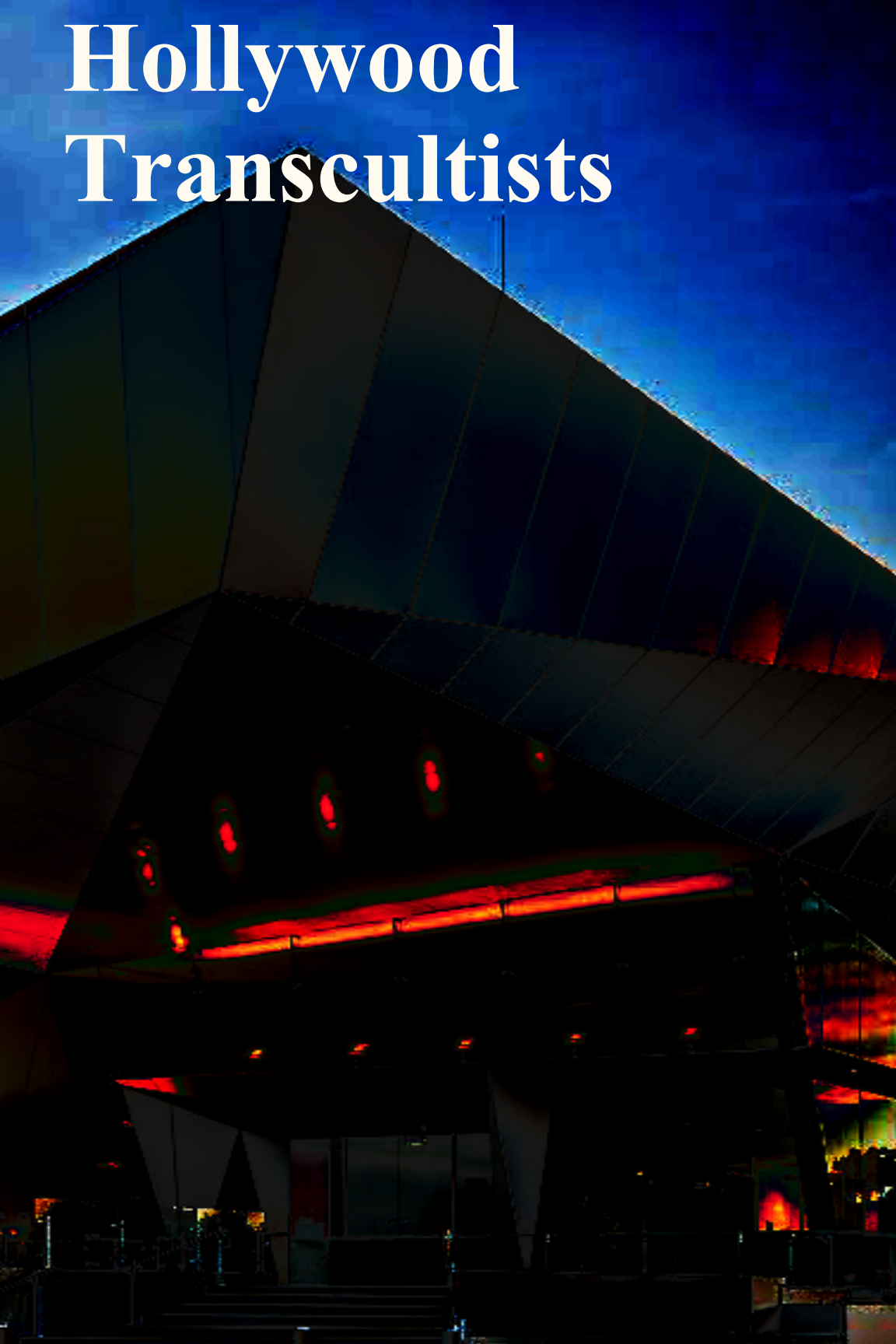
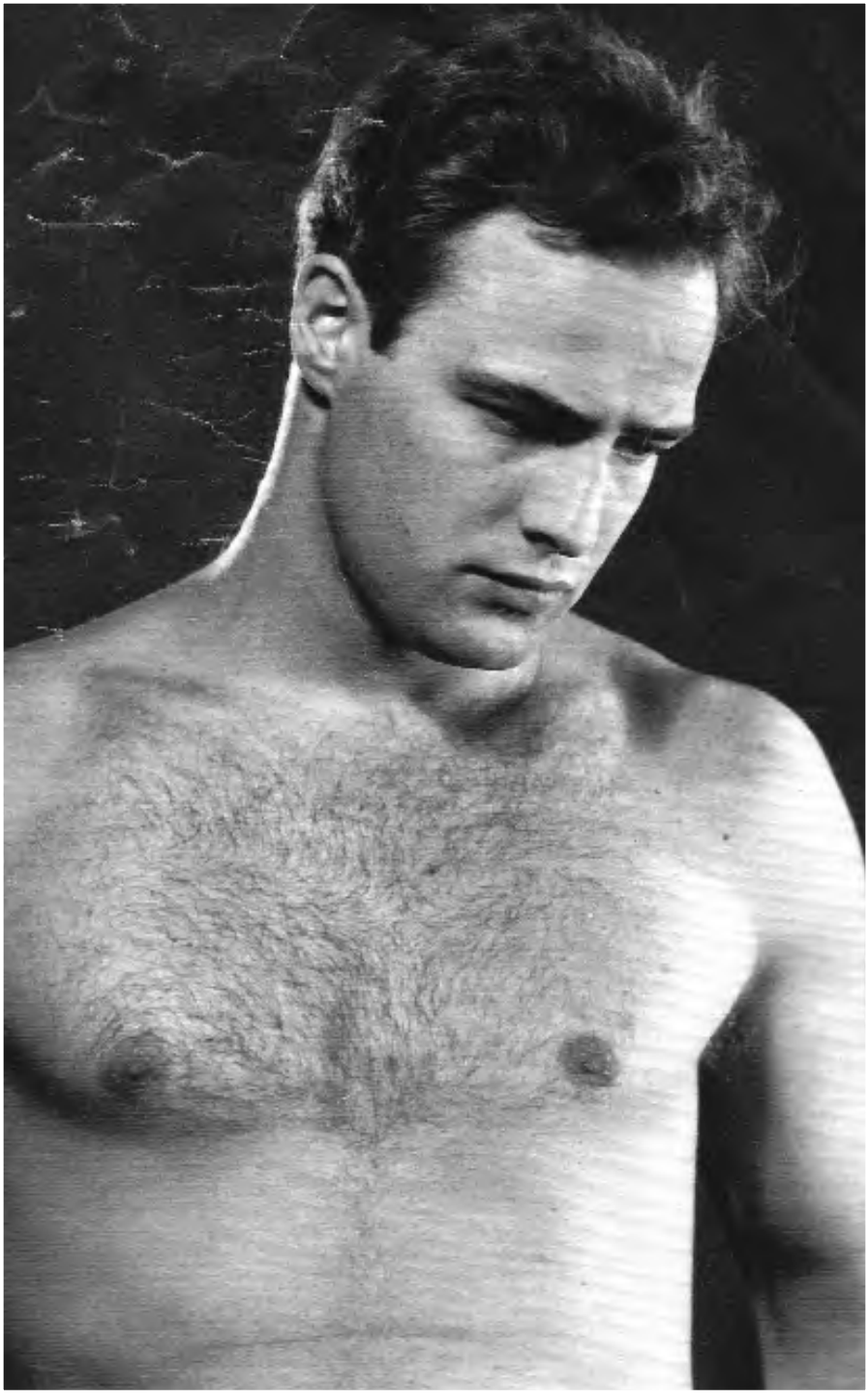
Hollywood Transcultists





Chapter One

New York City, or so it is said, lived through its headiest days between 1943 and 1948, going from the black-out nights of World War II to the neon-lit, postwar years that would bring on America's greatest period of prosperity.

Facing a sultry, unusually hot May afternoon as his train from Chicago pulled into Penn Station in New York, Nebraska-born Marlon Brando stepped down onto the concrete. He knew that he was different from other actors arriving in New York, and he also knew that he wanted to be a contender. To call attention to himself, he wore a cherry-red fedora. In his own words, "I wanted to knock New York on its ass!"

At nineteen years of age, he was a virile, macho image who moved through the city with a panther's grace. The Army might have branded him 4F because of nearsightedness and a football knee injury, but the love-starved widows and girlfriends—all in Betty Grable Technicolor makeup—left behind by soldiers and sailors, knew what the military didn't: Marlon Brando was a perfect physical specimen.

He received immediate approval from New Yorkers when he stepped up to use the infamous urinals at Penn Station. The 4F homosexuals who cruised there gave him appreciative glances as he took a much-needed piss. The sex-hunters obviously wanted him, and he basked in both their attention and their hunger.

Checking his tousled hair in the bathroom mirror underneath the station, he decided to leave it deliberately disheveled. It added to his sexual allure. He could feel his heart beating with the raw magnetism of his own burgeoning youth.

Powerfully muscled shoulders and arms filled his white T-shirt, one size too small. His well-developed legs were encased in the tightest pair of blue jeans seen on the streets of New York in that era of baggy pants. Before leaving the Middle West, he'd washed his jeans a dozen times, letting them dry on his frame, until they showcased his genitals into a tight, provocative, and promising "package of goodies," as he called them.

31 years before *One-Eyed Jacks*

As he gathered up his lone suitcase, made of cowhide, his sweat wetted his T-shirt in half-moons around his armpits. He'd made the right decision to wear no underwear, as he didn't want anything to come between his jeans and his skin.

In the mirror, he checked what he called "my pearly whites." The face staring back at him was deliberately uncouth and just a bit hostile, as he knew how sexually magnetic that was to any horny woman or homosexual male who wanted to get plugged. Even after hours on the bus, away from the gym, his body was still rock hard, the creation of digging ditches and laying tiles under the hot sun of the Middle West.

Perhaps it's apocryphal, but Marlon was alleged to have given his last five dollars to a fat black shoeshine man, who'd ridden the train up from New Orleans. "What you doing in New York, Mr. Man?" the shoeblack supposedly asked.

"I'm here to have a hell of a time!" Marlon is alleged to have responded.

"Thanks for the tip, the biggest I ever got. I'm lucky to get a nickel." He looked Marlon up and down as if sizing him up, not able to place him. "Where you from?"

"Born in Rangoon," he lied. "My daddy had an overseas job there before the war."

"And where might this Rangoon be?" the shoeblack asked. "I don't rightly know."

"It's over there and down a bit," Marlon said.

"Ok, now I know where it is," the black said.

Waving him good-bye, Marlon wandered into the dying afternoon of a New York war year. He'd had his first conversation with a native, even though the man was from Louisiana.

Marlon sampled the local breezes—not as fresh as Nebraska, but the good air of a city at war in both the Pacific and the Atlantic. New Yorkers feared at any time they might come under aerial bombardment. With a sense of danger, he looked up at the clear sky, as if anticipating a squadron of Nazi bombers.

Arriving in town, he wanted to become the *enfant terrible* of this dynamic city that lived on the edge. His actress mother, Dorothy, whom he called "Dodie," had taught him what an *enfant terrible* was, and he wanted to

become one.

Marlon Brando Sr. was back in Chicago, locked into a dull job at Calcium Carbonate, in which he earned one-thousand dollars a month, plus commissions. Marlon Jr. knew he'd never be controlled or dominated by his father ever again, once he'd "liberated" himself on the streets of New York.

As a send-off for his son from Chicago, Marlon Sr. said, "The theater? That's for faggots! It's not man's work. Just take a look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself if someone would pay good money to see a shit-kicking Nebraska boy like you emote on the stage."

"Bud" was no longer the name for him. He'd outgrown that nickname applied at his birth on April 3, 1924, back in Omaha.

It was going to be Marlon from now on. In his hopes and dreams, he knew that the whole world would soon be familiar with the name Marlon. "No, that's not right," he said out loud, attracting the attention of two women shoppers. "No, not Marlon. The world will know me by only one name. BRANDO!"

And so it came to be.

* * *

His sister, Frances Brando, born a year and a half before Marlon, lived on a cul-de-sac on Patchin Place in Greenwich Village. An aspiring artist, she was in a deep depression, having heard from the War Department that her lover, a Navy pilot, had been shot down and was instantly killed. Marlon tried to cheer her up, but at the time she was inconsolable.

Escaping from her flat, he was "free at last." No military school, no critical father to chastise him. He could be a true bohemian and stay up all night if he wanted to. He recalled that one time, "the first night I got officially plastered in my whole life," he fell asleep in the bushes of Washington Square and woke up on the sidewalk, with men in briefcases stepping over him on their way to work.

He didn't want to become one of those dark-suited men with their briefcases. He tried the odd job here and there. A waiter in a spaghetti house on Bleeker Street. A sandwich man assisting a vendor on Fifth Avenue where Marlon claimed he made fifty tuna fish sandwiches in about one hour. A short order cook "frying juicy burgers" at a tourist trap hole-in-the-wall near Times Square. An elevator operator at Best's Department Store was followed by a brief stint as a lemonade salesman in Central Park. For three days he drove a truck in New Jersey before he crashed it.

Frances, Jocelyn, and Marlon in Evanston, Illinois

Mostly he was free to wander about, which is what he was doing on the day he discovered Life Cafeteria on Seventh Avenue South. It was a place where rubber-neckers from the Middle West, with tour guides in hand, ventured into the Village to "gape at the faggots and the bull dykes," who were on display through the cafeteria's picture windows that opened to the street. "I remember seeing these baboons on the sidewalk staring in at these young men and women ordering food and drink," Marlon later recalled. "The rednecks were pointing at the diners like animals in a zoo. I was immediately intrigued and ventured in. Before I left that afternoon, I discovered that many of the homosexual men were actually putting on a show for the jam." Jam was a code word for straights. "They were deliberately acting real effeminate as a fuck-you to the straights." He recalled that a table of men and women "quickly adopted me and made me feel like I belonged."

It made no difference to him what the patrons did in private. "All my life I've never been interested in someone else's sex life—only my own," Marlon said. "I became a regular patron. One of the waiters developed a crush on me and served me food even when I didn't have enough money to pay for it."

A regular patron of Life Cafeteria was a struggling young writer, Tennessee Williams, who also survived on the leanest of budgets. But the future Southern author and the actor "destined" to play Stanley Kowalski didn't meet until much later on the beach in Provincetown.

Not everyone rushed to accept this brash young man from Nebraska, who

wore his trademark red fedora for another year. On Patchin Place, the same street where he lived with Frances, the famous novelist and playwright, Djuana Barnes, maintained an apartment at No. 5.

Marlon had read her underground 1936 novel, *Nightwood*, a masterpiece of Modernist writing with its lesbian overtones. He felt he could just barge up to her second-floor studio and introduce himself in spite of the "Do Not Disturb" sign on her doorbell. Not knowing about Barnes' self-imposed exile, he met not the author but a burly, older women whom he later called "the Bitch of Buchenwald." He was chased down the stairs and into the street.

Receiving money from home, Marlon was free to enroll in the Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research on West Twelfth Street. Since 1940 it had been turning out such graduates as Beatrice Arthur, Harry Belafonte, Shelley Winters, Rod Steiger, and ultimately Maureen Stapleton and Elaine Stritch. Even Tennessee Williams participated in a playwriting workshop here, an instructor warning him that his plays "are much too vulgar for stage presentation."

The acting courses were conceived by Erwin Piscator, disciple of Max Reinhardt, a refugee from the Third Reich and one of the most dynamic and creative forces on the contemporary stage. He was noted for his experimental stagecraft, such as bare sets and realistic acting. His left-wing ideology led to charges of Communism.

Piscator had created the celebrated Epic Theatre in Germany, but made a dangerous mistake in marrying Maria Ley, a Jewish ballet dancer from Vienna. Hearing of this, Hitler ordered the SS to arrest Piscator. The SS hauled in the wrong man. Before the mistake could be discovered, Piscator learned of the order of his arrest and somehow managed to escape to England where he, along with Maria, boarded a ship sailing for New York's harbor.

Marlon didn't take Piscator's classes all that seriously, often not showing up for them, and devoting himself to other classes such as yoga, dancing, and fencing. Walter Matthau, one of the graduates of the New School, mockingly called it the "Neurotic Workshop for Sexual Research." In his view, Marlon wanted to become an actor "so that he could get fucked from here to Timbuktu."

Erwin Piscator

Behind Piscator's back, Marlon mocked his Teutonic mannerisms and speech, at one time pretending Piscator was Hitler, much to the howling amusement of Marlon's fellow Workshop students.

Charles Chaplin and Albert Einstein

Piscator's heavy German accent made him easy for Marlon to caricature. The director's eyes were of the cold cobalt blue type that "dropped the gas pellets," and his mop of unruly hair was of a peculiar gray, like naval battleships were painted.

Marlon always showed up for class when a famous speaker appeared for talks, followed by a question-and-answer period. Paul Muni was a guest, later Sinclair Lewis and Paul Robeson, even Bertolt Brecht. Before he turned twenty, Marlon was meeting some of the cultural elite of America. The guest speakers had left-wing politics, or else they didn't get invited to the New School.

Through Piscator, Marlon one afternoon met Albert Einstein and would recall the meeting for the rest of his life. Einstein had lobbied the U.S. government to grant citizenship to Piscator.

Regrettably, Marlon was not in school the following week when Einstein reappeared to see Piscator. The scientist's guest was Charles Chaplin, whom Marlon viewed as the greatest artist of the cinema. Marlon frequently expressed regret that he did not get to meet Chaplin. However, he would have that dubious privilege--disastrously so--when The Little Tramp directed Marlon and Sophia Loren in *A Countess from Hong Kong*, released in 1967.

Marlon spoke frequently of his meeting with the great Einstein. Yet, strangely, he could not remember one single word of dialogue that took place between them. In later years, he claimed that "I have a great deal in common with Albert." When pressed to the exact nature of that shared identity, he said, "We've both fucked Marilyn Monroe, and I think he was a little better at it than I was."

* * *

One day Marlon strayed across the alleyway leaving Frances in her studio painting. The next day he announced he was moving in with a woman named Celia Webb. He later claimed falsely in his memoirs that over a candlelit supper by a fireplace in her one-room studio, he'd lost his virginity. That was a gross exaggeration, tantamount to his telling the shoeblack he'd been born in Rangoon. Marlon had long ago lost his virginity in Nebraska.

Celia was a window dresser for Macy's, and she was extremely small waisted and exotic looking, having arrived in New York from some South American country, perhaps Colombia. She was ten years older than Marlon and lived with her young son. Her husband was somewhere fighting on the battlefields of Europe, and she was "lonely and in need of a man," Marlon later recalled.

Celia would be the first in a long line of olive-skinned beauties with raven-black hair that Marlon would bed.

She was known around the village for her jungle-print dresses with plunging necklines that went all the way to her navel, almost unheard of in the mid-Forties. She slashed Victory Red lipstick across her rounded lips, and her ankle-strap high heels compensated for her shortness. Marlon remembered that she never wore underpants. While strolling the Village streets at night, and having a sudden need for Celia, he would take her into a dark alleyway and "bang her against a brick wall."

He bragged that in those days he walked around "in a state of perpetual erection." He would later tell best friend Carlo Fiore that Celia was a "sexual freak who liked it doggy fashion, often preferring penetration while she talked on the phone."

At one point Celia announced to Frances that her brother had proposed to her, but Marlon at the time was dating other women—and men—and had hardly settled down with one woman even as sexy as Celia.

When she lost her job as a window dresser and had to give up her apartment, Marlon eventually found another small studio for her on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village.

Sometimes he'd show up at Village parties with another woman, even though Celia too would have been invited to the same gathering and was looking "love-starved and hungry for me," as he'd later remember. On those occasions, he would simply ignore Celia, pretending he didn't know her.

Their relationship would last on and off for several years. At the very

moment of Marlon's greatest success in *A Streetcar Named Desire* on Broadway in 1948, Celia decided to give up her dream of marrying him. She departed for Paris. He would eventually follow her, but the relationship was never fully resumed, as Marlon discovered too many other distractions in Paris.

"I belong to the women of the world," Marlon would later tell Carlo Fiore. "Why shouldn't other women have a taste of me?"

In time, Marlon would summon Celia to live in Laurel Canyon in Hollywood—not as a lover but as his personal secretary. She'd try in vain to manage his messy business affairs.

* * *

Suddenly, Marlon was seen around the Village with an attractive woman named Caroline Burke. Born ten years before Marlon, she is credited with helping him "fine-tune" some of the subtleties of sexual intercourse with a woman.

Unlike Celia Webb, Caroline was Jewish, an intellectual, a theater-goer, an inveterate reader, a lover of classical music, and a collector of antiques.

As Marlon was to remember her, "She often wore some exotic perfume—Turkish, I think. I'm sure it was what dancing girls in the Harem wore when they shook their bellies in front of some horny Sultan. All I know is that every time she wore that perfume I got an immediate erection."

That Caroline was Jewish caused great admiration in Marlon. In spite of his growing up in an America riddled with prejudice, including anti-Semitism, he was a supporter of the Jewish people and their cultural accomplishments. That lack of prejudice also extended to blacks.

"He was a very liberal, very loving man," actress Elaine Stritch recalled, "at a time when there was much anti-black, anti-Jewish sentiment rampant even in the more educated enclaves of America."

In spite of all this admiration and that Turkish perfume, Caroline Burke had no sooner appeared on the radar screen than she disappeared from it.

* * *

While still operating an elevator at Best & Company, Marlon sought out another cafeteria in the Village when his favorite, Life, closed for vacation. He wandered into Hector's Cafeteria on Fourth Street and Seventh Avenue.

Sitting at the counter were two men with a seat between them. Since the

only space available was that seat, Marlon, uninvited, sat down between them.

"I'm Norman Mailer," the man on Marlon's right said, extending his hand.

"And I'm James Baldwin," the black man on his left said, also extending his hand. "You can call me Jimmy."

In his memoirs, Marlon rather bizarrely claimed that Mailer was speaking with a Texas accent, claiming that he'd served in the Army and had told his fellow soldiers that he was from Texas to keep them from "beating up on a Jew boy."

Mailer, at least according to Marlon's account, still hadn't shaken that Texas accent. Actually, at the time of his meeting with Marlon, Mailer had yet to be drafted into the Army, whose experience would lead him to write one of the most memorable of all novels to come out of World War II, *The Naked and the Dead*.

"I grew up in Brooklyn," Mailer said. "So if you've got a problem with that, let's step outside and settle the score."

"No problem at all," Marlon said. "I'm from Nebraska. Have you got a problem with that?"

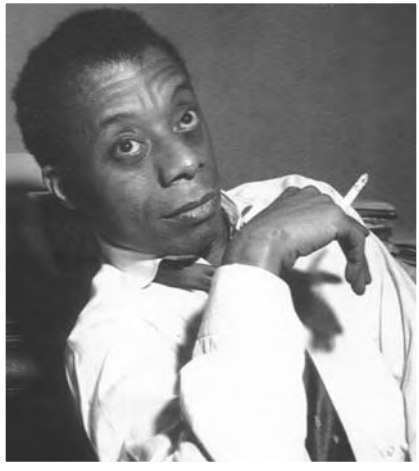
"I'm not sure that a place like Nebraska exists," Mailer said. "I think it's just a state of mind.

"If you're from Brooklyn, let's hear some Brooklyn talk," Marlon said.

"Fug you!" Mailer said in his best street-hood voice.

Over his bowl of soup, which cost twenty-five cents, Marlon learned that both Baldwin and Mailer were aspiring novelists. He liked Mailer but found him very macho, like a boxer who wanted to fist-fight you at the slightest provocation.

Marlon was more drawn to the black man on his left, who appeared far more sensitive. In spite of his ugly features, Baldwin possessed an inner beauty. Almost from the first encounter, Marlon concluded that Mailer was the most heterosexual man he was likely to meet in New York, whereas Baldwin was an obvious homosexual just emerging from the closet.



James Baldwin

Marlon was later convinced that his initial opinion about Mailer and Baldwin was right on target. Years later, Baldwin recalled, hopefully with some accuracy, the first meeting of this unconventional and soon-to-be famous trio of rebels. Marlon had plopped himself down between the two men when they were

engaged in an argument about race and sexuality.

"I have feelings of latent homosexuality," Mailer said. "Jimmy here has convinced me that I'm a latent homosexual. Even so, I chose to be heterosexual. What do you think of that?"

"To each his own," Marlon said, startled at the revelation and how quickly he'd entered another Greeenwich Village debate of the day.

"Norman feels that the issue of homosexuality is compounded by my blackness," Baldwin said.

"How so?" Marlon asked.

"I'm obsessed with black male sexuality," Mailer admitted. "You might say I'm romantically involved with the whole subject of blackness."

"Norman feels that the black male has the edge when it comes to sex," Baldwin said. "Want to chime in with your own opinion?"

"I really came in here for a cup of soup," Marlon said. "I don't want to get involved in any white boy/black boy kind of shit!"

In 1961 Baldwin would remember Marlon's dismissive comment when he wrote an article for *Esquire*. It was called "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," and in the piece he wrote about his relationship with Mailer.

"To me, the American Negro male is a walking, stalking phallic symbol," Mailer said. "I'm confused about the matter right now. But one day when I'm clear in the head, I'm going to write a piece about race relations. I'm going to call it *The White Negro*. Does that title excite you?"

"If you'll adapt it for the stage, I'll play the lead," Marlon said. "You see I'm an actor."

"Great!" Mailer said, rather dismissively. "So you're an actor. But what do you really do for a living?"

In the burgeoning friendship that soon developed between Marlon and Baldwin, the issue of race, at least according to Baldwin himself, never was an issue between them. "It just never came up," Baldwin claimed.

Later in life, in appraising Marlon, Baldwin said, "I had never met any white man like Marlon. He was obviously immensely talented—a real creative force—and totally unconventional and independent, a beautiful cat. Race truly meant nothing to him. He was contemptuous of anyone who discriminated in any way. Very attractive to both women and men, he gave me the feeling that reports I was ugly had been much exaggerated."

Norman Mailer

During the days, and especially the nights, Baldwin introduced his new discovery to Harlem. The writer took Marlon to many of the

scenes of his own bleak and poverty-stricken childhood, showing him where he'd lived and played in the city dumps before going home hungry. He also took Marlon to the church where he'd become an evangelical minister at the age of fourteen. His 1953 novel, *Go Tell It On the Mountain*, documented these tortured early days.

Baldwin, the oldest of nine children, never knew his real father. His step-father, a hard, cruel man who worked in a factory, had died in a mental hospital only months before Baldwin met Marlon.

He was sympathetic to the writer's early struggles, but mainly Marlon liked the Harlem jazz and the Harlem clubs to which Baldwin introduced him. By the time of Marlon's arrival in New York, the golden age of Harlem of the 20s and 30s had passed. It was the middle of a war, and clubs were still open but faced a dwindling number of whites who used to frequent their premises.

Baldwin told Marlon of such legendary night spots as the Cotton Club, and especially a place called "Hot Feet," where the entertainment was exotic and there were unlimited sexual possibilities. Cole Porter and Cary Grant were patrons, and a male madame, "La Rue La Rue," later arranged private rooms for the two celebrities with the more well-endowed performers. Brothels still flourished in Harlem, still catering to downtown whites who went north for "slumming."

At one "rent party," a free-for-all a tenant staged to raise money for his rent, Marlon was transfixed as he watched a piano player perform. Stripping to the buff, he inserted a lit candle, measuring twelve inches long, into his anal canal.

Marlon's favorite hangout became Lucky's Rendezvous at 773 St. Nicolas Avenue between 148th and 149th Streets. Lucky Roberts ruled the night, attracting a clientele of what one newspaper reviewer called "practitioners of what playwright Oscar Wilde called 'the higher philosophy.'" Lucky told the same newspaperman that he had no problems with his clients indulging in "same-sex hand-holding or gooey-eyed mooning."

It is not known for certain when the relationship between Baldwin and Marlon turned sexual. It perhaps occurred on the first night the author took his new friend to the notorious Mount Morris Baths at 1944 Madison Avenue, just below 125th Street. Opened in 1893, this was the oldest black bathhouse in the country. Although patronized by blacks, it also admitted white men, nearly all of whom were homosexual lured by the legendary tales of the endowments of black men.

Even when he wasn't with Baldwin, Marlon pursued Afro-Cuban music, and became a regular Wednesday night visitor to a club that staged a mambo contest. He was endlessly fascinated by the dance rhythms of New York's Puerto Rican colony.

From all reports, Baldwin was Marlon's first sexual experience with a black man. In his autobiography, Marlon admitted to having a sexual experience with Floretta, a nurse from Jamaica with what was known at the time as "bedroom eyes."

He said that it came as a surprise to him to discover that it was no different seducing a black woman than a white one, except in the sepia color of the skin, of course.

One night he bribed a musician with five dollars at a Harlem nightclub on 132nd Street to let him perform as a conga drummer. Later, he flirted outrageously with a beautiful "brown belle in a red satin dress slit up all the way to Honolulu."

When the beauty turned out to be the moll of a black gangster, Marlon, fearing he'd be knifed, ran all the way back to the Village.

* * *

Marlon's new acting teacher at the New School, Miss Stella Adler, made a grand entrance after all her pupils were seated. Barging into the room smoking a cigarette like Bette Davis, she was actually a cross between the devouring screen presence of Barbara Stanwyck and the steel magnolia aura of Margaret Sullavan. Stella was stunningly attired in a mink stole, red dress, and pink, spiked high heels. In all, she was a larger-than-life presence.

Sitting in stunned silence, Marlon found her entrance charismatic. In her early forties, she was a beautiful woman with soft blonde hair, steel-blue eyes, and a sharp, aquiline nose that she claimed made her look Jewish. Her appearance had sabotaged her attempt at a career in Hollywood.

Stella Adler

Her mercurial reputation had preceded her entrance into the classroom.

Her father was Jacob Adler, one of the great stars of the American Yiddish Theater, and Stella herself had at the age of four in 1906 appeared on stage with her father's troupe. Her brother was the famous character actor, Luther Adler, and her husband the producer, Harold Clurman, who claimed that his wife's curly mouth was "the most sensual of any woman who had ever appeared on the stage."

Marlon was about to find out if that were true or not. He was immediately captivated by Stella. Or, as he put it to his sister, Frances, "I could have fucked her on the spot right in front of the class."

Harold Clurman

A passionate, expressive teacher, Stella in front of her class was volatile, often explosive. At one point, she fell on the floor in a fit of frenzy to illustrate a point in her lecture on Ibsen. She delivered "sermons" on acting like the most passionate of evangelists warning the faithful about the floodgates of Hell. As if watching a great moment in the theater, her workshop students were transfixed by her lectures which were more like performances than classroom studies. "She challenged the imagination," said student Shelley Winters, "and made us want to be bigger and greater than we are. Above all else, Stella never wanted us to bore an audience. That would be the greatest of all sins."

Stella had emerged from the Group Theater of the depression era. The avant-garde troupe was founded by Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawford, and Lee Strasberg, who would later launch the Actors Studio. Playwrights such as William Saroyan and Clifford Odets came from the Group Theater, as did actor John Garfield, who would in the years ahead be offered the role of Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Franchot Tone was a member, before going off to Hollywood and marrying Joan Crawford. The doomed Frances Farmer also electrified audiences in New York in the 1930s before heading for Hollywood.

Elia Kazan, who as a director would be a defining moment in Marlon's career, also emerged from the Group Theatre. The founding father of Method acting, of course, was Konstantin Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre. Group Theater members took Stanislavsky at his word: "The creativeness of the actor must come from within."

Elia Kazan and Bobby Lewis
in *Waiting for Lefty*

"The Method" of the Group Theatre changed acting in the American theater for all time. Up to then, acting had been stylized, artificial—external acting rather than internal. "The elocution was theatrical, the emotion unfelt until Stella came along," Marlon once said. "Through Stella, I, along with others, learned to truly experience the in-depth emotion of a character. The motivation came

from deep within our souls. After Stella, actors couldn't get away with that shit about putting their hand on their foreheads and sighing in pain to indicate despair, crap like that!"

In the middle of her lecture that day at the New School, Stella became aware of Marlon. All her other students were impeccably dressed, the young men in suits and ties. He showed up in a red fedora, dirty white T-shirt, threadbare jeans two sizes too small that showcased his genitals, and a three-day growth of beard.

"Mr. Vagabond," she said. "Please stand up. Do you have a name?"

"Marlon Brando!" he said, almost defiantly as if to challenge her.

"If there's a part for a bum I hear about, I'll recommend that you be cast."

Although dismissive of him at the time of their first encounter, because of his startlingly unkempt appearance, she quickly became his captive fan. Fellow student Gene Saks once said, "Stella was mesmerized by Brando, and he was completely captivated by her. It was a mutual admiration society."

After Marlon's first reading for her, Stella changed her opinion of her student almost at once. That night, she told her husband, Harold Clurman, that Marlon was "going to become the finest young actor on the American stage, far better than John Garfield." Since Marlon mumbled his reading before her, it is not entirely clear as to why she saw such great promise in her pupil.

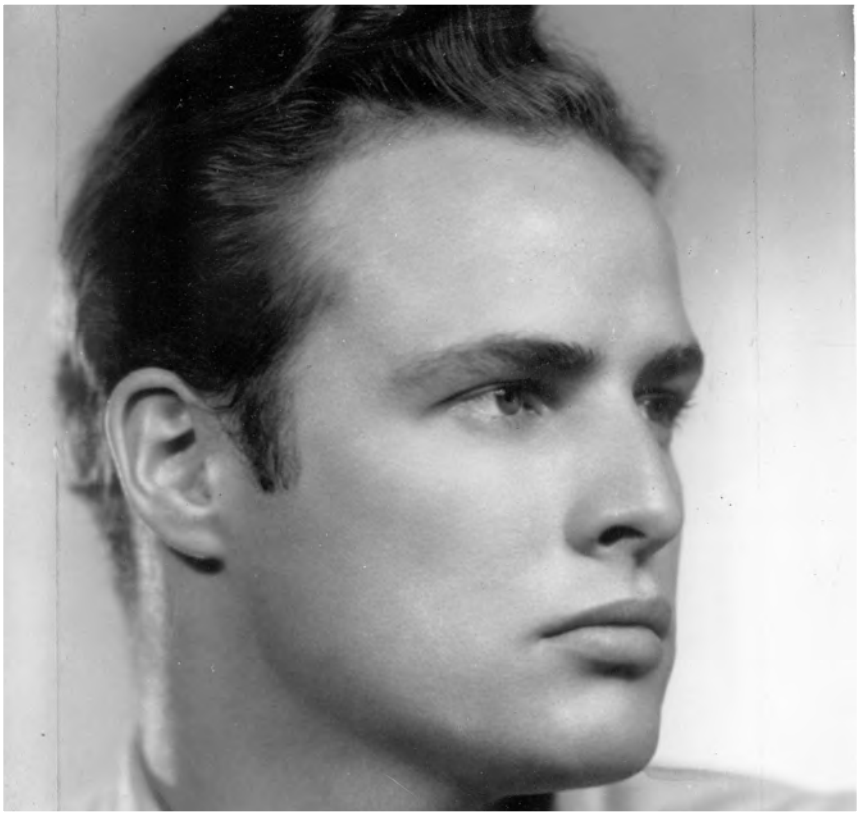
In later years, she recalled the event. "The first day I saw Marlon, I knew he was a primitive genius. He was completely untrained, totally inexperienced, a vagabond who'd drifted in from the American plains but one of such visible magnetism I was physically aroused by his presence."

She had more to say. "In those days Marlon looked as if he might hump you at any moment like a beast in the field, and you knew you wouldn't resist. I predicted that women would swoon when he came out on the stage. I was one of the first among my peers to recognize his potent image as a male sex symbol. Ziegfeld was concerned with all those pretty girls being like a melody. But I knew that it was the woman who usually bought the tickets for theater. I also knew they'd pay good money to see Marlon. John Barrymore got it right. He once told me that every time he stuffed a big thick sock in his green tights, his female audiences doubled the line at the box office."

Marlon later confided to Frances. "I have found my mama. Stella will provide for all my needs."

Soon, much to the annoyance of her husband, Marlon appeared at the Adler apartment every night. Ostensibly, Stella had first brought Marlon home to meet her attractive teenage daughter, Ellen, but Marlon's interest seemed almost entirely focused on the mother, even though he later dated Ellen, presumably having an affair with her too.

One of the future founders of the Actors Studio, Robert Lewis, recalled



Before the broken nose

one night when he dropped off a script at Stella's. Marlon and his teacher were alone in her apartment. "He was stripped except for a pair of boxer underwear. He was sitting at Stella's feet, not having much to say but staring at her intently. She was smoking a cigarette while sprawled on the sofa in her nightgown. I just assumed they'd had sex earlier. I don't know where her daughter or husband were."

Upon seeing Lewis, Stella looked him over carefully. "Marlon and I are studying," she said. "Tonight I'm going to be a tasty overripe piece of cheese, and he's going to be a very hungry rat."

One evening Stella was sitting in a cafeteria with Marlon and two other students. Lewis was also at the table along with his pal, actor Burgess Meredith, who'd been rumored to have had an affair with Lauren Bacall before she'd gone off to Hollywood to meet her Bogie.

Meredith remembered that Marlon wasn't saying anything but was studying every move Stella made. Finally, annoyed with him, she said, "What in the hell are you up to? Do you want to become a Stella Adler male impersonator

and take your act into clubs?"

"I like the way you smoke a cigarette," Marlon told his mentor. "You get carried away in conversation and carelessly drop the ashes on the table. You don't smoke a cigarette. You attack it."

Meredith was mildly surprised to hear Stella refer to Brando as "my puppy." "He did have a doglike devotion when he was in her presence," Meredith said. "I thought it was just the harmless crush of a teenage boy."

"Puppy," she said to Marlon, when he continued to stare at her, "are you listening to how I grow teeth?" To break the spell of his staring, she began to stare back at him. In front of Lewis and Meredith, she said, "What do you think of Marlon's face?" Although a question, she didn't expect an answer. "When he smiles, he shows all those shiny white teeth. Marlon's face seems to suggest that he has nothing to lose and everything to gain."

Theresa Helburn was a producer for the Theatre Guild and a key player in the stage career of Katharine Hepburn. Theresa was also a friend of Stella's, who introduced the producer to her protégé. At the time, Theresa was involved in the staging of her hit musical, *Oklahoma!* She gave him two tickets to see her show, and he later claimed "that's the first Broadway musical I'll ever go see—and the last!"

For years, Theresa "dined out" on her amusing story of Marlon's seduction of Stella. Theresa claimed that Stella herself revealed the details of Marlon's conquest of her.

It seemed that both Harold Clurman and daughter Ellen had left the Adler apartment without locking the door. On his nightly visit, Marlon knocked but there was no answer. He tried the doorknob, finding it open. Without knocking again, he entered the dimly lit apartment.

A light was coming from Stella's bedroom. He moved toward the light, pushing open the door to find Stella standing by the bed wearing "only her bloomers—no bra."

According to Theresa, "Stella was much too sophisticated to scream and cover up her breasts. She merely told Brando, 'I knew this was going to happen.'"

Slowly, according to Theresa, Marlon began to take off his T-shirt and jeans, revealing his young, muscled body. "There's nothing wrong with two actors being nude together," Marlon was alleged to have said. "It's part of my training. In our lifetime, full nudity will be sanctioned in the theater, and you know this to be true."

When Stella didn't say anything, but seemed mesmerized by his nudity, he went on. "Not only will actors of the future appear nude on the stage, they will also make love on the stage. In my lifetime, I will even seduce women on camera—that is, if I ever consent to make a movie. I need to learn how to act

out the making of love on stage, which I know must be different from making love the real way. You are my teacher. It is your duty to show me the way."

Stella later confided to Theresa that she felt Marlon's seduction technique lines were the most original she'd ever heard.

"I guess you're going to take what you want," Stella told Marlon, "and I don't have any say in the matter."

"No!" he protested. "This is one scene where the teacher takes what she wants. I don't come to you. You come to me. Haven't you read the fucking script?"

"What script?" she asked. "There is no script."

"Teacher hasn't prepared her lesson," he mocked her.

"Stop it!" she shouted at him. "You're fucking up my mind. There's Harold. My daughter. I don't want this!"

"Then, why, I ask you, have you moved five steps closer in my direction?"

"I haven't taken one step, and you know that's true," she said.

"Cut the shit!" he said in a harsh, commanding voice. "We don't have all day. Harold and Ellen might return unexpectedly."

She moved toward him, standing awkwardly for a moment before letting her underwear fall to the floor.

In a low, sexy voice, he told her, "If you pretend I'm raping you, you'll have less guilt."

* * *

As a disciple of Stella Adler's, Marlon soon came into conflict with Lee Strasberg, her "blood enemy." Originally Strasberg and Stella worked in harmony at the Group Theatre.

Both of these acting teachers followed Stanislavsky's earlier teachings in which he claimed that an actor should "act from memory." For example, if the part called for an actor to show anguish, he should summon some personal tragedy from his own life to convey that pain on stage.

In 1934, Stella, along with Harold Clurman, journeyed to Paris to meet the great Stanislavsky and to study with him for five weeks. To her astonishment, she discovered that his earlier theories about Method acting had been severely altered. In his new teachings, Stanislavsky called for the actor to create his character by imagination rather than memory.

When Stella sailed back to New York with this new theory, Strasberg completely rejected "this revisionism,"

Lee Strasberg

clinging to the earlier lessons of his mentor. Students at the New School sharply divided into two warring camps, one led by Stella, the other by Strasberg.

"Your truth is in your imagination," Stella told her aspirant actors, including Marlon. In a dig at Strasberg, she said, "As for the rest, it's lice!"

The exact details may never be known, as there are too many conflicting versions. But the feud between Stella and Strasberg exploded into violence one afternoon in the hallway of the New School when she came upon her adversary. She was confrontational in nature and began to attack him verbally. At one point after an insulting remark he'd made, she slapped his face.

Instead of taking it like a gentleman, Strasberg was enraged and kicked her in the shin, knocking her down.

At this point, Marlon emerged in the hallway and rushed to Stella's rescue. He punched Strasberg in the face, bloodying his nose. Falling to the floor, the forty-two-year-old teacher was repeatedly kicked in the groin by Marlon, until two male students pulled him away. One of the actors claimed that Marlon was threatening to kill Strasberg if "he so much as laid a hand on Stella again."

The violence that occurred that afternoon would lead to a lifelong hatred of Marlon for Strasberg.

Marlon used the medium of his autobiography to strike back at Strasberg. Marlon wrote: "After I had some success, Lee Strasberg tried to take credit for teaching me how to act. He never taught me anything. He would have claimed credit for the sun and the moon if he believed he could get away with it."

Marlon denounced the head of the Actors Studio as "an ambitious, selfish man who exploited the people who attended the Actors Studio." He called Strasberg "tasteless and untalented."

The conflict bubbled over after the death of Marilyn Monroe. In her will, she left Strasberg in complete control of her estate. In time, that estate would earn millions of dollars in licensing fees for the use of Marilyn's image. The blonde goddess had wanted Strasberg to "distribute among my friends, colleagues, and those to whom I am devoted" the bulk of her estate.

Marlon was furious in October of 1999 when he learned that Christie's had auctioned the bulk of Marilyn's personal effects. In his will, read in 1982, Strasberg left Marilyn's effects to his wife, Anna, who had never met the star. Christie's auction brought $12.3 million.

This "greed" on the part of Strasberg wildly infuriated Marlon, who frequently throughout his life denounced his long-ago nemesis.

Marlon had been delighted when Strasberg lost the best supporting actor Oscar for *The Godfather, Part II*, in 1974 to his own protégé, Robert De Niro.

* * *

In August of 1943, all of Marlon's women and the odd boyfriend were put on hold, as if he were carefully storing them for some future usage. The arrival in New York of the teenage Steve Gilmore required all of Marlon's attention and devotion. The two young men had a very special bond between them, in spite of the fact that Steve was three years younger than Marlon and was just a junior in high school.

The love affair of the two teenage boys had begun in 1942 when Marlon Sr. sent his son to his own alma mater, the Shattuck Military Academy in the sleepy little agricultural town of Faribault, Minnesota, where the "winters are as cold as a witch's tit," in his father's words.

Hating the idea of the regimentation of a military school, young Marlon wandered alone among the ivy-covered limestone buildings, "feeling abandoned and deserted." He was imbued with none of the patriotic fervor that blanketed America in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. Even fifteen-year-old cadets couldn't wait "to go fight the Japs."

In Whipple Residential Hall, he was assigned to a room with fellow cadet John Adams, to whom he took an instant dislike. However, he did bond with a cadet, Barry Dillman, who lived in the same dorm.

After only two weeks at the Academy, he began to date an attractive and very proper girl, Betty Ferson, a student at nearby Saint Mary's School. Reportedly, her mother was a close friend of Dodie's, Marlon's mother. Their romance was relatively harmless, one of those adolescent boy-girl kind of things that many other cadets pursued. Marlon took her to tea dances and to military proms, and for long walks by the river.

Dillman recalled that Marlon had great athletic ability, although not much discipline. He was a superb long-distance runner, a crack swimmer, and the best football player at the academy. "He was in better shape than any of us," Dillman later said.

Marlon also excelled as a member of the Crack Squad, a precision drill team that required rigorous discipline. The squad won the national precision drill competition

At Shattuck Military Academy

that year and was invited to Washington to perform in front of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. To attract attention to himself, Marlon went to a drugstore hours before the performance and purchased a bottle of henna dye like Lucille Ball in Hollywood was using. With an outlandish head of hideous orange hair—a "grotesque carrot top"—he performed in front of Roosevelt, attracting the president's amused attention but also earning the scorn of his squadron leader.

Marlon, or "Bud" as his classmates called him, told Dillman one day that he'd decided to become an actor like his mother. To accomplish that goal, he began to read every play written by William Shakespeare. He also joined the Shattuck Players.

The head of the English department, Earle Wagner (known as "Duke") was in charge of the school theatrical troupe. This confirmed bachelor, known as "the gay blade" of campus, lived at Whipple Hall in a two-room studio, filled with antiques, leather-bound copies of the classics, Oriental carpets, and overstuffed leather chairs. He walked around campus in long, flowing black capes lined in silk in such flamboyant colors as chartreuse and magenta. He was often seen driving around in his highly polished black Packard with a 100-pound English bulldog—"the world's ugliest animal." He'd named the dog "Lord Byron" after his favorite poet.

The handsome, athletic Marlon and the rather effete acting teacher and aesthete quickly bonded. In between his sports, studies, and meals in the dining hall, Marlon was often locked up with Duke in his private studio.

Before Marlon, young cadets, each wanting to be an actor, often visited Duke for long hours in his studio. But after Marlon, invitations to the other cadets were no longer extended. Only Marlon was invited at night to visit Duke.

Britt Philip, a classmate, said he went by the studio one night to pick up a play. "Marlon was clad only in his underwear, lying on an Oriental carpet at the foot of Duke, who was reading to him. I got the play and left hurriedly."

Another classmate later claimed that it was in Duke's studio that Marlon "learned to use his sexuality like a weapon." It was later to be employed with greater career advancement when he met such vulnerable homosexual playwrights as Tennessee Williams and John Van Druten.

"I'm not saying Marlon was testing out the casting couch, but it was obvious to me that to get the best grades and the star parts in our school shows, you had to hang out with the master," the classmate claimed.

"I think Marlon while still a teenager came to realize that many men in the theater—playwrights, fellow actors, and drama teachers—were homosexual and that they were attracted to him," the classmate said. "He was extraordinarily handsome in those days and had a perfect body. I used to stare at him

in the communal shower. Marlon liked to show off his body in front of the other cadets, some of whom were homosexual. He never seemed embarrassed or even conscious of his nudity, yet he was incredibly conscious of it. I know that sounds like a contradiction. He liked to show off his assets. All the other cadets went to the showers with a towel wrapped around their midriffs. Marlon strode down the corridors buck-ass naked. He could often be seen walking around the corridors nude, and he always left the door to his room open, lying in bed completely naked. All of us got to see a lot of Marlon's 'wacky' that year whether we wanted to or not. I later followed, more or less, a homosexual lifestyle myself, and I think it was looking at Marlon's nude body that made me realize my own desires. Since I'm now married, more or less unhappily, I don't want my name used."

Duke became so enchanted with his new pupil that he even wrote Marlon Sr., claiming that his son might succeed best by pursuing a career in the theater. The old man exploded. "I've got a wife who's been in the fucking theater for no good reason that I can see. I'm not going to have this professor make a fairy out of my son, not when I'm having to shell out $1,500 in tuition money to make a real man out of him. Not someone who sits in front of the mirror applying woman's makeup. Not some faggot who shakes his ass in front of an audience every night." Although he threatened to have Marlon removed from drama classes, his father never carried through with that.

After his appearance in one of Duke's school productions, *A Message from Khufu*, a melodrama centering on Egyptology, the school newspaper hailed Marlon as "a new boy who shows great talent." That review would be the first of thousands—both good and bad—in every corner of the globe.

Unlike her husband, Dodie was thrilled with Marlon's initial success on the boards, telling her daughters that her son had found his true calling. "It's the stage for him. I know he'll succeed where I failed."

* * *

One afternoon after class Marlon strolled into Boosali's Olympia Caf'e for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. An hour later, he emerged from the cafe with Steve Gilmore on his arm.

Steve, only fourteen at the time, was a boy of almost luminous beauty. He was about five feet ten, weighed less than one-hundred and fifty pounds, and had ash-blond hair and piercing blue eyes shaded by long velvety lashes. His features were almost perfect, especially his Cupid's bow, red-lipped mouth and his peaches-and-cream complexion.

Marlon's roommate, John Adams, reported that after "lights out," Marlon was tying two sheets together to form a rope and climbing down to the ground from the second-floor window. Sometimes he wouldn't return in time for the 5:45 wake-up call.

Marlon's fellow cadets thought he was slipping out at night to "screw the maids," mostly virginal country girls hired by the school as closely chaperoned workers.

Marlon was really visiting Steve off campus where he lived with his parents. Apparently, Steve and Marlon had conceived a plan whereby he could slip in and out at night without alerting the boy's parents.

During this time, Marlon made another friend on campus, fellow cadet William Langford, to whom he confided that he was secretly seeing Steve at night, although revealing none of the intimate details.

One day in town Langford met Steve as he was walking along with Marlon. Langford found the boy "rather soft like a woman. He was sweet and seemed to have a childlike trust in Marlon, whom he clearly worshipped. He gazed at Marlon with almost total rapture and hung on to his every word like those uttered by Jesus Christ himself. Steve was kind of moony, and it was obvious he was giving in to his hero's every wish. No doubt in my mind as to who was the top, who was the bottom."

One classmate called Steve and Marlon "the beauty and the brawn." There was a certain truth to that. All his life, Steve had been told, "You're so pretty you should have been a girl." The boy was not very masculine and had certain effeminate gestures, which led to lifelong ridicule and accusations of his being a "sissy."

To Langford's shocked surprise, Marlon and Steve made no attempt to conceal their intimacy in public. "If they felt like holding each other's hands, they did." One afternoon when Langford visited Marlon in his room at Whipple Hall, he found him in bed with Steve. "It was obvious they were nude under the sheets. Marlon didn't seem to give a rooster's fuck that someone would come in and catch the two of them in bed together. In fact, he seemed to be flaunting his relationship with Steve in a very defiant way."

Steve demanded sexual fidelity from Marlon but didn't get it. Marlon became notorious at the academy for his seduction of young girls. At one time, and by his own estimate, Marlon seduced twenty-eight girls that year, ranging from older waitresses at the town's cafes to virginal young farm girls in the agricultural community, many of whom were hired as maids by Shattuck. Cadet James Stewart later claimed that Marlon "was an equal opportunity fucker—the girls didn't have to be pretty, they could even be fat. They just had to be fuckable."

For a time Marlon was able to maintain two secret relationships—one

"I burned insects"

with Steve, another with Duke. It was obvious to fellow classmates, however, that Duke was becoming too possessive of Marlon. The teacher constantly referred to Marlon as "my protégé—my showpiece."

"Showpiece, hell!" said one classmate. "Codpiece would be more like it."

Then one fine day Duke allegedly went into what a drama student called "a queen's tizzy fit." Apparently, Duke caught Marlon sodomizing Steve in a secret little hideaway he'd discovered. It was in a stone-built *campanile* (bell tower) with a planked floor over the Dramatic Association's storage room where sets were stored, along with discarded costumes and various stage props.

"Marlon clearly broke Duke's heart," Stewart claimed. "From what I gathered, it would be the first of a number of hearts—both male and female—that Marlon would break."

After that day, the supportive relationship between Marlon and Duke collapsed. In defiance, Marlon began to miss rehearsals or flub his lines when he did show up. He clowned around on stage, even rewriting some of Shakespeare's lines and putting them into a more modern idiom. At one point during one of Duke's pretentious lectures, Marlon let a big, smelly fart.

At rehearsals, Marlon challenged Duke's interpretation of a role, whereas in the past he'd religiously followed his mentor's teachings. One afternoon, in front of the other actors, Marlon called Duke "an armadillo's asshole," a favorite expression of Marlon's at the time. Because Marlon possessed blackmail evidence on Duke, and could have destroyed his career, the teacher was forced to take the insult. "Marlon had a big pair of balls and didn't mind clanking them," Stewart said.

Marlon not only called Duke an asshole, but informed his former mentor that he could no longer "take your shitty directions—I don't interpret characters like you do. I can't play them your way. You're too superficial. I've got to get to the depth of a character."

Langford, an aspirant actor, said that he too got caught up in the ongoing conflict between Marlon and Duke. "Marlon became uncommonly sadistic. I had thought that he had a gentle soul. I remember one morning he'd broken from a precision drill to rescue a caterpillar about to get stomped on by the

marching cadets. He removed the caterpillar to a grassy knoll before resuming the military march. But there was another side of him that came out on the opening night of a school play. In the play, he was supposed to beat up on me. Duke had provided a light piece of wood for the scene. But to fuck with him, Marlon on opening night substituted a hard oak broom. As I ran around the stage, he beat me black and blue. I was screaming, but the audience thought it was naturalistic acting. I had to be treated at the local hospital, and I was bruised for weeks. I never really forgave Marlon for that violent beating."

That opening night was the final straw for Duke. He could no longer tolerate Marlon in one of his acting classes and asked him to drop out. By that time, Duke had discovered another protégé, even handsomer than Marlon but not as talented an actor.

After Marlon's departure, Duke stayed on at the academy, but was eventually dismissed when another faculty member caught him having sex with a young male cadet.

Marlon's relationship with Duke wasn't all that was going bad that year. His grades began to plummet, and he was in danger of flunking out of school.

Instead of studying, Marlon began to dream up pranks, as the demerits on his school dossier rose dramatically. One morning he stole all the silverware in the dining room and hid it so the cadets couldn't have breakfast. On another occasion, he looted slabs of Limburger cheese from the school larder and placed the smelly stuff in air ducts, forcing the evacuation of a classroom. He frequently skipped classes, running away on one occasion with a fellow cadet to Chicago. In the big city, he patronized black jazz clubs, listening for hours to musicians from New Orleans. Late at night, he picked up hookers and bragged to fellow classmates that in a three-day weekend, he'd bedded "seven of Chicago's finest pieces of ass." He also claimed that two of the hookers let him go for free "just to get some fresh, young meat for a change."

One morning Marlon climbed the Shumway Hall Tower on campus, cutting the ropes and sending the chimes crashing to the pavement below, nearly killing a cadet. On another inglorious occasion, he emptied a chamberpot out of a dorm window onto the heads of three cadets in their stiffly starched uniforms. In yet another prank, he stole bottles of flammable hair tonic from the rooms of various cadets and started a fire in one of the dormitory buildings.

The administration at Shattuck could barely tolerate Marlon's pranks. But their tolerance for him was rapidly fading. As if wanting to get expelled, he managed to convince eight other cadets—all freshmen—to show up in the dining hall with dyed green hair. "It wasn't just spring green," Burford said. "It was fucking chartreuse."

Later that night, or so it is still rumored, Marlon invited his green-haired

brigade back to his private room where they were caught by a faculty member engaged in an all-male orgy.

All that became too much for the administration. Marlon was expelled, his failing grades cited as the reason along with his frequent violations of various "probations." The president at Shattuck wanted to suppress evidence of the male orgy, fearing it would adversely affect future enrollment. The scandal was hushed up.

Early beefcake, age 12

Sent packing, Marlon headed for the rail station, but not until he'd sodomized Steve for what he feared might be the final time. He had no idea if he'd ever see his lover again.

That's why Marlon was doubly delighted when Steve showed up in New York. His rather wealthy father had been sent by his company to set up a junior branch in Newark.

Marlon would have weeks to be with Steve as the boy's parents apparently trusted the older man with their son. The exact details are lacking. But faced with seeing Steve every day, Marlon soon tired of him sexually, although the intimacy of their friendship would have decades to run before playing out.

It is believed that Steve pressed Marlon to run away with him, heading West. Steve was the first to suggest the possibility of future movie stardom for Marlon. The pretty young boy was flatly rejected. Marlon, or so it is believed, told Steve some very bad news. "I can't be faithful to any one person." Steve learned that Marlon, in addition to his love affair with the boy, was also engaged in a number of other intimate relationships. In addition to that, Marlon told Steve that he was also preferred anonymous sex with both men and women in a series of one-night stands.

Years later, when Steve consented to be interviewed about Marlon's life, he still couldn't bring himself to talk about the "destruction of all my hopes and dreams" with Marlon. He was more at liberty to reveal other secrets about Marlon but said that he never got over "my first heartbreak." At one point, Steve claimed that he'd contemplated suicide. "I spent the rest of my life loving Marlon," Steve said. "Throughout his stage career, I attended every opening. I went to every premiere of every film. When there was no premiere, I attended the first public showing of one of his movies. I became his most devoted fan."

"My second heartbreak came in the late 80s, when for no apparent reason, Marlon refused to take my calls," Steve said. "To get back at him, I began to reveal some of his darkest secrets. I wasn't going to let him cut me off in the way he did without seeking some sort of revenge!"

Chapter Two

By early January in 1944, Marlon was writing letters to friends and acquaintances in the Middle West, claiming that he was on the streets of New York "raising seventeen different kinds of hell." He never specified exactly what those different stages of hell were.

He continued to specialize in one-night stands, picking up both young men and women from the street. A fellow classmate at the New School, Jennifer Seder, claimed that Marlon dated "pure white trash, dirty-looking girls with stringy hair. I remember one horrible, ugly, and very fat girl with buck teeth he was dating. At the New School we called her Fang. Dating, Hell! That was the wrong word. Fucking was more like it. He was probably too ashamed of Fang to take her to a restaurant, even one of those late-night dollar-a-plate spaghetti joints on Bleeker Street."

Marlon wrote Don Henning, his confidant and headmaster back at Shattuck, that he was "having three serious relationships with at least three different women a week. Other than getting my rocks off, I have a more serious purpose. Clean underwear."

Brando at eight.

He wore his clothes until they started to smell, then he'd discard them for new ones. He was always in need of fresh underwear. At the apartment of one of his girlfriends, he would borrow her clean panties after a night of sex, leaving his soiled ones.

When he was spotted in the changing room at the drama workshop in women's panties, speculation arose that he was a transvestite. Actually, he wasn't. Although he'd occasionally dress in drag throughout his life, he was not into wearing women's apparel for a sexual thrill. The women's panties he wore were merely a "convenience of laundry."

During these vagabond days, he drifted from

one poorly furnished apartment to another, these temporary digs often borrowed from friends.

Marlon and his new "sidekick," Darren Dublin, became a familiar sight on the streets of Greenwich Village, hauling Marlon's possessions into a new home virtually every month. At the time, in addition to his wardrobe of T-shirts and blue jeans, plus one dark suit, Marlon owned a recorder, a small, easily portable red piano, and a tom-tom—and that was it.

Darren, a Bronx-born Jewish boy, was enrolled in classes at the New School with some vague hope of becoming an actor. The day Marlon met him, they became fast friends and didn't separate for forty-eight hours, talking until dawn. They fell asleep on costumes they piled onto a heap in the prop room at the New School.

One student described Darren's style as "early Woody Allen," but with protruding front teeth. He was small and unattractive, with a bad case of acne. Darren, or so it was said, was usually content with Marlon's "sloppy seconds," which often consisted of a string of black, Spanish, or Chinese girls. Whenever a Nordic-style blonde made herself available, her presence was a rare special occasion, like serving Beluga caviar at a family supper.

Often he'd take his dates, most often Darren, to a joint called The Cockatoo Club, where he'd beat the drums to entertain them.

Early in their relationship, Darren saw the Jekyll and Hyde side of his new friend, whom he referred to as "the poet, the sensitive side battling a raw animal nature."

In spite of his intensive dating, Marlon still found time for Stella Adler. She continued to call him "my puppy." He had taken to calling her "Mother Earth."

Stella Adler
"Pie in the face"

Through Stella, he was introduced to the (mostly male) artistic elite of New York. She called these men her *mishpocheh* or family. Marlon was soon hanging out with musician Oscar Levant, actor Lee J. Cobb, writer Irwin Shaw, composer Aaron Copland, critic Irving Howe, and even Stella's famous brother, Luther Adler, when he didn't have a stage or screen role.

When not hanging out with Stella's friends, "chewing the cud," as he put it, Marlon continued to take acting lessons from both Piscator and Stella. He even appeared in some school-sponsored productions.

At the New School, Piscator cast his unruly

pupil in George Bernard Shaw's play, *Saint Joan*. He did this in spite of having chased Marlon out of the auditorium the previous day when he caught him doing a wicked impersonation of himself. A future student of Piscator's, comedian Mel Brooks, would also do a devastating impersonation of the stern teacher. Brooks used Piscator as a role model when he inserted the character of the crazed German playwright of *Springtime for Hitler* into his hit show, *The Producers*.

Opening night on October 29, 1943 had marked Marlon's first appearance on a New York stage.

The Shaw play was followed about a week later, on November 5, with Marlon's appearance as Bartley, the son of an old woman in John M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. Before Christmas, he'd appeared in two more Piscator productions, both of them based on works by Tolstoy. Ambitiously, the teacher had condensed *War and Peace* into a three-hour stage drama. Shortly thereafter, Piscator adapted Tolstoy's *The Power of Darkness,* and cast Marlon in that adaptation too.

A male friend of Marlon's, Philip Rhodes, who eventually functioned as his makeup artist for four decades, saw both productions. Rhodes was especially impressed with Marlon's performance as Prince Anatole in *War and Peace*.

"Marlon was brilliant on stage," Rhodes claimed, "his presence mesmerizing. Though the other students were struggling through the heavy Russian drama, Marlon made his acting seem effortless—of course, that seeming non-effort may have been the greatest effort of all."

He also appeared in an English-speaking version of *Doctor Sganarelle,* a play by Molière, in which one critic claimed "Marlon Brando is an actor worth watching."

Showing that he was versatile, Marlon played Sebastian in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and later a giraffe in *Bobino*, written by Stanley Kauffman, who eventually became better known as a theater critic. The playwright Kauffman proclaimed that Marlon's role "consisted of being hit on the head and falling down, but he managed a way of falling that, without being obtrusive, was individual."

When Marlon was in costume for *Twelfth Night*, a fellow actor approached him backstage. The male student offered to help Marlon with his body posture, suggesting that he "lower your shoulders and put your chest out." The actor patted Marlon's crotch—not once, but twice—suggesting that he "pull this in a little."

At first Marlon stood motionless, taken by surprise. When the actor asked if Marlon were into "women, children, or men," Marlon punched him out. The errant actor ended up in the hospital with a broken nose.

Elaine Stritch

Piscator admonished Marlon for this violence, stressing that breaking someone's nose was not how professional actors showing basket in green tights handled propositions from fellow actors in the theater.

The actress (and later, comedienne) Elaine Stritch found Marlon's double role in Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hannele's Way to Heaven* "absolutely breathtaking." In the play, Marlon played both a prophet and a feeble old schoolteacher.

Although Marlon was pursued, he also pursued, being especially taken with Elaine, who was quite beautiful at the tender age of seventeen. Fresh from a twelve-year stint in a convent, she was virginal and relatively innocent at the time, thanks partly to her enrollment on 91st Street in a Roman Catholic finishing school which was strictly supervised by nuns.

At the time, Elaine was pretending to a sophistication she didn't possess, wearing outfits, usually with elaborate hats, which were inspired by the personal style of Stella Adler. Like Bette Davis in the movies, Elaine smoked cigarettes and tried to give "dramatic emphasis" to whatever she said.

In later years, Elaine claimed she fell big for Marlon "almost on first sight." He was extraordinary looking—very sensitive, artistic, and as wonderful as a character in a romantic novel."

Elaine's appearance may have misled Marlon. At any rate, he invited this daughter of a Catholic businessman from Michigan out on a date. Rather bizarrely, and in the spirit of a rather campy joke, he took her on a tour of some of the city's churches and synagogues, including stopovers at Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches. They ended up at a branch of the New York City Public Library, where he read passages to her from some of his favorite works, including Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

Elaine had been expecting not this, but a night of sophisticated banter like those witty exchanges between Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant in RKO movies of the late 1930s.

Finally, he bought her a plate of spaghetti, where she drank too much wine and consequently, could hardly walk. This cheap dinner was followed by a

"dirty" burlesque show filled with bumps and grinds. This convent-schooled girl, who'd dressed like a Stella Adler clone for the evening, burst into tears at the nudity. Nonetheless, she accepted an invitation from Marlon to go back to his apartment to look at his cat.

Through the wind and flurries of a midwinter snowstorm, he guided her black-booted feet to a dingy apartment on West 12th Street. Giddy from drink, she rested on a battered sofa with the springs broken, as she tried to pet a female cat in obvious heat.

From the back of the apartment, Marlon emerged in red silk pajamas, the top unbuttoned to reveal his manly torso. Making hurried excuses, Elaine fled into the night, pounding on the convent door at three o'clock in the morning, long past the midnight curfew. Rising from her bed, the stern Reverend Mother opened the door, allowing Elaine inside and chastising her.

Marlon's reaction? He didn't speak to Elaine for an entire year, except on stage when he was forced to deliver lines to her, as he did in *The Petrified Forest*, the play that Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart had adapted so successfully on the screen.

One of the few black men enrolled in classes at the New School was Harry Belafonte. As he had with James Baldwin, "color blind" Marlon formed a friendship with this Jamaican folk singer and actor. Piscator told Stella Adler that he suspected their student was having an affair with Belafonte.

Apparently not. Belafonte was strictly heterosexual. He did go out on several occasions with Marlon, however, but only to see a Broadway play. Belafonte most often saw the first act, Marlon taking over the ticket at intermission.

Later at a café over a glass of wine or else over a cup of black coffee, costing one nickel, they would discuss individual plays in depth, each telling the other how they would have interpreted one of the roles.

"Belafonte was definitely not one of Marlon's fuck buddies," Darren Dublin later said. "I'm sure Marlon would have loved for that to be, but, alas, there were some men and women in those days who eluded him—not many, though."

* * *

Stella Adler had formed a strong friendship with Clifford Odets during their shared experiences at the left-leaning Group Theater during the 1930s. She frequently and loudly proclaimed that his 1935 play, *Awake and Sing!*, dramatizing the struggles of an impoverished Jewish family, was one of the more brilliant works to come out of the Depression-era American theater.

For a few brief months, she entertained the idea that Clifford should write

a play to introduce Marlon to Broadway audiences. When Clifford's 1937 play, *Golden Boy*, was made into a Hollywood film two years later, the role made a star out of William Holden, who was cast as the young boxer who wants to be a professional musician. She was convinced that Marlon in a play written by Clifford could become an even bigger star than Holden.

There was a problem: Arguably, Clifford was America's greatest living playwright at the time, and he didn't write dramas to order as a means of showcasing aspirant young actors. Aware of this, Stella developed another battle plan.

Knowing of Clifford's homosexual tendencies, and privy to the most intimate details of his long-running affair with Cary Grant, "she dangled Marlon in front of Clifford like a piece of meat," Bobby Lewis (who would later be a co-founder of the Actors' Studio) claimed. "As I was to find out from Clifford himself, he took the bait."

But not at first. Originally, when he'd seen Marlon in rehearsals at the New School, Clifford was not impressed. "That acting genius that Stella was ranting about was not apparent to the naked eye," Clifford told Bobby Lewis. "He looked to me like a kid who delivers your groceries. I tried to talk to him, and he was completely inarticulate. Yet I could tell he was bursting to talk. At the time of our first meeting, the words wouldn't come out. Later, when I got to know him, I couldn't shut him up."

Clifford was short and stocky, and he had a look of such intensity that his eyes seemed capable of melting ice. Under a wisp of unruly hair, he stared at you with probing eyes, as if he were about to ask you an earth-shaking question and that your answer would change life on this planet as we knew it.

Overheard by actor Lee J. Cobb, Clifford's first words to Marlon were, "Stella tells me you're a genius. Of course, everybody in America is supposed to be a genius. But rest assured that even if you're not a genius, there is something to be said for mediocrity in the arts."

Marlon turned his back on drama's greatest crusader for social justice.

Later, Marlon confided to Stella, "I saw fire in his eyes. But I had to turn my back on him or else I'd go up in the flames." During his first year in New York, Marlon often spoke in such melodramatic terms.

Clifford next encountered Marlon at a party at the Adler apartment about a year before the end of World War II. Marlon showed up in an ill-fitting suit obviously borrowed from a much smaller friend. "I tried to speak to him again,

Clifford Odets

but got absolutely no response," Clifford told Bobby, also a guest at the party. "Marlon just stood in a corner and didn't say a word. He seemed to be saying, 'I'll stand in a corner because the wall is solid. It protects me in the rear and on two sides. Therefore, I have to protect myself only from the front.'"

Marlon was in a much better form for his next meeting with Clifford, who had been the first to throw down the gauntlet. The breakthrough between Marlon and Clifford occurred at Child's Restaurant at Columbus Circle, a "summit" meeting attended by Stella herself, Bobby Lewis, Lee J. Cobb, and Stella's brother, Luther Adler.

As if he'd been rehearsed, Marlon tore into Clifford, claiming that although he had symbolized the essence of the American theater during the 1930s, Clifford no longer represented the Great White Hope of Broadway, but that instead he was in a meteoric decline, having sold out to Hollywood. "I understand that after showing early promise you are, in fact, being forced to have movie hack writers rescue your scripts."

To everyone present, it seemed doubtful that any lasting bond would ever take root between Marlon and Clifford. Bobby later confided to Cobb that he was surprised that Clifford didn't punch Marlon out.

To the surprise of everyone at the table, especially Stella, Clifford reacted by inviting Marlon for a nighttime walk in Central Park. No one knows exactly what happened during the course of that promenade, but apparently Marlon opened up to Clifford, and the two artists started to really communicate for the first time.

The next morning over Child's Restaurant's famously bitter coffee and buttermilk pancakes, Clifford told Bobby that it was the subject of Marlon's mother, Dodie, that unleashed the actor's floodgate of emotion. Clifford quoted Marlon directly, the exact wording as funneled through Bobby's memory. "When I was a boy, she was beautiful and tender, and I loved her above all others. But when I needed her and reached out for her, she wasn't there for me. My mother's an alcoholic. I thought I could solve her drinking problem through my love for her and hers for me. That didn't work. The more I loved, the more she drank. With her love of the bottle, there was no love left for me."

In this relatively unromantic setting, beneath the harsh lights and workaday setting of Child's Restaurant, Marlon's friendship with Clifford was launched, only to be deepened and strengthened within the shadows of Central Park after dark. It was a friendship that with a few ups and downs would last a lifetime.

A week later, Marlon confided in actor Joseph Schildkraut, one of Stella's best friends and a member of her extended *mishpocheh*. The thin, pale-faced movie villain listened in silent astonishment as Marlon confessed to him the depth of his relationship with Clifford. "Because I admired his mind, I gave

Clifford my body."

Clifford and Marlon were seen all over town together, going to dinner parties, the theater, art museums, actors' workshops, whatever. Clifford had the money to afford tickets to Broadway dramas. Marlon no longer had to share one ticket with an equally impoverished Harry Belafonte.

Harry Belafonte

History does not record the long, intense dialogues between what some critics called America's greatest living playwright and America's greatest actor. Within days, Marlon had penetrated Clifford's shell, only to discover a deeply conflicted and self-destructive artist.

"Clifford was not only struggling with his latent homosexuality, which wasn't so latent at this point, but he was fighting all sorts of inner demons," Bobby said. He once witnessed an hour-long discussion between Marlon and Clifford. "So intense was their dialogue that I don't think they were even aware of my presence at their table. They were talking about the relation between art and life, and it was fascinating to hear them. I already knew how brilliant Clifford was from having worked with him at The Group Theatre. But after that night in a café in Greenwich Village, I came to realize that Marlon, in spite of his age, had his own brilliant insights into the creative process. Of course, Marlon wasn't as articulate as Lee Strasberg, whom I adored and Marlon hated."

John Garfield

Clifford was a close friend of John Garfield's. It was a relationship that had begun in The Group Theatre and was solidified when Garfield had appeared in his play, *Golden Boy*. At the time of his first meeting with Clifford, Marlon, in lieu of anybody else, was using John Garfield as a role model for his own career as an actor. In a pattern that paralleled Stella's pressure of Clifford to write a play around Marlon, John wanted Clifford to write a play for him as a vehicle for a triumphant return to Broadway.

"For a man who liked other men, in spite of his marriages, Clifford must have been in hog heaven," Bobby said. "He was no beauty, but he had a lineup of

handsome men who included Marlon Brando, John Garfield, and even Cary Grant vying for his attention. He must have felt like a king. Not only that, but women pursued him. After all, he'd been married, disastrously, to two-time Oscar winner, Luise Rainer. His friendships were legendary, even Albert Einstein. Clifford had spent weeks with that genius at his cottage on Long Island Sound. Clifford was even a friend of Charlie Chaplin, and later, Marilyn Monroe."

While married to Luise Rainer, Clifford had had numerous affairs with such actresses as the mentally troubled Frances Farmer, whom he'd met when she was in The Group Theatre. "He even stole Fay Wray from the arms of both Howard Hughes and King Kong for a brief interlude," Bobby claimed.

In the wake of his divorce from Luise Rainer, Clifford had met and married actress Bette Grayson on May 14, 1943. "Bette was his rosebud with great juicy melons instead of breasts, or so Clifford claimed at the time," according to Bobby.

But despite his recent marriage to such a sexy woman, Clifford and Marlon launched a sexual relationship, claimed Bobby, who was seeing both men almost daily during this white heat period of their lives. "The change between them was subtle and highly nuanced, but it was there. I have an instinctual ability to look deep into a man's soul, and I could tell they were in love, even though they tried to conceal it. For one brief interlude, I felt that Clifford fell for Marlon in a big way, even more than he had for Cary Grant."

"Marlon cured Clifford of one grand misconception," Bobby claimed. "Clifford felt that having a sexual climax would cut off the flow of his creative juices. He wanted to retain those juices—semen in this case—because he felt that by retaining them, it would lead to his writing great plays with memorable characters. Apparently, Marlon persuaded him that the flow of creativity had to parallel the release of semen. Marlon's point was that semen soured in your balls unless frequently released and replenished with a fresh supply. Both Marlon and Clifford, at least from what I gathered, were letting the semen flow between them, keeping their creativity juicy as well. The spigot between them was turned on full blast."

Bobby Lewis
as Herbert Hoover

"And then one fine day, it was all over between them," Bobby said. "Clifford broke down and confessed everything to me about the affair. He'd fallen for Marlon, and he thought Marlon loved him back. But he'd failed to understand Marlon's mercurial personality.

Marlon could be there for you one day, giving you the greatest time of your life, and then he'd be gone the next day. It didn't mean he was mad at you or even that he found you unfulfilling. In those days, and perhaps for the rest of his life, he was always moving on to some new world to conquer. Perhaps he'd decided that Clifford was never going to write that Broadway play for him."

Marlon used to be incredibly jealous of John Garfield who would eventually be offered the role of Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. During Marlon's early career, some critics had compared Marlon unfavorably to the better-established movie star.

The year before meeting Marlon, Clifford, in Hollywood, had been working on a screenplay for Warner Brothers based on the life of George Gershwin. In the scenario, Clifford had tailored the role of Gershwin for John, as improbable as that casting was. The film was shelved but would later be revived, retitled *Humoresque,* and even more closely tailored by other screenwriters for John, who was cast in the role of a temperamental violinist starring opposite Joan Crawford. Even though this script had been written by Clifford before he even met Marlon, it aroused a jealous fury in the actor when he discovered it one day in Clifford's apartment.

Almost overnight Marlon was no longer hanging out in cafés with Clifford but was seen walking arm in arm down the streets of New York with other loves of either sex.

It was to Marlon's credit that he later called Clifford in Hollywood and renewed their friendship, but not their love affair. With the passage of time, the sexual passion between them had dissipated.

Years later, in the early 60s, as Clifford lay dying on a hot Dog Day afternoon in a Hollywood hospital bed, fighting against the cancer eating his bowels, he didn't want most well-wishers to be allowed in to see him. His abdomen was swollen, and a tube was inserted in his nose. Another tube delivered wastes from his body into a glass jar at the foot of his bed. He was trying to decide who his true friends were.

Cary Grant, he'd decided, was no longer his bosom buddy. When the actor sent him a beautiful get-well card, Clifford called his former friend a "phony." He also rejected a massive bouquet of white carnations from "Mr. Hollywood," informing his male nurse to have the flowers delivered to another hospital room. When Cary showed up to visit him in the hospital, Clifford ordered his male nurse to turn him away. "I don't want him to see me dying."

Only a few select and local friends would be admitted, including Kim Stanley, Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan, and, rather improbably, Danny Kaye, with whom Clifford had had a brief affair. Clifford also looked forward to a visit from Charlie Chaplin, "the only other actor I know with Marlon's genius."

For some odd reason, Clifford anticipated a visit from Frank Sinatra, until Elia Kazan reminded him that he was suing the singer for an alleged breach of contract.

At the top of Clifford's list of "the chosen few" was the name of Marlon Brando. "In this Lotusland of phonies, Marlon is all that's left of what is true, real, and sincere," Clifford told Kazan.

On his dying day on August 18, 1963, Clifford ordered the nurse to "send for Brando. Only he—not any doctor—can save me now."

Even near death, Clifford still dreamed about writing that long-overdue film script for Marlon. In the movie he envisioned, Marlon would be cast as Beethoven.

Rushing to the hospital, Marlon arrived just in time to hear the playwright's last words. Marlon remembered his lover from the darkest days of World War II as "leaking with the fluids of death from all parts of his dying body. He was a dripping, emaciated figure."

Marlon took Clifford's hand and held it up to his cheek before kissing the inner palm in a final farewell.

Clifford managed only a weak smile, looking intently into Marlon's eyes one final time before oblivion. In a very weak voice, he managed to say, "Life is about shitting in a towel."

* * *

Marlon's older sister, Jocelyn Brando, born November 18, 1919, had already preceded her brother to New York.

Weighing only three pounds at birth, "Tiddy," as she was nicknamed, was put in a cigar box instead of a crib and dressed in clothing intended for dolls.

Jocelyn Brando and "Stanley Kowalski" at rehearsal

By the time she'd reached the age of thirteen, Jocelyn often had to be a substitute mother for her beloved "Bud" (before he became Marlon) and his sister, Fran. As Jocelyn fried pork chops for the brood, Dodie was hanging out drunk in some sleazy Omaha bar, indiscriminately taking on lovers, often married men much younger than herself.

Like Dodie, Jocelyn decided early in life to become an actress. That ambition came to a head when the Brando family moved to Santa Ana, California, in 1936. Dodie found herself only fifty miles from

the sound stages where her former lover, Henry Fonda, had become a famous movie star. Dodie and "Hank," as she called him, had begun their affair when he appeared on the stage with her in productions for the Omaha Community Playhouse.

Now Hank was a big star, having scored a hit with the 1936 release of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, a drama about feuding Kentuckians and the first three-strip Technicolor production released by Paramount.

Dodie often drove both Bud and Jocelyn—but not Fran for some reason—to visit Hank on the Paramount set. It was not clear to the children at the time if their mother's affair with the handsome young actor was still ongoing.

Thrilled at getting to know such a famous movie star, Jocelyn "then and there" decided to become a big-time actress herself. Back at Santa Ana High School, she enrolled in the Department of Drama. A classmate recalled, "Almost from the beginning Jocelyn Brando was the star of all our plays. She was just better at it than the other kids and had perfect elocution." Later she enrolled in Santa Ana Junior College as a theater arts major.

Leaving Santa Ana, the Brandos in time moved to Illinois, returning to their roots in the Middle West.

In various interviews over the years, a portrait of early Marlon has appeared in Jocelyn's recollections. She remembered that her family had a big cow named Bessie. "She fell in love with Bud and would only allow his gentle hands on her teats."

While performing in plays for summer stock at the Lake Zurich Playhouse in the northern suburbs of Chicago, Jocelyn met and fell in love with a charming young actor, Don Hanmer. In time, she'd marry him.

"Jocelyn was prettier and sexier than Frances Farmer, to whom she had a remarkable resemblance," Don recalled. The young actress and the young actor became lovers that summer.

Sometimes Bud would show up at the playhouse, wandering backstage to check out the props and fondle the costumes. Perhaps he was already dreaming of becoming an actor himself.

When Dodie herself showed up at the playhouse, she quickly learned about her daughter's affair with Don. "It's your life," she told Jocelyn. "You have a responsibility to live it to the fullest."

Marlon Sr., despite his estrangement from other members of his family, also learned about Jocelyn's pre-marital liaison. As Jocelyn's relationship with Don deepened, he traveled to Libertyville, Illinois, to confront Marlon Sr. and to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. Her father was skeptical, telling Don, "Fuck her all you want. But I don't want my daughter marrying a fucking actor without a fucking pot to piss in!"

Don didn't take Marlon Sr.'s advice. When Jocelyn was graduated from

Lake Forest College, about 30 miles from downtown Chicago, she and Don, although penniless, journeyed to New York on a Greyhound bus to search for work in the theater. Months later she made her Broadway debut in the 1942 production of *First Crocus*, a play which closed after only twenty-one performances.

Marriage to Don would follow, although Bud showed up and tried to prevent the wedding by telling Don—erroneously—that Jocelyn had the clap.

When she got a job as an understudy in a touring theatrical production, Don returned to Illinois and lived with the Brando family at Libertyville, a bustling little town some forty miles northwest of Chicago. Jocelyn was understudying in the play, *Claudia*, for Dorothy McGuire, who along with Hank Fonda, had become one of the most famous actors to come out of Nebraska. Delicate, pretty, and a heartfelt performer, Dorothy had appeared at the Omaha Community Playhouse opposite Hank in the play, *A Kiss for Cinderella*.

Claudia was a 1941 stage hit. By 1943 it would also become a successful movie starring Dorothy opposite Robert Young.

Delicate, Dorothy might have been, but relentlessly, she showed up every night to play the childlike newlywed coping with her mother's illness. Jocelyn, as understudy, was never allowed to go on in her place.

Back in Libertyville, Marlon often ridiculed his new brother-in-law, Don Hanmer, doing cruel impersonations of him.

With Don, Jocelyn returned to New York after her tour, paving the way for Marlon's eventual descent upon that city. She enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and "appeared in a play or two."

When Marlon finally arrived in New York, he went to live with Fran, but saw a great deal of Jocelyn as well. She soon discovered that her baby brother "was screwing any and everything. He was just a boy who couldn't say no."

Dorothy McGuire

Although Marlon flaunted his affairs with women in front of Jocelyn, it appeared that he kept his liaisons with men a secret. At that point, Don was overseas serving in the Army in the middle of World War II. Jocelyn gave birth to a baby, David, and Marlon found himself an uncle for the first time.

When Dodie arrived in New York in 1944 to escape her husband and to reunite with her estranged family, she was often accompanied by Jocelyn when attending

AA meetings at a little church on 23rd Street.

If there were any professional sibling rivalry between Jocelyn and her more famous younger brother, she never showed it. Of course, Jocelyn's career would never come anywhere near to equaling that of Marlon's. She followed the usual pattern of a Grade B actress of the time, although she did appear on the Broadway stage again in 1948 in the cast of *Mister Roberts*, the only woman in the play. Her character of Navy nurse Lieutenant Ann Girard was known for "the strawberry birthmark on her ass."

Despite her promising start, a big movie career for her never materialized. She did, however, land an important role in Fritz Lang's *The Big Heat*, released in 1953. Glenn Ford, the star of the film, remembered that "she looked like Marlon Brando in drag."

Her film career was hampered because she was blacklisted by the House on Un-American Activities. Years before, she'd innocently lent her support to a Communist front group.

Marlon brought her back to the screen in 1962 to appear with him in *The Ugly American*, but the movie was a box office bust and did nothing for either of their careers.

Marlon brought Jocelyn back to the screen once again to appear with him in another unsuccessful film, *The Chase*, in 1966, which also starred Jane Fonda and Robert Redford.

By then, it was too little too late. In 1981, when Jocelyn appeared in a minor role in that libelous portrait of Joan Crawford, *Mommie Dearest*, as Barbara Bennet, her screen career was flickering to dim. She lacked the superstar charisma of her brother.

She was more successful in television dramas, appearing in the 1960s in *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and also on *Dr. Kildare* in the 60s. She would also appear on TV in a recurring role on *Dallas* in the 70s.

In spite of an alcoholic mother and a philandering father, Jocelyn always retained fond memories of her baby brother, calling him "a blond, fat-bellied little boy—quite serious and very determined. As a boy, he was always miming movie death scenes and doing so very realistically. He would die but rise from death to be born again, only to die again. The story of Bud's life, I guess."

* * *

Throughout their lives, Wally Cox and Marlon Brando were referred to as the odd couple. Whatever labels were associated with their friendship, the two men became "best friends for life."

The same age as Marlon, Wally Cox was also destined for fame in show

Wide-eyed Marlon and his mother, Dodie

business. One friend was well muscled and masculine, the other frail, jug-eared, chicken necked, and a bit effeminate, speaking in a reedy voice. Today Wally is still remembered for his voice characterization for the animated superhero, "Underdog." His famous quote was, "No need to fear. Underdog is here!" But it was the hit TV series, *Mr. Peepers* in 1952, that made Wally Cox a household word throughout America.

Wally wasn't at all like the character he presented on television. In 1976, three years after Wally's death, Marlon told a reporter: "Wally didn't even remotely resemble that Mr. Peepers character. Instead, he had the mentality of an ax murderer. I can't tell you how much I miss and love that man."

Marlon was nearly ten years old when they met. Because of his father's work, the Brando family had moved to Evanston, outside Chicago, where the children were enrolled at Lincoln, one of the best public schools in America.

With his horn-rimmed glasses and with his frail body, Wally was the type of little guy bigger boys "liked to beat the shit out of," in the words of classmate Ernest Hopkins.

Although born in Detroit, Wally's parents had also moved to Evanston. "God knows where Wally's father was," Dodie recalled after meeting the boy's stepfather, Ben Pratt, a radio writer, and his mother, Eleanor Cox, who had penned several mystery tales, even a boring novel, *Seedtime and Harvest*, about Swedish farm workers.

Dodie later remembered that Wally's mother, an alcoholic like Dodie herself, fell in love with a "tough, butch woman and disappeared into nowhere" for a long time, although when she grew ill she later came back for a reunion with her abandoned son. Dodie and Eleanor may have met at an AA meeting in Evanston.

Marlon's first encounter with Wally was on the school play yard at Lincoln. On the ground, Wally was using his thin arms to shield his face from the kicks and blows raining down on him. He was being beaten up by three of the school tough guys who were calling him "sissy" and "fairy."

To his rescue, Marlon rushed the thugs and slammed punches into their noses and guts. Faced with a tornado of violence themselves, the tough boys didn't seem so tough any more and fled from the massacre.

Picking Wally up off the dusty ground, Marlon brushed the young boy off and introduced himself. According to Wally later in life, his rescuer's first words to him were, "Hi. I'm Marlon Brando. I've just become your new best friend."

From that very day, the two boys became inseparable, recalled classmate Eric Panken. "They went for long hikes in the woods. Wally was a budding botanist, if I recall. He pointed out the wonders of nature to Marlon and taught him the names of wildflowers. They argued, they fought, they broke up, and then they came back together again and all was forgiven. One time when Marlon got mad at Wally, he took a rope and tied him to a tree in the forest where Wally remained all night, waiting patiently for Marlon to come in the morning and untie him. Apparently, this did not seriously piss off Wally, because later that afternoon the two boys were seen walking arm in arm. Sometimes Marlon would protectively put his arm around Wally on the school grounds as if to signal to the bullies that he'd beat the shit out of them if they so much as laid a hand on Wally. They were very physical with each other, but I don't know how far that went. Are ten-year-old boys capable of having sex with each other? I know that one time when they went on a camping trip, they slept cuddled up naked with each other in their own tent. We could hear them laughing and giggling late into the night."

Eric recalled that once he was with some of the boys from the Lincoln School, and they were talking about girls, "a subject we knew nothing about. Marlon was with us but saying nothing. He had a pained expression on his face. 'What do I need a girl for?' he asked us before walking away. We didn't know a lot about homosexuality in those days, so none of the boys drew any ugly conclusions. It was okay for boys to bond real close back then. Many young men in the U.S. Army, or so I learned later, were doing the same thing. It was the thing to do. It was just assumed that as you grew older, you'd give up your boyfriends and bond with a girl."

Eric claimed that after Wally moved away from Evanston, Marlon did just that. "Suddenly, he was talking about girls all the time. He was always telling us about his sexual conquests, especially when he reached the age of fourteen and puberty. He said that he'd lost his virginity to the family maid back in Omaha. His libido seemed to be out of control."

Later, when he'd reunited with Wally again, he told him and other friends that he also "fucked the family's black maid" when the Brandos moved to Libertyville. Marlon would contradict himself, telling other friends that his first sexual experience with a black woman would be in New York.

He bragged to another classmate, George Robin, "I can have any gal I want. All I have to do is ask. Sometimes I don't even have to ask. The bitches come to me to get fucked."

One of his early girlfriends, who did not want her name used, would always remember her first date with Marlon, which led to her seduction. "I was a virgin and didn't know what was happening. He seduced me. There was no foreplay. Not even a kiss. He pulled up my skirt, pulled down my panties, and plowed me like a bull. I bled. It was very painful. I begged him to stop. He didn't until he'd finished with me. He really hurt me. Of course, I never went out with him again."

Wally Cox

Richard Loving, the artist who married Marlon's sister, Fran, once recalled that "Young Marlon was the most highly sexed individual I'd ever met. Primal, really, or maybe primitive is a better word."

At some point, Eleanor Cox broke up with her butch girlfriend and came back for Wally, taking him to New York in 1942. She enrolled her son at City College where he studied botany. He still corresponded with his friend Marlon, who at the time was enrolled at the Shattuck Military Academy.

In New York, Eleanor was stricken with partial paralysis and could no longer be the breadwinner for her son. Both men and women lovers seemed to have faded from her life, and she was totally dependent on Wally.

Her son immediately got a job working for an old-fashioned Polish cobbler in Brooklyn.

The reunion of Marlon and Wally in New York became part of the enduring legends of both men. Fran and Marlon were on Seventh Avenue, having gone shopping at a New York grocery store. Still a prankster, Marlon was trying to coerce Fran to get into a pushcart so he could race her up the avenue through traffic. The more mature Fran asked him, "Why don't you grow up? You're not in military school any more."

Wally Cox

As if by magic, Wally accidentally came upon them. Although both men had changed enormously since their school days, Marlon recognized "the little shrimp right away."

"He was so casual about running into Wally again after all these years," Fran recalled. "He didn't make a fuss about it at all."

"Hi, Wally," was all Marlon said. Instead of inquiring about how Wally had been after all these years, Marlon complained that Fran wouldn't get into the pushcart. He accused her of trying

to spoil his fun.

Wally, still looking "half-baked," in Fran's words, immediately climbed into the grocery cart without a protest. Thrilled at this, Marlon pushed the cart into traffic and rolled Wally up Seventh Avenue "for the ride of a lifetime," both young men narrowly escaping the jaws of death from the wartime traffic in the streets of New York.

Fran remembered that her brother was gone for three days and nights. Later Marlon claimed that he and Wally had a "lot of catching up to do. On matters like life and death, sex, our hopes and dreams, funny things that had happened to us while we were apart. And, yes, tragic ones. Those too."

By the time Marlon returned to Fran's apartment, he'd become "bonded at the hip for life" with his long-lost boyhood friend.

After that pushcart incident, Fran would later tell a reporter for *Coronet* magazine: "Wally and Marlon have been in complete rapport ever since."

Wally had another close friend at the time, a writer, Everett Greenbaum, who would create the shy, mild-mannered school teacher, Robinson Peepers, for Wally's hit TV series, a role, incidentally, that Wally detested.

"Wally and I were close back in those days," Everett later recalled. "But when Brando came back into his life, I played second fiddle. It was obvious that Wally's heart belonged elsewhere, although our friendship continued on a more subdued basis. He always called his friend, 'Marlon Brando, the actor,' and Brando always called Wally 'Walrus.'"

Soon Marlon was insisting that Wally wear his own characteristic jeans and T-shirt, and Wally complied with this dress code. "Marlon had the muscles to fill out both his T-shirt and jeans," Everett said. "Wally did not. He always looked like the skinny kid in the Charles Atlas ad, the one who gets sand kicked in his face."

"I never really knew what Wally and Brando talked about," Everett said. "Sometimes they'd sit for hours talking. It was hard to shut Wally up. Brando must have been a good listener. Both young men had a passionate interest in almost everything and would even read every page of *Scientific American*. I don't think they could afford to buy a copy of that magazine so they must have stolen it from some newsstand."

Marlon urged Wally to enroll in the New School, which he did, studying acting under Stella Adler. "To say that Wally Cox was not what he appeared to be would be the understatement of the ages," Stella later said. "Behind that mild-mannered, even meek façade, was a sarcastic little bastard with a rapier-like wit. He was the only person in the world who could cut Marlon down to size. And he did. Frequently. And Marlon shut his mouth and took it from this tough little mutton chop."

"Wally was always getting arrested back in those days," a friend, David

Geller, recalled. "Not that he did anything illegal. But any time one of New York's finest took a good look at poor Wally, they imagined him a rapist or at least one of those guys on a most wanted poster in the post office. Perhaps an escapee from a mental ward. Wally was routinely hauled in for questioning. Marlon would always show up later to help his pal get released. Marlon used to tell Wally that if he ever became famous and wrote memoirs, they should be entitled *Tell It to the Judge*."

Marlon helped Wally care for his invalid mother, Eleanor. Sometimes Marlon would buy a cup of hot soup from the deli and come to Wally's apartment where he would spoon-feed it to Eleanor. When she died, Marlon and Wally had a picnic on her grave but not as a sign of disrespect. "We loved her," Marlon later said, "and just wanted to be with her."

In the middle of World War II, Wally was drafted into the U.S. Army. Frail though he might have been, he passed the physical and began a rigorous military training program. After only two weeks at a South Carolina camp, he collapsed from heatstroke and hovered between life and death for three days. Apparently, the Army decided he wasn't soldier material and sent him packing back to New York with an honorable 4F discharge.

Reunited with Marlon once again, Wally managed to eke out a poverty-level existence by becoming a puppeteer—his first show-biz gig. He also enrolled in New York University's School of Industrial Design.

At a party in Greenwich Village, Wally met "a fellow stringbean," Richard Loving, and the two frail young men decided to launch a jewelry business together. A skilled craftsman, Wally taught Dick how to fashion jewelry out of sterling silver. Soon the two young men could be seen hawking their jewelry on the streets of the Village.

Portrait of an artist as a young man

Wally introduced Dick to Fran, and it was love at first sight. They began "intense dating," which eventually led to marriage.

Fran and Dick took an apartment together—called "a railroad flat" back in those wartime days. Wally, in an even more dilapidated apartment, lived across from Fran and Dick.

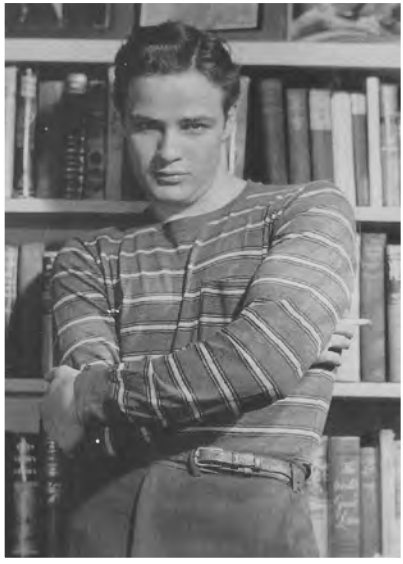
Bobby Lewis recalled seeing a lot of Marlon and Wally in those days. "Those two attended parties together, and everybody just assumed they were a couple. Marlon told everybody he met that Wally was 'a genius at comedy.' At private parties,

Wally performed milquetoastish, ad-libbed, and hilarious monologues. Once those guys borrowed *Lederhosen* from the prop room of the New School and showed up at a Village party dressed like Hitler Youth with Nazi armbands. Believe me, wearing Nazi armbands on the streets of New York in the mid-Forties wasn't a smart thing to do. In spite of that, they were the hit of the party, performing a whistling act followed by a Swiss yodel that had all of us in stitches."

As his friendship with Wally and Marlon grew, Bobby showed up frequently at Wally's cold-water flat in Hell's Kitchen along Tenth Avenue. "It was a hell hole. I felt that a big rat would devour me at any minute. Wally had furnished the place with junk picked up from the street. There was a nasty little bedroom to the side, a kitchen where no dish was ever washed, and a living room with a battered sofa with the springs broken, and the most disgusting urine-stained mattress I'd ever seen in my life with nothing to cover it."

"I have to sleep on this mattress when Marlon takes over the bedroom to bang some fresh pussy," Wally told Bobby.

"It was obvious to me that Wally had fallen, and fallen big, for Marlon," Bobby claimed. "I may be completely wrong, but I think back then that Wally stood on the border between being gay or straight. Marlon could have tipped the preference either way. I felt that Wally was ready to commit to Marlon, and I'm sure they were making love. Wally was obviously playing the role of the dutiful wife. But Marlon could never commit to anyone, much less a man. He loved his women too much. I could see the love in Wally's eyes as Marlon, with his well-muscled body, paraded around in the nude in front of Wally and me. Poor Wally looked at Marlon with such desire that it was almost pathetic. As if to humiliate his friend, Marlon often brought his girlfriends over to Wally's apartment to screw them. He'd take over the bedroom and make Wally sleep on that filthy mattress in the living room. Wally had to listen to the sounds of Marlon's love-making all night. It was sadistic, really."



The intensely shy, private Marlon

In spite of his relationship with Wally, and in spite of the random pick-ups, Marlon was still dating Celia Webb. In addition, he'd occasionally show up at parties with a young woman he introduced as Faith Dane. He frequently took Ellen Adler, Stella's daughter, to the the-

ater.

One friend at the time, who didn't want to be named, said he was a closeted homosexual during the days he knew Wally and Marlon as two struggling actors. "Wally had girlfriends on the side—not as many as Marlon, of course. But I don't think he had sex with any other man but Marlon. Marlon, on the other hand, would show up at Wally's apartment with both men and women. The gals came in all sizes—some ugly, some pretty. But some of the guys he picked up in Central Park looked like creeps. Druggies, whatever. Nearly all of them needed a bath and a haircut. Maybe a de-licing."

"The way I saw it, Marlon fucked Wally when he didn't have anyone else to fuck," Bobby Lewis claimed. "That's it: plain and simple. Wally was so anxious to have a piece of Marlon that he put up with any humiliation. Remarkably, and after a passage of many, many months, Marlon gradually fell in love with Wally, but not to the exclusion of his others. Never that! Wally came to understand that Marlon would never be his, and his alone. That was the best thing for Wally because he got on with his own life after a few, brutal, painful months of being a lovesick fool. Instead of going away, he reacted to Marlon's new set of rules by becoming a bit of a womanizer himself. Other than Marlon, there is no evidence he ever indulged in any other homosexual relationships—in fact, he married two women, Patricia Tiernan and Marilyn Gennaro. But if Marlon called, Wally dropped whatever he was doing and came running like a faithful puppy dog to his master. I think that Wally continued to love Marlon until he drew his last breath on that windy day in February, 1973, in Los Angeles."

"Without really explaining himself, Marlon once told me, 'I get something from Wally I don't get from anybody else,'" Bobby said. "'It's very real, very important to me.' From what I gathered, although Marlon and I grew apart, I think that Wally Cox remained the only enduring love of Marlon's life. Other friendships, other loves, would come and go. But his bond with Wally lasted beyond the grave."

* * *

Marlon Brando might never have become a screen legend were it not for a tall, willowy, ash-blonde beauty whose eyes changed colors to match light reflections. Born of proud American prairie stock in Grand Island, Nebraska, in 1897, Dorothy Pennebaker Myers, nicknamed "Dodie," was the daughter of a bookkeeper by day, and an adventurous gold prospector on the weekends, who hoped to get rich quick in the Colorado Rockies.

In her own drunken words, she was "the best God damn actress ever to come out of Nebraska, and to hell with that other Dorothy." Her reference was

to filmdom's Dorothy McGuire, a fellow actress at the semi-professional Omaha Community Playhouse. McGuire was twenty-one years younger than Dodie. Beginning with a squabble over the affections of Henry Fonda, also Nebraska born, the two Dorothys became life-long rivals.

Henry Fonda

"I brought realism and drama to the stage," Dodie once said. "That bitch, McGuire, had one emotional beat—that of home-fired warmth and mother love. If there's one thing I find disgusting, it's motherly love on the screen. It's worse enough in real life." Dodie didn't always believe her statements. She liked to utter strong opinions to shock what she called "tea-drinking Republican women who take their brew in delicate china cups painted with Pompadour pink roses. Instead of tea, give me a little Prohibition home-brew any day."

Her father died when Dodie was only two, and she experienced a chaotic childhood before entering into an even more chaotic marriage to Marlon Brando Sr., who had been born into Alsatian stock with an original name of "Brandeau." When he grew up, he made his living by selling chemical feeds and insecticides.

From the beginning of her marriage and even after the birth of her three children, Dodie had a total disdain for child-rearing and housekeeping. She did not believe in heavy discipline for her kids but preferred that they "discover their own true natures."

For young Marlon, that often "meant running wild through the town, raising hell, and causing trouble," in the words of former Omaha neighbor, Mrs. Casey Culler. "The kid was a total menace. The father was always on the road with one of his whores, the mother out drunk in some cheap motor court with someone's husband. That little brat, Brando—they called him Bud—once dropped my cocker spaniel into my well. I was glad when Omaha saw the last of that brood. I never went to see one of his films when he became a big movie star, and I'm sure I didn't miss out on anything."

When Marlon Sr. did return home from his womanizing and selling "all that poison to people," as young Bud put it, he went to sleep listening to his parents argue and shout at each other, hurling denunciations. Both of his parents accurately accused the other of committing adultery.

Their tempers were fueled by their "Prohibition brew." Once to shame his parents about their excessive beer-drinking, Marlon rounded up all the empty bottles, placing them prominently in front of their Omaha home to shock the

Prohibition-supporting, church-going neighbors who listened to long Sunday sermons on the evil of drink.

In spite of that act of rebellion in trying to humiliate his mother, Marlon was very supportive of her throughout her alcoholic binges. In 1932, she'd broken her leg while driving drunk to a secret rendezvous with a married Army officer, with whom she'd been having a months-long affair. When she was brought home from the hospital, he took her meals to her and even helped her with her bath. He told his sister, "Dad drives her to drink."

When Dodie sobered up, and she would for long periods of time, she was usually involved in a production at the Omaha Community Playhouse, where she was both a producer and, very often, the lead actress.

Eyewitnesses and newspaper reviewers of that era acclaimed her ability as an actress. "She was one of our best," said theater critic Nathan Palley. "It's too bad she had to leave Omaha and go to Illinois. It broke her heart to give up the theater. She could have been a big star. She was starting to attract a lot of attention when her husband took his family to Illinois because of his work."

In 1925, only a year after Marlon was born, Dodie starred in the play, *The Enchanted Cottage*, by Arthur Wing Pinero. Ironically, it was this same play that Dodie's nemesis, Dorothy McGuire, would turn into a highly successful movie in 1945.

When he became one of the big stars of Hollywood's Golden Age, Henry Fonda always thanked Dodie for launching him into acting. He remembered lying around his home one summer in Omaha, having dropped out of the University of Minnesota where he'd gone to study journalism. A call came in from the Omaha Community Playhouse. It was from Dodie, who was a friend of Hank's mother, Herberta. The juvenile lead had dropped out of a production, *You and I*, written by Philip Barry, who achieved far greater fame by writing *The Philadelphia Story* for Katharine Hepburn.

Although the play didn't run long, Hank fell in love with the theater and stayed around that summer to help paint the sets and sweep the floors. At some point during that summer, one of the longest and hottest in the state of Nebraska, Dodie fell in love with the handsome, lean young actor in spite of his shyness, or maybe because of it.

He was eight years her junior. Actually, Dodie seduced Hank. The young actor had lost his virginity earlier that summer in a seedy whorehouse in Omaha. He later said, "the experience was so horrible—just a wham-bam—that I was repulsed and very turned off women." Dodie may also have sensed that young Hank had homosexual tendencies, which would reach fruition when he met and fell in love with another aspirant, struggling young actor, the equally handsome James Stewart.

From all reports, Dodie was very patient with Hank, and somehow man-

Marlon Sr. & Jr.

aged to find satisfaction with him sexually in spite of his lifetime reputation as a premature ejaculator.

Long after leaving Dodie's bed, Hank would become known as a milquetoast husband, especially during his marriage to the nymphomaniacal Margaret Sullavan. Playwright Edward Albee originally wrote *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* for Hank to star in.

Hank's hanging around backstage at the Playhouse eventually paid off. He was cast opposite Dodie in 1927 in Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*, opening to good reviews for both of the lovers. It was at this point that Dodie was trying to persuade Hank to marry her. She promised to divorce Marlon Sr. and wed him right away. He turned her down, although surprisingly, they maintained their sexual liaison for years to come.

Dodie faced plenty of competition from other women. When he was cast in *A Kiss for Cinderella*, opposite that "steel magnolia," Virginia-born Margaret Sullavan, he fell in love with her and would eventually marry her. Dodie felt she could hardly compete against such a formidable challenger.

What infuriated her was when Hank repeated the same role in Omaha a few years later. He chose as his Cinderella a beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Dorothy McGuire, as his co-star. When reports reached Dodie that the much older Hank was having an affair with this teenager, Dodie was enraged. She threatened never to speak to Hank again, claiming "I detest child molesters."

Hank could be very persuasive when he wanted to, and eventually he got Dodie to forgive him. However, she never forgave "that little Lolita tramp, Miss McGuire."

Once when Dodie encountered Hank in Hollywood, following his disastrous marriage to Margaret Sullavan, he reportedly told his Omaha love, "I need a loving woman like you to restore my male confidence. Maggie told me I was a 'fast starter and a lousy finisher'—and she also made me feel like I had two cents in my pants along with two inches."

Dodie, inviting Hank back to her room, assured him that she would restore his manhood. In that, she must have succeeded. He went on to marry three socialites, including Frances Seymour Brokaw (mother of Jane Fonda), Susan Blanchard, Afdera Franchetti, and, finally, an airline stewardess, as they were called back then.

In 1944, after discovering "too many lipstick collars" on her husband's white shirts, Dodie had had enough. Forgetting that she too frequently engaged in adultery, she informed Marlon Sr. that she could no longer tolerate his philandering. She packed her bags and headed for New York to join her three artistic children.

Margaret Sullavan

Left with his chemical feeds and insecticides, Marlon Sr. remained in Chicago, but agreed to pay the rent. His final message to Dodie was "to give up drinking once you hit the streets of New York."

Arriving in New York in April, Dodie had a reunion with each of her offspring, including Marlon. She was astonished at how his body had developed and was impressed with Stella Adler's report of his acting talent. Dodie rented a ten-room apartment on West End Avenue in the Seventies, and invited all of her children to move in with her, since she had found them living "in God awful apartments under unsanitary conditions."

Bobby Lewis was one of the first visitors to the new apartment, which quickly became an "open house" to many struggling actors of that day. "It didn't have much furniture," Bobby said. "A piece here, a piece there. . .very minimal. It was furnished with items from the junkyard."

He learned from Marlon that Dodie had resumed her heavy drinking. "Even drunk, she put on a good show for the young actors who flocked around her. Sometimes she gave dramatic readings, and she was very good. She always said she was better than the great Katharine Cornell, with whom her son was about to get involved, and I believed her."

"People dropped in at all times of the day and night to the Brandos," Bobby said. "Often they slept on her living room floor. And yes, fornicated there as well. I met all sorts of people, including a woman who I think later became the wife of J.D. Salinger. Back in those days they called us bohemians, and the word stuck around for a long time until Gore Vidal told us it was no longer fashionable to use it."

"Sometimes I'd join Marlon in a search of the neighborhood bars for a drunken Dodie," Bobby said. "At other times Wally Cox would go on the hunt. Wally told me that one time they found her drunk on the street and had to carry her home and up the steps like a slab of beef."

He also claimed that a story was making the rounds at the time, and he didn't know if it were true or not. But it was believed that a drunken Dodie was picked up one night by two sailors and taken to a flophouse in the West

Sixties. It was rumored that she was repeatedly gang-banged by an untold number of sailors until Marlon somehow found out about her whereabouts and went to rescue her. Marlon himself told Bobby that one morning he discovered his mother in bed with a discharged Army man who'd lost one leg and one arm on the battlefields of Europe.

"Through all the crap she put him through," a close friend, Ann Hastings said, "Marlon continued to worship his mother. He forgave her for everything she did, all the bad stuff. She worshipped him as well. She frequently called him 'that acting genius that popped out of my womb.' She claimed that he'd one day set the theater world on fire with his acting talent. She also boasted that if her husband hadn't sabotaged her own career, that she too would have been a big star."

Ann also reported that one afternoon when she dropped in on the Brandos, she'd brought a large macaroni and tuna casserole since the family always seemed short of food. "Once inside the apartment, I saw the strangest sight. Marlon was sitting in the sparsely furnished living room. He had on one of Dodie's street dresses and a pair of those Joan Crawford fuck-me shoes, as ankle-strap high heels were called in those days. He was fully made up, lipstick and all. He didn't seem at all embarrassed for me to see him dressed like that. He asked me to put the casserole on the kitchen table and thanked me. He told me that Dodie didn't feel well and was resting. I just knew she was trying to sober up from a drunk. After leaving the kitchen, I hurried out of the apartment. It was all too weird for me."

Two weeks later, Ann had a falling out with Dodie, claiming that, while drunk, Dodie had made a pass at her husband. The two former friends never spoke to or saw each other again.

The slicked back look

Perhaps Ann was merely trying to get even, or else telling the truth, but after their initial estrangement, she went on to claim that Dodie was indulging in sexual intercourse with her own son. The charge could be dismissed as completely untrue were it not for some supporting testimony from Bobby Lewis.

Bobby claimed that he knew for a fact that Dodie often slept in the same bed with Marlon. "This was a very suggestive thing to do—after all, Marlon was a grown man. I have no evidence that his relationship with his mother was sexual. At the very least, I'd call it extremely intimate. One night while I was alone with Marlon and Dodie in their living room, listening to classical music, they seemed to have forgotten that I was there. Although she was wear-

ing a housecoat, open at the neck, he snuggled into her breasts as part of a nursing ritual learned long ago. In spite of her heavy drinking, Dodie always kept that special bond with her son. It was very Oedipal. A little too Oedipal for my tastes. At some point, I stopped visiting their apartment, preferring to see Marlon and Wally on the outside. In the theater, I was always uncomfortable with the theme of incest. I guess I should have put my own personal feelings aside and been more of a tough-assed artist."

* * *

Piscator was just too autocratic and Marlon too rebellious for their teacher/pupil relationship to last. Nonetheless, his teacher invited Marlon to join a summer stock troupe at a theater he operated with his wife, Maria Ley, at Sayville on Long Island across from the promiscuous gay enclave of Cherry Grove on Fire Island. It was a beautiful white colonial style theater that opened onto a country lane bordered with wildflowers. The setting was on a white sandy beach fronting an azure bay, a cliché of Long Island charm, the kind of place where Katharine Hepburn might build a house.

The actors were told to take whatever bed they could find and make it their own little nest. For his roommate, Marlon made an odd choice in Carlo Fiore, who would soon become his best friend. A Sicilian, he spoke Brooklynese and dressed in a zoot suit and wore blue suede shoes long before they were popularized by Elvis. He wore his jet-black hair in a greasy pompadour forming a ducktail at the neck line. Instead of Sayville, Carlo would have been more at home cast as an extra in that 1955 movie, *Guys and Dolls*, that lay in Marlon's future. On being introduced to him, Elaine Stritch mistook him for a gangster.

"I'm just a nomad," Marlon told Carlo. "I lived in three states and five different houses before I was six years old. If I go into the theater at all, it will be for one reason. I love to put on makeup and wear wigs."

"Are you a faggot?" Carlo asked.

"On nights the full moon rises," he said enigmatically before walking away.

Piscator warned his horny young actors, especially Marlon and Carlo, that all the female members of the troupe were virgins and he wanted to keep their chastity intact—"no unwanted pregnancies," he cautioned. If a male member of the cast were caught having sex with one of the young

Brando and Carlo Fiore

actresses, the offender would immediately be sent packing back to New York. What was unknown to Marlon and Carlo at the time was that Piscator himself planned to deflower each of the virgins himself, one by one, before the first autumn wind blew.

"Yes, *der Meister*," Marlon said provocatively to Piscator. "*Der Shtudents* will obey. 'Ja. 'Ja. 'Ja!"

Piscator did not condemn homosexual contacts among the young actors, and even slyly suggested that in lieu of not having women, the male members of the troupe might turn to each other for sexual relief—"the way it's done in prison," he said. Maria once asked her husband if he were condoning homosexuality. "Not at all!" he replied. "But it's a harmless pursuit and keeps the boys in line. The main thing is that it doesn't lead to unwanted pregnancy. In my young days in Germany, I often indulged in male/male sex. It can be very satisfying, different from a woman."

Marlon invited Carlo to be his bunkmate in a weather-beaten, unpainted old New England barn loft reached by a rickety ladder that led to a trap door upstairs. They lugged a mattress up the ladder, and it was there they spent their first night together talking until dawn came and Marlon fell asleep. Carlo made the unpleasant discovery that Marlon snored "like the thunder and lightning that sparks the sky before a summer storm."

Marlon would often take the ferry boat by himself over to the beaches of Fire Island where he was seen walking nude up and down the beach at Cherry Grove.

A longtime resident, Jay Garon, who was later to become a famous literary agent, claimed, "By the late 1960s nudity was commonplace on the beaches of Fire Island. But to my knowledge, Marlon was the first to drop his swimsuit. All of us had Marlon that summer. All you had to do was to invite him to come with you into the bushes. He only let himself be serviced. Strictly rough trade. But at least he didn't charge."

"Bare-assed swims" in the blue bay with Carlo were followed by dinners of French fries—"second helpings with lots of catsup"—and thick chocolate malts. Marlon always complained that the malts weren't thick enough like those he'd enjoyed as a child in Omaha.

Dinners were followed by the "deflowering of young virgins," especially those that Piscator had warned them not to seduce. In his memoirs, Marlon admitted that there was a "lot of unbridled fornication" that summer and that "I was in the thick of it."

Marlon and Carlo found a young woman from Sayville who worked as a maid in a nearby hotel. She spoke with a heavy German accent, had a bad case of acne, and wore her hair in pigtails. Nonetheless, Marlon was attracted to her. Carlo wasn't particularly enthralled but was "horny as hell" and agreed to

go along. Marlon and Carlo took her back to the barn and climbed the ladder before hoisting it up inside the trap door which they bolted. Once in bed, the Fräulein wanted to have sex only with Marlon, not with Carlo. He lay only two feet from his friend, "who pounded the hell out of the Nazi bitch."

Age 16: Bad Boy of Libertyville

In mid-intercourse, Marlon took his hand and ran his fingers across Carlo's face, lingering under his eyes. In the middle of his fuck, Marlon said in a soft whisper, "I just wanted to see if you were crying."

As Marlon got to know his new friend, Carlo, he learned more about him—and not just that he'd been a factory worker in Brooklyn, steam-pressing men's trousers. Carlo had "an affinity for drugs," especially heroin. Marlon was against drugs, but sympathetic to his new friend's addiction. In the years ahead, drug consumption would increasingly become a problem for Carlo.

At Sayville, to an audience consisting mainly of vacationing New Yorkers, Marlon repeated a role he'd performed in a New School production of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hannele's Way to Heaven*.

In front of the eponymous heroine, Hannele, Marlon flung off his black teacher's robe and stood in the spotlight in a suit of gold satin. "You could hear the gasps all over the audience," Elaine Stritch said.

"He was a young blond god, totally beautiful," exclaimed Glenda Johann, who was in the audience that night. "A nineteen-year-old playing Jesus Christ. It was fantastic. He was luminescent. I just knew he'd go on to greatness."

Elaine found his performance "absolutely breathtaking—you knew you were watching an acting genius on stage that night."

When Carlo told Marlon of Elaine's praise, he said, "I'm tired of being called an acting genius. Frankly, I haven't made up my mind if I want to be an actor at all."

In the theater, hearing the audience gasp, sat Maynard Morris, a powerful theatrical agent for MCA, the world's largest talent agency. After the show, Maynard came backstage to congratulate Marlon and ask him if he could represent him and send him out on auditions for Broadway shows.

Marlon startled him by his indifference and his comments. "Actually, my top priority this summer is to get laid. . .and frequently. I have a friend, Carlo Fiore, who says I'm an actor in a state of perpetual erection. My father wants me to join him in the chemical feed business in Chicago, and that sounds like

a nobler profession than acting." In spite of Marlon's indifference, Maynard pressed his case until Marlon agreed to sign with MCA.

The next opening night didn't go as well. Dodie took the train from New York to see her son play Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, a play she'd also appeared in in Omaha.

Piscator had been away in New York preparing a play for Broadway, and had turned the direction over to his mild-mannered and rather weak-willed wife who could not control the unruly and often rebellious actors. As opening night came, many of the players, including Marlon, had not learned the Bard's difficult lines.

After having heard raves about her son's acting, Dodie sat in the audience in stunned disbelief as Marlon gave one of the worst performances of his life. When he didn't know a line, as was often the case, he mumbled.

Later that night she told him either "take the theater seriously or get out of it."

Marlon informed Carlo that he'd never again appear in a play by Shakespeare, obviously changing his mind in 1953 for his performance in the movie, *Julius Caesar*.

With a Roman haircut

After the performance, Marlon invited Carlo and Dodie to the late-night Blue Moon Cafe. At table, Carlo ordered a gin martini and asked Dodie to join him. In front of Marlon, she confessed to being a recovering alcoholic and turned down the offer. "I can't even have one drink because it will lead to another and another," she said. "Even a thousand drinks will not be enough for me."

When a trio of musicians—a black sax player, a piano player with a bald head, and a fat bass player—played the cafe's theme song, "Blue Moon," Dodie asked Carlo to dance. He later admitted that when she lodged her still-attractive figure against his body, he got an immediate erection and wanted to take her right there on the dance floor, even though Marlon was hawkeyeing their every move.

Erwin Piscator (left) directs Carlo Fiore rescuing Dorothy Spaulding in *Twelfth Night*

On the way back to their barnloft that night, Marlon bluntly asked Carlo, "You want to fuck my mother, don't you? Don't deny it."

Fearing that Marlon would see through a lie—"I was always a bad liar"—Carlo confessed that he did from time to time have "an itch for older, attractive women." But he promised never to touch Dodie, even if she came on to him. "There's no way I could do that to my best friend."

Marlon seemed to accept that.

Later, Dodie did come on to Carlo. Even though he wanted to seduce her, he turned her down, claiming that he couldn't go to bed with the mother of his best friend. "It just wouldn't be right."

"I find you very attractive," she told him before walking toward her motel room alone.

The next morning, after Marlon had put Dodie on the train back to New York, he told Carlo, "I'm in love."

"What?" Carlo asked jokingly. "With the sound of your own voice."

"Cut the shit!" Marlon flashed anger. He wanted to be taken seriously. "No, I'm really in love for the first time. It's Blossom."

* * *

Her name was unusual. Blossom Plumb was often ridiculed as "Plump Bosom." Reared in Connecticut, she came from a prosperous WASP background, even though Marlon preferred "women with skins of color," in his own words.

A fellow workshop student at the New School, she bore a resemblance to a budding young actress, Eva Gabor. Maureen Stapleton remembered seeing her in the cafeteria of the New School with Marlon. "It was Mr. Gorgeous dating Miss Gorgeous," she said. "Until Blossom came along, I thought Marlon liked only ugly girls—often fat."

Blossom Plumb and Brando rehearsing *The Twelfth Night*

Marlon really got to know Blossom when he worked backstage with her on the set of *Charley's Aunt*. "Blossom was tall, pretty, and well stacked," Carlo remembered. "A regular Betty Grable who was all the rage at the time. But definitely not Marlon's type. She reminded him of Dodie."

A technician at Sayville had also tried to date Blossom but had been turned down. He recalled her as having "eyes as blue as an alpine lake, hair as the color of a Kansas wheat field, and skin that evoked a bowl of peaches and cream." Instead of installing wiring, perhaps he should have been a poet.

There have been many conflicting versions about what happened to end Marlon's stay at Sayville. The most believable is that Piscator caught Blossom in the hayloft naked with Marlon. Carlo maintained that "it was all innocent. They'd been rehearsing lines together in the loft and had fallen asleep on our bed." Protective of his friend, Carlo delivered a version that was a little too innocent to be believed.

The next morning, after catching them in bed together, Piscator dismissed both of them. Blossom cried and begged to stay on. Marlon, it was reported, was rather indifferent—in fact, according to some, eager to "get back to the fleshpots of New York where there will be no restrictions on my libido."

Before departing on the train back to New York, Marlon confided in Carlo that, "I want to go back to the city where all the girls like you to screw them doggie style."

Having gotten kicked out of military academy, Marlon faced his second banishment, again for so-called "immoral" behavior.

Before leaving Sayville, Marlon told members of the cast. "It's a shame, really. Mother Nature made man to want to get his rocks off. In answering the call of nature, we are often condemned for doing the very thing we were put on this earth to do. When will they ever learn?"

It's not known what Marlon thought about on that train ride back to New York. Even in his wildest imagination, he might not have known that he was about to plunge into a series of events that would make him a household name around the world.

Chapter Three

Marlon's new agent, Maynard Morris, was eager to launch his discovery. He suggested that Marlon, 20 years old at the time, might be "ripe" to play the part of the fifteen-year-old, Nels, in an upcoming play, *I Remember Mama*. It was being produced by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II as their first nonmusical after the historic success of their *Oklahoma!* "We were going to the bank every day with a wheelbarrow of money from that one," Rodgers claimed.

I Remember Mama had been written by John van Druten, the English playwright, who was fresh from his success of the previous year, *The Voice of the Turtle*. In 1947 that play would be made into a film, starring—of all people—Ronald Reagan.

Van Druten had based his play on Kathryn Forbes's *Mama's Bank Account*, a series of recollections about a struggling Norwegian family growing up on Steiner Street in San Francisco at the turn of the century.

Marlon accepted a copy of the script and took it to Dodie's West Side apartment where she read it aloud, not only to him, but to her two daughters as well. Marlon remembered falling asleep before the first act had ended. "This is the dullest play I've ever read," Dodie claimed. "It's not for you, Bud. Besides, you're too old to play an early teenager."

Dodie dismissed the play as a rip-off of the long-running hit, *Life with Father*—"pure schlock to take a New Yorker's mind off the war."

When Marlon presented the play to Stella Adler, she disagreed with Dodie, predicting *I Remember Mama* would become one of the biggest hits of the Broadway season. She urged Marlon "to go for it."

In spite of his respect for Stella's theatrical taste, Marlon felt little affinity for the role of the timid, rather shy Norwegian-American boy who entertained dreams of becoming a doctor. "It's not something I can sink my teeth into," he told Stella. "Besides, I hate reading before producers."

"How can you hate what you've never done before?" she asked.

"I'll feel like I'm standing there in front of them with my dick hanging

John van Druten

out," he predicted. "To me, a reading is like coming out on stage naked and having some shithead appraise your equipment. I've auditioned before. Back in Libertyville, I tried to get a job as a drummer in this swing band. The guys not only turned me down, they laughed at me, claiming I had no talent as a musician. After going through all that crap, I need some assholes to tell me I don't know how to act?"

"I'm sure it won't be a waste of your time," Stella said. "Who knows?" A smirk came across her face. "If you don't get cast as Nels, maybe Rodgers and Hammerstein will cast you as a cowboy in *Oklahoma!*"

Stella overcame his objections, and Marlon reported to the office of Richard Rodgers for the dreaded audition "against better judgment. Like, I could use the money. But not through some shitty Broadway show."

Rodgers was present, as was Oscar Hammerstein. Also in the office was John van Druten himself. He was amusing the producers with a story of how David O. Selznick had paid him $7,000 to write a draft of the screenplay for *Gone With the Wind*, which the producer had then rejected.

In front of the three show business veterans, Marlon gave "the second worst reading of my life." (The very worst reading, he'd soon learn, lay ahead in his immediate future.) "He stumbled, mumbled, and fumbled," as van Druten remembered it. Before he'd finished, Hammerstein told Rodgers, "Get this fucking kid out of here. What a waste of time!" Turning to Marlon with contempt, he said, "Jump back on the turnip truck, kid."

Van Druten moved toward Marlon, looking over his body very carefully. He was dressed in a very tight-fitting T-shirt that showed off his manly chest and muscles and a tight-fitting pair of jeans that emphasized his endowment. The playwright turned to his producers. "Let him stay. I think I can work with this one. Trust me, I see hidden talent here."

Aware of van Druten's homosexuality, Hammerstein said, "I know what you see hidden." He invited Rodgers out for a Broadway lunch, leaving the playwright and the actor alone in the office.

"Don't worry," van Druten called to their backs. "There's a spark here. As director, I can ignite it."

When the producers had gone, van Druten faced Marlon. "That was the single worst reading I've heard in the theater on either side of the Atlantic."

"*Adios!*" Marlon said with contempt, moving toward the door.

Van Druten raced after him, taking hold of his muscled arm. "Don't be so hasty. You've got the part. I can convince Rodgers and Hammerstein."

Born near the turn-of-the-century, in the last year of Queen Victoria's reign, van Druten was twenty-three years' Marlon's senior. As Marlon was later to report to Maynard, "The old letch really came onto me, telling me what a sexy young man I was. He said that one day he'd write a really hot part for me where I'd literally exude sex appeal on the stage. He told me that in the meantime I had to get my start on Broadway somewhere, and *I Remember Mama* might be the right launch pad for me. I went along with this homosexual who was practically salivating for me. By eight o'clock that night, after a few drinks, I was in the fucker's hotel room where he was devouring my cock."

The next day, Marlon signed for the role, getting seventy-five dollars a week. He told Morris, "I should get two-hundred a week for letting van Druten taste my noble tool."

Beginning with rehearsals for *I Remember Mama*, Marlon began to refer to his penis as "my noble tool."

He would do so for the rest of his life, at one point making the pronouncement, "I've never been circumcised, and my noble tool has performed its duties through thick and thin without fail."

* * *

Dodie was wrong and Stella was right. *I Remember Mama* opened at the Music Box Theater on October 19, 1944. It was an instant hit, with lines forming at the box office. The review in *The New York Times* didn't even mention Marlon by name. That was the last time that that prestigious newspaper would overlook him. However, Robert Garland, writing in *The Journal-American*, said, "The Nels of Marlon Brando is, if he doesn't mind me saying so, charming."

No longer claiming Rangoon as the place of his birth, Marlon insisted to the play's publicist that he'd been born in Calcutta where his father was engaged in geological research. He also falsely claimed that he'd come to the United States when he was only six months old. The publicist didn't quite believe him. "Are you sure you weren't born in Mukden, China?" he asked sarcastically.

"Hey, I never thought of that," Marlon said. "I'll use that as my birthplace in the next playbill." When the publicist suggested that it might be better to say he was born in Nebraska like

Mady Christians and Brando in *I Remember Mama*

movie stars Henry Fonda and Robert Taylor, Marlon dismissed the idea. "After all, what is theater but illusion?"

His sisters, Fran and Jocelyn, turned up for opening night, as did girlfriends Ellen Adler, Blossom Plumb, and Celia Webb, and best buddies Wally Cox and Darren Dublin. Only Dodie was noticeably absent. She was home drunk.

Bobby Lewis showed up too. "Marlon was fantastic," he later recalled. "When he came wandering downstage munching an apple, he was so natural I really believed that he lived upstairs. He was completely relaxed."

When Marlon was told of these comments, he dismissed them. "Like hell! I was so fucking scared I was developing a blood clot."

Veteran character actors and popular stars at the time, Mady Christians and Oscar Homolka, both from Vienna, and both cast within the same play, were stunned when Marlon's exit line met with thunderous applause. All he said was, "Good night, Mama. Good night, Papa." Stella Adler claimed that it was Marlon's "unprecedented naturalism" that inspired the audience to such a fever pitch. "He stood in perfect contrast to the overacting of Homolka and Christians, who were practically eating up the scenery. Marlon showed what subtlety on stage can accomplish."

Marlon remained contemptuous of the play, in spite of its success. He called it "sentimental slosh—bourgeois theater of the most blatant sort, strictly women's club matinee stuff."

The play would run for 731 performances, although Marlon would stay with the troupe for only a year. He easily became bored, repeating the same lines night after night. Growing impatient and restless, except during his eloquent coming-of-age speech in the third act, he began to improvise. At first he infuriated van Druten by inserting new words, or even a different line here and there, into the script. However, when presented with Marlon's noble tool in his dressing room, the author usually forgave the errant actor.

Noël Coward

"A rebellious lad," van Druten told his close friend and fellow playwright, Noël Coward. "But so sexy you'll forgive him of any transgression."

"I can't wait to meet the dear boy," Coward said. "He sounds delightful. I always like to audition fresh meat on both the American and British stage."

"Tell me something I don't already know," van Druten responded archly.

Van Druten obviously wasn't all that upset with Marlon's improvisations. When the final script of *I Remember Mama* was published, it con-

tained many of Marlon's "little things."

During the run of the play, actress Frances Heflin complained to van Druten that Marlon wasn't bathing regularly. Van Druten seemed dismissive of her comments. "There is nothing wrong with a man smelling like a man. I, for one, like the natural smell of a man."

Oscar Homolka

By the third week, a bored Marlon was conflicting with both of the stars, Mady Christians and Oscar Homolka, each a classically trained actor.

At one point in the play, Mady was to drink a cup of coffee and proclaim that it was so good she wanted a second cup. Before curtain time, Marlon poured lots of salt and several generous sprinklings of Tabasco into the pot. Mady not only drank from this "cauldron of horror," but managed a second cup without letting the audience know anything was wrong.

Marlon admired her "professionalism under duress." When the final curtain went down, she seemed to know who the culprit was. Backstage she pounded into his chest and slapped his face repeatedly.

Almost from the beginning, Marlon conflicted with Oscar. Marlon found the Austrian "brusque, unpleasant, pompous" and very Nazi-like. He enjoyed irritating this scene stealer with some scene stealing of his own, like picking his nose during the actor's big scene, or, even worse, unbuttoning and rebuttoning his fly.

When he deliberately pretended he'd never heard of the actor, Oscar began reciting his impressive list of credentials, including performances in *King Lear* and *The Emperor Jones* on the stages of Europe where his name was a household word. Marlon pretended that he wasn't impressed.

Oscar was contemptuous of American actors, viewing them as "just removed from the barbaric stage. They only recently started wearing clothes instead of cowskins," he was fond of saying.

One night Mady went to Marlon's dressing room to complain about his tendency to change lines and stage movements every night. When she knocked, he yelled for her to come in. She was startled to find him naked on the floor having intercourse with a half-clothed Stella Adler. "He seemed completely oblivious of my presence and kept going at it like it was Christmas," she told Oscar.

When he heard of this, he wryly replied, "Thanks for the warning. If I want to keep my virtue intact, I'll have to stay out of Brando's dressing room."

Mady noted her surprise that Marlon was seeing both Stella and her

daughter Ellen. “The fifteen-year-old girl was very different from her mother. Unlike blonde Stella, Ellen had jet-black hair like a gypsy flamenco dancer from Seville. She was very advanced for her age. Fifteen going on thirty.”

A minor actor, Herbert Kenwith, said he had to move out of the dressing room he shared with Marlon because of the constant stream of visitors, both male and female, that Marlon received most evenings after curtain call. Usually the women were dark skinned or even quite black—“yes, even blue black, but more often Eurasian.”

Oscar was scornful of the “flighty young men flocking backstage” to greet Marlon, who was just beginning to bask in the power he had over young homosexuals. “He relished their attention,” Oscar later said. “I think the word got out in New York fairy circles that if you wanted to get fucked and had a tight ass, you could go backstage and get it from Brando every night.”

A friend of the Brando family from Evanston, John Bingham, showed up one night to see the play and go backstage. “Marlon’s dressing room was filthy. There were even sanitary napkins lying about, and bloody ones at that. When Marlon talked to me about Evanston, he left the bathroom door open when he went to take a crap. He got up off the stool and didn’t even wipe. I was a bit taken back when I saw that he wore a lacy pair of women’s underwear. But I’d heard rumors that he’d turned homosexual when he got to New York.”

One night a young mulatto woman showed up and slipped backstage when the guard had gone to the toilet. She threatened to disrupt the evening’s performance if Marlon didn’t give her two-hundred dollars for the abortion she wanted. Not having the money, Marlon went to every actor and member of the crew, requesting donations. Finally, he raised the money.

Mady gave twenty dollars. “Why not send her over to Hoboken?” the star asked. “I understand that Frank Sinatra’s mother will arrange an abortion for anyone who asks.”

The most serious complaint lodged against Marlon from his fellow cast members was that he stood in the wings every night, waiting for his time to go on. While doing so, he’d fondle himself into a full erection, which was clearly visible through the tight knickerbockers he wore on stage. Not believing that the tale was true, van Druten sat out front one night to watch the performance. Marlon’s erection was clearly visible, and some female members of the audience let out audible gasps.

Backstage, van Druten confronted Marlon, charging that “your protuberance is very distracting.”

“In that case, if you don’t want me to go out with a hard-on, you’ll have to suck me soft every night.”

“Marlon continued to show it hard when he walked out on stage,” Carlo

Fiore later said. “You could hear the women in the audience swoon. I guess that’s one way to become a star.”

* * *

Clad only in his boxer shorts, Marlon answered the door to his dressing room in response to an urgent yet delicate knock. He was feeling good that night, thinking he’d delivered his best performance in *I Remember Mama*.

Mady Christians had told him that there were a lot of movie stars out front. She was going to name them, but he dismissed her, telling her that, “I’m not interested in movie stars. Maybe if Rin Tin Tin shows up. Otherwise, no!”

The female star who stood at his door was one of such sexual ambiguity and allure that he could hardly ignore her. He gently took her hand and eased her inside.

He still hadn’t spoken to her. For a stage actor dismissive of movie stars, he was in awe of this icon of beauty and glamour. She was the century’s embodiment of erotic sophistication, the mysterious Shanghai Lily of his childhood, taking the *Shanghai Express*. She was the brazen Frenchy getting doused with a bucket of water in *Destry Rides Again*. Although her legs were hailed as among the world’s most beautiful, they were covered in trousers tonight.

To his further astonishment, she gently glided to the floor on her knees. Reaching inside the flap of his boxer shorts, she removed his uncut penis, skinned it back, and proceeded to give him what he would later claim was “the world’s most perfect blow-job—before or since.”

It was only when she’d swallowed his offering and had risen to her feet, did the actress introduce herself. “Forgive me,” she said, “I should really tell you who I am. I am Marlene Dietrich. I admired your performance tonight very much. I think you’ll go far on the Broadway stage.”

Marlene Dietrich

“Since you know who I am,” he said, “and since you’re already very well acquainted with my noble tool, I won’t bother to waste time introducing myself.”

The exchange between Dietrich and Marlon would have been lost to history had not Marlon bragged about it to John van Druten the next day. The gossipy English playwright told not only Noël Coward, Dietrich’s friend, “but virtually everyone else,” or at least that’s what Oscar Homolka claimed.

Unknown to Marlon at the time, Dietrich’s

"tribute" to his acting talent was not unique. In her heyday, she had a custom of performing the same act of fellatio on artists and writers she admired. When she first met George Bernard Shaw, at least according to her husband, Rudolf Sieber, she knelt at his feet, unbuttoned his fly, removed his penis, and then "worshipped it." Only after the playwright had climaxed, "could we talk seriously," Dietrich later claimed.

Surveying the disaster that he called his dressing room, Dietrich said, "My, oh my, we'll have to clean up this place. My husband is a chicken farmer, but even his hens wouldn't call this place home." An alluring smirk moved across her face. "We'll have to invite Joan Crawford over. Even when she's visiting friends, she drops down on her knees, not to do what I did to you, but to scrub toilets. In some ways, I'm like Joan. They call me a *femme fatale*. But I'm just a *Hausfräu* struggling to get out."

In a long black limousine, en route to her hotel suite, Dietrich told Marlon that, "You are the most natural actor I've ever seen on the Broadway stage. I adored how you vaguely hinted at a Norwegian accent but didn't ghoulishly overdo it." She rubbed his cheek with a pink-gloved hand. "Just the right touch of blush, and I noticed it was natural—not makeup. You have that scrubbed open-faced look that a young teenage boy of Norway would have. However, I don't know how anything wholesome looking could emerge from that pig sty of a dressing room. And you look. . . what's the word? A bit chunky. Perfect for the part. I know you're not Norwegian. What is your ancestry?"

"Part Dutch, part Alsatian. . ."

She interrupted him. "German! I just knew it. You're a fellow *Kraut* like me."

Back in her hotel suite, he felt awkward with her before she retreated to the bedroom "to slip into something more comfortable." He'd bluntly told her he was hungry, thinking she would send down for room service. Instead she preferred to cook him "a special omelette" in the small kitchen attached to her suite.

In a few minutes she came back into the living room in a sheer, see-through night gown. His next move surprised her. Instead of moving toward her to seduce her, he went over and raised the living room's window. Crawling out through the open window, he disappeared into the dense fog that had blanketed New York that night, in the open air, ten floors above street level. "*Auf Wiedersehen*!" he called to her.

Obviously figuring that he was just playing a game as a means of frightening her, Dietrich, pretending nonchalance, went to the kitchen to prepare his omelette.

In fewer than ten minutes, Marlon appeared outside the suite's open

kitchen window, then swung himself inside, eventually standing beside her, next to her little stove. He'd emerged from the fog like a ghost. "There's no ledge outside to grab onto," he said. "But there's a gutter and a drain pipe that I used to haul me across instead."

"This is a very old hotel," she said matter-of-factly. "With a war going on, probably no one's inspected those drain pipes since the 30s. Drain pipes rust and rot away, like people you know."

"Maybe I could have fallen to my death," he said as if the idea had never occurred to him.

"Potentially at least, America could have lost one of its greatest young actors. Such a shame." She placed a potato omelette in front of him and invited him to sit down at the little table. "Enjoy, and finish every bite. You'll need all your strength for the fun and games I have in mind for us tonight."

* * *

His one-night stand with Dietrich forgotten, Marlon received another female visitor backstage after a performance of *I Remember Mama*. Tall and statuesque, she was a champagne blonde tastefully dressed in a black suit. As an associate of Maynard Morris at MCA, the forty-five-year-old woman came not to seduce Marlon, but to advance his career.

"Until I met Marlon," Edith Van Cleve recalled, "I had nothing but clients with more ambition than talent." The brilliant exception to her stable was Montgomery Clift, who was as talented as Marlon himself. "All of my clients wanted to become as big as Barbara Stanwyck, who at the time was the highest paid woman in America. In spite of his prodigious talent, Marlon just didn't seem to care if he made it or not. On our first meeting, I wanted to sign him to a contract. He was already represented by my colleague, Maynard Morris, but he hadn't signed a personal contract. Maynard had had great success, helping launch Gregory Peck and Tyrone Power. But I wanted to move in and take over Marlon for myself."

At first Edith tried to impress Marlon by promising to use her connections to get him various screen tests. "Every young actor in the 1940s wanted to be a screen star, so I just assumed Marlon did too."

"Keep those movie people away from me," he cautioned, taking her by surprise. "Do you really think I could become the next Betty Grable? I've got great legs myself, but hers are better."

"He had the body of an Olympic athlete," Edith said. "The beauty of a matinee idol. The talent of a young John Barrymore. But he just didn't seem to care if he capitalized off the package or not."

"Do you want to fuck?" he bluntly asked Edith.

Brando and Carlo Fiore

She assured him that she never mixed business with pleasure.

"Your loss," he said with seeming nonchalance.

Marlon was nothing if not a bundle of contradictions. In spite of his ranting against the movies, he agreed the following week for a screen test with 20th Century Fox. "I heard they're looking for a replacement for Shirley Temple," he jokingly said to Carlo Fiore. "The tough little slut is getting a bit long in the tooth." The expression, "tough little slut," as it applied to Shirley Temple, had been borrowed from silent screen star Louise Brooks.

Richard Gregor, who directed Marlon's first screen test, recalled the event decades later in his modest home in West Hollywood. He was very "out." "I thought Marlon was one humpy number when he showed up for the screen test in a form-fitting white T-shirt and jeans so tight that they showed the outline of his dick. I suggested that he remove his T-shirt for the test. Actually, that wasn't often done, but I wanted to get a look at those muscles. He refused to take off the shirt. 'I will do one thing for you, though,' he said. 'I'll take my dick out and piss for you if that is what's called for.' It didn't take me long to learn how rebellious he was."

"At one point, he pulled a big bugger of dried snot from his nose-right on camera," Gregor claimed. "He was supposed to have memorized a few lines from an old Tyrone Power script. But all that came out of Marlon's mouth was a few noncommittal grunts and a mumble here and there. Naturally, the test bombed."

Edith sent Marlon to test for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. After viewing the results, an MGM talent scout claimed that snot from Marlon's nose "dribbled down his face like soft ice cream." For his test at Paramount, he carried a Yo-Yo with which he proceeded to play with on camera. For Warner Brothers, he demonstrated on camera how to eat a raw egg.

At night he amused himself by going to the rooftops over jazz joints and dropping brown paper bags filled with water onto the heads of drunken patrons who staggered out at four or five o'clock in predawn New York.

Before his death in 1964, Maynard recalled that, near the end of the war, all the big studios were looking for new faces to fill the gap caused by some of the biggest stars, such as Clark Gable, being involved in the war effort. "Until the real stars came marching home, I felt there was a great opportunity in Hollywood for Marlon. Obviously he didn't agree. How else to explain why

he sabotaged every screen test Edith ever sent him on? Of course, he would eventually conquer Hollywood, but that would have to wait until later."

Abandoning hopes of a screen career for her new client, Edith sent him to try out for stage roles, since his year-long contract with *I Remember Mama* was running out, and he didn't want to renew, finding the same role boring.

Although she was relatively new as an actors' agent, Edith, a former actress herself, was a powerhouse. She knew some of the most legendary figures in the American theater.

Despairing of her new client succeeding on the screen—"his heart just wasn't into it"—Edith sent him out for an audition with two of the "living legends" of the American theater: Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

* * *

Marlon was sent by Edith Van Cleve to audition for *O Mistress Mine*, a drawing room comedy with a role for a sixteen-year-old boy. The author was Terrence Rattigan, a homosexual London-born playwright. Rattigan would be at the audition, along with the stars of the play, Lynn Fontanne, also English born, and her equally famous husband, Alfred Lunt. Like Marlon himself, Lunt was from the Middle West—Wisconsin in this case. Lunt and Fontanne had enjoyed a hit run with their play in London. Known to British audiences as *Love in Idleness*, it was renamed *O Mistress Mine* for Broadway.

Along with Rattigan, Lunt and Fontanne were sitting in the front row, immaculately attired as always. "Marlon looked like a bum who'd been picked up in the Bowery," Rattigan later recalled from his home in Bermuda. "I don't think he'd shaved for days. His T-shirt was dirty, and his jeans looked like he'd last washed them at the time of the Spanish-American War. Worse than that, he seemed to have a perpetual scowl. Actually, it was a kind of glower, as if he didn't belong on stage auditioning for us. Even though the Lunts were theatrical royalty, he greeted them with obvious defiance and arrogant hostility. The well-mannered Lunts were taken aback. As for me, I was more or less attracted to the beast.

Alfred Lunt

Lynn Fontanne

Beneath his sloppy appearance was a very handsome and very sexy young man with a certain amount of raw animal magnetism."

"I'm Marlon Brando," he said, even mumbling his name. Lunt heard the name as "Brindel," and addressed Marlon as such. Marlon didn't bother to correct the actor, who was known for his perfect elocution.

"Are you ready to begin?" Lunt asked rather impatiently. The availability of the role had been widely advertised, and backstage, Marlon had found himself part of a cattle call. At least fifty young men—maybe more—had shown up for the audition, their various ages, according to the stage manager, ranging from twelve years old to "at least one who wasn't a day younger than thirty-five."

Marlon frowned as he studied Rattigan's script. Although near-sighted, he vainly chose not to wear glasses. Finally, he tossed the script into an empty seat in the front row. "I can't say these words." Perhaps he couldn't even read them. "I just can't do this." Before the astonished theatrical trio, he walked off the stage.

Lunt called after him. "Don't make such a hasty retreat, young man," Lunt said. "Anyone as rude and as insolent as you must be hiding a great deal of talent. If you don't want to read the script, recite anything. At this point, Lynn and I—Terrence, too—mainly want to hear the sound of your voice."

"Recite your favorite verse to us," Fontanne chimed in. "Perhaps from Shakespeare."

Marlon stood stiffly and recited a nursery rhyme Dodie had taught him:

Hickory, dickory dock,
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one, the mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, DUMB.

He placed a heavy emphasis on the word *dumb*.

The recitation elicited utter disdain from the Lunts, but brought a smirk to Rattigan's face. Marlon stormed off the stage. "You're much too old for the role," Fontanne called after him. "Sorry. We won't be calling you."

"Be sure *not* to leave your name with the stage manager," Lunt said to Marlon's departing back.

The confrontation became part of the legend and lore of Marlon Brando. But there was more to the story than has ever before been told. It didn't just end with the recitation of the nursery rhyme.

Sitting in the back seat of the darkened theater was a handsome, debonair man. He was Jack Wilson, the lover of Noël Coward. He was also that playwright and entertainer's business manager, producer, and director. Like his

Jack Wilson

homosexual friend, Rattigan, Wilson was very intrigued with the young Brando, despite the actor's insolence.

"I don't think I'd ever seen an actor on stage in such tight jeans," Wilson later recalled to his friend, the Austrian chanteuse, Greta Keller, who was also a close friend of Noël Coward's. "There was something special about Brando. I thought he had enormous sex appeal. I think if cast in the right role, he could inspire rape fantasies in the female members of the audience. Perhaps some male ones too, if they're so inclined."

Wilson admitted to racing backstage. There, he introduced himself to Marlon, explaining who he was. "He barely noticed me, although I convinced him to give me his address," Wilson later recalled to Greta. "I told him that I had the perfect play in mind for him, one by Sir Noël himself. Brando seemed utterly indifferent to the idea, but agreed to show up when I called him for an audition."

Later, Wilson confided in Rattigan, "That's the most natural appearing actor I've ever seen on the stage."

"Cut the shit, you old sod!" Rattigan chided Wilson. "You just want to sample the package in those jeans that he must have had sewed onto his body."

"That, too," Wilson admitted, "except Noël will want him too."

* * *

Admitting that she was "crazy about the bastard," Dodie announced her departure from the apartment on West End Avenue. She was returning to Illinois and the arms of Marlon Sr.

Marlon Jr. did "everything in my power" to get her to stay. He even held out the prospect of sex with Carlo Fiore, whom he still called by the nickname of "Freddie," even though his friend didn't like that.

Marlon's first wife, Anna Kashfi, once claimed that Marlon's "submerged sexual longings for his mother had to be vented" in some way. Since, in her words, he had an "ingrained incest taboo, oedipal intercourse could be realized only vicariously."

Marlon was well aware that from the beginning Dodie had been attracted to Carlo, and he to her. Marlon hoped that if his mother fell in love with Carlo,

he might be able to keep her in New York. He urged his friend to seduce his mother. Carlo wisely turned down the invitation. Years later in discussing this with Anna, Marlon dismissed Freddie as a "left-handed homosexual."

Despite Marlon's resistance, Dodie took the train back to Chicago. In his own words, Marlon later admitted that he experienced "a kind of nervous breakdown." He was left alone and felt abandoned in the big West End Avenue apartment.

Marlon viewed his mother's departure as his own personal failure. "I had another chance to offer her my love, which I did, but it wasn't enough for her."

Unable to afford it, he soon got rid of Dodie's large apartment and moved to a one-room studio at Sixth Avenue and 58th Street. He kept it in the same "pig-sty" style that Marlene Dietrich had found in his dressing room.

"I stopped eating," Marlon said, "lost ten pounds, and felt depressed and vulnerable, but didn't know why. I still acted every night, but I was in emotional disarray."

He credited Stella Adler with "saving my sanity." He spent night after night at her apartment, even going into her bedroom to "see that she dresses properly." Often her husband, Harold Clurman, or her daughter, Ellen, whom Marlon often dated, would be sitting right outside in the living room.

In his autobiography, Marlon denied ever having an affair with Stella. "He merely wanted to protect Stella's reputation—after all, she was a married woman," Bobby Lewis claimed. "Actually, he was banging the hell out of his mentor night after night."

Bobby said that on several occasions Clurman admitted to him that he was well aware that his wife was having an affair with Marlon. "I know I should feel a jealous rage, but I don't," Clurman told Bobby. "I have to ask myself several times why I'm not furious, why I don't kick Marlon out of the apartment. But in my own mixed-up way, I love the guy. I feel Stella's entitled to a little affair on the side. She works hard and is very dedicated to the theater . . . and to Marlon, perhaps even to me on occasion."

When not with Stella, Marlon engaged in anonymous sex. He'd go to toilets frequented by cruising homosexuals, where he'd allow anonymous fellatio to be performed on himself. Or else he'd pick up women randomly on the streets and bring them back to his small apartment. Darren Dublin remembered that on one occasion he saw Marlon disappear into his bedroom with three young women. "All ages, sizes, and hair styles appealed to Marlon," Darren claimed.

In the meantime, Jack Wilson, when not in bed with Noël Coward, continued his pursuit of Marlon, holding out the prospect of various theatrical offers to the struggling young actor. Marlon found no work after turning down the road tour of *I Remember Mama*. "He was accessible to many offers at the

time," Bobby Lewis said. "He also considered himself ambrosia to various homosexual playwrights, and took delight in offering himself on a platter to them. John van Druten—or perhaps Clifford Odets—was just the beginning of Marlon presenting himself like a slab of meat to artists. He liked the way he could make them salivate and often bragged about his power over them. In his future lay Tennessee Williams."

* * *

A former American stockbroker, Jack Wilson was known for his matinee idol good looks. He exerted almost as much personal charm as did Noël Coward himself. Jack had a sharp wit and could make Marlon laugh, especially when he told the most indiscreet stories about "the gods and goddesses" of the theater, both British and American. Marlon quickly learned that Jack had been nicknamed "Dab" by Coward and that the playwright himself was called "Poppa."

Wilson managed to keep his affair with Marlon a secret until Coward heard about it via the Cole Porter grapevine and wanted to meet "this darling boy." To cover up for himself, Wilson said that he'd been seeing Marlon with an eye toward casting him in his mentor's drawing room comedy, *Present Laughter*. Of course, Marlon was all wrong for the role, and the savvy Wilson knew that. Still, he persisted.

Instead of having the audition in a theater, it was conducted in Coward's hotel suite which he shared with Wilson. That evening Coward had been entertaining his friend, the composer Cole Porter, in his suite. Wilson, Coward, and Porter sometimes traveled together as when they showed up on Venice's Lido, looking suitably bronzed for the photographers. All three men were bonded with their mutual interests in the theater and homosexuality.

Both Stella Adler, who'd read *Present Laughter*, and Marlon dismissed the play as "mere Coward fluff." Stella went so far as to say, "It's not worthy of him. Second rank Coward, or maybe not even that."

For bizarre reasons of his own, Marlon agreed to the audition. Apparently, it was not his intention to read the play's dialogue. Instead he showed up at Coward's suite with two black Jamaican drummers.

In front of the astonished, but delighted trio, Marlon danced in a jewel-studded G-string to the accompaniment of the black drummers. He'd been studying at Katherine Dunham's School of Dance and moved with perfect rhythm to the West Indian

Greta Keller

drum beat, his G-string held on by two snaps. At the end of the number, he snapped off the brief and stood nude before his appraisers.

"After I gave each of the drummers a hundred dollar bill," Wilson later told Greta Keller, "just to get rid of them, Cole, Poppa, and I had Marlon like we were at a smörgåsbord table."

After the fun, Marlon decided to tell the suave Noël Coward what he thought of *Present Laughter*. In nearly all biographies of Brando, Marlon stands before Coward and says "Don't you know there are people starving in Europe?" He is then alleged to have walked out on the playwright, after having dismissed his latest efforts as trivial.

According to Wilson, however, that incident never happened. "Marlon spoke bluntly to my darling Noël."

"There is no laughter in your play, present or past," Marlon said to Coward, if Wilson is to be believed. "It's like having a diarrhea attack with no toilet in sight." Marlon then left the apartment, having dressed in his jeans and T-shirt.

Apparently, Coward never forgave his rudeness. Still panting after Marlon, Wilson, however, was most forgiving.

The following day, using a sibilant *s*, Marlon swished in front of Carlo, singing Coward's "Mad About the Boy."

Marlon was still casting about for work. Even though Wilson never pressed Marlon to appear in *Present Laughter*, he suggested another job opportunity for him when the actor told him he'd run out of money and was not getting any more from back home.

Back in his stockbroker days, Wilson, hoping to win an account, often acquainted potential homosexual clients with the services of Kenneth London. The British-born "madam" ran an escort service, euphemistically called "Gentlemen for Rent."

* * *

Originally, London set up his service as an agency where handsome young men could be rented out for the night to women seeking escorts. The fee was one-hundred dollars a night, a rather large sum of money in those days. If a tuxedo were required, the bill would be twenty-five dollars extra. If sex were involved at the end of the evening, that would be a private negotiation between the young man and the client.

London himself didn't engage in the male prostitution aspect of the service. He always said, "Any sex was strictly between the boy and the woman." Of the hundred-dollar escort fee, London took fifty of it.

He claimed that during the first few weeks in the life of his company, all

Ruth Warrick

of the incoming calls were from women, including well-known actresses from Hollywood visiting New York and having need of an escort. As time went by, London began to receive calls from "respectable gentlemen," as he put it, requesting the escort services of a member of his handsome all-male staff. After checking with "my boys," London learned that at least half of the boys would agree to go out with a male. However, for that extra service, they wanted twice as much money. Soon London was offering escorts to both men and women.

"One of my boys even fell for a client, a rich businessman from San Francisco," London said, "and that's the last I ever heard of either of them."

Wilson introduced Marlon to London, who signed him as an escort. "Brando worked for me for about five to eight weeks, I don't remember which. He earned about three-thousand dollars for his time. He also agreed to escort both men and women. I don't know if sex was part of any of his deals. Frankly, I didn't want to know. Such knowledge could have led to my arrest for prostitution. Personally, I think Marlon did it for the thrill of it instead of the money. I could be wrong."

Rumors about Marlon being a "callboy" in the mid-Forties clung to him all his life, seeing print for the first time in *Brando: The Unauthorized Biography* by Joe Morella and Edward Z. Epstein. The two authors dismissed the rumors as "ridiculous" denying that Marlon had posed for a picture for a special "catalog" sent to London's rich clients.

Yet some highly placed sources, although not unimpeachable, claimed that Marlon did work for the agency, and, as mentioned, London himself confirmed it. Greta Keller claimed that Jack Wilson told her that Marlon worked briefly as a $100-a-night callboy.

Actress Ruth Warrick played Charles Foster Kane's very proper first wife in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* and became a legend in daytime TV drama with her appearances as Phoebe Tyler in *All My Children*. She also claimed that she first met Marlon when she called London, requesting an escort to take her to the opening of a Broadway show.

When pressed if sex were part of the deal, Warrick said, "Darling, I was a Forties movie star. In those days, we drew the shades when such activity happened after 'The End,' flashed across the screen. Let's keep it that way!"

* * *

Katherine Dunham

Impulsively, Marlon had decided to become a dancer instead of an actor—and "not just a white boy dancer." He wanted to become a black dancer, as irrational as that goal was. "I want to dance to the rhythms of divine drumbeats," he told best friends Carlo Fiore and Darren Dublin. "That is, when I'm not playing the conga drums myself."

His dream, which was shortly to be realized, involved meeting Katherine Dunham, doyenne of black dancers who had been hailed as "the hottest thing to hit Chicago since Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked the bucket." Moving from Chicago, she had opened a dance studio in New York, composed mostly of black, especially Haitian, and Puerto Rican dancers, with a "scattering of Cubans."

Her school was on 43rd Street near Seventh Avenue. By a coincidence, Lee Strasberg had opened what became an early branch of the Actors Studio in one part of the loft he shared with Dunham. Although he still detested Strasberg, Marlon, for reasons known only to himself, attended a few of Strasberg's classes over Stella Adler's objections. His excuse to her was, "I want to see what the enemy is teaching." He attended only a few classes. "Once he heard the sound of those bongo drums, he wandered next door and never came back to class," Strasberg later said.

Marlon was captivated by Katherine Dunham and went up to introduce himself and to get permission to join her school. The performer was already deep into her legend, having made her debut as a dancer on Broadway in the 1930s, sporting a birdcage on her head and a cigar in her mouth.

He told her that he'd seen the 1943 film, *Stormy Weather*, six times. In the movie, Dunham appeared as herself. He also told her that he'd seen her 1942 *Star Spangled Rhythm* the same number of times. Dunham had appeared again as herself in a "Smart as a Tack" number.

She might have been flattered by the attention of the handsome young Brando. A bit reluctant, she signed him up the same afternoon she met him.

Her suspicion at the time was that Marlon might want to join her school because he was a devotee of black women and wanted to use membership in the troupe "to get close to a lot of hot mammas." To some extent, Dunham's suspicion was true. But he also sincerely wanted to learn to dance.

Evocative of how enraptured he'd been by another mentor, Stella Adler, Marlon became "addicted" (his words) to Katherine Dunham in the days ahead. It was obvious to the rest of the troupe that he'd developed a crush on

her. Seduction, however, appeared out of the question, as she was still in love with her husband, John Thomas Pratt, whom she'd married in 1941.

Marlon wanted to learn all he could not only about black dance but about Dunham herself. She willingly shared stories of her life with him. Born in Chicago in poverty, she had a French-Canadian mother and an American father who traced his ancestry back to a slave ship arriving from Madagascar. When not directing the dancers, Dunham was often seen sitting with Marlon in a corner of the studio, reading Tarot cards to him.

He watched rehearsals every day, but didn't join in. As best as he could figure it, the Dunham technique of dance combined West Indian movements with traditional ballet, sprinkled with "Darkest African rituals," a strong dose of black American rhythms.

In just three weeks, Marlon had learned enough to join the regular class in rehearsals. "It's hard to believe that Marlon wasn't a nigger like us," said Jean Desirée, one of the Haitian dancers who had moved to New York from her native Port-au-Prince. "He was totally into the black experience. Over a period of time, he fucked nearly all the gals in our troupe and a lot of the beautifully muscled black skin boys too. He went black all the way. We had a brief affair but he quickly dumped me for some other meat."

After a short time, Marlon pronounced himself an expert at the cakewalk and the bebop, two dances that Dunham believed had "roots in darkest Africa." Even if he weren't the school's leading male dancer, Marlon became an exotic member of the troupe with his white-skinned body contrasting with dark-skinned men with their perfect physiques and well-developed muscles. He told friends that he loved to dance with the "budding Lena Hornes," referring to the brown-skinned female dancers with their sexy mesh stockings, their spike heels, and skimpy outfits whose fabric barely concealed their breasts.

"Dance, Marlon, dance," Dunham would call to him. "Dance with the same pounding beat I understand you use in making love. That way, you'll become a big star. In my dances, think of the rhythms as wild, pounding love acted out to the beat of a conga drum. No pirouettes from *Swan Lake*!"

Marlon danced nude except for a tattered old leopard skin apron (a handkerchief, actually, with long strings that tied behind his waist) that barely concealed his genitals, but completely exposed his buttocks. He never wore a jockstrap or pouch, claiming that no true African dancer would ever do that. When he danced, that flap went up in a twirling motion, revealing his cock and balls. No one objected, not even Dunham who found the costume "authentic to the African experience."

"As a dancer, Marlon was okay, I guess, but not great," Desirée claimed. "Actually, he was the worst dancer in the group and was far better on drums."

Marlon met a beautiful mulatto member of the troupe, a dancer from St. Louis, who was working on a number called "Incest." It dealt with her being raped nightly by her father, while her abused mother sat in the other room crying over what her daughter was subjected to. Marlon could never remember what her name was, but he had a brief affair with her before going on to other women. He told Carlo that, "I could become addicted to brown belles. They are much hotter in bed than white women."

When he tried this line out on his friend, James Baldwin, the author angrily rejected such a notion as a "typical black stereotype, perpetuating the myth that all of us 'colored boys,' gals too—are oversexed." In spite of his friend's protest, however, Marlon throughout his life still held to his original impression.

Marlon could not remember the dancer who wanted him to play the lead in her "Incest" number. Both the dancer and Marlon were hoping that Dunham would agree to stage it. When he ran through the number with the young dancer in front of Dunham, she completely rejected it, perhaps on personal grounds. It may have set off a bad memory for her. In her autobiography, *A Touch of Innocence*, Dunham wrote candidly that her father took an unhealthy interest in his growing daughter. She recalled his wanting her "to sit close to him in the truck or kiss him goodbye, or the touch and fondling that made everything about my life seem smudgy and unclean."

With his star role in modern dance fading quickly, Marlon became "just one of the dancers," definitely in the background. The star parts were taken over by Dunham's more skilled pupils. Even so, he seemed delighted just to be a member of the troupe.

Marlon became "besotted with Miss Dunham," in the words of Ralph Feernan, who was one of the major fans of black dance and planned to write a book on the movement that never materialized. "I talked to Marlon several times in those days, and I honestly believe he wanted to become black himself. At one point, he suggested that he might appear on stage in black face to blend in better with the other dancers. Miss Dunham completely rejected that idea as 'vulgar, even obscene.' But Marlon definitely wanted to go native."

In addition to dance, he studied drums under Henri Augustine, the troupe's *hungan*, a name that was used back in his native Haiti for a voodoo priest.

Marlon called him "Papa." The drummer gave Marlon a phallic symbol, which he wore at all times around his neck, telling friends that it not only warded off the evil eye but made him more virile in bed.

Desirée recalled that Marlon was transfixed when Papa played the drums. Trying to imitate Papa, he would play the drums for hours on end. "I think one of the boys in the troupe was giving him something too," she said. "Marlon was high all the time."

He told friends at the New School, where he still studied acting, that "he'd become a high priest of voodoo" after a special initiation one night in Harlem. He never fully explained exactly what went on that night in Harlem except to say that part of the initiation involved biting off the head of a live rooster and drinking the blood of a thirteen-year-old virgin after her hymen had been pierced by a large black dick.

"One night he played drums—congas, bongos, I don't remember—for eight hours straight," Desirée said. "He wouldn't stop, even when he had to ask one of the boys to bring him a quart jar to piss in. The dancer reached for Marlon's loincloth, pulled it back, and held his dick while he pissed in the jar. I'm sure the boy was one of Marlon's fuck buddies to be that intimate."

Marlon became a good enough dancer to make his first appearance at one of the *boules blanches* that Dunham staged monthly as a fund-raiser for her perpetually underfinanced dance school. These benefits drew a monied and cultural elite, often white. "The audience, and I'm guessing, was about thirty-five percent gay, the rest straight . . . sorta straight," Desirée recalled.

In the audience you were likely to find Betty Furness, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, even Noël Coward, Cole Porter, and Monty Woolley. Throughout their lives, Porter, Coward, and Woolley had a fondness for black men.

As Marlon was dancing in a sarong, he noticed a tall yet graceful white woman ogling him. She never looked at the other dancers, only at him. Hoping to impress her, he put more energy into his dance than he usually did.

Dripping with sweat at the end of the number, he came over to her. Her face looked vaguely familiar. Perhaps she was some actress he'd seen on the silver screen.

"Hi," he said. "I'm Marlon Brando."

"Miss Dunham has told me who you are," she said in a well-modulated, educated, East Coast charm school voice. She extended her hand.

"I'm Doris Duke."

* * *

The tobacco heiress, Doris Duke, was the wealthiest woman in the world. Her father, James B. Duke, had taught the world how to smoke readymade cigarettes, and made a $100 million fortune in the process, much of it passed on to his daughter when he died.

Doris Duke

In the dance hall, Marlon was immediately attracted to the "Million Dollar Baby." The eccen-

tric heiress was only in her mid-thirties at the time. He'd heard that Duke thumbed her nose at society. "I have a weakness for pleasure," she told him, "and a big appetite for adventure."

On his first night with her in her penthouse in New York, she revealed to him that her former lover, Errol Flynn, had been a Nazi spy during the early years of the war. She claimed that she'd dropped him for that reason, since she was a very patriotic American.

But something good, she claimed, had come out of her love affair with the swashbuckling actor. Flynn was a great believer in reincarnation, and he'd interested her in his passion. She'd consulted various reincarnation experts around the world, as the subject held great fascination for her.

"When I saw you dancing, I knew that we'd been lovers in a previous life," she told Marlon.

"Let's pick up where we left off," he said.

The details of the burgeoning Brando/Duke affair would never have been known were it not for one man. For several years in the Forties, Duke took as her confidant, Jimmy Donahue, the grandson of the millionaire Frank W. Woolworth. Jimmy was widely hailed at the time as the "playboy of the Western world." This was in the years before Jimmy launched his affair with both the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. "That insane camp," as Noël Coward called Jimmy, was also the cousin of the Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton. In spite of that, and in spite of Duke being the chief rival of Hutton, the tobacco heiress still took Jimmy into her confidence. That turned out to be a mistake.

Jimmy amused gay friends with hilarious stories about both Duke and Hutton, especially their romantic imbroglios. Much of what is known about Marlon and Duke is preserved through Jimmy's "oral history." He may have exaggerated certain details, as was his way, but the essentials of the affair appear to be basically what really happened.

Of course, Marlon himself contributed to the details of the affair in stories he told friends at the time. After his conquest of Duke, he openly bragged about his exploits at the New School. "For a young man born into modest circumstances in Nebraska, Doris Duke was the biggest feather in Marlon's cap," claimed Stella Adler, who seemed a bit peeved, even jealous, of Marlon's new, rich friend. Stella, however, immediately accepted Marlon's new friend because she saw Duke and her tobacco millions as a possible "angel" to fund various theatrical projects she might want to present in the future.

Jimmy Donahue

"The sex was glorious," Marlon told Carlo. "She went around the world on me, not missing a spot. She has an amazing curiosity and fascination with the male body, wanting to taste every inch of it. She likes to pet, fondle, and then lick voraciously. I had three orgasms before the butler arrived at ten o'clock the following morning with our eggs Benedict."

Marlon had more to say. "Doris is the first woman I've ever met who asked me what gives me pleasure in bed. With most women, I have to pleasure them. With Doris, she pleasures me. Listen, she's got great legs. Better than Betty Grable's. And great skin, too. Real smooth, like a baby girl's."

Not even asking Marlon if he smoked, Duke presented him with a sapphire-studded gold cigarette case before he'd left her suite on the morning following a night of seduction. "In Doris's world," claimed her first husband, James Cromwell, "she just assumed that all real men smoked."

On the first weekend of their meeting, Duke personally drove Marlon to Rough Point, her sprawling, drafty estate in Newport, Rhode Island. Jimmy Donahue was there, already drunk on champagne at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Marlon was fascinated by Duke's "cottage," the former summer home of the Vanderbilts. He went exploring from room to room, even though Duke told him that in all the years she'd lived at Rough Point, she'd never actually visited every room.

After lunch, Duke took both Jimmy and Marlon on a tour of her vast flowerbeds. "Doris insisted that flowers be blooming at all times during the growing season," Jimmy maintained. "She could not tolerate one dead flower in her beds. She constantly had the flowers rotated once they started to die down. She had all sorts of flowers, mainly gardenias and orchids, shipped in from Boston. She detested seeing a flower in its dormant period and demanded that it be dug up and a new one substituted."

"I was bored out of my mind," Jimmy said, "but Marlon seemed fascinated by her flowers. He told her that he had a friend, Wally Cox, who was a botanist. He said that Cox had given him an interest in all growing things."

"At one point on the tour, Doris went berserk," Jimmy said. "She discovered a dead petunia and immediately threatened to fire all her gardeners. To see Doris explode made the tour worthwhile for me. What's the use of having servants if you can't fire them in anger?"

Over dinner, while Jimmy drank, Duke hand fed Marlon almost an entire apple pie freshly baked from her kitchen. She told him that she'd grown impatient with New England and wanted to return to Hawaii to survey her estate, Shangri-La, there. "She invited both of us to go with her," Jimmy said. "Marlon accepted, I didn't, although I eventually ended up going anyway."

Over a late breakfast the following morning, Marlon told Jimmy of a

strange experience he'd had the night before. In the middle of the night, Marlon had gone downstairs for a glass of cold milk. He claimed that he'd encountered a "robber baron ghost" on the stairwell. "The ghost threatened to kill me. I ran all the way back up the steps and into the protective arms of Doris."

"Doris really seemed fascinated by Marlon," Jimmy claimed. "At one point she told me she was considering urging him to give up his career in the theater and come and live with her. I advised against that, although Marlon didn't have much career to give up at that point."

Apparently, at some point Duke made her offer to Marlon. He turned her down, later telling Stella Adler that he didn't want to be "the kept boy of the richest woman in the world."

Duke continued to keep Jimmy informed of her trysts with Marlon. She called him "a real man—and not one of those homosexuals I'm used to sleeping with."

Allegedly, she told Marlon that "life doesn't last forever and we owe it to ourselves to seek fulfillment and pleasure, even at the price of pain to others."

One night, according to Jimmy, Duke took Marlon to the Stork Club in New York. At one point, after a dialogue with columnist Walter Winchell, she went into a screaming rage. A drunken Winchell had asked Duke if he could be introduced to her "new boy." Duke summoned the *maître d'* and ordered Winchell "expelled" from her presence.

Jimmy found her story amusing. For many years, Duke had resented what Winchell wrote about her in his column. He always referred to her as either "the richest girl in the world," or "the girl who has everything."

"How can he possibly say I have everything?" she asked Marlon as her anger faded. "I don't have everything. At times I feel I have almost nothing. Life has not been fulfilling to me. In the decade coming up, I'm going to devote my life to fulfillment, both pleasure for my body and solace for my soul." Duke had frequently expressed such sentiments to Jimmy as well.

Marlon apparently agreed that "your way is the way to go. Full steam ahead. I'll be following right along in your footsteps." In the years ahead, Marlon, more or less, would follow Duke's battle plan.

Jimmy said that, at one point, Duke confided to him that she'd once picked up a muscled Hawaiian boy on the beach. "I just wanted to feel what it's like to have a fourteen-year-old make love to me." In his later years, Marlon too would be attracted to early teenagers, both boys and girls.

It seemed that neither Duke nor Marlon worried about legal consequences of child molestation. "I'm above the law," Duke once said to Jimmy. "If I get into trouble, I'll merely buy my way out. When you have unlimited money, you have unlimited power."

Jimmy believed that as the days and weeks went by, Duke was falling in love with Marlon. "He's not boring," she told Jimmy. "Always full of surprises, always holding out some new adventure for me. One night he took me along the dangerous part of the New York waterfront, and we checked into a two-dollar-a-night hotel. He seduced me in this rat hole. It was one of the most thrilling nights of my life. All men I've met before have wanted my money. Not Marlon. He seems completely unconcerned about my fortune. If he's got twenty dollars in his pocket, he'll spend it on me and to hell with tomorrow. For once in my life, I want to experience what it's like to be a vagabond. Marlon has even suggested to me that I hitchhike with him across the country to California. That we leave New York with absolutely no money and test our wits by living off the fat of the land."

Jimmy advised against that. "Oh, shit, Doris, that would kill you," he said. "You can't live without your gold bars, including some stored in Zurich with Hitler's Swastika on them."

Marlon soon discovered that Duke tired quickly of sex in the missionary position. She constantly referred to her posterior as "my pleasure spot," and admitted her fondness for sodomy to Jimmy. "She demanded that Marlon sodomize her repeatedly, and he seemed willing to indulge her passion," Jimmy claimed. "Doris was long known for taking it up the ass. From what I heard, she turned Marlon on to heterosexual ass-fucking. I could have done some ass-fucking with Marlon myself, if he had been willing. In his post-Doris era, I understand that Marlon liked to sodomize both young boys and girls, but he can thank Doris for teaching him one of life's greatest pleasures."

Duke had a sexual fetish, known to all her lovers and eventually to Marlon. Before intercourse, she demanded "one hour of foot worshipping" as sexual foreplay. "I've never eaten so many toes in all my life," he confided in Jimmy. "Until I met Doris, I think my record for eating toe jam was about five minutes. But she expects me to play with her feet for hours."

On what became Marlon's last weekend at Rough Point, where Jimmy was also "in residence," Duke confided to the two men that all her life she'd been frightened of being kidnapped. When she was only a young girl, her father had received endless kidnapping threats. "I always felt I was going to be abducted and held for ransom. My worst fear was that my daddy wouldn't pay the kidnappers one dollar of ransom and that they would kill me."

She claimed that a psychiatrist in Hawaii advised her to act on her worst fear. "I decided to face my fear of kidnapping but to tie it in with a sexual fantasy. Not only did I want to be kidnapped, but I wanted to be held in bondage and gang-raped. I think all women dream of being gang-raped."

"I know I do," Jimmy chimed in.

"Eventually, one of her lovers," Jimmy said, "actually staged a 'kidnap-

Rudolph Nureyev

ping' of Doris in Honolulu. He'd rounded up several handsome, virile boys on the beach and some muscled sailors along the waterfront. Each man was given a hundred dollars. Stripped nude and held in a beach house, Doris was repeatedly raped and frequently sodomized during her three-day ordeal."

"It was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life," she later told Marlon and Jimmy. "All my life I've exerted great power over others. For the first time, I was the victim, forced to do the bidding of my attackers. Frankly, I would never want to go through that experience again. But I got it out of my system, and I'm glad I did. I'm a better person because of what I've experienced. My body, bloody and bruised, was delivered back to Shangri-La with memories to last a lifetime. I immediately checked into a hospital."

On Marlon's "dates" with Duke in New York, they indulged their mutual passion for jazz piano, and were often seen at various Harlem night clubs. In some of these dives, Marlon would play the conga drums. On a few occasions, she took him on Sundays to a black church "somewhere in New Jersey" where she startled him by singing in the choir.

Faced with the possibility of other conquests, a seemingly endless parade, Marlon drifted away from Duke. Even so, they remained friends for life. He made several trips to visit her mansion at Shangri-La in Hawaii.

In later life, when Marlon became passionately involved in the plight of the American Indian, he interested Duke in his cause. He got her to contribute financially. At one point she donated 250 head of prime cattle to the Rosebud Indian Tribe.

Peter Brooke, a freelance journalist who was occasionally hired to do "undercover work" for Duke, took a cynical view of the Brando/Duke friendship. Brooke recalled a dinner attended by Marlon at Duke's New York penthouse. "Brando was just using her," Brooke claimed. "He was such a pompous ass."

Nonetheless, the friendship endured. A gardener at the Duke estate in Somerville, New Jersey, recalled being surprised one morning to see Marlon, clad only in a pair of jockey shorts, jogging across the front yard.

It was later learned that Marlon had come to visit Duke on her estate because he needed

Rudolph Nureyev

financing for a film script that interested him. It dealt with the plight of the American Indian. In the movie, Marlon would be cast as a hard-nosed government agent who comes onto an Indian reservation. There he meets and falls in love with a beautiful Indian maiden who wins his support for the plight of her people. According to the script, he resigns his government post and goes to live among the Indians, exposing the atrocities of the government. After showing some early enthusiasm for the project, Duke lost interest and never financed the film.

Surprisingly, according to Duke's servant, Leo Moffatt, the dancer, Rudolph Nureyev, was also visiting Duke at Somerville that weekend. He, too, had a film he wanted financed. The Russian's project was more fully developed than Marlon's vague idea.

Over dinner that night, Marlon patiently listened to Nureyev. He wanted to make a film based on the life of the legendary dancer, Nijinsky. Costing an estimated three million dollars, his film would be written by none other than Edward Albee and would be directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

On this film, Duke put up an initial $100,000, but soon learned of trouble once shooting began. Instead of the great Nijinsky as the film's centerpiece, Nureyev wanted to adapt the picture so that its story line became an autobiographical rehash of his own life.

"Duke pulled the plug," attorney Wes Fach of Somerville said.

Moffatt recalled a strange sight he'd seen when he went to round up Duke and her two male guests for lunch. "I was astonished to see Nureyev completely nude teaching Miss Duke and Brando how to belly dance. Miss Duke was without her top but had on some panties. Brando was in jockey shorts. But Nureyev, who looked amply endowed, was letting it flop around, as he taught them the movements. All my life I've regretted I didn't have a film clip of this unholy trio. Surely my clip would have become as famous as that of Marilyn Monroe singing 'Happy Birthday, Mr. President' to JFK."

Who you lookin' at?

Chapter Four

In his highly unreliable memoirs, Marlon remembered meeting Monty when he, Marlon, was appearing in *Truckline Cafe*. Marlon claimed that he went to see Monty's performance in *The Searching Wind*, the Lillian Hellman play in which Monty was cast opposite Cornelia Otis Skinner. Marlon, according to his memory, introduced himself to Monty and invited him out to dinner. That was simply not the case.

Instead, it was Edith Van Cleve who brought young Montgomery Clift—"the rage of Broadway"—backstage to meet Marlon near the close of his run in *I Remember Mama*. Provocatively, Marlon asked his potential rival a question even before introductions were made by the agent. "So, what's the verdict?" Marlon asked Monty, who was four years older. "Who's better looking? You or me?"

"Every day I get up in the morning, look at my puss in the mirror and ask myself the same question," Monty said, half-mockingly. "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest lad of them all? Montgomery Clift or Marlon Brando?"

"If you want my opinion," Edith chimed in to break the tension, "you're both the two hottest pieces of male tail ever to arrive in New York."

Because of his baby face and his almost poetic beauty and sensitivity, Monty looked even younger than the more masculine and well-built Marlon.

The following night, after composer David Diamond, while on the arm of Stella Adler, heard of this exchange between Monty and Marlon, he came up to Marlon at a party. "If it's some competition between Monty and you, I can tell you who's better looking, if you must know. Monty is actually better looking because your nose is all wrong. But you've got big balls, baby, and on stage it's the *cojones* that counts in an actor, not matinee pretty boy looks."

"I'll take your word for that, you Diamond in the Rough bastard," Marlon said, smiling.

Back at Marlon's dressing room for *I Remember Mama*, the actor suggested that Edith find herself some other male escort for the evening. Marlon put his arm around Monty and squeezed so hard that Monty winced in pain. "I hear you were born in Omaha," Marlon said. "That's my hometown. Omaha's

not big enough for two talents such as ours, so I guess it's just as well that we came to New York."

"The question is, is New York big enough to contain the two of us?" Monty said. "Or, are we going to clash? Be up for the same roles."

As Edith recalled, Marlon wanted to immediately assume some dominance over the less developed and more fragile Monty. Right in front of his agent, he gave Monty a kiss with tongue. "Before the rooster crows, you'll know who's the better man."

"How do you know *I'm* not the better man?" Monty asked, somewhat taken aback by Marlon's male aggression.

"Before dawn breaks, sweetcakes, I'll be on top. You, the bottom."

"Maybe the other way around," Monty said.

"The next few hours will tell."

Edith watched as the dazzling pair headed out of Marlon's dressing room and into the night.

What happened next was pieced together by Monty's brother, Brooks Clift, and their mutual friend, Bobby Lewis. Other friends over the years have also added their opinions.

"Their friendship—dare I call it an affair?—was brief and intense," said Stella Adler. "So intense that it was destined to burn out quickly. It was rivalry that tore them apart. They were both the two young geniuses of 1940s Broadway and later the two young geniuses of Hollywood."

"Many critics compared their acting style, but they were quite different," said director Elia Kazan. "Both, of course, were often cast as deeply troubled young men, their characters the victim of an uncaring society. Monty was more intellectual in his approach to a role. Marlon acted more out of instinct. Monty was soft, even fragile in his characterization. Marlon was more brutish, as best exemplified by his role as Stanley. Monty was so uptight that Marlon once told me that he felt Monty walked like he had a Mixmaster up his ass!"

Actor Kevin McCarthy and his wife, Augusta Dabney, whom he'd married in 1941, were Monty's best friends. McCarthy was the younger brother of famed writer and novelist, Mary McCarthy, and the cousin of former U.S. senator and presidential candidate, Eugene McCarthy. Over the years, Kevin made many comments about his doomed friend, Monty.

Kevin McCarthy

"A former child actor, Monty was a marvelous technician on stage," Kevin said. "Marlon, on the other hand, was the more sensual animal. Monty took it all very seriously, and Marlon more or less viewed acting as a joke, not a respectable

way for a real man to make a buck."

On their first date, according to Brooks Clift, both men had to explain to each other why they were 4-F. Monty said he was turned down because of chronic diarrhea caused by "some bug I picked up in Mexico." Marlon explained why he didn't make the grade, but assured Monty that "I'm a perfect specimen in every sense."

Monty Clift

Brooks said that the two young actors headed for the Battery on their first night together and raced each other for most of the way. "From what Monty later told me, they collapsed panting and out of breath. Monty always liked a bit of rough house, and he played with great intensity to release pent-up energy. He said that when he fell on the street, Marlon wrestled him to show him that he had more muscle and strength."

Brooks didn't know which man was the first to suggest it. But at one point in the evening Marlon and Monty decided to pull off their clothes and run through the almost deserted canyons of Wall Street. A military policeman spotted them and gave chase, but somehow they eluded him. "Both of them could have been shot," Brooks later said. "Those were tense times back then." Since they'd left their clothing on some dark street corner, Marlon and Monty were wearing "newspaper dresses" when they finally arrived at Marlon's apartment.

"They must have had a great roll in the hay," Bobby Lewis later said. "Because in the days and weeks ahead, they were seen everywhere together. When I went for a walk with them in Central Park, they even held hands, much to my embarrassment. Those were not tolerant times we lived in back then, but those two wildcats didn't seem to give a fuck."

Bobby claimed that their affair didn't last long. "Monty fell big for Marlon. They were both crazy. Two real lunatics. They'd do any stupid thing, like run out in front of traffic and see if cars could brake fast enough. They'd go to an expensive restaurant, then run out without paying the bill, flying down the street as a waiter gave chase. One night they pulled off their clothes and jumped nude in front of the fountain at the Plaza Hotel, splashing about. A cop arrested them, but somehow they got off with a small fine. Their agent may have come to the rescue, I'm not sure."

"Monty and Marlon could be two crazies on a Saturday night," Brooks said. "But there was a big difference. Marlon could pull himself together by Monday morning. Monty, on the other hand, couldn't come back from the brink so easily. Even in those early years, he could move into a whirlwind of despair, and no one could pull him back. Amazingly, he'd recover from his

bouts of depression. But as the years went by, those bouts of depression grew longer and longer until he couldn't escape his demons, regardless of how hard he fought to do so."

Kevin found that Monty was one of the most ambitious actors he'd ever known. Marlon seemed indifferent to future stardom. As proof of Monty's ambition, he told his new friend, Marlon, that, "I want to be the greatest actor in the world. And I know that means going to Hollywood. So far, I've resisted all offers. But it's almost a foregone conclusion that I'll be a big star sooner than later in Hollywood. I hate the idea of those fucking seven-year contracts. I don't want to become Louis B. Mayer's prize bull. If I do go to Hollywood, I'm going to demand the greatest of roles, the best of scripts, and directors like Howard Hawks."

"You talk big," Marlon told Monty, their exchange later reported to Brooks. "I think all of this shit talk shows a lack of self-esteem. It's very sad. I'll have to fuck these conceits out of you tonight."

Marlon later told Stella Adler that he thought Monty was a lost soul. "I know how to pace myself," Marlon assured his mentor. "Monty doesn't. He'll be a big, bright star but he'll soon flicker out." In that remark, Marlon turned out to be a prophet. "As for me, I'm in for the duration like a prizefighter who knows how to pace himself. The decades will go by, and I'll be out there emoting—not Monty."

Monty surprised acquaintances such as actor Tom Ewell, who said, "I often saw him at parties. On one occasion, at a party in Greenwich Village, Monty sat in Marlon's lap, fondling him and kissing him throughout the entire party. Admittedly, it was a mostly gay party. The straights there were very tolerant. But, even so, things like that were frowned upon. I once saw Kevin McCarthy and his wife, Gussie, with Monty. He was definitely a hugger and kisser, especially with the McCarthys. Monty was practically making love to his best friends."

Tennessee Williams always claimed that Monty had intense feelings for the handsome actor. "I think Monty was in love with him," the playwright maintained. "Kevin was the love of Monty's life." Kevin, however, was a heterosexual. Though he loved Monty as a friend, he did not want the relationship to become sexual.

"What Monty wasn't getting from Kevin, he got from Marlon," Bobby Lewis claimed.

The first rift in Marlon's relationship with Monty came because of a girl. Ann Lincoln, whom writer Robert La Guardia called "a cross between Judy Holliday and Margaret Sullavan." A rising young actress at the time, she met Monty when she appeared opposite him in *Foxhole in the Parlor*. Marlon remembered her as hard drinking and aggressive, with a strong sex

drive.

In his memoirs, Marlon wrote that Ann told him that Monty might be homosexual. "I found it hard to believe," Marlon said in those memoirs. "I imagine he was torn asunder by it." In so reporting, Marlon was completely misrepresenting himself. "How could he have found it hard to believe Monty's homosexuality when he was pounding his ass every night?" Bobby Lewis asked.

Marlon did have a point about Monty being torn apart by his gay streak. Monty went through his entire life struggling against his homosexual impulses.

"As for Marlon, he didn't seem to give a damn what anybody thought," Bobby said. "He moved from the bed of a woman to the bed of a man with no soul-searching at all. Marlon seemed to say, 'I am what I am,' and if you don't like it, go stick a feather up your crusty ass."

When Monty began to stray in his relationship with Ann Lincoln, she turned to his brother, Brooks, with whom she had an affair. When Monty found this out, he was enraged.

More pain was on the way. Soon after, perhaps as a means of making Monty jealous, Ann launched an affair with Marlon as well, all the while insisting that she still wanted to marry Monty. Whether it was true or not, word reached Monty that Ann was telling their friends in the theater that Marlon was far more preferable as a bed partner than Monty.

As the years went by, Monty and Marlon would grow apart, each of them rivals for the same dramatic roles. It was Monty, not Marlon, who was originally offered the lead in *On the Waterfront*. He turned it down. In 1958 Monty would be cast opposite Marlon in *The Young Lions*, and in 1967, it was Marlon who took over Monty's role in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* opposite Elizabeth Taylor. Originally Monty, at Taylor's urging, had been cast as the gay Army major in love with a handsome young soldier. Regrettably, Monty died of a heart attack before filming began.

Tennessee Williams hanging out

Later, during the actual shooting of the film, Marlon told Taylor, "Your friend Monty and I were alike in only one regard. Both of us had desperate hopes and nursed unspeakable desires."

When Taylor asked him to explain himself, Marlon said, "Both Monty and I have

human hearts. But they beat in the wrong places."

Brooks once asked his brother to define his brief but intense relationship with Marlon. Monty's response was enigmatic. "A mother substitute—that's all!"

* * *

"Except for Wally Cox, Marlon's affairs with men were launched with great intensity, but flickered out like a firecracker," Bobby Lewis claimed. "At one moment, insiders on Broadway would be talking about Marlon and Monty; and a moment later, the gossip was about Marlon and somebody else. Despite his many dalliances with men, especially in the Forties and Fifties, I think Marlon was basically straight. From all reports, he was particularly active as a homosexual in the 40s, less so in the 50s. After that, as he grew older, it appears that he led more or less a straight life—or so I heard. But with Marlon, you could never be sure."

Best pals Bobby Lewis, Wally Cox, Carlo Fiore, and Darren Dublin were always amazed at the clever balancing act Marlon maintained with his women. "I don't know how he did it, but he kept all of them dangling in the wind even though all his gals were aware of the existence of the others," Bobby said. "Not only that, but Marlon managed to pick up strays every week. He was so sexually magnetic that his women kept returning to his arms, even though by the time one of them woke up in the morning, Marlon might be gone from their warm bed and into an even warmer bed somewhere else. Marlon was definitely going through the most sexually charged period of his life. Maybe it was his Wheaties."

While enjoying intimacies with Celia Webb, Ellen Adler, and Blossom Plumb, Marlon also managed to launch an affair with Julie Robinson, an exotic-looking dancer from Katherine Dunham's troupe. Because of her relatively dark skin, and because she was a member of the Dunham dance troupe, many people thought Julie was a mulatto from the West Indies. Actually, she was Jewish, born of liberal New Yorkers who were described as comfortably well off.

Julie's best friend, Joyce Crosbie, another Dunham dancer, said, "Julie had charge accounts all over town when the rest of us had to sell pencils to pay for a cup of espresso at a Greenwich Village cafe."

From all reports, Julie fell in love with Marlon "and he with her," Crosbie maintained. "That is, Marlon fell in love with Julie in his fashion. However, I suspect that Marlon's true passion was the image that greeted him in the mirror each morning."

Even during the white heat of his affair with Julie, Marlon still hung onto

his other beauties. Julie was well aware of this. She constantly pressed Marlon for a commitment, because she believed she was his own true love. At least he told her that she was. "God only knows what he was telling his other women," Crosbie said.

Katherine Dunham also believed that "Marlon—at least for the moment—was in love with Julie. She urged marriage but he stalled her. Her affair with Marlon lasted, I guess, until his friend, Harry Belafonte, sang 'Yellow Bird' in Julie's ear."

After many a year—in 1957, to be exact—Julie and Belafonte got married. "Even when Julie more or less became Belafonte's woman, Marlon still pursued her," Dunham claimed. "She was one of my leading dancers, and I remember Marlon showing up in Cannes one afternoon hoping to win Julie back. He did handstands on the beach for her. But that didn't do the trick."

Both Belafonte and Julie were enrolled in drama classes at the New School with Marlon. As a West Indian with a father from Jamaica and a mother from Martinique, Belafonte found that his career as an actor was going nowhere. "Only Uncle Tom parts were offered to me," he told Marlon.

Eventually Marlon's interest in Julie subsided. As Marlon's own career soared with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Belafonte by 1950 was found at Martha Raye's Five O'Clock Club in Miami Beach, singing such "white women's songs" as Patti Page's "The Tennessee Waltz" or Rosemary Clooney's "Come On-a My House."

One day in the early Fifties, Marlon unexpectedly encountered Belafonte on the sidewalks of New York. Embittered and depressed, Belafonte had returned from his experience as an obscure entertainer in Florida. He told Marlon that on Miami Beach "there are curfews for people of my skin. A Negro can stay only in special hotels or drink from a special fountain for coloreds. He must use special but hardly equal facilities. It's special everything. I even had to have a goddamn pass to cross over from the colored section of town into the white."

Marlon listened with great intensity to tales of these atrocities, and promised that when he became "an even bigger star than I am now, I'm going to do something to right these injustices."

"Good," Belafonte said. "You can make a difference. Each and every one of us can make a difference. We have the power."

"One day we'll be marching arm in arm like brothers onto Washington," Marlon predicted.

Even though that day didn't come as Marlon envisioned it, he did in his way honor his long-ago commitment to Belafonte and to the civil rights movement.

* * *

Known in the 1880s as a tranquil, sleepy fishing village with a high percentage of Portuguese immigrants, Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod, had long been a retreat for artists, writers, and various "queer folk." Around the end of World War II, Marlon and Darren Dublin arrived there too.

Preceding them had been a long list of literari, including novelist Edna Ferber, whom Noël Coward always insisted was a man in disguise. "The other Edna," Edna St. Vincent Millay, had also been a visitor. Even Gertrude Stein was once seen wandering alone on the sand dunes. The diarist, Anaïs Nin, had also been a visitor during "one of her frequent lesbian periods," according to author Henry Miller, her lover, confidant, and muse.

Checking in for the first time during the summer of 1940, Tennessee Williams himself had called Provincetown "the frolicsome tip of the Cape." He'd been a regular visitor ever since.

"The playwright and the actor were destined to meet," said Peggy Guggenheim, also a frequent visitor to P-town. "Tennessee was born in St. Louis in 1911, and Marlon in Omaha in 1924. What an odd couple. But each artist needed the other. Tennessee supplied Marlon with the words; Marlon supplied the emotional intensity needed to bring those words into a memorable reality in the theater. Forget all those memoirs about them meeting much later. They knew each other—rather intimately, I suspect—long before Marlon ever took a ride on *A Streetcar Named Desire*."

Not as sophisticated in the early Forties as he later became, Tennessee—still imbued with some Midwestern mores—at first found the "behavior of the beach crowd shocking." The author, who would later write boldly about such subjects as cannibalism, compared himself to "an old auntie" at the time, suggesting that "I leave my glasses in my bedroom if I plan to go to the beach."

As the summers quickly passed, Tennessee more readily adapted to this new environment. "P-town was a place back then—perhaps even today—where one took one's pleasure as one found it," he told the author. "What I liked about the place was that it was unnecessary to disguise one's eccentricities. P-town offered liberation to those of us who harbored souls that had suffered repression somewhere else in America, as I did in the Middle West. Considering some of the secret passions that resided in the hearts of many of the summer residents, homosexuality was viewed as one of the lesser evils."

"The gay colony—I don't think we called it gay back then—was tolerated by the supposedly straight Portuguese fishermen and sailors in town," Tennessee said. "We queer ones provided a quick and easy way for them to supplement their meager incomes. Not bad. Two dollars in exchange for a fast blow job. Two dollars was the going rate until some vicious queen arrived

from Brooklyn Heights one summer. He started giving these men three dollars. We practically lynched this flamboyant dandy for causing immediate inflation after dark."

Sidney Shaw, a homosexual lyricist linked to the Dunham dance troupe, had turned Marlon on to the glories of summertime P-town. Planning to spend the summer at the Cape, Marlon arrived with only eighty dollars. "Bronzed, blond, and muscled, he was addicted to wearing jeans so tight you could tell that he was uncut," claimed summer resident Jesse Steele, one of the first to make the actor's acquaintance.

Yours truly

Completely lacking in talent, according to Peggy Guggenheim, Steele called himself a landscape painter. He was the scion of a wealthy auto-manufacturing family from Detroit, who sent him monthly payments to stay out of Michigan.

In those days, Steele was known as a "mincer." He dressed in flamboyant attire—"colors to challenge the rainbow," according to Tennessee—preferring pink and lavender. In spite of his effeminate manner and slight lisp, Steele was a favorite of the fishermen at the port, a scattering of beach boys, New England boat builders, and itinerant sailors.

His parties were "all the rage" that summer, attended not only by Tennessee, but by Peggy Guggenheim herself, along with her "lover of the moment," perhaps Max Ernst or Jackson Pollock.

The town's foremost sexual predators—Tennessee, Steele, and Guggenheim—bonded. All three shared a mutual belief. "A small stipend discreetly slipped to your man of choice for the night will guarantee a much more reliable erection," Steele claimed with a great degree of accuracy.

Tennessee and Steele would have frequent arguments and not speak for a few days. But the following day, all the wounds would heal, and the two of them would be seen biking along the main street of the town.

"Tennessee, with a few drinks in him, would often criticize what he called my profligate ways," Steele said. "Actually, he indulged in far more daring and dangerous sex than I did. At one point, his behavior became so outrageous that the couple with whom he was staying kicked him out. He was bringing back some of the more well-developed teenage sons of the local families. He was bragging about a steady diet of fifteen-or sixteen-year-old semen, which he told me was good for the skin. He was kind in his assessment of the age of these boys. I saw many of them. Fourteen if they were a day. His only requirement was that a young boy should have reached puberty. As for myself, I preferred more mature and manly men, those with a lot of experience. A man like Marlon Brando."

"I must have met Marlon his very first day in town," Steele claimed. "I'm not exactly saying that he was in town hustling. Well, not exactly. But if you wanted to give him a free dinner—and a big one at that—free lodgings in your home, and free drinks, he wasn't opposed to accepting such gratuities. All of us had Marlon that summer. He was passed around from one queen's mouth to another like Southern fried chicken at the communal table of a boarding house."

According to Steele, the big debate in bars that summer was over the size of Marlon's dick. Was it six inches or ten inches? "The actual measurement, depending on the queen telling the story, varied at least four inches. I was often asked to appraise Marlon's equipment, since everybody in P-town knew

I'd had him. I always said, 'I've had bigger but never tastier.' Marlon called it his noble tool, and I think that's the best description. We don't need to be vulgar size queens running along with a ruler."

If Steele is to be believed, and he often exaggerated, Marlon for a week or so was seen around P-town with Dame May Whitty on his arm. A dame by Order of the British Empire, the dowager of the British and American stage had been born in Liverpool, England, in the closing year of the American Civil War.

In 1945, she was appearing at the Provincetown Playhouse, repeating her role in *Night Must Fall*, in which she'd scored a hit on both the London and Broadway stages. She'd even repeated the role in 1937 in a film version opposite Robert Montgomery, for which she won an Oscar nomination.

Dame Whitty had seen Marlon's performance in *I Remember Mama* and had made his acquaintance backstage. "It's ludicrous to speculate anything sexual between those two," Steele said. "Her Majesty just enjoyed Marlon's company. She was to die in 1948, and I'm sure that she was no longer susceptible to the pleasures of the flesh by the time she began hanging out with Marlon. She did pick up his tabs, however, and so word got out that Marlon was her kept boy."

It was Dame Whitty who introduced Marlon to his benefactor that summer, Clayton Snow, hailed at the time as "The Queen of P-town," a title that Steele also claimed for himself. With a shrug, Steele maintained that "Claytina," as everyone called Snow, "looked like First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in 1934."

Clayton worked as the chief bartender at the Central House, a dive opening onto the water, next door to the Provincetown Playhouse. "Like the wartime queen of England, Dame Whitty liked a nip of gin every night," Steele said. "Sometimes more than one. Marlon was always at her side."

Dame Whitty suggested to Claytina that her actor friend needed a place to stay for the summer. By the very next day Marlon was living in Claytina's two-room cottage on a lane called Pumpkin Hollow, named after the large pumpkins an old grandmother once grew there for Halloween.

Dame May Whitty

"If there was a streak of cruelty in Marlon's character, it involved the devastating impressions he'd perform of Dame Whitty after she'd retired for the evening," Steele said. "His impressions weren't vicious, but deadly accurate. He had the bar in stitches. I also heard that when I wasn't around, he did swishy impressions of me too."

In the days ahead, Claytina was announcing to half of P-town that, "I've had Marlon. We've made a deal. In exchange for one rough-trade blow job a day, I'm giving him room and board. Claytina said that he'd told Marlon that he'd have to hustle his own drinks and spending money from the other P-town queens.

"Darren Dublin seemed to fade in and out of the picture," Steele said. "He wasn't always with Marlon. I have no idea what he was up to."

"Later reports claimed that Marlon rarely drank," Steele said. "But believe me, he was often drunk that summer in P-town. I don't want to leave the impression that he made out only with men. I knew more about his male conquests than his female ones. But I heard that he made out like a bandit with a lot of young women that summer, mostly actresses or dancers at the Playhouse. From what I observed, he liked women with dark skin. I don't think he was with these women for more than two or three nights, before moving on to some other belle. Marlon looked upon sex as a giant smörgåsbord, and he wanted a taste from every platter. One drunken night at Central House he told me that he'd acquired an appreciation for cunnilingus. 'Before this summer, I wasn't too much into going down on a woman,' he told me. 'Now I like it, not necessarily for the taste, but for the power I have over a woman while I'm performing the act.'"

Sometimes Marlon tried to pick up the wrong woman. One night at Central House, he ended up in the hospital. Approaching an attractive young Portuguese woman at the bar, he asked her to go to bed with him. Suddenly, at his back, Renaldo Salgado appeared. In the words of Steele, "this burly fisherman pulverized Marlon's pretty face, and I had to take him to the hospital for treatment. Later I told Marlon that in P-town we hit on the fishermen, not their wives. God, he could be dumb and daring at times."

Established in 1933, The Flagship was the most popular restaurant in P-town. Gertrude Stein and Anaïs Nin were long gone, but Tennessee was a regular patron. He appeared almost nightly with his lover, Pancho Rodriguez y Gonzalez, the strikingly handsome young desk clerk he'd met at La Fonda de Taos in New Mexico.

Arriving without Darren that night, Marlon was invited to join Tennessee's table by James Bidwell, an acquaintance of his. Tennessee had no objection. The playwright's *The Glass Menagerie* had opened at The Playhouse on 48th Street in New York on Easter Eve, 1945. Marlon had gone to see the play and its star, the incredible Laurette Taylor, whom he'd praised as "the world's greatest actress."

Admiring his work in the theater, Marlon was eager to meet Tennessee. Whether Marlon secretly hoped that the writer would be charmed by him and cast him in his next play is not known.

At the time of their historic meeting, Tennessee was struggling with a play called *The Poker Night*, whose title he later changed to *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

To the astonishment of the table, Marlon presented a drunken, cackling Tennessee with a piece of silver jewelry handmade by Wally Cox. Graciously accepting it in the style of Tallulah Bankhead, Tennessee slipped on the silver bracelet and dangled it in front of the other guests for an inspection.

"Then his eyes moved in on Marlon with that inner radar he seemed to possess," said Bidwell. "It was love at first sight, at least on Tennessee's part."

"Does that mean we're engaged?" he asked Marlon, laughing at his own remark.

Sitting beside Tennessee, Pancho stared at the new boy in town with a barely controlled fury. He refused to speak to Marlon when introduced by Bidwell.

"Oh, that blond hair," Tennessee proclaimed not only to Marlon but to the table at large, as he took in the actor's sensitive, poetic face, devoting equal time to the muscles encased like sausage in a white T-shirt and the tight jeans. Tennessee looked over at Pancho, who, in spite of his stunning looks, was a brunette. "All summer long, I've been famished for blonds." He would later insert that same sentiment into his play, *Suddenly, Last Summer*. "Now the gods have rewarded me for writing *The Glass Menagerie*. They've sent a Viking god directly from the shores of Valhalla."

He extended his hand to Marlon, the Wally Cox bracelet dangling from his arm. "I am Tennessee Williams. Soon all the world will know of me. I already know who you are. Marlon Brando. Soon all the world will know of you too. As I told John van Druten after sitting through his *I Remember Mama*, I didn't remember Mama at all. But who could forget Marlon Brando and that fabulous erection you were showing on stage?"

* * *

Much to Pancho's regret, Marlon continued to show up at the Flagship where he would "bum a meal off Tennessee." Increasingly isolated, Pancho sat beside his lover nightly, being virtually ignored as Tennessee amused Marlon with stories.

Occasionally, Tennessee would look over at Pancho and make some comment as if he weren't there. "Pancho fears he will lose me to the seductions that fame will bring. When one becomes famous, one must share oneself with the world, like it or not. When you become famous, Marlon, and I'm sure you will, you will understand the great burden that fame imposes on a life. Your own life will never be yours again."

The playwright also told Marlon that Pancho preferred a "one-to-one relationship, but at night my heart is a lonely hunter. I have never endorsed the idea of sexual exclusivity. One must venture forth each night onto the lonely beaches to encounter another like-minded but lost soul. In him, we can sometimes find greater tenderness and a rawer and immediate emotion than one can encounter in more stable relationships." At that point of Tennessee's monologue, according to Steele, Pancho stormed out of the cafe. "When Tennessee suggested that I, too, should leave him alone to talk theater with Marlon, I made my exit like Lynn Fontanne on her final curtain call," Steele said.

On other nights, in front of Marlon, Steele, and other members of the gay colony, Tennessee amused his listeners, who rarely contributed. "It was important to Tennessee that everybody be an audience," Steele said. "Most of us had already heard his stories, everyone except Marlon. He took in every word that Tennessee said, viewing it as Holy Writ."

Tennessee amused the table with stories that he'd received a letter from Joan Crawford, stating her desire to appear on Broadway in his play, *Battle of Angels*. "With a lot of rewriting, I think you might tailor this role for my particular talents," Crawford wrote. "I see that it might become a vehicle for myself." Cackling, Tennessee dismissed the idea of Crawford. In the pre-*Mildred Pierce* months in which she'd written the letter, her career had virtually collapsed, and she was hoping to rekindle it by appearing on Broadway.

Tennessee said he'd taken the play to Tallulah Bankhead and had come back in five days to get her reaction. "Darling," she told him, "let's have some bourbon and branch water while I tell you what a dreadful play you've written. It's indecent."

He finally persuaded Miriam Hopkins to take the role. After bombing with it, according to Tennessee, she shouted at him, "Damn you, Tennessee Williams. First, I lost the role of Scarlett O'Hara. Now this atrocity you inflicted on me."

On yet another night Tennessee entertained Marlon with stories of his short term at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. He'd been instructed to write what he called a "celluloid brassière" for Lana Turner, entitled *Marriage Is a Private Affair*. The playwright confessed that he spent most of the day working on his script, *The Gentleman Caller,* which was later entitled *The Glass Menagerie*.

"My writing wasn't going well," he said. "One very hot, muggy afternoon I was smoking far too many cigarettes and drinking much too much bourbon. Suddenly, there was such a rap on my door that I thought the Devil himself had been sent to reclaim me. Hiding the bourbon in my desk, I answered this urgent summons. To my surprise, little Margaret O'Brien was on the other side of the door. She was actually scheduled for an appointment in some other

office and had gotten lost. The little tramp took one look at me and informed me that I was drunk, information I already possessed. I didn't need this smaller and more loathsome version of Shirley Temple to tell me that."

Neither Steele nor anyone else knew on what night Tennessee invited Marlon for a walk on the beach. It probably occurred the weekend that Pancho traveled alone to Boston, Tennessee refusing to go with him. The playwright took the actor for a moonlit walk to one of the Peaked Hill "dune shacks," informing him that Eugene O'Neill had once occupied one of these shanties. Marlon asked Tennessee what he thought of the plays by O'Neill. "Isn't money beautiful?" was Tennessee's enigmatic reply.

Over "pillow talk" with a future lover, Frank Merlo, Tennessee reported what took place that night between Marlon and himself.

"I think you and I might find a bit of comfort with each other," Tennessee said to Marlon. "Perhaps you can find solace for your pain by suckling on my not altogether fallen breasts."

Marlon erroneously told Tennessee that he was straight.

"Yes," Tennessee said, "don't you find that the land here, especially the weather at night, all gray and foggy with strange lights, evokes a stage setting? As for being heterosexual, that is a lofty ambition not achieved by all of us. On many a dark night, when the heart feels desolate, you might need my nurturing. All you have to do is lie back on the warm sands, perhaps with the ocean water cleansing your feet. I'll transport you to a sublime shore in a far and distant land. Your heterosexuality will not be compromised in any way. I'll even pay. I know you're short of money, and I'll give you five dollars, and that's my highest price ever."

"I don't do it for money," Marlon said, conveniently forgetting his recent job in New York with the London agency.

Marlon turned him down that night. But, according to Frank Merlo, "Tenn got his man about two weeks later." To Frank, Tennessee remembered seducing a slightly drunken Marlon as the "tide lapped under the wharf and the hungry seagulls screeched overhead."

"I managed to extract two offerings from that magnificent tool before I would remove that treasure from my mouth," Tennessee said. "By the time Marlon's cannon shot for the last time, the early streaks of dawn were in the sky. I had found my new Kip in spite of my other romantic entanglements at the moment."

Tennessee was referring to Kip Kiernan, a handsome blond youth and former lover of his who had died of a brain tumor at the age of twenty-six.

"For a brief time," Tennessee told the author but not for publication, "I had a vision of myself becoming Mrs. Marlon Brando, living in some rose-covered cottage on the Cape. There in our cozy nest by the sea, we'd settle in

and enjoy everlasting happiness until the end of time. Although Marlon that summer temporarily turned his splendid body over to me, it was a vessel I was to possess only briefly. He was destined to share his magnificence with others. *So many others*."

* * *

Having given up a steady acting job with *I Remember Mama*, Marlon faced an uncertain future on Broadway when cast in the Maxwell Anderson play, *Truckline Cafe*. It was the first presentation of Playwrights' Company, a theatrical partnership formed by Harold Clurman and fast-rising Elia Kazan. The new company had grown out of their shared Group Theatre experiences in the 1930s.

Kazan was already a name when he agreed to produce *Truckline Cafe*, with Clurman directing. Monty Clift had already sold Kazan to Marlon by raving about his staging of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth* in 1942, in which the young actor had appeared opposite such veterans as Tallulah Bankhead, Fredric March, and Florence Eldridge. Kazan was also fresh from his film success, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, based on the best-selling book by Betty Smith.

Stella Adler had threatened Clurman that if her husband didn't cast Marlon in the small but meaty role of Sage MacRae, he would no longer get laid.

Marlon's part-to-be was that of a psychologically troubled returning veteran from World War II, who drowns his unfaithful wife in the Pacific Ocean before turning himself in. Kazan's motives for agreeing to produce the play still remain unclear, because from the first reading of Anderson's script, he'd pronounced it "God damn dull." Clurman, however, saw possibilities not only in the play but in Marlon himself.

The setting for the seedy cafe is somewhere along the coastal road between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Most of the action, such as it is, takes place offstage and is described by the actors.

Marlon's first reading in front of both Clurman and Kazan was a disaster. He mumbled all his lines and couldn't even be heard in the second row, according to Clurman. Infuriated, Kazan stormed out of the theater. "This might be your wife's fuck buddy," he

Wet entrance on stage in *Truckline Cafe*

called out to Clurman in front of Marlon, "but he's no actor."

Eventually the director convinced Kazan that he could "force" a performance out of Marlon. But Kazan remained doubtful. When Edith Van Cleve, in her role as Marlon's agent, presented his salary demands of five hundred dollars a week, "Gadge"—his nickname—"practically threw me out of his office," she recalled. After fierce negotiations, often riddled with denunciations, Edith got Marlon a salary of two-hundred and seventy-five dollars a week.

Marlon was the most inexperienced actor in the troupe which Kazan and Clurman had assembled. Also appearing in the play were Kevin McCarthy, Lou Gilbert, Karl Malden, Richard Waring, and Ann Shepherd cast as Marlon's soon-to-be-murdered wife.

Marlon was already a friend of Kevin McCarthy. And from the beginning, Marlon liked Karl Malden and admired his work. It was to become a mutual admiration society. Neither Karl nor Marlon knew that at that moment of their coming together, Tennessee Williams was laboring over a play that would bring fame to both actors.

Kazan was not alone in his disappointment with Marlon's acting. Maxwell Anderson, who had scored major successes with such plays as *Winterset* and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, thought Marlon was the worst actor ever to set foot on a Broadway stage. He referred to him as "that idiot."

It was Clurman who had introduced Marlon to Anderson, a playwright who had been described by the drama critic John Mason Brown as a "great, shy bear of a man." It was hardly a historic moment in the theater. The playwright and the actor traded insults.

"Why don't you appear in a play by Lillian Hellman instead of ruining mine?" Anderson provocatively asked. "Maybe something by Eugene O'Neill. Let *that one* suffer a bit."

"I understand you're a playwright of ideas," Marlon countered. "That you are taken most seriously, mostly by yourself." After delivering that line, Marlon stalked away.

At dress rehearsal Marlon showed up "in the tightest pair of green fatigues ever worn on a Broadway stage," said Richard Waring. "It showcased his genitals."

On seeing his wardrobe, Kazan shouted at Marlon. "We're not putting on a male burlesque show, Brando. Make those fatigues two sizes larger—and that's an order!"

Kazan was so disappointed at dress rehearsal that he urged Clurman to fire Marlon before opening night and find an immediate replacement. Originally, Kazan had wanted veteran actor Burgess Meredith for the role.

In a last-ditch effort to rescue Marlon in the part, Clurman came up with

a scheme. Only the night before, he had told Stella, "Marlon is withdrawn, completely inarticulate. He throws away his lines upstage. He talks like he's got marbles in his mouth. He is, in essence, catatonic."

He felt that "Marlon can't connect with the deepest part of himself. His pain is too great. That's why he mumbles. He's trying to cover up his real emotions."

While the rest of the troupe broke for lunch, Clurman asked Marlon to stay behind. Once the theater was emptied, he ordered the actor to climb a rope hanging from a gridiron above the stage. As he climbed the rope, Clurman yelled for Marlon to shout your lines "until your lungs burst." When Karl Malden returned from lunch, he was shocked to discover Clurman kicking Marlon, who lay screaming hysterically on the stage floor.

"Like a wild horse, Clurman had tamed Marlon," Malden said. "From then on, he could get the lines out of this throat. Before that brutal ordeal he went through, his lines seemed permanently lodged in his throat."

Even though Kazan at first "detested" Marlon, he very gradually won over the director's begrudging respect. "The Devil himself keeps the heart beating of this son of a Turkish rug salesman," Marlon told Clurman.

With his stocky build and dark complexion, Kazan was thirty-six years old when he met the young actor with whom he'd be forever associated in the public's memory, both in the theater and on film.

Truckline Cafe opened at New York's Belasco Theatre on February 27, 1946. For the purposes of what appeared about him in the program, Marlon switched the place of his birth once again, claiming to have been born in Bangkok, Siam.

Carlo Fiore watched the performance from backstage, claiming that Marlon had traversed the full circle, "a metamorphosis from dilettante to dedicated actor."

In preparation for his final scene, Carlo had watched Marlon race up and down an iron spiral staircase so that he'd arrive on stage breathless. A few seconds before his appearance, two stagehands doused him with buckets of ice-cold water, so that it would appear that he'd just emerged from the chilly Pacific.

Brando and Carlo Fiore

At the close of the play, Marlon's confession of the murder, a five-minute monologue, stopped the show and brought on a thunderous ovation. In his performance, he perfectly captured the war vet's sensitivity with an underlying hidden violence that could erupt at any moment. The conclusion of the play involves a posse that bursts

into the cafe to seize and haul him away, perhaps for a lynching. "Marlon pranced off the stage as if performing a dance of death, eager for his annihilation which he'd lacked the courage to do himself—either by a bullet to his head or drowning in the ocean," according to Carlo Fiore.

Writing for *The New York Times*, critic Lewis Nichols suggested that Anderson must have penned his play "with his left hand in the dark of the moon." John Chapman of the *New York Daily News* lambasted *Truckline Cafe* as "the worst play I've ever seen in my history of reviewing plays."

Yet Marlon's personal notices were raves. One critic, whose name seems to have been lost in the controversy surrounding the play, wrote, "Montgomery Clift, sit up and take notice! A Broadway star has come along to challenge even your brilliance." That remark was the beginning of a professional battle between the two handsome young actors that would last for years.

Backstage at the play, Marlon met veteran actress Jessica Tandy, who'd come to his dressing room not for seduction, as was so often the case with Marlon, but to compliment him on a "performance that is truly brilliant." Jessica was just months away from playing Blanche to Marlon's Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Director Jules Dassin was more to the point. "Oh, shit, this kid is great!"

To counter the bad reviews, the Playwrights' group took out ads attacking the critics, hoping to turn *Truckline Cafe* into a *cause célèbre* on Broadway. The ploy didn't work, even though Anderson lambasted his attackers as "the hound dogs of the press." The show would run for only eight performances, with Marlon finding himself out of work.

Even so, his short performance had made him the toast of Broadway. He was suddenly famous, vowing to punch anybody in the nose who called him "the new Montgomery Clift."

Marlon himself claimed that "Nothing, I learned, attracts women more than fame, money, and success."

Once again, Hollywood agents were pounding on his door. In bed, Marlon instructed his lover *du jour*—male or female—"to tell the fuckers I've gone home to Nebraska."

He did agree to meet with Margaret Webster, the British director and actress, at her apartment. She offered him the role of *Hamlet* in her repertory company production. He told her he'd get back to her. In a few days, he showed up at her door with a tinned can of imported French pâté as a gift. Attached to it was a note. He'd scribbled, "To be or not to be, alas, but for poor Marlon it's not to be."

* * *

On most lists of Marlon's lovers appears the name of Leonard Bernstein, the flamboyant composer and pianist who would captivate Broadway with such smash hits as *On the Town* or *West Side Story*.

Leonard Bernstein

It was generally assumed that Marlon met Bernstein through their mutual friend, Stella Adler. Apparently not. His first encounter with this musical giant, known for his versatility and boundless energy, was far more casual than that.

Before he started earning a decent living as an actor, Marlon often "crash-landed" at the seedy Park Savoy Hotel. His sometimes girlfriend Celia Webb lived in a room with him at this hotel with her young son.

The hotel stood on 56th Street, off Seventh Avenue. Since it was only two blocks from Stella's apartment, it was easy for Marlon to continue his visits—and presumably his affair—with his mentor.

The Park Savoy attracted struggling young actors from the Broadway stage, all of whom seemed to be perpetually out of work. At various times, actor Tom Ewell was in residence, and could be seen bringing home sailors—his favorite seafood—that he'd picked up in waterfront bars. During her so-called "lesbian period," Judy Holliday also lived here, as did Adolph Green and Betty Comden.

"On the same floor, where we shared a communal kitchen, one room would be filled by an out-of-work hoofer, the next room by an old-age pensioner, and yet a third room by a very busy Times Square hooker," Tom Ewell revealed in Key West during the filming of *The Last Resort*. "I met and became very friendly with Marlon at that time. He'd change lovers, both male and female, several times in the course of a week. He was never faithful to that poor Celia Webb."

Marlon's friend, Darren Dublin, lived at the hotel for a while, as did actress Maureen Stapleton. The landlady, Estelle Rose, weighed in at 225 pounds and spoke in a thick Brooklyn Jewish accent. She had a love/hate relationship with Marlon. She loved him when he paid his $18-a-week rent and hated him when he didn't. Ewell said that on several occasions Rose padlocked Marlon's door and wouldn't grant him access to his possessions until he came up with the money.

"Rose had been an old hoofer herself back in the Twenties," Ewell said. "She was a sort of a clone of Sophie Tucker and reputedly had the most vulgar act in show business. Marlon always seemed enchanted by her and would

listen respectfully for hours to her stories of the old days on Broadway. One night he told me he fucked her. He might have lied, but I believed him. You could not believe the types he hauled into his hotel room. Types that could never get picked up by anybody but Marlon."

Locked out one night, Marlon crashed at the pad of two transvestites who did a revue every Saturday night on Bleeker Street in The Village. "His friends at the hotel just assumed he was fucking them too," Ewell claimed. "On some nights when he found his door bolted, Marlon crashed in Darren's room, sleeping on the floor."

One night, at least according to Ewell, Marlon came home at two o'clock in the morning to find his room padlocked once again. He'd forgotten to pay the rent and had spent all his cash. Just as he was pounding on the door to Rose's room, Leonard Bernstein entered the building. Learning of Marlon's plight, the brilliant young composer invited the young actor to share his room for a sleep-in.

Bernstein had been appointed music director of the New York City Symphony Orchestra, so why he still kept a room at the low-rent Park Savoy when necessity no longer dictated it is a matter of conjecture. Ewell speculated that the room "came in handy for Lenny's off-the-record assignations."

Although he could never be sure, Ewell was convinced that Marlon didn't sleep on the floor that night but was invited into Bernstein's bed. "All of us knew in those days that Lenny was far more gay than he was straight. Marlon was very handsome back then. I propositioned him once or twice but he turned me down. Frankly, I think I looked better than some of the riffraff he dragged in."

In an affair that evoked the one Marlon had had with Clifford Odets, "he and Lenny became an item," Ewell claimed. "They were probably lovers for a month at least. After the semen stopped flowing, they remained friends for years to come. Marlon always had this thing for accomplished Jewish artists, be they female or male, and Lenny was just his cuppa . . . at least for a while."

Years later, in 1954, it would be Marlon who would convince Bernstein to craft the musical score for *On the Waterfront*. Until then, the composer had resisted writing music for the film industry, but Marlon was very persuasive. Bernstein told Marlon that, "I find it very unsatisfactory to write a score whose chief goal is to be unobtrusive."

Tom Ewell

On the set of *On the Waterfront*, Director Elia Kazan remembered that "Lenny always gave Marlon a tongue to taste when greeting him, usually right in front of the whole cast. I always turned away at such displays of male bond-

ing." Monty Clift maintained that Kazan was a homophobe.

Bernstein later confessed to fellow gay composer Benjamin Britten and others that, "Marlon was my one true love. Now I know what Judy [Garland] meant when she sings so beautifully about the man who got away. Marlon broke my heart. While it lasted, it was wonderful. Reason enough to be born." High praise indeed. Even assuming that Bernstein exaggerated the affair, he did harbor "a passionate affection for Marlon," as he confided to Stella.

"As for Marlon," Ewell said, "I don't think he gave sex with Lenny his primary attention."

Marlon did agree to disappear with Bernstein from the New York scene for about ten days. None of their friends knew what had happened to them.

Dorothy Raymer, a longtime columnist for *The Key West Citizen*, said that Marlon and Bernstein landed in Key West, where she encountered them on several occasions in the bars along Duval Street. Bernstein had discovered the glories of Key West in 1943, and wanted to share the town with Marlon. Marlon told Dorothy that he liked the old ramshackle seaport more than he did Provincetown, and he thought the redneck locals—called "conchs"—were, in his words, "fun as a fart and a half."

"They acted here like two men very much in love," Dorothy claimed. "But in Key West we've always been accustomed to that. In those days, I wore hibiscus in my hair. I remember that Marlon and Lenny took the flowers from my hair and wore them in their own hair at one of the local clubs. It was all very gay. Actually, back then we called it queer."

"Once," Dorothy said, "at a club on Duval called Sloppy Joe's, Marlon, accompanied by Bernstein on the piano, came out dressed like Dorothy Lamour in a sarong. He had a pet chimp with him. Borrowed from God knows who. He called it Bogo like the chimp who appeared with Lamour in that film, *The Jungle Princess*. Pretending, like Lamour, to be the tropical babe Ulah, Marlon gave a brilliant impersonation of Lamour singing *Moonlight and Shadows* as he cavorted with Bogo."

"The only trouble I ever had with Lenny," Dorothy claimed, "was that he liked to stick his tongue down my throat every time he greeted me. Marlon might have liked that but not me. I feared where Lenny's tongue had only recently been."

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Veteran character actress Estelle Winwood, performing in James Leo Herlihy's play *Crazy October*, reflected on her marriage to Guthrie McClintic, the eminent producer and director. "I did have one homosexual husband. At least. Guthrie McClintic. He was an extremely famous Broadway producer

Estelle Winwood

who loved his fellow man—often. I wasn't the only actress he married. He married Katharine Cornell. But it was different for her than me. Like her husband, she was attracted to her own kind. You know: Birds of a Feather fornicate together."

One night, near the closing of *Truckline Cafe*, Guthrie was sitting in the audience, mesmerized by Marlon's performance. Talking with Marlon backstage after the performance, Guthrie proposed that Marlon should consider auditioning for the role of the fey poet, Eugene Marchbanks, in George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, opposite his wife, Cornell. "It'll give you a chance to star opposite America's Duse," Guthrie said.

"I will only audition if you audition for me as a director," Marlon told the startled Guthrie. Instead of being insulted, Guthrie seemed wryly amused at Marlon's insolence, and, as was obvious to the rest of the cast of *Truckline Cafe*, the producer/director was powerfully turned on by Marlon.

There has been much speculation about why Marlon accepted a role so unsuited to his talents. At the time he was well aware that his friend and rival, Monty Clift, had appeared with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in Robert E. Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night* at the Alvin Theatre in New York in 1940. Depending on which critic you talked to, Lynn and Fontanne were the first couple of the American theater. Others considered Cornell and Guthrie the first couple of the American theater. Ironically, both the Lynn/Fontanne and the Cornell/McClintic marriages were called "lavender," meaning in name only, with Lunt and McClintic preferring men as lovers, and Fontanne and Cornell pursuing women, often young actresses.

During the run of *There Shall Be No Night*, Lunt fell madly in love with Monty, then only nineteen.

Bobby Lewis speculated that Marlon planned to duplicate the experience Monty had with Alfred Lunt but with Guthrie McClintic instead. "It was an amazing symmetry," Bobby said, "and I don't believe it was without design. When it came to experiences, Marlon didn't want Monty to have one up on him. Marlon also knew that Monty wanted the role of Marchbanks for himself. Actually, Monty would have been far more convincing as the effete poet than Marlon."

Katharine Cornell

Cornell had first appeared in *Candida* in 1924. She had revived the play several times

since, scoring great hits with Orson Welles in 1937 and Burgess Meredith in 1942 playing Marchbanks. McClintic planned to rotate performances of *Candida* with a modern dress adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. In that play, Marlon would be cast in a minor role as "The Messenger."

Marlon's involvement with the plays almost fell apart during his first meeting with Cornell, the *grande dame* of the American theater. A few minutes after their initial greetings, Marlon said, "I read Shaw's play. The part calls for you to be thirty-three years old. I hear you *admit* to being fifty." Actually, Cornell was forty-eight years old at the time. But her Guthrie was a ripe fifty-three years old when he fell for Marlon, whom he offered a salary of three-hundred dollars a week, a very respectable fee for Broadway actors in the mid-Forties.

Having successfully coped with the insults of another young *wünderkind* in the theater, Orson Welles, Cornell forgave Marlon for his impertinent remark. Rehearsals began at their townhouse at 23 Beekman Place, a brownstone the couple had purchased in 1923 for twenty thousand dollars.

The joke around Broadway at the time was that Guthrie was successful at directing his wife because he secretly wanted to play all her roles himself, everything from Juliet to Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Almost from the beginning, Guthrie realized that he might have cast Marlon in the wrong play. The macho-looking young actor had been cast as an effeminate, eighteen-year-old poet with a delicate, childish voice. Shaw's stage instructions had called for the character of Marchbanks to appear with a "haunted, tormented expression and a shrinking, shy manner."

"At least Marlon got *that* part of his character right," Guthrie would later say.

Cornell represented the old-fashioned school of acting, as opposed to Marlon, who was a Method-trained exponent of psychological naturalism. In her exalted romantic style, Cornell delivered her lines in a striking vibrato, using gestures so extravagant that they'd have been better suited to the character of Norma Desmond as portrayed by Gloria Swanson in the upcoming film, *Sunset Blvd.* "Acting with Cornell is like trying to bite down on a tomato seed," Marlon wrote sister Fran.

Part of the cast was veteran character actress Mildred Natwick who had appeared in *Candida* in 1937 and again in its revival in 1942, playing the role of Prossie. "As long as there are spinster and biddy parts," Mildred told Marlon, "I'll have a job." That drew a laugh from him. He adored Mildred, and the two actors became fast friends. Unlike Cornell, Mildred did not take herself too seriously.

"By the second week, it became apparent to me that Guthrie was seducing young Marlon," Mildred recalled years later. "Cornell was well aware of

what was going on. In my opinion, she encouraged the affair. It kept Guthrie happy and off the streets. Some of his rough trade pickups in the past had led to trouble. Kate feared scandal. At least with Marlon, there would be no scandal."

"If there was trouble, and there was, it came when Guthrie fell madly in love with Marlon," Mildred later said. "The love affair was doomed from the start. I'm sure Marlon did not feel the same way about Guthrie that this middle-aged man felt for him. He did find Guthrie amusing, however. No one was filled with more theater lore than Guthrie, and no one could be more entertaining when he wanted to. He was a regular *bon vivant*. It was sad to watch, however. Guthrie was following Marlon around like a little puppy. Marlon seemed indifferent to the whole matter. He did share Guthrie's bedroom. At the townhouse, Kate and Guthrie occupied separate master bedrooms."

Sir Cedric Hardwicke was appearing in the play as Cornell's pastor husband. "Marlon was contemptuous of this gifted but old-style performer," Mildred said. "Marlon told me, 'When I'm around that guy, I always try not to stand in a downwind.'"

Hearing the remark, Hardwicke got even with Marlon in his memoirs, *A Victorian in Orbit*. He declared Marlon "useless as Marchbanks." Marlon countered that Hardwicke was a "Johnny One- Note actor."

When Marlon wasn't at the Beekman Place address, he was sharing the apartment of Wally Cox on 57th Street. "It was like Grand Central station," Maureen Stapleton later remembered. "People came and went at all hours of the day and night. I don't think Marlon and Wally ever locked their doors—not that there was anything to take if some bandit dropped in."

"Marlon might have been involved with a number of famous men in the theater," Mildred said, "and was in fact a serial seducer of such gentlemen. But he was seducing far more girls at the time, at least from what I could see. I visited Wally and Marlon several times at their wretched flat. At the time, I heard that Wally and Marlon were having an affair, and I believed that. But he was also dating every dark-skinned, exotic young woman in New York. I remember seeing him at one time with an incredibly short girl from Nicaragua, another time with this beauty from Thailand. Girls he dated were definitely the type who couldn't get an escort for Saturday night. I recall one particularly overweight beast of burden. When Marlon caught me appraising her, he whispered in my ear, 'Fat girls need a good fucking from time to time—not just the skinny ones.' I truly am convinced that even though Marlon pursued sex daily, it didn't really mean that much to him. He rather bluntly shared

Maureen Stapleton

his feelings with me one night. 'I need to take one good crap a day or I feel rotten,' he said. 'I also need at least one good lay a day. I can live without the fuck but I'm miserable without the shit."

"Almost from the beginning of their relationship, Marlon made it clear to Guthrie that if he wanted him, he'd have to put up with his many affairs with women," Mildred said. "There was a young girl I remember that Marlon brought backstage. I think her name was Donna Bedford. A struggling actress at the time, she seemed very much in love with Marlon. He paraded this unfortunate creature in front of Guthrie who became very jealous and ordered her out of the theater. It was like Marlon was sending a signal to Guthrie. In essence, Marlon was saying, 'Listen, you old pervert, this is what I'm really into. Not you.' He could be cruel to his lovers. And never faithful. No, not that."

Once at Wally's apartment, Bobby Lewis challenged Marlon about his growing reputation on Broadway for sleeping with influential men in the theater. "I know you've got talent but some of your enemies are saying you only win parts because of the casting couch. I thought I'd really piss Marlon off by telling him that. Maybe it was the wine speaking for me. But he didn't seem to take offense at all."

Bobby struggled to recall Marlon's words at the time. "'To be an actor,' he said, 'I have to taste and sample much that life offers. That taste, like the lemon, is bitter. Yet under the right conditions, the lemon yields one of the great flavors on earth. Often I don't stand around to see what life offers, but I go out and discover what it can offer. That means the good, the bad, and the ugly. I need to experience it all, even if it means dealing with Cornell and Guthrie and their endless demands. I'm storing away experiences in my subconscious. I can summon these experiences when I need them on the stage. It's like removing a box from storage in my own personal warehouse. It's my duty to have as many experiences as I possibly can so that I can interpret the various stages of life's realities.'"

In a more refined version that he'd polish over the years, Marlon gave very similar views in a statement on acting he made in 1960, repeating the same sentiments again in 1962 before going silent on the subject.

On opening night, with some exceptions, the critics were unkind to Marlon. Stanley Kauffmann found that he "talked like a cab driver and moved like a third baseman." Writing in *The New York Times*, Lewis Nichols found Marlon's interpretation of Marchbanks "more sniveling than spirited."

Hollywood columnist James Henaghan later said, "I couldn't believe how effeminate Brando was in the role. Later when I went to see his macho performance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, I couldn't believe it was the same actor."

Mildred Natwick

Marlon Sr. showed up in New York to catch Marlon's performance opposite Cornell. Backstage he was introduced to the star and to Guthrie. "Marlon's father detested Guthrie," Mildred said. "After Guthrie walked away, he told me that he was nothing 'but an old fag.'"

Marlon Sr. had come to New York for reasons more compelling than to see a stage play. Once again, Dodie had fled back to New York to escape her marriage. She had resumed her heavy drinking and often disappeared for days at a time. Marlon Sr. wanted to track her down and win her back.

In spite of the bad notices of *Candida*, Louis B. Mayer sent one of his agents to the theater to deliver a handwritten note to Marlon. He offered him a seven-year contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer with a guaranteed salary of three thousand dollars a week for the run of the contract. Marlon had never been offered such a high salary before.

"Would you believe it?" Mildred asked. "The young fool turned it down. Backstage all of us were practically drooling at the offer."

An offer also came in from Elia Kazan, who wanted Marlon to play the juicy third role of a Jew in *Gentleman's Agreement*. Marlon turned that down too, the part going to his rival, John Garfield.

On reflection years later, Marlon found Cornell "empty-headed," an actress who depended on stage presence more than talent to attract attention. "It was like two people dancing to a different beat," he recalled of their time on the stage together.

In 1972 she was far kinder to him in her appraisal, claiming that he was "the finest Marchbanks I ever appeared opposite in spite of his often erratic performances."

In recalling Guthrie years later, Marlon provided no clue as to any sexual interlude that might have existed between them. He remembered only Guthrie's bizarre sense of humor and "a hernia that kept popping out when he laughed. When that happened, he punched himself in the groin and pushed it back into his gut."

It was at the final performance of *Antigone*, not *Candida*, that a friend of both Cornell and Guthrie appeared backstage. Newly arrived from London, he was handsome, dashing, and debonair, "with a speaking voice better than God himself," as Mildred put it.

"The Englishman had arrived to congratulate Marlon on his performance," Mildred said, "even though it was just a walk-on. He hurried past his

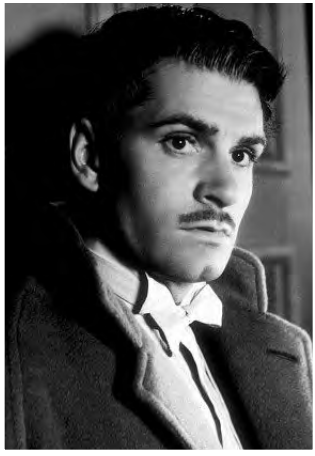
dear friends, Kate and Guthrie, and headed straight for Marlon. I don't know if Kate ever forgave him for that. I was standing nearby when God's anointed came up to Marlon. Instead of shaking his hand, he kissed both of Marlon's rosy cheeks. Finally, he broke away and extended his hand to Marlon. 'Great performance! I'm the man who married Scarlett O'Hara.' "

* * *

Backstage at *Antigone*, Laurence Olivier was utterly captivated by young Marlon. He told reporter Sheila Beckstein that, "Brando has only a very small role—no more than one speech really. But his performance was electrifying. Truly exciting theater. It's obvious to me that Marlon Brando is a star on the rise."

Mildred Natwick was invited to join Olivier and Marlon for a late-night supper at the home of Katharine Cornell and Guthrie McClintic. Years later, she would claim that she saw the affair between Marlon and Olivier developing "right before my eyes." She also noted that it was taking place right under the jealous eyes of Guthrie and in his own home, where Olivier was a house guest as he'd been several times before. It is not known if Olivier was aware of Guthrie's romantic interest in Marlon.

"I really believe that if he did know, it would not have made the slightest difference to Larry," Mildred would later claim. "He was of the school, 'All's fair in love and war.' John Gielgud slept with Larry on several occasions, or so he said. He once told me that whenever Larry spotted a handsome actor, especially one in green tights, he went after him with an unusual determination—and most often got his man. I mean, back in those days what aspirant actor would turn down *Macbeth*, much less *Hamlet*?"



Laurence Olivier

Producer David Lewis once said of his friend Olivier, "He would sleep with anyone."

During the run of a rather silly play, *No Time for Comedy*, opposite Katharine Cornell, Olivier had launched an affair with Guthrie. In the play, Olivier had been cast as "Gaylord Esterbrook" at the time his lover, Vivien Leigh, was in Hollywood shooting *Gone With the Wind*.

Guthrie was hardly Olivier's first homosexual liaison. His first wife, actress Jill Esmond, was a lesbian, and during his marriage to her, he'd been free to carry on whatever relationships he

wanted, usually with men of the theater. According to Jack Wilson, "Noël and Larry had an affair that lasted for years—or at least until I came along."

Olivier also had affairs with actors who ranged from dashing Richard Burton to dashing Errol Flynn, even the Frankenstein director, James Whale. References to these affairs were edited out of Olivier's autobiography at the request of family members and his third and final wife, actress Joan Plowright.

Under pressure, Olivier agreed not to publish these controversial revelations, including his description of his longtime affair with comedian Danny Kaye, but copies of the original chapters were made and widely distributed in publishing circles in New York. Olivier did go on record as saying, "I am prepared to believe that the sense of romance in those of our brothers and sisters who incline toward love of their own sex is heightened to a more glazing pitch than in those who think of themselves as normal."

Mildred believed that Olivier's seduction of Marlon occurred the very first night of the Cornell/McClintic late-night dinner. It continued, according to her suspicions, at the couple's retreat in the village of Sneden's Landing on the Hudson River. In previous years, Cornell and Guthrie had invited Vivien Leigh, Olivier's mistress at the time, to spend time there when Vivien and Olivier were hoping to star together in the film, *Rebecca*.

"I remember bits and pieces of the dialogue between Larry and Marlon at the Cornell home," Mildred said. "Larry was complaining that he and Vivien were regarded as 'mere *arrivistes*' by the American press. 'Sometimes autograph hunters over here mistake me for Maurice Evans. In most whistle stops, I'm considered a movie star. I don't think most Americans are aware of my career on the stage.'"

Olivier suggested to Marlon that in "just a few short months, and I predict this, you'll be followed everywhere by autograph hounddogs. Once I was standing at a latrine at the Plaza Hotel. The man next to me used that inopportune moment to request an autograph. I rather testily told him that his dick wasn't long enough for me to write Laurence Olivier. I buttoned up and walked out as grandly as I could." He also told Cornell, Guthrie, and Marlon that Vivien knew how to handle autograph seekers at her stage door. "She routinely shouts at them, 'Fuck off—now *fuck off*!'"

According to Mildred, Marlon laughed at this. He told Oliver, "If one of those hounddogs comes up to me, I'll tell him he'll get his autograph if he'll show me his ass. I'll write 'Marlon' on one buttock, 'Brando' on the other."

Mildred remembered Marlon asking Olivier why he wore so much perfume. "I know it's gilding the lily," Olivier said, "but I sweat a lot in crowds and under lights. I like to smell kissable at all times. You wear no cologne at all?"

"Just my natural smell," Marlon said. "Sometimes I don't even take a shower, much less a bath. I just throw a glob of spit into the air and run under it."

"Olivier laughed and it was obvious to me that he was both attracted and repulsed by Marlon's vulgarity," Mildred claimed. "Marlon's crude sexual animalism mesmerized Larry. I don't want to say that Larry had his tongue out panting for Marlon that night, but seduction was obviously on Larry's brain."

Before the night ended, at least according to Mildred, "Marlon and Larry were exploding off each other. There was a great chemistry between them, even though they were from entirely different sides of the pond. Different worlds, really. Before midnight, when I went home, Kate, Guthrie, and I could have been invisible ghosts. Larry had eyes only for Marlon—and Marlon only for him. Romeo had met his Juliet in an unlikely form."

Three days later when Mildred once again encountered Olivier, he told her, "I am the happiest man alive."

"Strong comments coming from a man who in the past had been so unhappy that he'd contemplated suicide," Mildred said.

"Our love is triumphant," Olivier told her. "In Marlon, I have found what I've been seeking but never came across in all my life. Vivien will have to understand. Her Ladyship is very understanding. I'm moving Marlon in with us."

Those plans, alas, did not materialize, at least not immediately. After less than a month, Marlon abandoned Olivier, giving him the same treatment he'd given such luminaries as Clifford Odets and Leonard Bernstein.

"One morning, he was lying nude under the sheets with Larry," Mildred said, "and the next day he was gone from the bed. Marlon dumped Larry to resume his one-night stands. Hamlet got jilted for late-night pickups."

The full story of Marlon and Olivier, catalyzed by the ongoing presence of Vivien Leigh and a film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* hadn't yet evolved. "Marlon merely put Larry on hold until some future date," Mildred said.

Marlon later confided to Stella Adler and Bobby Lewis, as well as others, that he'd been with Olivier "merely to listen to the sound of his voice." He told his friends that Olivier himself had admitted to "imitating absolutely and unashamedly" such stars as Ronald Colman, Alfred Lunt, and John Barrymore. He did caution Marlon, however, that "imitation is good provided you don't mold yourself around that one actor you admire—that you don't merely imitate. In your case, I just know you'll allow your own conception of a character to develop. Make it your own!"

Stella Adler once said that she was amazed at the future comparisons others would make between Marlon and Olivier. The debate would rage for

decades, and it's still going on: "Who was the greatest English-speaking actor of the 20th Century?"

John Gielgud found comparisons between Marlon and his friend, Olivier, "odious. How can you compare a young man who appeared on the stage for the last time in 1948 at the age of twenty-three with a gifted performer who first walked on the stage at the age of ten, and who would later define theater as we know it today?"

Gielgud was practically alone in deriding comparisons. William Redfield, in his *Letters From an Actor*, wrote: "Ironically enough, Laurence Olivier is less gifted than Marlon Brando. But Olivier is the definitive actor of the 20th Century. Why? Because he wanted to be."

Tennessee Williams himself pronounced Marlon "the greatest living actor ever . . . greater than Olivier."

As amazing as it seems, considering what different characters and actors they were, Olivier and Marlon were sometimes up for the same role. In one of the ironies of Hollywood, it was Olivier, not Marlon, who was the first choice to play Don Corleone in *The Godfather*. In yet another irony, on the night of March 27, 1973, in Los Angeles, Marlon would find himself competing with Olivier for an Oscar for the best actor of the year, Marlon for his role in *The Godfather*, Olivier for his star turn in *Sleuth*.

The Olivier/Brando coupling was too good a story not to make it to London. At a party attended by Vivien Leigh, the British theater critic, Kenneth Tynan, confronted the emotionally unstable actress. He too had had an affair with her husband and would later have an affair with her future costar in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Although not wanting to cause her even more pain than she was experiencing because of her personal demons, he became a little bitchy after a few drinks. He told her all that he knew of her husband's affair. Vivien listened politely, then said, "Oh, my. What fiddle-faddle! If that's true, I only hope that poor Larry knew what to do. Marlon Brando. I must try him myself one day!"

With that pronouncement, she turned on her heels and walked away. All Tynan saw was the curve of her back as she graciously made her way across a crowded London living room to greet the just-arriving Noël Coward and his partner, Jack Wilson. Both of these men already knew what Vivien didn't know.

What Marlon Brando was like in bed.

* * *

In the autumn of 1946, Marlon left the Cornell/McClintic townhouse never to return. That very same week he was given an inch-and-a-half thick

script by his agent, Edith Van Cleve. He was asked to read it that very night for an audition she'd arranged in the morning in front of Broadway producers Edward Dowling and Margaret Webster.

After devouring a heavy pasta dinner cooked by Wally Cox, Marlon started to read the script of Eugene O'Neill's latest play. In spite of the playwright's reputation, Marlon had never been impressed with O'Neill's works, finding his plays "dour, negative, and too dark." After only fifteen minutes, he fell asleep on the sofa.

The following morning at the audition that never came to be, Marlon attacked O'Neill's play in front of an astonished Dowling and Webster. "It's a piece of shit," Marlon claimed. Even though he hadn't read the script, he said it was "full of long, boring speeches. O'Neill sounds like an asshole on a soap box. The play is meaningless. The audience will fall asleep only ten minutes into the first act. I saved many plays before but even I can't rescue this turkey. I wouldn't even be caught dead performing in it." He walked off the stage before the producers could even respond.

On the opening night of *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill received perhaps his greatest critical acclaim. One critic called the play "the best of the decade." Marlon told Edith that, "I read the reviews and wept at what might have been. With me in it, it could have become O'Neill's masterpiece and my greatest hour upon the stage."

That same week Marlon was rescued by another offer, not from Edith but from Luther Adler, Stella's more famous actor brother who was making his Broadway debut as a director with a play called *A Flag Is Born*. "You'll be the only goy in the cast," Adler told him. He'd had doubts about offering Marlon the role but had done so at Stella's urging.

With music by Kurt Weill, the play was written by Ben Hecht, arguably the screen's most gifted writer and winner of three Academy Awards. His big hits had included *The Front Page* and *Twentieth Century*.

In *A Flag Is Born*, Hecht had lost his usual screen-writing brilliance. The play—actually a pageant masquerading as a play—was a cornball propaganda piece showing Hecht's zealous commitment to Zionism. *A Flag Is Born* was a virtual petition calling for the creation of the new State of Israel. It was also bitterly anti-British. The Royal Navy was preventing Jewish refugees from Europe, often survivors of Nazi concentration camps, from traveling to colonize the Holy Land. Long an admirer of the Jewish people, Marlon shared their dream of establishing a new homeland in Israel. He told his director, "the Adlers are my kind of people, not that ritzy Cornell crowd."

Marlon was cast as a young Jewish firebrand named David. He would be working opposite Celia Adler, who was Stella's sister, and Paul Muni. Muni was one of the few actors who appeared in pictures that Marlon admired. He'd

seen all of his pictures and was especially impressed with his role as a gangster in *Scarface* and a Chinese coolie in *The Good Earth*. Marlon found the veteran actor's accents, disguises, and versatility amazing.

Ben Hecht

Muni did not return the compliment. He chastised Marlon's acting in front of Adler, telling his director that he should fire Marlon and find some Jewish actor to take over the $48-a-week role as David. Muni claimed that Marlon was "completely miscast and completely unconvincing in the role." Unaware of what Muni was saying behind his back, Marlon stood in the wings watching Muni emote, telling Adler that "he gives me goosebumps."

A Flag Is Born opened on September 5, 1946 at the Alvin Theatre, playing mainly to Jewish audiences. On opening night, Muni's character was to die on stage at the end of the play. Marlon had to drape the flag of Israel over Muni's body and then launch into his moving, eloquent speech of the evening.

It was the highlight of his performance. Before they went on stage. Muni had instructed Marlon not to cover his face with the flag, but to leave it exposed as part of his death scene. In the nervousness of opening night, Marlon forgot and completely covered the older actor's face.

Although he'd mumbled through most of the rehearsals, Marlon was at his most ferociously intense during the play's final speech. Many members of the audience were awed by the clarity of his voice and the brilliance of his performance. He would, in fact, draw more applause than Muni at the end of the show. This enraged Muni.

Marlon's back faced Muni's coffin as he delivered his moving speech. Bit by bit, the "dead" Muni, with his hand concealed, tugged at the flag inch by inch until his previously covered face was exposed to the audience. Titters could be heard throughout the audience.

It was only when the curtain went down that Marlon learned what Muni had done. In his dressing room, Marlon told Adler, "The son of a bitch wanted to keep acting even while he was supposed to be dead. Maybe he wanted to act his way through rigor mortis. Maybe act his way to show the flesh rotting from the bone. What a fucking ham!" The next day Marlon forgave Muni but never again covered the actor's face with the flag for the duration of the run.

Paul Muni

A Flag Is Born was Marlon's first experience with a political commitment that in time would lead to his fight for the rights of the American Indian. At the time, American Jews were divided over how a Jewish home-

land should be established in Palestine. Marlon backed the more militant wing, the Irgun, a group led by Menachem Begin, that advocated violence and was anti-British. Most American Zionists, however, leaned more to the Haganah movement advocating a less violent approach, as proclaimed by the more moderate David Ben-Gurion.

After the play had run its course, Marlon actually traveled across the United States, raising money for the Irgun. "I was a hot-headed terrorist back then, advocating violence," he recalled later in life. "As I matured, I came to understand all sides, even the Arab point of view. I was a bit over the top when I proclaimed in speeches that British troops blocking Jewish immigration to Palestine were committing far greater atrocities than the Nazis. Blame it on my youth!"

Ben Hecht lost his sense of fairness and balance when he zealously took out a newspaper advertisement in the *New York Herald Tribune*. In that ad, he proclaimed that every time a British soldier dies, "I have a little holiday in my heart."

This support of Irgun terrorists would eventually cost Hecht his movie career. It certainly led to a boycott of all his work in Britain. Even such leading Jewish figures as Edward G. Robinson dropped his support after Hecht's blatant advertisements.

But Marlon remained loyal to Hecht, and basically agreed with the screenwriter. In his memoirs, Hecht claimed that *A Flag Is Born* raised one million dollars for the Irgun "Freedom Fighters." Actually, it raised $400,000. That money went to purchase a large ocean liner, named the *S.S. Ben Hecht*, which ferried nine hundred refugees to Palestine in March, 1947. The British Navy captured the ship and sent six hundred of its passengers to detention camps in Cyprus. The rest of the passengers escaped to Palestine where they joined the ranks of the militant Irgun. Later the *S.S. Ben Hecht* became the flagship of the Israel Navy.

Although Marlon was appearing in a political role, his presence as a sexual animal on stage did not go unnoticed. "Scads of young Jewish girls flocked every night not to listen to the message of our play but to see Marlon perform," Luther Adler said. Marlon wore a black turtleneck sweater that showed off his powerful physique and a pair of black trousers tied with a rope belt. One male writer proclaimed that he was "breathtakingly handsome, a figure of charismatic, mythic beauty."

"I think during the run of the play, Marlon must have fucked half the Jewish gals in New York," Adler said. "They flocked backstage to meet him, and he took his pick every night."

In the words of his first wife, Anna Kashfi, "Marlon seduced an ardent harem of voluptuaries. He told me, 'I wanted a house filled with women. One

for every occasion—a picnic in the woods, a day at the beach. One to screw in bed. One to screw standing up.'"

Not all visitors arriving backstage were female. One night Frank Sinatra showed up in Marlon's dressing room to congratulate him on his performance. Marlon later told Stella Adler, "All flash, an overbaked Guinea Pie. As for his singing voice, I'd prefer a castrated rooster at dawn." When the two stars made *Guys and Dolls* together, Marlon would have even harsher comments to make against Sinatra.

In Paul Muni, Marlon survived one legend on the stage. During his next venture, he would not survive the second stage legend.

The incomparable Tallulah Bankhead was about to barge into his life, the same way she'd aggressively barged down the Nile in her performance of *Cleopatra* in 1937.

She called Jack Wilson, the producer of her new play. In her throaty, bourbon-and-branch water voice, she instructed him, "Get me Marlon Brando! I can't stand Method actors, but get him anyway. From all reports, even if he can't act, I'll get royally fucked every night of the performance!"

Of Poetic Sensitivity

Chapter Five

Edith Von Cleve was not only the agent for Monty Clift and Marlon, but she was one of Tallulah Bankhead's closest friends. Tallulah told her that she was looking for a leading man to appear opposite her in the Jean Cocteau play, *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, originally called *Eagle Rampant* and a previous hit in London and Paris. Edith had reservations about the possible "chemistry" between Tallulah and Marlon, but recommended him anyway for the co-starring role.

Tallulah agreed to interview Marlon at her country home, "Windows," in Westchester County's Bedford Village, north of New York City. Her friend, Bobby Lewis, lived a mile away at Pound Ridge. He claimed that, "I could clearly hear her if the wind was right."

In Cocteau's romantic Graustarkian fable, the lead role of Stanislas is based on an impassioned young revolutionary poet who comes to assassinate the queen of an Eastern European country, but stays to love her, an improbable plot if there ever was one. In Cocteau's play, the queen is actually thirty-one years old. In real life, Tallulah was forty-three years old, Marlon a mere lad of twenty-two. Before meeting Tallulah, Stella Adler had warned him that Tallulah was a lesbian, but Marlon was soon to find out that that wasn't completely true.

In France, Cocteau had written the play for his lover, the actor Jean Marais, known at the time as "the handsomest man in France." Marais had instructed his playwright-lover to "Write a play in which I say nothing in the first act, talk all through the second act, and die dramatically in the third." In the play, as conceived by Cocteau, Stanislas shoots the queen before draining a fatal quaff of poison.

Before actually meeting Tallulah, Marlon arranged a luncheon with Bobby Lewis at his country retreat. Marlon was seeking advice from Bobby about how to handle "this bitch, this termagant, this vixen."

After getting lost and arriving by train in the wrong town, Marlon was eventually picked up by Bobby in his car and driven to his home. With Marlon was his on-again, off-again girlfriend, Blossom Plumb. She struck Bobby as "related to that Charles Addams character with the dead white face, dank hair,

and with her dress ending in a pool of blood on the floor."

After a lunch that had already been ruined by Marlon's late arrival, he went upstairs and stripped down to very revealing briefs on the terrace to take advantage of the late autumn sun. Blossom also stripped down, removing her bra but retaining her panties. Almost immediately, Blossom and Marlon got into a terrible row over Marlon's dating of a young woman who'd just arrived from Antigua, wanting to become an actress. In tears, Blossom ran from Bobby's house never to return. Marlon seemed indifferent and had no plans to go after her.

"After she'd disappeared, we settled down for a talk about Tallulah," Bobby recalled. "Marlon was smoking a lot. I surrounded him with ashtrays, warning him that we'd had a dry spell and asking him not to flip his lit cigarette over my balcony into the yard where the autumn leaves lay in dried-out piles. Ignoring me, Marlon did just that. His lit cigarette started a fire in my garden. I rushed down to put it out. When I returned, Marlon had stripped naked, claiming he wanted 'to be brown all over.'"

Back on his roof terrace, Bobby warned Marlon that "seduction will be part of the deal if you agree to play opposite Tallulah. She always insists on fucking her leading man—it's practically written into her contracts. When she comes on to you, and she will, just grin and bear it. Think of God and country as you do the dirty deed."

"I get it," Marlon told Bobby. "Aging actress and former beauty hopes to reclaim lost youth through the semen of handsome young men." He told Bobby that he didn't think Tallulah was bad looking, recalling having seen her in a movie she'd made in 1932 called *The Devil and the Deep* in which she'd costarred with Gary Cooper.

Bobby warned that Tallulah no longer looked as she did when she was made up like Garbo in that film. "All of her hard drinking has caught up with her," he told Marlon. Bobby also predicted that Marlon and Tallulah would not be compatible as actors.

Tallulah Bankhead

Marlon assured him, "I think I can handle Miss Bankhead. She wouldn't be the first aging actress who has come on to me."

Bobby later expressed his apprehension about the pairing. "Since Marlon and Tallulah employed widely different work methods, and since they both had an unshakable independence of spirit, a clash of personalities was a distinct possibility. With this in mind, I suggested that he ask

for a contract with a two-week notice clause in it. If things got impossible on the road tryout, he could leave the play. I then deposited him at Tallulah's."

Tallulah, "in a new frock bought for the occasion," greeted Marlon in the foyer of her home. "I even wore my most stunning jewelry, a gift from that tiny little prick, the Prince of Wales."

She was disappointed that he hadn't shown proper respect for her by showing up in a suit, white shirt, and tie. Instead he wore a dirty white T-shirt, tight jeans, and sneakers. "Dah-ling," she later told Edith. "He looked like he'd just finished eighteen rounds of baseball. Not only that, but right in front of me, he scratched his private parts."

In spite of his clothing, she found the body underneath his sloppy dress immensely appealing and invited him into her living room. A maid appeared to take their drink orders, Marlon requesting lemonade and Tallulah demanding her usual bourbon and branch water. Noting that she was already tipsy, Marlon asked, "Are you an alcoholic?" "No dah-ling," she replied, "just a heavy drinker."

Marlon continued with his insults. "You are roughly my mother's age," he told her, an actress who had practically gone into hysterics when turning forty. "My mother's name is Dodie. She is an actress too. And an alcoholic."

"I'm sure your mother is delightful," Tallulah responded. "We must invite the dear heart to rehearsals."

"Dodie was the lover of Henry Fonda," Marlon boasted.

"Oh, please, dah-ling, don't mention Hank to me," she said. "I went to bed with him only one time. He failed to produce an erection. Now I know why that magnolia Southern bitch, Margaret Sullavan, dropped him."

A bit stunned by her response, Marlon said, "I'm here to talk about the play. I have to be blunt. I think it's a turkey. It may, in fact, be the worst play in the history of the theater."

His words were dismissed by Tallulah. "Dah-ling, what does the fucking play matter? The audience will flock to see your Aunt Tallulah in it, not Cocteau's fantasy. *Me*, dahling. *The star!* Dah-ling," Tallulah continued, "I first met Cocteau in Paris in the late Twenties. I was appearing every night in lingerie on the London stage and I'd gone on a vacation to France. He forced opium onto me. At the time I had promised my daddy that when I went to Europe I wouldn't drink or go out with men. To get around that restrictive little promise, I took drugs and dated women. But *opium*, my dah-ling! Hardly my drug of choice. I felt like the bride of Fu Manchu and threw up *constantly* for a week."

As they sat discussing the play, Tallulah's withered hand began to wander up the leg of his blue jeans.

Later when Marlon stopped off again at the home of Bobby to report on

his "audition," Bobby asked the pertinent question. "What did you do?"

"I didn't stop her," he said. "Actually, I was interested from an engineering standpoint if it were possible for her to obtain her objective. I mean, my jeans were pretty tight. Amazingly, Tallulah scored. She not only got to feel my noble tool, but my balls as well. All the time we were carrying on with this silly blah-blah about this stinker of a play."

"Okay," Bobby said. "Now for the big question. Did you fuck Miss Bankhead?"

"I did the deed," Marlon claimed. "She's voracious. She drains a man so completely there's nothing left for tomorrow. It wasn't the greatest fuck I've ever had. I felt she expected me to, so I fucked her. My task was made more difficult because of the foulness of her breath. Her breath came out of her mouth and hung in the air like a poisonous mist. I guess I passed my casting couch audition. I got the part, although I'll probably regret it."

He told Bobby that Tallulah would be perfectly cast as the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*. Her body "smelled of Russian Leather perfume, her breath of rotgut bourbon. She smoked British cigarettes from a scarlet red box. She pressed these cigarettes into a long silver holder, a gift from Cecil Beaton, she claimed." Marlon told Bobby that even though Tallulah offered him the role of Stanislas, "I think she is more interested in me for sex."

Unknown to Marlon at the time, Tallulah had already been on the phone to the show's producer, Jack Wilson. "Picture me as Salome, dah-ling," she told him. "I want Brando's head delivered to me on a silver platter. I will have no one assassinate me but Brando. He throws a mean fuck. But, dah-ling, I'm sure you and Noël auditioned him long before your Aunt Tallulah."

Jack Wilson still had a powerful crush on Marlon and planned to seduce him during the tryouts of the play, as he had on several occasions before. "I found myself iced out, once the contract was signed," Wilson told chanteuse Greta Keller. "On our second time around, Marlon wouldn't even give me a tumble, even though everybody raves about how dazzingly handsome I am."

Back in New York, on at least ten different occasions, Tallulah invited Marlon to her suite at the Elysée Hotel. The ostensible reason was to rehearse scenes from the play. She always showed up at the door to her suite in revealing Parisian lingerie designed to show off her not altogether fallen breasts and her vagina.

After repeated seductions, Marlon wrote to his sister Fran that, "My mind feels like ten octopi in a space the size of a matchbox, each trying to manicure just its own toenails."

One night Marlon abruptly cut off the sex, refusing to meet with Tallulah at the Elysée. She did not take rejection very well.

As they went on the road for tryouts in Wilmington, Delaware, and

Washington, D.C., she attempted to rekindle Marlon's passion for her. Often these crude attempts were played out in front of preview audiences.

"She was supposed to kiss me in the play," Marlon told Bobby Lewis. "I came to dread those nightly kisses. Her tongue was especially cold. It was like an eel trying to slide backward into a hole. Her tongue would explore every cranny of my mouth before forcing itself down my throat." To counterattack, Marlon ate a bulb of raw garlic backstage before going on with the kissing scene. Learning that she detested the smell of peanuts, he ate a bag before going on.

The tryouts on the road were a disaster as the aging star and the future star clashed. "Tallulah, for all her fiery talent, clung to the old tradition of certain stage stars, namely that when they are holding forth in a scene, everyone for miles around should be immobilized," Bobby said. "They interpret any move or reaction from the other actors as distractions. Marlon, on stage, is the kind of actor who has a continuous life going for him, a life which results in scenes rather than star arias surrounded by accompanying robots. Tallulah even placed spies out in the audience to report to her if Marlon was acting behind her back in sections where she couldn't keep an eye on him."

In the play, Tallulah had to deliver a thirty-minute monologue, perhaps the longest soliloquy in theatrical history. She had instructed Marlon to remain motionless behind her back while she delivered this long, drawn-out speech.

"Marlon did everything he could to upstage Tallulah," Bobby said. He came down to Washington see the tryouts. "One night, or so I heard, he let out a loud fart during her monologue. He scratched his balls. Later backstage that night, Tallulah told me that she would like to give Marlon a good kick in those balls."

"During Tallulah's speech, Marlon would unbutton, then rebutton his fly," Jack Wilson said. "He would squirm during her speech and was especially adept at picking his nose. He would leer at the audience, wink at a stagehand standing in the wings. One night he scratched his ass, and I mean really scratched, going for those dingleberries. Not just onstage but backstage, Marlon was 'driving me nuts,' in Tallulah's words, with his constant sit-ups and push-ups. She called them nipups."

Tallulah Bankhead

By the time of opening night in Boston, Tallulah herself was calling Eagle *The Turkey with Two Heads*. Marlon was at his most outrageous on opening night. During Tallulah's long speech, he turned his back to the audience, spread his legs, unbuttoned his fly, pulled out his cock, and urinat-

ed against the stage scenery. The audience could clearly see his yellow urine raining down. With her back to him, Tallulah didn't know why the audience was laughing at her dramatic monologue.

It was all too much for her. After the curtain went down, and she learned what he'd done, she demanded, successfully, that Jack Wilson fire him as soon as possible. "Get me Monty Clift," she demanded, "if he's free. He and I did all right together in *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Like Brando, Monty is from Omaha too. It must be something they put in the water out there that makes their men so drop-dead gorgeous. Marlon is a beautiful but dangerous animal—like Monty Clift, but without the neuroses." She obviously didn't know Marlon very well.

Knowing that he'd been fired, Marlon planned a farewell performance, something that would even top his pissing scene. A perilous *coup de theater* scene came at the end of the play.

Standing at the top of a staircase, and looking as regal as possible, Tallulah is supposed to be shot by Marlon, playing Stanislas, before plunging head first down the stairs in one unbroken line. "This would be hazardous duty even for a trained stuntwoman, and certainly a daring challenge for a middle-aged drunk like Tallulah," Wilson said.

For his farewell performance, Marlon removed the blanks from his stage pistol. When he "shot" Tallulah, no sound came out. "Bang, bang!" he said as the audience laughed. Ever the trouper, she plunged down the stairs.

"Marlon then drank his poison as Tallulah lay dead at the foot of the stairs," Wilson said. "But Marlon wasn't ready for the coffin. Like Paul Muni in *A Flag is Born*, he prolonged the death scene. After swallowing the lethal potion, he staggered dramatically around the stage, gasping for breath. He clutched his throat in a virtual dancing jig of death. It was the longest death scene ever presented to a stage audience. Mercifully, I ordered the curtain. Otherwise, it would be midnight and Marlon would still be dying. By the time the curtain fell, none of the audience remembered Tallulah's daring staircase death scene. Marlon had completely taken her fire. Infuriated as the curtain fell, Tallulah rose from the dead. Backstage, she refused to take even one curtain call. 'I want Brando's blood,' she told me. 'I'll personally see to it that he never works another day in the American theater. The British theater as well.'"

Faking it

A Boston theater critic had fun ridiculing both

Marlon and the play. He claimed that "Bankhead's Southern contralto hammered away at Cocteau's delicate conceits and left them a rubbish heap of mystifying words." Regarding Marlon's prolonged death scene, he wrote, "Brando looked like a car in midtown Manhattan searching for a parking space."

In the type of grand theatrical gesture for which she was known, Tallulah surprised the cast when she rushed to kiss Marlon good-bye as he was making his final exit from the theater. "In spite of our differences," she proclaimed loudly in front of the cast, "I think you're going to become a famous American actor. Note that I said famous. Not good! And, dah-ling, that prediction comes from a woman who has fucked all the big names in the theater. John Barrymore. You name them. Remember, yesterday and today make for tomorrow." She turned and walked away from him, heading for her dressing room.

Once seated at her vanity table, she began to remove her makeup after calling for her secretary to draft a note to Tennessee Williams. Only the night before, she'd read his play, *The Poker Night*. It was set in New Orleans, and the star of the play was the character known as Blanche DuBois, who was to appear opposite her brutish brother-in-law, a character named Stanley Kowalski.

Even though she'd brutally rejected *Band of Angels*, the first play he'd sent her, Tennessee bravely sent her this other drama of his. "While I was writing this play, all of the speeches seemed to be issuing from your mouth, Miss Bankhead."

The note she drafted that night presumably no longer exists. Later, Tallulah denied ever having written it. But Tennessee for years maintained that he received it. As he recalled it, the note went something like this:

My Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for showing me your latest little play, even though I turned down the first one offered. Poor Miriam Hopkins was foolish enough to appear in that play that I knew would be a disaster. Regrettably, I must turn down the role of Blanche DuBois in The Poker Night. You and I are both Southerners. But I fear that you were born on the wrong side of the tracks in the South. You simply do not understand genteel and aristocratic Southern women. How we talk. How we behave. Therefore, I cannot be your Blanche DuBois because I find the character completely unreal. Instead of a faded Southern lady, you have depicted a strumpet.

When she presented the draft of your play to me, Edith also gave me a black Mark Cross purse, which I know you must have purchased with your earnings

from The Glass Menagerie. Thank you for the lovely gift which I am forced to return. How dare you send me a black purse! A lady always travel in brown. But I suppose that it's impossible for you to understand what a lady does.

I do have one suggestion for casting. I know of an actor who can appear as this brutish Stanley Kowalski character. I mean, a total pig of a man without sensitivity or grace of any kind. Marlon Brando would be perfect as Stanley. I have just fired the cad from my play, The Eagle Has Two Heads, and I know for a fact that he is looking for work.

Also, my darling man, I will never appear in a play where the word 'nigger' is used.

Good luck with your play. Perhaps Miriam Hopkins will give you another chance, although I doubt if even Miriam will go for this turkey.

With sincere best wishes,
Miss Tallulah Bankhead.

* * *

In his autobiography, Marlon erroneously wrote that "my virtue was still intact" after his ordeal with the two-headed *Eagle* and with Tallulah. "I would rather have been dragged over broken pottery than make love to Tallulah," he wrote. But that's not the story he related to Stella Adler, Bobby Lewis, and Edith Van Cleve. And that's not what he would later tell Tennessee Williams.

Launching the t-shirt industry

Tallulah herself, years later at her New York townhouse and in front of James Leo Herlihy, James Kirkwood, and the author, discussed in detail her seduction of Marlon, portraying herself in a far more glamorous light than the portrait that he painted of her.

On the train going from

Boston back to New York, Marlon wrote a letter to his family, revealing to them that he'd been fired from the play. "The next time T. Bankhead goes swimming, I hope that whales shit on her."

As he was writing the letter, word of his dismissal was just reaching the small, gossipy world of Broadway. "The verdict was in," Bobby Lewis said. "Marlon was viewed as difficult, temperamental, and not dependable. You might say that for a short time at least, he could have been labeled Broadway poison. At the time, I didn't know any producer who wanted to take a chance on him. Even Hollywood was cold shouldering him."

All offers for Marlon to work on Broadway or in Hollywood dried up. Marlon hinted that he "just might be available for at least one movie." But Lew Wasserman, president of MCA, informed Edith that "Hollywood is finally wise to the ways of Brando. No studio wants him any more. I predict he'll never find work in this town. He was a young upstart on Broadway that got some attention. His day has come and gone. Call him the star that never was. Besides, we now have Burt Lancaster. With Burt about to become the King of Hollywood, no one out here is talking about Brando any more. I suggest he buy a one-way ticket back to Omaha."

After writing the letter on the train, Marlon fell asleep. When he woke up, his wallet containing eight hundred dollars was missing. That represented all his earnings from *The Eagle Has Two Heads*. He was left penniless and he didn't know what to do. A panic set in.

In an amazing coincidence, from the far side of the rail car, he saw a young man emerging. As that man moved closer to him, Marlon was astonished to meet up with Monty Clift once again. What Monty chose not to reveal was that he, too, had been up in Boston. Tallulah had called him and requested that he come to Boston to replace Marlon in *The Eagle Has Two Heads*. Curious about the role, Monty arrived in Boston. But he turned down the role and immediately took the next train back to New York.

"Instead of talking about the play and my role in it," Monty later confided to his brother, Brooks, "all Tallulah wanted to talk about was Brando. She claimed he left her with 'history's worst case of crabs.'"

Back in New York, Monty told Edith that Tallulah didn't actually audition him for the play. When not talking about Brando, she attacked the Stanislavsky technique of acting, which she claimed was "fake and impractical—any actor who loses himself in a part is a stupid ass." When Monty queried her about her own acting technique on stage, she said, "If the scene gets very emotional, I don't get carried away with it. Instead of thinking—say, of murdering my husband on stage, whatever the script calls for, I often say my lines thinking about the big, juicy steak I'm going to order—blood red—right after the curtain falls."

Marlon was replaced with Helmut Dantine, who was thirty years old at the time. Before 1938 he'd been the leader of the anti-Nazi youth movement in Vienna. Placed in a concentration camp when the Nazis annexed Austria, he remained incarcerated there for three months before escaping to the United States. He is still remembered today for his attention-grabbing role as the downed German flyer who confronts Greer Garson in the classic, *Mrs. Miniver*, in 1942. That same year, he also had a small role in Bogie's *Casablanca*, playing a careless newlywed who gambles away his visa money.

For some perverse reason, and knowing that they were, at least in theory, competing for the same role, producer Jack Wilson booked both Monty and Helmut into a shared double bedroom at a Boston hotel. He was well aware that both young actors were viewed as "switch hitters."

Monty later confided to Brooks that he and Helmut had had a "one-night stand," even though they were technically rival actors vying for the same part.

Both Marlon and Monty had rejected Tallulah, but Helmut was only too happy to oblige as both her leading man and bed partner.

The young Irish playwright, Kieran Tunney, Tallulah's longtime friend, described Helmut as "handsome, butch, bronzed, muscles rippling, hair on chest showing." But when Tunney wrote that Helmut "unfortunately didn't have the inner equipment needed," Tallulah corrected him. "Believe you me, my dah-ling," she said. "He has the right equipment. And that comes from a woman once married to John Emery, who has the biggest cock in Hollywood."

She later told Jack Wilson what he already knew. "Helmut is the answer to a maiden's prayer." Wilson had already auditioned Helmut on the casting couch.

Upon his return to Manhattan, Marlon revealed his cruel streak as he spread vicious anti-Tallulah stories. At one point, he told his friend Tom Ewell at the Actors Studio that "Miss Bankhead lets her God damn dog fuck her. She also masturbates and lets the mutt lick up the pussy juice."

With columnist Earl Wilson, he was more subdued. "Tallulah considered me a weirdo. I got bounced from the show. The play was no good. Every day they had the janitor in to help rewrite the script. Tallulah didn't like me very much. She always wanted to go out and order champagne. Then she'd say, 'Oh, do let's paint the walls with fish.' I just about lost my mind."

In New York, *The Eagle Has Two Heads* opened on March 19, 1947, at the Plymouth Theatre. Trounced by the critics, it closed after twenty-nine performances. Cocteau denounced the production as a "vulgarization of my work." Dressed in dirty jeans, mud-caked sneakers, and a tattered shirt, Marlon sat in the first row on opening night. He got up and walked out before the curtain was drawn on the first act.

Marlon's experience with temperamental Tallulah drove him to a psycho-

analyst, Dr. Bela Mittelman. His therapy would continue throughout his twenties. He later recalled, "I was blessed with enough sense to realize that if I wanted well-being, psychoanalytic help was just about the only, and last, way I could get it."

Out of work, Marlon continued to live with the also penniless Wally Cox. They survived on peanut butter sandwiches. For amusement, they would gather horse droppings in Central Park from the stallions ridden by policemen. At night from their tenement floor on West 52nd Street and 10th Avenue, Wally and Marlon dropped bags of these horse turds on unsuspecting passers-by down below.

With stage money he'd earned, Marlon had purchased a motorcycle. He could be seen speeding through the canyons of New York with Wally "holding onto him for dear life." Often they'd zoom through the deserted streets of New York at three o'clock in the morning. Sometimes policemen would chase them, but Marlon always claimed that he managed to elude them.

When he wasn't "acting crazy and cutting up" [his words], he drifted into long, dark, and moody depressions that would last for days or even weeks.

Monty later recalled that, "Marlon seemed to occupy some secret place where he'd retreat in bad times. Perhaps it was on the other side of Oz. There he would contemplate his navel and his life. I remember visiting Wally and Marlon one night at their apartment. Marlon had taken a crude piece of cardboard. With a red crayon, he'd scribbled on it, 'You ain't living if you don't know it.'"

* * *

At a bleak point in Marlon's life, along came Shelley Winters. A whole generation has grown up identifying her as an earthy, outspoken, and overweight lady. But oldtime movie fans remember her as sexy, vampish, and svelte, a "hot blonde," in the words of Luther Adler, Stella's brother, who would later costar with her in *South Sea Sinner* in 1950. "She was the kind of gal your Jewish father wanted you to lose your virginity to but not to marry."

"Shelley was destined to play vulgar women, brassy, exciting, the kind you meet in a strange town on a bar stool," said George Cukor, who directed her in *A Double Life* with Ronald Colman.

Marlon himself later said that "Shelley was perfect for playing a loose woman. She was the woman you knocked up in a cheap motel room before moving on to classy Elizabeth Taylor."

He uttered these remarks after seeing Shelley appear with his former love, Monty Clift, and Elizabeth Taylor, in *A Place in the Sun,* released in 1951. In that film, Shelley, the sad, whining factory girl, gets knocked up

and bumped off, which earned her an Oscar nomination.

The meeting of Marlon and Shelley at Actors Studio was inevitable. Along with his sister, Jocelyn, Marlon frequently showed up for Elia Kazan's acting classes, joining an all-star student body that included Kevin McCarthy, Tom Ewell, Maureen Stapleton, on occasion Monty Clift, Arthur Kennedy, and Miss Shelley Winters herself.

As a blonde bombshell, Shelley—actually Shirley Schrift of Brooklyn—was seen at such clubs as El Morocco dressed in cheap finery on the arms of such playboys as actor Franchot Tone, who'd long ago been dumped by Joan Crawford.

The Beau with the Pink Carnation

Over the years, Shelley was an A-list seducer, her conquests including the likes of Ronald Colman, Sean Connery, Robert De Niro, Albert Finney, Howard Hughes, John Garfield, Sterling Hayden, Burt Lancaster, John Ireland (her biggest thrill), and legends such as Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, and even pretty boy Farley Granger, an astonishment to much of Hollywood who didn't realize he swung in that direction.

At the top of any list of Shelley's seductions appears the name of Marlon Brando. From the day he'd first met her in class, Marlon was drawn to what Frank Sinatra called "this bowlegged bitch of a Brooklyn blonde." Marlon liked her outspoken quality. "She called them like she saw them," he once said, "and if the emperor didn't wear any clothes, she was likely to tell His Majesty that he was jaybird naked with a pecker he should be ashamed of."

Once, when a director on one of her pictures asked her why she'd shown up late Monday morning for work, she informed him that, "I had to fly cross-country for the weekend because I desperately needed to get fucked."

In some respects, she was just as outrageous as Marlon himself. Seated next to Dylan Thomas at a dinner party in Los Angeles, she was told by the Welsh poet that he'd come to Hollywood "to touch the titties of a beautiful blonde starlet and to meet Charlie Chaplin." To fulfill part of his fantasy, Shelley surrendered her breasts to him.

When Marlon started to date Shelley, he couldn't afford to take her to "21" or the clubs to which she was accustomed when hanging out with the likes of Cholly Knickerbocker.

Nonetheless, she found him "sexual lightning," and there was a powerful

chemistry between them. She ignored his reputation "for seducing anything on the hoof," feeling he couldn't possibly have the time for such wholesale conquests. She would later learn otherwise.

One night Marlon invited her to dinner at his apartment after her performance in *Oklahoma!* at the St. James Theatre. Shelley had recently replaced Vivian Allen as "Ado Annie" in the hit show. Even though New York that night was hit with one of the worst blizzards of the Forties, she braved the chill in her beaver coat to climb five flights of stairs leading up to the rundown apartment Marlon shared with Wally Cox, who was often more than a roommate.

Arriving at Marlon's doorstep "in so many layers of clothes I looked like Marie Dressler on a bad night," Shelley was ushered into the coldwater flat. She nearly stumbled over an open can of midnight blue paint.

Marlon explained that he and Wally were redecorating. "They had dabbed a few feet of paint on one wall," Shelley said. "For one solid year, the canvas, the buckets of paint, and the brushes lay in the middle of that floor. No one had touched anything since my first visit. Every visitor just stepped over the paint which had long ago dried up."

Shown into the ramshackle apartment, she refused to remove her coat because she was freezing. "No Eskimo igloo was ever as cold as that damn apartment," she would later recall.

Marlon introduced her to his pet raccoon. "The beast smelled like it had just let eighteen farts," Shelley said. "The sole electric heater in the apartment was turned on that little beast. He looked so warm I wished I could have traded my beaver coat for his raccoon fur."

"When I innocently asked why Wally and Marlon didn't furnish the place better, he turned on me in anger. 'Listen, Miss Rich Bitch,' he told me. 'You're working in a hit Broadway show. I haven't worked in six months. Wally hasn't had a gig in a year.'"

As if on cue, Wally emerged from the bedroom of the two-room apartment. He appeared to be with a girl, although Shelley wasn't sure. Both of them were heavily bundled against the cold. Later, when the woman revealed more of herself, Shelley remembered her "as a very pretty girl with big glasses." She believed, but wasn't sure, that this was the woman who Wally would eventually marry.

In gray sweatpants, Marlon performed gymnastic exercises, as Wally prepared dinner. He removed all the food from the bitterly cold windowsill. "It was my first frozen food meal," Shelley later recalled. In her subsequent memoirs, she immortalized the meal of canned tomato soup served in broken mugs, cold cauliflower dipped in sour cream, and heavy brown rice cooked with nuts and kasha studded with raisins and green peppers. Cheap wine

1, 997...1,998...1,999...

spiked with gin made the whole table warmer, although Shelley still refused to remove her heavy garments. For dessert, Wally fried grapefruit in an iron skillet on the gas stove, later glazing it with brown sugar.

In front of Wally and his girlfriend, Marlon told Shelley that his roommate "is an old, fragile, beautifully embroidered Chinese ceremonial robe with a few Three-in-One Oil spots on it."

Wally flattered Marlon by claiming that "my friend is a philosopher but only on the deepest level. A deep thinker like the Rodin sculpture. But mainly he liberates everybody he comes into contact with."

"Honey child," Shelley said. "Your mother here doesn't need any liberating, baby!"

As dawn was breaking over the New York skyline, Wally and "his bohemian girl" disappeared into the bedroom. Still shivering, Shelley was left alone with Marlon and the raccoon in the kitchen, where a double bed had been placed. He invited her to join him in bed, promising that "My body generates a great deal of heat." In the early hours of the morning, as most New Yorkers were heading for work, she found that to be true.

Marlon and Shelley remained in the kitchen bed until about one o'clock in the afternoon of the following day, when she woke up in his arms. He made her coffee in an electric percolator. The flat had no electrical outlets, so he removed the bulb from over the kitchen table, screwed in an electrical adapter, and plugged the coffeepot in there. He then lit a candle "to take the curse off the darkness." The light was desperately needed since the kitchen had no window to let in the noonday sun.

Back in her beaver coat and her felt-lined galoshes, Shelley expressed her concern that he was out of work for so long. She casually mentioned that Mary Martin, then the reigning Broadway musical star, had visited with the cast backstage when she'd come to see *Oklahoma!* "She told me she's come across this most divine play by Tennessee Williams. He's calling it *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Mary thinks it'll be even bigger than *The*

Shelley Winters

Glass Menagerie. She wants to star in it. She also told me there's a great role for a young man. A brute of a character called Stanley Kowalski."

"I don't do musicals," he bluntly told her.

"It's heavy drama, baby," she said. "Bette Davis has even threatened to star in it to put some life back into a stalled career. I know Pauline Lord and Fay Bainter want it. But for my money I'm voting for that steel magnolia herself, Margaret Sullavan."

"Who's up for the Kowalski part?" he asked.

"Kazan is directing it," she said, "and I hear he wants a real big name. 'Only John Garfield will do,' he told me yesterday. He said the role calls for—and get this—'a quintessential semi-Simian actor of undiluted virility.' Quote, unquote."

"Fancy words for a brute."

"At the same time he said only John Garfield would do, he mentioned Burt Lancaster in the same breath," she said. "All that means is that he's undecided. Don't tell a soul about this, but I heard it for a fact that Irene Mayer Selznick, who's producing the show, doesn't want Garfield or Lancaster. She's after Monty Clift." The remark about Monty was not true, and Shelley knew it wasn't. Apparently, she was throwing in the name of Monty Clift to goad Marlon into action and get the role for himself.

"#*#!!#**!#&!!!" was his response.

From the stairwell, she called to him. "You passed the kitchen bed audition last night. I'm ready for a repeat. Meet me backstage at *Oklahoma!* tonight. I think this is going to be the beginning of a big love affair. But you've got to get rid of that goddamn, stinking raccoon first!"

* * *

At the New School, it was her thick accent, which sounded Texan to him, that drew Marlon to a beautiful blonde from Tularosa, New Mexico. Normally, he did not pursue blondes. But, as he told Wally Cox, "after a steady diet of chocolate, a vanilla cone tastes good, all sweet, virginal, and pure like the nourishing liquid I used to drain from our family cow."

The blonde introduced herself as Kim Stanley. Although normally a bit reserved, she was quite talkative around Marlon. "I just hit town and I've got only twenty-one dollars to my name—and it's going fast. To economize, I steal two oranges a day, but only from the most prosperous looking street vendors, and just one banana."

"I also go by Horn and Hardart on 57th Street just at closing time," she said. "A kindly man I know there—I think he has a crush on me—sells me the stale unsold sandwiches at ten cents apiece. He would throw them in the

garbage anyway if he didn't sell them to me."

"After I pay my rent this week, I won't have any money left at all," she said.

"Your problems are solved," he told her. "I'll get you a room at a real ritzy place, called the Park Savoy. Doesn't that sound impressive? I'll pick up the rent bill for you."

"You mean, I'm about to become a kept woman?"

"Welcome to the club. Half the women living in New York are kept."

"You're full of surprises," she said. "Some of the kids at school told me you have homosexual proclivities. I didn't feel you'd want a broad from the Southwest like me."

"That homosexual thing—don't pay any attention to that talk," he assured her. "What those kids actually meant to say is that I'm a lesbian in a male body."

She looked confused for a moment. "Well . . . since you're a man, I guess that lesbianism is okay. When I left New Mexico, my family warned me not to get involved with lesbians. But since you're a man . . . well, as I said, I guess it's okay. But the way I figure it, if I don't hook up with you, it's a bench in Central Park for me."

Kim's opening dialogue is known today only because of Brooks Clift, Monty's brother. He was soon to meet and have an affair with the actress, and she related her experiences with Marlon presumably over pillow talk with Brooks. These recollections were included in his unpublished memoir. The bulk of that memoir was devoted to theatrical personalities he'd known, with many pages that described his troubled brother.

Marlon, as promised, got Kim a room at the rundown Park Savoy, that rat-infested hell hole for out-of-work actors. It was far from being the ritzy palace he'd promised. Although living with Wally, Marlon was a frequent visitor to Kim's ragtag room with its beat-up furniture. Casey Sullivan, a homosexual actor who lived next door "with whatever rough trade I could find," often knocked on Kim's wall urging her to quiet down. "When Brando came to visit, the springs in that bed creaked all night."

Kim Stanley

"I was a virgin until Marlon deflowered me," Kim once told Brooks.

Gradually Marlon helped Kim get rid of a lot of her thick southwestern drawl. When not fornicating, he gave her elocution lessons. She told him that when she'd first enrolled at the New School, one of the teachers had advised her to "take the first Greyhound bus heading back to

Texas."

Through some unknown connection, Marlon found work for Kim. She was hired as a cocktail waitress at the Astor Hotel Bar near Times Square. Between pushing cocktails on the primarily homosexual clientele, she was a dress model at Macy's.

Marlon introduced her to both Lee Strasberg and Elia Kazan, and soon, she was enrolled in the Actors Studio. After about five weeks, her accent began to disappear, enough so that she was cast in a small part in a bad play by Gertrude Stein. Called *Yes Is for a Very Young Man*, Kim appeared opposite Anthony (Tony) Franciosa, a future husband of Marlon's other girlfriend, Shelley Winters. Although he disliked the play itself, Brooks Atkinson, drama critic for *The New York Times*, singled out Kim for special praise.

One day on a hand-holding walk through Central Park, Kim told Marlon, "All I ever wanted to do was to be the May Queen back in Santa Fe. Here I am trying to get an acting job in New York City. *New York City of all places!*"

After seeing Katharine Hepburn in a road show tour of *The Philadelphia Story*, Kim decided "it was the theater for me, although I have a degree in psychology. I can psychoanalyze you if you want me to."

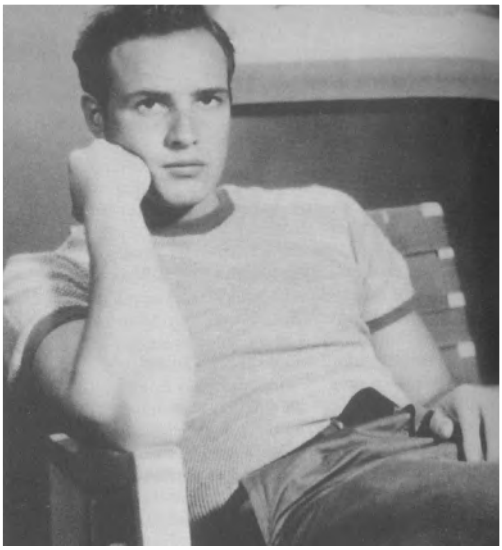
He took her up on that offer. As Kim later revealed to Brooks, "Marlon told me some of his deepest, darkest secrets, including his fear of being forever a mama's boy."

He also claimed that after a particularly intense affair with a man, such as Monty Clift or Leonard Bernstein, that he indulged in promiscuous sex, "screwing every girl who will go to bed with me—and very few of them say no."

"I have guilt about sleeping with men, and, almost to atone for it, I go in the opposite direction," he said. "The more the merrier. That way, I manage to convince myself I'm a bona fide heterosexual until the queer side of me comes out again."

Kim advised him that he'd make an excellent case study for Dr. Alfred Kinsey, a sex researcher who was getting better known every day. She claimed that she was very impressed with Dr. Kinsey when she heard him lecture on sex. "For the first time," she said, "I understood what sex was about and how it should be approached." At first Marlon volunteered to be interviewed by Dr. Kinsey, but he later bowed out, giving no reason.

Even though he may have kept it a secret from such close friends as Wally Cox and Stella Adler, Marlon, in the weeks leading up to his being cast in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, developed a fondness for group sex. During his "analytic" sessions with Kim, he confessed that at least once a week he attended an orgy in the Village. Group sex became especially popular in the Village in the months after World War II. "The war liberated both men and women,"



A pensive moment in sister Fran's apartment.

Tom Ewell later said. "It was a great time to be alive and to be in New York."

Sometimes groups, often all male, and with Marlon in their midst, would meet in a private apartment for an orgy. Other groups preferred a combination of men and women. Marlon confessed to Kim that he had "an insatiable appetite" at these orgies. He boasted that during one session in particular, at least a dozen young men and women got to enjoy "the pleasures of my noble tool." He even invited Kim to join him at one of these orgies. That wasn't her lifestyle, and she politely turned him down.

In an amazing turn-around, Marlon the patient began to analyze Kim the psychologist. He predicted that her luminous presence would one day light up the Broadway stage, and with that pronouncement, he demonstrated a gift for prophecy. But he also found that she had a very dark side, and he identified with her frequent bouts of depression and self-doubt. She shrank from the perceived pressures of future stardom, telling him that she could never be "comfortable in my skin" as a star. He shared the same feeling. She noted that he had attempted to deliberately sabotage his future stardom by "fucking up so badly in that *Eagle* play opposite Bankhead."

Kim's romance with Marlon lasted for about six weeks. "It was just too intense," she said. "Like a short candle, it burned out."

"I thought they were truly in love," Bobby Lewis said. "I was with them on several occasions. Their talk wasn't just about sex. They could go on for hours about Method acting. I often joined in on these sessions. Kim always claimed to anyone interested that Method acting had helped her become as 'free as possible.' She adored Lee Strasberg as much as Marlon continued to detest him. Although we didn't call it such in those days, Lee was actually Kim's guru."

Bobby would later work with Kim professionally, notably on Colette's *Chéri*. When interviewed years later by *Newsweek*, he called Kim "our greatest actress," and the magazine ran that accolade without attribution.

Although Marlon unceremoniously dumped Kim, he remained her friend

like he had with so many of his other loves. That friendship continued as she went through hasty marriages to actors Bruce Hall and Curt Conway.

Marlon avidly followed her career in the years ahead and was "thrilled," he later said, when he saw her perform in the 1955 William Inge play, *Bus Stop*. In her most memorable stage role, Kim played Cherie, the worn-at-the-edges nightclub singer. Refusing the screen role, she saw it go to Marilyn Monroe, who delivered one of her most memorable performances.

By coincidence, Marlon briefly considered appearing opposite his friend, Marilyn, in the role of the feisty cowboy who wins Cherie's heart.

When Marlon bowed out, the role was offered to Elvis Presley. It could have been a career-making move in Hollywood for Elvis. Many producers in Hollywood salivated at the prospect of Elvis and Marilyn in the same movie. But his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, turned down the juicy role, preferring Elvis to remain in the exploitation films he selected for him.

In one of her infrequent forays into film, Kim played the lead in a 1958 movie, *The Goddess*, loosely based on Marilyn herself. Sitting through the film twice, Marlon pronounced it "the greatest movie ever made—you can forget *Citizen Kane*."

By 1964 Kim had persuaded Lee Strasberg to have the Actors Studio present a production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. Her old mentor, Lee himself, would direct. Cast as the other two sisters were Geraldine Page and Shirley Knight.

"In their day, both Geraldine Page and Kim Stanley were hailed as the two greatest actresses on Broadway," Bobby Lewis said. "But long before each of them became famous, Marlon got in there first. Kim had met and befriended Geraldine many years before they worked together. If Kim wanted to hang on to Marlon between his group sex sessions, she made a big mistake. One night at a coffeehouse on Bleeker Street in the Village, Kim introduced the handsome young Marlon to the vibrantly engaging, if not beautiful, Geraldine Page. The chemistry was so hot between them I think he fucked Gerry on the first night of their meeting. Poor Kim went home alone."

After her self-imposed exile in New Mexico in later years, where Kim suffered a nervous breakdown, Marlon corresponded with her only rarely. She wrote letters on occasion to Brooks Clift, Marlon, Lee Strasberg, and Geraldine Page, whom she'd forgiven for stealing Marlon from her. In these letters, she expressed a frequent sentiment, also shared with pupils in classes where she taught acting. "You can't be good in the theater until you've immersed yourself in the marvelous detective story of the human spirit. But it's difficult, so terribly difficult."

Her last known contact with Marlon was in 1979 when she returned briefly to New York, launching an acting troupe in SoHo. She wrote him ask-

ing him to "use your star power to help me get financing to make a film about Virginia Woolf."

After mulling it over and placing a call to a producer or two, he found no enthusiasm. He never answered her urgent request.

But he did watch her 1984 TV version of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in which she played Big Mama. Kim had made her London debut in the play in 1958, but in that production she'd played not Big Mama, but "Maggie the Cat" herself. In 1984, cast as Big Mama, she appeared opposite Jessica Lange as Maggie.

"Perhaps the most brilliant interpretation of one of Tennessee's characters since Vivien Leigh took *A Streetcar Named Desire*," Marlon told his friends in Hollywood. "Watching Kim emote last night made me realize that she was the love of my life." He no doubt believed his assessment of her performance. But surely the second sentiment was said only for dramatic effect.

* * *

Among New York studs, Marlon became one of the first—and perhaps the only actor—to "audition" both Kim Stanley and Geraldine Page. Long before any theatrical agent fully understood the depth of their enormous talents, he was loudly and accurately proclaiming that each of them in her own way would become the greatest of all Broadway actresses, far better than either Lynn Fontanne or Katharine Cornell. The Stanley/Page debate still rages today as theatrical memory fades.

There is no doubt that Missouri-born Geraldine Page, called Gerry by her friends and the same age as Marlon, received the most acclaim. When friends told Marlon that Gerry was primarily a stage actress, not really suited to film, he'd say, "What the fuck? How many stage actresses do you know who can count eight Oscar nominations for their screen work? Gerry was nominated for Academy Awards even when she shouldn't have been." He was no doubt referring to her cartoonish performance in the anything-goes comedy, *You're a Big Boy Now*, in 1966.

One night in Key West, on the back porch of a local conch, Danny Stirrup, Gerry related her involvement with Marlon to an amused Tennessee Williams, his lover, Frankie Merlo, novelist James Leo Herlihy, art director Stanley Haggart, and the author.

"Yes, that dear Marlon took me to bed on the first night we met," Gerry said. "Such sensitive hands. We just deserted poor Kim Stanley. Marlon told me that he and Kim were merely friends. I believed the devil. Later, I found out that Kim was madly in love with him. I would never have walked off with the trophy of the night had I known that. Deliberate cruelty is not part of my

character."

She laughingly recalled, "I was no virgin when I met Marlon. I grew up in the Middle West where the corn-fed boys could outrun me, so I approached Marlon's bed already properly deflowered. From the first night, I realized that Marlon had nothing in common with other boys I had known. No man ever fascinated me as much until another actor with the unlikely name of Rip Torn came along. And, as you know, I married him."

"Bobby Lewis told me I'd have a two-month run with Marlon, if that," she said. "It became 'if that.' If I remember properly, our love affair didn't last an entire month. But our friendship has endured forever." She reached over and patted Tennessee's hand. "It was because of your characters that we achieved whatever notoriety the both of us enjoy. Without those plays of yours, what would Marlon and I have become? Marlon and I rarely see each other today. We have a phone relationship. I share my latest humiliations with him, and he shares his even more horrible humiliations with me."

At that point, her host, Danny Stirrup, arrived with a slice of Key Lime pie for her. "Carrot cake is my favorite," she told him, "but I'll go for this too. At our home in Chelsea—we call it Torn Page—Rip does the cooking and I do the eating. Anytime anyone invites me for dinner, I tell them I love everything but eggplant. It was food that brought Rip and me together. I was licking a strawberry ice cream cone. It was at the Actors Studio in 1955. This handsome but strange man comes up to me and asks me for a lick. I give him a dirty look. Then I look into his face again and let him have a lick. Rip has been taking licks ever since."

"If not for Rip, I would have married Marlon years before," she claimed, "but he never asked me. The closest we ever came was on a street in the Village. He bought me a two-dollar beaded necklace from this street vendor. The gems were red beans. He put the necklace around me and kissed me. 'That means we're officially engaged,' he said. I told him it was more customary to present a young woman with an engagement ring. 'No, that's old-fashioned,' he said. He'd read somewhere that some tribe on the planet used beads instead of an engagement ring. After that sort of proposal, there was never any talk of marriage again."

Geraldine Page

During their courtship, Gerry quickly learned that she wasn't the only girl in Marlon's chaotic life. "Sometimes when out on a date with me, he would walk off with another young woman he'd casually introduced himself to. One time we went into this drugstore. He walked up to the girl behind the

"I've got rhythm, I've got music..."

counter and asked her to go away with him. He had this seductive way around women. The girl literally walked off her job to go with him. As for me, I sat on the drugstore stool alone ordering a double chocolate malt. Some abandoned women would never have spoken to Marlon again. But I forgave my errant lover. In a way, dealing with him prepared me for my future husband. I learned to ignore all the young women Rip was secretly dating behind my back."

Geraldine continued with her memories: "One night Marlon boasted that he had 'at least six women pregnant' that month. He told me that somehow he was going to raise enough money so that these women could have illegal abortions. 'I'm very careless when I have sex,' he told me, as if I didn't already know that. 'I don't like to use protection,' he said. 'It desensitizes my noble tool.'"

"In those days, according to Marlon," Gerry said, "an abortion performed by a legitimate doctor cost five hundred dollars. A doctor in Brooklyn, Sam Segal, often performed these abortions. Marlon said that he always accompanied his pregnant girlfriend—by then, often his ex-girlfriend—to these abortions, paying for them with God knows what money," Gerry claimed. "He told me that in most cases he never saw the girl again after she had recovered from the procedure."

On one occasion," Gerry claimed, "Marlon actually invited her to an abortion party on Sullivan Street in the Village. "There must have been fifty people there. Wally Cox was at the entrance door collecting five dollars per head. Once I got inside the crowded little flat, I learned that an abortion had already been performed on a stringy-haired ballet dancer in a black leotard."

When another money taker took over at the door, Wally went to get Gerry some cheap wine in a broken glass, and she talked briefly with him. "Marlon and I are rooming together," he told her. "Marlon is the right shoe and I'm the left. People don't understand our strange friendship because the two of us are so different. But I'll let you in on a secret. I'm not beefy like Marlon as you can see. He gets all the women. I get very few. But hanging out with him I get his rejects. With the exception of your lovely self, his rejects aren't all that special. Marlon is known for dating pigs. Even though we're very different, we share one common trait. Marlon and I will go to bed with just about anybody who walks."

When the party was in full swing, and all the guests had arrived, "the fetus—or at least I thought it was a fetus—was passed around for everybody to examine," she said. "It had been placed in a clear Mason jar with a tin lid on top. When the jar was passed to me, I nearly dropped it. One look and I wanted to throw up. It was the most disgusting looking thing that ever came out of a human body. Maybe it was just a piece of chopped liver from the deli. But I just knew it was a fetus. I was so shocked I begged Marlon to take me home. He refused to go with me. He said he was going to play the bongo drums to entertain the guests. I went home vowing never to see Marlon again. The next night, I'd forgiven him and our romance resumed."

In the days ahead," she said, "Wally often joined us on our dates. Sometimes we'd do nothing more exciting than stop at Marlon's favorite place, Bernie's Juice Bar. I'd never had beet juice before, much less carrot, much less beet and carrot juice combined. I drank this horrible concoction to please him. Frankly I preferred orange juice."

"All of Marlon's friends, especially Wally, did whatever they thought Marlon wanted to do," she said. "He was definitely the ringleader and plotted all the amusements for his gang. Sometimes he took me motorcycle riding, no doubt in rehearsal for a future film of his. Once he took me to Chow-Chow, his favorite restaurant in Chinatown. There he taught me to eat with chopsticks. I think we ordered chop suey. In those days, eating Chinese meant ordering chop suey."

"One night—it was very late—he took me to this little dive in the Village," she said. "You know, candles dripping from cheap Chianti bottles. I had a glass of wine and suggested he might like one too. I knew he wasn't a big drinker. To my surprise, he ordered a large tumbler of straight Scotch—'the more rotgut the better,' he told the bartender. In one gulp he downed all that Scotch. I was stunned."

"To my horror," she recalled, "he took the glass and broke it over the wooden table. Before I knew what was happening, he took the most jagged edge of the glass and slit both his wrists. The blood was gushing out of both arms. The next hour passed like a blur for me. The bartender must have summoned an ambulance. We got him to the hospital. His life was saved."

"The next day I showed up at the hospital with flowers," she recalled. Marlon, with his wrists bandaged, was resting peacefully. I remember saying to him, 'How could you? What on earth drove you to try to commit suicide? You've got everything to live for.' He looked up at me. With the most sincere eyes I've ever seen on a human being, he answered me—and I felt his reply was genuine. 'To tell you the truth, I don't know why I did that. I truly don't. I hardly remember last night.'"

After that hospital visit, Geraldine's relationship with him tapered off.

"His intensity, the depth of his feeling about everything, frightened me. I wasn't all that emotionally stable myself in those days, and I feared Marlon would take me to the brink. He was more than I could handle."

She remembered that she hadn't seen him in a week, but that she had agreed to meet him at her apartment for a six o'clock rendezvous. Because of a rehearsal, she didn't get home until after eight that night. "I couldn't get in touch with him to tell him I was held up," she said. "I turned the key and went inside my dark apartment. In the kitchen when I turned on the overhead light, I noticed that my kitchen window had been broken into and someone had come in through the fire escape. I heard someone call out my name from the bedroom. I recognized Marlon's voice. I went into the bedroom where he'd taken a candle from the living room. In the glow, I could see he was lying on the bed nude in my silk lingerie, the only silk I owned at the time. 'I love soft fabric on my skin,' he told me. 'Now come and get in bed with me. I want to fuck you silly.'"

Gerry claimed that during her relationship with Marlon she was well aware of the other women he was dating. "I overlooked a lot, but what I could not forgive in some cases was the age of the girls he dated. Pure jailbait. Fifteen years old if that. More likely thirteen or fourteen years old. He claimed he was the champion hymen-buster of young girls in New York City."

"At one point," she said, "he even bragged of taking the virginity of a twelve-year-old girl still in the convent. Her parents were circus performers and had dumped her with some nuns. I have never interfered in the sexual pastimes of others and always try to withhold judgment. But I do not endorse child molestation. You remember all the trouble Errol Flynn had in the early Forties with statutory rape, and, of course, Charlie Chaplin is famous for his Lolita types. So was Howard Hughes. Becoming moralistic, I warned Marlon that he might be ruining the lives of these young girls. He merely shrugged his shoulders. In some ways, he could be the most sensitive man I've ever met. But he appeared completely indifferent to any harm he might be causing. About virgins, he had a completely Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality. He once told me that if he caused any harm at all, it was that he ruined these girls for all other men after only one night with him."

"After I drifted away from Marlon, I started dating this handsome young actor who had dreams of becoming a movie star," she said. "He later went to Hollywood and became one of its biggest stars, even though he was a closeted homosexual. So as not to cater to your voyeuristic pleasure, I won't name him. I'm sure everybody here knows who I have in mind." She waved her arm expansively in a gesture that included everyone on Danny Stirrup's back porch.

"Unannounced, Marlon came over to my apartment one night," she said.

"I was in bed with what's-his-name. Marlon barged in on us. That night, the window opening from my kitchen onto the fire escape had been left open so that we could get some air. Even though Marlon was the most promiscuous actor in New York, he called *me* the whore. He said his own mother, Dodie, was also a whore and that she'd betrayed him with other men. It sounded most incestuous. 'What is it with you women?' he asked me. 'Do you have to sleep with any man in pants?' He stormed out of my apartment, never to return. Later, at the Actors Studio, as a means of getting even with me, Marlon told me that he too had slept with what's-his-face, and my errant lover went on, according to Marlon, to claim that Marlon was better in bed than I was. I was hurt and Marlon retreated into a defensive withdrawal. Our relationship was over. I didn't see him after that unless he showed up at one of my plays."

Geraldine went on to state that despite their conflicts, she continued to call Marlon for advice about which roles to accept. And sometimes he'd call her to discuss if he should accept a particular script or not. "What was amusing," she said, "is that we always called each other but never took any of the advice. He told me to take the part of the mother in *The Exorcist*. But I'd read the book and wanted to throw up. I was offered the role of Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Marlon told me to go for it. Once again, I didn't listen to him. My biggest mistake was in turning down Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. The Tony that year went to my acting teacher, Uta Hagen, who immortalized herself with that juicy part. When I first read the play, I thought it was all just dirty talk. I almost turned down John Wayne in *Hondo* because I considered him a notorious right-wing bigot reactionary. When Marlon too advised me against *Hondo*, I decided to accept the part."

As long as there is an eccentric and kooky lady to play," Gerry told Tennessee, "there will be a role for me. A drunken, fading actress. A neurotic schoolteacher. An aging spinster. A vulnerable lady hanging on to life by an emotional thread. I work in spite of what critics call my 'habit of pouring on the weird tics a bit.'"

In the years that lay ahead, Marlon would see all her films, even the bad ones. He was mesmerized by her trademark fluttery gestures and seesaw voice. Rivaled only by Vivien Leigh, whose performance in many ways defined *A Streetcar Named Desire*, she was the ultimate Tennessee Williams troubled heroine, as exemplified by her stage portraits of the love-starved Alma in Williams's *Summer and Smoke* in 1952 and in her role as the fading movie star Princess Kosmonopolis (also known as Alexandra Del Lago) in the playwright's 1950 *Sweet Bird of Youth*. She would later earn Oscar nominations for these two roles on the screen.

For the part of the doomed hustler, Chance Wayne, in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Marlon himself flew to Key West to discuss his possible appearance in the

film with its author, Tennessee. Marlon dropped out when he learned the producers really wanted pretty boy Paul Newman.

Marlon later regretted that he didn't pursue the role of Chance more aggressively. "I know more about hustling than Newman," he said. He also regretted not appearing in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opposite Elizabeth Taylor. "I know more about being a homosexual than Newman," he said. "It's very clear to me that Tennessee modeled Alexandra Del Lago after Tallulah. I surely know how to appear opposite a Tallalah character better than Newman. Besides, I hear my prick is bigger than his."

* * *

Even before *A Streetcar Named Desire* went into rehearsal, rumor was rampant on Broadway that it would become the hit of the 1947 season. Its author was none other than Tennessee Williams, who had already scored a Broadway success with *The Glass Menagerie*.

Originally called *The Poker Night*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in its simplest form, was the story of a neurotic aristocratic southern belle, Blanche DuBois. She'd lost Belle Reve, her family estate, and with her illusions still intact arrives in New Orleans, after having been run out of her hometown because of her profligate ways. She seeks refuge with her sister, called Stella in the play, and her brutal brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski.

From her sixteen million dollar fortune, the producer, Irene Mayer Selznick, invested only $25,000 of her own money to get *Streetcar* launched. To make up the rest of the projected $100,000 budget, she called on old friends, Cary Grant and John Jay Whitney, for cash.

Pointedly, she did not ask her father, Louis B. Mayer, to invest, "because Dad liked only happy endings." Also ignored as a potential "angel" was her estranged husband, David O. Seznick, who was carrying on a torrid affair at the time with the beautiful young actress, Jennifer Jones.

Originally, Irene had wanted Josh Logan, the hottest director on Broadway, to handle *Streetcar*. But Tennessee had insisted on Elia Kazan after seeing him direct rival playwright Arthur Miller's *All*

Watch out for my spear

My Sons. Irene found Kazan a tough bargainer. He outrageously demanded and eventually forced her to agree to turn over 20 percent of *Streetcar* profits to him. He also wanted a guarantee of "complete control" over the production. Not only that, but he held out for the billing to read: IRENE SELZNICK PRESENTS AN ELIA KAZAN PRODUCTION.

As Irene and Kazan set about to cast the play, the relationship between the producer and director was tense. From the beginning, Irene interfered so much that Kazan warned her that, "I'll walk if you don't get out of my face. If your suggestions are so great, call your Dad. I hear he's in danger of getting kicked out of MGM." Although he could be cruel to her, she would always forgive him.

Irene insisted on casting stars "so I'll get back my investment." With that in mind, she invited Tennessee and Kazan to visit her at her lavish Hollywood home, where she was entertaining her best friend and rumored lover, Katharine Hepburn. At some point, Irene had tried to interest Miss Hepburn in going onto the stage as Blanche. Hepburn read the play but ultimately turned it down. "Why didn't your fucking husband cast me as Scarlett? Now, that's one Southern belle I could have played the hell out of." Unknown to all but her closest friends, Hepburn "cursed like a sailor," in the words of director George Cukor, "whenever the cameras weren't rolling."

While Kazan, Tennessee, and Irene were sitting in the garden of her mansion, "getting plastered," as Tennessee later recalled—"or at least I was having one wee dram too many"—a call came in from Hume Cronyn. "A call and an invitation."

Cronyn, a Canadian actor, had left behind a career in law to become an actor and the partner, both on the screen and in real life, to British actress Jessica Tandy. Tandy, whom he married in 1942, would, of course, become one of the great actresses of the English-speaking world, a position she'd eventually maintain for five decades. But that lay in her future.

Hume Cronyn

Knowing that his wife's career in Hollywood was going nowhere, Cronyn staged an early one-act play of Tennessee's, *Portrait of a Madonna*, at the Actors' Lab in Los Angeles. The protagonist in this play was an early version of Blanche DuBois, whose characterization was to be fully realized in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Cronyn directed Tandy in the part, and invited Tennessee, along with Kazan and Irene, to see the production.

Both Kazan and Tennessee were enthusiastic about Tandy's performance. "Since you won't allow me to play the role of Blanche myself," Tennessee said,

campily, “I guess we’ve found our star.”

Kazan agreed. “Let’s go backstage and offer her the part.”

As producer, Irene was not so sure. She’d grown up in the world of the star system and wanted big names. Before going backstage, Irene expressed her fears about Tandy to both Tennessee and Kazan. She warned that Tandy was far too strong an actress to play the frail, aging Southern belle who dressed in gossamer. “We need a Vivien Leigh type. We probably can’t get her, but I bet Margaret Sullavan can do it. Vivien would be better, however. I could just see her emoting like a moth attracted to the flame that will kill her.”

Ultimately Tandy won the role. Before she was signed, Irene, daughter of the studio system and a strong advocate of star power, had pushed Mary Martin as Blanche and Gregory Peck onto the somewhat astonished Kazan and his playwright. “When they were shocked, I told them that my choice for the roles was no stranger than David actually casting Humphrey Bogart in the role of Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*. At least David entertained the idea of Bogie for a week before sanity took over.”

Even though Tandy would go on to win a Tony award for the best stage performance of the year by a female, Irene had been right. Tandy was wrong for Blanche.

With the female role cast, Irene suggested actors for the role of Stanley Kowalski. “Earnest and dependable” Van Heflin appealed to her. But Tennessee and Kazan refused. She then put forth the name of Edmond O’Brien. “A face permanently fixed in a troubled squint and with a voice that sounds as if it brings only bad news,” was Kazan’s assessment.

Finally, Irene stunned Kazan and Tennessee by suggesting John Lund. “The boy from Rochester,” Kazan said, dismissing the idea. “Decidedly square and stoic. Not our Stanley.”

The name of Marlon Brando was put forth by Kazan. Irene, Tennessee, and Kazan himself had seen all of Marlon’s performances on stage. He was, in fact, Kazan’s pupil at the Actors Studio. “Too young,” Tennessee claimed. “He looks like a boy. I see Stanley as a thirty-year-old Polock.”

Kazan had just finished making *Gentleman’s Agreement,* in which John Garfield had appeared opposite Gregory Peck. The two men had worked together in the Group Theatre in the 1930s. “Julie would be perfect for this blue collar role.”

Tennessee wasn’t so sure, but Irene applauded the idea. “Let’s go for Garfield!” she said.

Tough, cynical, and edgy, both on and off the screen, New York bad boy John Garfield had burst into stardom. Half the world, or so it seemed, saw him emote with Lana Turner in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and opposite man-eating Joan Crawford in *Humoresque*.

Arriving in New York fresh from his hit in the film, *Body and Soul*, in which he played a dim-witted boxer, Garfield was cocky and demanding.

On a deserted stage, Garfield did a fresh read-through of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with Kazan playing both Blanche and Stella. In Garfield's judgment, "The male role is very secondary," he told Kazan. "This Stanley character is a mere prop for Blanche's histrionics."

He did not turn down the part but instead issued a series of demands. Before he'd sign for the role, he wanted Tennessee to rewrite the play, making Stanley's part the focus of the drama and expanding his role. He also wanted a guarantee that he could leave the play after only four months and that he would be offered the movie role. Tennessee turned down the request for a rewrite, and Irene refused to meet Garfield's other demands.

At the Actors Studio, Marlon confronted his teacher, Kazan. He'd heard that Garfield "all but had the part of Stanley." Marlon told Kazan, "I think Garfield would be perfect as Stanley. My only problem with him is that his old buddies from the Thirties, guys like yourself, call him 'Julie.' Is there some secret life about Mr. Macho that you're hiding from me?"

"I can assure you that John Garfield is the most heterosexual actor you'll ever meet," Kazan said. "I'm not known for hanging out with fags."

"Not that I'm saying Tennessee is a fag—far from it—but you hang out with him," Marlon countered.

"There is always the exception to the rule," Kazan said, "even a rule of my own making." He turned and walked away.

Although out of the running himself, Marlon was eager to learn any news he could about how casting for *Streetcar* was going. Karl Malden himself told Marlon that he'd been assigned the role of Mitch, Stanley's sidekick.

Marlon also learned from Kazan that the relatively unknown actress, Kim Hunter, had been cast as Stanley's brutalized wife, Stella.

At the Actors Studio, Kazan remembered that Marlon was "stunned" when he told him that Garfield was out and Burt Lancaster was flying into New York to read for the part.

"A circus acrobat," Marlon said. "I'm sure that's the kind of background Tennessee had in mind when writing the character of Stanley."

"Are you being sarcastic?" Kazan asked him.

"No, sincere."

Defensively, Kazan read to Marlon a newspaper clipping he was carrying with him. It was by Sheila Graham, the popular Hollywood columnist and former mistress of the novelist, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Gushing with praise after seeing Burt emote in *The Killers,* a short story by Ernest Hemingway, Graham wrote: "Masculinity was oozing from every pore. He was thirty-two but looked twenty-two, and what a physique! I could

see the muscles rippling up and down beneath his open shirt. It was a pleasure being with a future star at the beginning. He is always so friendly, so eager to please."

"Sounds to me like you want to turn *Streetcar* into a male burlesque show," Marlon said.

"Eat your heart out, Marlon!" Kazan told him.

"I was told that Burt, while in the circus, posed for the meat magazines," Marlon said. "You know, in those homoerotic Greco-Roman stances. And there are a lot of candid frontal nude shots of him in circulation. Maybe you could acquire one of them and run a nude billboard of Burt outside the theater. That surely would guarantee you business for *Streetcar*."

Kazan remembered losing his patience with Marlon and actually slapping him. "Fortunately, he didn't hit me back. 'Don't let your jealousy overwhelm you,' I told him."

"I've got a great body too!" Marlon protested. "I work out all the time."

"Your body's fine for Stanley," Kazan said. "I've told you before, you're just too young. What I didn't tell you, and I'll tell you now that I'm mad at you, you don't have the role in you. The part of Stanley Kowalski is just too big for your limitations as an actor."

"You're a rude, stupid man," Marlon said. "I'm dropping out of your class—you're a rotten teacher anyway—and out of the picture entirely. Someday I'll be the biggest star on Broadway. You'll come begging to me. Just you wait and see."

* * *

What happened next has become part of Broadway legend and lore. Even today, the scenario is a bit hazy, and all the eyewitnesses are dead, leaving only sketchy reports. "No one," Kazan recalled years later, "was exactly in the loop about that strange and long-ago week that Marlon and Burt Lancaster spent together in New York."

Burt arrived in New York with his agent, Harold Hecht, a former dancer for the Martha Graham company and the son of a Brooklyn iron contractor. Burt, whose career was soaring, was clearly Hecht's new meal ticket, and he was ferocious in his attempt to make a big star out of his newly acquired client. The role of Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar* was only one of several offers Burt was considering. Most of the excitement over him was generated for movie roles, not coming from the Broadway stage, except in the case of Kazan and Irene Selznick. Hollywood producers, not just Shelia Graham, saw his star potential.

Along with Hecht, "guarding him like a box of gold from Fort Knox" in

Burt Lancaster

Irene's words, Burt arrived at her grandly furnished Fifth Avenue apartment. She was impressed with the actor's good looks, physique, and male charm. But she later told Tennessee and Kazan that she felt Burt was more interested in securing the movie contract to play Stanley than he was in appearing on Broadway.

On her first meeting with Burt and Hecht, she told them of her triumph earlier in the day. She claimed that "I fished out Tennessee's best line from his wastepaper basket. 'I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.'"

"I just wish that Williams had put a line or two that good in the mouth of Kowalski," Burt told her.

Over drinks, he agreed to appear at the New Amsterdam Roof Theatre on 42nd Street and Broadway the following morning for a read-through of the play. Once again, as he had with Garfield, Kazan assumed the roles of both Blanche and Stella. At the rehearsal hall, perhaps to show off his manly physique, Burt insisted on removing his shirt.

It is not known how Marlon managed to slip in undetected to see Burt's read-through. Kazan later speculated that Marlon had disguised himself as a janitor. However he managed to conceal himself, Marlon saw Burt go through his first "blind read" of the play. It was the only time that Burt would "appear" as Stanley in front of anyone. Marlon was impressed with Burt's reading, Bobby Lewis later claimed, "although Marlon still felt that Garfield was the ideal choice for Stanley."

After performing as Stanley, Burt said he liked the role and "saw possibilities here." Hecht didn't comment, claiming, "I'll have to talk it over later with Burt."

Kazan left the studio for a meeting with Jessica Tandy, and Hecht had to see some old friends from his Brooklyn days. It was at this point that Marlon appeared, or so it is believed, and made the acquaintance of Burt, who had been left alone in the rehearsal hall.

"Marlon never told me the complete story," Edith said. "I was his agent, but I didn't even know how to get in touch with him most of the time. Technically, he was rooming with Wally Cox and that smelly raccoon. But whenever you needed him, he was never there but stashed away in some bed somewhere in God knows whose apartment. He never had a phone. You literally had to go over to that rattrap where he lived with Wally and leave him a hand-delivered message. The door was always open to their apartment, and

complete strangers wandered in and out at random. In those days it was the house party that never ended."

Within forty-eight hours, Hecht called Kazan to tell him that Burt would not be appearing on Broadway but was returning to Hollywood to make a film for producer Hal Wallis. Hecht also told Kazan that he wanted "Burt to be your first choice for Stanley when the film version is made."

Despondent over not being able to cast the right actor in the role of Stanley, Kazan met with Irene once more to reconsider Marlon. In spite of their temporary split, the director finally concluded that Marlon "would be a more dimensional Stanley than either Garfield or Lancaster once he finds himself in the role, which will take weeks, of course."

Irene and Kazan finally decided to send Marlon on a trip to Provincetown where Tennessee was applying his final polishing to *Streetcar*. "If Tennessee approves of Marlon in the role, he'll be our Stanley," Kazan said, "but only if our favorite homosexual says yes. One look at Marlon, and I bet Tennessee will get a hard-on." At the time, Kazan was not aware that his playwright not only knew Marlon but had already seduced him.

The only problem was, no one, especially Edith, knew where Marlon was. "Wally Cox was no help whatsoever," she said. "Wherever Marlon was, he wasn't rooming with Wally. He also hadn't informed Wally where he might be hanging out."

Marlon's former girlfriend, Geraldine Page, once said that he reminded her of a dog you take for a walk in the park. "He pisses on the elm tree. He pisses on the birch. Then, for a change of pace, he pisses on a fire hydrant or a patch of grass. His actual address shifted from day to day, depending on who—in his case, *what*—he was seducing. His ass *du jour*, so to speak. He once told me that he had to shift his address constantly, because so many of the young women he dated ended up stalking him after he dumped them, which he invariably did, including *moi*."

Burt Lancaster

Where Marlon was hiding out, it was later learned by Edith, was in the "bed of that gorgeous Burt Lancaster. Surely there were no two more beautiful men that God created than Burt Lancaster and Marlon Brando. What great porn stars they would have made as a screen duo. I don't know how Marlon persuaded Burt to disappear with him from that rehearsal hall, but away they went. I think on their first date that day after the *Streetcar* read-through, Marlon invited Burt to go with him to a gym. There,

they worked out together and presumably showered together. Somehow in the shower a torrid but very brief affair was launched."

"Obviously Burt was competition for Marlon, and the two actors would not only be compared frequently in Hollywood, but would often be up for the same parts," Edith said. "Even though I was Marlon's agent and close to him, a confidante about his affairs with both men and women, I never fully understood him. Instead of being hostile to actors with whom he was competing, Marlon tried to seduce them. It was as if the act of seduction gave him the edge. I assume that meant topping the victim in bed. Take poor Monty Clift, for instance. Instead of being leery of Monty, Marlon overpowered him sexually. At any rate, when I combed all of New York for Marlon to tell him he was on again for the part of Stanley, he was screwing Burt Lancaster. If I had been a man, I too would have wanted to screw Burt Lancaster."

"The two men partied, they drank together, and they may have even shared a woman or two in Burt's bed," Bobby Lewis said. "I heard they liked to roughhouse with each other, wrestle each other on the carpet, shit like that. These childish escapades, from what Marlon later told me, went atomic."

Encountering Kazan in Hollywood long after the film success of *Streetcar*, Burt told the director that, "I would not have been the great Stanley Kowalski that Brando was. He's a genius. But genius is too erratic. A pretty dangerous thing. It's better just to be talented. I am different from Brando—not better, just different. Where I've got one up on the fucker is that I have discipline. He doesn't."

In the years to come, Marlon followed not only Burt's career, but was always eager for gossip about his personal life. Marlon, Kazan, and Burt would each be cited in *Counterattack* magazine on August 4, 1950. The article claimed that all three men had a "Communist front record."

On many occasions Burt learned that directors wanted Marlon for a particular role, but that they had eventually settled for him instead. Marlon was Luchino Visconti's first choice for the role in *The Leopard*, which eventually went to Burt. Marlon had also been Tennessee's first choice for the role of Alvaro Mangiacavallo, the buffoonish truck driver opposite Anna Magnani's Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo*. Marlon turned it down, the role going to Burt.

Burt's biggest disappointment came when he lost the chance to play Don Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, based on Mario Puzo's kitschy best-selling novel. Paramount had been pushing for Burt in the role until Francis Ford Coppola awarded it to Marlon. For the rest of his life, Burt hated Marlon for "stealing my part."

Even more painful for Burt was when Marlon replaced him as the love interest in the life of Shelley Winters. The blond, brassy beauty had originally broken off with Marlon when *Streetcar* played on Broadway, but had

resumed their relationship in Hollywood.

Burt fell for Shelley in a big way, although he was married. She called their affair in the winter of 1951 "a lovely and sad backstreet romance." Her romance with Burt came to a crashing end when she encountered Marlon once again.

Burt was heartbroken when Shelley teamed up with Marlon once again. Reportedly, on some evenings, Burt sat in a parked car for hours at a time, watching Marlon come and go from Shelley's apartment.

"First the juicy roles," Burt told James Hill, who was his partner and the husband of Rita Hayworth. "Roles intended for me. Now he steals Shelley." He astonished Hill by telling him that he had fantasies of killing Brando. "No, not killing him myself," Burt said. "Hiring killers to do the job for me. I really mean that!"

* * *

On a windy, blustery New York day, Kazan encountered Marlon at the Actors Studio where he'd returned in spite of his threat to resign. "I've called Tennessee," Kazan told him. "He's waiting for you on the Cape. He wants to hear you read for the part of Stanley. If he goes for you, you've got the part. Of course, we can always have your blond hair dyed brown."

"How am I going to get up there?" Marlon asked. "I'm broke."

"I'll lend you twenty," Kazan said, reaching into his pocket.

Years later, Kazan recalled that moment in the history of the theater in a rather melodramatic way. "Marlon headed for the Cape to meet Tennessee. It was to be a date with destiny!"

Chapter Six

With the twenty dollars in his pocket that Kazan had given him, Marlon devoured all the food he could eat. "I was starving," he recalled. "Hadn't eaten a square meal in two days. Just peanut butter without any bread."

With the money he had left over, he bought groceries for Celia Webb and her son. Stashing the young boy with a friend, Celia joined Marlon on the trip to Provincetown to read for Tennessee. Since neither of them at this point had any money, Marlon stuck out his thumb, hitchhiking along the way and bumming food where they could find it. Celia and Marlon arrived in P-Town three days late. "In a tizzy," Tennessee had given up all hope of Marlon ever showing up. Kazan had warned him how undependable the actor was.

It turned out that Marlon and Celia had to hitch rides with at least eight different drivers before finally reaching the tip of Cape Cod.

In Tennessee's battered cottage, Marlon recalled that, "The toilet was overflowing with shit. That shit was swimming onto the tile floor—no one had mopped it up. I dug my bare hand into the toilet and pulled out what looked like a human fetus before delivery. Before I got there, Tennessee's motley crew had been using the bushes. Even the lights were out. Tennessee said they had been 'plunged into everlasting darkness.' I even fixed the God damn electricity using copper pennies."

Sharing the house with Tennessee were two strong-willed dames from Texas, producer Margo Jones and her estranged companion, Joanna Albus. The two women had come to the Cape to meet with Tennessee about mounting a production in Texas of *Summer and Smoke*.

Nicknamed "The Texas Tornado" by Tennessee, Jones had directed plays on Broadway before heading to the Southwest, landing in Dallas where she'd launched a repertory group, Theatre '47. Tennessee referred to Joanna as "the Tornado's sidekick."

Later, Joanna would become assistant stage manager when *Streetcar* opened on Broadway. Early gossip in P-Town linked Tennessee romantically with Margo until Joanna arrived on the scene to "set these gay boys straight." In Key West, Tennessee once said, "I have never been especially attracted to lesbians, although there has been a notable exception here and there."

Also sharing the cottage was Pancho Rodriguez, Tennessee's Mexican lover. At first Pancho threatened to leave P-Town and return to New Orleans

if Marlon spent the night. He was just as jealous of Marlon as he'd been on the first night they'd met years before. Tennessee prevailed upon Pancho to stay, and he did, although he refused to stick around for Marlon's reading.

As he had before that summer in Provincetown, Marlon bonded with Tennessee, finding him "a pristine soul who suffered from a deep-seated neurosis, a sensitive, gentle man destined to destroy himself."

In his autobiography, Marlon noted, but only casually, that the playwright was a homosexual, "but not effeminate or outwardly aggressive about it, and he never made a pass at the actors in his play. There was something eating at his insides that ultimately propelled him to his death."

Tennessee later recalled that "all of us were drunk when Marlon read for the part of Stanley." Taking the role he secretly coveted for himself, Tennessee played Blanche. He didn't need a script.

"The reading lasted less than two minutes," Margo recalled. "We just knew that Marlon was destined to be Stanley. I let out a Texas whoop like I do at the rodeo."

At first Tennessee didn't say anything after hearing Marlon read. His face looked as if he had disappointed Tennessee, who just sat there in a wicker peacock chair intently studying Marlon as he sucked smoke through a hygienic cigarette holder full of absorbent crystals. "The part is yours!" Tennessee finally said.

Leaving the women to prepare the beds for the night, Tennessee invited Marlon for a midnight stroll on the same beach where he'd seduced him some time before. Pancho had gone to the bars in P-Town, and the playwright didn't expect him to return to the cottage any time soon.

Tennessee later recalled that neither Marlon nor he said a word. "No mention was made of *Streetcar*. In the moonlight, I had never seen a man of such extraordinary beauty."

The myth about Tennessee never making a pass at his actors has been perpetuated, often in biographies, for decades. The playwright's longtime lover,

Stanley Kowalski (*Streetcar*) and
Val Xavier (*The Fugitive Kind*)

Frank Merlo, Pancho's eventual replacement, claimed the statement was true in a technical sense. "But we're splitting hairs here. Tenn never made a pass at actors. They made passes at him. Or, rather, they made themselves available to him. On the beach that night, and Tenn told me this himself, he didn't have to grope Marlon. Marlon whipped it out for Tenn. What gay man worth his salt wouldn't have taken advantage of that? Tenn was only human. And Marlon was his sexual fantasy. In Tenn's mixed-up head, Marlon and Stanley Kowalski had meshed into the same erotic image. Theirs was hardly a love affair, like Tenn and me. Marlon was rough trade to Tenn. He didn't mind servicing the stud, swinging on what Marlon always called his noble tool."

Tennessee was less than candid in his memoirs, claiming that he kept the relationship businesslike between Marlon and himself. "I have never played around with actors," Tennessee falsely claimed. "It is a point of morality with me. And anyhow Brando was not the type to get a part that way."

Perhaps that was true, but it didn't take into account that Marlon had seduced playwrights before, often very famous ones.

Back in his cottage at one o'clock in the morning, Tennessee noted that Pancho still hadn't returned from the bars. Marlon claimed he was starving. No great chef, Tennessee went into the kitchen and made him a ham sandwich. The ham was dry, the bread stale. He also poured Marlon a glass of milk. In one gulp, Marlon finished the milk and then requested the whole quart, which he proceeded to finish off. "Pure Stanley," Tennessee said.

He kissed Marlon on the lips and headed for his own bunk bed. He noted that Celia was asleep under a quilt in a corner of the living room, where Marlon went to join her for the night.

The next morning, Tennessee said that Pancho had not returned all night, but Marlon didn't seem unduly concerned. Tennessee lent Marlon twenty dollars so he could buy bus tickets back to New York. Leaving the cottage, Marlon told Celia that "Tennessee is a very easy touch."

On the Greyhound bus going back to New York, Marlon never spoke to Celia. He was lost in a world of his own. "I didn't have anything to say to her because my mind was completely occupied with how to play Stanley. I feared the part was too big for me. A sense of terror, unlike any I'd known before, came over me. I was shaking and sweating a lot. Celia tried to comfort me, but no one could. A demon was taking over inside me and squeezing my guts."

With Marlon out the door, Tennessee called Kazan in New York. "I want Marlon to be Stanley Kowalski. He's far better than Garfield could ever be."

When Kazan put down the phone, he called Irene Selznick. "That son of a bitch of a faggot up there on the Cape is riding a crush on Marlon."

Back in his cottage, Tennessee was writing a letter to his agent, Audrey Wood, calling Marlon a "God-sent Stanley." He seemed delighted to cast the

role eight years younger than he had written it. In the letter, he praised Marlon for delivering "the best reading I have ever heard," and that coming from an actor already notorious for his bad readings in which he mumbled. In his letter, Tennessee noted "the physical appeal and sensuality of Marlon, at least as much as Burt Lancaster."

Back in New York for the rehearsals of *Streetcar*, Marlon is credited with causing the final break between Tennessee and Pancho. During one particularly violent and jealous argument over Marlon, Pancho grabbed Tennessee's typewriter and tossed it out of the hotel window, seriously injuring a pedestrian below—in fact, almost killing him.

That was all too much for Tennessee. He bought Pancho a one-way ticket to New Orleans and gave him a thousand dollars "to jump-start another life for yourself." Pancho had calmed down after the typewriter incident. Pleading and even crying before Tennessee, he begged him to let him stay. "It's over," a somewhat callous Tennessee said. "Time to end what should never have begun in the first place."

On the way out the door, Pancho said, "I hope you and Brando will be very happy together. He's your fantasy both on stage and off."

According to Frank Merlo, Tennessee, post-Poncho, "made himself available" to Marlon on several occasions during rehearsals and during the long run of *Streetcar*. As reported by Frank, Tennessee told him, "The last time I enjoyed Marlon was that night on the beach at the Cape. It is a memory I'll always treasure. If he had wanted to come and live with me, I would have asked Pancho to leave much sooner. The relationship with Marlon never got beyond a blow-job. In my already broken heart, I knew even then that it is a hopeless pursuit every time we go after the unobtainable."

* * *

Marlon began rehearsals on October 5, 1947 in the hall on top of the New Amsterdam Theatre where Burt Lancaster had gone through his reading. By the third day, Marlon stormed out of the hall. Kazan chased him down the corridor. "I can't play this character," Marlon told Kazan, who remembered Marlon "all sweating and trembling with grief and anxiety."

"I hate Stanley Kowalski," Marlon shouted at his director. "He never doubts himself. His ego is so strong. He's always right—or at least thinks he's right—and he's never afraid. He's the complete opposite of all the things I am."

Slowly Kazan lured him back into the rehearsal hall, putting his arm around Marlon to offer him comfort. "Just think of Stanley as a complete hedonist," Kazan said. "The type of guy who sucks on a cigar all day because

he can't suck on a teat. He conquers with his penis like you conquer dame after dame with what you call your noble tool."

During the first week of rehearsals, Tennessee showed up on the roof of the New Amsterdam where Florenz Ziegfeld in the 1920s had staged midnight musical revues. He went around speaking to each cast member individually. "I'm dying of pancreatic cancer," Tennessee claimed. Marlon and Jessica Tandy, along with Karl Malden and Kim Hunter, were stunned at the news and didn't know what to say, other than muttering their condolences.

Kazan was already aware that Tennessee "was the world's most hysterical hypochondriac." He went over and embraced Tennessee. "Don't worry," he told the playwright. "You're a tough old bird and will live to be one hundred years old—maybe more. Now, let's get on with the rehearsals of this poetic tragedy."

Tennessee had originally intended that sympathy generated by the play be directed toward Blanche. Sitting with Kazan during the weeks of rehearsals, he clearly saw that Marlon was altering his intention. Instead of telling Kazan to restrain Marlon, Tennessee proclaimed, "The boy is a genius! Let's see what he can do. He's a Lawrencian fantasy of the earthy proletarian male." He paused. "A regular midnight cowboy." Years later in Key West, Tennessee would share his early reaction to Marlon with his neighbor, novelist James Leo Herlihy. The writer so liked the expression, *Midnight Cowboy*, that he wrote a novel about it, which was made into the Oscar-winning film of 1969.

Bobby Lewis visited *Streetcar* rehearsals to watch Marlon emote with Jessica Tandy. "Marlon was playing against Dodie, not Tandy as Blanche," he later said. "In Tennessee's character, Marlon found the same heavy drinking, the coquettish sexual flirtations, the lost hopes and dreams that he'd experienced with his own mother. He was seeing Dodie up there on that stage—not Tandy. In the rape scene, he finally fulfilled his incestuous wish to deflower his own mother."

Bobby dismissed talk of how Marlon was slowly "discovering Stanley" as he got deeper and deeper into the role. "Marlon used his portrayal of Stanley as an excuse to pick up a lot of blue-collar New Jersey truck drivers and give them blow-jobs. That's how he imbued himself with the semen of Stanley."

Kazan was not completely unaware of all of Marlon's nocturnal adventures during rehearsals for *Streetcar*. Often his star actor showed up late. "On some occasions Marlon looked like the shit had been beaten out of him," Kazan recalled. "Which it probably had. All of the cast knew that Marlon was fucking every woman in sight and, for a change of pace, picking up rough trade along the waterfront."

Along with Shelley Winters, Carlo Fiore—at Marlon's invitation—attended a rehearsal of *Streetcar*. "I was shocked at Marlon's transformation into

Karl Malden and Kim Hunter preventing backstage brawls between Brando and Tandy

Stanley," Fiore said. "He had put that pelvis-thrust-forward slouch of his to good use and turned his petulant pout into a snarl. His T-shirt disclosed the heavily muscled torso of a truck driver. He mumbled like a moron. He scratched his asshole, digging in deep to get at the itching. To show that he had a perpetual hard-on, he wore tight jeans to outline the bulge of his genitals."

For his appearance in *Streetcar* in a dirty, tight-fitting T-shirt and equally tight-fitting blue jeans, Marlon made a fashion statement that would be adopted by young men across America in the Fifties.

Lucinda Ballard, the costume designer, didn't just put a pair of jeans onto Brando. "The skin-tight jeans were tapered to show the muscles in his thighs and to showcase his genitals," she recalled. "During fittings, Marlon insisted on wearing no underwear. 'I want them to fit like a second skin,' he told me. After our first fitting, I went with him to get his blond hair dyed brown. He was becoming more and more like Stanley Kowalski each day."

The next day Lucinda came up with an inspiration. She went up to Marlon and tore the right shoulder of his red T-shirt, leaving it ripped. "I wanted to suggest that Stella might have attacked Stanley in an angry fit."

Lucinda was well aware that Marlon liked to show off his genitals. She'd designed his costume for *I Remember Mama*. He'd also been impressed with her work on the costumes for Tennessee's *The Glass Menagerie*.

From the very first, Kazan realized that Irene Selznick had initially been right: Tandy was too strong an actress to play a weak, vulnerable soul such as Blanche DuBois. At one point, he amazingly ordered a stagehand to tie Tandy in ropes. The other actors in the cast, including Kim Hunter and Karl Malden, were ordered to attack her and make fun of her in the most demeaning way. That meant attacking her "small tits," her "pus-laden vagina," her "lack of talent," even her "cunty smell."

Marlon and Jessica Tandy in *Streetcar*

She was reduced to tears when Marlon stepped up to her. As she lay helplessly on the stage floor,

still tied in ropes, he unbuttoned his blue jeans and whipped out his penis to urinate on her. At that point, Kazan intervened. He rushed up to Marlon. "Button up, boy! Can't you see Jessica is hysterical? We've already pushed her over the deep edge."

* * *

Two weeks into rehearsal, Marlon called Irene and asked if he could come over and visit her in her plush apartment. She agreed to see him, and later said that she felt that he might want to talk over the trouble he was having with his role. "He arrived in dirty blue jeans and a T-shirt," she said, "with some old Air Force leather jacket. For one hour we talked absolute nonsense—mostly about motorcycle riding and bongo drums. Then he got to the point of our rendezvous."

"I hear your old man is shacked up with Jennifer Jones," he told her, referring to her estranged husband, David O. Selznick. "I also hear you're divorcing the cad. After you divorce him, I might marry you. I've been thinking about proposing. Consider yourself flattered because I'm not the marrying kind. But I'm thinking it might be cool married to a classy dame like you. L.B. Mayer's daughter and all that. *Tout* Hollywood."

"But you don't know me," she protested, still not believing his words.

"After we're married there will be plenty of time to get to know each other. I must warn you one thing about me, though."

"No doubt one of your bad habits?"

"Not that. You should know in advance—it's only fair to tell you. Since your husband is Jewish, I have to assume he's cut. I must warn you that I'm not. But I'm good in bed. The foreskin of the male penis actually gives you a more sensitive tool to work with."

She told him that she'd take his marriage proposal under consideration. In all of their subsequent meetings, the subject of marriage never came up again.

* * *

Marlon detested Jessica Tandy, but became friends with his "wife" in the play, Kim Hunter who played Stella. Born Janet Cole in Detroit, she was two years older than Marlon. From the first meeting, these two actors bonded. He soon discovered that her liberal positions on Civil Rights matched his.

Kazan often found them huddled backstage somewhere "with their heads together like they were plotting an overthrow of the government. I just assumed Marlon was fucking her. He fucked everybody—maybe not Karl Malden or Jessica Tandy. But for all I know, he had them too." He smiled to

indicate he was absurdly joking. “Some little gossip even told me he fucked Tennessee Williams. Now, *that* I can believe. Throughout the entire run of the play, Tennessee was absolutely mesmerized by Marlon, even when he acted like a silly ass and sabotaged the play on more than one occasion.”

In Marlon, Kazan later reflected, he found a “soft, yearning, and even girlish side. But I warned him to save that for some other role, perhaps when he would play a homosexual in some future part. ‘For God’s sake, don’t play Stanley Kowalski as a fag,’ I warned him. ‘You’re Tennessee’s ultimate wet dream fantasy!’”

Marlon wasn’t Kazan’s only problem in casting. His initial attempt to direct Kim Hunter in her role as Stella failed utterly.

At one point Kazan claimed he was so disappointed in Kim’s role as Stella that he was considering replacing her with another actress. Then an amazing change came over him, as Jessica Tandy noted. “Far from condemning Kim, Gadge had only the highest of praise for her performance. He was spending all his time directing her instead of concentrating on my performance as Blanche. After all, the burden of carrying *Streetcar* fell on my shoulders.”

Marlon had a different take. “Kazan fell head, heels, and prick in love with Kim herself. In love in this case meant five weeks. Our director believed in seducing and moving on to the next victim.”

Carlo Fiore, in his so-called “tell-all” memoir about Marlon, was less than candid about what he knew about Marlon’s own involvement with Kim. Yet he remains the only source for information about Marlon’s seduction of his stage wife.

Marlon and Kim Hunter embracing in *Streetcar*

“The way Marlon told it, he came to Kim one night and said that for the purposes of artistic integrity, he had to fuck her,” Fiore said. He quoted Marlon as saying, “In the play our entire relationship is based on you hanging with me because of the carnal pleasure I provide for you nightly. Why else would a fine aristocratic Southern dame like Stella end up with Stanley? It just doesn’t make sense. Tennessee himself told me that the only reason Stella stays with Stanley is because of the way he fucks her. You and I can’t actually play our parts with any truth unless we go at it like animals, the way that Stanley plows it to Stella.”

Amazingly, and again Fiore is the only source for this, Kim agreed to go to bed with Marlon. Apparently, the seduction occurred

only one time. Marlon took her back to the apartment he had rented, along with Wally Cox, on West 52nd Street. It had been sublet from songwriter Vernon Duke. Once there—fortunately Wally wasn't home that night—he introduced her to his smelly friend, Russell the Raccoon.

Without admitting to a seduction, Kim later recalled a visit to Marlon's apartment. "There was a restaurant downstairs. Also nearby was a night club where, as I understood from Marlon, white senators from Alabama went to indulge their tastes in brown belles. It was a very garish and noisy part of town—not only night clubs, but jazz joints, sloppy joe eateries, and tourist traps hawking cheap souvenirs. Marlon told me he wasn't bothered by the loud sounds of the night. 'That's why I keep my windows open,' he told me. 'The noise lulls me to sleep like a baby.'"

She recalled that there were four urine-stained mattresses spread helter skelter across the living room floor. "Marlon told me he liked to keep his hi-fi blaring late into the night. He also said he liked the apartment because he could play his bongo drums all night, and no one complained about the noise. In one part of his living room, I noticed a set of barbells, some boxing gloves, and a punching bag. I guess that's how he kept himself in such splendid shape."

Later, after the deed was done, he took her downstairs for a pasta dinner at Leon & Eddie's. To cap the night, Kim recalled, he invited her for a midnight ride through the streets of New York on "this powerful Indian motorcycle he'd purchased with his first paycheck from *Streetcar*. I later learned that some of the most famous actresses in the world were invited to weave dangerously through New York traffic on that motorcycle, wildly holding onto Marlon for support. That also gave these women a chance to feel those muscles. To ride on Marlon's motorcycle from the Ethel Barrymore to his messy apartment for the purposes of getting royally screwed became a status symbol for women flying in from Hollywood. Some deliberately flew in just to see Marlon emote in *Streetcar*. Poor Jessica. Poor Karl. Poor me."

Apparently one night with Marlon was enough for Kim, who never revealed if Marlon in real life lived up to her on-stage husband of Stanley.

At least a friendship emerged from this one night of passion. In speaking to the press, Kim had only raves for Marlon the actor, saying nothing about Marlon the man.

She claimed that he had "an uncanny sense of truth as an actor. It seems absolutely impossible for him to be false. It makes him easier to act with than anybody else ever. Anything you do that may not be true shows up immediately as false with him."

Fiore claimed that the only comment Marlon ever made to him was, "I'm afraid that as bed partners Kim and I aren't really Mr. and Mrs. Stanley

Kowalski. Only on stage. But she's a fine actress in every way. She's going back to Hollywood, but she's too liberal and sophisticated for those constipated assholes out there."

His words were prophetic. In Hollywood, after appearing in such films as Bogart's wife in *Deadline, U.S.A.*, she was eventually blacklisted because of her strong pro-Civil Rights stances.

However, she returned and became familiar to a whole new generation because of her simian face in those *Planet of the Apes* films.

In 1968 she called Marlon in Hollywood, telling him that, "I'm trying to keep my dignity intact while buried under all this fucking monkey makeup."

Men wanted to be him. Women (and others) wanted him.

"I've made a monkey out of myself on the screen before," he told her. "Stella, we really wooed them a long time ago, didn't we? You and I will live forever as Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Kowalski."

* * *

In the out-of-town tryouts, Tandy complained to Kazan that, "If Brando feels bored or tired, he acts bored or tired. If he feels gay, he acts gay." Her remarks were later misinterpreted. It has been written that Tandy was charging Marlon with homosexuality. The word "gay" meaning homosexual was not quite in vogue then, and Tandy could have used the word in its old-fashioned sense.

"Knowing Jessica, she could have meant homosexual," Kazan said. "One night in New Haven, Marlon got so bored he played Stanley as a swish. The next day both Irene and Tennessee showed up to chastise him for this outrageous performance. Tandy was furious at him, denouncing him as 'the most unprofessional actor I've ever worked with.'"

But sometimes it was Marlon who lost his patience with Jessica. At one point, he stormed off the stage in complete disgust at her interpretation of Blanche. "My God, how can I play opposite Ophelia? She thinks she's appearing in Gielgud's *Hamlet*."

As Stanley, Marlon threw himself into the character, becoming an animal on stage. "He eats like one," Tandy said. "Moves like one. Talks like one!"

She complained to both Kazan and Tennessee that out of sheer boredom Marlon was shifting the emphasis of the play almost nightly. She never knew what to expect from him. She had good reasons to complain. In New Haven, she was delivering one of her most poignant speeches as Blanche. The audience snickered at her. She turned around and, to her horror, caught Marlon puffing a cigarette through his nostrils.

When she complained to Tennessee that Marlon was "destroying the integrity" of *Streetcar*, he attended a performance. After watching some of Marlon's alterations, Tennessee proclaimed to Tandy that "Marlon is adding a new dimension to *Streetcar*."

With a sense of despair, she endured night after night, living in dread of what Marlon might do at that evening's performance. Broadway loomed in her future, making her wonder if she'd survive opening night playing opposite an actor she called "Broadway's bad boy."

Unlike Tandy, Karl Malden liked Marlon but admitted that he got so frustrated with being constantly upstaged that he once smashed his fist into a brick wall. "At times I enjoyed acting with Marlon," Malden said. "He was a constant challenge. At other times I could have wrung his little neck."

Marlon's experience working with his costar, Tandy, in *Streetcar* wasn't as disastrous as his appearance with Tallulah Bankhead. But Marlon and Tandy, two very different stars, were completely incompatible. Marlon later summed it up this way: "We don't see eye-to-eye on some things. She believes you should shave and get dressed for a day in the country. Besides, she doesn't like peanut butter sandwiches."

Tandy's view of Marlon? "A selfish, psychopathic bastard."

There was obviously no sexual magnetism between the two players. That would have to wait for Marlon to be cast opposite another actress in the film version.

Tandy, with her Royal Academy training, was opposed to Method acting and the Stanislavsky system. Even in rehearsals, she wanted to "freeze" the play, its movements and its action.

Tryouts in New Haven preceded the play's shift to Boston where Kazan feared "the blue bloods would object to the raw, animal sex of the play." But *Streetcar* was well received. The cast continued with its optimistic streak as *Streetcar* opened to rave reviews in Philadelphia.

Kazan felt that the early success of the show would "have New York critics sharpening their knives for us. New York critics didn't always follow the praise that came 'from hicks in the boondocks.' I told the cast in Philadelphia that *Streetcar* could be compared to oysters. 'Remember,' I cautioned them, 'not everybody likes oysters.'"

* * *

A handsome young actor, Sandy Campbell, had asked Tennessee if he could play the role of the Young Collector in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Sandy was the lover of Donald Windham, one of Tennessee's best friends. Tennessee and Donald had co-authored a play, *You Touched Me!* which had starred Monty Clift on Broadway.

In a letter dated September, 1947, Tennessee wrote Sandy, telling him that, "I would love to have you in the part if it were at all suited to you, but if you remember the scene, the boy's name is Shapiro and Blanche says 'he looks like a young prince out of Arabian Nights!' He *has* to be dark."

In spite of the rejection, Sandy, with his hair dyed black, ultimately prevailed. He replaced the original actor cast in the Broadway company, and even returned to the role in 1956 when Tallulah Bankhead, in one of the worst mistakes of her career, finally agreed to appear as Blanche DuBois and was practically laughed off the stage by gay audiences who interpreted her involvement in the play as an act of high camp.

If Tennessee believed in the casting couch, Sandy would have gotten the role much earlier. In a letter sent to Donald Windham in October of 1948, Tennessee admitted that at a party he'd attended with Sandy, that the young actor/writer had gotten "very drunk and was so cute I had a letch for him. That is, I felt like I wanted to kiss him and hold him in my arms, but of course I didn't."

"Like hell he didn't," Frank Merlo, Tennessee's later lover, once said.

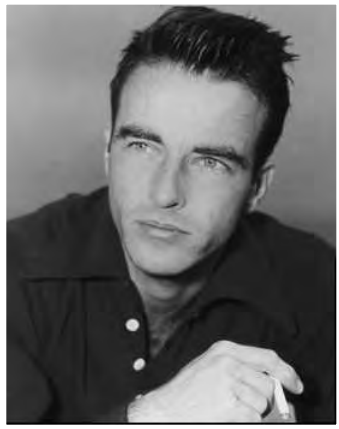
Even though Sandy was embarked on a relationship with fellow writer, Donald Windham, a love affair that was to span forty-five years, he was, in the words of Tennessee, "a star fucker of the literati."

Donald Wyndham
& Sandy Campbell

His affairs included the likes of Truman Capote and lesser literary stars of the late Forties and early Fifties. He did not specialize in actors except for Monty Clift and Marlon Brando.

"Until Sandy came into Marlon's life," Kazan later recalled, "Marlon was always in the driver's seat with both men and women who fell for him. For the first time, he was smitten. The love bug bit hard. Personally I think Marlon fell head over heels for Sandy. I don't really understand these male/male love affairs. All I know is that my male star of the show was following Sandy around with his tongue wagging. I'd

never seen Marlon act like this before. He was love sick. Perversely, I thought Sandy was Marlon's payback for all the ways he'd abused lovers in the past."


Monty Clift

Kazan and other members of the cast watched the love affair unfold before their eyes. Tandy recalled seeing Marlon and Sandy standing in the wings holding hands before Marlon was called onto the stage. "If I admired anything about Marlon," Tandy later remembered, "it was how open he was in flaunting that homosexual streak in himself. At a time, when he was seducing every woman who came backstage, including some of the biggest stars in Hollywood, he was still openly carrying on with Sandy, who was a dear, darling boy. Anybody would have loved Sandy. He was very precious and very ingratiating. In some ways, I think Marlon pursued Sandy so aggressively because he knew that boy was unobtainable and committed to another relationship with Donald Windham."

She recalled that Monty Clift came several times to see Marlon perform in *Streetcar*. The young actor had by then become very jealous of Marlon's success. The backstage gossip of the time was that Monty had fallen for Sandy at one point in his life. "I don't know when Sandy first met Monty," Tandy said. "Maybe he was around at the time Monty and Donald did that play, *You Touched Me!* All I know is that Monty had had an affair with Sandy. Sandy had rejected him in favor of Donald. When Monty learned that Sandy and Marlon were an item, he seemed furious. He came to visit me on several occasions. He told me that he did not like Tennessee because the playwright did very little to conceal his homosexuality. 'He's too God damn open about it!' Monty told me. He also told me that he believed some secrets, especially homosexuality, should be kept confined to the bedroom with a lock on the door. He also predicted that Marlon carrying on so openly backstage with Sandy would destroy Marlon's chance for a career. 'He'll be confined to the stage,' Monty predicted. 'On Broadway, you might get away with all this hand holding. In Hollywood, it'll be the kiss of death for Marlon.'"

Kazan never condemned Marlon for his open display of affection for Sandy. Instead the director seemed to grow more and more curious. Although still viewed as a homophobe by the gay members of the *Streetcar* crew, Kazan was showing more and more interest in the subject. Tennessee once speculated that he felt that the womanizing Kazan was a closeted homosexual. "Just show me a womanizer," Tennessee said, "from Errol Flynn and Howard

Hughes on down, and I bet you'll find a lavender streak in there somewhere."

One night Kazan confronted Marlon backstage. The director asked to speak to him in private. Marlon later told Kim Hunter what had taken place. Kazan, according to Marlon, came to him and said, "I really want to know what takes place when two faggots sleep together. I mean I can picture it in my mind, but I don't quite get the logistics." Marlon suggested that Kazan watch an underground gay film, as many were in circulation on the black market at that time. Kazan told him that he was seeking a closer encounter than that.

On a dare, Marlon invited him to share a hotel room. "We'll have twin beds," Marlon said to reassure his director. "Sandy and I will be in one bed. You and your lady of the evening can be in the other bed. We'll watch you, and you can watch us."

To the surprise of Marlon and Sandy, Kazan showed up with Kim Hunter. Both actors had heard that Kazan had been "having an affair with Blanche's sister," but this was their first confirmation of the rumor. Sandy recalled that both Kazan and Kim were a little drunk.

Sandy later told Tennessee and his lover, Frank Merlo, "We put on a great show for them. I wanted to perform my best, throwing more gusto in the sex than I usually did. After all, if I wanted a future career in gay porn, here was my golden opportunity." He smiled to indicate that he was joking. "We really went to it. Earlier, Marlon had suggested that we go at it like two animals in heat, getting into every conceivable position that we could think of. I called it

Was it Truman or Sandy Campbell?

our gymnastic romp. As far as I could tell, Kazan seduced Kim in a rather boring, old-fashioned missionary position."

Sandy Campbell is the only source of this amazing story. At first his claim might be met with a degree of skepticism, but not after 1988 when Knopf published *A Life*, Kazan's memoirs. In this autobiography, Kazan admitted that he extended the same invitation to Tennessee for a double date. While he occupied a twin bed with "a young lady" (unknown), Kazan watched Tennessee and "a Mexican jungle cat" (a reference to Pancho Rodriguez) make love. Kazan's critique of Pancho's lovemaking? "In a word, rambunctious."

At no point in the memoirs did Kazan admit to watching Marlon and Sandy go at it.

After a year's run of *Streetcar* on Broadway Kazan could admit that homosexual love "was no longer a mystery to me."

Kazan later told Tandy, "I have seen two stately homos perform—Mr. Williams and Mr. Brando. In Marlon's case, I should say bisexual—let's at least give him credit for that."

* * *

Author Truman Capote, Marlon's future nemesis, was on his way backstage to search for his friend, Tennessee Williams, long overdue for an agreed-upon luncheon date. As he was to later recall, "I stopped in my tracks when I encountered a young man asleep."

"It was a winter afternoon," Capote said. "I found the place deserted backstage except for this brawny young man stretched out atop a table on the stage under the gloomy glare of stage lights. He was sleeping soundly. He wore a white T-shirt and denim trousers that did little to conceal the outline of his genitals. He had a squat gymnasium physique and weightlifter's arms. It was definitely a Charles Atlas chest but he had a copy of Freud resting on the chest of that perfect body. I took him for a stagehand, one who definitely moonlighted for pay with the queens of Broadway."

"I looked closely at his face hoping to wake him up gently and perhaps arrange a rendezvous with him later where I would personally audition him," Truman continued. "It was as if a stranger's head had been attached to the brawny body, as in certain counterfeit photographs. For this face was so very untough, superimposing, as it did, an almost angelic refinement and gentleness upon hard-jawed good looks: taut skin, a broad, high forehead, wide-apart eyes, an aquiline nose, full lips with a relaxed, sensual expression."

"Finally, I realized it was Marlon Brando," Truman said. "He didn't have the least suggestion of the unpoetic Stanley Kowalski. It was therefore rather an experience to observe, later that afternoon, with what chameleon ease

Tennessee Williams

Marlon acquired the character's cruel and gaudy colors. Superbly, like a guileful salamander, he slithered into the part. His own persona evaporated."

Truman remembered how Marlon, lying on that table, opened only one eye at first to see what stranger had invaded his lair. "He looked at me as if I were green and a four-headed monster who'd just gotten off the ship from Mars," Truman said. "It was obvious to me that from the first Marlon was fascinated by me. Perhaps he'd never met anyone like me. I am, after all, unique. Sometimes I have this peculiar effect on men. When I first met Errol Flynn, he thought I was the sexiest thing since he'd last fucked a Tasmanian Devil. Even Mr. Macho, Bogie himself, was captivated by my charms. He told his wife, Lauren Bacall, that, 'I want to put Capote in my pocket and bring him home.'"

The fact that Truman Capote met Marlon is true, and the details, as noted above, have been reported in numerous biographies. But the choreography of the meeting that's outlined above didn't involve Marlon and Truman, but, rather, Marlon and Sandy Campbell.

The young actor had told his friend, Truman, about how he'd first met Marlon. Truman put a spin on the incident, eliminated Sandy from its context altogether, and substituted himself instead, as he so often did in many other incidents.

In reality, after *Streetcar* had opened on Broadway, Truman was taken backstage by Tennessee and introduced to Marlon in a way that was a lot more conventional than in Truman's more elaborate and romanticized version, as noted above.

From the moment they first met, Truman set about to ingratiate himself with Marlon. On one drunken night in Key West, Truman later claimed that, "Tennessee got him first, but I wanted to be next in line. After getting to know Marlon a bit better, I realized to my regret that the line stretched around the block. I had to persevere. I couldn't let Tennessee have one up on me."

* * *

The opening of *A Streetcar Named Desire* made theatrical history as the curtain went up at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on December 3, 1947. The

word had been out there for months that this was going to be "the play" to see that winter. For days in advance, lines had formed around the block, as theater-goers eagerly sought to buy tickets. Scalpers were having a field day, hawking tickets for fifty dollars each.

"Sex sells," said theater doyenne Jean Dalrymple, who was one of the distinguished guests on opening night. She joined a wide array of VIPs that also included a well-dressed Marlon Sr. and a sober Dodie, as well as Tennessee's mother, Edwina Dakin Williams, and the playwright's rather jealous brother, Dakin.

Even David O. Selznick showed up, although Irene had specifically asked him not to. She had suggested that her husband "and your trollop," an unkind reference to his mistress, Jennifer Jones, go elsewhere that evening. Selznick had aggressively promoted Jones for the role of Blanche DuBois, casting that was simply unthinkable to Irene.

"We had been told that *Streetcar* was filled with more raw sexual passion than anything that had ever been presented on Broadway," Dalrymple claimed. "The word was also out on Brando. Gossip had it that after *Streetcar* he was going to be the hottest actor on Broadway."

"From the moment Brando walked out on the stage, all eyes were riveted on him," Dalrymple said. "In his sweaty, tight-fitting red T-shirt, and in those even tighter jeans that were very revealing, he was like an animal in heat. It was an exciting moment in the theater."

"You could almost hear the women in the audience swoon as if they had suddenly found the rapist of their dreams," Dalrymple said. "Brando was a savage but what a sexy one! He was violent, crude, and totally mesmerizing. I don't recall having seen such utter rapture in a drama, and, believe me, I've seen the greatest performances of anybody of my generation—all the greats, from John Barrymore to Katharine Cornell. When the curtain went down that night, it was more than a new star had been born. We were actually devastated as if a quart of our blood had been drained from us. I knew that after Brando's performance that night in *Streetcar*, that acting, and Broadway itself, had changed for all time."

Jessica Tandy as Blanche DuBois

Sitting in the front row, along with Irene and Tennessee, were such famous faces as Monty Clift, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni, and Cary Grant.

Bobby Lewis was also in the audience that

night. He would later reflect on that memorable evening in the theater. "Marlon paved the way that night for other actors to come. You just name them, beginning with Marlon's understudy, Ralph Meeker, who in time also played Stanley. The parade of Marlon clones continued: Rip Torn, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, and most definitely James Dean."

When the final curtain fell that opening night, it was Dodie who was first on her feet to launch applause for Marlon that lasted thirty minutes. "Backstage, Jessica was furious," Kim Hunter recalled. "She knew that all that clapping was for Marlon and not for her star part."

One of the investors, Cary Grant, was the first to rush backstage to greet Marlon with a theatrical kiss on the lips. "I'm going to get back my money in the show," he proclaimed to a startled Marlon. "I see a future in Hollywood for you. Irene knows how to get in touch with me. When you get to Hollywood, I want to show you around. You'll find no better tour guide." Having had several drinks before show time, he was in a gay mood, as he retreated to make way for an onslaught of other well-wishers. As he departed, Marlon and Irene heard him yelling, "Hey, Stella. Hey, there, Stella, baby!"

Following Cary backstage was Geraldine Page, Marlon's estranged girlfriend. "You've become a star overnight!" she gushed.

"Cut the shit, Gerry!" he said, softening the harshness of his words with a seductive smile and a kiss on the lips.

Today it might be hard for modern theater audiences to understand what all the fuss about *Streetcar* was in 1947. Of course, the world people inhabited then was a far and different place. As one critic put it, "*A Streetcar Named Desire* was awful and sublime. Only once in a generation do you see such a thing in the theater."

Years later, another critic would proclaim that "Brando, the wild, sexy rebel, all mute and surly bad attitude, prefigured the great art form of the Sixties generation: rock and roll."

For appearing in *Streetcar*, Marlon was paid $550 a week (the equivalent of $7,500 a week in today's currency), $400 of which he sent every week to Marlon Sr. to invest. His father foolishly invested in such money-losing enterprises as oil fields in Indiana and his Penny Poke cattle ranch in Nebraska.

After the show, Tennessee invited his mother Edwina and his brother Dakin to join him for a party at "21." Director George Cukor was the official host, but behind the scenes, Irene was picking up the hefty tab. On the way there, Edwina told Tennessee that before the curtain she had met the Brandos, as he would later recall.

"They looked very respectable to me," she said. "I don't know how they could have produced a wild thing for a son. And, frankly, if you really want to know my opinion, I think Dakin is far handsomer than Brando."

"Speaking of wild things," Dakin chimed in, "at this fancy party, they just might be asking how a God-fearing woman like you could produce Tom here."

"Tom," she said, gently reaching for her son's hand, "for the life of me, I don't know why you insist on writing about Southern decadence when there are so many more spiritually uplifting subjects about the South that you could write about. You just give Yankees ammunition to use against us. I mean, even if Blanche and Stanley weren't blood-related, it's still *incest*!"

Truman Capote

Uncharacteristically, Marlon showed up at "21" in a dark suit and tie, accompanying Dodie and Marlon Sr., who were beaming and smiling at their son's success. Throughout the evening Irene kept rushing over to the Brando table, quoting excerpts from reviews as they arrived by special delivery. "Just hear this," she told the Brandos. "It's right here in print: 'Our theater's most remarkable young actor at his most memorable!'"

Later that night, Dodie went off the wagon. She'd been "dry" for weeks leading up to opening night, but could not resist when Karl Malden came around offering champagne. Irene would remember Dodie tap-dancing for the amusement of her guests. Dodie had been taking lessons. "My Dad's not going to replace Ann Miller with Dodie," Irene told Kim Hunter, "but Marlon's mom wasn't bad."

* * *

After *Streetcar* opened and perhaps to impress Marlon, Truman Capote showed up backstage one night with the photographer, Cecil Beaton on one arm, Greta Garbo on the other. Kim Hunter and Jessica Tandy were part of the "audience" at this moment in theatrical history, although they remained out of the loop, except as eyewitnesses to later report what occurred.

After congratulating Marlon on his brilliant performance, Garbo told him that she was here tonight because she'd promised Tennessee that she'd go to see the play since he wanted her to star as Blanche DuBois in the eventual film version of the work. If Garbo were aware that she was speaking in the presence of Jessica Tandy, who wanted to appear in the film version herself, she didn't seem to have any sensitivity to that.

"I must turn Tennessee down," Garbo told the private audience standing

in awe of her. “Blanche DuBois is a bad woman, and never again will I play a bad woman on the screen. The character is difficult, much too unsympathetic. I’m an honest and clear-cut woman. I see things with lucidity. I could never play such a complicated woman. I couldn’t bear to tell lies and see things around the corner instead of straight-on. Besides, who would believe me as an aging Southern belle on the verge of madness? I couldn’t play Scarlett O’Hara either.”

“What sort of role would entice you to return to films?” Marlon asked. Truman later recalled that Marlon was obviously impressed with Garbo and a bit tongue-tied, but he was trying to keep his cool and not show it.

“I always wanted to appear as Dorian Gray,” she said. “If some producer offers me that role, I will return to the screen.” Three years later when Katharine Cornell talked to Garbo about a possible comeback, the Swedish actress still insisted that only the role of Dorian Gray would bring her back to the screen. Except she had now added one condition. Garbo had recently seen Bette Davis in *All About Eve*. It wasn’t Davis that impressed Garbo but a young blonde actress named Marilyn Monroe. Garbo told Cornell she’d do the picture only if the director cast Marilyn Monroe as the young girl that Dorian deflowers, ruining her life. As an afterthought, Garbo added, “And, yes, I think Miss Monroe should be photographed nude at one point in the film.”

Throughout her meeting with Marlon, Garbo remained standing, refusing a chair offered by Jessica Tandy. Garbo also failed to comment on Tandy’s performance, or the role of Stella as portrayed by Kim.

Garbo went on to assert that although she’d most prefer to play Dorian Gray, it was likely that she’d return to the screen in *The Eagle With Two Heads*. “That brought a look of such astonishment to Marlon that I wish it had been captured on film,” Truman said.

“You’ve seen that turkey?” Marlon asked.

“Not with you in it, darling,” Garbo said. “I saw it on Broadway with that awful woman from the South, Tallulah Bankhead. It’s a play of great wretchedness. But even bad plays can be fixed for the screen. If I’m to wear décolletage in the film, there’s a lot I’ve got to arrange. Much exercising for me. Much coaxing of my body to get back in shape. Of all the films being offered to me right now, and they are considerable, it’s the role of a queen that I am going to select for my return to the screen. As you know, I’ve played queens before. But perhaps you’re too young to remember my films. I was a star when you were born.”

Greta Garbo

Marlon didn't comment.

"If I agree to do the play, and it's not final yet, I want you to be my leading man," Garbo said. "What actor could turn down a costarring part in Garbo's return to pictures? Incidentally, I hate the word 'comeback.'"

Cecil Beaton

Months later, Billy Wilder heard of that remark, and put much the same sentiments into the mouth of Norma Desmond, as played by Gloria Swanson, in *Sunset Blvd.*

At the door to his dressing room, Garbo impulsively kissed Marlon on both cheeks as a parting gesture. She reached for a rose held in the hand of Cecil Beaton and handed it to Marlon with a certain passion. She seductively kissed the rose before passing it to him. "That will put the dew on it," she said before adjusting her gray highwayman hat and departing into the night.

Cecil remained behind to make a request of Marlon, asking him if, over the weekend, he'd pose for a series of pictures for *Vanity Fair*. "Normally, Marlon would turn down such a request from what I'd heard about him," Truman recalled. "But I think he was charmed by Cecil. He must have known that Cecil was primarily homosexual. I'm sure Marlon had heard that Cecil regularly fucked Garbo. For some reason, that held enormous intrigue for Marlon as I was later to find out. I think Marlon wanted to learn what this mysterious Cecil was all about. In other words, what did a primarily gay photographer have that would make Garbo, who was primarily a lesbian, want to go to bed with him? I fear Marlon never found out the answer to that riddle. But he did agree to the photographic session. I invited myself to attend. This, I just knew, was going to be the best show in town."

The next day Marlon encountered Tennessee and reported on his exchange with Garbo, telling the playwright that the actress had turned down the role of Blanche DuBois.

"Just as well," Tennessee said. "I got carried away when I offered her the role of Blanche. Garbo is wrong for Blanche." He looked at Marlon as if he were a judge at the Spanish Inquisition. "Have you ever seen a drag queen impersonate Garbo?"

Marlon said that he had not.

"That's because she is unique," Tennessee said. "Almost impossible to capture in an impersonation. Actually, she's a hermaphrodite, with the cold quality of a mermaid. Definitely not Blanche." As an afterthought, Tennessee added, "I could play Blanche better than Garbo, as you already know from my reading with you that night back on the Cape."

Inviting Marlon for a drink, Tennessee told him that when he'd first gone to see Garbo about the role of Blanche, he'd gotten so nervous that he actually pitched another story idea to her. "I told her all about this film script I was working on. It's called *The Pink Bedroom* and it's about this actress and her agent lover. For an hour, I babbled on about the script with frequent interruptions of 'Wonderful!' from Garbo. Finally, when I finally shut up, Garbo rose to her big feet to dismiss me. 'Give it to Joan Crawford,' she told me."

Truman attended the photo shoot of Marlon the following week. He showed up in his dirty T-shirt and tight jeans from *Streetcar*. At some point, according to Truman, Cecil took at least a hundred pictures of Marlon. After Cecil was satisfied he'd had enough of those, he asked Marlon if he would remain behind and pose "for some figure studies," as Truman later quoted Cecil.

"Cecil was well aware that Marlon did not wear underwear under his jeans," Truman said. "Everybody along Broadway had heard that fascinating tidbit."

With absolutely no embarrassment, Marlon pulled off his shirt and unfastened his jeans. In a minute, he was stark naked for Cecil's camera. "I decided then and there that this handsome young man could be had," Truman said.

Years later in Key West, Truman became a bit coy, especially when talking about what happened after the photo shoot. "Both Cecil and I had Marlon that night in the same bed," he claimed. "He was strictly rough trade, but we managed to coax two loads from him—one for Cecil who got the first eruption, the next for Yours Truly."

After that, Truman claimed in front of Tennessee, Frank Merlo, and James Leo Herlihy, that he "serviced" Marlon frequently in the weeks to come. Truman not only lied on occasion about many of his involvements, but exaggerated those that really took place. He was also known for altering the facts to make a good story even better.

Frank Merlo and Tennessee Williams

But both Tennessee and later Elia Kazan felt that Truman told the truth in this case. "Even so, I think Truman highly exaggerated the extent of his romantic friendship with Marlon," Tennessee said when Truman left Key West. "Truman might have fallen down once or twice on bent nylon and given Marlon a blow-job, or even two or three. But I'm sure that the so-called love affair between

Marlon and Truman took place only in the wee one's churning brain."

There is no way at this point of determining if Truman told the truth. Marlon never commented, as far as it is known. Nor did Cecil.

The nude shots of Marlon became the talk of gossipy underground Broadway. They have never been published, at least for public consumption. Marlon later denied having posed for the nude shots.

Apparently, the pictures were not part of the vast repertoire of photographs and diary entries that Cecil left behind at his death.

There is speculation that Cecil in the 1950s sold the nude pictures to a very rich and very devoted fan of Marlon's, where they may reside to this day, waiting for some future heir to some estate to sell them to the highest bidder as a collector's item.

* * *

When *Streetcar* opened on Broadway, Tandy, in a spirit of reconciliation, brought columnist Sheila Graham to Marlon's dressing room. "Marlon, I have someone who's dying to meet you," Tandy said. She stood back and presented the columnist, who was especially vain about her looks.

"Who?" Marlon asked. "Your mother?" Perhaps he was paying Graham back for her effusive praise of Burt Lancaster's physical charms. At this point, Marlon had begun to regard Burt as a serious competitor.

Irene forced Marlon to grant some newspaper and magazine interviews, a task he loathed. Every one of "my inquisitors" wanted to know about his private life. He told them he swallowed one raw egg every morning for breakfast. "The rest of my diet consists of peanut butter and pomegranates. My hobbies are bongo drums, tom-toms, and riding motorcycles through the streets of New York. I like to box and swim in the nude. My reading matter consists entirely of Spinoza. My pet peeves are wearing shoes and giving interviews."

"What about your love life, Brando?" one impertinent interviewer asked. Marlon gave him a puzzled look as if he didn't understand the question. "I can't talk about something that doesn't exist."

* * *

Deep into the run of *Streetcar*, and only a few minutes before curtain time, Jessica Tandy received a call from Irene Selznick. The producer told her star that her father's favorite motion picture star, the crowned King of Hollywood, Clark Gable himself, was in town. Irene had presented him and "this little starlet" with two tickets for the best seats in the house.

For the past week, Jessica had not spoken to Marlon because twice in a

run of only three days, he'd upstaged two of her most evocative scenes. But she decided to break her silence to report this epic news.

Knocking on Brando's door, she stood bravely to confront him. "Yeah," he said when he threw open the door and discovered his nemesis. "What do you want?" he mumbled. He hadn't put on his jeans yet, which meant he was naked from the waist down. He pulled down his dirty red T-shirt to cover his privates, which he often didn't bother to do with many of his dressing room visitors.

"Marlon' she said with a stage smile, keeping her eyes averted skyward. "I just had to share the news. Clark Gable is out there in the audience right this minute waiting for us to go on." In those days, such an announcement was like saying that President Harry Truman was in the audience.

Jessica later recalled that she'd been surprised at Marlon's stunned reaction. "I just assumed that Marlon would be contemptuous of Gable and everything he represented as an actor. Gable represented old, established Hollywood. Marlon represented the Hollywood of the future.

Even though Marlon hadn't made a film yet, Gable had heard through the grapevine that the hot new Broadway star was being besieged with film offers. Before going to the theater, Gable had told Irene that, "I thought while I'm in New York I'd better check out tomorrow's competition. I'm getting a little long in the tooth, and I want to see who my replacement is going to be."

Gable's intuition was working just fine. It was as if he'd sensed that the sex symbol of the 1930s, as represented by himself, was about to meet the future sex symbol of the 1950s, as evoked by Marlon.

Jessica feared the end of the night's performance when Gable would actually meet Marlon. "On one occasion when we were discussing acting—that is, on one of the days we were actually speaking—Marlon cited a list of the phoniest 'non-actors' in Hollywood," Tandy said. "If I remember correctly, Gable led the list, followed by Lana Turner, Victor Mature, Betty Grable, and John Wayne. Singled out as the phoniest actress of all time was Joan Crawford, who he was yet to meet."

Clark Gable

"His cool air of detachment almost collapsed when I told him about Gable being out front," Jessica recalled. "I think Marlon almost forgot to put on his blue jeans that night."

"When Marlon went on stage, he absolutely froze," she said. "He was totally wooden. I did something that night I had failed to do so far: I

completely stole the show from him. I acted rings around this wooden Indian in a cigar store. I'm sure that Gable, seeing Marlon on the stage for the first time, must have been puzzled as to what the excitement was all about."

Later, Irene reported a story her father, Louis B. Mayer, told her. Upon his return to Hollywood, when Gable called on Mayer, he is quoted as saying to the studio mogul, "I think Brando was great! Just great!" Gable didn't disguise the sarcasm in his voice. "I think you should acquire the screen rights from your daughter. Peter Lawford would make a perfect Stanley. Van Johnson, an even better one. Of course, Roddy McDowell would show them both up. That Kowalski needs a dog for a pet. If Roddy is assigned the role, you could put Lassie in the picture. On the other hand, that Kowalski guy would go only for a poodle dyed pink. For Blanche, I'd suggest Lana Turner. You could paint wrinkles on her face. And for relief, get Judy Garland to sing two or three New Orleans jazz numbers. That will attract the homosexuals."

Mayer brushed aside Gable's ribbing. He'd seen the play in tryouts in New Haven. "I don't think it's a family picture. I urged Irene to get Williams to rewrite the ending. I told her it had to have a happy ending if the picture's going to be a success. Also, a lot of the subject matter—references to homosexuality, rape, shit like that—would have to be removed before it can ever be filmed."

Back in the theater on that fateful night, Marlon faced not only Gable but an audience of fourteen hundred patrons. He remembered the night later in his life. "I came to an absolute, complete void. I just stood there looking at the audience with a grin on my face. I looked up at the people in the balcony and all over the house, and it seemed terribly amusing. There were all these people waiting for me to say something, and I didn't have the slightest notion of what it was supposed to be. Kim Hunter was in the scene with me, and she is inclined to come apart in such situations. Her eyes got as big as saucers, and all she could do was ask me questions like 'What did you do then?' Or, 'What did she say?' Somehow we managed to get through it."

Irene Mayer Selznick

Throughout the night Marlon mumbled. Some irate members of the audience shouted "Louder!" at him. Kim Hunter later claimed that "Marlon in front of Clark Gable that night gave the single most disastrous performance of the entire *Streetcar* run."

To make matters worse, Marlon was also served the most stinking stage

dinner in the history of the theater. Each night he was supposed to eat a chicken dinner on stage. The food was supplied by the prop man. At each performance, according to Marlon, that chicken "got tougher and meaner." After curtain call one night, he told the prop man, "it was godawful—I'd rather eat dog shit."

On the night Gable showed up, the prop man served Marlon his stage dinner. When he lifted his napkin, he was in for a surprise. "It was the real thing," Marlon recalled. "All yellow, runny and smelly like a good dump by a dog should be. Not wanting to break character, I was for just a second tempted to take a bite just to show that shithead prop guy. But I quickly decided not to. The way I figured it, a paycheck of $550 a week just wasn't worth tasting a fork of shit."

Not telling Marlon what he thought of his performance, Gable graciously came backstage after curtain call and introduced himself to the actor and presented his starlet date for the evening. Someone had arranged a blind date for Gable, and later in the evening, he would seduce the attractive young woman, little knowing that one day her fame would eclipse his.

Gable told Marlon that if he looked like he did in the movies of the early Thirties that he could have played Stanley. "You didn't know that I once wanted to be a stage actor, did you?"

In front of Kim Hunter, Marlon confessed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Gable, but I'm not familiar with your career."

"Not even *Gone With the Wind*?" asked a startled Rhett Butler.

"Not even that," Marlon said, perhaps telling a lie.

He later told Kim, "I didn't want to inflate an already overinflated ego."

Gable invited Marlon to join him and his starlet for an after theater supper at Sardi's. Somewhat mesmerized by Gable in spite of his surface hostility, Marlon accepted.

"One day, kid, you're gonna draw more fan mail than I do," Gable predicted to Marlon in front of Kim. He paused as if to reflect for a moment. "Perhaps, I should say, more fan mail than I used to get. After I got back from the war, I found the gals don't write like they used to."

After dinner with Gable and his friend, Irene was the first to contact Marlon in the morning to find out what happened. He gave her few details, saying, "The King and I didn't have much in common."

Actually they had more in common than either man realized at the time. While making the original *Mutiny on the Bounty* in 1935, Gable had had a torrid affair with the Mexican actress, Movita, who was playing his Tahitian girlfriend in the movie, and who at the time was only a teenager. Gable, like Errol Flynn in later life, could have been charged with statutory rape. In the midst of the affair, Gable nicknamed Movita "Chili." He was amused by her hot

temper. Any time someone angered her, she said, "Go *feck* yourself." Unlike most other studs in Hollywood, Gable would often laugh at his own sexual inadequacies. He once told fellow *Mutiny* co-star, Franchot Tone, that when he did not satisfy Movita sexually, she'd scream at him: "Get off me, you son-of-a-beetch."

Kim Hunter and Marlon in *Streetcar*

Marlon would take this same Movita for his second wife in 1960. In the autumn of the same year, Marlon would meet the underaged Tarita Tumi Teriipaia, who played his Tahitian girlfriend in his own version of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Following in the footsteps of Gable with Movita, Marlon, too, launched an affair with this "jail bait" actress, who would become in time his third and final wife.

Gable and Marlon would surely have had more to say to each other if the King had known that "this new young upstart" would one day make his own version of *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

Gable had initially protested loudly against playing the role of Fletcher Christian "in knickers, pigtails, and a face as smooth as a baby's ass." Gable told Louis B. Mayer that he thought the character of Christian was actually a secret faggot. But Irving Thalberg insisted that he be cast in the role.

Gable played Christian Fletcher as unwaveringly masculine. But Marlon did the sissified version, beginning with his appearance with a red cape swirling around him, a true drawling fop. Gable surely would have been horrified at the remake of one of his most famous roles.

At some point during that evening at Sardi's, perhaps when Gable went to the men's room, Marlon turned his attention to the starlet, out on her first date with the King. Before Gable returned, Marlon must have worked fast, getting the brunette's phone number. When he arrived in Hollywood months later, he would take advantage of that number and call the actress.

Much later in life, he would confide to Edith Van Cleve. "Nancy was the First of the First Ladies I seduced."

He was referring to Gable's girlfriend, Nancy Davis, who eventually became better known as Nancy Reagan.

* * *

One night after a performance of *Streetcar*, Kim Hunter rapped on the door of Marlon's dressing room. She wanted to introduce him to Humphrey Bogart. Marlon at this point was getting used to visits by Hollywood royalty. In those days, movie stars haunted Broadway plays looking for hot new material.

At the time of his first meeting with Marlon, Bogie was in the process of raising money for a film adaptation of the new bestseller, *Knock on Any Door*, a novel by William Motley. It was the story of a juvenile delinquent portrayed as a victim of his own childhood.

Bogie arrived with two different missions, one concerning Marlon himself. The other focused on Kim. He was evaluating the actress as a future leading lady. Bogie told Kim, "This kid and I could become the hottest movie ticket since Fred Astaire danced off with Ginger Rogers."

Bogie tended to disguise his most serious intentions with facetious remarks. But, as Kim later remembered, "He definitely seemed interested in linking himself to Marlon. Old Hollywood teaming up with what potentially could be New Hollywood as represented by Marlon. Bogie also told me backstage that 'if you can't beat the competition, join them.'"

Marlon later recalled to Bobby Lewis details about his first encounter with Bogie. "The night he came backstage, I had nine pussies waiting in line to fuck me. That had become a regular occurrence every night. All I had to do was make my choice for the evening and apologize to the rest of the disappointed ladies. Then Bogie came backstage asking me to go with him to Sardi's. Now, how in hell could I turn down Bogie for a pussy? I had to put the hot twats in the deep freeze until the following night."

Marlon dined with Bogie at Sardi's, where they were frequently interrupted by rubber-necking autograph seekers. In his lisp, the veteran actor pitched to Marlon the role of Nick Romano in *Knock on Any Door* as his screen debut. "It's a great part!" Bogie assured him. "And with me in the lead, it'll be a box office smash. We can make beautiful music together."

Marlon later said that what intrigued him about the role was the credo as expressed by the character of Nick Romano. Nick's rule of life was, "Live fast, die young, and leave a good-looking corpse."

Marlon promised Bogie to read both the novel and an early version of the screen treatment. To solidify the deal, producer Mark Hellinger flew to New York for further talks with Marlon, telling the actor that "Bogie believes so much in this film that he's put up $25,000 of his own money, the exact amount that Irene posted for *Streetcar*."

Hellinger had Marlon more or less moving toward contract signing. But

he died suddenly, and Marlon lost interest.

Before the role was recast, Bogie placed one final phone call to Marlon at the Ethel Barrymore. As always, but especially during the context of this call, Bogie was half serious, half tease. He said, "I understand that on every fourth night you like to fuck a guy in the ass instead of pumping every twat in the city. If you'll agree to play Nick, I'll turn over my own juicy rosebud to you for one night. But don't get your hopes up that this is going to be any permanent arrangement. One night—that's all, pal!"

Humphrey Bogart

The sound of Marlon's laughter traveled across the coast into Bogie's living room. "As tempting as that offer is," Marlon told Bogie, "I must still say no."

Before hanging up, Bogie said, "Too bad. I could have ordered the scriptwriters to put in a love scene or two between us." He made one final macho-chivalrous pitch, perhaps realizing at this point that Marlon would never change his mind. "I'll even let you fuck my wife as part of the deal," he blurted out.

"Not even that can tempt me, as lovely as she is," Marlon said. Flattering Bogie as a means of softening the rejection, he added, "After you, I would surely be a disappointment to Lauren Bacall."

When *Streetcar* was being filmed in Hollywood, Bogie slipped onto the set, hoping in vain to conceal his appearance. But he was discovered by the makeup artist, Phil Rhodes. "To what do we owe this honor?" Rhodes asked.

"I just wanted to get a peek at this hot-shot kid," Bogie said. "He was supposed to have made his screen debut with me in a serious drama—not all this decaying Southern magnolia slush conjured up in the faggoty mind of Tennessee Williams. One way or another, I got to see Brando act for the screen."

"What's the verdict?" Rhodes asked.

"This guy Brando—he'll be doing *Hamlet* when the rest of us are selling potatoes."

Later, in 1951, it was with a certain irony that Bogie found himself pitted against Brando for the best actor award on Oscar night. Marlon, of course, had been nominated for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with Bogie weighing in for his performance in *The African Queen*. Up until the last minute, Bogie kept insisting to director Nicholas Ray and others, "Brando is going to win. I have a gut instinct for this thing."

But despite his premonitions, Bogie walked off with the Oscar. "That

night Hollywood voted its heart and gave Bogie the Oscar he should have won in 1943 for *Casablanca*," costar Ingrid Bergman later said. "Just imagine giving Paul Lukas the Oscar for *Watch on the Rhine* when Bogie really deserved it for Rick. Hollywood!"

* * *

There was no more dramatic moment in *A Streetcar Named Desire* than when Marlon rushed onto the stage with blood gushing from his nose. Preceding that, he had a twenty-minute break before he was due to reappear on the stage. To keep his energy level high every night, he often boxed backstage with whatever man was available. On occasion, his sparring partner was his friend, Carlo Fiore. On another occasion, it might be Karl Malden.

"One night no one wanted to box with me," he told Fiore. "I saw this fireman standing around, doing nothing, so I asked him if he'd go a couple of rounds with me. He was a shy kid and somewhat reluctantly put on the gloves. We squared off, circling each other. All of a sudden, he winds up throwing a haymaker at me. I saw it coming, but it was too late. Next thing I know I was flying ass over heels into a pile of wooden crates. I saw stars and began bleeding from the nose like a stuck pig. In the dressing room I put some cold compresses on my beak but couldn't stop the bleeding."

Marlon later related that when he heard his cue, he appeared on stage. "I held my nose, but from the break in the bridge a regular geyser of blood shot about ten feet across the stage." He managed to get through his scene with a stunned Jessica Tandy. As the curtain went down, she came up to him. "You stupid ass!" she said. From the loss of blood, he fainted at her feet. She stepped over him and headed for her dressing room.

Stagehands rushed to Marlon's rescue. Even before the curtain went down, the stage manager had already summoned an ambulance to rush him to the hospital.

Elia Kazan

In a hospital bed, Marlon encountered a staff doctor whom he would later call "a sadist and a butcher." After putting Marlon through excruciating pain, the staff doctor set his nose badly. "That perfect face, those classic looks, would never be the same again," Tennessee would later lament.

Marlon recovered quickly and could have returned to the play if he had really wanted to. But he told Fiore, "It's become a fucking bore. I need a rest. Why not a hospital?"

A theatrically smart woman like Irene real-

Jack Palance

ized that audiences were flocking to see Marlon, not Jessica.

During his absence, she'd hired actor Jack Palance to replace Marlon. He'd flown in from Chicago where he was understudying Anthony Quinn, who at the time was playing Stanley Kowalski to packed crowds in the Windy City. Palance would soon become one of Hollywood's fiercest villains in films, menacing Joan Crawford, for example, in the 1952 film, *Sudden Fear*. Standing six feet, four inches, this former prize fighter and Air Force bomber pilot was, in the words of Kazan, "the most menacing, the most sinister, and the most frightening Stanley Kowalski ever to appear on the stage."

With box office receipts falling off, Irene made a visit to Marlon in the hospital. Hearing that she was on the way, he bribed a nurse to paint spots of iodine on his face to discolor it and to "wrap me up in other places like a mummy."

When Irene saw him, she screamed. Rushing to his side to comfort him, she said. "You poor, poor boy." Somewhat unconvincingly, she told him she'd allow him plenty of time to recover, even if it meant closing down the play.

When she'd gone, he was removing the bandages as Fiore arrived in his room for a visit. His friend helped him get rid of the unneeded gauze. That night, or so Marlon assured Fiore, he was going to "call one of my anonymous broads to come over. Right in this hospital bed, I'm going to fuck the shit out of her."

Once released from the hospital, Marlon seriously studied his new face. He told Fiore, "My face was too beautiful for theater-goers to take seriously. Now, my nose is no longer straight and narrow. It's slightly aquiline. I like my new nose. It gives my face character. From this point on, I can play character roles—not just be a pretty boy."

Anthony Quinn

Back at the theater, Irene was blunt. "You're just not as handsome as before. But all is not lost. I suggest that you have your nose rebroken, then set properly."

He refused such a suggestion.

"Then live with your Halloween face!" she angrily told him.

Only two weeks after his seven-day rest in

the hospital, Marlon took up boxing again. His sparing partner at Stillman's Gym was none other than Rocky Graziano, the former middleweight champion. Marlon told the champ that his nose had been recently broken, so Rocky was careful not to pound the actor's face.

The next afternoon as both men showered together, Rocky asked Marlon what he did for a living. "I'm appearing in this play on Broadway. It's called *A Streetcar Named Desire*."

"What role do you play?" Rocky asked. "A conductor?"

"Something like that," Marlon said. He invited Rocky and his wife for the Saturday night performance. The next day Marlon arrived at the gym with two free passes for the best seats in the house.

That evening, when Marlon swaggered on stage as Stanley Kowalski, and Rocky realized for the first time that his sparring partner was a bigtime star, the boxer jumped to his feet. "That's him!" he shouted. Fellow members of the audience angrily told the champ to sit down and shut up.

The next morning when Rocky joined Marlon in the ring, he said, "I don't know if I want to box with you any more. I'll be holding back too much. After all, I don't want to fuck up the pretty face of a bigtime future movie star."

* * *

When she saw that ticket sales were gradually declining, Irene Selznick persuaded Marlon with his new nose to go on television to promote *Streetcar*. He only reluctantly agreed. She booked him for an appearance with Faye Emerson, "the first lady of television."

The buxom blonde actress and performer was married at that time to Elliott Roosevelt, the son of the late president, Franklin. Before rising to fame across the nation in the then-new medium of television, she had appeared on Broadway and as an actress in some two dozen lackluster Hollywood films. Bright and witty, she, nonetheless, had become famous on television for her *décolletage*. Behind her back, crew members on the show referred to her as "The Chest."

"Critical attention around the country, even national fame, came because of those God damn tits," Milton Berle once said. As "Mr. Television" himself, he seemed jealous that Faye was using her mammary charms to take some of the glory from the medium that he dominated at the time. Her son, William Crawford, would later tell the press, "When a cartoon showed a small TV screen containing only a V neckline, the reader knew it was dear old mom."

Throughout his entire first appearance on television with Faye, Marlon "all during the interview never once took his eyes off that monumental sight of Miss Emerson's cleavage," according to publicist Robert Condon. "Even

Faye Emerson

though Faye was noted for her poise under fire, she lost her cool that night. No matter where the TV camera moved, there was Marlon like a laser beam at the cleft just inches in front of his face."

"Is blonde the color of your real hair?" Marlon asked the astonished interviewer.

"Very frankly," she said, "I must tell the truth. My natural hair is brown. I tint it gold because blonde shows up better on TV."

"I think you sound sincere on your show," he said. "You don't put on airs. I don't like women who put on airs."

"I think glamour should be an integral part of a woman's personality," she said. "Not a superficial overlay."

"I agree with that," he said. "What I like is a woman with a high IQ in a low-cut gown. No dumb blondes for me."

"I'm glad you said that because most men are afraid of a woman with brains," she said.

"Women can be a lot smarter than men," he said. "I saw you on a show once with your husband. Elliott didn't recognize a quote from his own book on FDR. You did. You sure showed him up."

To that, Faye didn't respond but quickly changed the subject.

On the show, Marlon confided that he didn't expect to stick around with *Streetcar* when his contract ran out. "I don't want to disappoint Irene Selznick—one classy lady," he said. "But I've been suffering memory blackouts and forgetting my lines."

The ever-sharp Faye interjected, "Many actors in long-running Broadway shows go through the same afflictions."

"I feel it's time to move on," he said.

"What do you see coming in your future?" she asked. "A film career?"

"Oh, I just might make a movie," he said nonchalantly, breaking into what Bobby Lewis would later call a "shit-eating grin." "I'm sure Joan Crawford is in need of a new leading man," Marlon said. "She's already had John Garfield."

At that, Faye raised an eyebrow, noting that Marlon's comment could be taken two ways.

"Time for Crawford to turn to me and move on up in the world," he said.

After the show, Faye's chief rival in television, Arlene Francis, was waiting backstage to go on in another production. She later claimed that she overheard Marlon telling Faye: "Actually, I was just joking about making a film

with Crawford. I hear she's just like Tallulah: insists that all her leading men fuck her!"

"Even though he'd brilliantly upstaged her," Arlene said, "Faye was obviously intrigued with Marlon. She invited him to join her for dinner. From what I heard the next day, Marlon became a weekend guest at her apartment. It was a good thing that Elliott was out of town."

Later Arlene said that "Faye's great success was merging sexuality with intellect. They called her both the 'Blonde Bombshell' and the 'Smartest Woman in Television,' depending on which newspaper editor was writing what headline. Of course, those commentators got it all wrong. I was the smartest woman on television. At least Faye was clever enough to walk off with Marlon when every woman in New York wanted a piece of the action. I envied her."

That Sunday night at a secluded inn on a riverbank in Connecticut, a sharp-eyed reporter spotted Faye arriving in a black, chauffeur-driven limousine. She emerged wearing an eggplant purple doeskin suit with mink accessories. As always, she was clad in her trademark alligator shoes. She signaled to someone in the back seat. The mystery guest remained in shadow and was driven away by the chauffeur.

Faye made a solo entrance into the main dining room. The manager of the inn grandly ushered her into a private dining room reserved for VIPs. Apparently, the mystery passenger made his entrance through the back door of the inn and was discreetly ushered into the same dining area where Faye was waiting. Members of the staff later said that the mystery passenger was none other than Marlon Brando himself.

The following week when Bobby Lewis encountered Marlon, he said, "I fucked the first daughter-in-law."

"I guess you mean the late president's daughter-in-law unless Harry Truman has a son stashed somewhere."

"As far as I'm concerned, FDR is still president," Marlon claimed. "Truman is just a caretaker carrying out Roosevelt's grand scheme."

"I see," Bobby said. "Faye Emerson. Not bad. How was it?"

"She gave me a rave review," he boasted. "She confessed to me that I went where no man has ever gone before and, most likely, will never go again."

The Poker Room evoking *Streetcar*

* * *

In spite of his mischievous performance with Faye Emerson, Condon prevailed on Marlon to make one other TV appearance, this time with Eve Hunter, a sort of clone of the former first daughter-in-law. Marlon agreed but only on one condition: that he be allowed to bring Wally Cox onto the show.

Condon later recalled that Marlon's second TV exposure was a disaster as well. "Wally sat with his legs crossed, his shoe pointing toward Marlon. The camera picked up Marlon as he leaned toward the shoe. 'Something smells awful!' Marlon told Wally in front of the TV audience and much to Hunter's horror. 'What do you think is on the bottom of your shoe that smells so bad?'"

With deadly seriousness, Wally looked at Marlon. "Don't know, Bud. What do you think it is?"

"I'd better get down on my knees and investigate," Marlon said.

"At this point, Hunter looked like she thought her show was going off the air," Condon said.

Kneeling before Wally, Marlon picked off the offending substance. "It's only chewing gum," Marlon proclaimed, beaming before the camera and holding up a wad of the sticky stuff.

Other friends came and went, but Marlon's relationship with Wally Cox survived not only that joint appearance on TV, but the "theft of every gal that Wally got interested in," according to Bobby Lewis. "If Wally liked some woman, Marlon always took her away from his buddy. How he found time to do that is still a mystery. He already had his steady stream of models, dancers, and aspiring actresses, even famous actresses. And those were just the females. God knows how many males, and not just Sandy Campbell, he fucked on the side."

Still a hawker of jewelry, Wally had begun to break into show business. His first gig came in December of 1948 at the Village Vanguard, a popular club on Bleeker Street in New York's Greenwich Village. Whenever Marlon wasn't needed on the stage as Stanley, he could be spotted in Wally's audience, laughing louder than anybody and applauding almost overly enthusiastically.

Since the night club had a late show, Marlon often showed up after performing earlier in the night in *Streetcar*. To anyone interested, and even to those not so interested, Marlon proclaimed, "Wally Cox is America's greatest comedian—you can forget about Jack Benny and Bob Hope."

Bob Condon never offered Marlon another interview on TV. But he did observe from behind the scenes when Marlon agreed to make *Come Out Fighting!*, a projected TV pilot, with him as the star. Filmed in a Brooklyn stu-

dio, Marlon played a boxer.

"He did a damn good job," Condon said. "But for some reason the series was not picked up. Marlon was furious at the rejection. At that time, his ego inflated by *Streetcar*, he thought that anything he did in front of the camera would be eagerly picked up by a major network, most definitely CBS or NBC."

"I saw him shortly after his last performance in *Streetcar*," Condon later said. "He told me that Irene had held out the offer of his appearing as Stanley Kowalski in the film version."

"There is no way that I'm going to do Stanley on screen," Marlon told him. "No way! I'm sick to death of Stanley Kowalski. Women I go to bed with want Stanley—not me."

"What will you do?" Condon asked. "Another stage play?"

"I don't think American audiences understand me," Marlon said. "I've had other offers from abroad. I'm off to Paris. I'm going to break into French films. Of course, I've got to work on my French a bit."

* * *

According to Phil Rhodes, a disturbing phone call to the theater brought out New York detectives who swarmed backstage. The stage manager reported to police that an anonymous caller warned that if "Tandy appears on the stage tonight, she'll be assassinated." Kazan was alerted and went to Tandy's dressing room to warn her of the call. "It's up to you?" he told her. "To perform tonight—or not." The consummate professional, Tandy opted to go before the lights and gave one of her more brilliant performances as Blanche, even though there were several detectives watching the audience. Nothing happened.

Karl Malden later said that he believed that Marlon, in a disguised voice, had made the death threat against Tandy. "Marlon especially loved it when he could pull off a prank in complete secrecy."

* * *

Nicholas Ray had directed Humphrey Bogart in the 1949 *Knock on Any Door*, casting John Derek in the part that both Ray and Bogie had wanted for Marlon. In spite of Marlon's original rejection, Ray still wanted to direct Marlon's screen debut.

Near Marlon's closing weeks in *Streetcar*, Ray arrived with yet another script for the actor's consideration. It was called *Rebel Without a Cause*.

The script had been created from a non-fiction work by Dr. Robert M.

Lindner, which had been published back in 1944. Ray was still struggling with the script, but thought there was enough on paper to interest Marlon into playing the reckless, rebellious, and misunderstood youth, Jim Stark. Ray was also aware that time was running out on a possible casting of Marlon. It seemed that as every month went by, Marlon was simply getting too old to play a teenager.

He agreed to study the script and was immensely intrigued with the character, especially the idea of street gangs. Irene Selznick would have been horrified to learn Marlon had taken to riding with a motorcycle gang in Brooklyn, known as "The Eagles," after his performance every evening in *Streetcar*. Unknown to him at the time, he was rehearsing for *The Wild One*.

The story is not completely clear as to how he was allowed to hook up with this tightly knit group of hoods. Fiore claimed that he had introduced Marlon to the gang leader, Tony Medina, who was skeptical at first about allowing Marlon to join in with his night-riding boys. However, when Marlon purchased for Medina the most expensive motorcycle in New York, the gang leader reluctantly consented. As it turned out, Marlon also became a steady supplier of young girls for members of the gang.

Ray was eager to learn all he could about gangs, and Marlon asked and won approval from Medina to allow the director to ride with The Eagles. Apparently, at no point was Medina informed that Ray was a film director and might one day film a movie involving street gangs. Later, in Hollywood, Ray would manage to hook himself up with a Los Angeles gang in his attempt to find inspiration for *Rebel Without a Cause*.

One night at a location in New York State, the exact spot not known, Ray witnessed an extraordinary test of daring. Two members of The Eagles raced their motorcycles toward a cliff in a game of "chicken." Both of the young men managed to brake in time, or else their bikes would have been plunged to the rocks below the cliff. Ray was so inspired by this scene that he later incorporated it into *Rebel*, using cars instead of motorcycles.

Nicholas Ray

Ray later said that Marlon, too, had wanted to play chicken that night, but that he had persuaded him not to. "It's too risky," he told Marlon. "If you do, there might be another Stanley Kowalski on the Broadway stage tomorrow night."

With script troubles mounting, *Rebel Without a Cause* simply did not go before the cameras in 1949, and it was not to become the vehicle for Marlon's screen debut. When the cameras rolled

on *Rebel* preceding its release in 1955, it was James Dean who was cast in the star role of the rebellious youth. By then, Marlon was indeed far too old for the part. Ray later revealed, however, that after meeting Marlon he wrote what he perceived to be the actor's "personal character" into the role of Jim Stark in *Rebel*.

Carlo Fiore later remembered attending a screening of *Rebel Without a Cause* with Marlon in 1955. "Bud sat through the entire film with a stone face, not saying a word," Fiore said. "After the show, we drove to a drive-in hamburger joint, where Bud ordered two thick cheeseburgers with 'the works.' At this point he still hadn't told me what he thought of *Rebel*. Finally, the suspense was killing me. Losing my cool, I asked him, 'Well, what did you think of Dean? That kid is definitely living in your shadow.'"

"Marlon turned and looked at me like he didn't even know who James Dean was," Fiore recalled. "He didn't say anything at first. Finally, he turned to me and mumbled, 'I plan to fuck Natalie Wood. She's now the first on my list of possible conquests in Hollywood.'"

"You've already fucked Dean," Fiore chided him. "Why not Sal Mineo? I hear he's gay as a goose."

"Yeah, that Mineo boy might get lucky too."

"I hear that big tit Jayne Mansfield was originally tested for the role of Judy before it went to Wood. Have you had her yet? Or is she on your waiting list?"

"Mansfield is too blonde for me," Marlon said. "Besides I can have the real Marilyn anytime I want her. Why go for mock turtle soup when you can have the real turtle in the stew pot?"

"Good point," Fiore said. Nothing else was ever said between them about either James Dean or *Rebel Without a Cause*.

* * *

In spite of two turn-downs, Ray still pursued Marlon. In 1951, just as he was enjoying fabulous film success in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Ray presented him with a two-page synopsis called *No Return*, a story of American gypsies.

From the very beginning, the director had only two stars in mind, Marlon Brando and Ava Gardner. He felt that each of them was a sensation. "Cast together they'll eat up the screen," he said. "Ava and Marlon are the two hottest properties in the business. Watch the screen catch fire!"

Ray managed to bring the two stars together at his home. He later said that he felt that neither one of them was particularly interested in playing gypsies on the screen. "I think they secretly wanted to meet each other, as both Ava

Ava Gardner

and Marlon were gorgeous sexual predators at the time, each in his or her own way the sex symbol of the Fifties."

"Marlon expressed some vague interest in *No Return*, although he warned me that there was too much focus on sex and violence," Ray said. "Instead of that, he said that the film should deal with the plight of the American gypsies and the abuse they have suffered in this country."

Ava's only response was, "I've always had the gypsy in my soul."

Instead of talking script, Ava and Marlon made sexually provocative comments to each other. Asked to recall exactly what the exchange was between the two super stars, Ray tried to reconstruct the spiciest of their dialogue.

AVA: Frank [a reference to Frank Sinatra] told me you were a real shit.

MARLON: Mickey Rooney told me you have big brown nipples. He also said that when aroused those nipples stand out like some double-long, golden California raisins. Is that true?

AVA: That's for me to know and you to find out later in the evening.

MARLON: At heart, are you still the li'l hillbilly Tarheel gal from North Carolina?

AVA: I'll always be that, honey chile. That's what attracts them, baby. Heaven knows, it's not my acting. Louis B. Mayer, that son of a bitch, once said of me: 'She can't act, she can't talk. She's terrific! Sign her!'

Ray remembered both Ava and Marlon disappearing into the Hollywood night together. "I just assumed they fucked each other's brains out before the rooster crowed. And neither agreed to commit to *No Return*."

Before *No Return* reached the screen, Ray made repeated calls to both Marlon and Ava, hoping to pitch the completed script to each of them personally instead of going through their agents. His calls were not returned.

No Return finally reached the screen in 1956. By that time, it had been more provocatively titled *Hot Blood*, and it starred another sex symbol, Jane Russell. Cornel Wilde, even though too old for the role, was more convincingly cast as the gypsy male star.

Eventually, Marlon saw *Hot Blood*, perhaps speculating what might have been if the film had starred Ava and him on the screen. His movie review to Fiore? "I thought Jane Russell and Wilde looked good in their costumes."

* * *

During the long run of *Streetcar*, Marlon was hailed by most critics as the most gifted actor of his generation. His interpretation of Stanley had changed how future actors would emote both on the stage and screen. Yet, long after leaving the role, he still doubted his interpretation of Stanley.

"I never nailed down the character of Stanley Kowalski," Marlon later said. "I am overly sensitive to the pain of others. Stanley never understood the pain of others, their emotional torments. That was especially true in the way he treated Blanche. I played him as big and lusty, a man who devoured blood-red steaks before eating pussy at night. But I never cracked below his surface. I never really understood what made Stanley Kowalski tick."

A Streetcar Named Desire ran for 855 performances, winning the Pulitzer Prize. The play moved Tennessee Williams to the foreground as the leading playwright of his day. It made a star of Marlon, and propelled Kazan into the top echelon of directors.

For all purposes, Marlon's appearance in *Streetcar* was his *adieu* to the stage, as reported in so many biographies. Actually in 1953 he would appear unspectacularly in a summer stock production of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. He toured with the play briefly, appearing as Sergius Saranoff at such theaters as the Falmouth Playhouse in Coonamesset, Massachusetts.

After this run, he would never appear on the stage again, telling a reporter in Ivoryton, Connecticut, "It wasn't that I disliked the experience. I hated it! I almost went out of my mind."

* * *

The ever-faithful, devoted, and loyal Shelley Winters continued her affair with Marlon throughout the rehearsals for *Streetcar* and even after opening night, although the competition for Marlon *après*-performance was far greater than she at first knew.

She proclaimed, "There was an electrical charge and almost an animal scent he projected over the footlights that made it impossible for the audience to think or watch the other performers on the stage. All you could do was feel, the sexual arousal was so complete. I don't believe that quality can be learned:

it's just there, primitive and compelling. The only time I experienced a similar reaction was when I saw Elvis Presley perform in Las Vegas."

Even though Shelley openly was aware that Marlon "flashed across the stage like sexual lightning," she could not believe "another extraordinary reputation" about him.

"That reputation was that he seduced everything on the hoof," Kazan said. "Both the stallion and the mare."

Shelley later claimed that "I figured the reputation couldn't be true because when did he have the time?"

Marlon agreed to let her sit in on his rehearsals for *Streetcar*, because she felt that "something big was about to happen on Broadway, and I wanted to be there learning everything I could." Often she became so mesmerized while watching Marlon as Stanley that she sometimes arrived backstage at *Oklahoma!* with only minutes to spare before she herself was due to go on stage. The stage manager docked her one dollar for every minute she was late.

Marlon had warned her to disguise herself, so that she wouldn't be spotted and ejected from the theater by Kazan. Shelley wanted to see Marlon act but also wanted to watch Kazan direct.

Slipping into the back of the theater, she covered her blonde hair with a dark scarf and wore an old black coat that made her look like an Apple Annie bagwoman. To conceal herself further, she sat behind a post in the auditorium. From that vantage point she couldn't actually hear Kazan's words to Marlon, because "Gadge," as she called him, spoke in a very soft voice to his actors, unlike another director, Otto Preminger, who always shouted at them.

Day by day she inched forward to hear more of the exchange taking place between Marlon and Kazan. One afternoon Kazan turned and looked at her. "If you're going to hang around the theater, you can at least go out for coffee for us, and let the stage manager stay on the book." She became the "gofer" during rehearsals, and Kazan, having found some useful purpose for her, let her stay.

Shelley Winters

She later wrote: "Marlon mumbled and stumbled around, and the other actors fluffed; then he would suddenly spark fire for himself and the others, and you could hear him clearly and articulately in the last row of the balcony. Gadge would rehearse one scene all day, and it seemed painful and agonizing. Then they would have a run-through of the scene at five or six o'clock, and the acting

would lift me from my seat. I knew I was watching theater history being made."

Shelley's hunch was right. Unable to attend the opening night of *Streetcar* because of her own stage appearance, she read the reviews over "two containers of coffee" the following morning. One male critic seemed to have developed a crush on Marlon. He wrote, "There has never been—nor will there ever be again—a performance like the one Marlon Brando gave last night."

Shelley agreed with only part of the statement. She later told Lee Strasberg, "But Marlon, as wonderful as he is, isn't the Second Coming. How can that guy say there will never again be a performance like Marlon gave last night? Maybe some time in the future Marlon III will rise up from the masses and dazzle the world." Later in life, however, she told a class at Actors Studio, "Maybe that critic was right. So far, no one has come along to equal Brando's performance. All we've had so far are clones—and bad ones at that."

Finally, Shelley got to see the actual play as performed on Broadway, not just a rehearsal, when she attended a benefit performance on Thursday when she herself didn't have to appear on stage. Marlon ordered that a ticket be set aside for her at the box office. The stage manager of *Streetcar* whispered to her that if she wished, she could get one-hundred dollars for that ticket. She turned down the money, even though in 1947 one-hundred dollars was worth five-hundred in today's coinage.

Backstage she encountered Marlon who was then inhabiting a big chorus dressing room on the third floor. Completely littered and cluttered, it contained a cot (at the time she thought it was for catnaps), blankets, and several barbells and weights.

There was a dressing table in the room as well. In front of her, Marlon stripped to the skin and headed for the shower, as he was sweat-drenched as the curtain fell. Taking advantage of his absence, she examined the objects on the dressing table, first picking up a Charles Atlas instruction book with tips on weightlifting.

What amazed her, as she'd later recall, were at least a hundred pieces of paper. On these sheets were written the names of various women, along with their addresses and telephone numbers. Some of the star-struck women, often girls, had left pictures of themselves in the nude. There was a collection of hotel keys from such places as the Waldorf Towers and the Plaza. She was shocked at the number of famous female stars who had left keys.

Emerging from the shower, Marlon caught her going through his papers. "Bud, what in the hell are you doing? Preparing for a play where you're a burglar?"

It was then that Marlon confessed that "every famous woman in films, theater, and café society who sees the play comes backstage to congratulate

me and 'accidentally' leaves her key on my dressing table." He admitted that he'd already taken advantage of dozens of keys.

She was flabbergasted. "While you're performing this exhausting play eight times a week?"

"It's true: I'm exhausted but I'm doing my best. Some of them are knockouts. And who knows? It's the kind of research I might need sometime when I'm playing the role of a roaming Lothario with a gleam in his eye, a part very different from Stanley Kowalski."

Faced with all those keys on the dressing table, Shelley that night decided to end her sexual relationship with Marlon, although it would be resumed later in Hollywood.

Later that night, over an inexpensive dinner in a cheap eatery operated by refugees from Hong Kong, he rushed to down his chop suey, claiming that he needed to get some sleep. She suspected that he was telling a lie and would soon be racing off to take advantage of one of those keys.

A normally outspoken woman, Shelley in her memoirs did not reveal that among the notes and propositions left behind were the names and contacts for an array of A-list actresses, many of them Oscar winners and among the most photographed and famous faces on the planet.

Although Shelley did not name these actresses, Marlon's agent, Edith Van Cleve, a friend of the author's, later recalled "every delicious tidbit."

Unknown to Marlon, Edith was also the best female friend of Tallulah Bankhead's. When Tallulah got up every morning and, over her first cup of black coffee and the first of the day's cigarettes, she called Edith for the latest report on "Brando's nocturnal adventures."

"What was the little fucker up to last night?" she always asked Edith, taking delight in hearing the latest report of the star Marlon was seducing now.

It is because of these two gossipy friends that some of Marlon's more notable sexual conquests were later revealed.

"There has never been a story of such famous women being serially seduced in the American theater," Kazan said. "I saw it unfolding before my eyes, and even I couldn't believe it. Surely, John Barrymore at the height of his virility and beauty, and wearing those revealing green tights, didn't seduce as many famous women as our Marlon Brando."

When journalist Joe Hyams, tried to compile a list of all the women Marlon had seduced, he gave up, claiming, "It takes a statistician rather than reporter."

Film critic David Thomson put it this way: "Many of the women seem reconciled to his infidelity. They may not even see it as something worthy of blame, or guilt. He is less fickle than mobile—the way of sperm, after all. He is entirely candid about the extent of his sexual appetite, and about his reluc-

tance to settle. We do not have to agree that he is exceptional at sex; instead, he is unusual in that he pursues sex for its own sake, and is not often drawn into claims of love and eternity—the rhetoric that impedes so many of us. So lovers accept that they will be dropped and then reclaimed, depending on where he is, his mood, the chance of meeting. Never in love, he is never out of love. Liking sex with this woman, and that one, he is ready to repeat the experience. So in many cases women become fixtures in his life, only briefly in high fashion but never forgotten."

In spite of all the women parading through his life, Kazan startled Marlon by reminding him that "you are more dependent on your ties to men."

During the run of *Streetcar*, Marlon's sister, Fran, was quoted as saying: "Everybody wanted a piece of my brother, especially some of the leading female stars of the Golden Age."

Elia Kazan was blunt: "During the months he appeared under my direction as Stanley Kowalski, Marlon was a fuck machine. He became a phallic dream for both gay men and thousands of female theater-goers. Later he would become the wet dream for millions of film fans around the world. He was, in essence, the male sex symbol of the Fifties, with Marilyn Monroe wearing the crown for women. My greatest regret as a director is that I didn't have a chance to star both Marlon and Marilyn—the two Ms—in the same film.

After the opening night of *Streetcar*, the parade of famous actresses, most often from the film world, became a never-ending stream heading backstage. Ostensibly many of these stars expressed an interest in playing Blanche DuBois on the screen. However, many women who came to call were completely unsuitable for *Streetcar*.

"They came backstage for one reason only, and that reason was to fuck Stanley Kowalski," Kazan said.

Chapter Seven

Leading the parade backstage after a performance of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was the glamorous film star, Paulette Goddard. At one time she might have been married to Charlie Chaplin. Then again she might not have been.

This former Ziegfeld Girl, former Goldwyn Girl, intrigued Marlon for two reasons: she was brunette and attractive, of course, but he was mesmerized by the fact that Chaplin had been her Svengali. Upon meeting her, he told her, "Only for Charlie Chaplin would I consider appearing in film."

Regrettably, he would get his chance in the 1967 *A Countess from Hong Kong*, in which The Little Tramp would—disastrously—attempt to direct Marlon. Chaplin had been carrying around an idea for the script since the early 1930s, having originally intended to award star billing to his lover, Paulette, and to Gary Cooper. Eventually, long after passions had cooled between Chaplin and Goddard, the leading roles went to Marlon and Sophia Loren.

Perhaps from their first hour together, Paulette realized that Marlon was not her kind of man. He invited her out for supper. Instead of taking her to Sardi's, he took her to an all-night cafeteria near Times Square. Covered in jewelry and elegantly dressed, she attracted unwanted attention from the "dregs of the world," as she'd later describe the other patrons.

He told her, "Any old cheap cafe will do for me. I don't need to go to a fashionable night club or elegant supper club for food. In fact, I despise such places." He was saying that to a woman who'd spent most of her adult life at fashionable places. He attacked people who felt compelled to eat pheasant under glass, calling such ostentation "an affectation, an overindulgence, like decadent Romans who would kill an entire colony of pink flamingos to consume their tongues in a casserole."

Before the end of the evening, he told her that he'd never be seen driving around in a Mercedes-Benz or Rolls-Royce. "You can count me out, too, as a future buyer of one of those combination washing machines, iceboxes, and TV sets."

It is not clear at what point in the evening Paulette discovered that her rhinestone-studded purse, containing $65,000 worth of jewelry, was missing. In the excitement of meeting Marlon, she feared that she'd left it in his dress-

Paulette Goddard

ing room. In those days, Paulette was known for changing her jewelry two or three times in an evening. She always carried plenty of "spare gems" in her handbag.

Racing back to the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in a taxi with her, Marlon encountered a stagehand, who was closing down the house for the night.

Paulette rushed into Marlon's dressing room to discover that her purse was not there. She confronted the stagehand, demanding to know if he'd seen anybody come out of the dressing room after they'd left the theater.

"Just Igor Tamarin," the stagehand said.

She turned to Marlon, demanding to know who this Igor was.

"Oh, he often dances on tables," he told her. "Sometimes he appears nude or semi-nude at parties in the Village. He likes to impersonate Nijinsky."

Marlon claimed that he kept Igor in his dressing room to play soothing gypsy music to him before he went on stage as Stanley. "He's also my boxing partner, my wrestling mate, and my fencing instructor. When not doing any of the above, we play chess. He teaches me the finer points of the game."

"All very interesting," Paulette said sarcastically. "But is he a thief?"

"I wouldn't call Igor a thief," he said. "Perhaps sticky fingers would be a more apt description."

When Karl Malden shared a dressing room with Marlon, he was missing a silver cigarette case which he used on stage in an important scene every night opposite Jessica Tandy. He never recovered it. His suspicion centered on Igor.

One night Karl, pretending sleep, caught Igor rummaging through Marlon's pockets. Later Marlon admitted to Karl that Igor had indeed taken his cigarette case. "I've been trying to help my friend change his thieving ways," Marlon said, growing angry. "You're not helping Igor by embarrassing him by catching him red-handed."

After they left the theater, and in the early hours of the morning, Marlon managed to soothe the distraught Paulette. "My body heat and my hands—not to mention everything else—brought Miss Goddard some comfort in the night," he confided to Edith Van Cleve the next morning.

Waking up at eleven o'clock, he presented Paulette with her missing purse and the purloined jewelry, offering no explanation as to how the stolen objects had been found, much less delivered to her hotel room while she slept. She

wanted explanations. He was mysterious. “Last night,” he told her, “I shared my jewels with you. You tell me: which set of jewels do you appreciate the most, mine or those in that stupid beaded bag?”

Paulette’s answer was never recorded for posterity.

* * *

When Wendy Barrie, the British actress of the 1930s, came backstage to meet Marlon, he was already familiar with her work, having seen her in Alexander Korda’s *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, in which she’d played Royal Wife No. 3, Jane Seymour. He even knew that Wendy’s godfather was none other than J.M. Barrie, the Scottish novelist and playwright who wrote *Peter Pan* in which Miss Barrie’s stage-namesake Wendy is also a character.

None of these credentials particularly intrigued Marlon. He was more fascinated by her role as the girlfriend of the notorious gangster Benjamin Siegel, known as “Bugsy,” a name he hated. He was reported to have killed three men who called him Bugsy to his face. Known as a lady killer, Bugsy was also called the handsomest gangster who ever lived. At the time Wendy came backstage to meet Marlon, Bugsy had recently been murdered. A notorious nymphomaniac, Wendy during her affair with Bugsy had to keep her libido under control. Men who showed her too much attention were fitted with cement shoes.

Having been born in Hong Kong in 1912, Wendy was twelve years older than Marlon at the time of their first meeting, but she was well preserved and exceptionally attractive.

In his dressing room, Wendy invited Marlon for a midnight supper in her suite at the Plaza Hotel. He gladly accepted.

As he’d relate in the morning to Edith Van Cleve, he peppered Wendy with questions about Bugsy, so many inquiries, in fact, that she grew impatient with him. She preferred that Marlon’s attention be focused on her. She asked him, “Would you have preferred to go to bed with Benny instead of me?”

Wendy Barrie in *The Private Life of Henry VIII*

Marlon was enigmatic in his response. “He was one good-looking man, and I was told that he could go all night. Of course, you’d know more about that than I would. I’m sorry I didn’t get to meet him before he was gunned down. I would have liked to have learned his sexual secret. If I could go all

night, I could get around to servicing more women lined up to meet me backstage. After my cannon has shot for the third time in a night, I'm usually so pooped I want sleep instead of more nooky."

He didn't sense her growing impatience with Bugsy questions but asked another one. "I thought all gangsters were Italian. My friend, Carlo Fiore, told me Bugsy was Jewish. Not only that, but that his middle name was Hymen."

"You're right on both counts," she said.

"My mother's name is Dodie. I wished she'd named me Marlon Hymen Brando. A cute name, for sure."

Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel

Apparently, at some point in the evening the suave and sophisticated Wendy realized that the key to seducing Marlon lay in plying him with Bugsy stories. Bright and talkative, she had enough Bugsy tales to fill a large book, the size of one of the calzones so beloved by her late boyfriend.

So instead of discussing her favorite subject, which was herself, Wendy told Marlon little known Bugsy secrets. One was that Bugsy had discovered the obscure town of Las Vegas one scalding hot afternoon when he ordered his driver to stop the car. "While Bugsy was airing that big thing of his in the desert air, taking a long overdue piss, he got the divine inspiration to launch Vegas as the gambling mecca of the West."

"Benny," she said, "always felt that you could clear up almost any problem with a homicide. The boys in the mob called him 'the cowboy.'"

"Why cowboy?" Marlon asked.

"In the mob, a cowboy is a man who doesn't just set up a murder. He's the one who kills the victim himself instead of hiring someone else to do it."

"I see."

She enthralled him with Bugsy-in-Hollywood stories. "It's true," she said. "He was a total psychopath but what a charming one. He could charm the bloomers off anyone." She related the details of Bugsy's affair with the blonde bombshell of the Thirties, Jean Harlow, She also claimed that his best pals in Hollywood were actors George Raft, Clark Gable, and Gary Cooper. "Benny would round up the most beautiful gals in Hollywood and Vegas for his pals to seduce. He was a bit of a voyeur. Gable, Cooper, and Raft could fuck the cream of the crop, but Bugsy wanted to watch. He would sit at the foot of the bed and oversee all the action."

"Sounds a bit homosexual to me."

"I think he had a streak of that," she said. "Had you mentioned that to him, he would have shot you in cold blood. Cary Grant was one of his best friends. He always told me that he let Grant swallow his big cock any time he wanted, but that he never reciprocated."

"I've met Cary Grant," Marlon said. "I bet I could get him to suck my cock too."

Looking him up and down, Wendy asked him to remove his shirt. "I bet you could at that."

She told him that in addition to many random girlfriends, Bugsy had three other full-time mistresses. The Countess Dorothy diFrasso, Marie ("The Body") MacDonald, and "the cunty bitch," Virginia Hill.

"One time Benny registered all four of us at suites in the Flamingo in Vegas. When Hill ran into me in the lobby, she struck me so hard in the jaw that it became dislocated. I had to be taken to the hospital."

Wendy claimed that the blonde beauty, Marie, was relatively harmless but that Countess diFrasso, fresh from a broken romance with Gary Cooper, was serious competition. Holding Marlon transfixed, Wendy told of how the countess had taken Bugsy to Rome to peddle a revolutionary explosive device to Benito Mussolini, but that the invention fizzled out before Il Duce's eyes.

On that same trip, as related by Wendy, Bugsy, "the wild little Jew boy from the Lower East Side, was invited to join her at her country estate for a weekend. Once there, she introduced Bugsy to her fellow houseguests, Hermann Goering and Joseph Goebbels. Benny took such a dislike to Hitler's two henchmen that he planned to assassinate them on the spot. DiFrasso finally talked him out of that."

Raw animal magnetism

The character that Marlon would later develop (the starring role in *The Godfather)* was created on the night Wendy plied him with Bugsy stories, claiming that her former lover had been guilty of hijacking, mayhem, narcotics trafficking, bootlegging, rape, burglary, bookmaking, robbery, the numbers racket, extortion, and "countless murders."

"It was Bugsy's role as a white slaver that intrigued me the most," Marlon told his agent, Edith, the following morning. "Bugsy, or so Wendy claimed, took orders from all over the world for only the most desirable women. This oil-rich sheik, for example, would want a gal who looked like Betty Grable. Bugsy

would then have such a girl kidnapped and transported abroad, perhaps to Saudi Arabia. She'd end up in some harem never to be seen again. That really intrigues me. As I told you before, I always wanted my own harem. But if you're getting me only five-hundred dollars a week for *Streetcar*, it'll never happen. Not until you get me deals one day where I'll make millions."

Even though Virginia Hill—the sharp-tongued Georgia peach that Bugsy nicknamed "Flamingo"—was Wendy's rival in love, Wendy made her sound fascinating to Marlon. He learned that while in jail in Los Angeles, Bugsy was granted passes for conjugal visits with both Virginia and Wendy.

Behind closed doors, as Marlon learned, Virginia told members of the Kefauver Senate Commission in Washington that "mobsters think so highly of me because of my unmatched talent for blow-jobs."

Wendy believed that Virginia Hill knew some of the advance details of Bugsy's upcoming assassination which took place in her $500,000 Los Angeles mansion, a home that had once belonged to Rudolph Valentino.

Bugsy was reading an unfavorable article about himself in *The Los Angeles Times*. Hill was not in California at the time, having flown to Europe. From outside the house three bullets were fired into him. As he collapsed into death, two masked assassins broke into the room and smashed Bugsy's face with the butt of an army rifle. One crashed through the bridge of his nose and tore into his left eye. The other blow pulverized his right cheekbone, sending bone fragments through the back of his neck, shattering a vertebra. The police later found his right eye fifteen feet away from the body.

"I think all this mob era stuff ended with Bugsy's death," Marlon told Wendy. "But I admire this Virginia Hill. She was the only one with enough spit, sass, and guts to stand up to guys like Al Capone, Joe Adonis, and even Bugsy himself."

Marlon's fascination with the image of Virginia Hill continued for years. Once on a trip to Europe, he hired private detectives to try to locate her cottage in the Alps, where she'd apparently settled. In the late Fifties, he'd heard that she was broke and was fleeing from both the mob and the Internal Revenue Service. The detectives were unable to locate her. In 1961 Marlon learned that she'd swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills and had gone out into a Swiss snow bank "for the big sleep."

He received the news with sadness. On the set of *The Fugitive Kind*, he told Tennessee, "I've been blown by some of the most skilled fellatio artists in the world, including yourself. But I'll always regret not getting a blow-job directly from Virginia Hill. From all reports, she was the best of the best."

Once Wendy started talking that night in her suite, it was hard to shut her up. It was her "gift of gab" that would soon lead to casting her on The Wendy Barrie Show, one of television's first talk shows which would make her the

Virginia Hill

rival of Faye Emerson, Marlon's recent conquest.

Later he would boast to Carlo Fiore, "There was only one way that I could shut Wendy up—and that was to stick my cock down her throat."

Until they drifted apart, Marlon continued to see Wendy on and off for a number of years, the way he did with a lot of his women.

Perhaps inspired by her depiction of Bugsy, he became obsessed at one point in the early Fifties of making a gangster picture.

He went so far as to have a Los Angeles tailor design "pimp gear" for him to wear in a gangster movie that was never made. Evocative of Al Capone, Marlon appeared in a banana yellow suit with shocking pink hosiery and alligator shoes dyed scarlet red. His wide-brimmed hat was dyed a flamboyant chartreuse.

Dropping the Capone dress, he decided to appear in his first gangster movie as Bugsy in dapper dress like George Raft. He'd seen all the Raft films and those of Edward G. Robinson. Because Bugsy was handsome, and Marlon was handsome, he wanted to make the life story of Bugsy Siegel. That dubious honor would go to Warren Beatty in 1991, who appeared in a highly fictionalized account of the gangster's life.

By then, Marlon had made a comeback playing a very different type of gangster. However, the character of Moe Green in *The Godfather* would be a rip-off of Bugsy's notorious life.

It was with a certain sadness that Marlon learned in the 60s that Wendy had had a stroke and that this once vibrant and talkative woman was mentally incapacitated.

* * *

Marlon later confided to Carlo Fiore that he'd fallen in love with the blonde sex symbol of World War II, Veronica Lake and her peek-a-boo bang, when he'd seen her emote in the 1941 *I Wanted Wings* with Ray Milland and William Holden.

On meeting her for the first time backstage after a performance of *Streetcar*, he was somewhat disappointed to see that she'd changed her hair style, eliminating her most striking feature which was what had attracted him

Veronica Lake

to her in the first place. The War Department had requested that she get rid of the peek-a-boo bang because too many women working in defense plants had imitated her hair style, getting their low-hanging bangs caught—sometimes tragically—in machinery on assembly lines. Like the Biblical Samson, the cutting of her hair diminished Veronica's standing at the box office. Her popularity was on the wane the night she met Marlon, her fame forever rooted in the war years of the 1940s.

Unlike many other actresses who came backstage to meet Marlon, pretending they were interested in playing Blanche DuBois, Veronica actually wanted the part. She was smart enough to know that she had little chance of being cast in the film version, but wanted to take the play on the road, appearing in playhouses from Kansas to Minnesota.

Although the idea of casting Veronica as Blanche DuBois may have appeared absurd to some, the papers of Irene Selznick later revealed that she had seriously considered casting Veronica in the film version. However, after giving it some consideration, Irene scratched Veronica off her list, favoring at one point Miriam Hopkins or Bette Davis instead.

Ironically, in the late 1960s, her film career but a memory, Veronica would play Blanche DuBois in England, cast opposite the muscled hunk, Ty Hardin as Stanley. It was not one of the more memorable productions of *Streetcar*.

Tennessee later told Marlon that he'd seen Veronica in the play. "She and that religious but good-looking freak Ty Hardin ruined my play. I don't think I'll ever allow it to be revived again. After seeing you and Vivien on the screen, I know now that there can never be another Blanche and Stanley to live in my memory. Your images are etched in my brain. Every other actor who follows in your footsteps will be a pale imitation."

"The night Marlon met peek-a-boo, he met his match," claimed Carlo Fiore. "One crazy meeting another crazy. I was with them on a few of their binges. That hot tamale was far more off her rocker than old Bud himself."

Kazan later claimed that the Brando/Lake affair "lasted for ten nights—if that. Most of the actresses who came backstage to fuck Marlon got only a one-night stand. But in Lake, Marlon found a female companion that he could take to those sex-and-booze orgies he still liked to attend in Greenwich Village. Marlon, of course, would go only for the sex—not the booze. Veronica liked both sex and booze—and plenty of both."

Veronica's reputation had already preceded her before she went backstage to meet Marlon. She didn't need to attend orgies in Greenwich Village for kicks. Back in the Hollywood of the Forties, she'd become notorious for her sex-and-booze parties.

She had another reputation as well. She was known to prefer heavily endowed men and had bedded some of the leading studs of her day, including such heavy hung players as Howard Hughes, Milton Berle, Gary Cooper, and the Dominican playboy, Porfirio Rubirosa.

"Maybe Bud didn't stack up so well against those other players," Fiore speculated. "That might explain how they quickly switched from bedding each other to bedding the cream of the crop at one of those orgies. I went twice to the Village with the new duo, and both Veronica and Bud were clearly the stars of the festivities. As for me, I took whatever decent leftover came my way."

After the first night, Marlon had taken to calling Veronica "Ronni," and she was seen riding behind him on his motorcycle as he made his way through the streets of New York.

"They were two kindred spirits," Fiore claimed. "She made sexual conquests as freely as he did."

One night at a party, Fiore heard her tell Marlon that when she was horny, she drove through the streets of Los Angeles at night on a stud search. "When I spotted a hot number, I'd pull up to the curb. 'Hi, I'm Veronica Lake,' I would tell them. 'Get in if you'd like to fuck a movie star. I'll let you play with my peek-a-boo if you let me play with yours.'"

From Veronica, Marlon learned a new breakfast menu: Coca-Cola mixed with milk. According to Carlo, "For about six very long weeks, Marlon insisted on sharing this drink with me. I preferred Scotch. Veronica also taught him that the best breakfast in the world was a cold slice of pizza resting in the refrigerator from the night before. When I told my own mamma mia about this, she threw up her hands in Italian despair."

At one orgy in the Village, Veronica witnessed homosexual activity occurring between two young men in the corner. She confided in Marlon that she found such sexual practices "revolting." He lectured her on tolerance, but it would take years for her to come around to his more enlightened point of view.

In the 1960s, her viewpoint about gays completely changed. She became known as "the Fag Hag of Miami." At that low point in her life, she socialized only with gay men—"and played a wicked game of pool with them indeed."

One afternoon Marlon escorted Veronica to the reading of a new play at Actors Studio. The star was Monty Clift doing a solo. At the end of the reading, Veronica walked up to Monty to be introduced by Marlon. At first, he

seemed only vaguely aware of who she was. “You read that play like a fag with a hernia,” she told him.

Looking startled for a moment, he shouted back at her. “You fucking Hollywood has-been. Let’s face it, bitch, you’re washed up. My career’s just beginning. You’re history. A footnote I might add.” He angrily stormed off the stage.

“Now, now,” Marlon cautioned her. “We’ll have to learn to be more diplomatic around sensitive actors. Monty has enough troubles as it is.”

“No one was sensitive to me in Hollywood,” she said. “Everybody treated me like shit. You’ll go there one day—sooner than later—and I’m sure they’ll treat you like shit too if you let them.”

“That will never happen,” he assured her.

She advised that when he did go to Hollywood, he should become a rebel. “Don’t let the bastards tell you what to do. You set your own rules. When you become the big star I think you’ll become, they’ll be forced to listen to you, especially when they count those box office receipts. Instead of you having to kiss their asses, they’ll be lining up to eat your dingleberries.”

Aggressively smoking a cigarette in a lawn chair in her backyard in Miami in the 1950s, Veronica reflected on Marlon. “I think he took my advice,” she claimed. “But, even so, Marlon and I were never meant to be movie stars. I knew if I stayed on, the rat race would have killed me like it did my frequent co-star, Alan Ladd. In addition to alcohol, he was also battling his repressed homosexuality. Marlon was stronger than Alan or me. He told Hollywood to go fuck itself, and made the bastards take it.”

Marlon sensed a dreadful loneliness in her. One night she told him that she was feeling blue and had gone to the phone to call someone. “I just sat there with no one to call, not a single, living, breathing soul. I ended up calling a liquor store to deliver me some more booze. At least I got to hear a human voice and got to see a living being at my door, if only a delivery boy.”

As she related, he took her to Fire Island one day where both of them sat for hours, watching the sea in silence. Finally, she spoke, telling him that in the future she always wanted to live in a place by the sea. “I can sit for hours just listening to the sound the ocean waves make. More than anything on God’s green earth, the sea gives me peace. Unlike us, it’s eternal. On some very bad days, I imagine that I’m going to go to the sea where I’ll just strip off my clothes and walk into it, letting it wash me away to a better universe.”

That night over dinner on a terraced Fire Island restaurant opening onto the sea, she confided in him that her greatest ambition one day was to write *The Veronica Lake Cookbook*. “There will be nothing like it on the market. All the recipes will be easy to whip up—you know, when you come home exhausted or else too God damn drunk to fix yourself a decent meal.”

He agreed with her that the book would be a good idea and urged her to write it. "I'll buy the first copy," he promised.

Back in New York, he kissed her good-bye for the final time. "I knew it was to be the last kiss," she said, recalling the affair years later in a Miami bar. "It was time for both of us to move on. Our romance was short but sweet. He was on the dawn of a brilliant film career, and I was in the twilight of one. Of course, my career could never compare with his, although Alan and I had a few good moments on the screen. At least we took millions of American minds off the dreaded war for an hour and a half every night."

"Victor Mature was the best performer I ever encountered in bed," she said. "And God knows, he had the equipment. Aristotle Onassis, of all people, gave me the most orgasms in a single night. But of them all, Marlon was the most sincere. When he was on top of you, looking deeply into your eyes with that poetic face he had, he convinced you, at least for a moment, that you were the most important woman in the world."

Years later, when Marlon read in the papers that a newspaper reporter had found Veronica working as a cocktail waitress in a Manhattan bar, he instructed his accountant to send her a check for a thousand dollars. Out of pride, she never cashed it, but kept it framed in her Miami living room to show her gay friends.

Facing death in 1973, Veronica Lake had long ago been diagnosed as a classic schizophrenic.

* * *

Anne Baxter came backstage to meet Marlon, and not because she wanted to join the parade of aging actresses seeking to portray Blanche DuBois on the screen.

Only a year older than Marlon, Anne wanted the juicy role of Stella when the film was made. The idea wasn't far-fetched. Months later, in one of the casting notes that went to Jack Warner's office, producer Charles K. Feldman proposed Olivia de Havilland as Blanche DuBois and Anne Baxter as Stella. The Indiana-born granddaughter of architect Frank Lloyd Wright had already won an Oscar as best supporting actress in *The Razor's Edge* in 1946 in which she beat out such veterans as Ethel Barrymore and Lillian Gish.

As they talked backstage, Marlon ignored all the other well-wishers, including "a gaggle of gals," waiting to see him. He told Anne that he admired the way she worked with Orson Welles, director of the 1942 *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

She laughed at the ordeal she'd suffered through with the director while filming this movie. "After devouring eight of Joseph Cotton's Machiavellian

Anne Baxter

martinis, he sent his chauffeur on his way and begged me to drive him home, all 250 pounds of him. En route, I felt six hands up my skirt. He kept repeating, 'Oh, the beauty of it, Oh, the beauty of it.' I finally managed to get him out of my car on a lonely corner of Sunset Boulevard. I threw my tattered bra in the gutter and headed home to Mom and a piece of her apple pie." She smiled at him. "I don't know about you and Orson working together," she said impishly. "You've got no tits, no bra to rip. Besides, Orson always says, 'The only thing wrong with The Method is the *The*.'"

After she'd said that, he knew he'd found a woman as irreverent as he was . . . well, almost.

He invited her to go for a ride in Central Park with him on his motorcycle, and she willingly accepted. As he was making his way up the alleyway after having exited through the stage door, a large woman with a thick Deep South accent accosted him. "Why, Mr. Brando, up there on stage you're Stanley Kowalski. But in person you're just like everybody else."

Excusing himself from Anne, he walked over to the nearest doorway. Once there, he unbuttoned his blue jeans and urinated against a brick wall.

Minutes later, with Anne hanging onto his muscled frame, he was zooming on his motorcycle through Central Park, coming to a stop in the parking lot at the Zoo.

"Isn't it a bit late for calling on the animals?" she asked.

"I have a friend here who lets me in at night," he said. "My friendship with him, plus fifty dollars. I've made a buddy out of this big baboon. I call him Weissmuller." He reached for a paper bag attached to his motorcycle. "I bring him his favorite treats every night. He's come to depend on me showing up with my bag of goodies. I think if I didn't come around, he'd just sulk in the corner and fade away."

Once the zookeeper had shown Marlon and Anne to Weissmuller's cage, he left them alone. Marlon reached into the paper bag and pulled out a large banana. "You won't believe this," he told her, "but Weissmuller here is a bit of a homosexual. He insists on kissing me every night."

As an astonished Anne looked on, Weissmuller wasn't feeling that amorous on this particular night. Catching Marlon by surprise, the baboon spat in his face.

"The blast hit him right in the kisser," she later remembered. "And we're

not talking a dainty little spit but a big blast. Weissmuller must have been saving up all day to release that wad."

Stepping back in stunned amazement, Marlon recovered quickly. Wiping the spit from his face with the back of his hand, he went over to a nearby fountain and bathed himself as best he could. Then he filled his mouth with what appeared to be an amazing amount of water. His cheeks bloated with the liquid, he returned to the cage to confront Weissmuller.

"Marlon let go," she claimed. "Did he ever let that baboon have it. The animal recoiled in horror and ran to the rear of his cage where he covered his face with his hands, as if anticipating another attack."

"That will teach that God damn baboon some manners," Marlon said, taking her by the arm and leading her back to the motorcycle.

"That's it for me. I've had it. No more treats. No more visits. I knew I'd have trouble with that baboon one day. I don't want to admit this, but one night he mooned me. All those kisses didn't mean anything. He was just setting me up for the kill. How like a woman!"

Before getting on his motorcycle, she looked into his eyes. "Not this woman."

Later over cheeseburgers at a beer tavern in the Times Square area, Anne told him amusing stories about her career. She claimed that as a teenager she was fired from the stage production of *The Philadelphia Story* in pre-Broadway tryouts in 1939. "That damn dyke, Katharine Hepburn, thought I was too old for the part."

As regarded her marriage to actor John Hodiak, she told Marlon, "A marriage is happier when a man is more or less the sun and the woman's in the shadow. But what actress wants to be in the shadows?"

"I think you're sexy in sunshine or shadow," he said. "Very sexy. Sex and brains. What a winning combination, I've always said."

"Not in Hollywood," she countered. "The minute any woman is perceived as having a brain, it's supposed to cancel her sex appeal. Producers, and especially directors, don't know how to sell a star if they can't hype her sexually."

"I'm a bit short myself, and what I like about you is that I can tower over you."

"The question about any man with a woman is this? Can he be tall in the saddle even though short?"

"I've never had one complaint, and I don't expect any tonight," he boasted.

"What makes you think you're going to get lucky?"

"I think that was a foregone conclusion the moment you arrived at my dressing room door," he said. "But I must warn you, don't expect Stanley Kowalski. I'm not a rapist."

"I'll let you in on a little secret," she said, reaching for his hand. "I'll be the rapist!"

And so she was.

Two days later when he came by her hotel suite after a performance of *Streetcar*, he was looking for a repeat performance. He bribed a porter ten dollars to let him into her suite, as he wanted to take her by surprise.

He later related to Carlo Fiore what happened. "Anne must have been taking a shower. What I found wasn't her but a drunken Peter Lawford lying asleep and buck-assed naked on the sofa in her living room. I'm sure Peter would have liked it, but I wasn't into a three-way that night, so I tiptoed out. I went home to Russell, bedding down with my raccoon for the rest of the night."

* * *

Like Marlon himself, the glamorous and sultry Viennese actress, Hedy Lamarr, was one of Hollywood's most notorious bisexuals when she came backstage to greet him after his performance in *Streetcar*.

She was always frank about describing her affairs with both men and women in an age when such nocturnal adventures were carefully concealed. Most of the world knew she'd had affairs with Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, and Marlon's rival, John Garfield. What was not known at the time was that she'd also seduced Howard Hughes and a young John F. Kennedy.

She arrived backstage with a young blonde Viennese woman who was obviously in love with her. Hedy did not give the young woman the honor of a name, but introduced her to Marlon as "my hand-maiden." Marlon looked the rather voluptuous woman up and down. "Remind me tomorrow to call my agent and order one for myself." To the maid, he asked, "Got a young sister at home?" The young woman did not answer him.

Hedy Lamarr

Forever the provocateur, Marlon asked Hedy, "Is it true what I hear? That you slept with both Hitler and Mussolini?"

"I was married to Fritz Mandl," she said. "In case you are the only unenlightened person in the world, he was the famous Austrian munitions magnate. If he ordered me to sleep with one of those dictators, I did the bidding of my husband. That way, he could get fatter contracts. Hitler was all posturing. Out of uniform, he was not a man. Mussolini was the

most pompous ass I've ever known. Imagine stopping every minute to ask—in Italian, of course—how he was doing. A man secure in his sexuality would never do that. Mr. Brando, you strike me as a man secure in his sexuality."

"When you get lucky later tonight, you'll know just how true that is."

On the way to a late-night supper at Sardi's, with the hand-maiden tagging along, Hedy told Marlon that "Fritz taught me many things. He always said, 'A woman is a lady if she knows what jewels go with the right clothes.' Tell me, Mr. Brando, do you think I'm wearing the right jewelry with the right clothes?"

"In white ermine with a white satin gown and white ankle strap high heels with white diamonds, how could you possibly go wrong? At least no one will call you underdressed."

As the evening progressed, he seemed to want to etch every detail in his brain to report to Edith Van Cleve the following morning. She might not believe that Hedy actually came backstage to greet him.

Before getting out of the taxi, she took his hand and said to him, "If you use your imagination, you can look at any actress and picture her nude. I hope to make you use your imagination."

"That's fine with me," he said, "but I don't want to spend the entire evening imagining."

"You can at least spend dinner anticipating," she said. "I have learned that in sex the anticipation is almost as tantalizing as the actual conquest." She ordered a herring appetizer and a plate of cold salmon. "I must watch my figure," she told him.

"You don't have to do that," he said with a smile. "I've been keeping watch over it ever since we came into the joint."

For some reason the hand-maiden ordered a large platter of shellfish—"heavy on the oysters"—which Marlon knew he'd have to pay for, as it was the most expensive item on the Sardi late-night menu.

Later the next day, when Edith pumped Marlon for "every word that Hedy said," he claimed he could not remember most of the dialogue. "Seated with Hedy Lamarr," he told her, "I can't listen to what she's actually saying. All I can do is look at the movement of her lips. As she talks, I watch the exquisite shapes made by her lips."

As they were drinking their coffee, Hedy had abruptly asked him, "Do you remember your first sexual experience?"

Taken aback for the moment, he finally said, "Not really. I'm not trying to be coy. It's just that I've told so many lies about my first experience, that I'm not sure what is real or imagined at this point. I think it was our family maid. Perhaps she was black, perhaps not. No, the first was milk-white. I just don't remember skin color at this point because the color of a woman's skin is not

important to me."

Marlon was not being truthful at this point. He could recall in vivid detail his first sexual involvement with the family housekeeper, his beloved Ermi, a memory and a rejection that would haunt him forever.

"What color of skin do you think I have, Mr. Brando?"

"White porcelain."

She sighed. "Sometimes I find men tiresome, and that's why I carry my hand-maiden with me everywhere I go. Sometimes men have aroused me but proved to be impotent. No man should heat up a woman's body temperature and then leave her in a desperate situation. Don't you agree, Mr. Brando?"

"You will not have that problem later with me tonight," he promised. "My noble tool always does its duty."

"I certainly hope so," she said. "Tonight I'm feeling very horny." Hedy Lamarr was perhaps the only woman in Hollywood who uttered such a line, and, according to such lovers as Charles Boyer and Burgess Meredith, she uttered that sentiment frequently.

"Of course all the men in my life weren't impotent," she claimed. "Sometimes they were a bit kinky. One of my lovers was a whip-wielding sadist. He could only reach orgasm by tying my arms behind me and using the whip on me. I begged him not to mar my skin, which as you can see is perfect in every way."

"From what I can see, that's true," he said. "But I'll have to inspect your entire body to see if those whip lashes left any scars."

"That will be very difficult, Mr. Brando, because I prefer to have sex in rooms where only one small candle is glowing."

Back in her suite, the night began with Marlon ordered out of her bedroom until she could prepare herself for him. She summoned her hand-maiden to help her with full makeup. At the last minute the young woman brought ice cubes to rub across the nipples of Hedy's breasts to make them stand up straight. Only then did the hand-maiden summon Marlon into Hedy's boudoir.

The following morning he would report to Edith that Hedy was "the queen of orgasms," as she was already known in Hollywood. "She told me I was better than John Garfield, and that was music to my ears," he said.

Unknown to Marlon, he may have taken undue credit for his expertise in the sack. What the candid and outspoken Hedy later said was, "I experienced frequent orgasms when having sex with most men. With some men, I had uncountable orgasms." Marlon fell into the latter category.

Over morning coffee, Hedy reportedly warned Marlon not to fall in love with her. "All men I go to bed with fall in love with me. They also want to marry me and make a prisoner of me just like Fritz did when I married him and became Lady Mandl."

He promised her he wouldn't fall in love with her.

"One man, Ritter Franz von Hochstätten, son of one of Germany's most distinguished families, begged me to give up my career and marry him. When I wouldn't, he hung himself."

Dressing to leave her suite, he told her, "I've made love to women for most of a night. But in all my sexual history, I've never made love to a woman all night long. You were the first."

"I suspect I'll be the last, because there is no other woman like me on the planet."

"I agree with that," he said, bowing from the waist in the style of old Vienna. At her doorway, he must have realized he'd been too polite and courtly. "As a little boy growing up in Omaha, I never dreamed that the day would come when I would take sloppy seconds from both Hitler and Mussolini."

While she was still confused and pondering his words, he kissed her sensual lips and headed for the elevator to place his first call of the day to Edith Van Cleve.

* * *

Ingrid Bergman never entertained the slightest desire to play Blanche DuBois in *Streetcar's* film version. Ostensibly she went backstage after Marlon's performance one night in *Streetcar* to tell him that he was the most exciting actor on Broadway and to offer him the male lead in a future film she wanted to make. It was based on a story by Sigrid Undset, the Norwegian novelist and Nobel Prize winner. The role called for the male of the screenplay to be about ten years younger than the female lead. Having been born in 1915, Ingrid fit that profile of the older woman.

Ingrid Bergman

On learning that Ingrid would be in the audience that night, Irene Selznick cancelled a theater party of eight guests that she had planned to bring to the play. She was still furious at Ingrid for having had an affair with her husband, David O. Selznick, who had signed the exquisite, soft-spoken, and intelligent star to a seven-year contract.

Marlon told Carlo Fiore that he'd seen *Casablanca* three times and had "fallen for Bergman," and was eager to meet her.

At the time of their meeting backstage, Ingrid was viewed as a saint by most of the American public, or at least a nun. She'd worn

the habit when teamed with Bing Crosby in *The Bells of St. Mary's*. But her leading men and her directors knew a very different Ingrid.

Alfred Hitchcock, who'd directed her in *Spellbound* in 1945, once said, "She'd do it with doorknobs."

Ingrid had even admitted to her first husband, the Swedish doctor, Petter Lindström, that she couldn't work effectively without being either in love with her director or her leading man—hence, her infamous affairs with Gregory Peck, Spencer Tracy, Gary Cooper, and even Crosby himself.

When Ingrid met Marlon, she was at the peak of her fame and popularity. The scandal of the still-married Ingrid giving birth to Roberto Rossellini's child had yet to erupt and earn her worldwide denunciation, including an attack for her "immorality" on the Senate floor. The more puritanical of moviegoers boycotted her films as she fled to Italy, her reputation shattered. All of that, however, lay in her future.

Over dinner after that night's performance of *Streetcar*, Ingrid pitched her idea of the film script to Marlon, who seemed vaguely interested. "I've had movie offers before. None of them seemed quite right for me. I think my image and your image would contrast brilliantly on film. Of course, you'd get star billing."

"Of course," said Ingrid.

"Hedy Lamarr visited me the other night," he said. "We'll never do a film together. Could you really picture Miss Lamarr and Mr. Brando on the screen?"

"Perhaps the two of you could go naked on camera," she said. "Lamarr earned her reputation in Europe by running naked on the screen. I would never get naked before a camera."

"But you do get naked when you go to bed with a lover?" he asked impishly.

"That I do," she said.

"I understand that in your native Sweden everyone—man, woman, and child—runs around jaybird naked while the sun shines."

"A gross exaggeration, but most Swedes aren't shy about nudity." She paused to light her own cigarette. "As for Hedy, did she want you to appear in a film with her?"

"It was never mentioned."

"Actually, Hedy was originally slated to appear opposite Bogie in *Casablanca*," Ingrid told him. "But MGM wouldn't lend her to Warners. They were hoping to repeat all that *Algiers* schmaltz—you know, thick cigarette smoke, music in the background, lots of exotic atmosphere, and cloudy, mysterious people in dark corners plotting shadowy deeds."

The teaming of Ingrid and Marlon in a movie was not as far-fetched as it

might have seemed. In the 1950s producer Sam Spiegel flew to the Rossellini/Bergman villa, Santa Marinella, in Rome, to pitch a script to her that would costar Marlon. She turned him down, claiming that Rossellini (then her husband) never wanted her to return to Hollywood.

Over dinner, Ingrid amused Marlon with stories of Hollywood, admitting that her private affairs were getting "dangerous" and might one day attract the attention of the press. "Many rumors about me are true, but not those about Cary Grant and me." She'd recently costarred with him in *Notorious*.

"Our kissing scene in that movie has already become famous," she said. "For more than two and a half minutes, we went at it. The lips, the neck, the ears. Since our voices weren't heard, Hitchcock told us to say anything we wanted. Actually Cary told me that he'd left a lot of dirty dishes in his dressing room when he'd had five members of the cast in for lunch. No one had come to clean up the mess. In our most cuddly scene, as we were trying to decide what to do with our noses, I told him I'd go and wash his dishes as soon as our on-screen 'romance' ended."

"True Method acting," he said, laughing.

In the months ahead, as Ingrid would go on to make scandalous headlines around the world, Marlon would vehemently defend her as she was branded "an apostle of degradation" for her adulterous love affair with Rossellini in the late 1940s. In defending her, Marlon would say, "She lives life by her own truth, and for that I respect her greatly."

Over dinner he'd been dismayed by her constant habit of excessive smoking, even though she claimed she suffered from chronic throat problems. Sensing a need for fresh air, he invited her for a long walk through the streets of New York.

Out in the cool night breezes, she lamented that she wasn't in Sweden. She told him of the long walks she used to take by herself in her native country. "There is no more beautiful place in all the world than Sweden in the summer. The sun shines brightly throughout the evening, and the skies are luminous. It's a magic time. Now we find ourselves in New York where the skyline is forever gray."

She didn't talk just about herself but asked about his career and his sudden fame. He told her that he hadn't changed at all since he'd appeared as Stanley Kowalski. "I still play the bongo drums and eat peanut butter sandwiches like I always did. If the world really wants to go crazy over me, that's the world's problem."

She took him to her suite at the Hampshire House on 59th Street at the edge of Central Park. She'd stayed here during her appearance in the play, *Joan of Lorraine*, which had opened on October 5, 1946 at the Alvin Theatre. "When I did that play, I sometimes had a gang of three hundred fans follow-

ing me back to my hotel after the performance. During my twelve-week run, I called them the Alvin Gang."

She seemed genuinely curious about how he faced Broadway audiences every night. "Before the curtain went up on *The Maid*, I just seemed to break into little pieces. Once on stage, I had a hard time piecing myself back together again."

"I've had my mishaps," he said, without explaining what they were.

In her suite on the twenty-sixth floor, she stood holding his hand as both of them looked out onto an early morning view of New York. They were able to see all the way to the Brooklyn Bridge.

Dazzling good looks

Of all the women with whom he'd become momentarily involved during the time he appeared in *Streetcar*, Marlon had the least to say about Ingrid to the gossipy Edith the next morning.

"It is very easy for me to understand why she is America's most beautiful, most admired, and most beloved actress," he said, reporting on only the preliminary chitchat he'd had with the star.

"I felt he was protecting her reputation," Edith later claimed.

Apparently, on their first night together, Marlon had to settle for a demure kiss on the cheek from Ingrid.

She came back a month later to watch him emote in *Streetcar* once again. She also visited backstage and invited him back to her suite at the Hampshire House.

This time Marlon was a bit more forthcoming with Edith. "He made one enigmatic statement to me," she recalled. "Ingrid does not do what a whore does," he told me. "She's a lady yet also a woman with very strong desires. Yes, you might even call it lust. Even so, she maintains an aura of purity about herself. I think we'll make a great couple on the screen together."

"This time I got lucky," he admitted to Edith. "Unlike Rick in *Casablanca*, I got the beautiful but tormented Ilsa. But alas, it was for only one night. She didn't exactly say, 'Here's looking at you kid,' but she made it obvious that time was going by and it was time for me to move on. Play it,

Sam."

* * *

Arriving backstage to greet Marlon was Susan Hayward, known in Hollywood as "The Divine Bitch." Making a glamorous, stunning appearance, she was clad in a $10,000 ankle-length Labrador mink coat.

When he complimented her beauty, she said, "Honey, before flying to New York I decided to purchase this li'l old mink coat. A cloth coat can keep you just as warm. But if you have to go to a hock shop, you get more for mink."

In his dressing room, she reached into her purse and removed a shining red apple to present to him. "View this as your lucky red apple. Put it on your dressing table and don't remove it until you've given your last performance."

"Even if it rots?" he asked.

"Even if it rots. Let it stay there. To toss it in the garbage can spell disaster for you. Jess Barker, my creep of a husband, always presents me with a red apple at the start of every movie."

"If this magic works, I'll go for it." He placed the red apple on his dressing table, and in a much altered and decayed form, it was found there at the time of his last performance of *Streetcar*.

That evening he began to get to know this fiery redhead who lived her life in strict adherence to astrology. "If my astrologer warns me, I don't get out of bed, even if it means shutting down shooting for a day."

In her hotel suite, when he wanted to take her to bed, she insisted on listening to a song play until the end on the radio. "I hate that song!" she protested.

Susan Hayward

"Then why not switch to another station?" he asked.

"Bad luck will come to you if you don't listen for a song to play out."

"I see."

Under her mink, she wore a stunning yellow satin gown. "Yellow is my favorite color," she said. "But my husband hates it. That's why I always have to wear white, beige, or black around him. But he's not in New York with me, so I intend to wear yellow every day."

As he moved toward her to seduce her, she backed away. "Oh, no, buster!" she

said. “No man gets near me until he gives me flowers first.”

“I’ll be back.” He left the suite and took the elevator to the lobby where he purchased three dozen tube-roses.

Back in her suite, he presented them to her and was rewarded with a kiss on the mouth. “How did you know that the tube-rose is my favorite flower?”

“I didn’t,” he said. “Just a lucky guess on my part.”

En route to her bedroom, she informed him that a magazine article was coming out, naming her one of “Hollywood’s Ten Most Exciting Women.” “What do you think of that?”

He smiled and pulled her close to him, where he kissed her passionately on the lips. “Guess I want to find out what the excitement is all about.”

Most of the famous actresses who came to visit Marlon during this notorious period of his life were one-night stands. Even though Marlon later told Edith that he virtually loathed every word that came out of Susan’s mouth, “it was such a pretty and such a talented mouth that I wanted to extend my time with her.”

Dressed in a yellow designer dress, she invited him to have lunch the following day with her at “21.” Over a rare steak, she urged him to go to Hollywood “where the big bucks are. All this talk about how divine the stage is is pure bullshit.” She informed him of this between sips of rum and Coca-Cola. “I can’t stand any more of this crap that the real test of an actor is the stage. A stage actor has weeks or even months to create a role. Sometimes on camera we’re not even given a day to pull off a big scene. I ask you, which is the greater achievement?”

He mumbled something but it wasn’t a coherent answer.

Finally, she turned on him. “I’m tired of talking about myself. What do you think of me?”

“Well,” he said leaning back, being the only diner at “21” who’d ordered a glass of milk with his lunch. “I woke up an hour earlier than you this morning. You had three magazine articles about yourself on the table. I think those writers said it all about you. ‘A human goddess.’ ‘Cold as a polar bear’s foot.’ ‘An actress who goes through life with her fists up.’ And ‘as resilient as a trampoline.’”

At the end of their meal, she urged, ‘C’mon, big boy, we’re going to Brooklyn.”

In a limousine, they crossed the Brooklyn Bridge heading to the borough where she’d once lived in a tenement, becoming a friend to poverty. She showed him the corner where at the age of twelve she’d been the first female newsboy ever hired by the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

She ordered the driver to take her to Church Avenue and East 35th Street. “That’s where Edythe Marrener was born. According to astrology I was a

moon child, meaning I was born between June 22 and July 22. Moon children are emotional and creative. We're outwardly tough but sensitive at heart."

"My Irish father taught me to be tough," she said. "To fight for what I wanted. He told me to be like the rubber ball. The harder they hit, the higher they bounce."

Heading back over the bridge to her life as a movie star, she looked back at her native Brooklyn. "That's one of the places that's great to have been born in and just as great to leave."

At her hotel, he made an effort to get out of the limo with her but she opened the door for herself, jumped out onto the pavement, and shut the door quickly behind her, leaving him in the back seat.

"Tell my driver where to drop you off," she said. Standing on the curb as the long black car pulled away, she yelled to him, "See you in Hollywood, kid."

* * *

No more regal queen ever descended on Marlon backstage than "the lady of the shoulders," Joan Crawford. At the time, he was a young man, and she, in contrast, had been born at the dawn of the Edwardian era. Her first words to him were, "I've done everything a woman can do in life, but meet Mr. Marlon Brando."

No one had ever used such a line on him before, and he was immediately intrigued. When he fully understood who she was, he gently took her arm and directed her inside his dressing room, shutting the door to at least six younger women who looked like college coeds.

"You don't mind waiting in here while I get dressed for the street?" he asked.

"Not at all," she said, reaching into her purse for a cigarette.

"Forgive me, but I don't have a match."

"Never mind," she said, reaching for a gold cigarette lighter. "I prefer to light my own. Clark Gable gave me this lighter."

"I hear you two are quite good friends," he said, heading over to the rear of the large dressing room to change out of his Stanley outfit.

"Darling," she said, "I know exactly what you've heard. The whole world knows we're lovers and were from the first day we met. He's the only golden oldie I keep going with." She reached into her purse and removed a silver flask, downing a hefty swig. "Forgive my bluntness, but I don't believe in being coy. I always audition the new boy in town. By town, I mean Hollywood." She looked at him carefully, as he removed his tight blue jeans. "Don't be modest, darling. We stars are known for undressing in front of each

other or in front of a director. I invited one director over and right in my living room pulled off everything. I said, 'Darling, you might as well see what you have to work with.'"

"In that case," he said, "the jeans are coming off. I must warn you I don't wear underwear."

"From your performance tonight, that was obvious. Anyway, there is no need for false modesty between us. Go on. Get undressed so you can get dressed. Don't worry yourself about a little male nudity in front of me. This is not my first time at the rodeo."

When he slipped into his street clothes, she looked a little astonished. He'd merely exchanged his Stanley stage jeans for a cleaner pair of street denim. "I have some advice for you. If you want to be a star, you've got to look like a star. I never go out of my house, even to buy a grapefruit, unless I look like Joan Crawford, the movie star."

"I'm not a movie star," he said. "Nor do I plan to become one."

"Don't kid a kidder, darling," she said. "All Broadway actors in spite of their protests secretly dream of becoming movie stars." She crushed out her cigarette. "On second thought, I'd love to go out with you to '21' tonight, with you dressed like that. Here I am dressed like a gilded lily. There you are still looking like Stanley Kowalski even though the curtain has gone down. I think we'd make a grand entrance. It will show the fucking New York press that Joan Crawford is still in touch with the new young generation of actors. The Method. Whatever bullshit you want to call it."

At "21," Marlon began to suspect that the entire evening had been carefully choreographed. Too many columnists had been tipped off about their appearance there that night. He later told Carlo Fiore, "The God damn bitch is trying to capitalize off my own fame and somehow link in with it. Here she is, the most famous face on the planet, and she wants some of my magic too."

Joan Crawford

In the middle of their dinner, a rather liquid one for Joan, except for a blood-red hamburger, he bluntly asked her. "You've got great eyes. Big eyes. A result of surgery, perhaps?"

"Not at all," she said. "A stupid rumor. I've always had big eyes, and I've got baby pictures to prove it. My teeth were too big and ugly, and I did have them capped."

For some perverse reason, he insisted on asking her rude questions as if hoping to penetrate the movie-star shell she'd encased her-

self in. “A lot of you famous ladies have shown up to seduce me and to ‘audition’ for the part of Blanche DuBois. Are you one of them?”

She burst into laughter. “Heavens no,” she said. “I’m much too young and glamorous to play a faded Southern belle, even though I’m from Texas. I just heard from Irene Selznick that she’s offering the part to Miriam Hopkins. Perhaps Bette Davis. It’s a juicy part but not for me.” She bolted down half of her martini. “There is a film script I’ve been submitted, and I’m seriously considering it.”

“Is there a part in it for me?” he asked, not really caring.

“Indeed,” she said. “The male lead. It’s the story of an actress past her prime.” She sighed. “I don’t like the sound of that. She’s still big box office, but spends an extra two hours at her dressing room mirror before making an appearance. In the film script, she falls for the young writer of her latest picture. She grew up in old Hollywood with the studio system. This young writer dresses sloppily and knows a new Hollywood she’s never seen. He takes her out on dates on his motorcycle, stopping off at drive-ins for hamburgers. He invites her to a reading of bohemian poets. He falls in love with her.”

“Do I get the girl in the final reel?” he asked.

“The script is not that far along,” she said. “The star must make a big decision. Does she want to live in the old and fading world in which she’d been the queen? Or does she want to adapt and become born again with the young man who loves her, even though that would mean giving up a large part of her heart, things that she once thought sacred?”

“Seems like type casting,” he said. “My God, a screenplay like that could be the real story of Joan Crawford and Marlon Brando, depending on how things go tonight.”

Marlon reported on his one and only night with Joan to both Edith and Carlo Fiore. As he related to Fiore, he returned to her hotel suite with her after their dinner at “21.”

“She did all the drinking and talking,” he said. “Without any foreplay, about three o’clock in the morning, she pulled off all her clothes and eased herself down on her white carpeting. That’s how she wanted to be taken.”

“How it’d go?” Fiore asked.

“Not so good. She wanted to control the fuck, and I couldn’t get into it her way. I never got past her bad breath. She must have been drinking since morning. My noble tool, as you know, rarely if ever fails me. That’s why I call it ‘ever-ready.’ But with Miss Crawford, it let me down and couldn’t do its job. All I remember after that was heading for the door and hearing the worst cursing I’ve ever heard from a woman in my life.”

In spite of their ill-fated night together, Joan, in the words of Kazan, “still had the hots for Marlon,” and she appeared three times on the set of *A*

Streetcar Named Desire when it was being filmed in Hollywood. "She still lusted for our muscled, T-shirted genius," Kazan said.

After the premiere of the film version of *Streetcar*, she sent Marlon a telegram, praising his performance and adding a footnote: "You can park your motorbike on my front lawn any time you so desire."

He did not respond.

When casting for the 1952 *Sudden Fear*, she requested Marlon but got Jack Palance instead. Ironically, he'd been Marlon's stand-in during his hospitalization with a broken nose. It was not Marlon but Palance who would introduce Joan to the theories of screen acting emerging from the Actors Studio.

She would encounter Marlon five more times in her life, and it was always at some public party or function. At one point, meeting him in the presence of Irene Selznick, she said, "I found Palance moody and confused," she said, "when working with him on *Sudden Fear*, and would much have preferred you in the part. His moodiness disturbed me. All this racing around the sound stages trying to incite some emotion. As for me, just turn the fucking cameras on and I'll give you all the God damn emotion you want. You want tears, baby. I can cry on cue." She kissed Marlon on the cheek.

Palance later commented on working with Joan. "After we made *Sudden Fear*, she praised my menacing performance. She also told all the big cheese in the industry that she'd never work with me again. She accused me of copying Brando. The cameras were rolling during one of our scenes when she brought everything to a halt. Getting out of character, she shouted, 'If I had wanted Marlon Brando to do this scene with me, we would have hired him.'"

Losing Marlon for *Sudden Fear*, Joan tried one final time to play opposite him in *Autumn Leaves*, produced in 1956 by William Goetz and directed by Robert Aldrich. Cast as a New England spinster, she marries a lonely man in his late twenties, only to discover that he is a psychotic. She felt that Marlon would be perfect for the part and sent him the script. He only glanced at the script before turning it down.

He sent word to her through his agent that, "I'm not interested in doing any mother-and-son films at the present time."

"Marlon Brando is now at the top of my shit list," she said. "Replacing Bette Davis."

Later, when a reporter confronted Joan and asked her if the rumors were true that she'd pursued Marlon for both *Sudden Fear* and *Autumn Leaves*, and even a number of other pictures, she flatly denied it. "I'm no great admirer of his acting," she said. "Or his looks for that matter. There's something flat and dead about his eyes. Brando doesn't really have the handsomeness of a Cary Grant or Clark Gable. They were well groomed and intelligent looking.

Brando looks like he changes his underwear about every two weeks."

* * *

Tennessee Williams had called Georgia-born Miriam Hopkins "our finest Southern actress." He was most receptive when Irene Selznick proposed her for the role of Blanche in the film version of *Streetcar*. Alerted that she was being considered for the part, Miriam rushed to catch Jessica Tandy's performance opposite Marlon.

Privately she told her friends that, "playing Blanche will bring me back bigtime. For my efforts, it's almost a foregone conclusion that I'll win the Oscar."

Racing backstage to meet Marlon, Miriam pointedly ignored Tandy. Before going backstage, Miriam had told Irene Selznick that Tandy "simply doesn't know how to play a fading Southern belle. For that, you need the real thing. I can't understand why Hollywood or Broadway keeps casting British actresses in the roles of Southern ladies. Damn you, Vivien Leigh! Damn you, Scarlett O'Hara! I should have starred in *Gone With the Wind*. I could have done the role better than anyone!"

At the time of her first meeting with Marlon, the sun was setting on both the film and stage career of Miriam Hopkins. Her star had shone the brightest in the 1930s when she was an aggressive leading lady in films. Marlon had seen only two of her films, both with Bette Davis: *The Old Maid* in 1939 and *Old Acquaintance* in 1943.

When Irene told Marlon that she was bringing Miriam backstage after the play to meet him, he was skeptical of ever working with her. At that point, he had not even committed to playing Stanley in the film.

He told Irene that he found the on-screen Miriam "compulsively vivacious, dashing about making little gestures and chattering endlessly. As for her acting, I think it's all flim-flam."

Miriam Hopkins

"Perhaps Miriam will convince you otherwise," Irene told him. "I think she'd make the perfect Blanche." She cautioned him not to mention to her that she was also considering casting Miriam's nemesis, Bette Davis, as Blanche. "If there's anybody Bette hates more than Joan Crawford, it's Miriam."

Backstage, Miriam made her intentions clear to Marlon without actually saying anything. It was obvious that she wanted not only the film

role of Blanche, but to test the sexual prowess of its male lead.

She was a notorious seducer of both the elite of Hollywood, and some other major American celebrities as well. She'd bedded publisher Bennett Cerf ("great if you like the missionary position"); Maurice Chevalier ("a faggot if I ever saw one"); Bing Crosby ("he should stick to singing"); John Gilbert ("I can't believe what Garbo saw in him"); agent-producer Leland Hayward ("Katharine Hepburn could have him"); Fredric March ("rather skilled"), director Ernst Lubitsch ("as good a lover as a director"); Robert Montgomery ("he spends so much time denouncing homosexuals that I've begun to think he is one"); Franchot Tone ("ten inches and rock hard"), and director King Vidor ("he's more Bette Davis' type than mine").

Marlon was not completely captivated by Miriam, but agreed to have dinner with her. As he escorted her out the theater's back door, a small mob had assembled, mostly young women, each clamoring for an autograph.

At first Miriam thought the crowd wanted her autograph. But when she saw that none of the fans seemed to know—or care—who she was, she stood against the brick wall, letting Marlon ungraciously handle his adulation.

Later, he complained to her that, "I hate to be recognized. When people point fingers at me in clubs and restaurants and come over to annoy me, I just want to disappear."

"It's flattering for fans to single you out," she said. "In the 30s that happened to me a lot. When a performer is intriguing on film or on the stage, it's natural for people to want to know more about them. How they live. What they eat."

"And who they fuck?" he said sarcastically.

"That too," she said. "How else can you explain those silly movie magazines. I think your fame will grow, so you must learn to cope with the madness."

Almost using the more worldly-wise Miriam as an analyst, he told her, "My anxiety attacks are growing greater every day. Like Monty Clift, I have constant bowel trouble. I'm not sleeping at all. For the last three nights, I've had practically no sleep at all."

"When I can't sleep," she told him, "I don't count sheep. I count lovers. And by the time I reach thirty-eight or at least thirty-nine, I'm asleep."

"I'm frightened of myself," he admitted. "These uncontrollable rages come over me, and there are times I think I'm going to explode. I can't handle it. My greatest fear is that when I'm in one of my deepest rages I'm going to kill someone."

"Ever consider an analyst?" she asked. "One who specializes in psychosomatic illnesses."

"I'm going to such a guy right now," he said. "Bela Mittelmann."

"How's it going? she asked.

"He's a Freudian and the coldest man I've ever known," he said. "All I get from him is ice. He has no insight into human behavior and never gives me any help."

She urged him to drop Mittelmann and find another analyst more in tune with his perceived problems.

He told her he'd mull that over. "I could use Arthur Miller as an analyst."

"How so?" she asked. "He writes plays."

"He's been to see *Streetcar* three times," he said. "Of course, Tennessee claims that he's doing it because he's jealous of the play and wants to steal ideas from it. But I think he's really come to get a reading on me. I've gone out with him a few nights and we've talked. He's working on an idea for an essay. It's about penis envy, patricidal anxieties, incestuous yearnings, and suppressed homosexuality. According to Miller, I embody all those qualities. He claims that before the 50s end, particularly if I go to Hollywood, that I will become the symbol of a decade that will make guilt personal again."

Perhaps Marlon considered Miriam's suggestion to switch analysts. But he finally discarded the idea.

In the words of Elia Kazan, "Marlon kept lying on Mittelmann's couch for years. He used this effeminate Hungarian Jew as a substitute mother and father until Mittelmann mercifully passed on in 1959."

Kazan, also being treated by Mittelmann, claimed that the bald head and flab of the analyst evoked Moe in "The Three Stooges."

Breaking his patient's privacy, Mittelmann once told Kazan (who recounted the tale in his memoirs) that he suspected that Marlon's mother, Dodie, had molested her son when he was "just a little boy—and I think she did that frequently to make up for the inadequacies in her own life. I'm trying to break through with Marlon and to get him to recall those painful episodes with me. So far, no luck. These secrets are buried deep within him like the darkest of desires. But they are there. As long as they are buried, Marlon will be sexually confused."

"Have you ever been analyzed yourself?" Marlon abruptly asked Miriam.

"Never!" she exclaimed in horror. "Nor will I. I suspect that analysis might destroy the creative impulses that make me an artist. I think we're driven to perform as a means of working out our inner demons. Destroy the demon and you might also destroy our impulse to emote. It's the creative malady that keeps us going. To get rid of that would be like throwing the baby out with the bath water."

He looked at her in astonishment. "You've given me something to think about."

She was eager to steer the conversation toward *Streetcar*. Before praising

the play, she admitted that "I'm a bad judge of a play or film. I turned down *It Happened One Night*. Of course, Claudette Colbert in my role went on to win an Oscar. To me, it was just another silly comedy."

"Bad judge of material or not," she said, "I think Blanche DuBois is the role of a lifetime. It would make up for me not getting to play Scarlett O'Hara, a part I was destined to play." She gently reached out for his hand. "I must warn you: You and I are being friendly and cozy now, but once the camera is turned on us, may the best actor win. I'll be competing against you in the way I did on the screen with Bette Davis."

Up close and personal

"Fair warning," he said. "But from what I've seen of you tonight, I think you may have too much vitality for us to work together. I also hear that socially you're a very fine person, but a bitch to work with."

"So it is said," she said, laughing. "Do you know those boys at the *Harvard Lampoon* once voted me 'the least desirable companion on a desert island?'"

"We have two different acting styles—like Tallulah Bankhead and I did," he said.

"You mean you're a Method actor and I'm not," she said. "I've often wondered. How can a motion picture star reflect real life experiences when she leads an entirely artificial life?"

"You've just scored a point over me there," he admitted. "Even so, Kazan keeps urging me to draw upon my real-life experiences. As he puts it, 'turn trauma into drama.'"

As she ordered her fifth cocktail of the evening, he bluntly changed the subject. "Are you married?"

"I don't remember exactly," she said. "I read in some fan magazine that I'd married this reporter, Raymond B. Brock, on October 23, 1945. But since

I haven't seen him since, I can't really verify that. If you're really asking if I'm free tonight, the answer is yes."

As the check was called for, Miriam reached for his hand and cuddled close to him, anticipating that he was going to invite her back to his apartment. "I can't wait to work in front of the camera with you."

"Perhaps that will never happen," he cautioned.

"Oh, but it will," she said. "I just know it. I can feel it in my bones."

Her feeling was right. Of course, she'd never play Blanche opposite his Stanley. She would have to wait until 1966 when she played a minor role in his film, *The Chase*, which also starred Angie Dickinson, Jane Fonda, and Robert Redford. "It's sad," Marlon told director Arthur Penn, "to find a former big star like Miriam playing a small role in this turkey."

Out on the sidewalk in front of Sardi's, Marlon hailed a cab. Miriam looked astonished when she realized that he was not going to get into the back seat of the taxi with her. Severe disappointment showed on her expressive face.

Instead of a royal screw, she got a demure kiss on the cheek and a goodbye. As he would relate in detail to Edith Van Cleve in the morning, "I told Miriam that some seductions are better to be dreamed than realized."

* * *

Along with a copy of the play, *A Streetcar Called Desire*, its working title, Irene Selznick enclosed a personal note to Bette Davis in Hollywood. It was dated June 20, 1947.

Dear Bette,
Here it is, and I do hope you feel about it as we do. I am very eager to hear your reaction, and too, I want to tell you of our plans, as well as the changes contemplated. My home number is CR6-1911. Kazan will be working at my house all Sunday afternoon, but if you don't get a chance by then, do call me as early in the week as you can.
Irene Mayer Selznick.

Streetcar had not yet opened on Broadway, and Bette was the first on a list of possible actresses to star as Blanche DuBois. Other actresses would be considered, even improbable ones such as Ruth Warrick, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Constance Cummings, and Celia Johnson, but Bette was the number one choice for Irene. Although a New Englander, Bette had convinced Irene, thanks partly to the role she played in *Jezebel,* that she was the quintessential Southern belle.

Even though she needed a career boost at the time, as her film career was in shambles, Bette, exercising the worst of career judgment, turned down the play. She was furious when it became the hit of Broadway.

Bette Davis

She didn't want to make the same mistake twice when she heard that Irene might recommend her for the lead in the film. As she flew to New York to see the play, she also knew that her old friend, Olivia de Havilland, was also a contender and that Vivien Leigh was, at the time, a remote possibility as well.

Showing no loyalty to Miriam Hopkins, whom he'd praised, Tennessee shifted his alliance to Bette as soon as he knew the fading star was interested. "What perfect casting," the playwright told Irene, "a fading star playing a fading Southern belle."

In later years, Bette spoke of her trip to New York to writer Whitney Stine. "Tennessee promised me that if I did Blanche, he would see that I had it in my contract to do the film. Also, I was thirty-nine then, just the right age. Jessica Tandy did it brilliantly, but I thought Vivien Leigh wasn't good casting for the movie version."

She later added other comments to this statement. "Vivien got an Oscar for Blanche, just as she did for playing Scarlett O'Hara, a role that should have gone to me. Even though I lost that, I could have played Blanche DuBois opposite Brando. God, what an actor he is! I think Jack Warner sabotaged the deal. Ah, the lost causes. But I don't dwell on them. It was simply not to be!"

Years after Irene Selznick took Bette backstage to meet the rising young star, she revealed her personal reaction to the experience to Tennessee Williams and his companion. Frank Merlo, when she was starring in the stage version of *The Night of the Iguana*.

She also had observations for the general public, years later, about Marlon and Method acting, sharing her opinions in her memoirs: "They [meaning Method actors] have simply learned to express themselves, and I'm terribly happy for them. When they learn to express the character, I shall applaud them. Then there's the question of style. Without it, there is no art. As personal as these troubled actors are, there is—aside from much of a muchness—the same of a sameness. They are all busy revealing their own insides that, like all X-ray plates, one looks pretty much like the other. Their Godhead, the remarkably gifted Marlon Brando, may bring (as all true stars do) his own personal magnetism to every part, but his scope and projection are unarguable. He has

always transcended the techniques he was taught. His consequent glamour and style have nothing to do with self-involvement but rather radiation."

Bette would later repeat these same sentiments to her old boss, Jack Warner, when she encountered him again in 1962. "I wouldn't hire Marlon Brando as a gateman," he told her.

Instead of a dinner at Sardi's, Bette invited Marlon to a celebrity party honoring Clare Booth Luce, who showed up with an entourage of gay young men who clearly worshipped her every pronouncement. As Bette and Marlon stood nearby eating small quiches, he could clearly hear Miss Luce rhapsodizing about him and his performance in *Streetcar*. "Look at that face," she exclaimed. "All youthful beauty. Have you ever seen anything so exquisite? Only Michelangelo could capture it in stone."

Before Miss Luce, Marlon contorted his face into a grotesque mask, sticking out his tongue at her like a gargoyle. Miss Luce turned her back to him.

Bette did not scold Marlon on the way back to her suite, even though he'd insulted one of the most powerful and influential women in America, who was, after all, only paying him a compliment.

As Bette would explain later to Tennessee, "By that point in the evening, I had discovered that Marlon was on the dawn of a nervous breakdown. Instead of scolding, he needed sympathy, even nurturing."

Bette Davis did not have any particularly well-developed motherly instincts, as was plainly revealed in *My Mother's Keeper*, a sort of "Bette Dearest," tell-all memoir by her estranged daughter. B.D. Hyman.

But although she was no temple of mental health herself, Bette could on occasion respond in a loving, supportive way, since she genuinely admired Marlon's talent. She had gone through many bouts of deep depression in her own life, and was sympathetic to other troubled artists, at least the few she admired. As for the others, she wanted to see all of them, especially Joan Crawford and Miriam Hopkins, "on the next plane flying directly into Hell's Fire," as she once put it.

Clare Booth Luce

Bette claimed that after the Luce party, she invited Marlon back to her hotel suite. Once there, she found him visibly shaking. "He was sweating so profusely that his clothes were drenched," she said. "I suggested we call a doctor, but he claimed that these bouts were occurring frequently and that he had already sought medical advice. He also revealed that he was under the care of a psychiatrist."

During the course of the evening, if Bette is

to be believed, Marlon revealed to her that his mother, Dodie, had molested him as a young boy. "Many times she invited me into her bed," he is quoted as saying, "and I knew it wasn't right, but I didn't know how to stop it. Actually one part of me didn't want her to stop. I guess I was in love with her. She was always drunk—never sober—when she invited me to her bed."

Fran Brando later revealed that she had long suspected her mother of harboring an incestuous feeling "for young Bud."

At the same time that he was being molested by Dodie, Marlon also revealed that he was involved with the live-in housekeeper, whose name was Ermalene. He called her "Ermi."

Ermi was Scandinavian and had just turned eighteen when she came to live with the Brando family. Not a typical Danish blonde, she had silky dark hair because of her Indonesian origins. In his autobiography, Marlon admitted that, "We slept together. She was nude and so was I." He recalled fondling her breasts and crawling over her. What he didn't say was that she masturbated him, and also taught him to return the favor. When Ermi left to marry a young man named Eric, Marlon claimed that he was devastated, feeling that "my dreams had died with her going."

He told Bette that, "I felt abandoned. My mother had long ago deserted me for the bottle. Now Ermi was gone too. That's why in life I would always find women who were going to desert me; I had to repeat the process."

As Bette later told Tennessee, "Marlon spent the rest of the night suckling at my breasts like a little baby boy. It was like he was reverting to childhood and being with his mother again . . . or at least Ermi."

"He wanted to be masturbated," Bette revealed, "perhaps repeating the exact experience he'd had with Ermi and his mother. I felt sorry for him. Here he was night after night pretending to be this macho Stanley Kowalski. But in his heart he still was a lost little boy. Marlon and I would never again get together in private like that. He may not even have remembered what happened between us, blotting it from his mind. But it was a tender moment for both of us. Believe me, I've had very few tender moments with any man."

The day after his night with Bette, Marlon told Carlo Fiore, "I threw Bette Davis a mercy fuck. My noble tool felt obligated to do its duty because she's such an honored actress in films." Marlon's boast to his male companion may have been merely an attempt to cover up what really happened that night.

Marlon and Bette would meet again on the night of March 30, 1955 when he was awarded Hollywood's highest honor, the Academy Award for his appearance in *On the Waterfront*. After publicly presenting him with the statuette, she told him, privately "I named the darn thing Oscar myself. This statue's ass reminded me of my first husband, Harmon Oscar Nelson."

"That Oscar of yours had one fuckable ass," he told Bette, apparently

astonishing her with such a homosexual reference. She later repeated what he'd said to Irene Selznick. "Imagine me, after all these years in Hollywood, being mildly shocked by Marlon's remark."

Before leaving the Academy Awards that night, Bette told reporters, "I was thrilled that Marlon Brando was the winner. He and I have a lot in common. He too has made many enemies. He too is a perfectionist."

* * *

After his contract for *Streetcar* expired, Marlon planned to sail for France. "After a long *shlunk* in Paris, I'll find myself," he told Stella Adler over a farewell dinner.

"You'll never find yourself," she warned him, "even if you search all your life. I'm not certain anyone ever finds himself." She paused. "Or herself."

Before sailing, Marlon told Wally Cox that he was forced to "abandon my two steadies, my only true loves." One of his girlfriends was Toni Parker, a beautiful brunette dancer appearing nightly at the Latin Quarter.

The other was Cecilia D'Arthuniaga, a Colombian working in New York as a fashion publicist. She was equally beautiful. He told Bobby Lewis, "Cecilia is the girl I'm going to marry. We'll raise thirteen snot-nosed kids." Even as he uttered those words, Marlon must have known that there was no truth in his declared intentions.

Bobby knew that even though Marlon abandoned women, he also tried to hold onto them. He was leaving Toni and Cecilia behind, but heading for Paris to contact two former girlfriends, Celia Webb and Ellen Adler, both of whom were temporarily living in France.

On at least one occasion, Bobby challenged Marlon, asking him why he didn't want to let go of a woman when he'd moved on to another one. "With women," Marlon said, "I've got a long bamboo pole with a leather loop on the end of it. I slip the loop around their necks so they can't get away or come too close. Like catching a snake."

Marlon was getting a free vacation, including round-trip passage by ship because he was afraid to fly, plus three weeks salary at $350 per week. Director Claude Autant-Lara, the most controversial figure in the French film industry, wanted Marlon to star in Stendahl's *Le Rouge et le noir* (aka *The Red and the Black*), even though he didn't speak French. Marlon was told that he could learn his lines phonetically.

As Edith Van Cleve arrived at the pier to see Marlon off on his ship, she noted that he carried a copy of the classic novel for shipboard reading. If he agreed to do the film, his role would be that of Julien Sorel. All Marlon had to do was "seriously consider" the part.

Carlo Fiore was also there to wish Marlon a *bon voyage*. Marlon was disturbed to see his longtime friend shaking and sweating, in dire need of a drug fix, but he seemed to appreciate that Fiore had at least tried to pull himself together for his departure. In Marlon's cabin, a small group of friends had gathered to drink champagne toasts to Marlon. Popping the first cork, Marlon said, "Let's drink this shit before it becomes domestic."

In June of 1949, Marlon was about to embark on one of the greatest homosexual adventures of his lifetime, enlivened with the addition of a beautiful French or Italian woman for variety. En route to France, word was passed around the ship that if a male member of the staff "wanted a great blow-job," all he had to do was "knock on the door to Stanley Kowalski's cabin."

Johnny Evans, a waiter in the dining room, later claimed that "Brando was insatiable. I think he went through all of us—at least many of us—including myself, more than once. He did it better than my girlfriend." In addition to the more virile male members of the staff, two or three young women on the ship's guest list were also seen leaving his cabin late at night, including one rather large woman who, according to Johnny, "looked like she was going to give birth before the ship reached its port."

When not offering his sexual services to the staff, Marlon read the works of the Existentialists, especially Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir.

Before sailing, he'd told Edith, "I want to shake my Nebraska roots. It's about time I picked up some French culture after playing that dumb Kowalski character, which has nothing to do with me."

Celebrated on Broadway, even known by name in Hollywood, Marlon arrived in Paris as an unknown. Except for a select few, even the inner circle of French filmmakers and theater people had never heard of him.

In his autobiography, Marlon offered very few details about his weeks in Paris. "I was one of the wild boys of Paris," he wrote. "I did *everything*, slept with a lot of women, had no sense of time, and slept until two p.m. every day. Anything that was imaginable, I did in Paris."

The last line, intriguing with its lack of information, was certainly true.

At first Marlon and Autant-Lara, meeting for the first time in Paris, got along rather well. That is, until Marlon became better acquainted with the French director. Autant-Lara was flattered to hear Marlon say, "I don't think anybody working in Hollywood has ever made an effort to avail himself of their (*sic)* fullest potential the way French filmmakers do."

Autant-Lara came to his meeting with Marlon with impressive credentials. His father was the distinguished architect, Edouard Autant, a friend of the sculptor Rodin. His mother was Louise Lara, one of the most famous actresses to appear at the Comédie Française. In the 1930s he'd moved to

Hollywood where he'd worked on French versions of American films, notably Buster Keaton comedies.

Marlon was even pleased with the accommodations the director had obtained at the Quai Voltaire Hotel in the Seventh Arrondissement. The hotel had long attracted an artistic clientele, including Oscar Wilde, Richard Wagner, and Baudelaire. Marlon was housed on the fourth floor in a slightly seedy small bedroom in which Camille Pissarro had painted "Le Pont Royal" from his window.

On his first night in Paris with Marlon, Autant-Lara showed him his two most distinguished films, both made during the Nazi occupation of Paris during the war years. *Le Mariage de chiffon* (1942) and *Douce* (1943) were scathing satires on the class system. The director was the chief voice in France attacking the threat of "Hollywood imperialism." The hot-headed crusader was also the chief attacker of all forms of censorship. "My stands are not popular," he told Marlon. "I have no friends, but an army of enemies."

Autant-Lara found that Marlon, even though he couldn't speak the language, was a perfect mimic. "You speak French better than I do." The director thought Marlon would not have a problem learning his lines in French and repeating them in front of a camera.

The Brando/Autant-Lara honeymoon did not last long. The director's mistake was to an increasing degree turning to one of his favorite subjects, politics, as subject matter for his films. As an extreme liberal, Marlon was horrified by Autant-Lara's far right positions. He was opposed not only to blacks, but to Jews and even the North Africans living in French Algeria. When he launched into praise for Hitler, Marlon walked out. "If *The Red and the Black* is ever made," he told Autant-Lara, "it will not be made with me in it."

In 1954 Autant-Lara brought *Le Rouge et le noir* to the screen, starring Danielle Darrieux and Gérard Philipe, the latter appearing in the role originally intended as Marlon's film debut.

As the years went by, Autant-Lara's political stands grew even more extreme. In 1989 he was forced to stand down as a representative of France's far right National Front in the European Parliament after describing the Nazi gas chambers as a "string of lies."

As for his own career as a film actor in Paris, Marlon would have to wait until 1972 and his controversial appearance in Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*.

Marlon, who shortly after his arrival had orchestrated a few stray pickups in Paris, soon realized that his two girlfriends, Celia Webb and Ellen Adler, were romantically involved with other men. In fact, Ellen was so serious about her new companion, David Oppenheim, the American composer, that she planned to marry him.

His old friend, David Diamond, was also in Paris, so Marlon didn't have to be alone. In an attempt to explain his promiscuity to Diamond, Marlon said, "I have an inability to love because I feel inferior."

Marlon even encountered his former lover, James Baldwin, who introduced him to the expatriate American writer, Richard Wright. It was not a memorable encounter, and Marlon moved on. He wrote to Edith that, "I don't want to wander down memory lane in Paris, encountering everybody I knew in New York and spending all my time with Americans. I'm like a vampire. I want fresh blood!"

Finding himself in arrears at the Quai Voltaire, and with money running short, Marlon moved over to the Hotel d'Alsace, a fleabag. He occupied the exact room where Oscar Wilde had died penniless and in disgrace.

In the room next to him was Jacques Viale, an eighteen-year-old wannabe actor who'd been born in the agrarian Auvergne region of central France. He'd come to Paris to break into cinema, but was forced to work during the day as a waiter at La Coupole, a famous cafe once frequented by Ernest Hemingway and Henry Miller, among others, and scores of other American expatriates. Jacques was "out" before the term was coined. Once "liberated" in Paris from his provincial origins, he made no attempt to conceal his homosexuality. He later spoke about his relationship with Marlon during his "French exile."

"My friendship with Marlon later became my fifteen minutes of fame," he once said. "The acting career didn't work out, neither did my friendship with Marlon, but it was intense while it lasted."

"For a brief time I was Marlon's lover," Jacques claimed, "until I quickly learned that he didn't come to Paris to indulge in only one relationship, but sought many affairs with both sexes. Ultimately, I became his tour guide to Paris instead of his lover. Alas, alas! My time with him was the single greatest moment of my life. It was all downhill after Marlon."

* * *

His friends called him "the wolf from the steppes," because of his Russian ancestry. His name was Roger Vadim. A former stage actor and journalist, he dreamed of becoming a movie director.

On a pleasant mid-afternoon in June of 1949, he was sitting with his closest friend, the actor Christian Marquand, on the terrace of La Coupole, where much of the literary history of Paris in the 1920s had taken place. Jacques Viale was waiting tables that day.

Roger was sharing his latest adventures with Christian. In the heyday of the 1920s, Ernest Hemingway had been a regular patron of La Coupole, but

he no longer came around. Roger claimed that at present, "Papa and I are currently sharing a mistress. Sometimes we take her out together. She has nothing but praise for me, but she constantly insults Ernest. He seems to find her taunts vastly amusing, roaring with laughter and tugging away at his beard."

The intense young actor/writer was also eager to share his recent adventures on the Riviera with Christian. Roger had just returned from the Hotel du Cap in Antibes, where he'd spent several days hanging out with a handsome young American from Massachusetts. "We became instant friends," Roger said to Christian." We became so close that he moved into my room because he soon learned that that was where the action was. Often we took the same woman in bed together, which as you know is one of my favorite things, having shared so many beds with you and some lucky girl or boy."

"What's your friend's name?" Christian asked.

"John Kennedy, but I call him Jack," Roger said. "He claims his father was ambassador to England and is really a big man in America."

Both Christian and Roger watched the slow-moving traffic along Boulevard Montparnasse. They noticed, in Roger's words, "an extraordinarily handsome young man—an Adonis, really—at the next table. He caught our attention. He had taken off his shoes and was massaging a naked foot, which he had placed on a table between a glass of Perrier and an ashtray. Groaning with ecstasy, like a woman about to have an orgasm, he kept saying, 'Shit . . . that feels good . . . Shit . . . that feels good.'"

Roger immediately introduced himself and Christian and started a conversation, learning that this charming and personable young man was an American named Marlon Brando. "I was fascinated by him, but Christian was mesmerized by this young American beauty," Roger said. "When Christian saw something he wanted, male or female, he went after it. I knew before the lights went on that night in Paris, Christian was going to have our new acquaintance. We had never heard of Marlon Brando before in spite of his success on Broadway. To us, he was just another out-of-work actor bumming around Paris."

Christian Marquand and Brigitte Bardot in *And God Created Woman*

Joining Roger and Christian at table, Marlon told them that he was staying in an uncomfortable fleabag. That revelation brought an immediate invitation from both Christian and Roger to come and live with them in their tiny studio

on rue de Bassano. "We will guarantee you lots of amusement and much fun, but not much privacy," Christian assured him.

"That's fine with me," Marlon said. En route to Marlon's fleabag hotel in a taxi, the triple alliance of Brando, Vadim, and Marquand was formed.

"Of course, it was just assumed that all three men were heading for a sexual rendezvous," claimed Jacques Viale, who learned of this new friendship of Marlon's the next day. In his black suit and white waiter's apron, he had stood on the terrace of La Coupole, watching the three young men get into a taxi. "En route back to Vadim's studio, Marlon knew seduction was on the menu. Roger knew that. Christian knew that. Marlon told me that on their first night all three men 'hit the sack together.' How envious I was. How I would have liked to have become a fourth in that *ménage à trois*. Of course, then it wouldn't have been a *ménage à trois*. At least they could have let me watch if not join in their fun."

Jacques later became an intimate friend to both Christian and Roger, having been introduced by Marlon himself. He claimed that before Roger married three of the world's most beautiful women—Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, and Jane Fonda—he "seduced pretty boys or handsome young men with almost as much frequency as he did nubile young women. Roger never admitted it in so many words, but left the distinct impression that he'd committed an act of fellatio on John Kennedy on more than one occasion. Later in life, Roger turned almost exclusively to women. Let's just say that before Bardot, Deneuve, and Fonda, he was discovering himself. Not me. I was gay when I popped out of the womb."

"From that first night, Marlon and I became brothers for life," Roger said. "To me, he was just a charming friend to add to my collection. To Christian, it was more than that. My normally heterosexual friend was falling madly in love, and he usually went for women."

That weekend Roger introduced Marlon to his "teenage sex kitten," as he called her. She was a stunningly beautiful young girl named Brigitte Bardot. Before meeting her, Roger told Marlon that, "My task is to ignite this schoolgirl's dormant sensuality." In that, he would succeed beyond even his own wildest speculations.

Brigitte and Jane Birkin directed by Roger Vadim for *Don Juan*

Brigitte was a frequent visitor to the studio at rue Bassano, although her father, Louis Bardot, had forbidden her to go there.

Roger told Marlon that the first day he'd met Louis, "he took me to his desk in his study, unlocked a drawer, and showed me this pistol. 'If you lay a finger on my daughter, I shall not hesitate to use this on you.'" Risking his life, Roger ignored the threat, even though it seemed very serious.

Although after that first night in a three-way, Marlon had confined his sexual overtures to Christian, he was still fascinated by Roger. At the time, Marlon was reading a novel by Dostoyevsky. He compared Roger to a character in one of the Russian writer's novels.

Roger Vadim and Brigitte Bardot

Roger's response was, "I have always modeled my life on literature."

Was there a romance between Marlon and Bardot, who along with Marilyn Monroe, would become the three reigning sex symbols of the Fifties? There has been much speculation but no concrete proof. And Brigitte has remained silent on the subject.

Roger said that Marlon often lounged around the studio with his magnificent physique in a state of undress when Brigitte came to visit. "But Marlon and Brigitte never felt any real rapport. They liked each other and were quite friendly and cordial, but that's all. At least from what I know. It seemed to me that two such spontaneous and profoundly sensual creatures would have understood each other. But Brigitte was not at all dazzled by Marlon's physique, and he found her charming but no more than that."

Frankly, Roger was disappointed, as he admitted to Christian that he wanted to have a three-way with Marlon and Brigitte. In various couplings, this was his favorite form of sexual pleasure. A future wife, Jane Fonda, would reveal in her memoirs that Roger often instructed her to bring a female prostitute to their bed, and she reluctantly complied with his wishes.

Roger later said that Christian, Brigitte, and himself learned what a genius actor Marlon really was late one night. It'd been a long evening, and all four of them had gone club hopping, first the Club Saint-Germain and later, Le Tabou, both on the Left Bank. Finally, they headed for the Right Bank and Les Halles where they ordered pig's feet and onion soup.

Walking back home as the early streaks of dawn came to the Parisian sky, they headed up the Champs-Élysées. Marlon stopped in front of a cafe, Fouquet's, a favorite hangout of American expats and the preferred watering hole of film people visiting from Hollywood. He spotted chairs and tables

chained together so they wouldn't have to be taken in at night.

Without saying a word, he pulled on the chains and arranged the chairs on the sidewalk," Roger later wrote in his memoirs. "Then he began reciting the opening lines of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He played all the parts—not just Stanley, but Blanche and Stella too."

"Marlon recreated the true magic of the theater with just a few chairs and two barroom tables," Roger said. "Grumpy men and women, half asleep on their way to catch the first subway train to work, stopped out of curiosity or amusement. But after watching Marlon for a moment, they were spellbound and fascinated. Even if they didn't understand English, they recognized pure talent."

Marlon told Jacques that one hot afternoon Brigitte came by the apartment to meet Roger, who was running two hours late. He quotes Marlon as saying, "As this sex kitten stood before me, she removed her blouse. She wore no bra."

"My waist is perfect," she allegedly told him. "Only nineteen inches. And my legs would pass inspection anywhere. But my bosom. I have twice more than I should have. With my tiny waist, they look even larger."

"I immediately asked Marlon if this little flirtation had led to a seduction," Jacques said. "He said it did not. That Brigitte put back on her blouse only minutes before Roger arrived in the studio. Frankly, I don't know if Marlon were telling the truth or not. Did that scene really take place only in his mind? For all I know, he was indulging in harmless day-dreaming. Yet it had the ring of truth. From what I knew of her, Brigitte would pull a stunt like that. As time would prove, she wasn't opposed to taking off that bra now and then, even if she didn't usually wear one."

Perhaps one reason Marlon never moved in on Roger's teenage girlfriend, as he had on almost any date of Wally Cox's, was that Brigitte had eyes only for her "steppe wolf."

"I can't take my eyes off Roger," she told Marlon. "He seems strange, of course, and talks as if the world were already his, which I'm sure it'll be some day. Everything he says, even the trivial, is fascinating. My mother doesn't feel the same way about Roger as I do. Every time she knows he's coming to visit, she locks up the silverware."

Brigitte Bardot

At one point, Roger asked Marlon

Brigitte Bardot in *And God Created Woman*

what he thought of Brigitte, revealing that he planned to marry her one day. "She's a child-woman," Marlon said, "on the verge of a great adventure. But she—not you—will be the author of her own script."

Roger would carry through on his commitment to marry Brigitte. In a stroke of genius, he also cast his wife in *And God Created Woman* in 1956, choosing Christian Marquand for the male lead.

"Brigitte became so big in the late 1950s," Christian said, "that everything about her persona—her tousled blonde bouffant, her crisp white man-tailored shirts, and even her cigarette pants—was imitated all over the world. The film's title said it all—*And God Created Woman*. It didn't say *And God Created Adam*. I don't know if any of the millions of people who flocked to see the film even noticed me. It was the Sex Kitten who sold the tickets."

On seeing the film years later, Marlon told his friends, "It doesn't hold up well. Looks like a pretty lame excuse to film Brigitte nude on a St-Tropez beach. But the movie sealed her reputation as the seductress of the age, although you couldn't prove that by me. Of course, there are those who say that Marilyn Monroe was the seductress of the age. At least I can verify that one from my own experience."

Although Roger continued to see Marlon on occasions, and Christian turned out to be one of his best friends for life, Brigitte and Marlon drifted apart.

She contacted him in 1984, hoping to enlist his support in her fight for animal rights—"not just the Indians, animals have rights too." He turned down her request to get involved in her cause but promised to make a contribution.

He asked her how she was. She repeated a line she'd used since her fiftieth birthday. "I have been very rich, very beautiful, much adored, and very famous, but very unhappy!"

"Only I could have made you happy, and now it is too late."

* * *

In the summer of 1949, Christian Marquand and Marlon Brando fell in love, in the words of Roger Vadim. "It was an unconventional love affair that would span the decades, and fidelity to each other had nothing to do with it. I don't think I ever saw a more compatible couple. While Brigitte and I would be indulged in a terrible fight, Christian and Marlon would be in my bedroom

making mad, passionate love, just like I did with Brigitte when she wasn't mad at me."

Unaware of Marlon's recent success on Broadway in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Christian later recalled, "Marlon and I had an instant rapport. We were two kindred spirits, in spite of the fact he grew up in the wild west of America, and I was forced up in seedy Marseille. I liked him from the very first time I ever laid eyes on him, and I never stopped caring for him. He was my all-time best friend, even more so than Roger."

Though on most occasions a heterosexual, Christian had been introduced to both homosexuality and the screen when the oh, so gay Jean Cocteau had cast him uncredited in his film debut in *La Belle et la bête* (The Beauty and the Beast).

Christian wasn't really French but of Arab and Spanish descent. Originally, he'd been a stage comedian. When meeting Cocteau, the director decided that "male beauty such as yours can only be captured on camera. You have a raw sexuality that only the camera can tame. You possess a male charm so powerful that you can command the wind to stop blowing." A gross exaggeration, of course. Perhaps Cocteau had had too much opium that day.

Three years younger than Marlon, Christian was already a household word in France when he met Marlon. He'd appeared in such French classics as Henri-Geôrges Clouzot's *Quai des Orfevres* in 1947. The name of Christian Marquand appears today in movie trivia questions. From 1962 until his death in Paris at the dawn of the millennium, Christian was married to the famous Tina Aumont, daughter of Jean-Pierre Aumont and Maria Montez. Maria reigns today as *Cobra Woman*, the queen of cinematic camp.

[Author's note: Even though he appeared in films for fifty-five years, Tina Aumont's father, Jean-Pierre Aumont, remained a second-tier star throughout his life. He was called to Hollywood on occasion for such films as the 1954 *The Gay Adventure* or the 1975 *Happy Hooker*. He is remembered today for his key role in François Truffaut's valentine to moviemaking, *Day for Night*, released in 1973. Later in life, Aumont married actress Marisa Pavan. She was the sister of Sardinia-born Pier Angeli, who would carry on affairs simultaneously with both Marlon and James Dean before her death in 1971 of a drug overdose.]

At the time Marlon met Christian, the French star's future wife was only three years old and living in Hollywood.

Even before Marlon arrived in Hollywood to make his first film, the gossip colony was abuzz with news of his affair with the tall and craggy-handsome French star. Neither actor ever denied the rumors, even when blind innuendos about their close relationship appeared in the press. One columnist, writing in 1952, asked the question, "What Hollywood bad boy is spending

romantic nights not locked in the arms of a beautiful woman, but in the arms of a handsome male French movie star?"

On Christian's subsequent visits to Hollywood, he was sometimes spotted with Marlon dining in out-of-the-way and darkly lit restaurants in the San Fernando Valley. He was seen holding hands with Christian. Later, when a reporter asked Marlon about these rumors, Marlon calmly replied, "I am not ashamed. One should never be ashamed of love for one's fellow man. Only hatred of one's fellow man."

Neither Christian nor Marlon, of course, were exclusively homosexual. "Even though their affair, which lasted for centuries, was intense, it did not preclude having sex with other people, often in three ways, with a handsome boy or a beautiful young girl," Roger claimed. "Christian also served as Marlon's pimp when Marlon flew in from Hollywood. Christian told me that, 'All I have to do is to speak to any girl and bring Marlon that girl if he wanted her.'"

Along with Jacques Viale, Christian signed up as Marlon's tour guide to show him "the real Paris."

Marlon definitely wanted to see the seedy underbelly of Paris, and his new friends were only too willing to share the city's secrets at night. At some point, Marlon tired of the frequent exhibitions, both homosexual and heterosexual, often staged for the benefit of voyeuristic tourists from London and New York.

Jacques Viale claimed that "Marlon wanted to go beyond mere girl/girl, boy/boy, and girl/boy sex. He once told me that Roger and Christian took him to the notorious House of Ducks. In French, we called it Le Canard Bleu. This was a hellhole near Place Clichy that flourished at the time. It was run by some scumbag named Monsieur Giscard Guichet. He always claimed he was a count but had run a boy brothel in Marseille. His duck house catered only to the most perverted and jaded of both Frenchmen and tourist creeps who were tired of devouring virginal young girls and virginal young boys. This seedy character knew the depths of human depravity. To his house, he brought only the fattest or pleasantly plump of female ducks. Once there, he would tie up the ducks for his clients to penetrate. Just before a man reached his climax, Guichet would slice off the head of the duck so that the client could enjoy the poor bird's death spasms. After his own night with a duck, Marlon started referring to himself as 'trisexual.' People often wondered what he meant by that. Well, now you know. Don't you have an expression in English, 'Fuck a Duck?'"

Beginning with that summer in Paris, Christian would remain one of Marlon's most cherished friends. Even when Christian's film career entered twilight, Marlon got him the role of the French plantation owner in

Apocalypse Now in 1979. Christian's biggest coup however, was before that when he got Marlon to agree to star in the ill-fated film, *Candy*, in 1968, a movie that Christian directed.

The two men saw each other whenever they could, and Christian was always Marlon's host during his visits to Europe. It was with a great sadness that Marlon saw Christian "slipping away from reality" as the century neared its end. The French actor died of Alzheimer's disease near Paris on November 22, 2000, sending Marlon into a prolonged period of mourning.

"First Wally Cox," Marlon said to friends. "Now my beloved Christian. *I'm next*!"

* * *

While Marlon continued his tour of the boudoirs of Paris and its low-life dives, Edith Van Cleve back in New York was besieged by film offers for him. Much of Hollywood, including MCA president Lew Wasserman, had been turned off by stories of Marlon's erratic behavior on Broadway. But when several directors, notably Stanley Kramer, began showing interest in starring the young actor in his first picture, Wasserman and others became turned on again. The question was, "Where was Marlon?"

"I don't have to tell you what a big city Paris is," Edith told Wasserman. "I'm sending my co-agent, Maynard Morris, to Paris to find Marlon wherever he is. Maynard is the guy, you may remember, who discovered Marlon in summer stock. Maynard knows a lot of people in Paris. I'm convinced that he can find Marlon and bring him to Hollywood."

Wasserman warned her that time was running out on Kramer's offer to Marlon for a starring role in his next film.

"Yes, I know, Lew," she said. "Fortunately, I have five other firm offers for even better parts for Marlon at a bigger salary also waiting on my desk."

Wasserman had no way of knowing if she were bluffing or not. "Get Brando!" he shouted into the phone. "Get his ass in those tight blue jeans back to America. We're going to make a big movie star out of the joker if we have to drag him kicking and screaming into stardom!"

Lew Wasserman

Chapter Eight

In today's terms, French actors Christian Marquand and Daniel Gélin might be called the Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise of their day. But as charming and as handsome as he was, Christian wasn't enough to satisfy Marlon's libido. Upon meeting Daniel, he wanted him too. And so it came to be.

When Roger Vadim and Christian moved into a larger apartment along quai d'Orléans, Marlon went with them. Since there were four bedrooms, another roommate was added to help meet expenses. Even though he'd married French actress Danièle Delorme in 1945, Daniel and Danièle were living apart in 1949, although their divorce wouldn't come until 1954.

As with Roger and Christian, Marlon formed a friendship with Daniel that would last a lifetime. Christian and Daniel had replaced Carlo Fiore and Wally Cox as Marlon's best friends.

Three years older than Marlon, and strikingly handsome, Daniel had been born in the Loire Valley of France, and he would take Marlon to his home turf to show him the region's fabled châteaux. Even though Daniel's career as an actor would span sixty years in French theater, TV, and films, international audiences know of him only for a small role he had in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, released in 1956. As Doris Day looks on in horror, Daniel appears before James Stewart in a Marrakesh souk with a dagger in his back. Daniel whispers to Stewart the revelation of an assassination plot.

In later years, Daniel would impersonate *Napoléon* on the screen in 1955 in a film of the same name. Marlon in the year before would pull the same stunt in *Desirée*.

Daniel Gélin

Like Christian, Daniel, though basically straight (he would marry three women), had been seduced into homosexuality by the same man: Jean Cocteau. Daniel was an easy mark for Marlon's conquest.

"Marlon had Christian for love in the afternoon and Daniel at night, with lots of beautiful women on the side, each of them picked up and randomly discarded, whereas

both Christian and Daniel stayed around almost until the end," Jacques Viale claimed.

Daniel was part of Paris' post-war St-Germain-des-Prés scene that centered around such writers and intellectuals as Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Juliette Gréco, and Boris Vian. Daniel would introduce Marlon to each of these figures. Some of the meetings were successful, some were not, and one would lead to a seduction.

Sartre, the biggest name of all, ignored Marlon, telling Daniel that, "I have no interest in American actors. Also, no interest in this Tennessee Williams and his Southern decadence. All 'honey child' and dripping wax magnolias—no reality to it at all!"

Daniel called the chanteuse, Juliette Gréco, "my cellar friend," a reference to the fact that they met only in Left Bank cellars or boîtes where live music was featured. Upon meeting this beautiful brunette, Marlon was captivated by her. At first the attraction wasn't mutual.

Almost overnight, Marlon and Daniel were seen in Left Bank clubs hanging out with Boris Vian, who was one of the leading symbols of the post-war generation. Amazingly, he was an engineer, a poet, a novelist, a songwriter, a jazz trumpeter, and a record producer. Almost every night the trio shared a table at Tabou, a jazz joint.

Vian told Marlon that "only two things count in life: love, in all its many shapes, with pretty girls, and the music of New Orleans or Duke Ellington." Marlon didn't completely agree with that philosophy.

Vian called life "the foam of our days." In his broken English, he sometimes spoke in riddles to Marlon, who often didn't understand what he meant. "Because all this is not still nothing," Vian said enigmatically, "Boris Vian is prepared to become Boris Vian."

"I'm prepared to become Marlon Brando, but it might become a life-long struggle."

"I'm already Daniel Gélin. The one and only."

Sometimes Marlon and Vian would sit at tables twelve feet apart at Café de Flore and engage in fights with hard-boiled or even fresh eggs. When Sartre was hit one night, management asked Marlon and Vian to take their business elsewhere. Juliette Gréco remained a regular and acceptable customer. She said, "At the Flore, people are less ugly than anywhere else."

Even though kicked off the premises himself, Marlon still had a fond memory for the Flore. He claimed that "it was a great gathering place for artists of yesterday and of tomorrow, and the best place in Paris to take advantage of the first rays of the sun after a night of hell-raising with Daniel or Christian, sometimes Roger or Jacques."

Truman Capote, who had already known Marlon somewhat intimately,

showed up at the Café de Flore, spotting Daniel and Marlon at a nearby table. He told Tennessee, "They were so young and good looking and so unsuccessful at hiding their love. One afternoon I caught Marlon with his shoes off with his noble foot buried in Daniel's crotch under the table. Ah, if only I could find true love."

Daniel later claimed that the group of Frenchmen into which Marlon had stumbled was a "hot jazz generation" who had emerged in the closing months after the Nazis were run out of town. "We didn't just enjoy too much alcohol at night, we also overindulged in cocaine and heroin. Our main goal was not drugs but sexual freedom. That's where I stood when I first met Marlon, who seemed to want to be completely free sexually. Often the sex of our partner for the night didn't matter, and why should it? We were more concerned that the object of our affection for the night be good in bed and not whether they had a vagina or a penis. Both a penis and a vagina can bring sexual satisfaction if put to the right use, don't you agree? It was a new era in Paris, and all of us, including Marlon, were eager to break the sexual taboos imposed on us by our parents and a restrictive society. For example, I urged both Juliette and Brigitte to try lesbianism, but they had no interest."

Marlon quickly learned that Daniel had played the tom-toms in his film for Jacques Becker, a romantic comedy called *Rendez-vous de juillet (Rendezvous in July*), released in 1949. On hearing that, Marlon began to practice the tom-toms with Daniel in the new apartment, driving Roger and Christian "insane."

Soon Daniel managed to get them bookings in Left Bank boîtes where both men entertained young audiences with their music. Marlon later wrote to Fiore in New York: "This, and not appearing in *Streetcar* on Broadway, is the most exciting moment of my life."

Ironically, in the films that lay ahead of them in the Fifties, both Marlon and Daniel, on different sides of the ocean, came to symbolize the youth of their generation, especially after Marlon made *The Wild One* and Becker made two more films with Daniel.

Even though married—Danièle Delorme had co-starred with him in *Rendez-vous*—Daniel in his own words devoted his life to "sex, drink, and drugs," candidly admitting later in life that the "lethal combination got the better of me."

A staunch, longtime socialist and political activist, Daniel inspired Marlon in his future fights to protect the rights of African-Americans and Native Americans.

As the years went by, Marlon watched as Daniel "squandered his great gifts, his remarkable talent," noting that his friend's personal life had become "a mess." After writing that, Marlon later admitted to Roger that, "I could be

describing myself." Through all Daniel's stormy relationships, Marlon stood by him, even in the suicide attempts. He was there for the death of his one son, Pascal, who was only fourteen months old when he accidentally swallowed pills in 1957. Marlon wasn't physically on site when Daniel's second son, Xavier, whom Marlon knew well, lost a battle with cancer in 1999. But Marlon was on the phone almost every morning with Daniel, who was making his last threat of suicide.

In another irony, Marlon appeared with Daniel's illegitimate daughter, actress Maria Schneider, when they made *Last Tango in Paris* in 1972. She was the product of Daniel's affair with French model and bookstore owner, Marie Christine Schneider, whom he never married.

Upon Daniel's death in 2002, he won the praise of French president Jacques Chirac, who hailed him as "one of France's most enduring actors," claiming that he would be remembered for his "subtlety and sensitivity in his roles."

On hearing the news of Daniel's death, Marlon was devastated. "I have truly loved only three men in my life: Wally Cox, Christian Marquand, and Daniel Gélin. All the others were ships passing in the night."

* * *

The wild jazz club to frequent on the Left Bank was Le Tabou on rue Dauphine. Marlon started going there every night, often in the company of Roger Vadim, Daniel Gélin, Jacques Viale, or Christian Marquand, singly or in various combinations. Sometimes he brought his pickup for the night, which could be male or female.

The attraction was Juliette Gréco, the darling of Left Bank café society in the post-war years. Marlon, or so he told his new French friends, had fallen in love with her. This chanteuse had been dubbed "the high priestess of existentialism." Nightly she sang songs that were really poems, written for her by such stellar lights as Jean-Paul Sartre or Raymond Queneau, who had penned the extraordinary "*Si tu t'imagines*" just for Gréco. Jacques Prévert wrote the now classic "*Les feuilles mortes*" for her. The general French public still preferred Edith Piaf, but bohemian Paris adored Gréco, who had gained nationwide fame in France when Jean Cocteau cast her in his 1949 film, *Orphée*.

Born in Montpellier three years after Marlon entered the world, Gréco was the daughter of a Corsican policeman and a mother who later became a key figure in the French Resistance movement during World War II. Gréco herself was educated in a restrictive convent school before moving with her sister, Charlotte, and her mother to Paris. In 1943, all three of them were arrested by the Gestapo. Charlotte and her mother were sent to a prison camp,

Juliette Gréco

but the Gestapo released sixteen-year-old Gréco. She found herself wandering alone and penniless on the streets of Paris.

"I like this singer's mysterious dark looks," Marlon told Boris Vian. "A man could lose himself in a woman who looks like Juliette does. She's like a mysterious planet or a country in some remote corner of the earth waiting to be discovered."

Her tight-fitting black leotard added to her charm. At night she attended Communist meetings. With his more daring Left Bank friends, Marlon too attended some of these secret meetings, where he met poets, painters, writers, and musicians. Jean-Paul Sartre, who sometimes attended, told Marlon that Gréco's voice "encompasses millions of poems." He too was enthusiastic about Gréco, but never understood Marlon's appeal to his bohemian friends.

One night Marlon was seen at Le Tabou smoking marijuana with the jazz trumpet player, Miles Davis. Night after night, Marlon watched dawn break over the Paris skyline before heading back to his bed to sleep for most of the day.

The story may be apocryphal, but Marlon was said to have pursued Gréco in spite of her rejection of his often crude sexual overtures to her. She reportedly kept resisting him until one night, or so it is said, he climbed the wall of her apartment building. Somehow, it is believed, he climbed into the window of her second-floor boudoir, perhaps with the aid of a ladder. Once inside, he made his conquest of Gréco, as Left Bank rumor had it.

Roger Vadim and Christian Marquand claimed that Marlon was successful. Later, the romance between Marlon and Gréco was compared to that strangest of all desert plants, the Night-Blooming Cereus, called "queen of the night." Its exquisitely scented flower opens as night falls, then closes forever with the first rays of the morning sun. The fragrant, trumpet-shaped flower blooms for only one night at midsummer, evocative of Marlon's supposed conquest of Gréco.

She offered Marlon her debut single recording of "*Je suis comme je suis*" (I Am What I Am), which was written for her by Jacques Prévert. Marlon is said to have taken the record to Hollywood with him where he spent many a night during the Fifties listening to its haunting, evocative sound.

In later years, and perhaps unknown to Gréco, Marlon slipped into two or three of her concerts when the lights dimmed, disappearing before they went on again. He was especially impressed with her recording of "*Déshabillez-*

moi" (Undress Me). It became her most famous song, and she sang it in concerts around the world, often following in the footsteps of one of Marlon's other one-night stands, Marlene Dietrich.

Over the years, Gréco has had little to say on record about Marlon. She did find him intriguing, and, to an interviewer, remembered him as "a very polite and charming man with a great interest in everything. But I had the impression that he was not very strong. In performance, of course, he had enormous strength so that he had only to say something for you to believe it absolutely."

Back in New York after his return from Paris, Marlon told Carlo Fiore, "Of all the women I've met in the world, I thought Juliette Gréco was the one who truly deserved me. Obviously, though, she is a woman with a mind of her own—and quite a keen mind at that. It was her loss! She left a malicious blow like a knife in my heart."

He watched in surprise as her legend grew over the years, and she became the very symbol of *l'époque existentialist.*

In many ways, they would pursue the same politics in the years ahead, both becoming outspoken in their defense of oppressed people. He was, however, dismayed when Gréco "went Hollywood," becoming the mistress of Darryl F. Zanuck. The producer put her into a number of films in the late 50s and early 60s, including Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, but she never caught on with American audiences, who preferred the likes of Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, even Sandra Dee, in those days.

Shortly before Marlon's death, when world headlines announced that he was dying, Gréco gave one of her rare interviews, failing to mention her long-ago admirer. In bad translation from the French, she claimed, "I am rather insane than wise. I exist where truth lives and takes its form, where it becomes alive."

* * *

At the time Marlon sailed to France, the magazine *Paris-Match* was the leading journal of Europe. Its director was Hervé Mille, a homosexual and an arbiter of Parisian taste and style. A cultured, elegantly attired Frenchman, he was the epitome of continental charm and grace, moving in the top echelon of Paris, his best friends including Coco Chanel, Jean Cocteau, Edith Piaf, and Charles Aznavour. In Paris, Hervé was called "the Richelieu of Jean Prouvost," a reference to the French press lord and wool magnate who owned *Paris-Match*.

Hervé's brother, Gerard Mille, was one of the leading decorators of Europe. He lived with Hervé at a sumptuous villa on rue de Varenne that was

the major center of international Paris society in the post-Liberation era. As writer Marcel Haedrick once said, "Through the Mille home passed everyone who had talent, reputation, money, everyone who was of any importance, lasting or otherwise."

In February of 1949, Hervé had flown to New York to attend five performances of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. On his fifth visit to the play, he had gone backstage on the arm of Irene Mayer Selznick to meet both Marlon and Jessica Tandy.

The following morning, with Irene and her lawyer, he acquired the French rights to Tennessee's play, with a premiere production to be mounted in Paris. Before leaving New York, he called Marlon and invited him to visit him and his brother, Gérard, if he ever came to Paris.

Jacques Viale, who continued his friendship with Marlon, once tried to publish a small memoir documenting Marlon's adventures in Paris (on several trips), as well as recollections of Vadim, Bardot, Christian Marquand, Daniel Gélin, Jean Cocteau, and others. Poorly written, he could find no publisher for it. However, it provided a tantalizing glimpse of how Marlon came to have a friendship with such an unlikely pair as the Mille brothers, who lived in a world far different from his. Viale's account has no secondary source to back it up.

Marlon later told Viale that he "just arrived" at the doorstep to the Mille villa, remembering that it was still twilight and he couldn't resist the temptation to roll like a dog in their green grass. He claimed that Hervé later told him that when he looked out the window of his boudoir, seeing a young man in a T-shirt and tight-fitting blue jeans, he knew "at once that it was Stanley Kowalski shipped over from New Orleans."

It was true that Hervé had invited Marlon to call on him if he were ever in Paris, but the arbiter of protocol had expected a telephone call to precede Marlon's arrival at his door.

In spite of the intrusion, Hervé and Marlon became "instant friends," and Hervé is said to have taken him to a restaurant on the Left Bank frequented mainly by homosexuals and members of the French intelligentsia. When they returned to the villa, Gerard was still awake, having arrived home two hours earlier. He was reading in the library and listening to recordings of Edith Piaf. Even before Hervé introduced Marlon, Gerard "knew at once that it was Stanley Kowalski," having recognized Marlon from his photographs.

If Viale is to be believed, Gerard told Marlon that, "I'm an atheist, but on nights such as this I truly believe there is a God in heaven."

Whether true or not, Marlon claimed to Viale that he "moved in that night, and I've become their house guest on a rather intimate basis."

Gerard later told Vadim that he considered Marlon one of the most sexu-

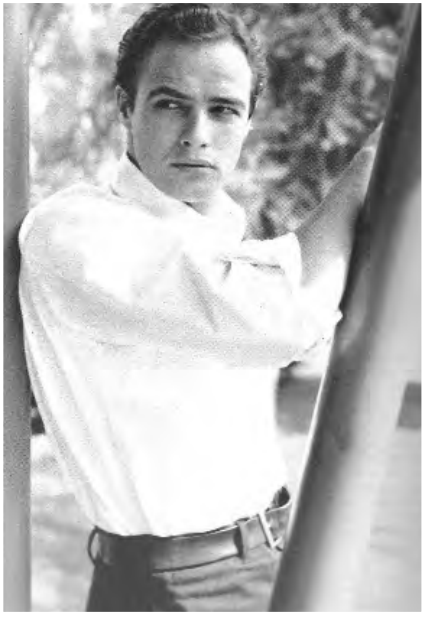
ally liberated persons he'd ever met—"and that coming from a friend of Jean Genêt."

Three days later, Marlon arrived at the Mille villa on the arm of Christian Marquand, introducing the French actor to both Hervé and Gerard. The two brothers and Christian played a practical joke on Marlon, sitting through a lunch as if meeting for the first time. Actually, the brothers were friends of Christian, having known him for a number of years.

"We quickly brought Marlon into our circle," Gerard is quoted as having said. "Christian was already a permanent fixture."

Apparently, both Christian, called "the sexiest man in France," and Marlon, hailed as "the sexiest man in America," had free run of the Mille villa. The only time that Gerard got angry at them was when he went to his closet to select one of his six tuxedos for a formal dinner party and found all of them missing. Invited to a special premiere, his friends—Christian, Marlon, Daniel Gélin, Jacques Viale, Roger Vadim, and Frederick Brisson—had borrowed all his formal wear. A producer, Brisson was married to screen star, Rosalind Russell, whom Coco Chanel years later would denounce as a "big horse" when there was talk of casting his wife in a stage play based on Chanel's life, the part eventually going to Katharine Hepburn.

Marlon often wandered around the Mille household inspecting it as if it were a museum, looking on in awe at the calamander screens and the lavish use of mirrors that seemed to give the salons a magic aura, that and the mammoth Chinese vases and the Venetian statues of blackamoors. Incongruously he encountered a lot of mounted deer.



All dressed up

Marlon became a fixture at the Mille dinner parties that often included Roger Vadim and Brigitte Bardot. Amazingly, with almost no credentials, Marlon had moved into the top echelon of *tout Paris*.

Hervé told Marlon that he had hired Jean Cocteau to stage the French production of *Streetcar*, and that the playwright, who had written *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, in which Marlon had appeared with Tallulah Bankhead, was eager to meet him. As of yet, they had found no French actor to play Stanley, although the celebrated but notorious

star, Arletty, had been cast as Blanche DuBois.

At the time of his burgeoning friendship with the Mille brothers, Marlon spoke only a little bit of French. Gerard, or so it is believed, was the first to suggest that Marlon reprise his Broadway role as Stanley but in French. Vadim said that Marlon could speak the language with a perfect accent, even though he didn't understand the meaning of the words. "Your accent is better than mine," Vadim told Marlon. The Mille brothers agreed. Under Cocteau's tutelage, the brothers felt that Marlon could master the language and be a sensation at the Parisian premiere of Tennessee's play. Marlon agreed to at least consider the possibility, and a meeting was set up between Cocteau and him.

The brothers had already taken Marlon to hear their friend, Charles Aznavour, sing. Before Cocteau would arrive in Paris, Gerard wanted Marlon to meet "our other two dear, dear friends."

"Who might these 'dear, dear ones be?'" Marlon asked.

"They are so very different," Gerard said, "but forever alluring with a timeless charm about both of them. Coco Chanel and Edith Piaf."

* * *

Coco Chanel and Marlon Brando were certainly the odd couple. Only the Mille brothers would think of bringing this incongruous pair together for lunch. Marlon was not used to taking advice about his dress code from anyone, so he appeared in the garden in his blue jeans and a T-shirt.

When Coco arrived, the Mille brothers were shocked to see her also attired in blue jeans. Perhaps she'd been tipped off about Marlon's appearance on Broadway in *Streetcar*. At that time, no respectable woman in Paris wore blue jeans. But the *Grande Mademoiselle*, as always, was ahead of her time. In the years to come, women all over the world were wearing blue jeans. After all, Coco was the designer who got French women, and later the world, to shorten their skirts, bob their hair, and throw away their corsets. She also got them to wear her trademark Chanel No. 5.

Originally Jean Cocteau had been invited but had come down with a dreadful cold and remained at his home outside Paris, in the Île de France. Eager to meet Marlon, he sent a note instead. "Watch out for our little darling, Madame Coco," he wrote. "She has the head of a black swan but the heart of a little black bull."

Christian had warned him that Coco was a lesbian and had been a Nazi collaborator. Even though both of those charges contained a tiny grain of truth, they were hardly the full loaf of bread, as Marlon quickly determined for himself. In fact, he found her a bit flirtatious with him. He also took note of her independence, her strong will, and her sharp tongue. He further found her a

self-made woman unashamed of her contradictions.

She inquired about his origins, and he told her Nebraska. Not quite sure where that was, she immediately thought he might be a native American Indian. "Perhaps you are the Last of the Mohicans," she said. Throughout the luncheon, she patted his hand fondly, referring to him as "*Mon petit Indien*. I'm so glad some American cowboy didn't shoot you down. You're far too beautiful to kill. Perhaps if you don't return to acting, I'll design men's clothes for you to model. Heaven knows somebody should design for men. All my rival male designers in Paris are pederasts, and I hardly need to name them for you."

When he invited her to come and visit America, she gladly accepted his invitation, having no intention of following through with it. "I should come and dress that dreadful First Lady of yours. Bess Truman. No wife of a head of state should dress like some washerwoman." Begun that afternoon and lasting throughout her life, Coco would attack the dress of American First Ladies, including Jacqueline Kennedy when she saw her photographed in a mini-skirt. "She wears her daughter's clothes," Coco proclaimed.

In the middle of lunch, an invitation arrived from Charles de Gaulle, who wanted to have lunch with her on the upcoming Sunday. She responded on the spot. "Tell your Mr. de Gaulle that the only invitation I'll accept is to his funeral," she informed a member of De Gaulle's staff.

Marlon was later to recall that "Chanel was the single most fascinating woman I've ever met. I detested every word that came from her mouth but was hypnotized by her. Even though she insisted on blowing the smoke of my Gitanes in my face, I still was held spellbound. Even when she blamed the Jews for the weakened franc, she continued to be mesmerizing. She complained that the blacks pouring into France had a bad smell but that she had been honored to have danced with some black prizefighter from America, with whom I was unfamiliar."

Coco Chanel

He'd heard all the rumors about her, including her taking an aristocratic German officer as a lover during the Nazi occupation of France. He'd even heard about Operation Modelhut in 1943, when she'd volunteered to go to London as a representative of the Third Reich to negotiate the end of the war between Germany and England. Yet he could not believe that such a person, the most famous French woman of her time, could have entertained Nazi

sympathies.

Only that morning, he'd read an article that Gerard had given him, which wrote about Coco's life as an orphan, revealing that she had been born illegitimately in a poorhouse and was later raised as an orphan.

Telling a total lie, but perhaps trying to relate to her, he claimed that he too had been orphaned in Nebraska. He told her that gunmen had broken into his ancestral home on the American plains and had killed both his parents and his two sisters. He claimed that he had escaped by hiding out in the root cellar, the one used for riding out tornadoes.

She seemed to believe this distortion because it tied in with her vision of a gun-toting America. But she harshly reprimanded him for putting her into the category of an orphan, claiming she had "very rich and very loving parents." But despite her objections, the magazine article was right. She had been an orphan.

"I'm going to Deauville," she told him. "Perhaps you'll drive me there."

He kindly turned down her offer, gallantly kissing her hand.

"So sorry you're not free," she said. "I need protection in Deauville. Wealthy refugees there always buy my clothes, even right off my back. One time I found myself in only my lingerie hiding out in the women's toilet as I'd sold my gown and all the trimmings."

At the doorway to the villa, he gingerly kissed both of her cheeks. She returned his affection with a pat on the cheek. Her parting words were, "Fame is solitude. Don't let it happen to you."

* * *

Jacques Viale was not just a fan of Edith Piaf and her music, he worshipped her like a goddess. When he learned that Marlon would be spending some time with her, he demanded to know every single detail of his friend's meeting with the star, "even the times she got up to go to the bathroom, which I understand she will do with the toilet door open right in front of her friends so as not to interrupt the flow of conversation." Marlon agreed to tell Viale everything, "even when a mouse, or perhaps a cockroach, crosses the floor."

He was expecting a show business personality like Mistinguett, all in feathers and boas. Instead he got Edith Piaf in a simple black dress, even though it was designed by Chanel. Hand-kissing by the Mille brothers preceded a quick introduction to Marlon before Edith rushed up to the butler. "I need a drink. My saliva's so thick I could spit ten-franc pieces." That was a favorite line of hers.

Seated at table with her drink and Marlon, she told him, "I haven't slept for forty-eight hours. My doctor gave me a dose that would kill a stallion and

still I am awake at night staring at my ceiling."

"I have found that one needs complete sexual release before sleep can come," he told her.

She smiled at him, patting his hand. "Thanks for the suggestion. I'll try it." She leaned back into the breeze, closing her eyes as if sleep might come after all. "I guess as a Broadway actor, with movie stars flying in from Hollywood, you're used to meeting only glamorous entertainers, beautiful women like Rita Hayworth or my friend Marlene Dietrich."

Edith Piaf

"I've met all kinds," he said. "Some not so beautiful."

"Now you're stuck with me, you poor dear, the one the press calls the little sparrow. Pale face, mousy hair."

"I think you're beautiful."

"Do you believe in reincarnation?" she abruptly asked, sitting up and opening her eyes.

"Of course, I do. Only a fool wouldn't believe in reincarnation."

"I do too," she said. "In a previous life I was Marie Antoinette dying a hideous death." She turned and gazed into his eyes as if demanding only the truth. "Who were you?"

"Napoléon," he answered almost without hesitation.

She looked even more deeply into his eyes to determine if he were mocking her. Finally, she decided he must be telling the truth. "I can see it in your face. You were Napoléon. I'm convinced of that."

Director Henry Koster, when he cast Marlon in the 1954 *Desirée*, would more or less tell him the same thing.

As lunch was served, with the Mille brothers hovering over Edith, she told the table that she'd had dinner with Pablo Picasso only two nights before. "He wants to paint me. A portrait like he did for Gertrude Stein. He calls my face poetic."

"It's not just poetic," Marlon interjected. "It's a book of poems."

"My, oh my," she said, looking Marlon up and down, beginning with his feet. "You must be a boxer.

"I do box as a matter of fact," he said.

"I just knew it!" she said. "I'm never wrong about these things. I adore boxers." She went on with her Picasso story. "He told me that I should hang onto the portrait once he finishes it. He claims that some day it will be like an old age pension fund for me when I sell it to a museum." She smiled. "He also made the most extraordinary statement. He said that he had a hope that his

paintings some day would cure toothaches."

As the lunch continued, Edith kept ordering more wine and urged Marlon to drink with her. Before that, he'd requested a glass of cold milk.

"Last month I also dined with Pablo," she said. "This time Jean Cocteau dined with us. All three of us made this agreement. We're going to write into our wills that our mourners show up at our funerals dressed in red. Anyone dressed in black will be kicked out. Would you write that same provision into your will, Mr. Brando?"

"I don't know," he said. "Death is so far from me at this point—surely the great occasion will occur for me sometime beyond the millennium—that I think it would be useless to put such a provision in a will. For all I know, people living on this planet won't even be wearing clothes post-millennium."

After lunch, she took him back to her apartment, where he just assumed she had seduction on her mind. As she was talking on the phone, he slipped off all his clothes and crawled naked under the sheets in her bedroom. After putting down the phone, she searched the apartment for him and seemed startled to find him naked in her bed.

"Who do you think I am, you bastard?" she shouted at him. "Some Pigalle whore? Get out of here!"

She chased his naked body from her bed and into the living room, holding open the door for him. Even though she was a virtual midget, she shoved him out the door, slamming it behind him.

Completely nude, he stood in the hallway, looking bewildered, not knowing what to do next. Suddenly, she opened the door and tossed only his blue jeans after him—not his T-shirt, not his shoes.

"I felt she definitely wanted to sample my noble tool," he told Viale later that night. "But she must have some mating ritual, the niceties with which I'm not familiar. I didn't play it right."

The next day, through the Mille brothers, she obtained his phone number and called him. Marlon picked up the phone. Instead of introducing herself, she sang *La Vie en rose* to him as an apology for her behavior.

She invited him back to her apartment that night. He somewhat reluctantly accepted her invitation. To his surprise, he found her dressed not in her little black Chanel but in tattered rags. She wanted him to take her back to Pigalle where she'd broken into show business by singing on the streets for a few francs a night. En route there in a taxi, she told him that she often performed this ritual. "It's important," she cautioned him, "to remember our roots."

On the streets of Pigalle, her haunting, evocative voice was raised in song once again. Marlon held the cap to collect the meager francs offered. Although one of the most famous women in France, along with Coco Chanel, Edith was

not recognized. However, all the passers-by recognized the distinctive voice, seemingly figuring that she was a Piaf impersonator. Marlon found that highly amusing. One bagwoman came up to her and proclaimed, "Sweetie, you'll never sound anything like the real Piaf. You just don't have the voice!"

Later that night she took him to her familiar haunts at Pigalle and at Montmartre. She invited him to ride with her on a merry-go-round that stayed open all night, hoping to give drunken revelers a thrill. "I want to see the dawn come up with you," she told him as she purchased a gingerbread "pig" for him from a street vendor. Later she invited him to her favorite bistro, Lulu's. Over French onion soup, she told him, "Whenever I'm lonely I come here to pick up Joes." She actually used the word Joes.

Staggering drunk into her building at six o'clock that morning, she stumbled and fell against a bucket of dirty water that the washerwoman had left in her hallway. He easily picked up her frail frame. As he would tell Viale, "I removed the rags from her body, retaining only her panties, and put her to bed. Then I slipped out of the apartment."

A slightly hung-over Edith called him the next morning to invite him to go with her to the Lido that night to see "the most beautiful and long-legged showgirls in Paris. Most of them, my dear, are from London. They have everything I don't. Not just legs but breasts. Shapely asses."

At the Lido at the head table shared by Edith, Marlon gazed upon "the sexiest women I've ever seen in my life, all dancing bare-breasted," as he would relate to Viale. He was somewhat startled when Edith invited some of them to join her at table for champagne. All of the showgirls were eager to meet the great Edith Piaf. "I often come here when I'm lonely and invite some of the girls to go home with me to cook French fries," she told Marlon. To his surprise, she did just that. After the show Edith, Marlon, and seven Lido dancers piled into two taxicabs and headed back to her apartment.

Once there, Marlon devoured the long-limbed beauties. He soon learned that of all the Lido dancers, a blonde from London made the best French fries.

The next day Marlon told Viale that he was hoping for an orgy. Roger Vadim had already told Marlon of Edith's lesbian tendencies and of her ongoing affair with Marlene Dietrich. But before dawn broke across the sky, Edith ushered the Lido girls out the door.

Apparently Marlon had proved his worthiness to her, and it was she who invited him to share her bed. He realized his mistake had been in getting into her bed on the previous night without an invitation.

Before taking off her clothes, she warned him, "I'm not a pervert. I noticed that the American men I sleep with think all French women are whores and will do all those nasty things their wives back home won't do for them. I believe in hygienic love. If you want dirty love, get yourself a whore from

Pigalle."

As she removed her final wardrobe, a pair of panties, he took in her small, frail body. "Also, I don't like men who get all sentimental with me and start crying for their mothers in the middle of the night. I want a man. Not a cry baby. And a final warning. If you want to go to bed with me, you must seduce Edith Piaf—not EDITH PIAF!"

The following day, Marlon told Viale, "Finally, I fucked her after days of foreplay. She was still asleep when I left her bed in the late morning. She looked deathly pale. In fact, she didn't even seem to be breathing."

Marlon became so concerned that he even called Gerard Mille and asked him to place a discreet call to see if Edith were all right. She informed Gerard that she viewed Marlon like a "meteor." This was the word she used for all her one-night stands. "He streaks across the Piaf sky and gives off a bright glow before falling to earth and turning into a cold piece of stone from outer space."

* * *

Jean Cocteau did not come to Paris to meet Marlon but sent an invitation for him to visit him at his country home at Milly in the Ile de France. Eager to meet Cocteau, Marlon arrived at the author and filmmaker's address where Joan of Arc had reputedly slept.

Marlon later told Jacques Viale and Christian Marquand that he'd been shocked at Cocteau's fakir-thin body with legs so willowy they evoked broomsticks. He extended a frail hand that looked as if it would be crushed if squeezed too tightly. The discolored yellow fingernails revealed his addiction to opium. To Marlon, Cocteau had a "slightly fish eyed look" which, even so, still managed to express an inner torture that suggested that all his dreams had gone unfulfilled. "Those were the saddest eyes I've ever seen," he told Vadim. "They were so filled with pain that I felt I was looking into the doorway to Hell." When questioned how Cocteau's eyes could be so expressive and still fish-eyed, Marlon mumbled something and changed the subject.

Jean Cocteau

In Milly, Cocteau put his delicate hand into Marlon's stronger grip as he proudly showed off his garden which was carved into oblongs like an herbarium from the Middle Ages. He was especially proud of his espaliered pear trees. Apparently, Cocteau and Marlon had made a silent agreement never to bring up the subject of Marlon's appearance with Tallulah Bankhead in *The Eagle Has Two*

Heads. It was a distasteful memory for both of them.

Sitting on a bench in front of a bust of a sinister-looking jinni, Cocteau got to know Marlon. He'd seen him perform as Stanley on Broadway but had never gone backstage to meet him. Cocteau later told a friend, "the savage beast from the American Midwest in all his manly glory and with his muscles intact has arrived at my humble abode. Just as he raped Blanche DuBois, I know he will go even beyond that limit with me and rip my very heart from my chest."

Marlon seemed amused that on the day of their meeting, Cocteau was having a bad hair day which made him look like a crazed scientist from some 1930s film. His frizzy hair shot out in all directions, as if he'd just undergone an electric shock treatment.

Before lunch that day, Cocteau invited Marlon inside his house to show him to the guest bedroom. Marlon wandered about as if he'd entered a very eccentric museum. Surely the gilded imitation fruit trees were a bit much for his own taste. Certainly he must have received a jolt when gazing upon a mammoth ten-foot tusk of a narwhal. Art Nouveau wallpaper had been plastered on every wall, at one point forming a backdrop for Bérard's large painting of Oedipus and the Sphinx.

As Cocteau stood as close as he could to Marlon, measuring himself against Marlon's larger frame, he said, "I feel like a very old pretzel standing next to a slab of prize Grade A American beef."

Over lunch Cocteau introduced Marlon to "my protégé," Edouard Dermithe, whom he affectionately called "Doudou." The sexy Italian/Yugoslav appeared in the smallest and tightest bikini Marlon had ever seen, one obviously designed to show off his heavy endowment. To Marlon, it was obvious that Doudou was a pet toy. "Doudou is a painter of male nudes," Cocteau told Marlon. "Before you head back to Paris, you must pose for him, of course."

Marlon accepted that offer. Three days later, Cocteau's dear friend, Woodrow Parrish-Martin, an American artist, arrived from New York to spend a few days at Milly. He found Doudou painting a nude Marlon in Cocteau's garden. As Parrish-Martin later reported, Marlon was frontally nude but draped in a Roman toga with boots. Cocteau had placed a *faux* Doric pillar beside Marlon.

As ridiculous and preposterous as this scene may have appeared, it would be repeated by Marlon when he agreed to appear in the 1953 release of *Julius Caesar*, a film in which he would be half dressed but with his genitals concealed.

"I wasn't privy to all the secrets of the Cocteau household that summer," Parrish-Martin recalled. "But I do know that Cocteau, Brando, and Doudou

were sleeping together in the master bedroom's four-poster with a lavish canopy. I was never invited to join them."

He also reported that Doudou and Marlon frequently sunned themselves in the nude in the garden, Cocteau making frequent appearances in a red silk Japanese robe. "He was deeply committed to his opium," Parrish-Martin claimed. "To me, this was a household of black orchids. Incidentally, the black orchid was Cocteau's favorite flower."

Woodrow Parrish-Martin

Parrish-Martin was still a houseguest at Cocteau's when Marlon departed for Paris. He turned a deaf ear to Cocteau's pleadings for him to appear as Stanley in the French version of *Streetcar*. "There's no way in Hell that I'm going to play Stanley again in any language, including Finnish. I'm also turning down the film version if offered. Let Anthony Quinn do the role and fuck it up!"

During the course of Marlon's visit, Cocteau had learned that Marlon had studied dance, even the ballet. On several occasions, Cocteau promised to write a ballet in which Marlon would star, with a final scene danced in the nude. "It'll be a sensation in Paris." Marlon made it clear that he no longer wanted to be a ballet dancer.

Parrish-Martin felt that Cocteau found Marlon "sexually mesmerizing," but he completely misjudged Marlon's own fascination with him. "I think Cocteau was just a momentary diversion for Marlon. Marlon had a history of renting out his body—without pay, that is—to a number of famous men. Receiving a blow-job from some famous person meant very little to him. Certainly it didn't suggest an emotional attachment."

When Cocteau bade Marlon *adieu*, Doudou was conveniently taking his one-hour morning bath. Cocteau told Marlon, "My love for my fellow man has always involved the capitulation of myself. My love always leads to the forfeiture of myself and my own manhood. I have given everything and received so little in return. With you, it could have been so different. We could have been involved with each other on equal terms. It could have been so different with you."

Before heading out, Marlon enigmatically replied, "It would have been different all right."

* * *

Marlon went to see the 1945 French film, Marcel Carné's monumental

Les Enfants du paradis (Children of Paradise) three times. Later he called it "maybe the best movie ever made."

"I was mad about Arletty," he told Fiore. "I mean, I was really in love with her. My first trip to Paris, I asked to meet Arletty. I went to see her as though I were going to a shrine. My ideal woman. Wow! Was that a mistake, was that a disillusionment. She was a tough bird. Her feathers, and she'd covered herself with a lot of them, grew in all the wrong directions. She devastated me. It took a while for me to pick up the pieces."

Long before the arrival of Catherine Deneuve, Jean Cocteau had pronounced Arletty "the most beautiful woman ever captured on film." When he was planning to adapt *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the Paris stage, he naturally asked her to play the fading Blanche DuBois. In 1949, Arletty, though still in possession of her great beauty, was fifty-one years old, but looked much younger. She was the Marlene Dietrich of Paris. "Regardless of how deep I move into age, I will be the eternal *femme fatale*," she told Cocteau who agreed with her.

In post-war France, Arletty was at the nadir of her once-fabled popularity in French films of the 1930s. At the time Marlon arrived in Paris, Arletty was trying to live down charges that she'd been a Nazi sympathizer during the occupation of France. In 1945, she'd been sent to prison for having an affair with a German officer. "My heart is French," she told an astonished judge, "but my arse is international."

The partisan French referred to Parisian women who slept with Nazis as "horizontal collaboration." First thrown into the Drancy concentration camp, Arletty was later sent to Fresnes prison near Paris where she languished for 120 days. When released, she was put under house arrest for another two years.

When Marlon first met her, she was still under a three-year suspended sentence and had to report to a parole officer. The judge had forbidden her to appear on the screen until the Forties came to an end, although he had not ruled out stage work. When Cocteau offered her the role of Blanche DuBois, she accepted it.

Arletty

Marlon attended the opening night of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in Paris. He would later write to Edith Van Cleve in New York that he found Arletty's Blanche "more authentic than that of Jessica Tandy." But overall he found the Parisian version of *Streetcar* "a vulgarization of Tennessee's work—a bastard child, really." He

noted that Cocteau had included such bizarre touches as nude belly dancers undulating in the background.

Back in New York, Marlon told Carlo Fiore that the French actor playing Stanley—he couldn't remember "the joker's name"—was pathetic. "To show emotion, the fucker kept leaping over the stage furniture—not just the chairs but the table as well. He made me and the audience…well, 'jumpy.'"

After the performance, he eagerly went backstage to meet Arletty at long last. He had not shaved in three days, and his jeans were so dirty and smelly they could stand up on their own legs. His hair was a tangled mess. Biographer Charles Higham wrote, "Arletty came from a tradition in which stars dressed like stars, people got themselves up to go to the theater, and nobody came backstage without an invitation. She snubbed him, and he was mortified."

This is the "accepted gospel" as promulgated in other Brando biographies as well. However, Arletty's maid and longtime companion, Mme. Jacqueline Triolet, had a far different story to tell about her mistress and "this upstart young American actor." It was true that Arletty dismissed Marlon when she first saw him. However, Cocteau told her who he was and what a sensation he'd been on the New York stage playing Stanley.

Out of respect for his acting genius, Arletty contacted Marlon and invited him for lunch the following day. Cocteau had warned Marlon to appear in his one decent suit of clothing. On their second meeting, Arletty saw beyond the dress and found Marlon charming. Since the beginning of the war, she'd had a fondness for young men, especially handsome, virile young men. "I share that trait in common with Cocteau," she once said.

Far from rejecting Marlon this time as she had backstage, she invited him to spend the night in her boudoir. The following afternoon she took him to her tailor who hastily designed two suits for "my new protégé," as she referred to him. A dark suit was to be worn at night when he'd accompany her to chic parties. A lighter suit was made for daytime wear, especially long drawn out lunches in the Bois de Boulogne.

"She wanted to turn me into her kept boy," Marlon told Fiore. "Light her cigarettes at parties. Freshen up her drink. Fuck her silly all night and then have freshly brewed coffee waiting for her when she took off her satin domino the next morning. Arletty wanted a combination sex slave and manservant."

At one point during their short-lived and mismatched romance, Arletty asked him if he'd play Stanley opposite her. "I can easily get that jackal playing Stanley fired," she told him. She said that in just a week she could teach him all of Stanley's lines in French. "We'll be a big hit, far bigger than I am now. Later, we can take *Streetcar* on a tour of the provinces and really haul in the francs."

He never formally turned down the offer. Apparently, Arletty was not aware that both the Mille brothers and Cocteau had made a similar offer to Marlon, which also had been refused. Perhaps the offer was too much for Marlon to handle. Or maybe he was growing tired of *tout Paris*.

As he wrote Edith, he was heading south to Rome. "All the so-called intellects, like Sartre, spend their nights drinking and attacking America. There is a lot I don't like about my own country either. But I'm just tired of it. I'm heading for Rome to sample the climate down there."

Regrettably, he left no forwarding address, even though Edith was desperately trying to get in touch with him to present movie offers, especially one from Stanley Kramer.

Upon his return to America, he gave her more details about Arletty, though not many. "One morning when she removed her satin domino, she found that her 'boy' had fled the nest. I didn't even leave her a note thanking her for her hospitality and the use of her overripe pussy."

Over a dinner in Brooklyn with Fiore, he said, "Arletty might be an icon in French cinema, but to me she was just a vicious, devouring bitch. Whatever possessed this Nazi whore to think she could control the uncontrollable—namely me?"

* * *

Abandoning Paris, Marlon, along with Christian Marquand, took the train to Rome. Their compartment was so small that the two men practically slept on top of each other. Since they had to raise their bunk bed to use the toilet, they often held "pissing contests" out the train window to see which one could shoot the longest stream of urine.

Through some unknown friend in Rome, Christian had arranged a meeting for Marlon to meet Vittorio De Sica, the Italian actor and director. At some point during his stay in Paris, Marlon had convinced himself that he wanted to make a film debut after all, but only in a neo-realistic Italian movie directed by De Sica.

De Sica was one of the chief exponents of neo-realism in the Italian cinema, and of all the directors in Rome at the time Marlon most admired his work. On four different occasions, he'd seen *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief), released in 1948. It's the tender story of a working class man whose bicycle is stolen, and it had won a special Academy Award for best foreign language film before the category was created.

There was much that Marlon admired about De Sica, including his employment of nonprofessional actors and location shooting to make scenes as realistic as possible. He liked the way De Sica used social issues as a theme

Vittorio De Sica

in his movies. "Just the kind of movies I'd want to make myself," Marlon had told Roger Vadim before leaving Paris.

At the time of the arranged meeting between Marlon and De Sica, the director/actor was at the peak of his creative powers and a long way from his posthumous film in 1974, *Il Viaggio* (The Voyage) that told of a turgid romance with an unlikely pair of lovers, Richard Burton and Sophia Loren.

In 1949, De Sica had starred in a film, *Domani è troppi tardi* (Tomorrow Is Too Late), with a fragile teenage actress of unvarnished beauty, Anna Maria Pierangeli, who in short time would be sent to Hollywood and hailed as "The Little Garbo" and billed as Pier Angeli. At the Venice Film Festival the following year (1950) her film would be named best Italian movie of that year, and Pier would win the award as best performance by an Italian actress.

Though De Sica was aware of Marlon's performance as Stanley on Broadway, he had not actually seen the play himself. Many friends of his had seen it, and had only glowing reports to deliver back to Rome. De Sica told his associates that he was flattered that Marlon had expressed an interest in working with him, a desire rather evocative of Ingrid Bergman's wish to work with De Sica's rival, Roberto Rossellini. Even before Marlon and Christian arrived in Rome, De Sica was polishing a film called *Homecoming* in English. He envisioned Marlon playing the male lead, with Pier Angeli cast as his young Neapolitan wife.

According to Christian, De Sica started pitching his film to Marlon within an hour of their meeting. "I want you in my story to undergo an emotional transformation on the screen." Marlon would play a young Italian soldier returning in 1945 to his hometown, war-ravaged Naples. There he would painfully learn that his young wife, Pier Angeli, had been a prostitute to Nazi soldiers as means of putting food on the table for her two children, a boy and a girl. De Sica hoped that Marlon could dramatize the inner conflict he felt about his wife being a prostitute as part of a desparate move to keep her children from starving. At one point in the proposed film, De Sica wanted the young boy to say, "She did it for us, papa. So we would have food. When you went to war, you left us to die!" Marlon was tremendously intrigued with this neo-realistic film, and, according to Christian, considered it for one week as a possible vehicle for his film debut.

When De Sica learned that Marlon was a brilliant mimic and could imi-

tate an Italian accent perfectly, he claimed that he would hire a voice coach for him. "No actor is needed to dub for you. Your Italian is perfect, if only you understood the words. But I will tell you what emotion to express."

"I have a commitment to examining the lives of the poor," De Sica told Marlon. "I'm devoted to Communism. If you have a true heart, you too will convert to Communism. You look well fed. Much of Europe, even today, goes to bed hungry, especially young children."

To illustrate his point, De Sica invited Marlon to join him on his nightly rounds across Rome where he called on what he labeled "the invisible ones." Marlon met a shoeshine boy only eight years old who wore rags and worked for meager tips. He met old women who lived by a lit fire at night near the Tiber and raided garbage cans outside restaurants for a few scraps of food. One pathetic old man begged for a few spare lire, claiming it was not for himself, even though he was starving. He wanted to purchase a saucer of milk for his dying dog whose flesh seemed eaten up with some devouring cancer-like disease.

The most pathetic case was a doe-eyed creature, slightly effeminate, but a boy of such great beauty that Marlon was awed by his looks. Since the age of eight, he'd been kept in a brothel where he was repeatedly raped by Nazi soldiers and members of Mussolini's Italian Fascist army, often at the rate of twenty men a night. After his ordeal, he could no longer utter sounds. De Sica paid an old woman to take care of the mentally damaged youth.

After the first week, Marlon was so impressed with De Sica that he told the director to draw up a contract. He would agree, or so he said, to sign for his first film role, although De Sica had only a six-page outline of the project.

"Good! Good!" De Sica said in the presence of Christian. "I am known for finding the unsuspected depths in an actor and bringing them out. Anna Magnani says I have an extraordinary sensitive touch with actors, especially children. You look like a man but I suspect you have the soul of a child. I will find your inner child and put it on film for all the world to see." Although not a homosexual, De Sica kissed Marlon passionately on the mouth in front of Christian. It wasn't a sexual come-on but a theatrical gesture to show his appreciation for this new talent who had mysteriously appeared on his doorstep.

De Sica introduced Marlon to his mistress, Maria Mercader. "I have lived with her since 1942 because my first wife, Giuditta Rissone, won't give me a divorce."

Based on the success of his *Bicycle* movie, De Sica had raised $125,000 for *Homecoming*, $10,000 of which he pledged to Marlon with another $5,000 going to Pier Angeli. "Women should always make less than men," De Sica said. "We don't want to spoil them."

During Marlon's brief stay in Rome, the proposed movie advanced to the point where De Sica arranged a luncheon meeting between Marlon and "my brilliant new discovery," whom he called "Anna." He predicted that she would become the biggest female star in Italian cinema.

Only ten days after Marlon met Pier Angeli, De Sica called Marlon's *pensione* near Stazione Termini. Unknown to Marlon, the director was a compulsive gambler. To gain a bigger budget for *Homecoming*, he had bet all his bankroll on the roll of the dice in an illegal casino in a hilltown near Rome. He'd lost every lira.

Shortly before his death in France in 1974, De Sica recalled, "Instead of introducing Brando to the world in 1950, I made the world take note of Sophia Loren when I made *La Ciociara* (Two Women) and released it back in 1961. Perhaps making a world-class star out of Sophia was a far greater accomplishment than putting Brando in his first film. He would not have been well cast as the Neapolitan soldier returning home to his prostitute wife. And what audience would ever believe that that angelic Pier Angeli could ever, under any circumstances, have been a prostitute?"

* * *

Even before Marlon met Pier Angeli for lunch at De Sica's home, the director had warned him that the teenager had had a very sheltered and cloistered life under the "hysterical protection" of her overpowering mother, Enrica. The mother, according to De Sica, was mainly concerned with preserving her daughter's virginity until a suitable Italian—and Italian only—husband could be found for her innocent daughter.

De Sica had discovered Pier Angeli—then known as Anna Maria Pierangeli—while strolling along Rome's Via Veneto. He gave her his card, asking if she'd like to be in the movies. From some other man, that would sound like a sexual come-on, but Enrica, who had always wanted to be an actress herself, already knew the fame of De Sica. Within weeks, Pier was cast in a star part opposite actor De Sica in *Domani è troppo tardi*, in which she played a disturbed teenager on the dawn of her sexual awakening.

The role, as Marlon soon discovered, could have been based on Pier's own life. De Sica told Marlon that during the shooting of the film, Pier at one point refused to follow directions and kiss the young boy playing opposite her.

"Not even a kiss," De Sica claimed. "Anna thinks a kiss from a boy will make her pregnant. Even Shirley Temple, Little Miss Lollipop, has been kissed on the screen. We finally got her to kiss the boy. Anna fainted."

Although he would seduce older women, especially when he was in his twenties, Marlon had a special fondness for teenage virgins. He was immedi-

Pier Angeli

ately attracted to Pier, finding her frail, tiny, and undeniably lovely—"as yet unsullied by the probing of my noble tool," as he told Christian Marquand.

Even though innocent, Pier after her first movie had become slightly more sophisticated—"but not much," in De Sica's words. "She'd learned, however, to indulge in guileless flirting. She played the teenager coquette over lunch that day with Marlon. He fascinated her. She'd never met anyone like him. I told my friend, Anna Magnani, that it was 'only a matter of days before Marlon does what no man has ever done before: get the virginal panties off Anna's ass.'"

Instead of Pier Angeli, Anna Magnani suggested that De Sica hook her up "with this American big shot, this Mr. Marlon Brando. He'll see how fast my panties come off, though they won't be virginal."

Marlon began his seduction of Pier by first winning over her mother, Enrica. He brought her gifts and even took her for a motorcycle ride one night through the narrow streets of Rome. Although he seemed to be wooing the mother, his ultimate target, according to Christian, "was to pierce that tight little hymen of Anna's."

Marlon soon discovered that mother and daughter had an "almost frightening co-dependence" on each other. When most girls of Pier's age in postwar Rome were pursuing boys, Pier, in spite of her initial screen success, still played with her dolls. She also had a particular affinity for stray animals, especially the thousands of starving cats who roamed the streets of Rome looking for rats. She brought them food at night, which Marlon helped distribute to the hungry felines. He told her of his own devotion to stray animals, which did more than anything to win her trust. "He was just setting her up for the kill," Christian said. "Marlon always got a hard-on when he was around an innocent girl, some far too young."

Christian claimed that Marlon's seduction of Pier, when it inevitably came, was "tantamount to rape. He took her fighting, protesting body on a grassy knoll near the Colosseum. Apparently, Anna never told her mother, Enrica would have ordered Marlon killed. After the rape, from what I heard, Pier withdrew into a shell. Her mother thought she had come down with some rare disease which no doctor could detect. Marlon found Pier in such a despondent state that he quickly dropped her and pursued other nocturnal adventures, often with me at his side."

However, through De Sica, Pier contacted Marlon, sending him a note. He found the note "amusing," sharing it with both De Sica and Christian. "After

that night with you," Pier wrote, "I belong to you—and just to you. No man in the world will ever do that to me but you! You are going to marry me! I just know it. I will become your beautiful bride. No one will ever know what happened between us. It will be our darkest secret. Even our children must not know what happened. I will tell them I was a virgin on my wedding night, and will insist that our own daughters go to their bridal beds as virgins."

Fleeing Rome, Marlon took the train with Christian to Naples where they sailed on to Palermo in Sicily. "Apparently, from what I learned, Pier desperately tried to get in touch with Marlon so that he could marry her," Christian said. "But more virgins and more trouble were already waiting Marlon in Sicily."

That seduction in Rome might have marked the end of Marlon's relationship with Pier. But it didn't. She was lured to Hollywood in 1950 at the age of eighteen. Once there, she would begin a meteoric rise to fame which would make her a household word in America.

Other actors, including Kirk Douglas, would temporarily enter her life. None was to become as famous as James Dean.

Only when Dean became involved with Pier did Marlon show a renewed interest. He didn't want Pier, and wasn't in love with her, but his plan—and it was a diabolical one—was to show Dean that he could take any woman—or any man, for that matter—from what Marlon increasingly called "my stalker and my clone," the way he contemptuously referred to his rival in Hollywood.

* * *

Vittorio De Sica had first met Anna Magnani when he'd cast her in *Teresa Venerdi* in 1941; it was released in America under the title of *Do You Like Women*? But it would be another Italian neo-realistic film director, Roberto Rossellini, who would make her famous when he cast her in *Open City* in 1944. That same year marked the launch of a tumultuous love affair between Anna and Rossellini.

At the time De Sica introduced this "volcanic earth mother" to Marlon, Rossellini had dumped her and had impregnated his new love, the already married Ingrid Bergman, causing a worldwide scandal.

Later, Marlon told Christian Marquand that he felt that Anna only inaugurated an affair with him to make Rossellini jealous. He might have captured the heart of the queen of Hollywood, virginal-looking Ingrid Bergman, but Anna wanted to show her former lover that she could run off with the newly crowned prince of Broadway, on the dawn of his becoming a major motion picture star. Rome was a small town in those days, and Anna was aware that word would soon reach Rossellini, whom Ingrid once claimed had been "the

love of Anna Magnani's life."

The one quality that Marlon liked about Anna was her ability to look straight into your eyes "with all the emotion there ever was," he said. "Even if telling a lie, she had the look of absolute honesty on her face. Actually, she was not into telling lies."

As Tennessee Williams once said of his dear friend, "I never heard a false word from her mouth."

She inhabited a universe all her own, and for two very brief and fleeting weeks in Rome Marlon became part of her world. De Sica later recalled his introduction of the volatile star to Marlon over dinner in a trattoria on the outskirts of Rome. "From the moment she met Marlon, she seemed obsessed with him," De Sica said. "And Anna was not a woman to keep her feelings to herself. Right at the table, she was crawling all over Marlon. It was obvious she couldn't wait to get him back to her apartment."

Marlon later told Christian what had happened on the night he returned to her apartment. "She took me out on her terrace and told me that she never goes to bed until the sun comes up. She said that sunrise gives a lovely glow over St. Peter's dome."

"It's the same light that greeted Michelangelo when he was designing his dome," she told Marlon. "Maybe a little more pollution to deal with today."

Although she drank only wine, she kept a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red Label on her coffee table for her male visitors. She also kept pretzels and peanuts, quickly learning that Marlon hated pretzels and devoured peanuts.

As they were holding each other and kissing each other passionately on the sofa in her living room, a handsome young man appeared from her bedroom, looking as if he'd been awakened. He was attired only in a pair of white boxer shorts.

Anna later translated their exchange in Italian for Marlon. He had told her that he had expected her to return home much earlier. She burst into fury at the sight of him. Rushing into her bedroom, she returned with his clothing, shouting at him in Italian. Without allowing him a chance to dress, she shoved him toward the door, kicking him out and tossing his clothes after him, evoking a scene in Marlon's own recent life in Paris.

Anna Magnani

Back on the sofa after the boy had left, she told Marlon that she'd given him a key but had demanded it back, telling him never to visit her again. "The trouble with men," she said, "is that they're hard to catch. But sometimes once you've

caught them, and you decide you don't really want them, it's hard to get rid of them. Let the bastard go back to the street life! He'll see what life is like when denied the comforts I offered him. My reward from him was to find out that he'd been cheating on me with other women."

Other than that he'd seduced Anna, Marlon gave De Sica and Christian few details of his first night—rather, morning—of love-making with Anna. "It must have been successful," Christian recalled, "since the following night she was driving him all over Rome."

Marlon claimed that she was the best driver he'd ever met. "She could have raced a chariot through the narrow streets of Rome and never had an accident," he later claimed. "She definitely could have been the star of *Ben-Hur*. Behind the wheel, she was fearless. Other drivers knew to make way for her."

During their brief romance, every evening was the same. She'd take him to one or another of her favorite *trattorie* for dinner. But she always called and asked what he wanted to do that night. She was merely being polite, having already mapped out the evening in exact detail. Knowing that Marlon had no real taste for food, she selected charming restaurants serving the best of regional food and usually opening onto one of the hidden squares of Rome.

The owner of a particular restaurant would always come out to greet her, ushering her to the finest table in the house and hovering over her for the rest of the night. Anna, according to Marlon, never looked at a menu, but always told the owner what she wanted for dinner.

She would even tell the chef how she wanted a dish prepared. Veal Marsala was one of her favorites. One night, in front of Marlon, she lectured a chef for fifteen minutes, discussing in the tiniest detail exactly how she wanted her veal prepared.

He noted that she had an unusual custom. After espresso, she would gather up all the leftover food on their table and place it in one of two sacks she carried with her. Then she would go from table to table, seeking food "donations" from the other diners. When she'd filled the sacks, she drove to the Colosseum where she'd deliver the food to the hungry stray cats that roamed Rome at night by the thousands. He was surprised that he'd indulged in somewhat this same pastime with Pier Angeli, making him wonder if all Roman women displayed such kindness toward strays.

One night at midnight at the Café Paris on the Via Vittorio Veneto, Anna and Marlon were at a sidewalk table enjoying a final drink, both ordering red wine. At the next table, a young blonde starlet, wearing a low-cut gown that hardly concealed her ample breasts, kept staring flirtatiously at Marlon, while breathing in deeply to expand the size of her already large bosom.

Finally, when Anna's jealousy could no longer be controlled, she got up

and ordered Marlon to leave at once with her. Picking up a full wine glass, she walked over to the starlet and poured the red liquid over her exposed breasts. "I was a whore before you were born," she said, stalking down the sidewalk to her car with Marlon trailing behind her.

Roberto Rossellini

Later, Marlon described Anna to Christian as "an enormous boiling cauldron likely to explode in fury at the slightest provocation." Her close friend, a priest, Father Antonio Lisandrini, meeting Marlon, described Anna as "a phenomenon of nature, incredible in love and anger."

Marlon became even more convinced of that as Anna often told him stories of her five-year affair with Rossellini in the post-war, pre-Bergman years. Once when staying in a villa along the Amalfi Coast, she made his favorite spaghetti for him. She seemed to be preparing it with love, even though she'd found out only that day about his ongoing love affair with Bergman.

When the dish was whipped up to perfection, she asked him to bend over to smell the wonderful aroma. As he leaned his face over the scalding hot pasta, she took her hand, and showing great strength, plowed his face into the burning food, causing him to scream in agony.

"He deserved that and more, the bastard," Anna told Marlon. "He betrayed me, dishonored our love." She claimed that one night when they both were staying in a suite at the Hotel Excelsior along the Via Veneto, Rossellini volunteered to take her two dogs for a walk. Downstairs, he left the animals with the concierge, hailed a taxi to the airport, and fled on a plane to New York. "All night I searched Rome for him, going to all his favorite clubs and restaurants hoping to find him. No Roberto."

One night she drove Marlon to a small trattoria along Via Appia Antica, the ancient route into Rome. It was after eleven o'clock which he thought was a little late to be heading out for dinner, even by Roman standards. The restaurant looked nearly deserted as she pulled up her car and turned off the lights. She waited behind the wheel with him in the passenger seat for about thirty minutes as the waiters appeared to be shutting down the trattoria.

Shortly thereafter, a man and a woman emerged from the restaurant, holding hands. The waiters had turned out the lights by then, and Marlon could not make out their faces. After putting the woman in the passenger seat, the man got behind the wheel of a red Cisitalia convertible and headed back toward Rome.

Anna started her car and trailed them, refusing to answer Marlon's ques-

tions. On the highway, the convertible was speeding, as was Anna. In what looked like an attempt to pass them by, Anna sideswiped their vehicle. Marlon in the passenger side felt the greatest impact and called out to her to stop. Once his car was hit, the unknown driver of the other car seemed to recognize Anna. Stepping on his accelerator, he tried to escape from her vehicle. Clearly the better driver, she too chased him with her iron foot on her own accelerator. Racing her car toward the rear end of his convertible, she gained speed on him, slamming into his car.

The vehicle in front, though damaged, speeded up again and left them along the deserted highway.

Anna pulled her wounded automobile to the side of the road and slumped over the steering wheel.

"Who was that?" he demanded to know.

"That was Roberto Rossellini and his Swedish whore, Ingrid Bergman," she said bursting into tears. "I still love the son of a bitch. I should have killed him."

He shared her pain as he was forced to listen to her sobs, later telling Christian that "Anna's tears were not of the ordinary. They were more like monstrous cathartic outbursts. They came like thunderous torrents."

"I felt like such a heel when I left her the following morning while she slept," Marlon said. "I didn't even leave a good-bye note. But it was time for me to move on."

In a final phone call to De Sica, Marlon said that, to him, Anna is "like a bad verismo opera. Nothing but outpouring of grief. She's all about threats and recriminations. She's ready to indulge in violence between torrents of meaningless tears. I can't live this way. I fear I will be her next victim. There is no future for us. Please understand me and thank you for everything. One day we'll make a great film together. The greatest!"

Marlon would not meet with Anna again until she was cast opposite him in the 1960 *The Fugitive Kind*, based on a play by Tennessee Williams.

Both Anna and Marlon at that time would create their own disasters both on and off the screen.

* * *

In Palermo, Christian received a telegram to return to Paris at once for a film job. He left Marlon to roam Sicily at his leisure. Marlon was later to tell *Playboy* magazine that "the most peaceful moment of my life" occurred when he was lying in a field of aromatic wildflowers in a park to the east of Palermo. With his shirt off, he lay in the grassy field as the sunlight of Sicily—praised by the ancients—tanning the muscled body so recently ravaged by Anna

Magnani and others.

What Marlon didn't tell *Playboy* was that while he was enjoying such a peaceful moment, an angry father with mob connections in Palermo had sent a junta looking for him. Only the night before Marlon had somehow managed to seduce the gangster's convent-reared daughter, taking her virginity. Her father was almost insane, having once vowed that "even if her own husband attempts to fuck my daughter, I'll have his dick cut off."

Somehow Marlon got word that he was a hunted man and sneaked onto a night boat bound for Naples. From there, he booked train passage all the way back to Paris, arriving with almost no money, having spent every lira. He had about ten francs when he arrived at the train station in Paris.

Once back in France, he made an astonishing decision given his choices. He could have lived in luxury with Christian or Roger Vadim, even Daniel Gélin. The Mille brothers would have taken him in, and most definitely Jean Cocteau would have extended another "sing-for-your-supper" invitation to his villa at Milly.

Marlon didn't even contact his newly made friends. Instead he preferred to hang out under bridges and on the streets with the *clochards*, (drunken beggars) of Paris.

Amazingly, in spite of his meager French, Marlon was adopted by these homeless ones, and it was in their company that he ventured out onto the streets of Paris at night, searching for scraps of food in the alleyways at the back of restaurants.

Smoking a cigarette on the set of *Streetcar*

Sent to Paris by Edith Van Cleve, her co-agent, Maynard Morris, had exhausted his hope of ever finding Marlon in such a large city with no address. Morris had called Roger Vadim and others who were known to have made friends with Marlon, but nobody in the film or theater world had heard from Marlon since he left for Italy. Christian thought he might still be in Sicily.

Maynard had booked passage on a flight leaving the next morning from Paris, heading to New York. He decided to take one final sentimental walk along the Seine before heading back to his hotel for the night.

What happened next was such a

Fred Zinnemann

coincidence that it might have appeared in a Charles Dickens novel.

As Morris was walking near a bridge by the Seine, he heard an American voice call out: "Hey, Maynard!" He was shocked and surprised. What Parisian beggar knew his name? Out of the shadows emerged Marlon, although Morris didn't recognize him at first. He looked like one of the *clochards* lurking in the background.

Marlon gladly accepted Morris' offer of a late-night dinner at a seedy bistro on the Left Bank. There Morris learned that someone had stolen Marlon's passport and that all his money was gone. Later Morris was telling Edith, "I couldn't believe it. Here every producer or director in Hollywood was clamoring for his services, and Marlon is out begging for food on the streets with the Parisian equivalent of the Bowery Bums."

Marlon's explanation was that he was "too proud" to visit his newly made French friends and that he wanted to test his survival skills by living on the street. Morris installed him once again at the Hotel Voltaire, paying his rent for one week. He gave Marlon about two hundred dollars in French francs, all the money the agent had left at that point. Marlon accepted it, promising to pay it back as soon as he got his first acting job.

Morris explained that as soon as he returned to New York the following day, he would have Edith send him a one-way ticket back to New York. Morris said that of all the offers that had come in for him, the most promising was a script called *The Men*, in which Marlon would be cast as the lead, playing a paraplegic. The film was to be directed by Fred Zinnemann. "Zinnemann's a rebel like me," Marlon told Morris. He'd seen the 1948 film, *The Search*, about Europe's displaced persons, and Marlon thought the movie had "social significance." The producer of *The Men* was to be Stanley Kramer."Kramer also has redeeming social importance," Marlon said, praising the movie the director had made, *Home of the Brave*, that explored racial prejudice in the U.S. armed forces.

"You're broke now," Morris said, "but you'll get forty thousand big ones for working on this film, after we take our cut, of course."

Three days later, Marlon received a telegram delivered to the Hotel Voltaire. It was from an ambitious young theatrical agent named Jay Kanter, who had moved to Hollywood and launched himself into a job in the West Coast office of MCA. He'd seen Marlon perform as Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire* three times but had never gone backstage to meet him.

Kanter enclosed a six-page outline of the script for *The Men*, and

expressed his eagerness to let Marlon be his "go-between" in negotiations with Kramer and Zinnemann. "Forty-thousand dollars is a lot of money," Kanter added as a postscript. "Hope you'll seriously consider this."

Tired of searching for a living in rotting garbage, Marlon wired Kanter back. "I'm on my way to Hollywood."

Before leaving Paris, a freshly scrubbed Marlon called on all the friends he'd made in Paris, especially Christian and Daniel Gélin.

During one final visit with Jacques Viale, Marlon said, "Finally, a Hollywood director has found a way to get me. He's decorated a tree with one-hundred dollar greenbacks instead of leaves. I'm going to appear in a film. What else is there for me? Take up hustling again? Return to the stage? Help dad in the cow shit business? Movies sound like an easy way to make some quick money without much work. Actually, I have no respect for the medium at all. I'll be back in New York before the first snowdrop falls."

* * *

After all his philandering in Europe, Marlon came back to New York and sequestered himself for ten days and nights in the apartment of his mousy looking friend, Wally Cox. "They never went out, never saw anybody, and his other friends had to wait their turn," said Edith Van Cleve. "At that time rumors were rampant that Wally was handy with the gentlemen. I can only imagine what Marlon and Wally did for those ten nights. I do know that they called for take-out to be delivered."

Wally's career was just beginning to take off at the time with his first serious television role in *School House*. But it would be more than two years before he would become a household word with his *Mr. Peepers*, also on TV.

When these two actors emerged from seclusion, they could be seen on their motorcycles on the streets of New York. "Wally might have looked slight, with timid features, but on that motorcycle, according to all reports, he was a daredevil demon," Edith said.

She was invited to join Wally and Marlon for his final night in New York, although she ended up picking up the tab at a little Sicilian trattoria in Greenwich Village.

Over a plate of spaghetti, Wally told Marlon, "You're going to become rich and famous. You're going to have major status to go with that fame, which will be worldwide, not just Broadway. You're going to attract a horde of hangers-on, the likes of which you've never seen. You attracted dozens of hangers-on back in the days when you were nobody. When you returned from Paris, you learned that some of your so-called friends had stolen all your possessions, even the underwear you rarely wear. You will attract more friends

like that in the days ahead."

"Don't worry your pretty little cocksucking head," Marlon said in front of Edith, flashing a smile to suggest he was joking. "I can handle whatever they throw at me. Those Nebraska winters are cold. It raises some tough boys. Tough enough to deal with those sun-kissed faggots with their orange-scented cologne water out there in Hollywood."

* * *

Crossing the vast American continent, Marlon read movie magazines. It seemed to him that the Hollywood he was heading to didn't seem too eager for new faces in the post-war years. The box-office champions remained Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, John Wayne, Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Gary Cooper, Clifton Webb, Randolph Scott, and even Abbott and Costello. Tyrone Power, Alan Ladd, Robert Taylor, James Cagney, and Errol Flynn were also clinging to their fans. Hollywood already had an impressive array of new faces, including Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Gregory Peck, and Kirk Douglas, with Glenn Ford and William Holden fast emerging. Not only that, but the entire film industry was threatened with the growing menace of television.

It was Broadway who'd discovered "baby Brando," as he sometimes called his early days in acting. Marlon was already twenty-five years old on that hot, sultry September day he first stepped down onto the steamy turf of Los Angeles. The train station was called Alhambra, and it was a stopover east of Los Angeles for the Santa Fe railroad. He'd arrived on the Super Chief, which all the stars like Katharine Hepburn took when riding the rails between Los Angeles and New York via Chicago.

Waiting for him at the station was young Jay Kanter, who was not only handsome but looked like a model who had just stepped from the pages of *Gentlemen's Quarterly*.

Originally hired to work in the mailroom at MCA, Marlon's talent representatives on the coast, Kanter was eventually assigned "to look after" Marlon. MCA's director, Lew Wasserman, had personally selected Kanter because he felt that Marlon could relate to someone his own age. "From all reports," Wasserman said to Edith in New York, "Brando needs a caretaker. You know, someone to wipe his ass after he shits, spoon feed him, put his dick into some starlet's pussy when he wants a good fuck."

Brando and Jay Kanter

The well-groomed Kanter quickly checked

Marlon's dress, as he'd heard stories, and was relieved to see that he wore shoes, or at least a pair of sneakers that looked as if they should have been retired to the back of the closet long ago. Kanter noted that his new star didn't wear socks, however. He was attired in a blue woolen suit which had a hole in the left knee, and the seat of his trousers had a wide rip.

All Marlon's clothing was crammed into a brown canvas handbag. Under his arm he'd tucked a copy of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.

In spite of their differences, Kanter and Marlon instantly bonded, so much so that when Marlon went to MCA to meet Lew Wasserman, he announced that "Jay is my new agent here." Almost overnight Jay was promoted from the mailroom to his own office with a secretary to go along with it.

Marlon is credited with giving Kanter's career a big push. Not only did he become the agent for Marlon, but he signed, among others, two other stellar clients, Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe. Marlon even watched in happy surprise as Kanter rose even higher, becoming the production chairman of the combined Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and United Artists.

After picking Marlon up at the train station, Kanter graciously invited him to move in with him, but Marlon wanted to be driven to Eagle Rock, a dreary working class suburb fifteen miles from Hollywood.

Even though she didn't want him and didn't have room, he was moving into the two-bedroom wooden cottage of Mrs. Betty Lindemeyer, Dodie's sister. The other bedroom was occupied at the time by Mrs. Elizabeth Meyers, Marlon's grandmother. Also occupying the cottage was Betty's husband, Oliver, who wasn't too happy to find Marlon sleeping on the sofa in the already overcrowded cottage.

Of the three occupants, Marlon preferred his feisty and good humored grandmother, whom he affectionately called "Nana."

En route to Eagle Rock, Marlon confessed his anxiety of having to face movie cameras with a broken nose. He pondered if he'd have enough time to have plastic surgery performed on his face before filming began. "You look beautiful," Kanter assured him.

That remark might have made Marlon wonder if Kanter was gay. He was not, but he was estranged from his wife, Roberta Haynes, although there was talk of the couple getting back together. Perhaps Kanter should not have confided that bit of information. If there was something Marlon liked, it was intruding into a marriage.

Kanter volunteered not his estranged wife at the time but a roster of available starlets, or even female movie stars who wanted to meet Marlon and were extending invitations. "I have no desire to go to Hollywood parties," he said, "and I prefer to date waitresses and secretaries instead of movie stars. I find female movie stars sticky, and I've known quite a few of them when I was

appearing as Stanley on Broadway. I find that by the time a woman becomes a movie star, she's been on too many casting couches and her pussy is stretched out of shape."

Nana and Betty had not seen "Bud," as they called him, in several years. They found he'd developed some strange new habits, like eating a pint of peanut butter a day and sucking on at least a dozen pomegranates every afternoon. Often he'd try to spit the seeds on the ceiling. He had the disgusting habit of downing six raw eggs every morning. "He'd stand at my kitchen sink," Betty recalled, "cracking a raw egg and holding it over his mouth. Sometimes the egg would slide down his gullet but on a few occasions the slimy stuff landed on my linoleum floor."

Sometimes Marlon would be found sleeping on the sofa in the morning; at other times he'd be gone all night.

"A lot of guys on motorcycles came by to pick him up at night," Betty said. "They looked like an unsavory crowd to me." Again, Marlon unknowingly might have been in rehearsal for a future film, *The Wild One*. Betty expressed her fear in a letter to Dodie that her son might end up in San Quentin before he even became a film star.

Dodie wrote back that Marlon Sr. was anxious to invest Marlon's $40,000 earnings in a cattle ranch in Nebraska, and indeed he would in time, "losing every cent of Bud's dough," as Dodie would later put it.

In an attempt to improve Marlon's wardrobe, now that he was a movie star, Betty and Nana took him to a department store in Los Angeles where they purchased a pair of brown gabardine slacks for him and a Scottish sweater in mint green. "He looked real nice in his new clothes," Betty said.

Marlon put on the sweater before the two women boarded the elevator with him. On the way down, he took out a pack of matches and began burning off the sweater's fuzz. Before the elevator reached ground level, it looked like he was trying to turn himself into a human torch. Betty quickly took off her coat and smothered the flames. Amazingly, Marlon was not burned. "We never tried to dress him again," Betty said.

Sometimes Marlon would have supper with his family, and would shock his relatives with his bad table manner. "He'd lower his face right down to the food and slurp it down, making loud noises." Betty said "I liked Bud but, frankly, we were glad to see him go, big-time movie star or not."

When Betty asked if Marlon would give them his forwarding address, he reported that he'd be living from now on in the paraplegic ward of the Birmingham Veterans Hospital at Van Nuys. "You can visit me there," he told Nana and Betty. "But don't be surprised if you find me in a wheelchair with a urine bottle."

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Originally entitled *Battle Stripe, The Men* was based on a screenplay by Carl Foreman. The director was to be Fred Zinnemann, with Stanley Kramer the producer. Marlon had been cast as Ken Wilchek, a former infantry lieutenant paralyzed from the waist down and sentenced to life in a wheelchair. A Nazi sniper's bullet had smashed into his spine in the closing days of World War II, according to the plot. A great deal of the film was to take place in a paraplegic ward, with actual victims cast in some of the parts, a touch of realism insisted upon by both Zinnemann and Kramer.

Cast in the sappy role of Marlon's devoted fiancée was Oscar winner Teresa Wright, who had gained nationwide fame in *Mrs. Miniver* and in another postwar film, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, which brought her a second Oscar, playing the love interest of Dana Andrews. Teresa, with her sad eyes and an aching vulnerability in her voice, was hoping to repeat this 1946 artistic and box office triumph with *The Men*, even though she'd be forced to deliver such corny lines as "I'm not marrying a wheelchair, I am marrying a man."

When he read the full script, including his own part of Ken Wilochek, Marlon wrote Dodie, "Here I am in Hollywood playing another Polack."

Zinnemann, a mild-mannered Viennese-born director, was eager to greet Marlon, and a meeting was arranged between the two by Jay Kanter. "I consider you and Monty Clift the two most adventurous actors of our time, and it's been a pleasure working with Monty on *The Search* and I'm looking forward with much anticipation of directing you in *The Men*," Zinnemann in his courtly way told Marlon.

Marlon's response startled Zinnemann. "I hope you're paying me more money than you paid Monty. He and I had an affair in New York, you know."

Zinnemann didn't know.

"I made him my bitch," Marlon claimed. "Now I guess you know who's the top gunner."

Assuming Zinnemann's role, Marlon rather arrogantly warned the director, "I refuse to be too much of a hero in this film. My character has to show his petulant, self-pitying side."

After he'd recovered from all that, Zinnemann told Marlon how he wanted the role played—"that of a young man whose body has betrayed him."

Zinnemann was somewhat surprised at Marlon's request, but agreed to it. Marlon actual-

Teresa Wright

ly wanted to live for three weeks at the VA facility in a "rehearsal period" before shooting began. He didn't want the other paraplegics to know that he was an actor, since it was unlikely that any of them had seen *Streetcar* on Broadway. He planned to join in the same arduous exercises and therapy the other patients underwent, including extensive time spent in the pool. Zinnemann met with Pat Grissom, president of the Paralyzed Veterans Association, and he agreed to intercede on Marlon's behalf at the hospital. He also agreed at the right time to reveal Marlon's identity and to request permission from certain of the vets to actually appear as actors in *The Men*.

The hospital checked Marlon in as a patient, although he nearly blew his cover on the first day by scratching his crotch. "I don't understand, man," one of the patients said, noting Marlon's action. "You don't have any feeling there, do you?"

Marlon responded, "Old habits die hard."

Later, Grissom claimed that Marlon "must be a great actor. He was fitted for leg braces, and I received a report from the attendant that Marlon was paralyzed from the tenth dorsal vertebra down."

Marlon blended well with the other veterans, becoming "one of the guys." He later confessed to Zinnemann that he sometimes became so upset that he had to wheel himself into the bathroom "to throw up."

"These guys put up with a lot," he told Zinnemann when he came to visit one day. "Not being able to walk for one thing. Shitting their pajamas another. But I think the worse thing they have to face—and you should bring this out in your movie—is that they can never fuck their wives or girlfriends again. That's what is primary on their minds. They feel that even though their women are loyal now, they will eventually betray them with other men."

On another day Zinnemann brought the screenwriter, Carl Foreman, to meet privately with Marlon on the grounds of the hospital. "Imagine me making my screen debut playing someone impotent," Marlon said. "Me! Of all people. Me, whose noble tool has serviced half the world and is ready, willing, and able to service the other half."

"Surely, you exaggerate," a stunned Foreman managed to counter.

"I have no fear about your acting ability," Zinnemann said."I have complete confidence that you'll charge the role with erotic power though you're unable to get a hard-on. I saw you on Broadway. Even though the two characters of Stanley Kowalski and Ken Wilocek are entirely different, I want you to appear as the sexiest man the world has ever seen in a wheelchair."

During his confinement, Marlon became extremely attached to one handsome twenty-three-year-old veteran (his family has requested that his name not be revealed). He was not a paraplegic but a quadriplegic. "Not even able to light a cigarette," Marlon said.

Famous ass shot

After only a few days, the vet, who will be called "Steve," revealed himself to be a homosexual to Marlon and confided that he planned to commit suicide. "There is no life left for me," Steve told Marlon.

During the course of his stay, Marlon became very protective of Steve and had all his meals with him and helped him exercise as much as was possible for him.

As Zinnemann later learned, one night an attendant, checking the ward, discovered Steve performing "an act of fellatio" on Marlon in the men's room. The attendant asked Zinnemann if he should report this to the hospital authorities. The director urged him not to. "Don't you realize?" Zinnemann said, "Marlon was performing a noble deed, giving a poor wretched soul a little pleasure in a life where virtually all other pleasure has been denied. Please say nothing of this."

Before the filming of *The Men* ended, Zinnemann reported to Marlon that Steve had committed suicide, although it was never revealed exactly how a

man without use of his arms and legs managed to kill himself. Marlon was very saddened and asked Zinnemann if he could take three days off from shooting to attend Steve's funeral and visit with his family. Already on a tight budget, Zinnemann agreed to that, feeling "I could not deny such a request although the studio was likely to yell at me for running over the budget."

The producer, Kramer, also anonymously visited Marlon at the hospital to introduce himself. Kramer told Marlon that he'd seen him in *Streetcar* but had also seen him perform opposite Tallulah Bankhead in "that turkey," *The Eagle Has Two Heads*. He laughingly recalled that when he was backstage he heard Marlon talking to Tallulah. Quoting Marlon to himself, Kramer said, "I'm going to go to bed with you tonight." According to Kramer, Tallulah didn't miss a beat and responded, "Indeed you shall, my dear boy, indeed you shall."

The day he met Kramer, Marlon made a strange request. He asked him to have one of his assistants deliver some porno movies to the ward so that the guys could enjoy them. "They've got to get their rocks off some way," Marlon told Kramer. "It's all harmless and might give the boys some pleasure." The very liberal-minded Kramer agreed that was a reasonable request and even privately bribed two night orderlies to allow the films to be shown. At nine o'clock, three porno movies from Kramer's own collection arrived to be shown to the paraplegics. Kramer later asked Zinnemann, "How did Brando know I collected pornography?"

Earlier that day, Marlon had asked Kramer to wheel him into the men's toilet. He didn't want the other patients to see that he could stand erect at the toilet and take a leak. When the coast was clear, Kramer signaled Marlon that he could stand up and piss. To his surprise, Marlon sat on the toilet seat.

"Listen, if you're going to take a crap, I'm out of here," Kramer told him. "I can't stand to watch anybody take a shit."

"No, I'm taking a piss," Marlon said.

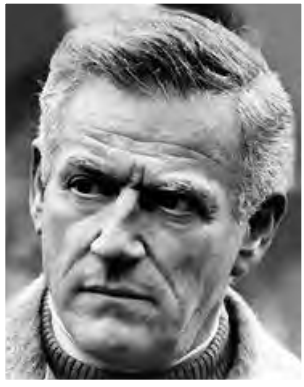
At first Kramer thought Marlon was sitting down in case another paraplegic wheeled himself into the toilet.

"I always sit down on the toilet seat to take a piss," Marlon told him. "I have done that all my life, and I will continue to do it."

"You mean, like a woman?" Kramer asked.

"Exactly like a woman does it," Marlon replied. "A piss is always better sitting down. Women know best. I do many things a woman does. I can take a man's dick, and on occasion I even wear women's lingerie."

"I heard you go both ways," Kramer said, "but are you a total fag?"



Stanley Kramer

"Labels mean nothing to me," Marlon said, shaking himself off and pulling up his pants to jump back into the wheelchair. "Wheel me back to the ward!" he commanded an astonished Kramer, still trying to adjust to his male star's words. Finally, he broke into a laugh. "Elia Kazan warned me. You're a real kidder. Always trying to put people on. You're a good actor. I'm hard to fool, and for one brief moment back there in the crapper you almost had me believing you."

Even before Marlon started shooting *The Men*, two movie offers arrived for him, both delivered by Kanter. The first was to appear in a film noir boxing drama, *The Harder They Fall*, based on a novel by Budd Schulberg, who would later write the screenplay for *On the Waterfront*. Marlon turned down the role which would not be filmed until 1956, starring Humphrey Bogart and Rod Steiger.

Marlon also turned down the part of Raul Fuentes in *The Brave Bulls*. He told director Robert Rossen, who was under investigation by the House on Un-American Activities, that he was opposed to bullfighting and could not appear in a film about cruelty to animals. "Offer the role to Anthony Quinn," Marlon told Rossen. "He wants to be me anyway." Marlon still bristled at any report in print that Quinn was a better Stanley Kowalski on the stage than he was. To his surprise, Marlon's suggestion was taken. Quinn accepted the offer to play Raul Fuentes in *The Brave Bulls*, released in 1951.

Not all producers or directors were eager to hire Marlon. Alfred Hitchcock derided Method actors to the press. "As for Brando's Method acting," he said, "if I ever directed him in a film and he asked me what his motivation for a scene was, I'd tell him your motivation is your paycheck, sucker!"

Marlon had refused to sign a seven-year contract, and he would be free after he finished *The Men* to choose his next role. He was well aware that preparations were under way for the filming of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and he knew that he'd be asked to repeat his role of Stanley on film. Even though he still publicly proclaimed he would turn down the role, if offered, he wrote to Dodie that, "It is almost an inevitable conclusion that I'll tell the fuckers yes. I am turning down all other offers and holding myself open to appear in *Streetcar* when the time comes—that is, if Irene and Tennessee can overcome all the censorship problems they'll have with this steamy drama. The way I figure it, the longer I appear as the reluctant debutante, the higher the final offer will be. If the shits want me to play Stanley, they'll have to pay my price. Fifteen thousand dollars for every inch of my dick." Marlon and Dodie never carried on typical mother-son dialogues.

Alfred Hitchcock

On his last night in the hospital, the ward was visited by

two Christian Scientists, Ethel Derrimann and Rebecca Hoover, both of whom appeared to be religious fanatics. Ostensibly to bring magazines and comfort to the men, the two zealots were actually there to convert. Derrimann preached to the cynical men in the ward, claiming that hospitals weren't the answer to their paralysis. "Only prayer and a belief in the Lord Jesus can save you!" she shouted at the men who were growing restless and hostile.

The only man in the ward who listened intently to every word was Marlon himself. Perhaps both Hoover and Derriman believed that they were converting him. Hoover added, "If your faith is great enough in the Lord, you can not only walk again but father children again."

At that false claim, Marlon jumped out of his wheelchair. Looking at him in horror, the two women did not at first comprehend what was happening, staring in disbelief.

Suddenly, deciding to reveal his true condition to the other vets in the ward, Marlon spun his chair across the room and stood proudly on his own feet. In front of his astonished audience, he performed a tap dance to rival Fred Astaire.

"I'm cured!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "I'm cured! He did a buck-and-wing as he raced toward the exit, crying, "It's a miracle! It's a miracle! I can walk!" He turned to the ladies for his exit line, "I can fuck again!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, sending three orderlies flying toward the ward to see what was happening.

The last these men saw of Marlon was a vision of him racing across the night-lit grounds of the hospital and jumping over an eight-foot fence with the agility of a pole vaulter.

* * *

Marlon became known for seducing many of his leading ladies in his films. Not so with Teresa Wright who had been cast as his fiancée in *The Men*. After meeting her on the set, he told Fred Zinnemann, "Have no fear you're going to be coping with an off-screen romance. After all, I'm not paralyzed from the waist down. Miss Wright is too squeaky clean for me. I don't think I could raise my noble tool for action with that one."

Speaking of their on-screen emoting, Teresa told Zinnemann, "there is just no chemistry between Marlon and me. As you know, I'm the only actress in Hollywood nominated for an Academy Award for each of my first three films. I'll not prepare my Oscar acceptance speech for *The Men*."

On the second day of shooting, Marlon told Zinnemann, "I suppose Miss Wright has ethereal talents, and that's why she doesn't pose in bathing suits or grant interviews with fan magazines. I applaud her for not sucking up to those

A scene from *The Men*

rags, but I'm not sure about this girl-next-door image of hers. I never liked the gal next door. I prefer women to be in my own house, in my own bed, not next door."

Teresa confronted Marlon during the first week of the shoot. "Some moronic columnist is promoting a romance between us. I hope it's not being planted by George Glass." She was referring to a movie publicity veteran who'd been hired to promote *The Men*. "I have it in my contract that there will be no leg art, no manufactured romances written about me by those two witches, Hedda and Louella, and no ermine-and-orchid settings for me. I also had my agent put in my contract that I'm not to be photographed running on the beach with my hair flying in the wind or looking insinuatingly at a Thanksgiving turkey. Samuel Goldwyn didn't always honor my contract. Most of his direction to me was, 'Let your breasts flow in the wind!'"

"Thanks for telling me this," he said. "I'll try not to be photographed with my hand in your bra."

"Don't be sarcastic with me, Mr. Brando," she said. "I have you know that Samuel Goldwyn paid me $125,000 a picture. For *The Men*, I'm getting only $20,000, half of what you're being paid."

"Even so," he said, "that's not too bad for a girl who didn't finish high school until she was twenty. Not me. I have a degree from Harvard University." He walked away, later telling Zinnemann, "Miss Wright's slightly warbling voice emerges from a steely core."

From the very beginning, and based on his experience living with the paraplegics in the V.A. Hospital, Marlon expressed his opinion that the film tended to avoid any issues graphically associated with his character's impotence. He clashed with both Kramer and Zinnemann. The normally mild-mannered Zinnemann responded in anger, "What am I supposed to do? Insert scenes showing you eating out Teresa's pussy? Without actually depicting it, the audience will be smart enough to know that by agreeing to marry you, Teresa has forever abandoned hope of penetration and will have to be satisfied with cunninlingus for the rest of her life."

"And what about a lifetime of changing my diapers?" Marlon said. "What about incontinence? We've got to work that in here somewhere. I mean, I lived in that ward. Every night the men pissed and shit all over themselves. I even followed their example. Every night I took a big crap in my hospital bed."

Teresa also complained to Zinnemann that "my best scenes have ended up on the cutting room floor." She was referring to a subplot which cast her opposite an actor, a healthy, full-bodied man, who was competing for her affection against Marlon. Zinnemann later said that the actor hired to play Marlon's rival was the son of one of the financial backers of *The Men*. "When Kramer and I saw the rushes, we realized he couldn't act at all. Instead of casting another actor in the role, and offending the backer, we dropped the subplot altogether and left it on the cutting-room floor. I figured this was the more diplomatic solution."

In later life, when Teresa started to grant interviews after her career was virtually over, she said, "Because of censorship problems, we never really came to terms with the unspoken problem in *The Men*. How was Brando, a paraplegic, going to make love to me when we got married? What kind of marriage were we going to have? What kind of love making? The issue remained relatively unspoken in *The Men*. If the film were being made today, perhaps it would be more graphic."

Teresa's husband, screenwriter Niven Busch, had warned her not to appear on the screen with Marlon. "I saw him on Broadway in *Streetcar*. He'll eat your heart for dinner. He'll upstage you at every turn."

At first Teresa didn't agree but after seeing the final cut of *The Men*, she admitted that her husband had been right. "I just cut my throat by agreeing to star opposite Brando."

Marlon sat between Kramer and Zimmenann when he saw the final cut of *The Men*. Kramer asked Marlon for his opinion. "I should have plowed my noble tool into Miss Sensitivity. After sampling that, I would have broken in this studio-era actress to The Method, made our scenes more effective. If my next film is *Streetcar*, I'm definitely going to plow it to Blanche DuBois, regardless of which pussy they cast in the part."

* * *

After the success of his war novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, Norman Mailer was summoned to Hollywood by Samuel Goldwyn. The script Mailer was working on seemed to combine *Day of the Locust* with *Miss Lonelyhearts*. "I want Monty Clift for the lead," Mailer told Goldwyn. "Brando is completely wrong for this part."

Mailer had hopes—soon to be deflated—of becoming a power broker on the West Coast. He decided to throw a big party for the Hollywood elite. Recklessly, he sent out invitations to all the big names of the industry—producers, directors, and top stars, both male and female. In those days of the Communist witch hunt, Mailer didn't realize that you didn't mix right wing

Hollywood with the "lunatic left." An impressive roster of big names accepted his invitation. At the time, Mailer was viewed as a possible rising star, and Hollywood didn't want to offend him. That would come later when he failed to deliver a picture with a huge box office gross.

Privately Mailer told close friends back in New York that Los Angeles was "the ugliest city in the world." But, when not making speeches for socialist presidential candidate, Henry Wallace, Mailer, in his own words, was "sucking up to *tout* Hollywood."

No longer hanging out with Marlon or James Baldwin, Mailer had acquired a new best friend, Mickey Knox, an actor from Brooklyn with whom Mailer was collaborating on a screenplay.

On the night of Mailer's party, it had been raining for two days and nights in Los Angeles. Even so, such big names as Fredric March and John Huston braved the elements to attend the party.

Having migrated back to the West Coast, Shelley Winters had been having a torrid affair with Burt Lancaster and wanted him to take her to Mailer's party. When he wasn't available, she impulsively called Marlon. How she was able to track him down is not known. She'd last seen him when their affair had ended abruptly upon her discovery that he was screwing around with "a hundred other women, including some big name stars."

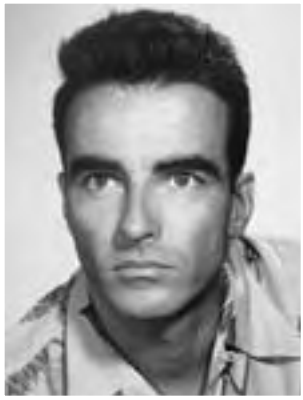
After about fifteen phone calls and a lot of heavy negotiation between them, Marlon agreed to go to his first Hollywood party, after having attacked such gatherings in the press as "crass and commercial exhibitionism."

Spending his last twelve dollars on a taxi, Marlon showed up an hour and a half late at Shelley's door. He was soaking wet in the suit he'd borrowed from Jay Kanter. Shelley had already warned him that he couldn't wear jeans and a T-shirt to Mailer's bash.

"The suit was three sizes too small for him, since Kanter was a little guy," Shelley said. "I think the cuff of the pants came to Marlon's calf. Fortunately he wore high boots to conceal that a bit." After kissing him, she joked with him, "at least you didn't show up in a wheelchair. I hear you go everywhere these days in a wheelchair. Tonight you have to walk on your own two feet."

Behind the wheel of Shelley's battered old red Pontiac, Marlon got lost, and another hour and a half had gone by before they arrived at Mailer's house. He didn't have a valet for the night, and cars were parked way down the hill and into the street. Parking there, Shelley and Marlon raced without umbrellas up the steep hill to Mailer's house, arriving "like drowned rats." Miraculously having managed to arrive dry, and also late, Elizabeth Taylor and her escort, Monty Clift, were greeting Mailer in the hallway.

Marlon noted that Elizabeth and Shelley were wearing the exact same blonde sheared beaver coat, except Elizabeth's was intact and Shelley's was



Monty Clift

soaked and clinging to her body.

Marlon hadn't seen Monty since their affair back in New York, and there was a distinct chill between the two former lovers. Since Monty had gone to Hollywood before Marlon, and the press had hailed him as a conquering hero, he distinctly resented the arrival of Marlon on California turf. It was obvious to Marlon that Monty viewed him as severe competition. The press had already assumed that they would be competing for the same roles.

Overcoming Monty's stiffness, Marlon grabbed him in a bear hug and planted a wet kiss on his lips. Monty recoiled in horror at this public display of affection. Nonetheless, he managed to pull himself together and introduce Marlon to Elizabeth Taylor.

"The great Mr. Brando!" Elizabeth said, barely disguising a slight contempt in her voice. "We meet at last."

Aware of the condenscension in her voice, Marlon said, "You're so young you look like jailbait." He looked with a slight contempt at Monty. "But your virginity will remain intact with this one here."

"So, you're making a movie about some guy who's impotent," Elizabeth said. "Was that type casting?"

He countered, "Where's Lassie? I thought you'd bring him tonight. I've got to warn you, I don't make dog pictures."

"There are many ways a movie can turn into a dog, even without an actual dog," Elizabeth said.

Her words were prophetic.

John Huston was standing only ten feet from Monty, Elizabeth, and Marlon at the time. By 1967, he'd cast both Monty and Elizabeth in the screen adaptation of Carson McCullers' Southern drama, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. When Monty died before filming began, Huston would grant the role of a homosexual to Marlon. Together this trio of talent would create "a dog of a picture," echoing Elizabeth's long-ago words.

Elizabeth Taylor

In time, Marlon would come to respect Elizabeth as an actress and view her as a friend. But initially he wasn't impressed, although he would praise the movie that she and Shelley would do with Monty, *A Place in the Sun*. However, he told Shelley, "I could have played Monty's part

more convincingly."

Marlon was rather snide in his late-night appraisal of Elizabeth to Shelley, claiming "she was dressed like she was attending a senior prom. That girl has no sex appeal at all. My prediction is that she'll never make it from child star into adult roles. Another classic case of what happened to Shirley Temple."

Marlon was angered by Monty's indifference. He felt the need to put him down before disappearing into the party. "It's true, Monty baby, I've finally succumbed to the jackals of Hollywood. Since I'm in town now, I might act you off the screen. Let's call it a friendly competition. I'll send you all the scripts I reject."

Monty took Elizabeth's arm and guided her away from Marlon. "Why not a wet one, Monty baby, for the road?" Marlon called out.

Monty didn't look back.

Shelley had disappeared into another part of the room, and Marlon turned around to accept an introduction from Mickey Knox. Marlon was not impressed with him either. Knox claimed that "my best buddy," Mailer, was hoping to sell the rights to *The Naked and the Dead*, for a film adaptation. "Listen, I saw you in *Streetcar*, and I thought you were terrific. There's a role ideal for you in *Naked*. I tried to convince Norman to offer it to you. But he wants Burt Lancaster instead."

Marlon turned and walked away, only to encounter Humphrey Bogart, whom he hadn't seen since backstage at *Streetcar*. "Hi, kid," Bogie said. "See that Adolphe Menjou standing over there. He and I just had a political fight. I nearly punched him out. He's definitely a neo-Nazi."

At that point, Ginger Rogers appeared. She already knew Bogie. "Ginger, are you still to the right of Hermann Goering?" he asked.

"Oh, you liberals!" Ginger said, jabbing Bogie in his stomach. Batting her false eyelashes, she turned and introduced herself to Marlon. "I didn't get to see you in *Streetcar*," she said, "but I hear you were terrific. All my gal pals told me you were just as sensational off the stage as on. Perhaps we'll make a movie together one day, and I can discover your talent for myself."

Ginger Rogers

"I'm not a hoofer," he said, turning and walking away, having deliberately insulted an actress who'd won an Oscar for straight drama.

Seeing Marlon, Norman called him over and introduced him to Cecil B. DeMille. The director was lecturing the author on his dress code. "If you're going to succeed in Hollywood," DeMille told Mailer, "you've got to buy stockings that cling

to your calves and don't fall around your ankles. Also your casual shirt and slacks need to be replaced with a dark suit. And learn to tie your shoelaces." Marlon quickly drifted away.

Charlie Chaplin

The real reason Marlon had attended the party was to meet Charles Chaplin. He discovered The Little Tramp standing alone in the corner. Marlon went up, introduced himself, and launched into praise of Chaplin's work.

Chaplin turned a somewhat deaf ear to Marlon's compliments. "I know, I know. Everybody from Albert Einstein to Sir Winston Churchill has called me a genius. But such talk bores me. What do you do for a living? A waiter perhaps?"

"I'm Marlon Brando, the actor. I starred on Broadway in Tennessee's *A Streetcar Named Desire*."

"Never heard of you," Chaplin said. "And I hate the title of your play. Too suggestive. No subtlety."

"I'm in Hollywood making movies now," Marlon said. "My greatest dream would be to make a film with you. I already know Paulette Goddard. Great gal! Sorry the marriage didn't work out."

"That's my business," Chaplin snapped.

"So, how about it?" Marlon asked.

"How about what?" Chaplin asked.

"Directing me in a film?"

"Mr. Brando," Chaplin said, before walking away, "that day will never come."

Chaplin was wrong. In *A Countess from Hong Kong*, released in 1967, Marlon was cast in the lead opposite Sophia Loren. The long-delayed collaboration of Chaplin and Marlon would be a disaster. Instead of directing Marlon, Chaplin spent more time warning him not to pinch Loren's ass and not to stare too intently at her décolletage in close-ups.

Sophia Loren

By the time the picture was wrapped, Marlon would no longer hail Chaplin's genius. He had a different opinion. "Chaplin is the worst director who ever set foot in Hollywood. Not only that, but a fearsomely cruel man, an egotistical penny-pinching tyrant, and the most sadistic man I've ever met."

Back at Mailer's party, Marlon felt he was bombing with all the guests, and retreated behind the bar to help the bartender mix drinks for the remaining hour he was at Mailer's home. Shelley brought Marlon a small bowl of Mailer's bouillabaisse which Marlon tasted and found terrible. "This reminds me of the plate of the shit I was served instead of chicken on Broadway in *Streetcar*."

Mailer's Hollywood party was making Marlon nervous. He grabbed Shelley by the arm and headed for the hallway. Seeing them leaving early, Mailer chased after them. "The party's just getting going," he told Marlon.

"Fuck it, man," Marlon said. With a forceful display of anger, he turned on Mailer. "Just who in the fuck do you think you are? Elsa Maxwell? The queen of the Hollywood social set? You should be sitting on your ass in Brooklyn writing *The Naked and the Dead Jr.*"

Seeing two blonde beaver coats hanging in the hallway side by side, Marlon grabbed the dry one for Shelley, making off with Elizabeth Taylor's wrap. When Shelley opened the door, and Marlon saw that it was still raining, he also grabbed a trench coat for himself.

Shelley drove Marlon back to his aunt's house in the rain. In front of the house, still in her car, Shelley gave Marlon a good night kiss which turned into a wrestling match. He seemed to want to repeat the nocturnal adventures they'd enjoyed in New York. Aunt Betty turned on the porch light to discover "what the fuss was about." That ended Marlon's bout with Shelley.

Back at Shelley's apartment, a call came in for her at four o'clock in the morning. It was from Mickey Knox. "That fucking Brando stole my trench coat. My keys were in that coat. My car is blocking all the others in the driveway. The party has erupted into violent political arguments. Adolphe Menjou has called Norman a 'crypto-Communist.'"

Shelley provided Mickey with the details to reach the house of Marlon's aunt. It was not Mickey who showed up at Betty's doorstep, but two patrolmen with sirens blasting and dome lighting flashing. Betty got out of bed at five-thirty to return the trench coat and the car keys.

Throughout the ordeal, Marlon slept soundly. The next afternoon, he called Shelley to tell her that that was the first and last Hollywood party he planned to attend.

"You didn't get lucky last night," he told her. "Let's set up something for tonight."

* * *

Like Teresa, Marlon didn't plan to cooperate on any publicity for *The Men*. Nor did he plan to grant interviews. He did agree to meet with George

Glass, a movie publicity veteran. A short, stubby man, Glass won Marlon over with his sense of humor. "I'm the kind of guy if you ain't talking about me, I ain't listening," Glass said upon meeting Marlon, causing the actor to laugh.

Louella Parsons

Even though reluctant, Marlon agreed to talk to the reigning duennas of the gossip columns, Hedda Hopper and the even more powerful Louella Parsons, both of whom were capable of making or breaking careers. However, he demanded that these gossip mavens interview him at the studio. Hedda agreed, but Louella said no. Marlon would have to drive over to her home.

Marlon dubbed Hopper "the neo-Nazi lady with the funny hats." He was a liberal, Hedda was to the right of Atilla the Hun. He told her, "The only reason I came to Hollywood was because I didn't have enough moral character to turn down the money." After that, he shut up, only mumbling.

"Do you care to answer any more of my questions?" she asked.

"I don't believe I do," he responded.

"Fine with me," she said. "I didn't want to do this interview anyway. Your producer, Stanley Kramer, insisted that I come here to do it. You needn't submit yourself to further anguish. I'm leaving. Good day!"

In spite of his rudeness to her, Hedda praised Marlon's talent in her column. The rumor was that Kramer had bribed her to do that.

Marlon was seen driving down Hollywood Boulevard with a trick arrow in his head, giving the illusion that an Indian brave had pierced his skull. He arrived at the home of Louella Parsons with the trick arrow still "imbedded."

Opening the door for him, she didn't lose a beat. "I had no idea that *The Men* was a Western," she told him.

Unlike his experience with Hedda, Marlon did answer some of Louella's questions. He fed her misinformation, including the claim that he was born in Outer Mongolia where his father had been a civil engineer. As for his favorite food, he told her, "I eat the eyes of gazelles."

When Louella asked him about his mother, he bluntly told her, "She's a drunk!"

She wrote in her column, "He has the manners of a chimpanzee, the gall of a Kinsey researcher, and a swelled head the size of a Navy blimp, and just as pointed—as far as I'm concerned he can ride his bike off the Venice Pier."

Marlon continued to grant so-called interviews, none of which was successful. Even before the release of *The Men*, the press was calling Marlon the rebel, the goof, the oddball, and a crazy mixed-up kid.

Marlon could deal with that. What he hated was being referred to as "the

next Valentino." He was also called a Dostoevskian version of Tom Sawyer. Many newspapers compared him to Greta Garbo, "wanting to be alone." He also scratched his genitals throughout interviews. He told one reporter that he found Hollywood "a cultural boneyard."

By this time in his career, Marlon had replaced Monty Clift as Hollywood's new *enfant terrible*.

Surprisingly, Glass even got Marlon to agree to some cross-country promotion to publicize *The Men*. Arriving in Chicago with his pet raccoon, Russell, Marlon was met by a studio representative. "Is there anything we can do for you, Mr. Brando?" the rep asked.

"Yeah," Marlon said. "Can you tell me where I can get my raccoon laid?"

After wrapping *The Men*, Marlon had greater respect for film acting, a sentiment not often heard at the Actors Studio. "Acting in films is the toughest form of acting," he claimed. "Anyone who can come through it successfully can call himself an actor for the first time. When you have to portray a shattering emotion while realizing at the back of your mind that if you move your head an inch too much you'll be out of focus and out of the frame—that's acting!"

Zinnemann found Marlon "a combination of idealism and shrewdness. He knows exactly what he's doing. And he's all that a director can desire in an actor. Yes, Marlon's not only a great character but he's a greater actor."

Even though he said this, Zinnemann would have far greater success directing Gary Cooper in *High Noon* and Monty Clift in *From Here to Eternity*. Yet in later life he always said he regretted never having had another opportunity to direct Marlon in a picture.

The Men opened at Radio City Music Hall in New York in the summer of 1950 at the start of the Korean War. Movie-going audiences at the time didn't want to see a film about paraplegics. Within two weeks of its release, it was pronounced "a dud" by movie distributors.

The movie-going public flocked to see other films at the time, especially *All About Eve*, *Cinderella, Samson and Delilah, Battleground, Annie Get Your Gun*, and *King Solomon's Mines*.

The reviews of *The Men* were respectful, especially about Marlon. René Jordan wrote, "Under the broken body and the childish tantrums, there is a vein of iron, a suggestion of a toppled God, a maimed Apollo."

John Mason Brown in the *Saturday Review* called Marlon "a seismograph of volcanic emotions." *Time* wrote of Marlon's "halting, mumbled delivery, glowering silences and expert simulation of paraplegics." The critic noted that Marlon's style didn't suggest acting at all but looked "chillingly like the real thing."

Marlon fought bitterly about the "happy ending" inserted at the last

minute, which went against Foreman's original script. But in later years, his point of view about *The Men* softened. "Public sensitivity about the needs of persons with disabilities probably began in America with the release of *The Men*."

Still a best friend, in spite of his being a drug addict, Carlo Fiore had a different take on Marlon's first film, calling it "a sentimental, tear-jerking soap opera—the usual Stanley Kramer bullshit." He blamed Teresa Wright for her "essential prissiness" that ruined the movie for him.

Edith Van Cleve said, "*The Men* did not make Marlon Brando a movie star, and certainly not known in every corner of the world. That would come with a movie called *A Streetcar Named Desire*."

Some biographies have erroneously reported that Marlon was nominated for an Academy Award that year for his performance in *The Men*. The Oscar went instead to Jose Ferrer in *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Marlon wasn't even nominated.

He may have killed his chances when he told a reporter, "If I win the Oscar, I'll send a cab driver to pick it up for me."

When Marlon didn't even get nominated, Oscar winner Gary Cooper remarked, "That was the Academy's way of saving Brando cab fare."

After completion of the film, and with no immediate contract for another movie, Marlon boarded the train that would take him to Chicago and on to New York. As he traversed the American heartland, "he never tired of showing his buttocks at every station stop," the conductor noted. "Brando mooned himself across the United States."

Back in New York, he told Edith, "I made an ass out of myself in *The Men*. Before America sees that, I wanted them to look up close and personal at the real thing. I pulled down my pants and showed anybody who wanted to look between Los Angeles and New York what my two fleshy moons are like. I took a few public pisses too in case anybody's interested in what my noble tool looks like when it's asleep."

Chapter Nine

Six weeks after the Mailer party, Shelley read Mike Connolly's column in the *Hollywood Reporter*. To her horror, she learned that her lover, Burt Lancaster, was expecting a third child from his wife, Norma. For months, Burt had been assuring Shelley that his marriage was over.

Across the street at Victor's, a local dive with a bar so dimly lit it was said to conceal "every known indiscretion," Shelley tried to make herself forget her lovesick pain by downing three triple gin martinis.

She turned around to see who had taken the seat next to hers. It was Marlon.

She rushed to the women's toilet but didn't vomit. Then, she threw cold water on her face, as Marlon pounded on the door. When she didn't open it, he entered the women's room and wiped her wet face with a rough paper towel. "Burt, that bastard, is a liar," she shouted at him. "He's fucking his wife."

Marlon escorted her to a table where he'd ordered dinner for both of them. She could eat nothing so he finished her dinner too. Knowing her heart was broken, he told her, "Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love." She recognized the line from *As You Like It*.

Still drunk, and upset that he wasn't taking her heartbreak seriously, she slapped him, but instead of reacting with anger, he took her in his arms and kissed her instead. "I don't think I've ever seen Marlon so passionate," Shelley later recalled when she returned the blonde beaver coat to Elizabeth Taylor. "As we got more and more affectionate, there in the booth, the bartender suggested that we move to a rented hotel room."

Back in her apartment, as Shelley showered, Marlon lit every candle and every stick of incense he could find, placing the candles in makeshift holders that included a discarded bottle of Chianti. Then he assembled each of the pictures of Burt which Shelley had placed throughout the apartment. There were enough of them to spark a small bonfire. When she emerged nude from the shower, she looked even more beautiful by candlelight. The assembled studio shots greeted her, piled on a low-slung coffee table. "The best way to get rid

of an old love is with a new love," Marlon told her.

She seemed to agree, telling him the incinerator was four doors down to the left.

Marlon had already taken off his blue jeans and T-shirt. He wore no underwear. Not bothering to cover himself, he gathered up the pictures and entered the hallway heading for the incinerator. It seemed that every tenant in the other apartments on the floor heard him as he smashed the glass and the frames around each individual picture, throwing the debris down the incinerator. Those tenants who actually opened their doors to see who was making the ruckus were greeted by the sight of Marlon, naked.

Shelley then dropped her robe on the living room floor and moved, naked, into the hallway to give him a passionate kiss. The Peeping Toms got a treat. Had even one of the tenants had a camera at the time, a memorable picture could have been snapped even before the term "paparazzi" was invented.

In her memoirs, Shelley remembered making love to Marlon all night long. Then, just before the sun rose over Los Angeles, there was a loud rapping on her door. Intuitively, she knew it was Burt Lancaster coming to make up with her. When his knocking didn't get any response, and perhaps assuming that she was sleeping too deeply to be easily awakened, he headed downstairs to a public phone.

Still wanting Burt back, in spite of his having misrepresented his allegiance to his wife, Shelley tossed Marlon his clothes and informed him of an escape route across her rooftop. Marlon wanted to stay "and duke it out" with Burt, but she insisted that he leave. Shelley was completely unaware that Marlon too had had a brief affair with Burt in New York.

Once she'd let him in, Burt immediately searched her apartment for signs that she'd had a liaison that night. In his haste to retreat, Marlon had left one of his sneakers. Seeing it, Shelley kicked it under her bed. As Burt roamed about ranting, she opened her curtains just in time to see Marlon, wearing only one sneaker, catch a streetcar, which vividly reminded her of all the brilliant rehearsals of the Tennessee Williams play that she'd witnessed in New York.

Burt Lancaster

Two days later, when Shelley saw the final version of George Stevens's *A Place in the Sun*, in which she'd co-starred with Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor, she suffered something akin to a nervous breakdown because, in her words, she found the picture "so real." She had also been dieting rigidly, and taking pills to help her sleep, the combination of which was wreaking

Shelley Winters and Brando

havoc on her nerves. On the advice of her doctors and friends, she was checked into Los Angeles' Cedars Medical Center.

That did not end her problems: Visits from Burt and Marlon had to be scheduled so that the two rival ex-lovers wouldn't run into each other. "Both men were athletes," Shelley said. "I don't know which one would have been declared the winner."

Elizabeth Taylor later remarked, "Poor Shelley. As always, the woman emerges the loser. Monty drowns her in *A Place in the Sun*, and she ultimately loses both a married man, Burt, and a man who will never marry, Brando."

After her release from Cedars, Shelley was seen boarding an airplane for New York with Marlon's chief rival and former lover, Monty himself.

When she returned to Hollywood, Shelley visited Marlon on the set of the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, but it was clear that the affair was winding down. Unknown to Shelley at the time, he'd be involved in a secret affair with her new roommate, a blonde sex goddess being groomed to replace Betty Grable at Fox.

Alone in their new apartment, Marilyn Monroe confided to Shelley that she too was trying to get over a disastrous affair with a married man. "Why can't we be more like men?" Marilyn asked. "View seductions as just another notch in our belts. Why can't we sleep with just the most desirable of men and not get all emotionally involved with them? Certainly not fall for the louses who in the end always go back to their spouses."

Her comment echoed the famous number that she'd perform a few months later in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

* * *

There is a tantalizing reference in Marlon's autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, that if read and investigated more fully would lead to rewriting episodes in biographies of Marilyn Monroe. Marlon writes that he literally bumped into Marilyn at a New York party after he'd made the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In reality, he'd already had a brief affair with her many months earlier, during the filming of *The Men*.

Even more tantalizingly, he admitted that, "I had first met her briefly, shortly after the war." Play that again, Sam? *Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando had met even before he went to Hollywood?* Typically, Marlon offered no details about the first meeting of the two up-and-coming sex symbols, male and female, of the rapidly approaching Fifties.

In all of the many exhaustive reports on the lives of Marilyn and Marlon, virtually no light has ever been shed on this strange encounter. The only insider to offer a clue about the historic first encounter between the film god and goddess is Carlo Fiore. Marlon told him that he'd first met Marilyn at a bar on Eighth Avenue in New York City, way back in 1946.

According to Fiore, he'd offered her fifteen dollars to come back to his rented room, where he claimed they made love all night. In the morning, Marilyn was gone, and he would not see her again until he filmed *The Men* in Hollywood.

Was Marilyn Monroe, for a brief period in 1946, hustling johns in New York City? It appears entirely possible. Marlon was not truthful to his girlfriends or mistresses, but he was not known to lie or exaggerate to Fiore. "With me, Marlon didn't have to fantasize about encounters with broads." Fiore said. "I could see it taking place right in front of my eyes. Often it was my broad he was scoring with. Long before he became famous, he was plowing such big names as Marlene Dietrich. Why not Marilyn? When he told me he'd fucked Marilyn in 1946, I found that completely believable. Still do."

Marilyn Monroe

During the war, Marilyn, then known as Norma Jeane, worked in an aircraft factory during the week, and moonlighted as a

model on weekends. Sometimes, while still married to James (Jim) Dougherty, she would disappear for a month or so at a time on a "modeling trip." One such trip involved an entire month spent in Washington State with a photographer named André de Dienes. De Dienes paid her two hundred dollars a month, the amount needed to repair the family's old battered Ford. De Dienes alleged that he not only took nude shots of her in the outdoors, but had an affair with her as well.

De Dienes is credited with teaching his nineteen-year-old model "variations on sex" that were unknown within the context of her relationship with her young husband.

At one point Marilyn told Sally Broye, with whom she'd worked at the aircraft factory, that she was slipping off to New York "to break into show business," perhaps to get a job dancing in a chorus line. According to Sally, Norma Jeane planned to tell Jim that she was seeking modeling work in Los Angeles, but that she claimed, privately, to have received an offer from a New York-based photographer for a modeling session. "The New York modeling job that Norma Jeane talked about apparently didn't pan out, and she found herself wandering penniless and broke on the streets of New York," Broye later claimed.

It was during this period in New York that Marlon apparently discovered Norma Jeane in a bar. Normally, he didn't go to bars unless he felt available pickups were there.

Lena Pepitone, Marilyn's maid in New York from 1957 until her death, revealed that Marilyn admitted to turning tricks for fifteen dollars in the Forties. Pepitone, author of *Marilyn Monroe Confidential*, claimed that she visited bars as a means of picking up men "for more pocket money."

Later, Marilyn admitted having worked as a hooker on the back streets of Hollywood, but denied that she ever actually accepted money for her favors. "I never took money. I only did it for food. Once I connected with a man, I'd negotiate for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, depending on the time of day."

Marlon's second encounter with Norma Jeane—now Marilyn Monroe—occurred in front of an apartment house in Los Angeles. Details are sketchy, but what happened between Marilyn and Marlon has been pieced together from remembrances of Fred Zinnemann and Carlo Fiore. Although their respective versions differed slightly, Marlon told each man essentially the same story about interchanges between Marilyn and himself. Marlon observed to Fred Zinnemann, "I wouldn't call her a rising starlet. Seems to me she spends more time on her back."

It is believed that at the time, he was waiting for Barbara Payton, who would become a scandalous movie star during the Fifties, but at that particular moment, he stood her up for Marilyn.

Rushing out of Payton's apartment building was a beautiful woman with a stunning figure, as Marlon later recalled to Zinnemann. Seeking a man (Marlon) in a car parked on the far side of the street, she apparently mistook him for her date for the evening. She was breathless when she peered inside the car. "You're not Sammy," she said, stepping back. "But you look familiar. You're Marlon Brando!"

"And who might you be?" Marlon asked. "Do I know you?"

"You don't recognize me with my new hair color," she said. I'm Norma Jeane, but now I'm known as Marilyn Monroe. You don't remember the time we got together in New York, and you invited me back to your place?"

"That could fit a thousand encounters," he said. "Get in the car. Perhaps you can do something to me to joggle my memory."

She giggled and ran around the rear of his car, wiggling her shapely butt onto the passenger's seat. "I didn't want to be with Sammy tonight anyway. He's fat and bald." As he started the car, she ran her hand across the back of his neck. "You're very good looking but not as pretty as before. Did you do something to your nose?"

"It was broken and not set right," he said.

"Adds character in my view," she said. "I don't like men who are too handsome."

"Thanks a lot!"

"What I mean is you're a handsome man now. When we met a few years back, you were just a pretty boy. I never go to bed with pretty boys. Of course, in my present situation I have to go to bed with almost anyone to get ahead. Get it? Give head to get ahead. But when I become a big-time movie star, I'll never suck another cock again—unless I want to, of course." Sexily, she looked over at him. "Unless I'm in the mood." She cuddled closer to him.

Zinnemann, according to reports, repeated this story at a number of dinner parties. Thanks to his repeatedly telling that story, the tale of young Marlon meeting young Marilyn as early as 1946 was, for a while at least, an oft-repeated topic of gossip in Hollywood.

"Forgive me, but I still don't remember you," Marlon is alleged to have said to Marilyn. "Perhaps if you'll go back to my place, you and I can repeat what you said we did in New York. I'm sure that will bring it all back to me."

"That would be fine with me," she said. "I hope you're not pretending that you don't remember because I've become too old for you. I mean I was young when we met. A teenager, really. Some men out here like only teenagers, not an old broad like me."

"You're not an old broad," he said. "In fact, with your sex appeal, your allure will be timeless."

"That's very flattering but you know yourself it's not true."

"Do I desire you?" he asked. "Put me to the test. Back at my place, we'll get naked together. If my noble tool rises to do its duty, then I still desire you. Fair enough?"

"The suspense is killing me," she said. "I can't wait." Leaning over him, she began to unfasten his trousers. As Marlon later told Zinnemann, "I practically had three accidents before we got there. Since that night in New York, someone had been teaching Marilyn new tricks. Maybe a lot of someones."

The next morning, Marilyn lingered over breakfast and stayed with Marlon "for a matinee performance," as she called it. Later Marlon recalled that, "I didn't think she had any place to go."

Marilyn said Sundays were very hard for her to get through in Los Angeles. "All the men I know are spending the day with their wives and families, and all the stores in Los Angeles are closed. You can't wander through looking at all the pretty clothes and pretending to buy something—not that I have any money to buy anything."

She shared her dreams about becoming a movie star with him. "I know a lot of gals arrive in Hollywood dreaming of becoming a movie star. But I have one up on them."

"What's that?" he asked.

"I can dream harder than they can."

After breakfast, she went to her purse and opened it, pulling out a lined slip of yellow paper. "I've written down all the names of the men I plan to seduce. Most are in show business, but some are not."

He read the list: Elia Kazan, Charles Laughton, Arthur Miller, Ernest Hemingway, Clifford Odets, Dean Jagger, Charles Boyer, Lee Strasberg, Nicholas Ray, Jean Renoir, Harry Belafonte, Yves Montand, Charles Bickford, Eli Wallach, and Albert Einstein."

The one and only Marilyn Monroe

"I've only seduced one on your list," he said. "Better strike Hemingway, Charles Bickford, and Charles Laughton 'cause I hear they're faggots. But Einstein. You're not serious."

"I'm very, very serious," she said.

It has never been completely determined if Marilyn did indeed seduce Einstein. However, in 1985, director Nicolas Roeg made a film, *Insignificance*, about the alleged

affair. Theresa Russell played the Marilyn clone opposite Michael Emil as "the professor."

Among Marilyn's possessions was discovered an autographed portrait of Einstein, signed: "To Marilyn, with respect and love and thanks, Albert Einstein." That evidence is often cited when biographers want to prove an affair between the scientist and the love goddess. Refuting that evidence is the claim of Eli Wallach. Regretting that he never became "the lucky victim" of Marilyn's sexual favors, despite the fact that his name was included on the list of her hoped-for seductions, Wallach claimed, years later, that he gave her a copy of Einstein's portrait as a joke, forging both the dedication and the signature.

Marlon's ongoing affair with Marilyn would stop and go, heating up in the mid-Fifties, but never completely disappearing, until her mysterious death in 1962.

Despite what he revealed to a handful of close friends, Marlon had very little to say "officially and on record" about Marilyn. He never demeaned her and spoke about her only in the highest regard. "Marilyn was a sensitive, misunderstood person," he said, "and much more perceptive than was generally assumed. She had been beaten down, but had a strong emotional intelligence—a keen intuition for the feelings of others, the most refined type of intelligence."

"Marlon lived through the whole Marilyn legend," Fiore later said. "The

Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando, sex symbols of the Fifties

nude calendar scandal, her lesbian relationships with such movie queens as Joan Crawford and Barbara Stanwyck, her tortured affair with the Kennedys—you name it. He was privy to her secrets and often gave her very good advice. She never seemed to heed Marlon's words, but still continued to call him for guidance she rarely followed."

Marilyn herself made few comments about Marlon, telling anyone who asked that, "He's very sweet and tender, not at all the Stanley Kowalski rapist people think he is."

Reporters clamored around her at an actors' benefit in December of 1955. She was escorted by Marlon. One reporter asked, "Miss Monroe, are you very seriously interested in Mr. Brando?"

"I'm not serious," she claimed, "but always interested."

Marlon kept Zinnemann up to date about his affair with Marilyn. He once told his director, "Marilyn's studio is claiming her bust measurement is 37. However, Marilyn herself disputes that. She says her bust measurement is 38. As for me, I have a built-in tape measure in my brain. I'm never wrong about these things. I'd put her bust at 35, and I should know!"

* * *

During a particularly tense moment of the Cold War, without letting his family or friends know, Marlon agreed to surgery on his knee for a long-ago injury suffered at the Shattuck Military Academy. The subsequent healing of the injury, and his complete recovery, had the unexpected result of making him eligible for military service in the Korean War.

To determine his draft status, he was asked to fill out a questionnaire. Under the question of race, he wrote: "Human." As for color, he listed: "Seasonal—oyster white to beige."

During his meeting with an army psychiatrist, he told the doctor that he was "psychoneurotic" and "suffered emotional problems." Although he was now physically able to be drafted and perhaps sent to Korea, he also checked off the box indicating that he had homosexual tendencies.

"That would do it for guys in those days," Edith Van Cleve said, "and Marlon had determined that he didn't want to sacrifice his life on the battlefields of Korea, ending up like one of those paraplegics he'd worked with while filming *The Men* in Hollywood."

But despite his avoidance of military service in Korea, his life was threatened nonetheless, and in a particularly disturbing way. In the early 1950s, celebrity stalking was relatively rare, perhaps confined to some star-struck fans trailing Greta Garbo on the sidewalks of New York as she went window shopping.

But when Marlon moved into his small apartment on Sixth Avenue and 57th Street, he began to receive a series of mysterious late night phone calls. The person on the other end of the line would hang up without saying a word, although he could hear the sound of someone breathing. For three months, the calls came in regularly. For some reason, Marlon never changed his phone number, nor did he report the incidents to the police.

Perfecting his Method acting

Finally, one rainy night he heard a delicate voice on the other end of the line. It was that of a woman.

He engaged her in conversation, trying to learn as much about her as she was willing to convey. She claimed that her profession was that of a "stick-up artist." She robbed liquor stores in New Jersey at night, fleeing on a motorcycle piloted by another woman friend who, in the woman's own words, was "deaf and dumb."

"You can rob me," he told her, "but I never carry around more than a dollar or two."

That was not the point of her call. She had become obsessed with Marlon during his appearance in *Streetcar*. She admitted to having attended fifty performances of the play just to gaze upon him. She'd also stolen billboards advertising the play, using them to cover the walls of her bedroom.

She had also managed to steal an eight-by-ten glossy photograph of him from the theater, and placed it beneath her pillow. Every night, she informed him, she had a marathon talk with the photo.

He listened in amazement as she revealed her plan. She'd been stalking him many nights after dark, although he'd been unaware of her presence behind him. She admitted that she intended to kidnap him with the help of her motorcycle-riding pal. They planned to haul him, bound and gagged in a rented car, to a remote boathouse on Long Island. There, as she claimed, she was going to imprison him so that she could slowly cannibalize him. The scene would be eerily evocative of the future movie, *Hannibal*.

Any sane person might have put down the phone at that point and called the police. But not Marlon. Years later, as he recalled the event in interviews and even wrote about it, he stated that he believed the woman was "deadly serious." In spite of knowing that, he recklessly invited the woman to his apartment. Apparently, she already knew his address.

Arriving after eleven o'clock one night, she rapped on his door. He took the precaution of opening the door with the chain attached. Reaching out, he frisked her for a weapon. Slowly opening the door, he peered up and down the

hallway to see if he could see her accomplice. The hall was empty, and the woman appeared to be unarmed and alone.

Inside the apartment, he invited her to sit down on his sofa across from his armchair. He studied her carefully, as if he were a police sergeant grilling a suspect. He also placed her under a harsh light from a standing lamp. She identified herself only as "Maria."

He found her extremely beautiful. She was an olive-skinned brunette with a very large bosom. She said that one of her greatest fantasies—other than cannibalizing him—was to be allowed to wash his feet in warm water. He said that was one request he could grant, and went into the kitchen to get a pan of water. Later he said that he suspected that Maria had a fantasy that he was actually Jesus and that she was Mary Magdalene.

Very tenderly she washed his feet and gently dried them with her long hair. During that act, he later claimed he became sexually aroused, inviting her into his bedroom.

As he was to tell Carlo Fiore, "Through some kind of bizarre thinking, or lack of thinking on my part, it became a thrilling idea to seduce the woman. I, as Jesus. She, as Mary Magdalene but also, secretly, as a potential cannibal."

The sex act, according to Marlon's later claim, came off beautifully until she broke into tears. "She must have cried for an hour after I committed the act on her," he later said. "I think she was a virgin."

He had a hard time of it, but he eventually managed to get her out of his apartment. As he remembered it, it was about three o'clock in the morning.

On the nights that followed, he said that he frequently encountered Maria waiting alone in his hallway when he returned home. "She never made a move toward me," he said, "nor did she do anything threatening. I had to get rid of her. Finally, I came up with the idea. As Jesus, I commanded her to go away and leave me alone. Since she thought I was Jesus, she obeyed me."

Getting all dolled up

Before she left, she even gave him her phone number and address in Newark, New Jersey. Two weeks later, he left for Hollywood again. But he kept thinking about her. Then he called a detective in New York and had him track her down. The address proved valid. She lived in a rented home with her brother.

On an impulse, Marlon called Maria's

house one night, getting her brother on the phone. He seemed aware of her obsession with Marlon and was thrilled to be speaking to a movie star. He revealed to Marlon that on the night he'd told her to go away, she'd arrived back at her house covered in blood. Apparently, she'd lacerated her body with shards of glass.

According to the brother, she went to her bedroom and tore down all the billboards advertising *Streetcar*. She also threw out all her Brando memorabilia. Outside in the backyard, she burned all the images. Back in the house, she announced to her brother, "Jesus is dead! He will not rise again."

Marlon put down the phone on the brother. He never heard from Maria again.

* * *

Marlon Senior was busy squandering Marlon Junior's earnings ($40,000) from *The Men* in a misguided investment in the Nebraska cattle business. But more money and bigger losses were on the way.

Warner Brothers finally met Marlon's demand of $75,000 to appear in the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Elia Kazan, who would direct the film, held out for the original Broadway cast. Consequently, Karl Malden and Kim Hunter were given the supporting roles that had made them famous on Broadway.

Jack Warner had preferred Burt Lancaster to Marlon, but acquiesced to Kazan's vision. Warner, however, definitely didn't want Jessica Tandy. "She's known on Broadway, but except for a few rotten movies, no one knows who she is," the studio chief said. "Olivia de Havilland should do it, but the bitch is demanding $175,000. I've got Vivien Leigh for $100,000. Her husband is making a movie in Hollywood, and the nympho wants to be with the cocksucker." Warner was referring, of course, to Laurence Olivier and his well-known homosexual proclivities.

Before this upcoming commitment in Hollywood, Marlon visited his family at Mundelein, outside Libertyville, Illinois. During his visit, Marlon Sr. showed him his archives of recorded conversations, claiming that he had audio recordings of the deals he'd made and the conversations he'd had with local businessmen. "That way, the fuckers can't cheat me later on."

Marlon Junior commandeered one of Marlon Senior's tape recorders, planning to put it to a different use. In New York, he was going to turn it on under his bed and secretly record the sounds and words uttered, most often in passion, during his love-making. He especially wanted to play back how women screamed when he climaxed in them.

* * *

In New York Bobby Lewis visited Marlon to congratulate him on his new-found movie stardom. Bobby recalled that Wally Cox was spending the night at Marlon's apartment. Cox was nursing a deep wound—the result of a bite from Marlon's pet raccoon, Russell, whom Cox detested.

Bobby remembered how he was shocked by Marlon's aggressiveness, even his crudeness. Later Bobby felt that Marlon once again was trying to work himself up to play the brute, Stanley Kowalski, in the screen version of *Streetcar*. "He wasn't Marlon that night, a man who had a gentle side, but a lager lout. He was insulting, even cruel to me, and he treated Wally like he was a doormat. But he still adored Russell."

He said that Wally had called for Chinese take-out to be delivered to Marlon's apartment. But before the delivery boy arrived, Marlon fell on the floor. "At first it looked like he was having a heart attack," Bobby said, "and I rushed to his aid, but Wally grabbed me and restrained me, shouting at me to 'Let him alone!'"

Wally pulled Bobby into the kitchen to explain that Marlon frequently suffered these "panic attacks." According to Wally, Marlon rolled on the floor with his eyes shut, often babbling. To Bobby, Marlon seemed to be going through an epileptic seizure.

"You know a lot about Marlon," Wally said to him. "Maybe too much. But there are secrets about him known only to me, secrets that will never be revealed."

"Such as?"

"I'll go to my grave and never tell," Wally said. "Marlon has a very, very dark side. Sometimes he can go for months and repress that side of him. But sometimes it comes out. You'd better leave the apartment. I think his dark side is going to be unleashed tonight. You wouldn't want to know what's going to happen in this apartment tonight. Good night!"

* * *

Five years younger than Marlon, and a native of Wichita Falls, Texas, Roberta Haynes was the estranged wife of Jay Kanter, who was not only Marlon's agent but to an increasing degree, his best friend. The relationship would last until Marlon's death.

A male friend was privy to the burgeoning romance between Roberta and Marlon. He didn't want his name used—call him "Hubert." "I still don't understand what was going on. Jay practically pushed Roberta into Marlon's arms, yet he told me he still wanted to get back with his estranged wife. When

Roberta Haynes

I asked him why, he said, 'I felt they would really go for each other.' If Jay was still married to her, and wanted to stay married to her, then why bring Marlon into the picture? Marlon always liked to intrude on couples, happy or otherwise."

At the time, Roberta was a curvaceous leading lady (measurements 35-24-34), who had appeared uncredited in *Knock on Any Door*, the Bogie picture that Marlon had turned down. Her Hollywood star would shine on her only briefly. In 1953 she would appear with Rock Hudson in *Gun Fury*, a routine western, and more memorably opposite Gary Cooper in *Return to Paradise*, a tale of the South Pacific.

When he met her in New York, Roberta reminded Marlon of a Polynesian beauty, the type he would seduce frequently during later decades in Tahiti. After breaking with Jay, Roberta had gone to New York to replace Leora Dana on Broadway in *The Madwoman of Chaillot*.

Roberta would later recall to Brando biographers that she first met Marlon at the Bird-in-Hand Restaurant along Broadway when he roared up on a scarlet-red motorcycle. In a black cap and leather jacket, he looked exactly like the motorcycle-riding hood he'd play in *The Wild One*. It was "love" at first sight.

Their romance was brief but intense, including a bout in the splashing fountain that stands regally in the square in front of New York's Plaza Hotel.

Although Marlon was seeing other women at the time, his romance with Roberta continued on and off whenever she was in town between road tour stopovers with *Madwoman*.

They were seen walking hand in hand down Fifth Avenue, buying fresh New Jersey strawberries from vendors, or shopping for a psychology paperback on Carl Jung in a Greenwich Village bookstore. He attended a performance of *Madwoman* at the City Center and then came backstage, exciting the cast. "At the time, every woman in New York wanted Marlon," said fellow actress Gwynne Betmann, "and Roberta walked off with the prize hunk. We were very envious."

Roberta recalled to one reporter that during her dates with Marlon, he was besieged with messages from Shelley Winters, which in front of her he tossed in the trash can. Whether he later returned Shelley's calls is not known.

He took Roberta to see *Play Me a Song*, in which Wally had a featured part. "The show opened and closed before it had even begun," Wally later said. "Marlon did everything he could to drum up interest with the press, but to no avail. My hour had not struck yet."

Sometime before the summer ended, Marlon wasn't seen with Roberta, but with Tamar Cooper, the daughter of Jack and Marie Cooper. In her mid-twenties, she could be seen holding on to Marlon "for dear life," as he raced on his motorcycle through the streets of New York.

When Jay Kanter learned of Marlon's affair with Roberta, he wasn't angry at his client but at his wife. When Marlon arrived in Hollywood to film *Streetcar*, Jay asked his wife to move back into their apartment. But since Marlon was already living there, along with his pet raccoon, Russell, Roberta didn't think that would be a good idea.

Fellow roommate and aspiring actor, Tony Curtis, once said, "For some reason Marlon always insisted that Russell sleep in our oven. It's a good thing I didn't come home one night and heat up the oven for a midnight supper."

Roberta soon learned that her affair with Marlon was winding down in spite of the lovely intimate experiences he'd had with her, including long walks in the country where he might take off his clothes for a nude swim. At the time Marlon was engaged in a number of other affairs, including one with a fifteen-year-old girl, which could have subjected him to a charge of statutory rape.

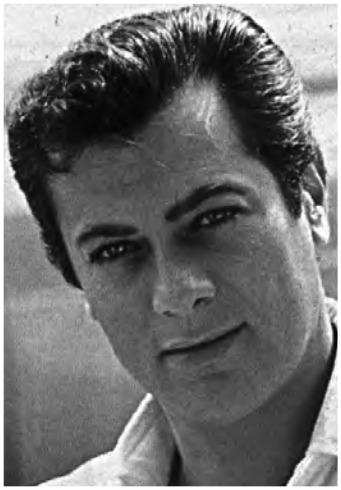
Whether Roberta learned about Marlon's temporary affair—conducted in Jay's apartment—with "Sister Elizabeth" is not known. But for a period of one month during the filming of *Streetcar*, a nun in black habit and stiffly starched wimple was seen coming and going from Jay Kanter's apartment. She was not coming to visit either Jay or fellow roommate Tony Curtis, but to have sessions with Marlon.

Sister Elizabeth, who later tried to hawk a "tell all" memoir to New York publishers, was born in Birmingham, Alabama. She'd come to Hollywood, like thousands of others, to break into films. But she always said that movie producers thought she was a dead ringer for Carole Landis, the 1940s star who committed suicide after a broken love affair with actor Rex Harrison.

Like so many other hopefuls, she took to prostitution to earn a living. When one client asked her to don a nun's habit—he had a closet filled with such costumes—she got an idea for future employment.

She began making the rounds of certain actors, mainly those born into the Catholic faith, who wanted to seduce a nun. In her unpublished memoirs, she claimed that the guilt-ridden Spencer Tracy was her chief customer, often employing her when Katharine Hepburn was

Tamar Cooper and Brando



Tony Curtis

away dating such women as American Express heiress Laura Harding or the more beautiful Claudette Colbert.

Sister Elizabeth was known for her 42-inch bosom, which she was quick to display since she wore nothing under her habit. "Often my clients wanted me to paddle them, perhaps evoking memories of their childhood. When Marlon got my number and began calling me, it was the reverse. He would pull up my habit and paddle me before we went on to other pastimes. I visited him for three weeks, and then he never called me again. Incidentally, I wrote about him in my memoirs. I call it *Confessions of a Kinky Nun*. If somebody would publish it, it would become a bestseller. I even sent a letter and my photograph to the White House when President Kennedy moved in. I thought, being born a Catholic, he might go for my nun's act. But he never wrote or called, even though I left my phone number. Guess he preferred Marilyn Monroe to me even though my bosom dwarfed hers."

In his own memoirs, Tony Curtis never revealed what he knew about Marlon's nocturnal adventures when they shared the same living space. He did reveal that a major turning point in his life involved seeing Marlon in 1947 on Broadway in *Streetcar*.

Jay's apartment in Los Angeles was on Barham Boulevard. When not living with Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier, Marlon stayed with Jay and Tony during the shooting of *Streetcar*.

At the time, Tony was filming *The Prince Who Was a Thief*. One night he asked Marlon, "What if you'd accidentally turned left down Barham Boulevard and went to Universal to be the son of Ali Baba, and I'd turned right and became Stanley Kowalski?"

"Then I'd have been stuck with 'Yondah lies the castle of my faddah,' and you'd have been yelling *STEL-L-A-A!"*

Cary Grant was Tony's favorite actor, and he could do a brilliant impersonation of him.

Unknown to Tony, his idol, Cary Grant, pulled up in his car one night in front of the Barham Boulevard apartment. He'd not come to see Tony but the other tenant. Earlier that day he'd made a "date" with Marlon himself.

* * *

"I can't stand the limey cunt!" Marlon shouted at Elia Kazan after the first three days of shooting *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "Miss Vivien Leigh. Miss Scarlett O'Hara. Now Lady Olivier. 'Good morning, Mr. Brando.'" He imitated her accent perfectly. "'Good afternoon, Mr. Brando.' She'll suffocate me with her politeness. I can't wait for the rape scene!"

"If the censors will allow it," Kazan cautioned.

The first time Marlon sat down to talk to Vivien, he found a vulnerable character, not the "prissy English bitch" he'd envisioned. She reached out and gently touched his hand, as she spoke of the first time she'd read *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1948. "I was touched by the haunting quality of Blanche," she said. "The play seemed to speak to a woman inside myself that lives within my own heart. Blanche DuBois is the animus of my own being. Talk about Method acting!"

That remark seemed to win Marlon to her side. After that, and until the end of the eight-week shoot, he became almost inseparable from her.

He was full of questions about how she'd fared in the London stage production of *Streetcar*, which was directed by her husband, Laurence Olivier. He was also anxious to learn of the feuds Olivier had with Irene Selznick and Tennessee Williams over cuts Olivier had made before the play opened in the West End of London.

One Saturday morning he drove her into the desert so she could breathe the fresh air. She'd had a struggle with tuberculosis and was having a hard time breathing in Los Angeles. "It's been ten years since Larry and I were here. Now there's this bloody smog. You're used to it. I'm not. It's like a yellow blanket that hangs over everything and doesn't go away. It stings my eyes and fills my lungs with poison."

He told her he knew of an inn thirty miles away that was outside the smog's radius. She could rest there for the weekend.

"When I first came to Los Angeles to play Scarlett," she said, "I remember oranges everywhere. Now those orange trees have vanished like my virginity."

"From what I was told, you and Larry had to

Vivien Leigh and Brando as Blanche and Stanley

Ms. DuBois and sweaty Stanley

live as secret lovers the last time you were in Hollywood," he said. "Now you are the married Sir Laurence and Lady Olivier. The King and Queen of the London theater."

"It's a respectability I don't deserve, and a social responsibility from the throne I don't want. As you'll get to know me, and I hope you will, there is nothing respectable about me. In London I pick up taxi drivers and fuck them."

Startled, he looked at her. Had he heard right? Did she actually say that?

"Don't be surprised," she said. "I'm just as whorish as Blanche DuBois was, taking on all those soldiers at that army base."

She paused, lighting her own cigarette, as if remembering something he'd just said. "Forgive me, but you said Larry. Do you know my husband, Sir Laurence?"

"I met him a few years ago in New York when he came to see me in a play," he said. "I was very honored."

"I won't bother to ask you how well you knew Sir Olivier," she said, sucking the smoke deeply into her tainted lungs.

"It's just as well, because I won't tell you."

"Growing up in the theater, I am used to such things. I never quiz Larry about his private life. His first wife was a lesbian, you know. When he's with Richard Burton, Danny Kaye, Noël Coward, I ask no questions. Larry asks no questions of me either. I don't love him. We are only Sir Laurence and Lady Olivier in front of the press. When our pictures aren't being taken, we lead completely separate lives."

"If I ever get married, and I don't plan to, I will demand from my woman that I go on leading my separate life."

Driving through the desert with Vivien, Marlon arrived at a wayside motel that seemed to evoke that dreary place she'd seen in *The Petrified Forest* with Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, and her friend and lover, Leslie Howard, her beloved Ashley Wilkes in *Gone With the Wind*.

They registered as "Petticoat Blossom" and "Durango Canyon." Inside the best room, Vivien began to remove her clothing to take a shower. "Do you know," she said to him in the stifling heat of the desert bedroom, "I am part of the world's most beautiful, the world's most talented, the world's most admired, the world's most successful, and the world's most adored couple. If the world only knew the truth. Why don't you rape me like Stanley Kowalski raped Blanche DuBois?"

"An invitation I can't resist," he said, moving toward her.

After sex, he told her over a meal in a roadside diner that he hadn't liked her at first. "So fucking formal."

"Her Ladyship is fucking bored with formality," she said.

He broke into laughter before affectionately leaning over and kissing her on the nose. "I can't believe I've slept with Scarlett O'Hara. Rhett Butler's woman. You won't be the first woman that Clark Gable and I have shared."

"Trust me, Clark Gable never got into my pantaloons."

* * *

Marlon's relationship with Vivien would have gone unrecorded had he not confided in both Charles K. Feldman, the producer of *Streetcar*, and its director, Elia Kazan. The story of Marlon and Vivien was just too hot for these two men to keep to themselves. When Frank Merlo, Tennessee's lover, arrived with the playwright on the set of *Streetcar*, both Kazan and Feldman shared the news about Marlon's sexual adventure with the two men, who were each anxious to hear (and eventually repeat) the latest gossip.

Tennessee and Frank were also anxious to learn about Vivien's first meeting with Marlon. The playwright had predicted "fireworks." Kazan related the story.

Marlon had arrived at the Green Room at Warner Brothers on a buttercup-yellow motorcycle. He wore a tight-fitting Halloween orange T-shirt that showed off his muscles. But instead of his usual dirty blue jeans, he was clad in a pair of elephant brown slacks for the occasion. Later, Vivien remarked to her dining companion, Kazan, "I was surprised when he came into the dining room in shoes. I fully expected to see his bare feet."

As Marlon approached Vivien's table, he overheard an argument she was having with Kazan. She was demanding that she play Blanche the way her husband had directed her in London, and Kazan wanted her to do the role the way he'd directed Jessica Tandy on Broadway.

Not wanting to become part of the argument, Marlon

Frank Merlo, Elia Kazan, Tennessee Williams, and Charles Feldman

A captured scene of *Streetcar*

shook Vivien's hand and wandered over to join Feldman at another table. At the time, Feldman had the most notorious black book in Hollywood, and Marlon wanted his producer to fix him up with only the hottest names on the list of available starlets.

After Marlon's hasty departure, Vivien told Kazan, "I find him offensively rude. But it may be just the kind of Stanley vs. Blanche hostility that will play well before the camera."

"Before this movie began, I knew that Jack Warner had paired a gazelle with a wild boar," Kazan said. "But we're going to make a great film, and both you and Marlon are going to walk off with Oscars. His first, your second. Surely you want a brother to go with that lonely statue you won for Scarlett. *Gone With the Wind* was a long time ago. It's time you set Hollywood on its ass once again. With Marlon you can do it. I know you two are not matched socially, but in this case talent will be the great leveler."

"But he mumbles," Vivien protested. "I too have been accused of lack of projection on stage. It seems that no one can hear me in the upper tiers in those cheap seats."

"Marlon mumbles," Kazan said, "but believe it or not he can also speak with articulation." Catching Marlon's eyes at Feldman's table, Kazan summoned him over again. Marlon came over and sat next to Kazan. "I've got to get back to Charlie. He and I are in hot negotiations over my pussy line-up."

Vivien pretended she didn't hear him, feeling that he was deliberately trying to shock her.

Jokingly, Kazan claimed that after *Streetcar* was finished, he planned to take on a film version of *Henry V* as his next creative venture. Patting Marlon's hand, he urged him to give a quick audition in front of Vivien.

Without being asked again, Marlon launched into a perfect imitation of Olivier doing *Henry V*. He must have gone on for ten minutes before getting up from table and excusing himself once again.

"Now eat your fucking meal," were his departing words.

"I'm shocked, truly shocked," Vivien said when he'd departed. "If I'd closed my eyes, I could have sworn that that voice was coming from Larry himself."

"He's good," Kazan said. He looked at her as if he wanted her to forgive Marlon for his rudeness. As if sensing his request, she brushed such a thought

aside. “Oh, fiddle-dee-dee, I can handle Mr. Brando.” Her eyes had narrowed and she looked like she did when uttering her famous, “I’ll never go hungry again” speech from *Gone With the Wind*. “Before *Streetcar* is wrapped, it’ll be Lady Olivier who will shock Mr. Brando.”

* * *

It is not entirely certain if Marlon had an affair with starlet Nancy Davis, later Mrs. Ronald Reagan. If he did, it was of short duration and occurred on the eve of her nabbing Reagan as her husband. Nancy left Marlon out of her autobiography, as she did other lovers. However, Marlon told both Charles Feldman and Elia Kazan that he’d made love to Nancy, whom he found “kinda cute with her brown eyes and hair just the color I like it.”

In the early 1950s, Nancy was known to have composed a list of unattached marriageable males. At the top of her list was Ronald Reagan. Other men on the list included actors, producers, and directors. Surely Nancy knew enough about Marlon to know that he was “not marriage material.” She allegedly told Ava Gardner, whom she encountered on the MGM lot, that “Marlon is just too wild and bohemian for me.”

“But not for me, honey child,” Ava was supposed to have countered. “Been there, done that.”

Nancy had first met Marlon in New York when she was dating Clark Gable, a romance that never got off the launch pad. At the time of her reunion with Marlon in Hollywood, Nancy was in the throes of a torrid affair with Benjamin Thau, head of casting at MGM.

She had desperately wanted to appear opposite Cary Grant in the film, *Crisis*, and made a screen test, hoping to secure the role of the doctor’s wife. When Dore Schary saw the screen test, he pronounced it, “The worst screen test in the history of Hollywood.” When *Crisis* opened later to no business, Grant told Nancy that she was lucky she didn’t get the part.

Nancy Davis

Thau was deeply in love with Nancy at the time she was dating other men. He even wanted to marry her “in spite of my Jewishness and my age.” No one ever accused Nancy of being anti-Semitic. Director George Cukor, who was dismissive of her, claimed, “If I had a nickel for every Jew Nancy was under, I’d be rich.” The noted Hollywood biographer, Anne Edwards, once

said, “Nancy was one of those girls whose phone number got handed around a lot.”

Peter Lawford had already spread the word that Nancy was skilled at fellatio. He alleged that she had kept not only himself but fellow actor Robert Walker (also Peter’s lover) orally entertained throughout the course of a motor trip to Palm Springs.

One of Thau’s assistants reportedly saw Nancy and Marlon dining at Chasen’s, a restaurant that Marlon had never visited before, as he hated formal dining rooms. Nancy was elegantly attired in a black Coco Chanel dress, a large white hat, and a corsage of small orchids. Abandoning blue jeans, Marlon wore a sports jacket and slacks but no tie.

When Thau heard that the woman he loved had been seen out with Brando, he was furious, threatening that Marlon would never make a picture for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. “By trying to move in on Nancy, the cocksucking queer has ruined himself in this town—I’ll see to that.”

Whatever relationship existed between Marlon and Nancy fizzled quickly, because she was soon seen dating the handsome actor, Robert Stack, and was also seen with the playwright-producer, Norman Krasna, who wanted to marry her. Krasna had just signed a deal with Howard Hughes at RKO, and he promised to make her the queen of that studio if she’d marry him. She turned him down. Her eyes were still trained on Ronald Reagan, her dreamboat.

Marlon told Kazan that Nancy would never appear opposite him in one of his films—“that is, if I ever make another film. But if you know of any roles calling for ‘the perfect wife,’ then Nancy’s your gal. She’s the exception to every other actress in Hollywood. Instead of some big-time career, she wants to settle down in a rose-covered cottage, raise three kids, and greet hubbie with a Scotch and soda every night at six o’clock, as the smell of fried chicken wafts through the house.”

Marlon may have accurately interpreted Nancy’s feelings at the time. She later confessed to just such a dream, hardly knowing that the “cottage” would turn out to be the White House, where in 1981 she would suffer the highest disapproval rating of any First Lady in modern times.

When Marlon was informed of Nancy’s marriage to Reagan, he sarcastically told Feldman, “A perfect match. I hear Reagan brushes his teeth every time he kisses a woman. I can even suggest a theme song for their marriage. Make it George Gershwin’s ‘Our Love Is Here to Stay.’”

Marlon in the years to come would always speak kindly of Nancy, “even when she was single-handedly running the Free World.” On the other hand, he deplored Reagan for what he claimed was “his witch hunting of so-called Communists.”

It wasn’t Nancy but another brunette who had suddenly appeared in

Marlon's life. He was about to begin a hell-raising romance with a fiery natured Puerto Rican who called herself Rosita Moreno (later Rita Moreno).

Ten years into her future, her name would become a household word with the release of *West Side Story.* Twenty years into her future, she'd shock movie audiences by performing fellatio on Jack Nicholson at the end of *Carnal Knowledge*.

At the time Marlon met Moreno, she was seeing George Hormel, the famous heir to a meat-packing fortune. Ironically, Hormel had been a classmate of Marlon at the Shattuck Military Academy. When he learned that Marlon was in Hollywood, Hormel asked his former classmate to one of his parties, to which he often invited jazz greats, paying them if they requested money. Wanting to play his bongo drums with Stan Getz or perhaps Chet Baker, Marlon eagerly attended. It was there on one hot night that he met Rita Moreno.

As he'd done so often in the past, Marlon decided to "move in on Hormel's cattle ranch." As he boasted to Kazan the next day, "That fucker might think all the meat in America is being canned in one of his factories. But Marlon Brando's meaty noble tool is free and swinging in the breeze."

* * *

Tennessee, accompanied by Frank Merlo, arrived in Los Angeles for a screening of *The Glass Menagerie*. After that, he visited the set of *Streetcar* every day, telling Frank he was "mesmerized" watching "the chemistry" between Marlon and Vivien, something he said that he had always intended between Jessica Tandy and Marlon on Broadway but never elicited from her.

With Marlon and Frank Merlo standing in the background, Tennessee told Kazan, "Vivien has brought everything to the role of Miss DuBois that I intended, and much more than I ever dared to dream."

While Tennessee was watching Kazan direct Vivien and Karl Malden in a pivotal scene, Frank Merlo slipped off to Mushy Callahan's Gymnasium on the Warner Brothers lot. As he was undressing, he overheard two men laughing and joking in one of the shower stalls.

Hoping to get in on the fun, he stripped down and walked toward them. "Those two didn't even see me. It was all so very gay. To my surprise, I saw Burt Lancaster and Marlon showering together. Burt was soaping Marlon's back with one hand and probing his ass with the index finger of his other hand. Marlon was giggling like a school girl. I left those two love birds alone and seduced a well-hung grip that day instead."

Frank returned to the set just in time to hear Vivien tell Tennessee, "It's all your fault. Your character of Blanche DuBois is tripping me into madness."

"I can understand that," he replied. "Blanche has already given me three heart attacks."

* * *

As Tennessee and Kazan continued to battle the censors, filming continued on *Streetcar* during one of the hottest summers in recorded Los Angeles' history.

Jane Wyman

Except for Marlon himself, Jack Warner remained deeply dissatisfied with the cast. His dream had been to cast Olivia de Havilland in the role of Blanche, with her estranged sister, Joan Fontaine, playing Stella. When he couldn't get de Havilland, he asked Jane Wyman, recently divorced from Ronald Reagan, if she'd attempt the role. The answer was no.

At the urging of David O. Selznick, Warner briefly considered David's wife, Jennifer Jones. The veto on Jones came from Irene Selznick herself, who was still bitter that David had dumped her for the younger and more beautiful star.

One week before shooting began, and even after Vivien had been signed, Kazan still held out for Jessica Tandy. He urged Warner to pay off Vivien and hire Tandy to replace her.

"No way!" Warner shouted back at his director. "If I don't want to fuck Tandy, I have to assume that other men in the audience will feel the same way. Not one man wants a piece of Tandy's ass. She's got the sex appeal of Lionel Barrymore. Case closed!"

Even at the last minute, Warner pushed James Cagney for the role of Blanche's almost boyfriend. But Kazan held out for Karl Malden.

Kazan and Warner clashed bitterly over Kim Hunter, the studio honcho claiming that Hunter had a "negative screen personality." Warner preferred Anne Baxter, Ruth Roman, or Patricia Neal, who was at the time in the throes of an ill-fated affair with Gary Cooper. "Even Donna Reed would be better," Warner claimed.

Olivia de Havilland

"If you cast one of those actresses," Kazan threatened, "I'm walking off the picture. Kim Hunter will be brilliant playing a girl who likes to get fucked by Stanley—and fucked regularly. She's the one. I should know. I've already auditioned her in that department."

While making *The Men*, Marlon had "screwed up" interviews with both Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, but he agreed to see columnist James Bacon on the set of *Streetcar*. The writer had been warned in

advance that questions about the actor's private life were off-limits.

But during the interview, Bacon later recalled, "Brando went into a detailed account of his personal life, one so raunchy that no publication could possibly have printed it in those days. He talked about fucking a girl in the ass with butter, and even made slight reference to a friendly romp with a goat back on the farm in Nebraska. Twenty-two years later when I saw *Last Tango in Paris*, in which Brando pretty much improvised the sex scenes, I realized I had been through this picture before, in Brando's own words back in 1950."

With other reporters, Marlon—and with good reason—continued to draw a curtain across any insights into his private life. "I have every right in the world to resist the insipid protocol of turning my life into the kind of running serial you find on bubble gum wrappers. You can't take sensitive parts of yourself and splatter them around like so much popcorn butter."

In contrast to Bacon, Louella Parsons and other columnists maintained an ongoing series of attacks against Marlon, deploring his manners and dress. Lolly called him "The Slob," and the label stuck.

But other members of the Hollywood elite found him dazzling, just as many A-list stars had when they came backstage to seduce him after his nightly performances in *Streetcar* on Broadway.

Gloria Swanson had no plans to seduce Marlon, but she later revealed that, "Although Monty Clift was offered the role of Joe Gillis in *Sunset Blvd.*, I secretly preferred Marlon Brando. I felt that the picture was so strong that I, as Norma Desmond, and Marlon as Joe Gillis, my gigolo, would have walked away with Oscars. Of course, the part went to the less charismatic William Holden."

In the middle of filming, Marlon's sometimes girlfriend, Shelley Winters, visited him on the set. Marlon took her by the arm and escorted her to his portable dressing room. Once inside, he locked the door for privacy. "Scream, Shelley scream!" he whispered to her. "We've got to shake the walls of this fucking trailer. I've got a reputation to maintain. Scream, Shelley, scream!"

Gloria Swanson

She obliged.

In only two weeks, Kazan managed to remove each of the stage directions Vivien had learned from Olivier during the staging of the play's production in London. A new and different Blanche DuBois was recorded on film. Not only that, but Marlon was finding nuances in the role of Stanley Kowalski that he had not realized on Broadway.

"I made Vivien connect role with soul," Kazan later said. "She and Marlon were perfectly matched. A chemistry exploded on screen that didn't exist between Marlon and Jessica Tandy on Broadway. Before my lens were two highly charged actors exploding off each other."

Privately Marlon told Kazan, "That delirium and despair you're capturing on the screen is Lady Olivier herself. She's writing a textbook of the madness that lurks within herself. I fear, though, that she's going over the deep edge with Blanche. She'll never come back."

Karl Malden

Other cast members took note of Vivien's tottering on the brink of a nervous breakdown. Karl Malden, though deeply devoted to Jessica Tandy, came to accept Vivien in the role of Blanche. "After all," he said, "she had star power. The film was riding on her. She was carrying all of us nobodies, including Marlon Brando himself. But she had a tenuous hold on reality."

In contrast to his ongoing struggles with Vivien, Kazan had no trouble directing Brando. He told Charles Feldman, "There was nothing you could do with Brando that touched what he could do with himself!" Feldman was surprised by the fact that Marlon had initially rejected the movie role of Stanley ("It'd be like marrying the same woman twice.") The producer was also surprised to learn that Kazan had originally refused the director's job, even when it was personally presented by Jack Warner. ("I don't think I could get it up a second time for *Streetcar*.")

Obviously, both Kazan and Brando eventually changed their minds.

* * *

Marlon was not necessarily known for getting along with producers. Charles Feldman, a canny Hollywood agent turned producer, was the remarkable exception. Marlon told Kazan, "Charlie is my kind of guy. We speak the same language." On the first day of their meeting, Feldman had won Marlon over by saying, "Welcome to Hollywood. I want you to make a picture about the three Fs—feuding, fighting, and fucking!"

In his mid-forties at the time, Feldman was often called "the Jewish Clark Gable," and many Hollywood insiders had told him that he should be in front of the cameras instead of directing operations from behind the scenes.

Feldman, as the New York-born president of Famous Artists, Inc., became the most famous agent in Hollywood, managing the careers of clients who

included Tyrone Power, John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, Ava Gardner, Gary Cooper, and eventually, James Dean. Not all of his clients liked him. Feldman once recalled that, "On the same day I was fired by Lana Turner, Rita Hayworth, and Marilyn Monroe."

Feldman told Marlon that during the filming of *Streetcar,* he would line up "the most fuckable pussies" in Hollywood for him.

"I'm ready, willing, and able," Marlon boasted. "Let the good times roll."

"To keep Vivien happy," Feldman said, "I'm seeing that she gets regularly fucked, too. So far, she's sleeping with anything in pants on the set. Kazan deflowered her when they took that long train ride from New York to Los Angeles. Through my friend Henry Willson, I'm keeping Olivier supplied with some of our better endowed young actors who want to be auditioned by Hamlet. You know that Olivier is gay, don't you?"

Not revealing his own sexual involvement with Olivier in the mid-Forties, Marlon merely said, "I'd heard that."

Just before he met Marlon, Feldman had divorced Jean Howard, a one-time MGM starlet, who had broken into films after working as a chorine and a Goldwyn girl. After retiring from show business, she became one of Hollywood's most famous photographers, shooting portraits of, among others, Tyrone Power, Gene Tierney, Richard Burton, and Cole Porter.

When his marriage "to the cactus flower of Texas" ended, Feldman became a "serial seducer" of Hollywood starlets, later offering some of them to his friends and clients. If it so happened that those friends and clients happened to be gay, he would call Henry Willson (discoverer of Rock Hudson) to supply what Feldman called "the man meat."

As he told Marlon, "When I got to Hollywood, I quickly learned that pussy won't always do it. To keep Monty Clift in line during the filming of *Red River*, I even let him suck my cock."

Feldman could also laugh at himself. "The first film I produced was in 1942. It was called *The Lady Is Willing*. Hot damn, did I ever learn that was true in Hollywood. Another film I produced two years later, *Follow the Boys*, also tells the story with me. I peddle flesh out here, male or female. It makes no difference to me as long as the money keeps rolling in. I'm one of those people who has no morals. That way, I never have guilt like that sickie, Spencer Tracy, who likes to have sex with teenage boys, then drinks himself into oblivion for a month over what he's done."

After the first week of shooting, Feldman called Marlon and offered him the use of his rented house in Beverly Hills for the weekend. He told Marlon that he was driving to Palm Springs "to fuck Hedy Lamarr for forty-eight hours straight."

"Did you provide me with some company?" Marlon asked, accepting

access to the property.

"There's plenty of champagne chilling," Feldman told him. "There's lobster and a can of caviar. And beginning at ten o'clock tonight, the hottest blonde pussy in Hollywood will arrive. Her pussy is not actually blonde. But for you and for the occasion, I've asked her to bleach it for you."

"No need to do that," Marlon told him. "I actually prefer my pussy dark."

"Too late, baby," Feldman said. "Have fun pounding that thing. I've been doing it for weeks now, and I highly recommend it."

"I can't wait until ten o'clock."

* * *

The blonde starlet promised by Feldman didn't arrive on schedule at ten o'clock but at midnight. She was to embark on an agenda of being perpetually late—that is, if she showed up at all. Marlon had his night light on reading a story about Arthur Miller, who had told him that, "You should give up this Hollywood crap and return to Broadway where you belong!"

Letting herself into Feldman's house with her own key, this blonde beauty appeared at the door to Marlon's bedroom. Looking up at her, he noted that she had her eyes half closed and her mouth half open. She was clad in a red sequin dress two sizes too small for her and wore pink ankle-strap Joan Crawford fuck-me shoes. She spoke in a whispered voice that came out as if she were panting. "You know me. I know you. Uncle Charlie sent me over to entertain you."

He looked her up and down with great admiration. "How could I fail to recognize Marilyn Monroe? Come on in. Don't be a stranger."

She giggled, coming into the room. "I didn't tell Uncle Charlie we already knew each other."

"For God's sake," he said, "get out of that dress. Those tits of yours look like they need to be liberated."

As she slowly and tantalizingly began to strip in front of him, she said, "Don't get the wrong idea. I don't like sex all that much, as I might have led you to believe. I just do it to please men. Sometimes I even come."

Marilyn Monroe

"Tonight you will," he prom-

ised. “My noble tool always does its job with honor, respect, and dignity for the woman.”

“Then let’s get on with it,” she said.

At the time, Johnny Hyde, her chief promoter, was still alive, but Marilyn was also hustling Feldman, fearing that Hyde with his weak heart would not always be around. She had volunteered her name as an entry for Feldman’s little black book, promising the businessman and agent that she would entertain his clients, prospective clients, directors, and producers. Almost overnight she became the most requested starlet in the little black book.

Their passion, as Marlon was to report in great detail to Feldman the following afternoon, lasted for three hours. Both of them fell asleep around five o’clock in the morning and stayed in bed until nearly two o’clock the following afternoon.

Over orange juice in Feldman’s kitchen, Marilyn told Marlon, “I think a girl should use sex like a weapon. I think this is the only way a girl can get ahead in a town ruled by men.”

He was amazed at how bluntly she expressed herself, whereas many other women he’d known would have been more restrained.

“I like it when you make love to me,” she told him. “I don’t like many of Uncle Charlie’s other clients.”

“Thanks.” He reached over to kiss her nose. “What’s with this Uncle Charlie stuff?”

“I just call him that to tease him,” she said. “He hates it. He says, ‘So, now I’ve reached the Uncle Charlie phase of my life.’ I told him that’s what he gets for dating high school girls. ‘If you don’t like to be called Uncle Charlie, then go out with girls your own age,’ I told him. Can you believe it? Uncle Charlie once fucked Greta Garbo. Now he desires *me*.”

“Apparently, he doesn’t desire you enough to keep you exclusively for himself,” he said. “But sends you out to service other clients.”

“Why not?” she asked. “After all, that’s how I got my start in the business. I still remember the fifteen dollars you gave me in New York so long ago. I really needed the money. Thanks.”

“You earned it.”

“Uncle Charlie has big plans for me,” she said. “Johnny Hyde’s not going to be around for long. He’s madly in love with me, but has a bad heart. He’s also got a small penis and can’t make me come. The one thing I hate about Johnny is that he thinks all women are tramps. Do you think that about women, Mr. Brando?”

“Not at all,” he said, affecting grandeur. “I think you’re enchanting. Far from a tramp. But you haven’t yet unleashed your special magic onto the world. When you do, your name will rank with Helen of Troy and Cleopatra.

God had a talent for creating exceptional women: Dietrich. Garbo. And now Marilyn Monroe."

She giggled again. "I hope you really mean that. Men tell such lies. I don't know who to believe."

"Trust me." He slammed down his coffee and stood up. "Let's go for a walk in the garden. Breathe Uncle Charlie's fresh air." In the garden holding her hand, he asked her, "Have you ever been in love? Even once?"

She sighed and her lip quivered. "Yes, once. His name was Fred. A musician and a bit skinny for my taste. Unlike my husband, Fred could make me come. But he told me I was good for nothing but fucking. His only complaint was that my breasts were too big, too much like a cow. He said he preferred women with smaller breasts. He also found my clothes cheap. One night he told me I was too stupid to talk to, and I've been trying to improve my mind ever since."

"This Fred sounds like a total asshole," he told her.

Marilyn was talking about Fred Karger, a relationship that produced three of her pregnancies, each ending in abortion. He did not marry her because he did not consider her a suitable parent for his children from previous marriages.

Only the insiders of Hollywood knew how despondent Marilyn became when Karger slipped away to Santa Barbara on November 1, 1952 and married Jane Wyman, even though Ronald Reagan was still in love with her. Karger told friends that "Jane Wyman is the type of gal you marry. Marilyn Monroe is the type of gal you fuck."

Wyman would ultimately divorce Karger, charging that he had "an uncontrollable temper" and citing "grievous mental cruelty." But in 1961, to the surprise of Hollywood, she would remarry her musician. Until he died of leukemia in 1979 at the age of sixty-three, Karger maintained that "Marilyn stalked me throughout most of the 50s. She never got over me."

"Do you find me too stupid to talk to?" Marilyn asked Marlon.

"Not at all," he said. "I find you entertaining in conversation and the Miracle Lady in bed. Speaking of bed, my noble tool is rising to do its duty one more time."

She giggled, locking her hand with him as his hand enclosed one of her breasts.

After another round of sex, she jumped up from the bed and turned her naked ass to him. "Johnny tells me I have a behind like a nigger. What do you think, Mr. Brando?"

"I like nigger behinds," he said. "Get back in bed with me and I'll show you."

She smiled at him. "You've had enough for one morning. I don't want to spoil you. Don't tell anybody this, but I have nigger blood in me. Really, I do.

I'm not joking."

For reasons known only to herself, between 1948 and 1951, Marilyn insisted on telling confidants that she had "nigger blood" in her. There is no proof that she did. She told this same tale to Kazan and others. After 1951, she was never heard to make that claim again.

Rushing to the shower, she called back to Marlon. "I will let you fuck me three more times this afternoon. Then tonight I want you to escort me to a private party on the Fox lot. Tyrone Power will be there. I'll introduce you to him."

Marlon would later give a detailed report to both Kazan and Feldman about his night with Marilyn. Feldman was happy that, in his role as the producer of *Streetcar,* he'd pleased a hot new associate. Kazan had a different reaction. "I knew you'd eventually get around to Marilyn. I'm not jealous."

"Why should you be?" Marlon asked. He paused for a moment. "I know Uncle Charlie is fucking Marilyn. But you, Gadge. You and Marilyn?"

"In her busy schedule, she manages to fit me in. She's my mistress. I still love Molly but I like a piece on the side. I guess we'll have to work out an arrangement where you and I share her, with an occasional fuck going to Charlie."

"Let's not kid ourselves," Marlon said. "Where Marilyn is concerned, the lines form on the right and the left. What are you promising her? The lead in your next picture?"

"How did you guess?" Kazan said. "I told her the role is hers. But actually I just met with Darryl Zanuck. He's signing Jean Peters for the part."

"Better check with Howard Hughes," Marlon said. "I hear he's branded Miss Peters."

"It's okay with Hughes," Kazan said, "providing none of us ever get within ten feet of Miss Peters."

"What's this film about?" Marlon asked.

"Emiliano Zapata. He led a 1910 peasant uprising in southern Mexico. I've been in collaboration with John Steinbeck since 1948. Zanuck's going to produce it. He wants to star Tyrone Power in the lead."

"What's this fucking film called?"

"We're thinking of calling it *Viva Zapata*," Kazan said. "I haven't run that by Zanuck yet."

"Why in hell haven't you told me about this script?" Marlon asked. "Power's getting a little long in the tooth to play a young rabble-rouser. Let me see the script. I've always wanted to play a revolutionary. If the script is good, I might even agree to come back to Hollywood for one more film role—mind you, just one more and that's it!"

* * *

Marilyn Monroe

That evening when Marlon and Marilyn arrived at 20th Century Fox, they headed for the Café de Paris, the studio's commissary, site of the party.

At the door, all conversation was interrupted as heads turned to feast on the stunning blonde starlet on his arm. Marilyn had poured herself into a low-cut strapless black cocktail dress with a décolletage that plunged toward hell. Wearing towering white high heels, she stood on shapely but wobbly legs, putting on a show for the eyes feasting on her. In the middle of a harangue to five of his assistants, all male, even Darryl Zanuck was upstaged and forced to take notice of this new arrival. No one seemed to notice Marlon.

Breathing in deeply, thereby accentuating the size of her breasts, Marilyn quickly deserted Marlon and began to work the room. Within minutes, Marlon had renewed his acquaintance with both Anne Baxter and Susan Hayward, whom he hadn't seen since his seductions of them during the Broadway run of *Streetcar*. Anne was polite and friendly, but it was obvious that her interest was now focused elsewhere. Susan chastised Marlon "for not calling me the moment you got to Hollywood." But when one of Zanuck's aides came to summon her to the studio chief, she moved on.

Jeanne Crain came up and introduced herself, telling him how much she'd admired his performance on Broadway in *Streetcar*. "I didn't know you were in the audience," he told her. "You should have come backstage. We might have had some fun."

She quickly changed the subject to herself, telling him that she and Claudette Colbert were going to make an exciting new picture called *All About Eve*. Ironically, neither actress would star in the film. The woman who would replace Jeanne in the role, Anne Baxter, was standing only ten feet away as Jeanne gushed, inaccurately, about her role in the upcoming film.

When Jeanne disappeared, Gregory Peck emerged, shaking Marlon's hands. "I'm such a slob," said the immaculately groomed Peck, "that I was offered the role of Stanley but I turned it down." He smiled at Marlon's startled look. "I'm joking," Peck said. "You and I will never compete for the same

roles."

Suddenly, the blonde-haired June Haver was standing next to Marlon and chatting. He found her boring. However, the late arrival of Betty Grable attracted him. He headed for the door to introduce himself. As he did, Marilyn grabbed his arm. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Come on, I want you to meet my co-star, Tyrone Power." Marlon glanced over to the other side of the room, where Tyrone had joined the inner circle listening to Zanuck pontificate. When Marilyn tried to join the inner circle, with Marlon trailing her, one of the aides directed her away from the group.

"Oh," Marilyn said. "I guess we'll have to wait for His Majesty." Taking Marlon's hand, she led him to the terrace, then patted the seat next to hers. Sitting down, he took her hand. Marilyn's eyes drifted toward Betty Grable, whom everyone seemed to be ignoring. "Poor Betty," Marilyn said. "Everybody in the room knows that Zanuck is grooming me to replace her. Someday I'll get old, too, and he'll replace me."

"No one will ever replace you," Marlon assured her.

"There's talk I'm going to be loaned to another studio to make *Clash By Night* for Howard Hughes," she told him. "It's based on a play by Clifford Odets."

"I know Clifford," he told her. "Rather well, as a matter of fact."

"Barbara Stanwyck is the star," she said. "I hear she's a lesbian. I guess I'll have to sleep with her." She sighed. "First, Joan Crawford. Now, Stanwyck. Isn't there any big Hollywood female star who's not a lesbian?"

"Marlene Dietrich," he said jokingly. "Greta Garbo."

"Oh, I've heard about those two," she said.

"Work with Bette Davis," he advised her. "You'll be safe with that one. I know from personal experience she likes men."

Ironically, Marilyn would eventually be cast in *All About Eve*, starring Bette Davis.

As Marilyn sat talking with Marlon, waiting for Tyrone to become free, she started issuing opinions that he felt were only recently formed. She wanted him to know that she had opinions about many things, as she claimed she'd been improving her mind in the last few months. She spoke about acting, love-making, and politics. The interest in politics surprised him.

As she talked in her own distinctive style, he soon realized that he'd heard all these opinions before. Elia Kazan was the originator of these points

Betty Grable

of view, especially about radical politics. She was merely parroting Kazan's own ideas, and perhaps didn't even believe half of what she was saying.

Finally, he interrupted her. "When did you become interested in politics? Especially the doctrines of the Communist Party?"

"I'm not all that interested," she said. "Gadge is passionate about politics, and I guess some of his interest rubbed off onto me. I'd rather sleep with politicians than hear their rants. What about you?"

"I always make it a point to kick politicians out of my bed," he said. "I mean, if Harry Truman called me to the White House to sleep with him, I guess I'd go. After all, he is the president of the United States, the man who dropped the atomic bomb."

The one and only Stanley Kowalski

She looked confused for a minute. "I didn't know Truman was gay." The word had only recently come into vogue.

Finding her charmingly gullible, he said, "Don't tell anyone, but he sleeps with his joint chiefs. Not only that, but Truman and Eisenhower were once lovers."

"Ike, too?" She looked distressed. "That leaves me out in the cold. It's about time they put a red-blooded heterosexual into the White House to give us gals a chance at them."

Freed from Zanuck, Tyrone suddenly appeared, kissing Marilyn on the lips before extending his hand to Marlon. "I haven't seen *Streetcar* yet," he told Marlon, "but I'm dying to. I hear you're terrific."

"There is a prediction that I'm going to become the king of Hollywood."

Tyrone looked surprised, as if he couldn't decide if Marlon was being supremely confident or merely jesting.

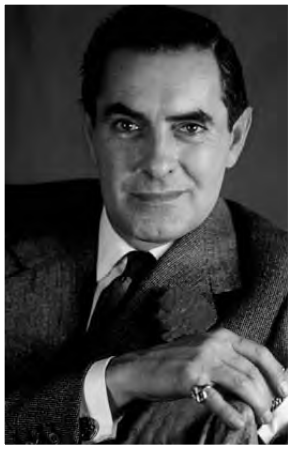
"You'll do something I couldn't do: Knock Gable off his throne."

"In time, in time, my good man." Marlon moved closer to Tyrone. "Did anyone ever tell you that you have the most beautiful eyes in Hollywood? The most sensual mouth?"

As Marilyn laughed, Tyrone appeared flabbergasted, still not able to determine if Marlon were a big put-on or if he were sincere.

"You certainly take a direct approach," Tyrone managed to say.

"Let's don't kid ourselves," Marlon said. "I hate pretense. All of Hollywood knows I sleep on both sides of the fence. Marilyn has had her



Tyrone Power

affairs with women. Stories of you and Errol Flynn, even Howard Hughes, are legendary. Since all three of us share the same bi-interest, I suggest we leave the party together and pursue those mutual concerns."

It is not known what happened next, but Anne Baxter, talking about that night years later at her home in Connecticut, said that she "was surprised to see Monroe, Tyrone Power, and Brando leaving the party together. All of us knew that Ty had engaged in a three-way with Hughes and Lana Turner. Why not with the new kid on the block? Brando. What Ty didn't know is that I had already sampled the charms of Brando before he got around to him. At that point, Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando were about to become the hottest ticket in town. Ty's star was fading. He'd long ago lost the male beauty he showcased in the Thirties. Perhaps he was trying to link up with the new stars of the future, hoping some of their magic would rub off. Whatever he was thinking, nothing would work out for poor Ty. Like Grable at that party, Ty was on the way out the door. Maybe in some weird way he thought some of their new dazzle would ignite his old dazzle. But in spite of his three-way with them, it doesn't work that way. Maybe it wasn't obvious to Ty, even though it was perfectly obvious to me: Marlon Brando and Marilyn Monroe do only solo acts."

A week later Marlon entered a night club where he was pursuing one of the performers, a Creole beauty fresh from Martinique. He'd made a date with the dancer for later in the evening. To his surprise, he found Marilyn wandering around alone.

Except she wasn't alone. She quickly informed him she was on a date with the seventy-one-year-old Joe Schenck, one of the founders of 20th Century Fox. Although Marilyn later maintained that her relationship with Schenck was strictly platonic, she told Marlon otherwise. "I can't stand it when the Jew shit puts his hands on me. I cringe all over, but a gal has to do what a gal has to do to get ahead in this rotten town."

Although initially surprised by her comment, Marlon was to learn later that Marilyn often riddled her private remarks to him with anti-Semitic references, a prejudice that would only grow as she got older. Her anti-Semitism, however, did not prevent her from later converting to Judaism at the behest of her Jewish husband, playwright Arthur Miller.

"The impotent bastard has asked me to marry him," she told Marlon, referring to Schenck. "He doesn't have long to live. He's already had a cere-

bral hemorrhage. But the old coot's a good dancer. He told me that if I marry him, he'll die soon. That way, as his widow, I stand to inherit fifteen million dollars. He knows that as my husband he can't be there for me in ways that are important to a woman. He says I can entertain men on the side, providing I don't rub his nose in it. Which means that even if I become Mrs. Schenck, you'll still get lucky with me."

"I'll take the job," he said with a smirk. "Filling in for stud duty for old man Schenck with someone as pretty as you is hardly work. You've got a deal." He reached over and kissed her on the lips.

She practically screamed at him, backing away. "A girl's got to look her best in this town. There you go messing up my makeup. It only took me an hour."

At that point, Schenck emerged from the men's toilet, still buttoning up. He walked over to Marilyn and kissed her on the cheek. He looked Marlon up and down. Just as Marlon extended his hand to introduce himself, Schenck backed away slightly. He didn't extend his own hand to Marlon. "I know who you are. You're Marlon Brando. I was telling Zanuck the other day that I don't care how big a star you become in this town. As long as I have anything to say about it, you'll never make a picture for Fox."

Taken aback, Marlon at first didn't know how to respond. Finally, he said, "Congratulations on getting out of jail. I hear President Truman pardoned you."

Marlon was referring to Schenck's sentencing to one year in jail for income tax evasion. He served four months until his pardon came in.

"Come on, Marilyn," Schenck said, roughly taking her by the arm and leading her away.

Turning her head as she departed, Marilyn smiled at Marlon.

"Until we meet again, Miss Monroe," Marlon called after her.

That future rendezvous would be sooner than either of them expected.

* * *

As one of the original backers of the Broadway version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Cary Grant had a vested interest in the film. He seemed to take an even greater interest in Marlon, although, as actor Stewart Granger revealed in his memoirs, Grant was simultaneously pursuing him at the same time.

Grant was hardly Marlon's most admired actor. But since he was such a big star, Marlon later told Kazan, "I think I'll go out with him to see how far he'll go with me."

Before the night of their first date ended, Marlon realized that Grant was

willing to go a great distance—or at least all the way to San Francisco. Driving Marlon to the Los Angeles airport, Grant announced that he'd arranged for them to have dinner in San Francisco. "It's safer and more discreet there," he assured Marlon. "Too many people know me in Los Angeles."

Cary Grant

Marlon reluctantly went along for the ride. After he was airborne, he preferred to sit up front with the pilot instead of in the rear with Grant. From the pilot, Marlon learned that the aircraft belonged to Howard Hughes. Like virtually everybody else in Hollywood, Marlon already knew that Grant and Hughes had been on-again, off-again lovers since the 1930s.

Checking into a suite at the Fairmont Hotel, Marlon noted that there were two bedrooms. He took the smaller one since Grant had brought more luggage with him. Grant appeared an hour later in the suite's living room. Marlon was wearing an ill-fitting blue suit, but Grant looked like a fashion model—an older one, admittedly—and was camera ready. Marlon was to say later, "I don't think I ever met a man as well groomed as Cary."

The clothes were perfect, but not the man himself. Physically, Grant was not the man he was on the screen. He looked years older. Finally, out of curiosity, Marlon asked him, "Is there something wrong? I mean, are you sick or something?"

"I'm getting better," he told Marlon. "While I was in London shooting *I Was a Male War Bride* with Ann Sheridan, I came down with jaundice. I lost thirty pounds, and I'm still weak, trying to get my energy back." That evening, Grant took Marlon to catch the "Pussy-Katt" revue at Finocchio's, the leading drag club in town. He confided that he and Hughes often went there when they were in San Francisco together. Marlon was famished and ordered two shrimp cocktails and a thick blood-rare steak, Grant preferring a simple piece of grilled chicken with some white rice.

Returning to their hotel suite, Grant seemed in a talkative mood, and Marlon was all ears. In spite of his health, Grant was drinking heavily, Marlon choosing to sip from a beer bottle.

By two o'clock that morning, Grant startled Marlon by telling him that he was going to retire from pictures. "I've saved my money. Howard Hughes has tipped me off to some good investments. I'm comfortable. I don't have to work a day in my life again if I don't want to."

"Man, I wish I could say the same," Marlon said. "If I had your money,

I'd find myself a Caribbean island somewhere and drift down there never to be seen again."

"I think it's time for us old guys like Jimmy Stewart and myself to step aside and make way for you younger upstarts, you and Montgomery Clift and God knows how many others there are waiting in the wings. I think the 1950s will see a very different type of male movie star than those of us who graced the screen in the Thirties and Forties. You will be up there leading the pack of the hot new young Turks."

"Perhaps," Marlon said, "and then again perhaps not. Unlike every other actor in Hollywood, I don't have a driving ambition to be a movie star. I'm keeping my options open."

"I don't enjoy making films anymore," Grant said. "Perhaps I never did. I feel my best films are behind me. Ben Hecht and Charles Lederer are working on something for me called, 'Darling I Am Getting Older.' I hate the fucking title. I think I'll turn it down. There's no way in hell I'm going to appear in a movie with a title like that."

When 20th Century Fox made the film, directed by Howard Hawks, the title was changed to *Monkey Business*. The female stars were Ginger Rogers and Marilyn Monroe.

By four o'clock that morning, Grant had confessed to Marlon that, "I came very close to killing myself in London. It wouldn't be the first time—I've tried to do myself in before."

"I don't understand it," Marlon said. "To me, you've got it made. Everything to live for, even if your career is winding down. There are other things to do in life than make movies."

"I'm sure there are," Grant said. "I just don't know much about those other things. It seems I've always made movies. I have had this dream of going around the world on a tramp steamer, with or without Betsy. Perhaps without her."

He was referring to his then-wife, actress Betsy Drake.

"I want to forget about this character I call Cary Grant. Take up my old name: Archibald Leach. My friends could call me Archie."

"To me, you'll always be Cary Grant," Marlon said. "The image is undelible."

"Directors haven't started offering me monster parts," Grant said, "but right this minute George Cukor is thinking about remaking *A Star Is Born* with Judy Garland in the lead. Guess what?" As he said that, he poured himself another drink. "I'd be cast as the drunken has-been, Norman Maine. Too close to home, I told Cukor. Imagine that Cukor offering me the role of a has-been."

"I hate growing old," Grant continued. He was still furious with the spinsterish columnist Hedda Hopper, rumored to be in love with Grant herself.

When the 46-year-old Grant married the 27-year-old Betsy Drake, she'd written: "When a man of forty falls in love with a girl of twenty, it isn't her youth he is seeking but his own."

After learning all the details about what Grant and Marlon talked about, Charles Feldman and Kazan waited for the climax.

"We stood out on the terrace to watch the sun rise over San Francisco, and I swear it was one of the most spectacular sights I've ever seen," Marlon said. "I think I'm going to move to San Francisco."

"And then what happened?" Feldman asked. "Did the old queer put the make on you?"

"We went to bed," Marlon said.

"Your bed or his?" Kazan asked.

"God forbid, separate beds?" Feldman said.

"I think whatever happened in that suite between Cary and me will be a secret I'll take to my grave," Marlon said. "I've already told you guys too much. I'm sure Cary will never tell what happened."

Although it's not known what transpired between Marlon and Grant during the remainder of the weekend, Marlon later reported that Grant repeatedly called him upon his return to Hollywood. "I'm not taking Grant's calls," Marlon told Kazan. "I've already got one limey to deal with. I don't need another one."

He was referring to either his co-star, Vivien Leigh, or perhaps to Larry Olivier.

Rebuffed by Marlon, Grant in the months ahead did little to conceal his disdain for the entertainment industry's new breed of actors. Without mentioning Marlon by name, he told the press, "It's a period of blue jeans, dope addicts, and Method—nobody cares about comedy any more."

Later, Grant would grow even more candid, telling an interviewer, "I have no rapport with the new idols of the screen, and that includes Marlon Brando and his style of Method acting. It certainly includes Montgomery Clift and that God-awful James Dean. Some producer should cast all three of them in the same movie and let them duke it out. When they've finished each other off, Jimmy Stewart, Spencer Tracy, and I will return and start making real movies again like we used to."

After filming on *Streetcar* was wrapped, Marlon called Feldman for a final good-bye. "Charlie, spending some time with Cary Grant has convinced me of one thing. Of all the possibilities for me in all the world, I don't want to be a fucking movie star. Let me out of this cage?"

* * *

Laurence Olivier

Back in New York, Wally Cox was not in the loop about Marlon's affair with Vivien Leigh. Wally shared one of Marlon's letters with Bobby Lewis. In the note, Marlon stated that, "Scarlett O'Hara has fabulous tits and a tight ass even at her age. I want to fuck her so much I walk around the set with a perpetual hard-on."

In his memoirs, Marlon claimed, "Like Blanche, she [meaning Vivien] slept with almost everybody and was beginning to dissolve mentally and to fray at the ends physically." He also falsely claimed that, "I might have given her a tumble if it hadn't been for Larry Olivier. I liked him too much to invade his chicken coop."

In spite of the five million dollars Random House had given him for his autobiography, Marlon wasn't being entirely candid. He not only invaded the Oliviers' chicken coop, he anchored there for a while as the chief rooster.

Day by day on the set, Kazan had seen the burgeoning romance between Vivien and Marlon unfold before his eyes. "Vivien's wild sexual craziness, her flirtatiousness, her faded Southern belle appearance turned Marlon on."

When not before the cameras, Kazan saw them constantly sitting with each other and smoking cigarettes. Sometimes Marlon would sing "Songs My Mother Taught Me" (the title of his autobiography). Vivien's two favorite songs from Marlon's mother-fueled repertoire were "Don't Fence Me In" and "Streets of Laredo," two odd choices for her.

Even Kazan was shocked to see exactly how Olivier intruded into the romance—and hardly as a jealous husband. In fact, he didn't seem jealous at all. "All Sir Larry wanted was a piece of the action. Or, should I put that differently? A piece of Marlon's ass. He'd long ago abandoned the bed of Lady Olivier."

One afternoon Olivier invaded the set. He'd been working that day, shooting the lackluster film, *Carrie*, based on Theodore Dreiser's bestselling novel, *Sister Carrie*. Vivien was telling Marlon, "Like Blanche, I'm a pathetic creature. An artist too sensitive for her own good. Too vulnerable. I am destructible. The world will soon do me in, I fear." Blowing out smoke, she looked at him in a new light. "Perhaps, for all I know, you will be my executioner. I may at this very moment be talking to a reincarnated version of Marie Antoinette's guillotine ghoul."

"No, not that. Anything but that."

At that point Olivier intruded, hugging Marlon into a tight embrace he'd not known since their last night in New York together.

Their reunion was followed by an invitation to dinner that night and a midnight swim. It would be the beginning of many dinners and many swims in the elegant Coldwater Canyon house with its egg-shaped pool which Charlie Feldman had arranged for them to live in during the shooting of *Streetcar*. It was the same house where the couple had stayed during the making of *Lady Hamilton* in 1941, and the same house where four years later Feldman would introduce Senator John F. Kennedy to by then-a-star Marilyn Monroe.

Although he'd lived briefly with Elia Kazan in a house nearby, and had "permanent quarters" with his agent Jay Kanter and roommate Tony Curtis, Marlon moved in with the Oliviers that night.

The Oliviers occupied separate bedrooms in the mansion. Olivier turned in first and was soon followed by Marlon. Vivien later told Kazan, "Sometimes I'd see a light on in Larry's bedroom, and I just assumed that he and Marlon were doing whatever two men do when they go to bed together. I never really understand that kind of love. But I must say this for Marlon. When it comes to couples, he's an equal-opportunity seducer. On many a night he rose from Larry's bed and joined me in mine. I never sleep. All my nights are sleepless. Sometimes he would find me in Charlie's garden wandering around like Ophelia in a see-through nightgown."

Another house guest who'd just arrived from London, actor David Niven, remembered walking into the garden to discover "Brando and Larry swimming naked in the pool. Larry was kissing Brando. Or maybe it was the other way around. I turned my back to them and went back inside to join Vivien. I'm sure she knew what was going on, but she made no mention of it. Nor did I. One must be sophisticated about such matters in life."

Niven later recalled that he felt that both Olivier and Vivien "were hopelessly in love with Brando. My God, he was so handsome I could have fallen for him myself, and I'm hopelessly straight. Marlon Brando was adorable. So unlike Stanley Kowalski that he was playing on the screen, he was so gentle, so kind. Of course, I saw only his gentler side. But from the sounds coming from Larry's bedroom, I also knew that Brando could be a brute."

Niven very accurately predicted that the so-called romance between the Oliviers and Marlon would not last beyond the shooting of *Streetcar*. The actor did think that his friend Olivier was "walking on thin ice in combining an affair with Marlon and the very jealous Danny Kaye. All Hollywood at the time was talking about Brando's romance with the Oliviers. There was no way in hell that Kaye couldn't have heard about it."

Even so, Kaye, along with Sylvia Fine, went along with his original plan to throw a grand party for the Oliviers in the ballroom of the Beverly Hills Hotel. The Kayes had worked desperately to trim their guest list to one hundred and fifty. Jack Warner claimed, "If someone didn't get an invitation to this bash, they either left town or turned off their lights at eight o'clock."

Danny Kaye

Without a specific invitation for him, the Oliviers invited Marlon to join them for the event. Olivier even lent Marlon one of his tuxedos to wear for the occasion. Unknown to Marlon at the time, Kaye was deeply in love with Olivier.

Passing through the lobby leading to the ballroom, Marlon spotted Marilyn Monroe in plunging décolletage. A fellow male guest was introducing her to Errol Flynn. Marlon merely winked surreptitiously at her and walked on. Later, Marilyn would report that Flynn not only seduced her that night, but played "You Are My Sunshine" on his piano using only his erect penis.

At the head of the reception line and under glittering Austrian chandeliers, Kaye embraced both Olivier and Vivien, holding his hug with Olivier longer.

On seeing Marlon, Kaye looked shocked, staring first at Marlon and then at Olivier with a "how could you?" look. Suddenly, Kaye slapped Marlon. It was no stage slap but one using all the power and force in his body. Marlon was a boxer and could have clobbered Kaye. He chose not to.

"Like your hair color," Marlon said to Kaye before turning and walking away.

Kaye just stood there staring in defiance as he left. He'd dyed his hair bright red—almost orange—for a movie.

Vivien saved the night by linking her arm with Kaye, and, pretending a pride she didn't feel, grandly entered the ballroom where *tout* Hollywood was watching. Nearly everybody at that point knew that Kaye and Olivier were having an affair, and her fellow guests wanted to see how Vivien pulled off the evening.

"She was brilliant," Feldman later said. "What theatrics, entering the ballroom on the arm of her rival. She was gracious throughout the evening. No one could believe that she knew of the affair and secretly detested Danny Kaye. As for Marlon, I'm sure he found companionship later that night."

The following morning, neither of the Oliviers found Marlon in their beds.

Later, Vivien discovered a note addressed to both of them on their breakfast table in the Feldman garden.

Olivier seemed to know the contents. “Take it with us. We’ll read it on the freighter.”

After the thrill and excitement of Hollywood, Olivier felt that a long ride across the Atlantic on a small French freighter would be good for the both of them. The trip turned into a disaster.

Admitting that he and Vivien were hardly a honeymoon couple any more, he claimed that “the stark reality of our company plunged us both into depressions.” He also said that “the idea of suicide had its attraction, and I found myself more and more drawn to the ship’s rail and the fascination of the foam sweeping by.”

As for Vivien, he recalled, “She was walking a stairway to a dark gulf. I knew she’d never climb back.”

One night he invited Vivien to his cabin for a pre-dinner drink, telling her to bring the as-yet-unopened note from Marlon. “Please read it,” he told her. “I can’t bear to open it myself.”

The note from Marlon read: “Dear Vivien and Larry. Thank you for your hospitality. You were both wonderful to me. I will treasure my memory of you for always. But it is time to move on now, and I’m heading back to New York to resume my life. My regret is never having gotten to know either of you. But, then, I have always depended upon the kindness of strangers.”

Chapter Ten

When the candidates for the Oscars were announced in 1952, Marlon was nominated for an Academy Award for his portrayal of Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His major competition came from the "sentimental favorite" Humphrey Bogart for his starring role in *The African Queen*. Also nominated was Marlon's former lover, Monty Clift, for his role in *A Place in the Sun*. The other contenders included Arthur Kennedy for *Bright Victory* and Fredric March for *Death of a Salesman*.

The same year, Vivien was nominated for best actress, her major competition being Katharine Hepburn for *The African Queen*. Marlon's girlfriend, Shelley Winters, was nominated for *A Place in the Sun*, as were Eleanor Parker for *Detective Story* and Jane Wyman for *The Blue Veil*. Karl Malden and Kim Hunter were both nominated for supporting roles in their performances in *Streetcar*.

On Oscar night, three of the contenders associated with *Streetcar*—Vivien Leigh, Karl Malden, and Kim Hunter—walked away with Oscars, Marlon losing to Bogie. Facing reporters, Kazan told the press, "Stick around, boys. Marlon's day will come."

A week later, Marlon told Kazan that he had spotted Katharine Hepburn sitting alone in a restaurant. This was a most unusual sighting, since Hepburn frequently maintained that her mere appearance in a public restaurant often caused her to faint. Since Hepburn and Marlon had been the big losers on Oscar night, he went up to her table to introduce himself and "to share our mutual loss of the nude statue."

"I'm Marlon Brando," he said. "But I'm sure you recognize me."

"Mr. Brando," she said to him, sounding like the aloof and aristocratic character she played in *Adam's Rib*, "I neither recognize you nor want to know you. Please leave me alone."

After that rebuff, he went into the men's toilet to take a leak. There were only two urinals. He stood next to a stranger who seemed to be observing him carefully as he pissed. Thinking it was a sexual come-on, Marlon turned angrily to stare into the face next to him. It was Spencer Tracy.

Tracy smiled at him. "You mopped up the screen, boy, with your Stanley

Kowalski." Stepping back from the urinal, Tracy buttoned up. "Keep up the good work, kid, and you'll make it some day." With those parting words, he exited. But then he stuck his head back inside the toilet. "Of course, you'll never make it as big as I am. But, what the hell! One star always burns brighter than the other." With that, he disappeared for the final time.

As Marlon told Kazan the next morning, "So that's how Oscar winners treat contenders. I want no part of it. By the way, I think Tracy's queer. Hepburn, too, from what I hear."

* * *

After the filming of *Streetcar*, Marlon returned to New York, making frequent appearances at the Actors Studio, claiming he wanted "to meet girls" more than he wanted to learn anything about acting from Lee Strasberg. Soon after, as it happened, Elia Kazan flew to New York to conduct some business with his attorneys, and in his wake, both Tyrone Power and Marilyn Monroe made it a point to be in New York too, perhaps to lobby Kazan for roles in his upcoming film, *Viva Zapata!*

At a party in Greenwich Village, Marlon was surprised to see Marilyn Monroe sitting alone, playing the piano. She hadn't told him that she was coming to New York. Before he could walk over and greet her, he was corralled by Tom Ewell and Wally Cox, who took him over to greet the playwright, William Inge, who would become the chief rival on Broadway of Tennessee Williams.

An hour later, Marlon was still talking with the men when Stella Adler entered the room, tapping him on the shoulder. In his autobiography, Marlon identifies Stella only as "someone." He claimed that he turned around quickly, in the process delivering a sharp blow with his elbow to someone's head.

That someone turned out to be Marilyn herself. "Oh, my God," Marlon quotes himself as saying, "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. It was an accident."

"There are no accidents," she said.

Later in his autobiography, Marlon claimed that he sat beside Marilyn on the piano stool trying to teach her how to play. "You can't play worth a damn," he told her.

From that point onward, Marlon's autobiography, although admitting to an affair with Marilyn, drifts off into fantasy, not revealing what really happened during their next few days in New York.

He loved those *Guys and Dolls*

Marilyn Monroe

Marilyn and Marlon were seen leaving the party together. It was later learned by Marlon's friends that she took him back to her hotel, where Tyrone Power was waiting for her. According to Carlo Fiore, Marlon, Marilyn, and Tyrone resumed what had been only a brief interlude together in Hollywood.

No one has ever recorded what happened in bed that night between Marilyn, Tyrone, and Marlon. But many of Tyrone's male lovers, including Errol Flynn, reported that he was a "bottom" so one can reasonably conclude what might have happened. Presumably both men serviced Marilyn.

But ironically, instead of spending time with Marilyn in New York, both Tyrone and Marlon ended up in the days ahead seeing her only rarely. She had a lot of "mysterious" appointments, and she didn't want to share the exact nature of her business with her lovers, considering it "too personal."

Soon, there emerged an understanding between the three of them about the desirability of a leading role in Kazan's upcoming film, *Viva Zapata!*. Marilyn claimed she would wear a black wig in the film and Tyrone felt that through the very clever use of makeup he could be transformed into a Mexican. "I'm already Black Irish," he told Kazan.

Although Marlon secretly wanted the lead in *Viva Zapata!*, he did not convey that desire to Tyrone, who continued to be Zanuck's choice for the role. In a pattern previously established with both Montgomery Clift and Burt Lancaster, Marlon continued a by-now familiar pattern of "seducing the competition."

Tyrone and Marlon—without Marilyn—were frequently seen together in New York.

Marlon was the latest in a long line of Tyrone's conquests: Howard Hughes, Errol Flynn, Noël Coward, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, Cesar Romero, Robert Taylor, Lana Turner, Loretta Young—and, yes, even the Argentine dictator's wife, Evita Peron. "Why frustrate people?" he was fond of saying. "If I'm feeling horny at the time, and I like them, I'll oblige them. They meet me. They are curious. Sometimes we have to get the sex out of the way just to move on with our friendship."

Marlon invited several of his friends to meet Tyrone, including Stella Adler, Carlo Fiore, Wally Cox, Bobby Lewis, and James Baldwin. Tyrone was facing a crisis in his life and career, and he used this audience to speak openly about his conflicts.

Claiming he was fed up with costume dramas such as the recent box office

failure of *The Black Rose*, he said he wanted to become a free agent in the summer of 1952 when his contract with Fox would expire.

"The days of my great vehicles—films like *In Old Chicago* or *The Razor's Edge*—are beyond me, I fear," he told Marlon's friends.

Tyrone hastened to add that before he relinquished movie stardom, he planned to make a final attempt to have a hit movie with *Viva Zapata!* "I'm being offered fewer roles," he told the group. "*Viva Zapata!* will put me back on top again. I have to reinvent myself. But I fear it's not in me. The world wants my youth, not my middle age."

"My new friend here has that Irish sense of doom and gloom," Marlon said. "His guilt is beginning to show on his face."

"I used to look like Dorian Gray," Tyrone said. "Now I look like the portrait in the closet. These bags under my eyes are real."

"All of us in time become the portrait in the closet," Stella said. "Right now our dear Marlon is arguably the most beautiful male animal in America. But what will he look like forty years from now? A grotesque, perhaps. Tallulah Bankhead once suggested to me that all of us become caricatures of ourselves."

"Tallulah should know," Marlon said sarcastically.

"I'm tired of talking about myself," Tyrone said. He turned to Stella. "What do you think about me?"

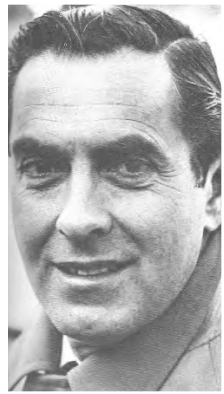
Perhaps she was being too kind, but she articulated her opinion very carefully. "I think you've embodied the Byronic hero in film. But I also think you were seduced by those jackals on the coast who turned you into their victim. Sure, they made you a movie star. Naturally, you were mobbed by screaming women and young girls at airports and train stations. Your face was young—beautiful, romantic, idyllic, more so than your nearest idols, Robert Taylor and Errol Flynn. But now that I see the post-war Tyrone Power, I feel a certain dissipation is showing. You are beginning to wear your disillusionment on your face. There is a cynical look there not obvious in your movies. I study face and body language in actors. I can't help but notice a downward curl to your perfect lips. You seem trapped in a career going nowhere. You must leave films. When your contract expires, go on the stage like your father. He did all right."

Stella was referring to the great stage actor, Frederick Tyrone Power or Tyrone Power II, who reached the peak of his success in 1905.

Tyrone claimed that he'd also discussed stage work with Kazan before leaving Hollywood. "I told him, 'For anyone truly interested in the theater, it's a tragedy to be born handsome.' Kazan let me know that 'handsome is better than being born homely.' Then he thought for a minute. 'The greatest tragedy is to be born at all,' he said."

Wally Cox told Tyrone that he felt that "like Marlon, Mr. Actor here, your

incandescence can be transferred from screen to stage. So many other film actors would bomb on the stage—take Clark Gable, Greta Garbo. Tallulah Bankhead, however, as Marlon well knows, is the opposite. She's a stage actress, not a film actress. That's why Bette Davis has to play her parts on the screen."


Tyrone Power

"I fear I may be one of those filmic actors," Tyrone said. "Like our friend, Marilyn Monroe. She was surely invented for the camera."

"I'm not sure about that," Marlon said. "Only the other night Bill Inge said he would like to write a play for Marilyn and me." Ironically, after Elvis Presley turned it down, Marlon was offered the lead role in Inge's *Bus Stop* to star Marilyn and himself in the 1956 release. When he rejected it, Marilyn turned to the lackluster Don Murray to play the lead. Marlon's former girlfriend, Kim Stanley, would appear in the stage version.

Tyrone eventually took Stella's advice, opening *John Brown's Body* on February 14, 1953 at the Century Theatre in New York. The play was directed by Charles Laughton, who fell in love with Tyrone, and it co-starred veteran actors Raymond Massey and Judith Anderson. To make that appearance on stage, Tyrone turned down *The Robe* and half a million dollars, the role eventually going to Richard Burton.

Stella later commented, "Power seemed at the crossroads. Marlon was about to become the hottest male movie star of his day, especially after he made *On the Waterfront* and *The Wild One*, and Marilyn Monroe was well on her way to becoming the chief star of the tabloids. I think by hanging out with those two, Power was desperately trying to connect himself with the new Hollywood that was emerging right in the bed he shared with them. In a way, you can say that Power was auditioning the new kid on the block, Marlon, and the new girl on the block, Marilyn, as if he could rediscover that special magic he once had when he was the world's most beautiful male animal back in the Thirties. Even *I* was gorgeous then."

At one point during their "dates" together, including late-night jaunts to Harlem jazz clubs, Tyrone reportedly warned Marlon not to fall in love with him. "Too many men and too many women like Lana have fallen for me. I love them but then I leave them without a formal announcement, the way I deserted poor Lana. I can't stand confrontations."

"Have no fear that I'll fall in love with you," Marlon is alleged to have said. "I have never loved anybody—maybe my mother. But that didn't work out."

"That's good to hear," Tyrone said. "I save my love for my women. My

homosexual affairs are strictly physical—never of the heart."

"The heart is physical," Marlon countered. "The most important part of the body."

At a jazz club, where Marlon played the bongo drums, James Baldwin, the host, later reported an exchange between Marlon and Tyrone.

He heard Tyrone describing and then inviting Marlon to what he called "Esther Williams parties" in Los Angeles. In the early 1950s, the more liberated members of the Hollywood set, including married couples, were attending these booze-and-pool parties where no bathing suits were allowed. By midnight they usually turned into orgies, both gay and straight.

Tyrone claimed that he had become addicted to such parties in France when he attended a number of them. "The custom has now come to Hollywood," he said. "Since everybody is nude around the pool, you can see what you're getting before you take it to the bedroom. I've had some unpleasant surprises when men have dropped their trousers in front of me."

"I've had those occasions too," Marlon said. "With Princess Tiny Meat in particular."

"You mean Montgomery Clift?" Tyrone said. "Everybody's talking about how little his prick is."

"That's the guilty party," Marlon said.

"Try my good friend Rock Hudson," Tyrone urged. "Ten thick inches."

In the months ahead, Marlon, along with Tyrone, was in regular attendance at these pool parties, most often the mixed ones, although he and Tyrone, along with Rock Hudson, were also fixtures at some of agent Henry Willson's more notorious all-male pool parties.

Before any of that happened, however, Marlon "pulled a double-cross on Ty," according to Tom Ewell. "He fucked that poor guy in more ways than one. While romancing Marilyn and Ty, Marlon received a call from Elia Kazan. Gadge had overcome Zanuck's objections and had agreed to star Marlon in *Viva Zapata!* Marilyn's part went to Jean Peters. Since Marilyn and Ty—never together again—were still seen (separately) with Marlon in the months to come, I guess they forgave him. I would have been seriously pissed."

* * *

Puerto Rican born Rita Moreno was Marlon's classic type. His affair with her would stretch out for years. He moved in on Rita at the right time, just as her affair with George Hormel, the meat-packing heir, was winding down.

Hormel received bad publicity during a marijuana bust at his home. It was reported that Rita, standing only five feet two and weighing probably no more

than ninety-eight pounds, attacked two burly policemen during the raid. “Rita was a fighter,” said Carlo Fiore, “not just for herself but for social injustice. If someone crossed her the wrong way, she’d take them on. Of course, I learned all this from Marlon, not from personal experience.”

Even so, Fiore was a bit dismissive of the relationship. “Rita could always amuse Marlon, like when she placed a basket of fruit on her head and imitated Carmen Miranda. Marlon always went big for that act.”

Other observers took the romance more seriously than Fiore. When the romance first became known, one columnist claimed that the coming together of Rita and Marlon “must have been like two exiles stumbling on each other in a strange country.”

“She was the woman Marlon should have married,” Tom Ewell said. “That is, if I may speak for Marlon. She was smart, beautiful, talented, and a true blue friend. She was the woman Marlon always turned to ‘when love goes wrong,’ to quote the song from Marilyn Monroe. He should have married her instead of the three disasters he did wed. I once attended a party with Rita and Marlon when I saw them together for the first time. They didn’t even know I existed. They sat in an armchair in the corner of the room. Rita plopped in Marlon’s lap for the entire evening. I don’t think they were even aware of others.”

After Rita ended her tumultuous Hormel affair, Marlon began dating her on both coasts. At the time, she was not the star she ultimately became. She was appearing in such quickies as *So Young, So Bad* in which she played a juvenile delinquent who commits suicide after a sadistic matron makes her cut her hair. In that bomb, she was billed as “Rosita Moreno,” her name changed to Rita for her next picture. That was *Pagan Love Song* in 1950, in which she impersonated a Tahitian island girl, which was much to Marlon’s liking and a portent of the dozens of young Tahitian virginal maidens who lay in his own future.

Rita Moreno

When she appeared as an Indian squaw in *The Yellow Tomahawk*, Marlon gave her the nickname “Honey Bear” in private, at least to his friends. If you didn’t look quickly, you missed her in MGM’s classical musical, *Singin’ in the Rain*, released in 1952.

In her early days, Rita, according to Hollywood insiders, was a “neurotic, unhappy girl.” Because of his constant failure to commit to the relationship,

Marlon did not necessarily add to her bliss. “They must have been dynamite in bed,” Fiore said. “I can only guess. Marlon obviously liked what he was getting from her, because he returned to her time and time again. When not in bed, both of them shared a growing concern about social injustice and racial prejudice. So, they even had something to talk about.”

Rita has commented publicly, only briefly, about her long-enduring romance with Marlon. She once explained their relationship this way, “You must know that dating Marlon in those days meant keeping your mouth shut. He would be furious with you, and would perhaps end the relationship, if you granted interviews. He was not only a private person, but wanted to keep his affairs away from the prying eyes of the press.”

In later life, she said, “It’s hardly a secret that Marlon liked fiery tempered, sexy Latin girls. I certainly qualified in that department. But that’s for him to straighten out, really.”

At the time, there was much press speculation that Rita was going to become the first Mrs. Marlon Brando. In one of the most highly publicized events of their affair, Rita flew to Tokyo where Marlon was filming *Sayonara*.

As the jealous Anna Kashfi (Marlon’s first wife) remembered, “Evidently Rita materialized at the Miyako Hotel under an escort of photographers. Pictures of Marlon and her were soon available to all news bureaus, she smiling radiantly, Marlon looking discomfited.”

Even as Marlon was preparing to marry Anna Kashfi, the presence of Rita hung like a black cloud over their marriage. On one occasion, as Anna was getting into bed with Marlon, she discovered a heavy black wig draped over an endpost of the headboard. In her words, “It hung there, tresses streaming downward, like an obscene trophy mounted to commemorate a conquest.” She demanded to be taken home that night, but more fights over Rita loomed in Anna’s shaky future with Marlon.

Brando and Rita Moreno

One night as Anna was in Marlon’s bedroom, Rita arrived on their doorstep, pounding on the door and shrieking. “It’s Moreno or me,” Anna threatened him. “Make your choice—right now!” He went downstairs to calm Rita down and ask her to leave his house. Finally she did. But she would not be gone forever.

Rita’s relationship with Marlon survived his short marriage to Anna, but her attempts to become the second Mrs. Marlon Brando failed.

“It’s all my fault,” Elia Kazan later said. “Even before Kashfi, Marlon had met the Mexican actress, Movita Castenada, on the set of *Viva*

Zapata! Like Rita, Movita was another fiery Latina. I guess Movita had something that Rita didn't. For my money, I would have stuck with Rita. Those two were perfectly suited for each other. Both devotees of Afro-Cuban rhythms on bongo drums at four o'clock in the morning."

Disaster almost struck when Marlon was filming *Mutiny on the Bounty* and met the Polynesian beauty who would become his third wife, Tarita Teriipaia.

At first Rita's reaction seemed subdued. "I was amazed to hear he was engaged," she told the press. "But he seems to be a lost soul, looking for a niche. Apparently, he's found what he's been seeking."

In private, Rita seemed to be growing more despondent over her failed relationship with Marlon. Thoughts of his two marriages drove her into such despair that in April of 1961 at Marlon's home on Mulholland Drive, she took an overdose of sleeping pills. Discovered by Marlon's secretary, Alice Marchak, Rita was saved by the arrival of an ambulance with a doctor who pumped her stomach.

There would be two more acts of self-destruction that followed within the next few months. Arriving at Marlon's house one night, Rita asked him to go for a ride in the Hollywood Hills with her so that they could discuss their relationship. At one point during a fierce argument, she lost control of her vehicle and plunged into a ravine, her beautiful face hitting the dashboard. She arrived "bloody and screaming" at the nearest hospital. Marlon was unhurt.

Only eight days later, and still in recovery, she had another violent argument with Marlon. She ran into his bathroom and attempted to slash her wrists. Once again, she was rushed to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.

After a long hiatus, Rita came back into Marlon's life when director Hubert Cornfield cast her in a low-budget quickie film shot in France. An existential thriller, much of it in silence, *The Night of the Following Day* was released in 1969.

Brando in *The Night of the Following Day*

In it, Rita played a drug addict who sniffed cocaine in rolled dollar bills. Marlon was cast as a kidnapping chauffeur. Although the film was a failure at the box office, the role marked the last time his classic male beauty would be showcased on the screen. For the film, he'd lost weight and appeared "lean and mean," in the words of his director, wearing a black, form-fitting turtleneck and a bobbed blond wig.

Observers of the film being shot didn't know where the real life relationship ended and the reel

Rita Moreno and Brando in *The Night of the Following Day*

life of the two started. "I think their relationship on screen got messed up with their off-screen love affair," Cornfield said. Marlon delivered one line for his screen character that might have also been uttered to Rita in private. "I love you. Go on, cut my face if that's what you feel like—I deserve it." He smashes a bottle and offers her its jagged neck.

Critic David Thomson reported that the affair between Marlon and Rita resumed during the making of this unfortunate film. "The affair carries over into one prolonged, violent sexual scene in which people on the set were amazed to see Brando and Moreno losing their characters and becoming themselves," Thomson claimed.

The film would open and close almost immediately, just enough time for critics to attack it. Penelope Houston found that Marlon "was doing an imitation of Brando."

Another critic, Richard Roud, was so disappointed with Marlon's performance that he provocatively asked, "Would we, if we could see his earlier work again, decide he never was that good anyway?"

Marlon was glad to see filming come to an end on *The Night of the Following Day*. With the release of the movie, he'd discharged his final contractual obligations to Universal. He wrote the film's epitaph himself: "It makes about as much sense as a rat fucking a grapefruit!"

* * *

Up until the final hour, the producer, Darryl F. Zanuck, fought bitterly with Kazan over the casting of Marlon in the star role in *Viva Zapata!* Agreeing to abandon Tyrone Power, Zanuck pushed Anthony Quinn for the lead. "At least he's a God damn wetback spic, and we won't need makeup for that big-dicked fucker. I hear his dick is even bigger than mine, and I'm a legend..."

Rare for Marlon, he had even submitted to a screen test. Julie Harris played his wife in the test. When Kazan showed the screen test to Zanuck, he chomped down on his cigar. "You've got to be kidding!" he shouted. "Brando and Harris as Mexicans? Why not cast Betty Grable and Van Johnson in the part? There is no way in hell that Brando will ever be cast in *Zapata!*"

It was only at the last minute that Marlon's agent, Jay Kanter, could broker a deal, even getting a $100,000 fee for Marlon. At first, Zanuck appeared

to be having a stroke when he heard the salary demand. “Fuck that!” he shouted. “I could buy every blonde whore in Los Angeles for that kind of dough.” When Kanter held out a two-picture deal, and pointed out that Marlon was the hottest male star to arrive in Hollywood since the meteoric rise of Clark Gable, Zanuck capitulated. “Put a fucking drooping mustache on Stanley Kowalski, dye his hair jet black, tell Kazan to get him to stop mumbling, and let’s pretend the fucker is a Mexican Indian. Movies are only pretense anyway.”

Zanuck only green-lighted *Zapata!* because Kazan had directed *Gentleman’s Agreement* for the studio in 1947, which had been nominated for eight Academy Awards, winning Best Picture.

After signing Marlon, Zanuck told Kazan what he really thought of his star. “He’s nothing but a son of a bitch, and a surly one at that. Brando is even more of a bastard than I am. With the exception of Tyrone Power, a guy I’ve always wanted to fuck, even though I’m straight, I find all actors sons of bitches. I also hear Brando is a faggot. During the shoot, keep those Mexican boys away from our star. We don’t want a fucking scandal on our hands with Mr. Macho. I hear he likes it up the ass.”

Marlon also had utter contempt for Zanuck. “An absurd-looking man, Zanuck bore a striking resemblance to Bugs Bunny,” Marlon claimed. “When he entered a room, his front teeth preceded him by about three seconds.”

Before Kazan and crew departed for the hot sands of Texas along the Mexican border, Zanuck had one final piece of advice. “To make a film, there’s only one thing to keep in mind. Will he fuck her or won’t he?”

At the end of Zanuck’s heated negotiations with Kazan, in which he got the director to lower his fee from $175,000 to $100,000, Zanuck shouted, “Now take your Jewish cowboys and get the fuck out of my office. Jayne Mansfield is waiting in the next room for me to fuck her.”

The producer was referring to the Brooklyn-born actors Kazan had hired as cowboys. These included Irving Winter and Henry Silva.

As filming began, Marlon brought his magnetic presence to the set of *Viva Zapata!* But even his power as an actor could not escape the one-dimensional writing of John Steinbeck. The film attempted to focus on political issues such as democracy and dictatorship. But after reading the script, Zanuck had been dismissive. “I’m not impressed with John Steinbeck. I’ve met him. He’s an asshole with dingleberries.”

Darryl F. Zanuck

Zanuck was on target about the writing.

Steinbeck inserted such ponderous dialogue as, "A strong man makes a weak people." Kazan struggled to prevent *Zapata!* from becoming a left-wing tract. He knew that it was only a matter of weeks before he'd be called to testify in front of the Committee on Un-American Activities, in which he planned to reveal details about his Communist past in the Thirties. To "save his skin," he named "fellow travelers," earning him the undying animosity of Hollywood's more liberal members.

When Marlon watched on TV as his favorite director, Kazan, was "singing like a canary" in Washington before the right-wing investigators, he vowed never to speak to him again. He called Kazan's testimony "an act of terrorism" against his friends. But he genuinely liked Kazan and would, of course, in time forgive him. Another movie with Kazan, and with it an Oscar, lay in Marlon's future.

Throughout the filming of *Zapata!*, Marlon complained to Kazan that he'd been "snookered" into making a two-picture deal with Zanuck. He said that he had only done so because his agent, Jay Kanter, claimed that he'd lose his job if he didn't sign. Marlon wrote briefly about this in his autobiography, misspelling the name of his longtime friend and agent as Kantor (sic).

With the help of "that makeup genius," Phil Rhodes, Marlon worked on his own face to transform himself into a Mexican. He glued his eyelids together and put plastic rings in his nose. He also wore a two-way stretch plate inside his mouth. Even after all this hard work, cameraman Joe MacDonald privately remarked, "Brando looks like Charlie Chan in a sombrero."

What Marlon was actually trying to do was transform his own Midwestern look into an uncanny impersonation of Zapata. Marlon was inspired by Diego Rivera's famous portrait of the revolutionary.

Elia Kazan and Brando showing off the goods

Behind his stony Indian mask, Marlon's adopted mannerisms included a way of training his eyes into a fixed and unblinking stare. His fellow actors weighed in with their comments, Jean Peters claiming that "Marlon is deliberately trying to look cross-eyed." His rival, Anthony Quinn, cast as Marlon's brother, Eufemio Zapata, said that Marlon "was as inscrutable as an Aztec calendar." Fellow actor Joseph Wiseman, playing a venomous newspaperman in *Zapata!*, compared Marlon to "a Mayan statue."

Before filming began, Marlon went to Mexico and lived like a peasant in the little pueblo of Sonora. Here he studied the lives of

the peasants—how they talked, moved, and sounded. He wrote Dodie, "As each day goes by, I become less and less a *gringo*. I'm thinking of finding myself a Mexican wife and settling forever south of the border. I'm also learning Spanish, and I think I have a good chance to become the biggest male movie star Mexico City has ever seen."

In yet another letter to Dodie, he wrote, "I have successfully transformed myself into a *mestizo* revolutionary. But Kazan says I'll have to wear brown contact lenses to disguise those slate gray eyes I inherited from you and Dad." Once he was given the lenses, Marlon buried them in his lower lip in a misguided attempt to keep them safe until one night he accidentally swallowed them. Kazan had to call a halt to shooting that day until the wardrobe department at Fox could fly in new lenses for Marlon.

Kazan had been forced to seek a location in Texas because the Mexican government objected to the script about their national hero. Zanuck had been warned that the safety of the *Zapata!* crew could not be guaranteed if filming actually took place in Mexico.

On a scouting trip, Kazan had discovered the dreary little border outposts of Del Rio and Roma in Texas. It was there that he sent his crew during the blistering summer of 1951, when desert temperatures often reached 120°F, causing Marlon's heavy makeup to "melt down." To cool off, Kazan and Marlon would go swimming naked in the Rio Grande after the shooting of the day ended.

In spite of the Mexican makeup, Marlon had only one thing in common with the hero Emiliano Zapata. The Mexican revolutionary had nearly two dozen bigamous marriages. Marlon would follow in his hero's footsteps—that is, if some of his more intense relationships could be called "marriages."

Throughout the filming, Kazan stuck by Marlon, calling him "the only genius I have ever met in the field of acting." During the shoot, Kazan gave Marlon free rein. Sometimes that worked, sometimes it didn't. In a scene in which Marlon was supposed to appear drunk, he consumed a bottle of tequila in his dressing room "for the purposes of authenticity." But when he was called before the cameras, he staggered and collapsed on the set. Two burly grips carried him back to his dressing room where he slept soundly until the following morning.

Kazan gave Marlon little guidance but did have a strong point of view about the character of Zapata. "Don't be misled by all that shit in Steinbeck's script about how the fucker loves his wife. In our hero's life, women are to be used, knocked up, and abandoned. Zapata loves his *compadres*. For these Mexican peasants, fucking is no big deal. Zapata's social concerns are his real concerns."

"Then I'm perfectly cast," Marlon said. "I'm like Zapata in real life!"

A scene from *Viva Zapata!*

The rushes Kazan sent back from Texas did not impress Zanuck in Hollywood. "It's just a big Mexican oater." Zanuck had produced pictures in the Thirties when Westerns were called oaters because of the grain fed to horses. "A *Scarlet Pimpernel* with a dignified motif—and no Carmen Mirandas!"

The more hostile the reaction from Zanuck, the more enthusiastic Kazan seemed to become about his picture and especially its male star. In a note to his boss, Kazan seemed carried away with Marlon's appearance on the screen. "Look at that face—that face! Its brooding sadness. The poetry of it. God damn it, it's the face of Edgar Allen Poe!" After reading that note, Zanuck called two of his male assistants into his office. "Is Kazan, like Brando, another faggot?"

When not chasing after women or having cute Mexican boys sent to his dressing room, Marlon found other amusements. At night he set off firecrackers in the tawdry, dust-covered lobby of the little Texas motel where he was staying.

Sometimes he captured deadly tarantulas and put them in the dressing rooms of the women working on the film. "One time that led to a virtual stampede," Kazan later said. "The women were nearly killing each other to see who could get out the door first. Marlon also discovered the joys of farting at the most inappropriate moments. Any time he met someone who thought he was important, Marlon would fart. He learned to fart on cue. I think he ate a lot of beans at night."

When not capturing tarantulas, Marlon appeared on the movie set dangling an imitation black widow spider on his left shoulder with his pet raccoon, Russell, on the other shoulder.

When Sam Stanley, a reporter from a Houston paper, arrived to interview Marlon, he amazingly granted the privilege. "My father is a great engineer," he told the gullible reporter. "Right now he's working on a secret plan coming out of Washington. Dad's designing a tunnel under the Atlantic to stretch between New York and Southampton in England."

Brando and Quinn, the best of friends

He told another reporter that when shooting was finished on *Zapata!*, he was going to quit the movie business and become a geek in a circus. The lowest paid and most despicable job in all of show business, a geek is a guy who bites

the head off live chickens. Marlon got the idea for this "new profession" by watching Tyrone Power play a geek in *Nightmare Alley*.

Marlon's water fights with the crew were harmless enough. But one of his pranks almost turned deadly. One hot afternoon, Marlon slipped real bullets into the gun of one of the extras during a battle scene. "Fortunately, I was a bad shot," said John Davidson, "or else I'm sure I would have mowed down three or four extras during the staged gun fight. Marlon's pranks were getting out of hand, and Kazan severely lectured him, telling him that 'little boys need to grow up.' Frankly, I wanted to plow my fist into the shithead's face. The next day he showed up on the set, pulling his stupid little pranks. He didn't even seem to give a fuck that he might have caused me to kill other guys."

Brando's multiple personalities

Even more intriguing than the Mexican revolution and desert romance Kazan was depicting on screen were the real-life seductions going on off camera. In addition to a string of Mexican boys, who were each rewarded with a five-dollar fee for their services, Marlon was seducing female stars. Starring in his motel boudoir, as they appeared in his life, were Jean Peters, Marilyn Monroe, and Movita, the Mexican actress. Jean would quickly appear and disappear in Marlon's life. Marilyn and Movita would have a long run at his own box office. And Movita, eventually, after the passage of many years, would become Marlon's second wife.

Years later, Kazan in front of Tennessee Williams and others said, "Practically every woman within a one hundred mile radius of Roma headed to town to fuck Marlon. But he ignored most of them. He had affairs with Movita, Peters, and Marilyn. But his warmest relationships were with men. He never seduced Tony Quinn, but I counted at least twenty guys who visited his bedroom over a short period of time. He particularly liked teenage boys, especially the really handsome, olive-skinned ones. He once told me, 'They have the smoothest skin—sometimes their asses are even smoother than a woman's creamy breasts.'"

* * *

Actor Anthony Quinn, according to Elia Kazan, arrived on the set of *Viva Zapata!* "with a chip on his shoulder—the first reason being that he wanted to play Marlon's role and not the brother."

From the very beginning, Quinn told Kazan that he was going to play the swaggering, lecherous, bullying brother with such power and force that "there's no way in hell that Brando is going to upstage me. Unlike Brando, I'll have no problem with a Spanish accent." Quinn was half Mexican, on his mother's side, with his father being half Mexican and half Irish.

Quinn had also taken over the role of Stanley Kowalski that Marlon had created. Under the direction of Harold Clurman, Quinn claimed that he'd received more critical acclaim in the role than Marlon had. That was not true, but Quinn always maintained that self-satisfying point throughout his life.

Quinn presented Kazan with an article containing a comment from actress Uta Hagen, who had also played Blanche in *Streetcar*. "Brando was too sensitive to play Stanley," Hagen charged. "Tony Quinn was better because in real life he is a brute. Except Tony doesn't know he is a brute."

The rivalry between Quinn and Marlon continued throughout the shooting of *Viva Zapata!* When Quinn complained to Kazan that the director was favoring Marlon in their scenes together, Kazan responded in anger. "That's a lot of shit! So eat it!"

To heat up the screen between Marlon and Quinn, Kazan went to each of the actors and told absolute lies. To Quinn, Kazan claimed that Marlon was spreading scandalous stories. Then Kazan would go to Marlon and tell him "outrageous libel" that Quinn was allegedly spreading about him. "I kept Marlon and Tony bubbling with hatred for each other," Kazan later claimed. "I really stirred up the pot between the two of them. But I was doing it for the good of the picture."

Even though Quinn never confronted Kazan again, accusing him of favoring Marlon, he continued to tell cast members he had contempt for Marlon. "I know Brando is a fairy," he told Jean Peters. "I'm sure he'd like me to stick my dick up his overused ass. But I have another suspicion. The way Kazan coddles Brando makes me think that our Commie director might also be a faggot. Kazan even walks like he takes it up the ass." Far from being a homosexual, Kazan at the time was having a torrid affair with Marilyn Monroe.

Anthony Quinn and Brando

Quinn also revealed that at one point in the film, "my killing rage against Brando almost reached the danger point. I came very close to beating the shit out of the mumbling faggot. In one scene I lost control and started yanking his hair out of his conceited head. I wanted to stick my sword in him—and almost did. Can you see the headlines? QUINN KILLS BRANDO."

During the second week of the shoot, Marlon and Quinn decided on a unique way to vent their

anger and to prove who was the better man. At the end of the afternoon's work in the blistering heat, the two actors staged pissing contests into the Rio Grande. The winner was the man who could piss the longest yellow stream.

On the first afternoon of the contest, three members of the crew watched as the two actors battled for supremacy. John Stacey, an extra, said, "The moment Quinn whipped it out, I knew he had Marlon beat. Quinn's dick was so fucking long that it practically stretched halfway across the river. It was no contest right from day one. Day after day we watched the pissing contest. Except for one afternoon, Quinn won every time. But we had to admire Marlon's tenacity. The one day he won, Marlon told us he'd been drinking beer all day."

Margo and Anthony Quinn in *Viva Zapata!*

After filming *Zapata!*, Quinn and Marlon didn't speak for fifteen years. One night while watching Quinn on nationwide television, Marlon learned for the first time that Kazan had deliberately invented lies to tell each actor. After the show, Marlon called Quinn. "Now I understand," Marlon told the actor. "Kazan was trying to make us hate each other, make our rivalry more realistic. I guess he didn't trust our acting skills. Kazan fed you a pack of shit. I never claimed that you couldn't act your way out of a paper bag. By the way, how does one act oneself out of a paper bag? I've had nothing but respect for your skill as an actor for years."

After that call, Quinn decided to bury the hatchet, as he put it. He believed Marlon's claim that Kazan had been the cause of the trouble between them.

"Marlon and I never became friends," Quinn later said. "We really didn't have much to talk about. We'd talk about whether a Mexican pussy is tighter than a *gringo* pussy. We talked about what a yellowbelly Kazan was to betray his Communist friends. Stuff like that. Not much else. I have always believed that I'm a better actor than Marlon. There's too much pretense with that one."

Quinn would later recall his last meeting with Marlon at a dinner party in Hollywood, in which Marlon confessed that "acting is a joyless burden—just a load of shit. I don't know how much longer I can stand it."

* * *

On his first meeting with Jean Peters, Marlon was captivated by the sultry brunette. Kazan warned him, "Stay away from her! Howard Hughes will have your balls. She's private property."

"I'm not afraid of Hughes," Marlon said. "What's he going to do. Swoop in on us in one of those old *Hell's Angels* planes and drop bombs on us?"

Marlon quickly learned that Hughes had sent a 24-hour "lady-in-waiting" to Texas to chaperone Jean during the shoot. "Since nothing ever energized my libido more than a well-guarded target, I was determined to have her," Marlon said. "We did a little casual flirting, but her chaperone was in watchful attendance, so I didn't get anywhere."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Marlon was being too modest in his autobiography. Kazan always claimed that Marlon bribed the chaperone, seducing her and winning her devotion, which "cleared his pathway to Peters."

Once again Quinn found himself competing for Jean's affections. The actor also wanted to seduce her. "Both Marlon and Quinn were wooing Peters in spite of her chaperone," Kazan said. "One night both men, Marlon with a Mexican guitar, climbed up a tree outside her bedroom window to serenade her. I guess Peters found Marlon's warbling more enchanting than Quinn's 'Down in Old Mexico' songs. The next night Marlon got the invitation to visit Peters in her boudoir. Quinn was told to stick it somewhere else!"

On his first night with Jean, Marlon found her devastated and on the verge of tears. Seeing the first rushes, Zanuck had been horrified at the heavy make-up used on Jean's face. Marlon had always heard that Zanuck was "a bigot of the old Hollywood school," with contempt for blacks and Asians. He often gave such roles to white people.

"You're photographing Peters so dark skinned she looks like a nigger!" Zanuck had wired Kazan. "No one will buy a movie ticket to see a leading lady who doesn't look white," Zanuck also claimed. Time and time again Kazan was ordered to reshoot scenes with Jean "so that she'll come off white."

"In other words," Marlon told Jean, "our fucking producer doesn't want us to look like the Mexicans we're playing. I'm sending a wire to Zanuck myself and telling him, 'Miss Peters and I aren't in Kansas anymore.'"

Jean Peters

The next day, the heat in Roma reached 120°F in the shade. To keep his pet raccoon cool, Marlon fed Russell strawberry milkshakes. "For some reason, Russell hates chocolate milkshakes and spits out vanilla ice cream," he told Jean.

At first she found Russell "adorable," until he pissed in the back seat of a new convertible Hughes had presented her. The next night, while Marlon was making love to Jean, Russell apparently

became jealous. He took a bite out of Jean's ankle. The next day Hughes flew in a private doctor to treat the bite of his mistress.

As his days and nights deepened, Marlon found Jean a simple straightforward person. He couldn't believe she could "get involved with a nutcase like Hughes."

Born in Canton, Ohio, on October 15, 1926, Jean grew up with a dream of becoming an English teacher. Arlen Hurwitz, her roommate at college, shelled out four dollars and sent in Jean's picture, taken by a campus photographer, to the Miss Ohio State beauty contest.

Although at the time Jean felt that it was a waste of money, she emerged as the winner. Part of the prize was a Hollywood screen test which led to a $150-a-week contract at Fox. By the time of *Viva Zapata!*, Zanuck was paying Jean $6,000 a week.

Although she didn't think of herself as a "sex symbol" as envisioned by Zanuck, she was a stunning natural beauty, and it was this loveliness that had caught the attention of Hughes. Marlon was also taken with her "flawless and creamy skin," as he described it to Kazan.

He also liked the fact that Jean wore blue jeans as he did and didn't mind appearing without makeup. "Unlike Marilyn, who was the very cliché of a 50s movie star," Marlon said, "Jean dressed like a housewife from Ohio on her way to the supermarket. She also made the world's best Caesar salad."

Marlon confided in Kazan that after a third night of love-making, he'd asked Jean to become his wife and to give up her ongoing affair with Hughes.

Somehow Hughes, back in Los Angeles, learned of the affair and dispatched Jeff Chouinard, a former private eye and ex-fighter pilot, to Roma, Texas. Hughes felt (with good reason) that the woman chaperone had not been doing her job adequately.

Howard Hughes

Fearing that Marlon might be sexual competition for Hughes as regards Jean, Chouinard paid some of the extras working on the set of *Zapata!* to report on Jean's activities.

In his first dossier, the security chief wrote back to Hughes, "Brando has the sweet mind of a four-year-old and has no interest in chasing women."

Surely no private eye ever delivered a more ridiculous report to his boss than Chouinard sent to Hughes. For the time being, Hughes felt confident in the false belief that "Jean is not shacking up with Brando."

Later, Marlon found out that Hughes was

"spreading the word that I was a faggot. Howard Hughes is one to talk! Talk about the pot calling the kettle black."

It wasn't Hughes and his spying that ruined the blossoming romance between Jean and Marlon. It was "Montezuma's revenge," as Jean called it. She came down with "history's worst case of dysentery" and could hardly get through her final scenes without encountering "some potty emergency." Shot after shot was interrupted when Jean had to race back to her dressing room. On at least one occasion she didn't get there on time.

With Jean indisposed at night, Marlon wandered around looking for some action. Surprisingly for him, one Saturday night he didn't find anyone available. He wandered over to Kazan's cabin to talk over the film. He knocked on the door and heard a woman's voice calling out for him to enter.

In the half-darkened room, he made out the figure of a beautiful blonde in Kazan's bed. Under a flimsy white sheet, she appeared nude.

"Come on in, Marlon," she said in her most bewitching little girl voice.

He'd recognize that voice anywhere.

It was Marilyn Monroe.

* * *

At three o'clock in the morning, there was an urgent rapping on Marlon's door. Stumbling nude to answer it, he discovered it was Marilyn wrapped in a white terrycloth robe that probably belonged to Kazan. She rushed into his room, and, as he'd later relate to his director, she said, "Something dreadful has happened. Molly Kazan and Gadge's kids have arrived unexpectedly. They weren't due until next week but decided to come a week earlier. Gadge sent me to be your girlfriend while his family is here."

Marilyn Monroe

Pulling her into his arms, he told her, "We'll have a wonderful time pretending you're my girlfriend."

The next morning, Marilyn renewed her friendship with Jean Peters. Kazan later reported that neither actress showed any jealousy toward the other over Marlon. When Marilyn and Jean teamed with Joseph Cotten to make *Niagara*, released in 1953, there was an easy accord between the two actresses. "Jean must have known that Marilyn was also the on-again, off-again girlfriend of Howard Hughes, but this didn't seem to cause friction between the two women who genuinely seemed to like each other.

During the week Marilyn spent on the set of *Viva Zapata!*, Marlon got to know her as never before. She revealed to him that Kazan had introduced her to his longtime friend, the playwright, Arthur Miller, and that, "We're a threesome. I don't mean all three of us go to bed together. Sometimes I'm with Arthur, and on other nights when he's not with Molly I'm with Gadge. Gadge told me he doesn't think I'm star material, but Arthur has great faith in my talent and my future as an actress. He told me in time I might even become a modern day Sarah Bernhardt. To do that, however, I've got to stop playing all these dumb blonde parts."

Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller

While Kazan was sleeping with his wife, Marlon kept his director posted on what he and Marilyn talked about. They spent hours discussing acting, Lee Strasberg, and the Actors Studio. "Lee told me that I could do plays one day by Eugene O'Neill. *Anna Christie*, for example. He even told me that he'd like to direct me as Lady Macbeth one day."

"You're going to become a big star, Marilyn," Marlon told her. "But beware of Strasberg. You're his ticket to the big time. He'll just use you and exploit you, and take you for all you're worth."

Even though Marlon uttered those words, he surely could not have known how prophetic his comment was. Even post-millennium, Marilyn's estate, left to Strasberg, still brings in some eight million dollars a year in royalties and residuals for use of her celebrated image.

Every male member of the crew was captivated by Marilyn—all except one, Anthony Quinn, who called her "an empty-headed blonde with a fat rear. Oh, Monroe was pretty enough to look at, but there were hundreds of better-looking actresses poking around Hollywood. Even after she hit the big time, with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, I never could see what all the fuss was about. All I knew was that she walked around our dusty Texas set in a slinky dress that showed the crack of her ass. There seemed to be precious little going on beneath her glorious blonde mane."

One hot afternoon, according to Kazan, Marlon "approached me with a deadly serious look on his face and asked me what my intentions were regarding Marilyn. 'Are you going to divorce Molly and marry Marilyn?' he asked. 'Hell, no,' I told him. Marilyn Monroe will never be anybody's wife. She's not wife material. Girlfriend, yes. Even mistress. Wife, no!" He warned Marlon that Marilyn was "in a marrying mood." "I told him to watch out. She might lay a trap for even you, the world's expert at eluding a wedding ceremony."

Kazan also told Marlon that, "even as we speak, Marilyn is also trying to get Arthur Miller to divorce his wife and marry her. The woman is absolutely capricious. If some fool man marries her, he'll sit home at night wondering what man—or in her case, what woman as well—she's out fucking that night. Joe Schenck, Joan Crawford. Darryl F. Zanuck. Maybe even Rock Hudson, and he's gay. Marilyn told me she likes to fuck gay men for variety."

Not satisfied with any of these answers, Marlon again pressed Kazan to explain fully how he saw his own future with Marilyn. "You're going to keep fucking her? Is that right? Exactly what will she be to you?"

"Okay, if you must know, I can tell you," Kazan said. "A mascot—nothing more!"

On the fifth night in Roma, Texas, Marilyn confessed to Marlon that she was pregnant. She said that condition was "not unusual for me. I prefer natural sex, and I've had several abortions before. I don't remember how many."

He wanted to know if she knew who the father was. "I honestly don't know," she said. "I suspect one of four men in this order: Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller, Fred Karger, and Marlon Brando."

"Why do I come in last?" he asked. "My noble tool is as fertile as any of those jokers."

"I was a little more careful with you—that's all," she said.

A year or so later, Kazan confided in Tennessee Williams and his companion, Frank Merlo, "the most outrageous event that took place during the filming of *Viva Zapata!* You're not going to believe this." The director's claim was that some time during the shoot of *Zapata!*, Marlon and Marilyn slipped away from the set. Using assumed names, according to Kazan, they somehow obtained a license and were married one weekend in some Texas border town.

"Later on, when she was sleeping with me," Kazan said, "she called herself Mrs. Brando and told me that since I was married and since she was married we were committing adultery. I told her I had no problem with that."

No record has been found to show that Marlon actually married Marilyn, but it's entirely possible. Kazan later said, "It was amazing what a hundred-dollar bill could accomplish in those days in those little Texas towns. Both Marlon and Marilyn were two crazy mixed-up kids. They may have gone through a wedding ceremony on a lark, finding it an amusing thing to do. Marlon was a practical joker, and I could see him going along with that. Marilyn was so reckless she'd definitely do something like that. If they were telling me the truth, and I suspect they were, then Marlon's subsequent marriages to those three women, and Marilyn's marriages to Art Miller and Joe DiMaggio would make both of them bigamists."

After she returned to Los Angeles, Marilyn the following week placed an urgent call to "my husband," Marlon. "There will be no little Marlon Jr. No,

you're Marlon Jr. There will be no Marlon III. I've had a miscarriage. What a great little guy he would have been with Marlon Brando as his daddy and me as his mommie."

"How do you know it would have been a boy?" he asked.

"Don't be a silly goose," she told him. "Women have an instinct for knowing things like that."

"If you want a kid at some future date—I mean, one with me—just think of me as your sperm bank."

* * *

With all the affairs he had going on, Marlon also found time to launch a relationship with a Mexican actress named Movita, little knowing at the time that she would eventually become the second "official" Mrs. Marlon Brando.

Movita was an adopted name. Born perhaps in 1917 (various dates are given), Marie Castenada entered the world on a moving train traveling between Mexico and Nogales, Arizona. She was born into a family of two sons and eight daughters. Growing up in Los Angeles and attending Fairfax High School, she played "a mean guitar" and was also a dancer, playing bit parts that included a brief appearance in *Flying Down to Rio* with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

By the time Irving Thalberg cast her in *Mutiny on the Bounty* in 1935, with Clark Gable and Franchot Tone, she was billing herself as "Movita." *Mutiny* would represent the peak of her career, although other roles followed, including *The Hurricane* in 1937 and *The Girl From Rio* in 1939. She also appeared in a campy role as "Rosita del Torre" in *Rose of the Rio Grande* in 1938. Her career, however, was going nowhere.

Movita

In 1939, as war loomed in Europe, Movita married the Irish boxer, Jack Doyle, a tempestuous marriage that ended in divorce in 1944. Movita rode out most of the war years in England, suffering through nightly aerial bombardment from Hitler's Luftwaffe.

Marlon met Movita's husband, Jack Doyle only once. They even had a sparring match in the ring, Doyle generously providing Marlon with tips on how to improve his technique. Although he made a fortune from boxing and also did some acting, Doyle lost all his money through gambling and drink—in his own words, "on fast women and slow horses." He died penniless in the 1970s, although Marlon once sent him a check for two thousand dollars when

the ex-boxer had no place to live.

Returning to Hollywood from London after World War II, Movita could find very few roles—bit parts at the most.

Launched on the set of *Viva Zapata!*, Marlon's affair with Movita would continue on and off throughout the Fifties. He always left her for other women, then would return only to leave her again. That would also be the pattern of his married life to her as well.

Marlon told Kazan and his makeup man, Phil Rhodes, that Movita reminded him of a gypsy. "She's primitive and earthy," he said, "but what I like about her is that she believes everything I tell her." On the set of *Zapata!*, she worked with Marlon on his Spanish accent.

"Everybody else in the film except Marlon spoke like they'd been born in Brooklyn," Movita said.

Kazan found that Movita had a stabilizing influence on Marlon. "She was the mother figure, the Nebraska mommie Marlon never really had. Except she wasn't a prairie woman, but a Mexicali Rose. She reminded me of that old Mexican actress of the Thirties, the fiery, tempestuous, and volatile Lupe Velez, whose life ended in suicide. Actually I felt sorry for Movita. Marilyn Monroe and Jean Peters were a tough act to follow."

Although Marlon was fond of seducing teenagers, he found "the older woman," Movita, captivating in spite of their age differences. "I know my reputation for preferring jailbait, but I often throw a mercy fuck to older women," he told Kazan. "I think Movita is funny—she makes me laugh. She's also beautiful in her own kind of way. Just my type. She's also smart and very sympathetic to my problems when I lay my head on her breast at night. She's also the hottest piece of ass south of the border."

One week into her fling with Marlon, Movita appeared on the set of *Zapata!* with a large diamond ring, claiming it was an engagement ring from Marlon and that the two of them planned to get married upon their joint return to Los Angeles. She was seemingly unaware of any "marriage" between Marlon and Marilyn.

"Everybody laughed off Marlon's fling with his Mexicali Rose," Quinn said. "But I knew Movita very well. Very well, indeed! She was a very determined woman. I felt that she would survive all the Monroes and eventually get her man, and time proved me right. She even overlooked Marlon's tricking with dicks and stood by him, even though he treated her real awful. Yes, they would eventually marry—what a mistake!"

"I never understood Marlon's fascination for Movita," Jean Peters later recalled. "She was a bit too much of a Tequila Rose for me. She reminded me of Carmen Miranda, all in her bright colors. She was only missing a pair of castanets and a *Sevillano* polka dot dress in red and white. I think I contemp-

tuously called her 'Carmen.' I thought Marlon was dating below his station in life."

First wife Anna Kashfi admitted that the dark-skinned and high-cheek-boned Movita "set Marlon's libido racing. For Movita—and for Marlon—it was sex at first sight," Kashfi claimed. "She accompanied him back to Hollywood to share his rented bungalow. They remained intermittent lovers for eleven years." Movita would also follow Marlon to New York on various occasions.

"She had incredible patience," Kazan said, "waiting and waiting and waiting to become Mrs. Marlon Brando. Considering what happened between them, her wait was in vain."

Quinn later said that unlike some of Marlon's girlfriends, or even his other wives, Movita "never tried to make hay out of her romance with Brando. She seemed content to live in the shadows of his private life, and that's probably why the relationship endured for as long as it did."

***

Tennessee Williams, in an indiscreet interview, once told a reporter, "Marlon Brando is just about the best looking man I have ever seen, with one or two exceptions. And I have never played around with actors. It is a point of morality with me. And anyhow, Brando is not the type to get a part that way."

Amazingly, the statement sent shock waves through the press, as if Tennessee were "outing" himself before the term was invented. At that time in the early 1950s, the world did not necessarily know that Tennessee was a homosexual. The only part of his statement that was true was the claim about Marlon being good looking. The rest was a total fabrication, since the playwright had long ago sampled Marlon's charms and had been plowed by the actor's "noble tool."

Tennessee's statement brought a laugh to fellow gay author, Gore Vidal. On hearing the comment, Vidal remarked, "Oh, that Tennessee! Don't you just love The Glorious Bird?" That was the way Vidal always referred to Tennessee.

Vidal would find himself on most lists of Marlon's male lovers. But in his memoirs, *Palimpsest*, Vidal tried to lay these rumors to rest. Once, when asked about Marlon's bisexuality, Vidal was a bit dismissive.

Gore Vidal

Kenneth Tynan

"Anyone with a great deal of sexual energy and animal charm is going to try everything."

Vidal encountered Marlon at a party in London when he was filming *The Countess from Hong Kong*, directed by Charles Chaplin. The writer claimed that Marlon arrived drunk at the party hosted by critic Kenneth Tynan, along with such guests as Richard Harris and Michelangelo Antonioni. During the course of the evening, Vidal writes that Marlon dared Tynan to go into the bathroom with him "for a full-on-the-mouth kiss as proof of our friendship."

Instead of embarking on an affair, Vidal said that he scratched his forehead when introduced to the actor. Marlon asked him, "Why are you scratching your forehead *like that*?" Vidal replied, "Would you rather I scratched *your* forehead?"

Antonioni, according to Vidal, was so impressed with the Tynan party that it inspired his upcoming film, *Blow-Up*.

Vidal would later claim that he "hardly knew" Marlon. Much more persistent were the rumors of an affair between Vidal and Paul Newman, Marlon's so-called clone. The friendship between Newman and Vidal would last for half a century.

In the aftermath of *Viva Zapata!*, Marlon installed himself once again in his apartment in New York on Fifty Seventh Street. Movita moved in with him, having accompanied him from Hollywood.

Leaving Movita to clean up his apartment, Marlon spent most of his days and a lot of his nights with Wally Cox. By that time, rumors of an affair between the two men were circulating on both coasts. But very few people knew who the actor/comedian Wally Cox was.

When he wasn't with Wally, Marlon renewed his friendships with Stella Adler and Bobby Lewis, among others. He was anxious to share his movie-making experiences, some quite humorous, with his theater friends. "I have utter contempt for the movies," Marlon claimed, contradicting earlier statements about how hard film-acting was.

Marlon introduced Movita to Bobby Lewis. "I think Marlon was smitten but not all that serious," Bobby later said. "I know that while he was living with Movita, he was seeing other people, including Rita Moreno and others, even some young actors on the side. There was some vague talk of marriage, and Movita continued to show off that diamond engagement ring, but I couldn't see Marlon settling down with some cha-cha bit actress. Or settling down with anyone as far as that goes. Marlon told me that the only real love in his

life had been his pet raccoon, Russell, and that he'd even turned that critter loose in some forest in the Middle West."

Christian Marquand

Instead of spending all his time in New York pursuing seductions, Marlon was often lying horizontal on the couch of his psychiatrist, where he continued to maintain that, "I'm sexually confused."

"I don't know what the psychiatrist was doing for Marlon, but I found him the same as he always was," Bobby Lewis said. "Movie stardom hadn't changed him at all. He never took taxis, preferring the subway. He still liked to play the old water bag game out his apartment window, giving passers-by down below a sudden spring shower, and he still took delight sliding down the banisters into the subway."

The novelty of being back in New York quickly wore off for Marlon. He also grew tired of Movita's Mexican dinners. "There's just so much chili a man can eat before the hot peppers burns his ass as you take a shit," he told Bobby Lewis.

Leaving Movita alone in the apartment, he flew to Paris. There he renewed his friendship with Roger Vadim and re-launched his sexual affairs with both Daniel Gélin and Christian Marquand.

"Although he abandoned women left and right, including his later wives, Marlon had a steadfast loyalty to Gélin and Marquand that was remarkable," Kazan once said. "He was in constant touch with both actors and spoke of them frequently. Was it love? In Marlon's case, I would hesitate to use the word love."

Tennessee, in his continental rambling, was introduced to Marquand by Marlon. "I never really got to know Monsieur Marquand," Tennessee later said. "Through all of our time together in Marlon's hotel suite, Marquand kept licking Marlon's body, paying particular attention to his neck. I think before the evening ended, Marquand had given Marlon at least three hickeys. Both men received me in their underwear. I have no objection to gentlemen callers receiving me in their underwear. I think Marquand, at least in those days, was a very handsome young man, and I applaud Marlon for his good taste in Frenchmen. As for Frenchmen in general, I think every male homosexual in America should have at least one interlude with a Frenchman at some point in his life."

Arriving back in New York, Marlon temporarily ignored the film offers being sent from Hollywood by Jay Kanter. He decided instead to make an appearance at the Actors Studio where he was requested to say a few words.

James Dean

His words turned into a long, drawn-out speech about stage acting versus screen acting.

At the back of the room sat a young man slouched down in his seat, so much so that his ass was hardly touching the bottom of the chair. Throughout Marlon's speech, the young man stared at him "so intently I felt my skin burning," Marlon later told Bobby Lewis. "I don't think I've ever been looked at that way before," Marlon said, "and I've been evaluated by the best of them, male and female."

From time to time, Marlon would steal a glance at the young man, whom he found was broodingly handsome, a severe intensity combined with an appealing vulnerability. Marlon immediately pegged the aspirant actor as a homosexual.

"He looked at me with such a childlike sincerity," Marlon later told Bobby, "that I knew it must be love. What else?"

After the session, and after the other students had filed out of the room, the young man remained glued to his seat, still slouching, and still staring at Marlon. As Marlon approached him, the young man rose to his feet and extended his hand.

"I'm your greatest fan," the young actor said to Marlon. "Some day I want to become an actor just like you. Your style, everything."

As he said that, Marlon still held onto the young man's hand, not returning it. "You can hold my hand all night long if you want to," the young man said.

"Indeed I shall," Marlon said. "Or should I have said, 'Indeed, I will.' I always confuse will and shall."

"I'm confused about a lot of things," the young man said. "Very confused. But not confused in my admiration for you."

"Since you seem to know who I am, who might you be?" Marlon asked.

"James Dean. But you can call me Jimmy. Born in Marion, Indiana on February 8, 1931. Died April 17, 1967."

"You know the date of your death?" Marlon asked. "How remarkable."

"I've always had this uncanny ability to predict deaths," Jimmy said.

"Do you know when I'm going to die?" Marlon asked.

"You'll die on December 24, 2010," Jimmy said. "A very old man."

"Do you really plan to die so young?" Marlon asked.

"I sure do," Jimmy said, snickering. "My motto is: live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse."

"If that's your goal" Marlon said, "I'm sure you'll accomplish that loafy goal."

He stood looking into Jimmy's eyes for a long minute, maybe two minutes, maybe a lot more. As he would later recall the moment to Bobby Lewis, Marlon said he wasn't certain of the time. Finally, he spoke to Jimmy. "I hope you understand what I'm about to do. I sometimes do this with men. I'm going to take you in my arms and give you a long, deep kiss. It may be the first time in your life you've ever been kissed, really kissed. My kiss will be just the beginning of a lot of other deep kisses that I'm going to give you in the months ahead." As he moved toward the young actor, Marlon got so close he could smell Jimmy's breath. "All your dreams and fantasies about me are about to come true!"

* * *

In his autobiography, Marlon tried to conceal his romantically tortured involvement with Jimmy Dean, suggesting that he met his young admirer—six years his junior—much later than he actually did. Bobby Lewis often saw Marlon and Jimmy together in the winter of 1951.

At the time, Jimmy was being partially supported by an older television producer, Rogers Brackett, who was a homosexual. "If my relationship with Jimmy was a father-and-son type, it was definitely incestuous," Rogers later said. The producer wanted a monogamous relationship with Jimmy, but Jimmy refused to commit to that. Perhaps to punish Rogers, Jimmy described in intimate detail his various affairs with both men and women, including Marlon.

The composer, Alec Wilder, and also the television art director, Stanley Haggart, were also privy to the secret involvement of Marlon and Jimmy. Later, each of those three men, with additional information supplied by Bobby Lewis, relayed more or less the same accounts of the long-sup-

James Dean

pressed relationship between Jimmy and Marlon.

James Dean

In his autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Marlon falsely claimed that he was introduced to Jimmy by Elia Kazan on the set of *East of Eden*. According to the autobiography, Jimmy told Marlon that he was "not only mimicking my acting but also what he believed was my lifestyle." In that statement, Marlon was accurate. Only the date and place of the introduction was wrong.

Rogers Brackett claimed that according to Jimmy's own account, Marlon took him back to his apartment and seduced him on the afternoon of their first meeting at Actors Studio. "I got to make love to Marlon," Jimmy told Rogers, "which is something I've been longing to do ever since I first heard about him."

Actually, it was more like Marlon making love to Jimmy. "He was completely in charge of our love-making," Jimmy revealed to Rogers. He told me what he wanted, and I went along for the ride." Without Jimmy specifically saying so, it was obvious to Rogers that Marlon had sodomized his young friend.

As in previous years, Marlon had walked the streets and attended clubs and cafes with Clifford Odets or Leonard Bernstein. He was soon "spotted everywhere with Jimmy Dean," claimed Stella Adler. "I had many long talks with the two of them."

"They were a definite couple," Alec Wilder said. "Of course, the words, sexual fidelity, would be unknown in each of their vocabularies. Jimmy and I used to sit and talk for hours in my room at the Algonquin Hotel. He kept me abreast of the affair. I really believe that Jimmy fell in love with Marlon that year. As for Marlon, I don't think he ever loved Jimmy. I met Marlon only three times, and each time he was with Jimmy. In my opinion, Marlon was in love with Marlon."

"Jimmy tried to dress exactly like Marlon," Alec said. "With one notable exception. To keep warm in the winter, he wore a black bullfighter's cape slung over his shoulders."

Jimmy frequently visited Stanley Haggart, especially when he was broke. Stanley at the time was the leading art director in New York for television commercials, and Jimmy wanted Stanley to use his influence to get work for him. Rogers, too, helped Jimmy find work. But Jimmy would often disappear for weeks at a time, not returning at night to Rogers's apartment. "This would seriously piss off Rogers," in the words of his most intimate friend, Alec Wilder. "When Rogers cut him off from jobs, Jimmy would go over to Stanley's."

"Jimmy never had any money in those days," Stanley said. "Sometimes I

would lend him fifty dollars with no expectation of ever seeing the money again. Believe it or not, fifty dollars could actually buy something in those days. Even when Jimmy had less than two dollars in his pocket, Marlon wouldn't lend him a cent. Jimmy said he felt that Marlon deliberately wanted him lean and mean on the streets, looking for a handout."

Stanley said that Jimmy never phoned in advance before dropping by his apartment in the East Fifties. "He just arrived on the doorsteps. He always wanted me to make tapioca pudding for him. It was sort of a comfort food for him. He never came to see me unless he was depressed or broke. His manners were horrible. He'd put muddy feet up on my new sofa and would flick ashes on my Oriental carpet, never bothering to use an ashtray. He talked frequently about Marlon and how frustrated he was in the relationship. I got the impression Jimmy was engaged in a cat-and-mouse affair with Marlon, with Marlon being the cat, of course. Marlon seemed to be toying with Jimmy for his own amusement. I think Marlon was sadistically using Jimmy, who followed him around like a lovesick puppy with his tongue wagging."

"I sensed a terrible loneliness in Jimmy," Rogers said. "Whatever he wanted or needed, I felt I could not really provide even though he shared my bed on many a winter's night. It was obvious to me that he preferred Marlon's arms to mine. Even though he must have known that Jimmy was hopelessly in love with him that winter, Marlon insisted on rubbing Jimmy's nose into his other affairs. Sometimes Marlon would invite Jimmy over to watch as he fucked some pickup from the street. Jimmy told me that he'd spent many a night at Marlon's watching like a voyeur as he made love to someone else. Jimmy claimed that Marlon often invited him for 'sloppy seconds' when the object of his lovemaking had retreated. It wasn't a very happy relationship for Jimmy, and I was as jealous as a bitch in heat, because at least momentarily I'd fallen—and fallen big—for Jimmy. When Marlon was out on one of his many dates, Jimmy would often stalk him, even following him home. On many a night Jimmy would stand beneath Marlon's apartment house, looking up at his bedroom window as the lights went out, wanting to be in that bedroom himself. One very cold morning, Marlon came downstairs in his pajamas and invited Jimmy, shivering in the cold, to come upstairs with him. But, I fear, those acts of kindness were the exception—not the rule."

James Dean

Stanley Haggart cited occasional acts of generosity on the part of Marlon. "When he found Jimmy half starved, Marlon would sometimes

invite him to a steak dinner in the Village. But these were very rare occasions. When Jimmy had no money at all, he told me that he would consent to blowjobs in a men's room in Central Park to earn a few bucks. When he got money, he lived on chocolate milkshakes for energy. He claimed he could survive on a daily intake of milkshakes, although he complained of a runny stool because of the lack of solids in his diet. I fed him when he came to me, trying to give him some red meat and a garden salad, followed invariably by my tapioca pudding."

Brando flips the bird at Dean

"Jimmy often spoke to me about his dreams of future stardom in Hollywood," Alec said. "He said he was going to keep imitating Marlon in his acting style. Then, when he actually got to Hollywood, he wanted to star in all of the movies Marlon turned down. 'I'm a natural for Marlon's rejects,' he told me. Even though I urged him to forge his own style as an actor, he never listened."

One night about two o'clock in the morning, Jimmy arrived at my apartment," Rogers said. "I hadn't seen him in days. He begged me to take him to an all-night diner where he could eat chili and beans like he used to when a boy in Indiana. Reluctantly I got dressed and went to the diner, even though I detest chili. He told me he was giving up his dream of a career as an actor. He said that Marlon had told him that he could never make it as an actor and that he had no talent. Jimmy was sobbing between the beans. He claimed that his relationship had deteriorated and that Marlon didn't want to see him again."

Ironically, at the time, Jimmy was hoping to land the role of Nels in the TV series, *I Remember Mama*. The same role, of course, had brought acclaim to Marlon in the stage play.

Back from the diner, Rogers felt that Jimmy was coming unglued. "He went to get his bongo drums. He always kept most of his possessions in my apartment. Back in the living room, he wanted to play the drums for an hour or two. At one point he pulled off all his clothing. I was shocked to see that he had burns on his chest. Jimmy told me that they were from cigarette burns by Marlon. I was practically ready to call the police on this brutal son-of-a-bitch

until Jimmy told me that he'd asked Marlon to do that to him. For the first time in my life, I came to realize what a masochist Jimmy was—or was becoming."

While filming *The Last Resort* in Key West in the 1970s, actress Barbara Baxley said that she knew both Jimmy and Marlon in the Fifties. "I remember seeing Marlon at a party in Greenwich Village. He knew that I was Jimmy's friend. I think these two guys had only known each other for a few weeks. Knowing of our friendship, he came up to me. 'You'd better get your boy to a psychiatrist right away,' he told me. 'He's an emergency case. One crazed sicko! If you only knew what he wants me to do to him.'"

Already aware of the S&M implications of the Brando/Dean relationship, Barbara cautioned, "You don't have to participate if you don't want to. You could just walk away."

"Just what I'm going to do with you right now," Marlon said before retreating to the other end of the room.

"Self-destructive or not, Jimmy continued to see Marlon even though I begged him not to," Barbara claimed.

* * *

The release of *Viva Zapata!* brought Marlon his second Oscar nomination. The first time he'd lost the award, bowing to a sentimental favorite, Humphrey Bogart. The second time he lost to another sentimental favorite, an aging Gary Cooper appearing in *High Noon*.

To Marlon's chagrin, Anthony Quinn won as best supporting actor. "I guess this Oscar shows Brando who's the better actor," Quinn told the press.

Although he always spoke contemptuously of the Oscar, Kazan revealed that Marlon seemed bitter at his loss of the award to Cooper. In a way, according to Kazan, Marlon felt betrayed by Fred Zinnemann, Stanley Kramer, and Carl Foreman, all of whom had worked on *The Men*.

"I should have made that fucking *High Noon*," Marlon told Kazan. "Instead Kramer offered the role to that little faggot, Monty Clift, and not to me. Clift turned it down and guess what? Kramer gets Cooper who's much too old for the part. If I'd made the film, I would have fucked Grace Kelly every night. I'm going to get the nympho bitch yet—just you wait and see."

Marlon, even at that time, was a bit of a prophet.

Zapata! gave Marlon a chance to show off his magnificent physique, winning him thousands of adoring new fans, both women and an increasing coterie of gay men of all ages who made him their new pinup boy.

However, audiences laughed at the wedding night in the film depicting Marlon as Zapata and his bride, as portrayed by Jean Peters. Instead of raping her like Stanley did Blanche in *Streetcar*, Marlon makes an unusual request.

"I can't read," he said to Jean on the screen. "Teach me. Teach me *now*. Get a book!"

The problem with Kazan's casting of Marlon was summed up rather devastatingly by critic Milton Shulman of the *Evening Standard*, "The ability to scowl, to shrug sullenly, and to shout without parting the lips hardly adds up to a Mexican bandit. Mr. Brando still has to prove he is good at something other than being Mr. Brando."

Marlon himself had serious doubts about his own portrait of Zapata. "I was too young to play the part," was his dismissive comment.

* * *

Back in Hollywood, the debate continued to rage over whether Marlon was "good in the sack—or not." Like his movies, Marlon was getting mixed reviews. "Some women found him gentle and loving," Kazan said, "and I should know because we both bedded Monroe. She was the one who found him gentle and loving. But a lot of the gals wanted Stanley Kowalski. If they got Marlon on the night he was playing Stanley, they gave him a good rating—that is, if they wanted him to be Stanley in bed which most of them did."

Some of these women went on to write memoirs, in which Marlon was evaluated sexually. Among these scribes were Liz Renay in *My Face for the World to See*. Actually the book shows more than her face, including a picture of her running nude along Hollywood Boulevard to the delight of the paparazzi.

Liz Renay is often hauled out to discount speculation that Marlon would not date blondes because they reminded him too much of his mother, Dodie. Liz enjoyed a brief affair with Marlon after filming ended on *Viva Zapata!*

"For a man who was supposed to avoid bedding blondes, Brando seduced more of these pale-haired ladies than I can count," Kazan said. "Shelley Winters, Liz Renay, Marilyn Monroe—and the beat goes on. Personally I think all this talk of Marlon not liking blondes is bullshit. He'd fuck a blonde one night, a brunette on the other night. One time when we were pissing together outside Roma, Texas, Marlon told me, 'What does it matter? All cats are gray at night.'"

Although born in Mesa, Arizona, to a family of religious zealots, Liz Renay abandoned her strict upbringing and became a "V-Girl" for World War II servicemen, praised for her beauty and her voluptuous figure. In time, she was one of the strippers along 52nd Street in New York.

A "gal pal" to mobsters, she eventually landed in Hollywood after winning a Marilyn Monroe look-alike contest. She was sentenced to three years probation for refusing to "be a canary" against mobster Mickey Cohen. When

she violated probation, she went to jail for three years. Nonetheless, she was a survivor and went on to marry eight times and appear before more than a dozen grand juries.

Liz Renay

En route were many lovers, including Marlon.

Some of her affairs were documented in her tell-all memoir. Many of her dates were with movie stars—not only Marlon, but Ray Danton, George Raft, Frank Sinatra, and Burt Lancaster. Sharing her memories, she wrote about Marlon and "exotic rum drinks in Polynesian hideaways, ending in his chaotic apartment." With Sinatra, she recalled a flight to Atlantic City for a champagne party in his private suite. During the filming of *Elmer Gantry*, she remembered Burt Lancaster and "steins of beer at Malibu Beach or in Yorkville's Germantown in New York." She claimed that if ten men gathered, eight of them would make a play for her. The suggestion was that the other two men would be gay. Liz even rated her conquests on a chart, with Burt topping the list for his Grade A performance in bed, although Marlon also scored high points, which his first wife, Anna Kashfi, found amazing.

Liz was one of literally thousands of girls who came to Hollywood to unseat the blonde goddess, Marilyn Monroe. The list most prominently included Jayne Mansfield.

William Ornstein, a writer for the *Hollywood Reporter,* was speaking of Liz but his comment could have included dozens of blonde hopefuls who arrived daily at Union Station, hoping to kick Marilyn off her throne. "Liz Renay was on the way to becoming a superstar. Add a few good breaks and subtract a few bad ones, and she could have been Marilyn Monroe."

Joanne Dru

Marlon, however, was the one who got lucky, seducing both the wannabe and the real thing.

He didn't have time to get around to all the women who wanted him, however.

"I wanted to seduce Marlon Brando," actress Joanne Dru once said. "And, yes, I wanted him in bed to mumble, to be rough with me, even brutal, and definitely antisocial. I also tried to seduce his rival, Monty Clift, when I was the object of his affections in *Red River*. But that romance got nowhere. I never got Clift, I never got Brando. I guess I should have chased James

Dean. But, like Shelley Winters, I got John Ireland, and he ruined me for all other men. One night I encountered Tallulah Bankhead at a party, and we got into a fight over whether my husband, my John, had the biggest dick or her former John (a reference to John Emery) was the winner of the bull prize. I think my argument was more convincing. Tallulah finally capitulated, stalking away shouting, 'That John Ireland of yours is not a mere man—he sounds like a fucking horse!' John, I'm sure, had more than Monty, Marlon, and Jimmy put together. Of the three, I much preferred Marlon. He was the sexiest of the three bad boys of Hollywood. I'm sure Marlon would have gone for me. I'm a brunette and much prettier than Jean Peters!"

* * *

The summer of 1952 was coming to an end.

One afternoon as Marlon was in his apartment, sleeping nude next to a clothed Movita, a call from Hollywood came in from Jay Kanter. Director Joseph Mankiewicz and producer John Houseman had each seen Marlon perform in his long-ago stage appearance in *A Flag Is Born*.

Just as the rest of America, including comedian Milton Berle, was making fun of Marlon's mumbling on screen, Houseman and Mankiewicz knew he could speak with perfect diction and had a highly polished delivery—that is, if he wanted to. Kanter was fast and blunt with the offer. "Don't laugh," he said, "but these guys want you to join an all-star cast and play Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*. Read that, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*."

Constantine's Marlon

As Marlon took the train from New York to Los Angeles, a headline blared the news: ET TU, KOWALSKI.

Arriving on the set of *Julius Caesar*, Marlon was presented with a bust of himself in the role of Mark Antony. It was the work of Constantine, the Hollywood sculptor. Marlon's reaction? "It makes me look as if I'm about to suck every cock in Hollywood."

Chapter Eleven

Producer John Houseman, Orson Welles' old collaborator at the Mercury Theatre, had conceived the "mad but brilliant idea" of casting Marlon as Marc Antony. In his autobiography, Marlon devoted only one cryptic paragraph to the film, *Julius Caesar*. "For me to walk onto a movie set and play Marc Antony without more experience was asinine."

Even before filming began, *Collier's* magazine called Marlon "The Neanderthal Man." Riding his motorcycle to the studio on the first day of rehearsal, he had seen a devastating comedy skit by Jerry Lewis on television only the night before. Lewis had practically gotten a standing ovation across the country by giving his impression of Marlon as Stanley Kowalski portraying Marc Antony doing his "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech. Marlon detested such ridicule, which poured out not only from Lewis, but from Milton Berle as well. Before filming began, he'd already told Joseph Mankiewicz, his director, "I'm sick to death of being thought as a blue-jeaned slobbermouth."

Brando as Marc Antony

Before his return to Hollywood, Marlon had stopped off at Penny Poke Farm in Nebraska, which was continuing to sponge up every dollar he earned in films. His relationship with his father remained as tense as ever, but Marlon found Dodie warm and loving, delighted that her son was "tackling Shakespeare," as she put it, despite his earlier vow that he'd never do that. He spent a lot of his time in Nebraska shouting "Friends, Romans, countrymen" to the corn growing in the fields. But mostly he stayed in his bedroom listening to recordings of such Shakespearean actors as Laurence Olivier, John Barrymore, and John Gielgud. At times he became so absorbed in these melodious voices

with their perfect diction that he'd refuse to come down for dinner with the Brando family.

To a persistent interviewer, Marlon was contemptuous of the film even before it was shot. "There were a lot of togas left over from *Quo Vadis?* So John Houseman persuaded MGM to do *Julius Caesar* for very little cost, including my own salary. I'm getting only $40,000, which isn't making my father too happy."

Although the casting of Marlon as Marc Antony had brought ridicule to both Houseman and Mankiewicz, their selection of the film's other actors generally met with approval. They assembled an impressive British and American cast, including the distinguished John Gielgud playing Cassius in his first ever American film. James Mason, rather contemptuous of Marlon, was cast as Brutus. Louis Calhern played Caesar, and Edmond O'Brien interpreted Casca. For the women, who were relegated to minor roles, MGM used contract players Greer Garson as Calpurnia and Deborah Kerr as Portia.

Marlon approved of the male actors, but was a bit dismissive of Kerr and Garson as characters in a Shakespearean play. "Their names were added just for box office," Marlon told Mankiewicz. "I'm trying to decide which one to fuck first. If I proposition Deborah Kerr, and I don't think I will, I fear it will not be a match made in heaven. But I hear Garson likes young guys. I think I'd like to fuck Mrs. Miniver. Why not? Another notch in my belt. Garson wouldn't be the first aging movie queen who has sampled my noble tool."

Even up until the final minute, the front office at MGM remained skeptical about casting Marlon as Marc Antony. Houseman, however, continued to lobby for Marlon until the eleventh hour, referring to him as "one of the very great actors of our time." Amazingly, the front office wanted to give the role to "the most wooden actor in Hollywood," gun-toting Charlton Heston. Throughout his life, Marlon always held Heston in deep contempt, and especially loathed his right-wing opposition to gun control.

Clad in Roman attire,
but what's underneath?

Before leaving for the West Coast, Marlon, accompanied by his pal, Wally Cox, had gone to a recording studio and crafted a recorded version of his dialogue in *Julius Caesar*. Once that was completed, he invited Mankiewicz

Our hero

to "that filthy pad on 57th Street that bore the remnants of many broads."

Mankiewicz sat in a broken-down chair that still smelled of Russell the raccoon's urine, even though the animal was by now running wild through the forests of Nebraska. Finally, when the recording came to an end, Mankiewicz rose from his chair. "For God's sake, Marlon, you sound like June Allyson."

Mankiewicz carried the recording over to John Houseman. After listening intently to it, the producer told his director, "You've got your work cut out for you. We need a voice like Orson Welles has. There's a soft, feminine side to Brando's voice. He also has a slight lisp like Bogie. His thin voice doesn't match his rugged face or his powerful physique. Maybe we could keep him in the film but get Olivier or Paul Scofield to dub his voice."

Instead of becoming paralyzed, Marlon continued on an almost day-and-night schedule to perfect his role. Two months later he approached both Houseman and Mankiewicz with another recording, this one far more powerful. "My God, I think he's got it!" Mankiewicz shouted.

When Mankiewicz sent the recording to Dore Schary at MGM, the production chief at first refused to believe the voice was Marlon's. "I don't have time for your silly games," he wired Mankiewicz. "Any fool would know that was the voice of Olivier."

Still objecting to casting Marlon, Schary proposed one final choice for Marc Antony. "What about Stewart Granger?" The British actor was an MGM contract player at the time.

Both Houseman and Mankiewicz felt that Granger "was just another pretty English boy, great for a gay man's fantasy but lousy for Marc Antony."

Marlon had already protested against a portrait bust by the artist who went by the name of Constantine. Then, on the set, he was shown Kenneth Kendall's oil painting of him as Marc Antony wearing a scarlet toga with gold laurel leaves. Marlon shouted, "That painting's shit!" MGM had wanted to hang it in the lobby of the Four Star Theater in Los Angeles where *Julius Caesar* was scheduled for its West Coast premiere.

Suddenly, Marlon's old friend from Rome, director Vittorio De Sica, arrived unexpectedly on the set. De Sica wanted to wish him luck and to express his regret that so far they had not been able to work together. As a courtesy, Marlon walked him up and down the Roman streets constructed by

Joseph Mankiewicz

MGM prop men. At the end of the tour, De Sica proclaimed, "Ah, what realism! It looks exactly like modern day Ferrara."

When shooting began, Marlon was rooming once again with his agent, Jay Kanter. When Movita flew in from New York to join him, Kanter rented a home for the two of them in Laurel Canyon. But Marlon was rarely home, as he continued to pursue his other affairs.

Years later, Mankiewicz recalled, "Marlon had Movita stashed up in some canyon somewhere. But she had to wait her turn. Even though I had an all-star cast in front of the camera while making *Julius Caesar*, Marlon had an all-star cast off camera. You name it. Greer Garson, Pier Angeli, Rita Moreno, Jimmy Dean. Marilyn Monroe on a few occasions. Ursula Andress. Katy Jurado. John Gielgud. Even Stewart Granger. Stewart Granger! You heard that right. How in hell did he make the list? Our boy Marlon was one busy boy. He must have used starch on his noble tool to keep it stiff at all times."

Marlon confided to Mankiewicz, "I don't want any of the motley crew I'm dating to pin me down." The director was astonished to hear such a distinguished group of actors and actresses referred to as a motley crew. "If a person wants an affair with me, he or she will have to learn my ground rules. I don't want to sound immodest, but I am, after all, Marlon Brando, a fucking movie star. That means I can have any star or starlet in Hollywood I more or less want. I can't really remember getting turned down. In relationships, I do the turning down. I'm the one who walks. No one walks out on me!" But even as he made that claim to Mankiewicz, Marlon must have known it wasn't true.

Brando practices sword fighting

Marlon held back during rehearsals, delivering lines *sotto voce*. In contrast, during rehearsals, John Gielgud gave full performance-level readings with a musical speaking voice that never harmonized with the rest of the cast. "I had to pump blood into Marlon and take a quart or two from Gielgud before they faced the cameras," Mankiewicz said.

Though stating that, he presented a different point of view to his producer, John Houseman. "Marlon is working his ass off," Mankiewicz claimed. "And it's a very talented and much fucked ass."

During the first week of shooting, Houseman showed up frequently on the set. Although originally, it had been his idea to cast Marlon as Marc Antony, he later confided his bitter disappointment to Mankiewicz. "I think our boy is awed by all this talent, especially Gielgud's," Houseman claimed. "He's a stuttering bumpkin only remotely acquainted with the English language."

Gielgud overheard the remark. Not wanting to interfere with Mankiewicz's direction, Gielgud modestly sought and obtained the director's permission to tutor Marlon in Shakespearean speech patterns at night.

When Gielgud departed from the set, Mankiewicz turned to Houseman and said, "That British faggot wants to get into Marlon's blue jeans. Or at least see what's under the toga. I think he views these upcoming lessons as his golden opportunity. Gielgud has developed a lovesick crush on our boy Marlon."

* * *

In the privacy of Gielgud's dressing room, Marlon found the English actor "cadaverously thin with the features of a hooded falcon." He later told Mankiewicz that Gielgud was "perfect casting for the lean and hungry Cassius."

Although Gielgud maintained a steely reserve in most social encounters, Marlon liked him at once. In spite of their very different backgrounds, the relationship became confidential from the first hour. Gielgud even confided in Marlon that he was afraid to appear before a camera—"at least at close range because I fear I'll photograph like an effete homosexual."

Gielgud came to his lessons in Shakespeare with Marlon following his long string of seductions of young actors—notably Richard Burton and Laurence Olivier. Like these two English actors before him, Marlon found Gielgud highly astute and intelligent—"brilliant at Shakespeare and brilliant at direction. He could seduce you with the sound of his voice, not his body," Marlon later told Mankiewicz.

When Marlon complimented Gielgud on his voice, the actor said, "It is all I have. All my life I've been surrounded by actors who have marvelous bodies. Take Larry Olivier. I adore his voice but he has it all over me in vitality and looks. He can play Romeo in love scenes that become intensely real and tender on stage. As for my Romeo, I fear I'm very cold aesthetically compared with Larry."

"How do you think we'll compare when this damn film is made?" Marlon asked before answering his own question. "You'll provide the spirituality, the

abstract, and I'll come in with earth and blood. I will bring realism to Shakespeare. You, especially with your voice, will provide the lyricism."

"What about our bodies?" Gielgud asked.

The question did not surprise Marlon, who later told Mankiewicz, "John had been drinking in my looks ever since I came into his dressing room."

"I will provide the male beauty, and you can go for the sublime," Marlon said.

On the third night of rehearsal in Gielgud's hotel suite, he asked Marlon to remove his clothing. "I've made that same request of beautiful young actors such as yourself before. I feel that if you are nude, I can better evaluate you as an actor. When you read your lines in the nude, you get closer to the essence of a character."

Marlon was never afraid to take off his clothes in front of anyone, and he quickly met Gielgud's request, knowing exactly what the older actor's motive was.

Later, Gielgud was cautious and respectful in recalling his lessons with Marlon. "I went to Marlon's caravan," Gielgud said, "and went through his scenes and showed him where the phrasing and the color should be different. The next day he came down and played it using everything I'd given him."

Privately Gielgud never revealed his feelings for Marlon. Publicly, he lauded him. "He was very self-conscious, nervous. He used to come on the set looking perfectly wonderful in this sort of tomato-colored toga and straight bangs with a cigarette in one corner of his mouth. Then he'd take it out and put it behind his ear to show he wasn't being posh. He was awfully afraid of looking silly in that costume."

Gielgud's lessons paid off for Marlon. Within days, his on-camera performances improved remarkably. Mankiewicz felt that Marlon's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech had rarely been delivered "with so much intensity, with the passion of his soul in it."

Most biographers claim that after a few lessons, Gielgud bowed out of his role of teaching Marlon how to perform Shakespeare. But Mankiewicz later recalled that that wasn't so. "Gielgud was in there until the end lusting for our boy."

Gielgud was so taken with Marlon performing Shakespeare that he invited him to go back to England with him, where he had been asked to appear opposite Paul Scofield in repertoire at Hammersmith. "I personally will direct you in *Hamlet*."

Marlon turned down Gielgud's offer. "I can't play London or anywhere else. I've promised Jimmy Dean to go scuba diving with him in The Bahamas. But thanks for the blow-jobs."

Gielgud was deeply insulted but when asked put a good face on the

John Gielgud

rejection. "I actually begged Marlon to play *Hamlet*, and he seemed flattered as that was the role that had brought some attention to me. He vowed, though, that he'd never act in the theater again."

As time went by, however, Gielgud grew a bit bitchy about Marlon. "In *Julius Caesar*, Marlon was merely imitating Olivier. An actor imitating another actor acting. Sad, really."

After Gielgud finished his role in *Julius Caesar*, Mankiewicz approached Marlon and asked, "Forgive the intrusion, but I've got to ask the million-dollar question."

Marlon immediately sensed what Mankiewicz wanted to know. "It was the least I could do for John to express my gratitude for those lessons in Shakespeare. I felt I owed him one."

* * *

From the first moment Mankiewicz introduced them, actor James Mason took an instant dislike to Marlon. Mason knew that he was the central character in *Julius Caesar*, but he told Mankiewicz that "like he did in *Streetcar*, stealing the play from Jessica Tandy, Brando as Marc Antony is taking the film's sympathy from me. I'm coming across as colorless. Any actor who could make such an antihero as Stanley Kowalski sympathetic can walk away with this picture. You've got to stop him, and put the focus back where it belongs. Namely, on me!"

Mankiewicz agreed to do that and for the next few days attempted to shift the sympathetic focus back to his friend, James Mason, with whom he'd bonded during the making of *Five Fingers* at Fox.

The ever-sharp Marlon was the first to catch on to his director's motivation. His immediate response was a violent denunciation of Mankiewicz, with whom he'd had a fine working relationship up to that point.

In front of fellow actors Edmond O'Brien and Louis Calhern, Marlon threatened to walk off the picture if Mankiewicz "threw one more scene to Mason." When tension between the actor and his director reached the boiling point, Marlon took the low road. "All of fucking Hollywood knows you're plowing it to Mason and his beloved wife, Miss Pamela, every night. You're the hottest ménage à trois in town. But that's no excuse for you to favor your fuck boy here over me. It's not professional."

At this outburst, Mankiewicz was horrified, shutting down the set for the day. What Marlon had confronted him with was true. Mankiewicz was indeed

locked in a three-way embrace with both Pamela and James Mason, and their affair was the gossip of Hollywood.

"All of us were tense about performing Shakespeare on camera, and when Marlon came out publicly with that little secret, all of us knew privately that it made it so much worse," Calhern said. "I adored Marlon but wish he hadn't gone that far. He'd embarrassed Mankiewicz in front of all of us. Frankly, I don't care if he embarrassed Mason or not. I detested that cold-blooded sucker."

Amazingly, Mankiewicz forgave Marlon for his outburst, although it must have been painful to have been humiliated in such a public way. Mason never spoke to Marlon again unless he had to within camera range.

Mason was on target with his perceptions about Marlon even before seeing the film. Writer Kenneth L. Geist nailed it: "James Mason as Brutus compounds the problem because his personality is not inherently good-natured, and his bitter, unsympathetic quality, though muted, continually works against the domestic pathos of his scenes with his wife [Deborah Kerr]. The qualities that made Mason a star in the Forties—the arrogance and coldness that made him 'the man you love to hate'—are wrong for Brutus, and Mason rightly suppresses them. But the result is a performance restrained to the point of self-effacement."

Matters grew worse between Marlon and Mason when another director, George Cukor, appeared on the set. He was approaching Marlon to costar opposite Judy Garland in *A Star Is Born*. Cukor was frank with Marlon, telling him that, "Cary Grant was my first choice, but he turned me down."

"A fading, alcoholic has-been," Marlon said sarcastically. "Too close to home for Cary, I guess. What I don't understand is why would you come to me with the role. I'm in the prime of my life. A has-been? My greatest roles are yet to come. Your casting of me in this film sucks. Really sucks!"

He looked across the set to where Mason was sitting clearly within earshot of Cukor and Marlon. "If you're looking around for some actor to play an alcoholic has-been, he's sitting right over there." Marlon pointed to a startled Mason, who abruptly got up from his chair and walked off the set.

John Gielgud, Brando, and James Mason mingle during breaks

Ironically, Cukor did offer Mason the role opposite Garland. Whatever reservations he had about accepting the role, Mason overcame them. As for Marlon, Mason was not diplomatic when a member of the press asked him what he thought about working with

Marlon. "He's an asshole, a son of a bitch, and one of the dwellers in the lower circles of Hell. He's like some grotesque baboon who delights in showing his ass to the world, and is so wrong in thinking we want to gaze upon its fleshy mounds!"

Louis Calhern

Just as his relationship with Mason collapsed completely, a friendship developed between Marlon and veteran actor Louis Calhern. The younger actor and the older actor quickly became confidants. Calhern confided in Marlon that he had been having an affair with Marilyn Monroe ever since John Huston had cast the two of them in *The Asphalt Jungle*. "She was my mistress on screen, and I guess I wanted to duplicate our roles off screen," Calhern told Marlon.

Then he delivered his bombshell. "But lately I've become impotent with Marilyn. I've gone to doctors. I don't know what to do. The way I see it, when a man becomes impotent with Marilyn Monroe, he's no longer a man. I know you and Marilyn come together on occasions. You're so much younger than I am, but I'm turning to you for advice. What can you tell an old man who's suddenly impotent with Marilyn?"

Marlon looked Calhern squarely in the eye. "I wouldn't worry about it if I were you. Even if I, who's known for his always reliable noble tool, had ever been impotent with Marilyn, I wouldn't let it bother me. I think it's only a phase that you're going through. It will soon disappear, and you'll be a stallion again. In the meantime, take up with a brunette or redhead before tackling a blonde again. You just may need a change of flavors."

After early doubts, Mankiewicz became so thrilled by Marlon's performance as Marc Antony that he asked him to appear in a filmed version of another play by Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. For some reason, Marlon chose to insult his benefactor. With deadly seriousness, Marlon said, "Only if I get to play Lady Macbeth." He turned and walked away.

As he was heading for his dressing room, he encountered Fred Zinnemann who had directed him in *The Men*. In Marlon's dressing room, Zinnemann also made him an offer, informing Marlon that a screen play would soon be ready. "It's based on the life of Van Gogh. I can't envision anybody else but you in the role of Van Gogh."

Marlon stood up, as if to dismiss Zinnemann. "Then I guess Van Gogh won't be cutting off his ear any time soon on the big motion picture screen."

Back on the set, Mankiewicz chose to ignore his star's latest rejection. Mankiewicz's day was brightened when word came in that the front office of MGM was "thrilled" with the rushes of *Julius Caesar*.

"Marlon clearly surprised all those Doubting Thomases," Mankiewicz

said. “In spite of a somewhat abrasive personality off-camera, he was great as Marc Antony. So much so that the front office was planning a follow-up vehicle. I was asked to develop the film version of yet another play by Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, although I would have preferred to do *Macbeth*. It was already decided that Marlon would be ideal as Antony once again but in the different setting of Egypt. When Dore Schary told me who he wanted to cast as Cleopatra, I collapsed. Instead of rounding up ‘the usual suspects,’ like Vivien Leigh, Schary sent over Ava Gardner to talk to me. Ava’s very beautiful, and I know Frank likes her pussy. But Cleopatra? Ava Gardner in Shakespeare? I told Ava I was busy and sent her to talk over the film with Marlon. At that time, he didn’t even know that MGM was planning to develop *Antony and Cleopatra*. He certainly didn’t know he was going to be asked to play Antony once again, this time opposite Ava Gardner. What a cruel joke! I watched in amusement as Ava made her way across the set to Marlon’s dressing room. Oh, if only I could have been a fly on the wall to see what was about to take place in that dressing room. Thinking it might be one of the many women at the studio wanting to seduce him, I fully expected Marlon to open the door with a hard-on.”

* * *

“Honeychild, I hear that I’m about to barge down the Nile as your Cleo,” she said, startling Marlon with her sudden appearance and perhaps evoking a sexy memory of their previous time together. “The last time Tallulah Bankhead attempted such a thing on Broadway, her barge sank. Do you think me and you can keep the fucking thing afloat?”

At this point Marlon kissed Ava hard on the lips and ushered her into his dressing room, shutting the door. For what happened next, Mankiewicz would have to rely on whatever information he could get out of Marlon.

“We’ll never know what went on in that dressing room,” Mankiewicz recalled, “but Ava and Marlon spent at least three hours in there getting reacquainted. I had to shoot around my Marc Antony.”

The director remembered that when Ava did leave Marlon’s dressing room, she looked a little worse for wear. “You can tell Dore Schary the deal is off, sugar,” Ava said to Mankiewicz. “Right from the horse’s mouth, Marlon told me there’s no way in hell he’s going to play Marc Antony again on the screen. Once was enough. ‘More than enough,’ he told me.”

“Too bad,” Mankiewicz said, lighting up his pipe. “I think I could have come up with some real screen magic between the two of you. The combination of Gardner and Brando might have set off a demand for a series of films starring the two of you sexpots. Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn are my

good friends, but I find them sexless on the screen. You and Marlon exude sex appeal from every pore. Hell, with the two of you on the screen, guys will go to the movies carrying their overcoats. You know what they'll be doing under those overcoats."

"Honeychild, it's been a long time since I fell off the turnip truck from North Carolina," she said.

"As Cleopatra, I could truly have turned you into the enchantress of the ages," he told her.

"What a joke!" She lit her own cigarette and provocatively blew smoke in his face. "Ava Gardner quoting Shakespeare. Honeychild, when I landed in Hollywood, I couldn't even speak the king's English. My Tarheel accent was so thick it could cut molasses pie."

Even though he quickly abandoned hopes of bringing Ava and Marlon together spouting Shakespeare, Mankiewicz had other plans for them. He was working on an original story, *The Barefoot Contessa*, which he had originally planned to publish as a novel, but was turning into a screenplay. It was still in the early stages of development.

In his scenario, his heroine, a performer he called Maria Vargas, becomes a glamorous Hollywood star who lands a titled European aristocrat for a husband. The Vargas character was clearly based on Rita Hayworth, who in 1947 had married Aly Khan, son of the Aga Khan one of the wealthiest men in the world, and spiritual leader of the Shia Imami Ismaelian Muslims. The marriage would end in divorce in 1953. Mankiewicz called his scenario a *drame à clef*. In one of the early versions of the project, he'd centered the male lead around the character of a Texas tycoon modeled on Howard Hughes.

Right on the set of *Julius Caesar*, Mankiewicz began negotiations with one of his costars, Edmond O'Brien, to play the third lead, that of a smarmy publicist.

For the female lead, in addition to Ava, Mankiewicz considered both Joan Collins and Elizabeth Taylor. Out of embarrassment, and perhaps the fear of an outraged reaction from Aly Khan, Mankiewicz was hesitant to offer the role to Rita herself.

Ava Gardner

Mankiewicz pitched the leading male role of Harry Dawes to Marlon, claiming that he wanted to expose "the Cinderella myth of movie stardom."

Marlon flatly rejected the role. "I'm not into making pictures about movie stars this year. I'm not into even being a movie star myself."

After Marlon turned him down, Mankiewicz went to Humphrey Bogart, who told him he'd be delighted to appear in the film. Later Mankiewicz would regret the use

of Ava and Bogie. “They had no chemistry on the screen. Perhaps my fantasy cast would have been Marlon with Rita Hayworth. Who could play herself better than Rita?”

In the days ahead, and during the final weeks of shooting *Julius Caesar*, Ava continued to slip around and see Marlon in private. They didn’t avoid the prying eyes of Mankiewicz, however.

One night after work, Marlon became very confidential, as he often did on certain occasions. He had a remarkable revelation to make about Ava, although Mankiewicz recalled that he did it with “great understanding and sensitivity.”

Talking about it years later, Mankiewicz tried to quote Marlon’s exact words. For the first time Marlon learned of Ava’s peculiar “pastime,” a revelation missed by her biographers but not by Anthony Summers in *Sinatra the Life*.

Ava, according to Marlon, was fascinated by prostitution. Marlon quoted her, “Fucking’s a great sport. The shitty part is all the talk you have to put up with from the man before the dirty deed is done.”

During their first week of intense love-making, Ava told Marlon that what really turned her on, other than their own sex together, was picking up female prostitutes along Santa Monica Boulevard.

“She’s not a dyke,” Marlon assured Mankiewicz. “But she likes to pick up these ladies of the night and spend the rest of the evening smoking and drinking with them as she listens to their low-life tales of lust in the dust. Life on the hustle, the raw edge.”

Mankiewicz at first found this story unbelievable, suspecting that Marlon was playing one of his many practical jokes. However, he cautioned, “I don’t know why I wouldn’t believe it. I’ve lived in Hollywood long enough to know that any one of the denizens out here is capable of anything.”

In bringing Mankiewicz into his confidence, Marlon revealed his big plan for Ava that coming Saturday night. He was going to escort her to a bordello which specialized in offering “movie stars” to its male clients, and to a few female clients as well.

“The madam of this bordello claims that if you can’t fuck the real thing, she’s prepared to offer you the mock,” Marlon said. “A look-alike. A man gets to spend the night with his screen favorite: ‘Joan Crawford,’ ‘Marilyn Monroe,’ ‘Elizabeth Taylor,’ ‘Jane Russell,’ or ‘Judy Garland.’ Would you also believe ‘Margaret O’Brien?’” Mankiewicz himself had patronized the bordello on certain occasions.

Marlon claimed that Ava wanted to be taken to the bordello to meet the madam. “That’s not all,” he said. “With the permission of the madam, Ava wants to exchange places this coming Saturday night with her stand-in.”

"That's wild!" Mankiewicz said. "It's incredible. May I be the first male customer to hire the real Ava for the night?"

Marlon pondered that request for a minute. "If you showed up as Ava's first client, I would just shit my pants. I don't know what Ava would shit."

At this point, Mankiewicz, a normally brilliant storyteller, drifted off and was skimpy on details. He did admit that after Marlon and Ava entered the bordello that Saturday night, he came in about an hour later and requested Ava's services from the madam. After a one-hundred dollar fee was paid, Mankiewicz was escorted to Ava's small bedroom, while Marlon drifted off "to do my duty with 'Betty Grable.'"

"Here I want to end my story like one of those old movies where the shade is drawn over the nocturnal activities of a man and his wife as 'The End' flashes across the screen," Mankiewicz said. "I will tell you this much: I spent two hours in Ava's whorehouse bedroom that night. But I've told you enough. The lady, and she is a lady, deserves her privacy."

The next day, as Marlon reported to Mankiewicz, an angry call came in from Frank Sinatra. "Listen, creep, and listen good. I know all about you and Ava. Stay away from her. Don't ever come within twenty feet of her even at a party. You got that? First offense, broken legs. Second offense, cracked skull. If you live through all that, cement shoes. One more false step and you've had it." He slammed down the phone.

* * *

"Mrs. Miniver, I presume," Marlon said, walking up and extending his hand to Greer Garson upon their first meeting. He didn't know how the relationship would go. In what was an obvious catty remark made about him to the press, Garson had recently said, "On the whole I do not enjoy actors who seek to commune with their armpits, so to speak." Instead of taking that remark as an insult, Marlon chose to view it as a challenge.

She was courtly and gracious to him in spite of what she might have privately thought. She even invited him for tea the following afternoon in her dressing room.

With an amused eye, Mankiewicz watched the so-called romance develop between the established "great lady of the MGM war years" and the upstart young stage actor from New York.

Marlon didn't generally accept invitations to tea from leading female stars, but he decided to honor Garson with his presence. The woman whom film critic Pauline Kael would denounce as "One of the most richly syllabled queenly horrors of Hollywood" seemed in the flesh like "a rather nice lady if you like motherly types," Marlon said.

Marlon, with a certain self-satisfied amusement and a twinkle in his eye, kept Mankiewicz posted on his developing relationship with the red-haired Garson. Alone in her dressing room, Marlon told her, "We've both made movies with Teresa Wright, and I must say she was more successful costarring with you in *Mrs. Miniver* than she was with me in *The Men*."

"You're far too kind," Garson said, pouring him tea.

"Teresa told me, and I quote, 'There are actors who work in movies. And there are movie stars. Greer Garson is a movie star.'"

"I guess that's a polite put-down from the bitch," Garson said. "I loathed her smugness."

Greer Garson

That candid comment won Marlon to Garson's side, and he would remain a devoted fan until the end of the shoot. She told him that when she invited him to her dressing room, she "didn't want him to get the wrong idea."

"Don't worry about that," he assured her. "I'm getting the right idea."

She smiled and told him a story about his former rival, John Garfield. She said that he misunderstood a note she'd sent him, inviting him to tea. "As I turned my back on Garfield to make the tea, he grabbed me saying, 'Let's not fool around, Greer. I want to fuck you right now!' I broke free of him and chased him from my dressing room. What's it going to be with you?"

"I'm not going to be chased out if that's what you're getting at. You invited me here, and I'm going to do my duty and perform like a gentleman should."

"Even if that lady is married?"

"Especially if that lady is married. The way I view it, if a woman is married, she's tired of that same old dally-whacker night after night."

"Dally whacker?" she asked, confused. "What an odd word."

"Don't bother to look it up," he told her. "I made it up."

"I guess dally–whacker is just as good a word as any." She poured his tea. "Let's have a sip of my brew and take it from there."

"Miss Garson," he said, "in America that's called winging it."

Mankiewicz claimed that he was "left hanging," and didn't get any more details on the Garson/Brando affair. However, he did claim it was "of short duration." During their time together, Marlon discovered that Garson had fucked Louis B. Mayer, and even a few electricians and grips on her films. "She was oh, so discreet," Mankiewicz said. "But beneath all those Academy Award nominations for playing a lady beat the heart of a siren. Garson and I

Greer Garson, Brando, and Deborah Kerr

even got it on one night. I asked her if she'd ever fucked Walter Pigeon, who played her husband in a million movies. She denied it. But she did admit to me that she got it on with Clark Gable and Errol Flynn—not at the same time, of course. She said she turned down a proposition from Joan Crawford. Garson was quite passionate in bed in spite of her screen image. After getting to know Garson in a very private way, I think she showed Marlon a good time in their roll in the hay."

The director claimed that most of the sexual liaisons between Garson and Marlon took place in his dressing room. "I had to talk to Marlon one hot afternoon. As I approached his dressing room, I saw Garson leaving. I was almost certain he'd been banging her that day. When Marlon came to the door, he was wearing a pair of purple bikini-style underwear. At long last I found out what he wore under that Roman toga."

"Marlon admitted to me that one weekend Garson managed to slip away from her house and go with him to the Riverside Inn in Riverside," Mankiewicz said. "That's where Ronald Reagan between marriages—and sometimes during marriages—used to take his bitches. Marlon told me that he and Garson registered as Lord and Lady Greystoke. You know, Tarzan's ancestral relatives."

Mankiewicz claimed that Garson was only on the set of *Julius Caesar* for a short time. She told Mankiewicz that, "I've been a devotee of Shakespearean roles ever since I made my debut in a school play portraying Shylock, complete with beard. I wanted to be in it even if I were only carrying a spear! Deborah Kerr received a similarly small role as Portia. Kerr and I were just there to dress up the story. Our parts are so small that we felt like the producer's girlfriends while making it."

After the end of filming, Marlon would not be close to her again. However, "like a voice from the past," she called him one day to star opposite her in the screen adaptation of the original Broadway play, *Sunrise at Campobello*, which had opened at the Cort Theatre in New York on January 30, 1958, with Ralph Bellamy cast as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mary Fickett as Eleanor Roosevelt.

Jack Warner had acquired the screen rights for half a million dollars. Garson was cast as Mrs. Roosevelt. Surprisingly, she campaigned for Marlon to get the part of her on-screen husband despite Jack Warner's strong objections.

Garson went so far as to call Marlon with her idea, but he laughed off the suggestion. "No more wheelchairs for me." He was referring, of course, to his first picture, *The Men,* and to FDR's confinement for many years in a wheelchair. He later reported that Garson sounded very disappointed. Privately he told friends, "Greer and I would have been laughed off the screen." Later, he read with dismay that shooting had begun with her cast as Eleanor, and with Ralph Bellamy reclaiming the role he'd originated on Broadway.

"Leave it to Hollywood," Marlon said. "They've got an Eisenhower Republican playing Eleanor Roosevelt. First, they should cast a Democrat as Eleanor. It's an insult to the grand old lady of the Democratic Party. Secondly, they should cast a lesbian as Eleanor. Personally, I don't think straight women should ever be cast as lesbians. There are many fine lesbians in Hollywood who could impersonate Eleanor. Garson's not one of them!"

* * *

Even though Movita was sitting at home waiting for him, and Marlon was also seeing Rita Moreno on the side, he still found time to call the Mexican beauty, Katy Jurado. He'd been captivated by the actress ever since he'd seen pictures of her when Fred Zinnemann had cast her in *High Noon* opposite Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly.

Katy's reputation as a femme fatale in Mexico had preceded her arrival in Hollywood. In her native country, she was already known on the screen for portraying sultry home-wreckers and mysterious women with a past. Marlon said he felt that she was going to become the Dolores del Rio of the Fifties. He told Mankiewicz that he was attracted to "her enigmatic eyes, black as hell, pointing at you like fiery arrows."

As Katy once said in an interview years later in Cuernavaca, "Marlon called me one night for a date, and I accepted. I knew all about Movita. I knew he had this thing for Rita Moreno. Hell, it was just a date. I didn't plan to marry him."

She did admit, however, that their first date stretched into an affair that extended for a number of years, climaxed by their last times together on the set of *One-Eyed Jacks*, a picture Marlon would direct himself for release in 1961.

Katy Jurado

After one night with Katy, Marlon henceforth called her, "my sultry Mexican wildcat. I've never had sex like that with any woman. Frankly, I don't think I'll ever top Katy, though I may roam the world far and wide. She does everything. She even makes love to your lungs."

Future husband Ernest Borgnine would call her "beautiful, but a tiger." In time, her future costar Elvis Presley would dub her La Chula [an affectionate moniker that roughly translates as "female pimp"] as a nickname.

In 1954 Katy was nominated for an Academy Award for her appearance in *Broken Lance* opposite Spencer Tracy, the first Mexican actress ever to be so honored. After the nomination, Tracy told his good friend, Pat O'Brien, "That Katy is too much woman for me. Better go back to my other Kathie [a reference to Katharine Hepburn] who makes no demands on me. And, I mean none, except that I give up drinking."

All Mexicans Marlon had met or read about were born South of the Border into poverty. Not Maria Christina Jurado Garcia. She came into the world "with a gold spoon in her mouth" [her words], having been born the same year as Marlon to a rich family in Guadalajara.

Her world of wealth and privilege ended when the federal government confiscated the family lands for redistribution to the landless peasantry. All her life Katy exploded into almost violence whenever the subject of that takeover came up.

"As a woman, she's a stunning beauty," Marlon told Mankiewicz. "She has a more assertive personality than Rita Moreno, and that is really saying something. Katy calls her image on the screen a 'distinguished and sensuous look.' I don't know how distinguished she is but that is one sensuous woman. She's the same dangerous seductress cum man-eater in real life that she's been in all those Mexican movies, which she has made me sit through one by one."

Marlon was startled to learn that to support her family she'd once worked as a bullfight critic. In 1951 John Wayne produced the film *Bullfighter and the Lady* and cast Katy in it. The film's director was Budd Boetticher, who was also a professional bullfighter. The film was shot in Mexico. At the time Katy only knew a limited amount of English and had to speak her lines phonetically.

She confided to Marlon that she'd had an affair with Wayne, who wanted to marry her. "Unlike you, Marlon, this so-called Duke is no Duke in bed. He's on and off you in no time and doesn't possess the adequate equipment to satisfy a woman." Marlon seemed delighted at Katy's put-down of Wayne's sexual technique.

"If there is one person in all the world that Katy truly detests, it's Rita Hayworth," Marlon told Mankiewicz. "Katy feels that she should be receiving the same acclaim that Rita is getting and is seriously pissed off. One night

when she went to a theater in Hollywood to see Rita perform in *Gilda*, Katy jumped up and cursed the screen at Rita's performance. Ushers had to haul her from the theater. That's how jealous she is."

When Marlon, accompanied by Katy, went to see her performance in *High Noon*, he burst out laughing when she delivered her line, "It takes more than big, broad shoulders to make a man." She was so furious at him for laughing at the line that she slapped his face.

"What a spitfire!" he told her.

"Don't call me spitfire," she said in anger. "Why must all Mexican actresses be called spitfires. Why not hot tamale?"

"But you are one."

"Latina women can be more than sexpots in American cinema. You have nothing in this country but racist cinema."

"Actually, I agree with you on that point."

Two years before his own death in 2004, Marlon learned that Katy had died in Cuernavaca on July 5, 2002. "How will I get through the rest of my life without Katy Jurado somewhere in the world?" he said. He hadn't contacted her in years. "Oh, my memories," he said when challenged about how long he'd been out of touch. "To Mexicans she was what Anna Magnani should have been to the Italians but wasn't." He never explained exactly what he meant.

When queried, he said, "Oh, I had a point there somewhere. But these days when I go to make my point, I don't find I can get there. It's like my noble tool. For the first time in my rotten life, it's beginning to fail me. Louis Calhern had that problem when he tried to fuck Marilyn Monroe in some forgotten decade I've lived through."

* * *

During the filming of *Julius Caesar*, Jay Kanter kept Marlon abreast of movie offers coming in for his rising young star. The one that intrigued him the most was from Columbia, an offer to star in the musical *Pal Joey*, with Billy Wilder directing. Marlon would be cast as a hustler and a womanizer.

"Marlon was only tempted by the project because his costar was to be Mae West," Mankiewicz later said. "I'm not sure he had any intention of actually making the film. He flirted with the offer just to meet Mae West. He told me he'd always been fascinated by her. 'We're both sexual rebels,' he said."

"Ever since I was a kid, I've heard stories that Mae West isn't a woman at all. But a drag queen. For once and for all time, I'm going to get to the truth of this."

An invitation from Mae was forthcoming. Marlon even put on a suit

before arriving at her Ravenswood apartment. Ushered into her all-white living room by some bodyguard he suspected was her lover, Marlon found Mae sitting on the sofa carefully arranged in a nest of white boas. She did not normally rise to her feet to greet visitors, but on this occasion she did stand up. It was obvious that she wanted him to inspect her entire figure. "Might as well see what you've got to work with as your female star."

Mae West

"And what a stunning figure it is," he said hoping his compliment would win her favor.

"As you can plainly see, my hour-glass figure hasn't shifted yet," she said, taking her hands and rubbing them along her hips to emphasize her slimness. "My measurements are the same as Venus de Milo's. Only I got arms." She sat back down on her white satin sofa, carefully rearranging herself in a field of boas. "So, you're Marlon Brando. Stanley Kowalski in the flesh. That's how I like my men. In the flesh!"

"It's an honor to be here," he stammered. "I must admit I'm overcome with Mae-mania."

"Don't let it worry you," she said in that famous voice of her. "I'm addictive."

To him, Mae looked different bare-headed, without her trademark picture hat. She was also a lot shorter than he'd envisioned. She wore a full-length pink gown and a tiny jacket of scarlet red. Around her neck she'd placed a heavy-laden diamond necklace. Noticing him staring at it, she said, "They don't call me Diamond Lil for nothing."

He was a bit awed by her, and, as he'd later tell Mankiewicz, "Mae did most of the talking. I sat there with my tongue hanging out. But I think that's the way Mae wanted it."

"So Columbia wants me to star in this flicker, with you as my leading man. A sort of Diamond Lil meets Stanley Kowalski drama. Are you game?"

"I'm mulling it over," he said.

"Me, too, but I've got problems with the script," she said. "First off, I write my own lines. Let's face it: This country has only three leading playwrights: Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and me. They want me to come aboard this project because of all the publicity I'd generate for *Pal Joey*. Not only would they be getting me, but millions of dollars of free publicity. They'd clean up at the box office. But I'm not so sure I'll be willing to give them this Christmas present. I've spent years building up my reputation as a fabulous

entertainer, and I don't know if I want these boys cashing in on my fame. I am, after all, an institution."

"That you are, Miss West," he said. "Vivien Leigh and I, in my humble opinion, had a certain dynamic on the screen. I'm sure Marlon Brando and Mae West would heat up the screen in a different way."

"Watch that billing, duckie!" she said. "The way I see it on a marquee is like this: MAE WEST STARRING IN *PAL JOEY* WITH MARLON BRANDO."

"I bow to your greater box office appeal and your legendary name," he said, perhaps not meaning a word of it.

"You'd better be careful before signing to do a picture with me," she cautioned him. "When I'm on the screen, no one in the audience looks at any other performer. You can have your own scenes by yourself or with that other gal in the picture. But I fill the whole screen when I'm on."

"That's completely understandable," he said, showing her the greatest respect despite her egomaniacal pronouncements.

"No disrespect intended, Brando," she said, "but I sorta envisioned my return to the screen with this good-looking guy I met the other night. The new boy in town. Rock Hudson. I think me and him might start a heat wave on the screen. Give 'em fever. He's got muscles in all the right places, or so I hear. Do you get my drift? A man's gotta have a long loaf in the bread basket or else I'm off the staff of life."

Still in full possession of her show business savvy, Mae seemed to realize even then that she and Rock Hudson appearing together might cause a sensation. At the 1958 Academy Awards, the duo did just that. Mae verbally caressed Hudson's body as they sang, "Baby, It's Cold Outside." The audience at the Pantages Theater whistled, shouted, stamped their feet, and cheered. "We brought down the house," Mae later claimed. "Too bad Hudson is one of the boys. I discovered Cary Grant and made him famous too. Too bad he's a fairy like Hudson. Fairy boys have always been attracted to Mae."

"Would you feel comfortable playing your character in *Pal Joey*?" he asked.

"I always play ladies of no character," she said. "Who wants to go see a movie about a lady with morals? Morality and me never met up with each other on the screen."

At one point in her monologue, she interrupted herself. "Perhaps you're unaware of it, and I understand, of course, but you're not just staring at me, but looking at me like I'm a big juicy apple, the kind the serpent handed to Eve, and you want to take a big bite."

"Maybe that's true," he said. "But I'm awed by you. Your skin. It's peaches and cream."

"And my teeth are my own too," she said. "What did you expect? Some wrinkled old fossil? I'm timeless."

"I see the evidence before me," he said.

"I'll let you in on the secret of my youth and beauty," she said, "and I've never told anyone this. It's because I inherited this double-thyroid. It's responsible for my powerful sex drive, my boundless energy, and my youthful look. I inherited it from my three-breasted grandmother."

"What a great gift!" he said.

"I was also born with my cherry intact," she said, laughing at her own comment. "But I gave that up before I reached puberty. I still believe in sex at least once a day. How about you?"

At first he looked puzzled. "Oh, of course. At least once a day, maybe a lot more."

"My kinda man," she said. "I like a man with some life in him."

"Don't get married," she cautioned him. "A man like you will always want to have a lot of harmless fun, and marriage will only hamper you. I got hitched one time. But I used to lock up the old goat in my broom closet and go out on the town, returning before the rooster crowed. The geezer got used to it."

Midway into his visit, she rose from the sofa once again and invited him on a tour of her apartment. "I keep the curtains drawn at all times except night," she told him. "My perfect skin could never tolerate the harsh light of Los Angeles."

Everywhere he looked, he saw gilt and cream colors, along with white fur rugs and gilded Louis XIV chairs. Photographs of Mae in her show business prime were everywhere. Seeing him looking at a photograph of her on Broadway in 1928, she asked, "Don't you think I look the same?"

"The same," he said.

Some of the pictures of her were taken during the heyday of vaudeville. One was of a very young man. With a quizzical look, he stared at it.

"You won't believe this but that photograph is of me," she said. "I got my start in vaudeville as a male impersonator."

"What horrible casting!" he said.

Back in her living room, she had her bodyguard bring both of them a glass of chilled cranberry juice. "I'm a teetotaler," she said.

"You're welcome to spend the night," she said, "but I must warn you about something. I keep men around only as long as they serve my purpose. When I'm done with them, out the door they go. I'm too busy being Mae West to take too much time with any man. For a gal like me, men are meant to satisfy me—not the other way around."

Marlon spent the night at Mae's apartment, the intimate details of which

he did not make available to Mankiewicz, except to say that the action took place under a mirrored ceiling in her bedroom. “I like to see how I’m doing,” Mae had told him.

Despite their off-screen activities, they never faced the cameras in *Pal Joey*, their roles going years later to Frank Sinatra and Rita Hayworth. “Such a shame,” Mankiewicz said. “With Mae West and Marlon Brando, *Pal Joey* would have become the camp classic of all time.”

Even though Marlon was skimpy on boudoir details, Mankiewicz did demand to know the answer to one gnawing question. “Ok, spill it! Is Mae West really a man in drag?”

Marlon’s reply was a bit enigmatic. “She’s a male chauvinist pig but all woman!”

* * *

When *Julius Caesar* opened in New York on May 8, 1953, Dodie wired her son: “You’ve proven you can do the classics. I’m so proud of you. Your devoted Dodie.”

Although *Julius Caesar*, when viewed today, is a disappointing film in many respects, Mankiewicz always defended Marlon’s performance. “He plunges into acting the way a deep-sea diver goes overboard. He keeps his eyes shut for hours to see what it’s like to be without sight—in case he ever has to play a blind man. He practices using only his left hand for days so he’ll know what it’s like to play the part of a character who’s lost his right hand.”

Many critics were kind to Marlon. One critic for the *Observer* in London suggested that to appreciate Marlon’s versatility “one should try to imagine John Gielgud portraying Stanley Kowalski.”

Laurence Olivier was asked if he thought Marlon playing Marc Antony was doing an imitation of him. “I thought, God, that’s me up there on the screen, and God am I awful! Is that all I’ve given to the world?”

When the 1954 Academy Award nominations came out for the films of 1953, Marlon once again was nominated as best actor. He found himself competing

Marlon visits Monty Clift on the set of *From Here to Eternity*

against two of his former lovers for the prize, Montgomery Clift and Burt Lancaster, both nominated for their roles in *From Here to Eternity*. *Eternity*'s director, Fred Zinnemann, who had directed Marlon in *The Men*, had briefly toyed with the idea of casting Joan Crawford with Marlon playing the role that eventually went to Lancaster. Marlon's co-star in *Julius Caesar*, Deborah Kerr, took over the role that Crawford rejected. Also nominated for best actor was Marlon's future rival, Richard Burton, for his performance in *The Robe*.

Deborah Kerr

All of these actors lost out to the heavy favorite, William Holden, who walked away with the trophy for his role in *Stalag 17*.

Privately Marlon told friends that if he ever won the prize, instead of being nominated, "I'll get up on the stage, pull out my dick, and piss on the front row. No prizes should be awarded for acting. Actors shouldn't compete against each other like it's a boxing match. How can any sane person compare my performance in a Shakespearean play with Holden's war prisoner drama? Hollywood's insane. They can take their Oscar and shove it where the sun don't shine!"

* * *

Since Russell the raccoon was wandering wild in some Nebraska forest, hopefully with a playmate, Wally Cox moved back in with Marlon upon his return to New York after *Julius Caesar*. Wally had been forced to move out because Russell had taken such a dislike to the actor that he frequently bit him, often severely.

Wally and Marlon once again picked up the thread of, in the words of Tom Ewell, "a relationship that was about as close as two men could ever get."

Bobby Lewis was a frequent visitor to their apartment. "It was a dump, really, with a toilet that looked like it was scrubbed every fifth year," Lewis said. "But Wally and Marlon didn't mind living in this squalor. Wally wanted Marlon all to himself, and I think Marlon was faithful for about ten days. Then he slipped back into his old habits. He even urged Wally to settle down and get married. After all, Wally was bisexual. For Wally's homosexual needs, Marlon assured him that 'I'll always be there for you.' Or at least that was my understanding of the situation from long talks with both men."

With *Julius Caesar* wrapped and with no other film contracted for, Marlon was an "artist-at-large." Through Jay Kanter, offers continued to pour in from Hollywood.

An intriguing prospect came in for Marlon to star in *Prince of Players*, based on the life of Edwin Booth (1833-1893), the famous American actor who became notorious as the brother of John Wilkes Booth, the man who assassinated Abraham Lincoln. The ensuing scandal forced him into temporary retirement.

Richard Burton

Philip Dunne, the director, wanted Marlon to star in this bio/drama based on a scenario by Moss Hart. Dunne had already lined up some of the great actors of the day, including Raymond Massey, Charles Bickford, and Eva Le Gallienne, with lesser-known younger players who included Maggie McNamara. Pretty boy John Derek was cast as John Wilkes Booth which Marlon found "an amusing conceit."

After briefly considering it, Marlon turned down the leading role, deciding, "I don't want to play an actor, and certainly not a classical actor." The studio, 20th Century Fox, briefly considered turning it into a vehicle for Laurence Olivier, finally offering the role to Richard Burton, who accepted it.

At a party in Hollywood, in front of witnesses, Marlon derided the script and the casting of *Prince of Players*. "It's just a showcase for Burton to show us how bad he is in a Shakespearean role. I turned it down because the film had too many staged portions of Booth's most famous plays, especially *Hamlet*. I wanted it to be a probing study of Booth's fascinating and tragic life. When Fox couldn't get a top-rate actor like Olivier or me, they settled for Burton, a third-rate performer with even worse skin."

The remark eventually reached Burton, who was furious, threatening to physically attack Marlon if he ever encountered him. That critique from Marlon marked the beginning of a suppressed but simmering feud between the two men that lasted throughout their lives. The war between them accelerated when they made the disastrous film, *Candy*, released in 1968 and directed by Marlon's long-time lover, Christian Marquand.

Christian Marquand

The great director, Fritz Lang, who had directed Marlene Dietrich in *Rancho Notorious*, wanted Marlon to star in *Human Desire*, based on a work by Emile Zola. The tagline for this film noir was, "She was born to be bad...to be kissed. . .to make trouble!" After reading the script, Marlon wrote the Viennese director, "I cannot believe that the man who gave us the über dark *Mabuse*, the pathetic child murderer

in *M*, and the futuristic look at society, *Metropolis*, would stoop to hustling such crap as *Human Desire*."

Lang eventually cast a very wooden Glenn Ford in the role. Marlon continued to make appearances at the Actors Studio where he was treated like a celebrity. Aspiring actors and actresses adored him, and were only too willing to make themselves available to him. Sometimes he gave them actual advice on acting. "You've got to get into a part to the point that you're no longer acting but living the character. In movies don't let the director tell you you've got it right on the first two or three takes. Demand at least ten different takes."

It was during this period between jobs that Marlon and Wally Cox posed for the most notorious photograph ever taken of an A-list movie star. In the photograph, Marlon is committing fellatio on his friend. Charles Higham in his book on Marlon wrote: "A vicious forged photograph of Marlon in a sexual encounter with Wally Cox gained wide underground circulation in Hollywood; the faces had been cleverly superimposed on other people's bodies in a studio lab. The forger of this piece of smut was never identified."

The photograph was real, however, and was no forgery. Wally's face does not appear in the photograph, only Marlon's. Marlon himself later admitted to posing for the candid shot. Only Wally's penis is shown, and it's fully erect.

Later Marlon admitted to friends that he did indeed pose for the photograph, but dismissed it by saying, "It was only done as a joke at a party. It's not to be taken seriously."

The picture gained such notoriety that it came very close to being introduced as evidence of "Mr. Brando's perversity" in the bitter divorce proceedings that flared between Marlon and Anna Kashfi, his first wife.

Woodrow Parrish-Martin, who had met Marlon when he stayed with Jean Cocteau in the Île de France, always claimed that the photograph was taken at a party in Harlem staged by Phil Black.

"All of us used to go to his parties in the Fifties," Parrish-Martin said. "They were the talk of New York. Completely outrageous and totally gay. Of course, you had to cough up ten dollars for all the food, drink, and sex you wanted. But that was cheap for what you got."

There were two Phil Blacks operating in Harlem at the time, and their identities were often confused. Phil Black was also known for staging the greatest Harlem transvestite ball of the year, which drew many luminaries such as James Baldwin or even the "snow white" Anaïs Nin, the celebrated

diarist. Even movie stars from Hollywood, including Lana Turner and Ava Gardner, showed up at these infamous balls, one of which was raided by the police.

Black is said to have dared Marlon to pose for the photograph, and that Marlon took him up on his dare. "Wally went along with it," Tom Ewell said. "I wasn't at that particular party, but I attended Black's orgies when I was in town. In addition to the sex going on in his back bedrooms, Black staged the best entertainment for the voyeur. He also spread out the best buffet in New York City. I attended just for the food." Ewell then smiled. "Yeah, right!"

The photograph must have mass produced, because within weeks it was in wide circulation on both the East and West coasts. One of James Dean's male lovers said that he remembered the young actor having the picture taped to the wall over his bed.

"I think every gay male in America at the time had a copy of Marlon's candid shot," said gay actor Roddy McDowall. "When I went to Paris one summer I found the picture being sold openly at kiosks along the Seine. Any American tourist who wanted to see Brando's skill at fellatio could smuggle a copy back into the United States."

The author of *Hollywood Babylon*, Kenneth Anger, once told an interviewer for the Australian publication, *Campaign*, that he too possessed a copy of the picture of Marlon giving head.

"It was taken in 1952," Anger very accurately said. "He is going down on his roommate, Wally Cox, the television actor. I've tried to publish it a couple of times, but publishers have always refused."

Although the photograph is available today to anyone who can surf the web, newspapers and magazines in 2004, upon the occasion of Marlon's death, once again refused to publish the salacious photograph, which looks a bit tame by today's standards. However, by 2004 the photograph had gained such notoriety that many obituaries and follow-up stories in the wake of Marlon's death felt compelled to mention this long ago "outrage."

Getting intimate with Wally

According to Fiore, Marlon never seemed overly embarrassed by the picture. "Throughout his life," Fiore said, "Marlon never had any false modesty about showing his genitalia. In fact, when he made *Last Tango in Paris*, Marlon was willing to have himself photographed letting it all hang out. Any big-time male movie star who would do that wouldn't get unduly upset over some long ago, stupid photograph showing a little cocksuck-

ing. Most actors at one time or another do that in their career. Sometimes we had to drop trousers in those days just to get a stinking part."

No one was happier than Marlon when Wally was cast as the school teacher, Robinson Peepers in the 1952 sitcom TV series, *Mr. Peepers*. The show made its debut as a summer replacement. Because of its high ratings and rave reviews, it moved quickly to a regular line-up. The sitcom that starred Wally was about a mild-mannered high school science teacher, the epitome of a "Casper Milktoast." Soon Wally's nerdy voice became familiar to millions of households throughout America. One TV reviewer at the time added a personal note to his interview with Wally, calling him "quite a ladies man."

"That brought a laugh to the hip denizens of the Actors Studio," Bobby Lewis later said.

After *Mr. Peepers* was cancelled, Wally was given another sitcom—*The Adventures of Hiram Holiday*, which ran during the 1956 and '57 season. His longest running "gig" was as the voice of the lead role in the cartoon "*Underdog*," which lasted for nine seasons, running from 1964 until his death in 1973. "There is no need to fear! Underdog is here!"

For more than six years, from 1966 until his death, he was the upper left square on "*The Hollywood Squares*" game show.

Brushing aside the fellatio portrait, Wally once filmed a commercial that studio executives considered "too indecent" for broadcasting on TV. In the "offending" material, Wally on camera opened his dress shirt to reveal a small segment of his undershirt. In the days before Janet Jackson showed the world her breast, this was considered "exposing underwear on a live model," which was strictly forbidden, and the commercial never aired.

Marlon's comment? "I'd like to show the fuckers something that can't be aired!"

* * *

Back in California, Marlon rented a ranch house near the Pacific Palisades. Movita soon followed, although Marlon, as usual, continued to pursue various other affairs. He rarely, if ever, appeared in public with Movita. For several months, he made no appearance with any other woman.

When seen in a public place, such as a Los Angeles restaurant or a movie house, he was invariably alone. There were two reasons for this: Movita threatened him that if seen out with another woman, she'd leave him and return to Mexico. Not only that, but Marlon was leading a secret life at night, far from the prying eyes of the media.

Unknown to many of his friends at the time, Marlon was doing research for a new movie, *The Cyclists' Raid*, with shooting slated to begin early in

Movita and Marlon's silly faces

1953. Just as he'd entered a ward of paraplegics to research his first film, *The Men*, he now took to hanging out with motorcycle gangs, including the notorious *Hell's Angels*, named after the first big movie ever shot by Howard Hughes.

The scenario of Marlon's new film was based on an incident that happened on the weekend of July 4, 1947, in Hollister, California. An estimated four thousand motorcyclists hit the little town and virtually took it over before departing the next day after wrecking the place.

Marlon was an old friend of the motorcycle. Almost daily he and Wally Cox had ridden their motorcycles through the canyons of New York. In Los Angeles, to prepare for the movie, he took to motorcycle riding with a vengeance. He also took to patronizing mainly gay-oriented shops and appeared at night dressed in black leather and silver chains, his face partially hidden by a cyclist's cap which he wore at a jaunty angle some described as "feminine."

He was frequently spotted around Los Angeles at night with what was called *pachucos*, Latino juvenile delinquents. He often attended a tough bikers' joint, Tequila Maria's, with its sawdust floors. Drug dealing went on behind its barn-like structure.

It was here that he met Luís Ramon, a twenty-three-year-old, well-built Latino who had slipped into the country illegally by crossing the Mexican border and heading for San Diego when he was only fourteen. He'd become a hustler, eventually acquiring enough money to move to Los Angeles on a new motorcycle he'd recently purchased.

It is because of Luís that we know anything at all about Marlon's life with the bikers. "I had been gay since I was six years old and my uncles in Mexico used to play with me," Luís said. "When I first met Marlon, I already knew who he was, although I didn't recognize him at first. I thought he was an amazing look-alike. On the first night, I took him back to my place. We fucked all night. Before the morning, I was telling him—in Spanish, no less—that I loved him. That was decidedly uncool, but I just blurted it out."

Luís claimed that he introduced Marlon to all the members of his motorcycle gang, and they eagerly accepted him, even answering his detailed probing questions.

"Marlon wanted to join our culture," Luís said. "That meant lots of liquor, lots of drugs, occasional violence, and creamy nights of testosterone."

One night, Luís recalled, the police swept into Tequila Maria's, arresting *pachucos* caught with drugs. Luís and Marlon were forced to strip to the waist so their arms could be tested for needle marks. The policeman, according to Luís, didn't realize he was man-handling both Stanley Kowalski and Marc Antony. Before releasing Marlon, the cop frisked the well-built actor.

Brando in *The Wild One*

"Everything would have gone smoothly," Luís said, "if Marlon had kept his trap shut." As he was being frisked, Marlon told the cop, "All of us have to get our kicks some way." That suggestive remark so infuriated the cop that he hauled Marlon to jail where he was booked for the night.

"I was waiting outside the jail when Marlon was released the following morning," Luís said. "Marlon told me that he was thrown into a cell with about ten other men. He said they taunted him and called him 'pretty boy.' He told me in graphic detail how he was held down and gang-raped by all the men in the cell. I didn't know if he was telling me the truth or not, but he sure looked like something had happened to him. I sorta believed his story. A lot of cute young guys were gang-raped when they were thrown into these cell blocks with the dregs of the night."

Luís admitted that he soon realized that Marlon "wasn't going to be my mate for life. He had sex with a lot of the other guys I introduced him to. Marlon didn't want a commitment to me. He was not only having sex with the men, but he had some Mexican bitch stashed away somewhere, and he often disappeared to ball her. Marlon played the field."

"He used to help me out financially, but our break came when he refused to hire me to play one of the bikers in *The Wild One*," Luís said. "A lot of guys, even some of my friends, were hired, but for some reason Marlon didn't want me around. Maybe I knew too much. I was bitterly disappointed and wanted to get back at him."

Luís took his amazing story to the editors of *Confidential*, the leading scandal magazine of the time, and he thought he had a deal made. "At the last minute, they were bought off," Luís claimed. "They practically kicked me out of their offices."

In those days, *Confidential* was willing to suppress a story for the right bribe. There were rumors that Harry Cohn, studio chief at Columbia in charge of production, sent $50,000 in one-hundred dollar bills to the editors of the

magazine to squelch the story.

Actual bikers, mixed in with actors, were used in the filming of *The Wild One* to give greater authenticity to the movie. Many were straight and brought their "motorcycle mammas" to the set. Others were gay. One biker, in fact, erroneously reported to a journalist that Marlon had a "twelve-inch dick that had to be taped to his stomach so that it wouldn't bulge in his jeans and distract film-goers." That revelation was never reported, but *Time* magazine suggestively made the point in a cover story entitled "Too Big for His Blue Jeans."

Marlon and co-star, Yvonne Doughty

With a little help from artist Andy Warhol, Marlon, as a leather-jacketed, motorcycle-riding hood, became an icon of the 20th century. Marlon later referred to this image as "my curve ball. I became the poster boy for attitude, angst, and anomie."

Producer Stanley Kramer thought he had a hit with Marlon's new film. He'd been disappointed in his famous *Death of a Salesman*. Released in 1951, it had registered only a marginal profit at the box office. Kramer had read a magazine article about the infamous Fourth of July weekend in northern California. Motorcycle-riding hoodlums, known as the Nomads and the Boozers, invaded the hamlet of Hollister and took it over, drag-racing up and down the main street. To cope with the unrest, squad cars from three neighboring towns roared in to maintain law and order, although they could not completely control the beer-drinking mobs.

Based on this incident, Marlon was cast as one of the gang leaders, Johnny. From the beginning, Marlon found much to object to in the script, beginning with the title of *The Cyclists' Raid* He demanded unsuccessfully that the title be changed to *Frenzy*. For a week, that's what the film was called until studio publicists changed it to *Hot Blood*. Eventually, Harry Cohn at Columbia called the shots, renaming it *The Wild One*.

"I'm playing a sexual outlaw," Marlon wrote Dodie back in Nebraska. "But the Breen office is demanding a lot of changes in the script. Those shitheads think the plot is Communist and are afraid it will incite young America to rise up against their elders. Bullshit!"

The first meeting with László Benedek, the Hungarian director, went off well. "That's probably because we talked about everything but the film," the director later recalled. But by the end of the first week of shooting, Marlon

was at war with Benedek, insisting on rewriting many of his lines. Kramer had given Benedek only twenty-four days to shoot the film, and the director was literally on the verge of tears throughout most of the shoot.

With contempt, Marlon told Kramer that Benedek should devote his future "to keeping Doris Day a virgin in her films."

Marlon derided Benedek to fellow cast members, claiming "Mr. Goulash has no balls. Why in the fuck did Kramer hire a Hungarian to direct a film about American biker hoods? Beats me!"

Marlon hated the director's continental manners which seemed inappropriate on the set of such a picture. Benedek didn't help matters when, on seeing the first of the rushes, he commented, "If you've seen one American biker, you've seen them all—and that goes for Marlon Brando."

Marlon told anybody who was interested that he'd turned down the film script when first offered. "I told Kramer I wasn't doing any motorcycle movies that year. 'Get Jimmy Dean,' I told him. 'He also rides a bike.'" As the script was continually weakened by mandates from the censors at the Breen office, Marlon grew more and more disillusioned with the movie, becoming increasingly inarticulate, finally resorting to mumbling.

Marlon drew mixed reviews from his costars, Mary Murphy and Lee Marvin. Mary was thrilled at "meeting Mr. Gorgeous" and reportedly developed an instant crush on him. He was seen flirting outrageously with her and on a few occasions took her for long rides on his bike. Apparently, the romance never blossomed because of the sudden appearances on the set of two women.

Marlon had told his biker buddies that he planned "to deflower" Mary, whom he suspected of being a virgin. But his plans were put on hold when his sister, Jocelyn, showed up on the set. "Marlon was at his best when she came around," Mary said. "He was real sweet around his sister."

During the final moments of the film, Marlon hands Mary a stolen statuette. Reviewers likened it to a phallus.

Regrettably, Mary's future in films, which stretched out for two decades, would not be bright. Her role as the good girl to Marlon's bad boy would be her only standout film role. "She had her one brief shining moment," Benedek said, "in what became a cult film."

Murphy later ended up running an art gallery.

Mary Murphy and Brando

At the time of his sister's visit, Marlon had formed a close bond with actor Sam Gilman, who played a minor role in the film. Like Wally Cox, Gilman soon became Marlon's "sidekick," as he called it. Except for one "bust-up" the two men would remain close friends until Gilman's death.

Jocelyn and Brando on the set of *The Wild One*

"After Jocelyn left, Movita showed up," Gilman claimed, "so I guess Marlon never got around to plowing Murphy, assuming that a nice gal like her would have given in to him."

Gilman remained with Marlon throughout the shoot and in the years to come. "He hovered over Marlon like a mother hen," claimed Kramer. "Frankly, I think Marlon abused Sam. In front of other cast members, Marlon would order Sam to bring him a quart of banana ice cream, or Marlon would demand that Sam shine his shoes. The actor always seemed willing to do Marlon's bidding just to remain in his company."

During the shoot, Marlon himself took credit for inserting the movie's most famous lines. When a waitress asks Marlon what he's rebelling against, he responds, "Whaddya got?"

When Lee Marvin came together with his co-star, the meeting was a disaster, according to Gilman. "Marvin wanted to be Marlon."

Marvin was cast as Chino, the leader of a rival gang. In the film, Marvin says, "Hi ya, sweetheart. Johnny, I love you." One reviewer likened Marvin's lines to his playing Mercutio to Marlon's Romeo. Those lines were all the love expressed between the two rivals, who hated each other as much off screen as on screen.

Off-screen exchanges between Marvin and Marlon were kept to a minimum. Marvin chided Marlon, claiming that he was going to change his name to Marlow Brandy. Marlon replied, "I'm going to change my name too. My new moniker will be Lee Moron."

Mary, reportedly, later tempered her enthusiasm, claiming that "Marlon was a little too plump to play Johnny. At twenty-nine he was also too old. The role called for an eighteen-year-old."

"Marlon was deeply depressed at the way the movie was going," Gilman said. "He ordered me to bring him more and more food. His ass broadened toward the end of the shoot."

Lee Marvin

A rough-riding cyclist himself, Marvin was all too aware of the homosexual element among the bikers cast in the film. He called the gay bikers "pussies." Not only that, but Marvin mocked the "sensitivity" that Marlon displayed as an actor. "When Marlon wasn't on the set, Marvin imitated him, employing a girlish lisp and placing his hands on his hips and prancing around like a fairy," Gilman said. "Personally, I found Marvin disgusting and reported to Marlon the shit going on."

At the end of the shoot, one reporter asked Lee Marvin what it had been like working with Marlon. "He's the biggest piece of shit on a stick in Hollywood, where the competition is keen for that title."

When asked about Marvin, Marlon responded, "An asshole! A sadist both on and off the screen. As an actor, about all he can do is toss a cup of scalding coffee into poor Gloria Graham's face." Marlon was referring to the 1953 *The Big Heat*, which contained just such a scene which has now entered the pantheon of all-time screen portrayals of a sadist.

Marlon himself admitted that *The Wild One* was a failure, and many years after the film was released claimed that it "doesn't hold up well today," although it inspired an array of biker pictures, including *Easy Rider*. Audiences today often laugh at certain sequences in the film.

Marlon said that the original script was one of social significance, but that the message of the film had been impossibly diluted. "It had been our intent to make a film that showed why young people tend to bunch into gangs, including motorcycle gangs, to express themselves in violent acts."

But upon viewing the finished product, Marlon felt that, "If anything, the film made motorcycle gangs fun." He told Kramer that *The Wild One* was the "biggest disappointment of my career."

"Don't worry about that," Kramer said. "If you stay in pictures, you'll have far bigger disappointments." Incidentally, Harry Cohn has delivered a one-line review after seeing our film. "'I hate it!'"

Marlon claimed that "the only good thing to come out of the film was its help in releasing some of my inner violence. Before *The Wild One*, I thought of going home and killing my father. After *The Wild One*, I decided that I shouldn't actually kill him, but pull out his corneas."

Marlon vowed never to work with Kramer again, even when the producer called him and offered him the starring role in *The Defiant Ones* in 1958, opposite Sidney Poitier. Marlon slammed down the phone on Kramer.

The Wild One was widely denounced for promoting "anti-social behavior

A scene from *The Wild One* with Marlon and Mary Murphy

among the young." It did become a cult film among teenagers, many of whom dressed as Marlon did in the film, in leather jackets and blue jeans. No one did that more than James Dean, who suddenly appeared on his own motorcycle, dressing and talking exactly as Marlon did in *The Wild One*.

One fan who saw the movie claimed that Marlon's "sideburns, overt sexuality, and grooving to the jukebox invented Elvis Presley."

British censors were so horrified at the violence depicted in the movie that they refused to allow it to be shown in their country. It languished in vaults until 1968, when it was released throughout the British Isles with an X rating.

Fleeing Hollywood, Marlon returned to New York. With him, he carried a book on the life of Gauguin. He told friends like Wally Cox and Edith Van Cleve that he wanted to retire and go to an island in the South Pacific.

"I'm going to make one more picture, then spend the rest of my life like a lazy lizard in the sun, eating, sleeping, and reproducing the race. Before my noble tool relaxes for the final time, I plan to father at least twenty-eight dark-skinned island children with at least that many women."

Thinking he was joking, the reporter did not record Marlon's comment.

However, there was a grain of truth in what Marlon was saying.

* * *

In the spring of 1953, mainly as a means of providing jobs for out-of-work friends, Marlon astonished his agent, Edith Van Cleve, by suggesting that he was available for the straw-hatted summer theater circuit. He agreed to appear in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*.

When the deal was set, he called all of his friends, including Carlo Fiore. "Listen, playboy," Marlon told him. "How'd you like to come on the road with me and get your ass off the streets this summer?" Fiore agreed, providing he could find a connection to keep him supplied with drugs.

Marlon told Fiore that he wasn't serious about the play but just wanted "to fuck around and have some fun." He rounded up the rest of his gang, including Marie and Philip Rhodes, Janice Mars, Valerie Judd, and Sam Gilman.

During the previous month, Marlon had been seeing a handsome young actor, William Redfield, who had become an almost constant companion. Marlon was hanging out more with this Manhattan-born stage actor than he

was with Wally Cox. Marlon chose the lesser role of Sergius, the aristocratic Bulgarian major with Bryonic pretensions. The more important role, that of the pragmatic, anti-romantic Bluntschli, he graciously conceded to Redfield. Among Marlon's friends, Redfield was the only one lucratively employed at the time. But he gave up a profitable job on TV to follow Marlon to New England.

As one of the original members of Actors Studio, Redfield had befriended Marlon. "Befriended isn't really the word," Fiore said. "I think he worshipped him. That summer the two men got to know each other on intimate terms."

"I'd known Redfield for several months before finding out he had a gay streak in him," Fiore said. "Of course, I think most actors have a gay streak in them, even the straight ones. One night on the road I walked into Marlon's bedroom and found them going at it. Redfield was on top. Seeing me, Marlon shouted, 'Get the fuck out of my room. Can't you see I'm busy?' Redfield was so intent on riding it to the finish line that he didn't even seem to notice my intrusion."

"Redfield and Marlon were virtually inseparable that summer," Fiore said, "although both of them got some female ass on the side. But always together. They even fucked chicks together like Marlon and I had done in that long ago summer. Redfield followed Marlon around like he was a lovesick puppy. I think he really fell in love with Marlon. I warned him to keep the relationship physical—not emotional—but the fool wouldn't listen to me. Like a bitchy queen, he accused me of wanting Marlon for myself. He claimed I was jealous. I was jealous of their friendship, as I wanted to spend time with Marlon, but only as a friend, not as a fuck buddy. Redfield didn't believe me. Since he wanted to fuck Marlon, he just assumed that I did too."

(Top left to bottom right) William Redfield, Herbert Ratner, Janice Mars, Lydia Westman, Carlo Fiore, Ann Kimball, Marlon, Sam Gilman, and Phil Rhodes

A lot of biographers have reported a romance between Marlon and Janice Mars, a cabaret entertainer and a friend of both Tennessee Williams and William Inge. "I don't call going to bed a few times with someone a serious romance," Mars later recalled. "As I remembered it, Redfield and Marlon were cutting a swath through all the waitresses and apprentices along the route.

There was plenty of heterosexual activity going on beside the male bonding between Redfield and Marlon. I didn't learn about their own affair until after the run of the play. Fiore spilled the beans. I wasn't surprised. In the theater, you're used to such things."

When not "fucking around," as Fiore put it, Marlon spent a lot of time with his new friend, Sam Gilman. They had met on the set of *The Wild One* with Gilman in a bit role. "The friendship lasted longer than mine with Marlon," Fiore claimed.

As co-stars, Marlon and Redfield began their romance during the run of the play in early July of 1953 at the Theater-by-the-Sea in Matunuck, Rhode Island, before going on to Falmouth on Cape Cod and Ivorytown in Connecticut, winding up in Framingham, Massachusetts. Redfield claimed, on most nights, that Marlon just walked through the part. When Redfield challenged Marlon about this, he said, "Man, you don't get it. It's just summer stock."

He impressed a sixteen-year-old teenager, Tammy Grimes, who was to become a star in her own right. Janice Mars felt that Marlon wanted to have an affair with this under-aged actress, but that speculation cannot be confirmed. In spite of Marlon's bad acting, Tammy was very supportive of him. She found Marlon "mesmerizing onstage, even when he was improvising hilarious monologues of double talk."

Professional reviewers were not so kind. One critic in Connecticut wrote that "In *Arms and the Man*, Marlon Brando is making a fool of himself."

Janice Mars remembered only the good times. She recalled Redfield and Marlon taking lot of nude swims together. "All that was missing in those chilly New England waters was Katharine Hepburn."

"Marlon seemed adrift that summer," Gilman recalled. "He was thinking of going to Europe, maybe Mexico. He often spoke of going to a place in Mexico where beautiful girls put fireflies in their hair at night to illuminate their beauty in the moonlight."

"He told me that one of his joys of traveling the New England circuit was to piss in some of the same places where George Washington whipped it out."

At the close of the show in early August of 1953, Marlon had become so passionate in his relationship with Redfield that he invited him to sail to France with him aboard the Liberté. The trip would last two months.

Movita was left to fend for herself in Marlon's apartment. As the two men sailed away, Movita stood on the docks, waving good-bye and suppressing her tears. It is not known if she realized that Redfield was having an affair with her future husband.

In Paris Marlon renewed his affairs with Daniel Gélin and Christian Marquand. On many a night on the continent, Redfield was left alone to amuse

William Redfield stares as Marlon waits for his flight

himself until Marlon and he headed to the south of France "and the fleshpots of the Riviera."

Seven years later, in 1961, as Redfield sat in the townhouse of Tallulah Bankhead, he provided only a brief sketch of his involvement with Marlon. Like Marlon did years before him, Redfield was appearing in a play starring Tallulah: in Redfield's case, the ill-fated *Midgie Purvis*.

Marlon, Redfield claimed, had been very grateful to him for helping to create the *Mr. Peepers* television sitcom that had brought fame to Wally Cox.

That evening in 1961, Redfield spoke of his own career and his hopes and dreams when he'd started out on Broadway at the age of nine, making his debut in *Swing Your Lady*. Two weeks after that drunken night at Tallulah's, far from her listening ears, Redfield confided, "Marlon and I have many things in common, mainly that both of us appeared in plays with Tallulah Bankhead and survived. No small accomplishment."

At that time, he spoke with great affection for Marlon, and felt that "our friendship will last to the grave. We're bonded at the hip.

But in reality, the friendship wouldn't last as long as Redfield prophesied.

* * *

Even though Marlon dumped Redfield as his lover after their two-month sojourn on the continent, the friendship endured, although they would go for months without seeing each other.

In 1965, Marlon persuaded director Bernhard Wicki to hire Redfield for a role in *The Saboteur: Code Name Morituri*, to be shot on Catalina Island, off the coast of Southern California. Marlon was slated to co-star with the British actor, Trevor Howard. Marlon even secured a role for Wally Cox as an alcoholic doctor.

Although not normally a heavy drinker, Marlon took to "heavy boozing during the shoot," said Sam Gilman, who'd also obtained a job as "dialogue coach" on the film because of Marlon's influence. "Marlon shared a two-bedroom villa with both Wally Cox and Redfield. One night he'd share Wally's bed. On another night he'd sleep with Redfield. Personally, I think Wally was his favorite."

Gilman claimed that in addition to this male-on-male activity, "there was

Yul Brynner

a steady flow of anonymous pussies parading in and out of Marlon's villa or dressing room. I don't know how he managed to service everybody. I asked him if he'd let me take on some of them. At least his discards. He said he'd throw me some action."

Wally frequently appeared on the set drunk, but Marlon was very tolerant. He told Sam Gilman that "my old buddy is in a bad marriage. He's troubled."

Other than Trevor Howard, Marlon's other co-star was Yul Brynner, filmdom's first bald star, born in Russia of Swiss-Mongolian extraction. This former trapeze artist and café guitarist fascinated Marlon.

Both men were notorious bisexuals who had seduced many of the same partners. Both had had affairs with Jean Cocteau, with whom they'd smoked opium. But mainly they'd seduced the same women: Tallulah Bankhead, Anne Baxter, Ingrid Bergman, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, and even Nancy Davis, so they had a lot to talk about.

Marlon was clearly bored during the making of the film, and he devised a way to shock the crew. One afternoon between takes, he put on a record and danced with Brynner. "It was a real bumping of the crotches," Gilman said. "At the end of the dance, Marlon kissed Brynner long and hard on the lips. For Marlon, that was not an unusual occurrence."

"What started out as a joke just to shock the bored cast turned into something a little more serious," Redfield claimed. "To relieve their mutual boredom, Marlon and Yul started spending long hours together in his dressing room. I just assumed they were having an affair. What else?"

Also appearing in the film was a pretty, demure-looking actress, Janet Margolin of New York. She was cast as a Jewish refugee. She had gained fame in the film, *David and Lisa*, released in 1962.

"Marlon taunted me throughout the film," she said. "He was very cruel. He frequently attacked my acting and undermined what little self-confidence I had. He told the director that I was completely miscast and was ruining the entire film on which everybody else was working so hard. Time and time again his attacks drove me from the set in tears.

Yul Brynner, Janet Margolin, Wally Cox, and Brando

His quicksilver nature practically pushed me to the point of suicide at one time. It was a dreadful experience working with him. Don't add me to his list of conquests. When the picture bombed, I even called him in New York to shoulder all the blame myself. The son of a bitch pretended he didn't even know who I was."

Marlon in *The Saboteur: Code Name Morituri*

Marlon's temper continued to be frayed throughout the shooting. At one point he physically assaulted the director, Bernhard Wicki, an act of violence rare for Marlon.

Morituri died a painful death at the box office, opening and closing in two weeks in August of 1965. Critic Pauline Kael suggested that a great actor—meaning Brando—had become fortune's fool.

"Marlon Brando, a once-promising actor, has begun a downward drift," wrote James Roberts. "In a few years, I predict the question will soon be, Marlon who?"

Critic Kenneth Tynan, Marlon's sometimes lover, was delighted by the film. "Brando shows his true quality for the first time in a decade, with a perfect German accent, a silky smile, a flair for deadpan ironic comedy, and miraculous timing that explains every pause and hesitation as exhaustively as a footnote. Outside the masterworks, one seldom encounters screen acting as subtle as this."

Kenneth Tynan

Upon seeing the movie, Elia Kazan claimed, "Marlon seems hell-bent on destroying what could have been a career as the greatest male movie star of the 20th century!"

* * *

After *The Saboteur: Code Named Morituri* was released in 1965, Redfield wrote a famous book on acting, *Letters from an Actor*, eventually published in 1966. The *New York Times* ran an excerpt of the book. In it, Redfield claimed that Marlon had "dishonored himself" by appearing in so many trashy movies. The actor built a case that Marlon should give up films and return to the stage, where, as Redfield generously suggested, "he could be our finest Hamlet."

Although it was not a vicious critique of Marlon, Redfield's *New York*

Times article produced an avalanche of protests from Marlon fans who defended their star. One reader asked, "If Marlon Brando has William Redfield for a friend, he need look no further for an Iago."

An infuriated Marlon told Fiore, "Billy has betrayed me. The Brutus to my Caesar. I can't believe that I ever trusted him."

Even though he'd never speak to Redfield again, Marlon did delight in the success Redfield eventually had while co-starring with Marlon's own friend, Jack Nicholson. The two actors appeared together in the Oscar-winning *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, released in 1976.

When Redfield died of leukemia the following year, Marlon uttered the following pronouncement: "Even though I banished him as a friend, his death causes me great pain," Marlon said. "Like so many other friends in life, he tried to cash in on his association with me, and that is wrong. He should have stood on his own accomplishments, and be judged as a man that way. Regrettably for him, his epitaph and his only claim to fame will be one achievement: FRIEND OF MARLON BRANDO. Those words should go on his tombstone."

Chapter Twelve

From his apartment in New York, Marlon toyed with scripts sent to him by Jay Kanter in Hollywood. One film, to be called *Stazione Termini*, would have him playing opposite Ingrid Bergman. David O. Selznick acquired that property for his wife, Jennifer Jones, changing the title to *Indiscretion of an American Wife*, casting Montgomery Clift opposite her.

Jack Warner finally overcame his long-held objections to Marlon and offered him the lead in a pirate movie, *Black Ivory*. His co-star would be Vivien Leigh. "Scarlett O'Hara alias Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski playing Caribbean pirates," Marlon told Jay Kanter. "And Hollywood thinks *I'm* crazy!" Fortunately, the film was never made.

Before producer Sam Spiegel and a reluctant Elia Kazan agreed to cast Marlon in *On the Waterfront*, other actors were considered.

Unknown to all but a few movie trivia experts, Kazan arranged a screen test with the handsome, blue-eyed Paul Newman, whom Marlon used to call "another one of my clones." Newman had made a hit on stage in *Picnic* and was successful in his test. Delighted with the results, Kazan offered him the role of Terry Malloy, but had to back out when both Frank Sinatra and Marlon wanted the part.

Actually, it was Spiegel who went after Marlon and finally got him to accept the role of Terry Malloy. From the beginning, Kazan had wanted Sinatra, who had just scored such a major comeback in *From Here to Eternity* with Burt Lancaster and Montgomery Clift. One Sinatra biographer wrote that the singer turned down the project. "Bullshit!" Budd Schulberg later recalled. "Frankie would have given his left nut to play Terry Malloy."

As proof that Sinatra really wanted the role, he unsuccessfully sued Sam Spiegel for half-a-million dollars for breach of contract when he learned that Marlon had been signed to play the part.

Still holding out for Sinatra, Kazan and Spiegel almost came to blows over casting. Kazan said, "I don't want that son of a bitch in my film, and he's not right for the part anyway." Kazan had been deeply offended at Marlon's

remarks that he'd never work with him again "for turning canary and exposing all his Commie friends."

Although Kazan still wanted Sinatra, he later admitted that "I had to eat shit" and, despite his objections, offer the role to Marlon when Spiegel insisted that "I can get my investors to double the bankroll with Brando instead of Sinatra."

"Privately, I felt that Frankie, even though a bit scrawny, could have portrayed a more credible boxer than the easy-going Marlon," Kazan later admitted.

Frank Sinatra

To add insult to injury, Sinatra—almost as a consolation prize—was offered the role of the priest, later played by Karl Malden. Sinatra rejected the role in fury, telling Kazan that "your darling little mumbler is the most overrated actor in the world."

Even though Marlon accepted Spiegel's offer, he showed contempt for the role from the very beginning. "I'm just doing it for the money," he told the press. Actually he did need the money, a total of $125,000—"cash up front." Marlon Sr. had been consistently mismanaging the cattle ranch in Nebraska and had been running up huge debts in his son's name.

Both Kazan and the film's scriptwriter Budd Schulberg were working for percentages of the gross. Jay Kanter urged him to accept such a deal as well, but Marlon flatly rejected it. When *On the Waterfront* went on to make millions, Kanter stated that "Marlon really screwed himself—what a mistake! He should have listened to me."

As part of his deal with Spiegel, Marlon insisted that "my new best friend," Sam Gilman, be hired as his dialogue coach. Fiore signed on as Marlon's stand-in, although warning Marlon that he was still hooked on heroin.

Eventually, Marlon agreed to work with Elia Kazan "for one more time", although he was still disappointed that his former director had "squealed" to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, identifying as Communist sympathizers individuals who had once been his friends.

"I'm getting tired of calling Kazan a canary," Marlon told Fiore. "Got another word?"

"Why not rat? Stoolie. Cheese-eater."

Ironically, all of these epithets for an informer were used in the script to describe the character that Marlon was playing in the film, Terry Malloy.

Because of a schedule conflict, Marlon turned down a star turn in *Mister Roberts*, the part going to Henry Fonda, Dodie's former lover. This was no great loss for Marlon, since he wasn't the right actor for the part anyway.

In 1949 Kazan had read a series of Pulitzer Prize-winning articles by Malcolm Johnson in *The New York Sun* documenting corruption among the unionized dockworkers in New Jersey and New York. Soon after, he decided to transform these stories into a screenplay. In a collaborative effort with Arthur Miller, he had already worked on similar material, naming their rough draft *The Hook*, which was never purchased by any studio.

Inspired by *The New York Sun's* treatment of the Malcolm Johnson exposé, Kazan turned once again to Arthur Miller for help. This was somewhat amazing in that Kazan had named Miller as a Communist before the House on Un-American Activities. Angrily, Miller rejected Kazan's peace offering, calling him a "stool pigeon." Another of the names exposed by Kazan was Marlon's old rival, John Garfield.

Critics have suggested that Kazan used the film as an "affirmation of the nobility of turning informant," thereby justifying his own controversial stance of "ratting on his left-wing friends."

One day Kazan discovered that Budd Schulberg had been inspired by the same series of news articles crafted by Malcolm Johnson. On learning of this, Kazan drove down to Schulberg's farm in Pennsylvania and before two o'clock the following morning had agreed to a collaboration on the project, fully aware that many studios would consider the material too drab for the screen. There was also fear of union violence when shooting began. Kazan anticipated that there would be attempts to disrupt filming.

Like Kazan himself, Schulberg had also "named names" before HUAC. "Those two squealed like pigs on castration day," Marlon said.

Carlo Fiore and Brando clowning around on a tractor

Lee J. Cobb was cast as Johnny Friendly, the mob boss of the waterfront. The name was apt for Cobb, who had also been a "friendly" witness before HUAC.

Cobb had exposed the left-wing involvement of such actors as Sam Jaffe and Lloyd Bridges. On learning this, Marlon suggested that the film be retitled *The Three Collaborators*.

After completing the script, Kazan and Schulberg had shopped it to all the major studios, finding nothing but rejections.

In rejecting *On the Waterfront*, Zanuck told Kazan and Schulberg, "People today want to see

films about the rich and glamorous, not some grainy black-and-white flicker about sweaty longshoremen. Besides, it's too depressing for CinemaScope."

"But what about those Okies in *Grapes*?" Kazan asked, referring to the 1940 Henry Fonda movie, *Grapes of Wrath*.

"That was long ago and this is now when movies are facing a triple threat from television." But when *On the Waterfront* walked away with all those Oscars, Zanuck later admitted, "I made a mistake. Bigtime."

Finally, the independent producer, Sam Spiegel (calling himself S.P. Eagle), green-lighted the project "but only in black and white and only for a low budget."

Spiegel was fresh from his success with *The African Queen*. He was telling anyone in Hollywood willing to listen, "I personally saved the careers of two potential has-beens, Bogie and Hepburn. Their careers were nose-diving until Sammy boy came along."

Harry Cohn at Columbia finally agreed to distribute the film, after having already rejected it twice. Cohn claimed, "I still hate the script but I'd cast Brando reading the phone book. I can make big bucks on Mumbles."

Fiore claimed that before filming began, Marlon haunted the stevedore bars along the New York and New Jersey docklands. "Sometimes I'd go with him to these joints," Fiore said.

"At other times he wanted to make the nightly rounds by himself. I know that he picked up some of these burly boys for rolls in the hay, just as he'd seduced the bikers before making *The Wild One*. Marlon once told me that he got closer to understanding the character of Terry Malloy by actually fucking with these stevedores. 'You don't get to know them by hanging out with them swilling down beer as they brag about how many bitches they fucked last week. You only get to know them when they take off their clothes and are alone with you in bed. That's where they really reveal themselves. They're so vulnerable then. They'll let you get inside their heads and inside something else to boot.'"

Evoking an incident that happened to him while researching bikers' bars for *The Wild One*, Marlon with his *faux* Bronx accent was caught up in a narcotics raid one night at a waterfront dive in Hoboken. Marlon later told Fiore, "I was just doing some people-watching when all these cops burst into the joint. I was forced into a line-up against the wall. I had to strip off my shirt while a copper searched me for those tell-tale puncture marks of a heroin addict. This time I passed the test and kept my mouth shut so I wouldn't be thrown into the Tombs for the night."

After the casting of the male actors, Kazan set about to find a suitable female lead to play opposite Marlon.

Joanne Woodward was a strong contender for the female lead. But she lost

the part the day Marlon showed up for Eva Marie Saint's audition with Kazan. "Marlon asked me to dance and then took me in his arms and we twirled around the floor. There was so much at stake for me, and it was so emotionally powerful, I burst into tears."

"At the end of the dance, Marlon kissed me and went over to Kazan who was standing nearby intently watching us," Eva Marie said. "We've found our gal," Marlon told Kazan.

Eva Marie Saint had made a name for herself on the stage and in TV drama. Marlon had seen her in Horton Foote's *A Trip to Bountiful*, and was impressed with her cool detachment and acting skills.

Elizabeth Montgomery had also been a "heavy contender" for the part, but Kazan finally went with Eva Marie for the role of Edie Doyle because he felt that Montgomery came off too much "of a finishing school dame" to play a woman reared on the waterfront in Hoboken.

With Marlon's cooperation, Kazan decided to make Eva Marie a supporting actress instead of a lead actress. His ploy was that she would stand a better chance of winning an Oscar as supporting actress than as a lead player. At Oscar time, Kazan's ploy worked, and Eva Marie walked off with an Oscar.

Marlon had only one major objection to the casting of Eva Marie in the role. When he chided Kazan, Marlon may have been joking. "I hear our star is involved with someone—I mean, really involved—and there goes my chance to fuck her unless I can figure out a way."

Brando and Eva Marie Saint in *On the Waterfront*

Marlon was referring to Eva Marie's husband, Jeffrey Hayden, the television director. Once he met Marlon on the set, they became "instant friends." Hayden told Kazan that it was "harmless" for Marlon to have lunch every day with his wife. "He's just building up her confidence," Hayden said to Kazan, who wasn't so sure about that.

Kazan once noted that Eva Marie's marriage to Hayden "lasted longer than most people's lives."

Kazan later denied rumors that Marlon and Eva Marie had an affair during the making of the film. She

had only fond memories of working with Marlon. "He had a wonderful sense of humor," she said. "It was cold and I wore red flannel long-johns. When it got bitter, I'd pull up my skirt and do a can-can for him. He always loved that. When it got really cold, he'd look at me and say, 'I think it's time for the can-can.'"

The only trouble between Eva Marie and Marlon came one day when he didn't like the way she was emoting with him in a scene. It called for viciousness on her part, which she wasn't delivering. He began to taunt her, to criticize her acting, her appearance, and her delivery of lines. As the camera rolled, he had her in a frenzy and in tears. She later recalled, "I came at him screaming, kicking, and clawing; I really wanted to kill him. It was only after the scene was shot and he broke up laughing that I knew he'd tricked me into delivering a performance I might not otherwise have been able to pull off."

On a cold, windy day in Hoboken, with a wind chill factor of below zero, shooting began on *On the Waterfront*. Members of the mob, acting as spies for their gang bosses, observed the proceedings carefully. Kazan used a quasi-documentary style of direction. Boris Kaufman came up with a bleak monochrome cinematography. The net result, especially when real dockworkers were used to be stationed around Marlon, was a film of chilling realism.

Marlon later admitted to Fiore that ten minutes before he was to shoot his first scene as Terry Malloy, he didn't know how to play the character. "Should I play it as Mutt? Jeff? Perhaps Falstaff?" But when the camera was turned on him, he instantly fell into character, coming up with a believable person that would become one of the great post-war screen portrayals.

Kazan had been a former dockworker himself, and he knew the milieu well. He also knew that mob reprisals against him were a distinct possibility. He hired a bodyguard to be with him at all times. It helped that the bodyguard was the brother of the local police chief.

Marlon felt no need of any protection—in fact, he took the subway to work, dressed as a dockworker. "I wanted to feel like one of the blue collar workers."

That democratic attitude didn't extend to hanging out with the stevedores around the big bonfires they lit in steel drums to keep warm. Fiore and Marlon retreated to a warm hotel room in a local dive ridiculously called the Grand Hotel. "There," according to Fiore, "we had lots of hot coffee, mama's apple pie from room service, and we soaked in hot baths, occasionally knocking off that odd piece of ass."

Although Marlon's relationship with Eva Marie went smoothly, he frequently conflicted with Steiger, evoking his feud with Anthony Quinn on the set of *Viva Zapata!* Marlon told Kazan, "This Steiger creature likes to cry in every scene. What a cry baby! What a ham!"

A scene from *On the Waterfront* with Rod Steiger

Spiegel showed up on the set to chastise the freezing crew for not working faster on the thirty-day shoot. Wearing a vicuna coat and $125 alligator shoes, he always arrived in a limousine, with two well-stacked blondes waiting for him in the back seat to rush back to "21."

Marlon viewed Spiegel as a "dazzling con artist." It was Marlon who provided a characterization for Spiegel that would become part of his legend. "Place Spiegel in a foreign country—buck-assed naked—and in 24 hours he'd be in bespoke tailoring, living in the penthouse suite in the best hotel in town, as a chauffeured limousine pulled up with the three hottest, big tit blondes in town."

Marlon was racing against a time clock and didn't need Spiegel to tell him what time it was. In a "moment of madness," he'd signed a two-picture deal with Darryl F. Zanuck. He was soon due in Hollywood for costume fittings on *The Egyptian*, based on Mika Waltari's best-selling novel. Marlon was intrigued with the possibility of playing Sinuhe, a surgeon who treated the poor in the era of Ramses.

Both Marlon Sr. and Dodie showed up at the docks to watch some of the scenes being filmed. Marlon's relationship with his father remained as chilly as the Hoboken winter. But Marlon was warm and loving to Dodie, perhaps sensing that she was in failing health that might lead to her death. Fiore admitted that "I almost fell in love with her all over again." Chain smoking, Dodie shocked Marlon with her physical appearance, even though she'd tried to hide her deteriorating condition by using heavy makeup.

In the filming Dodie watched, Marlon plays Terry Malloy, an ex-pug, longshoreman. His ties to the mob come from his brother (Rod Steiger) who works for the boss of the docklands, Lee J. Cobb playing Johnny Friendly.

Unwittingly, Marlon lures a workmate to his death. "I just thought they were going to lean on him a little," Terry later said. The dockworker is tossed from a roof to his death.

The action brings in the crime commissioners, as played by Lief Erickson and Martin Balsam. Karl Malden, Marlon's old friend from his *Streetcar* days, was cast as the dedicated priest, who fights corruption.He is joined by the sister of the dead man, Edie, as played by Eva Marie Saint.

Charley (Steiger) is sent by the gangland boss to persuade Marlon not to testify against the mob, which leads to their memorable taxicab scene.

Charley's failure to secure Terry's cooperation in keeping his mouth shut leads to Charley's murder. Marlon finds him dead hanging on a baling hook used by dockworkers to remove cargo.

The death of his brother, however, only increases Terry's resolve to testify before the crime commission. After his testimony, Marlon is severely beaten. But in a fake Hollywood-style ending, he is seen leading the dockworkers through the yard doors, having successfully dealt with Johnny Friendly's goons. The workers, like docile sheep, shift their alliances from Friendly to Terry when he proves to be the stronger man.

Karl Malden, bloody Brando, Eva Marie Saint and an extra on the set of *On the Waterfront*

The most famous scene in the movie takes place in the back of a fake taxicab between Steiger and Marlon. In that scene, Steiger attempts to persuade Terry not to testify before the crime commission. Marlon reminds his brother of the days when he'd been a boxer and had a good chance at the title bout until he'd been ordered by Friendly to throw the fight.

In the scene, Steiger threatens him with a gun. Marlon's response is, "Oh, Charley, Charley, I could have had class. *I could have been a contender*. I could have been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am." Terry turns accusingly toward his brother. "*It was you, Charley, it was you*."

This is the most anthologized of all of Marlon's movie scenes, and the source of millions of Brando imitations.

Kazan later admitted that he didn't really direct this memorable scene but "let Rod and Marlon work it out in improvisation. Marlon showed *me* how the scene was to be performed."

It was ironic that Marlon walked out at four o'clock that afternoon on what was to become his most famous scene in films. In his contract, he had written that every afternoon at four o'clock he was to leave the set for sessions with his analyst, Bela Mittelmann.

Steiger was furious that Marlon had walked out on him during his big moment. For his close-up, Steiger was fed Marlon's lines by Kazan himself.

Marlon never liked his most famous scene. He always protested that Charley would never have drawn a gun on him. "Brothers don't do such things," Marlon falsely claimed. "The mob boss would have sent someone less involved to kill me." On that point, Marlon was possibly right. Behind the

scenes, Fiore had goaded Marlon into challenging Kazan by telling Marlon, "The gun-pulling bit hits a bullshit note."

In his autobiography, Marlon admitted that he and Steiger changed "the one-way ticket to Palookaville" scene completely. Steiger too claimed that "Brando and I did a lot of improvising in that scene."

But despite the eyewitness testimony, including statements from Kazan, that Marlon improvised the taxi cab scene, Budd Schulberg later denied it. "Marlon did not improvise it. That is a grand myth. During the film he would improvise a word here and there, but he didn't change lines. Much later, Brando said he had improvised the cab scene. That's absolutely nonsense. The scene was intact before we sent him the script."

Steiger went through the movie "throwing shit fits," in the words of Marlon. Steiger clearly detested the real star of the picture and made that obvious. At one point he confronted Kazan, accusing him "of throwing every scene to Marlon. The way you kiss his ass is sickening. Next thing I know you'll be rimming his ass. I know what's going on in that Grand Hotel room of his."

Of all the actors in the film, only Lee J. Cobb, cast as Johnny Friendly, the mob boss of the dockworkers, overacted, his scenes veering close to caricature. "He's seen too many Edward G. Robinson movies," Marlon told Kazan. Nonetheless, Cobb, along with Karl Malden and Rod Steiger, were each nominated for best supporting actor. Of course, with three actors in the same film competing, they cancelled each other out, paving the way for a dark horse winner like Edmond O'Brien in *The Barefoot Contessa*.

In a scene with Karl Malden as the priest, Marlon spits and says, "Damn!" This marked the first time that a four-letter word had been uttered in American cinema since Rhett Butler said farewell to Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*.

Rod Steiger and Brando in the famous taxi cab scene

The most poignant scene in the film occurs when Eva Marie drops her glove. It wasn't in the script. It was an accident. Impulsively Marlon picks it up and puts it on his hand. As Kazan later said, "By holding onto the glove, Marlon symbolically was holding on to her. He transfers his sexual or loving feeling toward her onto the glove. He was able to express through the glove something he couldn't express to her directly, because he was held back by the knowledge that he'd been an accessory to her brother's murder."

When the film was wrapped, Kazan told Spiegel, "This time Hollywood can no longer delay granting Marlon his overdue Oscar. Marlon is a bisexual the way an artist should be: He sees things both as a man and as a woman."

Working for a fee of $15,000, Leonard Bernstein created background music to give the film a melodramatic *West Side Story* punch and lyricism. One-time lovers back in the Forties, Bernstein and Marlon shared memories of their early days in New York, but whatever passion had existed between the two men belonged to their yesterdays.

Leonard Bernstein

Amazingly, Marlon did not realize he'd created another defining role in the history of American cinema as he had done with the role of Stanley in *Streetcar*. When Kazan showed him the final cut of the film, Marlon sat through it in silence. At the end of the film, he was so depressed with his performance that he left the studio without saying another word to Kazan. He later told Fiore, "Kazan and I have made our last picture together." He meant those words.

Kazan, however, wasn't finished with his attempts to cast Marlon in films. On four different occasions in the future, he would approach him with offers—*East of Eden*, *Baby Doll*, *A Face in the Crowd*, and *The Arrangement*. In each instance, Marlon turned Kazan down, claiming, "The roles are not right for me. After you and I brought Stanley Kowalski and Terry Malloy to the world's attention, I think we've given it our best shot."

In spite of these rejections, Kazan in later years told interviewers, "Marlon's performance in *On the Waterfront* as Terry Malloy is the finest thing ever done by an American film actor."

As for his own interpretation of his role, Marlon later said, "*Streetcar* was just as effective, but then I had more part under me."

Alan Frank, in his review of *The Screen Greats*, put it accurately, "Brando was completely under the skin of his character. Malloy was a mass of impeccably integrated contradictions—tough and yet capable of moments of great tenderness and sensitivity, self-willed and far from articulate, although still succeeding in conveying deep emotion."

On the Waterfront grossed six million dollars, but was made for less than $900,000.

Kazan found only forgiveness in Hollywood once *On the Waterfront* was a success. "It was full–blown cinema art," claimed Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times*. Overnight, Marlon's salary tripled, and Kazan also could write his own ticket.

Parading into Jack Warner's office in Hollywood, Kazan informed the studio chief that he wanted to film John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, an update of the ancient Cain and Abel story. Warner immediately okayed the project. "Cast whatever actors you want in the part," Warner told him. "Anybody but Marlon Brando. I can't stand the shit on a stick."

"But Marlon's the one I want," Kazan said.

"Okay, okay, offer the fucker the role, but get out of my office. I'm gonna cry!"

Having made six good movies in a row, Marlon had now stretched the bounds of credibility. Even though Kazan had called him "the only genius I've ever met in the field of acting," Marlon upon his return to Hollywood was about to show the world that even geniuses have their bad hair pictures.

* * *

Wandering the streets alone at night, Marlon sometimes called on the actress Barbara Baxley long after midnight. She was appearing on Broadway at the time in *Camino Real* by Tennessee Williams.

"Marlon felt great despair," she said. "One night he collapsed sobbing in my arms. 'I'm not good enough for the role,' he cried out. 'I'm no good! I'm making a fool of myself.' I offered him what comfort I could. The next morning he refused to leave my hotel room and go to work. Kazan sent Carlo Fiore over to get Marlon when I called Kazan to tell him what was happening. 'I'm not going to make the picture!' Marlon shouted at Fiore when his friend came into my room. Fiore virtually had to haul Marlon back to the set. I thought Marlon was experiencing a total nervous breakdown and would never make it through the filming."

Stella Adler blamed the psychiatrist, Bela Mittelmann, for reducing Marlon "to a jelly-like state emotionally." She said that on one cold night he arrived at her apartment building and stood in the hallway bellowing "Stella! Stella!" until she came to the door to let him in.

Barbara Baxley

Movita lived in Marlon's apartment on 57th Street across from Carnegie Hall while he was shooting *On the Waterfront*. Sometimes he'd come home; sometimes he wouldn't. Only once did she show up on the set herself, amusing the crew with a certain ability she had to assess the size of a man's penis by fondling and examining his left hand. Movita claimed she learned "this trick from the gypsies."

"A lot of men on the crew were insulted by

her findings," Fiore said. "She had me right down to the very inch. 'What about Marlon?' I asked her. "'He compares his hands to those of a syphilitic dwarf.'"

"Marlon and I are extremely practical in bed," she enigmatically told Fiore. "We have a very passionate sex life. I want to marry Mr. Marlon."

Thinking she could win Marlon's hand in marriage by making a better nest for him, she set about to redecorate their apartment, spending five thousand dollars of her own money. She ripped out the worn cabbage rose linoleum and hauled off the ripped couches and chairs which still smelled of raccoon urine.

Fiore had encouraged her in this interior redecoration. When Marlon found out that Fiore was behind the scheme, he confronted him, "Fuck man! Fixing up my apartment with her own God damn money is going to make it harder for me to kick her out."

In spite of her redecorating efforts and her attempts to provide a proper home for Marlon, he sent her packing to California to pursue an acting career going nowhere. Their eventual marriage loomed years into the future.

Out with Movita. In with Rita Moreno. Fiore never liked Moreno, although admitting that "she was one sensual woman." He also confessed that he "never liked Marlon's women." Kazan even speculated that there was an unfulfilled sexual attraction between Marlon and Fiore. "I doubt if those two ever hit the sack," Kazan said. "Each had too much macho pride to ever do that. But I bet they wanted to."

* * *

Although he loudly and frequently proclaimed that he hated parties, Marlon was seen at quite a few of them, especially those in Greenwich Village during the making of *On the Waterfront*. Norman Mailer threw a party and invited Marlon, who showed up with Rita Moreno. "If a woman was married, you could almost guarantee it that Marlon would make a pass at her, even with Miss Moreno looking on. My wife was no exception."

James Dean, the lover

One night at a party in Brooklyn, Marlon brought as his "date," James Dean.

"How Marlon Brando could later proclaim he didn't meet Dean until he was starring in *East of Eden* for Kazan is beyond me," said Jimmy Schauffer, an out-of-work actor at that Brooklyn party. "All of us along Broadway knew that Dean

and Brando were carrying on. It was the worst-kept secret. From what I observed that night, Brando was definitely in charge of the relationship. If he wanted something, perhaps a drink, he sent Dean to get it. When Brando was ready to go, he got up and without saying a word Dean tagged along like a puppydog after its master. We'd also heard rumors that there was more than a little S&M in that relationship. Guess who the S was?"

Instead of hopelessly pursuing Eva Marie Saint during the filming of *On the Waterfront*, Marlon chased Anne Ford, a twenty-four-year-old blouse designer. He met her at a party that his new friend, Sam Gilman, threw in his honor.

Two nights later, when Marlon was alone in the Gilman apartment, he called Anne to come on over. At the time she had dinner guests and claimed that she couldn't get away. He told her that all she had to do was announce to her guests that she had "a sudden need of her ear trumpet and would have to pick it up." She found that amusing but made up some more urgent excuse for her guests and headed out of her apartment building to Sam Gilman's. Later she would remember, "We watched old movies in Sam's living room, ate hot dogs, and went to bed."

The coupling was apparently successful because Anne and Marlon were seen eating more and more hot dogs and frequently "wandering off to dreamland after all that mustard," as Fiore put it. Since Movita had left, Marlon didn't have a nagging woman at home to greet him at night.

On nights for whatever reason that he didn't want to see Anne, and was too tired to pursue a woman on his own, he called Gilman, commanding him to "get your ass out of bed and bring me a woman. I don't much care what she looks like as long as she knows how to fuck and suck!"

Fiore called Gilman "Marlon's faithful lapdog. Sam would get out of bed and go out on a gal hunt. He always turned up with something. Almost any gal in Manhattan in those days wanted to fuck Marlon Brando, so the pickings were easy for Sam."

After what Fiore called "Marlon's strange piece of ass," he'd be seen escorting Anne again. She sometimes showed up on the set of *On the Waterfront* where the dockworkers called her "Marlon's piece." She remembered searching for shiny, juicy apples on Seventh Avenue for Marlon and buying frozen chicken breasts to reheat in his oven for their dinners.

"At night we watched *Mr. Peepers* on TV starring his friend, Wally Cox, whenever he was on," Anne said. "Sometimes Marlon would strip nude and play the bongo drums for me. On other evenings, he'd introduce himself as Count Von Huesen to headwaiters, speaking with a thick German accent."

At one of the dingy movie houses on 42nd Street, he took her to see *The Wild One*. He'd never seen the picture before with a real audience. Sitting in

the front row, he wore his Bad Ass cyclist's cap from *The Wild One*. Anne recalled that at several points during the screening, he covered his eyes to avoid certain scenes. "He just groaned," she recalled. "It was painful for him. He thought he was awful. 'It's so bad,' he said to me. 'I just can't watch it. How could I have done it?'"

Finally, when one scene came on showing him on a motorcycle, he whispered he couldn't take it any more. Standing up in the theater, he shouted at the audience, "Look at Marlon Brando's fat ass!" After that, he stormed out of the theater with Anne chasing behind him.

The romance ended quickly after Anne gave an interview to *Glamour* magazine. She recalled one bizarre night with him. "He came through my front door shirtless, danced the entire length of the room, made a demi-disappearance behind the opposite door and exited with a graceful Arabesque kick—without a word of greeting or a glance my way. His conversation, often over the phone, consisted of abstract flights of fancy. Once he was a crow and about to take off on his midwinter flight to Florida. 'I'd like to drop you a postcard.' he said. 'but these claws make it so difficult to hold a pen.'"

* * *

Dodie had written to Marlon that she was traveling by train to Los Angeles, where she planned to visit with her sister, Betty Lindemeyer, with whom Marlon had stayed when he first came to Hollywood to make *The Men*. He had been increasingly concerned about her health ever since she'd showed up on the set of *On the Waterfront*, suffering from hypertension as the result of her long-term alcoholism.

One night Betty called Marlon in New York to tell him that Dodie had collapsed and had been rushed to the Huntington Memorial Hospital. Leaving within hours, Marlon took an emergency flight to Los Angeles and arrived at the bedside of Dodie. The doctors told him that she was suffering from a disease of both her kidneys and liver. All of her years of hard drinking and chain smoking had caught up with her.

For three weeks in that hospital bed, Dodie slipped in and out of a coma. Marlon Sr. had also flown in to be at her death bed, as had her other children, Jocelyn and Fran.

Marlon was at her side at five o'clock on the morning of March 31, 1954 when she came out of her coma and reached for his hand. She issued a warning. "Don't fight with the big boys in Hollywood. They have the power to destroy you, and they always win. Go along with them, Bud. Take the money and run."

She drifted back into her coma but rallied about twenty minutes later. "I'm

not scared," she said, "and you don't have to be." She drew her last breath which was more of a gasp. In death, he kissed her silent lips.

She had died at the age of fifty-five, three days before his thirtieth birthday.

Very calmly, Marlon went to the night nurse to report his mother's death. He also asked to borrow a pair of scissors. Back in Dodie's hospital room, he snipped a lock of her hair. For a souvenir and remembrance, he took the pillow from her head and also removed an aquamarine ring from her finger, which he would later wear himself after having the band extended.

He later told Fiore that he wandered for hours during the rest of that morning along the beaches of Santa Monica. "I felt at one with nature," he said. "I ran after some seagulls trying to join their colony, and for a brief moment I imagined that I could fly away with them. Over the rainbow, as Judy might say. I merely succeeded in frightening them. Dodie gave me life and taught me to like the wind, to listen to it, to learn from it. To appreciate the spring green pushing its way up in the Nebraska soil. To love nature. To love animals—not just Russell. She taught me that we are all creatures of this God's earth from which we'll return when it's all over, as it was for her." In front of Fiore, Marlon burst into deep sobs. Fiore took his friend in his arms and held him tightly.

Tributes from friends and acquaintances from all over the world poured in for Marlon. In New York, Stella Adler told the press that, "Dodie Brando was a very heavenly, very beautiful, very girlish, but lost soul."

The very small, very private funeral was attended only by Marlon, Marlon Sr., Fran, Jocelyn, and Betty Lindemeyer.

There is some doubt and dispute about what Marlon did after the funeral. Most of his friends say, "He just disappeared from the face of the earth," whereas others challenge that claim.

Stella denied that Marlon "fell apart—he was remarkably pulled together throughout the ordeal." Her claim was not supported by others, including Fiore. His friend said that Marlon tried to kill himself in Los Angeles by swallowing a whole bottle of sleeping capsules.

Fiore was unable to provide specific details, but his claim was that Marlon was rushed to a hospital where his stomach was pumped. In an unconfirmed report, Marlon attempted to jump out of the window on the upper floor of his hospital room. A nurse entered the room at that opportune moment and prevented his fall, screaming for orderlies to come to Marlon's rescue. Again, Fiore admitted that this information did not come from Marlon himself, who didn't want to discuss the matter with him.

What is known is that Bela Mittelmann, Marlon's psychiatrist, flew to Los Angeles to be at the side of his patient. Marlon's sister, Fran, claimed that

"with the aid of Mittelmann, Bud confronted some awful truths. One, that he was in love with Dodie. Another, their relationship was incestuous." The other sister, Jocelyn, apparently never spoke out on this matter.

At one point during his psychiatric counseling with Mittelmann, Marlon became so furious at Marlon Sr. for his treatment of Dodie, that he confessed that he'd purchased a gun. According to Fiore, Marlon told Mittelmann that he planned to kill his father.

Sam Gilman related somewhat the same story. "The fact that Marlon told several friends of his that he planned to murder his father indicated to me that he was not going through with it," Gilman claimed. "He wanted to be talked out of it. I, among others, did just that, urging him to throw away the gun. I think the buying of that gun and the threat were just part of Marlon's healing ritual, following Dodie's death."

Fiore said that, "I loved Dodie too and my own grief was intense. But Marlon's grief was unlike anything I'd ever seen over the loss of a relative and even a parent. He didn't bathe. He didn't eat. It was like he wanted to die, to go and join Dodie. At times, though, he would blame her 'for my own life being so fucked up—it's because of her that I have never been able to commit to another woman.' At one point he even accused Dodie of trying to control his life from the grave. Then on another night he came up with a different story, blaming himself for the mutual failure of their lives. The most astonishing remark Marlon ever made to me came about a month after Dodie's death. It was about two o'clock in the morning. I'd been drinking heavily all night but Marlon hadn't touched one drop. He looked at me with that kind of sincerity that only Marlon seems to possess. In a voice so soft it was almost a whisper, he said to me, 'Dodie should have divorced Dad and married me. I should have been the only man in her life. Marlon Jr., not Marlon Sr., was the man for Dodie. I could have made her happy.' I made no comment on his remark. I didn't dare. Why? I think he was not talking to me but conversing with the darkest, deepest reaches of his own soul. He was carrying on a debate with himself. His dark side speaking to his more rational side. His words were not meant for human ears."

Dancer Sondra Lee, who was rumored to have been a girlfriend of Marlon's back in the Forties, said, "I continued to see Marlon over the years, and I knew him very well. I think he became more cynical after Dodie died. There was a new and razor-sharp edge to him that had never been there before. He seemed less vulnerable. In time he would develop great compassion for the Indian or the downtrodden black. But in individual relationships, I think he lived more for himself and didn't pay quite the attention to other people's feelings that he used to. That was especially true in the case of his lovers. It was a leaner, meaner Marlon that settled his dispute with Fox and reluctantly consented to make that turkey, *Desirée*."

In the weeks following Dodie's death, one reporter cornered Marlon and asked him if he felt that her excessive drinking hastened her death. Marlon turned violently on the reporter. "Don't you dare say that! My mother never touched a drop in her life."

* * *

In New York, Stella Adler threw a party for Marlon at her apartment. Even though passion's fire had been put out between them, he had remained her loyal friend and still thought of his former teacher and lover as his mentor.

At the party he was dazzled by a petite, raven-haired beauty who was only nineteen. She stood barely five feet one. Ignoring the other guests assembled in his honor, he spent the rest of the evening monopolizing Josanne Mariana-Berenger.

She had a certain toothy gamin quality that eventually led to comparisons with French actress Leslie Caron. "I didn't know Josanne very well when I invited her to my party, but she possessed a sharp Gallic wit that appealed to Marlon," Stella said.

Assuming that she knew all about him from reading movie magazines, he stood close to her, looking deeply into her eyes and asking probing questions. By nine o'clock he learned that she was working as a governess for the family of a New York psychiatrist, who ironically turned out to be a close associate of Bela Mittelmann, Marlon's own analyst. By ten o'clock he found out that her stepfather was a French fisherman who lived with her mother in a small hamlet on the French Riviera. By eleven o'clock he knew that she had been a model and that her dream was to become an actress. By midnight he'd proposed marriage to her. Telling Stella good night and thanking her for the party, he left the apartment with his arm around Josanne's trim waist.

Josanne Mariana-Berenger

If Josanne thought that the road to romance with her newly discovered Prince Charming would be a smooth ride, she was sadly mistaken. The following night—he had invited her to dinner—he showed up with another girlfriend, Betty Schoffield, a wannabee actress.

"Betty was pretty but dumb," Fiore said. "I should know. When Marlon wasn't balling her, I was taking those sloppy seconds. Marlon not only took Betty to dinner with Josanne, but over the meal devoted all his attention to Betty, ignoring Josanne. Although he'd made love to Josanne the night before, and had proposed marriage, he

ignored the object of his affection over dinner that night. He went home with Betty."

On the following evening, he showed up for dinner with Josanne, and he was alone. After his success on TV with his sitcom, *Mr. Peepers*, Wally Cox had moved out of the apartment he shared with Marlon across from Carnegie Hall. As a replacement there, Marlon installed Josanne.

She became a fixture in his life, even accompanying him back to Hollywood, where he faced contractual duties with Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox.

Rumors of an impending marriage were published in the press. At first reporters were dismissive, having been tricked by Marlon before. As a practical joke, he once told a reporter that he was engaged to the French actress, Denise Darcel, and that they would be married soon. When the story broke, the actress denied the report and threatened to sue the newspaper. When the angry reporter confronted Marlon, he merely shrugged off the attack. "I thought you were too smart to fall for a ridiculous story like that."

When confronted with the charge of having staged a publicity stunt with the announcement of his engagement to Josanne, Marlon responded in anger. "Why does Marlon Brando need publicity? If anything I avoid it. Besides, if it were a big publicity stunt, I would be stupid to admit it. If it's not a stunt, then our engagement speaks for itself. Write what you want. People will think what they will."

In Hollywood, Josanne rented a modest apartment, found work as a sales-clerk, and took acting lessons. She also found time to make the rounds of various studios, hoping to cash in on her publicity with Marlon. There were no offers.

Finding no legitimate work in Hollywood, Josanne, unknown to Marlon, posed for some skin magazines, using a different name. Living in a foreign country, she was forced to earn money however she could, because Marlon offered her nothing. On a few occasions, he would go out for dinner with her, forgetting to carry any cash with him. Although he promised to pay her back, he never did.

Josanne Mariana-Berenger and Marlon

To keep expenses down, she rented a room within her apartment to a beautiful aspirant actress, Ursula Andress, who was then unknown. This turned out to be a mistake. Marlon met the stunning actress and began dating her behind Josanne's back. He had another reason to date Ursula. She was also going out with James Dean, and Marlon, as he said to Fiore, liked "to move in on Jimmy's territory." There was a certain irony here, as Marlon was also dating Dean himself.

By June of 1954, Josanne found Marlon so moody and depressing that she announced that she was returning to France to stay with her parents. Marlon claimed that he would follow her to France as soon as he "took care of some business," which, unknown to Josanne, meant resuming his affair with Rita Moreno.

Kissing Josanne good-bye, he promised, "I'll soon be there." As the weeks dragged by, he began by writing her two or three letters a week. But soon there were no letters coming in from him.

In late October he sailed on the *Île de France* to Paris, where he would resume his friendship with Roger Vadim and re-launch his affairs with "my old faithfuls," Christian Marquand and Daniel Gélin.

In Paris, he stayed with Hervé Mille, of *Paris-Match*, his longtime friend. To Marlon's surprise, he found that Hervé had entertained a famous house guest, the handsome young senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy. Although registered at a deluxe Paris hotel, Kennedy was actually staying with Hervé. "What's going on here?" Marlon demanded to know.

"I'm saving the exclusive for *Paris-Match*," Hervé said. He was only joking. He had no intention of exposing Kennedy's private life in his publication or in any other.

It came as a total surprise when Marlon sent Josanne a telegram. She didn't even know that he was in Paris. He asked her to join him. Racing to Paris on the train, she resumed her affair with Marlon. He told her that the engagement was still on, and that he wanted to go to Bandol to meet her parents who lived over Henri's Bar. Bandol is a fishing village west of the naval port of Toulon along the French Riviera.

A few days later Marlon was seen roaring into Josanne's hometown on a motorcycle. By October 29, a newspaper in nearby Toulon reported that, "Madame and Monsieur Paul Berenger of Bandol are happy to announce the engagement of their daughter to the American film star, Monsieur Marlon Brando."

After that announcement, seemingly "half the press of the world" descended on the little fishing village of Bandol. In Paul Berenger's fishing boat, Marlon escaped with Josanne to a little island off the coast where the two of them went into seclusion in a rented fisherman's cottage.

Reporters soon tracked them down, and Marlon and Josanne were forced to flee back to the mainland. At one point, in an almost unprecedented move, Marlon held a press conference, begging the reporters to leave him alone and to stop hounding Josanne. He explained that he was in Bandol to get to know his future in-laws. "I also want to live for a while under this beautiful blue sky where my fiancée grew up." He refused, however, to announce a date for their wedding.

After the press conference, Marlon was besieged with doubts about a possible marriage. Weeks later he would tell Fiore that he suspected that he'd been tricked into a marriage proposal. "Those doubts didn't go away," Fiore said. "If anything, they only intensified when the shit hit the fan in Paris."

The French press had been digging into Josanne's past life, even though she was only a teenager. It was learned that at the age of seventeen she'd posed nude for the Polish artist, Moïse Kisling. Buying the pictures from Kisling, a Paris department store devoted a window to the nudes, causing a near riot among shoppers. The charms of Marlon's bride-to-be were displayed for all the world to see.

The manager of the store announced to the press that Marlon had called and offered to buy Kisling's nudes "at any price," but the offer was refused. "The pictures remain in the window," the manager said. "No fire sale could attract the attention my store is getting."

Even though Marlon was dismayed at the nudes, he continued his romance with Josanne. He especially liked to pig out on Madame Berenger's bouillabaisse—in fact, he developed a lifelong addiction to this dish. Josanne's mother prepared the soup daily from fish caught by her husband.

In boat-necked, striped jerseys that matched, Josanne and Marlon were photographed on the Riviera shopping for fresh fruit at vendors down by the waterfront or else going for bike rides. One night they dressed up and showed up at the grand casino in Monte Carlo where Marlon gambled away five thousand dollars.

There was a growing perception in the press, which was very critical of Josanne, that she was no more "than a gold-digging French hussy."

"Back in Hollywood, I didn't know what was going on," Sam Gilman said. "Later when Marlon and I hooked up again, I learned that during his engagement to Josanne he'd had at least twenty affairs with various genders. Although he professed to be 'head over heels' in love' with this French gal, I had my doubts. My fear was that she was just using Marlon to carve out a career for herself in films, although she didn't seem to be doing a good job of that."

Brando and Josanne
Mariana-Berenger

At first it appeared that Josanne was unaware of Marlon's bisexuality. However, when Tennessee Williams arrived in Paris and invited the two of them for dinner, he learned that someone had filled her in. The playwright was en route to Rome. Tennessee

reported that over dinner Josanne accused Marlon of having an affair with Christian Marquand and stormed out of the restaurant. “Like Frankie and myself [a reference to his lover, Frank Merlo], Josanne and Marlon fought a lot.”

For some unexplained reason, Marlon sent Josanne to Paris while he remained on the Riviera. He promised to join her there soon. In Paris, Josanne lost some of her shyness. As Marlon, with a hint of disappointment in his voice, later told Fiore, “She was only too willing to pose for pictures. Too willing to grant an interview. She seems to want to promote her own career as an actress.” In Paris, Josanne announced that she planned to marry Marlon that coming June.

When cornered by a reporter on the Riviera, Marlon refused to confirm the June date. He was vague, claiming “maybe we’ll be married in a year. The wedding might take place in New York. Then again it might be in Bandol. Everything depends on whether Monsieur and Madame Berenger want to travel to the United States. We’ll work it out. Why don’t you back off and give us time to sort things out for ourselves?”

Fiore later claimed that Marlon “got to know a few olive-skinned Provençal boys” while Josanne went alone to Paris. “From what he later told me, he was particularly captivated by a seventeen-year-old son of a fisherman in Bandol. From what I heard, the kid was a stunning beauty with that incredibly dark hair that Marlon always liked on either a man or a woman.”

In spite of sleeping nightly with this boy, Marlon told another reporter that, “My life depends on joining Josanne in Paris.”

Marlon wired Josanne in Paris to sail back to New York without him. He claimed urgent business in Rome where he had received a number of film offers. Hopping aboard the Nice-Rome express, Marlon sped south.

* * *

Somewhere between the French border and Rome, Marlon picked up a beautiful blonde. She was Italian but from the Tyrolean part of Italy. Perhaps she was really of Austrian stock. Nothing is known about her. By the time he checked into the Excelsior Hotel, he was alone. But not for long.

Tennessee Williams had already arrived in Rome to meet with Luchino Visconti. The playwright was in the midst of writing some dialogue for the film, *Senso*, in which Visconti wanted Marlon to star opposite Ingrid Bergman. Marlon was particularly interested in the film, set in Venice in 1866, because Christian Marquand had also signed to play a supporting role. Marlon met with Visconti in the presence of Tennessee, and Marlon expressed great interest in the project. But unable to raise the financing required for a

Brando/Bergman vehicle, the director settled—at far lesser salaries—for two other stars, Farley Granger and Alida Valli.

Tennessee later claimed that Marlon showing up in Rome when he did solved a major problem in my life. "At the time, I was seeing a very beautiful young man, Guido Arnella. A stunning creature, a sort of Italian version of the French star in the years to come, Alain Delon. My romance with Guido was suddenly interrupted when Frank Merlo called to tell me that he was arriving in Rome. I had to get rid of Guido and fast. At the meeting I had between Marlon and Visconti, I took Guido along with me. When Guido and Marlon met, it was love at first sight. Marlon thought he was taking Guido away from me, but it was time for him to go. Marlon didn't know this, but he got me out of a tight spot, as Frankie's plane was about to land in Rome."

Almost overnight, Guido was installed in Marlon's suite at the Excelsior. Tennessee also reported that Marlon, Frankie, Guido, and he had dinner together. Frank was unaware of how the group's romantic liaisons had so recently shifted.

Tennessee also claimed that even at this early date he had communicated with Marlon about a play he was working on. It eventually was to be called *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and would open on Broadway in 1955, starring Ben Gazzara, the gritty Italian actor born in New York City.

"I assured Marlon that *Cat* would be an even bigger role for him than Stanley," Tennessee said. "He expressed great interest but ultimately turned down the role, even when I called him to tell him that Elia Kazan was going to direct."

Encountering Elizabeth Taylor at a party in Hollywood one night, Marlon told her that he'd read that she had just signed to do the screen version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. "I never liked the fucking play," he told Taylor.

He had also learned that Paul Newman had signed to co-star with her. "Too bad you're having to play opposite Newman," Marlon told her. "Compared to me, he's a mere pipsqueak. It's sad to think you're not getting to sample the real thing."

One night back in Rome when Marlon was spotted at a trattoria by a reporter from the United States, he was pointedly asked why he didn't bring Josanne to Rome with him. He was also asked if he'd broken off the engagement. "That's spittoon rubbish! If you must know, I still love Josie."

In another part of the world, Josanne was also asked about her romance with Marlon. She told reporters, "I love Marlon and he loves me. There is nothing else to say."

While lying in bed with a nude Guido, Marlon read his mail from Jay Kanter in Hollywood. Other film offers were coming in. Marlon foolishly turned down the lead in an explosive movie, Otto Preminger's *The Man With*

the Golden Arm, the coveted role going to his archenemy, Frank Sinatra.

Marlon also turned down *War and Peace*, and told director Vincente Minnelli that "there is no way I'm going to appear in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Didn't Valentino do that? I don't dance the tango."

While in Rome, Marlon also received offers from European producers. Director Marc Allegret wanted him to star in the French version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D.H. Lawrence. Learning of Marlon's refusal, Guido contacted the director and volunteered himself as its star. Allegret turned down Marlon's lover, casting actor Erno Crisa instead.

Irene Papas

Tennessee claimed that Guido kept Marlon so busy during his Roman sojourn "that he didn't have the time to sample the local Pier Angeli types that he was so fond of doing."

Tennessee was wrong. After Marlon's death, the Greek actress, Irene Papas, admitted that she launched an affair with Marlon in Rome during this period. In fact, in an interview with *Corriere della Sera*, the Italian daily, she called Marlon "the great passion of my life."

The revelation came when a journalist approached her, hoping to get a comment from her about Marlon's death. "A comment? What can I say? That I esteemed him, but I want to add something. I loved Marlon Brando. I really cared for him. We had a love story. Let's call it a long relationship. Perhaps I'm doing wrong to speak about it now that he's not around to contradict me, but I'm confessing precisely because, as of today, he's in the absolute, far from anybody, belonging to everyone."

She claimed that neither she nor Marlon ever wanted to talk about their relationship because "we didn't want to share with anyone this love that wasn't a true secret but a private one, belonging just to us." She said that she first met Marlon when he was thirty and she was twenty-four.

"I have never since loved a man as I loved Marlon," Papas said. "He was absolutely the man I cared about the most and also the one I esteemed the most, two things that generally are difficult to reconcile."

The interview was granted at the ancient Greek theater in Epidavros, 110 miles southwest of Athens. She recalled that her last meeting with Marlon was five years before his death. It occurred in Greece when he was there to attend a conference. "In spite of the burden of time that showed on his body, in spite of so many things, even family tragedy, he was still magnificent in the way he

used his head and how he would reply to you. I remember our good-bye kiss."

Leaving both Papas and Guido in Rome, Marlon took the train all the way to Paris. As he later told Roger Vadim, "I got on the train alone, a cabin all to myself. But during the course of that long journey, I did some entertaining. Very entertaining. The gender was of no importance to me."

As winter deepened in Europe, Marlon decided it was time to return to America for film commitments. For the final lap of the train journey into Paris, he was sharing his cabin with a handsome but unknown young man, whom Marlon introduced as "my secretary." He arrived with this young man at the St-Lazare station in Paris. There he was greeted with a bevy of inquiring reporters and thousands of wildly cheering French teenage girls, whom Marlon labeled "the screamers."

After rounding up his friends, Marlon was seen with Roger Vadim, Hervé Mille, Christian Marquand, and Daniel Gélin. Somehow in the confusion of seeing his friends and/or lovers again, the young man, "the secretary," had seemingly disappeared from Marlon's life.

Marlon sailed into New York harbor aboard the S.S. *United States*. He was nattily dressed, wearing a dark blue suit raffishly set off with a Tyrolean hat with a peacock feather. He refused to give a date for his wedding, although claiming he still planned to marry his French beauty.

As expected, he was asked what he called "the stupid question of the day."

A reporter shouted at him, "How do French girls compare with American girls."

"I don't see what nationality has to do with choosing a wife, unless she's Joe Stalin's cousin," Marlon said. "Comparisons? The French have Brigitte Bardot, and we Americans have Marilyn Monroe. How do you choose between these two love goddesses? It's a matter of personal taste."

Marlon seemed in no rush to fly back to Los Angeles, although telling friends, "I can't wait until I'm with my Josie again."

* * *

Once in New York, and in spite of his talk to reporters, Marlon resumed his affair with Rita Moreno. When not with her, he was seen dancing the mambo—taught to him by Katherine Dunham—with a Spanish flamenco dancer, Carmen Amaya, who was reported to be "Marlon's latest flame."

"Before rushing back to the arms of that Berenger dame, Marlon was also seen about town with any number of exotic beauties," Fiore said. "Marlon was also seeing a lot of beautiful boys on the side, mostly aspirant actors who hoped that some of his magic would rub off on them. Instead of a movie contract, these losers left Marlon's apartment the next morning with a sore ass.

When one of these actors would try to hold Marlon to his promise, he would merely laugh at them. 'You fell for the oldest casting couch routine in Hollywood,' he would tell them. 'Let that be a lesson to you if you actually ever raise the train fare to Los Angeles.'"

As a cynical joke, Marlon often hooked up some of these aspirant actors with a "Hollywood producer friend of mine." Actually Bob Salser was a photographer of male nudes who did highly illegal male pornographic movies on the side. "What Marlon did in helping me cast dirty gay movies in the Fifties should have won him an award," Salser later said.

Before heading back to the West Coast, Marlon launched another "scandalous" affair, which got him exposure in *Confidential*, the leading scandal mag of the Fifties. He began a "torrid romance" with Jerri Gray, a Broadway dancer who would later appear with Sammy Davis Jr. in *Mr. Wonderful*.

Fiore said that Gray would strip down and do an interpretative dance "that would make Rita Hayworth's *Gilda* look like it was danced by a Mother Superior."

"Was Brando a great lover?" Gray was asked by a reporter.

"Enthusiastic would be a better word," she said.

What made the story scandalous at the time was that Gray was a black woman. In those days, A-list white movie stars did not openly date black women. Interracial liaisons were forbidden. Although they were going on back then, they were discreetly kept from the prying eyes of the press. Marlon, however, seemed to flaunt his romantic involvement with Gray.

"It wasn't just black women—and on a few occasions black boys—it was also Asian women," Fiore said. "If a woman had sloe eyes and the inscrutable face of the Orient, you could count on Marlon to be banging those tom-toms and lighting that incense. I lost count of the broads."

Josanne, of course, never became Mrs. Marlon Brando. Back on the West Coast, Marlon reunited with her. "But not really," Sam Gilman said. "His affair with James Dean was at its peak. He was also involved with Dean's girlfriend, Ursula Andress. Pier Angeli, now in Hollywood, came back into Marlon's life as well. It was all very incestuous. Rita Moreno was there, Katy Jurado. Movita in and out. Dozens of others. Two big movie stars—one male, the other female—lay in his future. Marlon was one busy boy. He and the French dame just drifted apart."

Following his breakup with Josanne, she refused to talk to the press. Finally realizing that her dream of a married life with Marlon was "only to be dreamed," she returned to France and the arms of her childhood sweetheart, whom she later married. Years later, she granted an interview to the press in which she claimed, "Marlon is far too independent a man to submit to the bonds that would tie him down in a marriage. I know that now. I didn't back then."

As was the case with many a girlfriend or boyfriend, Marlon remained friends with Josanne. When he visited France, he sometimes went to Bandol to renew his acquaintance with Monsieur and Madame Berenger—"my in-laws that never were." He was also spotted bouncing Josanne's new baby upon his knee.

During his marriage to first wife Anna Kashfi, she asked him what went wrong in his love affair with Josanne. He shrugged his shoulders. "She had bad breath."

* * *

In Los Angeles it was the night of March 30, 1955 at the Pantages Theater. Seemingly half the world would be listening to the Academy Award presentations, where Marlon had been nominated as best actor of the year for his performance in *On the Waterfront*. In fact, the picture had been nominated for 12 Oscars, putting it up in the *Gone With the Wind* category. Even composer Leonard Bernstein had been nominated for an Oscar for his music score.

In addition to having three actors nominated for one picture—Lee J. Cobb, Rod Steiger, and Karl Malden—Eva Marie Saint was up for best supporting actress, ironically competing with Katy Jurado, Marlon's girlfriend, for her performance in *Broken Lance*. Other nominees that night included the picture itself, Elia Kazan for best director, Budd Schulberg for best screenplay, and Boris Kaufman for best cinematography.

Marlon later admitted that he was "in great conflict" about attending the ceremonies. Even at this early date in his career, he didn't believe in the granting of awards for acting. He recalled that on the night of the ceremony itself, as he was being driven to the presentation, he was still pondering whether he should put on formal wear.

Brando with his Oscar

Marlon was not the only one concerned that night about what he should wear. Backstage at the theater, Sam Spiegel was in a semi-hysterical state pacing up and down. Earlier in the day, he'd called Kazan. "I feel like a whore with flu in a World War II cathouse in Honolulu, with two hundred sailors waiting for their turn at me. What if the fucker turns up in a ripped T-shirt and dirty jeans?"

Right before the beginning of the ceremonies, Marlon emerged from his dressing room looking immaculate in black tie and tux. "You've got class, boy," Spiegel told him.

"If only I could say the same for you," Marlon responded in an insult to his producer.

Spiegel remained "the nervous nelly," as the ceremony

began, still pacing up and down. To anyone who'd listen, he asked, "What if Brando tells the audience to shove it?"

Backstage, Marlon encountered Bob Hope. "This is such a terrible competition," he said to a somewhat flabbergasted Hope. "There's such a hysterical feeling to win. It makes actors lose sight of the real objective. I feel like I'm being shipped off to Devil's Island to get my ears chopped off."

"Crosby did that to me years ago," Bob Hope quipped before walking off. Later he'd stage a mock fight on stage with Marlon, pretending to try to grab the Oscar from his hands.

Marlon was once again pitted against that sentimental favorite, Humphrey Bogart, to whom he'd lost for *The African Queen*. This time Bogie was nominated for *The Caine Mutiny*. Marlon's other competition was Bing Crosby, another sentimental favorite. The "boys in Vegas" were betting on Crosby, who had starred in *The Country Girl*. Ironically, the author of that screenplay was Clifford Odets, Marlon's former lover and still friend.

In another touch of irony, Marlon was competing against James Mason for *A Star Is Born*, a role Marlon turned down although it would have given him a chance to play opposite Judy Garland whom he admired. Marlon didn't expect much competition from Dan O'Herlihy in *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. Marlon was pissed at director Luis Buñuel for having made the film in the first place. Marlon had always wanted to play Robinson Crusoe himself.

Spiegel thought things were going his way when Eva Marie was announced as an early winner. She'd arrived pregnant at the theater. Earlier in the evening, Marlon had jokingly told reporters that he—not her husband—was the father. Accepting the award, the actress gasped, "I think I may have the baby right here." A few titters could be heard across the room. The next morning some puritanical members of the press reproached Eva Marie for her statement. Louella Parsons found the remark "tasteless," and Hedda Hopper thought "it cheapened the ceremony."

Finally, Marlon's big moment came, as Bette Davis walked across the stage in the very same way she'd done in *Beyond the Forest*, which had ended her long career at Warner Brothers. She was wearing a skull cap to cover her bald head, which had been shaven for her role in *The Virgin Queen*.

Taking the white envelope from Price & Waterhouse, she opened it. Reading it, she let out a whoop in a cracked voice: MARLON BRANDO!

On stage, Marlon's speech was short. "Thank you very much." Holding up the Oscar, he noted, "It's much heavier than I imagined. I had something to say and I

Oscar anyone?

can't remember what I was going to say for the life of me. I don't think that ever in my life have so many people been so directly responsible for my being so very, very glad. It's a wonderful moment, and a rare one, and I am certainly indebted. Thank you."

In front of the audience of his peers, Marlon appeared young and awkward, but sincere—"not the arrogant prick he'd been portrayed in the press," said Kazan.

Backstage Marlon was kissing everybody in sight, beginning with Bette Davis whom he hadn't seen since the night she came backstage to "mother him" when he was appearing in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

He walked over to congratulate Grace Kelly, reminding her that if he'd been given the role he would have co-starred with her in *High Noon*. "Too bad you didn't," she said flirtatiously. "We would have had a good time."

"So it's true what they say about you and your leading men?" he said with a mocking tease to his voice.

"That's for you to find out for yourself, Mr. Brando," she said. At some point in the evening he slipped her the phone number where he'd be later that night.

"You were great!" he told Grace when reporters surrounded them. "Personally I thought Crosby and Garland would beat us out."

One member of the press shouted at Grace, "Kiss him!"

"I think *he* should kiss *me*," she demurely responded.

Marlon happily obliged, kissing her again and again until the photographers were satisfied.

Privately he told her that he should never have made *On the Waterfront*. "I hold the film in contempt. I was awful in it." He held up his Oscar. "Look at how Hollywood rewards mediocrity!"

Some members of the press had been disappointed. Hoping for hot copy, reporters had wanted Marlon to behave outrageously. Instead he told them, "I'm sick to death of having reporters stand around staring at me as if I'm about to throw my raccoon at them. I no longer own Russell. His heart belongs to Mrs. Russell these days. If I know Russell, he probably has eight kids by now."

Louella Parsons came up to Marlon to congratulate him. He almost kissed her before realizing it was his archenemy who had written all that unflattering copy about him when he'd first arrived in Hollywood. He shook her hand instead, then whispered that he was going to give her an exclusive "for old time's sake."

"The other night I was fucking Katy Jurado up on the roof of a house in Laurel Canyon," he told Lolly. "As you know, she was one of the nominees tonight. Now Katy is a Latina woman who likes to give voice to her passion.

As we were deep into the dirty deed, she started screaming, 'Fuck me! Fuck me! Fuck me, Marlon Brando!' As I plunged all of my twelve inches into her, she shouted at the top of her voice: 'MARLON BRANDO MARLON BRANDO! I'M CUMMING!' I clapped my hand over her mouth and hissed at her, 'For fuck's sake,' I told her, 'don't use my God damn name.' Now print that!" He turned and walked away from Lolly.

"I left her with her mouth open like she was catching flies," he later told Fiore.

As Grace was leaving the theater, she walked back over to Marlon. This time she gave him a kiss on the lips. She explained that she was rushing off to Romanoff's to celebrate with Bing Crosby. At the time she was having an affair with her co-star in *The Country Girl*. "I feel embarrassed," she said. "After all, I got my Oscar but you took his."

Marlon went to the home of Jay Kanter, his agent, who had assembled an array of well-wishers, each wanting to congratulate Marlon. The French champagne flowed, Marlon preferring to take his bubbly in a souvenir mug from the city of Los Angeles instead of in one of Kanter's crystal goblets.

Pulling off his dinner jacket and loosening his tie, he plopped down on Kanter's sofa. Before him on the coffee table he placed his newly won Oscar. In front of the other guests, he addressed his Oscar. "I hope you're gay," he told the statuette.

"Why do you want him to be gay?" Fiore asked.

"Because I'm going to win a companion for him, and they don't make female Oscars," Marlon said.

Fiore warned him not to get too carried away, pointing out that the hock-shop value of an Oscar, just for its metal, brought only eighty dollars.

Grace Kelly and Brando at the Oscars

"But you're forgetting one thing," Kanter said. "It can mean added millions at the box office and a hefty bank account for the star if he'd taken my advice and opted for a percentage. Even so, you'll find that your salary has been tripled for your next picture."

Many observers of the Hollywood scene made predictions that night about Marlon's future. At post-ceremony parties all over the city, insiders predicted that Marlon's "wild years are over."

"He's become part of the Hollywood establishment," pronounced Sam Spiegel, who apparently never became a member himself.

"The Oscar has pacified Marlon," Hedda

Hopper told the gathering at one party. “Now he’s a major star. Take it from Hedda, Brando will start acting like a star.”

How wrong she was.

Back at Kanter’s gathering, a call came in at one-thirty that morning for Marlon. Getting up from the sofa, he seemed to know who was on the other end of the line.

After taking the call, Marlon confronted Fiore in the hallway. “Make my excuses, would you? I’ve got to bug out. A rendezvous with a fellow Oscar winner.”

Fiore demanded to know where he was going at this hour.

“I’ve got a date with a blonde,” Marlon said. “And there are still those people who spread the rumor that I don’t like blondes.”

* * *

The paths of Grace Kelly and Marlon had almost crossed several times in recent years. Looking like a highly polished product of a finishing school, Grace had only just departed from the offices of agent Edith Van Cleve in 1951 before Marlon arrived. His agent told him that she’d just signed “a girl I flipped over after talking to her for only fifteen minutes. Her name is Grace Kelly. I think she’s going to become a big Hollywood star. She’s not only serenely beautiful but talented.” Edith was instrumental in getting Grace cast in a small role in Henry Hathaway’s drama, *Fourteen Hours*, released by 20th Century Fox in 1951.

Working in theater in Colorado during the summer of 1951, Grace fell in love with Gene Lyons, a good-looking Irish actor with a “brooding charisma” that many critics likened to Marlon. In New York, Edith kept Marlon posted on the emerging career of Grace. She often said she’d like to have both Grace and Marlon cast in the same film together.

Grace Kelly

“When I heard that Grace had fallen for Lyons, I was a bit dismissive,” Edith said. “Another would-be Method actor, I thought. I told Grace this.” Edith even told Marlon about Grace’s affair with Lyons, since Lyons was often compared to Marlon.

“Oh, no, not another Brando clone,” he said.

“I mentioned this very point to Grace,” Edith said. “And guess what she told me? Grace said she’d ‘rather have the real thing.’”

Marlon smiled smugly. “Glad to know that,”

he said. “I’ll have to put Grace Kelly on my ever-growing list of stars and starlets to seduce.”

Marlon’s MCA agent in Hollywood, Jay Kanter, had also been an early promoter of Grace. In fact, Kanter was the agent who brought Grace to the attention of Stanley Kramer and Fred Zinnemann when they were casting *High Noon*.

It had been Edith’s dream to see her two favorite clients, Grace Kelly and Marlon, cast in *High Noon*. Both Zinnemann and Kramer, who had produced *The Men* with Marlon, found Grace “very straitlaced and very virginal.” She got the part, along with Marlon’s girlfriend, Katy Jurado, playing the third lead. The film, of course, would bring Gary Cooper his second Oscar. To win it, he had to beat out the closest runner-up, Marlon for his role in *Viva Zapata!*

The affair between Grace and Marlon might have happened months before it actually did. In addition to such rejects as Joanne Woodward and Elizabeth Montgomery, Kazan had briefly considered casting Grace Kelly in the Eva Marie Saint role in *Waterfront*. “But I finally decided that was ridiculous,” Kazan confessed. “Who would have believed Grace Kelly as the girl who grew up in the wilds of the Hoboken waterfront?”

In her dainty white gloves, Grace’s rivaled the poise of Jacqueline Kennedy. But Grace’s image was deceiving.

Before their respective Oscar winnings brought them together, Marlon was well aware of Grace’s reputation for seducing the A-list stars of Hollywood, of which he was now an exclusive member.

In the short span of a few years, the objects of her affection would include not only Gary Cooper, but Clark Gable, Cary Grant, William Holden, Ray Milland, David Niven, Frank Sinatra, James Stewart, Spencer Tracy, and such pre-Prince Rainier royal seductions as another playboy prince, Aly Khan, and even Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran.

“Despite her lady-like poise, and her somewhat aloof air, Grace had the mentality of a streetwalker,” Edith later said. Author Gore Vidal once called her “an easy lay—she was notorious for that.”

Don Richardson, a theater instructor who’d had a brief affair with a teenage Grace, said, “She screwed everybody she came into contact with who was able to do anything good for her. She screwed agents, producers, directors, and certainly all of her leading men, even the gay ones.”

After making *High Noon* with Grace, Cooper said, “She looked like she was a cold dish with a man until you got her pants down. Then she’d explode.”

As director Henry Hathaway once said, “She wore those white gloves but she was no saint.”

Marlon was to find that out for himself on Oscar night. But before the dawn broke, he also came to realize that Grace had used him for more than just a roll in the hay.

Only five years older than Grace, Marlon was a bit young by her standards. She was known for her preference for older leading men. During her Hollywood career, the average age of her leading men was forty-six.

Bing Crosby

When Grace met Marlon, she was already deep into her affair with crooner Bing Crosby, her co-star in *The Country Girl*. He was twenty-six years older than she was. Actually their affair had begun a year and a half before they'd made a film together.

As his wife, Dixie Lee, lay dying of cancer, Bing was falling in love with Grace. Their affair was often conducted at the home of actor Alan Ladd, a close friend of the singer. Before heading for bed, he often turned out the lights in the living room, leaving the pair on his sofa. "Just lock the door when you guys leave," Ladd would often tell Bing and Grace.

Edith remains the main source of information about the affair between Marlon and Grace. But she regretted that Marlon provided only scant details, "although he used to keep me regally entertained with a lot more information about his affairs with famous actresses, especially those he seduced when appearing on the stage in *Streetcar*. I once told Marlon that listening to his tales of seduction was tantamount to my getting off. So he used to call and say, 'I've got another conquest to report to you. This one is going to make you cream your bloomers.'"

Apparently, during Marlon's first hour with Grace, he had to listen to her complaints about Bing Crosby. Although she'd just won the Oscar for *The Country* Girl, she claimed that Bing had almost denied her the role, since he had approval of his leading lady. "He thought I was too beautiful," Grace told Marlon. "Not drab enough."

"Bing Crosby has a point there," Marlon said.

Unknown to Marlon at the time, Bing had fallen deeply in love with Grace and wanted her to marry him since the death of Dixie had left him a widower. "But I'm not in love with him," Grace had told her friends. She also told the same friends that Bing was refusing to take no for an answer.

What happened in Grace's suite around three o'clock that morning is still not known in exact details, but Bing arrived for a showdown with Grace. Instead of that, he found a nude Marlon in her bed.

"That must have been doubly difficult for Bing," Edith said. "Earlier in the evening he'd been denied the Oscar by Marlon, his last chance. Now he finds the same young nude stud in Grace's bed. Reportedly, there were fisticuffs. What chance did an aging, drunken singer have against a well-built

young actor who was also a boxer? Marlon was a bit vague, but I gathered that he knocked out the voice behind *White Christmas*."

From what Edith gathered, Grace called both the house doctor and the hotel manager. A drunken Bing was removed to another suite as Grace and Marlon resumed their affair.

Edith speculated—and it was pure conjecture on her part—that Grace knew that Bing was going to drop in on her after he'd made the round of Hollywood parties where well-wishers tried to console him for his loss of the Oscar to Marlon.

"Frankly, I think Grace wanted to dump Bing and just used Marlon to help her do just that," Edith said. "Since he wouldn't listen to her refusals of marriage, and since he kept begging her to marry him, the drama queen in Grace came up with a way to make her point. What better way to tell a man that you're not going to marry him than to dramatize it with a nude Marlon Brando in your bed with a full erection raring to go."

After Oscar night, Bing Crosby joined Frank Sinatra in developing a lifelong hatred for Marlon.

Before the dawn broke, Grace was interrupted by another Hollywood legend, marring her night of bliss with Marlon. A phone call came in for her around five o'clock that morning. Somehow the caller had obtained her phone number.

In a drunken but famous voice, the intruder said, "This is Judy Garland, Judy FUCKING Garland. You bitch! You took what was rightfully mine. Tonight was my last chance for the Oscar. You'll have many more chances in your future. This was it for me. I'll never forgive you." Judy then slammed down the phone on Grace.

She reported to Marlon what Judy had said. "She's got a point," Marlon countered. "You'll probably go on to win seven more Oscars."

"What the hell!" Grace said, not disguising the anger in her voice. "Why don't you take my Oscar over and give it to Judy? Before Judy, I had to deal with a very jealous Jane Wyman."

Vying with Judy for *A Star Is Born*, Grace also faced competition from Wyman, who had been nominated for her role in *The Magnificent Obsession* opposite Rock Hudson.

"When I ran into Wyman, she told me that she'd seen *The Country Girl* but had walked out on it," Grace told Marlon. "'Isn't it terrible when these Hollywood directors miscast us in a role,'" the bitch told me "Grace did a perfect imitation of Wyman's distinctive voice.

"That's true," I told Wyman. "If they'd wanted someone drab and mousy, they could have cast you, my dear."

"Meow!" Marlon said. "Wyman must have wanted to slap your face."

"There's more," Grace said. "Before she stalked off, I told her, 'if you lose the Oscar to me, and I'm sure you will, you can rest on your laurels. After all, you've had Ronald Reagan, and I haven't had time to get around to him yet. But he's next on my list.'"

"Grace may have intended to use Marlon as a mere pawn," Edith said, "but after their first night together I think she developed a genuine affection for him. Perhaps I should call it passion. I know for a fact that Marlon and Grace slipped off together to spend at least two secret weekends together on the French Riviera when she was reigning over Monaco."

In public, he was usually very respectful of Grace. When she became Princess of Monaco, Marlon said, "In Hollywood only Audrey Hepburn could have moved so effortlessly from movie star to royalty."

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"Seducing a princess is an experience every man should know at least once in a lifetime," Marlon told Edith after he'd made the *Countess of Hong Kong*, with Charlie Chaplin directing him in London. He'd made that remark after completing the film for Pinewood Studios outside London in 1966. At the time he'd lost a lot of excess tonnage.

Uncharacteristically, he'd hobnobbed with the aristocrats of Britain, and was even seen dining one night with Princess Margaret and her husband, Lord Snowdon.

Princess Margaret Rose

"Apparently Margaret Rose was really taken with Marlon," Edith said. "He was a bit lean on giving me details of that affair. I think it took place at something called Strand House in Winchelsea, a hamlet outside Rye in Sussex."

As for the sexual attraction of Margaret Rose to him, Marlon smugly said, "Lesbians are always attracted to me."

Although the royal princess was hardly a lesbian, several of her affairs with women were revealed following her death. In referring to her as a lesbian to Edith, Marlon must have been privy to some information not known to the general public at the time. "Whatever streak of lesbianism she might have had was cured by me," Marlon smugly told Edith.

Bob Dylan

Bianca Jagger

Faye Dunaway

One night, Marlon, perhaps in jest, told Edith, "I'm tired of princesses. Why not a queen? As my agent, you're ordered to get me the private phone number of Liz. I hear Philip leaves her alone many a night in that drafty palace. I've also heard that she's seen two of my movies and thinks I'm hot. Who knows? She might divorce Philip and marry me. My noble tool might become responsible for a number of royal princes running around London."

"I'll get onto it first thing in the morning," Edith said. "I'll call the Archbishop of Canterbury. I think he has her number."

"Edith poured herself another hefty Scotch and sprawled across her sofa. "I need to get off again," she said. "Tell me about your affair with Irene Papas. While you're at it, fill me in on all the gory details about those rumors of affairs with Faye Dunaway, Bianca Jagger, and, while we're on the subject, all the dirt on Bob Dylan. That *Forever Young* song really grabs me!"

* * *

What happened to Marlon's Oscar?

Over the years it disappeared, eventually turning up for sale at a London auction house. Marlon protested that it was stolen merchandise and that it was his personal property. The auction house called off the sale, but the possessor of the *Waterfront* Oscar refused to return the prize.

It is not clear if the holder of the Oscar was male or female. The London auctioneers informed Marlon that the owner of his Oscar was claiming that it had been a gift and refused to return it. Marlon staunchly denied that he'd ever given away his Oscar.

* * *

One night at two o'clock in the morning in New York, Marlon placed a call to Fiore. "Get your ass out of bed and get over here to help me pack."

“What in the fuck is going on,” a sleepy Fiore asked.

“I’m going to Hollywood to appear in a camel opera.”

“You on a camel?” Fiore asked in astonishment. “In Nebraska, they ride horses, not camels. What role is this latest bullshit from Hollywood?”

“They want me to play Cleopatra.”

Chapter Thirteen

As part of a two-picture deal that Marlon had foolishly signed with Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox, he was assigned the role of a doctor in *The Egyptian*, a multi-million dollar extravaganza shot in CinemaScope and Technicolor. Initially, he'd been intrigued by the project until he finally got around to reading the script. After he'd read it, he called Jay Kanter. "I'm going to find a way out of this Egyptian pile of camel dung." His agent warned Marlon of severe complications—"perhaps the destruction of your screen career—if you don't go through with it."

Two days before he was to report for work on *The Egyptian*, his costar, Bella Darvi, showed up unannounced at his doorstep. All of insiderish Hollywood knew that she was Zanuck's *inamorata*. The Polish-born actress claimed that she was "just paying a friendly call" on her upcoming male costar. Darvi had failed in the first role that Zanuck had assigned her, *Hell and High Water* (1954), but he persisted in casting her for the important role of the Babylonian whore in *The Egyptian*. Earlier, Marlon had told Kanter, "What typecasting for Miss Darvi!"

Later Marlon would claim that "the only thing I liked about Darvi was her brunette hair." Patiently he listened to her long tale of past misfortune, as she spilled out her life to him, going from the tortures of World War II concentration camps to the glittering palace casinos of Monaco. During this long recitation, he kept refilling her glass with Scotch.

As Marlon learned, Darvi by the age of eighteen was gambling heavily in the casinos and running up big debts. The source of her money remains unknown, some observers suggesting prostitution.

It was in Monaco that movie mogul Zanuck, accompanied by his long-suffering wife, Virginia, discovered Darvi, then known as Bayla Wegier. In a foolish move she'd later regret, Virginia suggested to her husband that Darvi might have "the same appeal as Ingrid Bergman."

Paying off her gambling debts, the Zanucks shipped her off to Hollywood, installing her in their guest cottage. Zanuck began to groom her for stardom. After arriving unexpectedly on Marlon's doorstep, Darvi was invited to spend the night in his bedroom. She left early the following morning for the studio.

At ten o'clock, Sam Gilman came by with eight pairs of new shoes for Marlon to try on. He didn't want to go to a shoe store "just to be stared at," so he ordered Sam to select various shoes in his size. Painstakingly Marlon tried on each pair, rejecting each of them. He suggested to his ever-faithful Sam that "you go back to the store and try again to come up with something I like. Also, a pair that actually fits would help."

Bella Darvi

Over breakfast with Gilman, Marlon revealed details of having spent a night with his prospective leading lady. "I know Zanuck has the hots for her, but she can't act. We pretended to do a scene together. She's a hopeless case. I can't believe Zanuck is so smitten that he hasn't noticed this, but the bitch is cross-eyed. Not only that, she speaks with a lisp and has a foreign accent to boot. The American public won't be able to understand a word the cunt says. Her speech is slurred. Of course, that could be from all the scotch she put away. One mumbler—namely me—in a picture is enough."

"After our so-called rehearsal together, my noble tool did its duty," Marlon told Gilman. "I fucked her. Once was enough. After all that alcohol, the bitch just lay there flat on her back, leaving me to do all the hard work. Not only that, she has the worst drunken breath since I got close to Joan Crawford. There's no way in hell I'm going to play opposite her. I'm telling Zanuck first thing tomorrow that I'm off the picture. Rabbit Tooth can put his girlie in some other movie. I want him to cast Elizabeth Taylor in the role of the whore."

Gilman offered a mild protest, suggesting that Taylor worked for another studio and was already involved in a movie.

"I guess you didn't hear me, Sammy boy," Marlon said with contempt in his voice. "I have long suspected the wax buildup in your ears. It's Elizabeth Taylor—or else I walk!"

The next morning, Marlon met Michael Curtiz, his director. The Hungarian was still dining out on his fame for having directed Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* during the war. The meeting between Curtiz and Marlon lasted for less than fifteen minutes.

"I'm told you're a tough pisser to work with," Curtiz told Marlon. "I have my own way of dealing with tough pissers. Remember who I am! I stood up to Mr. Tough Guy, Bogie himself. If I can handle him, I can certainly handle some faggot from the New York stage. Any time an actor gets out of line with me, I know how to deal with them. I have this bull whip on the set with me. I take it out and zing it across their buttocks. You're an easy target, Brando. That ass of yours seems to be growing bigger every day. I'm going to round

up one of Marie Dressler's old girdles and fit it on your fleshy mounds."

Giving no oral response, Marlon rose from his chair and walked out of Curtiz's office. Behind the wheel of his car, he drove it off the lot without one good-bye wave at the security guards.

"It was the talk of the town," Gilman later said. "Marlon just up and disappeared. I was certain he was on his way back to New York. Plane, train, I knew he didn't drive."

On hearing that his star had bolted, Zanuck screamed so loudly his bellows could be heard across the Pacific all the way to Japan, or so a secretary at Fox later claimed.

"I frantically called for Marlon, searching everywhere for him," Kanter said, "But as it turned out, he walked out on a full-blown disaster."

Marlon's hasty evaluation of Darvi and *The Egyptian* turned out to be deadly accurate in spite of the fact that Zanuck had assembled an all-star cast. "Victor Mature and I would have supplied the beefcake," Marlon said, "with the two Jeans—Gene Tierney and Jean Simmons—coming in with the cheesecake."

When it became obvious that Marlon wouldn't relent, Zanuck secretly approached James Dean, offering him the role of the doctor in *The Egyptian*. "I figured if I couldn't get Brando, go for the clone."

James later said, "I didn't do Biblical epics. Besides, I was afraid I'd be standing in back of a camel just at the moment he decided to dump the big load. Speaking of shit, that's *The Egyptian*."

Edmund Purdom replaced Marlon in the role of the doctor. Marlon had met Purdom briefly when the British-born actor appeared as James Mason's servant in *Julius Caesar*. "I'm not impressed with him as an actor," Marlon told John Gielgud.

"Neither am I," Gielgud said. "But as a male beauty, Mr. Purdom can put his shoes under my bed any time."

As in the case of Darvi, all attempts to make a star out of Purdom failed. Even Zanuck was finally forced to admit that both his male star and *The Egyptian* itself "turned out to be a pile of shit. Even ten Brandos couldn't have saved this turkey."

Despite growing evidence that it was a bad idea, Zanuck continued to try to make a star out of his mistress, casting her in *The Racers* in 1955. And although he starred her opposite some of the leading men of her day—Victor Mature, Richard Widmark, Kirk Douglas—Zanuck couldn't transform the Polish beauty into a convincing star. When his wife Virginia discovered that their *protégée* was having an affair with her husband, she sent her packing.

After a few more unsuccessful films abroad, Darvi returned to her heavy drinking and even heavier gambling at Monaco. The years were unkind.

Mounting debts from gambling and increasing despair over her failed career led to several suicide attempts. She attempted a memoir, *Why I Never Worked with Marlon Brando and Other Tales of Hollywood,* but never got beyond the first chapter. Finally, on the morning of September 11, 1971, she succeeded in killing herself by turning on the gas in her apartment in Monaco.

Marlon was hardly saddened. "I hear that while making *The Egyptian*, Darvi took a pounding twice a day from Zanuck's big dick, but also managed to fuck Victor Mature, Peter Ustinov, Michael Wilding, and even Michael Curtiz himself. How did Jean Simmons and Gene Tierney ever keep their pussies intact from that insatiable whore? Thank God I bolted from El Stinko. I don't do sword-and-sandal epics."

As late as the early 1960s, Marlon was turning down "sand pictures," although he obviously relented when he agreed to do a western, *One-Eyed Jacks*, released in 1961.

Later, he rejected what he called "another camel dung opera," *Lawrence of Arabia*. He turned down David Lean's offer. The director cast Peter O'Toole instead, and, upon the film's release in 1962, the replacement for Marlon became an international star. Years later when O'Toole encountered Marlon, Marlon said, "My rejection of that Lawrence sod made a star out of you. But damned if I wanted to spend two years of my life out in the desert on some fucking camel."

Lawrence of Arabia wasn't the only classic film Marlon rejected, as he made his way through the Sixties as the featured actor in one horrible, ill-chosen film after another. He refused to play the Sundance Kid opposite Paul Newman's Butch Cassidy. "Too bad," Elia Kazan said upon hearing the news. "The idea of Marlon on the screen in a picture with Newman makes me drool. Who knows? I might have even gotten the two of them to fuck each other off screen so I could watch."

After he fled Hollywood and the set of *The Egyptian*, Marlon landed in New York, exactly as Gilman had predicted. His flight made front pages around the country. Those same newspapers reported that Zanuck was suing him for two million dollars for breach of contract. Marlon asked his psychiatrist, Bela Mittelmann, to write Zanuck, explaining that Marlon was under his constant care—"a very sick and confused boy." Zanuck was not impressed and continued with his suit.

Afraid to stay at his own apartment, Marlon moved in with actress Barbara Baxley at her small Murray Hill studio.

Baxley later claimed that Marlon wasn't just pretending to Fox that he was in the throes of a nervous breakdown. "He *was* breaking down, and I've seen enough cases of that, including in my own life, to know a basket case when I see one. His career in Hollywood had become white heat—too hot for

him to handle. He was the biggest thing in Tinseltown since sliced bread. But his career was taking a toll on him. His father had just squandered all his hard-earned money on bad cattle investments in Nebraska, and was demanding $150,000 more in immediate cash. And his mother, the love of Marlon's life, was dead. His own love life was in chaos. Of course, we shacked up. But it wasn't love between us. I felt that Marlon was just getting his rocks off—nothing more."

The actress said that Marlon would endlessly sit in her little studio, not listening to television or even the radio. "He just sat there for hours staring at a blank wall. He was definitely entering the most paranoid part of his life. He began to distrust even his closest friends, and I suspected he might turn on me. He especially suspected Carlo Fiore. He expressed doubts about the loyalty of Sam Gilman, who was virtually his faithful servant. He even came to suspect the loyalty of Phil Rhodes, his faithful makeup man. One night he attacked Wally Cox. Surely no man on earth was a more loyal friend than Wally. But Marlon falsely claimed that 'I know for a fact that Wally is writing a book about me.' But Wally was doing no such thing."

Baxley, who had spent a good part of her own life in the offices of psychiatrists, tried a bit of amateur analysis on Marlon. "He hated being under legal obligation to anyone, much less a Hollywood studio, and especially Zanuck. Big salaries from Hollywood simply didn't impress Marlon although, God knows, he needed the money. Even though he'd become a big star, Marlon still remained the Hollywood bad boy with the Bad Ass cyclist's cap riding a motorcycle. He didn't want anyone to be his master. A sad paradox. The truth was, Marlon couldn't even be his own master. He wanted love but spurned it once he found it. He sought fame but hated what he'd seen of it. He wanted to be a great actor but at the same time claimed that acting was a silly and stupid profession. He was an extremely complicated character who didn't know anybody else, because he didn't know himself. As for Bela Mittelmann, Marlon should have thrown that quack off the Empire State Building long ago."

One afternoon, Marlon slipped out of Baxley's studio to buy some yogurt at Max's Deli. Recognizing Marlon, the owner alerted the press. When reporters descended, Marlon fled.

He appeared two hours later at his own Carnegie Hall apartment. Somewhere he'd managed to secure a disguise, appearing as a United Nations diplomat with a false mustache, striped pants, and a walking cane of ebony and pearl.

He called Baxley that night to tell her where he was. "This is the obvious place for me to go. My own apartment. No one will think of looking for me here."

A U.S. marshal was trying in vain to serve Marlon with legal documents.

Suspecting Marlon might be holed up in his own apartment, the marshal came up with a scheme. Pounding on Marlon's door, he announced that he was from the Academy with an announcement of Marlon's nomination for an Oscar.

The door swung open, and Marlon was served his subpoena.

Only the previous day, Marlon Sr. had informed his son that all their investments in cattle had failed and that he needed that $150,000 at once. "You're broke!" Marlon Sr. bluntly told his son.

Weighing his position, Marlon called Jay Kanter in Hollywood, begging him to come up with some settlement. An agreement was hammered out between Kanter and Zanuck.

Marlon agreed to appear in the historical romance, *Desirée*, for Zanuck "if you'll call off your legal hound dogs."

In one of Hollywood's worst casting mistakes, Marlon was cast as Napoleon.

"In some ways I'm perfect for the role," he told Fiore. "I'm short enough. Napoleon was short. I've been eating so much junk food lately that my ass would look fat in a pair of silk breeches, like Napoleon's ass did. In doing research for the part, I read that Napoleon was a 'phallic, narcissistic type suffering from a castration complex and had an organ inferiority, with sado-masochistic tendencies.' The character fits me to a T. But how embarrassing to be playing a man with a small dick. My reputation will suffer."

* * *

Before flying to the West Coast to film *Desirée*, Marlon, at Stella Adler's urging, had gone to see Eugene O'Neill's long-running Broadway drama, *Long Day's Journey into Night.* Stella was convinced that Marlon would be ideal if cast in the film version.

He sat through the whole play, watching the deteriorating condition of a mother hooked on drugs. Later, he told Stella that the play was "too close to home," a reference to his having survived the alcoholism of Dodie. "Besides, it's a lousy play. I won't do it. I've turned down O'Neill plays before. Shitty playwright."

After Dodie's death, Marlon attempted a reconciliation with Marlon Sr. One biographer wrote that Marlon Sr. was "an astute businessman" in oil wells and cattle, and had, in fact, made so much money for his son that he "could live comfortably for the rest of his life." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Marlon Sr. was completely incompetent as a businessman and had squandered all of Marlon's money. He was flat broke during the making of *Desirée*, and had to borrow $25,000 from his costar, Merle Oberon, to pay expenses.

According to an agreement worked out between Kanter and Zanuck, Marlon would surrender all of his $175,000 salary to Fox for having run up such huge costs for the studio when he bolted the set of *The Egyptian* and fled to New York.

Despite his father's disastrous handling of Marlon's finances, beginning with the first $40,000 he was paid for his role in *The Men*, Marlon agreed to go into business with him again. Together they founded a film company, Pennebaker Productions, named in honor of the maiden name of Marlon's mother.

* * *

German-born Henry Koster was selected by Zanuck to direct *Desirée*, because the movie mogul had been pleased with the way he'd handled Richard Burton in *The Robe*.

The mild-mannered director would prove no match for the temperamental and arrogantly stubborn Marlon.

Koster had assembled an all-star cast, with the British beauty, Jean Simmons, cast as the eponymous Desirée. The veteran beauty of the screen and boudoir, Merle Oberon, was cast as Napoleon's errant wife, Josephine. Michael Rennie was to play Napoleon's trusted general, Bernadotte, with Cameron Mitchell cast as Napoleon's brother, Joseph.

Marlon also wanted some of his friends hired for the picture, insisting that Sam Gilman be cast as Fouché, the French minister of finance. Phil Rhodes was hired as makeup man. Florence Dublin, the wife of one of Marlon's best friends, Darren Dublin, was hired to play Elsa Bonaparte, Napoleon's scheming Corsica-born sister.

Marlon wanted Darren as his stand-in. But James Dean, perhaps playing a competitive game with Marlon, had already hired Darren as his stand-in on *East of Eden*. Marlon was furious at James, finally insisting that Zanuck lure Darren back to the set of *Desirée*. Darren acquiesced, but during his subsequent time there, he found Marlon increasingly hostile and resentful that "I had betrayed him."

Eventually, during the filming, Marlon broke off his relationship with his former friend, claiming falsely that Darren was "banging" his girlfriend, Josanne Berenger. During their confrontation, Marlon spat in Darren's face. Because he needed the money, Darren stayed on the set for another three weeks. But the friendship was never repaired.

Carlo Fiore had become hooked on heroin again, and was not asked to get involved in the production of the film. But despite that, he arrived on the set right after shooting began in need of money. With some reluctance, Marlon

lent him money out of the loan Merle Oberon had given him, warning him not to spend it on drugs.

He didn't get around to reading the script until after shooting had begun. And after reading it, he was dismissive of its merits. Upon meeting costar Jean Simmons, he told her that "the film is ridiculous. But I didn't want to be in debt for the rest of my life, so I showed up." He also claimed that the casting of him as Napoleon was "Zanuck's sick joke on me."

The screenwriter was Daniel Taradash. "At least they got Taradash's surname almost right," Marlon said, no doubt referring to the word "trash."

Marlon in *Desirée* attire

Holding the script up in front of Koster, Marlon dropped it at his feet. "Do you actually plan to shoot this crap? To me, it reads like Barbara Cartland's rewrite of *Das Kapital*."

Koster considered himself an expert on Napoleon. He noted that Marlon had read only a book or two about the French dictator "and overnight had become an expert, clashing with me." In contrast, Koster said that he had been a Napoleonic scholar, an interest inherited from his father, who had filled their house in Germany with Napoleonic artifacts, including uniforms, flags, and helmets. "Brando simply didn't have it in him to play Napoleon. I did the best I could with him. But Stanley Kowalski was no Bonaparte, not even a distant cousin."

Marlon called Koster "a lightweight who was much more interested in uniforms than in the impact of Napoleon on European history."

When commenting on the accent that Marlon adopted for *Desirée*, fellow actor Cameron Mitchell delivered what became a famous comparison. "Instead of Claude Rains or even Sir Cedric Hardwicke, his voice was a cross between the nasally, comically aristocratic Hermione Gingold and the meltingly husky Joan Greenwood."

In the film, Jean Simmons, playing Desirée, is still in love with the Little Corporal. But in a plot line that reflected the bizarre power structure of Europe in the early 19th century, because of her status as the wife of one of his generals (Bernadotte), she eventually becomes Queen of Sweden. During an emotional reunion with Napoleon after her move to Sweden, she tells him of her dislike of that country. He asks her why. "It's too cold." At that point in the filming, as a gesture of rebellion against a plot line he despised, Marlon unexpectedly broke into song, jokingly delivering a historically inappropriate version of "Baby, It's Cold Outside."

"Koster completely lost his temper with that one," Mitchell said. "Of course, the line was ridiculous, but Marlon deliberately ruined the scene and wouldn't shoot it again."

Koster recalled that for some reason Marlon froze in certain scenes. "On one occasion, all Marlon had to do was to deliver a simple command to an officer, as played by Michael Rennie," Koster said. "He flubbed every take. Finally, he said it right on the twentieth take. I didn't like the scene but ordered it printed anyway since I didn't think I'd get anything better out of him."

At one point, when Marlon didn't like a scene, he pulled down his pink silk Napoleonic breeches and demanded that Koster come over and inspect him for crabs.

One afternoon, Marlon denounced Koster in front of the entire crew. "You're superficial!" Marlon shouted at his director. "You can't direct shit. Who in the fuck do you think you're trying to direct? Deanna Durbin?" Koster had directed the demure Canadian teenager with her beautiful soprano voice in some of her musicals.

Imitating Durbin, Marlon burst into his own rendition of "Ave Maria." Storming off the set, he went to his dressing room and called Zanuck, threatening to walk off the picture unless Koster was fired and replaced with another director.

However, by the following morning, Marlon's temper had cooled. He was back shooting the final scenes of *Desirée*, but refused to take any more direction from Koster. If Koster tried to direct him, Marlon would turn to the person nearest him and engage in a conversation, making indiscreet remarks about Koster, including speculation about how small his penis was.

One day Zanuck sent word that Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, would be visiting the set to watch the filming of *Desirée*. Privately Zanuck had learned that Selassie had admired Napoleon.

Hoping to impress Selassie, Zanuck invited him to witness the scene in which Napoleon crowns himself emperor in front of at least a thousand fancily dressed extras pretending to be at the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. According to Mitchell, Marlon deliberately set out to sabotage the shooting by giving many of the extras water pistols. "He got a reluctant Sam Gilman to hand out the weapons and to instigate the water duels."

When Emperor Selassie arrived on the set, Marlon spoke to him in French. The Ethiopian dictator wore a chest of medals, of which he was obviously proud. As Napoleon, Marlon wore only one medal.

Marlon as Napoleon with Emperor Haile Selassie

"It looks to me like you won more battles than I did, and I conquered Europe!" Marlon said. Selassie appeared stone-faced in front of Marlon and ten members of his Ethiopian palace guard. "Selassie was furious, insulted, whatever," Mitchell said. "After that, he pointedly ignored Brando. But there was more fun to come."

Henry Koster

Just as Koster called for action, Marlon signaled Gilman for the war to begin. Suddenly the male dress extras, and a few of the women too, pulled out their water pistols and began squirting each other.

"Getting completely carried away, the actors reverted to their childhood, as they squirted every target in sight," Mitchell claimed. "The game just escalated. At one point Marlon picked up a fire hose and aimed it right onto the set. The antiques were ruined. So were the costumes. So were the wigs. If Koster had kept the cameras on, the scene would have been more interesting than anything actually shot in *Desirée*. The whole day was a disaster. Zanuck threatened to sue Brando once again, but nothing ever came of it. Up until then, Brando had nearly reduced Koster to tears. On that day, Koster cried like a baby. As for Selassie, he got the hell out of there. I bet that was the last movie he wanted to see being shot."

Throughout the entire film, Mitchell claimed he was horrified at how Marlon repeatedly humiliated Koster. "At one point Koster was reduced to getting down on his knees and begging Brando to get up out of his chair and face the cameras. Finally, Brando agreed to be filmed but only if Koster personally went to the commissary and bought him a chocolate ice cream soda 'extra thick.' The director was forced into this humiliating act, and he dutifully held up production until he could go and buy that soda. Actually Brando didn't need Koster. Brando as Napoleon was his own director. At one point Brando argued with Koster for about an hour over how a scene should be shot. I was amazed when Brando finally gave in to his director. It was a full frontal shot with Brando in his pink silk breeches. After one minute of filming, it was obvious why Brando had given in. He was sabotaging the scene. Brando was pissing in those pink silk bloomers he wore. That yellow stain around his crotch grew as big as Australia before Koster called cut."

Cameron Mitchell

Mitchell was a ruggedly handsome actor, and on several occasions he suspected that Marlon was coming on to him. "I'd heard that he was bisexual, and I could tell he had the hots for me. Whenever he was around me, he always made up some excuse to put his hands on me or his arm around me. One day he confessed to me that he

was trisexual. But he didn't explain what that meant. The second week into the shoot, he whispered to me that he and I should indulge in a little brotherly love to make our scenes as brothers more vivid on screen. 'What exactly does that mean?' I asked him. 'Come on, you know,' Brando said to me. 'Come back to my dressing room for a little suck. The other day when I was pissing at the urinal with you, I was impressed with what I saw.' Unlike some straight actors who went with Brando just because he was Marlon Brando, I didn't go that route and turned him down. After that, he refused to speak to me off screen."

At the end of shooting, Koster was ready for a nervous breakdown. He told Zanuck, "Back in the Thirties, Greta Garbo and Charles Boyer might have pulled off *Desirée*. But I had pieces of wood for actors, especially one Marlon Brando who has taken ten years off my life."

Having fulfilled his obligation to Fox on *Desirée*, Marlon announced to a reporter that he was leaving on a world tour that would last at least two years—"maybe forever." He claimed that he planned to find some secluded hideaway, perhaps in the South Pacific. "I'll eat two quarts of ice cream a day, get awfully chubby, and fuck brown-skinned teenage gals until I've doubled the island population."

He had expressed similar sentiments before. Each time he made such a pronouncement, he put it more colorfully than before. The truth of the matter was that he had emerged penniless after shooting *Desirée*. He told Kanter that to meet his obligations, he needed another job—"and be quick about it." In a coincidence, he claimed that he would "even play a song-and-dance man."

When MGM refused to let Gene Kelly star as Sky Masterson in the Damon Runyon classic, *Guys and Dolls*, Marlon won the part by default.

* * *

Film industry insiders had predicted "fireworks" between the very proper Merle Oberon, *doyenne* of Hollywood, and Marlon when they met on the set of *Desirée*. She was a woman known for her impeccable manners, and he was still called "the rebel," although he'd taken to wearing a better wardrobe. James Dean was now dressing as Marlon used to.

Merle Oberon

Merle had already heard all the gossip about how cruel Marlon could be to aging movie queens. The story of his rejection of Joan Crawford was frequently cited. Merle went to her old friend and former lover, Zanuck himself, and expressed her grave reservations about working with a Method actor like Marlon, who was just the opposite of her "Old Hollywood" style of emoting.

She desperately wanted to play the role of the

Empress Josephine, the wife of Napoleon, but feared that her screen dynamic with Marlon wouldn't work unless Zanuck hired a more powerful director to keep Marlon in line. "Just endure," Zanuck told her. "All things come to an end, even Marlon Brando!"

Although intimidated by his reputation, Merle was pleasantly surprised when she actually met Marlon. "He seemed absolutely fascinated by me," she claimed. "He told me that he had much admired my previous work on the screen. We became very close during the filming, and he was a frequent guest at my house. One time in my dressing room he broke down and poured his heart out to me over the pain he was suffering from the loss of his mother. I felt great sympathy for him. He even let me make some suggestions as to how he should play Napoleon." She chuckled. "I told him that an emperor like Napoleon wouldn't chew gum. He parked the glob under his throne."

Years after *Desirée* was filmed, Merle said that Marlon was "very cooperative with me but not with the others. They had a terrible time with him. But I found him fantastic. He used to come to my house for dinner—and if I said eight o'clock, he would be there right on time and dressed in his blue suit and tie. I remember he met Noël Coward at my house, and they got on very well." When she said that, Merle was unaware that Marlon and Coward had met on intimate terms in the mid-Forties. Neither man chose to enlighten her on the nature of their previous encounters.

Merle was later credited with transposing her own accent—neither French nor British—onto Marlon. Her voice was a bit clipped, with overly enunciated vowels. "God damn it to hell!" Fiore later said. "Even though I was sometimes hired as Marlon's dialogue coach on a picture, he went for years speaking in that Merle Oberon voice of his. He sounded like a lisping Boston faggot with terminal lockjaw!"

Throughout the shooting of *Desirée*, Marlon was kind to Merle, knowing that at her age she was sensitive as to how she was being photographed. "You're the best thing in the picture," he kept reassuring her, and he was right.

"No one could believe that Marlon was putting on a suit and tie for Merle and attending her fancy dinner parties," said Sam Gilman, who was living with Marlon at the time. "Marlon never checked to see if any of the women he was balling had a husband stashed away somewhere. He always managed his seductions even if there were a husband hidden in a closet somewhere."

Marlon bragged to Gilman that, "I've never fucked a Tasmanian aristocrat before. By the way, does Tasmania have aristocrats?"

Actually Merle had deceived Marlon. She wasn't from Tasmania, but had been born in India as a "half-caste," a term widely used at the time. (In Merle's case, she was the product of an English father and an Indian mother.) She had spent a great part of her career trying to keep the world from knowing her ori-

gins. Actually, her bloodline wouldn't have mattered to Marlon. He liked Indian women in saris. In fact, he was to marry his first wife, Anna Kashfi, thinking she was Indian, only to be horribly disappointed when he found out she wasn't.

No one had a tape recorder under Merle's bed when Marlon arrived to seduce her. But many of her former lovers gave her ten points on a scale of one to ten, including Zanuck himself. Although Prince Philip always remained tight-lipped about his affair with Merle in Mexico, Clark Gable, Leslie Howard, and Gary Cooper all praised her charms in bed, as did a whole array of other stars, including David Niven, Ronald Colman, George Brent, Brian Aherne, Maurice Chevalier, James Cagney, Richard Harris, Rex Harrison, Robert Ryan, and countless others. On hearing a recitation of all the stars she'd successfully seduced, Marlon seemed impressed. "She did better than Scarlett O'Hara," he said. "She managed to seduce both Rhett Butler and Ashley Wilkes—not bad."

Many women detested her, including Marlene Dietrich who was offended by her pseudo-ladylike affectations. "A common piece," Marlene called her. Cecil Beaton claimed that Merle was "almost a nymphomaniac—as promiscuous as a man enjoying a quick one behind the door."

"Such a lady!" Marlon told Gilman after the first night he'd spent with Merle. "I can't imagine that she ever sweats. Do you think she needs to go to the can? Or has she evolved beyond that messy deed? She even has her chef prepare hamburgers *en croûte*. And Napoleon himself never ate with better silver."

When Marlon became the latest in her long list of movie star bedmates, he made only one complaint to Gilman, claiming that she once interrupted him while they were having hot sex.

"Just imagine," she whispered in his ear, "I'm in bed with Stanley Kowalski. *The* Marlon Brando!"

"My hard-on deflated at hearing that," Marlon told Gilman, "but soon I was back in the saddle again, my noble tool doing its duty."

Gilman claimed that although Marlon didn't fall in love with Merle, he had a real empathy for her. "Merle knew her star was fading," Gilman said. "Apparently, she had long talks with Marlon about the twinkle in her star growing dimmer and all the feelings that aroused within her, knowing that her career was near its end. After *Desirée*, she made only sporadic appearances, one of which was a small role in *The Oscar* in which she was type-cast as an actress past her prime."

"The only roles open to me in the future will be that of a rich old lady involved with a much younger man," Merle told Marlon.

If Gilman is to be believed, Marlon told her, "Come over here and join me in bed. We can start rehearsals on that role right now."

In the years to come, Marlon watched with a certain melancholy as Merle fulfilled her self-prophecy. Her last film appearance was in a vanity production, *Interval*, released in 1973. In it she played an older woman involved with a much younger man. The actor was Robert Wolders who became her last husband. Marlon had been at a party in Hollywood in the late 1960s when Merle met the handsome actor. He later jokingly (or perhaps not) told Gilman, "I wanted that hunk for myself until Merle made off with him instead."

After seeing Wolders emote with Merle in *Interval*, he sent her a kind note in Mexico, knowing how hostile the critics had been to her. Instead of praising her acting, he complimented her "timeless beauty."

She responded by extending an invitation to him to sail with Wolders and her on an around-the-world cruise aboard the old vessel, *Kungsholm*. He sent his apologies, pleading other commitments.

The affair of Merle and Marlon hardly survived the shoot of *Desirée*. Gilman knew what went wrong. He claimed that Merle made the mistake of inviting Rita Hayworth to one of her dinner parties. The two stars had become friends when Rita was cast with Merle in the romantic triangle, *Affectionately Yours*, released in 1941, co-starring Dennis Morgan.

"At the end of Merle's little *soirée*, she asked Marlon if he'd drive Rita home," Gilman said. "The love goddess had arrived at the dinner without an escort. Marlon too readily agreed. After that night, it was out with Merle, in with Rita."

* * *

"The poor little rich girl," heiress Gloria Vanderbilt, was about to enter Marlon's life, if only for a one-night stand.

Gloria, as she confessed herself in her romance memoir, *It Seemed Important at the Time*, had seen *On the Waterfront* and was mesmerized by Marlon—"that inarticulate sensitivity. So feminine—and yet so masculine." Right then and there she decided, "Yes, that's for me."

Gloria Vanderbilt

Very early one morning, she called her best friend, Carol Marcus, in California. Carol not only knew Marlon, but had dated him and had been seen riding around New York City on the back of his motorcycle.

After an almost constant busy signal, Gloria finally got through to Carol. Coincidentally, Carol's line had been tied up talking to Marlon. Carol's plan involved having dinner with him that night. In response, Gloria arranged a seat on the

next available plane winging its way to the West Coast . . . and to Marlon. Amazingly, she arrived in Los Angeles in time for dinner.

At "Chez Brando," Gloria was attired in a scarlet sari with gold threads.

She wrote of "instant gratification" when she first laid eyes on Marlon. If she defined her husband, Leopold Stokowski, as God, then in her view Marlon must be Zeus . . . at least.

Gloria dined with Carol and Marlon's aunt, Betty Lindemeyer, in the kitchen of Marlon's house. But Gloria stayed on after the other two women had left for the night.

Before midnight she'd been delivered to his bedroom where she remembered seeing a framed photograph of him dressed as Napoleon that had been shot on the set of *Desirée*. Although his phone was switched off during his lovemaking to her, she recalled the phone's lights going on and off throughout the night. She suspected these unanswered calls were coming in from other women.

Carol, who apparently wasn't jealous, came to pick up Gloria the next morning.

Carol was throwing a party that night, and Gloria waited in vain all day for Marlon to call. She anticipated that he'd show up at Carol's party but he didn't. Instead Gene Kelly danced in the door, and Gene and Gloria ended up kissing as the husky sounds of Lauren Bacall singing "Little Girl Blue" drifted in from the living room.

Marlon never showed up, but called the following day, reaching Gloria shortly before she boarded her plane back to New York. He thanked her for "tender feelings."

Although she pined for Marlon in New York, listening to the Nat King Cole recording of "Unforgettable," she never heard from him again. After that "tale of enchantment," she decided she'd never again give her secret heart completely to anyone—"not even to Zeus Marlon."

Other lovers were waiting to fill the vacuum—an aviator, Howard Hughes, a crooner, Frank Sinatra, and even an unidentified man from Chicago. She called him "the Nijinsky of cunnilingus."

The details associated with each of these love affairs, as noted above, were revealed by Gloria herself in 2004 in her "romance memoir," *Gloria Vanderbilt: It Seemed Important at the Time.* And until she revealed the details of her brief affair with Marlon, as noted above, their short-lived romance wasn't known except among intimate friends.

* * *

Previous biographers of Marlon and Rita Hayworth were in for a shock on March 1, 2003 when *Harper's* magazine published an article "Last Tango in

Rita Hayworth

Westwood: On Not Sleeping with Marlon Brando." The piece was written by Phyllis Raphael.

The article described a dinner at a Westwood restaurant, where Phyllis, along with her husband, Bob, "the young Turk," joined Rita and Marlon at table sometime in 1968, before Marlon's body became shrouded in fat. During the course of that evening, Marlon shamelessly flirted with Phyllis—"his knuckles light as a firefly's wings—tracing the upper flank of my left arm," out of sight of her husband Bob. This was not a revelation. Marlon routinely flirted with other men's wives.

But during the course of that dinner, despite his flirtations with Phyllis, Marlon directed most of his charm toward Rita. At that point in her life, Rita no longer looked like the dazzling Love Goddess of the Forties, the stunning Latina beauty, who'd married film genius Orson Welles and Prince Aly Khan. Phyllis found "no trace of the glamorous actress who looked out from the covers of fan magazines I read in high school under the hair dryer in my Brooklyn beauty parlor. Her face is puffy, her hair is pulled back in a severe bun, and she's dressed in a strict buttoned-up glen plaid suit and laced-up oxfords. She doesn't look so much like a movie star as like a woman who, if she even had a film career, would have spent it playing the matron in British orphanages. But Brando is treating her as if she's still the luscious Gilda, her silken leg extended from the slit in a long, strapless black gown."

At the table, as witnessed by Phyllis, Marlon confessed that he and Rita were "old, old friends. She's always been there for me," he said. "She saved me from myself, and we had some great times together."

This would come as a revelation to the readers of *Harper's* magazine and certainly to Hollywood insiders, who had up until then never known of any links between Rita and Marlon.

During the course of the dinner, as related in Phyllis' magazine article, Marlon went on and on with his lush tribute to Rita. He kissed her fingertips in tribute for "How much you've taught me, the Stanislavsky side of you, the degree which your insights have shaped my performances."

Was Marlon a bit drunk? Had he confused Rita Hayworth with Stella Adler?

Under the sunlight of Marlon's praise, Rita leaned her head on his shoulder and, in Phyllis's words, became "suddenly younger, even glowing."

She said, "No, not really!" But it was obvious that she welcomed his compliments.

Marlon was engaging in a "courtship dance" with Rita as he must have

done at one time or another in some distant past. He talked of the times they'd spent together. "No one—no one—was more fun than Rita," Marlon said. "We shared plenty of laughs." He paused provocatively. "But there was more . . . so much more. Rita here was a rare lady. A pure soul! A class act."

Phyllis wasn't alone in corroborating the long-standing relationship that thrived, virtually unknown to the public, between Marlon and Rita Hayworth.

Rita's close friend, Jane Sinclair, who lived in Paris during the last seven years of her life with a very young French husband, shed some light on the Brando/Hayworth romance shortly before her death in 1993. A woman not known for her discretion, she was also a close friend of Roger Vadim and Christian Marquand.

Jane Sinclair revealed that Rita and Marlon conducted a secret romance within the confines of a home that "one of my husbands used to own in Beverly Hills. Rita and Marlon were never seen in public. It was all very private, very hush-hush. They went to bed together the night Marlon brought her back from a dinner party thrown by Merle Oberon. I don't think it was love, but the romance had a certain passion in it." Privately, after a few drinks in the bar of the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Sinclair confessed her reason for promoting a romance with Rita and Marlon: Behind their backs she was secretly dating Rita Hayworth's husband, the singer, Dick Haymes. A toothy, slick-haired singer from Argentina, his eager-to-please baritone had enchanted radio audiences during the 1940s.

Sinclair admitted that when Dick couldn't get money from Rita, he got it from her. "I was forced to pay by the inch, darling."

Sinclair attempted to explain Rita's fascination with Marlon. "It wasn't just about sex. I went to bed with Rita's other husband, Prince Aly Khan. He could send a woman into ecstasy, the greatest lover since that Dominican stud, Porfirio Rubirosa. I also went to bed with Marlon one night. But he was no Prince Aly, no Porfirio."

Until she met Marlon, Rita often complained that, "Every man I've known fell in love with Gilda and woke up with me." Marlon was different. He claimed that Rita looked her prettiest without makeup. He found a good, gentle person behind all the lipstick, satin gowns, and black hosiery.

"Unlike many of her lovers, Rita had plenty to talk about with Marlon after the sex was out of the way," Sinclair said. "Actually, I think Rita used Marlon as her analyst, and he always liked to meet and listen to people in trouble. Rita told him all her secrets, things she'd buried inside herself for years. Like surrendering her virginity to her father, Eduardo Cansino."

Cansino was a Spanish vaudeville dancer, and Rita danced with him on stage in the "Sin City" of Agua Caliente, Mexico, the patrons thinking they were brother and sister.

Rita also told Marlon that her first husband, "that god damn con man," Edward Judson, had forced her to sleep with powerful men in Hollywood who would further her career. He ordered her into the bed of Harry P. Cohn, then head of Columbia Pictures. Rita always privately referred to Cohn as "that shithead." She claimed that Judson threatened to mutilate her face if she didn't sleep with the man he'd selected for her.

Rita confessed to Marlon that her husband, Dick Haymes, was just "using me for a meal ticket. After all his drunken sprees and all those ex-wives, he's blown four million dollars. He's also left with a bagful of kids to support."

Marlon, according to Sinclair, was always willing to listen to Rita's woes, both marital and romantic. "He also wanted to hear all the details of her love affairs," Sinclair said, suspecting that Marlon might be a voyeur.

According to Sinclair, Rita's list of lovers was long, including such "usual suspects" as Kirk Douglas, Charles Feldman, Glenn Ford, Errol Flynn, Howard Hughes, Tony Martin, Victor Mature, Robert Mitchum, David Niven, Gilbert Roland, Tyrone Power, and James Stewart.

Some of her romances weren't successful. Peter Lawford pronounced her the "worst lay in Hollywood—always drunk, and she never stopped eating." Marlon learned that she'd had a serious affair with the Spanish bullfighter, Luis Dominguin, when he was not in the arms of another Forties love goddess, Ava Gardner. There was a surprise or two for Marlon, as Rita revealed details about her affair with Caryl Chessman, California's "Red Light" bandit, accused of impersonating a police officer who robbed and sometimes sexually assaulted his victims. From his cell on Death Row at Folsom Prison, Chessman wrote four separate books, each of which generated public sentiment against capital punishment. After eight stays of execution, he went to the gas chamber on May 2, 1960.

But the biggest surprise for Marlon came when he learned the horrors of her "storybook romance" with Prince Aly Khan. She described some of his endless affairs. Before meeting Rita, Marlon thought that she had vast wealth as a result of that marriage. Rita revealed to him that even though her father-in-law, the morbidly obese Aga Khan, the hereditary Iman (spiritual leader) of the Shi'a Imami Ismaeli Community, was worth his weight in diamonds, he didn't share those riches with his playboy son, a womanizer and a gambler. She claimed that she often had to pay her husband's debts until she too ran out of money. "The bastard owes me $18,000 in child support," she told Marlon. She also told him that even though married to Aly Khan, she was pursued by other royals, especially the endlessly decadent king of Egypt, King Farouk, and the persistent Shah of Iran.

"Marlon was shocked to learn that Rita was broke and having a hard time surviving," Sinclair said. "I think he gave her money to help pay her debts. Like Judy Garland, she came within a few inches of getting evicted."

In one of the most despicable acts that Harry Cohn ever did, he placed secret recording devices both in Rita's dressing room and also within her house. Howard Hughes had pulled the same trick on Ava Gardner. One night Cohn made a recording of Rita and Marlon in bed. He kept it in his office, frequently playing it for his friends. He thought it was all one big joke. "Mumbles and Gilda making love," he called it.

Without revealing his true feelings, Marlon once told Carlo Fiore that "there is one thing that I think about a lot when I'm pounding Rita. I hate to admit this, but it gets me extra excited."

"You think of her as Gilda?" Fiore asked, stating the obvious thought in most men's heads.

"No, not that at all!" Marlon said. "Rita's likeness was stamped on the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. I think about that right before I'm about to erupt inside her with my own explosion!"

According to Jane Sinclair, Marlon continued his friendship with Rita "even when passion's flower wilted," in her words. He only stopped coming to see her when she had moved deeper into Alzheimer's, the disease that was to dominate the remaining twenty-five years of her life, and she no longer knew who he was.

Marlon was watching television on May 14, 1987 when news broadcasts announced Rita's death. Friends said he wept unashamedly.

* * *

Marlon found his *Desirée* costar, British-born Jean Simmons, "my kind of woman." An actress of effervescent talent, with delicate traits and mannerisms, she reminded him of Audrey Hepburn or Deborah Kerr. Critics called their teaming in *Desirée* "dreary," but that was on screen. Off screen they became friends. On meeting Marlon, Jean called attention to the fact that they had been slated to appear together in *The Egyptian* until he bolted. "It was the script—not your casting," Marlon assured her.

Stewart Granger

When he met her, Marlon was aware of Jean's ongoing feud with Howard Hughes. The aviator had developed an obsession with her and had urged her to dump her husband, Stewart Granger, and marry him. When she refused, he retaliated against her, threatening to destroy her career. Such an action drove Stewart to plan "how to murder the bastard," as he confessed in his autobiography, *Sparks Fly Upward*, published in 1981.

Four years younger than Marlon, Jean did not have a reputation for being promiscuous when she met Marlon, although she was rumored to have seduced two of best friend Elizabeth Taylor's husbands, Nicky Hilton and the producer Michael Todd. Speaking of Elizabeth Taylor husbands (at least future ones), Richard Burton and Jean were also rumored to have had an affair during their costarring turn in *The Robe*. There were also rumors of affairs with the studly Robert Mitchum and Laurence Harvey, who actually preferred black men to white women.

Marlon claimed that he "held back in my desire for *Desirée*" because Jean was married to Stewart. That pronouncement came as a surprise to Marlon's friends. Never in his life had he held back on the seduction of a woman because she was married or had a steady boyfriend. If anything, he seemed to prefer women already in a deep commitment to another man instead of what he termed "free-range vaginas."

Before Jean introduced Marlon to her husband, Marlon contemptuously referred to the British actor as "the great white hunter," because of such previous adventure films as MGM's blockbuster hit of 1950, *King Solomon's Mines*. Stewart also held Marlon in contempt, or so it seemed. In his autobiography, Stewart admitted that even though Jean liked Marlon, he found him "fairly insufferable."

When Jean told Marlon that Stewart was dropping by the set to meet him, he admitted that he was looking forward to "sizing up the competition." His remark could have been interpreted in two different ways. One, that he viewed Stewart as a roadblock to his moving in on Jean. Two, that he wanted to evaluate an actor who was often "spoken of in the same breath for the same roles in movies."

Considering how different Stewart and Marlon were as both men and actors, it now seems a bit of a stretch to think they could have played the same roles. But for years the word in Hollywood was, "If you can't get Marlon, go for Granger." MGM, in fact, had originally wanted Stewart for the role of Marc Antony instead of Marlon.

As improbable as it seems today, Stewart was asked by director Laurence Olivier to play Stanley Kowalski in the London production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, opposite his wife, Vivien Leigh. Granger turned down the offer, which had originated directly from Irene Mayer Selznick, claiming that "Brando is a tough act to follow."

Eventually, both men were offered, and both of them refused, starring roles in such soon-to-be classics as *From Here to Eternity* and *A Star Is Born*.

One critic wrote that suave Stewart Granger, instead of appearing in costume epics and adventure films, "would be better suited for drawing room comedies, lounging about in a smoking jacket, swilling martinis, and making

Michael Wilding, Elizabeth Taylor, Stewart Granger, and Jean Simmons

bedroom eyes at the ladies." The critic was right on target. As Stewart himself would readily admit, "I'm not the type to play a peasant in New Orleans calling for Stella."

The 1962 *Sodom and Gomorrah* had first been offered to Marlon who turned it down, Stewart going for it. In the film Stewart played opposite Pier Angeli, girlfriend of both Marlon and James Dean. When Marlon learned that Stewart had been cast in the film instead of himself, he sarcastically remarked, "I wonder which role he's playing. Sodom or Gomorrah? If I know Stew, he's definitely going to play Sodom."

Like Marlon himself, Stewart not only had already led a life of high adventure, but many of his greatest episodes lay in his future. He'd had love affairs with the two richest women in the world, Barbara Hutton and Doris Duke. Like Marlon, he'd been involved in a three-way with Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. In time, he would chase a nude Vivien around and into her swimming pool, trying to force tranquilizers down her throat.

Like Marlon, the swashbuckling MGM star was a bisexual, his most enduring romance being with another British actor, Michael Wilding. When Elizabeth Taylor was planning to marry Wilding, columnist Hedda Hopper summoned the couple to her home. Once there, in front of Wilding, Hopper declared that Wilding was a known homosexual and that Taylor would be "throwing away your life" if she married him. At the time, Taylor and Wilding were house guests of Stewart and Jean. After their return to the Granger-Simmons house, Wilding told Stewart about the confrontation.

In anger, a drunken Stewart called Hopper, denouncing her as a monumental bitch. "How bloody dare you accuse a friend of mine of being queer, you raddled, dried up, frustrated old cunt." He slammed down the phone on the powerful columnist, who attacked him repeatedly throughout the remainder of his and her career.

Years later, when appearing in New York in the play, *Chameleons*, an older and mellower Stewart admitted that Hopper had been right. He revealed that he had indeed had an affair with Wilding, claiming "it was something men did during the war."

When Marlon met Stewart on the set of *Desirée*, both men were prepared to take an instant dislike to each other. Marlon had been difficult and temperamental with his director and the rest of his crew, except costars Merle Oberon

and Jean Simmons. But Sam Gilman claimed that "Marlon turned that old black magic on Stewart the moment they shook hands. Marlon absolutely captivated *Scaramouche*," he said, referring to the MGM costume epic in which Stewart had starred in 1952.

In contrast to the brash, swashbuckling image he projected on the screen, Stewart was completely different in person, a caring, articulate, educated, sensitive actor with a bisexual background to equal Marlon's own adventures. As John Gielgud once said, "Stewart is adept at bringing the greatest pleasure to both men and women."

Apparently unknown to his wife, Jean, an intimate relationship quickly developed between Marlon and Stewart, according to Gilman. He said that the friendship was conducted in total secrecy and lasted "at least" through the filming of Marlon's next picture, *Guys and Dolls*, in which he was cast once again opposite Jean Simmons.

During the filming of *Guys and Dolls*, Stewart admitted that he was having anxiety attacks about his marriage, as Jean faced "the triple menace of Brando, Frank Sinatra, and Joseph Mankiewicz," who was directing the picture. If rumors are to be believed, Mankiewicz succeeded where Sinatra and Marlon struck out. Although not admitting to an affair with Jean, Mankiewicz years later recalled that Marlon and Sinatra "may not have gotten Jean, but they did at least get to share Ava Gardner so I don't feel that sorry for them. Having sampled the charms of Ava myself, I know what a treat that must have been for my boys."

Both Marlon and Sinatra surely would have been horrified to have the director speak of them as "my boys."

After that fateful meeting with Stewart, Marlon called off his chase of Jean. "He went for the handsome hubby instead," Gilman said. "Why not? Virtually every horny woman, bisexual male, or gay boy had the hots for Stewart back in those days. Cary Grant pursued him for years."

Gilman, who was living with Marlon at the time, saw the affair between the two men unfold before his eyes. "Slipping around so as not to alert his wife, Stewart was a frequent visitor at Marlon's. I know they disappeared into Marlon's bedroom on many a night. I don't know for sure, but there was no television in that bedroom. Not even a radio. Those two boys must have been up to something, unless they settled for holding hands. Knowing Marlon as I did, he never settled for that, not even some passionate kisses. Marlon had to go all the way."

In front of Gilman, who poured their drinks and often cooked meals for the two actors, Stewart kept Marlon constantly amused with stories from his life. He claimed that he once tested for the lead role in *Quo Vadis?* with a seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Taylor. John Huston was called in to direct that day,

instructing Stewart to play his part "like a drunken buck nigger!" The starring roles eventually went, of course, to Deborah Kerr and Robert Taylor.

Marlon learned that Stewart lost his virginity to "Josette," a young French prostitute he met in Paris while he was there for a rugby match. He spoke of his first wife, the British actress, Elspeth March. Stewart claimed that he seduced a female French friend of hers only to "come down with history's worst case of gonorrhea."

He also told Marlon that Doris Duke had such a large vagina, that "even Porfirio Rubirosa, the world's heaviest endowed playboy, couldn't fill it." Stewart was obviously not aware that Marlon had already had an affair with the tobacco heiress. "I practically fell in when I seduced Duke," Stewart told Marlon and Gilman. "And as you already know," Stewart said, directing his comment just to Marlon, "I'm very well hung." In fact, when the wardrobe department at MGM first put a pair of tights on me, for *Scaramouche*, I bulged so much they had to tape my equipment to my belly."

For weeks, Stewart amused Marlon with his stories. Both men had seduced Hedy Lamarr and shared stories about their respective adventures with the Austrian beauty. "When I fucked Hedy, she was late for her hairdresser. Nonetheless, she instructed me, 'Now don't come too fast!'"

"That had Marlon doubled over in stitches," Gilman said. Marlon also took delight in the impersonations that Stewart did of his fellow British actor, Cary Grant. He always referred to Grant as "the leader of Hollywood's pansy brigade."

One night Stewart, in front of Gilman, told Marlon that Elizabeth Taylor was number one on his list of future conquests. "I've always wanted to fuck her," he said. "I've had the groom. Why not the bride?"

Marlon admitted that he, too, would get around to "fucking Liz when the time is right." Richard Burton always maintained that "my Elizabeth and that Brando creature had an affair" when they costarred in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, released in 1967.

In front of Gilman, Stewart told Marlon that when he came to Hollywood, he found out that Englishmen had a reputation for being stuffy and condescending. "That's just an act we put on. Deep down we're bawdy and raunchy."

"You're not stuffy at all," Marlon said. "And I should know. If it weren't for the accent, you could be an American."

Stewart arched an eyebrow. "Should I take that as a compliment?"

"What reputation do Americans have in London?" Marlon asked.

"Frankly, they're known as cocksuckers whereas British men are famous for being sodomites."

"Well," Marlon said, getting up and motioning Stewart toward the bedroom. "Reputations are about to be tested tonight."

Gilman took that as proof that Marlon and Stewart were engaged in a sexual liaison—"or else liked to have pretty hot dialogue."

And then one day after *Guys and Dolls* was wrapped, the relationship between Marlon and Stewart ended. "To my knowledge, they didn't have a falling out," Gilman said. "Marlon had a brief attention span. He once told me that nothing captured his attention for more than seven minutes. Stewart had a good track record. He stayed around until weeks turned to months. I know it's an odd coupling. Stewart Granger and Marlon Brando. But so was Marlon Brando and Wally Cox an odd coupling. Stewart and Marlon took real delight in each other's company for as long as it lasted. Real male bonding. I overheard them making plans to go on a big trip to India together. Marlon even urged Stewart to settle down with him one day and purchase the ranch next to his in Nebraska. Marlon claimed they could ride on horseback together and watch the wildflowers burst into bloom on the plains—shit like that. They even compared notes on what it was like to fuck Ava Gardner. In the long run, there was no love lost between the two men. But for one brief moment they ignited passion in each other. Both men had a great gusto for living. They came together, however briefly, and a good time was had by all except me. I didn't go that route."

* * *

Sam Gilman was on the set of *Desirée* the day Marilyn showed up. He later learned the details of what transpired between the two stars. She was working on a nearby set, filming *There's No Business Like Show Business*, a frothy tribute to Irving Berlin. In the film, she performed her now infamous "Heat Wave" number, in which she seemed to be doing a caricature of Carmen Miranda.

Marlon as Napoleon with Marilyn Monroe

Encountering Marlon, she giggled when she saw him dressed as Napoleon. In a formal gown, she posed for pictures with him. On the surface, everything seemed all right. One major star calling on another major star.

But in his dressing room she showed him where makeup concealed black and blue marks on her right arm. "Marilyn abhorred violence of any kind," Gilman

said. "Marlon was furious to learn what a mean shithead DiMaggio was in private, in contrast to his public image. He'd come home drunk and accused Marilyn of continuing her affairs with both Marlon and Frank Sinatra, and countless others, even though married to him. That may have been true. Even so, violence was not the answer. Marilyn told Marlon that DiMaggio had started beating her and that she'd run into their bedroom and locked the door. He broke down the door and continued beating her, avoiding her face so that she could still appear before the camera. At least he knew enough to do that. He didn't want the press to learn what a shit America's hero really was. Marlon became incensed when he learned of this. He wanted Marilyn to move out, and he told her she could come and live with him until she found a place of her own. He also advised her to file for divorce. Two nights later, he told me that Marilyn's marriage to DiMaggio wasn't legal anyway, because technically she was still married to him and had not gotten a divorce. I still don't know to this day if Marlon was actually married to Marilyn—or whether he was just putting me on."

Somehow, Marlon broke through to Marilyn. Standing nearby as if on security watch for Marlon, Gilman heard Marilyn singing "After You Get What You Want You Don't Want It," which was one of her numbers for *There's No Business Like Show Business*. Gilman later learned that Marilyn was auditioning the number for Marlon, seeking his approval.

Marilyn was no dumb blonde. She had a reason to visit Marlon other than to say "Hi."

"She must have been fucking Joseph Mankiewicz, because she'd learned that the Damon Runyon musical, *Guys and Dolls*, was about to be cast," Gilman said. "Mankiewicz had wanted Gene Kelly for the role but MGM said no. Frank Sinatra was lobbying for the role of Sky Masterson. Ever since he'd cast her in *All About Eve*, Mankiewicz and Marilyn had had a sometimes thing. Perhaps over pillow talk, she'd learned that the director was going to offer the role of Sky Masterson to Marlon, even though Sinatra would have been the more obvious choice."

Marlon later told Gilman that he thought Marilyn was joking when she revealed that. "Me, a song-and-dance man? That'll be the day!"

Marilyn desperately wanted to play one of the two female leads. She would do either one, but preferred to portray Miss Adelaide, although she said that if she agreed to the part, the role would have to be greatly expanded.

Marlon promised to lobby for her, because he was still a friend of Mankiewicz, but said he would refuse

Joe DiMaggio

the role himself. “If Joe Mankiewicz is crazy enough to offer me the part, I’ll tell the fucker to go fly a kite.” The role of Miss Adelaide eventually went to Vivian Blaine, who had originated the part on Broadway.

According to Gilman, Marilyn told Marlon that DiMaggio wanted to turn her into a simple housewife. Her first husband, James E. Dougherty, had tried to do that back during World War II.

“You know, a home-cooked dinner by the fireplace where I prepare his favorite pasta as he watches baseball on TV, or big-time boxing, perhaps a Roger Rogers movie,” Marilyn said. “He even insists that I iron his white shirts, using lots of starch.” What Marilyn failed to tell Marlon was that at the time, she and DiMaggio had three servants.

Publicly, she was informing the press, especially her favorite columnist Sidney Skolsky, that, “Marriage is something you learn more about while you live it.” Privately, she told Marlon that the marriage to DiMaggio was all but over except the formalities.

“I think Marlon and Marilyn seriously discussed marriage—the real thing for all the world to see, not that fake ceremony, or whatever in the hell it was, that they had on location with *Viva Zapata!*” Gilman said. “Marlon told me that Marilyn agreed to the marriage, providing that she would not be expected to have children.”

Three nights later, when Marilyn came over for a dinner cooked by Gilman, Marlon said, “DiMaggio’s going to be a tough act to follow if I take up with Marilyn.”

“What do you mean?” Gilman asked.

“Marilyn told me, ‘Joe’s biggest bat is not the one he uses on the baseball field.’ She also told me that, ‘If sex is what it took, I’d stay married to Joe.’”

“I’ve never heard any woman complain about your noble tool,” Gilman said to reassure his friend.

One week later, as Gilman recalled, a new and different Marilyn fled to the set of *Desirée* to see Marlon. “Instead of a formal dress, she wore a tattered bathrobe that was last washed in 1913,” Gilman said. “She wore no makeup and looked awful. At first I didn’t recognize her. Marlon later explained to me that Marilyn Monroe was just a show business concoction. The real girl wasn’t anything like Monroe.”

To illustrate his point, Marlon related an incident that had occurred along New York’s Fifth Avenue several months previously. “We were just strolling along and chatting. She wore a scarf and no makeup. Suddenly, she turned to me and asked, ‘Do you want to see what happens when I become Marilyn Monroe?’ She took off the scarf, applied lipstick, did something to her hair, gave me her raincoat to hold, and then walked like the sultry bitch she’d played in *Niagara*. Within moments, she was mobbed by adoring fans. It

seemed that everyone forgot me. Me, fucking Marlon Brando. The biggest movie star on the planet."

On her second visit to the set of *Desirée*, Marlon saw at once that Marilyn was in serious trouble. "He just walked off camera," Gilman said, "and headed for Marilyn. Wrapping a strong arm around her, he led her once again to his dressing room where he put out the DO NOT DISTURB sign. All shooting had to be suspended for the day. The director was furious. I hung around in case Marlon needed me later. I never knew exactly what drove Marilyn in such a condition to the *Desirée* set. Later Marlon quoted her to me. 'My brains are leaving me just like they did with my mother,' Marilyn told Marlon. 'They're going to come for me. Lock me away in some hospital.' Perhaps without knowing it at the time, Marilyn was having a prophetic vision of her future."

Marlon said that Marilyn begged him to run away with her. "Any place in the world," she told him. "Just a place where we can hide out forever."

"I fucked her," Marlon told Gilman. "That was the only way my noble tool knew how to calm her down."

"Marilyn did hide out for several days with Marlon before everything blew up between Jumpin' Joe and her," Gilman claimed.

"I like a gal like Marilyn," Marlon later told Gilman. "She can take it in three different holes—my kind of woman."

Suddenly, without even leaving a note for Marlon, Marilyn disappeared.

"I told Marilyn good-bye," Gilman said. "I even saw the man who had come to take her away. It was Frank Sinatra. I told Marlon that Marilyn had left in a taxi. If I'd ratted that it was Sinatra, he would have exploded on me. God, did he hate Sinatra."

"Believe me, the feeling was mutual," Gilman claimed. Not only was Sinatra seriously—and even dangerously—pissed over Marlon's moving in on Ava Gardner, but Sinatra had just learned that Marlon, after holding out, finally told Mankiewicz that he was willing to sign to play Sky Masterson. Sinatra needed film work, and with great bitterness eventually agreed to accept the minor male role of Nathan Detroit.

Gilman claimed that during Marilyn's filming of *The Seven Year Itch*, Marlon forgave her for running out on him without a good-bye.

"They would be close until the day of her death," Gilman said. "But never again did I hear talk of marriage."

* * *

At the Fox studio, Marlon took Carlo Fiore to see a screening of *Desirée*, explaining that "I used a lot of nose putty and layers of makeup. Since I was

forced to do the picture, I walked through the part. I tried to get some humor in my characterization, but the final result merely depressed me instead of amusing me."

When Anna Kashfi, who became Marlon's first wife, went to see the film with her neighbor, Marilyn Monroe, Anna claimed, "I was appalled by the awkward expository dialogue and by the camera angles that emphasized Marlon's fat buttocks bulging against snug, silk breeches."

Marlon winced when he saw how Zanuck was advertising the picture for its 1954 release with the somewhat confusing slogan, "Before Josephine there was *Desirée* . . . and some say there was always . . ."

A preview audience in Pasadena laughed at some serious parts of the movie. In one scene, Marlon, playing Napoleon, asks the question, "When did you stop loving me?"

A heckler rose up in the audience. "When you made this shit-kicker."

The audience burst into derisive laughter. The years of unprecedented ridicule for Marlon had begun.

Paul Holt, writing in the *Daily Herald*, summed it up: "This is probably the worst performance of any star asked to play a character role in costume that Hollywood has ever offered us in a long and dogged assault upon our credulity."

Normally critical of Marlon's acting, Sir Laurence Olivier said, "I adored his performance. The best screen Napoleon ever!" Whether Olivier was being serious or else indulging in subtle ridicule is not known.

Vivien Leigh had a different opinion, calling it "a burlesque walk-through by a zombie. I think Audie Murphy would have been better cast as Napoleon."

When Jay Kanter told Marlon that *Desirée* had outgrossed *On the Waterfront*, Marlon made his comment by quoting H.L. Mencken, "No one ever lost money underestimating the taste of the American public."

Marlon delivered one final comment about *Desirée* and then refused to speak of it ever again. "It was a serious retrogression and the most shaming experience of my life."

Privately, Carlo Fiore expressed his dismay about Marlon's career to Bobby Lewis in New York. "This is the end for Marlon as an actor. He should have been born years earlier when he could have played in adult movies. Now we're going to get such freak things as Marilyn Monroe's ass splashed nine feet across the screen in CinemaScope. Stuff like that. Next thing I know, Zanuck will ask Marlon to take over for Raymond Massey and play Abe Lincoln. I'm sure he'll be asked to play Douglas MacArthur. It's a certainty he'll get the next remake of Valentino's life story. My prediction? He'll end up like James Stewart and Gary Cooper, certainly Henry Fonda, playing some old Gabby Hayes codger in a sagebrush oater!"

* * *

In the 1950s, Swiss-born Ursula Andress, who styled herself as "the female Marlon Brando," was struggling to learn English with some vague hope of making it as a Hollywood star. She had the beauty and the physical assets, but lacked talent and never wanted to work hard enough to master the King's English, preferring her native German tongue.

James Dean with girlfriend number two, Ursula Andress

Marlon had met the Swiss bombshell—often called Swedish in biographies—when she was temporarily sharing an apartment with Josanne Berenger, Marlon's "one true love," or so he said.

When Andress moved into her own ivy-covered cottage overlooking Sunset Boulevard, Marlon was a frequent visitor.

Still living with Marlon at the time, Sam Gilman said that Andress was a true *femme fatale*. "If Josanne wanted to hold onto Marlon, she made a fatal mistake in introducing him to her roommate. No woman on the face of the earth should introduce a boyfriend or husband to Ursula. When Marlon met her, she could have any man on the planet she wanted, providing he wasn't gay. No, I take that back. She could have any man she wanted, including the gay ones. If I know Ursula, she'd convert them to heterosexuality."

"Marlon told me that he was dating two young women, Ursula Andress and Pier Angeli, and he was going to marry one of them and keep the other one as his mistress," Gilman said. "But I haven't decided which one is going to be cast in the role of the long-suffering wife and which one is going to be cast as the lucky mistress who gets the diamonds, the mink coats, and me," Marlon said.

"But isn't James Dean dating Andress and Angeli," Gilman protested. "Aren't they, in fact, his girlfriends, maybe with a little Terry Moore thrown in between sessions with the boys."

"Yes, Jimmy is dating both Pier and Ursula," Marlon said. "That is precisely why I'm interested. I have to keep showing Jimmy boy who's the real man in our relationship. I'm practically driving that boy to suicide. When not with Ursula or Pier, or running off

Ursula Andress

to Mexico with that shit-kicker from Texas, Howard Hughes, Jimmy boy can't seem to get enough of my noble tool."

Unlike James's affair with Pier Angeli, Marlon did not take the month-long romance with Andress seriously. "She's more woman than Jimmy can handle," he told Gilman.

Andress remembered her courtship with James. "He came by my house late. He came in room like wild animal, and smell of everything I don't like. We go hear jazz music and he leave table. Say he go play drums. He no come back. I don't like to be alone. I go home. He come by my home later and say he sorry. Ask if I want to see his motorcycle. We sit on sidewalk in front of motorcycle and talk, talk, talk, until five. He go home."

On other nights, she was seen riding around Hollywood on the back of James's motorcycle. She was also spotted in fast-moving cars driven by James—in fact, she was with him on the day he purchased the car that would cost him his life.

On the times she did go out with him, she said that they "fought like cat and dog—no, two monsters. But we make up and have fun."

She more or less followed the same pattern with Marlon. They too argued and made up. Apparently, they got into a row over American music on their first date, and the arguments continued. "That Ursula had a mind of her own—I'm sure she still does," Marlon once said. "She doesn't depend on a man to make up her mind for her. She's got opinions about everything."

Marlon was particularly interested in finding out from Ursula who the better lover was: James Dean or himself. "I don't think Ursula ever revealed that secret to him," Gilman said. "It drove him crazy. She probably took delight in that. Marlon might have thought that Ursula was too much woman for Dean. Personally, I think she was too much woman for Marlon as well."

When Marlon was "dating" James during the filming of *East of Eden*, he found that the young actor would often arrive at his house on a motorcycle with a German-language phrase book tucked up in his jacket. Marlon asked him why he was trying to master German. "I want to be able to fight with Ursula in her own language. She's not making much progress learning English, and I want her to comprehend how vindictive my insults are."

"Sounds like love," Marlon said jokingly.

Soon the press was referring to Ursula as "the paramour of Marlon Brando." One columnist predicted a combustion when "the female Marlon Brando hooks up with the one with the testosterone."

Marlon was influential in getting Andress a contract with Columbia. Nothing much came of that, and she later bought her way out of it, even though she hadn't made a film for the studio.

After Marlon, and after James, Andress met her John. He was the hand-

John Derek

some matinee idol John Derek, or "Derrick" as some Dean biographers erroneously put it. She would marry Derek in 1957, divorcing him in 1966. Derek went on to marry two younger beauties, Linda Evans and Bo Derek.

Waiting in the wings to grab Ursula were Warren Beatty, Ryan O'Neal, Harry Hamlin, and even Jean-Paul Belmondo and Fabio Testi. By then, Marlon had long faded from the picture.

However, when *Dr. No*, the first of the James Bond thrillers to reach the screen, was released in 1962, Marlon went to see it three times. Like the rest of the world, he was mesmerized by the now-famous white bikini scene of Andress emerging from the sea. Cast in the role of Honeychile Ryder, she brought a smoldering presence to the screen. Becoming an almost overnight legend, she was launched as one of the most desirable women on the planet. Her role also launched the Bond movies as a Hollywood staple, even though she was paid only ten thousand dollars for her effort. She later sold the bikini at auction for $61,500 to an anonymous buyer. *Dr. No* propelled her into a minor screen career where she became a 1960s pop icon, appearing with everybody from Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley to Woody Allen and Peter O'Toole.

In the Nineties, when Marlon was writing his "tell-all" autobiography, he placed a two-hour call from Hollywood to Rome to speak to Andress. At first he flattered her, calling her "the ice maiden of forty wet dreams." But then he insulted her by asking her if she'd ever had an affair with him. He wanted to get it right for his memoirs.

It comes as a surprise that he was doing such personal research, because his memoirs became famous for leaving out details of his affairs, excepting Marilyn Monroe, of course.

When Andress's former husband, John Derek, heard of this phone call, he was astonished. "Who wouldn't remember fucking Ursula Andress? Marlon Brando must be coming down with Alzheimer's disease."

In a quote attributed to Andress (she may not have said it), she summed up her emotions about her affair with Marlon. "Marlon Brando can't love any woman because he never stopped having an affair with himself."

* * *

Pier Angeli had arrived from Rome to make her way toward stardom in Hollywood. Marlon had not seen her since his rape of her in Italy.

When not debating whether to make a film of *Antony and Cleopatra*, MGM executives were also considering filming *Romeo and Juliet*. The stars?

Marlon as Romeo and Pier as Juliet. Marlon decided to call Pier and discuss the project with her.

Pier was that curious "mixture of child, waif, and minx." When she'd first met Marlon in Italy she was—in her own words—"greedy for life, romance and emotion."

"What she got was rape, then abandonment," said director Vittorio De Sica.

When Pier arrived in Hollywood, on the rebound after a heart-breaking affair with Kirk Douglas¸ she was ripe for a new romance.

Marlon showed up at the Pierangeli house, and Pier agreed to see him despite of the brutality of their past in Rome. Her mother, Enrica Pierangeli, insisted that her sister, Marisa, go along on their dates.

With loud honking, Marlon arrived for his first date in front of the Pierangeli home. He was driving a large truck filled with bales of hay. He invited Pier and Marisa to join his friends, who included Rita Moreno, Jerome Robbins, and Phil Rhodes, his makeup man. Setting out on a picnic, Marlon, using an old map, got lost and never found the lake where he was headed. It had long since dried up.

Nonetheless, he became a fixture around the Pierangeli household that summer, and was finally able to date Pier without a chaperone. Sometimes he'd show up for dinner with the family, loving Enrica's pastas and bringing not-yet-released movies for the family to see.

At the end of the summer, Enrica claimed that Marlon was "the adorable son I never had, full of love, sensibility, and great compassion." Apparently, she didn't have a clue as to what was going on between her daughter and Marlon.

On their frequent dates, Marlon and Pier were spotted on the beaches of Malibu, strolling along the sands hand in hand. They were seen riding horses in Griffith Park. They often stopped at one of those 1950s diners, with waitresses on roller skates, to order hamburgers. Or else he'd take her to a movie in Pasadena. Marlon claimed he never patronized movie houses on Hollywood Boulevard "because too many fuckers know who I am." When not with Marlon, Pier would repeat, more or less, the same dates with James Dean.

Marlon drove Pier around Hollywood in a bullet-riddled car that had once belonged to Bugsy Siegel, the gangster whom he continued to admire and whose life story he wanted to film one day. "I'd go over big in a gangster movie," he once told Fiore.

Although Marlon dated Pier, who was twenty-two years old at the time, he told Sam Gilman that she was still a child at heart. "Sometimes as I'm driving her around Los Angeles, she sucks on a lollipop. She often hums nursery rhymes, and she still collects stuffed animals. Anytime I fuck her, I give her a

James Dean with girlfriend number one, Pier Angeli

teddy bear. She likes pink ones, not black or brown ones."

Whereas Pier's mother, Enrica, eventually approved of Marlon, she objected violently to her daughter's romance with James. Her first problem was that he was not a Catholic. Even when he promised to convert, she still disapproved of him because of his bad boy image. She'd also heard stories of various homosexual liaisons. According to Enrica, "Dean was always dirty. He was utterly self-centered. He used to come into my house and not even say hello. He'd head for my living room and play loud music, often until four o'clock in the morning. I doubt if he'll ever amount to anything."

At the time, Pier was filming that cinematic disaster, *The Silver Chalice* that starred the young newcomer, Paul Newman—the actor who James most admired after Marlon. James had met Pier when he strolled over from the *East of Eden* set to watch Newman perform in *The Silver Chalice*, one of that engaging young actor's worst roles. Originally Newman was to have played James's brother in *East of Eden*. "I want to check out the competition," James told Kazan. "This Newman baby is hot!"

Hand holding in the Warner Brothers commissary led to hotter dates. Soon Pier was giving James a gold wrist watch and even a miniature gold frame with her picture in it. Referred to as "Romeo and Juliet" in the press, Pier and James began their star-crossed affair, most of it carried out secretly in hideaways along the Pacific Ocean.

Pier claimed—falsely or not—that their love was so great that they once seriously contemplated holding hands together and walking into the Pacific Ocean. "That way, we knew we'd be together forever."

Paul Newman

Marlon told Gilman that he felt that Enrica's objection to James only drove Pier into his arms. Apparently, Marlon was right on this call. Conducting an affair in secret only seemed to add spice to the Angeli/Dean affair, especially since she was also slipping around having an affair with Hollywood's other bad boy, Marlon himself.

"To capture the two bad boys of Hollywood at the same time, both of them men with an ambiguous sexuality, was no small accomplish-

ment for Pier," said Virginia Mayo, who was the actual star of the 1954 *The Silver Chalice* at Warner Brothers.

Pier Angeli and Vic Damone

Occasionally, James might get out of his Brando drag and dress formally, as when he escorted Pier to the premiere of *A Star Is Born* in 1954, a night when Judy Garland was clearly the star.

The romance between Pier and James lasted from late June until the end of September, 1954.

Unknown to James, Pier was also secretly dating not only Marlon, but the singer, Vic Damone. She was having affairs with all three. Although publicly professing to be hopelessly in love with Pier, James behind her back mocked her as "Miss Pizza Pie."

Gilman later claimed that it was Marlon himself who ended—at least temporarily—Pier's affair with James, an act that drove her into the arms of Damone.

Unknown to either of the other parties, Marlon arranged dates with both James and Pier on the same night. James was invited to arrive an hour earlier. Two hours previously, Marlon had called Pier, telling her that he'd injured his leg in a fall. He asked her to enter his living room through the garden, telling her that the door would be open.

When she arrived, Marlon was nude on the sofa with James. "It was a hot sixty-nine the boys were having when innocent, impressionable Pier walked in on them," Gilman said. "I was in another room but I heard her scream and saw her racing out through the garden and back to her car."

James left the following morning, flying alone to New York. Someone tipped off reporters that his romance with Pier was off. In New York, journalists asked him what had happened.

"Something," he said enigmatically.

James, Marlon, Pier, and certainly Gilman knew what that "something" was.

James was still in New York when he heard over the radio an announcement from Louella Parsons that Pier was going to marry Damone.

Avidly, Marlon read press comments about the unhappy end of the romance between Pier and James, his own two lovers. "I am normally contemptuous of the press because of all the shit they've written about me. But in reading about Jimmy and Pier, I now know that most columnists live in a fantasy world. They're not only vindictive, they are fools. All these stories are a lot of bullshit—nothing more!"

Legend has it that James, astride his motorcycle, waited across the street from St. Timothy's Catholic Church at Beverly Glen and West Pico, in Los

James Dean

Angeles, during Pier's marriage to Damone.

"The press continues with its fantasies," Marlon told Gilman. "That shit story about Jimmy waiting across from the chapel! While Pier was getting married, our boy was probably somewhere taking something up the ass. I should know."

Far from being heart-broken over Pier's marriage to Damone, James had launched a hot and torrid sexual affair with Rock Hudson. Other than Marlon himself, the handsome actor had always been James's fantasy male and one of the imagined passions of his life. Alongside pictures of Marlon in his bedroom, James had posted three pictures of the well-built Hudson posing without his shirt. The romance with Hudson would endure until they were cast opposite Elizabeth Taylor in Edna Ferber's *Giant* and went on location together in Texas. The strain proved too much for their affair.

Biographers have claimed that James and Pier never met again, and that each mourned the loss of the other until their dying days.

Other, far more knowledgeable sources maintain that the affair between Pier and James continued until his untimely death. These same sources also claim that Marlon continued his affair with Pier for another eighteen months into her marriage to Damone. Always contemptuous of Pier, Gilman said, "She wanted Marlon's dick, Dean's pecker, and Damone's Italian sausage."

As shocked as she might have been witnessing Marlon having sex with James in the Brando living room, Pier eventually recovered from the experience and continued her affairs with both actors even during her marriage. "It was all very sick," Gilman claimed. "Everybody knew that Dean was one disturbed little boy. In time, when Pier took her own life, the world learned how mentally unbalanced she was too. Compared to Pier and Dean, Marlon looked sane—and that's one hell of an accomplishment for him."

When Hollywood reporter Joe Hyams once arrived at James's house, he encountered Pier in tears fleeing from the same premises. Even though married to Damone at the time, she'd come to tell James of her pregnancy. Hyams later reported that he found Dean looking distraught. "I held him to my chest and rocked him." The distinct impression Hyams gathered was that Pier believed that James was the father of her baby, not Damone.

By coincidence, Damone encountered James at the Villa Capri restaurant in Los Angeles on the night in August of 1955 when Pier gave birth to a son. "Come on, let's drink a toast to my son."

James raised his glass to the singer. “I’ll drink a toast to my son any time,” James said. The head waiter had to pry the two combatants apart.

When Marlon heard about these fisticuffs, he said, “Both Damone and Jimmy are full of shit. I’m the father!”

After James’s death, Marlon’s days with Pier were numbered. As Marlon found other interests, and Pier continued to stay with Damone, “the noble tool spoke for the last time,” in the words of Gilman.

In a surprise development, which infuriated Marlon, Pier became close “gal pals” with Anna Kashfi following Kashfi’s bitter divorce from Marlon in 1958 and the subsequent custody battles over their son, Christian.

Marlon told friends that he felt Pier had betrayed him by providing a sympathetic shoulder for Kashfi to cry on and spill out her bitter recriminations against him. Whether Pier ever told Kashfi about her brutal rape by Marlon in Rome is not known.

In her later years, Pier claimed that “Jimmy Dean is the only man I ever loved deeply as a woman should love a man. I never loved either of my husbands the way I loved Jimmy.”

Privately she confided to friends, “I was never in love with Marlon Brando. In fact, today I hate him. Of all the men in my life, of all the brutality I suffered, even the fights with Vic Damone, I detest Brando the most. He used acts of violence on me, both physically and mentally. He’s a sadist! I never want our paths to cross again. I will be bitter toward him until the day I die.”

Even though Marlon came to view Pier as “the enemy,” he still followed the rise and fall of her career in Hollywood. In her final years, after two unsuccessful marriages, she drifted from Hollywood to Rome, accepting what bit parts she could find during her descent into alcoholism and drugs.

When Susan Strasberg encountered Pier in Rome, she reported to Marlon that, “Pier’s still beautiful in a fragile, battered sort of way. But a heavy drug addict. A hopeless creature.”

Elia Kazan, Marlon, Julie Harris, and James Dean

In Los Angeles, it was the night of September 9, 1971. Troubled by the collapse of a once promising career that had her hailed as both “the new Ingrid Bergman” and, absurdly, as “the new Rita Hayworth,” Pier swallowed a massive dose of Phenobarbital. Her lifeless body was discovered the next morning. She hadn’t quite reached her fortieth birthday.

Her family claimed it was “acciden-

tal." Marlon told his friends that "Pier killed herself because she never got over me." That assessment appears highly unlikely.

As a description of her tragic suicide was splashed around the world, James Dean was long dead, of course, and Marlon was indifferent, at least according to Elia Kazan. "I knew Pier from the time she hung out with Jimmy on the set of *East of Eden*. I'm not sure he was that much in love with her. He was carrying on countless other affairs with both men and women when he was dating Pier. Marlon told Pier he loved her, but he deceived her. As for Pier, I think she was so mixed up she didn't know from hour to hour who she loved. I doubt if she loved Damone, but she was sure as hell fascinated with Jimmy and Marlon. Personally, after Jimmy died, I think she used him for publicity purposes, hoping to revitalize a dead career. She claimed to be the love of Jimmy's life. Sorta Romeo and Juliet crap. Jimmy was no longer around, but I spoke to Marlon about Pier's suicide, and he didn't give a fuck. His only remark to me was, 'All of us have to go sometime, somehow, some way.'"

* * *

Even though Marlon had rejected Elia Kazan's offer to star in *East of Eden*, he visited the set of that film to renew his relationship with the director. He wanted to see its star, James Dean, at work in front of the camera. After watching James emote for a while, Marlon privately told Kazan, "It looks like our boy here is wearing my last year's clothing and employing a style of acting I abandoned after my first six months on Broadway in *Streetcar*."

Kazan told Marlon, "I'm directing him in this movie, and he'll probably be a big hit. The boy does have something. Call it star quality, I don't know. My deepest regret is that I'm not directing you in the film. Come on, fucker, it's the story of your life. You could play it brilliantly. You've lived it. The story of a confused and angry young man abandoned by his mother—read that Dodie—and starved for the love of a rigid, puritanical bastard of a father—read that Marlon Sr."

When Kazan called a break for lunch, James invited Marlon to his dressing room. Once there Marlon warned James that by appearing in *East of Eden*, "You're courting fame, and nothing is more destructive than being famous. I can't walk down the street any more but what I'm followed. I can't go see a movie any more but what a line of girls follows me into the theater. The other day I went into a deli to order a hot pastrami on rye and a cream soda, and at least five faggots were suddenly behind me, yelling, 'Marlon, can we have your autograph!' You know what I did? I pulled down my jeans and mooned them. I told them, 'Autograph this, boys. Write Marlon on one cheek, Brando on the other.'"

Paul Newman and James Dean

Marlon was vastly intrigued to learn that Kazan had originally tested James with Paul Newman, who was up for the part of James's brother in *East of Eden*. "I'm very attracted to Paul," James confessed. "On some days I'm in love with you. On other days in love with Paul. At the end of the test, I asked Paul to give me a kiss. Real deep and dirty. He pinched my ass instead. But I wished he'd done more than pinch my bottom," James said. "I always wanted Paul Newman to fuck me and make an honest woman out of me."

Years later when Marlon told this story to Gilman, Marlon said, "Jimmy wasn't the only one who wanted to fuck with Newman. Frankly, I did too. When he worked with Pier Angeli on a picture, she wanted Newman's tool too. Frankly, I don't think any of our horny trio ever got our man."

Back on the day of Marlon's first visit to the set of *East of Eden*, and in the privacy of James's dressing room, he told Marlon of a recent visit from Tennessee Williams, who was in town, working on the outline of a new play, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. "He came by the set to talk to Kazan about directing the play on Broadway," James said. "But once he laid those eyes on me, he didn't have much time for Kazan. Tennessee told me he originally wanted you for the lead. It's the story of a repressed homosexual. Think you can handle it?"

"There's nothing repressed about me," Marlon said.

"Perhaps," James said enigmatically. "I invited Mr. Williams to come back to my dressing room. I know he went down on you several times during the war when you boys were on Cape Cod together. He was a bit drunk when he showed up here. But I took down my jeans and let him blow me, perhaps like he'd done to you at one time. I guess I'm the better man. After that blow job, Mr. Williams offered me the lead role in the Broadway production. I hear Kazan thinks *Cat* is going to be a major success. Bigger than *Streetcar*. Out with Brando. In with James Dean. The new boy on the block."

If James thought he was going to anger Marlon, he didn't succeed. Marlon had already turned down the play and told Tennessee that he never planned to venture to Broadway again, especially with one of his plays. "We did it fine the first time, and once was enough for one life."

Kazan later suspected that James remained deeply in love with Marlon, but when he arrived in Hollywood he tried to prove how macho he was by dating Ursula and Pier. "Frankly, Marlon was ready to dump Jimmy at one point," Kazan said. "But, suddenly, on hearing that he was going out with Ursula and Pier, Marlon's interest in Jimmy was piqued again. Up to then,

Marlon had shown no interest in Ursula. Suddenly, Marlon began calling her for dates. I guess he had to prove to Ursula that he was a better lover than Jimmy. Or, maybe, prove something to himself. When it comes to Marlon Brando and Jimmy Dean, who can figure those two out? I mean, Marlon was also dating Marilyn Monroe, and I was too. That would go on for some time. Did it really matter that she would marry some baseball player along the way? Joe DiMaggio was fucked up. So was Arthur Miller. So was Marilyn. So was Jimmy. I guess I was the only sane one in the lot even though my liberal enemies still called me 'the canary.'"

James wanted to date the same women that Marlon did, according to Gilman, including not only Pier Angeli and Ursula Andress, but Katy Jurado too. Marlon exploded when he learned about the Dean/Jurado affair. "That fucking Jimmy doesn't want just to imitate me, he wants to be me!"

During the filming of *East of Eden*, columnist Sheila Graham called James "the poor man's Brando." Even though James worshipped Marlon, he told Elia Kazan, "I want my worship of Marlon to remain private. Public comparison of the two of us as actors is an unfriendly gesture."

After his visit to the set, Marlon began to see James on a regular basis, but not as often as he liked. According to Gilman, James wanted to date Marlon every night. "He torched for Marlon," Gilman said.

"Even when Marlon was out on a date—most often with a woman—Dean stalked his prey," Gilman claimed. "On his motorcycle, Dean often followed Marlon and his date. If they went—say, to a Mexican restaurant—Dean would show up and sit there all night at the bar drinking Tequila Sunrises until Marlon left. I was in the house and know for a fact that Dean often called at three or four o'clock in the morning. Marlon told me that he was sitting in his car one foggy night at a lookout point on Mulholland Drive. He was in the car, with of all people, Natalie Wood. Suddenly, the face of James Dean appeared at the window, staring in at them. I would have been spooked by Dean. But Marlon felt that it was just 'harmless child's play—he's got a crush on me. But so does half the rest of the world, both male and female, so I can't blame Jimmy for that. Once they get a taste of my noble tool, they want to own it. But it belongs just to me. I will decide where to put it to use.'"

Natalie Wood

James kept Marlon entertained with a puckish series of tricks. Like a Houdini he would disappear into the bathroom and lock the door from the inside. Then he would escape through the lone window but also leave it locked from the inside. Marlon would rush to the front door. There was James smiling sheepishly. Marlon could never figure out how he did that

James Dean

trick. Sometimes he would put both a cigarette and lit match in his mouth and put his lips together. He'd then open his mouth and the cigarette would be lit. Also the match would still be burning.

"I think Dean and Marlon shared one bad boy characteristic in common," Gilman said. "When either of them had to piss, they found the nearest wall and pissed to their heart's content regardless of who was looking on. When a wall wasn't available, they used a fire hydrant or a tree like a dog."

James revealed to Gilman in Marlon's presence that during his struggling days as an actor he was the kept boy of Rogers Brackett, a TV producer. Later when Rogers fell on hard times after losing his job in advertising, he appealed to James to lend him some money.

"Sorry, Pops," James said. "I didn't know it was the whore who had to pay."

"I thought the story rather sad, really," Gilman said. "But Marlon laughed for a good ten minutes, like it was the funniest thing he'd ever heard in his life."

In spite of their differences, Marlon and James had a lot in common—and not just their Midwestern origins. Both had fathers who claimed that all actors were "faggots and fairyboys."

"Both had a sexual ambivalence," Carlo Fiore said. "Both had sides so dark that no flashlight would ever be strong enough to penetrate those dark recesses."

One night James told Marlon that the turning point of his life occurred back in Marion, Indiana, when he went to see *The Men*.

Gilman sat on the sofa, listening to James, seated on the floor of Marlon's living room praise the older actor. "You were terrific," James told Marlon. "I didn't know what acting was all about until I saw you in *The Men*. You conveyed so much with minimalism. Suddenly, I knew how to do it. Through you I learned to show anguish. Unlike Bette Davis in constant motion, you taught me the power of stillness. The use of outward serenity to convey internal turmoil, the complete opposite of screen acting until you came along. Even the tiny flicker in your face conveys something, an emotional byproduct, an unrealized dream, an unfulfilled passion. After *The Men*, I decided to become a serious actor. It was the greatest moment of revelation in my entire life."

"All these pronouncements from Dean struck me as a lot of ass-kissing," Gilman said. "I think there was also a lot of ass-kissing of another kind going on in the bedroom as well."

Friends back in New York were startled to get notes from James signed: "From James-Brando-Clift-Dean."

After seeing *The Wild One*, James adopted a new dress code that focused on jeans, black leather jackets, and white T-shirts. As his adulation of Marlon reached a fever pitch, he purchased a motorcycle.

One night James parked his motorcycle and took Marlon for a spin in his new Alfa Romeo. Marlon returned two hours later, his face white. "He's a daredevil on the road," Marlon told Gilman. "I think he has a death wish. He drives like he wants to die and take me with him. If I ever get in a car with him, I'm going to take the wheel. Behind the wheel of a car, Jimmy boy is absolutely fearless."

Marlon always confused Gilman when he made pronouncements about James. "Jimmy wants to be loved but he doesn't," Marlon told him one night, leaving Gilman to ponder that remark for himself.

"Don't fall in love with me," James warned Marlon, in front of Gilman. "When emotional demands are made on me, I collapse."

"Don't worry your pretty head," Marlon told him. "But at least you've revealed to me how to get rid of you in case that's my desire in the future."

"There is a toughness about him that's only pretend," Marlon told Gilman when James had left. "Actually he needs to be nursed like a baby. Sometimes when he's in need of a mother, I let him suckle at my breasts."

Dore Schary was talking of casting James in *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, the story of middleweight champ, Rocky Graziano. Because Marlon fancied himself a boxer, he and James often worked out in the ring. "Frankly, I think Marlon threw some killer punches at Dean when he wanted to punish him," Gilman said. "There was always an undercurrent of latent hostility between Marlon and Dean. It made me uncomfortable to be around the two of them."

James, of course, never made the film. It was given to newcomer Paul Newman. Cast opposite him was none other than Pier Angeli.

After filming *East of Eden*, James showed up at the gallery of Kenneth Kendall to admire a sculpted head, inspired by Marlon, that the artist had crafted. Kendall later revealed that James was so impressed with the sculpture that "he almost devoured it, fondling it, loving it. He was totally fascinated."

While there, he also wanted to see all the pictures of Marlon that Kendall had in his files. "He went through them one by one," Kendall said. "At the end, he was very hesitant, but he managed to blurt out a request."

"Would you sculpt me like you did Brando?" James asked.

At first Kendall wasn't impressed with Dean, who had shown up slovenly dressed at the studio. When the artist went to see *East of Eden*, he became impressed

Dean Memorial Head

and later did a sculpture of James which was placed in Griffith Park. By that time, James was dead.

Gilman claimed that Marlon's affair with James continued until the young actor's death. "Marlon didn't seem jealous or to mind that Dean at the same time was also dating Rock Hudson. The boy's affair with Hudson lasted at least until they shared that rented house in some Texas hicktown during the shooting of *Giant*. When that happened, I think things really soured between Hudson and Dean. Hudson later said some very unkind remarks about Dean."

Midway into the shoot, director George Stevens caused real hysteria in James when he informed him that he had originally offered the role of Jett Rink in the Edna Ferber drama to Marlon.

"Marlon turned me down," Stevens told James. "I then went to Montgomery Clift. He turned me down too."

"Guess you're left with sloppy seconds," James said. Before storming off the set in anger, he told Stevens, "Or should I say sloppy thirds?"

"Hudson and Dean were thick as thieves for a few weeks there," Gilman said. "Marlon merely found their affair amusing, but he warned me that the romance between the two men would not last. 'Rock is so too square for our kinky boy,' Marlon said."

"Late one drunken night I asked Marlon if he'd ever had an affair with Hudson," Gilman said. "I knew he'd attended all-male parties at Hudson's house. In those days, Marlon showed up with Tyrone Power, who was also having an affair with Hudson."

"No, I never fucked The Rock," Marlon said. "Quite the opposite. Rock fucked me. If there's one thing more delectable than my noble tool, it's my rosebud!"

"During his final months with Marlon, Dean was out of control," Gilman said. "Dean arrived about three o'clock one morning. I let him in the house. He was threatening to kill himself if he didn't see Marlon. I woke up a sleepy Marlon who wandered downstairs naked. He conferred privately with Dean. Somehow Dean managed to persuade Marlon to drive away with him in the middle of the night. I hope Marlon was doing the driving."

"I noticed that Dean would get drunk by having only two glasses of vino. And he was one mean fucking drunk. Marlon would just sip a coke observing Dean like a boa constrictor sizing up a chicken to deep throat. Marlon needed to keep his sanity in order to control Dean later in the night. Under the influence of alcohol, Dean reverted from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde. He physically tried to assault Marlon on more than one occasion. Marlon never fought back. A much stronger man, he could have physically restrained Dean."

Rock Hudson

"I shouldn't mention this, and God will get me for it, but Marlon and Dean engaged in some very sick games together, especially near the end of Dean's short life," Gilman claimed. "Very S&M stuff. Marlon on occasion did engage in violence with some of his girlfriends, as has been widely reported. To my knowledge, he never got violent with any of his male lovers except with Dean. They played their dirty games with each other. It was like the two rivals brought out only the darkest side in each other. Many a night I heard Dean sobbing yet begging for more."

"The thing that I found the most disgusting was that the men engaged in fist-fucking," Gilman said. "In the last months of Dean's life, it was widely rumored that he liked to be fist-fucked. I think Marlon turned him on to it. I don't think Marlon ever fist-fucked any other person in his life but Dean, and I think he did that only because he was begged to do so. Frankly, when Marlon first told me about it, I had never heard of such a practice. I didn't even understand how it was physically possible. I mean skin stretches only so far. Later on, I heard reports that Dean frequented bars on Santa Monica Boulevard where he'd pick up two, maybe three, or perhaps on some occasions five bikers willing to fist-fuck him."

Some of James's female dates, such as Betsy Palmer, thought he was not "all that interested in sex. I just assumed that he was almost asexual."

Gilman differed with that opinion. "He had a whole string of seduction mates. To Marlon, I called them Jimmy's little girlfriends and his little fairy-boys. I can't speak for his whole life, but during the time he was dating Marlon, he also had a whole harem, both male and female, each one of whom seemed willing to do his bidding. He was banging some bitch one night, and the very next night getting fucked by some biker. I hear he liked only bikers who dressed like Marlon did in *The Wild One*."

Betsy also used to accuse James of "being queer but this didn't seem to bother him. I once heard Dean on the phone. Apparently, he was being propositioned by Liberace who offered him a thousand dollars to come to Las Vegas with him. That was a hell of a lot of money back then. Liberace told Jimmy that he'd already seduced Rock Hudson, and wanted Jimmy next. Apparently, if Jimmy is to be believed, Liberace also told him that he wanted to go to bed with him even more 'than I want to seduce Marlon Brando, although I'll get that one too.'"

Liberace

Another Dean girlfriend at the time, Arlene Sachs, claimed that she had just turned seventeen when James took her virginity. "There was blood all over. I know a lot of people were claiming that he wasn't interested in sex but I think he was very interested. He devoted every night to its pursuit."

James Dean in his Porsche

One night, James invited aspirant actress Rachel Evergreen to an orgy. "Everybody knew why they were there, but nobody knew how to get the orgy to begin," Evergreen said. "Jimmy dropped his blue jeans—he wasn't wearing any underwear—and began jerking off in front of everybody. That got the action started."

"Later he told me that Marlon Brando got orgies started just like that in Greenwich Village in the Forties," Evergreen claimed. "'If it's good enough for Brando, it's good enough for me,' Jimmy told me."

James, according to Evergreen, was rather upfront about his homosexual affairs. "When he moved back in with Rogers Brackett after the producer found a job, James was always complaining to me that his ass was sore from having been fucked all night."

Marlon and James in front of witnesses engaged in what was called "a cat fight" at an all-male gay party in Malibu only days before James's death. In front of amused witnesses, Marlon accused James of dating women such as Ursula Andress just to mask his homosexuality. "You and Tab Hunter are doing the same thing," Marlon shouted at James. "Taking out beautiful women and giving them a peck on the cheek at the door. You claim to hate all this manufactured Hollywood publicity crap, yet you indulge in it like everyone else in this cesspool—that is, everybody except me. I've got nothing to cover up. Nothing to be ashamed of. I am what I am, and I'm proud of it."

According to the gay men at the party, James ran from the house and tried to get on his motorcycle but Marlon prevented him from doing that.

Ronnie White said that "Dean might have been killed that night if Brando had let him get on that motorcycle. He'd been drinking heavily all afternoon. At my party Brando had only a cranberry juice cocktail. Brando drove Dean home in Brando's car. The next afternoon a hung-over Dean arrived at my house and rode off on his motorcycle without even coming inside to thank me for the party. What a bitch! I don't care what has been written about Dean and Brando. From what I observed, they were just two bitchy queens going at it. Not macho studs. In fact, I think both of them were just drama queens."

The sun was starting to go down on the afternoon of September 30, 1955. During the making of *Giant* in that "drought-stricken whistle stop" of Marfa, Texas, director George Stevens had forbidden James to go car racing. With filming behind him, he was driving his Porsche Spyder to Salinas to compete in a race there. With him was his mechanic, Rolf Wütherich.

With the afternoon sun blinding him, James raced to an intersection along Route 41.

Also approaching the intersection was Donald Turnupseed, a student from Polytechnic Institute at San Luis Obispo, who was driving a black and white Ford sedan. He was rapidly approaching Route 41 at its Y-shaped junction with Route 466. Convinced that he could see his Porsche, James accelerated. Inexplicably, Turnupseed's car began to cross 466. The Porsche smashed into the heavy sedan.

James was killed instantly on impact. His neck was broken, his chest crushed. He was only twenty-four years old.

Dazed, Turnupseed stepped from the wreckage of his car. He had only a slight bruise, but would live for the rest of his life under the burden of "the man who killed James Dean." There were even death threats against him from James's most devoted fans.

Thrown clear and landing in a ditch, Wütherich survived, although he faced several subsequent operations. He lived until 1981, dying at the age of fifty-three in his native Germany. The cause of death was another car accident.

With Sam Gilman, Marlon drove to the site of the wreck a week later. Gilman stayed in the car at Marlon's request. Getting down on his knees, Marlon surveyed the ground. Only a few feet away, Gilman heard his words.

"Jimmy, I loved you more than I told you."

Chapter Fourteen

Although Marlon had avoided Cary Grant since his early days in Hollywood, he did agree to accept a call from that actor one lazy afternoon when he was lounging in the sun in his garden. Sam Gilman brought the phone to Marlon.

"Hey, kiddo," came a distinctive voice familiar to movie audiences the world over. "Thanks for the memory."

"I thought Bob Hope owned exclusive rights to that line," Marlon said.

"It's a show business tradition to steal from each other," Grant said. "Just ask Milton Berle."

"What's up?" Marlon asked, obviously not eager for another one of Grant's propositions.

"I just read a script sent over by Joseph Mankiewicz. He wants me to play Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls*."

"You'd be great in the role," Marlon said.

"I turned him down. I suggested you for the part."

"I don't get it," Marlon said. "This is Stanley Kowalski from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Everywhere I turn someone seems to think I can be a song-and-dance man. I don't even know how to sing, much less dance, except for Katherine Dunham routines. You're not the first person who wants me to appear in this musical."

"Frank Sinatra desperately wants the role," Grant said. "I heard you don't like Sinatra. Take the role just to piss him off."

"It's a deal!" Marlon said.

Grant hung up the phone without a good-bye.

* * *

Even before filming began, the award-winning *Guys and Dolls* was viewed as a hot property in Hollywood. Since its 1950 opening on Broadway, it had run for three years. Shelling out a million dollars for the film rights, Samuel Goldwyn, then seventy-two years old, purchased the property in 1954.

In a surprise development, Goldwyn contracted with Joseph Mankiewicz to direct *Guys and Dolls*, even though he'd never done a musical before. It

took Goldwyn several weeks to decide on the male star, the role of gambler Sky Masterson. Sinatra kept badgering Goldwyn for the part, but the aging producer turned a deaf ear.

After Grant rejected the role, Goldwyn wanted Gene Kelly. The dancer was eager to restore his box office clout after the fiasco of *Brigadoon* and his shelved ballet film, *Invitation to the Dance*. Metro's corporate chief, Nick Schenck, refused to release Kelly. Schenck had a long simmering feud with Goldwyn, and told him, "Go fuck yourself!"

Undaunted, Goldwyn continued his search for a male star, approaching Burt Lancaster. He too turned down the role. At one point, Goldwyn flirted-with the idea of casting Bob Hope and Jane Russell in his costly musical. Tony Martin was briefly considered. That casting was one of Goldwyn's better ideas. Even Bing Crosby was a candidate. Goldwyn then toyed with the possibilities of casting Kirk Douglas, Robert Mitchum, and Clark Gable.

Finally, the producer decided to cast against type and sent the script over to Marlon. Within days, Marlon rejected it. But Goldwyn persisted, appealing to Mankiewicz, who'd had an easy working relationship with Marlon during the filming of *Julius Caesar*.

The director wired Marlon: "UNDERSTAND YOU'RE APPREHENSIVE BECAUSE YOU'VE NEVER DONE A MUSICAL COMEDY. YOU HAVE NOTHING—REPEAT NOTHING—TO WORRY ABOUT BECAUSE NEITHER HAVE I. LOVE, JOE."

Marlon's closest friends, including both Gilman and Carlo Fiore, urged him to take the part to show the world that he could be effective in something other than a heavy drama. Finally, after Mankiewicz assured him that his singing voice would be dubbed, Marlon wired Goldwyn with his acceptance

Brando in *Guys and Dolls*

But finding an accomplished singer to match Marlon's rather high-pitched speaking voice proved difficult.

Going back on his original promise, Mankiewicz then decided that Marlon would have to use his own voice. Frank Loesser was brought in. He had created the music and lyrics for the Broadway version of *Guys and Dolls,* following a script by Abe Burrows and Jo Swerling, who'd based their musical on the Damon Runyon story, *The Idyll of Sarah Brown*.

After working with Marlon for two weeks, Loesser recorded his voice, telling Mankiewicz and Goldwyn that

Marlon had a "voice that was of a pleasing, husky baritone quality." On hearing a recorded version of his own singing, Marlon declared that it "sounded like the mating call of a yak." Later, he changed his appraisal, lamenting that his voice "sounded like the wail of a bagpipe through wet tissues." Goldwyn saw great possibilities in Marlon using his own voice. "I can just see the headlines," he told Mankiewicz. "BRANDO SINGS!"

The Italian vocal coach, Leon Ceparro, was brought in to teach Marlon how to sing. The usually testy, finicky, and highly critical coach was kind to Marlon's voice. He claimed that Marlon "has an opera singer's palate. He can sing a top B flat without effort. This is a tremendous feat after only a few weeks of training."

At one point Ceparro made an uncharacteristic and preposterous statement, claiming that Marlon could "make the Met if he studied hard enough."

Marlon told reporters, "Up to this time my singing has been confined to the bathtub. But my voice coach tells me I'll be quite a dramatic tenor."

Marlon knew that the press was making fun of him for accepting a role in a musical. One day he confronted some other reporters. "When I was a rebel, you boys portrayed me as an asshole. I was the hot copy boy who scratched his ass and pissed on the rug. What am I now to you boys?" Without waiting for an answer, he stormed off.

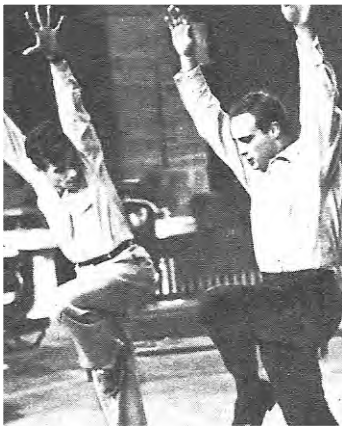
With a few exceptions, almost the entire cast was poised to ridicule Marlon behind his back. But he found an ally in Francis, Goldwyn's wife. She'd listened to a recording of his voice and claimed, "Marlon sounds like a young Fred Astaire. Not only that, but he taught me the proper way to do barbecue, Nebraska style."

Actually sound engineers had to work for weeks, splicing together pieces of various sound tracks before getting a complete song as recorded by Marlon.

After the film's release, Marlon's singing voice didn't cause shock waves in America. But it did in Germany. Up until then, Marlon's movies had each been dubbed into German by a gravel-voiced baritone. Upon hearing Marlon's high-pitched singing, audiences booed. By the thousands many didn't go to see his future movies, since his macho image had been destroyed by the high register of his voice in *Guys and Dolls*.

Marlon knew that his dancing would also be a problem, even though he'd performed with the Katherine Dunham troupe in New York. "But that was a different type of dance," he told Fiore. "This *Guys and Dolls* shit is difficult hoofing and hard to pull off."

The brilliant dance director, Michael Kidd, was brought in. Marlon's dancing didn't annoy Kidd as much as his constant gum chewing. Kidd brought a bucket to the studio and carried it around, telling Marlon to "spit it out." Later, Kidd said, "I wish Marlon would get his oral gratification some-



Michael Kidd choreographs Marlon for his role as Sky Materson

where else, if you get my drift. He's certainly no dancer but he's musical. And he loves to hoof it."

After working with Marlon, Kidd continued his kind appraisal, regardless of what he might have personally thought. "Marlon moves like a prizefighter—very light on his feet. A little heavy for ballet, but audiences will be agreeably surprised when they see him on the screen."

Marlon's fans were surprised to hear he'd be singing and dancing in a musical, and they wondered why their idol had accepted such an unconventional role. Unknown to his legions of admirers, Marlon desperately needed the money, and Goldwyn was offering him $200,000 for starring in *Guys and Dolls*.

Marlon would later tell author Truman Capote, "I wanted to do something bright, something yellow. Up to now the brightest thing I've ever done was red—red, brown, gray, down to black."

* * *

Mankiewicz dreaded the morning that Frank Sinatra arrived on the set to confront his costar. Although Sinatra had lobbied for the role of Sky Masterson, he'd accepted the lesser role of Nathan Detroit, who ran "the oldest established permanent crap game in New York." Sinatra's role called for a Jewish borscht belt comedian, an actor like Sam Levene, who had been perfectly cast in the part on Broadway. Ironically, there was little singing associated with Sinatra's role, since he'd have been perfectly suited to sing Loesser's rapturous songs.

Angry for having been cast in the minor male lead, Sinatra was still fuming over Marlon's affair with his beloved Ava Gardner. He was also still resentful that he'd lost the role of Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront* to Marlon.

Marlon was contemptuous of Sinatra, telling Mankiewicz that, "He's a great talent on stage but a shithead off stage. He thinks he's god and parades around with a string of henchmen following him. The crooner can't act. I think he peaked when he was a bobby sox idol back in the war years."

In spite of their differences, Marlon tried to befriend Sinatra on the first day. He even asked him if he could come to his dressing room for some act-

ing tips. “Look, Brando, don’t give me any of that Method acting shit!” The two actors rarely spoke during the rest of the shoot.

Sinatra was known as a one-take actor. In no less than two takes, he’d get it right. In contrast, Marlon often required twenty to twenty-five takes.

In their first scene together, Sinatra had to eat a slice of New York deli cheesecake, as he attempted to con Sky Masterson into a sucker bet. After going through almost two cheesecakes, Sinatra stood up in rage. “These fucking New York Method actors! How much cheesecake do you think I can eat?” He turned to Mankiewicz. “Don’t put me in the game, coach, until Mumbles here has finished rehearsing.” He stormed off the set.

The next morning, Sinatra’s temper had cooled, and he resumed eating that cheesecake. This time Marlon required only three takes. Even though Mankiewicz wasn’t satisfied with the scene, he decided to print it anyway.

Fiore had been hired as Marlon’s stand-in and was a close observer of what was happening. “Marlon had traditionally seduced his competition like Burt Lancaster and Monty Clift. But Marlon’s charm was wasted on Sinatra. There was no way that Marlon was going to get to suck Frankie’s big dick. That Hoboken WOP liked pussy too much. Ol’ Blue eyes detested Marlon and often looked like he wanted to have him killed. Perhaps do it personally.”

As had been defined before he accepted the role, Sinatra was supposed to both speak and sing with a Bronx Jewish accent. But breaking out of character almost from the first day, Sinatra launched into his smooth balladeer’s voice, singing flawlessly and without any accent. When Marlon heard Sinatra’s first number, he was livid with anger.

Behind Sinatra’s back, Marlon went to Mankiewicz to protest. “Sinatra’s singing is all wrong. Where’s the Jew? The Bronx accent? He’s supposed to clown it up. But he’s singing like he’s been cast opposite Judy Garland and is competing against her ‘Over the Rainbow’ voice. You can’t have two god damn romantic leads in *Guys and Dolls*. I’m the fucking romantic lead, and you’ve got to do something about it!”

“Why don’t you go tell Sinatra how to sing a song?” Mankiewicz asked sarcastically.

When Mankiewicz refused to redirect Sinatra, Marlon exploded in fury in his dressing room in the presence of Fiore. “I’ll never work with that fucking Mankiewicz

A captured scene from *Guys and Dolls*, though similar to what Brando would like to have done to his co-star, Frank Sinatra

again. What a weak nelly he is not to stand up to Sinatra. At least Mankiewicz has stopped sucking James Mason's prick now that he's lusting after Jean Simmons."

Frank Sinatra

Sinatra also had complaints about Marlon's singing. Speaking privately to the director, he said, "Don't you see how humiliating it is for me to be stuck in the chorus backing up Brando in 'Luck, Be a Lady tonight?' The guy can't even carry a tune, and I've had to be on camera for a total of fifty takes already. The fucker still hasn't got it right. I'm the world's greatest interpreter of that song, and I'm hearing its worst rendition from Mumbles."

Marlon refused to watch the takes. Sinatra sat through every session in the studio. After watching Marlon and Jean Simmons perform on screen in one scene, Sinatra told Mankiewicz: "If nothing else, *Guys and Dolls* proves how much Brando is out of his depth in anything but serious drama. Critics call him a tiger of an actor. Tell tiger tail to work only in feline parts in the future." Before leaving, he turned to the director a final time. "Tough shit for Brando! There aren't that many tiger parts around these days."

The camera picked up some of the hostility and tension between Marlon and Sinatra. After three weeks, Marlon was reduced to calling Sinatra "that WOP from Hoboken. Did you know his fat mother, with her unwashed ass, was really an abortionist?" Marlon never explained why he thought Mrs. Sinatra had a butt none too clean.

When Sinatra heard this, he threatened to personally "beat the cocksucker to a pulp." Aware of Marlon's bisexuality, Sinatra countered Marlon's growing criticism of him by calling him a cocksucker—not to his face but loud enough on the set that Marlon could clearly hear him.

Marlon's nerves were reaching an explosive level. Before filming began, he'd reduced his one hundred and ninety pounds down to one hundred and sixty-five by keeping to a diet of steak, salads, and fresh vegetables. But as his agitation increased, Marlon's overeating began in earnest, and his weight shot up again. "The heavy drape jacket you see him wearing in the movie was meant to cover up his expanding thighs which were growing elephantine at one point," Mankiewicz claimed.

As confirmed by actor Regis Toomey, cast in the role of Arvide, "The entire cast was sharply divided into two warring camps: pro-Brando and anti-Sinatra, or pro-Sinatra and anti-Brando. Sinatra was snotty and very difficult. It was obvious to the cast that he hated both Brando and his own role as

Joseph Mankiewicz

Nathan Detroit. He could be a prick. He gave Mankiewicz a hard time. If there was a need for communication between Sinatra and Brando, Sinatra sent one of his henchman. To communicate with Sinatra, Brando sent Fiore."

Toomey also noted that it didn't help relationships between the two stars when Marlon won the Oscar for his role in *On the Waterfront*, the announcement coming in the early days of filming for *Guys and Dolls*.

One day Marlon told Fiore, "Sinatra is the kind of guy that when he dies he's going to heaven to curse God for making him bald."

"Meow!" Fiore said. "If I didn't know what a macho heterosexual stud you were, I'd swear that you were a queeny bitch."

"Get the fuck out of my dressing room," Marlon told him. "Or else I'll stick my noble tool up your ass, and you'll scream like a stuck pig! You know you've always wanted it."

"I hope you're joking," Fiore said.

"Don't test your luck," Marlon told him.

Fiore reported that one scene with Sinatra called for endless retakes. In the scene, Marlon was supposed to put his hand at Sinatra's throat and cover his bow tie to see if Sinatra could describe its color. "It appeared at one point that Marlon actually wanted to choke Sinatra instead of covering his bow tie," Fiore said. "It got so bad that I felt Sinatra was going to order his goons to beat up Marlon. Then a surprise. Marlon seemed to be fed up with Brando himself. His nerves frayed, he walked off the picture.

"Get someone else," he told a startled Mankiewicz. "I'm through. I'm leaving the studio. *Guys and Dolls* is a piece of shit, the smelly kind."

By the next morning, Mankiewicz had stayed up half the night persuading Marlon to come back to the studio. He showed up on time and completed the scene with Sinatra in one take.

Off camera, neither actor spoke to the other, not even a good morning.

The worst was yet to come.

* * *

One afternoon when Sinatra wasn't needed on the set of *Guys and Dolls*, Ava Gardner showed up. According to Fiore, she spent the rest of the day in Marlon's dressing room. Fiore himself delivered the message to Mankiewicz that Marlon would not be available for an appearance before the cameras until the following day.

Ava's motives, to put it mildly, are suspect here. She liked Marlon, but it was clear that she never had any abiding passion for him. Their affair was a sometimes thing, as the two of them pursued other interests.

Fiore speculated, perhaps accurately, that Ava wanted to make Sinatra jealous. "Her appearing on the set that day, with Sinatra out of the picture, both figuratively and literally, was her fuck you to Ol' Blue eyes," Fiore said. "Since the crew was equally divided into Sinatra and Brando camps, she knew that word would get back to Frankie boy before the rooster crowed. And it did."

Years later, Mankiewicz claimed that he felt "Marlon was playing with fire. He'd already antagonized Sinatra to the point that I suspected any day Sinatra would call up two henchmen from Hoboken to pay a call on 'Mumbles.' To mess around with Ava like Marlon was doing was asking for it. I knew Marlon very well, but I didn't tell him how to run his private life just as I refused, even though I was the director, to tell Sinatra how to sing. I'd directed Ava in *The Barefoot Contessa*. She had a will of her own. I could hardly tell her what to do on camera, much less off camera. I didn't want open gunfire on the set of *Guys and Dolls* but I clearly anticipated it. The next day I told Marlon that if he wanted to have an affair with Ava, he should do it in private. Not on the set. He seemed placid about the whole event, acting like there would be no repercussions from Frankie boy. I knew otherwise."

"When a woman as beautiful and sultry as Miss Tar Heel comes to get serviced by my noble tool, only a cad of a man would turn down a lady in distress," Marlon told Mankiewicz. "It was my duty to rise to the occasion, and that is exactly what I did."

Mankiewicz was surprised the next day when he encountered Sinatra. "Far from being enraged, he seemed relatively cool," Mankiewicz said. "That is, relatively cool in Sinatra's terms. He was always a bundle of energy. He reminded me of a firecracker about to go off at any moment. I knew that at least ten people had told him about Ava's visit to Marlon's dressing room. Sinatra even had a scene on camera with Marlon that day. Even though he didn't speak to Marlon, the scene went easily. Sinatra performed brilliantly on the first take. It took Marlon ten takes but he finally got it. Instead of showing his usual impatience with Marlon blowing the scene, Sinatra willingly suffered

Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner

through every retake until Marlon did what I wanted. Then Sinatra got up, excused himself, and went to his dressing room, where he was constantly surrounded by his flunkies. When not on the set, he was on the phone to Chicago, New York, Las Vegas, Miami, and especially Havana for some reason. I figured that guy had a lot of far-flung business interests and deals going on that I wasn't privy to and didn't want to be."

Producer David Dexter once said, "Handling Sinatra is like defusing a ticking bomb." Mankiewicz agreed with that assessment. He just wanted to wrap *Guys and Dolls* and get it in the can before any eruptions occurred.

He was not to get his wish.

Sinatra had married Ava Gardner on November 7, 1951, but their divorce would not come through until July 5, 1957. Long before that, Ava had confided in Marlon that the marriage "was all but over."

Marlon told Fiore, "What Sinatra doesn't know is simply put: Ava Gardner is through with him. She's moved on to other dicks. Not dicks as big or as impressive as that dangler Sinatra carries between his legs, but nonetheless other tools. Sometimes tools not as noble as my own. He's still carrying the torch for her. It's sad, really. I've never had his problem. My problem is trying to get a woman to move on when I'm through with her. I would never carry the torch for any woman. With my pick of all the beautiful women in all the world, do I need to carry the torch for just one woman? No way! Sinatra is a fool. I heard he even had Lauren Bacall deliver a coconut cake to Ava. Did that swooner—so beloved by the 1940s bobbysoxers—really think a coconut cake would do it? Ava hates coconut. She told me so herself. Now if Sinatra had sent her favorite, chocolate fudge, he might still be getting some North Carolina pussy."

Two days later, Sinatra got his revenge, or so it appeared. Fiore is the only source of the revelation of what happened to Marlon, who later wanted to cover up his humiliation and keep the news from Mankiewicz and other members of the crew. Marlon certainly had no intention of going to the police.

In Fiore's own words, here is what happened.

"Marlon often rode his motorcycle home from the studio. On the days he did that, I would return to his house maybe an hour or so earlier and get everything ready for him. That often meant lining up the 'entertainment' for the evening. Sometimes it would be one of the cast members, male or female, from the set of *Guys and Dolls*. With Marlon, you never knew who he would show up with for the night. When Marlon failed to arrive at the appointed time, I didn't think anything of it. He was often late. Sometimes if he met some meat along the way, he didn't show up until the next morning. For a month I had been staying over at Marlon's place, although I lived elsewhere. But that's another story."

By midnight when Marlon didn't show up, I went to bed. Around two o'clock, I heard Marlon calling for me from the living room. It was a real distress call. I jumped out of bed buck naked and headed downstairs. What I saw horrified me. Marlon wasn't beaten and bloody like he appeared on the screen in *On the Waterfront*. But there was something wrong. First, he looked like shit. But it was more than that. He looked like he'd just visited hell and had escaped with his life."

"As the morning wore on, and I tended to him, I learned only a little bit of the story. For reasons of his own, Marlon chose to spare me some of the details. It seems that he was accosted by three men while he'd parked his bike at some remote garage and had gone inside to use the men's toilet. One of the guys entered the men's room. He had a gun with him. Marlon was forced into some big black car and driven somewhere. He wasn't sure. The men threatened to kill him. Marlon was told that before they killed him, he was going to be castrated. It was sort of like the Chance Wayne role that Marlon turned down in Tennessee Williams's *Sweet Bird of Youth*."

"Marlon claimed that he suffered an agonizing two-hour ordeal with these men who held him at gunpoint in the back seat of a limousine. 'They kept talking about killing me and castration', Marlon told me. 'One of the goons told me that he was going to offer me a choice: He could kill me, a quick and easy death with a bullet in the heart. Or else he'd let me live. If he let me live, he'd castrate me and then carve up my face so that no plastic surgeon could ever repair it. He said that he'd let me make the choice of these two evils.'"

"Marlon told me that he had never been so frightened in all his life. 'If those guys were actors, all of them should receive Oscars,' Marlon said. 'I thought they were the real thing. From the way they talked, they sounded like they were from back East. If anything, they sounded like some of the stevedores I worked with in Hoboken. They meant business. I was sweating blood. I also shit my pants. They put the fear of God in me. Don't you get it? God! *One* Frank Sinatra.'"

"I seriously questioned Marlon," Fiore said. "At no point during his torture was Sinatra's name mentioned by the goons. No 'stay away from Ava. Gardner' shit—nothing like that. No warning from Sinatra that the next time would be fatal. I'm sure Sinatra was behind this whole thing. He threatened and intimidated other people in his life—or so I heard. Why not Marlon? His arch-enemy number one."

Marlon said that at one point he realized that the men were not going to kill him or use a knife on him. Somewhere in the Hollywood Hills, he was kicked out of the car. He remembered rolling down a steep ravine. His body was bruised but his face bore no damage. He could complete work on *Guys and Dolls*. He said he climbed back up the ravine and hailed a passing car

about thirty minutes later. It was a man and his wife. They recognized him at once and were only too glad to drive *the* Marlon Brando wherever he wanted to go. He told them that he'd had an accident while riding on his motorcycle, and had run over the edge of the highway. He lied that his motorcycle was wrecked somewhere down the ravine, and that he'd send one of his staff to rescue it in the morning. "Marlon stayed up all night," Fiore said. "I doctored him, even gave him a bath. When morning finally came, he was too weak to go to work. It was a Friday. I called Mankiewicz to tell him that Marlon was sick. He slept all weekend. He didn't even want to get up to go to the bathroom. He had me bring him a pan. I even had to help him take a crap, something I don't relish doing. But Marlon insisted."

"I was with Marlon on Monday morning when he showed up for work. Amazingly he looked terrific, like he'd had a long vacation. No one could tell, I'm certain, that anything had ever happened to him. He went ahead and finished the picture on time. But he gave Sinatra wide berth. Marlon even hired a bodyguard."

* * *

Samuel Goldwyn's first choice for Marlon's costar in *Guys and Dolls* was Grace Kelly, but she turned him down. The producer then offered the role to Deborah Kerr, Marlon's costar in *Julius Caesar*, but she had other commitments. Finally, he awarded the role to Jean Simmons, who had starred with Marlon in *Desirée* where they had become friends. Like Marlon himself, she was an untrained singer.

Jean Simmons and Brando rehearse for *Guys and Dolls*

Jean showed up on the set, and she and Marlon resumed the marvelous camaraderie they'd developed while filming *Desirée*. Apparently, Jean was not aware of Marlon's secret involvement with her husband, Stewart Granger. "That certainly would have put a strain on the relationship," Fiore said. Jean quickly fitted into her role as Sister Sarah, a mission sergeant who falls for a two-bit gambler, as played by Marlon.

After working with Jean for only two weeks, Mankiewicz was like a lovesick schoolboy telling

Goldwyn, "In terms of talent Jean Simmons is so many heads and shoulders above her competition. So much so that I wonder why she didn't become the great star she should have been."

What Mankiewicz didn't tell Goldwyn was that he'd fallen for Jean and would pursue her throughout the picture. The director had deserted the still-warm bed of James Mason and his outspoken wife, Pamela, and had moved on to other interests. When Marlon learned that his director was smitten with Jean, he told Fiore, "At least it's better than sucking a prick's prick!" Marlon was referring to James Mason.

Despite his ongoing feud with Sinatra's boys, Marlon worked smoothly with Jean once again. Of course, where were the usual embarrassing moments. As Sarah, Jean had to deliver a disastrous piece of dialogue when she was talking about a song, "A Women in Love." Before the camera, she was forced to say, "But now it's playing inside me all true and honest as though my heart were beating the drum." On hearing this, Marlon broke into hysterical laughter on camera.

Mankiewicz fought bitterly with Goldwyn over the casting of the second female lead, the role of Adelaide, who in the script has already lived through a fourteen-year-old engagement to Nathan Detroit. Goldwyn wanted Betty Grable to play the aging chorus girl. Mankiewicz wanted Vivian Blaine to re-create her Broadway turn as Adelaide.

When Grable learned that she wasn't going to get the role, she called Goldwyn and thanked him for his support. Then she burst into tears. "My last chance to do a really big musical," she sobbed.

Unknown to Goldwyn, Marilyn Monroe, then the hottest female property in Hollywood, pestered Mankiewicz for the part. She could do that over pillow talk, as she was sleeping with him at the time and had been carrying on an on-again, off-again affair with him ever since he'd directed her in *All About Eve*. Finally, he told her that he was going to let Vivian Blaine re-create the role of Adelaide that she'd done so successfully on Broadway.

Marilyn even called Marlon and asked him to intervene on her behalf. But he told her that his contract did not allow for his approval of leading ladies. "Very well," Marilyn said. "Then it's over between Joe [Mankiewicz] and me. No more nooky for him!"

Firmly maintaining his position, Mankiewicz finally got the green light to cast Vivian Blaine.

Unusual for Marlon, he did not sexually pursue either Jean or Vivian. In contrast, Fiore claimed that Marlon "fucked almost everything else on the hoof, including the extras." He claimed that he didn't know from day to day the target of Marlon's affections.

Fiore remembered one extra who looked "fifty-five if she was a day. Her

black hair was obviously dyed, and her large breasts sagged so low they fell to her navel. Her legs were so thin in proportion to the bulk above that she seemed top-heavy. I couldn't believe it when Marlon asked me to get her telephone number."

"That broad is old," Fiore told Marlon. "She's also ugly as sin."

"You fuck your broads, and I'll plant my noble tool in mine," Marlon told him. "Get her phone number for me."

Fiore got the woman's number. "The next morning he told me that the old bag came over to his house."

"She fucked my brains out," Marlon told Fiore, "and later the bitch thanked me for giving her a chance to fuck *the* Marlon Brando."

Marlon's sexual expressions on the set weren't limited just to women. One of the handsome extras on *Guys and Dolls*, Mickey Gayot, a Broadway dancer, claimed he had an affair with Marlon during the shoot. "Marlon often called me to his dressing room where he'd fuck me. No love making. Just down to action. I really enjoyed it but wanted more, of course. I didn't get it. When the job ended, I gave Marlon my phone number in New York and asked him to call the next time he was in town. One night I read in Winchell's column that Marlon was back in New York. But he never called. I'm still waiting, Marlon!"

Fiore more or less confirmed Gayot's account. "Marlon fucked half the girls in the chorus and a lot of the male extras as well, especially the good-looking or well-built ones. The parade in and out of his dressing room was amazing. Everybody was talking about it. I don't know how he could fuck so many and still have time to get around to service his 'regulars' with that always reliable noble tool of his."

* * *

While working as a stand-in for Marlon on the set of *Guys and Dolls*, Fiore rented a poolside studio on a beautiful Beverly Hills estate that was itself rented to the actress, Barbara Payton. She charged him only forty dollars a month.

A brassy blonde with a black, whoring heart, Barbara Payton flashed on the screen as a bombshell before becoming an alcoholic, drug-addicted hooker.

Years later, Fiore recalled his experience with Payton and Marlon's involvement with her. "The bitch was Hollywood's number one trollop," Fiore claimed, "and I should know. But you can also ask Bob Hope, James Cagney, and Gregory Peck, among countless others for confirmation."

Still young and beautiful at the time she met Fiore and Marlon, Payton had

come from the cold winds of Cloquet, Minnesota, to the warm beds of some of Hollywood's most famous players, including Howard Hughes. She was blessed with blue eyes and a fair complexion that revealed her Norwegian ancestry.

Hollywood's most sexually motivated attorney, Greg Bautzer, once said, "You have never been given a blow-job until you've been on the receiving end of Barbara's skilled mouth and tongue. I've been blown by the best of them—Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich—you name 'em. Barbara takes top prize."

Hughes once told his pimp, Johnny Meyer, "Payton will do anything in bed—and I mean anything. If you want to piss in her mouth, that's okay with blondie."

Before meeting Marlon, Payton had been the Queen of the Tabloids between 1950 and 1952. The single most scandalous movie star ever to emerge from the placid 1950s, Payton dumped her husband in the late 40s and headed for Hollywood determined to make it big. "If a blonde with absolutely no talent like Lana Turner can become a movie star, then I know I can too," she announced to anyone interested.

When her test at RKO didn't work out, she ended up as a carhop at Stan's Drive-In at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenue. Hustling tips and peddling chocolate milkshakes and blood-letting hamburgers, she also did another type of hustling on the side.

The riches from her nocturnal activities allowed her to buy an expensive wardrobe. Soon she was seen at all the posh clubs, including the Trocadero, Ciro's, and El Mocambo. She was hailed as "the Queen of the Night."

Her love nest on Cheremoya Avenue was paid for in 1949 by none other than the much-married Bob Hope. When the comedian refused to give her an additional $5,000 a week in "spending money," she threatened to blackmail him in exchange for her silence. Hope settled what was called "a huge sum of money" on her, but she went through all her new loot in just three months, claiming, "I have expensive tastes."

A.C. Lyles, the movie producer, once claimed that "Payton never had an itch she didn't scratch." Minor actor Mickey Knox recalled that she'd kept him in bed for three days and nights, all in one stretch. "I had to crawl out of that dump on my hands and knees. What a workout! What a pussy!"

She even got involved with James Cagney, who secured her a contract at Warner Brothers for $5,000 a week. He put her in *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye*. The film had hardly been released before she was swallowing Gary Cooper's mighty sword near the sound stages of *Dallas* while taking in $10,000 a week. Suddenly, she was seen around town with the classy New York actor, Franchot Tone, who had been married to Joan Crawford in the 1930s. Tone was twen-

ty-two years older than Payton, and he lavished expensive gifts on her, including jewelry.

During her affair with Tone, Payton also fell for rock-jawed Tom Neal, a sort of dime store John Garfield. Almost sadistically, Payton played one man against the other and would eventually marry each of them, thereby creating two of the shortest marriages ever recorded in Hollywood history.

Barbara Payton

Neal learned about Payton's involvement with Tone, and on the night of September 13, 1951, emerged from the bushes outside Payton's apartment and attacked Tone, smashing his nose and breaking one of his cheekbones. Tone was rushed to the hospital with a brain concussion and remained in a coma for eighteen hours. Morning newspapers headlined this "Love Brawl" across the world.

Marlon wanted Fiore to keep him posted on any "suspicious activities" transpiring within the Payton estate in Beverly Hills. One day Fiore reported to him that he'd seen Payton in her living room going down on her latest lover, a black man who arrived every afternoon on a motorcycle. Seeing Fiore, she acknowledged him with her eyes but continued at her specialty.

Fiore reported to Marlon that the next morning at two o'clock, Payton arrived in his apartment, using her landlady's key, and asked if she could perform oral sex on him, like she'd done with her black lover. He turned her down, or so Fiore claimed.

After hearing this, Marlon told Fiore that he was interested in being fixed up with Payton so that he, too, could enjoy her specialty. He remembered that he'd had a date with her before he encountered another blonde, Marilyn Monroe, leaving the same apartment building where Payton had been living at the time.

During the three months that Fiore lived on Payton's rented estate, Marlon was a frequent visitor. "He said he felt that Payton was only interested in oral sex, although that doesn't appear to be the case."

Marlon learned that Payton liked to perform oral sex while dressed in black fishnet hosiery, a garter belt, and revealing black lingerie.

"No one will ever know the exact details of what went wrong between Payton and Marlon," Fiore said. "He only liked to give me the dirty details of his triumphs, rarely his failures. Payton was a known blackmailer. She'd blackmailed Hope, Cagney, and so I hear, Gregory Peck, although I'm not so sure about Peck. Through some guise that I don't know about, she managed to get compromising pictures taken of her male victims. Somehow pictures of

Payton giving both Tone and on a different occasion Tom Neal a blow-job were circulated all over Hollywood. Don't ask me how, but she managed to get pictures of herself performing a blow-job on Marlon. All that I know is that one day Marlon called me to his dressing room. 'Thanks but no thanks for fixing me up with our fellatio artist, Miss Payton,' he told me. 'Getting away from that bitch has cost me fifty thousand dollars, and you're to blame.'"

Fiore said that earlier, when he had warned Marlon not to get hooked up with Payton, Marlon had brushed him aside.

"Don't you know enough by now not to talk back to the biggest movie star in the history of the fucking world?" Marlon told Fiore. "This is Hollywood. Underlings don't talk back to big stars. Get out and I don't want to see you for the rest of the day unless I need a shit and run out of toilet paper and need you to come and lick me clean."

Fiore continued to live on the estate until one morning Payton announced that she was broke and would have to abandon the property. For the remainder of the filming of *Guys and Dolls*, Fiore moved into the apartment of a Parisian hooker. "Hell, Marlon had to have her too," Fiore said. "He couldn't let me have a girl, even if a hooker, all to myself. He too had to get in on the act. By that time, I had resumed my fondness for heroin, and really didn't give a fuck what he did. Or what the hooker did."

Marlon, according to Fiore, was Payton's last A-list seduction. After he'd extricated himself from her life—all at a price—Payton was headed for Skid Row. She moved deeper and deeper into heroin addiction and—among other professions—became a lesbian-for-hire. She ended up a broken down and snaggle-toothed whore working Santa Monica Boulevard, jumping inside the cars of strangers and giving fast blow-jobs for ten dollars while her clients kept the motor running.

In February of 1967, Payton, unconscious, was found in the parking lot of Thrifty's Drug Store in Hollywood. At first, sanitation workers thought that her reclining body was a bag of trash. She'd been living on the streets for the past three months. She was rushed to Los Angeles County General Hospital.

Marlon learned of her plight in the morning newspapers and had Sam Gilman deliver five hundred dollars in cash to her hospital bed. With the money, after her release from the hospital, she went to stay with her parents, both of whom were also alcoholics. In May of 1967 her mother found her slumped over a toilet. Her daughter was dead. An autopsy revealed that she'd died of a heart attack and liver failure just six months shy of her 40th birthday.

Later in life, Fiore said that, "Marlon Brando, my former friend, had more affairs with movie stars, male and female, than any other star in the history of Hollywood. But his affair with the very sleazy Barbara Payton—the most hot-to-trot hoyden who ever graced the silver screen—has to rank as the tawdriest of his seductions."

* * *

At the end of the filming of *Guys and Dolls*, Goldwyn presented Marlon with a shiny new black Thunderbird, a car that back in the mid-Fifties was all the rage. When invited to the New York premiere of *Guys and Dolls* at the Capitol Theatre on the night of November 4, 1955, Marlon felt obligated to attend, even though he hated film openings. He agreed to pick up Jean Simmons and ride with her to the premiere.

As their limousine neared the theater in the Times Square area, Marlon remembered screaming fans, mostly female teenagers. He likened them to "a horde of Mongol warriors screaming hysterically."

The fans overran the barricades and descended on the limousine, pounding the windows and trying to break in. Marlon recalled two members of New York's finest in blue arriving on horseback to chase away the mobs. Their pathway cleared, Jean and Marlon were practically carried into the theater. "All I remember that night were hands everywhere on my body," Marlon said. "I must have been groped fifty times before getting into that god damn theater. I felt like Sinatra back in the Forties when he appeared there."

Years later, he still shuddered when he remembered the incident. "It was the most terrifying moment of my life. I thought surely I was going to die."

Otherwise the night went smoothly. The premiere of *Guys and Dolls* was a big event, attended by such notables as New York governor Averell Harriman, along with Mary Martin, Audrey Hepburn, Margaret Truman, William Holden, and Humphrey Bogart.

All the major participants in the film, including Mankiewicz himself, later admitted that *Guys and Dolls* was a great triumph as a Broadway play, but a dud as a movie. Yet despite the cast's cynicism, critic Andrew Sarris hailed it as "the most entertaining musical from Hollywood since *Singin' in the Rain*."

In 1955 it became the second biggest movie attraction in America, grossing thirteen million dollars and eventually receiving four Oscar nominations, although none went specifically to Marlon. That year, only *Giant,* starring James Dean, Elizabeth Taylor, and Rock Hudson, earned heavier grosses.

Even so, Marlon claimed, "This is the last time I'm going to try to take over for Gene Kelly."

* * *

When he first met Anna Kashfi in the Paramount commissary in October of 1955, Marlon would later tell George Englund, his partner in Pennebaker Productions, that she "was the most beautiful woman in the world."

Anna Kashfi

At the time of their first meeting, Marlon was entertaining Eva Marie Saint who was on the lot filming *That Certain Feeling* with Bob Hope. Over lunch, Marlon, according to Kashfi, was "nibbling" at the nape of Eva Marie Saint, his costar in *On the Waterfront*. Distracting himself from Eva Marie's neck, Marlon turned to a nearby luncheon guest, asking, "Who is that good-looking broad in the red sari?"

And thus was launched an ill-fated union that would be played out before the world.

Kashfi said that at first Marlon did not reveal to her that he was a movie star. Instead, according to her, he claimed to be the author of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." She said that it took Spencer Tracy, her costar in *The Mountain*, to explain to her who Marlon actually was.

Although a film actress herself, Kashfi maintained that she'd never heard of Marlon Brando at the time of their meeting. Nor, according to her claim, had she seen any of his films. At the time, Marlon, of course, was the most publicized movie star in the world. Other journalists have maintained that Kashfi knew exactly who Marlon was and had arrived in Hollywood deliberately to seduce him and form a relationship with him, having already heard of his penchant for liking exotic women. Marlon Sr. at one point called Kashfi a "gold-digger."

Their first date had been in that black Thunderbird that Goldwyn had presented to Marlon after the filming of *Guys and Dolls*. Since Kashfi demanded a chaperone, Marlon brought along George Englund, another bachelor. Subsequent dates were in a battered old Volkswagen in dire need of a muffler. Kashfi remembered it as "Marlon's rattrap strewn with beer cans, stained hamburger wrappers, and discarded newspaper sheets that smelled of urine."

Marlon's first seduction of Kashfi may have been tantamount to rape, as he picked her up and carried her into his bedroom without her permission. He told her that rape was "just an assault with a friendly weapon." She would describe his lovemaking as "a well-rehearsed, polished performance—selfish, without warmth or naturalness." She also claimed that he "is not well appointed," adding that, "he screens that deficiency by undue devotion to his sex organ, calling it 'my noble tool.'"

While working with Spencer Tracy on one of his dullest movies, *The Mountain*, Kashfi was touted in the press as "Calcutta born to a fine Hindu family." It was claimed that she could speak eight languages. A talent scout had spotted her at a dance recital in London and had brought her to the attention of Hollywood director Edward Dmytryk.

The affair began on a slow note since Marlon left for Japan shortly after it began to film *The Teahouse of the August Moon*. When he returned, he learned that Kashfi had been hospitalized for tuberculosis. Placed in the City of Hope Hospital in Los Angeles, Kashfi would remain there for three months in recovery. Since the final scenes of *Teahouse* were actually shot within a studio in Los Angeles, Marlon—protected by a surgical mask—became a frequent visitor to her hospital room. He most often showed up in the costume of the Japanese character he played in *Teahouse*. "Herro, herro," he'd greet her. "Raff if you must. I'm just a doctor making one of my house cawrs." To look Japanese, he wore a rubber lid around his eyes and was given protruding teeth, a wig, and layers of yellowish greasepaint. He began to bestow gifts on Kashfi, including Dodie's jewelry, even the pillow he'd removed from under his mother's head only minutes after her death.

At one point in their courtship, Marlon told Kashfi, "If my mother, Dodie, had lived, I could not have married you. She wouldn't have let me go. She loved me too much."

Up until then, the word "marriage" had never been mentioned.

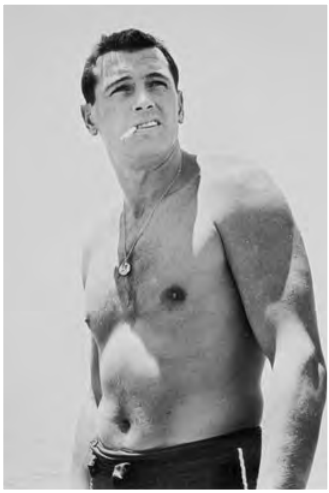
* * *

Kashfi appeared in a small role opposite Rock Hudson in *Battle Hymn* in 1956. They had not become friends. But when she met his wife, Phyllis, the two women instantly bonded. Hudson was a homosexual, and his marriage to Phyllis had been forced onto him in an attempt to prevent an exposé by *Confidential* magazine. Phyllis had worked for the notorious Henry Willson as his secretary. Willson, a homosexual, had "created" Rock Hudson, even inventing his name.

As the Hudson marriage was falling apart, Kashfi frequently stayed with the couple at their beach house in Santa Monica. Marlon became a frequent visitor too, but seemed more interested in disappearing with Hudson than visiting Kashfi.

Marlon needed no introduction to Hudson, who at the time was the number one box office star in the world. Tyrone Power, one of Hudson's many male lovers, had introduced them long before at one of the all-male gay parties that Hudson threw at his home.

On some nights Marlon didn't even drive by the Santa Monica house, but had Hudson come



Rock Hudson

to his place. Friends of both actors always claimed that Hudson and Marlon "were never close."

Sam Gilman had a different point of view. "Just what do you mean by close? Is sucking someone's cock close? Is taking Rock's ten-inch dick up your ass close? I would say that Marlon and Rock rocked while Phyllis and Kashfi sat somewhere wondering where the boys were. What friends should say, if they want to be more truthful, is that Rock and Marlon never fell in love. They just fucked each other's brains out."

During the time he dated Hudson, Marlon, according to Gilman, "was in great shape. For *Teahouse*, he'd dieted himself down to one hundred and seventy-five pounds. Rock used to come by and the two of them would soak pairs of blue jeans before putting them on. Then they would go out and lie in the noonday sun for the jeans to dry. That way, the jeans would be molded to their bodies."

Gilman claimed that he often served the men drinks at Marlon's home, where both of them talked about the difficulty of "being the two most famous movie stars in the world" while trying to maintain a secret life. One day Gilman heard Hudson telling Marlon that he was "ninety-five percent homosexual, five percent bi." In contrast, Marlon claimed that he was "seventy-five heterosexual, only twenty-five percent homosexual."

"Let's work on that twenty-five percent," Hudson said to Marlon, flashing his by now world-famous smile.

When Hudson turned on the charm, like he did with Marlon, he ridiculed himself by calling himself "Charlie Movie Star."

Hudson confided to Marlon, "For me, my wife doesn't exist. She repulses me. It's getting so I can't stand to be in the same room with her."

According to Gilman, Hudson strongly advised Marlon not to marry Kashfi. "I don't even know her, but I sense a deeply troubled individual," Hudson claimed. "There are emotional problems. If you marry her, I think you'll live to regret it. It'll be a fast ride to hell. Trust me, I know about bad marriages."

When Hudson and Marlon got bored, Hudson would do something wild like call up Judy Garland who would sing "The Trolley Song" to them, even "Over the Rainbow."

One afternoon in front of Gilman, Marlon sat in the garden nursing his drink. "We can't fuck any more this afternoon," Marlon told Hudson. "I've

Rock Hudson and Phyllis Gates

had my fill. I don't want to see Anna tonight. Not even Rita Moreno would interest me. I'm sure you don't want to go home to Phyllis. God, how could you have married her? She looks like something a pimply faced boy would take to the senior prom. Let's think of something exciting we can do tonight."

Stark naked, Hudson rose from a chaise longue beside Marlon's pool. "I've got it!" he said. "I'm calling Liz Taylor to come over for dinner. Who knows? We might even have a three-way. After all, the three of us are the biggest God damn movie stars in the whole fucking world!"

* * *

Marlon didn't want Kashfi living with him, so he installed her in a 1930s-era apartment complex in West Hollywood. Marlon Sr. lived in the same building. Later, Kashfi claimed that she'd been moved there so that Marlon's dad could spy on her. The relationship between Marlon Sr. and Kashfi remained cool. She found him a brooding old man "with the residue of debauchery etched across his face."

When Kashfi announced she was pregnant in September of 1957, Marlon decided that he had to get married as a means of legitimizing their child. Both parents accurately predicted that the baby would be a boy. Fiore urged that Marlon seek an abortion for Kashfi.

At the time of their first meeting, Fiore had been impressed with Kashfi. But as he got to know her, he spoke of her "frightening rage." The first time he saw her in a temper fit, she rushed from the bathroom with a large bar of soap which she hurled at Marlon. "It got him between the eyes and cracked in half," Fiore claimed. "Stunned, Marlon staggered back and fell."

Consistently, Fiore warned Marlon not to marry her. Kashfi, according to some reports, suspected that the relationship between Fiore and Marlon was "homoerotic." Many observers close to Marlon came to the same conclusion.

Although admitting many revealing secrets about Marlon's life, as well as his own, including heroin addiction, Fiore always denied that he and Marlon ever engaged in sex. After their visits to Los Angeles, both of Marlon's French friends, Christian Marquand and Roger Vadim, privately revealed their suspicions that the relationship between Marlon and Fiore was sexual. Upon hearing this, Fiore dismissed their suspicions. "Both of those queer French frogs want to get into Marlon's pants themselves."

Brando and Carlo Fiore

But Gilman once told friends that one morning when he was serving coffee, he discovered that Marlon and Fiore, both of them naked, had fallen asleep in each other's arms. And Fiore did admit that one morning, he woke up to the sensation of Marlon playing with his [Fiore's] genitals.

Kashfi not only found the intimacies between her husband and Fiore suspicious, but she also began to suspect that there was something going on between Marlon and Christian Marquand. When he came from Paris to visit Marlon, Kashfi noted that the two actors "displayed an affection toward each other that far overreached the usual expression of friendship."

Brando and wife number one, Anna Kashfi

Marlon didn't want to alert the press to news of his upcoming marriage. However, to buy the wedding ring, he showed up in the center of Pasadena wearing a flowing saffron-colored Hindu robe. Within minutes, his disguise was discovered, and he was mobbed by fans.

Marlon had intended to marry Kashfi in Arizona, but at the time that state barred interracial marriages. Instead the wedding took place at the modest home of Marlon's aunt, Betty Lindemeyer.

Before she could go through with the ceremony, Kashfi demanded a nosegay of Madonna lilies. Surprisingly, no Los Angeles florist had them for sale. The flowers had to be flown down from San Francisco. That took hours.

While waiting, "We sat around drinking champagne until the flowers arrived," Kashfi said. "By then everyone was understandably drunk. At that point I would have married a baboon."

Finally, the ceremony began. On wobbly legs, Kashfi appeared in a sea green sari with a white brocade blouse embroidered with gold. Marlon wore an opera cape with a shocking pink lining and a classic Homburg. Conducting the ceremony was not the Buddhist priest as requested by Kashfi, but a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. J. Walter Fiscus, pastor of the Little Brown Church in the Valley in North Hollywood.

At the time of his marriage, Marlon was thirty-three years old. His bride was twenty-three. She was also two months pregnant.

Marlon told Fiore that he had no intention of staying married to Kashfi and planned to divorce her a few months after the birth of their child. "I married her only to legitimize our boy. In other words, I got married to get divorced."

* * *

Marlon had made no plans for the honeymoon. Driving around aimlessly, he came to the house of Jay Kanter in Beverly Hills. His agent hastily moved out, and the recently married couple spent the first night of their honeymoon in this borrowed house. "There was no sex," Kashfi later said. "It was not the most memorable of honeymoon nights."

Marlon later told Fiore that he didn't like to "touch women when they are in a family way."

Having made no plans, Kashfi suggested to Marlon that they drive out to stay with her newly acquired friends, the Western writer, Louis L'Amour, and his wife, Kathy. They lived in Palm Desert in a house filled with memorabilia of the Old West.

L'Amour later recalled that "Marlon amused us by crushing out cigarettes on the back of his hand. He claimed that he'd learned the trick from James Dean."

"Leaving the gals to clean house," L'Amour practiced target shooting with Marlon. For lunch he drove Marlon to his favorite barbecue joint eighteen miles away, where the two men would always forget to bring food back to their women.

L'Amour said that he found Marlon's habit of public urination amusing. "The first time I got him to the barbecue joint, Marlon had to go," L'Amour said. "We'd been drinking beer in the car. He couldn't wait to get to the crapper. Right in front of the open-air tables, Marlon whipped it out and pissed all over the place, arching the yellow stream high. The diners were shocked at their first up-close exposure to a genuine movie star."

Marlon's habit of urinating whenever he felt like it had gotten him in trouble before, notably at some unknown girl's school where he was nearly arrested, and again in the waiting room of a Boston train station.

Louis L'Amour

At night, Marlon and L'Amour sat on a cowhide sofa in the Western-styled living room, as the writer would regale him with stories of the Old West. In a short time, L'Amour would become one of the most prolific of all Western writers, following in the footsteps of Zane Grey. U.S. presidents such as Dwight Eisenhower would cite L'Amour as their favorite writer. Although Marlon listened attentively, he was more interested in stories of L'Amour's own life.

The writer spoke of his "hobo-ing it cross country" on freight trains with bums, some of whom had been riding the rails for fifty years or so. "I came to know all the hobo jungles, wheat bins, and gaps in piles of timber," L'Amour said. He remembered sleeping on the beach in San Pedro, California, one summer where he said that one night he was held down by "three drunken truckers who raped me. It caused me to have a new appreciation of women. I don't see what fun they get out of having a man stick it to them. To me, I felt like a pig probably does when he's getting castrated. Such pain! Only having a baby must be worse. No one can accuse me of being gay. I hated it!"

Brando and
George Englund

Marlon didn't respond exactly, merely stating that, "Pleasure comes in many forms."

L'Amour told of circling the globe when he was a merchant seaman and visiting the bordellos of "Persia," Egypt, Borneo, and the Dutch East Indies, reciting at great length some of the "specialties" he'd encountered among foreign prostitutes. Marlon seemed intensely interested. Not caring if his new wife were within hearing distance or not, he told L'Amour that he too planned to sample the bordellos of the Far East "in my immediate future."

Before the week-long visit came to an end, Marlon told L'Amour that he wanted him to "jot down all your most intense experiences in a film treatment." He promised that his newly formed production company, Pennebaker, would seriously consider filming his world travels. Marlon promised the writer that, "I'll play Louis L'Amour myself."

"Who else?" L'Amour asked.

George Englund recalled L'Amour arriving at Pennebaker months later not to sell his own scenario, but a hard-boiled Western novel *To Tame a Land*, "a sodbuster oatie," as L'Amour put it. Englund later wrote that L'Amour didn't look the part of a Western novelist. "He was a large man with wavy black hair that suggested a Greek Mafia don whose boats ran hashish out of North Africa," Englund said.

Although Englund expressed doubt about L'Amour, he felt that Marlon "as a Western hero seemed a strong commercial idea."

The project eventually led to Marlon starring in and directing *One-Eyed Jacks*, released in 1961.

* * *

During their first month of married bliss, Marlon informed Kashfi that he intended to lead the same life he'd led before their wedding.

He was true to his word. After their marriage, Kashfi claimed that she saw even less of him than when they were dating. Much to Marlon's horror, she began to talk to the press, including one of his chief critics, columnist Hedda Hopper. Kashfi's remarks, by anyone's standards and especially for the 1950s, were extremely candid, "Living with Marlon is like an afternoon at the races—short periods of orgiastic activity followed by long periods of boredom and anticipation. He's almost never home. He attracts women like feces attract flies."

It was music to Hopper's ears, which rested beneath a large picture hat. Hedda, taking copious notes, learned that, "Marlon leaves a lot to be desired as a romancer. He's just plain clumsy—and that's the truth. If he weren't a film star, he wouldn't get to first base with a woman."

The reporters who trailed after Kashfi discovered that her parents weren't from India but were British, living in Wales. Until Anna's marriage to Marlon, Mr. and Mrs. William O'Callaghan hadn't even known the whereabouts of their daughter.

Mrs. O'Callaghan protested that, "There is no Indian blood in my family or my husband's family," but she did agree that her daughter had indeed been reared in Calcutta when her husband found overseas work there.

Kashfi stuck by her Indian parentage story, claiming that William O'Callaghan was her stepfather—not her real father. She cited David Kashfi, an Indian architect, as her real father and said that she had been the byproduct of an "unregistered alliance"—a demure way of declaring that she was illegitimate. According to her, her mother had married O'Callaghan two years after her birth.

Mrs. O'Callaghan claimed that her daughter, Joanne O'Callaghan, had been born in Darjeeling, India, on September 30, 1934.

In spite of all these revalations about her origins, Kashfi continued to deny she was British. At one point, she claimed, "I have never even heard of the couple," referring to the O'Callaghans.

Publicly, Marlon maintained that reports of his wife's mysterious racial

Louella Parsons, Debbie Reynolds, and Hedda Hopper

origins were "just so much garbage rooted out by a pack of vultures." Even so, the press continued to put the word "Indian" in quotes when referring to Kashfi.

When members of the press moved in on Marlon for his reaction to reports that Kashfi had faked her background, he brushed them aside. He uttered a snappy, "No comment!" Privately, he had plenty to say to his friends, and the issue led to violent fights between Kashfi and himself.

He even hired private detectives to look into Kashfi's claims about her background. One of Marlon's detectives concluded in his report that Kashfi "was about as Indian as Queen Elizabeth of England." Marlon felt he'd been victimized and betrayed. The world press in its blitzkrieg of the story was making him out to be a fool. At one point he called his attorney, asking if he could have the marriage annulled on the grounds that Kashfi had given false information on her marriage license. He became extremely bitter about how the press was invading his privacy with each new exposé. He denounced reporters as, "All scum, just hired buffoons, character assassins. Men driven by brains as aggressive as a hungry Tyrannosaurus Rex."

Kashfi's marriage to Marlon was of the "Stormy Weather" variety. "Even before they got married, they started fighting," Fiore said. "The fighting continued on their non-honeymoon and for every day thereafter. Marriage did not deter Marlon from sleeping with other people."

Launched into married life, Marlon hauled Kashfi around Hollywood to show her off, spending evenings, for example, at the home of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in the Holmsby Hills where Marlon and Bogie played "sadistic chess" until late into the night.

It was during this "marriage from hell," that Marlon became a "porno star." Making use of a camera attached to the foot of his bed, he taped sexual encounters with various women, some of them famous. He also taped certain sexual encounters with men, including at least three movie stars. It was later revealed that one of those movie stars was Rock Hudson.

Kashfi, years from that time, claimed that when her son discovered these homosexual porn movies, it drove him insane, eventually leading him to commit murder. Such claims, of course, were dismissed by the courts. At one hearing before a judge, Kashfi charged Marlon with "unspeakable sexual acts." Accusing him of lapses in morality, she claimed that he "degraded himself and his family in society."

As tensions between Marlon and herself increased, Kashfi reverted to the bottle and pill popping, relying heavily on Nebutal and Seconal.

A baby boy was born to Marlon and Kashfi on Mother's Day, May 11, 1958, at the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. Marlon wanted to name him Christian, after his French lover, Christian Marquand, Kashfi pre-

erred Devi which means "goddess" in Hindi. The child became known as Christian Devi Brando, Marlon calling him "Chris," Kashfi stubbornly sticking to "Devi." He was slated to grow into a tragic life.

Christian Brando and Anna Kashfi

After the fight over a name, their next big battle was over whether to have Christian circumcised or not. Kashfi favored circumcision, Marlon opposing it. In his view, an uncut penis was far more sensitive, and men "who are intact enjoy sex far more." He had repeated that same sentiment to others as well. In retaliation, she publicly claimed that Marlon's opinion was "based on his own undistinguished pudendum." After becoming a senior citizen, Marlon himself would one day undergo the circumcision operation.

In June of 1958 Marlon Sr. married Anna Frenke Paramore, the daughter of Gene Frenke, a real estate investor. She was only thirty-eight. Kashfi claimed that she had to insist that Marlon pick up the phone and talk to his father, who had not invited him to his wedding. "Hi, Pop, I hope you'll be happy," Marlon said before slamming down the phone. He turned to Kashfi. "Why did you make me talk to him? That God damn son of a bitch. I can't stand him. And the way he treated my mother. . .to hell with him."

Likewise, son Marlon had not invited his father to his wedding to Kashfi. "I'll bury him dead before I do!" he had proclaimed.

Anna Frenke Paramore and Marlon Sr.

In spite of saying that, Marlon entertained his father and his new wife frequently when they arrived in Los Angeles. Sometimes Wally Cox and his wife, Betty, joined them for dinner. Rumors were circulating at the time that Marlon's only reason for marrying Kashfi was to camouflage his homosexual relationship with Wally. That gossip appears to be unfounded. The hostilities between Senior and Junior remained intense. Marlon Sr. once denounced his son for his "nonstop screwing."

Upon his return from Japan and the filming of *Sayonara*, Marlon demanded that Kashfi wear kimonos and attend to him like a geisha.

While Marlon was dating other women—or,

more secretly, men—Kashfi went on a house hunt for them, finding a Japanese style home on Mulholland Drive that had originally been built for Howard Hughes. Marlon fell in love with the place. At long last he'd found a home. Mulholland Drive was to be the place where he'd end his days.

The home at 12900 Mulholland Drive was a single-level structure with two bedrooms that stood on four acres of landscaped grounds opening onto panoramic views of the San Fernando Valley. At first he rented it for $1,500 from its owner, "a Buddhist monk." Marlon came to love the privacy afforded by the property and the owner's rock garden and Japanese temple. The house lay at the termination of a winding private driveway. At the beginning of the drive, Marlon posted a sign on the gate. "Unless you have an appointment, under no circumstances disturb the occupant."

After they moved into the house on Mulholland Drive, Dean Martin dropped by to take acting lessons from Marlon, and Maureen Stapleton arrived to occupy the spare bedroom. Fed up with Stapleton's extended stay, Kashfi kicked out this talented actress and longtime friend of Marlon's from the 1940s.

It was only ten days before their first wedding anniversary that Kashfi announced that she was divorcing Marlon, claiming she could no longer tolerate "his strange way of living."

Kashfi fled Marlon's home, moving in with Pier Angeli, who had also separated from her husband, Vic Damone. Some thirty days later Kashfi filed for divorce. In papers read in court, she claimed "grievous mental suffering, distress, and injury."

The Brando/Kashfi divorce became final on April 22, 1959. The terms of the divorce called for Marlon to settle half-a-million dollars upon Kashfi, to be paid out over the next decade, plus one thousand dollars a month in child support, as she'd retained custody of Christian.

* * *

If their marriage was stormy, their post-divorce was a tornado. The battles over the custody of Christian began on November 18, 1959, and continued into the 1970s, revealing details of Marlon's heretofore secret life never presented to the public. "Kidnapping," raids on each other's homes, lurid court testimony, and even violence characterized their battles. No divorced couple in the history of Hollywood fought each other longer and harder—and more notoriously—than did Anna Kashfi and Marlon Brando. A pawn in their fights, Christian himself ultimately became the victim of his parents' endless battles both in and out of the courtroom. This troubled youth would one day make scandalous headlines around the world.

Anna Kashfi attacks Marlon

In their continuing battles over Christian, Fiore claimed that Marlon and Kashfi "were fucking up the kid's life, shuttling him back and forth between Marlon's home and Kashfi's rented houses. The kid became confused. He seemed completely disoriented. Ultimately he grew up to be impossible to handle."

In 1960 Marlon hauled Kashfi into court when she refused to grant him visitation rights to see his son. He asked the court to hold his former wife in contempt and grant him full custody of Christian. Kashfi countered that she had refused Marlon because he showed up at her doorstep with "an unidentified girlfriend." Kashfi was referring to Marlon's latest flame, actress Barbara Luna.

Kashfi also claimed that Marlon "brutally beat me and struck me, and once threw me to the floor of the bedroom while the baby was in my arms." In her testimony, she also maintained that Marlon had taught her son, only two and a half years old, to say "fuck you."

In a stern warning, Judge Benjamin Landis told Marlon, "You are an artist, and you have a certain right to your eccentricities, but the child has rights too."

Four months later they were in court again, Marlon claiming that he had been denied thirteen consecutive visits with Christian. In counter testimony, Kashfi said that she did not want her son exposed to "an immoral man" like his father.

Marlon's attorney requested that Kashfi be held in contempt. Furious, she loudly denounced Marlon in court, calling him a "God damn slob." When the judge ordered a recess, Kashfi, in front of photographers, waited for Marlon to leave the courtroom. She slapped Marlon in the corridor, her violence being recorded on film.

Kashfi wanted to prove that Marlon was unfit to have Christian in his custody. She claimed that Marlon "flaunted his mistresses and illegitimate children" in front of their son.

In court, Marlon attempted to show that Kashfi was often under the influence of drugs, such as barbiturates. He once obtained the key to her apartment. Entering it, he discovered Kashfi "out cold."

"I scooped up Christian and made a hasty retreat," Marlon said.

Flying back from Tahiti on June 29, 1961, Marlon once again battled Kashfi in a Santa Monica courtroom. It was at this hearing that Marlon for the first time publicly announced that he was secretly married to his old girlfriend, Movita.

In the courtroom, Movita made faces at Kashfi as she testified. After hearing both Kashfi and Marlon denounce each other, Judge Eric Auerbach lectured them, declaring that their battle over Christian had become a personal vendetta. He said that the young boy had "become an instrument of vengeance" between the divorced couple.

The portrait Marlon always painted in court was that of Kashfi as a violent woman. "While I was home in bed, she came in and flung herself on the bed and bit me three times and slapped me. I tried to restrain her and get her out of the house, but she went to get in her car and tried to run over me. I went back in my house and locked the doors. She threw a log through one of the windows and came back into the house through the windows. I held her down on the bed and tied her with the sash of my dressing robe. I then called the police. I told them I would not press charges and asked them to escort her home. She refused but the police persuaded her."

Once when an angry judge shouted at her, she stormed out of court. The judge had reprimanded her for not answering questions on the witness stand. "Isn't that too damn bad!" she told reporters in the hall.

* * *

Kashfi seemed hell bent on embarrassing Marlon in every court session. In one of her more lurid custody suits, she claimed that she found the door unlocked at Marlon's home and entered it. According to her testimony, she said that she came into the house and went to his bedroom where she discovered him in bed "with a certain Asian beauty who shall remain nameless."

Surprisingly, since there was nothing illegal about that, Marlon was nonetheless asked in court, "Do you have ladies into your home for sexual reasons?"

Marie Cui with baby

"I have ladies in my home for many purposes," he responded, "including sexual."

The unknown woman was actually Marie Cui, with whom Marlon was having an affair.

While filming some scenes in Manila for *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, Marlon went to a club where he spotted an eighteen-year-old dancer, Marie Cui. He was immediately captivated by her beauty. Their romance began that night.

In counter testimony, Marlon claimed that Kashfi "broke into my house and jumped up on the bed and started pulling the girl's hair out. The girl, terrified, beat it. Then Anna started wreck-

ing the house. When she heard the taxi drive up, Anna ran down to try to catch the girl before she left. I followed along, with Anna biting me, hitting me, scratching me, and swearing at me. Finally, I said, 'Anna, this is enough. Go home.' She refused, so I took her and turned her over and spanked her as hard as I could."

Kashfi tried to refute that claim, saying that when she discovered the nude girl, that both Marie Cui (not naming her specifically) and Marlon had "jumped on me. Furniture started flying. I'm not strong enough to fight two people, so I ran."

Kashfi said that she broke into Marlon's home to "get back at him for breaking into my house and poking holes in my diaphragm with an ice pick. In a further charge, she stated before the court that on the night of her unannounced visit to Marlon's house, he "tackled me in his front yard and knocked my head against a stone."

Her charges were greeted with skepticism by the court.

Marlon was vague about this particular encounter, putting the date as "sometime in 1961 or perhaps 1962."

The judge ruled against both Marlon and Kashfi, granting temporary custody of the six-year-old Christian to Frances Brando Loving, Marlon's sister, who lived in Mundelein, Illinois, with her husband and other children.

In time, Marie Cui would have her own court battles with Marlon.

On February 27, 1963, Cui gave birth to a daughter, which she named Maya Gabriella Cui Brando. Later, when she filed a paternity suit against Marlon, she claimed that he had refused to see her when he discovered that she was pregnant. Cui steadfastly maintained that Marlon had urged her to have the baby and that, "I deliberately got myself pregnant."

She also claimed that she fully expected to receive financial support when she returned to Manila to be with her family. But no money ever came from Marlon, according to her later court testimony.

When she returned to Los Angeles, Cui said that she went directly from the airport to Marlon's house, entering it when she found the door unlocked. She claimed that "I walked right in and slapped him in the face."

Marlon entered St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica, suffering from a kidney infection. There he was served with a subpoena from Cui on July 19, 1963.

As Marlon appeared before Judge Edward Brand on August 1, 1963, he learned that Cui was seeking $775 a month financial support. Five days later, when the blood tests came in, Marlon was discovered not to be the father. Judge Brand dismissed charges against him, although Cui steadfastly maintained that "the child is Brando's."

Astonishingly, Marlon and Cui were reported to have continued with their

sometimes love affair over the course of the next few years, and reportedly Marlon contributed to the financial support of the woman's daughter. "Maya always claimed that Marlon Brando was her father," a friend recalled. However, in spite of his financial contributions to her education, he always insisted that Maya was not to use the name of Brando.

Marie Cui would be in the vanguard of a number of Asian beauties that Marlon seduced. Fiore estimated that it may have added up to nearly three hundred. Reporter Joe Hyams once headlined an article: "Brando, As a Great Lover He Seems to Be Without Equal in Contemporary Film History."

* * *

On the afternoon of December 6, 1964, Kashfi passed out and was found comatose. Rushed to UCLA Medical Center, she was carefully examined. The determination was that she'd overdosed on barbiturates. In the aftermath, Marlon was granted temporary custody of Christian.

When she was released from the medical center, Kashfi broke into Marlon's home, kidnapping her own son against court orders. Backed up by his attorney, Allen Susman, along with two private detectives, Marlon arrived at the Bel Air Sands Hotel where he broke into Kashfi's suite and reclaimed his son. He was armed with a court order.

Barefoot and in her nightgown, Kashfi chased Marlon and the men into the hotel lobby. Once there, she assaulted three people who tried to restrain her. One of them, Sergeant Ed Hall, was also a policeman. He arrested her and charged her with assault and battery of a police officer.

Marlon was forced to appear in court before Superior Judge Laurence Rittenband. In his testimony, Marlon claimed that his former wife suffered from "psychoneuroses which at times causes hysterical blindness." He also reported that she kept a loaded revolver and that he feared she "might harm herself and my son."

In October of 1965, the judge allowed Kashfi, in spite of the testimony, to regain custody of Christian. Marlon called the decision "barbarous."

For her assault on the policeman, Kashfi was fined two hundred dollars.

* * *

Court testimony over the years about Marlon was damaging, but Kashfi came in for her share of hits. A friend of hers testified that she found Kashfi in her apartment, unconscious in a puddle of her own vomit. Outside, baby Christian played unattended at the side of a swimming pool.

On another occasion, Fiore maintained that Kashfi left her young son

alone in a car parked on Wilshire Boulevard, while she stormed Marlon's office "in a frenzy of rage, beating him with her fists." After observing the romance, marriage, divorce, and subsequent legal battles, Marlon's close friend, George Englund, finally concluded, "If you're in love with Marlon, you're in rough company."

Except for Christian, Marlon's other children stayed out of the limelight. When a reporter asked him how many children he actually had, he said, "Several. My children are flowers in the great meadow of love!"

Having spent the half-million dollars awarded to her by a judge, Kashfi went back to court, asking for a continuation of payments. She was turned down.

During filming of *The Godfather*, Marlon was back in court where he and Kashfi were awarded joint custody of Christian. By now, the boy was twelve years old. Learning that Christian was consuming alcohol and taking drugs, the judge ordered that he be enrolled at Ojai Valley School.

Weeks later Kashfi arrived in Ojai and checked her son out of school. Her motives for doing so were unclear. Perhaps she feared that Marlon's attorneys were going to legally take her son away from her again. With two "unknown men" in the car with Kashfi, Christian was driven to a remote fishing village in Baja California, Mexico, south of the California state line. Kashfi then attempted to return to Los Angeles on a bus, but along with a woman companion, was taken from the vehicle and booked in a Calexico jail on a charge of being disorderly. Kashfi claimed that her son had been kidnapped and that she feared for his safety.

Mexican agents managed to locate the thirteen-year-old boy at a so-called hippie campsite in Baja. He was hiding under a pile of dirty clothing and appeared to be suffering from bronchitis. Apparently, during his captivity, Christian had been subjected to homosexual advances by one of his captors.

Anna Kashfi

One of the "hippies" at the campsite claimed that Kashfi had promised to give them ten thousand dollars for hiding Christian. Eventually the teenager was returned to Los Angeles. Mexico deported the eight Americans at the campsite, labeling them "undesirables." Back in Los Angeles and in court again, Marlon was allowed to take Christian to Paris where filming resumed on *Last Tango in Paris*. Kashfi fumed but was powerless to do anything about it.

Christian was returned to school at Ojai, but was later expelled when he set fire to his dorm.

Desperately searching for a case against Marlon, Kashfi used the scandal of the Academy Awards against him. When Marlon refused to accept the Oscar for his role in *The Godfather*, she filed a petition in Superior Court. Before a judge, she claimed that her son had been humiliated and embarrassed by Marlon's "blatant disregard for conventional social decorum" on Oscar night.

When *Last Tango* was released, sparking an international controversy and blaring newspaper headlines, Kashfi went back to court again. She claimed that Marlon's appearance in the film made him unfit to be a father, and she wanted a judge to remove the joint custody provision of the court, returning Christian solely to her. She maintained that he portrayed "a sexually maladjusted and perverted person who utters obscene, foul, shocking, and distasteful profanities." Her former husband, she claimed, was appearing in a pornographic movie, said to be evocative of the private videos he'd taped at his home with various sexual partners.

Attorneys at the time tried to introduce the notorious photograph of Marlon performing fellatio on Wally Cox, depicted earlier within this book, but the judge refused to allow it and dismissed other charges as well.

Finally in April of 1972, Marlon gained full custody of his son.

Even after Kashfi's marriage to salesman James Hannaford, her legal wrangles with Marlon continued. She sued Marlon once again for custody. In her petition, her attorneys maintained that Marlon, on a ski trip to Idaho's Sun Valley, pushed Christian onto the terrace. After his shower, according to the petition, he was clad only in a towel. The temperature on the freezing terrace was 15°F.

The allegation was that in front of the terrace window, Marlon had "dropped his pants, pressed his buttocks to the glass, and yelled, 'Here, climb into this!'" Kashfi eventually dropped the suit.

In 1979, Kashfi got her revenge on Marlon by publishing *Brando for Breakfast*, a shocking tell-all memoir. Heretofore, no wife in Hollywood history had written such a revealing book. In it, she ridiculed not only his lovemaking but his sexual organ, exploring what she called his "kinky sexuality and sexual compulsions." Crown Publishers, hoping to reach a large audience, claimed that in the memoir, "Anna Kashfi shows the ability to admire Brando's greatness even as she rails against his imperfections. She also shows an understanding of her own failures, which drove her, almost fatally, to seek solace in drink, drugs, and madness."

"He can be brutal," Kashfi told her readers. "He has punched photographers who had the temerity to request a pose. He's slapped and beaten women and shown callous unconcern at the death of a friend or employee. Within his being lurks the unregenerate soul of a Cro-Magnon."

Chapter Fifteen

One could borrow the title of the Eugene O'Neill play, *Strange Interlude*, to describe Marlon's brief affair and continuing relationship with the beautiful actress, Susan Cabot. Three years younger than Marlon, this Bostonian was reared in a series of eight foster homes, evocative of the young life of Marilyn Monroe.

The details of the Brando/Cabot affair remain sketchy even today. He apparently saw one of her movies and became intrigued with her black hair and sultry good looks. She was a B actress appearing in B movies with such actors as Tony Curtis, John Lund, and Audie Murphy. A former roommate of Marlon's, Tony Curtis, may have introduced them.

Marlon was obviously more impressed with Susan the woman than Susan the actress. She'd appeared in such forgettable films as *Ride Clear of Diablo* (1954) and *Flame of Araby* (1951). At the time Marlon met her, she was working for the "King of the Bs," Roger Corman, playing the lead in the melodramatic rock 'n roller, *Carnival Rock* (1957).

Susan told Marlon and other friends that she was tired of appearing as a "prop" in sagebrush westerns and Arabian Nights fantasies.

Susan Cabot

In 1959, while still dating Marlon secretly, Susan launched herself into a highly publicized affair with King Hussein of Jordan. Again, the circumstances of their meeting are unknown, no doubt arranged by one of the king's assistants. Hussein had told several of his associates, including reporters, that his all-time favorite film was *Son of Ali Baba*, in which Susan co-starred with Tony Curtis. Perhaps he fell in love with Susan's screen image and set out to pursue her.

"At that time Marlon was getting ready to dump Susan," Carlo Fiore claimed. "But when he heard that the

king was fucking her, Marlon got interested all over again. I guess he figured if Susan was good enough for Hussein's bed, she was also worthy of Marlon's."

Susan continued to maintain very secret relationships with both Marlon and the king as she moved deeper and deeper into the 1960s. Perhaps deciding that neither suitor would ever marry her, she wed Michael Roman in 1968. Subsequently she gave birth to a son, Timothy Scott Roman, who suffered from dwarfism. At the time, she told Fiore that she didn't know if the father was Marlon Brando or King Hussein. Fiore found that pronouncement "totally awesome—why not name her husband as the suspected father?"

Fiore was never certain if Marlon believed that the boy was his or not. Marlon admitted to having had unprotected sex with Susan during the first stage of her marriage.

As an act of generosity, he privately contributed to the child's support. A medical researcher had told him that some hormone could cure dwarfism. This was all highly experimental based on "a substance" that was said to be taken from cadavers. Some medical authorities maintained at the time that injections of this mysterious substance could make dwarfs grow taller. Fiore felt that "all this crap sounded like some Frankenstein movie, and I stayed out of it."

"Marlon at the time had lost all sexual interest in Susan but seemed fascinated with the subject of how to make dwarfs grow tall—it was too bizarre for me," Fiore said.

On December 10, 1986 Marlon received a call from someone, informing him that Susan had been bashed to death by a weight-lifting bar. The fatal blows were delivered by her own son, Tim, in their Encino home. At the time Tim was twenty-two years old.

Before confessing to the crime himself, her son maintained that his mother had been killed by unknown assailants using Ninja methods.

At his trial, Tim's defense attorneys maintained that he was "an emotional wreck because of an overly protective and disturbed mother who lived like Norma Desmond did in the movie, *Sunset Blvd.*, but in a home seething with filth and decay." The conditions were said to be so horrible that "they constitute child abuse," in the words of the defense attorneys.

These same attorneys also maintained that at the time Tim caved in his mother's head, he had "become temporarily unglued" because of all the various experimental hormones he'd been forced to take. Marlon's worst fear did not happen. At first, he'd feared that his name would be drawn into the courtroom proceedings. All his financial contributions to Susan had been paid in cash so that he would not leave a bank trail of canceled checks.

In a surprise development, Tim received a suspended sentence and was placed on probation instead of a conviction for murder.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Marlon told Fiore that he had finally concluded that the young man was not his son, even though he had privately provided money over the years. “Any child born to a woman and impregnated by my noble tool would have been born perfect—not a dwarf.”

* * *

“If a beautiful young woman ever had a penchant for suicide, she dated Marlon,” Fiore once said. Of course, he was exaggerating, but Marlon throughout his life romanced many women who later either attempted or else succeeded at suicide—Rita Moreno, among them.

At the time of his marriage to Anna Kashfi, he was secretly dating her friend, the green-eyed, tempestuous Gia Scala, who had been born in Liverpool, England, although she was descended from an aristocratic Italian family and had grown up in Messina, Sicily. Moving to the United States to live with her aunt in Long Island, she developed into a stunning beauty. One night she caught the attention of an ex-Marine, Steve McQueen, who fell in love with her and wanted to marry her, although she turned down this future film star.

She was first discovered as a professional “quiz kid” on “The Arlene Francis Show,” which led to a contract with Universal International. During the making of *The Big Boodle*, she claimed that a heavy-drinking Errol Flynn raped her, but she didn’t press charges. She was seen around town dating handsome actor George Nader, later learning that he was a homosexual involved in an affair with Rock Hudson among others.

In 1957 she was cast in *Don’t Go Near the Water*, opposite Glenn Ford, who had completed filming *The Teahouse of the August Moon* with Marlon. Both actors had become blood enemies for life.

In the original casting and in a bit of irony, the female lead had gone to Anna Kashfi. Kashfi later wrote of her horror in working opposite Ford. “His vendetta with Marlon apparently enveloped anyone close to Marlon. He flaunted his dislike for me early in the shooting schedule. In shots with his back to the camera, he would wave his hands in front of my face. In our close-up two-shots, he would whisper obscene limericks in my ear. He never passed up an opportunity to carp at me.”

Gia Scala

At one point tensions mounted between Ford and Kashfi to the point

Glenn Ford

that he could no longer tolerate her. "You're out!" he screamed at her. "Out! Out! Out!" He strode off the set. The role was given to Gia Scala. Apparently, there was no jealousy between the two actresses, who became close friends.

Ford could tolerate Scala, not Kashfi. Once again Ford was cast opposite Scala in the film, *Cowboy*. Before shooting began, Scala told the director that she wouldn't be able to shoot on location in Texas and New Mexico because she had to remain near the bedside of her mother, who was dying of cancer. In another one of those twists of fate, Kashfi was assigned the role to replace Scala.

Ford was horrified but learned that he did not have casting approval, so he was forced to make the film with Kashfi in the lead. As he told the casting director, "I can't even stand to be in the same room with anybody who fucked Marlon Brando. That means, I'm a lonely man."

"Marlon and Ford detested each other long before they made *The Teahouse of the August Moon*," Fiore said.

Fiore claimed that the feud between Ford and Marlon arose when Ford was cast in *Human Desire*, a role Marlon had rejected. Fiore attended the movie with Marlon, who loudly denounced Ford's "wooden" performance. Marlon told a reporter, "Glenn Ford is the kind of movie star tailor-made to smile on camera for publicity eight-by-tens. He's hopelessly boring on the screen. In this corruption of the Émile Zola book, Ford just stands there on camera waiting for accidents to occur."

Word of this critique immediately got back to Ford in Hollywood. When the hottest—and some said the best—male actor in America criticized another, that made news.

When Daniel Mann cast both of these actors—sarcastically called "the male version of Joan Crawford and Bette Davis"—in *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, it was inevitable that the two men would clash.

Marlon soon tired of Scala and dropped her. Despondent over her mother's death from cancer, Scala sailed to England to film *The Two-Headed Spy*. There she threw herself over Waterloo Bridge and into the Thames. But she was pulled to safety by a passing cab driver. When Fiore told Marlon of this, he said, "If a woman wants to kill herself, she should be allowed to do so."

In May of 1971, Marlon learned from his son, Christian, that Scala was undergoing psychiatric observation at a hospital in Ventura County. He was disturbed to learn that she was later released into the custody of Kashfi and

was staying with Christian and her. Scala learned that her ex-husband, Don Burnett, was going to marry TV actress Barbara Anderson. Despondent and still in love with her former husband, Scala swallowed roach poison and was rushed to the hospital where a priest administered the last rites of the Catholic Church. Miraculously she survived.

But on April 30, 1972, she finally succeeded in killing herself by taking an overdose of drugs. She was found dead at her home in the Hollywood Hills. She was only thirty-eight years old. "She didn't like the world and wanted to go to another place," Marlon said. "And that's the opinion of an atheist."

* * *

When Marlon signed to do *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, his luck in film scripts was running out. A popular novel by Vern J. Sneider, it had been adapted by John Patrick into a Broadway success. Marlon claimed that he'd attended the play four times and had "laughed so hard the first time I farted three blasts in a row," much to the chagrin of the other members of the audience sitting near him.

At first when Marlon expressed an interest in the play, executives at MGM thought he wanted the lead of the bumbling Captain Fisby, later assigned to Glenn Ford. Not so. Marlon wanted to play Sakini, a comically sly Okinawan interpreter and handyman to post-war American occupation forces, a role that had been played rather effectively by David Wayne on Broadway.

Brando in *The Teahouse of the August Moon*

Complete with "Jap makeup," as he called it, and a *faux* Japanese accent, Marlon told Fiore that, "I'm going to play Sakini as gay, and naïve America will never know the difference."

The theme of the movie was a cultural clash between U.S. servicemen stationed in Japan and the post-war natives. Wayne, who had appeared with Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn in *Adam's Rib*, was bitterly disappointed to learn that Marlon had stolen the role from him. Dore Schary, chief of production at MGM, had been set to go with Gene Kelly as Fisby, with Wayne repeating the role of Sakini that

he'd done so successfully on Broadway. His hopes were dashed when he learned that Brando wanted his role. Wayne was told that he didn't have the "star power" to carry the picture.

Marlon personally selected Daniel Mann to direct. His credits included *Come Back Little Sheba* with Burt Lancaster and *I'll Cry Tomorrow*, with Susan Hayward. Both these movies stars had gone to bed with Marlon.

Arriving in Tokyo, Marlon lectured reporters on the evils of the American occupation of Japan, claiming that it was tantamount to the American treatment of their native Indians. "I always threatened to punch out John Wayne if I ever met him. I'm really pissed off at the way Indians are treated in his movies. But I met him only one time in my whole life. It was at a restaurant in Los Angeles. I was dining with Jane Greer trying unsuccessfully to get into her panties. Wayne came over to my table. He introduced himself. All smiles and soft-shoe charm. He told Jane and me that he hoped that we enjoyed the food. That was it. The first and last time I laid eyes on the fucker. We'll never do a movie together, although he'd be better in this role of a U.S. serviceman than that shit-kicker, Glenn Ford."

In Japan, Marlon revealed that he had just returned from a trip to Bali where he'd happily observed naked Balinese women bathing in a river. In his view, all the women of the world should appear in public bare-breasted. "There should be no shame. After Bali, I have decided to spend the rest of my life on an island somewhere surrounded by a bevy of beautiful cinnamon-colored girls. Cinnamon is my favorite color. In the future, I will drink only cinnamon-flavored coffee."

Marlon spent the first week hanging out with veteran character actor Louis Calhem, with whom he'd bonded during the filming of *Julius Caesar*. He found Calhern deep into alcoholism and depression over the breakup of his affair with a much younger woman. MGM had cast Calhern as Colonel Purdy.

After five weeks in Japan, Calhern suffered a heart attack and died. Marlon wired John Patrick: "Lou died in his sleep last night, and I'm glad. He was so lonely and unhappy that he really didn't want to live." Calhern was replaced with Paul Ford, who'd done the role on Broadway. All scenes that had been filmed with Calhern had to be re-shot.

The day before he met Marlon, Glenn Ford had complained bitterly to Daniel Mann about his salary. He'd just learned that he was being paid far less than Marlon, even though Ford's role was much larger. "I'm the fucking star of the picture!" Ford shouted. "Not Stanley Kowalski."

Marlon's attempts to bond with Ford turned out to be clumsy overtures. His questions, perhaps deliberately so, were too provocative. "Tell me, Glenn. You and I have fucked some of the same stars. Bette Davis, Joan Crawford. But what is it like to fuck Judy Garland? Also, Barbara Stanwyck? Stanwyck comes as a surprise. I hear she's a dyke." Ford turned and walked away.

Marlon later blamed Ford for ruining the movie because he was "too absorbed in himself to give a good performance. He refused to work in concert with me," Marlon said with a certain bitterness. "It was a horrible picture and I was miscast."

Marlon and Ford clashed, as Ford reverted to all the tricks he'd learned in the movie business to steal scenes, such as backing up two steps so that the camera would have to follow him and he'd wind up full faced in the shot, eliminating the other actor—in this case, Marlon.

Marlon later claimed that "Ford took scene-stealing to Olympian heights." But Marlon also told Ford that he was aware of all his manipulative tricks. He cited the case of Olivia de Havilland who, to steal a scene, breathed in deeply to make her breasts swell out. But he reminded Ford that he had no breasts to swell. "If you've got anything else that swells under your uniform, we don't want to see it on camera. Save it for Rita Hayworth."

Marlon denounced Ford's performances beginning from the first day of the shoot, calling him "a second potato William Holden, but without Holden's hard-on on camera. Ford stumbles and stammers, and his performance means nothing, says nothing, goes nowhere."

When this was reported to Ford, his only comment was, "I despise Marlon Brando. Always have. Always will."

One reviewer wrote, "*Teahouse* is Brando's chance to impersonate Charlie Chan. Casting Marlon Brando and Glenn Ford in the same movie is as mismatched as having Marjorie Main play a love scene with Tab Hunter. It just doesn't work."

Brando on Ford: "A stick-in-the-mud."

Ford on Brando: "A vain showoff."

One night Marlon, drunk on too much sake, told Carlo Fiore, "I hope Glenn Ford doesn't wake up in the middle of the night, think I'm *Gilda*, and try to fuck me."

Fiore countered that Marlon need have no fear of that from the very macho, very heterosexual Ford.

On film, Marlon's accent was sometimes incomprehensible, as he tried at every turn to sabotage the performance of Ford. When Marlon became aware that Ford was trying to steal scenes from him, Marlon proved himself the master of the game. From that day on, he set out to wreck every scene in which Ford appeared, driving that studio system actor into virtual tears. At one of Ford's biggest scenes in the film, Marlon suddenly appeared on camera swatting flies. Although he'd selected Mann as his director, Marlon soon conflicted with him because of the way he was performing on camera.

Teahouse stands as one of the three worst pictures Marlon ever made. One critic claimed that, "It was the most appalling movie made in the 1950s by any

actor." Marlon delivered such smarmy lines as, "Pain makes man think, thought makes man wise, wisdom makes life endurable."

Mann and his assistants finally concluded that Marlon could not play comedy but was a great tragic actor. "In comedy, he is the worst kind of ham," Mann said. "A real clumsy technique."

After *Teahouse*, Marlon would not attempt such a wily impersonation and character role until he signed to make *The Godfather* sixteen years later.

After filming *Teahouse*, Ford apparently tried to forget having worked with Marlon. But, according to Fiore, Marlon developed an obsessional hatred of Ford. Marlon tried to round up or hear every negative comment ever made about Ford.

Marlon took delight one night when he encountered Bette Davis in a restaurant after she'd made *A Pocketful of Miracles*, released in 1961. Referring to Ford, Davis said, "That son of a bitch is telling everybody in Hollywood that he helped me have a comeback. That shitheel wouldn't have helped me out of a sewer."

David Swift, who directed Ford in *Love Is a Ball* in 1963, said, "Ford approaches his craft like a twelve-year-old temperamental child." Marlon agreed.

Marlon's friend from the 1940s, Clifford Odets, told him, "It is an easily won bet that in a few years Glenn Ford will get just like the other movie people: bored, sprawling, careless, an overly relaxed fallen angel—they are all affable boys out here, almost tramps."

After Joanna Copeland Carson divorced Johnny Carson in 1972, Ford started dating her. The comedian made several cracks about him on *The Tonight Show*. Ford was so infuriated that he considered suing Carson. But Carson's biggest fan was Marlon himself, who stayed up at night to watch *The Tonight Show*, hoping to hear more mockery of his nemesis.

"Not since Frank Sinatra, have I hated a fellow actor this much," Marlon said. "His first wife, Eleanor Powell, claimed that it was sheer hell living with Ford because of his inferiority complex. I bet he's got a lot to be inferior about!"

* * *

Marlon's next film, *Sayonara*, marked his return to Japan, a land for which he felt great affinity. "American women should be subservient like Jap women," he told Carlo Fiore, whom he'd hired as a dialogue coach for two hundred and fifty dollars a week.

The film was based on that sprawling mess of novel by James A. Michener, a romance and tragedy in modern Japan. In signing to do the film,

Joshua Logan, Brando, and William Goetz

after turning it down three times, Marlon wanted the picture to have a message and expose the Air Force's official policy of opposing inter-racial marriage. Before *Sayonara* was filmed, American occupation forces were opposed to its men marrying Japanese women, and made it illegal for them to take their wives back to the States. Marlon hoped that *Sayonara* would be a plea for greater racial tolerance.

Or at least that was what he said. Driving him forward was a $300,000 salary, plus a return of ten percent of the gross. That turned out to be another one-million dollars for him at a time he desperately needed the money to fuel his production company, Pennebaker.

Marlon hated the script that Logan and producer William Goetz presented to him. Privately, Marlon told Fiore, "I could piss a better script in the snow than this shit." When Marlon complained to Logan about the script, the director generously suggested that he could rewrite any part of it he wanted to. With Fiore's help, Marlon practically rewrote the entire script. However, only eight lines of the revised dialogue actually appeared in the final cut.

Marlon, however, insisted on a complete new ending, objecting to the "Madame Butterfly finale." As originally intended, Marlon falls in love with a Japanese dancer but must leave her at the end of the picture. He demanded that at the end of *Sayonara*, he marries his beloved, thereby negating the title. "There is nothing inherently wrong with racial intermarriages, even black and white," he told Logan. "Love does not follow a color line. I want to marry the object of my affection at the end of the film."

Amazingly, Logan and scriptwriter Paul Osborn agreed to this change, which completely distorted Michener's original concept.

When he met Marlon for the first time, Logan had expressed his regret that Elia Kazan instead of himself had directed Marlon in *Streetcar* on Broadway. "I got the script from Tennessee and read it before Kazan," Logan said. "Your interpretation of Stanley was the greatest male role on Broadway in the Forties. Under my direction we would have made it even better." Logan also revealed that he'd wanted to cast Marlon in the film lead of *Mister Roberts*. The director felt that Henry Fonda, Dodie's former lover, had been creditable playing the lead on Broadway "but is too old for the film." Fonda, nevertheless, got the movie role after all.

After meeting his director, Marlon told Fiore, "At last I've met a man more high strung and quixotic than I am. He's driven by demons, maybe bigger ones than I am. Fits of depression descend on Logan like summer rain." Sometimes the rain turns into hurricane gales."

Although their initial meetings had been pleasant, Marlon clashed with Logan on almost every scene once filming began. Marlon wanted a message picture, whereas Logan saw *Sayonara* as a more commercial venture. Once he expressed his concept of making movies to Marlon. "Films are about making money at the box office. To do that, you have to have an almost nude Marilyn Monroe trying to scale a twenty-foot wire fence to escape from about a dozen would-be rapists, all of whom are hardened criminals and haven't gotten their chance at a real woman—only boy ass—in years."

Marlon later reported to Fiore that he thought Logan's "concept for making movies is very quaint."

Logan also cast two actors, James Garner and Ricardo Montalban, in the film. Both men, of course, later became stars in their own right. Marlon thought Garner, in spite of "his incredible nervousness," performed well in the role. But he seriously questioned the casting of Montalban. "A Mexican in the role of a Kabuki performer?" he asked Fiore.

When he signed for the picture, Marlon was looking forward to playing opposite Audrey Hepburn. But two weeks into production, Logan informed him that Hepburn had turned down the role, fearing, "If I play an Oriental, I'll be laughed off the screen."

Logan discovered Miiko Taka, a Nisei-American working for sixty dollars a week in a travel agency in Los Angeles. He introduced her to Marlon, even though she had had no acting or dancing experience. Marlon met privately with her and told Logan that "Taka has great sensitivity and would be ideal in the role."

Logan later regretted his decision to hire Taka, telling Marlon, "I tear my hair out trying to get a decent performance out of her. After *Sayonara*, she's going nowhere in films."

Brando and James Garner in *Sayonara*

Marlon made no attempt to seduce Taka, as he'd done with so many of his leading ladies in the past. "She was definitely Marlon's type," Fiore recalled, "but we were too busy to get around to her." He claimed that "Marlon and I must have fucked every Japanese girl involved with *Sayonara*."

One girl was a deep-throat kisser, biting Marlon's tongue and causing it to swell so badly he couldn't enunciate on camera. "Mumbles was really Mumbles that day," Fiore said. "Logan was furious."

Marlon insisted that he play his character with a Southern accent. "As everybody knows, Southerners are the most bigoted people in America. If I'm a Southerner, it'll make my character's about-face on racial prejudice more compelling."

When the movie was released, Marlon's southern accent often drew a negative reaction from critics. One critic labeled it "Brando's cornpone and chitlin' accent." Always negative toward Marlon's performances, *Time* magazine found that his Southern accent appeared to have been "strained through Stanislavsky's mustache." C.A. Lejeune in the *Observer* suggested that subtitles should have been used to make Marlon's words comprehensible.

Even though Marlon was difficult with Logan during the shoot, the director nonetheless pronounced his star "a genius—the best actor I've met since Garbo."

Marlon was highly critical of Logan during the filming. At one point he told Truman Capote, who'd come to Japan to interview him, that, "In one scene, I did everything wrong I could think of. I rolled my eyes, grimaced in the wrong place, and used irrelevant gestures. When I finished the scene, Logan smiled at me and said, 'It's wonderful Marlon. Print it!'"

Marlon may have been misleading Capote. In the final print, no such outrageous scene appeared as described by Marlon.

Marlon also admitted to Capote that, "I just walked through the part—nobody knows the difference anyway."

Considering how casually Marlon began his filming of *Sayonara*, Hollywood insiders were surprised when he was nominated once again for an Academy Award for best actor. He lost to Alec Guinness in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Marlon could take some comfort in knowing that his long-time rival, Anthony Quinn, nominated for *Wild Is the Wind*, also lost.

Fiore said that Marlon felt some embarrassment when his co-stars won for supporting roles, Red Buttons, playing Sgt. Joe Kelly, and Miyoshi Umeki, his Japanese wife. In the film, Buttons chooses to die rather than leave his Japanese wife behind. The plot bordered on soap opera.

Marlon and Fiore sat through a showing of the final cut together. Logan sat alone ten rows behind them. Neither party said a word during the long screening. When the end flashed on the screen, Marlon rose to his feet and headed for the door. "Not my cup of sake," he called back to Logan.

In a sarcastic remark, Fiore said, "A lot of pretty Jap gals crossed a lot of pretty bridges."

The world did not agree with Marlon or Fiore. *Sayonara* grossed millions

around the globe and became Marlon's most successful film until his appearance in *The Godfather*.

As he was leaving Tokyo, a call came in from Twentieth Century Fox, reminding him that, according to his contract, he owed them one more picture. "How would you like to play a Nazi officer with an ash-blond dye job?"

* * *

In a disastrous move that he'd regret for the rest of his life, Marlon agreed to meet with the author, Truman Capote, in January of 1957 at the Miyako Hotel in Kyoto. Capote had been assigned to write a piece on Marlon for the *New Yorker*. Marlon hadn't seen the writer since he'd performed in *A Streetcar Named Desire* on Broadway. At that time, he'd shared an erotic moment with Capote and his friend, Cecil Beaton.

Marlon learned that Beaton was also in Kyoto with Capote, but he invited only Capote to dinner at his hotel—not Beaton, even though he'd posed nude for him. Before the meeting, Capote had told Marlon that the first part of the interview would be on the record, followed by the candid remarks later "of two old friends getting together to share a memory or two." It sounded innocent enough.

But the director of *Sayonara*, Joshua Logan, didn't fall for Capote's reassurances and had, in fact, barred him from the set of the picture. Horrified to learn that Marlon had granted the interview, Logan called Marlon's suite to warn him, "The vicious queen will destroy you."

"Don't worry your sweet noggin 'bout this little tadpole one bit," Marlon said, using his exaggerated Southern accent he'd adapted for his character in *Sayonara*. "I can't go into details, but Capote worships me. The piece he'll probably write on me will sound like that silly fodder printed in *Photoplay* magazine."

"I'm not so sure," Logan said. "I've heard this guy talk at parties. He's not that kind to you. He tells everybody that he and Cecil Beaton seduced you. He even claims that you posed nude for Beaton. I've heard him describe your dick to enraptured audiences. Personally, I think he's got it in for you. He knows you're one of the most powerful icons in America. Capote likes to shatter icons. To expose them for having clay feet. He'll do the same to you."

"Before the night is over, I'll have Capote sucking on my noble tool."

Truman Capote

"So you think," Logan told Marlon. "I have just read the little fucker's *The Muses Are Heard*. He treats human beings like bugs to be squashed underfoot." *The Muses Are Heard* was Capote's non-fictional lampoon of the *Porgy and Bess* troupe traveling in Russia.

"I know Capote," Marlon assured Logan. "I can handle the little Southern faggot just fine. I will speak only the usual crap to him. Stuff fit to print. He will not get a look into my soul. My soul is a very private place."

Carlo Fiore remained in Marlon's suite during the first hour of what became an infamous encounter between the author and the actor. Arriving with a bottle of vodka under his short arm, the diminutive Capote—"slim and trim as a boy"—minced into Marlon's cluttered suite.

With his high-pitched, nasal voice, he greeted Marlon with a kiss on the lips and a handshake for Fiore. Although not a teetotaler, Marlon rarely drank much alcohol. In front of the suspicious Fiore, Capote started pouring the liquor for Marlon, preferring a "courtesy sip" for himself. Fiore later recalled that Capote used "his eccentric charm and sly manipulation to get Marlon to drink that vodka."

The interview began at 7:15pm, with Fiore departing an hour later. Privately in the bedroom, Fiore told Marlon that he'd call him "every hour with an emergency. This will allow you to escape from the pansy's clutches." Marlon agreed to that. Fiore kept his promise, but Marlon refused to respond to the so-called emergency calls and kept talking nonstop to Capote until 12:30am the following morning.

Sitting with pages of a script piled around him, Marlon opened up to Capote as he'd done to no other journalist. He revealed very personal moments about his mother, Dodie; about his private views on friendship, love, and marriage; about what a lousy director Joshua Logan was—and on and on, one personal revelation piling up on top of another.

Marlon said that he was working on a script for his newly formed production company, Pennebaker. It was to be a Western, and improbably titled *A Burst of Vermilion* because of the red handkerchiefs the cowboys in the movie would wear around their necks.

During this long ordeal, Capote took no notes as he was known for his "unfailing memory."

Capote later claimed that Marlon, throughout his long ramblings, "sounded like an educated Negro using big words only recently learned."

Later the writer revealed the secret of his interviewing techniques. "You make the victim think he's interviewing you. I told Marlon some of my most personal secrets, even about my mother. Naturally, we shared homosexual secrets with each other. Slowly, ever so slowly, I began to spin my web. By opening myself up to Marlon, I got him to open up like a flower petal facing

Yukio Mishima

the dawn. He began to reveal himself as he never had before. The more he talked, the more confessional he became. By the first hour, I knew I was on to a big story. My victim was trapped. I came for an interview but went away with insights that no other writer had ever gotten."

As his opening gamut, Truman described his recent rendezvous with Yukio Mishima, the successful Japanese novelist and playwright who would commit hari-kiri, publicly, on November 25, 1970, as a samurai-inspired act of defiance against the modernization and corruption of the Japanese psyche. "As a lover, he found me inadequate," Capote claimed. "But in exchange for his own hospitality in Japan, he told me that when he comes to New York he wants me to arrange for him to suck a big white cock."

Having seduced each other before, Capote and Marlon were frank in talking about their homosexual affairs. They spoke at length about the young actor and friend of Capote's, Sandy Campbell, whom Marlon had seduced when he'd worked on stage with him in *Streetcar*. Marlon told Capote of his involvement with Clifford Odets, Tennessee Williams, Laurence Olivier, and their mutual friend, Leonard Bernstein.

Capote finally left a drunken Marlon in his suite. The next morning, Marlon told Fiore that his hours with Capote had been better than any session he'd ever had with his analyst. "And it didn't cost me a fucking cent."

Having had no sleep all night, a gleeful Capote called Joshua Logan, who'd come to work early on the set of *Sayonara*. "Oh, you were so wrong about Brando," an ecstatic Capote informed the director. "Last night your star talked my head off. I got my man." He paused for dramatic effect. "In more ways than one!" Capote hung up the phone on a bewildered Logan.

Capote was being sly, but Logan, no stranger to homosexual affairs himself, got the message. He was convinced that Capote had seduced a drunken Marlon, as the author once did with Errol Flynn. Later in the day on the set, when a hung over Marlon showed up for work, Logan confronted his star. Logan wasn't concerned with the morality involved in the Capote seduction of Marlon, but about any bad publicity that might be generated for *Sayonara*.

"Did you go to bed with Capote?" Logan demanded to know.

"If you call 'going to bed' getting a mere blow-job from the little monster with the succulent mouth, then OK, I went to bed with him. I've gone to bed, as you call it, with lots of other men, too. But I hardly consider myself a homosexual, given my long track record with women. Gays are attracted to me. I let them seduce me. I'm doing them a favor. They want it so much. Why deny

them the privilege? It's nothing for me to get a blow-job. When you're horny, any port in the storm will do."

While Capote was in Marlon's suite, Cecil Beaton in another part of town had picked up two American sailors. After giving each of them a blow-job, the two young Navy men robbed Beaton, making off with his wallet, an expensive watch, and a valuable camera.

Over breakfast that morning, Beaton told Capote, "If I had it to do over again, I would still have taken them back to my suite. As you well know, I'm not at all enchanted by Americans, Truman Capote excluded, of course. But I must admit that your sailors have tasty cocks. But I have a question for you. Why are all American men circumcised? That's a very cruel cut to us lovers of foreskin."

In the weeks ahead, Marlon began to fear exposure by Capote in the *New Yorker*. In May, Marlon sat down and wrote Capote a three-and-a-half page, single-spaced, handwritten letter. The letter, later released by Truman, was filled with an odd choice of words, misspellings, and unusual grammatical constructions.

"It is, indeed, discomforting to have the network of one's innards guy-wired and festooned with harlequin streamers for public musing, but, perhaps it will entertain. I am sorry, in a way, that you didn't complete your plans for the full travesty you had planned to do because it has come full upon me, that there are few who are as well equipped as yourself to write, indeed, the comedy of manners."

This letter was written before Marlon had actually read the interview. But the gossipy Capote had told "everybody I know about it" even before publication. Word had traveled back to Marlon who was aghast.

Entitled "The Duke in His Domain," the Capote profile of Marlon appeared in the *New Yorker* in November of that year. In the article Marlon was depicted as an overweight, self-indulgent movie star pretending to be on a diet while stuffing himself with French fries, spaghetti, and apple pie. And that was just for openers.

"The interview could have been so much worse in print if I had wanted to reveal all I knew about Brando," Capote later recalled. "If I'd written about the homosexual liaisons of Marlon's, I could have destroyed his career. As it was, I was kind to him. Of course, my profile was not just a journalistic revelation. More of a celebrity exposé. But actors should be exposed for what they are: mental dwarfs."

New York gossip columnist, Dorothy Kilgallen, called it "a real vivisection." Her rival columnist, Walter Winchell, wrote that the article was "the type of confession usually confined to an analyst's couch." Marlon's sister, Jocelyn, called the article "a well-written, bitchy hatchet job!"

Enraged, Marlon called Joshua Logan to apologize for having been so critical of him in the article. "That little bastard spent half the night telling me his problems," Marlon said. "I felt the least I could do was tell him a few of my own. If I ever run into the pissy queen, I'll kill him!"

Logan chided Marlon that, "You should have done that before you let him come into your room."

Capote never responded to Marlon's heartfelt plea to suppress the profile. But the author did have a post-publication comment to make to a reporter.

"Brando apparently felt that my profile of him was an unsympathetic, even treacherous, intrusion upon the secret terrain of a suffering and awesome sensibility. I thought it was a sympathetic account of a wounded young man who is a genius at acting but not markedly intelligent."

Seething with anger but also painfully humiliated, Marlon called on George Glass and Walter Seltzer to press a lawsuit against Capote, seeking the advice of two savvy Hollywood insiders. Glass had first met Marlon when he'd been working as a publicist for Stanley Kramer. A one-time publicist himself, Walter Seltzer had turned producer.

When the men got Marlon to confess that he actually did make the revelations as reported by Capote, they advised him to drop the lawsuit.

Feeling dejected and powerless to fight back, Marlon sighed before getting up to leave their office. At the door, he paused and looked back at the men.

"I was sandbagged!"

* * *

Marlon often assumed the role he was playing on screen off screen. When filming *Sayonara*, he wanted his women to behave like Geishas. Cast as a Nazi officer in his next film, *The Young Lions*, released in 1958, "Marlon became Little Hitler," in the words of Carlo Fiore, "very imperial and very domineering."

Fiore should know. He'd just married Marcia Hunt, but was having marital troubles almost from the beginning. Since he needed the money and also wanted to "escape from America," he gladly agreed to accompany Marlon to Germany and France as a "hired hand" during the shooting of *The Young Lions*. Marlon told his buddy, and Fiore agreed, that "we don't want our women following us to Paris."

The script by Edward Anhalt, who'd won an Oscar for his screenplay, *Panic in the Streets*, in 1950, had been adapted from the best-selling novel by Irwin Shaw about World War II. Marlon owed 20th Century Fox another picture as part of a two-picture deal. Having walked out on *The Egyptian*, he'd

made only one picture, *Desirée*, for producer Darryl F. Zanuck. Zanuck asked Marlon to play the role of an idealistic but disillusioned Nazi Wehrmacht officer, Christian Diestl, in *The Young Lions* to complete his contract. The script centered around three soldiers: Marlon as the Nazi officer, a Broadway singer turned soldier, and an American Jew.

Budgeted rather modestly at two million dollars, Fox had devised a shooting schedule of less than fifty days. The first meeting between Marlon and his new director, Edward Dmytryk, took place at Marlon's residence. He was already familiar with the director. It was Dmytryk who had discovered Anna Kashfi in London and brought her to Hollywood for a role in the Spencer Tracy movie, *The Mountain*. Later, after his divorce from Kashfi and the bitter custody battles that ensued, Marlon sarcastically thanked Dmytryk "for that dubious achievement."

Dmytryk immediately realized what an unconventional star he'd be facing. Only thirty minutes into a debate over the script, Marlon got up and announced, "I've got to take a leak." Thinking Marlon would excuse himself and go to the toilet, Dmytryk was astonished to see Marlon toss out some flowers from a Japanese vase. Wearing a kimono, Marlon opened his robe. He was nude underneath. "In front of me, he took a horse piss into the vase," Dmytryk said.

After urinating, Marlon sat down to tell Dmytryk of the "serious reservations" he had about the script. "I want you to understand something before I sign on," Marlon said. "I can't play villains. I won't play a villain. If I walk into a room filled with a hundred people, and just one of them hates me, I have to leave at once. That's how sensitive I am. Playing a Nazi as a villain, and getting millions of audience members around the world to boo me, is more than I can take. It's more than I will do. Either you allow me to play Christian with humanity and sympathy, or I'm off the picture."

Marlon went on lecturing his director. "We must make Shaw's clumsy novel into a World War II version of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*. I foolishly turned down that classic. Here's my chance to play Julian Sorel in another version, a character struggling between the black robe of the priest or the scarlet red of Napoleon's troops."

Edward Dmytryk directs Marlon in *The Young Lions*

The director reminded Marlon that Nazis were inherently evil. "They killed millions of people," he protested, "and not just Jews."

Since Marlon had script approval, and since Zanuck was demanding Marlon for the part, Dmytryk had little choice but to go along with Marlon's "rewrite" of the lead character in the film.

A scene from *The Young Lions*

Zanuck had an ulterior motive for wanting Marlon in the film. At the time, Marlon was one of the world's reigning box office champs. In return for Zanuck not pressing "for millions" in a court of law when Marlon walked out on *The Egyptian*, Zanuck agreed to pay him only $50,000 for his appearance in the film. Eager to put his legal and financial fights with Zanuck behind him, Marlon agreed to those humiliating terms.

In contrast, Montgomery Clift, Marlon's co-star, was earning $750,000. Even Maximilian Schell, in his first American movie, was pulling in $200,000. Dean Martin, the other co-star, told Marlon "not to fret too much—that fucking Zanuck is paying me only $25,000."

In Paris, Marlon, with Fiore's help, began to rewrite his scenes in the film. When the author of the novel, Irwin Shaw, arrived in Paris, Marlon arranged to meet with him at the bar of the Hotel Raphael.

There, Marlon lectured the embittered novelist. "No race, no nationality has the market on evil," Marlon told Shaw. "You wrote the character of Christian too villainous. I will have to search for his humanity which is missing from your novel."

The hot-tempered Shaw disagreed so violently with Marlon he almost struck him in the face. Later, Shaw told Dmytryk, "It serves me right for sitting down with the stupid fucking actor. I knew he didn't have any fucking brains. If he had any brains, he wouldn't be an actor in the first place. An actor is an empty fucking inkpot. You have to pour ink into the god damn fool to get anything out of him."

Before landing in Paris, Marlon had been shocked to learn that his co-star was none other than Montgomery Clift. The press was already predicting "the battle of the century" as the two famous Method actors battled it out for acting honors in the film.

Having been lovers in the 1940s, Marlon and Monty had remained "acquaintances and occasional friends over the years." Most often they had been portrayed as rivals, which they were. They were often up for the same roles.

Dean Martin and Monty Clift in *The Young Lions*

After James Dean's death, the press had hailed Marlon and Monty as "the only two bad boys left in Hollywood." Marlon had no objection to the casting of Monty in the film, and told Dmytryk that he'd be "most interested in seeing Clift work up close," even though they had virtually no scenes together.

Although he had no objections to Monty, Marlon violently objected to the casting of Tony Randall in the role of the Broadway entertainer. Dmytryk anticipated objections from Marlon when Dean Martin was cast in the role, but there were none. Marlon and Martin liked each other.

Following an acrimonious break with his partner in comedy, Jerry Lewis, Martin was trying to establish himself as a straight actor in his first "dramatic part."

"Any performer who would have the good sense to break from that Lewis creature can't be all bad," Marlon said.

Dmytryk cast other top-flight actors in the film, which turned a projected B picture into an A movie. Playing along with Marlon, Monty, and Martin were Hope Lange, Barbara Rush, and May Britt, as well as Maximilian Schell, who was having a hard time with English lines. Once again, Marlon secured a small role in the film for his ever-faithful Sam Gilman.

On the first day of shooting in Paris, Marlon told Dmytryk, "I've got to play somebody else in this film other than Brando. Monty, as usual, will be playing Brando. I've been giving Dean Martin acting lessons, so he too will be trying to play Brando. Having my identity stolen, I've got to come up with some new characterization."

Arriving in Paris to begin filming, Marlon told the press, "The picture will try to show that Nazism is a matter of mind—not geography—that there are Nazis, and people of good will, in every country. The world can't spend its life looking over its shoulder and nursing hatreds. There would be no progress that way."

In Paris, Marlon seemed to resent his newfound celebrity, remembering fondly the days when he could roam the streets without being recognized. "It's a nightmare for me," he told Fiore. "Everywhere I go people mob me. They rip my clothes. They tear my shirts. They try to swallow me whole. I feel countless hands on my crotch. At times I feel the fucking world wants to rape me. My tool, noble as it is, can't service the entire world!"

* * *

Back in his beloved Paris, Marlon resumed his long-time relationships with Christian Marquand and Daniel Gélin. He told Carlo Fiore, "The years have gone by and my love for these French froggies is as strong as ever. A bond never broken. Sometimes I think I like to fuck these men more than I like to bang Anna's pussy." He was referring, of course, to Anna Kashfi whom he'd left behind. Marlon also threw parties at his suite at the Hotel Raphael, inviting his friends from the late Forties, Roger Vadim and "sex kitten" Brigitte Bardot.

In later years, Fiore admitted that he was jealous of Marlon's friendships with other men, especially Christian Marquand. Fiore was also stood up for Sam Gilman and Gélin, Marlon wanting to spend his evenings with those men instead of Fiore.

Fiore was always quick to point out that his jealousy was based entirely on hating to share Marlon as a friend "but not as a lover. When it came to love-making, Marlon and I didn't go there." Over the years, Fiore continued to deny that any sex took place between Marlon and himself. "I must admit that when Marlon insisted on watching me fuck my girl of the moment, I became a little suspicious. I think, if I recall, his eyes were glued to my hard dick instead of the woman in question. If Marlon and I ever had any sexual contact, it was at one of the drunken orgies we attended when you didn't know who you were getting unless you felt specific body parts."

Speaking privately to Fiore one night at a party, Vadim confided that he'd noted "many, many changes in Marlon since our last reunion. He's no longer the shy American boy Christian and I picked up in that café on the Left Bank and brought home to live with us. He no longer has that marvelous vulnerability he had back then. He's far more self-assured, even a bit arrogant in his demands. He's become his own man. I doubt if he can be manipulated. He seems to be saying, 'You should not pity me. It is I who should pity you.'"

The director wanted Marlon blond for the movie. After trying on a dozen wigs provided by wardrobe, Marlon gave up. "My God, I look like a drag version of Marilyn Monroe. If I appear on the screen in one of these wigs, men will go to movie houses with an overcoat over their laps. Underneath, they'll be jacking off watching me emote."

Marlon invited Fiore to join him at the Parisian hair salon, Carita-Alexandre's. "I'm going to bleach my hair." When Fiore arrived at Marlon's suite to accompany him to the hairdresser, he was shocked to see Marlon attired in the Nazi uniform he'd wear in the film.

"There was Marlon all in his jackboots, peak cap, and battleship gray

breeches," Fiore said. "His uniform was set off by an Iron Cross. Marlon had taken to going across Paris and speaking with a German accent. I warned him not to appear on the street in full Nazi regalia, reminding him that Parisians were still suffering from the wounds of the war. Marlon wouldn't listen and paraded down the Champs-Elysées as a Nazi to the beauty parlor. I feared a sniper's bullet. We did get one old lady who spat at him. Nothing more serious than that."

Marlon emerged from the hairdressing salon into the bright sunshine of a Parisian afternoon. "His hair wasn't just blond," Fiore said. "It was the color of a bright lemon with just a touch of lime-green chartreuse in the right light. It was the strangest color I'd ever seen."

Observing it in a mirror, Marlon claimed that he liked the dye job. In his reflection, he gave the Nazi salute, then goose-stepped up the Champs-Elysées.

Marlon asked Fiore to accompany him to the first fast-food emporium ever to open on the Champs-Elysées in the post-war years. "There Marlon downed three different entrecôtes along with heaping mounds of *pommes frites*. His weight had already shot up to one hundred and ninety-five pounds. I asked Marlon if he wanted to reach two hundred. I told him, 'When we get back to the Raphael, we can call room service for dessert. How about a chocolate milkshake and a banana split?'"

"Don't trouble your overfucked ass about it," Marlon shot back sarcastically at Fiore. "We're in Paris, god damn it. Froggies don't know how to make desserts like that."

Marlon bonded with co-star Dean Martin, although he was prepared not to like the man. But that was only during the first week. By the end of the second week, Dean was spending all his time with Monty Clift. "What an unlikely pair," Marlon told Fiore. "What does a macho man like Martin want with a repressed homosexual like Monty? There's only one thing Dean must be getting out of this relationship. Monty was always good at cocksucking. Martin's Italian sausage must be getting quite a workout."

Whenever Marlon did meet with Dean Martin, the exchanges were pleasant enough. "I certainly can't talk theater with him," Marlon told Fiore. "Dean and I talk about pussy, agreeing and disagreeing about the various actresses in Hollywood who have the tightest pussies. I'm sure Dean doesn't indulge in pussy talk with Monty."

On the nights that Fiore, not Christian Marquand, accompanied Marlon out on the town, Fiore felt that his friend was "a time bomb waiting to go off." Coming out of the Lido night club, Marlon was accompanied by a handsome twenty-year-old male dancer from Brazil, not one of the long-legged showgirls. When a Parisian cameraman tried to photograph Marlon and his date for

the night, Marlon lunged at him, trying to choke the photographer and smash his camera. "I had to pull Marlon off the guy," Fiore said, "or else he might have been slapped with a multi-million dollar lawsuit."

As the days rolled by, Marlon spent more and more time with Marquand, even bringing him to the set. Fiore was often ordered to wait in Marlon's dressing room until needed. When Marlon started asking Marquand to coach him with his performance, the real director, Dmytryk, felt threatened. He ordered Marquand off the set. He later told Fiore, "I don't like gays or switch-hitters like Marquand."

* * *

Marlon liked to befriend his leading ladies and often seduce them. On the set of *The Young Lions*, there was an impressive array of beautiful actresses: Hope Lange, Barbara Rush, and May Britt.

Marlon struck up a relationship with a hot-tempered, Paris-born entertainer, Liliane Montevecchi, who was also appearing in the film in a small role as a French prostitute. A *prima donna* from Roland Petit's ballet company, she was in the tradition of Leslie Caron and Zizi Jeanmaire. Marlon was immediately captivated by her delightful mangling of the English language.

When the July rains descended on Chantilly, north of Paris, Marlon sought and got permission to go for a few days to visit the Costa del Sol, settling into the emerging resort of Torremolinos. Montevecchi had made it clear that she didn't want to become another one of Marlon's girlfriends, but a friendship did ensue.

In his post-*Sayonara* period, Marlon wanted his women to be subservient like those he'd known during the filming. Montevecchi had no intention of being that. She was very outspoken and held very strong opinions.

Back in Paris to complete the filming, Marlon and the French dancer were having a heated argument in the bar of the Hotel Prince de Galles on the Avenue George V. After that disastrous interview with Truman Capote in Japan, where Marlon had gotten drunk on vodka, he had sworn off liquor. Instead of a cocktail, he ordered a large silver pot of boiling water to be placed on the table so he could make his own tea.

To make her point with Marlon, Montevecchi slammed her fist down on the table, upsetting the silver pot of scalding water.

Liliane Montevecchi

Marlon screamed in agony as the water burnt his groin. Pulling down his pants—he wore no underwear that day—he ran into the reception area. Flashing his injured genitals at the reception desk, he demanded an ambulance to take him to the hospital at once. The reception desk personnel didn't seem unduly concerned to see a half-naked American movie star with scalded genitals. At the Prince de Galles, this veteran crew had seen it all. They quickly called an ambulance.

Marlon suffered second-degree burns, and his body was shaved. When Fiore rushed to his hospital room, he found a doctor rubbing a stinking yellow sulphur-like salve over Marlon's genitals.

"The doctor's gay," Marlon called to Fiore. Marlon didn't know if that were true or even if the doctor spoke English. "He loves getting to play with my dick and balls," Marlon said. "Can you believe that this has happened to me? Here we are in Paris of all places. I had so many pussies and so many tender rosebuds lined up to fuck. Now I'll have my noble tool in a sling!"

When Fiore returned the following afternoon, bringing flowers, Marlon invited him in. "The hospital, I've learned, is staffed by nuns. Every time the bandages on my genitals have to be changed, every nun in this hospital makes it a point to come into my room with some made-up excuse. These gals have never seen a man's dick before. The way I look at it, if they want to get a glimpse of my noble tool, even though it's burnt, let them feast their eyes and enjoy themselves. Later on, they can resume their lives as brides of Christ."

Back in California, when Kashfi heard the news, she suggested the following day's headlines: BRANDO SCALDS BALLS!

In Paris at the Hotel du Palais-Royale, Marlon went at once to Monty's suite to greet him and to tell him how much he was looking forward to co-starring with him in *The Young Lions*. He even apologized for taking star billing, claiming, "The studio demands it."

Having not seen Monty in several months, Marlon discovered a wreck of a human being following his auto accident. Monty was also suffering from phlebitis and downing tranquilizers like Ronald Reagan scarfed down jellybeans. Monty was also suffering from a bad cold, for which he was taking belladonna "because my nose is so stuffed I can't breathe."

Although Marlon was later highly critical of Monty's pill popping, Carlo Fiore said, "Marlon should not have been so critical of Monty. Marlon himself was relying heavily on Seconals and amphetamines to get through another day."

Throughout the Fifties, Marlon had taken somewhat of a paternal interest in Monty, even though competing for roles with him. "It was a case of if you can't get Brando, go for Clift," Darryl F. Zanuck once said. Their love affair, in the Forties, such as it was, was almost a forgotten encounter when Marlon

and Monty reunited in that hotel suite in Paris.

Although Marlon took little notice of the careers of any other actor, except James Dean, he journeyed to Broadway to see Monty appear in *The Sea Gull* in 1954. Marlon was in illustrious company, joining old friends Harry Belafonte and Marlene Dietrich. Arthur Miller even sat with Marlon, although the playwright had been disturbed to learn of Marlon's love affair with Marilyn Monroe.

All of these legendary names went backstage to congratulate Monty on his performance. Marlon approached him first, taking the emaciated actor in his arms and planting a wet kiss on his lips. "That was a genius I saw on that stage tonight," Marlon told Monty in the presence of the other famous guests.

Later, when Monty was exiting through the back door, reporters cornered him to ask about Marlon. "Mr. Brando is continuously creative even with shitty material," Monty told the press. Privately Monty confided to their mutual agent, Edith Van Cleve, that he "absolutely detested" Marlon's performance in *The Teahouse of the August Moon*. "First he was a joke cast as a Jap," Monty said. "Also Marlon played it far too gay."

"Poor Monty never lived long enough to see some of Marlon's future travesties on the screen," Edith said.

Monty attended a dinner party at the home of his close friend Elizabeth Taylor on the night of May 13, 1956, while they were filming *Raintree County*. Drunk and drugged, he left the party and started down the hill in his car but ran over a ravine, smashing his vehicle into a telephone pole. He came close to death. Screaming as she raced down the hill, Taylor climbed down into the ravine and opened Monty's smashed car door. Seeing that he was choking, she reached into his throat and removed five of his teeth.

Up all night and unable to sleep, Fiore at his apartment had the radio on when a bulletin came over the wire announcing Monty's accident. Ignoring the time, Fiore called Marlon, awakening him.

"Freddie," Marlon said with growing impatience. That was his nickname for Fiore. "Do you know that it's four o'clock in the morning? Thanks for the news about Monty. So bad. But I'm going to look like Monty does right now if I don't get my own beauty sleep." He hung up the phone.

Weeks after the accident, Marlon visited Monty when he was released from the hospital, discovering that Monty was losing his battle with drugs and booze.

According to Fiore, Marlon went to see Monty, hoping to save him. After only one hour, Marlon concluded that there was no hope for Monty. He was too far gone.

At one point, and again according to Fiore, Marlon told Monty, "I should hate you because you've always been viewed as my competition. But I don't

hate you. You've been good for me. You've made me a better actor because I want to be better than you. That makes me work harder. You're my touchstone. My challenge. Ever since I saw *A Place in the Sun*, I knew you could take the screen from me. But, after that, you've just gone downhill. You never lived up to your promise."

Marlon's words angered Monty. "At least I didn't make *Guys and Dolls* singing and dancing with Sinatra," Monty said.

"Touché!"

"You don't know this," Monty said, "but I was offered the role of Napoleon in *Desirée* before you."

"You've got to be kidding," Marlon said in astonishment. "Montgomery Clift as Napoleon? You could never have done it. Never have donned those pink silk breeches. Besides, your ass is far too skinny to play Napoleon. They would have had to pad your butt."

"Wardrobe didn't need to pad your butt for *Guys and Dolls*," Monty said. "That was one big, *big*, big fat ass up there on the screen—and in color too. You all but mooned us!"

Before he left Monty's suite, Marlon urged his friend to join Alcoholic Anonymous. "You're going to die if you don't stop this!"

"I can't stop!" Monty said, his eyes showing the same emotion and tenderness he'd revealed in his final scene with Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun*. "I've got to go on until I can't go on any more. Only now the end is much sooner than later for me."

Later that night, Marlon called Fiore to his hotel suite to talk about his encounter with Monty. "All I could do was to look into that shattered face and shed tears with Monty. We cried in unison."

Monty Clift

"The structure of that once beautiful face has been forever altered by the beauty butchers," Marlon told Fiore. "It was once the most sensitive face ever to appear on the silver screen. No more! His once-tender lips are marred by a vertical scar. His features are so altered that he looks like a cadaver that someone dug up two years after it'd been resting in some dark crypt."

"He looks like a zombie," Marlon went on. "He's drugged day and night from what I gather. There is such a neurotic fragility about him that it makes it painful for me to be in the same room with him. He reminds me of an eggshell. Easy to crush in my hand at any moment. But I have no desire to destroy yesterday's competi-

tion. He's no longer a rival to me in spite of what the shitheads in the press claim. The only thing we still have in common at this point is that we have the same two agents—Edith Van Cleve in New York and the ever-loyal Jay Kanter on the West Coast. Both good people unlike the fuck-ups they have to deal with in the theater and the film industry."

"Monty can no longer convey that bewildered deer-caught-in-the-headlights look of his," Marlon said. "If anything, his present face is an expressionless wraith. After all that plastic surgery, his face is immobilized. As I spoke to him, those incredible eyes of his were still alive but the face is a mask concealing a dead brain long ago buried by the numbness of booze and pills. Monty is enveloped in a fog of anesthesia."

In later years, Fiore said that "Marlon's relationship with Monty was always off base. During the making of *The Young Lions*, it entered the twilight zone."

"It was important for Marlon to prove that he was superior to Monty, and he clearly was," Fiore said. "Marlon was fucked up. But compared to Monty, Marlon was actually sane and in control. Marlon had to be *the man* in their relationship. Back in the Forties he had to show their friends that he was the one in charge. How else to explain why he forced Monty to go in drag with him to a party hosted by Kevin McCarthy at his home in Bedford Village. From the beginning, Marlon wanted to be top gun. That was what happened during the entire filming of *Lions*. The movie marked the end of their troubled and very strange relationship. It was painful to watch from a front row seat like I had."

Fiore shared the limousine that drove Marlon and Monty to Chantilly, north of Paris, where the filming began. "I remember it rained a lot of the time. When Monty and Marlon learned there would be no work for them, they would take the train to Paris. I often went along with them."

Increasingly, Monty was out of control, whereas Marlon held back on his drinking, nursing one cocktail all night. Fiore remembered one night at the bar of the plush George V Hotel. In the course of two hours, Monty downed fifteen gin martinis—"extra heavy on the gin."

In front of the hotel, he broke loose from Marlon and Fiore and climbed onto the roof of a limousine. On top of the car, "twitching like a paralytic," Monty danced a jig before collapsing and sliding down onto the hood. Both Marlon and Fiore rescued Monty, putting him into a taxi and going back to his hotel suite where they undressed him and put him to bed.

Back on the set the following morning, Monty was terribly hung over but still drinking alcohol from a thermos. He wanted to watch Marlon act. After one scene, he came up to Marlon. "Please stay in character," he said. "Don't play Christian like he was Jesus Christ. You're not Jesus Christ, you know."

When Monty later learned that Marlon at the end of the film wanted to roll down a hill, ending on the ground with his arms outstretched like a crucified Christ figure, Monty threatened to bolt the movie. "If he does that," Monty told Dmytryk, "I'm off the picture. I mean that!"

Monty prevailed, but even so he complained to the director almost daily, attacking Marlon's performance. "He's sloppy," Monty said of Marlon. "He uses only one-tenth of his talent."

One afternoon Irwin Shaw appeared on the set to see "what Hollywood is doing to my novel." Still infuriated at Marlon, the novelist pointedly ignored him, but bonded with Monty. After seeing the rushes, Shaw told Dmytryk, "I detest Brando's performance. Who does he think he is? Only Monty is true to the character I wrote."

One day Monty didn't report to work at all. From a young French boy Monty had been sleeping with at the Hotel du Palais-Royale, Marlon and Fiore learned that night that Monty had gone to a gay bar on the Left Bank. It was called Tabou. Arriving at the club, Marlon and Fiore didn't spot Monty among the patrons, although Marlon attracted a lot of attention from the gay men.

Fiore led Marlon to the backroom where, to their horror, they discovered a nude Monty lying on a pool table. He was being fucked by a young man who wore only a leather jacket. At least ten other gay patrons of the backroom had lined up to sodomize the American movie star.

Much to the anger of the other gay men, Fiore and Marlon forced Monty to get off the table. They dressed him and took him in a taxi back to his hotel, where they undressed him and put him to bed.

The one-day disappearance was but a prelude to an even larger vanishing the following week. Dmytryk was horrified, threatening a lawsuit. Marlon did not seem unduly disturbed. He told Fiore, "I heard that Spencer Tracy used to disappear and go on a big drunk before every picture. Tracy's a big star. *Was* a big star. If Tracy can get away with that shit, why not Monty? It's what queers like Monty and Tracy do. It's all because they can't come to terms with their homosexuality. As for me, I've never had any sexual regrets. Why should I? Life is too short for all that guilt crap."

A posse sent by Dmytryk found Monty in Rome. Apparently, the actor had left a paper trail. He was discovered in a seedy bordello that hired both male and female prostitutes. Underpaid Italian sailors on leave rented their bodies to gay johns to make extra money. Monty had heard of the bordello and had gone there "hungry for seafood," as he put it. The aging woman owner of the brothel, who looked like Lotte Lenya on a bad night, told the studio posse that Monty had hired at least a dozen sailors during his brief stay in the brothel.

Marlon greeted Monty when he was returned to France by the posse.

Neither man spoke of what Monty had been up to in Rome. Later that night, Marlon told Fiore, "Monty is deeply horrified at his own homosexuality. Even though he's plagued by it, he returns to it time and time again like he did in Rome. I suspect that he hates the homosexual acts he indulges in so much that he's a homophobe himself. There is no acceptance of who he is. His sexual guilt is even greater than that of Cary Grant, and I know of which I speak."

After the final scene was shot, Marlon bid a final farewell to Monty. In front of the entire cast, Marlon walked over to Monty and embraced him, putting a kiss on his lips. "Take care of yourself for my sake," Marlon said. "Without you around to challenge me to do better and better work, there would be no one left." He kissed Monty on the mouth again. There were tears in Monty's eyes as Marlon departed from the set.

When the picture was presented at an Actors Studio benefit at the Paramount Theater in New York months later, publicist John Springer virtually had to force Monty to go. En route to the theater in a limousine, Monty put up a brave front, telling Springer that, "I've already written my Oscar acceptance speech."

During the screening of *The Young Lions*, Monty's brave façade collapsed. When his image appeared on the screen in a close-up, a young woman rose from her seat in the balcony. "Is *that* him?" she shouted so loudly that all the patrons, including Monty, could hear her.

After the screening, Monty retreated in disgrace from the theater. But instead of focusing on his own performance, he chose to attack Marlon in front of Springer. "That God damn Marlon Brando! He's turned Christian into a fucking Nazi pacifist."

After *The Young Lions,* Monty still had a few major movies in him, including the 1959 *Suddenly, Last Summer,* but privately he "was on the road to hell," as his lover, Roddy McDowall, said. Later, Elizabeth Taylor used her box office clout to get Monty cast opposite her as a homosexual in the film, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. But he died of a heart attack on July 23, 1966.

Marlon agreed to stand in for Monty and take over the starring role. When he encountered Taylor during the first day of shooting of this 1967 release, he spoke kindly of their mutual friendship for Monty and the waste of a great talent. "Monty's gone to a far and better place," Marlon said. "He did not belong in this world."

* * *

The Young Lions opened to mixed reviews. Marlon's scenes with Monty were viewed, in the words of one reviewer, as a "boxing match" in which Marlon was "the only contender," drawing more favorable reviews than his

rival. The picture evolved into a commercial success worldwide. It would be Marlon's only success for nearly fifteen years.

David Watts of the *Financial Times* gave Marlon credit for turning "a third-rate bestseller into a second-rate box office hit."

Although world audiences, including those in the United States, generally accepted Marlon's sympathetic portrayal of a Nazi, it ran into trouble with Israeli censors who at first would not allow it to be shown in their country. Surprisingly when Egypt banned the film, Israel relented, allowing it to be shown to record-breaking crowds of Jewish movie-goers.

Egyptian censors had a different reason for banning the film. *The Young Lions* portrayed an American Jewish soldier, as interpreted by Monty, in a favorable light.

Reacting to the Egyptian ban, Israeli censors rescinded their position. "The Jew is so lovable that we decided to overlook Brando's sympathetic portrait of a Nazi," one censor told the press. "By now, the whole world knows what monsters the Nazis were. One screen portrayal by Brando could hardly change global perception."

* * *

Back in 1940, Tennessee Williams wrote a play which he called *Battle of Angels*. Biking over to the dressing room of Tallulah Bankhead, he offered it to her, his favorite star. Two weeks later she read it and turned it down with a certain violence. Even though he eventually persuaded Miriam Hopkins to appear in its key role, it had always been viewed as a disaster. Nonetheless, it remained one of Tennessee's favorites.

During one of his many dry spells as a writer, he took the play out of mothballs to rewrite. Finally, he mounted a Broadway production of it, retitled *Orpheus Descending,* in 1957. Although he'd wanted Marlon and Anna Magnani to star in it, both actors turned him down. Maureen Stapleton and Cliff Robertson headed the cast instead.

Tennessee Williams

Tennessee set this soapy Southern melodrama in the bigoted little Mississippi Bayou backwater called Two Rivers. The main character of Val Xavier was a former hustler and café entertainer who appears in a snakeskin jacket with a guitar and a line: "You're not young at 30 if you've been at a party since you were 15."

Tennessee promised Marlon that his character would be "full of sexual exoticism and poetic

yearnings." Marlon's response was "this Val Xavier character strikes me as a hustler who used to sell it by the inch."

"We all have to do what we must to survive," Tennessee said.

"The line I like best is when you have Val classify people into three types—'the buyers, the bought, and those who don't belong to no place at all,'" Marlon said.

"I'm sure I don't have to tell you which type of people we are," Tennessee said.

Marlon as Val Xavier in *The Fugitive Kind*

Even with several rewrites, when Tennessee struggled to make Marlon's part larger, the playwright's revised scripts were still rejected by Marlon.

Annoyed by the rejection, Tennessee told Marlon's agent, Edith Van Cleve, "I made the character of Val Xavier a possible bisexual so Marlon should feel perfectly cast."

Orpheus Descending was only one of five plays that Tennessee had offered to Marlon, each one rejected by him. In Japan, Marlon had told Truman Capote, "There are beautiful things in *Orpheus*, some of Tennessee's best writing, and the Magnani part is great. She would wipe me off the stage. This boy Val never takes a stand. I didn't really know what he was for or against. Well, you can't act in a vacuum. And I told Tennessee. So he kept rewriting. I had no intention of walking out on any stage with Magnani. Not in that part. They'd have to mop me up."

Marlon's bank account had been drained dry following his divorce settlement with Anna Kashfi. His father had called him to tell him that all of his money invested in the Nebraska ranch had been used up. His new studio, Pennebaker, was running into financial disaster with Marlon's debut as star/director in *One-Eyed Jacks*. When Sidney Lumet, the director of *The Fugitive Kind*, offered Marlon a million dollars to appear in the film, he agreed.

Anna Magnani signed on for $125,000, the same salary as the director, Lumet. Joanne Woodward, who'd won the Oscar in 1957 for her portrayal of the psychotic heroine in *The Three Faces of Eve*, was hired for $30,000.

Until Marlon signed on, the part of Val Xavier had been cast with Anthony Franciosa, the husband of Shelley Winters, Marlon's former girlfriend,

Joanne Woodward

Franciosa had agreed to do the role for $75,000. During the making of *Wild Is the Wind* in 1957, Franciosa had been Magnani's lover both on and off the screen. "Hollywood is nothing if not incestuous," Lumet said.

Marlon later told the press that the only reason he agreed to do *The Fugitive Kind* was "because I needed the money and in a hurry, and it was the best role I could find overnight."

When Marlon showed up on the set, he was greeted by Lumet, who at the time was married to Gloria Vanderbilt, one of Marlon's "one-night stands." The director may not have known of his wife's involvement with Marlon. Both director and star assumed a professional relationship with each other. Marlon was "somewhat fascinated" that Lumet had been one of the original "Dead End Kids" and also the former son-in-law of Lena Horne. Ironically, Lumet, a former actor, had replaced Marlon on Broadway in *A Flag Is Born*.

There was a certain awkwardness when Marlon greeted Joanne Woodward, whom he'd dated for a month back in 1953. The Georgia-born blonde had married Paul Newman in 1958, an actor often unflatteringly described as "Brando's clone." There were rumors at the Actors Studio that Marlon and Woodward had had an affair. Friends of Woodward's claimed that Marlon was not her type and that she was dating him only to make the already-married Newman jealous.

In *The Fugitive Kind*, Woodward was cast as a rich, wild, and exhibitionistic nymphomaniac-dipsomaniac, with white makeup, black-ringed eyes, and bleeding nose. In one scene she was asked to kneel before Marlon as Xavier. She says, "I want something to hold the way you hold your guitar." She makes it rather clear to film audiences what it is that she wants to hold—and in her mouth at that.

Reportedly, Woodward later said—rather astutely—that Tennessee, Marlon, and Anna Magnani were performing "in a self-parody of their past glories."

Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman

At the end of the filming, Woodward would also claim that she'd never work with Marlon again. "I hated working with him because he was not there. He was somewhere else."

* * *

Lumet dreaded the day when Magnani would encounter Marlon in Milton, New York, a small town eighty miles north of Manhattan that had been disguised to look like something in Mississippi. He feared that the meeting would be "like two hydrogen bombs waiting to explode." Lumet was unaware that the younger and sexier Marlon had had an affair with the younger and sexier Magnani on her home turf in Rome years before.

Almost from the first hour he'd reunited with Magnani, Marlon knew that "there was no spark between us," as he'd later tell his friend Sam Gilman. "The chemistry just wasn't there."

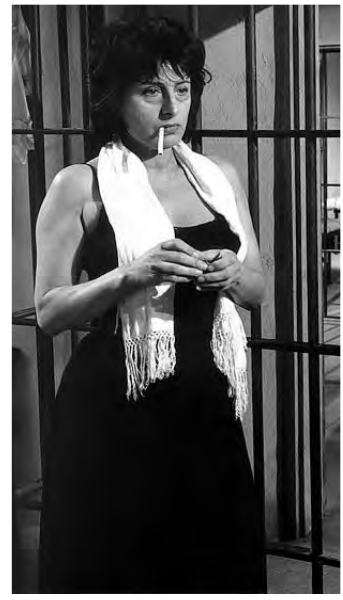
In a phone call the night before, Tennessee told Marlon that, "Anna told me she's in love with you, Marlon. You're in for a hot time!"

Later that afternoon Marlon responded to a question from the press. "Magnani is the explosive type of woman I like to play opposite. She is real. Of course, she is crazy like me and we have our differences."

Still believing that she could seduce Marlon as she had back in Rome, Magnani at first was enthusiastic about him. "When I work with him," she said, "it is like I work with a strange animal ready to pounce." Of course, that was not necessarily a compliment. She softened her words, "Yet it is a wonderful experience to see him be so realistic. So completely *all* man."

After only a few days, Marlon called Tennessee. "When I encountered *La Lupa* [her nickname], I found that she has turned into Tallulah Bankhead. An older creature for sure, but one even more sexually aggressive. She is that kind of woman, like Tallulah, who makes me flinch. Nothing but a sexual predator and a caricature of the actress she used to be. She is fierce for all the wrong reasons. She is intimidating to others. She once possessed a certain raw beauty. She has now reached the borderline of ugly."

At the age of fifty-one, Magnani was horrified that the cinematographer, Boris Kaufman, was making her look old. She brought in glam-



Anna Magnani

Anna Magnani and Brando

orous pictures of Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida with instructions that she wanted to be photographed as they were, forgetting they were much younger and more beautiful than she was.

Sadly, Lumet watched her struggle as she faced the cruelty of the camera that seemed to pick up every wrinkle and crevice. “A great talent with a great problem,” Marlon said. “She drove us crazy worrying about the way she looked. Her looks fit her character. After all, she was playing an aging woman lusting after a hot young stud—namely, me.”

Marlon confessed in his autobiography that Magnani on several occasions tried to see him alone. He finally paid a call on her at her hotel suite. “She started kissing me with great passion,” Marlon said. “I tried to be responsive because I knew she was worried about growing older and losing her beauty. As a matter of kindness, I felt I had to return her kisses. To refuse her would have been a terrible insult. But once she got her arms around me, she wouldn’t let go. If I started to pull away, she held on tight and bit my lip, which really hurt.

“With her teeth gnawing at my lower lip, the two of us locked in an embrace, I was reminded of one of those fatal mating rituals of insects that end when the female administers the coup de grace. We rocked back and forth as she tried to lead me to the bed. My eyes were wide open, and as I looked at her eyeball-to-eyeball, I saw that she was in a frenzy, Attila the Hun in full attack. Finally the pain got so intense that I grabbed her nose and squeezed it as hard as I could, as if I were squeezing a lemon, to push her away. It startled her, and I made my escape.”

Anna Mugnani in
The Fugitive Kind

Having escaped her clutches, Marlon had to play a love scene with her the next day. “It was downhill after I rejected her,” he said. “I don’t know how we ever finished this cornpone drama. What made our love scenes worse was her furry upper lip.”

At the end of the shoot, Magnani told Tennessee, “I do not wish to work with Mr. Marlon Brando ever again.”

Maureen Stapleton

On the other hand, Marlon said he would work with Magnani again "but only with a rock in my fist."

Tennessee was nervous about the conflicts between two of his friends. He claimed that "Brando and Magnani engaged in a clash of egos never before known in the history of the cinema."

Advertisements for *The Fugitive Kind* falsely claimed that, "The Screen Is Struck by Lightning."

"All the lightning was off camera," claimed Maureen Stapleton, Marlon's talented friend from the Forties. On Broadway, she'd played Lady Torrance but was forced to take the minor supporting role of the sheriff's wife in the film. "Talk about humiliation. But I'm a trouper and I did it. In the theater, a paycheck comes sometimes before pride. I'm sure Marlon himself would agree. We were both working for paychecks."

* * *

Tennessee made the mistake of attending a sneak preview of *The Fugitive Kind* at the RKO Theater on 58th Street in New York. He was accompanied by his longtime companion, Frank Merlo. The audiences—at least those who did not walk out on the showing—booed the screen.

After the screening, Tennessee and Frank were slipping out of the theater heading for a get-away taxi. A member of the audience spotted Tennessee and hissed at him. Other patrons also saw the playwright and began hissing him as well. "I just hissed back," Tennessee later said.

The next day the reviews started to come in. Writing in *Time and Tide*, Clancy Sigal said, "Watching Brando imitating Judy Holliday's impersonation of him in *Bells Are Ringing* is, at its most serious, like seeing a scratchy old film of Duse or Bernhardt; surely someone is kidding someone?"

The film opened officially in April of 1960, playing to nearly empty movie houses across the country. Exhibitors reported that many members of the audience walked out in disgust before "The End" flashed on the screen.

Regrettably, the failure of the play, *Orpheus Descending*, and its film version, *The Fugitive Kind*, marked the funeral rites for Tennessee's fashionable reputation. But for the rest of his life, on and off during those dry spells as a writer, Tennessee would get out the script and dust off the play. His "bail-out" rewrite never came.

In New York, Tennessee and Frank called Marlon and asked if they could

drop by his apartment one night. Arriving early, Tennessee and Frank greeted Marlon like old friends.

"Hon, the old faggot has come back into your life," Tennessee said to Marlon, warmly embracing him.

"You never left," Marlon said.

Over drinks—far too many for Tennessee—he told Marlon that he feared he was going to become a library author instead of one whose plays are performed on Broadway.

Marlon countered that he was going to become an actor written about in film schools instead of one seen on the screen. He told them that while making *The Fugitive Kind*, he'd taken a plane back to Los Angeles every weekend to cut his directorial film, the western movie, *One-Eyed Jacks*, in which he also starred. "The God damn thing drove me into bankruptcy and ran up to eight hours."

He said that the other day, a college student had sent him his thesis. As part of an academic study, the student had maintained that *One-Eyed Jacks* was a homosexual movie. The paper claimed that Sam Gilman, Marlon's best friend, who was also cast in the film, performed with "sexual innuendo" when playing opposite Marlon's character of Rio. "In fact, the conclusion was that Sam Gilman and I, along with the other cast, had made a homosexual movie."

"Welcome to the club," Tennessee said. "Everyone writes that about my plays."

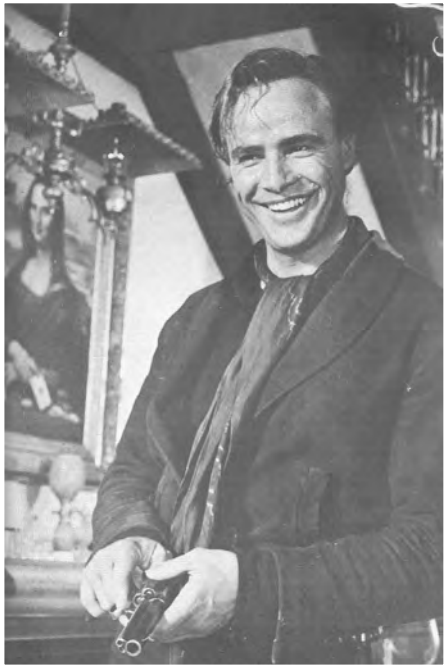
Marlon told his guests that variations on the Horatio Alger story were the wrong reading material for America's youth. "Fame is a fraud and a gyp," Marlon said. "The biggest disappointment of my life."

At the door, Tennessee and Frank kissed Marlon on the lips. They did not know when they would see him again.

Tears welled in Tennessee's eyes when he told Marlon that "on some glorious morning I'm going to create another Stanley Kowalski character for you to play."

"I'll be there for you," Marlon said.

Before heading down the hall, Tennessee looked back at Marlon.



Marlon in *One-Eyed Jacks*

“I’ll race you to hell. Bet I’ll get there before you do.”

Marlon would later claim that “he encountered Tenn deep into drugs and pills—but not quite as bad as Monty. Tenn was clearly coming apart. Success is a deadly game, especially when you can’t live up to your earlier successes. Just ask me.”

Tennessee Williams died on February 25, 1983, after choking on a bottle cap in a New York hotel room.

* * *

Tennessee seemed to have predicted his own demise as a playwright. And Marlon lived to see the twilight of his own career, as he limped from one bad movie to another. “I never seem to get it right,” Marlon said, remembering his films of the 1960s. The decade saw him stumble from one box office disaster to another. But unlike Tennessee, Marlon made a brief comeback with the release of *The Godfather* in 1972.

When his stage and screen performances thrust him into the public arena in the 1950s, he was part of an exclusive ten-member club whose films earned more than any other actors’ in the entertainment industry. But by the 1960s, times had changed. The American public was growing tired of Marlon’s “poetic hooliganism.” The subsequent decline of Marlon Brando as a film star remains one of the great tragedies in film history.

The kids who had flocked to see *The Wild One* in the 1950s had grown up and sired rebellious children of their own. Now, they could even scoff at the idol of their teenage years.

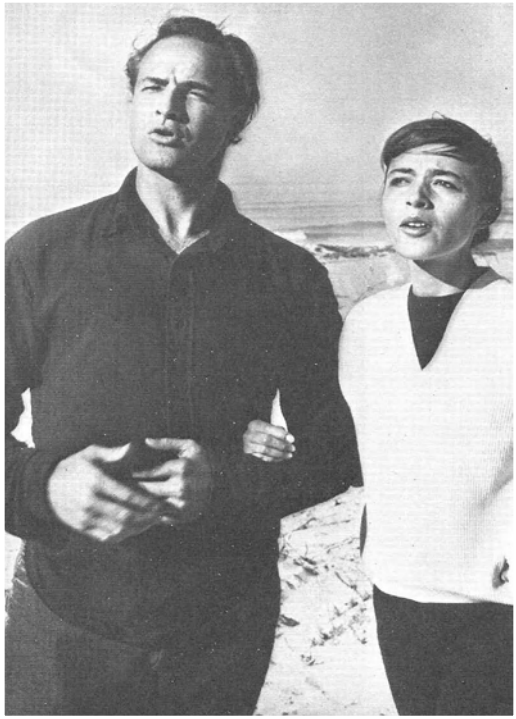
To his new best friend of the 1990s, Michael Jackson (of all people), Marlon confided, “My good-bye has been the longest good-bye in the history of show business. My tragedy was I didn’t know enough to get off the stage when the play had ended.”

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

THE STARS OF *ONE-EYED JACKS*: From left to right, Katy Jurado, Marlon, Karl Malden, and Pina Pellicer converge for their shooting of this disastrous Western in Death Valley. The original director, Stanley Kubrick, who was fired by Marlon, had wanted Spencer Tracy to play Malden's role of Sheriff Dad Longworth. In the film, Malden with a twelve-foot bullwhip savagely beats Rio (Marlon). In objecting to Tracy, Marlon said, "I don't want that closeted queer getting his jollies sadistically beating me. The old faggot would probably develop a boner, his first in years. Poor Kate Hepburn. But I hear she's dyke-oriented anyway."

"NO TITS!" was Marlon's demand for his leading ladies, both Mexicans, Katy Jurado, his former lover, and Pina Pellicer, cast as her daughter. "I don't want my leading ladies heaving big boobs on the wide screen while I'm trying to get an important point across." Jurado jokingly presents Marlon (during an early costume fitting for his upcoming role in *Mutiny on the Bounty*) with a *faux* Oscar, complete with genitals. She jokingly said, "You deserve the Oscar for seducing more women, including me, than any other actor in the history of Hollywood. A noble tool, indeed!"

GERONIMO! The Indian chief known as "Red Arrow" was hired by the crew of *One-Eyed Jacks* to teach Marlon how to use a bow and arrow. These lessons were said to have launched his interest in the plight of the American Indian. In his classic story of revenge in the Old West, Marlon set out to "storm the citadel of Western cliches." In poker, two one-eyed jacks are usually wild cards. "Brando was the only wild card during that filming," said leading lady Katy Jurado. "He was also too old to play Billy the Kid."

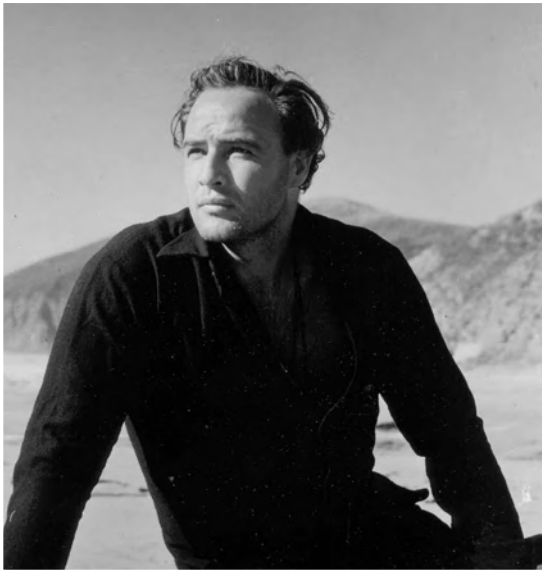


HOLLYWOOD'S NEW CINDERELLA: On location for *One-Eyed Jacks*, Marlon launched an affair with his leading lady, the emotionally fragile Mexican actress, Pina Pellicer. Calling her "Pigeon," he became her Svengali. Marlon fired Carlo Fiore from the film but not before he found Pellicer "like an exposed nerve--thin, frightened, and full of anger." When a beautiful older Mexican actress appeared on the set, Pellicer dropped Marlon. The lesbian relationship didn't work out. Returning to Mexico, Pellicer committed suicide in December of 1964.

EN ROUTE TO THE TICKLED PINK MOTEL: On the set of *One-Eyed Jacks*, Marlon faced his leading lady, Pina Pellicer. When he took her back to his Monterey motel, she said, "it wasn't sex, it was a devouring." After sex, Marlon, "dieting" for the film, called room service and ordered two apple pies à la mode and a quart of cold milk before bedtime. "He went to sleep but I felt unfulfilled, used by him," Pellicer told her costar Katy Jurado, cast as her mother. Ironically, at the beginning of the film, Katy had been Marlon's motel bedmate.

DIRECTOR OUT OF CONTROL: Under Marlon's direction, the budget for *One-Eyed Jacks* zoomed from $1.6 million to $6.5 million. An extraordinary one million feet of film was exposed. The first so-called "director's cut" ran for an astonishing eight hours. Paramount executives took the film back from Marlon, and studio editors cut it to a length of 141 minutes. At its official premiere on March 30, 1961, Marlon called what was to have been "the greatest Western ever filmed" a potboiler.

THE BLIND DIRECTING IN EXPENSIVE VISTAVISION: "I don't know how this film is going to end," Marlon told his startled cast. "But I want a scene where someone gets shot in the back. Who wants to be the shooter? Who wants to be the shootee?" Chico Day, his assistant director, pointed out to Marlon that he was looking through the wrong end of the range finder. "Holy shit!" Marlon said. "Little wonder we're so way behind schedule on this fucker! What the hell? Tell the executives at Paramount they can go fuck themselves."



WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS TO ROLL BY: During the filming of *One-Eyed Jacks*, Marlon spent hours waiting for clouds to roll in. "I've go to have clouds, not a clear sky, before we can go on shooting." Howard Hughes, while filming *Hell's Angels*, had done the same thing. "Only difference between Marlon and Hughes waiting for those clouds is that that Texas drill bit could afford to waste weeks with the cast getting paid overtime," Sam Gilman said. "Marlon didn't have the money. I knew before its release that *One-Eyed Jacks* would never pay back its cost. But I danced all the way to the bank."

MARLON HOLDS OPEN THE DOOR FOR FRANCE NUYEN: Born in Marseilles in 1934, the beautiful but hypersensitive Eurasian model and actress, France Nuyen entered Marlon's life when she appeared as a young girl in the stage version of *South Pacific*. The introduction was arranged by Joshua Logan, the play's director, who had clashed with Marlon on the set of *Sayonara*. Even though engaged to Anna Kashfi at the time, Marlon launched himself into an affair with this somewhat näive young actress. "It is my job to show her the way," Marlon told his friends, one of whom, Carlo Fiore, recalled Nuyen sitting at Marlon's feet 'looking up at him adoringly." The Franco-Chinese actress of exotic charm traveled in disguise with Marlon to Haiti. "He just wanted an excuse to be a big little boy and dress up and be someone else and see how long he could fool everybody," she said.

THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG: Starring on Broadway in this production, France Nuyen was engaged in a torrid affair with Marlon. He told Carlo Fiore, "In our relationship, I'm the top, France the bottom." "I might have imaged such," Fiore told his friend. At one point Marlon urged his then director, Stanley Kubrick, to write in a part for a Chinese girl in *One-Eyed Jacks*. He even suggested France Nuyen for the part. Kubrick shot back, "She can't act." After that exchange, Kubrick was out of a job and went on to greater glory. In the end, though, France never got anybody to write in a role for her.

BARBARA LUNA IN BUTTONS, BOWS, AND GARTER BELT: Making her debut on Broadway at the age of six in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*, Barbara Luna was a "mixed breed." She had Italian blood flowing through her veins along with Hungarian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Filipino plasma. Over the years she appeared in films with Marlon's "lovers and enemies," including Frank Sinatra, Vivien Leigh, Spencer Tracy, and Lee Marvin. She ended up in the daytime soap opera, *One Life to Live* (1968), playing Maria, "the bitch everybody loves to hate." Luna, as she preferred to be known, was the first choice to play Anita in *West Side Story* in 1961, but the producers cast Rita Moreno, one of Marlon's girlfriends, instead. During the making of *One-Eyed Jacks*, Marlon launched an affair with Luna. He told Karl Malden, "I was working only fourteen hours a day directing this fucker, and I still had a lot of sexual energy to use up."

"MY MEXICAN TAMALE" That's how Marlon referred to his second wife, the Mexican actress Movita, whom he married in 1960 in the wake of his divorce from another exotic actress, Anna Kashfi. Before getting hitched, Marlon and Movita had been lovers for years. In spite of Marlon's reputation for preferring underaged "jailbait," Movita was an older woman, born in 1917 (Marlon was born in 1924). Marlon told his friends that he'd married Movita in a secret ceremony because she was pregnant at the time. Installing her in a fine home in Coldwater Canyon, Marlon supported Movita but never lived with her. With Marlon, she had two children--a son, nicknamed "Miko," and a daughter, Rebecca.

HOLLYWOOD IS NOT A FIT PLACE FOR CHILDREN: Tired of Marlon's constant womanizing, Movita announced in April of 1962 that she was returning to Mexico. Pictured above is Movita with her stepson, Christian (left), and her own son, Miko (right). Anna Kashfi, Christian's mother, did not want Christian to associate with Movita's children. After her return to her homeland, Movita remained married "in name only," but stayed on friendly terms with Marlon. In a surprising legal twist, Judge Harry Brand in a Santa Monica courtroom in 1968 granted Movita an annulment from Marlon in spite of the fact that their marriage had produced two children.

"THE NADIR OF MY CREATIVE RESOURCES HAS BEEN REACHED" was Marlon's lament at the end of the shooting of his role as Fletcher Christian opposite Trevor Howard's Captain Bligh in a remake of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, released in 1962. This contradicted an earlier statement, "I had some of the best times of my life making the film." At least he discovered his Shangri-La, a coral atoll in the South Pacific, Tetiaroa, which he purchased in 1966. Making headlines around the world, *Bounty* became one of the most controversial and costliest films in cinema history, skyrocketing to a final tab of $18 million. Marlon suffered through five separate versions of his character in a staggering total of 30 different screenplays, as costs mounted during the long eighteen-month shoot. Marlon used ear plugs to keep him from hearing director Lewis Milestone's commands. Because of "the disaster," Marlon would forever be known as "profligate" and "undisciplined." Flying back to Los Angeles after filming, he lamented, "My bankability, even my career, are threatened. It's shit roles for me from now on." Milestone called Marlon "a ham actor, a petulant child."

POLYNESIAN "LOVE SONG": During the making of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, Marlon launched a relationship with Tarita Teriipaia, the daughter of a Bora-Bora "papa" and a Chinese "maman." In *Mutiny*, she'd been cast in the minor role of Maimiti, the Tahitian girl in love with Christian Fletcher, as played by Marlon. Life imitated art as the pair became involved. She remembered Marlon living in a beachside hut and playing the bongos all night when not sleeping with local island girls. After the long, arduous filming, he flew her back to Los Angeles where she discovered that he was still married to Movita, who ironically, had played the same role (Maimiti) in the original 1935 version of *Mutiny* with Clark Gable and Charles Laughton. When Tarita became pregnant, Marlon urged her to abort the child, but she refused. A son, Teihotu, was born on May 30, 1963, and Marlon denied fatherhood. Enraged, he flew to the atoll where he severely beat Tarita with his fists and a belt. Heading back to Los Angeles, he abandoned her in "a pool of blood," according to her memoirs, published in French.

THE "SLEEPLESS MARRIAGE": Amazingly, if Tarita is to be believed, Marlon rarely slept with her during their long affair and their common law marriage that produced two children. In custody battles with Marlon in Los Angeles, first wife Anna Kashfi referred to Tarita and her brood as "Brando's mistress and his illegitimate children." While filming *Mutiny*, Marlon often spoke of Tarita's "Rousseau-like innocence." He claimed that he delayed seduction of her for six entire months, a record for him. The real reason for the delay may have been a bad case of gonorrhea he'd contracted from all his womanizing with the beauties of the South Pacific, often at the rate of three per night, sometimes all of them in the same bed with him.

"AND WE ALL LOSE OUR CHARMS IN THE END": Marilyn Monroe sang those exact words when she was filming *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* with Jane Russell. This photograph of her was secretly taken following her autopsy when she was the victim of a suicide (perhaps a murder) on August 5, 1962. As has so often been said, her image evoked, and continues to evoke, all that is good, bad, ugly, glamorous, phony, and tacky about Hollywood. Her friendship and occasional lovefests with Marlon lasted up to a point close to her death. Marlon was one of the last people, other than Peter Lawford, that Marilyn spoke to just before her untimely death. Throughout the rest of his life, he claimed that she was murdered and had not committed suicide. He also maintained that hours before her death, Marilyn confided in him "a story so shocking that it would blow the lid off this town and lead to a rewriting of all those Marilyn and Kennedy biographies."

THE NOT SO UGLY AMERICAN: When *The Ugly American* was released in 1963, Marlon's radicalization" had begun and was making world headlines. Marlon allowed his close friend and Pennebaker partner, George Englund (husband of actress Cloris Leachman) to direct the two-hour film. His sister, Jocelyn, was granted a supporting role but most of the key players were relatively unknown. With a mustache inspired by Ronald Colman, Marlon played a U.S. diplomat, "a pigheaded man of good intention." He flew to Tahiti after filming. While on his island, he heard a radio broadcast announcing that Marilyn Monroe had died. At first it seemed unreal, as he'd so recently spoken to her in such a confidential manner.

ODE TO THREE WAYS: Being a Democrat, Marlon had supported John F. Kennedy in his bid for the presidency, but as JFK's campaign evolved, the Massachusetts senator was far too much of a moderate for Marlon's left-wing politics. Marlon had two major reasons for disliking the young president when they met together in a Los Angeles hotel suite a few months before the president's assassination. Marilyn had already related her stories to him about the "abuse" she'd suffered, both from the president and from his brother, the attorney general, Robert Kennedy. Marlon also resented the President's close association with Frank Sinatra before the two men went their separate ways. The President liked Hollywood gossip, and welcomed his meeting with Marlon. The President viewed Marlon as "the greatest womanizer who ever set foot in Hollywood," with conquests whose numbers surpassed even those of Sinatra. According to Carlo Fiore, Mr. Kennedy and Marlon "wanted to indulge in some serious pussy talk," evocative of Kennedy's friendship with Sinatra, who had arranged for JFK to meet beauties who enjoyed seductions that carried the presidential seal. Fiore claimed, "Marlon later told me that the first question Kennedy wanted to know was, 'Is Shirley MacLaine's pussy really red?" Marlon later said that he was embarrassed at not knowing the answer to that, having never seduced her. Kennedy and Marlon talked for about two hours. The President seemed fascinated as Marlon told him about his A-list seductions. Both Kennedy and Marlon agreed that they were "never finished with a woman until they'd had her three ways."

A FLIGHT TO NOWHERE: The 1964 silly froth, called *Bedtime Story*, might have been filmed in the 1930s with Cary Grant and James Stewart. Instead, it starred Marlon and David Niven. Marlon was much too fat to appear in a beach scene with Shirley Jones, but that didn't stop him from showing a lot of flesh--too much, in fact. Playing two adventurers, both Niven and Marlon actually played themselves. As two Riviera-based gigolos, Marlon and Niven join up to con wealthy women, most often widows and divorcées. Penelope Gilliatt, in the *Observer*, wrote: "It makes you feel that civilisation might as well leave it to the amoebae again."

THE WIDOW AND THE CONTENDER: Separated from his wife, Cloris Leachman, George Englund, Marlon's close friend and partner, was spending a lot of time with Lee Radziwell. She, of course, was the sister of the former First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy. Lee invited Englund to visit with Jackie and her in Washington, and he was specifically asked to bring Marlon too. The two sisters were staying at the home of Ambassador Averell Harriman, who had lent Jackie his house as a refuge following the assassination of her husband in Dallas.

At the house, guarded by the Secret Service, Englund introduced "the two best known people in America," Mrs. Kennedy and Marlon Brando. Fueled by an excessive consumption of martinis, the quartet agreed to dine at the Jockey Club, Jackie's favorite French restaurant in Washington. It was the night of January 29, 1964. At the restaurant, the party was ushered to a private table. But someone spotted them and called the press. Within the half hour, paparazzi and reporters descended to record Jackie's first social appearance since JFK's funeral. Escaping like "fugitives" in Englund's words, the famous quartet fled through the kitchen. Later, Lee and Marlon cooked omelettes as Jackie and Englund sat in her living room, describing the recent, traumatic events in Dallas.

Three weeks later, Marlon received a thank you letter from Mrs. Kennedy, claiming she found "the omelettes wonderful and the conversation even more wonderful." She asked Marlon to tell no one, but invited him for a secret weekend away from the prying eyes of the press. Marlon told Carlo Fiore that his time with Mrs. Kennedy was "far too brief," and he eagerly looked forward to getting to know her better. Their secret rendezvous took place in New York at the Hotel Carlyle, where Mrs. Kennedy's late husband had enjoyed trysts with Marilyn Monroe.

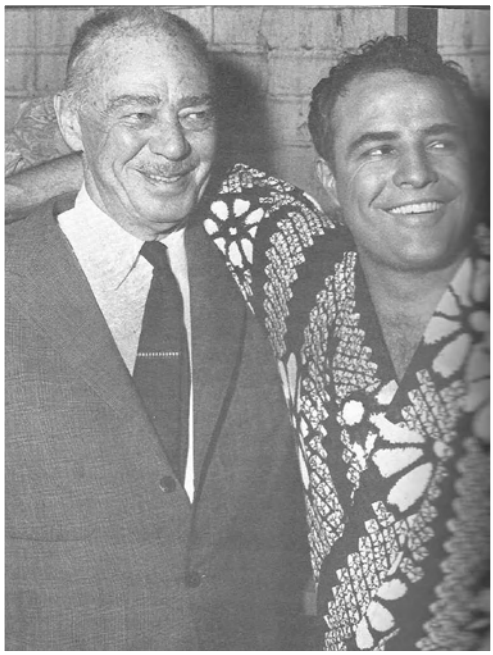
Back in Los Angeles, Marlon refused to tell Carlo Fiore the details of his affair with Mrs. Kennedy. Marlon revealed only one tantalizing detail. According to Marlon, Mrs. Kennedy revealed that on a visit to India, Nehru himself had taught her how to stand on her head and meditate. In New York, she taught Marlon to do that. Fiore claimed that Marlon stood on his head for the next three weeks, at various times meditating. But, complaining of headaches, he eventually abandoned the practice.

After his brief interlude with Mrs. Kennedy, Marlon wrote to her, proposing marriage. He claimed that his own marriage to Movita was in name only. He said that he could easily get a divorce. He also promised to provide privacy and comfort for Mrs. Kennedy and her children on an island in the South Pacific. She found his proposal "amusing" and filed it with some 2,000 others she'd received, including one from a Greek shipping magnate that looked promising.

In 1974, after Mrs. Kennedy had become Mrs. Aristotle Onassis, Marlon had a violent run-in with Ron Galella, America's most famous *paparazzo*. He was known to all tabloid readers for his consant harassment of Mrs. Onassis. After his release from the hospital, Galella sued Marlon for half-a-million dollars. The lawsuit was settled out of court for $40,000. Mrs. Onassis reportedly was "thrilled that Marlon was still out there, looking out for me."

***THE SABOTEUR: CODE NAME--MORITURI*:** In this old-fashioned melodrama, released by 20th Century Fox in 1965, Marlon teamed up once again with Trevor Howard, his *Mutiny on the Bounty* costar. Also appearing in the film were Marlon's old friends, William Redfield and Wally Cox, along with Yul Brynner, with whom Marlon bonded rather intimately. *Newsweek* called the film "patent claptrap." Both Marlon and Brynner needed the money, and that's why they did the film. The bald-headed Brynner detested 20th Century Fox so much he dubbed it "16th Century Fucks."

THE DEATH OF MARLON SR.: The love-hate relationship between Marlon Sr. and Marlon Jr. ended in 1965. Despite their outward show of affection, as depicted below, "the two men hated each other," in the words of Sam Gilman. Early in June of that year, the doctors for Marlon Sr. diagnosed a melanoma growing on the back of his hand. After radium treatments, it was determined that the cancer growing in him was not operable. Death came on July 18, 1965 at St. Vincent's Hospital in Santa Monica. A few months months before Marlon Sr. died, he'd engaged in a bitter fight in Pennebaker offices, denouncing his son as a "God damn fool." Marlon Sr. had even slapped Marlon Jr. in front of witnesses. "Marlon took it like a man, but stormed out of the office," Sam Gilman said. "When Marlon Sr. died a few months later, there was no funeral. After hearing of his father's death, Marlon told me, 'I loathed the bastard, and I'm glad he's out of my life. Fuck him.'"



Later, Marlon journeyed to Nebraska and spread his father's ashes in the fields of Penny Poke Farm. Marlon Sr. was described, in his obituaries, as a "successful businessman" even though he had squandered enormous amounts of his son's money in foolish investments.

***THE CHASE*-- HOTHOUSE, SOUTHERN, AND GOTHIC:** In her steamy drama about a hard-drinking Southern backwater, playwright Lillian Hellman let it rip. In a screenplay inspired by both *Peyton Place* and *High Noon*, it focused on wife-swapping, racism, megalomania, arson, and murder. The cast was gold plated, and included Marlon, an extraordinarily handsome Robert Redford, and legendary beauties Angie Dickinson and Jane Fonda. Fonda later described her part as "Barbarella comes to small-town Texas." Even the infamously narcissistic movie star of the 1930s, Miriam Hopkins, found herself wandering into the film. Its producer, Sam Spiegel, said, "Brando sleepwalked through *The Chase*. The only chase occurred when Brando ran from process servers sent by Anna Kashfi." Director Arthur Penn later declared that Brando "looked like a baby Orson Welles. He was good at seduction. All off camera." After it was released in 1966, the film bombed at the box office.

DON'T GIVE ME THAT FUCKING BULLSHIT!: That was Marlon's opening line to the Canadian director, Sidney J. Furie, when he said that he was looking forward to working with Marlon on the 1966 release, *The Appaloosa*, a Mexican western. The simple plot has Marlon, cast as Matt Fletcher, setting out to recover a horse stolen from him by John Saxon, playing a Mexican bandit. From the beginning, Marlon wanted to send "more messages" in the picture about the harsh treatment of Indians. When Alan Miller, the producer, retitled the film *Southwest to Sonora*, Marlon threatened to walk. The British, however, released it with the *Sonora* title. Miller was horrified when Marlon insisted on his hiring of Christian Marquand, his French friend. "Marlon wanted top salary for Marquand, even though he had nothing to do with the picture," Miller claimed. "From what I gathered, Marquand earned the salary I was paying him by hanging around naked in Marlon's dressing room all day. They put more energy into sodomizing each other than Marlon did playing his part on camera."

TWILIGHT FOR THE LITTLE TRAMP: "In one of the worst mistakes of my life," Marlon signed on to be directed by Charles Chaplin, whom he'd always idolized. Approaching the end of his life, Chaplin was not what he used to be when he cast Marlon and Sophia Loren in the 1967 disaster, *A Countess from Hong Kong*, an idea that had originated in Chaplin's head back in 1931. Set in the stateroom of a luxury ocean liner, it was a typical 1930s "comedy," though improbably and wrongly placed within a 1960s setting. The director combined his usual mix of farce and sentimentality. Chaplin had never been duller and more unimaginative. The little tramp ended up detesting Marlon. "I would have whipped the horses harder leading his cortège to the cemetery if he'd died midway into production," said Chaplin. Marlon responded, "A nasty, sadistic asshole from hell. And I'm being kind. Ernst Lubitsch might have pulled it off. Not Chaplin!"

"LISTEN, YOU SON OF A BITCH, YOU'RE WORKING FOR CHAPLIN NOW!": Marlon rarely agreed with reviewers. But he pasted *Time* magazine's review of *A Countess of Hong Kong* over his bathroom mirror. *Time* wrote: *"A Countess from Hong Kong* is probably the best movie ever made by a 77-year-old man. Unhappily, it is the worst ever made by Charlie Chaplin." As a screen team, Hollis Alpert, of *Saturday Review*, found that Marlon and Loren had "about as much passion as that of a pair of love-wracked halibuts." "It was the swan song of a great silent screen talent who last had a grand design for a film back when I was shitting my diapers in Nebraska," Marlon said. "At the end of the shoot, Marlon told Chaplin, "You can take this fucking film and stick it up your ass. Frame by frame!"

"HER TITS AND ASS ARE TOO BIG": Marlon, at least when he was still speaking to his director, Charlie Chaplin, had an unkind appraisal of his costar, the Italian bombshell, Sophia Loren. He taunted her at every turn. When Chaplin directed them in their first love scene, he whispered--not sweet nothings in her ear--but an insult. "Did you know, you've gotten black hairs growing out of your nose which is too big?" Loren was upset from day one, having lost her battle for top billing on the film. Many a morning Marlon showed up late to work as Loren--made up and fully dressed--waited for him. He'd been carousing all night with his lover, Christian Marquand, even in his hotel suite when a startled reporter from a London newspaper came to interview Marlon and caught him "slurping Marquand."

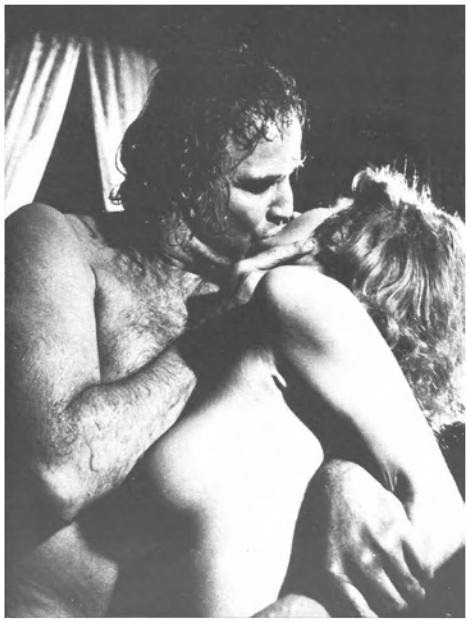
ELIZABETH TAYLOR AT HER MOST FLAMBOYANTLY VULGAR: When Monty Clift died of a heart attack, Marlon signed on to play the repressed homosexual, Major Weldon Penderton, in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, directed by John Huston and released in 1967. It was based on a bizarre Southern drama by Carson McCullers, a story of infidelity, perversion, and murder in an Army camp in Georgia. The film included Julie Harris, playing a next door neighbor who cuts off her nipples with a pair of garden shears. Richard Burton had turned down the role because he was nervous about playing a homosexual. He later overcame that prejudice when he signed on as Rex Harrison's lover in *Staircase* in 1969. Burton visited the set every day, ostensibly to watch Marlon act. But privately he told friends that he suspected "Liz has the hots for the boy. I have to see that she doesn't get into trouble." What did Marlon think of the Burton/Taylor romance? "Loved her, hated him!"

CANDY "ON AN ABYSMALLY LOW AND TASTELESS LEVEL": Marlon later claimed that it was only because of his friendship with Christian Marquand that he agreed to appear in *Candy*, released in 1968. Marquand, as the film's director, lined up Charles Aznavour, James Coburn, John Huston, Walter Matthau, and even Sugar Ray Robinson for what came to be called "the ultimate dirty movie." The film was freely adapted from the best-selling pornographic spoof by Terry Southern. Richard Burton was signed to star opposite Marlon. He played a debauched Welsh poet (type casting?). Ringo Starr was improbably cast as a Mexican gardener. Also miscast was Marlon, who played a phony Jewish guru. Taking a page from the *Kama Sutra*, Marlon has to teach Candy, as played by Ewa Aulin, the seven stages of sexual mysticism. The joke is, he's exhausted before reaching the seventh stage.

Before the end of the filming, Burton blamed Marlon "for leading me astray and getting me to appear in this stinker." Marlon responded: "My suggestion is for you to remake the Laurel and Hardy series. Based on your domestic life with Liz Taylor." Later a reporter asked Marlon what it was like to appear on screen with the *great* Richard Burton. "It was like working with the Seven Deadly Sins," Marlon shot back.

***QUEIMADA!* RELEASED AS *BURN!*:** In this 1970 release, Marlon played an English spy, Sir William Walker. In Cartagena, Colombia, where the picture was shot, he remembered nearly killing his director, Gillo Pontecorvo, so bitter were the clashes between the two hot-tempered men during filming in 1968. Marlon claimed that the motley crew were stoned most of the time, enjoying a strong variety of marijuana known as Colombia Red. Mostly he remembered the women, many from Brazil. "Dozens of them showed up, mostly upper-class women from good families, and they wanted to sleep with everybody," Marlon said. "After they went home, some told me, they intended to see a doctor who would sew up their hymens so that when they got married their husbands would think they were virgins."

"LOOKING LIKE A SLIGHTLY MAD BEN FRANKLIN": That's how the *New York Times* described Marlon's appearance in the 1971 release of *The Nightcomers*. It was shot in England and directed by Michael Winner, who based the script on the Henry James short story, *The Taming of the Screw*. Cast opposite him was Casablanca-born, Stephanie Beacham. Critics wrote of her "icy beauty, withering stare, and a British accent wielded like a poison dart." She was nervous about her nude scenes with Marlon. She need not have been. No one went to see the picture. After languishing in a vault for a year, it was finally picked up by an American distributor, who played it to empty houses across America. The smart money boys in Hollywood predicted, "Brando is finished in pictures."



***THE GODFATHER*--**

THE COMEBACK OF MARLON BRANDO: After a series of critical and financial disasters, Paramount executives were leary of casting Marlon as *The Godfather* in Mario Puzo's best-selling novel. Director Francis Ford Coppola wanted Sir Laurence Olivier, who was not available, to play Don Corleone. Although he needed the work, Marlon at first turned it down, claiming that he would not make a film glorifying the Mafia. But after reading the script, he said, "I don't think the film is about the Mafia at all. I think it is about the corporate mind." Years later, Marlon blamed Coppola for his massive weight gain. "Coppola not only makes the best pictures but the best spaghetti in the world." At the time he was cast into *The Godfather*, Marlon was otherwise virtually unemployable. His weight had ballooned--and he was constantly depressed.

YOU WANT BRANDO AFTER TEN BOX OFFICE FIASCOS?: Executives at Paramount discouraged best-selling author Mario Puzo in his campaign to cast Marlon in their film version of *The Godfather*. "Brando is troublesome and uncooperative," said Paramount Production chief, Robert Evans, "And not only that, he'll fuck your wife or mistress behind your back." Refusing to change his mind, Puzo, a tough product of Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, sent Marlon galleys of *The Godfather,* his epic story of a crime family that would soon capture the attention of the world. In addition to the book, Puzo was also writing the filmscript, and still holding out for Marlon. Marlon didn't read the book, but called Puzo to thank him for sending over the galleys. "Paramount will never hire me," Marlon told the author. "So let's forget it. I'm sure George C. Scott will get the nod." Puzo would go on to write all three *Godfather* movies (the latter two without Marlon), for which he'd receive two Oscars. When Puzo died on Long Island in 1999, he was writing a fourth *Godfather* movie, the film script of which he was going to send to Marlon, hoping that he'd agree to appear in a cameo.

"I'M PAYING BRANDO ONLY $50,000. BUT IF THE PICTURE IS A SUCCESS, HE'LL MAKE A FORTUNE: That was Robert Evans talking, the chief of production at Paramount. In addition to his base salary, Marlon was also given five percent of the gross of *The Godfather*, with a ceiling of $1.5 million. In a financial mistake, and strapped for cash, Marlon sold his points back to the studio, ending up with only $300,000.

When Evans finally agreed to cast Marlon, he sent him Mario Puzo's film script. Marlon finally got around to reading it, finding it "cheap pulp fiction in the tradition of Harold Robbins." But after reading the complete novel, he agreed to sign on. Later, Marlon told Sam Gilman that he was fascinated by their producer, Evans, because, "I understand that he's fucked Ava Gardner, Lana Turner, and Grace Kelly. Having sampled the charms of a couple of these ladies, I'm impressed with his choice of bedmates. Even more, I'm impressed with his judgment. He got an invitation from Sharon Tate the night she was murdered, but Robert said no." (Later, Sharon invited Jay Sebring instead, who, with Sharon, ended up as part of the Charles Manson bloodbath.)

TOP HEAVY WITH OSCARS: Director Francis Ford Coppola was the heavy winner in 1972 as he collected Academy Awards for *The Godfather*, one of the highest grossing pictures in the history of films. It brought him an Oscar for the screenplay he fashioned with Mario Puzo. The film also won a Best Director Academy Award for Coppola as well as a Best Picture Oscar. Coppola was launched on his way as one of the country's most erratic and controversial filmmakers. Coppola was working on *Godfather IV* with Puzo at the time of the author's death. After Puzo died, Coppola abandoned the project, saying, "I can't do it without my friend." Coppola suffered the indignity of both Marlon and George C. Scott turning town their Oscars for films written by him--Scott for *Patton* in 1970 and Marlon for *The Godfather* in 1972.

"A FAUN TRAPPED IN THE HEADLIGHTS OF AN ONCOMING CAR": That's how Al Pacino described his feelings during his first meeting with Marlon. Cast as Michael Corlone, Pacino once said, "Jeez, every time I'd run into Marlon Brando on the set, my face would turn red and I'd start laughing." Originally Marlon was unhappy with the casting of Pacino as his son. "I want Robert Redford," Marlon demanded, but didn't get him. Coppola recalled a dinner when members of the cast were introduced to Marlon. "Immediately everyone started relating to him as *The Godfather*. Jimmy Caan started telling jokes. Al Pacino looked tragic, and every time Brando turned his face, Bobby Duvall started to imitate him." Pacino was nervous in his first scene opposite Marlon as Don Corleone. The scene depicted a bedside vigil Michael keeps for the Don following an assassination attempt. "Have you any idea what it was like to do a scene with Brando?" Pacino later asked Coppola. "I sat in movie houses when I was a kid watching Brando in *Streetcar* and *Viva Zapata!* Now I'm playing a scene with him. He's *God*, man."

"BRANDO IS STRICTLY TABOO. LOOK WHAT HE DID TO *MUTINY*": The Paramount casting director who said that is living today in a seedy motel off Social Security. Financed in part by the breathtaking box-office returns on the sappy *Love Story*, *The Godfather* eventually emerged as a spectacular box-office success. Prior to his being cast in the film, Marlon submitted to the humiliation of a screen test, which took place in the privacy of his home. For the test, Marlon stuffed his cheeks with wads of tissue paper. When Robert Evans at Paramount saw the test, he proclaimed: "He certainly looks Italian. Fine! But who is he?"

"He's an actor named Marlon Brando," Coppola told the studio chief. Charles Bluhdorn, the sometimes-visionary chairman of Paramount, on hearing who the actor was, jumped up from his seat. "Oh, no, no, no! Anybody but Brando!" Dieting before filming began, a thinner Marlon was confronted by Robert Evans. "You're too thin to play the Don," Evans warned him. Throughout the rest of his life, no producer would ever utter such words to a bloated Marlon ever again. That very night Marlon resumed his diet of spaghetti, potatoes, three beefsteaks, two apple pies, a quart of ice cream, and a large jar of milk.

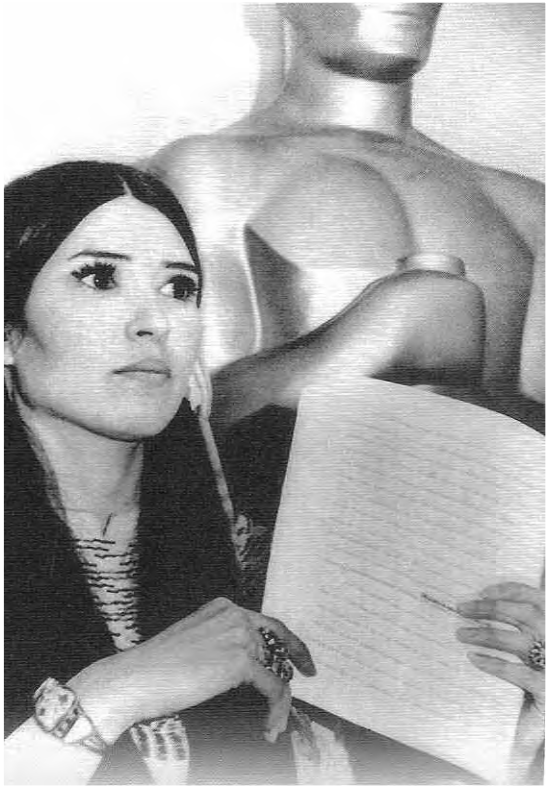
"THE WINNER IS...MARLON BRANDO": Those words came from Liv Ullmann on March 27, 1972, after she opened the envelope in front of millions of people during the selection of the year's best actor in a motion picture. Marlon, for his role in *The Godfather,* had vanquished such once and former friends as Sir Laurence Olivier, who had been nominated for his role in *Sleuth*. But Marlon didn't show up to receive his award.

Marlon had sent, on his behalf, Sacheen Littlefeather (alias Maria Cruz) to reject the Oscar if presented. She arrived minutes before the announcement, looking like an Apache princess and robed in white buckskin with turquoise beads. Heading her off when he learned what was happening, the producer of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences event, Howard Koch, encountered Littlefeather and threatened to cut her off the air if she read Marlon's long-winded refusal speech.

Appearing as the most newsworthy event during Hollywood's most glamorous night, Littlefeather was forced to speak extemporaneously, as titters erupted across the auditorium. Littlefeather informed the otherwise shocked audience worldwide that Marlon was turning down the Academy Award as a protest against filmdom's misrepresentation of Native Americans.

Littlefeather was both a Yaqui and an Apache, but many press reports the following day called her a Mexican. It was also revealed in the press that in 1970 she'd won the Miss American Vampire Contest.

The attacks on Marlon began that very night. The following day, columnist Rona Barrett went on television, challenging Marlon to "put your money where your mouth is and build hospitals and schools for the American Indian with his riches from *The Godfather* and *Last Tango* instead of squandering the money on a Tahitian paradise for yourself."



By the thousands, other attacks came in, including versions from both Rock Hudson and Clint Eastwood. The Columbian Coalition, a lobbying group for Italian-American rights, also blasted Marlon. "Frankly," the organization said in a written statement, "we see a blatant contradiction between your reasons for refusing the award and your participation in a film that defamed the Italian-American community. You should be ashamed of yourself."

Marlon responded, "I am not ashamed!"

***LAST TANGO IN PARIS* (1972)**: The young Italian director and poet, Bernardo Bertolucci, had come up with an intriguing idea for a film destined to become one of the century's most daring and controversial. He was fresh from his success in making *The Conformist*, which had starred Jean-Louis Trintignant, the French actor, along with Dominique Sanda. The basic plot of *Last Tango in Paris* revolved around an expatriate, middle-aged American who meets a reckless young girl for a series of sexual encounters, without ever revealing their names to each other. Bertolucci approached Trintignant to star in it, but was turned down when he learned that the role called for frontal nudity. Sanda had no objection to appearing nude, but she was pregnant. Ironically, the father of her baby was none other than Christian Marquand, Marlon's longtime lover. Bertolucci's second choice for the role was Catherine Deneuve, but she, too, was pregnant.

With Trintignant out of the picture, Bertolucci thought of casting Marlon, an actor he'd idolized since he was eleven years old and sat in a dark movie house watching him emote in *Viva Zapata!*

In Paris, Marlon was taken to see *The Conformist*, by his longtime lover, a Chinese lady named Anita Kong. She'd seen the film seven times and admired it greatly. Marlon too was impressed with *The Conformist*, and agreed to meet with Bertolucci at his suite at the Hotel Raphael where Marlon had stayed during the filming of *The Young Lions*. "I felt shy and in awe of Marlon when meeting him for the first time," Bertolucci recalled. "And then he started talking in Tahitian French. I spoke normal French. In time, I learned much of my English from Marlon. He mumbles a lot. That's why nobody understands me when I speak English."

Marlon was looking for some daring and provocative project as a followup to *The Godfather*. As Bertolucci pitched the story idea of *Last Tango in Paris*, Marlon became more and more intrigued with the possiblities. Of course there were problems. The producer of *Last Tango* was none other than Alberto Grimaldi, who was suing Marlon for $700,000 for his "inappropriate behavior" during the filming of *Burn!* By coincidence, Grimaldi felt that the script of *Last Tango* had "infinite possiblities" with Marlon in the lead. If Marlon would sign for the picture, Grimaldi agreed to drop the lawsuit. He even offered Marlon a salary of $250,000, plus ten percent of the world gross. Marlon signed on.

During pre-production, Bertolucci took Marlon to an exhibit at Le Grand Palais in Paris to see the gruesome paintings of Francis Bacon. He claimed that these paintings had inspired him to film *Last Tango*. Looking at the paintings with Marlon, Bertolucci waxed enthusiastically about "the burnt browns and blood reds of a homosexual's palette." He told Marlon, "In Bacon's paintings you see people throwing up their guts and doing a makeup job with their own vomit. You are like one of the figures in a Bacon painting. Everything shows up in your face. You have the same devastated plasticity."

"BRANDO IS AN ANGEL AS A MAN, A MONSTER AS AN ACTOR": Those were Bertolucci's words uttered after only a week of contact with Marlon. The director had flown to Los Angeles to spend long hours with Marlon in his house on Mulholland Drive. During these sessions, Marlon and Bertolucci took turns playing Freudian analyst with each other. For one brief moment, it was seriously considered that *Last Tango* should be written as a homosexual drama between a middle-aged man and a young man, both doing nude scenes with each other depicting actual anal penetration on the screen. That idea hardly survived an afternoon. When he would later see the film, the Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman, said that *Last Tango* would have been more powerful if it had been about two men.

In Los Angeles, Bertolucci issued a challenge to Marlon. "Let's talk about ourselves, about our lives, about sex. That's what the film is going to be about."

In the film, Marlon is cast as Paul, a forty-five year old American expatriate living in Paris. He'd lived for the past seven years as the parasitic husband of the *patronne* of a Parisian flophouse. At the beginning of the film, Paul's wife has committed suicide.

Cast as a nineteen-year-old girl opposite Marlon, Marie Schneider was the illegitimate daughter of Daniel Gélin. There was a certain irony here. Along with Christian Marquand, Gélin had been Marlon's French lover for years.

Maria claimed that she got along with Marlon "because we are both bisexual." When asked about this by a reporter from a French film magazine, Marlon admitted that he was bisexual. "I am not ashamed. I've never paid attention to what people said about me. Deep down, I feel ambiguous. Sex somehow lacks precision. I say sex is sexless."

During the filming, Christian Marquand was a frequent visitor. "Forty years of Marlon's life experiences went into that film," Marquand claimed. "It was Marlon talking about himself. His relations with his mother, father, children, lovers, friends--all come out in his perfect performance as Paul."

"THE MOST POWERFULLY EROTIC MOVIE EVER MADE": The word was out for the world press, even two weeks into the filming. Paramount executives told Bertolucci they did not want Marlon cast in the lead, figuring that the relatively modest budget of one and a half million dollars might balloon as it had during the filming of that "nightmare, *Burn!*" At the time *The Godfather* had not yet been released as "box-office dynamite." Bertolucci turned instead to United Artists, which granted him partial financing, even though fearful that the *Last Tango* might be "too pornographic."

On Marlon: "I have at my disposal a great actor, with all the technical experience any director would require," Bertolucci said. "But I also have a mysterious man waiting to be discovered in all the richness of his personal material."

Sounding like a character created by Norman Mailer, Marlon at one point in the movie's dialogue says, "What the hell, I'm no prize. I picked up a nail in Cuba in 1948, and I got a prostate like an Idaho, but I'm still a good stick man. I don't have any friends. I suppose if I hadn't met you, I'd probably settle for a hard chair and a hemorrhoid."

Marlon later admitted to *Rolling Stone* magazine that he never actually knew what *Last Tango* was about. "Bernardo went around telling everybody that the movie was about the reincarnation of my prick. Now what the fuck does that mean?"

Upon the release, Bertolucci flew to New York to promote *Last Tango*. Once there, a reporter asked him about rumors of an affair with Marlon. "I fall in love with all the actors in my films. Both actors and actresses. They are the prolongations of my penis. Yes, my *penis*. Like Pinocchio's nose, my penis grows!" As the journalist noted, the director didn't exactly answer the question.

While in New York, Bertolucci received a secret communication from the White House. President Richard Nixon wanted a private screening of *Last Tango in Paris*. With his strong leftist leanings, Bertolucci was no admirer of Nixon. He refused the presidential request even though he was a guest in what was at the time known as "Nixon country."

"**LET'S JUST SAY WE'RE TAKING A FLYING FUCK ON A ROLLING DOUGHNUT"**: This is how Paul, as played by Marlon, responds when Jeanne, as played by Schneider, asks him to define their relationship. In the film she actually mocks his flabby body. His retort: "In twenty years, you'll be playing football with your tits."

In his autobiography, Marlon related what was a painful incident for him: *I had one of the more embarrassing experiences of my professional career when we were making this film in 1972. I was supposed to play a scene in the Paris apartment where Paul meets Jeanne and be photographed in the nude frontally, but it was such a cold day that my penis shrank to the size of a peanut. It simply withered. Because of the cold, my body went into full retreat, and the tension, embarrassment and stress made it recede even more. I realized I couldn't play the scene this way, so I paced back and forth around the apartment stark naked, hoping for magic. I've always had a strong belief in the power of mind over matter, so I concentrated on my private parts, trying to will my penis and testicles to grow; I even spoke to them. But my mind failed me. I was humiliated, but not ready to surrender yet. I asked Bernardo to be patient and told the crew that I wasn't giving up. But after an hour I could tell from their*

faces that they had given up on me. I simply couldn't play the scene that way, so it was cut.

At one point, Bertolucci insisted that Marlon and Schneider have actual sex on film. Marlon objected to the command, claiming that, "We don't want our sexual organs to become characters in the film." Marlon recalled one scene of buggering, in which, "I used butter, but it was all ersatz sex."

Although Marlon refused to "fuck Maria on camera," author Norman Mailer felt that the director should have prevailed. Upon seeing the film, Mailer expressed his disappointment. "Brando's cock up Schneider's real vagina would have brought the history of cinema one huge march closer to the ultimate experience it has promised since its inception--that is, to embody life."

"SHE WAS A LITTLE LOLITA--ONLY MORE PERVERSE": Bertolucci told Maria Schneider, "Whether it's frontal nudity, masturbation, or sodomy, I will have a voyeuristic eye."

Bertolucci claimed that he considered one hundred actresses for the role before coming upon Maria Schneider. "I asked her to strip on camera for a screen test, and she did so without hesitation. It was her carefree attitude toward nudity that won her the role."

Marlon often seduced a fully nude Schneider on camera while he was partially dressed. When the film was released, women liberationists attacked *Last Tango* for concealing Marlon's genitals while exposing Schneider's charms. Although writing a very laudatory review, critic Pauline Kael said privately: "Do you really want to see a forty-seven-year old man, with a not perfect body, totally nude?"

Throughout the filming, Marlon had a hard time remembering his lines. He finally asked Bertolucci to scribble them on Schneider's naked derrière.

In *Last Tango*, Maria Schneider plays a twenty-year-old *petite bourgeoise* named Jeanne. Meeting Marlon while apartment hunting, she becomes involved with him in the throes of what Bertolucci labeled as "a vertical passion."

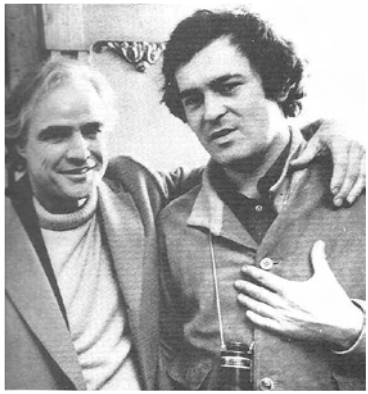
As the film depicts, Marlon and Schneider meet for three days in an abandoned apartment to act out their deepest sexual fantasies. Most of these fantasies are of a sadomasochistic variety.

Paul tells her he wants sex "stripped of romance and personality." He doesn't even want to know her name. Under Paul's spell, Schneider as Jeanne agrees to eat vomit for Paul, and even to allow a pig to fart in her face as she reaches orgasm.

All of Paris buzzed with the "news" that Marlon and Schneider were having a romance both on and off the camera. "Everybody knew that Daniel Gélin had fucked Marlon for years," said Roger Vadim. "Now he was going after the daughter." He smiled with a certain smugness. "I guess if you like the father's ass, why not the daughter's?"

However, Schneider denied any romantic involvement with Marlon. "He was just a daddy to me. I never felt any sexual attraction to him. He's almost fifty, and he's only beautiful to his waist--certainly not below the waist. Not for me."

Promoting the film in New York, Schneider smoked a joint in front of a reporter from *The New York Times*. She told him, "I've had more men lovers than women."

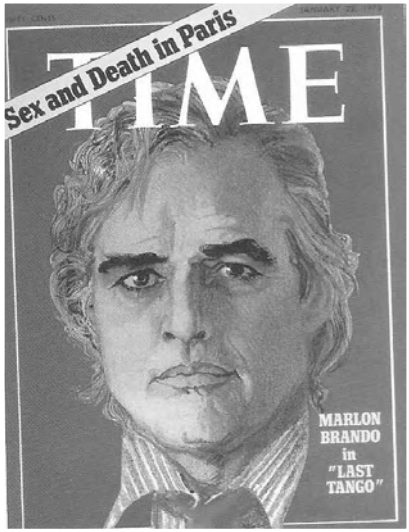


LOVERS OR JUST GOOD FRIENDS?: Maria Schneider later shocked reporters when she claimed, "Bertolucci was in love with Marlon Brando, and that's what the movie was about. We were acting out Bernardo Bertolucci's sex problems--in effect, trying to transfer them to film."

Marlon, in a final reaction to the film, stated, "For the first time, I have felt the violation of my innermost self." Opening in the fall of 1972, the film earned forty-five million dollars, of which Marlon pocketed four million. For many viewers, the scenes in the *Last Tango* were hard to take. Dustin Hoffman, watching one scene, remembered getting up and hiding behind a pillar in the theater. In that scene, Paul excoriates Jeanne with a blistering diatribe. He informs her that "we are all alone until we look in the asshole of death." As a final act of sexual humiliation, he orders her to sodomize him with her hand.

"I thought I was watching a film scripted by Jean Genet," said Tennessee Williams, who put off for weeks going to see the film because he'd heard that Marlon, his beloved Stanley Kowalski, was appearing in hard core porno. "The ghost of Baudelaire hung over *Last Tango*," Tennessee claimed after sitting through the film twice. "I felt that all my reservoir as an artist had been depleted just by sitting through the movie. Of course, I saw it twice. Maybe that's the reason I'm so drained."

Mae West, who'd had a previous erotic encounter with Marlon herself, sent him a message. "It's good and dirty," she wrote. "But, of course, I'm easily shocked."



Rock Hudson, Mae's singing partner at the Academy Awards one time, expressed his disappointment in the film. "There was no oral sex. How could Bertolucci have made *Last Tango* without my favorite sport: fellatio?"

In Bertolucci's native Italy, censors at first prevented the release of *Last Tango*. The censors claimed it was "crude, repulsive, and even unnatural in its representation of the carnal union...accompanied off screen by sounds, sighs, and shrieks of climax pleasure."

Having turned down the Oscar for *The Godfather*, Marlon did not expect to be nominated again. But he was, as was Bertolucci for best director. Marlon lost that year to Jack Lemmon for *Save the Tiger*, with Bertolucci losing to George Roy Hill for *The Sting.*

MARLON IN WALLY WORLD: In Tahiti it was February 15, 1973. Marlon was in a different time zone but early morning listeners in California had awakened to hear that the comedian, Wally Cox, had been found dead at the age of forty-eight. After suffering from years of alcoholism, Wally had died on Rosacomare Road in Bel Air. His widow, Patricia Cox, had called the Bel Air Patrol to report the death at 7:30 that morning.

Was it suicide? The word spread like wildfire in Hollywood that it was. On a bedside table near Wally's body was found an empty bottle of Placidyl, a sleeping tablet. The day before and late into the night, Wally had been drinking heavily. His death brought renewed rumors that Wally and Marlon had engaged in homosexual relations ever since they were boys growing up together. Rumors of the famous photograph that Marlon had posed for, committing fellatio on Wally, were revived. "Wally was the big love of Marlon's life," said Stella Adler in New York, but only privately to friends.

Wally was heading downward in his career, reduced to flopping in Las Vegas, appearing on TV shows, and doing a comic bit as the "persnickety bird watcher," P. Casper Biddle, on two separate episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. He had been cast in Marilyn Monroe's last film, *Something's Got to Give*, but she was murdered before its completion.

Wally was reduced to appearing on *Hollywood Squares* five days a week, "the last stop in a show business career." The producers kept him on because audiences found him hilarious, but they admitted that Wally always arrived "half bombed."

In the last months of his life, Wally claimed that "the only thing I have left in life to enjoy is to walk in the woods with Marlon." Assisted by Marlon and his girlfriend, Ursula Andress, Wally had created a taped recording of the entire King James version of the Bible, playing every devil and every saint. Copies of this project, tragically, have been lost.

Taking the next flight from Tahiti to Los Angeles, Marlon wanted to say a final good-bye to Wally. Arriving at his Mulholland Drive estate, he found a suicide note from Wally written two days previously. Marlon read the note and tore it up. His loyal friend, Sam Gilman, was at Marlon's side.

Marlon refused to divulge the contents of the note, telling Gilman that, "What Wally and I had was between the two of us. His final note wasn't meant for other eyes--just mine."

After an examination of the body, it was reported by Thomas Noguchi, the Los Angeles County Coroner, that the comedian had died of "severe coronary disease due to arteriosclerosis." But despite the official diagnosis, it was widely known that at the time of Wally's death, he had been despondant for months. His successful *Mr. Peepers* and its successor,

The Adventures of Hiram Holiday, were no longer being shown on TV. His book, *My Life as a Small Boy*, was published but attracted virtually no readers. In the last weeks of his life, his drinking had increased to what friends viewed as excessive.

Throughout his life, Wally denied ever having been Marlon's gay lover. But among their friends, the issue was debated. Actress Sondra Lee, who knew both men, insisted they were not lovers. Carlo Fiore and dozens of other intimates claimed that they were. Fiore went a step farther, charging that "Cox liked kinky sex--not just with Marlon but with hookers. He hired expensive hookers to service his needs. Modesty prevents me from going into details, but I can tell you that leather and whips were involved."

Since Wally despised funerals, his widow, Patricia Cox, decided to hold a wake for her late husband's friends, who included Vincent Price, Tom and Dick Smothers, Ernest Borgnine, and even Twiggy. Not wanting to see the other guests, Marlon slipped in through a bedroom window. He did not want to come out and greet the other mourners. "These assholes weren't Wally's friends," Marlon said. "I was the *only* friend Wally ever had."

Pat Cox recalled that Marlon "didn't want Wally to marry me. He was very possessive of Wally." But his widow refused to admit that her husband's death was a suicide. She did concede, however, that "Wally had been very depressed during recent months."

"If Wally didn't actually kill himself on the night in question," Sam Gilman said, "he did night after lonely night. He was drinking himself into oblivion. Marlon knew this and talked to me all the time about his concerns. I think Wally decided early one pre-dawn morning that life wasn't any fun anymore. I'm sure that he felt it was time for him to go."

Since Wally despised funerals, it was announced that his body would be cremated and his ashes tossed into the sea. That didn't happen. Marlon asked the widow for the ashes, claiming that he would spread them on the grounds around his Mulholland estate.

But in a bizarre twist, he concealed the ashes in his home. On nights when he was feeling lonely for Wally, he took them out of hiding and placed the urn on his dining table. There he would proceed to have "dinner with Wally," talking in his own voice but answering questions or making observations in Wally's voice. Marlon was always capable of doing a perfect imitation of his late friend.

In Tahiti, Marlon once talked to a journalist, Adrano Botta, of *L'Europeo*. Marlon was very candid, admitting that he'd had many women as "I insist on enjoying sex. Should sex and desire die in me, it would be the end." Then he candidly admitted that he'd "never been happy with a woman."

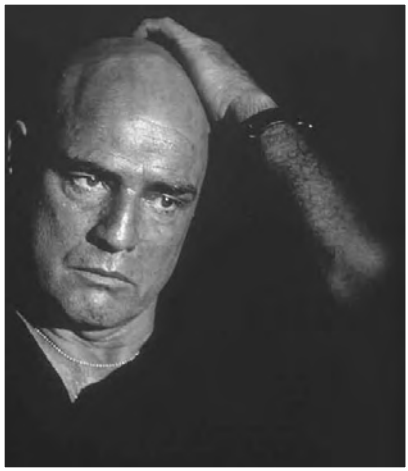
In the wake of Wally's death, Marlon admitted that he could no longer put any faith in friendship. "I only come through with deep wounds," he said, his eyes welling with tears at the loss of Wally. "I am deeply lonely. Alone without Wally." He noted that with the passing of Wally, he had death and old age to look forward to and to accept "with all feasible serenity. Here I am trying to save the world with all my noble causes, and I couldn't even save my best--my only--friend," Marlon said.

When Marlon himself died, two pictures were found in his bedroom--one of his mother, Dodie, the other of Wally. "He was my soulmate, the only person I've ever been able to really talk to," Marlon said. "I loved him as few men have ever loved another man. I'll miss him until the day I die. With him gone, there is no one left on earth for me to talk to. If Wally had been a woman, I would have married him, and we would have lived happily ever after."

MARLON IN DRAG: Teaming up with actor Jack Nicholson and director Arthur Penn, Marlon starred in *The Missouri Breaks*, released in 1976. Two of America's most acclaimed actors, including Marlon himself, and one of its most lauded directors couldn't save this turkey. Set in the foothills of the Tobacco Root Mountains, Montana, in the 1880s, *The Missouri Breaks*, if remembered at all today, is recalled for Marlon appearing in drag for no discernible reason. Instead of an attractive showgal, he looks like Old Mother Hubbard. The most famous scene is one depicting Marlon in his bath, being gazed upon by a gun-toting Nicholson. Marlon's sudsy body looks like a voluptuous nude as painted by Rubens. Flush from his Oscar-winning success in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Nicholson overshadows Marlon as an actor. Russell Davies, in the *Observer*, noted: "This is one of the most extravagant displays of *grande-damerie* since Sarah Bernhardt." Fergus Cashin, in the *Sun,* wrote: "Marlon Brando at 52 has the sloppy belly of a 62-year-old, the white hair of a 72-year-old, and the total lack of discipline of a precious 12-year-old."

"**BRANDO IS NEVER LESS THAN FAINTLY RIDICULOUS**": So wrote Andrew Weiner in *New Society*. For this 1978 release, director Richard Donner, in what was viewed as an act of madness, cast Marlon Brando--yes, Brando of Stanley Kowalski and *Godfather* fame--as Jor-El, Superman's daddy. Knowing that Krypton was about to explode, Marlon with an English accent sends "my only son" to the planet Earth. This appalls his wife, as played by Susannah York. She has little respect for Earth, noting that, "They are primitives--thousands of years behind us."

In *Superman*, Marlon established a career pattern: Make a great deal of money in as short a period of time and with the least effort possible. Headlines about Marlon's salary made the world press. For twelve days filming, he received $3.7 million dollars. Not only that, but for such a brief appearance he got 11.3 percent of the domestic gross and 5.65 percent of foreign gross. All in all, he would be guaranteed a minimum of $1.7 million even if *Superman* failed at the box office, which it didn't. Slated for a tragic personal ending, the handsome, well-built twenty-four-year old Christopher Reeve garnered world attention, as he switched from Clark Kent to Superman. Marlon was asked if the studio could use footage shot from *Superman I* in *Superman II*. When he demanded his usual percentage--an outrageous demand, for sure--he was turned down.



"A PIECE OF HAM IN A FILM THAT IS RAW MEAT": So described Arthur Thirkell, in the *Daily Mirror*, about Marlon's appearance as a shaven-headed, bloated, and Buddha-like character in the 1979 release of *Apocalypse Now*. Based on Joseph Conrad's novella, *The Heart of Darkness*, the film about the moral dilemma of the Vietnam War teamed Marlon with his *Godfather* director, Francis Ford Coppola. Coppola cast Don Corleone this time as Kurtz, described as a "mad Minotaur in his murky labyrinth, waiting to be killed." Beset by troubles, including natural disasters such as typhoons raging through the Philippines, the film with an initial twelve million budget eventually ballooned to thirty million.

"SAM, I'VE GOT ANOTHER GIG AS A NAZI": Marlon's words to close friend Sam Gilman announced his latest role--not in the movies but in a TV series: *Roots: The Next Generation*, a TV mini-series broadcast in 1979. This was the second series of author Alex Haley's popular Roots series. The book was alleged to have traced the author's ancestors from 1882 to 1967. Much of the script has been questioned as to how authentic it was, and at one point, Haley was sued for plagiarism. Even so, Marlon made an appearance in Episode no. 7. This time he was not playing a German Nazi as he did in *The Young Lions*, but the American Nazi, George Lincoln Rockwell. Marlon's appearance in the TV series won him an Emmy. His scene was brief but he wanted it to be "villainous, a portrait of Evil," he told Haley. In his brief role, Marlon as Rockwell is being interviewed by Haley for *Playboy* magazine. Marlon is seen sitting behind a large mahogany desk. He is framed by a portrait of Hitler and Nazi flags. As one critic said, "He radiated bigotry and paranoia." This was not one of his big money appearances. His fee went to charity. Marlon had come a long way since he'd appeared on this same stage, number 19, in Burbank. A quarter of a century before *Roots*, he'd arrived here to play Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

***PATTON* MEETS *THE GODFATHER*:** The two stars of the 1980 release, *The Formula*, George C. Scott and Marlon, had turned down their respective Oscars, Scott for *Patton* and Marlon for *The Godfather*. For his brief appearance in *The Formula*, Marlon was granted an awesome salary of three million dollars for less than two weeks of work. He also demanded eleven percent of the worldwide gross. For his three scenes in the film, he'd earn an extra five-million dollars. "Not bad for a day's work," Marlon told Scott. In this so-called political thriller about oil tycoons and multi-national cartels, Marlon plays Steiffel, the chief of the OPEC cartel. Scott later said, "I think I played some washed-up son-of-a-bitch. But don't ask. I didn't wake up until shooting was over." Scott lauded Marlon's performance, perhaps out of kindness. "He goes beyond acting. He creates like an Impressionist painter." Marlon appeared with a hearing aid in the film. He wasn't actually losing his hearing, but wanted his aide to feed him his lines.

"THE MANTLE OF ORSON WELLES FALLS FROM HEAVEN ONTO MARLON BRANDO": Or so thought one critic of the outrageously obese Marlon when he appeared in the 1989 release of *A Dry White Season*. Directed by Euzhan Palci, the film co-starred Donald Sutherland. It was your standard anti-apartheid, propaganda film set in South Africa. Marlon was cast as a cynical, pot-bellied lawyer fighting apartheid, a far cry from his take as an American Nazi leader. Despite its status as a low-budget film, Marlon's agent originally got him an offer of $3.3 million, plus 11.3 of the world gross. "Look at Marlon's gut and you can see where the money is going," said a disgruntled cameraman. That was unfair. Unknown to the crew, Marlon had agreed to do the film for scale, and he donated "that paltry sum to charity if you don't mind my honking my own horn." He deplored his female director, calling her "an amateur." He hated the final cut of the film and protested loudly to MGM. "I have never put more of myself into a film, never suffered more while doing it, and never received so little recompense of any kind in any motion picture over the last thirty-five years."

A FOND PARODY OF DON VITO CORLEONE: In 1990 a film was released called *The Freshman*. Marlon pronounced it "a stinker" until it started to do well at the box office, and then he withdrew his comment.

Directed by Andrew Bergman, it reteamed Marlon with Maximilian Schell (*The Young Lions*). Marlon also starred with baby-faced pretty boy, Matthew Broderick. Marlon brought his whale-like presence to the screen in this mob movie, where he seemed to be doing a take-off on his role in *The Godfather*.

The zany plot revolves around a Gourmet Club, at which the only dishes on the menu were endangered species. *The Freshman* in the movie is assigned the dangerous task of collecting and delivering a Komodo dragon--the famous giant lizard of Indonesia--to the kitchen of the club for slaughtering and cooking. Playing Buddha-boy again, Marlon and his mumbles had reached the point of inaudibility. For his appearance in the film, Marlon got a reported $3.3 million, plus 11 percent of the gross. During the shoot, Marlon appeared to be losing control. His longtime makeup man, Philip Rhodes, was treated with great hostility, although he'd been a loyal friend for years. "Eventually Marlon iced me out--wouldn't even speak to me," Rhodes said. "It was terrifying." Marlon was also coming up to people and making very indiscreet remarks. Sometimes the crew thought he might be jesting, but he looked very serious. He approached a cameraman when Broderick was doing a scene. "That's the most fuckable ass I've ever seen," Marlon told the startled cameraman. "That's too bad he's straight. If I were a century younger, I'd like to reshoot *Last Tango in Paris* with a boy like young Matthew cast in Maria Schneider's part. I would demand that Matthew appear in full frontal nudity. This time, the fuck scenes in *Tango* would not be simulated. They would be real. Looking at that ass, well..I'd do the fucking picture for free!"

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL, THE MOST INTELLIGENT, AND THE RICHEST GIRL IN TAHITI": That's how Marlon's daughter, Cheyenne Brando, described herself in 1995, the same year, on April 16, when she hung herself at the Brando estate at Punaauia in Tahiti. At the time of her death at the age of twenty-five, this former model "with the perfect figure" had gained so much weight she was almost as corpulent as her famous movie star father.

Her life was short and tragic. She became the focal point of one of the most notorious murders in Hollywood history, based on events swirling around the night of May 16, 1990, when Marlon's 32-year-old son, Christian Devi Brando, Cheyenne's half-brother, shot 26-year-old, Dag Drollet, her Tahitian lover. Dag was the father of her future child.

Marlon's close friend, George Englund, accurately described Cheyenne: "She was a delicate riddle...luminously pretty, not large but with an almost aggressive beauty, black hair, dark eyes, and in those eyes an anima pulsing. In Marlon's female child, I was seeing the same penetrating stare, the offhand sexuality, the eyes that know--all the Brando hallmarks."

The story began in 1960 in Tahiti when Marlon met a beautiful Polynesian actress, Tarita Teriipaia, on the set of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. She would become his common law wife and the mother of his two children, beginning with a son, Teihotu, born May 30, 1963.

When Marlon told Tarita that he wanted another baby, to follow the birth of their son, he did not seduce her. Instead he took her to a medical specialist, and the baby was conceived by artificial insemination one hot afternoon in June of 1969. Following the birth of Cheyenne, it would take years for Marlon to officially recognize her and her older brother as his legitimate offspring.

Cheyenne's unusual name came about when Marlon flew Tarita and her baby girl to Washington D.C., for a reunion of American Indians. He'd already asked and had gained permission from the Cheyenne Indians to borrow their name for his newly born daughter. Taking the baby from its mother, who sat near the rear of the hall and who was until then unaware of what he had planned, Marlon carried his daughter to the stage, facing Indians assembled from all over the country. There, he raised his daughter "to the Great Spirit" and announced that henceforth she'd be called Cheyenne Brando in honor of the tribe whose rights he championed.

In the 1980s, growing up in Tahiti, Cheyenne was emerging as a beautiful girl with high hopes for her future. She was good in school and ambitious in her career plans--painter? doctor? actress? She was proud to be the daughter of Marlon Brando, remembering to send him presents on his birthday and on Father's Day, although she ignored her mother on those occassions. When she was old enough, she flew to Los Angeles to be with Marlon. At times he could be extremely affectionate toward her, buying her presents. At other times he could be relatively indifferent as when he refused to pay her education bills.

No one knows for sure what happened to Cheyenne, but slowly and then more rapidly she seemed to undergo a major personality change, going from Dr. Jekyll to Mrs. Hyde.

One friend in Tahiti said that Cheyenne as a teenager became hooked on drugs, a dependency she'd maintain until the end of her life. "She went from being a sweet girl to a mon-

ster. Although I viewed myself as her best friend, I soon abandoned her. If I'd see her coming, I would cross over the street to avoid her."

One afternoon in Tahiti, Cheyenne was confronted with a "new sister," Petra, who had been flown in from Los Angeles. She was two years younger than Cheyenne and had been conceived by Marlon with one of his secretaries. Learning that she was on "equal footing" with Petra, Cheyenne exploded in an angry, violent outburst in which she went through the house breaking anything breakable. That afternoon would mark the beginning of violent outbursts that would continue throughout the rest of her short life, along with her drug abuse.

During one full-moon night in Tahiti--"fired up on angel dust"-- Cheyenne met Dag Drollet, a Polynesian man, then only twenty-three years old and very handsome. It was at a disco bordering the sea in Papeete. Spring had come to Tahiti that May of 1987. The coming together of Dag and Cheyenne would end tragically.

Their relationship quickly became passionate but stormy. Many of their fights were staged in public in Polynesian restaurants and dance clubs. One of their most violent confrontations occurred in August of 1989.

Fleeing from Dag, Cheyenne jumped into a Jeep belonging to Christian Brando. She roared down a night road at 100mph, but lost control of the car, crashing into a ditch. The impact broke her jaw, and part of her ear was ripped off. A section of her face "just caved in."

Marlon didn't want Cheyenne to be operated on by Tahitian surgeons, so he flew her to Los Angeles for better medical care. There, California surgeons put seven metal plates into her head. After a twelve-hour stint on the operating table, Cheyenne's face was saved "but what about her soul?" Tarita asked.

Flying back to Tahiti after her recovery, Cheyenne, according to her mother, Tarita, experienced a "degrading of personality." During one intense argument, Cheyenne tossed an ashtray at her mother, causing a severe facial injury.

At school, she physically attacked fellow students, even her teachers. Even though she'd moved in with Dag and his mother, Lisette, Cheyenne claimed that Dag frequently beat her. Because of her heavy drug usage, Tarita suspected that her daughter might be hallucinating.

At one point in 1989, Cheyenne confronted her mother, claiming that she was pregnant with Dag's child. Seven years older than Cheyenne, Dag was already the father of another illegitimate child. During the early months of her pregnancy, Cheyenne became "uncontrollable and unpredictable"--slapping waiters in cafes and shops, even strangers on the street. "If my daughter had lived in a first world country," Tarita claimed, "she would have been judged as certifiably insane."

As Cheyenne's pregnancy deepened, Tarita's concerns grew. Cheyenne would often approach and then strike an innocent passerby. "The doctors told me that her pieced-together face was very fragile. If a stranger suffering an attack from Cheyenne were to strike her back, it might kill her, I was warned." When Tarita shared her concerns with Marlon, he responded, "My daughter is not sick."

Marlon wanted his grandson to be born in the United States, so he flew Tarita, Cheyenne, and Dag to his home on Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles. Dag (pictured below with Cheyenne) went along for the trip, although he planned to tell Cheyenne that even before their child was born that he was going to leave her. He could no longer stand her violence and her drug abuse.

At the time, police authorities in Tahiti wanted him to return there to face manslaughter charges. Driving drunk one night, he'd run over and killed an eight-year-old child getting out of a truck on a highway.

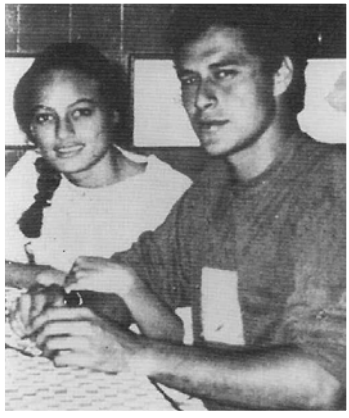
On hearing that his half-sister was in town, Christian called Cheyenne and invited her out to dinner at Frank & Musso, a restaurant in Hollywood. Dag was "invited" to remain behind and watch television in the den.

Driving back to Mulholland Drive, Christian stopped off at his girlfriend's house to retrieve an assault weapon, a Sig-Sauer .45--called "the Porsche of handguns." After the passage of California's ban on assault weapons, Marlon had demanded that his son bring the gun to Mulholland for safekeeping.

Reportedly, Christian arrived back at the house fuming in his anger at Dag's alleged assaults on his pregnant sister. With his assault weapon, Christian headed for the den. Although he would later claim that he struggled with Dag and the gun went off accidentally, in reality he may have shot Dag in the head without warning. He died instantly.

On the night of the murder, Tarita remembered waking up to the smell of smoke. She was immediately alarmed because she knew that her increasingly deranged daughter had taken up the habit of setting fires, including one recently in the laundry hamper. "She'd just sit back and watch the flames," Tarita said.

As Tarita wandered through the darkened house, where all the lights uncharacteristically had been turned off, she saw a flickering light coming from the TV room. With trepidation, she entered the room and saw a body sprawled on the sofa. "He was drenched in blood," Tarita said. "I checked to see if he were alive. There was blood everywhere. On my hands, my throat, all over the couch." She began to scream to awaken the household.



Rushing to Marlon's bedroom, she found that Christian was already there, confessing the murder to his father. "Their image was grave," she said. "Marlon ordered me to stop screaming. I fainted dead away."

When she was revived, she remembered the house filled with police officers. She saw two of those police-

men leading Christian away in handcuffs.

At the time of the murder, a particularly shocking rumor emerged. Before leaving to have dinner with Christian, Cheyenne allegedly told Dag that the "baby growing in my stomach is not yours. It belongs to Christian."

Surveying the murder scene in the den were homicide detectives, A.R. Monsue and Lee Kingsford, who had been among the first police officers to examine Dag's six feet, five-inch dead body sprawled on the sofa. Barefoot, he was clad in a pair of gray surfer shorts. After a hurried examination, Monsue determined that the fatal bullet had entered Dag's left cheek.

Kingsford remembered that he was astonished when he questioned Marlon. Instead of answering questions about what he knew about the slaying, Marlon insisted that he'd tried to be a good father to Christian and Cheyenne. "I've tried to be a good father to all of my nine children," he said. "Four of them are adopted, incidentally."

On the phone "day and night" talking to lawyers, Marlon was also besieged by the press. Angrily, he addressed this invasion, and Tarita heard his words. "One of the things that's the most difficult to understand is that in the midst of all this chaos, all this anguish, we had to face the press. Men are trying to make money off our family tragedy. In normal times, the press can make you suicidal. But under these circumstances, they become completely impossible."

To defend his son, Marlon hired famed attorney, Robert Shapiro, who would later achieve notoriety during the O.J. Simpson trial.

In a preliminary court hearing, Christian testified that Cheyenne "went off on this bizarre tangent and kinda got me going. Knowing what I know now of her mental state, I doubt whether she was ever beaten by Drollet. I feel like a complete chump for believing her."

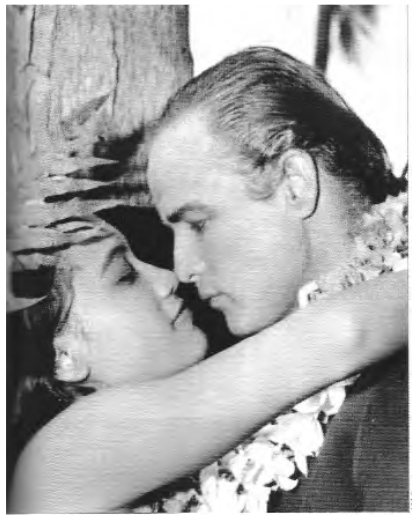
Christian was placed in jail for three months while lawyers tried to get him out on bail.

After the killing, Cheyenne flew back to Tahiti. Once on island, papers were delivered to her. The Drollet family was suing her as an "accessory" to the death of their son. In the days and weeks ahead, she made several suicide attempts. Marlon found that he too could not go back to Tahiti. The Drollets case also named him as an accessory. Because of that, Marlon himself could be detained on Tahiti should he decide to fly back there.

Dag's father, Jacques Drollet, also filed a $100 million wrongful death suit against both Christian and Marlon while Drollet continued to press charges against Cheyenne in Papeete.

In Tahiti, Cheyenne was eight months pregnant and ready to have her baby when authorities in California wanted her there for questioning. On June 26, 1990, she gave birth to a baby boy named Tuki. A nurse told the local

press, “Tuki was born drug addicted. All during her pregnancy, Cheyenne Brando continued to take drugs. The kid could have been born with brain damage. He had to be sent to detox.”

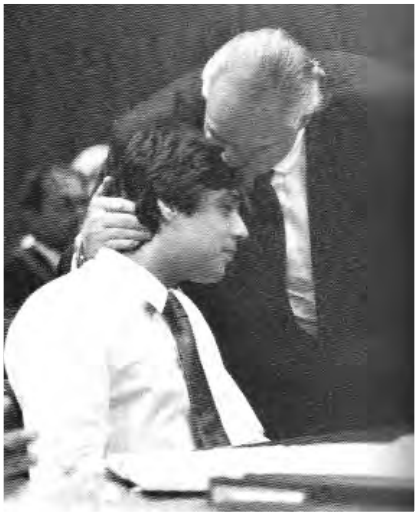


While still in detox, Cheyenne wandered into the ward where her child was asleep. With no security guard around, she picked him up and carried him into the bathroom where she plunged the infant under a cold water faucet trying to drown him. The nurses rushed in to retrieve the baby. Cheyenne became violent and started to smash the furniture in her room. Her doctors committed her to the Vaiami Psychiatric Hospital. A doctor there told Tarita: “Don’t worry about the baby. He’s doing well in spite of his ordeal. Worry instead about the child’s mother. She’s the one who needs help.”

On November 1, 1990, Cheyenne took a huge overdose of pills to kill herself. Only days before, a French judge in Tahiti, Max Gatti, had demanded that she not leave the country. She was to be tried in local courts as an accomplice to murder.

After having her stomach pumped, she survived that attempt on her own life. But on the night of November 14, she once again attempted suicide by tying a rope to a tree outside her bedroom window, the other to her neck. She then jumped. Miraculously, she also survived this attempt at hanging, although she remained in a coma for one week.

On February 26, 1991, Christian appeared at the Santa Monica Courthouse, telling his father, “I’ve been coming through these doors since I was a kid.” He was referring, of course, to the vitriolic fights staged between Anna Kashfi, his mother, and Marlon over his custody. He pleaded guilty that day to a charge of voluntary manslaughter.



In what must be viewed as incredible understatement, Christian’s psychiatrist, Dr. Saul Faerstein, testified: “Once an inquisitive and alert child, Christian has been damaged by his upbringing and chronic substance abuse. Despite the material advantages conferred by the Brando name, neither parent provided a stable, protective, and safe emotional environment for Christian to grow up in.”

One of his probation officers took the stand to claim that Christian suffered “brain damage from alcohol and druge abuse as a youth. He was kidnapped several times by one or the other of his parents,” the officer said. He also claimed that Christian was “molested by a hired kidnapper, and abused by his alcoholic, mentally ill mother.

Christian is unassuming, low-profile, low self-esteemed."

Marlon through his lawyers secured his release, but only after mortgaging his house to post two million dollars in bail money. It was at this point that Marlon walked over to his son in the courtroom and planted a kiss on his head, a picture which was flashed around the world.

Having already pleaded guilty to manslaughter, Christian's trial was set for January of 1991.

Taking the stand, Marlon delivered an Academy Award performance, saying, "You always tend to blame the other parent, but I know that I could have done better. I think perhaps I failed as a father, but I did the best I could."

In a bit of bizarre testimony, Marlon said, "As much as it may not be believed, I loved Dag. He was going to be the father of my grandchild. As they were carrying the boy out, I asked one of the officers to unzip the bag because I wanted to say good-bye to him properly. I kissed him and told him I loved him."

After seventy-five minutes of testimony from Marlon, Dag's father, Jacques Drollet, took the stand. He'd known Marlon for thirty years. "Brando is an actor," Drollet said. "He can cry and lie like a horse can run. He was acting up here on the stand. Does anyone believe a word of it?"

In spite of Marlon's plea for his son, Christian was sentenced to ten years in prison. Before his release, Christian would serve seven years of that sentence.

It is believed that Christian is living somewhere in the Northwest today.

In Tahiti on July 17, 1991, magistrate Max Gatti forced Cheyenne to testify for four hours. At the time, she said that her brother did not see her as a sister, "but as a young woman." The reference was clearly incestuous, which could establish a different motive for Dag's murder.

The judge found her completely irrational and unstable. Taking that into consideration, he granted Marlon's request to let her fly to the French mainland to enter a mental asylum in a western suburb of Paris. However, he ordered that she deposit her passport with the police station.

Once in France, Cheyenne underwent treatment for mental illness and in the weeks ahead showed some improvement.

Marlon flew to France and smuggled her out of the asylum, taking her to a friend's home in the French city of Orléans, even though this was against the court's orders.

Tarita, who had been assigned custody of Cheyenne's son, arrived in Orléans from Tahiti. Seeing her with her son after months of separation, Cheyenne reacted violently to her mother. She bit Tarita's finger, practically severing it. Tarita bit her back. When Marlon came into the room, he discovered "blood everywhere."

On October 27, 1991 a warrant was issued for Cheyenne's arrest. French police located her living with Marlon in Orléans and arrested her. Marlon was not charged, presumably because at the time, his reputation was so high in France, even greater than it was in America, that French authorities anticipated a public outcry if he were incarcerated. Under armed guard, Cheyenne was flown back on a French military aircraft to Tahiti.

Facing a hearing on April 15, 1992, Cheyenne made the astonishing and headline-screaming charge that, "I am sure that my father asked Christian to kill Dag." It was at this same hearing that she claimed she "detested" Marlon and reported his sexual advances toward her. According to Cheyenne, her father tried to get her to go with him to a sea-bordering hotel in Santa Monica so he could "spend hours making love to you," but she refused to go with him.

In spite of Marlon's efforts on her behalf, including trying to get treatment for her psychological disorders, Cheyenne constantly made indiscreet remarks to the press about her father. In one interview, she claimed, "Marlon Brando is the Godfather in the flesh, capable of manipulating others as he wants."

After endless dramas and international incidents worthy of a feature film, Judge Jean-Bernhard Taliercio, who had replaced Judge Gatti, dropped all charges against Cheyenne. The judge claimed they lacked merit.

With Christian in prison, Cheyenne no longer faced trouble with the Los Angeles police for fleeing to Tahiti. Marlon encouraged her to return to California. When she arrived, he placed her in a bleak mental asylum in San Francisco, where she languished for two full years before flying back to Tahiti in 1995.

Tarita, along with her son, Tuki, met her at the airport. But upon driving her back to Marlon's home, Cheyenne expressed undying hatred for her mother and threatened to kill her. She lunged at the wheel of the car and attempted to drive Tarita and her son off the autoroute and kill them. There was a lot of blood in the car, as Cheyenne bit Tarita and Tarita bit back.

When she finally managed to get Cheyenne home, Tarita called the police and reported the incident. The police came for Cheyenne and hauled her away to the local insane asylum.

But she escaped in April of 1995, returning to Marlon's house. In her bedroom, Cheyenne rigged a rope to a beam in her bedroom ceiling, climbed into a chair, put the noose around her neck, then kicked away the support.

Cheyenne was buried in a granite vault high on a hill overlooking Papeete. Her grave is at the end of a long, arrowhead shaped valley studded with mango trees and acacia. "Your soul is now in God's hands," said a priest in French over her grave.

Until the end of his life, Marlon claimed, "I'm being haunted." He was so convinced that he was being pursued by the ghost of Dag that close friends thought he might be cracking up. He spoke of "cold ghastly lips" that came in the middle of the night to plant the kiss of death on his own mouth. According to Marlon, the ghost kept whispering in his ear, "I should not have died."

"It's terrifying!" Marlon told his friends. "I know it's Dag's angry spirit."

Eight months after Marlon's death, Tarita burst onto the world scene, publishing in French her autobiography entitled, *Marlon, mon amour, ma déchirure (Marlon, My Love and My Torment)* To demonstrate that her former spouse was interested in teenage sex, she maintained that Marlon became her lover when she was very young. However, in her autobiography, she downplayed Marlon's sexual interest in her daughter.

However, Cheyenne left a diary whose passages were widely publicized after her death. In it, she wrote, "He (Marlon) used to like to massage me as if he wanted to pretend we were making love. He presented it as a game, but I was just a child and had no idea what he meant."

Cheyenne also claimed that her father fondled her breasts and "inserted his finger inside me," even when she was having regular intercourse with Dag. At no point did she ever maintain that there was penis/vaginal intercourse, although she claimed that her father discussed this possibility with her at length.

A friend in Tahiti, who did not want to be named, made the most bizarre charge of all. He said that Cheyenne told him that her father one night claimed that he wanted to become the father of "your next baby."

"BRANDO AS TORQUEMADA PHONES IN HIS PERFORMANCE": That terrible but poetically accurate putdown came from Anne Billson, of the *Sunday Telegraph* after having seen the 1992 release of *Christopher Columbus--The Discovery*, directed by John Glen, known for his James Bond movies. Although appearing only in a cameo role, Marlon got top billing, playing Torquemada (1420-98), the Inquisitor-General whose office used to adjoin a torture chamber. Producers Ilya and Alexander Salkind, who'd broken with Marlon on his percentage demands for *Superman II*, decided to take a chance with him again.

They also cast Tom Selleck as King Ferdinand of Spain and Rachel Ward as Queen Isabella. Marlon designed his own costume on the screen, a black skull cap and a mammoth black robe to hide his corpulent bulk. Throughout the film, he smiled enigmatically like the Mona Lisa.

Marlon insisted on rewriting the script to portray Columbus as the "cruel, ambitious man he was, a man who would stop at nothing, including exterminating the guileless Indians who offered him food and gold." But Alexander Salkind, Ilya's father, turned down Marlon's revision. Marlon was bitterly disappointed, claiming that Alexander stuck to the original story, which Marlon called "idiotic, untruthful, and uninteresting. It was a big mistake because the picture was a huge failure." He admitted that he just "walked through my part. I mumbled my way through the part and gave an embarrassingly bad performance." Marlon later said, "The pay wasn't bad, though: Five million dollars for five days' work."

"THE FILM HAS SERIOUS POTENTIAL TO BE THIRD RATE": Or so wrote Janet Maslin in *The New York Times* about *Don Juan DeMarco*, a film released in 1995 that starred Marlon and his admirer, Johnny Depp. The movie also brought Marlon and Faye Dunaway together on the screen for the first time, although their names had been romantically linked off screen years before. The plot has a psychiatrist, Dr. Jack Mickler, as played by Marlon, trying to treat a young patient (Depp), who presents himself as Don Juan, the greatest lover in the world. Even a bad movie has one good scene, and it's the last in the film. Set on a beautiful tropical isle (shades of Tahiti), Marlon dances gracefully with his wife, Marilyn, as played by Dunaway. Depp only agreed to be in the film if Marlon were cast as the psychiatrist. To learn a Spanish accent, Depp watched a tape of *Fantasy Island* re-runs. "The hardest part of working with Brando was keeping a straight face," Depp later recalled.

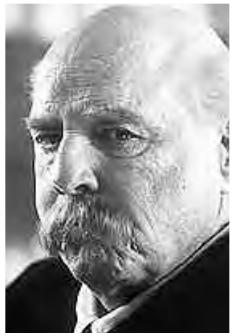
"HE GIVES A GREAT IMITATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH": Or so said a wag of Marlon's bizarre role as Dr. Moreau in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, released in 1996. Cast opposite such actors as Val Kilmer, Marlon was directed by John Frankenheimer in this picture based on a novel by H.G. Wells. Through DNA experimentation, Dr. Moreau has upset the balance of nature by turning animals into humans. As the mad doctor, Marlon virtually appeared in drag, with red lipstick and Kabuki makeup, something his friend, Michael Jackson, might have done.

His appearance, riding through the jungle in a sedan chair as he surveys his hairy mutants, is startling--even alarming. Writing in the *Boston Globe*, critic Jay Carr said, "It's as if in this new celebrity age of genetic engineering, Brando is deconstructing the idea of actors sitting in for the gods."

The picture raised the question of "Whatever Happened to Marlon Brando?" In a seminal essay, Molly Haskell took a stab at answering that question. "What is the strength of his legend?" she asked. "How has it stayed alive in spite of so many dubious achievements? It is written in a word. Brando. Like Garbo. He is a force of nature. An element. Not a human being. There is only one Brando. Even when the actor plays his favorite role, that of the serious, socially committed anti-star, he is still one of the five or six greatest actors the cinema has produced."

"FOR TORTURING AND KILLING YOU, WE'LL GIVE YOU $50,000": New Hollywood was taking over old Hollywood. Rising star, Johnny Depp had purchased Bela Lugosi's old Los Angeles mansion for $2.3 million. Retiring to Lugosi's "Viper Room," Depp worked on the screenplay of *The Brave*, which he would direct and star in for its 1997 release. When not "surrounded by bimbos to wipe out his romantic sorrow," he read the novel by Gregory McDonald that told of a down-on-his-luck American Indian recently released from jail and offered the chance to "star" as victim in a snuff film. In the film, Depp is to be tortured and killed on camera for $50,000. He needs the money for his wife and kids. Marlon appeared only in the small role of McCarthy, but enjoyed the assignment, as he'd formed a friendship with Depp when they'd worked on *Don Juan DeMarco*. Depp later told Marlon that he was so deeply upset at the negative reviews he'd garnered when *The Brave* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival that he planned to refuse to show the film in the United States.

***FREE MONEY* OR BRANDO AS WALRUS?:** In *Free Money*, released in 1998 and directed by Yves Simoneau, Marlon was cast once again opposite Donald Sutherland, with both Charlie and Martin Sheen in supporting roles. Playing "the Swede," Marlon in this slapstick comedy is an overprotective father to his ruthless son.



At this point in his career, critics were beginning to write about Marlon as if he were dead. Almost weekly, reports from so-called "friends" stated that Marlon might have only months to live. One article said that "Brando, hardly recognizable, is struggling to remain upbeat even though his last days are filled with sadness and regret over the tragedies of his life." Even though Marlon continued his work in films, reporters wrote about his "disappointment, regret and anger," claiming that "Marlon felt let down and abandoned by former wives, lovers, and children." One writer even claimed that, "Marlon Brando is haunted by the past and thoughts of dying."

MISS PIGGY BATTLES A GAY GODFATHER: In the 2001 release of *The Score*, a crime caper, director Frank Oz--much to his regret--cast Marlon Brando in the third lead of a picture starring Robert De Niro and Edward Norton. Two Hollywood veterans, 58-year-old De Niro and 77-year-old Marlon shared screen time together. Marlon plays an elderly gay cook orchestrating the biggest heist of his career; De Niro a thief ready for retirement; and Norton an aspiring young thug. The film cost nearly $70 million, of which $3 million went to Marlon for three weeks of work in his last major film role.

Even more interesting than the film was what happened off camera. From the first, Marlon clashed with the director, Frank Oz. When he learned that Oz had been the voice of Miss Piggy in the Muppet Show, he constantly referred to him as "Miss Piggy." When Oz attempted to direct Marlon, he got a curt response of "Fuck you!" Defiantly, and despite (or perhaps because of) his heavy weight gain, Marlon frequently pulled off his pants and his underwear, appearing stark naked from the waist down. That forced the cameraman to shoot him from the waist up. Tensions between Oz and Marlon became so fierce that Marlon refused to appear on the set if his director were there. Marlon said he would take direction only from De Niro.

Before the film was released, Oz tried to play down any conflict he'd had with his star. "Movies can become all the better for off-screen conflict." Producer Gary Foster weighed in as well: "Everybody was trying to make the movie as great as it could be. When you have that kind of creative power, there is bound to be arguments. It's normal."

The reaction of critics was generally favorable. Roger Ebert in the *Chicago Sun-Times* called it, "the best pure heist movie in recent years." Rita Kempley in the *Washington Post* thought, *The Score* was "smart, sleek, and sharply directed. Even if it stank, the volatile chemistry among Robert De Niro, Marlon Brando, and the dynamic Ed Norton would be worth the price of admission." Jay Carr of the *Boston Globe* concluded that "What we've got in *The Score* is three great actors kicking a caper movie around like a soccer ball."

For clever quips, the prize went to *Time* magazine, which claimed that Marlon was made up "like Barbara Bush doing her best Truman Capote impression."

MARLON AND MICHAEL JACKSON--THE FINAL EMBRACE: Back in the 1980s, Marlon was introduced to Michael Jackson through Quincy Jones. Their friendship grew slowly until the post-millennium when Marlon was proclaiming that "Michael is my best friend...at least the only loyal one. The others have betrayed me."

For nearly two decades Marlon's son, Miko, worked as a security guard at Jackson's Neverland Ranch. After his father's death, Miko told the press: "The last time my father left his house to go anywhere, to spend any kind of time, it was with Michael Jackson. He loved it. My father had a 24-hour chef, 24-hour security, 24-hour help, 24-hour kitchen, 24-hour maid service. Just *carte blanche*. Michael even bought a plasma TV screen for my father. When he moved the set to another room, Michael ordered him another." Miko also claimed that Jackson was the godfather to his daughter, Prudence.

While Jackson was filming a Pepsi Cola commercial in January of 1984, his hair caught fire. It was Miko, hired as his bodyguard, who saved him. Miko often drove Jackson to Mulholland Drive to spend evenings with Marlon. Marlon even worked on a screen treatment for Martin Scorsese. In the proposed scenario, Marlon cast himself as God, with Jackson playing the Devil.

One night Jackson, hoping to entice Marlon to lose weight, brought him fresh vegetables from his organic garden. But what made the evening rather bizzare was that Jackson arrived at Marlon's house dressed in a pink-and-chartreuse Pinocchio outfit, complete with a long nose.

Marlon, or so it was reported, had to use Jackson "as a bank," at one point borrowing one million dollars in cash from him.

Regardless of the stress Marlon faced, Jackson was there for Marlon. The singer was extremely generous to the actor he idolized. There were rumors that Jackson regarded Marlon as a father figure.

Marlon was a recipient of a million-dollar antique watch from Jackson and, in 2001, a million-dollar offer to appear at the singer's 30th anniversary concert at Madison Square Garden. In exchange for the cash, Marlon was to deliver a talk praising Jackson.

Marlon came out onto the stage and took a seat. He introduced himself by saying, "You may be thinking, who is that old fat fart sitting there." He then removed his watch and informed the packed crowd, "In the last minute, 100,000 children have been hacked to death with a machete." After that opening, Marlon started to ramble. After ten minutes of mumbling, he was booed off the stage.

By 2001, the world was no longer shocked by almost anything that Jackson or Marlon did. Therefore, the news that Marlon was going to appear in a Michael Jackson video, his latest single, "You Rock My World," didn't cause any shock waves. Marlon was depicted sitting in a chair smoking a cigar, watching, along with a group of mobsters, Jackson dance. Marlon's henchmen appeared poised to beat Jackson up for flirting with Marlon's girl.

In 2002, Marlon was holding private, invitation-only acting workshops for VIPs in Hollywood, everyone from Sean Penn to Johnny Depp. Even Jackson showed up to see an actor almost as eccentric as he was. Before the class, a curtain opened to reveal a corpulent Marlon dressed as a woman under a long blonde wig and wearing a dress of red and purple polka dots with so-called "Joan Crawford fuck-me high heels." He'd slashed his mouth with scarlet red lipstick like Tallulah Bankhead used to wear.

In return for Jackson's kindness, Marlon promised the singer that if any of "those child molestation charges" ever stick to you, I'll get you out of the country and get you to a safe refuge in Tahiti. Don't worry. I can do it!"

EPILOGUE

After a life of success, failure, and excess, Marlon Brando died on July 1, 2004. He was 80 years old. New York's *Daily News* screamed in a "secondcoming" banner: THE DON IS DEAD.

According to his wishes, Marlon was cremated. When the ashes were returned to Marlon's home on Mulholland Drive, three vehicles set out heading for Death Valley. The cars contained some of the last remnants of Marlon's dysfunctional family, including Tarita who remembered that the heat was so intense that she could hardly breathe.

As indicated in Marlon's will, family members were taking his ashes here. Before leaving home, they had been mixing his ashes with those of Wally Cox, his longtime companion who had died "so long ago," as Marlon often said.

Facing the scorching sun and biting desert winds, family members tossed half of the combined ashes "into the elements."

The other half of the ashes of both Wally and Marlon were flown to Tetiaroa, his beloved Shangri-La in the South Pacific. There, only Tahitian members of Marlon's family, including Tarita once again, were present as the ashes "committed suicide in the winds."

On the way home from Marlon's Tahitian funeral, Tarita wondered why she, too, couldn't fly away like the birds of Tetiaroa. "Out and up, away into the shadows of the sunset," she pondered. "Like the ashes of Marlon Brando, never to return to this earth."

ADIEUX

Author's Acknowledgments

My mother used to work as the "Girl Friday" (now a politically incorrect term, of course) for that fabulous cabaret entertainer, Sophie Tucker, "The Last of the Red Hot Mammas." Growing up on Miami Beach, I was dazzled by the film and theatrical stars who came to call on Madame Tucker. Ronald Reagan, Jackie Gleason, Bob Hope, Tony Martin, Judy Garland (who knew me by name), and Frank Sinatra, who always gave me a ten-dollar bill (a lot of money for a kid back then). Lena Horne even offered me a glass of champagne. Well, not really. I sipped from her glass when she went to the powder room.

When Ms. Tucker sent my mother to New York with some of her wardrobe concerns, my mother used the opportunity to see a Broadway play. Everybody was talking about the sensational Marlon Brando appearing at the time in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire.* When she returned to Miami Beach, she told me, "Marlon Brando is the only man I'd ever leave your father for."

This was my first exposure to the mesmerizing influence Marlon had on women. She couldn't stop talking about him, and became one of his most obsessive fans.

When the film version of *Streetcar* opened in Miami, I was the first in line for the twelve o'clock showing. I even stayed glued to my seat for the day's second showing as well. To do this, I had to skip school. That night over dinner, after my mother asked me how my school day went, she invited me to accompany her to the eight o'clock showing of *Streetcar*. That night I saw the movie for the third time. Since then, I long ago lost count of how many stage versions of the play I've seen, how many Stanleys, how many Blanches. There was even a disastrous performance by Tallulah Bankhead as Blanche.

Throughout the 1950s, my classmates and I grew up with Marlon Brando. Movie debates often focused on the question, "who is you favorite actor?" It was always Marlon Brando, James Dean, or Montgomery Clift. When Marlon came charging onto the screen on his motorcycle in *The Wild One*, we abandoned our preconceptions about dress codes and adopted his style.

After my university education, to my surprise, and despite my youth, *The Miami Herald* sent me to Key West as its bureau chief. In those coincidences of life, my next door neighbors turned out to be Tennessee Williams and his longtime companion, Frank Merlo. In no time at all, I was going over there almost nightly for dinners, enjoying Frank's marvelous Italian cooking. In the years to come, I'd reciprocate those dinners both at my home in Key West and in New York.

When Tennessee kicked Frankie out, he came to stay with me in New York. It was there that he started to dictate his memoirs to me. They were mainly revelations about Tennessee, but they also included a number of stories about Marlon. Frankie eventually reconciled with Tennessee, but then died of lung cancer before those memoirs could ever be completed.

I would continue my friendship with Tennessee until his death, hanging out with him in Key West, New York, London, Rome, Los Angeles, and, on one occasion, in Madrid. That was easy and convenient for me to do since I wrote travel books to each of those destinations.

Once when I was living there, Marlon slipped into Key West for a nine-day visit. Since Tennessee was busy writing during the day, his companion and I had Marlon all to ourselves during the day. At night, Marlon had more important things to do. During that brief time, we learned more about Marlon than we ever thought possible.

Over the years Tennessee introduced me to his friends, who sometimes introduced me to their friends. Many of these same friends also knew Marlon, and, if they knew Marlon, if only slightly, they had stories to tell. In fairness to many of the persons I've talked to over the years, no one necessarily knew at the time that they were being "interviewed." Some of them might have been horrified to learn that their comments would one day appear in a book. But, as Tennessee's friend, Truman Capote, once said, "Never trust a writer."

He too arrived in Key West to visit Tennessee and to pursue nocturnal adventures. He not only had scandalous stories about Marlon to entertain us with, but many indiscretions to report. His subjects were just as fascinating as he was: Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, Montgomery Clift, and, among others, John F. Kennedy.

It was through Tennessee that James Leo Herlihy (the author of *Midnight Cowboy*) and I first met the director Elia Kazan. Although he wrote about Marlon in his autobiography, Kazan saved the most risqué of his tidbits to report in private to intimates.

It was in Rome that Tennessee introduced me to his close friend, Anna Magnani. We made several visits to her apartment, which was always followed by dinner. Ms. Magnani had plenty to say about Marlon. Nothing good.

I was also allowed to visit with Tennessee and Ms. Magnani during the

shooting of *The Rose Tattoo*.

One night in Rome, her favorite director, Vittorio De Sica, joined us at table. He had a number of stories to tell about "early Brando," including details about Marlon's involvement with Pier Angeli.

A special thank you goes to Walter Starcke, whom I met in Key West in the late 1950s. This well-known producer collaborated with the playwright-director, John Van Druten, on his play, *Bell Book and Candle*. Later, he became Van Druten's assistant director on the original Broadway production of *The King and I*, and he was privy to the most private details in the life of Van Druten as well as his close friends Noël Coward and Cole Porter. Marlon appeared in the Van Druten play , *I Remember Mama*, long before *Streetcar*.

Through Jim Herlihy, I met Tallulah Bankhead, who was resting in Key West after touring in his play *Crazy October*, which was produced by Walter Starcke. Tallulah had many stories to tell about Marlon—none of them flattering—as well as revelations about virtually everyone else.

In New York, I met Edith Van Cleve, one of Tallulah's closest friends. She was Marlon's theatrical agent, and in time provided priceless information about his early days in theater. She also related enlightening and amusing stories about the famous actresses who appeared backstage to seduce Marlon when he was appearing in *Streetcar*. Shelley Winters first exposed these "string of seductions" in her autobiography, but didn't name names, much less relate details about specific incidents. But Edith did. Normally, Marlon wouldn't have told her so much, but he quickly realized that she was "salivating at the mouth for red meat."

Some of these famous actresses I would eventually meet and know on my own, although Edith's stories were invaluable. I had first met Veronica Lake when I was just a kid. My mother had worked on her picture, *Slattery's Hurricane,* which was shot in Miami.

Tamara Geva introduced me to her best friend, Anne Baxter, who I came to know near the end of her life. The famous literary agent, Jay Garon, threw a party for his client, Hedy Lamarr, and invited me. During the first of several evenings together, she told me, much to my surprise, of her "encounter" with Marlon.

Nearing the end of her life, Ingrid Bergman allowed me to visit her summer home off the western coast of Sweden where she fed me a large beet for lunch. Freed of the pressures of Hollywood and its hype, she talked freely, even telling of many directors who had tried to bring Marlon and her together on the same picture, although she'd met him privately long before.

In Fort Lauderdale, Peter Pell, one-time secretary to Susan Hayward, introduced me to his friend and former employer. Her comments were candid, sizzling, and often testy. Flying to Chicago to see *The Night of the Iguana*,

I was introduced to the play's star, Bette Davis, by Tennessee.

In the years to come, I spent many evenings with her, as I would with her nemesis, Joan Crawford, whom I met when my partner, Stanley Haggart, worked as the art director for some of the Pepsi Cola advertising campaigns. I even spent an evening with Miriam Hopkins off Sheridan Square in New York's Greenwich Village when she was trying to mount a play called *Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara.*

A few years before his death, Maynard Morris, Edith's fellow theatrical agent, entered my life. He was filled with wonderful anecdotes about his clients, Marlon and Monty Clift in the 1940s, including his own chance meeting with Marlon in Paris.

No one hooked me up with more people than Stanley Haggart, who seemed to know everybody in the dance, movie, and theater world. He'd arrived in Hollywood back in the days when you could actually get to know people such as Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford. Stanley was a longtime friend of Cary Grant and Randolph Scott.

One of the early boosters of the Katherine Dunham dance troupe, Stanley provided many private details about Marlon's days of "going tribal" when he joined the group. Stanley was also a close friend of Jimmy Donahue, the Woolworth heir, who revealed the juicy details about Marlon's involvement with the tobacco heiress, Doris Duke.

Stanley also had a close friend, Brooks Clift, who worked with him in advertising. Brooks also became my friend, showing up for dinner either alone or, more often, with his famous brother, Monty.

Sometimes he'd bring his mistress, Kim Stanley, the brilliant actress. I eventually learned of Kim's own early involvement with Marlon. Back in Key West, Tennessee also introduced me to Kim's rival, Geraldine Page, an equally brilliant actress, who contributed a marvelous story to this book.

I am also grateful to the Viennese *chanteuse,* Greta Keller, for sharing stories about Marlon's close encounters with Noël Coward and his lover, Jack Wilson.

At TV Graphics, a New York studio that filmed commercials, I encountered a fellow employee, Minnesota-born Steve Gilmore, who provided me with heretofore unknown and behind-the-scenes information about Marlon's days at the Shattuck Military Academy and his own involvements with Marlon. Later in life, Steve's love for Marlon turned bitter when he was abruptly cut off from his idol.

During my first summer in New York, I headed for a holiday in Provincetown. Once there, I immediately encountered Jesse Steele, longtime resident. Back in the 1940s, he knew what was happening in every bedroom at this bohemian resort. He provided rich anecdotes not only about

Marlon's visits, but about Tennessee's link to the resort as well. In Key West, Tennessee also shared his insights into P-town with me.

I will be forever grateful for the young actor, Howard Bennett, for introducing me to Bobby Lewis, famous for his association with the Actors Studio, and for Bobby allowing me to be ushered into the august presence of Stella Adler. Both of these brilliant people were filled with insights into the life of Marlon in the New York theater during the 1940s. Bobby told me that he was a "voyeur to Marlon in the 1940s. I knew everything going on…well, in Marlon's case, I'd better say 'almost everything.'"

The producer, Harold Clurman, husband of Stella Adler, was a font of information about New York theater in the 40s, and about Marlon in particular. He both admired Marlon's talent and at times "despised the young man."

To actress Ruth Warrick (remember her in *Citizen Kane?*) and Greta Keller, my thanks for confirming what had been rumored for decades—that Marlon worked briefly as a "gentleman escort" in New York during the mid-1940s.

Ted Hook, Tallulah's "secretary," brought that veteran character actress, Mildred Natwick, into my life. Almost immediately, we "bonded at the hip." She told me many stories about the "lavender marriage" of Guthrie McClintic and Katharine Cornell, and she also had a front row seat during the brief affair between Marlon and the bisexual actor, Sir Laurence Olivier.

During her Broadway performance in *Midgie Purvis,* Tallulah introduced me to her director, actor Burgess Meredith. He richly contributed many anecdotes to this book, especially about the theater world of the 1940s, as well as many stories about Marlon. Theresa Helburn, of the Theater Guild and a close friend of Katharine Hepburn, was also a rich contributor, providing insights into Marlon's relationship with his muse, Stella Adler.

It was during Tallulah's very short run in *Midgie Purvis* that I also encountered actor William Redfield. Once a friend of Marlon's, he told me of his own involvement with Marlon, when they both ventured forth in summer stock. Years later, he also provided revelations about his work with Marlon during the 1965 filming of *The Saboteur: Code Name, Morituri.* His comments about Marlon and Yul Brynner were particularly enlightening.

When I was seeing a lot of Susan Strasberg, I met Lee Strasberg, who contributed his own version of events centering around Marlon, Stella Adler, and Method acting. He was not a great admirer of either Stella or Marlon.

It wasn't Tennessee, but the composer Bart Howard ("Fly Me to the Moon") who introduced me to his neighbors, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn. In the months that followed, I spent many evenings with them, as they shared memories of *Streetcar* with me and gave me enough additional material to fill a book on the theater, if I had wished. Their friend, Kim

Hunter, once their guest, also shared her memories of working with Marlon and Jessica for Elia Kazan.

Tennessee also introduced me to his onetime producer, Irene Mayer Selznick, who provided information, not only about the launch of *Streetcar,* but about her father, Louis B. Mayer, and the early days of MGM.

In the 1960s, I frequently encountered author James Baldwin, who had many "delicious tidbits" to tell about Marlon and his other experiences as well. Baldwin contributed the incident about where Marlon met Norman Mailer and himself in a Greenwich Village cafeteria.

Tom Ewell appeared in his last film, *The Last Resort,* based on a novel I'd written, *Butterflies in Heat.* Nearing the end of his life, Ewell was in a confessional mood. Night after night in Key West, where the film was shot, he spoke about his life, with marvelous stories about Marlon during the Forties in New York, as well as anecdotes about Katharine Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe, with whom he'd appeared in films. Barbara Baxley, also starring in *The Last Resort,* had keen insights to offer about two of her former best friends, Marlon Brando and James Dean. Both Tom Ewell and Dorothy Raymer, a columnist for the *Key West Citizen,* contributed insights into the brief Leonard Bernstein/Brando affair.

Stanley Haggart had a friend, the TV producer, Rogers Brackett, who had virtually launched James Dean in New York. Stanley and another friend, the composer Alec Wilder, shared many Marlon/Dean stories with me, although not for publication.

Jane Sinclair, whom I'd first met in California and then later called upon at her home in Paris, had been a close friend of Rita Hayworth. She knew about Marlon's own involvement with the love goddess and spoke freely about this. Jane was also a friend of Marlon's two longtime French lovers, Christian Marquand and Daniel Gélin. She provided many insights into Marlon's controversial relationships with these two handsome French actors, and she also knew of Marlon's days with Roger Vadim and his "sex kitten," Brigitte Bardot. But no one helped me more than Jane's friend, Jacques Viale, who at one time had entertained the idea of writing a memoir about Marlon's early days in Paris and his involvements with the cultural elite there.

During the course of my decades in California, I often sought out movie producers such as Stanley Kramer and Fred Zinnemann to talk to about movies and their careers in general—and often about Marlon specifically. Edward Dmytryk also had much insiderish information to tell about directing Monty Clift and Marlon in *The Young Lions.*

None of these august men were as articulate and as charming as the director, Joseph Mankiewicz. I met him at a party that Lucille Lortel threw for him at her suite in New York's Sherry-Netherland Hotel. Nearing the end of his

life, he was most willing in the weeks ahead to share his memories, especially those that involved his direction of Marlon in both *Julius Caesar* and *Guys and Dolls,* and what was going on behind the scenes.

No one helped me more than Carlo Fiore, for decades Marlon's best friend, until Marlon turned on him. I met Carlo when he was working for my dear friend, the California-based tycoon, Gordon Howard. Over the years, I spent much time with Carlo, listening to his stories about Marlon, only a few of which he related within his book, *Bud: The Brando I Knew.*

Marlon was furious at Carlo for writing a book about him after their friendship had ended. Carlo thought that his former friend was completely unfair. "Since I could have told so much more—I knew where all the bodies were buried." At any rate, Marlon never forgave Carlo, who grew increasingly bitter after Marlon denounced him. Without Carlo, I would not have had a book with such rich "insider" details.

Gordon Howard himself, a Westerner of charm, grace, and sophistication, collected old cars once owned by movie stars during the 1920s, and restored them to running order. "I know everybody in California worth knowing," he often boasted to me. Sometimes I put him to the test, as on the weekend we drove out to see "my dear friend," Louis L'Amour, the famous Western writer. At the time, I had no idea that L'Amour even knew Marlon, but immediately following Marlon's marriage to Anna Kashfi, he spent his honeymoon week with the L'Amours.

L'Amour, to hear him tell it, led a life that was far more interesting that anything he ever put on paper.

Sam Gilman replaced Carlo Fiore as Marlon's best friend. Except for one break, Marlon and Sam became "friends for life." However, during that break, Gilman was so infuriated at Marlon that he contacted Jay Garon, the literary agent in New York who specialized in celebrity exposés, and poured out much of what he knew about Marlon. However, when Marlon learned that yet another book was coming out about his private life, in the wake of the publication of *Bud* by Carlo Fiore, he called Gilman. The two friends reconciled, and Marlon even arranged for future acting work for Gilman. Gilman withdrew his proposed memoirs from circulation, but not before some of his most personal revelations about Marlon made the rounds of New York publishers.

In half a century, I heard and recorded hundreds of stories about Marlon. To write this portrait, I had to toss out enough material for a dozen other books about Marlon. It was all too much, the life too rich. But for all the many people over the years who contributed even the smallest detail, a paragraph or less, I am deeply grateful.

The author wishes to thank **Monica Dunn** for her ongoing assistance with editorial aspects of this book.

My gratitude is also extended to my courageous publisher, **Danforth Prince**, who labored long and diligently to get this book onto the shelves of bookstores. He reviewed my sources, perused my notes (many of them withered with age), and sharpened and focused this book's presentation. Without undue drama, he handled zillions of problems, and aggressively promoted this book in most of the countries of the English-speaking world. To Dan, and to Blood Moon Productions, heartfelt thanks.

Author's Final Note

Within the pages of this book, the source of each individual piece of information is positioned very close to the spot where the information actually appears.

Also within the pages, direct quotations have been transcribed "as they were remembered" by the people who originally heard the remarks. They're presented in the same format, using the same phraseologies, that were used when those remarks were originally transmitted to me. If the exact wording and phraseologies of any individual quotation are *not* accurately presented, the author hopes that the points being made, and the impressions being relayed, have nonetheless been rendered and repeated as accurately as possible.

Throughout this biography, I sincerely hope that I have transmitted and preserved the essence of once-fabled lives, including that of Mr. Brando himself.

To each of the sources noted above—dead or alive—and to the countless others not mentioned, I extend my heartfelt thanks for unveiling an American original, Marlon Brando Jr.

Darwin Porter
New York City
October, 2005

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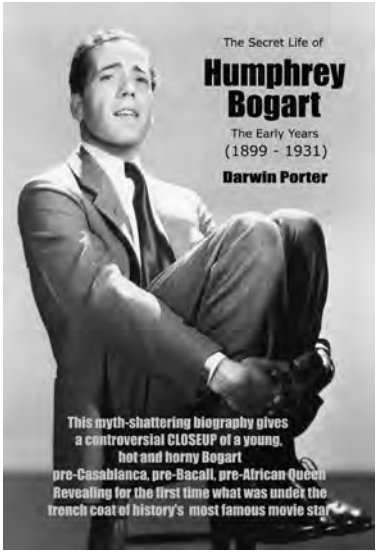


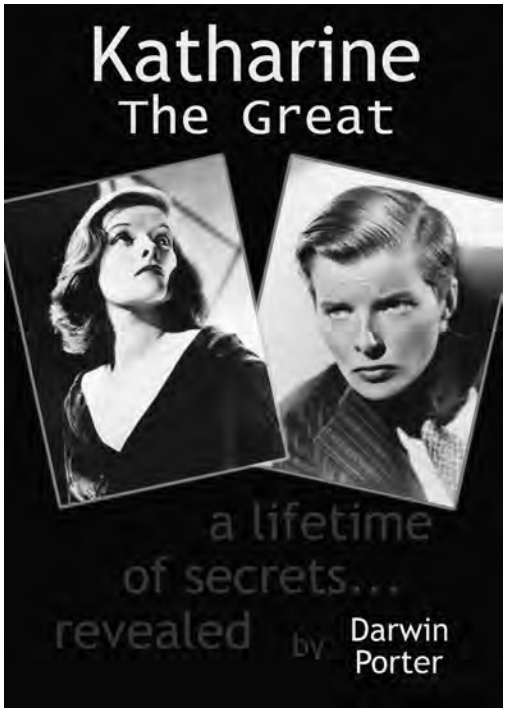
"Humphrey Bogart was one of Hollywood's most celebrated lovers, his romance with Lauren Bacall hailed as one of the greatest love stories of the 20th century. But before they met, he was a drug-taking womanizer, racking up a string of failed marriages and broken relationships with some of the world's most beautiful women. In this extraordinary biography, drawing on a wealth of previously unseen material, veteran showbusiness writer Darwin Porter, author of *Hollywood's Silent Closet,* reveals the truth about Bogart's shady past."

As reported by London's *Mail on Sunday* in June of 2003

From The Georgia Literary Association
(an affiliate of Blood Moon Productions)
ISBN 0966-8030-5-1
528 pages, plus 64 photos. $16.95

You've read what KATE REMEMBERED:

Here, in this extraordinary biography, is what
Katharine Hepburn wanted to forget



"Behind the scenes of her movies, Katharine Hepburn played the temptress to as many women as she did men, ranted and raved with her co-stars and directors, and broke into her neighbors' homes for fun.

AND SOMEHOW, SHE MANAGED TO KEEP IT ALL OUT OF THE PRESS.

As they say, **Katharine the Great** is hard to put down."

(*The Dallas Voice*, April 9, 2004)

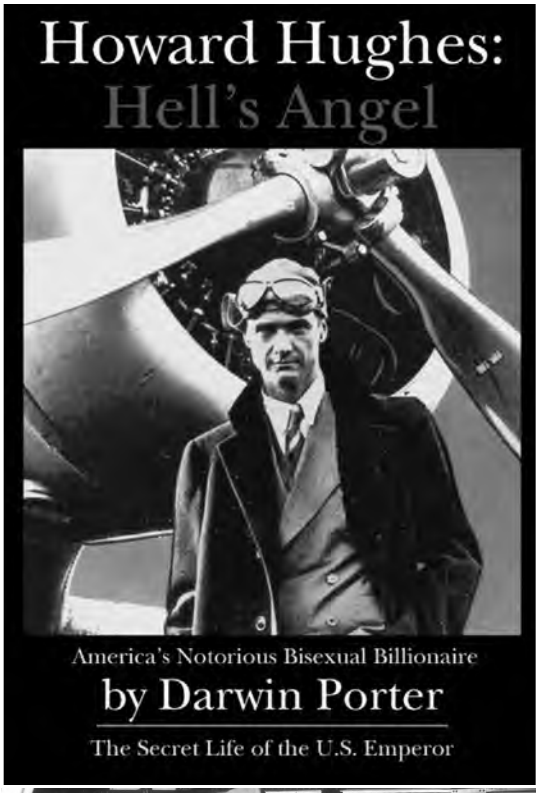
ISBN 0974-8118-0-7.
Trade Paperback, $16.95. 571 pages, 78 photos and an index.

HOWARD HUGHES: HELL'S ANGEL

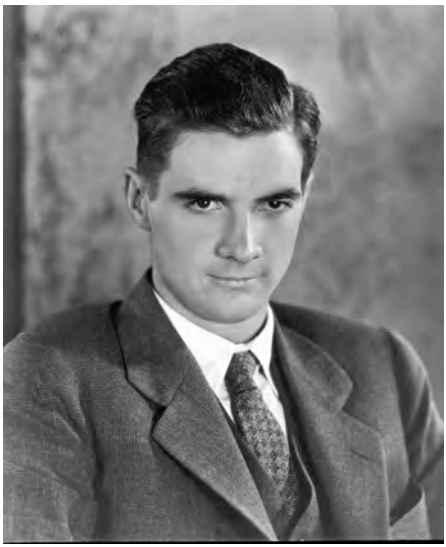
AMERICA'S NOTORIOUS BISEXUAL BILLIONAIRE
THE SECRET LIFE OF THE U.S. EMPEROR

by Darwin Porter

A rigorously researched but highly entertaining
hardcover published in April of 2005
by BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS
ISBN 0-9748118-1-5. $26.95



As serialized by London's ***Mail on Sunday,*** Darwin Porter's newest biography focuses on the Hollywood intrigue, and the Hollywood debauchery of Howard Hughes, with stuff that's only hinted at in *The Aviator*. It contains radical, never-before-published material about the jealousies, the lusts, and the dementia of the most seductive but bizarre film mogul of all time. Researched over a period of 40 years, it's a stormingly good read about ***Who*** and ***What*** money can buy. Written and edited with a keen sense of its importance as a scholastic book of record, it has 814 pages plus a comprehensive index and 175 vintage photographs.



WHAT THE CRITICS SAID:

"Thanks to Darwin Porter's biography of Howard Hughes, we'll never be able to look at the old pin-ups in quite the same way"

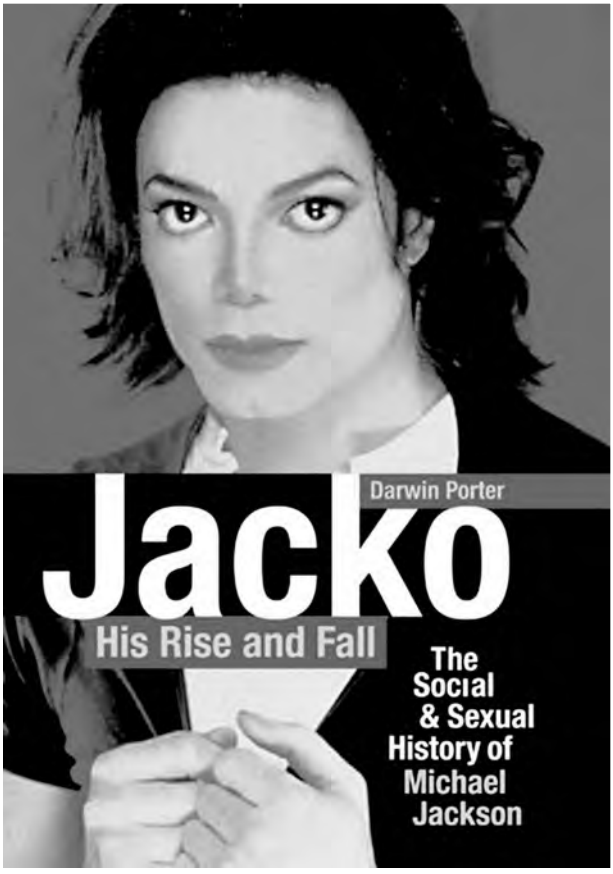
THE LONDON TIMES,
March 30, 2005

"Darwin Porter grew up in the midst of Hollywood Royalty. His access to film industy insiders and other Hughes confidantes supplied him with the resources he needed to create a portrait that both corroborates what other Hughes biographies have divulged and go them one better."

Carol Haggas, writing for Foreword
Magazine, July, 2005

"According to a new biography by Darwin Porter, Hughes's attitude toward sex, like the Emperor Caligula, was selfish at best and at its worst, sadistic. He was obsessed with controlling his lovers and, although he had a pathological fear of relationships and marriage, he proposed to countless women, often at the same time. Only three people successfully resisted Hughes's persistent advances: Elizabeth Taylor, Jean Simmons, and Joan Crawford. Of the three, it was Crawford who most succinctly revealed her reasons for refusing Hughes's advances, "I adore homosexuals, but not in my bed after midnight."

London's SUNDAY EXPRESS,
March 20, 2005



Jacko, His Rise and Fall: The Social and Sexual History of Michael Jackson, by Darwin Porter, from Blood Moon Productions, 542 pages, with photos, ISBN 978-0-9748118-5-7. $27.95 More about Michael than you might ever have thought to ask. Blood Moon: Biographies and film guides that change the way America interprets its entertainers.

"I'd have thought that there wasn't one single gossipy rock yet to be overturned in the microscopically scrutinized life of Michael Jackson. But Darwin Porter's exhaustive (but always zippy) hybrid of celebrity bio and solid reporting proves me quite wrong. It's all here: The abuse Jackson suffered as a boy from the fists of his father; rough early years on the "chitlin' circuit"; his rocky relationship with Diana Ross and his quirky relationship with Liz Taylor; his sham marriages and his oddly conceived three children; unflagging rumors of his homosexuality; and his scandalous affection for generations of adolescent boys. Definitely a page-turner. But don't turn the pages too quickly: Almost every one holds a fascinating revelation."

Richard Labonte
Books To Watch Out For

ANOTHER OUTRAGEOUS TITLE IN DARWIN PORTER'S BABYLON SERIES

Hot, Unauthorized, and Unapologetic!

LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN, JANE WYMAN & NANCY DAVIS

All the Gossip Unfit to Print

DARWIN PORTER & DANFORTH PRINCE

LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN,
JANE WYMAN, &
NANCY DAVIS

ALL THE GOSSIP
UNFIT TO PRINT

AWARD-WINNING ENTERTAINMENT

ABOUT HOW AMERICA INTERPRETS ITS CELEBRITIES

WWW.BLOODMOONPRODUCTIONS.COM

"Love Triangle *is that rare animal: A book that appeals both to the devotees and the detractors of Ronald Reagan. There's not a page in this large, monumentally researched work that doesn't contain a gold nugget of insider Hollywood revelation, some of which might shock the faint of heart."*

"All the dish is here on star Jane Wyman and starlet Nancy Davis, too, those naughty ladies from the good (bad) days of Golden Age Tinseltown. Back then, secrets were to be covered up, not exposed as they are so blatantly today when personal communications, not meant for public viewing, lead off the night news, thanks to some hacker."

—Florence Gavin
Dirty Laundry

"There are guilty pleasures. Then there is the master of guilty pleasures, Darwin Porter. There is nothing like reading him for passing the hours. He is the Nietzsche of Naughtiness, the Goethe of Gossip, the Proust of Pop Culture. Porter knows all the nasty buzz anyone has ever heard whispered in dark bars, dim alleys, and confessional booths. And lovingly, precisely, and in as straightforward a manner as an oncoming train, his prose whacks you between the eyes with the greatest gossip since Kenneth Anger. Some would say better than Anger."

—Alan W. Petrucelli
The Entertainment Report
Stage and Screen Examiner
Examiner.com

A Word About Phraseologies

Since we at Blood Moon weren't privy to long-ago conversations as they were unfolding, we have relied on the memories of our sources for the conversational tone and phraseologies of what we've recorded within the pages of this book.

This writing technique, as it applies to modern biography, has been defined as "conversational storytelling" by *The New York Times*, which labeled it as an acceptable literary device for "engaging reading."

Blood Moon is not alone in replicating, "as remembered" dialogues from dead sources. Truman Capote and Norman Mailer were pioneers of direct quotes, and today, they appear in countless other memoirs, ranging from those of Patti Davis to those of the long-time mistress (Verita Thompson) of Humphrey Bogart.

Some people have expressed displeasure in the fact that direct quotes and "as remembered" dialogue have become a standard—some would say "mandatory"—fixture in pop culture biographies today.

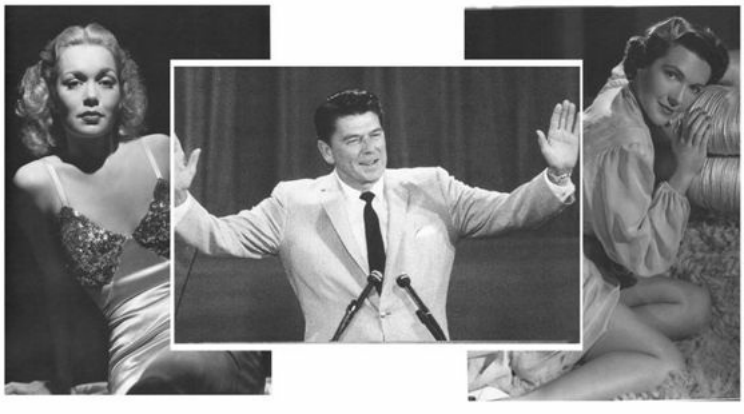
If that is the case with anyone who's reading this now, they should perhaps turn to other, more traditional and self-consciously "scholastic" works instead.

Best wishes to all of you, with thanks for your interest in our work.

Danforth Prince
President and Founder
Blood Moon Productions

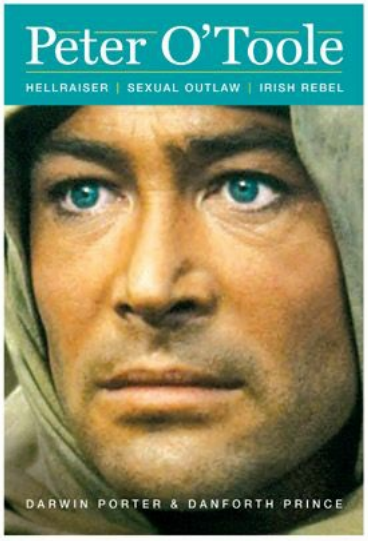
LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN,
JANE WYMAN, &
NANCY DAVIS

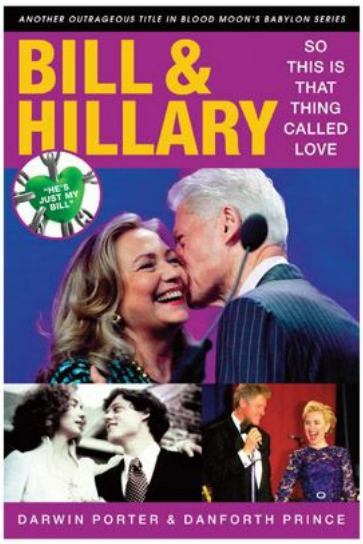


DARWIN PORTER & DANFORTH PRINCE

AND COMING SOON!



Peter O'Toole
Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel



Bill & Hillary
So This Is That Thing Called Love

OTHER BOOKS BY DARWIN PORTER

BIOGRAPHIES

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis
A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams

Pink Triangle
The Feuds and Private Lives of
Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote,
and Famous Members of their Entourages.

Those Glamorous Gabors
Bombshells from Budapest

Inside Linda Lovelace's Deep Throat
Degradation, Porno Chic, and the Rise of Feminism

Elizabeth Taylor
There is Nothing Like a Dame

Marilyn at Rainbow's End
Sex, Lies, Murder, and the Great Cover-up

J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson
Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women

Frank Sinatra
The Boudoir Singer. All the Gossip Unfit to Print

The Kennedys
All the Gossip Unfit to Print

Humphrey Bogart, The making of a Legend *(2010), and*
The Secret Life of Humphrey Bogart *(2003)*

Howard Hughes
Hell's Angel

Steve McQueen
King of Cool, Tales of a Lurid Life

Paul Newman
The Man Behind the Baby Blues

Merv Griffin
A Life in the Closet

Brando Unzipped

Katharine the Great
Hepburn, Secrets of a Lifetime Revealed

Jacko, His Rise and Fall
The Social and Sexual History of Michael Jackson

and, co-authored with Roy Moseley
Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara,
The Private Lives of Vivien Leigh & and Laurence Olivier

FILM CRITICISM

Blood Moon's 2005 Guide to the Glitter Awards
Blood Moon's 2006 Guide to Film,
Blood Moon's 2007 Guide to Film, *and*
50 Years of Queer Cinema
500 of the Best GLBTQ Films Ever Made

NON-FICTION

Hollywood Babylon—It's Back! *and*
Hollywood Babylon Strikes Again!

NOVELS

Butterflies in Heat,
Marika, Venus (a roman à clef based on the life of Anaïs Nin)
Razzle-Dazzle,
Midnight in Savannah,
Rhinestone Country,
Blood Moon,
and ***Hollywood's Silent Closet***

TRAVEL GUIDES

Many Editions and Many Variations of ***The Frommer Guides, The American Express Guides,*** *and/or* ***TWA Guides, et alia*** to:

Andalusia, Andorra, Anguilla, Aruba, Atlanta, Austria, the Azores, The Bahamas, Barbados, the Bavarian Alps, Berlin, Bermuda, Bonaire and Curaçao, Boston, the British Virgin Islands, Budapest, Bulgaria, California, the Canary Islands, the Caribbean and its "Ports of Call, " the Cayman Islands, Ceuta, the Channel Islands (UK), Charleston (SC), Corsica, Costa del Sol (Spain), Denmark, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Edinburgh, England, Estonia, "Europe by Rail, " the Faroe Islands, Finland, Florence, France, Frankfurt, the French Riviera, Geneva, Georgia (USA), Germany, Gibraltar, Glasgow, Granada (Spain), Great Britain, Greenland, Grenada (West Indies), Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Jamaica, Key West & the Florida Keys, Las Vegas, Liechtenstein, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Maine, Malta, Martinique & Guadeloupe, Massachusetts, Morocco, Munich, New England, New Orleans, North Carolina, Norway, Paris, Poland, Portugal, Provence, Puerto Rico, Romania, Rome, Salzburg, San Diego, San Francisco, San Marino, Sardinia, Savannah, Scandinavia, Scotland, Seville, the Shetland Islands, Sicily, Sint Maartin & St. Martin, South Carolina, Spain, St. Kitts & Nevis, Sweden, Switzerland, the Turks & Caicos, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Venice, Vienna and the Danube, Wales, and Zurich.

LOVE TRIANGLE
Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis

Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thanks for the Memories

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

JOAN BLONDELL AND VAN JOHNSON

AND TO STANLEY MILLS HAGGART AND WILLIAM HOPPER

Ω

PLUS A CAST OF HUNDREDS OF OTHER PLAYERS FROM THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, SOME OF WHOM DID NOT WANT TO BE NAMED.

RONALD REAGAN WAS THE FIRST U.S. PRESIDENT TO TRIUMPH OVER WHAT HAD BEEN CONSIDERED, PRIOR TO HIS ELECTION, AN INSURMOUNTABLE STIGMA: HE WAS A *DIVORCÉ* WHO HAD BEEN MARRIED TWICE.

THIS IS THE STORY OF THE LOVE TRIANGLE WHOSE COMBATANTS ARE FEATURED BELOW.

Ronald Reagan with Jane Wyman. Love is in bloom. Their marriage lasted from 1940 to 1948.

Ronald Reagan with Nancy Davis. Their “until-death-do-us-part” union lasted from 1952 until 2004.

SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
E PLURIBUS UNUM

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The Heartland's Heartthrob Becomes the Horny, Hardworking, Most Eligible Bachelor in Des Moines, and Radio Broadcasting's "Sports Voice of the Midwest."

PROLOGUE #2: SARAH JANE FULKS (JANE WYMAN)
Abandoned and Molested, "Pug Nose" Wyman is Seduced into a Teenage Marriage.

PROLOGUE #3: ANNE FRANCIS ROBBINS (NANCY DAVIS)
Born to a potty-mouthed Vaudevillian actress who imagined herself as Scarlett O'Hara, "Cuddles" Davis Becomes an Ambitious Debutante in a World of Theatrical Celebrities.

***

CHAPTER ONE
Before Meeting Reagan, "Sarah Jane" Marries a Sex Maniac and later, a Trannie Who Sold Dresses. Her First Marriage is Suppressed, the Other Forgotten. Mating Games: Jane's Romantic Detours with George Raft, Errol Flynn, & Bing Crosby. Jane and the "Chorus Girl Cuties" (Lucille Ball, Betty Grable, & Paulette Goddard).

CHAPTER TWO
Ronald Reagan in Hollywood—Warner Brothers' "Errol Flynn of the B's." A Victim of Chronic "Leadinglady-itis," He Falls in Love Again...and Again...and Again...and Again.

CHAPTER THREE
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CHAPTER FOUR
"Horndog Reagan," Conquering Warners, Starlet by Starlet. "He's a Greater Swordsman than Errol Flynn." Reagan About His Role in *Dark Victory:* "Just because I was cast as a homo doesn't mean I *am* one."

CHAPTER FIVE
Fiery Susan Hayward Battles Jane Wyman for Reagan during His War with the Dead End Kids. Reagan Complains: "Too Many Starlets are Demanding my Services." Bobbysoxers in Philadelphia Strip "Sexy Ronnie" Naked.

CHAPTER SIX
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CHAPTER SEVEN
When Quoted by His Enemies, Reagan's Most Famous Movie Line, "Where's the Rest of Me?" Becomes a Mockery of His Shortcomings. The Press Hails "Jane and Ronnie" as America's Perfect Couple. "Dreamboats" John Payne and Dennis Morgan Pursue Jane, as Reagan is Ensnared by Rival Blondes, Betty Grable and Carole Landis.

CHAPTER EIGHT
After His Success in *Kings Row*, Reagan Becomes MCA's "Million Dollar Baby." Drafted into the Army, He Objects to Medics Fondling "My Family Jewels." Jane Enlists the Homosexual Actor Van Johnson as a "Beard"

to Disguise Her Infidelities.

CHAPTER NINE
Jane and Reagan Go to War. When Reagan Becomes a Propaganda Agent for the U.S. Army—a "Bloodless Celluloid Commando"—His Popularity Roars to An All-Time High. Jane, Finding True Love in the Arms of John Payne, Defines Reagan as a "Has-Been."

CHAPTER TEN
Starlet Nancy Davis Joins MGM's Contract Players and Gets a Reputation as "One of Those Girls Whose Phone Number Gets Handed Around a Lot." Her romantic interludes include "Quality Time" with Clark Gable, Peter Lawford, Robert Walker, Alfred Drake, Mike Wallace, and Marlon Brando, and career-enhancing assistance from Spencer Tracy and MGM's Casting Director, Benny Thau.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
Jane Wins an Oscar—At Last, Big-time Stardom for "the Hey-Hey Girl." She Spends *Lost Weekend*s with Ray Milland, and Works Through Marital Dramas Behind the Scenes of *Johnny Belinda*. Jane to Reagan: "I'm in love with Lew Ayres, and he wants to marry me."

CHAPTER TWELVE
Jane Dumps Reagan, Leaving Him Broken-Hearted and Suicidal. Pistol-Packin' Reagan Faces Death Threats from Union Brass, then Outs Hollywood Commies to the FBI. In His New Role as a Liberated, Highly Visible Bachelor on the Prowl, He Pleasures Marilyn Monroe and Doris Day.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
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SPECIAL FEATURE: HELLCATS OF THE NAVY
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CHAPTER FOURTEEN
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SPECIAL FEATURE: WHITE HOUSE NIGHTS
Frank Sinatra and the Reagans: A Love Triangle.

SPECIAL FEATURE: "GORBACHEV, TEAR DOWN THAT WALL!"
What a Venerable *Starlette* of B-List Films, "Songbird" Joy Hodges, told the President of the Soviet Union during a State Dinner at the White House.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN. THE LONG GOODBYE. FINALE. REST IN PEACE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.
Who Talked and Who Didn't.

RECORDING THE VOICES
Love Triangle: Its Authors

Scenes from the Life of an American President

"Back in Dixon, Illinois, a rich older woman wanted me to be her kept boy. But I had other plans. I headed for Hollywood."

"Talk about getting your ass beat. When I returned to my *alma mater*, Eureka College, in 1947, my TKE frat brothers left me with red buns."

(Left) "If there's one thing I liked to do, it was playing Cowboys and Indians."

"Here, I'm ready to scalp a few, although Barbara Stanwyck (*right*, his co-star in *Cattle Queen of Montana; 1954)* preferred to shoot them down off their horses."

"In 1955, John Payne and I made *Tennessee's Partner*. People in Hollywood always claimed that Jane had this thing for Payne."

"Here, he and I take a break and absorb some sun. You decide which of us is the hottie."

"Okay, so Jack Warner had fired me and I had to make a living. Here I am in Las Vegas with the slapstick Honey Brothers. It was burlesque, but I insisted that the showgals wear pasties."

Michigan governor George Romney (yes, Mitt's father) watches as Reagan fails to flip a jelly bean into his mouth. The setting was the Governors' Conference in Washington, D.C., on March 17, 1967.

Running for Governor of California in 1966, Reagan on horseback waves his cowboy hat in San Jose during Mexican Independence Day. He told friends, "Sacramento is the first act before I gallop off to the White House."

"When Nancy and I arrived in Sacramento, we realized that that Victorian monstrosity of a governor's mansion was a damn fire trap. We moved out. Here I am, carrying our dishes."

During his Governorship, the Reagans' housing dilemma was solved by rich friends, who bought them an elegant home in an exclusive suburb of Sacramento.

"At Eureka College, they wouldn't let me on the baseball team. I showed them."

"Here, as Governor of California, I threw out the first ball of the 1972 World Series at Oakland."

"Here, I am at my ranch in California on a foggy day, August 13, 1981."

"Whereas Hitler danced a jig at the fall of France, I'm tossing my leg into the air after signing the largest tax reduction and spending control bill in American history."

"At my ranch in California, I drove my Jeep to clear some dead limbs from my property."

"In Washington, I set out to clear deadwood from the government."

"Forget Milton Berle! That Liz from across the pond could wow them with her jokes about the heavy rains of California."

On March 10, 1983, Queen Elizabeth II visited the flooded Reagan spread, Rancho del Cielo.

Nancy told the press, "Thank god she didn't spend the night! Our guest bedroom could house a Munchkin or two from *The Wizard of Oz*. And Ronnie used to say, 'If you sat down on the can, your legs stuck out the door.'"

Reagan shook the hand of John F. Kennedy, Jr., as Caroline Kennedy looks on. It was their first visit to the White House since the Presidential

regime of Richard Nixon in 1973.

Reagan told the handsome young man, “I believe I’m shaking the hand of a future President of the United States.”

After JFK Jr. departed, Reagan told Nancy, “I hope my prediction never comes true.”

A former First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis *(on the right)*, greets a presiding First Lady, Nancy, as a smiling and indulgent President Reagan looks on. The June 25, 1985 rendezvous occurred in Boston at a fund-raiser for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Later, Reagan told his aide, Donald Regan, “I first met Jackie in Hollywood in the late 1950s, when she was screwing my best friend, Bill Holden.”

(Above) Reagan and Nancy appear to be admiring a sculpted replica of a Komodo Dragon presented to them in Bali in May of 1986.

His shirt was a gift from the Indonesian people. As he later quipped, “The only thing louder was the mouth of Jimmy Carter.”

(Left) in the Oval Office, President Reagan shows off his golfing stance, hitting a ball within the sightlines of a real golf pro (Ray Floyd), who's standing outside the frame of this photo.

When this photo was published on June 24, 1986, golf pros thought Reagan's pose was "effeminate."

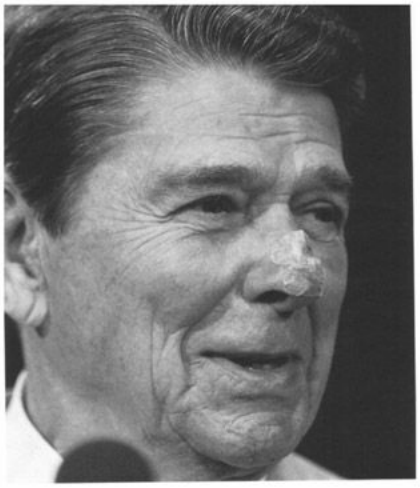
When he heard that, Reagan, always fast with a quip, told aides, "They don't know the half of it. in private, I give the best pansy imitation in the history of the Presidency."

(Left) President Reagan welcomes the Iron Lady of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, to Camp David on November 6, 1986. There was press speculation that he had always been drawn to strong-willed women. "Take his two wives or his mother, Nelle, as an example," wrote one reporter.

Another had a different view. "I think Mrs. Thatcher had the hots for him."

Reagan and Nancy dig into the earth at a ground-breaking ceremony for the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, California, on November 21, 1988.

Again, Reagan was fast with a quip, telling reporters, "Nancy learned the use of a shovel by scooping up horse shit on my ranch in Malibu."



President Reagan certainly earned his place in the sun in American history. But was it good for his nose? Apparently not.

In August of 1987, he appeared at a press briefing in the Old Executive Office Building in Washington. He'd just had surgery on his nose for cancer.

(Left) In January of 1989, after eight years residency in the White House, President Reagan and Nancy bid farewell to their assembled well-wishers at Washington's Andrews Air Force base, before a plane hauled them away to their retirement in California. The occasion caused them to shed tears.

When Reagan was later asked about it, he said, "Richard Nixon in his farewell address also shed tears—and so did his wife, Pat. but Dick and I were tearing up for very different reasons during our exit from the White House."

Prologue #1

Ronald Reagan
(1911-2004)

The Heartland's Heartthrob Becomes the Horny, Hard Working, "Gay Blade and Most Desirable Bachelor" in Des Moines

Young Reagan in the arms of his first love, “Mugs,” who cautioned him to get a grip on his raging hormones.

The Reagan family *(left to right)*: Jack, Moon, Baby Dutch, and Nelle. Young Reagan is “all dressed up.”

The son of an alcoholic Irish father and a Bible-thumping religious zealot mother, Ronald Wilson Reagan entered the world on February 6, 1911. As viewed through the windows of the family's apartment, in the hamlet of Tampico, in northwestern Illinois, the scene could have been from the 1880s, with horse-drawn carriages traversing Main Street.

The infant son, who would grow up to be called "The Great Communicator," started early by crying his head off day and night. "For such a little bit of a fat Dutchman, he sure makes a hell of a lot of noise," said Jack Reagan.

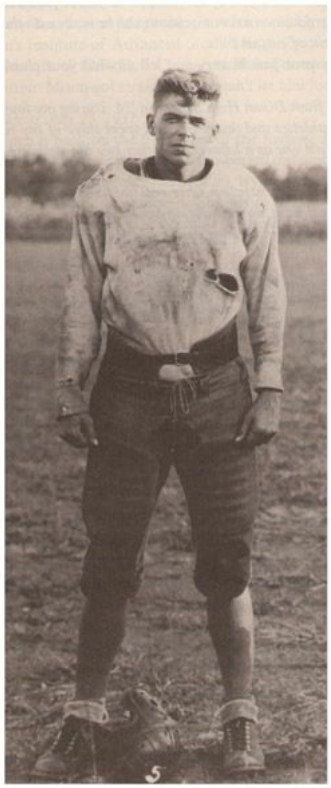
Trim and fit, Dutch became a lifeguard in Dixon, saving 77 lives.

The boy was nicknamed "Dutch."

The devout Nelle Clyde Wilson had previously given birth to another son, John Neil Reagan, who was nicknamed "Moon" after the cartoon character of Moon Mullins.

When he was sober enough, Jack sold shoes and his friends admitted he had "the gift of Blarney and the charm of a Leprechaun."

Auburn-haired Nelle, of Scottish-English descent, had an ample bosom, narrow hips, and a strong jaw. She'd taken out one of her large breasts in church for Dutch to suckle. Later, she complained to Jack, "He sucked voraciously for his mother's milk, practically biting my nipple off. He can't get enough."



In his high school football uniform, Dutch was getting an early rehearsal for his first famous movie, *Knute Rockne—All American*.

"That means in twenty or so years from now, he's gonna be a tit man, chasing all the big bosom dames, if I know my son," Jack said.

The family was poor. As a boy, Dutch went to the butcher, where liver was given away free, as it was viewed not fit for human consumption. The boy said the liver was for their cats, except it usually was the main course at Nelle's Sunday dinner.

In later years, Dutch recalled growing up with Moon, "Ours was a Tom Sawyer-Huck Finn idyll."

In the years to come, the Reagans moved five times, including a dismal existence in a cold-water flat in Chicago, where they were called "trashy Micks." Jack enjoyed Chicago, as it was labeled "the most drunken town in the Middle West."

Nelle and Jack in a 19th Century pose

Reagan inherited his love of acting from "Jack & Nell," who appeared in amateur theatricals, his father scoring

his greatest hit as a female impersonator, with lots of powder, rouge, and bright red lipstick.

In school, Dutch was known as a bookworm. “I got my ass beat a lot,” he recalled. “Those rough-and-tumble farmboys called me a sissy. I got used to black eyes and bloody noses, but I wanted to learn.”

The highlight of his young life came in 1926, when he was made Dixon’s lifeguard along Rock River, a position he’d hold down for seven summers, during which time he heroically saved 77 lives—men, women, and children. Muscled, bronzed, and handsome, he became the most pursued young man in Dixon.

Dutch’s first love, Margaret Cleaver (Mugs), in 1928. She looked like a flapper, but was a “Bible Thumper.”

Wanting to play football, but too skinny, Dutch became a baton twirler for the school band. Moon called him “a majorette.” By his junior year, he also became an actor in school plays.

Along came love into his life, Margaret Cleaver, nicknamed “Mugs,” a sparkling brunette with brown eyes. As he later revealed, “She told me to control my raging hormones. She always wore that chastity belt.”

Washing dishes helped pay his tuition at Eureka College. He’d later joke, “The road to the presidency was paved with masses of dirty dishes.”

As he physically filled out, he got to play football, his passions being football, drama, politics, and Mugs.

Eureka College Man, Reagan, with his hair parted in the middle, starred in school plays.

Although he qualified for the football team, the basketball team rejected him because of his poor eyesight. He

became a cheerleader instead. The players called him “Sister Boy.” But he was elected the captain of the swimming team.

Taunted by Moon for being a virgin, Dutch finally lost it to Peggy Hannah, 28, who charged young men from the nearby college $1.50 a throw.

After a vagabond life, the Reagans settled in Dixon, Illinois, a hundred miles west of Chicago, on the banks of the Rock River. Dixon became the role model for President Reagan’s “a Shining City on the Hill.”

Dutch’s favorite spot for having a cold lemonade was President’s Park with its statue of Abraham Lincoln. In 1823, the future president with his volunteers had roared through town to rout some hostile Black Hawk Indians, driving them north into Canada. Later, when Peggy got pregnant, she admitted, “It could have been any one of forty guys.” Both Moon and Dutch drove her to Chicago for an illegal abortion.

After college, he drifted to Des Moines where, in time, he was hailed as “The Radio Sports Voice of the Middle West.”In his own words, “I became the Gay Blade of Des Moines.” He dated an array of beautiful young girls. Even a rich older widow fell for him.

Reagan achieved early fame in Des Moines, broadcasting sports and chasing corn-fed beauties.

While there, Durch’s first major league seduction occurred when Aimee Semple McPherson, the most famous evangelist in America, seduced him after he interviewed her at his radio station. Big name Hollywood stars would follow.

One winter day, his life changed when he was invited by the managers of the Chicago Cubs to watch their training on Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California. He shouted, “California, here I come!” and he was off.

He was twenty-six years old, and the year was 1936, when he hit Tinseltown.

In Des Moines, he’d interviewed a singer, Joy Hodges. He found out that she was the star nightlife attraction at Los Angeles’ Biltmore Hotel, where he was staying. She stood him up on a date, but, in remorse, arranged for him to meet a blonde starlet, Betty Grable, with whom she’d recently worked on an RKO picture, *Follow the Fleet* (1936). This close friend of another starlet, Jane Wyman, turned out to be the most glamorous woman Reagan had ever met.

Aimee Semple McPherson, America's most famous evangelical faith healer, had Reagan singing "Ave Maria."

On their first date, Grable seduced him. "She taught me more tricks than a whore learns in a whorehouse," he later bragged to Moon.

That spring of 1937, he returned to Catalina Island, ostensibly as part of an assignment from his work as a sportscaster to watch the Chicago Cubs in training. But after his re-arrival in California, he shifted his focus, heading for Hollywood instead. He stayed at the Biltmore once again. This time, Hodges kept her date with him.

He told her, "I want to be a movie star." In Des Moines, he would have been laughed at, but in Hollywood, that statement was typical. Issuing a warning, she told him, "Men who wear glasses don't get passes." She translated that phrase for him, explaining that men who wear glasses don't get screen tested.

Hodges arranged an interview with her own talent agents, who handled big stars like Robert Taylor, as well as minor starlets like Grable and Wyman.

In Reagan, these agents thought they had discovered "the next Robert Taylor," and a screen test was arranged for him at Warner Brothers.

Reagan later recalled, "Some homos in wardrobe and makeup treated me likea slab of beef, but remade me to face the camera. On his report, the head of wardrobe wrote—"Greek god physique but not Johnny Weissmuller. Broad shoulders, slim waist, slight over six feet, face that would get a second look from Joan Crawford."

Starlet Betty Grable, on the dawn of World War II fame, was Reagan's first conquest in Hollywood.

His test went smoothly, but he had to get approval from Jack Warner.

He could not wait around and returned to his broadcasting job in Des Moines.

Five days later, back in Iowa, he received an urgent telegram from his agent. It read: WARNERS OFFER CONTRACT SEVEN YEARS. ONE YEAR OPTIONS. STARTING AT $200 A WEEK.

It was late at night when he received the telegram. “I think I yelled so loud I woke up every coyote in Iowa.”

In his newly purchased Nash convertible, he headed for the “Dream Factory” that was Hollywood in those days, in the full flower of what is known as “its Golden Age.”

Warner Brothers promoted Reagan as a body beautiful.

***

To his new friends in Hollywood, especially Dick Powell, Reagan recalled that screen test. “It was my introduction to Hollywood, which I found crawling with homos. I met a lot of them in makeup and wardrobe. They sure took liberties with my body, feeling and fussing, a little to much for my tastes. But they did turn a hayseed from the Middle West into a passable leading man.”

Ronald Reagan, a former hayseed, now one of Hollywood’s leading men.

Years later, Ron Reagan, Jr. would write about his father’s “physical beauty” at the time, citing his “charisma as a man who harbored an unquenchable flame of ambitions and believed in his dreams.”

WHO
Ronald Reagan
1911-2004
Sportscaster,
Movie Star,
Politician, and
President
REAGAN
FOR PRESIDENT
Let's make America great again.
THEATER
RONALD REAGAN
RIP
MORE COLOR THAN ANY OTHER MOVIE MAGAZINE
Modern Screen

Prologue #2

Jane Wyman
(1917-2007)

A Lonely Teenage Girl Meets "A Walking Streak of Sex"

Baby Sarah Jane was a pug-nosed cutie abandoned by her parents.

Even in school, **Sarah Jane** showed promise of the Hollywood chorus girl she'd become.

Nicknamed "Saint Joe," St. Joseph, Missouri, lies on the Missouri River on the Kansas/Missouri border in the northwestern part of the "Show Me" state. It was the starting point of the Pony Express and the death

place of the outlaw, Jesse James. It is also the home of Missouri Western State University. Once, it was the last supply point before a pioneer ventured into the "Wild West." Deep in this heartland of America, a movie star was born.

Even though she was married to a man who became one of the most famous of the 20th Century, and even though she became an A-list, Oscar-winning movie star, much about the life of the screen star Jane Wyman remains a mystery.

Her birthday, her actual parents, and the basic facts of her background and upbringing are consistently misreported.

Much of the false information about her emanated not only from the Warner Brothers' publicity department, but from Jane herself.

Jane Wyman's humble birthplace in St. Joseph, Missouri. From this, a multi-millionaire actress emerged into world fame.

In defiance of her status as a minor, and as a vehicle to combat the possibility that she'd be rejected for employment because she was under-aged, Jane herself "invented" her birth date as January 4, 1914. In St. Joseph, authorities representing the state of Missouri registered her actual birth as January 5, 1917. Her biological parents were Gladys Hope Christian and Manning J. Mayfield, who had married in Kansas City, Missouri, on May 17, 1916, only eight months before her actual birth.

The infant's original name was Sarah Jane Mayfield, although most of the official records associated with her early life report her last name as Fulks. That was the surname of her foster parents, who never legally adopted her. Officially, her maiden name was never officially changed. Her surname of Wyman came from a mysterious young husband, a brief interloper who has since disappeared into the dustbin of history.

Jane's mother, Gladys (1891-1960), worked in St. Joseph as a stenographer and office assistant for Dr. Jackson Elam. Jane's father, Manning (1885-1922), was a worker at a local factory that turned out food products made from grain.

When Jane was five years old, her father unexpectedly opted to leave St. Joseph without his family, heading alone for San Francisco, where he found employment as an office worker at a local shipping company. He divorced Gladys in October of 1921, having taken a mistress in San Francisco. He died on January 21, 1922 at the age of twenty-seven, having contracted a severe case of pneumonia.

Back in Missouri, when Dr. Elam's wife discovered that her husband was having an affair with his stenographer, Gladys was fired. Instead of remaining to face disgrace in St. Joseph, she decided to take the train to the bright lights of then-burgeoning Cleveland, Ohio, to try her luck there.

Gladys told her associates that she wanted to find another husband, and she believed that bringing a young child to her uncertain future in Cleveland would be "too much baggage" for her. She also couldn't afford to hire a part-time babysitter for her young pre-school daughter.

During her employment with Dr. Elam, she had met the Fulks couple. Richard Fulks, 65, the husband, was rather stern and didn't have much to say, but his German wife, Emma, 60, seemed interested, perhaps, in arranging a future adoption.

In an impulsive moment, Gladys proposed that she leave Sarah Jane with the Fulks family, who would take care of her and supervise her schooling. She promised that as soon as she found work in Cleveland, she would send child support.

"Little Miss Wyman is a mystery no one ever bothered to solve."
—Marlene Dietrich

Although somewhat reluctant at first, the Fulks agreed to take responsibility for the child.

Jane's foster parents were a hardworking, battered-by-life couple. Emma Reiss (1866-1951) had emigrated many years before from her native Saarbrucken, Germany, to Missouri. Jane's foster father, Richard D. Fulks (1862-1928), had been progressively promoted from beginnings as a low-level municipal bureaucrat to the community's chief detective.

Young Jane's new home was a gloomy house she'd later call "a Victorian gingerbread monstrosity, something out of an Addams Family cartoon."

Her foster parents were stern disciplinarians. Her new stepfather was an aging, balding man with a walrus mustache. The sound of laughter was never heard in this decaying pile. It was a sad, lonely place for Jane.

Once settled in Cleveland, Gladys did not send child support. Except for a brief visit with Jane in Los Angeles in 1933, Gladys never saw her daughter again, dying in New York City at the age of sixty-five in 1960.

Later in life, Jane could not recall one pleasurable memory from her girlhood. "I was raised in such a bitter household that it took me years to recover from the memories that remained."

In a rare interview given to *Guidepost* Magazine in 1964, Jane said, "I was extremely shy as a child. Shyness is no small problem. It can cripple a whole personality. It crippled me for many years. As a child, my only solution to the problem of shyness was to hide myself and make myself as small and insignificant as possible. Through grade school, I was a well-mannered little shadow who never spoke above a whisper."

On September 10, 1923, "Sarah Jane Fulks" was enrolled in the Noyes School in St. Joseph. She had little interest in schoolwork and was not a good pupil. If called upon to answer a question, her vocal chords would become almost paralyzed with fear. Eventually, she dropped out of school.

Every afternoon on her way home from school, Jane would walk by Edward A. Prinz's Dancing School, where young girls could enroll for lessons for fifty cents. His students called him Dad.

From the street below, Jane could hear the echo of staccato, syncopated taps. She dreamed that one day, she might become a dancer.

Since coming to live with the Fulks, Jane had never asked for anything, but she began to beseech Emma to enroll her in the dancing school. For the first few weeks, Emma resisted, but when Jane's teacher summoned her for a discussion about her foster daughter, she warned her that Jane's extreme shyness was growing more severe. "It's almost a sickness that can lead to social retardation. The only thing she expressed an interest in involves dancing lessons. It might bring her out of her shell. Right now, if a grown up speaks to the poor child, she bursts into tears. Something has to be done to help her, and I think dancing lessons will help a lot."

Even though her husband, Richard, remained adamantly opposed, Emma bundled Jane up one afternoon and enrolled her in Ed Prinz's School. For the first time, Jane met a man she could idolize.

As the weeks progressed, Prinz singled Jane out for special attention, devoting two hours a day to training her after the classes had "officially" ended. Even though his resources were limited, he purchased three beautiful white dresses for her and bought her red ribbons. He took special care in dressing and undressing her in her dance costumes, which he paid for himself.

In later years, she would remember his excessive fondling of her during costume changes. In those days, most of the residents of St. Joseph didn't even know what a pedophile was.

Later, Jane said, "At no point did I feel I was being used. I was just delighted that a grown-up was doling out love and affection to me, something I never got at home."

Working extensively with her, Prinz took an ugly little duckling and transformed her into a beautiful swan.

***

By 1922, Emma had saved up enough money for Jane and herself to head west, by train, to Los Angeles. Ostensibly, as she explained to her husband, she wanted to visit her children, Morie and Elsie, who were now married and had families of their own. She'd never seen her grandchildren. Richard's son, Raymond, had moved to Texas years earlier, and had never been heard from again.

Richard agreed to come down to St. Joseph's railway station to see Emma and Jane off to California. Jane noticed that he was walking with a limp. Lately, he'd gone to a doctor to see what was wrong with him. The doctor had found nothing, suggesting that he was far too ambitious and was working too hard, keeping long hours. His physical condition had deteriorated during the previous years.

Frugally, Emma had packed provisions in a basket for them to eat along the way en route to Los Angeles. By the time the train had crossed the Missouri State Line, heading west, Emma made a confession to Jane.

"Actually, I may never come back to your Papa," she said. "If my plans go well, you're going to be discovered in Hollywood and made a child star."

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As Hollywood séguéd into the Roaring Twenties, the studios were no longer the precarious enterprises they had been during the previous decade. Studios had become film factories, and talent was being devoured as a means of meeting weekly production quotas. Movie theaters were springing up across the country,

Wyman's role model, and the wealthiest pre-teen in Hollywood: BABY PEGGY.

At first anonymous, stars had now emerged as distinctive icons in their own right. Household names included Rudolph Valentino, Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, William S. Hart, and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., among many others.

If at this early stage, Jane had a role model, it was Diana Serra Cary, billed as "Baby Peggy." At the time, the "Million Dollar Baby" was receiving 1.2 million fan letters annually. Emma had taken Jane to see the star's first film, Playmates, in 1921, in which the actress had appeared with the canine star of Century Studios, Brownie the Wonder Dog. Emma bought Jane a Baby Peggy doll, and the young girl drank milk from a container that featured a portrait of Baby Peggy on the label.

Child star **Jackie Coogan** is seen here in a tender embrace with **Charlie Chaplin** in *The Kid* (1919).

Young Sarah Jane wanted to be in their next picture. She discovered that The Little Tramp was even fonder of little girls.

***

One of the first magazines Emma ever purchased at a Hollywood newsstand featured a headlined, ambition-fueling story—"YOUR CHILD SHOULD BE IN PICTURES."

"Just think of it," Emma told Jane. "You could be earning a million dollars a year, like Jackie Coogan with Charlie Chaplin in *The Kid* (1919). I heard those were real tears the boy cried."

Every weekday morning, Emma, with a carefully dressed Jane, set out to make the rounds of the studios, beginning at Century Studios. Jane said, "I soon learned that the world was filled with blonde, curly haired little girls being pushed before a bored director."

Emma eagerly read the trade papers, and she came across an item announcing that Charlie Chaplin was considering making a film in which he plays the errant father of a little orphan boy and girl he adopts, which leads to a series of wild antics. It had already been announced that Jackie Coogan, who had played Chaplin's irascible sidekick in *The Kid*, had been contracted to play the boy. But the search was on to find a girl to appear opposite Coogan and The Little Tramp. Emma was convinced that Jane would be ideal as Coogan's little sister.

Arriving at Chaplin's office, Jane and Emma were disappointed to find at least twenty blonde little girls waiting to see the superstar. They had to wait four hours before they were ushered into Chaplin's office. Emma wanted to accompany Jane, but the secretary insisted that Jane go in alone.

What happened that late afternoon between Chaplin and Jane became part of Hollywood's whispered lore. Years later, Jane spread the scandalous story about what took place, claiming that during the course of her interview with the star, he unbuttoned his trousers and exposed himself to her.

Unfamiliar with male anatomy, she was said to have giggled nervously at his exposed penis. For her, it must have been a daunting introduction to the male body, as Chaplin claimed he possessed a twelve-inch appendage, which he defined as "the eighth wonder of the world." Because Chaplin's fondness for little girls was well documented, the story of the alleged encounter between Jane and Chaplin gained traction. Previously, he had gone on record as saying, "The most beautiful form of life is a very young girl just starting to bloom."

Regardless of what happened that day, Jane was rudely kicked out of Chaplin's office.

After making all the rounds with no ensuing job offer, Emma and Jane received more bad news. Morie Fulks (one of Emma's biological children and their host during their time in L.A) told them one night over their meager dinner that he could no longer support them and that he had already purchased two one-way tickets for their transit back to St. Joseph.

***

After her return to St. Joseph, Jane sank into a deep depression. The town had never looked so bleak.

On March 25, 1928, Richard Fulks died, leaving Emma a widow at the age of sixty-two. She managed to sell the house, but because it was heavily mortgaged, there was very little left over. Nonetheless, with her meager savings, she decided to pack her things and return to Hollywood with Jane. Arriving in Los Angeles, Jane and Emma found a cheap room in a shabby boarding house that mostly catered to out-of-work actors.

Still a lackluster student, Jane enrolled in Los Angeles High School, which she found "was overrun with predatory boys."

She wanted both singing and dancing lessons. She lied about her age and found a job as a waitress at Mannings, a coffee shop, burger joint, and ice cream parlor, where she worked for tips, sometimes coming home with two dollars a night.

During the day, she took singing and dancing lessons. Frustrated that her calendar was overloaded, she dropped out of school without telling Emma.

***

One spring night in 1933, when Jane was only sixteen, a tall, well-built young man came into the coffee shop and ordered a chocolate malt. She'd never seen such a handsome male. He looked older than her. Actually, he was twenty-seven.

Sipping his malt, he stared at her, not taking his eyes off her. "I felt he was undressing me," she recalled.

"Listen, gal," he said to her. "I don't care how many boyfriends you have. From now on, you're going to be my girl, belonging just to me. Is that understood?"

She was flattered but pretended otherwise. "I understand nothing of the sort. You just walk in here and think you can take over my life. I don't even know who you are."

"Let me introduce myself," he said in a husky, masculine voice. "I'm Eugene Wyman. I dropped out of school, and I've got this job as a mechanic at a nearby garage. So now that you know who I am, just who in hell are you, other than being a soda jerk?"

"Sarah Jane Fulks," she said, already mesmerized by him.

"The name of Sarah has got to go," he said. "Sounds like some old maiden aunt. I like the name of Jane, however. I'll let you keep it. But the Fulks will have to go, too. Sounds like a dirty word. But don't worry about it. Before the end of the month, I will have changed that name from Fulks to Jane Wyman."

"You're pretty sure of yourself," she said.

"Baby Doll, I've got a lot to be sure about. The girls call me a walking steak of sex. I'm gonna hang out here till

you get off from work. Then I’m gonna take you dancing. If you’re a good girl, I might even tell you I’m in love with you.”

Prologue #3

Nancy Davis
(1921-)

Born in a Trunk, "Cuddles" Davis Becomes a Debutante in a World of Theatrical Celebrities

Handsome, red-haired **Sangston Hettler, Jr.**, always claimed he was the first man to "deflower" **Nancy Davis**. Did she discover why he was nicknamed "Sock?"

Nancy's mother, actress **Edith Luckett**, nicknamed "Lucky," was a beauty, a bigot, and "slept on both sides of her bed," as it was called then.

Born Anne Francis Robbins on July 6, 1921 (not in 1923, as she'd later claim), the future First Lady,

Nancy Davis, grew up a theatrical world of make-believe. She was the daughter of the actress, Edith ("Lucky") Luckett.

For some reason, her mother chose to call her "Nancy," instead of Anne. After a difficult delivery, the infant entered the world at Sloane Hospital in Flushing, Queens, a borough of New York City.

As a weapon in her campaign of remaining "eternally young" on stage, Edith claimed she'd been born in 1896, although the actual year of her birth was 1888, when Grover Cleveland was president. She invented a glamorous background for herself, a Tara-like setting inspired by something from the life of Scarlett O'Hara, falsely claiming that she was a Southern belle from one of the first families of Virginia.

The infamous movie star lesbian, **Nazimova,** was designated as Nancy's godmother.

Actually, she was born the youngest into an expansive and boisterous brood of nine children, the daughter of Charles Edward Luckett, a clerk for Railway Express. To make ends meet, her mother, Sarah Frances Whitlock, ran a boarding house near the railroad tracks in Washington, D.C.

The family lived in rooms over buggy stables near the theater where Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated. It was called "Swampoodle," (a swamp filled with puddles), and was inhabited mostly by working class Irish Catholics. As Edith remembered it, "all the men got drunk on Saturday night."

Six years younger than Edith, Nancy's father was Kenneth Seymour Robbins, who grew up in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His family had deep colonial roots.

From all reports, Kenneth was a mama's boy, the type of kid his mother attired in white and dressed until he was nine years old. He wore his hair in long blonde curls, evocative of Mary Pickford.

He always claimed that he was a graduate of Princeton, although no record has ever surfaced to prove that. He attended a theatrical performance at the Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where he spotted Edith in a small part. He went backstage and introduced himself. Soon, they were dating, which eventually led to their marriage on June 27, 1916.

When America went to war in 1917, Kenneth volunteered and served until January of 1919, when he was honorably discharged.

Shortly after his return from the Army, he and Edith separated. He was not living with her when Nancy was born. After she recovered from childbirth, Edith took the infant girl on the road with her, as she traveled from town to town as part of a touring theatrical troupe. She hired babysitters along the way.

"When Judy Garland later sang about being born in a trunk, I knew what she meant," Nancy later recalled. "Before I was three, I had greasepaint in my veins. My ambition from the age of five was to become an actress like my mother."

In the meanwhile, Edith had grown into a beautiful young girl with blonde hair and larkspur blue eyes. She matured early, dressing like the fashion-conscious soubrettes of the day, with cloche hats, silk stockings, peacock feathers, and hobble skirts.

She preferred to hang out with the male actors and learned "to curse like a Turkish sailor." No joke was too

bawdy for her potty mouth. Many of the women who worked with her found her vulgar, but the men seemed to adore her.

In the selection of Nancy's godmother, Edith made an odd choice, designating Alla Nazimova, the Russian-Jewish actress, born in Yalta in 1879, and the reigning queen of MGM in Hollywood and its highest paid star in 1920.

Edith and Loyal at their wedding. She lied about her age.

Edith had met Nazimova on Irving Place in Manhattan at the townhouse of the city's most celebrated literary agent, Bessie Marbury. Her lists of clients had included Oscar Wilde, W. Somerset Maugham, H.G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw. Marbury lived with her love, the society decorator Elsie de Wolfe, who later became famous as Lady Mendl.

Nazimova was said to have been enthralled with Edith's youthful beauty and had taken her as a lesbian lover the night they met.

Later, Nazimova cast Edith in a small role in *'Ception Shoals*, which opened on Broadway on January 10, 1917.

***

After years on the road, Edith decided that her vagabond lifestyle was hardly ideal for bringing up a daughter. She took her to the home of her older sister and brother-in-law, Virginia and C. Audley Galbraith, who lived in a small house in Bethesda, Maryland, outside Washington, D.C. For herself, Edith rented an apartment in Manhattan in the theater district.

Married since 1904, the Galbraiths were a tightly knit, conservative family who offered Nancy a stable environment. A small little corner of an upstairs porch was converted into a sleeping quarters for the newly arrived Nancy.

As Nancy entered grade school, Edith began to face the fact that she'd always be a second tier actress appearing in "third rate productions," for which she usually earned $60 a week. She was approaching middle age, recognizing that if stardom were to come to her, it would have visited her during her twenties.

However, based to some degree on her bubbling personality, she had developed a friendship with big name stars.

One by one, Nancy got to meet such greats as Lillian Gish, Colleen Moore, Walter Huston, and ZaSu Pitts. Edith became extremely intimate with Spencer Tracy, who in time practically became a member of the household. As a young girl, Nancy suspected that Tracy and her mother were having an affair, although he had a wife, Louise, and a deaf son, John.

***

Before the 1920s came to an end, life changed drastically for Edith and ultimately for Nancy, too. Sailing for Europe from the port of New York aboard the *SS New York*, Edith met Dr. Loyal Davis, who hated his first name. Edith was at the "dangerous" age of thirty-nine, back when a woman that old found it almost impossible to find a second husband.

Nancy Robbins Davis at graduation from Girls' Latin.

Davis was only thirty-one and an associate professor of surgery at Northwestern University. He had earned his M.D. in 1918, and five years later, had studied with Dr. Harvey Cushing, later hailed as the pioneer of modern neurosurgery in America.

Davis himself had become the first neurosurgery specialist in Chicago. "I operate on man's most delicate parts, his brain and his spinal cord," Loyal said.

A shipboard romance was launched, though Edith was disappointed after learning that he already had a wife, Pearl, in Chicago, and a two-year-old son, Richard. He assured Edith that his marriage was all but over.

After he delivered a speech at a medical conference in London, he headed with Edith for an adulterous holiday on the French Riviera, settling into chic Cannes.

Although they went their separate ways after their return to America, they vowed to meet again after he solved his domestic problems in Chicago.

In a fit of delayed good intentions during a stopover in New York, the recently divorced Dr. Loyal married Edith in a union that would survive till the end of their respective lives. Huston functioned as their best man at their wedding in October of 1928. Young Nancy, back in Chicago, did not attend.

The newly married couple soon provided a home in Chicago for Nancy.

Loyal could afford to send Nancy to the exclusive Girls' Latin School of Chicago. He was charging $500 for a major brain operation; $150 for a prefrontal lobotomy.

His marriage to Edith would last fifty-three years and became, in time, a sort of role model for Nancy's long-enduring marriage to Ronald Reagan.

Politically, at the time, Edith was perceived as "a short, gay Democrat," and Loyal labeled as a "tall, serious Republican."

Although Loyal did not officially adopt Nancy until 1938, she always referred to him as "my father." Later in her life, when challenged about that claim, she said, "I don't care. Loyal was my father in my mind." In her memoirs, she wrote: "Since Kenneth Robbins was such a small part of my life, it is impossible for me to think of him as my father."

At the time of her adoption by Loyal, she legally changed her name to Nancy Davis.

At school in Chicago, Nancy became an avid movie fan and was allowed to go to the cinema with girlfriends whenever she wanted. She developed a very serious crush on Tyrone Power. A girlfriend remembered that she eventually collected enough pictures and articles for the compilation of a thick scrapbook on the handsome movie star, whom she defined as "a living doll." She also maintained a crush on fast-rising Jimmy Stewart, whom she would later meet.

Ironically, one of her acquaintances, Mary Beth Langford, had a crush on a different handsome new star at Warner Brothers. Nancy, however, was rather dismissive of the girl's infatuation. "I just don't understand what you see in Ronald Reagan."

Nazimova came through Chicago, appearing in her hit play, Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Nancy's godmother introduced her to her new lover, Glesca Marshall.

Edith had such an attractive personality that she became friends with two of the biggest names in the theater or in cinema, both Lillian Gish and Helen Hayes, each of whom visited her in Chicago. There, the two great stars were

introduced to young Nancy.

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It had to happen. When Nancy proclaimed herself “sweet sixteen,” her interest in boys overpowered her fascination with the movies and its male stars.

Her friends maintained that she had many beaux, and, in the words of one jealous rival, “Nancy was determined to lose her virginity before the rest of us. She was a very pushy person and always had to be the first in everything.”

Into her life came a tall, red-haired young man, Sangston Hettler, Jr., a student in Chicago at Boys’ Latin. Nicknamed “Sock,” he was popular with the girls and admired for his good looks and athletic body. According to reports, he fell madly in love with Nancy.

Young men, out to prove their emerging manhood, liked to boast of their af fairs. Whether it was true or not, Sangston bragged, “I taught Nancy about the birds and bees.”

Nancy Robbins Davis as a debutante at the “official beginning” of her adult life.

For a while, Nancy continued to date Sock, who invited her once a week to Chicago’s chic Fortnightly Club, a members’ only dinner and dancing club in a stately Georgian mansion. One night, Nancy took the microphone and sang “Pennies from Heaven” to the other patrons. Sock later said, “Nancy wasn’t exactly Dinah Shore, but she wasn’t as bad as I feared.”

When she heard that Sock was telling his friends that he’d taken her virginity, she dropped him.

After Nancy broke up with Sock, she tried to get dates with Robert Crane, scion of a wealthy plumbing contractor, and with Buddy Baird, whose family had made a million or two in real estate.

“Although she pursued Bobby and me, we weren’t that interested in taking her out,” Baird said. “We had far prettier girls chasing after us. I noticed that Nancy pursued only guys from rich families. I called her ‘La Belle,’ as did most of her classmates behind her back.”

Baird also claimed that Nancy “shopped” around Chicago for the scions of dynastic fortunes—Armours and Swifts, the meatpackers; McCormicks of farm machinery; Palmers and Fields in retail; or the Wrigleys in chewing gum.

At the age of sixteen, Nancy’s birthday present was her first car, a black Mercury convertible with red leather upholstery.

Ironically, in her senior year, she was cast in her school’s production of the George S. Kaufman play, *The First Lady*, which had premiered on Broadway at the Music Box Theatre in 1935.

The plot spun around two determined women intent on putting their men into the Oval Office. One of the politicians was identified as “Good looking, a Westerner, and he doesn’t know a thing.” In the 1980s, the same charge would be leveled against Ronald Reagan.

According to the plot, through various means of treachery, Nancy’s character succeeded in getting her man into the White House after delivering a slogan that she remembered years later as one of her favorites: “The American people ought to elect the First Lady and then let her husband be President.”

As Europe went to war in 1939, Nancy graduated from Chicago’s Girls’ Latin School.

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With a major in English and drama, coed Nancy Davis enrolled at Smith College in September of 1939. For the world at large, it was a dreadful time. In Berlin, Hitler ordered a Nazi attack on Poland, launching World War II. Wartime deprivations at Smith lay in the immediate future, but Nancy didn’t seem overly concerned. “I have no interest whatsoever in politics,” she proclaimed.

She was attending the largest women’s resident liberal arts college in America. Within the Ivy League’s circle of elite schools, Smith was included among the prestigious “Seven Sisters” colleges.

As Nancy herself confessed in her memoirs, *My Turn*, “At Smith College, I majored in English and drama—and boys.”

Returning to Chicago for the Christmas holidays of 1939, Nancy was to face one of the milestones of her life. On December 28, at a tea dance, she would launch herself as a debutante at the Casino Club and acquire a new beau while doing it.

Although lovely, cosmetic surgery after college changed Nancy’s look and especially her nose, into something more in synch with prevailing standards of “pert and sassy.”

Fifty Princeton men, in Chicago as escorts for the various debutante launches, were invited. In walked Frank Birney, Jr. The son of a Chicago banker, he was a member of the Triangle Theater Club at Princeton.

When they were introduced, Nancy found Birney “charming, gracious, witty, and very good looking.”

“Nancy was not everyone’s *cuppa*,” said one of the guests, William Barton, unchivalrously. “But Frank seemed to go for her, although the guys at Princeton didn’t think he liked girls all that much. Nancy appeared open and friendly and looked like she was an easy lay if you wanted it.”

Back at Smith, Nancy began to date Birney on weekends and was intrigued that he, too, wanted to become a stage actor.

In Manhattan, they often met “under the clock at the Biltmore Hotel.” He claimed to his classmates that he was having an affair, hoping to squelch rumors that he was a “sissy boy.” Ever since enrolling at Princeton, he had endured taunts from his more “traditionally masculine” classmates.

His roommate, Geoffrey Talbot-Jones, said, “Frank was a manic-depressive and frequently talked about suicide. He was despondent, worrying about flunking out of Princeton because of his poor grades. Toward the end of his life, he was also deeply troubled by some recent involvement he’d had. I presumed he’d had a disastrous sexual encounter with some stranger, and the experience had wounded him in some way. I can’t speculate on what that was, but he was demoralized.”

Another of Birney's friends, James Easton, said, "I knew Frank was dating Nancy. They seemed to live in a world that, after the war began, no longer existed. They resided in a theatrical world, absolutely oblivious to the Battle of Britain or Hitler's killing of the Jews. He dated her, but I don't think he was in love with her."

Suddenly, in New York City, Birney committed suicide by deliberately darting toward an oncoming train. The *Daily Princetonian* ran a story about his suicide, quoting the train's engineer: "I saw the young man dart out from behind a pole right in front of my oncoming train. I gave a long blast on my whistle, but he kept coming. I applied the brake, but was not able to bring the train to a stop before we struck him. His body was mutilated beyond recognition."

Birney's roommate at Princeton discovered a suicide note, which he turned over to the dead man's family. Nancy flew to their side and offered what comfort she could.

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Back at Smith, Nancy was a poor student, especially in science and math. She was accused of majoring in extracurricular activities.

After America entered the war during the immediate aftermath of the December, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, eligible men became fewer and fewer. Many of the Smith undergraduates had already kissed their boyfriends goodbye before sending them off to die on the battlefields of Europe or North Africa.

Nancy was not caught up in the war effort, preferring to spend her free time within any of the three movie houses of Northampton, watching films starring such actors as Mickey Rooney or Judy Garland.

She still collected photo albums of movie stars. Tyrone Power remained her favorite, followed by Jimmy Stewart. At some point, Errol Flynn became one of the movie idols she worshipped. After seeing *Kings Row*, she added another young actor, Ronald Reagan, to her growing list of heartthrobs. She'd never cared for Reagan before.

She remained steadfast in her goal of becoming a Broadway star, if not a movie actress.

Much to Nancy's disappointment, neither Loyal nor Edith could attend her graduation ceremonies. Edith faced wartime travel restrictions, and Loyal was on duty as a surgeon for the U.S. Army in England.

But at long last, diploma in hand, Nancy was free to return to Chicago.

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Funds were still low, so Nancy went to work as a nurse's aide at the Cook County Hospital. The job, which often consisted of carrying out bedpans, was, to her at least, demeaning. She quit and became a sales clerk at the mammoth Marshall Field Department Store. Her most frightening moment there involved stopping a woman carting off stolen jewelry. When Nancy confronted the thief, she retaliated by ripping off Nancy's dress.

It was during the summer of 1944 that Nancy launched her second "most serious" love affair.

James Platt White, Jr. was a handsome student from Amherst College, in Massachusetts, and the scion of a wealthy family, During World War II, he had joined the Navy.

Later, his college classmates claimed that he spent a great deal of time grooming himself and dressing immaculately. He did not like sports, and preferred theater to football. He shared this common interest in the theatrical world with Nancy. "He didn't really fit in too well with the other frat brothers," a classmate said. "Some guys thought he was a bit of a sissy."

When White's ship docked at San Diego, Nancy visited him. When they went to Hollywood, Nancy, with White accompanying her, paid to visit to Nazimova, a year before her death in 1945.

On June 24, 1944, Loyal and Edith announced Nancy's engagement to White. She was presented with a diamond engagement ring his parents had purchased at Tiffany's. Their engagement lasted until right after the Navy transferred White to the South Pacific.

In her memoirs, Nancy wrote: "I broke off the engagement later that summer. It was a heady, exhilarating time, and I was swept up in the glamour of war, wartime engagements, and waiting for the boys who were away. I realized I had made a mistake. It would have been unfair to him and to me. It wasn't easy to break off an engagement, but it was the best thing for both of us. We weren't meant to be married, but we remain friends to this day."

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After years of delay and endless frustration, Nancy decided to launch herself as a stage actress. Edith told her, "I

have your back. We'll contact every big name we have, from Lillian Gish to Spencer Tracy, to get you roles. We'll be shameless about it, letting nothing stand in our way."

In the middle of the night, Edith awakened Nancy, telling her about a vivid dream she'd just had. "I dreamed that you're going to become a big star, one of the biggest, right up there with Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. Not only that, but you're going to marry a movie star and have two children with him—a boy and a girl. A future Oscar is already having your name engraved on it."

Chapter One

Jane Wyman Marries a Sex Maniac and Later, a Trannie Who Sold Dresses

HerFirst Marriage is Suppressed, the Other Forgotten

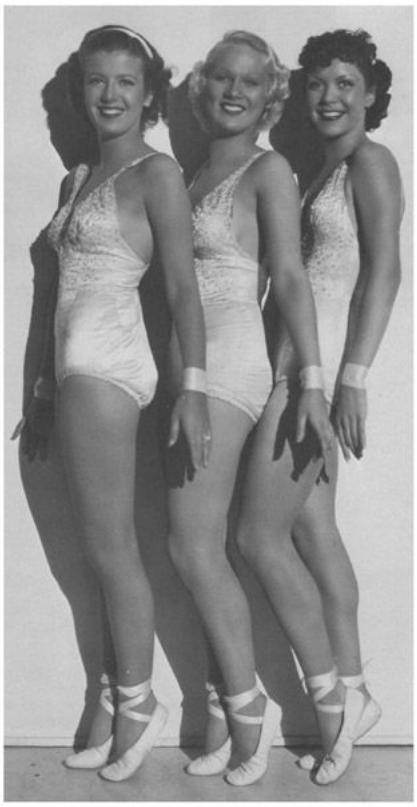
Mating Games: Jane's Romantic "Detours" with George Raft, Errol Flynn, & Bing Crosby

In these early publicity stills, Jane Wyman could be pouty or fun-crazed. "I didn't exactly take Hollywood by storm, cast as a chorus girl cutie or some star's sidekick for more than a decade," she said. "The directors were retarded in taking notice of me, but the male stars of the 30s found I had a certain allure. If only they'd stop calling me 'Pug Nose.'"

Eugene Wyman carried through on his promise to change the name of Sarah Jane Fulks to Jane Wyman, although she would continue to bill herself with her former name for months to come.

To the horror of her foster mother, Emma Fulks, Jane ran away to marry Eugene, falsifying her real age, since she was still a minor.

When she first went to work in Hollywood, appearing in the chorus line of *The Kid from Spain*, (1932), she told her fellow chorines, Paulette Goddard and Lucille Ball, about her early marriage. But after those revelations, she would remain silent, allowing any link to, or memory of, her first husband to disappear into the vast landscapes of America.



Early Cheesecake: Jane *(right figure)* in *King of Burlesque* (1935)

No record has ever been discovered that she divorced Eugene, the implication of which was that she became a bigamist when she remarried.

As relayed to her new friends, Eugene turned out to be some sort of a sex fiend. As Jane confided, “He didn’t just want to make love to a girl, he wanted to devour her.” On her honeymoon night in a cheap roadside motel, he had sex with her six times, followed by three more bouts before noon the following day.

Since she had no basis for comparison, she initially thought all men were like Eugene. During her first week of marriage, she also learned that his heavy drinking sometimes made him violent.

She had to endure several beatings, and she plotted to run away from him. But she really had no place to go. Emma had virtually disowned her.

When Jane threatened to leave him, he vowed that he’d carve up her face with a broken beer bottle.

He earned enough at his garage that he did provide her with food and lodging in a cheap apartment in West Hollywood. The marriage limped along for a month, going from bad to horrific.

One night, when he came home drunk, he was with his best friend, a studly farmboy he’d known when he lived in Bakersfield. She was asleep when the two men entered her bedroom and Eugene ripped the covers off her. He also tore off her flimsy garment, as she tried to cover her nudity in front of this stranger.

As she’d later relate to Goddard and Ball, Eugene not only held her down while his burly friend raped her, he then mounted her himself, deliberately trying to hurt her. She spent the rest of the night as the prisoner of both of these strong young men, as she was mauled and repeatedly attacked.

She stayed awake all night, and Eugene’s friend left shortly before six. Since Eugene didn’t work on Sundays, he was still sound asleep. Quietly, she gathered up her clothing and found his wallet on the dresser. It contained eighty dollars, which she removed. Then she silently made her way out the door with her battered suitcase and into the early morning air. Her body ached.

Later that day, she took a bus to southern Los Angeles, where she found a room for rent at eight dollars a week in a shabby boarding house filled mostly with Mexican laborers.

For the next few weeks, she found what jobs she could—waitress, switchboard operator, manicurist, but nothing worked out. One day, she heard that LeRoy Prinz was becoming one of the lead choreographers of Hollywood. He was the son of Edward (“Dad”) Prinz, who had been her dance instructor in St. Joseph.

On her day off, she showed up at his studio, which was very informal. She walked in and introduced herself to the choreographer, who had been working on musicals since 1929 with the advent of the Talkies.

She found him charismatic, and he liked her in spite of her shyness. Apparently, "Dad" had told him about her, and he was eager to meet her.

During the next few days, as he practiced dance routines with her, she came to know him quite well. As she remembered LeRoy, he "was a little giant standing five feet, five inches, with a potty mouth. He was a feisty little man, who always had a cigarette dangling from his lips and looked more like a bartender than a choreographer."

In a profile in *The New York Times*, LeRoy's life story was compared to that of a script for an Errol Flynn adventure picture.

The Times had not exaggerated. He'd been sent to reform school after chasing his stepmother with a carving knife. Later, upon his release, he formed a song-and-dance act on the vaudeville circuit. Called "Prinz and Buck," he danced onstage with a young black man.

As he grew older, he became a cabin boy aboard a ship heading for France. When he got there, he hitchhiked to Marseille, where he joined the French Foreign Legion, serving as a bugler in Algiers. When World War I erupted, he became a pilot for Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's 94th Aero Squadron, where he crashed eighteen planes and was nicknamed "America's German Ace."

At war's end, he drifted to Paris, where he was hired as a choreographer for the *Folies Bergère*.

Returning to the Americas, he ferried ammunition for Nicaraguan rebel leader, Augusto César Sandino. When that came to an end, he flew to Mexico City, teaching young wannabee pilots how to fly.

Finally, he returned to the States, first settling in Omaha, Nebraska, where he danced in a bordello, Heading east to Chicago, he became for a time the producer of special shows for Al Capone and his gangsters. Eventually, he made it to New York, where he was hired as a dancer by the famous nightclub entrepreneur, Texas Guinan.

After leading a wild life of high adventure, LeRoy Prinz, Jane's dance teacher, rehearses Mary Martin for a 1939 appearance in *The Great Victor Herbert.*

With the advent of sound, after Hollywood began to produce musicals, LeRoy headed West, where he found jobs directing dance sequences for Paramount and then Warner Brothers.

Using his influence, LeRoy obtained a job for Jane dancing as one of the Goldwyn girls in the chorus line of *The Kid from Spain* (1932).

LeRoy told her that Samuel Goldwyn was "always on the look-out for pretty young fillies to add to his stable of stunning chorines."

It was on the set of this slapstick comedy (Jane's first-ever film role) that she was befriended by Goddard and Lucille Ball, and also by the young star, Betty Grable.

Grable later recalled meeting Jane. "She and I were regarded as 'ponies' in the Goldwyn stable because we were the smallest of the dancing girls."

The Kid from Spain: Jane Wyman is lower right; Lucille Ball is second from top; Paulette Goddard fourth from the bottom.

"I had signed a contract claiming I was sixteen years old," Grable said. "Jane, too, lied about her age, making herself older. I would have to stand still for two years until my real age caught up with me. Jane, too."

"Lucy, Paulette, Betty, and I were on the long road to stardom," Jane said. "For Lucy and Betty, and for me, it was a long, tortuous road. But, frankly, Paulette took a few shortcuts to stardom, but I never wanted to play the casting couch game."

After Jane's violent rape by Eugene and his friend, she confided to Goddard, "I feel I don't have any morality left to hold onto, not now, not after what happened to me. I was used like a cheap whore."

"You can turn that to your advantage," Goddard said. "Now that you're already a fallen woman, fuck your way to the top, baby."

Goddard certainly took her own advice, sleeping with Joseph M. Schenck, who became chairman of 20th Century Fox. She also bedded such big box office draws as Gary Cooper and Clark Gable before landing in the marriage bed of the very successful, very rich Charlie Chaplin, who had once exposed himself to Jane.

The comedian—frenetic, goggle-eyed Eddie Cantor—was the star of the picture. Other than waiting around between scenes, Jane didn't have that much to do, so she watched Cantor emote in front of the camera, doing the eye-rolling song-and-dance routines whose oft-repeated gags made him famous. They had earned him the nickname, "Banjo Eyes."

Even though her part was miniscule, and limited just to the chorus, Jane exchanged pleasantries with the film's well-established director, Leo McCarey, who had been working in silent films since 1921.

Jane also met Busby Berkeley, who choreographed some of *The Kid From Spain's* dance numbers. He gave Jane her first screen close-up, as part of the technique he had developed, the "parade of faces"–individualizing each chorus girl with a loving close-up.

Jane's first Hollywood seduction was with a young Robert Young, who was ridiculously cast in *Kid from Spain* as Ricardo, a Latin Lover type with a pencil-thin mustache. Before breaking into pictures, he'd been a bank teller, a reporter, and a shoe salesman.

After three dates, he seduced her on a Saturday night. The following Monday, Goddard asked her, "How was it?"

"I was screwed by a real gentleman," Jane said. "After my disastrous marriage, I thought all men were brutes in bed. Robert did it with courtesy and such politeness. He even thanked me profusely at the end."

That same Monday, the film's director, McCarey, confronted Young and told him, "You don't have any screen eroticism. I don't think you'll make it in pictures."

Chorine, Betty Grable

Weeks after the picture was wrapped, Jane had a chance encounter with Young on Hollywood Boulevard. “The reviews of *The Kid from Spain* have come out,” he said. “One paper wrote, ‘Robert Young is less noticeable than the rest of the cast.’”

“I’m sorry Robert. Better luck next time,” she said, giving him a kiss on the cheek before moving on.

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Meanwhile, Paulette Goddard was sleeping with director Mervyn LeRoy, who, in time, would become known for helping launch such stars as Edward G. Robinson, Clark Gable, Loretta Young, and Robert Mitchum. LeRoy was also known for seducing some of the great beauties of Hollywood, including blondes such as Ginger Rogers and Lana Turner.

Chorine, Paulette Goddard

Goddard used her influence with LeRoy to get him to cast Jane in a small part in a film he was directing, *Elmer the Great* (1932), an ode to the Great American Sport, wherein a country hick bats his way to stardom.

Elmer the Great was conceived as a vehicle for the endless corny vaudevillian character actor, Joe E. Brown, whose wide mouth was frequently compared to the Grand Canyon. The female lead was awarded to Patricia Ellis, the self-proclaimed “Queen of the Bs” at Warner.

At Goddard’s urging, Jane hinted to LeRoy that she’d be available for dates, but he didn’t seem that interested. He later boasted that he had “discovered” Jane Wyman. “Jack Warner had signed her. I first spotted her walking around the lot in a yellow polo coat. I decided she’d be right for this part in *Elmer*. I cast her and she did a swell job. Her career was launched.”

Chorine, Lucille Ball

In contrast to LeRoy, Brown made many seductive hits on Jane, as she confessed to Goddard. “I think he’s goofy looking,” Jane said. “He’s not my type at all. Unlike you, I’ll sleep with a director or a star, but only if he’s good looking, I insist on that.”

During the filming, Jane and Goddard became close friends. Goddard, by now a star in her own right, confessed to Jane that she had gotten her start on Broadway “by letting Florence Ziegfeld fuck me.”

Goddard’s advice to Wyman was to continue to pursue her screen career, providing that she had married “some rich businessman who pays for your upkeep and isn’t stingy with mink coats and diamond rings.”

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Why was Joe E. Brown called “Mr. Big Mouth?”

Robert Young in the 1930s... ”No erotic fire.”

Chicago-born director, Norman Taurog, who in time would helm eighty films, offered Jane a small role in the

latest Jack Oakie film, *College Rhythm. [Its plot involves the college rivalry of a piccolo player and an All-American halfback who both love the same coed.]* Oakie had appeared in so many of these collegiate films that he was known as "The World's Oldest Freshman."

Busby Berkeley, a neurotic perfectionist, directing *Babes on Broadway* in 1941.

Although he liked Jane, Taurog failed to see her potential. "I'm not surprised," she recalled. "My God, in the past few months, he'd directed Gary Cooper, George Raft, Charles Laughton, W.C. Fields, and Carole Lombard. How could I measure up to those guys?"

In *College Rhythm*, Oakie played the role of "Love 'n' Kisses Finnegan," a once-celebrated college quarterback who, after graduation, falls on hard times. He finds work at a department store, where his status as a former football star is broadcast as an advertising ploy.

Jane told Taurog that "Oakie made a pass at me, but didn't score a touchdown off screen." Even though she turned him down, she respected his comedic talent.

Jane asked Taurog if he thought she'd ever graduate from a bit-part player in the chorus line into a major actress. "Your speaking voice is poorly pitched and unsteady in tone," he responded. "It doesn't match your face. And that heart-shaped face of yours! I don't know how it would go over in a dramatic role. The cast members call you 'Dog Puss.'"

Jane spent much of her time on the movie set, laughing and talking with Franklin Pangborn, one of Hollywood's most visible stately homos of the 1930s. His fussy and effeminate mannerisms were matched only by those of Edward Everett Horton.

Pangborn showed her an article written by the militant film censor Joseph Breen in 1932. Breen had claimed that sexual perversions were rampant among the Hollywood colony, alleging that many directors and male stars were queer.

[Between 1934 and 1955, Breen, a strict (some say rabid, with a sense of missionary zeal) Roman Catholic, was a film censor with the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.He zealously applied the stuffy and punitive Hays Code to film production, much to the rage and frustration of avant-garde directors, actors, writers, and civil libertarians.]

Movie director, Mervyn LeRoy (*right*), boasted of launching the career of Jane Wyman. Matinee heartthrob Robert Taylor would discover Jane in a more intimate way.

Pangborn also showed her an article from *Variety*. “Effeminate boys have crept into motion pictures,” it stated. “Winked at, they are now a comedy staple.”

“If a director needs a swishy interpretation, I’m his boy,” Pangborn told Jane.

On the set of *College Rhythm*, Jane met a fellow bit player billed as Clara Lou Sheridan. She would later become famous as the movie star, Ann Sheridan. She appeared in two scenes, first as a glove saleswoman and later as a spectator at the department store football game.

Non-Collegians: Jack Oakie with Mary Brian.

Jane spoke to her only casually, never realizing that she would, in the years to come, become a frequent visitor at her home during her marriage to Ronald Reagan, with whom Sheridan would later star.

When Jane went to see the final cut of *College Rhythm*, she said, ruefully, “Goo-Goo,” the mascot duck for the football team, walked off with the picture.”

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Jane went on to play a very small role in the frothy 1935 film, *All the King’s Horses*, a mediocre musical about a movie star who exchanges places with lookalike king from the mythical kingdom of Ruritania, causing political and romantic complications for both of them.

Its director, Frank Tuttle, had helmed movies since 1922, including *The Untamed Lady* (1926), with Gloria

Swanson, and *Kid Boots* (also in 1926), starring Eddie Cantor and Clara Bow.

A former prizefighter, the Danish film actor and singer, Carl Brisson, was the film's dashing star, cast into the double roles of both the King (Rudolf XIV) and the hapless actor (Carlo Rocco) who temporarily "replaces" him.

A star from the British stage, Mary Ellis, was cast as the film's dignified female lead, Elaine, Queen of Langenstein. Known for her roles in musical theater, Ellis had sung at New York's Metropolitan Opera House with operatic superstar Enrico Caruso.

Two character actors, Eugene Pallette and Edward Everett Horton, became two of the most unusual characters Jane would ever meet. Early in his career, Pallette was a slender leading man, but he morphed into a very obese actor with a large stomach and a deep, gravelly voice.

Jane meets the two most visible and reliable homos of Hollywood—Franklin Pangborn *(left)* and Edward Everett Horton.

[Pallette liked Jane as a friend and would remain friendly with her throughout the war years. In 1946, he became convinced that a "world blow-up" was imminent, fearing—with some justification—that the planet was threatened by atomic bombs.

He purchased a 3,500-acre mountain fortress in Imnaha, Oregon, to await the nuclear holocaust.

Jane was among the people to whom he extended an invitation there for survival. On his ranch, he had a large herd of prize cattle, a vast amount of food, and his own canning plant and lumber mill.

Jane thanked him, but turned down his invitation. When the world blowup did not happen within two years, as he had predicted, he sold the ranch and returned to Hollywood, but never made another movie.]

After working with Pangborn, Edward Everett Horton became the second "stately homo" of Hollywood with whom Jane would work. She found him vastly amusing. He told her, "Even though homosexuality can't be depicted on the screen, it is hiding in plain sight. I entered films at the height of the so-called Pansy Craze. It pays for me to be a sap or a mouse on screen. Those are euphemisms for queers. If a director wants a bumbling, stuttering, fluttering, actor, here I am. If the macho leading man needs a fairy friend, here I am, twinkle toes and all."

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Jane's next picture was *Rumba* (1935). *[A bored debutante pursues, romantically, a Latino dancer in a Broadway show.]* Its 71-minute screenplay featured two big stars, George Raft and Carole Lombard. As its director, Paramount selected Russian-born Marion Gering. Before arriving in Hollywood to direct some Sylvia Sidney movies, he had helmed many plays on Broadway.

Carl Brisson

Raft and Lombard had had a hit when they'd filmed *Bolero* together the previous year. Paramount was hoping —in vain—that lightning would strike twice. In *Bolero*, Raft and Lombard had created fireworks both privately and onscreen, but their torrid romance seemed to have fizzled before filming began on *Rumba*.

The film is perhaps best remembered for a scene in which Raft, in tails, dances sublimely with Lombard, in shimmering silver lamé against a backdrop of stylized tropical vegetation. But in spite of its impressive cast, *Rumba* didn't project the sparks that *Bolero* did.

Also appearing in *Rumba* as an uncredited chorus girl, like Jane, was Texas born Ann Sheridan, an actress known for her acerbic wit, her come-hither looks, and her deep, suggestive voice. She would soon be christened the "Oomph Girl" by Hollywood Publicists. She became friends with Jane on the set of *Rumba*. Despite its commercial appeal, however, Sheridan despised the "Oomph" label, telling Jane, "*Oomph* is a noise a fat man makes when he bends over to tie his shoelace in a phone booth."

Apocalytic visionary: Eugene Pallette

Like Paulette Goddard and Lucille Ball, Sheridan planned to "sample the wares" of some of the leading stars of Hollywood—and she did.

Jack Benny said, "Annie was just a plain, simple girl. She liked her sex simple and her liquor plain, and she liked a lot of men and a lot of liquor." Ultimately, Sheridan agreed with the comedian's assessment of her.

While making *Rumba*, Sheridan took Jane on a "troll" of the Hollywood bars. "After a few drinks, I passed out," Jane said, "but Annie was just starting her binge."

During the making of *Rumba*, Sheridan agreed to pose for some publicity stills, trying to make herself look super sexy. Privately, she told Jane, "I have the body of a skinny young man."

Since her figure was less than shapely, wardrobe made a chest harness for her, with rubber, size-38 breasts.

As Jane looked on, and as the day grew hotter, it became time for lunch. Annoyed at the discomfort of the harness, Sheridan took it off and slung it at Jane. "Honey, hold my tits for me while I change into something more comfortable."

During her early days at Warners, Jane, like Sheridan, would also be asked to seductively pose for cheesecake. Jane herself was soonafter reminded of how Hollywood bestowed breasts upon its flat-chested stars and wannabees. As she was walking by Lombard's dressing room, the blonde-haired star opened the door and called out to one of the wardrobe men. "Okay, faggot, bring me my tits."

When Jane completed her work on *Rumba*, she bid farewell to the cast and crew, hoping they might work together on some future project. When she approached Raft, he said, "I like your looks, Pug Nose. How about a date with me tonight? I think there's a role for you in my next picture."

George Raft romances Carole Lombard, with Jane on the side, in *Rumba*

"I'd be honored to go out with you, Mr. Raft," she answered.

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To Jane, and to thousands of his fans, Raft was exciting, intriguing, and charismatic. A Broadway dancer, a Hollywood tough guy, a gambler, and a Don Juan with a life-long involvement in the Underworld, he had emerged from Hell's Kitchen in New York. Having been born there in 1895, he was a juvenile delinquent and a member of a rough-and-tumble street gang before becoming a boxer.

Deciding that boxing wasn't for him, he became a dancehall gigolo, rooming with and loving his counterpart, Rudolph Valentino. Together, they worked the "tea rooms" of Manhattan and later made professional love to aging, rich women before returning to their shared apartment and their mutual bed.

Ann Sheridan admitted, "I have no tits," but Hollywood billed her as "*über-glamorous, über-sexy.*"

One client fell in love with Raft and nearly fatally stabbed him when she learned that he was dating her so-called best friend.

Eventually, Raft fell into the bed of the queen of New York City nightlife, Texas Guinan. She typecast him as a gigolo, an association that would remain with him throughout the rest of his career, in her movie, *Queen of the Night Clubs* (1929).

From that lowly beginning, he drifted into movie work.

After his hit film, *Scarface* (1932), he joined the pantheon of Warner Brothers' screen gangsters, the most visible of which included Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, and the emerging Humphrey Bogart.

Raft also starred in Mae West's first film, *Night After Night* (1932), and had an affair with her. Later, after he saw the final cut, he turned on her. "The bitch committed armed robbery in stealing the picture from me."

After 1932, he perfected his evil sneer and rude, stoic manner that would carry him through the 1930s. But with the passage of youth, his wooden presence on the screen would grow more dreary with each lackluster picture.

Jane would go out on two separate dates with Raft, both of which led to violence. Early on the evening of the first date, he'd taken her to the Café Trocadero on Sunset Strip. Almost overnight, it had become the place for Hollywood stars to be seen. A black tie, French-inspired supper club in the posh Sunset Plaza section of the Strip, it had quickly become one of the most famous nightclubs in the world.

But when a waiter served Raft a gin and tonic that was not to his liking, the movie star tossed the drink into the young man's face. Jane was horrified at such behavior, but said nothing.

Many sources claim that Raft did not drink, but many of his dates, including Jane, differed, suggesting that he was a binge drinker who could go for weeks without a drink before having a heavy bout with liquor.

Raft had been drinking heavily that night and invited Jane back to his apartment. With reluctance, she accepted the invitation, her decision based to some degree on her hopes of snagging a role in his next picture.

Inside his apartment, furnished in what she called "gangster modern," she was introduced to Mack Grey. Raft referred to him as "My Man Friday."

Raft put on some recorded music. To her astonishment, he ordered Grey to dance for him. When his servant wasn't dancing fast enough to please his boss, Raft removed a revolver and shot two .38 caliber bullets at the floor, narrowly missing Grey's feet. After that, he danced faster.

One of the two bullets had penetrated through to the floor below, embedding itself into the sofa of Mrs. Jack Warner, the former Irma Solomons, an heiress. It caused a small scandal that was quickly hushed up.

As Jane later reflected, "That bullet could have ended both my future career at Warners and Raft's, too."

In spite of her disastrous first date, she agreed to return to the Trocadero with Raft on a second date. She still wanted that part in his next movie.

When Raft escorted Jane to the dance floor at "The Troc," the two professional dancers created such a sensation that the other couples quit dancing and formed a circle around them to watch the exhibition.

Later, at table, Raft told her, "I could have become mainstream Hollywood's first X-rated dancer. I was very erotic in my dances in New York. I caressed my body, especially Black Snake. To make it bigger, I fondled it as I danced, and it grew bigger and bigger, much to the delight of the squealing women in the audience."

Raft always referred to his large penis as "Black Snake," and, according to women who had gone to bed with him, it was an apt description.

As Jane would later tell Lucille Ball, "Grey wasn't there at his apartment that night. Raft didn't attempt to seduce me with any subtlety. He was drunk and attacked me, ripping my dress. He raped me, although, frankly, I didn't put up much resistance."

To Jane's surprise, she learned later that both of her friends, Ball and Betty Grable, had each had flings with Raft, too.

Once, Ball confessed that she'd become involved with Grey before her involvement with Raft. "He doesn't have a pretty face, but he can have any woman he wants when he takes off his clothes." Grey had risen from the back streets of Brooklyn and had been known by the mob as "The Killer."

Ball admitted that Raft finally seduced her himself, although Tallulah Bankhead had warned her that she'd gotten gonorrhea from Raft. Before his involvement with Ball, Raft had assured her that he'd been cured.

"We had several fights," Ball claimed. "One time he got so mad at me, he broke into my apartment and cut up all my clothing with a pair of tailor scissors."

Ball also confided, "Did that guy like to screw. On his day off, he devoted at least twelve hours a day to prolonged screwing. He told me he averaged at least two women a day."

Years later, Grable also told Jane about her own disastrous involvement with Raft, who beat her on occasion. "He said he wanted to marry me. No way! Personally, I think he's a latent homosexual, in spite of his womanizing."

Raft carried through on his promise to Jane and got her a small part in *Stolen Harmony* (1935), directed by Alfred L. Werker, who had been involved in filmmaking beginning with the Silents in 1917. He had earned the undying animosity of the temperamental director, Erich von Stroheim, when Fox called him in to reshoot and re-edit the director's film, *Hello Sister!* (1933).

After working with Jane and others, Werker, in the early 1940s, had directed a number of comedies for Laurel and Hardy.

In *Stolen Harmony*, Raft was cast as a dancer/actor/gangster who, after his release from prison, joins Ben Bernie's Swing Band, playing a mean saxophone. Various misadventures take place before Raft finally saves the day and rescues the band.

Band leader Ben *["The Old Maestro,"]* Bernie and his band starred in the movie. Bernie was a jazz violinist and radio personality known for his showmanship and memorable bits of snappy dialogue. Jane had often danced to his hit record, "Sweet Georgia Brown."

To beef up her income, Jane asked if she could appear as a vocalist with his band, since she was also a singer. He turned her down, later picking Dinah Shore for the spot instead.

Lloyd Nolan, born in San Francisco, made his film debut in *Stolen Harmony*. He would go on to become one of the leading character actors in Hollywood.

Jane was on the set of *Stolen Harmony* as a witness to one of the most violent cops-and-robber shootouts in the history of the movies. After the film's release, it was determined that some of its scenes were so violent that a few states refused to allow the movie to be screened until parts of it were cut.

Variety infuriated Raft when it suggested that a double was used in many of his dance numbers. "I don't need a fucking double. I'm a dancer. There are two dancing gangster actors in Hollywood, George Raft, number one, and James Cagney, a distant second."

***

Jane was beginning to despair at the direction of her career, since she seemed stuck as an uncredited cutie in the film industry's chorus line. Yet when she was offered another uncredited part, this time in *King of Burlesque* (1936), she accepted. During those Depression years, any paycheck, even a meager one, was welcomed.

But 1936 would turn out to be one of her best years so far, as she appeared in six movies.

At Paramount, Jane was not under contract, but was simply an extra, hired whenever a "perky" blonde was called for. She stood 5'5", tall for the day, and her hair and trim figure were in style. She had large brown eyes and high cheekbones. She photographed well, but she was still self-conscious about her appearance, working hard to gain confidence.

She had also picked up an agent, actually an actor/agent. Minnesota-born William Demarest had worked in vaudeville before coming to Hollywood in 1926 to begin a career in silent films. He'd have his greatest film success with Preston Sturges, appearing in such hits as *Sullivan's Travels* and *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*. Like Jane, he'd go on to big success in television, notably in the sitcom *My Three Sons [it ran from 1965 to 1972]*, in which he appeared opposite Fred MacMurray.

In the mid-1930s, when acting jobs were scarce, he hustled roles for other actors, including Jane.

She later commented on that period of her life. "A lot of men had tried to exploit me, and it had toughened me up. I heard a lot of sweet talk and heaps of promises that amounted to nothing. But a few along the way genuinely had my welfare at heart, notably William Demarest."

Years later, she spoke of this time to *Guidepost* magazine. "For a girl who grew up in terror at being looked at, it was agony for me to appear on camera. Then I made a discovery: A good shield for shyness is a bold exterior. Did my heart turn over when the man with a megaphone bellowed my name? Were all the other dancers prettier? Never mind. I covered up my shyness by becoming the cockiest of all, by talking the loudest, laughing the longest, and wearing the curliest, most blatantly false eyelashes in Hollywood."

Even thought her role was small in *King of Burlesque*, Jane was thrilled to be working with some top professionals in the business. The one-time jazz musician and vaudevillian star, Sidney Lanfield, had signed to direct. He had been working at Fox since 1930. In 1955, he and Jane would work together again on television's *Fireside Theater*.

She wasn't thrilled to see Jack Oakie again, this time cast in third billing, but she was impressed with the film's other star, Warner Baxter, who at the time was the highest paid male movie actor in Hollywood, and the blonde singer, Alice Faye, goddess of the 20th Century Fox lot until she was replaced in the 1940s by Jane's friend, Betty Grable.

At the wrap party, Demarest, her agent, told Jane, "You've got to do a quickie with Big Mouth."

"Oh, no, not Joe E. Brown again," she protested.

"Oh, yes," he said.

William Demarest, Jane's first Hollywood agent: "God, she was jumpy. Thought I was going to rape her."

***

On the set of *Polo Joe* (1936), Jane once again faced Joe E. Brown, whose contract with Warners was nearing its end. As his farewell gesture to the studio, Brown and his gaping mouth appeared in this lackluster slapstick directed by William McCann.

Years later, Jane claimed she could not remember what she had to do in the movie. All that she recalled was Brown telling her what pleasure he could provide her with his canyon of a mouth.

On the set of *Polo Joe*, Jane escaped from the hot pursuit of Brown and fell into the strong, muscular arms of Wayne Morris, a tall, good-looking blonde with a slow drawl who had just signed a contract with Warners.

To Jane, Wayne represented the ideal American male. She told her friends, "Every high school has a Wayne Morris type. He's usually the captain of the football team. I could easily fall in love with him, but I held my heart in check when I learned that he went out with a different girl at least four nights a week. With him, the line of beauties pursuing him formed on both the left and the right."

"Until I learned more about him, I was in love with him," Jane said. "Yes, it led to a sleepover in his apartment. He's completely skilled in the art of lovemaking. Wayne was like a kid in the Hollywood candy store, wanting to sample all the sugary goodies, of which I was a nugget."

*[*Polo Joe *marked Jane's long association, both professional and private, with Morris.*
A native of Los Angeles, Morris played football at Los Angeles Junior College. Later, he worked as a forest ranger. He returned to Los Angeles and studied acting at the Pasadena Playhouse, where a Warner Brothers talent agent spotted him in 1936. Blonde and open-faced, he was the perfect type for "the boy-next-door" parts.]

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Co-starring Carole Lombard and William Powell, *My Man Godfrey* (1936) was a comedy-drama directed by Gregory La Cava, a freelancer throughout most of his career. The story was about a Depression-era socialite (Lombard) who hires a dignified, handsome derelict (Powell) to be her family's butler, only to fall in love with him.

Both Constance Bennett and Miriam Hopkins had been considered for the role, but Powell had insisted on Lombard. *[The couple had been married from 1931 until their divorce in 1933. Their cinematic pairing was interpreted at the time as a rare example of friendship triumphing over heartbreak in the aftermath of a stormy marriage.]*

As he had during the course of their real-life marriage, Powell continued to object to Lombard's obscene vocabulary, every other word being "fuck" or "shit." During her divorce proceedings, she had accused him of being a very emotional man "cruel and coarse in manners of language who displayed his temper repeatedly." Ironically, at least for the purposes of their reappearance on screen, their former courtside acrimonies were set aside.

Jane agreed with Graham Greene's 1936 assessment: "Mr. Powell is a little too immaculate, his wit is too well-turned, just as his clothes are too well-made; he drinks hard but only in the best of bars. He is rather like an advertisement of a man about town in *Esquire."*

Wayne Morris was a Warner Brothers' heartthrob of the 1930s. Jane had nothing but praise for "his football player physique and his virility."

Although an aging actor, born in 1892, Powell was still an attractive, sophisticated man. Jane was reluctant to flirt with him, because all of Hollywood knew that he was in love at the time with the platinum blonde bomb-shell Jean Harlow.

[In June of 1937, Harlow's early death would shock the world. Clark Gable forced his way into her home after she had been absent from the studio, and incommunicado for a week. He discovered that the star was dying because her mother, a Christian Science devotee, refused to send her to the hospital for an operation.]

On the set, Jane spotted the director, La Cava, sitting by himself after lunch. She approached him and asked for advice about her career. He looked her over very carefully. "My suggestion is that you learn to play sickeningly sweet, pure honey type of roles," he told her. "That way, you can replace Loretta Young on the screen."

Jane was at first delighted to have been cast in *My Man Godfrey*, calling it "my first big break." I've got two lines of dialogue with Lombard. In the 20s, I heard that Howard Hughes had taught her about the birds and the bees. I flubbed my lines three times, but Carole was very helpful."

Jane recalled, "I faced real competition to get noticed from the other players in this film. In the supporting cast was Alice Brady, who stole the picture, along with Gail Patrick, Jean Dixon, my old buddy, Eugene Pallette, Alan Mowbray, and Mischa Auer. How do you follow acts like theirs?"

Jane was cast in a scavenger hunt scene, but most of the footage ended up on the cutting room floor. "I'm still in the picture," she said. "You can catch me next to the organ grinder and this damn vicious little monkey. The bastard bit me so hard, I screamed."

***

Running only one hour, *Here Comes Carter* was the fifth Warners' short film to be directed by William Clemens, a Hollywood veteran best known for having previously helmed the three of the studio's most durable series: Philo Vance, Nancy Drew, and The Falcon.

Carole Lombard and William Powell in *My Man Godfrey*. At their divorce, she complained of his temper, and he attacked her obscenity.

The charming and boyish-looking Ross Alexander was cast as the film's lead—a radio commentator in a convoluted plot that involves vengeance of an old wrong through whistle-blowing on some shady Hollywood

scandals.

On the set, Jane launched a friendship with Ross. Born in Brooklyn, his life would end, shortly after their first meeting, in suicide. Ironically, Warners would almost immediately replace him with a young radio announcer from Des Moines named Ronald Reagan. Jane would later refer to his tragic life story as “a bad Hollywood movie.”

He had a bubbly personality and spoke in a voice that Jack Warner later defined as “very similar to young Reagan’s.”

With Jane, at least, Ross did not conceal his homosexuality.

During his dialogues with her, he enlightened her about Hollywood actors. “Many of the biggest stars are actually homos or at least bisexual.” As an example, he cited his best friend, Henry Fonda, who had become his lover in 1933 when they first started rooming together during their joint appearances in summer stock. “Hank’s true love is Jimmy Stewart, but Jimmy is not always available, so he settles for me.”

For years, Ross had been under pressure to camouflage his homosexuality. As a means of doing that, he had married, in February of 1934, as part of a lavender arrangement of convenience, the Broadway actress, Aleta Friels. Faced with a failed marriage and a stalled career, she committed suicide less than a year later, in December of 1935, shooting herself with a rifle in the barn of their home in the Hollywood Hills.

[To her astonishment, Alexander revealed that he had pursued Bette Davis for three years. “If I had been able to get her to marry me, it would have been the publicity coup of my life, and I’d be a big star today. But she uncovered my secret. Bette, you know, detests homosexuals.”

Ross’s big break came when he was chosen to play Demetrius in the all-star cast of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1935).

The same year, he starred in Captain Blood *in the role of Jeremy Pitt, cast as the friend and navigator to the character played by swashbuckler Errol Flynn. Alexander told Jane that he had fallen in love with the bisexual Australian actor, and that the two men were currently involved in a torrid affair.*

“So far in my screen career, I’ve been nothing but a second rate Dick Powell, signing on to any role he rejects,” Ross told Jane.

Before meeting Jane, Ross had entered yet another marriage, this time to Anne Nagle, an actress from Massachusetts, who was to work for 25 years in film adventures, mysteries, and comedies.

Anne Nagel is not to be confused with Anna Neagle, Britain’s biggest female draw for seven years, and the wife of producer Henry Wilcox.]

Also appearing in *Here Comes Carter* was the brassy-*personaed* Glenda Farrell, who had arrived in Hollywood toward the end of the Silent Era. Finding no work immediately, she worked temporarily in a whorehouse, seducing, among others, clients who included a young Humphrey Bogart.

The doomed Ross Alexander.

Like Joan Blondell, Farrell specialized in wise-cracking, hard-boiled, and somewhat dizzy blonde roles. She and Blondell were often paired together in films. During a period of her career, Jane’s screen *persona* would be compared to that of both Blondell and Farrell.

Jane and Wayne Morris didn’t have much to do in the film. Her relationship with him almost collapsed when she saw him leaving Farrell’s dressing room late one afternoon as she was heading home. She confronted him and accused him of having an affair with her rival.

He freely admitted it. “The broad wanted to find out if all those stories about ‘Jumbo’ were true,” he said. “I plowed her. Listen, you don’t own me. I know you sleep around quite a bit yourself.”

“He’d nailed me,” Jane later confessed. “He and I didn’t have any special arrangement. I decided to hold onto him. I’d have to be very understanding. When I wasn’t with him, I was free to date other men, so I thought it was a fair deal between us.”

He asked to go home with her. “After two or three beers and a steak, I’ll have recovered from Farrell, and I’ll be all yours for the night.”

“It’s a deal, Jumbo,” she said. “Forgive me for being so silly. It’s just that Farrell and I are rivals, and I resent her taking roles I want. That’s why I got so pissed when I saw her going after my man, too.”

Demarest sent over the latest script with a brief role for Jane. She read it one night and called the next morning, with her assessment of the script. “This sounds like another turkey masquerading as a tiger.”

She was referring to the 1936 *Bengal Tiger*.

***

Ross invited Jane to attend an intimate dinner at the home of Errol Flynn, the swashbuckling, relatively new star at Warners. Ever since appearing together in *Captain Blood*, Ross and Flynn had been lovers, even though Flynn was married at the time to the French actress, Lili Damita.

The Flynns lived on Appian Way, a narrow, hairpin-curved mountain path positioned off Laurel Canyon Boulevard in the Hollywood Hills. Ross notified Jane that Damita would not be present at the dinner, as she and Flynn had had a violent argument the night before.

Before meeting him, Jane had heard many lurid stories about Flynn—that he was a lecherous, lovable rebel, a sexual pervert, and a drunkard. In the flesh, he evoked none of those qualities. Critics at the time suggested that he was the true heir to the handsome, swashbuckling traditions of Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. At the time, Flynn was at the peak of his male beauty, on the verge of interpreting the title role in the aptly name *The Perfect Specimen*.

Glenda Farrell, often Jane’s rival for roles, once made a confession: “My first job was in a bordello, where I learned how to act by telling johns how great they were as lovers.”

As he kissed her hand, Flynn was the epitome of graciousness, and initially, at least, Jane had a very favorable view of him. Later, she referred to him as the “Tasmanian Devil,” a reference to his birthplace.

Her future husband, Ronald Reagan, who would make two movies with Flynn, had a very negative view of the Australian.

As Flynn introduced Jane to his six other guests, none of whom she had ever heard of, he was most solicitous of her. His softly accented voice was especially alluring and seductive. As she would later say, “A gal would have a hard time saying no to this guy.”

By the time she met him, Flynn had already seduced hundreds of women and dozens of men, claiming that he lost his virginity at the age of twelve to the family maid in Australia.

[Before Flynn’s early death at the age of 50 in 1959, he claimed that he had made some 12,000 to 14,000 sexual conquests with persons from all walks of life, including— during the course of one especially prolific

afternoon in his dressing room—four starlets.]

Jane remembered his eyes, a seductive tool unto themselves. “They twinkle when he talks to you,” she said, “and they are flecked with gold.”

His sometimes roommate, David Niven, described Flynn “as a great athlete of immense charm and evident physical beauty, crowing lustily atop the Hollywood dung-heap.”

Flynn seated Jane with him at the head of the table, talking mostly about himself. He claimed that he got his start in life as a slave trader and prospector in New Guinea.

He also spoke about the time when Jack Warner hired him. “He said I reminded him of John Barrymore, a hard-drinking, wenching, lovable, handsome man. I think Warner wanted to be like John and me, but he wasn’t.”

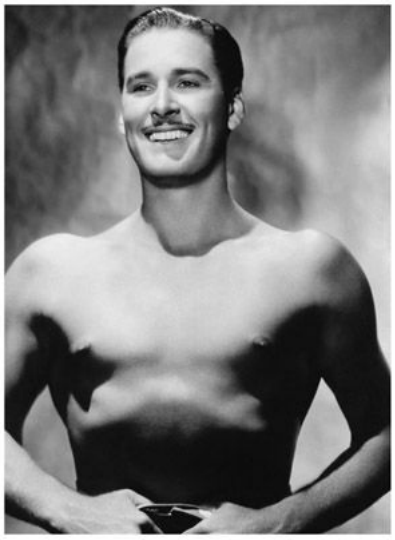
“I’m supposed to be a great swordsman,” he said. “Well, I guess I am in one department. But on the screen as a dueling swordsman, I stink. I’m horrible at fencing. In the beginning, Michael Curtiz had to reshoot many of my scenes because of my inadequacies. Or else he’d call in one of the stunt doubles.”

The dinner party broke up before midnight, because of early shooting schedules the next morning. Flynn already was rather drunk when he told Jane, “I feel as horny as a three-peckered billy goat.”

“What a flattering invitation,” she said.

However, she accepted his offer to stay over. When Flynn relayed that information to Ross, he got angry and stormed out of the house.

In spite of the liquor, Flynn lived up to his reputation as a great lover. After the sex act, she cuddled in his arms until he made a confession. “I lied to you. I pretended I used precautions, but I didn’t. What’s the point of eating dinner with your gloves on?”



Errol Flynn shows off why he was selected as the star of *The Perfect Specimen* (1937). Overnight, he became a pinup boy.

Horrified, she jumped up from the bed and headed for his kitchen. There, she removed a bottle of white cider vinegar from his cabinet and then raced to the bathroom for a serious douche.

[During the weeks ahead, Jane feared that Flynn might have impregnated her. If so, she planned to have an abortion. Maybe it was that vinegar. Whatever, she never became pregnant.]

The next morning, on the set of *Here Comes Carter*, Jane told Glenda Farrell, “Every girl should enjoy the manly charms of Errol Flynn. And, at the rate he’s going, every girl will have her chance at him.”

***

Jane’s next film was *Bengal Tiger* (1936), directed by Louis King and starring Barton MacLane and June Travis. MacLane was cast as the blustering lion-tamer who marries his assistant’s poverty-stricken daughter, as played by Travis. To advance the plot, she then falls in love with the man on the flying trapeze (Warren Hull).

To Jane, the real star of the film was “Satan,” a tiger who did the best acting job, mauling a double, chewing up a chair, and snarling at a whip.

King was a Southern gentleman from Virginia, who had become known in the 1920s for directing westerns and

adventure stories. He was the brother of the famous director, Henry King.

In her future, Jane would often be attracted to her leading man. But MacLane was a big turn-off to her. He was cast as the furrow-browed tough guy giving someone a hard time. He seemed menacing, with his squinty eyes and his mouth clamped tightly shut.

Jane told Travis, "I think the script writer got it perfect. Barton ends up as cat food in the final reel. I'll never understand why he ever became a star. He has little talent and is both ugly and obnoxious."

Travis seemed rather contemptuous of Jane and soon wasn't speaking to her. She was from Chicago, the daughter of Harry Grabiner, vice president of the Chicago White Sox. With her dark brown hair and green eyes, she stood 5'4". It was understandable why Ronald Reagan, in his first picture, was attracted to her, but ever so briefly.

Travis not only snatched Reagan from Jane before she got a chance at him, but she fell into the slot at Warners that Jane wanted for herself. Travis became another actress known as the "queen of the B's," something Jane had been striving for, since she feared that super stardom was but a dream.

***

When William Demarest called to tell Jane that Paramount had offered her a small role in the film version of the hit Broadway musical, *Anything Goes* (1936), she was elated. Later, she was disappointed to learn "just how small a small part can be."

With music, at least some of it by Cole Porter, the film would star Bing Crosby, Ethel Merman, character actor Charles Ruggles, and a newcomer, Ida Lupino, taking the role Jane really wanted, that of "Hope Harcourt."

An odd choice of director for a musical was Lewis Milestone, a Russian-born Jew who had achieved fame for winning two Oscars as the director of *Two Arabian Knights* (1927) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).

On the set, Merman befriended Jane, and the bigger star often complained to her about her newly written role in the film. On Broadway, she had appeared in 420 performances, but she detested the new film script. "Everything in this movie is geared to promote that stuck-up asshole, Crosby," she told Jane. "Those jerks, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, have written one dumb line after another for me. 'What are you doing here?' What's the idea?' Crap like that. The censors even nixed my big number, 'Blow, Gabriel, Blow.' Too suggestive, they say."

Porter was furious when he heard that many of his songs with their suggestive lyrics had been removed from the film, and that new composers had been called in to fill the gap. However, they allowed "You're the Top," to stay in, perhaps not realizing that for a gay audience, that was a very suggestive line.

Merman knew Porter and spoke to Jane about him. "We are two very different ducks," Merman said. "He likes cute young men, and I prefer something else. He's Yale educated, and I never opened a book. He prefers elegant food and wine, and I'm a hamburger gal with lots of onions and catsup. He wears Savile Row suits, and I prefer loud hats and flashy costume jewelry."

The film was about a shipboard romance in which Crosby chased after Lupino. Merman called the British-born actress "a limey bitch."

June Travis and Barton MacClane were the stars of *Bengal Tiger*. Jane could never figure out how MacLane became a leading man.

The beautiful starlet, Travis, would soon be in the arms of Ronald Reagan, both on and off the screen.

Lucille Ball dropped by the set one day to have lunch with Jane. In the commissary, Jane whispered a secret. "Ethel is one butch broad. Would you believe it, she invited me to her dressing room and put the make on me. I got out of there—and damn fast."

"I should have warned you," Ball said. "Ethel is a lesbian."

[Escaping from the embrace of Merman, Jane became friends with Lupino. In a few short years, Lupino would

also become a close friend of Jane and her new husband, Ronald Reagan. She visited the Reagans frequently at their apartment at 1326 Londonderry Road in Beverly Hills. To Jane's dismay, Lupino and Reagan would talk politics all night. Both of them were liberal Democrats and supporters of FDR.

At Warners, Lupino became known as "the poor man's Bette Davis," accepting whatever "leftover parts" the grand diva turned down.]

As filming progressed on *Anything Goes (1936), and* Jane heard Crosby sing and emote on camera, she developed a crush on him. Somehow word of her interest reached him. He approached her one day. "I hear you like me," he said. "Let's do something about that. A date tonight, perhaps?"

***

In the days ahead, Jane and Bing Crosby launched what evolved into a long-enduring affair for each of them. It would be put into storage in the 1940s during her marriage to Reagan, but it would resume in the 50s when they made two more pictures together.

Bing Crosby with Ethel Merman performing "You're the Top," with its suggestive Cole Porter lyrics.

According to Merman, "I thought Crosby was somewhat of a girlie man, and he claimed I was far too macho. Nothing ever happened between us, but if it ever did, I bet I'd be the one on top."

The crooner, with his trademark bass-baritone, sometimes preferred pretty but demure young women with delicate features, and Jane fitted that bill. There was a fourteen-year difference in their ages, but that didn't matter to her.

As the 1930s had moved on, Jane had ceased to care if a man were married or not. Paulette Goddard had told her, "All movie stars, married or single, sleep around. It's how we play the game out here."

Jane was aware that Crosby in 1930 had married the Tennessee-born singer and showgirl, Dixie Lee (aka Dixie Carroll). Jane had heard reports that both were alcoholics, but that whereas Crosby had brought his liquor consumption under control, his wife had become more and more depressed.

[The 1947 film, Smash-Up—The Story of a Woman, *starring Susan Hayward, was loosely based on the tragic life of Dixie Lee. She had had a brief film career at Crosby's Paramount Studio, her most notable movie being* Love in Bloom *(1935).]*

Crosby had a history of seducing some of his leading ladies. Of course, on the set of *Anything Goes*, he certainly did not plan to go after Merman. He could have made a play for Lupino, but he chose to pursue bit player Jane instead.

Crosby had bedded Miriam Hopkins (his co-star in *She Loves Me, '34);* Joan Bennett (his co-star in *Mississippi, '35);* Joan Blondell (his co-star in *Two for Tonight, '35);* and most recently the mentally disturbed Frances Farmer (his costar in *Rhythm on the Range, '36)*.

Since Crosby was well known and a married man, he had to be very secretive about sexual trysts with Jane. Their love affair could not be carried out at Chasen's, the Troc, or at the Cocoanut Grove.

Fortunately, director Frank Tuttle was only too willing to give them the use of his guest cottage. He hardly remembered Jane from her brief stint in his *All the King's Horses*. Crosby was Tuttle's friend, referring to him as "my favorite director."

Tuttle had helmed Crosby's *Here Is My Heart* (1934) and would go on to direct him in such pictures as *Waikiki Wedding* (1937); *Doctor Rhythm* (1938); and *Paris Honeymoon* (1939).

Many stars, directors, and other entertainers detested Crosby. His rival, Rudy Vallee, claimed, "Bing has ice water in his veins instead of warm blood." The public, however, adored him, and he remained a beloved singer

throughout the dizzy Prohibition era, during the bleak years of the Depression, and through the darkest days of World War II. She had heard stories about his troubled marriage to the beautiful but tragic Dixie Lee and his difficulties with his own sons. He was said to beat them severely.

With Jane, on occasion, he displayed a streak of cruelty, "but he never hit me," she claimed. "However, I did on that rare occasion piss him off, but I never went too far. I learned that if you make one major wrong move with Bing, he'll never speak to you again. For the most part, we had a very good relationship."

One night, when Crosby and Jane were sitting out on a breeze-swept terrace in the Hollywood Hills, taking in the panoramic view of Los Angeles at night, she broached a delicate subject. She asked him if he had ever considered divorcing Lee.

"Never!" he shouted at her. "Don't ever ask me that again. "I'll never divorce Dixie. It's truly an 'until death do us part' kind of thing."

For all his dark side, Crosby was wonderful with minorities, according to Jane. He not only related to African Americans, including the great Louis Armstrong, but he brought the same respect to the shoeshine boy at the front gates of Paramount. He'd stop and talk to the boy and joke with him. "He was never patronizing, like most stars of the 30s to minorities," Jane claimed.

As Jane later told Glenda Farrell, "Bing is not the stud that Wayne Morris and Errol Flynn are, but he's adequate for the job—and I like him a lot. But he's very distant emotionally, not physically. Nobody seems to get close to him, certainly not his family."

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At one point, Jane drifted into a deep depression once again, as she had so many times before, feeling that her career had stalled. The 1930s were passing, and she still hadn't made it big. Every day, chorus girls, some no more than sixteen, were arriving from the hinterlands.

She finally decided to take Paulette Goddard's advice and find some wealthy man to marry. "If he's nice and charming, or even handsome, that's all to the good, but don't ask for everything," the star advised. "If he's got enough money, you can't insist on all those other redeeming qualities."

Along came Myron Futterman. He was a clothing manufacturer from New Orleans, who specialized in ladies' gowns. He always lied about his age, but she suspected that he was at least twenty years older than she was. He had been born in 1903, making him fourteen years older than Jane.

Like her friend, Lucille Ball, Jane was a party girl. A studio such as Paramount or Warners could call upon her to entertain an important out-of-town client. Futterman had important connections in the business world, and someone at Warners called Jane and asked her if she'd entertain him during his visit to Los Angeles. Hoping to get cast in another Warners film, Jane agreed.

Although not as attractive as she would have preferred, Futterman was a gracious Southern gentleman, who treated her kindly, although she realized he wanted to have sex with her. She managed to hold him off until the third date. He was far from the greatest lover she'd known, but, on the other hand, he was not a disaster. As she later told Goddard, "Myron is competent in bed."

"Count yourself lucky," Goddard said. "Most men are incompetent between the sheets, and I should know. But if the bank account is big enough, competent is just rosy pink."

It was Jane who pressed marriage onto him. He'd been married before and still spoke favorably of his first wife, and seemed to be mourning her loss.

He flew with Jane to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. That wasn't all. A diamond engagement ring was followed in two days by a wedding band placed on her finger at City Hall before a justice of the peace. The date was June 29, 1937.

To her, it seemed that almost overnight, she'd become Mrs. Myron Futterman, although she had never divorced Eugene Wyman. "Who's to know?" was her cavalier attitude.

During her honeymoon, she realized that she'd married the wrong man, as she'd later relate to Goddard. She hadn't realized how conservative her new husband was. Although he marketed gowns with plunging *décolletage*, he didn't want Jane to wear such a dress or gown. For days at a time, he sank into a sullen mood and didn't want to see or talk to her. He was so withdrawn at times, he reminded her of her foster father.

For her, the worst was yet to come. He did not want her to pursue a career in Hollywood. "That's something whores do," he told her. He had plenty of ammunition to back up that outrageous statement. "I've dated plenty of starlets. All of them put out. In fact, let's face it: That's how I met you. I want to rescue you from the life of a tramp."

She wasn't as shy as she used to be, standing up to him and telling him she was going to pursue her career—"or

else!"

"Faced with such a strong statement from me, he caved in," she told Goddard.

William Demarest didn't give the marriage much of a chance for success. "When Jane married that Futterman guy, I was really put off by him when I met him. Wherever they went, he was taken for her father. I think she married him for a sense of security, but his demands made her insecure. It was a money thing. Before she got married, she had told me that one day, she'd be thirty years old, with only $100 in her bank account."

Fortunately for Jane, Futterman was on the road most of the time, leaving her to her own devices. That meant she could show up at the Troc or the Cocoanut Grove with a series of come-and-go beaux, becoming the dutiful wife the moment he hit town again.

"Myron is tight with the purse strings," Jane told Demarest, "but generous with thewardrobe."

For the first time in her life, she had all the dresses and gowns she wanted, showing up at various night clubs with a different outfit every time.

"It was just assumed that she had some sugar daddy," Demarest said, "and at least in the clothing department, she did. Otherwise, he gave her an allowance of $50 a week."

She and Futterman had nothing in common. She liked nightclubs and movies. He wanted to go to bed at ten o'clock. For relaxation, he attended a ball game or else went to the fights. Not only that, he wanted to live in New Orleans, not Hollywood.

Whenever he came back to Hollywood, he accused her of flirting with everybody from Errol Flynn to Bing Crosby. Actually, he was right about that.

What he didn't know was that in the final weeks of their marriage, she had met a handsome young man that she felt "I could really go for."

The inevitable confrontation between Futterman and Jane occurred one rainy afternoon. Jane came home early from Warners, feeling sick. When she turned the key in the door, she sensed something unusual going on in the apartment. Loud music was coming from the bedroom.

When she opened the door, she discovered Futterman in drag, wearing a white satin gown with large red polka dots. To his astonished face, she said the first thing that flashed in her mind. "Myron, you're far too big to wear polka dots."

She left soon after, packing an overnight bag. Divorce was inevitable.

For $200, Demarest got Jane a divorce lawyer and arranged for her court date. Before a judge, she told him that Futterman had refused to conceive a child with her. She also claimed that he abandoned her for weeks at a time, returning to her and charging her with adulturous affairs. "I was constantly harassed and compared unfavorably to his first wife. He made me insecure and neurotic."

The judge granted the divorce on December 6, 1938. As part of the settlement, Jane was awarded $1,000 in cash, plus her attorney's fees. The title to her car was still in his name, but he transferred it to her.

At 1326 Londonderry Terrace, overlooking Sunset Strip, he'd lived in an apartment with her during his trips to Hollywood. During their marriage, he had allowed her to furnish the apartment with the modern pieces she preferred, although he wanted more traditional choices. After their divorce, he told her, "Take all of this crap. I'm just removing my clothes—and that's it. Enjoy!"

Many years later, Futterman gave a brief interview to a reporter. He said, "I knew that Jane would blossom into a great screen actress one day. Stardom was everything to her, and it was backed up by a steely determination. She really wanted to be a big Hollywood star, and she didn't want a husband to block that pursuit."

As Jane's star rose on the horizon, Futterman became a footnote in the history of a great actress. However, an inveterate grave finder tracked down his tombstone, discovering that he had moved to California and had died in Los Angeles on March 6, 1965. He was buried in the Garden of Everlasting Peace on lot 5298 in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park at Glendale.

When this evidence was presented to her, she snapped, "Gone and forgotten."

Chapter Two

Ronald Reagan in Hollywood — Warners' "Errol Flynn of the B's"

"LeadingLady-itis"
(Falling In Love Again…and Again…and Again)

In Ronald Reagan's first movie, *Love Is on the Air*, June Travis took him to her breast both on and off the screen, although she later denied it. The former sports reporter, age 26, made his Hollywood debut as a crusading radio announcer.

As a young Lothario, Regan found "love" again, at least for three weeks when he was teamed with pretty, perky Mary Maguire in *Sergeant Murphy* (1938). Here, she salutes him for a job well done. Exactly what performance was she praising?

‘It’s a tough racket, but when you consider the rewards you’re shooting at—fame such as couldn’t be won in any other profession and wealth that amounts to dizzying heights—it’s worth the chances you take.”

—Ronald Reagan

“When I was young and had just arrived on the Warners lot, I shacked up with any female who caught my eye—and I got an eyeful.”

—Ronald Reagan

For twenty hours, without sleep, Reagan had driven his Nash convertible across the desert, heading west for Los Angeles. He had stopped only for food and gas. “By the roadside, I watered a lot of cactus along the way, since I had dry throat all the way. At the wheel, I must have drunk enough bottled water to flood the banks of the Colorado River.”

Warners Four: *left to right*, Albert, Harry, Sam, and Jack. As young Polish immigrants, the sons of a cobbler, they did everything—butchering hogs, making leather shoes, selling homemade soap (later, bicycles).

In time, they would become movie moguls, the bosses of Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, and a young Ronald Reagan.

Eventually, his battered, dust-covered car pulled up at the entrance to the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. “After I got there, I think I slept for the first twenty-four hours,” he recalled.

He had checked into the Biltmore because his friend, the singer, Joy Hodges, had returned for another singing engagement in the nightclub there. He called her to thank her for arranging a screen test for him.

Reluctantly, she admitted why she had stood him up on what was supposed to have been their first date several months before. “You wanted to go riding, and I didn’t have any riding clothes, but I was too ashamed to admit it. Since then I’ve bought an outfit that makes me look like the Queen of the Sagebrush.”

That Sunday, the two of them went riding together. She later admitted, “There was no sexual chemistry between us, in spite of what people said. He was new to Hollywood and lonely, and he needed someone to talk to.”

“I knew he needed some action, so once again, I called my friend, Betty Grable, to the rescue,” Hodges said. “I knew she’d soon be knocking on his door at the Biltmore. Later, when I saw Ronnie in the movies, I realized that I’d missed out on something, and regretted turning him over to Betty.”

[Hodges, had previously appeared with Grable in Old Man Rhythm*.]*

“When I went on a promotional tour with Ronnie, months later, I was about to move in on him, until I learned that both Jane Wyman and Susan Hayward were already fighting over him.”

In spite of Grable’s upcoming marriage in November of 1937 to the former child star, Jackie Coogan, she seemed more than willing to slip around town on Reagan’s arm.

When he asked her about Coogan, she told him, “He’s probably visiting some whorehouse tonight. He likes very experienced gals who will do everything.” She went on to tell him that when she’d first started to date him, she thought Coogan was rich. As a child star, he earned $4 million *[the equivalent of some $50 to $65 million in the U.S. currency of 2014]*.

“But now, I usually have to pick up the restaurant or nightclub tab,” she said. “He has no money. As a grief-stricken 20-year-old, after his father died in an accident, he turned all his assets over to Lillian, his mother. She’s got a greedy lover, Arthur Bernstein.”

[In an interview, Lillian had shamelessly informed the press, “Every dollar a kidearns before he is 21 belongs

to his parents. His money is now mine to spend on fur coats, diamonds, expensive cars—whatever I want. The little devil won't get a cent of it. He's been a bad, bad boy."]

"Jackie went to Chaplin, since he'd made millions for him," Grable said, "but all he got from Chaplin was a thousand dollars."

[Coogan would later sue his mother and Bernstein, but all he rescued from his previous earnings was $126,000. His legal battle with his mother led to the enactment of the California Child Actor's Bill, often called "The Coogan Law," which requires a child actor's employer to set aside 15% of his earnings in a trust.]

One morning, Betty, in her car, drove Reagan around Hollywood, his new home. He had never really seen much of it, and was shocked at buildings painted Halloween orange, chartreuse, or pink. "Out here, we call it pussy pink," Grable said. Her potty mouth sometimes startled him.

As their friendship intensified, Grable got him a pass to enter the grounds of Paramount, where he had lunch with her in the commissary. She told him she was making a movie called *This Way, Please*, starring Charles ("Buddy") Rogers, who was struggling to rescue his sagging film career.

"LeRoy Prinz is my dance instructor," Grable said. "The talented little midget is often screwing around with my fellow starlet, Jane Wyman. He's teaching her dance steps 'movie star style'—among other lessons."

Unlike the women Reagan had previously known, Grable had no hesitation about discussing "Who's screwing who," as she put it. She suggested that she had been shacking up with Rogers ever since they had appeared together in the 1935 *Old Man Rhythm*. "He's not getting much from Mary"

[She was referring to "America's sweetheart," Mary Pickford, who, prior to her decline, had been the most lucrative female star of the silent era. She had married Buddy Rogers in 1937, in the wake of her divorce from Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.]

Later, when Hodges joined Grable and Reagan for a rendezvous, she complimented Reagan on his new eyewear. She turned to Grable, "I got him to get rid of those damn horn rim glasses. Now he's leading man material."

After a few days at the Biltmore, shacked up during some of them with Grable, Reagan moved into less expensive lodgings, in this case, the Hollywood Plaza. His agent, George Ward, had instructed him that he should live closer to Warner Brothers.

On Wednesday, Ward retrieved Reagan at his new hotel for an appointment at Warners. It would be his introduction to the co-producers and director who were thinking about casting him in his first movie role.

"Our agency has high hopes for you," Ward said. "We've already warned one of our highest-paid clients, Robert Taylor, that Warners is aggressively interviewing and grooming his competition. Bob may be prettier, but you're a good looker yourself. At least your shoulders are broader than Bob's, and I'm sure your dick is bigger. Bob is rather deficient in that department."

Such talk embarrassed Reagan. Later that day, he complained to Grable, "Men shouldn't talk about each other's personal equipment that way. I don't like it."

"Get used to it, sweet cheeks," Grable warned him. "Out here in Hollywood, when we're not talking about upcoming pictures, and whether there'll be a role for us, movie stars talk about dick sizes and the measurements of a woman's breasts. Bette Davis said that Hollywood lives in a tit culture. She might have said in a 'tit and dick' culture."

When he was alone, Reagan wrote to Nelle and Jack, informing them that he was having a difficult time adjusting to "this semi-desert environment in a city without a past."

He had heard that immigrant moguls from Eastern Europe, often one-time peddlers and junk dealers, ran the film studios of Hollywood, ruling with iron fists and autocratically hiring and firing dancers, singers, comedians, cowboys, real-life gangsters, beauty queens, and handsome leading men. Many, he learned, had escaped Hitler's "final solution" in the gas chambers of Central Europe, and now lived in harmony with Okies fleeing the Dust Bowl, hundreds of whom worked as laborers in the film studios.

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In his new status as a contract player at Warners, Reagan was paid $200 a week to join a roster of big name stars including James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Errol Flynn, and the queen of the lot, Bette Davis. Humphrey Bogart was also on hand in case a director needed an actor who could play a convincing villain.

Before signing with Warners, Reagan had read whatever he could about the studio.

Jack Warner was its vice president in charge of production. He was one of four Polish-Jewish brothers—Harry, Albert, Sam, and the youngest, Jack himself. Around the turn of the century, each of them had settled in the United States, where they were among the first to envision the future of the movie industry. By 1903, they had opened their

first theater—in Newcastle, Pennsylvania—featuring early films such as *The Great Train Robbery*, a historic short (12 minutes long) silent film.

Depicted here at the peak of his power and glory, Jack Warner, the tycoon who ran Warner Brothers, established his studio, along with his brothers, in Hollywood in 1923. They wanted to escape the licensing fees of the anti-Semitic Thomas A. Edison.

Jack never believed Reagan would be a star—"perhaps a leading man, or the pal of the leading man."

Based on their objections to the payment of licensing fees to Thomas A. Edison, within seven years, they were producing their own films. Edison seemed to dislike Jews intensely, wanting to bar them from an involvement in the movie industry. When the Warner brothers started to produce their own films, Edison accused them of exploiting sex on the screen.

Near the end of World War I, the Warner brothers moved to Los Angeles, opening a studio on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, then a boom town in the making. They scored a big success with "The Wonder Dog," Rin Tin Tin. The dog, an exceptionally intelligent German shepherd, had been brought to America by a soldier who had found it wandering about after his master, a French soldier, was slain by the Germans.

During their early debut in Hollywood, Warners hired wisely, employing Darryl F. Zanuck and the brilliant director, Ernst Lubitsch. In addition, they wisely signed stage actor John Barrymore to a contract, scoring a big hit with *Beau Brummel* (1924).

Before the end of the 1920s, Warners was the first studio to become a pioneer of talkies, although Harry had initially (and loudly) objected. "Who in hell wants to hear an actor talk?"

Jack shot back, "Ever hear of Shakespeare, brother dear?"

Jack ventured into sound, casting Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer*, which featured a limited number of sound segments. It became a sensation, signaling the twilight of the Silents and the end of the careers of many big stars who did not have a voice suitable for Talkies.

In the 1930s, Warners produced musicals along with socially realistic films "drawn from the headlines. After turning out such hit films as *The Public Enemy*, which made James Cagney a star in 1931, and *Little Caesar*, which did the same thing the same year for Edward G. Robinson, Warners became known as the gangster studio.

Their pre-Code Talkies were daring and provocative.

By 1934, censors from the Production Code Administration (PCA), as spearheaded by Joseph Breen, tightened their control over Warners movies, ordering that it restrict itself to more moralistic, less gritty, and more idealized storylines. As a response to their increasingly strident demands, Jack turned to historical dramas, along with swashbucklers, women's pictures, and adaptations of best-selling novels. Some of their pre-Code stars, "tainted" as they were with reputations for sexual profligacy and indiscretion, ended up working for low budget studios along "Poverty Row."

To help buttress the revenues of their A-list pictures, the Warner brothers needed quickies, usually shot in three weeks to a month and sometimes running no more than 60 minutes. Bryan Foy ("The Keeper of the Bs") was hired to supervise and organize their production.

"Brynie," as he was nicknamed, had been the youngest member of the famous vaudeville act, "Eddie Foy and the Seven Little Foys."

Ironically, Ronald Reagan, at Warners—usually under Foy's supervision during the late 1930s, would become

famous as “The King of the Bs,” and as “The Errol Flynn of the Bs.”

Foy himself came out to greet Reagan and welcome him to the studio. Foy told him that he’d been named co-producer of Reagan’s first film, *Love Is On the Air*, a 59-minute B-movie released in 1937. “You’ll play a radio announcer.”

According to the plot, Reagan is an aggressive radio announcer who investigates a local crime wave. When sponsors complain, Reagan is demoted to the humiliating job of hosting a kiddie show on the air. He usurps the job from Jo Hopkins, a character played by June Travis. Eventually, she falls for him and joins his anti-crime crusade. In the end, good guy Reagan triumphs heroically over the mob.

“Type casting,” said Reagan. “I was a radio announcer.”

“But now, you’ve got to become one on the screen, which takes another kind of talent,” Foy cautioned.

The producer handed him a copy of the script. “I’m taking you to meet Jack Warner. He’s a very busy man, and we can’t take more than four or five minutes of his time. He’ll do all the talking. Listen to him as if God himself were speaking. You don’t have to curtsy, but suck up!”

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The flamboyant showman, Jack Warner, lived up to his billing and a magazine’s description of him. “He was always smiling through a tan under his thin, oiled hair.” He was also the self-proclaimed “court jester” at the Roosevelt White House, where, in his capacity as head of Warners, he was a frequent visitor. Like Reagan, Jack was a liberal supporter of the social policies of FDR—a “New Dealer.”

In his $35 suit, Reagan was introduced to Jack in his $1,000 Savile Row tailored clothing, which included a silk handkerchief and a necktie. To Reagan, he was an intimidating figure. Jack did almost all the talking.

“Here at Warners, we’re a peddler of dreams, the creator of illusions,” Jack said. “During the depression, Warners has been the American drug of choice.”

Later, when he was alone, making use of his fantastic memory, Reagan wrote down Jack’s pronouncements.

“With the coming of a World War, which I know is inevitable, we’re hiring patriotic, all-American white Protestant guys like yourself—guys with good looks. Catholics we can cast as priests, Jews as intellectuals. Leggy blondes will play bad gal roles, and aging brunettes will be mothers baking apple pies. Actors with foreign accents will be Nazi spies.”

“We’ve replaced Al Jolson with a very wholesome Dick Powell—no more blackface shit. Negroes will be cast as servants, usually lazy and retarded, just shuffling along. We’ll cast anti-heroes like Bogart with heroic types like yourself.”

“Your agent *[George Ward]* told me you’re a shirt-chasing, red-blooded American boy with a perpetual hard-on—there’s not a homo streak in you. That’ll be a change from our popular hero, Errol Flynn, who will stick it in any hole. That one’s heading for trouble. You’re free to chase after our beautiful starlets, but don’t knock them up. In case you do, we’ve employed a resident abortionist to take care of unwanted babies.”

“Of course, you don’t really have to chase after the skirts. These horny pussies will be calling you. If you’re a stud, our gals will keep you busy. Most of them can’t get enough. I sample a different one every day myself.”

Reagan was finally allowed to say something. In the brief moment allotted, he thanked Jack for letting him become a member of the Warners family.

“You’re welcome, and you seem personable enough,” Jack said. “But don’t get difficult like that god damn mutt, Rin Tin Tin, the Wonder Dog. He was our ‘mortgage lifter’ in the 20s, but I fired him in ’29. The first time I met the beast, he bit off a hunk of my flesh. He often attacked his director, too.”

“I’m eager to cooperate,” Reagan said.

Jack glanced at his watch, “I’ve got Miss Bette Davis waiting, and she’s threatening to scratch my eyes out, wanting better roles. What a bitch!”

In the anteroom to Warner’s office, Reagan was introduced to Hal B. Wallis, who told him he would be the co-producer of *Love Is On the Air*. Reagan shook his hand and said how eager he was to begin shooting his first film. Wallis would later refer to Reagan as “that hick radio announcer from the Middle West.”

Foy then introduced him to Bette Davis, who wore a funny hat. “I’m honored to meet you, Miss Davis,” he said. “I consider you the greatest *tragedienne* on the screen.”

“Of course you do, dear boy,” Davis snapped.

“You were thrilling in *Of Human Bondage,”* he said

“Of course I was,” she replied. “So why didn’t I get the fucking Oscar?”

After she abruptly departed, heading in to Jack’s office, she continued talking. Apparently, Jack had slipped into his adjoining toilet, leaving Bette and Wallis together and alone.

From his position in Warner's anteroom, Reagan heard Davis say, "What a silly boy."

"The kid's name is Ronald Reagan, some hayseed Jack has put under contract," Wallis said. "He was hired to replace Ross Alexander."

"Poor pathetic homo Ross," Davis said. "Even though he was always pestering me to marry him, I was sorry to hear he committed suicide. He thought that by marrying me, his perversion would be camouflaged. It figures that Jack would hire another homo like this Reagan boy to replace Ross."

Wallis suddenly shut the door to Warner's office, and Reagan could hear no more. He was infuriated, but maintained a polite façade. Davis had insulted him, but he didn't dare strike back.

Director Nick Grinde recalled, "I had to teach Reagan how to kiss on camera. He was wet-lip-ping Travis and ruining her makeup. I made the ultimate sacrifice and used my own lips to show the fucker how it's done. He learned fast after that."

Foy sensed his anxiety. "Lesson number one in the film business: Take it on the chin until you have the power to get even."

Foy introduced Reagan to his first-ever film director, Nick Grinde. Grinde was married at the time to actress Marie Wilson, with whom Reagan would work on the 1938 film, *Boy Meets Girl*. Like Reagan, Grinde was from the Middle West, hailing from Wisconsin. He'd written the script for the film *Toyland* (1934), which had co-starred Laurel and Hardy and some of the music (including "March of the Toys") by the noted composer, Victor Herbert.

"I heard you were a radio announcer in Des Moines," Grinde said. "You may end up playing the role of Andy McLeod as yourself."

Co-starring in the film as its second lead was Eddie Acuff, a minor actor and another Middle Westerner who would become better known playing the recurring role of the postman, Mr. Beasley, in the *Blondie* movie series. He and Reagan quickly became friends and started having lunch together in the commissary.

For the remainder of his first day at Warners, George Ward drove him to the Santa Monica Pier. Reagan wanted to go swimming.

As he was emerging from the water, Ward came up to him. "My God, you're an Adonis from the deep. We're going to have to pose you in a bathing suit for publicity photos.

That weekend he arranged for a Warner photographer to take "beefcake" pictures of Reagan in swimwear. *[Of course, they weren't called beefcake back then.]*

Reagan said, "I used to be a four-letter man in college, but I didn't think that gave me an excuse to stick out my chest and expand my biceps publicly, every time someone mentioned the word 'health.'"

Even before the release of *Love Is On the Air*, these beefcake photos, when published, generated fan mail. Most of it originated with teenage girls, but a number of homosexuals wrote to him too, relaying in graphic detail what the letter-writer would do to him if and when he removed his trunks. He found fan mail from either gender embarrassing. "For the first time in my life, I was being treated like a slab of beef."

The next day, he reported to casting director Max Arnow. "Good to see you again, Reagan," he said. He looked him up and down. "Where in hell did you get that bargain basement white jacket? You look like a Filipino refugee." He was then informed that he'd have to supply his own wardrobe. Throughout the course of his involvement in *Love Is On the Air*, there would be a dozen changes of suits, and he owned only four.

He solved that dilemma by "doubling," which involved wearing the same suits at the beginning of the film and again at the end, hoping that the audience would have a brief attention span.

He also met Percival ("Perc") Westmore, who was widely acknowledged as the best makeup artist in Hollywood. Reagan would later become friends with both Westmore and his wife, actress Gloria Dickson. Perc regularly applied the makeup of such Warner stars as Kay Francis and Bette Davis, and was credited with the

creation of thirty-five shades of blonde.

With his razor-sharp instincts, he appraised and evaluated Reagan's physicality: "Your neck's too short, Kid," he said. "Jimmy Cagney has the same problem. I'll send you to his shirt maker, who can design a trick collar that will conceal your deficiency."

Young Reagan, after his transformation by Warners' Wardrobe and Makeup Departments.

He later complained, "Too many homos took liberties with my physique in both makeup and wardrobe, but they did a god damn good job. You've got to hand it to these guys. They're outrageous, but they know their business."

Westmore continued, oblivious to the alarm his appraisals were causing: "And your head is too small. It doesn't leave room for your brain. We'll have to disguise that fact as well, Ronald."

Having been called Dutch for most of his life, Reagan was not yet accustomed to the name "Ronald." Throughout his life, he had always regretted having been named that.

Then Westmore introduced him to the writers in Warner's publicity department, instructing them to "hide the fact that he's a no-necker with a pinhead."

Reagan later said, "It's amazing that Perc and I became friends after all his insults to my physicality."

Almost immediately, the Publicity Department ground out a press release, citing Reagan's broad shoulders and slender waistline. According to the release, the Hollywood newcomer "was almost proficient in every sport, an expert marksman and horseman."

With his newly coiffed pompadour, his hair no longer parted in the middle, Reagan showed up on the set for his kissing scene. Director Grinde was there waiting to introduce him to his leading lady, June Travis.

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Love Is On the Air was a minor crime drama whose plot and premises had already appeared, in another variation, on the screen. Its plot was a rehash of the 1934 movie, the badly titled *Hi, Nellie*, one of Paul Muni's less impressive films. In it, Ronald Reagan, age 26, was making his screen debut.

Reagan was shown a memo that Grinde had received from the Breen office, the official censor of Hollywood films. New to both movie making and to censorship, he read it with embarrassment and astonishment:

"Mr. Reagan, in the role of the radio announcer, must not be unduly exposed in the scene where he strips off his pajamas and starts to dress. If he is photographed in his underwear, make sure he wears white boxer shorts with an athletic supporter underneath. At no point should there be a mound of his genitalia on display, even if it's covered by fabric."

At that point, his leading lady, June Travis, emerged from makeup. With her dark brown hair, her green eyes, and her round, rosy cheeks, she was beautiful, standing 5'4", and relatively new to films. Born in Chicago, she was the daughter of Harry Brabiner, who in the 1930s was vice president of the Chicago White Sox.

Two years earlier, she'd appeared in *Stranded* with Kay Francis and George Brent. Howard Hawks had directed her in *Ceiling Zero* (1936), starring James Cagney and Pat O'Brien. For her role in that film, Amelia Earhart, a friend of her family, had instructed Travis in flying, aeronautical navigation, and parachute jumping.

She was very flirtatious with him. "Those green eyes were practically begging me to take her out…or whatever," he said to Grinde.

During his first hour with Travis, shooting a kissing scene, Reagan got to know her rather well, at least insofar as her succulent lips were concerned. “I was so eager to get at her that I pressed my face against hers so hard I think I turned her features into pudding. Grinde stepped in to teach me how to screen kiss, using his own stinking mouth on mine.”

“You don’t come at a gal with your tongue hanging out like *Tyrannosaurus rex* about to swallow whole some primeval beast.” Then he showed Reagan how to kiss on camera.

“I learned my lesson, which helped me kiss dozens of beautiful stars in my future. It’s true. I had moved toward June’s mouth like there was no tomorrow. I practically sucked the tongue out of her mouth. Grinde told me I had to kiss the girl without shoving her face out of shape. He told me that our lips should barely meet. I had to leave her as beautiful as she was, even though giving the impression of a fervent kiss.”

Working with Travis, Reagan developed his first case of “a disease called *Leadinglady-itis.”* That’s when an actor falls in love with his leading lady and has an affair with her, but only during the shoot. When the picture is wrapped, both parties move on. In some cases, the affair is resumed when the two appear in another picture together. Occasionally, it leads to marriage.” *[Such was the case with Jane Wyman and Reagan when they made* Brother Rat *in 1938.]* It’s also common for an actress to develop “*Leadingman-itis*.”

At the end of their kissing scene, when Travis whispered into his ear, “I want some more of where that came from,” their affair was launched.

That was all the encouragement he needed. For the next three weekends, she was in his arms, mostly when he was alone with her in his bachelor apartment. When they wanted diversion, he took her to shoot clay pigeons in an amusement arcade at the Santa Monica pier.

The ultimate late 30s chic: June Travis, the woman who set the pattern for Reagan’s chronic and oft-repeated syndrome, “LeadingLady-itis.”

“June was a great shot,” he said, “knocking off every clay pigeon in the shooting gallery. She even licked me throwing baseballs at milk bottles. She was also great at water sports and at hockey, a real girl jock in spite of her delicate beauty. She was also a fine horsewoman, as she demonstrated when I took her riding in Griffin Park.”

Travis later told the press that she went out with Reagan on only one date, the focal point of which involved a shooting match at a carnival. When he heard that, Grinde said, “Of course, June said that. but that doesn’t mean we have to believe her. After all, a gal has to protect her reputation in this town.”

One night during dinner together in Hollywood, Reagan and Travis encountered James Cagney, with whom she had previously appeared on the screen. He kissed Travis and chatted with her. Reagan reminded him that he’d conducted an interview with him at his radio station in Des Moines. “I remember that, “Cagney said, “but I have no memory of you. You know, stars meet so many people. It’s all in a day’s work.”

During the short time he knew her, Reagan was getting serious enough with Travis that he contemplated proposing marriage. There was much speculation about why his affair with her ended so abruptly.

As he was to learn painfully, she had another suitor who was also ardently pursuing her. He was Walter Annenberg. A playboy born to a wealthy Jewish family in Milwaukee, he eventually evolved into a major media mogul, philanthropist, and patron of the arts. He showed her a far more glamorous life than Reagan could. Annenberg and Travis were seen cruising together along Hollywood Boulevard in his custom-made Lincoln, at his

luxurious bungalow on the grounds of the Beverly Hills Hotel, and in Palm Springs. He also escorted her to San Simeon, the exclusive mountaintop castle of the press baron, William Randolph Hearst and his actress/mistress, blonde-haired and vivacious Marion Davies.

[Reagan eventually retreated from his affair with Travis, surrendering her to Annenberg. There were no hard feelings. In fact, Annenberg and the woman he eventually married, Leonore Cohn, became best friends with Reagan and Nancy.

After Annenberg convinced Reagan to switch his allegiance from the Democratic Party to the Republicans, he arranged for his friend's first big break: a job as the host of TV's General Electric Theater *from 1954 to 1961. He later encouraged Reagan to enter politics and subsequently became one of his biggest campaign contributors.*

Reagan, with his wife Nancy, often spent New Year's Eve with the Annenbergs at Sunnylands, their palatial winter estate in Rancho Mirage, near Palm Springs. "Although born Jewish, Walter and Leonore, whom we called Lee, did not practice Judaism. Nancy and I often celebrated Easter and Christmas with them," Reagan said.

By this time, Annenberg was a publisher, owning The Philadelphia Inquirer, Seventeen *magazine, and the popular* TV Guide. *As a philanthropist, he donated $2 billion during the course of his lifetime to educational institutions and art galleries.*

Richard Nixon appointed Annenberg ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1969 to 1974. It was Annenberg who introduced Reagan to Britain's "Iron Lady," Margaret Thatcher.

At a reception, President Reagan welcomes his chief backers, the Annenbergs. Reagan later said, "I was never happier than when I rode around Palm Springs on Walter's golf cart."

After Reagan's election as U.S. president, he appointed Leonore as the U.S. State Department's Chief of Protocol.]

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William Hopper, cast in a small role in *Love Is on the Air*, was an engaging and extremely handsome actor, the only child of singer and comic stage actor, DeWolf Hopper, Jr., and actress Hedda Hopper. His mother would become a famous Hollywood gossip columnist, the rival of Louella Parsons.

William is best remembered today for playing detective Paul Drake in more than 250 episodes of TV's long-running Perry Mason series. He is also known for his role as the father of the Natalie Wood character in James Dean's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955).

William had made his film debut when he was one year old. His father had cast him in his 1916 silent movie, *Sunshine Dad*. Hedda divorced DeWolf in 1922, and subsequently moved from New York to Hollywood with her son.

For William, his role in *Love Is On the Air* was a bit of a comedown, since in the same year (1937), he'd been Jane Wyman's leading man in *Public Wedding*, a picture also directed by Nick Grinde. During the shooting of that film, he'd escorted Jane on two dates. William also had a major role that same year, co-starring with Ann Sheridan

in *The Footloose Heiress*. He had also dated Sheridan, mainly for publicity purposes, hoping that their photos would appear in the newspapers.

Ironically, therefore, William Hopper bears the double-barreled honor of having dated Ronald Reagan's future wife, and his longest and most enduring mistress (Ann Sheridan) too.

Voyeuristically, Grinde watched the burgeoning friendship between Reagan and William. "The boy had stars in his eyes every time Ronnie walked onto the set," Grinde recalled. "All of us knew that William was a homosexual—all of us except Ronnie. William dated women as camouflage to conceal his sexual proclivities. He'd later marry twice and serve heroically as a Navy frogman during World War II, but he was always known in Hollywood for having a boyfriend on the side. As William got older, the boyfriends got younger."

At one point, William introduced Reagan to his mother, Hedda, who would become his future political ally. In 1937, Reagan was still a New Deal Democrat, and he interpreted Hedda's opinions as "politically to the right of Attila the Hun."

Hedda Hopper, the vindictive "Hellion of Hollywood," photographed in a rare instance without a hat.

Hedda's son, William Hopper, who worked with Reagan on his first picture, is seen here as Paul Drake on *Perry Mason*, the TV series.

She liked Reagan and told him, "I'm glad to see my boy Billy running around with a real red-blooded American boy and not one of those queers who are always chasing after him."

At the time Reagan met Hedda, her lackluster movie career had nose-dived into cinematic oblivion. "I need a new gig," she told him. To find another source of income, she was developing a new career as a gossip columnist, something she was adept at. On Valentine's Day of 1938, her first column, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," would make its debut in the *Los Angeles Times*.

In Reagan's first picture, *Love Is on the Air*, he appeared with young William Hopper *(left)*. To his chagrin, Reagan learned that he was "becoming the dreamboat of Hopper's sexual fantasies."

William invited Reagan for a weekend of boating offshore from Catalina Island, where his mother had arranged, through a friend, for their occupancy of a small vacation cottage.

Much of that weekend remains a mystery, although Grinde later shed some light on what happened: "Ronnie was incredibly naïve at the time about the ways of Hollywood," Grinde said. "He didn't know it, but William was actually 'dating' him, even though they were taking out two girls at the time. William's real goal involved seducing Ronnie and making him his lover. Hedda's son really had the hots for Ronnie."

"When he returned from Catalina and reported for work on Monday morning, Ronnie was reluctant to talk about his weekend," Grinde said. "I finally got it out of him: The two men had shared a double bed. In the middle of the night, Ronnie was awakened by William going down on him. He pulled away from that encounter in horror and spent the rest of the night on the sofa."

"Most straight actors I've known will let a homo go down on them if no women are available," Grinde said. "Not so Ronnie. I don't think he had a queer streak in him."

"He was very upset, and I tried to wise him up to the ways of Hollywood," Grinde said. "I told him that the industry was populated by homos. 'Every day, a dozen or more are getting off the train at Union Station, fresh from the hinterlands.' I warned him that as a good-looking guy, he'd be solicited, frequently."

"You've got to turn them down firmly but politely," Grinde told Reagan. "They'll be co-starring with you, applying your makeup, styling your hair, dressing you, shooting your publicity stills while you're in a bathing suit, and even directing your pictures. I think you should make up with William, shake his hand and assure him you still want to be friends. Don't treat him like a pariah. He probably feels like a shit because of your rejection. And lest you forget, you certainly don't want to piss off Hedda."

Reagan obviously took Grinde's advice. In a few weeks, he was once again seen on double dates with William, who was escorting actress Isabel Jewell, his arm candy for the evening. At the time, Reagan seemed to be dating a different woman six nights a week. Sundays were reserved for family dinners with Jack and Nelle.

Grinde's advice to Reagan was astute. Hedda's son would play a New York reporter in one of Reagan's most famous films, *Knute Rockne—All American* (1940). In fact, he would appear in an amazing total of nine films with Reagan between 1937 and 1942.

During its filming, Reagan frequently viewed the advance rushes of *Love Is On the Air*. "When I first saw myself on the screen, as others see me, I sank into my seat. I've been doing that in every movie since."

The film opened on November 12, 1937, at the Palace Theater in Manhattan, where it played second fiddle in a double feature that included the prestigious *Stage Door*, starring Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers.

Love Is On the Air, Reagan's quickie, had been cobbled together in just three weeks for a budget of $119,000.

The film's makeup chief, Perc Westmore, had issued a warning to the cameraman: "When Reagan gets tired, his left eye starts to travel."

Although *Love Is On the Air* was akin to a frivolous and minor potboiler, it received generally favorable reviews. The *Hollywood Reporter* defined Reagan as "a natural," and *Variety* labeled him as "a find."

Jack Warner was impressed enough to pick up Reagan's option and raise his salary to $250 a week.

Confidant that he'd succeed as a movie star, Reagan purchased a house in West Hollywood for his parents, Jack and Nelle. He sent them the train fare to Hollywood, and eventually moved them into 9031 Phyllis Avenue, the only home they'd ever owned in their lives.

In failing health, Jack had given up drinking after his heart attack, although he remained a chain smoker. "So Dad won't feel he was on relief," Reagan gave him a job, paying $25 a week, answering his fan mail, which had begun arriving at Warners. He told his father that he didn't have to respond to letters from homosexual men.

With his increase in salary, Reagan moved into a cottage at 1128 Cory Avenue, a block north of Sunset Boulevard. He boasted to his male friends, "It's become known as the love cottage of Hollywood."

Soon, his brother Moon followed his family to Hollywood, and Reagan succeeded in getting him a job as an announcer at WFWB, a radio station owned by Warner Brothers.

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It was Priscilla Lane, the singer and actress, who sought him out when she learned that he had lived in her native state of Iowa. She was from the small college town of Indianola, south of Des Moines, and had sung, live, at the radio station in Des Moines where Reagan had been a sports announcer.

Priscilla was the youngest of the singing Lane Sisters, a trio which included Lola and Rosemary. The sisters had

made their professional debut at Des Moines' Paramount Theater. During his residency in the city, Reagan had been one of the theater's best customers.

Orchestra leader and radio personality Fred Waring heard the Lane sisters and subsequently lured them to Hollywood for appearances with his band, the Pennsylvanians, in the bemusedly frothy *Varsity Show* (1937), starring Dick Powell.

Priscilla turned out to be the most promiscuous of the three sisters, engaging in an affair with Powell before moving on to Wayne Morris, with whom she was later cast in *Love, Honor, and Behave* in 1938. Morris was also dating Jane Wyman, even though she was married at the time to Myron Futterman, who, as a salesman, was often out of town and on the road.

"Priscilla liked to date different men," Waring said. "At Warners, she told me, 'I've died and gone to heaven. So little time, so many men. She got really busy when Busby Berkeley cast her in *Men Are Such Fools* (1938)—one night with Morris, another night with Humphrey Bogart, another co-star in that movie. She also spent an occasional weekend with this handsome newcomer, Ronald Reagan. Warners was a very incestuous place in the late 1930s, with everybody sleeping around with everybody else."

Over their first lunch together in the commissary, Reagan and Priscilla shared different memories of how they broke into show business.

She told him she'd had her first screen test in New York, with two other aspiring actresses, Margaret Sullavan and Katharine Hepburn, whom she described as "a strange-looking girl with her hair slicked back in a sort of bun and with a weird voice. Not very pretty. All three of us were turned down when MGM saw our screen tests. Fortunately, other studios had better taste."

Reagan later recalled, "Priscilla and I came roughly from the same part of America, and both of us were just feeling our way around Hollywood and learning its special kind of morality. My friend Mugs would definitely not approve. The girls I dated didn't go to church on Sunday."

"Nelle met some of my dates. My mother told me, 'I wish you'd find some nice girl and settle down instead of running around with those painted hussies from Warner Brothers.'"

Priscilla became a frequent visitor to Reagan's love cottage. They would sometimes be spotted leaving for the studio together during the early morning hours when it was still dark.

After watching a movie, Priscilla and Reagan often dined together at Barney's Beanery on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. Both of them loved Barney's chili and his cold beer. They always began their meal with his famous onion soup, enjoying it under a crude sign that read FAGOTS *(sic)* STAY OUT.

Priscilla Lane, one of the singing Lane Sisters, liked to make love to her leading men both on and off the screen. Lane courts the young Hollywood newcomer, Ronald Reagan.

Barney, explaining his stance to them, and later to *Life* magazine, which had to censor his provocative comments, said: "I just don't like queers. There's no excuse for them. They'll approach any good looking guy and put the make on him. Anybody who does any recruiting in my place is shown the door. I've seen them take a guy home and turn him into a queer for life. Some guys completely give up with women once a queer has bedded them. That's because a queer will do things no decent woman will do. I say, shoot 'em. Who gives a fuck if one more faggot bites the dust? What I can't understand is why any man in his right mind would prefer plugging a smelly asshole to a juicy pussy."

Reagan said nothing and appeared embarrassed at these comments. Priscilla chimed in, "Barney, you've got a lot to learn about sex, my friend. I understand homos to my toenails. Who wouldn't like dick?"

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Shortly thereafter, Reagan was assigned the lead in another film, *Sergeant Murphy* (1938). He was a last minute choice, based on the fact that the highly temperamental James Cagney had originally intended to star in the film. But Cagney had objected to the final script by Warren Jacobs, based on a true story by Sy Bartlett. With a running time of only 57 minutes, the picture would be directed by B. Reeves Eason, and produced by Bryan Foy ("The Keeper of the Warner Bs") who had been in charge of Reagan's first film.

Sergeant Murphy, set against a backdrop of the pre World-War I U.S. cavalry, was inspired by a racehorse with that name. Eason was a logical choice to direct a picture about horses. He had staged the most famous racing scene in pictures, the frenzied chariot race in the original (1926) version of *Ben Hur*, starring Ramon Novarro and Francis X. Bushman.

In *Sergeant Murphy*, Reagan's starring vehicle, the horse is an expert jumper, but freaks out at the sound of gunfire, which, of course, makes him useless as a military animal. He's destined for a meat factory until Reagan, cast as Private Dennis Murphy, saves his life and acquires him. The horse is smuggled into England, where it enters the prestigious Grand National Steeplechase. The film was a low-budget quickie, so location shooting at the fabled British course was not possible. As a substitute, Eason used the Santa Ana Racetrack in California instead.

He wrote a dispatch to the *Des Moines Register*, claiming, "I'm no hero, but if you're yellow and refuse to risk a few bruises, and occasionally something more serious, you might as well leave Hollywood."

The film would later generate protests from the Screen Actors Guild because real military men were used, denying jobs for Hollywood actors. But Jack Warner, based to some extent on his contacts with the Roosevelt White House, had obtained the permission of Harry Woodring, U.S. Secretary of War. The secretary claimed, "It is essential for the public to see a true picture of the Army rather than one based on a director's imagination."

In *Sergeant Murphy*, on a much more limited scale than what he'd later bring to fruition in 1939, the director made use of Reagan's equestrian skills and his love of horses. After receiving approval from Warners not to use a stunt man, Reagan did his own riding himself. Jack Warner had sent a threatening memo, warning about any cruelty to the horses. "If a horse is forced into a scene where it breaks a leg and has to be put down, I'll break a few legs myself," the studio mogul had threatened.

Eason sent a memo to Foy. "Reagan is very professional, shows up on time, and knows his lines. Unlike many actors I've worked with, he arrives on the set sober."

Cast in the film as the Army's post commander was veteran actor and director, Donald Crisp, a Londoner. Previously, he had played General Ulysses S. Grant in D.W. Griffith's controversial masterpiece, the racist silent drama, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Crisp was an experienced horseman himself, having served as a trooper in the 10th Hussar during the Boer War, where he had befriended a young Winston Churchill.

On the set of *Sergeant Murphy*, Reagan contracted another case of "*Leadinglady-itis*" when he was introduced to an eighteen-year-old Australian beauty, Mary Maguire. Her father was Mickey Maguire, a racehorse owner. "She knew her way around a stable," Reagan said.

At first, Reagan, in uniform, was attracted to “my delicate, petite Aussie,” Mary Maguire.

After the war, he’d have nothing to do with her, having heard that she’d been closely associated “with a coven of British Nazis.”

Almost immediately, she asked him to call her Peggy and told him, “I think you’re one handsome man. You should have been an Aussie. We need more men like you Down Under.”

Reagan was delighted when Eason sent the actors and crew on location to the Monterey Peninsula, the home of the 11th U.S. Cavalry. After work, Reagan and Maguire went together on long, romantic walks along the sea shore, which she claimed reminded her of her native Australia. The red-tiled roofs and adobe buildings, however, evoked the era when Mexico ruled over the land.

They stayed in separate rooms at the local lodge, which was rather elegant, requiring formal wear at dinner.

When the picture was released and the reviews came out, several critics claimed that Reagan appeared to be more in love with Sergeant Murphy (the horse) than with his leading lady. Off the screen, that was not the case.

On several occasions, Eason spotted Maguire leaving Reagan’s bedroom before dawn. When interviewed years later, Eason said, “Reagan’s affair with the sophisticated, smart-talking Priscilla Lane prepared him for his marriage to Jane Wyman, and his romantic fling with Mary Maguire, more demure in demeanor, was a rehearsal for his wedded bliss with Nancy Davis.”

Although only eight years younger than Reagan, Maguire came to view him as a kind of father/lover, according to both Crisp and Eason. A fellow Australian expat, John Farrow (later, the father of actress Mia Farrow), had arranged an interview for Maguire with the casting director at Warners, who ordered a screen test for her.

“So far, I don’t like these *ingénue* roles,” she told Reagan. “I’m a serious actress. The script on this clunker says I’m to say my lines in four different ways, ‘sweetly, frigidly, impulsively, or excitedly.’ How insulting to me as an actress!”

After the location shooting was completed in Monterrey, and after their return to Hollywood, Maguire and Reagan had a strong disagreement. Contrary to Reagan’s strongly expressed advice, she threatened to instigate “a mutiny” against Jack Warner. Ignoring her lover’s caution, she stormed into Warner’s office, demanding better and more dramatic parts, “the kind you assign to Olivia de Havilland or Bette Davis.”

Predictably, the mogul refused. Her militancy led to the abrupt end of Maguire’s career at Warners.

Before her eventual return to England, she paid a farewell visit to Reagan, who seemed to have lost his romantic interest in her, having moved on to other starlets. They shared, however a mutual disappointment in the fact that Warners had delayed the release of *Sergeant Murphy* for eighteen months.

When it was eventually released, its critical reception did virtually nothing for either of their careers.

In reference to *Sergeant Murphy*, film critic Dorothy Masters, writing in *The New York Daily News*, issued a prophetic pronouncement, alluding to the virtually unknown medium of television: “In the movies, only because television isn’t yet equipped to do him justice, Ronald Reagan’s erstwhile radio announcer’s looks and personality scoop out toeholds for a plot that can barely make the grade. These are the thrills attendant to daring horsemanship, comedy is in abundance, but the scenario has no villain (and therefore, no suspense).”

Bert Harland in the *Hollywood Spectator* issued faint praise: “Reagan has gained noticeably in ease, in sureness of gesture, and in ability to get his thoughts and emotions into the camera.”

After her humiliating failure in Hollywood, shunned by the studios because of her outburst in Jack Warner’s office, McGuire moved to England. There, in 1939, she married the controversial British fascist Robert Gordon-Canning, thirty years her senior. The widely detested leader of the British Union of Fascists, he was a rabid anti-Semite.

In the summer of 1940, during the Battle of Britain, he was jailed under the De-fence Regulation Act and not released until 1943.

McGuire wrote to Reagan and others in Hollywood, claiming, “I do not share my husband’s Fascist sympathies. I will not be a party to his political agenda, and I oppose Hitler’s policy regarding the Jews. As you know, I worked with many Jews in Hollywood with no prejudice against these people.”

Maguire divorced her husband in 1945 when he purchased a large marble bust of Hitler from a sale of German Embassy property. Gordon-Canning had announced to the press, “Jesus, 2,000 years ago, was mocked, scorned, and crucified. Today, he is a living force in the hearts and minds of millions of people. The same fate awaits Hitler, a charming and fine man.”

Maguire returned to Hollywood in an attempt to revive her career, but her reputation remained tainted. She later blamed “Hollywood Jews for blocking my return to the screen.”

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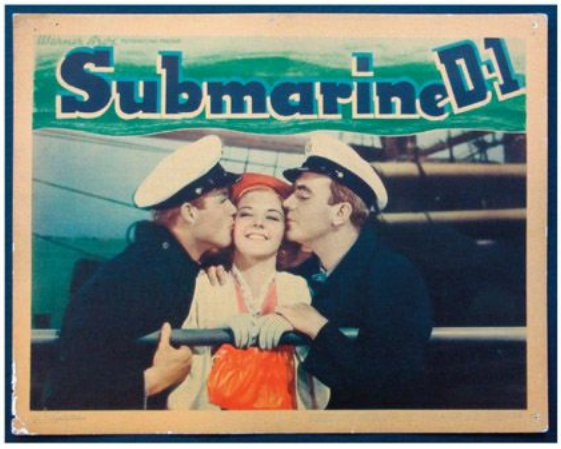

Pictured above: Wayne Morris, Doris Weston, and Pat O’Brien. Reagan ended up on the cutting room floor.

Having been cast as the lead in his first two pictures, Reagan proclaimed, “I’m on top of the world.” Then reality set in. During the context of his next three pictures, he either ended up on the cutting room floor or in bit parts.

He had hardly stripped off his U.S. Cavalry uniform before he had to don the uniform of a Navy flier, and rush south to Coronado, California, where his first A-list movie, *Submarine D-1* (1937), was nearing completion.

Directed by Lloyd Bacon, the film offered many insights into the U.S. Navy submarine force on the eve of World War II.

[One of its plot devices focused on then high-tech new devices, including the Momsen lung, an experimental underwater breathing device which some experts say may have killed more submariners than it rescued.]

Warners had cast three of its A-list male stars as the movie’s male leads: Pat O’Brien, George Brent, and Wayne Morris.

Reagan was disappointed to find that his role was hardly more than a walk-on. As he later wrote, “Some place in the studio higher echelons, it had been decided to provide a surprise ending to the picture so that neither *(sic)* of the three stars would end up with the girl. I would come in as her fiancé in the last reel.”

Uncharacteristically, Reagan didn't succumb to *Leadinglady-itis* after his introduction to Doris Weston, the female star of the picture. They had lunch at a café one day, finding that both of them hailed from Illinois.

The Chicago-born singer, actress, nightclub singer, and radio performer had been chosen to replace Ruby Keeler opposite Dick Powell in *The Singing Marine* (1937).

During lunch, she revealed that while filming *The Singing Marine*, she'd befriended "a cute little thing with a button nose. Her name is Jane Wyman. She saw you in a movie and thought you were good looking. She wants to meet you. I invited her to join us here, but she's needed for a scene."

"Some other time," he said.

On the set, Reagan met Pat O'Brien, a fellow Irishman, who was a close friend of James Cagney. They had become lifelong friends after their first encounter in 1926. During the course of his career, O'Brien became known for playing Irish cops or priests. The Milwaukee-born actor would loom large in Reagan's future. He invited Reagan to join him for lunch and to meet James Cagney. Reagan told him he'd already interviewed Cagney in Des Moines, but the actor hadn't remembered him. Later, during that encounter, Cagney finally remembered being introduced to Reagan.

Another of the film's male leads, Wayne Morris, would also loom in Reagan's future when they had a conflict over who had "squatters' rights" to Jane Wyman. At the time Reagan met Morris, he was also seducing Wyman, as well as Priscilla Lane, Reagan's other girlfriend.

On his second day on the set, Reagan met veteran actor Frank McHugh. This Pennsylvania-born actor had been performing ever since he was a child. He had been a workhorse contract player at Warner's since 1930, playing an occasional lead, but most often a sidekick to the leading man, consistently providing a film's comedy relief.

Veda Ann Borg: A visionary about the future role of television, and a newcomer to Hollywood from Sweden, she preferred her romantic encounters "down and dirty."

McHugh introduced Reagan to the actress, Veda Ann Borg, who had a minor role in *Submarine D-1*.

Born of Swedish parents, Borg was a beautiful, shapely blonde, who had broken into films the same year as Reagan. In her career, she had been in 100 films, including a small role in the 1945 *Mildred Pierce*, starring Joan Crawford. *[Ironically, the daughter in that movie was also named Veda.]*

"Veda had seen Reagan on the set and wanted to meet him," McHugh said. "I sorta played Cupid and brought them together. She accepted his invitation to spend a weekend at his cottage. When I saw her the following Monday, I asked her, 'How did it go?' She was very frank with me, almost too frank."

She told him, "It was good, clean fun in the missionary style. But as Wayne Morris and George Brent can tell you—yes, I've had both of them, too—I like it more lowdown and dirty."

Reagan's fling with Borg lasted for a few months, but in 1939, he visited her in the hospital after a car crash. She had been so badly injured that plastic surgeons had to drastically reconstruct her face.

She was one of the first actresses in Hollywood to recognize the importance of television. When she met with Reagan in the 1950s, she recommended that he, too, enter the medium. In time, he agreed, becoming the host and occasional star of the *General Electric Theater*. Perhaps based to some extent on his influence there, she eventually appeared in one of G.E.'s televised dramas.

McHugh also introduced Reagan to George Brent, who had the second male lead. He was one of Warner's major leading men and a famous womanizer in Hollywood. "Morris dates B-movie starlets," McHugh told Reagan. "Brent, on the other hand, goes for the big names—Bette, Olivia, Garbo, and Young."

[He was referring to Brent's affairs with Bette Davis (his costar in Housewife; *'34)*; *Olivia de Havilland when she wasn't otherwise occupied with Errol Flynn; Greta Garbo (his costar in* The Painted Veil; '34); and *Loretta Young (his co-star in* They Call It Sin; *'32). When Brent bothered to come home, he was married to Ruth Chatterton (his co-star in* The Rich Are Always With Us; *'32)*.

In the early 1940s, Reagan and Brent would conflict over yet another movie star, Ann Sheridan.]

At the last minute, the script of *Submarine D-1* was drastically revised. Reagan's scenes ended up on the cutting room floor, and Morris got the girl (Doris Weston). Ironically, however, before the film's release, based on subsequent cuts and edits, none of these four men, including Reagan, got the girl. In the final reel, their love and patriotic dedication to their submarine won the hearts of all four of the Navy men.

Reagan had originally been publicized as one of the stars of the film. Amazingly, he got fan mail praising his performance, even though he was not in the final cut. "After that, I learned to take fan mail with a grain of salt."

That Saturday night, Reagan was on a date with Priscilla. "Guess what?" he said. "I've been assigned another picture, although I don't know in which role. It's called *Hollywood Hotel*, and your two sisters, Rosemary and Lola, have already been cast in it."

"I know, I know," she said, showing irritation. "I've warned my bitch sisters that I saw you first."

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Priscilla Lane need not have worried that Reagan would become intimately involved with either of her sisters, Rosemary or Lola, during the filming of *Hollywood Hotel* (1937). All he managed was a brief handshake and a hello to each singer.

His role as a radio announcer was small. It involved an appearance with Louella Parsons, publicized at the time as "the Queen of Hollywood," because of her gossip column, which was religiously read by everybody in the film industry as well as by the public at large.

Whether he was scheduled for a scene that day or not, he showed up every day for lunch and for talks with the film's other actors and top-rated musicians. He had never been included within such an A-list cast of star players before.

Dick Powell, the star of the movie, formed a bond with Reagan, becoming his favorite golfing partner. Likewise, Jane Wyman, cast in other pictures, was also forming a bond with Joan Blondell, who would soon marry Powell.

Joining the singing Lane sisters (Rosemary and Lola) was another popular singer of that era, Frances Langford.

As Mona Marshall, Lola delivered a strong comedic performance, showing she could act as well as sing.

The director, Busby Berkeley, had assigned Reagan only a small role. Jerry Wald wrote the weak script. The movie was helped by the wonderful songs of Johnny Mercer and Richard Whiting, as interpreted by Benny Goodman and his or chestra.

Reagan, who derived from the same town (Dixon, Illinois) as the dreaded columnist, Louella Parsons, appeared in her star-studded revue, *Hollywood Hotel*.

From left to right, Lola Lane, Dick Powell, Ted Healy, Reagan himself, and Allyn Joslyn.

"Busby's personal tribulations seem to weigh heavily on him, and about the last thing he wanted to do was direct *Hollywood Hotel,"* Reagan said. "Privately, the stars complained that he wasn't telling them what to do, and I didn't like my role, especially as I had been the star in my last efforts."

Reagan had lunch with Wald, who at the time was a writer at Warners, although he'd later become more celebrated as a producer. He was the same age as Reagan, and would play a future role in the careers of both Reagan and Jane Wyman. Wald was the inspiration for the horrid character of Sammy Glick in the Budd Schulberg novel, *What Makes Sammy Run?*

Reagan found him intimidating, or, as film critic David Thomson described him, "Certainly, he was a vulgarian in the David O. Selznick mold, combining a brutal instinct for the lowest common denominator with earnest literary pretensions."

Reagan formed many relationships during the filming of *Hollywood Hotel*, notably with Parsons herself. When she learned that he, too, was from Dixon, Illinois, she was immediately taken with him, admiring his good looks and athletic build. She began to promote him in her column, defining him frequently, in print, as one of the most exciting newcomers to Hollywood.

The idea for the film grew out of Parsons' radio show, which was also called "Hollywood Hotel." Launched in 1934 and sponsored by Campbell's Soup, the program became one of the most listened to in America. The audience thought it was coming from a glamorous hotel, but in reality it was broadcast from a dreary booth at a radio station.

William Paley, head of CBS, had come up with the idea for Parson's radio program, and for four years running, it was one of the most popular on the airwaves. On a typical show, its Master of Ceremonies, Dick Powell, sang at least one song, and Frances Langford came out and did a blues number.

Stars who included Jean Harlow and Clark Gable showed up for chats with Parsons, who interviewed them about their latest happenings, which usually meant they had a new movie to promote. In those days, most stars got $1,000 for an appearance on radio, but in this case, Parsons gave each of them a crate of canned soup, usually tomato, as a gift from the sponsor.

The plot of *Hollywood Hotel* (the movie) was relatively simple. Powell, the lead, played a singer and saxophone player, Ronnie Bowers, in the immediate aftermath of signing a ten-week movie contract. His (now redundant) employer, Benny Goodman, with his band, gives him an enthusiastic send-off, performing "Hooray for Hollywood," as composed by Johnny Mercer, as part of the farewell. The number is belted into a microphone, onstage, by Langford and Johnnie Davis, an actor, singer, and trumpeter from Indiana who was making his film debut.

"Hooray for Hollywood" (the song) became a standard and is still performed at movie award ceremonies, including some of the annual Academy Award presentations.

As part of the film's zany plot, Lola Lane, cast as the temperamental star Mona Marshall, doesn't show up for a premiere. Instead, her lookalike, played by Lola's real-life sister, Rosemary Lane, appears as an emergency substitute, fooling both Parsons and Reagan. Thus follows a series of convoluted misadventures, with the character played by Powell eventually falling for Virginia (Rosemary), who works as a waitress.

Eddie Acuff *(left)* was Reagan's confidant, but did a poor job of keeping his secrets.

Two future movie stars, blonde-haired Carole Landis, and a redhead, Susan Hayward, appear in the film in uncredited roles. *[Reagan would become intimately involved with both of them.]* Landis was cast in the film as "the most glamorous hatcheck girl in Hollywood," helping Mona's daffy father, Hugh Herbert, on with his overcoat. At the age of nineteen, Hayward played the role of "a starlet at table."

On the set, Reagan arranged a reunion with actor Eddie Acuff, who had been his co-star in *Love Is On the Air*. Acuff later recalled, "Reagan and I often had a drink together afterwork. His reputation as a Hollywood horndog began on the set of *Hollywood Hotel*. I think he was trying to topple Errol Flynn's seduction record. Apparently,

Reagan didn't make it with Rosemary and Lola Lane; he had already had Priscilla. He seemed to be lusting after Glenda Farrell, Frances Langford, Carole Landis, and especially a newcomer, Susan Hayward, who made the mistake of falling in love with him. He dated all of them, even though Frances was married to Jon Hall and our director, Busby Berkeley, was banging Landis. Undoubtedly, never again in his screen career would he meet so many beautiful young starlets willing to do his bidding. You might say that *Hollywood Hotel* represents the peak of his off-screen career as a Don Juan with a roving eye. Of course, never again would he be so young, so virile, and look that great, either."

"That Reagan was a sneaky little devil when he came to getting some nookie," Acuff continued. "That year I also made a picture called *The Singing Marine*, in which this cute little dish, Jane Wyman, had a small part. I took her out on two occasions, but I don't think she dug me at all. I was no Casanova like Reagan."

The film had an array of big name musicians, and Reagan often took his dates to hear one of the stars perform in the local nightclubs. He met Johnny Mercer, "The Genial Southern Gent from Savannah."

After talking with Reagan, Mercer said, "You'd be perfect for the role of Ashley Wilkes."

"Who in hell is Ashley Wilkes?" Reagan asked.

"That means you haven't read Margaret Mitchell's novel, *Gone With the Wind,"* Mercer said. "I hear Jack Warner might buy it. You could be Ashley, with Errol Flynn in the male lead as Rhett Butler, and with Bette Davis playing Scarlett O'Hara."

"I'll try to get a copy of it," Reagan said.

Later, Parsons shared some indiscreet gossip about Mercer: "He's a perfect gentleman during the day. But at night, he can become vicious when he hangs out with Bing Crosby's hard-drinking cronies. Bing is dating this starlet, Jane Wyman, who is right cute."

"My God," Reagan said. "Everybody I meet keeps talking about this Jane Wyman."

"The other night at this out-of-the-way club, Mercer got really loaded and wrecked the joint," Parsons said. "Bing paid for all the damages."

Reagan also met Georgia-born Harry James, who had appeared with Benny Goodman's Orchestra before assembling his own swing band. In 1939, James became the first director of a "big-name band" to hire the young vocalist, Frank Sinatra. Reagan was conducting an on-again, off-again affair at the time, as mentioned previously, with Betty Grable, who would later marry James after her divorce from Jackie Coogan.

Reagan also met Gene Krupa, a jazz and big band drummer, known for his high energy and flamboyant style. The Chicago-born musician invited Reagan to hear him play in a local dive. After watching his performance, Reagan defined him as "a Ball of Fire."

[In an ironic touch, Ball of Fire *became the name of a 1941 film in which Krupa made a cameo appearance with Barbara Stanwyck and Gary Cooper.]*

Reagan was also drawn to Lionel Hampton. An African-American from Louisville, Kentucky, and the first jazz Vibraphone player, he was destined to become one of the great names in jazz history.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Reagan was not a bigot and was delighted to hear Hampton performing with the first racially integrated jazz group. As a drummer, Hampton performed stunts with several pairs of sticks, twirling and juggling without missing a beat.

Hampton later said, "Those were hard days in 1937. Appearing with white musicians made it possible for Negroes to have their chance in baseball and other fields."

While hanging out with the stars of *Hollywood Hotel*, Reagan for the first time became interested in "the politics of the screen actor," a commitment that would lead to his election, in 1941, to the Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild.

Ted Healy, murdered by Wallace Beery

He quickly learned that most actors were narcissistic, and didn't want to talk about anything except themselves. In contrast, he was genuinely interested in their welfare, as he would demonstrate as president of the Screen Actors Guild.

"I also learned the ropes of the movie business by listening to veteran actors share their experiences with me," he said. "Those actors were Allyn Joslyn, Alan Mowbray, and Ted Healy. My experiences with each of them was different, but very enlightening in the ways of Hollywood."

After meeting Ted Healy one day on the set, the Texan invited him to bring a date and join him and his wife, Betty Hickman, to hear Gene Krupa on the drums. Healy had been instrumental in launching the slapstick comedy style of The Three Stooges. He appeared on stage with them until they broke with him in 1931 after a dispute over a movie contract. He had seen better days, having made a staggering (for the time) $9,000 a week when he was the highest-paid performer in vaudeville.

Reagan, with Priscilla Lane on his arm, found the Healys delightful and amusing company, and a friendship was formed. "Let's do this again," Healy said at the end of the evening. He would later call and invite Reagan and Priscilla to a New Year's Eve party scheduled at his house.

They never attended that party. On December 21, 1937, Reagan was listening to the radio when he heard that Healy had died suddenly at the age of 41. Initial reports listed the cause of death as a heart attack. However, it was later reported that immediately prior to his death, he had suffered recent wounds, including a "discolored" left eye, a deep cut over his right eye, and bruises on his head, neck, and chest. Witnesses claimed that he had been involved in some altercation the night of his death at the Trocadero nightclub on Sunset Strip. His assailants were identified as a trio of "college boys."

Months later, the real culprits were revealed, but no charges were ever filed against them for either murder or manslaughter. The leader of the attack was said to have been actor Wallace Beery, the gravel-voiced, jowly, superstar and a "lovable lug" onscreen in many an MGM film. His cohorts were Albert ("Cubby") Broccoli, later a producer of the James Bond films. Pat DiCicco, Cubby's cousin, was also said to have been involved. He was no stranger to scandal, having been implicated in the murder of his first wife, actress Thelma Todd. He later entered into an unsuccessful marriage to heiress Gloria Vanderbilt, during which he brutalized her.

Reagan later said, "Hollywood is good at covering up a scandal and letting the real culprits take a walk."

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During the filming of *Hollywood Hotel*, its producer, Hal B. Wallis, had shown up on the day where a shot involved Louella Parsons. He lavishly greeted her. When she left "to check my makeup," he turned to Reagan. "I cast her because I decided that no one can play Louella better than Louella."

Perc Westmore had applied both Reagan's and Parson's makeup that day, and Orry-Kelly had created a simple black dress for her as a means of making her appear thinner. He then borrowed $165,000 worth of jewelry, a virtual fortune back them, to add to her glamour.

As Parson's biographer, George Eels, wrote: "During the filming, when Louella saw Lola Lane's splashy movie queen gown, she found her simple black too drab. When Orry-Kelly refused to give her another, Louella screamed, swore, threatened, and threw a full-fledged tantrum. Finally, the temperamental designer, who was accustomed to having his way—even with stars—pretended to give in. The result: He designed a gown for Louella that made her

look like a large floating island."

Weeks later, Reagan, a fellow by-product of Dixon, Illinois, escorted a very nervous Parsons to a screening of their newest film. "In the dark theater that awful night, I thought I heard a local critic laugh loudly when I appeared on the screen," she later wrote.

Grabbing Reagan's hand, she rushed, sobbing, out of the theater and into the street. "I have never been so unhappy in my life."

So was Reagan. He protested, "But, Louella, my scene has not come up yet. You left too soon!"

***

When Reagan met Glenda Farrell on the set of *Hollywood Hotel*, he didn't really want to date her. She had made several flirtatious advances toward him, each of which he had ignored. "She's practically begging me to take her to bed," he confided to Acuff, "but she's not my type. She's a bit trashy, if you ask me."

"She got her start in Hollywood working in a whorehouse," Acuff told him.

"The Blonde from Oklahoma," as she was sometimes billed, was seven years older than Reagan, having migrated to Hollywood at the end of the Silent era. Her big break came in July of 1930 when she was given the female lead in *Little Caesar*, starring Edward G. Robinson. Along with another brassy blonde, Joan Blondell, Farrell personified a wise-cracking, hard-boiled, and somewhat dizzy blonde—an on screen archetype during the early talkies.

Farrell carved out a niche for herself playing the articulate and street-smart Torchy Blane, girl reporter. Billed as "The Lady Bloodhound With a Nose for News," she was shoehorned into one of the limited roles in American cinema that positively portrayed women as competent, career-oriented, and self-reliant. As Torchy, Farrell solved crimes that baffled the police.

When Reagan met Farrell, she was between husbands, and occasionally dating, among others, fellow contract player Humphrey Bogart.

Late one night, when Reagan was alone in his cottage reading a script, there was a knock on his door. When he opened it, he discovered Farrell standing there in a mink coat she'd borrowed from wardrobe.

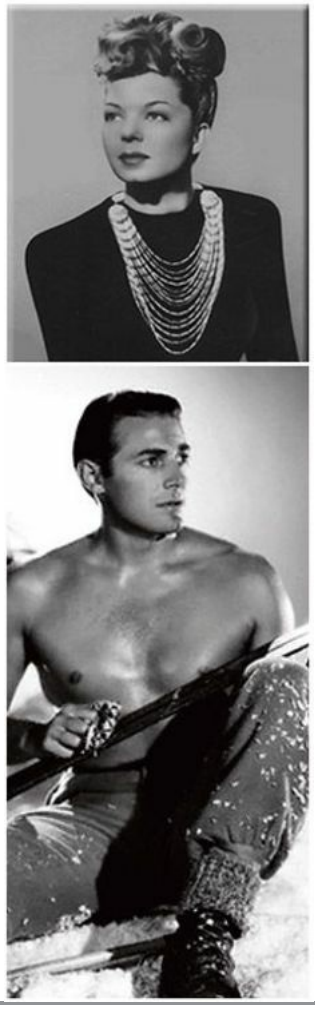
He invited her in, perhaps beginning to reappraise her. She was more beautiful at night, or so it seemed, standing 5'4", with devilish blue-green eyes.

It was a cool night in Los Angeles, and she kept on her coat as he went to mix her a drink.

As he shared a cocktail with her in front of his fireplace, she talked about herself, as did most of the actresses he met.

Her father was a horse trader of Irish and Cherokee descent, and she'd made her first appearance on the stage playing Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* at a theater in Wichita, Kansas. "At every performance, I went to heaven on a pulley," she said.

Long before Shirley Temple acquired squatter's rights to *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1938), Farrell had appeared in the role as a child actor on a stage in San Diego.



Before she married Elliott Roosevelt, singer Frances Langford *(above)* was wed to Jon Hall *(lower photo)*, famous on screen for wearing a sarong.

Known as "the swinging duo" of Hollywood, Frances and Jon invited Reagan for a *ménage à trois*.

After her drink was downed, Farrell stood up before him.

"You're leaving?" he asked.

"No, but we both have an early call," she said, "so I figured time is wasting." In front of the flickering light of the fireplace, she opened the mink coat, letting it glide to the floor. She was completely nude underneath it. "Hop to it, big boy," she ordered.

***

As a frequent listener to Parson's "Hollywood Hotel" radio show, Reagan had often heard Florida-born Frances Langford sing, especially her cheerfully upbeat signature songs, "I'm In the Mood For Love," and "You Are My Lucky Star," both of which were among his favorites.

Short (5'1" tall), vivacious, and pretty, she had made her film debut two years earlier in *Every Night at Eight* (1935). He was aware that she'd married the B-actor Jon Hall in 1934. Tall, athletic, and handsome, he was the scantily clad star currently appearing with another relative newcomer, Dorothy Lamour, in *The Hurricane* (1937), which eventually became a box office success and later, a camp classic.

Over lunch, as the talk drifted to relationships, Langford suggested that Reagan not get married: "Better that you remain the most sought-after bachelor in Hollywood."

"I fear you flatter me," he said, modestly.

"I'm finding marriage a roller-coaster ride," she said. "It's very difficult maintaining both a marriage and career,

too. “

“I plan to get married in the future, as I keep telling people,” he said. “But right now, I’m having too good a time. A wifey and kiddie will have to wait.”

“Jon and I seem to operate on different time schedules,” she said. “When I’m home, he’s off somewhere. First, he’s got to settle on a name. He appeared in pictures first as Charles Locher and later as Lloyd Crane before becoming Jon Hall. He’s not much of an actor, but if he sticks to swashbucklers, fairy tales, Westerns, and South Sea adventure films, he’ll do all right. He’s got a great body, especially when he appears in a male sarong. Speaking of great bodies, you seem to have one yourself.”

“I don’t think it wise for me to strip down here in the commissary,” he said.

“I agree, but why not come over Saturday afternoon and go swimming with Jon and me in our pool, followed by a barbecue?”

“That sounds wonderful,” he said. “I need to make new friends. Right now, my social life consists of a series of dates, no real friends.”

“As actors just sinking their teeth into Hollywood, I’m sure you and Jon will have much to talk about,” she said. “I might even sing ‘You Are My Lucky Star’ for you.”

“That would be swell,” he said. “Should I bring a date?”

“No, just yourself. We can entertain you.”

The following Monday over lunch, Acuff pressed Reagan for details of his Saturday night fiesta with Jon Hall and Frances Langford.

Reagan seemed reluctant to talk about it. “A bomb. I’ve heard about decadent lives in the movie colony. On Saturday night, I experienced it. Frances and Jon are the weirdest couple I’ve met out here.”

“I should have warned you,” Acuff said. “They throw some wild parties and occasionally have orgies. At some parties, Jon strips down and masturbates while a circle forms around him, urging him on.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” he said.

“I think I know what happened,” Acuff said. “They tried to lure into a three-way?”

“Right you are.”

“Did you enjoy it?” Acuff asked.

“Like hell, I did,” Reagan said. “After thanking Frances for her barbecue, I got up and walked out the door. I won’t go there again. Even if the setup had been with two gals and me, I still wouldn’t have gone for it. I may be a bit square, but I believe in one man, one woman at a time. Of course, for variety’s sake, there can be two or three ladies within the same week, but only one at a time.”

After seducing Betty Grable, Reagan took on her chief rival at Fox, Carole Landis *(above)*, the “Queen of Cheesecake.”

"At some parties, I've seen a guy screwing a gal while another guy bangs him at the same time," Acuff said. "I might try that myself one night."

"That's disgusting," Reagan said. "Let's change the subject."

At that point, Acuff signaled to a young, blonde actress carrying her lunch on a tray to come and share their table. She walked over. He said, "Ronald Reagan, meet Carole Landis, who's got this bit part in *Hollywood Hotel*. She's god's gift to all cheesecake shutterbugs."

After smiling and shaking Reagan's hand, she signaled she'd be right back after rushing off to get a Coke.

When she was out of earshot, Acuff whispered to Reagan. "Carole might be a new experience for you if you decide to take on two gals at the same time. She sleeps with both men and women, so it might be interesting. At least you'd get to see two gals in action at the same time."

"Eddie, I think you're one great guy, but did anyone tell you you're a real sickie?"

***

After meeting Carole Landis, Reagan wasted no time in asking her out on a date. Unknown to him at the time, the blonde goddess (whose measurements were widely publicized at the time as 37-24-35), had launched a torrid affair with Busby Berkeley, whom she called "Buz." He had been instrumental in getting her a minor part in *Hollywood Hotel*.

She concealed that fact from Reagan, but suggested that she did not want to accompany him, publicly, to a nightclub. Presumably, that might have made Berkeley suspicious and jealous.

"In that case, why not drop by my place for a supper?" he asked. "That is, if you like grilled hamburgers and spinach salad, my specialties."

That night, she arrived promptly at seven for drinks, followed by a simple yet tasty dinner he cooked himself.

He liked to exchange stories and experiences with all newcomers to Hollywood. He told her how easy it had been for him to get a screen test and a contract at Warners.

"Your life seems so conventional," she said. "My becoming a Hollywood starlet took a more circuitous route. If a film were ever made of my life, it would have to star Jean Harlow."

Landis' father had been a "drifting railroad mechanic" from Wisconsin, who had left home before she was born with the name of Frances Lillian Mary Ridste. She had been the youngest of five children. Tragically, two of her brothers had died young and violently. They included Jerome who, as a 17-month-old baby, was fatally scalded to death when a pot of boiling water spilled on him. Later, her 11-year-old brother, Lewis, was accidentally shot by a "gun nut" next door. He had been recklessly firing at some crows perched on his fence.

She told Reagan that just before she had dropped out of high school at the age of fifteen, she had tried to join the football team.

"A girl on the team?" he asked. "That would have caused a riot in the locker room, especially when the guys went to take a shower."

"That's what the coach thought, too," she said, "so I formed an all-female football team."

Reagan was reluctant to get involved with a married woman, and he pointedly asked her if she had a husband.

"Yes, unfortunately, and I'm still married to the jerk. He stole his father's car and we eloped to Yuma, Arizona, in January of 1934. He told me his name was Irving Wheeler and that he was a writer. Age nineteen. Actually, his name was Jack Roberts, and he was a part-time usher in a movie theater—and a full-time sleazeball."

She said that the marriage had lasted for only twenty-five days, and that her mother had arranged for it to be annulled before the end of February.

"Stupidly, we slipped away again and remarried on August 25. That time, the marriage lasted just three weeks. He was into it for the sex. When we weren't having sex, we fought all the time."

"Why haven't you gotten a divorce?" he asked.

"I've been meaning to, but I haven't gotten around to it yet."

"You should, you know. What if you meet some guy you'd like to marry?"

"You mean, like yourself?"

"I didn't exactly mean *that*."

After running away from her teenage husband, Landis arrived in San Francisco "with exactly $16.82 in my flimsy little purse."

"I went to all the clubs, trying to find a job as a showgirl," she said. "Nothing. I got a lot of propositions. Older guys just love to screw teenagers. I'm not proud of it, but for a time, I worked as a call girl. A gal has to do what a gal has to do."

She revealed why she had changed her name to Carole Landis, the Carole coming from her favorite star, Carole

Lombard. “I dyed my hair blonde, and that seemed to work. Two days later, I was hired as a hula dancer at a night club, although I didn’t know my left foot from my right.”

When she’d saved up enough money, she took the train from San Francisco to Los Angeles. “Unlike you, I auditioned for bit parts on the casting couch.”

Then, she revealed to him that she was currently involved in a torrid affair with Berkeley.

“Studio heads like Jack Warner routinely demand sex from their wannabe starlets. Unless you’re a super star, you’ve got to trade sex for a bit part in almost any picture. Right now, I’m, appearing in more films, albeit shitty little parts, than any other actress in Hollywood, all coming from my lying on that damn casting couch.”

[She was not exaggerating. In 1937 alone, the year Reagan started out in films, Landis was cast in at least ten films, maybe more, since some of her scenes in movies ended up on the cutting room floor.]

“Unlike you ladies, being a man, I’ll never be called upon to lie on any casting couch,” Reagan said. “It doesn’t work that way for guys.”

“Like hell it doesn’t!” she answered. “You haven’t been asked to drop your pants because you haven’t worked with a queer director yet. I predict your day will come. With all the homos directing pictures these days, you’ll get propositioned!”

“If any director ever comes on to me like that, he’ll end up with a bloody nose,” Reagan answered.

“You should be more cooperative. John Wayne didn’t have a problem dropping his pants for John Ford. Hell, Gary Cooper got hired as a stuntman by bedding Rudolph Valentino. And later, during the making of *Wings*, he even had to make whoopee with Howard Hughes.”

“I never knew that,” Reagan said. “It’s hard to believe. They’re such he-men.”

“Those are the ones the queers go after,” she said. “You’re very good looking and— although I’m not entirely sure—you seem to have a great body hidden under all those clothes.”

“Thanks,” he said. “Maybe you’ll see more of it before the night ends. But tell me about some other films you worked on.”

“I slept with Mervyn LeRoy, the director, as a means of getting a part in *The King and the Chorus Girl* (1937),” she said. “LeRoy kept me busy when he wasn’t balling Lana Turner.”

She revealed that her unwanted husband, then billing himself as Irving Wheeler, once showed up on the set. “I got LeRoy to give him a tiny little part in *The King and the Chorus Girl*, but Jack has no talent at all. The last I heard from him, he was selling his big dick to queers cruising Hollywood Boulevard. He charges five dollars for a blow-job, more if a homo wants rough sex.”

“During the filming of that chorus girl turkey, I made friends with another chorine named Jane Wyman,” she said.

“There’s that name again,” he said. “It seems everybody I meet has just seen Jane Wyman.”

“Jane and I started out as rivals,” Landis said. “She and I both wanted to be moved to the front of the chorus line. But partly because LeRoy was screwing me at the time, I got the spot. Jane plays around a bit, but there’s no one else like ‘legs apart’ Landis here.”

Over cognac at the end of their meal, she shared some of her ambitions and fears. “I want to prove myself as a real actress and not be known as some curvaceous cutie. I desperately want to be a star, and I don’t want to end up like most film actresses, living in some sleazy rooming house and sleeping on a piss-stained mattress, with an empty liquor bottle beside me, a woman with full scrapbooks of past successes, but with an empty stomach.”

“It’s getting late,” she said, starting to unbutton her blouse. “In case Busby won’t propose to me, you might be interested. I fully believe a man should try out a woman before proposing to her.”

“My mother, Nelle, wouldn’t agree,” he said. “And if I had a daughter, I wouldn’t advocate that. But for myself, I believe it.”

“Then you don’t mind if I sleep over tonight?” she asked.

“It would be a dream come true,” he said.

[In the weeks, months, and even years to follow, Reagan must have found sex with Landis most agreeable. Their affair would continue through the early years of his marriage to Jane Wyman.]

Reagan’s friend, Eddie Acuff, was kept abreast of the Landis/Reagan affair. After all, he was the man who introduced them. He later commented on their special relationship.

“I think they had different reasons for being attracted to each other, aside from the sex, which I heard was good. Carole told me that herself.”

“Although Carole had a brother, Lawrence Ridste, still left, they never saw each other,” Acuff said. “Reagan became not only her lover, but a big brother to her. She told me that she could depend on Reagan for good, solid advice, even though she lived on the sharp edge of the sword.”

“His attraction to her, however, was harder to figure. Of course, she was a blonde cutie, and that’s enough for

most men. But it was more than that. There was a side of Reagan that he never wanted people to know about, a darker side. In spite of his philandering during his early days at Warners, he was still known as Mr. Goodie Two-Shoes. He maintained that reputation regardless of his private life."

"Carole was that bad girl type Reagan's mother had warned him about," Acuff continued. "It was like a Jewish mama warning her little Bernie, or whomever, about the forbidden fruit, a blonde, gentile, Christian *Shiksa*."

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Acuff also became aware of an even more tempestuous affair Reagan launched during the shooting of *Hollywood Hotel*. It was with another "dress extra" (i.e., "bit player"), Susan Hayward, a fiery, short-tempered redhead from Brooklyn. While he was having lunch with Acuff in the commissary, Hayward came right up to Reagan and sat down beside him.

Her opening line was a new one for him: "This is your lucky day."

"Hi, I'm Ronald Reagan."

"And I'm Susan Hayward," she said provocatively and seductively.

"Is this the beginning of a beautiful friendship?" he asked.

Acuff later recalled, "Susan and Reagan just ignored me, caught up in their own private flirtation. I was witnessing the beginning of his most tumultuous, even violent, affair of the 30s. The question was, was he man enough to handle a firecracker like Hayward? Correction: I mean 'a stick of dynamite' like Hayward."

Chapter Three

Jane Wyman

The Chorus Girl Cutie Successfully Pursues Clark Gable, Henry Fonda, & Robert Taylor

Overdressed, Ambitious, & Adorned with Fake Jewelry, "The Hey-Hey Girl" Dances the Night Away

She was just a plucky young woman with a baby face spotlighted by a pug nose. Her talent was wasted in uninspired musicals, *clichéd* Westerns, insipid comedies, and amateur detective stories. But then the girl discovered she could make you cry in *Johnny Belinda* ('48).

As Jane herself claimed, "It was a hell of a long trip getting there, even if it took a movie of uncut corn to do it for me."

At Warner Brothers, and for the first time, Sarah Jane Fulks was billed as Jane Wyman when she was assigned a small speaking part in *Stage Struck (1936)*, starring Dick Powell, Warren William, and Joan Blondell, who stole the picture.

Hey-Hey-Hey, from Jane Wyman, the Hey-Hey Girl.

Jack Warner had decided to give Jane what the studio called "the build-up" to see if fans gravitated to her. "We don't really have a star here," he said. "Maybe a gal pal to a star."

The studio's casting director, Max Arnow, told Warner, "This Wyman gal has something, but I can't figure out what it is."

The build-up seemed designed to turn her into a major rival of the studio's other wisecracking chorus girl types, as exemplified by Blondell and Glenda Farrell.

As Jane posed endlessly for countless cheesecake photos and "girlie shots," the studio coaches went to work on her image, giving her dancing, singing, and acting lessons. Perc Westmore, the studio's resident makeup genius, worked on her face. In addition, a voice coach was brought in, as her speech was considered at the time as "unsteady."

As part of the campaign to improve her public image, men from the studio's wardrobe department told her she should tone down her clothing. She had become known for overdressing, having frequently appeared in "overly flamboyant" garb during nighttime excursions to the Cocoanut Grove or the Trocadero. Since she couldn't afford real jewelry, she had adorned herself with fake emeralds and diamonds.

Yet even when the wardrobe department critiqued her for "dressing like a Saturday night floozie seeking a sailor pickup who's been at sea for six months," she refused to listen.

During her filming of *Stage Struck*, she told Blondell, "I'm a dancing, good-time girl, and I'm not ashamed of it."

"I've been through hard times with rotten husbands and fickle boyfriends," she claimed. "I've known hunger, joblessness, and abuse. I've stood in the chorus line watching women of lesser talent get ahead."

"I'm still in the fucking chorus line, so I've decided to have some fun, now that I've dumped Myron Futterman. I've had 23 years of high energy—that's why I'm the 'Hey-Hey Gal,' but I've packed in 60 to 75 years of life experience—and that includes all the disillusion that goes with them."

"Everybody says I'm taking over the 'Resident Tough Gal Blonde' roles at Warners from you and Glenda Farrell. Hell, I've been living that Tough Gal role for the past decade. I'm no longer the little virgin who lives next door."

"Paradise depends on what a man is between the sheets."

—Jane Wyman

“It’s not true that all the leading men like James Cagney and others at Warners have fucked me,” she told Blondell. “Some of them didn’t even give me a second look.”

When Jane saw her latest part, she complained to her agent, William Demarest, “I think I’ll be typecast as a gum-chewing chorine until I’m thirty-eight, when I’ll be too young to play grandmother roles and too old for the chorus line.”

Her complaints to Demarest continued. “I don’t like being billed as ‘The Hey-Hey Girl.’”

That’s because you’re so lively,” he said. “Jumping around all over the joint. You can’t keep still for a minute. After a day‘s work on your feet, you continue dancing in night clubs until dawn breaks.”

In her one scene with Dick Powell, he was impressed with her, telling Berkeley, “Jane can sing, she can dance, and she can act. You should give her more to do. We have a budding Ginger Rogers here.”

When he saw the rushes of their scene, Powell was amused.

POWELL: “*What’s your name?*
WYMAN: “*My name is Bessie Fufnick. I swim, I dive, I imitate wild birds, and play the trombone*.”

Jane had wanted to make a play for Powell, although she didn’t find him very sexy. She told her friend, Frank McHugh, who had fourth billing, “Blondell’s already got him. They’re going to get married.”

Even though she had little to do, Jane was allowed to remain on the set to watch Blondell emote. She was interpreting the role in an outrageous “camp” style, years before the word was coined.

Her character seemed to be based on that scandal-soaked tabloid outrage of the time, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, whom one critic decades later would define as “the Paris Hilton of the 1930s.”

With a pencil-thin mustache, Powell was not cast in the movie as a singer.

Jane had wanted the role of the *ingénue*, but Berkeley had cast newcomer Jeanne Madden in that part instead. “Her role should have gone to me,” she complained to Busby Berkeley.

“Jeanne can’t act, but I needed a singer, A Ruby Keelerish type, and I thought she’d do,” Berkeley said. “But after directing her in her first two scenes with Powell, I think I’ve made a horrible mistake.”

When he saw the rushes, he said, “Warner has put me in a financial strait-jacket on this movie. Powell is tepid in his role, and Madden delivers her lines with such flatness, she makes Ruby Keeler sound like Bette Davis. As for Blondell, she flashes her pearly whites, bats her eyelashes, and flaps about like an over-the-top Carole Lombard. In all, the movie tastes like yesterday’s piss.”

Jane need not have worried that Madden would be much competition for her. “I ceased to be jealous of her when her star flickered out so fast, she won’t even merit a footnote in the history of Tinseltown. As for me, I was going places, except it would take a few more years to climb up that ladder.”

At one point, Blondell invited Jane into her dressing room. Years later, Blondell told one of the authors of this book, “The press had begun to define Wyman as ‘the future Joan Blondell,’ and since I was still around, I figured I should get to know my competition better. I took the same approach with Jane that Betty Grable would eventually take with Marilyn Monroe when Fox was grooming her as Betty’s replacement.”

Jack Warner had decided to give the busty blonde the ultimate star treatment, and as such, Jane was awed by Blondell’s dressing room. It incorporated a large living room, a fireplace, two bedrooms, a fully stocked kitchen, and a separate room for wardrobe and makeup.

Powell emerged from her bathroom wearing nothing but a pair of boxer shorts. Giving Jane a quick hello, he dressed hurriedly and left to shoot a scene, still complaining of his sore throat.

Perhaps to make clear to Jane who was the star, Blondell asked her to take two wire-haired dachshunds, collectively known as “The Thundering Herd,” for a walk on the grass.

When Jane returned with the dogs, Blondell was being interviewed by a handsome young feature writer for *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Addressing Blondell, the reporter asked: “The fashion designer, Orry-Kelly, recently asserted that you have ‘the most beautiful lips in Hollywood.’ What do you think of that honor?”

“Blondell appraised him. “Why don’t you try them out for yourself.”

“Oh, no,” he said. “I couldn’t do that.”

On Jane’s final day on the set, she and Blondell lunched together in the commissary. “It’s no secret that Dick and I are going to get married, so my romantic future was settled during the making of this film,” she said. “But how did it go for you?”

“Usually, I at least find someone to date on a film,” Jane claimed. “But not this time around. The only proposition I got was from Spring Byington. I turned her down.”

“I did too,” Blondell said. “That sweet charming woman certainly likes pussy—that’s Hollywood for you!”

In spite of any potential rivalry, Blondell and Jane liked each other, and would spend many future evenings together. Dick Powell would in time become one of Ronald Reagan's best friends, and the two married couples—Powell and Blondell, Reagan and Wyman—became a social fixture on the Hollywood scene until 1944, when the Powells divorced.

The studio knew at the time that Jane was married, but that fact was deliberately not publicized, and no one had ever seen her mysterious husband. Therefore, Jack Warner felt it important for Jane to attend premieres on the arm of one of his handsome contract players. Ronald Reagan was suggested as an ideal escort, but he rejected the idea, based on his knowledge that she was married. "It would hurt my image to be seen dating a married woman," he protested.

"A lot of guys I was assigned to date put the make on me when we attended a premiere or whatever," Jane told Blondell. "I fought off most of them, but not always, if you get my drift. Of course, if my date was a star, he found me most accommodating. Privately, even though I was married, I dated a few big stars who had wives at the time. The pot can't call the kettle black."

Hope bloomed anew for Jane when Demarest called with news that he'd gotten her a role in an upcoming film, *Cain and Mable (1936)* that would star Clark Gable and Marion Davies.

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On her first day on the set of *Cain and Mabel*, Jane was greeted by the film's director, Lloyd Bacon, who seemed deeply experienced in almost any genre of filmmaking—comedies, westerns, musicals, and gritty crime dramas "torn from the headlines."

By the end of her first day, Jane was disappointed that once again, "I'll get lost in the chorus line."

Even though her contract called for only a week's work on the film, Jane also showed up on days when the stars were shooting their big scenes. She had learned to ingratiate herself with the big names, hoping they would use their influence to either expand her roles, or get her future parts. Over a period of a few days, she managed to meet both Gable and Davies.

More gifted as a *comedienne* than as a dramatic actress, with past credits that included a stint as a Ziegfeld chorus girl, Davies was the publicly acknowledged mistress of press baron William Randolph Hearst. Born in Brooklyn, Davies had been educated in a Manhattan convent.

"Come on, honey," Davies said. "Let's have a snort together in my dressing room." She was referring to a twelve-room house that had been specifically moved for her use onto the Warner's lot. Jane was impressed at how lavish it was.

With the help of her maid, while she removed one outfit and got into another, Davies told Jane that she'd worked with Gable on *Polly of the Circus* (1932). It was obvious from her tone and from her wording that he'd seduced her.

"Clark was determined to seduce every female star at MGM, and by now, he virtually has. And now, while he's here at Warner's, he'll probably work his way through the gals on this lot, too. You're cute. I bet you'll be next on his list."

"I'd be honored," Jane gushed. "I'd love to go out with Clark Gable."

"Stick around, sweetie," Davies said. "Perhaps I can arrange something."

Davies asked Jane to fetch her more ice. "I'm about to collapse from heat stroke. It's a god damn 122° F. on that set. I've got to dance in a fur costume that could get me through a winter in Alaska."

"By the way, I used my star power and ordered Bacon to make Clark shave off that mustache of his. It tickles me when he kisses me. While I do my next big scene, keep bringing me ice," Davies said. "I'll put it on my wrists to keep cool."

Jane's favorite moment in the film came when Gable insults Davies as follows: "If the galloping you do is dancing, I've seen better ballet in a horse show." Davies slaps him before emptying a bucket of ice cubes over his head.

Jane appears as one of the dancers who suddenly explode, manically, onto the sound stage near the end of the movie. At the finale, a 100-foot-high pipe organ bursts apart, releasing 150 bridesmaid chorus girls, grinning like Cheshire cats and wailing, "I'll Sing You a Thousand Love Songs." The elaborate dance sequence lasted onscreen for only nine minutes, but it took a week to shoot.

Marion Davies with Clark Gable in *Polly of the Circus*

Near her final day on the set, Davies approached Jane. “I told Clark about you. He wants to see you in his dressing room.”

With trepidation, Jane headed for his dressing room and knocked on the door. “I was nervous as hell,” she later recalled, “but I decided to cover it up with a brassy bravado.”

When he invited her in for a drink, she delivered the opening line she’d rehearsed: “Are you really, as your press agents claim, a lumberjack in evening clothes?”

“One and the same, babe,” Gable said.

“I’ve seen all your films with Jean Harlow,” she said. “And I loved every one of them. But as you can see, unlike Harlow, I wear a bra.”

“Bras can be removed,” he said, “and I’m good at that.”

Gable was suddenly called to the set. He turned to her. “Marion’s invited us to San Simeon this weekend,” he said. “I’d like you to ride up with me.”

“That is so thrilling,” she said. “I’ve always wanted to see that castle. I read something about it every day.”

“I assure you that once you’re there, I’ll be more interesting than that damn castle,” he said. “Now give me a kiss and we’ll meet later and set up a time and place for me to pick you up.”

“I can’t wait,” she said.

“Keep it on ice for me, you sweet little thing.”

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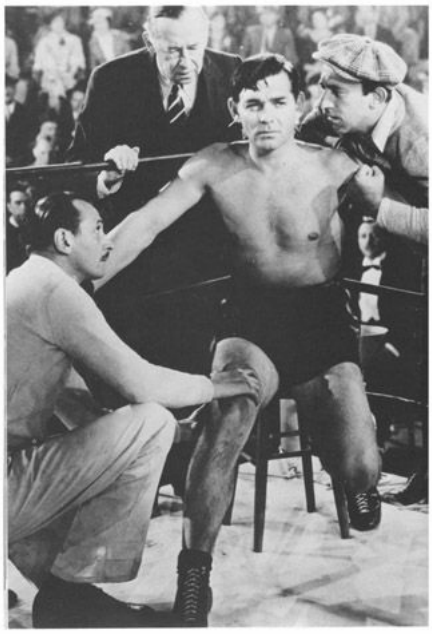
On Saturday morning, Jane had hoped to leave early for San Simeon, but Gable had something to do, and they didn’t depart until late in the afternoon. She’d read about the many lavish parties Hearst and Davies had hosted at the castle for such guests as Charlie Chaplin (her secret lover), Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and such unlikely guests as a very young John F. Kennedy. When George Bernard Shaw visited the castle, he famously remarked, “This is what God would have built if he had had the money.”

Since they arrived late, most of the other guests had already retired for the evening. Gable told Jane he’d see her later, as he left to join the male guests who were having cigars and brandy in the library before retiring.

Appearing drunk, Davies was there to greet Jane and show her to her room. But first, she invited her into the powder room, where she removed a bottle of gin kept cool in her toilet tank. “Let’s have a belter,” she said. “I have to hide my liquor because Willie doesn’t like for me to drink.”



Gable, as a pro boxer, in *Cain & Mabel*. Earlier in his career, his manly physique had been rejected as "unfit to play Tarzan."

An hour later, Jane, in her sole *négligée*, had gone to bed and was about to drift off to sleep when Gable entered her room. "Clark," she said, sitting up in surprise.

"Didn't Marion tell you?" he asked. "I'm sharing the room with you."

The next morning over breakfast, Jane was introduced to one of the world's most powerful media barons, the portly William Randolph Hearst himself, along with other guests. Hearst told her, "You're a real cutie with that button nose of yours. It looks really kissable."

What happened between Gable and Jane that weekend didn't emerge until a few days later, when Blondell invited Jane for lunch at the Brown Derby. There, Blondell more or less guessed what had taken place. After all, Gable had seduced her way back in 1931 when they worked together on *Night Nurse* for Warner Brothers.

When Jane appeared somewhat reluctant to discuss her seduction by Gable, Blondell assured her, "I know the routine, and I'm sure that the same thing happened to you. He comes into your bedroom and pours you a drink and then begins some harmless chit-chat. He asks you about your ambitions as a movie actress. Then he gets into bed with you, kisses you, and fondles your breasts before he gets up and removes his clothes. Then, there's no more petting, no more foreplay, no more kissing: It's down to the dirty deed. It's all over in about a minute or so. He's a fast shooter. Then he's up and heading for the shower. By the way, he shaves his armpits and his chest."

"Joan, you've nailed it," she said. "That's exactly the way it happened!"

Years later, Blondell said. "Clark adored women—not in a lechy way. He loved beauty. His eyes would sparkle when he saw a beautiful woman. And if he liked you, he let you know it. He was boyish, mannish, a brute—all kinds of goodies. When he grinned, you'd have to melt. If you didn't want him as a lover, you'd want to give him a bear hug. He affected all females, unless they were dead."

Her involvement in *Cain and Mabel* did nothing for Jane's career. She wasn't even noticed. It didn't help Davies or Gable either, as it was a flop at the box office. *Newsweek* summed it up: "The studio's cycle of musical spectacles, begun with the successful *42nd Street*, reaches a new low. Clark Gable and Marion Davies fit into this picture like a fat hand squeezed into a small glove. Too much talent for such a skimpy, thinly woven plot that unravels in a trite series of moments."

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During negotiations for her next movie, *Smart Blonde* (1937), Jane, as a Warner Brothers contract player, accepted whatever role she was given, no matter how meager. She didn't want to go on suspension.

Once again, she was disappointed that she'd been cast as a hatcheck girl. Having previously been uncredited in so many movies, she was relieved to hear that she'd get a screen credit, albeit in very small type.

The star of the picture was Glenda Farrell, playing a wisecracking female reporter, Torchy Blane. Jane decided

she'd approach Farrell, if at all, with some caution. "By then, I was not only being billed as 'the next Joan Blondell,' but as 'the next Glenda Farrell,' too," Jane said. "I didn't think Miss Farrell would be particularly happy that her rival was in the same movie with her."

On the third day of shooting, when Jane accidentally crossed paths with Farrell, she greeted her and reminded her that she'd worked on her film, *Here Comes Carter*, in which her friend Ross Alexander had the male lead. "Oh, were you in that?" Farrell asked. "I hadn't noticed." Then she walked on.

In *Smart Blonde*, Jane as a hatcheck girl is trapped in a bit part between the picture's two stars, Barton MacLane and Glenda Farrell.

The director of *Smart Blonde was* Frank MacDonald, a railroad employee who had quit his job and begun working for Warners in 1933 as a dialogue director. He told Jane that her voice was weak, but that because she had only a line or two of dialogue in the film, "It doesn't really matter, because your scene will probably end up on the cutting room floor."

She was not impressed with MacDonald, and neither was Jack Warner. MacDonald eventually drifted over to Poverty Row.

Wayne Morris: Aviator, movie star, and patriot.

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Jane's first impression about the possibility of finding a lover, or even a suitable date, on the set of *Smart Blonde* seemed virtually non-existent

How wrong she was. At the last minute, Wayne Morris was assigned a bit part and showed up on the set. He invited her for a weekend at a friend's vacation retreat in Palm Springs. She'd heard a lot about the place, but had never been there and was anxious to go.

She almost canceled her commitment to the plan when she saw him once again emerging from Farrell's dressing room.

He realized that she had spotted him and he walked over to her immediately. "Listen, babe, remember our agreement."

“I remember,” she said. “But I’m still jealous of that bitch.”

“Honey, she means nothing to me. But she’s the star of the picture. Like many of you chorus gal types, a man with a body like mine sometimes has to lie on the casting couch, the same as you babes. You won’t believe some of the big names at Warners who have wanted to play with Jumbo. “

“I’d believe it,” she said, sarcastically.

She couldn’t stay mad at him for long, and she left the next morning for the hot, sticky drive to Palm Springs.

The town evoked a desert landscape and movie stars sipping cocktails around pools attached to lavish homes. Back in the days of Rudolph Valentino and Theda Bara, the resort had become a mecca for discreet, off-the-record weekends.

Jane fell in love with the place. *[It would become her hideout in years to come. Eventually, she leased a house there after her divorce from her third husband, Ronald Reagan.]*

Once they arrived inside the two-bedroom house, Morris pulled off all his clothes and jumped into the pool. He urged her to strip down, but she refused. She finally agreed to swim topless with him, but she retained her bottom. “I may be a chorus girl, but I’m still a lady,” she said.

That Saturday night, he told her that he’d invited four other couples over for drinks and a swim in the cool of the evening. She put on a cocktail dress and returned to the pool area, finding him still lying, nude, on a chaise longue.

“Aren’t you going to get dressed?” she asked. Then, she heard the doorbell. “For God’s sake, throw a towel around you.”

Jane answered the door and greeted Morris’ friends. He hung out with people on the fringe of the movie industry—grips, technicians, a wardrobe woman, no big stars. She ushered them onto the patio.

Morris’ bath towel fell down as he was mixing drinks for his guests. He didn’t bother to recoup it. “He was stark raving naked in front of the women and their dates,” she later told Blondell.

“Soon, all the couples were stripping down and jumping into the pool,” Jane said. “Wayne urged me to get naked and join them. Instead, I retreated into the house until they left. I feared the whole thing would turn into my first Hollywood orgy, but it didn’t. I learned something about Wayne—it was my first encounter with an exhibitionist.”

Later that evening, he told her, “In Hollywood, it pays to advertise your best assets. The news will spread. A lot of the producers and directors in this town are homos, and this kind of word of mouth will lead to steady work in films, maybe even a major role.”

“Dear one, don’t you see that that makes you a whore?” she asked.

“It’s Hollywood, baby, where a pretty boy doesn’t have to go hungry.”

Morris had completed his brief appearance in *Smart Blonde*, and he agreed to call her in a few days. “Something big is cooking for me.”

She felt lonesome and abandoned on the set that Monday morning. She read a book until it was time for lunch, as she had nothing to do.

Later, as he was strolling into the commissary, she encountered a tall, very good looking man who held open the door for her. “Hi,” he said. “I’m Craig Reynolds. Where have you been hiding all my life?”

“I’m Jane Wyman,” she said.

“Since we both appear to be alone, why don’t you share a bite with me?”

“I thought you’d never ask,” she said.

“He was drop dead gorgeous,” as she’d later tell her friend, Lucille Ball. “When he trained his left eye on me, I melted.”

She didn’t mention anything about his right eye. “It was one of those ‘if you blow in my ear, I’ll follow you to the ends of the earth,’” Jane said.

“Craig was creamy, dreamy, my kind of man, the ideal beau I’ve been seeking in Hollywood, but never found,” Jane claimed. “By the time the blueberry pie was served, I was ready to roll if he wanted me, although I feared my passion for him was not matched.”

She had never met him before, even though she’d played bit parts in two of his movies, including *Here Comes Carter*, which had starred her friend, Ross Alexander, as well as Farrell. Reynolds had also played minor roles in her just-completed *Stage Struck* and, before that, in *Rumba*, with Carole Lombard and George Raft.

“Well,” he said, “on the occasion of this, our fourth picture together, it’s time I remedied that with a hot date tonight.”

“I’m game,” she said.

“Craig and I began dating that very night,” Jane told Blondell, who had become her confidant. “When Craig took off his clothes, I nearly fainted. He’s an Adonis, the type high school girls dream about. Unlike Clark Gable,

he's got an impressive piece of equipment and can go all night."

Craig Reynolds, an early love of Jane Wyman's. When he "turned it on," his left eye was said to be the most seductive in Hollywood.

Jane began to learn more about Reynolds, a native of Anaheim, California, over breakfast the next morning. Fortunately for her, he was unmarried, and would remain so until 1943. In his early films, he'd been billed by his real name, Hugh Enfield.

In many ways, his career at Warners evoked her own. Both had used their original names in the beginning, and now they were being evaluated by Jack Warner as potential stars. Previously, Reynolds had been cast as the second lead in *Paris in Spring* (1935). Although he was nine years older than Jane, he looked much younger.

[In 2014, an online fan, identifying herself as "Caftan Woman," was still raving about Reynold's sex appeal. She, too, cited his seductive left eye, evoking Jane's comment in the late 1930s. Caftan Woman defined Reynolds as "Versatile, energetic, tough, and as dashing and charming as Errol Flynn."

Caftan Woman went on to write: "In 1936, Reynolds was at home on the range as the villain opposite Dick Foran in Treachery Rides the Range. *He seemed born to the tuxedo in the Warren William comedy,* Times Square Playboy. Stage Struck *(1936) was a fine showcase for Reynolds as Gilmore Frost, a ham actor with a way with the ladies. He had the opportunity to display his comedic talents along with his good looks."]*

When *Stage Struck* opened in Pasadena as a sneak preview, Reynolds escorted Jane to see it, later taking her back to his apartment until dawn broke over Los Angeles.

"I wanted to marry him, but he never asked me," Jane recalled to Blondell. "I was at least willing to move in with him, but he had time for me only two nights a week. He was busy on those other nights, but never told me how. It was obvious that he was leading a double or even a triple life."

All the people who had worked with Jane and Reynolds were predicting stardom for them. It was even suggested that Reynolds and Jane might co-star together in their own series of films, based on the detective character created by Erle Stanley Gardner.

Eventually, however, Reynolds ended up getting cast in *The Case of the Black Cat* (1936), playing in a minor role. Ricardo Cortez was cast as Perry Mason, with June Travis as his secretary, Della Street, the role Jane coveted.

Jane would later learn from Carole Lombard, during the filming of an upcoming movie, *Fools for Scandal*, that Reynolds and she often joined "my homo pals, Ricardo Cortez and Cesar Romero, for wild nights on the town at the queer bars." The outspoken Lombard told Jane that "Reynolds and Cortez had been taken with each other during the filming of the Perry Mason movie."

"At least I know how Craig occupies some of his nights," Jane later said. "But there are still nights unaccounted for. In gossipy Hollywood, I was sure to find out sooner than later."

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Based on her familiarity with the other actors in its cast, Jane referred to her brief appearance in the 1936 release, *Gold Diggers of 1937*, as "old home week." It brought her together again with previous stars on whose films she had worked, notably Dick Powell and her friend Joan Blondell, now a happily married couple. Once again, she encountered a very icy Glenda Farrell, cast in the third lead. The director, Lloyd Bacon, had helmed Jane's brief appearance in Clark Gable's *Cain and Mabel*.

Blondell with then-husband Dick Powell, in the swing of things.

Another familiar face, Busby Berkeley, arrived on the set to direct what evolved into some of the decade's most lavish musical numbers. Among other composers, Harold Arlen contributed to the music.

Joan Blondell singing one of the great but thinly disguised odes to socialism after WWI, "Remember My Forgotten Man."

[Blondell's stirring rendition of "Remember My Forgotten Man," the keynote song within that movie, became an anthem for the frustrations of the unemployed and the government's failed economic policies, especially those of Herbert Hoover. "I Can't Sing Worth a Damn," Blondell said, "but in that Forgotten Man number, I mostly talked and acted my way through what evolved, in terms of socialist propaganda, at least, into a very important and controversial song."]

Blondell seemed concerned for her future. "Right now, I'm one of the most sought-after actresses in America. But how long can it last? Wrinkles and gray hair are on the way. But I'm excited by my upcoming movie. I'm going to appear opposite Errol Flynn in a film aptly entitled *The Perfect Specimen."*

"Remember me to that perfect specimen," Jane responded. "He's probably forgotten me by now. After all, Errol is king of the one-night stand."

"You don't have it so bad, kid," Blondell said. "At least you can call Craig Reynolds honey one or two nights a week."

Jane finally received a copy of the script of *Gold Diggers of 1937*, wondering what was in it for her. Character actor Victor Moore was cast in it as a meek, aging hypochondriac who thinks he's dying. He plans to back a Broadway show, but finds that his partners have lost his capital in bad stock market investments.

Cast as one of the chorus girls, Jane soon discovered that the script granted her only one line of dialogue. It consists of the words: "Girls, we're saved!" shouted to her fellow chorines when the money for the show is finally raised.

The movie's theme song was, "With Plenty of Money and You." Identified by its secondary title, "The Gold Diggers Lullaby," it became a big hit.

The film's finale, an elaborate chorus-line-dance-number, quickly evolved into a major-league Busby Berkeley

spectacular. Jane appeared in it as one of 104 women wearing white military uniforms, tapping in military formations and geometric patterns, singing "All' s Fair in Love and War."

During the Academy Awards that followed the release of this film, and based on this lavish production number, Berkeley was nominated for an Oscar for Best Dance Direction of the year.

At the end of filming, Jane was anxious for news and details about her next assignment.

"I got you a part in *The King and the Chorus Girl,"* her agent, William Demarest told her.

"I hope I get to play the chorus girl," Jane said.

"No such luck," he said. "That role goes to the co-star, Joan Blondell. I think you know her."

***

Actor Craig Reynolds continued to date Jane, taking her out at least two nights for dinner every week, followed by a sleepover at her apartment. For some reason, he never invited her to his own apartment. She kept hearing reports of his various involvements with both men and women, but she never confronted him about it. Neither had pledged fidelity to the other.

Double Trouble: Billy (*left*) and Bobby Mauch. Before actor James Craig came along, these twins were Gore Vidal's "ultimate sexual fantasy."

Reynolds at that point in his life claimed, "I'm shooting skyward in Hollywood." It certainly seemed so at the time. In 1937 alone, he appeared in a total of eleven films, either in bit parts or in starring roles, including *Smart Blonde* with Jane.

"I must be setting a record with the number of film appearances. If this keeps up, by 1939, I'll be a household word throughout America."

He invited her to a sneak preview in Pasadena of his latest film, *Penrod and Sam*, in which he had been cast as "Dude" Hanson, a gangster with a mean streak. She noticed that he sat nervously on the edge of his seat, waiting for his image to appear on the screen.

Although she found his brief appearance riveting, she felt the film actually belonged to Billy Mauch, one of the famous Mauch twins. The other twin was Bobby, and both of them had starred with Errol Flynn in Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937).

The plot of *Penrod and Sam*, was based on the short stories of Booth Tarkington. It concerned a gang of junior G-Men, a secret club where all the members were sworn to uphold the law and turn in crooks.

During their exit from the theater, Reynolds spotted Billy Mauch, who had slipped into the theater, unnoticed, to catch the final cut of his performance. He introduced the twin to Jane, before inviting both of them to join him for late night hamburgers.

Over a beer, Jane found the young Billy to be winsome and blue-eyed. She had seen the Errol Flynn movie. "Were you the prince or the pauper? I couldn't tell the difference."

"Neither can our mother, although she claims she can," Billy said. "Sometimes Bobby and I secretly trade roles. We tricked Flynn that way, even the director and crew."

[Bobby and Billy Mauch would reunite to film two more movies based on Tarkington's tales, Penrod and His Twin Brother *and* Penrod's Double Trouble. *They'd flip a coin to see which brother would play which role.*

During World War II, they'd serve in the military together. After the war, the sun set on their film careers. Billy,

however, would appear on the screen for a final cameo with Ronald Reagan and a chimpanzee in Bedtime for Bonzo *(1951).]*

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With so little work, Jane continued to visit actor friends on the sets of their respective movies. Other than as a means for passing the time, she had a motive for these visits. She was hoping that one of her friends would introduce her to the right director, who'd say, "You fit perfectly into this choice role I haven't cast yet."

When an invitation to visit Bing Crosby filming the Depression-era musical, *Pennies from Heaven* (1936) arrived, she eagerly accepted.

The Crooner warmly welcomed her, inviting her to his dressing room, where he indulged in heavy petting with her. Called to the set, he said, "I promise there's more to come later tonight."

She got to hear him sing, "Ev-ry time it rains, it rains pen-nies from heav'en." Later, *Down Beat* magazine reported that the recording was among the best-selling in America for three solid months.

When he broke for lunch, Crosby asked Jane to join him in the commissary, where he introduced her to Louis Armstrong. The jazz trumpeter and singer was also appearing in the film. Noted for his flashy cornet and trumpet playing, along with his raspy singing voice, the African American musician was a favorite of Jane's. Crosby admitted that Armstrong's velvety lower register and bubbling cadences in such songs as "Lazy River" had exerted a powerful influence on him.

After the closing of Harlem's Cotton Club in 1936, Armstrong had moved to Los Angeles, where he was appearing at the local Cotton Club, along with Lionel Hampton on drums. Jane and Crosby were invited to watch them perform.

Paramount executives didn't want to hire Armstrong to perform within the movie, but Crosby had insisted. The trumpeter was consequently featured within a musical number and as part of two comic exchanges. He was among the first black stars to get billing in an otherwise white picture. Crosby had wanted to perform a duet with him, but the bosses at Paramount rejected that idea, a bow to the segregated color line of that era.

Armstrong told Jane, "I could run my mouth all day about My Man Bing. He's got a heart as big as the world. Carry on Papa, I say."

After work, Crosby drove Jane to his new house at 10500 Camarilly Street, telling her that "Dixie and the boys are away."

As his car pulled into his driveway, she asked him, "Is this a mansion or a palace?" It was the first of dozens of invitations to come, where she'd be invited to the home of a movie star. At the time, in 1930s dollars, Crosby was making $150,000 per picture, plus $3,500 for a radio broadcast.

To her, that was a vast fortune. "I don't think I've ever been known to carry more than fifty bucks at a time," she said.

After offering her a drink, he took her on a tour of the grounds, which included a bathhouse next to a luxurious swimming pool, along with a tennis court. Back in the house, he escorted her downstairs to his den and bar, which was adjacent to a playroom and a living room, complete with fireplace and a large Murano chandelier. The house was a mixture of styles, ranging from Regency to Victorian. In all, a very informal style.

For her girlfriends, Jane later summed up her night with Crosby: "After being mauled by Wayne Morris, a brute in bed, my time with Bing was a cake-walk. I've decided that if I don't make it in the movies, I'm going to marry a movie star, and lie around all day on a sofa, calling out, "Beulah, peel me a grape.'"

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Two days after her visit to Bing Crosby's home, Jane was invited to visit Wayne Morris on the set of his latest film, *Kid Galahad* (1937). He showed her into his dressing room and gave her passionate kiss before telling her, "This is my big break. I play a boxer, the title role. Jack Warner is grooming me for stardom as the next Errol Flynn."

"Who else is in this picture?" she asked.

"The big names: Edward G. Robinson, Bette Davis, and Humphrey Bogart."

The film concerned an aggressive promoter (as played by Robinson) who transforms a naïve bellhop into a boxing star. During the course of the movie, he tangles with mobster Bogart at every turn.

As a champion prizefighter in *Kid Galahad*, Wayne Morris, the tall, blonde, and well-built actor, saw this publicity still from Warners. “My best asset, ‘Jumbo,’ is hidden by those droopy shorts.”

Veda Ann Borg and Jane Bryan were cast in minor roles. Ironically, during the making of *Kid Galahad*, Ronald Reagan was having an affair with Borg, and he would soon develop a crush on Jane Bryan when they made a picture together.

In a role she hated, Davis was cast in *Kid Galahad* as a torch singer, the on-screen mistress of the character played by Robinson. She hated her character’s name, “Fluff” Phillips. “Whether I like it or not, I’m forced to play, once again, this annoying cardboard character,” she had said.

In addition to the affair she was conducting with one of its stars, Wayne Morris, Jane had other reasons that motivated her visits to the set of *Kid Galahad*. Not knowing if Davis would be available, Jack Warner had recommended Jane for the role of Fluff. It was to be Jane’s first big break at Warners.

“I lived in a dream for at least for two weeks, thinking I’d achieved my first starring role, and with Bogart and Robinson, no less! But then I got a call that Davis had suddenly become available, and consequently, I would no longer be needed.”

Although Morris was delighted to have been given such a big part, he was furious at the size of his paycheck. “It’s criminal—that’s what it is.” He was receiving $66 a week, whereas Robinson was earning $50,000 for his role in the film, with Davis getting $18,000.

During the early days of the shoot, Bette Davis had repeatedly—and seductively— invited Morris to her dressing room, and he kept refusing. He’d even asked Bogart, “How do I get this hot-to-trot mama off my back? I’m not into mothers this year.”

Morris was 23 at the time, Davis only 29.

“Why don’t you throw her a mercy fuck?” Bogart asked.

“I get it up only for teenage gals,” he said. “Perhaps if they’re hot enough, a gal in her early twenties might do.”

Jane learned that in an effort to get to Morris, Davis had even approached Curtiz and asked him to write in a passionate love scene between Morris and her. The director had refused.

Jane didn’t realize that she was being used when Morris invited Jane to join him, with Davis for lunch. At first, Davis ignored Jane, completely, directing all of her comments to Morris.

“I just had another argument with Curtiz,” Davis said. “He hates me, you know. He didn’t want me in the picture. In the early 1930s, he seduced me. ‘You’re no bigger than a little piece of okra,’ I told him later. He’s despised me ever since.”

“No wonder,” Jane said.

“That’s certainly not my problem, is it Jane?” Morris asked.

Jane didn’t immediately answer, but she noticed that Davis’ face seemed immediately consumed in a jealous rage.

Davis stood up and, for the first time, addressed Jane directly, this time as a means of insulting Morris: “When you see *Kid Galahad*, Miss Wyman, expect to give one big yawn. There’s no excitement except what I generate.”

The next day, when Jane once again showed up on the set of *Kid Galahad*, she encountered Davis. She reached for Jane's arm. "Listen, Kid, if you think Morris is faithful to you, forget it. He's making it with this bimbo, Veda Ann Borg, when she's not screwing this Ronald Reagan. Borg's role in the picture is so small, she's identified in the cast as only 'the Redhead.'"

Jane politely thanked Davis for her warning, and headed for Morris' dressing room. She had long ago accepted the fact that he slept with other women, much in the same way that she slept with other men.

At lunch, Morris introduced Jane to Humphrey Bogart, who would soon be making a picture with Ronald Reagan. Like Bette Davis, he too, was disenchanted with his role in *Kid Galahad*.

"Can you believe that I play this creepy character whose name is Turkey? I complained to that bastard Curtiz, telling him my role was one-dimensional. He told me, 'I make this film go so fast nobody notice character.'"

"I don't want to bitch too much, however, because I've heard that Jack Warner is considering dropping me when my contract is up," Bogart said.

Later, he said, "I ran into Robinson. I told him I had to learn to shoot better. I explained to him that in the film, I get shot and a blanket is put over me. But when I shoot him, the bullet doesn't kill him right away, and he survives for a curtain speech he gets to deliver in the arms of Bette Davis. So while he gets to deliver this big *Pietà*-like death scene, I'm covered up in a flea-infested blanket."

Later, when Morris introduced Jane to Robinson, he spoke kindly of Bogart. "For all his outward toughness, insolence, *braggadocio*, and contempt, there comes through a kind of sadness, loneliness, and heartbreak, all of which are very much part of Bogie the man. I always feel sorry for him—sorry that he imposes upon himself the façade of the character with which he has become identified."

As Jane was leaving the studio with Morris, she thanked him for letting her visit the set of *Kid Galahad*. "At least I got a preview of the stars I would have worked with if I'd been allowed to play the role of Fluff."

"Honey," he said from behind the wheel of his car. "You can Fluff me any time of the day or night."

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As Demarest, her agent, had predicted, Jane was awarded with a role in *The King and the Chorus Girl* (1937). This time, instead of a role as hatcheck girl, or inclusion as an unbilled chorine, her character would have a name: Babette Latour. "How phony can a name be?" she asked Joan Blondell, the female star of the film. "But I'm glad that at least I have an identity."

The film was notable for a screenplay officially credited to Groucho Marx. The plot focused on Alfred VII, a young and rich deposed king in exile in Paris, who is monumentally bored. That leads to his involvement with a chorus line cutie. The plot seemed inspired by the abdication of Edward VIII in England, followed by his exile to France.

Jane was anxious to meet the handsome, dashing, star of the movie, Fernand Gravey, *[an actor billed in the U.S. as Fernand Gravet.]* He had been cast in the role of King Alfred Bruger VII.

When Blondell introduced him to Jane, the Belgium-born actor bowed and kissed her hand. She found him enchanting, and it was obvious that he was attracted to her. He suggested that they might get together later in his dressing room for a drink.

Fernand Gravey (aka Gravet): "I may be married, but the heart wants what the heart wants."

"I'll count the hours," she said, before he bid her *adieu*.

Later, in Blondell's dressing room, she said, "Not that it would matter to you, but Fernand got married last year to this French actress, Jane Renouardt, who is fifteen years older than he is. Perhaps he likes older women."

"Perhaps he'd like a little variety in his life," Jane shot back.

"This is his first film in America," Blondell said. "Jack Warner is giving him a big build-up, thinking he can be the studio's leading Gallic lover, ready and available whenever a picture calls for a good-looking Continental with impeccable manners."

Later that afternoon, the drink with Gravey led to a sleep-over at Jane's apartment. During the evening, she learned more about this charming new import from the Continent.

He had started performing at the age of five under his father's direction. His parents, Geôrges Mertens and Fernande Depernay, had each been film actors during the silent era. Born in 1905, Gravey had made four movies himself in 1913 and 1914. His first good movie role was in *L'Amour Chante*, released in 1933.

His first English-language movie, *Bitter Sweet* (1933), an adaptation of an operetta by Noël Coward, was followed by a more famous reincarnation when Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald re-configured and re-filmed it in 1940.

Gravey told Jane that he could make both English and French-language movies because he'd been educated in Britain.

"I wondered why you spoke such perfect English," Jane said.

The King and the Chorus Girl was Gravey's first film for Warner Brothers, and he was anxious to succeed.

Over dinner at the Brown Derby, she found Gravey to be a gentleman of impeccable manners and Gallic charm. "Too bad you're already married," she said.

"Marriage is a legal contract, but it does not place a limitation on my desires. I'm free to follow the rhythms of my heart."

"I agree with you," she said. "Marriage is such a limitation."

The next day, Blondell was eager to hear a report on her date with Gravey.

"He's the kind of man any woman could really fall for," Jane said. "I'm sure he has a dark side—perhaps smothering babies to death, or something like that—but he showed none of that to me. Unlike Wayne Morris, he told me his ultimate aim in bed is to please a woman—and that he did. I wonder, though, if all Frenchmen are that oral in bed."

"I haven't sampled enough Frenchmen to make a learned judgment," Blondell said. "When are you seeing him again?"

"Would you believe tonight?" Jane asked.

"I'd believe it," Blondell said. "How long do you think this is going to last?"

"At least until the end of the picture," Jane said, "and then, I'm certain he'll return to his other Jane, his wife from the 19th Century."

"Can you add him to your growing list of *beaux*?" Blondell asked.

"Women down through the ages have managed to have more than one lover, and I'm sure I can, too. In fact, tomorrow, when I have the day off, I'll be visiting Craig Reynolds on the set of his new movie."

On the second day of shooting, Jane encountered Mervyn LeRoy, who was directing the picture. He kissed her on the cheek, recalling that he'd directed her in her second film, *Elmer the Great*, starring Joe E. Brown.

He told her that the Hays Office was objecting to the plot line of the Gravey/Blondell movie. It had issued a mandate that no film in Hollywood could be made, even under the disguise of fiction, that exploited the abdication of King Edward VIII and his subsequent marriage to the twice-divorced Wallis Warfield Simpson, a (scandal-soaked) American socialite.

As part of a spirited defense, LeRoy argued that the movie had gone into production before the abdication scandal had erupted, and that therefore, the objection of the Hays Office was without merit.

LeRoy revealed that Warners was investing a whopping $2 million in the production and filming of *The King and the Chorus Girl*. "I'm having the last laugh on the Hays Office. I'm directing Gravey as an effete, brandy-swilling ex-monarch, evocative of Edward VIII himself. Did you know that the jerk who gave up the throne of England 'to marry the woman I love,' is actually a homo?"

"I didn't," she said. "But now that I do, I'll know not to proposition him if I'm ever introduced."

Later, LeRoy invited her to the set to witness Blondell emote her way through one of her big scenes.

Even though Blondell was the star's friend, Jane wished that the role of the chorus girl had gone to her. From what she'd seen of Blondell's performance, this was her best yet. Later, the *Los Angeles Evening Herald Express* would agree, asserting that her portrayal was "the finest she has ever put on the screen. She has the subdued finesse of a Lubitsch heroine."

Blondell would later assert that the film, with its undercurrent of star-crossed love, was her favorite.

"Dorothy was a sympathetic role for me," Blondell said. "A woman with some intelligence and character, though ignorant of royal protocol. The kind of person chorus gals often are. It was one of those lucky breaks that sometimes comes along when you're under contract, have made a dozen poor pictures, and are wondering if the public will ever forgive and forget them."

On the set, Jane was happy to be reunited with Edward Everett Horton, playing Count Humbert Evel Bruger. He had previously worked with her during the filming of *All the King's Horses*. "You and I seem stuck in pictures with 'King' in the title. For me, maybe I should be making movies with 'Queen' in the title."

"If that happens, I'm sure you'll get the title role," Jane said, laughing with him.

On the set, Jane bonded with a blonde-haired actress, Carole Landis, who had been cast as an unbilled dancer in the chorus line at the Folies Bergère. Carole confided to Jane that she was dating a handsome newcomer to the Warners family, Ronald Reagan.

"Who isn't?" Jane asked, sarcastically, tired of hearing the name.

Two days later, she got to witness Landis perform as a chorus girl. "I admire that gal's guts," she recalled. "She had a real independent streak back then, long before she became a star. She demanded—yes, demanded—that LeRoy place her at the head of the chorus line. Amazingly, she got her way. I learned something from that. Being mousy Sarah Jane Fulks would get me nowhere. I had to become more assertive."

An uncredited actor appearing in the film was identified as "Jack Roberts." He seemed to be annoying Landis, hanging around her uninvited. When he left, Landis told Jane, "I married the jerk back home when I was sixteen years old, and the marriage lasted one night, if that. Now the creep is trying to break into the movies. His real name is Irving Wheeler. I've got to get rid of him. Maybe I'll have my new boyfriend, Ronnie Reagan, beat the shit out of him. Ronnie's very athletic and in good shape."

Jane and Landis gravitated to each other. Their careers seemed to share, more or less, the same position, although Landis was far more aggressive in sleeping with producers and directors as a means of procuring roles.

One night, Landis suggested that she (with Reagan) and Jane (with Gravey) go out together on a double date. At the last minute, Gravey had to cancel because Jack Warner had invited him to his home to discuss, over dinner, his upcoming build-up at Warners.

Jane later claimed that at that point in her life, she had come to accept Warners as an extended big family. "Of course, there are all sorts of families, and sometimes members don't get along. There are petty jealousies, whatever."

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A Warners luminary, Kay Francis, met Jane through LeRoy. To Jane's surprise, Francis seemed to take an interest in her.

Jane had seen a number of her movies and was enthralled that such a big star would take time out to talk with her. She invited her on several occasions to her dressing room, and one afternoon had lunch with her in the commissary.

She was impressed with this Oklahoma-born star, particularly her style of dress.

She learned that Francis had made her debut as an actress by understudying for Katharine Cornell on Broadway in *The Green Hat*, She told Jane that her big break had come when she'd appeared opposite Walter Huston on Broadway in *Elmer the Great*. Jane told her that when the play was adapted into a movie, she'd been a member of the cast.

"I saw the movie, but don't remember you in it," Francis said.

"You're forgiven," Jane said. "If you blinked, you would have missed me."

Jane had to cancel two dates, one with Reynolds another with Morris, to accept an invitation to spend the weekend at Francis' home. The star had promised "to give you some pointers on wardrobe and makeup. I know what it takes to become a star, and I think I can groom you to become one yourself."

Kay “Fwancis,” as she called herself.

Jane later conceded to Blondell that Francis taught her many secrets, especially “how to be an illumination when the camera is turned on you.” The Saturday afternoon had gone beautifully, and Jane felt she’d found a new friend.

But, according to Jane’s confession to Blondell, their relationship collapsed later that night. “She put the make on me and grabbed me and kissed me. I felt a foot-long tongue down my throat. I left her place at once. She screamed after me and called me a lot of names. I don’t object to the casting couch. I’ve been there. Lain there. Or is it ‘laid’ there? But there’s one thing I always insist upon. The person seducing me on that casting couch has to have a dick.”

Months later, a British film distributor refused to release *The King and the Chorus Girl* in the U.K., because of the use of the word “King” within its title. Like the character in the film, Britain’s recently abdicated king was living in exile in France. The film’s reference to the fallen monarch (Edward VIII, aka the Duke of Windsor) was too obvious.

However, when Warners agreed to change the name of their movie to *Romance Sacred*, it was released throughout the U.K. Despite the change in its title, U.K. audiences immediately recognized its references to their former monarch.

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On a Sunday night, Craig Reynolds called Jane after midnight. She was asleep when the phone rang. From the background noise, she realized that he was at a wild party. His slurred voice indicated that he’d been drinking.

“It’s finally happened, Janie,” he shouted into the phone. “I’m a star.” He told her that for the first time, he was playing the leading male role in a movie, *The Footloose Heiress* (1937), opposite Ann Sheridan.

“I’m so happy for the both of you,” said a sleepy Jane, who tried to sound as enthusiastic as possible. She couldn’t help but be jealous of her fellow actors. Top billing seemed to be happening to everybody but her.

Concealing her true feelings, she agreed to have lunch with Sheridan and Reynolds on Monday at noon. It took a long time for her to go back to sleep, as she was disillusioned with both her career and the men in her life.

The day before, she’d called her former chorus line girl friend, Paulette Goddard, who had married Charlie Chaplin in 1936. “How much longer do I have to wait to become a star?” Jane asked.

“Well, honey, I did it by marrying Charlie,” Goddard said. “Perhaps you, too, can hook your wagon to a bigtime star, or perhaps to a director or producer. It’s working for me. Charlie has become my Svengali, he wants to create an image of me as a spirited girl of the gutter, not easily given to surrender, or so he says.”

“Good luck with that, whatever it means,” Jane said. “Perhaps only Charlie knows.” She must have recalled the time Chaplin had exposed himself to her when she was a teenager.

On the set of *The Footloose Heiress*, Jane discovered that Reynolds, despite his status as the star of the picture, had not been given a private dressing room, but shared one with both William Hopper, Hedda Hopper’s son, and the character actor, Frank Orth.

In the commissary, Jane and Reynolds waited until Sheridan’s arrival to begin eating.

Sheridan told them that she had lingered too long at Paramount in uncredited parts. When she signed with

Warners in 1936, she was hoping for star roles.

Born in Texas and the winner of a beauty contest, Sheridan claimed she came from a straight-laced southern Baptist family. “My mother told me that ‘Vanity is bad’—just tell that to a screen actress—and she also claimed that ‘marriage is the only role for a woman.’ Like hell it is! She’s still urging me to return to Texas and become a school teacher.”

“Even though I’ve got no tits, Jack Warner told me he’s going to launch a big publicity campaign featuring me as a sex symbol,” Sheridan confided to Jane.

She studied the star closely, hoping to learn the secret of how she had sprung from the chorus line into starring roles. There was a no-nonsense quality to her, and she appeared down-to-earth. Hedda Hopper, the mother of her co-star, William, would later write, “Ann Sheridan is the kind of girl that wouldn’t seem an intruder at a stag party.”

Partly because Jane wasn’t otherwise employed at the time, she showed up on the set of *The Footloose Heiress* every day, since she had nothing else to do.

She told Sheridan, “My romance with Craig has gone from white hot passion to maintenance.”

Reynolds emerged from his dressing room jauntily attired in a leather jacket and fedora, a kind of prototype of “Indiana Jones,” a movie character that loomed in Hollywood’s future.

He introduced her to William, whom she found “extraordinarily handsome.” While he was filming a scene, Reynolds noted Jane’s interest in Hedda’s son. “Don’t get your hopes up. He’s a homo. I found that out when I undressed in front of him.”

Later that day, Reynolds and Jane had drinks with William, who promised her he’d get his mother to plug her in her column. He spoke of his friend, Ronald Reagan, suggesting to Jane and Reynolds that they go out together on double dates.

During her third day on the set, Jane was introduced to Anne Nagel, who had married her friend, Ross Alexander, in September of 1936. The marriage had transpired shortly after the suicide of Alexander’s first wife, Aleta Freel.

Nagel had met Alexander on the set of *Here Comes Carter*. Jane was astonished. “I was in that picture, but I haven’t seen it yet. We obviously worked on it on different days.”

“Ross is a very secretive man,” Nagel said. “Perhaps he didn’t want us to meet. Of course, Ross has a lot to be secretive about.”

Both women described the torturous trail they’d followed since their arrival in Hollywood.

Born in Boston, Nagel had originally planned to be a nun before becoming a photographer’s model.

Two days later, during Jane’s final visit to the set, Nagel approached her. “Good news. Ross just called. He’s just learned that he’s going to star in the next Ruby Keeler film, and you’re in it, too.”

“He has the male lead, and you have a credited role! Its title is *Ready, Willing, and Able.”*

“Thank God I can go back to work and quit hanging out,” Jane said.

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On her first day on the set of *Ready, Willing, and Able* (1937), Jane was handed a copy of the script by director Ray Enright. It was a musical, conceived mainly as a vehicle for tap-dancing Ruby Keeler. Instead of Dick Powell, Ruby’s usual co-car, it starred Jane’s friend, Ross Alexander, in the male lead.

Ruby Keeler in 1933. The dancer told Jane, “My husband, Al Jolson, is a sex pervert.”

Before noon, Jane had skimmed the script, finding to her disappointment that her role was that of an unnamed receptionist. Becoming more assertive, she confronted Enright later that afternoon, asking if her role could be expanded.

He told her to be patient, claiming that he would give her a better part in the next two films he was directing.

Jane later said, "Unlike most of Hollywood, where telling a lie is an art form, Enright kept his promise tome, even though my upcoming roles weren't the star parts I wanted. At least I was working."

Ready, Willing, and Able is memorable for two reasons: It introduced the (later) immensely popular song "Too Marvelous for Words;" and it featured a campy, easy-to-satirize scene in which Keeler tap dances on the keys of a gigantic, tap-tap-tapping typewriter.

Jane was not included in the film's publicity campaign, but her name appeared in advertisements in tiny, eight-point type as opposed to the larger 20-point type reserved for Keeler.

She spoke briefly with Jerry Wald, one of the film's scriptwriters. She complained to him about her difficulties in finding a good part. He warned her to be patient. "Your day will come," he said. "Some stars are born overnight, but they are the rare and lucky ones. Most stars become stars by painfully climbing that ladder in Hollywood one rung at a time."

"I thought he was just bullshitting me," Jane said. But years later, she recalled, "Jerry was absolutely right. Look what he did for my career."

During the shoot, Jane saw more of her new friend, Ross Alexander, than she ever had before. One day at noon, he invited her to join Keeler and himself for lunch in the commissary. Jane had already seen most of the film repertoire of this Canadian-born actress and dancer, including her breakthrough role in *42nd Street* (1933), opposite Dick Powell.

From 1928 to 1940, Keeler had been famously married to Al Jolson. Over lunch, Jane was rather surprised at how she referred to her husband with contempt. "Every day I'm married to Jolson, I have to go to confession," Keeler said.

Jane is *Ready, Willing, and Able*.

After lunch, Keeler was called to the set, but Jane and Alexander remained behind to chat. She was intrigued by Hollywood gossip, and her actor friend was a font of information.

"Jolson is not a faithful husband," Alexander said. "He occasionally fucks from A-list—Barbara Stanwyck, for example—but mostly, he hires prostitutes, showgirls, and what he really prefers, 'colored gals,' as he calls them.

Some of his conquests tell me his favorite thing is having oral sex performed on him. I also hear he demands 'unusual positions'—especially those not approved of by missionaries."

Despite Jane's envy of Keeler's stardom, she wanted to see her perform on camera whenever possible.

[Budd Schulberg, in The Harder They Fall, *wrote: "Even in the scantiest attire, Ruby Keeler carried herself with an air of aloof respectability, which has the actual effect of an intense aphrodisiac. Seeing her with her black lace stockings, forming a sleek and silken path to her crotch was like opening a wrong door by mistake and catching your best friend's sister in the act."]*

One afternoon, when Jane was watching Keeler dance in front of the cameras, Jolson himself arrived at the studio and was suddenly standing beside her. She introduced herself.

"I can't remember names," he said. "So I'll remember you as 'Pug Nose.'"

At one point, he asked her to step outside with him. "I expected him to offer me a role in his next picture. How naïve I was." She relayed the details of her encounter with Jolson to Alexander. "He rudely propositioned me, wanting me to sneak off with him somewhere and perform oral sex on him. He told me it would a smart career move on my part."

"Did you accept?" Alexander asked.

"I turned him down," she said, "but I configured it into a most flattering rejection. I told him that I had heard that his penis was so mammoth I feared it would choke me to death."

During the shoot, Jane visited Alexander at his home—a ranch in Encino— with his second wife, Anne Nagel. They seemed to be having difficulty in their marriage. Privately, he had told Jane, "I can't be a real husband to Anne. It's not in my nature."

Jane had been escorted to the Alexander/Nagel home by her former co-star, Fernand Gravey, to spend one of the pre-Christmas holidays with the unhappily married couple. Nagel told them that, "Ross and I are planning a long-delayed honeymoon in New York when Enright tells him it's a wrap."

Gravey volunteered to go into the kitchen with Nagel to help her prepare a French sauce for a dish she was serving. Alexander invited Jane to go for a walk.

He had a confession to make, telling her that he'd picked up a hobo hitchhiker and had performed an act of oral sex on him. The stranger recognized Alexander's face from his screen images, and threatened to blackmail him.

"He could ruin my career," Alexander lamented. "He demanded $10,000 in cash from me, which I don't have. I had to go to Jack Warner, who agreed to lend me the money to avoid a scandal."

"I fear that because of this, Warners isn't going to renew my contract. Publicity told me he considers me 'too hot to handle.'"

She offered him her deepest sympathy, promising "to stand by you until this blows over."

The day after Christmas, Jane received a call from Cornelius Stevenson, the butler at the Alexander household. "I wanted to talk privately with you. But I didn't have a chance."

He revealed that three weeks before, he found an intoxicated Alexander loading cartridges into his pistol. He was in a very dark mood, and I feared he was going to harm himself, maybe commit suicide like his first wife did out in the barn. But he claimed he was going to shoot some birds. Perhaps you could come over later this afternoon and be with him. He really trusts you."

She promised she could, but Craig Reynolds distracted her, asking her to host a private party he was giving for friends.

She heard no more from Ross's household until January 3. A distraught Nagel was sobbing into the phone. "Ross is gone," she said. "He shot himself."

Dressing immediately, Jane drove over to the house where the police admitted her after checking with Nagel. In tears and emotionally distraught, Nagel told her that Ross had taken a .22 pistol from his cabinet, claiming he was going to shoot a duck for tomorrow's dinner.

He went out to the barn, aimed the pistol at his temple, and shot himself. The butler found him slumped over a bag of grain in the hayloft.

Along with Glenda Farrell, Henry Fonda, and others in the Warner community, Jane attended Ross's funeral at Forest Lawn's Little Church of the Flowers.

Bette Davis had been pursued by Ross during the months he was begging for her to marry him, and she had bitterly rejected him. She told associates, "He's dead. One must not speak ill of the dead. Good!"

When she and Jane returned to the studio, Enright told her that future roles intended for Ross would be assigned to the newcomer, Ronald Reagan. "They're both handsome and they both have the same baritone voice."

When *Ready, Willing, and Able* was released, Warner ordered that Ross's name be demoted to fifth position in the credits, even though he was the film's lead male star.

Henry Fonda, according to Jane, had been distraught at Ross's funeral. Enright told her that he had been

contracted to direct Fonda in his next picture, *Slim*, set for a 1937 release. “You’re in it, too,” he told her.

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Jane’s next picture for Warners, *Slim*, starred Pat O’Brien and Henry Fonda as two telephone linemen, with Margaret Lindsay playing their love interest. Jane was cast as the girlfriend of character actor Stuart Erwin, who played “Stumpy.” Craig Reynolds had a small role as “the Gambler.”

Of all my on-screen lovers, ranging from John Payne to Rock Hudson, I ended up in *Slim* as the girlfriend of Stuart Erwin (*left*),” Jane recalled. “Hollywood can be cruel to a working gal.”

Emerging from Squaw Valley, California, Erwin was fourteen years older than Jane, a wide-eyed, fair-haired actor who was usually cast as an amiable, none-too-bright hayseed. “With Henry Fonda up for grabs, I’m assigned Erwin as a boyfriend,” she lamented.

When he met Jane, Erwin told her, “I usually get to play slow-witted rubes. At the rate I‘m going, I’ll probably end up playing the same type of role on Poverty Row. Oh, and just because I’m your boyfriend in the movie, don’t get the wrong idea. I’m happily married to an actress, June Collyer.”

“Don’t worry,” she snapped back. “You’re safe with me. My real life boyfriend, Craig Reynolds, is in the film, too, so all my needs are satisfied.”

Young Henry Fonda, at around the time he was involved with starlet Jane Wyman.

Jane bonded with the star of the picture, Pat O’Brien. She later recalled, “He took me under his wing and was like a big brother to me. There was no funny stuff. He was a happily married man, but he taught me many tricks of the trade. I’ll always be grateful to him. He said he’d made a new male friend, Ronald Reagan, and that he’d introduce us sometime. He thought we’d make the perfect fit ‘as a romantic couple.’”

Once again, Jane was disappointed that she didn’t get to play the female lead. That role went to Margaret Lindsay, who plays Nurse Cally in a plot that calls for her to switch her romantic affections from the character played by O’Brien to Fonda.

The movie explores the hazards—including electrocutions—faced by telephone linemen under dangerous conditions such as storms, high winds, and lightning. Slim remains one of Fonda’s lesser-known roles. He thought

so little of it, he didn't even mention it in his autobiography, *My Life*.

Ray Enright, the director who had previously helmed her in *Ready, Willing, and Able*, appeared on the set to greet her. "I told you I'd cast you in my next picture, and so I did."

"Thanks, Ray, but you could have made my role a bit bigger and written in a love scene between Fonda and me. Would *you* like to kiss Stu Erwin?"

"That's not one of my fantasies," he answered.

When Lindsay met Jane, the Iowa-born actress told her, "We have a mutual friend in William Hopper. I'm dating Ronnie Reagan, and we often go out on double dates with William and his girlfriend, Isabel Jewell. She's an actress, too."

Jane had seen Fonda at a distance during the funeral of Ross Alexander. On the set of *Slim*, he came up and introduced himself. "You can call me Hank."

He commented on his role in *Slim*. "I know it's a B picture, but I like to play earthy guys like the lineman Slim. He's a real down-to-earth guy, the kind of blue collar man who makes America great."

She told him that she'd seen him at Ross's funeral. "Ross told me how close you guys were."

Since he wanted to discuss his departed friend, he invited Jane to lunch. "I assumed Ross clued you in on our very secret relationship," he said.

"He did indeed," she answered.

"That means, then, that I can speak frankly to you. You know, therefore, that he was passionately in love with me, a love that I could not reciprocate with equal emotion," Fonda said. "It was also a love I did not reject. During my first marriage to Margaret Sullavan, she had devastated me. I didn't feel like I was a man anymore. She can make any man feel like two cents—and two inches. She cheated on me constantly, and I felt castrated by her. How can you make love to a woman as she critiques your performance, loudly telling you that you're both a 'fast starter' and a 'lousy finisher.'"

"A lot of men wouldn't have put up with crap like that and would have bashed her face in," Jane said.

"Perhaps I should have, but I'm not a violent man. Ross built me up and constantly praised my manhood. I was attracted to him because of what he was doing to beef up my ego."

Jimmy Stewart told Jane, "Hank and I share our women together sometimes."

The death of his best friend had occurred so recently that Fonda seemed to want to unburden himself to Jane, finding her an attentive, sympathetic listener.

"I was the best man at Ross's wedding to Aleta Freel, whose suicide probably put the idea of his own suicide into Ross's head." Fonda said. "I knew the marriage wasn't going to work, though. Ross was really in love with me, but desperately trying to conceal his homosexuality by marrying Aleta."

"Ross and I went to Hollywood together and lived at this place on Woodrow Wilson Drive. Dogs and goats ran freely all over the place. I found Hollywood had an unreal quality. For a while, I lived with Aleta and Ross. But I have another close friend, Jimmy Stewart."

"Jimmy and I rented this Mexican style farmhouse in Brentwood next door to Greta Garbo. Ross was furious at me for moving out and was very jealous of Jimmy. Jimmy and I were double dating, Lucille Ball for me and Ginger Rogers for him. I cooked dinner. Sometimes, Ross would drop in, but he obviously felt left out. He began to live dangerously, rarely returning home to Aleta. He told me he was spending his nights with studio grips, electricians,

extras, messenger boys, whomever. I feared for his safety."

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Craig Reynolds was planning to take Jane down to Laguna Beach for the weekend, but canceled at the last minute. She just assumed that he'd gotten a better offer from one of his girlfriends, perhaps a boyfriend.

She mentioned that to Fonda when he stopped to talk to her. He seemed upset. "I was going to drive Frances, my wife, to Lake Arrowhead this weekend, but we had a big fight, and she stormed out of the house last night, and hasn't come back."

He flashed on an idea. "Since we've both been stood up, why not drive there with me? I've got this real nice cottage that belongs to a friend."

On their way to Lake Arrowhead, Jane and Fonda felt free to talk to each other about their previous romantic failures. She admitted to having had two disastrous marriages, and he spoke about his failed marriage to Margaret Sullavan.

"I got started with women in a very bad way," he admitted. "When I was a teenager, I lost my virginity in a whorehouse in Omaha. It was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life. It turned me off women for a very long time."

"I guess I don't make a good husband. When I'm working on a film, I immerse myself in the role and even take it home with me. I come into the house, wanting a light supper. Then I toddle off to my study to learn tomorrow's lines. It's early to bed for me."

"Not only that, but all my friends, including Jimmy Stewart, have a burning interest in the movie industry. Frances just isn't interested. What does she care about rushes, close-ups, and billings?"

"When I first met Frances, I was banging Annabella, my co-star in *Wings of the Morning*, but Frances lured me away," he said. "But I don't think Frances is happy with what she got. She listens to all the shit spread about me. She ran into that horrid George Sanders at a party. He told her that I was a Don Juan homosexual who has to prove himself with one woman after another. She was always suspicious about my relationship with Ross. She's also terribly jealous of my friendship with Jimmy. She calls it 'too intimate.' Incidentally, Jimmy might drop in to share the cottage with us this weekend."

"I'd love to meet him," she said. "I think he's divine."

"So does Jean Harlow, and Ginger Rogers raves about him, too. Jimmy has a goal: He wants to get intimate with 263 glamour girls before it rises for a final time."

"Why such an odd number?" she asked.

"A fortune teller told him that was his destiny. He'll probably end up making a movie with my former wife, Margaret. I'm sure he'll seduce her during the course of the filming. Jimmy and I believe in sharing women."

"Include me in that, too," she said. "I'd love to date him."

"I'll try to set it up," he said. "I'm sure he'd be interested."

The screen goes black at this point. When she returned from Lake Arrowhead, Jane gave a "very limited" description to her confidant, Joan Blondell, of what happened. Blondell was eager for further details, but Jane would not provide them. All that Blondell got from her was that Stewart had arrived at the cottage late at night and had walked in on Fonda and Jane having sex.

"Oh, my God," Blondell said. "Did it turn into a three-way? I hear that Jimmy and Hank adore three-ways."

Marines, when they're not singing: Jane Wyman *(left)*, Dick Powell, and "Reagan's Swede," Veda Ann Borg.

"All I can tell you is that I didn't behave like a lady that weekend—and I'll say no more."

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In her next picture, *The Singing Marine* (1937), Jane was cast once again in a movie starring Dick Powell, Ronald Reagan's good friend and the husband of Joan Blondell. The film marked the third movie in a row in which she'd been directed by Ray Enright.

Powell played a marine from Arkansas who becomes a popular radio singer.

Jane had a small role playing a "cutie" called Joan. *The Singing Marine* was the last of a trio of Warner films celebrating the military, beginning with *Flirtation Walk* (1934), a tribute to the Army, followed by *Shipmates Forever* (1935), honoring the men of the Navy.

She had worked with many members of the cast before, including Busby Berkeley, who was brought in to stage two musical sequences.

At first, Jane had been told that the movie would be another showcase for Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler, with Warners hoping to repeat the success of *42nd Street*. But Keeler had another commitment and consequently, was not available.

Jane had hoped that she might have been summoned to take the role intended for Keeler. She reminded Enright, "I sing and dance, too, and rather well, if I must say so myself."

He rejected her in favor of Doris Weston, a Chicago-born actress, radio performer, and nightclub singer. Jane, at one point, chatted briefly with Weston, who told her, "I was chosen because of my physical resemblance to Keeler. Frankly, I'm a much better singer than Miss Ruby."

Big, stupid, and abusive: Guinn Williams

Cast in a minor role was Guinn ("Big Boy") Williams. He stood 6'2", with a muscular frame from his years of working on ranches in his native Texas and playing semi-pro and pro baseball.

Eighteen years older than Jane, he'd made his screen debut in 1919 in the silent comedy, *Almost a Husband* with Will Rogers, Sr. He worked mainly in supporting roles in sports dramas, westerns, or outdoor adventure pictures. He was teamed frequently with Alan Hale, Sr. as a sidekick in Errol Flynn movies.

Williams relentlessly pursued her, and she finally relented, agreeing to go out with him on a Saturday night. The date evolved into a disaster.

Except to confide some of its details to Joan Blondell, she never spoke of it again. Apparently, Williams had assaulted her in his car when she refused to have sex with him. Based on his extreme strength and physicality, he overwhelmed her.

According to Blondell, he drove her home, and she left his car "humiliated and depressed." She had been bleeding. "He just ripped me apart."

Both Blondell and Jane agreed that she would not report the incident to the police, which would have catalyzed a frontpage scandal.

To help her recover, Blondell invited her to join Powell and herself for a weekend at her "love nest," on North Maple Drive in Beverly Hills. Powell was away at the studio when Jane arrived.

Blondell told her that she'd been considered to star in *The Singing Marine* when Keeler became unavailable.

"I protested, because I didn't want to work with Ray Enright again. I wrote a letter to Hal Wallis, telling him

that Ray and I had already worked enough together. We knew each other's tricks, so—as a director—he had nothing else to teach me. I concluded the letter with: 'There's nothing more to be gained for the good of a picture by our continued association.'"

Blondell said that Powell had become a wonderful father to her son, Norman, who had been fathered by her former husband, the noted cinematographer (and abusive alcoholic), George Barnes. Powell had adopted her boy, changing his name to Norman Powell. In time, he would grow up to become an accomplished producer, director, and TV executive.

Over drinks, Blondell and Jane indulged in "girl talk." She admitted that Powell was a better father than lover. "It's a ritual every Friday night. We're sitting listening to one of his recordings when he gets this look on his face. It's a signal. He raises his eyebrows. As I lie in bed waiting for him, he spends a half hour in the bathroom. What a thorough cleansing job! A hot shower, hair wash followed by elaborate combing of his coiffure. He checks to see that his nails are clipped. Endless gargling with mouthwash. Finally, he enters the room for some pajama-clad action for exactly four minutes. He's got it perfectly timed. When it's over, he rushes back to the bathroom for another thorough cleansing."

Over Sunday dinner, Powell complained that at the age of thirty-two, "I'm still playing a juvenile. I can't keep this up much longer. I hear Jack Warner is grooming my replacement, Kenny Baker. You've worked with him before. I've just heard that you are going to star with him in *Mr. Dodd Takes the Air*. At long last, you've got co-star billing. You've made it, Pug Nose!"

Kenny Baker with Jane Wyman in *Mr. Dodd Takes the Air*. He was being groomed as Dick Powell's replacement. But where was the sex appeal?

"Well, it's about god damn time," she said. "Pardon my French."

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Director Alfred E. Green welcomed Jane to the set of *Mr. Dodd Takes the Air* (1937). She had been told that her latest movie was a remake of the 1932 release of *The Crooner*, a cautionary tale about the dangers of stardom, a vehicle for the message that fame can be a terrible curse.

The star of the picture, Kenny Baker invited Jane to lunch in the commissary, where he seemed filled with career anxiety. "I can't seem to make it big like Bing Crosby or Rudy Vallée. I'm not even the equal of Dick Powell, whom I'm supposed to be replacing at Warners. As a singer, I'm referred to as milque-toasty, with no sex appeal. Vallée, in contrast, was attacked by Cardinal O'Connell. He was defined as a threat to the nation's moral safety. The cardinal claimed that Vallée's appeal was obviously rooted in raw lust. No one ever says that about me."

She assured him that he was a good-looking man, although privately, she agreed that he was no sexual menace to anyone.

In an uncredited role, William Hopper befriended Jane and had lunch with her. He spoke of his growing friendship with Ronald Reagan, and told Jane that they often double-dated at the Cocoanut Grove. Jane responded that she'd like to meet "this Reagan boy that everybody seems to be talking about."

He told her that he'd try to arrange it sometime, but first, he wanted her to meet his mother. Hedda Hopper was just launching her gossip column about the movie industry.

In her office, Hedda ruled like an imperial monarch, stridently ordering her two employees about. Jane had hoped that Hedda would interview her and devote some space to her in her column. But Hedda, worldly wise and

sophisticated, seemed more intrigued with her own pronouncements.

She told Jane, "Hollywood is the ultimate Bitch Goddess, with the power to destroy. She has a taste for fresh blood, especially that of young starlets, who are a dime a dozen in this town. Very few will surface to the top as stars."

"When the lucky few get there, they'll find out that it isn't what it was cracked up to be. The Bitch Goddess can also destroy big stars—take Jean Harlow, for example. Sometimes, even when stardom is achieved, the Bitch Goddess turns actors into alcoholics, liars, cheats. You'll be lucky if you grab the prize, but if you do, know that it carries a wicked price."

After Hedda had finished her rant, she focused on her son, William, who was making coffee for them. "Bill is a nice boy, and I don't want him to get mixed up with bad company. Are you a bad girl? Tell me, how many men, married or otherwise, have you slept with since leaving Union Station?"

"I can't do that, Miss Hopper, I'm a respectable married woman…or was. My marriage is over now."

"You seem like a sweet gal, and I approve of your going out with Bill," Hedda said. "He's the victim of dreadful rumors. Some gossips claim he's a homosexual, which is definitely not true. He's the most red-blooded actor working in Hollywood, which I dub 'Pansyville.' Rumors are flying that Ronald Reagan and my Bill are lovers, which is definitely not true. That's pure bullshit! Just ask their girlfriends. If you want to be a star, you've got to put up with crap like that."

Later, over dinner that night, William talked frankly about his mother, whom he called Hedda. "All the stars call her for lovelorn advice. She'd be a success writing a Lonely Hearts column. Of course, I've got some dark secrets. I never share my private life with Hedda. She hates communists, Jews, and homosexuals."

"We were never close as mother and son. But she made sacrifices for me. In the middle of the Depression, she sent me to Catalina Island School. The tuition was $2,000 a year, and to cough up that kind of money, she had to live in a dreary basement apartment with rats."

"Hedda had a hard life," he said. "My father, DeWolf Hopper, was a singer and comic stage actor. Off stage, he was an abusive alcoholic. She divorced him and took me to Hollywood. Here I am, dreaming of stardom. Aren't you dreaming of stardom too?"

She admitted that she was. "I look up in the sky at Polaris, which seems to stand motionless in space. Other stars in the northern sky rotate around it. I picture myself as Polaris. One day, I want minor stars and supporting players, male or female, to gravitate around me."

"I've been told that Polaris is much brighter today than it was when Ptolemy first observed it thousands of years ago. That's what I want to be in my upcoming *[1940s]* films. Brighter and more visible than I ever was in these stupid B-films I've been making in the 30s."

"Go, girl, go," he said.

When *Mr. Dodd Takes the Air* was wrapped, Jane collapsed. As she later told Joan Blondell, "My candle was burning at both ends. I'd been rushing from one movie set to another, then going out dancing every night until 4:30 in the morning. Getting an hour's sleep before rushing to the studio. I've been filled with such anxiety about my career that I've been breaking out in red blotches."

On June, 22, 1937, she entered the hospital. Although not yet a star, she generated a headline in *Variety—JANE WYMAN HOSPITALIZED FOR NERVOUS BREAKDOWN*. The story appeared on page 67.

Blondell visited her a few times during her three days in the hospital before driving her home.

While resting in bed, a call came in from William Demarest. "You won't believe this, but you've got the star role in your next picture. Your leading man is William Hopper, Hedda's son. I think you know him. The film is called *Public Wedding*."

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A former vaudevillian, the B-movie specialist, Nick Grinde, is known today (if at all) as the director who helmed Ronald Reagan's first Hollywood movie. But he also directed Jane Wyman in the first film, *Public Wedding*, in which she was billed above the leading man. Even before reading the script, Jane knew that it would be a second-rate picture.

To her surprise, she learned that the well-known actress, Marie Wilson, had been cast in the film's third lead. Although details of Grinde's marriage to her are disputed, Jane had heard that Wilson and Grinde were married in the early 1930s, and subsequently divorced. Apparently, their relationship had survived the ordeal.

In *Public Wedding,* Jane appears with William Hopper in what might have become a rehearsal for the real thing.

During the course of their chats, Wilson informed her that she'd soon be appearing in *Boy Meets Girl* (1938), with James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and Ronald Reagan. "Nick said he would introduce me to Reagan. He's eligible marriage material, I heard, and I'm between husbands."

As an actress, she became so identified with the character of Irma that she ended up playing dumb blondes throughout the remainder of her career. She would later claim that, "Marilyn Monroe stole my dumb blonde *persona* when she saw me in *Satan Met a Lady." [Released in 1936, that film was the second screen adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's detective novel*, The Maltese Falcon*.]*

In *Public Wedding,* Jane was cast as "Flip Lane," part of a group of five street-smart employees of a carnival side-show. Broke and without jobs, they concoct a publicity scheme, a phony, "mock wedding" staged within the gaping open mouth of a (previously unprofitable) stuffed whale. Jane, as the star, plays the bride, with handsome William Hopper interpreting the role of her groom, Tony Burke. To make their plot livelier, the protagonists sincerely dislike each other. However, after the wedding, they discover that they are legally married.

During the filming, Jane encountered, once again, Veda Ann Borg, who played Bernice, a receptionist. Borg liked to have "a nip or two," as she put it. By three o'clock in the afternoon, she was usually intoxicated. One day, fearing for her safety, Jane agreed to drive her back to her apartment.

She was curious about why Borg had dumped Reagan, when half the young women she met, including Wilson, seemed to have set their sights on him for future seductions.

"I can answer that, but do you mind if I get down, dirty, and graphic?" Borg asked.

"Go ahead," Jane said.

"I'm European in my tastes," Borg said, "meaning I like the smell of a man. Reagan is always showering and always smelling like soap. To make our sex work, I asked him to wait for three days before taking a shower. I said that would make the sex all the better. I have a perversion. I like to go down on a man when he's got head cheese."

"What in hell is that?"

"Oh Jane, darling, you've got a lot to learn about sex. But I'm no teacher. Eventually, you'll find out for yourself what headcheese is, not during any sexual encounter with Mr. Clean, Ronald Reagan."

"I'm beginning to get the picture," Jane said. "Let's drop the subject."

During the shoot, William Hopper took Jane out on a few occasions, ending the evening "dancing at the Troc" on Sunset Strip. At the end of the night, he'd always kiss her on the cheek and hastily bid her goodnight.

She learned that after seeing her, he'd spend the night with Stanley Mills Haggart, who had a small house on Laurel Canyon Boulevard. She assumed that he and Haggart were lovers.

[At the time, Haggart, who had been intimately linked with both Cary Grant and Randolph Scott, worked at RKO Studios as an extra. He was a "night bird," regularly hitting the hot clubs of Los Angeles. Hedda liked to go to bed early, so Stanley and her son William often prowled through the night time landscapes of underground Los Angeles, ostensibly picking up items for Hedda's column. However, in those days, most of the "dirt" they unearthed could not, for legal reasons, be printed.]

One night, Hedda called Jane at Warners and asked her to visit her home after she got off from work. She thought that Hedda, as a nationally syndicated columnist, was finally going to interview her. Jane drove over with high expectations and a touch of fear.

When she got there, Hedda offered her a drink and said, "I'll get right to the point. I can give you a major star

build-up in my column, but I want something in return."

"Within reason, I'll oblige," Jane promised.

"I want you to marry my son."

Jane was so startled that it took her a moment to recover.

It seemed that William had been caught in a sexual and romantic scandal with Jon Hall, who was enjoying great success as the hero of John Ford's epic, *The Hurricane* (1937). He co-starred in it, often wearing a sarong, opposite Dorothy Lamour, who also wore a sarong and hibiscus flowers, throughout most of the tropical-island action/adventure/romance.

At first, Jane was very reluctant to get involved, but Hedda could be very persuasive. After her third drink, Jane agreed to meet with William to discuss the arrangement's details and implications.

"Don't worry," Hedda said. "If you're discreet, you can see other men on the side. It's what we call in Hollywood a 'lavender marriage.'"

Jane immediately realized that Hedda had previously lied to her. Hedda had known that her son was a homosexual for years.

Shortly before her departure from Hedda's apartment at around midnight, after listening to the reams of publicity such a marriage would generate, Jane agreed to go through with it.

There was, however, one important problem: Hedda had not bothered to check with William. Although he adamantly refused to participate in the arrangement, Hedda assured Jane that she could talk him into it.

As it turned out, she could not. After less than a week, their so-called "engagement" was canceled.

Jon Hall survived that potential scandal with William Hopper, and many other scandals after that, and eventually, in the 1940s, became a star, often appearing with campy Maria Montez.

Jane co-starred with William Hall before he began interpreting Hollywood as "the boulevard of broken dreams."

Later, during one of William's conversations with Jane, he asked her, "You're not mad at me for rejecting that offer of marriage, are you?"

"Not at all," she said, smiling and giving him a hug and a kiss on the cheek. "Let's be brother and sister instead. Besides, the marriage would never have worked. We just wouldn't have been right for one another." `

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For Jane's next film, since Warner's had no immediate use for her, she was lent out to Universal Studios for a role in *The Spy Ring* (1938). Its director, Joseph H. Lewis, cast her as the female lead. Even though her role was secondary, Jack Warner decided to give her star billing, and for some reason, ordered that she be hailed as "The Year's Best Actress!" which she clearly was not.

With the same sinking feeling she'd associated with *Public Wedding*, she didn't have high hopes for this film, either.

Lewis was known for his stream of hastily produced B-movies, most of them low-budget westerns, action pictures, and thrillers. Around Universal, he was known as "Wagon Wheel Joe," for his cowboy movies, usually shown to the kiddies at Saturday matinees across the country.

Jane had never heard of the star of the picture, William Hall. Universal had recently signed this Brooklyn-born actor, planning to groom him for major stardom. *The Spy Ring* was designed as a trial balloon to see if he appealed to audiences. Jane learned he was already thirty-five years old, which struck her as "a bit long in the tooth" to be launched as a possible matinee idol.

He played an army officer and the star player on the camp's polo team. Lewis, the film's director, shot so many miles of polo footage that to Jane, it appeared to be "another horsey oats opera" instead of a spy thriller.

The executives at Universal had so much faith in Hall that after shooting was completed, he was cast and contracted as the male lead in yet another film, *Escape by Night* (1938), even before *The Spy Ring* was released. Jane lunched with her friend, Anne Nagel, who was on the set that day for a meeting with Hall. She had been cast as his leading lady in his yet-to-be-shot spinoff film *[i.e.*, Escape by Night*.]*

She did not want Jane to speak about her late husband, Ross Alexander, who had recently killed himself. She still seemed in shock and would go into seclusion for three years after she finished her final film commitment. When she resurfaced, she joined Universal as one of its "scream queens" in B-picture horror flicks.

[Both the reviews and box office receipts for The Spy Ring *were disappointing. By the time William Hall's second film was released for public consumption, Universal had dropped him. Even though he played the lead, Hall's name was not used within the film's promotions and publicity.*

Consequently, Hall disappeared from the Hollywood scene. In 1986, Jane noticed a small obituary in Variety, *reporting that he had died in obscurity in Kerr County, Texas. She had only one comment. "Hall was tall in the saddle. The loftiest actor I ever worked with, towering at 6'4".*"*]*

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After her temporary loan-out to Universal Pictures, Jane's return to Warners, her home studio, was filled with disappointment. Her star roles had gone largely unnoticed, contained as they were within programmers designed to precede, in theaters, more noteworthy, A-list competitors.

The director, Mervyn LeRoy, who had helmed her in *The King and the Chorus Girl*, had cast her this time in a small role in *Fools for Scandal* (1938), starring Carole Lombard, with Fernand Gravey and Ralph Bellamy as her leading men.

Recognizing that Fernand's last name, "Gravey," didn't sound romantic in English, the studio changed its spelling to "Gravet" on posters with Carole Lombard.

The role was so small that Jane's name didn't even appear in some of the listings. "LeRoy was going around

still claiming that he'd discovered me," Jane lamented. "But what had he discovered? Not a star, that's for god damn sure. He's doing better with Lana Turner in more ways than one."

The first day on the set, Jane resumed her affair with Gravey, with whom she had become involved during the shooting of *The King and the Chorus Girl*. She had been told that the film had greatly offended the Duke of Windsor, who had threatened to sue.

Gravey hadn't called her since that movie, and he tried to explain why. "At the time I was temporarily separated from my wife *[the French actress Jane Renouardt]*. We had had a big fight around the time I met you. I got angry at her and told her that she was old enough to be my mother."

"I can see why a wife wouldn't like that," Jane said.

"My wife and I are now back together again and limping along in our marriage," he said. "But she's learned a big lesson. I'll stay married to her, but will also see other women. It's my nature."

On their first night out again, dancing at the Troc, he told her he didn't hold out much hope for the commercial success of *Fools for Scandal*. "Lombard and I have no chemistry. I don't see why Clark Gable finds her so hot. She's appealed to Gary Cooper and to John Barrymore, but not to me. Perhaps we Frenchmen have more exacting standards for women."

Even though he was predicting failure for their present movie, Gravey told her he was about to be loaned out, short-term, to MGM. "I've signed to play Johann Strauss in *The Great Waltz*, opposite Luise Rainer. I'm hoping this big production will put me over the top."

"I'll be cheering you on," she said. "I adore your Continental charm, unlike some of the jerks I've been cast with. Take Joe E. Brown, for instance."

During his nights with Jane, Gravey seemed morbidly depressed over what was about to happen to his beloved France. He feared an attack from Germany. "Hitler's Nazi war machine will overrun Paris," he predicted.

[Gravey's fears came true in 1940. MGM was set to star him in the film version of Rafael Sabatini's novel, Scaramouche. *But Gravey turned it down and returned to France just before the Nazi invasion. Throughout the war, he was a member of the French Secret Army, and later joined the French Foreign Legion to fight the Nazis. By war's end, the French people hailed him as a war hero.*

Renouardt forgave him his many indiscretions, and they stayed married until his death of a heart attack in 1970, her death following two years later.]

Fools for Scandal, the screwball comedy, had a convoluted, rather silly plot, with Lombard cast as Kay Winters, a film star living in Paris. She is pursued by both Gravey and Ralph Bellamy. Lombard remembered Jane from her brief stint in *My Man Godfrey*. She told her that she was sorry that her role didn't make the final cut of that previous movie, and she invited Jane to her dressing room for a few drinks.

At one point, Lombard pulled off her robe and stood nude in front of a full-length mirror. "Guess what?" she said, surveying her curves. "Only today, the *Hollywood Reporter* wrote that 'I'm a platinum blonde with a heart-shaped face, delicate, impish features, and a figure to be swathed in silver *lamé.*' That's what somebody on that paper thinks. Let me ask you. If you were a lesbian, would you be muff diving on me right now?"

"I'd be eating you up," Jane said, jokingly.

She was fascinated by Lombard's dialogue. *Life* magazine had asserted that off-screen, "Her conversation, often brilliant, is punctuated by screeches, laughs, growls, gesticulations, and the expletives of a sailor's parrot."

At the time of filming, all of Hollywood knew that Gable, despite his status as a married man, was involved in a torrid affair with Lombard. One day, she announced that Gable was going to show up on the set for lunch with her. She told Jane that she wanted her to serve as a "beard," along with Bellamy, Isabel Jeans, and Jenkins.

In spite of the fling Jane had had with Gable during the filming of *Cain and Mable*, he did not seem to remember her. Or perhaps he was pretending ignorance to throw Lombard off the scent. Bellamy later told Jane, "Gable has had all the major female stars at MGM, and half the starlets. How can he remember every conquest?"

With nothing to conceal in front of her fellow actors, Lombard talked openly about her affair with Gable, although that didn't seem to set too well with him. She claimed that she'd been included in his otherwise all-male hunting and fishing trips. "In the future, I'm going to seriously limit the number of films I make every year. It was those conflicting schedules that ruined my marriage to William Powell."

"That and the fact that you two guys were not compatible," Gable interjected.

The talk inevitably turned to the upcoming filming of Margaret Mitchell's novel, *Gone With the Wind*. Most of America wanted Gable to play Rhett Butler. But Jane was shocked when Lombard claimed that its producer, David O. Selznick, had more or less promised her the lead female role of Scarlett O'Hara.

"Myron Selznick, David's brother, is my agent, and I can't stand him," Lombard said. "But I'm keeping him

because I think he'll push David into signing a contract with me."

"You should be grateful to Myron," Gable cautioned. Then, addressing the other listeners present, he said, "He got her a contract with Paramount for $450,000 big ones a year."

"Well, you've got something there," she said. "That makes me the highest paid pussy in Hollywood."

Gable admitted that he was a bit leary about appearing in another period costume drama after the failure of his film *Parnell* (1937). "Carole here feels that the role of Rhett Butler will be the high point of my career."

"I know I have stiff competition for Scarlett," Lombard said. "Everybody from Lucille Ball, that low-rent RKO hooker, to Katharine Hepburn, a lesbian and Miss Box Office Poison herself, wants it. Joan Crawford and Bette Davis would each kill for it, and Paulette Goddard is telling everyone the role already belongs to her."

"Would you believe that my dear, departed Jean Harlow, whom I loved dearly, read that thick novel when it came out and began to imagine herself as Scarlett?" Gable said.

He warned Carole not to get her hopes up, because he'd heard rumors that Selznick feared that casting a pair of "illicit lovers," like Lombard and himself, in the same movie might cause a moral backlash if and when their affair were discovered, and lead to boycotts of the movie, nationwide.

Before the meal ended, Lombard lamented the script of *Fools for Scandal*. "I think I'm making my worst film, although how can it be more horrid than *The Gay Bride* (1934)?"

[Lombard's dire forecast turned out to be accurate. Even her most dedicated fans stayed away "in droves" from Fools for Scandal. *She was so disappointed with the film that for a while, at least, she opted to appear only in dramatic roles instead of comedies.]*

Since Jane had never read *Gone With the Wind*, and since everyone else was talking about it, she bought a copy one Friday afternoon and canceled all engagements. By late Sunday night, she had waded through it, savoring every scene that featured Melanie—the character who marries Scarlett's love, Ashley Wilkes.

When Jane encountered Carole the following Monday morning, she aggressively lobbied for the role. "I think I'd be perfect as Melanie."

Carole looked Jane over skeptically for a moment and then smiled. "Honey, I think you're mousy enough to pull off that sob sister role."

After a moment's hesitation, Carole continued: "Despite all the press about those other Scarlett wannabees—including that old hag, Tallulah Bankhead, for god's sake— I've got the role of Scarlett sewn up. I practically have Selznick eating breakfast out of my honeypot. I can promise you this: The role of Melanie is yours. I'll see to that."

"Do you really mean it? Jane asked. "You really think so?"

"My word is like a certified check that you can take to the bank."

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By now, Jane viewed herself as a hard-working staple on the Hollywood wannabee scene, attending auditions, showing up on time for appointments, and generally emoting on and off the screen in efforts to advance her screen image and career.

Her next gig involved another star billing in *He Couldn't Say No*, a film released in 1938. Except for Frank McHugh, her leading man, Jane didn't know any of the actors appearing with her in this film directed by Lewis Seiler. Even though the movie had clearly, since its inception, been configured as a B picture, she was delighted that once again, she'd been awarded with a highly visible role.

She was less excited when she read the script. McHugh starred as a timid man who works for a linoleum company for $30 a month. Cast as Violet Coney, Jane plays his domineering girlfriend. When his boss gives him a ten-dollar-a-month raise, she and her mother decide that it's time for him to get married.

At an auction, he purchases a nude statue modeled after the girl of his dreams, whom he adores from afar. Regrettably, her father, a senator, is campaigning against public nudity and wants to confiscate the statue. After a series of complications, McHugh gets the girl of his dreams, and dumps the complaining, kvetching character played by Jane.

"It's just as well," she said. "I wouldn't want to end up in the arms of Frank anyway."

Released with low expectations as a B-list programmer, *She Couldn't Say No* was quickly tossed into the Hollywood's dustbin.

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Jane was a bit heartsick, or so she claimed, when she was cast in *Wide Open Faces* (1938), once again appearing in a movie with "Big Mouth," character actor Joe E. Brown. This time, she was Brown's co-star, unlike

the smaller role she had played years before in *Polo Joe*, their previous film.

When she met with the film's director Kurt Neumann, she told him, "I'll have to wear a chastity belt and throw away the key if that horndog Brown chases after me like he did on the set of *Polo Joe."*

Wide Open Faces: Ingenue Wyman with Joe E. Brown. She called him "a horny old toad."

Neumann assured her that Brown, in spite of his lovable screen image, still "has a taste for the ladies, especially if they're young and pretty like you. I do, too."

"Are you going to take director's privilege with me?" she asked.

"We'll see," he said. "For the moment, I've got my eye on this hot little blonde number, Barbara Pepper. I've cast her in a bit part."

As she chatted with Neumann, she came to realize he'd been given the wrong picture to direct. Born in Nürnberg, Germany, he'd come to Hollywood in the early talkie era to direct German-language versions of Hollywood films, as was the custom back then. Once he'd mastered English, he was also assigned low-budget programmers such as *The Big Cage* (1933).

Starlet Barbara Pepper *(left)* was Lucille Ball's best friend. Ball introduced her to Craig Reynolds, Jane's beau, who immediately dropped her for Pepper.

Later, as a fat lady (right) she appeared in several episodes of *I Love Lucy*.

Wide Open Faces, a short film of only 67 minutes, is a story of criminals gathering at a lakeside inn where a bank robber has stashed $100,000. Brown plays Wilbur Keeks, a soda jerk, and Jane a character called Betty Martin. She gets ensnared in the subterfuge when she and an aunt move into an abandoned mansion where the crooks believe that the stash is hidden. Before long, the mobsters are chasing after both Jane and Brown. The script was poor, and the film—released during Brown's waning film career—bombed at the box office.

Lucille Ball, Jane's former friend from the chorus line, appeared on the set one day. At first, Jane thought her appearance was for a reunion with her, but it turned out that Ball's real reason for showing up was to greet her other friend, Barbara Pepper, who had a supporting role in *Wide Open Faces*.

Until Ball showed up, Jane hadn't noticed the blonde New York actress. During her stint as one of the Goldwyn Girls, Pepper had met her lifelong friend, Ball.

Ball invited Pepper and Jane to lunch in the commissary, where Jane's sometimes beau, Craig Reynolds,

showed up to join them.

Ruefully, Jane would later inform Ball, “Your friend, Miss Pepper, stole Craig from me. I think they exchanged phone numbers when I went to the ladies’ room. All I know is that three nights later, he was seen around town with Pepper when not dating one of his menfolk.”

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One Friday morning, Carole Lombard called Jane early at her apartment, extending an invitation to drive with her to Palm Springs for the weekend. “Of course, I want you with me, but there’s a motive to this invitation: I want you to be my beard. We’ll look like two playgirls at the resort, having fun on the golf course, dining out, whatever. But secretly, I’ll be shacked up with Clark *[Gable]*. While the casting for *Gone With the Wind* is ongoing, we’ve been advised to *lay low*. Did you get the *double entendre*, darling?”

Thrilled at the prospect, Jane eagerly accepted. “Should I bring a date?” she asked.

“Skip it,” Carole said. “We’ll have a full house as it is. Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck, another pair of so-called illicit lovers, will be joining us. As for you, I’ll pick up some handsome tennis pro, or whomever, for you. In Palm Springs, you never have to import a stud. The place is overrun with them.”

In Palm Springs, Gable arrived in time for lunch with Carole and Jane. He remembered her from their lunch in the commissary, but still seemed unaware that he had seduced her before that. Two hours after he disappeared into the master bedroom with Carole, they emerged in bathing suits. Jane joined them in the pool.

An hour later, when she went to answer the phone, Gable looked quizzically at Jane. “I think I met you before that day in the commissary,” he said.

“I had a small part in *Cain and Mabel,”* she said.

“My God,” he said, his memory jogged. “We did it, didn’t we?”

“That we did,” she answered. “But Carole doesn’t have to know.”

“Good thinking, kid,” he said.

When Carole returned to the pool, she told them that Robert Taylor would be showing up alone at ten o’clock that evening. He and Barbara Stanwyck had had a big row, and she wouldn’t be coming.

Taylor arrived at around ten, as promised, after a big Mexican dinner had been served and cleared away by a staff member. He seemed better looking in person than he was on the screen. Jane was entranced by his looks, although he paid little attention to her, directing all his remarks and most of his attention to Carole and Gable.

“Louis B. Mayer doesn’t want Barbara and me to get married. He claims that it will greatly reduce my appeal as a matinee idol. He wants me to remain a bachelor. Barbara disagrees. She says, ‘Fuck Mayer and marry me.’ We had a fight.”

Carole, Gable, and Taylor stayed up way past midnight, comparing notes and gossiping. As Jane recalled, “I was outclassed. I felt left out.”

She retired slightly before midnight, as they continued talking late into the night.

At around 3AM, she woke up, sensing a presence in her bedroom. She switched on a lamp. Completely nude, Taylor stood at the foot of her bed.

“*What*…?” She was startled.

“Turn off the light and keep quiet,” he ordered. “I don’t want to disturb Clark and Carole. Can I crawl in with you?”

“If that’s what you’ve got in mind,” she said. “I thought you’d come to borrow a pair of pajamas.”

Other than confiding in Carole, and giving only the briefest of details to Joan Blondell back in Hollywood, Jane didn’t fully reveal what happened that night.

Her sexual interlude with Taylor would eventually, however, be discovered. Taylor apparently enjoyed his time with Jane so much that he promised to get her a small role in his next picture, MGM’s *The Crowd Roars* (1938). She was excited at the prospect of working on an A-list movie after her string of Bs.

On the set of that movie, when it finally got underway, one of the co-stars, Edward Arnold, walked in on Jane and Taylor in his dressing room. “Don’t you know how to knock?” an angry Taylor called out to the pudgy actor.

“Sorry,” Arnold said. “Carry on, dear hearts. I was young once myself.”

[Apparently, Barbara Stanwyck never found out that Taylor had cheated on her with Jane. Stanwyck married Taylor in 1939, and after Jane wed Ronald Reagan in 1940, the two couples became close friends and often visited each other’s homes for dinner.]

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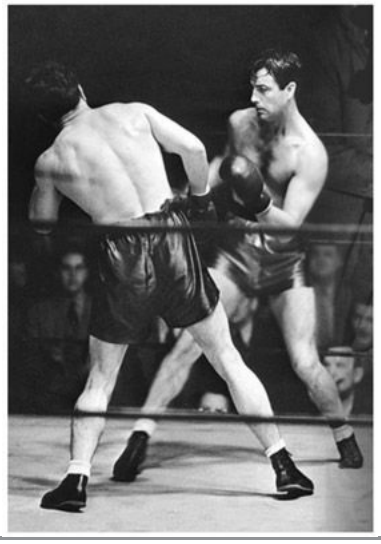
On the set of Jane's next film, *The Crowd Roars* (1938), Richard Thorpe had been assigned to direct a very talented cast of supporting players. Jane's role was minor, the female lead going to Maureen O'Sullivan, who had previously appeared with Taylor in *A Yank at Oxford* (1938). The supporting players included Edward Arnold, Frank Morgan, William Gargan, Nat Pendleton, Lionel Stander, and Isabel Jewell.

Taylor told Jane he hoped that this macho prizefight drama would end his press lampooning as an effeminate pretty boy. "I've got hair on my chest," He showed her ashirtless picture of himself with a patch of black hair on his chest. The photo was being released by the MGM publicity department.

In *The Crowd Roars, a* macho boxing film, Jane's role was minor, eclipsed by the talents of the female lead, Maureen O'Sullivan.

"No one will think I'm a faggot when they see me playing *sock-'em dead* Killer McCoy, the menace in the ring." Jane noticed that with his smudged face, mussed hair, and truculent stance, he did indeed look credible as a boxer. She complimented him on his hairy legs. "Bob, with legs like that, you're the male version of Betty Grable."

Born in Kansas, Thorpe, the film's director, had begun his career in vaudeville before coming to Hollywood, where he directed his first silent film in 1923. During the course of his long career, he had helmed 180 movies.



The Crowd Roars for Robert Taylor, here successfully portraying a professional, hard-hitting boxer.

Thorpe told her, "The only reason you're in the picture is because Bob requested you, and he's got a lot of clout. Actually, I had a much better actress in mind."

"Thanks for your confidence," she said. "I'll try to make you proud of me."

Jane envied O'Sullivan's status as the lead opposite Taylor. Despite her jealousy, and with the understanding that they'd be filming a scene together, Jane was most gracious when they met.

Originally from Ireland, O'Sullivan had gone to school with Vivien Leigh. When she had emigrated to Hollywood, she was first signed by 20th Century Fox, but had later gravitated to MGM.

Once there, "Boy Wonder," Irving Thalberg signed her to appear as "Jane" in a series of Tarzan movies, beginning with *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), opposite that hunk of beefcake, Johnny Weissmuller.

When *The Crowd Roars* was released, Taylor told Jane, "The picture was therapeutic for me. When the public sees my smudged face, my mussed hair, my boxing stance, and my right crosses, they'll realize how macho I really am."

The movie did a respectable box office, and for the most part, Taylor got good reviews. One critic wrote: “He plays the pug with a good deal more command than he has mustered in the past. He takes his place with Clark Gable among the screen heroes.”

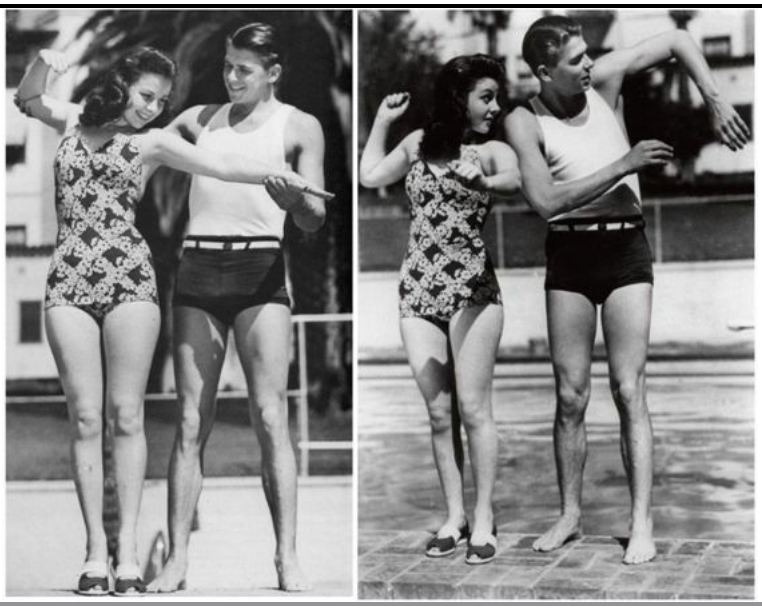
Reacting to critics, who virtually ignored her, Jane asked, “Was *I* in the picture?”

Taylor came to her defense. “She was a sparkling little star on the way up. The director and the cameraman more or less neglected her. I did not!”

Chapter Four

Horndog Reagan: Conquering Warners, Starlet by Starlet

"He's a Greater Swordsman than Errol Flynn"



It was publicity pictures such as these that caused Warner's to promote its new rising star, former lifeguard Ronald Reagan, as a "male pin-up," here depicted teaching Susan Hayward how to swim. When they were shown to Jack Warner, he said, "My God, Ronnie's got better legs than this redhead from Brooklyn. Her legs are too fat, and she doesn't know how to pose for leg art."

Years later, in Fort Lauderdale, Hayward said, "My greatest film role would have been as Scarlett O'Hara in love with Ashley Wilkes, as played by Ronnie Reagan—perhaps with Errol Flynn as that cad, Rhett Butler."

"I've been out with her on only two dates, and already, she's acting like she owns my balls."

Bogart and Reagan in *Swing Your Lady*, a career atrocity.

So said Ronald Reagan on the set of his latest movie, *Swing Your Lady* (1938). He was talking to the star of the picture, a depressed Humphrey Bogart, who hated his role. The lady Reagan was referring to was Susan Hayward.

"The trouble with you, "Bogart said, "is that you don't know how to handle women. You should take some lessons from the master himself, namely, me. Every now and then, you need to sock a bitch in the kisser to remind her who's boss."

At the time he made the movie with Reagan, Bogart was locked into his third marriage to the minor but tempestuous actress, Mayo Methot. Their arguments became so public, they became known around Hollywood as "The Battling Bogarts."

After having starred in pictures, Reagan found himself in this one in a forgettably minor role which he'd shoot in just five days. Once again, he'd been cast as a glib, fast-talking radio announcer, which, of course, had been part of his pre-Hollywood career.

"All I get to do in this stinker is to make unwise wisecracks," Reagan lamented.

Bogart had been forced to star in the picture that he would later assert was "the worst movie in my entire career."

In time, film critics Harry Medved and Randy Lowell agreed with him, selecting *Swing Your Lady* as among *The Fifty Worst Films of all Time (and How They Got That Way)*, a round-up of the most awful atrocities ever cranked out by Hollywood studios.

Although Reagan and Bogart would conflict, politically, in their future, Reagan chose to remember him pleasantly in his first memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?* He claimed that Bogie was a real pro, a very affable man in spite of his tough guy façade. He liked to rib Reagan, always referring to him as a skirt chaser whenever he encountered him in the years ahead, even during the course of his marriage to Jane Wyman.

Joan Blondell was the first to read the script of *Swing Your Lady*. Ray Enright, who had recently completed directing three separate films with Jane Wyman in bit parts, offered Blondell the role of "Cookie Shannon," which ultimately went to Penny Singleton. "I detested it," Blondell recalled. Her refusal to participate in its production forced Jack Warner to suspend her for four weeks.

She had told Bogart, "The picture is crap. A stupid hillbilly romp. You're supposed to be some barnstorming wrestling promoter in the Ozarks. I didn't think it was a good idea to jeopardize my health to make this cornpone hee-haw."

> *"Just because I was cast as a homo doesn't mean I am one."*
>
> *—Reagan on the set of Dark Victory*

Suffering from neuritis, Blondell had recently admitted herself into a hospital. Jane was her daily visitor.

Swinging Ladies: The cast is all here *(left to right)*, the Amazonian female blacksmith (Louise Fazenda), the charming Penny Singleton, Bogie, and a smiling Ronald Reagan, wondering why he was trapped in this clunker.

Unwilling to risk suspension, and needing the money, Bogart accepted the role of the sleazy promoter. From the first day, he feuded with Enright. "My God," Bogart said, during a phone call to Blondell. "This creepy little guy was a gag writer for Mack Sennett comedies. He once directed the wonder dog, Rin Tin Tin, and now, he's trying to tell me how to act."

When Bogart had complained to Jack Warner about the lousy parts he'd been assigned, the studio chief said, "Bogie, I can hardly give you romantic leads. What beautiful gal would want to end up with your ugly kisser in the final reel?"

In his role of Ed Hatch, Bogart, as a wrestling promoter, finds himself broke in a small town in Kentucky. There, he is impressed with a female blacksmith, a muscled Amazon named Sadie Horn, a role played by Louise Fazenda, the wife of producer Hal B. Wallis. Behind her back, Bogart referred to Wallis as "The Prisoner of Fazenda. Imagine his marrying that ugly puss when he could have his pick of any of the beautiful gals of Hollywood."

Reagan agreed with Bogart's unflattering assessment of the talented *comedienne*, who played a country bumpkin with multiple pigtails and spit curls. Clad in calico dresses, she seemed inspired by Minnie Pearl and Judy Canova. She spoke only once to Reagan, telling him, "Hal is not impressed with you at all. He feels you can only play sports announcers—nothing else."

"Thank your husband for the compliment," Reagan shot back.

In the script, Bogart decides to stage a fight between Fazenda and a boxer he had promoted, Joe Skopapoulos (Nat Pendelton). Pendleton had recently worked on a picture where he'd tried unsuccessfully to seduce Wyman.

Reagan talked with the always reliable character actor, Frank McHugh, cast as "Popeye Bronson." Reagan had just seen McHugh's movie, *He Couldn't Say No*, in which he and Wyman were given star billing.

Perky Penny Singleton caught Reagan's eye. Bogart had told Reagan that "Penny is the only one in this clunker who looks good enough to fuck."

Reagan agreed, but he acted cautiously because he'd learned that she had recently married a dentist, Dr. Laurence Scogga Singleton.

During Reagan's second day on the film set, Singleton openly flirted with him. "Unlike Bogart, you are one good-looking man," she said to him. "How about lunch?"

In the commissary, she told him how unhappy she was in her marriage to the dentist. "After the first month, I realized I'd made a mistake. I'm going to divorce him after I let a respectable amount of time go by."

"At least you're getting free dental care," Reagan quipped.

At the end of the meal, she asked him, "Can I come over to your place tonight and cook dinner for you? I'll bring the steaks."

"I know I shouldn't, but it sounds like an offer I can't refuse." Reagan had begun to recant his personal rule of never dating a married woman.

Somehow, Bogart heard about Singleton's visit to Reagan's home. Later, Bogart, the voyeur, wanted details. He asked Enright, "What's your opinion? Did Reagan fuck Penny?"

Enright asserted that in all likelihood, the answer was yes.

At the time of Reagan's interlude with Singleton, she was a brunette. In time, she'd dye her locks blonde for her appearance as "Blondie" opposite "Dagwood," the comic strip characters. Partly in honor of that series, she remained a blonde for the rest of her life.

Reagan later said, "Penny was no dumb blonde, as I believed at first. She became the first woman president of an AFL-CIO Union and led a strike by the Radio City Rockettes."

The dire predictions of Blondell and Bogart about the upcoming doom of *Swing Your Lady* came true. It took in less than $25,000 at the box office, and Jack Warner pulled the plug on it after its release, nationwide, after only two days, playing to mostly empty houses.

After that, dreading his next film assignment, Reagan actually feared that his contract would not be renewed.

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Through her husband, the well-connected Dick Powell, Blondell was alerted early to what films Warners planned to produce and who would star in them.

In a call to Reagan, she announced, "Bryan Foy is giving you the lead role in your next picture, *Accidents Will Happen* (1938)"

"I hope that film won't be just another accident," he said.

"I'm sure it will be a big hit," she said. "I have a personal interest in it. The female role will be played by none other than my sister, Gloria."

"Is she blonde and beautiful, like you?"

I'm warning you, Reagan. As it pertains to my sister, keep that much used dick of yours buttoned up. Or have you switched to zippers now for faster action?"

Don't worry about that," he told her. "That part of my anatomy is worn out now that I'm dating Susan

Hayward."

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When Susan Hayward first spotted Reagan on the set of *Hollywood Hotel*, she told fellow starlet, Carole Landis, "When Christmas comes this year, I want that hunk tied with a red ribbon, nothing else, and put under my tree. He's the most gorgeous thing I've seen here since taking the stagecoach from Brooklyn."

Unknown to Hayward at the time, Landis had more or less the same thoughts about young Reagan, too.

Hayward, the blunt, fiery, and very talented redhead, was born Edythe Marrener on June 30, 1917, at 3507 Church Avenue in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn. She was the daughter of Walter Marrener, a Coney island carnival barker, and his Swedish wife, Ellen. Young Edythe had to rise above poverty and a childhood automobile accident that came very close to crippling her for life.

As a teenager, she hawked copies of *The Brooklyn Eagle* on the streets of Flatbush. For a time, she was in the stenographer's pool, deserting that to become a model for fashion photographers. After four months of that, she landed on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

From the streets of Brooklyn, a young Susan Hayward developed a philosophy of life, which she later shared with Reagan.

"The only thing a woman should ever be afraid of in her life is not having lived it."

There, she was evaluated by director George Cukor, who brought her to the attention of producer David O. Selznick, who was searching for a young actress to star as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*.

Hayward accepted the free train ticket to Hollywood, and—abandoning Brooklyn forever—headed west for a screen test.

As the train rolled toward California, Hayward was determined to make it big, overcoming the disappointments and rejections she'd faced during the course of her frustrated young life. "When you grow up in Flatbush, and you're poor, you learn to roll with the punches," she later said.

Hayward, despite her best efforts, still spoke a husky Brooklynese. Cukor immediately ordered her to take elocution lessons.

During the late 1960s, while living in Fort Lauderdale, Hayward spoke wistfully to author Darwin Porter about those long-ago days in California when another rising young star, Ronald Reagan, was included among her first beaux.

"It was a golden time," she said. "There was no smog. The weather was always sunny, and there wasn't too much traffic. I remember the night-blooming jasmine that scented the air. It was a romantic place and a time to fall in love."

"For my screen test as Scarlett, I had to practice a Southern accent with a vocal coach," Hayward said. "After all, we girls in Brooklyn didn't speak like we had cotton in our mouths. They coiffed me and dressed me up like an

antebellum Georgia peach."

"I made the test with Alan Marshall. It involved a scene between Scarlett and Ashley Wilkes, in the library of Twelve Oaks. I still remember my lines: "*Oh, my dear. I love you. I tell you, I love you. And I know you must care about me, because…Ashley, you do care*."

Reagan surprised her by saying that he was being considered for the role of Ashley, "although Selznick isn't exactly beating my door down."

"Maybe if you'd put out a bit for George Cukor on his casting couch, the role might be yours," Hayward suggested, provocatively.

"I'm not that kind of guy," Reagan said.

"Susan was bubbling over with anticipation about that screen test," Reagan later recalled. "I feared she was heading for heartbreak."

Ben Medford, Hayward's first Hollywood agent, privately told Reagan, "The test was terrible, but I can't tell her that. She's a bitch to work with, but I see in her a deep emerging talent."

Her beauty and spirit attracted the attention of Howard Hughes, the aviator and movie producer, who ordered his pimp, Johnny Meyer, to set up a date with her.

Hughes later told Meyer, "Susan cooked the dinner herself. In Brooklyn, do they prefer bloody chicken? Even so, I see a possibility in her for future dates. As you know, I prefer 'wet decks.'" *[That was Hughes' reference to recently divorced women, or those who were "well-seasoned."]*

Hayward later told Cukor, "Hughes' favorite kind of sex is oral, both on the giving and receiving end."

During the next few weeks, Hayward shifted her interest in Hughes onto Reagan. She later confided to Medford. "Believe it or not, on my first date with Reagan, he didn't even kiss me on the cheek when he said good night. I decided to take matters into my own hands. I figured that this bashful boy needed some encouragement. When he went to kiss me on our second date, I invited him inside for a night cap. He stayed over for breakfast."

"Neither Reagan nor I were as sexually experienced as we pretended," Hayward, years later, told author Darwin Porter. "I mean, he knew where all the plumbing was, but he'd be no competition for more experienced men. But what the hell! One afternoon on Santa Monica Beach, I fell for him."

"Although we both knew that we had to conquer Hollywood, I actually began to think about settling down, getting married, stuff like that. He was one beautiful man."

"But there was a serious drawback," she said. "He talked too much, babbling on about baseball scores and the fear of a war in Europe—subjects that held no interest for me whatsoever. But I was willing to overlook that. In those days, most other actors talked about what they had read in *Variety* or in *The Hollywood Reporter*, perhaps the latest gossip from Louella Parsons."

"He bored me, but I dug him. I wondered how he managed to crowd all those facts into his small head. But I came alive when he made love to me."

Louella Parsons had taken a maternal interest in Hayward, who confided in the gossip maven.

"I want to mother him and make love to him," Hayward confessed. "Sometimes, I enjoy lying awake at night, listening to the sound of his breathing. I feel comfortable with him, fulfilled as a woman."

"It's about time you youngsters got married and settled down," Parsons advised. "I think the two of you would make an ideal couple."

Hayward and Reagan found themselves jointly enrolled in the Warners' Drama School under the tutelage of acting coach Frank Beckwith, a nervous little man who wore horn-rimmed glasses and was known to "pass wind" frequently.

Penny Singleton and Carole Landis were also in the class. Both of them, along with Hayward, were having affairs with Reagan.

Nervous at being exposed, he paid no undue attention to any of them. "Susan hawkeyes my every move," he told Beckwith, who was aware of his pupil's romantic liaisons with his fellow classmates. "I think Susan suspects there's something going on between Carole and me. She's always calling Carole a tramp."

Over lunch with Reagan one afternoon, the drama coach told him that of all the women in his class, Hayward had the best chance of making it as a star. "She's aggressively self-assured. She could play bitches, but not a woman with a heart. She would not be convincing as a vulnerable character. On the other hand, Jane Wyman, whom you haven't met, has heart—It would be hard for Wyman to convincingly play an icy bitch."

"Jack Warner told me I need to teach Hayward to cry on cue," Beckworth continued. "Perhaps if you drop her, you'll break her heart, and then she'll know how to act as if she's vulnerable."

"That's not a good idea," Reagan said. "Susan has threatened to castrate me if I dump her."

In Fort Lauderdale, more than twenty years later, Hayward recalled to Darwin Porter that in the beginning, during her brief stint at Warner's, her career was going nowhere. "I was a nothing in nothing roles. If nothing else

happened, I realized I might at least end up with a steady boyfriend, namely Ronald Reagan. Actually, I wanted to move from Warners to Paramount, hoping to get a contract over there."

Reagan's seduction of Hayward and other starlets stirred up a debate at Warners. The head officer of his local U.S. cavalry branch told the press, "Ronnie is a greater swordsman at Warners than Errol Flynn." That comment, when he read it, infuriated Jack Warner, who preferred to promote an image of Reagan as a chaste, clean-cut, All-American boy, saving himself until the right woman came along.

The publicity department at Warners, reacting to pressure from above, developed an idea to promote the careers of both Hayward and Reagan by having them pose in swimwear—"a little cheesecake for the boys, a hunk of beef for the ladies." Those candid photographs appeared in newspapers across the country.

One of the photos was captioned *RONALD REAGAN SHOWS SUSAN HAYWARD THE RIGHT POSITION*. The publicist meant to suggest the right position in the water, but sexually sophisticated Hollywoodites interpreted it as a reference to the right position during sexual intercourse.

Warner studied the photographs carefully: "I'm not a faggot, but Reagan's legs are better than Hayward's. She has chubby calves and knobby knees. With these pictures, Reagan is going to become the pin-up boy for every fairy in the country. THAT IS NOT THE IMAGE I WANT FOR HIM."

Nearly everybody on the lot interpreted Reagan as a love 'em and leave 'em kind of Lothario. In contrast, a noted studio writer, Owen Crump, disagreed, defining Reagan as the studio's "porch warmer—that is, more gab than grab, with no threat to any virgin."

When Blondell heard that, she said, "Reagan might not have been a threat to any virgin at Warners, because no such animal existed there. All of our gals have already been laid end to end."

Reagan spent the night with Hayward when she learned that the coveted role of Scarlett O'Hara had been awarded to a relatively unknown British actress, Vivien Leigh.

"The only comfort I could give her," Reagan confessed to Medford, "was to make love to her all night."

Astonishingly, perhaps for reasons of political discretion, Reagan chose to completely exclude any mention of Hayward from his Hollywood memoirs, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, published in 1965.

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Off the screen, a major turning point in Reagan's career came when super agent Jules Stein, founder of the Music Corporation of America (MCA), entered his life when he purchased William Meiklejohn's talent agency, the organization which had arranged for Reagan's first screen test and his original contacts with Warners.

Rising from South Bend, Indiana, Stein was more than forty years old when he first met Reagan. He had first opened shop in Hollywood in 1937, representing such stars at Warners as Bette Davis. He also branched out to other studios, luring Joan Crawford, Betty Grable, Ingrid Bergman, Greta Garbo, and Frank Sinatra to supposedly greener pastures.

By the mid-1940s, it was estimated that half of the movie industry's stars—including Jane Wyman and her first agent, William Demarest, now working mainly as an actor—were being represented by MCA, by then pejoratively nicknamed "The Octopus."

Jules Stein, MCA's powerful boss, with connections to the mob, told Reagan: "I'm not only going to make you our million dollar baby during the next few years, but one day, when you're older, I'll make you a multi-millionaire, too."

"Of course, when we put you in a position of power, I'll want favors in return."

Through a lucrative bribe, Stein persuaded Louella Parsons to give Reagan the "star build-up" in her column.

Reagan didn't spend all his time dating. He became obsessed with his career. Whereas in one picture, he'd be the star, his follow-up assignment would involve only a minor role. He desperately wanted to be a major star, right up there with Pat O'Brien, Errol Flynn, James Cagney, and Edward G. Robinson.

He had high hopes, however, for his next B picture. Entitled *Accidents Will Happen*, it ran for only an hour, a drama/romance about phony insurance claims. Cast in the star role, he played an ambitious insurance claims adjuster, Eric Gregg.

Gloria Blondell, Joan's younger sister, was appearing in this, her second film, having made her screen debut in *Daredevil Drivers* (1938), co-starring Beverly Roberts and Dick Purcell. Unlike Joan, she would have only a minor career as an actress.

In 1938, just as it was emerging from the Depression, America was plagued with insurance frauds. The plot of *Accidents Will Happen* was, in the words of its director, William Clemens, "torn from today's headlines." A specialist in low-budget crime dramas, Clemens had previously directed Jane Wyman in *Here Comes Carter (1936)*.

In the photo above, Jane, in a backless gown, goes into a huddle with Jules Stein in a restaurant on Hollywood Boulevard.

He allegedly told her, "Janie, I know you like to sleep around, but we're going to promote you and Reagan as 'the greatest romance of the 20th Century.'"

In the film, the character played by Reagan is married to the wrong woman, Nona (Sheila Bromley), who is collaborating, without her husband's knowledge, with the insurance fraud crooks.

Reagan's character, however, soon falls in love with a cigar stand sales clerk, Patricia Carmody (Gloria Blondell). In this jam-packed thriller, all ends happily, as Reagan, aided by Gloria, captures the crooks, including his own wife, and opts to spend the rest of his life with the blonde beauty hawking those cigars.

On the set, Reagan, according to Clemens, "went crazy" over Bromley.

The exact age as Reagan, Bromley, of San Francisco, had never quite agreed on her name, billing herself at various eras of her career as Sheila LeGay, Sheila Manners, Sheila Mannors, or Sheila Manors. She had launched her career in westerns at "Poverty Row's" Monogram Pictures during the early 1930s, appearing with such cowboy stars as Hoot Gibson, Johnny Mack Brown, and Bill Cody.

She had also made three films with John Wayne: *Westward Ho* (1935); *Lawless Range* (1935); and *Idol of the Crowds* (1937). After her affair with Wayne, she uttered a remark that was widely circulated throughout Hollywood, "There's not enough there to mess up your mouth with."

In *Accidents Will Happen*, Reagan was cast as a naïve insurance adjustor married to a crooked wife (Sheila Bromley), but rescued by the love of a decent woman (Gloria Blondell, sister of Joan, depicted above playing a cigar stand salesgirl.)

Although not known for beating up on ladies, Wayne once threatened her he'd mash her face if she didn't stop mocking his lack of endowment.

When Reagan became president of the United States in the 1980s, Bromley, then retired, was set upon by reporters eager to learn details of her affair with him.

She consistently denied that she'd ever had any involvement with the president during the 1930s.

However, those who worked on the picture with her claimed that she was lying. Clemens, who died as Reagan was running for election as president, said on one occasion, "Bromley spent four hours in his dressing room when I didn't need either of them for the scenes I was filming. During the shoot, he was also pumping it to Gloria Blondell. He was quite a stud in those days before Nancy put a chastity belt on him."

Cast as a crook in the movie, a New York trained actor, Elliott Sullivan, specialized in gangster roles, his characters usually named "Lefty" or "Mugsy." Before he became blacklisted in the 1950s, he made dozens of films, including *King of the Underworld* (1938).

"In the movie, on the screen, *[the character played by]* Reagan threatened to beat me up. I liked the guy. More to the point, I envied him. It was Bromley in the afternoon, Gloria Blondell at night, with Susan Hayward showing up on occasion, too. Hayward had stamped 'personal property' on the guy, but that didn't slow him down in his role as Don Juan. If only I had his looks. Clemens told me I looked like the average Joe in America who carries his lunchbox to a factory job."

Disregarding the pointed warning from Joan Blondell, Reagan went after her younger sister, Gloria. Joan seemed jealous of her sister, who not only resembled her, but had the same pretty, bubbly, vivacious, and curvaceous appeal.

Reagan learned that Gloria was a girl within the "stables" of Howard Hughes, that she was part of a bevy of relatively unknown actresses he kept available in case he had a sudden need for them in the middle of the night. Systematically, he told all of them, "I made Jean Harlow a star. I can do the same for you."

Reagan was afflicted with "*Leadinglady-itis"* specifically as it applied to Gloria, but only for the duration of the picture. "It was no more than a brief fling," Gloria later admitted to both Joan and her husband, Dick Powell, who rendezvoused with Reagan at least once a week for a game of golf.

According to Gloria, "Reagan was not serious about me, and I viewed him as a passing fancy. It might have gone on longer than it did, but Hughes learned of our affair and sent a warning to Reagan through one of his henchmen. Reagan didn't care enough for me to antagonize Hughes. Very soon after Reagan and I broke up, I fell really hard for someone else. Reagan didn't want to settle down in those days. He was like a hungry, greedy little bastard who wanted to sample every dessert on the buffet table. He provided the banana for the banana split, and I provided the cherry, so to speak."

Before the production of *Accidents Will Happen*, Joan Blondell wanted to ensure, in her mind at least, that the virginity of her sister, Gloria *(depicted above)*, would still be intact at the end of filming.

After his first night with Gloria, Reagan learned that "she'd lost her cherry long ago, and was being kept by Howard Hughes."

[In the aftermath of her fling with Reagan, Gloria launched an affair with Albert R. ("Cubby") Broccoli, one of the aviator and movie mogul's employees and henchmen. When Hughes learned of this, he fired Broccoli and threw Gloria out of his "stable." In 1940, Broccoli defiantly chartered a plane to fly Gloria and himself to Las Vegas, where they were married.]

Cast in *Accidents Will Happen* in a minor role was Anderson Lawler. When Reagan met him, he was a part-time actor, but mainly a talent scout for Warners. "I'm already discovered," Reagan told the talent scout.

Reagan, as President, was an avowed anti-communist. In this scene from *Accidents Will Happen*, he's seen beating up an insurance scammer and mobster, as played by Elliott Sullivan. Later, in real life, Sullivan was blacklisted as "a communist pinko."

During one of Reagan's discussions with Lawler, the actor announced that he was expecting a guest, scheduled for arrival soon, for lunch with him in the commissary. "Stick around and meet him."

Within fifteen minutes, Reagan was shaking the hand of Gary Cooper, who would soon be seducing Susan Hayward when they co-starred together in *Beau Geste* (1939).

"If all goes well," Reagan told him, "I'll soon be playing your rival in *Gone With the Wind*, Ashley Wilkes to your Rhett Butler."

"I doubt that," Cooper said. "I don't want to play Rhett. Let Gable have it! Anderson here keeps urging me to do it, though."

"I think it would be the role of a lifetime for Coop," Lawler said. "He can play Southern. His first talkie was *The Virginian* (1929). I'm from Alabama, so I taught him some good 'ol Southern dialect while he was rehearsing the role."

Later, Reagan talked to director Clemens, regretting that he'd not been given real he-man roles like Cooper. "He seems like a real man's man."

Here, Reagan gets cozy with Sheila Bromley's ankle. When he became President, she told reporters, "Ronnie and I, contrary to reports, did not have an affair."

"During the making of *Accidents Will Happen,"* director William Clemens claimed, "when he wasn't due on the set, our boy Ronnie was making the rounds from Gloria's dressing room to Sheila's."

"He's a man's man all right," Clemens said. "He got sexually involved not only with Anderson, but with Cary Grant, William Haines, Rod La Rocque, Howard Hughes, David Lewis, Randolph Scott, and Cecil Beaton. When Edmund Goulding directed him in *Paramount on Parade*, I heard he 'worshipped' Cooper twice a day."

"I can't believe that," Reagan said. "He's so masculine."

"Wise up!" Clemens said. "Some of the most masculine men in Hollywood are queer. Don't tell me you think only effeminate men suck cock. Of course, Coop seduces women, too. Let's name them: Claudette Colbert, Marlene Dietrich, Tallulah Bankhead, Lupe Velez, Clara Bow."

When Cooper was later asked about how he differed from his image on the screen, he responded. "Hollywood personalities are really applesauce. We deceive the public and get paid for it. I get paid pretty well, so I deceive the public really, really good."

By now, Jack Warner no longer opposed his publicity department's policy of posing Reagan with the most beautiful women on the Warners lot for cheesecake photographs. Instead of spoiling his clean cut image, Warner felt it enhanced his sex appeal. He ordered more of the same.

It was at this same time that the studio mogul picked up on the refrain, calling Reagan "A better swordsman on the Warners' lot than Errol Flynn."

He also wanted Reagan to systematically escort Warners starlets to premieres, events where they'd be widely photographed. When Hayward heard that he'd be escorting other women on studio-arranged "dates," she warned him: "Make sure you escort them and nothing else."

Ironically, she, too, was ordered to encourage photo ops with rising young male stars, so she came to realize it was strictly business.

Stubbornly, Reagan had not listened to Joan Blondell's mandate about keeping his hands off her younger sister, Gloria. He didn't listen to Hayward's mandate, either.

Soon, the publicity department notified him that he'd be Lana Turner's date at the next Warners' premiere.

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Wearing a dinner jacket borrowed from Warners' wardrobe department, Reagan, with his hair slicked back, took a taxi to retrieve the starlet Lana Turner, at her home, as part of the process of escorting her to the world premiere of *Jezebel (1938)*, starring Bette Davis and Henry Fonda.

The date was March 7, 1938. Months before, Jack Warner had bowed out of the competition for the film rights to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. Subsequently, they'd been sold to David O. Selznick for just $50,000.

Might it have happened? At least in the talking stage, there arose the possibility of casting Gary Cooper as Rhett Butler and Ronald Reagan as Ashey Wilkes in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

[At Jezebel's premiere, Davis was still fuming over her loss of the role of Scarlett O'Hara. Reagan, however, was more philosophical: "I had long ago accepted the fact that I was not going to play Ashley Wilkes, the Southern gentleman," Reagan said. "The part was better cast with this British actor, Leslie Howard, with Gable as Rhett Butler."

In releasing its own Civil War epic, Jack Warner was hoping to capitalize off the growing fame of Gone With the Wind *by "striking first." Selznick had already accused Warner of* plagiarizing Gone With the Wind. *When* Jezebel *was released,* Time *magazine claimed that it resembled the Mitchell novel like "chicory to coffee."*

Long before Vivien Leigh came onto the screen as Scarlett O'Hara, Davis in Jezebel *was hailed by Warner's publicity machine as "The Most Exciting Heroine Who Ever Lived and Loved in Dixie!"]*

Reagan arrived at a modest little apartment on Highland Avenue, above Hollywood Boulevard. It was a neighborhood filled with low-rent apartments, catering mostly to transients who had flocked to Hollywood to break into the movie business.

When he knocked on Turner's door, it was opened by director Mervyn LeRoy, who had discovered Turner and cast her in the now notorious opening scene of *They Won't Forget* (1937), where she played a young girl in a sweater who becomes a murder victim. LeRoy offered Reagan a drink.

He congratulated LeRoy on his casting of Turner in *They Won't Forget*, for a Warners release. Her appearance in the film had created a sensation, especially her bouncing bosom, which earned her an appellation as "the Sweater Girl."

"Lana signed a contract just four days after she turned sixteen," LeRoy claimed. "When I first met her, she was so nervous, her hands were shaking. She didn't have on any makeup, and she was so shy, she could not look me in the face. But there was something endearing about her. I thought she was the right gal to play a murder victim. I wanted to call her Lenore Turner or Lurlene Turner, but she came up with 'Lana' on her own."

For some reason, perhaps because he was overstocked with beautiful young women, Reagan had been somewhat reluctant to date Turner. He asked the publicists at Warners, "Do I have to go to the premiere of *Jezebel?"*

"No, but you'll be hanging out a lot longer at Warners if you do," the publicist had responded.

From the bedroom of her apartment, Turner emerged looking dazzling in a white gown borrowed from the wardrobe department at Warners. Reagan looked stunned when introduced. He finally said, "You're the most beautiful gal I've ever seen."

"You're not bad yourself, buster," she replied.

Like Reagan, she had emerged from origins in a small town, having been born in the mining hamlet of Wallace, Idaho. She was almost eighteen when she first met Reagan. After she kissed LeRoy goodbye, she headed out the door with Reagan.

Years later, in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel, Turner recalled her first date with Reagan to author Darwin Porter. “He said I was the most beautiful girl he’d ever seen, but he was not the best looking man I’d ever seen. I mean, he was handsome but not a beauty contest winner. I found him very appealing, with the most wonderful manners, and he knew how to treat a lady. He made me feel grown up even though I was only a teenager, around eighteen at the time.”

He complimented her on *They Won’t Forget*.

“Oh, please,” she said. “Don’t bring that up. I’m still embarrassed. My mother, Mildred Turner, told me I move with coltish grace, sinuously, undulating. But all I saw on that screen was those jiggling jugs of mine. The boys in the theater whistled and catcalled. I scrooched down in my seat in embarrassment. Later, I fled from the theater in horror. As I walked along, I tried to keep anything from bouncing.”

He had rented a taxi to take her to the theater, because he felt that his own car was too battered to show up at a premiere with such a glamorous star.

“I hear that *Jezebel* is an unashamed rip-off of *Gone With the Wind*, even though Selznick’s movie hasn’t yet been released,” he said.

“Like everyone else, I read *Gone With the Wind*, but I knew I could never play Scarlett,” she said to him. “It wasn’t right for me. But Warners sent me over to MGM to do a screen test. I was embarrassed to learn that a great director like George Cukor had been assigned to the test. I rushed through it as quickly as I could, both Cukor and I knowing that nothing would come of it.”

[Years later, Turner was deeply embarrassed when screen tests, including hers, of actresses wanting to be cast as Scarlett were shown on TV. “I was held up to ridicule,” she lamented at the time.]

Before arriving at the premiere, Turner turned to Reagan and gripped his hand. “I’m afraid! All eyes will be on us. Deep down, I’m still a frightened little girl. But when that car door opens, I’ll try to camouflage my insecurities by throwing my head up high in the air and walking along the red carpet like I own Tinseltown.”

At the theater, a pedestrian walkway had been built above the traffic of the boulevard in front. A reporter for *The New York Times* later wrote that “Lana Turner on the arm of Ronald Reagan made a dazzling appearance crossing the bridge of stars, even though they aren’t stars yet. Klieg lights brightened the night sky over Hollywood, as hundreds of fans showed up.”

After the premiere, where the night and most of its credits belonged to Bette Davis, Reagan invited Turner to dinner. He was happily surprised that she enjoyed the same type of food that he did: Hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, barbecued ribs, and spaghetti with meatballs.

When their food was served, she removed a bottle of chili peppers from her purse. She sprinkled it over the ribs, telling him that she was convinced that it removed toxins from one’s body.

What happened after dinner has grown hazy in Hollywood lore, with various versions repeated, most of them inaccurate.

On the golf course the following Sunday, Reagan confided to Dick Powell that, “Lana is just as oversexed as I am. I spent the night with her after seeing *Jezebel*, and I hope it’ll be the beginning of many more nights to come. I’ve got to slip around, though, because I don’t want Susan Hayward to find out.”

In riding costumes, Lana Turner poses with Ronald Reagan for publicity shots. His friend, Dick Powell, later revealed, “Lana was one of Ronnie’s grandest conquests, a flamoyant feather in his cap.”

Later, Lana denied the affair, probably because of her friendship with Nancy Davis.

Edmund Morris, Reagan’s official biographer, noted, “Dutch was not yet a one-girl guy. He was soon seen squiring dishy Lana Turner around town, joking that he ‘wasn’t acting’ in her company.”

His pursuit of Turner was made easier when Warners’ publicity department asked them to pose for pictures together for distribution nationwide.

“Lana and I did whatever the studio wanted us to do,” Reagan later said. “Put on our clothes, take off our clothes. Susan would kill me if she ever heard me say this, but Lana looks hotter in a bathing suit than she does.”

When Lana Turner walked down the street in *They Won’t Forget* (1937), she was dubbed “the Sweater Girl” and became an overnight sensation. She always claimed she wore a bra; viewers of the movie doubted that.

At the movie’s preview, a young man in the audience yelled out, to almost universal applause: “Get a load of that kid! Whatta pair of tits!”

Late one morning, Reagan, in his battered car, drove Turner to the Warners ranch outside Los Angeles, where they would be photographed together in riding costumes. An expert horseman, he taught her how to ride.

That night, back at her apartment, she cooked a meal for him, filet mignon coated with cracked peppercorns, lots of salt, and mustard. He was no longer surprised when she sprinkled hot sauce over it. “Too much sauce gives me the runs,” he said. “You must have a cast-iron stomach.” He also noted that she was “the world’s slowest eater, chomping down on a piece of steak for at least fifteen minutes before swallowing it.”

News of the Reagan/Turner affair eventually reached Wayne Morris at Warners. One afternoon, he confronted Reagan in the commissary. “What is this shit about you moving in on Lana? Before you, I was taking advantage of the big crush she had on me.”

“Isn’t Priscilla Lane enough for you?” Reagan said.

“Isn’t Susan Hayward enough for you?” Morris asked.

“*Touché,”* Reagan answered.

In her memoirs, *Lana—The Lady, The Legend, The Truth*, she was discreet. She did recall posing for pictures with Reagan, defining him as “a nice young man,” but provided no other insights.

In his memoirs, Reagan didn’t even mention her.

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A friendly young reporter from Des Moines visited Reagan at Warners. He had seen pictures of him posing with Turner, and he asked what it was like for a local boy to find himself dating glamour queens.

“Miss Turner is an actress of natural beauty that gets worked over by the studio makeup department that creates a make-believe character for her. She is very down to earth, kind and considerate. Young girls across America, so I’m told, are trying to imitate her. Of course, Hollywood publicists like to rewrite her story. If a girl gets a high school diploma, it suddenly appears in print that she’s got a doctorate. If she spends all Saturday afternoon in the beauty parlor, that isn’t talked about. Magazines and newspapers print that she spends all her spare time helping homeless refugees from Europe.”

Reagan would have more or less agreed with Patrick Agan’s conclusion in *The Decline and Fall of the Love Goddesses*. “To millions, the Love Goddesses were surrogate mistresses, ladies of incredible beauty who afford at least a visual satisfaction that men were able to indulge in even in the company of their wives. The Love Goddesses were an inspiration, Everests of glamour for both men and women.”

Now there’s a movie star! A view of Lana Turner in 1947, during her filming of *Green Dolphin Street.*

After Reagan had been elected to the Oval Office, author Darwin Porter met with Turner in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel. “Now that Ronnie is President, the press is always asking me about my former relationship with him,” she said. “Somebody wrote that I didn’t even remember dating him—that is pure crap! Of course, I remembered him. I’ve even been asked to describe what kind of lover he is. I’ll never tell, but I’ll give you a hint. He’s a man who likes to take his time, unlike another future President of the United States I used to know.”

“I liked Ronnie right from the beginning, and we became friends. Later, I got to know Nancy Davis when she was a starlet at MGM. After she married Ronnie, I visited their home on many occasions.”

“I recall one very formal party I attended with Ronnie in the mid-50s,” she said. “I was still trying to hold onto my beauty, but for the first time, I realized that he’d lost his looks. His face had aged a lot. That Midwestern farm boy appeal of his had faded with my romance with Artie Shaw. He still had that beautiful head of hair, perhaps dyed, but he had begun to look the way he did when he was governor of California.”

“I liked Nancy, but detested Jane Wyman,” Turner continued. “I first met her when we were both starlets at Warners. Later, for the 1982-83 season, I appeared with her on TV in *Falcon Crest*. After an initial introduction and

a chat, she didn't even speak to me. She always resented my beauty. Not only that, but she learned that I had dated Reagan before she got her claws into him. She was one icy cold bitch."

Turner's daughter, Cheryl Crane, wrote: "After Reagan became President, mother couldn't help but think of him as that young guy from Warners. When she met him after the election, she said, 'Well, if it isn't *El Presidente.*'"

Along with a handful of other movie stars, Lana Turner joined that very exclusive club of women who had been seduced by both Reagan and John F. Kennedy.

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When director Lloyd Bacon called Reagan with his next film assignment, *Cowboy from Brooklyn* (1938), the actor was disappointed when he learned of his role. After starring parts, he'd been demoted to seventh billing. "You wouldn't exactly call this climbing the ladder to success, now would you?" Reagan asked Bacon, who answered with a vague overview about how stardom isn't always achieved overnight.

The stars of the picture were Dick Powell, Pat O'Brien, Priscilla Lane, and Dick Foran, with Ann Sheridan and Johnnie Davis in supporting roles.

The plot for *Cowboys from Brooklyn* spoofed cowboy singing stars such as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. Although he's afraid of animals, Brooklyn-born Elly Jordan (as played by Powell) becomes a singing cowboy at a dude ranch in Wyoming owned by Ma and Pop Hardy. Their daughter (as played by Lane) teaches him the ways of the West and also falls in love with him.

O'Brien and Reagan were cast as two Broadway hustlers looking for their next meal ticket. At the dude ranch, they discover the so-called singing cowboy and sign him to a radio contract. Typical of a 1930s comedy, complications inevitably follow as part of the light and fluffy plot.

O'Brien had become a sort of father figure to Reagan, who was all too aware that this tough-talking Irishman was a scene stealer. On screen, he was a fast talker. To counter that, in his scenes with him, Reagan spoke slowly and softly. "Bacon failed to tell me that I was screwing up every scene," he complained. "Without my knowledge, he was cutting my scenes and rewriting them, putting them into the mouths of other members of the cast."

One day, Elisabeth Risdon, a veteran English character actress, invited Reagan to lunch in the commissary. Before approaching the subject of his failure as an actor, she told him about herself.

During the filming, Pat O'Brien *(right)* invited Reagan to become a member of the "Irish Mafia," an informal clique which pointedly excluded Jews like Edward G. Robinson

Born in London in 1887, she had originally played beautiful society ladies. She spoke of her affair with George Bernard Shaw, who had cast her in some of his best plays. "I was once the leading lady to George Arliss," she said. "That long, bony face of his was such a turn-off for me, but I thought of God and country when he kissed me. I decided that a love scene with him was something to endure, like a kidney stone."

She finally got around to telling him what was going wrong with all his scenes with O'Brien. "Pat's got this high-pitched, rather nasal speedball patter. He comes on like he's announcing that the building is on fire. Then you speak and you send the plot to the cellar with your slow drawl. Then he comes in again, with just a hint of Irish brogue, and he has to pick up the pace after you've put the audience to sleep. You seem to have trouble keeping up with the movie's race-to-the-finish comic pacing."

Elisabeth Risdon in 1941... Teaching Reagan how to act.

Heeding her advice, Reagan met privately in O'Brien's dressing room. Without the director's knowledge, O'Brien walked him through their next scene, telling him exactly how to play it opposite him.

In the next scene, after his coaching from O'Brien, Reagan was called upon to enter Grand Central Station in New York City to face the press. With a straw hat and cane, he did a carnival shill to introduce singing cowboy Powell. When Bacon called for action, "I came through like gangbusters," Reagan later wrote. "I bounced the cane off the floor, caught it in mid-air, and launched into my pitch. Bacon didn't have to give my lines away anymore."

These two Irishmen, O'Brien and Reagan, bonded so well that Reagan was invited to become a member of the "Irish Mafia" clique in the commissary. "If you got invited to their table, you'd arrived," Reagan said. "On any given day, you could dine with Dick (Powell), Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, and Frank McHugh. Edward G. Robinson wanted to join us, but Pat rejected him for being 'too Jewish.'"

One afternoon, when they weren't needed on the set, Reagan and Powell remained behind for extra cups of coffee. Powell appeared to be going through a career crisis. "I feel trapped by my Warners contract. How long can I go on playing a crooning man-boy? God damn it to hell and back, I was born in 1904. It'll soon be 1940. I'm not exactly a spring chicken anymore."

He confided to Reagan that he'd refused any involvement in the latest Busby Berkeley musical, and that Jack Warner had reacted by placing him on a twelve-week suspension with no pay.

"I've got to invent a new screen life for myself. If I don't, I'll be washed up in pictures."

"You've got more courage than I have to defy Warner," Reagan said. "I take whatever crap they throw at me."

"I'm desperate to expand my range, but Warner won't let me do it," Powell said. "He made me play Lysander in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (1935), although I was wrong for the role. A Shakespearean actor I'm not. All this anxiety is fucking up my marriage to Joan (Blondell). She's pregnant, by the way."

"Congratulations," Reagan said.

"I don't know about that," Powell said. "I'm not a happy camper at home. After supper, I retreat."

Powell was instrumental in securing Reagan a seat on the board of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG).

The board included not only established stars like Walter Pidgeon and Robert Montgomery, but a broad representation of those who worked in the industry, including free-lancers and extras. Reagan filled his seat on the board in his capacity as "a new, young contract player." SAG would play a large role in his future, and he referred to it as a "damned noble organization," although initially, he had opposed a union for actors.

During the course of filming *Cowboy from Brooklyn*, Reagan resumed his liaison with Priscilla Lane. He remained discreet, not letting Susan Hayward find out. She sometimes showed up unexpectedly on the set, perhaps hoping to catch him in something.

Lane certainly didn't limit her charms just to Reagan. On two different occasions, Reagan noticed Lane emerging from Powell's dressing room after long visits. Additionally, sometimes, Wayne Morris showed up to take Lane to lunch. In a private moment, alone with Reagan, Lane urged, "Don't tell Wayne about us," she warned Reagan. "He'd turn you into pulp."

"My lips are sealed," Reagan said.

One weekend, when Morris was out of town, Lane asked Reagan if she could spend the weekend with him. He told her that he had already committed himself to escort Hayward for an Italian dinner with his family on Sunday

night.

"Don't worry about that," Lane said. "I'll come by your place late on Sunday morning. We'll go for a swim, have lunch, and later take care of business."

"It's a deal," he said. "But you've got to promise to leave something left over for Susan."

On the set that Monday, an exhausted Reagan, fresh from separate sexual performances with both Lane and Hayward, rendezvoused with Lane for coffee. She discussed a rising star, Ann Sheridan, who'd been given a small role in *Cowboy from Brooklyn*.

"Ann and I get together to talk about the men in our lives," she said. "Bogie's okay in bed, she told me, but when a gal lies under him, and he's kissing her, she has to swallow a pint of saliva."

"Thanks for warning me," Reagan said jokingly. "He'll not get into my bed, that's for damn sure."

Reagan later confessed to Powell, "When I met Ann, it was love at first sight." He'd gotten off to a bad start with Sheridan, suggesting that she resembled June Travis, his girlfriend from the time they made *Love Is on the Air (1937)*. Her resemblance to Travis was an ongoing sore point with Sheridan, because in 1936, her first screen test had originally been turned down at Warners because—according to their wisdom at the time—she looked too much like Travis.

But she forgave him and invited him to her home out in San Fernando Valley. He lied to Hayward, telling her he was going mountain hiking that weekend "with some of the boys."

Having emerged from a childhood in Denton, Texas, Carla Lou Sheridan was four years younger than Reagan. After winning a beauty contest, she quit college and headed to Hollywood to pursue a career as an actress, making her film debut in 1934 at age 19.

Going nowhere at Paramount, she migrated to Warner Brothers in 1936, signing a long-term contract with them and changing her name to Ann Sheridan.

Tagged as "The Oomph Girl," a sobriquet she loathed, she became a popular pinup girl, once receiving 250 marriage proposals from fans in the course of a single week.

When Reagan met her, she was unhappily married to the actor, Edward Norris. "We'll be divorced no later than next year," she confided to Reagan and others of her friends. "The marriage was a mistake."

That Saturday, Reagan drove out to Sheridan's home. They had a late morning swim in a nearby pool and enjoyed barbecued ribs, Texas style, for their lunch. His afternoon, as Reagan would later relate to Powell, was spent in bed with this former beauty queen from the Lone Star State.

Over sunset cocktails, she talked about having worked on the film, *Black Legion*(1936), with Bogart. "I came right up to him and introduced myself. I said, "'How in the fuck are you, Mr. Humphrey Bogart?' He shot right back at me, 'You wanna feel it and find out?'"

"Bogie told me that what really attracted him to me was that I smoke three packages of cigarettes a day," Sheridan said.

That Monday at lunch, Reagan confided in Powell. "There's something so frank and down to earth about Ann that I'm very attracted to her. She has this come-hither look. What red-blooded American male can resist her? She's luscious," Reagan claimed. "After my weekend with her, I've nicknamed her the Texas Tornado. I've arranged to see her again two nights from now. "That is, unless Susan Hayward hears about it and gets militant. Perhaps you'll take Susan off my hands."

"Imagine having such delicious meat on your plate as Susan," Powell said. "And you want to scrape her off. Enjoy your run of luck while it lasts—and don't hand out any marriage proposals. A man's salad days last only a short while."

When *Cowboy from Brooklyn* was released, it didn't lose money, but didn't attract hordes at the box office either.

On July 14, 1938, *The New York Times* wrote: "To have built a standard length comedy out of an almost piteously frail satirical idea embodied in *Cowboy from Brooklyn* was an engineering achievement equivalent to the reconstruction of a giant diplodocus from a fossilized great toe. The best of the film's comic passages are slapstick, and the best, incidentally, are none too good."

A month after he'd finished work on the film, the director, Lloyd Bacon, called Reagan with news of his upcoming next picture. Entitled *Boy Meets Girl* (1938), it would star James Cagney and Reagan's friend, Pat O'Brien, once again.

When he heard the list of supporting players, he told Bacon, "That might be a problem for me. Not only is Susan Hayward likely to show up on the set, but you've cast two of my girlfriends, Carole Landis and Penny Singleton. How am I supposed to service so many starlets?"

"Listen, pal, at the rate you're going, it's gonna fall off by the time you're forty," Bacon said.

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The respective fans of Susan Hayward and Ronald Reagan barely noted, or perhaps never realized, that both of them were associated with one of Humphrey Bogart's most unusual *films noir*, *The Amazing Dr. Clitter-house* (1938). In it, Bogart co-starred with Edward G. Robinson and Claire Trevor. The screenplay was written by John Huston and John Wexley, and the picture was directed by Anatole Litvak, who was (unhappily) married at the time to Miriam Hopkins.

Scary *Dr. Clitterhouse:* Edward G. Robinson, Claire Trevor, Humphrey Bogart. Bogie hated the film so much, he (unofficially) renamed it "Dr. Clitoris."

As the respected and "well-connected to society" Dr. Clitterhouse, Robinson is writing a book on the physiological reactions and psychological motivations of criminals, but decides he needs first-hand knowledge. Consequently, he becomes a criminal himself, robbing jewelry from the safes of the rich and famous. He later meets Rocks (as played by Bogart), a gangster and *bona fide* jewel thief who's working with a gang of safecrackers. Before the end of the film, the doctor realizes that he needs a final chapter—one on homicide. He gives Rocks a poisonous drink and studies his reaction as he dies.

On the set, Bogie encountered Reagan, who was complaining about his meager role in the film as a radio announcer. "They're not even letting me show my face in this film—just my voice."

"Would you say that's better than having to show your ass?" Bogie asked. "Listen to me, Reagan, you're a good looking guy—not my type, but good looking enough, I guess, although I prefer men with more kissable tits. I saw a picture of you without your shirt."

"You're kidding me," Reagan said. "I was told you like to put people on."

"You're gonna go to the top," Bogie said. "I've told you this before. You're going to become a bigger star than I could ever hope to be. It'll take a few more Bs for you, then it's Grade A prime rib beef movie roles for you. As for me, with my kisser, I'm stuck in the Bs. Jack Warner has told every director on the lot that I'm not good looking enough for a romantic role. He also considers me a midget. He complains that I'm losing my hair. Then there's the question of my lisp."

"Yes, I was wondering about that," Reagan said. "I was told to stay away from guys who lisp in Hollywood."

"Good advice, kid."

"I also got my report card from Jack Warner," Reagan said. "A little bird told me."

"You mean a certain secretary in Warner's office, the one with the shapely legs."

"Something like that," Reagan said. "Warner thinks I'm nice looking—of course, that's damning with faint praise. He says my best quality is my voice, very friendly. As for my acting, he thinks I'm a bit stiff but okay for B pictures. He thinks I have no comic timing, so I can only do drama. But, and here's the rub, he thinks I have 'no heat' on the screen."

"If you and I did a love scene together, we'd burn up the screen," Bogie said.

"You're such a kidder," Reagan said. "I was warned about you. Fortunately, man-on-man kissing scenes will never be shown on the screen—we can thank God for that."

"As I said, hang in there," Bogie said. "You can play romantic leads throughout the 40s and into the 50s. If you're still around in the 60s—and that's highly unlikely—you'll have to switch to villain roles."

"What about you?" Reagan asked. "Do you still plan to be a villain in the 1960s?"

"No, not me," Bogie said. "When the 60s roll around, I'll be resting comfortably in Forest Lawn."

"I'm going to hang around for two or three more years," Reagan said. "If I don't make it, I'm going home, back to radio."

In the final cut of *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*, moviegoers didn't see Reagan, but they heard his voice as a radio announcer.

It was even worse for Hayward, who lamented to Reagan, "My walk-on part in the film ended up on the cutting room floor."

The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse earned a profit of only $10,000. *The New York Times* defined it as "sad and aimless."

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Reagan's eighth film, *Boy Meets Girl (1938)*, was directed by Lloyd Bacon, who had just helmed him in *Cowboy from Brooklyn*. Although it had been successful as a play on Broadway, *Boy Meets Girl* had a rough launch as a film.

Reagan appears in *Boy Meets Girl* with Marie Windsor, who played a pregnant waitress, and with Dick Foran (*right)* who was cast as a celluloid cowboy.

Two famous comedians, Olsen and Johnson, were slated to play the leads, but other commitments made each of them unavailable. Ultimately, the roles went instead to James Cagney, who had been absent from Warners for two years as part of a self-imposed exile, and Pat O'Brien, the star of Reagan's previous film.

The notoriously independent Cagney refused to accept George Abbott as director, but agreed to Bacon. Marion Davies, mistress of William Randolph Hearst, was cast in the female lead. She made so many demands on Bacon—ranging from her dressing room to what she defined as a poorly written script, that Bacon finally, in exasperation, replaced her with Marie Wilson.

In supporting roles was a talented cast, including Ralph Bellamy, Frank McHugh, and Dick Foran. Once again, Reagan was cast in a very minor role as a radio announcer. "If this keeps up, I'll be playing a radio announcer broadcasting the Second Coming," he said.

The film was actually a spoof of movie studio manias and politics, and Reagan was surprised that Jack Warner had personally approved the script. Bellamy plays a studio honcho with some subtle similarities to Warner himself.

The plot revolves around the studio's most visible cowboy star (Foran), who needs a hit movie to revive his fast-descending career. The two writers, as portrayed by Cagney and O'Brien, invent a plot that involves the infant son of a waitress in the studio's executive dining room, as played by Wilson. Subsequently, the baby, "Happy," becomes a star. Foran, partnered with the toddler, goes on to make a series of hit pictures.

Other than the cute baby, the picture clearly belonged to Cagney, who frequently jumps around like a crazed man, with O'Brien rather gloomily playing his more restrained counterpart. Reagan's role as a radio announcer, which appears only at the end of the picture, was so minor, he wasn't even given a screen credit.

Reagan arrived on the set several days before he was needed, mainly as a means of bonding with O'Brien and Cagney, his Irish Mafia friends. Though back on the lot, Cagney was still feuding with Jack Warner, frequently denouncing him in obscene Yiddish. Cagney was now the "bad boy" on the lot, known for his leftist politics and his

court battle with Warners. The studio had violated his contract by billing another star over his name. Cagney also wanted to limit his films to four a year and to have a say in his choice of scripts. Reagan and O'Brien offered their support as friends, but each of them was terrified by the thought of antagonizing Warners the way Cagney had done.

Cast in a bit part, Penny Singleton sought Reagan out, chastising him for not calling her after the brief fling they'd had together. He used a standardized excuse, "I've been too busy." He also reminded her that she was a married woman.

"But my marriage is on the rocks," she told him. "I'm on the verge of divorcing that lout. We've each agreed to date other people."

Penny Singleton as Blondie Bumstead was cast opposite Arthur Lake in a series of Blondie movies based on the comic strip characters.

She'd later tell the future President, "Every picture is Blondie does this, Blondie does that. Why not you and me starring in *Blondie Fucks Reagan*?"

"So," he said. "It's a typical Hollywood marriage."

She was very excited at a recent turn in her career. She had just signed for roles in a series of Blondie pictures with Arthur Lake, based on Chic Young's popular comic strip of Dagwood and Blondie.

Reagan resumed his affair with Singleton, visiting her dressing room on several occasions. She shared the space with Wilson, with whom she had an agreement. A red ribbon tied to the doorknob meant that Singleton was occupied. Wilson waited out the liaison by sipping cups of coffee in the commissary.

After one of their trysts, Singleton "introduced" Reagan to Carole Landis, who had been cast in an uncredited role as a commissary cashier. At the time of their "re-introduction," Landis and Reagan didn't give the slightest clue that they even knew each other as David knew Bathsheba.

On a night off from Susan Hayward, Reagan visited Landis at her apartment. He later told O'Brien, "My love-making usually cheers her up, but she's very depressed these days."

Landis had already appeared in bit parts in an amazing twenty-one films. "Nobody ever talks about my talent," she had lamented to Reagan. "Rumors keep circulating that I'm sleeping my way to the top, and not just with Busby Berkeley. The rumors are so persistent, and so vicious, that a powerful group of studio wives are protesting to their husbands about using me in future pictures. Even worse, a blind item appeared recently in a gossip column about how 'a little blonde starlet is trading sex for fame.'"

"Don't let these women get to you," Reagan had urged. "I bet most of these studio wives began as starlets screwing their way to the top, or at least into a marriage license."

The following night, he met with Hayward, who also seemed far more concerned with her career than in lovemaking. "If Jack Warner would give me a decent role, I would succeed. I'm pulling in $150 a week mainly by posing for publicity shots and doing some one-line walk-ons. I've heard rumors that Warners is not planning to renew my contract. My option comes up in a few weeks."

Years later, Hayward's close friend, Martin Rackin, said, "Jack Warner used to boast that one actor on his ass was worth two on his feet, and he kept them that way. Susan was very shy and very insecure back then. She really got kicked around, and I think it got to her. After the Warner treatment, she never let down her guard. It made her a loner, and she never changed."

Hayward had told Reagan that she'd recently made a movie, *Men Are Such Fools* (1938), starring Wayne Morris, Priscilla Lane, and Humphrey Bogart. Then, with a veiled ferocity, she told him, "On the set, I met one of the bit players, this trampy blonde, Carole Landis. I told her that if she met up with you, she's to look on with admiration, but that she's not to touch."

On hearing that, Reagan opted not to tell her that he'd spent the previous evening in Landis' apartment.

In the final moments of *Boy Meets Girl*, Reagan appears as a radio announcer on a red carpet welcoming stars to a premiere. Known only to insiders, his scene was conceived as a subtly mocking satire of Errol Flynn.

For months, Flynn had been urging Warners to film a script he had (partially) written, *The White Rajah*. In the final moments of *Boy Meets Girl*, Reagan announces the arrival of stars at the premiere of a (non-existent) *The White Rajah*, with the subtle implication that it starred Errol Flynn.

Boy Meets Girl opened across the country on August 27, 1938, and—mainly because of Cagney's involvement—it attracted a respectable box office. Many fans went to see it, thinking—in spite of its title—that it was a gangster movie, perhaps a saga about Bonnie and Clyde.

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Reagan was a last minute choice to play the young attorney in *Girls on Probation* (1938). Originally, it had been intended to star John Garfield, a newcomer to Warners.

A potboiling and pedestrian programmer, *Girls on Probation*, by anyone's estimation, was a Grade B flick with limp direction and a weak script by Crane Wilbur. Running only an hour, it didn't get much publicity or even a lot of notice at the time of its release in 1938. It made a "retro comeback," however, in the early 1980s when Reagan was president.

In spite of the picture's weakness, Reagan was glad to be cast as its male lead. Jane Bryan got first billing.

[In the film, Bryan plays the innocent young Connie Heath, who is falsely accused of theft by the witchy Gloria Adams (Susan Hayward). At a party, Gloria publicly accuses Connie of stealing her evening gown and Connie is arrested. As it turns out, the gown was illegally "borrowed" by Connie's bad-girl friend, Hilda (Sheila Bromley) from a local dry-cleaning shop.

In the luridly titled *Girls on Probation*, Reagan, as a crusading district attorney, came down with another case of "Leadinglady-itis" when he met Jane Bryan, whom the script reveals is really a "nice girl," despite her embarrassing problems with the law.

Onscreen, her character revealed how much she appreciated his help in explaining things to the judge.

Offscreen, based partly on the hysterical jealousy she faced from Susan Hayward, she told him, "Let's confine our friendship to a handshake."

Connie is subsequently tried for grand larceny, but a handsome, bright prosecuting attorney (Reagan) gets her off on probation. Later, based on a series of spectacularly foolish choices, Connie again hooks up with Hilda, once again gets into trouble, once again is publicly shamed, and once again is arrested.

She is ultimately rescued by Mr. Do-Right (i.e., Reagan), who gets her off again, this time because he's fallen in love with her.]

Reagan did more than fall in love with Bryan on screen. He fell for her off-screen, too, developing another case of *Leadinglady-itis*. But his luck in seducing his leading ladies had run out. She told him she liked him a lot, and although she wanted to be his friend, "Let's keep it sealed with a friendly handshake and not a kiss."

Jane Bryan, a good girl on probation, dependent (in the film, at least) on the loving ministrations of a prosecuting district attorney (i.e., Ronald Reagan).

A child of Hollywood, Bryan was a beautiful young woman being groomed for stardom at Warners during the late 1930s. She had already appeared in some memorable films, including *Marked Woman* (1937), with Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart; *Kid Galahad* (1937), with Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, and Davis, and *Each Dawn I Die* (1939), with James Cagney and George Raft.

Watching each of these movies, Reagan had been drawn to Bryan's winsome, fresh face, an innocent contrast to the cynicism of gangster-playing stars like Robinson, Raft, and Bogart. Bryan, even though she was only ten years younger than Davis, would play her daughter in four separate films. In two additional films, she would be cast as her sister.

Girls on Probation would be the first of three films Bryan would appear in with Reagan, the others being *Brother Rat* and *Brother Rat and Baby*.

Bryan had become an almost inseparable *protégée* of Davis, the star. Based on their extremely close friendship, and based on Davis' penchant for demanding that she be cast in films with her, rumors spread of a lesbian love affair. Bryan appeared with her mentor in *The Sisters* (1938), and played her daughter in *The Old Maid* (1939).

Unusually generous for Davis, she predicted stardom for Bryan, suggesting that she was on the dawn of becoming one of the great stars of Hollywood. "Of all the younger actresses around, Jane, to me, is the most likely to develop amazingly." *[Oddly, in retrospect, Bryan's lackluster and unspectacular performances seem unworthy of such lavish praise from Warners' reigning diva.]*

Reagan's ego was soothed when he learned the reason for Bryan's rejection of his sexual overtures. At the time, she was secretly dating Justin Dart, "the Boy Wonder" of the pharmaceuticals industry. They would marry in 1939, the union lasting until his death in 1984.

In 1945, he'd take over the floundering Rexall drugstore chain, building it into a food and consumer products conglomerate which later merged with Kraft Foods.

Cast as the bad girl of *Girls on Probation*, Sheila Bromley wasn't as cozy with Reagan as she'd been when they'd made *Accidents Will Happen*. She resented the excessive attention he was paying to Bryan.

As a future budding politician, Reagan was always gracious to the supporting players in each of his films, and especially to their directors. He enjoyed his time with the Pennsylvania-born director of *Girls on Probation*, William C. McGann. In just one decade, beginning in 1930, he would helm fifty-two movies.

One evening, as previously arranged, Reagan picked up Hayward at her cheap bungalow court, where she was living with her brother, sister, and mother in a sleazy apartment with broken bed springs, a tattered sofa, and splintered chairs.

He took her to dinner at Chasen's. "At last, I've got a part in *Girls on Probation*, where I at least appear on the screen for ninety seconds, even though I play a bitch. My only problem is that I'm supposed to be a socialite, but with my Brooklynese, I sound more like one of the Dead End Kids than a debutante."

She claimed that whenever she could, she had attended various screenings of Ronald Colman's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937). "He has perfect diction. I listen to it. I've seen the picture so many times I know all his lines. When I get home, in front of the mirror, I stand there and mimick his lines. I'll learn proper English yet."

At Chasen's, he noticed that she had brought a doggie bag. She bagged the entire bread basket and asked for another one. She even scooped up the leftovers on Reagan's plate. Previously, he'd taken her one day to lunch at Schwab's, where she had emptied the contents of their table's sugar bowl into a container she'd carried with her.

"Are things that bad at home?" he asked. "I'm far from rich, but I could lend you some money."

“I’m too proud to accept charity,” she answered. “We’ll get by.”

She was carrying on bravely, always believing that she’d eventually achieve success by working harder. “I have to dream hard, too,” she’d told him.

One night when he arrived on her doorstep, she was almost giddy with excitement. She’d just met with director William Keighley, who had cast her as the female lead of an upcoming movie, *Brother Rat*. Wayne Morris and Eddie Albert had been selected as two of the three male leads.

“It takes place in a military school,” she told him. “Keighley said you’re being considered for the third male lead.”

Regrettably, Hayward’s enthusiasm lasted for only a few days. Jack Warner had sat through a screening of *Four Daughters*, and had been so excited by the performance of Priscilla Lane that he’d decided to drop Hayward and cast Lane in *Brother Rat* instead. He told executives at Warners, “Priscilla, unlike her sisters, Rosemary and Lola, is headed for bigtime stardom.”

Hayward’s disappointment increased when Warner screened her brief scene in *Girls on Probation*. He immediately realized that she had not yet overcome her Brooklynese, a dialect that he considered inappropriate for her role in *Brother Rat*. Consequently, he ordered his staff not to renew her contract with Warners. “The bitch speaks pure Flatbush,” he claimed.

Reagan spent almost an entire weekend trying to rescue Hayward from the depths of her despair. She was almost inconsolable. At one point, he feared she might commit suicide.

But by Monday morning, her steely determination had returned. She told him that she was going to hire an agent for herself and storm the gates of Paramount.

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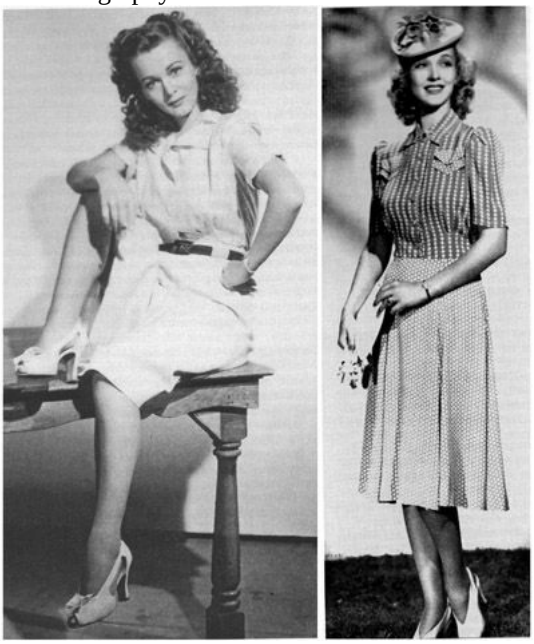
Carole Landis was among the young wannabees cast as inmates of a women’s prison in *Girls on Probation*. A viewer would have to look closely to spot her.

Her affair with Busby Berkeley was winding down. She was last seen in public with him in the spring of 1938, when he took her to a costume party at the Hawaiian Paradise Club.

Her first husband, Irving Wheeler, had arrived on the scene and was trying to extort money from Jack Warner. He was not willing to give him one dollar.

Wheeler had hired a crooked lawyer and filed a lawsuit. A headline in *The Hollywood Reporter* read—BUSBY BERKELEY NAMED IN $250,000 LOVE THEFT SUIT. Although they’d only lived together for less than a month, way back in 1934, Wheeler’s lawsuit charged that Berkeley had stolen his wife from him.

Berkeley’s lawyer counter-filed with a demurrer that the case be thrown out of court, which it eventually was. But ultimately, the scandal hurt everyone’s career, including Berkeley’s. In the aftermath of the public shame the lawsuit caused, Berkeley’s original choreography for the Scarecrow in MGM’s *The Wizard of Oz* was scrapped.

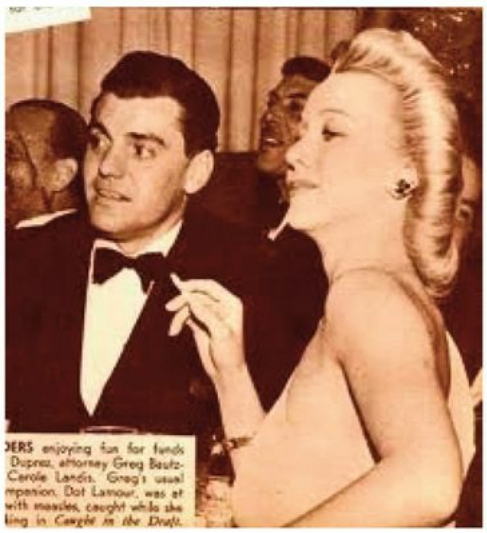


Two views of Carole Landis: *(left)* Coochey-coo? and *(right) Haute* fashion, circa 1942.

During the course of the lawsuit, Landis made a powerful ally. Attracted to her beauty, Gregson (Greg) Bautzer, a handsome Hollywood attorney, had represented her.

Bautzer was known for seducing some of the stellar lights of Hollywood, which, over the years, would include Joan Crawford, Dorothy Lamour, Ginger Rogers, Paulette Goddard, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Jayne Mansfield, Ann Miller, and Lana Turner. In time, he would become the lover of Jane Wyman, too.

During Landis' turmoil and public humiliation, Reagan offered her whatever emotional support he could, but he rejected her proposal of marriage, fearing that she was far too controversial. On the other hand, she hoped that a stable marriage to Reagan would bring a stop to the barrage of bad publicity that had virtually earmarked her as a Hollywood whore.



Looking as regal as an empress, the former prostitute, Carole Landis, one of the blonde bombshells of World War II, is seen on a date with ladies' man, Greg Bautzer, future lover of Jane Wyman.

Landis pleaded with Reagan to marry her, but he was turned off by her lifestyle, her emotional instablity, and her notorious past.

Reagan allegedly informed his Irish Mafia friends, including Pat O'Brien and James Cagney, that "Carole is a girl you sleep with, but don't bring home to your mother."

Late one night, Landis called him in tears. "Jack Warner is not renewing my contract. I'm adrift."

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The upcoming director of *Brother Rat*, William Keighley, called Reagan and invited him to lunch at the Warners' commissary. "The role of the third cadet is yours," he promised. "At lunch, I'll introduce you to Jane Wyman. I've cast her as your girlfriend in the movie."

Brother Rat had opened on Broadway on December 16, 1936, and had run for 577 performances. Eddie Albert as Bing Edwards would repeat his stage role on the screen, but the parts of the other two male stars would be recast. Frank Albertson had starred as Bill Randolph in the play, but the movie role went to Wayne Morris. And although one of America's most outstanding actors, José Ferrer, had played Dan Crawford on Broadway, Reagan was assigned the role for the movie version.

When Reagan came together for the first time with Jane, he found her reasonably attractive, but no more so than any number of starlets he'd previously dated. In the beginning, she seemed more attracted to him than he was to her.

Her divorce from the dress peddler, Myron Futterman, would not be finalized until December of that year (1938). Consequently, Reagan still regarded her as a married woman and at first kept his distance. She signaled her willingness to date him, but "he took his god damn time getting around to it," she later complained to director Keighley, who had originally introduced them at lunch.

Privately, Reagan confided to the director, "I'm still hot for another Jane, Jane Bryan, who you've also cast in this movie. But her heart belongs to another."

The plot of *Brother Rat* ordained that Wayne Morris would romance Priscilla Lane, that Eddie Albert would be happily though somewhat dysfunctionally married to Jane Bryan; and that Reagan and Jane would fall passionately in love.

Brother Rat [the nickname used for each other by military cadets] had been on Broadway, staged by George Abbott. It had starred Albert in a breakthrough role, although his part had been considerably reduced in the film script written by Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay. The setting for the film and its rowdy cadets was the Virginia Military Institute, defined as the West Point of the South.

Whereas Reagan was the more conservative cadet, the one who always seemed to be going "along for the ride," Morris' role was that of "someone who can get into more shakes than you can shake a shako at." Albert played the slow-thinking married cadet "who plugs along to accomplish things the hard way."

After sitting through the first rushes, watching the high-energy characters developed by Morris and Albert explode onto the screen, Reagan told Keighley, "I think I've gotten lost in the sandwich."

Reagan later recalled, "I was just a foil for Wayne and Eddie. I was this conservative roomie going along with Wayne's hare-brained shenanigans, but rather grudgingly."

To add some spark to his character, Reagan risks trouble by romancing the academy's stern Commandant's daughter, played by Jane as the bespectacled Claire. She's intent on becoming a bacteriologist. In one scene, as a means of making herself more alluring to Reagan, she removes her horn-rims and tosses them onto a cot. Her direction was to appear as "cutely alluring," and she does. The director noted the on-screen sexual chemistry between Jane and Reagan, which had not been fulfilled off screen.

Fraternal Rats: *(left to right)* Ronald Reagan, Wayne Morris, and Eddie Albert.

Whereas George Abbott on Broadway was an impresario known for his fast-paced action on stage, Keighley, was known through his film work for cadenced melodramas, such as *Each Dawn I Die*. As a film, in comparison with the Broadway play, the action moved more slowly.

For the first time, Reagan revealed on screen that he had a talent for comedy. Partly as a result of his work in *Brother Rat*, many other comedic roles lay in his future in the 1940s and 50s.

Priscilla Lane, the female star of the movie, was doing more than just sipping a shared soda with Wayne Morris *(left)* and Reagan.

During the course of the comedy, Albert learns that his wife is pregnant, which threatens his ability to graduate. *[According to the plot premises, cadets are forbidden to marry while attending the academy.]*

Lane told Reagan that her part had been intended for Olivia de Havilland, who rejected it, and that his role had originally been cast with Jeffrey Lynn. For Lynn, an even bigger disappointment had involved losing the role of Ashley Wilkes to Leslie Howard in David O. Selznick's *Gone With the Wind*. "I lost out on Ashley, too," Reagan told Lane.

[Handsome and tall, a schoolteacher from Massachusetts prior to his migration to Hollywood, Jeffrey Lynn was interpreted as the front runner for the role of Ashley Wilkes, partly because of his physical resemblance to the character, as defined by Margaret Mitchell in her novel. Lynn was used extensively during David O. Selznick's "Search for Scarlett," playing Ashley in the screen tests for many of the actresses who tried out, sometimes disastrously, for the part. Selznick eventually cast the more experienced British actor Leslie Howard, much to Lynn's disappointment.]

Although Reagan's sexual liaison with Lane had ended, he noticed that Morris was still visiting her dressing room. "Wayne and I are just rehearsing our roles," she jokingly told Reagan.

Unaware of Reagan's previous links to Lane, Jane complained to her, "Ronnie seems to prefer hanging out with his frat brothers who visit him on the set. I don't see him dating any girls."

Eddie Albert, decades before his fame as the male lead in the TV sitcom *Green Acres*, in a broadcast studio for one of the networks during the 1940s.

"Honey," Lane said. "You just go on believing that fantasy."

Years would pass before Reagan learned that Jane was also carrying on an affair with Morris, one that would stretch on and off way into her future.

As was his custom, Reagan bonded with the rest of the cast. "Everybody liked him," Jane said.

He discovered that Albert hailed from Illinois like he did. "I was born with the name Heimberger, but I had to change it because of the anti-German prejudice." He told Reagan that he never planned to be an actor, and that instead, his original mission involved "conquering Wall Street." The crash of 1929 put an end to that.

Albert followed his stockbroking gig by accepting whatever job he could. "For a time, I was a man on the high-flying trapeze," he said. "Before becoming an actor, I even sang in a night club."

Long before Reagan and Jane conquered the medium of television, Albert got there first. As early as 1936, in the "prehistoric" days of early TV, Albert became one of the first television actors, performing live in RCA's first television broadcast.

He also became a friend of Jane's, although he was decades away from interpreting the starring role of Carlton Travis on TV's *Falcon Crest* with her.

[Albert's life came to an end in 2005. Like Reagan, he suffered from Alzheimer's disease during his final days. He became one of four Illinois-born "nonagenarians" of Hollywood's Golden Age who lived until the 21st century. The other three included Buddy Ebsen, Karl Malden, and Reagan himself.]

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Before meeting Reagan, Jane had dyed her hair platinum. "When I changed my hair, I actually changed my

entire personality," she told him. Before I became a blonde, I had tried everything to get a start as an actress, but no one gave me a tumble." She paused. "So to speak."

When they met, she was only twenty-one, Reagan six years her senior. But in spite of his frequent seductions of starlets, the twice-married Jane was a decade or so ahead of him in life experience. At the time of her meeting with Reagan, she was emerging from the ruins of her disastrous marriage to Myron Futterman.

Reagan viewed her as markedly different from the archetypal image of an "over-painted, oversexed Hollywood glamour girl." As he relayed to Keighley. "She is not a brassy blonde like Joan Blondell, or a gal with a scandalous reputation like Carole Landis, so far as I know. She doesn't seem to have the fire and fury of a Susan Hayward, who is determined to get ahead at any cost."

In *Brother Rat,* Reagan breaks the rule, "Men don't make passes at girls who wear glasses," by wooing the commandant's daughter (Wyman), seated next to him.

She developed a crush on Reagan before he got around to her. Perhaps it was because she played "a brainy dame" in *Brother Rat*.

But when the cast and crew went to San Diego for location shooting, they took long walks along the moonlit beach at Coronado, and love, or something like it, blossomed.

As he confessed to Keighley, "When Jane trains those wide-set brown eyes on me, with that easygoing smile, I'm intrigued. It's not exactly love at first sight. But unlike some of the girls I'm dating, she's respectable enough to bring home to mother."

In addition to being attracted to Reagan's good looks and athletic body, she had other reasons to like him, as she once expressed in an interview with a reporter. "Until I met Ronnie, I viewed all men with suspicion. I felt men were just out to use women. But I was drawn to Ronnie because of his sunny personality. He seemed genuinely and spontaneously nice. He is also very kind, and I wasn't used to that."

"Neither of us was a star at the time," she recalled. "He was not a matinée idol like Errol Flynn, and I was no overdressed glamour girl like Kay Francis. We were just two kids climbing the ladder to what we hoped would be stardom for the both of us. Before I met him, I was the dancing fool, known as 'the Hey Hey Girl.' My nights were spent at the Cocoanut Grove or the Troc, wearing a big hat with a long cigarette holder coming out of my face."

Reagan wanted Jane Wyman to give up smoke-filled nightclubs and devote more time to outdoor sports and to him.

Shown above, in this carefully pre-arranged publicity photo, he teaches her to skate.

"Ronnie asked me why I didn't do more daytime activities like horseback riding or playing golf," she said. "He also told me he was an expert swimmer, and invited me to go swimming with him. I needn't be afraid of the water, he told me, bragging that he had rescued 77 people when he'd been a young lifeguard in Illinois."

She told how Warners' publicity had arranged for Reagan to take her, along with Ann Sheridan, ice skating to pose for shots for the newspapers. "Both Ronnie and I already knew Ann, and she was a fine girl. I couldn't skate worth a damn, and I fell on my ass. He rescued me and stood me up for the photos. After that, we met often at the rink, and he actually taught me figure skating."

It was years before Jane became aware that Reagan's friendship with Sheridan extended way beyond a kiss on the cheek.

On his first formal date with Jane, he took her to the premiere of *Second Fiddle* (1939), starring the Norwegian ice-skating queen, Sonja Henie, and Tyrone Power.

"He was a refreshing change of pace for me,' Jane told Lane. "I'm accustomed to men putting the make on me the first time out. He seemed like he's from a more innocent time, a Midwestern boy on a date with his college sweetheart. He never made a pass at me. At the end of the evening, he gave me a kiss on the cheek, and told me he respected me as a nice girl."

"He lectured me on a whole range of subjects," she said. "He's very smart and seems devoted to his parents. He supports them, you know."

"Because of all the abuse I've suffered in my life, I'm filled with resentments toward people. But I found him the very opposite. Mentally, he seems very healthy to me, although I'm sure he's got a darker side. Perhaps his pleasant façade is merely that. After midnight, he probably becomes a serial killer."

"I seriously doubt that," Lane said.

Lane told Keighley, "I think Ronnie is falling for Jane, but he plans to take his time. He's having too much fun being a much sought-after Hollywood bachelor. There are a lot of starlets at Warners who want him to fuck them. He's got a few steadies. Susan Hayward is a regular, Ann Sheridan a sometimes thing. I think at this point in his life, he wants to keep his options open. Unless he gets a gal pregnant, I don't think he'll want to settle down."

Once or twice a week, he took Jane dancing at his favorite night spot, the Grace Hayes Lodge. They frequented the place enough to adopt a favorite song, "Deep Purple," as a symbol of their shared affections. Sometimes, they double dated with Perc Westmore, Warner's expert makeup artist, and his actress wife, Gloria Dickson.

Morris took notice of the burgeoning relationship between Jane and Reagan. "I got the feeling those two couldn't wait to make love on camera. They were annoyed that the scriptwriters didn't have more love scenes for

them. I saw an affair developing. I decided to give Reagan a break and cool down my affair with Jane. I didn't plan to give her up, not by a long shot, but I'd slip around behind his back and see her less frequently. She was just too turned on by me to give me up completely. I have this affect on women."

In his first memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, Reagan mentioned *Brother Rat* in passing, although he made no mention of Jane. At the time he wrote it, he was married to Nancy Davis, who may have been the book's censor.

He barely concealed his disappointment that Eddie Albert stole the picture he'd made with Jane from both of them. "There is only one discovery in a picture, and it wasn't Jane or me," he claimed.

In its review, *The New York Times* wrote: "The cast of *Brother Rat* doesn't include strong marquee talent, but performances by the various members of the company are adequate."

After *Brother Rat* was wrapped, Reagan and Jane continued dating, although not exclusively. Priscilla Lane said, "It appeared to me that she was chasing after him, but that he was running faster than she was. The two of them eventually got married, but before that happened, two big affairs lay in each of their futures, along with some side action with other parties too. I don't think either of them wanted to retire to a rose-covered cottage to start dumping kids. Both of them hoped to make it big as movie stars. With them, love and marriage had to take second billing to seeing their names on the marquee."

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Jane Wyman was surprised when she learned that Ray Enright, not her favorite director, had cast Reagan in *Going Places* (1938). At the time, he was unaware that it was a recycling of *Polo Joe*, a film she had made in 1936 opposite comedian Joe E. Brown.

"Jack Warner is certainly getting mileage out of that tired old horse," she told Reagan.

Originally a play by Victor Mapes and William Collier, Sr., the story was first filmed as a silent in 1923 starring Douglas MacLean. In 1929, it was made into a talkie with the very fluttery Edward Everett Horton in the lead.

In its reincarnated, 1938 version, Reagan once again was playing second fiddle to his friend, Dick Powell. The first day the two actors had lunch together, the veteran crooner lamented, "This is the kind of picture I've been trying to avoid."

Scriptwriters Jerry Wald, along with Sig Herzig and Maurice Leo, had been called in to pump new blood into the tired old script, which was enlivened with songs by Johnny Mercer and Harry Warren. *Going Places* produced only one memorable song, "Jeepers Creepers." It was not sung by Powell, but by Louis Armstrong, cast as the groom to the racing horse, Jeepers Creepers. He could race only if he heard that song playing.

In this B-rated flick, the plot was thin, involving a fake identity. Peter Mason (as played by Powell) poses as a famous gentleman jockey as a subterfuge for gaining access to the lavish estate of horse-breeding Colonel Tithering (Thurston Hall), a rich Maryland landowner. Powell is really after the colonel's niece, Ellen, as played by Anita Louise, a stunning blonde beauty in spite of her overbite.

Because he's presumed to be a prize-winning jockey, the colonel demands that Powell ride Jeepers Creepers in a major race. Friends of the colonel plan to shadow the horse in a truck as it races alongside the track, loudly broadcasting the horse's theme song.

Reagan later said that the only thing he liked about the movie involved working with horses and being attired in natty riding garb. He played the colonel's none-too-bright son.

Part of the movie was shot at Los Angeles' Will Rogers State Park, a popular venue for the horsey set in Hollywood during the 1930s. With his *belle du jour*, Reagan often went to the park on weekends for horseback riding. One weekend, he encountered Walt Disney there. "Stick around, boy," Disney told him. "I might cast you in one of my movies. No, not as Prince Charming. Some other role."

It would be the female stars of *Going Places* that Reagan would remember best.

A pert blonde, the exquisite Anita Louise, born in New York, was one of filmdom's most beautiful, fashionable, and stylish stars. She was also known in Hollywood as a society hostess. Her parties, whose invitations were coveted, were attended by the Tinseltown elite.

Going Places was a comedown for her, as she'd previously appeared in minor roles in such prestigious productions as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935); *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1935); *Marie Antoinette* (1938) with Norma Shearer; and *The Sisters* (1938) with Bette Davis.

When Reagan met her, her once promising career was winding down. By the 1940s, she'd be reduced to appearing in minor B pictures, acting infrequently until the advent of television. She'd marry film producer Buddy Adler in 1940.

Before that, in the late 1930s, she dated Reagan, considering him as potential husband material except for one major flaw. She told Enright, "Ronnie doesn't have money, and I'm a girl with expensive tastes."

On one occasion, Reagan met Louise's mother. "Never again," he told Enright. "She is the ultimate stage mother from hell. She frankly told me I wasn't good enough for her daughter."

Years later, after he was discharged from the Army, Reagan encountered Louise dining at Chasen's. By then, she'd gone over to Columbia, appearing in such B movies as *Dangerous Blondes* (1943).

Here's Reagan, *Going Places*, torn between two blondes, man-hungry Minna Gombell *(left)* and social-climbing Anita Louise. Both women chased Reagan offscreen.

"If he weren't so poor, I might have made something of him," Louise said at the time.

She told Reagan, "Those dreams of stardom I shared with you were merely to be dreamed. At best, I'll be a footnote in Hollywood history as one of those pretty ladies from the films of the 1930s."

She later shared her views on Reagan with her childhood friend, Stanley Mills Haggart, a sometimes actor and "leg man" for Hedda Hopper.

"Had I not married Buddy," Louise said. "I might have made something of Reagan. He looked great in the tailor-made tux I purchased for him. I asked him to be the host of several of my parties, introducing him to Hollywood bigwigs—Darryl F. Zanuck, Samuel Goldwyn, even Louis B. Mayer. After all, Jack Warner didn't seem to be doing all that much for him. But Ronnie seemed to prefer low-rent women—Jane Wyman, Susan Hayward, even Ann Sheridan. Had movies not come along, each of those gals would probably be working the truck stops."

During the making of *Going Places*, Reagan was also pursued by "the blonde terror," Minna Gombell, who was nearly two decades his senior.

"I like to chase after women," he told Enright. "I don't like it when they aggressively go after me. Gombell's first movie, *Bad Girl* (1931), must have been autobiographical. Thank god you don't have me doing any love scenes with her. I don't want to turn her on any more than I do. She told me she'd like to taste me, beginning at my earlobes and working her way down to my big toes."

At one point in his later life, Reagan was asked if he'd ever dated Rosella Towne, an Ohio-born actress who also appeared in *Going Places*. He had no memory of who she was and did not recall having ever worked with her. That did not signal that he had signs of his oncoming Alzheimer's disease at the time. He may not have remembered Towne, because her appearances in his films, with one exception, were so minor.

At the time she worked on *Going Places*, she was hoping for a breakthrough role, which came later during the course of that same year. She had been cast as the lead playing the comic strip character Jane Arden in *The Adventures of Jane Arden* (1939). Warners was hoping that the picture would lead to a series of adventure films, the way the cartoon character of Blondie did for Penny Singleton.

After *Going Places*, Towne would appear with Reagan in three more films, all of them in 1939—*Dark Victory*, *Secret Service of the Air*, and *Code of the Secret Service*. Critics touted her as a future star, but in 1943, following her marriage to Harry Kidman, she disappeared from the screen.

Towne was not featured in any future series based on Jane Arden or anyone else. A future series, however, did get awarded to Reagan, beginning with his next picture, in which he was cast as Secret Service agent Bass Bancroft, a character he'd eventually portray in a total of four films.

Jack Warner had predicted that Reagan—as a Secret Service hero—could have flourished through the production of at least a dozen more films if his movie career hadn't moved in a different direction and had he not entered the Army.

Years later, when Rosella Towne was told that Reagan didn't remember her, she lamented, "How quickly they forget!"

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Ila Rhodes, a beautiful blonde beauty contest winner from Pasadena, emerges onto the scene to become a mysterious chapter in Reagan's love life. All of his previous biographers, if they knew about Rhodes at all, have misstated her links to him.

The actress aided in obscuring the details of her own biography. At one time, she claimed she was the daughter of a Cherokee Indian chief; at other times that she was the daughter of English aristocrats.

She also misrepresented her age, claiming that she was only twenty-one when she met Reagan, defining his age at the time as thirty. Actually, he was born in 1911 and she had been born in 1914, so her math was off. Adding to the confusion was the fact that at various times during the course of her career, Rhodes billed herself as Rae Corncutt, and once as Rae Cornutt.

Rhodes was cast as Reagan's leading lady in the first of his four serial roles as Brass Bancroft. She would also appear in two more films with him, but in very minor roles.

In 1980, during the course of her marriage to a Brazilian industrialist, she discussed her affair with the press when Reagan was running for president.

She made the claim that she was engaged to him for eight or nine months in 1939. At any rate, it must have given Reagan a busy calendar for romancing, as he was also involved at the time with Ann Sheridan, Jane Wyman, Susan Hayward, and an occasional starlet on the side. As his friend, Pat O'Brien, said. "At Warners, Ronnie was known to have a more fully booked date book than Errol Flynn, if such a thing were possible."

Many of Reagan's friends, including Dick Powell, Joan Blondell, O'Brien, and co-stars John Litel and Eddie Foy, Jr., confirm that Rhodes showed them an engagement ring allegedly given to her by Reagan.

He did not meet Rhodes, as was his custom, when she was first announced as his leading lady. Instead, Blondell introduced Rhodes to Reagan when he came to visit O'Brien and herself when they were starring in a movie, *Off the Record* (1939). Rhodes appeared uncredited as a telephone operator in this film.

"Those two lovebirds really took to each other, and Ronnie was seen leaving the studio with her at five o'clock that afternoon," Blondell said. "What happened next, they'll have to tell you."

The Pride of Pasadena: Ila Rhodes was a pretty blonde actress, but a very minor one.

As she later admitted—and her claim appears to be true—"Ronnie fell in love with me, and we were engaged for eight or nine months until I learned that he'd been seeing other women."

From the day of their first meeting, Reagan began an affair with the young beauty. But he was never seen in public with her, particularly at places where his romance would be reported to Jane or Hayward. Rhodes admitted that he never took her to Chasen's, or to any such posh dining venue.

"We ate at hot dog stands or at hamburger joints, and drank at taverns up the coast—you know, the kind with sawdust on the floor," Rhodes said. "We slipped away for a weekend in Palm Springs. We also went to this little beach house Pat O'Brien rented near Laguna Beach."

Blondell and others said that Rhodes had a "wild, wild reputation." One author claimed that she introduced Reagan to "sexual decadence." Other starlets reported that as a lover, Reagan was strictly "a missionary position type seducer."

Rhodes was known as a woman "who went all the way." In an interview, Rhodes said, "Ronnie was tall and attractive, very cute. I didn't have an antidote to ward off my attraction for him. Of course, he had a hectic schedule."

She might have been referring to all the B movies he was making, but she could also have been aware of his ongoing affair with Hayward or his "heavy dating" of Jane. How he managed to be engaged to Rhodes while seeing these other women has never been adequately explained.

Noel Smith, who later directed Rhodes and Reagan in *Secret Service of the Air*, said, "Ila practically lived in Ronnie's dressing room when they weren't due on the set. They even took their lunch there instead of going to the commissary."

It seemed that Reagan fell under her spell. "I don't know exactly what she was doing to him, but Ronnie just couldn't get enough of it," Smith said. "In those days, most men had to go to a whorehouse to get the services she was rumored to be performing on him."

He knew that a marriage to Rhodes, a woman with a dubious reputation, might jeopardize his standing at the studio. At one point, he went to Jack Warner to see if he would have any objection to his marrying her.

During the course of their private conversation, as Reagan later revealed to O'Brien, Warner admitted that he, too, had enjoyed the charms of Reagan's bride-to-be. But then he denounced her, claiming that Reagan's marriage to her would destroy a promising film career. Allegedly, he told Reagan, "You're a clean cut American boy. At least that's how we're promoting you. Marriage to the whore of Warners will ruin your name. You don't want to get messed up with a woman like that. Call off that god damn engagement—or else!!

It appeared that after his meeting with Warner, Reagan broke off his engagement to Rhodes, although he might have held out a promise of marriage at some future date. But he did not abandon her sexually, as he continued to see her on and off when she appeared in other films with him.

Blondell befriended her and tried to smooth over her rejection from Reagan. "Jack Warner has him by the

balls," Blondell told her. "He controls all contract players."

One day after work, Blondell drove her to the Brown Derby for drinks. Over her second cocktail, Rhodes confessed, "I liberated Ronnie sexually. Apparently, he's never let himself go with a woman before. Even though he's been screwing Warners starlets, he still is incredibly naïve about sex. Or at least he was. A lot of guys I sleep with like to have me strap on a dildo. When I tried that with Ronnie, he almost went into a panic. He'd never heard of such a thing, although it is a common feature in all the whorehouses of Los Angeles."

Five months later, when Blondell ran into Rhodes on the Warners lot, the young beauty seemed depressed. "From leading lady, I've dropped down to appearing on the screen uncredited…you know, receptionist, telephone operator. I'll soon be leaving Hollywood, as I've planned another future for myself."

"And what might that be?" Blondell asked.

"While I'm young and beautiful, I'm going to marry some very rich man, preferably one with a private plane, three homes, a bank vault filled with stock certificates and bonds, and a man who has a tendency not to be stingy with diamonds."

"Good luck, kid," Blondell said.

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In 1939—a year that has been cited as the most glorious, in terms of film production, in the history of entertainment—Reagan pioneered the first in a series of forgettable B films focusing on the adventures of a worker in the Secret Service.

That same year, other much more notable films were also being produced, and greeted with huge acclaim: Judy Garland was filming *The Wizard of Oz;* Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable were playing Scarlett and Rhett in *Gone With the Wind;* James Stewart was in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington;* Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff was suffering through *Wuthering Heights;* Bette Davis was going blind in *Dark Victory;* and John Wayne became a big star in *Stagecoach*.

Conceived as Warners' programmers, the Bancroft series of adventure films were snappy, fast-paced, and action packed, complete with car chases, aerial stunts (often from the studio's stock footage library), train wrecks, and fistfights, some quite violent. The young, virile, clean cut Reagan, in the third year of his Warners contract, played an ex-Navy pilot turned commercial transport aviator, who is recruited by the Secret Service.

Released in 1939, *Secret Service of the Air* was the first time Reagan was cast as Brass Bancroft. The scriptwriter, Raymond Schrock, was asked, "Why the name of Brass?"

He responded. "Men in the audience will get it. Haven't you heard of brass balls?"

"I'll be competing with Flash Gordon and the Lone Ranger for the boys who attend Saturday matinees," Reagan said. "They don't want to see romantic mush. They want action, and I'll give it to them. I'll do my own stunts."

The 61-minute film was based very loosely on the memoirs of W.H. Moran, the former chief of the U.S. Secret Service. Moran had been hired at $250 a week as a consultant, but most of his job involved generating publicity for the film. The scriptwriter had to be inventive, because much of Moran's work for the government was classified as top secret.

The original villains in the film were supposed to be Nazis, who, under Hitler in real life, were soon to invade Poland, an act that ignited World War II in September of 1939.

[Ironically, during the course of the next two years, Joseph Breen of the censorship office ordered American film studios not to identify Nazis as evil or as wrongdoers in their films because of the neutrality policy of the United States in effect at the time. That ruling, however, did not pertain to Asians (read that as "Japanese") who could, without restriction, be depicted as the bad guys.

Any attempt on the part of the U.S. censorship office to treat the Nazis deferentially ended abruptly in December of 1941 with the entry of the Americans into World War II, as sparked by the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Nazis could, and have been, identified as bad guys in the huge majority of American films ever since.]

In the film, Reagan goes undercover to infiltrate a gang of spies. He poses as a counterfeiter to gain entrance to the illegal cabal. The villains are operating an airborne smuggling ring conceived as a means of bringing hostile aliens into the United States.

Reagan, the Fighting Irish, as Secret Service Agent Brass Bancroft, balls his fists to confront the enemy

Despite his emotional involvement with the notorious starlet, Ila Rhodes, Warners publicity set out to promote a squeaky clean image of Reagan as a new hero in the movies. A statement claimed, “Ronald Reagan, both in appearance and personality, is the representative of all that is admirable in young American manhood. There is nothing pretty boy about him. Virility is his outstanding characteristic.”

The mention of “pretty boy” was a veiled dig at Robert Taylor, the resident pretty boy at MGM. Ironically, Taylor was one of Reagan’s closest friends, a relationship so close that his girlfriend, Barbara Stanwyck, once accused her bisexual beau of having a crush on Reagan.

“I don’t want to be a candidate for glamour roles,” Reagan told the press. “I don’t care to have my hair curled.” To promote his macho image, he was photographed working out with Mushy Callahan, the former junior welterweight boxing champion.

Warners assigned a Californian, Noel M. Smith, to direct the picture. He had helmed *Tooties and Tamales*, his first film, back in 1919, and would go on to direct 125 movies between then and 1952.

On being introduced to Smith, Reagan asked, “When do I fight? And whom?”

Smith later recalled, “Within an hour, my star had five skinned knuckles, a bruised knee, and a lump half the size of an egg on his head.”

On the second week of the shoot, an actor in a minor role fired a blank .38 caliber cartridge too close to Reagan’s ear, puncturing his ear drum. The damage couldn’t be repaired, and he suffered a loss of hearing in that ear for the rest of his life.

Deep into the shoot, Reagan had another accident when, clad in his flying outfit, he stepped in front of a studio wind tunnel. As his parachute became unraveled, he was dragged by the hurricane-force winds across the railroad tracks of the props department and hurled against a wire fence. After the wind machines were shut down, he was rescued by two studio grips. An ambulance arrived and he was rushed to a hospital where he was examined. Doctors found no injuries, but he spent the night there and was released to recover at home that weekend before reporting back to work the following Monday morning.

Producer Bryan Foy had lined up an impressive supporting cast, including John Litel, James Stephenson, Rosella Towne, and Foy, Jr. “I’ve cast Ila Rhodes as your leading lady, although she’s inexperienced,” Bryan said. “She’s the only one in the cast I’m taking a chance on. If she doesn’t go over in this film, she’s going to be reduced to uncredited role in programmers.”

The role of Saxby, Reagan’s boss at the Secret Service, was interpreted by veteran actor John Litel. The Wisconsin-born actor had enlisted in the French Army during World War II and had been decorated for his bravery. Reagan thought he was ideal for the role.

Robert Taylor *(depicted above)* was Reagan's best friend, but his occasional effeminacies were something that Reagan, in the promotion of his own career, wanted desperately to avoid.

A Warner's contract player, Litel would appear in 200 films, most often as a hard-nosed cop or as a district attorney. He not only would make another Brass Bancroft films with Reagan, but would also appear in his classic, *Knute Rockne—All American*.

Dapper James Stephenson played the villain, Jim Cameron. Born in Yorkshire, England, the son of a chemist, Stephenson had been a stage actor in his native country until coming to the United States in 1937 at the age of 48. Jack Warner thought he'd be ideal cast as either an urbane villain or a disgraced gentleman.

Eddie Foy, Jr. played Bancroft's genial side-kick, Gabby. He and Reagan bonded and became close friends for years.

Eddie was introduced to show business in vaudeville as part of a family act, "The Seven Little Foys." He later branched out on his own, making his debut on Broadway in 1929 in *Show Girl*. In the 1940s, he would appear with Judy Canova in four films. She always played a hillbilly yokel, or a country bumpkin. One film had them battling Nazis.

John Litel *(right)* played the role of Saxby, Reagan's tough-as-nails boss at the Secret Service.

Reagan interpreted Eddie as a genuine trouper, and he served as Reagan's "lookout" during filming, so he wouldn't be caught with Rhodes if Jane or Hayward arrived unexpectedly on the set.

Bancroft's dialogue, which Reagan was forced to deliver, sounded at times like something that tough-guy Edward G. Robinson might have said on screen. "He's a number one stool pigeon. Framing me so I'll get sent to Alcatraz. He called me a squealer. I'm not taking that from anybody."

In the film's most gruesome scene, the pilot, in his cockpit, pushes a stick on his control panel. The floor of the aircraft's passenger compartment suddenly opens for a view of earth thousands of feet below. The aliens are thus hurled to a squashy death.

This scene and others brought protests from the censors at the Joseph Breen office. It was suggested that the script be altered so that the captured criminals would be punished but not executed. Breen also wanted all references

to opium smuggling eliminated. Additionally, a scene revolving around a café brawl was defined as "too violent a rough and tumble," and clipped from the final cut.

At the end of the movie, Reagan battles the villain in the cockpit of the airplane, as it plunges to the ground. This, although extremely violent, was deemed acceptable by the censorship board.

In response to protests from Jack Warner, Breen exclaimed, "I am the Code! I stand like a man on the seashore, trying to hold back the tides of the ocean with a pitchfork." He also said that he detested what he called "the whorehouse crap of Hollywood. A tide of immorality is engulfing the world." Privately, he blamed Hollywood's sexual indulgences on the Jews who operated most of the Hollywood studios.

Producer Bryan Foy cast his brother, Eddie Jr., *(depicted above)* as Gabby, Bancroft's genial sidekick. "I liked Eddie a lot," Reagan said. "But he was one of those touchy-feely kind of friends. Couldn't keep his hands off me."

The Breen office had even objected to the plot of Reagan's relatively harmless comedy, *Boy Meets Girl*. The censors cited veiled undercurrents of illegitimacy, bigamy, and abortion.

"The movies of one Ronald Reagan often contain nudity and promote promiscuity," Breen charged. "I also object to the treatment of marriage in Reagan films, along with rampant sexual innuendo."

Privately, he maintained a dim opinion of Reagan. "From what I hear, he's a horndog screwing every legs-apart starlet at Warners."

The pompous, dreaded, very judgmental, and much-despised Joseph Breen, the ferocious overseer of censorship issues associated with the movies.

Warners publicity played up the claim that Reagan as a reserve officer "made many training jumps from planes." A picture of Reagan outfitted as an ace pilot was placed in theater lobbies across the country, along with blowups of Charles Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, the Wright Brothers, and Eddie Rickenbacker. In truth, Reagan had an absolute terror of flying.

The Secret Service of the Air was part of a political campaign to present the U.S. government in a good light long before the December, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. Jack Warner enjoyed a fine working relationship with the War Department, and sent many copies of Reagan's film to officials in Washington.

In a letter to the War Department, Warner maintained that "with this film, we are trying to alert the American people about the dangers of subversive activities from foreign agents. We are also trying to rekindle some old-

fashioned American patriotism."

At Warners, Reagan had become used to wearing military duds—a Navy uniform in *Submarine D-1*, even though his scene was cut from the final version; that of a U.S. Cavalry officer in *Sergeant Murphy;* and a military cadet's uniform in *Brother Rat*.

Throughout his varied interpretations of Brass Bancroft, Reagan continued his interest in politics. A left winger, Eddie Albert told him that Hollywood's Communist Party wanted to come the aid of the unemployed, the dispossessed, and the homeless, many of whom had lost their homesteads in the Middle West during the Depression and the Dust Bowl, and had drifted to California.

To the then-liberal Reagan, these goals sounded admirable, and he asked Albert if he could join the Communist Party. The chairman of the party, however, rejected Reagan's admission form, defining him as a flake and asserting that his political opinions changed every twenty minutes.

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At long last, Reagan was cast in an A-list film, a soap opera tearjerker, *Dark Victory* (1939), a vehicle for Bette Davis. He hated his role of Alec Hamm, a repressed homosexual. He was fifth in billing, earning $1,258 for his work on the film, as opposed to the $35,000 paid to the film's female star.

There is evidence from Hal B. Wallis, the film's producer, that Reagan asked him to play the lead role of the brain surgeon, Dr. Frederick Steele. That role, however, went to George Brent, marking his eighth film with Davis.

Spencer Tracy was the first choice for the role if MGM would temporarily release him from his contract with them for a short-term stint with Warners. But after reading the script, Tracy turned it down. "This is Bette's picture," he wrote, as part of his rejection.

Basil Rathbone was then tested for the role of the doctor. After watching his own test, Rathbone wrote Jack Warner, "Would you either let me have the test or destroy it yourself?"

[Once again, Reagan would compete with George Brent for a role in yet another Bette Davis film, In This Our Life *(1942), co-starring Olivia de Havilland. Reagan lost the role of Craig Fleming to Brent. Perhaps Reagan enjoyed some revenge by continuing to seduce Brent's wife at the time, Ann Sheridan.]*

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As associate producer of *Dark Victory*, Wallis selected David Lewis, the lover of director James Whale, of *Frankenstein* fame.

Born in Colorado in 1903 to Russian Jewish immigrants, Lewis later trained under the "Boy Wonder," of MGM, Irving Thalberg. Originally, Lewis had wanted to be an actor himself, studying in New York under the *grande dame*, Maria Ouspenskaya.

He became known for taking any film script and making it better. Unlike others of Hollywood's closeted homosexuals, Lewis was rather frank about who he was, and did not attempt to camouflage his same-sex cohabitation with Whale. Because of that, Reagan was leary of Lewis' reputation when they met. Lewis shook his hand, but Reagan later complained to Brent that, "David held it far too long."

Although he had never been nominated for an Oscar, the bisexual director, Edmund Goulding, was one of the best directors of so-called women's pictures, competing with gay director George Cukor. Among many other films, Goulding had directed Greta Garbo and John Barrymore in *Grand Hotel* (1932). As regards Goulding's previous exchanges with Bette Davis, he had directed her in a 1937 film, *That Certain Woman*, and in the same year as *Dark Victory*, 1939, he'd helm another critical success for her, *The Old Maid*.

Born in London during the twilight of the Victorian era, Goulding was the son of a butcher. From a lowly beginning, he rose to become not only a great director, but a virtual Renaissance man too—playwright, novelist, screenwriter, singer, and composer.

Goulding was very friendly with Reagan during the first week of filming, almost paying him too much attention. It was obvious to Lewis that Goulding was maneuvering to seduce Reagan. Lewis called that fact to Goulding's attention. "You just want him for yourself, bitch," Goulding said.

"How true!" Lewis admitted.

Dark Victory's Associate Producer David Lewis *(depicted above)*, lover of James (*Frankenstein)* Whale, was willing to advance Reagan's career, providing he lay on his casting couch.

Jack Warner had allotted only thirty shooting days and a budget of $500,000 for *Dark Victory*. Principal photography began on October 8, 1938.

Dark Victory had flopped on Broadway as a star vehicle for the formidable Tallulah Bankhead. As such, Jack Warner was able to purchase it for Kay Francis for $27,500. In a surprise move, Francis not only turned it down, but sued Warners, like Davis had done previously, to break her contract.

After that, even Bankhead herself was considered for the role. Then, for a brief time, the part belonged to newcomer Gale Page.

During the time David Selznick controlled the rights to the property, Barbara Stanwyck lobbied him to give her the lead. Selznick turned her down, offering the part to Merle Oberon instead.

At one point, Selznick even sent the script to Greta Garbo, but she returned it without reading it. Immersed in plans for *Gone With the Wind*, which was consuming all of his time, Selznick eventually allowed the rights go to Warners.

Films of the 1930s, for the most part, were supposed to have happy endings. Not *Dark Victory*. The doomed heroine, Judith Traherne, has an incurable brain tumor and dies in the final scene as the world grows black. Davis was cast as a spoiled rich socialite on Long Island, interested in fast cars, beaux, race horses, drinking, and parties. In her early scenes, Davis almost hysterically overacts, but settles more comfortably into the portrayal later on.

Geraldine Fitzgerald, a little known Irish actress, was cast in the sympathetic role of Judith's best friend, Ann. Warners, through Wallis, had signed her to a seven-year contract.

Fitzgerald had been warned to expect "actress warfare" with Davis on the set. But they established a friendship and had mutual respect for each other's very different talents. That same year, Fitzgerald received an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress in her role opposite Laurence Olivier in *Wuthering Heights*.

On the set, Reagan's girlfriend, Ila Rhodes, was heartbroken. Her brief position as his leading lady had come and gone after the release of *Secret Service of the Air*. In *Dark Victory*, she had an uncredited bit part playing a secretary.

Reagan offered her what comfort he could, and that involved making love to her in his dressing room. He was also balancing his ongoing affairs with Susan Hayward and Jane Wyman.

On the set, Reagan sometimes bonded with Humphrey Bogart, who for some strange reason played a horse trainer caring for Davis' stables. Like Reagan, he, too, was supposed to be in love with Judith Treherne. In those days, Reagan and Bogie often discussed their troubles with women.

"Both Susan and Jane seem to have marriage on their minds," Reagan said. "So does Ila Rhodes, that cutie I introduced you to the other day. Only problem is, marriage is about the last thing on my mind."

"Well, if you decide to get married, I'm prepared to divorce Mayo Methot and let you take her off my hands."

"Thanks, but no thanks," Reagan said.

Later, Bogie became less than friendly with Reagan when he heard that he had lobbied for his role as the horse trainer, urging Goulding to give his part of the repressed homosexual to Bogie. "The guy already has the lisp," Reagan had said to the director.

In this scene from *Dark Victory*, Bette Davis as Judith Traherne was slowly going blind. Her close friend, Alex Hamm (an effete society gadabout portrayed not very convincingly by Reagan) provided sympathy, but not much else.

The script was subtle but clear—to Reagan's horror—that the character he was portraying was that of a frustrated, deeply closeted homosexual.

[Two weeks into the shoot, Bogie decided to play one of his practical jokes on his costar.

One hot afternoon, he waited until he saw Reagan heading for the men's room. Reagan was already there, urinating, when Bogie entered. There were eight urinals, but Bogie opted to stand at the one on Reagan's immediate left.

"To get even with the fucker and to frighten the hell out of him, I stared down at his dick," Bogie later said to Goulding. "I leaned over close to him and whispered in his ear. 'I can take care of that thing for you.' Reagan didn't even finish pissing before he was zip-ping up and out of the toilet."

Geraldine Fitzgerald *(left)*, the formidable Bette Davis, and Ronald Reagan as he appeared in his first A-list role, "although I didn't want to play it homo."

Throughout the remainder of his life, and despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Reagan always insisted in private that Bogie was a bona fide homosexual.]

Goulding extended an invitation to Reagan and Rhodes for a party at his spacious home. At the time, Reagan was unaware of the exact nature of Goulding's notorious parties, which most often degenerated into orgies. At Goulding's home, a butler showed them into the foyer where Gouldng came out to greet them.

To Reagan's surprise, the director was dressed as a stern British nanny holding a wooden paddle. "I'm available tonight to deliver corporal punishment to those who have been naughty."

Almost speechless, Reagan later regained his voice. "I didn't know this was a costume party."

"Don't worry about it, darling," Goulding said. "Clothing is strictly optional. On the screen, I specialize in tasteful, cultured dramas. Off screen, my specialties include promiscuity and voyeurism."

Ushered into a large room, Reagan and Rhodes saw about fifty other guests, male and female, most of them in various stages of dress, mostly undress. Many of the women and men, too, were in their underwear. "You can strip down if you want to," Goulding told Reagan. "I've seen your publicity stills. Everything is casual here."

"No thank you," Reagan said. "We're fine."

He learned from fellow guest David Lewis that he and Rhodes had arrived in time for the orgy. Both Lewis and Goulding had rounded up “handsome hunks” from the various studios, along with beautiful young starlets.

Goulding left the room to check on the evening’s “entertainment.” Reagan whispered to Rhodes, “Let’s have a polite drink and then get the hell out of here.”

“C’mon, Ronnie,” she said to him in front of Lewis. “Loosen up. The fun is about to begin.”

Reagan told her he was leaving, but she said, “I’m staying.”

He never really forgave Rhodes for staying behind. It certainly marked the end of their engagement and perhaps their relationship, too. She later reported to him what happened. “Goulding was the master of ceremonies, presiding over a very debauched scene—all combinations, with lots of role playing. At the orgy, Goulding obviously preferred the hunks.”

Two days later, Goulding walked into Reagan’s dressing room without knocking. The actor was changing for a scene, wearing nothing but a pair of white boxer shorts. He looked uncomfortable in Goulding’s presence.

“Sorry you left the party,” Goulding told him. “But you can make it up to me.” He reached inside Reagan’s shorts and fondled his genitals. Reagan immediately yanked his hand away and reached for his pants.

Goulding later told Lewis, “The kid rejected my advances. He’s got a pretty good hang, though, but seems to be saving it just for the ladies.”

Moody and tormented, director Edmund Goulding solicited sex from Reagan, but didn’t get it.

He also invited him to one of his infamous Hollywood orgies.

“How unusual for a Hollywood actor,” Lewis responded.

After that, Reagan and Goulding began to argue about how he should play the role of Hamm.

In the movie, Reagan had been cast as an alcoholic who, although in love with Judith, might have fitted more comfortably into the bed of Brent. Some latter-day reviewers suggested the role might better have been cast with Lew Ayres; others that either Van Heflin or Robert Walker might have developed the role into an Oscar-winning nomination for Best Supporting Actor of the year.

As Hamm, Reagan was supposed to play an inebriated idle dilettante, a character “full of chatter, as much so as a parrot or a woman.”

When Reagan refused to play the role as a gossipy and—by inference—gay male, Goulding—rather than firing him outright—pared down his part to just a few scenes. In those scenes, Reagan appears as a rather dull and unimaginative man of few words, delivering a performance that’s wooden, at best.

The character of Hamm had originally been conceived as “a drunkard, sexually ambiguous waste of a man.” Goulding interpreted that to mean “a repressed homosexual.”

“Goulding saw my part as a copy of his own earlier life,” Reagan later wrote, an obvious reference to Golding’s own homosexuality.

“I was playing, he told me, the kind of young man who could dearly love Bette but at the same time, the kind of fellow who could sit in the girls’ dressing room dishing the dirt while they continued dressing in front of me.”

“I had no trouble seeing him in that role, but for myself, I want to think that if I strolled where the girls are short of clothes, there will be a great scurrying about and taking to cover,” he wrote.

“Goulding didn’t get what he wanted, whatever the hell that was, and I ended up delivering my lines the way my instinct told me they should be delivered. It was bad.”

Most reviewers agreed with Reagan’s own assessment of his performance: It was bad.

Goulding later expressed his disappointment in Reagan’s acting to Hal Wallis. “He refused to understand the nature of Hamm. He drank because he felt impotent, and he loved Judith because she was unattainable. The character was not necessarily a practicing homosexual, but a man battling his own sexual instinct and tragically

losing, escaping to the bottle. Reagan saw only black and white in a character, never gray. He wanted to play good guys, supermachos like Brass Bancroft, the Secret Service agent. I went on and shot the film with him, but I should have fired him."

"Because Reagan refused to cooperate, I cut several possibly good scenes with him," Goulding later said. "It could have been a juicy part."

On the set of *Dark Victory*, Reagan had never been the object of so many sexual advances, some of which came from Bette Davis herself. She was at a turning point in her life, coming to an end of her affairs with Director William Wyler and aviator-film mogul Howard Hughes. She was also divorcing her first husband, Harmon Nelson, Jr.

One afternoon, she invited Reagan to her dressing room and was outrageously flirtatious with him. Finally, when he stubbornly refused to pick up on any of her come-hither signals, she openly invited him to go to bed with her. He politely refused and excused himself. From that point on, she contemptuously referred to him as "little Ronnie Reagan."

If Davis struck out with Reagan, she at least got Brent to seduce her. She had been pursuing him for years. He had just divorced his actress wife, Ruth Chatterton, and was on the market again. Davis' most famous line in *Dark Victory* was "Darling, poor fool, don't you know I'm in love with you?" She delivered that same line in private to him. Their affair would continue even after *Dark Victory* was wrapped. But by the time he married Ann Sheridan, it was all over between them.

Orry-Kelly was selected to design Davis' costumes. For years, the flamboyant gay designer was her foremost costumer, beginning with *The Rich Are Always With Us* (1932), and ending with *A Stolen Life* (1946).

During the shoot, Davis had several feuds with Orry-Kelly over wardrobe. She wanted to show skin, even asking him to design what she called, "my naked dress."

When Reagan saw her in the revealing couture, he whispered to the designer. "Bette could be nude and she wouldn't turn me on."

Orry-Kelly misinterpreted the remark, assuming that Reagan was actually a homosexual. Later, when the designer propositioned him, he learned differently.

After his rejection of Orry-Kelly *[the former lover of Cary Grant]*, Reagan asked Brent, "Are we the only heterosexuals making this movie?"

"I'm a heterosexual," Brent assured him. "I don't know about you. After all, you've been cast as the homo—not me!"

That snappy remark made Reagan dislike Brent even more than he had before. Ever since joining Warner Brothers, he'd felt that those gentlemanly roles assigned to Brent could have been better performed by him.

When *Dark Victory* was released in 1939, it had to compete with some of the greatest films Hollywood ever made. Even so, it drew mobs of fans at the box office. The reviews, however, were mixed. *Time Out London*, years after its release, defined it as "a Rolls Royce of the weepie world."

Reviews of Reagan were sometimes harsh. A critic wrote, "He doesn't do much of anything except guzzle vast quantities of alcohol and generally embarrass himself."

Bogart also didn't fare well as Traherne's horse trainer. A reviewer claimed that he played his role "with a creepy kind of sexuality."

At Oscar time, Davis received a nomination for Best Actress, losing to Vivien Leigh for her role in *Gone With the Wind*, a role Davis had coveted.

After shooting wrapped, Reagan entered a confused period of his life. The women he was involved with seemed to be wanting more of a commitment from him than he was willing to deliver.

After a sleepless night, he rose early one morning to greet the dawn.

He later wrote about his impressions: "I saw my first real California sunrise. It comes up over the rise of the mountains that hedge Hollywood on the East, with the misty clouds radiating all the colors of the rainbow."

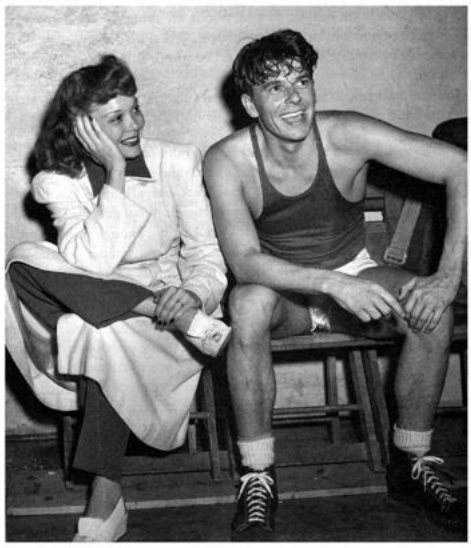
Chapter Five

Fiery Susan Hayward

Battles Jane Wyman for Ronald Reagan During His War with the Dead End Kids

Reagan Complains:

"Too Many Starlets Are Demanding My Services."



Until she met Reagan, Jane was not sports oriented, a nightclub with a drink being her favorite outing. At first, she liked to watch him at play, just to "check out his sexy body."

She later referred to this candid snapshot as "the happiest picture ever taken of Ronnie."

A picnic for two for the budding Warners starlets. They were being defined by the press as “a serious romantic item.” Within a few months of this Sunday afternoon outing, they would be hailed as “America’s Most Perfect Couple.”

Actually, they weren’t, but they were in love.

Movie historians cite 1939 as the greatest year in the history of motion pictures. That year, based on the release of *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett O’Hara stood in the barren gardens of Tara, proclaiming, “As God is my witness, I will never go hungry again.”

A future U.S. president as Brass Bancroft, under arrest *(top photo)* and on a secret mission *(bottom)*.

Starved for participation in A-list pictures, and yearning for good scripts, both Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman were suffering from a different type of hunger as they rushed from one B-movie to another.

Reagan continued his role as a B-list matinee hero within a programmer series playing Brass Bancroft, Secret Agent. That's when he wasn't hitting the streets with the Dead End Kids or making love onscreen to his leading lady, a lesbian in private life.

Jane had graduated from the chorus line to at least eighth billing, but occasionally, she was awarded a starring role in a very minor film. For her, the highlight of 1939 involved meeting and starring "with the love of my life." The co-participant in that grand passion, however, wasn't Ronald Reagan.

Jack Warner was not pleased with Reagan's lack-luster performance with Bette Davis in *Dark Victory*. "If you've got a weak script that none of our big male stars want, give it to Reagan," Warner told producer Bryan Foy. "Also, have him make some more of those Bass Bancroft adventure stories."

"I was proud of some of the B-pictures we made, but a lot of them were pretty poor," Reagan said. "They were movies the studio didn't want good, they wanted 'em Thursday."

Director Noel Smith was tapped once again to direct Reagan as Bass Bancroft in *Code of the Secret Service* (1938). Eddie Foy, Jr., repeating his earlier role, was signed on as his sidekick, Gabby. The female lead, such as it was, went to Rosella Towne.

Running for only 58 minutes, the plot sends Reagan to a remote section of Mexico on the trail of a coven of counterfeiters using plates stolen from the U.S. Mint. At their headquarters, with the understanding that the paper used in the printing of U.S. currency is unique, the villains are bleaching real dollar bills and printing larger denominations on the same paper. The chief of the bad guys is a colorful, peg-legged character disguising himself as a Catholic priest.

Reagan didn't like any of his dialogue, especially the line, "*Oh, you wanna get tough, huh?*"

An expert horseman, Reagan is filmed jumping onto the back of a stallion and riding at a fast clip into the setting sun. At one point, he hides out in the river, escaping a Mexican posse. He breathes through the tube of a broken reed.

Bobbysoxers in Philadelphia Strip "Sexy Ronnie" Naked.

John Litel was not available to repeat his role of Saxby, Bancroft's boss, the part going instead to Joseph King. Reagan found him a bit wooden. A figure in silent films, King acted in 211 movies from 1912 to 1946.

One can only imagine the consequences if the circumstances in this picture had occurred in real life, with Reagan, during his presidency, as a terrorist's hostage. Reagan is tied up on the left, Rosella Towne on the right.

When Reagan saw a screening of *Code of the Secret Service*, he was horrified. The producer, Bryan Foy, agreed with him. Both of them went to Jack Warner and pleaded with him not to release it. After viewing the film, the studio chief agreed.

But later, he retracted his word, releasing it across the country as a minor programmer. To appease Foy, he agreed not to show it in the Los Angeles area, so as not to embarrass the producer and the actors in their home town.

On a trip back to Dixon, however, Reagan saw that his former favorite movie house was, indeed, showing the film. The ticket taker immediately recognized the hometown boy. "Mr. Reagan," he said. "Welcome home, but you should be ashamed of yourself for making this turkey."

In New York, a reviewer said, "I used to go see Pearl White in *The Perils of Pauline* at the Saturday matinee. Now the screen has a new Pauline facing even greater danger. Pauline is now Ronald Reagan."

After Warner betrayed Foy and Reagan and released the movie, Reagan said, “It was the worst film I ever made. Never has an egg of such dimensions been laid.”

[One of Reagan’s future security chiefs, Jerry Parr, when he was a child, had a different opinion. He went to see the movie eight times. Afterward, he told his parents, “When I grow up, I’m going to become a member of the Secret Service like Brass Bancroft.”

Ironically, he eventually became not only a member of the Secret Service, but was designated as Reagan’s Chief of Security. He accompanied Reagan on all his personal appearances, including a 1981 visit to the Hilton Hotel in Washington, where the President gave a speech to the Construction Trades Council.

After he left the hotel, the sound of gunfire cracked the air. As Reagan later wrote, “Jerry Paar grabbed me by the waist and literally hurled me into the back of the limousine. When I landed, I felt a pain in my upper back that was unbelievable. ‘Jerry, get off,’ I said. ‘I think I’ve broken one of my ribs.’”

Agent Jerry Parr, *right*, a childhood devotee of the Brass Bancroft series, pushes Ronald Reagan into his limousine during a 1981 assassination attempt in which the president was wounded.

Later, in the hospital, the President learned what really happened, as he suffered excruciating pain. He had taken a bullet from the demented John Hinckley, Jr. After ricocheting through his body, the bullet came to a stop about an inch from his heart.

“I began to realize that when Parrhad thrown his body on me, he was gallantly putting his own life on the line to save mine. I felt guilty that I’d chewed him out right after it happened.”

Only the week before, Reagan had gone to Ford’s Theater and looked up at the flag-draped box where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

Hinckley had gone to see Taxi Driver *starring Jodie Foster, and had become mesmerized by her. In his memoirs, Reagan wrote, “Although I have never seen the movie, I’m told there was a scene in it in which there was a shooting; For some reason, Hinckley decided to get a gun and kill someone to demonstrate his love of the actress.”]*

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When director Roy Del Ruth called Jane Wyman to tell her that he’d cast her in his upcoming aviation picture, *Tailspin*, she was mildly surprised to be playing an aviatrix. But when he revealed the formidable lineup of stars, she was not only awed, but a bit intimidated. Never had she faced such an array of stars, headlined by Alice Faye, Constance Bennett, Nancy Kelly, and Joan Davis, along with the former silent screen heart-throb Charles Farrell in the male lead.

Getting sixth billing in the 84-minute film, Jane learned that she would play a woman pilot named “Alabama.” The movie was an oddity in that most films of the 1930s featured celluloid versions of only male pilots such as Clark Gable or Spencer Tracy.

According to the plot, Trixie (as played by Faye) takes off from her job as a Hollywood hatcheck girl and joins with another female aviator, Babe Dugan (Joan Davis), to enter a women’s air race from Los Angeles to Cleveland. An oil leak causes their plane to crash, but the two women survive to continue with additional airborne adventures.

Trixie’s rival, both in the air and for the romantic affections of the male lead, is socialite Gerry Lester (Constance Bennett), the daughter of a steel mogul. After lots of romantic scheming and scraping together the agreements and finances she needs to fly her plane, the optimistic and very perky Trixie eventually wins, although she was aided by the kindly rich girl, Gerry, who at first fakes engine trouble as a means of letting Trixie win, but who then gets into serious danger when her plane crashes and she is injured.

Jane Wyman, showcasing the *haute mode* of 1941.

Warners had lent Jane to 20th Century Fox since it had no immediate role for her. That didn't mean that Jack Warner was pushing her aside. He had taken out an ad in *The Hollywood Reporter*, naming her among his top ten contract players. On that list, only Jane and a New York actor, John Garfield, would ultimately achieve stardom.

While filming, Jane's final divorce papers came through from Myron Futterman. She had only kind words to say about him to the press, ignoring the harsh reality of their actual marriage. "I thought I was doing the right thing at the time," she said. "Myron was a lovely, charming man, but it just didn't work out. I guess I married too young." She defined her marriage to him as her first, ignoring completely her marriage to Eugene Wyman.

For reasons of her own, she misled Warners' publicity department, asserting that her father, "Ernest Wyman," had died. There had never been such a person. *[Her screen name, Wyman, had derived from her first husband, Eugene Wyman.]*

During the shoot, the producer, Darryl F. Zanuck, with his cliché cigar, showed up on the set. He had come to see both Del Ruth and Faye. He met Jane briefly and said, "Welcome to Fox. Hope it won't be your last visit."

After a brief chat, he wandered over to Del Ruth before spending an hour with Faye. After all, Faye was his most bankable star. Jane had wanted to make a good impression on him, but she was sure he would have forgotten her by tomorrow.

Faye's husband, singer Tony Martin, came onto the set one afternoon. Faye was emoting before the camera. Unlike Zanuck, Martin paid a lot of attention to Jane.

As she'd later tell Joan Davis, "I find him very handsome and oh, so masculine. But I didn't want to interfere in Alice's marriage, although Tony flirted with me outrageously. I don't give that marriage a long life."

Jane was right, as Faye and Martin would divorce in 1940. She'd follow that with a 1941 marriage to Phil Silvers.

On the set, Jane turned down Martin's invitation to slip away for a drink. "He was some sharpie," she told Davis. "Too much hair oil, and I find his singing style a bit bland. He's no Bing Crosby. But I can see why Alice fell for the lug. He's very, very sexy. When he talks to a gal, he stands so close to her he rubs his ample package up against her."

Tail Spin's female cast members, *left to right*: Jane Wyman, Joan Davis, Alice Faye, Constance Bennett, Nancy Kelly, Joan Valerie.

"I found myself lost in this lineup of hot-to-trot dames," Jane said.

The next day, Faye talked to Jane. "It seems that both of us started out as wise-cracking showgirls in films, but I, at least, have been told by Zanuck to soften my image. One reviewer said I was 'a singing version of Jean Harlow.' As you can see, my hair-dresser has given my peroxide blonde hair a more natural look."

"Miss Faye, you look beautiful, and I loved you in *In Old Chicago.*" Jane said.

"Would you believe it, Zanuck initially turned me down for that role? He offered the part to MGM's Harlow, but she died, of course."

"I'm anxious to see you in *Alexander's Ragtime Band,"* Jane said. "With that divine Tyrone Power. I think he is the world's handsomest man."

"I do, too, but he's never given me a tumble. Most days, after work on that picture, Power rushed off with Errol Flynn, who always showed up at five o'clock. The world's second handsomest man made off with the world's first handsomest man. For we ladies, there is no justice."

Three days later, Faye encountered Jane on the set. "Did you hear the latest news? My newest claim to fame. I'm the favorite movie star of Adolf Hitler!"

That same day, Jane chatted with Charles Farrell, the matinee idol of the 1920s. Appearing in more than a dozen films with Janet Gaynor, they were once hailed as "the movies' favorite couple." With nostalgia, he discussed Hollywood in the 20s.

"Did you catch my latest?" he asked her. "I play Shirley Temple's dad in *Just Around the Corner* (1938). Alice has also played Temple's mother. Maybe Alice and I should get married and make the little lollipop brat legitimate."

Jane interpreted Del Ruth as a smooth, competent, director who managed to keep all those screen stars in line, along with a complicated plot that involved aerial competition and frequent wisecracks from both Davis and Jane. Del Ruth was a genuine professional, who, since 1932, had been the second highest-paid director in Hollywood.

Jane was awed by the blonde beauty of Constance Bennett, a New Yorker who was the daughter of famed actor Richard Bennett and the older sister and fellow actress, Joan Bennett. Constance seemed very independent, cultured, and rather candid.

For years, Jane had read about the star in fan magazines, learning that she liked to collect both money and men. One reporter asked her father, "Doesn't Constance know she can't take her money with her?"

Richard had responded, "If she can't take it with her, she won't go."

Everyone in the film industry had an opinion about Constance. Columnist Adela Rogers St. John said, "She has a reputation for attracting other girls' men." Bette Davis cattily remarked, "Her face is her talent. When that drops, there will go her career."

"I'm not quite the female Casanova that rumors have it," Constance told Jane. "In fact, I'm married at the moment. My husband will be arriving soon to take me to lunch, and I'll introduce you."

An hour later, Jane met James Henri Le Bailly de La Falaise, Marquis de La Coudraye, who had *[from 1925 to 1931]* been the third husband of Gloria Swanson. He had won Constance from the arms of her then-lover, Joseph P. Kennedy. Both Constance and Swanson had competed for the love of both Kennedy and the French nobleman.

In her capacity as *Tail Spin's* third lead, Nancy Kelly was just "walking through the picture." That same year, she was also making *Jesse James* (1939), interpreting the role of Tyrone Power's love interest. Emerging from New England, she had been a child actress and model, becoming "the most photographed girl in America" at the age of nine.

Rising from the plains of Minnesota, Joan Davis was a comedic actress who had gotten her start in vaudeville. Jane had lunch with her one afternoon in the commissary. By now, she was used to actresses talking about themselves. Davis revealed that she'd appeared in a picture, *Way Up Thar* (1935) with the then-unknown Roy Rogers. "He told me he would have made a pass at me, but didn't, because I was just too ugly," Davis said.

In her private life, Jane continued to date Reagan, but, as she told Joan Blondell, "He is hardly overcome with passion at the sight of me. He's also dating other starlets, casually playing the field. So am I. When 'God's gift to women' comes along, I'll know who he is at once. Perhaps he's waiting just around the corner."

She told Del Ruth, "When Ronnie goes for a while without calling me, I ring him up and ask him out. He's too polite to refuse such a request from a lady. I do wish he'd show more aggression in pursuing me."

Actually, as Jane would later concede to Louella Parsons, "I am much more concerned with my career than I am chasing after some man,."

For five days, she sat around idly until a call came in from Lewis Seiler. He told her that she would be returning to her home studio at Warners, as he'd cast her in *The Kid from Kokomo* (1939). She learned that her co-star would be Wayne Morris.

Left to right: Gale Page, Dick Powell, and Ann Sheridan in *Naughty but Nice*

"Talk about a man who aggressively pursues women," she said. "He is the master of the forward pass."

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"This is my swan song to Warner Brothers," Dick Powell said, shaking Reagan's hand and welcoming him to the sound stage of their latest movie, *Naughty But Nice*. "I should be twenty years younger, playing my role."

Director Ray Enright had assembled a cast that, for a B-picture, was considered stellar. It included Reagan's sometimes lover, Ann Sheridan; Maxie ("Slapsie") Rosenbloom; newcomer Gale Page; plus such veteran performers as Helen Broderick, ZaSu Pitts, the ever-reliable Allen Jenkins, and band leader Peter Lind Hayes.

Although his role In *Naughty but Nice* was one of the smallest and least inspired in the film, Reagan managed to look "Presidential."

Naughty But Nice was filmed in October of 1938, but Jack Warner was so disappointed with it, he delayed its release until June of 1939.

The plot whirls around Donald Hardwick (as interpreted by Powell), a young and somewhat prim music teacher who comes to New York to try to get his symphony published and to visit his colorful Aunt Martha, a role interpreted by Helen Broderick. His other two aunts are played by ZaSu Pitts and Vera Lewis.

When these idiosyncratic aunts appear on camera, they steal the show. Donald is introduced to Linda McKay (Gale Page), a lyric writer, who sees jazz and Big Band potential in Powell's symphonic music and also falls in love with him.

Torch Singer Zelda Manion (Sheridan) vamps the young composer, luring him away, at least temporarily from "nice girl" Linda. Playing the role of Ed Clark, Reagan was cast as an honest music publisher. Linda converts Donald's composition to swing, and the music ends up on *The Hit Parade*.

On the set, Page and Sheridan became friends. Sheridan told Reagan, "Gale and I are just two Cherokee squaws. I was told that Indian blood flows through our veins. Both of us are looking for a brave warrior—and you're it, Big Boy. Gale and I decided you're more Comanche than Cherokee."

Warners' Publicity Department gave Sheridan a major press buildup. No expert herself, *[she was in the process of divorcing Edward Norris at the time]*, she was encouraged to provide women with marriage tips, suggesting that in her pursuit of a happy marriage, a woman should be a good companion—and not just a wife. Posters advertised what was pre-defined as Sheridan's style of attracting men: "Not too much fire, not too much ice, it's best to be just a bit *Naughty But Nice."*

Sheridan met Reagan in her dressing room for what she called "a very personal reunion." As she later told Page, "I wanted to make sure that all his equipment was still in working order and that Susan Hayward, perhaps in a fit of rage, hadn't snipped it off."

As he left her dressing room, Sheridan told him, "Don't tell Powell, but Jack Warner is giving me top billing. Warner's thinking is that it's better to promote one of his rising contract players than yesterday's news. Powell is on his way out the door."

After Reagan read the script for *Naughty But Nice*, co-written by Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay, he told Powell, "You're getting a rather tepid send-off from Warner's with this turkey."

"Don't I know it," Powell said. "But let's struggle upward and onward."

Originally entitled *The Professor Steps Out*, *Naughty But Nice* was a minor musical with songs by Johnny Mercer and Harry Warren.

Reagan was pleased to be working with Powell. He later recalled, "I was one of the thousands who were drawn to this very kind man, and who would think of him as a best friend. Sometimes, our paths took us in different directions, and months would pass without your seeing each other. When we did meet again, it would be as if no interruption had occurred. I cannot recall Dick ever saying an unkind word about anyone."

Years later, in a memoir, Reagan credited one of his fellow cast members, veteran stage actress Helen Broderick, the mother of Oscar-winning actor, Broderick Crawford, of changing his mind about unions. "At first, I was not a union man, until one afternoon when Helen cornered me in the Warners Commissary. She lectured me for an entire hour about the facts of life. After that, I became the most devoted member of the Screen Actors Guild."

Gale Page and Ann Sheridan asked Reagan if he would escort them to hear the act of Peter Lind Hayes, the vaudeville entertainer, songwriter, and occasional actor. He had a small part in their movie.

Up to then, Reagan had not paid much attention to Page, whom he found demure and rather attractive. After the show, Page invited Sheridan and Reagan to her home, where she'd already baked a tray of lasagna.

He was only vaguely familiar with Page's short career. Both of them shared memories of their small contribution to *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse* (1938), the picture on which they'd worked with Edward G. Robinson and Humphrey Bogart.

Page's big break had come when she became a member of the "four daughters," three of which were played by the Lane sisters—Priscilla, Rosemary, and Lola—in the highly successful film, *Four Daughters* (1938). The picture had induced Jack Warner to sign Page to three more sequels with the Lane siblings.

Rumors of what happened that night at Page's apartment, where Reagan and Sheridan were guests of the young actress, eventually leaked out. The following Monday morning, Reagan confided in Powell the events of that Saturday night. "After eating, we engaged in a game of strip poker. The gals must have been con artists. They beat hell out of me, and I ended up stripped down to my underwear. After another game, even that came off, my last vestige of modesty."

"This was my first three-way," Reagan confessed, "and it'll be my last!"

The story was too tantalizing for Powell to keep to himself. That night, he told what had happened to his wife, Joan Blondell. She couldn't resist sharing it with her co-stars on the set of *The Kid from Kokomo*. Reagan's friend, Pat O'Brien, found it amusing, but Jane Wyman said she thought it was "disgusting."

On the last day of shooting for *Naughty But Nice*, Page visited Reagan in his dressing room to kiss him goodbye. "You have such a great figure," she told him. "You really should share it with others."

"I do enough of that already," he told her.

Months later, he would find out exactly what she meant by that strange suggestion.

Reviews of *Naughty But Nice* were tepid at best, or scathing at their worst. *Variety* called Sheridan "a slight menace, a mike siren who would break up the songwriting team just to be cut in on Powell's future songs." *Harrison's Reports* criticized "the silly plot and trite dialogue."

Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* dismissed the film, claiming that it was "staffed by a competent cast of pranksters. This item might be steady fun if it were anything more than a bath of old gags strung together."

Even if Reagan's films were poor, it didn't seem to affect his ever-growing fan mail. Hundreds of women seemed to write letters that were almost love letters in tone. One woman found his voice "…irresistible. I like the way you breathe around words. What a pillow talker you must be."

Every week at least a dozen marriage proposals arrived. Most of them enclosed photographs of their senders in various states of dress, or undress, as the case might be.

Although Reagan's body was widely admired, he also had an eye for the female figure—that is, when he could see it.

Edmund Morris, in his officially sanctioned biography, *Dutch*, related a typical moment when Reagan went to the beach with Jane Wyman and a "friend."

"He must have been under orders not to wear his glasses in public," the friend claimed. "He squinted painfully as he watched her retreating figure go into the water. Then he jabbed at the sides of his eyes, pulling the flesh tight, and stared long and hard through sloed slits. The effect was of almost oriental lechery."

"All this adulation from fans is going to my head," Reagan told Powell. "I find myself walking around with my head in the clouds. But a call from the producer, Mark Hellinger, brought me down to earth with a thud."

The last day at the studio, Reagan went to Hellinger's office to pick up a script of his next movie, *Hell's Kitchen*, a feature he was ordered to make with the Dead End Kids.

"How could Jack Warner throw me into a hellhole with those juvenile delinquents?" Reagan asked. "Unlike Bogie and Cagney, I've been a good boy. I don't cause trouble like Bette Davis. Why was I being singled out for punishment?"

Pat O'Brien, the male lead, also greeted Jane. Reagan's close friend was like a father figure to her. In the starring role, O'Brien played Billy Murphy, a fast-talking boxing manager. Blondell was cast as his wily sweetheart, Doris Harvey.

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Joan Blondell, the female star of *The Kid from Kokomo*, had been working a week on the movie before Jane Wyman reported to work as one of the supporting players. Blondell was there to greet her on the sound stage and invite her to share her dressing room, sparing her from the cramped communal salon reserved for the supporting female players.

Lewis Seiler, who had directed Jane in *He Couldn't Say No*, was also there to welcome her. She had read that he would next be directing Reagan and the Dead End Kids in *Hell's Kitchen*.

Pat O'Brien and Joan Blondell, the stars of *The Kid from Kokomo*. He was a fast-talking boxing manager sharpie, and she was his wily secretary.

Jane's sometimes lover, Wayne Morris, arrived late on the set that day, since he had not been needed in early scenes. He passionately kissed Jane and invited her to have lunch with him in the Warners' commissary.

At first, he discussed his career woes, complaining about the script by Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay. "I play this hayseed boxer who won't fight in the ring until he finds his mother who abandoned him on a doorstep as a baby. Incidentally, I think mama posed for that painting of *Whistler's Mother's*. I'm made to look like some sissy mama's boy. I'll be ridiculed like I was when I was a male cheerleader at Los Angeles High School."

"You were a cheerleader?" Jane asked in astonishment. "With your build, I thought you'd have gone out for football."

Usually Morris had a rather carefree personality. But on this day, he appeared worried and a little bit afraid. "I just learned that Warners is not going to renew my contract. Working with Bogie on *The Return of Doctor X* has done me in, along with this present turkey we're making. Bogie himself claimed that our Doctor X is a piece of shit. He's cast as the living dead in search of fresh blood."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I hear Republic, which has combined with Monogram, is searching for a replacement for John Wayne," he said.

"You'd be perfect for John Wayne roles," she said.

I'm going over there to try to convince the brass that I can be their guy as soon as I finish making this cheesy farce."

At the end of the lunch, he saved other important news for last, revealing that he'd just married Leonora Hornblow.

She looked mildly shocked. "I hope the two of you will be very happy," she said, without trying to show any jealousy.

"It's not working out," he said. "We're only two months into the marriage and we're already talking divorce. That brings up the subject of you and me."

She reached for his hand. "Let's put you and me on hold for a while, at least until your divorce comes through. Are you okay with that?"

“Hell no!” he said, flashing anger. “But it’s lady’s choice. I’ll predict something. You and me are going to get back together. You’ll miss my kind of loving.”

“That may be true,” she said. “Do you realize this is our fifth picture together?”

“I’ll predict something else,” he said. “I bet we’ll do five more. Fan magazines claim we make a cute couple, and that you should have gone for me in *Brother Rat* instead of Reagan.”

“I must go,” she said, rising from the table. “I’m sorry you’ve run into trouble so early in your marriage.”

“You’ve had at least one or two husbands, so you know how things often don’t work out.”

“What seems to be the trouble?” she asked. “I know that whatever your problem may be, it’s not in the bedroom. You’re an artist in the boudoir.”

“Of course it’s not that,” he said. “The bitch objects to my sleeping with other women.”

Like Morris, Jane also wasn’t pleased with her role in *The Kid from Kokomo*. At one point, she talked to Wald, the screenwriter. “I just wrote a film for your boyfriend, Reagan,” he said. “*Naughty But Nice*. If he invites you out on a movie date to see it, turn him down.”

She expressed her dissatisfaction with her role in *The Kid from Kokomo* as a girl reporter, the love interest of Morris.

“Eventually, when I’m a big-time producer, I’ll bring stories by D.H. Lawrence and Ernest Hemingway to the screen,” Wald said. “But for the moment, at least, I’m putting bread on the table.”

Blondell’s biographer, Matthew Kennedy, wrote: “If Jack Warner wanted to make Blondell happy again, he had a peculiar way of showing it. *The Kid from Kokomo* was so bad, in fact, that Warner more likely wished to bully Joan off the lot by giving her a Skid Row assignment. Predictably, *Kokomo* stunk up theaters for a few days, barely made its cost, then crept away to rightful obscurity.”

Kokomo, Indiana, was never as glam as the implications of this photo by *haute* photographer George Hurrell, snapped as a publicity photo of Jane Wyman for her role in *The Kid from Kokomo*.

Blondell, at age thirty-two, saw attention shifting to such younger actresses as Jane and Ann Sheridan. Jane stood with Blondell as she looked out over the empty sound stage at the end of the filming of *The Kid from Kokomo*. “The same fate awaits me one day,” she said to Blondell.

“Where’s the brass band playing for my send-off?” Blondell asked. She lamented not having campaigned for better roles. “They gave me the roles Carole Lombard turned down. I’ll go down in film history as one of the Depression Blondes in movies of the 30s.”

A messenger boy interrupted her and handed her an envelope. In front of Jane, she opened it. “It’s dated January 7, 1939, my last paycheck from Warners. It totals $2,916.67—and that includes bonuses.”

Then she turned to Jane. “Let’s get the fuck out of here!”

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The producers of *Hell’s Kitchen*, Bryan Foy (still “King of the Bs”) and Mark Hellinger, sent Reagan its script, in which he discovered that once again, he had a disappointing role. It was obvious from the beginning that the picture would be stolen by the Dead End Kids.

“They’ll make mince meat out of me,” he complained to co-director Lewis Seiler, who had just completed

helming *The Kid from Kokomo*.

"I don't think I'll be able to handle the rowdy scenes by myself," Seiler said. "I've called in E. A. Dupont as my co-director. "He's a German who's directed crime stories on film since 1918. He'll keep these unruly boys in line."

The underlying concept for the Dead End Kids had originated on Broadway in 1935 as a play, *Dead End*, which ran for 684 performances based on Sidney Kingsley's grim look at slum life on the Lower East Side of New York City. Producer Samuel Goldwyn had seen the play and decided to film it, paying $165,000 for the rights. In his film version, in starring roles, he cast six of the original Kids from the Broadway play.

During the filming of *Dead End*, the young actors ran wild around the studio, vandalizing and destroying property. At one point, they crashed a delivery truck into a sound stage while a film was actually being shot.

"I'm too old to put up with shit like this," Goldwyn had informed director William Wyler. "I'm selling these jerks' contract to Jack Warner. Let him deal with these aging brats."

The original film, *Dead End* (1937), had starred Sylvia Sidney, Joel McCrea, and Humphrey Bogart.

Before reporting to the set, Reagan placed a call to Bogie to learn about his experiences working with this motley crew. That actor told Reagan, "I did something that rubbed those jerks the wrong way. All of a sudden, all of them descended on me and stripped off all of my clothes, including my underwear. There I stood, jaybird naked, before cast and crew. With one hand covering my privates, I rushed to my dressing room listening to the catcalls and the jeers."

The Dead End Kids: Hollywood's romanticization of America's urbanized juvenile delinquents. Although movie audiences found them compelling, none of the actors who worked with them did—especially Reagan.

Upper row, left to right: Huntz Hall, Gabriel Dell and Billy Halop. *Bottom row:* Leo Gorcey, Bobby Jordan and Bernard Punsley.

Bogie, in 1938, had also been cast in *Crime School*, with the Dead End Kids playing young hoodlums sentenced to reform school.

"I was miscast in *Crime School* as a do-gooder," Bogie said. "Not a role with my name written on it. Actually, *Crime School* was a rehash of Cagney's 1933 *The Mayor of Hell*. And now, Jack Warner is reworking virtually the same script with you in it. That bastard is sure getting his money's worth out of this old turkey."

Reagan also contacted Cagney, who had only recently filmed *Angels with Dirty Faces*(1938), with the Dead End Kids. It had also starred Bogie and his friends, Pat O'Brien and Ann Sheridan.

"You've got to watch the gang's leader, Leo Gorcey," Cagney warned Reagan. "He tries to throw you off by his constant ad-libbing. One day I snapped. I gave him a stiff arm above his nose and snapped his head back like I was going to break his neck. 'Now listen, punk,' I told him. 'There won't be any more of this god damn nonsense. You're going to do it like Michael Curtiz told you to. Or else…' The next day, the fucking ad-libbing stopped."

Reagan told Seiler, "If Cagney and Bogie each survived working with the Dead End Kids, I guess I can, too."

In *Hell's Kitchen*, Reagan was cast as a do-gooder, playing the role of lawyer Jim Donohue. He gets his uncle, Buck Caesar (Stanley Fields), a paroled convict with money, to make a contribution to the reform school which houses the Dead End Kids.

Regrettably, the school's superintendent, Krispan (Grant Mitchell), is a crook, keeping a double set of financial records. Eventually, as could be expected, the Kids expose Krispan's nefarious deeds, the most horrendous of which involves locking one of the Kids in a deep freeze, where he dies.

In the United Kingdom, because of its violence, the film was given an "H" rating (the equivalent of an "X" rating today).

For the female lead, Margaret Lindsay had been cast as a social worker. Reagan had already escorted her on two studio-sanctioned dates, each involving their attendance at Warners' premieres.

When he heard that Lindsay would play a role in the film, he told Seiler, "I think I'm losing my sex appeal with her. I didn't even rate a good night kiss on her doorstep."

"You're the wrong gender," Seiler told him.

"You mean, she's a lesbian?" Up until that point, Reagan seemed to feel that all lesbians were macho-strutting and butch. His mind had not yet wrapped around the concept of a lipstick lesbian, an archetype exemplified by Lindsay.

During the second week of shooting, it came as a complete shock to Reagan to learn that Seiler had cast Ila Rhodes in a small role in *Hell's Kitchen*. He had broken off his engagement to the actress four months before, and she was bitter toward him.

Hell's Kitchen: Reagan with Margaret Lindsay. "She batted for the other team," he said.

On the day of his scene with her, both of them were to appear with actors Grant Mitchell and Stanley Fields. For the first time in his life, he faced an actress who denounced him personally. Rhodes came up to him. "You turned out to be a second-rate asshole!"

He said nothing, but waited impatiently for direction from Seiler as a means of getting through the scene. He later told the director, "You didn't do me any favors. Here I am in this picture, facing an irate former girlfriend, pretending to make love to a lesbian on camera, and putting up with the Dead End Kids to boot."

Of all the gang members, Reagan held Huntz Hall, another New Yorker, in the deepest contempt. The son of an Irish immigrant, an air-conditioner repairman, Huntz got his nickname because of his "Teutonic-looking nose." At the age of five, he'd become a performer on radio. In previous films, Hall and Bogie had practically declared war on each other. Bogie had warned Reagan, "Watch out for him."

Huntz Hall: Bogie defined him as a "god damn psycho."

Huntz maintained a total disdain for Reagan, referring to him as a square. Along with some of the gang

members, Hunt plotted to give Reagan a "hot hat." On three separate occasions, he rolled newsprint around a hat, setting it on fire, and then slipping forward and shoving the burning headgear down onto Reagan's head. He would always yell in panic, but remove the burning hat before his hair caught on fire. "The Square was never seriously burned until one day," Hunt recalled years later.

Eventually growing bored with this prank, Hunt devised a devilish deviation on his arsonist theme: One day, as Reagan sat dozing in a director's chair, Hunt slipped up behind him and placed a powerful firecracker under the flimsy canvas of the chair's seat.

The firecracker blasted off, setting Reagan's trousers on fire. He screamed in panic as the flames engulfed his clothing.

"That fucking firecracker acted like a stick of dynamite," Huntz said. "Reagan must have jumped ten feet in the air."

As Hall stood laughing, looking like the dopey-looking kid he played on camera, another Dead End Kid, Bernard Punsley, rushed to Reagan's aid.

He smothered out the fire on his trousers and got two grips to carry him to Reagan's dressing room. An ambulance was summoned.

With a pocket knife, Punsley cut away at Reagan's burnt clothing. With a first aid kit, he applied a soothing salve to Reagan's burnt buttocks. When the ambulance and its crew arrived, Punsley told them he was a doctor in training, and rode beside his patient.

Even at the hospital, Punsley insisted on staying in Reagan's room. The actor agreed, because he'd come to his rescue. He visited Reagan every day and seemed to administer to him as if he were Reagan's doctor. He learned that Punsley, who was always reading medical books on the set of *Hell's Kitchen*, planned to become a physician.

Later, when he went into the Army, he received medical training. After the war, he entered the Medical College of the University of Georgia and obtained a degree. In time, he became the Chief of Staff at South Bay Hospital in Redondo Beach, California. When Reagan was Governor of California, he sent a note of thanks for his rescue, years before, along with his congratulations at his successful transition from acting to the medical fields.

A future doctor, Bernard Punsley later claimed, and rightly so, "I saved Reagan's ass...and I mean that literally."

In his letter, Reagan jokingly wrote, "You know better than anyone I've met how to deal with a hot-assed actor. Like you, I've changed professions, me going into politics, and you into medicine. You'll probably do better in helping people than I will in my new job."

Years later, Reagan recalled his horrid time working on set with the Dead End Kids. "It was an experience similar to going over Niagara Falls the hard way—upstream. Counting noses and getting them all in one scene was a major chore, but sometimes it was a relief when they did take off and disappear for a few hours. You never knew when a canvas chair would go up in smoke or be blown apart by giant firecrackers they were never without. Having heard lurid tales from other actors, like Bogie and Cagney, I approached my first picture with them as something of a sweat. I barely survived that to find that Jack Warner had cast me in another picture with these hoodlums. They had graduated beyond juvenile delinquents at that point."

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For her third film role of 1939, Jane Wyman was not thrilled to be cast as Torchy Blane, the girl reporter turned amateur detective. Beginning in 1937, Glenda Farrell, Jane's rival at Warners, had made the role her own in a series of seven movies, including *Smart Blonde* (1936), in which Jane had had a small part.

The first Torchy Blane movie was a box office hit, and Jack Warner ordered that it be developed into a series. It

eventually included such installments as *Torchy Gets Her Man* and *Torchy Runs for Mayor*.

After Farrell bowed out of the series, the next Torchy role was awarded to Lola Lane, one of the famous Lane sisters. Lola's picture bombed at the box office, but Warner decided to give the series a final chance by casting Jane as the star of *Torchy Plays With Dynamite*.

The second female lead, that of bad girl Jackie Maguire, went to Shelia Bromley, who had made a film with Reagan. From time to time, Jane chatted briefly with her between takes, appearing pleasantly polite, although she didn't like her co-star. At one point, Bromley told Jane, "I think I'm the only one of Reagan's leading ladies that he didn't seduce. Not that he didn't try."

"How nice that you so bravely held out," Jane snapped, sarcastically.

Bromley's claim about being "a Reagan Virgin" was later disputed by her co-workers.

In the film, Bromley played the girlfriend of the notorious hoodlum, "Denver Eddie," who escapes a police raid, but Bromley is arrested and sent to jail. Torchy gets herself thrown into jail, too, by turning in eleven false alarms. In prison for eleven months, she befriends Maguire. Torchy's plan involves trailing Maguire after both of them are released from prison. The amateur detective rightly thinks Maguire will lead her to Denver Eddie—and so she does.

In this, the final sequel of the Torchy Blane series, Jane *(right)* replaced Glenda Farrell *(left)*. Farrell had defined the role of a tough, fast-talking blonde, through four previous sequels.

Already out of steam by the time Jane arrived, the series was terminated after her first and final try.

"By the time I took over the role of Torchy, the series had run out of steam," Jane later recalled. "Noel Smith, the director, wasn't much help to me."

"I watched all of Farrell's previous Torchy films in the Warners' screening room," Jane said. "She played her as a fast-talking, wise-cracking, tough-acting broad, but I wanted a different interpretation that was more who I was. Farrell's characterization of Torchy was rather annoying. I wanted to play her with more sympathy."

In the Torchy Blane movies that had featured Farrell, her none-too-bright boyfriend had been a detective played by Barton MacLane. Jane ended up with character actor Allen Jenkins, with whom she'd worked before. "I liked Allen," she said, "but I don't think any movie-goer will take us seriously as a romantic couple."

Smith not only helmed Jane in her debut as Torchy, but had also been assigned to her upcoming film, wherein she would also play a detective. At the end of the shoot, he had only praise for Jane. "She always showed up on time, perfectly made up, and with all her lines remembered. She was most cooperative."

"My, she was one good-looking dame, and my crew used to stare at her. Behind her back, they talked to each other about how they wanted to plug her. She'd joke and banter with them, but never give them any action. Frankly, the word back then was that Jane slept only with big-name stars like Henry Fonda or Clark Gable, perhaps an occasional director. But no cameramen, grips, lighting technicians, or messenger boys. Anytime Reagan called, she came running, even though he wasn't a big star."

One hot afternoon, Farrell showed up on the set to see how Jane's interpretation of Torchy was coming along. She and Jane chatted between takes.

"I'm leaving Warners," Farrell said. "Or, more accurately, it's leaving me. I hope I'll find work at Columbia and extend my career. But if I don't, I'll be like Blondell, one of those Depression-era film blondes of the 30s who tried to make Americans forget their troubles."

Jane wished her luck in her future career.

Years later, Jane tried to put a spin on her own B-pictures of the 1930s. "The writing, direction, and overall production values *[of those films]* may not have been much, but they did move fast and got all the action packed into less than an hour. I found that the shortcuts sharpened my timing and gave a razor-edge to my acting style. It was like being trained in an acting school. *[Thanks to them]* I learned how to be a stronger presence on the screen."

Jenkins more or less echoed Jane's sentiments. "The result was a hell of a lot of good pacing, compressed action with not a second wasted, and an overall *root-a-root-toot* effect that, I'm afraid, action films tended to lose when they got too long and careful."

"Of the three women who played Torchy, including Farrell and Lola Lane, Jane was the most attractive in purely physical terms," Jenkins said.

When the *Torchy Plays With Dynamite* came out, movie reviewers compared the three actresses who, over time, had interpreted the character of Torchy Blane. They defined Farrell as "the toughest broad of them all. For pure brass, she wins the prize," or so claimed the *New York Journal-American*. "Lane was more feminine and genial, less sure of herself. Wyman was less brassy, but more in control as Torchy, more her own woman."

For the most part, Jane's reviews were better than those for Lane. Most critics defined Lane as "a ghastly substitute for Glenda Farrell."

One reviewer asked, "Has any movie-goer ever seen Allen Jenkins get the girl until now?"

One of the worst reviews asserted, "If you've seen one Torchy film, you've seen them all. Jane Wyman does all the cutesy tricks she's learned from working in all those Warners' potboilers."

She liked *Variety's* appraisal of her performance best of all. She clipped it out to read it to Reagan on their next date.

"Jane Wyman is new to the title role of the newspaper scribbler and her casting as Torchy Blane is a happy choice. She clicks nicely with Allen Jenkins as her detective sweetheart, and goes through another exciting experience with mobsters. Wyman circumvents any temptation to overact and makes her romance with the detective lieutenant realistic."

"I'm grateful to *Variety* for saying that," Jane told Reagan. "But I didn't think my so-called romance with Allen looked realistic at all. Far from it!"

Torchy Plays With Dynamite had opened across the country as a B-list programmer on a bill that featured an A-list 1939 movie, *Dodge City*, starring the dashing Errol Flynn. Jane was disappointed when her picture flopped. Subsequently, the Torchy Blane series did not survive the 1930s.

Jane did not appear in *Dodge City*, but Warners publicity wanted to send her on a junket with Flynn to Dodge City, Kansas, for its premiere. She was told that the publicity she'd generate would help her career. Other Warners stars included Ann Sheridan and newcomer John Garfield.

Jane, of course, remembered, unfavorably, her one-night stand with the Australian star, Flynn, a major Hollywood seducer. She wondered if she'd be competing with Sheridan for his legendary romantic attentions.

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One night, Reagan had dinner with his friend and Father Confessor, Pat O'Brien. He told the older actor that although he felt a strong need to become married with children, he did not want to abandon forever his life as a free-wheeling bachelor. He wondered if it were in him to dabble in the best of both worlds, although that would involve betrayal.

Susan Hayward, Jane Wyman, and Ann Sheridan were virtual fixtures in his life. He'd dropped Ila Rhodes, and now, he wanted to find time for two beautiful blondes, Carole Landis and Betty Grable, who had each been phoning him.

As he told Dick Powell over lunch at the Brown Derby, "I may be spreading myself a bit thin, but I think there's enough of me to go around."

When he discussed his dilemma with O'Brien, telling him, "If I accommodated all the starlets calling me, I wouldn't have time to make any movies," Reagan found him less than sympathetic.

"Poor Baby," O'Brien responded. "If only I had that problem. Even my wife turns me down more often than not."

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On April 1, 1939, at Union Station in Los Angeles, Jane, with three big suitcases stuffed with wardrobe items from Warners, boarded a specially chartered train headed to Dodge City, Kansas, for the premiere of a Technicolor western starring Errol Flynn.

Jane was not in the cast of *Dodge City*. Warner's had commissioned Olivia de Havilland as the female lead. Jane was sent out as a Warners starlet, along with others, to publicize the film, but also to garner publicity for her own burgeoning career.

At the station, she joined some of the other passengers, including Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan, Wayne

Morris, John Garfield, De Havilland, Bruce Cabot, and another starlet, Jean Parker.

Sheridan and Jane were shown to their individual compartments by a porter. Jane whispered to her friend, “I wonder what the sleeping arrangements are going to be on this train ride.”

Although Jane wasn’t in *Dodge City*, she was invited along on its promo tour.

Above, Olivia de Havilland and Errol Flynn, the featured stars of the picture, get dodgy.

“Errol already slept with me during the making of *Dodge City*,” Sheridan confessed. “And Garfield and I have just made a thing called *They Made Me a Criminal* (1939). We’ve been spending some very hot nights together, but there’s been absolutely no talk of marriage, which I’m glad about, ‘cause I’m just recovering from a divorce. John feels he’s got to share his dick with half the females of Hollywood, but he said it took a whole week before he got laid after arriving in Hollywood.”

“How tragic for him,” Jane said.

“I’m sure Morris will be knocking on the door of your compartment soon,” Sheridan said. “And perhaps Errol will throw you one, too.”

“Been there, done that,” Jane said. “But I could easily handle a second helping from that Tasmanian Devil.”

Sheridan was riding the crest of her *Oomph Girl!* publicity buildup. Even though her role as a dance hall hostess was minor, she was nonetheless assigned third billing in *Dodge City*, one of Warners’ “big budget” releases for 1939.

“I’m surprised Bogie is along for this trip,” Sheridan said. “Maybe he’s escaping from that harridan of his, Mayo Methot.”

“I saw him slipping some little wren onto the train back at the station,” Jane said. “She looked sixteen if she’s a day. So I think we won’t be seeing much of him.”

The train stopped first in Pasadena, where De Havilland got off to report to the MGM sound stages to begin her role as Melanie in *Gone With the Wind*. Jane envied her, having coveted that part for herself.

After that, the train made sixteen stops en route to Dodge City. At each of them, all the actors, including the stars—with the visible exception of Bogie, who didn’t seem to care—got off to pose for photos and to sign autographs.

William Lundigan...Erotically involved with Errol Flynn

Since Kansas was dry and because many of the stars were heavy drinkers, the prop department at Warners had converted one of the railroad cars into a replica of the hard-drinking bar *["The Gay Lady Saloon"]* that had been featured within the movie.

During the first night of their transit from L.A. to Kansas, Jane awoke after midnight and discovered that the light in her compartment didn't work. She exited from her compartment in search of a night porter. During her search, she spotted a young actor, William Lundigan, emerging from Flynn's compartment. She had already met him, finding him clean cut and good looking.

Sheridan had told her that Flynn had gotten him a small role in *Dodge City*. That would lead to future roles in Flynn's films, including *Santa Fe Trail*, in which Reagan would co-star.

The following evening, in the Gay Lady Saloon, Jane was surprised at how open Flynn was in flaunting his bisexuality.

Rising from his table at around midnight, he looked at Lundigan. In front of everyone, he said, "Fancy a poke, sport?"

The young actor dutifully rose from his chair and followed Flynn to his compartment.

Jane had expected Wayne Morris to come knocking on her door, but he hadn't. She soon found out why. He was spending his nights with Jean Parker, the Montana beauty, who had been working as a Warners starlet since 1932. Like Jane, she had unsuccessfully auditioned for the role of Melanie in *Gone With the Wind*. Parker had previously appeared with the Barrymores (John, Ethel, and Lionel) and with such performers as George Raft, Katharine Hepburn, and Robert Donat.

She was married to George E. McDonald, the prominent New York socialite and newspaperman, but her marriage was coming to an end, as indicated by her ongoing affair with Morris. Parker would divorce her husband in 1940. Jane viewed Parker as her rival, and managed to avoid her throughout the course of the train ride.

Jane found Garfield, a New York trained actor and "bad boy," immensely attractive and sexually appealing, but dangerous. She was reluctant to get involved with him because of her friendship with Sheridan. But any time Sheridan was not around, Garfield sent Jane "signals."

He told her that Warners had recently completed a survey of movie fans. "Jack said I have a powerful image on the screen, a certain *persona* that's very sexy. He claims I'm unique among actors because I appeal to both genders —I mean, regular guys, and not just the fags, seem to like me."

She assessed his cocky attitude and feared that it would soon catalyze some ongoing feuds with the Warners' brass.

"You know, I'm the obvious replacement for Bogie, and as you probably noticed, he's been avoiding me. I can also play those Edward G. Robinson roles. I find both Bogie and Robinson a bit creepy. You may not know this, but Robinson's a fag. And Bogie has no sex appeal at all. When are you going to let me provide you with one of my samples?"

"Give me a raincheck," Jane said.

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Late one night, before the Warners train rolled into Kansas, Flynn knocked on the door of Jane's compartment. "How about it, sport?" he asked.

Young John Garfield (from: *They Made Me a Criminal*).

"I thought you'd never ask," she said, ushering him inside.

She offered him a drink, during which time he complained that he had been woefully miscast in *Dodge City*. "No one appreciates my acting. Everybody seems more interested in my thighs."

"That's because you encase them so well in those green tights," she said.

"I'm just a god damn sex symbol to the whole fucking world," he said.

"You should be flattered," she said. "I'm honored that you could include me in your busy schedule."

"Of course, sport," he said. "I adore you. Sheridan and Lundigan are just passing fancies. I really like quality gals like you."

Then he stood up. "Don't you think I should get out of my clothes and show you I'm still *The Perfect Specimen?* I'm sure you saw that movie I made with your buddy, Joan Blondell."

"I did indeed," she said. "But I prefer to see the real thing, not the screen image."

Flynn spent the rest of the night seducing Jane, promising to continue the adventure after they got to Dodge City.

During their final drunken night within the Gay Lady Saloon, "The Boys" gathered on the far side of the car. Jane still hadn't spoken to Big Boy Williams, having never forgiven him for his attack on her. His was the loudest voice, audible during conversations he conducted, respectively, with Alan Hale, Patric Knowles, Lundigan, Flynn, and Bruce Cabot.

Jane and Sheridan sat together at the far end of the railway saloon, in a position that allowed them to clearly overhear every word the men were loudly saying. Their topic was Venus's flytraps, which Jane quickly figured out was a reference to a vagina.

"When I married Lili Damita, her honeypot was so big it could stretch a country mile without tearing an inch," Flynn said.

"Since Bogie isn't here, I confess that I've had his wife, Mayo Methot," Cabot said. "So has Flynn here. So has Knowles. It was the biggest hole I've ever seen. A guy could fall in."

"My dear friend, John Barrymore, described the Venus's Flytrap better than anyone," Flynn said. "He once told me what it was like to fuck Tallulah Bankhead. You shove it in, a journey through the depth of a West Virginia coalmine, until you come to the main saloon and gallery. There, a cabin boy descends with a ladder, ringing a bell, inviting you to go on to the lower depths, if only human skin could stretch that far."

Jane later told Sheridan, "I was afraid to get up and leave. I didn't know what Big Boy would say about me."

When the train finally arrived at Dodge City, the passengers were met with a brass band and a parade. As they were driven through town in open cars, Jane waved to the adoring crowds.

Dodge City was previewed that night in three different movie houses. The film was shown around the clock until dawn, so that the town's entire population could see it if they wanted to.

The first night in Dodge City, Flynn kept his promise and visited Jane's suite. He left at two o'clock that morning, returning to his own suite which he shared with Lundigan.

As Jane told Sheridan over breakfast the next morning, "How could you and I go through the 30s as starlets at Warners without bedding Errol Flynn? If either of us hadn't, we'd be disgraced."

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One night, when the sands from the desert winds were blowing into Los Angeles, an elated Susan Hayward arrived on Reagan's doorstep. "I'm a star!" she shouted, as she kissed and embraced him. "Perhaps not the biggest star in Hollywood, but I'm on my way."

Her first big break had come when she was cast in Paramount's 1939 remake of*Beau Geste*, the original story based on a silent film, released in 1926, that had starred Ronald Colman. In the newer version, three brothers—Gary Cooper, Ray Mil-land, and Robert Preston—were the stars, with Hayward cast as their love interest and the female lead.

The dream of every Hollywood starlet, Susan Hayward was the belle of the ball in *Beau Geste*, attracting the leering interest of Robert Preston, kneeling at her feet; Gary Cooper, standing guard over her; and Ray Mil-land, moving in on the right.

"Coop" won the prize in all departments, but later dumped her.

Even though she was broadcasting the news of her big break, Hayward was also aware of its limitations. "I'm the gal who says goodbye to the boys as they set off to war at the beginning of the picture, and I'm the one who's there to welcome them back."

"Congratulations and come on in," he said, taking her wrap. "I've got two steaks on the fire."

"At last my Flatbush accent is gone," she said gleefully. "The director, William Wellman, told me I now sound like a combination of Ronald Colman and Barbara Stanwyck."

Reagan tactfully avoided asking Hayward about her romantic life when she wasn't with him. Rumors were spreading that she and Cooper were engaged in an affair.

As a means of publicizing *Beau Geste*, Paramount had sent her on a splashy publicity tour to her native New York, where she received a lot of personal publicity, including her appearance on the front cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

The next day, Reagan lunched with his new friend, Eddie Foy, Jr. During its course, they discussed their upcoming film, *Smashing the Money Ring*, another "Brass Bancroft, Secret Agent" thriller.

"He confided in me," Foy later said. "He told me that he'd never known Susan to be this wild and passionate. But he also expressed an unease about her, as if she were too vital and way too intense. His exact words to me were, 'Susan's a fiery tigress. I have this awful feeling that when she's in bed with me, she's going to sting me like a Black Widow spider after our dirty deed is finished.'"

Three nights later, Reagan entertained a very different, more angry, and more sullen Hayward. Her earlier sense of giddy elation had evaporated. At the end of the filming of *Beau Geste*, Gary Cooper, who seemed to have been afflicted with the same state of *Leadinglady-itis* that usually enveloped Reagan during filmings, had dropped Hayward and moved on to his next conquest.

Not only had Hayward lost Cooper, but those big roles she'd dreamed about had not been forthcoming from

Paramount. Once again, she had been cast in two B-pictures. One was the lackluster *Our Leading Citizen (1939),* with Bob Burns, a former radio comic. The other, also from 1939, was *$1,000 a Touchdown*, co-starring Joe E. Brown and Martha Raye, two loud-mouthed troupers facing faltering screen careers.

Hayward did have some news that concerned him. That afternoon, she had had lunch with columnist Louella Parsons, who had asked her to join her in a vaudeville-inspired publicity tour scheduled for November. “She’ll have a bevy of beautiful starlets, and she plans to ask you to be the sole male performer going with her on the jaunt.”

“Who are the other gals?” he asked.

“She hasn’t made up her mind yet, but I know she’s going to ask Jane Wyman, that ugly little twat who performed so badly with you in *Brother Rat*. That role should have gone to me. I could have pulled it off.

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With trepidation, Reagan reported to the Warners studio for his latest film, *The Battle of City Hall [Before its release in 1939, the title was changed to* Angels Wash Their Faces, *the sixth of seven films featuring the Dead End Kids.]* Its director was Ray En-right, who had previously helmed Reagan in the disastrous picture he made with Bogart, *Swing Your Lady*, and also in *Naughty But Nice*, where Reagan played a distant second fiddle to his friend, Dick Powell.

When Reagan shook Enright’s hand, he was frank, admitting he wasn’t looking forward to appearing once again with the Dead End Kids. He told Enright about the serious burns he had suffered on his buttocks after Huntz Hall had exploded a firecracker under his chair.

Reagan did not condemn all of the Dead End Kids, relaying to Enright the bravery of Bernard Punsley. “This doctor in the making put out the fire and ministered to my burns until the ambulance arrived. I’ll always be grateful to him for that.”

Jack Warner had ordered the film’s title change as a means of cashing in on some of the success of a movie that Warners had released the previous year, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, a picture that had co-starred James Cagney, Ann Sheridan, Bogart, and the Dead End Kids. *Angels Wash Their Faces* was not really a sequel, but Warner hoped to trade off the wide visibility of the original title.

Reagan with Ann Sheridan in *Angels Wash their Faces*.

As the son of the District Attorney, (Henry O’Neill), Reagan was not pleased with his role, even though he shared top billing with Sheridan.

Enright told Reagan that he had conferred with his colleague, Michael Curtiz, the jaded survivor of many previous encounters with The Dead End Kids. *[Curtiz had directed* Angels With Dirty Faces *the year before.]* In this heavy Hungarian accent, Curtiz witnessed how the Dead End Kids had thrown a lit firecracker into Bogie’s dressing room, and had painted obscene murals on the office walls of various high-placed Warner executives. They had also set off the fire sprinklers in the wardrobe department, ruining thousands of dollars worth of costumes.

Finally, as a means of policing the unruly delinquents, Curtiz called in a big ex-football player, Russ Saunders, to enforce security.

As Leo Gorcey later recalled about one of Saunder's disciplinary actions, "Anyone who has ever been hit, point blank—with water from a full-size, high-pressure fire hose can understand why we caused no more trouble."

As reported by Enright, "The first day Reagan encountered Hall on the set, he did something out of character for him. He punched Hall in the nose, giving him a bloody one. After what he did to Reagan on *Hell's Kitchen*, Hall certainly deserved that punch. He picked himself up off the floor and looked like he was going to fight Reagan. But he thought better of it and insulted him instead.

"Forgive me," Hall said to Reagan. "I know you have to keep those lily-white melons smooth and ready to receive the pricks of Errol Flynn and all the other studs at Warners who want to poke you."

Enright claimed that when he heard that, a genuinely furious Reagan looked like he wanted to continue beating up Hall, but turned and walked away instead. From then on, Hall and Reagan made it a point to stay out of each other's way.

Hall procured marijuana for the Dead End Kids. "They're going up in smoke with this Mexican weed," Reagan told Enright.

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"It's good to work with Ann Sheridan," Reagan told Enright. "She's a great gal." In *Angels Wash Their Faces*, he falls in love with her.

According to Enright, Sheridan seemed to have a soothing influence on Reagan. "When they weren't needed on the set, they spent a lot of time together in his dressing room. Ann was very frank with me about their relationship."

"We're not in love," she told Enright. "But we have great sexual chemistry. If you can find a guy in Hollywood who knows how to fuck, you hold onto him."

For his part, Reagan never discussed his affair with Sheridan. "In spite of his busting Hall in the face, Reagan was a real gentleman," Enright said. "I knew he was dating Wyman at night. I had directed her pictures as well."

Once again, Reagan found himself working not only with Hall and Gorcey, but with Gabriel Dell and Bobby Jordan. He had lunch several times with Punsley. In the film, the character he played ended up badly. Trapped in a tenement fire, he is burned to death.

Margaret Hamilton: Have you ever tasted an unripe persimmon?

Punsley introduced Reagan to Frankie Thomas, who played Sheridan's brother. Reagan found him likable and talented, having worked on Broadway since he was eleven. He'd recently appeared in a hit film, *Boys' Town* (1938), starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney.

Sheridan was cast as the loyal sister of Gabe Ryan (Thomas), who is framed on a charge of arson and sent to prison. His gangland members work to clear his name, and the real arsonist is revealed at the end, as could be predicted.

"Other than being cast with Ann as my leading lady, what made the highlight of the picture for me involved meeting two delightful old broads, Margaret Hamilton and Marjorie Main," Reagan said.

The same year Reagan met Hamilton, she was also starring as "The Wicked Witch of the West" in *The Wizard of Oz* with Judy Garland. "Thank God the movies had roles for an actress with a sour-apple expression and a beak-like nose. She was a natural to play the greatest female villain in celluloid history. To my surprise, I learned that before she became the terror of all little kids, she'd been a kindergarten teacher and had, for a while, run a nursery

school. In the movies, she virtually cornered the market on playing schoolmarms, backfence gossips, spinsters, and acerbic old buzzards. In private, she was one of the nicest ladies I have ever met."

He had seen Hamilton in her role in *These Three*, based on Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, which had originated as a hit play on Broadway. In the film, Miriam Hopkins and Merle Oberon run a girl's school. A malicious little brat, played by Bonita Granville, spreads lies about them and endangers their livelihood.

"I loved it in the movie when you hauled off and smacked hell out of the little bitch," Reagan told her.

"Speaking of Bonita, here she comes," Hamilton said. "I'll introduce her. She's got a crush on you."

Bonita Granville...a crush on Reagan

At that point, Reagan had not been informed that Granville was also in their movie. Hamilton later said, "Bonita met Reagan, but he seemed immune to the charms of this sharp-nosed, brazen young woman. Later, Bonita got Mickey Rooney to seduce her in those Andy Hardy films, but Reagan was a holdout. Of course, he had Ann Sheridan. What did he need with Bonita?"

Main, who later became famous for her Ma Kettle roles, had appeared in the original Broadway production of *Dead End*. She was asked to repeat her role. In this movie version, she was cast as the mother of gangster Humphrey Bogart. She delivered a classic line, "*Ya yellow dog*!" before slapping hell out of Bogie.

She had heard about the trouble the Dead End Kids had caused Reagan. "If any of these hooligans cause you any more grief, send for me and I'll turn them into sopranos!"

Mom, roasted piglets, and Marjorie Main. She threatened to castrate the Dead End Kids.

During the final week of the shoot, John Garfield came onto the set to retrieve Sheridan. He was introduced to Reagan, who had been told that he'd accompanied Sheridan and Jane Wyman to Dodge City for that film's premiere.

He informed Reagan that he, along with Sheridan, had been cast as the stars of a new movie, *Castle on the Hudson*, with Reagan's good friend, Pat O'Brien.

When Garfield excused himself to go to the toilet, Reagan said to Sheridan, "My dear lady, I hear you and

Garfield are becoming quite an item."

"That's because with Jane and Susan Hayward lusting after you, you're not always available. With you, the line forms on the right."

Dick Foran called Jane Wyman a "go-to-gal."

"You flatter me," Reagan responded.

When she asked about his next picture, he said, "I'm back to playing Secret Agent Brass Bancroft chasing after counterfeiters. I'll end the 30s struggling through another B, heading for oblivion unless something breaks for me soon."

"Maybe Hollywood will get wise and cast us two heartbreakers together in an A-list picture," she said. "I feel it in my bones."

She had spoken like a prophet.

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After sitting, bored, and watching Jane Wyman emote as Torchy Blane, Jack Warner pulled the plug on the series. To replace it, he immediately ordered the script department to launch a new series about a private woman sleuth that would be fresher and more tantalizing than the stale Glenda Farrell series.

The result involved Jane receiving star billing in *Private Detective*, where she was cast as Myrna ("Jinx") Winslow.

The 57-minute film would be screened as the bottom half of double bills throughout the country, opening at the end of 1939 and playing for a few weeks into 1940 when Europe had gone to war.

Screen writers Raymond Schrock and Earle Snell were hired to concoct a crime drama pitting Jane against her boyfriend detective, a role interpreted by Dick Foran in the part previously played by either Barton MacLane or Allen Jenkins.

Jane had never considered Foran a charismatic leading man. She told Noel Smith, the director of *Private Detective*, "Dick is hardly the type to set a gal's heart fluttering." Later, she re-evaluated him when he arrived on the set looking tall and handsome, a clean-cut all-American type like Ronald Reagan, standing six feet two with thick red hair.

She had always associated Foran with singing cowboy roles, where he had been directed by Smith. Occasionally, he had appeared in such A-list pictures as *The Petrified Forest* (1936), with Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart, or *The Sisters* (1938), again with Davis. Jane had seen him in *Cowboy from Brooklyn* (1938), in which he had appeared with Reagan.

Although he was married at the time to Ruth Piper Hollingsworth, Foran signaled to Jane that he'd be interested in dating her. He explained, "My marriage is on the rocks, and I'll soon be filing for divorce."

"Welcome to the club," she said.

"If you're lucky, I'll sing my hit recording, 'My Little Buckaroo,' to you, something they featured in my film, *Cherokee Strip* (1937)."

"Thanks, but I'll skip it for the time being," she said.

Foran had nothing but praise for Jane, calling her "a real trouper, a good sport, no temperament, always a pleasure to play with."

In the same year, he'd directed Jane, Smith also helmed Reagan in *Secret Service of the Air*. "I always felt that Smith was the kind of director who wanted to rush through a movie, bringing it in on time and under budget," Jane said. "He didn't believe in giving an actor much guidance. His motto was, 'Show up on time, know your lines, and don't bump into the furniture.'"

Gloria Dickson: NOT the luckiest girl in the world.

The plot of *Private Detective* revolved around Jane, a detective who's involved in an investigation of a divorcée accused of murdering her ex-husband. A child is involved, as is a sleazy lawyer (Morgan Conway).

Jane and her boyfriend, a police officer, cross and criss-cross paths so often they decide to work together as a means of making more progress on the case. Her most dangerous moment occurs when she barely manages to escape carbon monoxide poisoning.

Jane was already a friend of her co-star, Gloria Dickson, who had made her film debut with Lana Turner in the 1937 *They Won't Forget*. She was the wife of Perc Westmore, the leading makeup artist at Warners. The Westmores often double dated with Jane and Reagan.

["There had been such hope for Gloria when she started out at Warners," Jane later recalled. "In 1937, she landed on the covers of several magazines, and featured in such articles as 'The Luckiest Girl in the World.' She wasn't lucky at all. I didn't see much of her after she and Perc divorced in 1941. There were two more husbands before she was burned to death in a fire in her Los Angeles home in 1945."]

As Jane feared, *Private Detective* met with lackluster or bad reviews. *Variety* summed it up like this: "Warners has put the Torchy Blane series into the garage for an overhauling and a repaint job. *Private Detective* has a new finish, but underneath, it's plainly the Torchy formula, with wider cruising range than was the case in the girl reporter series with Glenda Farrell."

When Jack Warner viewed *Private Detective*, he canceled the proposed follow-up installment that would have featured Jane. "Once again, I was back, along with the other starlets, in the Warners cow corral."

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In the third of the Brass Bancroft Secret Service series, *Smashing the Money Ring* (1939), Reagan once again chased after counterfeiters, except that this time the crooks were already in prison.

The character he was playing had been defined as "an ace treasury operative," on a mission to bust up the ring, which was printing counterfeit money on the prison printing press and shipping it out into circulation by concealing it within bundles of their newspaper, *The Big House Bugle*.

Backed up with footage shot at San Quentin, Bancroft poses as a prison inmate so that he can live among the prisoners and learn how their operation works.

After Reagan read the script, mainly by Raymond Schrock, he knew at once that it was filled with all those prison movie *clichés* from the 1930s. The main villain, "Dice" Matthews, (played by the ratlike actor, Joe Downing), spouts dialogue such as "Don't forget what happens if you sing to the coppers!"

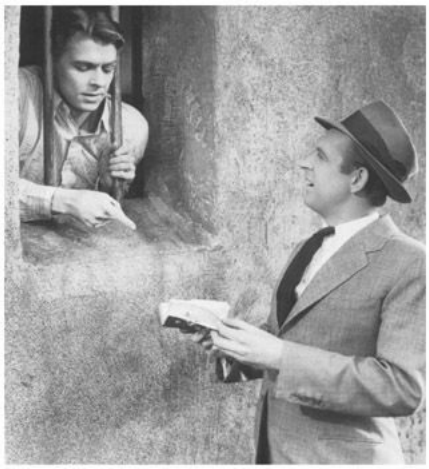
"A line like that might have worked coming from the mouth of George Raft," Reagan said.

"Dice" is feuding with the owner of a gambling ship, the *SS Kismet*, who he claims "double crossed me." When the investor is sent to prison, Dice goes after him with a shiv. But Reagan intervenes and saves his life, although (amazingly) that doesn't alienate him from Dice.

The lovely Margot Stevenson.

As the plot thickens, Reagan falls for the film's only female character, Peggy, the daughter of the owner of the *SS Kismet*.

Margot Stevenson was cast in the role. This sultry, blonde-haired, and glamorous New Yorker was also a stage and radio actress who was known mainly for her role of Margot Lane opposite Orson Welles in the radio adaptation of *The Shadow*.



Reagan in jail!! with Eddie Foy, Jr. in *Smashing the Money Ring*.

Stevenson is incidental to the story, and appears mainly because Jack Warner wanted some romance in an otherwise all-male prison movie. On screen there was no chemistry between Reagan and the star. Apparently, there was no off-screen combustion, either. While making the movie, Reagan did not come down with his usual "disease" of "*Leadinglady-itis*."

Once again, Reagan's friend and confidant, Eddie Foy, Jr., was cast as his goofy sidekick, Gabby.

Foy gave a good reason about why "Ronnie didn't pursue Margot, who was a very sexy broad. When she wasn't working, Jane Wyman was known to pop unexpectedly onto the set."

Some of Foy's scenes were bizarre and perhaps suggestive. In one segment, he says, "I'll never forget the night I played Little Red Riding Hood aboard the *USS Arizona*. Did they salute me with 26 guns?"

No explanation is given as to why he was referencing this folkloric tale before the rugged seamen sailing the battleship.

Trigger-happy, and very *Film Noir*: Good Guy Reagan aims a pistol at actor Dick Rich in *Smashing the Money Ring*.

Joe King played Reagan's boss, Saxby, although Reagan had wanted the more seasoned John Litel in the part instead.

The director, Terry O. Morse, a Missouri-born film editor since 1927, was new to Reagan. That same year, he was also helming *The Adventures of Jane Arden*. He complained to Reagan that he did not like to direct, "particularly the shitty material I'm assigned." In 1956, he did have a moment of glory when he directed the Raymond Burr scenes in *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!*.

Smashing the Money Ring was the second worst of the Brass Bancroft films, and Reagan felt his character would go the way of the already-canceled Torchy Blane detective serials. He also spent many restless nights fearing that Jack Warner would not pick up his option.

Jane visits Reagan, who's in prison garb, on the set of his Brass Bancroft movie, *Smashing the Money Ring*.

He later recalled, "A lot of script changes went on every day. You never knew what the action was or what your lines were until you arrived on the set. Morse was working with a very small budget and a time clock that was ticking. The movie was released, warts and all."

Since the title, *Smashing the Money Ring*, revealed the ending, movie-goers felt no suspense during the 57 minutes the film was unwinding on the screen. "Everything was predictable," Reagan said. "The dialogue was boring, the action lame."

"I made many films in Hollywood I was not proud of," he said. "*Smashing the Money Ring* was one of them."

In a bizarre attempt to promote the movie, Jack Warner ordered that theater lobbies showing the serial be filled

with fingerprint booths, WANTED posters, and “crime clue boxes.” Patrons were encouraged to drop the names of suspicious neighbors into the boxes. Reagan objected to the promotion, defining it as “a Big Brother Is Watching You” kind of spying.

Reagan also objected to the way that he was being promoted both on and off the screen. Bancroft was defined in promotional materials as “a man with smashing fists when guns aren’t handy.”

Jane Wyman embracing Kid Nightingale (John Payne), the “Singing Swinger.”

“Reagan off-screen is much different,” the publicity department trumpeted. “Don’t get out of line around him, or you might get a taste in private of what the villains get on the screen.”

Reagan pointedly informed the publicity people, “I’m not a violent person.”

In response, one member of the staff said, “Get real! You should thank us for publicizing your testosterone quotient. It worked for Errol Flynn, didn’t it?”

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Jane closed out her lackluster film career of the 1930s with yet another programmer, *Kid Nightingale*, co-starring John Payne. Thinking it would be “just another picture to grind out,” she ultimately interpreted the experience of making that movie as “life-changing.”

When she arrived on the set, her plans to marry Ronald Reagan had moved from the back of her brain to its frontal lobes. But, as she told her friend Paulette Goddard, “Life has this funny way of throwing you a curve ball. While dreaming of walking down the aisle with Ronald, along comes John Payne. God has this talent for creating exceptional men.”

The devastatingly handsome John Payne and the pert, beautiful blonde, Jane Wyman, fell in love in both real and reel life.

Since Goddard had never met Payne, Jane expressed her opinion: “He’s a Southern gentleman from Virginia raised in an antebellum mansion. He is devastatingly handsome, with a devilish smile and an eye-catching cleft in his chin. He stands six feet four, and he can also sing a love song. Not only that, he exudes sex appeal with his super-wide shoulders and rocklike muscles, enough to make a weak-kneed girl swoon.”

“There’s just one major drawback,” Jane said. “This Greek god is married to that little nobody actress, Anne Shirley. The lucky cow gets to paw those manly inches every night. Imagine waking up in the morning with a nude John Payne in bed with you? God, I detest that creature for snaring John when I want him. He could have his pick of Hollywood goddesses, and he chose Stella Dallas’ bitch of an ungrateful daughter.”

The notorious “crotch shot” of John Payne from *Kid Nightingale* became an underground favorite of American homosexuals.

As Roddy McDowall recalled, “It did for John what that Betty Grable pinup pose did for her in World War II.

She was referring to the 1937 movie *Stella Dallas*, the tearjerker soap opera that Shirley made with the long-suffering character who played her mother, Barbara Stanwyck.

The thin, silly plot of *Kid Nightingale* focuses on a singing waiter who gets into a fight with some obnoxious diners and knocks them out, for which he is fired. A shady boxing promoter, played by Walter Catlett, witnesses

Payne's pugilistic skills and signs him up to become a boxer. "The quick buck artist" bills the character played by Payne (Steve Nelson) as "Kid Nightingale."

As the woman who falls for Payne, Jane, cast as Judy Craig, is a rehearsal pianist and singer. She and Payne get to perform a musical duet. He also sings operatic arias and Tin Pan Alley songs. Because of his studly physique, he attracts hordes of screaming females to his boxing matches, which are rather brief. His manager even hires an orchestra to accompany him, musically, after each of his knockouts.

"I got the role only because your friend, Dick Powell, turned it down as he was making his exit from Warners," Payne told Jane.

The director, George Amy, had a front-row position as he watched Jane fall hard for the seductive charms of Payne. "It was obvious to the whole cast that by the second day, Jane was madly in love," Amy said. "When they weren't due on the set, Jane spent all her time in Payne's dressing room. I didn't think Payne was going to divorce Shirley and marry Jane, although stranger things have happened. Jane was a sweet girl, but I feared she was heading for heartbreak. Like so many of Hollywood's leading men, Payne would probably drop her at the completion of the picture and return home to Shirley and their baby girl."

"Reagan showed up on two occasions," Amy said. "That guy liked to talk. I was known as a film editor more than as a director, and he asked me tons of technical questions, showing me he had a keen mind."

Johnnie Davis *(center figure)* is cheerfully positioned between Reagan *(left)* and John Payne *(right)*. But it was actually Jane coming between the two men.

When Reagan heard about Jane's interest in Payne, he came over to work out with him in the studio gym. "Perhaps he wanted to check out the competition," Davis said.

When Payne was shown this candid shot, he said, "My chest is better developed than Ronnie's, and my legs are more muscular."

Amy was one of the best film editors in Hollywood, a favorite of other directors such as Howard Hawks and Michael Curtiz. His editing was one of the reasons Warners became known for turning out a steady stream of pictures with fluid style and at a breakneck pace.

Years later, Payne told the press, "When I made *Kid Nightingale* with Jane Wyman, she was so much in love with Reagan that she couldn't wait for our love scenes to end so she could rush to his arms."

Actually, however, in his capacity as a married man who was cheating on his wife, Payne was putting a good spin on his relationship with Jane, hoping to distract reporters from suspicions about his not-very-secret affair with his co-star.

Jane wanted to know every scrap of information about Payne she could learn from him. "I was flattered," he

told Amy. “No woman had ever shown that much interest in me.”

She learned that he had attended a prestigious military school, the Mercersburg Academy, in Pennsylvania. Later, in 1930, he’d studied journalism at Columbia University, earning a living writing pulp fiction—“The bodice ripper type.”

He had also studied drama and took voice lessons at Julliard in New York City. “I drifted from odd job to odd job,” he said. “At one point, I was a wrestler billed as Alexei Petroff, ‘the Savage of the Steppes.’ I operated an elevator in a hotel, worked at the switchboard, and served beer to pool hall sharpies when not mopping up their vomit in the men’s toilet. I was a male nurse and also a nanny to two unruly brats.”

He later sang on the vaudeville stage. There, a talent scout for Samuel Goldwyn spotted him at Broadway’s Shubert Theater in 1934. “Once I made it to Hollywood, I was bounced from studio to studio,” he said. “I’ll soon be leaving Warners and signing with Fox. I don’t like the image, but they plan to turn me into a pretty boy to compete on screen with MGM’s Robert Taylor.”

It was pure speculation, but Amy suspected that one of the reasons Payne so easily strayed with Jane was because he’d heard that his wife was having a torrid affair with John Garfield on the set of the movie they were making, *Saturday’s Child*, released in 1940.

His affair with Jane marked the beginning of Payne’s roving-eyed conquests of many other screen goddesses, including Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Sonja Henie, Linda Darnell, Gene Tierney, and Susan Hayward.

As their affair quickly deepened, Jane confessed to Goddard, “John and I are in love, but he’s not going to leave that dreadful little Shirley thing. He’s made that painfully clear to me. But he had a counter-proposal: I couldn’t turn that down. I’m crazy for him, and he’s agreed to be my back alley lover, even if I marry Ronnie. That way, I can hold onto him. I mean, the sexual chemistry between us is explosive. I decided not to be greedy. If I can’t devour the whole pie, I’ll settle for a slice of it.”

“Go, girl, go,” Goddard advised.

“*Kid Nightingale* opened to rather bad reviews. *The New York Times* “yawned” through the picture, but praised Catlett as a “flibbertigibbet pug scout,” Harry Burns as a fake singing teacher, and “Porky” Ed Brophy as “a dyspeptic manager.”

Kid Nightingale also got a snicker from *Variety*. “The producer must have had his tongue-in-cheek. It’s a combination of one film of every kind of pap, hokum, and comedy business that Hollywood has used since Mack Sennett and the Keystone Cops. It’s so absolutely silly, it’s almost good.”

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In the beginning, Susan Hayward did not view “pretty, pert” Jane Wyman as a romantic threat to her relationship with Reagan. She knew that he’d dated her during the filming of *Brother Rat*, a pattern he had followed with many of his other leading ladies. When his films were completed, so were his affairs, respectively, with these other starlets. At least that’s what she had been led to believe.

She had also heard that Jane had divorced some dress manufacturer from New Orleans.

On several occasions, Reagan had told Susan that he always rejected invitations to date married women. “I don’t care whether they are in the midst of a divorce or not. Until they get their papers, it’s no dice with me.”

She had taken him at his word, as he had seemed sincere in his dishonesty. It’s true that he rarely dated married women. Jane had been an exception to his usual rule, but there had been others.

If anything, Hayward felt that her greatest competition for Reagan’s affections derived from Priscilla Lane, who had been cast as the female lead in *Brother Rat*. Hayward, more or less, had been promised that role, fueling her resentment of Priscilla.

Years later, in her apartment in Fort Lauderdale, Hayward spoke with bitterness about that time in her life. “They called that whore, Priscilla, ‘Warners’ blonde sweetheart.’ She pretended to be a Goodie Two-Shoes, but everyone knew what a slut she really was. She was not only fucking Reagan, but also Bogie, Wayne Morris, Bruce Cabot, Flynn, and for all I know, Edward G. Robinson, except I heard that he was a closeted gay who really preferred boys. Can you imagine that? Little Caesar himself chasing after pretty young boys? That was Hollywood back in those days.”

“I remember Reagan as if it were only yesterday,” Hayward ranted. “It was Friday night. I had spent the better part of the day working on my makeup and finding the sexiest dress I could wear. He had called me for a date, and I was very excited. I put clean sheets on my bed and stocked my medicine cabinet with his favorite gargle. He told me he had some important news to tell me. I knew what it was: He was going to propose!”

“When the doorbell rang that night, I took one look in my full-length mirror for reassurance. Then I went to the door. There he stood, in a white jacket, his hair slicked back. He smelled like he’d just stepped out of the shower.

That was one clean man. I wanted to grab him, pull him inside, and rape him on the spot. But like Bette Davis said in some awful movie, 'I'd love to kiss you, but I just washed my hair.'"

Hayward recalled that he'd kissed her, but gently. She had thought that was because he didn't want to mess up her makeup. "I was in full warpaint, and we were heading for Cocoanut Grove."

"On the drive down, we made only small talk. I knew he was avoiding the subject of marriage. That would come later in the evening. I was almost certain he was carrying an engagement ring in his white jacket."

She remembered that "everything had gone swimmingly that night. He ordered champagne, but I asked for a Scotch to begin the evening. I found myself shaking. I thought a hard drink would steady my nerves."

She claimed that before dinner was over, she was wondering if she should keep her name of Susan Hayward, or else change it in future billings, to Susan Reagan.

"Since very few fans had even heard of Susan Hayward back then, it would have been no big deal. A lot of actors in the 1930s changed their names after appearing in only a couple of pictures."

Over an after dinner drink, Reagan told her that he had "an important secret to share with her."

"I won't get Louella on the phone right away," she said with a smirk. "I mean, she's got to know, sooner than later, but I promise to keep it a secret at least for forty-eight hours."

As she remembered, "He looked quizzically at me."

"You mean, you don't know?" he said. "God, I thought you'd heard the gossip by now. Word travels fast in this town."

"It suddenly occurred to me that Reagan and I were on two different pages. 'You're going to ask me to marry you tonight, and my answer is yes! There! That's out in the open even before you ask me. Us Brooklyn gals like to make it easy for our beaux.'"

Reagan looked startled before blurting out, "You don't understand. I've fallen in love with Jane Wyman. I'm going to ask her to marry me."

Blind with rage, Hayward rose from the table. She took a glass of champagne and tossed it in his face before storming out of the club, causing a scene.

"My tears were falling like a faucet," she said. "I called to the doorman to summon a taxi. When Reagan caught up with me, I hauled off and gave him the slap of his life. Growing up in Flatbush, I knew how to slap a man. He must have felt like he'd been stung by a nest of mad hornets."

Hayward claimed she spent the next ten nights alone, barricaded within her apartment. "Thank God I didn't have to report to the studio. I cried my eyes out. They got all puffy, and I looked like shit. The phone rang several times. I didn't know if it was Reagan or not. Finally, on the eleventh day, I picked up the receiver, expecting it to be either the studio or Reagan. It was neither."

Louella Parsons was on the other end of the line. "Susan, darling, I've been desperate trying to get in touch with you. I want to book you on a nationwide publicity tour. Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan have already signed up for it."

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Louella Parsons had rounded up a troupe of starlets, plus Reagan, to accompany her on a coast-to-coast personal appearance tour, a kind of vaudeville act billed as "Parson's Flying Stars." The tour was to last eleven weeks, for which Parsons would be paid $7,500 a week. The columnist allotted $4,200 of that to be divided among her six young subcontractees.

Before leaving Hollywood, she told Hayward that "the stars of the show will be those two lovebirds, Ronnie and Janie." That caused Hayward's face to turn as red as her hair. She confessed to Parsons that she was still carrying a torch for Reagan. "I can't believe any sane man would dump me for that little mouse, Wyman."

Ronald Reagan with Louella Parsons, getting ready to make headlines on their return visit to Dixon, Illinois.

He knew how to handle “The Most Feared Woman in Tinseltown” better than any other actor.

Ever the two-faced one, Parsons confidentially claimed that she agreed with Hayward. In contrast, she told Jane how happy she was for her to have snared Reagan.

“There’s no way Jane’s gonna become a star,” the self-styled “Gay Illiterate” told Hayward. “She’s not beautiful. She’s not talented. Her career will be confined to bit parts, and I think her days before the camera will be very short. She’ll probably become a housewife for Ronnie, raising his children.”

“That won’t be true forme,” Hayward predicted for herself. “I’m gonna have to build extra shelf space to store my Oscars.”

Parsons assured her that she liked an actress with confidence.

When Hayward learned the names of the other starlets in the traveling troupe— Joy Hodges, Arleen Whelan, and June Preisser—she exclaimed, “I am not overwhelmed.”

Hodges had scored a success on Broadway in a Rodgers and Hart musical, and had completed a co-starring role in *Little Accident* (1939) for Universal.

Reagan had always been grateful to her for helping him get launched in pictures in the aftermath of his early migration to Hollywood. Their dating had been “harmless,” in his words. “No big deal, but we did have a love for each other.”

Before she contracted for the tour, Parsons had visited the studios, including MGM, Warners, and 20th Century Fox, asking for suggestions about how to choreograph and promote her vaudeville preview of “The Stars of Tomorrow.” As she admitted, “I’ve always had this soft spot in my heart for Ronnie. He and I share something in common. We both came from Dixon, Illinois.”

Reagan was very nervous about having to be in such close intimacy with Hayward so soon after he’d dumped her. But he was delighted that his friend, singer Joy Hodges, was going along.

David Niven had described Parsons as “Short, dumpy, and dowdy, with large brown eyes and a carefully cultivated vagueness.” But Reagan liked her, mainly because she was constantly plugging him and his career in her column.

He had, on occasion, been entertained at her home for intimate dinners with her third husband, Dr. Harry Martin, whom Parsons called “Docky.” He specialized in treating movie stars who had contracted venereal dis eases.

Nymphomaniacal Norwegian Darling of the Nazi hierarchy, and former fuck-buddy of JFK—Sonja Henie

The first time Reagan had dined with the drunken doctor, he had loudly whispered to him, “I’ve just treated Clark Gable for the clap.”

Because Parsons worked for the Hearst newspapers, she had booked her tour of just those cities where her boss, press baron William Randolph Hearst, owned a newspaper. That way, she would be assured of getting favorable reviews for her show. The hard-working starlets, along with Reagan, would be called upon to perform four or five shows a day, usually scheduled as part of the screening, in theaters, of a double feature.

For the big send-off from Los Angeles, and to cash in on free publicity, Parsons lined up major stars to see the troupe off at Union Station. The stars included Deanna Durbin, Sonja Henie, Eleanor Powell, and Hayward’s nemesis, Priscilla Lane. Hayward remembered that Jane was furious when Priscilla gave Reagan a passionate kiss on the lips. “Wyman was even more enraged when that nymphomaniacal Norwegian skating star, Sonja Henie, practically lip-locked Reagan,” Hayward said.

Jane later complained to Parsons, “I thought the ice queen was going to suck out Ronnie’s tongue.”

June Preisser with Mickey Rooney. “Andy Hardy” appears to be resisting her advances on screen. That wasn’t the case in private.

Meanwhile, also as part of their very public departure, Hayward was kissed passionately by a trio of bisexual stars, Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, and, somewhat less passionately, Fred Astaire. Slipping off afterward to conceal

herself from photographers, she wiped her lips, later telling Parsons, “I don’t know where those three cocksucking mouths had been the previous night.”

Although he wasn’t her type, she also accepted a big smack from the reigning box office champ, Mickey Rooney. She heard Parsons chide him for being two years older than his official MGM biography.

“I’ll be Andy Hardy forever,” Rooney said, “especially if Metro keeps finding these knockout sweethearts like Lana Turner for me.”

Pert, blonde-haired June Preisser showed up at the railroad station to greet Rooney. She had made *Babes in Arms* with him, and he gave her a warm embrace and a “very French kiss,” as he called it.

Preisser, with her song-and-dance routines, had more vaudeville talent than any of the other starlets. Most of her acts opened with her “rolling” herself, like a tire, across the stage, using her hands and feet to imitate the rolling motion of a wheel.

Capitalizing on her skills as an acrobat, this Southern Belle from New Orleans would soon appear with Rooney and Judy Garland in *Strike Up the Band* (1940).

Another member of Louella’s touring brigade was Arleen Whelan, born in Salt Lake City. During her twenty-year career, which began in 1937, she would make two dozen films, starting with Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Kidnapped*. She broke into movies after one of 20th Century Fox’s directors, H. Bruce Humberstone, received a manicure from her.

When Hayward met Whelan, she later confided to Parsons, “I thought redheads like me are supposed to flame. I’m on fire. Whelan can’t light a candle to me. That red hair of hers is probably dyed.”

To pacify her, Parsons privately agreed, although publicly, she tried to portray herself as a neutral and benificent monarch throughout all the backstage knife-stabbing to come.

After a tryout in Santa Barbara, the troupe opened at RKO’s Golden Gate Theater in San Francisco after the audience had snoozed through a Jean Hersholt movie, *Meet Dr. Christian*. The date of that premiere was November 15, 1939.

Parson’s 70-minute stage performance featured dance, music, comedy, and references to recent Hollywood gossip. On stage, her role involved sitting behind a desk, watching the hopefuls perform in front of her, while imperiously trying to figure out which of the “youngsters,” as she called them, deserved a mention in her column. As corny as this was, audiences in the late 1930s “ate it up,” Parsons gleefully reported.

Whelan recalled that Hayward usually stalked out onto the stage “like a red-haired panther. She planted her feet firmly, as if she owned the god damn theater and then she’d shout, ‘Anyone here from Brooklyn?’ Wherever we played, there was always a rowdy bunch from Brooklyn, or so it seemed.”

The highlight of the show was a comedy sketch between Reagan and Hayward.

Hodges recalled seeing them perform. “Hayward put fantastic zeal into her performance. She was the least-known member of the troupe, but stood out the most. She came out on stage looking stunning in a blue velvet dress with all that flame-red hair.”

“For her sketch with Reagan, she at one point ‘stage stabs’ him, but his head keeps bobbing up. Then she slugs him repeatedly. I don’t mean a stage slug, but a down-and-out, fist-smashing attack. I don’t know how Ronnie stood it.”

From the beginning, Jane stood in the wings watching as Hayward pummeled her groom-to-be. She later complained to Parsons. “She is slapping him so hard just to make me mad. If she keeps this up, she’s going to injure him. She’s getting even with him for dropping her in favor of me.”

Parsons later said, “Ronnie rolled with the punches and at no point did he complain of Susan’s attacks. After the tour, he must have walked down the aisle with Jane black and blue.”

Hayward, annoyed at Jane standing in the wings glaring at her, bitterly complained to Parsons, urging her to have her removed. “She’s destroying my act. Instead of concentrating on what I’m doing, I’m staring at her.”

When Parsons suggested that Jane remove herself from the sight lines of actors performing on stage, she refused. “To hell with this would-be Scarlett O’Hara. If I don’t stand there watching over Ronnie, she’d kill him before our wedding day. She’s just slapping him around like that to spite me.”

“Or maybe to spite Ronnie,” Parsons chimed in. Perversely, she seemed to enjoy the rivalry between the two actresses, each of whom would go on to become a super-star of Hollywood’s Golden Age.

Louella had traveled with her own personal hairdresser and came out every night clad in mink and pearls. As she settled behind a desk, onstage, she read phony items *[“William Powell and Ginger Rogers have been seen holding hands”]* from a fake teletype machine. Then, after delivering her “update from Hollywood,” she’d surrender the stage to Whelan, who sang a *Bossa Nova* tune. A San Francisco paper wrote, “She moves with mild undulations of her torso.”

Variety found Reagan “very personable, deft, and obviously at home on the stage,” suggesting that he might

consider Broadway as an option one day.

The Hearst-owned *San Francisco Chronicle* defined the show as “sparkling—great dramatic flair from Louella.”

Non-Hearst papers were critical, however, one of them suggesting that Parsons spoke her lines in a “muffing, spluttering, stumbling voice.”

After San Francisco, Parsons and her “Flying Stars” were off to tour America, landing in such cities as Pittsburgh, where they played to “standing room only” audiences.

In Philadelphia, Reagan came to realize for the first time that he’d become a sex symbol to hundreds of young American women, along with a few grandmothers who had joined his fan club.

That was demonstrated one night when he left his hotel room, passed through the lobby, and walked out onto the street. He was immediately confronted with dozens of bobbysoxers, most of them with autograph books.

He later recalled, “Somehow, the crowd got out of control. I’d never seen women this aggressive before. They tore at my clothing, wanting a piece of me. I felt several hands grabbing my crotch. Before the hotel security guards rushed out to save me, I was practically stripped naked. Thank God I wore a clean pair of underwear. I thought things like that happened only to Frank Sinatra. Now I was experiencing it. That’s what I get for being so god damn handsome and having such a masculine physique.”

“On the tour, Louella was a bit mischievous,” Hodges said. “She reported to Arleen that Susan had been making unflattering remarks about her.”

Whelan set out to get her revenge, and went to Jane. “I hate to tell you this, but last night at around two o’clock in the morning, I saw Reagan leaving Susan’s bedroom. I was coming home late from a date.”

Jane believed Whelan’s lies, later denouncing her future bridegroom, calling him “a whoremonger.”

At one point during the tour, Jane got so angry, she wouldn’t speak to Ronnie except on stage,” Hodges claimed. “Finally, they had to appeal to their fairy godmother, Louella herself, to impose an uneasy truce upon these ill-matched lovers.”

During the tour, while Jane was alienated from Reagan, Whelan decided to move in on him, hoping to take advantage. In Chicago, where Parsons was fêted, there was a swimming pool in the basement of their hotel.

“Arleen pursued Ronnie there,” Hodges said. “When he put on his trunks, and went for a swim—he was quite the athlete—Arleen put on her most seductive bathing suit and followed him downstairs.”

“Arleen told me, ‘Ronnie’s package looks promising, and I intend to sample it before this damn tour is over,’” Hodges claimed. “She was also mad at Louella for inviting only one male star along on the tour.”

The players moved on to Washington, D.C. There, Parsons invited Eleanor Roosevelt to attend one of the performances, but the First Lady politely declined the invitation. Parsons fumed, “That bitch. I’m more famous than she is, and she snubs me.”

Hodges later recalled, “There was something so alone about Hayward. She was the most unpopular of all the gals on the tour. I was a brand new bride. And Dutch (Reagan) and Jane had each other. Arleen was very gay, with plenty of beaux. She was to marry Alexander D’Arcy in 1940. June already had a career on the stage with her sister, Cherry. But Susan—she seemed to have nothing except her natural talent.”

A promotional tour makes whoopee about the Ronnie-Jane wedding nuptials to come.

Joy Hodges *(left)* and Arleen Whelen *(hovering over the happy couple)* look on with a certain envy.

"Hayward had absolutely no sense of humor," Hodges continued. "She was grumpy all the time. We later learned that Jane had stolen Ronnie from her. I avoided Hayward whenever I could. She could be so blunt. You never knew when she was going to say something biting, hateful, or just plain sarcastic. Hayward sucked up to Louella, but gave everybody else a rough time, especially Ronnie and Jane."

At one point during the tour, a drunken Parsons took Jane outside and lectured her, "You're wearing far too much costume jewelry. It detracts from your natural beauty and makes you look cheap. You don't want to look like a Saturday night hooker when you go out."

For Jane, the highlight of the cross-country tour came when Reagan presented her with a fifty-two carat amethyst engagement ring. She proudly showed it to the girls.

When Hayward found out about it, she jealously snapped, "The man I'm going to marry will give me a fifty-two carat diamond."

En route back to Hollywood, their TWA plane stopped in Albuquerque, where the Pueblo Indians made Parsons an honorary member of their tribe. They gave her the name of "Ba Ku La," which translates as "Princess Starmaker."

Later, in her hotel room, the newly christened "Indian Princess" telephoned her editors, demanding that her previous submission be rewritten, as follows:

"Ronnie Reagan and Janie Wyman are to be married as soon as our personal appearance tours end in Hollywood. These two lovebirds are made for each other. It will be the third marriage for Jane, the first for Ronald."

When he read the column, Reagan said to Jane, "Louella says that your marriage to me will be number three. Where did she get that wrong information?"

"Not from me, darling," Jane said. "I was only married once. I've told you that."

During her years-long marriage to Reagan, she never revealed to him her first marriage to Eugene Wyman.

Years later, when Reagan was the emcee for *The General Electric Theater*, a reporter asked him about his involvement with Susan Hayward. All he said was, "Fire and Ice," before walking away.

During the months she spent in Fort Lauderdale early 70s, Hayward said, "It was men like Oleg Cassini, Jeff Chandler, John F. Kennedy, Porfirio Rubirosa, and oh, yes, Ronald Reagan, that led me to say, 'Men! I'd like to fry 'em all in deep fat!'"

Chapter Six

Louella Parsons' Favorite "Lovebirds,"

Ronnie and Jane,

Begin Married Life.

But Will They Be Faithful?

Reagan's Movie Line "Win One for the Gipper" Morphs Into a Vote-Getting Slogan for His Future Campaigns.

Jane Wyman began her "married life" with Ronald Reagan months before the actual wedding, although he didn't come home every night.

"He's a great dancer," she told Joan Blondell, "and you know how much I like to dance. I prefer to go nightclubbing six nights a week, but he can settle happily for two. It's a possible conflict."

Here, Jane is pictured with her baby daughter, whose name became Maureen.

"He talks of having more children," Jane said to Blondell. "I told him to have the orphanage send over as many kids as he wanted, but he'd have to hire some god damn nannies to take care of them. I've worked too hard to become a movie star to let it all slip away from me now. It's a possible conflict."

Before he entered into marriage with Jane Wyman, Ronald Reagan called on Pat O'Brien, his fellow actor and "father confessor."

Reagan later told Dick Powell, "Just before I stepped up to marry Jane, I had been in the toilet throwing up. No, not because the idea of marriage either terrifed me or disgusted me. I had history's worst case of the flu, and felt dizzy-headed and faint."

"On our honeymoon night, Jane didn't get a rise out of me."

"I've slept with a lot of Hollywood starlets," he admitted, "and I've come to the conclusion that none of them is ideal marriage material. I'm looking for a gal I could proudly take home to dear old Dad...and Mom, too. Nelle believes I won't find such a gal in show business."

"What about Jane?" O'Brien asked.

"She's the best candidate so far," Reagan admitted, "but she didn't make a very good wife to this guy, Myron Futterman. My fear is that once again, Jane will not honor her marriage vows and that she'll go out with other men when I'm away, perhaps on location. She cheated on Futterman with a lot of other men, including yours truly. Since Futterman was out of town a lot, she had plenty of chances."

"Let me ask you this," O'Brien said. "Would you be faithful to her? You're a real ladies' man, bouncing from the bed of one starlet after another. From what I've seen, you don't have to ask them. They throw themselves at you. Could you resist such temptation and go home to a wife and maybe kids night after night? As we Irishmen know, the flesh is weak."

"I've got to be truthful with you, as I always am—no bullshitting with you," Reagan said. "In all honesty, I think I'd become a husband with a cheating heart."

"I believe that, too, my boy," O'Brien said.

"My answer might be different twenty or so years from now," Reagan said. "Maybe then I'll be ready to settle down: But right now, I'm living my salad years. Only a fool or a homosexual would turn down some of the offers I'm getting. For instance, Betty Grable and Carole Landis are still calling me. On the other hand, I'd like to start a family…You know, have three or four kids."

"I have some advice for you that goes against the *clichéd* rule," O'Brien said. "Why not have your cake and eat it, too?"

Reagan looked startled at first, then seemed to mull it over. "I think that might be some of the best advice a young married man can ever receive."

"All Married Male Stars in Hollywood Have Something on the Side."

—Gale Page

Stepping out, Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan made a dashing, handsome, and romantic couple.

As this picture indicates, they had liberated themselves from their early Middle West dress codes and had "gone Hollywood."

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After talking to O'Brien, Reagan proposed marriage to Jane, but how he went about that remains a source of widely different speculation. Some of Reagan's closest friends, including Dick Powell, Eddie Foy, Jr., and Eddie Albert claimed that Jane forced him into marriage with a suicide threat.

In a surprise move, First Lady Nancy Reagan confirmed those assertions in an interview in 1989 with Reagan's biographer, Edmund Morris. She claimed that Jane swallowed a lot of pills, but summoned an ambulance herself to rush her to the hospital to have her stomach pumped.

According to Nancy, when a messenger delivered the suicide note to Reagan, he rushed to the hospital. When he was allowed to see her after her stomach was pumped, he was alleged to have said, "Of course, I'll marry you.":

"You know how softhearted Ronnie is," Nancy said to Morris. "Jane Wyman knew which buttons to push."

The story of Jane's suicide attempt was widely publicized at the time. Nancy's source obviously must have been Reagan himself.

Over the years, Jane consistently denied the story to her friends, labeling it "a gross exaggeration. It was Nancy who tricked Ronnie into marriage by getting pregnant—not me. She should not be spreading lies about me concerning an event that happened so very long ago."

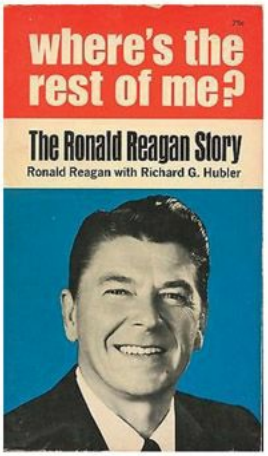
As would be expected, Jane had a very different version. "Ronnie's proposal was about as unromantic as anything that happened. We were about to be called for a take on the set of *Brother Rat and a Baby*. Ronnie simply turned to me as if the idea were brand new and had just hit him and said, 'Jane, why don't we get married?' I couldn't think of any reason we shouldn't. I'd been wondering for a whole year—ever since I first saw him—why he hadn't asked me. I was just about to give him a definite yes when we were called before the cameras. In trying to step down off my personal cloud, I managed to muff a few lines and toss in a whispered 'yes,' after the director yelled, 'Cut!'"

Louella Parsons supplied her own version, claiming that "One lovebird proposed to the other lovebird during our cross-country tour."

When Reagan became president—the first divorced man to ever do so—there was a renewed interest within the press about his first marriage. Many reporters sought copies of his first memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, for a rundown of his version of his first marriage. The book had been published in 1965 at the culmination of his film career.

In an almost shocking omission, which his editors at Duell, Sloan, and Pearce let him get away with, Reagan didn't even mention that he married Jane.

[In March, 1961, Duell, Sloan and Pearce became an affiliate of Meredith Publishing Company, which later sold parts of it to the Academic Learning Company, LLC and to Prentice-Hall.]



Although Reagan was dating other women, even doing more than dating, he and his blonde starlet, Jane Wyman, more or less let the world know that they were "an item."

All dolled up, they descended the steps of the Biltmore Hotel on February 23, 1939, after the Oscar ceremony. Jane's coat was a gift from Myron Futterman, her second husband.

Parsons had plenty to say about the upcoming marriage. "Jane was always so nervous and tense before she found Ronnie. She was a girl on the make—for life, for love. I think she wanted, well, *everything*. Steady, solid, decent young Ronnie has slowed down her pace, and it is all for the best. It is an opposites-attract thing, but I'm predicting here and now that these opposites will celebrate their 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries—together."

Joy Hodges, who had accompanied Parsons on her cross-country vaudeville tour, saw potential trouble in the upcoming marriage. "Even back in 1940, Ronnie was almost fanatically interested in politics, always talking about the war, Hitler, FDR, Lend-Lease, whatever. Jane was clearly bored with such talk. She made that rather obvious. She told every body, 'Don't ask Ronnie what time it is, or he'll tell you how a watch is made.' She liked talking about movies and gossiping about the latest indiscretions within the Hollywood colony."

"I knew both of them pretty well, especially Jane, if you get my drift," said Wayne Morris. "I thought their attraction was almost entirely sexual. For that reason, when the novelty wore off, I predicted the marriage was due

for a crash landing. I don't believe that a zebra can change its stripes. Jane was a playgirl who loved night clubs and handsome men, especially guys like me. Reagan was a magnet for the babes, attracting most of the little hotties running around the Warners' lot. He was also smarter, better educated. She didn't know what he was talking about half the time. Their temperaments were entirely different. Except for sex, the marriage had little going for it."

Eddie Albert, who once again had co-starred with them in *Brother Rat and a Baby*, talked to Reagan two days before the marriage. "Ronnie described Jane as 'lots of fun to be with' and 'a good sport.' That didn't sound like a man too deeply in love. I think she pressured him into marriage with that suicide attempt. I was convinced that my good buddy couldn't give up his pastime of screwing beautiful babes."

By the time Reagan entered into marriage, he was making $1,650 a week, whereas Jane was drawing only $500 a week as a contract player at Warners.

Although a so-called movie star, Jane had not yet been able to cash in on her growing fame. He knew he was not marrying a woman of means, but he soon learned his bride-to-be was not only flat broke, but heavily in debt, too.

Warners' Publicity wanted to use their budding romance to promote their careers. So they posed for a series of pictures demonstrating what a happy couple they were.

For the November, 1941 issue of *Screenland*, Jane had given an interview to writer Virginia Wood. "When I married Ronnie, I was drowning in debt. I was marrying a man who could not let a bill lie on his desk for more than ten days. I tried to pay all my debts before I walked down the aisle, but I was not making enough money to pay them off. On one account, I was paying it off at two dollars a week."

"Ronnie told me that when we were married, he would see to it that both of us saved half of everything we made," she said.

Before their marriage, Joan Blondell and her husband, Dick Powell, took the Reagans to the Cocoanut Grove where Powell was invited to sing a song for the guests.

Louella Parsons *(left)*, the gossipy columnist and "Tinseltown Tarantula," came down hard on many relationships, including Clark Gable, a married man, living with Carole Lombard.

Although she was known for exposing indiscretions, she always gave Reagan and Jane a pass when she heard of one of their adulterous scandals.

"Later, Jane and I went to the powder room," Blondell said. "She made a confession to me."

“I can’t help wondering if Ronnie’s easy nature is some sort of an act,” Jane said. “He’s just too god damn good natured. It doesn’t seem possible that a man could have so even a disposition consistently. I’ll let you know in two weeks if I’m marrying a Dr. Jekyll who turns out to be Mr. Hyde.”

Jane didn’t wait long between marriages. Her divorce from Futterman was finalized right before Christmas of 1939. She married Reagan on January 26, 1940. The rite of marriage was celebrated at the Scottish-themed Wee Kirk o’ the Heather Chapel in the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California.

Jane later joked to Blondell, “It was Nelle Reagan’s idea to have the marriage performed in a cemetery. I practically had to stumble over the graves of Lon Chaney (Senior) and Marie Dressler to get to the chapel on time.” The chapel had been the setting for the 1937 funeral of Jean Harlow.

The Rev. Cleveland Kleihaur performed the ceremony, which was traditional in every sense except for the bridal kiss. Jane didn’t even get a peck on the cheek. That showed sensitivity on Reagan’s part, not the reverse. “To get to the chapel, I had to rise from my deathbed, where I was suffering from the flu. I felt so weak during the ceremony, I thought I was going to pass out.”

In a gown with accessories borrowed from the wardrobe department of Warners, Jane made a dazzling bride in her floor-length, high-necked, long-sleeved blue satin gown with a mink fur hat and a matching muff.

Two generations of Reagans at the “Ronnie and Janie” wedding. Nelle, in the frumpy finery of her era, and Reagan’s father, Jack, flank the groom and bride.

For his best man, Reagan selected Bill Cook, a friend from his Des Moines days as a radio announcer. Cook had been a member of Reagan’s barbershop quartet.

Jane introduced her maid of honor, Elsie Watt, as her sister. Technically, Elsie was not her sister, but the daughter of Emma Fulks, who had reared Jane as a young girl when her real parents had abandoned her. To give the bride away, Louella Parsons had arranged for her husband, Dr. “Docky” Martin, to walk Jane down the aisle.

Blondell was rather cynical about the wedding. “I met Moon Reagan, Ronnie’s brother. He held down jobs in media, but I found him rather dumb and boorish. But he was a doll compared to Ronnie’s mother, Nelle. She looked like some severe religious fanatic, a real Midwest Puritan. His father, Jack, was already drunk before the ceremony began. I heard Jack approach Jane and beg her ‘not to take Dutch away from us.’”

“Louella hovered over the newlyweds like some devouring mother hen,” said Dick Powell. “She even hosted the reception at her home on North Maple Drive in Beverly Hills. Louella was so excited, she wet her pants. I mean that literally. But she did that at most of the parties she attended. Weak kidneys, I suppose.”

The couple left for their honeymoon in Palm Springs, a resort that would more or less become her home in time to come.

Unusual for the desert resort, it rained almost every day, ruining Reagan’s plans about playing golf, a game that Jane also enjoyed. He was going to teach her to swim, but that plan also fell through.

Fifty years after that honeymoon, and at the same resort, correspondent Bob Colacello asked Jane to recall her rainy honeymoon.

“Is there anything about it that stands out in your mind?” he asked.

“No, not particularly,” she said.

He later claimed, “She flashed me such a cold and angry look that I thought she might murder me right there in her pink-and-lavender retirement condominium.”

When Reagan and Jane drove back to Los Angeles, he moved his meager belongings into her modest three-bedroom apartment at 1326 Londonderry View, off the Sunset Strip.

That Monday, Blondell called and invited Jane to lunch at her favorite spot, the Brown Derby. “Ducky, how’s married life?”

“We’ve had our first argument,” she answered. “He wants to start a family right away, and I want to stay lean and mean and continue my movie roles, waiting for the big one.”

“And now for the most important question,” Blondell said, even though she knew the answer. “How is Ronnie in bed?”

“If Hollywood was Mount Olympus Lew Wasserman *(depicted above)* was Zeus,” said the late Jack Valenti, former president of the Motion Picture Association of America.

“He’s about as good in bed as he is on the screen,” Jane answered.

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Back in Hollywood, Reagan became suspicious that the mobs of crazed bobbysoxers in Philadelphia, who had previously disrobed him, had actually been paid to do so. The prime suspect was his aggressive new agent, Lew Wasserman, representing the Music Corporation of America (MCA).

Born in Cleveland to Jewish-Russian immigrants, Wasserman had begun a meteoric rise, beginning in 1933 as a theater usher at a movie house in Cleveland and eventually evolving, under the MCA baton, into the most powerful actors’ and entertainment industry agent in the world.

His clients included not only Reagan and Jane Wyman, but Warners’ *über*-diva, Bette Davis. In fact, most of the big stars at Warners were represented by him.

If Wasserman were indeed the culprit who had staged the mob scene in Philadelphia, he had a reason. It was his attempt to convince Jack Warner that his new client was a sex symbol, with the intention of getting him a breakthrough role in an A-list picture.

Warner believed that Errol Flynn and George Raft were sex symbols, but not “a clean-cut boy like Ronnie, whom I like personally, inviting him to my dinner parties.”

“My male stars—Bogie, Ronnie, and Edward G. Robinson—are not sex symbols. Bogie and Edward G. are too ugly, almost repulsive, and Ronnie is every gal’s big brother, but not one she wants to commit incest with.”

Wasserman had met with Warner to try to get him to cast Reagan in an A-picture, the role of George Gipp in *Knute Rockne—All American*, which was to star Pat O’Brien as the coach.

For a while, William Holden and John Wayne had been leading contenders for the role of Gipp, although Robert Young and Robert Cummings provided heavyweight competition.

At one point, a handsome Canadian actor from Manitoba five years older than Reagan, Donald Woods, was in the lead. He had appeared in several B pictures, making his film debut in 1928, at the dawn of the Talkies. Occasionally he got to appear in an A-list picture, too, including *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935) and *Anthony Adverse* (1936). Warner finally concluded that Woods “is even more clean cut than Reagan. I hear he’s faithful to his wife. My god, from what I heard, those two lovebirds fell in love with each other in the first grade.”

[Woods had married Josephine Van der Horck in 1933, and he was still married to her when he died in Palm Springs in 1998.]

“The role of George Gipp is not particularly romantic,” Wasserman protested.

“Okay, I’ll consider Ronnie and get back to you,” Warner promised.

It was believed that after this meeting, Wasserman then hired young women in Philadelphia to forcibly disrobe Reagan when he emerged onto the street through his hotel's front door.

But, then again, maybe not. No smoking gun was ever discovered, and Wasserman, of course, denied the charge.

"Ronnie's come a long way since he got rid of those god damn horn-rimmed glasses," Warner had told Wasserman.

[After 1940, Reagan was never again seen in any film with glasses. He had been among the first Hollywood star to wear contact lenses, something new on the market then in America. But there were problems. "Each lens has a little bubble over the cornea that you have to keep filed with a saline solution," Reagan told his friends. "Every couple of hours, the solution turns gray and you go blind. You've got to take them out, remove the liquid, and put in a clear solution. They're difficult to wear, but vanity prevails."]

Knowing that Wasserman also represented Jane Wyman, Warners issued an order concerning her appearance, too. "I don't want her to wear glasses like she did in those *Brother Rats*. It makes her look too scholarly. Also, I want her to be blonder. Tell her hair stylist to make her hair lighter. I'll invent a name for the kind of hair color I want. Call it '*Vroom Blonde*.'"

Wasserman succeeded in negotiating more money for each of these soon-to-be-married clients of his. He arranged a seven-year contract for Reagan at $3,500 a week, referring to him as "my first million-dollar client."

He also convinced Warner to raise Jane's salary from $500 a week. He secured a three-year contract for her, beginning at $1,500 a week, with the stipulation that it would eventually climb to $2,500 a week.

Since she was still heavily in debt, she was delighted with the money. But as each new role came in for her, and she read yet another lackluster script associated with a B-picture, she continued to harass Wasserman to get her better parts. "I've got money in the bank, but I'm still a B-picture baby."

That long-anticipated A-picture role, her breakout movie, would not come until war's end in 1945.

In contrast to Jane, who was always complaining, Reagan became "the darling of MCA."

"Reagan was unlike all of our other clients, who bombarded us with complaints day and night," said Taft Schreiber, an MCA executive. "Bette Davis constantly storms our citadel with one complaint after another. The diva even came to us one time to complain that Jack Warner had never felt her up."

Newlyweds for hire: An artfully staged, skilfully choreographed (by the studio) marriage. Three views of "America's most ideal couple."

"I understand that Mr. Warner likes to put his filthy paws up a girl's dress," Davis said. "But he's never done that to me. Does that mean he thinks I'm not a sex symbol like Kay Francis?"

"If a star gets trapped in a rotten flick, we're to blame," Schreiber said. "But Ronnie never blames us. He suffers through the B with good spirits, knowing that his big break will come, feeling secure that we're working to build him up."

Wasserman predicted that Reagan would become one of the biggest wartime stars in Hollywood. "Let's face it," Wasserman said to Reagan. "Sooner or later the United States will be attacked. All the glamour boys, unless some of them are too old, will be in the service. You're blind. They won't draft you. You can take over those matinee idol roles. Just be patient a little longer."

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Whereas *Brother Rat* (1938) had been a hit, its sequel, *Brother Rat and a Baby* (1940), was lackluster. However, Warners hoped that the publicity generated by the marriage of Reagan with Jane would beef up the box office receipts.

In the sequel, the original cast was reunited—Wayne Morris, Priscilla Lane, Jane Bryan, and Eddie Albert, plus Reagan and Jane. Instead of William Keighley, a new director, Ray Enright, a familiar face to both Jane and Reagan, was brought in to helm the script, written by Jerry Wald and Richard Macaulay. A strong supporting cast included such stalwarts as Arthur Treacher, Paul Harvey, Berton Churchill, and Humphrey Bogart's quarrelsome wife, Mayo Methot.

The baby in the movie, the one supposedly belonging to Eddie Albert and Priscilla Lane, was the usually congenial toddler, Peter Good. At one point during the filming, Elsa Maxwell, the famous hostess, threw a party for him at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. The kid was brought screaming into the party, and he continued screaming for another fifteen minutes until he was finally removed.

The film's most memorable and prophetic line was delivered when Jane says to Reagan: "You might as well back down, because I'm gonna get you."

Reagan noted that Enright was frequently impatient and seemed to deliberately rush through the script. At one point, he told Reagan, "Speed it up. I want out of this shit pile."

On the set, Reagan met a struggling, young, and rather handsome actor, Alan Ladd, who was appearing in a small role.

"My great dream is to become a big star like you," Ladd said to Reagan.

"You flatter me," Reagan answered. "I'm hardly a big star."

Ironically, the stardom during World War II that might have gone to Reagan, had he not been drafted, went to Ladd, after he appeared as the laconic gunman in the 1942 *This Gun for Hire*.

"Hollywood's two midgets, Ladd and his frequent co-star, Veronica Lake, became the screen team that Jane and I dreamed of becoming," Reagan said. "Jane and I never made it, but they sure did. No hard feelings, kids."

Critic George Browne wrote, "What was mildly amusing when Morris, Albert, and Reagan were enrolled at the Virginia Military Institute as cadets seems silly and rather childish now that they have graduated to being so-called 'adults.' Their antics don't seem to work anymore, and we've heard that Jack Warner has ruled, 'No more glasses for Wyman.'"

Another critic noted, "Reagan looks distinctly uncomfortable kissing Wyman on the screen. Maybe they should practice more at home. Dare I point out that all the principal stars were far too old to play the roles assigned?"

Jane Bryan in 1939, off-camera, and her husband, drugstore czar Justin Dart, Sr. They evolved into major financial backers of political Reagan.

Another reviewer suggested that "If Reagan is trying to succeed in screwball comedy, as this film suggests, somebody should tell him Cary Grant he ain't."

Enright told Reagan that their film, *Brother Rat*, had angered some graduates of V.M.I., and that consequently, all references to that military institution were eliminated from the sequel.

By the time Reagan worked again with Jane Bryan on the sequel, his original crush on her had gone the way of the summer wind. She was engaged to wealthy Justin Dart. Dart was unaware of Reagan's former passion for his wife-to-be, and he and Reagan bonded in spite of their differences. A staunch Republican, Dart was large, gruff, with a brilliant grasp of economics. Mostly, they debated FDR, Reagan in his capacity as a liberal Democrat, wanting FDR to seek re-election, and Dart fearing that he would.

Dart was in the process of divorcing heiress Ruth Walgreen, the daughter of the drugstore magnate, Charles Walgreen. Even with the divorce, Dart still controlled a large share of the fortune. He would turn his share into millions of dollars. He later recalled, "I played music whose siren sounds eventually lured Reagan into the Republican orchestra."

Bryan retired from the screen after *Brother Rat and a Baby*, and Dart became president of the Rexall Drugstore chain.

They remained Reagan's personal friends, surviving the collapse of his marriage to Jane and encouraging a relationship with his new wife, Nancy Davis. "We didn't have to convert Nancy to the Republican side," Dart later said.

The gang's all here: Fellow "Rats" *(left to right)* Wayne Morris, Eddie Albert, and Ronald Reagan carry their women *(left to right)* Priscilla Lane, Jane Bryan (and baby), and Jane Wyman

The Darts first urged Reagan to run for governor of California and later for President of the United States. In the decades to come, the drugstore czar would become the bluntest and most outspoken of Reagan's so-called "Kitchen Cabinet" of longtime friends invited to the White House.

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Her career on the skids, Mayo Methot was the third wife (all of them actresses) of Humphrey Bogart, Helen Menken and Mary Philips having preceded her. Methot had been cast in a small role—that of a larcenous passenger on a bus—in *Brother Rat and a Baby*. Once designated as "The Portland Rosebud," during her youth in her native Oregon, she had lost her looks, thanks to her very heavy drinking over the years.

By the time she married Bogie in 1938, her alcoholism had taken its toll. In the 1920s, she had been a popular actress on Broadway. Signing with Warners in the '30s, she had specialized in the portrayal of tough-talking dames in such pictures as *Marked Woman* (1937), co-starring Bogie and Bette Davis.

On the set, Methot chatted with Reagan and Jane, who were each well aware of her reputation as the more combative of "The Battling Bogarts." Both were heavy drinkers known for their violent excesses under the influence. She was such a warrior that Bogie had nicknamed her "Sluggy." During one fight in their kitchen, she'd taken a butcher knife and stabbed his left shoulder. After that, the press dubbed their home "Sluggy Hollow."

Bogie arrived one day on the set, congratulating Jane and Reagan on their marriage and inviting them to lunch with Methot and him in the commissary. "I hope your marriage will be as successful as mine," he said, presenting a straight face to Jane and Reagan.

Against Reagan's better judgment, he accepted an invitation to dress in formal wear and attend a gala at the Cocoanut Grove with them.

As they were dressing for the event, Reagan warned Jane, "We'd better confine our drinking to one glass, because we'll have to carry Bogie and Methot home in our car."

At the Ambassador Hotel, Reagan and Jane nursed their respective drinks, while the Bogarts belted down quite a few. Jane couldn't help but notice Methot's "conspicuous cleavage." When she dropped her purse and bent over, her left breast popped out of her gown.

"Stuff in your tit, bitch!" Bogie snarled at her. Angered, she straightened up, lifted her glass of vodka, and tossed it into his face. Although Reagan expected an immediately violent response from him, Bogie, for the moment at least, gave the appearance of remaining calm. Meanwhile, Jane looked pointedly in another direction.

But as he sat there, with liquor dripping from his face, it was obvious that Bogie was fuming. Slowly, he picked up a napkin and wiped away the vodka.

At the end of the evening, Bogie and Methot headed for the lounges to freshen up. Jane and Reagan remained behind to pay the bill. "We survived the night, but barely," he said. "Now, let's get these two home and call it a night."

"Never again," she vowed.

With Reagan behind the wheel, driving them home, Methot suddenly demanded to be taken to the Cock n' Bull

Restaurant & Bar on Sunset Boulevard for a nightcap. Reagan demurred, saying that he and Jane had to get up early, but Bogie joined his wife in insisting.

"Take us to the fucking Cock n' Bull!" Bogie ordered Reagan.

Finally, to keep the peace, Reagan drove them there in spite of Jane's signals that she wanted to go home.

The restaurant and bar was one of the favorite watering holes of the stars. In 1931, Methot had married its co-owner, Percy T. Morgan, and she still liked to patronize the bar because the staff never presented her with a bill.

Seated at table, both Bogie and Methot each ordered vodka and tonic, the Reagans preferring coffee. When Methot's drink was served, she spit it out. "This is gin and tonic, you fucker," she called out, loudly, to the waiter. "I SAID VODKA, AND I MEAN VODKA."

The waiter moved forward to replace her drink. With condescension, showing his utter disdain for his wife, Bogie thanked her for not having tossed the drink into the waiter's face. "That's what she usually does," he said to Reagan, "like she did with me tonight at The Grove."

Reagan glanced at Jane, noticing that she was growing decidedly uncomfortable as the night progressed.

When the waiter returned with a different drink, Methot slugged down a fourth of it before turning to Bogart with a certain ferocity.

He shot a glance at Reagan, saying to him in an undertone, "Take a good god damn look at that face on her. She's getting ready for the kill. I can always see it coming." Then he turned his full attention in her direction.

"What is it now, my fair lady? What is going on in that vodka-soaked brain of yours?"

She ignored him, focusing instead first on Reagan and then on Jane.

"I found out today that my husband has been fucking Ann Sheridan."

Reagan squirmed in his seat, knowing that he was guilty of the same pleasure.

Almost as if for the first time, Jane spoke up. "Mayo, that's not true, Ann is a dear friend of mine, and she confides in me. She never once has mentioned Bogie, except as a vague reference as a friend."

Cocktail Parties That End Badly: The photo above shows the early stages of a stylish and formal gathering that devolved into a gunslinging disaster. *Left to right*: Mayo Methot, Humphrey Bogart, Ronald Reagan, and a very blonde starlet, Jane Wyman.

"Listen, sweet cheeks, I know better," Methot said. "Nothing gets by me."

"C'mon, bitch," Bogie snarled. "We're heading out of this joint."

Bogie stood up, along with Jane and Reagan, Methot rose on her unsteady feet, looking angry and distraught and also as if she were about to topple over.

When Bogie reached to support her, she slugged him in the face, bloodying his nose. He struck her back, knocking her down onto the floor. When Reagan offered to help her up, she pushed his arm away. "I can rise on my own fucking feet," she said, using the table to brace herself as she rose.

Then, facing Bogart in all her fury, she reached into her purse and pulled out a revolver. "Okay, Mr. Gangster, Mr. Tough Guy, it's twilight time." Then she pointed the gun at Bogie.

"I dare you," he said, defying her.

At first not knowing what to do, Reagan lunged toward her, impulsively wrestling the gun from her hand.

"You bastard," she shouted at Reagan. "I should shoot you, too."

Jane nervously intervened, taking the gun from Reagan's hand and passing it to the restaurant manager, who had rushed to their table as the noise had escalated.

“Come on,” Jane said to Reagan. “We’re going home. I’m sure that these two will get to their own home on their own steam if they don’t kill each other first. If not, it’s hardly our problem.”

Reagan dutifully followed his new wife. As he exited from the restaurant, the entire place could hear the Bogarts screaming at each other.

[As far as it is known, that incident at the Cock n’ Bull was the third time during her marriage to Bogart that Methot had threatened her husband with a gun.]

Louise Brooks in her memoir, *Lulu in Hollywood*, summed it up: “Bogie found Methot at a time of lethargy and loneliness, when he might have gone on playing secondary gangster parts at Warner Brothers for years and then been out. But he met Mayo and she set fire to him. Those passions—envy, hatred, and violence, which were essential to the Bogie character—which had been simmering beneath his failure for so many years—she brought to a boil, blowing the lid off all his inhibitions forever.”

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The marriage of Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan attracted such nationwide attention that the couple became known as “America’s Sweethearts.” Jack Warner ordered that another script be found for them, insisting that in this latest picture that they be jointly configured as man and wife.

Top billing for their next project, *An Angel from Texas* (released in 1940), actually went to Eddie Albert and Wayne Morris, their *Brother Rat* cohorts.

A face familiar to both Reagan and Jane, Ray Enright, was called in to helm the pair once again in this 69-minute B-picture released by Warner Brothers.

The female lead went to Rosemary Lane, sister of the famous trio which also included Lola and Priscilla, Reagan’s former girlfriend.

Enright assembled a strong supporting cast that included Ruth Terry, John Litel, Hobart Cavanaugh, Ann Shoemaker, Tom Kennedy, Milburn Stone, and Elliott Sullivan.

An Angel from Texas represented an oft-repeated, unimpressive film concept with an overused, somewhat experimental history, a re-configuration of a tired old workhorse that should have been sent out to pasture years before. Its script, written by George S. Kaufman (not one of his better works), had originated in 1925 as a play on Broadway entitled *The Butter and Egg Man*. Its plot involved a folksy out-of-towner who is persuaded to invest in an iffy but eventually successful Broadway play, finding love in the intrigue associated with the production.

Warners was hoping that by teaming Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman as a husband-and-wife in *An Angel From Texas*, the studio could cash in on the massive publicity generated by their recent marriage.

The “Angel” in the film’s title represented a show-biz term for a financial backer. In the 1940 film, a good-looking, rather innocent Texan (Albert) sends his girlfriend (Lane) to Broadway, hoping she can break in as a working actress. Instead, she becomes a secretary to a fast-talking sharpie, a Broadway producer as portrayed by Morris, and his more restrained partner.

Albert arrives with $20,000 of his mother’s life savings to invest in a hotel. But he’s lured into investing the money into a Broadway show, instead.

Jane was cast in the film as Reagan’s wife. She easily outwits both her husband and his con artist partner and helps back their Broadway show with money from a winning sweepstakes ticket registered in her own name.

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During the first year of her marriage to Reagan and her subsequent pregnancy, Jane did not see John Payne, refusing to return his persistent phone calls.

Reagan also temporarily abandoned his sometimes girlfriend, Ann Sheridan, at least until they started making more movies together.

Sheridan, however, was a frequent visitor at the Reagan household, praising Jane's cooking. Toward the end of the year, she began showing up at the Reagan apartment with George Brent, whom she would eventually marry.

Joan Blondell later delivered a rather revealing insight into Jane's relationship with her new husband. Blondell was aware of Jane's romantic interest in Payne.

"If you were making a movie with Payne and Ronnie, how would you cast it?" Blondell asked.

"I'd cast John as the romantic lover," Jane responded, "and I'd ask Ronnie to play the role of an older brother, who is a sort of a father figure to the heroine."

During their days off from the studio, both Reagan and Jane liked to play golf, so they applied for membership in the Lakeside Country Club. Their boss, Jack Warner, applied at the same time. Whereas his application was rejected, Jane and Reagan were granted membership.

Later, Reagan asked the club's president why Warner had been turned away. "We don't want Jews in our club," he told Reagan, who resigned from the club the following day, along with Jane.

Subsequently, both Jane and Reagan joined the Hillcrest Country Club in Beverly Hills, where they were befriended by other golf-loving couples, including George Burns and Gracie Allen and Jack Benny and Mary Livingston.

When *An Angel from Texas* opened across America, audiences were not particularly mesmerized. *Variety* referred to Albert's "befogged cranial machinery," and to Lane as "his school Bernhardt girlfriend."

The paper went on to say, "*[Angel from Texas]* wasn't made with the hope of knocking critics for a loop or lining up standees at the box office, but it serves its purpose of a good little audience picture with a fair share of laughs, once the patrons are in."

The New York Times characterized the film as "a bright little farce about a couple of yokels from Texas who outwit a pair of Broadway theatrical sharpies. Ray Enright has directed it in a breezy, farcical manner."

Another critic said the script should never have been reactivated after its 1928 release as a silent.

An Angel from Texas did absolutely nothing to advance the film careers of either Jane or Reagan. They were still hampered with reputations as actors limited to roles in B-pictures, hoping their big break would come soon. The sun would shine on Reagan far sooner than it would cast its powerful rays on Jane. Whereas he'd have to wait for only a few months, she would spend years languishing in the shadows.

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Lewis Seiler had already directed Jane Wyman in *He Couldn't Say No* and in *The Kid from Kokomo*. For the third time around, he gave her fifth billing in his latest picture, *Flight Angels*, scheduled for release in 1940. The other stars included Virginia Bruce, Wayne Morris, Dennis Morgan, and Ralph Bellamy. She had worked with Bellamy before in *Fools for Scandal*, starring Carole Lombard and Fernand Gravet *[aka Fernand Gravey]*, whom Jane had dated.

The excitement within the cast was generated by Dennis Morgan, Warners' handsome new leading man. Jane had heard the gossip: Now that Reagan had married her, he was no longer the favorite handsome hunk of Warners starlets. Almost overnight, Morgan became the most sought-after heartthrob, even though he had married his childhood sweetheart way back in 1933.

Jane was most anxious to meet him, but in the meantime, she had to deal with her sometimes errant beau, Morris. In her dressing room, he told her that his divorce from Leonora Hornblow would be finalized as soon as he received some court documents.

"Even though you're now an old married woman, I still have the hots for you," he ungracefully informed her.

Flight Angels: Wayne Morris, Jane Wyman, Virginia Bruce, and Dennis Morgan.

She thanked him for his continuing interest, but claimed, “I’m not ready yet to start cheating on my husband.”

“I bet you won’t say that when you meet Dennis Morgan,” he said. “All my girlfriends are dumping me and going for him. Are you going to join the stampede?”

“I haven’t met God’s gift to women yet, and I’m still very much in love with Ronnie,” she said.

“You will be until he starts to bore you,” Morris responded. “When that day comes, think of old Wayne here. I can always rise to the occasion.”

“I’m well aware of your manly charms,” she said. “Right now, I’ve got to put on my air wings to take flight with this B picture we’re making.”

A 74-minute programmer, *Flight Angels* was an inside look at the pilots and stewardesses who work for a fictional airline. Morgan played an ace supervised by Bellamy, who grounds him when he learns his eyesight is failing. Bruce and Jane were cast as stewardesses, Bruce is in love with Morgan, who—in the film—eventually marries her. Morris was cast as an engineer working on a secret research aircraft called “the Stratosphere Ship.” If all goes well, the aircraft will fly higher and faster than any other plane.

During the compilation of the film, Morris became so fascinated with flying that he told Jane that planned to study to become a naval aviator. “War is coming to America,” he said, “and I want to be ready to shoot the bastards down when it comes.”

Seiler introduced Jane to Margot Stevenson, who had been cast in a minor role of a woman named “Rita.” Jane was rather cold and distant to this actress, because she suspected that the New York beauty had had an affair with Reagan when she had co-starred with him in the picture, *Smashing the Money Ring*.

On the set of *Flight Angels*, Stevenson was spotted leaving Morris’ dressing room on two separate occasions. As Jane told Seiler, “Since Wayne isn’t getting anything from me, he’s wasting no time finding it elsewhere.”

In *Flight Angels*, Dennis Morgan seemed to have been typecast. On screen, he played a pilot with a roving eye for the ladies, much to the distress of his on-screen wife, Virginia Bruce.

Off screen, Morgan’s roving eye focused on Jane.

At one point, John Garfield arrived late one afternoon for a date with Stevenson. Their affair would continue

when she was cast in his next two films, *Castle on the Hudson* (1940) and *Saturday's Children* (also 1940).

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At long last, the eagerly anticipated Dennis Morgan walked into Jane's life. His romantic image had not been overly sold, as he was extremely handsome, radiating charm with his curly hair, broad shoulders, tall physique, and "Oscar-winning smile."

Jane agreed with the recent assessment of Ginger Rogers, who defined him as "the personification of the Arrow Collar Man." *Variety* had announced that Morgan was set to co-star with Rogers in *Kitty Foyle* (1940), each in meaty and highly dramatic roles.

Morgan had a natural spontaneity and winning charm. As he kissed Jane's hand, he said, "What a bonny lass. I know that sounds corny, but Jack Warner has ordered me to act more Irish."

"Actually, I was born in Wisconsin to a Swedish father and a Scottish mother. But Warner plans to cast me Irish."

"Your secret is safe with me," she said.

"For keeping it secret, I'll sing 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' one night to you."

"I can hardly wait for that moment," she said, flirtatiously.

"I'm supposed to be the new boy on the block at Warners," Morgan told Jane. "I'm hot, at least according to the publicity, but you may not agree with my build-up."

"But I do," she said. "You look like a dream walking. I hope I'm not being too forward. I just blurted that out without thinking."

"I love hearing that from you, Button Nose," he said. "I might even belt out a song for you right now."

"I know what a great voice you have," she said. "Ronnie took me to see *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936). You were dazzling when you emerged dressed to the nines and looking gorgeous, surrounded by a birthday cake of the most beautiful women in the world. I practically swooned when you sang 'A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody.'"

"I hate to disappoint you," Morgan said, "but those idiots over at MGM dubbed my own singing voice and substituted that of Allan Jones instead. I can sing so much better than he can."

"I'm sure that's true," she said. "That won't happen at Warners."

"Already, the attacks on me have begun," he said. "Today I read that I'm being referred to as a 'muscle-bound canary.'"

"We have to expect that in this business."

"I'd like to get to know you better," he said.

"For you, I'll be an open book," she said. "But for now, you've got to go. If you stick around for another minute, I'll fall madly in love with you. After all, I'm only flesh and blood."

He kissed her on the cheek, but hadn't gone far until he glanced back at her, promising, "I'll be back!"

Flight Angels opened to predictably bad reviews, *Variety* claiming, "It's as obvious as the nose on your face and a typical Grade B second feature."

Another critic, Clive Hirschhorn, wrote, "The corn is high as an elephant's eye (8,000 feet, to be precise) in this soap opera of the air, which zeroes in on the private lives and public duties of air stewardesses and the men who pilot planes in which they serve. Romance, drama, and excitement cohabit shamelessly in Maurice Leo's familiar screenplay."

Years later, Morris recalled fondly his working on that picture and on other films with Jane, Reagan, Eddie Albert, Priscilla Lane, and Jane Bryan. "We were the 'One-for-All and All-for-One' Society of Busy Bees. 'B,' of course, for B pictures. But those days were fun."

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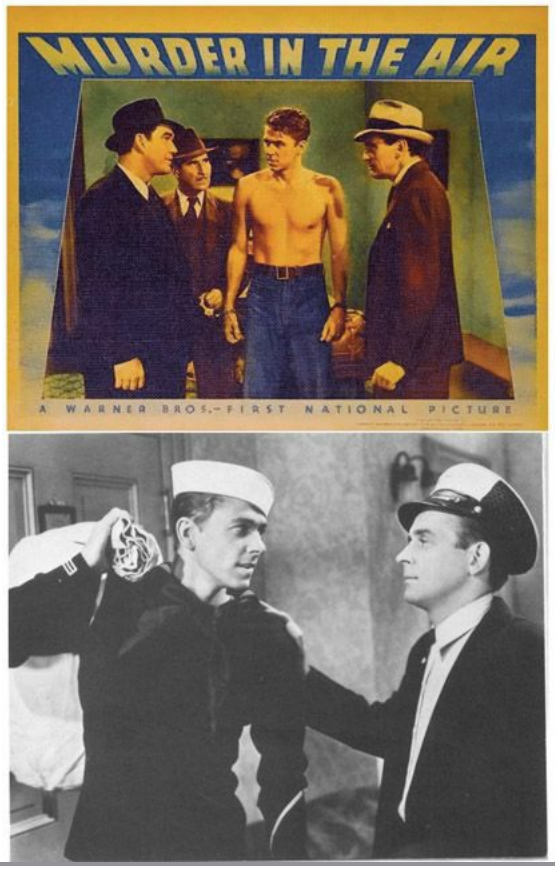
After Lewis Seiler directed Jane Wyman in *Flight Angels*, he helmed her husband, Reagan, that same year in *Murder in the Air* (1940). This would be the fourth (and last) film in which Reagan would star as secret agent Brass Bancroft.

He was reunited with his friend and confidant, Eddie Foy, Jr., who had starred with him in *Smashing the Money Ring*. John Litel, who had interpreted the role of his boss in the first Bancroft film, returned to the series in the same role of Saxby. The British actor, James Stephenson, was a familiar face, having co-starred with Reagan in *Cowboy from Brooklyn*, *Boy Meets Girl*, and *Secret Service of the Air*, each of the three released in 1938.



"Hello Sailor." Brass (Reagan) Bancroft with Foy, embarking on his secret mission.

In their latest endeavor, Stevenson would interpret the role of the spy, Joe Garvey, who speaks with an intentionally indeterminate foreign accent. He directs an allegedly patriotic society with hints of Fascist bad-guy overtones, "Loyal Naturalized Americans."

With a length of 55 minutes, *Murder in the Air* was the shortest of the Bancroft films, but also the best for fight scenes and aerial combat on the screen. Reagan's increasing number of female fans, as well as his gay ones, thought he looked "really cute" in his sailor uniform and swooned when he appeared shirtless.

As the war deepened in Europe, the United States was still not officially involved, although the FBI and other agencies were arresting alleged saboteurs and ferreting out spies on the home front. Even though he fully recognized the commercial value of releasing a film about the spy industry into espionage-crazed America in 1940, Jack Warner accused the producer, Bryan Foy, of "stretching a five-paragraph story on page eighteen into five or six reels."

To beef up the plot, Bryan Foy had obtained footage of a dirigible crashing into the ocean. Scriptwriter Raymond Schrock was ordered to configure that footage into the film's dramatic climax.

After a well-known spy is killed in a train wreck, Reagan, as Brass Bancroft, is ordered to assume his identity and penetrate the inner circle of the spy ring. That part in the film turned out to be a bit of a stretch for his acting ability. One reviewer found his impersonation of an America-hating tough guy unconvincing. "Reagan is just too clean-cut and patriotic to be a Nazi spy."

Brass Bancroft's goal in the film involved preventing the spies from obtaining a new super weapon, a death ray projector that could destroy any airplane within a distance of four miles. *[It was widely speculated in some quarters that Hitler already possessed such a weapon.]* In the film, the death ray was called "The Inertia Projector," the ownership of which will determine the outcome of the war.

Of course, as anticipated, our hero, Reagan, will save the day and bring down the plane in which the chief bad guy—assisted by his use of the death ray—is making his escape.

Future historians have noted that in the 1980s, President Reagan's "Strategic Defense Initiative"— more commonly known as his Star Wars plan—was inspired by memories of the death ray, whose concept he had been so closely involved with during his crafting of *Murder in the Air*.

Reagan, as Brass Bancroft, on the verge of both a scary discovery, and an attack from James Stephenson.

Prior to Reagan's involvement, the film's title had been renamed twice. Previous names had included both *The Enemy Within* and *Uncle Sam Awakens* before they were declared as not commercial enough. The title that eventually stuck was *Murder in the Air*. According to Jack Warner, "'Murder,' the audience understands, and 'In the Air' makes it all the more intriguing."

Long before it became notorious to liberals, HUAC (the House Un-American Activities Committee) was presented favorably in the film, a life-supporting voice that warned about the dangers of saboteurs and spies who operated destructively within the fabric of the American infrastructure.

The film's attack on "Reds" and "Wobblies" (a pejorative name for labor unions) provided a preview of Reagan's future as a conservative politician.

Among the many studios in Hollywood, Warners had become anti-Nazi before MGM, Fox, or Paramount. In 1939, Warners' had released *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, starring Edward G. Robinson. Because America was supposedly neutral at the time, that film had set off a wave of protests.

"Jack had a lot of balls to make this anti-Fascist film," Reagan said after seeing the movie.

Some congressmen had accused the Warners, especially Jack and Harry, of "warmongering." Immediately after its release, *Murder in the Air* was banned in Germany, Japan, and in some Latin American countries, including Argentina.

Months before its script went before the cameras, Jack's brother, Harry Warner, had delivered a blistering speech before the American Legion. He called upon Legionnaires to "fight unwelcome un-American forces. Drive them from their secret hiding places, destroy their insidious propaganda machines, and drive out the 'Bunds' and their leagues, their clans and Black Legions, the Silver Shirts, the Black Shirts, and the Dirty Shirts!"

After the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the censors at the Breen Office wanted to avoid another controversy about America's neutrality. In an early draft of *Murder in the Air*, a coven of saboteurs, obviously German, were ripping apart railroad tracks as a means of derailing an oncoming train. Censors demanded that the scene be reshot and the saboteurs reconfigured as members of "mixed nationalities."

The months before America went to war represented a troubled time, with opinions sharply and rancorously divided. German Americans were raising loud objections against an unfavorable depiction of their homeland. Irish Americans opposed Lend Lease, America's initiative that sent supplies and equipment to a battered Britain, Ireland's long-standing oppressor. Many U.S. senators remained firmly isolationist, urging Americans to stay out of "Europe's War." Reagan learned that the Breen office was often, at its core, anti-Semitic, blaming Jews, not Hitler, for the troubles in Europe.

Even at that early stage, Reagan was aware of the dangers of Fascism. He was firmly committed to the belief that America was in imminent danger of an attack. He endorsed the first draft of *Murder in the Air*, with the full realization that it was obvious pro-American propaganda. Within a relatively short time, he would be making propaganda films for the War Department.

Originally *Murder in the Air* had opened with stock footage of goose-stepping Nazis on (malevolent) parade. The chief of the Secret Service proclaimed in a voice-over, "Once again, the world is rushing headlong into a

maelstrom of death and destruction which would wipe civilization from the face of the earth."

After depicting the horrors of Europe, the screen turns peaceful, showing America going about its daily pursuits, feeling secure in its policy of isolation. But warnings are sounded that espionage agents are seeking to paralyze American industry, bomb its defense plants, and destroy its natural resources.

The Breen office demanded that these anti-German scenes be removed. However, some of the footage of the original version remained, wherein against a backdrop of fires and explosions, a headline reveals the gravity of the situation—PRESIDENT PLANS NATIONWIDE DRIVE ON SPIES AND SABOTEURS.

Reagan was already familiar with Lya Lys, the actress cast as *Murder in the Air's* leading lady. He had already seen her performance in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. In this newest film, she'd been cast as the scheming and crafty Hilda Ryker, who exposes Brass Bancroft's cover when he is on the trail of the spies.

Although he played a villain in *Murder in the Air*, Stephenson, in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, had been cast as a British Military Intelligence Agent. In *Confessions*, Lys had been cast as Erika Wolff, the mistress of Dr. Karl Klassel (Paul Lukas) who arrives in America to rally support for the Nazi cause among German Americans.

When Reagan met Lys, she had just married John Gunnerson, a Chicago vending machine manufacturer who had once been married to the famous silent screen star Anna Q. Nilsson. During the shooting of *Murder*, Lys used Reagan as a kind of Big Brother confidant, pouring out her woes. "After being married to John for only three days, I realized it was a mistake."

He found Lys an intriguing woman, originally thinking she was German, having been born in Berlin. But she told him she was actually French and Russian.

Three years older than Reagan, she was among a group of French actors who had arrived in Hollywood in the late 1920s to make French language versions of American films. Their members included the future matinee idol Charles Boyer.

Lya Lys, a European actress, fled the Nazis, refusing to make propaganda films for Josef Goebbels.

Lys told Reagan that in the 1930s, she had returned to Paris to star in the surrealistic film by Salvador Dalí and Luís Buñuel, *L'Age d'Or*, delivering her finest performance.

She returned to Paris during the late 1930s, and was appearing there in a play entitled *The King's Dough* when war broke out. "I was among thousands of refugees fleeing Europe," she told Reagan. "But I couldn't get passage on a ship sailing from France. I was told to use a Scandinavian port. On the way to Denmark, I was detained for three days by the Nazis, even though I had become an American citizen. It seems that Josef Goebbels wanted me to stay in Berlin and make propaganda films for the Nazis at UFA Studios. Like Marlene Dietrich, I refused. They finally let me go, warning me never to return to Germany, telling me that if I did, I would be imprisoned."

Rightly thinking that *Murder in the Air* was a timely film, Warners geared up a massive publicity campaign, unusual for a programmer. In real life, Reagan had a morbid terror of flying, but in Warners' publicity releases, he was depicted as an ace pilot with a reputation for daring parachute jumps.

His friend, Foy Jr., asked him if he were embarrassed, in spite of his aversion to flying, at being promoted as a modern day Charles Lindbergh.

"It's all fantasy, my dear friend," Reagan said. "You forget we slave every day in a dream factory. Since when did Hollywood ever concern itself with telling the truth?"

Warners' Publicity Department devised a marketing plan wherein young boys across the country, for a fee,

could join the Junior Secret Service. Membership included an 8" x 10" autographed photo of Brass Bancroft, signed by Reagan himself.

Ads across America asked countrymen to join Reagan in battling what was defined as "A Fifth Column of up to 20,000 secret and concealed enemies" seeking to sabotage America's infrastructure and to steal America's secrets. Schools were urged to set up essay contests, addressing the question of, "What steps do you think government must take to combat espionage and spying?"

Variety wrote that *Murder in the Air* "is strong on novelty in the Buck Rogers vein," and *The New York Tribune* pronounced Reagan "a dashing hero and a two-fisted man." But despite their patriotic preachings, Brass Bancroft movies did not routinely receive good reviews. One critic interpreted Reagan as "a heroic youngster playing Bancroft with vigorous conviction as he faces danger."

As Reagan moved into the 1940s, his increasing popularity was reflected in an avalanche of fan mail. Warners' mail department claimed that he was receiving almost as much fan mail as Errol Flynn.

[Writing in 2010, the Memphis-based film critic John Beifuss said, "The Warner archive collection of Brass Bancroft films raises a question. Why aren't these movies better remembered today? Is it because Reagan was a bit too immature and (even then) square *to appeal to kid audiences, while also a bit boyish (and the films too juvenile) to interest adults? Whatever the reason, they're worth rediscovering for old movie buffs in general and for Reagan fans in particular."]*

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Carole Landis no longer called, especially after Reagan got serious about his relationship with Jane Wyman. He figured that the sexy blonde starlet had moved on with her life, although he'd always been attracted to her.

Variety had reported that she'd landed the female lead in an A-list picture, *One Million B.C.* (1940), opposite a muscle-bound newcomer, Victor Mature. It appeared that he was being groomed for stardom. Reagan had seen pictures in the newspapers of this actor, with his muscular frame, thick lips that opened to a toothy smile, and slick waves of dark hair. *Variety* also noted that in *One Million B.C.*, Mature as a skin-wearing caveman would battle giant lizards while projecting grunts at Landis.

One night, when Jane was involved in an evening shoot, Reagan called Landis, who agreed to meet him at an out-of-the-way club. He signaled that now that he was married, it would not be a romantic date, but a "chance for old friends to catch up."

She agreed to meet with him with the understanding that she'd have to leave before nine o'clock, for an important engagement.

Over drinks at the Blue Parrot, she told him how thrilled she was to be starring as the lead in a new movie. "I think it's going to make me a star. Of course, I have to wear skimpy animal skins and show off my body, but what the hell. Today, Victor Mature and I had to shoot a scene in this tree where a fifteen-foot python slithers down to join us. I nicknamed it Pete. The film is being directed by Hal Roach, Senior and Junior. They had to film a dozen takes because Vic is deathly afraid of snakes. I'm sort of a tomboy and wasn't scared. However, I wasn't quite prepared for my closeup with Pete when the god damn reptile darted his tongue out to give me a kiss."

Rather abruptly, he asked, "How's your love life?"

"Now that you no longer come around, I've found a beau or two. Of course, as anticipated, Vic comes on strong with me. He's the son of an Italian-speaking immigrant knife sharpener from Kentucky. Roach has signed him to a contract at $250 a week. When one of his talent agents discovered him, Vic was living in a tent on the bank of a small river in San Fernando Valley, where he bathed every morning. Getting fucked by him is like having a log shoved up you."

"That doesn't sound like much fun," Reagan said. "Are you and Zanuck finished?"

"Not at all," she said. "He keeps promising to make me a star. I still come running whenever he calls me and summons me to his office for love in the afternoon. All business at Fox slows down between noon and 2pm, when he takes his conquest of the day."

"I gathered you've moved," Reagan said.

"I rented this little bungalow at 1130 South Clark in Los Angeles. It's a neighborhood filled with underpaid studio employees and young actors hoping for the big break."

At the end of their meeting, Landis wrote down her new address and phone number. "One night when there's a full moon, why don't you drop in?"

"I love seeing you, but it doesn't seem that you have any night free."

"You've got a point there, gorgeous," she said. "What the hell! For old time's sake, you can at least give me a lip-lock before we depart."

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After making eight B pictures in 1939, Reagan had grown impatient with producers or directors who never cast him in quality movies. He knew his days as the King of the Bs were numbered. Since no one would offer him a good script, he decided to write one himself, although he was not a writer. Jane volunteered to help him, but since she was far less well educated, her writing skills were even worse than his.

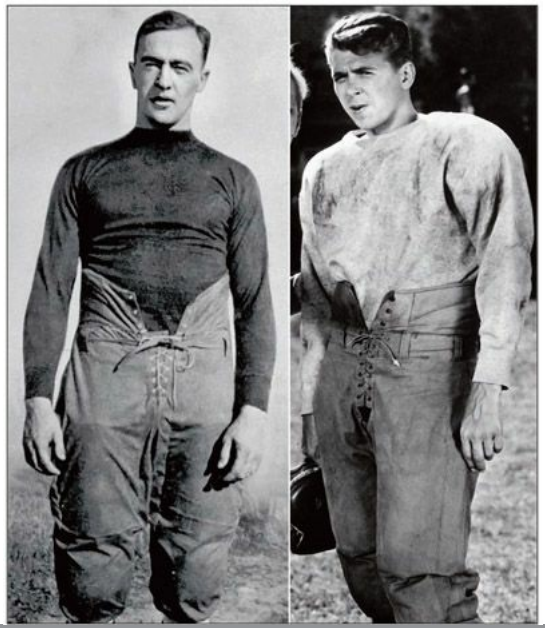
He obviously needed a subject, and he thought he'd like to write the script for a football picture. He decided to focus on the careers of George Gipp and Knute Rockne. Ever since he'd been a young boy, Reagan had admired the football exploits of George Gipp.

Michigan-born Gipp (1895-1920) had been a football player for Notre Dame, designated as that university's first All-American. During his senior season, he died at the age of 25 of a streptococcal throat infection days after leading Notre Dame to a win against Northwestern.

Of course, as Reagan soon learned, the story of Gipp could not be accurately transmitted without examining the life of his coach, Knute Rockne.

Born in Norway in 1888, and educated as a chemist, Knute Rockne is regarded as one of the greatest coaches in the history of college football. He popularized the forward pass. During his thirteen years as head coach at Notre Dame, his "Fighting Irish" won 105 victories, including three national championships.

Rockne's death in Kansas on March 31, 1931, shocked the nation. His TWA flight 599 crashed while he was en route to participate in the production of the film *The Spirit of Notre Dame*. President Herbert Hoover referred to Rockne's death as "a national loss."



Left: George Gipp, movie star and college football hero, who died of a streptococcal throat infection in 1920. *Right:* Ronald Reagan personifying George Gipp in 1940.

To his surprise, Reagan one morning read that Warners', his home studio, was coincidentally moving ahead to film the life story of Knute Rockne, which would, of course, include an episode that featured the short, brilliant, and tragic life of Gipp.

He had never done this before, but Reagan set out to lobby for a role, scheduling an appointment with Hal B. Wallis, the producer of the upcoming film, which would eventually be entitled *Knute Rockne—All American*, after trying out two other titles, including *The Life Of Knute Rockne* and *Touchdown*.

Before attending the meeting, Reagan talked to the film's first director, William Howard, who was hoping for a comeback. This talented, once-promising director had fallen on bad days.

Left: Knute Rockne, revered by sports fans as one of the most inspirational football coaches who ever lived. *Right:* Pat O'Brien personifying Knute Rockne in the film.

During the first weeks of the shoot, Howard was drinking heavily, and Wallis fired him, replacing him with Lloyd Bacon. That director had helmed both Reagan and Pat O'Brien in the two films they had made together, *Cowboy from Brooklyn* and *Boy Meets Girl*.

To Reagan's astonishment, he had learned from Howard that William Holden and John Wayne had each been tested for his role of Gipp, and that each had been rejected by Wallis.

"Wayne looks better on a horse," Howard had said, "and Holden is better as a violin player than a boxer, much less a football player." He was referring to Holden's role in the recent release of *Golden Boy* (1939), in which he'd starred with Barbara Stanwyck.

After a screen test, Robert Young was also rejected. "Put him in a dinner jacket in some parlor," Wallis said in a memo. "Certainly not on the football field."

Robert Cummings was another actor considered. "This Missouri kid might play a dapper playboy, but he can't play football," said Wallis in yet another rejection memo.

Howard had suggested Dennis Morgan, who was making a picture with Jane Wyman, but Wallis wouldn't even sanction a screen test. "Morgan looks like he just stepped out of a beauty parlor to get his hair waved. He doesn't belong on a football field. Sports fans would mock him."

The Canadian actor, Donald Woods, was given the most serious consideration. Before Reagan claimed the title, Woods was another actor known on the Warners lot as "the King of the Bs." Woods had a better physique than Reagan, and was taller, standing 6'4".

Although Wallis thought Woods would be most convincing as a football player, he had another assignment for him. He and Lupe Velez had stirred up some box office in *The Girl from Mexico*. Wallis ordered a sort of sequel, *Mexican Spitfire*, in which he wanted the stars to appear together once again. "By the time Velez gets through fucking Woods, he won't have the energy to run across a football field," Wallis claimed.

In his office, the producer was not impressed with Reagan's physical presence. "You're not big enough to play a football player. Those guys are fucking bruisers."

Reagan protested. "Gipp weighed five pounds less than I do. He walked with a sort of slouch and a limp. He looked like a football player only when he was on the field."

To convince Wallis that he knew his way around a football field, Reagan went home and returned with pictures of himself in a uniform from the years when he played for Eureka College. That seemed to do it for Wallis, but he still wanted Reagan to be tested on camera.

By the time he got home that day, before Jane returned from the studio, the phone was ringing. It was Wallis'

secretary. “The boss man wants you to show up for an eight o’clock shooting in the morning. You’re to be tested for the role of George Gipp.”

Reagan was elated. His big chance had come at last.

For his screen test, Reagan thought he would appear opposite some contract player, as was the custom. To his surprise, when he showed up, Pat O’Brien, in his coach’s uniform and in full makeup, was there to shake his hand. He’d agreed to participate as Knute Rockne, conferring on camera with Reagan playing George Gipp.

The test went smoothly, and was completed before noon, when O’Brien invited Reagan to the commissary for a hamburger. Over coffee, he told Reagan that Jack Warner had wanted James Cagney to play Knute Rockne, because he was number four in terms of star power at the box office.

“In terms of star power, I’m not even in the top fifty,” O’Brien said. “But both Bonnie Rockne, Knute’s widow, and the Catholic Church objected to Cagney because he’d appeared in all those gangster films. After that, Warner went after Spencer Tracy, but MGM wouldn’t release him. I was the last resort. I got the role only because Bonnie approved.”

Two days later, Wallis called Reagan, granting him the role. “You’re going to be on the screen for only ten minutes, but your role is vital to the script.”

Screenwriter Robert Buckner, an amateur historian who had known Rockne slightly, got advice from Bonnie, as well as from the brass at Notre Dame. He told Reagan, “Bonnie claims there are too many football scenes and not enough scenes relating to her husband’s academic achievements.”

He also revealed that he was writing a new screenplay, a Western called *Santa Fe Trail*. There’s a great role in it—that of George Armstrong Custer. You should lobby for it.’

Despite that advice, Reagan was not intrigued enough to follow it.

On the set, he had an embarrassing encounter with Gale Page, with whom he had had a notorious three-way with Ann Sheridan. She had been cast as Bonnie Skiles, the sweetheart that Rockne eventually marries. Reagan told O’Brien, “Thank God I have no love scenes with her. One night, things got out of hand between us.”

O’Brien responded, “All of us adventurous Irishmen take a detour here and there, and no man should be held responsible for mistakes along the way.”

On the set of *Knute Rockne*, Reagan was reunited with veteran actor Donald Crisp, with whom he had co-starred in *Sergeant Murphy*. Crisp had been cast as Father Callahan, who ran the university. Later, some reviewers cattily commented, “Crisp forgot he was playing Father Callahan. He thought he was playing God himself.”

Reagan also had a reunion on the set with William Hopper, Hedda’s son. In *Knute Rockne*, Hopper had been cast in an uncredited role as a New York reporter.

William had continued to call Reagan frequently, but he had always put him off. He wanted to maintain his friendship with William, mainly because he was the son of such a powerful columnist, but knowing about William’s sexual interest in him, he didn’t want to get too close. Reagan complained to O’Brien, “William’s always after me.”

Over lunch, William told Reagan that married life to Jane Gilbert “is something to endure. I prefer another kind of action. How is married life with you?”

“Jane and I are very happy, but unless we’re making a picture together, we don’t see a lot of each other. Two movie stars who get married rarely lead a life of domestic bliss— that is, if both of them are employed.”

William said that he wished Reagan well, hoping that his portrayal of George Gipp “will put you over the top. As for me, I’m working steadily, but I’m just part of the scenery—a bank cashier who gets murdered, a cowboy in the background, often a reporter, once a Yale tennis player and a society gent in a top hat.”

Hedda joined them for lunch and sympathized with her son’s career frustration. She had experienced the same problems when she had tried to be a movie star. “When bad days come, all your hard work seems to be waiting to fall on you like a ton of bricks. I remember when I lost my seven-year contract at MGM. I was never a star, always a featured player, letting the spotlight shine on the stars. I was the mean woman who slapped children, made myself a gossipy and annoying guest, or else a matron on the make for someone else’s husband. On the screen, I looked ridiculous. I once asked Mayer why I was always cast as a bitch. He told me, ‘It takes one to play one.’”

Most of the film’s football scenes were shot at Loyola University. The most difficult scene called for Reagan to run eighty yards for a touchdown. On that hot summer morning, he’d arrived in time for a heavy, high-cholesterol breakfast, consisting of a greasy bacon-and-egg sandwich, a can of pineapple juice, and coffee.

After his first run, a difficult dolly shot, Bacon ordered Reagan to do the run again. On the second time around, the cameraman still wasn’t pleased with his shot. Bacon yelled out, “Once more, Reagan!”

On the third try, Reagan, with a lump in his stomach, made the dash. He raced past the goal line and headed for a wooden fence that enclosed the field. There, he vomited up all that bacon fat. “My director’s name would also be Bacon—you figure,” he said, after having soiled his football uniform.

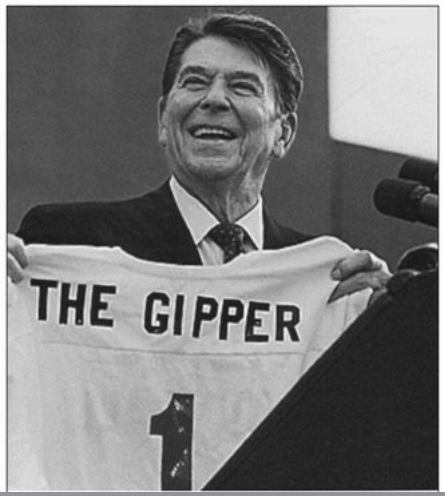
Gipp’s final words, supposedly uttered to Rockne before his death in 1920, were repeated by Reagan in the

film: “Some day when things are tough, maybe you could ask the boys to go in there and win just one for the Gipper.”

[The American Film Institute ranked the quote “Win one for the Gipper,” as number 89 on its poll of the top 100 most famous quotes ever uttered in a movie. When Reagan ran for president in 1980, he used “Let’s win one for the Gipper” as a political slogan. At that point, he was often referred to as “The Gipper.”]

Years later, looking back on his role as the Gipper, Reagan recalled, “It was a springboard that bounced me into a wider variety of parts in pictures. It’s true, I got some unmerited criticism from sports writers. One of them wondered why the producers never shoehorned real football players into key roles. But since I practically earned my way through college playing football—that disturbed me. However this criticism was balanced by some unmerited praise from the same general source, because another sports writer said I was so accurate in my portrayal of the Gipper that I even imitated his slight limp. Actually, I wasn’t trying to limp. I just wasn’t used to my new football shoes and my feet hurt.”

For the gala premiere of *Knute Rockne—All American*, Warners rented two trains to chug their way from Los Angeles to South Bend, Indiana. Stars were commissioned, not only Jane and Reagan, but Rudy Vallée, Donald Crisp, Gail Patrick, Ricardo Cortez, Gale Page, and even Kate Smith, with the understanding that she’d be belting out frequent renditions of “God Bless America.” Bob Hope also traveled to Indiana to serve as toast-master. Taking time off from his father’s 1940 presidential campaign, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. also showed up to read a letter of congratulations from the president.



Top photo: George Gipp, dying, is interpreted by Ronald Reagan in a screen interpretation that lasted for no more than ten minutes of the film’s total running time.

Lower photo: During his second bid for the office of President of the U.S. Reagan invoked the role he’d played and the line (“Win one for the Gipper”) he’d delivered in 1940.

Still suffering from a heart condition, Jack Reagan was invited to go along with the troupe. “He revered fellow Irishman Pat O’Brien, putting him in the special category of Al Smith,” Reagan said. “Dad and Pat became instant friends. Unfortunately, they went out every night boozing, returning in the early morning. I was worried about Dad’s heart.”

When Jack returned home to Nelle, he told her, “I’ve had everything now. I’ve seen Dutch get to be a star. Oh, I know the studio hasn’t made him one yet, but the folks back there know he’s arrived. I wish you could have heard

the welcome they gave him. As far as I'm concerned, nothing will ever top it. I'm ready to go any time now."

For the first time, Reagan was acclaimed as an actor. He noticed it when he walked onto the Warners' lot every day. "Suddenly, people who had never spoken to me before were calling out, 'Good morning, Mr. Reagan!'"

[Reagan did not live to see the ghoulish exhumation of the body of his beloved role model, George Gipp, on October 4, 2007. Gipp's body was dug up for DNA testing to determine if he'd fathered a child out of wedlock with an 18-year-old high school student. His right thighbone was removed from his grave, and the rest of his decaying corpse was re-buried the same day, much to the horror of Gipp's relatives. The tests showed that Gipp was not the father of the child that was born within days of Gipp's death way back in 1920.]

Left to right: Eddie Albert; Olivia de Havilland (who had no musical talent); and Jane (who could sing and dance, but who only mimed at playing the violin) in *My Love Came Back*.

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As contract players at Warners, it seemed inevitable that Jane Wyman would end up in a picture (*My Love Came Back; 1940)* with her nemesis, Olivia de Havilland. She didn't have anything against Olivia personally, "Other than her being born," she confided to Reagan and others.

Perhaps inaccurately, Jane claimed that she would have become a big star on the Warner lot had it not been for Olivia, "who got all those roles with my name on them, beginning with Melanie in *Gone With the Wind* (1939)"

"I also should have starred opposite David Niven in *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), with Errol again in *Dodge City* (also 1939), and most definitely with that gorgeous hunk, John Payne, in *Wings of the Navy* (1939)."

Jane recalled her first meeting with Olivia. "The bitch had a chip on her shoulder. After *Gone With the Wind*, and after her suspension, she thought she was entitled to the roles reserved for Bette Davis. We were both cast in this little romantic comedy, *My Love Came Back*, but Miss Olivia didn't think the film was worthy of her talents. She actually told me that her part was the kind of role that might normally have been assigned to 'a little starlet like me.'"

"My role is such crap that even Priscilla Lane turned it down," Olivia told Jane.

Warners' assigned the German film director, Curtis Bernhardt, to "this little slice of strudel," as he characterized the film. Bernhardt had been arrested by the Nazis because he was a Jew, but he managed to escape in 1933 and had fled first to France and England, and then to Hollywood. The year Jane met him, he had just come to work for Warners.

He told Jane that in an upcoming film, based on a script then being written, he was considering casting her husband. "It's called *Million Dollar Baby."*

In addition to Jane and Olivia, Bernhardt had assembled an all-star cast of supporting players, including Jeffrey Lynn, Eddie Albert, Charles Winninger, Spring Byington, Grant Mitchell, William T. Orr, and S.Z. Sakall.

In the film, Olivia was cast as a talented, high-strung violin student at a New York academy. She walks out on her music teacher, the cuddlesome S.Z. Sakall.

Later, she is accused of being the mistress of a wealthy and distinguished patron of the arts, as portrayed by Winninger. When he cannot attend a concert with Olivia, he sends his young business manager, the dashingly handsome Tony Baldwin (Jeffrey Lynn). The two fall in love.

Jane was cast as a musical friend of Olivia's. Her boyfriend is played by Eddie Albert, who had made those two *Brother Rat* movies with her.

To prepare for their roles, both Jane and Olivia each took violin lessons. *[In the final version of the film, the*

music supposedly emanating from their instruments would be dubbed.] But whereas Jane learned how to handle the fingering and bowing on a dummy instrument, Olivia did not, losing patience and frequently shouting at the director.

In his cold German accent, Bernhardt told her, "I do not like incompetence. You should have learned how to finger the instrument like Miss Wyman here."

That did not endear Jane to Olivia.

Bernhardt told Jack Warner that Olivia complained about every single thing. "She is imperial and haughty. She dislikes everybody. The only person who can control her is Jimmy Stewart when he comes onto the set to make love to her in her dressing room."

On the first day Stewart arrived, he kissed Jane. "I enjoyed our previous time together with Hank (Henry Fonda). But I'd better steer clear of you now that you're married to my buddy, Ronnie."

In the middle of the shoot, Olivia, feigning illness, disappeared for a week. "Curtis was cursing her in German, and life was miserable on the set," Jane said.

One day, Bernhardt invited Jane to lunch in the commissary, where he complained at length about Olivia. Jane recalled their meal. "Beer in a large tankard, pretzels, and several slices of Bavarian chocolate cake. Chocolate cake and beer have never been my favorite taste treats."

By now, Eddie Albert and Jane were friends. He had worked on pictures with her before, and, amazingly, would also be appearing on TV with her in the 1980s. They always maintained an innocent but flirtatious relationship.

Jane became very fond of Lynn, and would co-star with him in a future movie. She found the New Englander handsome and exceedingly charming.

"On the screen, and in person, too, you look like the kind of clean-cut fellow you could take home to meet dear ol' mom," Jane said.

"I suffer from always appearing on screen with stronger personalities," he claimed. "In *Four Daughters*, John Garfield attracted most of the attention. In *The Roaring Twenties*, I was up against James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart. Now, I've been assigned to film a movie called *All This and Heaven Too*. What chance do I have when Bette Davis lights up and starts puffing on that god damn cigarette?"

For the most part, critics dismissed *My Love Came Back*, one calling it "a fluffy little romantic comedy. It's like Chinese food. An hour later, you're hungry. The same holds for this film. An hour later, you'll have forgotten all about it in your search to sink your teeth into something more substantial. The stellar talents of Olivia De Havilland and Eddie Albert are completely wasted. This movie is more suited to the limited talents of Jeffrey Lynn and Jane Wyman. Actually, the supporting stars such as Cuddles Sakall steal any scene they're in."

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In May of 1940, Reagan was invited to pose in the nude for a sculpture class at the University of Southern California. Gale Page, who had played Knute Rockne's wife in their recent film, was enrolled in an art class there. She informed Reagan that her fellow classmates had voted him "The Most Nearly Perfect Male Body" among Hollywood's male stars.

Page later recalled, "Ronnie appeared extremely flattered, but also embarrassed, especially about posing in the nude."

After she cajoled him, he finally agreed to model for the class, but only if they allowed him to wear bathing trunks. "They'll have to settle for me in the same swimwear I'd appear in on the beach."

"I think we can make that work," she said. "I have a vivid memory of your genitals, and I'm a very good artist. The assignment is to draw a nude male body. The artists can sculpt your body, but they'll mold a replica of your genitals from my sketch. Of course, regarding those genitals, I would like a refresher course."

"We'll see about that," he said. "As you know, I'm a married man."

"Surely, you wouldn't be the only married man in Hollywood to have something on the side. That's virtually mandatory for a male movie star."

Dressed in a business suit, Reagan drove with Page to the USC campus the following evening. Outside the classroom, he faced her in the hall. She directed him to the men's room, telling him he could change into his trunks there.

A few moments later, he appeared in the classroom, where he was warmly greeted by a group of young women. About five or six young men also crowded around him, asking for his autograph. Some of them wanted him to autograph the publicity picture in which he'd posed in swimwear with Susan Hayward.

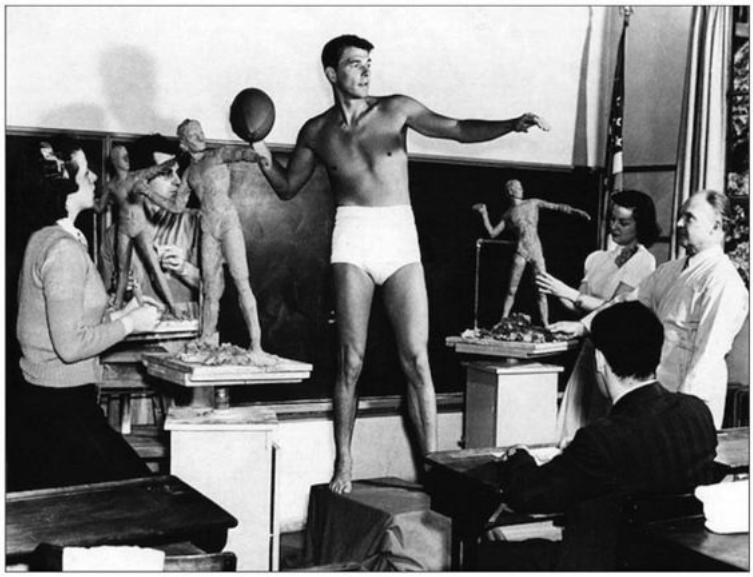
The class instructor called him aside. "I hope you'll change your mind about posing in the nude. It's all for art. It has nothing to do with sex. Our students are very sophisticated."

"I'm wearing trunks, or else it's no deal," Reagan responded. He opened his robe to display his body in a white

bathing suit.

"Many of your greatest fans are here to sculpt your body," the instructor responded. "Several of them are young men who view you as a dreamboat. They collect pictures of you."

"Why aren't these guys collecting cheesecake pictures of Betty Grable or Carole Landis?"



Reagan, chaste and modest, modeling in Grannie's panties.

"Art students have varying sexual tastes," the teacher said. "Just imagine that you're David posing for Michelangelo."

"I will feel red-faced just posing for these gals," Reagan said. "But having all these guys ogling me, too…I don't know about this."

"After five minutes, you'll be relaxed. I'm sure you'll take off that bathing suit. I've seen you shirtless in movies. In one film, you stripped down to your underwear. Here, you can take the final step."

"I think not!"

"All right," the teacher responded. "We'll take you any way we can get you. Perhaps you'll change your mind and do what comes naturally, so we won't have to imagine your genitals. Several in my class have told me that they suspect you have beautiful genitals, nothing to be ashamed of."

During the session, Reagan had to pose uncomfortably, balancing a football in his right hand. Tiring easily, he had to take several breaks. Never in his life had his body been admired by so many at such close range. "Many young women, and even the men, were lusting for my body," as he'd later confide to Jane.

She became angry at him for having agreed to pose in the first place.

En route back to Page's apartment, she asked him to drop in for a nightcap. "I really want to see you again completely nude. If I'm going to draw your genitals, I don't want to rely on a distant encounter, but on a recent memory."

"I don't know how I feel about this," he said.

"Please don't be so square," she said. "You're going to be immortalized with thirty nude sculptures. I bet someday they'll be collectors' items."

"One thing," he said. "You didn't warn me that a photographer would arrive to snap my picture as a nude model. I don't know if I like that kind of body beautiful publicity. My male friends will make fun of me."

"Listen, Ronnie, as I'm sure you've been told by others, especially directors: You've got to start selling yourself as a sex symbol so that you can compete with Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Tyrone Power, and, most definitely, with Errol Flynn. Flynn would have posed nude for the class, but they voted for you instead."

"I hope you're not giving me bad advice, you cute little vixen," he said, climbing up the stairs to her apartment.

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Jane Wyman was reunited with Wayne Morris, her former boyfriend, on the set of their next movie, *Gambling on the High Seas* (1940). His divorce from Leonora Hornblow had just been finalized, and he was on the prowl

again. According to Jane, “Wayne never let a marriage license cramp his romantic pursuits.”

She also revealed, “He wasn’t interested in the B picture we were making. All he could think and talk about, other than romance, was his fascination with flying. It began when we made *Flight Angels* together.”

“War is in the wind,” he told her, “and I’ve joined the Naval Reserve. Any day, I expect the United States will join the Allies in World War II. When I’m not in front of the camera, I’m studying to be a Navy flier.”

Both of them agreed that their first three movies, *Here Comes Carter, Polo Joe,* and *Smart Blonde*, had done absolutely nothing for their careers. Their first *Brother Rat* movie had done well at the box office, but the sequel didn’t go over. Nor did their two most recent movies, *Flight Angels* and *An Angel from Texas*.

“Whether you like to face it or not, we’re a screen team,” Morris told her. “Think Hepburn and Tracy, William Powell and Myrna Loy, Clark Gable and Joan Crawford, even Garbo and Gilbert.”

Jane Wyman with Wayne Morris in *Gambling on the High Seas.*

Very *noir*, her performance evoked something akin to a female version of Brass Bancroft.

“I don’t think we play ball in those leagues,” she cautioned him.

He bent down and gave her a kiss on her pug nose. “I know you don’t like to admit it, but we’re also a winning team between the sheets.”

“Is that any way to talk to a married lady?” she asked.

“I’ll give you a pass for now,” he said. “But on our next picture, I bet you’ll come home to daddy.”

“You’re assuming we’ll be teamed again.”

“It’s in the cards,” he accurately predicted.

The script for *Gambling on the High Seas* might have been better titled “*Mobsters, Mayhem, and Murder.”* Its complicated plot revolves around a casino boat operating in international waters off the coast of the United States. Gambling aboard the boat is strictly for suckers who get fleeced. Morris stars as Jim Carver, an investigative reporter accessorized with a big camera and flashbulbs.

Jane was cast as Laurie Ogden, a rather demure young woman who is Morris’ love interest. She is also the bookkeeper to crime boss Greg Morella (Gilbert Roland), who owns the crooked gambling ship. With Morris’ urging, she agrees to testify against her boss in court, but he learns of her scheme and orders her kidnapped and imprisoned aboard his ship. Morris, eventually and inevitably, comes to her rescue.

The gimmick aboard the casino ship is a rigged roulette wheel with a concealed camera, one reviewer noting that the director, George Amy, gave the roulette wheel more close-ups than he gave either Morris or Jane.

Cast as a mobster, Mexican-born Gilbert Roland, dashingly handsome and masculine, was planning to marry screen goddess Constance Bennett, with whom Jane had starred in *Tailspin*.

She remembered Roland “as an aggressive Latin Lover type, always feeling that he had to flirt with every pretty *gringa* he met.”

“Originally, before I got hooked on acting—and actresses, I might add—I wanted to be a bullfighter,” he told Jane. “I would have been a *big* attraction in my suit of lights, if you get my drift.”

“I get your drift,” she shot back. “But let it keep on drifting.”

Even though she turned down a forward pass, she found him an intriguing character. “Gilbert could make me swoon,” Jane said to director George Amy.

To put Roland off, she said, in jest, “I’d go to bed with you, but I suspect you’d tell half of Hollywood,

including Ronald Reagan. You're obviously the kiss-and-tell Mexican bandit."

After Jane became a major star, Roland recalled working with her, "There was talent written all over her, but she was a late bloomer in movies, struggling for fifteen long years in programmers. She had a surface bravado. She appeared to be very confident, but I think she was plagued with self-doubt. Over the years, she always had this driving determination to be a big star—and she made it. She knew she had this certain flame burning inside her, and she fanned it, increasing its fire."

When *Gambling on the High Seas* was released, *Variety* wrote: "Could the newspapers of the country but hire the see-all, know-all, tell-all reporters trained in the B-picture corner of the Warner lot, there'd doubtlessly be not even space on page one for news from the war in Europe. They would be too full of underworld inside and cracking wide open crooked gambling joints through the smart work of newspapermen who look like the Boy Scouts of America personified."

In spite of the awkward wording of that review, Jane was pleased to read this appraisal of her own involvement in the film: "Miss Wyman makes a very aesthetic *vis-à-vis* to American Boy Morris."

That night, she showed the review to Reagan. He told her, "Don't worry, hon, you'll do better in your next picture."

She stormed out of the room, heading for the bedroom, where she locked the door from the inside. When he came knocking later, she didn't open it until it was time for her to report to work early the next morning.

***

Although the previous onscreen pairing of Jane with Reagan, *An Angel from Texas*, had not generated a lot of excitement at the box office, director Lewis Seiler and producer Bryan Foy decided to take one more chance and re-team them together in *Tug-boat Annie Sails Again* (1940). The picture was conceived as a sequel to Marie Dressler's highly successful *Tugboat Annie* in 1933.

Based on its success, Dressler had been immediately scheduled to make a sequel, but she died in 1934, a year after the original film's release. Louis B. Mayer searched for a character actress to follow in her shoes, but found no suitable candidate.

Finally, Jack Warner acquired the rights, and cast the character actress Marjorie Rambeau as the grizzled old salt.

In the film's original version, crusty old Wallace Beery played the role of Annie's husband. But in the sequel, Annie is a widow, skippering a vessel called the *Narcissus* from the fictional port of "Secoma," a combined depiction of both Tacoma, Washington, and the larger port of Seattle. Most of the outdoor shots, however, were filmed on location in the Port of Los Angeles.

Jane and Reagan worked smoothly with Seiler, who had helmed Jane in *He Couldn't Say No* and in *Flight Angels*, and had directed Reagan in *Hell's Kitchen* with the Dead End Kids.

Appearing with her husband for the fourth and final time, Jane was cast as Peggy Armstrong, a rich young socialite who falls for Reagan, who plays the role of a poor sailor, Eddie King.

Seiler selected a strong cast of character actors to support his three stars, notably Alan Hale, Sr., who played Annie's major rival, the scheming Captain Bullwinkle. Others included Clarence Kolb as Joe Armstrong, Paul Hurst as Pete, and Chill Wills as "Shiftless."

Reagan also arranged a small role for his brother, Moon, in the film.

Maureen Reagan, the first child of Reagan and Jane, claimed that she made her film debut in *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*. Her face doesn't appear on the screen, as she was still in her mother's womb. In her memoir, *First Father, First Daughter*, she wrote: "There's a scene in the movie in which Mother gets knocked into the water, and I cringe every time I see it, knowing that I took the fall with her." She later referred to it as her "in utero" performance.

Reagan setting sail with Rambeau & Wyman.

Perhaps Maureen didn't know this, but Jane's dive from the pier required four takes. "I ruined four dresses and got a thorough drenching. When Ronnie found out, he was furious with Seiler, fearing taking such falls would make me have a miscarriage."

In yet another scene, Jane pushes Reagan off the pier as a means of punishing him for giving her a public spanking when she backed her automobile into his, sending his vehicle into the water. In her role as the daughter of a shipping tycoon, before the film's happy ending, she arranges for it to be dredged up and re-painted, returning it to him in good condition.

Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan were feuding and fighting—and eventually loving—in *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* aboard the *Narcissus*.

The script of *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* involves a "tug" of war Rambeau fights with her arch-rival, Captain Bullwinkle (as played by Hale). Annie faces financial troubles, canceled contracts, fights over salvage laws, and a violent storm at sea.

Both Reagan and Jane later asserted that they enjoyed working with Rambeau. "Like *Tugboat Annie*, Marjorie was a tough old broad," Reagan said. "Born in San Francisco, she was deserted by her father and taken to remote

Nome, Alaska, for some reason."

Because Nome was a rough town, filled with far more men than women, Rambeau's mother dressed her as a boy. She sang in and played the banjo in music halls and rowdy saloons. What her mother didn't realize was that an effeminate, rather pretty young boy might also invite lust in the horny frontiersmen. Reportedly, as an early teenager, Rambeau was raped three times, the men perhaps delighted to find that the boy was actually a girl.

Eventually landing in New York, Rambeau made her Broadway debut in the spring of 1911. After that, she drifted to Hollywood, where she starred in silent films.

Ironically, as an early talkie, one of the films she played a role in was *Min and Bill* (1930), starring Wallace Beery and Marie Dressler, the original stars of *Tugboat Annie*. Rambeau was cast as a waterfront floozie. Later, one of her best showcases was as the trampy mother of Ginger Rogers in *Primrose Path* (1940), for which she received an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress.

Although Jane's role in *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* did not particularly challenge her, Seiler praised her nevertheless. "In spite of the nothing assignments she was given, she seemed to me to be always trying to give the banal lines and situations something extra. We had a lot of great character actors in the film, and she studied them like she was taking acting lessons."

In a release from Warners' publicity department, Jane was quoted as saying, "Ram-beau's seasoned talent and enormous thespic self-assurance awed me at first, and then I discovered the big heart and the wonderfully supportive nature of this fine woman."

Those words reflected Jane's sentiment but not her exact language. Most of the time, she spoke in vernacular slang, never using words like "thespic"

Rambeau also appraised Jane: "I think she was the greater talent, far more so than Ronnie. He had more book learning, but she was street smart and had her own kind of intelligence. She could size up people quicker than Ronnie."

As shooting progressed, Jane's pregnancy began to show. Seiler ordered his cameraman to conceal her expanding belly behind items of furniture or other actors. A dressmaker was hired to design costumes to make her look thin.

When the picture was released, most critics cited Jane and Reagan only in passing. Rambeau attracted most of the attention, and the critics were harsh, stating the obvious: Marjorie Rambeau was no Marie Dressler.

In the film, Reagan got to show off his athletic physique not once, but twice. As one reviewer said, "His torso looks better than this movie."

During the filming of *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*, Reagan had been so sure that Jane was going to have a son that he printed birth announcements to that effect. "Sperm like mine can only produce a boy," he bragged to Pat O'Brien.

"Don't count on the kid being born with a dick," the veteran actor warned him. "Mother Nature plays some wicked games."

On January 4, 1941, the day before Jane's 24th birthday, she gave birth to a baby girl weighing five and a half pounds. She was named Maureen Elizabeth Reagan. Following in the footsteps of her father, she would become a screen actress before venturing into politics.

When Reagan was shown his baby girl, he told the nurse, "She's a homely little thing, isn't she?"

With his usual frugality, he crossed out the word "boy" on his pre-printed birth announcements and wrote in "girl."

Reagan was fretting not only about the health and welfare of Jane and little Maureen, but about his new role in an upcoming movie. So far, Warners' hadn't notified him of his next assignment as a contract player.

He learned about it in a most unusual way when he was called back to the Warners lot to reshoot a scene with Rambeau.

As he waited for the scene to be set up, he sat in a director's chair reading the latest news about the war in Europe. Suddenly, a man approached him from behind. As he turned around to see who it was, he experienced a close encounter. He was shocked as a tongue darted into his mouth as part of a sudden and passionate kiss.

"You're gonna star with me in my next picture," the man said. "I've been yearning to give you a few pokes, sport, and here is my chance."

It was Errol Flynn.

Chapter Seven

When Quoted by His Enemies,
Reagan's Most Famous Line
"Where's the Rest of Me?"
Becomes a Mockery of His Shortcomings

The Press Hails "Jane & Ronnie" as America's Perfect Couple—But Were They?

Above, in a scene he rehearsed endlessly, Reagan discovers he has no legs. Ann Sheridan *(right figure in photo, above)* is there to comfort him.

In 1940, the Reagans were captured on camera, at home, cracking nuts, as a depiction of America's most perfect, most adorable, and most wholesome couple.

In 1940, Jane appeared in *Honeymoon for Three*, a film released in January of 1941, the month Maureen was born.

She heard that she'd been cast when Joan Blondell called her one morning at eight o'clock. "Have you read *Variety* this morning?" her friend asked. "It's been announced you've been cast in *Honeymoon for Three* with George Brent and Ann Sheridan. "Those two are having such a hot affair that I hope they have something left for the

camera."

Reagan had left early for the studio that morning, and Jane and Blondell had a long woman-to-woman talk about husbands, careers, and motherhood.

Blondell surprised Jane by telling her that her upcoming role was part of a remake of a movie that she had appeared in back in 1933. "I have no idea why Jack Warner is recycling this old script again," Blondell said. "When I filmed it, it had already been a hit on Broadway called *Goodbye Again*. I appeared with Warren William and Genevieve Tobin. It was a passable little piece of fluff, but it was quickly buried in the graveyard of forgotten films."

"We made it pre-Code, before the Breen office began tampering with it, so your writers will have to clean it up to get it past the censors," Blondell said. "There was a scene in our version where it was implied that Warren is taking a piss. It turned out to be running water. And in my version, I slept in the same hotel room with my boss—and it was understood that we weren't married. That's pretty *risqué* stuff, wouldn't you say?"

"I'd like to see it—sounds like fun," Jane said. "I met Warren William when we appeared together in *Stage Struck* with you. I saw Tobin in *The Petrified Forest* with Bogie and Bette Davis. Then Tobin's husband, William Keighley, directed Ronnie and me in *Brother Rat."*

"I know all that," Blondell said.

"Just trying to let you know what a Hollywood insider I've become."

"I made *Goodbye Again* when I was recovering from yet another abortion," Blondell confessed. "George Barnes didn't like the idea of having children. He believed that kids take the romance out of a relationship. Unfortunately, he didn't believe in using rubbers."

[She was referring to the famous cinematographer, George Barnes, whom she married in Arizona in 1933, the union surviving until 1936. During the short run of that marriage, Blondell insisted on carrying a child to term. A son was born to the couple in 1934. She named him Norman. The boy was later adopted by her second husband, Dick Powell, and his name was changed to Norman S. Powell."]

"Ronnie wants to have children, but I don't want to settle into the role of a bored housewife looking out for a lot of little Reagans running around the place. I'm going to continue to pursue my film career, as hopeless as it looks at the moment."

"That's not what the fan magazines are claiming," Blondell said. "They say that Ronnie has domesticated you."

Ruth Waterbury of *Photoplay* was among the hacks promoting Jane's image as a woman wanting to settle down in the kitchen and bedroom as a dutiful wife playing second fiddle to her husband.

Waterbury overlooked the fact that in 1941 alone, Jane would release four different movies. "Jane is madly in love with Ronnie and is devoted to him," Waterbury wrote. "His every wish is her command. He comes first in her life, even if it means sacrificing her own career. She works constantly to build up his ego and confidence."

Blondell later said, "The Jane that Waterbury described was not the Janie I knew. She lacked confidence in her own talent, and didn't spend much time building up Ronnie's confidence as a screen actor from what I saw. She had a steely determination to succeed at all costs. Instead of being a wife and mother, she talked constantly about chasing that elusive dream of stardom."

Two "Dreamboats," John Payne & Dennis Morgan, Pursue Jane, as Reagan is Ensnared by Rival Blondes, Betty Grable & Carole Landis.

"I think Ronnie is cute," Jane told Blondell. "If only he would stop talking about politics, he'd be a hell of a lot cuter. I've failed twice at marriage, and, frankly, I don't know if I can make a go of it this time around, either. We put on our smiling faces for our fans, who read those pulp magazines, but in private, we can be a lot less charming."

Young Jane evolved into the odd girl out, appearing in a wardrobe disaster she hated. Warners' wardrobe department promoted it as "a *foulard* dress with a wide-brimmed hat." Jane denounced it as "frumpy."

Even at that point in her life, Jane showed a fierce independence. When her friend, Lucille Ball, had called to congratulate her on her marriage, Jane made a frank admission. "Even though I'm married, I still have my eye trained on every good-looking guy I meet, especially if they're named John Payne or Dennis Morgan. A really gorgeous guy can make me forget about home and hearth, at least put aside enough time for love in the afternoon. Which would your rather do, change some kid's shitty diaper or let John Payne make love to you?"

"You know me well enough to answer that question for yourself," Ball said.

The *Motion Picture Herald and Fame Poll* had designated Jane as a "Star of Tomorrow," but after their forecast was released, she lamented to Ball, "But will tomorrow ever come if I keep appearing in one highly forgettable film after another? I'm on the rocky road to thirty, and still turning out these god damn programmers. Who do you have to sleep with to get ahead in this town!"

Grannie Nelle, childminding Baby Maureen.

"Try Jack Warner, Louis B. Mayer, and Darryl F. Zanuck, and most definitely Harry Cohn," Ball said.

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The script for *Honeymoon for Three* arrived that afternoon. When Jane read it, she was shocked at how small her part was. More than her role as Elizabeth Clochessy, she'd have preferred the part that went to Osa Massen, a Danish actress who had come to America in 1937, after having begun her career as a newspaper photographer. The same year Jane met her, she'd been cast as Melvyn Douglas' unfaithful wife dealing with blackmailer Joan Crawford in *A Woman's Face* (1941).

That night, when Reagan came home, Jane complained to him about her career frustration. "I was called the *Hey Hey* Girl. Now I should be renamed the Queen of the Sub-Plots. I'm living through the paper doll years of my career."

"I don't expect much from Lloyd Bacon," she said. "He's the director. He races through a film like he did my appearance in *Gold Diggers of 1937."*

"I did all right when he directed me in *Knute Rockne*," Reagan said.

"I applaud your good luck," she said, sarcastically. "Lady Luck hates me."

Jane's competition: Danish beauty, Osa Massen.

"She doesn't at all," he said. "After all, she brought me to you. How lucky can a gal get?"

Sheridan was clearly the star of the picture, playing the secretary to George Brent, cast as the novelist, Kenneth Bixby, who is a literary Don Juan, eagerly sought after by hordes of women fans. One woman, Julie Wilson (Osa Massen, who, it's revealed, is married to the character played by Charles Ruggles), sneaks into his hotel room in the hopes of getting her book published. Thus the action begins. Elizabeth (as played by Jane) is Julie's cousin, who has followed her to Bixby's hotel. Elizabeth is engaged to the character played by William T. Orr, with whom Jane had worked before in *My Love Came Back*. She remembered him talking obsessively about America's possible entry into World War II.

"I plan to become an Army Air Force officer," he had told Jane.

At the war's end, Orr would marry Joy Page, Jack Warner's stepdaughter. A rosy future in media, especially the fast-emerging field of television, awaited him.

In *Honeymoon for Three*, Anne (Sheridan) gets her man Bixby (Brent) in the end.

Key roles were also played by Walter Catlett, who has some funny bits as a waiter, and by Lee Patrick, who seemed adept at playing eccentric characters who included nurses, floozies, and dithery socialites. In the movie, as Mrs. Pettijohn, she names her children after her favorite authors, including Booth Tarkington.

Jane enjoyed seeing Charles Ruggles again, an actor whose career would span six decades, a hundred pictures, and a reputation for playing absent-minded authority figures.

On the set, Jane met the screenwriting twins, Julius and Philip Epstein. They were filled with bitterness toward Jack Warner. In spite of their commercial success, Warner despised them, resenting their pranks, their work habits, and the odd hours they kept.

In 1952, the producer would turn their names over to the house Un-American Activities Committee. When asked if they were ever members of any subversive organization, the twins wrote, "Yes, Warner Brothers."

After their farce in which Jane appeared, the brothers went on to better things, winning an Oscar for the screenplay of Bogie's *Casablanca* (1942). They worked on that script with Howard Koch.

George Brent and Ann Sheridan, the stars of *Honeymoon for Three*, outshone Jane in this frothy romp, but Jane claimed, “My Day Will Come.”

Like some other cast members, Catlett, defined by Jane as “the ugliest actor I ever met,” was going on to greater things. Playing a testy and pompous waiter in *Honeymoon for Three*, he would soon be cast in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) with James Cagney.

Jane had never appeared this unglamorous on the screen before. Ironically at the same time she was posing for some of the most glamorous publicity shots for Warners. Some critics ridiculed her film outfits, calling them “in preparation for playing an old maid.” Another critic noted, “If Jane Wyman dressed like that in private life, she would never have nailed heartthrob Ronald Reagan.”

Walter Catlett...”The ugliest actor ever.”

During the filming of the movie, Hollywood writers made frequent visits to the set, looking for hot copy about the romance between Brent and Sheridan. Jane was with Sheridan when she was asked if she planned to marry Brent before Christmas. “Honey, I wouldn’t spoil Christmas that way,” she answered.

Even when Brent gave her a square-cut diamond, placing it on the third finger of her left hand, she still denied any engagement. “It’s just a gift from a friend,” she told reporters. “I place it on the finger where it fits best—and that’s all there is to it. We’re not engaged. Every time George gives me something, the press declares we’re on the verge of eloping.”

Honeymoon for Three was an obvious attempt to capitalize off the current flood of Brent-Sheridan publicity. But when the film was released, one critic wrote, “Brent and Sheridan may go up in flames off screen, but on screen, they make one burned-out couple.”

Charles Ruggles... Specializing in mousy, stuttering, henpecked husbands.

To Jane, Sheridan confessed that they were having an affair, and that she was considering marrying him. Up to then, after her divorce, she'd been playing the field, dating David Niven, Allan Jones, and Frederick Brisson, along with directors Jean Negulesco and Anatole Litvak after he escaped from the clutches of Miriam Hopkins. Her dates with César Romero, "The Latin from Manhattan" were strictly platonic, as he was really lusting after Desi Arnaz, much to the annoyance of Lucille Ball.

"Frankly, George doesn't have a good marriage record," Sheridan said. "His first marriage to Helen Campbell lasted less than thirty days. Although he was married to Ruth Chatterton for two years, they didn't live together for most of that time. His third marriage to Constance Worth didn't survive the honeymoon."

Julius *(left)* and Philip Epstein: Irreverent and identical screenwriting twins working feverishly on the script for *Casablanca*

"What's the matter with him?" Jane asked.

"I don't know for sure," she said. "As for me, I have a sexual problem with him."

"What kind of problem?" Jane asked.

"Brent *bent!"* Sheridan said before being called to the set.

[Sheridan's comment about Brent's sexual equipment, unprintable at the time, was made to Hedda Hopper, in explaining why their marriage broke up so quickly.]

Honeymoon for Three opened to bad reviews. The reasons most often cited for its failure included its direction, its acting, and its script. One critic in New York wrote, "George Brent is cast as a Lothario novelist, but it's not apparent why the ladies throw themselves at this dull character. Clark Gable he isn't."

The film opened in January of 1941, the month Reagan and Jane added Baby Maureen to their household.

Many of Jane's friends, such as Paulette Goddard, called to congratulate her. Jane was rather frank. "Thanks, but no thanks. I am terribly disappointed. I was carrying around a girl all these months, and I wanted a boy, *really* wanted a boy. I had even selected a name for the kid: Ronald Reagan, Jr."

As a new father, Reagan was also being interviewed by the press. "The experience *[of having a baby]* made all this cartoon stuff about prospective fathers seem cheap. After work at the studio, I would go directly to Jane's hospital room. I was glad to be working because it took my mind off worrying about Jane. When she went into labor, she threw aside the hands of both the nurse and doctor. She grabbed mine and hung on for dear life. That gave me such a thrill, as I can't believe."

After the birth of their daughter, the Reagans found their living space too cramped. Although he held back, she urged him to go into debt and build a house. He had taken her to see the Rosalind Russell film, *This Thing Called Love* (1940), and she had fallen in love with the house depicted in the movie. She sought out the designer, asking him for a copy of his architectural plans, which he turned over to her.

After searching every weekend, Jane and Ronald bought a plot of land on a steep hill overlooking Hollywood Boulevard. A contractor was hired, and a new eight-room home was built. Jane decorated and furnished the house without any help from Reagan. "All he did was remind me that I was spending too much money," she lamented to her friends.

She was glad when he was cast in *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) with Errol Flynn. That gave her a chance to put some finishing touches on the house. She, too, was excited to have been cast, almost simultaneously, in another picture, *Bad Men of Missouri* (1941). As she told Blondell, "It stars my former lover, Wayne Morris, and my future lover, Dennis Morgan."

"Are you worried about Ronnie appearing in a movie with Flynn?" Blondell asked. "Do you think he'll tell Ronnie about the fling you two guys had?"

"No," Jane said. "Errol will be too busy chasing after Ronnie. I think I'll write a message for Flynn on Ronnie's

dick—‘This dick is mine.’”

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For the most part, Reagan continued to ignore calls from Carole Landis, the celluloid blonde goddess, perhaps wanting to forget their romantic liaisons of the late 1930s. Nonetheless, he continued to tell friends such as Pat O’Brien, Robert Taylor, and Dick Powell, that, “Carole is one of the most luscious dames in Hollywood, but she’s also among the most promiscuous where the competition is stiff for that honor.”

His friends agreed, perhaps having sampled Landis’ charms themselves. He knew that Powell had.

Unexpectedly, an urgent call came in from Landis that he felt he had to take. She informed him she was in the hospital, having been severely beaten. “I trust you as my friend. I need you to come to the hospital and help me figure out what to do.”

When he got there, he found part of her face bandaged, and her nose was causing her a great deal of pain.

After a few minutes, she revealed what had happened. She’d become romantically involved with Pat DiCicco, a so-called Hollywood agent with no clients. He was in reality the front man for gangster Lucky Luciano’s illegal activities in the Los Angeles area. Luciano was the city’s major drug dealer, and those foolish enough to move in on his territory usually ended up with bullets in their bodies.

Reagan talked very earnestly to her, telling her that although he didn’t want to dictate to her, “If you continue to hang out with DiCicco, you might end up dead. He’s already been involved in at least two famous murders, and god knows how many gangland slayings. I know the guy’s handsome and charming when he wants to be, but he’s lethal.”

Pat DiCicco...a documented henchman of Lucky Luciano, a brutalizer of women, and an omnisexual gigolo.

DiCicco was an already well-documented beater of women. During his marriage to actress Thelma Todd (1932-34), he sent her to the hospital several times after assaulting her. Later, he was implicated in her murder.

In time, he’d marry heiress Gloria Vanderbilt, who, as published in her memoirs, stated that he beat her, too.

DiCicco had earned his negative reputation with Reagan because he had been partially responsible for the beating death of Reagan’s friend, comedian Ted Healy. Wallace Beery and Albert (“Cubby”) Broccoli were also involved in that fatal beating.

Landis promised to dump DiCicco. “If I do, I hope that means you’ll start calling on me again,” she told Reagan.

“Maybe sometime in the future, but right now, I’m trying to stay true blue to Jane. Maybe you should get married, too. Settle down.”

“If you’d divorce Jane and agree to marry me, I’ll straighten out. You’re the kind of guy who can help me.”

“I can’t.” he said. “I’m taken. But if you try hard enough, you can find the right man. Just make sure he’s not already married.”

After Landis was released from the hospital three days later, she kept her promise to Reagan and dropped DiCicco. She even followed his advice and in 1940, she got married, a state of affairs that remained intact for only two months.

Her groom was an infamous playboy of the time, Willis Hunt, Jr., scion of a wealthy California society family

in the yacht business. He lived in the Art Deco-style Sunset Towers Apartments on Sunset Boulevard, former home of John Wayne, Errol Flynn, director Howard Hawks, and gangster Bugsy Siegel.

Bon vivant Willis Hunt, Jr., with Carole Landis at their wedding. He preferred "sex without gender" and desired Reagan.

Hunt thrived on speeding, and officers in the L.A.P.D. let him dress up in a police officer's uniform and arrest speeders along Santa Monica Boulevard and in the Hollywood Hills. At night, he was a party boy, often throwing orgies described as featuring "sex without gender" inside his deluxe apartment.

"I'm not really a homo cocksucker, because I'm always the top," he assured Landis.

During his two-month marriage to Landis, they were often seen cruising around Beverly Hills in his custom-made Lincoln convertible. On weekends, he took her flying, piloting his own plane. Later, in the evening, they were seen dancing and drinking at the Mocambo or at the Trocadero.

When Landis could take him no more, she walked out, filing for divorce. The very next night, he was seen dating Betty Grable, who had divorced Jackie Coogan. Landis later told Reagan, "I'm seriously pissed off. He's going out with Grable because he knows she's my rival at Fox, and he's dating her to spite me."

Dysfunctional playboy Willis Hunt chased blondes. In addition to Carole Landis, he heavy-dated Martha O'Driscoll.

Hunt was also seen dating New York actress Eleanor Frances, a dead ringer for Landis. He was also involved with starlet Carol Gallagher.

Hunt's most serious involvement was with Florida-born Martha O'Driscoll, who had appeared in 1939 with Mickey Rooney in *Judy Hardy and Son*. She was also set to have a minor role in Preston Sturges' classic comedy *The Lady Eve* (1941), starring Barbara Stanwyck, and also in Cecil B. DeMille's *Reap the Wild Wind (1942)*.

Hunt called Reagan and invited him—"without Jane"—to one of his infamous parties. Reagan politely turned him down. Not put off, he phoned Reagan two days later and invited him to Bakers Field. He explained that at the airfield, he had become friends with some Royal Air Force pilots, who had a fleet of six two-seater fighter planes. They were training Americans who wanted to volunteer to shoot down Nazi planes flying over England during the Battle of Britain. With his fear of flying, Reagan turned down that offer. Hunt, however, was persistent, consistently calling Reagan and annoying him with his invitations.

Finally, he called Landis to protest Hunt's calls. "Why does he keep calling me? Are you behind this? Have you

told him about us?"

"I hope you don't mind, but I did," she said. "He's not jealous—in fact, he finds you really cute. Actually, he wants to make it with you, perhaps join us in a three-way. He keeps calling because he never accepts the word 'no.'"

"Tell him to butt out, god damn it!"

"I'll not only do that, but I'm divorcing the fucker. I've had it. Since he can't get you, he's settled for Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., who swings both ways. If you don't believe me, ask Joan Crawford. Of course, she swings both ways, too."

After her divorce, in reference to her brief marriage, Landis told the press that, "It took exceptional forbearance just to make it through those sixty days."

She called Reagan to ask him to come by her home one night after work, but he refused. A short time later, she phoned him again, telling him she was going on a location shooting in Florida and asking him to slip away with her for a short vacation.

"The star of the picture is that bitch, Betty Grable, whom I detest. She claims she knows you, Like I'd believe you'd hang out with trash like that bleached blonde whore."

He wanted to say, "It takes one to know one," but he held his tongue. "I can't go away now. I'm making a movie with Errol Flynn."

"Better take along your chastity belt, darling," she said before hanging up.

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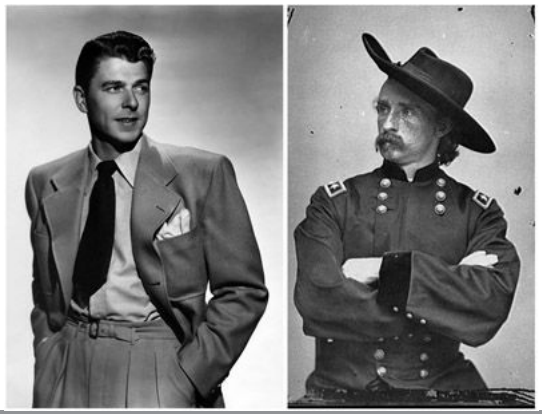
A call from Warner Brothers came in to the Reagan home at six o'clock that morning. Jane was already awake, but Reagan was still sleeping. She called him to the phone. "It's Warners."

On the line, he learned that he was to report at eight o'clock for a costume fitting for Errol Flynn's new picture, *Santa Fe Trail*.



Ronald Reagan impersonated George Armstrong Custer *(right)* in *Santa Fe Trail*, a loosely historical tale of an anti-slavery rebellion in Kansas.

"Wayne Morris is off the picture," the voice said. "You're taking over the role of General Custer."

In the wardrobe department, a bright new cavalry uniform, blue with gold braid, had been crafted specifically for him. On the floor, he noticed a crumpled, discarded uniform with Morris' name pinned to it.

In his memoirs, Reagan recalled that that uniform had made a lasting impression on him. "It occurred to me that it would be just as easy someday to throw my clothes in the corner and hang some other actor's in their place. It's a highly competitive business."

Santa Fe Trail was the only film set in the Old West that Reagan would make for Warners. On the set, he was greeted by screenwriter Robert Buckner, who had also written the script for *Knute Rockne—All American*. "I've just been polishing your lines,"

"Michael Curtiz will be on the set soon," Buckner said, "But I've got to warn you: The bastard didn't want you in the role. He didn't want Morris either. Those two guys had a big fight and the Mad Hungarian ordered Morris off the set. Curtiz wanted John Wayne, who turned it down. He sent Curtiz a note: 'I REFUSE TO PLAY FLYNN'S PUSSY."

Before leaving Reagan to read the script, Buckner told him, "Actually, it was Jack Warner who wanted you to play Custer. He said war is coming, and he was about to lose his leading male actors. He told us the Army won't take you because you're blind as a bat."

Reagan sat down to read the script through his contact lenses. "Do I make my last stand against the Indians?"

“It’s not that kind of role,” Buckner said. “The plot revolves more around John Brown, the abolitionist crusader. It’s not history. I’ve taken poetic license.”

As he read Buckner’s script, Reagan realized that little of it made sense from a standpoint of historical fact. The script called for Flynn to interpret the early military career (i.e., during the 1850s) of J.E.B. (“Jeb”) Stuart, later the Confederacy’s most renowned cavalry commander. Reagan had been hired for a sanitized (and chronologically incorrect) interpretation of George Armstrong Custer’s career before the Civil War, covering events which might have happened years before the 1876 massacre by Native Americans of his military contingent at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

When the film opens, Custer and Stuart are graduating from West Point in 1854, although in reality, Custer was a fifteen-year-old schoolboy at the time. Jefferson Davis also factors into the narrative, as do future Civil War generals such as Philip Sheridan, James Longstreet, James Hood, and George Pickett. Raymond Massey was cast as John Brown, a fanatical American abolitionist who advocated the use of armed insurrection as the only means of overthrowing slavery in the United States.

From behind him, Reagan heard the thick Hungarian accent of the film’s flamboyant director, Michael Curtiz. “I want you to do good job. Earl Flint will be asshole as usual.” *[The director always botched the names of people.]*

To many viewers, Buckner’s script seemed to haphazardly combine the dramas associated with the westward expansion of the U.S. with a retelling of the abolitionist crusade of John Brown, a love story between the characters played by Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland; and a story about the growth of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroads.

Left: John Brown (1800-1859), from a 19th century photo of the idealistic abolitionist, and *(right)* Raymond Massey, interpreting John Brown as an un-hinged fanatic.

[The railroad was the subject of a popular song composed by Johnny Mercer and Harry Warren, “On the Atchison, Topeka, and The Santa Fe,” written for the film, The Harvey Girls *(1946), and sung by, among others, Judy Garland.]*

“It’s eight parts entertainment, two parts fact,” Bruckner told Reagan. “Or, as Curtiz with his accent says, ‘*It’s not the exact facts and we haff the facts to prove that*.’”

Warners’ re-enactment of salad days at West Point in the years immediately preceding the Civil War:

Left to right, Reagan in a loose interpretation of the student with among the lowest test scores (Custer); Flynn as J.E.B. Stuart; David Bruce; and in the right foreground, William Lundigan, Flynn’s off-screen lover.

Before the day was over, Reagan met most of the cast—some new faces, but a lot of familiar ones with whom

he'd worked before. Guinn ("Big Boy") Williams shook his hand, and Reagan smiled at him, though he detested the braggart. Ward Bond came up to greet Reagan. "I play Windy Brody," he said. "I think they mean for me to fart a lot."

Olivia de Havilland was most gracious, extending her hand to Reagan. She discussed working with Jane Wyman on *My Love Came Back*. In *Santa Fe Trail*, she played Kit Carson Halliday. "In the movie, both you and Errol are in love with me. In the end, he wins. But in real life, I'd much prefer you."

A shifty villain in an era of shifting alliances: Van Heflin

"Thank you," he said. "I'm flattered."

"Alas, Jane saw you first," De Havilland said. "But fortunately, right now, I have James Stewart to keep my company. He keeps talking about marriage, but his voice doesn't have a sincere ring."

De Havilland later told her biographer and film archivist, Tony Thomas, "My problems with Errol on the set of *Santa Fe Trail* are purely personal. He deliberately and provocatively up-staged me in two scenes, something he had never done before. Since then, I have wondered if his behavior might have something to do with the fact that I was seeing a lot of James Stewart and that our affable co-star, Ronald Reagan, spent a lot of time talking to me on the set. Errol was still married to Lili Damita, albeit unhappily, and he was hardly in a position to court me, but I knew he was fond of me, as I was of him. Someone else paying attention to me seemed to bother him a bit."

Reagan losing De Havilland.

Flynn was not scheduled to appear on the set for a few more days, so Reagan went around greeting the cast.

Alan Hale had just made *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* with Jane and him. Before that, he had been a regular sidekick of Flynn in such movies as *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Hale and Reagan, in their near future, would be making more films together. Hale later said, "I like guys you can hang out with—Errol Flynn, Ward Bond, John Wayne. Reagan was too stiff and formal for my tastes."

Flynn winning De Havilland.

Reagan also greeted such familiar faces as Henry O'Neill, who had been cast as De Havilland's father. He had a warm reunion with John Litel, who had played his boss in two of the Brass Bancroft movies. Hobart Cavanaugh also greeted him.

Reagan met an up-and-coming star, Van Heflin, who had been cast as Rader, a disciple of John Brown. In the movie, he too attends West Point, though he is discharged for distributing anti-slavery pamphlets.

Emerging from the bowels of Oklahoma, stage actor Heflin seemed to hold Reagan in contempt, though it was not obvious. He'd later refer to both Reagan and Flynn as "Hollywood pretty boys. They're not actors at all."

Heflin had appeared on the Broadway stage with Katharine Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story*. He was still angry that he had not been cast in the play's screen version, the role eventually going to James Stewart.

In one of the coincidences of that day, Stewart himself showed up on the set to take his girlfriend, De Havilland, for lunch in the commissary. An angry Heflin confronted him, eventually cursing him. Before they came to blows, Reagan came between them. "C'mon, guys, if I fought every actor in Hollywood who got a part I wanted, I'd be beating up someone every day…or getting my ass licked."

When Heflin wasn't needed on the set, he hopelessly pursued De Havilland.

Unlike Reagan, Heflin would achieve early success in Hollywood, winning an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor for his role in *Johnny Eager* (1942), wherein he played the boozy, philosophical pal of gangster Robert Taylor.

Reagan chatted with William Lundigan, learning that most of the cast shunned him, dismissing him as "Flynn's plaything." Flynn consistently placed him in minor roles within his films. Reagan and Lundigan shared joint memories of their days as radio announcers.

He told Reagan, "If the United States goes to war, I'm joining the Marine Corps."

"Will your buddy, Flynn, join too?" Reagan asked.

"He doesn't want this known, but he can't pass the physical. From the outside, he looks gorgeous, but inside, he's a mess."

The craggy-faced Canadian actor, Raymond Massey, seemed so self-absorbed in his portrayal of the spooky fanatic, John Brown, that he had little time for Reagan. Jack Warner had personally supervised his makeup to ensure that he came off looking like a lunatic. A critic later defined Massey's interpretation of John Brown in *Santa Fe Trail* as "frighteningly demented, vaguely echoing Hitler's evil."

[Massey would make a far more lasting cinematic impression the same year when he appeared as Hollywood's definitive Abraham Lincoln in Abe Lincoln in Illinois *(1940). Two years later, he would appear with Flynn and Reagan again in the wartime action and aviation story,* Desperate Journey *(1942). And in 1955, Massey would star in the low-budget film,* Seven Angry Men, *in which he presented the character of John Brown as a far more sympathetic figure than his portrayal of him in* Santa Fe Trail.]

Finally, four days later, Flynn arrived on the set. He attempted to kiss Reagan on the mouth as he'd done before. Since Reagan was now aware that the swashbuckler was a kissing bandit, he turned away. Flynn's lips only managed to brush against Reagan's ear. "Just a friendly gesture, sport, since we'll be making our first picture together, I thought we might as well get cozy."

“I don’t go in for man kissing,” Reagan said, “although I know it’s a show biz tradition. Everybody kisses everybody in Hollywood.”

“And ain’t it fun, sweet cheeks?” Flynn said. “I’d better read the god damn script. That asshole Curtiz has been shooting scenes with Massey for four days without one call for me, the fucking star of this flick. If that doesn’t change soon, Curtiz is going to face big trouble and a one-way ticket back to the goulash factories of Budapest.”

Although he tried to conceal his jealousy, Reagan envied Flynn as America’s fourth-ranking box office star in America. Reagan didn’t even place in the first one hundred.

“I once swore I’d never speak to you again,” Flynn said. “Perhaps bloody your nose if we ever met up. But time has passed, and I’m in a more forgiving mood.”

Reagan was dumbfounded and wanted an explanation, but none was forthcoming from Flynn.

Years later, a Flynn biographer, David Bret, provided a possible clue. “It was rumored that Ross Alexander had taken his life because he believed that Ronald Reagan had been signed by Warner Brothers to replace him. Although he would work with Reagan in the future, Errol would always detest him and hold him personally responsible for his friend’s death.”

If Flynn had felt such an emotion, it wasn’t obvious when they co-starred together. Actually, during the making of *Santa Fe Trail*, Flynn spent a lot of time talking to Reagan, enough to incite a jealous rage in Lundigan.

Flynn discussed his troubled marriage to Lili Damita. “We are in a connubial war,” he said. “I play the field from my base in a bachelor apartment. Damita doesn’t accept this. She watches and pursues me as Javert pursued Jean Valjean.”

“Her possessiveness upset our marriage from the start. As you’ll find in your marriage to Jane, it’s not man’s nature to be monogamous. Neither is it woman’s. The proof of this is in the well-known rejection of the whole standard of monogamy by so many people. You’ll find what I’m saying to be true in your own marriage once you and Jane settle in. You’ll stray and so will she. Movie stars are faced with challenges to their morality that are far greater than what’s faced by 99% of the population.”

“I plan to remain faithful,” he protested.

“Time will tell,” he answered. “Actually, you’re lucky to have Jane. She’s one hot little piece of ass with a twitching pussy.”

“How would you know that?” Reagan asked, his anger growing. “You don’t talk like that to a man about his wife.”

“I was just speculating,” Flynn said. “Call it a wild guess. Of course, I don’t have any personal experience… with your maiden fair.”

“If only I could believe that,” Reagan said. “Let’s drop the subject.”

Seething with anger, he turned and walked away.

He soon forgave Flynn, mostly because of De Havilland’s urging: “Errol can’t help being Errol.”

“I guess you’re right,” Reagan said.

The very next afternoon, between takes, Flynn was talking with Reagan again, yesterday’s embarrassment seemingly forgotten.

“I want to be taken seriously,” Flynn said. “I feel I’m inwardly serious, thoughtful, even tormented, but in practice I yield to the fatuous, the nonsensical. I allow myself to be understood abroad as a colorful fragment in a drab world.”

Later, Reagan would write in his first memoir, “Errol was a strange person, terribly unsure of himself, and needlessly so. He was a beautiful piece of machinery, likable, with great charm, and yet convinced he lacked ability as an actor. As a result, he was conscious of every minute of scenes favoring other actors and their positions on the screen in relation to himself. He was apparently unaware of his own striking personality.”

As a means of proving his point, Reagan recalled an all-night shoot at the Warner ranch. “My fellow actors and I were sitting around the campfire with Errol. I was right next to him, and he asked Curtiz to move me. I was placed behind two actors taller than me. My face would barely show in the shot—in effect, there would be only a glimpse of me. But I set out to protect myself. During rehearsal, I secretly piled up a mound of loose earth with my feet. When the cameras rolled, I quietly moved to the top of my newly created gopher mound so that my head showed above the two actors in front of me. I then dropped my one line like the gentle rain from heaven on the heads of the tall ones in front.”

Ava Gardner: At a party, Mickey Rooney described this sultry star to Reagan. “She has big brown nipples which, when aroused, stand out like some double-long, golden California raisins.”

But when Reagan saw the final version, he was horrified. Flynn had demanded that Reagan’s only line, uttered from the top of a low mound next to the campfire, be cut.

Late one afternoon, a luscious Tarheel beauty from North Carolina arrived on the set. Ava Gardner introduced herself to Reagan. She had arrived to meet Flynn, who had promised to take her to Palm Springs for the weekend.

She told him, “If I were a man in a picture with Errol Flynn, I’d be terrified—the competition would be too great. He’s probably the most beautiful man I’ve ever dated. He has a perfect body—one that’s at home in a swimsuit or on a horse. Actually, *The Perfect Specimen* (did you catch his movie?) looks better with no clothes on at all. He’s fun, gallant, well mannered, and with a sense of humor. When he walks into a dark room, it’s like a light being turned on. He drinks too much, and he fucks too much, but he’s got style, *honeychile*. Real style.”

Before heading off to Flynn’s dressing room, she kissed Reagan on the cheek. “Give Ava a call some night. I might help liberate you. I’ve been known to turn many a square into a bouncing ball.”

During the shoot, Reagan couldn’t believe how vicious Curtiz was. The Hungarian threw a fit when he learned that he had to use a dummy instead of Massey’s real body during his hanging scnee. “Wardrobe knows how to put choke to protect Massey’s neck. Maybe he won’t really hang, maybe. I don’t want god damn dummy. But Warner moron insists.”

When the filming began, an elderly actor playing the minister stood on the scaffold with Massey, who would then disappear as a *ségué* shot showed the dummy dangling. Curtiz kept yelling, again and again, for the elderly actor to step back. After he screamed to step back a final time, the older actor fell off the scaffold, a vertical distance of twelve feet.

“That ruthless tyrant, Curtiz, walked over and looked down at the actor, who was in agonizing pain, and crying out for help,” Reagan said. “He’d broken his leg. Curtiz took one look at him and then yelled at his production assistant, ‘Get me another god damn minister!’”

A handsome young actor, Gene Reynolds, played Jason Brown, John Brown’s son. In a scene, as he lay dying, Errol Flynn bends over him, offering him loving comfort. When Warners’ released a publicity still of Reynolds together with Flynn, Lundigan was furious. “Hell, Errol, you look like you’re playing a love scene with Reynolds. I bet you want him more than you want me.”

Flynn rushed to Lundigan’s side to assure him that “You’re my one and only.”

During the second week of the shoot, Reagan was introduced to a young beauty, Susan Peters (formerly known as Suzanne Carnahan) from Spokane. Spotted by a talent scout, she had recently been given a contract at Warners.

Although the script of *Santa Fe Trail* ordained that Reagan would lose De Havilland before the end of the movie, it called for him to be introduced to “the right girl” and for him to subsequently fall for the character played by Peters. He found her a lovely girl, and befriended her, and she seemed to view him as a kind of father figure, although he was only a decade or so older than her.

During the months ahead, after the picture was finished, Peters continued to call Reagan for advice. She felt lost and lonely in Hollywood, and he offered her reassurance.

In 1942, in a panic, she came to him after Warners’ failed to renew her contract. Consequently, he advised her to go to MGM. Within weeks, she had a contract with Metro, which had offered her a role in Greer Garson’s *Random Harvest* (1942). *[This film eventually brought Peters an Academy Award nomination as Best Supporting Actress.]*

The doomed and very depressed Susan Peters turned to Reagan as a father figure, not as a lover.

[For Peters, at least, triumph was followed by tragedy. She had married Richard Quine, the film actor and director. On January 1, 1945, he had invited her to go duck hunting with him. During the hunt, his rifle accidentally discharged and a bullet lodged in Peters' spinal cord.

When Reagan visited her in the hospital, he learned from her doctor that she would be permanently paralyzed, and that she'd have to live in a wheelchair.

Because of her physical limitations, she appeared in only a few productions after that. (One of them was a role in a regional production of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie.) *In 1952, she died at the age of 31. Doctors noted that her death was hastened by starvation and dehydration because Peters' had "lost interest" in eating and drinking, and had lost the will to live.]*

The shooting schedule of *Santa Fe Trail* took place in the oppressive heat of midsummer, the temperature often soaring to 110°F. The men were dressed in heavy military uniforms, the women in long 19th-century dresses. One location was Sun Valley in the arid Santa Susanna Mountains, a short distance north of Los Angeles. Stars and first-tier cast members were housed in small cabins. There weren't enough cabins for singles, so even the stars doubled up, Flynn sharing his cabin with Lundigan. The extras and crew slept dormitory style.

William Hopper, Hedda's son, had been assigned an uncredited role in the film as a military officer. When he arrived on the set, he informed the production assistant making housing assignments that he was Reagan's closest friend, and that he wanted to share his cabin.

Reagan had continued his friendship with William and occasionally went out with him, but he felt uncomfortable sharing such small quarters with him. William made it even worse when he told Reagan, "My passion for you has continued unabated."

"Get over it!" Reagan cautioned him.

"I won't get over it until my curiosity is satisfied," William said.

"If you think having sex with me one time will satisfy you, you're wrong. It would only whet your appetite. You'd be begging me every night for more."

"Perhaps you're right." William said.

The two men slept peacefully in a double bed, and William respected Reagan's privacy and did not move in on him during the night.

The next morning, Reagan woke up hot and sweaty and headed for the shower. He turned on the cold water. When he emerged, William, in his underwear, was sitting on the toilet, holding up a bath towel for him.

"What the hell?" Reagan said. "Get out of here."

"You mean I can't even look? What harm is that causing?"

"None, I guess," Reagan said, taking the towel. "Look, but don't touch."

"You really know how to break a guy's heart," William said.

He faced more disappointment when he went to a screening of the final cut of *Santa Fe Trail*. His only scene had been removed from the narrative.

During location shooting, some of the staff suffered injuries. Flynn got a saber cut on his thigh, and Massey's right leg was seared with a blank cartridge. Some of the horses also suffered leg injuries and had to be put down, which prompted an investigation by the ASPCA.

At the end of the shoot, Flynn, against Reagan's wishes, gave him a kiss on the mouth. Reagan wanted to pull away, but didn't want to antagonize Flynn, since he'd learned that they might be co-starring soon in another picture together.

He would later tell Jane, “Now I know how a woman feels when she suffers unwanted attention from the male animal.”

“You live in Hollywood,” Jane said. “Get used to it. Every third guy here is a homo.”

Reagan did not attend the film’s premiere in Santa Fe, but De Havilland accompanied Flynn. Warners sent three men from their publicity department to ensure that their star stayed sober for the premiere. They did not succeed. On the night of the big event, Flynn showed up drunk.

When the film opened across the country, it was a big success, earning some one and a half million dollars, a lot of money in the early 40s.

Reviews were mixed. The highly critical Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times*had faint praise: “It’s got everything that a high-priced soap opera should have—hard riding, hard shooting, hard fighting, and a bit of hard drinking by Errol Flynn.”

Variety weighed in with slight praise for Reagan, claiming, “He also scores.”

He was annoyed by a review written by Charles Whittaker. “Ronald Reagan recedes into the scenery when confronted with Errol Flynn’s charismatic and magnetic on-screen personality.”

Many critics noted that politically, the movie seemed to reflect a Southern point of view, with Brown cast as a villain. Another noted that “blacks are depicted as wide-eyed simpleton Sambos. However, Reagan’s Custer seems more sympathetic to Brown wanting to rid America of slavery.”

[In later years, Santa Fe Trail *is often confused with another loosely historic Flynn movie*, They Died With Their Boots On *(1941). Directed by Raoul Walsh, it represented the eighth and final film collaboration of Flynn with Olivia de Havilland. In this release—in vivid contrast to* Santa Fe Trail*—Flynn portrayed General George Armstrong Custer in a not historically accurate rundown of his life and career, including a heroic spin on his last stand, and death, in the Battle of Little Bighorn*.

In 1968, United Artists Television, the owner of the copyright for Santa Fe Trail, *did not renew it, and the Flynn/Reagan movie entered the public domain.]*

Reagan learned that after the premiere of *Santa Fe Trail*, Flynn invited Lundigan and some other friends to go on what he defined as a “Good Will Tour” of Central and South America. The exact venue of that tour would be hotly disputed for decades to come.

Among Flynn supporters, it was said that he was on a spying mission for British intelligence. His detractors, however, including author Charles Higham, claimed that he was meeting with foreign agents, especially in Buenos Aires, turning over secret information to the Nazis.

As a film star, Flynn was invited by various U.S. ambassadors to visit American Army and Navy installations.

As part of his South American tour, Flynn took along his pimp, Johnny Meyer, also known for working for Howard Hughes. On what became defined as Flynn’s “chicken hawk” tour, Meyer rounded up beautiful boys and girls in the twelve-to-fourteen year old bracket. They were invited aboard Flynn’s yacht for sex orgies.

Lundigan later told his gay friends, “Usually Errol has to go to Mexico for such pleasures. Hell, in the States, he could be charged with statutory rape.”

Reagan later discussed these rumors about Flynn with key administrators of the Screen Actors Guild. “I don’t trust Flynn,” Reagan told the board. “Never did, never will. I think he’s capable of almost anything, at least in sexual terms. But thinking of this Aussie as a Nazi spy is a bit much for me, although he does have a number of suspicious friends.”

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In a phone call to Paulette Goddard, Jane Wyman was ecstatic. “I can’t believe my good luck,” Jane said. “Although I don’t like Ray Enright as a director, the bastard called to tell me I’m going to co-star with my dream man, Dennis Morgan, in this thing called *Bad Men of Missouri* (1941). Of course, Wayne Morris is in the picture, too, but I can keep him at bay. Tell me, am I going to break my marriage vows?”

“Such vows are made to be broken,” Goddard claimed. “Imagine pledging to be faithful to just one man. It’s inhuman. I’m sure Ronnie is slipping around on the side since he’s always surrounded by all these beauties at Warners’.”

“Do you really think so?” Jane asked.

Not all men from Missouri (the "Show-Me-State") are bad: In the photo above, Wyman appears with Wayne Morris *(left)* and Dennis Morgan, each of whom were or would become her lover.

"The only faithful husband in Hollywood is my dear Charlie *[Chaplin],*" Goddard claimed.

"Now you're being sarcastic, my dear," Jane said.

"Keep me posted on this Morgan thing," Goddard said. "And pray that he doesn't have a small dick. I've been so disappointed by these so-called Hollywood studs—Clark Gable and John Wayne come to mind. Of course, Charlie makes up for it. Right now, he's sleeping with this blonde bitch, Carole Landis. I think your Ronnie knows her. Watch out for her! On a movie set, she's known as 'Legs Apart' Landis."

Jane's script was sent over to her that afternoon. As usual, *Bad Men of Missouri* was a disappointment to her. It told the story of the Younger brothers who, enraged by carpetbaggers infringing on the war-ravaged American South, move to the lawless frontier in this fictional western. They include Cole (Dennis Morgan); Bob (Wayne Morris); and the very talented Arthur Kennedy, cast as Jim. Jim is in love with Mary Hathaway, the character played by Jane. Ohio-born Alan Baxter had been hired to play a ruthless Jesse James.

After reading the script, Jane felt that its writer "should be horsewhipped. I have to repeat lines to the Younger brothers like, 'They say you did a lot of bad things—but a lot of good things, too.' I get to kick Walter Catlett in the shins and call Victor Jory a 'no good, low-down carpetbagger.'"

When Jane reported to wardrobe, she learned that she was to wear a snood and shapeless gingham dresses in many of her scenes. "I'd dyed my hair a whorish blonde, but it was to be hidden in some scenes with a bonnet. Actually, a snood was coming back into fashion since women were using them to secure their hair when working with machinery in defense plants."

When she met the film's scriptwriter, Charles Grayson, she protested, "I wish you'd given me something more to do. I'm playing second fiddle to a bunch of men who outnumber me by a thousand to one. Now and then, amidst all that gunfire, I'm permitted a *meow* or two. I get to look through a window as the rain comes down. I get to shake the hand of Dennis Morgan. Imagine with Dennis in the movie, you cast Kennedy as my lover. Who in hell is going to believe that? Wayne Morris would be better as a lover than Kennedy. Kennedy's very average looking—not the kind of guy a girl would go for when hunks like Dennis and Wayne are in the picture."

When she met her on-screen boyfriend, he introduced himself as "John Kennedy" of Massachusetts. "I thought Grayson said your name was Arthur Kennedy."

"It is," he said. "But I haven't gotten used to it yet. Arthur, which is my middle name, is my new billing. Up to now, I've billed myself as John Kennedy."

He had just appeared with James Cagney, playing his brother in *City for Conquest* (1940). "Jimmy discovered me. He likes to discover young men." He sighed. "To each his own."

[This was not the only picture Jane would make with Arthur Kennedy. In their future lay Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie*.]*

Enright appeared with Victor Jory, introducing the actor to Jane. He'd been cast in their upcoming movie as the villain, William Merrick, a crooked banker who buys warrants on back taxes and then dispossesses farmers and their families. As the plot unfolds, the Younger brothers set out to avenge his misdeeds. Their father, Henry Younger (Russell Simpson), had been killed by Merrick's henchman. The brothers then begin a series of bank and train robberies, often stealing from Merrick, before turning their loot over to the impoverished farmers.

Jane congratulated Jory on his success playing Jonas Wilkerson, the brutal and opportunistic overseer in *Gone With the Wind*. "I don't think I can ever forgive you for being so mean to Scarlett," Jane said. "You were such a bastard. I think you're terrible."

"You won't believe that when I started out, I was cast in romantic leads," Jory said. "Then directors got a glimpse of my coal-black and threatening eyes. I've been the bad guy ever since."

Jane also met actor Howard da Silva, thinking he was Portuguese. He corrected that impression. “I was born to Bertha and Benjamin Silverblatt, two Yiddish-speaking Jews in Cleveland. I have no relatives in Brazil or Portugal. I just liked the sound of Da Silva.”

[She would later work with Da Silva and Ray Milland during her breakthrough role in The Lost Weekend *at the end of the war.]*

Jane was intrigued with Faye Emerson, a Southern belle who would later marry into the First Family at the White House. By the end of the 1940s, she would become “The First Lady of Television.” Reagan was soon to work with her in one of his future movies, and he’d get to know her far better than Jane did.

Although Emerson had married a naval aviator, William Crawford, she was known to be sleeping around. She aroused Jane’s jealousy by making a play for Morgan, who spurned her advances. When she didn’t get him, she pursued Morris, finding him an easy conquest. Jane saw her leaving Morris’ dressing room on several occasions.

During the making of the film, Jane had several intense talks with Virginia Brissac, born in San Jose, California, in 1883. Upon meeting her, Brissac asked Jane for her autograph. “I want to add it to my collection, along with those of Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, Henry Irving, and Rudyard Kipling.”

“I’ll be in distinguished company,” Jane said, signing her book.

Brissac had had a long stage career when she was young, later appearing in such movies as *Dark Victory* with Bette Davis and Ronald Reagan and in *Destry Rides Again* (1932), with Marlene Dietrich and James Stewart. Brissac would retire from the screen in 1955 after playing James Dean’s grandmother in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

Jane always found comic actor Walter Catlett amusing, having appeared with him in *Kid Nightingale* with John Payne and more recently, in *Honeymoon for Three*.

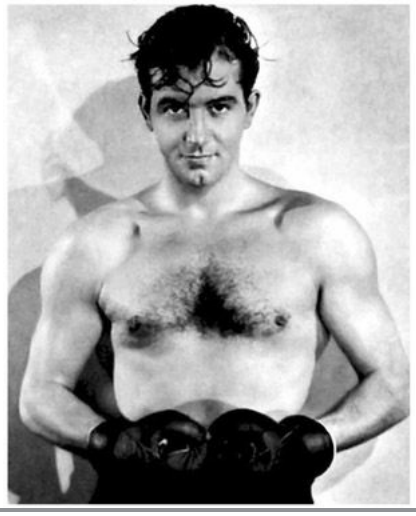
Jane on Howard da Silva: “He is the kind of man so easy to detest.”

During a rainy afternoon, when she was told she would-n’t be needed for the rest of the day, Catlett approached her. “One of your dear friends is waiting for you in a car outside.”

At first, Jane refused to approach the car in the pouring rain unless he told her who was waiting for her inside. “He wants it be a surprise. He’s a dear friend.”

Under a heavy black umbrella, she approached the car on its passenger side as the door was thrown open for her. Sitting behind the wheel was Payne himself.

Once inside, he took her in his arms and passionately kissed her. “I’ve missed you so, darling. My heart is breaking for being separated from you for so long.” Then he started the motor. “I’m taking you away to my hideaway.”



When Jane saw this publicity still of John Payne, she exclaimed, “the fantasy come true of every fair maiden.”

As she’d reveal to Catlett the next day, “I once made a movie called *He Couldn’t Say No*. Well, you’re looking at *The Girl Who Couldn’t Say No*. Let’s keep my little rendezvous with John our secret.”

“My lips are sealed,” Catlett promised.

From that day forth, Payne became a fixture in Jane’s life, coming and going at frequent intervals. His marriage to Anne Shirley was falling apart. He told Jane that she was still involved in an affair with her co-star, John Garfield.

“Shirley is out of her mind,” Jane said. “What gal in the world would want Garfield when John Payne, the sexiest man in pictures, is available?”

Linking up romantically with Payne again didn’t diminish Jane’s passion for the dashing Dennis Morgan. She eagerly awaited their reunion on the set.

During her absence from him, he was often the subject of Hollywood gossip. He’d made *Kitty Foyle, The Natural History of a Woman* (1940) with Ginger Rogers, the former dancing partner of Fred Astaire, in a drama about a working girl, which had brought her a Best Actress Oscar.

In the picture, Rogers found herself caught between two of the handsomest actors in Hollywood, not only Morgan, but James Craig, hired as a “replacement” for Clark Gable, to whom he bore some resemblance.

Rogers later wrote about Morgan in her memoirs, finding him “extremely handsome and intensely romantic, without manufactured overtones.” However, in the celluloid world of *Kitty Foyle*, the character she played found only unhappiness after she married him.

Morgan had also completed *Affectionately Yours* (1941), a charming comedy *[which somehow flopped at the box office]* starring Merle Oberon and Rita Hayworth. Rumors abounded that both Oberon and Rogers had taken “leading lady’s privilege,” and seduced Morgan.

As regards her involvement in *Bad Men of Missouri*, Jane later told Goddard, “I’m the leading lady in this Missouri western, and I, too, am going to take leading lady’s privilege with this super cute guy.”

During the shoot, Jane got to know Morgan, and she took delight in their romance. She began to arrive later and later at home every night, telling Reagan that she was held up at the studio. He couldn’t understand why such a small role in the picture would be such a burden to her, requiring so many late hours. She didn’t bother to explain.

Nine years older than Jane, Morgan, whose birth name had been Earl Stanley Morner, had briefly worked under the acting pseudonym of Richard Stanley. At the debut of his association with Warners, the studio assigned him the new name of Dennis Morgan.

He told Jane that if not for a whim of fate, she might have been playing opposite Humphrey Bogart instead of with him. At the last minute, Bogie had turned down the script and had been placed on suspension.

Jane interpreted Morgan as the antithesis of the gritty Bogart, and wondered why Jack Warner had assigned him as Bogie’s replacement. That would happen again when Bogie rejected the script for *God Is My Co-Pilot* in 1945, and Morgan had great success with the role.

He had married his childhood sweetheart, Lillian Vedder, way back in 1933. “It was love at first sight,” he said, “when I saw her selling poppies to passersby at a war veterans’ benefit.”

Originally, he was signed by MGM as a “threat” to Nelson Eddy, the singer-actor who often co-starred with Jeanette MacDonald.

As Morgan would later confide to his best friend, Jack Carson, “MGM didn’t quite know what to do with me. Off the screen, even though I love my wife, I had the time of my life. Let me see: Jean Harlow in *Suzy* (1936).”

“Instead of fucking these MGM beauties, who did nothing for my career, maybe I should have let some of MGM’s homo directors blow me, but that’s not my style.”

As one reporter claimed, “Warner’s put Dennis Morgan on the assembly line with Wayne Morris, Arthur Kennedy, Jeffrey Lynn, Eddie Albert, and Ronald Reagan—likable young lugs squiring the heroine until Bogart, Cagney, or Flynn came crashing down to sweep her up.”

Later, Jane told Goddard, “Dennis stands six feet two inches, and weighs 175—and he’s all man. And yes, even in that department you worried about.”

Jane later talked with Goddard about her affair with Morgan and the understanding they’d reached. He’d told her, “We’re very attracted to each other, but we won’t let our romance interfere with our marriages. In fact, by letting off some pent-up love steam with each other, I’ll be a better husband to my wife and you’ll be a better wife to Ronnie.”

“You’re very special to me, and I’d marry you in a minute if both of us were free,” she’d told him. “But I think you’re right. Instead of getting married, we’ll have a back street affair.”

“It’s more fun to get out of that stinking alley and slip off to a perfumed boudoir,” he said.

As she’d later relate to Goddard, “*Bad Men of Missouri* was, for me at least, the worst of my movies. But I’d rate Dennis a ten on a scale of ten. John Payne is more sex driven, but Dennis combines romantic love with kindness. He worships a woman and makes her feel like a goddess.”

One night, he’d told her, “You fit into my body so smoothly, it’s like you were meant to stay by my side forever. I think we’re going to know each other for many a year.”

“If not decades,” she accurately predicted.

As he once told Jane, “I’m always faithful to my wife in my heart. Where I put my prick is my own god damn business.”

Before its release, cast members were shown the final cut of *Bad Men of Missouri*. In the darkened screening room, Jane sat next to Morgan, and he held her hand.

After he’d seen it, Kennedy later recalled how unhappy Jane was with her role. “There’s talent in that girl, and Enright should have taken advantage of it. The film would have been better if there were less horse chases and more of Jane. She gave it her best. But bigger and better things awaited her in her future roles.”

Critic Jennifer Logan wrote, “The love scenes with Jane Wyman and Arthur Kennedy go by in a blur of speed. Wyman, a very pretty girl, has what must be one of the shortest romantic roles in the history of horse opera.”

Variety weighed in: “*Bad Men of Missouri* is a cinematic glorification of that daring band of desperadoes, the Younger Brothers, operating in Missouri after the Civil War. It’s strictly a shoot-em action melodrama, with plenty of excitement for a programmer. Expect lots of tough riding, robberies, and dusty chases.”

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In between films, Reagan took time off to catch up with Betty Grable, who was finally getting star billing after years of slaving in minor roles. Her divorce from child star Jackie Coogan had been finalized a few months before, and she told Reagan that she was enjoying “my role as a bachelor gal with a roving eye.”

She had just completed *Moon Over Miami* (1941), a Fox Technicolor musical co-starring Don Ameche and Robert Cummings. “Unfortunately, that bitch Carole Landis was in it, too. She hates me. She wanted to be me, and resents Zanuck for building me up. Zanuck is fucking her, not me. When he called me to his office and took his dick out for me, I said, ‘Darryl, that’s very beautiful, but you can put it back now.”

“I’m having a turbulent private life, but at least stardom has come to me,” she said. “After I rejected Zanuck’s sexual advances, he’s gotten even by casting me with Landis. He has this thing about pitting one star against another. He used me to remind Alice Faye to stay in line. Now he’s using Landis to remind me that I can be replaced. She and I hated each other on sight.”

“That’s understandable, because of the position Zanuck put you in,” Reagan responded.

“Landis makes it worse than it is with her big mouth,” Grable said. “She’s telling everybody that she stole *Moon Over Miami* from me. She also claims she’s far more beautiful than I am. She told Zanuck, Don Ameche, and others that ‘Grable is so full of herself, it’s a wonder she doesn’t explode.’”

“It sounds as if a big catfight is shaping up,” he said. “Count me out.”

In the passenger seat of his car, she hiked up her dress. “I don’t want you to have an accident, but my gams have been voted the most beautiful in the world. Fox has insured them for $1,250,000.”

“How do you feel about all this publicity about your legs?” he asked.

“It would have been fine when I was a struggling chorus girl,” she answered. “But right now, I’d rather the guys wrote about me as an actress. Frankly, I always felt the face of an actress was more important than her figure.”

“I’m not so sure about that, except for someone like Garbo or Katharine Hepburn,” he said.

At that point, Grable asked about the welfare of Jane Wyman. “I haven’t seen her for some time. You may not know this, but Jane and I, along with Paulette Goddard and Lucille Ball, got our starts together in this clunker called *The Kid From Spain*, a vehicle for Eddie Cantor way back in ’32. Jane was billed as Sarah Jane Fulks. Give the kid my love, won’t you? Congratulate her on snaring a prize like you. I know what a treat it is to get pounded by you.”

Hot, Competitive Blondes: Landis with Grable in *Moon Over Miami*.

“I’ll give her your regards, but leave out that bit about what a prize I am,” he said. “Sometimes, I don’t think she appreciates me like some of my gal pals.”

After they’d talked and had a few drinks, Grable asked Reagan to drive her home, since it was starting to rain heavily. She’d been driven to Warners that morning by a dancer friend.

En route back to her place, she suggested that she would be willing to become his “mistress in waiting,” as she defined it.

“You’re the most gorgeous gal in Hollywood, and I may be a god damn fool, but I’d better take a raincheck, although that is the most tempting offer I think I’ll ever receive in my life.”

“Too bad,” she said. “I’m even more experienced than I was since our last round. It looks like I’ve got to take the bull by the horn.” Then she reached over and swiftly unzipped his pants. Before he fully realized what was happening, she was voraciously fellating him.

[Long before the world heard of Linda Lovelace and her movie, Deep Throat, Betty Grable’s oral skills became an underground legend during World War II.

Biographer Mart Martin, among others, wrote, “Grable had a lifelong affection for chorus boys and dancers, many of whom were homosexual. When she couldn’t find other sexual partners, she’d press her demands on them to service her. But she really preferred rough men of the truck driver and bartender type and especially liked to fellate them.”]

As she later bragged, “I brought Ronnie to a climax that rivaled the eruption of Vesuvius.” As she got out of the car, she blew him a kiss. “That will have to do until next time, Big Guy.”

He looked a bit stunned at first, trying to recover from the assault. He seemed to have changed his mind about her offer. “When can I call you again?”

“Come over Saturday afternoon at around two o’clock,” she said. “Tell Jane you’re playing golf with Dick Powell, or some such shit.”

She later relayed details of her sexual encounters of the 1930s and the World War II era to her homosexual dancer friend, Bob Foster, who wrote *Betty Grable’s Men*, whose publication was ultimately rejected by a number of publishers. In it, he described her affairs with Jackie Coogan (she married him), Desi Arnaz, Victor Mature, George Raft, Tyrone Power, Mickey Rooney, Robert Stack, Don Ameche, John Payne, Dick Haymes, Buster Crabbe, George Montgomery, and Ronald Reagan.

The final two chapters were devoted to her second husband, band leader Harry James.

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After appearing in some twenty-three films for Warners’, Reagan was cast in the 1941 version of MGM’s *The Bad Man*.

[Note that Reagan's The Bad Man is *an entirely different film from* Bad Men of Missouri, *a Jane Wyman film, which, confusingly, was also released in 1941*. The Bad Man *represented Reagan's first loan-out by Warner to another studio, in this case, MGM.]*

MGM had requested Reagan for the role of Gil Jones, an impoverished but well-intentioned American running a ranch in Mexico. MGM's decision to hire him was based on executives there who saw his performances as George Gipp in *Knute Rockne* and as General Custer in *Santa Fe Trail*.

Conceived as a remake of a remake of what had originated as a Broadway play more than twenty years before, *The Bad Man*, in addition to Reagan, featured Laraine Day, cast as his leading lady, and the veteran warhorses Wallace Beery, playing a noble-hearted Mexican bandit, and Lionel Barrymore.

[Earlier versions of its script had been released in 1923 as a silent film, starring Holbrook Blinn, and again in 1930 as a pre-Code talkie starring Walter Huston.

Beery had been selected as a leading player in the 1941 version because of his authenticity as a Mexican bandit in Viva Villa! (1934). *But in this 1941 reincarnation, he played the character like a buffoon, blustering and mugging, booming out his lines in an annoying rendering of pidgin English.]*

Who's The Bad Man? *Left to right*: Laraine Day; golden oldies' Lionel Barrymore; Wallace ("wifebeater") Beery; and the future President of the United States.

The film's director, Richard Thorpe, was in a bad mood when Reagan greeted him. *Variety* had just revealed in painful detail the circumstances of his firing as director of Judy Garland's *The Wizard of Oz* after only two weeks of shooting. He was pondering a libel suit.

Among his previous achievements, Thorpe had directed Jane Wyman in a bit role in *The Crowd Roars* (1938), starring Robert Taylor.

Thorpe warned Reagan that Beery and Barrymore were notorious scene stealers, "using every trick in the book and adding a few never invented. That asshole Beery even stole a picture from Rin-Tin-Tin, The Wonder Dog."

For that and for other reasons, Reagan approached Beery with a certain disdain. He'd never liked him on the screen. He held a personal grudge against him as well:

In the 1941 version of *The Bad Man*, Beery plays a kind of *Mexicano* Robin Hood, helping Gil Jones (Reagan) and his wheelchair-bound Uncle Henry (Barrymore) avoid the loss of their ranch to greedy bankers. Complications materialize when Gil's childhood sweetheart (Laraine Day) arrives at the ranch with her difficult and quarrelsome husband (Tom Conway). Predictably, the ranch will be saved, Conway will be chased away, and Reagan will be free to get involved once again with his love from yesteryear.

Beery, a veteran actor who during the course of his lifetime would be a player in 205 films, originated in Missouri, He ran away from home in 1901 at the age of 16 to work for the Ringling Brothers Circus as an elephant trainer until he was attacked and mauled by a leopard.

From there, he migrated to Hollywood, appearing with his future wife, Gloria Swanson, in *Sweedie Goes to College* (1915). He married the vamp a year later, and she wrote about her horrendous time with this brute, beginning with his drunken, bloody rape of her on her wedding night. His violence and alcoholism led to her divorce from him in 1919.

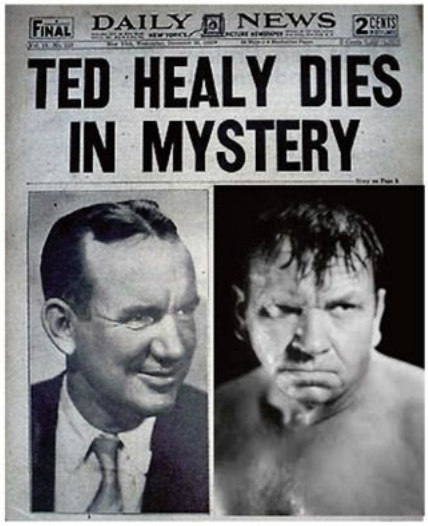
One of his most successful pictures had been *Min and Bill* (1931), starring the formidable Marie Dressler. For *The Champ* in 1931, he'd won an Oscar as Best Actor. He'd also appeared with Dressler in *Tugboat Annie* (1933).

When he met Reagan, he told the young actor that he'd seen the sequel, *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*, and that he was not impressed. "You and your blonde floozie wife sure fucked up that picture. Poor Dressler must be turning over in her grave."

"How can anyone, even Marjorie Rambeau, follow in Dressler's footsteps?" Reagan asked. "And Jane is not a floozie. She's a lady."

"You might also wonder how any actor can follow in the footsteps of yours truly here," Beery loutishly answered.

During his heyday in the 1930s with MGM, this unlikely star became the highest paid actor in the world, starring with such luminaries as Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, George Raft, Fatty Arbuckle, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and Joan Crawford.



Because the editors feared libel, this frontpage of New York's *Daily News* was yanked at the last minute, before the newspapers hit the streets.

In the version that replaced it, the Wallace Beery photo *(on the right)* was removed, along with a caption which identified him as a murder suspect.

In its place, the editors ran a photo of a woman from an unrelated story.

Although during the shoot, Reagan never directly confronted Beery, he held him responsible for the December, 1937 death of his friend, Ted Healy. Following a dispute in a tavern, Beery, along with Albert ("Cubby") Broccoli and Pat DiCicco, had attacked Healy and severely beaten him, kicking him in the head, abdomen, and ribs, knocking his left eye from its socket, delivering major bruises and lacerations to his head, neck and trunk.

An autopsy and subsequent investigation deemed these men not guilty of (directly) causing his death, but Reagan knew better. He blamed Eddie Mannix *[VP and General Manager of MGM]* and Howard Strickling *[MGM's Head of Publicity]* for covering up the scandal.

Reagan had always been fascinated by Lionel Barrymore's screen work, ever since he'd seen *A Free Soul* (1931), in which he played an alcoholic lawyer alongside Norma Shearer and Clark Gable. For his performance in that film, Lionel, the older brother of the famous siblings, Ethel and John, won an Oscar as Best Actor.

Lionel had begun his stage career in the 1890s. By 1911, he was making films with D.W. Griffith at Biograph Studios. In 1915, he starred with the legendary Lillian Russell in the movie *Wildfire*. Like Beery, he had worked with all the big names, including John Gilbert, Gable, Greta Garbo, Spencer Tracy, Jean Harlow, Marie Dressler, Lon Chaney, Sr., and even his sister, Ethel. He'd faced off on the screen with Beery before, appearing with him in *Grand Hotel* (1932), and with John, his younger brother.

Thorpe seemed to take delight in telling Reagan about all the rumors swirling around Lionel's head. Because of the pain from his crippling arthritis, Lionel was said to be a morphine addict. It was also rumored that Louis B. Mayer was purchasing $400 worth of cocaine every day as a means of keeping him out of pain and allowing him to get some sleep.

In addition to having broken his hip twice, Lionel, again according to rumor, suffered from having contracted syphilis in 1925 during an affair with a young stage actor. Lionel was known for developing crushes on actors, notably Clark Gable when they co-starred together in *A Free Soul*. It was said that the fellating of young men was his favorite form of sex.

Reagan later said, "Lionel was theater through and through. An actor such as myself was made better by his

great ability—provided you keep from being run over. He was confined to his wheelchair at the time, and he could whip that contrivance around on a dime. It's hard to smile in a scene when your foot has been run over and your shin is bleeding from a hubcap blow."

Lionel Barrymore in December of 1939, performing *A Christmas Carol* for radio broadcast.

Originating in Utah, Laraine Day was Reagan's leading lady. This time, he didn't fall in love—far from it. She was dating Ray Hendricks at the time, a singer turned airline executive. She'd marry him a year later, but divorce him in 1947. The following year, she married Leo Durocher, manager of the baseball team then known as the New York Giants. Subsequently, she became known as "The First Lady of Baseball."

[In 1957, after being sold and moving to California, the team was renamed the San Francisco Giants.]

Reagan told Thorpe that Laraine, a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., the Mormons), was the most rigidly puritanical of his many leading ladies. She was so intensely dedicated to the teachings of her faith that she did not smoke, drink, or swear, and refused to even drink tea or coffee. "Nothing tastes better than a glass of cold milk, or ice water, on a hot day," she told Reagan.

Onscreen with Laraine Day, Reagan cozied up to his co-star, but didn't develop any particular case of "Leadinglady-itis."

An MGM contract player, she was known as "Nurse Mary Lamont," the title character she played in a string of seven Dr. Kildare movies, beginning with *Calling Dr. Kildare* in 1939, where she co-starred with Lew Ayres.

On occasion, Laraine and Reagan discussed politics. Whereas he was still a liberal Democrat, she was a staunch Republican. She told him, "If your friend, Dick Powell, doesn't make you see the light politically, I'll enlist César Romero, Ginger Rogers, Adolphe Menjou, Irene Dunne, even Mary Pickford, to convert you."

Like Reagan, she detested Beery, refusing to speak to him except on camera. When she'd played his daughter in *Sergeant Madden* (1939), she claimed he'd pinched her bottom until the cheeks of her buttocks were black and blue. "He's nothing but a filthy, dirty old man," she complained to Reagan.

One day, when Jane arrived on the set for lunch with her husband, he introduced her to Laraine. Later, Jane told him, "She's pleasant enough, but she lacks star quality. She'll never be a front-rank actress. Hollywood is filled with these fluffy bits. I think she'd be passable playing the secretary to some boss."

"*Meow!*" was Reagan's response.

He got along better with the film's supporting actors than he did with the stars. He met Russia-born Tom Conway, the brother of the more famous actor George Sanders. Conway would be remembered in the '40s for taking over the role from his brother of the sleuthing "Falcon" in a detective serial.

When Reagan met Conway, he was already showing signs of alcoholism, which in time would lead to his sad death in a flophouse in Venice, California.

Over lunch one day, Reagan found him very resentful of his brother, George Sanders. "I love George, but I also hate him, too. I live in his shadow…He takes roles from me that I could have performed better. He is so imperious, so suave, so sure of himself. He looks down on the whole world, including me. His shit stinks just as much as mine. So do his farts. I used to sleep with him."

Cast as Red Giddings in *The Bad Man*, Texas-born Chill Wills was folksy and shaggy-haired, always bringing a dollop of color to any western. "He was the type you'd expect to find sitting around the campfire under a full moon some night in Texas," Reagan said.

Actually, Wills had started out as an amateur singer in minstrel and medicine shows, later forming a group called "Chill Wills and His Avalon Boys."

After the release of *The Bad Man*, critics suggested that the picture should have been far better. Beery and Barrymore got most of the attention. Reagan was barely mentioned in most critiques.

He told Jane, "I don't think Mayer will be using me again anytime soon."

Later he described his experience making that film.

"I survived the Dead End Kids. And I survived Hollywood's two curmudgeons, Wallace Beery and Lionel Barrymore. Even so, I probably couldn't survive playing a leading man to Joan Crawford, even though I'm one tough *hombre."*

"I learned one thing working for Mayer," Reagan said. "MGM is the Tiffany's of Hollywood, whereas Warners is a hash house specializing only in meat and potatoes."

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Late in April of 1941, Reagan and Jane stopped by the house of Jack and Nelle Reagan. He wanted to say goodbye to his parents before heading to the East Coast on a publicity jaunt, with Jane, to promote *The Bad Man*. He hugged Jack and kissed his mother goodbye. Then, on an impulse, he exited from his car to wave a final goodbye to them. Standing near their doorstep, his parents waved back. It was the last time he'd ever see his father alive.

The night of May 17, Jack had been out on an all-night drinking binge with his newly minted friend, Pat O'Brien. "When two Irishmen get together to gab, there is some serious drinking of good ol' Irish whiskey, the nectar of the gods," he said.

Nelle had begged him not to go, citing his ill health. "I'm as robust as an ox," Jack had boasted.

During a stopover of his tour in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Reagan received the call from Nelle that he had long anticipated. She informed him that his father, age 57, had died of a heart attack on May 18.

He had collapsed on the floor of their living room, and she had immediately summoned an ambulance. She had phoned the wrong company, an inadvertent error whose timing might have contributed to Jack's death.

It seemed that there was a jurisdictional dispute between emergency medical teams serving Beverly Hills and West Hollywood. Whereas she should have contacted a service based in West Hollywood, she had phoned one in Beverly Hills instead. When the company researched the Reagans' street address, they discovered that their home lay outside the city boundaries of Beverly Hills. Therefore, they opted not to answer the call, and failed to ring Nelle back to inform her of that. During all the confusion and delay, Jack had died unattended.

Nelle fully understood that her son had a fear of flying, despite all his daring aerial exploits in those Brass Bancroft Secret Service movies. "If you and Jane got in a plane to fly back, and something went wrong, I could never forgive myself. The thought of burying my younger son and my husband on the same day would kill me. Take the train. I'll delay the funeral until you and Jane return."

When Jack Warner called Reagan, offering him the use of his personal plane—a TWA DC-21, which happened to have been at Idlewild Airport in New York City at the time—Reagan graciously rejected the offer.

It would take five days before Reagan, with Jane, could arrive in Los Angeles. Years later, he would recall the moment of their arrival to his daughter Maureen. "It was a grand California day when your mother and I arrived at Union Station. We hadn't been in the state long enough not to grasp the beauty of a California day. But despite the lovely weather, I was desolate."

The funeral was held at St. Victor's Catholic Church in West Hollywood, which attracted a small group of mourners, the most notable of which was Pat O'Brien. As Reagan recalled, "I'm sure Jack knew that Pat and his new friends were there in that little church off Sunset Boulevard to say goodbye."

Before the funeral, Reagan learned that Jack had started attending church—a Catholic one—again. As James Cagney later described it to Reagan, "Your father heard the flutter of wings in heaven."

Moon Reagan was at the funeral, and he appeared grief stricken. "Dutch's older brother had always been closer to Jack than Dutch was to him," Nelle claimed.

With a stoic face, Reagan listened to the funeral service for his father, the former shoe salesman, wanderer, binge drinker, and lapsed Catholic. Nelle, in a dress of lavender prints, sat between her son and Jane. The light from the stained-glass windows illuminated her Gothic American face, and in her lap rested a tattered Bible with dogeared pages.

At the end of the service, she looked over at her son with her gray-blue eyes. "Dutch," she said, taking his hand and holding it tightly. "You're all that I have left in the world now. I know you'll be there for me until the end."

Weeks later, Reagan talked to his friends about his feelings during the burial of his father. "I was beyond crying. My soul was desolate, desolate and empty. All of a sudden, I heard somebody talking to me, and I knew it was my father. He was saying, 'I'm all right. I'm in a place that's very nice. Please don't be unhappy and take care of Nelle for me. Give my love to Jane and my new grandchild.' After I heard that soothing voice, my desolations just went away. The emptiness was all gone."

[As a contract player with a steady income, Reagan had been giving Jack and Nelle $175 a month to live on. Since they had almost no house or car expenses, that represented a most adequate income early in 1941.

During World War II, after Reagan was drafted, he made a deal with Warners' to provide Nelle with $75 a week to answer his fan mail. Because of the number of movies he'd made in the early 1940s, his fan mail had continued, though not in the volumes before. Jack Warner agreed to deduct all the paychecks sent to Nelle from Reagan's future services to the studio upon his return from the Army.

Baby Maureen was only five months old when Jack died, and, of course, she had no memory of him. But she had great and lasting affection for Nelle, whom she called "Gramsie."

She later claimed that her grandmother "was something of a clairvoyant. She was absolutely convinced that one of her sons, 'My beloved Moon or Ronnie," would one day become President of the United States. One afternoon, she told me, 'My greatest goal in life is to travel with you and Dutch to Washington for the swearing in of Moon to lead our nation.'"]

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One night in her living room, Jane turned to Reagan, dropping the latest script she'd received (*The Body Disappears;* 1941) onto her coffee table. "It's just a silly little comedy," she said, "by Erna Lazarus and Scott Darling, whoever the fuck they are."

Although Reagan didn't seem to care too much about the script, he urgently wanted to know who her leading man would be. "Am I in danger of losing my gal to some hot stuff?"

"I'm going to play opposite that darling Jeffrey Lynn," she said. "He's such a gentleman, unlike the other ruffians at Warners."

"What a coincidence," he said. "He's also the leading man in my next picture, *Million Dollar Baby* (1941). I resent him. He's getting star billing over yours truly."

In addition to Lynn, Jane's co-stars included her gay friend, the very prissy Edward Everett Horton; a former New York model, the sultry Marguerite Chapman; David Bruce; Ivan Simpson; and Willie Best. The director, Ross Lederman, was unknown to Jane.

Two days later, at Warners, she met Lederman. He annoyed her, telling her, "I'm the only prima donna on this lot. Get it right the first time. I don't go in for retakes."

At home that night, she accused Lederman of being "brusque, crude, rude, and a son of a bitch."

It was obvious to Jane that the storyline of *The Body Disappears* had been stolen from James Whale's *The Invisible Man* (1933). As she'd later recall, "It was the worst movie I ever appeared in in the 40s."

In this daffy comedy, a young millionaire, Peter de Haven (Lynn), is behaving outrageously. His fellow partygoers, each of them studying to be doctors, decide to teach him a lesson. When Lynn passes out drunk, some of the young men kidnap him and place him on a slab of marble in the college dissecting room reserved for cadavers.

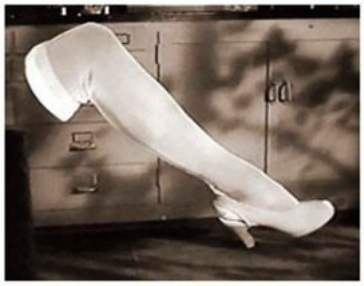
As an outrageous and mad scientist, Horton is working on a serum which will make a person invisible. He injects Lynn with an experimental serum, making him appear headless when he awakens. Jane is cast as Horton's daughter and as Lynn's love interest. She, too, receives the serum and loses her head.

As predictable, both Lynn and Jane get their heads restored before the end of the final reel. Science fiction is combined with romance and what passes as mystery in this cinematic flop.

In *The Body Disappears*, Jane maneuvers a face-off with Edward Everett Horton, that champion scene stealer and comic mugger champ.

Jane enjoyed renewing her friendship with Horton, whom she had met while filming her bit part in *All the King's Horses* (1935). He would later invite her to visit his 22-acre tract of land in Encino. Dubbing it "Belly Acres," (actually Belleigh Acres), he told her. "All it lacks is its own post office."

"I brought my Scottish mother to live there," he said, "although she objects to my acting as a sissy on film. She demands that I attend church more often. When reporters come snooping around, I tell them I'm a confirmed bachelor. I hide my lover *[Gavin Gordon]* in the closet until the press departs."



No, It's not a prosthesis...It's Jane's leg, the only part of her body still visible after ingesting "The Serum."

"All the actors, including myself, learned a lot from Edward," Jane said. "The director offered us no guidance. We more or less had to direct ourselves."

"I hold Jane in the highest esteem," Horton later said. "It took a long time for her big break to come."

[In the late 1950s, during one of Jane's visits to "Belly Acres," Horton was complaining that the State of California was forcing him to sell a portion of his land to make way for the Ventura Freeway, a major traffic artery that opened in 1960.]

Jane found her leading man, Jeffrey Lynn, "dreamy. If I didn't have Ronnie, I would have dated him. The trouble with Jeff was that he was too polite to fight the gang of carpetbaggers who ran the studios. He didn't know how to become a star. He did just what they told him to do. He made all those movies with the Lane sisters, including *Four Daughters* (1938). The year I worked with him, *Four Daughters* had inspired yet another family melodrama starring Lynn, *Four Mothers* (1941)."

"I didn't see Jeffrey for years after the movie was made," she said. "I heard from Ronnie that he was in Army Intelligence. He and this blonde starlet, Marilyn Monroe, had small roles in *Home Town Story* (1951). And he did a little bit better in *BUtterfield 8* (1960), with Elizabeth Taylor. But the Hollywood sun never shone bright enough on this leading man. He ended up leaving show-biz to sell real estate. Actually, he never recovered from the loss of the role of Ashley Wilkes in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). He once confessed to me that he would have been a bigger star were it not for Ronnie, who got the roles most suited for him."

Craig Stevens had only a bit role in Jane's newest film, but he would figure into her future after the war. She found him handsome and charming, noting that he exuded masculinity. Horton admitted to her that although he had a crush on Stevens, "It won't do me any good. I'm not in his league."

Stevens would later marry actress Alexis Smith, who would become Reagan's leading lady in his first movie role after the war. Reagan would then follow that role by co-starring with Stevens in his next film after that, too.

By now, Jane was critically inspecting every young beauty appearing in her movies, attempts to evaluate any

player who might one day challenge her tenuous position as a Warners' contract player. It was commonplace for a starlet's options not to be renewed, and Jane had been lucky to hold onto her contract, such as it was.

She turned an envious eye on one of the movie's supporting stars, Marguerite Chapman, a former switchboard operator who evolved into a New York model. She had parlayed her victories into a Hollywood contract, making her film debut in 1940.

Jane was right about sensing future stardom for the lovely young woman. In time, Chapman would appear opposite such stars as Edward G. Robinson and George Sanders. Big stardom never came, however, and Chapman ended up in supporting roles. One of them was a 1955 appearance with Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*.

Chapman later recalled an unpleasant experience she had with Reagan when dining with three other cast members, including Jane, in the Warner commissary. Reagan had joined his young wife for lunch.

"He was a real big shot back then," Chapman said. "Headed for stardom, as everybody thought. I was sitting at table between Jane and Horton. When Reagan joined us, he immediately embarrassed me."

Marguerite Chapman—a serious threat to Jane's sovereignty at Warners, or so she thought at the time.

"I heard from Jane that you're Catholic," Reagan said. "Why are you Catholic?"

"Because I was born one," she answered.

"That doesn't mean you have to stay one," Reagan said.

"I never liked the man after that," she said, "and I certainly never voted for him in future elections."

Other than its silly plot, *The Body Disappears* sometimes causes additional embarrassments when screened today on such networks as Turner Movie Classics. They revolve around the on-screen behavior of Willie Best, known back then as "Sleep n' Eat." An African American actor from Sunflower, Mississippi, he was a rival of the now notorious Stepin Fetchit, an actor who's reviled today because of his screen portrayals of dark-skinned, stereotypically lazy simpletons. That was exactly the role that Best was called upon to play in *The Body Disappears*, in which he was filmed as an eyeball-popping illiterate fool.

Best, who would soon appear in *High Sierra* (1941) with Humphrey Bogart and Ida Lupino, had been playing a variation of this role in other films since 1930. As he told Jane, "I don't mind acting witless. That is, if the paycheck is fat enough. I call it 'bringing home the bacon.' It's better than pickin' cotton in Mississippi on a dog day in August."

Jane talked mostly about the frustration of her new career," Lynn said. "She seemed 'put upon' by her new duties as a wife and mother."

"I'm tired of playing a sidekick to a bigger star," she told him. "I'm always cast in that secondary position, or else as a reporter turned detective or a glasses-wearing bookworm. I should have some of the roles going to Ida Lupino. There's got to be something better for me—and for Ronnie, too. All the roles I want to play go to either Lupino or to Ann Sheridan, who is my friend, or else to Olivia de Havilland. If you think I'm turning green with envy, you've got that right."

The release of *The Body Disappears* ended up as a second-tier programmer, and didn't even play in some of North America's major cities. Instead, it was dumped into small town movie houses from Peoria, Illinois, to Pocatelo, Idaho.

Critic Clive Hirschhorn claimed that, “The only thing not injected with an invisible serum was the film itself—which, in the circumstances, was an oversight and not easily forgiven.”

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Back at his home studio, after his brief stint for MGM, Reagan was once again cast opposite Priscilla Lane, this time in *Million Dollar Baby* (1941). Although the ardor which had once blazed between them had dimmed, they remained very friendly and supportive of each other.

After Reagan read the script of *Million Dollar Baby*, he told Priscilla that he was delighted to get the girl in the end. “I was afraid that Jeffrey Lynn would walk off with you. After all, he’s billed before me in the credits.”

It’s somewhat ridiculous plot was based on a Leonard Spigelgass story called “Miss Wheelwright Discovers America.” For some reason, it took three of Warners’ most talented writers—Casey Robinson, Richard Macaulay, and Jerry Wald, to come up with an only mildly entertaining film script.

As the plot unfolds, a young attorney, James Amory (Lynn), travels to England to meet with an American multi-millionaire, Cornelia Wheelwright (May Robson), who has been living abroad for thirty years. He tells her that her father earned his fortune by defrauding his former business partner. She is also told that the granddaughter, Pam McAllister (Lane), of the defrauded partner is alive and living in a very modest boarding house in New York.

Feeling guilty, Robson journeys to America and checks into the boarding house herself, where she discovers Pam living across the hall from her pianist boyfriend (Reagan). She anonymously makes a gift of a million dollars to the shocked young woman, who works as a sales clerk in a department store. Elated, Pam immediately buys gifts for her friends in the boarding house—including Reagan, her true love.

Their reaction is not what she expects—in fact, she finds them resentful. Her new-found wealth threatens her relationship with Reagan, who does not “want to marry money. I prefer to make my own way in the world.”

In a totally unbelievable development in the plot, Lane ultimately donates her fortune to charity, winning back the heart of her hard-working musician boyfriend. Presumably at the end of the movie, they start out on their life together as poor as they were when they were dating.

Unusual for him, Reagan had gone to work two weeks in advance of the shooting date, hoping to master some of the visual aspects, at least, of his role as a pianist. He went to Warners’ Music Department, where he engaged a pianist to teach him how to play a piano keyboard, if not musically, at least for how it would appear on camera. Up to then, he had no musical background except for singing with a barbershop quartet in the Middle West. He was taught how to manipulate his fingers on a dummy keyboard, making no sound.

“A lot of acting is imitation anyway,” he later said, “and I became pretty good, as long as the piano remained silent. For a while, I almost convinced myself I could play.”

Although his hands seem to be playing the piano in the film, the actual sound came from dubbing by a concert pianist.

For several days, as Reagan studied the keyboard, David Lewis, the associate producer of *Million Dollar Baby*, showed up to take him to lunch.

Reagan had tangled with Lewis before, in his earlier capacity as associate producer of *Dark Victory* with Bette Davis. He resented Lewis for his continued sexual pursuit of him. “God, you’re aggressive,” he told Lewis. “Why not accept a no as a no?”

“Don’t hate me because I’m rich!” *The Million Dollar Baby*, as interpreted by Priscilla Lane, begs her strange-valued fiancé, Reagan.

“Because I firmly believe that if you spent one night with me, I’d win you over and you’d switch to my side.”

"That would be the day," Reagan said, sarcastically.

"I'm not a studio hack, and if you play along with me, I can really help make you an A-list star by getting the right roles for you. I believe that the producer and the writer account for 80 percent of a film's success, the director and actor (or actors) only twenty percent. I like emotional dramas like the work I did on *Camille* with Garbo and Robert Taylor. I did a lot for Taylor, and he was most cooperative with me."

"I learned everything from Irving Thalberg at MGM, and he was the best in the business. I found out that the script based on a controversial novel, *Kings Row*, is in pre-production. It includes themes relating to both incest and homosexuality, but that can be toned down for a movie. I could use my influence to get you one of the screen's top roles. I could be a breakthrough for you. I see an Oscar in it for you."

"Why can't you help me win the role without turning me into a male whore?" Reagan asked. "C'mon, give me a break."

"And you want me to do this for you without anything in return?" Lewis asked. "That's not how we play the game in Tinseltown."

"Are we negotiating?" Reagan asked.

"Think over my offer," Lewis said. "I can get the role for you if you'll cooperate. Jeffrey Lynn on this very picture is practically signing a contract that he'll do my bidding if I get the role for him. You're so goddamn stubborn."

"Listen, I want to cooperate, and I need your help. But I can't…I just can't."

"Will you meet me halfway?" Lewis asked.

"Exactly what would that entail?" Reagan asked.

"Nude massages. You've been massaged before in the nude at your golf club. I know that for a fact. The masseurs there working you over are homos. So you've already been that route before—and you ended up paying the guys to paw your beautiful body."

"But nothing happened with those guys," he protested. "It was just a massage."

"If you'll let me massage you, nothing will happen either," Lewis said. "I promise I won't go all the way."

"Well, since you put it that way, and since such a thing has already happened to me at the golf club, I'll have to consider it. I really want a breakthrough role. I guess we might make some sort of deal."

"You're one hard bargainer," Lewis said. "Years from now, after you become a big star—with my help—you can omit this sordid detail from your memoirs."

"You can count on me doing that," Reagan vowed.

[Lewis penned the first draft of a tell-all memoir, devoted in large part to his long relationship with director James Whale (1930-1952), filling it with tantalizing tidbits about his troublesome relationships with Ronald Reagan, Robert Taylor, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer (with whom he claimed he had an affair), Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, Irving Thalberg, Spencer Tracy (with whom he also claimed an affair), Jean Harlow, Ingrid Bergman, and Charles Boyer, who he claimed was a closeted homosexual.

Several of his friends read the manuscript and urged him to destroy it. Later, instead of a tell-all, he wrote a rather vanilla and harmless book, The Creative Producer: A Memoir of the Studio System.*]*

On his first day on the set, Reagan met with the film's German director, Curtis Bernhardt. He discussed not about Reagan's role in the movie, but about events in Germany, out of which he had escaped from the Nazis. He was morbidly worried about his Jewish family and friends he'd left behind.

"Bernhardt really filled me in on what was actually going on," Reagan later said. "The massacre of the Jews and other atrocities. He convinced me that America was asleep at the wheel, claiming that the country should mobilize. He predicted that the Nazis would one day invade the U.S. from the East Coast, the Japs from the West."

"He was actually a very talented director," Reagan said. "He shouldn't be handling the fluff he'd been given. He'd directed both Jane and Olivia in *My Love Came Back* and now he was tackling our project, with its stupid plot. In my role, I was virtually insisting my girlfriend give away a million bucks. If Jane brought home a million bucks, I'd be worshipping at her altar."

During the shoot, Reagan lunched with Priscilla Lane, his leading lady. Instead of romancing her, as he'd done during his past, he listened to her pour out her career woes. "Even when I was big box office at Warners, I made only $750 a week. I was constantly demanding more money from Jack Warner. I also turned down roles and went on suspension."

She showed him a copy of the London publication, *Picturegoer*. "Even the magazine is asking, 'Why is Priscilla Lane still knocking on the door of major stardom?' The magazine got it right. I've just been a stooge to John Garfield or Cagney. I deserve much larger and bigger parts."

Then she congratulated him on his marriage to Jane.

"Men are going to be scarce during the war," Reagan said. "Maybe it'll last until war's end."

After six decades on the stage and screen, the Australian actress, May Robson, was coming to the end of a distinguished career. As the eccentric lady of wealth and good conscience, she virtually stole the picture, *Million Dollar Baby*, from its other actors. She would die the following year at the age of eighty-four. During the shoot, she invited Reagan to see a screening of her recent film, *Granny Get Your Gun* (1940). "An amusing little trifle," she told him, and he agreed.

She claimed that there was a certain irony in her appearance in *Million Dollar Baby*. "I feel I've made this movie in reverse. In 1932, I starred in a film called *If I Had a Million*. I played the resident of an old folks' home who suddenly gets a new lease on life when I'm given a check for one million big ones from a dying business tycoon. Now, in your movie, I'm playing a dying lady dispensing a million—you figure."

Reagan had not gotten to know Johnny Sheffield when he'd played the childhood version of the title character in *Knute Rockne—All American* the year before. But he made it a point to meet and talk to the ten-year-old on the set of *Million Dollar Baby*, where he'd been assigned the minor role of Alvie Grayson.

His father had once read in the *Hollywood Reporter* an article entitled "Have You a Tarzan Jr. in Your Backyard?" Reginald Sheffield felt that his son, Johnny, fitted the bill, physique and all, and arranged for an interview for him to appear as the adopted son of Tarzan in the next jungle movie, starring Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan.

During the audition, Weissmuller selected Johnny from among 300 juvenile actors interviewed. He soon appeared as "Boy" in *Tarzan Finds a Son* (1939). That same year, Sheffield also starred with Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney in *Babes in Arms*.

It was bound to happen that a fellow actor would eventually transmit gossip about Jane Wyman to her husband, Ronald Reagan. The comic actor, Walter Catlett, had recently appeared in *Bad Men of Missouri* with Jane. A heavy drinker, he always carried around a secret flask, although his large consumption of alcohol never seemed to interfere with his work. He was living proof that the art of gossip wasn't confined to women.

One day, he cornered Reagan during a break in filming, claiming, "I want to speak to you man to man. I promised Jane I wouldn't squeal on her, but I was never good at keeping a secret. I think a husband should know what a wife is up to so he can put a stop to it."

"And what is this hideous secret?" Reagan asked. "She's a Nazi spy? A lesbian in the closet?"

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Jane is slipping around seeing John Payne on the side. I know. I arranged a rendezvous between them during our last picture together."

Swinging on a vine, Johnny Weissmuller teaches Johnny Sheffield how it's done.

In private, they became "Big John" and "Little John," and developed a strong affection for each other during the decade in which they made eight Tarzan movies together, including *Tarzan Finds a Son* (1939).

Reagan looked stunned. "Spare me—I don't really want to know the details."

"I'm sorry I had to tell you that, but I got fed up reading in all those fan magazines about what a perfect couple

you guys were," Catlett said. "If you confront her, don't let her know that I was the one who let the cat out of the bag."

"I won't," Reagan said. "Actually, I don't plan to confront her at all. Jane's business is her own."

"You're a very understanding husband—far more than I would be," Catlett said. "If I found out that my wife was cheating on me, I'd beat the shit out of her."

"I'm sure you would," Reagan said before walking away.

Two days later, when Betty Grable called to confirm a Saturday afternoon date, he went to it, as he'd later confide to Dick Powell, "with less guilt than before."

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Over drinks on Betty Grable's terrace, Reagan laughed at the title of her latest movie, *Hot Spot*, co-starring Victor Mature and her nemesis, Carole Landis. It was based on a novel, *I Wake Up Screaming*, by pulp fiction writer Steve Fisher.

"I can't believe the Breen Office is letting Fox get away with a title like that. Guys all over the country will be making jokes. Do you play the title role of Hot Spot?"

[Reagan was right. Producer Darryl F. Zanuck ordered the title of Fisher's novel restored. Although the posters had already been printed defining the film's name as Hot Spot, *it was retitled* I Wake Up Screaming *after violent objections from the Legion of Decency.]*

At one point, publicly and on the set, Grable and Landis had become embroiled in a hair pulling catfight until they were separated by Mature. "Not only is the blonde whore my worst enemy," Grable told Reagan. "She and I are sharing the sexual favors of Victor."

"I'm surprised you're making such a stark drama," he said. "No song-and-dance numbers?"

"My mother wants me to take my place up there with the marquee drama queens— Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, and Bette Davis. But Zanuck figures I'd better stick to musicals. In fact, many fans came to see *Hot Spot* thinking it was a musical."

"Landis won't shut up bad mouthing me," Grable continued. "She's played third lead in two of my recent pictures, not only *Hot Spot* but *Moon Over Miami*. The hooker is telling everyone that she's stolen both pictures right out from under me."

Grable tossed Reagan a copy of a newspaper with a column by Jimmy Fiddler. I tread: "20th Century biggies are boasting that if any of their singing stars go temperamental, they have an ace in the hole—Carole Landis, who has been improving her fine natural voice by industrious study."

Grable also showed him a copy of *American Magazine*. "Though Carole has appeared in big roles in only four pictures, she has been dubbed by columnists from coast to coast as Hollywood's top glamour girl with the most gorgeous figure in moviedom."

"What does that make me?" Grable demanded to know. "Chopped liver?"

"You have a unique talent," Reagan told her, "and you need to concentrate on it and develop it. You can never escape competition. The same is true at Paramount and especially at MGM. At Warners I've got plenty of competition. Right now, Jeffrey Lynn is breathing down my neck, wanting parts assigned to me. And I want the roles given to George Brent. That's how studio politics work."

"After divorcing Jackie Coogan, I was looking forward to my new life as a swinging bachelor gal, but it has its dark side. I'm doing a lot better than Jackie. I don't think he's worked since we did *Million Dollar Legs* (1939). We're still friends. But both of us agreed that ours was just a childhood affair—we were too young to settle down. Unlike me, this former child star isn't finding any demand for his services. He claims that his fickle public couldn't stand for him to ever grow up."

Sexual innuendo, censorship, film noir, Betty Grable, A corrupt NYPD, and Victor Mature

"I think the same thing will happen to ShirleyTemple," he answered. "She lacks the talent to endure as an adult star."

After Reagan had helped cool Grable's rage about Landis, he suggested they go inside. Over a second drink, he confessed that he'd learned that Jane was having an affair with John Payne, with whom Grable had worked before.

She did not look surprised. "John and I had an affair when we made *Tin Pan Alley* (1940), and, years before that, we were a singing duet on a 15-minute daily show for CBS. Like you and Jane, John and that wife of his, Anne Shirley, are written up as 'The Perfect Couple,' but we both know that that isn't true. Both of them cheated on each other all the time."

"John plans to do what Gable did at MGM—that is, seduce all the beautiful leading ladies like you did at Warners. Not just me, but Linda Darnell, too. Now, he's making *Sun Valley Serenade*. When she's not on her skates, Sonja Henie summons him to do the dirty deed. I suspect he's already had Alice Faye, and he's got Gene Tierney in his sights right now, too. His thing with your Jane will be over before it really begins."

"I certainly hope so," he said. "I'm worried. Payne is a tough act to follow. I have doubts I can't satisfy Jane the way he does."

"Have no doubts," she assured him. "You do just fine. That reminds me." She got up and excused herself, appearing fifteen minutes later in a see-through black *négligée.* "Let's quit talking about all these other hunks and hussies, and get down to the main attraction of this fast-fading afternoon—you and me, baby!"

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After the longest kiss *(upper photo)* in cinematic history until then, Jane told her leading man, Regis Toomey *(lower photo)*, "Don't even think about ever trying that again."

Jane would later remember her 1941 film, *You're In the Army Now*, because of one scene with the Pittsburgh-born actor, Regis Toomey, who played her love interest, Captain Radcliffe. They indulged in what had been until then the longest kiss in cinematic history, lasting three minutes and five seconds, or four percent of the film's duration.

She later told Reagan, "Thank god our director, Lewis Seiler, didn't call for retakes. Regis had bad breath. He must have eaten skunk meat for supper. The sacrifices I make for my career!"

Alerted the day before the kissing scene was to be filmed, Reagan appeared on the set as an observer. Jane complained that his presence there made her uncomfortable, but her husband handled it very well, according to Toomey. At the end of the liplock, Reagan approached Toomey. "I didn't know if he was going to punch me in the nose—or what. Actually, he was quite friendly and shook my hand. He said, 'How did you get Jane to sit still that long'?"

Betty Grable, the #1 pinup girl in the world.

The film dealt with a timely topic. President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew that the United States would eventually enter World War II, and he had re-in-stated the draft. It became the topic of the day, as young men throughout the nation speculated on getting drafted and how it would disrupt their lives, or even end their lives.

Warners had cast Jimmy Durante and Phil Silvers as Jeeper Smith and Breezy Jones, two vacuum cleaner salesmen who accidentally get inducted into the Army.

Jane played "Bliss Dobson," the daughter of Colonel Dobson (Donald MacBride), who is opposed to Jane dating Toomey. Her leading man had started out in romantic roles in 1929. His scenes with Jane would virtually be the last of those kind of parts, as he'd soon switch to character roles minus his toupée.

Emerging from the streets of the Lower East Side of New York, Jimmy Durante was known as "Schnozzola," because of his big nose. When Jane worked with him, he was one of the most popular comedians in America, known for his throaty way with a song, his jovial good spirits, his one-liners, and his clipped gravelly speech, along with his comic butchery of language, all of it delivered with a New York accent.

On the surface, Durante had a bubbling, upbeat personality, yet Jane sensed a deep sadness in him. Finally, he told her the bad news. A doctor had informed him that his wife, the former Jean Olson, whom he'd married in 1921, had a serious heart ailment and had only months to live.

[His wife died on Valentine's Day of 1943 at the age of 46.]

Emerging from Brooklyn, the son of Russian Jews, Phil Silvers was hailed as "The King of Chutzpah." A veteran of vaudeville and burlesque, he'd been appearing on stage since the age of eleven. Jane found him "all frantic *schtick*, acting with buffoonish, idiotic behavior, even stealing scenes from Durante."

Although the film clearly belonged to Durante and Silvers, within its context, Jane had at least one moment in the spotlight, including the long kiss.

In a sexy dress that revealed her legs—and as Silvers claimed, "she has beautiful gams"—Jane sang "I'm Glad My Number Was Called" for a USO show. She was followed by Silvers, who, as Jeepers, performs an Apache Dance.

His comic behavior was just a front he put up. She discovered that most of the time, he suffered from a deep depression. Sometimes he had to be physically dragged out of his dressing room to perform on camera. He always managed to pull himself together to go through his routine.

Jane had no trouble working with Seiler again. He'd directed her in *He Couldn't Say No* (1938), and he'd also helmed Reagan in *Hell's Kitchen* (1939). He told her how sorry he was that the public didn't line up to see the other film he'd directed, *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* (1940), in which he'd cast Reagan and Jane as a screen team. "This new picture is a cinch," he told her. "Silvers and Durante will direct themselves."

Jane reported to work every day, but often was not needed, since Silvers and Durante were monopolizing most of the scenes—two comedians and an Army tank.

Seiler noted that during the movie's shooting, John Payne paid many visits to Jane's dressing room. She was getting to know the handsome actor, and liked what she learned.

"Before hitting pay dirt at Fox, where they are building me up as a big star, I drifted around Paramount and also Warners," he said. "They didn't know what to do with me."

In 1940 alone, Payne had been cast in six films at Fox, including *Star Dust*, in which Linda Darnell had made her screen debut, and *The Great Profile*, in which John Barrymore spoofed himself during his dying days.

"Like most Hollywood hunks, John is worried that he'll be sucked up into the war," Jane told Paulette Goddard.

"If we go to war, I'm going to enlist in Army pilot training, and I hope I'll be stationed in Long Beach, so I can continue seeing you," he'd told Jane.

"Instead of Errol Flynn, I get Phil Silvers (*left),* 'the King of *Chutzpah,*' and Jimmy Durante *(right),* '*Schnozzola,*' as my leading men," Jane *(center)* said. "How lucky can a gal get?"

She said to Goddard, "John does not take acting very seriously. He views it merely as a fun job with good pay."

"A lot of people seem to think he's just a pretty boy with a lot of gals fluttering around him, but he's a real gentleman with a serious side," Jane said. "He's much deeper than people think or the roles he plays. I mean, he reads philosophy, stuff like that."

"I've fallen into the Robert Taylor category at MGM," he told Jane. "Fox is building me up as the studio's pretty boy, their rival to Taylor."

When Jane poured out her feelings to Lucille Ball, the actress said, "You sound like you're in love."

"I am," Jane said, "but in John's case, love and marriage don't necessarily go together. He told me that when he divorces that Anne Shirley thing, he may never marry again. But then again, he might. He seems very confused. Do you think I should continue sleeping with John and betraying Ronnie?"

"Get it while you can, honey," Ball responded. "That's what I do, since Desi *[Arnaz]* is always on the road. I'm sure he knocks off a piece or two in every town in which he appears."

When *You're In the Army Now* was released, Jane didn't expect good reviews, knowing that all the attention would be devoted to the manic comedy of its male leads. One reviewer did single her out, however, citing her for "playing a piquant, saucer-eyed good sport, looking like she was having some fun." For the most part, the movie was attacked for its heavy slapstick and corny situations.

A week later, Lloyd Bacon, the director, called her. "In our last picture, Olivia (De Havilland) had the female lead, but in my new picture, *Larceny, Inc*. (1942). I'm giving the female lead to you. You're going to be the leading lady to Edward G. Robinson."

"In my last picture, I had a record-breaking kiss of three or so minutes. If you're telling me I've got to kiss Ol' Liver Lips for that long, I'm walking."

"It's not that kind of picture," Bacon said. "Show up on the set at 7AM tomorrow morning."

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Before the final casting of *Casablanca (1942)*, many actors were suggested. The drama had originated as an unpublished play, *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. Stephen Karnot, the first reader at Warners, had suggested for the male lead (Rick Blaine), either Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, or George Raft, with Mary Astor cast in the female lead.

The story was set in that Moroccan city of mystery, Casablanca, the action occurring after the fall of France, as refugees from that Nazi-occupied country gathered there, many of them waiting for exit visas.

Karnot called it “sophisticated hokum,” but predicted, “It will play.” Based on his favorable report, Jack Warner agreed to pay $20,000 for the adaptation, the highest amount ever paid for an unproduced play.

When the director, Michael Curtiz, read the first draft of the script, he thought that the role of Rick would be a good vehicle for Raft. The actor read the script and immediately rejected the role. He said he was tired of playing gangsters and that in his past, Rick had been a hoodlum.

As for Hal B. Wallis, after he reviewed the script, and as he was mulling over which actors might populate it, he sent out a “trial balloon,” a list of candidates. It was published in newspapers nationwide on January 5, 1942. His tentative cast nominated Ronald Reagan as Rick, Ann Sheridan as Ilsa, and Dennis Morgan as Victor Laszlo, the Czech freedom fighter.

[When he was in the White House, Reagan was asked if he had ever been offered the role of Rick. “It appeared as an item in The Hollywood Reporter*,” he answered, “but I don’t recall ever seriously being offered the part.”*

When Ann Sheridan was asked about it, she said, “The female lead was originally to have been that of an American heiress, but the writers turned her into a Europeanwoman. I was never formally offered the role.”

We remember it well—*Casablanca:* “We’ll always have Paris.” Depicted above, Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart.

Morgan corroborated his colleagues’ statements, saying, “I was never asked to play Victor Laszlo.”

As for Raft, although some movie writers claim that he was never offered the role of Rick, Raft’s biographer, James Robert Parrish, wrote, “Warners decided to test Raft in a more or less ‘straight’ role, that of Rick Blaine, ex-smuggler and present café owner. World War II had dampened the gangster film cycle (or, more correctly, Adolf Hitler and crew becoming the new gangsters). Raft rejected the role, reportedly because he did not like the taint of ex-gangster.”

Years later, at a casino in London, Raft—who was fully aware of Hollywood commentators who claimed that he was never offered the role of Laszlo—was asked about his inclusion in the list of possible contenders for the role of Rick in Casablanca*. In response, he asserted, “Warners wanted me to play Rick, and I turned them down. Anybody who says that isn’t true is a god damn cunt!”]*

Before shooting began, Wallis changed his mind, recasting the roles with Bogie, In-grid Bergman, and Paul Henreid as the three main protagonists.

Hedy Lamarr had lobbied for the role of Ilsa, but MGM would not release her. Actually, Bergman had not wanted the role, viewing it as a B picture, little realizing that she was the star of a movie that would be hailed as the greatest ever made, even better, in the eyes of many critics, than Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane*.

When *Casablanca* was released in November of 1942, Reagan expressed his regrets to Dick Powell that he never got to play Rick. He stood idly by, looking on in envy as the role of Rick became a personal triumph for Bogie, establishing him as a romantic star and not just a screen villain. *Casablanca* brought him his first Oscar nomination, and also made him the reigning male star at the studio, “The King of Warner Brothers.”

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To his regret, Reagan ended up assigned instead to a routine sixty-three minute programmer, *Nine Lives Are Not Enough* (1941), to be directed by the London-born A. Edward Sutherland.

At first, he was delighted to learn that Jane Wyman would be his leading lady, but he was later informed that she’d been assigned to another picture.

Reagan’s first question was, “Who is going to be my new leading lady?” He was told it would be the very beautiful Joan Perry, the Florida-born New York City model, a career which had led to a Hollywood contract with Columbia 1935. She had previously appeared with such actors as Melvyn Douglas, Lew Ayres, and Ralph Bellamy. But her biggest coup involved receiving a proposal of marriage from the studio boss, the much-feared Harry Cohn.

During the hour that the film’s director, A. Edward Sutherland, spent with Reagan on the first day, he talked more about himself than he did Reagan’s upcoming role. Arriving in Hollywood from England, he’d appeared as a

bungling police officer in *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914), starring Charlie Chaplin, Mabel Normand, and the formidable Marie Dressler. Sutherland had become known for directing comedians, claiming, "I'd rather dine on tarantula than make another movie with Stan Laurel." However, he got along with the acerbic W.C. Fields.

Among Sutherland's five wives was the legendary Louise Brooks (1926-1928). During their tumultuous marriage, both of them were known for numerous affairs on the side.

Finally, Sutherland, who had been a *protégé* of Chaplin, got around to giving Reagan his overall direction as the newspaper reporter, Matt Sawyer, in *Nine Lives Are Not Enough.* "Play the role with a flip brashness. You know, the aggressive reporter with his hat resting on the back of his head. You can be resourceful and come up with some moves on your own. Play it frantic, like you're always in a jam. But, remember, you always land on your feet."

"With those directions, I should surely win an Academy Award nomination," Reagan said, sarcastically.

He studied his script. As a reporter for "The Daily News," he is known around the office as the "Boy Crusader." He is constantly getting into trouble with his tough boss, Howard da Silva. Reagan writes an *exposé* of a local mob boss (Ben Welden), but the gangster clears his name and files a libel suit against the paper.

Enraged, Da Silva demotes Reagan to the police beat, and threatens to assign him to writing the lonely hearts column if he slips up again.

Reagan makes the nightly rounds with two policemen (James Gleason and Edward Brophy) in their patrol car. Reagan particularly liked working with Gleason, who was also a playwright and screenwriter. He always played tough but warmhearted characters. Known as the master of the double-take, he was bald, with a loud, craggy voice.

According to the plot, during their patrol one night, Reagan and the cops discover the body of a missing millionaire. Reagan, as journalist, writes it up for his paper as a murder, although the coroner rules it as a suicide. Once again, Reagan is in trouble with Da Silva, who fires him.

He is determined to prove it was murder, and he enlists the help of the slain millionaire's daughter (played by Joan Perry in her role of Jane Abbott.)

Complications ensue, but in the end, Reagan discovers that it was murder after all. In the meantime, Perry falls in love with Reagan and marries him. She also buys the *Daily News* for him. His first move as its new owner involves assigning Da Silva the lonely hearts column.

Reagan with Joan Perry in *Nine Lives*. Before filming began, Reagan received a memo from Harry Cohn, the mogul who ran Columbia: "Hands off Joan. Got that, Reagan?"

During filming, actress Faye Emerson, cast as Rose Chadwick, paid special attention to Reagan, although he more or less ignored her. He would later regret that.

As he told Dick Powell, "I wish I had sucked up more to Faye. She was divorcing her first husband, William Crawford. How did I know that within months, she'd be married to Elliott Roosevelt and would move into the White House. If I had become a close friend of hers, I, too, would have been a frequent visitor to the White House, advising Franklin Roosevelt on how to conduct the war."

The character played by Reagan didn't like Da Silva in his screen role, and Reagan, as a private individual, detested him in private. The actor had just completed *Bad Men of Missouri* (1941) with Jane, Like Walter Catlett, who had blabbed to him about Jane and John Payne, Da Silva was also a nasty gossip. He and Reagan got into several bitter political arguments. Although still a liberal Democrat, Reagan viewed Da Silva as a card-carrying communist.

Concealed behind the draperies in *Nine Lives:* Reagan, playing a nosy reporter ("*Give me the City Desk*") looks unpresidential.

[Da Silva was later blacklisted by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. After that, he was unable to find work in the movies or on television.]

One day, after Reagan had angered Da Silva, he struck back. "When I made *Bad Men of Missouri* with your wife, she spent more time with Dennis Morgan than she did before the camera. You'd better check to see what's going on. Sometimes, a husband is the last to know."

Coming so soon after the equivalent allegation about Jane and John Payne, Reagan became deeply depressed, trying to convince himself that Da Silva was a liar.

In the middle of the shoot, Jane invited Joan Blondell and Dick Powell for dinner. They were obviously having their own marital difficulties.

Blondell recalled, "I sensed that Ronnie was greatly depressed. He was polite and he even told a few jokes, but he kept looking at Jane when she wasn't looking back. It was like he was studying her with a questioning look on his face. I suspected that some nasty little shit had been spreading gossip about Jane. But he had his own guilt. I'd heard through the grapevine that he was slipping around knocking off a piece here and there. Dick was doing the same with me. I just brushed off his infidelities. I referred to arrangements such as ours as a typical Hollywood marriage."

James Gleason: Played tough guys or cops, always with a suspicious whine in his voice.

Cast in a small role as a mechanic, John Ridgely had appeared with Reagan in *Secret Service of the Air* (1939) and with Jane in *He Couldn't Say No* (1938). Now, he observed Reagan closely, sensing something was wrong. "He had changed," Ridgely said. "He seemed depressed, and his heart wasn't in his work. I felt he was going through marital troubles, like most couples do after they get hitched. He also talked about the draft, wondering if he'd be called up. Because of his bad eyesight, he couldn't fight on the front lines, but he might end up in some desk job. With his contact lenses, he could always push papers."

During the shoot, Reagan spent most of his time with Joan Perry. The two bonded and often had lunch together, but it wasn't a case of "*Leadinglady-itis.*"

He knew that Perry was marrying one of the most powerful figures in Hollywood. He feared that Jack Warner might not renew his contract, and that he might find himself pounding on the door of Columbia, looking for work.

The way he figured it, if he were a close friend of Harry Cohn's new wife, he'd have a better chance of getting a contract with that studio.

To his surprise, he found that Perry had also been announced as the leading lady in his next picture, *[The title of that film, originating as* Eagle Squadron *and later changed to* Flight Patrol, *would eventually be released in 1941 as* International Squadron.*]*

John Ridgely: He found the future president "a troubled soul."

As regards his acting technique in *Nine Lives Are Not Enough*, Reagan had taken Sutherland's advice. One critic defined his performance as "helter-skelter."

The film had taken just twenty-two days to shoot, and Jack Warner had ordered the rough cut sent to his office for a screening. In a somewhat confusing memo, he claimed that *Nine Lives Are Not Enough* was "a peachy picture." But then he wrote, "I have about a half dozen more revamping shots, inserts, and effects to put in, and I cannot understand why they were not done in the first place, especially in the off-scene fight where Reagan slugs the newspaper reporter and throws him off-scene. Undoubtedly, they had mufflers on their black jacks."

Sutherland was left to figure out what all that meant.

Warner also said that he detested the title *Nine Lives Are Not Enough*, since it had little connection to the plot. He promised he'd send over a new title, but he never did.

Reviews were tepid, as were attendance and box office receipts. One critic called the film, "a mystery-comedy —and not much of either."

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In a Manhattan night club, in 1935, a beautiful model, Betty Miller, 21, danced by the table of Harry Cohn, aged 44, the chief honcho at Columbia pictures. Miller was in the arms of another man, but Cohn was intrigued by her striking figure.

As a fast worker, he offered her a Hollywood contract before the night was over, telling her "to dump that faggot you're with."

When she reached Hollywood, she found that he was in the process of trying to divorce his first wife, the former Rose Barker, whom he had married in 1923. Cohn personally drove Miller to Columbia, where he ordered both makeup and wardrobe to transform her natural beauty into something very glamorous for her screen test. He approved the test himself, and the newly re-christened "Joan Perry" found herself co-starring in *The Case of the Missing Man* (1935) opposite Roger Pryor. Cohn had told her that "Betty Miller" was too commonplace. "Sounds like a cobbler's daughter."

Perry moved in with Cohn long before his divorce was finalized. They lived together on Lexington Drive in Beverly Hills. After marrying her on July 30, 1941, at the St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan, he returned with her to their home in Hollywood. Now that she was his bride, they began to entertain the Hollywood elite, including Louis B. Mayer, Irene Dunne, Katharine Hepburn, Mae West, Cary Grant, even Sabu and Humphrey Bogart.

On the set of *Nine Lives Are Not Enough*, Perry invited Reagan and Jane to one of her fabulous dinner parties. As a stunning hostess, she appeared in a gown designed by Jean Louis of the Columbia Wardrobe department. She presided at one end of the table, with Cohn at the other end. Placed on either side of him were phones which were constantly ringing.

After dinner, Reagan joined Cohn in his library, where the male guests gathered for cigars and brandy. Perry was entertaining the women guests, including an emerging star, Rita Hayworth, in the adjoining saloon.

"Did Joan tell you?" Reagan asked Cohn. "She's starring in my next picture, *Flight Patrol.*"

“I prefer for you to refer to her as Mrs. Cohn,” he said.

In spite of that slight embarrassment, Reagan was amused by Cohn, who seemed more well-versed in Hollywood legend and lore than anybody he’d ever met.

Before meeting Cohn, Reagan had heard many stories about him. He’d been born in 1893 into a working class Jewish family in New York City. Eventually, he landed in Hollywood and helped open Columbia Pictures on Poverty Row. His fortunes changed after the release of *It Happened One Night* (1934), a Frank Capra comedy starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. The picture swept up five major Oscars at the Academy Awards ceremony that year.

Behind his back, Cohn was derisively called “White Fang,” ruling like a tyrant, and presiding over Columbia like it was his own private police state.

Perry had admitted to Reagan that her new husband had a personality like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He was loud, brash, and had an intimidating personality. On his desk rested an autographed portrait of Mussolini, which he’d obtained in Rome during a visit there in 1933.

He was also known for demanding sex from his starlets as part of their employment. Over the years, he would seduce an array of established actresses, starlets, and extras, often deflowering A-list stars who included Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Monroe, and Lucille Ball.

Joan Perry (*aka* Betty Miller, *aka* Mrs. Harry Cohn).

He maintained a secret passageway that led directly from his office into a dressing room filled with starlets, in a style something akin to a harem.

Everyone in Hollywood had an opinion about Cohn, usually negative. Hedda Hopper told Reagan, “He’s a man you stand in line to hate.”

Director Elia Kazan asserted, “Cohn is the biggest bug in a pile of horse shit.”

In the library of his home, Cohn put his arm around Reagan and whispered in his ear, “Let me tell you about Hollywood: It’s all about horses and cunt.”

Reagan later recalled him: “Cohn was a great vulgarian, but at moments he had a certain charm. To him, all women were broads who could be had. At one point during our dinner party, when he cornered my Jane, he told her, ‘If that Reagan boy can’t satisfy you, you’re looking at a man who can.’ On that very night, he told me, ‘I kiss the feet of talent. I won’t be kissing your feet, Reagan.’”

Above is the logo/avatar inspired by the physicality of Mrs. Harry Cohn. It became recognizable throughout the world. Hail Columbia!

That night, he also told Reagan that he'd seen him only once on the screen—and that was with Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1939). "You were supposed to be playing a homo, but you didn't do it right. In that bar scene with Bette, when you held up your drink to your mouth, you should have raised your little pinkie. That way, you'd signal the audience that you were a homo."

"I didn't see the role that way," Reagan protested.

"Bullshit!" Cohn said. "Edward Everett Horton could have given you lessons in how to play a fag."

Despite the pedestal on which he placed his wife, Joan Perry, Harry Cohn continued to fuck around with, among others, Rita Hayworth, who's depicted above.

He told Reagan that long after she'd been a silent screen goddess, Gloria Swanson arrived at Columbia with two screen treatments she wanted him to produce. "I scanned both of them and turned each of them down. Three weeks later, the little over-dressed dwarf arrived with another screen treatment, which she insisted on reading to me, all twenty-five pages of it. I found it far too depressing, about a heroine who goes blind at the end of the picture. You guessed it. I turned down *Dark Victory."*

Before Reagan left Cohn's home at around midnight, the drunken mogul approached him. "I know you'll be working with Mrs. Cohn again, and that you'll be in close proximity to her, perhaps even playing love scenes. I also know what can happen when a hot-to-trot stud like you meets a horny broad like my young wife."

"I assure you, Mr. Cohn, I'll be a perfect gentleman," Reagan said. "You can count on that. Any love scene between us will be strictly in the script."

"Thanks for that," he answered. "It's not just having my wife cheat on me. It's a health issue."

"I don't understand," Reagan said. "I'm not contagious."

"It's like this," Cohn said. "You guys with uncut dicks can cause a vaginal infection in women. Joan is used to clipped men like me. We Jews are a hell of a lot safer than you Protestant germ carriers."

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Cast as "Denny Costello," Jane Wyman had the female lead in her latest movie, *Larceny, Inc.* (1942), wherein she played the adopted daughter of "Pressure" Maxwell (Edward G. Robinson).

They worked with three strong supporting players: Broderick Crawford as "Jug" Martin, a dim-witted gangster; Jack Carson as Jeff Randolf, a fast-talking salesman; and Anthony Quinn as the villainous gangster, Leo Dexter. Its plot was based on a Broadway play, *The Night Before Christmas*, by the distinguished humorist, S.J. Perelman, although this comedy-drama was not one of his greatest achievements.

Its director, Lloyd Bacon, welcomed Jane to the set and gave her a copy of the script, where she learned that

Carson was the unlikely choice for her love interest. Bacon had most recently helmed Jane in *Honeymoon for Three* (1941).

The plot of *Larceny, Inc*. evokes Woody Allen's much later film, *Small Time Crooks* (2000). It spins around a supposed bank robbery that never quite comes off. A fellow inmate at Sing Sing, Dexter (Quinn) tries to intrigue Pressure (Robinson) and Jug (Crawford) into joining him in a bank robbery after their release from prison.

Pressure actually wants to purchase a dog-racing track in Miami with Jane, but the bank turns down his request for a loan. Along with Jug, he purchases a luggage shop next door to the bank. From the basement of the luggage store, they plan to dig a tunnel into the bank's vault.

In the meantime, a slick salesman (Carson) arrives to entice them into buying an inventory of fine luggage, wholesale, for their otherwise virtually empty store. Advertising gimmicks are devised by Carson to line up customers. Eventually, based on the spectacular success of his luggage business, Pressure decides to become legitimate and stops digging the tunnel.

Tension rises after Dexter (who's still in jail) hears that Pressure has "stolen" his idea about digging a tunnel, and that he'll pocket the money from its success. Vengefully, Dexter breaks out of jail, with the intent of extorting money from Pressure. Burglar alarms are set off, there's gunfire, a police raid, and the luggage store erupts into flames. Dexter is captured and returned to Sing Sing, Pressure rebuilds his store and becomes a mogul in the merchandising of luggage and a civic-minded patriarch. Jane and Carson end up in each other's arms.

Robinson told Jane that he had accepted the comic role of Pressure Maxwell to off set the tough guy image he'd established in his star-making role of "Rico" in *Little Caesar* (1931).

With the world at war, Warners was making fewer films. In 1942, Jane's only release was *Larceny, Inc*. In it, she was teamed with "tough guy" Edward G. Robinson. He turned out to be a man of culture, unlike his portrayals on screen.

Perhaps awed by his reputation, she was prepared not to like Robinson until she actually met him. In private, he was soft-spoken, cultured, and spoke seven languages. Born to Romanian Jews in Bucharest, he had emigrated to Manhattan, where he launched his acting career in Yiddish theater on the Lower East Side. His success in *Little Caesar* typecast him into gangster roles at Warners. His chief rivals for parts became George Raft, James Cagney, and Humphrey Bogart.

"Eddie wasn't the prettiest mug ever to appear on the screen, but I learned a lot from this sensitive, talented man," Jane recalled. "He was a real pro."

Larceny, Inc. Jane appears here with Jack Carson, marking the beginning of a long friendship.

He later said, “I found Jane a delight, totally professional and very pretty. I’m amazed that Jack Warner kept her dangling on the vine for so long before giving her a meaty roles like Ginger Rogers had in *Kitty Foyle*. Jane was one hell of a dame, who could do both serious drama and light comedy, each equally well.”

Although Robinson praised Jane’s talents to reporters, she was disappointed when he published his memoirs, *All My Yesterdays* in 1973. He didn’t even mention her. All he wrote about their film was this line: “Then back to Warners’ for *Larceny*, Inc.”

“Eddie had this pug face with a snarling, snapping delivery that I had a hard time keeping up with,” Jane later said. “He could play a milquetoast on occasion, although he excelled as a tough guy. No, he did not begin every sentence by saying, ‘See.’ I was a bit nervous working with him. When I met him, he’d just made *Manpower* (1941) with Marlene Dietrich. I could hardly imagine at the time that one day *little ol’ me* would be cast opposite the formidable ‘Kraut’ in a movie shot in London.”

Jack Carson, from the windswept plains of Manitoba, had made it to Hollywood, “kicking around” in movies since 1937. Usually, he was cast as an overbearing boor or some beefy lug, a hapless target of derision. But by the 1940s, he had been recognized by Warners as a first-rate comic actor who deserved better roles. At the time Jane met him, both of them were getting bigger parts. Between 1937 and ’38, Carson had appeared as a minor player in some two dozen films. *Larceny, Inc*. marked the first of several movies in which he would be cast with Jane.

Today, Carson is best remembered for his dramatic roles, including that of the rejected suitor to Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), and the oafish brother of Paul Newman and the father of those “no-neck monsters” in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958) by Tennessee Williams, co-starring Elizabeth Taylor.

“Jane and I truly bonded,” Carson later said. “We’d both survived a lot of crappy movies, and she, like myself, was a real trouper. I was also the best friend of Dennis Morgan, and he truly adored her. The three of us often hung out together. I was used as the ‘beard’ to cover up their romance. I didn’t mind at all. I knew when I’d served my purpose. I’d frequently disappear into the night back in those days.”

“On the set, I had to watch Jane,” he said. “If not, she’d steal every scene we were in. I thought she had real potential. For all I know, one day she’d be the Queen of Warners after she dethroned Bette Davis. I knew she’d have to compete with Olivia de Havilland for the crown.”

According to Jane, the screen didn’t reveal just how big Carson was, standing 6’2” and weighing some 225 pounds. “Over the course of a life, he was married four times. At the time I met him, he was wed to Kay St. Germain Wells. *[For many years, Kay was the radio voice of Elsie the Cow.]* When they divorced in 1950, Jack indulged in some heavy dating with Doris Day and wanted to marry her. Day was also indulging in heavy dating with another divorced man I knew so very well—Ronnie himself. Doris dumped both Ronnie and Jack to marry Martin Melcher, and brother, did she live to regret that choice.”

Broderick Crawford: He had an unlikely look for a movie star.

Actress Helen Broderick's son, Broderick Crawford, was burly and brutish on the screen, but, in Jane's view, "a lovable lug off the screen." In 1937, he'd become famous for brilliantly playing Lennie in the Broadway production of *Of Mice and Men*. Ironically, and to his deep chagrin, he was not awarded that role in that drama's Hollywood remake in 1939. The role Broderick had developed (and coveted) went to Lon Chaney, Jr. instead.

"When Broderick and I used to go for a drink," Jane later reflected, we never thought for a moment that B picture stars like us would each end up one day winning an Oscar for Best Actor or Best Actress of the Year." *[Cast as Willy Stark, a charismatic, rough-edged character based on the crooked Louisiana politician, Huey Long,* All the King's Men *(1949) would bring Crawford a Best Actor Oscar.]*

Malevolently handsome Anthony Quinn under arrest at the conclusion of *Larceny, Inc.*

During the filming of *Larceny, Inc*., Jane and Reagan invited Crawford to join them at a steak house, a style of restaurant he'd specifically requested. "That night, I saw the beginning of his downfall: Lots of liquor and heaps of food. I couldn't believe it. He ordered three big steaks cooked blood rare and told the waiter to keep his glass of liquor full at all times."

When Jane met Anthony Quinn, he'd just finished playing Chief Crazy Horse in *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941), starring Errol Flynn. Throughout his career, Quinn would not only play Indian chiefs, but Hawiian chiefs, Filipino Freedom fighters, Chinese guerillas, and, in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), a clever and dynamic desert sheik.

"A seductive bundle of impish charm," is how Jane described him. Born in 1915 during Mexico's revolution, Quinn had always claimed that whereas his mother was of almost pure Aztec descent, his father, Francisco (Frank) Quinn, had been the offspring of a Mexican mother and an Irish immigrant father from County Cork. Francisco Quinn had ridden with Pancho Villa, the Mexican revolutionary.

Quinn became the first Mexican-American actor to win an Oscar—in his case, in 1952 for his supporting role in *Viva Zapata!*. Marlon Brando, its star, lost the Oscar that year to Gary Cooper for his role in *High Noon*. Actually, Quinn had originally wanted to play Zapata, but director Elia Kazan preferred Brando.

On the set of *Larceny, Inc*., Quinn told Jane he was a master painter, and surprised her with his request to paint her in the nude. She politely refused, but he persisted. He told her that his painting would immortalize her the way Goya's *The Naked Maja* had done for the Duchess of Alba. Jane still refused.

"If you won't let me paint you in the nude, can I fuck you in the nude?" he asked.

"I must also turn down your gracious offer, your request put so delicately," she said.

In 1937, Quinn had married Katherine DeMille, the adopted daughter of Cecil B. De-Mille. He was never faithful to his wife. When he tangled with Jane, he was also having an affair with Rita Hayworth, his co-star in *Blood and Sand* (1941). Other recent conquests had included Mae West and Carole Lombard.

He'd told actress Ruth Warrick, "I want to impregnate every woman in the world." Years later, to author Darwin Porter, Warrick mused, "I didn't realize at the time how literally he meant that."

Evelyn Keyes, "Scarlett O'Hara's younger sister," said "There was simply too much of Tony. Yes, down there, too."

At the conclusion of filming of *Larceny, Inc*., Robinson threw a wrap party, and most of the stars and supporting actors showed up. Broderick Crawford arrived already drunk.

Quinn appeared to be suffering that evening from a deep depression. Speaking to her privately, he told Jane he'd be leaving the party soon. His two-year-old had drowned in the lily pond of his next door neighbor, W.C. Fields. After having a drink, and greeting the other guests, he quietly departed. She noticed tears running down his cheeks, and she ran out into the yard and embraced him warmly.

Robinson, the party's host, pointed out some of his choice paintings. She was very impressed with his knowledge of art, of which she knew virtually nothing.

Young Jackie Gleason..."How sweet it is!"

At the party, Jane made the rounds, talking with a Brooklyn-born actor, Jackie C. Gleason, who played a soda shop clerk in their film. "He told me he'd been born a pool hustler and a night club comic before trying to break into the movies," Jane said. "I found his brief role in our film uninspired, and I told him so. He said he was off to play Bogie's pal in a picture, *All Through the Night* (1941). I stupidly predicted he should try some field other than acting. How wrong I was! He did much better when he billed himself as Jackie Gleason."

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As Reagan moved into production of the fourteen films he made that were released between 1940 and 1943, a Gallup poll conducted during the summer of 1941 placed him at number 82 in the roster of American box office attractions. The number one spot went to Clark Gable, largely because of the success of his portrayal of Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* (1939), which, in 1940, was still playing in movie houses across America.

Much to her disappointment, Jane Wyman did not rank among the top one hundred box office draws.

As far as paychecks went, "The King" (Gable) made $210,000 per picture; Errol Flynn $157,000; and Reagan $52,000 per film.

A more in-depth survey of movie audiences found that Jack Warner's attempt to turn Reagan into a romantic lead had largely failed. Reagan's greatest fans were young men and boys eighteen and under, no doubt stemming

from his roles as Secret Service agent, Brass Bancroft.

Surveys showed that one out of ten movie fans would go see a film if Reagan's name was on the marquee. In contrast, 30 to 40 percent of Americans asserted that they would go see any film starring Flynn.

Reagan was slightly more popular with women than with men. Most of them seemed to feel, "He's a Mr. Average Nice Guy, but he's no Adonis." One woman wrote, "I find his crinkly eyes and wide grin a good substitute for glamour."

One fan wrote, "My Mom would approve of him if I brought him home."

Another commented, "Ronald Reagan suggests home for Christmas, football games, summer jobs at gas stations, junior proms with white carnations, and a fraternity pin worn on a girl's sweater."

Responding to the polls, Reagan admitted, "I know I'm no Errol Flynn or Charles Boyer. A man doesn't have to stand out from his fellow man to make his mark in the world. Average will do."

Flight Patrol (whose name would later be changed to *International Squadron;* 1941) was Reagan's 27th film. When he asked its director, Lothar Mendes, the names of his leading ladies, it was confirmed that he'd be working with Joan Perry (Mrs. Harry Cohn) again. This time, she'd been reduced to fifth position in the star lineup. His other two leading ladies included Olympe Bradna and Julie Bishop, actresses unfamiliar to him.

Reagan was a bit leery of Berlin-born Mendes because he had a negative stereotype of German and Austrian directors, gained in part from the stormy legend of Erichvon Stroheim during the Silent era.

Mendes' most famous film was the 1934 *Jew Süss. [In the U.S., it was released as* Power—Jew Süss. *That film, which condemned Nazi atrocities, is not to be confused with the notorious anti-Jewish film,* Jud Süss *(1940), which was commissioned by Josef Goebbels through the UFA Studios in Berlin.*

Jew Süss was a British historical drama based on Lion Feuchtwanger's 1925 novel of the same name. It starred the German actor, Conrad Veidt, who later achieved screen immortality in Casablanca *(1942).]*

Screenwriters Kenneth Gamet and Barry Truivers met with Reagan to talk over how they had conceived his role of Pilot Jimmy Grant in *International Squadron*. "Grant is a cocky man, a real son of a bitch," Trivers said. "His devil-may-care attitude leads to the death of two of his comrades. This experience turns him from a trouble maker and a braggart into an aviator hero."

In the early part of the film, Grant appears as a playboy, a loner, full of bravado. Behind the wheel of a plane, he says, "I'm going to get this baby to six hundred (MPH) If I have to get out and push. I can fly any crate they give me."

As a Yank in war-torn Britain, he joins fellow pilots from such countries as Nazi-controlled Poland, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia. "Sounds had a Notre Dame back-field," Grant quips.

The dreaded Breen office raised objections to the first draft of the script, which depicted Grant (i.e., Reagan) as a fun-loving womanizer. No sweetheart of any pilot was safe from his amorous advances. Facing the objections, one of the producers, Edmund Grainger, ordered the writers to tone down the seductively manipulative aspect of Grant's character. As Grainger so graphically phrased it in a memo, "Don't have Reagan's tongue hanging out to lap pussy every time he sees a broad."

In its promotion of Reagan, Warners went to great lengths to portray Reagan as a great aviator, labeled in private and on the screen as an "unconquerable and intrepid pilot." For the release of *International Squadron*, the men in Warners' publicity department pulled out the stops, writing that "Reagan plays an avenging angel hurtling out of the heavens to shoot down Herman Göring's *Luftwaffe* pilots before they could bomb London." Another line associated with the role Reagan had been assigned shouted, "He is a man who lives only for today, because he might be placed in a hole in the ground tomorrow."

At the time America entered the war in December of 1941, Reagan was one of only a handful of men associated with valor in the air, even though his only experience in aviation had been faked in a movie studio. After one dreadful experience during a flight, he swore he'd never take another. Of course, by the time he became President of the United States in the 1980s, he had overcome that fear of flying he'd had as a young man.

In *International Squadron*, Reagan (as Jimmy Grant) plays a crack stunt pilot who accepts the job of delivering, transatlantic, a U.S. bomber to the embattled R.A.F. in war-torn Britain. After his successful arrival in England, he meets friends from the States, including squadron commander Charles Watt (James Stephenson) and Reg Wilkins (William Lundigan), another fighter pilot.

Reagan isn't interested in joining the R.A.F. until he witnesses a *Luftwaffe* air raid over London during the Battle of Britain. After he sees a child killed, he changes his mind and joins the Eagle Squadron, a British-sponsored air unit composed entirely of foreign fighters, including Americans, flying for Britain against the Nazis.

As described in a 1941 critique by *The New York Times*, "No ace among war films, it is none the less a brisk, brash flier in pulse-quickening entertainment…it is the familiar yarn of the cocky American *[as played by Reagan]* who joins the squadron, creates romantic havoc among his buddies' *fiancées*, and grows up after his breaches of

discipline have cost the lives of two companions…Ronald Reagan is excellent as the slaphappy hell-diver who finally pays for his moral failures with his own death in combat."

Frank Wead, aviator, screen-writer, and critic of Reagan's reputation as an aviator.

A week into the shoot, Reagan learned that *International Squadron* was "the bastard copycat of an equivalent movie, *Ceiling Zero* (1935), that had starred two of his friends, James Cagney and Pat O'Brien. That picture had two starring male leads, each cast as a pilot. Originally, Jack Warner had wanted the script of *International Squadron* to have two male leads, Errol Flynn and John Wayne, each cast as a pilot. But when they weren't available, the script was refashioned to make Reagan, as a pilot, the sole male star.

An oddly distorted portrait of Reagan, supposedly windblown during one of his (nonexistent) flights.

Within ten days from the debut of shooting, Mendes visited Warner and complained to him about Reagan. "He's supposed to be so sexy that he creates havoc among the girlfriends of his fellow pilots. Flynn could have pulled off a role like that. But try as I might, I can't find any overpowering sex appeal in this Reagan boy. He's too clean cut, too American, the kind of guy you'd find coaching a Little League team."

The fabled aviator, Frank Wead, a stunt pilot turned screenwriter, had written the script for *Ceiling Zero*. During one of his visits to California, he visited Reagan on the set of *International Squadron* to see how this recycled version of his story was coming along. Based on Warners' flood of advance publicity, he just assumed that Reagan was a daring aviator like himself. With that preconceived notion in mind, he shared several long talks with him, discussing his own former exploits in the air.

A smiling Ronald Reagan represents the Face of America in *International Squadron*.

Like Reagan, Wead was originally from Illinois. But, unlike Reagan, he was a *bona-fide* American aviation hero. During World War II, he had been promoted to the rank of commander.

As a screenwriter, Wead, in 1938, had received two Academy Award nominations, one for Best Original Story for *Test Pilot*, starring Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy, and a second for Best Screenplay for *The Citadel* with Robert Donat, Rosalind Russell, and Rex Harrison.

At one point, Wead invited Reagan to drive from Los Angeles south to San Diego with him so he could make a test flight, accompanied by Reagan, of an experimental Naval aircraft.

Reagan politely refused, claiming that Warners wouldn't permit him to take such a risk during the shooting of a movie.

Lovely and patriotic Julie Bishop, as portrayed by YANK magazine as one of their choices for Armed Forces "pinup girl" of 1944

Wead became very friendly with Reagan, proposing that the young actor should refer to him by his nickname of "Spig." Reagan later told Pat O'Brien, "Spig's life story should become the subject of a film, entitled *Spig*, about his life's involvement with aviation."

In *International Squadron*, Reagan was surrounded with an array of talented supporting players, including Julie Bishop, a California-born actress who'd begun making films in 1923. As a child, she'd appeared in Laurel and Hardy movies. During her work with Reagan, she would sign for roles in *Princess O'Rourke* (1943) with Olivia de Havilland, Robert Cummings, and Jane Wyman; and also with Humphrey Bogart in *Action in the North Atlantic* (also 1943).

Bishop would appear in a few more movies, including a role in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) as a down-on-her-luck waitress, with John Wayne, but that dream of a big career faded. In 1944, she married General Clarence A. Shoop, a test pilot for Howard Hughes who later became a vice president of Hughes Aircraft.

Perry was upset that the film's lead female role had gone to Olympe Bradna and not to her. The French dancer and actress was born in Paris, and Reagan found her an intriguing personality, the daughter of two world famous bareback riders. At the age of eight, she'd become a professional acrobatic dancer, later joining the *Folies Bergère* in Paris. After moving to Hollywood, she launched her film career in 1933, appearing over the years with such notables as Gary Cooper and George Raft.

Ironically, Bradna would pose no further career threat to Perry or to any other actress either. After she completed *International Squadron*, she retired from acting and settled into a marriage with Douglas Woods Wilhoit, CEO of the Stockton, California, Chamber of Commerce and a political appointee to the Juvenile Parole Board and the local Board of Corrections. After seventy years together, both of them died in 2012.

French-born Olympe Bradna, a former dancer at the *Folies Bergére*, being courted by "The Face of America" (Reagan) in *International Squadron*.

Before Bradna settled down with Wood, she had a final fling with Anthony Quinn, who had just made a movie with Jane. Although married to Katherine DeMille at the time, Quinn visited the set of *International Squadron* five times for rendezvous with Bradna. They had become romantically involved when they'd starred together in the 1941 Warners' movie, *Knockout*, which had cast Arthur Kennedy as a boxer.

Reagan had met Quinn at the home of Edward G. Robinson. Although he had only recently recovered from the drowning of his young son, he was back on his familiar circuit of seducing starlets.

One day, as he was leaving, Quinn spoke to Reagan. "I love my wife, as I know you love Jane—she's a dear—but speaking man to man, a guy like me has to have something on the side. It's my hot Latin blood."

"I understand," Reagan assured him.

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By now, thanks to her wedding to studio autocrat Harry Cohn, Reagan's friend and third female co-star, Joan Perry, had become one of Hollywood's most gracious hostesses. Jane and Reagan were often invited to her formal dinners or cocktail parties. Sometimes, Jane would opt out, claiming, "I have to look after Maureen."

Reagan actually liked to arrive stag at Joan and Harry's parties, enjoying the flirtatious attention bestowed on him by such beautiful starlets as Rita Hayworth or the sultry Evelyn Keyes.

It was at the home of the Cohns that Reagan was introduced to some of the power brokers who would later lend him political and financial support during his bids for governorship of California and President of the United States.

On the set, Reagan sometimes lunched with Perry. One afternoon, she discussed her honeymoon with Harry Cohn. "I headed for the pool, and he told me he'd join me there. But when I got there, I realized I had forgotten my suntan lotion. I returned to the room to discover Harry fucking our very young Mexican maid."

"What did you do?" Reagan asked.

"I told them to carry on, as I went to the bathroom and retrieved my lotion, then headed back to the pool."

"That's what I call an understanding wife," he said.

"I knew about Harry's reputation before I married him, and I didn't think he would change after we exchanged our vows. You can't expect Harry to be faithful. I talked it over with Virginia Fox, who married Darryl Zanuck back in 1923. She told me she never expected Zanuck to be faithful, and I couldn't demand fidelity from Harry, either. We had to enjoy the money, the luxury, the power, and prestige of being married to a studio mogul, and we had to forgive their womanizing. Every day at the studio, Harry, at around noon, has what he calls a 'fuck break,' and he summons the starlet of his choice for an afternoon lay."

Reagan had worked previously with his co-star, James Stephenson, most recently in the final installment of the Brass Bancroft films, *Murder in the Air*.

He learned from Stephenson that he had signed to play the psychotic Dr. Gordon in *Kings Row* (1942), an upcoming picture in which Reagan also wanted to be cast. But on July 29, 1941, Reagan heard over the radio that Stephenson had died. He later recalled, "He was to have been the doctor who cut off my legs in *Kings Row*. But instead of him, Charles Coburn had to perform that sadistic act."

The handsome, blonde-haired actor, Helmut Dantine, born in Vienna, had a brief role in *International Squadron*. He'd already been assigned another part in the upcoming film, *Casablanca* (1942). In it, he'd appear as a desperate Norwegian newlywed gambling as a means of raising money for an exit visa out of Morocco.

Dantine told Reagan that since 1938, he'd been involved in the anti-Nazi movement in his native Vienna. When the Nazis took over Austria during their *Anschlüss*, he was arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp outside Vienna. His father had used his influence to get him released, after which he'd fled to California.

Helmut Dantine, as a Nazi aviator in *Mrs. Miniver*.

In addition to his performance in *Casablanca*, he would also make a startling appearance as a Nazi soldier in *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) with Greer Garson.

Reagan renewed his friendship with William Lundigan, Errol Flynn's boyfriend, with whom he had worked on *Santa Fe Trail*.

When Reagan had lunch with him, the handsome young actor was very candid. "Errol treats me like a Saturday night pussy. He ignores me for days, then calls and expects me to come running, which I always do. He never treats me like an equal, but like some boy in his harem. Right now, he's seeing a lot more of Bruce Cabot than he is of me. He calls him 'Big Bruce,' for obvious reasons, I guess."

"I find Errol a bit hard to take," Reagan said.

"I find him hard to take, too," Lundigan said.

"I didn't mean it that way," Reagan said. "You boys always twist a man's words."

"Sorry…And by the way, I've got some news for you," Lundigan said. "It's been announced that Errol is going to make *Desperate Journey* (1942), an anti-Nazi movie. He asked Jack Warner to designate you as his co-star. He liked you a lot when we made *Santa Fe Trail*. In fact, he told me that he's going to get you yet. How do you think that makes me feel?"

"Rest assured," Reagan said. "I can fend off any advances from Mr. Flynn. He should know by now I don't go that route."

"Perhaps you will," Lundigan said. "Others, both men and women, have said that, but they finally collapse under Errol's charms. He's very persuasive. If his charm fails, he can revert to rape."

"I'll call for your help if he tries that," Reagan said.

One afternoon, Flynn arrived on the set and greeted Reagan. "How's about a kiss, sport?"

"Instead of that, how about a punch in the nose?" Reagan asked.

While waiting for Lundigan to complete a scene, Flynn was introduced to Dantine. As Reagan stood witnessing it, Flynn was instantly attracted to the Austrian actor, and made his intentions obvious. The young actor seemed mesmerized by Flynn, in a way that implied, according to Reagan, that Lundigan would suddenly face competition

for Flynn's affections.

It came as no surprise, months later, when Dantine was announced as one of the supporting actors in Flynn's upcoming picture, *Desperate Journey*.

Tod Andrews was cast in *International Squadron* as a French pilot, the boyfriend of the character played by Bradna. In their movie, Andrews played a character named Michele Edmé. He liked the name so much, he changed his professional name to an English-language derivation of it, being henceforth known as "Michael Ames." Reagan would soon find himself competing with Ames for the role he wanted in *Kings Row*.

The brass at Warners' became upset at the slow pace of *International Squadron*, and Mendes was replaced by Lewis Seiler as director. He had previously helmed Reagan in *Hell's Kitchen* with the Dead End Kids. "I thought Mendes was a rough taskmaster, but Seiler, anxious to conclude filming on schedule, was reckless," Reagan said. "He almost caused me to go up in flames."

Reagan had requested a double for one or two of his character's dangerous stunts, but Seiler rejected his requests. In one scene unfolding inside the cockpit of a plane, Reagan was to set a mop on fire, open the cockpit's hood, and toss the blazing mop outside. That stunt was intended to incite Luftwaffe pilots into thinking that his plane was on fire and to move on to other targets.

Reagan ignited the mop. But then, when he tried to open the hood of the cockpit, it jammed, and the cockpit began filling up with flames and smoke. Two grips eventually forced the hood open and rescued him. Reagan was rushed to the hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation.

When he was released two days later, Seiler demanded that the scene be reshot immediately. Against his better judgment, Reagan performed the same scene with a new mop. This time, the scene went off without incident.

International Squadron bore remarkable similarities to 20th Century Fox's *A Yank in the R.A.F*. (1941), a "hero aviator" film co-starring Tyrone Power and Betty Grable.

Consequently, Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox wrote threatening letters to Jack Warner, accusing him of stealing the plot of *A Yank in the R.A.F*. "You're planning a low-budget picture to capitalize off the fame of our movie," Zanuck charged.

Warners' position was that *International Squadron* was a remake of its 1935 movie, *Ceiling Zero*. Consequently, they went ahead and released the Reagan film without going to court to defend it.

Upon the release of *International Squadron*, many reviewers hailed the movie as Reagan's best work to date, although he had little competition for that honor, considering the lackluster reviews generated by his previous string of B movies.

However, when the film was screened in England, some technically savvy members of the audience laughed. The "Spitfire" Reagan's character had piloted was nothing more than a doctored-up Ryan monoplane that didn't even have a retractable landing gear. In his memoirs, Reagan wrote that "people accepted our makeshift props with the same kindly understanding they gave the local high school play." In writing that, perhaps he didn't hear the mocking laughter that howled out of England at the time.

Patriotic Fervor: Tyrone Power with Betty Grable in Darryl Zanuck's sword-rattling answer *(A Yank in the RAF)* to Jack Warner's *International Squadron*.

Although America had not yet entered World War II, Jack Warner ordered major promotion of the film, knowing that audiences, except for "America Firsters" and German-Americans, were siding with the British.

International Squadron was blatantly anti-Nazi, a slant which censors interpreted as a flagrant violation of America's neutrality.

Warner wanted to promote Reagan as a star, with the understanding that if he was rejected by the Army because of his eyesight, he'd become the biggest star at Warners, especially in wartime movies about airplane pilots.

Ads for *International Squadron* proclaimed: "This is the role that zooms Ronald Reagan to the heights of stardom." History would demonstrate, of course, that that advertising slogan was a gross exaggeration.

Isolationists in Washington were outraged by the anti-German slant of *International Squadron*. Warners was accused of "war-mongering," and the Warner Brothers were specifically blamed as "Jews selfishly maneuvering American troops into World War II."

A politically motivated investigation was called. A Subcommittee of the House Committee on Interstate Commerce summoned Harry Warner to Washington for questioning. Since the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Warners was considered the most anti-Nazi film studio in Hollywood.

Before the committee, Warner delivered an eloquent defense of his studio, claiming a responsibility to let the American public know about what was happening in Europe and the world. He said that of all the books published the previous year in America, seventy percent of non-fiction books were anti-Nazi, and ten percent of all fiction reflected the same point of view. He also claimed that ten percent of all film scripts submitted to Warners were virulently anti-Nazi.

But in early December of 1941, within days of the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the committee's war-mongering charges against Warners were dropped. At that point, all Hollywood studios began churning out pro-America wartime propaganda films that were not only anti-Nazi, but anti-Japanese as well.

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A sprinkling of snow early one morning hinted at a cold upcoming autumn in Dixon, Illinois. Louella Parsons set out with Ronald Reagan to celebrate "Louella Parsons Day" in their native town of Dixon, where both of them had grown up.

Seizing the moment, Jack Warner rushed an early cut of *International Squadron* to a movie theater in Dixon for a world premiere.

Using her power as a ruthless Hollywood columnist, Parsons rounded up a bevy of Hollywood stars, spearheaded by Bob Hope, to accompany Reagan and her on their tour of her native Midwest.

Others in her all-star troupe included the comedian Jerry Colonna, along with Ann Rutherford, who had played Scarlett O'Hara's sister, Coreen, in *Gone With the Wind*. The handsome leading man, George Montgomery, went along too, as did silent screen star, Bebe Daniels. She was accompanied by Ben Lyon, who had scored such a hit in the Howard Hughes production of *Hell's Angels* in 1930, the year in which he'd married Daniels.

Jane Wyman, recovering from minor surgery, was not able to make the trip, so Reagan's mother, Nelle, accompanied her son instead, lamenting, "I'm so sorry that Jack didn't live to see this day." Her husband (Reagan's father) had died that May.

To take over when Hope's humor failed him, comedian Joe E. Brown, Jane Wyman's least favorite film partner, also joined the troupe aboard the train heading east.

A few moments after the train's arrival at Dixon's railway station, Parsons stepped in front of a waiting microphone to deliver a "thank you, thank you, thank you," to the assembled crowd.

Then Hope claimed the microphone from her. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Over there is the birthplace of your townswoman, Louella Parsons. Do you wonder that this glamour girl—ablaze with orchids, dressed to the teeth, bedecked and bejeweled— wants to forget it? Do you wonder that the little lady is overcome with emotion?"

Parsons was irritated at such an enigmatic and downbeat introduction, but flashed an insincere smile nonetheless.

A crowd of 50,000, many from neighboring homesteads and hamlets, had journeyed to Dixon to see the stars. A ten-block parade, with five bands and fifteen floats, was staged along the elm-lined Galena Street, the shop-flanked main artery of the little city. Parsons would recall the parade that seemed "to spin in my memory like a happy but dizzy dream."

She rode in an open convertible, waving her white-gloved hand to the bystanders in a style she'd lifted from watching newsreels of British royalty moving through the streets of London.

In all his Brylcreemed glory, Reagan rode in a separate car with a frail Nelle, as both waved to the crowds. The parade ended near Geisenheimers Department Store, where Parsons had once worked as a sales clerk in the corset department, merchandizing contoured undergarments to restrain the flesh of her corn-fed customers. This was near the old store where Jack Reagan had once fitted shoes onto local farmers who came from outlying fields into Dixon

to shop.

Louella Parsons, accompanied by Ronald Reagan, returns to the little town of Dixon, where she once sold undergarments and corsets to farmers' wives.

Later, Parsons dedicated the Louella Parsons Children's Ward, a new facility within the town's Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital.

The hospital visit was followed by speeches in the park. At the podium, Reagan delivered a rather long-winded speech, much to Parsons' obvious annoyance.

"I want all of you to know that I did not sleep last night, thinking of my trip back here, where I could meet old friends. I counted the seventy-seven persons whom I have been credited with pulling out of the Rock River at Lowell Park many times during the night."

Snapped in Dixon, and portraying a finger-pointing Ronald Reagan, the face of the mystery woman in the photo above is obscured in shadow.

Some newspapers labeled her as Louella Parsons; others as Nelle Reagan. You be the judge.

Then, Parsons managed to grapple the microphone from Reagan. Before that, Colonna had whispered in her ear, "Reagan thinks he's running for Congress."

Two hundred special guests were invited to a "rubber chicken" luncheon paid for by Warners. These box lunches were served on the lawn of Hazelwood, the Myrtle Walgreen estate.

In the afternoon, Reagan visited Lowell Park, where he discovered that the log on which he'd notched a record of the seventy-seven men and women he'd saved from the Rock River had washed away. At a ceremony, he was presented with a clock with the engraving, "From 77 Grateful People." Before the crowd, he said, "I came to know the victims better in five minutes than their mothers did in a lifetime."

Following a banquet at Dixon's Masonic Temple, a local movie house held the premiere of *International Squadron*, which, at its conclusion, received a standing ovation.

Parsons announced that director Frank Capra wanted Reagan to star in his upcoming film, *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944). That role, however, was later awarded to Cary Grant. Parsons also announced that Jack Warner wanted Reagan to star in *The Will Rogers Story*. That didn't happen either.

[Ironically, a decade later, in 1952, The Will Rogers Story *would be made, but its star was Will Rogers, Jr., playing opposite Jane Wyman, by then divorced from Reagan.]*

Reporters from Hollywood interviewed the locals for firsthand memories of either Parsons or Reagan. Several women remembered Louella as "a silly romantic girl, a big sentimentalist with dreams of being a writer." Several

recalled " her gooey personality." She had attended Dixon College followed by a year of teaching in a country school. Later, she worked part time as a reporter on the *Dixon Star*.

Biographer Edmund Morris rounded up some opinions of Reagan at the time: "Loves to talk, hates to listen. Exaggerates his college football prowess. Dislikes tennis and tomatoes. Combs his hair the wrong way. Keeps on his shoes as he undresses. Also keeps a scrapbook of flattering news clips of himself. Nurses a beer longer than Carrie Nation. Likes Bing Crosby and macaroni and cheese. Steals jokes from George Burns and Jack Benny. Dick Powell and some Republicans want him to run for Congress on their ticket, but Reagan remains a passionate New Dealer."

A reporter for the *Dixon Star* wrote: "If beauty-starved Dixonians were looking forward to ogling Ronald Reagan's curvaceous wife, they were doomed to disappointment. Instead of an eyeful of Jane Wyman, they got an earful of Louella Parsons." Newspapers proclaimed that Louella Parson's Day generated more excitement than did the parade dedicated to Charles Lindbergh when the fabled aviator visited Dixon. All media hailed the rags-to-riches story of both Parsons and Reagan, citing them "as typically American Sunday supplement heroes."

On a broadcast over CBS's Chicago affiliate, Reagan proclaimed that the event in Dixon "fulfilled a dream which probably every boy has at some time—that of coming home and being acclaimed by the local folks."

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After recovering from minor surgery (a curettage), Jane Wyman reported to work as a loan-out to RKO. Her next picture, a vehicle for bandleader and singer Kay Kyser, was entitled *My Favorite Spy* (1942), a comedy caper revolving around Nazi spies working undercover in America. After reading the script, she was displeased with her role, regarding the film as a vehicle for the musician. "I'm just the blonde fluff," she claimed in a call to Reagan.

"So what else is new?" he asked her.

During her brief stint in the hospital, she'd been discreetly visited, on separate occasions, by both John Payne and Dennis Morgan. They brought flowers and well wishes, and Payne even talked about the possibility of marriage if they ever divorced their respective spouses.

In response, she told him she had no intention of divorcing Reagan. "But check with me later," she said. "I might change my mind."

Morgan, as he'd told her before, never planned to divorce his wife, but preferred their present sexual arrangement. Jane seemed in agreement.

During his final visit, Payne brought casting news: "I heard from Gregory Ratoff, who's directing, that you're going to be loaned out again, this time to Fox. We're going to appear in this thing called *Footlight Serenade* (1942) with Betty Grable and Victor Mature. Those two are involved in a torrid affair."

In the aftermath of her surgery, she'd returned home. There, the producer of *My Favorite Spy*, Harold Lloyd, the famous silent screen comic, dropped in for a visit.

Kay Kyser, bandleader and entertainment mogul, gets amorous with Jane in *My Favorite Spy*.

As a little girl, she'd seen him on the screen playing bespectacled nebbishes in peril. In the pantheon of silent screen comics and their popularity with movie-goers of that era, he had placed third after Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

In a moment of levity, she told him, "The last time I met Chaplin when I was a little girl, he tried to molest me. How safe am I with you?"

"Very safe," Lloyd said. "I molest no one. I'm the one who's usually molested."

She told him that as regards their upcoming *My Favorite Spy*, she'd been disappointed to find herself taking third billing after Kyser and Ellen Drew, a former beauty contest winner who, in the film, would play Kyser's bride.

Ellen Drew

"I think it'll be a big hit," Lloyd predicted, not addressing her concern.

Kyser, at the time, was a popular bandleader and singer, a well-known radio personality of the 1930s and the war years. His big hit on radio was as the quizmaster of an ongoing variety show, "Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge."

[A native of North Carolina, Kyser was also a vocalist, a Big Band director, and a master of swing and jazz. To capitalize off his fame, Hollywood had cast him in a number of movies, including That's Right You're Wrong *in 1939 and* You'll Find Out *in 1940. His last film had also been John Barrymore's last,* Play mates, *made in 1941. Barrymore died in the spring of the following year.]*

Before shooting of *My Favorite Spy* began, Jane lunched with its director, Tay Garnett. He was very blunt. "I asked RKO to hire you because I wanted your fine acting and style to camouflage the fact that Kyser is a swinging musician, but a lousy actor."

A native of Los Angeles, Garnett won Jane's approval. She'd seen two of the films he'd directed, including *Eternally Yours* (1939), which had co-starred Loretta Young and David Niven. *[In future years, Jane would appear with Niven in film, and Young would become her best friend.]* Before the end of their lunch, Garnett invited Jane to a screening of his latest movie, *Seven Sinners*, starring John Wayne and Marlene Dietrich as a torch singer.

On the set, Jane had a reunion with William Demarest, who'd been cast in a minor role. In the 1930s, he'd been her friend, mentor, and agent. She chided him: "After you discovered her in an ice cream parlor, you seemed to do better with Ellen Drew's career than with mine."

"Those are the breaks, sweetheart," Demarest said. "I did my best for you, gal. At least I kept you working."

[Like Jane, Drew, an early beauty contest winner, had emerged from Missouri. Her status as a beauty queen had brought her to the attention of Demarest, who managed to find a position for her at Paramount. Soon after, she appeared in several pictures, including Sing You Sinners *(1939) with Bing Crosby and* The Lady's From Kentucky*(1939) with George Raft.*

In 1944, she'd switch from Paramount to RKO, where she appeared on screen with leading men who included William Holden, Basil Rathbone, Robert Preston, and Ronald Colman.

In the 1950s, as Drew's career faded, Jane's spiraled upward.]

When *My Favorite Spy* opened across America, this whirlwind of dizzy intrigue received lackluster reviews. As the sultry blonde, Jane personified most of its sexual energy. Movie posters provocatively presented her as bosomy in a filmy black *négligée*.

Screenland magazine defined the zany film like this: "A spy comedy with Kay Kyser playing a not-too-bright bandleader who is called to Army Service on his wedding day. He is later released and made a counter-espionage agent. Of course, Kyser bags the spies in the end, returns to his bride (Drew), while Jane plays his blonde secret operator-partner. It's not our favorite Kyser film."

Another movie magazine asked, "How can we win WWII with bandleader Kyser as our spy? Nonsensical music-comedy tried to explain."

In 1973, Kyser, in an interview, remembered Jane, reflecting on her sense of humor and her keen sense of loyalty. "She had a heart as big as the outdoors. She's also big on soul, too, and can sing a pretty darn good song herself."

"She also gave me many good tips on acting, though claiming she couldn't act herself," Kyser said. "After she won an Oscar for *Johnny Belinda*, I accused her of being a liar for telling me she couldn't act."

Garnett, the film's director, later commented, "Because of Jane, our troupe had great chemistry on the set while making *My Favorite Spy*. Too bad that chemistry wasn't reflected on the screen. The picture should have been much

better than it was."

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The surprise is that *Kings Row*, a controversial novel by Henry Bellamann, ever made it to the movie screens of America in 1942. Its release coincided with the debut of America's entry into World War II.

It seemed that every theme in this novel about a small town in the Middle West in the 1890s was flagrantly contrary to the Hayes Production Code: Homosexuality, incest, suicide, insanity, premarital sex, nymphomania, sadism, and mercy killing.

Jack Warner first asked Wolfgang Reinhardt to produce the film. But after reading the novel, he wrote back: "As far as the plot is concerned, the material in *Kings Row* is for the most part either censurable or too gruesome and depressing to be used. The hero finding out that his girl has been carrying on incestuous relations with her father; a host of moronic or otherwise mentally diseased characters; people dying from cancer, suicides—these are the principal elements of the story."

Warner turned to Hal B. Wallis and asked him if he'd produce the film, and he agreed, signing David Lewis as his associate producer. As he'd promised Reagan months before, Lewis began to lobby for the role of the second male lead, the character of Drake McHugh, to go to Reagan.

However, Wallis had other stars in mind. But first, he sent galley proofs of the novel to screenwriter Casey Robinson, who had scripted the film *Dark Victory* with Bette Davis in which Reagan had played a homosexual. Robinson had also worked on the script of *Million Dollar Baby*, starring Reagan.

Wallis hired producer Sam Wood as director. He'd already directed many films that evolved into hits, beginning his career in 1915 as an assistant to Cecil B. DeMille. Over the years, he'd helmed some of Hollywood's biggest stars, including Gloria Swanson, the doomed Wallace Reid, Marion Davies, Clark Gable, and Jimmy Durante.

A liberal, Jack Warner admired Wood's talents, but found him such a right winger as to be objectionable. Groucho Marx had worked with him on *A Night at the Opera* (1935) and *A Day at the Races* (1937), calling him a "fascist," denouncing him as anti-Semitic, and abhorring his racist comments about black people.

Wood had previously directed Robert Donat in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939), which had brought that actor an Oscar. That same year, Wood had been nominated for an Oscar as Best Director, but lost to Victor Fleming for his direction of *Gone With the Wind* (1939). *[Ironically, Wood had been an uncredited director of many of that film's scenes.]* The following year, he'd been nominated as the year's Best Director for *Kitty Foyle* (1940), but lost to John Ford for his *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Setting out on a cruise in Asia, Robinson leisurely read *Kings Row* and was horrified, although he admitted he found it a page-turner. "I also found it personally revolting," he later said. "It seemed to be an attack on the very moral fiber of an American small town at the turn of the century. After finishing it, I took the galley proofs and tossed them into the Sulu Sea near Bali. But no sooner had the galleys hit the water than I realized how the story might be saved. Step by step, I'd have to eliminate the controversial scenes without losing the power of the book. For example, instead of the doctor committing incest with his daughter, I would have him covering up her insanity. I wired Wallis to purchase it, but warned him that we'd have trouble with those censors at the Breen Office.

Bellamann's view of small-town America as a sexually decadent, sadistic Hell was not compatible with the patriotic ferver then sweeping over the entertainment industry.

The miracle, partly because of the howls of protest from censors, was that Reagan's acclaimed film ever got made at all.

On Robinson's recommendation, Wallis purchased the film rights to the novel for $35,000, just $5,000 less than he'd unsuccessfully offered for the film rights to *Gone With the Wind, [David O. Selznick eventually paid $50,000 for them.]*

Originally, Fox had wanted *Kings Row* with Henry Fonda, but later rejected it because of its censorship problems. Jack Warner liked the idea of Fonda playing the sensitive role of Drake that eventually went to Reagan. Warner even suggested to Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox that he'd consider hiring Tyrone Power to play the lead role of Parris Mitchell, but Fox refused to release its major star.

After it had become clear that neither Fonda nor Power was available, Wallis and Warner penciled in several actors who might be ideal for the role of Parris, including Laurence Olivier (an odd choice for a dyed-in-the-wool resident of a small Midwestern town), Cary Grant, Robert Taylor, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Glenn Ford, Alexander Knox, Arthur Kennedy, John Garfield, Errol Flynn, and even Ronald Reagan. Warner rejected both Flynn and Garfield as "too sexy for the part."

For the role of Drake—the trust fund playboy who loses his money and later, his legs—the list of contenders being considered included Robert Cummings (who eventually was cast as Parris), Lew Ayres, Dennis Morgan, Franchot Tone, Fred MacMurray, Ray Mil-land, Lew Ayres, Robert Preston, Eddie Albert, John Garfield, Arthur Kennedy, and, finally, at the bottom to the list, Ronald Reagan.

Wallis was more intrigued with an unknown newcomer, a young and handsome actor, Michael Ames, who had previously appeared in a brief role with Reagan in *International Squadron* (1941) when he was identifying himself, professionally, as Tod Andrews.

Wallis had more or less assigned the role to Ames, but then news came in that the actor had been drafted into the Army. There went his one big chance, an acting opportunity which would never come again. Ames remained resentful throughout the rest of his life for losing the role.

The role of Cassandra Tower, the neurotic daughter of the incestuous Dr. Alexander Tower (as played by Claude Rains), attracted far more interest from actresses than the more wholesome female lead of Randy Monoghan, the tomboy from the wrong side of the tracks.

Bette Davis actively campaigned for the role of Cassandra, but Wallis thought she'd be overpowering and would distort the focus of the movie. Ida Lupino was sent the script, but returned it, finding it "degenerate." Ginger Rogers was mailed the script, but didn't respond. Warners' own Olivia de Havilland was a distinct possibility, but she wasn't interested. Vivien Leigh was under consideration until she left Hollywood, returning to war-torn Britain with Laurence Olivier.

Linda Darnell and Anita Louise were two other candidates, along with a virtually unknown actress, Adela Longmire. Warner sent a memo to Wallis, asserting that "Adela is a great actress," but Wallis didn't agree. Warner came up with some other actresses, none of whom met with Wallis' approval either. They included Susan Peters, Joan Leslie, and Priscilla Lane, who had appeared with Reagan in those *Brother Rat* movies. Wallis strongly approved of Gene Tierney, finding her ideal, but Zanuck at 20th Century Fox had already signed her to another film, *Tobacco Road* (1941).

Then, unexpectedly, the publicist for Marlene Dietrich announced that she had won the role of Cassandra, but nobody in Hollywood believed that.

The part finally went to Betty Field, a Bostonian with sad, sultry eyes. She had scored a success in Hal Roach's production of *Of Mice and Men* (1939), playing Curley's sad, slatternly wife.

Humphrey Bogart had read *Kings Row*, and he called his friend, Ann Sheridan, to suggest that she pursue the role of Randy, the well-adjusted girl who ultimately wins Drake's heart. She read the novel, thinking at first it would never reach the screen because of its taboo subjects.

When she became convinced that it could, she settled her contract dispute with Warners and aggressively sought the role—and won it. In fact, in the ads, she would take star billing, followed by Robert Cummings, Ronald Reagan, and Betty Field.

Wallis lined up one of the best supporting casts of any drama ever filmed at Warners—Charles Coburn, Claude Rains, Judith Anderson, Nancy Coleman, Maria Ouspenskaya, Harry Davenport, and many lesser but very talented lights. He also had to cast child actors, Ann Todd; Scotty Beckett; Douglas Croft; and Mary Thomas to play childhood versions of the lead roles.

"As I read the novel, with all its hypocrisy and narrow-minded people, it evoked for me my memories of growing up in Denton, Texas, where I fought against those traits and those people," Sheridan recalled in 1966. "Like Ronnie, I would give my best performance in any picture."

By the time Robinson sent his fourth screenplay to the Breen office, he had eliminated any hint of homosexuality between Parris and Drake; cut out Parris' mercy killing of his grandmother; and axed the death scene where Drake dies of cancer. Everything connected with Dr. Tower's incest with his daughter, Cassandra, was replaced with a theme of insanity. Tower kills her instead, thus keeping her from marrying Parris and ruining his life.

Kings Row was a precursor of Grace Metalious' *Peyton Place* that dominated the bestselling novel lists of the 1950s.

The Breen office even objected to the dialogue between Cummings and Reagan when Parris had to sleep over at his friend's home. Originally, Reagan was to say: "You have to bunk with me. I hope you don't mind the change."

In a decision that left its actors trying to figure out their motivation and meaning, the Breen censors ordered that the dialogue be changed to: "You have to bunk with me. I hope you don't mind, Mr. Mitchell."

Wood didn't want Reagan to wear a lot of makeup in *Kings Row*. But Cummings, a drag queen in private life, insisted on heavy makeup, so much that a critic later said, "In *Kings Row*, Robert Cummings looks like he's made up to be third girl in a chorus line."

Reagan knew from the beginning that he was facing his most challenging role. He recalled, "I drew upon some of the traits of Moon *[his brother, Neil Reagan.]* My brother was rakish, charming, and of good humor, a spicier version of myself. I felt the town of Kings Row in the movie could easily have been Dixon."

Two views of Betty Field, seen in the lower photo with Reagan in *Kings Row*. She took on the difficult role of the emotionally mal-adjusted Cassie, stealing the part from Bette Davis.

During the course of the filming, Reagan spent a lot of time with Sheridan. Always attracted to each other, they resumed their romance, as Wood closely observed. “I made sure that Reagan got advance notice when Jane visited him on the set. I knew she and Ann were good friends, a friendship that would have come to an abrupt end if she’d caught her husband banging Ann in her dressing room. Fortunately, that never happened.”

“The role of Drake was an acting chore that got down and deep inside me and kind of wrung me out,” Reagan recalled, years later. “The early scenes were easier. In those, I played a gay blade who cut a swathe among the ladies.”

“Ann was a great help, practically giving me acting lessons. We spent a lot of time rehearsing the scenes, not just of the two of us. Sometimes, she played Parris when Cummings wasn’t around to rehearse with me.”

During the making of *Kings Row*, Sheridan told him that she’d heard “a rumor that Bette Davis wants your strong brown arms around her in her upcoming film, *Now, Voyager.”*

“I thought Bette detested me,” Reagan said.

“Don’t kid yourself,” Sheridan said. “She wants you to fuck her in spite of your rejection of her offscreen in *Dark Victory.”*

Both Sheridan and Reagan knew that Cummings was better suited to comedies than to heavy drama. However, Alfred Hitchcock didn’t think so. The Missouri-born actor told them that Hitchcock had just signed him to star in *Saboteur* (1942).

In the controversial adaptation of the novel *Kings Row*, Reagan played Drake, a young trust-fund philanderer, a radical change of pace for him.

Robert Cummings *(left)* was cast as Parris, his close friend from childhood.

Just as Reagan hated flying, Cummings had a passion for it, and kept urging Reagan to “come fly with me.” Sheridan had told him that their fellow actor, who was to marry five times and father seven children, “Liked an occasional boy.” Reagan assumed that Cummings’ invitation “to come fly with me” was actually a sexual pass.

To attend a cast party, Sheridan made Cummings up and let him wear her clothes to the informal event.

In later life, Reagan was saddened to see Cummings, an advocate of natural foods and a healthy diet, succumb to drug addiction.

Within a year after making *Kings Row*, Cummings would join the U.S. Army Air Corps, becoming a flight instructor.

Reagan recalled, "Robert fell for all that Warners publicity crap about what an ace pilot I was. In all my talks about flying with him, never once did he see through the ruse. I must have sounded like the aviator I certainly wasn't."

"Young Reagan was such an easy-going and fun person to be around that he was clearly the best-loved actor on the set," said Coburn. "I really hated it later when I had to amputate his legs," he joked.

Rising from the swamps of Georgia, Charles Coburn, born in 1877, said he started his theatrical career handing out programs in the local Savannah Theater. He'd made his debut on Broadway back in 1901. He often performed on stage with his first wife, actress Ivah Wills. After his wife died in 1937, he came to Hollywood to begin film work. Today, he is best remembered for his appearance opposite Marilyn Monroe in the 1953 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. At the time he met Reagan, he'd just finished *The Lady Eve* (1941), with Barbara Stanwyck.

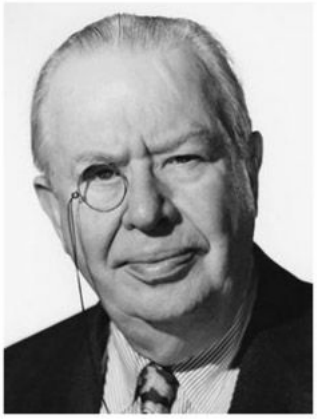
In the same year that he played a sadistic doctor in *Kings Row*, he also made *In This Our Life*. Reagan kidded him: "As Bette Davis' pathetic uncle, you seemed to display an unnatural interest in your niece."

An associate producer, David Lewis, was on the set almost every day. As Sheridan noted, "David seems to follow Ronnie around with panting tongue."

[But did Reagan keep his promise to let Lewis give him nude massages during filming? The only source for that is Wood, who claimed he walked in one day on Reagan as he lay nude on a cot receiving a sensual massage from his associate producer.

"I told the boys to carry on and left," Wood told Sheridan. "I suspect it's one of those George Cukor/Clark Gable director/actor seductions.]

Reagan later recalled that two of the most formidable actresses he ever worked with were Maria Ouspenskaya and Judith Anderson. Born in 1876 during the days of the Russian Empire, Ouspenskaya became an acting teacher and a stage star. She came to Hollywood and had early success in *Dodsworth* (1936), which brought her an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress. When she met Reagan, she was at the peak of her career, appearing as an old Gypsy fortuneteller in the horror film, *The Wolf Man* (1941). She had had other hits in *The Rains Came* (1939), with Tyrone Power, and in *Waterloo Bridge* (1940) with Robert Taylor and Vivien Leigh.



A major-league sadist masquerading as a decent, small town doctor: Charles Coburn.

Anderson, an Australian, had just been nominated as Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of the malevolently lesbian Mrs. Danvers (the housekeeper) in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940). After *Kings Row*, she would go on to appear in many memorable films, including *Laura* (1944), and in Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), with Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman.

London-born Claude Rains had first thrilled Reagan in his appearance in *The Invisible Man* (1933). "From *Casablanca* (1942) to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Claude was one of the most talented actors who ever appeared before a camera," Reagan claimed.

Nancy Coleman, who came from Washington State, was a minor actress who played Louise Gordon (the daughter of Coburn's character, the sadistic Dr. Gordon) in *Kings Row*. Her early romance with Reagan prompts the doctor to (sadistically and unnecessarily) amputate his legs after an accident at the railroad tracks.

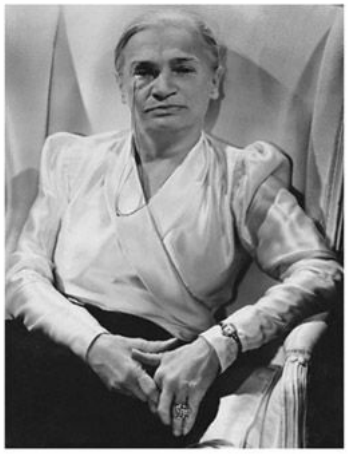
Coleman would work with Reagan and Errol Flynn in their upcoming movie, *Desperate Journey* (1942).

Three talented technicians contributed greatly to the success of *Kings Row*. They included a Chinese American cinematographer, James Wong Howe, a master of the use of shadow and one of the first to use deep-focus

cinematography.

An American composer of Austro-Hungarian birth, Erich Wolfgang Korngold was one of the leading composers of Hollywood's Golden Age, rivaled by Max Steiner and Alfred Newman.

For the film's production design, there was no one better than a Connecticut Yankee, William Cameron Menzies. At Hollywood's first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929, Menzies had won an Oscar for Best Art Direction for his work on *The Dove* and *the Tempest*.



Maria Ouspenskaya, a relic of the Romanov Empire.

Reagan knew his most challenging moment would be the scene where he wakes up to discover that the sadistic doctor had amputated his legs. "I had to find out how it really felt, short of actual amputation," he said. "I woke up in the morning, rehearsing the line, looking up at the ceiling. I even rehearsed in front of mirrors in the men's rooms of restaurants. I consulted doctors and psychologists. Anything to summon up the cauldron of emotions a man must feel who wakes up one sunny morning to find half of himself gone. Ann worked with me over and over again on the scene. I had to get it right."

He later said, "Perhaps I never did quite as well again in a single shot."

Claude Rains told Reagan "I am Bette Davis' favorite actor."

Reagan replied, "I'm her least favorite."

The day he walked onto the set in pajamas and a nightshirt, Jane had come, with little Maureen, to greet him and wish him well.

He discovered that the prop men had cut a hole in the mattress and installed a structural support, with a void, beneath the opening. Reagan had to sink his legs into that hole.

"Lights! Camera! Action!" the director commanded at the beginning of the shot

Then Reagan, as Drake, screams, "Randy!" Again, "Randy! Randy!" In desperation, his hand reached down, grasping for but not finding his thighs. He quivers like a slain animal in his death throes. "Where's the rest of me?"

With the delivery of that line, Reagan entered screen immortality.

Wood pronounced it a wrap after the only one take.

Playing an almost demented, deeply repressed daughter: Nancy Coleman

Cummings later recalled, “When Ronnie delivered that line to movie audiences, across the country, at first, they thought his genitals had been cut off, too. There were gasps of horror.”

Amazingly, Wood revealed that Reagan’s scene of post-amputation was almost cut from the film’s final version. “Too many American servicemen in 1942 were getting their legs amputated. There was a fear that audiences would react in horror to Reagan’s scene, as it was too close to what was going on in the real world. Jack Warner suggested that I shoot the scene so that Reagan discovers that only one leg was removed, but I held out for both legs being amputated. Finally, I persuaded Warner to agree to it.”

In the movie, unlike events as they transpired within the book, when Drake dies of cancer, Reagan recovers from a deep depression and finds personal redemption through the love and support of his beloved Randy (Sheridan). She helps him become a successful real estate developer, and he recognizes that life is worth living, even without legs.

Also cast in *Kings Row*, Judith Anderson had previously appeared in an even more famous movie as Mrs. Danvers, the cold, imperious, and ultimately, psychotic, housekeeper in *Rebecca* (1940).

In 1945, the year of his death, the novelist, Bellamann, was working on his novel’s sequel, *Parris Mitchell of Kings Row*. Katharine, his wife, finished the novel for him, publishing it posthumously in 1948.

Although *Kings Row*—Reagan’s greatest screen role—became a classic, it did not get good reviews. Bosley Crowther, writing for *The New York Times* described it as “gloomy and ponderous.”

Harrison’s Reports defined it as “A powerful but somewhat depressing drama.”

In spite of the attacks, *Kings Row* was nominated for three separate Oscars: Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Black and White Cinematography. But MGM’s *Mrs. Miniver* carried off all three of those prizes.

In general, Reagan fared better than Cummings. Crowther, for example wrote, “Cummings looks and acts like a musical-comedy juvenile trying to find his bearings in this heavy Ibsenesque plot.”

There was talk that Reagan might be nominated for an Academy Award, but Warners decided to throw its powerful support behind *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, starring James Cagney, instead.

The American Medical Association strongly attacked the movie because of its portrayal of doctors in such an unflattering glare.

“*Kings Row* was the finest picture I ever appeared in, and it elevated me to the degree of stardom I had dreamed of when I first came to Hollywood in 1937,” Reagan said.

The film developed something of a negative image after its release in February of 1942. “America had gone to

war, and *Kings Row* was hardly a morale booster," Reagan said. "All the other studios were rushing into production of pictures to lift the American spirit and imbue us with hope of winning the war. Our picture presented a depressing view of small town America, quite unlike those Andy Hardy films with Mickey Rooney. I bet Hitler would have loved *Kings Row* if Josef Goebbels could slip a pirated copy into Berlin."

Before Reagan could really capitalize off his breakthrough role, he'd have to join the Army. He failed to take advantage of his new position as a top star at Warners, and noted to his severe disappointment the juicy roles he lost between 1943 and 1946.

After the war, his film career would never regain the momentum it had momentarily achieved.

Reagan to Ann Sheridan, in reference to his amputated legs: "Where's the Rest of Me?"

Kings Row had another downside. Jane Wyman later confessed to Joan Blondell. "It may ultimately have contributed to my divorce from Ronnie. He screened it countless times, every time someone came over, although they might have seen it already. Night after night, I had to watch that film. I came to know every line every actor in it delivered. I got so I couldn't take it anymore. Finally, I told Ronnie, 'Why in hell don't you make another movie instead of reliving your one moment of screen glory?' That pissed him off."

Chapter Eight

After His Success in Kings Row, Reagan Becomes MCA's "Million Dollar Baby"

Drafted into the Army, Reagan Objects to Medical Personnel Fondling "The Family Jewels"

In a mink coat with some strings of pearls, Jane Wyman salutes 2nd Lt. Ronald Reagan, of the Army Air Force Personnel Office, in the autumn of 1942. Granted referrals, he had continued to make movies that year until he was finally called up for duty.

Since he was "blind as a bat," he was not fit for active duty. Instead, he'd begin to make war propaganda movies.

In *Juke Girl* (a secret reference to a prostitute), Ronald Reagan gave Ann Sheridan, his sometimes mistress, the most passionate kiss of his screen career.

When Jane Wyman saw this publicity still, she lamented, "If only he kissed me this way at home!"

In the summer of 1941, with Europe at war, many young American men faced being drafted

into the military. Millions of Americans believed that the United States could stay out of the war—but not Reagan. He was convinced that an American involvement in World War II was inevitable. But because of his poor vision, he didn't think he would ever be drafted.

Actually, he didn't want to go into the Army. At long last, he was on the verge of major stardom, a dream cherished for so long, and he had a beautiful wife and a baby girl.

A uniformed movie star with wholesome, Midwestern roots and a mother, Nelle, who adores him.

Nelle paid a visit in September of 1943 to "Fort Roach," the headquarters of Reagan's film production unit. He always responded in anger when someone accused him of "being a draft dodger avoiding danger."

He cited how valuable to the war effort war propaganda films were.

To his chagrin, during the making of *Kings Row*, his status as a member of the U.S. Cavalry reserve was revoked, thereby making him immediately eligible for active duty.

He was devastated. As he complained to Dick Powell, "I've worked and labored for this moment, and now that it's here, it seems that the government has other plans for me. If I'm drafted into the Army and spend several years away from Hollywood, I won't have any fans left when I get back."

"That's always a possibility," Powell said. "In Hollywood, our replacements are always pounding on studio doors. The old-timers like Clark Gable will return to face a new crowd of good-looking guys at Warners, MGM, Paramount, whatever. By the end of the 1940s, a whole new generation of younger guys will be enlisted as replacements for Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, and Robert Taylor. The stars of the 1930s will be viewed as over the hill, long in the tooth, and washed up."

"Stop!" Reagan said. "You're just too depressing."

In response to a letter he received, Reagan got up early one morning, kissed Jane goodbye, and drove to March Field for his physical. His athletic body passed the medical examination. As he later said, "I didn't like some young guy, just out of medical school, fondling my balls, but it's all in the game."

Two doctors later, however, bluntly informed him that although he'd passed the physical, "You're as blind as a bat. If we gave you a gun, you'd probably end up accidentally shooting at General Eisenhower."

"And based on your lousy vision, you'd probably miss," the other doctor said.

Reagan was given a copy of his medical report. It recommended "Limited service— eligible for corps area service command, or War Department Overhead only."

At the time, men so designated were rarely drafted. Reagan told friends, "It's highly unlikely I'll ever be called."

However, while he was still asleep, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a call came in from Neil (Moon) Reagan. "Wake up, Dutch!" he shouted into the phone. "We're at war. The Japs attacked Pearl Harbor this morning."

At the time of America's entry into World War II, Reagan was only thirty years old— and still draftable. Within a week, he was instructed to report to Fort Mason at the port of San Francisco, where warships were launched for action in the Pacific.

Right after the Japanese attack, young men across America, many of them either outraged or in a state of

numbed disbelief and/or shock, lined up at their local draft boards. Based on his association with Warners, Reagan, however, was not among them.

Lew Wasserman, Reagan's agent at MCA, called on Jack Warner, asking him to write a letter to the Assistant Secretary of the War Department, seeking temporary deferment. Warner claimed that Reagan was vital to the financial security of his studio. He also stated that he planned to cast Reagan in "propaganda films," conceived to boost the morale and resolve of the American public.

Within thirty days, Reagan received notice from the War Department that he would be deferred until April of 1942. Then, after reappraisal, if inducted into the Army, he'd be assigned the rank of second lieutenant.

The implications of Reagan being drafted meant that Jane would, in essence, become the breadwinner of the household. Wasserman, who was also her agent, managed to renegotiate her contract, raising her salary to $750 a week, although she was still mired in B pictures—and would be for some time.

With that increase in salary, she could easily afford the $15,000 mortgage they'd taken on their new home in the Hollywood Hills. It called for a payment of only $125 a month.

Although Reagan's contract with Warners wouldn't expire until 1944, Wasserman urged him to let him try to re-negotiate his movie contract anyway. During Wasserman's subsequent meeting with Jack Warner, the agent pressed his case. "I think that when *Kings Row* is released, Ronnie is going to move into the top tier of male movie stars. You'd better sign him for another seven years, or I'll let his contract expire and I'll freelance him. Louis B. Mayer has already hinted to me that he'd like to make Reagan a boy star at MGM."

Warners had seen a sneak preview of *Kings Row* and agreed with Wasserman's assessment. The new contract called for him to pay Reagan $758,000 over a seven-year period.

Reagan had an ally in Col. Lewis B. Hershey, director of the Selective Service, who viewed morale-boosting movies as "essential to the national health, safety, and interest of America."

He cited war movies under production as a virtual "second front" in its propaganda wars against both Japan and

the Nazis. Now that America was no longer neutral, Hershey requested that all studios, including Warners, make "the Japs the most evil monsters who ever inhabited the Earth and Hitler's Nazis devil worshippers intent on enslaving the world."

Warner told Reagan, "I want to get deferments for you until you've made three more pictures after *Juke Girl* (1942) and *Desperate Journey* (also 1942). I'll try to convince the War Department that it's more vital to have you turning out American propaganda movies that taking some desk job in the Army. With your eyesight, that's exactly what you'll become, a paper pusher."

"If you can make a lot of films, at least five in 1942 and 1943, I'll release one a year. That way, your fans won't forget you. You know, those jerks are a fickle lot, but they keep us in pussy, potatoes, and Porsches."

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Reagan immediately went into production on *Juke Girl* with his favorite actress and sometime lover, Ann Sheridan. She had married George Brent on January 5, 1942.

Originally, Warner had cast Ida Lupino in the lead, but when *Kings Row* opened with such success, he wanted to reteam Sheridan with Reagan. "I probably should make five or six pictures teaming you and your Ronnie boy, our answer to MGM's Spencer Tracy and Hepburn, the faggot and the lesbian," Warner said to Sheridan. "At least you and Reagan are heterosexuals—as far as I know. In Hollywood, of course, you can never be sure."

After Reagan read the script, he was disappointed. So was Sheridan. "This is not exactly a great wedding present from Warners," she told Reagan.

As a follow-up to his success as Drake in *Kings Row*, he had wanted something stronger. *Juke Girl* was a dreary story about a slovenly group of itinerant crop pickers in Florida, highlighting conflicts between laborers in the field and management's taking advantage of them.

"I'd call it the truck farmer's version of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath,*" Sheridan said. "A grim melodrama."

A.I. Bezzerides and Kenneth Gamet had adapted the story from Theodore Pratt. Although Pratt had originated in Minnesota, most of his novels were set in Florida, where he lived. Originally, he'd entitled his story "Jook Girl." Jook was a reference to a small roadside joint in the southeastern United States where one could eat, drink, and dance to music from a jukebox.

After reading the script, Reagan called Sheridan. "What in hell is a Juke Girl?"

"It's a euphemism for whore," she answered. "It's not spelled out in the script, but juke gals work a tavern catering to farm workers."

“Sounds like we’re making a filthy picture,” he said.

“Not at all,” she answered. “It’s more about crops than cocks.”

Once again, Reagan was helmed by the German director, Curtis Bernhardt, who did not seem happy with his latest assignment. He later said, “I did not like either of the pictures I made with Mr. Reagan, neither *Million Dollar Baby* nor *Juke Girl*. He was a sort of unimportant, pleasant, healthy, typically American boy, nothing special about him at all. I did not expect much of a future for him in films. He had a nice smile that might work better if he were an insurance salesman.”

“The only time he heated up on camera was when he made love to Annie Sheridan,” Bernhardt claimed. “In one love match, shooting began on Wednesday and ended on Friday. She’d just come off her honeymoon, but it looked like she was getting ready for a second honeymoon with Reagan. When I finally finished the scene, I advised the two of them to get a room. It appeared to me that they took my advice, but I suspected that something was going on between those two long before they came together in *Juke Girl*. I hoped George Brent wouldn’t find out.”

Cast as Steve Talbot, Reagan played a drifter who arrives in Florida with his friend, Danny Frazier (Richard Whorf). They seek work in the tomato fields. Their friendship is strained when Steve sides with a farmer, Nick Garcos (George Tobias), in his struggle with Henry Madden (Gene Lockhart), who controls a fruit farm and packaging plant.

In a complicated plot, the story moves forward with violence, killings, commercial intrigue, even mob justice. Reagan would forever remember the battle of the tomatoes. At one point, he squashed a big, fat, juicy tomato into Lockhart’s face.

In one scene, hired thugs try to break the resolve of an independent farmer by smashing truckloads of his tomato crates. After wallowing in squashed tomatoes for three nights, Reagan said, “With all the misconceptions about pampered stars, none is so far afield as the belief that physical discomfort isn’t tolerated. On the first night, we used real tomatoes in the trucks. A crew placed them back in the trucks for the filming on the third and fourth nights. By this time, the tomatoes were rotten and stunk like hog heaven. Not only that, but I always despised tomatoes.”

The film was supposed to take place among crop pickers in the humid heat of Florida. But actually, it was shot in the wintry cold of Central California, the temperature dropping one night to 27° F. Since the actors needed to have sweaty faces, they often rubbed glycerine on their skin to create the illusion. Bernhardt asked some of the men to smoke cigarettes to explain the vapor in the night air. When the breath vapor became too visible, Bern-hardt would have to call for a halt in filming.

In *Juke Girl*, Reagan appears in a scene in a bar with George Tobias (*center)* and Richard Whorf. The dwindling members of his fast-fading fan clubs considered this the “lustiest” picture of him ever taken. “He’s got a gleam in his eyes,” said Brenda Fairfield, president of his Los Angeles Fan Club. “He was never more beautiful, and he seems to be looking at a stripper.”

Sheridan was given star billing as Lola Mears, the *Juke Girl* herself. Steve (i,.e, Reagan) romances Lola, but she seems reluctant to commit because of her shady past. She takes a job in Atlanta, Georgia, telling Steve he’ll be better off without her. However, they become closer when a lynch mob goes after them both. Before the final curtain, Lola and Steve, united in love, agree to settle down on their own farm and give up their tumbleweed lives.

When not occupying his time with Sheridan, Reagan spent evenings with William Hopper, Hedda’s son. He’d been cast in *Juke Girl* in an uncredited role as a postal clerk. “Stardom seems to have eluded me,” he told Reagan.

On location, he asked to bunk with Reagan as he’d done before, and Reagan agreed. He no longer felt as uncomfortable around William as he had before. He was free to undress in front of him, take a shower, and share a

bed with him. At one point, he asked William, “Have you gotten over your crush on me?”

“Far from it,” William proclaimed. “When Ronnie Reagan is old and gray, he can put his shoes under my bed any night he wants.”

Sheridan claimed that, in some perverse way, “I think Ronnie gets off on the adulation Bill heaps on him. After all, it’s pretty god damn hard to reject being adored. Bill flattered him constantly. After even the simplest scene, Bill would praise him, calling him the most brilliant actor in films today.”

Sometimes, as Reagan sat with William and Sheridan around a campfire, they listened to music composed and performed, informally, by Lockhart. Although he played the villain in the film, off screen, he was polite and charming. He wrote lyrics for songs, and sang many of his creations for them.

He told Reagan, “I’m in the bio period of my career—*Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940); *Edison the Man* (1940); *Billy the Kid* (1941); and *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (1941). He had just filmed *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941) with Errol Flynn cast as General Custer.

Reagan told him, “I’m seriously pissed off that I didn’t get to play General Custer. After all, I was Custer in *Santa Fe Trail*. I think Jack Warner fucked me by not giving me the role again.”

“Win some, lose some,” Lockhart said.

Reagan was distressed to learn that Howard da Silva had been cast as Cully in *Juke Girl*. He had detested that actor ever since he’d told him that Jane was having an affair with Dennis Morgan during their work together on *Bad Men of Missouri*.

Two weeks into the shoot, Reagan also had a reunion of sorts with Faye Emerson, who had flirted outrageously with him when they’d shot *Nine Lives Are Not Enough*. Once again, she flirted with him, and once again, he showed no interest in her at all.

In one of the more dramatic moments of *Juke Girl*, Reagan smashes a big, rotten tomato in the face of Gene Lockhart, who plays the vicious owner of a fruit farm and packing plant.

Reagan was the most physically violent of all U.S. presidents—that is, on the screen.

Cast as a fellow drifter and itinerant worker, Whorf was very talented, later becoming an author, director, and designer. At the time he met Reagan, he was appearing in far better A-list pictures, including *Yankee Doodle Dandy* with James Cagney (1942); and *Keeper of the Flame* (1943), with Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn.

One night at a local tavern, Reagan and Whorf joined Alan Hale, Sr., and associate producer Jack Saper, who were also involved in the filming of *Juke Girl*. Both Saper and Hale told Reagan they looked forward to working with him and Flynn on their upcoming movie, *Desperate Journey*.

Reagan had recently made *Tugboat Annie Sails Again* with Hale. Reagan later said, “There was one thing Hale could do— and that was drink. He played a drunk on *Santa Fe Trail* with Errol and me, and he wasn’t acting. I could nurse a drink for an hour or two. Hale could drink all night. He obviously had a hollow wooden leg. He told me that once in Texas, he’d drunk for thirty-six uninterrupted hours. I told him, ‘That’s impossible.’ He claimed that every hour or so, he went to the toilet and threw up and then came back for more. What a man! What a disaster!”

In Reagan’s view, Tobias, a New Yorker, was pleasant and easy to work with. He had signed with Warners in 1939, playing supporting roles in such movies as *Yankee Doodle Dandy (1940)*, with James Cagney, and in *Sergeant York* (1941) with Gary Cooper. Tobias said he’d gotten his start by appearing as a Russian visa officer in Greta Garbo’s 1939 *Ninotchka*.

Otherwise deeply involved in wartime film and propaganda production, Jack Warner had given producer Hal B. Wallis a clear hand without any interference during the shooting of *Juke Girl*. At first, based on the title, Warner

thought it was a musical. That was partially true: In the movie, as Lola, Sheridan is a singer, warbling "I Hates Love."

But when Warner was screened a rough cut of the film, he was horrified at its pro-union stance. During his long and turbulent battles with union workers, Warner had sided with Walt Disney's anti-labor stance.

Juke Girl marked the beginning of the end of Warner's long association with Wallis He would make only one more movie for Warners, *Casablanca* (1942), before leaving the studio.

Reviews were lackluster, if not hostile, when *Juke Girl* opened across the country. *The New York Times* defined it as "another Warner's semi-social life-in-the-raw-drama, where a lot of slangy lingo is tossed fast and loose. As a cynic, Sheridan contrasts with Reagan, an idealist, who is stanch *(sic)* as a young hero. The whole smacks too much of the synthetic. It's like a tune that comes out of a jukebox."

Sheridan and Brent on their honeymoon in May of 1942.

No sooner was Reagan back in Hollywood, than he received a call from Warner, who with his typical vulgarity, said, "Get yourself some pussy and head out again. You don't want to keep Errol Flynn waiting on his *Desperate Journey."*

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On location for *Juke Girl*, Reagan had come to know Ann Sheridan as he never had before or would ever again in the future.

It was obvious to him that she was very unhappy about her recent marriage to George Brent, with whom Reagan had co-starred in *Dark Victory*. "George's marriages usually don't make it through the honeymoon," she said. "I also suspect that he's resumed his affair with Bette Davis."

"He's a real penny pincher," Sheridan complained. "He recently told a reporter, 'I'm saving my money. You can't play Shirley Temple forever.' He told me I had to buy all my own clothes and that I had to pay half of the household expenses."

"That's a better deal than I'm offering to my poor Jane," he told her. "If I go into the Army, she'll have to pay all of the household expenses, including bringing up Baby Maureen. On a soldier's pay, Jane can't expect me to buy her expensive gowns."

"Oh, you men," Sheridan answered. "Excuses, excuses." It's more than the money thing. George is very withdrawn at times, going into deep, dark moods. He'll lock himself away and not speak to me for days. I think he hits the bottle during those periods of isolation. Right before marrying me, he had this affair with Ilona Massey when they made *International Lady* (1941). Apparently, he likes her Hungarian goulash. The picture should be retitled *An International Affair."*

"You know better than most that all of us—the handsome hunks of the screen—face impossible temptations,"

he said. “After all, we’re horny guys and they cast us with the most desirable women on the planet—and that means you, sugar.”

“You’re right, she said. “I didn’t really expect a womanizer like George to be faithful. Frankly, I’m a ‘man-nizer’ if there’s such a word. I think an actor and an actress should not marry. I wonder at times how you and Jane will make it. It’s inevitable that one star will become a bigger star than the other—call it professional jealousy. I’ve already become a bigger star than he is. You saw *A Star is Born*, of course. George is low octane; I’m high octane. Some reporters are already referring to him as a has-been of the 1930s with a career in decline. Annie Gal is going up, up, just like you.”

“As Hollywood stars, you and me, baby, the King and the Queen of the Bs, are going to become the King and Queen of Warners—forget that smokestack, Bette Davis. As for Flynn, he’ll probably end up in jail for raping an eight-year-old girl…or boy, perhaps.”

During the course of the evening, she admitted that she went to Jack Warner to protest against having to appear in *Juke Girl*. “He threatened me with suspension again.”

On location, both of them shared their dreams. She had learned that Warner had acquired the rights to Edna Ferber’s sprawling novel, *Saratoga Trunk*. She was “burning with desire” (her words) to play the heroine of the novel, whom she described as a Creole version of Scarlett O’Hara.

Two bathing beauties, Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman, on their honeymoon in Palm Springs, 1940.

Reagan was astonished to learn that she’d recommended him to Jack Warner, suggesting that he play the male lead, a cowboy, in Saratoga Trunk. He’d never read the novel, and she told him she’d lend him her copy.

“I’m already working in Hollywood with a French teacher,” she said. “Right now, he’s got me speaking ‘Franco-Texan.’ I’m even willing to don a blonde wig for my screen test.”

[Reagan did read the novel and, indeed, thought he could play the role of the cowboy. But his getting drafted into the Army ended that possibility. As for Sheridan, she made a screen test, which, according to Jack Warner, was “so god damn awful I couldn’t even show it to her.”

In 1945, Saratoga Trunk *was released, the role of the Creole vixen having gone to a Swede, Ingrid Bergman, playing opposite cowboy Gary Cooper. One critic claimed that “at times, it is unbearable to sit through this disaster.” That made Reagan feel better that he’d lost the role.]*

On long, lonely nights, Reagan and Sheridan talked about their upcoming projects—*Desperate Journey* for him, and the flag-waving *Wings for the Eagle* (1942) for her. “My co-star is that dreamboat, Dennis Morgan,” she told him. “He’s got all the starlets at Warners salivating.”

“I know that Morgan has been married for years,” he said. “Do you think he messes around with his leading ladies?”

“Do you think a bear shits in the woods?” she answered. “Sure, he does. He’s a prize catch. Just ask such leading ladies as Ginger Rogers and Merle Oberon.”

He didn’t want her to know that their co-star, Howard da Silva, had told him about rumors of an affair between Morgan and Jane. He was, in essence, fishing for information.

Sheridan was trying to escape the *Oomph Girl* image and wanted to be viewed more seriously as an actress. “I don’t know if this recent publicity will help me,” she said.

She showed him an article that defined her as “a hash house version of Carole Lombard who combines comedy with sex appeal.” The article also noted that it was appropriate that she was working on a movie with truck drivers. “Sheridan is known for her foul language and can outcurse any truck driver.”

He noticed that on her dressing table she kept a picture of herself as Clara Lou from Denton, Texas. “I was all pudgy fat with kinky hair and a space between my teeth. But in a few months, I turned myself into a beauty contest winner, even though I’ve got no tits.”

I think you’re lovely, and your tits are just fine with me.”

“I like your balls, too,” she said.

[George Brent drove up from Los Angeles and made a surprise visit to the set of Juke Girl, *where Curtis Bernhardt was shooting a scene at night.*

What happened is not exactly known, except it became fodder for Hollywood gossip. All that is known for sure is that Brent gave Reagan a black eye. Someone told him that Reagan was having an affair with his wife. The culprit was the gossipy Howard da Silva, who had revealed Jane’s earlier indiscretion with Dennis Morgan.

What is known is that Bernhardt had to order heavy makeup to camouflage Reagan’s black eye. “Fortunately, I was shooting night scenes, and I could cast his left eye in shadow,” the director said. “He told me he bumped into a door when he got up one night to take a piss. Brent told me he punched ‘the hell out of Reagan.’ I prefer to believe Brent.”]

Not wanting to alert Jane to the incident, Sheridan temporarily quit accepting invitations to the Reagan household for dinner. Sheridan and Jane would make two more pictures together in the 1940s. Apparently, Jane never learned of the affair between Sheridan and her husband. If she did, she never confronted Sheridan about it.

According to Joan Blondell, when rumors of Reagan’s infidelity reached Jane, she had a tendency to brush them aside.

As she once told Blondell, “How can I expect fidelity from him when he can’t expect it from me? The pot can hardly call the kettle black.”

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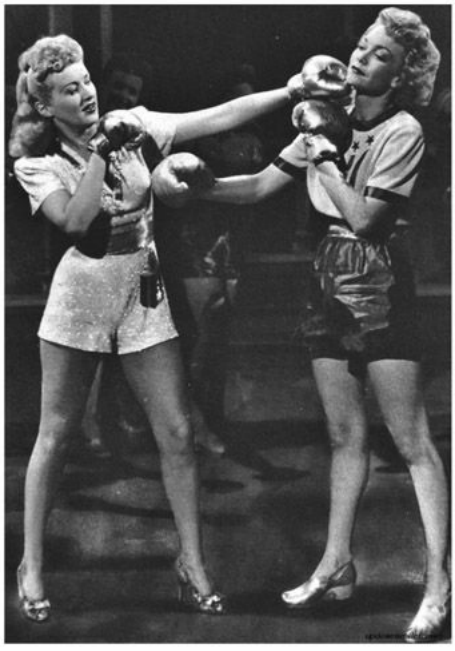
Paulette Goddard picked up the phone to hear Jane’s voice bubbling over with excitement, even though it held a hint of anxiety. “You won’t believe this, but that Russian bear, Gregory Ratoff, has cast me in *Footlight Serenade* (1942) with John Payne as my leading man. Betty Grable and Victor Mature are in it, too.”



Betty Grable *(left)* and Jane Wyman duke it out in *Footlight Serenade*. Jane worried that her legs weren’t as beautiful as those of Grable.

“I heard that Grable and Mature are really going at it,” Goddard said. “With them teamed up with lovebirds like

you and John, the film should be retitled *Lovers Quartet*. You might steal Mature away from Grable one night just to find out what the excitement is all about."

"Your suggestions are always so outrageous—that's why I adore you so," Jane said.

"You are one lucky girl," Goddard said. "John Payne and Mature are the two sexiest men in Hollywood. I got John Wayne on my last picture. What a dud! Guess what? I'm now making another movie. Are you sitting down? It's called *The Forest Rangers* (1942)."

"Who's in it?" Jane asked.

"That red-haired bitch, Susan Hayward, is the other leading lady. In the movie, and perhaps later in real life, too, we've got to fight it out for Fred MacMurray. I saw a picture of him shirtless. He's got a great body, and I must investigate below the belt. Did you have to duke it out with Hayward for Ronnie boy?"

"I did and you can declare me the winner," Jane said. "He promised he'd never see her again."

"I met Regis Toomey," Goddard said. "He's in my picture, too. You and Regis, as you know, hold the world's screen kiss record. Frankly, I wouldn't even let that loser kiss me on the cheek."

"I did it for a day's pay," she said. "He knows he has no future as a leading man. He actually said something smart. He told me, 'I'd rather be a supporting actor than a star—supporting actors last longer.'"

"True, true," Goddard said. "But he left out something. A true female movie star, after the blush of youth fades, can always marry a very rich man and live in luxury for the rest of her life. Men love to marry movie stars."

Incidentally, my divorce from Charlie *[Chaplin]* is coming through in June *[1942]*. I'm a bachelor gal once again—thank God. I'm playing the field, darling."

While preparing for her third picture in 1942, Jane read Robert Ellis' script of *Footlight Serenade*. "Hell in a basket," she told Reagan and others. "Here I am, playing Betty Grable's sidekick. Always a sidekick, never a star. I get to rub Grable's ankles when she's tired from dancing. Betty and I started out in the chorus line with Goddard and Lucille Ball. Now Betty's heading for the bigtime, and I'm still taking the leftovers."

"It's not so bad," Reagan assured her. "At least you're drawing a fine paycheck."

When Reagan read the script, he said, "I see that John Payne plays your husband. I worked out with him when you guys did *Kid Nightingale*. My god, that guy practically did a striptease on camera. I hear the gals really go for him. But in this flicker, he's got to compete with a guy they call 'The Body Beautiful.'"

Cast as a conceited boxer, a shirtless Victor Mature is interviewed by an admiring news reporter.

[The reference was to Victor Mature, cast as a conceited heavyweight boxing champion who wants to put on a Broadway show with a part for Betty Grable. Unknown to Mature, Jane, in a secondary role, is secretly married to Payne, also in the cast. The predictable complications ensue. No one ever accused Ellis of being a great screenwriter.]

"Ellis must have been on something when he came up with the name of my character," Jane said. "Flo La Verne. Isn't that just too precious for words?"

Ellis gave Jane a line that would have no special meaning for 1942 audiences, but which would get a laugh when shown to audiences in the Reagan 1980s. At one point, Grable tells Jane that she plans to become the understudy to the star of the show. Jane quips, "You have as much of a chance of being the understudy as I have of being the First Lady."

Torn between two hunks, John Payne *(left)* and Victor Mature, Betty Grable called herself "The luckiest girl in the world. I had both of them. Jane Wyman prefers John."

[As Jane told Goddard in the early 1980s, "Had I stayed married to Ronnie, I'd be First Lady now, going down in the history books. The way it is, history will shine on that little MGM starlet, instead. What was the poor dear's name? Nancy something? I went to see one of her movies only because it had my friend, Barbara Stanwyck, in it. I fell into a deadly coma."]

Although Jane had met Grable at the same time she had been introduced to Goddard and Lucille Ball, she'd never been as close to Grable as she was to the other two actresses.

Ratoff told Jane that Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox had granted Grable some leeway in the selection of her female co-star. Ironically, the two choices were Jane and Ball. Grable chose Ball because she said, "Her career has fallen into the briar patch."

When Ball arrived for lunch with Jane and Grable, Grable was not available, as she had retreated with Mature.

At table, Ball said to Jane, "Long time no see, kid."

"I heard you turned down my role," Jane said. "Is my part that bad?"

"It was okay, rather routine," Ball said. "My real reason is that I wanted to star in *The Big Street* (1942). If I'd accepted *Footlight*, I wouldn't be available for *The Big Street*. By the way, I hear RKO is not going to renew my contract."

"I hope that's just a rumor and that it isn't ture," Jane said. "All of us live in fear of losing our contracts. I think you're great, and I loved you and Desi *[Arnaz]* in *Too Many Girls* (1940)."

"I did, too," Ball said, "and at least I met Desi. I'm mad about the boy. So are a hundred other women. Darling Desi likes to service all of us, including, on occasion, the cocksucking mouth of César Romero."

Both women shared memories of the early 1930s and their struggles at the time, remembering when they'd been cast in the chorus line of *The Kid From Spain*. Although Jane wasn't delighted with her current role, she vowed to make the best of it.

"For me, the highlight of the movie will be when I put on boxing gloves and duke it out with Betty," Jane said. "My anxiety is that we've both got to wear shortie short shorts, and her legs were voted most beautiful in the world."

"We all fall short in some department," Ball said. "As for me, I'm always getting cast with well-stacked broads, and I'm known as the 'No Tit Wonder.'"

For the most part, Jane and Grable got along during the shoot. So far, it seemed that Jane was still unaware of any involvement with the blonde goddess and her husband.

Jealousy did arrive on one occasion, and that was when the costume designer, Earl Luick, presented Grable with a very sexy gown. Grable rejected it. "I'd prefer to wear skunk," she told Luick.

He then crossed out Grable's name on the garment's design sketch and wrote in Wyman's name in its place. After the gown was made, Jane wore it in a scene. At its conclusion, the crew "wolf-whistled" her. In Jane's words, "Betty was seriously pissed off."

Four days later, Grable had recovered from her upset and invited Jane to go with her to Zanuck's office. "I want you to sit outside the door in the secretary's office. If Zanuck tries to rape me, and if you hear me screaming, call security."

Grable remained in Zanuck's office for nearly an hour, and Jane heard no screaming. When she finally emerged, Grable's face was beaming. "No rape, darling, but I got a pay raise to $2,000 a week. Also, a promise to shoot all my future films in Technicolor. And you know how gorgeous I look in Technicolor. He told me he would have shot *Footlight Serenade* in color, but he was in short supply of color stock because of the war."

Jane later said to friends, "I adore Betty, but the green bug bites me, hard, ever so often. Especially that afternoon when she left Zanuck's office. It was not just the pay raise, but she told me she was getting some 5,000

fan letters a week, mostly from servicemen."

Grable had a tough dancing number with her song, "I Heard the Birdies Sing." She had to (cheerfully) engage in a boxing match with her own shadow. For help, she called in her sometimes boyfriend, George Raft. Jane had been seduced by him during the production of *Rumba*, when she had a bit part opposite the female lead, Carole Lombard. Jane came over to him to shake his hand. She later complained to Grable, "The conceited bastard once fucked me. Now he doesn't know me."

Former lovers who hustle—George Raft *(left)* and Rudolf Valentino.

"What does it matter?" Grable asked. "By the way, I think he's a latent homosexual. He lived with Valentino in New York, and I heard those roomies really went at it. During my so-called affair with George, about the only time he ever touched me was to beat me up."

As always, director Ratoff rattled off instructions in his thick Russian accent filled with more malapropisms than Samuel Goldwyn. When he saw that Jane didn't like her role, he suggested, "You should become a bobcat (perhaps he meant 'wildcat'?) like Olivia de Havilland and Bette Davis. They barged into Jack Warner's office and demanded stronger parts. They're getting them."

"I can't do that," Jane said. "Frankly, I'm glad to be employed. Let's face it: Those wisecracking blondes of the 30s, of which I was one, are being shown to the door. Take Glenda Farrell and Joan Blondell, for instance. I fear I might be next. At least, I'm occasionally given the female lead, as when I co-starred with Edward G. Robinson. It's better to work than it is to stand at the gate of Warners looking through the iron bars."

Jane found herself appearing with Phil Silvers again, after having co-starred with him and Jimmy Durante in *You're In the Army Now*.

"This time around, poor ugly Phil, a scene stealer himself, had to compete with two handsome hunks, and he was no match for John and Victor," Jane said. She introduced him around, presenting him as a comedian. He corrected her. "I'm a comic actor. I don't do stand-up." Because he'd just completed filming *My Gal Sal* (1942), he needed no introduction to that picture's male star, Mature himself.

Many envious stars had become profoundly bored with the constant barrage of fan magazine fluff about what an ideal couple Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan were. Consequently, they were eager for news of infidelities associated with either member of the marriage of "America's Sweethearts."

One case emerged when Jane invited singer Joy Hodges to the Fox commissary for lunch. Reagan remembered Hodges fondly for her help in snagging his first screen test. Involved in a car accident, Hodges couldn't make it to the luncheon, but Mature wandered in and asked Jane if he could share her table.

He had been freed of Grable that afternoon because she and John Payne were meeting with director Irving Cummings about their next co-starring vehicle, *Springtime in the Rockies* (1942). "I don't envy Payne," Mature told Jane. "In this upcoming movie with Betty, he's got to fight off the sexual advances of both César Romero and Carmen Miranda."

Throughout most of the luncheon, Mature was quite flirtatious with Jane. She didn't exactly welcome his advances, but didn't reject them either. A photographer snapped a picture of the two of them as he was holding her hand. The next morning, when it appeared in the papers, the rumor mill began grinding out tales of a torrid affair that Mature was conducting with Jane during the filming of the picture. Jane was not as upset as she might have been, because the *faux* romance with Mature threw "the hounds off the scent of John and me," as she told Goddard.

In front of his assembled cast, Ratoff predicted that *Footlight Serenade* would become the hit musical of 1942. He was wrong. Nonetheless, it attracted a reasonable box office success, in large part because of Grable's marvelous dancing and the authentic-looking backstage sets.

Footlight Serenade marked a key moment in Grable's increasing visibility as the box office champion of World War II. Based partly on the success of that film, "The Girl With the Million Dollar Legs" would become the most

famous pinup queen of World War II.

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Juke Girl wrapped late on a Saturday night. By Monday morning, Reagan was rushed into shooting *Desperate Journey*, a sort of anti-Nazi action/adventure/propaganda film with Errol Flynn as his co-star. The script depicted Nazis as dunderheads and nincompoops.

With the exception of Michael Curtiz, Reagan didn't always get a first-rate director, certainly not for his B pictures. That changed with *Desperate Journey*, directed by Raoul Walsh.

Jean Douchet summed up the screen character of director Raoul Walsh, who's depicted above:

"His characters are projected on the world by their own energy and committed to a space that only exists for ther actions, fury, spirit, craft, ambition, and unbridled dreams."

Walsh, a New Yorker, had worn an eyepatch ever since his was driving through the Utah desert and a jackrabbit crashed through his windshield, spraying his face with shattered glass and putting out his right eye.

Prior to his accident, Walsh had portrayed John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin, in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). As an actor, he had also interpreted the role of Gloria Swanson's boyfriend in *Sadie Thompson* (1928). After the loss of his eye, this hard-core Hollywood veteran directed such stars as John Wayne, James Cagney, and Humphrey Bogart.

[Marlene Dietrich told people that Walsh was the biggest "pain in the ass I've ever known."]

Reagan wasn't thrilled at being directed by Walsh, who had just completed *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941) with Errol Flynn cast as General George Armstrong Custer.

Reagan still resented losing the role to Flynn, after he'd portrayed Custer in *Santa Fe Trail*. Reagan's resentment—jealousy, really—increased when he learned that Walsh and Flynn were contemplating five more films in their immediate future—*Gentleman Jim* (1942); *Northern Pursuit* (1943); *Uncertain Glory* (1944); *Objective, Burma!* (1945); and *Silver River* (1948).

Ironically, although many of these upcoming Walsh films contained roles that could have been handled by Reagan, he had to serve in the military. Cynically, he frequently wondered, "If Flynn were such a 'perfect specimen' (as the title of one of his movies had implied), why hadn't he been drafted, too?"

He'd heard rumors of Flynn's ill health, but didn't believe them. "The guy's body looks too terrific to have anything wrong with it," Reagan told his friends. "Walsh and Flynn are so close, they look like brothers…or should I say, lovers? They've got their arms around each other, and they go out at night lowering Hollywood's liquor supply and bursting maidenheads even if there aren't many of them around these days."

Flynn called Walsh "Uncle," the director referring to his star and best friend as "The Baron."

"He's my kind of man," Flynn said to Reagan. "He was an athlete, a stunt rider, a man's man. He's also a man's director, the exact opposite of cocksucking George Cukor, the so-called Women's Director."

Reagan was provocative when he discussed Flynn privately with Walsh. "Does Flynn's homosexuality bother you?"

"Hell, no!" Walsh said. "A stiff prick has no conscience. A hole is a hole is a hole. If it provides sexual relief, it does its job. Why would the gender of a person matter if either one brings sexual satisfaction?"

"I've never heard it put that way before," Reagan said.

“I don’t know how many times Flynn has told me he’s in love,” Walsh said. “Right now, he has the hots for Helmut Dantine. This weekend it will be someone else. He doubles his chances by not being gender specific.”

Unusual for him, Reagan was also provocative when he talked privately with Flynn. “You look in great shape, man,” he said. “But Walsh told me you were classified 4-F.”

“I’ve been examined by private doctors and Army doctors,” Flynn said. “My decadent lifestyle has caught up with me—too much sex, too much liquor, too much opium and cocaine, too many cigarettes. I was told that my heart and lungs are irreparably damaged. One doctor predicted that I have only two years to live.”

Flynn leaned over to Reagan and whispered, “I don’t want this to get around, but I occasionally have recurrent bouts of venereal disease, although I’m clean for now, at least. I have a heart murmur and recurrent malaria. Get this: I also have tuberculosis in my right lung.”

“Sorry to hear that,” Reagan said. “You’d never know any of that crap by looking at you. How are you going to handle all this?”

“I’m going to double up on my smoking and drinking,” he said. “I’m thirty-two years old now, and if I have to leave this earth so soon, I’m going to have sex three times a day—twice with women, the other with some boy ass. If I get horny in between, I’m going to take it out and masturbate, regardless of who’s looking. Would you like me to demonstrate, sport?”

As Flynn started to unzip, Reagan protested, “Not today…maybe a week from now.”

Of the many pictures snapped of Errol Flynn, dressed or undressed, this was his all-time favorite.

He had only one complaint: “It doesn’t show my most celebrated asset.”

Flynn admitted that he had specifically requested Reagan for the role, even though he resented any scene where he might shine. “I found on *Santa Fe Trail* that you and I blend in well together on the screen—good chemistry. Frankly, if you weren’t such a square, we could blend together perfectly off screen, too, as we’re well matched.”

“Errol, I told you—it was NO yesterday, NO today, and NO tomorrow.”

“You’re really missing out on the time of your life, sport,” he answered.

As shooting progressed, Reagan began to take Flynn’s health claims seriously. Before the picture wrapped, his weight had dropped to just 165 pounds. Wardrobe had to re-tailor his wardrobe and in some cases, use padding.

“They don’t have to pad me in the crotch, though,” he told Reagan. “That remains as fat as ever.”

In spite of his bravado, he often didn’t make it to the set until noon, which inevitably brought a lashing from Walsh.

“But ‘Uncle’ was the eternal forgiving father,” Reagan said. “No matter how many times Flynn fucked up in this preposterous Rover Boy-like saga we were making.”

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In its production of *Desperate Journey*, a film that was increasingly interpreted as a useful propaganda film suitable for viewing by audiences within each of the nations allied against Hitler, Warners made it a point to include portrayals of aviators from most of the Allied Nations.

In *Desperate Journey*, Errol Flynn *(left)* and Ronald Reagan, wearing Nazi uniforms, make nincompoops out of the Germans in this preposterous, implausible yarn.

In the movie, the leader of the mission is an Australian, Flynn himself, playing Flight Lieutenant. Forbes. Reagan got second billing—in letters as big as Flynn's—cast as the American flight officer, Johnny Hammond. Alan Hale, Sr. played an R.A.F. veteran, Flight Sergeamt Kirk Edwards, who hailed from Scotland. As flying officer Jed Forrest, Arthur Kennedy represented Canada; and a very young Ronald Sinclair portrayed an Englishman, Lieutenant Flight Sergeant Lloyd Hollis II, the "baby" of the crew.

The plot contained no real love interest, but Nancy Coleman was cast as Kaethe Brahms, who comes to the aid of the downed pilots. Reagan had appeared with her in *Kings Row*, in which she'd been cast as his first girlfriend. He told Walsh, "With Nancy, there is no way I'm going to come down with my usual disease of *Leadinglady-itis*. You've dressed her up to look like a dyke librarian."

Ronald Reagan: the only U.S. President to publicly impersonate a Nazi.

The villain of the piece was the veteran actor Raymond Massey, playing Major Otto Baumeister, no longer John Brown or Abe Lincoln from Illinois. Wearing a monacle, no less, and menacing, he interpreted his role as a Nazi commander of a prison for Allied soldiers in a sneering, utterly unconvincing way.

The mission of the Allied pilots involved flying over Schneidemühl, close to the Polish border, and bombing the railway junction that channeled Nazi munitions trains on to other parts of the Western and Eastern Fronts.

After successfully bombing their target, the heroes' plane is shot down and they are rounded up and imprisoned. They are interrogated and threatened in Massey's office. But through a ruse, they escape and begin a cross-country trek through Germany, with the Nazis hot on their trail. At one point, they slip aboard a train and secretly enter Hermann Göring's private railroad car, where they break into the Nazi's private stocks of food and liquor until they're discovered.

As part of the process, they unveil a treasure trove of secret Nazi documents, including the locations of secret *Messerschmidt* factories manufacturing planes to bomb Britain.

As they cross Germany, they leave a trail of destruction, including setting fire to chemical works in Berlin and mowing down hundreds of Nazis.

Flynn declares, "We're going to be the first invasion to hit Germany since Napoléon." Their feats, as later appraised by critics, "would put even Superman to shame."

As Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* put it, "The frenzied action is filled with hair-raising, side-splitting adventures, a wild goose trek across Germany, including slugging guards, knocking out Raymond Massey, car chases, and incidental sabotage. You need to turn to the comics to see action like this."

At the end, only three of the original crew, depicted as "The Three Musketeers," remain alive. In a feat of astonishing daring, they manage to mow down fields of armed Nazis as part of their plan to commandeer a German aircraft ready for a bombing attack on the waterworks of England.

After subduing the Nazi security guards protecting the plane, the three Allied airmen take off. But before they reach the English Channel, they release a bomb aboard the plane to destroy a German munitions factory.

At the end of the movie, Flynn proclaims, "Now for Australia and a crack at those Japs."

Flynn had to memorize many lines in German, which he delivers fluidly and smoothly during scenes depicting his friends' interrogation by Nazi guards.

At one point, Flynn tells Reagan, "I don't want you to upstage me. I've become used to sharing co-billing with females like Ann Sheridan or Bette Davis. But sharing such a billing with a male is a bit hard for me to take, sport."

Ultimately, Flynn demanded that Reagan's best scene be transferred to him, a demand that eventually led to a widely observed argument between Flynn and Walsh. Of course, the two men later made up, but Walsh nonetheless insisted he wanted Reagan to interpret the scene. In it, Massey has prisoner Reagan brought into his office, hoping that the American might reveal the secrets of a newly developed American bomber plane.

Desperate Journey's incarnation of a malicious but incompetent Nazi: Raymond Massey.

Although the character played by Massey speaks English, Reagan uses double-talk, inventing works such as "thermacockle" and "dermodyne." He later knocks Massey out, eats his breakfast, and helps the other prisoners escape from the heavily guarded Nazi compound.

Reagan delivers a few good quips, although some of them come at inappropriate times. The Allied soldiers are being chased by a Nazi patrol intent on killing them. When the pilots' stolen German car runs out of gas, Reagan says, "This is the first time I ever ran out of gas with a couple of guys."

There was a certain irony in one of Reagan's lines. He is awakened by a member of his crew. He complains, "Why do you have to wake me up when I was having a date with Ann Sheridan?" He'd just completed *Juke Girl* with Sheridan, with whom he had had shared intimacies that went way beyond those of a mere "date."

When Kennedy, a co-star in *Desperate Journey*, lunched one day with Reagan, he had just completed *They Died With Their Boots On* with Flynn.

"I heard on every picture, Flynn has some young actor following him around panting," Kennedy said. "On this one, it's not Helmut Dantine, but Ronald Sinclair. In the General Custer movie, it was a young man named William Meade. He was a rich kid set to inherit a fortune and was a great guy, just the kind Flynn likes—handsome, athletic, fabulous body, and a crack polo player. In spite of all his money, he wanted to act. Flynn got him a job as an extra. Then tragedy struck. During the filming of the massacre of Custer and his army at the Little Bighorn, Meade fell from his horse onto his sword, which pierced his heart. Flynn went into mourning, and rightfully so. The whole cast was saddened by the passing of that kid."

Alan Hale, Sr. was by now a familiar face to Reagan, having worked with him before, most recently on *Juke Girl*. He usually liked to have lunch with Flynn, but that ritual was put on hold whenever Flynn retreated at noontime to his dressing room with Sinclair.

Hale amused Reagan, telling of his adventures making movies with Flynn. "Once I, along with three other actors, were chatting and having a few nips with Flynn in his dressing room. All of a sudden, Lupe Velez appeared. She just walked right in, ignoring us, and unzipped Errol and went down on him. As she was sword swallowing, she looked up and saw this statuette of the Madonna and Child on his dressing table. She broke off her suction to cross herself and beg for forgiveness from the Madonna, then resumed her work. She's a complete exhibitionist."

[On December 14, 1944, Velez, despondent over her latest unsuccessful love affair, took an overdose of sleeping pills and died.]

Flynn kept badgering Reagan to come to his Mulholland Farm, high above Los Angeles on Mulholland Drive, for drinks and dinner. Finally, Reagan agreed, but insisted on bringing Jane, warning Flynn, "My wife is a lady—so cool it."

Flynn obviously must have found that amusing, as he'd seduced Jane long before her husband ever did.

Later, Jane and Flynn pulled off the charade, never letting Reagan know that, years prior to their get-together, she'd been an overnight visitor.

An article in *Photoplay*, quoting Reagan, revealed his newest impression of the Aussie: "Here was not a swashbuckler's eyrie, but the home of a man with quiet culture. Books on philosophy, adventure, the best fiction,

copies of bespoke travel in foreign lands, a musical library of the best symphonic records, everywhere the evidence of taste and thoughtful living. I had to revamp my image of Errol. Here was a man with a capacity—and a need—for friendship."

In *Desperate Journey*, unlike in most Flynn pictures, romantic entanglements almost didn't exist, since the cast was mainly male except for Coleman. Nonetheless, Flynn maintained his reputation as an ace seducer, although he ran into trouble with Dantine.

The handsome, gracious Austrian was twenty-five years old.

He told Reagan, "It's so ironic. Here I am playing a *Luftwaffe* pilot and also a Nazi pilot in *Mrs. Miniver*, and I'm one of the most anti-Nazi men around."

Biographer David Bret summed up Flynn's sexual dilemma during the filming of *Desperate Journey*.

"Dantine, like actor Patric Knowles, soon found himself fighting off Errol's amorous advances—though had Errol been aware that the young man was Jewish, he most definitely would not have been interested. Dantine had long since set his sights on Tyrone Power, and according to a statement given at the time by his friend, Tallulah Bankhead, as Power was away fighting in the war, Dantine was 'saving himself' for his lover's return."

Back on the set, Flynn turned his sexual attention onto the youngest actor on the set, Ronald Sinclair, who was only "barely legal" at the time. A native New Zealander, he was known as a pretty boy with a baby face.

Flynn confided in Reagan, "Unlike you, *this* Ronnie is a hell of a lot more cooperative in satisfying my sexual desires. He's a sodomite's dream fantasy come true. I think he's straight, and he complains that I hurt him, but he always gives in to me. He would-n't dare turn down the star of the picture."

In the middle of filming, the U.S. government sent word to Reagan that he had only two weeks to finish his work on *Desperate Journey*. Jack Warner had not succeeded in getting him a more extended deferment. Walsh had to reschedule his shooting, and begin to film scenes out of sequence. There was great pressure. Reagan later wrote: "Long shots of my back were saved for a double after I was gone."

A minor actor, David Casey, later said, "My claim to fame is that I once played Ronald Reagan in a movie, but only my back."

To Reagan's amazement, he learned that Wasserman had renegotiated an even more profitable contract than his recent one, this one authorizing a salary of $3,500 a week for forty-three weeks of work annually.

"But I thought Warner contracts usually called for forty weeks of work, annually. Why the extra three weeks?" Reagan asked.

Wasserman explained, "I knew that Warner wouldn't go higher than $3,500 a week. That's more than he's paid any star, including Flynn. Those forty-three weeks, spread out over seven years, will eventually total more than a million dollars. As you know, you once made a film called *Million Dollar Baby,"* Wasserman said. "Thanks to this contract, you, Mr. Reagan, are now MCA's Million Dollar Baby."

Baby Maureen and Jane tell Reagan goodbye as he heads out early to report for duty at the War Propaganda Department. For a while, at least, Jane's parting sally to him was, "Win one for the Gipper."

At long last, success," Reagan lamented. "The moment it happens, I go into the Army on a soldier's pay of $250 a month."

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Unlike Jane Wyman, Reagan often liked to stay home at night, reading newspapers or listening to the war news. In contrast, she wanted to go dancing almost every night. Before he went into the Army, he made a deal with her, agreeing to take her out as often as possible.

With a nanny looking after Maureen, Reagan and Jane became regulars at the Brown Derby, followed by dancing at the Cocoanut Grove or the Trocadero. Chasen's became their favorite dining venue, as Reagan considered its chefs the finest in Los Angeles.

Increasingly, they went out with other couples, especially Barbara Stanwyck and Robert Taylor. Apparently, neither Stanwyck nor Reagan ever learned that their respective spouses had had a brief fling together during the filming of *The Crowd Roars*.

Sometimes, particularly at Chasen's, Jane and Reagan were seen dining with their boss, Jack Warner, and his wife, Ann Page. They were also friendly with agents Lew Wasserman and his wife, the former Edith Beckerman, and with Jules Stein and his wife, the former Doris Jones.

But Jane detested Reagan's new friend, director Sam Wood, who'd helmed him in *Kings Row*. Politically, she viewed him as "to the right of Josef Goebbels." Still a liberal Democrat, Reagan seemed to enjoy endless political debates with the virulently anti-communist Wood. Perhaps this was the beginning of Reagan's training for his presidential debates of the 1980s.

Finally, Jane told him, "I've had it! I've got other things to do than sit around listening to you guys go at it. From now on, count me out. I'll make other plans."

It was at that time that Jane began to "date" Van Johnson, the strawberry blonde, freckle-faced singer, actor, and dancer, who was being groomed to appear in all those "Boy-Next-Door" roles in World War II-era movies.

Her friend, Lucille Ball, had introduced them. Ball had been instrumental in launching Johnson's movie career. He'd appeared with her and with Desi Arnaz in the movie, *Too Many Girls* (1940).

She told Jane, "I just adore Van, and he'd be the perfect escort to take you dancing. Not only is he a good dancer, but he won't put the make on you…ever! He plays ball for the opposite team."

"Oh, I see," she said.

Jane explained the situation to Reagan about her need for an escort, telling him that "Van is harmless, although I doubt if I can trust him around you."

He told her, "This Johnson boy sounds like a fine choice for you."

Johnson and Jane became intimate friends on their first date. She later said, "Van is marvelous. He's dedicated to having a movie career, but he's also a lot of fun. He's a fabulous dancer, but I kept up with him. I was flattered when he complimented me on my dancing. In some clubs, we took over the floor, the other couples standing back to watch us go. I felt the years disappear from my age. At the end of the evening, I got a peck on the cheek."

Over the next few months, Jane was photographed with Johnson many times. Insiders such as Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons knew that Johnson was a "vanilla date," but much of the public began to believe that Jane was cheating on her husband while he was at home changing Baby Maureen's diapers. There were rumors that "Hollywood's Most Ideal Couple," as they were dubbed in the press, were actually on the dawn of breaking up.

Reagan knew that he would be away from Jane for weeks at a time during his military service, and it seemed that Jane's arrangement with Johnson would be most suitable.

Johnson was often invited to the Reagan's house for one of her home-cooked dinners, since he was leading the bachelor life. He jokingly kidded Jane in private, "If you ever decide to dump that handsome hunk of yours, I get first grabs."

"Oh, Van," she answered. "How you boys talk."

Jane and Johnson had reasons other than dancing as motivations for their dating.

Each served as a "beard" for the other. Johnson was carrying on a clandestine affair with the dancer/actor Gene Kelly. On Broadway, Johnson had been Kelly's under-study during his hit show, *My Pal Joey*, where he played a womanizing louse. With a Hollywood contract, Kelly had made *For Me and My Gal* (1942) with Judy Garland, in which he'd played another heel trying to avoid the draft.

Reagan gave Jane permission to "date" handsome Van Johnson, with his clean-cut boy-next-door look. Perhaps Van's gender preference for men reassured everyone that he wouldn't pose any serious threat to the Reagan marriage.

Jane and Johnson deliberately were seen together in the early part of any given evening. But often, they slipped away and separated before the night was over. Sometimes, Jane didn't arrive home until two o'clock in the morning. Apparently, Reagan never questioned the lateness of her returns home.

Johnson often disappeared into the arms of Gene Kelly, Jane preferring the arms of Dennis Morgan or John Payne. This arrangement would continue through the war years and beyond.

No one seemed to suspect what was really going on behind the scenes, with the possible exception of Reagan, who had already been alerted to his wife's dalliances with both Payne and Morgan.

Unlike her own slow rise to fame, Johnson seemed to be "storming through 1942" (Jane's words) in his movie career. He'd been cast as a cub reporter opposite Faye Emerson in the filming of *Murder in the Big House* (1942), during which he was asked to dye his eyebrows and hair black. He'd also had a small role in MGM's *Somewhere I'll Find You*, starring Clark Gable and Lana Turner.

"Gable and I played poker a lot," Johnson later said, "although he told me in the beginning, 'I don't like fags.' Not so Lana. She adores us boys. Problem was, the damn director, Wesley Ruggles, terrified me so much I kept blowing my lines."

Since Broadway, Gene Kelly had been dancing into the arms of Van Johnson.

On a few nights, Jane was seen with both Johnson and his new friend, Keenan Wynn, who had made his screen debut in *Somewhere I'll Find You*.

Wynn had married Eve Lynn Abbott, but in the beginning—for obvious reasons—she was not included in their outings. Kelly was usually involved with actress Betsy Blair (his eventual wife) and wasn't always free. Johnson admitted, "Keenan is not the prettiest face in the world, but I love him dearly. We're an item. In spite of his looks, he's a hot number in bed."

Keenan Wynn...Van Johnson's secret love.

Johnson, when not with Jane, was often seen out with "Keenan and Evie," as he called them. Rumors spread that they were a threesome, as Jane revealed to Reagan one night.

"That's fine with me," he said, "providing you don't make it a foursome."

Amour and Scandals Royal: Princess O'Rourke (Olivia de Havilland), disguised as a "commoner," is helped and hosted by the kindly Jane Wyman, who is married, as part of the plot, to Jack Carson.

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Before heading to Warners to play a supporting role in Olivia de Havilland's latest movie, *Princess O'Rourke*, Jane complained to the ever-patient Reagan: "I detest Olivia. I don't have anything against her personally, but I envy her roles, which I think should have gone to me. On the set, I'm going to be ever so polite to her. After all, I'm an actress and can pull that off. It wouldn't do me any good to let her know how I feel about her. I'll have to talk to her sister one day. I hear Joan Fontaine loathes Olivia. Maybe Joan could deliver the real story about her sister."

"It sounds like you have the same kind of envious relationship with Olivia that I have with Errol Flynn. We don't want to be them, we want merely to take over their movie roles."

When Jane reported to work at Warners for the filming of *Princess O'Rourke*, the first person she encountered was De Havilland, who had arrived early. The star of the picture graciously invited Jane for a morning coffee in her dressing room. To Jane's astonishment, she discovered that De Havilland envied the choice roles being funneled to Bette Davis, just as much as Jane envied parts going to De Havilland. In spite of her envy, however, De Havilland maintained an uneasy friendship with Davis.

"Jack Warner still thinks of me as an *ingénue* and doesn't give me the meaty roles I want." De Havilland complained. "I wanted to star in *The Letter*, a role which, of course, went to Bette. I even wanted the role she played in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* opposite Monty Woolley. I think Ida Lupino often gets better roles than mine. I wanted her part in *The Hard Way* (1942), but I was turned down."

After enough Hollywood gossip, De Havilland became very businesslike. “Now, let’s go over this script. It not only will be directed by Norman Krasna, but he wrote its script. That will make it extra difficult for me when I have to tamper with some of his lines.”

Before even going over the script, De Havilland told Jane, “Remember, I’m of royal blood in the movie, and I act regal even when *incognita* as a princess. You are a commoner—in fact, I want you to act drab and common, married to a slob like Jack Carson. At no point are you to take the spotlight off me. Imagine yourself as a lady-in-waiting in my shadow.”

Originally, Fred MacMurray had been slated for the Robert Cummings lead, and he probably would have been more convincing as an airplane pilot studly enough to produce male heirs, the hope of the princess’ uncle (Charles Coburn). MacMurray, however, dropped out, pleading previous commitments to Paramount.

When she’d first read Krasna’s script, De Havilland rejected the role of the princess, claiming that she would not report to work if she was assigned the part. Confronted with her defiance, Jack Warner ordered that she be suspended. As her replacement, he contacted Alexis Smith, asking her to test for the role and go through a wardrobe fitting. But before a contract could be drawn up with Smith, De Havilland had a change of mind and reported back to work, adhering to an erratic, diva-driven schedule that forced Krasna on many a day to shoot around her.

Love, American style: Jack Carson and Jane Wyman set a good example for a lonely, misguided monarch.

Princess O’Rourke was a Cinderella-in-reverse tale, evoking a precursor of a roughly equivalent movie released in 1953, *Roman Holiday*, that starred Audrey Hepburn as a demure but rebellious princess in Rome.

Princess O’Rourke was a light comedy set in wartime Washington, D.C., with Olivia de Havilland cast as Princess Maria, fleeing from an unnamed European country after being driven out by the Nazis.

She is on a visit to the nation’s capital with her Uncle Holman (Charles Coburn). Claude Rains had lobbied for the role, but lost it to Coburn.

Disappointed with the traditional and tired blood lines of conventional European royalty, Coburn is seeking a fresh, “virile” American as a proper consort prince for Maria.

Traveling incognito, and presumably terrified of flying, she swallows some sleeping pills aboard a flight piloted by Eddie O’Rourke (Robert Cummings). When the flight has to turn back because of bad weather, Cummings can’t arouse Maria from her pill-induced slumber, so he graciously hauls her off to his apartment, where she will presumably recover, unharmed, from the effects of the pills.

From there, the plot thickens. When the Princess awakens, Cummings assumes that she is “Mary Williams,” an impoverished European refugee. “Mary” is subsequently befriended by a very down-to-earth couple, Jean Campbell (Jane), the wife of Dave Campbell (Jack Carson.)

The mistaken identity plot thickens and complications ensue.

Finally, it all ends happily, with a White House wedding presided over by Harry Davenport, playing a Supreme Court Justice. A lookalike for the president’s dog, Fala, makes his screen debut.

In the early 1940s, Fala was the most famous dog in America. He's depicted here beside his owner, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

In *Princess O'Rourke*, the role of Fala as a symbol of the president himself was assigned to a (canine) stand-in.

In the film, the princess writes a note to her suitor, Cummings, which the little Scottie dog delivers to his room. The setting, which accurately replicated the interior of the White House, was created by designers on Warner backlots.

A New Yorker, Norman Krasna was a playwright, screenwriter, producer, and film director. Jane had first met him when she had a bit role on his movie, *The King and the Chorus Girl*.

Gladys Cooper: Aristocratic and domineering.

Krasna was mostly known for writing screwball comedies involving mistaken identity. For his script of *Princess O'Rourke*, he won an Academy Award.

Not only did Carson and Jane lead a strong supporting cast, but they were joined by other major talent, notably an elegant Londoner, Gladys Cooper, playing a governess and secretary to the princess. Jane frequently had tea with her at four o'clock.

She later recalled, "Dame Gladys was the most impressive actress I ever worked with."

Born in 1888, Cooper had begun her career on the stage as a teenager in Edwardian musical comedies before going into dramatic roles in silent films. She delayed her arrival in Hollywood until 1940, where she began to play a series of character parts, often cast as a disapproving, snobbish, aristocratic society woman. Famous roles include her casting in *Rebecca* (1940), starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine. The year Jane met Cooper, she was also cast as the domineering mother of Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager* (1942), which would bring Cooper an Academy Award nomination as Best Supporting Actress.

Jane chatted briefly with Julie Wilson, who had been cast as a stewardess. She was terribly disappointed in her reduced status as an actress. As Jane well knew, she'd been one of Reagan's leading ladies in *International Squadron*.

During the year he'd filmed *Princess O'Rourke*, Coburn also starred in *The More the Merrier* for which he would win a 1943 Oscar as Best Supporting Actor.

"Because Ronnie has screened *Kings Row* countless times, I must confess I've come to hate you," Jane said. "You seem so nice in person, but such a monster on screen."

"Don't let my niceness fool you," Coburn said, jokingly. "I have a black heart—in fact, I'm just a dirty old man."

During the making of *Princess O'Rourke*, Carson, in later life, admitted that he'd served once again as the "beard" for Jane during her illicit romance with Dennis Morgan. Ostensibly, Morgan made frequent visits to the set to see his best friend, Carson. "We lunched with Jane in the commissary and later retreated to my dressing room," Carson recalled. "I'd slip out discreetly and leave Dennis and Jane to pursue whatever perversions they wanted to—

just kidding, folks. The meetings with Jane and Dennis became easier in the future because Warner cast all of us in pictures together. In fact, my next picture was with Jane."

De Havilland conflicted on several occasions with Cummings. He ran into frequent scheduling conflicts, as he was also filming *Between the Girls* at Universal. Knowing that he was a secret cross dresser, film crews teased him endlessly about the title of the movie.

When De Havilland did show up on the set, she was infuriated to find that Cummings was shooting at Universal. Often, she'd have to deliver her lines to a stand-in. She was also frustrated that Coburn kept forgetting his lines, calling for numerous retakes in his scenes with her.

The tension between De Havilland and Warners intensified as shooting progressed, or didn't progress, on *Princess O'Rourke*. Suffering from low blood pressure, De Havilland began to arrive late and leave early. Some days, she called in sick.

Her frustration with Warners led to a lawsuit. Unlike Bette Davis, who lost her own bitter legal battles with Warners, De Havilland ultimately prevailed.

The production of *Princess O'Rourke* was one of the most troublesome vehicles ever turned out by Warners. Although filmed mostly in 1942, its release was held up for almost a year because of legal issues, most of them revolving around De Havilland and her lawsuit to get out of her contract.

Before the eventual release of *Princess O'Rourke*, a firestorm of criticism came from Washington and its wartime Bureau of Motion Pictures. A copy of the film was shipped for screening. Within a day, a strongly worded letter of objection arrived from BMP officers, citing that the script had not been pre-approved. Nelson Poynter, the director of the BMP Office in Hollywood, called on Warner at Burbank. He accused Warner Brothers of "recklessly using the war for background incidents in an opportunistic attempt to capitalize off America's epic battle rather than to interpret it."

He also objected to the depiction of the President, who remained looming somewhere in the background. "You make him sound like a busybody," Poynter charged. "You've also caricatured the Secret Service and made fun of our Allies among European nobility." In spite of these stern objections, BMP did nothing to stop the eventual release of the picture.

In general, Jane was mostly singled out for decent reviews, and in some ways, *Princess O'Rourke* marked a turning point in her career as it provided a showcase for her comedic talents. She was especially good and appraised as "Sparkplug capable with her foil, Jack Carson." For the most part, the picture got good reviews, *Variety* defining it as a "spritely, effervescing, and laugh explosive comedy-romance." It enjoyed moderate success in its day. When it was re-released decades later, modern viewers were not as kind.

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When gossips got word of Robert Taylor's entry into the armed forces, they joked that an even more effective fighter might be his wife, Bloody Babs, shown here brandishing scissors in the tough, lady-like but macho style for which she had become infamous.

It was early morning in the household of Barbara Stanwyck and her husband, Robert Taylor. Pouring her morning coffee, Stanwyck went to the phone to hear Reagan's cheerful voice. "You're always so god damn pleasant," she said to him. "Not me in the morning. I'm like a caged tiger who hasn't been given any red meat in four days."

“It’s my fault for calling so early, but I wanted to alert Bob that I’m on my way to pick him up.”

She put down the phone and walked down the long hallway toward the bathroom. “Junior, she shouted through the closed bathroom door, over the sound of running water, “your boyfriend is on the phone.”

“Coming!” Taylor shouted back.

“I bet that’s what you say to him,” she said, sarcastically.

Stanwyck had always taunted him about his homosexuality, and she accused him of having a crush on Reagan. Taylor had repeatedly denied that.

Reagan was driving Taylor south, to a local marina, where their mutual friend, actor Robert Stack, had rented a small yacht to take them on a weekend sail to Catalina. Jane didn’t want to go, and Stanwyck wasn’t invited.

Fan magazines propagandized the marriage of Barbara Stan-wyck and Robert Taylor as another ideal couple, evocative of the marriage of Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman.

Here, Stanwyck poses with Lt. Robert Taylor at home from active duty in the Navy.

Over a quickie breakfast, Stanwyck demanded to know why she couldn’t come along. “I know that the late, much-lamented Carole Lombard used to accompany Gable, you, and the other guys on hunting trips.”

“This is different,” Taylor told her. “It’s like boys’ night out. The guys will be nude on the boat wanting to get a suntan all over. No place for a woman.”

“God knows what you boys will do with your dicks hanging out,” she snapped.

At the sound of a honking horn, he jumped up from the table and grabbed his bag. “Take care, Queen!” He always called her that.

“Aren’t you going to kiss me?” she asked.

“Later, when I come back,” he said, heading out the door and racing toward Reagan’s car, since they were running late for their rendezvous with Stack, an actor as handsome as they were.

Reagan was much closer to Taylor than he was to Stanwyck, an actress he found intimidating, although Jane seemed to admire her style and commanding presence. Since their marriage in 1939, Taylor and Stanwyck had become Reagan’s closest friends, included in their inner circle of Joan Blondell, Dick Powell, James Stewart, Claudette Colbert, and Eddie Albert from their *Brother Rat* movies.

The night before picking Taylor up, Reagan had told Jane, “Barbara treats Bob like an unruly child, and she always humiliates him, suggesting he’s not a real manly man. You know, unlike us, they occupy separate bedrooms.”

“Even on their honeymoon?” she asked. She’d heard rumors that Taylor and Stan-wyck had a “lavender marriage,” Both of them were known for sleeping with others on the side. Taylor had had affairs with Howard Hughes, Errol Flynn, and Tyrone Power, but with some females, too, including Virginia Bruce and even Greta Garbo, when he’d made *Camille* with her. He’d just completed *Johnny Eager* (1942), in which he’d been intimate with Lana Turner. Stanwyck had had her own affairs, dating from the A-list with Marlene Dietrich and Joan Crawford.

“Bob and Barbara must come together sometime,” Reagan told Jane. “The other day, Bob told me that she always wants to control the fuck. As for their honeymoon, Bob claimed he’d found her so overpowering and commanding that he became impotent— and she’d mocked him.”

“That’s a sure-fire way to give a man an erection,” Jane said.

“Evenings with them can be rough,” he said.

“Better than time out with the Battling Bogarts,” she said. “Mayo Methot, as you remember, once pulled out a

revolver and threatened to kill him."

He recalled an evening at dinner when Stanwyck was on a rampage, attacking her husband's masculinity.

"No wonder the press is hailing us instead of them as the ideal couple," Jane said. "It looks like we're going to remain unchallenged as Hollywood's most ideal couple," he said. "Me in uniform while you're staying behind."

"I guess the press will write about all your daring aerial combats shooting down Göring's *Luftwaffe* pilots," she said. "Of course, you'll still be in California behind a desk somewhere."

On the boat to Catalina Island, about a mile offshore, Reagan, Stack, and Taylor sailed with a three-man crew. The rental of the yacht was a gift from Howard Hughes, the aviator and billionaire. Reagan had heard rumors that both Stack and Taylor on occasion were "Hughes' boys."

It was Stack who first stripped down and suggested that Taylor and Reagan drop their trunks, too. "Let's get a suntan all over."

Not afraid to take off his trunks, Reagan stripped down and headed for a mat on the deck. Taylor was the most reluctant, but, he too, took off his trunks.

On the trip to Catalina, Stack had talked about his friend, John F. Kennedy, who had just left Hollywood for Navy duty. Reagan was familiar with Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, but knew nothing of his children. Stack said that, "After the war, he plans to get into politics from his home state of Massachusetts. Probably run for Congress. After that, the Senate. And, then, the Presidency."

"I wouldn't take that ambition too seriously," Reagan said. "Doesn't every red-blooded American boy want to be President of the United States, even me?"

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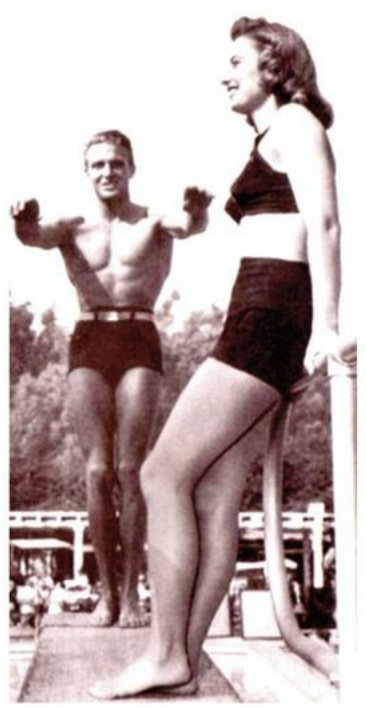

Robert Stack *(seen above with Barbara Stanwyck)* often went swimming with Stanwyck, Jane Wyman, Reagan (when available), and Robert Taylor.

The first time Stanwyck saw Stack in a bathing suit, she told him, "Your body is perfect, a piece of sculpture when compared to Bob or Ronnie."

To Blondell, Jane recalled the last dinner party she had hosted for Stanwyck and Taylor. "It was a disaster."

"Ronnie held back, but Bob and Barbara were drinking heavily. Bob teased Ronnie about his first days in Hollywood when Ronnie was touted as "the next Robert Taylor.'"

"I'm still working on it," Reagan had retorted.

At the party, Taylor had revealed that he'd never seen the 1940 movie, *Waterloo Bridge*, in which he'd played a soldier and Vivien Leigh had played a ballet dancer/prostitute in London.

"I don't get off on too many of my pictures," Taylor said. "When Louis B. Mayer learned I'd not seen *Waterloo Bridge*, he held a special screening of it in his living room in front of friends."

"You seem so casual about the movies you make," Jane said. "How unlike Ronnie. When tour buses stop by our house, Ronnie runs out the door and invites them in for a screening of *Kings Row."*

"Jane exaggerates," Reagan said, looking embarrassed. "I have shown it on occasion to a very select few of our friends."

"Yeah, right," Jane retorted. "He defines 'friends' as anyone listed in the Los Angeles phone book."

"I understand why Junior doesn't want to see his own films," a rather drunk Stanwyck had chimed in. "After all, I've made a couple with the guy myself. I prefer to work with a real man. I've just finished *Ball of Fire* with Gary Cooper (1942). Talk about a real man."

Then she looked over at Reagan. "You look like a real man," she said. "Not like pretty boy over there. How about it, Reagan? Why don't you and I make a movie together one day?"

"I'd love it, but I don't see that happening."

On the night before Reagan's departure for San Francisco and his new post with the U.S. Army, Jane threw an intimate dinner party for him, inviting Joan Blondell, Dick Powell, Jack Benny, and Mary Livingston. Pat O'Brien showed up with his wife, Eloise, and George Brent escorted his wife, Ann Sheridan. Reagan and Brent had made up in the aftermath of Brent giving him a black eye when he and Sheridan were filming *Juke Girl*.

Taylor said he was anxious to put on a uniform, but that his wife objected.

"You're too old," Stanwyck told him. "They want young men, not grandfathers."

Taylor was only thirty-one.

[In February of 1943, Taylor would be sworn into the U.S. Navy under his original name of Spangler Arlington Brugh. Although he would apply several times for active duty, he was turned down because of his age. Instead, the Navy sent him to Livermore, California, to make seventeen training films for Naval Air cadets. Reagan, in contrast, would find himself making films for the U.S. Army Air Force.]

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Upon the release of *Desperate Journey*, *The New York Times* referring to it as "comic book stuff," but the fast-paced action scenes, under Walsh's direction, were generally singled out for praise.

Hollywood, 1942: Lt. Ronald Reagan shows up in uniform with his wife, Jane Wyman, for the premiere of *Tales of Manhattan* at Grauman's Chinese Theatre.

Warner was horrified that *Desperate Journey* opened at the same time as Flynn's notorious trial on charges of statutory rape, where the term "in like Flynn" was coined.

The fear was not real. The courtroom revelations about Flynn's romp with underage girls actually generated publicity that sent audiences flocking to movie houses. *Desperate Journey* earned more than $2 million, considered a big success in 1942 dollars.

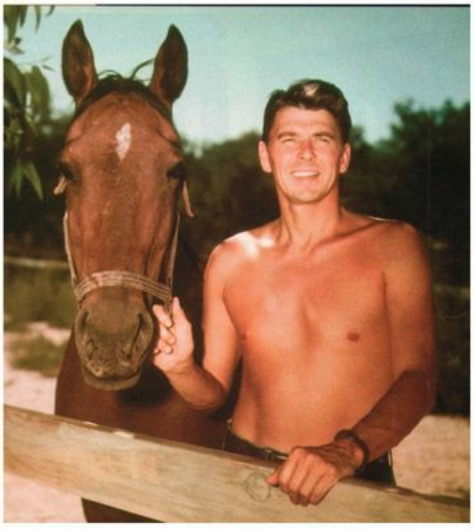
By the time the film was released, Reagan was not wearing a military uniform from the Warners' wardrobe department, but a real one issued by the U.S. Army.

Chapter Nine

Jane and Reagan Go to War

Drafted Into the U.S. Army, Reagan Becomes a "Bloodless Celluloid Commando"

His Popularity Roars to an All-Time High, Even Though Jane Refers to Him as a "Has-Been"

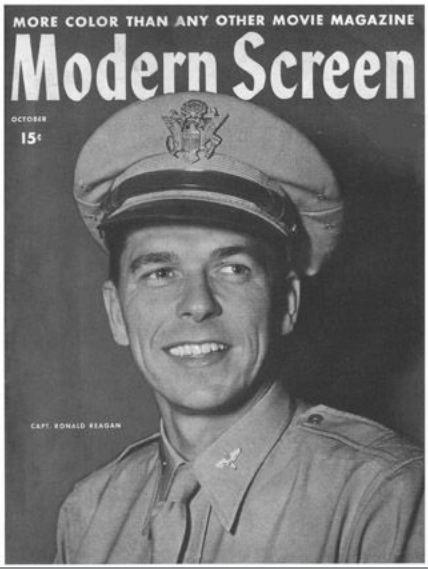


Ronald Reagaon, on the ranch with his favorite horse, "Baby," took an athlete's pride in the grace of his body's "mechanics." But his poor eyesight kept him off the battlefields in World War II, although he promised to "kill as many Nazi beasts as I can."

He made propaganda films instead.

During a War Bond fundraising tour with John Payne, Jane wrote to her close friend, Paulette Goddard. “I’m traveling with the obscenely handsome John Payne. Men as sexy as he is should be rounded up and placed in a male harem for the girls to enjoy, especially me.”

The day after Jane hosted Reagan’s farewell party at their newly christened “dream house,” she drove him to Glendale, where he caught the night train north to San Francisco. During their tearful farewell, he left her with a *cliché*: “Jane, keep the home fires burning, and take care of yourself and our baby girl.”



Poster Boy: America, in league with Hollywood as symbolized by Ronald Reagan, goes to war.

Aboard the train, his identity shifted from that of a Hollywood movie star to a commissioned officer in the Army Air Corps, the predecessor of the U.S. Air Force.

As his train headed north during the frightening month of April, 1942, the publicity department at Warners was ordered, in cooperation with the U.S. Army, to inaugurate a massive buildup for Reagan and Jane. “We’re going to use them as our propaganda couple to promote the U.S. War effort,” Warner said.

Almost within the week, the studio’s publicity department launched a campaign with such headlines as “MR. AND MRS. AMERICA FIGHTING THE WAR.” One feature story was headlined, “REAGAN & WYMAN—SO LONG BUTTON NOSE.”

In spite of how it misled the public, Reagan and Jane aided Warners’ publicity campaign with zeal. *Variety* reported: “Ronald Reagan left today to join an Army unit in San Francisco, leaving behind his beloved young wife (Jane Wyman), and their daughter, Maureen. She told the press, ‘I will wait for him, pray for him, and live for the day when Ronnie comes marching home.’”

Before heading out, Reagan had been photographed looking at horrific pictures of the swollen bodies of dying boys and girls being deliberately starved to death by Nazi soldiers in the ruins of Warsaw. “I hate war,” Reagan told the press. “But the scourge of Hitler’s Nazism has to be wiped from the face of the earth.”

He would never be sent to fight on the battlefields of Europe or the Pacific. He did not reveal that his poor eyesight would keep him stationed in California throughout the duration of the war.

Jane was quoted as saying, “Now the war is real for us. Now it’s Ronnie’s war, and it’s also my war.”

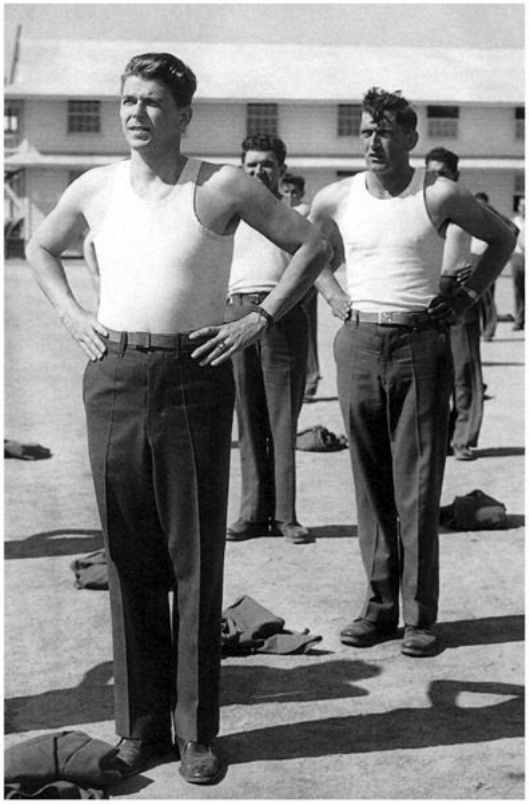
Although Jack Warner had powerful political influence in Washington, time had run out on his ability to get any more deferments for Reagan. In his final call to Reagan, Warner held out a titillating promise: “There’s a hell of a lot of buzz going around that you’re a shoo-in for the Oscar for your performance in *Kings Row.”*

Northbound on that train, Reagan was saddened to think that the lucrative contract that Lew Wasserman had negotiated with Warners wouldn’t help him now. Household and living expenses would have to come out of Jane’s salary. It was clearly understood that studio paychecks ended whenever an employee entered the Armed Forces.

Jane Finds “My True Love” in the Arms of John Payne.

As reported by *Screenland* magazine, “Just when Reagan’s career and his personal life are rich with fulfillment

comes his call to duty. If he is called, the one hindrance may be his deficiency of eyesight. Without his glasses, he can't see clearly more than five feet from him. Ronnie's adoring wife, Jane Wyman, isn't saying a word. But there's a hurt in her face as she goes gaily around Hollywood these days. Little Maureen Elizabeth, the Baby Reagan, is too young and healthy to realize the scope of the drama."



In the spring of 1943, Reagan took his orders like any other man in military service. They included early morning calisthenics. Surely he could not have imagined at the time that one day, he would be Commander-in-Chief.

Arriving at Fort Mason, Reagan had to submit to another physical, a medical procedure which he continued to define as "jiggling my balls." He was assigned the job of supervising the loading of convoys heading for Australia. "Our strategy was to build up a force there to prevent Japan from pinning down its flank on Australia and then being able to turn that attack onto the West Coast of the United States."

He often chatted with soldiers heading out to the Pacific. "They talked the same lingo," Reagan said. "They were enraged at the attack on Pearl Harbor. Most of them had the same goal. To quote them, 'I want to kill as many Japs as I can before they come for us.' Never in my life have I met so many young Americans seeking revenge—and they'd get it, too."

At the time, the somewhat archaic Fort Mason was configured mainly as a Cavalry post, and Reagan felt at home there, as he went horseback riding in his riding breeches, boots, and spurs. Men not in the Cavalry often mocked "these cowboys on horseback," reminding them that the Polish Army on horses had been "systematically slaughtered by the mechanized might of Nazi tanks."

Long after he left Fort Mason, Reagan recalled his most terrifying experience there. "I had to stand in line in my underwear with a long line of guys waiting to get vaccinated. The day before, seven of our men had died from inoculation from a faulty vaccine. I could only pray that the problem had been solved. When that needle was jabbed into my arm, I paused for a silent moment, waiting to see if I were going to drop dead. Obviously, I survived. But now I know what is meant when someone says, 'I was sweating blood.'"

On his second day at Fort Mason, Colonel Bob Ferguson came out to greet him. They were friends, from having served together in the 11th Cavalry. Ferguson had worked on Reagan's movie, *Sergeant Murphy*, way back in 1938. After warm greetings, Ferguson turned Reagan over to his supervisor, Colonel Philip Booker.

In his memoirs, Reagan described the colonel as "a small, slim man with the wiry physique of a horseman… blunt, quiet, and all business." He soon learned that Booker was a fan of his Brass Bancroft films, in which he'd played an agent of the Secret Service. "But just because I'm a fan of yours doesn't mean that you can give me any

shit."

One night, Booker invited Reagan and three of his fellow lieutenants to his home for dinner. At table, Reagan learned that Booker was a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, as had been depicted in Reagan's movie, *Brother Rat*. Reagan brought this up at table.

The reaction from the colonel came as a shock to him. "I saw that piece of crap," Booker raged. "Nothing has made me so god damn mad in my whole life. You guys libeled my *Alma Mater*."

At Fort Mason, Reagan avidly followed the war news from Europe and the Pacific. It was grim—in fact, 1942 was the darkest year of the war for America. Reagan's fellow officers and enlisted men were despondent over bulletins coming in from the Pacific. Bataan had surrendered "to the Japs," the papers said, and that stunning defeat was followed by the fall of Corregidor. The Japanese attacked Mandalay *[the second-largest city and the last royal capital of the country then known as Burma]*, forcing the colonial British to flee from Indo-China to India. In Europe, the news was consistently horrible. The Nazis had launched V-2 rockets onto war-torn London, thereby obliterating massive acreage in the British capital's densely populated East End.

Among his fellow servicemen, Reagan could not escape the fact that he was a movie star, the only one serving at Fort Mason. Many of his fellow soldiers asked for his autographed picture and posted it on the inside of the door of their locker. When quizzed about the implications of that by Colonel Booker, Reagan said, "I'd feel more comfortable if their pinup was Betty Grable instead of me."

"I would, too," replied the colonel. "I guess it takes all kinds to make up an Army."

At night, the horny young men quizzed Reagan endlessly about what they inelegantly termed "Hollywood pussy." They wanted to know which female stars "put out" and what their bust measurements were. He answered each question with his usual good nature, without giving too many specific details and definitely avoiding insights into any of his own sexual relationships with the stars at Warner Brothers.

Sometimes the questions were very provocative, even salacious. Larry David of St. Louis said, "I once saw a picture of you in the paper with Lana Turner. I heard this rumor that one night in New York, uptown in a night club in Harlem, she sucked off five big, dark-skinned bucks in the men's room. Is that true?"

"That's a new one on me," Reagan said. "I know Miss Turner. She's really a fine lady."

On some nights, Reagan—even though he didn't really seem to belong—went out "on the town" with his fellow servicemen, trying to fit in with their pursuit of hell raising, female flesh, and liquor.

Back in Los Angeles, he shared some of those memories with Dick Powell, telling him that San Francisco was crawling with prostitutes who'd flocked there to service the military men shipping out. "Any guy could get laid, providing he had at least ten bucks in his pants," Reagan said.

He recalled meeting a "dyed blonde vixen" (his words) from his native Des Moines. She tried to pick him up, and when he turned her down, she focused on a handsome young lieutenant instead. "She told a bizarre story that one night, she seduced a man with two penises. I guess when it comes to a man's body, anything is possible, certainly a freak. She disappeared that night with the lieutenant, although he assured her he had only one dick."

"The town was also crawling with homos," Reagan said. "They, too, were flocking in droves to San Francisco, and they scored plenty. Unlike the prostitutes, they didn't charge. Men turned to them when they had spent their monthly stipend from the government."

He later said, "I was always opposed to gays in the military, although realizing, of course, that they were already there and had been since the days of Alexander the Great. There was a lot of stuff going on in the Fort Mason barracks at night, but I said nothing. It was a touchy issue, and I didn't want to get involved. 'Hear no evil, See no evil'—that's who I am."

[In the closing years of Reagan's presidency, the nation's chief executive was challenged for a statement from a journalist about his stand on gays in the military. He had no comment. Later, he told Donald Regan, his chief of staff, "That's a problem I'll leave for George Herbert Walker Bush. Let him stick his neck out."

In the late 1940s, Reagan recalled another issue associated with his experiences at Fort Mason. One night in a bar, he was approached by a homosexual with a Southern accent who told Reagan he was a playwright and had written a drama for Tallulah Bankhead. "He was drunk and volunteered to give me a blow job," Reagan said to Powell. "After the guy told me I was the best-looking thing in pants, he reached out and felt me up and I almost punched him, but then, decided not to. He didn't look like the violent type."

"I thought nothing of the matter until I was introduced to Tennessee Williams at a Hollywood party. I was divorcing Jane Wyman, and he told me that she was being considered as the star of the (1950) *movie version of his stage play,* The Glass Menagerie. Williams *claimed we'd met during the war in San Francisco and that he'd unsuccess fully propositioned me in a bar. Then I remembered that nasty little encounter."*

Tennessee Williams in Key West, Florida, 1947. He once propositioned Reagan.

"I thought you were very aggressive just reaching out and feeling a man like that," Reagan told Williams. "For copping that feel, I want you to write a great role for me, the equal of that Stanley Kowalski part you gave to Brando."

"Your request is my command," Williams later quoted himself as having said to his friend, the author Donald Windham. "As a movie star, I'd place Reagan in the same position I put Lana Turner when MGM assigned me to write a movie scenario for her."

"I remember that," Windham said. "You called it 'a celluloid brassiere.'"

"In Reagan's case, let's change that to a celluloid jock strap," Williams said.

Reagan later admitted to Dick Powell and Robert Taylor, "I was sometimes overcome with guilt as I watched these scrawny little boys boarding ships heading for the war in the Pacific while I, robust, virile, and more than six feet tall, stood by, sending at least some of them to their deaths."

Sometimes, Reagan's duties included showing teenage schoolboys around the public areas of Fort Mason. "If the war had lasted long enough, some of these guys with pimples would have been drafted into the Army themselves," Reagan recalled.

Entertaining the troops: Marlene Dietrich at a USO show...trying to make the boys happy.

"I was usually asked three questions: How many Nazis have you mowed down? How many Japs did you kill? Did you ever date Betty Grable?"

Despite his rank as an Army lieutenant, Reagan never escaped his status as a movie star. His superior officers ordered him to give interviews to the press and to deliver short speeches at local benefits and War Bond rallies. His big night came at the San Francisco premiere of *Kings Row*. Colonel Booker ordered him to deliver a morale-boosting pep talk before the first-night audience. Seats for the first showing of his proudest cinematic achievement would be reserved for select members of the Armed Forces. From the podium, Reagan faced a sea of combat-ready men in uniform.

Near the end of his tour of duty at Fort Mason, Reagan was ordered back for three days in Los Angeles to help launch the USO program, spearheaded by, among others, Bette Davis and John Garfield, with such stars as Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich lending their support as well.

Back from her War Bond tour of the Southeast, Jane welcomed him home, but he later expressed concern about her dark mood. "She was polite and loving on the surface, but seemed strangely distant as if her interests were elsewhere," he said. "Something was on her mind, and I didn't know what. It seemed that without my presence, she had done just fine on her own. On the train back to San Francisco, I was left feeling rather empty about my homecoming."

He confided these concerns to his agents, Lew Wasserman and Jules Stein, and to Dick Powell, who may or may not have known that Jane had fallen deeply, perhaps hopelessly, in love with John Payne.

Back at Fort Mason, Reagan claimed, "I smelled trouble," when he was ordered to report at once to Colonel Booker's office. There, he was told that he'd been summoned to the office of the commanding general of the post. Booker thanked him for his help with the USO program before warning him, "In the presence of the general, you'll address him in the third person, and you stand at attention and salute."

"Yes sir!" Reagan snapped.

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Reagan recalled that he was very nervous when he was summoned into the office of the Commanding General. When it came time to write his memoirs, the general's name escaped him.

"In fairness to you, I've heard complaints that you're sick and tired of being a showhorse for all our starstruck Cavalry brass," the General said. "You are, after all, our only resident movie star here, eating cauliflower and hot dog stew with the rest of us."

"With your permission, sir," Reagan said. "I only make personal appearances when ordered to do so by my superior officers. In the future, sir, I will refer all such requests to your office for your approval. You can decide whether the request is from some starstruck fan wanting an autographed photo and a look at a movie star. You know best, sir, what is needed for morale and the War Effort."

"That sounds about right to me, Reagan," the General said. "I thought all these appearances were just your attempt to keep your name before the public. A lot of fans will forget a lot of you stars by the end of the war."

"I hope not, sir," Reagan said. "Sir, right now, I've been placed in the position of 'Ronald Reagan, have uniform, will travel.' I do, sir, what I am ordered to do."

"Good to hear that, Reagan," the General said, "because I have an order of my own. I have a directive from the office of President Roosevelt. He has declared that throughout the country, cities are to celebrate 'I Am an American Day,' with military parades, entertainment, and pep rallies with morale-boosting speeches. All of that will be followed by a War Bond sale. It's all for the War Effort, of course. And we'll need a major Hollywood star to sing the National Anthem."

"Sir, my wife, Jane Wyman, is a singer, and I'm sure she'd love to fly to San Francisco to sing the National Anthem."

The General cast his most disapproving look on Reagan. "I'm sorry to deny you a conjugal visit, but I had something else in mind. Frankly, I'm a Jeanette MacDonald fan myself. I never miss one of her pictures with Nelson Eddy, although I find him a piece of fluff. I have no idea what she sees in that silly fart. I understand you've bedded most of the Hollywood beauties. I'm sure you know Miss MacDonald."

"Sir, she's an MGM star," Reagan said. "I worked with the women of Warner Brothers."

"I don't give a flying fuck what studio she works for," the General said. "All I know is I want Miss MacDonald in San Francisco to sing the National Anthem and to meet me. Otherwise, it's your ass, Reagan. DISMISSED!"

After leaving the General's office, Reagan, as instructed, reported to Colonel Booker. He had already received a report from one of his liaison officers. "Good work, Reagan," Booker said. "I understand you pulled the General's stinger before he even got warmed up."

Back in his office, Reagan immediately placed a call to Louis B. Mayer in Culver City. Getting his secretary on the phone, he told her that he had an official request from the Commander General of the U.S. Army base in San Francisco. His call was put through to Mayer right away. In the conversation that ensued, Reagan conveyed the General's request for the services of MacDonald.

Singing sensation Jeanette MacDonald, shown here with Clark Gable in *San Francisco*.

"I'm the wrong man to ask for any favors from Jeanette," Mayer said. "She hates my guts. I just terminated her contract. But I'll have a friend of hers convey the request."

"Thank you, Mr. Mayer," Reagan said.

"Anything for the War Effort," Mayer answered. "Otherwise, Hitler will be burning Jews on Hollywood Boulevard."

Within two days, MacDonald called Reagan, claiming that she would appear. Assuming that she would, he had by then worked out arrangements for her appearance.

Reagan and members of the press were on hand to greet the singing star at the San Francisco airfield where her plane landed. In front of reporters, she told Reagan, "You're far more handsome in person than you are on the screen, and you look good in your movies, too."

"Flattery will get you anywhere with me," he said, jokingly.

It seemed that half of San Francisco turned out for the holiday celebration. MacDonald gave the grandest rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" he'd ever heard. "Her voice could be heard all the way to Tokyo," Reagan recalled.

She agreed to another performance, one that Reagan had arranged just for men in uniform.

Throughout San Francisco, thousands of men were waiting to be shipped out from temporary housing in, among others, the mammoth Cow Palace and abandoned factory buildings. The soldiers had been confined to these dreary quarters and, in most cases, weren't allowed off base, based on the government's fear that they might accidentally reveal classified information. In those days, San Francisco was crawling with spies for the Japanese.

The venue for MacDonald's performance, and the 17,000 servicemen slated for attendance, was the infield of San Francisco's Greyhound racing track.

When Reagan announced MacDonald, she was received with wild applause. "Maybe you guys would have preferred Betty Grable," MacDonald said from center stage. "But what you see is what you get." At that, the servicemen applauded even more loudly, as she launched into a repertoire of hit songs from her movies.

At first, Reagan had been concerned that the singer would be "too operatic, too high brow" for the audience, but she won them over.

Of course, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was mandatory, but she got the most applause when she sang "San Francisco," the name of the song and the title of her hit 1936 movie with Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy. In the film, MacDonald had belted out her anthem, cheerfully and defiantly, in the dusty, earthquake-ravished ruins of San Francisco, "singing in that hokey but entertaining way," Reagan said. "Although Judy Garland had mocked Jeanette's performance in that film, the boys loved the song."

“The soldiers were so young, so full of hope,” Reagan later said. “For hundreds of them, it would be their last night in America. Jeanette knew that. I knew that. Tears were in our eyes as Jeanette and I embraced at the end of her concert.”

Without his knowing it, the brass was about to end Reagan’s days as an officer at Fort Mason. One morning, Colonel Booker demanded his appearance in his office. “Kid, we’re shipping you back home to Los Angeles. In your new assignment, you’ll be able to spend most nights in the bed of that beautiful wife of yours, the one the press calls ‘Pug Nose.’”

“What gives?” Reagan asked. “I got the impression that the Army deliberately likes to assign soldiers to bases away from home.”

“This is a special case, a whole new Division,” Booker said. “On orders from General George Kenny, you’ve been assigned to the Air Force base in Los Angeles. You’re going to make training and propaganda films for the Army.”

Booker filled him in on the details: Although Jack Warner, who had been assigned the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, had not succeeded in getting yet another deferment for Reagan, he had nonetheless used his considerable influence to get him transferred to a newly created propaganda division of the Army Air Corps. It was called the First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU). Its task involved the production of morale-boosting films. Lew Wasserman, Reagan’s agent, had also been instrumental in arranging Reagan’s new assignment on his home turf.

New films!! From a wartime production company whose government-sanctioned, government-funded mission rocked Hollywood. It’s the U.S. Army’s FMPU (First Motion Picture Unit)!

“At last the Army got something right in your new assignment,” Booker said. “In my thirty-four years in the Army, this is the first time I’ve seen the brass make sense by putting a square peg into a square hole.”

[Reagan later claimed, “I’ve been called a square several times, but that was never seen as something to be proud of. I just wish the Colonel had used a different image, calling me a round peg fitted into a round hole.”]

After a final salute, and as Reagan was heading out the door, the Colonel called him back. “I never told you this, kid, but I liked you a hell of a lot more than I ever let on. In my short time with you, I came to think of you as my son. Now get the hell out of my sight before I get too god damn sentimental.”

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Before departing for San Francisco, Reagan had given Jane a public relations lecture. “Exchange that mink coat for an apron from the kitchen. No more dancing with Van Johnson at the Troc. Hide that costume jewelry, even though it’s fake. Wear sensible clothes and shoes, none of that glamorous stuff that will look whorish to soldiers fighting in the mud. At all times, appear as a dutiful housewife and loving mother. After all, you and I are the poster young man and woman of Hollywood at war.”

“As much as I dislike what you’re ordering me to do, I think you’re right—god damn it and to hell and back,” she answered.

For the most part, Jane followed Reagan’s suggestion and toned down her nightclubbing and partying. But she had another boss, too, and that was Jack Warner.

The call from her mogul boss had come in at ten o’clock on Saturday morning. That was an unusual hour for Warner to call, but he said it was an emergency. She thought some star had fallen ill, and that she was being summoned to replace her on a film set.

A star had, indeed, fallen ill, and Jane was being summoned to replace her, but not in a film. Warner had been informed by the Victory Committee that Rita Hayworth had become ill just prior to her scheduled departure on a

War Bond fund-raising, month-long tour of America's Southeast. Warner wanted Jane to replace her.

"You're to tour with John Payne," Warner said. "I loved you two together in *Kid Nightingale* (1939). You both are singers and can both entertain a crowd. You get along with him okay, right?"

"I admire his talent and found him pleasant to work with," she said, demurely, concealing the depth of her passion for her upcoming traveling companion. She agreed to the tour and its terms, and Warner gave her the names of the people to contact about transportation and logistics.

After concluding the call with her boss, bubbling over with enthusiasm, she phoned Joan Blondell. "If there's any man who can make me forget that Ronnie is away, it's John Payne," she said. "For me, that's like winning Lotto. I could have gotten César Romero for a traveling mate. I'll really get to know what it's like to be the wife of John on this tour."

"Have fun, kid," Blondell said.

Before leaving on her tour, Jane met with actor William Demarest, who had been her agent in the 1930s. He weighed in on his opinion of Reagan's tour of duty in the Army. "I don't think he minds it as much as some of the guys like Robert Taylor and Jimmy Stewart. They are leaving booming careers. In spite of *Kings Row*, Reagan is still mired in B pictures, so he's not giving up that much. Of course, he'll miss you and the baby."

"I'm not sure Ronnie agrees with you," she said. "He thought his career was about to blast off like a rocket. Also, he'd just signed a million dollar contract, and now the money's been cut off."

After talking to Demarest, she had only a day to pack and make herself ready for the tour, leaving instructions with Maureen's nanny. In a call to Payne, she learned that he, too, was eager to depart.

Help Win the War! Buy a Bond! Wyman with Payne in *(top photo)* Spartanburg, SC and *(lower photo)* in Burlington, NC.

On September 9, 1942, Jane embarked on a month-long tour of the South, beginning in the bluegrass State of Kentucky.

At many of the rallies, Payne auctioned off his necktie and was forced to keep buying new ones, many of them selected by Jane. One woman offered to pay $1,000 for Payne's underwear—"or $2,000 if it's soiled a bit." He politely declined.

Unlike Reagan, she did not suffer from a fear of flying. "I flew a few overcrowded crates during that tour," she recalled, "but I wasn't afraid. John was by my side, and he gave me security. Occasionally, I had nightmares about my friend, Carole Lombard, going down in that plane. Clark (Gable) was still mourning, despite the tons of mail from women around the world, many of them willing and able to replace Carole as his fourth wife."

In every town in which they stopped, there were endless luncheons, usually with the town mayor, the councilmen, and anybody viewed as a local dignitary. "But why must they always serve chicken *à la king*?" Jane asked Payne.

From the very beginning, she had been served chicken wings in hot sauce. She found the dish usually made her ill, and she complained later that the food was too greasy. "Southern cooks seem to cook all their vegetables in what they call fatback," she said. Complaining of stomach troubles, she switched to hot tea, fruit juices, and unbuttered toast, losing fifteen pounds before the end of the tour.

The question most asked of Payne was, "How's your love life?" He had a pat response: "How's yours?" The most frequent question put to Jane was, "What is Ronald Reagan really like?"

Her pat answer was, "A scholar and a gentleman…in all, a very nice and kind man. Great husband. Great father."

Payne usually sang first, followed by a song from Jane, then a duet from their joint appearance in *Kid Nightingale*.

Because of hotel room shortages, Jane and Payne were not always able to get a suite, or even adjoining rooms. Sometimes, they were on separate floors. No matter, he planned to slip into her room at night to sleep with her, leaving before dawn and heading back to his own quarters.

As Jane later told Goddard, "I fell in love with John in Kentucky and even more in love with him when we visited his native Virginia. We did shows in Roanoke. In the South, John reverts to his Southern gentleman accent. They love *chittlin*' talk in these parts. The only time he is not a gentleman is when he makes love. Then he becomes Tiger Man."

"What a lucky gal you are," Goddard said. "You get Payne and I'm settling for Burgess Meredith."

At one point, Jane found herself in the same airport with her longtime friend, Lucille Ball. "It took a god damn war for Hollywood to recognize me as a singer," Jane complained. "Instead of getting cast as the lead in a musical, like Betty Grable, I'm allowed to sing in bond rallies. They're lining up camp shows for me, too."

"Even so, we're late to the game," Ball said. "Bob Hope was shaking his butt and Dorothy Lamour was bouncing her twat before servicemen even before Pearl Harbor."

"I hear they're even sending Hedy Lamarr on tour," Jane said. "She can't sing, can't dance, and can't tell jokes."

"All she has to do is stand before an audience and let the guys look at her," Ball said. "Perhaps she can take off her clothes like she did in *Ecstasy*. Or, better yet, she might tell the guys what it's like to get fucked by both Mussolini and Hitler."

"My friend, Jack Carson, can tell jokes," Jane said.

"Don't forget Orson Welles," Ball said. "He can do magic tricks. Astaire can dance, and Veronica Lake, the midget, can show off her peek-a-boo hairdo."

Sometimes Jane was asked "Who is taking care of Baby Maureen?" She answered that it was Nelle Reagan, her mother-in-law.

As the tour progressed, Jane began to part with some of the possessions in her handbag, beginning with a tube of lipstick which she gave to a woman who bought a $1,000 War Bond. Later on, she sold her earrings, telling Payne they were costume jewelry. She even gave away her compact and her gold cigarette case, a gift from Reagan, as an incentive to persuade someone to buy $2,000 worth of War Bonds.

In Norfolk, Virginia, at their most successful bond rally, she and Payne netted $52,000 worth of War Bond sales.

[Greer Garson later infuriated Jane when she reminded her that her War Bond rally in Huntington, West Virginia, drew a crowd of 12,000 fans, larger than any of the rallies where Jane and Payne appeared.]

In North Carolina, one man asked if they had a War Bond worth $15,000.

"Business must be good for you," Jane said to him.

"I'm a gambler," he told her. "Like marines and doctors, we gamblers also contribute to the War Effort. Therefore, I'm glad to invest some of my profits in War Bonds. By the way, I cheat at cards."

"You come up here with that $15,000, and I'll give you a kiss," Jane promised.

Anne Shirley...John Payne's wife, and Jane Wyman's competition.

That promise of a kiss inspired her with an idea: She'd heard that some of the stars were selling mouth-to-mouth kisses on their tours. Hedy Lamarr had once sold a kiss for $25,000. When Jane tried that, there were no bidders.

Later, she suggested that Payne should try to sell a $25,000 kiss. Amazingly, at one stop, he got a taker—a rather effeminate man. "I'm loaded and I'm buying."

The crowd booed him and Payne rejected the offer. "You should have gone for it," Jane scolded him that night. "As you kissed the guy, you could have said to yourself, 'I'm doing this for god and country.'"

After heading a War Bond rally in Spartanburg, South Carolina, Jane retired to her hotel suite, where Payne joined her within the hour. For the first time, he talked to her extensively about his recent divorce from Anne Shirley, with whom he had not been living during the final turbulent months of their marriage.

Upper photo: A hardworking First Lady (Eleanor Roosevelt) and *(lower photo)* a First Lady "who might have been"—shown here dressed with a 1940s sense of military chic.

Throughout the tour, but especially on this evening in Spartanburg, Jane expected a proposal of marriage from Payne, with a recommendation that she divorce Reagan. But, as she'd later confide to Goddard, "He never asked me —not once—even though he told me he couldn't live without me."

"How like a man," Goddard quipped.

Throughout the remainder of World War II, Payne enjoyed his life as a bachelor. Shirley's public image as a sweet, dewy-eyed innocent was beginning to wear thin with the public, and her audience was dwindling. In 1944, she abandoned her screen career.

For Jane, the highlight of her tour, other than the love-making of one of Hollywood's greatest studs, was a luncheon at the White House sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt as a means of thanking the entertainers for their contributions to the War Effort. Years later, Jane remembered the event with a certain irony. "I never became First Lady, but at least I married a future President of the United States."

At the end of the tour, Payne revealed his plans. He was only a year younger than Reagan, so he knew he wouldn't be sent to fight the war in Europe or the Pacific. But he decided he was going to enlist as an Army pilot. He was already an expert aviator. "I'll teach young guys how to fly planes, at least the mechanics of it. War veterans will teach them how to handle themselves in aerial combat."

Three weeks after his return to Hollywood, he showed up to take her dinner in uniform. "He looked like a poster boy for Uncle Sam," she said.

He told her that he'd been assigned to the base at Long Beach, California, where, as it turned out, he remained for the next two years. She promised she'd slip away and drive down to see him every chance she got.

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No sooner had Jane returned from her tour of the South than she received a call from Bette Davis, who informed her that she and John Garfield were opening the Hollywood Canteen in premises that had originally been conceived as a stable. The premiere of "this home away from home" for servicemen was scheduled for October 3, 1942.

Davis wanted Jane to be there at least one or two nights a week to entertain the servicemen, dance with them, and serve coffee and doughnuts.

Jane agreed, and Dennis Morgan was often her escort. Singing with him at the canteen provided the perfect cover for their continuing affair.

One night, Morgan told her about some casting news at Warners that surprised her. "As you know, I was supposed to be the freedom fighter in *Casablanca*, opposite Reagan and Ann Sheridan. Of course, that didn't happen. You may remember that I replaced Bogie as Cole Younger when he bolted from our film, *Bad Men of Missouri*. But did you know that I was the original player slated to appear as the star of *The Sea Hawk?* But Jack Warner decided that Errol Flynn would play a better swashbuckler. I was also set to play General Custer in *Santa Fe Trail* opposite Flynn, but that part went to Reagan."

"Well, now that Ronnie and a lot of other stars are in the military, you can clean up as Warners' leading actor," Jane said.

She was right. Two years older than Reagan, and therefore not immediately eligible for the draft, Morgan did not enter the service, and continued to make movies throughout the war, beginning with *Wings of the Eagle* (1942) in which he co-starred with Jack Carson and Ann Sheridan. "It was a real flag-waver," Morgan told Jane. His last such film was the controversial World War II drama, *God Is My Co-Pilot* (1945).

As Jane later said, "Dennis fought the war on the screen, not off it."

Only weeks before she departed for her tour with Payne, the Treasury Department in Washington had launched its War Bond tours, calling on Hollywood stars to provide the entertainment. Stars were assigned to seven separate units, each sent to various destinations that included 353 cities and towns during the month of September alone.

Jane was notified that she'd been assigned to Group 5, whose other players included Veronica Lake, Greer Garson, and Payne. At a launch party, Jane chatted with Garson and Lake and with some of the stars from Unit 6, which comprised her friend, Goddard, along with James Cagney, Reagan's friend, as well as Hedy Lamarr and Irene Dunne.

Jane also became a performer at the USO's Camp Shows. She preferred not to travel too far afield, and she therefore confined her appearances to bases in California, where she was joined by stars who included Lucille Ball, Betty Hutton, Lena Horne, and the Andrew Sisters.

From 1941 to 1947, the USO sponsored some 400,000 shows with such stars as Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, and even Hattie McDaniel—"Mammy" of *Gone With the Wind*. As Jane remembered it, "Danny Kaye was a tough act to follow."

Wayne Broyhill, an enlisted man, had a different point of view. "Danny was okay telling jokes and all. But we were surrounded by guys all day. We wanted female flesh, and that was provided by Jane Wyman. She did a sexy number and showed us her gams. The boys yelled and hooted until they were hoarse. That Ronald Reagan is a lucky bastard."

Jane never went overseas for camp shows, although she was often invited to do so by the likes of Edward G. Robinson, her former co-star, or such luminaries as Martha Raye, Merle Oberon, and Al Jolson. Demurring, she said she needed to be near her young daughter.

Many stars were asked to appear in film clips slated for screening in theaters across the country. A Newsreel Division of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry was formed in connection with this War Bond drive. Payne was asked to make one of these clips with Dorothy Lamour. On the day of the shooting, Jane went with him to the studio.

"My God," she later told Goddard. "Lamour practically tore John's pants off him. She was one hot-to-trot bitch, who wouldn't control her horny paws. He actually seemed to enjoy the attention. He'll pay for that."

Beginning with Carole Lombard in 1942, twenty-eight performers lost their lives during their War Bond and morale-building tours because of illness, diseases, and plane crashes. In 1943, a plane carrying a USO troupe crashed outside Lisbon, Portugal, severely injuring Broadway singer Jane Froman. Despite her confinement at the time to a wheelchair, she fought her way back to the stage to entertain again.

[Jane later noted that Hollywood was adapting Froman's story into a Technicolor movie entitled With a Song In My Heart *(1952). She lobbied aggressively for the role, only to lose it to Susan Hayward. "I desperately wanted that part, almost more than any other role. But it went to Susan Hayward, that red-haired bitch. At least I managed to tear Ronnie away from her entangling web. Hayward can't sing. They had to dub her with Froman's voice."]*

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Leaving Fort Mason, Reagan reported to work in Hollywood, joining the newly created First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU), created by General Henry H. Arnold, who was nicknamed "Hap." He commanded the Army Air Corps, which later morphed into the U.S. Army Air Force.

Reagan would stay at this command post throughout the duration of the war, never leaving the United States, although many of his fans were made to believe that he was fighting with Allied troops in Europe.

As the months passed, Reagan was amazed at the growth of the Air Corps. In 1939, at the beginning of the armed conflicts in Europe, it had some 25,000 men and fewer than 3,900 planes. By the time of the June, 1944 D-Day invasion of Normandy, Arnold commanded some 2.5 million men. American factories were turning out 150,000 planes per year.

Photoplay carried the news that "Jane Wyman and wee daughter are probably the happiest people in town, since husband and daddy Ronald Reagan has been temporarily sent back to Burbank to make government film shorts."

Before Reagan signed on, Warner had already been making propaganda films for the War Department, including such releases as *The Tanks are Coming* and *Service with the Colors*, each targeted at young men who had not enlisted.

When Reagan went into the army, only three percent of men in the movie colony had signed up. Dozens upon dozens of directors, actors, screenwriters, sound engineers, producers, cameramen, and other technicians had not joined.

Reagan's first office was at the old Vitagraph Studios in Los Angeles until that location proved too small. At that point, he and the vast crew were transferred to the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City. Because of the undisciplined crew there, and reports of "outrageous behavior" among the former movie people, locals referred to it as "Fort Wacky." It also became better known as "Fort Roach."

Star Power as Hollywood Goes to War: Lieutenant Reagan (who defined himself, facetiously, as "the American Goebbels" after Nazi Germany's notorious propaganda chief), at the FMPU, organizing propaganda and training films.

At Fort Roach, Reagan faced 1,000 enlisted men and officers, most of whom had had no military training except for what they'd received working on war pictures at the various studios. As one technician, Ralph Davidson, told Reagan, "We know how to stage a war only if it's called for in the script."

Reagan's superior officer was Paul Mantz, who had been the most famous stunt pilot in Hollywood. In 1937, he'd helped Amelia Earhart learn navigational skills, but had rejected her offer to fly with her as co-pilot during her ill-fated (final and disastrous) attempt to fly around the world.

Mantz had once run an air charter service dubbed, "The Honeymoon Express" because it carried so many illicit lovers to secret rendezvous destinations. His clients had included Howard Hughes, Clark Gable, James Cagney, and Errol Flynn. "I should write a tell-all," Mantz told Reagan. "You won't believe some of the love duos—even trios—I flew, with genders getting all mixed up." Mantz had also worked on flight scenes for such pictures as *Test Pilot* (1938), starring Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy.

During his tenure at Fort Roach, Reagan constantly appeared on the covers of magazines. He was always in full uniform, always with a smile, and most often with the Stars and Stripes waving behind him. In the history of the Presidency, no man, other than Dwight D. Eisenhower, had ever been photographed so frequently in uniform.

Hollywood at War: Hollywood's most celebrated stunt pilot (Paul Mantz) found a huge demand for his services at Reagan's FMPU. Much of it involved staging aerial dogfights for the Army's propaganda and training films.

Reagan met many young recruits who complimented him on his daring aerial exploits as depicted in such films as *Murder in the Air* and *International Squadron*. He didn't tell them that those scenes had been faked, and that any daring aviation feats had been performed by stunt pilots.

During Reagan's first week at Fort Roach, Jack Warner arranged for him to meet General Henry Arnold, nicknamed "Hap," the chief of staff of the Army Air Corps. These two men had jointly developed the idea of the First Motion Picture Unit for the production of Army training and P.R. films. Hap and Reagan blended

harmoniously and learned to work well together. Hap told Warner, “The Reagan boy is my kind of soldier, my kind of man, a sharp shooter. I hear he’s a real lady’s man, too.”

“That’s putting it mildly,” Warner replied. “During his first three years at Warners, all our starlets lost their virginity.”

Arnold had several long talks with Reagan, focusing on military issues and convincing him that the future of the United States as a world power depended on its supremacy in the air. Amazingly, Arnold never learned that Reagan, one of his chief protégés, was plagued with an irrational terror of flying.

He viewed Reagan as one of his most effective propagandists. During his time at Fort Roach, FMPU would produce some 225 films, most of them with a running time of 30 minutes, although some lasted on the screen for only nine minutes. The cheaper ones were completed for less than $5,000, although longer ones cost as much as $15,000. Reagan starred in some of these films and narrated dozens more. Many of them have been lost or destroyed in the years since the war ended.

During his first months at Fort Roach, Reagan was deeply troubled about moral issues associated with the war and his films. He told Jane and some of his closest friends, such as Dick Powell, “Sometimes I lie awake thinking about these guys: Our films are shown to high school and college students. We glorify flying—just read our press releases. We claim flying is full of inspirational splendor, the roaring engines of bomber formations gliding through the clouds. In reality, as any R.A.F. pilot can tell you, flying is a grim and dangerous business. A man can die—in fact, he usually does.”

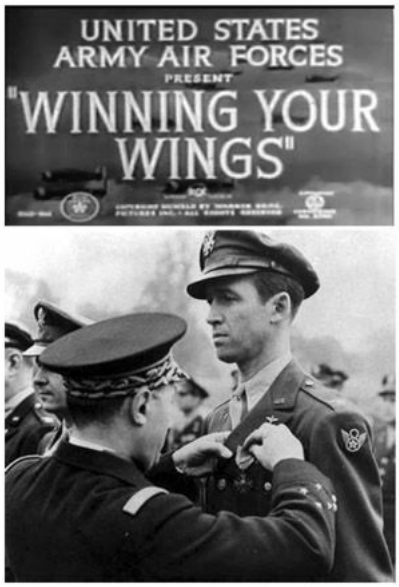
Warner told Reagan that the U.S. government had more or less taken over the direction of his studio, using its facilities, when needed, to make propaganda and training films. The Army also provided outlines for A-list feature movies for them to shoot. “At our peak in 1939, we were turning out about a hundred films a year. In 1943, we were reduced to making only about three or four dozen. Of course, that means less work for Jane. Naturally, the war has really cut into our profits.”

On most nights at Fort Roach, Reagan was allowed to go home to spend the night with Jane. On many a night, she wrote him a note that she’d be late, leaving Baby Maureen in the care of a nanny. Jane never explained where she was, and he was too polite to ask. Occasionally, she’d mention casually, “Oh, I was out with some friends, and forgot how late it was getting.”

Reagan had met Oklahoma-born Owen Crump when he was a writer at Warner Brothers. In his new role with FMPU, Reagan found himself taking orders from Crump. A dynamic, rather overpowering personality, Crump was described by Reagan as “terse and tough.”

At the time Reagan worked with him, Crump had wed Lucile Fairbanks, which made him the nephew-in-law to Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., and Mary Pickford. In time, that would lead to Reagan being invited to Pickfair, the home of the reclusive Pickford, America’s former sweetheart, and her husband, Buddy Rogers.

Crump took Reagan to the screening of a picture he’d co-directed with John Huston. Called *Winning Your Wings* (1941), it starred Jimmy Stewart. “The aim of Jimmy’s film was to inspire young men to forget baseball games, summer romances, football in autumn, and family vacations,” Crump said. “The suggestion was that men should abandon those pursuits and enlist in the Air Force.” Crump then uttered a statement that appeared to be outrageous: “When that film was shown in theaters, it incited 500,000 young men to enlist. I want you to turn out films as powerful as Jimmy’s.”



It was Jimmy Stewart, who made the most successful American propaganda film, *Winning Your Wings*.

Repeatedly honored by the military, he rose to the rank of Brigadier General by 1959.

"It's a tough act to follow, but I'll try," Reagan said.

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During the war, magazines were brimming with stories of male stars who had either been enlisted, been drafted, or somehow managed "to elude Uncle Sam."

Reagan came into contact with many of them, and read about those he didn't encounter. Among Reagan's closest friends was Robert Taylor, who appeared in war movies such as *Bataan* (1942), but he was told too old to be drafted. Nonetheless, in 1943, he enlisted in the Naval Air Corps and became a flight instructor. He also narrated the 1944 wartime documentary, *The Fighting Lady*.

Too old to enlist, Bob Hope and Reagan's friend, Pat O'Brien, traveled thousands of miles to entertain the troops.

James Stewart was one of the actors who became a genuine hero during the war. He joined USAAC in 1940, although initially he was refused entry because he was five pounds under the required weight of 148 pounds. But he talked his recruitment officer into ignoring his weight. He became a colonel and flew combat missions, eventually awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After seeing some of Reagan's training films. Stewart told him, "Real war is not like you depicted it. It's more deadly and insane, at times without reason or any type of morality, nothing but senseless death. It was execution in the air of young men who would never be allowed to finish their lives, either in Germany or in America."

Cary Grant and Errol Flynn each avoided military service, but David Niven volunteered and left Hollywood to return to war-torn England where he became a hero, his exact role in the service never fully explained.

Frank Sinatra avoided the draft and never served in any branch of the military.

A World War I veteran, Humphrey Bogart was in his 40s and too old to be drafted, although he frequently appeared in war movies, including the classic *Casablanca*.

Reagan said, "Bogie was in, the king of Warner Brothers, and I was out. And damn it, I didn't win the Oscar for *Kings Row*. Neither did Bogie, but his time would come again. Mine would not."

On August 12, 1942, the "King of Hollywood," Clark Gable, turned down a commission and entered the Army as a private. Perhaps as a swipe at Reagan and others, he said, "I don't want to entertain. I just want to be sent where the going is tough."

In January of 1943, after his involvement in a training program known as one of the Army's "90-day wonders," Gable graduated as a second lieutenant and aerial gunner. In England, he became part of a flying squadron, the 351st heavy Bombardment Group, known as "Hatcher's Chickens," named in honor of their colonel.

Gable did not escape the attention of Josef Goebbels' Nazi propaganda machine. From Berlin, a broadcast was made: "Welcome to England, Hatcher's Chickens, among them the famous American cinema star, Clark Gable.

We'll be seeing you soon in Berlin, Clark."

Film star Ronald Reagan: Dealing with delicate ideological issues AND looking good while he was doing it. His fear of flying was not visible in this publicity shot for FMPU.

Lower photo: evidence of the growing military might of the US's wings of war.

Before the war, Gable had been Hitler's favorite male movie star. *Der Führer* issued a specific order to try, if possible, to capture Gable alive, especially if his plane was shot down behind enemy lines. "If not that, I want his dead body brought to me."

While based in England, Gable carried out dangerous missions over Germany, including the bombing attack on the synthetic oil plants at Gelsenkirchen. In that raid alone, twenty-five Allied bombers were lost. Gable's plane returned safely, but riddled with five bullet holes. He was so daring in combat that many of his crew members felt—perhaps as a reaction to the fatal plane crash of his wife, Carole Lombard, in circumstances not associated with active combat—that he harbored a secret death wish.

After his military service in England, Gable asked to be transferred to the continuing war in the Pacific against the Japanese. He waited and waited until, as he said himself, "I felt discarded." After serving for nearly two years, he asked for a discharge from active duty. Ironically, that request was granted by a captain, Ronald Reagan, at Fort Roach.

An effeminate pic of the director of Germany's *Luftwaffe*, the sadist, art collector, and morphine addict, Hermann Göring.

[In the closing months of the War, Jane and Reagan visited Gable after his return to California. Jane had never mentioned her sexual encounter with Gable so long ago. At Gable's ranch in Encino, they discovered an aging movie star, graying at the temples and putting on weight. They learned that he consumed a quart of Scotch a day, having purchased an entire truckload of it when war had first erupted in Europe.

Gable told Reagan, "If Hitler had caught me, the son of a bitch would have put me in a cage like a gorilla and exhibited me throughout Germany. If my plane were going down, I would not have bailed out and allowed my capture by the Nazis for delivery to whatever fate lay in store for me."

Hermann Göring of the Luftwaffe had designated Gable as "one of the most wanted of war criminals."

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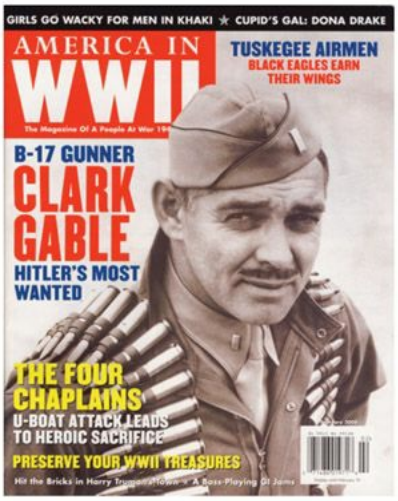
The King of Hollywood enlists! Clark Gable gets inoculated, just like every other guy, during his basic training.

An upcoming king of Hollywood—at least in terms of box office receipts— was John Wayne.

Having met during the late 1930s, when both of them were struggling for stardom, Reagan and Wayne knew each other only casually. It wasn't until the late 1940s and early 50s that they finally bonded in their mutual goal of ferreting out communists who were allegedly "infiltrating" the movie industry.

But these two men did have a few tense encounters during World War II, when both of them remained in Hollywood. Across the country, boys in their late teens or young men in their early 20s flocked to see Wayne ("The Duke") in the movies. During the war he made some movies, including *The Fighting Seabees* (1944); *Back to Bataan* (1945), and *They Were Expendable* (1945).



This military magazine documents how appealing the idea of Clark Gable's capture would have been to the Nazi propaganda machine. Hitler wanted him tortured and paraded, nude, and in chains, through the streets of Berlin.

These movies once prompted Reagan to quip, "To judge by his movies, John won the war against the Nazis and the Japs single-handedly."

When The Duke heard that, he told Ward Bond, "When you see Reagan again, tell him I'm going to rip out his right eyeball and eat it as an appetizer. I haven't seen him mowing down any Japs in this man's war."

Owen Crump called Reagan to his office one day to "bounce an idea off your head. "What about setting up recruiting desks in the lobbies of movie theaters, nationwide, that happen to be screening any of Duke's films?"

"I think it would work," Reagan said.

"John is even more of a hero to young boys than Jimmy Stewart is, and look at all the recruits he enlisted with his propaganda film"

Reagan rendezvoused with Wayne for dinner one night at the Cock n' Bull in Hollywood to feel him out on Crump's idea.

Over steaks, Wayne became very defensive about not having enlisted. "You know I'm too old for the draft. I'm classified 3-A, which is a family deferment."

"I talked to your man John Ford, and he thinks you should do more for the war effort. That led Crump to come up with this idea about the lobby enlistments."

"I wish Ford would shut his god damn mouth about my status," Wayne said, flashing anger. "He's always urging me to enlist."

"That's what Ford told me, but he claims that you always come up with the excuse that you've got two more pictures to complete."

"It's not so easy," Wayne said. "Over at Republic, Herbert J. Yates is threatening to sue me if I walk out on my contract. He's even called the War Department seeking a permanent deferment for me."

He wasn't always overweight, pompous and jowly: John Wayne in a studio publicity shot for *Back to Bataan* (1945).

Wayne also confessed a personal reason for not wanting to enlist. “I know it’s selfish of me, but I’ve been waiting for years for my big break in films, and it’s finally here. If I walk out now, I may never get this chance again. Don’t you see the gamble I’m taking if I enlist?”

“I see it clearly,” Reagan said. “I faced the same thing after *Kings Row*, but the War Department would not grant me any more deferments. I was carted off willingly.”

“Hooray for you, the American hero,” Wayne said, mockingly. “You’ve got to understand something. Some of the leading men of Hollywood, stars like Robert Taylor and Clark Gable, are in the military. All sorts of roles are opening up for leading men, and I want to take advantage. Hell, I’ve appeared with Marlene Dietrich and Joan Crawford, even Claudette Colbert. I got to fuck Marlene and Crawford. Not Colbert, of course. She’s as much of a duke as I am.”

Before the end of Reagan’s dinner with Wayne, Duke had agreed to the theater lobby enlistment campaign and even promised to go on a three-month tour of U.S. bases and Army hospitals in the South Pacific.

Years later, when Ford talked to Reagan about his dinner with Wayne, the director said, “I think the Duke has become a superpatriot mainly as an attempt to atone for sitting out World War II.”

Not just Ford, but a lot of men Reagan knew in the movie industry had enlisted, including Robert Montgomery and Fox producer Darryl F. Zanuck.

In 1942, Jane and Reagan had attended the wedding of Wayne Morris, their *Brother Rat* co-star and Jane’s former lover, to Patricia O’Rourke, an Olympic swimmer and sister to B-movie actress Peggy Stewart.

That same year, Morris became a Navy flier, piloting F6F Hellcats off the aircraft carrier *USS Essex*. A daring pilot, he shot down seven Japanese planes and contributed to the sinking of five large ships in service to the Japanese Empire. For his daring feats, he would be awarded four Distinguished Flying Crosses and two air medals.

Back at Fort Roach, Reagan met Brooklyn-born Dane Clark and co-starred with him in a wartime propaganda movie. Reagan later told Meredith, “Dane calls himself ‘Joe Average,’ but he really isn’t. He has a law degree, and during the Depression, he was a boxer, baseball player, construction worker, and nude model. He told me as a model he got a lot of propositions, especially from homosexuals.”

Previously stationed at Fort Roach, Clark had managed to make such war movies as *Action in the North Atlantic* (1943) with Humphrey Bogart, and *Destination Tokyo* (1943) with Cary Grant. Reagan arranged for both of these films to be shown at his military base.

[After the war, as Reagan floundered to find a suitable movie role, he noted that Clark at Warner Brothers shot way ahead of him, playing the surly artist opposite Bette Davis in A Stolen Life *(1946). He’d just appeared in* God Is My Co-Pilot *(1945) with Jane’s good friend, Dennis Morgan. Exhibitors in 1945 named him the 16th most popular star at the box office.*

Clark was one of the first Hollywood actors to appear on television, which in the late 1940s was just emerging. He advised Reagan to do the same, but Reagan told him, “I can’t see myself appearing on that little box.”

Diminutive Dane Clark, a former nude model and boxer in New York, hit Hollywood in 1943. He tried to promote himself as a sex symbol, but suffered from the stigma of labels defining him as "the poor man's John Garfield."

How wrong he was.]

Actor Arthur Kennedy, who had played Jane's boyfriend in *Bad Men of Missouri*, was assigned to a post in the FMPU's wardrobe department, but he disliked his sergeant. When he applied for a transfer, he was very polite in describing his plight to Reagan. "Sir, my sergeant isn't the type to stand on a blood-soaked beach and yell, 'Onward men!'"

"I understand," Reagan said. "I'll see what I can do.' He obtained Kennedy a new post as assistant to the gardener at Fort Roach. "He spent a lot of time clipping hedges, but usually sneaked off the base at three o'clock and never got caught. That way, he could keep up with his drinking."

Reagan would appear for the first and last time in a movie, made on base, with Burgess Meredith.

Meredith admitted to Reagan, "I'm not a dashing swain, but in a kind of mongrel way, I chased the foxes." Over a period of time, that had included a group of A-list stars such as Hedy Lamarr, Ingrid Bergman, Olivia de Havilland, Peggy Ashcroft, Ginger Rogers, and Norma Shearer, plus a *ménage à trois* with a wealthy German lady and her lesbian lover.

As a means of avoiding confusion with a certain politician, the actor, John Kennedy of Massachusetts *(photo above)* opted to bill himself as Arthur

Kennedy.

A talented, brooding actor of great intensity, Kennedy was assigned by Reagan the task of clipping hedges on their Army base.

Meredith was filled with amusing stories, telling Reagan that during sex with Tallulah Bankhead, she had shrieked, “For god’s sake, don’t come inside me! I’m engaged to Jock Whitney!”

Meredith was arguably the most accomplished actor Reagan ever appeared with, having starred in some of Hollywood’s biggest movies and also achieving success on Broadway. Before joining the Army, he had scored big in the 1939 film adaptation of the John Steinbeck novel, *Of Mice and Men*, a story about hope, despair, migrant workers, and marital infidelity during the Great Depression.

“Most of the time, the guys thought Reagan was a square,” Meredith said. “Very formal, very stiff, a man who obeyed the rules. But he had his ribald moments. His favorite (comedy) routine, believe it or not, involved demonstrating the Seven Stages of a Man’s Life through a pissing routine.”

Edmund Morris, in his biography of Reagan, described it as follows: “First, Reagan would imitate the Little Boy with bursting bladder, hoisting himself high on tiptoe. Then the furtive adolescent, a copy of *Esquire* in hand, making vague masturbatory motions. Next came Mr. Regular Fella, who unzipped, peed, zipped, washed, and exited whistling. The pansy followed, mincing up to the wall and ogling to the left and right, while taking as much time as possible *in flagrante*. He was pushed aside by the Athlete, who unfurled a prodigious member (he used the full length of this tie) and hosed the mahogany with such force that he staggered in recoil. Then the wobbling Drunk, spraying everybody in sight. Finally and pathetically, the Old Man doddered in, fumbling at his fly buttons—here he became cruel.”

Arthur Kennedy, Burgess Meredith, and Dane Clark weren’t the only actors working at Fort Roach. Reagan became lifelong friends with the strikingly handsome George Montgomery. After he married singer Dinah Shore in 1943, the newlyweds often doubled dated with the Reagans.

Reagan became aware of an argument percolating its way through Fort Roach, mostly in the makeup department, as to which was the better-looking actor, Reagan or Montgomery. Standing 6’3” and weighing 210 pounds, Montgomery usually won. Much of his well-muscled body had been developed by riding horses and working cattle on his family ranch in northern Montana, where he’d been born the youngest of fifteen children to Ukrainian immigrant parents.

As he told Reagan, he’d landed a job as a stunt man on an MGM Greta Garbo picture in 1935, only two days after his arrival in Hollywood. That had led to stunt work in cowboy films, and by the early 1940s, he was co-starring with such stars as Ginger Rogers and Gene Tierney. Coincidentally, he’d also co-starred with—and been seduced by—two of Reagan’s girlfriends, Carole Landis and Betty Grable. Just prior to joining the U.S. Army Air force, Montgomery completed a wartime movie, *Bomber’s Moon* (1943), in which he and Kent Smith escape from a prison camp.

Tall, rugged, and handsome, George Montgomery wanted to be an interior decorator, but became a boxer instead. Drifting to Hollywood, he became a movie star.

He frequently went out on romantic dates with Reagan. Don’t get the wrong idea: Singer Dinah Shore and Jane Wyman went along for the fun.

While at Fort Roach, Reagan made future best friends in the most unlikely of places.

“I hated the son of a bitch when I first met him,” said William Holden, who, during the war, became a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Force, working in collaboration with the First Motion Picture Unit.

He recalled an early episode of his involvement in the Armed Services: “My friend, Richard Webb and I, from Paramount, went to Reagan’s office at Fort Roach to present our credentials. He ordered us to stand at rigid attention while the fucker read laboriously all the regulations. I hated his guts. Once freed from this god damn dictator, I called him a son of a bitch when I left his office.”

Holden had really wanted to join active service, and he resented having to report to the Motion Picture Unit. Its only advantage, he maintained at the time, was that he got to go home every night to his wife, the American actress Ardis Ankerson, who acted under the name of Brenda Marshall.

He related a memorable incident when, early one morning, Reagan and a camera crew were roughly shuttled into the desert for a training mission. “It must have been 120° F., and our bodies were soaked with sweat,” Holden said. “At noon, we were given a horrible lunch, Spam or something, and some rotting cabbage.”

It was the beginning of a beautiful, life-long friendship between William Holden and Reagan. But it began under unlikely circumstances.

“Ronnie and I were sitting on the can, side by side, suffering bouts of diarrhea from rotten Spam.”

Hours later, back at the base, Holden said, “There must have been something wrong with the Spam. Every guy in the unit got the runs. At the barracks, there was a stampede to the urinals where 18 toilet bowls with no seats were lined up. In a mad dash it was first come, first dump. At one point, the noise sounded like fiesta night in Guadalajara.”

“On the seat, I turned to look at the guy unloading next to me. It was Mr. Ronald Reagan, our captain. After that, Ronnie and I became best friends, or more aptly, ‘asshole buddies’ as Southern boys say. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”

Sometimes, Reagan was embarrassed that he had not served on the front, even though his eyesight had prohibited it. That was especially true when he had a reunion with his *Brother Rat* star, Eddie Albert.

Albert’s career with the Army had begun long before the United States entered the war, and even before the beginning of his film career. As a clown and high-wire artist with the Escalante Brothers’ Circus, he had performed in Mexico. Privately, he was working for U.S. Army Intelligence, photographing Nazi U-Boats in Mexican harbors.

On September 9, 1942, he’d enlisted in the U.S. Navy, later becoming a lieutenant in the U.S. Naval Reserve, where he was awarded the Bronze Star for his bravery in the invasion of Tarawa in November of 1943. He rescued some 75 Marines under heavy enemy machine gun fire.

Back in Hollywood, Albert presented Reagan with an intricately carved fastener *[netsuke]* removed from the “uniform of a dead Jap.” Reagan accepted the gift with a red face.

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Reagan immersed himself in his latest gig as a military propagandist.

“Even when he came home, he talked about nothing but the war, speculating how the world was going to line up politically when victory came,” Jane told her friends. “He detested Josef Stalin, our ally, telling me that politics make strange bedfellows. He hated communists, especially home-grown Reds.”

At Fort Roach, Reagan found himself making films again. Either in front of the camera, or as a narrator, his film and radio experience was highly valued.

In his first Army film, he interpreted the title role of *Mr. Gardenia Jones* (1942), even though he objected to his character’s name. “Somehow, Gardenia doesn’t strike me as a fit name for a man.” Lending their talents was an impressive cast, beginning with Laraine Day, his leading lady from when both of them had starred in *The Bad Man*

(1941).

Supporting players included Charles Winninger, Fay Bainter, and Chill Wills. The director was George B. Seitz, whose career had begun in the Silents when he'd directed *The Perils of Pauline* (1914).

Mr. Gardenia Jones was a documentary depicting the work of the USO, showing how it provided both recreational and morale-boosting services for American troops. In the movie, Gardenia has enlisted before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When the invasion occurs, Reagan is seen in aerial combat, mowing down Japanese planes, a bit of fantasy for a man afraid to fly.

In a surprise to both the cast and their director, this flag-waving war propaganda film ran into threatened censorship problems with the War Department. Despite the film's patriotic overtones, their objections almost prevented MGM from releasing it. The War Department censors objected to scenes that depicted soldiers jumping up with joy at the opportunity of taking a shower in the canteen, or sitting in overstuffed, comfortable chairs. "This Army," as noted by *The New York Times*, "feels this is not good for morale, as it implies that there are no showers or other comforts for soldiers in military camps."

After expressing its objections, the War Department allowed the film to be released anyway. Eventually, it won a nomination for an Academy Award as the Best Documentary of 1942.

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Lewis Seiler, who had directed both Jane and Reagan in *Tugboat Annie Sails Again*, was brought in to helm Reagan and others in *Beyond the Line of Duty* (1942). Seiler seemed anxious to speed his way through production of this 22-minute film, as he wanted to move on to his next assignment directing Marlene Dietrich and John Wayne in *Pittsburgh* (1942). Even if it were a rush job, *Beyond the Line of Duty* would go on to win an Oscar as Best Short Subject (two reel).

The film is unique in that it cast both a sitting president, Franklin D. Roosevelt (in archive footage), and a future president, Reagan (as narrator).

The star of the film was a bomber pilot hero from Texas, Captain Hewitt T. Wheless, cast as himself. A week after the raid on Pearl Harbor, Wheless, as the pilot of a B-17, had attacked Japanese warships in the Philippines and shot down seven Japanese fighter planes.

In his next film, formally entitled *Recognition of the Japanese Zero Fighter (1943)*, but identified around Fort Roach and to thousands of enlisted men as simply *Jap Zero*, Reagan found himself at the center of an instructional film teaching Allied airmen to correctly distinguish between enemy Japanese aircraft (the Zero) and the American P-14 fighter plane, which resembled it in many ways. Reagan played the role of a pilot who not only recognizes, but then destroys a Zero over the Pacific. He later said, "*[In making this film]* I relied on my experience filming sequences for *International Squadron* (1941)."

Months later, after watching the film, Crump sent out a rather sour memo, stating "Ronald Reagan is too famous a face to use in films involving instructional procedures. Our job is to save lives, not entertain."

From then on, Reagan was banned from appearing in equivalent films, although Crump did not issue that mandate to such actors as Van Heflin, George Montgomery, Lee J. Cobb, Arthur Kennedy, and William Holden, whom Crump defined as "boozy and ridiculously charming, a poster boy to get young men to enlist."

Reagan *(right)* teaches, instructs, commands, inspires, and urges his companions and the nation onward in *Rear Gunner*.

Reagan would, however, be allowed to work on other "War Effort" films not conceived strictly as "instruction manuals."

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Without question, the most ambitious of all of Reagan's war propaganda shorts was *Rear Gunner* (1943), with an all-star cast headed by Burgess Meredith as Army Private Pee Wee Williams. Supporting players included Reagan himself, cast as Lieutenant Amers, along with instructor Tom Neal and Dane Clark, playing an enlisted man who likes Coney Island shooting galleries.

When she heard that her husband was working with Burgess Meredith, Jane was concerned that Reagan might learn some of her sexual secrets. Before leaving for military duty, he'd dated her best friend, Paulette Goddard. He would marry her in 1944. Goddard was Jane's *confidante*, and she wondered how much the actress had told Meredith. As she said in a call to Goddard, "Please warn him that discretion is the better part of valor, or however the line goes."

The film traces the odyssey of Pee Wee, a shy Kansas farm boy who is transformed into a killing machine, thanks to his assignment as an aerial gunner in the tail turret of a U.S. bomber.

Ray Enright, who had recently helmed Jane and Reagan in *An Angel from Texas* (1940), was called in to direct. Reagan had to leave town to shoot the film on location, both in the desert outside Tucson and also at the Las Vegas Gunnery School.

The film was blatantly patriotic, aimed at encouraging young men to go to gunnery schools in preparation for aerial combat. Most men who enlisted wanted to be pilots, not rear gunners. Gunnery schools frequently advertised with the slogan "We are always on the lookout for men short on height, but long on ambition." These schools were in the business of training "shorties" to become killers in the sky.

One of Reagan's lines proclaimed, "The film is about creating a modern knight of fire." He defined the position of a rear gunner as "a passport into the vistas of victory." In one sequence, an instructor tells Meredith, "A rear gunner knows that the fire from your guns is the fire of freedom."

After a film sequence demonstrating a rear gunner in action, Reagan asserts, "It's shooting like this that will knock them on their Axis."

In just twenty-six minutes of frenzied aerial combat, the farmboy evolves from a hayseed to a war hero, winning the Distinguished Service Cross.

One sequence depicts Reagan in the cockpit, evoking one of his Brass Bancroft movies when he played an "Agent in the Air" for the Secret Service.

Viewed today, the film seems to have emerged from a time machine. Some references evoke a snicker, as when the dialogue includes a reference to the Air Corps having a "gay day."

Unlike most of the films from FMPU, Jack Warner paid for the cost of *Rear Gunner's* production and wanted to release it as a commercial feature, with exhibitors paying to show it. The War Department objected, claiming, "Actors such as Ronald Reagan and Burgess Meredith, who have been commissioned into the Army, should not be exploited for commercial gain by any film studio."

Consequently, *Rear Gunner* was released, without charge, to theaters nationwide as part of their regular programming. It was not, however, specifically promoted as a special feature, as Warner would have preferred.

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With a duration of twenty-two minutes, *Target Tokyo* (1942) was narrated by Reagan. It was a glorification of the B-29 bomber, a virtual flying fortress created to bomb the Japanese homeland into submission. Before the advent of the B-29, Japanese generals had claimed that their homeland was beyond the reach of any American bomber. The B-29 proved what a false statement that was.

The film begins on an early dawn in Nebraska, where the B-29s begin their long journey, with stopovers en route

As narrator, Reagan claims that for the Japs to stop them, their task would be "as hopeless as trying to stop the flow of water at Niagara Falls."

At one point during a bombing raid, the B-29 is shown flying over a munitions factory in the environs of Tokyo. Reagan asks the pilot, "Well, bud, what are you waiting for?" Immediately, the bombs rain down, destroying the factory.

General Douglas MacArthur had to evacuate The Philippines during the epic battle for those islands against the Japanese, vowing, "I shall return!" Reagan became involved in yet another film, *Westward Bataan* (1944), which paid homage to MacArthur and his island-hopping military strategy. It depicted and dramatized the U.S. campaign to cut off supply routes to Japanese soldiers maintaining beleaguered strongholds in New Ireland and New Britain. Reagan declares, "The Japs can surrender or rot."

An officer in the movie tells his men that the Japanese should be watched "like you would a deadly rattlesnake."

The enemy is depicted as a pack of fanatics, willing to fight to the last man, woman, or child, giving up their lives for their emperor. Viewers are told that the Japanese are willing to sacrifice ten million of their people. As narrator, Reagan grimly asserts, "Well, life isn't cheap in America." A Japanese mother is shown as she is presented with a box containing the ashes of her son. "We don't raise our boys to be god in little white boxes," Reagan assures his viewers.

Tarket Tokyo promoted the technological sophistication of the B-29, a flying Superfortress with Twelve 1/2-inch (12.7 mm) remote controlled M2 Browning machine guns and 20,000 pounds of "Earthquake bombs."

The atomic bombs that later fell on Japan were delivered by this aircraft.

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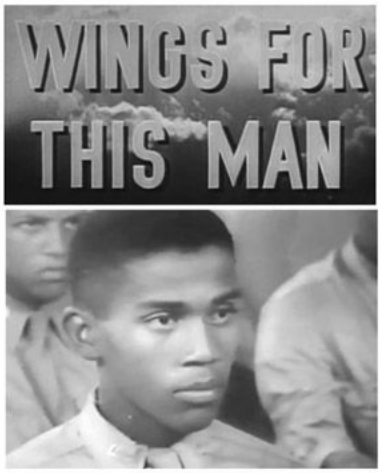
In *For God and Country* (1944), Reagan had an unusual role. Cast as a Catholic chaplain, he tells his fellow soldiers, "Gunsare not for chaplains." His two closest friends are a Protestant and a Jew, both of whom are killed trying to save the life of a Native American. "We were trying to cover all religious fronts in this film, all except Moslems and atheists," Reagan said. "There was a famous saying, 'There are no atheists in a foxhole.'"



Racial issues in the then-segregated U.S. army were touched upon delicately and lightly, very lightly.

For God and Country is a plea for racial and religious harmony among men allied against a common enemy. As part of the film's narrative, the chaplain asks, "What better weapons can a soldier carry with him into battle than those of courage, of unswerving devotion to his faith, and to his fellow man? The obvious answer to Reagan's question is "a gun."

Very few of these wartime propaganda films depicted African American servicemen, who were referred to as Negroes in most World War II movies. *Wings for This Man* (1945) was an exception, as it was devoted entirely to black pilots training in Alabama at the Tuskegee Air Base.

The movie begins with Reagan as narrator dramatically depicting an outnumbered U.S. squadron in a dogfight with planes from the *Luftwaffe*. The Nazi planes are shot down. Back at the base, it is revealed that the American pilots were black. To find their place in the sun, Reagan suggests, "These airmen had to overcome misunderstanding, distrust, and prejudice."

For the most part, racial issues are not hit upon too heavily. Reagan states: "One thing was proven here: That you can't judge a man by the color of his eyes or the shape of his nose. These men were pioneers, and pioneers have never had it easy."

At the film's end, a white officer is seen decorating a black pilot, giving him "*Wings for This Man*," the title of the short.

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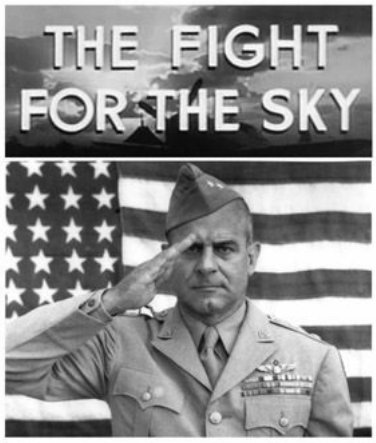

Jimmy Doolittle salutes in *Fight for the Sky*. When it was released, Reagan said, "We've already beat the Krauts and the Japs. We're just waiting for the Fat Lady to sing."

The Fight for the Sky (1945) was one of the last of Reagan's propaganda films. The documentary details the exploits of the American fighter escort pilots during bombing raids of Nazi Germany. They are depicted destroying the *Luftwaffe*.

Reagan's co-star was Jimmy Doolittle, the aviation pioneer who earned the Medal of Honor as commander of the famous "Doolittle Raid" over Japan during World War II. In 1942, Doolittle and his fellow pilots shocked the Japanese by flying the first retaliatory air raid unleashed upon the Japanese mainland. The attack force of sixteen B-25s set off from an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. Hornet *[now permanently moored as a museum ship in Alameda, California, near San Francisco.]*

Targets of the raid included, among others, Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and Kobe. After the raid, Doolittle's plane, now out of fuel after twelve hours of fighting, went down in a rice paddy on the Japanese-occupied mainland of China. Rescued by Chinese guerillas, with the assistance of the American missionary, John Birch, Doolittle was smuggled into territory controlled by the Allies. Although Doolittle survived for other heroic missions and flying records, four of his crew members lost their lives as a result of being captured and tortured by the Japanese.

The Fight for the Sky focuses on Thunderbolts (B-47s), Mustangs (P-51s), and Lightnings (P-38s), planes that smashed Hermann Göring's *Luftwaffe* during its desperate attempts to maintain control of the skies of the Fatherland.

As Reagan asserts during his narration of the film, "Into these three great fighters, America poured its genius. No American fighter ever failed because of enemy odds, however great."

As bombs fall over Germany, the film ends with praise for heroic Allied pilots "who in the decisive hour smashed the *Luftwaffe* and gave freedom of the air over Europe."

The film was released in both a 20-minute version and as a longer feature with a running time of 40 minutes. Reagan narrated only the shorter version. The movies are packed with camera footage of strafing runs and aerial combat. Images of several fighter aces are shown on the screen. Each pilot survived the war, though some were captured when their planes went down and they were held as POWs.

The message sent out to these pilots was "Attack! Attack! Attack!"

One day, Reagan received a call that informed him that the Armed Services were releasing him to make a film at Warner Brothers.

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The number of Jane Wyman films produced at Warners was greatly reduced during the closing years of World War II. She appeared in only a fraction of the movies she'd rushed through in the 1930s and early 1940s.

A highlight of her film production during World War II had included co-starring with Olivia de Havilland in *Princess O'Rourke* in 1943. Her schedule was busier in 1944 when she was cast in three B-pictures and made a guest cameo appearance in *Hollywood Canteen* alongside such stars as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford.

The war did not devastate her small family in the way it did thousands of other American homes. Reagan drove home from Fort Roach most evenings, and Baby Maureen was healthy, except for a tendency to cry hysterically at three o'clock in the morning.

Jane continued to see a lot of her personal friends, usually visiting them at their homes for private dinners or parties. Occasionally, at obscure locations, she went out dancing with Van Johnson.

As the war dragged on, Jane continued her affair with Dennis Morgan, who—because he wasn't otherwise committed to military service—was still making movies for Warners.

Also, with high anticipation and whenever she could, she drove down to Long Beach, where John Payne was a flight instructor with the Army Air Force.

After his divorce from Anne Shirley in 1942, she had fully expected him to urge her to divorce Reagan and to marry him. When they had gotten together, both of them had expressed their "undying love" for each other. But there was no talk of his eventually marrying her.

One Sunday afternoon, with no warning whatsoever, he told her that they needed to talk. Their weekend, at least in her view, had been glorious, "almost the dearest, yet most passionate, I ever spent with John"

John Payne dumped Jane Wyman so he could marry Gloria DeHaven.

But that afternoon, as they faced a dying sun sinking in the west, Payne delivered news that devastated her. He told her that he was ending their relationship because he'd proposed marriage to the MGM music star, Gloria DeHaven. As Jane later revealed to both Blondell and Goddard, "I was in a state of shock. I had no clue this was about to happen. I guess John wants a wife more than he desires a married off-the-record gal like me hanging on to him."

Battling Blondes: June Allyson.

At the base, after his kiss-off speech, Payne reached for her hand after opening her car door. "Maybe we'll meet again, kid, after the war is over. That is, if I grow tired of my bride and you finally get up enough courage to ditch Reagan."

...and her nemesis, Joan Blondell.

"Maybe," she said, declining a farewell kiss.

She later told Goddard, "I cried all the way back to Los Angeles. I lost what was never mine in the first place."

Goddard knew DeHaven, who was the daughter of actor Carter DeHaven. He'd used his influence to get her cast in minor parts in two Charlie Chaplin films—*Modern Times* (1936) and *The Great Dictator* (1940)—made during the course of Chaplin's marriage to Goddard.

Jane had seen DeHaven in the 1943 *Best Foot Forward* with June Allyson and again with Allyson in *Two Girls and a Sailor* (1944).

Payne had told her that DeHaven, who was seven years younger than Jane, would retire from the screen after their marriage.

[DeHaven retired from filmmaking, but only briefly, making a return in the lackluster 1948 melodrama, Summer Holiday, *in which she played the sweetheart of Mickey Rooney. The picture flopped.]*

Blondell and Dick Powell also ended up in the divorce courts, freeing themselves from each other in 1944. Powell soon became involved with Allyson, whom he would marry the following year. Powell and Reagan still continued as friends. But after his marital reshuffling, instead of showing up at the Reagan home for dinner with Blondell, he appeared there with Allyson on his arm.

Jane remembered her first meeting with the short and perky MGM star. As she later told Blondell, "Right in front of Dick and me, June flirted outrageously with Ronnie."

"I'm not surprised," Blondell said. "She's a nympho, in spite of that syrupy personality of hers. The bitch lived with me for a time at my apartment in New York when she was trying to break into show business. I know *all* about that one."

"Grab him, darlin', if he's in uniform." Burgess Meredith marries Paulette Goddard.

After her messy divorce from Chaplin, Goddard began dating actor Burgess Meredith, who was making war propaganda films at the time with Reagan at Fort Roach. She married him in 1944, much to the consternation of Jane. "She didn't marry him for his looks or for his money, of which he had none. Surely, it wasn't because of his talent as an actor."

Meredith himself explained to Jane what had attracted him to "P.G.," as he called her.

"She walks into a room and you feel a sinuousness about her, a sense of danger. On top of that, she produces a nonstop flow of speech that is witty, cunning, and touching."

After witnessing the marital debris of her closest friends, Jane consoled herself over the loss of Payne, whom she continued to maintain as "the greatest sexual thrill of my life."

She told Blondell, "I still have the affection of Ronnie and Dennis Morgan, the two handsomest men at Warners. Not bad for a working gal like me. Who knows? In my next film, I may imitate Ronnie and develop *Leadingman-itis."*

"Jane, dear, there are those—not me, of course—who claim you came down with that disease back when we made all those silly pictures for Warners in the 30s."

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The first picture Jane made in 1944 had the less-than-enticing title of *Make Your Own Bed*. She was teamed with the robust, 220-pound Jack Carson, who had first appeared on the stage in a college production playing Hercules. "I tripped," he told her, "and brought down half the set."

"That's one way to launch yourself into show business," Jane said.

Jack Carson sleuths and schemes around Jane Wyman in *Make Your Own Bed*.

In this, his latest film, Carson told her, “Here I go again, playing the clown, stooge, or whatever befuddled mess I am.”

[The title of the film seemed to stem from a not-very-funny standing joke about a doublebed.]

Once again, her lover, Dennis Morgan, was a frequent visitor to the set, ostensibly to see Carson, his best friend. Secretly, Morgan continued to use Carson as his “beard” to meet with Jane. As Carson later confessed, years later, “I was with them only until we left the studio. Then I scrammed to leave them to tend to business. Maybe Jane was not getting enough from Reagan. How in the hell would I know?”

On the first day of shooting, she met a Londoner, her director, Peter Godfrey. She later concluded, “Peter was a bit too experimental and avant-garde for a pedestrian script like *Make your Own Bed*. He was very talented and was also at home with the classics, including both Molière and Strindberg.”

The rather weak screenplay of *Make Your Own Bed* was by Francis Swann and Edmund Joseph. The plot has Walter, a gunpowder manufacturer (Alan Hale, Sr.) and Vivian, his wife (Irene Manning), living in the country and finding it difficult to keep servants. Walter solves the problem by hiring a private detective, Jerry (Jack Carson) who had been fired for arresting the local District Attorney. Walter tells Carson that his life is in danger—“Nazi spies are everywhere.”

In *Make Your Own Bed*, Jerry, as portrayed by Carson, needs a cover, so he brings in his *fiancée*, Susan (Jane), to work for the household as a cook. The biggest problem involves the fact that she can’t cook. Consequently, as improbable as it sounds, Walter and Vivian solve their staff problem by agreeing to take turns preparing the meals themselves, all the while keeping Jane employed.

There is another problem, however: Jerry, as a sleuth, can’t even locate the Brooklyn Bridge. But by the final reel, as could be predicted, the Nazi spies are unmasked.

The most fascinating woman on the set was Irene Manning. Though born in Cincinnati, she could be made up to look like a continental *femme fatale*. She had played the diva, Fay Templeton, in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) opposite James Cagney. Jane was jealous of her, although she tried to conceal it. She’d co-starred with Morgan in *Desert Song* (1943), and Jane had heard rumors of an affair.

To make matters worse, director David Butler had cast Manning in another 1944 movie, *Shine on Harvest Moon*. It not only starred Morgan, but two of Jane’s best friends, Jack Carson and Ann Sheridan. Jane lobbied to join Carson, Morgan, and Sheridan as a player within that film, but she was rejected in favor of Manning, which infuriated her and increased her distaste for the singer-actress.

USO darling Irene Manning: Making her own bed, and competing with Jane for the attentions of Dennis Morgan.

Manning didn’t seem jealous of or threatened by Jane, and at one point, invited her to join her on an all-girl USO tour of war-torn England for morale-boosting performances with bandleader Glenn Miller, shortly before his death in 1944.

Although at the time, Jane claimed that she was needed “to take care of Ronnie and Maureen,” she regretted not having been part of that troupe.

She later said, “Had I gone, it would have made a fascinating chapter in my memoirs.”

[Incidentally, those memoirs—although contemplated—would never be written.]

After it was wrapped, Jane sat with Carson and Morgan, watching the final cut of *Make Your Own Bed*. At the end, and over drinks, she claimed, “This is the worst movie I’ve ever made.”

Perhaps it really wasn’t, but that’s what she said atthe time.

Jane didn't like her role in *Crime by Night*, but loved having her name in large letters above the title. She had a scene with Jerome Cowan *(left)* and with bit player Stuart Crawford.

When Cowan told her he was having sexual fantasies about her, she snapped, "Only in your dreams, pal!"

Bosley Crowther, writing in *The New York Times*, panned it. "For all the contortions it goes through, the movie is a limp dishrag, a labored but failed endeavor to fetch laughs with a lot of old gags, like kitchen disasters and wrong doors. The humor is feeble and unsustained."

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Jerome Cowan, Jane's new leading man in *Crime by Night*, may not be a household name, but the appearance of this mustachioed character actor from New York had been immortalized in two film classics, which are forever being shown on TV. One was *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), in which Cowan was cast as the doomed private eye, the partner of Sam Spade, as played by Humphrey Bogart. The other famous film in which Cowan appeared was the perennial Christmas favorite, *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947). Jane would eventually see that film more than once, partly because it starred her former lover, John Payne, alongside Maureen O'Hara.

After serving in World War I, Cowan had become a vaudeville headliner until 1936 when Samuel Goldwyn brought him to Hollywood for a role in *Beloved Enemy*.

Amazingly, despite his late entry into films, Cowan became one of the most employed actors in Hollywood, appearing in some 120 movies. He was the suitor spurned by Bette Davis who consequently ended up onscreen with him as *The Old Maid* (1939). After completing his role with Jane, Cowan prepared for another face-off with Davis in her star role in *Mr. Skeffington* (1944).

During the filming of *Crime By Night*, Cowan downplayed not only his role, but that of Jane's. "It's just another Warner Brothers' private eye caper—nothing more, nothing less. The only thing it's got going for it is a trio of very beautiful actresses, beginning with you but also including Eleanor Parker and Faye Emerson."

"When I heard that you three beauties were in the movie, I had a wet dream," Cowan said. "Although I'm faithful to my wife, Helen Dodge, I dreamed that all three of you were the chief girls in my Harem."

"How flattering," Jane said, not quite disguising her sarcasm.

After dinner with Cowan, Jane shared her impression of him with Morgan. "My god, couldn't Jack Warner have come up with a younger actor to appear as my boyfriend? I looked it up. Cowan was born in the final year *[1897]* of Grover Cleveland's presidency. He's forty-seven right now and looks older. I'm twenty-seven and look like a girl out of college."

"How true," Morgan responded.

Jane also complained to the film's director, William Clemens, about his choice of her leading man, and her role. "Basically, it seems that all I have to do is feed Cowan his lines."

"But you get to kiss him in the final reel," Clemens said.

"Thanks a hell of a lot!" she snapped. "That would be like kissing my father if I had one. With Cowan as my boyfriend, he could get arrested for child molestation. Where is John Payne now that I need him in more ways than one?"

The plot of *Crime by Night* focuses on private eye Sam Campbell (Cowan) who is on vacation with his secretary-partner, Robbie Vance (as played by Jane). They become involved in a murder investigation. Harvey Carr, the father-in-law of Larry Borden (Stuart Crawford), is found dead from a blow by an ax. Borden's promising career as a concert pianist had ended in a fight with Carr, who had chopped off Borden's hand with an ax. Therefore, Borden was a prime suspect in Carr's murder, perhaps as an act of revenge for destroying his musical career.

Borden is Campbell's friend, and he and Robbie (that is, Jane), arrive to help. Eleanor Parker was cast as Irene Carr, the daughter of the murdered man and Borden's ex-wife. She arrives on the scene as another dead body, that of the gardener, turns up.

Irene shows up with Paul Goff (Charles Lang), a singer whom she intends to marry. He also arrives with his agent, Ann Marlow (Faye Emerson).

Complications ensue in the thickening plot, which spins around a Nazi spy ring. Carr, the murder victim, owned a chemical plant. At first, Goff is a suspect until he is also murdered.

SPOILER ALERT: Ann Marlow (Emerson) turns out to be the culprit, a Nazi spy. Ironically, at the time, after her marriage to Elliott Roosevelt, Emerson was set to move into the White House, the nerve center of the United States' War direction against the Nazis.

As a reviewer in *The New York Times* asserted, "The real crime in *Crime by Night* are the people who made it, forcing the audience to sit through 72 minutes of tedium. At my viewing, many patrons walked out after the first thirty minutes."

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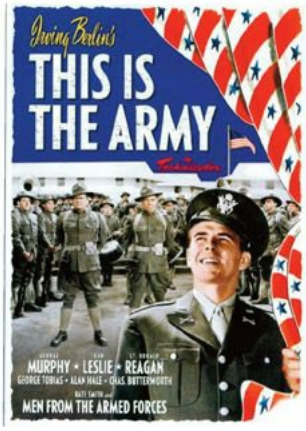
Leaving Fort Roach, based on wartime orders from his superiors, Reagan returned to Warner Brothers. He later wrote, "It was a thrill for me once again to be a part of the picture business." His assignment involved playing a key role in a feature film, *This Is the Army* (1943), a sometimes bizarre wartime musical produced by Hal B. Wallis and Jack Warner. The screenplay was by Claude Binyon and Casey Robinson. Robinson had written the script for *Kings Row*.

The movie was based on Irving Berlin's hit Broadway musical of 1942. He had produced a roughly equivalent show as a morale-booster during World War I called *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*. Money earned for the 1943 movie version, eventually totaling some $12 million, would be donated to the Army Emergency Relief Fund.



At the time, Reagan was drawing a monthly stipend from the Army of $250. He was told that even though he was starring in the film, he would get no additional salary from Warners. However, the non-enlisted civilian star of the movie, song-and-dance man George Murphy, would draw around $28,000.

In addition to Murphy, other major stars would be cast in the film, along with some 300 Army men and sailors from the U.S. Navy. Before the war, most of these had been singers or actors in civilian life.

For the most part, Reagan was impressed with the cast which the film's director, Michael Curtiz, had assembled. Although he considered Curtiz temperamental and difficult, he had gotten along with the Hungarian when he'd helmed Errol Flynn and him in *Santa Fe Trail*.

Jane claimed, "I was seriously pissed off when I didn't get to play Ronnie's girlfriend in *This Is the Army."* Instead, the part went to "sweet little Joan Leslie," depicted above.

If Jane had gotten the part, she could have worn her own uniform. In the summer of 1942, as a public relations statement partly based on her success in selling War Bonds, she was commissioned in the Army Air Corps as a 2nd lieutenant. Jane was proud of it, however, and insisted, "I deserved the part."

In addition to Murphy and Reagan, Curtiz had cast "sweetheart sweet" Joan Leslie, plus supporting players who included George Tobias (Reagan's co-star in *Juke Girl)* and Alan Hale, Sr. (Reagan's co-star in *Tugboat Annie Sails Again)*.

Other veteran performers included Charles Butterworth, Rosemary DeCamp (the mother of the character portrayed by Reagan), Una Merkel, Stanley Ridges, Ruth Donnelly, and Dolores Costello, once hailed as "the goddess of the silent screen." Personalities who included Kate Smith, Frances Langford, Gertrude Niesen, Victor Moore, Joe E. Louis, and Berlin himself appeared as themselves.

On his first day back at Warners, Reagan was ushered into Curtiz' office, where he was concluding an acrimonious phone conversation with an irate Bette Davis. Curtiz slammed down the phone. "The patriotic bitch wants to be in my movie. She can't sing or dance. She's no soldier. When I cast bitch in *Cabin in the Cotton* (1932), I called her a 'goddamn nothing no good sexless son of a bitch.' But we made up when I lick pussy. She likes pussy licked. We made five more films after that, but not this one, god-damn it."

At some point, Reagan asked Curtiz, "Exactly what type of boy is Johnny Jones, the one I'm to play?"

"Who gives a fuck?" Curtiz exclaimed. "No one cares about character. I make it so fast nobody notices. Don't argue with me. I'm Best Director." He pointed to a table where his Oscar for Best Director rested. He'd won it for the 1942 *Casablanca*, with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. "Bogie's a shit. Bergman fuck him, she fuck me, she'll fuck any round object."

"Your role no special shit," Curtiz continued. "Any actor at Warners under thirty-five can play it. You run around calling people to stage and turning down offers of Joan Leslie who wants to marry you so she can get fucked. You want to wait until war's end. You claim you don't want to make her widow. She finally wins and you get fuck. You don't actually fuck her on screen, fool. You and Leslie can stage private exhibit for me. I like to watch. Usually, I hire a big black buck to fuck young blonde gal. That's my favorite."

Curtiz told Reagan their film meant a lot to him. "I escaped from the Nazis. Members of my family not so lucky. They die at Auschwitz."

"Right now at Warners I ride high. Tomorrow, I might fall off horse. You no make dough at box office, you are tossed into gutter with garbage."

Actors who became career politicians: Reagan with George Murphy in a scene from *This is the Army*. Murphy steered Reagan from left to right.

Then Curtiz summoned Joan Leslie into his office and introduced her to Reagan. A latter-day film historian would write: "Sweet, perky young things were a dime a dozen in Hollywood's heyday, but Joan Leslie stood out as a highly appealing and engaging young actress with some flashes of genuine talent."

George Murphy, who had tap-danced his way to fame in 1930s and early 40s musicals, was cast as Reagan's father. "And I never let him forget it," Reagan said. Actually, he was only nine years older than Reagan, having been born a "Connecticut Yankee."

This Is the Army opens in 1917, with Murphy portraying a fast-talking vaudeville performer who gets drafted. In World War I, after a severe injury to his leg, he can't perform any more, although he can walk around with a cane. As Reagan admitted, "It took a lot of makeup and a gray dye job to make George look like my father."

Although the two men had known each other for years, Murphy became president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) in 1944. It was during this time that the two performers bonded.

[Reagan later referred to Murphy as "my own John the Baptist," whatever that meant. In time, Murphy became a politician, serving as a Republican in the U.S. Senate from 1965 to 1971, representing the State of California. He became the first notable U.S. actor to make the transition from the movies into politics, predating both Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger, each of whom served as governor of California.

Beginning with This Is the Army, *Reagan and Murphy became lifelong friends. "When I met Ronnie, he was a nearly hopeless hemophiliac liberal. But I changed his mind, although it took a lot of talking. As a liberal, he backed all the wrong causes. It was a struggle, but I eventually turned him into a benighted Republican. I made him realize that our Republican philosophy of self-reliance, as opposed to the welfare state, was in keeping with his own ideals and not those of mad-dog Democrats who like to give away the store."]*

Reagan experienced an embarrassing moment when he stood on a replica of a Broadway stage with Murphy and Curtiz. The director was stridently demanding the beginning of the movie's big number, which included the singing and dancing of dozens of soldiers.

[In those days, the military was segregated.]

"BRING ON THE WHITE SOLDIERS!" Curtiz bellowed.

After the men were in place, Curtiz yelled, "BRING ON THE NIGGER TROOPS!"

Murphy politely corrected him, telling him that N word was offensive, not only to blacks but to him.

"I'm sorry," Curtiz said. "BRING ON THE COLORED NIGGERS."

During the first week of filming, Reagan was introduced to Irving Berlin at least five times, in as many separate venues. "He never seemed to remember that we'd met before. One day, he sat through the rushes and greeted me with, 'Young fellow, I just saw some of your work. You've got a few things to correct—for example, the huskiness in your voice—but you really should give this business some serious consideration when the war is over."

Reliable, stalwart and solid: Reagan as the competent but unflashy announcer for the frequently bizarre military/theatrical revue *This Is the Army*.

Cast in a very minor role was Craig Stevens, who was seven years younger than Reagan. Like Jane, he was from Missouri. Since 1939, he'd been cast in minor parts, although he and Reagan would co-star in a film together after the war.

As Reagan privately confessed to Murphy, "I was starting to worry a bit about Craig. I invited him to share my dressing room, but he praises my body and my looks too much, whether I'm in or out of my clothes. He also brings me gifts as if he's courting me. I was going to confront him. How wrong I would have been."

"How so?" Murphy asked.

"One day, he introduced me to this beautiful actress, Alexis Smith," Reagan said. "He's going to marry her. I'm now so comfortable with Craig that I even piss with him at the urinal without suspecting him of checking out my dick. He's definitely not a homo."

"My boy, you can be rather naïve about some things," Murphy said. "Haven't you ever heard of a bisexual?"

"Frankly, I don't believe such a thing exists. You're either straight or you're a homo. Guys who pretend otherwise are just bullshitters."

For their appearances in *This Is the Army*, Curtiz asked many of the soldiers—"I selected only pretty boys"—to appear in drag. "Many guys seemed only too eager to dress up like gals," Curtiz told Reagan. "Do you think it's possible that the Army is infested with homos?"

"Definitely not," Reagan said. "It's against Army policy to enlist homos. They weed them out at induction centers."

"So you say," Curtiz said. "I think many of them slip in anyway."

Reagan never recovered from the day Hale appeared on the set of *This Is the Army* in a blue dress with long blonde curls inspired by something from a silent Mary Pickford movie. He was not too happy being in drag. "Alan, would you go out on a date with me after the show?" Reagan asked.

"Why don't you go fuck yourself?" Hale suggested.

"Wait till Ward Bond and John Wayne hear about this," Reagan said. "I want to be the first to tell them."

With some other soldiers in drag, Hale performed in a number called "Ladies of the Chorus."

When the Breen office saw the film, wherein U.S. soldiers danced merrily together in drag, they exploded in fury and violently objected. They demanded that such scenes be cut. Jack Warner refused.

Breen also interpreted many of Berlin's songs as "too suggestive." Again, Warner refused to eliminate them from the film, and contacted the War Department, which warned the Breen office "to take a hike."

"There's a war on, in case you bluenoses never heard that," General Hap Arnold told Joseph Breen during an angry phone call. "I'll decide what our boys can see or not see, and I want them to see this picture." Then he slammed down the phone on Breen.

Not politically correct in today's terms, the film also included an unfunny minstrel number entitled "Manny," in

which dozens of white soldiers, about half of them in drag and all of them in blackface, performed a “coeducational” song and dance number that by today’s standards seems surreal.

Reagan found himself the butt of the song, “This is the Army, Mr. Jones.” He had not one memorable scene, but acquitted himself well, although outclassed by the massive array of stage talent surrounding him.

All the dancing white soldiers were shown up by the film’s showstopper, the black troupe of the James Cross Company performing a fast-moving and ultra-energetic number entitled “That’s What the Well-Dressed Man in Harlem Will Wear,” a reference to Army khaki.

At the revue’s end, the soldiers learn they are being immediately shipped, that very night, to Europe. They march through the theater with rifles and full military gear, hurriedly kissing their (weeping) mothers, wives, and girlfriends *adios*, and moving out and into a waiting convoy of trucks.

The film was a big hit, earning some $12 million for the Army Emergency Relief Fund.

In spite of his lackluster performance, Reagan fitted in perfectly with the patriotic mood of the country. For the first and only time in his life, *Box Office Record*, in reference to the 1942-43 season, gave him the highest ranking of any male star in Hollywood. With 195 points, he topped a list that included runners-up James Cagney at 186, Bing Crosby at 176, Clark Gable at 171, and Cary Grant at 169.

“I’m king of the hill,” Reagan shouted into a phone at Jane when notified of his standing.

Although he would hardly have believed it at the time, that moment in his life represented his peak as a Hollywood movie star. In terms of what pertained to his career as an entertainer, everything after that would run downhill.

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Doughgirls: Ann Sheridan *(left)*, Alexis Smith, Jane Wyman.

For her final film of 1944, Jane Wyman found herself reunited with her friends, Ann Sheridan and Jack Carson, in *The Doughgirls*, a wartime bedroom farce about the housing shortage in Washington. Also cast were the Reagans’ newly minted friends, Alexis Smith and her handsome boyfriend (soon to become her second husband), actor Craig Stevens

Carson, in the role of Arthur Halstead, has married his girlfriend, Vivian, and he books a honeymoon suite for them. But he soon learns that Jane has moved in her friends, Edna (Sheridan) and Nan (Smith), who can’t find lodgings elsewhere. Not only that, but they, too, have newly minted husbands, Sheridan having hooked up with John Ridgely and Smith with Stevens.

The young women—Jane, Smith, and Sheridan— soon face complications when, for somewhat contrived reasons, the marital status of each of them is unexpectedly defined as illegal by the authorities When Vivian learns that she is unmarried, she boots Carson out of their quarters. In his frustration, he refuses to pay the hotel bill unless Vivian moves out her girlfriends. Subsequently, she is forced to pawn her earrings to settle the bill.

Doughgirl: Eve Arden as a gun-toting Soviet socialist.

In the meantime, Arthur's boss, Stanley, played by Charles Ruggles, pursues Jane, although the mating of the pixie-like comic and Jane seems preposterous. He was fifty-eight at the time.

Eve Arden was cast as a Russian guerilla fighter, Natalia Moskarova, who is sent over from the Russian Embassy as yet another roommate. Although miscast, it was obvious to the other stars that Arden was a major threat as a scene stealer. She played the role in its broadest sense, lacking the subtlety of Greta Garbo's performance as a die-hard Soviet communist in *Ninotchka* (1939).

A play by Joseph Fields, *The Doughgirls*, had been a hit on Broadway in 1942, running for 688 performances. The brother of the famous lyricist, Dorothy Fields, Joseph was both a playwright and director, having scored two previous Broadway triumphs, *My Sister Eileen* (1940) and *Junior Miss* (1941).

Although Jack Warner was willing to bid only $40,000 for the screen rights to *Gone With the Wind* (1939), he put up an astonishing (for the time) $250,000 for the movie rights to *The Doughgirls*.

Of course, he knew that the Broadway script was "too spicy" for the movies, and that he'd have to remove any suggestion that the couples were living together and having pre-marital sex. Much of the racy dialogue of the play would also have to be rewritten into something much more bland.

James V. Kern was hired to write the screenplay with Sam Hellman. For some unknown reason, Warner also designated Kern as director of this prestigious project, even though he'd had no experience in that field.

Jane expressed at the time her disappointment with Kern both as a writer and as a director. *[Later, however, she changed her mind about Kern, a New Yorker. "I met him when he was still green. He'd been a lawyer, ditching that career for show business. He really found himself when he became a director of TV series in the 1950s, doing hundreds of shows, including the* I Love Lucy *series with my friend, Lucille Ball, and in the early 60s*, My Three Sons, *with Fred MacMurray."*

At the time of her involvement with Kern in *The Doughgirls*, however, Jane complained to him about the way he'd written her character of Vivian. "You've made me a little harebrained, witless figure. I mean, some of the lines I've been given make me squirm. When I hear that Alexis and Craig are going to have lunch at the White House with FDR, I make the ridiculous claim, 'I enjoyed the president in *Princess O'Rourke.'* As you well know, I was the co-star of that movie. The President didn't appear in the film. I read the script for the Broadway play. My character of Vivian had far more spice."

Jane also complained to Mark Hellinger, the producer. "I noticed you billed me in fourth position, under Alexis. I've been a star at Warners, and Alexis is the new girl on the block."

"Sorry, Jane, but my billing stays," Hellinger said. "Case closed."

That night, Jane complained to Reagan that she hated her role so much she was considering refusing to cooperate, and subsequently being placed on suspension. Up until then, he had hardly paid attention to her concerns, but suddenly, he came alive.

"You know that Maureen and I are depending on you to bring in a weekly paycheck," he said. "We can't live on Army pay!"

"All right, god damn it," she told him. "How does it feel to be a kept boy?"

He stormed out of the house and drove over to spend the night with Ann Sheridan, who surprised him with news that she'd almost gone on suspension herself. "I saw the play on Broadway, and I decided I didn't want to play any of the three girls."

He was very persuasive, and he invited her to come to dinner the following night and talk Jane into going

forward with the role of Vivian.

Sheridan agreed to do that. After about an hour, she convinced Jane to continue struggling through the role, promising her, “We’ll have fun. Alexis is a great gal, and Carson is your pal.”

Sheridan later told Smith, “What tempted Jane was that once again, Carson can be her beard for any rendezvous she has with Dennis Morgan.”

On the set, Jane chatted briefly with Regis Toomey, with whom she had shared the longest screen kiss in history. He’d been given only a minor role in *Doughgirls* as “Agent Walsh.”

“I still dream of that kiss,” he told her. “I’m ready for a repeat.”

“Once was enough,” she quipped. “I’m still trying to catch my breath.”

Cast in a minor role was Irene Manning, with whom Jane had appeared in *Make Your Own Bed*. She continued to snub Manning, believing that she was conducting a clandestine affair with Dennis Morgan.

When Jane saw the ads for *The Doughgirls*, she complained once again to its producer, Mark Hellinger. Publicity included sexy pictures of Smith, Sheridan, and Jane, but what she objected to was the prominent display of Manning, even though her role was small. “My god, you’re showing her tits, a big bosom on display, and that lacy see-through lives up to its purpose.”

“Sex sells,” Hellinger told her.

“So that’s how Manning makes her money,” Jane quipped before walking away. During the closing months of the war, Sheridan continued to spend evenings with Jane and Reagan. She recalled one evening as typical.

She said, “Ronnie was a baseball nut. The day before, he’d heard this game on the radio, and he gave us a play-by-play account, the way he used to do on the air in Des Moines. Jane begged him to stop, claiming that neither of them was interested in baseball. He politely listened to his wife’s complaints, but carried on with a detailed description for all nine innings.”

In the kitchen, Jane complained to Sheridan, “If it’s not baseball, it’s politics. Christ, he even makes speeches in his sleep.”

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In 1944, Jane got a reprieve from her marriage when the Air Force sent Reagan, with John Garfield, on a bond-selling tour across America.

Garfield later recalled, “In any town we landed in, I went out and chased the dames. Because I was John Garfield, I always scored. Once, I took three gals back with me. I invited Reagan to share in my luck. But he stayed in his room reading scripts. I’d heard what a lady-killer he’d been at Warners. That was one *serious* man.”

Garfield played a large role in Jane’s life. They both spent three or four nights a week at the USO, entertaining and feeding U.S. servicemen. Bette Davis and others saw Jane leave every one of those nights with Garfield. There were plenty of rumors but no smoking gun. No one was absolutely sure they were having an affair.

John Garfield with Lana Turner in a defining moment from *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

However, when Garfield, in 1946, made the classic *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, he gave his version to his co-star, Lana Turner, with whom he was having an affair at the time.

As related to Turner, Garfield said, “I fucked Jane over a period of six weeks. After traveling on the road with her ‘bookish’ husband, on that war bond tour, I figured the poor gal needed it from some man who knew how to deliver the goods, namely, me.”

Garfield, as even his friends would admit, was not known for his modesty.

[At the beginning of World War II, Bette Davis and John Garfield, with help from others, founded the Hollywood Canteen, a morale-booster for military men being shipped off to fight in the Pacific, or else returning after surviving military engagements on land and sea.

Garfield enlisted Jane’s support, and she appeared regularly at the canteen, entertaining the young men with song, dancing with them, and serving them coffee and doughnuts. “I got a lot of propositions, but the rule was, no dating the servicemen after the canteen closed.”

Of course that otherwise strict rule didn't seem to apply to either Garfield or Jane.

The entertainment center became so popular that Jack Warner ordered director Delmer Daves to make it the subject of a movie with an all-star cast. It was released in 1944 and entitled Hollywood Canteen. *The plot was thin, the main stars being Robert Hutton, Dane Clark, and Joan Leslie. Hutton becomes the millionth G.I. to enter the canteen, and consequently, he wins a date with his dream girl, Leslie.*

During the filming, Jane asked her director, Daves, to screen one of his earlier movies, the 1943 wartime adventure, Destination Tokyo, *for servicemen. It starred Cary Grant in what had been Daves' directorial debut. Daves obliged and the men applauded wildly.*

Foreground, left to right; Jack Carson, Jane Wyman, John Garfield, and Bette Davis raising the military's morale, in *Hollywood Canteen*.

A few years later, Jane read a screenplay by Daves entitled Dark Passage, *a movie Warners released in 1947.* When she heard that Daves was also directing it, and that it would star Humphrey Bogart, she went to Daves and lobbied for the female lead. "Sorry," Jane," he said, "but Bogie's already spoken for his Baby to play Irene in our movie."

She knew, of course, that "Baby" meant Lauren Bacall.].

The tepid "romance" of Hutton and Leslie in *Hollywood Canteen* was merely a backdrop for the appearances of a star-studded cast that included both Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. Avowed enemies, they tried to stay in different parts of the canteen. Other stars ranged from *film noir's* Ida Lupino to Roy Rogers and Trigger. Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, and Paul Henreid represented the *Casablanca* coven. Jane convinced her friend, Barbara Stanwyck, to add her star name to the canteen, both in the movie and at the service counter.

One night, she whispered to Jane, "I see at least twenty hot guys here who would be Bob's type."

[The reference, of course, was to her bisexual husband, Robert Taylor.]

Jack Benny was in the movie and often appeared at the canteen to deliver a comedy routine, as did veteran performer Joe E. Brown. Jane still referred to Brown as "My least favorite leading man."

When Jane worked at the canteen, singing a song or two, she waited until closing time, when Garfield would volunteer to drive her home. On some nights, Garfield preferred to depart the premises with Joan Crawford on his arm. Their romance would grow hotter when they both co-starred in the 1946 *Humoresque*.

When Dennis Morgan made an appearance to entertain the troops, Jane always left the canteen with him.

Upon the release of *Hollywood Canteen*, audiences ignored the assault of the critics and flocked to see it. Jack Warner donated 40% of the ticket sales to the canteen itself.

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Jane visited Van Johnson frequently during his recuperation from his automobile crash, and when he recovered, he asked her to go dancing with him. During the war, she'd kept a low profile and wasn't seen in clubs. But with victory almost assured, she went back to nightclubbing with Johnson.

Ironically, the movie magazines had run more pictures of Reagan and Johnson during the war than any other movie stars. Whereas Reagan represented the (married) man in uniform, Johnson had been dubbed "America's

(available) Sweetheart," and frequently depicted with June Allyson.

"Jane seems to have captured both of these so-called gods," Sheridan said. "Of course, she and others knew her dates with Johnson were harmless and merely platonic outings."

Sometimes, Jane was seen out with both Johnson and a handsome young actor, Tom Drake, who had achieved fame as Judy Garland's "Boy Next Door" in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). She was a "beard" to their burgeoning relationship, although Johnson also continued his affair with the married Keenan Wynn.

An idealized portrait of small-town American virtue: Tom Drake, "The Boy Next Door," with Judy Garland in *Meet Me in St. Louis*.

One night, Drake told Jane, "I don't rate the magazine coverage Van and your Ronnie get, but I'm also a favorite. I'm getting tons of mail, real gooey letters from young girls. Van gets even more mail like that."

"What would those little girls think if they could see you and Van, intimate and together?" Jane asked.

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Released in the summer of 1944, *The Doughgirls* picked up mostly bad reviews, one of them defining it as "More mishmash than smash." James Kern was attacked for his lack of experience as a director.

Paper after paper decided to downplay the film's other female stars and feature Jane—despite the fact that she had been billed below both Smith and Sheridan. The press had continued to define her and Reagan as "The Constant Honeymooners," and they still graced the cover of magazines. Maureen was, throughout most of the war, the most widely publicized baby in America.

The New York Times asserted, "Jane Wyman plays a priceless nitwit. The pairing of Wyman with her sidekick, Jack Carson, is threadbare." Other New York critics attacked how Hollywood had "sanitized" the original stage play, blaming its censure on a "bunch of bluenoses."

Despite its reviews, it did a respectable business at the box office, and Jane continued to get roles.

That led to a bitter row one night when Reagan came home. "You complain that all I talk about is politics. Well, all you talk about is your damn career."

"As a star, I've caught up with you in the last two years. There are those who say I've surpassed you."

"What are you trying to do?" he angrily retorted. "Replicate the plot of *A Star Is Born?"*

He was referring to the Fredric March/Janet Gaynor film released in 1937. It was the story of a rising young actress who marries a Hollywood super star. As he becomes a has-been, her star rises.

The argument became so intense that Reagan packed a bag and went to spend the next ten nights in the apartment of William Holden. He kept a small hideaway with a double bed, mainly where he brought his women.

"Ronnie and I never got off together," Holden told his friend, Glenn Ford. "We slept together. He'd fall asleep and I'd jerk off if I didn't get anything that day. When I blast off, I always let out a war whoop. I'm sure he heard me, but pretended to be asleep."

During the final months of World War II, Jane's marriage to Reagan was in serious trouble. His growing interest in politics and her near-obsession with her own career formed a deep void between them.

When she got a good review, he'd say, "That's nice, Janie," and go back to reading his newspaper, or else he'd talk politics. "Did you hear that FDR might appoint Douglas MacArthur to rule over Japan?"

"Who gives a fuck?" she'd say.

One evening, he saw her emerging in an evening gown and a mink coat. "I was told not to wear mink during the war years. But the damn war is about over, and I'm back with my mink to show off in front of the photographers."

"Where are you heading?" he asked. "You know I have to get up at 4:30 tomorrow morning."

“I can sleep late,” she said. “We operate on different time clocks.”

“It’s not good for our marriage, your going out late at night like this,” he said.

“It’s good for my career,” she said. “I’ve got to circulate, go to parties, go dancing, meet directors and producers.”

“Don’t climb too high,” he cautioned her. “As I’ve told you before, I don’t intend to become known as Mr. Jane Wyman.”

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Jack Warner told Reagan that throughout the war, his fan mail had continued unabated. Millions had seen him appear in or else narrate Army films. “In some weeks, your mail tops Flynn’s. His fans are still loyal to him, even though he was investigated on charges of statutory rape. Judging by the mail, however, thousands of young American gals want to get raped by Flynn, not to mention the hordes of homo mail he gets from guys who are 4-F.”

Day after day, Reagan viewed real combat footage sent by his crews in both Europe and the Pacific. “It was a horrible experience to sit through,” he said. “One can only imagine what it was like to be in the middle of it. Plane crashes, poor guys being burned alive, massacred by the Japs or the Nazis. All the horror of war.”

When at last, the Allies declared victory in Europe, Owen Crump became the first of FMPU’s camera combat units to move into western Germany. Crump even beat Eisenhower in inspections of Hitler’s notorious death camp at Buchenwald. Thousands had suffered and died in this camp. Newspapers made it famous as the former abode of one of her era’s most notorious women, Ilse Koch, the wife of Karl-Otto Koch, commandant of the camp. After the war, this psychotic woman (“The Bitch of Buchenwald”) was accused of having lamp shades crafted from the skins of murdered inmates with distinctive tattoos.

Crump sent footage of the atrocities back to Reagan and the officers of FMPU. Crump issued a warning. “The scenes depicted in these films are not fit for human viewing.”

After watching what he called “the most sickening scenes I was ever to witness in my life,” Reagan went outside the screening room and vomited.

He later said. “Those images are engraved on my brain forever. There will be no escaping them in my nightmares. What ghastly images to have to watch: Inmates so gaunt and emaciated you wondered how they could possibly be alive. I saw ditches being filled with their bodies and then bulldozed by the Nazis as if they could really bury their cruelty and depravity. I never knew how a country with Germany’s rich cultural background could revert to such savagery.”

Reagan recalled the final bitter battles of Americans fighting the Japanese as they prepared for an invasion of their homeland, where a million U.S. soldiers, it was estimated would lose their lives.

He was driving along a California highway when he heard on the radio that “a fantastic bomb has been dropped on Hiroshima.”

“Suddenly, I knew my days in the Army were drawing to a close and I could return to Warners a movie star. It was the end of one aspect of my career. It was also a beginning, but none of us knew that at the time.”

When he got to a phone, he called Jane.

“Your Johnny—in this case, Ronnie—will soon be marching home. Kick out all your other boyfriends and make room for Daddy.”

“You’re joking, of course,” she said, sharply.

“Of course I am,” he said.

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To most of his fans, Reagan had shown “great courage under fire” during the war. Actually, he’d never heard one gun fired. His reputation had been based solely on his “daring exploits” as portrayed in some of his movies, especially the wartime propaganda flicks, *Jap Zero* and *Rear Gunner*.

Reagan had served at Fort Roach for more than three years. But on September 10, 1945, he was given his discharge, thereby terminating his active duty.

After he drove home and entered his house, he secretly anticipated a “Welcome home, Ronnie” surprise party. But even though she was not involved at the time in any film project, Jane was nowhere to be found. There was no note or explanation of any kind.

Maureen and her nanny, however, were waiting to greet him.

He immediately placed a telephone call to Jack Warner, perhaps expecting him to react with joy that he was free to resume his movie career at Warners.

As Reagan later told Bill Holden, “Jack was friendly enough, and he invited Jane and me over to dinner. He also congratulated me on all those wartime propaganda movies. But his mood changed when I asked him to start sending over scripts.”

“We don’t have anything for you now,” Warner said. “I’m sure something will turn up. We’ll stay in touch. I’ve got to go.”

As Reagan confessed to Holden, “So, this was to be my homecoming. I felt both my private life and my movie career had evaporated. I was desolate.”

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In the summer of 1944, Jane had flown to New York at the request of Jack Warner to promote *The Doughgirls*. While there, she had received a phone call that changed her life.

The second day of her arrival, Walter Winchell, in his popular column, had announced her presence in New York. That morning, at around 10AM, a call came in from director Billy Wilder. Since the success of his *Double Idemnity* (1944), starring Fred MacMurray and Jane’s friend, Barbara Stanwyck, Wilder was the hottest director in Hollywood.

Throughout the war years, despite the harmonies produced on their piano, tensions were high in the “WyReaMan” household.

“What a delight to hear from you, Mr. Wilder,” she said.

“I’m an early riser, and I dropped off a novel for you to read. I left it for you at the Plaza’s reception desk.”

“I’ll read it right away,” she promised.

“I’m going to make it into a film,” he announced. “I want you to play the girlfriend of the hero. Perhaps I should say ‘anti-hero.’ He’s an alcoholic.”

“What is this novel called?” she asked.

“Read it! It’s *The Lost Weekend.*”

Chapter Ten

Starlet Nancy Davis Joins MGM's "More Stars Than There Are in Heaven"

Nancy Gets a Reputation as "One of Those Girls Whose Phone Number Gets Handed Around a Lot."

At Manhattan's Stork Club, Clark Gable was seen dating Nancy Davis.

A columnist wrote: "Has something happened to Clark Gable, something in the form of starlet Nancy Davis, that is, changing the fitful pattern of his romantic life? Has he, in other words, finally found the Gable woman, for whom he is more than willing to give up the Gable women? The answer seems to be yes--even though, if it is love at all, it is, so far, love in hiding."

Ronald Reagan may have been Nancy's consolation prize after losing Clark Gable, but the B-picture star became the love of her life. She made up her mind long before he did.

The problem was: How to get this roving post-Wyman Romeo to quit dating every starlet in Hollywood and settle down to home and hearth with her?

During World War II, Ronald Reagan (always in uniform) and Jane Wyman arguably became the most publicized couple in Hollywood, representing a fantasy version of what the American male in uniform and his wife and baby daughter on the homefront should look like. What was going on in their private lives beyond the screen was not known at the time, nor even today.

Alert, aware, intelligent, and ambitious. Nancy Davis in 1950.

As for Nancy Davis of Chicago, she almost fell off the radar screen until after the war, when her biography could resume after a long and dormant slumber.

After Nancy's graduation from Smith College in 1943, she secured work in summer stock that was so minor it's hardly worth mentioning.

Nancy still pursued a theatrical career, beginning at the lowest rung on the ladder, appearing in New England as an apprentice in mostly summer stock theaters.

"An apprentice meant you had to do everything, even clean the toilet in the star's dressing room," Nancy recalled.

Diana Barrymore, called "The Barrymore Brat" because of her Hollywood excesses, was the star, Nancy Davis the apprentice, in summer stock.

"I appeared in rickety old summer stock playhouses along the Eastern Seaboard, including Bass Rocks, Massachusetts. "Sadly, most of them are gone today."

Nancy remembered her excitement when she actually had a line in one of these plays. "It wasn't much of a part. I wore a black uniform and a starched white apron. I came out and spoke my line: 'Madam, dinner is served.' Often an actress starts at the bottom, and I was following that age-old custom."

During that summer of 1943, Walter Hartwig, director of the Ogunquit Playhouse in Maine, cast Diana

Barrymore in *You Can't Take It With You*, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. Nancy had wanted the role for herself, but was hired as an apprentice.

Diana was the daughter of the legendary John Barrymore, an alcoholic Don Juan who had died the previous year (1942). Her mother was the poet, Blanche Oelrichs, who had been Barrymore's second wife.

In the year of her father's death, Universal had signed Diana to a contract and promoted her as "1942's Most Sensational New Screen Personality." But within months, she'd become known as "The Barrymore Brat," because of her intake of alcohol and drugs and her lack of self-discipline.

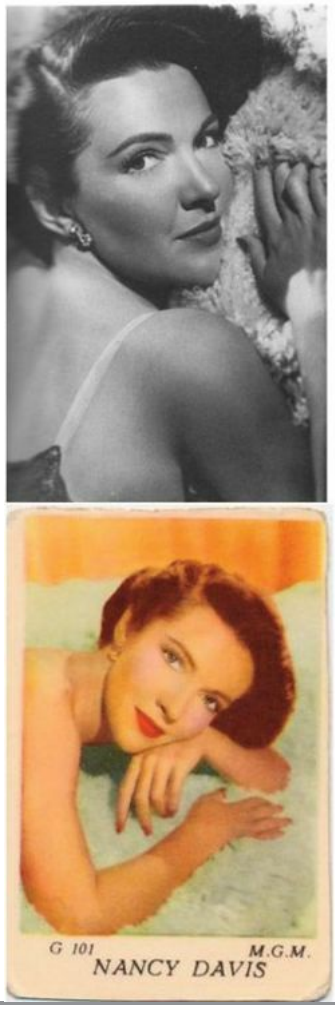
In response to the negativity building up against her in Hollywood, and as a means of fine-tuning her dramatic technique, Diana decided to take a respite and do summer stock in 1943, where she often showed up drunk at curtain time. She was also recovering from a disastrous affair with Errol Flynn, who had housed her dissipated father during his dying days. In her memoirs, Diana denied an affair with Flynn, but friends claimed otherwise.

Say it isn't so. When Nancy Davis worked in summer stock with Buddy Ebsen *(upper photo)*, she developed a powerful crush on him. Her taste in men later improved.

In the lower photo, hayseed Ebsen is seen in the TV series, *The Beverly Hillbillies* with Irene Ryan as possum-hunting Grannie.

Ironically, when Diana's memoir, *Too Much, Too Soon* was adapted into a film, Flynn played her father, with Dorothy Malone appearing as Diana. Nancy noted the brouhahas surrounding Diana during her apprenticeship, discussing them later with Joshua Logan.

Nancy was later hired to work on Ogunquit's summer stock production of *The Male Animal*, in which Buddy Ebsen was one of the stars. He was known for his inimitable, eccentric dancing style, with his tall, lanky frame doing rubbery gyrations. Nancy had seen him perform on the screen with both Shirley Temple and Judy Garland. He told her that he had lost out on the role of "The Tin Man" in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), because he was allergic to the silver makeup.



When Nancy Davis was signed by MGM, the studio at first tried to promote her *(upper photo)* as a *femme fatale*. But she had formidable competition from true *femmes fatales* like Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, and a rapidly maturing Elizabeth Taylor.

Nancy's image *(lower photo)* did end up in a stack of movie star postcards distributed before World War II in Sweden, each of them sized and formatted like baseball fan cards.

John Edenstone worked on the production that summer and later claimed that Nancy developed a powerful crush on Ebsen. She admitted to that in a memoir. Eden-stone recalled, "Perhaps Nancy should be forgiven for her taste in men. Ebsen was a jerk. Even though many members of the production staff were gay, he was always attacking what he called 'queers.' Heshouldn't have been alarmed. No self-respecting homo would be attracted to that hay-seed. In later years, he sure found his calling when he played the rube, Jed Clampett, in *The Beverly Hillbillies* on TV."

Nancy's job as a backstage apprentice involved switching on recorded music backstage when Ebsen, on stage, walked over to a Victrola. "I was so mesmerized by him that I ignored the cue, and he had to ad-lib while I got the stars out of my eyes, and played the music."

Since her crush on Ebsen was going nowhere, she headed back to Chicago at the end of the summer with men on her mind—one in particular.

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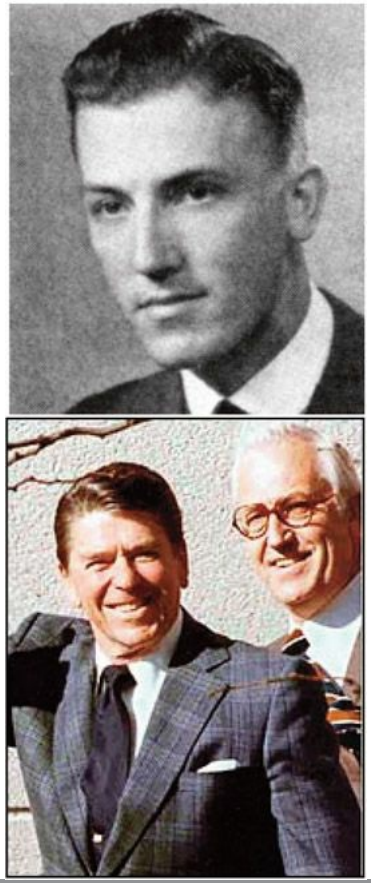

Young Dr. Daniel Ruge *(upper photo)* was one of Nancy Davis' first lovers when he worked for her stepfather, Dr. Loyal Davis, in Chicago.

Later, he became Reagan's White House doctor, and was with him at the time of an attempted assassination in 1981. Dr. Ruge may, in fact, have saved the life of the President.

Nancy was rumored to have begun a three-month affair with Dr. Daniel Ruge, the longtime partner of Loyal Davis, her stepfather. Ruge later denied it, claiming, "You reporters have gotten me mixed up with Clark Gable, whom Nancy did date. Not me, brother, although she was a nice, beautiful young lady."

Hollywood biographers such as Mart Martin have long included Dr. Daniel Ruge among Nancy's post-war lovers. "For twenty years," Ruge said, "I was loyal to Loyal, but I didn't share his racist attitudes. Neither did Nancy, She loved her stepfather and let him rant, never challenging him."

Born in Nebraska in 1917, he had earned his medical degree and a doctorate in pharmacology at Northwestern Medical School in Chicago. As a student, he had contracted tuberculosis, which had scarred his lungs. While training as a neurosurgeon in Chicago, he had worked for Loyal.

Ruge's assistant, Peter Winter, originally had wanted to be a doctor himself, but finally dropped out, having concluded that studying medical journals "was not my thing."

Winter had a front row seat to Ruge's growing interest in Nancy. "She was the one who chose to go after Daniel, in my view," Winter said. "He was an easy conquest. I think she'd lost her virginity long before they became secretly involved. I saw evidence that they were going at it hot and heavy. Very masculine, Daniel stood 6'2" and was appealing to a lot of the nurses. But Nancy got the prize."

"I don't think he was in love with her, but found her a reliable sex outlet. He was too much of a gentleman to go into clinical details, but he always came in with a smile on his face after a night out with Loyal's stepdaughter. I often saw them heading out at night, with theater tickets. Loyal knew about it and didn't object. He trusted Daniel not to get her pregnant, or, if he did, he knew how to take care of it."

"The affair ended," Winter said in an interview, "when Nancy settled in New York and found many other beaux, of that I'm certain. But she and Daniel would remain friends for years to come, even in the White House.

*[**Fast forward** to March 30, 1981. The local time in Washington, D.C., is 2:25pm, and President Ronald Reagan is leaving the Hilton Hotel after a speech before the AFLCIO. Suddenly, six shots ring out from a .22 caliber*

Rohm RG-14 revolver. The assassin was the deranged, Oklahoma-born John W. Hinckley, Jr., age 26.

Reagan was not hit directly. One bullet ricocheted off the President's armor-plated, black Lincoln limousine and penetrated his left side. The bullet hit his rib and punctured and collapsed a lung before lodging in the spongy tissue an inch from his heart. The President had come close to instant death.

Reagan's press secretary, Jim Brady, received a direct shot, the bullet entering his brain. Police officer Thomas Delahanty was shot in the neck. As he was trained to do, Secret Service Agent Timothy McCarthy stood his ground and turned to face the gunfire. He took a bullet aimed at Reagan. It hit him in the chest. All the men shot around Reagan survived, through Brady remained paralyzed on the left side of his body until his death in August of 2014.

In one of the ironies of history, Dr. Daniel Ruge, Nancy's former beau, was functioning at the time as chief physician at the White House. He stood close to Reagan during the attack on the President's life.

Rushed to George Washington University Hospital with Reagan, Ruge ordered that the President be stripped naked so he could locate the entry point of the bullet. Blood transfusions were ordered at once. The President was calling out, "I can't breathe." He was suffering a massive loss of blood. Emergency surgery was performed, and some members of the staff were on the verge of rushing to their phones to announce that Reagan was dead, and that George H.W. Bush had assumed the presidency.

There was great confusion at the time as to who was running the government. Secretary of State Alexander Haig proclaimed, "I am in control here." At the time, Bush was flying to Washington from Texas.

Ruge later admitted, "I made a grave error in not notifying the proper people that, according to the 25th Amendment, Bush should have been named Acting President. Reagan was completely drugged and out of it. He was in no shape to preside over World War III, should it have come."

Rushed to the hospital, Nancy was in a state of hysteria. That night she wrote in her diary, "Nothing can happen to my Ronnie. My life would be over." Her anguish and depression lasted for months.

Ruge, still friends with Nancy after all those years, later discussed his term as chief physician at the White House. He said, "I inspected every inch of Reagan's body, inside and out. He was seven years older than me, and he was in a hell of a lot better shape than I was. He didn't smoke cigarettes and took care of himself."

He also denied that Reagan, during his first term, showed signs of his oncoming Alzheimer's disease. "He had a good memory then. I don't know about his last years in office. I never saw any signs of mental deterioration."

Ruge claimed he didn't remain in his post for a second term, because, "I found the job vastly overrated. It's not one of the glamour jobs at the White House. For example, Nancy often could not fit me in for a seat at State dinners. Dressed in a tux, I had to sit in my office solving crossword puzzles, waiting for the President to have a stroke, which never happened."

Ever faithful, Nancy was always there for Reagan throughout his hospital ordeal. In her 1989 memoir, My Turn, *she claimed she had the White House chef deliver her husband "two favorite soups: hamburger and split pea."*

As Reagan recovered, the story grew more bizarre. At his trial on June 21, Hinckley was charged with thirteen offenses, but found not guilty by reason of insanity on June 21. After the trial, he wrote that the "shooting was the greatest love offering in the history of the world." In his deranged mind, he seemed to believe that his act would earn the love of actress Jodie Foster, with whom he had maintained an obsession ever since he'd seen her in the 1976 film, Taxi Driver. *In it, she played a child prostitute.*

Before heading off to kill Reagan, Hinckley considered tracking Foster down and committing suicide in front of her, but he soon rejected the idea. In his crazed mind, he figured that assassinating a President would elevate him to the level of a historical figure like Lee Harvey Oswald—and therefore, her equal. Oswald was his role model.]

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George Batson's *Ramshackle Inn* opened on Broadway on January 5, 1944, marking the New York debut of ZaSu Pitts on the stage. The play got poor to occasionally tepid reviews. But because of Pitts' draw as a popular *comedienne,* it nonetheless ran for 216 performances. The newspaper *PM* reviewed it as "a dreary piece of hocus-pocus, with a soporific first act and a helter-skelter second and third. Batson seemed to tailor the role of "Belinda Pride" to Pitts' specific talents, with her "blinking eyes, fluttering hands, and quavering voice."

The plot concerns a retired librarian (Pitts) who buys a decaying colonial inn on the beach for only $3,000. As would be expected, it is falling apart and has a leaky roof. As one critic wrote, "Pitts is the imperturbable librarian who encounters ghosts and secret trunks, as she wanders through mysterious situations and thunderstorms, meeting both the living and the dead as innkeeper."

Most of the residents of the inn are bizarre—characters, viewers might have believed, from the twilight zone. There's a bootlegging operation going on in the basement.

Pitts liked her role so much that she persuaded the producers to take it on the road, first to Washington, then to Chicago. It was here that Nancy, along with her parents, Loyal and Edith Davis, took her to see the play, following the performance with a reunion with Pitts.

There was a small role in the play for "Alice Fisher," a gangster's moll who is kidnapped and sedated. Alice, dazed, drugged, and confused, makes only a brief appearance. The young actress interpreting that role dropped out in Chicago.

Subsequently, Pitts asked Nancy if she'd step in and take over the role as *Ramshackle Inn* headed for Detroit and points throughout the Middle West.

Nancy later wrote in one of her memoirs, "I suspect Edith had a hand in getting me the role. It was my first part in a professional production, and I grabbed my big chance. I played the role of the girl held captive upstairs. It wasn't much of a part, but it was a start, and I was on my own, with the best wishes of my parents."

In Detroit, Pitts took Nancy under her wing, even letting her share her dressing room. "It was a brand new world for me," Nancy said, "and having a friend like ZaSu was very comforting. She had been a great beauty in her youth, and at this point in her career looked ageless. We traveled with the play across country."

Nancy's mentor, inspiration, and unofficial guardian was a family friend and actress from the Silent era: ZaSu Pitts.

Here, she's depicted with Mary Pickford *(right)* in a 1917 scene from the silent film, *A Little Princess*.

During the tour, the players stopped off at the Danforth Lodge on Lake Oconomowoc in Wisconsin. Nancy was seen going out with two different beaux, described as "farm-fed, red-blooded, all-American types."

John Sheldon, a stagehand, later said, "Even though she was under ZaSu's protective eye, Nancy seemed to have a few stage door Johnnies waiting to take her out. She was not an obvious showgal cutie, but men, some much older than Nancy, seemed to find her sexually alluring. I don't know if she were putting out for these guys or not. She never said anything. But there was a lot of gossip about her backstage."

Veteran actress ZaSu Pitts claimed, “Nancy is like a daughter to me.”

The play returned to New York, but not to a theater on Broadway. “We played the subway circuit,” Nancy said, referring to theaters in Brooklyn and the Bronx. At one point, they appeared on Long Island.

When the tour ended, Nancy decided to remain in New York, pounding the streets of Broadway, looking for a job in the theater. “I fancied myself the second coming of Helen Hayes,” she said, jokingly. “I’d grown up surrounded by such great artists as Spencer Tracy and Lillian Gish. Now, I wanted to become part of their exclusive fraternity, even if it meant getting attacked by a lecherous Tallulah Bankhead.”

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Moving into the least expensive room at the Barbizon, an all-woman’s hotel known for housing acting hopefuls at the time, Nancy began her conquest of Broadway. To keep her from feeling alone and adrift, she lived close to family friends when she moved to a small apartment on East 51st Street, near the man she still called “Uncle Walter,” Walter Huston. He urged her to date and meet people in the theater. He even arranged escorts for her with people who might get her a part in a show.

Spencer Tracy lived in the Waldorf Suites, and sometimes, Katharine Hepburn stayed with him. Nancy grew closer and closer to him, and he would play an important role in her career as it advanced.

During the day, she walked the streets, going from one casting office to another. She later denounced a lot of these casting calls as “meat markets.” Horny producers often asked her to show them her legs—and many of them wanted her to lie on their casting couch or else perform fellatio on them as they sat at their desks. For the most part, she avoided such advances. “I want to be a serious actress,” she told family friend, Lillian Gish. “I don’t intend to become a Ziegfeld Girl.”

Spencer Tracy in an early photo with his son, John, who was deaf, living “in a world of silence,” as his father, with anguish, described.

In her first memoir, *Nancy* (1980), she admitted to having dated "a lot of actors, mostly writers, directors, assistant directors, and assistant producers." On occasion, she dated more influential producers and directors, some of whom took her to the Stork Club. "No serious romances," she recalled.

She was on a lean budget and had to "watch every penny, or at least every nickel" (her words). Visiting movie stars stopped at the Stork Club, then one of the most fashionable after-dark rendezvous spots in New York, and one night, she caught her first glimpse of the very glamorous Joan Crawford. Ethel Merman was a regular, and Nancy saw her showing up on the arm of J. Edgar Hoover. When Nancy mentioned her sighting to Tracy, he said, "It's all a cover. He's a homo, and she's really a dyke."

Waiters at the Stork Club always served platters of freshly baked rolls. When Nancy thought no one was looking, she slipped two or three rolls into her evening bag—one roll for breakfast, another as an ingredient for sandwiches at lunch, if she could afford a slice of baloney to go with it.

One night, the club's savvy owner—celebrity-hunting, eagle-eyed Sherman Billings-ley—sent over a pound of butter, with a note: "I thought you might enjoy some butter on my rolls."

One day at lunch, Tracy told her that his son, John, was coming to New York, and he wanted Nancy to go out with him, showing him the sights. Although Tracy maintained a suite at the Waldorf Towers, he asked Nancy if she'd invite his son to sleep on the sofa bed in the living room of her apartment. She agreed, finally deciphering why Tracy didn't want his son to stay with him. She realized that Katharine Hepburn was a frequent visitor, and he didn't' want John to report any news back to his mother, the former Louise Treadwell, who was still a loyal wife to Tracy despite his philandering.

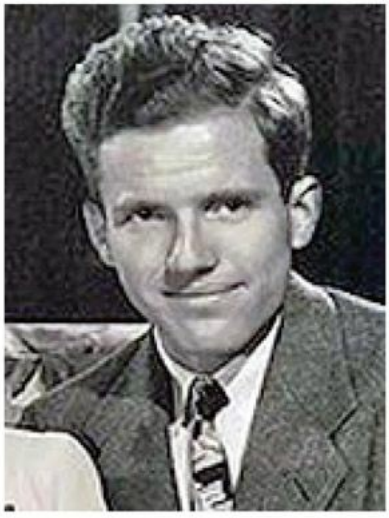
Before John's arrival, Tracy told her, "I'm proud of the boy. I don't like to talk about his deafness, but know that he leads a fairly normal life in spite of it. He went to college, and his classmates were very fond of him. He often went out on dates with the prettiest campus queens. He's a great dancer—no Fred Astaire—but he can whirl you around a dance floor. He's making a career as an artist. Walt Disney is my friend, and he's hired John at his studios."

"He has the makings of a great polo player and could have been a champ," Tracy said. "Too bad polo has gone more or less out of style in Hollywood."

He also vowed, "As for his deafness, I will never give up. Somewhere, some place, I'll find a doctor who can restore his hearing."

John had been a polio victim and in addition to his deafness, had poor eyesight.

Nancy followed Tracy's guidance and treated John like one of her regular boyfriends. Since they were living together in such close proximity, it was assumed by those who knew her that she was having an affair with Tracy's son, especially since they were seen out together every night. Huston certainly thought so, and suggested to his friends, "My dear little girl, or so I think, is going to marry Spence's son. He's a god damn nice boy, and I believe he'd make a suitable husband for Nancy. Spence always uses John's having been born deaf as an excuse for his drinking, which is pure bullshit, of course."



As Spencer Tracy said about his son, John Tracy, depicted above as a young adult: "But he bravely carried on in spite of his deafness, including dating my little friend, Nancy Davis."

"Did they go at it, living together in the same small apartment?" Spencer mused. "I don't know. Sometimes, the father is the last to find out such

things."

John and Nancy did the rounds together, strolling along Fifth Avenue and through museums, and visiting the theater. At night, they went dancing, and Tracy didn't exaggerate the talent of his son on the dance floor. Every day, with Tracy, they took a walk in Central Park. Nancy noticed that he seemed to love his son very much, but seemed incapable of displaying his affection.

John preferred musicals instead of dramas, as it was hard for him to decipher the plot. As for musicals, he told Nancy he could sense the music through vibrations.

One night, John and Nancy went to see Tracy perform in a Broadway Play, *The Rugged Path*, written by Robert E. Sherwood, the dean of American dramatists. The play had opened to critical attacks, most of them directed at Sherwood. Even though Tracy's acting was praised in most reviews—"a good actor in a bad play," Hepburn still urged him to drop out.

Katharine *("La Divinissima"*) Hepburn.

Tracy had showed Nancy a review by John Chapman in the *Daily News*: "The sooner Spencer Tracy goes back to Hollywood, the better—and he should stay there!"

The Rugged Path opened on Broadway in November of 1945, closing in January after eighty-one performances. In brief, it was the story of a newspaper editor who becomes a liberal activist after time spent in London as the English were plunged into World War II. He clashes with the paper's conservative owners, including his brother-in-law, before leaving to fight in the Pacific.

One night, Hepburn entertained John, Nancy, and Tracy at her own small apartment. Fellow guests included writer/director Garson Kanin and actress Ruth Gordon. It turned out to be John's farewell dinner.

The next morning, a driver from MGM, as arranged by Tracy, arrived to take John to the airport. At her door, she reached down to pick up his suitcase. "No, let me do that," he said. "You are my princess and I am your slave."

After kissing him goodbye, she later claimed, "I closed the door and wept."

Huston was wrong about any lasting romantic link between John and Nancy, although he insisted they did have an affair. "A hot-to-trot young man and a hot-to-trot young lady living in such close quarters," he said. "The inevitable must have happened. At least I think it did."

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In 1946, with World War II at an end, Broadway experienced its apogee in both drama and musicals. Ethel Merman had a smash hit in *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *Oklahoma!* was in its third season; *Carousel* in its fourth. *I Remember Mama* was a big hit at the Music Box, and *The Magnificent Yankee* was being staged at the Royale.

The year before, Tennessee Williams had premiered *The Glass Menagerie*. Later, it became a movie that starred Jane Wyman. On Broadway in 1946, *The Voice of the Turtle*, a play by John Van Druten, was in its third season. A year later, it would be made into a film starring Ronald Reagan.

In comedy, Judy Holliday scored a hit in *Born Yesterday*. When she repeated her performance on the screen, she would win an Oscar for it, beating Bette Davis' performance in *All About Eve* and Gloria Swanson's star role in *Sunset Blvd*.

Post-war Broadway audiences might have enjoyed *Lute Song* if they could accept Mary Martin as an abandoned Chinese wife and Nancy Davis as a Chinese flower maiden.

Into this firestorm of success arrived Mary Martin, opening *Lute Song* at the Plymouth, a lyrical musical based on a very old Chinese play, *PiPa-Ji*.

[Set during the Han Dynasty (206 b.c.–220 a.d.), *PiPa-Ji (The Lute), by Gao Ming, tells the story of a loyal wife who is impoverished when her husband is forced to marry another woman. She spends the next 12 years searching for him, earning her living by playing the pipa (lute). In the Broadway adaptation of this ancient Chinese opera, the two are eventually reconciled and live out their lives happily.]*

Martin had scored a big success three years earlier on Broadway in *One Touch of Venus*.

The director of *Lute Song* was John Houseman. Born in Romania, the British-American actor was known for his collaboration with director Orson Welles in projects that included both *Citizen Kane* and for their launch of New York's acclaimed Mercury Theatre in 1937.

Prior to landing a small role on Broadway in *Lute Song*, Nancy had been hired as an actress in a gig that lasted for only four days. She later wrote that she could not remember the name of the play or its director. "He called me out into the garbage-strewn alley," she recalled. "He told me that I was wrong for the role and did not understand the character."

"I've got to let you go," he said. "Good luck in your theatrical ambitions, but, frankly, your legs are too thick for the theater."

She was too embarrassed to go back inside, so she asked him to retrieve her coat and purse, which he did. Nancy later wrote, "It was the first and last time I was ever fired from anything. I found out how painful it is to be rejected."

Out of work again, she'd made extra money modeling for the Conover Agency. She was often asked to model hats, because the agency suggested that she didn't have the physique for a full-figure model, especially if she had to show off her legs.

For the Broadway stage, *Lute Song* was adapted by Sidney Howard and Will Irwin, with a score by Raymond Scott and lyrics by Bernard Hanighen. Accessorized with lavish sets and music, it was an avant-garde mood piece, the story of a young wife, Tchao-Ou-Niang (Martin), who is married to Tsai-Yong (Yul Brynner). He leaves his wife and goes away to become a highly visible magistrate. He marries Princess Nieou-Chi (Helen Craig) and loses contact with his original family.

His parents, played by Mildred Dunnock and Augustin Duncan, die of starvation, and Martin, as his wife, although abandoned, nonetheless has to sell her hair to pay for her in-laws' funeral expenses. Ultimately, Brynner's character is reunited with Martin's character, and the princess welcomes her into the royal palace as Tsai-Yong's No. 1 wife.

[Craig, star of film, TV, and radio, had created the role of the deaf mute in the original Broadway production of Johnny Belinda *in 1940. Ironically, the movie version (1948) would bring Jane Wyman an Oscar.]*

Before opening on Broadway, Martin had been a houseguest of Edith and Loyal Davis in Chicago. Edith no doubt gave the star a slight nudge, which led to the casting of Nancy in a minor role as a Chinese handmaiden, *Si Tchun* (spelled by Nancy in a memoir as *Tsi Chun*). It marked her first and last appearance on Broadway. She later said, "I looked about as Chinese as Betty Grable." Oddly enough, even though they remained lifelong friends, Martin didn't even mention Nancy in her memoir, *My Heart Belongs* (1976), a strange omission.

Houseman later claimed in a memoir, "I wanted to fire Nancy, but Martin intervened and prevented me from doing so."

His star confronted the director, "I have a very bad back, and Nancy's father is the greatest neurosurgeon in America. Nancy stays in the play! Or else I walk!"

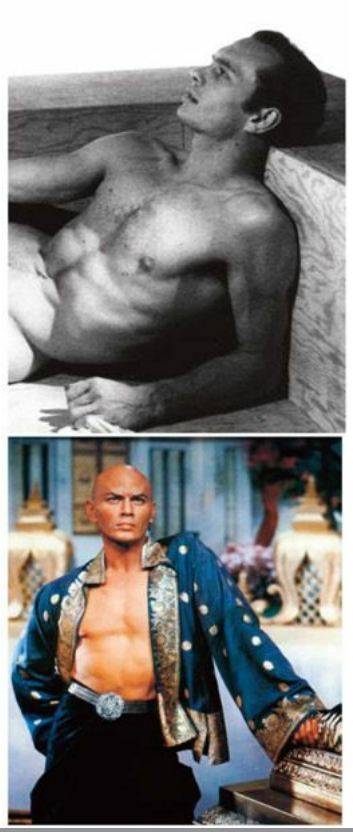
He later wrote: "At Mary's behest, to play the princess's flower maiden, we engaged a pink-cheeked, attractive but awkward and amateurish virgin by the name of Nancy Davis." He may have been off his mark with that virgin appraisal.

In preparation for her role, Nancy dyed her brown hair black and worked her makeup so that her eyebrows were set at an angle. "I hope this would make me look more like a Chinese Princess's flower maiden, really a lady-in-waiting. In spite of that, I still never won the favor of Houseman."

In contrast to his negative critique of Nancy, Houseman almost seemed to be in love with Brynner, describing him as "dynamic and strangely beautiful, and young man of Russian-Chinese origin. He was very sexy, an exotic leading man with an interesting speech and a vaguely Oriental look." Before the beginning of dress rehearsal, he invited Houseman to his dressing room, where he stood completely nude. "I am yours to do with as you wish. Dress me from my skin outward…or whatever you had in mind."

Before signing for *Lute Song*, Brynner did modeling work, having been photographed in the nude by George Platt Lynes. Nancy confessed in a memoir that "all the girls in the cast had a crush on Brynner," who had hair then and a magnificent physique. A photograph of him in all his uncut glory was circulated backstage. The original negative was later acquired by gay pop artist Andy Warhol.

Nancy never admitted that she was among those who had a crush on Brynner. She didn't have to: Too many others in the cast were already spreading that rumor.



Sexy, exotic Yul Brynner had hair when he appeared in *Lute Song* and discovered the charms of Nancy Davis. He'd posed for an infamous nude, half of which is shown above, taken by a photographer depicting Brynner in all his uncut glory.

In the lower photo, he is seen in his iconic role as the King of Siam in *The King and I*.

In later life, Brynner had only compliments for Nancy. "If she'd stuck it out, I think she would have become a first-rate star."

He later confided in Houseman, who was not always discreet. He'd told his director that he had not actually seduced Nancy, but that she'd "serviced" him. There is only his word for that. However, throughout his career, he was known for summoning the most beautiful young men and women to his dressing room, where they found him waiting in the nude to be serviced.

[Once, when he was asked about that custom of his during his star role in The King and I, *Brynner said, "I'm the King of Siam, with unlimited power. I am merely taking monarch's privilege."*

Regardless of what happened (or didn't happen) with Nancy, Brynner, as a major star, went on to world class seductions, an impressive array that included Deborah Kerr, who found him "very, very sexy," and even Tallulah Bankhead. The list is long: Anne Baxter, Ingrid Bergman, Claire Bloom, Joan Crawford, Yvonne De Carlo, Judy Garland, Gina Lollobrigida, Maria Schell, and ultimately, Marilyn Monroe. When he was dying of cancer, Marlene Dietrich said, "Goody, goody— serves him right." He had abruptly dropped her.

Brynner also had a number of homosexual affairs, especially with a very young Sal Mineo, when they appeared together in The King and I *on Broadway. In France, the author, painter, and designer, Jean Cocteau, often fellated Brynner when they smoked opium together.]*

Immediately adjacent to the theater presenting *Lute Song* was a competing theater showcasing *Three to Make Ready*, starring Gordon MacRae, Ray Bolger, and Arthur Godfrey. Nancy had befriended two future stars, Patricia Neal and Jean Hagen. Hagen would one day star in a movie with Nancy called *Night Into Morning*, and Neal would co-star with Reagan in *The Hasty Heart*. The three aspiring actresses often visited the theater next door.

Later, MacCrae boasted that "Nancy and I saw some action in my dressing room." Hagen said she doubted that, because she felt that MacCrae exaggerated his conquests. "He was always bragging about the women he had. One night, he even forced himself onto me. I resisted, but didn't put up all that much fight. I figured it was easier to give in. He was so god damn good looking. He later became an old drunk, singing in motel restaurants in Indiana."

Many of the cast members of *Lute Song* were heavy drinkers, but not Nancy. During the run, Richard Davis, her

stepbrother, arrived in New York to stay with her. He was accompanied by three Princeton men into heavy boozing. After one all-night binge, Richard came into her apartment and was so sick he threw up in her bathtub. He later said, "It took two years before she would speak to me again."

The studly singer/actor Gordon MacCrae, who was appearing in a theater next door to *Lute Song*, later boasted to Patricia Neal and Jean Hagen that he'd seduced Nancy Davis.

Hagen wasn't sure if MacCrae ever accomplished that or not, "But he sure got around to me!"

Both Edith and Loyal Davis flew in from Chicago to attend the opening night of *Lute Song*.

The highlight of the show was Martin singing "Mountain High, Valley Low." *Time* magazine defined *Lute Song* as "The season's loveliest production and its most charming failure. There should have been either less spectacle or less story." The play opened on February 6, 1946 and closed on June 8 after 142 performances.

Lute Song was viewed as only moderately successful, surviving as long as it did because of the box office appeal of Mary Martin. For Brynner, it led to the career breakthrough of his life. Martin eventually recommended him to her friends, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, to play the Siamese despot in the classic musical, *The King and I*, a role that would be indelibly associated with him.

In spite of *Lute Song's* bad reviews, Brynner won the Donaldson Award as "the most promising new Broadway star of 1946."

Later, Nancy would be asked to go with it on tour, but she rejected the offer. An offer for another road tour with a play had come in from her dear friend, ZaSu Pitts.

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Before Broadway, the cast of *Lute Song* tried out their musical in both New Haven and Boston. Nancy bonded with its lead dancer, Ron Fletcher, who was also a choreographer. She later described him as "effervescent, high strung, and very, very stylish."

As described in Fletcher's memoirs, "There was a quality Nancy had that drew her to me and I never was that interested in girls. I find her a curious mixture, on the one hand vulnerable yet I sensed a strength and a resolve in her that was iron willed. She seemed very determined."

"We went out every night because she made me laugh, and she had this amazing little chortle. Her voice had a touch of whimsy, rather adorable. I often took her ballroom dancing. We glided across the floor like Vernon and Irene Castle."

Fletcher said that during the Boston tryouts, they were virtually penniless. "Both of us were readers, and we pooled our money, five dollars in all, and joined a rental library. One night, we were determined to go ballroom dancing, but had no money to buy tickets. Since we hadn't rented any books yet, we went back to the rental library and withdrew our deposits. After that, we danced the night away."

Fletcher and Nancy were introduced to Dolly Haas, who was married to the famous newspaper caricaturist, Al Hirschfeld. She was a star of both German and American films, and was planning to take over Mary Martin's role for the road show tour of *Lute Song*.

[Martin would later candidly admit, "Dolly was much better in the part than I was."]

Haas recalled Fletcher and Nancy showing up one night in her dressing room. "She was an enchantingly beautiful young girl, and I think they were very interested in getting married. They even asked my opinion about what they should do. They seemed so young, so very much in love. I told them to go for it."

Many years later, Fletcher admitted he had had a sexual relationship with Nancy. "She was one of only three

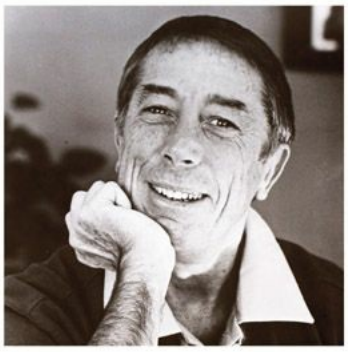
women that I slept with in my entire life."

In later years, Fletcher referred to Nancy as "a delightful creature. She was bright and curious. However, she didn't seem worldly at all, and I liked that about her. I would tell her tacky, obscene stories, and that wonderful laugh of hers could be heard."

"Although we had a little romance on the road, I don't think she was in love with me, and I was not in love with her. After we came back to New York, we slowly drifted apart. However, when I opened an exercise studio in California, she was a frequent visitor, showing up with her socialite friend, Betsy Bloomingdale, for my special exercises."

[A former Martha Graham modern dancer, Fletcher was also a disciple of the health and exercise regimes of Joseph and Clara Pilates, the original developers of the Pilates exercise regime, a movement that later attracted millions of devotees. It combined calisthenics and yoga with orthopedically savvy exercise equipment that to one pupil resembled instruments from a medieval torture chamber.

In 1972, Fletcher opened his health and exercise studio in Los Angeles, and his first customer was the novelist, Judith Krantz, who wrote bestsellers that included Scruples. When he met her, he told her, "I am a gay man recovering from an addiction to alcohol." Krantz found him charming and soon spread the word among the Hollywood elite. Patrons who began showing up at his studio included Barbra Streisand, Candice Bergen, Ali MacGraw, and, as mentioned, "Nancy and Betsy," who were Fletcher's favorite customers.]



Ron Fletcher, the celebrated dancer and choreographer, was one of many intimate relationships "Broadway Nancy" formed with homosexual men.

In the lower photo, in Los Angeles, he is seen teaching one of his famous Pilates classes, lessons which attracted A-list stars from the movie community.

As author Kitty Kelley noted, "Most of Nancy's closest friends and relationship were with homosexual men, both as friends and lovers. Homosexuality seemed to envelop her world. For the rest of her life, she enjoyed platonic friendships with well-dressed gay men who became her mentors in the arts, fashion, cuisine, and interior design, shaping her tastes and pointing her toward sophistication."

When Fletcher drifted out of her life, Nancy took up with Roger Fryer, an aspiring young producer. She went out with him almost every night, accompanied by his lover, a young actor named James Carr. She referred to them as "Bobby and Jimmy." In summer, the three of them could be seen in her small back garden barbecuing hot dogs on a grill.

Fryer and Nancy would become lifelong friends, and he went on to achieve great success on both Broadway and

in Hollywood. “I make movies to pay the rent,” he told her. “But the stage is my true love.”

“The theater world and the film world are both strange,” Fryer said, “in that you don’t keep your relationship usually beyond the run of the show or the making of a film. But Nancy was one of the people that kept her friends closely held.”

In time, Fryer would produce such Broadway hits as *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Auntie Mame*, and *Sweeney Todd*, his blockbuster films including *Mame, The Boys from Brazil*, and *The Shining*. He brought to the Los Angeles stage such luminaries as Katharine Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Carol Channing, Angela Lansbury, and Mary Martin. He also presented plays by Arthur Miller, Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Lillian Hellman.

Biographer Bob Colacello also noted Nancy’s affinity for homosexual men. “If she had stayed in show business instead of marrying an actor who went into politics, it would hardly have been noteworthy. She was close to a number of lesbian and bisexual women over the years, starting with her godmother, Alla Nazimova, and her circle of friends. But this is not unusual in the world of entertainment. If gay men were attracted to the young Nancy Davis, it was probably for the same reason that straight men were: She was pretty, lively, well-dressed, a good dancer, a good listener, and, like her mother, a natural-born coquette. She knew how to flirt with a man in ways that were flattering and unthreatening, which may explain why gay men felt especially comfortable around her.”

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Following the success of *Ramshackle Inn*, George Batson wrote another play, *Cordelia*, for ZaSu Pitts, who asked Nancy if she’d accept a small part in it and take it on the road with her. Nancy accepted without reading the script, because she trusted Pitts’ judgment completely. The aging actress not only wanted to star in the play, but she believed in it so much, she’d invested a lot of her own money in producing it. *Cordelia* went on tour in the summer of 1946, hoping for a premiere on Broadway that autumn.

As the plot unfolds, ZaSu is raising two sisters whose mother walked out on them. She also rents rooms in a shack at the end of a wharf in New England, one of which is occupied by a gambler. Cast as Millicent, Nancy plays an upper-class young woman who falls in love with the street-smart gambling man.

Once again, she was on tour with Pitts, sharing her hotel rooms and helping organize Pitts’ wardrobe, much of it designed by Edith Head. To the cast, they appeared extremely close, sleeping together, dining together, and going home with each other every night during tryouts in both Boston and New Haven.

Although it was wild speculation, with no real evidence, many cast members assumed that Pitts and Nancy were engaged in a lesbian affair. It was well known to them that Nancy’s godmother, Alla Nazimova, the Silent Screen goddess, was a lesbian. In reality, Pitts viewed Nancy almost like her own daughter and was very protective of her.

The reviews were lackluster, critics evaluating the play as “amateurish and hokedup.”

As a last resort, a play doctor was summoned. He immediately changed the name of the play from *Cordelia* to *Dangerous Woman*. Pitts stuck up her nose at that title. “Sounds like a Joan Crawford movie.”

Ironically, in 1952, Crawford would make a film, *This Woman Is Dangerous*.

Jack Kirkland was a “play doctor” and a man of many talents—playwright, producer, director, and screenwriter. At the time, he was best known for adapting Erskine Caldwell’s controversial play, *Tobacco Road*, to the screen. Nancy met him, remembering that he’d penned one of her favorite movies, *Now and Forever* (1934), with Gary Cooper, Carole Lombard, and Shirley Temple.

But even a talented writer such as Kirkland could not rescue *Cordelia*, and Batson’s play closed on the road, never making it to Broadway.

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After the failure of *Cordelia*, Pitts wanted a “surefire guarantee of success,” and with that in mind, she selected a much-reprised comedy workhorse, *The Late Christopher Bean*, written by Sidney Howard from an original French farce. Many other actresses had already interpreted that play, including Lillian Gish, Edith Evans, and the formidable Marie Dressler.

ZaSu Pitts in Erich von Stroheim's silent classic, *Greed* (1924), her most controversial performance.

In the summer of 1947, Pitts, along with Nancy, still sharing her hotel room, toured with the play on the summer stock circuit. That autumn, Pitts took the play to major cities that included Philadelphia, Boston, Milwaukee, and Cleveland. At the opening at Chicago's Civic Theater on October 20, 1947, Nancy received more congratulatory telegrams than Pitts, with acknowledgments from such established stars as Spencer Tracy, Walter Huston, Mary Martin, and Lillian Gish.

On opening night, Edith Davis appeared, wearing a mink coat with an orchid pinned to it. On her arm was Loyal Davis, who was now the president of the Society of Neurological Surgeons.

After the show, Edith threw a gala opening night party, inviting the elite of Chicago, including Dwight Green, the Governor of Illinois.

The next day, reviews of Nancy's role were not as enthusiastic as those of her parents. In her role as an *ingénue*, Nancy was called "a sweet, decorous girl." Another critic found her "unusually attractive and talented." She carried a copy of that review in her purse for months, although later admitting, "I wasn't exactly setting show business on fire, yet I was doing work I really liked."

Ingénue Nancy Davis onstage with ZaSu, in a performance of *The Late Christopher Bean*.

The producer, Michael Myerberg, had signed screen actor Guy Kibbee as the star of the play. Bald, pot-bellied, and rosy-cheeked, Kibbee was familiar to film-goers of the 1930s, as he'd starred with almost every major performer from Errol Flynn to Shirley Temple. He was cast as a country doctor who takes in roomers, one of whom

is Christopher Bean, an artist. During the course of the play, Bean dies, bequeathing the household a number of paintings. Although at first they're thought to be worthless, as the plot develops, it's revealed that they're masterpieces. Nancy was cast asthe country doctor's older daughter, who is in love with a local paperhanger who turns out to be an artist himself. By Act Three, we learn that Pitts, the doctor's housekeeper, had been secretly married to Bean, and that in her capacity as his widow, all those masterpieces belong to her.

On the road, Kibbee and Pitts got all the critical attention, and Nancy was virtually ignored. One critic, however, called her performance "nicely sweetened without saccharine."

When the play opened at the Olney Theater in Olney, Maryland, outside Washington, Nancy received a note backstage, requesting a visit with her after the show. It was from General and Mrs. Omar Bradley, who had recently been entertained at home in Chicago by Edith. Bradley, of course, had commanded the American Army in Normandy, and was slated to become President Harry Truman's chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Nancy welcomed them warmly, realizing that her mother still had the kind of allure that attracted famous people.

The next day, the local paper asserted, "Nancy Davis took the role of a sappy, cloying girl and turned it into a real person."

During the play's run in Olney, James Karen, a young actor, part of the Olney Theater Company, congratulated Pitts on her star role in the con troversial four-hour long *Greed* (1925), a pet project of the temperamental director, Erich von Stroheim. "That god damn picture," Pitts muttered to Karen. "Don't mention that film to me. As far as I'm concerned, Stroheim can shove every single reel of it where the sun don't shine." Then she turned and walked away.

Nancy was shocked, as she'd never heard her mentor use such strong language. "To provoke her like that, *Greed* must have brought back a lot of painful memories."

Two views of the man who at the time was the most dashing romantic lead on Broadway—Alfred Drake, known for "draking" women.

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After her return New York, Nancy attended a party given by Mary Martin. For a starlet, an invitation to one of Martin's parties was a great honor, as she knew all the luminaries on Broadway, including Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Helen Hayes, and playwrights such as George Kaufman.

At the party, she was introduced to actor/singer Alfred Drake, who, with his rich baritone voice, had become the King of Broadway musicals, particularly after his spectacular performance as Curly, male lead in the 1943 production of *Oklahoma!*. With macho pizzazz, he'd opened each performance with a rousing rendition of "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'."

Nancy had first seen him playing Marshall Blackstone in the original production of *Babes in Arms* (1937), in which he'd sung the title song. She found him very handsome in a virile, masculine way, and it was obvious that he was attracted to her, too. Despite his marriage in 1944 to Esther Harvey Brown, he was still known for his seductions of "songbirds and starlets." Boastfully, he relayed to his friends the names of the stars or starlets who had been "draked," and which of them remained for him to "drake."

Nancy had heard that in spite of his name, he was actually Italian, having been born Alfred Capurro of parents who had emigrated to New York from Genoa. Somewhere along the way, according to those who knew Drake, he began seeing Nancy on the side. "It had to be a back alley affair," said Cole Porter, who himself had a crush on Drake, "because Alfred was married, and he didn't want word to get back to his Esther."

From unverified reports, including from Porter, the affair lasted for only a season. "I think the Davis girl objected to the fact that she couldn't be seen in public with him and especially couldn't go to A-list parties, where he had to show up with his wife. I also think that she wasn't convinced that he'd get her a part on Broadway."

Suddenly, Drake was out and Max Allentuck was her man of choice, at least for a little while.

Allentuck was way down the line when it came to Broadway luminaries, but he nevertheless had the power to get an aspiring actress cast in a play. His career had begun in vaudeville. After that, he worked for major producers such as Kermit Bloomgarden, who was currently presenting Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest* (1946), and who would later produce *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1955), and *The Music Man* (1957).

Years later, Helen Tiers, the former secretary to Allentuck, was interviewed by reporter Joan Evert. The secretary remembered Nancy's arrival in Allentuck's office. "She didn't look like a young actress seeking a job in the theater," Tiers claimed. "She was dressed like a movie star. She owned a fur coat and always wore tasteful, well-tailored clothes. She was also beautifully groomed, not a hair out of place. Unlike most show-girls of that day, Davis believed in 'The Fashion House Style,' which promoted 'good lines and quiet, subdued colors.' Even though very busy, Max always made time for Davis, most often slipping out the back door with her to do whatever they did together. Frankly, I think Nancy Davis was hotter for Max than he was for her…His first marriage to Peggy Phillips had crashed. By 1949, he would wed the actress Maureen Stapleton, no great beauty, but one of the most talented stage actresses on Broadway. She had made her debut in the 1946 *Playboy of the Western World."*

In her column, Dorothy Kilgallen wrote, "Max Allentuck, general manager for producer Kermit Bloomgarden, is often seen after the curtain goes down with rising brunette starlet, Norma *(sic)* Davis. Do I hear wedding bells?"

Maureen Stapleton in the urban canyons of NYC's Theater District, late 1940s.

"Nancy Davis was screwing around with my husband, Max Allentuck, before I got to him."

Wedding bells did not toll. Soon, Nancy, in the opinion of Allentuck, was "pursuing bigger game in the Hollywood jungle."

[Although Stapleton divorced Allentuck in 1959, in 1981, she seemed fully aware of her ex-husband's involvement with Nancy Davis, when Stapleton attended a reception in Washington with Tennessee Williams. She had been one of his favorite actresses since the 1951 production of The Rose Tattoo.

In the reception line, Nancy Davis Reagan, now First Lady, greeted the actress.

"Hello, Maureen," Nancy said. After she had passed on down the line, Tennessee whispered to Stapleton, "I didn't know you knew Nancy Reagan. Not enough to call her by her first name."

"I never met her before. But, like me, she's an actress, and we always call each other by our first names. Besides, we have something in common: She used to fuck my former husband, Max Allentuck.]

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In July of 1948, Nancy's gay friend, Roger Fryer, turned producer, asked her to play the daughter in a stage revival of *The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman. The role of the formidable, evil Regina Giddens had originated as a Broadway hit in 1939, starring Tallulah Bankhead. In 1941, producer Samuel Goldwyn and director William Wyler had cast Bette Davis in the movie version. That film had starred Teresa Wright as Regina's daughter. In the Chicago stage revival of 1948, Nancy was given that role.

She accepted the role from her friend, Fryer, although there is evidence that there was tension between them during rehearsals. At one point, an exasperated Nancy said, "Teresa Wright is a hard act to follow."

Ruth Chatterton, the former wife of George Brent, was asked to take on an even more daunting challenge and interpret the role of Regina Giddens in the footsteps of Bankhead and Davis, each of whom had stamped powerful images into one of the genuine "bitch roles" of the stage and screen.

A star during the early Talkies, Chatterton's career had already peaked by the time she accepted the role of Regina. Her last American movie, William Wyler's *Dodsworth*, had been released in 1936.

Nancy Davis was virtually ignored by reviewers. However, John Davidson wrote: "The role of Regina Giddens, a soulless and sadistic vixen, an unmitigated murderess, is so overpowering that it seems to devour poor little Nancy Davis, who struggled to hold her own in this Southern nest of cottonmouths and rattlers."

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In September of 1948, back in New York, pounding the dirty sidewalks of Broadway, Nancy was once again looking for work and finding none, although Roger Fryer told her she might gain experience working in television, then in its pioneering stage. He told her he'd see if he could line up something for her. Spencer Tracy was also looking for a role for her. When he called her apartment, she thought it was to report on a possible role. But it involved something else. He told her that his friend, Clark Gable, was coming into town later that month, and he wondered if she'd be free to date him. "I highly recommended you."

Three distinguished actresses, Tallulah Bankhead (left); Bette Davis (center); and Ruth Chatterton appeared either on stage or the screen as the Southern hellion, Regina Giddens, in *The Little Foxes*.

Nancy Davis was cast as Chatterton's daughter.

Living in a shadowy existential hell with an evil dragon for a mother. *Above, left*: Teresa Wright and Bette Davis in *The Little Foxes*.

In Chicago, Nancy *(right)* dreaded stepping into Teresa Wright's shoes in this gothic tale of family anguish and female duplicity. She got tired of hearing, "Teresa Wright did it better." Her performance went virtually unnoticed.

"It would be the greatest honor of my life, but I can't imagine the King of Hollywood walking up three flights of steps to date an unknown starlet. I mean, he could have his pick of any woman in New York."

"Great!" he said. "You'll do it. I'll give Clark your phone number."

After putting down the phone, Nancy immediately called Edith in Chicago. "I'm going to date Clark Gable! *The* Clark Gable!"

"Oh, my dear, you're delusional," Edith said.

Nancy often turned to astrology as her guiding light, and subsequently, she consulted an astrologer. The stars were right in the heavens, or so it seemed, for her date with "The King."

Three days later, Gable called and invited her for dinner and dancing at The Stork Club. She later said, "I was in a state of shock when I put down the phone. My heart was palpitating. I had worshipped him on the screen. I could not believe that I had actually spoken to him."

From reading fan magazines, Nancy was awed by the glamorous women Gable had conquered, including his late, doomed wife, Carole Lombard. The list included some of the most glamorous stars of the Golden Age—Lana Turner, Mary Astor, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Hedy Lamarr, Merle Oberon, Norma Shearer, Lupe Velez. "What would a man who'd had all those queens want with a mere handmaiden?" *[Her reference was inspired by the role she'd played in* Lute Song.*]*

The slim, brown-eyed beauty from the Windy City paraded into the Stork Club on the arm of Gable himself. Photographers at the entrance snapped their pictures. In a memoir, Nancy would later rave about how "sexy, handsome, and affectionate," he was. In the club, he held her hand, and she found him "romantic and fun-loving."

Nancy Davis, as a postwar Broadway *ingénue*, looked, acted, and dressed like a major-league star before she became one.

"A flood of women walked by our table on the way to the powder room," she wrote.

She claimed that she didn't know how many friends she had until Gable invited her to dance. "Oh, Nancy, darling, how wonderful to see you!" many of the women said, wanting to be introduced to Gable.

The evening presumably ended with a kiss on the mouth. On many an occasion, his dates had complained about his bad breath, because of the false teeth he wore. Nancy had no complaints, and accepted his offer to be booked during every night of this stay in Manhattan.

The World Series was being played at the time, and he invited her to Yankee Stadium following lunch the following day. At ten o'clock, a lovely bouquet of red roses arrived at her apartment before he picked her up. Actually, Gable did not cut as dashing a figure as he had when he'd played Rhett Butler back in 1939. Gore Vidal, whose mother, Nina Vidal, had once had an affair with him, wrote, "At this point in his life, Gable had put on weight, and he drank heavily. After a few drinks, he would loosen his false teeth, which were on some sort of peg, and then shake his head until they rattled like dice. His post-war movies had flopped at the box office, but he was still a big name to his public."

When Clark Gable made *The Hucksters* (1947) with Ava Gardner *(see above)*, he told her "I'm not feisty Mickey Rooney, but there's still fire in the engine."

To Sydney Greenstreet, he recalled dating Nancy Davis. "Something might have happened if I'd stayed in New York. But I went back to Hollywood, where I already had an over-full card of women—and Ava can't be beat."

At Yankee Stadium, Nancy and Gable were mobbed. Four policemen had to escort Gable and Nancy to their box seats. Earlier, they had been seen lunching at the exclusive "21."

Walter Winchell, in his popular column, wrote: "At long last, Clark Gable had found a replacement for his beautiful doomed wife, who went down in that plane crash in 1942. He went into mourning, but now seems to have emerged. If anyone can bring him out of his depressive shell, it is a cute little brunette starlet whom he's taking to all the hot spots of Manhattan."

Other reporters heard the sound of wedding bells, which had rung, at least in print, for Nancy before, but which had always stopped ringing before she was able to march up the aisle to an altar.

Gable and Nancy continued their high-profile dating, attending a hot ticket Broadway musical, *High Button Shoes*. The musical starred Phil Silvers and Nanette Fabray, with music by Jules Styne and lyrics by Sammy Cahn. Its director was George Abbott. As Gable walked in with Nancy, the audience stood up and gave him an ovation.

Joan Crawford in a publicity still for *Mildred Pierce*, a role coveted and lost by Jane Wyman.

Crawford was Clark Gable's part-time lover. He confessed to her that in New York, he had "strayed with Nancy Davis."

"Nancy, who?" Crawford asked.

Word of an affair reached Chicago. Edith telephoned one morning. "What in hell is going on between Gable and you?"

"We're just good friends," Nancy said.

"Like hell. I've talked to Spencer Tracy. As you know, he's Gable's confidant. Gable told Spence that he's fucking you."

“Spence exaggerates.”

“Well, if he’s plugging my daughter and you get knocked up, make sure you get a wedding ring.”

Tracy seemed to fancy himself a matchmaker. He told Katharine Hepburn, George Cukor, Garson Kanin, and Ruth Gordon, “Clark is banging Nancy. She’s seen late at night leaving his suite at the Waldorf. He’s not much of a lay, as he freely admits himself, but she couldn’t do any better than wed the King of Hollywood. Actually, that title belongs to me, but I forgive Clark for using it.”

Nancy more or less denied the affair, without actually saying so. Back in Hollywood, Joan Crawford, Gable’s steadfast friend and lover over the years, claimed that he had admitted to an affair with Nancy—“Whoever in hell she is.”

In a memoir, Nancy hinted that Gable may have indirectly proposed to her. One night he asked her, “How would you feel about living on a ranch?” He was obviously referring to his ranch in Encino, California.

She later claimed that she fumbled her response. She said, “Gee, I don’t know. I never have.” On looking back at that moment, she wondered, “Was Clark sounding me about a possible future together? And, if so, how should I have responded? I wasn’t in love with him, but if we had seen more of each other, I might have been.”

And then, suddenly, it was over.

Gable flew back to Hollywood and to the arms of Ava Gardner, with Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe looming in his future. A year later, he entered into an unsuccessful marriage (1949-1952) to Sylvia, Lady Ashley, a socialite.

Tracy told his gossipy friend, the director George Cukor, that “Clark was Nancy’s first choice for a husband. Ronald Reagan was just the consolation prize.”

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Long before Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman became big stars on television, Nancy broke into the medium during its infancy. As she recalled, “I had to wear green makeup and black lipstick! TV was very new, and you had to wear some strange colors if you wanted to look good on those early, primitive black-and-white TV sets.”

An offer came through for her to appear in a telecast called *Broken Dishes*, set to air on May 12, 1948, on Kraft Television Theatre. Some biographers have suggested that this was a new script. Actually, it had been around for years. *Broken Dishes* had premiered as a Broadway play in 1929 when it had introduced another newcomer to the theater, also named Davis—Bette in this case. The screen diva defined November 5 of that year as “the greatest triumph of my professional career, the night I first saw my name on a Broadway marquee.”

Far from being an unknown property, *Broken Dishes* had already been adapted into three separate Hollywood movies, each with a different title: *Too Young to Marry*, with Loretta Young (1931); *Love Begins at Twenty* with Patricia Ellis (1936); and *Calling All Husbands* with Lucile Fairbanks (1940). When Nancy starred in the teleplay, the property was viewed in Hollywood as “a tired old workhorse.”

It was a comedy focusing on a henpecked husband in the Middle West, with a nagging wife always talking about “the man I should have married.” The daughter, as played by Nancy, seeks independence from her domineering mother by marrying a man her mother finds objectionable. At the finale, that man the mother idealized turns up. Ironically, he has become a penniless fugitive, desperately fleeing from the police.

Benny Thau, head of casting at MGM, had flown to New York to confer with Tracy at his temporary home at the Waldorf Towers. Nancy had alerted Tracy to watch her debut on TV. He invited Thau for drinks with him and to view the telecast as well. Thau detested television and feared future competition from the new medium, so he sat, visibly suffering, through the telecast. Apparently, however, the fifty-one-year-old man, unmarried at the time, became quite fascinated with the twenty-eight year-old actress, Nancy herself.

Star Maker Benny Thau: When the MGM Lion roared, starlet Nancy Davis answered the call.

At the end of the broadcast, Thau expressed his interest in dating Nancy. Tracy agreed to call her, finding her excited when she heard he was in charge of casting at MGM, “The Tiffany of Studios.”

After his first date with Nancy, Thau discussed with Tracy that he might arrange a screen test for her. “We need another clean cut, girl-next-door type at Metro,” Thau said. “We’ve already got enough sultry types—take Lana Turner and Ava Gardner, for example. Of course, for class, we already have your beloved Katharine Hepburn.”

In her memoirs, Nancy doesn’t even mention Thau, although he became one of the most influential men in her screen career. According to unconfirmed reports, Thau’s long affair with Nancy actually began in New York.

She wanted to believe Thau when he told her he would arrange a screen test for her at MGM. If the studio bosses liked it, a seven-year contract would follow. “I could hope and dream,” she recalled.

In the meantime, while awaiting that contract, she did more live television. ZaSu Pitts cajoled once again and asked Nancy to repeat their roles in *Ramshackle Inn* as part of a telecast for Philco Television Playhouse. It aired on January 2, 1949.

Nancy’s performance went over so well with the Philco producers that she was invited to repeat her role in *The Late Christopher Bean*, the play in which she had toured with Pitts. However, she was not available for the telecast, and the Davis’ family friend, Lillian Gish, took the star role. That telecast was premiered on February 6, 1949.

By that time, Nancy’s screen test at MGM had been scheduled. She often had long talks on the phone with Thau.

When her air tickets arrived, she organized the details of her departure and packed her luggage.

She told her friends, perhaps in exaggerated jest, “Greer Garson replaced Norma Shearer as Queen of MGM. Now I’m on my way to dethrone Garson.” Nancy never actually “dethroned” her, but she did replace Garson in one of her roles: The British actress had been Thau’s mistress.

Although Nancy arrived on the scene at the end of Hollywood’s Golden Age, she still managed to win a seven-year contract at a time when more established MGM contract players were being let go. As she set foot on California soil, many stars were desperately free-lancing in search of acting jobs.

Although Edith encouraged her daughter’s film career, Loyal did not, claiming, perhaps correctly, that Hollywood was “an unsavory place.”

Spencer Tracy had contacted his gay friend, director George Cukor, known as the best women’s director in Hollywood, and asked him to direct Nancy’s screen test. That was unheard of; Cukor didn’t do screen tests. But for Tracy, he agreed to supervise Nancy’s try-out.

Tracy also placed a call to Dore Schary, a former screenwriter now in charge of production at MGM. He would

soon replace Louis B. Mayer. Schary had written the script for *Boys Town* (1938), which brought Tracy an Oscar. “Nancy knows how to look like she’s thinking when she’s on stage,” Tracy said. “I’m told you want to make message pictures. Nancy would be ideal for those.”

When Nancy heard that Schary suffered back pains, she put him in touch with her stepfather, Loyal Davis, a high-profile neurosurgeon. The doctor relieved the executive’s pains, which made him grateful to Nancy.

Before her screen test, Nancy spent three weeks with Lillian Burns, MGM’s drama coach, who rehearsed the starlet in voice, dancing, acting, deportment, and appearance.

For the test, Thau arranged for Nancy to have as her cameraman George Folsey, who was said to photograph women more beautifully than anyone in his field. “I can turn a snaggle-toothed hag into a sultry, classical dame,” he proclaimed.

Sent to makeup, Nancy found herself sitting between June Allyson and Elizabeth Taylor. Both of them would eventually become her friends.

Women who drove Benny bananas: Greer Garson *(left)* and Nancy Davis.

The top hair stylist in Hollywood, Sydney Guilaroff, was assigned to tangle with her hair. William Tuttle, acclaimed as the leading makeup artist in Hollywood, rivaled only by Perc Westmore, did her face. He told her, “We’ll have to do something about your eyes: They are too big for pictures.”

She walked onto the set with her eyes half closed until the cameraman, Folsey, asked, “Did you get enough sleep last night?”

Macho, magnetic, and charismatic: Howard Keel “wiving it wealthily” in *Kiss Me Kate*.

She explained what Tuttle had said.

“It was a fucking joke. You can’t have eyes too big for the movies. Ever see a Joan Crawford picture?”

As her leading man, Howard Keel was selected to appear opposite her. The handsome, strapping, macho

baritone from Illinois would become the movie equivalent of Alfred Drake on Broadway, eventually appearing in such upcoming musicals as *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950) and *Show Boat* (1951). He was known for his big, booming voice. Nor was he modest, claiming, "I'm big in all departments."

Keel and Nancy were given a script for an upcoming MGM film, *East Side, West Side* (1949). Ironically, when shooting began for that film, Nancy would be assigned a role in it.

During the filming of her screen test, Nancy admitted, "I was terribly nervous, but Howard talked to me and made me calm down." During a break, he told her of his background, asserting that he'd come from a coal-mining town where his father had committed suicide when he was a young boy.

As he grew in stature in the coming years, he would become a sex symbol at MGM, and he boasted of having scored with his leading ladies. They had included Kathryn Grayson, Ava Gardner, and Esther Williams. He said that before that, he'd seduced Norma Jeane Baker (Marilyn Monroe) when she was only thirteen and he was twenty-one. He referred to Monroe as "San Quentin jail bait."

Four years after his screen test with Nancy, Hedda Hopper asked Keel, "You appeared on camera with both of Reagan's wives, Nancy and Jane Wyman. You are known in Hollywood as quite a ladies' man Did you get lucky with Nancy or Jane?...Maybe both?"

"I can answer your question with a question," Keel said. "Does a bear shit in the woods?"

After the screen test, Nancy had to fill out a questionnaire about herself. She shaved two years off her age, defining it as twenty-six. Among her phobias, she listed that she hated "vulgarity, untidiness of mind, and cigars."

When she signed with MGM, Nancy stood 5'4" and weighed 116 pounds. She named her favorite actors as Walter Huston and Spencer Tracy, her favorite female star as Laurette Taylor, the older, Irish-American actress. In 1944, on Broadway, she had been the first to interpret the key matriarchal role of Amanda in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

George Cukor: Very outspoken in his negative impression of Nancy.

Nancy also asserted that her greatest ambition was "to have a successful marriage."

Although he masked it, Cukor took an instant dislike to Nancy. Privately, he told Tracy, "She has absolutely no talent."

[Throughout the rest of his life, Cukor made nasty remarks about her. In his most notorious comment, he claimed, "If I had a nickel for every Jew Nancy was under, I'd be rich."]

Cukor showed her screen test to producer Pandro S. Berman, who had dealt, frequently, with such über-luminaries as Katharine Hepburn. He told Cukor, "Nancy Davis just doesn't have star material."

Nancy later recalled, "I escaped the usual star buildup, having to pose in bathing suits and the like. From the beginning, I was cast either as a young girl with children, or I was padded to appear as pregnant more times than I can recall. From 1949 to 1956, I would make eleven films, but, except for a few of them, I hardly remember what happened during the shoot."

Unlike Reagan's first wife, Jane Wyman, Nancy didn't seem to be particularly susceptible to "*Leadingman-itis.*" Male stars who failed to light her fire included Van Heflin, James Mason, Zachory Scott, James Whitmore, Ray Milland, Ralph Meeker, and George Murphy, Reagan's best friend. "Glenn Ford was attractive enough, but he was involved," she said. In one of her final films, however, her leading man really turned her on—Reagan himself. By then, she'd already married him.

During her first interview with Louella Parsons, the aging gossip maven asked her, "Is there one man in your life?"

"Not yet," Nancy said. "I don't want to sound trite, but I'm married to my career, and that's pretty much the truth."

Actually, the first journalist to interview Nancy after she signed her contract was columnist Ines Wallace. What she wrote was rather bland. Privately, she had a sharper opinion: "My impression of her was dismal. She was more like a character actress than a leading lady. She looked a bit long in the tooth. Mayer liked to sign young girls—take

Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland, or Lana Turner, for example. I was told that MGM planned to build Nancy up. Up for what? Oblivion? The fans won't go for this one. Trust me!"

Nancy also realized that within MGM, she couldn't compete with those "child-woman" stars, the rosy-cheeked "girl next door" type. June Allyson and Jane Powell were already under contract for those parts, with Debbie Reynolds looming on the horizon.

"I had to be something in between," Nancy said. Thau told wardrobe and makeup that he wanted them to create "that respectable lady look, an image of manicured prettiness."

"Nancy was not glamorous," Thau said, "and she knew that."

"After I put my "Jane Henry" on that contract, I started receiving a weekly paycheck," Nancy said. "No longer would I have to depend on Edith and Loyal for support."

[In later years, Nancy, in her real-life role as a mother, would have to provide money for her son, Ron Reagan, Jr., during the early stages of his career as a ballet dancer.]

Although her starting salary was low, Nancy seemed pleased with it. "Of course, "she remarked, "Lassie, that beautiful collie, was pulling in $1,000 a week at the time."

Thau had previously informed Nancy that Lassie, in the dog's capacity as a star, was equivalent to "Greer Garson with fur."

Berlin-born Gottfried Reinhardt was the son of the fabled Austrian theater director, Max Reinhardt. The son had produced *Two-Faced Woman* (1941), the final film of Greta Garbo.

When Nancy first encountered Reinhardt as part of a chance meeting, he was in preparation for his classic 1951 film, *The Red Badge of Courage*, the epic Civil Wardrama starring war hero Audie Murphy.

Dore Schary represented a new breed of mogul, making decisions and sponsoring movies that would have driven his domineering predecessor (Louis B. Mayer) crazy.

According to Reinhardt "Benny Thau always made his directors cast the girl he was sleeping with at the time. Nancy was a horrible actress, and I knew she got her contract by devious means. Benny called me into his office and asked me to cast her in my next picture. Sidney Franklin had already rejected her. I said I would get back to him, but I never did. Of course, Benny could have insisted, but he didn't. Even with no talent, Nancy had a lot going for her, giving Benny blow jobs and having Loyal Davis take care of Dore Schary's back."

Taffeta Fashion Glam: In this *haute* fashion shot arranged by MGM, the hope was that Nancy would evoke an allure as pronounced as that of Lana or Ava. But as her resumé was scrutinized, she seemed less and less suited for sultry.

Reinhardt said, “Even without a screen test, she had that contract in the bag. As long as she showed up, wasn’t drunk, and didn’t up-chuck on camera, she was in like Flynn. A lot of guys were rooting for her, including Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Dore Schary, and my friend, Benny Thau. Louis B. Mayer didn’t like her screen test, but he finally gave in and allowed her contract to go through. Mayer was beginning to lose a lot of his power in the late 1940s. Back in the 1930, he would have ordered Davis off the Metro lot.”

Lucille Ryman Carroll, head of MGM’s talent department, cynically remarked, “Benny knew the Davis girl would never be a star. He just wanted his morning blow job. If he gives her a role, I predict it’ll be in a B picture. Of course, Schary goes for that demure look. What in hell does he know? He even turned down Marilyn Monroe, and she went over to Fox.”

Once her contract was signed, Nancy evacuated her apartment in New York, finding a similar one in Santa Monica. After a few weeks, she rented a modest house in Beverly Glen. Her neighbors were Van Johnson and his wife, the former Evie Wynn. Like Jane Wyman before her, Nancy became close friends with Johnson, going swimming with him or else playing tennis. Evie went along for the outings.

[Johnson’s boss, Louis B. Mayer, had ordered him to get married as a means of putting a stop to rumors that he was a homosexual. “I became ‘It,’ meaning the only safe choice woman for Van to marry,” Evie later said. “I was told to divorce Keenan, Van’s best friend, and then marry Van. To save his career at MGM, Keenan also agreed to Mayer’s harsh terms. Boy, did we make a lot of sacrifices to hold onto an MGM contract.”]

Not the big stars, but the minor ones, resented Nancy at MGM and spread rumors about her. When Nancy arrived in Hollywood, she perhaps thought that Clark Gable would continue dating her, as he had in New York. But except for a lunch or two in the MGM commissary, he did not.

Ernst Lubitsch *(left)*, a brilliant director of savvy and wit, is seen with Gottfried Reinhardt, the talented son of the celebrated theater impresario, Max Reinhardt.

When Benny Thau asked him to cast Nancy in his next picture, he was horrified.

She'd heard that he was seeing an MGM blonde, Audrey Totter, who had signed with the studio in 1944, playing a floozy who makes her dough by rolling drunken soldiers and sailors in *Main Street After Dark*. Totter took up with Gable when they were cast together in *Any Number Can Play* (1949). She and Nancy would later come into jealous conflict over actor Robert Walker.

[Ironically, Totter would also get into jealous tangles with Jane Wyman over the affections of John Payne and Lew Ayres.]

Totter referred to Nancy as "Benny's little *protégée* from New York." She had taken an instant dislike to Nancy on first sight. She spread the story around the studio that one morning, she had an appointment with Thau, claiming she had entered his office and found his secretary out. She opened the door to Thau's office without knocking, and discovered someone going down on him as he sat behind his desk. She claimed that quickly and quietly, she shut the door and left his office's anteroom. "I waited in the hall to see who had been performing fellatio. After twenty minutes, Nancy Davis, looking prim and proper, emerged."

MGM's casting director had an enormous influence on her brief film career. As vice president of MGM, he had been in charge of casting since 1928. He was one of MGM's "College of Cardinals," who reported directly to the boss of bosses, Louis B. Mayer. The other so-called cardinals included Eddie Mannix, Lawrence Weingarten, and Hunt Stromberg.

Nancy-Hater: Audrey Totter

"Nancy is in good hands with Benny," Tracy told Gable and others. "Mayer is bombastic, but Benny is more the quiet type—in fact, his voice is so soft, you have to strain to hear the fucker. If two stars are waging war on the set, Benny is called in as the peacemaker."

In his early fifties, Benny had a tendency to early baldness and was developing a paunch. He always ate a large piece of cake for dessert at lunch, and repeated that order for dinner, always *à la mode*.

As he said himself, "I was constantly surrounded by the most beautiful men and women in the world. I never pretended to be a looker myself."

Elizabeth Taylor claimed that "Benny was like a surrogate father. I turned to him for advice...and perhaps a little more." The final phrase within that statement was deliberately enigmatic.

Nancy Davis in 1949: A new starlet outside her home on Beverly Glen, rushing to get ready for a hot date.

Actually, Thau could have been a second father to Nancy, too, as he was four years older than her birth father, Kenneth Robbins.

Thau was very popular among the male stars at MGM, often lining up prostitutes for them. He was especially known for his Christmas Eve orgies.

In spite of his unprepossessing looks and personality, Thau was rumored to have "the busiest casting couch at MGM," rivaling that of Harry Cohn at Columbia and Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox. Greta Garbo adored him and trusted him so much that she worked without a formal contract. "Benny's handshake was enough for me," she said.

His list of conquests was long—often starlets like Nancy, but sometimes, big name actresses such as Jean Harlow, Rosalind Russell, Jeanette MacDonald, Mary Astor, Joan Crawford, Loretta Young, and Norma Shearer.

He willingly abandoned all of these ladies when a red-haired Londoner arrived at MGM. She was Greer Garson, born in 1903 and, consequently, far closer to Thau's own age—he was born in 1898—than Nancy.

Garson became Thau's mistress. He closely supervised her career. In 1941, she was nominated for an Oscar for *Blossoms in the Dust*, that soggy Technicolor soap opera.

Usually, MGM did not sign actresses as old as Garson for their star roles, only for character parts. But Garson's style, manners, and ageless beauty seemed to overcome that prejudice. In 1942, she appeared in her biggest box office hit, *Mrs. Miniver*, which earned an Oscar for her. When she received it, she delivered the longest acceptance speech (5 ½ minutes) in Hollywood history, a liberty that would not be tolerated during Academy Award ceremonies today.

An MGM publicity photo: Tennis anyone?
Nancy, anyone?

During the filming of *Mrs. Miniver*, a young (age 26) and very handsome actor, Richard Ney, played her son. "When I saw Richard in uniform, I fell madly in love with him," Garson said. "So I married the boy." She was 39.

No longer with Garson as his mistress, Thau was a free agent when he encountered Nancy. "She was sweet and appealing," he recalled. "Except for some jealous actresses, she was very popular at MGM."

During her first weeks in Hollywood, Thau was Nancy's constant escort, although eventually, both of them expanded their date calendars.

[Thirty years after his affair with Nancy and long after his retirement from MGM, Thau was an invalid, confined to a wheelchair, a permanent resident of the Motion Picture and Television Hospital outside Los Angeles. He would die there in 1983 when Nancy was First Lady, presiding over the White House.

Greer Garson, the original "cougar," with Richard Ney. Their marriage lasted four years.

Several members of the Hollywood elite came to visit the dying man. Reporters were shocked to find him so

outspoken. "I don't have to protect any star's reputation at this point," he claimed. "Even my own." He admitted that at one point, there had been talk of marriage with Nancy. "But I didn't pursue it. First, I was a much older man. I was also aware that Edith and Loyal were anti-Semites, and I was a Jew. So marriage was something to think about, but it just wasn't realistic."

Among those interviewing Thau was the well-known biographer, Anne Edwards, author of Early Reagan *(1987). She visited Thau during the closing months of his life. As reported by Kitty Kelley, Thau confided to Edwards that Nancy was renowned in Hollywood for giving oral sex. "She not only slept around, she performed that act and she performed it not only in the evening, but in offices. That was one of the reasons she got her contract, and one of the reasons she was popular at MGM." Edwards said she did not print Thau's claim because it was "too scandalous, too taste less," and because her book was about Reagan, not Nancy.*

Peter Lawford, one of Nancy's lovers, also claimed, "She was known for giving the best head in Hollywood."

Another biographer, Laurence Leamer, who wrote Make Believe: The Story of Nancy and Ronald Reagan *(1987), also claimed that Benny Thau's receptionist alleged that she found used condoms in Thau's wastepaper basket after every one of Nancy's visits. That suggested that their sex acts may have extended beyond fellatio, since in the late 1940s, few women used condoms when giving oral sex back in those halcyon days before AIDS.*

Other books—not just Kitty Kelley's—have suggested that Nancy became known as "the fellatio queen of Hollywood" long before the release of Linda Lovelace's Deep Throat *in 1972.*

A free-lance reporter, Daniel Burns, visited Thau at his retirement home and later claimed that he made a "deathbed confession." Perhaps unknown to Burns, that confession had already been expressed to others.

Thau told Burns, "Nancy was the undisputed Queen of Fellatio in Hollywood. The champion had been Faye Emerson before her marriage to Elliott Roosevelt. In the 1950s, after Nancy got married to what's his name, Marilyn Monroe was, more or less, the undisputed queen, even though she didn't hold the title. Of course, all critics agree that by the early 70s, Linda Lovelace was the oral expert. During her brief fling with William Holden, she tried to get Reagan's pal to fix her up with the man himself."

In Linda's view, only Reagan could determine "which of us is better, Nancy or me."

So far as it is known, Holden never complied with Lovelace's request.

Later, when asked about the role of Thau in her life, Nancy claimed, "I liked him as a friend, but that is as far as it went. I was not *his girlfriend."]*

In heavily sanitized latter-day evaluations," Nancy proclaimed, "Joining the studio was like walking into a dream world." But because of her understated manner and her somewhat distant approach to acting, MGM often found her hard to cast. In the early 1950s, roles that might have gone to Nancy went instead to Janet Leigh, Leslie Caron, Jane Powell, and, most definitely, Debbie Reynolds.

Almost as a foreshadowing of her future as Ronald Reagan's wife, if a role called for "a gentle, plain, and understanding spouse," it went to Nancy, in Thau's opinion.

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The legacy of Nancy's movies appear minor, indeed, when compared to the distinguished list of those of Oscar-winning Jane Wyman, and to the many (less stellar) films made by Reagan. One of the few positive things that a film critic might say about Nancy's film repertoire is, "They're not as bad as rumor has it."

Reflections in a Mirror? Or just a *Shadow on the Wall*? Nancy Davis gets *noir*-ish in her film debut.

The first film Nancy made was a mystery thriller, *Shadow on the Wall*, co-starring Ann Sothern and Zachory Scott. Many movie-goers thought it was her third picture, because, although it was shot early in 1949, it was not released until more than a year later, after she'd appeared in two other films, *The Doctor and the Girl* and *East Side, West Side*. The reason for the delayed release of *Shadow on the Wall* is not known. Perhaps MGM had made a similar B picture and wanted to hold back the premiere of *Shadow on the Wall* as a means of reducing the competition.

Although George Cukor had directed her screen test, for her first film, Nancy was assigned a relatively untried Englishman, Patrick Jackson, to helm her. He'd made documentaries in the 1930s and had directed *Western Approaches*, a fictional account of 22 sailors marooned in a lifeboat, in 1944. Much of that film had been shot in the Irish Sea. Real sailors rather than professional actors were used.

"Pat was patient with me, knowing how scared I was," Nancy said. "He told me the movie was based on a novel, *Death in a Doll's House*, and he gave me a copy which I read in one night. I think I got more understanding from the book than from the director."

Sothern usually played sassy but sympathetic characters, but in *Shadow on the Wall*, she was cast as the villain, Dell Faring, who, in a jealous rage, shoots her sister, Celia (Kristine Miller), when she learns she's involved in an affair with her boyfriend. Suspicion for the murder falls on Celia's husband (Zachory Scott), who—if he's found guilty—may be sent to the electric chair.

The only witness to the murder is a nine-year-old child, the stepdaughter of the victim, played by Gigi Perreau. She saw only the shadow of the killer, projected on a wall, and she was so traumatized by what she witnessed that her memory is blocked.

The cast of *Shadow on the Wall*, *left to right*: Ann Sothern, Zachory Scott, Gigi Perreau, and Nancy Davis.

Who was the real killer? Sothern or Scott? Psychiatrist Nancy held the clue, which was locked inside the traumatized brain of little Gigi.

The girl is sent for consultations with a psychiatrist (as played by Nancy), who races to unblock the child's memory before the wrong man dies.

In a chat with Nancy, Sothern told her, "Studios sell stars on their good looks and personality buildups. It will happen to you. You'll be asked questions like, 'Do you sleep in the nude?' A star is just a big name to a studio, nothing more. Publicity will give you a fake bio. If you don't deliver at the box office, you're out the door."

One of Sothern's most visible hits had been Fox's *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), wherein she played an ambitious writer married to a younger man (Kirk Douglas).

Years later, Sothern expressed a dim view of Nancy to tell-all biographer Kitty Kelley. "I remember her as quite soft and pudgy, looking like she'd had a nose job. Although she was pleasant enough, she seemed rather devious to me. I can't tell you exactly why—it was just a feeling I had. Maybe it was because she was so ambitious. She was a tough lady who definitely knew where she wanted to go. She didn't impress me much."

"She was well connected with Benny Thau, if you get my drift. He sometimes appeared on the set to see how things were coming along for his Nancy."

Sothern viewed all female newcomers to the screen with a certain disdain, seeing them as "tomorrow's competition." Also, at the time she expressed her negative opinions of Nancy, she was in the process of divorcing her actor husband, Robert Sterling, and she had recently been dropped from MGM after her final appearance in a series of Maisie movies in which she had starred as a wisecracking secretary, Maisie Ravier, since 1939. *[Sothern's last exposure to the role was in* Undercover Maisie *(1947).]* She was worried about her future in movies—and rightly so. In the months ahead, she would turn to television.

Gigi Perreau, screaming and traumatized, by *Shadow on the Wall*.

As a type, Scott, in real life, reminded Nancy too much of the sleazy character (Monty) he had played opposite Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce* (1945). She later thanked him in a memoir for being supportive of her as she struggled through her first movie role.

Off screen, she noticed that Scott wore a gold earring. He claimed he'd worn one ever since 1938, when the

captain of a fishing boat he'd hired off the coast of Mexico had worn one.

Scott wore it in spite of an attack by Walter Seltzer, a publicist at Warners, who claimed, "Scott has a quality of effeteness about him, a slight effeminacy. There is talk that he is a homosexual, and that he really doesn't fit into Hollywood."

Nancy could not help but notice an enormous tension between Sothern and Scott. Jackson had told her, "It's good that they don't have to play any love scenes. I've known directors who had to helm love scenes between bitter enemies. Imagine having to passionately kiss one of your worst enemies?"

At one point, Jackson explained why Scott was feuding with Sothern: He blamed her for interfering in his marriage to the former Elaine Anderson. In November of that year, Elaine would file for divorce from Scott, citing mental cruelty.

While Scott was away from Hollywood, on location, Sothern had introduced Elaine to the novelist, John Steinbeck, asking him to escort her to dinners and parties. As their courtship continued, Steinbeck fell in love with Elaine and continued their off-the-record affair even after Scott returned. Alienating Scott further, Sothern often served as a "beard" to mask their adulterous relationship.

During the shooting of *Shadow on the Wall*, the homosexual Latino, César Romero, was a frequent visitor to the set. After he'd been locked away with Scott in his dressing room for more than an hour, Sothern loudly remarked, "César is helping Scott mend a broken heart by offering his own special physical comfort. The use of his expert mouth."

On the set, Nancy befriended Perreau. A few years before, as a four-year-old, she had played the daughter of Claude Rains and Bette Davis in *Mr. Skeffington* (1944).

Nancy seemed aware that Perreau's career as a child actress was suffering from comparisons to a far more talented juvenile, Natalie Wood, who was three years her senior.

Jackson predicted that Nancy and one of the movie's supporting players, Barbara Billingsley, could usually be interchanged "as the same housewifey types."

[Barbara later hit it big when she was cast as June Cleaver in the long-running (1957-1963) sitcom, Leave It to Beaver. *Nancy, who would probably have been adept at portraying an American mom from the 1950s, might also have been ideal as Beaver's mother.]*

The New York Times praised Nancy's performance in *Shadow on the Wall*, finding it "beautiful and convincing." It could not, however, accept Sothern's radical change of screen image, suggesting that she was better suited for musicals or light comedies. *Newsweek* claimed that both Sothern and Scott handled their "high-voltage roles with effective restraint."

Tyrone Power *(left)* with César Romero.

Carmen Miranda, friends to both men, said, "These two guys committed what the public might call acts of unspeakable perversion, but what I might view as just having a wild party."

Nancy got her best review from *Variety*, which defined her performance as a standout, claiming "This actress is definitely a comer."

MGM brass, however, interpreted *Shadow on the Wall* as "just another cheap B-picture thriller."

Thau would later tell Nancy that it was just as well that the release of *Shadow on the Wall* had been delayed, because he believed that her two other films, *The Doctor and the Girl* (1949) and *East Side, West Side* (also 1949), were, in the long run, better showcases for her talent.

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"The Doctor" (Glenn Ford) and "The Girl" (Janet Leigh). Nancy, to her regret, was NOT the romantic lead. "Off screen, Janet got Glenn—not me," Nancy said.

As evidence of how small a town Hollywood was in the late 1940s, MGM designated, as director for Nancy's next film (*The Doctor and the Girl*), Curtis Bernhardt.

[Coincidentally, in 1940, he had helmed Jane Wyman in My Love Came Back. *A year later, he had directed Reagan in* Million Dollar Baby. *Now, it was his turn to work with Nancy in a minor role.]*

The stars included Glenn Ford and Janet Leigh, with Gloria DeHaven appearing in a supporting role. At the time, she was married to John Payne, Wyman's "true love" from earlier in the decade.

But as the daughter of a real-life doctor, she knew how to play it. Here, with a sense of gritty realism, is Nancy with Glenn Ford, "The Man Who Got Away" from her.

Originally entitled *Bodies and Soul*, the movie had an array of talented supporting players, most notably Charles Coburn, cast as a famous doctor and the father of the screen characters played by Ford, DeHaven, and Nancy. Other players included Bruce Bennett, Warner Anderson, and Arthur Franz. Nancy was typecast, playing the daughter of a famous neurosurgeon (Coburn), which—as the daughter of Loyal Davis—she was in real life.

Like Nancy, Leigh would also write an autobiography. Entitled *There Really Was a Hollywood*, it was published by Doubleday in 1984 when Nancy was one of the most famous and powerful women in the world. Many fans wondered why, within its pages, Leigh deliberately eliminated any mention of Nancy, with whom she'd played pivotal scenes.

"The choice was deliberate," Leigh in later years revealed to reporter George Hills. "I detested Nancy Davis. Not only did she make a play for my then beau, Glenn (Ford), but she went after most of my roles at MGM."

"Alfred Hitchcock claimed that Nancy's name was submitted for my landmark role in *Psycho* (1960)," Leigh

continued. “After all, I received an Oscar nod—and should have won instead of Shirley Jones—for that terrifying scream, the most famous in film history. Demure little Nancy would have fucked up that scene for sure. Hitch told me, ‘I turned Miss Davis down, of course. The idea of casting her was absurd.’”

“She went after my roles, regardless of what they were—everything from an *ingénue* to a tragic heroine. Perhaps a widow romanced by Robert Mitchum, a Russian spy opposite John Wayne, a naïve Southern girl, Gene Kelly’s girlfriend, Carleton Carpenter’s love interest (can you imagine such a thing?) or even Robert Ryan’s gun moll,” Leigh claimed.

In her own memoirs, Nancy wasn’t as petty as Leigh. She did at least mention her as a member of the cast, but it wasn’t even a case of damning by faint praise. All that she wrote was, “Janet played Glenn’s wife.” Privately, she was said to have thought that Leigh’s role would have been better suited for her.

Actually, Bernhardt cast their respective roles correctly. Leigh was seven years younger than Nancy, and as such was physically better suited for the role of “The Girl” in the film.

Ford was cast as a young doctor who suffers from a difficult relationship with his father (Coburn), and pursues a romance with a young female patient (Leigh) in all her dewy freshness, *[Leigh had been “discovered” by Norma Shearer, the former Queen of MGM.]*

Dore Schary wanted gritty realism and consequently, he ordered Bernhardt to shoot the scenes “on the fly” in New York City. That involved setting up cameras on the actual streets and sidewalks “to film the natives,” as Bernhardt defined them.

Years later, although Ford hardly remembered being in the movie with Nancy, he had nothing but praise for Leigh. “She had ability, brains, and ambition. I got to know her.”

Bernhardt described their relationship in more cynical terms. “Ford got to know her all right, like David knew Bathsheba. Janet Leigh ingratiated herself with Ford by launching their romance one afternoon when she pissed all over him.”

He was referring to a scene where Ford and Leigh played a newly married couple. On their wedding night, he has to carry her up two flights of stairs. As he does, he whispers to her, “I don’t think I can make it.”

“The more he struggled, the more I laughed,” Leigh wrote, “until finally, I passed the threshold of restraint and wet my pants, which only made me laugh harder—and it kept coming (I swear). I could see a spot on my skirt in the actual film.”

Ford, at the time, was married to singer-dancer Eleanor Powell, who had retired from the screen to marry an unfaithful husband. Like Reagan, Ford came down with “Leadinglady-itis," as provoked by Rita Hayworth. Along the way, he managed to seduce Eva Gabor, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Margaret Sullavan, and Barbara Stanwyck. He even had a one-night stand (*surprise!*) with Marilyn Monroe, as he confessed to his son, Peter Ford. The question is still out as to whether Bette Davis seduced him when they co-starred together in *A Stolen Life* (1946).

After meeting Ford, playwright Clifford Odets, the lover of Cary Grant, issued a strange pronouncement. “It is an easily won bet that in a few years, Ford will get just like the other movie people: Bored, sprawling, careless, an overly relaxed fallen angel— They are all affable boys out here, almost tramps.”

In *The Doctor and the Girl*, DeHaven was cast as the most rebellious of Coburn’s three daughters, running off to live in Greenwich Village. Her character was described as “flouncy and indiscreet.” After falling ill from an illegal, back alley abortion, she arrives, near death, on her brother’s doorstep. She has lost much blood and dies shortly afterward, in spite of what one critic called “the desperate ding-dong struggle on the table to save her.”

[In another of the ironies of Hollywood, Nancy found herself working closely with DeHaven, who was the ‘blood enemy” of Jane Wyman, having stolen John Payne from her.]

It has been said that Nancy Davis, as a lonely young girl, learned the power of fantasy and self-creation from her actress mother and theatrical godmother, each of them larger-than-life actresses who ate up the scenery.

In somewhat nerdy contrast, Nancy played Coburn's dutiful daughter, who marries a successful pediatrician (Warner Anderson). Bernhardt ordered that one of her scenes be reshot: After Nancy greeted Ford, cast as her brother, with unseemly emotion, the director admonished her with, "Please remember that you're playing Glenn's sister, not his lover."

In another memorable scene, Nancy, clad in mink, arrives one wintry day at her brother's dingy third-floor walkup. Before leaving, she gives Leigh (playing her sister-in-law) her mink coat. After she's gone, Ford tells his wife, "She has plenty more mink coats at home."

Also cast as a doctor, Arthur Franz was introduced to Nancy. He would co-star with her again in *Hellcats of the Navy* (1957), the only movie she ever made with Reagan.

Bernhardt claimed, "Janet had Glenn tied up, so Nancy went after Bruce *[Bennett]*, or so it seemed to me. I think she struck out, but who knows? I know that Virginia Mayo fell for Bruce big time when they made *Smart Girls Don't Talk* in '48."

Although the film contained "two male beauties," Bennett and Ford, neither of them gave Nancy a tumble, so it was alleged. Off screen, she was pursued by Coburn, then in his seventies, perhaps rehearsing for his role in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), when, as a millionaire, he lecherously chased after Marilyn Monroe.

Nancy later claimed, "Charles invited me to dinner, and I spent the rest of the evening fighting him off."

The 98-minute film made a profit of $184,000 on a budget of slightly more than a million dollars. It opened on September 29, 1949 in theaters around the country. Nearly all critics ignored Nancy's performance, the focus being on Ford, Leigh, and Coburn. *Variety* was an exception, faintly praising it with the evaluation: "Nancy Davis is to be favorably noted."

The New York Times critiqued *The Doctor and the Girl* as "a nice little bedside tear-jerker—slightly gruesome, of course, but full of hope. In the role of the noble young doctor, who shuns a Park Avenue practice to help the working poor, Ford does a satisfactory job of solemnly carrying the torch flung by Dr. Kildare in that film series. *Suture! Suture tie! Sponge!"*

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Director Gottfried Reinhardt later claimed, "With all the talent on tap, I didn't want to cast Nancy Davis in a picture, so I palmed her off on Dore Schary."

Consequently, it was Schary who ordered the producer, Voldemar Vetluguin, to cast Nancy in *East Side, West Side*, an A-list picture top heavy with stars—Barbara Stan-wyck, James Mason, Ava Gardner, Van Heflin, and Cyd Charisse.

The MGM film was set for a Christmas (1949) release and came in on schedule.

East Side, West Side: Nancy Davis in a "one-take" scene with Barbara Stanwyck, who, according to director Curtis Bernhardt, "had the hots for little Miss Nancy."

Nancy joined an array of very talented supporting players, including the communist sympathizer Gale Sondergaard, William Conrad, Douglas Kennedy, and William Frawley. Cast as a supporting figure was Beverly Michaels, the sexpot of sexpots. "If it has blonde floozy written on it, I got the part," Michaels said. She also captured the producer, Vetluguin, who married her that year.

Mervyn LeRoy, the film's director, always claimed that he had "discovered" Jane Wyman when he'd cast her in a very minor role in *Elmer the Great* (1933). "Ironically, I was the same director who helmed Reagan's other wife, Nancy, in her first A-list picture," as he bragged in later years.

East Side, West Side was a melodramatic mystery thriller about a high society couple, the Bournes, (as portrayed by Stanwyck and Mason) on the verge of breaking up their marriage. The interloping mistress in the film is Ava Gardner, cast as Isabel Lorrison, who is eventually murdered.

Van Heflin and Barbara Stanwyck appeared together in *East Side, West Side*. He told her, "If you'd like to know me better and get acquainted with all my body parts, and I yours, all you have to do is invite me over tonight. I take loving a woman as seriously as I do sailing the high seas, and I view love-making as an art form. I like to make a woman feel as if she'd been loved from the tip of her brow to her big toe."

"An enchanting offer," Stanwyck said. "You should pitch those lines to Ava Gardner."

As a *femme fatale*, Gardner undulates across the screen, claiming that with the crook of a finger, she can lure Mason away from Stanwyck. Gardner later said that her performance was inspired by Joan Crawford's attempt to steal Norma Shearer's husband in *The Women (1939)*.

[In a touch of irony, whereas in 1949 Gardner played a home wrecker on the screen, she was defined as a home wrecker offscreen because of her well-publicized affair with Frank Sinatra. At the time, he was still famously married to his high school sweetheart, Nancy Sinatra.

During the film's conception, Gardner had been slated to play the lead role of Mason's wife. But when Stanwyck became available, Gardner was demoted to the role of Mason's mistress. Later, Gardner said, "At the time, I was seriously pissed off. But it turned out to be the better role, and certainly the more flamboyant one."]

Mason is the primary murder suspect. After many complications and mixed alliances, Heflin finds a woman's broken fingernail, a clue that eventually sets Mason free.

Nancy was cast in the film as Hazel Lee, the best friend of the character played by Stanwyck, who remains elegantly attired throughout the film, evoking a model for Christian Dior's 1949 "New Look."

Her portrayal as a meddlesome tattle-tale wasn't designed to populate any Nancy Davis fan clubs. Fully aware of Mason's philandering, she deviously asks Stanwyck, "Is everything all right between you and Brandon?" She then reveals a string of details associated with her husband's infidelities.

In another scene, Nancy hosts a party for the character played by Heflin, a foreign correspondent launching his first book. It is he who will eventually crack the mystery of who murdered the character played by Gardner.

LeRoy remembered Nancy as having two things on her mind, "Snaring a famous husband and having a big career. Gable had eluded her and she could only let her mouth water when Sinatra came after work to pick up Ava. Nancy told me she wanted to be bigger than both Stanwyck and Gardner. She didn't have the talent of Stanwyck or the beauty of Gardner, so I suggested she'd set her goalpost too high."

Nancy and other cast members could not help but notice that Sinatra showed up most evenings to haul Gardner away for the night. It is not known for sure, but this may have been Nancy's first encounter with Ol' Blue Eyes. She developed a crush on him that would endure for decades. When she was First Lady, she frequently invited the singer to gala affairs at the White House.

Nancy admired Mason from afar, especially his "languid but impassioned" speech patterns. The Yorkshire-born actor was married at the time to actress Pamela Mason, who sometimes visited the set with her friend, Zsa Zsa Gabor.

During a chat with Mason, Nancy learned that he was a devoted cat lover. The year he made the film with Nancy, he and Pamela had published a book, *The Cats in Our Lives*.

Nancy had heard rumors that Mason had a gay streak in him. During the shoot, two of the handsomest and most well-built young men on the film crew made extended visits to his dressing room. The DO NOT DISTURB sign was exhibited during each of their visits.

In her memoirs, Nancy recalled that her one big scene was with Stanwyck. "I was nervous working with a star of her reputation and especially because I had to give a long speech. But when I got it right on the first take, she applauded and congratulated me, which, of course, made me feel marvelous."

One day, Stanwyck's husband, Robert Taylor, was scheduled for an arrival on the set. Stanwyck told Nancy that she and Taylor had been invited to dinner at the home of Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman. "They are our close friends," Stanwyck asserted.

When Taylor appeared, Gardner, notified in advance of his arrival, retreated to her dressing room. "Watch the bitch go," Stanwyck muttered to Nancy. "In this film, I'm playing the cuckolded wife. It happened to me in real life. Bob was fucking Gardner when they made *The Bribe* (1949) together. Now Gardner is getting murdered in our movie. It couldn't happen to a more deserving person."

Two closeted bisexuals, Barbara Stanwyck and James Mason, cozy up to each other in *East Side, West Side*. But it was just make-believe.

When Gardner heard that Stanwyck was badmouthing her on the set, she told LeRoy, "I notice that Bloody Babs is being nice to that Davis girl. She'll be lucky if Stanwyck doesn't seduce her. The little thing is Stanwyck's type, just like Nancy Sinatra. Stanwyck adores Frankie's wife, and he suspects something…"

"Maybe Stanwyck just likes gals named Nancy?" LeRoy said.

Ava, beautiful Ava Gardner, with James Mason in *East Side, West Side*.

Faced with such female pulchritude, and the acting talent of Stanwyck, Nancy *(cheesecake photo, below)* simply faded into the background.

In a memoir, Nancy described Gardner as "…so beautiful, she took my breath away." She met her at the MGM newsstand when Gardner wore no makeup. The actress complimented Nancy on her performance in *The Doctor and the Girl*. Those were the last kind words Gardner would ever say about Nancy. Soon after that, someone told Gardner that Nancy was lusting after her man, Sinatra.

Ironically, Nancy eventually found herself emotionally involved with two of Gardner's boyfriends, actors Robert Walker and Peter Lawford. Gardner had co-starred with Walker in *One Touch of Venus* (1948). That had led to Gardner's involvement with Walker's best friend, Lawford. As he explained it, "Bob and I like to share."

Eventually, as her relationship with Sinatra deepened, Gardner dumped both Lawford and Walker. Following in her footsteps, Nancy began to date both young men herself, which turned Gardner against her, even though she'd discarded the men.

"Of course, Ava got pissed off at Nancy," LeRoy said. "Nancy was greedy, wanting Peter, Bob, and Frank.

What a coincidence that each of them was or had been involved with Gardner. I don't think it just a coincidence."

Gardner, by then engaged to Sinatra, became friends with Mason and his wife, Pamela, and frequently went out as a foursome. It was at table with the Masons at the Sugar Hill Club in Harlem that Gardner got into a terrible fight with Sinatra over his liaison with a New York prostitute. During one of the argument's most memorable moments, she removed her diamond engagement ring and tossed it across the club.

Of the cast, it seemed that the beautiful, talented dancer, Cyd Charisse, was the only member who, like Caesar's wife, was above reproach.

As a child, she suffered from polio, but went on to become a dancer with Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly. At the time that Nancy met her, she was married to the singer, Tony Martin. As she'd tell anyone interested, "With Tony in your bed, a girl has no need of any other man." They remained married until her death in 2008.

As was her custom on a film set, Nancy made a point of ingratiating herself with the supporting players of *East Side, West Side*. She often appeared even when she wasn't needed. "She was learning, learning, learning, watching the pros go at it," LeRoy recalled.

Devoted actress, Neo-Pinko and Reagan Hater: Gale Sondergaard.

One of the first persons she met and chatted with was Gale Sondergaard, who had won an Oscar for her film debut in *Anthony Adverse* (1936). She was later nominated for an Academy Award for her role as "the first wife" in *Anna and the King of Siam* (1946). She told Nancy that originally, she had been slated to play the evil witch in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). "The first script called for the witch to be glamorous," she told Nancy. "But then the script was changed to make the witch hideous. I bowed out. I thought that my wearing such disfiguring makeup would damage my career. Margaret Hamilton had none of my reservations."

During the months ahead, the actress would view Reagan with "total disgust." She later accused Reagan of turning in a report to the FBI about her and her husband, producer Herbert J. Biberman, alleging that both of them were card-carrying communists. Biberman became one of the notorious "Hollywood Ten" of the early 1950s. This led to Sondergaard being blacklisted in Hollywood. When screen roles dried up, she fled to New York to find work in the theater.

Cyd Charisse in a dance routine ("Sombrero") that was a lot less demure than her role in *East Side, West Side*. Faced with the choreographic brilliance of this dance icon, it became increasingly clear that Nancy could not compete.

Nancy noticed that another actor, Douglas Kennedy, a New Yorker, was paying a lot of attention to Stanwyck. His adulation must have paid off because she was instrumental in getting him cast as the Sheriff in her hit TV series for ABC, *The Big Valley* (1965-69).

Also cast in the movie was veteran actor William Frawley, who had made more than a hundred movies. He told Nancy he was finding it harder and harder to find character roles. She was pleased to read that in 1951, Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball had cast him as the cantankerous, miserly landlord, Fred Mertz, in their hit TV series, *I Love Lucy*.

When *East Side, West Side* opened across the country, Nancy gave it a good review, praising it as "outstanding." The rest of the country did not. The attack was led by Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times*. "It's a picture that just about hits the low water mark of interest, intelligence, and urgency."

Marica Davensport had co-written the screenplay, which was based on her novel. But even she said she was not going to see the picture because she'd heard that it was horrible.

Stanwyck's biographer, Dan Callahan, summed up the film in his book, *The Miracle Worker*. "Mason and Heflin are stuck in dull roles, and Stanwyck herself is saddled with the worst role of the kind of sniveling, stoic wifey who does nothing but worry about her husband's infidelities. She's up against young Amazons like Cyd Charisse and the ultimate big blonde, Beverly Michaels, who acts as a *deus ex machina* in the last third. Sitting beside Charisse in a car at one point, Stanwyck is photographed like a grizzled old frontierswoman. The resplendent Ava Gardner, playing the hellcat trying to break up her marriage, dominates the whole stultifying enterprise through sheer physical splendor."

Postwar Bad Girls: What's an ambitious *starlette* to do? Go "Goody-Good" or "Baddy-Bad" on screen?

Pictured above: Beverly Michaels, a girl whose public image Nancy wanted to avoid.

MGM records revealed that *East Side, West Side* garnered $1,518,000 in North America and slightly more than

one million in overseas rentals. But because of the expenses and the all-star talent, the profits generated were only $31,000.

LeRoy later summed up the cast of *East Side, West Side*, claiming, "They were a bunch of whores, faggots, cocksuckers, dykes, tramps, commies, pederasts, dopers, panty sniffers, rimmers, pillheads, floozies, and male hustlers selling it by the inch." He told this at a party given for columnist Hedda Hopper, who, in her picture hat, laughed loudly. Of course, he knew she could not print such a provocative comment.

*[**Fast forward** to late 1963 in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, where Gardner was co-starring with Richard Burton and Deborah Kerr in Tennessee Williams'* The Night of the Iguana, *directed by John Huston.*

Elizabeth Taylor, who had accompanied her husband, often joined Burton, as well as Tennessee, Gardner, and Huston, for a tequila-soaked night. At the time, Gardner had turned on Nancy, because of her interest in Sinatra.

Gardner surprised her fellow drunks one night by claiming, "I got to Ronnie's uncut inches before Nancy." She then related an incident that took place at William Holden's private home when his wife, Brenda Marshall, was away. At the time, Holden had been Reagan's best friend.

"I was jaybird naked in the pool with my companions, the black model, Maddy Comfort, and the artist, Paul Clemens," Gardner said. "Reagan came out wearing a polo shirt and slacks to see what all the raucous laughter was about. We grabbed him and tossed him in the pool with us. He put up a struggle, but we stripped him. Maddy and Paul later wandered off, and I lured Ronnie into Bill's cabana. He wouldn't fuck me, but I went down on him and he rose to the occasion."

Later, after Gardner went back to her villa, Tennessee asked Huston, "Do you think Ava is telling the truth, or is she just getting back at Miss Nancy?"

"Hell, how would I know?" Huston asked. "Whether it's true or not, the story makes a good yarn."]

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Nancy's stepson, Michael Reagan, reportedly once said, "If Nancy knew that one day she'd be First Lady, she would have cleaned up her act in the late 1940s.:"

He was obviously referring to her notorious sex life. To read her two memoirs, you get the impression she was a demure virgin when she married Reagan.

It is not known how many men Nancy dated during the starlet years at MGM that preceded her first and only marriage. Only the "marquee names" of Nancy's dating lists have emerged, and that is because some of them lived to see Nancy become famous. Men, being men, like to brag, particularly about their sexual conquests. There are even web sites today devoted to Nancy's list of suitors, many of whom have privately praised her alleged "oral talents."

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It is not entirely certain if Marlon Brando ever had an affair with starlet Nancy Davis. If he did, it was of short duration and occurred shortly before she nabbed Reagan as her husband. Nancy omitted any mention of Marlon within her autobiographies, as she did each of her other lovers.

Marlon, however, told two producers— Charles Feldman and Elia Kazan—that he'd made love to Nancy, whom he found "kinda cute with her brown eyes and hair just the color I like it."

In the early 1950s, Nancy was known to have composed a list of unattached marriageable males. At the top of her list was Ronald Reagan. Other men on the list included actors, producers, and directors. Surely Nancy knew enough about Marlon to realize that he was "not marriage material." She allegedly told Ava Gardner that "Marlon is just too wild and bohemian for me."

"But not for me, *honey child*," Ava was supposed to have countered. "Been there, done that."

Nancy had first met Marlon in Manhattan when she was dating Clark Gable, a short-term romance that never got off the launch pad. When she reunited with Marlon in Hollywood, Nancy was in the throes of a torrid affair with Benny Thau, head of casting at MGM. Thau was said to be deeply in love with Nancy during a period when she was dating other men.

One of Thau's assistants reportedly saw Nancy and Marlon dining at Chasen's, a restaurant that Marlon had never visited before, as he hated formal dining rooms. She was elegantly attired in a black Chanel dress, a large white hat, and a corsage of small orchids. Having (temporarily) abandoned his blue jeans, Marlon wore a sports jacket and slacks but no tie.

Brando, the quintessential Postwar Bad Boy. His dining with Nancy at Chasen's supposedly drove MGM's casting director, Benny Thau, into a jealous rage.

His relationship with Nancy, if one developed at all, fizzled quickly.

When Thau heard that the woman he loved had been seen out with Brando, he was furious, threatening that Marlon would never make a picture for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. "By trying to move in on Nancy, the cocksucking queer has ruined himself in this town—I'll see to that."

Whatever relationship existed between Marlon and Nancy fizzled quickly, because she was soon seen dating others.

Marlon told Kazan that Nancy would never appear opposite him in one of his films—"That is, if I ever make another film. But if you know of any roles calling for 'the perfect wife,' then Nancy's your gal. She's the exception to every other actress in Hollywood. Instead of some big-time career, she wants to settle down in a rose-covered cottage, raise three kids, and greet hubbie with a Scotch and soda every night at six o'clock, as the smell of fried chicken wafts through the house."

Marlon may have accurately interpreted Nancy's feelings at the time. She later confessed to just such a dream, hardly knowing that the "cottage" would turn out to be the White House. There, in 1981, she would suffer the highest disapproval rating of any First Lady in modern times.

When Marlon was informed of Nancy's marriage to Reagan, he sarcastically told Feldman, "It's a perfect match. I hear Reagan brushes his teeth every time he kisses a woman. I can even suggest a theme song for their marriage. Make it George Gershwin's 'Our Love Is Here to Stay.'"

In the years to come, Marlon would always speak kindly of Nancy, "even when she was single-handedly running the Free World." On the other hand, he consistently deplored Reagan for what he claimed was "His witch hunting of so-called Communists."

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Since Nancy had been a teenage girl, Spencer Tracy had always defined her as "my favorite daughter." He was her mentor, someone she loved and respected. But Tracy got drunk a lot and became very indiscreet, lacking in judgment. His friend, director George Cukor, later claimed that at some point in the late 1940s, Tracy's platonic relationship with Katharine Hepburn hit rocks in the road. "In a way, Nancy Davis was blamed."

Tracy rented a cottage on Cukor's estate, with Hepburn a frequent visitor. To his intimates, the gossipy director later described the Tracy-Hepburn conflicts about Nancy.

Hepburn had originally befriended Nancy, but whereas Tracy had encouraged her to become an actress, Hepburn did not.

She wrote Nancy a letter, warning her "How damn awful the acting profession is: Perhaps you think it's all too glamorous, and it's all about socializing with rich and famous stars. Most young girls who dream of being an actress end up waiting tables or else are found at the switchboard."

HOLLYWOOD QUIZ: What (or who?) was one of the wedges (discounting their respective bi-sexuality) that tested the widely publicized loyalty of Spencer Tracy to Katharine Hepburn? ANSWER: Nancy Davis!

Depicted above are Tracy and Hepburn in one of their scenes from *Adam's Rib* (1949).

One night, according to Cukor, Tracy became "Fed up with Kate bossing me around." He turned on her and ordered her out of his cottage. At one point during their argument, Tracy is reported to have said, "If you don't get out, I'll give you a boot in your bony butt."

Tracy had become hostile at the end of the filming of *Adam's Rib* (1949), in which bisexual Hepburn had taken an "undue interest" in her co-star, Judy Holliday, another bisexual actress.

As Tracy relayed to Cukor about Hepburn, "Sometimes when I hear the sound of that out-of-control voice, my whole body cringes. I encourage her to smoke more, since that lowers her voice register."

Before kicking her out, and perhaps as a means of making her jealous, and to infuriate her, Tracy confessed, "I've found an adoring woman, one who understands me, respects me, and gives in to me on any issue. How unlike you! She's the woman I've been looking for all my life and never found. Believe it or not, it's someone I've known for years, but have never thought of in that special way before—that is, until now. Hell, I'm even a friend of her mother's."

"Who might this Goddess of Virtue be?" Hepburn had asked, sarcastically.

"Nancy Davis."

A week later, Hepburn called Cukor, claiming, "Spence has all but given up. He'll end up one day all alone except for the bottle. I won't be there for him."

At the time of her dismal assessment, she seemed unaware that Tracy was experiencing renewed vigor with Nancy.

Cukor told his close gay friend, Anderson Lawler, an early lover of a young Gary Cooper, "Spence is enjoying the comforts of the damned—a bottle of whiskey. He's not in good health. He's no longer a champ at the box office. He looks like shit. He's a walking tub of suet. He sucks off hustlers but won't admit he's a homo. Yet he's still a big enough name he can get a date on a Saturday night, even if it's Nancy Davis. I directed her in her screen test. I know how limited she is."

Even though she'd headed East in 1950 to rehearse her Broadway performance of Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Hepburn still called Cukor for news of the Nancy Davis/Spencer Tracy liaison.

Cukor later said, "Kate has always been aware of Tracy's affairs with other women, and even of his affairs with a number of men. The ratio was about ten women to every one male. But the mere mention of Nancy Davis' name made her explode."

"Spence is a big name in Hollywood, and Nancy will date anybody with a big name," Hepburn charged. "She likes to associate with important people. She is not the only actress in Hollywood who thinks she can sleep her way to the top. There are some actresses, myself included, who get there on talent alone."

Nancy dated Tracy, although not exclusively, for at least three months. He seemed to know she was trying to advance her career. As he admitted to Cukor, "I encourage her in a film career, although I secretly know she doesn't have what it takes to be a star like Kate and me. Her biggest hope in life is to hook up with a producer, director, or perhaps a rich actor. The thing with Gable didn't work out, but there are others."

Eventually, after she started dating Reagan, Tracy and Nancy drifted apart. Tracy loathed Reagan, calling him a "Red baiter always looking for a pinko in the haystack."

"Miss Nancy is laying a trap for this Reagan guy," Tracy told Cukor. "I think the two of them deserve each

other. I just hope Ronnie goes in for oral sex like I do. If he does, he'll be happy as a pig in shit."

Years later in a memoir, Nancy wrote: "Spence was the most charming man I've ever known."

As for Hepburn, Nancy claimed that her friendship with the aging actress just (inexplicably) ended. "To this day, I don't understand why. I made several attempts to revive our relationship, but got nowhere."

***

Nancy's brief fling with Norman Krasna hardly rates a blip on the radar screen, even though it led to a proposal of marriage. He was a talented screenwriter, playwright, producer, and director, who had garnered an Oscar for writing the screenplay of *Princess O'Rourke*, in which Jane Wyman had a co-starring role. At the time Nancy met him, he was writing a play, *John Loves Mary*, which would later be released as a movie (in 1949) with Reagan.

Marriages that might have been: Producer/mogul Norman Krasna, with fresh and dewy Nancy Davis, as shown in a publicity shot from way back in 1943 from a drama production at Smith College.

Krasna was only three years older than Nancy, and, like her, he too had worked in a department store, Macy's, in Manhattan. Dropping out of law school, he'd turned to writing. When she dated him, he was in the throes of divorcing the former Ruth Frazee.

If Nancy had a selfish motive in going after him, it was to advance her career. Krasna, in collaboration with producer Jerry Wald, had signed a $50 million deal with Howard Hughes, the owner of RKO, to produce a dozen movies. Krasna promised Nancy that if she'd marry him, he'd make her the "Queen of RKO," and offer that Hughes had previously made to Ingrid Bergman, who had turned him down.

On October 13, 1949, the Hollywood columnist, Edith Gwynn, wrote: "Nancy Davis and her whole family are thinking over a proposal of marriage from Norman Krasna. He is so *currazy* about her that he's already popped the all-important question."

When Reagan showed up on Nancy's doorstep, two days before Christmas, she had already rejected Krasna's proposal. Reagan, as head of SAG, congratulated her on having being assigned her own dressing room at MGM, and delivered to her a gold key, compliments of the studio, that had been commissioned as a symbolic honor from Ruser Jewelers in Beverly Hills.

After being dumped by Nancy, Krasna fell into the arms of Erle Chennault Galbraith, the former wife of Al Jolson, marrying her in 1951, the union lasting until his death in 1984. When he met Nancy years later at a party, he told her, with modesty and humor, "Any man would look great in my wife's eyes after having been married to Al Jolson!"

***

Rumor has it that when actor comedian Milton Berle, once known as "Uncle Miltie," or "Mr. Television," first submitted his memoirs, *Milton Berle, An Autobiography* in 1974 to Delacorte Press, it contained a lengthy section devoted to Nancy Davis.

At that time, there was talk that Reagan might have a good chance of winning the presidency in 1976, and that Nancy might become First Lady. Either Berle's agent or his editor apparently asked him to remove the section on Nancy, which was labeled "tasteless and vulgar."

When Nancy dated Berle, he was just emerging from two marriages to actress Joyce Compton (1941-1948 and, after a divorce and remarriage, 1949-1950).

He may have dated Nancy three times. “Any more than that, and my mother figured out some way to put a stop to it,” Berle said. “She didn’t want me to get serious over just one woman. She wanted me to play the field.”

“Here I am, dancing with Marilyn Monroe, butt to butt,” Milton Berle said.

He also claimed, “I seduced a future First Lady (an obvious reference to Nancy) and a First Lady *wannabee*. Marilyn told me that JFK had promised to divorce Jackie and marry her, thereby making MM First Lady. God, what a story that would have been!”

On his first date with Nancy, he told her, “I am both a Jew and a Christian Scientist.”

Long before meeting Nancy, he had generated a notorious past loaded with sexual exploits. He even claimed to have seduced evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. If true, he would be following in the footsteps of Reagan.

In addition to encounters with anonymous starlets and chorines, he often dated from the A-list. His partners had included Reagan’s girlfriend, Ann Sheridan, Lucille Ball, Linda Darnell, and Betty Hutton.

In Miami, during conversations with Darwin Porter, Veronica Lake was very graphic about her seduction by Berle: “It was at least a foot long and became at least two inches more when erect. I’d never seen anything like it, and I had once been seduced by Porfirio Rubirosa.”

Berle often boasted about it, even in public settings: “I’ve got the biggest *schlong* in Hollywood. I’ve got Forrest Tucker and John Ireland beat by two or three inches, maybe more.”

Standing beside him at a urinal, fellow comedian Phil Silvers quipped, “You’d better feed that thing or it’s liable to turn on you.”

The comedian’s adopted son, Bill Berle, once shopped a *Mommie Dearest* type memoir about his father, a tell-all inspired by Christina Crawford’s exposé of her mother, Joan Crawford. Entitled *Near You*, it relayed tales about his notoriously well-endowed father, calling him a “domestic tyrant, a habitual gambler, and a physically gifted ladies’ man with an aberrant sex life.” In it, he claimed that Berle, invited to a function at the White House, was overheard telling a group of men, “I fucked Nancy Davis back in the Stone Age.”

Merv Griffin in 1945, just after he began working as an announcer at KFRC Radio in San Francisco.

Merv later became one of Nancy Reagan’s best friends and a defender of her reputation “against the vile, tasteless attacks of Uncle Miltie.”

Overhearing him, Merv Griffin, one of Nancy's closest friends, approached Berle and cautioned him to "Cool it —Nancy might hear you."

Berle turned on him in fury: "Shut your cocksucking mouth, faggot." Then he grabbed his crotch, as he did so often, "or else I'll choke you with this club of mine."

Griffin turned and walked away.

Bill Berle also wrote, "I wasn't there to see my father put his 14-inch thing of his to use on Rita Hay-worth, Marilyn Monroe, even Nancy Davis, but I hoped they had a good time."

He also wrote, "In time, my father went from being the biggest celebrity in the world to a 'couldn't-get-arrested' has been."

***

Although a Jew who knew about prejudice, legendary broadcaster Mike Wallace, who dated Nancy, was accused at one time of being "a homophobe, a racist, and anti-Mexican."

One of Nancy's suitors was Mike Wallace, the journalist, game show host, actor, and media personality remembered chiefly today for appearing as the host of CBS's *60 Minutes*, which had its debut on television in 1968. In the years that followed, he interviewed some of the most prominent people in the world.

His origins with the Davis family go back to when he was a freelance radio announcer in Chicago in the early 1940s before he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1943.

It is not clear when Nancy dated Wallace, perhaps after his divorce from his first wife, Norma Kaplan in 1948 and before his marriage to his second wife, Buff Cobb, in 1949.

Wallace first encountered Edith Davis in Chicago in 1941 when he was broadcasting the evening news on Chicago's WBBM, and she was performing live, on radio, as an actress. After their broadcasts, they often went to the Wrigley Building for drinks.

He became a guest at the Davis home, where he met both Loyal and Nancy. "I got to know Edith and her child," he later said. He was interviewed by author Bob Colacello. "Her child was very ladylike, a Smith girl with a Peter Pan collar and the black patent leather shoes and the white gloves and pearls. Nancy was her father's darling. Utterly unlike her mother, who could drink and be very bawdy in a funny way."

When Nancy matured into an attractive young starlet during her MGM days, Wallace recalled, "She wanted to be rich and famous, but things weren't happening fast enough for her."

Nancy reportedly found Wallace one of the most informed and intelligent men she'd ever dated. They didn't always agree, although their friendship lasted until he died, as did his loyalty to Edith and Loyal. "I'm the son of Russian Jews," Wallace said. "Loyal and Edith were called anti-Semitic, but I never saw any sign of that."

Wallace had his own prejudices, as revealed in 1967 during his documentary, *CBS Reports; The Homosexuals*. During the now notorious broadcast, he asserted, "The average homosexual, if there be such, is promiscuous. He is not interested or capable of a lasting relationship like that of a heterosexual marriage. His sex life, his love life, consists of a series of chance encounters at the clubs and bars he inhabits. And even on the streets of the city—the pick-up, one-night stand, and these are the characteristics of the homosexual relationship."

Reportedly, Nancy saw the broadcast, watching in horror. There were some subjects on which she was more informed and sophisticated.

By 1992, Wallace said, "Of all my broadcasts, I have come to regret that one most of all. I'm far better informed today. I was just parroting what I heard from doctors and psychiatrists. They were wrong, and I was wrong to fall for their shit. I know differently today. Gay people by the millions have long-lasting relationships and even raise loving families."

Although she continued to maintain respect for Wallace, as she did for her anti-Semitic, racist parents, he did cause her more embarrassment. During the first year of the Reagan presidency in 1981, he had to apologize for a racial slur he made against blacks and Hispanics. At a break in *60 Minutes*, he was caught on tape during his

delivery of a broadcast about how a bank duped low-income workers in California. He said, “You bet your ass their contracts are hard for them to read over watermelon or tacos.”

He later apologized, saying, “We Jews felt a kind of kinship with blacks, but, Lord knows, we weren’t riding the same slave ship.”

Wallace went to visit Edith and Loyal at Scottdale’s Biltmore Estates. Loyal was 84 at the time, Edith 92. A CBS-TV co-worker who was with Wallace at the time reported on how their reunion went. Loyal and Edith were standing in their doorway.

Edith called out, “Mike, how in the fuck are you?”

After exchanging greetings, she is alleged to have pulled her dress up over her head to show him her recent surgical scars. “Look what those fucking cocksuckers did to me.”

Later, she revealed that whenever a doctor was examining her, “I always grab his crotch to see what kind of man he is.”

When Nancy became First Lady, Wallace interviewed her. He ungallantly asked her to confirm her birth year—either 1921 or 1923. “Your son, Ron Junior, said it was 1921.”

“He wasn’t there,” she snapped.

“Well, which year was it?” Wallace asked again.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet,” she said.

Months later, Wallace attended a gala dinner on Martha’s Vineyard thrown by Katharine Graham of *The Washington Post*. He was seated between a former First Lady (Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis) and Nancy, the current First Lady. He recalled Nancy inviting her to revisit the White House.

“Jackie was very polite,” Wallace later said, “but it was obvious to me that she didn’t want to go back again.”

“I’ll think about it and get back to you,” Jackie said.

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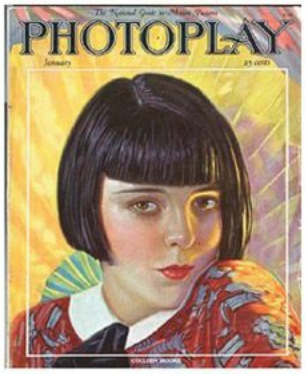
Late in 1948, before Nancy arrived in Hollywood, her actress friend, Colleen Moore, gave her a letter of introduction to a handsome young actor, Robert Stack. She’d seen him in his screen debut in 1939 when he gave Deanna Durbin, the teenage singing sensation, her first smooch on camera in *First Love*, a charming, Cinderella-like tale. The cinematic event made frontpage news and heralded Stack into stardom.



Millionairess Colleen Moore: Robert Stack’s matchmaker and a flapper-star from the Silent Era.

“If you play your cards right,” Moore told Nancy, “you might learn what caused Durbin to swoon.”

In a phone call to Stack, Nancy heard a warm, inviting voice: “Colleen is a great friend of my family. If she says you’re adorable, that’s good enough for me. Let’s go out on a date and test the waters.”

Reportedly, Nancy was “awed by Robert’s male beauty.” In 1980, when Reagan was running for President, Stack published his autobiography, *Straight Shooting*. He was more subdued about Nancy, calling her “attractive and well-mannered. She had this little laugh that was quite enchanting. She even had a sense of humor about herself…and everybody else. My family invited some of the Hollywood elite to their parties. Because of Nancy’s background and social graces, she glided through the parties like the most graceful swan in the room, with her hair in place and always tastefully dressed, even one night when a drunken Veronica Lake almost threw up on her.”

In 1940, Robert Stack, once known for having “the most perfect male physique in Hollywood,” shared the same bed with a future President, JFK. They were rarely alone in this bed.

Reportedly, he also got a future First Lady under the sheets, too.

Although they weren’t offensive to Nancy in any way, Stack’s editor at Macmillan reportedly chose to remove all references to Nancy. In a curt note, he (or she) wrote: “In the Davis revelations, let’s remove Nancy and stick with two other Davis names—Bette and Sammy.”

Because Nancy was viewed as such hot copy at the time, with Reagan running for President, the editor made Xerox copies of Stack’s comments, and circulated them through the Macmillan offices.

Stack’s mother had been a dazzling Hollywood socialite who had attended the 1923 wedding of Rudolph Valentino to Natasha Rambova. His father was an advertising executive who created the slogan, “The beer that made Milwaukee famous.” The family regularly entertained such celebrities as Frank Sinatra, Enzio Pinza, Edward G. Robinson, Nelson Eddy, Clark Gable, and Robert Taylor.

In the late 1930s, the seventeen-year-old Stack, with his golden blonde hair, was called an Adonis. He captivated the attention of Howard Hughes, the billionaire bisexual, studio mogul, and aviator.

Stack was always awed by power and money, but he really preferred women, and the list of his conquests is long: Elizabeth Taylor, Betty Grable, Diana Barrymore, Yvonne De Carlo, and Lana Turner, plus a treasure trove of starlets. After World War II, when Anne Frank’s attic *[where she’d hidden from the Nazis]* was searched, Allied soldiers found a romantic photograph of Stack among her treasured possessions.

During the summer of 1940 in his bachelor apartment in the Hollywood Hills, Stack and John F. Kennedy, newly arrived in town and seeking sexual adventures, entertained a bevy of starlets but also big name stars on occasion. “I’ve known many of the great male stars of Hollywood, including Clark Gable,” Stack said. “But none of them compared to Jack. He literally could charm the pants off a gal.”

It was through Stack that Nancy first heard of JFK. “He was the only man in Hollywood better looking than me,” he immodestly proclaimed. “All the hot *tamales* on the West Coast took notice. He really needed a date book. I’ve known him to have sex in the afternoon, sex at cocktail time, sex after dinner, and even a sleepover after midnight—all with a different woman.”

Stack and his socially connected parents once took over the former home of Colleen Moore, a Mediterranean style house, vintage 1928, at 345 St. Pierre Road in Bel Air. It had been built with money earned when Moore was number one at the box office during the peak of the Jazz Age in the 1920s. At one point, when he was dating Nancy, he took her there. There were pictures in the hall of the star with her Dutchboy haircut and shapeless dresses, taken when she was the personification of the flapper.

Stack told Nancy, “This is a lovely house with terrible memories—attempted murder, rape, and just about every

sexual deviation in the book."

He showed her the blue-painted room which had been his bedroom. "This is the bedroom where Errol Flynn was accused of the rape of Betty Hansen. For a time," Stack told Nancy, "the police sealed off the room to ensure that no one disturbed the evidence, which they hoped would incriminate Flynn." *[With the help of fabled attorney, Jerry Giesler, Flynn was eventually judged not guilty.]*

Two horny bachelors, Robert Stack and a young John F. Kennedy, on the prowl in postwar Hollywood. JFK told his pal, Stack, "I've come to Hollywood on a poontang hunt."

As a couple, Stack and Nancy soon drifted apart, in spite of finding each other "congenial company."

When a group of fan clubs voted Stack as "The Sexiest Man in the World," he moved on to virtually dozens of beautiful women who were throwing themselves in his pathway.

As for Nancy, she became involved in the tormented life of actor Robert Walker and, by extension, his best friend, Peter Lawford.

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One of Nancy's favorite wartime movies was *Since You Went Away* (1944), starring Claudette Colbert, Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, and Shirley Temple. Nancy had been moved by the brief performance of Robert Walker in the film. His heartbreaking smile signaled "to all those little people sitting out there in the dark" that the character he was playing, that of a very young soldier, was inescapably doomed.

In the movie, he was earnest, lean, and likable as the boyfriend of the character played by Jennifer Jones. Ironically, although the scenes between this married-in-real-life couple were effective, their relationship was collapsing. Producer David O. Selznick had already begun his affair with Jones, and, after her divorce from Walker, he would marry her. There are those who say that Walker never recovered from his loss of his wife.

Love Lost: Then-newlyweds Jennifer Jones with Robert Walker.

While he was mourning the loss of Jennifer to Hollywood kingpin David O. Selznick, Nancy caught Walker on the rebound.

Complicating Walker's life, even though he claimed that he hated himself for doing so, he often indulged in homosexual affairs. Perhaps in a misguided attempt to wreak revenge on Jones during the filming of *Since You Went Away*, he had sexual liaisons with two of the handsomest young men, each in a minor role, who ever graced the

movie screens of the 1940s. They were Guy Madison (making his film debut) and John Derek.

During the closing months of World War II, Walker used his quiet charm, good looks, and sincere voice to convince audiences that he really was the boy next door. He was most endearing in pictures as a young soldier at war. His main competitor for that title was another handsome actor, Tom Drake, who became Judy Garland's "boy next door" in the 1944 *Meet Me in St. Louis*, a role originally cast with Walker in the part.

In another instance that illustrates the extreme complications of Hollywood relationships, Walker became involved with Peter Lawford. In the throes of his affair with Lana Turner, he had taken up with Walker when not dating Drake and Reagan's estranged wife, Jane Wyman.

After filming *One Touch of Venus* (1948) with Ava Gardner, Walker and the Tarheel beauty had a brief fling. Lawford also had a fling with Gardner. The plot thickens. At the same time, both Walker and Lawford also began to date Nancy.

After the collapse of his marriage to Jones ("the love of my life"), Walker had entered into a disastrous marriage to Barbara Ford, the daughter of the well-known director, John Ford. Its annulment after only five weeks intensified his depression and heavy drinking.

On October 22, 1948, Walker was arrested in Los Angeles on a charge of drunken driving. A candid snapshot of him at the time of his arrest was flashed around the world, even appearing in *Life* magazine. In the photograph, the actor is obviously intoxicated, his suit rumpled, his right hand balled into a threatening fist, his face contorted with rage.

"I feel Bob is crying out to the world to save him," his friend, Katharine Hepburn, told Irene Mayer Selznick when she saw the photograph.

According to Irene, "Kate had a protective feeling whenever she encountered a lost soul"—Spencer Tracy was an example of that. She'd befriended Walker during the filming of *The Sea of Grass* (1947) when he'd played the nasty offspring of Tracy and herself. Their friendship had deepened in their next picture together, *Song of Love* (also 1947) when, as Johannes Brahms, Walker had pined for her.

After Walker's arrest on the drunk and disorderly charge, Dore Schary at MGM warned the actor that he had two choices—either quit films or else undergo psychiatric treatment at the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, where stars often went to "dry out."

Robert Walker *(left)* and Peter Lawford were each cynical, opportunistic, gossipy, and, as the years advanced, spectacularly unstable.

Both of them enjoyed the alluring charms of Ava Gardner and each got to enjoy Nancy Davis' "specialty."

Walker opted for the clinic, where he spent seven months in rehabilitation. Eager to see how he was responding to treatment, Hepburn remained in constant touch. After his return from Kansas, beginning the moment he stepped off the plane, the press mobbed him. Walker announced. "I'm able to work again—eager to live."

After his return to Hollywood, Walker began dating Nancy. Hepburn was very upset with Nancy—"First, she moves in on Spence, and now on Bob, as if he didn't have enough trouble."

Soon after his return to Los Angeles, he renewed and repeated his self-destructive habits, including the consumption of inordinate amounts of alcohol. His love life grew even more complicated, especially with men. As for women, he concentrated on Nancy.

At one point, Walker confided to his friend and sometimes lover, Merv Griffin (when he was still young trim, and handsome) that he had proposed marriage to Nancy. He later became one of Griffin's closest friends.

"Obviously, she didn't accept," Griffin said to Walker.

"She told me that over the course of a lifetime, she thought Reagan would be the better provider," Walker said.

Lawford, who by now had his own key to Walker's home, came over late one afternoon with their mutual friend, producer Joe Naar. Walker was not supposed to be there, having told Lawford he'd arrive in time for dinner.

As later relayed to Cukor, Lawford claimed that when they came into the living room, he first encountered Nancy in the nude and Walker half dressed on his sofa. "It appeared to me that they were engaged in some sort of sex act—guess what?" Lawford said. "Nancy rushed to the bathroom to get dressed. At the time, she seemed terribly embarrassed, but she recovered quickly. It wasn't long after that she began to date both Bob *and* me. As you know, I was already deep into my affair with Bob."

"The whole town's talking," Cukor said, "about a *ménage à trois."*

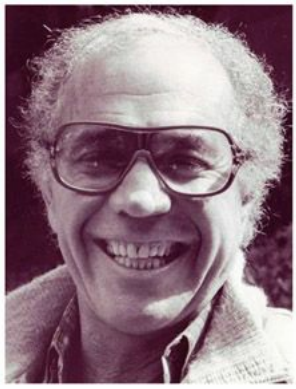
[Naar later became the best and most reliable source for information about the sexual trysts among Walker, Nancy, and Lawford. A former William Morris agent, he later produced the hit (1975-1979) TV series, Starsky and Hutch. *As an agent, his clients included not only Lawford, but Steve McQueen, Ali MacGraw, Raquel Welch, and Marilyn Monroe.*

At one point, Naar double-dated with Lawford and Monroe. He remembered their first date, but didn't recall the young starlet he was with at the time. "At one point, Peter urged me to switch dates, and I ended up taking Marilyn home. She became not only my temporary lover, but my lifelong friend, confidante, and client."

Naar's friendship with Lawford led to his becoming a member of Camelot's inner circles. The Kennedys accepted him, and he became known for jetting around the country with them and the likes of Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis, Jr.

Ironically, one of Naar's most successful ventures was as a producer for the General Electric Hour, *which was hosted by none other than Ronald Reagan.]*

Nancy was added to the marquee names of Lawford's seductions, which included a lot of A-listers, notably June Allyson, who also seduced Reagan, as well as Lucille Ball, Anne Baxter, Noël Coward, director George Cukor ("Peter was such a lousy lay— strictly oral"), Ava Gardner, Judy Garland, Rita Hayworth ("she had bad breath"), Sal Mineo ("my all-time best"), Marilyn Monroe ("there was a problem with hygiene")' Lee Remick, Clifton Webb ("I let him do all the work"), Van Johnson and his lover, Keenan Wynn, whose divorced wife, Evie, Johnson had married, on orders from Louis B. Mayer.



Emmy Winner Joe Naar

The dean of Hollywood biographers, Lawrence J. Quirk, who knew Lawford "from way back when" asserted that he went out with women "to help dispel rumors about his relationships with men—and there were several of them. These relationships worried him; they were often a sexual release rather than a romance. When he fell in love with or entertained romantic feelings toward a man, Peter grew inescapably depressed. This side of his erotic life he found ominous, threatening, baleful, yet he needed it, too."

Author Mart Martin claimed that from his investigation, Lawford often patronized "young male extras and studio messengers."

Supposedly, Nancy was aware of Lawford's journeys into the gay world, but for her it didn't seem a problem. She had dated and even had affairs with gay men during her New York days.

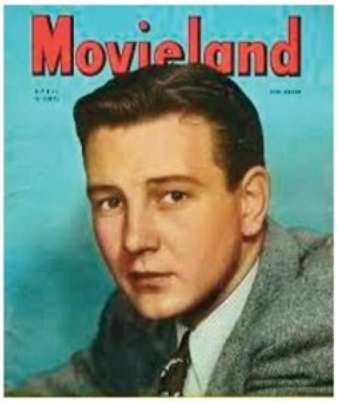
Young lovers Peter Lawford and Nancy Davis.

Whereas he married into a First Family (the Kennedys), she became the iron-gloved matriarch of a First Family of her own.

When Lawford married Patricia Kennedy, and became part of the Kennedy clan, his wife did not seem unduly concerned with his trysts in the gay world. While he was away, she was having her own flings, including one with Porfirio Rubirosa, the Dominican playboy known for his international charm; his links to the brutal Dominican dictator, Trujillo; his failed marriages to Doris Duke and Barbara Hutton; and for his stupendous sexual endowment.

Apparently, Walker had many soul-searching talks with Nancy. As he told her and so many other friends, "Even as a kid, I knew I was not meant to be born into this world. It was an accident. I've spent my life trying to escape the world, wanting to go back to the peace I knew before I entered it."

After the collapse of his Hollywood career, Drake, no longer the pretty boy at MGM, worked selling used cars in Los Angeles. In the late 1940s and early 50s, he and Lawford often slipped away to wherever Lawford had access to privacy.



Handsome Tom Drake, "the boy next door" to Judy Garland in *Meet Me in St. Louis,"* had a lament about his years-long affair with Peter Lawford: "Imagine, I had to fight off Robert Walker, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, and ultimately, Nancy Davis for squatter's rights to this elusive Brit."

"I'd heard stories that Peter was having a fling with both Walker and this starlet, Nancy Davis," Drake said. "I found that out during my final weekend with Peter. He showed up in Palm Springs with Walker and Nancy. Privately, he told me that she had taken turns fellating them during their transit from Los Angeles to Palm Springs.

"She worked on one of us in the back seat," Lawford said. "The other had to drive. We took turns."

"I was heartbroken that weekend," Drake said. "Peter had dumped me, and I was still madly in love with him."

In another biography appeared an account that Lawford and Walker drove all the way to Arizona with Nancy so that she could visit her parents, then living in their retirement residence. Lawford may have relayed the incident to one of his wives, but that appears not to be true. Those who knew Nancy doubted very seriously if she would show up in Arizona with not one, but two lovers.

Drake's account seems far more plausible. Of course, Lawford could have fabricated the Arizona tale as a means of masking his sexual tryst with Drake.

Alfred Hitchcock may have been type casting when he starred Walker as the smiling psychopath and repressed homosexual in *Strangers on a Train* (1951). It became Walker's most memorable role and one of the British director's grandest creations.

The year the picture was released, Nancy was saddened by Walker's sudden death.

On the night of August 28, 1951, Walker's housekeeper found the actor ranting, raging, and threatening violence. She summoned his psychiatrist, who examined him, then sedated him with amobarbital. The sedative, combined with the alcohol in Walker's bloodstream, caused immediate respiratory failure. He was dead at the age of thirty-two.

During the years that followed, Nancy followed Lawford's saga, especially the episodes associated with his role as brother-in-law of John F. Kennedy, based on his marriage to Patricia Kennedy. Lawford would marry three more times as he drifted into alcoholism and hired call girls, who viewed him as a "quick $50 oral sex trick," plus a series of male hustlers upon whom he performed fellatio and quickly dismissed them.

By then, Nancy was far, far away, her world orbiting around Ronald Reagan.

Her relationship with Reagan began when Mervyn LeRoy was directing Nancy in *The Doctor and the Girl*. She had a matter she wanted to take up personally with Reagan, who at the time was the President of the Screen Actors Guild. Nancy knew that LeRoy and Reagan were friends.

Although she had to wait for days, the call from Reagan finally came through.

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The films of Nancy Davis, if they are remembered at all today, are highlighted by *The Next Voice You Hear*, released by MGM in 1950. Her co-star was James Whitmore, with whom she'd make another movie in 1951. Child actor Gary Gray was cast as their son. Based on a preposterous script by Charles Schnee, the movie was produced by Dore Schary and directed by William A. Wellman, popularly known in Hollywood as "Wild Bill." The plot could easily have dipped into camp were it not for the screen sincerity of Nancy and Whitmore.

The film's unlikely premise focused on the voice of a man claiming to be God. His declarations would pre-empt every radio program, worldwide, for six broadcasts over the same number of days. On Sunday, as an anxious world awaited his words, he was silent, presumably resting on the Sabbath.

Whitmore and Nancy portrayed a typical American couple with the *clichéd* names of Joe (played by Whitmore) and his pregnant wife Mary (Nancy). They hover beside their radio, listening to "God" broadcasting from "Heaven."

Nancy's ultimate "Mom" role: *Left to right*, James Whit-more, Gary Gray, and the future First Lady of the United States.

A New Englander, Wellman was the most talented of the directors who ever helmed Nancy. His 1927 silent film, *Wings*, was the first movie to win an Academy Award as Best Picture. He'd go on to direct *A Star Is Born* (1937), with Janet Gaynor and Fredric March; *Nothing Sacred* (also 1937) with Carole Lombard; and *Beau Geste* (1939) with Gary Cooper.

Before directing Nancy, he had just scored a big hit with his World War II drama, *Battleground* (1949). Coincidentally, that film had also starred Nancy's friend, Van Johnson, and featured Whitmore in a supporting role.

Nancy dreaded reporting to the set to face Wellman, as his reputation had preceded him. He was known as brusque and aggressive. Louise Brooks had described him as "sadistic."

He did not immediately endear himself to Nancy. "I hate all actresses," he told her. "I detest their narcissism. I prefer to direct men. Women take up so much time worrying about their hair, their makeup, their wardrobe."

"He knew I just wasn't the big-bosom, sweater girl type like Lana Turner," Nancy said. "So we got that out of the way. I couldn't have looked more drab than I did in my $12.95 maternity smock."

She was one of the first actresses to appear on screen as openly pregnant. Before that, actresses tried to conceal their pregnancy, as if it were something vulgar, an embarrassing condition not to be flaunted before audiences. But Wellman wanted realism in Nancy's character, insisting that she wear no makeup and not to benefit from the ministrations of a hairdresser. When MGM commissioned Hollywood's leading hairdresser, Sydney Guilaroff, to style Nancy's hair, Wellman chased him off the set.

An affable, plain-looking actor from New York, Whitmore, with Nancy, closely resembled a typical middle-class American couple. He had recently appeared with Marilyn Monroe in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950). Monroe was just emerging as a screen siren. Whitmore would later appear with Reagan's first wife, Jane Wyman, in one of the episodes on her *Jane Wyman Presents the Fireside Theatre*.

Whitmore had been a dedicated student at the Actors Studio in New York, and when he moved to Los Angeles, he opened his own acting workshop. One of his new pupils was James Dean. One hot afternoon, the young actor, sloppily dressed, showed up on the set of *The Next Voice You Hear*. When later queried, Nancy reportedly claimed she did not remember meeting Dean, who would later threaten a character portrayed by Reagan with a gun in one of the episodes on his *General Electric Theater*.

In front of Nancy and Wellman, Dean said, in reference to Whitmore, "I owe a lot to Jimmy here. He has much to teach an actor. So far, he's the only person I've met in Hollywood who hasn't demanded to suck my cock in return for a favor."

Working with Wellman did not turn out to be the ordeal for Nancy that she had feared—in fact, they became friends. She recalled, "The tiger turned out to be a pussycat."

When it was completed, MGM sent Nancy to New York to promote *The Next Voice You Hear*. She recalled "my greatest thrill" involved standing in front of the Radio City Music Hall's grand marquee, where for the first time, she saw her name, NANCY DAVIS, posted in big letters. She remembered standing for an entire hour looking up at the marquee.

At the film's premiere on September 12, 1950, she was escorted by her new beau, Ronald Reagan, whom she had already begun to date. *[More about that later…]* The occasion marked the first time the couple had ever been photographed together.

Regrettably, Radio City Music Hall was not the proper venue for a message picture from Dore Schary. Movie fans were used to coming to the grand showcase for spectacles and later, to see the Rockettes performing their stunning precision dance numbers.

The New Yorker pounced on the film, attacking it as a "meandering, maudlin affair." *The New York Times*, however, cited Nancy's role as "a cheerful and considerate pregnant wife."

In Los Angeles, her friend, Spencer Tracy, went to see the movie. To Katharine Hepburn, George Cukor, and others, he said, "Nancy projected the passion of Good Humor ice cream—frozen, on a stick, and vanilla."

In spite of its controversial subject and nation-wide reviews, the film failed at the box office, losing $65,000 for MGM.

But what did Nancy's newest boyfriend think of *The Next Voice You Hear*? After its premiere, Reagan invited Nancy to dinner and gave her some advice. "Send that wardrobe you wore in the picture to the cleaners and then lose the claim check."

What for Nancy began as a romantic evening ended on a sour note. He told her, "I'm still in love with Jane, even though she's divorced me. I still think we'll get back together one day. I plan to grow old with her."

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Before being cast in *The Next Voice You Hear*, Nancy had made two screen tests, hoping to play the female leads in two films, each scheduled for release in 1950.

She first wanted to appear as the wife of Cary Grant in *Crisis*. In it, he played a renowned brain surgeon vacationing in South America with his wife, a role Nancy coveted. The surgeon becomes inadvertently embroiled in a revolution when the country's dictator, played by Oscar-winning José Ferrer, urgently needs life-saving brain surgery. The dictator demands that it be performed, by the American doctor, with utmost secrecy.

Dore Schary screened Nancy's test, later defining it as "The worst screen test in the history of motion pictures." He told aides, "Nancy will be perfect playing the simple plain housewife to a bloke like James Whitmore. But for Cary Grant's wife, let's cast Paula Raymond. She's a hell of a lot sexier than Nancy."

[Since Grant took no part in denying the role to Nancy, she did not hold a grudge against him. In fact, in 1981, as First Lady, five weeks after the attempted assassination of Reagan, she invited Grant to a gala event at the White

House in honor of the U.K.'s Prince Charles.

For that event, she selected what she called "a fun group," consisting not only of Grant, but Audrey Hepburn, right-winger William F. Buckley, her close friends Alfred and Betsy Bloomingdale, and fashion doyenne Diana Vreeland.

The evening erupted into a media controversy when Nancy was photographed curtseying before Prince Charles. It set off a firestorm, one newspaper claiming, "No First Lady should be caught bowing her knees in front of royalty. Actually, in her current role, Nancy Reagan has far more power than Prince Charles."]

The next role Nancy sought and appeared in a screen test for was the part of the wife of Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. A friend of the Davis family, Louis Calhern, had already been cast as the justice in *The Magnificent Yankee* (1950). He would win an Oscar nomination for his role, which required him to age from 61 to 90 during the course of the film.

"I knew the part was a difficult one for me, too," Nancy said. "I, too, had to age considerably for the role."

Once again, studio personnel evaluated her as "totally unsuited to play the wife," the part going to Ann Harding, who had both the talent and the presence to pull off the demanding role.

Nancy learned later that this time around, Schary had endorsed her for the role, as had Ardie Deutsch, the film's producer. However, when John Sturges was assigned to direct *The Magnificent Yankee*, he sat through Nancy's test, which seemed to infuriate him. He wrote a memo to Schary, claiming that Nancy was "WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!" for the part.

[Nancy never shared a story with Calhern that she'd learned from Dr. Loyal Davis.

At one point, in Chicago, he had performed surgery on the ailing actor. In the middle of the procedure, as he lay on the operating table, Calhern's heart stopped. Desperately, Davis massaged his heart and resuscitated his breathing. Although he revealed details of the incident to both Edith and Nancy, the doctor chose never to tell his most famous patient.]

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After the failure of *The Next Voice You Hear*, and her "bombing" in two separate screen tests, Nancy's future as a movie star looked dim. A whole roster of new stars was on the horizon, dozens of whom were far more talented and beautiful than she was. She would limp through only a few more pictures before fading into oblivion, only to evolve decades later into one of the most powerful behind-the-scenes women of the 20th Century.

She claimed that her next movie, *Night Into Morning* (1951), was her favorite film, in spite of the similarity of its title to *Night Unto Night*, a film made in 1949 by Reagan. She was hoping that her latest film would salvage her dimly flickering career. Her fantasy was that by starring with Ray Milland, it would lead to a breakthrough equivalent to that of Jane Wyman when she co-starred with him in *The Lost Weekend* (1945). That film had propelled Wyman into an A-list career and had brought Milland an Oscar for his portrayal of a tormented alcoholic.

Milland expressed his hope that with his appearance once again as an alcoholic, he would score another triumph, this time as a college professor who becomes a drunk and a possible suicide after his wife and ten-year-old son are burned to death in a freak fire.

A Canadian, Fletcher Markle (the director), would praise Nancy's performance. "If only the critics had taken notice," he said. "She is a gifted actress, although typecast as a nice, steadfast war widow. In her one big scene, where she tries to prevent Milland from committing suicide by jumping out of a hotel window, she was superb. She had one page of dialogue, and she pulled off this difficult scene in just one shot. After that, I called her 'One Take Nancy.'"

Lightning did not strike twice. Ray Milland *(left)*, shown above with Nancy and John Hodiak, had immortalized himself opposite Jane Wyman by playing an alcoholic in *The Lost Weekend*.

Six years later, now cast with Nancy Davis as his leading lady, he hoped for his second Oscar. Alas, his performance, and the picture, failed.

In the film, John Hodiak played an academic, a junior colleague of Milland's at his college. Engaged to be married to the widowed character played by Nancy, he becomes jealous of the attention she pays to Mil-land.

Nancy would recall, "This was one of the few times I played a *fiancée* and not a wife."

Markle had emigrated to the land of sunshine and palm trees from the cold winds of Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was multi-talented: Actor, screenwriter, TV producer, and director. He had contributed to the screenplay of Orson Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), starring Rita Hayworth as a blonde.

McCambridge on the verge of shooting Joan Crawford in *Johnny Guitar*.

One day Markle's lover, Mercedes McCambridge, appeared on the set. Having divorced his first wife, the former Helen Blanche Willis, in 1949, Markle was rushing into a marriage to McCambridge. She met Nancy, later asking Markle, "Where did you find that little mouse?"

In November of 1950, McCambridge triumphed over Nancy when she was designated as number four in *Photoplay's Choose Your Stars* contest. In spite of her sagging career, Nancy came in fifth. McCambridge seemed delighted that fans favored her over Nancy. Topping both of them was starlet Piper Laurie, who had just had a fling with Reagan, as she later confessed in her autobiography.

Nancy, emoting with John Hodiak in *Night Into Morning*.

Born in Wales, Milland, to Nancy, at least, seemed rather cynical, having appeared on the screen since 1929. She suspected that he might have interpreted a co-performance with her as a comedown. During his long career, he would star opposite Gene Tierney, Lana Turner, Marlene Dietrich, Ginger Rogers, Loretta Young, and Veronica Lake, sometimes seducing his leading ladies, as he did with Jane Wyman in *The Lost Weekend* and later as the murder-plotting husband in *Dial M for Murder* (1954), co-starring Grace Kelly, with whom he fell in love. That threatened one of the most enduring marriages in Hollywood, that of Milland to the former Muriel Weber.

He told Nancy, "From now on, acting to me is just taking home a paycheck. I think it's downhill for me from now on."

Nancy with John Hodiak: Is he barring her entrance? Or signaling that it's OK to enter?

John Hodiak, involved at the time in a disintegrating marriage to Anne Baxter, laughed as rarely as Greta Garbo. In one scene within *Night Into Morning*, Nancy was called upon to make this stoic Ukrainian laugh. In take after take, his laugh—to the director, at least— sounded fake. The scene took place when they were mounting a flight of stairs. During Nancy's final take, she spontaneously whispered, "belly button," in response to which Hodiak laughed uproariously. His cackles met with the director's approval.

Nancy's friend, Jean Hagen, was also in the picture. She and Nancy bonded more than ever and had lunch together. Hagen had seduced Ralph Meeker during the filming of their previous picture, and now she turned her seductive charms onto Hodiak. She later told Nancy, "Getting fucked by Johnny is like getting plowed with a beer bottle."

While making the film, Hodiak seemed very depressed. Not only was his marriage failing, but the year before, he had been voted "box office poison" by movie exhibitors across the country.

[At the age of 41, Hodiak would suffer a fatal heart attack in his bathroom and die.]

That curmudgeon of *The New York Times*, Bosley Crowther, attacked *Night Into Morning*, appraising it as "a morbid swirl of sentiment and self-pity" *Variety*, however, cited Nancy's performance as showing "warmth and understanding."

[Nancy appreciated the kind words, but told Hagen, "those words doth not a star make."

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Nancy made only a brief appearance with Fredric March in the 1952 *It's a Big Country*, Dore Schary's flag-waving salute to America. An all-star cast, a glittering roster, was assembled by MGM, including personalities already familiar to Nancy—Ethel Barrymore, Gary Cooper, Van Johnson, Gene Kelly, Janet Leigh, Marjorie Main, George Murphy, Lewis Stone, and James Whitmore. An anthology of vignettes, it depicted scenes from American lives. It was directed by a committee whose members included Richard Thorpe, Charles Vidor, Don Weiss, Clarence Brown, John Sturges, and William A. Wellman.

In Nancy's segment, "Four Eyes," she plays a schoolteacher who becomes aware that one of her pupils cannot see very well. She tries to persuade his father (March), improbably cast as an Italian immigrant, to purchase of pair of eyeglasses for the boy— hence the title, "Four Eyes." She meets passionate resistance from a father who thinks it's unmanly for his son to wear glasses. She triumphs in the end. She later said, "I wish my segment with March could have been a whole picture. I'm sure I could have learned a lot from him."

At first, Nancy had been leery of working with March because of the reputation that had preceded him. He had already seduced many of his costars, including Tallulah Bankhead, Clara Bow, Olivia de Havilland, Ann Harding, and Miriam Hopkins. He was notorious as "the most lecherous fanny-grabber in Hollywood."

Back when she was still speaking to Nancy, Katharine Hepburn told of her experience with March when he'd been cast opposite her as her tartan-wearing lover, the Earl of Bothwell, in *Mary of Scotland* (1936). Knowing that he was going to glide his hand up her 16th-century costume, she was prepared for him. "When he came to my dressing room, I had taken the largest banana in my fruit bowl and put it into my bloomers. When his hand went up my dress, he discovered a very large phallic object and retreated. Case closed."

A much older and not-so-horny March encountered Nancy when they worked together in 1952. “He treated me like a lady and was a perfect gentleman in every way.”

In spite of Schary’s high expectations for *It’s a Big Country*, audiences stayed away in droves. Ultimately, it lost $677,000 for MGM.

Despite Nancy’s praise for March, most critics found his performance as a *Papa Italiano* hammy, a caricature. Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* thought it a role that J. Carroll Naish might have pulled off. In his autobiography, Schary never even mentioned his once pet project. Nancy also cut mention of it when she penned her second memoir.

It seemed that both MGM and its stars wanted to forget the film as a fiscally disastrous embarrassment.

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For some strange reason, Nancy, in her memoirs, remembered appearing in *The Frogmen*, co-starring Gary Merrill.

Although Merrill had indeed been in the movie, Nancy had not. The film’s two major stars were Richard Widmark *(left)* and Dana Andrews.

In neither the script nor the final footage, not a single female was waiting for them after their succesful demolition of underwater obstacles for the U.S. Navy in the Sea of Japan during World War II.

In her first memoir, *Nancy*, she made an astonishing claim: “I also did *Rescue at Sea*, which may have appeared as *The Frogmen* in 1955, if it came out at all. I played opposite Gary Merrill, and it’s another picture I’d just as soon forget. Every performer has a few of these in the closet.”

Everybody is entitled to a lapse of memory, but it’s surprising that Nancy didn’t compose her memoirs with a scrapbook of newspaper clippings and memorabilia about her movies on her desk. It’s true that she appeared in a movie originally entitled *Rescue at Sea*, but its title was later changed—that particular film was never called *The Frog-men*.

There was a movie released n 1951 called *The Frogmen*, and it did star Gary Merrill (at the time, Mr. Bette Davis) in third billing. The two big-name stars involved with the project were Richard Widmark and Dana Andrews, but no women ever appeared in *The Frogmen*. It was the story of the U.S. Navy’s Underwater Demolition teams battling the Japanese Army and Naval forces in the Sea of Japan during World War II.

Why would Nancy connect herself with this all-male underwater adventure film? The mystery may have been solved when director Henry Hathaway was tracked down. He had been the original director of *The Frogmen*, and a major director in Golden Age Hollywood, helming such stars as Clara Bow, Gary Cooper, Marlene Dietrich, and Nancy’s friend, Walter Huston. Its original script had called for some women’s roles, the type who waited on the shore for their lovers to return from the dangers of The Deep.

“I vaguely remember—and I could be wrong about this—but I think I called Nancy in for a reading for one of the female roles,” Hathaway said. “Instead of Merrill, Richard Conte was to have been her leading man. Later, both Conte and I dropped out, and the script was rewritten with no roles for women at all.”

Lloyd Bacon was called in to direct *The Frogmen*. He had helmed Reagan in *Knute Rockne—All American* (1940).

Even though she wasn’t in it, Nancy said she was ashamed of *The Frogmen*. She need not have been. It was the first A-list movie to depict SCUBA diving and clandestine underwater demolition activities during wartime, and it became a big cultural hit. Many young men cited this movie as their inspiration for becoming Navy SEALS.

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Often missing from the list of Nancy’s movies was the 1952 release of *Shadow in the Sky*, a financial disaster that cost MGM $644,000, in spite of its relatively low production costs. Her co-stars were James Whitmore, her

close friend Jean Hagen, and a self-styled “sex bomb” and bad boy, Ralph Meeker.

A decision was made by the studio to sell *Shadow in the Sky* as a sexy movie. Publicity did not think Nancy, or even Jean Hagen, should be the focus of the ad. Instead, it was decided that Ralph Meeker, clad in skinny bathing attire, would attract a wider audience.

The film was directed by Fred M. Wilcox, a Virginian better known for his two dog movies, *Lassie Come Home* (1943), and *Courage of Lassie* (1946). He’d also had a hit directing Margaret O’Brien in *The Secret Garden* (1949).

Nancy’s work with him went smoothly for both of them.

Its plot centers around Burt (Meeker), who is in a mental institution after having undergone traumatic experiences while serving as a Marine in the South Pacific during World War II. His girlfriend, Stella, is played by Hagen. Wilcox couldn’t help but see that Hagen was Meeker’s girlfriend offscreen as well. “She was seen coming and going from Meeker’s dressing room” he recalled.

Nancy was cast as Betty, Burt’s sister, married to Lou (Whitmore). The suspense of the movie, if it could be called that, derives from whether Burt, as a mentally wounded warrior, can be stabilized enough to return to a normal life outside the asylum.

Ralph Meeker might have added Nancy to his impressive roster of A-list seductions.

Actually, he spent more time applying his “magnificent woman-killing weapon” (as he immodestly described it) to Jean Hagen.

Whitmore often lunched with Nancy and she came to consider him “a good family man.” Before he divorced his wife, the former Nancy Mygatt, in 1971, the couple had three sons. After that, he married three more times. His final marriage, launched when he was a senior citizen, lasted until his death in 2009.

Nancy seemed to have no memory of making that movie, devoting only sixteen lines to it in her memoirs, *Nancy*. Maybe she blanked it out because while working on the film, she received very distressing news.

She learned that Reagan had proposed marriage to actress Christine Larson, and he was said to be deeply in love with the beautiful starlet.

“Lightning struck twice for Nancy,” Wilcox later said. “While filming our movie, she learned that Metro didn’t plan to renew her contract.”

Although Meeker was unmarried at the time, he was out of the running because of his affair with Hagen,” Wilcox said. “At any rate, he’d soon be off to Broadway to star in William Inge’s *Picnic*, where he was said to have taught his understudy, Paul Newman, ‘Who’s the Man,’ if you get my drift.”

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Talk About a Stranger (1952) was Nancy's last film for MGM, which, as she had predicted, soon after dropped her from its roster of contract players. That was hardly surprising. Faced with the loss of revenue as audiences stayed home to watch TV, the once-fabled studio was releasing hordes of its stars and staff. The Golden Age of Hollywood had come to a whimpering end. Once big name stars like Bette Davis were advertising for jobs.

After George Murphy *(right)*, one of Reagan's closest friends, co-starred with Nancy in *Talk About a Stranger*, he gave Reagan some advice: "Dump Nancy, and marry Doris Day."

The star of *Talk About a Stranger* was George Murphy, who called himself Reagan's best friend, an honor also claimed by both Robert Taylor and William Holden.

Playing the son of Nancy and Murphy was the rumor-spreading child actor, Billy Gray. The Vienna-born actor, Kurt Kasznar, one of Hollywood's closeted gays, was cast as the mysterious stranger.

Directed by David Bradley, *Talk About a Stranger* tells the story of Bud Fontaine, Jr. (as interpreted by Gray), who suspects a strange new neighbor (Kasznar) of poisoning his dog. The boy launches a smear campaign and spreads vicious rumors about the man, which turn out to be based on false impressions. In time, Bud comes to realize that people are not always what they appear to be, learning one of life's lessons, but not before he endangers crops in the valley by his vandalism of the neighbor's oil tank. Murphy and Nancy cope as best they can with their irrepressible son.

Bradley seemed an odd choice as a director. He was an actor, a collector of vintage films, and a university lecturer. At the Art Institute of Chicago, he'd cast a 17-year-old wannabee actor, Charlton Heston, in his feature length 16mm version of *Peer Gynt*.

In 1963, he would direct *Madmen of Mandoras*, a short feature film that was expanded, in 1969, into the

notorious made-for-television movie, *They Saved Hitler's Brain*, a scifi romp that some critics define as one of the most absurdly campy (but un-funny) films ever made.

Evil neighbors who turn out to be benign and innocent: gay actor Kurt Kasznar.

Producer Richard Goldstone shared his memories of working with Nancy: "At MGM, she was on her way out the door, yet at the commissary she was table-hopping, talking to all the big names, sitting at one point with Clark Gable before hopping over to share a drink with Spencer Tracy and to give him a big kiss. I had never seen a starlet dare do that before."

All that Nancy remembered about Gray was that he had a fascination with motorcycles. The year she'd met him, he had appeared as the boy version of the Native American athlete and protagonist of *Jim Thorpe—All American*. Burt Lancaster had been cast as the adult version of Jim Thorpe. Later that year (1951), Gray would make a science fiction film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, starring Michael Rennie and Patricia Neal, a future girlfriend of Reagan's.

Talk About a Stranger: George Murphy, Billy Gray *(center)* and again, another "worried mother" role for Nancy.

Gray went on to achieve fame in the long-running (1954-1960) TV series, *Father Knows Best*. He later denounced the plots and characters of this sitcom as "totally false," blaming the series for "a lot of problems between men and women today."

Talk About a Stranger was advertised as a film that would send "chills down your spine." It did not. Nancy was later reported to have said, "George and I both agreed: *Talk About a Stranger* was MGM's way of giving us the pink slip."

Murphy himself later quipped: "Every year since then, around Christmastime, I have promised Nancy that I would get a print and run it—but thus far, she has been spared that pleasure. I do hope that the Democrats don't get hold of the film and run it on *The Late, Late Show* during my 1970 campaign for the Senate. It might be more than I could overcome."

Murphy also wrote, "Nancy met Ronnie about the time we were making *Talk About a Stranger*. He had succeeded me as President of the Screen Actors Guild and in that capacity, Nancy paid him a visit. She was repeatedly being embarrassed by the fact that the name 'Nancy Davis' kept popping up on Communist Front lists, and she was receiving invitations to attend radical meetings. That was difficult to bear, since Nancy was decidedly anti-communist. At director Mervyn LeRoy's suggestion, she sought out Reagan for his counsel. He not only straightened out the matter, but a year later, he married the girl."

What Murphy did not put into his memoir was a final line, "against my wishes."

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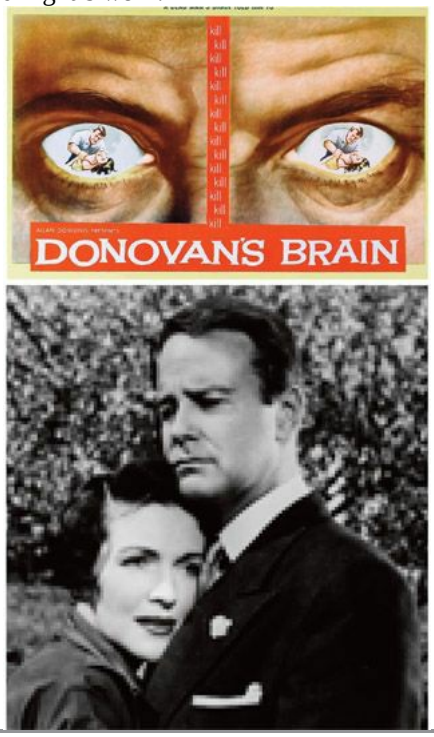
After her sagas at MGM, Nancy wanted to bow out of films, particularly after her marriage to Reagan in 1952, but "I had some bills to pay, so I hung in there a little longer. I made *Donovan's Brain* (1953), a low-budget sci-fi picture, but it was not a class act."

Based on a novel by Curt Siodmak, it was released by United Artists in 1953. The screenplay was both written and directed by Felix E. Feist, an MGM executive who had directed both Deanna Durbin and her younger rival, Judy Garland, in *Every Sunday* (1936).

Nancy recalled that *Donovan's Brain* "was silly but popular, and must have been particularly amusing to my father." *[She was referring to her stepfather, Dr. Loyal Davis.]*

She recalled the first morning she reported to work, driving at 4:30am through the deserted streets of Beverly Hills one wintry, pre-dawn day. Suddenly, the flashing dome lights of a police squad car signaled for her to pull over. Two officers were suddenly flanking her car. One of them demanded her license, the other searched the back seat with his flashlight. They demanded answers: "Where are you going? Where have you come from? How much money do you have in your purse?"

That night, after she returned home from the studio, she told Reagan what had happened to her. He laughed at her encounter. "Honey, the cops saw a good-looking woman driving a convertible at that time of the morning. They thought you were returning from a hard night's work."



For Ayres, it was a humiliating come-down. For Nancy, it was a final (doomed) opportunity for stardom:

Photo above shows Nancy with her co-star, Lew Ayres (Jane Wyman's former love fantasy from *Johnny Belinda*) in *Donovan's Brain*, a weak but campy scifi thriller that caused embarrassment during her tenure as First Lady

"What kind of work?" she asked.

"Those cops thought you were a prostitute."

Nancy's co-star in *Donovan's Brain* was Lew Ayres, who by now had descended to the nadir of his career. He was no longer the beautiful young German soldier depicted in the classic *All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)*.

Ironically, he had starred with Jane Wyman in her Oscar-winning portrayal in *Johnny Belinda* (1948). When she had divorced Reagan, it was with the belief that Ayres would marry her. He had dumped her instead.

Donovan's Brain, like *The Next Voice You Hear*, is regarded today as high camp. When Nancy was First Lady, it was sometimes shown at midnight. Audiences, nearly always composed of young people, would "hoot and holler" at the screen.

Its plot spins around an attempt by Dr. Patrick Cory (as played by Ayres) to keep alive the brain of a multi-millionaire megalomaniac, "the man you love to hate," W.H. Donovan. He had gone down in a fatal plane crash, and his body had been removed temporarily for safekeeping to the nearby home of Dr. Cory. Cory, surgically and

illegally, removes his brain and attempts to keep it alive. His long-suffering wife, Janice, is played by Nancy. The brain eventually takes possession of Cory and transforms him into an evil blackmailer.

In her memoirs, Nancy recalled her upcoming film, *Hellcats of the Navy* (1956), as her final film and the only one in which she ever co-starred with Reagan. By the time of its production, they had been married for four years.

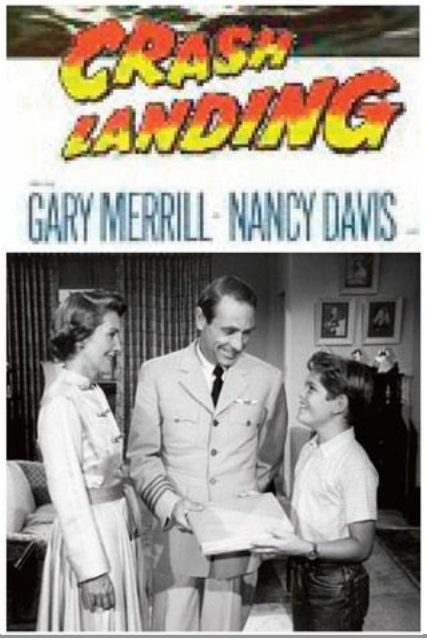
She was wrong. She made one more film after *Hellcats of the Navy*.

***

Her last film, *Crash Landing* (1958), was made for Columbia. It was the one that Nancy had confused with *The Frogmen*. Originally, *Crash Landing* was entitled *Rescue at Sea. [Nancy had recalled it as the original title of* The Frogmen.]

She had remembered Gary Merrill as her co-star in *The Frogmen*. Actually, he became her co-star in *Rescue at Sea*, whose title was eventually altered to the more dramatic *Crash Landing*.

The 76-minute film was one of the first major aerial disaster films. Nancy was cast as Merrill's devoted wife. He plays a pilot crossing the Atlantic with a plane full of passengers. Midway across the ocean, he is forced to make an emergency landing. Fortunately, a U.S. Navy vessel is nearby to rescue the crash victims.



For Nancy, it was another "Home and Hearth, Postwar U.S. Mom" role, an image that would serve her well during her husband's later campaigns. She's shown here in *Crash Landing* with her man in uniform (Gary Merrill) and their onscreen son, Kim Charney.

The film was a forerunner of *Airport* (1970), the hit movie that starred Burt Lancaster and Dean Martin, bringing a Best Supporting Actress Oscar to Nancy's friend, veteran Helen Hayes, cast as a stowaway.

As in all subsequent aerial disaster films, *Crash Landing* focused on a diverse group of passengers making true confessions as they prepare to die. The film was created by Fred Freiberger (aka Charles Woodgrove), the future producer of the third season (1968-69) of *Star Trek*.

Merrill spent most of his time complaining about his marriage to Bette Davis, which at the time was on the rocks.

[Movie trivia: Merrill had replaced José Ferrer in the Broadway hit, Brother Rat *(1937), the play that inspired the subsequent movie starring Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan. Merrill told Nancy that he had appeared as one of the soldiers in* This Is the Army, *also starring her husband, Reagan. Reagan had also co-starred with Merrill's estranged wife (Bette Davis), playing her gay suitor in* Dark Victory *(1939).]*

Nancy met the second female lead, Irene Harvey, sizing her up as competition, as she frequently did. Harvey had made her screen debut in *The Stanger's Return* in 1933, starring Lionel Barrymore. After divorcing her first husband, William Fenderson, she had fallen in love with *matinée* heartthrob Robert Taylor, who had broken from Thelma Ryan after taking her virginity. Thelma later became First Lady, Patricia Nixon.

Taylor moved on to the bisexual aviator, Howard Hughes, and Errol Flynn, even Greta Garbo, before settling in

to marry Barbara Stanwyck. ("Her balls are bigger than mine," he'd told Reagan).

The fourth lead was played by Roger Smith, a handsome, debonair leading man from California. His greatest film exposure was yet to come, when he'd play Patrick Dennis, the nephew of *Auntie Mame* (1958), starring Rosalind Russell in her classic, lighthearted hit.

He would go on "to do what a million other men only dreamed about," and that was marrying sexpot Ann-Margret in 1967. He became not only her husband, but her manager.

Fred F. Sears, a Bostonian, directed Nancy's final film. He was about the same age as Reagan and had made the *Durango Kid* series of westerns, starring Charles Starrett. At the time he helmed Nancy, he was known as a quickie director, always bringing a picture in way before deadline. He was also called "the fast buck director," turning out juvenile crime films, action thrillers, rock musicals, and sci-fi "epics."

He would later become notorious for making one of the worst movies of all time, *The Giant Claw* (1957), "a clunky mishmash of hideous special effects. The giant claw turns out to be a spectacularly inept marionette that looks like a mutant turkey and sounds like a crow choking to death," in the words of one critic.

Merrill, boorish and frequently drunk, was a man with a personal and onscreen past. Here he is with Bette Davis, in mink, during filming of *All About Eve*.

Nancy, whose screen image was to an increasing degree that of the kind of girl an American ex-GI would want to marry, simply didn't project an onscreen image with as much fun or drama.

Most movies seem to have some kind of sexual relations going on between and among the cast and crew. But, from all reports, *Crash Landing* was rather pristine. There was an attempt at sex on the part of a drunken Merrill. He sent a messenger to Nancy's dressing room, requesting her to come to his trailer to go over some scenes with her.

He later said, "I'd heard from my buddies that she gave great head. That was her reputation in Hollywood. I knew she was married, but I hoped she still played around. I was married to Bette, but I let the bitch know she didn't own my dick. Bette used to go down on Howard Hughes, and I wanted to see how my wife, as a cock-sucker, stacked up against Reagan's wife. I stood jaybird naked in my trailer waiting about twenty minutes for Nancy. She didn't show up."

When it came to sex talk, the gutsy New Englander, with his dour demeanor and dark brow, wasn't known for his subtlety.

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During her involvement in those many B-pictures, Nancy had had only one role in mind, and that was to become the wife of a successful and presentable man. At the time, it was inconceivable that such a role would morph her one of the world's most famous women.

She once said, "I was following in some big, big footsteps—Martha Washington, Dolley Madison. For great humanitarian achievement, there was no lady who ever came close to Eleanor Roosevelt. For style, Jackie Kennedy won all honors. But in movie terms, my role of First Lady would be like remaking *Gone With the Wind* and casting me in the Vivien Leigh role of Scarlett O'Hara."

Chapter Eleven

Jane Wins an Oscar—At Last, Big-time Stardom for the Hey-Hey Girl

"Jane Deserves a Fling...and I Intend to Let Her Have It." —Ronald Reagan

"I'm In Love with Lew Ayres—and He Wants to Marry Me."

The Weekend Wasn't Entirely Lost.

Her road to stardom began with scenes like this from *Lost Weekend*, where glam Jane, accessorized with (now endangered) Somalian leopardskin, emotes with an alcohol-blocked novelist, as played by Ray Milland.

Can a Girl Really Have It All?

With *Johnny Belinda* came stardom and a wrenching emotional resonance with a former army chaplain bruised from the horrors of active duty on the blood-soaked Pacific front. Here, plain Jane as the reclusive deaf-mute, Belinda, with one of her true loves, Lew Ayres.

Throughout the war years, Joan Blondell and Paulette Goddard had remained Jane's steadfast *confidantes*. Alexis Smith was a newer friend, and also devoted to Jane, just as her new husband, Craig Stevens, seemed to hang on Reagan's every utterance.

One morning, Jane, in tears, called Goddard. "Ronnie and I had a big fight last night, and he stormed out of the

house. The fan magazines still call us ‘The Constant Honeymooners,’ but nothing could be farther from the truth. We’re at odds over something all the time.”

Like many couples trying to pick up their threads of marital bliss in the aftermath of the many changes brought on by WW2, Reagan and his then-wife present an illusion of compatibility at the California State Military Guard Ball of 1945.

Their latest conflict involved Reagan’s desire to have another child. A very precocious four-year-old Maureen was virtually demanding a little brother as a playmate.

“Unless Billy Wilder has misled me, *The Lost Weekend* will be my breakthrough role,” Jane said. “As you know, I’ve waited fifteen years for something like this. I don’t want to fuck it up now, get pregnant, and let my career fade away.”

“Tell that fucker of yours that if he wants a baby, adopt one,” Goddard advised.

“I might do just that,” Jane said. “Maybe tonight, if he ever stops talking about politics and the menace of communism, and reverts to his demand that we have a child, I’ll bring up the adoption idea. As for dirty diapers, the nanny can change them.”

Expensive Accessories for an A-list Celebrity: Satin and very good mink...What else would a movie star wear?

Jane arrives at the premiere of *Johnny Belinda*, the film that would eventually win her an Oscar.

“You’re in luck working with Ray as your leading man,” Goddard said. “I seduced him on the set of *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942). He was ten times better than our co-star, Johnny boy *[a reference to John Wayne]*. Ray and I have just filmed *Kitty* (1945). It’s a sort of Eliza Doolittle costume drama set in the 1780s. I’m this guttersnipe walking the sidewalks of London. Ray discovers me, coaches me, and turns me into a duchess.”

"Sounds like fun," Jane said.

"On the set, we resumed our affair, and he's hotter and better looking than ever," Goddard said. "He's the best kisser in Hollywood. Ever notice those luscious lips of his? His Welsh dick is in good working order, and he never pulls out until a woman is completely satisfied."

"What about his wife?" Jane asked. She was referring to the former Muriel Weber, whom Milland had wed back in 1932.

"Every girl deserves the chance to spend one night of her life with Gregory Peck." *—Jane Wyman*

Ray Milland was filled with emotional intensity when he filmed this scene with Jane Wyman in *The Lost Weekend*.

"It wasn't the script," he later said. "It was my anger at that bitch, Hedda Hopper. When I refused to go on her *Hedda Hopper Show*, she called me 'a limey son-of-a-bitch, the worst kind of ingrate.' She also threatened to spread the word about what she called 'My true sexual proclivities.'"

"Oh, her!" Goddard said, contemptuously. "She's that long-suffering dishrag who knows Milland seduces his leading ladies like your Ronnie used to. But Ray told me he long ago became bored pumping the same old piece night after night."

"How you talk, gal," Jane said. "I wish Ronnie wasn't such a gentleman, and could get lowdown and dirty once in a while. Put some steam into our sex life. Are you through with Ray for the moment? Can I move in?"

"Full speed ahead," Goddard said. "That fucking husband of mine *[Burgess Meredith]* is so horny, he demands it once or twice a day. I've got plenty of action on the side, even with Clark Gable, now that he's no longer in the service. I think you told me you've had him, too. He's nothing to write home to mother about. But I'll soon be making another 18th-century costume drama, this time with that divine Gary Cooper. *[Her reference was to* The Unconquered *(1947).]* Coop and I shacked up together when we made *Northwest Mounted Police* (1940). Yes, he indeed deserves his nickname, 'The Montana Mule.'"

"I'm still young and life has got to offer more than Ronnie and babies," Jane said. I've still got Dennis *[Morgan]* and thank God for that. I call him always reliable and dependable. My nickname for him is EverReady."

"Say no more, doll," Goddard said.

"I still long for John Payne," Jane said.

"Honey, a sexual thrill like him comes to a girl only once in a lifetime, if that. But get over it. Ever onward. Maybe one day you'll make a movie with David Niven. I've had him. Ever had a dick that's six inches thick? Try it. You'll like it."

"Before I ring off," Jane said, "I've been dying to ask you a question. Why in hell did you ever marry a guy like Burgess Meredith?"

"Darling, I've always wanted to ask you a big question," Goddard said. "What in fuck were you thinking when you married Ronald Reagan?"

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Jane received a phone call from Billy Wilder. “The Breen office is fighting every aspect of *The Lost Weekend* project. Fucking bluenoses. But Warner, the son of a bitch, said we’ll make the film anyway. Report Monday morning to wardrobe.”

That Monday, Jane stopped at Warners to retrieve some possessions from her dressing room before driving over to Paramount.

By coincidence, she encountered Jack Warner, who still called her “Little Janie.” He had given the OK to lend her to Paramount. “So, you’re off to make that drunk movie. Don’t get your hopes up, gal. I’m an old showman. I always believed that drunks on film should be for comic relief. Depicting an alcoholic as a serious character will mean a big bomb at the box office. But it will be Paramount’s loss, not mine. By the way, give my luck to Ronnie. When he gets back, come over and dine with us like you guys used to do.”

To effectively portray these scenes of progressive drunkenness, Mil-land said, “I knew that when the camera came close, nothing could be hidden or faked.”

He praised Wilder for his help, citing his “prying, probing, intuitive touch of genius,” and Brackett for his “kindly calm and sociological insight.”

When Jane reported to Paramount to co-star in *The Lost Weekend* (1945) with Ray Milland, its director, the Austria-born and deeply respected Billy Wilder, came out to greet her. That represented “star treatment” that he usually bequeathed to the more established actresses he’d directed, such as Barbara Stanwyck during her collaboration with him on *Double Idemnity* (1944).

She’d heard a lot about Wilder and was anxious to be directed by him. She knew that he was Jewish and had fled the Nazis in 1933, emigrating to Hollywood, where he’d had a successful career. He’d coauthored the script for the screwball comedy, *Ninotchka* (1939) with Great Garbo, as directed by Ernst Lubitsch. It had been widely advertised as GARBO LAUGHS.

Over coffee in the Paramount commissary with Wilder and his co-writer (Charles Brackett), while discussing their *Lost Weekend*, Jane learned from Wilder that “You were not our first choice. We offered the part to Stanwyck, but she turned it down, thinking it was Milland’s movie. Then we decided to ask another friend of yours, Paulette Goddard, but we decided she was too sexy.”

“I didn’t know any of this,” a distressed Jane said. “Neither of them said anything to me about it.”

“Actually, Milland was not our first choice either,” Brackett said. “To play the stressed-out and alcoholic writer, Don Birnam, we went first to José Ferrer. But he was just too ugly, and we became convinced that to win the sympathy of movie audiences, we had to go for someone handsome. Then, at first, Milland didn’t want to appear in a movie of such human degradation.”

Wilder and Brackett informed Jane that the location scenes on the streets of post-war New York had already been filmed. “Even scenes of an unshaven Milland rattling the doors of a pawn shop to get a loan,” Brackett said. “We even captured the grit and grime of Bellevue Hospital.” She was told this with the understanding that her scenes in the movie would be filmed in a studio.

Brackett assured her that she would get co-star billing, her name appearing in the same size letters as Milland's.

"It took Billy and me two months to write the screenplay," Brackett said. "We wrote it with our blood. Enormous changes had to be made from the novel."

He was referring to Charles R. Jackson's bestseller with the same title. In distinct contrast to what had been portrayed in the novel, Don Birnam's repressed homosexuality was trivialized into a case of writer's block. To provide more of a love interest than what had appeared within the novel, Jane's character of Helen St. James was virtually invented for the film.

During their second cup of coffee, Jane learned that MGM, Fox, and Columbia had each rejected the script, defining it as "too downbeat, too grim."

She quickly summed up both Brackett and Wilder as being widely different personalities. She later said, "Charles was the classy façade, Billy the guts."

[In Hollywood, the frequent and usually inspired collaborators, Wilder and Brackett, were known as "the Gold Dust Twins," "the Katzenjammer Kids," or "Hansel and Gretel."]

"It's good working with Billy, although we fight a lot," Brackett said. "We're from completely different backgrounds. My roots go back to 1629 and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Billy was conceived one night when his prostitute mother was raped behind a sleazy beerhall in some back alley. I appeal to the better side of human nature. He prefers the dark side of man."

Finally, perhaps with a sense that its *noir* theme of repressed anguish and alcoholism was very *avant garde* for a nation recovering, often with the assistance of alcohol, from the ravages of war, Wilder handed her the latest revisions to the script. Then he suggested that she spend the rest of the morning reading them, since she wouldn't be called onto the set until after lunch.

Before noon, a leopardskin coat was delivered to her dressing room, with instructions to wear it when called for, as it configured into the plot. *[It was the prop that brought Helen and Don together at the beginning of the movie. Toward the end, Don pawns it in a pawn shop in exchange for a gun, with which he plans to commit suicide.]*

Talking him out of his death wish would be the focal point of Jane's big scene. Her character would succeed in that awesome task. She would convince him to give up liquor and return to writing his novel, *The Bottle*. At the end of the film, Milland drops a lit cigarette into a glass of whiskey, as a means of making it undrinkable and as proof that he is cured.

Wilder had arranged for her to have lunch in the commissary with Milland, presumably to discuss the nuances of their respective roles. In person, the Welshman was far handsomer and more charming than he was on the screen in any of his light comedies. "Paulette has told me wonderful things about you," Jane gushed.

"Why take her word for it?" Milland answered. Then he raised an eyebrow. "Why not investigate for yourself?"

Almost from the beginning, he established the tone of their relationship by openly flirting with her. She no doubt had heard the many rumors associated with his prowess at seducing his leading ladies.

He confessed to her, "My character is unsettling—so unlike me—and personally, I find the subject of alcoholism distasteful. I'm afraid that as a drunk, I'll dip into caricature and be laughed off the screen."

"Fortunately, my character stays sober throughout the run of the film. I think I can pull it off unless Billy starts screaming and cursing me," she said.

"Filming on the streets of New York was a nightmare," he said. "I spent a night in the ward at Bellevue where patients were delirious during their withdrawal from alcohol. Many of them were having these hideous hallucinations like the one I have to have in this damn movie. I fled at three o'clock that morning. I couldn't stay there all night. At times like now, I feel I was not psychologically cut out to be an actor," he confessed.

"Neither was I," she said. "But I had no choices—either be a showgirl or a prostitute."

"But my dear, they're the same profession," he said.

He amused her with stories of his life, beginning when he was in the Household Cavalry of the British Army and became an expert marksman, horse rider, and airplane pilot. "I'd like to go riding with you one Sunday afternoon."

"Maybe Ronnie could join us," she said. "He's an expert rider."

"How nice, but that's not exactly what I had in mind," he said. "I prefer to go riding with just you."

"Oh, I see," she said.

"I have nothing but fond memories of the horse stables," he said. "When I was fifteen, I lost my virginity one evening in an empty stable stall. I surrendered it to a very determined blonde two years older than me."

Before luncheon was over, he reached over, took her hand, and kissed it. "I have always believed that an actor and an actress, playing lovers on the screen, should rehearse that love in private. What do you think?"

"I completely agree," she said. "I've always become intimate with and demonstrated my affection for my leading men. That's except for Joe E. Brown and Phil Silvers."

Milland looked mildly surprised until he realized that she might be joking. But in the days ahead, he came to know that she had been serious. In a call to Goddard, after about four days of working with Milland, she confessed, "We did the dirty deed. You were right about him. What a contrast to Ronnie, who comes to bed smelling like a bar of soap. Ray gives off a real he-man scent. A true male aroma, and that's a turn-on."

As Milland admitted in his memoirs, *Wide-Eyed in Babylon*, "There had been a few previous peccadilloes, nothing serious, just the normal male revolt against his convenient chains. It was very easy to succumb to in those days."

He also said that whenever his homelife was deteriorating, he would pack a suitcase and check into the Sunset Towers. "My wife thought my depression was a dramatically staged excuse to shack up with some blonde Hollywood dame, and not without reason." While making *The Lost Weekend*, that statement perhaps reflected his involvement with Jane.

During the filming of *The Lost Weekend*, Jane had a sad experience during her brief reunion with Craig Reynolds. He had been "my dream man, my Adonis" when they had appeared together in movies in the 1930s. Both of them were dreaming of stardom, and at the time, there was talk of marriage.

At an afterparty celebrating the Oscar victories of *The Lost Weekend*, Jane embraces director Billy Wilder. Ronald Reagan looks on, indulgently, from the left, while Ray Milland, on right, appears inebriated.

She learned that he was appearing in an un-credited role in her film. "I'm afraid that the stardom I dreamed about isn't going to happen for me," he told her. He'd joined the Army during the war and had won a Purple Heart. "But now that I'm back in Hollywood, the phone isn't ringing."

She seemed rather embarrassed to have run into Reynolds in such reduced circumstances. His star had flickered out, and hers was just beginning to shine brightly. She kissed him on the cheek and moved on after wishing him good luck. She was deeply saddened to learn of his death in 1949 in a motorcycle accident.

Right before Christmas in 1944, Jane received a call from Wilder, who had obviously been drinking. "The shitheads over at Paramount have decided not to release *The Lost Weekend*. 'It's too god-damned depressing,' the assholes said. But I know the real reason. The liquor industry is willing to part with $5 million for the negative of this film. They want to destroy it, claiming that showing it will cut into their profits."

But in the weeks ahead, the president of Paramount, Barney Balaban, overruled his executives. "I don't make pictures to flush them down the toilet," he said. "Open the god damn film across the country, and to hell with the liquor industry. Bogie's baby *[Lauren Bacall]* is called 'The Look.' After *The Lost Weekend*, Milland will be known as 'The Kidney.'"

The Lost Weekend was eventually nominated for seven Academy Awards, winning four of them: Best Picture, Best Director (Wilder), Best Actor (Milland), and Best Writing of an Adapted Screenplay (won jointly by Brackett and Wilder).

After his win, Milland reached the pinnacle of his career, becoming the highest paid star at Paramount.

When shooting was finished on *The Lost Weekend*, Milland told Jane goodbye. He headed north for a two-week vacation with his wife, Muriel. As a farewell to Jane, he told her, "Maybe we'll meet again."

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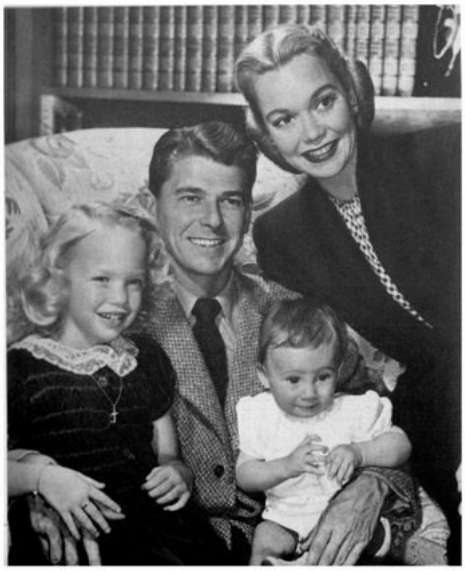
As World War II was coming to an end, Reagan faced an uncertain future in films. In contrast, based on the acclaim heaped on her performance in *The Lost Weekend*, Jane's career had skyrocketed.

To her friends, Joan Blondell, June Allyson, and Paulette Goddard, Jane complained constantly. She had always wanted a father figure to compensate for the dad she never had. For a time in the early 1940s, Reagan was that to her, plus also a lover. “Now I’m the breadwinner,” she proclaimed. “Do you gals know what an Army captain’s pay is?”

The general public remained under the impression that Reagan and Jane were the happiest married couple in Hollywood, although “Ray and Muriel” were also cited as an equivalent example of marital bliss. Ironically, all of this publicity was happening at the time Jane and Milland were conducting an illicit affair.

But occasionally, a reporter was more realistic, as was a wartime writer for *Modern Screen*. “If things at the studio upset Jane Wyman, she gripes about them at home. And she is upset a lot. She flies off the handle. When Ronald Reagan is around, he tries to calm her down. But she doesn’t want to be calm, she wants to storm. ‘You don’t know what things are like,’ she tells her husband. ‘You’ve been away too long.’ When she cools off, she realizes that Reagan has his own problems and that it can’t be fun to come home on a weekend pass and listen to her beef.”

Months later, *Modern Screen* filed another report, suggesting that there was trouble in paradise and hinting that Jane may have a secret lover. Rumors were rampant at the time in Hollywood, many believing that Jane and Van Johnson were having an affair, as had been hinted before in the past. At the time, the world did not know that the handsome, freckle-faced, blonde-haired actor was a homosexual. And only the most deeply entrenched insiders knew that Jane’s secret lover was actually Dennis Morgan.



As the Reagan/Wyman marriage crumbled, a beaming Reagan, with a smiling Jane, posed for this “happy home” shot with blonde-haired Maureen and a new member of the family, an adopted son they named Michael Edward Reagan.

Reagan was infuriated when he read *Modern Screen*. He threatened to hunt down the reporter who had written the article, and “throttle” him if he didn’t retract the statements printed about Jane. As it happened, the accusations were never retracted, and Reagan did not attack the reporter.

Jane did not want another baby, but Reagan and Baby Maureen did. On a shopping trip with her mother at Saks Fifth Avenue, Maureen placed an order for a baby brother with the store clerk.

Within a few days, the issue was finally resolved: Jane and Reagan would adopt a baby boy.

In his arguments for adoption, Reagan issued a statement to the press, citing that because of the disruption of World War II, thousands of unwanted children were homeless and desperately in need of loving parents.

On March 21, 1945, shortly after he was born, Michael Edward Reagan was brought to the Reagans’ home. At last, Maureen had a baby brother. Reagan welcomed the newcomer to the household, calling him “our real child.”

Jane later said, “I never thought of Michael as an adopted child, and as he grew up, I never thought of myself as an adoptive mother, but as his own mother. The way I see it, we’re blood. I have no more to say, except that he is my baby boy.”

A few fan magazines ran pictures of Reagan, Jane, and Michael, but many devoted photos to just Reagan and the baby.

Despite the presence of two small, demanding children within their home, Reagan and Jane, after the war,

became fixtures on the Hollywood party circuit. As columnist Hedda Hopper wrote, “At parties, Ronnie talks politics while Jane perches atop the piano and makes like Helen Morgan.”

Her role as a fixture, with her husband, on the party circuit lasted no more than a few months before Jane grew bored. She wanted her old life back, but with newer escorts. By this time, Reagan had given up partying and was devoting his nights instead to the politics associated with the Screen Actors Guild. In 1947, he was elected as the organization’s President.

June Allyson, married to Dick Powell at the time, was a close observer of the Reagan marriage. She hid her own attraction to him from Jane, but she told other friends, “One day, I’ll get my man, Ronnie. Probably when he leaves Janie. I want him. And Lola gets what Lola wants.”

An older, more mature man, Powell had begun overlooking his errant wife’s many indiscretions, including her love affair with Alan Ladd and, later, her off-the-record weekends in Las Vegas with Dean Martin.

Allyson predicted that the Wyman/Reagan marriage would end in the divorce courts. “Her career is on the rise. His is going to hell.”

After completing *One More Tomorrow*, Jane said, “It’s a picture I’m ashamed of—and I don’t shame easily.”

Jack Warner agreed. He delayed its release until it could benefit from all the favorable publicity Jane received for *The Lost Weekend*.

Although it wasn’t her fault, Dennis Morgan, her co-star, became angered when marquees across the country took down his name and displayed hers instead. “Oh, my god,” she told Joan Blondell. “I’m experiencing with Dennis what I’m going through with Ronnie. Dennis was the hottest male star on the lot, and now he’s falling. His star is dimming. Ronnie’s star is also dimming. I’m shining brighter than ever, and I think they resent me.”

“Of course they do, darling,” Blondell said. “How like a man. They’re all no good!”

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Jane was delighted to learn from the British director, Peter Godfrey, that she’d be starring once again in the 1946 release of *One More Tomorrow*. Her passion for Dennis Morgan had continued unabated, although here were long periods of separation. As she and Reagan had grown farther and farther apart, she welcomed the tenderness and love that Morgan provided, though he was still married and kept telling her he did not plan to divorce his wife.

Godfrey would soon be directing Reagan in two of his movies, *That Hagen Girl* (1947) and *The Girl from Jones Beach* (1949).

Jane was pleased to hear that she’d also be co-starring with two of her girlfriends, Alexis Smith and Ann Sheridan. Morgan would also be working once again with “my best pal,” Jack Carson. Ironically, Carson’s character in the movie was named “Regan.”

Hollywood insiders always wondered if Jane Wyman (*left)* ever found out about Ann Sheridan's long-enduring affair with her husband.

It was a romantic liaison that began long before Reagan's marriage to Wyman.

One More Tomorrow was a reincarnation of Philip Barry's socially conscious play, *The Animal Kingdom*, which had been filmed in 1932 with three A-list stars, Ann Harding, Leslie Howard, and Myrna Loy.

In this latest version, Sheridan was cast in the star role as Christie Sage, a photographer for *The Bantam*, a publication going bankrupt. Once again, Jane played Sheridan's 'sidekick.

Morgan played Tom Collier, a rich playboy pursuing Sheridan. When she turns him down, he is ensnared by Cecilia Henry (Smith), a scheming gold-digger who eventually marries him. Still pining for Christie (Sheridan), it's clear that he doesn't really love Cecilia.

On the set, reunited with Morgan, Jane discovered a more mature actor, one more self-assured. He had become the leading man at Warner Brothers, a position Reagan coveted but never achieved. Morgan's peak years were from 1943 to 1949. Later, he fell out of favor with 1950s audiences.

During the shoot of *One More Tomorrow*, she got to know him better than ever, learning more about his background. Unlike her, he'd had a normal childhood as the son of a baker. His mother had studied music before her marriage and had transmitted her love of singing to her son. They often sang duets together. As a teenager, he took singing lessons, and he often sang at solo recitals and church socials. In high school, he'd played the trombone in the school band.

At Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, he'd fallen in love with Lillian Vedder, later marrying her, but not abandoning his pursuit of some of his leading ladies.

When *One More Tomorrow* was released, the critics, if they noticed Jane at all, claimed she was "sadly wasted in another sidekick role." One reviewer wrote, "The original version of *The Animal Kingdom* with Leslie Howard was oversexed and heavy handed, while the one with Dennis Morgan is simply flat. Although the cast is likable, they couldn't save a dull script."

Ginger Rogers, who would appear in movies starring both Reagan and Morgan, later commented on these two being afflicted with "*Leadinglady-it is."*

"In most cases, Ronnie and Dennis moved on once the picture was over," Rogers said. "From the grapevine, I heard that the one exception to their fickle wars is their continuing fascination with Jane Wyman. Her particular appeal has always eluded me. But she must send out some siren call, because both Dennis and Ronnie keep coming back to her charms."

"As for Jane herself, I was fairly neutral about the dame," Rogers said. "That is, until she decided to dig her greedy claws into Lew Ayres. He was my ex, but I still resented the bitch for moving in on him."

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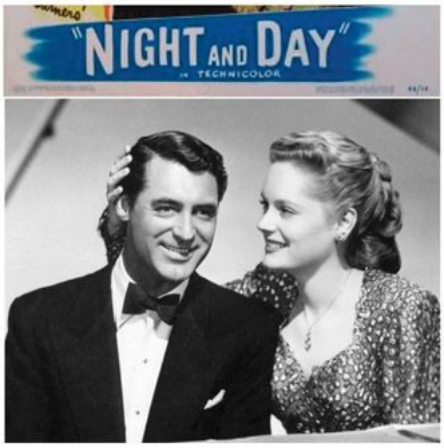
During the months after the war, Alexis Smith and her husband, Craig Stevens, were spending a lot of their free time with Jane and Reagan, now that he was no longer in the Army.



A vanilla, and unconvincing, portrayal of a "marriage of convenience" inspired by the life of Cole Porter. Despite the film's shortcomings, the casting department at least got something right: Like Porter himself, both of the film's stars, Cary Grant and Alexis Smith, were bisexuals.

Alexis' career at Warners seemed on a quick rise to stardom. "I'm no longer window dressing," the actress from British Columbia told the Reagans. She had made *Gentleman Jim* (1942) with Errol Flynn; *The Constant Nymph* (1943), with Joan Fontaine and Charles Boyer; and she'd played an unsympathetic part in Humphrey Bogart misfire, *Conflict* (1945). She was set to make yet another film with Bogart, *The Two Mrs. Carrolls* (1947). She had previously appeared with Jane in *The Doughgirls* (1944) and now, in the buoyant aftermath of the Allied victories in Europe and the Pacific, she was on the screen with Jane once again in *One More Tomorrow* (1946).

One night during one of their communal dinners, Alexis announced, "I'm going to play Cole Porter's wife, Linda, in my latest film, *Night and Day* (1946)," Alexis told the Reagans. "My leading man is Cary Grant. Of course, he's not as handsome as Craig is."

Was the real Cole Porter as good-looking as Cary Grant? Actors up and down Broadway responded with a resounding NO!

In *Night and Day*, Jane played a good hearted turn-of-the Gilded Age cutie, but resented having such a small role while Alexis Smith got the star part.

As a means of maintaining her friendship with Alexis, Jane tried to conceal her jealousy.

The Lost Weekend had not been released yet, and Jane's career appeared to be going nowhere. She had left word with Jack Warner. "Please notify me of any roles that Joan Crawford or Bette Davis turn down. I'm your gal."

So far, he had not heeded her desperate call.

Two days after the dinner with Alexis and Stevens, a call came in for Jane from Michael Curtiz, the director of *Night and Day. [He had only recently directed Joan Crawford in Mildred Pierce, a role Jane had coveted.]* To Jane, Curtiz said, "Girlie, I promise you role. I deliver role to you. Cole Porter story. Well, not the faggot's real story.

Movie is *Night and Day*. Part for you."

"But I was told you'd already cast Alexis Smith as Porter's wife," she said.

"Not the female lead, dummy," Curtiz said. "That of song-and-dance cutie. You get to work with Grant. A big shit. Best of all, you get me. Greatest director west of Budapest."

"Send over the script," she said. Within two hours, a studio messenger from Warners arrived on her doorstep with the script for *Night and Day*. She studied it for a few hours, and was greatly disappointed with her role of showgirl Gracie Harris. At the time, she appeared only briefly at the beginning of the film, although her role was later expanded.

The ultimate curmudgeon: Monty Woolley.

She was pleased that her part as a showgirl gave her a chance to show off her talent as a singer and dancer. Her big number in *Night and Day* was "Let's Do It," with all its risqué suggestions. The role called for her impersonation of a gold-digging hooker, pursuing millionaires, each of whom she called "Peaches," so she wouldn't have to remember their names.

Under contract, and needing money for her recently expanded family, she accepted the role and showed up the next day at the studio. By then, the complete cast had been assembled, including Eve Arden, her friend from *The Doughgirls*, who relayed scandalous stories about having co-starred with Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*.

Also cast was a friend of both Cary Grant and Cole Porter, character actor, Monty Woolley, known as "The Beard" for obvious reasons.

"I had given up being blonde," Jane recalled. "But the role called for a blonde. I headed to my hairdresser and a bottle of bleach. I was back to being a blonde cutie like I was in the 30s. Although I was a ripe old thirty-two years old, I was once again a chorus girl."

Even though her appearance in *Night and Day* was brief, Jane's bubbly personality came out. Grant defined her performance as "vivid," as opposed to the more demure Alexis, cast in the role of Porter's long-neglected wife, as indeed the real Linda had been during the course of marriage to her gay husband.

Jane was shocked to learn that Warner had paid Porter $300,000 for what turned out not as an accurate overview of his life story, but a fictionalized, sanitized overview. Porter had specifically requested that Grant play himself onscreen, even though physically, the two men did not resemble one another at all.

[Ironically, two other famous figures would request Grant to play themselves on the screen—notably John F. Kennedy in PT 109, and gangster Lucky Luciano in the film version of his crime-soaked life. Grant said, "Even I would like to play me on the screen."

Porter also demanded that his longtime friend, character actor Monty Woolley, be cast as himself in the film. The white-bearded actor had achieved his own measure of screen stardom when he had appeared with Bette Davis and Ann Sheridan in *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1941).

On the set, Jane met Woolley, who greeted her with a kiss on the cheek. "I hope you're here to welcome me to Hollywood, he said. "It's rather like living on the moon, wouldn't you say?"

Publicly, Jane expressed admiration for Grant's talent. Privately, she asserted that she "loathed" him. To Reagan and her girlfriends, she called him "a queenie prima donna." Her troubles with him began on June 14, 1945, during the early filming of *Night and Day* on a back lot at Warners, where a simulation of the New Haven railway station had been crafted.

"In stifling heat, I was dressed in this period costume fit for a winter in Alaska," Jane recalled. "Grant demanded that our scene be reshot, reshot, reshot, and then reshot again. He didn't like his dialogue, although he'd previously approved it. He objected to our costumes, claiming they were not authentic to the period. He objected to what he called 'my fucking rotten characterization in this stinker.' Since he was facing Technicolor cameras for the first time, he objected to his makeup, claiming that it was giving him skin rash. By quitting time, all of us were in a

piss poor mood—and hating Grant. He was one leading man who didn't capture my heart—and a homo to boot."

After the release of *The Lost Weekend* and its subsequent acclaim, Warner ordered Jane back into the studio. Her role in *Night and Day* had been expanded, and as such, her character was needed for additional sequences which would appear near the ending of the film.

She acquiesced, but regrettably for her, she had already been cast as Ma Barker in *The Yearling*. "Sometimes, on the same day, I had to be a chorus girl in the morning and then in the afternoon appear as a drab frontierswoman. I nearly had a nervous breakdown."

She confessed to Paulette Goddard and others, "I've ordered Ronnie out of my room at night. I can't be his sex slave and make two movies at once."

In the final weeks of shooting *Night and Day*, Curtiz finally lost his patience with Grant, with a screaming denunciation in front of cast and crew. The director called his star "a limey faggot," and then walked off the picture. Warner persuaded him to return the following day.

At long last, filming ended. On the final day of the shoot, Grant confronted Curtiz: "If I'm ever stupid enough to work with you again, you'll know I'm either broke or I've lost my mind." Then he stormed off the set.

When the film was released, Porter praised it. But privately, he said, "It was a plot of absurdities concocted by a string of Hollywood hacks. But I wouldn't want the truth depicted anyway."

Said to be the toughest woman in Florida, hard-drinking, hard-scrabble Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings became a literary legend in the Southeast.

Film historian Lawrence J. Quirk later wrote: "Of course, the real Cole Porter, bitchy, tormented, wildly homosexual, compulsive promiscuous, never got to the screen—to his own secret amusement."

Screenland accurately summed it up: "Movie audiences who elect to see this Technicolor extravaganza will have a delicious feast of Cole Porter songs, as well as notable personalities."

[A 2002 film, De-Lovely, *starring Kevin Kline and Ashley Judd, dealt more frankly with Porter's*

homosexuality.]

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In 1939, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings had won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, based on her coming-of-age novel, *The Yearling*, the tender story of a young boy in the late 19th century wilds of north-central Florida. He adopts an orphaned fawn with disastrous consequences. It was also the story of a family's struggle against the elements of nature.

MGM acquired the novel's film rights, with Sidney Franklin set to produce it. His attempt, begun in 1941, failed. He had cast Spencer Tracy in the lead role, opposite Anne Revere, who was later blacklisted during the Joseph McCarthy witch hunt era. Cast as the young boy, Gene Eckman was thirteen years old and from Georgia.

Although MGM invested half a million dollars in location shooting near Ocala, Florida, the production eventually shut down. Tracy feuded with director Victor Fleming of *Gone With the Wind* fame. He complained, "The god damn insects devoured our flesh and then ate our bones."

Eckman was deemed wrong for the role.

The Yearling remained shelved throughout most of the war until Franklin revived it in 1945. This time, he demanded an all-new cast. Penny Baxter, the story's patriarch, had been originally conceived as a smalltime farmer and game hunter, warm-hearted and loving. In contrast, the novel was very clear that the boy's mother, Ora, is deeply embittered by the death of her three previous children, and profoundly resents the harsh frontier conditions in which they live.

The boy, Jody, raised in the bug-infested scrub country of north central Florida, is desperate for love, which he is not getting from his mother. He showers affection on the fawn, nicknamed "Flag." Penny had to kill the fawn's mother as part of a folk-medicine ploy that involved using her internal organs to draw the poison out of his bloodstream after he was bitten by a rattlesnake. Jody takes the fawn home with him, but as it matures, the deer become destructive, damaging the family's meager crops. Flag has to be put down, which catalyzes tragic consequences for Jody.

Child star Claude Jarman, a Tennessee hillbilly boy, snuggles up to his movie father, Gregory Peck. Jarman had to beat out 12,000 other Southern boys for the coveted role.

After he'd seen *The Lost Weekend*, Benny Thau thought Jane might be possible, as part of a remarkable change-of-pace role for her, as Ma Baxter.

One Friday afternoon, Jane was summoned to Thau's office, receiving instructions that she was to read *The Yearling* over the weekend. Thau wanted her to audition, the following Monday, for the role of Ma Baxter.

She bought two copies of the novel, one for herself, the other for Reagan to read. This time, he showed an interest in one of her roles. He thought it could mean a breakthrough for her, telling her, "You might even win an Oscar like Luise Rainer did for *The Good Earth*, another film about survival against powerful odds."

Jane mentioned that Thau was known for his infamous "casting couch."

"Go over there and say you'll do the part. But let me know if the bastard gets fresh with you. I'll storm over

there and kick some ass."

That Monday, with trepidation, she arrived at 10AM at Thau's office. Although she desperately wanted the part, the idea of doing it terrified her. At this point in her life, she felt very insecure.

Jane, glamour queen of the 30s and early 40s, went plain, "care-worn, and embittered" on this testiment to the survival instincts and grit of the impoverished American Frontier.

In this case, the "Frontier" was the insect-and-alligator-infested scrublands and swamps of north-central Florida.

Introduced to Thau, she found him "a perfect gentleman speaking in a soft voice." He spent about half an hour discussing the role with her before summoning the producer, Sidney Franklin, and the film's director, Clarence Brown, into his office.

When Brown shook Jane's hand, he appeared shocked. "I thought you were a brunette."

She explained that she had to have her hair dyed blonde for her role as a showgirl in *Night and Day*.

"If you get the role in *Yearling*, you've got to dye it back," Brown told her.

"Not so fast here," Thau said. "If we cast Gregory Peck in the lead, he's already very dark. The boy we're considering, Claude Jarman, Jr., is very blonde. If Jane is a blonde, it would explain how Jarman came along."

Peck was summoned back to Thau's office the next day. He was currently making David O. Selznick's *Duel in the Sun*, a Technicolor Western. He had complained, "It's difficult making love to Selznick's woman *[a reference to Jennifer Jones]* while your boss is looking on."

In Thau's office, Peck was told that MGM wanted him for the role of Penny Baxter opposite Jane Wyman.

"Surely, you don't mean Wyman!" Peck asked in astonishment. "Wouldn't she be better in light comedy?" He had not seen *The Lost Weekend*.

"The gal has untapped possibilities," Thau assured him.

At first, Thau had considered the young British actor, Roddy McDowall, to play the boy, Jody. But Thau eventually rejected him as "too prissy," deciding to launch a nationwide talent search. That led to the discovery of Claude Jarman, Jr., who at the time was a fifth grader in Nashville. He was tested and signed for the role.

Brown might have seemed an odd choice to direct *The Yearling*. After all, he was famous for having helmed Greta Garbo in seven movies and Joan Crawford in six. Although born in Massachusetts, he had grown up in Tennessee and was familiar with rural America. That had been amply demonstrated in such films as *Of Human Hearts (1938)*, a saga of pioneer life.

Once again, an MGM crew journeyed to Ocala, where filming on *The Yearling* began on March 15, 1945. There, they faced the same problems as before: Rainstorms, oppressive heat, humidity that drenched clothing and caused makeup to run, and endless attacks by swarms of insects.

Casting the fawn proved especially difficult. The deer grows during the course of the film, changing his body shape. Before shooting ended in January of 1946, a total of 72 different deer had been used, and since none of them could act on cue, endless re-takes were necessary. Peck recalled that for one scene, Brown had to shoot the scene in 72 takes, which was the same number of deer used in the depiction of Flag.

As Ora, Jane had never looked so drab on film. Although still in her early 30s, she appeared to be at least forty, maybe more. But she didn't object. "I wanted to be taken seriously as an actress. I knew that would only happen if I

showed Hollywood I could take on a major dramatic role."

One day, Jane received an unexpected visitor to the set, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings herself. After asking Jane if she had any rotgut liquor, she settled onto Jane's sofa, where she endlessly chain-smoked unfiltered Lucky Strikes. Very outspoken, she candidly said, "Back home, I pound my typewriter day and night while in my bathroom, I make bathtub gin and float red roses in my toilet. The problem is that every time I take a crap, I have to replenish them."

"I've got to tell you!" Rawlings continued. "You and Peck don't look like the characters in my novel. Penny is a runty little frontiersman, a farmer and game hunter, and Ma Baxter is as big as a barn. I figured the only way you got the part was because Brown is fucking you."

A ballsy, *über*-extroverted hurricane of male flash: Forrest Tucker. Jane said "no."

"I hope Greg and I will surprise you," a flustered Jane stammered, diplomatically.

A rather drunk Rawlings departed three hours later, but only after demanding a kiss on the lips from Peck. He and Jane were then introduced to Jarman, their "son."

"The Kid *[a reference to Jarman]* worked increasingly well with both Greg and me," Jane said. "He even got a Juvenile Oscar for his performance. But I feared that after *The Yearling*, there would be no more great roles for him."

Their romance (and their affair) continued beyond the filming of *The Yearling*.

Here, Peck and Plain Jane appear in deliberately soiled—and historically accurate—scrub-farmer garb.

The Yearling's third male lead was played by the rugged Forrest Tucker, cast in the film as a member of the redneck Forrester family, distant neighbors of the Baxters. In the early 40s, Jane had seen Tucker in two movies, *The Westerner* (1940) with Gary Cooper, and *Keeper of the Flame* (1942) with Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn.

"He seemed perfect for the role of backwoods Lem," Jane said. "He stood 6'4", weighing 200 pounds. He was famous for his endowment, said to be one of the largest in Hollywood. Although married to the former Sandra Jolley, he had plenty of girlfriends coming and going. Word about his big attraction traveled fast in Hollywood. With Tucker, the line of beauties formed on the left and right."

Tucker kept inviting Jane to go out drinking with him, but she refused, claiming, “I fear I’ll lose my virginity.”

“How could that be?” he asked. “Aren’t you married to that Reagan fellow?”

“I am,” she said, “but he hasn’t gotten around to deflowering me yet.”

“You’re such a bullshitter, Janie, but I like you, a gal with spirit.”

The supporting players didn’t mean much to Jane during the shoot. Her interest involved bonding with Peck. “He looked absolutely gorgeous in spite of his frontier rags. After meeting this tall, sturdy, and urbane young actor, she told her girlfriends, “He is the handsomest man in Hollywood—the new Gary Cooper.”

In 1942, Peck had married Greta Kukkonen, a Finnish hairdresser. They would have three sons. As a means of learning more, Jane put through a call to Paulette Goddard, the world’s expert on the bedtime habits of stars, both male and female, who played around.

“He cheats on his wife only on that rare occasion,” Goddard told her. “Of course, that nympho, Ingrid Bergman, got him on the set of *Spellbound*. Hitch *[Alfred Hitchcock]* told me that the Swede would fuck a doorknob if nothing else were available.”

Jane told Goddard “If Bergman can seduce Greg, so can I.”

As always, Goddard urged her on. “Go, Girl, Go.”

At first, Peck was too busy to spend any time with Jane. Like her, during her early involvement in filming *The Yearling*, he’d have to race between the sets of two separate pictures, *Duel in the Sun* and *The Yearling*. He later defined that period of his career as “a kind of cinematic schizophrenia. The film sets were a mile apart. I’d get out of my Florida cracker overalls and put on my sexy cowboy stud clothes and practice my Texas drawl on the way to make love to Jennifer Jones. What a contrast in characters! Jane faced the same dilemma in *Night and Day*, doing her final scenes as a showgirl before getting all drab for Ma Baxter in *The Yearling*.”

On a professional level, Jane had nothing but praise for Peck. “He was my alltime favorite leading man, very easy to work with, a real gentleman, very serious about his acting, always wanting to get his every scene right.”

Near the end of the shoot, the cast and crew traveled to Lake Arrowhead, east of San Bernardino and about 100 miles from Los Angeles. Jane rented a cabin on one side of the lake, the Pecks rented one on the other.

Whenever he was not involved with the Screen Actors Guild, Reagan came to stay with Jane, Maureen, and Baby Michael. The Pecks and the Reagans often dined together, with Reagan at the barbecue, grilling steaks in the backyard.

When their respective spouses, Greta and Reagan, returned to Los Angeles, both Jane and Peck decided to stay on in their respective rented cabins for solitude and brief vacations. It was during this period that Peck got into his speedboat at night and crossed Lake Arrowhead for dinner at Jane’s. “I loved her cooking. I put on twenty pounds, ending up weighing 184 pounds on a 6’3” frame.”

On quiet evenings, he told her about his early struggles trying to break into acting. “I was often homeless in New York, sleeping in Central Park on a bench. I got a lot of offers from guys wanting me for a sleepover, sometimes just in exchange for a good meal. I turned them down except once or twice when I’d do anything for a big juicy steak.”

He told her he’d been exempt from military service because of a back injury he suffered while receiving dance instruction from Martha Graham.

“Fox didn’t think it was macho to promote the idea that I’d been in a dance class, so Publicity claimed that I injured myself while rowing when I was at my university,” he said.

“The Welsh playwright, Emlyn Williams, got me my big break as the lead in his play, *The Morning Star*, in 1942. He believed in the casting couch,” Peck remembered.

It was in the Reagans’ cabin that Jane and Peck became intimately involved. “Those moonlit nights on the lake under a full moon were very romantic,” director Brown said. “I knew what was going on behind the backs of Greta and Reagan. The whole crew knew.”

Jane told her girlfriends, Goddard and Blondell, “I followed in Ingrid Bergman’s footsteps. Greg is hypnotic. A gal can fall for him. That deep, well-modulated voice of his is pure seduction. He told me that he’d been a male model before going to Hollywood. He posed for underwear ads, but, as he told her, “the underwear ads were rejected.”

“Tell me why!” she asked.

“I’m too embarrassed,” Peck said. “The advertiser instructed the ad agency to find another model. He didn’t want me giving men a case of penis envy.”

“Men exaggerate so,” Goddard said.

“But in Greg’s case,” Jane said, “he told the truth. He’s a great lover, a woman’s dream. He’s going to have a big career in Hollywood. He’s getting fan mail from women and homos all over America. He has to give in to temptation once in a while. He’s only human—and all man!”

In the only statement Peck made in an interview about Jane, he said, “She’s a great woman. Very talented and a hell of a lot of fun to be with.”

The Yearling was released in Los Angeles very late in 1946, in December, as a means of making it eligible for Oscar consideration in that year. Its official premiere was celebrated during January of 1947 at Manhattan’s Radio City Music Hall, where it was a big hit.

Most reviewers and columnists lauded Jane’s performance. *Photoplay* claimed that “*The Yearling’s* chief acting honors belonged to Jane Wyman as Ma Baxter. Devoid of glamorizing makeup, she *is* a care-worn, embittered woman with one goal in life: Food and shelter, and maybe a well outside her door so she need not trek a mile for every precious drop.”

Parents Magazine stated, “It is Jane Wyman as Ma Baxter who does the most creative acting, for she suggests a whole lifetime of denial in the mother’s fear of losing Jody if she loves him too openly. Her intense pride in rising above poverty and being beholden to no one is true of pioneer dignity. And she makes understandable the bitterness of backwoods women.”

Columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote: “Jane Wyman, demonstrating an amazing versatility, is the surprise of the picture. She plays the drab, nagging, miserable farm wife with such authority and definition as to make it almost impossible to believe that this weary creature and the glamorous little cookie of *Night and Day* came from the repertoire of the same actress.”

Peck himself pronounced *The Yearling* as “a bit too saccharine for me, too many Walt Disney elements.” Despite his reservations, he was nominated for Best Actor, although he lost to Fredric March for his performance in the box office hit, *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Jane was nominated for an Oscar as Best Actress of the Year, only to lose to her longtime rival, Olivia de Havilland, cast as the long-suffering mother in *To Each His Own*.

The Yearling was also nominated as Best Picture and Best Director (Brown) of 1946 and Harold F. Kress was nominated for Best Film Editing.

In addition to its many nominations, the film went on to win a pair of Oscars, one for Best Art Direction and Interior Decoration; another for Best Color Cinematography.

Based on the acclaim accorded to Jane after the release of two of her recent films, *The Lost Weekend* and *The Yearling*, she had self-confidence for the first time in her life. “I found I had a new self. I was no longer afraid, no longer shy. If people didn’t understand the new me, the hell with them. Regrettably, I don’t think Ronnie understood that I was going to the top rung on the Hollywood ladder, in spite of what happened to his career. From that moment on, my turned-up button nose became something that nature had placed in the center of my face. Period.”

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“What a comedown,” Jane said, when she learned that she’d been cast in a Western named *Cheyenne* (1947), *[It was retitled* The Wyoming Kid *for TV.] “A god damn Western,” she railed.*

Jane, Bruce Bennett, & Janis Paige in *Cheyenne*.

Reagan tried to console her, reminding her that most of the big female stars at Warners had also appeared in Westerns. “Did you forget that you were in *Bad Men of Missouri* with Dennis Morgan?”

“I didn’t forget,” she said. “In fact, he’s my co-star in *Cheyenne.*”

She tried to conceal her delight at being with Morgan again, since, during her filming of *The Yearling*,she'd almost lost touch with him.

On the first day of shooting on the set of *Cheyenne*, Morgan lunched with her, each of them trying to console the other for the failure of *One More Tomorrow*. Later, he visited her in her dressing room, perhaps proving that her allure for him was still as strong as ever.

She found him "as sweet as ever." She told Joan Blondell, "He reminds me of a naughty little boy who's caught sticking his hand in the cookie jar. Critics call his acting wooden, but I find he's versatile and not appreciated by Jack Warner."

Other than Michael Curtiz, Jane had never worked with a director as powerful as Raoul Walsh. Before leaving one morning for work, Reagan told her, "Errol *[Flynn]* and I survived Raoul in *Desperate Journey*. So can you."

Morgan said, "Walsh has directed John Wayne, Errol Flynn, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, and Marlene Dietrich. Now us. He'll make mincemeat of us."

Actually, he didn't. Walsh seemed to realize that *Cheyenne* would be one of his minor efforts, and he didn't overly extend himself. One afternoon, he flatly told Jane and Morgan, "Direct yourselves today. I'm going to get drunk. If you don't want to do that, go fuck each other, which sounds like a hell of a lot more fun than starring in this picture."

In *Cheyenne*, Morgan played a card shark in trouble with the law. A Wells Fargo agent approaches him and offers him a deal. "Find a stagecoach robber known as "The Poet," and all charges against you will be dropped.

Morgan sets out on his mission, where he encounters Jane, cast as Ann Kincaid. She is secretly married to "The Poet," a swaggering folk hero played by Bruce Bennett, a former Tarzan. Arthur Kennedy, her boyfriend in *Bad Men of Missouri*, played his stagecoach-robbing sidekick, the Sundance Kid. Singer Janis Paige plays a saloon singer, and did so badly.

Jane later said, "I have only a distant memory of that movie. I know that moviegoers stayed away in droves."

Throughout most of the film, Jane and Morgan are at odds on the screen. At one point, they are forced to sleep together in a small cabin. He says, "Put your foot where it belongs."

In response, she quips, "Don't tempt me!"

In their reviews of the Western, most critics were cruel, although some thought Jane was cool and Morgan jaunty as an amateur sleuth trying to unmask a quixotic stagecoach bandit. The heavies in the film, Bennett and Kennedy, were labeled as "dour," and Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* found Paige "ridiculous as the dance hall girl."

Variety claimed that Jane's role sweetened toward the end when she falls for Morgan.

In Jane's summation, "Just when I got the ball rolling on my career, I fumbled the pass."

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In 1947, Jane assessed herself as being, "On top of the world." She said that in spite of her continuing marital conflicts with Reagan. Her marriage was deteriorating rapidly, even though, as she told her confidantes, "Ronnie doesn't seem to realize that. After years of pursuing every dame at Warners, he seems to be settling down to a comfortable, middle-class family life. He even wants a third child."

Of course, he has SAG," she told both Dick Powell and June Allyson. "At times, I think he's more married to the Guild than to me."

Powell tried to apologize for him. "With all the union troubles, with everything coming down on his head, it's no wonder."

Later that evening, when Powell was outside talking to Reagan, Allyson joined Jane in the kitchen. "Darling, do what I do," Allyson said. "Have an affair on the side. Right now, I'm making *Good News* with Peter Lawford. We had an affair, but it's over now."

"He's very handsome," Jane said.

"I'll introduce you."

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Jane was excited by her next picture, *Magic Town* (1947), mainly because her co-star was James Stewart, with whom she had had a fling back in the 1930s. William Wellman, its director, told her that he was hoping for the kind of critical success that "Jimmy enjoyed after *It's a Wonderful Life*. That picture flopped at the box office, but it got great reviews. I know you want to continue your winning steak after *The Lost Weekend* and *The Yearling*. If you and Jimmy perform like I think you can, both of you might carry off Oscars for *Magic Town*."

“You certainly have high hopes for us,” she said. “I hope Jimmy and I can live up to your expectations.”

Once, when she failed to deliver a certain scene, Wellman yelled at her, “You stinking deer killer! Do it again!” Throughout the filming, he kept calling her “Deer Killer,” a reference to her role in *The Yearling*. It was an ongoing joke with him, one she didn’t appreciate.

RKO, it turned out, was only the distributor. *Magic Town* was an independent production created by the Oscar-winning screenwriter, Robert Riskin, who had married Fay Wray. He had been a frequent collaborator of Frank Capra, having worked with him on *It Happened One Night* (1934) which had brought Oscars to Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable.

In *Magic Town*, Stewart was cast as Rip Smith, a failed pollster who hoped to jump-start his career by finding the “public opinion capital of America,” where he could test views that reflected the American mindset at the moment.

He settled on the small town of Grandview, where everybody was typical. Everyone that is, except Mary Peterman (as played by Jane), a crusading newspaper editor who wants the town to evolve, expand and grow. Stewart prefers it to remain in a time capsule.

Naturally, they fall in love. Before shooting began, Stewart told Wellman, “I want to generate as much heat with Jane as Katharine Hepburn and I did in *The Philadelphia Story* (1940).”

James Stewart and Jane Wyman in *Magic Town*: Sexy but coyly romantic icons of small-town virtue.

Generally known as “Wild Bill,” the director had assembled an impressive supporting cast. Jane had a reunion with Regis Toomey. Together, they still held the record for the longest screen kiss. This time, he got only a peck on the cheek.

Meeting Jane again after a long absence, her co-star, Stewart, warmly embraced and kissed her. Over lunch in the commissary, they had time for an update of their lives. “I’m amazed you haven’t gotten married yet,” she said. “You know what happens to an unmarried actor in Hollywood who turns forty. Hedda and Louella will spread rumors that you’re queer.”

“How wrong they’d be,” he answered. “I keep a little book. In it, I record my every conquest. To date, I’ve reached 201.”

“Please tell me just the marquee names,” she said. “If you don’t, I’ll call Paulette Goddard, and she’ll keep me up to date.”

“I’m not a Kiss-and-Tell guy, but if you insist: “Jane Wyman, first and foremost. Wendy Barry, Diana Barrymore, Olivia de Havilland, Jean Harlow, Rita Hayworth, Katharine Hepburn. Must I go on?”

“Don’t stop now,” she said.

“Okay. Jeanette MacDonald, Ginger Rogers, Rosalind Russell, Norma Shearer, Lana Turner, Loretta Young, Margaret Sullavan, and Marlene Dietrich. When Marlene and I made *Destry Rides Again* in ’39, I knocked her up. She had an abortion.”

“How unfortunate,” she said. “I’d have loved to see what a kid by you and Marlene looked like.”

Stewart may have been off in his math. Before he entered the Air Corps during World War II, a Hollywood columnist estimated the number of his conquests to be “263 different glamour girls of Hollywood.”

He still had the stammering delivery and gangly physique she remembered, and although he’d matured, he remained boyishly attractive. She told Lucille Ball, “Jimmy has a somewhat eagle-beaked appearance, but he’s handsome in an offbeat way.”

“I may soon get married, but I’ve loved my bachelor days,” he said. “Let me tell you, they were wonderful… just wonderful. Boy, did I have some hot times. It would be hard to give it up and settle down.”

Over dessert, he asked her, “Do I have to apologize for that night when Hank *[Henry Fonda]* and I took

advantage of your innocence? You were so young, so pretty."

"Don't kid yourself, big boy," she said. "I wasn't all that innocent. I was fucking Errol Flynn, Robert Taylor, and Clark Gable, for openers: You're not the only one who can drop marquee names. And let me add the great James Stewart and Henry Fonda to that impressive roster. Speaking of that, do you go in for repeats?"

"We'd better not," he said. "Let's just confine it to flirting with each other and kissing on camera. You see, I'm close friends with your Ronnie. I'd feel guilty about it."

"It's your loss," she said with a sigh.

When it was released, *Magic Town* didn't find its audience, although later generations usually tended to appreciate it.

As for her performance in it, *Photoplay* gave Jane a plug, writing, "It's unusual enough to rate a cheer. It's unrealistic enough to rate a brush-off. Wyman is a good actress; her quiet handling of the role of the small town newspaperwoman is apt enough to sometimes put the mannered Stewart at a disadvantage."

Faced with a lackluster reception, RKO publicity agents went to work and devised a series of provocative new ads. Within a context and using a pose having nothing to do with the movie, Stewart was depicted holding Jane in a sexy embrace with her shapely legs on ample display. The headline blared "THEIR LOVE JEOPARDIZED THE HAPPINESS OF THOUSANDS."

Reagan went to see the film, later critiquing it to Jane with the comment, "Where was Frank Capra when you and Jimmy needed him?"

Jane also got her share of negative reviews, one critic writing, "I was never sure who Jane Wyman was impersonating. Surely it wasn't Irene Dunne. No, Jean Arthur. No, I've got it. Claudette Colbert."

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Peter Lawford is seen on a night club outing to Slapsie Maxies, with Jane Wyman as his date.

Reagan heard of this, but didn't seem to be threatened. "Everybody knows this limey bastard is a pansy. You'll be safe with him. He's so effete. Not just the way he talks, but the way he walks and acts..."

Jane accepted June Allyson's invitation and visited her on the set of *Good News* (1947), a movie she was co-starring in with Peter Lawford. Six years younger than Jane, the good-looking British star was a known bisexual in Hollywood.

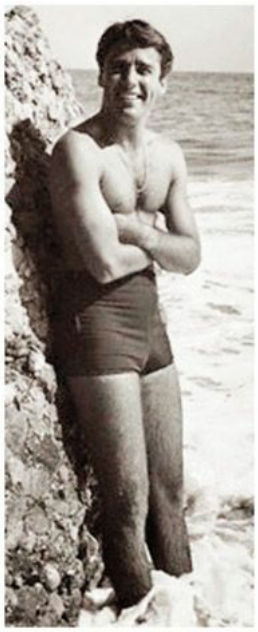
At the time, he was no longer dating Allyson, but was juggling affairs with another MGM starlet, Nancy Davis, as well as with Van Johnson and Tom Drake. He was also managing an affair with Robert Walker, and had broken up with Lana Turner. Before that, he'd had a fling with Rita Hayworth.

When Allyson and Jane got together, they discussed one favorite topic—and that was men. Jane revealed "a cute story" about when she'd first called Reagan for a date. "I invited him to drop by my place for cocktails. He asked me, 'What for?'"

After meeting her, Lawford asked Jane out one Friday night. He met her at the studio and drove her up to Malibu, asking, "You made some excuse to your husband?"

"I don't remember if I did or not, but he's used to my going out."

"You and June must spend a lot of time making excuses to your husbands," he said.



Lawford, cruising.

Jane chose not to view that as an insult and threw herself into the fun of the evening. He admitted, during their drive up the coast, that he had been surprised when Allyson had responded to his advances during their work co-starring together in *Two Sisters from Boston* (1946).

"I guess I believed all that fan magazine pulp that depicted Dick Powell and her as the perfect couple. I was crazy about her. She was like a little china doll, so sweet, so nice, so intelligent. She even invited me to her home for parties. She insisted I bring a date to throw Dick off her trail."

"He's only a good detective in the movies, not in real life."

"June and I finally had to cool it because Louis B. Mayer found out about us and threatened our careers," Peter said.

Allyson later recalled, "I sort of presented Peter as a present to Jane when we broke off. She was so frustrated in her marriage to Ronnie. I had been fond of Peter in a very romantic way. I loved his devil-may-care attitude, and his British accent fascinated me."

According to Allyson, "Jane and Peter became intimate on their first date."

In Malibu, Lawford invited her to a little tavern that on Friday nights featured an open mike. "I'm having to sing and dance in *Good News,"* Lawford said. "I'm neither a singer or dancer. Tonight, I'd like to sing a few songs with you to get over my shyness about singing in public. I know you're a singer. We can do the familiar favorites that both of us know, like 'Bye, Bye Blackbird.' If I can sing before strangers, I'll be better prepared to do so on camera."

He and Jane sang five songs, and the crowd in the tavern cheered, demanding more. Jane called out to the audience, "We have so many requests, we'll stay here all night and sing them all!" That brought even more cheers.

Later, she told Allyson that after midnight that evening, Lawford brought her back to his living quarters. "I think Lady May Lawford lived in another part of the house. He calls his mother 'The Bitch.' Peter is very oral."

After only five dates, as Jane was about to start filming *Johnny Belinda* with Lew Ayres, both Lawford and Jane were ready to move on to other conquests. She told Allyson the real reason she broke from Lawford: "I heard that he goes to whorehouses since his regular dates won't do all the oral stuff he demands. He's also said to patronize male hustlers that he pick up in toilets. I'm afraid that if I keep dating him, I'll catch something."

About a month after they broke off from one another, Jane received a call from Lawford. Apparently, he'd given a blow-by-blow description of their affair to his newly minted and very gossipy friend, Frank Sinatra. "Frank wants a date with you," Lawford said. "Are you game?"

"Let me get back to you on that," she told him. Then she hung up the phone, never to use it again to call Lawford.

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June of 1947 represented one of the darkest moments in Reagan and Jane's troubled marriage. During the course of that month, Reagan was stricken with pneumonia. When he began gasping, "I can't breathe," he was rushed to the emergency ward of Los Angeles' Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. There, he was diagnosed with a fever of 104°. When Jane was allowed to visit him the following morning, his doctors told her that he had a rare strain of pneumonia that resisted so-called miracle drugs. They suggested that he might die.

Coming as it did on top of her mounting woes, she worked herself into a state of hysteria. Months before, her own doctor had told her that she was pregnant again. That was about the last news she wanted to hear, as she'd been cast as the star of *Johnny Belinda*, her most important role to date.

During a talk with Joan Blondell, she accused Reagan of tricking her and getting her pregnant. "He thinks that by knocking me up, he can save our marriage," Jane said. "All he's done is make me hate him." Before ringing off, she told Blondell that she'd had sex with Reagan for the last time. "We're going to separate."

Early on the morning of June 26, Maureen's nanny summoned an ambulance to rush Jane to the Queen of Angels Hospital. There, at 11:26AM, she gave premature birth to a pathetically frail and undersized wraith, a baby girl, whom she'd already named Christine Reagan. Days later, when Reagan recovered from his pneumonia, he incorrectly informed the press that Jane had had a miscarriage. She had not. The girl was born, but had died of cardiac arrest at 8:45PM on the evening of her birth.

Reagan did not console Jane on their loss. Neither did she offer him any comfort.

On her orders, the authorities cremated the body six days after Christine's death.

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When Reagan, after a prolonged fight for his life, was released from the hospital, he was seventeen pounds lighter. And whereas he resumed work on the filming of *That Hagen Girl* with Shirley Temple, Jane began to train for the role of the deaf mute in *Johnny Belinda*.

To master sign language, Jane hired Elizabeth Gessner, an expert, who spent weeks teaching her how. She had a hard time mastering it, but finally, she realized what her problem was. The fact that she could hear was reflected in her reactive timing and in the expression on her face. She solved that problem by stuffing wax into her ear canals during rehearsals, a technique she'd continue during the actual shooting of the film. Using that device, and by remaining silent for hours at a time, she gave the illusion of being lost within a context of total deafness.

Reagan was still occupying the same home with her, Maureen, and Michael. At first, he didn't know that her ears were plugged, thinking she was refusing to speak to him.

As she remembered, "We often passed each other in the hallway. He came and went, usually involved in SAG business at night. He had moved out of our bedroom and slept in the guest room. Under the same roof, we lived in separate worlds."

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During pre-production, before Jane's casting as Belinda, there had been many intense debates, all of them stressful, with various stars considered for the role. Joan Crawford called producer Jerry Wald, who was responsible for the green-lighting of *Johnny Belinda*. "I need another Oscar to match the one I won for *Mildred Pierce,*" she asserted.

Wald was impressed with the way Jean Negulesco had helmed Crawford in *Humoresque* (1946). Of course, Wald knew she was too old for the role, as was Bette Davis, who was also in the running.

"The new girl on the block," Eleanor Parker, was deemed most suitable, but she had already signed to appear in other pictures, *Escape Me Never* with Errol Flynn, and *The Voice of the Turtle* with Reagan, both in 1947.

Finally, after all the Warner executives had seen a screening of *The Yearling*, Jane emerged as the final selection. Somewhere along the way, two of Jane's closest friends, Alexis Smith and Ann Sheridan, had also been discussed as possible candidates.

A sensitive movie brilliantly acted, and marketed with lurid overlays from MGM's publicity department.

Despite condemnations from censors, audiences were drawn to it.

Yet even after Jane signed for the role, the casting debates continued. Samuel Goldwyn, presumably meddling in the affairs of a competing studio, called Wald, telling him, "You know in your heart that there's only one actress who'd be the ideal choice for Be-linda—and that's my little Teresa Wright. Even though you've already cast Wyman, you know I'm right. With her, it might be a stretch. With Wright, it's a natural."

An abused deaf-mute, as portrayed by Jane, emerging—with the help of Lew Ayres, seen here from behind—from her prison and shell.

Wright had already won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress in *Mrs. Miniver* (1942), and had delivered a brilliant performance in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). For a very brief time, Wald considered removing Jane from the project and signing Wright instead, but Goldwyn demanded too much money for a loan-out.

Bringing *Johnny Belinda* to the screen had required a long period of gestation. In 1940, it had opened on Broadway as a play starring Helen Craig, the wife of actor John Beal, who had been Katharine Hepburn's co-star in the film, *The Little Minister* (1934).

At the time, Jane had attended a performance of the play with Reagan and Louella Parsons during one of their cross-country promotional tours. Parsons predicted "This play will never be made into a film because the plot centers on a rape. That is forbidden for display on screen."

Parsons opinion reflected a conservative application of the values and standards of her era, but *Johnny Belinda* would defy the Code and become the first A-list picture of its kind to feature rape since 1934, when the Production Code had begun strict enforcement of its self-defined moral imperatives.

World War came and went before Wald unearthed the property and told Warner, "It'll make a hell of a movie." It took a lot of persuading before Warner purchased the rights for $50,000. Even then, the studio faced the major task of rewriting and reconfiguring it. To that effect, Warner hired two screenwriters of minor importance. One of them was Irma von Cube, a German-American who, after an early career working on films in Berlin, had penned the script for *Song of Love* (1947), starring Katharine Hepburn, Paul Henreid, and Robert Walker. Her partner in the scriptwriting of *Johnny Belinda* was a writer/actor, Allen Vincent, who had starred in minor films in the 1930s. As a scriptwriting team, they went through eight versions before one of them was finally deemed acceptable.

Johnny Belinda had originated as a play by Elmer Blaney Harris, who based it on an incident that had occurred at his summer home on Prince Edward Island off the eastern coast of Canada. Lydia Dingwell (1852-1931), a deaf

mute, had been brutally raped and impregnated, with dire consequences, including murder. The story not only dramatized the horror of rape, but the consequences of spreading rumors and lies in a small town of fishermen and their families.

Jane was cast as Belinda McDonald, the victim of the rape, who is befriended by a new doctor, Robert Richardson. He realizes that Belinda, though treated like a dummy by the townspeople, is very intelligent. Her father is Black McDonald, and she lives with him and her Aunt Aggie. Belinda rarely ventures into town, where she is likely to be mocked.

The doctor's secretary is in love with him, but when he spurns her advances, she marries a local lout, Locky McCormick, the villain of the piece. He gets drunk at a dance, goes to the farm where Belinda is alone, and rapes her, which causes her to become pregnant.

As a 1930s "Pretty Boy on Celluloid," Lew Ayres had a certain androgynous appeal, attracting the hearts of such diverse personalities as Spencer Tracy or Ginger Rogers, and ultimately, Jane Wyman herself.

When news of her pregnancy spreads through the town, the doctor is suspected as the father. The baby boy is named Johnny.

When Locky, now married to Richardson's secretary, decides he wants to claim (and kidnap) the baby, he is shot (and killed) by Belinda after a struggle. Subsequently, she's put on trial for murder, but eventually, news of who actually committed the rape is aired in the open light of day. Richardson saves the day, taking Belinda and Johnny to their new home and a new life.

As director of this controversial screenplay, Jean Negulesco became available when Errol Flynn refused to accept him as director on the set of *The Adventures of Don Juan* (1948).

Negulesco proposed to Wald that Brian Aherne should be shoehorned into the role of the doctor. "If not Brian, how about Robert Donat or Ronald Colman?"

Wald, however, had a different vision: He had seen Marlon Brando interpret the brutish role of Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and as the doctor, he wanted the handsome, talented young actor. Warner, however, adamantly disagreed. He, too, had seen *Streetcar*. "I understand Brando is a secret faggot. Besides that, he mumbles. I didn't understand a god damn word he said except 'STELLA! STELLA! STELLA!'"

Finally, the name of Lew Ayres was put forth, based on his having played a doctor in a series that included nine *Dr. Kildare* movies from 1938 to 1942.

Although his fame had derived from roles he had played before the war, Ayre's career was far from over. He had already made a successful post-war comeback playing an empathetic doctor in *The Dark Mirror* (1946).

When Ayres was first contacted about the role, he said. "Although I hear you signed Jane Wyman, who is all wrong for the part, I hope you cast Teresa Wright as my leading lady."

Wald responded, "You leave the casting to us, okay?"

At the time Ayres made that statement, he had seen neither *The Yearling* nor *The Lost Weekend*. He remembered Jane, if at all, as the wisecracking "Hey-Hey Girl" of the 1930s. He didn't learn until later that she didn't want him for her leading man either, preferring Joseph Cotten.

The studio's first choice for the rapist was sexy, stoically handsome Rory Calhoun, who had served a three-year jail term for several incidences of armed robbery before he was twenty-one. His gay agent, Henry Willson, was heavily promoting him and taking sexual advantage of his new discovery. Calhoun would go on to become a star,

making two pictures with Marilyn Monroe, *How To Marry a Millionaire* in 1953, and *River of No Return* in 1954, which also co-starred Robert Mitchum.

Warner ruled against Calhoun. A newly emerging, malevolent-looking "menace" on the screen, Stephen McNally, was selected instead. *[Ironically, when the actor was billed as "Horace McNally," he had played the kindly doctor, Robert Richardson, on Broadway in the stage version. He kept the name of Horace until he was cast in Johnny Belinda. Henceforth, he would be billed as Stephen McNally.]* Wald had been impressed when he'd played the villain in Judy Garland's *The Harvey Girls* (1946).

When McNally first met Jane on the set, he asked her, "Can we go somewhere private and rehearse the rape scene?"

She denied his request.

A New Yorker, like McNally, Jan Sterling would become one of the best known of the cinematic blondes of the 1950s. She'd be nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress for her performance in *The High and the Mighty* (1954).

At the time Jane met her, she was married to the British actor, John Merivale, who would later become famously associated with Vivien Leigh, becoming her lover after her divorce in 1960 from Lord Laurence Olivier. Sterling herself would become married to the likable lug, the "character leading man," Paul Douglas.

Originally, Janis Paige, a singer/actress, was selected for the role of the doctor's jealous secretary, Locky's wife, but Wald interpreted her screen test as unacceptable.

Agnes Moorehead was cast in the role of Belinda's aunt and flinty guardian. Moorehead had made her debut in *Citizen Kane* (1941), one of the greatest films ever made. Before that, she'd worked in The Mercury Theatre with Orson Welles. Moorehead's performance in *Johnny Belinda* was eventually nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress.

Charles Bickford was offered the role of Belinda's father. Wald later said, "He held me up. It was highway robbery. But we finally hired him for $5,000 a week." At the time, Bickford was among the hottest character actors in Hollywood, and there was talk that he might win the Oscar for his recent appearance in *The Farmer's Daughter* (1947), co-starring Loretta Young and Ethel Barrymore.

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Cast and crew of *Johnny Belinda* were moved to the village of Mendocino, some 42 miles north of San Francisco, along the 42-mile-long Big River. This rustic setting had been selected by Wald with the understanding that more than any other village in California, it matched the terrain of a fishing hamlet in the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

On the set, Jane came face to face with her leading man, Lew Ayres.

She had first seen him on the screen in 1929 when he'd starred opposite Greta Garbo in *The Kiss* and she'd "thrilled at his male beauty" when he played the young soldier on *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).

Ever since, he'd been a media event, and she followed his life and career in the fan magazines. They had reviewed his marriages, first to Lola Lane and later to Ginger Rogers.

From the first night, Jane and Ayres became almost inseparable. "I'm not saying that Lew drove the nails into the coffin of my marriage to Ronnie," she later told June Allyson. "Lew was not to blame. But he moved into my heart. I would probably have divorced Ronnie anyway. There is no way I wanted to become the wife of a politician."

In record time, both Ayres and Jane became *confidants*. Reagan had offered her no comfort following the cremation of their infant daughter, but Ayres did. At first, he came on to her like a priest, which he had wanted to be at one time in his life. But by the third night, her "father confessor" had become her lover.

As she later claimed, "he became almost overnight the love of my life."

Jane had to tell someone, and she chose Agnes Moorehead, who, based on their work on the same movie set every day, became an eyewitness to Jane's fast-developing love affair. Jane told her, "John Payne thrilled me sexually, Dennis Morgan is a darling. But Lew is something else. I have an actual glow when I'm around him. I know I sound like a silly schoolgirl, but he touches my heart in a way no man has ever done before."

During their time off, they would wander off together. Sometimes, they shared a picnic along the banks of the Big River, finding a secluded spot. She took up painting, with a preference for landscapes. He drove her around in a battered pickup truck rented from a local farmer with funds provided by the studio.

They found an escapist retreat in the fern-banked canyons of Russian Gulch, amid copses of redwood trees. Sometimes, they explored the rocky coastline around Fort Bragg, finding a hidden cove where he made love to her. She painted scenes of the Noyo River, with its small fishing craft, while he read the theology-based existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard.

"Often, we would sit for hours at a time, when we weren't needed for a scene," she told Moorehead. "Like Belinda in our picture, I could communicate silently with Lew."

He told her of his much-publicized experiences during World War II. In March of 1942, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he had refused to bear arms and consequently, registered as a conscientious objector. In reaction, many theaters boycotted his films, especially films in his *Dr. Kildare* series. Along with other conscientious objectors, he was sent to Cascade Locks, an internment center in Oregon. "I believe in praising the Lord, but not passing the ammunition," he said at the time.

He left the internment camp by volunteering as a medical corpsman and chaplain's assistant serving on the front lines in the South Pacific. Once there, he earned the respect of his fellow servicemen, exposing himself to danger, aiding the wounded, and comforting the dying.

He told Jane, "The horrors of war were worse than I'd imagined. I held little children in my arms as they were bleeding to death, with only a minute or so to live. I saw other children standing by to watch their parents be buried in a mass grave. I held soldiers whose intestines had been ripped out by a bomb. I listened to their dying word. Often it was, 'Tell my mother that I will always love her from Heaven.'"

Ayres showed her a column written by right winger Hedda Hopper shortly after his return to Hollywood. She commended him for his service during the war, the terms of which had originally inspired frontpage ridicule. "Ayres faced professional suicide, but to crucify a man who stands up to his own convictions is un-Christian and un-American," Hopper wrote.

He kept his body in good shape at the age of thirty-eight, two years older than Reagan. Often, Jane and Ayres swam nude together in the waters of Big River. He told her he liked the role he was playing. "I stand up against a bigoted, self-righteous town. The role was made for me."

"Ronnie is pragmatic," Jane told Moorehead. "Lew is idealistic. Ronnie reads about politics, Lew devours books on religion and philosophy."

On Sunday afternoons, on a riverbank, Ayres would play his jazz banjo for Jane. She didn't know that he'd been trained as a musician in his native Minnesota. His father had played the cello.

Jane also said, "He doesn't indulge in Hollywood gossip like I love to do. In addition to being a brilliant actor, he can also whittle, sculpt, write anti-war plays, and compose a symphony—he's a true Renaissance man. I find him a wonderful companion and a great and most satisfying lover. When he seduces a woman, he makes her feel like a goddess. He also has a good sense of humor, very much like my own."

"His eyes convey a sadness," she told Moorehead. "He's very quiet. When he does speak, it's with a warm, caring voice that I find very soothing. He's a vegetarian. I haven't had a steak since I met him. At night, he holds me in his arms."

"Girl, you sound like you're in love," Moorehead answered.

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When Jack Warner saw the first rushes of *Johnny Belinda*, he exploded in fury. "What is this? Some fucking mood piece about fog and seagulls from Sweden?" He had just returned from a vacation in France. When Jane came on the screen, he was even more horrified. "I can't stand the sight of her. She's ugly. People don't buy tickets to see an ugly woman on the screen. Put some makeup on her. You've got too much of this deaf-and-dumb shit. Have a voice over to narrate and let us know what she's thinking. Silent pictures went out, already. In fact, Warners invented the talking picture."

Negulesco did not listen to the demands of his boss and went on shooting the picture as he'd conceived it.

Late one afternoon, Reagan arrived unexpectedly in Mendocino. He hadn't informed Jane that he was coming. Was he on the scene because he'd heard rumors that she was having an affair with Ayres? Moorehead and Negulesco noticed that Reagan got a chilly reception from Jane. She did not allow him to sleep in her cabin, claiming that it would break her concentration for the role. Ironically, he ended up bedding down in Ayres' cabin, because it was the only place with an available bed.

As Negulesco later said, "I would love to have been a fly on the wall to hear what those two guys had to say about each other."

Reagan left early the next morning, but the director noticed that Jane did not kiss him goodbye. However, Reagan shook Ayres' hand and thanked him for putting him up for the night.

Within two days, another unexpected visitor arrived on the scene to confront Ayres. It was his girlfriend, the blonde-haired actress, Audrey Totter. Unknown to Jane, she and Ayres had been engaged in an affair.

Unlike Reagan, who had been discreet and had caused no trouble, Totter was "itching for a fight," as she told Negulesco.

Their confrontation took place in Jane's cabin in the presence of Ayres. "The screams between the two jealous women could be heard across the river," Negulesco said.

In a rage, Totter left Mendocino, vowing never to speak to Ayres again.

"Totter got kicked out on her ass," Negulesco recalled. "I had a member of my crew drive her to San Francisco and put her on a plane back to Los Angeles. Her fling with Lew was over. Obviously, he'd found a new gal, a married one at that. I figured that if Totter knew that, then the word had already spread across Hollywood. America's ideal couple of World War II was that no more. The title had passed."

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After their completion of *Johnny Belinda*, Jane told the cast and crew goodbye, hugging and kissing Moorehead. She told her newly made friend that she was going for a short vacation in New York. After telling Negulesco farewell, Ayres drove Jane to San Francisco, where they boarded a plane together to New York.

Once in Manhattan, they booked a suite together at The Plaza, but for the most part avoided the usual celebrity haunts, such as the Stork Club. However, Harrison Carroll, the Hollywood reporter for the *Herald-Express*, caught up with the romantic couple one night.

Perhaps he came upon Jane in an unguarded moment. She almost never made comments about Reagan to the press. But on this afternoon in December of 1947, she did. "There is no use lying. I am not the happiest girl in the world. It's nothing that happened recently. It's an accumulation of things that have been coming down for a long time. When I return to Los Angeles, I will talk things over with Ronnie. I hope and believe that we will solve our problems and avoid a separation."

Later, when columnist Gladys Hall cornered her, she had been drinking and was even more indiscreet, delivering a far more candid appraisal of her marriage. "Ronnie and I are through. We're finished! It's all my fault."

When she read these statements, Louella Parsons called Reagan at once. These two former residents of Dixon, Illinois, had long been allies and friends. He told her, "I love Jane and I know she loves me. I don't know what this is all about, and I don't know why Jane has done it. For my part, I hope to live with her for the rest of my life."

Then he uttered a shocker, "Jane very much needs to have a fling, and I intend to let her have it."

Hedda Hopper managed to reach Reagan for brief statement. He said, "If it comes to divorce, I'll name *Johnny Belinda* as my co-respondent."

Back in Hollywood, Jane asked Reagan to move out, and he took his luggage to a hotel. Even so, she seemed to realize how indiscreet her comments in New York had been.

She wrote an "open letter" to him, which was sent to and then published in a movie magazine.

"Dear Ronnie,
You and I have been married for seven years. During this period, at least once a week, you've reminded me (kiddingly), how lucky I am to have you for a husband. I thing I am lucky. All kidding aside, there isn't a single thing about you I'd want to change. You've been wonderful to me in many ways."

Apparently, she didn't mean a word of what she'd written.

To squelch rumors about an affair with Ayres, Jane called Reagan and invited him to be her escort at the premiere of *Johnny Belinda*. He told George Murphy, "I think this means a reconciliation. I'll be sleeping in my own bed tonight."

It was a glittering affair. In contrast to her drab appearance in the film, Jane showed up in a satin gown and a mink coat, looking almost as glamorous as she'd ever appeared.

Although the lavish event went smoothly, and she was smothered in congratulations, the evening ended in disaster. After he'd taken her to dinner at Chasen's, a fight erupted between Reagan and her on the sidewalk when the valet was retrieving Reagan's car.

Jane was heard shouting at Reagan, "I got along without you, and I damn well can get along without you now, you fucking has-been."

Also waiting for her car, actress Jane Greer overheard the altercation.

Wyman asked the doorman to hail a taxi for her. As she was getting into the cab, Greer also heard Reagan call after her, "Who are you fucking tonight?"

Johnny Belinda opened across the country to rave reviews. Warners, however, decided to take out full page ads emphasizing the rape. A drawing pictured a menacing man moving toward a frightened young woman. Headlines blared "SHAME CAME OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND CHANGED A YOUNG GIRL'S LIFE" Some of the ads suggested that Ayres, as the doctor, was the culprit who raped her. "HER DOCTOR WAS THE FIRST TO SHARE

HER SHAME."

In spite of Jack Warner delaying the film for months, he relished its success when it became the studio's biggest money-maker of the year. "Sometimes, it's great to be wrong. I'm laughing all the way to the bank."

Seen together at the Oscar Ceremony, waiting for an announcement about *Johnny Belinda*: Lew Ayres and "no longer plain" Jane Wyman. Reagan was noticeably absent.

In Hollywood, Parsons reviewed *Johnny Belinda* for *Cosmopolitan*, "If stardom is what Jane Wyman wants most, *Johnny Belinda* will guarantee her this eminence. Jane as the deaf mute is real and very touching. She rises to every demand of tenderness and warmth."

Jane expected to be on the list of Best Actress Academy Award nominations, although she didn't expect to win. On Oscar night, Ayres, not Reagan, was her escort. Irene Dunne was nominated for *I Remember Mama;* Olivia de Havilland for *The Snake Pit;* Ingrid Bergman for *Joan of Arc;* and Jane's friend, Barbara Stanwyck, for *Sorry, Wrong Number*.

Lovemaking on Oscar Night.

With Ayres in the seat beside her, she listened as Ronald Colman came forward to read off their names. "I slumped in my seat," Jane later said. "Two rows in front of me, I could see the neck of Dunne. She was preening, probably already mouthing her acceptance speech. Then I heard the name of JANE WYMAN ring out in the hall. I was speechless. I nearly fainted. I couldn't believe it. Lew gave me a big kiss and hug in front of the world, and urged me to get up on my feet and go forward. I dropped my handbag, and everything, including my lipstick, went rolling out on the floor. On the way to the stage, I thought of the damnest things, like 'did I remember to wear my girdle?'"

Accepting the Oscar, she gave one of the shortest speeches in the history of the Academy. "I accept this award very gracefully for keeping my mouth shut. I think I'll do that again."

Backstage, she was congratulated by Ayres, who hugged and kissed her again. She consoled him for his own loss. He had been nominated as Best Actor of the Year, but lost to Laurence Olivier for *Hamlet*.

An hour later, Jane showed up for a gala celebration honoring her in the Champagne Room of the Mocambo. On one of her arms was Jack Warner himself; on the other, Lew Ayres.

Warner took the occasion to announce that Jane was being considered for two upcoming pictures. The first was the film version of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* that at the time, on Broadway with Marlon Brando, was eliciting raves throughout the theatrical world.

[The film role ultimately went to Vivien Leigh, bringing her her second Oscar.]

The second movie Warner announced at Jane's Oscar Night party was the filming of *Ethan Frome*, the 1911 novel by Edith Wharton, a story about tragedy, irony, and repression set in rural New England.

[Bette Davis for years had urged Warners to film the Wharton novel. But she'd left the studio. Warner briefly considered co-starring Joan Crawford with Humphrey Bogart, but the project was eventually shelved.

In 1922, it would finally reach the screen with Liam Neeson and Patricia Arquette as co-stars.

Reagan got his own silent revenge for being left out of the festivities surrounding Johnny Belinda. *When he published, in 1964, his autobiography of his years in Hollywood, he didn't even mention the film or his estranged wife's Oscar win.]*

That night, with her Oscar beside her bed, Ayres made love to her "until the *cock* crowed," as she remembered it to June Allyson.

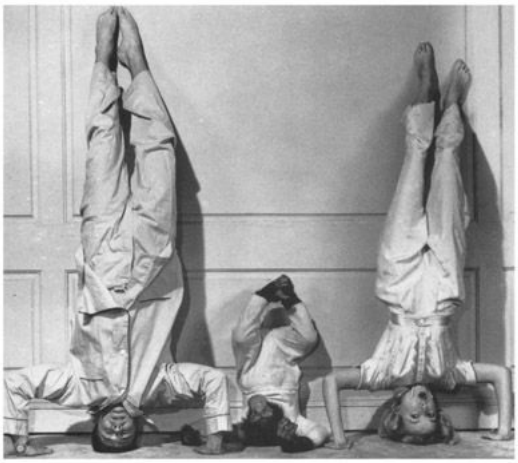
She received yet another prize before morning. Somewhere in the middle of the night, in the pre-dawn hours, he proposed marriage. "I can't think of living apart from you."

She remembered his exact words, as she later relayed them to Allyson. Holding her close, Ayres told her, "I want you to be my bride for the next fifty years. And then we'll talk about it."

Chapter Twelve

Jane Wyman Dumps Reagan for Lew Ayres, Leaving Him Broken-Hearted and Suicidal

Pleasuring Marilyn and Doris Day, a Liberated Bachelor Goes on the Prowl



Ronald Reagan and Diana Lynn stand on their heads as part of a training exercise for their pet chimp in the notorious *Bedtime for Bonzo*.

"Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant raised a feisty leopard in *Bringing Up Baby;* James Stewart had an invisible six-foot rabbit named *Harvey*, and Donald O'Connor had *Francis, the Talking Mule*. I thought I could get away with raising Bonzo. But my enemies used my performance against me politically in the years ahead, and I was forever ridiculed and haunted by the memory of appearing in that farce. Bonzo sure made a monkey out of me."

In 1947, when he testified before HUAC about communists in the film industry, Reagan wore his glasses so he'd "look more academic."
"I will defend the right of any American to openly practice and preach any political philosophy from monarchy to anarchy. But this is not the case with regard to the communist. He is bound by subversion and stealthy to impose on an unwilling people the rule of the International Communist Party, which is, in fact, the government of Soviet Russia."

Reagan had spent nearly four years in the U.S. Army Air Force making war propaganda films. No longer drawing a captain's pay, he was finally back on the payroll at Warner Brothers, with a salary of $3,500 a week, an large amount in 1945 currency. There was no immediate role for him, so he spent most of his days working on the construction of an unfinished ranch house surrounded by eight acres in North-bridge in the San Fernando Valley, which he and Jane had recently purchased.

Postwar Reagan: He's no longer the newest, hottest, or youngest actor in town.

"In my absence from the screen, a lot of new faces had emerged," he said. "Roles were going to Peter Lawford, Tom Drake, Robert Walker, Cornel Wilde, and there was talk that my friend, William Holden, and Burt Lancaster were going to become super stars."

According to George Murphy and Dick Powell, Reagan viewed Gregory Peck "as the hottest new kid on the block." Ironically, Peck was co-starring with his wife, Jane Wyman, in what would become a classic, *The Yearling*.

Although he had not yet found "the proper comeback picture for Ronnie," Jack Warner invited him to dinner. He later said at a dinner party, "A very different looking Ronald Reagan arrived at my door. He'd lost that pretty boy look he had when all the hot little starlets at my studio were chasing him. He'd become a man, with broader shoulders. He was also heavier. That boyish air he'd had was completely gone. After the war, Robert Taylor, Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, and Tyrone Power just weren't the pretty boys that caused women and teenage girls to swoon in the 1930s. Ronnie now numbered in that old group. The word handsome could still be used to describe these men, however."

Actually, in the ensuing years, Reagan became more interested in politics than he did in filmmaking, since the great roles he'd anticipated had eluded him, the ones he had expected after his appearance in *Kings Row*. He told actor Robert Montgomery, "The super stardom I'd dreamed about is not going to happen—and I know that."

"I can say the same thing about myself," Montgomery answered.

Despite his falling popularity, he could still point to a hefty paycheck. In 1946, he earned $150,000 a year as opposed to Humphrey Bogart who brought home "to my Betty" (Bacall) $432,000. Also at Warners, Errol Flynn earned just one dollar under $200,000, with Bette Davis, still queen of the lot, hauling away $328,000.

Pistol-Packin' Reagan Faces Death Threats from Union Brass, Then Outs

Hollywood "Commies" to the FBI.

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"I set about joining "every organization I could find that would guarantee to save the world, although later, to my great regret and shame, I learned that many of these were nothing but communist front groups." Reagan wrote in a memoir.

"At the time, my aim was to save the world from Neo-Fascists. I overlooked the on-coming world nightmare of communist takeovers. Actually, in the beginning, I viewed many communists as liberals like myself. Some communists I considered misguided; others, of course, were far more dangerous. At the time, I was trying to separate a good communist from a bad communist, but I soon learned there was no good communist."

On the homefront, Reagan had a lot to overcome. He'd later write, "I was a bit introverted. I've been inclined to hold back a little of myself. In some ways, I think this reluctance to get close to people never left me completely."

Jane Wyman would certainly agree with that assessment, as would his children, Maureen and Michael, and later, even his future children with Nancy Davis: Patti Davis (who didn't want to use his last name as her own) and Ron Reagan, Jr. His son would eventually become a liberal like his father had been in the 1930s and 40s.

Reagan still defined himself as a "hemophiliac liberal," but the blood flow of his "bleeding heart" had been slowed down somewhat by the waste and greed he'd witnessed firsthand in government spending in World War II.

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In the immediate post-war years, as he saw how corrupt Hollywood was, Reagan lost many of his idealistic beliefs. To an increasing degree, he began to express his fear that Communists were trying to take over the film industry for use as a propaganda vehicle, worldwide. At the time, 95% of the movies shown worldwide were conceived, scripted, and produced the United States. American films were drawing a weekly audience, worldwide, of 500,000,000, a staggering figure that's especially impressive, considering the population at the time.

Years later, Reagan recalled his own political shift to the right, "The light went on in some obscure region of my head. It took me a long time, but reality dawned. I came to condemn liberals, *[one of which I had been]*, as lost in their own ideological myopia."

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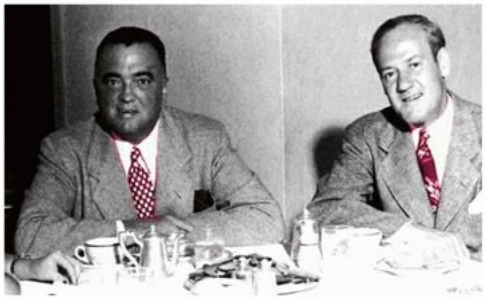
Reagan received a mysterious midnight visit at his home from three agents of the FBI. He'd been an informant to the FBI on a very casual basis since 1941, reporting on wartime conditions in Hollywood when he was making propaganda films for the government.

Until that late night meeting, Reagan's role had been only casual. But since the end of the war, J. Edgar Hoover had noticed the actor's increased political power and wanted him to become a weekly informant for information about—in the director's words—"Who's Red in Hollywood, and who's taking his marching orders from old Joe Stalin."

Middle Aged, but Still a "Babe Magnet," Reagan Sees the Decline of His Movie Career Before Warner Brothers Boots Him.



The two most dangerous and deeply closeted homosexuals in America: FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover *(left)* and his *protégé* and long time companion, Clyde Tolson.

Reagan later asserted that his four-hour early dawn meeting with the FBI "opened my eyes about Moscow's attempt to take over the film industry and to use it for their own propaganda purposes."

In the months to come, during the "witch hunt" of communists in the film industry, Reagan—now identified internally, within the F.B.I. as "Agent T-10"— filed weekly reports with Hoover.

SAG reunion *(left to right*): Jane Wyman, Henry Fonda, Ronald Reagan, Boris Karloff, and Gene Kelly.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, his role was eventually made public, although not a lot was ever learned. Many pages, perhaps vital for understanding exactly what he did, were missing from the mass of documents As for those people in the industry whom Reagan had cited as communists, their names were blacked out.

As regards his role as a domestic spy for the FBI, he told Powell and Murphy, "I felt like I was acting out my Brass Bancroft Secret Service roles in the movies."

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Before the war, Reagan had served on the Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild. After his discharge from the Army, Jane Wyman was influential in getting him reinstated. He would devote much of his time and energy during the next few years to the political activities of SAG, putting more energy into them than he did into his film career.

More drama as SAG's administration grows increasingly hostile to anything associated with socialism: *(Left to right)* George Murphy, Gene Kelly, Ronald Reagan, and William Holden.

Reagan became its third vice president in 1946. In 1947, Robert Montgomery resigned as president, because subsequent to becoming a film producer hiring actors, he viewed his duties at SAG as a conflict of interest. A special election awarded Reagan with the organization's presidency. Later, he was formally elected as SAG's full-time president, serving terms from 1947 to 1952, and again in 1959 to 1960, eventually serving an unprecedented six

terms.

Director John Huston delivered a harsh appraisal of Reagan's presidency of SAG. "I think he hooked up with SAG for purely selfish reasons. He used it as a road to power and political influence. He only went into politics because he was washed up as an actor, appearing in horrible B pictures."

Reagan later confessed, "Although Jane was helpful in getting me back on the board, I didn't pay much attention to her suggestions. Perhaps I also ignored Anne Revere ("too radical"); Louise Beavers ("a champion of civil rights"); and Agnes Moorehead ("I never took to lesbians very much").

He paid more attention to the men, "even Frankenstein" (*i.e.*, Boris Karloff), Edward Arnold, Walter Pidgeon, Pat O'Brien, and Dick Powell. "They made a lot of sense, but James Cagney, Henry Fonda, and John Garfield were leaning too far to the left," Reagan said.

"Of course, I listened to old friends, Robert Taylor and George Murphy, who were very conservative Republicans, as was Dick Powell."

A series of crippling strikes loomed in the film industry. In an emergency meeting, the SAG board, and later the membership, voted by a vast majority to adopt a no-strike policy, which Reagan endorsed. But the issues that would later divide Hollywood into warring camps were just beginning.

Since Reagan appeared to be anti-union, and had enormous influence within SAG, he developed powerful enemies, placing himself at risk of bodily harm.

When his positions became known, he was viewed as "anti-labor." This led to a series of threats against him, He received anonymous calls late at night, pressuring him to publicize the riots as a working class protest about wages, benefits, and hours, and not just an intra-mural battle between two competing unions, the CSU (Conference of Studio Unions) and IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees). One caller shouted at him, "If you don't play ball, we'll throw acid in your face, and unless it's a remake of *Frankenstein*, you won't be able to make any more of your rotten movies."

The morning after receiving what he viewed as a very serious threat, Reagan drove to the security office at Warner Brothers. There, the staff issued him a .32 Smith & Wesson handgun. He mounted it in a holster strapped to his chest, inside his jacket.

From then on, during a period of seven months, he never went anywhere without it. Every night, a Burbank police officer stood outside his house until dawn. "If approached and threatened by a would-be assassin, I was prepared to shoot to kill," Reagan said.

He was later credited as one of the major forces that ended the labor strife. Jack Warner said, "Ronnie turned out to be a tower of strength, not only for the actors, but for the whole industry. He is to be praised by anyone working in the film industry."

"Ronnie was a worthy successor to Bob Montgomery and me as president of SAG," Murphy said. "He was well aware of the strange creatures crawling out from under make-believe rocks in our make-believe town. He was on the front line in exposing those in the industry who are as Red as a May Day Parade in Moscow."

The strikes slowly came to an end in 1947. "The communist-dominated unions dissolved, in Reagan's words, "like sugar in a hot cup of coffee."

Jack Warner loudly proclaimed, "I will fire anyone suspected of being a communist."

In all, Reagan calculated that the post-war strikes had cost the studios $150,000,000, with a loss of wages set at $28,000,000.

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A week after reporting for work again at Warner Brothers, Reagan was summoned to the office of Jack Warner to discuss his future career.

"I've been mulling over what kind of movies you should make. Movie audiences have changed since your Brass Bancroft days."

"What do you think I'm best at?" Reagan asked. "I've got my own ideas, but you're the bossman."

"You're not romantic enough to step into Errol Flynn's shoes," Warner said. "I see you as Warners' answer to Cary Grant, in film scripts of parlor, bedroom, and bath."

"Personally, I like Westerns and outdoor pictures like what you've assigned for me in *Stallion Road,"* Reagan said. "I'd like to appear in historical Civil War dramas. I'm a U.S. Cavalry/Indian buff, that kind of stuff. John Wayne will be rattling his saber as a Yankee soldier, I'm sure. I hear Ray Milland is getting in on the act, and you can bet your ass that Gregory Peck will do adventure stories, riding off into the setting sun, the wind blowing the cavalry guidons."

"Well, I'm not one to talk to so much about Civil War dramas," Warner said. "I turned down *Gone With the*

Wind.”

“What about putting me in baseball or football pictures?” Reagan asked. “I like films about sportsmanship, America’s pioneering spirit, courage under fire. I’m for depicting the violence needed to settle the West with all those redskins wanting our scalps. I’m sure your boy, Errol Flynn, will be making those kind of adventure films.”

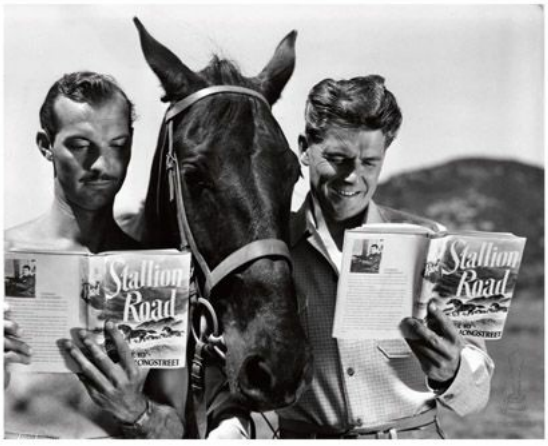
“Speaking of Flynn, he was set to star in *Stallion Road*, but I heard that he was drunk that day and the following night of his first appearance on the set. Some boys from the studio are trying to sober him up so I can bring him back to work on some other picture. I decided to drop Flynn when I heard that Bogart and Bacall each wanted to star in *Stallion Road*. They’re almost guaranteed box office these days. With them in the movie, you can make a comeback in a hit.”

To his chagrin, Reagan left Warner’s office with no clear guidance or insight into what his film future held. That afternoon, he met the director of *Stallion Road*. A New Yorker, James V. Kern seemed “an odd choice to direct a hoss opera” (Reagan’s words). He was known as a singer, songwriter, screenwriter, and actor. He’d previously helmed Jane Wyman, Ann Sheridan, and Alexis Smith in *The Doughgirls* (1944). He’d later achieve far greater success as one of the resident directors of the hit TV series of the 1950s, *I Love Lucy*.

Right before he left the studio, Kern introduced Reagan to the acclaimed Southern novelist, William Faulkner, who had been hired to write the script for *Stallion Road*.

Later, when Reagan was alone with Faulkner, the novelist told him, “I hate this god damn script based on that Stephen Longstreet novel. I’m working on this piece of shit for only one reason. I’m dead broke. I’m always dead broke. Why not lend me two-hundred dollars? But I’m warning you: I’ll forget to pay you back.”

Ten days before shooting began, Reagan received an emergency call from Kern. “Bogie and Bacall have dropped out of the picture.”



In this publicity photo, the film’s male leads Zachory Scott *(left)* and Reagan, are standing on either side of “Baby,” Reagan’s own horse. The men are each reading the original novel from which the movie script had derived.

“Any reason given?” Reagan asked.

“Bogie told Jack Warner he doesn’t like Westerns, and also that he didn’t want to work with you. He said he doesn’t like your witch hunt politics. I’ve replaced them with Zachory Scott and your friend, Alexis Smith. I worked smoothly with Jane and her in *The Doughgirls.*”

Within the week, Warner bluntly rejected Faulkner’s script and brought in Longstreet to try to write the screenplay from his own novel.

“It seemed that Longstreet had a lot of pokers in the fire,” Reagan said. “Before he left Warners that day, he gave me a copy of an unpublished novel of his. He told me it would make a great movie with me in the lead. I promised to read it over the weekend.”

Reagan with Alexis Smith, with whom he used to socialize as part of a double-dating ritual with his then-wife, Jane. After a misunderstanding with just the four of them together in Palm Springs, their friendship ended.

During his first week of work, Reagan was disappointed that Warner had cut the budget in half and would shoot *Stallion Road* not in Technicolor, as originally announced, but in black and white. “The loss of color was a pain in the ass,” Reagan told Kern. “Color would have given the crew a chance to shoot the beautiful scenery of the Sierra Madre Range, north of Los Angeles, with its lush setting of alpine meadows sweeping down to the waters of the Pacific.”

Reagan talked privately with Kern about the loss of Bogie and the subsequent casting of Scott. “I was hoping to ride Bogie’s shirttails to a big box office success to tell the world—REAGAN IS BACK!”

“At least you’re getting star billing,” Kern said. “With Bogie and Bacall, you’d have been reduced to the third lead.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” Reagan said. “Zach is a fine actor and, I’m sure, a pleasure to work with, even though he’s a homo.”

In the latest conception for *Stallion Road,* Reagan was cast as Larry Hanrahan, a horse breeder and a veterinarian, with Alexis interpreting the role of a rancher, Rory Teller, who visits Larry hoping that he can cure her ailing prize mare. He falls for her. So does his arriving friend, Stephen (as played by Scott), who is visiting the ranch as a setting for his next novel.

Along the way, Stephen and Rory have a falling out. Subsequently, Stephen steps in to form the third leg of a love triangle.

Stephen comes down with life-threatening anthrax. Rory to the rescue. She injects him with an untested serum, and he miraculously recovers. So does her love for him.

Nelle Reagan visited the set for three days in a row. She later told her son, “From what I’ve seen, *Stallion Road* will be a bigger picture than *Gone With the Wind.*”

“Ronnie and I both decided that the horrible old Production Code would work against luring people into movie theaters after the war,” Alexis said. “The reality of war increased the sophistication of audiences who wanted more realism in the movies. All over America, women were having children out of wedlock, for example. Also, segregation was breaking down.”

One scene Reagan remembered called for Alexis and him to get down from their horses, lie down under a tree, and kiss. She was lying beside him on the grass as his lips came down over hers.

Suddenly, Kern called out, “CUT! You look like you’re fucking her! Raise yourself up a bit and rest yourself on one elbow!”

“We reshot the scene,” Reagan said. “I had to make love to Alexis on one elbow.”

During the filming of *Stallion Road,* Reagan was introduced to Count Nino Pepitone by Dan Dailey, the

singer/actor. Pepitone had been an officer and expert equestrian in the very stylish Italian Cavalry during World War II. The two men bonded. Reagan eventually hired Pepitone as his riding coach and later as manager of his eight-acre ranch in the San Fernando Valley. He'd named the place "Yearling Row" after Jane's successful movie with Gregory Peck.

He and Pepitone constructed paddock fences and a quarter-mile racetrack. "Every post hole for the inner rail posts was dug by me," Reagan said.

In the future, Pepitone would also manage Reagan's second ranch, which lay in the more distant Malibu Hills.

Pepitone sold Reagan his alltime favorite horse, a black thoroughbred which Reagan named Baby. "I fell in love with that horse," Reagan said. "It was that horse I used in *Stallion Road."* At the ranch, he and Pepitone began to breed thoroughbreds, selling them at yearling sales.

Stallion Road took only 109 days to shoot, a record for Reagan. It was wrapped in March of 1947.

The box office was poor. In Mississippi, Faulkner went to see the movie, and later wrote Reagan a note: "The horses stole the picture from you guys."

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In a direct confrontational style usually associated with Bette Davis in her dealings with Warner Brothers, Reagan, instead of passively waiting for his next role, entered a meeting with Jack Warner armed with two script proposals of his own. He had never been this bold before.

Still hoping to make him a big star, Warner listened patiently. Reagan had read the script of Bogie's next movie, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), a Warner project slated for direction by John Huston, who had also written its screenplay. It wasn't the lead, but Reagan wanted to play a character named Cody, who tries—with an evil coven—to find gold in the mountains. In the film, he dies during his efforts to do so.

One morning over coffee at his breakfast table, Reagan read that the role had gone to Bruce Bennett, who, billing himself as Herman Brix, had played Tarzan. Reagan had last seen him on screen as Joan Crawford's discarded husband in her Oscar-winning *Mildred Pierce*.

At a glittering Hollywood gala, Jane Wyman presented a united front, disguising her alienation from her then-husband, Ronald Reagan.

[Years later, during their co-starring gigs as competitive brothers in The Last Outpost *(1951), Reagan and Bennett would laugh about their having competed for the role.]*

Reagan also had read Stephen Longstreet's latest script and pitched it to Warner, claiming that it would be ideal as a Western for him. It was the Civil War drama that Reagan had mentioned he'd like to film one day. Warner had promised to review the script.

Once again, to his disappointment, Reagan read in *Variety* that the picture, based on the Longstreet project, was scheduled for filming and direction by two men well known to him, Raoul Walsh and his wartime Army boss, Owen Crump. Warner had decided that the role, with its exciting Civil War scenes, would go to none other than Errol Flynn, the star he'd previously rejected for *Stallion Road*.

Had Reagan succeeded in getting the role, he would have co-starred with Ann Sheridan, with whom he'd had a long-enduring affair and with whom he was still on friendly terms.

Reagan would never get cast in a Western at Warners. After he was dumped by his boss, he starred in Westerns made by other studios during his declining years in the movies.

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During the filming of *Stallion Road*, Reagan had many long talks with Alexis Smith. She was not only his friend, but Jane's *confidante*, and one of the few people in Hollywood who knew about his disintegrating marriage to Jane.

At one point, he pleaded with her, asking her for some guidance, with the purpose of "getting Jane to come back to me. As you know, we're secretly separated, although she comes around to see our kids."

Alexis warned him not to pressure Jane. "She and Lew Ayres have this thing going, and you've got to let it play out, for better or worse. Her affair with him may lead to your divorce, but, again, it may not. It may peter out—forgive the pun—and she'll come back to you."

"You mean, I've got to wait and see, since it seems our future is entirely in her hands."

Jane did not want the press to learn about her marital difficulties. While Reagan was filming *Stallion Road*, she was queried about a dual-career marriage. When America's young men were returning from the war, the questions most often being asked was, "Will women become wives and mothers, leaving business to the male breadwinners?"

Jane defended working women: "Thousands of nice young couples all over the country have two jobs in one family, and they do all right. They adjust to it and to one another because they want to get along. There's no reason why two actors can't do the same thing if they're in love and don't start thinking themselves big. Our marriage is working for us."

Obviously, she didn't believe in being truthful. She also claimed, "Having children is not a reason for a woman to give up work."

Reagan faced a lonely time in his life, although he had support from his friends, Robert Taylor, William Holden, George Murphy, and Dick Powell, all of whom found him depressed and defeated. "He was a builder-upper, not a tearer-downer," Murphy said. "He'd put his heart into his marriage to Jane. She was the bedrock of his family, which had included Michael and Maureen growing up. Both of them still mourned the loss of Christine, the infant who died."

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At one of the lowest points in his life, "an English Rose," actress Patricia Roc, entered Reagan's life. Beautiful and alluring, she was hailed by producer J. Arthur Rank as "the archetypal British Beauty, the Goddess of the Odeons, a blue-eyed brunette with porcelain skin."

Some of her fans defined Patricia Roc as “the most beautiful woman in England, our answer to Hedy Lamarr.” Her notorious affairs earned her the nickname “Bed Roc.”

Reagan was among her conquests. She later claimed that she prevented him from committing suicide.

Before meeting Reagan, Roc, in London, was referred to as “Bed Roc,” because of her numerous affairs. One of them was with actor Michael Wilding, with whom she’d filmed *The Farmer’s Wife* in 1941. As Roc recalled, “I had him long before Elizabeth Taylor.”

Roc later said, “I was surprised that a man of Ronnie’s dignity would stoop so low as to marry such a little, loud, brassy blonde like Jane Wyman. He deserved a woman of more finesse and dignity, with more sophistication. He found me warm, earthy, and sexually inviting.”

On her second day in Hollywood, Roc dined with Walter Wanger, producer of *Canyon Passage* (1946), at the celebrity-haunted Brown Derby. Two tables away she spotted Reagan talking with Adolphe Menjou. Throughout the meal, Reagan kept looking at her. When Wanger noticed, he warned her, “Don’t bother. He’s a bore. I’m sure he and that Right Winger Menjou are talking about Reds under the bed.”

Finally, Menjou left and so did Wanger, but Roc chose to remain behind. So did Reagan. After their respective dining companions left, he got up and came over to her table, asking if he could join her.

“It’s about time,” she said. “You looked at me like a *Tyrannosaurus rex* hungry for his next meal.”

He told her that during the war, when he’d worked in propaganda films, his staff had been sent some of the patriotic movies she’d made in Britain, including *Let the People Sing* (1941) and *We’ll Meet Again* (1943), co-starring Vera Lynn, the title based on her biggest World War II hit when she was “the most beloved songbird in Britain.” He congratulated her for her contribution to the war effort.

He asked for her phone number. She told him, “I’ll give that to you and a lot more. But why don’t we drop by your place, and you may get more than my phone number.”

She later admitted, “He seemed shy, and I made it easy for him. He didn’t seem happy cheating on his wife, but a man’s desire won out. I left the next morning.”

Roc was not only beautiful, but a *femme fatale* who specialized in seducing married men. She was always the epitome of elegance, style, and fashion.

In 1945, the year Reagan met her, she’d scored hits in two English-made studio melodramas about Thomas Gainsborough, the 18th-century English portrait and landscape painter. They included *Madonna of the Seven Moons*, and the aptly named *The Wicked Lady*.

After that, she came to Hollywood to film *Canyon Passage* (1946), the only movie she’d make there. The stars of that picture were Dana Andrews, Susan Hayward (Reagan’s former girlfriend), Ward Bond, Andy Devine, and Lloyd Bridges.

“I found Ronnie very personable, good looking, but depressed,” Roc later said in an interview. “He was still very much in love with his wife, yet became fascinated with me. We went to bed on our first date together, and after that, he wanted to monopolize me. But I was dating others.”

“If I went to dinner with another man, Ronnie would tip the waiter to get a table next to mine, where he would sit alone and just stare at me.”

“I became deeply fond of him, but rather as one becomes fond of a lost child. We became lovers because, quite frankly, I was scared and lonely on my arrival in Hollywood, and sex seemed the only thing to alleviate his utter misery. I was seriously concerned that he might do something to himself if I didn’t make him feel that somebody

wanted him, because his wife sure as hell didn't."

"Of course, we had to be extremely careful how and where we met, especially as he was still locked into one of the highest profile marriages in Hollywood. We could both have lost our contracts had we been caught. He really fell in love with me, even though expressing his deep love for Wyman. He even followed me on location where I was making *Canyon Passage*. I couldn't turn around without falling all over him."

While waiting for Roc to finish her scene for the day, Reagan accidentally came face to face with the film's star, Susan Hayward, whom he had not seen since their torrid affair of the late 1930s. According to the film's director, Jacques Tourneur, "Susan walked right past Reagan and didn't speak to him. Later, I found out why. He'd dumped her for Jane Wyman back in 1940."

Unknown to Reagan on the afternoon of his visit, Roc had just spent two hours in the dressing room of the male star of the picture, Dana Andrews.

A "fair damsel" as "sex crazed" as Roc did not want to confine her amorous pursuits just to Reagan. She was also seen dating Lloyd Bridges, Cary Grant, Errol Flynn, and Brian Donlevy. Character actor Ward Bond developed a powerful crush on her, but she tried, perhaps unsuccessfully, to keep "Uncle Ward" at bay.

As her biographer, Michael Hodgson, noted, "In real life, Patricia's effect on men was to prove devastating. Had things gone differently, Nancy Davis might never have become Reagan's wife, and he might not have survived to enter the White House."

Reagan told Dick Powell, "Patricia Roc has instant sex appeal, I don't know what it is. This stunning, blue-eyed brunette has put a spell over me. At least she can make me forget about Jane for a while."

It was during his affair with Roc that Reagan suffered a nervous breakdown, which led to thoughts of suicide. He conveyed to Roc that at times in the middle of the night, he thought about killing himself, leaving Nelle and Jane to take care of Maureen and Michael.

"I found him just wretched and miserable," she said. "He adored Wyman and his family, and just couldn't understand why or how she had completely lost interest in him. She was bored with his political interests and his intense involvement in the Screen Actors Guild. She resented what she called 'his obsession with the threat of communism.'"

"If I had been older and more experienced, I would have realized how deeply he was suffering and would have urged him to seek psychiatric help. He told me, 'Life just isn't worth living anymore. I don't see the point of going on.' Night after night, I tried to talk him out of suicide. His depression affected our love life. On many a night, he was unable to perform like a man should."

"I hate to say this, but when Ronnie is in love, he looks like a sick parrot," Roc later told her biographer, Michael Hodgson.

"Sometimes, after he left my place, Ronnie told me he would drive over to Lew Ayres' home, park his car across the street from his doorway, and just sit there until three or four o'clock in the morning. Just waiting and looking, either watching the lights go on or off in the house or Wyman and Ayres returning home late from some nightclub."

"When I left him in Hollywood, he seemed heartbroken," Roc claimed. "He begged me to stay. He had taken up heavy drinking, often in the company of his friend, William Holden. I don't know how good a friend Bill was. He was very charming, very sexy. Once, when Ronnie was called away for a night shoot, he asked Bill to pick me up and escort me to a premiere. Behind Ronnie's back, he propositioned me after taking me to dinner and the show. Did I go to bed with Bill Holden? I'll never tell!"

For the premiere of the British film, *Scott of the Antarctic*, Reagan had a reunion with Roc at the film's Royal Command Film Performance at the Odeon on London's Leicester Square in November of 1948. Both he and Roc appeared on the stage. *[Reagan was in London at the time filming* The Hasty Heart *with Patricia Neal, whom he was also dating.]*

Britannia Rules!

Ultimately Reagan lost the battle for the affections of Patricia Roc to Anthony Steel, England's "Mr. Beefcake," depicted above.

That night, he presented Roc with a beautiful ruby ring. Backstage at the Royal Film Performance with her, Christine Norden, the British sex symbol, overheard Roc claim, "I love rubies. They are so hot. Just like sex!"

"Reagan came back to live with me at my London flat on Hallam Street, where he repeatedly asked me—begged me, really—to marry him." Roc said. "He told me that before leaving America, Wyman had denounced him. 'She called me a bore and told me she wanted a divorce.' Ronnie looked utterly damaged. I had to have a lot of sex, and, as was the case with him in Hollywood, he often could not perform."

"We said our goodbyes and it was obvious that he was suffering during his departure from London. I felt sorry for him, but I didn't love him. A new man had entered my life."

He turned out to be André Thomas, a French cameraman, who became her second husband in 1949.

Despite the bonds of her recent marriage, Roc soon fell under the spell of Anthony Steel, England's "Mr. Beefcake," during their making of the film, *Something Money Can't Buy* (1952). "Tony had this animal magnetism that Ronnie didn't possess, and he was very, very *very* good in bed, unlike Ronnie. We didn't always use protection, which led to the birth of my son. André forgave me for my indiscretion, but I suspect that he always believed that Ronald Reagan was the father of my son."

When Roc was interviewed shortly before her death, a reporter noted a "wicked twinkle in her eye" at the mention of Reagan's name. "I think I saved his life. And you know, had I accepted his proposal, I would have made a rather good First Lady, would-n't I? But the thought of living the rest of my life in America was more than I could bear."

At her home in Minusio, overlooking Lake Maggiore in Switzerland, Roc always kept a photograph of Reagan and herself, each of them gazing deeply into the other's eyes. It was still resting on her piano right after Christmas in 2003, when she died at the age of 88.

Today, Patricia Roc is defined by British film historians as "The Fairest of the Fair, the most beautiful girl ever to appear in British cinema."

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"I was ashamed of my next picture," Reagan told Dick Powell. "I could not bear to sit through it."

He was referring to *That Hagen Girl* (1947), whose co-star had been Shirley Temple, the most famous child star of the 1930s.

"From the moment I first read the script, I did not like my role of Tom Bates, a man in love with a girl half his age. Jack Warner insisted I do it. So did the director Peter Godfrey. I didn't want to lose that weekly paycheck, which was keeping me going, so I went for it."

"The picture didn't help Shirley either," Reagan said. "She was transitioning from a beloved child actress to a teenager in love, and the public didn't quite accept her. To them, she was still sailing on *The Good Ship Lollipop."*

David O. Selznick, who held Temple's contract, later met Reagan at a party. "I lent her to Jack Warner because,

quite frankly, I didn't know what in hell to do with her anymore now that she'd filled out."

Warner was hoping to achieve the success of Irving Reis' *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer* (1947), which had teamed Temple with Cary Grant. But in that movie, Temple merely had a puppy crush on Grant. His real romantic interest centered on (the fully adult) Myrna Loy.

Charles Hoffman had to draft three separate scripts before Godfrey agreed to green-light the movie.

In the film, Mary Hagen was rumored to be the illegitimate offspring of a union between a demented heiress and a local war hero. She finds friendship in a teacher (Lois Maxwell) and with a young would-be suitor (Rory Calhoun). Mostly, she is shunned by the judgmental, gossipy townspeople.

As released in Holland, the film was retitled "*Scandale!*" a prophetically apt name.

After the war, lawyer Tom Bates (Reagan) returns to town a decorated war hero. Slowly he falls in love with the very young Mary in spite of the circulating rumors that he was her father. Predictably, a scandal ensues.

The first day he met Temple, Reagan joked with her: "I hope you're no longer a communist." He was referring to a ridiculous report back in 1938 when at the age of ten she was called to testify before HUAC. It was all a mistake, and she was exonerated and later became a friend of J. Edgar Hoover, at one time sitting on his knee within F.B.I. headquarters.

Temple's opinion of Reagan? "If only he looked younger, or I older."

At one point near the end of the film, Reagan had to jump into cold water eight different times to rescue the character being played by Temple from a suicide attempt. By the time the scene finally pleased the British director,

Reagan had caught viral pneumonia and was hospitalized. He nearly died. It was at this same time that Jane gave birth to Christine, their daughter who died a few hours later.

An unlikely, and ultimately disastrous, screen duo: A post-adolescent Shirley Temple, shown here with her middle-aged romantic interest, Ronald Reagan.

Reagan's hospitalization caused serious delays in the film's production. Matters became more complicated when Shirley announced that she was pregnant, her condition growing more obvious by the day. *[She had recently, and impetuously, married a philandering heartthrob, John Agar.]* As a means of viewers looking too closely at her thickening frame, her scenes and the delivery of her lines had to be rushed, often ruining the shreds of dramatic flair they might have conveyed. In faraway shots, her (non-pregnant) double was used.

When he was finally able to return to work, Reagan strenuously objected to the ending, in which he leaves town, with Temple, aboard a train, presumably with the intention of marrying her. Reagan would have preferred that his character board the train alone, with the understanding that she'd then be free to marry her young lover, as played by Calhoun.

Ex-con and serial seducer, Rory Calhoun, with "that horny eternal virgin," *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.*

"At least," censors noted, "he was closer to her age than that lecherous character played by Reagan."

Godfrey, however, saw nothing wrong with the original script's ending. "After all," Reagan said, "he was married to jail bait himself. His wife was young enough to be his daughter."

An audience's reaction at a sneak preview proved that Reagan was right. When he appeared in a scene with Temple near the end of the film and said, "I love you," some viewers walked out; others booed. "I sank down in my seat and waited for the audience to file out before I dared show my face outside," he recalled.

Based on that informal survey, Godfrey ordered that the offending scene be deleted from the film's final version. Its deletion re duced an already confusing movie into something almost incomprehensible.

"Of all my leading ladies, I had the least chemistry with Shirley than I ever had with any actress in the past." Reagan claimed. "Elizabeth Taylor might have pulled it off. In spite of all those years in front of a camera, Shirley could not act."

Temple ultimately had the last word about *That Hagen Girl:* "As movie kissers go, Reagan is not bad at all. In fact, he was very, very good."

The reviews generated by the film were so devastating that they hastened the end of Temple's screen career. *That Hagen Girl* was defined as "a foamy dud" and "an uninspired soap opera." Temple's acting was dismissed as "wooden," and Reagan was cited as "hopelessly miscast."

Time magazine, in its November 10, 1947 issue, lacerated the picture. "Moviegoers with very strong stomachs may be able to view an appearance of rebated incest as a romantic situation."

In Moscow, *The Daily Worker* wrote: "Shirley is just Shirley. But Reagan! A philosophic father and sweetheart to the same girl. Odd."

One critic wrote: "In one scene, Shirley Temple attempts suicide. Too bad she did not succeed."

The New York Times wrote, "Poor, put-upon Shirley looks most ridiculous through it all. She acts with the mopish dejection of a school child who has just been robbed of a two-scoop ice cream cone."

That Hagen Girl was featured in the 1978 anthology *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time*. When Reagan ran for political office, all prints of the film mysteriously disappeared, but a few of them re-emerged in 1990 and were subsequently shown on Turner Classic Movies. Its resurrection vastly amused Reagan's political enemies, who subsequently mocked him as a "child molester."

As a footnote, during the filming of *That Hagen Girl*, Reagan had dated Lois Maxwell, who was cast in the movie as a sympathetic teacher, Julia Kane, a figure who might have made a more suitable romantic choice for Reagan, as Tom Bates, to romance.

Instead, Reagan dated her off screen, going out with her on about four dates during the course of the filming. On their first date, she told him that her original name had been Lois Ruth Hooker.

"No wonder you changed it," he said.

During one of their outings, he escorted her to a *Life* magazine photo shoot in which she posed with an up-and-coming actress. Reagan found himself shaking the hand of a striking blonde. He held her hand for an extended time, and seemed mesmerized by her allure.

He would remember her long after the photo shoot. He and Marilyn Monroe would meet again many times in his future.

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The outdoor adventure film that Reagan had been promised never happened. Jack Warner called him and told him that his attempt to hire Cary Grant had failed, and that Reagan was needed at once to report to London-born director Irving Rapper for a role as an army sergeant on leave during World War II in New York.

The script was based on one of the most successful of Broadway plays in the 1940s, *The Voice of the Turtle*. "It was written by that British fag, John Van Druten," Warner told Reagan.

As the play's star on Broadway, Margaret Sullavan, who had been married to Henry Fonda, had generated rave reviews. "I've tried to negotiate with the bitch, but to no avail," Warner lamented. "What a whore! She never met a highway pickup she didn't go for. You wouldn't want to work with a dame like that."

"Then who are you going to cast as my leading lady?" Reagan asked. "I think June Allyson would be ideal if you can get Louis B. Mayer to release her."

Because of the wide variety of roles she played, Eleanor Parker was called “the woman of a thousand faces.” Here, depicted romantically with Reagan in The *Voice of the Turtle*, her makeup and hairdo evoke Margaret Sullavan.

“I’m casting Eleanor Parker,” Warner answered.

At the time, Parker was one of the stars at Warners who had emerged during the war. Reagan had not seen her performance in the remake of *Of Human Bondage* (1946), in which she played W. Somerset Maugham’s mean-spirited waitress-prostitute.

Reagan protested, wanting to co-star with a bigger name. “Listen, Ronnie, my boy,” Warner said. “You used to be very cooperative. Now you’re protesting everything like some grand diva. You don’t have box office clout, not that you ever did. If you want that paycheck to continue coming in, you’ll let me direct your career. Also, to put it mildly, I’m god damn pissed off at your union activities.”

That Monday morning, Reagan reported to work and was greeted by Rapper, who had previously scored a hit helming Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager* (1942).

During their talk together, Rapper told him that he’d recently talked with Davis. “I told her I was directing you in your new movie. She said. “Watch out for little Ronnie Reagan.’”

Playing a wannabee actress, Eleanor Parker *(center)* tries to separate man-eating Eve Arden from her soldier boyfriend (Reagan).

“What in hell did she mean?” Reagan asked.

“Only Bette knows what Bette means,” Rapper said. “We have this love-hate relationship.”

“What I have with Bette I would-n’t call love,” Reagan said.

Rapper gave him the finished script from Van Druten, who had also written the screen version. Rapper said that within a few days, Reagan would meet the co-stars. They included Eve Arden, Wayne Morris, Kent Smith, John Emery, and Nino Pepitone, Reagan’s horse-breeding friend from the Italian cavalry. Pepitone needed a job, and

Reagan had used his influence to get him cast in the movie as a headwaiter.

The Voice of the Turtle revolves around an aspiring actress, Sally Middleton (Parker), who has come to New York to conquer Broadway. Her friend is Olive Lashbrooke (Arden), a promiscuous man-chaser who doesn't believe in chastity.

Because Olive's weekend date, Bill Page (Reagan), can't find any hotel space in wartime New York, Olive maneuvers Sally into housing him in her new apartment. Despite their mutual reserve, love wins in the end, and Bill and Sally become romantic.

When he first met Parker, Reagan thought she was Margaret Sullavan. *[In a nod to Sullavan's success in the Broadway version, Warner had ordered that Parker's hair and makeup be inspired by that of her predecessor.]*

"What in hell does 'Voice of the Turtle' mean?" he asked Parker.

"Rapper told me it comes from the Old Testament's *Song of Solomon*," she said, and that it's a reference, like many other of the passages within that book, to erotic love."

> *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

"Oh, I see…Turtle as in turtle dove," he said. "Well, here I am, back in my military clothes again. But in the army, we didn't have such well-tailored uniforms."

He later recalled, "After I played my first scene with Parker, I had no more reservations about her. The question became, could I hold my own with such a talented actress?"

Over lunches and between takes, they got to know each other. Although he admitted to Rapper that he found her "extremely attractive," there would be no *Leadinglady-itis*. She had recently married film producer Bert E. Friedlob, and "she seemed very involved on the home front," Reagan said. "And, of course, I had my ongoing woes with Jane. The air was not made for a romantic attachment, although it might have been diverting…for me, at least."

On his last day on the set, Reagan wished her luck in her future. "Perhaps we'll work together again."

"Perhaps," she said. "Things have a way of working out for me. I maintain that if you work, believe in yourself, and do what is right for you without stepping all over others, the way somehow opens up."

"That is the most un-Hollywood philosophy I have ever heard in my life, especially in dog-eat-dog Hollywood," he said.

On the set of *The Voice of the Turtle*, he was reunited with Wayne Morris, with whom he'd made those *Brother Rat* movies. The former Golden Boy of Warners never regained his footing in films after the war. He told Reagan, "If you hadn't come along, I would have won Jane for myself."

For Reagan, *The Voice of the Turtle* was a modest success. His reviews were tepid. "At least I wasn't attacked." A typical overview appeared in *Newsweek*. "Ronald Reagan turns in a pleasantly sensitive performance as the sergeant."

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J. Edgar Hoover, with a lot of right-wing help, launched the most sweeping and penetrating witch hunts in American history. He saw Red everywhere, a river of conspiratorial corruption whose tentacles, he claimed, incorporated the highest offices in Washington, as well as most of the movie studios and film stars in Hollywood. The hunt was on to ferret out communists in all walks of life, but mostly in politics and the film colony. In the "Red Scare" that J. Edgar spearheaded in the aftermath of World War II, lives, friendships, reputations, and careers would be destroyed.

The very conservative J. Parnell Thomas, a former stockbroker, had been elected seven times as New Jersey's representative in Congress before being sent to prison for nine months on charges of corruption. Prior to his downfall, he was an avowed anti-communist. He claimed that the Federal Theatre Project presented nothing but "sheer communism propaganda."

He seemed to have a special aversion to Hollywood. When Thomas became chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, J. Edgar supported him totally. The FBI fed Thomas a constant stream of accusations as to who was a communist and who might make a friendly witness before HUAC.

In May of 1947, Thomas and his chief aides visited Hollywood on a "fact-finding" mission. He held several secret meetings with Reagan, who promised his full support in "weeding out the Hollywood garden of Red weeds."

Thomas returned to Washington to launch his investigations of HUAC, with America's radios and early televisions tuned in. At first only friendly witnesses were called. Many of the spectators wanted not only to hear who was a communist, but to view the testimonial performances of movie heartthrobs who included Gary Cooper and

Robert Taylor.

Reagan arrived days before the hearings for secret meetings with Hoover and his lover, Clyde Tolson, Hoover's chief aide at the FBI. Reagan promised his full cooperation. Because of his connections with SAG, he claimed "I'm in the ideal post to go after the commies polluting our industry."

Accompanied by the sound of popping flashbulbs, Reagan's appearance before HUAC hardly prompted the heartthrob hysteria brought on by the testimonies of sexpots Taylor and Cooper.

Having already promised to combat the movie industry's "domination by communists, radicals, and crackpots," Reagan had volunteered to appear before HUAC.

He looked rather studious in a white gabardine suit complete with thick glasses. As president of SAG, he claimed he had always opposed communist propaganda. "I do not believe that the communists have ever at any time been able to use the motion picture screen as a sounding board for their ideology." He contradicted testimony by Robert Taylor in that regard.

Before the committee, he seemed to be undergoing a major political change, drifting uncomfortably from an FDR New Deal liberal into a conservative Republican. On some weeks he would take one position, appealing to his liberal friends, and at another time he would be turning them in as suspected communists.

Earlier, he'd told Hoover that "I am firmly convinced that the Congress should declare the Communist Party illegal."

After his testimonies, he hurriedly left Washington for a return to Hollywood and his marital woes.

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After Reagan's return to Hollywood, Alexis Smith tried to bring about a reconciliation between Jane and her distraught husband. Along with Smith's husband, Craig Stevens, she invited the estranged couple to drive east with them into the desert for a long weekend of rest in Palm Springs. Friends had made their vacation home available to Alexis and Stevens.

"I had to do a lot of persuading, but Jane has agreed to come with us," Alexis said. "I used the argument, 'You must do it for the children if not for Ronnie.' She was very hesitant, but finally agreed. Actually, to tell the truth, I think she wants to make Lew Ayres jealous."

Reagan had won the sympathy of Alexis when they had co-starred together in *Stallion Road*, his first picture after the war. As for Stevens, he was up for a major role in one of Reagan's upcoming pictures, *Night Unto Night*.

At the time of the ill-fated trip to Palm Springs, Alexis and Stevens had become Jane and Reagan's closest friends, and both of them were saddened at Jane's separation from her husband.

In Hollywood, Good Friends Should Swing Together. (*aka* "Going Too Far with Ronnie and Jane."

Depicted above, Craig Stevens and his wife, Alexis Smith.

As Jane once told Ann Sheridan, "Alexis and I often drift off somewhere to indulge in girl talk, but Craig hangs out with Ronnie. He seems to worship him."

Stevens had told Jane, "Everything I ever knew about politics I learned from Ronnie."

Reagan seemed pleased to have such a devoted person listening to his political views. But Jane was suspicious. "Craig and Ronnie sometimes went for an occasional weekend together, like a sailing trip to Catalina," Jane told Sheridan. "When he gets back, I always ask Ronnie what happened."

"If you're implying anything, don't," Reagan warned her. "I had initial suspicions about Craig, but not now. He's had plenty of chances if he wanted to move in on me, and he's been a perfect gentleman. When we've been in a small cabin and had to share the same bed, nothing happened. Forget your fears. He's married to one of the most beautiful women in Hollywood. What makes you think he wants a man?"

"I didn't have the heart to tell you, but Joan Crawford told me that Alexis is a lesbian," Jane said. "Crawford thinks Craig and Alexis have a lavender marriage."

"I only learned what that meant a few weeks ago," he said. "You know the same is said about our friends, Bob Taylor and Babs Stanwyck. I don't believe it's true. I've also gone away with Bob. He's all man, with an eye for the ladies."

"Crawford told me more," Jane said. "She suspects that Craig had an affair with her husband, Phillip Terry. As for Terry himself, Crawford told me he had an affair with Bob Taylor."

"You're nothing but a little Hedda Hopper today," Reagan said. "Okay, since you're spreading rumors, let me reveal a few about you. It was rumored that when you made *Magic Town*, you had an affair with Jimmy Stewart. That's not all. You were said to also have had an affair with Wild Bill Wellman" *[i.e., director William Wellman]*.

"Well, maybe I did, smart ass," Jane said, walking out of the room.

"Now that you've become a big star, you'll be hearing a lot more rumors spread about yourself, and you'll get bad press."

[Reagan's prophecy came true.]

Jane still managed to enchant both Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, but columnist Hy Gardner in the months ahead began making digs at her. He had been hired as an entertainment reporter and syndicated columnist for *The New York Herald-Tribune*.

He once wrote: "Jane Wyman, that woman unlike the genuine cream of the cinema crop, whose names are box office magic, seems to consider the approach of a reporter as an irksome intrusion upon the privacy of a high-priced public goldfish."

Jane retreated to Palm Springs that weekend with Reagan, Alexis, and Stevens. But she returned alone. Reagan later left the villa where Stevens and Alexis were staying and checked into a hotel, as he needed a few days' rest after the pressure he'd faced in Washington delivering his testimony before HUAC.

When word of this reached gossipy Hollywood, it was assumed that Reagan's attempted reconciliation with his estranged wife had failed. But Joan Blondell later reported a very different version of what happened that weekend. Blondell claimed that she heard only a very sketchy version from Jane.

"Ronnie and I did not get back together," Jane told her. "We also ended our friendship with Craig and Alexis."

"After buttering us up for months, making us think they were friends who liked our company, it turned out that they liked more than that," Jane said. "Friday night went beautifully. The house had two bedrooms. The four of us talked openly. It was suggested, and Ronnie and I agreed, that we would not share a bed our first night back together. We'd wait and see how things went that Saturday."

"But by midnight, we found out that wasn't the real reason Craig slept with Ronnie and Alexis bedded with me. As I was drifting off, she started feeling my breasts, wanting to make love to me. Ronnie experienced much the same assault. He was half asleep when he felt Craig's lips come down on his, and his hand feeling the family jewels. We both packed our bags, and I headed back to Lew Ayres. Ronnie rented a hotel room and stayed on."

Blondell responded, "The war brought a lot of changes in sexual attitudes, and in post-war Hollywood, there's a lot of that shit going on. I know there is. Wife-swapping's been around for a long time. But now there's a new game out here. It's about sexual bonding, husband to husband, and lovemaking among wives."

"Count me out!" Jane responded.

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Although both Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons had publicly forecast that the marriage of Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan might be "everlasting," each of them was eager to rush into print with headlines. "RONALD REAGAN SCOUTS MARITAL BREAK," wrote Hopper. In even bigger headlines, Parsons announced, WYMAN, MATE IN RIFT. Jane got the focus in the headline because by then, she was by far the bigger star.

After the appearances of those "scoops," Reagan called each of the columnists directly, telling them "It's only a 'tift.' All married couples have them. I'm confident that we'll solve our problems and have a long and happy life."

When Louella Parsons heard that Jane was making indiscreet remarks about Reagan's sexual performance, she

lectured her severely. In her column in a 1948 issue of *Photoplay*, the columnist wrote: “It is unfortunate but true that Hollywood can shrug off most marriage crack-ups. But when they are Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan—well — we just can’t take that. For eight years, they have shared a beautiful life that has earned them the respect and admiration even of people who did not know them personally. To those of us who are close friends, they were an ideal Mr. and Mrs. That’s why this hurts so much!”

Rosemary DeCamp, the actress, had been one of the first to recognize an animosity coming from Jane, whose impatience with Reagan was clearly evident during the course of a SAG meeting. In the middle of a verbose speech by Reagan that went on and on, Jane stood up. “Oh, for god’s sake, Ronnie, shut up and go shit in your hat.”

Months before the actual filing of the divorce, Hollywood gossips and the town’s press corps were speculating about a warring twosome who had, throughout World War II and the years leading up to it, been defined as Tinseltown’s “Most Ideal Couple.”

For the most part, the press took Reagan’s side, concluding that he was the wronged party. In the spring of 1948, Fredda Dudley in *Silver Screen* magazine wrote: “Hollywood sympathy in this case is one hundred percent behind Ronnie, who is a prince. Jane is a moody person, temperamental, ambitious, restless, and seeking; furthermore, she is not now and hasn’t been well for some time. It is to be hoped, that as her health improves, her other problems will vanish, and that two of the town’s favorite people will resume their marriage.”

Parsons warned Jane, “You’re losing a good, decent family man. They are hard to find in Tinseltown. Most of the men out here are looking for a good man themselves.”

For Reagan’s birthday on February 6, 1948, Jane presented him with a turquoise-colored Cadillac, but signed the card, “Love, Michael and Maureen.” Then she flew to Las Vegas for a quickie divorce.

Once in Las Vegas, she checked into the Flamingo Hotel. According to the *Los Angeles Examiner*, on February 27, 1948, “She was seen in the casinos and out dancing every night with a different man, her various beaux having one thing in common: Youth and beauty.”

But within a week, she flew back to Los Angeles, telling a reporter, “I couldn’t stand the wind blowing in from the desert.”

Later, she told Reagan, “There is no chance for us. I’m filing for divorce and charging extreme mental cruelty.”

Years later, during recollections of her years with Reagan to her Catholic priest, Robert Perrella, as well as to her girlfriends, June Allyson and Paulette Goddard, Jane claimed, “It was exasperating to awake in the middle of the night, prepare for work, and have someone at the breakfast table, newspaper in hand, expound on the far right, the far left, the conservative right, the conservative left, the middle-of-the-roader.”

When Reagan was told that his leading lady would be Patricia Neal, he didn’t know who she was.

Producer Jerry Wald told him, “Jack Warner has the hots for her. She’s only twenty-two. He wants to configure this Southern belle from Tennessee as Warner’s answer to Greta Garbo.”

Reagan didn’t think it was believable that “a hick from Tennessee would be hailed as a new Garbo.”

On June 28, 1948, the inevitable happened: Jane filed a petition for divorce. Reagan did not show up in court, but was represented by an attorney, William Berger. Jane’s lawyer was Lloyd Wright, who had represented some of the biggest names in Hollywood at the time of their divorces, ranging from Mary Pickford to Charlie Chaplin, even Mae West. (Yes, the diva had once been married.)

Child support, alimony, and a property settlement were determined. Reagan was ordered to pay $500 a month in child support for Maureen and Michael, for whom Jane retained custody. As long as Jane continued to work in

films, she would get no alimony. However, should she not be able to work, he was to pay her an additional $500 a month in support. The value of their communal property, totaling $75,000, was to be divided half and half, following the sale of their house on Cordell Drive. She later moved into a house in Malibu.

As a side note, she was given all the furniture, and he kept the horses, including his favorite, "Baby."

Her only comment, upon leaving the courthouse was to a reporter, "There is nothing between us anymore. Case closed."

When he came by to visit the kids, Jane said, "You're welcome at any time. But call first and warn me. I might not be here. Thanks for the memory. We had some good times."

"And two children," he reminded her. "Don't forget them."

At the time of their parents' separation, Maureen was seven years old, Michael only three. "Daddy told me the sad news, but promised to always be around for me when I needed him," Maureen later wrote in a memoir.

Although Jane had been such an important part of Reagan's life, in his autobiography, *An American Life*, he mentioned her as only a terse abbreviation: "I married Jane Wyman but it didn't work out, and in 1948, we were divorced."

One of his old friends recalled, "There had been warning signs, but I think the divorce horrified and shocked him. He didn't think he'd ever be divorced. His mother had put up with an awful lot from her husband, but they had remained married even though he repeatedly came home drunk."

"Small town boys grow up thinking only other people get divorced," Reagan later wrote. "The plain truth was that such a thing was so far from even being imagined by me that I had no resources to call upon."

"As soon as news of his divorce was published, Reagan's phone began to ring, the way it had when his picture was first published in the Hollywood press as Warners' new young star.

He later said, "I was still mourning Jane, but to compensate, some of the world's most beautiful women were calling me for dates."

Still proclaiming grief over the loss of Jane, Reagan entered what Dick Powell defined as his "second horndog period," the first having occurred in the late 1930s when he'd arrived at the gates of Warner Brothers. "I think he set out to fuck everything in sight."

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Producer Jerry Wald called Reagan to inform him that Jack Warner had approved the casting of Jane Wyman and him in *John Loves Mary*, based on the hit Broadway play of the same name written by Norman Krasna. "I'll have the scriptwriters, Phoebe and Henry Ephron, write in love scenes between Jane and you. Your kissing—and I hear from the gals that you're good at that—will win Jane's heart all over again."

Reagan was stunned at the news and expressed his concern: "What will Jane think of working with me?"

He had other concerns as well. He'd already seen the Broadway stage version of *John Loves Mary*, starring William Prince as John, with the elegant Nina Foch as Mary.

"From what I saw in New York, the play is too much like *The Voice of the Turtle*. I'll be in my Army uniform again. But this time, instead of an Army sergeant on leave, I'll be a returning veteran. Don't you think, as a plot device, that this 'Returning Soldier from the War' *schtick* is wearing a bit thin as a plot device? Dana Andrews already delivered, in *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), the best take ever about a veteran's return to the homefront."

"Jack Warner insists that you do it," Wald answered. "And, as everybody on the lot knows, Jack knows best. David Butler will be your director. He did all right with Hope, Crosby, and Lamour in *Road to Morocco* (1942)."

Reagan learned that his supporting cast would include names familiar to him: Jack Carson, Wayne Morris, Edward Arnold, Virginia Field, Katherine Alexander, and Irving Bacon.

Two weeks later, near the time he was to report to work, Wald called him with a sense of last-minute panic. "I've just got the news from Jack. I don't know what happened. Wyman's out, Patricia Neal is in."

"Who in hell is Patricia Neal?" Reagan asked.

"You'll meet her soon," Wald answered.

That night, Reagan found an article in *Variety*, reporting that Neal had achieved success on Broadway in the Lillian Hellman play from 1946, *Another Part of the Forest*.

The play had been Hellman's prequel to *The Little Foxes* that had, in 1939, been such a successful Broadway play, with Tallulah Bankhead playing the mature Regina. The Broadway play had evolved into a 1941 movie with Bette Davis starring as Regina.

When the film script of *John Loves Mary* arrived, Reagan read it avidly in moments when he wasn't worrying about his marriage to Jane and coping with the union wars among the movie guilds.

Its farcical plot was based on the premise that the character played by Reagan would marry, “in name only,” a Cockney war bride so that he could bring her to America and get her U.S. citizenship. Then, according to the plot, she would divorce Reagan and marry his war buddy (Jack Carson). Virginia Field had already been cast in the role of Reagan’s English bride who arrives in New York to discover that her love interest, Carson, is already married, with a child on the way.

Reagan, as the returning veteran, comes back to the girl he left behind, Neal. She’s been expecting him to marry her until she learns he’s already wed. Edward Arnold, cast as Senator McKinley, her father, has plenty to say about his daughter’s dilemma. The supposed setting is the senator’s apartment at the St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan.

Patricia Neal recalled this scene with Ronald Reagan: “It was a trouser-challenged moment for him. He was kidded by the cameramen, who wondered how he could possibly wear such shorty-short panties without something hanging out. Ronnie defended his masculinity by claiming he wore a heavy-duty jockstrap to protect his modesty.”

Before the beginning of shooting, Reagan was introduced to Neal at Jack Warner’s New Year’s Eve party. “Reagan walked over to me across a crowded room and shook my hand, telling me what wonderful things he’d heard about me. Then he went away. Shortly before midnight, I spotted him on the terrace weeping uncontrollably with some older woman. I’d heard he was all broken up over his marital difficulties with Jane Wyman.”

Butler gathered the entire cast of players together for a read-through. Reagan renewed his acquaintance with this *Brother Rat* co-star, Wayne Morris. He and Morris had always viewed themselves as rivals. “I called Jane Wyman, my old girlfriend, and asked her out the other night,” Morris said.

“Did she accept?”

“Hell, no!” Morris said, “But you can’t put a guy down for trying.”

Arnold, the burly and engaging actor “with the big gut,” the intimidating stare, and the deep voice, had been president of SAG from 1940 to 1942. During this tense period with the unions, Reagan spoke to him two or three times a week, viewing him as an experienced and politically seasoned “comrade-in-arms.”

After the first day’s shoot, Neal told Reagan, “You knew exactly what to do. Everybody seems to. I was too excited to be afraid on my first day in front of a camera.”

Three days later, he attended the first rushes with her. After they had sat through them, she said, “It was purgatory. I thought I looked bad. I didn’t realize that the camera adds twenty pounds. I was a caricature in those false eyelashes and that overly painted mouth. As for my voice, it was pure molasses.”

Neal’s sexy, seductive voice, however, recorded beautifully, Reagan comparing it to “an organ concert.” Less diplomatically, Carson likened it to “a musically inclined dripping rain pipe playing the scales.”

In one of his scenes with Neal, Reagan was ordered to appear in a pair of underwear assigned by the wardrobe department.

During his enactment of the scene, as the cameras rolled, and Arnold, as an irate father, walked in on a romantic interlude between Reagan and Neal, Reagan was hurriedly zipping up his pants—without a jockstrap. He yelped in pain before yelling out, “I’ve got my dick caught in the zipper.”

The cameras kept rolling.

In his first memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, published in 1965, Reagan reported on this incident, but edited out most of the graphic details. Nonetheless, that film clip entered the Warner files as "one of the most hilarious behind-the-scenes bloopers in film history."

Back in his dressing room, a pantless Reagan complained to Butler. "Look at me! These underpants are cut so short my dick hangs out. Just look!"

"I see!" Butler said. "You're uncut just like me. For God's sake, man, this is not a blue movie we're making. All actors appearing in underwear scenes should wear a jock strap. I thought you knew that."

As the new girl on the block, Neal was swamped with invitations to parties, perhaps with the assumption that many of Hollywood's more established actresses wanted to check out the latest competition. She told Reagan, "Even Bette Davis has invited me for tea. Do you know Miss Davis?"

"I've had the pleasure," Reagan said, sarcastically.

In the beginning, Wayne Morris, the fading blonde screen Adonis of the 30s, was Neal's frequent escort to these parties. There, he reportedly drank too much and fretted, publicly, about his falling star.

Eventually, Neal found Carson a lot more fun, and she began to go out with him. The press seized on this dating, and practically had the two of them walking down the aisle. In her memoirs, Neal admitted that one night, she and Carson went to bed together, but she claimed, "We were too wasted to have sex."

She also went out on three dates with Reagan, but, according to her, "I drew a blank, like I did with Carson. He spent most of our evening lamenting the loss of Jane. When it came time to go to bed, I couldn't get a rise out of him. That would have to wait until we co-starred together in *The Hasty Heart* (1949) in London."

One morning on the set, over coffee, Neal confided to Reagan that she'd met Cooper the night before. For some reason, he was accompanied by Errol Flynn. "Gary shook my hand, said he'd be glad to work with me, and walked away. Flynn—no longer the sexy Robin Hood in green tights—pursued me. Being a helpless girl, I was forced to give in to his demands. But I was still dreaming of Gary."

When Wald saw the rushes of *John Loves Mary*, he sent a memo, dated January 19, 1948, to Reagan. "The idea that you get paid for all those kissing scenes with Pat Neal is beyond my comprehension. In the new contract between producers and actors, I'm planning to have a clause inserted regarding kissing scenes, that a refund be made by the actors to the studio. You certainly put everything into your so-called 'work.'"

Unlike its Broadway predecessor, the film version of *John Loves Mary* quietly slipped in and out of movie theaters across the country without any stampedes at the box office. It did nothing for Reagan's career. Any good reviews went to "that emerging new star, the ravishing Patricia Neal."

Of course, she also came in for her share of negative reviews. Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times*, wrote, "There is little to recommend her for future comedy jobs. Her way with a gag line is painful."

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In June of 1949, Jack Warner ordered the release of *Night Unto Night*, a film that Reagan had made in 1946, but whose exposure had been delayed. "I don't expect to make a profit with this turkey," the studio mogul said, "but I'm hoping to at least get back my production costs."

Night Unto Night was the second movie Reagan shot after his discharge from the Army. It was promoted as the American debut of the Swedish-born Viveca Lindfors. Warners hoped that she would be the studio's answer to Greta Garbo or Ingrid Bergman. As it turned out, more Americans saw Lindfors' debut in *To the Victor* (1948), wherein she was cast as a woman with a past who falls in love with Dennis Morgan; or in the same year, in *The Adventures of Don Juan*, in which—in period costumes opposite Errol Flynn, she looked ravishing. Finally, with the much-delayed release of *Night Unto Night*, movie-goers could see her co-starring with Reagan. The only problem was, no one seemed to actually want to see the movie.

Right after his release from the Army, Reagan managed to look rather boyish in a swimsuit on a beach with his co-star, Swedish-born Viveca Lindfors, another Scandinavian *femme fatale* with hopes of becoming "the next Greta Garbo."

Night Unto Night was made during one of the most troubled periods in Reagan's life, with Jane threatening to end their marriage. Reagan found a "lot of comfort" (his words) in the friendship of his co-star Craig Stevens, back when he and Jane, along with Stevens and Alexis Smith, often comprised a quartet for dinner and dancing.

But by the time the movie was released, Reagan had broken off his friendship with the bisexual actor after Stevens had revealed the depth of his romantic attraction.

As a director, Chicago-born Don Siegel had been unknown to Reagan. So was his leading lady.

When Siegel introduced Reagan to Lindfors, she said, "Forgive me, but I've never heard of you."

"Miss Lindfors," he answered, "I can return the compliment. I have never heard of you, either."

"I was a film star in Sweden," she said.

"Well, I've heard of Greta Garbo and Ingrid Bergman, two other film stars from Sweden. But I've missed your movies."

She walked away, no doubt insulted.

Lindfors was detested by the film's second female lead, Osa Massen. She had been born in Denmark, as opposed to Lindfors' Sweden. Reagan referred to their conflicts as "The Battle of the Vikings." Massen complained to him that Siegel was favoring Lindfors in all their scenes and giving her extra close-ups. "I think he's in love with her."

"I wish he'd fall in love with me and give *me* preferential treatment," Reagan said. "God knows I need it to get through this stinker."

Once alerted by Massen, Reagan came to notice that Siegel and Lindfors were indeed having an affair. They disappeared every day at around noon into her dressing room. The director married his star in 1948.

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Drawn from the pages of the Philip Wylie novel, the plot of *Night Unto Night* casts Reagan as John Gaylord, a biochemist who retreats to a rented beachfront home on the Gulf Coast of Florida. *[The movie was actually shot in California, a lot of the action (suchas it was) taking place in the beachfront house that had been used in the production of Joan Crawford's* Mildred Pierce*.]*

When this movie was shot, Reagan was still very close friends with Craig Stevens *(left)*, one of the co-stars, along with Osa Massen *(center)* in *Night Unto Night*.

It turns out that the house he's rented from Ann (Lindfors) is haunted. When he asks her about strange noises in the building, Ann admits that she sometimes heard the voice of her dead husband, killed during World War II, echoing through the house. As a scientist *[he's a biochemist]*, he tries to convince her that the dead do not return to Earth.

He has a dark secret: He has epilepsy. The film seems to treat epilepsy as if it's contagious. Complications arise when Ann's sister, Lisa (Massen), arrives and shows a romantic interest in Reagan. At this point, Lindfors, as Ann, has already fallen in love with him.

Secondary roles were played by Rosemary DeCamp and Broderick Crawford, a married couple who live nearby.

Although Reagan and Lindfors did not particularly like each other, they maintained a surface politeness and even had a few conversations together. Once, when the topic of sex came up, he told her, "It's always best in the afternoon, when you've emerged fresh from the shower."

She told him, "I'm glad I met Don *[i.e., Siegel]*. Before coming here, I had not had sex with a man for several months. I was hot and hungry."

During the filming of *Night Unto Night*, Reagan, along with most of the other cast members, had to ride a bus through the gates at Warners in Burbank, where picket lines had formed. Rocks and bottles were thrown at the windows of their bus.

Both Stevens and DeCamp were sympathetic to the strains Reagan endured at the time. "He was dealing with the ugly strike through his position at SAG," DeCamp said. "He was working 18 to 20 hours a day, but he remained cheerful and loquacious when he showed up with three or four hours sleep. In contrast, Jane Wyman was seen out almost every night dancing like a son of a son. Yet the North Hollywood Women's Professional Club named her its 'Ideal Working Mother' for 1946."

Near the end of the film, when the epilepsy of Reagan's character is disclosed, he goes upstairs to commit suicide with a revolver. This is his big scene with Lindfors. He tells her, "Death isn't the worst thing in a man's life—it's only the last."

She counters, "I don't know the reason for death, but I do know that life has its own reasons—and it isn't ours to end."

Before the end of the film, she convinces him not to shoot himself.

In that, the movie's plot is different from that within Wylie's novel. In the book, John kills himself by deliberately walking into the path of an oncoming truck.

In a memoir, Reagan wrote, "If you think this was a hard story to bring to life on the screen, you're right."

Shooting the various scenes of *Night Unto Night* ended on December 29, 1946. Reagan remembered Christmas Eve on the set. "Eggnog was served and by two o'clock that afternoon, we were drunk. We needed the sun, but got threatening gray skies. I went home to the most depressing Christmas of my life." As predicted, *Night Unto Night* was an utter flop. One reviewer asserted that, "Jack Warner should have left it collecting dust in some archive." Another reviewer, in pointing out the inadequacies of Reagan's performance, asked, "Where is John Garfield, even Dane Clark, now that we need him?"

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After viewing the drab and uncompelling *Night Unto Night*, which, based on his orders had been shelved for years, Jack Warner decided to co-star Reagan and Viveca Lindfors in yet another movie together, a casting choice he never explained. He summoned Reagan to his office: "I have this important new film I want you to make with Viveca and Claude Rains. It's called *Up Till Now*, and in it, you play a communist."

"At first, I thought he was joking," Reagan recalled. "Then I realized he was serious."

"Me, a communist?" Reagan asked Warner in astonishment. "In case you don't know, there's a Red scare on. Do you want me to get blacklisted?"

"Read the script tonight and you'll understand why I want to make this movie, particularly right now when all of us are under investigation from Washington."

That night in his library, Reagan studied the script by David Goodies, who had just signed a six-year contract with Warner Brothers to develop screen treatments. The credibility he was currently enjoyed was based on the successful transition of his novel, *Dark Passage*, into a movie co-starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. *[Released in 1947, it had been marketed with the tagline: TOGETHER AGAIN: BOGART AND BA-CALL—IN DANGER AS VIOLENT AS THEIR LOVE.]*

In *Up Till Now*, Claude Rains would be cast as a puzzled father of two sons, one of whom (Reagan) becomes a communist, and another (possibly Arthur Kennedy), a fascist.

Lindfors would play a naturalized American citizen who explains the value of democracy to the politically errant brothers. Her conversations would, before the end of the film, persuade each of them to repudiate their former political convictions.

Warner told Reagan, "You see, with this film, I can go before HUAC and repudiate communism and present myself as a defender of democracy, attacking evil communism. In the HUAC witch hunt in Hollywood, I don't want them to catch me flying a broom."

Actually, even though the movie had not been made, weeks later, Warner appeared before HUAC and cited *Up Till Now* as testimonial to his commitment to the propaganda war against the communists.

"The film will star Ronald Reagan, the truest American and the most anti-communist in all of Hollywood. With the help of its producer, Jerry Wald, *Up Till Now* will show us battling un-American ideologies. It will unmask Reds in the film industry and expose our foreign enemies. Democracy has no middle lanes, left detours, or right alleys—only the great big highway of American Liberty, sufficiently broad and straight for all to travel in peace."

Back in Hollywood, Reagan met with Goodies, finding that he was currently rewriting a script based on W. Somerset Maugham's *The Letter*, which in 1940 had been one of Bette Davis' most memorable movies. The new treatment was to be entitled *The Unfaithful*.

Goodis told Reagan that he'd written *Up Till Now* "to give people a look at themselves and their American heritage." In his own words, Goodis was "mesmerized to meet a bigtime movie star like you."

Reagan later told Wald, "That Goodis fellow practically was foaming at the mouth. It seems he worships my screen image. He wanted to date me. Imagine!"

A few weeks later, without explanation, Warner abruptly canceled *Up Till Now*.

As late as 1957, Goodis still harbored a crush on Reagan. He got in touch with him and asked him to play the male lead opposite Jayne Mansfield in an upcoming film, *The Burglar*. Reagan rejected the film role, just as he had turned down the author's sexual advances. Dan Duryea was cast as the male lead instead. Today, *The Burglar* (1957) reigns as a *film noir* classic, one of the greatest heist films ever made.

Instead of *The Burglar*, Reagan accepted the lead in *Hellcats of the Navy* opposite his wife, the former starlet Nancy Davis.

As Nathan J. Juran, the director of *Hellcats of the Navy*, later said, "Ronnie could have been making love, at least on screen, with Jayne Mansfield. Instead, he ends up with Nancy. I hope they have some off-screen chemistry. They sure didn't have any on screen in our turkey of a movie."

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Meeting in a closed door session at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, the Motion Picture Association of America released on December 3, 1947, what became notorious as "the Waldorf Statement." In a two-page press release, studio moguls ranging from MGM's Louis B. Mayer to Columbia's Harry Cohn, attacked the "Hollywood Ten," a group of writers and directors, each of whom was facing a jail term for contempt of Congress.

Although Reagan initially had reservations about the Blacklist, knowing what harm in could cause, particularly to innocent people, he ultimately endorsed it as a necessary evil.

In a speech to SAG, Reagan lauded its members "for doing more than any other union in America to rid itself of communists" He went on to vilify producers who still hired suspected communists.

[By 1953, Reagan got what he wanted: SAG adopted a bylaw that barred communists and required new members to swear loyalty oaths.

A cynical Melvyn Douglas was still bruised from the beating which his wife, Helen Gahagan, had experienced in recent Senatorial elections at the hand of Reagan's ally in the suppression of pinkos, Richard Nixon. Douglas later commented on that: "Reagan was hardly the family values man he appeared to be. He was seducing practically every virgin in Hollywood. Before he banged them, he did not, so I heard, require them to sign a loyalty oath."]

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Some observers defined it as "Love on the rebound." With the understanding that Jane Wyman was spending her nights in the arms of Lew Ayres, two shapely blondes were about to enter Reagan's life.

At the end of the war, Reagan and William Holden bonded as never before. Each of them turned to the other for emotional support. In many ways, Holden replaced Robert Taylor, George Murphy, and Dick Powell as Reagan's closest comrade.

In 1941, Holden had married an attractive divorced woman, actress Brenda Marshall, whose real name was Ardis Ankerson. On May 2, 1946, the couple gave birth to Scott Porter Holden.

As Holden admitted, "I was never much of a family man." He spent many nights away from home, often out with Reagan as his drinking companion. When the two men walked into Ciro's on many a night, all that the waiter had to ask was, "The usual?"

In addition to their respective family problems, both of them were worried about their careers. Holden would listen sympathetically to Reagan's woes about Jane and the movies he'd been assigned, before pouring out plenty of his own pain. He admitted to Reagan, "I've hit rock bottom. I'm almost thirty and a wreck—a second-class actor in Hollywood with little hope of longevity. I'm getting shit wages, just enough to feed my family and perhaps pay my liquor bill. On most nights, I stick you with the tab, since you're drawing bigger bucks."

Holden invited Reagan to pick him up after a day's shoot at the set of his latest movie, *The Dark Past* (1948), co-starring Lee J. Cobb, Adele Jergens, and Nina Foch. It was a remake of the 1939 *Blind Alley*. As the star of this psychological thriller, Holden played an escaped convict, convicted killer, and dream-shackled gunman, who hides out with his gang in the isolated home of a psychiatrist, whose family and guests he holds hostage.

"When I joined him on the set, Bill's biggest complaint was the flat-top haircut which the film's director, Rudolph Maté, ordered him to get," Reagan said. "Bill hated it. That man was fastidious about his hair, going to the barber once a week. He told me he didn't want to play a killer, preferring to make Westerns instead. That's what I wanted to do instead of so-called romantic comedies."

At the 1939 World's Fair in New York, a beautiful blonde, Adele Jergens, was voted "The Fairest of the Fair." In Hollywood, her publicists began calling her "The Girl with the Million Dollar Legs," which "seriously pissed off" Betty Grable, the holder of that title.

Subsequently, Columbia redefined Jergens as “The Champagne Blonde.” When William Holden introduced her to Reagan, he admitted, “I fell in love.”

It was on the set that Holden introduced Adele Jergens to Reagan. He later said, “I think I fell in love with her the moment I saw her walking across the sound stage toward me. I asked her out that very night for a date.”

A “chorus girl blonde,” the Brooklyn-born actress accepted. Over dinner at the Brown Derby, he learned about her background. During a stint as a Rockette at Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan, she was named “Number One Showgirl in New York.”

She had also worked as a chorus girl at the Brooklyn Fox Theater and as a model for the John Robert Powers Agency. While understudying for the role usually reserved for the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee, in the 1942 stage version of the musical review *Star and Garter*, she filled in for the star one night when Lee was ill. A Columbia talent scout had chosen that particular evening to attend. His “discovery” of Jergens eventually led to a movie contract in 1944. During the months to come, she was cast opposite Rita Hayworth in *Tonight and Every Night* (1945).

In the final years of World War II, Jergens became one of the most popular pinup girls among G.I.s, rivaled only by Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, both of whom viewed her as formidable competition.

In films, Jergens was often cast as either a blonde floozie or as a burlesque dancer. After Reagan began taking her out. Holden noted that their romance was taking a serious turn.

One night, Reagan proposed marriage to her, and she accepted, with the understanding that they’d marry as soon as his divorce was finalized. She had never been married. Since it would not be proper for her to wear an engagement ring, as he was still wed to Jane at the time, he gave her a diamond bracelet instead. He even purchased a mink coat to go with it.

A jealous Evelyn Keyes claimed, “Jergens knew how to get ahead at Columbia. She slept with Harry Cohn, who had the hots for her. At one time, she was fucking both Ronald Reagan and Cohn.”

Jergens was often seen out on the town with both Holden and Reagan. At first, Hollywood gossips assumed that Reagan was merely “The Beard,” concealing the adulterous relationship Holden was having with his co-star. When Holden, Jergens, and Reagan were spotted one morning leaving his Londonderry apartment at 5AM, each of them dressed for work, word spread that the “chorus girl cutie” was having a three-way with both actors.

At this point, Jergens developed a friendship with Virginia Mayo, who, ironically, was set to co-star in *The Girl from Jones Beach* with Reagan.

In her home in Thousand Oaks, California, in 2004, shortly before her death, Mayo told author Darwin Porter, “Adele and I had many talks about Reagan. She told me that he was a “real gentleman, and he bestowed many gifts on her.”

“I think I’m helping him recover from the loss of Jane,” Jergens confessed to Mayo. “I think he’s rushing too soon into another marriage, although I’ve already agreed to it. Encouraged by Bill Holden, he’s going through a heavy drinking period. Even when drunk, though, Ronnie is still a gentleman, unlike Bill. When he’s stinking drunk, Bill becomes a monster and sometimes hurts me. He gets very rough.”

Mayo asked Jergens if the rumors about a three-way with Holden and Reagan were true.

Too Many Blondes?

Adele Jergens, *(left)*, with Marilyn Monroe, her ferociously competitive co-performer in *Ladies of the Chorus*. As it happened, Reagan got involved with each of them at the same time.

"Adele was evasive, but I read between the lines," Mayo recalled.

Jergens told her, "I won't go into that, but I will tell you this: Bill and Ronnie are the two cleanest actors in Hollywood. I once came over to Ronnie's apartment. He'd given me the key, and I planned to meet him there later. In the living room, I poured myself a drink. I heard all this laughter coming from the shower. At first, I thought Ronnie had brought home another woman. It turned out to be Bill. Both of them came out of the shower a little later, with their bodies wrapped in towels. If you ask me, you must know, both of them smelled like a bar of soap. But they always did. I think each of them took at least four showers a day, unlike some actors, who managed to get under the water only two or three times a week, if that."

When Reagan was starring in *The Girl From Jones Beach (1949)* with Virginia Mayo, Adele Jergens was filming *Ladies of the Chorus* (1948), at Columbia. Cast as a chorus girl, she starred opposite Marilyn Monroe in her first significant film role. The two actresses played mother and daughter, even though Jergens was only nine years older than Marilyn.

Reagan remembered that he had once met Marilyn at a photo shoot. He greeted the director, Phil Karlson, who welcomed him to the set. In the early 1950s, he would direct John Payne, Jane Wyman's former lover, in three movies, eventually helming Elvis Presley in *Kid Galahad* (1962).

Karlson liked Reagan and invited him to watch Marilyn do her big number—"Every Baby Needs a Da Da Daddy."

"I could tell that Reagan was mesmerized by Marilyn," Karlson said. "His eyes practically bulged. He told me that he felt Marilyn was heading for big stardom. Frankly, I think she gave him a hard-on. Fortunately, Adele was nowhere around. She would have been jealous."

At the end of the number, which she did in one take, Marilyn ran over to Reagan. She gave him a wet kiss on the lips. "We've met before. Don't you remember?"

"Who could forget you, kid," he said. "You were sensational."

"I'm even more sensational when you get to know me," she claimed.

Before Jergens appeared on the set, Karlson noticed that Marilyn slipped Reagan her phone number. "Come up and see me sometime, big guy," she said, imitating Mae West.

"I knew from that moment that Adele had some serious competition." Karlson claimed.

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Lauren Bacall, backed up by Humphrey Bogart, announced that she was willing to risk suspension by refusing to appear in *The Girl from Jones Beach*. As she told friends privately, "My main objection would be having to

appear in such a revealing white bathing suit."

"It was the second Ronald Reagan picture I turned down," Bacall said. "Both Bogie and I had refused to appear with him in *Stallion Road."*

The lead female role in *The Girl from Jones Beach*, a fluffy romantic comedy, went to the blonde bombshell, Virginia Mayo, to be directed by Peter Godfrey, who had previously helmed Reagan in that abject disaster, *That Hagen Girl*.

After reading the script, Reagan objected to his role, telling Jack Warner that he didn't want to do it. "I see myself sitting tall in a saddle for the camera—you know, like John Wayne or Gary Cooper. Are you, by any chance, sitting on a script like Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington?* Look what it did for Jimmy Stewart."

"You're doing that *Jones Beach* thing or else," Warner warned him. "Just today, I put Bacall on suspension for refusing to play the female lead."

Reagan himself knew that it was a role that called for Cary Grant. In fact, when the movie was released, one reviewer claimed, "Cary Grant could have phoned in Reagan's role."

Reagan described his role as that "of a modern painter of the *Vargas* or *Petty Girl* type. Eddie Bracken played my sidekick. The plot called for me to romance a dozen or so gorgeous models."

In the plot, Reagan played Bob Randolph, who, as an illustrator, has drawn the perfect model, "The Randolph Girl." Bracken is hired by television producers to find the real life Randolph Girl. But Reagan, as Randolph, loudly asserts that the beautiful girl in his illustration had been inspired by a composite of a dozen or so models.

Eventually, the search leads to Ruth Wilson (Mayo), who looks like the living image of the illustrated version of the Randolph Girl. When the character played by Reagan learns that, he changes his name to Robert Venerik, claiming that he is a Czech immigrant who knows very little English. That allows him to enroll in a class where Ruth teaches English "as a second language" to new arrivals. From that point on, the plot leads to its inevitable, somewhat contrived, conclusion. The viewer easily surmises, based on dozens of clues and signals, that Reagan and Mayo will, before the film's end, fall in love.

Jones Beach: Lotsa Girls, Lotsa Flesh, Lotsa Fun.

Left to right: Ronald Reagan, Virginia Mayo, Eddie Bracken, and Donna Drake.

Mayo recalled the late morning when she had to make her first appearance in a skimpy white bathing suit. "The bathing suit is the most unfriendly garment in the wardrobe department. A girl can't keep a secret in a bathing suit."

Reagan gets *The Girl from Jones Beach*. "Mayo They Be Happy Forever."

Summoning her courage, she put on the bathing suit and walked outside her dressing room door. Reagan was waiting there for her. "He gave out a wolf whistle that could be heard in Chicago," she said. "I loved it! He restored my confidence."

He later said, "That bathing suit on Virginia would have raised the dead. The film we were making wasn't much, but Virginia's white thighs would guarantee box office."

Reagan later wrote that at one point, "Eddie Bracken got so goggle-eyed over the beauties in the film—not just Virginia—that he stepped on my heels and tripped me. It cracked my coccyx. It was my first experience with the pain of a broken bone. Unfortunately, it would not be my last."

Godfrey had to shoot around Reagan until he recovered, which caused the picture to run over budget.

Jane Wyman had taken the children, Maureen and Michael, for a holiday in Hawaii. She turned her house over to him, since she had a live-in staff there, who would take care of him during his convalescence.

One afternoon, Bracken visited Reagan. "I was filled with apologies for causing the accident. As I was heading into his bedroom, a beautiful young blonde emerged," Bracken said. "She flashed a smile at me and quickly left. After her face registered with my brain, I realized that it was that new girl, Marilyn Monroe, who had just come from Ronnie's bedroom. She was getting a hell of a lot of publicity, and I just knew it was Marilyn."

In the next room, Bracken faced Reagan who, despite being bedridden, had a smile on his face.

"That blonde," Bracken said. "That was Marilyn Monroe!"

"One and the same, but let's keep that as our little secret."

"My lips are sealed," Bracken responded.

"Thank god Marilyn's weren't," he quipped.

"For three seconds, I didn't get it, until the light dawned," Bracken said. "Marilyn had given him a blow-job, so that he wouldn't have to exert his back."

"Ronnie looked at my face as I was registering what had happened. He quickly picked up on it."

"You catch on quick, you dumb bone-crusher," Reagan said. "look what you've done to me, you fart!"

"Lying flat on your back obviously has its rewards," Bracken said.

"But Marilyn and I are going to have to delay 'number two' until my back heals, thanks to you."

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[Film historians and movie trivia buffs have long speculated about what prompted Adele Jergens to break off her engagement to Ronald Reagan. Virginia Mayo provided the answer." Adele found out that Marilyn (Monroe) was slipping behind her back for sex with Ronnie. She called the whole thing off, but she didn't return the mink coat or the diamond bracelet."

Before her death on November 22, 2002, Jergens gave her final interview. At the time, she was living in a retirement community at Camarillo, California.

"If I had played my cards right, I might have become the first actress ever to be First Lady of America. Too bad I let Reagan slip through my fingers over a jealous spat over Marilyn Monroe. I should have forgiven him."

Today, the world, except for dieheard fans, have forgotten the dazzling blonde of the film noir *era*.

Journalist Alan K. Rode summed up her appeal: "Adele Jergens could sing, dance, strut, and act with the best of them. She will always epitomize that bygone era of hardboiled repartee, sleek fedoras, and sequined, spangled burlesque queens. For better or worse, she was that gorgeous gal that the heavies in movies just had to have along for the ride."]

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Reagan had serious misgivings when it was announced that he was going to co-star with Ida Lupino in a movie called *Woman in Hiding*, to be shot during the late summer of 1949.

This was to be his first picture under a new deal Wasserman had arranged with Jack Warner. Reagan still had three years to go under his contract with Warner Brothers. Under the revisions arranged for him by Wasserman, he would make only one picture a year for Warners for a pre-defined fee of $150,000. He would otherwise be free to work for other studios.

Then Wasserman arranged for yet another contract, this time between Reagan and Universal Studios. In May of 1949, an agreement had been reached that stipulated that Reagan would make five pictures for Universal over a five-year period for a salary of $75,000 per picture.

On the surface, he had maintained an uneasy friendship with Lupino, "except she leans too far to the left for my tastes."

"If Lupino is not an actual Red, she's at least a deep magenta," he told William Holden.

Apparently, at the time they were scheduled to make a movie together, Lupino had not yet learned that Reagan was filing reports about her political activities with the FBI.

Twice before, he had been slated at Warners to co-star with Lupino, in both *Kings Row* and *Juke Girl*, but in each instance, she had gone on suspension rather than accept parts she disliked.

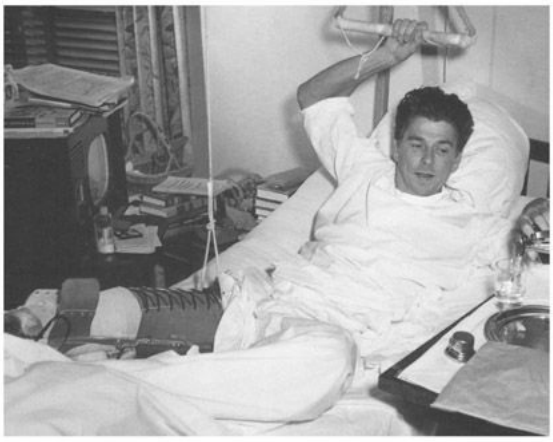
On the Saturday before shooting was scheduled to begin the following Monday, Reagan agreed to play in a for-charity baseball game for the benefit of the City of Hope Hospital. Some of the town's leading male actors were teamed against an opposing group composed of film comedians.

Before the end of the first inning, Reagan, after hitting the ground during a play, screamed out in excruciating pain.

Rushed to the hospital in an ambulance, he learned the bad news. He would not be shooting with Lupino (or with anyone, for that matter) on Monday. "My leg was sheathed in layers of tape and moleskin, with straps from these mummy wrapping hitched to a thirty-five pound weight by means of a pulley," he wrote in a memoir. "Twenty-four hours later, my eyes were swollen shut, my teeth hurt at even the touch of a tongue, and I itched and peeled all over. I was allergic to the wrappings. For more than a week, the massive histamine doses kept me only semi-conscious; then I settled down to weeks of discomfort because there was no removing the bandages."

An X-ray had shown that he had broken his right thigh bone in six different places. His hospitalization lasted for seven weeks. After that, he still would not be fully recovered. "Months in a cast was followed by a steel-and-leather brace, and that was followed by crutches. At long last, I was able to hobble around on a cane."

Initially, when Jane Wyman was in London shooting *Stage Fright*, she lent Reagan access to the home they used to share but which now, thanks to their divorce settlement, she occupied. There was a staff on site to take care of him. When she returned from England, Reagan was moved to the home of his mother. There, Nelle waited on him day and night at the house he had purchased for her on Phyllis Avenue. She was in her late sixties and ailing, but drove over to the Farmers' Market every day in her old Studebaker to buy fresh fruit and groceries for him.



Reagan recovers from a shattered thighbone after a charity baseball game. Marilyn came to give him “lip service.”

“I cooked all his favorite foods and tended to him like the baby boy I had long ago given birth to,” she recalled. “When he could walk again and take care of himself, he moved out. I cried all that day and half the night. I didn’t want him to leave, but to stay with me.”

Directed by Michael Gordon, *Woman in Hiding* went into production on schedule. The director arranged for actor Howard Duff, fresh from an affair with Ava Gardner, to replace Reagan as the male lead.

Lupino objected to the handsome replacement when she met him. “I don’t like him,” she told Gordon.

Apparently, she changed her mind. One night, Duff seduced her, and she later married him.

Months later, Reagan encountered Duff at a party. “Thank you for breaking your leg. Ida was against me until she succumbed to my masculine charm.”

Years later, by the time Reagan ran for Governor of California, Lupino still retained her negative impressions: “I blamed the bastard for deserting the Democrats,” she claimed.

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During his long periods of convalescence, Reagan could count on only one visitor, Marilyn Monroe. As he told William Holden, “I never knew when she would show up. For the most part, she was always in a hurry, perhaps going off on another date. She was one busy girl, but she knew I needed sex. I was flat on my back, but I could count on her to give me lip service. That brought me some sexual relief. My back and leg might not be in working order, but at least one part of my plumbing was still satisfactory. Marilyn’s a great gal. You should date her sometime, Bill. Just don’t let your wife know.”

During World War II, Captain Ronald Reagan was stationed in California, handling PR for the Army. In that capacity, Captain Reagan ordered his staff photographer, Private David Conover, to visit a local factory to take pictures of women on the homefront who were turning out aircraft, munitions, and parachutes. These morale-boosting photos of pretty girls contributing to the war effort were for publication in *Yank* magazine.

One of the girls he photographed that day was Norma Jeane. She could hardly know at the time that she’d eventually have an affair with Private Conover’s commanding officer – or that the officer would become, long after her own death, the President of the United States. Conover later claimed that the eyes of Norma Jeane “held something that touched and intrigued me. She should be a movie star.”

After lunch, he requested that she change into a red sweater, and he took more pictures of her in which her breasts were more prominent. When Conover came into the office of his boss (Reagan) a week later, he noticed that he’d pinned up that picture of Norma Jeane. Reagan said, “This young lady, not Lana Turner, should be called The Sweater Girl.”

Holden, among others, including Dick Powell and June Allyson, believed that Marilyn viewed Reagan as a father figure more than a lover. “She was going through a rough period in her life,” Allyson recalled. “Even though he was incapacitated, Ronnie was that shoulder for her to lean on.”

Sometimes, Marilyn didn’t seem so rushed, and she’d spend hours with Reagan in his Londonderry apartment during his long recuperation.

She related to Reagan that originally, Harry Cohn had held out such promises to her, even admitting that he’d put her on the casting couch. “He told me he was looking for a backup for Rita Hayworth, with whom he was having

a lot of trouble," Marilyn said. She even shared some of her secrets with Reagan, including that her hairline had been lifted through electrolysis, with the intention of highlighting her widow's peak.

On one visit, she shocked him. "I thought you were my old girlfriend, Lana Turner. You look just like her."

"Only younger," Marilyn said. "I am the *new* Lana Turner, made up to look just like her."

One afternoon, she arrived heartbroken and fell into his arms. "Cohn has let me go from Columbia. His promises are shit."

"You know what Cohn's final words to me were?" she asked Reagan. "He called me a 'goddamn cunt' and told me he never wanted to see me on the Columbia lot ever again."

When Reagan had met her on the set of *Ladies of the Chorus* (1948), Marilyn had told him that the picture with Adele Jergens was going to be a big hit. It wasn't—in fact, it flopped at the box office.

She revealed that she had studied and "worked so very, very hard" for the part. At one point, she'd gone to a seedy burlesque theater in downtown Los Angeles. Billing herself as "Mona Monroe," she'd stripped for the men. She later said, "I heard from one of the ushers that whenever I came on, the men placed their coats over their genitals to do their business in the dark."

She even went to see a performance by the elegant Lili St. Cyr. This tall, buxom, and statuesque blonde brought glamour, almost a sense of refinement, to the art of striptease. Marilyn visited her performance every night and met her backstage. What she didn't tell Reagan was that she had a lesbian affair with St. Cyr.

While at Columbia, Marilyn had fallen in love with her strikingly handsome voice coach, Fred Karger, who conducted his own band. What she didn't know, but would soon find out, Karger had another woman competing for his love-making. The competition was formidable: Jane Wyman.

During her chats with Reagan, Marilyn apparently left out many details of her life. She presented only limited but often tantalizing facts about her past. She didn't tell him about her lesbian affairs, because she knew he wouldn't understand such things.

As author Michael John Sullivan once wrote in his book, *Presidential Passions*, "Reagan's understanding of sexuality was exceedingly simplistic: For him, sex was either black or white so that sexual feelings of a highly complex or conflicting nature were both threatening and incomprehensible. The inflexibility of his narrow sexual sensibilities is perhaps best seen in his unchanging attitude toward homosexuality. Working in a business that is home to a very high percentage of gays and bisexuals, he remained intimidated by the prospect of sexual diversity."

In contrast, Marilyn understood.

In addition to St. Cyr, Marilyn was also engaged in a lesbian liaison with Natasha Lytess, her drama coach at Columbia.

Marilyn had to carry around a datebook to keep abreast of her affairs, which included Karger, but also actor John Carroll and even producer Joe Schenck.

When Reagan saw a picture in *Variety* of Marilyn on a date with Pat DiCicco at the Cocoanut Grove, he warned her about this hustler, who had been married to Thelma Todd (murdered) and Gloria Vanderbilt (beaten).

It was through Reagan that Marilyn once met Holden, who was scheduled to appear in *Born Yesterday* at Columbia.

Over drinks with Holden and Reagan, Marilyn said, "You two butch numbers are excepted, but I find that most male actors are 'pansies,' because acting is a feminine art. When a man has to paint his face and pose and strut and pretend emotions, he isn't doing what is normally masculine."

"Hello, fellow pansy," Holden said to Reagan. "To prove my masculinity, I'm going out to fuck every starlet in Hollywood."

Holden seemed enchanted with Marilyn—in fact, he left Reagan's apartment that night, promising to drive her home.

When she visited Reagan again, during a discussion about Holden, she said, "Through Bill, I've discovered the dumb blonde role that will make me one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. In *Born Yesterday*, I'll play Billie Dawn, a great role. Bill thinks I'm perfect for it. He's going behind Cohn's back and arranging a test for me at Columbia. He thinks the test will convince Cohn to give me another chance."

One rainy afternoon, Marilyn arrived at Reagan's apartment, her eyes red from crying. She said that the designer, Oleg Cassini, had made a gown for her, and had presented it to her as a gift. "I returned the favor," she said.

In her gown, she attended a party at the home shared by Cassini and his wife, Gene Tierney. "The bitch threw me out the door the moment I came into the foyer," Marilyn claimed. "In front of everybody, she exploded in fury. Her exact words, and she shouted them loud enough for everybody to hear, were, 'How could you invite this tramp? She's a nothing!'"

Reagan offered her what comfort he could, and then, in return, she offered him her own kind of comfort.

Four days later, Marilyn was back in Reagan's apartment, this time telling him the bad news. Harry Cohn had refused to look at her test for Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday*. "I won't tell you what else the bastard said about me."

Somehow, she managed to get herself cast in a cameo role in another movie, *Love Happy*, with the Marx Brothers. She asked Reagan, "Will I have to bed all the Marx Brothers?"

"Probably, but not at the same time," he answered.

That was followed by another role that year in *A Ticket to Tomahawk*, with Dan Dailey and Anne Baxter. She was delighted when the director, Richard Sale, told her, "You can sing and dance better than Betty Grable."

That Saturday, Grable herself arrived at Reagan's apartment with a gift. He hadn't seen her since her marriage to bandleader Harry James.

When June Allyson heard about their reunion, she said, "I'm only guessing, but I don't think they resumed their affair. It was just two old friends getting together to talk about their early days in Hollywood, trying to climb rungs of the ladder to stardom."

Reagan was very saddened to hear news over the radio on July 5, 1948, that Carole Landis—another blonde he'd known from his early Hollywood years—had overdosed on sleeping pills and died. It was reported that she had been despondent over the breakup of her affair with Rex Harrison.

Allyson admitted to her friends, Peter Lawford and Van Johnson, that she, too, had had a brief fling with Reagan when he came to visit her one afternoon. "He was still walking on crutches at the time. I was the one who had to seduce Ronnie. It was just a two-week fling. I was mad at Richard *[a reference to her husband at the time, Dick Powell]* at the time. Ronnie was between marriages. Nothing came of it. We remained friends."

Years later, she told Johnson, "Could you imagine? I'm one of the few women in Hollywood like Marilyn Monroe, who seduced two U.S. presidents. Although I had John F. Kennedy before Marilyn, in her case, she had Ronnie before I did."

At one point, Reagan flew Marilyn to Miami Beach. He checked into a suite at the Roney Plaza, booking her into the more modest Helen Mar Hotel, a few blocks away.

During their time together, he took her for three nights in a row to hear his favorite entertainer, Sophie Tucker, billed as "the Last of the Red Hot Mommas." She was appearing in a sold-out revue at the Beachcomber.

To end each show before the essentially Jewish audience, she sang, "*Yiddische Momme*." For some reason, this was Reagan's favorite, although he was the least Jewish person in the night club.

Sophie also invited Reagan and Marilyn to her big birthday bash on February 9,1950. In 1887, she had been born in the Ukraine, which had been ruled during that era by Czarist Russia. A crowd of celebrities flew in from around the country, including Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, George Burns, and Joe E. Lewis, along with newer comedians who included Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin. Frances Langford sang.

Nightclub entertainer Sophie Tucker: "Ronnie got it all wrong. What in hell did I have to do with Whistler's Mother?"

Reagan was among the honored guests asked to say a few words at the podium. For some reason known only to himself, he called Sophie "the Whistler's Mother of Show Business." He praised her talent and congratulated her for her contribution to charity. "Sophia fled from Czarist Russia to come to our shores seeking the American Dream. That dream has come true for her."

Sophie closed her birthday gala by singing her signature song, “Some of These Days.”

Backstage, as a farewell, Reagan and Sophie lip-kissed. After that, Sophie kissed Marilyn, revealing to Reagan in a broad aside, “My advice, Ronnie, is to marry this sweet little sugartit. Make an honest woman of her. Take the word of the Last of the Red Hot Mommas.”

Marilyn Monroe: The last of the Red Hot Mommas urged Reagan “to make an honest woman out of her. Marry her and to hell with Jane Wyman.”

During their final dinner together on Miami Beach, Reagan told Marilyn that he’d booked her aboard a plane separate from his own flight as a means of discreetly hauling her back to Los Angeles. “It’s been fun,” he said, “but it’s over now. Someone else has moved into my life.”

“So, it’s just one of those things,” she said, appearing on the verge of tears. She never could stand rejection.

Back in Los Angeles, she waited two weeks before showing up on his doorstep again. He welcomed her into his apartment.

“We did our thing,” she later said. “But there was never any commitment, any definition of our relationship, or whether it had come to an end. It did, eventually, of course, but I ended it…Not him! Do I know men?”

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Mobile again, no longer walking with a cane, Reagan launched one of his most serious romances, one within a series of “between marriages affairs,” this time with gossip and entertainment columnist Doris Lilly. Cindy Adams, the *New York Post* columnist, once wrote, “Doris was never fond of poverty. She was meeting rich people when the rest of us were in camel’s hair. She received a prized sable coat from a male admirer, who was a little bit married.”

“If it were true that money grew on trees, all my friends would be married to apes,” Lilly said. For years, she wrote a popular gossip column for the *New York Post*. Later, she admitted that her column was sometimes “silly,” and that the people she wrote about were often “shallow.” But they’re pleasant and they smell good and they eat well and drink good wines—and that’s all right.”

Columnist Doris Lilly was a social butterfly whom Reagan called “My Gilded Lily” as she flitted from millionaire to millionaire.

Even as a young contract actress working for Cecil B. DeMille, Lilly had an eye for people already established, but also for up-and-coming millionaires. She sensed that Reagan, although a “failed actor” (her words) when she began to date him, was “really going places one day, perhaps in a field different from the movies.”

Lilly told author Kitty Kelley that Reagan “liked the big, outdoor blonde, Pasadena Rose Bowl Parade queen type of California woman. I know, because I was one of them. Whenever they were in town, we went to see George Jessel or Sophie Tucker, his favorite entertainers. We went ice skating in Westwood by the old veterans’ home. I listened to all his stories and his endless rants about politics. We were often separated on different coasts. Sometimes the references in his letters were sexual.”

On April 28, 1948, in a letter he wrote to her, he said, “I’d like to be tossing off a ‘short one’ with you.”

One Sunday morning, when she called him, and after a few minutes of dialogue, she accused him of having “another blonde in bed with you.”

He later sent her a note. “Your call interrupted no Sunday matinee (*d--n it*: I was just fogged over and sleepy.”)

He never wrote out the words “damn” or “hell.” They were always abbreviated to “d—n” or “h—l.”

On their dates, he was still driving that turquoise Cadillac, that birthday gift from Jane Wyman before their divorce.

“Reagan and I had a delightful little romance in 1948,” Lilly claimed. “Intimately, he was nothing memorable, but he was an appealing-looking guy who was very, very sweet. I hate to say that he was weak—maybe a nicer word would be ‘passive.’ He loved to go out and be seen at all the nightclubs in Hollywood in those days, and he loved to drink, but was never a drunk. He was a very gentle, very square, very hayseed type of man.”

She later denied that she had ever admitted to an intimate relationship with Reagan. “I don’t talk about sex. That’s not my generation.” However, it was well known among Reagan’s friends that Lilly often indulged in a sleepover with Reagan, leaving before dawn. William Holden and Reagan’s best male friends were aware of the relationship, because he talked privately about his plans to marry her. He confessed to Holden and others, “The sex was great.” Obviously, based on what she later said, it was greater for Reagan than it was for Lilly.

Years later, she recalled that one night, Reagan was filled with total despair, “I just can’t get it right,” he told her. Reportedly, he was almost sobbing. “I’m no good alone. I need someone to share my life, and Doris, you are that someone.”

She said, “What I knew for sure was that he didn’t love me, and I didn’t love him. I could have had him if I’d wanted him. If I was willing to make the big moves, push, be there, encourage him, never leave him alone for a moment. He would never leave me if I made him think it would be wrong to do so. Those soft, vulnerable eyes staring into mine. I couldn’t do it *[i.e., marry him]*. I would only bring him more misery later on. I let the moment go.”

“But the day was saved,” Lilly said. “Along came Nancy to save his soul.”

In 1951, after she broke up with Reagan, Lilly’s tongue-in-cheek novel, *How to Marry a Millionaire* was published by Putnam. Ironically, its 1953 adaptation into a film became one of the most popular movies Marilyn

Monroe ever made.

Lilly later wrote a sequel, *How to Marry a Billionaire* (Delacorte, 1984). “A million dollars isn’t much money these days. You can’t even get a decent house for that.”

Lilly is also said to have been the inspiration for the Holly Golightly character in Truman Capote’s novella, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, which evolved, in 1961, into a movie hit starring Audrey Hepburn. *[Capote had wanted Marilyn Monroe to interpret the role. Other women, not just Lilly, also claimed to have been the inspiration for Holly.]*

Lilly said, “There was a lot of wondering about who was the original Holly Golightly. Pamela Drake and I were living in this brownstone walk-up on East 78th Street, exactly the one in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Exactly. Truman used to come over all the time to watch me put on my makeup before I went out. There’s an awful lot of me in Holly Golightly.”

Lilly later said, “After me, I don’t think Ronnie went out with anyone on a very serious basis. He was a new bachelor with a roving eye. From what I heard, he took out a girl only once or twice before dumping her. Some of his affairs lasted a whole week.”

When Reagan became President, Lilly sold two of the love letters he’d written to her for $4,400. Financier Malcolm Forbes purchased them and presented them as a gift to Nancy Reagan. He waited until Reagan left office so that she would not have to declare them as gifts.

Lilly was furious when she heard what Forbes had done. “That bitch *[a reference to Nancy]* is so jealous of any other woman who knew Ronnie that she’ll probably destroy the letters so that future generations won’t know there was anyone else but her in his life. It’s a damn shame that Malcolm gave them to her, because those letters should be preserved as part of history.”

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Perhaps out of friendship with Reagan, both Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons rarely reported on his post-Wyman romances. However, columnist Sidney Skolsky ran many a juicy tidbit, detailing a number of affairs of the women in his life, including Adele Jergens, Monica Lewis, Patricia Neal, and Nancy Davis, whom he referred to as “a pretty model.”

Connie Wald, who had been married to Jerry Wald, a close friend of Reagan, recalled that period of his life “between marriages.”

“His career was going downhill, and he was drifting from the bed of one beautiful young woman to another. I must say, the girls really went for him. He had his pick of Hollywood beauties. He was so sweet and nice, and he still had his good looks. Yet he was a very private man. He didn’t want anyone to look inside. He was never really serious about anyone until Nancy Davis came along, and even she had a hard time nailing him. She faced stiff competition from half the dames in Hollywood. Many a starlet was anxious to become the second Mrs. Ronald Reagan, president of the Screen Actors Guild.”

Even the fan magazines picked up on Reagan, the new “Hollywood swinger.” *Silver Screen* wrote, “Never thought we’d come right out and call Ronald Reagan a ‘wolf,’ but let us face it. Suddenly, every glamour gal considers him a super-sexy escort for the evening. He admits he’s missed a lot of fun and is out to make up for it. Some say that the torch of Jane Wyman has finally been reduced to a feeble flame.”

Reagan claimed his hot date, Kay Stewart, had “Betty Grable legs and Betty’s blonde hair, although in this picture she had reverted to her natural “wren brown.”

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Sometimes, Reagan double dated with other married couples, particularly Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck, who were having their own marital troubles. They would divorce in 1951. One night, Reagan was spotted with starlet Kay Stewart, whom he called “My Yellow Rose of Texas.

Stewart and Reagan often talked about how they got started in Hollywood in the late 1930s. She had a brief appearance in Ernst Lubitsch’s 1939 *Ninotchka*, and she had worked with Preston Sturges in his comedies. Reagan said, “Kay had never really had a chance to show off her talent.”

Both Stewart and Reagan were recovering from recent divorces. She had been married to Langdon William Proctor.

Reagan told Stanwyck, “Kay wants to be as big a movie star as you are.”

Stanwyck shot back, “As if that were possible.”

Penny Edwards, shown here in full cowgirl drag with Roy Rogers. When the “King of the Cowboys” wasn’t in the saddle, Reagan became the horseman.

Actually, Stewart went on to garner nearly a hundred credits, mostly in TV series, such as *Charlie’s Angels*, *Baretta, Medical Story*, and *The Doris Day Show*.

“My romance with Kay ended before it really began,” Reagan told Taylor. “She’s looking for another husband, and it isn’t going to be me.”

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Penny Edwards had a small role in *That Hagen Girl* with Reagan and Shirley Temple. Three weeks after making that box office failure, he called her for a date, which led to several outings and what was rumored as a prolonged sexual fling.

At the time Reagan met her, she was appearing in *Two Guys from Texas* (1948), with Dennis Morgan and Jack Carson. He quizzed her a lot about Morgan, and she said she knew very little about him, except Jane paid at least five visits to the set to see Morgan. Edwards later said, “I think Ronnie suspected something was going on between Dennis and Jane. I felt something was, but I’m not a blabbermouth.”

Edwards was blonde and blue-eyed—“just my type,” Reagan said.

Stanwyck said, “Ronnie was a gentleman who preferred blondes but married brunettes.”

Edwards had appeared in 1943 in *The Ziegfeld Follies* with Milton Berle. “He took my virginity and gave me

the wrong impression about men. I had never seen a nude man before, so I just assumed that all of them had a tree truck between their legs. Did I soon learn differently."

Reagan would go for long periods without calling and then suddenly, "in the middle of the night, he'd ring up for a date," she recalled.

He learned that she'd become involved on and off the screen with Roy Rogers, "King of the Cowboys." When his wife, Dale Evans, retired as "Queen of the Cowgirls," Edwards filled in for her, signing on for such pictures as *Sunset in the West* (1950). She told Reagan "You take Roy out of the saddle, and he isn't much, if you get my drift."

"I've heard the same said about John Wayne," Reagan said.

"They can't say that about you, lover boy," Edwards said. "What stamina! What endurance!"

"My thing with Ronnie might have gone somewhere had it not been for my mother," Edwards recalled. "She was a real Bible thumper, a religious zealot. She hated Ronnie, and called him a whoremonger."

He met her a few more times, including as part of a date with her right before he married Nancy Davis. She told him she was making *Pony Soldier* (1952) with Tyrone Power. "Guess what? I'm shot with an arrow, I ride in a burning wagon, I am kidnapped by Indians and thrown from a horse. I have to swim in a raging river, and I'm tied to a flaming stake to be set on fire. Otherwise, there's not much action, certainly not from Ty Power."

He later learned she'd taken up with bisexual Rory Calhoun, with whom both of them had worked on *That Hagen Girl*. But then, she abandoned her film career to join the Seventh Day Adventists. The *Los Angeles Times* headlined the news—PENNY EDWARDS CALLS WHOA TO HOSS OPERAS.

A veteran infighter of the diva wars: Peggy Knudsen.

Her retreat was only temporary. In the late 1950s, she returned briefly to film some Westerns. She ended her life making appearances at Western conventions, dressed in cowgirl outfits and signing autographs for members of her dwindling fan base.

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Reagan's involvement with starlet Peggy Knudsen was so brief it hardly counts. From Duluth, Minnesota, she arrived in Hollywood hoping to break into the movies. As she told Reagan, "I ended up working with two of the biggest bitches in Hollywood, Bette Davis in *A Stolen Life* (1946) and later, that same year, with Joan Crawford in Humoresque."

She also appeared with Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in *The Big Sleep*. "Don't believe all those stories about Bogie being faithful to his wife," Knudsen said.

When she dated Reagan, she had emerged from a divorce from Adrian P. Samish. She finally decided that Reagan wasn't going to marry her, so she went after and won Jim Jordan in 1949.

Reagan never saw her again, but read in *Variety* that she was appearing in *Istanbul* (1957) with Errol Flynn. Reagan had seen Flynn, drunk and extroverted, at a party a few months earlier. "Poor Peggy," he said. "She's getting Errol on his last legs, just before the lid is closed on his coffin."

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Florida-born Dorothy Shay, known as "The Park Avenue Hillbillie," was another Reagan conquest. As part of her art, she usually dressed like a Park Avenue socialite, but when she opened her mouth, she sounded like a low-end Florida cracker from the Panhandle.

Dorothy ("The Park Avenue Hillbillie") Shay.

When Reagan met her, she had scored one of her biggest recording hits, "Feudin' and Fightin." Her 1947 *The Park Avenue Hillbillie*, rose to number one on Billboard's chart of bestselling popular albums.

Later, Shay worked with Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in the movie, *Comin' Round the Mountain* (1951). "Lou and I used to talk dirty," she said. "Real raunchy stuff. I told him that of all the guys I'd bedded, Ronnie was strictly missionary position. In contrast to him, I did everything. I think my kinky maneuvers turned him off. I don't believe he'd ever experienced any 'rosebud' fore-play. There was a part of him that he wanted to keep very, very private."

Eileen Howe, whose "True Confessions" were promoted on the front page of this French magazine.

Reagan became intrigued by starlet Eileen Howe after reading about her in the newspapers. For a time in the late 1940s and early 1950s, she was hailed as "the prettiest girl in Hollywood."

In December of 1946, Louella Parsons ran a strange item in her column, claiming, "Eileen Howe is allergic to touch, and can't even hold hands with her boyfriend."

"Where in hell did Louella get that idea?" Reagan later asked after dating Howe.

A former model for the Hartford Agency in New York, Howe became fodder for gossip columnists once she'd arrived in Hollywood. In May of 1947, Dorothy Kilgallen claimed, "Gilbert Roland, once Constance Bennett's husband, is wooing Eileen Howe."

As a starlet in Hollywood, she was secretly dating Lew Ayres, who otherwise was expressing "undying love"

for Jane Wyman.

Howe's date book was filled with suitors who included Jimmy Van Heusen, Errol Flynn, Dean Martin, and movie Tarzan Lex Barker.

Like those men, Reagan was drawn to her measurements of 35-23-35. She had to work Reagan in between calls from Howard Hughes. Ted Briskin was seen dating her after his divorce from Betty Hutton. Tony Curtis, Vince Edwards, and Scott Brady were also on her trail.

Reagan gave up the chase in January of 1952 right before he married Nancy. Columnist Hay Hoye wrote: "Gary Cooper's latest 'friend' is Eileen Howe."

Reagan's conclusion about her: "She didn't do too bad for a gal who can't stand to be touched."

***

Singer Evelyn Knight was not the most beautiful blonde Reagan ever dated, but she was talented, quite good looking, and had a bubbly personality that charmed him, at least temporarily.

Known as "The Lass with the Delicate Air," she was a popular recording artist in the 1940s and 50s, having scored a big hit with "Buttons and Bows." Her duet with country singer Red Foley, "My Heart Cries for You," was a lament heard on jukeboxes from Maine to Florida and west to Oregon.

Reagan first spotted her during a visit to the Blue Angel Nightclub in Manhattan. He waited until her final performance and then invited her out for a midnight date. She was seen leaving his hotel suite the following morning. Back in Los Angeles, he attended her shows at both Ciro's and the Cocoanut Grove.

He claimed that Knight was his favorite singer, saying that he preferred her to Jo Stafford, Peggy Lee, and Dinah Shore. He told William Holden that his greatest night with her was at a small club in San Fernando Valley, where both of them had been drinking heavily. Knight took the microphone and sang all the favorites whose names were called out to her from the audience. "She knew them all, and never missed a beat," he said. "We ended up closing the joint down."

Singer Evelyn Knight dedicated "My Heart Cries for You" to Reagan.

He asked Holden, "Guess who my competition is? Tony Martin, Bing Crosby, and Gordon MacCrae. Those singers are a randy bunch." He'd heard that Ray Sinatra, a cousin of Frank Sinatra, had signed on as her musical conductor. "I wonder if Ray takes after Frank."

The last time he saw Knight was in 1954, two years after his marriage to Nancy. She told him, "I'm getting out of the business. Supper clubs are dying, and the sound of rock and roll fills the air waves."

Knight ended up living in obscurity in Phoenix, where she hired out as a babysitter, usually to people who knew nothing of her illustrious past.

***

Reagan dated the Massachusetts-born Ruth Roman, a sultry brunette, before she married Mortimer Hall in 1950. When he learned that she was the daughter of immigrant parents from Lithuania, he told her, “If all the girls in Lithuania look like you, I’m taking the next boat there in the morning.”

Ruth Roman: “If guys like Ronnie Reagan couldn’t get Ava Gardner, they settled for me.”

Her father had been a circus barker, who died when she was very young. As a means of supporting her family, her mother became a char-woman.

Reagan told Hedda Hopper, “Ruth has really struggled to get beyond one of those ‘blink-and-you-miss-me’ parts.”

Roman played a supporting role to Rita Hay-worth in *Gilda* (1946) and to Bette Davis in *Beyond the Forest* (1949). Finally, she nabbed a key role in *Champion* (1949) with Kirk Douglas.

“I love acting,” she told him. “But it can break your heart. It has mine several times.” She said that she had posed for stills for crime magazines at $5 an hour as a means of earning $200 to travel by train from Massachusetts to Hollywood.

One day, Reagan visited the set of *Champion* where he chatted briefly with its director, Mark Robson. While Roman was in the shower, Robson introduced Reagan to Lola Albright. Reagan then secretly asked Albright out on a date.

Eventually, after months of struggle, Roman was awarded the female lead in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Originally, the male lead was to have gone to his friend, William Holden, who pulled out at the last minute. Subsequently, that key role went to a weaker actor, Farley Granger. The second male lead was given to Robert Walker, who was dating Nancy Davis at the time.

After her completion of *Strangers on a Train*, Roman was cast with Jane Wyman in *Starlift* (1951). Reagan became a bit agitated after hearing that. Doris Day, whom he was also dating at the time, was in that movie, too, and he didn’t want either Day or Roman to discuss him with his ex-wife. “Jane and I are divorced,” he told Roman, “but I still feel embarrassed when she encounters women with whom I’m having an affair.”

By the time she made *Starlift*, Roman was no longer bedding Reagan, but he did see her on occasion. “In my talks with Jane, your name never came up,” she assured him. She told him that Gary Cooper was also in *Starlift*.

“He propositioned me, even though I heard he was still in love with Patricia Neal.”

“And married, too,” Reagan added.

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Hailing from Akron, Ohio, singer/actress Lola Albright was buxom and blonde. On her first date with Reagan, she wore a gown with such low *colletage* that it left little to the imagination. She came to Hollywood in 1947, but didn’t get a good role until her involvement in *Champion*, two years later.

Reagan wondered if she’d been seduced by Kirk Douglas, who was known for bedding actresses with whom he appeared.

Reagan may have gotten her a role in his own *The Girl from Jones Beach*, released the same year as *Champion*. At any rate, he admired her very much and noted that she had a fairly successful career in Hollywood without ever

becoming a big star.

Lola Albright tried to imitate Betty Grable's celebrated World War II pinup photo, but didn't quite pull it off.

Years before, Reagan had seduced the real thing. Lola was "merely the mock."

In time, he saw her as a nightlife singer on television's detective series, *Peter Gunn* (1958-1961), as created by Blake Edwards. Albright was cast as the romantic interest of the series' namesake, Peter Gunn, played by Craig Stevens. Reagan as a rather crass joke said, "Until you, *I* used to be Craig's love interest." Later, Reagan went to see Elvis Presley's *Kid Galahad* (1962), because he heard that Albright was in it.

Reagan also maintained another, indirect link, to Albright. In 1952, she married actor Jack Carson, the best friend and often movie sidekick to Dennis Morgan, with whom Jane had conducted her most enduring love affair.

As far as Albright's dating of Reagan, it appears that he took her out to a nightclub on perhaps two occasions as part of "a harmless encounter," he said. "Lola was very charming, a talented star who could both act and sing, and a nice person, something not always encountered in Hollywood."

***

Ann Sothern was acquainted with Reagan's second wife, Nancy Davis, before he was. Both of these women had appeared in *Shadow on the Wall*. If the blonde-haired Sothern had had her way, she might have been the one who married Reagan instead of Nancy.

Ann Sothern: “I worked with Nancy Davis, but what I did with Ronnie, I wouldn’t exactly call ‘work.’”

In 1949, Sothern was in the throes of divorcing Pennsylvania-born actor Robert Sterling, whom she’d impetuously married in 1943, when thousands of other couples seemed to be rushing with equivalent wartime zeal into the bonds of matrimony.

Sterling had been a flight instructor throughout most of the war. After his release from the military, he found that his career had faltered during his absence. Likewise, after appearing in several postwar films, including as the featured actress within the popular Maisie series, Sothern’s own career “was on the skids,” as she put it.

Since Reagan and Sothern always seemed to be laughing and joking with each other on their “fundates,” his friends, including Dick Powell and June Allyson, thought they might eventually traipse down down the aisle together. “I knew that Ann was most willing,” Allyson said.

Reagan, however, may have found Sothern too aggressive. She’d told him, “When a gal is getting rid of a husband, it’s time for her to go shopping for another.”

Although he dated her from anywhere from three weeks to a month, marriage was not on his agenda. She’d gained a bit of weight, and she was two years older than he was. As he told William Holden, “I like my dates to be ten to fifteen years younger than me.”

“So you can be a father to them?” Holden facetiously asked.

“Yeah, right!”

“You say ten to fifteen years,” Holden said. “You’ve got it all wrong. Try twenty to twenty-five years.”

The Sothern/Reagan romance ended abruptly. Allyson thought she knew the reason why. Shortly after filming *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), Sothern contracted infectious hepatitis after being injected with an impure serum as part of a medical procedure while she was in England for a stage performance.

Reagan didn’t wait around long enough for her to recover.

***

A more serious relationship for Reagan developed with Betty Underwood, a starlet who had had a minor role in *The Girl from Jones Beach* (1949).

A former Powers model in New York, the strikingly beautiful Underwood was one of dozens of young women who had come to maturity during World War II and had migrated to Hollywood. She arrived there in 1948, and began dating Reagan, who was in the last throes of his divorce from Jane Wyman.

One night, he invited her to a premiere. “I like to arrive with a bombshell on my arm,” he said. “That way, Jane won’t think I’m still in mourning over her desertion of me.”

In Hollywood, Underwood became better known for dating famous men than she was for her movie career. She enjoyed a romance with the former Mr. Joan Crawford (Franchot Tone), which caused a rift between her and actress Jean Wallace, who was married to Tone at the time.

Betty Underwood. As one reporter wrote, “Betty Underwood plays Ronald Reagan like a fiddle, making him chase her all over the East Coast, from New York to Florida.”

Scott Brady, the brother of Laurence Tierney, was a handsome stud, the former lover of Anne Bancroft, who dated him at the same time Underwood did. “Scott was very proud of his equipment—and rightly so,” Bancroft said.

Brady said, “I liked Betty a lot. But in those days, my phone was ringing off the walls, not only from hot babes, but a lot of famous male stars, too. I guess word of my gift had gotten around. I turned her over to Reagan.”

That was not exactly the case. Brady didn’t actually turn her over to anybody. Underwood charted her own course.

Reagan’s affair with her lasted until March of 1951. The year Reagan married Nancy (1952), Underwood became engaged to Lester Deutsch, the multi-millionaire aeronautics pioneer.

Shirley Ballard on Reagan: “A hard guy to nail down.”

At last report, she was still alive in 2013. If asked to dredge up a memory of Reagan, she recalled him as “charming, delightful, and very romantic.”

If she had any regret at all, it involved her burning of his love letters, which would potentially be worth a lot of money today.

***

A Los Angeles native, the attractive starlet, Shirley Ballard, also appeared in Reagan’s date book at the time. Fourteen years younger than him, she was another talented newcomer to the industry who never became a full-fledged star. After her heyday, parts were infrequent and minor, and included a brief appearance in the 1979 film *Mad Max*, starring Mel Gibson.

When Hedda Hopper asked Reagan about Ballard, he said, “It was nothing, Hedda, She’s a fine girl. We were just ships who passed in the night without colliding.”

***

Reagan was introduced to Peggy Stewart by her brother-in-law, Wayne Morris, who had co-starred with Reagan and Jane Wyman in those *Brother Rat* movies.

Peggy Stewart: “After my divorce at the end of the war, I was shopping around. Ronnie fell into my cart, but hopped out.”

Growing up in West Palm Beach, Florida, Stewart, a beautiful starlet, was twelve years younger than Reagan. She’d entered a wartime marriage to actor Don (“Red”) Barry, but their wedded bliss didn’t make it till the Victory parades.

She became known for a string of B Westerns, in which she appeared with such cowboy stars as Sunset Carson, Wild Bill Elliott, and Gene Autry.

She broke into movies at the same time as Reagan did, making her debut in *Wells Fargo* (1937), in which she was cast as the teenage daughter of Joel McCrea.

“I’ve played every role from a chorus girl in *Man About Town* (1939) to a convict in *Girls in Chains* (1943),” she said.

When Reagan no longer called, she “free lanced” in the romantic department until actor Buck Young came along. She married him in 1953, and was still married to him at the time of his death in 2000.

In later years, Stewart often appeared dressed as a cowgirl at film festivals, where her fans remembered her. A fan would approach her, “I still remember you in *Cheyenne Wildcat* (1944).”

Stewart was still working as late as 2012, when she was cast as “Grandma Delores” in the Adam Sandler comedy, *That’s My Boy*.

***

Reagan momentarily fell for “my songbird,” Monica Lewis, a dimple-cheeked beauty known as “America’s Singing Sweetheart.” One of her biggest hits was “Put the Blame on Mame,” the highlight of Rita Hayworth’s

movie *Gilda*. Other hits included “I Wish You Love” and “Autumn Leaves.” The theme and title associated with the *Autumn Leaves* was made into a movie (1956), starring Joan Crawford.

Lewis’ singing voice was later used for commercials on the TV series, *General Electric Theater*, which Reagan hosted.

No, it isn’t Lana Turner. It’s Monica Lewis!

Still alive at the time of this writing, Lewis wrote an autobiography, *Hollywood Through My Eyes: The Lives and Loves of a Golden Age Siren*, in which she detailed her romances with Reagan and Kirk Douglas.

She also wrote about her discovery by Benny Goodman and her ill-fated stint at MGM, where she was groomed “as a threat to Lana Turner. I was in the right place at the wrong time.”

At the time Reagan dated her, Lewis was the singing voice of “Miss Chiquita Banana,” a cartoon TV commercial. In 1948, she appeared on the first ever *Ed Sullivan Show*. She married record producer Robert Thiele in 1945, but divorced him in 1947. A few months later, she was seen out with Reagan. They made an attractive, compatible couple, but nothing very serious came out of their romance, since Reagan, and perhaps Lewis, too, were each “playing the field.”

Reagan was reportedly shocked when he learned that Lewis had married Jennings Lang in 1956.

Monica Lewis with her husband, Jennings Lang, the man who delivered the only known punch to the face of Ronald Reagan.

[In 1951, Lang had been involved in one of that year’s biggest Hollywood scandals. Producer Walter Wanger discovered that his wife, the beautiful and sultry Joan Bennett, sister of Constance Bennett, was having an affair with Lang, a theatrical agent at the time. They conducted their romance clandestinely, often at vacation spots in the Caribbean. In Los Angeles, they enjoyed “quickies” at his apartment in Beverly Hills.

Wanger learned of the affair. Like a crazed cuckold, he lay in wait for them, shooting Lang in the testicles when he emerged from a car with Bennett. Helater pleaded temporary insanity, eventually escaping with a four-month jail sentence.]

Reagan was acquainted with Lang, as he had become the head of MCA’s West Coast TV operations.

In the halls of one of MCA's office buildings, Reagan encountered Lang during the time he was married to Lewis. "Jennings, my good fellow," Reagan said, mockingly. "I hope everything is in working order. You're the first *castrato* I've ever met."

Losing control, Lang punched Reagan in the face, bloodying his nose. Apparently, this was the first and only time Reagan had ever been struck in the face in Hollywood.

Lang later became a producer, turning out such pictures as *Airport 1975*. He never forgave Reagan for his insult. After he left MCA, he attacked him. "Reagan is the invention of that Hollywood conglomerate, MCA," he charged. "Every facet of his life, from his film career to his entry into politics, to his money in the bank, is indirectly controlled by MCA. He is the puppet, with MCA pulling his strings, with the help of the Mafia."

***

A diminutive beauty, Wisconsin-born Christine Larson graced movie screens from 1948 to 1955 in a series of grade B Westerns and long-forgotten potboilers like *Last Train to Bombay (1952) and* Valley of the Head Hunters (1953).

She became better known in TV series, including *The Cisco Kid* and *Four Star Playhouse*, and in 1950, she also starred in five episodes of *Dick Tracy*.

In Hollywood, Larson became notorious for her varied affairs with screen actors, and was often featured in the gossip columns. She had a long affair with actor Johnny Mack Brown, who had been one of the greatest halfbacks ever to play for the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide.

In Hollywood, Brown had been a romantic leading man, appearing opposite such stars as Greta Garbo, Mary Pickford, and Joan Crawford. His widely publicized affair with one of his leading ladies, Marion Davies, then mistress of William Randolph Hearst, damaged his career.

Baha'i Beauty: Christine Larson

When Jack Carson spotted Reagan with Larson one night at the Cocoanut Grove, he quipped, "Out with a redhead for a change?"

Larson and Reagan were often spotted together going horseback riding, usually on Sunday afternoons. She was a champion equestrian and a rodeo queen. She told him, "My greatest ambition in life is to own a Lipizzaner stallion. Why don't you buy me one?"

"I thought I was stallion enough for you," he answered.

She not only went riding with him along the trails of the Hollywood Hills, but she designed his cowboy gear too. Before dating him, she had been a designer for the Western Costume Company. "I prefer to dress my men from the skin, beginning with their jockstraps," she once said. He liked the suits she gave him, except for one. It was all in red, and included red boots and a red ten-gallon hat. He refused to wear it.

William Holden said, “Christine was different from Ronnie’s usual girlfriends. She was absolutely gorgeous with great legs. I slipped behind Ronnie’s back and bedded her a few times. A hot little number.”

Holden later claimed that “Neither Christine nor Nancy Davis knew it—at least I don’t think they did—but Ronnie was also carrying on at least three other affairs when he was courting them. I screwed around a lot myself in those days. But I was more selective than he was—I mean, I went for the class dames like Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly.”

For Reagan, at least, there was a potential problem associated with Larson’s choice of religions, especially if Reagan continued his involvement in politics. She was a follower of the Bahá’i faith. It was reported that Larson got Reagan to attend at least four Bahá’i services with her.

[Ranked as one of the world’s fastest-growing religions, and founded by Bahá’u’lláh, a much-persecuted visionary who was exiled for his teaching in 19th-century Persia, Bahá’i is a monotheistic religion emphasizing the spiritual unity of humankind, asserting that there is only one God, the source of all creation, and that the human purpose is to learn to know and love God through such methods as reflection, service to humanity, and prayer. The religion, which has more than five million adherents worldwide, recognizes the link to God of such prophets and messengers as Moses, Muhammed, Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna.]

The playwright, O.Z. White, who knew both Reagan and Larson, claimed, “Reagan would talk about politics, Christine about the Bahá’i. In that religion, it is forbidden for a member to enter politics.”

Even so, Larson claimed that Reagan was moved by her faith and its universal message. When he became President of the United States, he asked for a halt to the executions of the Bahá’i people in Iran.

At one point, as reported by June Allyson, “Ronnie got down on bended knee and proposed marriage to Larson the old-fashioned way. She told me she was in her twenties, but I’d heard that she was actually 33 at the time.”

Along with an engagement ring, he presented her with a diamond wrist watch. She promised she’d get back to him with her answer the next day. As promised, she called him the following afternoon, rejecting his offer of marriage, but telling him that she planned to keep the wristwatch.

At the time, he was dating Larson at her apartment on North Beverly Glen, he was also dating Nancy Davis, who had an apartment on South Beverly Glen. On some days, he’d have a late afternoon session with Larson before driving over to escort Nancy to dinner.

One night, according to Larson, “Ronnie appeared on my doorstep in a state of panic. Even though I’d not accepted his marriage proposal, we had continued to see each other. He’d told me he’d just come from the apartment of Nancy Davis.”

“She claims she’s pregnant, and I’m the father,” Reagan told Larson. “I’m not so sure. This may be just a trick to lure me into the marriage trap.”

That night, Reagan left Larson’s home and drove alone to Slapsie Maxie’s nightclub on Wilshire Boulevard. It was one of his favorite haunts. Although she was on a date with someone else, he spotted starlet Selene Walters.

She was later described as “a big California blonde star, like one of those beautiful Rose Bowl queens Reagan always lusted after.”

At some point, Walters slipped him her phone number and address. She would later become the centerpiece of one of the most notorious chapters in Reagan’s “between marriages” horndog periods.

Larson later lamented having rejected Reagan’s proposal of marriage. “I made a terrible mistake,” she confessed. “I liked him a lot, although I was not in love with him. I could not have imagined that one day, he would be Governor of California. If I had married him, I would have been First Lady of California. It never occurred to me that he’d rise that far in politics.”

Larson died in 1973, and, of course, wasn’t alive to see her former lover obtain an even more important government office.

Actually, what hastened the end of the Reagan/Larson affair was the day she told him that she had fallen in love with Gary Cooper and that they were engaged in a torrid affair in spite of their age difference.

In 1989, someone asked Reagan if he’d ever proposed marriage to Christine Larson. “I do not recall any person by that name,” he said. “I have no memory of her whatsoever. I dated a number of young ladies in those days, but nothing serious—that is, until my dear Nancy came along.”

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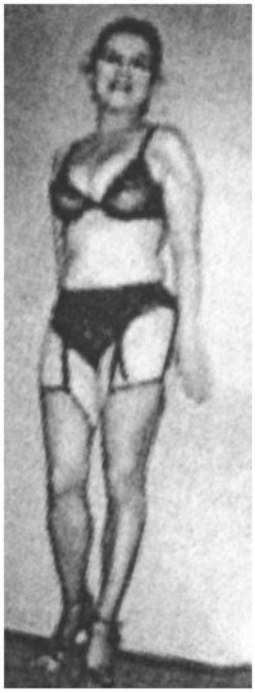
Bob Thomas, author of *Jack Warner, Crown Prince of Hollywood*, said of Jacqueline Park, “Her life had been the stuff of trashy novels. Born in Philadelphia without a father; raised in New York’s Hell’s Kitchen by a promiscuous mother, worked as a dancer in Manhattan night spots; recruited by a madam as the plaything of millionaires; went to Hollywood for the kinky pleasures of director Edmund Goulding. She tried to be an actress, but

mostly she worked nighttime for well-known figures including Cary Grant, who introduced her to the mind-expanding capabilities of LSD."



This blurred photograph shows Jacqueline Park, dressed receive visitors. She had a brief fling with Reagan, but a longer, more enduring affair with Jack Warner.

"A kinky footnote in dating career," Reagan told William Holden.

George Paley, a businessman from the Los Angeles area, introduced Park to Reagan, who seemed entranced by her beauty and her self-assured personality. He asked for her telephone number and called her the next day at the Studio Club, where she lived.

At that time, before his eventual move to a ranch in the Hollywood Hills, he was still living in the Londonderry Apartments. He made a date with her for the following night. He suggested that since he lived only a short distance away, it would be cheaper to take the bus. "Right away, I knew he was cheap, but I went over anyway."

At his apartment door, he greeted her in a red silk bathrobe with an ascot. "Our first date got off to a rough start," she later confessed. He didn't want to leave his apartment with me. When things got amorous later in the evening, it was embarrassing. He couldn't perform. He blamed it on the fact that he was still in mourning over his wife, Jane Wyman, who had divorced him."

In spite of that disaster of an evening, Park claimed she continued to see him. "He was an important man, the president of SAG. "We both were confident that his sexual prowess would return—and it did."

Transportation was always an issue between them. On her first date, she asked for cab fare back home. "I told him I was afraid to be out on the streets, a woman alone at two o'clock in the morning."

"He told me there were no rapists in his area, and that it was foolish to waste money on a cab. I barely had enough bus fare in my purse. It continued that way throughout our entire relationship. No cab fare…ever. He never took me to a night club. He never bought me a gift. He occasionally ordered take-out. I still don't know why he didn't want to be seen with me. I sure as hell didn't look like chopped liver. And he was divorced, after all."

Reagan had a more favorable memory of Park than she had of him. He told June Allyson, "Jackie is a curious mixture of a fragile beauty and worldly wisdom learned through the school of hard knocks."

His relationship with Park ended brusquely on the night she arrived at the Londonderry Apartments and confronted him with news that she was pregnant. "It was the worst night of my life," she recalled. "He accused me of having affairs with other men. At one point, he shouted at me, 'All you starlets are trying to entrap a man by getting pregnant and demanding marriage. First, I don't think the kid in the oven is mine. We were never seen together. There's no proof we ever had a sexual relationship. You're going to have to deal with this god damn thing yourself. I know I'm not responsible. You'll not get one cent from me. One of your other boyfriends will have to

give you the money for the abortion.'"

In tears that night, she left his apartment, "taking the bus, of course. I didn't plan to go after him in court with a good lawyer. I was afraid that if I defied him, I'd lose my membership in SAG."

A friend of hers, Bentley Ryan, came to her rescue. She credited him with arranging the details of her abortion.

As was later speculated, had she given birth to Reagan's child, there might have eventually been another son (or daughter) arriving at the door of the White House, "demanding to see Daddy."

After Reagan, Park dated many famous men, including Frank Sinatra after Ava Gardner dumped him. "Frank liked orgies," she said. "I didn't. We broke up when he demanded I go to bed with him and another woman."

For a time, she conducted a secret affair with the handsome lawyer and playboy, Greg Bautzer. "One night, he told me to arrive after midnight. By then, I had a car. Before I got out of my car, I spotted a woman leaving his house. I saw him kissing her goodbye. When she walked under the streetlight, I recognized her face. It was Jane Wyman."

Ironically, in 1961, Park became the mistress of Jack Warner, Reagan's former boss. "He was just as cheap as Reagan. A lousy tipper. His underwear was torn. He patched together thin bars of soap in his bathroom. He gave me a weekly allowance of $200, but sometimes shortchanged me."

She recalled being taken to London, where they attended a reception in which he introduced her to Princess Margaret. "Jack told her Royal Highness, 'Jackie here has a heart of gold and a snatch to match.'"

"He refused to take me to the White House when he got an invitation from John F. Kennedy in 1962," Park claimed. "His excuse was, 'I can't take my mistress to the White House.' Later, when he returned to Hollywood, he told me, 'I'll be damned. Jack Kennedy slipped away with me to one of the private rooms. Waiting for us was his own mistress and a gal for me, too.'"

Years later, after Warner ended their relationship, Park recalled Reagan: "He just ran out on me when I got pregnant. He was a swinger in those days. He went out with this girl and that girl. But the moment he married Nancy, he became a Republican. He reformed, and there is nothing more boring than a reformed swinger."

Park later became a Manhattan "psychodramatist," *[in this case, a sex therapist]*, charging male clients $100 an hour to act out their sexual fantasies. She also wrote a book, *Memoirs of a Hollywood Mistress*, but found trouble finding a publisher.

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When Kitty Kelley's 1991 book, *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography*, came out, the accusations of actress Selene Walters made headlines. A typical one read GIPPER THE RIPPER. Her stunning charge was that Reagan had raped her. Only two American presidents have ever been charged with rape—first, Reagan, and later, Bill Clinton.

Walters did admit to meeting Reagan, "the lone wolf," when he appeared at Slapsie Maxie's nightclub one night when she was in the company of another man. She also claimed that she slipped him her phone number and address. Her motives may have been more career-oriented than based on any physical attraction for him.

"He was the president of the Screen Actors Guild, and I thought he might help my career. God knows, I needed some help."

She later said that she was asleep when her doorbell rang at three o'clock that morning. It was Reagan.

"I opened the door and let him in," she later told *People* magazine. "Once inside, it was the battle of the couch. I was fighting him. I didn't want him to make love to me. He's a very big man, and he just had his way. Date rape? No, that was Kelley's phrase. I didn't have a chance to have a date with him."

Based on the events of that night, Walters said she had no ill will toward Reagan. "I even voted for him for president. I don't think he meant to harm me."

Some reporters claimed that Reagan's aides managed to keep Walters' revelations from being printed in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

But the week Kelley's book was released, Reagan was accosted on the steps of a church, where he and Nancy were paying one of their biannual visits.

In front of TV cameras, a reporter called out: "Did you rape Selena Walters?"

Reagan politely said, "I don't think church would be a proper place to use the word I would have to use in discussing that."

The reporter later commented, "That was not exactly a denial."

The reporter's encounter with Reagan, with Nancy clinging tightly to the arm of her husband, was broadcast on TV news across the nation.

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Did Ronald Reagan rape Selene Walters (*shown supine, above*)?

Both Doris Day and Jane Wyman appeared in Reagan's next film, *It's a Great Feeling* (1949), a silly piece of fluff spoofing Hollywood. But none of their scenes was together. In addition to Day, the actual stars of the picture were Dennis Morgan and Jack Carson, in yet another of their movies together.

Is It *Really* a Great Feeling?

Reagan appeared in a cameo with Dennis Morgan in a scene that takes place in a barbershop. It is one of the few times that Jane Wyman's former lover (Reagan) came together with her present lover (Morgan).

In her autobiography, *Doris Day, Her Own Story*, by A.E. Hotchner, Ernest Hemingway's friend, Day claimed that she had met Reagan through mutual friends who had moved to Los Angeles from New York.

This was at the time Reagan was divorcing Jane, and Day was in the throes of divorcing her second husband, saxophonist George Weidler. She had previously been married to trombonist Al Jorden, with whom she had a child, Terry Jorden, who later changed his name to Terry Melcher, adopting the name of Day's third husband, Martin Melcher.

At the time she started dating Reagan, Day had just emerged from a romance with Jack Carson, her co-star in her first film, *Romance on the High Seas* (1948). Carson and Day had also co-starred in her next film, *My Dream is Yours* (1948). Their romance had been called "mutually therapeutic." She was trying to keep him from drinking himself into oblivion, and he was attempting to wean her from her addiction to smoking three packages of Camels a day.

"The first time I saw her, I adored this pretty blonde with the freckles," Reagan said. "She had a real bubbly personality."

Reagan's first date with Day was in May of 1948, at the time Jane was filing for divorce. Day remembered that he spent most of the first evening "talking mainly about Janie. I lamented George."

"I'm a failure," she said to him.

"Not at all!" he responded, trying to reassure her. "Jack Warner told me you're going to become one of the biggest stars in Hollywood."

"But I failed at the two things I wanted most in life—that was to be a good wife, and to have a happy marriage."

“There were two things that impressed me about Ronnie,” Day wrote. “How much he liked to dance, and how much he liked to talk. Ronnie was really the only man I’ve ever known who loved dancing. There was a little place on Cienega that had a small band and a small dance floor, where he often took me. He danced well and had a pleasant personality, so I invariably enjoyed going out with Ronnie.”

Whereas Day was a Republican, Reagan at the time was still a liberal Democrat. She listened intently to his discourses, although his points often didn’t match her conservatism. She suggested he might tour the country giving speeches. “He’s what I would call a political personality—engaging, strong, and very voluble.”

Reagan was overshadowed by other actors in the “cattle call” that Jack Warner issued for most of his then-underused stable of movie stars.

Depicted above: Doris Day, Dennis Morgan, and Jack Carson, listening through a peephole.

As Day’s biographer, David Bret, wrote: “The two would sneak off to his apartment high in the Hollywood Hills, and make love while marveling at the panoramic view below.”

Previously, Reagan and Day had each been directed by Michael Curtiz. She complained that he had given her great insecurity. “He wants me to lose weight and have hollow cheeks like Marlene Dietrich.”

“I’m back to being a bachelor again,” he said. “This was my first apartment in Hollywood. When I married Jane, I took her to live with me here. But these days, or nights, it gets pretty lonely wandering around this bachelor flat without anyone to love. This place brings back a lot of memories, both good and bad.”

“I’m surprised you moved in again,” she said. “I’d have preferred starting over again somewhere else.”

As Reagan told June Allyson, “Doris needs a lot of reassurance about her looks.”

She told him, “Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror, and I burst into tears at all those freckles.”

“You’re beautiful,” he said. “So fresh-faced. The freckles add to your charm.”

“I don’t know,” she said. “I have to spend so much time in makeup that I feel I’m wearing a plaster mask whenever I face the cameras. I’d give my soul to look like Hedy Lamarr.”

He was vaguely disturbed when he learned that Alexis Smith and Craig Stevens had befriended her and welcomed her to Hollywood, asking her to parties. These included an invitation to the home of Stanley Mills Haggart, the set designer and advertising agent.

Reagan always felt that Smith and Stevens had only “set Jane and me up so that, as a bisexual couple, they could move in on us.”

Even though he apparently never made his intentions known to Day, Reagan talked about the possibility of proposing marriage to her to such good friends as George Murphy. Dick Powell and June Allyson were also aware of the possibility of a marriage between the singing star and Reagan.

He even went so far as to discuss with Murphy the business angle of such a liaison. “I didn’t want to become Mr. Jane Wyman, but I’m thinking over being Mr. Doris Day. That might be a career goal, as I move into middle age. The roles are already drying up. I could be very aggressive, get the best movie deals for her, the fattest recording contracts. I’d make a great manager for her.”

On the set of *It’s a Great Feeling*, Reagan shook the hand of the director, David Butler, who welcomed him. Butler had been a former actor himself on the stage, and later in the Silents, but he became better known for second-rate musicals. Reagan soon learned that Butler had developed an unreciprocated crush on Day.

Reagan learned that he and Jane were not alone in making a cameo appearance in Butler’s film. They were joined by Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, Joan Crawford, Sydney Greenstreet, Danny Kaye, Patricia Neal, Eleanor Parker, and Edward G. Robinson, along with Directors Michael Curtiz, Raoul Walsh, and King Vidor. Butler even had cast himself in a cameo.

Reagan had only one scene, set in a barbershop, not with Jane, but with Morgan and Carson. There was an

undercurrent of sexual rivalry. Either known or unknown to Reagan, Jane had continued her long affair with Morgan. Complicating matters, Day had broken off with Carson before landing in Reagan's welcoming arms.

In the scene, Carson is in the barbershop, lamenting his difficulties in shooting his latest film. In the seat beside him is a man whose face is covered with a hot towel. When the towel is removed, it's revealed that the mystery man is Reagan himself.

Day plays a woman trying to break into Hollywood with the help of Morgan and Carson.

Before heading back to Wisconsin, Day appears as a Parisian prostitute in a black wig, crooning, "There's Nothing Rougher Than Love." Finally, she gives up and returns to her hometown of Gurkeys Corners, where she is set to marry her local hayseed boyfriend, Jeffrey Bushfinkle. Carson finds them at the altar. The bride and bridegroom have their backs to the camera. After their marriage vows, Bushfinkle lifts the veil of his bride to kiss her. He is seen for the first time. He looks like Errol Flynn. It *IS* Errol Flynn!

Later, Carson complained to Reagan. "When I made my first picture with Doris, *Romance on the High Seas* (1948), I was the fucking star. By the time this turkey is in the can, I'll be out there as her supporting player. She'll be the star."

At the end of the shoot, Carson encountered Reagan again. "In that last scene with Flynn, he and I almost came to blows—no, not that kind…"

Reagan later speculated why he and all the stellar personalities were cast in this "lightweight fluff. Jack Warner had all of us under contract, and I think he wanted to give us something to do until something better came along."

After finalizing his cameo, he called Lew Wasserman. "Get me a Western, god damn it!"

"Not now, Ronnie, baby," his agent said. "You're going to be flown to England to make *The Hasty Heart* with Patricia Neal. If you're lucky, you'll get to fuck her, although Gary Cooper is a tough hoss to follow."

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At the time of his cameo in *It's a Great Feeling* (1949), Reagan, as president of SAG, was facing the "growing menace" of television and its threat to the Hollywood film industry. He wrote: "Supplies of headache powder are running low, and there's moaning and groaning in the land of make believe—for Hollywood and the entire entertainment industry are caught in the throes of a revolution."

SAG entered into a dispute with motion picture producers. At one point, actors threatened to go on strike.

The dispute, as Reagan explained it, developed within a context wherein screen actors had sold their services with the understanding that movies were intended only for exhibition in theaters. "Films should not be used in television without additional payments to actors."

The producers claimed they had a right to use a film they made and paid the actors for in any medium they chose.

In the end, the producers held firm on not granting residuals from television to actors for films they had made, some dating back to 1930, long before television became an almost universal fixture.

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Patricia Neal was not Jack Warner's first choice, nor the first choice of director Vincent Sherman, for the role of the nurse, Sister Margaret, the only female role in *The Hasty Heart* (1950), based on the hit play by John Patrick. Originally, Eleanor Parker, who had co-starred with Reagan in *The Voice of the Turtle*, had been cast in the role, but had to drop out because she was pregnant.

Reagan and Neal, as friends and “civilians” aboard the ship returning to the US from England at the conclusion of filming.

Reagan seemed pleased when Neal was designated as her replacement, because he had worked so smoothly with her in *John Loves Mary*. That was a comedy. *The Hasty Heart* was a serious drama set in Burma during World War II, most of its scenes taking place in a military hospital. When Reagan signed on, he thought he was going to be cast as Latchie, a dying Scottish soldier, clearly the film’s most meaty and pithy part. But he soon learned from Sherman that the role had gone to an Irish newcomer, Richard Todd. A handsome actor born in Dublin, Todd walked off with the prize, for which he would later win an Oscar nomination.

Reagan had to be satisfied with the far less charismatic role of “Yank,” a compassionate American soldier recovering from malaria. In the hospital, he tries to befriend the often hostile Latchie.

Neal, instead of uprooting herself to London for the four-month filming, with Reagan, of *The Hasty Heart*, would have preferred to remain in Hollywood, co-starring with Gary Cooper in *Task Force*, because she was madly in love with him. Cooper promised to write her every day during their separation, which he did not do.

Neal and Reagan arrived together in bombed-out, post-war London during one of the bitterest, coldest winters in twenty or so years. “There was no heat anywhere,” Reagan said.

Although jealous of his having been awarded the star role, Reagan maintained a surface politeness with Todd. Todd later recalled, in an interview, “Reagan had a lot of complaints about filming in England. After the war, England froze the amount of money a producer could take out of the country. To spend the revenue earned in Britain, movie companies were shooting in England. Reagan felt that that represented a total lack of grace on Britain’s part, considering that the United States had ‘saved England from Hitler’s Nazi grip’ (his words).”

Filming was at the financially troubled Elstree Studio, which was being rebuilt after damage from Nazi bombardments during World War II, and slowly being adapted for use as a television production facility.

Barely Speaking: Richard Todd, *(left)* with Ronald Reagan.

In *The Hasty Heart*, Latchie can't relate to others in the ward, although Yank tries to win his friendship, as does Neal as the nurse. At the time of his casting, Todd was thirty years old and had been a British paratrooper. He asked Reagan, "How many Nazis did you kill during the war?"

"I made propaganda films for the Americans," Reagan said, perhaps with a pang of guilt.

"We were shooting in England, but we were supposed to be in Burma, where it was hot," Todd said. "Sometimes, we had to appear in our shorts. Reagan continued to complain about the chill and dampness. 'I'm freezing my balls off,' he told me. 'The gals back in Hollywood won't like that.' That was the first time I realized that Reagan could talk like a regular bloke."

After the first week of filming, Todd invited Reagan to go on a pub crawl with him. Reagan told Todd, "I feel my film career is about over and yours is just beginning. I envy you. But one thing I don't envy is trying to make it in post-war Hollywood. It was always a vicious place. But the deadly rattlers have been replaced with man-eating dinosaurs. I may go into politics on a national level, although my involvement in politics has damaged my film career. I made enemies of directors and producers who might otherwise have hired me."

Todd also claimed that, "The image of Jane Wyman hovered over the set of *The Hasty Heart* like she was the co-star of that picture. Reagan was still in love with her, although having dates—perhaps affairs—with others. He and Patricia Neal were together practically every night. He once told me that he thought he and Jane would get back together. Once, I jokingly asked him, 'if he got back with Jane, would he give me his cast-offs?' He had no answer for that. While shooting the film, he spent a lot of time on the phone with Jane in California. He was eager for news not only of her, but also of the children. "

Neal later credited Reagan with giving her a lot of support during the filming. "We would have dinner and even go dancing at one of the local halls. He was a good dancer. People may have been shabbily dressed and their food rationed, but at night they sang and danced with all their hearts. They were happy the war was over. English food was horrid, a lot of cardboard fish with soggy bread crumbs and exhausted vegetables. Reagan missed his steaks and had a batch flown in from '21' in New York. But when he invited Neal to a steak dinner at the Savoy Hotel, the chef came out and apologized. 'The steaks, Mr. Reagan, have gone bad.'"

Neal said, "Ronnie knew differently. The chef and the kitchen crew had eaten them."

Sherman recalled, "Both Pat and Ronnie were depressed over their affairs of the heart. They were pining for Gary Cooper and Jane Wyman. I had to put up with these two lovesick puppies."

At the Savoy, Neal and Reagan had adjoining suites. Waiters and maids noted that they kept the connecting doors open at all times. One maid reported that she'd caught them having a shower together. When Todd heard about this, he said, "My motto is, if you're not with the one you love, make love to the one you're with."

When Neal was appearing on Broadway with Anne Bancroft in *The Miracle Worker* (1959), she modified her account of her experiences in London. Bancroft was seriously dating the designer, Stanley Mills Haggart, at the time.

"I once said that Ronnie never made a pass at me," Neal said. "What I didn't say was that I made a pass at him. On several nights, we cuddled up. What else was there to do? It was so god damn cold in London after the war. Of course, I wished it were Gary in my bed. At the time, Ronnie was mourning for Janie but getting cozy with Doris

Day—and with me."

In the Dining Room of the Savoy Hotel, Reagan and Neal often dined with Elizabeth Taylor and Robert Taylor, who were in London together filming *Conspirator* (1949). He still numbered Robert among his best friends. Robert confessed to Reagan, "Elizabeth and I are getting it on."

Neal formed a friendship with a young dentist, Hamish Thomson, who was in love with her friend, Helen Horton. One weekend, Thomson drove Neal and Reagan on a sightseeing tour of the Cotswolds. "We played a quiz game," Neal said. "The question was, 'What would you like to be if you could be anybody in the whole world'?"

Reagan answered, "President of the United States."

Virginia Mayo, who had made *The Girl from Jones Beach* with Reagan, attended a Royal Command Film Performance of the movie, *Scott of the Antarctic [the third most popular film at the British box office in 1949],* starring John Mills. "Our party in London included Alan and Sue Ladd," she recalled, "along with Larry Olivier and Vivien Leigh. Vivien fell asleep during this dull and depressing movie, and her right breast popped out. I nudged Ronnie to awaken her and inform her of her tit malfunction. Instead of watching John Mills, he spent the rest of the movie staring at that exposed breast of Scarlett O'Hara, which he didn't get to see in *Gone With the Wind*."

Before the screening, Reagan had met Queen Elizabeth *(a.k.a*. Elizabeth *Bowes-Lyon, identified in later years as Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother],* but not her daughter, Princess Elizabeth *[who ascended to the throne in 1953, and was later identified as Queen Elizabeth II],* who was pregnant at the time. Reagan was also introduced to Princess Margaret and Prince Philip.

When not otherwise involved, and when he had time off, Reagan wandered among "the nooks and crannies of Mayfair, exploring old curiosity shops. I expected Nell Gwynne to emerge from her royal carriage at any minute."

One night, at the Bar of the Savoy Hotel, Neal heard Reagan pondering whether the United States should attack the Soviet Union and destroy it while the U.S. still had exclusive access to the atomic bomb. "We could establish for centuries to come the *Pax Americana,"* he said.

Whereas Vincent Sherman had known Reagan for years—in fact, he'd directed some of the scenes from his *Juke Girl* with Ann Sheridan—Neal met the director in London for the first time. He had a reputation for seducing some of his leading ladies, such as Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. "You're next," he told her.

Reagan and Todd bonded more as filming progressed. "I think he forgave me for taking the role he wanted," Todd said. "At one point in the film, he gave me a massage on camera. If he had not become president, he could have hired out as a masseur. If I recall, he gave me an erection."

It can be assumed that Todd was joking, but perhaps not.

Todd later recalled, "Ronnie buttered me up when he heard I had been cast opposite Jane Wyman and Marlene Dietrich in Alfred Hitchcock's upcoming *Stage Fright* (1950), to be shot in London. I think Reagan wanted me to be a go-between, running messages to Jane on the set in our upcoming film. He told me he thought there was a good chance that if she would agree to meet with him, there could be a reconciliation."

"I didn't think so, but I humored him," Todd said. "I promised to put in a good word for him with Jane."

Todd later delivered a bombshell, telling Sherman, "Reagan approached me shortly before his marriage to Nancy Davis and asked me to make one final plea with Jane Wyman to re-marry him. I found this astonishing, because the grapevine claimed that Nancy was already carrying Reagan's baby on her long route with him to the altar."

According to Todd, Reagan said that he'd call off his upcoming marriage to Nancy "if Jane came through."

During the filming of *The Hasty Heart*, Sherman claimed that Reagan was "very thin skinned when I critiqued his performance. In his memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, he had good words for everyone but failed to mention me."

During the four months that Reagan worked in London, Sherman noted a radical shift in his politics, as Reagan moved away from the Democrats and into the camp of the Republicans. As he'd later put it, "I spent those months in England while the Labour Party was in power. I saw firsthand how the welfare state sapped incentive to work from many people in a wonderful and dynamic country."

Sherman claimed that Reagan tried to get over Wyman by having a secret affair with a script girl on the set of *The Hasty Heart*. "She was sort of a mousy-looking creature with glasses, but she had big tits," Sherman recalled. "I heard that she joined him for shack-ups when he took a vacation after filming. They were seen together in Wales, Ireland, and France."

When Sherman returned to Hollywood, Jack Warner told him, "I want to get rid of Reagan. Most of his pictures are lousy. Did you see crap like *That Hagen Girl* and *Night Unto Night*? He was a pretty boy when he was running around Hollywood in the early 40s fucking Betty Grable and Lana Turner. But he's getting jowly and moving into middle age. I'll throw him in crappy films and maybe he'll break the contract."

As Reagan entered the 1950s, he faced the dilemma of all other actors confronting the Big 4-0. He had long

talks with Jimmy Stewart, Robert Taylor, Dick Powell, and George Murphy. Hollywood was a great burial ground for young romantic leads turning middle-aged. A few of the better ones, including Stewart, Henry Fonda, and Cary Grant, could survive in the right pictures, but most of the others were cast aside.

Reagan feared that his tomb was waiting for him at Forest Lawn. If he couldn't continue a career in movies, what should he do with the rest of his life? Though he initially resisted it, did appearing on that little black-and-white box in people's living rooms loom in his future?

Reagan had signed to make five movies with Universal at a salary of $75,000 per movie. When he refused to appear in the first two movies Universal offered him, Lew Wasserman, his agent, was forced to renegotiate his contract. What emerged was a three-picture deal, beginning with *Louisa* (1950), followed by *Bedtime for Bonzo* (1951), and concluding with *Law and Order* (1953), the last finally fulfilling his dream of getting cast in a Western.

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Universal filmed *Louisa* in 35 days for a budget of $800,000, much of which went to its "elderly talent" that included Charles Coburn, Edmund Gwenn, and Spring Byington. On the set, Reagan had a reunion with Coburn, accusing him once again of "cutting off my legs in *Kings Row*, you miserable old fucker."

In this scene from *Louisa*, Piper Laurie evokes a rebellious teenager, Reagan a frustrated middle-aged adult. Charles Coburn looks on.

It was during the making of *Louisa* that Stage 18 was converted into a mammoth party hall, marking Coburn's 60th anniversary in show business. A surprise guest at the party was Jane Wyman, who made no special overtures to the man she'd just divorced.

Even though Reagan was appearing in weak films during his post-war era, he still maintained a certain popularity among fans who cited his "likable personality." In the first poll of *Modern Screen* readers, Reagan ranked fifth in popularity, following in the wake of John Wayne, Alan Ladd, Clark Gable, and newcomer Farley Granger.

Reagan and Piper Laurie in *Louisa*. She was barely legal.

Most movies at the time were devoted to young love, but not *Louisa*. It was about the romance of a dotty grandmother (Byington), torn between two suitors. Directed by Alexander Hall, the congenial family comedy cast this plump woman as the mother of the character played by Reagan. She comes to live with her architect son. Once

there, she is pursued by an elderly grocer (Gwenn). Coburn was cast as Norton's boss, an aging, bombastic roly-poly who is also a rival for Byington's affections.

Reagan, as Norton, is the befuddled, anxious son, watching his mother's antics. Cast in the role of Reagan's wife was Ruth Hussey, sweet as his helpmate in an un-challenging role. Piper Laurie, making her film debut, is cast as Reagan's daughter, who's coping with the affections of Scotty Becket, her young boyfriend.

Some critics hailed the film as a "geriatric love story."

Reagan's role could have been played by any one of dozens of actors. It was not a showcase for his limited acting talents. Yet in spite of his lackluster role, he later said, "*Louisa* is a good and healthy plus to any list of screen credits."

Reagan found London-born Gwenn a delight, and congratulated him on his performance as Kris Kringle in the 1947 film, *Miracle on 34th Street*, for which he won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar.

Reagan had known Byington since the 1930s. She told him that she had two dreams: One involved purchasing a small coffee plantation in Brazil—she was already learning Portuguese—and another involved enrolling in flying lessons.

"Two worthy goals," Reagan told Hall. "Not a bad ambition for a woman born in 1886."

Reagan welcomed Hall's direction, telling him, "If you could do for me what you did for Robert Montgomery in *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941), I'd be pleased indeed. *[For his involvement in that picture, Hall had been nominated for an Academy Award as Best Director of the Year.]*

Cast as boyfriend Jimmy Blake in the movie, Scotty Beckett was a Californian who started in show business when he was three years old. Although he had made a name for himself appearing in the *Our Gang* comedies of the 1930s. Reagan had met him when he played the child manifestation of the Robert Cummings' character in *Kings Row*.

One might assume that an off-screen as well as on-screen romance might have developed between Laurie and Beckett. He was born in 1929, she in 1932. But instead, that eighteen-year-old neophyte actress fell into the arms of a 39-year-old instead, Ronald Reagan.

Laurie accompanied Reagan on a tour to promote *Louisa* in his former residence, Des Moines, and later to his hometown of Dixon. Nelle, looking very frail, also joined the tour. In the words of one reporter, Reagan appeared in a "cocoa brown suit and tie" at the Paramount Theater in Des Moines, where he had once been a radio announcer. He introduced a stunningly beautiful Laurie, who wore an emerald green strapless gown as temperatures soared outside, within a theater that had no air conditioning.

Reagan told his audience, "Hollywood people aren't really like what you read in the gossip columns." Backstage, he whispered to Nelle, "They're even worse."

After leaving Des Moines, witnessing all the changes that World War II had brought to the town, he remarked, "You can't go home again."

It seemed that the entire town of Dixon came out to greet Reagan and his mother. The mayor presented him with a key to the city, and banners along the main street proclaimed WELCOME HOME DUTCH. He led the parade, riding down Main Street in a cowboy outfit on a palomino. Later, at a banquet, Nelle and Reagan serenaded diners with "In the Good Old Summertime."

During his dedication of a new swimming pool, Reagan addressed a crowd, calling them a "pack of sissies. We used to swim in the river."

In 1950, Reagan *(on the right)* returned to his hometown of Dixon, where he'd been a lifeguard.

At a dedication ceremony for the town's new swimming pool, he stripped off his clothes, except for a scarlet bathing suit, and showed off a trim, fit physique, still holding up after all these years.

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A daughter of Detroit, the beautiful teenager, Piper Laurie, was making her film debut in *Louisa* with Reagan and other members of the cast. She had signed a contract with Universal, and was getting a big buildup by that studio's publicity department. The staff claimed that she bathed in milk and ate flower petals to protect her luminous skin. Her ancestors were Jewish immigrants from both Poland and Russia.

Reagan was the first big star to be captivated by Laurie's beauty, or at least he was the first to date her. But other handsome male stars lay in her future, including Paul Newman and Tony Curtis. Howard Hughes had also cast his eye on her.

One night at a premiere, Ann Sheridan introduced her to Clark Gable. As Gable later told Sheridan, "That is a very, very pretty gal. Too bad I'm such an old man."

Upper photos: Piper Laurie, teenaged sex symbol, gets "cutsie patriotic."

Lower photo: Piper Laurie, having lost her virginity to Ronald Reagan, is escorted by him to a premiere of *Francis* (1949), starring Donald O'Connor with a "Talking Mule."

As Reagan turned forty, he was just at the age that many men think of seducing younger girls, even teenagers.

Such was the case with Reagan and Laurie. When he had been introduced to her on the set of *Louisa,* where she played his sixteen-year-old daughter, she noted that he held her hand for an extra long time.

During the filming, Reagan chatted with the teenager, listening to her complaints about the script and the character she was playing. To live up to Universal's publicity, which had hyped her as "The Girl Who Eats Orchids," she was served flower petals for lunch in the commissary, even though she found them distasteful.

At his invitation, she became a frequent visitor to his dressing room.

One day, the film's producer, Robert Arthur, approached her, telling her it wasn't proper for such a young girl to be seen going in and out of Reagan's dressing room. Arthur reminded her, "Reagan is old enough to be your daddy."

After that, she started turning down invitations to visit Reagan in his dressing room, but he was persistent, inviting her to the Hollywood premiere of *Francis* (1949), the picture starring Donald O'Connor in the story of a talking mule. It launched a series of Francis sequels. Both Laurie and Reagan were photographed with the mule. At the event, members of the Universal staff (in theory, at least) served as their chaperones.

There was no seduction during the shooting of *Louisa*. All that Laurie got from Reagan was a kiss on the cheek.

However, the cast was asked several months later to perform *Louisa* on the Lux Radio Theater. At the end of the broadcast, Reagan invited Laurie to dinner, promising he'd serve hamburger steak instead of "those god damn orchids they force you to eat."

He had to ask permission from Laurie's mother, Charlotte Alperin. The woman seemed apprehensive, but reluctantly agreed, perhaps because Reagan was such an important figure in Hollywood.

In the car, heading to his home, Laurie noticed him looking at her. But surely, she asked herself, it wasn't in *that* way.

In his apartment, with its panoramic view, he offered her a glass of wine, turned on some romantic music, and retreated to the kitchen.

She later wrote in her autobiography, *Learning to Live Out Loud,* "I didn't know if Ronnie knew I was a virgin. I knew I wanted to make love with him. I wanted to be completed by this wonderful man who clearly desired me. He would know what to do."

The revelations she made in that memoir later made headlines. Susannah Cahalan of *The New York Post* wrote. "Ronald Reagan wasn't 'the great communicator' in the sack."

Laurie described the bedroom romp as "without grace. Ronnie was more than competent sexually. He was also a bit of a show-off. He made sure I was aware of the length of time he had been 'ardent.' It was forty minutes. And he told me how much the condom cost."

However, she claimed that he'd ruined the romantic experience she'd envisioned by telling her, "There's something wrong with you" during their drawn out intercourse. "You should have had many orgasms by now—after all this time. You've got to see a doctor about your abnormality, and maybe that doctor can find out why it hurt you so at first. There's something wrong with you that you should fix."

She later lamented, "His words to me were cold and just plain stupid. And in a moment in my life when I might have benefitted from it the most, he offered not the slightest trace of humor or kindness."

Months later, she was sent on a publicity tour with Reagan to Chicago.

A Universal executive, Charles Simonelli, who was on the tour with them, told Laurie, "He is good at making all those speeches. Do you think he's running for president or promoting *Louisa?"*

Later that night, he followed her back to her suite at the Ambassador East Hotel and asked if he could come in. She refused, but suggested a walk in the night air instead. The question of age came up, and he seemed troubled that she was only nine years older than his daughter, Maureen.

He kissed her passionately, and told her he wanted to be with her again. She said she had another *beau*, the singer, Vic Damone. "The truth was, I no longer found Ronnie to be someone I wanted to be close to. His insensitivity had been wounding, and, in retrospect, even cruel."

During the walk back to the hotel, she told him that she had been honored that such a famous movie star "had been the first." As she looked at his face, he appeared shocked. She later wondered, "Did he know I was a virgin? Didn't the stain on the sheet send him a signal?"

During the final year of Reagan's presidency, Laurie was invited to the White House for the "goodbye gala" of all of his old friends, mostly from his Hollywood days.

She cabled her regrets and later explained why she did so: "I told myself it was because I didn't agree with him at all, politically, but that wasn't the complete truth. I hadn't seen him since before he'd become Governor of California. After all those years, it seemed odd to be invited. I assume the guest list had been put together without his input, and that I would simply be among a large group of actors with whom he'd worked. That would have made me uncomfortable. As disappointing as it was, the relationship had been more important to me than that. I wished to

save myself embarrassment. Who knows? I might already have been wiped from his memory."

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Before he shot *Louisa*, Reagan had made a far more serious film, *Storm Warning* (1951), an anti-Ku Klux Klan "message picture." The last such movie Warners had made was the 1937 anti-Klan film, *Black Legion*, starring Humphrey Bogart.

Pain, betrayal, and strife in this scene from *Storm Warning* as Steve Cochran, playing a bigoted brute, gets physical with his wife (Doris Day), and her sister (Ginger Rogers).

But despite the fact that technically, it was an older film, *Louisa* was released before *Storm Warning*.

Jerry Wald, Reagan's long-time friend and a former screen writer, was the producer of *Storm Warning*, and he ran into trouble casting the four leads—that of a crusading district attorney, Burt Rainey, and two sisters, Marsha Mitchele (a fashion model), the other, Lucy Rice, a pregnant waitress living in a small Southern town with her brute of a husband, Hank Rice.

During the film's development, it had been tentatively entitled *Storm Center*. Wald had considered casting Bette Davis as the older sister, with Jane Wyman playing the married waitress.

Wald sent the script to Lauren Bacall, who studied it with Bogie, the star of *Black Legion* (1937), the first anti-KKK film at Warners. Bogie recommended that she reject the role. She didn't feel she was right for the part, so he cabled Jack Warner. Enraged, Warner ordered that his contract player go on her sixth suspension.

He then sent the role to Joan Crawford, who had recently heated up the screen in *The Damned Don't Cry* with Steve Cochran, a story about a gangster and his moll. Crawford heard that Doris Day was about to be signed as the younger sister. Consequently, she, too, rejected *Storm Warning*, sending a memo to Wald. "Who in hell would ever believe I was the sister of Doris Day?"

Ginger Rogers was called, and she immediately accepted the role. After winning 1940's Best Actress Oscar for *Kitty Foyle*, she had long ago proved that she was a dramatic actress—and not just the dancing partner of Fred Astaire.

When Wald presented the script to Doris Day, she felt that the role of the younger sister would be a challenge, a non-singing part. She declared that "I'm not up to it." Wald had heard that her first husband, the trombone player, Al Jorden, had been abusive to her, and that she might draw upon her own horrible memories to portray the battered woman. She wanted to work with Rogers, whom she claimed had been "my idol since I was just a girl going to the

movies."

"You and Ginger are both Christian Scientists," Wald said, "so when you're not due on the set, you can talk religion with each other."

Since Wald had liked Cochran so much as the gangster in *The Damned Don't Cry*, it was surprising that he did not immediately consider him for the role of Hank. He kept referring to the part as a "Stanley Kowalski type character." He'd seen Marlon Brando on Broadway and decided to offer him the role. Within a week, he'd heard from Brando. "You must be joking," was all he wrote.

Two movie veterans, Ronald Reagan and Ginger Rogers, posed for a publicity still for *Storm Warning*, their pose suggesting the film was about a benign romance.

Far from it. The film dealt with the effect of the Ku Klux Klan and the terror it generated in a small Southern town.

Surprisingly, Wald next considered José Ferrer, who was a very different type of actor and would have been horribly miscast. Finally, he went back to what was obvious all along, and cast Cochran as the handsome, hirsute, sexual menace.

A former cowpuncher, Cochran had drifted into the theater, appearing as Mae West's co-star in the stage production of *Diamond Lil*. At night, he kept her bed warm. As West proclaimed, "It takes a big man to satisfy a big gal like me."

When Cochran learned that Wald had offered the role to Ferrer, he told the producer, "What a mistake that would have been. The role calls for a male sexpot, which Ferrer just ain't. As for me, the gals of Hollywood, and some of the cocksuckers, too, call me 'Steve the *Schvantz.*'"

Wald signed Stuart Heisler (*The Glass Key/Dallas/Tulsa)* to direct *Storm Warning*, with the stars billed as Ginger Rogers in the lead, followed by Ronald Reagan, Doris Day, and Steve Cochran. The casting of Rogers and Day would later confuse some fans, who went to see *Storm Warning* thinking that it was a lighthearted musical.

Reagan had met Heisler when he'd made the 1944 wartime propaganda movie, *The Negro Soldier*, a documentary-style recruitment piece targeting African-American men. Coincidentally, Heisler had been the film editor on Jane Wyman's first movie, *The Kid from Spain* (1932). "Her part was so brief, I hardly noticed her," Heisler told Reagan.

In his casting of Reagan, Wald told him, "I'm considering various other titles—*The Violent Friends!*, *Cause for Alarm!*, *The Outraged City!*, *Outcry!*, *The Fallen!*, *Winner Take Nothing!*, *Thunder in the Night!*, and *End of the Line!*, always with an exclamation point at the end of each title."

After rejecting each of those titles, he devised the title, *Ku Klux Klan, Storm Warning*, eventually dropping the reference, within the title at least, to the KKK.

The film begins on a bizarre *film noir* note, with Marsha (as played by Rogers) arriving on a rickety bus late at night in a little town that is shutting down fast. She witnesses a man being dragged from his jail cell and murdered. Two Klansmen then remove their hoods, revealing themselves as Charlie Barr (Hugh Sanders) and Hank (Cochran).

By the time she reaches her sister's home, she learns that Lucy (Doris Day) is married to Hank, whom she'd just witnessed help murder a man.

Ironically, although the KKK is known for its anti-black stance, the two people murdered during the course of the movie included a white man and, later, a white woman.

Marsh faces a dilemma when she finds that her sister is madly in love with Hank and expecting his baby. The plot thickens when Rainey, the town's District Attorney (Reagan) learns that she actually witnessed the murder. He wants her to testify against her brother-in-law, Hank, and other members of the Klan.

The movie ends in violence, with Day getting fatally shot, the only film in which one of her characters ever dies on the screen.

Each of the principal stars had already seen the Broadway version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the controversial 1947 Broadway play by Tennessee Williams for which Warners had acquired the screen rights. In the filmed version—eventually released in 1951—Brando would repeat the role he had made famous on the stage, and Vivien Leigh would play Blanche DuBois.

All four of the stars of *Storm Warning* noted its similarity—with the exception of the KKK subplot—to *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

When Williams saw the movie, he accused the scriptwriters of plagiarism, although he never pressed any legal action against writers Daniel Fuchs and Richard Brooks. Brooks would go on to write and direct *Elmer Gantry* (1960) with Burt Lancaster in a classic performance.

Doris Day's biographer, Tom Santopietro, would certainly agree with Williams' assertion. He wrote: "When fashion model Marsha Mitchell arrives in town with her 'high-fallutin' ways,' she interrupts the blissfully ignorant blue-collar marriage of her younger sister Lucy and Hank Rice. Just as in *Streetcar*, Blanche DuBois' arrival intrudes upon her younger sister's marriage to Stanley Kowalski. Hank Rice is, like Kowalski, presented as a crude, bigoted roughneck, and Cochran is here outfitted like Brando's Kowalski, right down to the tight-fitting T-shirt. Most striking of all is the long-simmering sexual tension between Stanley and Blanche here mirrored in the quick-to-boil sexual attraction between Hank and Marsha, an attraction that end in an explosion of violence and death."

District Attorney Rainey (i.e., Reagan) is eager "to rid the town of a bunch of hoodlums dressed up in sheets." When Marsha confronts Lucy with what her husband has done, she claims, "I don't care what he's done. I'm not gonna leave him." Her dedication evokes Stella's devotion to Brando in *Streetcar*.

In the footsteps of Kowalski, Hank tries to rape Lucy's older sister, as Brando did to Blanche DuBois.

Storm Warning's outdoor scenes were shot in the small California town of Corona, in Riverside County, southwest of Hollywood, which the set designers had defined as the community most closely resembling a town in America's Deep South. As Reagan said in his memoirs, "It was rumored to be the center of Klan activity here on the West Coast."

Storm Warning ends violently, as Doris Day is fatally shot, the only film in which a character she plays dies. Reagan and Rogers look on in grief.

He recalled that one morning, shooting a street scene at 3AM, he was approached by "a little character who sidled up to me and whispered out of the corner of his mouth, 'I hear this movie is about the Klan. I'm in the local outfit, and if you need to rent some robes, let me know.'"

In Corona, Reagan staked out "two nests for myself." One was a jailcell in which he could nap between takes. Another was the stockroom of a women's ready-to-wear shop on Main Street, where he could be made up and changed into his drab wardrobe as a small town district attorney. Wald had instructed the wardrobe department, "Don't dress him up— just off-the-rack garments that don't really fit right. He's not posing for some men's fashion magazine."

When it was released, no one registered any laughs from members of the audience, but when it's viewed today, some politically savvy viewers guffaw at the words expressed by a character who (rather awkwardly) says to Reagan's, "Everything would be okay if nobody interfered with us from Washington."

On the final day of shooting, Rogers had lunch with Reagan. "Wald told me I can't help but win another Oscar

for this."

"I wish you luck—Oh, just to have one Oscar!" he lamented.

During the filming of *Storm Warning*, gossip columnists published items about Day dating Reagan. Apparently, he never actually proposed marriage to her, but discussed the possibility with George Murphy. "If you want to run for high office one day," Murphy advised, "Doris would make a great choice—what a personality! She can sing, too. Even if you bore your audience with one of your long-winded speeches, they'll still show up to hear her sing 'Sentimental Journey.'"

If Reagan ever actually decided to propose marriage to Day, he waited too long. She was also dating someone else and would, in fact, marry Martin Melcher on April 3, 1951. Both were practicing Christian Scientists.

Melcher would be an unfortunate choice. When he died in 1968, Day discovered, to her horror, that he had squandered her lifetime earnings in poor investments.

Wald decided to launch *Storm Warning* in the South, but soon perceived that towns such as Atlanta and Birmingham were, in his view, "too racist." He decided on the more neutral city of Miami (Florida) where *Storm Warning* was screened in a public theater on January 17, 1951.

Wald had approved an ad that depicted a Klansman beating Rogers below a blaring headline that read —"UNDER THE HOOD, HE WAS PURE YELLOW."

Day came down with the flu and canceled her scheduled appearance at the film's premiere in Miami. Reagan had planned to continue his affair with her, but when she dropped out, he called another blonde and invited her down to Miami instead. Her name was Marilyn Monroe.

Reagan had flown Marilyn to Miami once before, stashing her on Miami Beach. Once again, he booked her into the relatively cost-conscious Helen Mar Hotel. This "second time around" ended their relationship when he refused to escort her to the premiere. "I wanted to make a grand entrance with flashbulbs popping, with you and Ginger. She's always been one of my idols."

When he still refused, she denounced him. "I'm good enough for you to fuck, but not to be seen with in public," she said.

[Eventually, Marilyn would not only get to meet her idol (Rogers) but would work with her as well. Along with Cary Grant, they starred together in Monkey Business *(1952).]*

Critical response to *Storm Warning* was essentially negative. Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* defined *Storm Warning* as a "mechanically melodramatic film, superficially forceful but lacking real substance or depth." Critic Dennis Schwartz claimed that the film "trivializes the serious subject of race hatred with an inadequate depiction of the KKK. Surprisingly, the racial hate message of the Klan is never touched upon. These Ku Klux Klan members seem to be only interested in keeping outsiders away from their town, dressing up in their robed costumes to act tough while in disguise and using the Klan to hide their thieving criminal activities."

One critic claimed that Reagan was "his usual mediocre self." The reviewer for *Cue* liked it, calling it "a first rate melodrama—a grim, gripping story."

The film marked Wald's last effort for Warner Brothers. After his work on it was finished, he left the studio to form his own production company. His relationship with Reagan went back to his early days at Warners when Wald was a contract screenwriter.

After that, Reagan pitched many projects to Wald, describing the kind of roles he wanted. He expected to spend part of the 1950s starring in films produced by Wald. But proposals from Wald never came in. Wald did, however, contact Jane Wyman, casting her in her memorable 1951 film, *The Blue Veil*.

In the 1980s, Rogers would be invited to Reagan's White House. "I didn't get to dance with Ronnie, but Vice President George Bush told me that his 'great dream' involved dancing with me, based on his having seen Fred Astaire and me in *Top Hat* (1935)."

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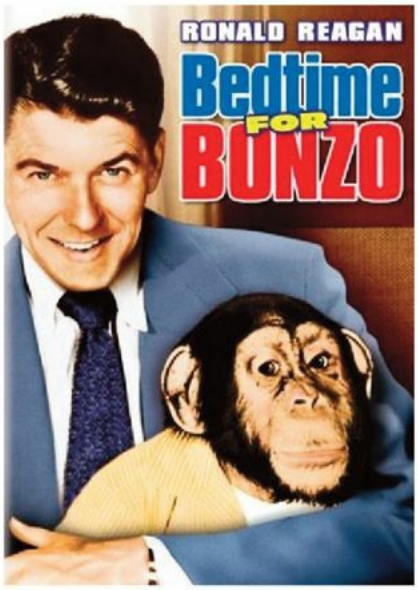
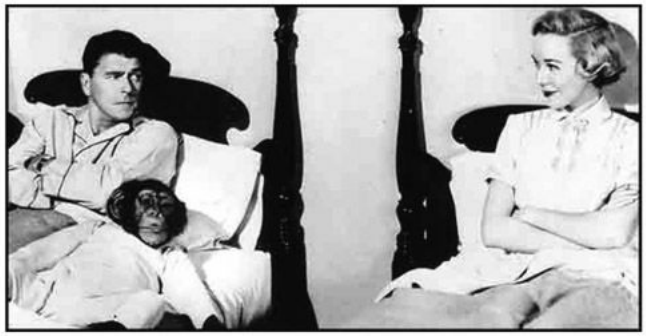
More than *Kings Row*, more than *Knute Rockne—All American*, Reagan is famous for having made *Bedtime for Bonzo* (1951) for Universal. He was cast as Peter Boyd, a psychology professor, who tries to teach human morals to a chimpanzee (Bonzo), hoping to solve the "nature versus nurture" question. To that effect, he employs Jane Linden (actress Diana Lynn) to pose as the chimp's mother, with Reagan the father. As a scientific experiment, they raise him exactly like a child growing up in the 1950s.





Their “child,” a chimp named Bonzo, causes bedroom consternation for Ronald Reagan and Diana Lynn.

When it opened, *Bonzo* got rather good reviews, *Variety* defining it as a “first-rate comedy,” and *The Hollywood Reporter* labeling it as “a smash.” But when Reagan’s political enemies viewed it in the 80s, one Democratic candidate wrote, “Bonzo wasn’t the only actor in this embarrassment with his tail hanging between his legs.”

Regardless of whether any of them saw the movie, political opponents used Reagan’s making of this film to mock him with such headlines as BONZO GOES TO WASHINGTON. Some critics claimed that Bonzo showed more intelligence than Reagan. A random survey taken in Los Angeles revealed that the only film most people on the street could name that Reagan ever made was *Bedtime for Bonzo*.

Frederick de Cordova was designated as director of this trifle. In time, he helmed such stars as Elvis Presley, Tony Curtis, Audie Murphy, Yvonne de Carlo, Humphrey Bogart, Bob Hope, and Errol Flynn. But he was forever mocked for having directed Reagan in *Bedtime for Bonzo*. When he directed Johnny Carson’s *The Tonight Show*, the TV host frequently ridiculed Reagan and, less frequently, De Cordova for *Bonzo*.

Reagan’s leading lady was a Los Angeles actress, Diana Lynn, who had been a child prodigy at the age of twelve, showing an amazing talent at the piano, and eventually developing a deep and abiding friendship with author Gore Vidal. She appeared in the comedy *My Friend Irma* (1949), in which Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis made their film debut.

A Viennese character actor, Walter Slezak, played a zoology professor, with his corpulent figure, bushy hair and mustache, his shifty eyes, and high-pitched, sneering voice.

For some reason, Reagan never saw the complete cut of *Bedtime for Bonzo* until he ordered, during the course of his presidency, that it be screened at the White House. His only comment was, “You’re a chump if you make a movie with a chimp—they’re born scene stealers.”

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After Bonzo, Reagan's longtime wish came true. Director Lewis R. Foster at Paramount, in a production for William H. Pine and William C. Thomas, cast him in a western, *The Last Outpost* (1951). As a "man in gray on horseback," Reagan was cast as an officer in the Confederate Army in conflict with his brother, depicted by Bruce Bennett playing a Union officer. The plot revolves around the Confederacy trying to intercept gold shipments heading East from the Southwest. Reagan insisted that the producers pay for the transport of his own horse, "Baby," to Arizona.

You'll have to see the movie to learn why Reagan, cast as the dashing leader of a Confederate cavalry unit in Arizona, ends up dressed as "a Yankee in blue." At least his dream came true: He finally got to star in a Western.

Here, he has eyes only for the ravishingly beautiful Rhonda Fleming, Hollywood's Queen of Technicolor.

Other than his horse, what made the film exciting was its female co-star, Rhonda Fleming, who would also be cast as his leading lady in three future productions.

Still not married to Nancy Davis, he came down with a new bout of his chronic "*Leadinglady-itis*." Stunningly beautiful, Fleming was one of the few actresses he ever worked with who was actually born in Hollywood instead of having migrated there. At the time she met Reagan, she was between husbands.

Reagan's actual relationship with Fleming has been one of the most misunderstood in his repertoire. George Murphy claimed that he "fell in love with Rhonda during the making of *The Last Outpost."*

June Allyson said that one night, when she invited Reagan to dine with her husband, Dick Powell, and herself, "All he did was talk about Rhonda. He may have been the first guy who called her the 'Queen of Technicolor.' He went on and on until I got jealous, praising how 'incredibly beautiful' she appeared before the color cameras with that porcelain skin and flaming red hair.'"

In Reagan's tell-nothing memoir, *Where's the Rest of Me?* he merely mentions that he was cast opposite Fleming. However, Irv Kupcinet, a columnist for the *Chicago Sun Times*, in his autobiography, published in 1988, included a curious passage. He claimed that Reagan, "the handsome bachelor, was mad about the girl" (Fleming).

"Rhonda was fond of Ronnie, but not in love. One night, Reagan was so frustrated that he pulled out his gun and fired a shot at her. I'm sure he was wide of the mark purposely, but he did scare the romance out of their idyll. I often wondered what the course of history might have been."

A year later, Fleming called Kupcinet's story "awful" and "crazy." In a statement, she claimed: "Reagan and I weren't social on or off the set. We certainly didn't have a romance."

In Edmund Morris' book, *Dutch*, he wrote: "My research cards show Reagan stepping out with at least sixteen young and beautiful actresses from Doris Day and Rhonda Fleming to the peachy and not-yet-legal Piper Laurie. God knows how many more there were or how many came back to spend the night. He was always shy about speaking of such matters when I interviewed him as an old man."

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Since he needed money, Reagan agreed to accept a low salary of $45,000 for starring in *Hong Kong* (1952) less MCA's ten percent commission. He remembered the day at Warners when he got $150,000 per picture.

This movie poster is significant for one reason: The designer misspelled Reagan's last name, billing him as "Regan."

The producers of *The Last Outpost*, William H. Pine and William C. Thomas, as well as director Lewis R. Foster, and even its distributor, Paramount, were so pleased with the on-screen chemistry of Rhonda Fleming with Reagan that they cast them together in *Hong Kong* (1952).

As Reagan recalled, "This was my first time to play a bum." He was cast as Jeff Williams, an often un-shaven, down-on-his-luck, American ex-soldier who decides to stay on in Hong Kong after the end of World War II. He hopes to make a lot of money selling surplus equipment left in Asia by the departing Armies.

"First a fucking chimp, now a four-year-old Chinese boy to steal the scenes." He was referring to child actor Danny Chang, who had the third lead. Reagan takes him in after discovering him wandering lost and alone.

He plots to steal a precious jeweled idol the boy possesses, and then to desert him, until his better nature, as prompted by his growing love for the very decent character played by Fleming, a Red Cross volunteer. At the time he meets her, Reagan has been embittered by his run of bad luck, but he's eventually won over by the charm and innocence of the boy and by the loving compassion of Fleming.

In an interview, Fleming said that Reagan was "more glowing and vibrant when he was telling yarns offscreen than when he was playing before the cameras. I don't think he felt very comfortable as an actor. Actually, I think he truly wanted to be in some other profession."

Here, in *Hong Kong*, Reagan appears with child star Danny Chang. With a touch of bitterness, he later said, “Never appear with scene stealers like a chimp or a child.”

Reagan told director Foster, “I’ll soon be forty-five years old. At this point in my life, I had hoped to be either Duke Wayne or at least Bill Holden. I should have playing the hustler, Joe Gillis, in *Sunset Blvd.”*

Reagan said “*Hong Kong*, with its paranoid politics about the communists, came and went before you could blink your eyes.”

The film’s review in *The New York Times* suggested that its title might more aptly have been “Ping Pong.”

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Reagan returned to Warners, his *alma mater*, for two more movies. Reunited once again with Virginia Mayo, he co-starred with her in *She’s Working Her Way Through College* (1952). Shortly before she died, Mayo told author Darwin Porter, “I thought Ronnie and I had something going, and I liked him a lot. But Nancy Davis showed up all the time—and nothing came of it.”

She's Working Her Way Through College would not be the only time Reagan toiled in burlesque. At the nadir of his career in the 60s, he'd MC a burlesque act in Las Vegas.

Mayo played a woman who, in an effort "to improve her mind," abandoned her career in burlesque to enroll in a Midwestern college, where she rents a room from Reagan, a professor, and his wife, as played by Phyllis Thaxter. Between classes, in an attempt to boost ticket sales for the University's floundering drama department, Mayo's character choreographs a musical, in which the very talented Gene Nelson, cast as a football star, joins her, as does another blonde beauty, Patrice Wymore, who was even more famous for her marriage (1950-1959) to Errol Flynn.

Director H. Bruce Humberstone also cast Don DeFore as Shep Slade, an obnoxious, boastful, ex-champion footballer, who still has a yen for Reagan's wife, his former sweetheart from younger days.

When Reagan went to see the final cut of *She's Working Her Way Through College*, he remarked, "It's (nothing but) a showcase for Virginia's gams."

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As his farewell to Warners, Reagan starred in a baseball picture, *The Winning Team* (1952), with Doris Day as his wife. "Since you didn't become my wife off screen, I guess you can play my wife on screen," he told Day.

Reagan cuddles up with a "working student," Virginia Mayo.

He was cast as Grover Cleveland Alexander, one of the foremost legends of American baseball. He later said that he enjoyed making the film as much as he did *Knute Rockne—All American*. "I also got to do some real acting dealing with Alexander's drinking problem—shades of Ray Milland in *The Lost Weekend."*

Alexander, of course, was the baseball great who won the championship for the St. Louis Cardinals against the New York Yankees in the 1926 World Series.

Before shooting began, Reagan trained for three weeks with Cleveland's Bob Lemon and with Detroit's Harry Priddy, pitching and learning "the difference between throwing from the mound and just throwing."

Alexander, the baseball great, nicknamed "Old Pete," had died in 1950. Although Day got star billing because of her box office clout, the real star of the picture was Reagan.

Although Reagan continued for a while to be cast in minor film roles, *The Winning Team* hastened the end of any big movie career for him as a middle-aged actor. Day's biographer, Tom Santopietro, summed up the problem: "Reagan did not have the emotional depth of acting chops to bring off the complex characterization required. He is simply not a very interesting actor, and is not up to the task of appearing in every scene. His lack of technique and resulting inability to access the required emotional complexities are evident in every scene requiring a display of emotion."

Later, Day was reported to have said, "My role required for me to do little more than appear angelic and be supportive and helpful. My God, where was Nancy Davis? She should have played my part."

Lewis Seiler, who helmed *The Winning Team*, had first directed Reagan in *Hell's Kitchen* (1939) with the Dead End Kids.

Reagan actually liked the script about Alexander, who had been a heavy boozer and suffered epileptic seizures.

This was Reagan's second time playing an epileptic, beginning with "that dismal failure," *Night Unto Night* (1949).

Day and Reagan were backed up with strong support from character actor Frank Lovejoy, who defined himself as "a boy from the Bronx." At the time he met Reagan, he had just appeared with Joan Crawford in *Goodbye, My Fancy* (1951). That movie would become his best remembered. "I'm always cast as the movies' Everyman," he told Reagan.

Reagan almost faced a disaster. He had recovered from breaking his right leg in a charity baseball game. However, in one scene from *The Winning Team*, he fell and almost inflicted the same injury to his left leg. Priddy, Detroit's second baseman, had accidentally stepped on him. "I suffered a painful laceration," Reagan claimed, "and had to hobble around for days. At least he didn't break my leg."

Day later recalled, "Aimee, the wife of Grover Cleveland Alexander, was the most boring role I ever had to play. I wasn't surprised when it failed to score a home run at the box office. Ronnie was already in his 40s trying to act like a 21-year-old."

Both of them talked about their upcoming marriages, Reagan "praising Nancy as if she were a goddess fallen to earth," in Day's view.

She was more realistic about her own new spouse. "I've settled down in Toluca Lake with Martin (Melcher) to a life of non-bliss."

Time dismissed *The Winning Team*, attacking the "rookie performance" by Reagan.

Even though Day "hated myself in the thankless role," she won *Photo-play's* Gold Medal for being "the most popular actress of the year."

Reagan departed from the Warner's lot on January 28, 1952, after fifteen years of filmmaking. There was no fanfare, "not even a gold watch," he said. "I thought a goodbye from Jack Warner might be in order. I got only silence. I asked for my final paycheck. I was told, 'It's in the mail.'"

As he pulled his car out of the studio parking lot that day, he noticed an attendant removing his "permanent" nameplate from in front of what had, for years, been his parking space.

Years later, when he was running for Governor of California, Warner was approached to open his wallet for the campaign.

Refusing to contribute, he said, "No, no, no, Dennis Morgan for governor, Ronald for first friend."

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Released from his long-enduring contract with Warner Brothers, Reagan found himself adrift in a sea of aging, unemployed actors, each of them on the verge of turning fifty. Dick Powell had told him, "The road between forty-five and fifty goes by as quickly as a summer cloudburst."

Once again, he was rescued by the same Paramount team that had cast Rhonda Fleming and him in *The Last Outpost* and *Hong Kong:* producers William H. Pine and William C. Thomas, along with director Lewis R. Foster.

The moment Reagan read the script for *Tropic Zone* (1953), he knew it would be a dud. He called it "a sand-and-banana epic," although it was hardly an epic.

"The script was hopeless, but I was grateful to the boys for hiring me before. As a favor to them, I agreed to make *Tropic Zone*."

Actually, Lew Wasserman, his agent, later revealed, "I practically had to beg Pine and Thomas to use Ronnie again."

Chapter Thirteen

Jane Battles Marilyn for the Man Who Becomes Her Husband No. 4 and No. 5.

A "Cougar on the Prowl," Jane Seeks Young, Hot, and Handsome Male Flesh on the Hoof

Jane lamented to Paulette Goddard, "Just my luck. To win Ronnie, I had to fight off Betty Grable, Susan Hayward, and a wagon load of starlets at Warners. To get my claws into my new husband, Fred Karger *(depicted twice with Jane in photos above)*, I had another road block. Little Miss Monroe herself. Freddie is that rare specimen—a living doll!"

"But just when I thought I'd knocked Marilyn out of the race, around the bend comes another Adonis...Rock Hudson, who can offer Freddie something I can't."

"*Beloved Belinda in a Lovable New Role,*" proclaimed the ads at Warners. As Jane reported to work at her home studio, these ads were already in production in the art department. She had a leading role in a fluffy new comedy, *a Kiss inthe dark*. Her co-star would be David Niven, on loan from Samuel Goldwyn. In events which transpired, the British actor's name would be billed over hers.

David Niven, whose mysterious war record as an Allied spy is still a matter of conjecture, played this love scene with Jane's full understanding of his former affair with her gossipy friend, Paulette Goddard.

She called Jane, wanting to know if she had yet succumbed to his manly charms.

"No," Jane answered. Since shooting began, he's had this sore throat and retreats to his dressing room when he's not needed on the set."

"Sorry about that, girl," Goddard said. "You're missing out on something really wonderful. I should know."

The second male lead would be played by Wayne Morris, her old flame from the late 1930s. But as Jane told Paulette Goddard, "With Wayne and me, the candle has already burnt out at both ends."

Over lunch with Jane, Morris told her, "I've gone from leading man to the meathead boyfriend who loses the girl—like in this thing we're making!"

"At least you've got a job, sugar," she told him. "And in the Hollywood of today, that's a damned fine accomplishment!"

The three leads would be supplemented with a strong supporting cast that included Victor Moore, Broderick Crawford, and Maria Ouspenskaya.

After reading the script, Jane told her director, Delmer Daves, "I thought that Jack Warner could come up with stronger material for an Oscar winner like me."

"Be patient," he told her. "I see another Oscar in your future. After all, you can't expect to win Oscars back to back like Luise Rainer."

A Kiss in the dark's plot centered around a concert pianist, Eric Phillips (Niven), who returns from a tour to discover that he's inherited an apartment house with loony tenants. His favorite is a beautiful photographer's model, Polly Haines (Jane). Niven has trouble with his resident manager, the zany Victor Moore, the scene stealer of the film.

Jane remembered her role chiefly for the fact that as a photographer's model, she had to undergo more than two dozen wardrobe changes.

She had first met Crawford when they had appeared together in *larceny, inc*. with Edward G. Robinson. "What a puny role for a star like me," he told her. The events of 1949 would later represent the pinnacle of his career, as he'd win the Best Actor Oscar for his role as the crooked politician in *all the King's Men*, its script based on the bestselling book by Robert Penn Warren.

Jane had great respect for Ouspenskaya, and was later very sorry to learn that *a Kiss in the dark* was the final role for the aging Russian actress. After many distinguished performances, she died on December 3, 1949, at the age of 73. She suffered a fatal stroke after severe burns from a fire in her house. She had ignited it after falling asleep with a lit cigarette.

She Falls in Love with Her Co-Star, Rock Hudson, Until the Night She Discovers Him in Bed With Her Husband

In addition to being sick, Niven could not master moving his fingers across the piano keybord in any convincing way. He later admitted, "An expert played the piano with his arms through my tailcoat while I rolled my eyes and looked soulful."

She tried to put a good face on the film, saying, "The role is a test of my versatility. Comedy is as exacting as drama. It demands more of a performer technically, although audiences aren't as apt to give a good comedy performance the recognition it deserves."

The observer in London defined *a Kiss in the dark* as "one of the silliest and trashiest stories seen on the screen for many a long day." *Time* claimed, "The film is a daffy romantic comedy apparently intended to show that Oscar-winning Jane Wyman is not really a deaf-mute."

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Preparations for her next film began with a call from director Michael Curtiz, telling her that Jack Warner had cast her in a comedy called *The octopus and Miss Smith*.

"Your leading man, girlie, is Dennis Morgan. Maybe you guys will spend time on film, not all time fucking. Morgan is no more big box office. He'll play second violin to you."

"You mean, second fiddle," Jane said.

"Fiddle, violin, trumpet, who gives a fuck?"

Jane was cast as Jennifer Smith, with Morgan as Davy Jones (alias Bill Craig), who claims he's a zoologist, maneuvering an underwater vehicle. He is actually a submarine engineer on a secret government mission. After an accident at sea, he rescues Jane, but because of the secrecy associated with his job, he can't tell her who he is.

When she recounts the story of her rescue to her business partner (Eve Arden), and to representatives of the Tyson Institute, which intends to finance a project for her, they think she's crazy. Since Morgan can't tell her who he really is, the inevitable complications ensue. All ends well, however, and eventually, Jane wins her sailor both on and off the screen.

Jane blew her top when she heard that the film's title had been changed to *The lady Takes a Sailor* (1949), but she was otherwise cooperative.

When she was criticized for accepting such a silly part, she told Louella Parsons that had she not accepted the role, a lot of employees at Warners would have been fired, based on Jack Warner's policy of laying off employees because of dwindling post-war profits. "It might have been a mistake, but I made a lot of the crew happy by accepting the role."

Jane maintains her resolve in this comedy about ladies, sailors, errors, and mistaken identities. *above*, Dennis Morgan, Eve Arden, and a mystified (until the final reel) Jane.

Curtiz had assembled a supporting cast that was stronger and more talented than the frothy and somewhat silly plot. Its members included Eve Arden, Allyn Joslyn, Fred Clark, Tom Tully, and William Frawley. Jane's former friend, Craig Stevens, was awarded a minor role, but the two of them avoided each other whenever possible. Jane and Reagan had broken from Stevens and his wife, Alexis Smith, after that weekend in Palm Springs.

She told Curtiz, "I've been away from comedy too long, and I'm off in my timing. Comedy is damn tricky. I take my hat off to anyone who can play it well. Fortunately, we've got my gal pal, Eve Arden. She's always on her mark."

On her final day on the set of *The lady Takes a Sailor*, Curtiz told Jane she had to sail to England for her next movie, *Stage Fright*, to be directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

"Who's my leading man in this one?" she asked Curtiz.

"Marlene Dietrich," he answered.

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Before leaving for England, Jane filmed a cameo for inclusion within the otherwise completed *it's a Great Feeling* (1939), a film in which her lover, Dennis Morgan, played the male lead. Reagan was in the picture, too, but he and Jane had no scenes together in that all-star Warner Brother's extravaganza.

In one scene of that movie, Jack Carson and Morgan are grooming Doris Day for stardom. Carson says, "I'll see to it that she's as good in this as Jane Wyman was in *Johnny Belinda.*"

"She didn't even talk in that one," Morgan says.

Carson replies, "Well, you can't have everything."

it's a Great Feeling marked the film debut of Maureen Reagan.

It was positioned into a scene where Jane is called into the office of the producer (played by Bill Goodwin), and is told that Carson was going to direct her in *Made-moiselle Fifi*, her next movie. Jane faints upon hearing that she has to work with a director who, the audience learns, is notoriously temperamental.

Jane's attempt to train her daughter Maureen, pictured above in a scene with her from *it's a Great Feeling*, sparked the child's interest in becoming an actress.

Jane later said, "If producers and casting directors were looking for 'cute' and 'perky' in the early 1950s, I was their gal."

At this point, a blonde kid (Maureen) enters with a glass of water. She hands it to Jane and says, "Here, Mommy, take this."

Maureen, in a latter-day evaluation of her first screen appearance, claimed, "I thought I was just terrible, certainly the weak link in an otherwise fine production."

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Reagan had returned from England after making *The Hasty Heart*. Plans called for him to care for and protect Maureen and Michael while Jane went to London shooting *Stage Fright* with Alfred Hitchcock. Jack Warner promised her star billing over her co-star, Marlene Dietrich.

The two male leads were Michael Wilding and Richard Todd. Ironically, Todd had been Reagan's co-star in *The Hasty Heart*.

"When I first arrived at the studio, Marlene was the first to greet me," Jane recalled. "She was the epitome of graciousness, although I heard from Hitchcock that she bitterly resented getting second billing. Ironically, she became the most visible star of the picture."

"I admired Marlene's figure," Jane said. "She was almost fifty, yet retained her sense of glamour and enchantment. She invited me to lunch that day and stuffed herself with steak and kidney pie. I had to watch my weight and settled for a salad. Yet she never gained weight."

Hitchcock usually opted to include a “blink of the eye“ cameo of himself in each of his films. In *Stage Fright*, he opted to make that appearance in a London street scene with Jane.

As it happened, according to Dietrich, Hitchcock would have preferred for an English actress to play Jane’s role, and he would have been happier if Tallulah Bankhead (whom he had previously directed in *lifeboat* (1944), had been given the part played by Dietrich. Jack Warner had personally vetoed each of those preferences.

Later, when Jane confronted the director about his preference for an English actress, he admitted that he had wanted Jean Simmons.

Are the most menacing killers always the handsomest? Here’s Jane in Stage *Fright* with the film’s scariest psycho, her tormentor, Richard Todd.

Stage Fright was a murder mystery, some of it relayed in flashback, based on the Selwyn Jepson novel, *Man Running*, with a screen treatment from Whitfield Cook, Ranald MacDougall, and Alma Reville (the director’s wife). Dietrich rewrote some of her own dialogue.

Jane was cast as Eve Gill, an American who is studying at RADA, wanting to become an actress. She develops a crush on fellow actor Jonathan Cooper (Todd), who is secretly in love with the flamboyant stage actress and singer, Charlotte Inwood (Dietrich).

Jane befriends Todd when he claims that Charlotte came to him in a blood-stained dress after killing her husband. When he went to retrieve a new dress for her at her home, witnesses saw him leaving the scene of the crime and he was fingered as the killer.

Eve meets Detective Wilfred O. Smith (Wilding) and is drawn into his orbit, finding out that his middle name is “Ordinary.” She bribes Charlotte’s cockney dresser, Nellie Goode (Kay Walsh), and Jane becomes “Doris Tinsdale,” hired to be Charlotte’s maid.

From that point on, the plot employs many of Hitchcock’s tricks before it reaches its dramatic conclusion. It turns out that Jonathan is the real murderer after all, and that Hitchcock tricked the audience with a *faux* flashback.

Super glamorous Marlene Dietrich lights up for demure Jane Wyman in this scene from *Stage Fright*. Jane complained to Hitchcock, "I may have an Oscar, something Marlene doesn't have, but she has everything else--She's taken a bite out of Richard Todd, she's snared Michael Wilding, she's got the Dior wardrobe, the glamour, and the songs."

"She might be telling us she's "The Laziest Gal in Town," but she's damn busy looking after Marlene!"

Two veterans of the English stage were cast as Jane's parents, Alastair Sim as Commodore Gil, and Sybil Thorndike as Mrs. Gill. Sim was a Scottish character actor who, in addition to his theatrical career, had been a leading star in British cinema in the 1950s, appearing in more than fifty movies. Jane was amazed at the tonal control of his voice and his sensitivity to the nuances of the English language. "Only John Gielgud rivaled him," she said.

She adored Thorndike, who had been made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. George Bernard Shaw had written *Saint Joan* specifically for her.

Others in the cast included Hitchcock's daughter, Patricia Hitchcock, in her movie debut as Chubby Bannister in a humorous vignette.

Even though Dietrich detested Hitchcock, he gave her the star treatment, allowing her to bring in Cole Porter to help her with her one big song in the movie, "The Laziest Gal in Town." At first, she'd rejected it, claiming "It is too old." But it went over so big with audiences that she sang it on tour for the rest of her professional life.

For her other song, "La Vie en Rose," Dietrich purloined the signature song of her French lover, Edith Piaf. Hitchcock finally agreed to include it in the film, after protesting that the song was already too well known.

He also let Dietrich hire Christian Dior to design her wardrobe, which the diva insisted on taking home with her at the end of filming.

"Next to Marlene, I looked like a little brown wren," Jane complained.

When she saw the first rushes, Jane burst into tears, seeing herself depicted on the big screen as a drab maid. She called Jack Warner and he agreed. He phoned Hitchcock, ordering him, "Let Jane spiff herself up. After all, she is one of our studio's marquee attractions, and there is nothing to be gained by making her look like Marjorie Main on a bad day."

Hitchcock tried to reassure Jane. "You're an attractive woman in your own right. You're one type, Marlene is another. You're also twelve years younger than she is. The camera will catch that. So why worry?"

"Jane's refusal to stick to the script annoyed me," Hitchcock said. "She should have been a pimply faced girl. Wyman just refused to be that, and I was stuck with her. Suddenly, with Warner's blessing, she started showing up with more makeup. She just refused to stay in character the way it was written."

Although Jane frequently tangled with Hitchcock, their relationship remained more tranquil than his with the more temperamental Dietrich. Jane later said, "We had a pleasant uneasiness between us at all times. In other words, I didn't find him a cuddly teddy bear. I also didn't like it when he told me that he preferred to direct blondes."

As shooting progressed, Dietrich began to pay more and more attention to Jane, overcoming her initial jealousy at her star billing. As Jane recalled, "On days when Marlene had no studio call, she would come on the set just the same. She'd fix my dress, make suggestions about my hair and makeup, and help me in many ways."

Later, Jane had unattractive stories to relay to Paulette Goddard, who was no friend of Dietrich, since Goddard was jealous of the star's appeal to Erich Maria Remarque, the renowned writer whom Goddard eventually married.

Jane claimed, "At one point, when Dietrich was messing with my hair, she fondled my breasts."

It isn't known if this really happened, or whether Jane was being spiteful to Dietrich. However, the German diva had been known to pull that stunt with other female stars, as once reported by, of all people, Mae West.

Dietrich told Jane, "If the Academy gave Oscars for great performances as a lover, I would have a shelf filled with replicas of that statuette**."**

At first, Jane found the Irish-born stage and film actor and former soldier, Richard Todd, "Handsome enough to win any maiden's heart." That year, he would marry Catherine Grant-Bogle, whom he'd met at Scotland's Dundee Repertory Theatre. "Hitchcock told me that Marlene had already 'auditioned' the young man *[i.e., Todd]*, who was two years younger than me," Jane said.

As regards Todd, Michael Wilding said, "Dick was taking bachelor's privilege before settling down to wedding bliss. That is, of course, bedding any available lass he could. Jane seemed the most susceptible to his Irish charm and wit."

At the time of Jane's first excursion to a Mayfair pub with Todd, he turned her off by talking about his experience of working with Reagan in *The Hasty Heart*.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather close that chapter of my life."

During her filming of *Stage Fright*, Jane's attorney sent her documents defining the date of her divorce from Reagan as July 18, 1949.

Jane rejected Todd's next two invitations for pub crawls with him. Then one afternoon, she received a letter from Lew Ayres. In it, he reminded her that he'd been married twice before (to Lola Lane and Ginger Rogers), and telling her that he had no desire to repeat the process. "I may never marry again. At least you and I made a great film together, and had endearing moments of love. But it must end."

Louella Parsons was in London at the time, and she heard that Ayres had dumped Jane. Normally, the gossip maven and the actress were the best of friends, but on this occasion, Parsons told friends that "Jane was icy cold."

"I have no plans to marry *anyone,"* Jane told Parsons.

"Perhaps I got Jane on the rebound," Todd recalled to Wilding and others. "But she came to my dressing room and fell into my arms. I think she needed reassurance that she was still desirable to men. Before that night ended in her hotel suite, she was assured about just how desirable she really was. It took a loving Irishman like myself to do that job. From then on, we had this thing, although I kept it from my bride-to-be. There was a lot of sneaking around."

Dietrich got involved in details associated with Todd's upcoming marriage. She wanted to know the birth dates of both Todd and Grant-Bogle.

Astrologist Carroll Righter was Dietrich's professional stargazer. The actress consulted him at least three times a week. A cultured homosexual, he would advise her to see Jean Gabin one evening, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. another evening, or Ernest Hemingway on a third night.

In front of Jane, Dietrich told Todd what she'd learned from her astrologer. "You must not marry that girl. The stars are never wrong. My life is ruled by the stars. If you marry her, you'll be making a ghastly error."

Todd later said, "Marlene, or rather her stargazer friend, was right. My marriage ended in divorce."

Hitchcock told Jane, "The only thing I like about Todd is his expressive eyes. You have other qualities, but I think you also have some of the most expressive eyes of any actress in film today."

"Thank you," Jane said, "but I can assure you that Richard has hidden talent—not just his eyes."

"I see, my dear," Hitchcock replied. "I will have to take your word for it. Unlike George Cukor, who is in town filming a movie, I do not put my leading actors on a casting couch."

During the making of *Stage Fright*, Wilding was ending his marriage to Kay Young, whom he would divorce in 1951, allowing him to marry Elizabeth Taylor the following year. Prior to his marriage to Taylor, he had been the fourth most popular star at the box offices of Britain.

Both Dietrich and Wilding were immediately attracted to each other. "When I introduced them, they were practically making love," Hitchcock said. "I wanted to tell them to get a room. In a sense, they did. Her dressing room."

On their first day together, Wilding was bewitched by "the world's most glamorous grandmother." As he recalled in a memoir, *The wilding way*, "My first sight of her was breathtaking. She was lying on a sofa, draped in furs, her lovely legs gleaming in black tights, looking like a 20th Century Venus. I was completely bewitched and tongue-tied until she broke the silence herself."

"Before Marlene took up with Michael, I got a sample of her world-famous oral talents," Todd said. "So did George Bernard Shaw, I heard, on their first meeting. After she serviced me, she told me that even though she opposed my upcoming marriage, she considered my bride to be a very lucky girl. I considered that a great compliment, considering some of the guys she had serviced. You name them, Gary Cooper, Yul Brynner, Joe DiMaggio, Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster, George Raft, Orson Welles, John Wayne, General George Patton, John

Gilbert, Howard Hughes, Ronald Colman, John F. Kennedy, and such ladies as Colette and Barbara Stanwyck."

Before Jane met Michael Wilding *(above)*, Dietrich told her, "He's the British equivalent of Jimmy Stewart."

"That's good to know," Jane answered. "I've had Jimmy, and liked him, so maybe this newly liberated bachelor gal will make a new conquest."

"Too late," Dietrich told her. "I saw him first, dear heart."

Wilding was nearly twelve years younger than Dietrich. She found him sophisticated and amusing, and he entertained her with amusing anecdotes about his life. As her biographer, Donald Spoto, wrote, "*[wilding]* had scarcely been introduced to her when she offered herself to him, as if the way for her to feel young was to prove to herself that she could keep a young man. 'I am too old for you,' she said bluntly. Obviously, he did not agree."

During the shoot, Dietrich and Wilding became the most photographed couple in London, their romance generating tabloid fodder. But it was not destined to last. Maria Riva (Dietrich's daughter), in her memoirs, provided the reason why her mother did not remain with Wilding.

Riva wrote: "During the Wilding time, my mother kept up her devotion to Maurice Chevalier, became involved with a famous American actress known not only for her talent, pined for Jean Gabin, received her baseball player when he needed cosseting, loved Erich Maria Remarque, her charming general, Edith Piaf, a gorgeous Teutonic blonde who became her German pal, and worked full time at being indispensible to her immediate entourage."

Riva was being discreet, not revealing some of the other names with whom Dietrich was involved at the time.

After the filming, Dietrich told both Jane and Riva, "I don't like Hitchcock. Why they all think he is so great, I don't know. Josef von Sternberg was great, *Stage Fright* is bad. Maybe in cutting, he'll do all his famous 'suspense' to save it. He certainly didn't do it while we were shooting this monstrosity."

Privately, Wilding told Hitchcock, "I don't like this Wyman creature. Perhaps Ronald Reagan went for her. I'm not sure who Reagan is. I've never seen one picture of his. I hear he's a second rate actor. She suffered being the only Yank in an all-English cast."

Publicly, he said to the press, "Miss Wyman carried off her role with dignity and poise. I think she held her own beautifully."

At the end of the shoot, Hitchcock told the press, "Marlene Dietrich is a professional star. She is also a professional cameraman, art director, film editor, costume designer, hairdresser, makeup artist, composer, and producer—*and* director."

The next morning, she read in the *london express observer* that Marlene Dietrich had been spotted at one of the London airports while awaiting the departure of a flight to Paris. A journalist had reported that after being asked what it was like working with Jane Wyman, "Miss Dietrich merely shrugged her shoulders and walked toward the departure gate."

Upon the release of *Stage Fright*, Dietrich got rave reviews, Hitchcock, Jane, and the movie not faring well. The word used to describe Jane was often "mousy."

Critic Molly Haskell hailed Dietrich's performance as one of the greatest in her long career. The *Sunday Mirror* in New York found Dietrich "supercharged with sex appeal at her age. She makes Jane Wyman look like a Girl Scout leader."

Another reviewer mocked Jane's attempt at a Cockney accent, except when she said "mattam" for madam. "That was the only Cockney enunciation she managed to get correct," he wrote.

Years later, Jane said, "On the screen, I was supposed to be falling in love with Wilding. Nothing could have been further from the truth. In my scenes with him, I could-n't make out half of what he was talking about."

Fans today, especially those who watch *Turner Classic Movies*, seem to appreciate *Stage Fright* more than those who saw it back in 1950.

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In an inaccurate report, the *daily express* ran a story asserting that Lew Ayres had flown into London and was seen dancing with Jane Wyman. The journalist wrote, "I hear wedding bells in the background."

Jane was not with Ayres, as he had previously broken off with her. She was dating her latest beau, Clark Hardwicke, described as a "millionaire sportsman." He was actually a golfer. But he did look like Ayres, so the inaccuracy in the report was based on a case of mistaken identity.

Jane in 1950, on the loose with Clark Hardwicke, capturing a young man's fancy until the real thing came along.

Jane's affair with the young man would continue after her return to Hollywood.

A pivotal moment came for her in London right before she left. On a sightseeing trip in a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce provided by the studio, she asked her driver to stop in front of an imposing building. She thought it was Westminster Abbey. Actually, it was Westminster Cathedral, the largest Catholic church in England. She later told a reporter, "I'd never seen such a sight in my life."

She spent an hour inside, marking the beginning of her interest in the Catholic liturgy. She attended the Cathedral every day during the remainder of her stay in London, becoming fascinated by the rituals inside, including mass, rosaries, the wardrobe of the priests, and the panorama of church history extending back to its Old Testament beginnings. On the day of her final visit, she made a strange statement: "I'm going to become a Catholic even if it kills me."

In Hollywood, among the bills that had piled up, she first opened a letter from her divorce lawyer, Lloyd Wright. He charged her $7,500 for divorcing Reagan. She sent him a check for $5,000 and marked it "Payment in Full." He accepted her reduced fee.

Plain Jane, without makeup, testifying in court about her intention of divorcing Reagan.

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Ironically, her letterhead read, “Mrs. Ronald Reagan, Hollywood, California.”

When Clark Hardwicke returned to California, she was seen frequently with him. There were rumors of an upcoming marriage.

Ruth Waterbury, a former assistant to Louella Parsons and the former editor of both *Photoplay* and *Silver Screen*, didn’t think so. “Let’s face it: Clark Hardwicke is a cute, sexy kid with a good athlete’s body. Janie was feeling light and giddy, and Clark filled the bill for that mood. She used him to distract herself. I never heard her say anything really deeply felt about him.”

[The last time Jane was seen in public with her dashing young beau was in august of 1950, when Movie Life *covered the preview of* The Glass Menagerie, *her latest film based on the hit Broadway play by Tennessee williams. after that, Hardwicke slid into the graveyard of her forgotten beaux.]*

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A new saga in the very dysfunctional life of the Wingfield family began when Charles Feldman and Jerry Wald, as producers, set out to bring Tennessee’s *The Glass Menagerie* to the screen. They envisioned it as a 1950 release directed by Irving Rapper.

Casting was a major issue fraught with trauma. Tennessee rarely got his wish when it came to the stars who were hired for screen adaptations of his plays. Originally, he’d wanted Teresa Wright for the role of Laura. “Her sad eyes and the aching vulnerability in her voice would make her ideal as Laura,” he told Feldman.

But by the time Tennessee reached Hollywood, he had changed his mind, telling Feldman, “Only Judy Garland can capture the poignancy of Laura.”

The producer had his own ideas. “I’m pitching the role of Amanda *[the play’s steely matriarch]* to Ethel Barrymore and the part of Laura *[amanda’s disabled and overly vulnerable daughter]* to Jeanne Crain.”

In the weeks that followed, Feldman ran into more and more roadblocks and kept calling Tennessee to report on changes in his vision for the cast. In the first of these calls he announced, “I think Gene Tierney should play Laura, with Montgomery Clift in the role of the Gentleman Caller.” Tennessee at least liked the idea of Clift.

Two days later, Feldman called again with another change: “How about Marlon Brando as the Gentleman Caller, and Tallulah Bankhead as Amanda?”

“As much as I adore Tallulah, don’t you think she’s a bit strong to play a gentle Southern belle?”

Before Feldman called again, he’d spoken to Brando. “Marlon said he’ll never work with Tallulah again unless the Earth is attacked by Martians.”

[in 1947, Tallulah and Brando had starred together, with frequent outbursts of spleen, rage and fury, in the Jean Cocteau play, The Eagle Has Two Heads.*]*

A week later, Feldman called again. “I’ve come up with the best idea of all: Miriam Hopkins, that Savannah magnolia, as Amanda, with Ralph Meeker playing the Gentleman Caller. He’s less than lovable to work with, but brazenly masculine for the role.”

A dysfunctional mother argues with her dysfunctional son: Arthur Kennedy with Gertrude (*“Rise & shine!”*) Lawrence.

Although it had been pre-arranged that the film would be distributed by Warner Brothers, there were rumblings from Louis B. Mayer at MGM. Enraged, he had telephoned Tennessee’s literary agent, Audrey Wood, claiming he owned the rights to *The Glass Menagerie* because Tennessee, while on salary at MGM, “wrote the play on our dime. By giving this to Warner’s, he’s biting the hand that fed the little faggot. I’m finding it harder and harder to cast Greer Garson. But she’d be great as Amanda. I also resent Williams’ criticism of my judgment at MGM.”

[Tennessee had told the press that he had been dropped by MGM “in retaliation for my unwillingness to undertake another stupid assignment after i fucked up on Marriage Is a Private Affair *(1944) for lana Turner.”]*

Mayer’s threat of a lawsuit did not materialize, and eventually, to his humiliation, he lived to see his own daughter, Irene Mayer Selznick, produce Tennessee’s second film, *a Streetcar named desire*, for Warner Brothers, not MGM.

Tennessee was surprised once again when Feldman called to tell him that he’d just signed the British star, Gertrude Lawrence, to play Amanda. Tennessee knew her as a singer, dancer, and musical comedy performer. *The Glass Menagerie* would be Lawrence’s only film in which she worked at an American studio with an otherwise all-American cast.

Since, contractually, Feldman had the power of casting, Tennessee relented, but nevertheless threw in a dig, “Is Lawrence bringing Daphne du Maurier to Hollywood with her?”

[Both Tennessee and Feldman knew that lawrence and the world-famed novelist were lesbian lovers.]

When Tennessee actually met Lawrence, he was deliberately provocative: “In London, Noël Coward told me that he lost his virginity to you when he was just thirteen years old. According to Noël, the two of you did it on a train.”

“That story is absolutely true,” she answered. “I fear I scared off the boy from women for life.”

With some reluctance, Tennessee accepted a screenwriting credit with Peter Berneis, the play’s adapter.

Tennessee shuddered when he learned the details of the movie’s final casting. The role of Laura went to Jane Wyman.

He feared that she was too old for the part, but the co-producer, Jerry Wald, assured him she’d be terrific. “Jane, of course, isn’t fresh anymore. But she studies a character for weeks and throws herself into the part.”

It was the director, Irving Rapper, who called Tennessee to tell him that the pivotal character of Tom Wingfield would be played by Arthur Kennedy, and the part of the Gentleman Caller would be given to Kirk Douglas, then in the first flush of his stardom.

Visiting the set, Tennessee met with Jane, later defining her as “a strong, cold, and determined bitch.”

He remembered her divorced husband, Reagan, dropping by the set to give her a poodle for her birthday.

Kirk Douglas as the “Gentleman Caller,” with Jane as the girl whose psyche is as damaged as her club-foot.

“I later met John F. Kennedy before he became President,” Tennessee said. “I thought he was much too good looking and sophisticated to get elected. As for Reagan, there is no way in hell that I could believe this un-talented actor would ever become president. It was inconceivable. I guess I don’t know how to pick them in politics.”

He made this statement in 1980 to Margaret Foresman of *The Key west Citizen*.

Reagan invited Tennessee to join Jane and him in the commissary.

As Tennessee remembered it, Reagan and Jane talked about which boarding school would be the right choice for their daughter, Maureen. “They decided on Palos Chadwick School at Palos Verdes. That’s where Joan Crawford sent her daughter, Christina, instead of smothering her. I’m sure Joan would have decided on death-by-strangulation if she knew that Christina would write that horrid little memoir, *Mommie dearest, [published in 1978]* about her adoptive mother.”

Tennessee continued: “Maureen never wrote a *daddy dearest* book about Reagan, but that other daughter of his, Patti Davis, came close, or so I’d heard. I never read crap like that before.”

After Reagan bid Jane and Tennessee goodbye, he headed out the door.

Ten minutes later, Tennessee left the commissary with the intention of beginning his afternoon walk. He later told Darwin Porter, “Reagan was outside, waiting to be picked up by someone. This blonde suddenly pulled up in her car. I strained my one good eye. The face was unmistakable. That blonde taking Reagan away, no doubt, for a session of love in the afternoon, was none other than perky little Doris Day.”

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Interpreting the role of Laura was a rough challenge for Jane, as she had to play the club-footed and deeply depressed daughter of the spectacularly dysfunctional Wing-field family. She lives in a world of her own, collecting fragile glass animals. She shares the apartment with her brother, Tom (as played by Arthur Kennedy), and her iron magnolia mother, Amanda (Gertrude Lawrence). Tom is a frustrated would-be writer earning a meager living laboring in a warehouse. The three survive in a tenement building in St. Louis. The absent husband of the house, a telephone repairman, “fell in love with long distance” and, years before, abandoned his family to survive as best they could.

Wanting his disabled sister to find a potential *beau*, Tom brings home a gentleman caller (Kirk Douglas) as the movie heads toward its tragic *dénouement*. At a particularly poignant moment, he informs the very vulnerable Laura that he’s already engaged to another woman.

Jane used her expressive eyes to convey her character's vulnerability, living in her "world of glass." She told Rapper, "In some respects, Laura reminds me of that lonely little girl I left behind in St. Joseph."

Although Rapper was the wrong director for the job—it called for an Elia Kazan—he did try to make effective use of Jane's bittersweet docility in closeups.

She recalled, "It takes more than a limp to play a lame girl. It takes a definite frame of mind, in which you project yourself into the part so fully that you even think like a handicapped person and act like one. In *Menagerie* I wear a specially designed shoe that makes my left foot turn in and that actually forces me to limp."

Ironically, Jane's personal hobby involved collecting glass replicas of animals. She even lent Warners some pieces from her personal collection.

During the filming, Michael Reagan became desperately ill with some kind of flu virus and had to be hospitalized. When she wasn't needed on the set, Jane was with him at the hospital.

Rapper warned that she was risking shutting down production if she contracted the flu herself.

She later became furious that Warners publicity promoted the film like some sex drama with large lettered typeface proclaiming:

HE WAS TOO SHY FOR TOO LONG…AND THEN CAME FRESH GUY.

The filmed version of *The Glass Menagerie* (1950) did not do well at the box office. Even Douglas expressed his disappointment. "Unfortunately, the movie was not well directed," he said, "and Gertrude Lawrence's vanity had to be appeased. She insisted on a flashback, where she was young and glamorous, so no one would think she was the old lady that she actually was. The elements didn't mesh; the movie just didn't come off."

Years later, Douglas would recommend that moviegoers wanting to see *The Glass Menagerie* should, in lieu of the version he was in, catch the 1987 version directed by Paul Newman, starring his wife, Joanne Woodward.

In reference to the 1950 version, Tennessee himself later stated, "I detested the film. As I predicted, Lawrence was a dismal error in casting. The movie version was a dishonest adaptation of my play. I would soon get used to that in Hollywood's other attempts to film one of my dramas."

For a brief few months, Jane Wyman captured Greg Bautzer, a powerful attorney and the most sought-after bachelor in town.

She had nothng but high praise for him, telling a reporter, “He’s a woman’s man, thoughtful, considerate, attentive. If you ask him to the most informal dinner party, he’ll send flowers the next day with a sweet note. If you go nightclubbing with him and are separated from him for so much as one dance, he’ll send a waiter with a scribbled message, ‘Miss you.’ When you’re with him, you know that for him—at that moment at least—you’re the only woman in the world and the most beautiful.”

Bosley Crowther of *The new York Times* agreed with Tennessee about the miscasting of Lawrence. He called her “a farcically exaggerated shrew with the zeal of a burlesque comedian to see her diffident daughter wed. Her Southern accent has an occasional cockney strain.”

Crowther, however, had kinder words for Jane’s performance, defining her acting as “beautifully sensitive.”

Time magazine wrote: “Miss Wyman is constitutionally incapable of looking so ethereal as Julie Haydon, who played the role on Broadway. But with the help of shoulder-length hair and a childlike smile, she gives the part of the girl half her age an almost equally poignant sincerity.”

Jane told Rapper, “I worked harder on Laura than I did on *Johnny Belinda.”*

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A native Californian, the same age as Reagan, Greg Bautzer began to date Jane in 1950. He was one of the most prominent attorneys in Hollywood, with clients who ranged from Howard Hughes to Ingrid Bergman.

Many of his female clients—most of them top stars—were also his lovers. He seduced Lana Turner when she was just sixteen and went on to long, tumultuous on again, off again affair with Joan Crawford. His roster of seductions featured Dorothy Lamour, Ava Gardner, Ginger Rogers, Rita Hayworth, Peggy Lee, Merle Oberon, Joan Caulfield, Marguerite Chapman, and Evelyn Keyes. He finally married actress Dana Wynter in 1956.

Others seduced by him included Lucille Ball, Tallulah Bankhead, Gene Tierney, Marlene Dietrich, and Jayne Mansfield.

“I think Greg was born with really good looks,” Jane said. “He stood 6’2” and was a great dancer. He was well built and took care of his athletic body. He was not only very intelligent, but a brilliant attorney with great charisma.” She shared these views with the homosexual actor, Clifton Webb, with whom she co-starred in the 1959 movie, *Holiday for lovers*.

The July, 1951 issue of *Photoplay* filed a report on the romance between Jane and Bautzer:

“The guy has something, there’s no doubt about that. ask any man what it is and he’ll tell you. Bautzer’s a man’s man, virile, successful, a gentleman where he works, or where he plays. and he’s out to win, wherever he is, in the courtroom, at the poker table, or on the tennis court. Yet somehow, once he has won, he seems to lose interest —as though the fun were all in the battle, and the victory anticlimactic.”

It appears that Bautzer seduced Jane long before they made any high-profile appearances, such as escorting her to the premiere of her hit movie, *The Blue veil* (1951).

At that premiere, both of them encountered Ronald Reagan, who was dating starlet Nancy Davis at the time. After Bautzer introduced her to Nancy, he whispered to Jane, “Not my type. Maybe it’s all that Reagan can get these days.”

Once they went public with their affair, columnists and fan magazines speculated on the probability of an upcoming Bautzer/Wyman marriage.

Modern Screen proclaimed, “At last, a girl who can make Greg Bautzer forget about Lana and Ava, etc.”

A reporter discovered that both Jane and Bautzer had taken blood tests as a prelude to marriage.

Another reporter for *Modern Screen* saw Jane and Bautzer at a party hosted by George Sanders. He wrote, “Usually Bautzer works the room. But on this particular evening they spent most of the night in the corner making goo-goo eyes at each other. They did talk to their host and later to the producer Gabriel Pascal. That was big of them, since the party was in Pascal’s honor.”

Then, suddenly, Bautzer was no longer seen with Jane, but with Ginger Rogers, who had recently made *Storm warning* with Reagan. After listening to Lena Horne at her show at the Cocoanut Grove, Bautzer and Rogers danced the night away. At their booth, he frequently kissed her.

Paulette Goddard later provided the clue as to why the affair between Jane and Bautzer ended so abruptly. “Greg could charm the pants off a girl, and Hollywood cock-suckers never let him alone—notably his client, Rock Hudson. He arranged Hudson’s divorce, incidentally. But there was a Jekyll and Hyde quality to Greg. He had violent fights with Joan Crawford—I mean knock down, drag-out fights. Alcoholism ran in his family. When he had too much to drink, Mr. Hyde came out.”

“Jane told me that he arrived at her doorstep unexpectedly one night and caught her in bed with that handsome hunk, Howard Keel, with whom she was co-starring in *Three Guys named Mike*. Jane said that Keel escaped, but Greg practically put Jane in the hospital. That was the end of that.”

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Lana Turner turned it down, and Ava Gardner rejected it. June Allyson accepted it, but at the last minute had to notify MGM that she had to bow out because she was preganant. “A Blessed Event is on the way. But call Jane Wyman. She’s looking for something light and fluffy after *The Glass Menagerie.”*

Allyson was right. Jane accepted the role in *Three Guys named Mike* (1951), in which she played Marcy Lewis, an airline stewardess, in this black-and-white comedy directed by Charles Walters.

Three Guys named Mike was made in an era when a job as a "stewardess" was considered glamorous, and when an airplane ride to anywhere was an exciting and adventurous novelty.

The three handsome "Mikes" in the film included Van Johnson, playing a research scientist; Barry Sullivan, an advertising executive; and Howard Keel, an airplane pilot. Sidney Sheldon, who in time would evolve into one of the bestselling novelists in the world, wrote the screenplay, whose theme revolved around three guys chasing after Marcy.

Walters, who was gay, had just directed Judy Garland in *Summer Stock* (1950). Garland had been fired from *annie Get Your Gun* (1950), the title role subsequently being awarded to Betty Hutton, with Keel as her leading man.

Even though Allyson had to bow out of the film's lead role, she telephoned Jane every two or three days for updates about what was happening.

Allyson had always remained in touch with Johnson, her close friend and co-star.

As Jane told Allyson, "All that Van and I do is talk girl talk. I'm ever so grateful to him for all those nights he took me dancing during the War."

A New Yorker, Barry Sullivan stood 6'3", and Jane found him "very manly, the type of guy whose shoulder a girl can lean on."

She met him during the peak career period of his life, when he'd appeared in his most famous movie, cast as a director in *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1951), opposite Lana Turner and Kirk Douglas. He had also played opposite opposite Bette Davis in *Payment on demand* (1951).

Keel was married, having wed Helen Anderson, who had been in the chorus of his stage musical, *oklahoma!*. In the early 1950s, at the peak of his career, he became known for seducing his leading ladies, especially Kathryn Grayson and Ava Gardner, each of whom had co-starred in *Show Boat*. Apparently, he struck out with Doris Day in *Calamity Jane* (1953).

Jane had been attracted to his macho flair, his booming baritone style, and his studly good looks. During luncheons together, they shared memories of their awful childhoods. Keel had been born the son of a poor and violent coalminer who had committed suicide when he was a young boy. Before breaking into show business, he'd been a singing waiter and other more dubious professions. He admitted to Jane that on rare occasions, "When I was broke, I sold my services to older women."

"Well, I'm two years older than you. How much do you charge?"

"For you, baby, it's free. I'll pay you."

"That's very flattering. I think I'll take you up on that offer."

She later told Allyson, "Our bopping lasted until the end of filming. Then for him it was back to Helen. How lucky she is. Howard is a man and a half, maybe even more than that."

In his memoir, *only Make Believe*, Keel wrote, "I lost Janie at the end of the film. I guess she thought airline pilots were a wayward lot."

The movie made a tidy profit for MGM, although reviews were tepid at best. *Time* found Jane's performance perky enough, but claimed, "The plot device of three Mikes chasing her is a thin idea spread pretty thin."

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For her next picture, Jane moved over to Paramount, wanting to take her dressing room trailer with her. However, the gates of Paramount weren't wide enough to allow it access inside.

She was looking forward to her next picture, *Here Comes the Groom* (1951). Not only would it give her a chance to sing and dance, but it would mean a reunion with Bing Crosby, one of her favorite performers.

They had seen each other infrequently over the years for "dalliances." He'd first seduced her when she had an uncredited bit part in his 1936 musical, *anything Goes. [ironically, Crosby appeared in the 1956 version of* Anything Goes, *too.]*

Their director assigned to *Here Comes the Groom* was Frank Capra, with whom Jane had always wanted to work, even though, since the end of the war, his career had fallen into great decline. Critics derided his style of filmmaking as old-fashioned, overly idealistic and sentimental. More sophisticated movie fans had emerged from the ashes of World War II, calling for more cynical heroes than a Capra character.

Here Comes the Groom: Perpetuating the myth that weddings make a girl happy.

In the Paramount commissary, Jane lunched with both Crosby and Capra until Crosby was summoned to the head office. She told Capra, "Bing's still adorable, but I've noticed a lot of changes in him. He seems deeply troubled. More temperamental. Although he's so very nice to me."

"As long as he treats you like a lady, what else matters?" Capra asked. She seemed to agree.

After their luncheon reunion, she spent the night with Crosby, inviting him to a friend's apartment. She encountered a disillusioned man, who seemed to find comfort in her arms. He was still married to the former actress

and nightclub singer, Dixie Lee, but they lived in separate parts of their home, along with their four boys: Gary, twins Dennis and Phillip, and Lindsay.

For the first time, she learned that Dixie was suffering from ovarian cancer, and had been an alcoholic for years.

Crosby sensed that Jane was very unhappy to be appearing with Alexis Smith. “I thought you, Craig Stevens, and Reagan had all been great friends.”

She told him she didn’t want to talk about it. “That’s over now.”

The rest of the cast consisted of Franchot Tone, James Barton, Alan Reed, Minna Gombell, and *wünderkind* Anna Maria Alberghetti, an opera prodigy from Italy.

Alberghetti had performed professionally since the age of six and had made her Carnegie Hall debut in New York at the age of thirteen. In time, she would appear on several occasions on *The ed Sullivan Show*.

Jane learned that the original story of *Here Comes the Groom* by Robert Riskin had been shopped around for several years, and that it had, for a while, been considered as a vehicle for James Stewart and later for Bob Hope. Hope, Crosby’s co-star in all those “Road Movies,” called on the first day of shooting: “Bing, so now you’re reduced to taking my rejects?”

[during the shooting of Here Comes the Groom, *Riskin, Capra’s alter ego, suffered a stroke and had to undergo surgery for a blood clot in his brain. He was left partially paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He would never write again.]*

In the plot, Crosby was cast as a newspaper reporter, Pete Garvey, stationed in Paris. He visits an local orphanage and falls in love with a young boy, Bobby, and his little sister, Suzi. He wants to adopt them and bring them back to live with him in Boston. But U.S. Immigration warns him that he must marry within five days or the adoption will be voided and the Parisian kids deported.

In the movie, the child character (Theresa) played by Alberghetti is also up for adoption. Her immediate problem gets solved when an well-meaning American couple, Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey (Alan Reed and Minna Gombell) take her away after her soulful rendition of “Caro Nome.”

Back in Boston, Crosby learns that Jane, his fiancée when he left, is now engaged to her boss, the blueblooded and very rich Wilbur Stanley (Franchot Tone), and that she plans to marry him. Garvey learns that Smith, cast as Winifred Stanley, is also in love with her fourth cousin (Tone). The usual Capra complications ensue, but the public knew in advance that it could count on a happy ending with all matters resolved.

In their duet together, “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening,” written by Hoagy Carmichael with lyrics by Johnny Mercer, Jane and Crosby overshadowed even their talented array of backup musicians.

When it was released by Decca Records, “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening” reached the bestseller chart on *Billboard*, landing there in September of 1951 and nesting there for six weeks.

The lyrics had Americans singing throughout the autumn:

In the cool, cool, cool of the evenin’, tell ‘em i’ll be there.
In the cool, cool cool of the evenin’, better save a chair
When the party’s getting’ a glow on, ‘n’ singin’ fills the air,
In the shank o’ the night, when the doin’s are right, you can tell ‘em i’ll be there.

On screen, Jane showed such chemistry with Crosby that a reporter visiting the set wrote of a possible romance. He was right. Columnists began to pick up on that, even though Crosby was still married.

He and Jane got to know each other as never before. He confided details of his life to her which he had shared with only two or three other friends. Louis Armstrong described him as “a lost, lonely dude.”

He admitted that he “suffered Catholic guilt” but had indulged in a series of extramarital affairs, calling himself a “serial adulterer” and labeling his behavior as “compulsive.”

“I have no trouble finding beautiful women willing to hop into bed with me,” he confessed. “Often, they just want to use me.”

“Are you sure it’s not your melodious voice that wins them over” she asked him, facetiously.

When Hope arrived on the set, Crosby told him, “Jane and I are considering marriage, but only after Dixie dies. We are mutually supportive of each other. She’s also great in bed, a charming companion, and a rather sophisticated lady. I think she would make a wonderful wife.”

“Make me best man,” Hope said. “Of course, since it’s a public appearance, I’ll have to charge you.”

“Let me put it this way,” Crosby said. “Jane is the tonic in my vodka, the cream in my coffee, the caviar on my toast.” As for the best man fee, I’m being generous giving you two dollars.”

One day, Crosby said, “I’d like to meet Maureen and Michael. In the meantime, I’ve invited my four boys to lunch with us in the commissary. You might find out for yourself if you want to be the stepmother of these losers.”

During the lunch, Jane sensed that his sons were afraid of their father. “He was rather sharp with them,” she later told Capra. “In Gary’s case, he canceled his order of a steak and selected a salad for him instead.”

Jane was correct in her assessment of the tensions between Crosby and his boys. After the singer died in 1977, son Gary wrote a “Daddy Dearest” type of memoir entitled *Going My own way*, in which he depicted Crosby as “cruel, cold, remote, and both physically and psychologically abusive.”

Crosby did admit to Jane that he reserved the harshest punishments for Gary. As the young man later wrote: “Each Tuesday afternoon, he weighed me in, and if the scale read more than it should have, he ordered me into his office and had me drop my trousers. I dropped my pants, pulled down my undershorts, and bent over. Then he went at it with a belt dotted with metal studs he kept reserved for the occasion. Quietly, dispassionately, without the least display of emotion or loss of self-control, he whacked away until he drew the first drop of blood, and then he stopped. It normally took between twelve and fifteen strokes. As they came down, I counted them off one by one, and I hoped I would bleed early.”

A famously tragic American family: The four Crosby brothers in 1959. *(left to right)* Dennis, Gary, Lindsay, and Phillip.

[Bing Crosby’s sons came to tragic ends. lindsay died in 1989 and dennis in 1991, both of them suicides from self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Gary died in 1995, when he was 62, of lung cancer. in each case, Jane still retained fond memories of Crosby and wrote him long, heart-warming letters, addressing his grief.

None of these sons inherited any of Crosby’s millions. His will created a blind trust stipulating that none of his offspring would receive inheritances until they reached the age of 65. only Phillip lived beyond that age, dying at 69, in 2014, of a heart attack.]

Capra later said, “When I finally got Jane and Bing to walk down the aisle at movie’s end, it was straight out of *it Happened one night [released in 1934, and directed by Frank Capra]* with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. I decided that if I was reduced to having to steal from my own picture, it was time for me to take a long rest.”

Crosby was paid $150,000 for his performance; Jane, $125,000. Capra made off with $176,000.

Jane later told June Allyson, “I withdrew from Bing’s affection because stories were printed that he planned to divorce Dixie and marry me. I was getting awful letters at the studio. Homewrecker was the mildest accusation against me. I realized it was time to go.”

Here Comes the Groom made money in spite of its critical reviews. Joseph McBride, Frank Capra’s biographer, wrote, “The plot itself had seen better days. All Capra was able to do was magnify its flaws.”

The kindest words appeared in *The new York world-Telegram* in a critique by Alton Cook: “Now that Jane Wyman has her Oscar safely tucked away, she is back at being our most pixieish comedienne and making her share of things very mirthful as a fisherman’s daughter out to crash Boston’s most blue blooded circles. When Frank Capra is in exactly his best mood, he and his writers have the maddest and funniest flights of fancy ever produced on this continent.”

Another critic nailed it more accurately: “*Here Comes the Groom* is pure Capra-corn!”

Capra later recalled, “Jane traded her crying towel for the glamour girl’s raiment and became a dish to behold.”

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While Jane was still married to Reagan, Evelyn Keyes, “Scarlett O’Hara’s Younger Sister” in *Gone with the wind*, decided to throw a big bash to celebrate the first anniversary of her marriage to director John Huston. The co-hosts were directors Lewis Milestone *(all Quiet on the western Front)* and Jean Negulesco *(Three Coins in the Fountain)*.

Keyes wanted to hire a band to entertain her 200 guests, among whom were some of the stellar members of *tout* Hollywood.

Keyes had worked with musician Fred Karger on *The Jolson Story* (1946) and suggested that he pull together a band for the night to entertain her guests. He hurriedly agreed and knew just which of his fellow musicians was best for which instrument. After only two days of rehearsals, they were “ready for showtime,” as he told Keyes.

Reagan had always wanted to work with Huston, but never got the chance after failing to nab the role he wanted in the director’s *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), starring Humphrey Bogart.

Huston and Keyes soon became very good friends of Reagan and Jane. They frequently visited each other’s homes, and also went double-dating together at various clubs.

When Karger and his band took a 30-minute break, Keyes introduced him around to Hollywood hostesses.

In fact, Karger and “my boys” were such a smash success at the party that some of these show-biz hostesses, that very night, began plans to book him for their own special events.

At one point, it was not Keyes, but Judy Garland who introduced Karger to Reagan and Jane. Garland grabbed Jane’s arm. “Come with me to the can. I need to take a crap!” Reagan was left talking with Karger, of whom he later said, “What a nice young man.”

In the large ground floor bathroom of the Huston ranch, hawk-eyed Garland, though a bit drunk, picked up on Jane’s interest in the handsome young band leader.

“Privately, I’ve hired Freddie for duties other than music. But he’s a great musician. He’s worked with me on some numbers. He’s one of the music directors over at Columbia.”

“Is he married?” Jane asked.

“He’s divorced. Sounds like you’re interested, girl! If you’re like me, I never got enough when I married Vincente Minnelli. I guess he was saving it up for Gene Kelly.”

“Mr. Karger is awfully handsome, even charismatic,” Jane said.

“Not only that, but Freddie’s hung like there’s no tomorrow,” Garland said. “I’ll arrange for you guys to get together late one afternoon for drinks at my place.”

“He’s available, now that Rita has dumped him,” Garland said.

[Garland was referring to the involvement of Rita Hayworth with Karger, who had worked privately with her, coaching her for scenes in Gilda *(1946) and* The Loves of Carmen *(1948).]*

After taking her self-styled “crap,” Garland grabbed Jane’s arm again. “C’mon, I’m going to sing *over the Rainbow* for these drunken slobs.”

Although Keyes had hired Karger and his band, the hostess had also persuaded some of the most famous entertainers in the world to sing free for her guests, including not only Garland, but Frank Sinatra. After they performed, Jane herself asked if she could sing two numbers, going into a whispered conference with Karger.

This huddle would be the first of many a *tête-à-tête* that would continue on and off until Karger’s death. Or, as Jane put it to Garland on another night, “Our huddle that night at the Hustons led to a cuddle..and beyond.”

In a memoir, Keyes wrote, “It was the best goddamned party I ever attended.”

The next weekend, on a Sunday afternoon, Reagan and Jane arrived unannounced at the Huston ranch. It was not unusual for friends to just drop in for the weekend at the Hustons. Invitations were not necessary.

Their living room was in shambles. Upon seeing them, a hung over Huston said, “Evelyn, it’s time for Bloody Marys—and don’t be stingy with the vodka, darling.”

Sipping drinks with her guests, Keyes related what had happened the previous night. They had invited Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Ida Lupino, and Collier Young to join them for dinner.

“At around one o’clock this morning, John here decided he wanted to play football with the boys,” Keyes said. “Bogie was barefoot at the time. For a football, he used my $1,000 ceramic vase. Bogie dropped it, and it shattered into pieces. He cut his foot on the sharp pieces. Betty *[Bacall]* while scolding him all the while picked out the slivers with tweezers.”

Throughout the afternoon, Huston revealed to Jane and Reagan that he was a world class drinker. Despite becoming increasingly intoxicated, he told one fascinating story after another.

As dusk descended, when everyone agreed that they were hungry, Huston invited all four of them down to Olvera Street, the Mexican section of Los Angeles, for tacos and beer. “Jane and John had had quite a few, but Ronnie and I were restrained,” Keyes recalled. “At the end of the fest, Ronnie put a giddily drunken John and Jane into the back seat and took the wheel, with me sitting up front beside him.”

“We’ll be the policemen, and I’ll drive,” Reagan announced.

In her memoir, Keyes wrote, “Ronnie was a sober-minded, responsible citizen even then. A nice Democrat. I wonder where he went wrong.”

The Blue veil: Jane with Richard Carlson...The love that might have been.

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Jane was seen around town dating Curtis Bernhardt, a director far older than she was. It may or may not have been a romance. He’d helmed her during the war in *My love Came Back* (1940), and they had remained friends. Now he had a new picture for her called *The Blue veil* (1951). He wanted her to play a nun-like nursemaid.

“Me? A nun? You’ve got to be kidding!”

She was perplexed, but over just one night’s dinner, he sold her on the role.

She told him, “Bring it on. I’ll play anything except lesbians, hookers, and gun molls.”

She was called back to the studio for some retakes on *Here Comes the Groom*. During the course of those touch-ups, she had lunch with Bing Crosby. When he was informed of her newest film offer, he urged her to go for it.

“I don’t know,” she said. “It’s been such fun working with you in a musical. After *Johnny Belinda* and *The Glass Menagerie*, my nerves are frayed. I’m ready for the recuperation ward. *The Blue veil* is one tough role.”

“But at least, unlike *Johnny Belinda*, you’ll get to talk,” Crosby answered.

A week went by before Bernhardt called again from an office at RKO. “I’ve got bad news. Garbo saw the French version of *The Blue veil*. She wants to use it as a vehicle for her comeback picture.”

The Blue veil: Jane with her actor/mentor, Charles Laughton.

[Bernhardt was referring to a French picture, directed by Jean Stelli, Le voile bleu. *it had been released in German-controlled Paris in 1942 and became one of the biggest film successes during the nazi occupation of France, an era when Germans heavily censored any film shown in their captured territories*.

But soon after her initial enthusiasm, Garbo notified Bernhardt that she was not going to accept the role.

[In the late 1940s and early 50s, Garbo occasionally accepted a script, making it known that she was contemplating a comeback, and then rejecting the roles, perhaps based on fear of facing the cameras after such a long absence from the screen. Such was the case with The Blue Veil.*]*

The Blue veil: Matronly Jane with the then *ingénue* Natalie Wood.

After Garbo's departure, Bernhardt sent the script to Ingrid Bergman, who responded, "After all those condemnations based on my love affair with Roberto *[Rossellini, whom she later married]*, I've become *persona non grata* in Hollywood. I'll have to turn it down. The public will probably mock me in a nun's role."

Only then did Bernhardt once again appeal to Jane. "You're our gal," he said. "Garbo has bolted."

The script arrived, an adaptation by Norman Corwin from a story by the French author François Campaux. Norman Krasna and Jerry Wald, Jane's old friends, were co-producers. Wald cabled, "I've been serarching for another Wyman picture after *Johnny Be-linda*. I assure you, *The Blue veil* is it. It has your second Oscar written on every page. Not only that, but I've cast your buddy, Joan Blondell, as a supporting role."

The title of the film came from the blue veil that French nursemaids commonly wore. The melodramatic plot centered on LouLou Mason, a war widow (played by Jane) who, after the death of her newborn baby, devotes her life to raising other people's children. The film is a series of vignettes about the families and children Jane becomes involved with as a nursemaid.

In the wake of the death of her newborn, Jane takes a job caring for the infant son of Frederick K. Begley (Charles Laughton), a corset manufacturer who lost his wife in childbirth. He proposes marriage, but she rejects his offer. Instead, he marries a woman named Fleur (Agnes Moorehead), who immediately fires Jane.

That leads her into a series of adventures in various homes, none more notable than when she begins the care and supervision of Stephanie (as played by the then-juvenile actress, Natalie Wood), the daughter of a fading musical actress Annie Rawlins (Joan Blondell).

As the teardrops fall, LouLou experiences one heartbreak after another within the various homes, even fleeing with one boy, Tony, to Florida. When his mother, Helen Williams (Audrey Totter), decides she wants him back.

Jane's character is arrested.

She ends her days as a janitor working in a children's school. There, she is spotted by one of her former charges, Dr. Robert Palfrey (Don Taylor). When he finds her, lonely and nearly destitute, he takes her home with him to raise his own children.

During the first week on the set of *The Blue veil*, Bernhardt introduced her to a strong supporting cast who included not just Blondell, Laughton, and Moorehead, but Richard Carlson, Carleton Young, Audrey Totter, Cyril Cusack, Dan O'Herlihy, and Don Taylor, fresh from having played Elizabeth Taylor's husband in *Father of the Bride* (1950) and *Father's little dividend* (1951).

Lunching with Blondell, Jane said, "My God, I've got to go from twenty to seventy. Only Perc Westmore, my old makeup artist, can pull that one off."

[whereas Perc defined the pattern for her makeup, he had to be hospitalized during the shoot.]

"No actor ever impressed her as much as Laughton, a towering and portly thespian known in both America and England. He was also a notorious homosexual, his status well known within London's theater circles. "He taught me how to act, walk, and talk like an old person. I learned more in two weeks from him than I did from any director. He made me feel old, and I mean that as a compliment. But I was only thirty-seven at the time, and in the prime of my life, with hormones raging. It was a big leap from that to old lady, but I finally got there."

The Blue veil: Jane, decrepid but dignified.

Jane chatted with Natalie Wood, who told her she wanted to escape the curse of such child stars as Shirley Temple, whose career ended when she turned adolescent. "Right now, I'm playing daughters to such parents as Fred MacMurray, Margaret Sullavan, and James Stewart, and I'm slated to be Bette Davis' daughter in *The Star*. As you know, I'm calling your friend, Blondell, 'mom'."

"If *The Blue veil* flops, we'll all pick our whistlestops," Wald told her. "If not, we'll take our bows. It's a challenge for you, but you have the talent to pull it off. Better than Garbo ever could."

Jane detested the invasive press, but granted one interview during the shoot. As the statement indicates, no one ever accused her of being "The Great Communicator," as they would Reagan in later years.

"We're put into this world. No one knows why. Sometimes I don't like it. Sometimes, I'd rather be in heaven. Meanwhile, I'm here for a certain number of years. Nothing adds up for me except how much good you can show people during that span. Without a goal, you don't live, you drift. I've set myself quite a few. This is the only one that's ever made sense."

Writing in *The new York Times*, Bosley Crowther defined *The Blue veil* "a whoppingly banal tear jerker that will lure multitudes of moviegoers who like nothing better than a good cry. Curtis Bernhardt's soupy direction stretches Wyman into a series of parchedly sunlit episodes contrived to squeeze the heart and present this lady as a quivering-lipped saint. Wyman has little to do herself except age daintily. Since, like the rest of *The Blue veil*, Wyman is so far removed from flesh and blood, we can only leave her and it to heaven."

At awards time, for her performance, Jane won a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress and also nominated for an Oscar.

The Blue veil grossed nearly $4 million, the most financially successful picture RKO released that year. For the first time in her long career, Jane was named one of the film industry's "Top Ten" box office draws.

Jane wouldn't take Maureen Reagan to see *Johnny Belinda* because it involved a rape, but she made it a point to escort her to a screening of *The Blue veil*. In her memoirs, Maureen recalled the experience. "*The Blue veil* was that movie where she loses a baby and then becomes a governess; she spends the rest of her life saying goodbye to one child after another. What a depressing movie! And she had to live with this character every day. No wonder it was sometimes difficult to get a smile out of her."

Maureen later told her friends at school, "My mother sat through the entire movie and didn't shed a tear. She has no sense of drama."

Jane's competitors for the Oscar that year (1951) included Katharine Hepburn for her role in *The african Queen;* Eleanor Parker for *detective Story;* and Shelley Winters for *a Place in the Sun*.

All of them lost to Vivien Leigh, taking home her second Oscar for her memorable performance as Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' *a Streetcar named desire*.

Blondell was nominated for Best Supporting Actress, but lost to Kim Hunter as Stella in *a Streetcar named desire. variety* defined Blondell's performance as her best since *a Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1945). In *The Blue veil*, she played a neglectful show business mother of a twelve year old. One writer said, "Blondell added vinegar to a movie drowning in molasses."

It was a year of honors. Very briefly, Jane was reunited with her co-star in *The Year-ling*. As he'd matured a bit, Gregory Peck looked handsomer than ever. She surely recalled her romantic nights with him. Both of them had been given *Photoplay's* Golden Award of 1951 for Favorite Actor and Favorite Actress of the year.

After the Awards Ceremony, she asked him, "If we're so goddamned popular, why not do a picture together?"

"Great idea," he said. "I'll lobby for the right script."

Their dual roles never materialized.

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After Reagan's separation from Jane, he got to know Fred Karger before she did. When he was flirting around with the idea of marrying Adele Jergens, he often picked her up during the early evening night after she'd finished work her day's work on *ladies of the Chorus*. In it, she played Marilyn Monroe's mother, even though she looked like her sister.

Fred Karger: Babe magnet.

On the set of that movie, Karger was responsible for the staging of Marilyn's big number, "Every Baby Needs a Da-Da Daddy."

On three different occasions, Reagan and Jergens double dated with Marilyn and Karger. Reagan was surprised to learn that Marilyn was living with Karger's mother, Anne, and his daughter, Terry.

Karger told Reagan, "I brought Marilyn home and asked mother to take care of her, because she was lost, broke, and lonely. Anne just adores her. So does my daughter."

When Reagan started secretly seeing Marilyn, especially when he was convalescing with a broken leg, Marilyn complained to him, “Freddie does-n’t love me. A man can’t love a woman and feel contempt for her. He’s ashamed of me and wants to change me. He says he can’t take me out because I dress like a trollop.”

MM as she looked when Karger first dated her.

Her biographer, Fred Lawrence Guiles, wrote: “When Marilyn realized she was in love with Karger soon after their first dinner, she felt she must persuade him to marry her. That he didn’t seem about to do so was a reality to which she finally would resign herself. Fred Karger was to have the singular distinction of being the only human being Marilyn attempted to disarm and yet who was resistant up to the end.”

Once, after she hadn’t visited for quite a while, she showed up “slightly altered.”

“Freddie told me I had this small blemish, a fleshy tip, that made my nose appear too long. He arranged for me to go to a plastic surgeon to take care of it. The surgeon also removed some cartilage and inserted it into my jaw to make my chin stronger. Before that, Freddie was calling me ‘chinless’.”

“You look more gorgeous than ever,” Reagan assured her.

Later, when Marilyn became the roommate of Shelley Winters, she told her, “Freddie is so neat, he even keeps his pubic hair trimmed. He thought my upper teeth protruded, so he set up an appointment with an orthodontist, sending me to this Dr. Walter Taylor, who is a specialist in cosmetic surgery.”

Later, when Marilyn took up with agent Johnny Hyde, she told him that, “Freddie makes me feel inadequate. After a night with him, I’m churning in frustration. He won’t do certain things in bed I like.”

“I’ll bet he’s a secret homo,” Hyde said.

“He also told me that he can never marry me because I would not make a fit stepmother for his daughter, Terry. She adores me.”

Maurice Zolotow, one of Marilyn’s early biographers, wrote that Karger was “the epitome of courtliness. But when Marilyn fell for him, he was sour on women. When he talked of love, it was to express a world-weary hopelessness about the honor of women. He claimed that women were not capable of genuine love. He believed that no one could give herself honestly and entirely to one man for whom she cared. He said women ‘were too shrewd, too practical.’”

One moonlight night on Santa Monica Beach, Karger, a bit tipsy, said those three magic words that Marilyn was longing to hear—“I love you.”

She later told columnist Sidney Skolsky, “Those words were better than a thousand critics calling me a movie star. All the fame and bright lights I had dreamed about suddenly were in *me.*”

But the next day, in Marilyn’s words, “Freddie forgot about what he’d told me on the beach. He was his same cynical self with all the barriers to his emotion erected around him. He even teased me about my ignorance of culture and history.”

He told her, “Your mind isn’t developed. Compared to your body, it’s embryonic.”

Joan Blondell later said, “All the problems that Freddie found in Marilyn he didn’t find in Jane. Jane was more his type. Marilyn for sex, Jane for marriage.”

Karger’s first known outing with Marilyn as his date was at the premiere of *The asphalt Jungle* (1950), her first breakthrough movie. “I deserved something from him,” she told Skolsky. “In 1948, for his Christmas present, I

bought him a $500 gold watch which I'm still paying off at the rate of $25 a month."

She later told Skolsky, "One of the reasons I fell for John Kennedy is that he looks like Freddie."

When Karger began dating Jane, Marilyn heard about it and exploded in fury. When she learned that he planned to marry Jane, she told Winters, "I will hate Jane Wyman for the rest of my life, even in heaven. I wasn't all that interested in Reagan, but I played around with him just to get even with Jane for taking Freddie from me. I'm still carrying a torch for the guy. He should have been an underwear model."

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After *The Blue veil*, Jane returned to Warners for a cameo appearance in *Starlift* (1951). Directed by Roy Del Ruth, its all-star cast included James Cagney, Gary Cooper, Gene Nelson, Frank Lovejoy, Virginia Mayo, Phil Harris, Gordon MacRae, Randolph Scott, Doris Day, and Ruth Roman.

At the time, Reagan was dating both Day and Roman.

"I'm not on the screen for very long," Jane said, "but at least I get to sing 'I May Be Wrong (but I Think You're Wonderful).'"

The silly plot concerned two pilots, Mike Nolan (Dick Wesson) and Rick Williams (Ron Hagerthy), who try to meet Nell Wayne (Janice Rule), a fictitious film star performing in a star-studded musical in San Francisco. Before meeting Rule, Roman introduces them to Day and MacRae, who are rehearsing, "You're Gonna Lose Your Gal."

Although *Starlift* takes place during the Korean War, Jane said that it evoked fond memories of her times at the Hollywood Canteen during World War II.

Bosley Crowther, the acerbic critic for *The new York Times*, summed it up: "The acts are unspeakably slapdash, and the romance is painful beyond words. The performances given by Janice Rule and Ron Hagerthy as the flier are as sappy as they could possibly be, and Dick Wesson as a pushy pal of the flier is downright insufferable."

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Hollywood columnists were surprised when Jane accepted the role of Betty Blake Rogers, the wife of Will Rogers, Sr., the legendary humorist and lariat-twirling cowboy from the Ziegfeld Follies. The picture was *The Story of will Rogers*, set for a 1952 release from Warner Brothers, with Michael Curtiz directing.

Glam Jane becomes Plain Jane again, this time in *The Story of will Rogers*.

As columnist Sidney Skolsky noted, "The part of Rogers' wife so clearly called for that gentle lady, Phyllis Thaxter, who once played Ronald Reagan's wife in a film. Thaxter knows how to play 'nice,' without the usual spoonful of saccharine. But why did a big star like Oscar-winning Jane Wyman take such a small role—a part that could have been handled by hundreds of actresses of minor talent?"

Thanks to the passage of time, Jane's reasons for accepting the minor role can be determined. To begin with,

she was planning to star in a very strong role as a movie star who returns to Broadway in an aptly titled script called *Broadway Revisited*. It was a powerful role, although there was a rumor that Jack Warner had originally offered it to Lauren Bacall, who would play a similar role in her future on Broadway in *applause*, a stage musical based on *all about eve*.

Jane had a secret reason for wanting the part: She hoped that, based on her performance, producers could see that she could impersonate a stage actress. She had witnessed many stars approaching forty or beyond who had extended their professional lives, after movie roles evaporated, by appearances on the stage.

There was another reason. She had just appeared with her pal and sometimes lover, Bing Crosby, in *Here Comes the Groom*. He thought he could play Will Rogers and actually submitted to a screen test. He asked Jane to co-star as his wife. However, when he saw himself on the screen, he had to admit that his own personality and the *persona* of the humorist were not a perfect fit. As he told Jane, "Will and I don't go together like love and marriage, or a horse and carriage."

Jane was ready to bow out of the role after Crosby's screen test bombed, but Warner persuaded her to accept the role as a favor to him. He had decided to cast Will Rogers, Jr. in the part of his father, but he was very inexperienced and had no marquee name.

"I need someone who can get movie fans to buy tickets," Warner told her. "If you'll go along with me on this one, I'll assure you of some big pictures coming up where I'll give you the lead. I've requested this kind of concession from Bette Davis on at least on two occasions when she was big around this studio, and she agreed."

The mogul was referring to Davis taking a secondary role in *The Man who Came to dinner* (1941) with Monty Woolley and *watch on the Rhine* (1943) in which she played second fiddle to Paul Lukas.

Directed by Michael Curtiz, with whom Jane had a dreaded reunion, *The Story of will Rogers* featured a supporting cast of now familiar faces to her, including James Gleason, Carl Benton Reid, Eve Miller, and Slim Pickens. Steve Brodie and Eddie Cantor were also in the cast.

Virtually all of America had tuned in for details about Rogers' tragic death in 1935, when he was killed in a plane crash en route from Fairbanks to Alaska's northernmost tip, Point Barrow. His close friend, Wiley Post, also died in the wreck. In the movie, Noah Beery, Jr. interpreted the role of Post.

During a dialogue with Curtiz, he told her that her role had been offered to both Eleanor Parker and Phyllis Thaxter—yes, the same housewifey actress suggested by Skolsky.

The role of Will Rogers, in addition to being offered to Bing Crosby, had been considered for both Herb Shriner and Charles Drake. Curtiz also told her that Will Rogers, Jr., the son of the subject of the film, had been screen tested and subsequently rejected for the role way back in 1942. In contrast, on this newest effort, he got the part.

"Big year for me, 1942," Curtiz said. "I was hot shit. *Casablanca*, you know. Your boy, Reagan, didn't get Bogie's part."

Jane was introduced to her leading man, Will Rogers, Jr., who had had a varied career. From January 3, 1943, to May 23, 1944, he had been a U.S. Congressman from California when he resigned to rejoin the U.S. army. Through a varied career, he'd been a minor actor, writer, and publisher.

He closely resembled his father, though lacking any of his talent. He later told the press that he found Jane "wonderful to work with, tremendously helpful and supportive. She taught me more about acting than Curtiz did."

Publicly, Jane said nothing, but complained to Curtiz, "I find him tiring to work with— retake, retake, and more retakes until he gets it right, if he ever does."

Reviewers were puzzled that the script by Frank Davis and Stanley Roberts contained so many historical inaccuracies about Will Rogers, Sr. Although his son was very familiar with his father's life, he apparently never alerted the writers about the points where they were wrong. For example, the movie depicts Rogers' father, Clem Rogers, as a delegate from Oklahoma at the 1932 Democratic convention that nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt. Clem Rogers, the grandfather of Rogers, had died in 1911, the year his grandson was born.

After a screening, Jane told Curtiz, "I don't like the way I look on the screen. As for that drab wardrobe you forced me to wear, it stinks. I refuse to do anything to promote the film."

She was right. The critics damned her performance with faint praise, using such words as "likable," "supportive," "pleasant," and "displays a gentle attitude."

She described her role as "a simpering onlooker." Years later, when she saw it on TV, she said. "I think I used Nancy Davis as my role model, you know when she gazes adoringly at Reagan when he's making one of his endless speeches."

In spite of its many weaknesses, *The Story of will Rogers* was one of the top box office hits of 1952, grossing $2.65 million in U.S. rentals.

In later life, Rogers, Jr. appeared in several TV productions, and was one of several actors to host syndicated reruns of the hit series, *death valley days*, whose original run was hosted for a season by Reagan himself.

Jane lived long enough to be saddened by the increasing deaths of people she had known. In 1993, she heard over TV news that Rogers, Jr. had committed suicide at the age of 81, after suffering heart problems, several strokes, and an ongoing series of hip replacements.

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Jane always listened to broadcasts from Hollywood, especially roundups of news in the entertainment industry.

Cougar Jane with the younger and very well-heeled Travis Kleefeld, whose society mother was anything but amused.

The date was March 4, 1952. Leading off the afternoon news was an announcement that Ronald Reagan had married the MGM starlet, Nancy Davis, in the Little Brown Church in the Valley, in Studio City, California.

Stunned, Jane turned off the TV. The next day, reporters besieged her, wanting her to reveal her feelings and reactions. It seemed that the world wanted to know.

"I wish Ronnie and his bride all the happiness—and that's all I have to say. It's not my affair."

"What do you think of Nancy Davis?" one reporter called out to her.

"I have never heard of the lady until today," she falsely claimed.

"But she's a movie star," he yelled back.

"I doubt that," she said. "I read *variety* from its front cover to the back page. I don't recall reading about any Nancy Davis. Excuse me, I'm late for an appointment."

Exactly thirteen days from the date of Reagan's marriage, Nancy made her own announcement to the press. She reported, "I'm engaged to Travis Kleefeld, and I'll have nothing else to say about it."

As reporters rushed back to their offices and their typewriters, the first questions on everyone's lips was, "Who in the fuck is Travis Kleefeld? Do we have a picture of this guy?"

A devastatingly handsome young man, Kleefeld was ten years younger than Jane but looked much younger even than that. When they had been secretly dating, he was often mistaken for her son.

After the announcement of his engagement to Jane, he became an overnight celebrity. The search was on to find out who he was.

No complete answer ever emerged, but there were clues. It seemed that Jane had met the dashing young man at a Christmas party, and had begun to date him right away.

Speculation was rampant. Had Jane deliberately chosen to announce her engagement so soon after Reagan's marriage? Was she rushing into something impetuous because her former spouse had beaten her to the altar? Only she knew the answers.

Very little was known about him. He was said to be rich, and that he didn't have to marry Jane for her money. He was the scion and heir to a well-known contracting family, and he worked in the family business, which he would one day inherit. His friends, however, said that his secret desire was to be a singer like Frank Sinatra.

[Five years after the announcement of his engagement, Kleefeld did launch a fairly unsuccessful singing career, billing himself as "Tony Travis." He generated little enthusiasm for his talent, despite the fact that he had quite an acceptable singing voice.]

Two weeks after Jane's wedding announcement, she was summoned to Warner Brothers. The studio mogul told her that a ton of fan mail had come in from her devotees, denouncing her decision to marry a man so much younger

than herself.

"You've been called everything from a cradle snatcher to an old bag lady seeking to corrupt a handsome young man," Warner said. "You've made a laughing stock of yourself. Your fans are deserting you in droves. Hundreds claim that they will never go to see another Jane Wyman picture."

When a reporter investigated the reaction of Kleefeld's parents, it was obvious that collectively, they interpreted the upcoming marriage as horrifying. One family member said, "I hear Jane Wyman is forty-five if she's a day."

Actually, at the time, she was only thirty-eight.

When the fan magazines hit the stands, Jane was humiliated and burst into tears at the unflattering coverage.

Columnist Ruth Waterbury, a close observer of Jane's, later recalled, "The situation matched that *[of the storyline]* of her future picture with Rock Hudson called *all That Heaven allows*, the story of an older woman falling for a young man. Was Jane in love with Kleefeld enough to withstand the hostile reaction of the public? I think she loved him in her fashion. But eventually, she started to give in. She couldn't stand up to the mounting pressure and ridicule. In a few weeks, she called off the engagement, claiming that 'Travis and I aren't right for each other.'"

Since his family controlled the purse strings, the son and heir opted to acquiesce to their complaints. *Modern Screen* wrote, "Travis Kleefeld put a down payment on a mink coat for Jane Wyman just before the engagement was called off. Incidentally, relations between Jane and Kleefeld's mother were what you might call 'strained' when we were going to press."

Jane was also quoted as saying, "Age had nothing whatever to do with our decision not to marry. I guess we're the only two people who are not conscious of the difference in our ages. It was just that we decided that marriage was wrong for us and it was silly to go into as serious a matter as matrimony without being perfectly aware it was what we both wanted. Believe me, Travis and I will always be friends. I think he is one of the finest men I've ever met. But we have both realized that we went into this thing too quick and that it's better to break up before marriage than to go into the divorce courts later."

What Louella Parsons knew and other reporters didn't was that after breaking off the engagement, Jane continued to see Kleefeld on several occasions. "He's great in bed," Jane told Parsons in a confidential aside. From then on, she saw him in secret for the next few weeks, although he dated other, younger women.

When asked why she continued to see Kleefeld after breaking off the engagement, Jane said, "It's best that way—no entangling alliances."

She admitted to Parsons that she was jealous of the starlets that Kleefeld dated, knowing that the columnist would not print that comment.

Riddled with insecurities, Jane told Ruth Waterbury, "God, I feel old looking at Travis out with all those young, beautiful women. Don't print that!"

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In spite of the fiasco associated with her engagement to Kleefeld, Jane entered her "cougar" period, although that term was not in vogue at the time. Today, of course, "cougar" is used to describe an older woman pursuing a younger man.

Along came Tony Trabert, an extraordinary tennis player who was thirteen years younger than Jane, but looked twenty-five years her junior. In the opinion of some observers, it survived as one of the most mysterious relationships of her life.

Was it an affair, a friendship, a passing fancy, or something serious? Jane was not talking. Trabert became the World's no. 1 tennis champion, and is included in the list of the twenty-one greatest players of all time.

Standing 6'1", he was considered by reporters "cute rather than handsome." There had been speculation that Kleefeld looked like Jane's son, but Trabert, in the words of one journalist, "could pass for her grandson."

Jane with the very young future tennis star, Tony Trabert. When June Allyson heard of this relationship, she sniffed, “The less said about it, the better.”

As a cynical Hedda Hopper said when she saw a picture of Jane with Trabert at a tennis match, “The next thing I’ll hear is that Jane has been hanging out around kindergartens.”

[Born in Cincinnati in 1930, Marion anthony Trabert was a stand-out athlete in both tennis and basketball at the University of Cincinnati.

In 1955, three years after dating Jane, his record was one of the most spectacular ever associated with an american tennis player. He had won a trio of the most prestigious amateur tennis tournaments—the French, wimbledon, and american Championships en route to being ranked world no. 1 among the amateurs for that year. He turned professional that autumn of 1955.

After his retirement in 1971, he began a 33-year career as a tennis and golf analyst for CBS, covering such events as the U.S. open. after an amazing career, Trabert retired in 2004, three years before Jane died.]

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Originally, Judy Garland had signed with Paramount to appear as a Broadway star in a film entitled *Just for You*. Robert Carson had written its screenplay based on Stephen Vincent Benet’s story, *Famous*.

But after being fired by MGM on the set of *annie Get Your Gun*, Garland was still struggling with pill addiction. Bloated and puffy, she had failed in her diet.

Grande dame of the American Theater, Ethel Barrymore, co-starring with *der Bingle* and Jane in *Just for You*.

Consequently, Paramount decided to rewrite the script into a vehicle for Jane Wyman and Bing Crosby, pairing them together as a team based on the success of their previous hit, *Here Comes the Groom*.

Just for You, with a reworked script, was shot within a context of speed and intense pressure beginning in mid-

October of 1951, and finished shortly before Christmas for an early release in 1952.

Filming it was not a happy experience for either Jane or Crosby, who had discussed a possible marriage during the making of their previous film together.

This time around, however, “Der Bingle” was not in a romantic mood. Consumed by what he described as “Catholic guilt,” Crosby was morbidly obsessed with the agonies of his slowly dying wife, the former star, Dixie Lee, a victim of ovarian cancer. Also, his conflicts with his sons, especially Gary, were growing increasingly wrenching and bitter.

Jane’s private life was in upheaval as she drifted from beau to beau. Consumed with emotional anxieties, she also faced a health crisis, leading eventually to hospitalization because of a kidney stone.

In spite of her problems, and despite her status as a woman on the doorstep of middle age, she looked like a far younger actress than she actually was. That was fine with her, considering the skimpy costumes she’d have to wear in her upcoming picture.

Its director, Elliott Nugent, had assembled a strong supporting cast, including the formidable Ethel Barrymore, along with Robert Arthur, Natalie Wood, Regis Toomey, and veteran actress Cora Witherspoon.

Jane was cast in it *Just for You* as Carolina Hill, a musical comedy star on Broadway with a personal style evocative of Mary Martin. Carolina is the girlfriend of Jordan Blake (Crosby), a Broadway producer who is so busy and self-involved that he neglects his two children, Jerry Blake (Robert Arthur) and Barbara Blake (Natalie Wood).

In the film, Jane tries to bring harmony to the family and reconcile Crosby’s character to his son and daughter.

During their first luncheon together, Jane and Crosby talked about the plight of alienated children as being “a little too close to home” to each of their individual situations. Crosby was very estranged from his four sons, and between Jane’s career and her heavy dating schedule, she saw little of Maureen and Michael.

She was anxious to meet and work with “Miss Barrymore,” whom she regarded as the greatest actress in the history of the American theater. Ethel had been cast as Alida De Bronkhart, the principal of a snobbish girls’ school.

She found Ethel in declining health, living the last decade of her life. “I was young back in 1901, somewhat of a beauty. Look at me now, a withered rose in the summer garden, deep in December.”

Whenever possible, the two actresses met for tea or else had lunch together in the commissary.

“Zinging a Little Zong”...*Just for You*, with Bing and Jane.

Barrymore shared many memoires of Jane during their long discussions together, revealing details about her private life that didn’t get included in her autobiography, *Memories*.

Ethel tantalized Jane with tidbits from her past. “Twice in my life, two people have attempted to rape me. Tallulah Bankhead and my brother, John. Only one of them succeeded, but I won’t tell you which one.”

She also said that in 1900, Winston Churchill had proposed marriage to her. “Perhaps I should have accepted his proposal,” she told Jane.

Jane hadn’t seen Natalie Wood since they’d worked together on *The Blue veil*, where she’d played Joan Blondell’s adolescent daughter. “Here I am again playing a daughter,” she told Jane. “When will I ever grow up?”

[Four months later, Jane encountered natalie at a Hollywood premiere. The young girl rushed up to her to whisper confidential secrets. “Guess what? i’ve had my period. The flow of blood terrified me. i screamed for my

mother, thinking i was dying. Mother had never explained to me the finer points of menstruation."

"Congratulations!" Jane said. "welcome to womanhood."

"i can't wait to check out the dicks of so many guys—Tab Hunter, Tony Curtis, Rock Hudson, maybe even Robert wagner. or perhaps that new guy, Jimmy dean. i've talked it over with my mother, and she thinks it should be this hot young actor, nick adams. in fact, she's selected nick to teach me the ways of the world."

"i think fourteen is an acceptable age," Jane said. "it wasn't that long ago that a fourteen-year-old was getting married and having children and following daniel Boone into the american wilderness."]

Paramount hoped to repeat the success of a Crosby/Wyman duet, which had been such a hit in their rendition of "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening."

In response, the composers came up with "Zing a Little Zong." When it was released as a recording, it enjoyed a moderate success, but they did not replicate the sales of their previous hit.

For his appearance in *Just for You*, Crosby was paid his standard fee of $150,000, with Jane receiving $133,000. During the shoot, she also signed a contract with Decca, who wanted to promote her as "The Dinah Shore of Tomorrow."

She was rather *blasé* about a recording career, although she made some records with Danny Kaye, Groucho Marx, and Jimmy Durante. Two of her comedy releases included "Black Strap Molasses" and, on the flip side, "How Di Ye Do and Shake Hands."

Just for You enjoyed only moderate success at the box office, and was certainly not a hit the way that *Here Comes the Groom* had been.

The Christian Science Monitor wrote, "As Broadway star Carolina Hill, Jane Wyman is abundantly qualified to strike a young man's fancy—or, as the story indicates, a young man's father's fancy. She plays with genuine affection scenes in which she tries to promote better family relationships among the Blakes, and with tender understanding, the difficult passages in which she discovers that she has inadvertently encouraged the young son to fall in love with her."

Writing in *Showplace*, critic Jake Karr said, "*Just for You* is artificial hocus-pocus. Miss Wyman bobs about ingratiatingly, mainly in abbreviated togs, displaying an elegant figure. She also pipes prettily some of the film's songs."

Mae Tinee of the *Chicago Tribune* found that "Miss Wyman sparkles like Lake Michigan on a sunny morning, and the studio provides her with some of the most becoming costumes a woman could have."

[after Just for You, *Crosby and Jane went their separate ways, occasionally running into each other, but drifting apart.]*

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On most occasions, Jane kept quiet when asked about Reagan. She'd often leave the room "to powder my nose," if she were at a private party. If cornered by a reporter, she'd say, "Excuse me, I'm late for an appointment."

But Reagan angered her when, as president of SAG, he "launched a stupid campaign" (her words). He wanted to prevent fan magazines such as *Photoplay* and *Modern Screen* from writing about the private lives of "established stars." Jane expressed her disbelief that Reagan thought such a thing was possible to achieve in a free society with a free press.

In a public statement, Reagan said, "Such stories are all right for youngsters on their way up—Natalie Wood or Tab Hunter come to mind, perhaps Tony Curtis or Janet Leigh."

"But there comes a time when established stars such as Jane Wyman and myself should have control over what is written about them, with the option of a veto."

It is not known what prompted his outrage. Jane told friends that she suspected it was an event that occurred back in September of 1951, when she, escorted by Greg Bautzer, attended the premiere of *The Blue veil*.

On a chance encounter, the couple ran into another couple in the lobby of the theater: Reagan out on a date with the MGM starlet, Nancy Davis. He introduced his date to his former wife.

As Bautzer noted, "An iceberg came between these two ladies big enough to sink ten ships the size of the *Titanic*. But all of us were ever so polite."

When both couples arrived later at Ciro's, for some reason, Nancy and Reagan were directed to empty chairs at the table otherwise occupied by Jane and Bautzer. *[Perhaps it was a mistake from a misguided maître d'hôtel, although it was later surmised that Bautzer himself had tipped the headwaiter and asked him to do that.]* Not wanting to make a scene, Reagan and Nancy sat at the table with Jane and the handsome attorney, whom he already knew.

Bautzer said, "Reagan looked like he was sweating blood. But all of us were too well bred to make a scene.

Boy, did that guy look like he wanted to crawl out of his seat. Both Nancy and Jane behaved like two proper ladies, not bitter rivals in a love triangle."

It must have been terribly awkward for Nancy, because I'm sure she'd heard all the stories about how Reagan was still moaning over the loss of Jane. Everybody ordered something, something light, that is, and this 'double date' soon broke up as we went our separate ways. My evening didn't end until Jane swore on a stack of Bibles that I was better in bed than her former husband."

When the fan magazines heard what Reagan planned to do by presenting a censorship proposal to the members of SAG, they fought back. A typical response, an open letter to Reagan, appeared in *Motion Picture Magazine*, as composed by its editors:

> *"You cited fan magazines about stories of your divorce from Jane wyman as being 'false and irresponsible' invasions of your privacy. we disagree, because you apparently didn't feel the marriage itself was a private affair. during your marriage, you opened your home to photographers and reporters and allowed pictures of your home, your wife, and your children, Maureen and Michael, to be taken. But if a happy marriage is news, then it seems to follow that the* breakup *of that marriage is also news. Yours is a business, Mr. Reagan, which is built on publicity. in this sense, actors are like politicians."*

Most actors were horrified to learn about Reagan's position. Ida Lupino and many others at SAG advised him not to bring such a proposal to a vote.

His censorship proposal died like a victim shot in the heart.

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Still floating from studio to studio, Jane was assigned a role in her next movie, *love Story*, scheduled for a 1953 release through Columbia.

[its title was later changed to the more sexually suggestive let's do it again.]

She was to be reunited with Ray Milland, her co-star from *The lost weekend*.

Doing It Again: Jane with Ray Milland, this time in a context more flippant than the emotionally wrenching *The lost weekend*.

Three weeks before director Alexander Hall was to begin rehearsals and shooting, Jane arrived at Columbia to work on her dance routines and songs.

As she waited in a rehearsal room, in walked Fred Karger. She'd first heard his small band at a party given by Evelyn Keyes and John Huston. "My dreamboat" she later called him. He had just come from a morning game of tennis.

As she'd later tell June Allyson, "He was the man with the Betty Grable legs, the male equivalent, of course. He

wore a pair of tennis shorts, very tight, making things rather obvious. His outfit and T-shirt were sunflower yellow. I had never seen a tennis player in anything but white. He was beautifully tanned and a living doll. He told me he was going to be my vocal coach at Columbia. I'm afraid I said something obvious, an old line."

Paramount promoted movie depictions of Jane as cheesecake, wearing leotards and sexy, strapless, form-fitting tops. Fearing that he was focusing exclusively on her legs, she told the photographer, "My breasts have not altogether fallen, in case you want to photograph them—fully covered, of course—too."

"And what was that, my dear?" Allyson asked. "Maybe I'll use it sometime myself."

"I asked him, 'Did it hurt?'"

"You mean, my tennis game?"

"No, when you fell from Heaven," she answered.

Karger had dark, wavy hair, a compelling smile, and an athletic build.

Fred Lawrence Guiles, author of *legend, The life and death of Marilyn Monroe*, wrote, "Fred Karger's eyes danced with an exuberance that become mystifying only after you bumped up against his reserve."

It seemed that Jane fell in love with him almost at once, although she later confessed, "I never did break down the wall of reserve he'd constructed around himself." During the three weeks she worked with him, she got to know him "as Bathsheba knew David" (her words).

"He looks great in clothes, from tennis shorts to a tuxedo," Jane told Joan Blondell. "And he looks best of all without a stitch on. It would take a Michelangelo to sculpt a body like that."

Except for his tennis outfits, he always wore conservative, dark suits and never went out the door without putting one on. Most evenings, he wore a tuxedo when taking her nightclubbing and certainly for his public appearances as the leader of his band. Once, when he escorted Jane to a garden party, he selected a dark suit as his wardrobe to an event where other many other men were attired (his words) in "pussy pink or marigold pants."

"Almost overnight, Freddie has come to fill a void in my life," Jane told Paulette Goddard. "I think he is the man for me."

"Sounds to me you've found husband number four," Goddard said.

"I think you're right. I want to be with someone young and vital, not some grandpa like Reagan, who sits in the living room every night reading editorial pages and news magazines, not to mention endless books on politics."

"Ronnie talks politics day and night," Jane said. "Freddie and I share the same interests, including similar tastes in music. He likes to gossip about the movie colony, like I do. He also likes to spend every evening dancing in nightclubs, just like I prefer. Unlike Van Johnson, he doesn't drop you off at the end of the evening, with just a kiss on the cheek. After stripping down, he brushes his teeth, gargles, and jumps into bed to send a gal to Heaven."

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Fred with Jane, in love, and happy.

While working with Karger during the day and spending her nights in his arms, she learned more about him. He was more than a vocal coach. She knew he had his own band, but he was also a composer and conductor.

He'd been born only a year before her, the son of the famous Maxwell Karger, a producer and director at the old Metro company before it became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

In 1921, Maxwell died young, suffering a fatal heart attack aboard a train traveling from New York to Fort Wayne, Indiana. Fred's mother, Anne Karger, had lived with him at the Hollywood Hotel, and was known for staging Saturday night parties, which she called "Pops Evenings."

As a young boy, Fred moved among the Hollywood elite, getting a kiss on the lips from Rudolph Valentino, a lollipop from Charlie Chaplin, or the promise of becoming a child star from Mary Pickford. Jack Pickford, Mary's brother, always tossed him in the air, and Buster Keaton once brought him a pet baby rattlesnake. "Imagine giving a rattlesnake to a little boy," Fred said. "Buster was insane."

Fred with Jane, in love, and happy.

Fred had been born a Catholic, but was not a practicing one. "I'm out all Saturday night into the wee hours. When it's time for mass, I'm sleeping it off," he told Jane.

In August of 1940, he'd married a minor actress, Patti Sachs, who eventually left show business and became a high-powered lawyer. They had one daughter, Terence Meredith, nicknamed "Terry." When Sachs and Fred separated, she used her skill as a lawyer "to fleece me," Fred told Jane. "I got custody of Terry. My daughter and I live with Anne."

During his days, Fred was the assistant to Morris Stoloff, the musical director at Columbia. But at night, he made the rounds, playing at elegant private parties, including one at the home of Jack Warner. Because of his good looks, he and his band were often booked by some of the most famous hostesses of Hollywood, including Merle Oberon. Sometimes, he'd get a booking in the Escoffier Room at the Beverly Hills Hotel. On such an occasion, Jane always had a front-row table.

Hedda Hopper summed up the attraction: "Fred Karger and Jane had music in common and had a lot of laughs together. Since he was practically her age, she didn't have to go through any more older women/younger man publicity. He was as lonely as she was, and, unlike Bautzer, wanted to remarry. He felt rootless and disoriented, and wanted to get back into domestic harness again. At the time, everyone thought he was perfect for Jane. Even Ronald Reagan approved of him."

"I'm in love with Freddie Karger," Jane said in a giddy voice over the phone to June Allyson. "He makes beautiful music on and off the stage. I'm already calling him Freddie. He's gorgeous and all the plumbing is first rate and works perfectly—a maiden's dream. He is my Prince Charming, the man I've waited for all my life and didn't think I would ever find."

"Cool it, gal," Allyson cautioned.

As Maureen Reagan later wrote, “Mother brought Michael and me home one weekend from boarding school. It was a Halloween weekend, and I met Fred and his daughter, Terry, who was about six months younger than me. Michael, Terry, and I went trick or treating. When we got back, mother and Fred were waiting in the den. We walked in, and they sat us down and told us of their plans to be married. Boom! Instant extended family! Just add water and stir. When they got back from their elopement, we had these bags of rice to throw at them. I think I might have pelted Fred with clumps of rice a bit harder than tradition called for.”

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On November 1, 1952, Jane Wyman married Fred Karger in Santa Barbara at El Montecito Presbyterian Church, although both were Catholic, a church that frowned on divorce. Fred’s best man was Richard Quine, the actor and director. They had the shortest honeymoon on record, one Sunday night in a suite at a Santa Monica hotel.

News of Jane’s Infatuation Goes Out to the A-list:

Above, Ethel Merman, Jane, and Fred Karger share a meal and some gossip. But what are all three of them looking at? The formidable Bette Davis had just appeared before them.

Both of them got up early Monday morning to begin filming *let’s do it again* (1953)..

Back in Hollywood, they quickly learned that both Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper were furious at Jane for not giving either of them an exclusive scoop.

In another part of town, a young starlet, Marilyn Monroe, was, as she later recalled, “Crying my eyes out. I vowed to get even with Wyman if it was the last thing I ever did.” There were rumors that she had contemplated suicide that day by overdosing on sleeping pills.

When Oscar Saul, the producer of *let’s do it again*, arrived at the set that morning, he found a party underway. “I asked my assistant director, ‘What in hell is going on?’” Saul asked. “He told me that the cast and crew were giving a surprise party for Fred and Jane. They had eloped that weekend.”

At lunch in the commissary, screenwriter Nunnally Johnson stopped by to congratulate Jane and Karger. Later that night, he wrote to his friend, Claudette Colbert, who was at her home in Barbados. “Met Jane Wyman’s new husband—and that’s all there is to that!”

After Jane and Karger had been back in Hollywood for just two nights, her friends decided to throw a private party at Chasen’s, since there had been nothing festive for their actual wedding.

Ironically, also dining at Chasen’s that night was Marilyn Monroe with her chief supporter, the columnist Sidney Skolsky. He had done more to promote her career than any other writer in Hollywood, performing many of the kind of PR stunts for her that Louella Parsons had crafted for Reagan.

“When Marilyn heard of the private party for Jane and Freddie, she decided to crash it,” Skolsky said. “I urged her not to. That was the only bitchy thing I ever saw her do.”

She jumped up from the banquette and headed for the entrance to the private party. The usher there was a fan of hers and just assumed that she was among the invited guests.

Parsons was there that night, and witnessed Marilyn slinking into the party. Hedda Hopper was also there, accompanied by her son, William, and his companion, the designer, Stanley Mills Haggart.

Haggart later said, “I had known Marilyn since the days she’d first arrived in Hollywood. I knew she was up to no good. She glided into the room in a form-fitting pink dress and headed straight for Freddie. Jane was on the other side of the room, but she, like the rest of the guests, almost came to a standstill, gazing upon Marilyn and wondering what she was up to.”

“She sidled right up to Freddie and gave him one of her gooey wet ones, no doubt sticking her skilled tongue down his throat. Freddie looked completely flabbergasted, actually shocked. I looked over at Jane. She was bubbling

over in fury."

"Congratulations, Freddie," Marilyn said, loud enough for the room to hear.

"That voice wasn't Marilyn's usual coo," Haggart said. "It was strident, obviously she wanted Jane to hear every word. After giving the groom another gooey one, she fluttered away, blowing kisses to Freddie as she departed."

Again, she called out in a loud voice, "Just because you're married doesn't mean you have to be a stranger. You can come knocking on my door any rainy night. I'm sure we can find something to do that will amuse you."

Then she returned to Chasen's main dining room to rejoin Skolsky.

Three weeks later, Marilyn had another run-in with Jane. Earlier, she had told Shelley Winters, "Even though Joe DiMaggio is in my life, Fred Karger is the only man I've ever loved. To hell with marriage licenses. I'll still go after him from time to time. I know he'll always give in to me. He didn't want to marry me, but he's still turned on by me. As for Wyman, that bitch will get hers."

Her revenge on Jane was enacted through a chance encounter. The event, which became notorious in Hollywood history, also occurred at Chasen's, this time in the ladies' room.

"Doing it Again?" Or was it the first time? Jane with Aldo Ray.

When Marilyn entered the lounge, she spotted Jane in front of a mirror, applying fresh lipstick. Details are missing. They obviously had words, and another woman in the lounge later reported that she heard Jane call Marilyn "a cheap little bleach blonde trollop."

At that point, Marilyn lunged at Jane, and ripped off her wig. Because of a scalp irritation, Jane had worn a wig that night to conceal her condition.

Jane screamed as Marilyn quickly exited from the ladies' room.

Within the week, the novelist, Jacqueline Susann, heard of the incident, which later became the most dramatic scene in her best-sell ing novel, *valley of the dolls*. The encounter was also depicted on the screen in 1967, with the real-life Susan Hayward cast as the diva who gets her wig ripped off.

Incidentally, that movie featured the doomed Sharon Tate, whose fate it was to be brutally murdered by a psychotic gang under the influence of Charles Manson.

Many years later, at a party in New York, a hostess introduced Jane to Susann. Jane glared at her hostess. "I'm a lady. Why should I want to meet this piece of trash?" Then she turned her back on Susann and walked away.

"If that's a lady, I'm the Queen of Sheba," Susann told her hostess.

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Just at the point when Ray Milland had become a distant memory—like that Ellen Drew movie, *night Plane from Chungking*, you saw back in 1943—the handsome actor came back into her life. To Jane's surprise, she was told that her upcoming film with Mil-land would be a remake of *The awful Truth*. Adapted from a Broadway comedy, it had already been filmed three times, as silent movies in 1924 and 1929, and—in its most successful version, in 1937, starring Irene Dunne and Cary Grant.

Teamed with Milland for the first time since *The lost weekend*, Jane got star billing over him. Milland's career

was in steep decline, but Jane was at her peak. The tired old script was given fresh, modern overtones. *let's do it again* was the story of a composer's wife (played by Jane) who tries to make her husband jealous. Her plan backfires and catalyzes her divorce from Milland.

Directed by Alexander Hall, *let's do it again* was produced by Oscar Saul, who had barged into Harry Cohn's office at Columbia saying, "Just think, Harry, we've got two Oscar winners, Wyman and Milland, in a picture together once again."

"Big fucking deal!" Cohn said. "I won't get excited until I see the box office receipts."

After greeting Hall and Saul on the set, Jane braced herself for a reunion with Mil-land in her dressing room, where she had already changed her outfit and adjusted her makeup three times. When he came in to greet her, she was taken aback. He had aged considerably, blaming his increasing loss of hair on the branding irons used to curl his locks when he'd co-starred in *Reap the wild wind* (1942) with John Wayne and Paulette Goddard.

As before, as he had back in 1944, he flirted with her. "Shall we take the advice in the title of our movie and do it again?" he asked.

"I think not," she said, politely, kissing him on the lips. "I prefer to keep the old memory intact."

As for Aldo Ray, the second male lead of *let's do it again*, Jane didn't give in to him, but he relentlessly pursued her anyway, making propositions in his "gargle voice." She remembered him as "very masculine, a bit rough around the edges but kind of sexy."

Ray had been a Navy frogman and had played football in college. He had a sizable endowment and had posed nude in a widely circulated underground photograph.

As he confessed, "I dropped trou for George Cukor, who helped me in my career." Ray also climbed the lavender ladder when he was cast with Spencer Tracy in *Pat and Mike* (1952). That movie also featured a particularly macho performance from Tracy's platonic friend, Katharine Hepburn.

After his performance with Jane, Ray fell into the arms of Rita Hayworth when they co-starred in *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953).

Jane later recalled, "Every woman needs an Aldo Ray in her life, but never for more than six weeks. And then he has to go."

Let's do it again grossed $1.25 million at the box office. It was widely promoted with the advertising slogan, "Go Girl, Go!" That is what Jane did, letting loose in the role, even doing a wicked mambo, which was all the dance rage that year, and performing in such sultry song and dance numbers as "I'm Takin' a Slow Burn Over a Fast Man." Her performance brought out her farcical side, and her acting was compared favorably to that of Irene Dunne's in the film's 1937 predecessor. As for Milland's "serviceable" performance, critics pointed out that "He is no Cary Grant."

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While Jane was still filming *let's do it again*, representatives from Warners arrived to ask her to pose for advance publicity photographs for her upcoming film, *So Big* (1953). Her two male co-stars, Sterling Hayden and Steve Forrest, had already been announced, as had its director, Robert Wise. Of course, Wise's two greatest triumphs lay in his future—*west Side Story* (1961) and *The Sound of Music* (1965).

The "soaper/saga," a novel written by Edna Ferber, was reaching the screen for the third time. As a silent, it had starred Colleen Moore, Nancy Davis' close friend. Jane's own friend, Barbara Stanwyck, had made it into a talkie in a 1932 version.

One night at dinner, after Jane announced to Stanwyck that she'd signed to reprise her role as the noble, valiant woman toiling in the soil, the diva stormed out of the room. She went two weeks before speaking to Jane again. "Sorry, Jane, but I get pissed off when I hear that another actress is reprising a role for which I've given my original interpretation."

When Jane called Paulette Goddard to tell her about her next two leading men, Goddard was excited. "My God, you're getting two of the handsomest, most masculine, hot, horny, and hung actors in Hollywood—all the girls say so. Steve, you know, is the brother of Dana Andrews, and all of us have had him, at least those of us who got him when he was sober. Forrest, during the war, fought in the Battle of the Bulge against the Nazis in their last big drive into the West. I hear that the Battle of the Bulge was named after Steve."

"Since Steve plays my son in the film—a kid I've named So Big—would that be committing incest?" Jane facetiously asked.

"Follow the advice of your latest movie ad," Goddard said. "Go, Girl, Go!"

The Literary Voice of the Great American Plain: Edna Ferber.

Both Goddard and June Allyson constantly advised Jane to play around. “It actually saves a marriage and keeps it from getting boring,” Goddard claimed.

At the time, Jane was indulging in what she called “the revenge fuck.” In 1952, although she had entered into the first of what would be two separate marriages to band-leader Fred Karger, she had heard rumors that he was still slipping around for trysts with his former girlfriend, Marilyn Monroe, who had also wanted to marry him.

When Hayden posed with Jane for the ads for *So Big*, she was immediately attracted to him.

In the early 1940s, during his marriage to blonde goddess Madeleine Carroll, Hayden had been billed as “the Beautiful Viking God.” He was known for seducing his leading ladies—Anne Baxter in *Blaze of noon* (1947); Dorothy Lamour in *Manhandled* (1949), and Marilyn Monroe in *The asphalt Jungle* (1950). Apparently, he managed to elude Bette Davis when they’d appeared together in *The Star* (1952).

Vintage Americana: Abandoning all vestiges of glamor, Jane portrays a pioneer woman sod-busting with her husband (Sterling Hayden) and raising a son in *So Big*.

After Jane posed for publicity photographs with Hayden, she told Wise, “Sterling, without a doubt, belongs among the gods of Valhalla. What a man! What a god! After being with him, how can I go home at night to Fred *[Karger]* and be satisfied?”

Steve Forrest was “another blonde god” [Jane’s words] but completely different in personality. He was a tall Texan, born to a Baptist minister in a family of thirteen, one member of which included his older brother, Dana Andrews. Enlisting in the Army at age eighteen, he’d returned to America and benefitted from the G.I. Bill, eventu ally receiving his Bachelor’s degree, with honors, from UCLA. He’d majored in theater and soon was working at the

La Jolla Playhouse outside San Diego, where Gregory Peck discovered him and arranged for a screen test at MGM, which led to a contract.

Jane flew to New York to see Steve Forrest perform on Broadway in the aptly named *The Body Beautiful*.

Jane and he sometimes went nightclubbing together. One night at a tavern north of Santa Monica, they sang a duet together, the quality of which benefitted from his status as a trained vocalist.

She raved about him so much to June Allyson, that she, too, "sampled the wares" *[allyson's words]* when they starred together on TV in *The duPont Show with June allyson*, a series that was launched in 1959. Although Forrest had married Christine Carilas in 1948 and would still be married to her at the time of his death in 2013, he still played around.

In a moment of intimacy, Jane Wyman shows her screen husband, Sterling Hayden, a new outfit for their son, who is becoming "So Big."

"Women found him irresistible," Jane claimed, "beginning with a seduction of Lana Turner when he'd appeared in her 1952 picture, *The Bad and the Beautiful*."

As an actor trying to make it in Hollywood, Forrest was rumored to have "put out" for Reagan's friend, Robert Taylor, when they co-starred together in *Rogue Cop* in 1954. That same year, he was second billed to Reagan in *Prisoner of war* as one of the incarcerated G.I.s tortured by the North Koreans.

Jane is depicted with her “son” in the movie, *So Big*.

Once again, as in *The Yearling*, she played a frontier woman who bravely ekes out a living in an often cruel climate, triumphing against powerful odds.

When Jane saw the publicity photographs in which she’d posed with Hayden for *So Big*, she was enraged. She personally called Jack Warner to denounce them. “This is a tender story of Selina and her love for her son, her dreams that sustained her through years of rugged farm toil.”

“Sex sells, Janie,” the mogul answered. “Now I’ve got to go. Joan Crawford’s on the phone.”

She later denounced the ads as the “work of a pack of vulgarians.” The ads depicted her being grasped by a lustful, brutish Hayden. The copy read:

HE STOOD THERE SO BIG—LOVE HAD COME. INTENSE. UNASHAMED.

For the rest of his life, Hayden would be kidded about those ads. Gossipy Hollywood already knew about his endowment, the size of which was almost legendary.

Literary fans of Edna Ferber protested the advertising, but it nonetheless succeeded in herd ing TV-crazed audiences of the 1950s into movie houses. Instead of listening to Jane’s protests, Warner approved an equivalent ad with equivalently lurid photos, this one with the headline:

SHE WAS READY TO FORGET SHE’D EVER BEEN A LADY.

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As a married woman, Jane felt it was her duty to move Karger out of that little bungalow he shared with his mother and daughter, Anne and Terry. “I don’t trust grown-up men who still live with their mothers. Don’t tell me you’re another Clifton Webb who even attends parties with his mother?”

“You know I’m not that type,” he answered. “Webb can’t make you scream in ecstasy at night.”

She found a home for them on Beverly Glen Boulevard, with small, separate bedrooms for Maureen, Michael, and Terry. Anne was left alone in her bungalow. Jane’s living room was big enough to accommodate his two pianos and her one piano.

From the first, she found that their career demands often had them living in separate worlds. Sometimes, as he was staggering in from a late night gig, she was leaving to report to make-up on a film set.

When she wed Karger, whereas Jane was at the peak of her earning power, he drew a modest weekly wage and often picked up one or two hundred dollars for a gig at night. Nearly all of his money went either for alimony payments to his first wife or for the upkeep of his daughter, Terry, or to his mother, Anne.

Joan Blondell said, “Freddie in essence is a kept boy. That is not unusual in Hollywood. Many big stars like Jane support their husbands or else pay the bills of their boyfriends.”

Karger enjoyed living in his new wife’s luxurious world with two or three servants, including a nanny to look after their children when they were home and not away at boarding schools. On weekends, he liked to be served

breakfast in bed.

After three weeks of married life with Karger, Jane got a call from June Allyson. “How’s married life, kid?”

“Freddie is a man of intellect, talent, and sophistication,” Jane said. “Except for the conflicts in our working schedules, I have only one complaint about him in the bedroom.”

“Don’t tell me he’s the type of guy you have to ask, ‘Is it in now?’”

“Quite the contrary,” Jane said. “You have to warn him not to put in those final inches or he’ll split me open. No, it’s not that. He has this habit of spending thirty minutes every morning deciding on which pair of underwear he wants. I don’t know why it matters, unless he’s modeling his drawers for someone.”

“Unlike my life with Ronnie, Freddie just can’t get enough,” Jane claimed to Allyson. “Sometimes he wakes me up in the middle of the night ready and raring to go. After all, I did get to know him on my aptly named film, *let’s do it again.”*

“Oh, if that were only true with Richard and me.” She was referring, of course, to her husband, Dick Powell.

Modern Screen wrote, “Fred Karger might have had a better chance if he’d married Sarah Jane Fulks and not the great movie star, Jane Wyman. But Sarah Jane disappeared a long time ago. Wyman is said to boss him around, and Karger, from all reports, is imbued with a manly pride and not used to taking orders from a woman. Also, he wants to become a bigtime musician like Harry James, and he resents it terribly when the press refers to him as Mr. Jane Wyman.”

In less than a month of marriage, Jane began to find flaws in her husband’s character. She admitted to Joan Blondell, “When he’s drunk, he’s dangerous to be around. When he found out I’d had a fling with Bing Crosby, he became violent and started breaking things in the living room. I explain my thing with Bing was before I met him, but that didn’t cool him off. I think he’s jealous because Bing, as a musician, is wildly successful and Freddie is still struggling.”

“As you know, I like to paint on Sunday afternoon. I had seven of my paintings decorating the walls of our living room. He was so mad, he broke a bottle of Scotch and slashed my art work.”

“Even when sober, he has a violent temper,” Jane told Blondell. “We attended this premiere. Some stupid fan called out to me, ‘Jane, who’s the guy with you? Is he important?’ That really pissed off Freddie. I had to restrain him or else he’d have slugged that fan.”

The most shocking revelation she learned about Karger was that he had a bad heart condition similar to that of his father, Maxwell, a condition so serious it had led to the producer’s early death.

“Up to then, I thought my husband was a stallion,” Jane said. “Now I know differently. He seems to go day and night, a fulltime job at Columbia and all those late night gigs with his band. He’s tired, overworked, completely exhausted, which makes him irritable.”

In March of 1953, he endured a mild heart attack. “We had him rushed to the hospital in an ambulance,” Jane told Allyson. “The doctor warned me he had to cut back on his schedule and give up smoking those three packages of cigarettes a day. I’m urging him to give up the band, too. I didn’t tell him that I’m often embarrassed to go to a Hollywood party to find Freddie and his band working as the hired hands for the night.”

A big blowup in their marriage occurred right before Christmas of 1953. Jane was late arriving home, and Karger and the children were collectively decorating the living room and the Christmas tree. When young Michael was left alone in the living room, the boy began lighting candles. He accidentally set fire to the decorations on Jane’s antique dining table, which was covered in heirloom lace.

A fire broke out and blazed out of control The fire department was summoned as it spread. When Jane got home, she was shocked to find her living room soaking in water, the ceilings blackened, and some of her valuable possessions destroyed.

She had such a fight with Karger that he moved out before Christmas Eve, spending two weeks in a suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Reportedly, Marilyn Monroe, in the aftermath of one of her frequent tiffs with DiMaggio, moved in with Karger when the former baseball player, in a rage, flew to visit his relatives in San Francisco.

Finally, Jane admitted to Blondell, “I miss the sex. I’m going over to the hotel to make up with Freddie and ask him to come home. The living room has been redone.”

After a year of marriage, Jane told Blondell, “I think I had a Hasty Heart rushing into marriage to Freddie.”

Her words were a reference, of course, to Reagan’s movie, *The Hasty Heart*.

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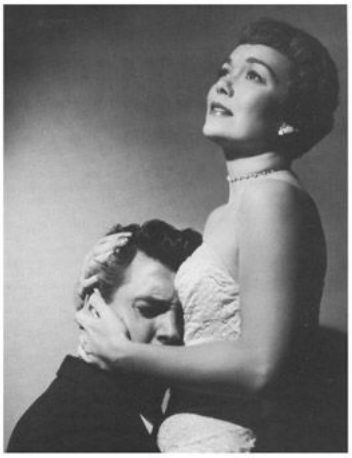
Jane received a call from director Douglas Sirk, informing her that Universal had decided to remake that tearjerker, *Magnificent obsession*, based on Lloyd C. Douglas’s bestselling novel, originally published in 1929.

Its plot had previously been adapted into a film in 1935, starring Robert Taylor and Jane’s friend, Irene Dunne,

in the lead roles. The script had originally been offered to Jane's other Catholic friend, Loretta Young, but she had rejected it. "Irene is my best friend. I don't want to remake the picture in which she was so glorious," Young said.

Jane's career in the mid-1950s was slipping, and Universal executives decided to give her a boost in this seminal soap. Executive Ed Muhl also insisted that "America's new heartthrob," Rock Hudson, be cast as the male lead. "The original *Magnificent obsession* made a big star out of Robert Taylor. I think the remake can do the same for Rock. Maybe lightning will strike twice."

Jane had rehearsed how to be a deaf mute before shooting *Johnny Belinda*. A month before the filming began, on *Magnificent obsession*, she studied how blind people react. "They just don't go around careening into the furniture and tripping over themselves," she said. The character she plays is blind throughout part of the movie.



Based on the directives of Jack Warner, the ads that promoted the tender love story portrayed by Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson were sensationalist and lurid.

Posters screamed: "A Story Of Love That Will Become One Of The Deepest Emotional Thrills Of Your Lifetime!", and "This was the moment unashamed, when this man and this woman felt the first ecstasy of their *Magnificent obsession!"*

Two days before shooting, Rock had taken an inner tube to ride the waves at Santa Monica beach. Soon, he was drifting way out to sea, where he rode the crest of a wave back toward the shoreline. Before he reached it, the crashing surf landed him on the beach with a broken collarbone.

Fearing that he'd jeopardize his big chance, he refused to let doctors put a cast on him, although he was warned

that the bone would not heal properly and that he might feel pain for the rest of his life.

On the first day of shooting, Jane sensed that something was wrong with him when they came into body contact during rehearsals for a scene together. She went with him to his dressing room, where he confessed that his collar bone was broken. She promised not to tell anyone and to be careful in her love scenes with him.

Rock, born in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1925, was considerably younger than Jane. He stood 6'5" and towered over her. He was not only tall, but exceedingly handsome, wavy haired, and solidly built, a former Navy man who had become a Hollywood beefcake pinup, thrilling millions of teenage girls and gay men of all ages.

Jane was very patient with Hudson, even when some of their scenes had to be reshot thirty or even forty times.

On the set, producer Ross Hunter huddled with Sirk and Jane, telling both of them, "I want this to be a three-hanky movie. I like to give the public what it wants—a chance to dream, to live vicariously, to see beautiful women, jewels, gorgeous clothes, and to experience melodrama."

Hunter told Jane, "I'm the world's champion crier. That's why I'm so good at producing junk like our movie. Call me the 'Sultan of Soap Operas.' Even though I find it repulsive, I hawk heterosexual romance. In fact, I worship at its altar because it makes big bucks for me."

Hunter had served in Army Intelligence during World War II. Later, this gay man became a theatrical producer and director, known for light films starring Doris Day, Lana Turner, Debbie Reynolds (the Tammy movies) and later, Julie Andrews.

A Dane, Sirk had been one of Germany's leading stage directors before the war, later working for UFA studios. He was credited with making a star of Zarah Leander in Nazi cinema. Because his second wife, Hilda Jary, was Jewish, he said, "goodbye to Adolf" (his words), leaving Germany in 1937. By 1942, he was making anti-Nazi films in Hollywood.

Hudson later told Sara Davidson, who was working with him on his autobiography, "Doug would lock his office door, have the secretary hold his calls, and come after me on his knees. It was enough to keep him hooked and eager to help my career."

In *Magnificent obsession*, Rock was cast as a spoiled playboy, Bob Merrick. He has an accident in his speedboat, and his rescuers send for the only resuscitator in the area. Regrettably, Jane, cast as Helen Phillips, discovers her husband as he suffers a heart attack and dies. He, too, needed that resuscitator, the assumption being that if its life-saving powers hadn't been squandered on the character played by Rock, Jane's husband would have lived.

Jane's Helen refuses to accept Bob's generous offers and apologies. When he tries to pursue her by jumping inside her car, she escapes onto the street, where she is hit by an oncoming car and, as a result, becomes blind.

From then on, heartstrings are pulled. Along the way, Merrick discovers his spirituality, learning about the "magnificent obsession of helping others without making them aware of it. As only a Ross Hunter movie would dare, he even becomes a brain surgeon, not only saving Helen's life, but restoring her sight. After a long struggle and endless resistance, she falls in love with him, leading to an improbable but happy ending.

On the set, Jane was reunited with her friend, Agnes Moorehead, who had starred with her in *The Blue veil*. In *Magnificent obsession*, she played the role of Jane's trusted friend, Nancy Ashford.

It was during the filming that Agnes Moorehead's friend, the outrageously campy Paul Lynde, came on the set.

When Moorehead was called away, he told Jane, "The whole world knows Agnes is a lesbian—I mean classy as hell, but one of the all-time Hollywood dykes."

"I can play them all," Moorehead told Jane. "Bring 'em on. Domineering mothers, comical secretaries, neurotic spinsters, puritanical matrons."

Barbara Rush, a beautiful young actress, was cast as Joyce Phillips, Jane's stepdaughter in the film. Married to actor Jeffrey Hunter, she would appear opposite such stars as Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Richard Burton, James Mason, Frank Sinatra, and Kirk Douglas during her movie career. She affectionately called Ross Hunter "Uncle Mame."

One of the supporting players, Otto Kruger, had been a matinee idol in the 1930s, later cast as suave villains or shady fellows. He'd appeared in films starring everyone from Barbara Stanwyck to Grace Kelly.

Mae Clarke, born Violet Mary Kootz in Philadelphia, had a small supporting role. Her career had peaked in 1931 when she played Frankenstein's bride and was chased by Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein*. That same year, James Cagney in *The Public enemy* smashed a grapefruit in her face at the breakfast table.

Hudson's romantic life was growing more and more complicated. One night, Ross Hunter invited him to Chasen's for dinner. "As Hudson entered the room, all the eyes, even the jaded ones attuned to male beauty, cast their gaze upon him," Hunter said.

He later told a jealous Sirk, "Rock was especially stunning that night. After two bottles of champagne, I told him that I wanted to spend the weekend with him in Palm Springs. It was even bigger than I had imagined."

"By the end of that weekend, I told him, 'I love you, Rock!'"

"Even with a broken collar bone, I was really put on the casting couch—first with Sirk, and, to top it off, now Hunter." Rock said. "I was getting a real workout."

Rock confided his being a victim on the casting couch to his friend and fellow gay actor, Roddy McDowall.

"Jane was always gracious and put me at ease in front of the camera," Hudson said. "I was nervous and didn't want to fuck up this big picture. It was my first real break. I think I brought out the mother instinct in her. Things got out of hand one night, though. What shall I call it? Mother love, perhaps? You get my drift."

"It's not that I had not had intimate contact with a woman before. In my day, I've delivered a few mercy fucks, notably with Joan Crawford at her house. Or a weekend with Tallulah Bankhead in Las Vegas. Those mercy fucks extended to fading matinee idols like Errol Flynn and Tyrone Power. I didn't mean for it to happen with Jane. I respected her too much. I think she turned to me when she heard Fred Karger was back, banging Marilyn Monroe."

When the film was released, it made ten times as much money as the original Taylor/Dunne version—in other words, it was a major hit.

Hudson got the worst reviews. Critic Doug McClelland called him, "comic strip handsome, thrashing about with no special distinction, his scenes lined up with all the depth and subtlety of great colored blocks."

The new York Times appraised Jane: "In appealing contrast to Miss Dunne's pristine languor, Miss Wyman is, as usual, refreshingly believable throughout."

Magnificent obsession was a big hit, earning $5 million for the studio. Thousands of letters poured into Universal, citing Hudson's stunning male beauty—"and those soulful eyes."

A star was born.

Magnificent obsession brought Jane another Oscar nomination. But that was the year (1955) that Grace Kelly won the Best Actress Award for *The Country Girl*.

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Escorted by Fred Karger, Jane had flown to New York to promote *Magnificent obsession*. A suite was reserved for them at the Waldorf Astoria. Rock Hudson flew in the following day and paid an early afternoon visit to their suite. It was made clear that Rock and Karger would work out together at a health club on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and that Jane would spend part of the afternoon having her hair styled in advance of their gala event that evening. All of them agreed to return to Jane and Karger's suite later that afternoon, allowing time to dress in formal wear for that evening's gala event.

After some additional chitchat, Jane departed for her appointment with the hair-dresser. Twenty minutes after leaving the Waldorf, she realized she'd left a diamond bracelet—one of her most expensive pieces of jewelry—on a tabletop back at the Waldorf. She hurried back to the suite, fearing that a member of the housekeeping staff might steal it.

She entered the suite believing that she it was empty. Suddenly, she heard noises from the bedroom. When she opened the door, she found Karger and Rock engaged together in lovemaking. Karger was on the bottom, and he was the first to see her. "Oh, my God, Rock. It's Jane."

She grabbed her diamond bracelet and walked quickly toward the exit, leaving the men alone together. She didn't know what happened between them after that.

When she returned to the suite later that afternoon, she found Karger alone. He was already dressed in his tuxedo for the premiere. Rock, apparently, had left.

She said nothing. It was Karger who spoke first: "You've got to understand, honey. Both Hunter and Sirk told me that Rock is going to become the biggest star in Hollywood in just a year or so. I had to give in to him. He came on strong. With him headed for super stardom, he could get me assigned as musical director on all his films. I was doing it for career advancement…*for us*, darling."

Presumably, she assumed her most convincing mask of sophistication and tolerance. "It's okay, darling," she said. "Rock is very seductive. I, of all people, know that."

"You mean…?" He looked flabbergasted.

"I mean just that, my husband," she answered. "I had him before you. We'll have to ask him which of us he prefers."

"I can't believe this is happening," he said.

"I'm flying back to California alone," she said. "I hope you'll understand. Now let me get dressed so we can put on our best smiles as *Mr. and Mrs. Jane wyman* on the red carpet."

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The months ahead were rough on the marriage. Jane called it "marriage on the rocks." Karger was gone nearly every night of the week. On some of those occasions, he was appearing with his band. But she suspected many of those nights were spent at Rock's home.

Karger and Jane began a slow drift apart. Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons were soon made aware of their marital troubles.

That summer, Jane revealed to Parsons, "There will be no reconciliation. I have decided that things aren't working out between us."

"There's no hope?" Parsons asked.

"None."

"When Parsons contacted Karger, he told the gossipy columnist, "Let Jane speak for the both of us. It's her decision."

Hopper one morning led her syndicated column with the headline WYMAN/KARGER MARRIAGE ON THE ROCKS. She had learned that Karger had gone back to living with his mother, Anne, and his daughter, Terry.

Five weeks later, Parsons spoke to Jane and had a long talk with her. "I told Jane that both of them were equally to blame. I also said that I knew they had problems, but they were not important ones. I convinced her to take him back."

In a week, Karger was sleeping in Jane's bed again, and both Hopper and Parsons were writing about their reconciliation.

It is not known who, but some gossipy "friend" of Jane's reported an incident he'd learned. According to the revelation, Karger had spent a long weekend in Palm Springs, occupying a hotel suite with both Tyrone Power and Marilyn Monroe.

Jane might have overlooked his dalliance with Rock, but bringing Marilyn back into his life was too much. She could tolerate a liaison between him and Power, but not with Marilyn, or so she told Joan Blondell.

On November 10, 1954, she filed for divorce, charging mental cruelty. Her papers came through on December 7.

The day before that, she was received into the Roman Catholic faith, which, of course, frowns on divorce.

Blondell later said, "Many stars in Hollywood, though loyal Catholics in their spiritual hearts, don't always adhere to the church's rigid teachings. The Pope is so un-bending, only the most devout can follow his dictates. The church's sense of morality is too rigid for a mere human being with needs and desires. Life is about having fun. It's so damn short."

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With movie roles drying up, Jane, in 1955, became the host of *Jane wyman Presents the Fireside Theater*, her gig lasting for three years.

"I was following Ronnie by appearing on the little black-and-white box," she told friends.

Fireside Theater was an anthology drama series that ran on NBC from 1949 to 1958, becoming the first successful series on American television. Shooting schedules were short and budgets skimpy, but the public loved it, even though most critics panned the telecasts. For most of its run, *Fireside Theater* was among the top ten most popular shows on television.

Both Frank Wisbar and Gene Raymond predated Jane as host, but she became the most successful because of her famous name, winning the most viewers.

It wasn't that she was not getting any film roles. Offers were for movies she didn't want to make, including *Friendly Persuasion* (1956) with Gary Cooper, a role that went to Dorothy McGuire. She praised the great latitude she had working in television during her tenure. She also agreed to star in fourteen of the series' episodes, eventually appearing with Joseph Cotten, Paul Henried, and Linda Darnell. One of them was *Holiday in autumn* (1955), wherein she co-starred with Fay Wray of *King Kong* fame. She also worked with actors she knew from earlier periods of her career, including Jack Carson and Dane Clark, even her former lover, Peter Lawford.

When she left the series, it would not be Jane's last venture into TV drama. "Bigger and better things—and a lot more money—were my distant horizon," she recalled much later.

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Returning to the big screen, Jane starred in "a woman's picture," *lucy Gallant,* for producers William H. Pine and William C. Thomas. It was set for release in 1955.

For the first time, she'd be working with the strikingly handsome, muscular, 6'3", square-jawed actor, Charlton Heston. On being introduced to her, Heston startled her with his opening line.

"Did you know that Ronald Reagan and I have something in common?" he asked her.

"And what might that be?" she asked.

"We both posed nude for sculpture classes," he said.

[NOTE: whereas Reagan retained his "bloomers" during those modeling sessions, Heston, by all accounts, did not.]

The film's director, Georgia-born Robert Parrish, was a former child star. He was also a screenwriter and editor, having won an Oscar for the film, *Body and Soul* in 1947. As an actor, he'd appeared with her former lover, Lew Ayres, in the 1930 *all Quiet on the western Front.*

Jane was supported by two talented actresses, Claire Trevor, cast as Lady Mac (short for MacBeth), and Thelma Ritter as Molly. "Any time Trevor or Ritter appeared on camera, you can be assured they'll steal the scene," Jane said to Parrish.

On the first read through of John Lee Mahin's film script, based on the Margaret Cousins novel, Jane found out just how disappointed Heston was to be co-starring with her. "This movie is nothing but trashy soap opera," he said.

Off screen, Charlton Heston was cynical about his role in *lucy Gallant*, telling Jane:

"It's basically your show, with me wandering in and out for stud duty," Heston said. "I'm contracted to make this buzzard for one reason. Dollar bills!"

Jane didn't know what Heston was getting, but she was drawing $163,000 for ten weeks' work.

"When I heard *you* were my leading lady, I thought it was one of those May-December romances," he told her. I mean, you're thirty-seven, but I'm only thirty, although I look twenty-five."

After that put-down, she struck back. "Perhaps you're right. I see you're still carrying around your baby fat in that pudgy ass of yours. Better take it off, Chuck."

Although insulted, he took her advice and slimmed down for all of his next pictures, many of which had him half nude.

Haute mode: Jane, prepping for *lucy Gallant's* fashion promenade with designer Edith Head.

"Edith was a lesbian," Jane claimed. "She always managed to cop a feel when fitting me for one of my gowns."

During the shoot, she found him, "cold and distant," and he obviously did not like working with her in this story of marriage vs. career, the saga of a dress designer who sets up shop in a hick Texas oiltown where women, for the most part, are attired in calico and gingham.

Into her life comes Casey Cole (Heston), a lanky local rancher, who falls in love with her. Their love scenes were unconvincing. At one point, Heston joins the Army, but upon his return, he becomes an oil tycoon. Lucy's shop burns to the ground, and she faces a perennial question: Stay on and build a bigger store, or retreat into a marriage? Feminists hated her final choice.

Ritter's advice was "Having a man is better than ending up a rich old maid with a monogrammed water bottle."

The highlight of the movie was a spectacular fashion show. The film's costume designer, Edith Head, actually makes a rare appearance on camera. So did Alan Shiver, the actual then-governor of Texas, who introduces the fashion show.

Paramount publicity ran a promotional ad that both Heston and Jane found vulgar:

HE'S COLD—SHE'S HOT—SHE WARMS HIM UP.

Another copywriter got carried away, defining the movie as:

A STORY WITH THE FORCE AND POWER OF AN EXPLOSIVE GUSHER.

At the end of the shoot, Heston said, perhaps falsely, that "Jane's a lot of fun, down-to-earth, and unaffected."

When asked what she thought of working with Heston, Jane uttered: "No comment!" and walked away.

Bosley Crowther of *The new York Times* wrote: "Some of it catches sudden flashes and briefly revealing glints of the crudities and vulgarities of the Texas *nouveaux riche*. The ostentation of such things as lavish spending and going to backyard barbecues in evening gowns is subtly satirized."

The film, *lucy Gallant*, limped into theaters across the country, soon disappearing with a broken leg and quickly forgotten.

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The teaming of Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson was so successful in *Magnificent obsession* that Universal decided to unite them again as a romantic couple in *all That Heaven allows* (1955).

The Rock Hudson she'd worked with on *Magnificent obsession* (1954) was not the same actor she had encountered on the set of *all That Heaven allows* (1955).

He had, during the interval between these films, become a big star. In the fan magazines, he and Marilyn Monroe were written about more than any other celebrities. Fan clubs had sprouted up in all the States.

Once again, the producer was Ross Hunter, who commissioned Peg Fenwick to write the screenplay based on a story by Edna L. Lee and Harry Lee.

It was the story of a May-September romance between a wealthy widow, as played by Jane, who lives in a small, suburban New England town with two college age children. One day, an exceedingly handsome and virile young gardener arrives to prune her trees. He is Don Kirby (Hudson), an intelligent, down-to-earth passionate younger man who leads an idealistic, Thoreau-inspired, *walden Pond*-style life outside the gossipy, mean-spirited town. Gradually, the couple fall in love, despite the difference in their age and class.

Her children are horrified. Son Ned (William Reynolds) accuses his mother of besmirching her late husband's memory. Daughter Kay (Gloria Talbot) is equally unenthusiastic, fearing that her mother will disgrace the family. She prefers her to wed Harvey (Conrad Nagel), a longtime family friend. In real life, Nagel, born in 1897, had been a romantic leading man on the silent screen. Jane doesn't seem attracted in any way to this older man, who could conceivably have played her father. At the time of shooting, Jane was forty-one, Rock, 29, although he looked even younger.

Jane with Douglas Sirk, who had slept with her acting partner.

Jane knew that Sirk was a sometimes lover of Rock's and she felt she could discuss her embarrassment with him. She revealed that she'd walked into her suite at New York's Waldorf and had found Rock seducing Fred Karger.

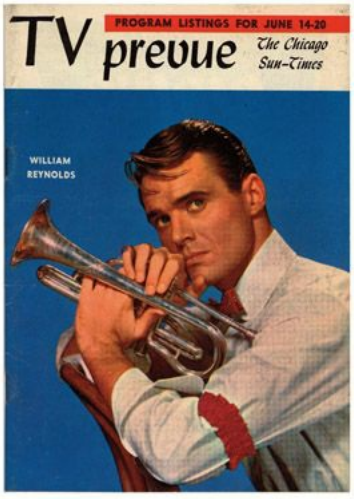
Jane, backstage, with Rock Hudson, who had slept with her husband.

"That is a problem," he said. "There will be love scenes between Rock and you."

"Don't worry, I'll pull them off regardless of how I feel about Rock's betrayal," she said. "I won't be the first actress in Hollywood who has faced this dilemma."

She decided she needed another hit, and she threw herself into this story of small town bigotry, prejudice, and narrow-mindedness.

On the set, at one of their first reunions since their embarrassment at the Waldorf, Hudson walked right over to her and kissed her on the cheek. "Great to be working with you again. Our last picture made me a biggie. People treat me different. Sometimes they just stare at me in awe. If I let out a fart after eating a bowl of chili, I get applause, like I've done something wonderful. It seems that everybody I meet thinks I can walk on water."



Cover boy William Reynolds, hailed as a "classic male beauty," played Jane's son in *all That Heaven allows*. Director Sirk told Jane, "I'd like to direct a love scene between 'Billy Boy' and Rock, but the world isn't ready for that...Yet!"

"I don't!" she said sharply.

"Oh, Janie, let's make this picture and forget about Freddie," Rock said. "He's trying to find himself. You must understand that in Hollywood, these things happen more than you would know."

For the sake of the picture, she told him she'd cooperate with him.

He said he'd been tapped by George Stevens to appear in his upcoming film *Giant* (1956), based on the Edna Ferber novel. His co-stars would be James Dean and Elizabeth Taylor. He claimed that both Alan Ladd and William Holden had wanted the lead role in *Giant*, but both had been rejected.

"Maybe you'll bed both of them, too," she said, sarcastically.

"Actually, that's what I plan to do," he said.

During the course of the day, he told her that his gay agent, Henry Willson, was forcing him into a lavender marriage with his secretary, Phyllis Gates, who was a lesbian. "I hate the idea of getting married, but too many of the fan magazines are running stories headlined: WHY ISN'T ROCK MARRIED?"

Within the first week, Jane was either introduced or else renewed her acquaintance with the rest of the cast, particularly Agnes Moorehead, who had previously starred with Rock and herself in *Magnificent obsession*.

When Jane filmed a scene with Reynolds playing her character's son, in reference to the character played by Hudson, he tells her, "All you see is a good-looking set of muscles."

Ironically, that is what Rock saw and appreciated when he was introduced to Reynolds.

[Many film critics have hailed Reynolds—who was native to los angeles and of norwegian ancestry—as the most stunning of the so-called "pretty boys" of the 1950s, others of whom included Robert wagner, Tony Curtis, and Tab Hunter.]

Sirk told Jane that he felt "Rock will go for this hunk big time. Billy boy is just his type. The question is, will Reynolds swing in Rock's direction?"

It is not known if Rock ever made a pass at Reynolds, as he so often did with handsome young men who worked with him on his films, once falling in love with a cameraman.

Reynolds had married Molly Sinclair in 1950 and remained wed to her until the time of her death in 1992.

The only published source attesting that Rock and Reynolds might have been lovers was a 2004 biography, *Rock Hudson*, by the prolific writer, David Bret. But there is no other confirmation, and the claim could have been just speculation.

During the filming of *all That Heaven allows*, as Jane moved deeper and deeper into her on-screen romance, the script rekindled sad memories of how the gossips of Hollywood had destroyed her own engagement to Travis Kleefeld, a young man she'd loved at the time. As an actress, she was drawing on that experience as a means of bringing the character of the affluent older widow in love with a younger man to the screen.

When reporters came to the set, Jane put up a brave front: She said, "After working with Rock Hudson the second time around, I'd say that he's got to be the biggest thing to hit the industry."

After Sirk read that that comment in the papers, he said to her, "Rock's got the biggest thing all right."

"Oh, you size queens," Jane responded, dismissing him.

During the filming, Jane bonded with Virginia Grey, who was her same age. Born in Los Angeles, Grey told Jane that Gloria Swanson had been her first babysitter. At the age of ten, Grey had made her film debut in the silent, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927).

Jane, as well as most of Hollywood, knew of Grey's long-enduring affair with Clark Gable. She confided to Jane that she was heartbroken when he married Lady Sylvia Ashley in 1949. "He'd proposed to me months earlier," she said. "I'll never marry any other man if I can't have Clark. After all, once you've gone to bed with Clark Gable, no other man will do."

Virginia Grey: "It's Clark Gable or no one."

Unknown to Grey, Jane herself had long ago had an affair with Gable. Her appraisal of him as a lover was remarkably different from Grey's high evaluation.

The same year (1955) that Grey had worked with Jane, she'd also played a role in the film version of Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*, working with the volatile and very temperamental Anna Magnani and the (calmer and more restrained) Burt Lancaster.

As Jane was leaving the studio late one afternoon, she ran into Karger, who was just arriving. At first, she thought he had come to see her, perhaps hoping for a reconciliation, although they had only recently divorced. He was courteous but distant, as she would later recall to Sirk, with whom she still confided.

It turned out that Karger was at Universal to retrieve Rock in advance of the plans they'd formulated for that evening. He explained it to Jane by claiming that Rock had hired his band as part of one of his upcoming outdoor parties.

That was the last time she saw Karger on the lot. However, Sirk and others told her that after that, Karger made it a point to wait for him across the street from the entrance to Universal. He was parked there many afternoons around the time when shooting had ended for Rock that day.

As Jane told Sirk, "Fred is obviously not playing for Rock every night of the week. Or perhaps he is, so to speak."

Don't worry," Sirk said. "Their romance won't last long. Rock is very promiscuous. I get him once or twice a week. And he usually keeps three or four studs on call at all times. The thing with Fred will blow over soon enough."

"I don't know why I'm so concerned about it," she said. "After all, I divorced him."

Critics dismissed *all That Heaven allows* as another "soaper from Sirk." However, it scored so big at the box office that in the wake of its success, Universal wanted to cast Jane and Rock in a series of romantic comedies together.

Rock would go on to his biggest success in light, romantic comedies, but the female role would not go to Jane, but to Doris Day, as it did in *Pillow Talk* (1959), a mega-hit.

Years later, Jane lunched with Sirk. She asked, "What's a damsel like me to do? I lost my husband to Rock, but his thing with Fred is over by now. Alas, those romantic comedies featured Doris Day instead of me."

"Well, why don't you chase after Fred and remarry him?"

"That's about the dumbest idea I ever heard," she said. "You can take that idea and shove it where the sun don't shine. I'll never remarry that jerk. NEVER!"

"Jane, my darling, You're protesting too much."

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When *all That Heaven allows* was initially released, and dismissed as "a woman's weepie," Sirk said, "There is a short distance between high art and trash, and trash that contains an element of craziness is by this very quality nearer to art."

In the 21st Century, many film historians are inclined to agree with Sirk's assessment. *all That Heaven allows* has won praise from such filmmakers as Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Quentin Tarantino.

In 1995, the United States' National Film Registry added it to their list of films that it defined as "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

Film historians today cite the movie as a critique of the conformity-obsessed America of the Eisenhower era.

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Jane had a reunion with Van Johnson on the set of their latest picture, *Miracle in the Rain* (1956). Whereas she had returned to Warners (at least for the filming of this movie), he had been let go from MGM, where, in the 1940s, he'd been billed nationwide as America's Sweetheart, along with his female counterpart, June Allyson. In 1945, he had tied with Bing Crosby as America's top box office star.

Johnson poured out his frustrations to her.

Jane's "Miracle" with Van Johnson.

Before the end of his contract with MGM, he had co-starred with Elizabeth Taylor in *The last Time i Saw Paris* (1954). He'd also teamed with Gene Kelly as the sardonic second lead in *Brigadoon*, both pictures released in 1954.

He was still married to Evie Wynn, the former wife of Keenan Wynn, who had divorced her so that Johnson could marry her. As prompted by Louis B. Mayer, he had hoped that by doing so, he would squelch rumors about his homosexuality.

It wasn't just his declining career that troubled Johnson that particular day, but his loss of a role he coveted: He had wanted to play the Texas rancher, Bick Benedick, in the movie version of Edna Ferber's *Giant*, opposite Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean. But the coveted role had gone instead to Rock Hudson.

Jane tried to comfort him. "Rock stole that choice part from you, and he ran off with my husband, the sleep-around Fred Karger."

Perhaps with a bittersweet sense of irony, she told Johnson, "This is my last picture at Warner Brothers. I got my first screen credit here back in the 1930s—and now it's over. I don't expect Jack Warner to come out and say goodbye. He had another actor moving into Ronnie's dressing room before he had even finished packing. Things get gone and quickly forgotten around this joint."

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The sappy plot of *Miracle in the Rain* by Ben Hecht had appeared in *The Saturday evening Post* back in 1943. Warners had invested $75,000 for the story back then, which at the time was considered a very high price. Hecht was a successful and highly visible screenwriter, known for such hits as *His Girl Friday* (1940), so he could command top dollar for his material. Yet for some reason, his *Miracle* had never been brought before a camera.

Before Jane's picture reached the big screen, Hecht's story had already been transformed into four separate productions for live television, in 1947, 1949, 1950, and 1953, respectively.

After reading the script, Warner said, "It's such a goddamn sad ending, it's bound to bring in an Oscar or two. After all, the soldier is killed and our meek little typist also dies in St. Patrick's Cathedral, clutching the G.I.'s talisman in her palm. You can't beat crap like that!"

In Manhattan's St. Patrick's Cathedral, Jane lights a candle in memory of her dearly departed after being comforted by a (very handsome) priest.

To her chagrin, she was later advised, "Movies about Catholic miracles have gone out of style."

Miracle's plot involved a young woman who falls in love with a soldier during World War II, Weeks later, he is killed overseas. The miracle arises when she gets up from her sickbed, even though she's seriously ill, and makes her way to St. Patrick's Cathedral. Miraculously, her dead lover appears again before her, giving her a lucky coin he had taken overseas with him, which later provides "proof" that he (*i.e*., his spirit) had really been there, and that she was not hallucinating.

Her friends felt that Jane's recent conversion to Roman Catholicism had influenced her acceptance of the role.

In Hecht's original story, Jane's character dies (presumably in a state of ecstasy) in St. Patrick's Cathedral. But Warner didn't want that to be made clear. In the wide screen version, the audience is left guessing: Did Jane's character die, or did she recover and go on with her life?

No longer flying high as Hollywood's Golden Boy, Johnson was nonetheless paid $150,000 for starring in the picture, Jane taking home $120,000.

Evocative of Reagan's departure from Warner Brothers, Jane's farewell was equally dismal. She called Jack Warner's office to tell him goodbye. She later said, "I didn't expect him to walk me to the gate. but he refused to take my call. So much for that. Hollywood has always been cruel on its aging dames. Perhaps Paramound will remake Gloria Swanson's *Sunset Blvd*. and cast me in the role of that aging screen diva, Norma Desmond."

At the gate, one man came out to greet her. An aging janitor, Hebnry Dolland, in his seventies, kissed her farewell. He'd remembered her when she was a Warners' chorus girl in the 1930s, and he told her he'd be retiring soon, too. "Not much to retire on, though."

"That's what we get for working for that tightwad, Jack Warner for all these years," she said, waving Dolland goodbye. It was her *adieu* to the studio that had employed her, sometimes traumatically, for such a long time.

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Weeks after leaving Warners, Jane accused Jack Warner of sinking all his promotional budget into *Giant*, leaving *Miracle in the Rain* to open with relatively little advertising and almost no promotion. "It could have been a hit," she told Johnson. "It could have brought us Oscars. Instead, we were screened in front of empty houses."

The Academy ignored it at Oscar time. "At least I didn't catch pneumonia after having to act all those scenes in a god damn rain pour," Jane said.

The new York Herald Tribune joined dozens of other newspaper critics in lam-basting the movie. "Miss Wyman's typist is a glum portrait unrelieved by any sense of depth of character or humor. She is sad even when she realizes she is in love. There is hardly a change of expression when she learns of the death of her soldier boyfriend, played by Van Johnson. *Miracle in the Rain* is straight-faced and uncompromisingly dull."

Hecht came under fire for his "hankie grabber, which is not typical of this tough-talking former newshound." His *Miracle* was called "a tough lump of goo to swallow."

The new York Times was gentler in its condemnation, claiming, "*Miracle in the Rain* hits high, lovely notes on occasion, but too often lapses into soap opera."

The St. louis Post-dispatch labeled *Miracle* "a tearjerker that is as unabashed as any we've encountered."

“My future belongs on that little black box,” Jane said. “Maybe there’ll be a film role every now and then, no doubt playing a mother.”

***

Offers for big screen roles were few and far between. Those that came in were for what Jane called “monster pictures.” When she’d gone to a screening of *what ever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962), she was horrified, later claiming that “Bette Davis and Joan Crawford have disgraced themselves. They must have needed the money awfully bad.”

Journalist Vernon Scott wrote, “Fortunately, Jane is economically independent and can afford to sit on the sidelines rather than accept distasteful pictures.”

To Van Johnson, Jane said, “I refuse to play a dope addict, an aging prostitute, or, as I’ve told producers many times before, a lesbian. I turned down the role of a lesbian in *walk on the wild Side* (1962). It’s going to my friend, Barbara Stanwyck.”

“Takes one to play one,” Johnson said.

“Now Van, be kind,” she cautioned.

“Her former husband, His Lordship, Bob Taylor, once propositioned me at MGM,” Johnson claimed.

“That doesn’t surprise me at all,” she said. “I always suspected something was going on between Ronnie and Bob. All those weekends alone together in the wilderness.”

To cheer her up, Johnson invited Jane to a party he was hosting that Saturday night, promising her that there would be a surprise guest.

On the day of the event, she began dressing and working on her makeup at three that afternoon, arriving alone at the party at eight o’clock.

There were some thirty guests there, mostly male. After making the rounds and hearing endless compliments, Fred Karger emerged from Johnson’s bedroom dressed in his usual dark suit.

She was mildly shocked at seeing him again, because they had not contacted each other in months. He explained that he was staying temporarily with Johnson. “We’re roommates,” he said.

“Roommates?” She was skeptical. “Is that what they’re calling them this year?”

For part of the night, they talked about their less-than-bright careers and the problems generated by their children, Terry, Maureen, and Michael.

During the weeks ahead, she began to encounter Karger at other parties and, on occasion, when his band was hired for a gig. One night, she agreed to meet with him for dinner, and they began to see each other more regularly after that.

She later told Joan Blondell, “Our Catholic faith is bringing us together again. We spend a lot of time discussing Catholicism. I’ve been trying to lure Freddie back into the church again. We’re both at loose ends, not knowing where to go. The other night, when he brought me home, we kissed on my doorstep. I invited him in for a nightcap. He never left. It was wonderful having him make love to me again. I’m even considering re-marrying him.”

“Never a good idea,” Blondell warned. “If it didn’t work out the first time, chances are it won’t the second time on the merry-go-round either. I bet you’d face the same problems. And then there is the gay thing, hiding in the closet.”

“I can’t truly blame Freddie for turning elsewhere for that which I can’t give him,” Jane said.

***

The day Jane decided to remarry Karger, she phoned June Allyson to tell her the news. Unlike Blondell, Allyson seemed delighted. “I always thought Freddie was a living doll,” she said.

“And after all,” Jane continued. “He’s not the only man in Hollywood who has slept with both Rock Hudson and Marilyn Monroe—take the late, lamented James Dean, for example.”

Jane remarried Karger on March 11, 1961. Attending the ceremony were such dear friends as Allyson, Blondell, Paulette Goddard, Loretta Young, Irene Dunne, and Claudette Colbert. As Colbert later said to Jane, “What are we old bags to do now that movie roles are almost disappearing? I find that, unlike today, I attend more funerals than weddings.”

As Colbert had noted, it was a time for burying old friends and acquaintances. Reagan’s mother, Nelle, died in 1962, and Jane, accompanied by Karger, attended the funeral.

She offered her sympathies to Reagan, who looked grief stricken. “Welcome to the 1960s, Ronnie,” she said. “The Hollywood we used to know is *Gone with the wind*. I sure miss it. I know you’ll also miss Nelle something

awful."

When she looked into his eyes, she saw the tears welling up. He said nothing.

"Nelle was such a good woman," Jane said, in parting. "They don't make them like her any more. She belonged to an America that is fast fading, and we belong to a Hollywood that is now making all these sick movies."

Maureen Reagan summed up her family situation at that time. "Mother was re-married to Fred Karger, and the two of them shared a small apartment in Beverly Hills. Dad and Nancy were living at the house in Pacific Palisades. Michael had moved in with them to finish up high school. Ron *[i.e, Reagan, Jr.]* was in kindergarten, and Patti was eleven years old and full of resentment for a twenty-two year old woman nicknamed 'Mermie" *[i.e., Maureen herself]* who sat next to her father on the sofa."

After remaining safely at home every night during the first three months of his re-marriage, Karger got an occasional gig, but not like he'd done in his heyday. Disco had come to Hollywood, and he was no longer in such demand. But sometimes, he didn't return home until three or four o'clock in the morning. She no longer asked where he'd been.

***

Throughout the course of most of her marriage to Karger, Jane managed to star in an occasional film or teleplay. But as her marriage entered its final months, she received no offers for either the big screen or for "the little black box," as she continued to call it.

She and Karger began to argue and fight a lot. He continued to have violent outbursts of temper.

They were also having problems with their children. Michael had dropped out of Arizona State University after only one semester. Like Reagan, she had cut him off financially.

Maureen was having marital problems. She'd wed John Filippone, a police officer, in 1961 but divorced him the following year. In 1964, she married David G. Sills, an attorney and Marine Corps officer. He moved her to San Clemente while he was stationed at Camp Pendleton, demanding that she abandon her acting ambitions. She later admitted, "I was a perfectly wretched housewife."

Out of boredom, she joined her father as a Republican volunteer during the 1964 presidential race of Barry Goldwater against Lyndon B. Johnson.

By 1967, she'd divorced Sills.

Long before that, however, Jane also faced the divorce judge.

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Other than the usual charges aired before a divorce court, Jane never spoke about the reasons for the collapse of her second marriage to Karger. But two reasons have emerged over the years, mainly gleaned from friends like Blondell.

Karger had escorted Jane to the funeral of her friend, Dick Powell, who had died on January 3, 1963. Jane offered Allyson what sympathy she could, even though she knew that her friend had never been faithful to her actor/director husband. *[Privately, Jane and many of her friends referred to allyson as "a nympho.]*

Jane told Karger about Allyson's numerous affairs, including one with John F. Kennedy, who was later assassinated in November of the year of Powell's death.

"She sometimes seduces her leading men, including Peter Lawford," Jane claimed. "For years, Alan Ladd was the passion of her life, and later, Jimmy Stewart. She also has this thing for Dean Martin."

At first, Jane wasn't suspicious when June began to call Karger to "help me with some arrangements." She paid him $200 per consultation, and he told her, "It's about what I get for a gig."

A few times, when Karger returned home at four o'clock in the morning, Jane snapped sarcastically, "some gig." She told Blondell that she'd found lipstick on Karger's collar on more than one occasion.

Blondell said, "I'm not surprised. I've known that Allyson bitch for years, beginning in New York. She was known as 'Miss Hot to Trot.'"

What may have finally turned Jane off Karger was when he hired a twenty-two year old saxophone player, Terry Nelson, from Chicago, for his band.

Whenever Karger, with his band, went out of town on a gig, Nelson always roomed with him. In Los Angeles, Karger often spent long nights with the sexy young blonde, later informing Jane, "We had to rehearse some new numbers."

"I can imagine what those numbers were," she said. "Sixty-nine, for example."

Whenever she made accusations like that, he'd storm out the door, usually after breaking some objects.

She told Blondell, “I can’t go on with him. I’ve got to end it, sooner than later.”

One day, Nelson, through a family connection, arranged for Karger and his band to appear at a small club in his native Chicago. Bidding Jane goodbye, he and Nelson flew away.

Before the end of the gig, and before he’d flown back to Los Angeles with Nelson, Jane had moved out of their apartment. She left a brief note: “From now on, Buster, you pay the damn rent. Better yet, why not move in with Nelson? You’re practically living with him anyway.”

[Nelson outlived Karger, dying of AIDS in Chicago in 1984.]

In court on March 9, 1965, Karger charged Jane with desertion. Three weeks later, she countercharged, claiming “grievous mental cruelty.” She also revealed that she’d been the victim of “Karger’s uncontrollable temper.”

***

Reagan must have been dismayed when he picked up the papers that March. He had been approached by powerful monied interests to become the Republican candidate for Governor of California in the next election. His close friend, the song-and-dance man, George Murphy, had just been elected to the U.S. Senate from California.

Although the primary wasn’t until the spring of 1966, he would spend all of 1965 “gladhanding my way across the state.”

He was horrified when his name was brought up and his divorce from Jane spread all over newspapers in their rehash of her divorce from him. But Murphy told him not to worry about his status as a divorcé. “This isn’t fucking Alabama or Georgia in the Bible belt. This is California!”

After her (second) divorce from Karger was finalized, Jane told Blondell, “I guess I have no talent for marriage. That’s the last time for me.”

“Well, Reagan seems to have found his mate for life,” Blondell said.

“Ronnie is the marrying kind. I’m not,” Jane said. “He’s found his clinging vine, the one he always wanted, but he didn’t find an independent woman like me. This little former starlet creature is the kind of wife I never was.”

Despite the embarrassing charges that were aired in divorce court, Jane felt no hostility to Karger. In fact, far from the prying eyes of gossips, they sporadically got together “to catch up on things,” as she put it. Once, they were spotted together in San Francisco, provoking an item in a local newspaper column about the possibility of a third marriage of her to Karger.

[Jane and Karger remained friendly until the end. Three years after their divorce, he remarried. But, like his father, he had continuing heart trouble, and once had a heart attack. She visited him whenever she could.

When she heard that he was dying of leukemia, she claimed that she “went to the church every day, asking God to save Freddie.”

Despite her prayers, Karger died of leukemia in 1979 at the age of sixty-three.]

Jane would outlive her “two-time” and “two-timing” husband by twenty-eight years.

She would never marry again.

***

After appearing with her in some of Jane’s favorite movies, Agnes Moorehead— Jane called her “Aggie”—offered an interviewer some insights into Jane’s life.

“In some ways, I think Jane has entered the most contented period of her life. The intense careerism has mellowed and lessened; she has her good friendships, her rewarding sessions with the paintbrush and canvas, her pleasure in her developing children.”

“I think she has given up her illusions about men and the kind of life she had hoped to live with one. She has come to realize, in a sense, that she was her own best company—and she understands herself better than any other human being. At last, she is free of the foibles and assorted demands of a mate.”

Seven years of relative seclusion would pass before Jane returned to the screen, although during the interval, she would occasionally accept a role in a teleplay.

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“I thought I’d spend the rest of my days hanging out paining landscapes in Carmel,” she told Paulette Goddard. “But then came November of 1980. All hell broke loose.”

She was referring, of course, to the election of her former husband, Ronald Reagan, to the office of President of the United States.

Stories about the ins and outs of their previous marriage were making headlines around the world.

As she told Goddard, “I was getting calls from Finland, Egypt, even Patagonia. Where the hell is Patagonia?”

She refused every request for interviews about her life with Reagan. She did make one statement, however: “I have no regrets about not becoming First Lady. Oh, no, the glare of the White House, with its fish-bowl existence for a First Lady, is not for me. I have perfectly wonderful memories of my years with the President. We are good friends, and we will always remain good friends.”

Reagan also refused to discuss his first marriage, except for one remark: “I was divorced in the sense that the decision was made by somebody else—not by me.”

An adept survivor in a fast-changing Hollywood, Jane managed, with skill and style, to revamping her image and her “look” with every decade.

Here’s Jane in the early 70s, sporting a look that enhanced her appeal to golden-age fans as well as to the casting directors of made-for-TV movies, daytime TV, and sitcoms.

A Special Feature

A young executive at Lorimar, one of the leading producers of TV programs, spoke to his board of directors: "If an old dame like Jane Wyman can still hobble around, and doesn't look like Phyllis Diller's grandmother, I see some real show biz marketability for her, having been married to Reagan and all that shit."

"Let's bring her back. Makeup can do wonders these days, or we could photograph her through gauze. Didn't the bitch once win an Oscar or something? Who cares? The big thing is that she was married to the President of the United States. I'm told that no one in American history ever divorced a man who went on to become President."

"We have the perfect series coming up," he continued. "Of course, the Hollywood Hills is filled with has-beens who could play the role, but there's no one who was once married to Ronald Reagan. Wasn't Hitler still alive when they got married?"

The young executive was told that in 1940, the United States had not yet entered World War II.

"My god!" he answered. "Way back then! She must have told Reagan when he walked in the door to wipe the dinosaur shit off his shoes."

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Originally, Jane's friend, Barbara Stanwyck, had been offered the role of Angela Channing, the tyrannical matriarch of the Falcon Crest Winery in a TV soap tentatively entitled *The vintage Years*. Flush with success from his hit series, *The waltons*, Earl Hamner later changed the title to *Falcon Crest*, fearing that the first tag would indicate the soap was about old people.

Falcon Crest would go out on the CBS network for its first broadcast on December 4, 1981, running for nine trauma-infused seasons, shutting down on May 17, 1990.

Its lifespan more or less paralleled the two-term presidency of Ronald Reagan.

When Stanwyck bowed out, Hamner thought it would be wise to exploit the publicity generated by Jane Wyman, Reagan's first wife, who was back in the news again. He reportedly said, "Dare we bill her as 'The Woman Who Almost Became First Lady?'"

In the original pilot, Jane sported a gray wig, but that was later changed to her own dyed brown hair. "The preview audiences laughed at me for wearing that dreadful wig, and I put my foot down. Also, I told Hamner to soften my role. Originally, my character was too much of a god damn bitch."

He later called Jane "A tough broad, but she knew what she was doing. It was not her first time at the rodeo."

As a Napa Valley wine tycoon, Angela would spend the series feuding with and fighting her relatives, plus others, as a means of retaining control of the family legacy.

She battles one of the heirs to Falcon Crest, Robert Foxworth, and his wife, Susan Sullivan, but dotes on her handsome playboy grandson (Lorenzo Lamas), the real-life son of Fernando Lamas and Arlene Dahl.

"The Iron Lady of the Vineyards," Jane Wyman, veteran survivor of changing times in Hollywood, with the *Falcon Crest* gang in 1984.

Throughout the 8½ year run of the series, guest stars came and went, including Celeste Holm, still remembered for her role in *all about eve* (1950), who nearly burns down Falcon Crest.

A good hunk of *tout* Hollywood, notably Lana Turner, showed up for guest appearances. Jane had always detested her, an enmity dating back to the time "she messed around with Ronnie."

To boost ratings, other featured notables included Gina Lollobrigida (after negotiations with Sophia Loren fell through); Robert Stack, Cliff Robertson, Kim Novak, Leslie Caron, Lauren Hutton, Eddie Albert, Eve Arden, and Ursula An-dress, whose involvement caused a tiffle because of her status as one of Nancy Reagan's best friends.

One of the highlights of the series transpired when Jane, as Angela Channing, married Falcon Crest's lawyer, Phillip Ericson (Mel Ferrer). Consistent with her character, as developed by Jane, Angela does this not only for love, but for access to greater power. Ferrer's character maneuvered ambitiously through the politics of the family legacy until the writers of the series had him killed off in a plane crash.

At one point, Ginger Rogers, perhaps the ultimate symbol and archetype of Golden Age Hollywood, was proposed for the role of Susan Sullivan's mother. But the blonde was ruled as "not the right type" for the role. Jane Greer, star of many a 1940s *film noir*, was hired instead.

Hamner notified Jane that he was casting César Romero, as her co-star in the role of a very wealthy tycoon, who helps her "save the plantation." The script was still being written when she was told, "There will be some on-screen romancing." At the time, Romero was in his seventies and white-haired.

Although Jane had often accepted Romero as an occasional escort between her marriages—this lifelong bachelor had been the escort of many great Hollywood divas, including Joan Crawford—she was alarmed at the prospect of that new twist in the series' storyline. She was especially disturbed at the prospect of any kissing scenes between them.

Celebrity psychic John Cohan was a friend, confidant, and psychic advisor to Jane for many years. He had followed her interaction with another of his friends, Rock Hudson, during their filming of *Magnificent obsession* and *all That Heaven allows*.

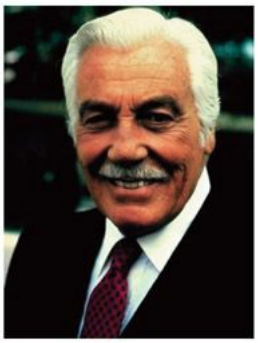
[Cohan has been a celebrity seer and channel of wisdom to stars who have included elizabeth Taylor for more than thirty years. during much of that time, he supplied columnist Cindy adams with his yearly predictions, many of which turned out to be surprisingly accurate.

Many insights about the stars can be found in Cohan's tantalizing memoir, Catch a Falling Star: The Untold Story of Celebrity Secrets, *published in 2008. in it, he has much to reveal about former friends and clients, including natalie wood, Merv Griffin, John Kennedy, Jr., elvis Presley, Mick Jagger, and Rudolph nureyev. He also writes about "my dear friend" nicole Brown Simpson as well as "the love of my life," Sandra dee, the former wife of singer Bobby darrin.]*

John Cohan...privy to celebrity secrets.

Cohan was also a friend of Romero, and was well aware of his long-lived crush on Desi Arnaz. When Jane learned that Romero was to be assigned as her love interest in *Falcon Crest*, she called Cohan to express her possible objections. "I don't want him on the show if there's to be a kissing scene," she said. "There's an AIDS epidemic, I don't know where his mouth has been the night before."

Cohan had a talk with her, telling her that "Cesar is a gentleman and a fine actor. I can assure you that he's as meticulous in his hygiene as he is in his grooming. You have nothing to fear."



César Romero..."The Latin from Manhattan."

Obviously, Cohan convinced her that Romero would present no threat, even during an embrace. She called Hamner the next day and told him, "I think Cesar will be ideal in the part of my beau."

Jane's friendship with Romero remained intact, despite her fears. A few weeks later, Romero resumed escorting Jane to various premieres or tributes to aging players in the film industry. They'd sometimes end the evening

dancing. “He’s a great dancer,” she told Cohan, something he already knew, of course.

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Starting out at $25,000 per episode, Jane’s fee for her involvement in *Falcon Crest* eventually rose to $100,000 per episode, making her the highest paid woman in television.

John O’Connor, in *The new York Times*, summed up *Falcon Crest* in 1981. “And so it goes, the standard stuff of soaps, with a crisis bubble bursting at least three times between commercial breaks. At fadeout, Jane Wyman is meaningfully stroking a falcon on the grounds of her estate. The stage is set for anything.”

The other actors in the series often complained to Hamner that Jane was telling them how to act. When Hamner confronted her with this, she said, “The poor dears, for the most part, have had no experience. If they’re bad, I’ll look bad. Now we can’t have that happening, can we?”

Throughout the run of the series, Jane bitterly resented any publicity that linked her to the Reagan presidency. Her former association with the President became especially visible at the 1984 Democratic Convention, when protesters opposing Reagan’s policies carried signs “JANE WYMAN WAS RIGHT” within view of television crews.

Her salary as a highly visible actress was sometimes compared to that earned by Reagan in his capacity as president, columnists suggesting that she was being paid ten times more than he was.

She didn’t like it when critics jokingly referred to her series as “*dallas* with grapes.”

“We were more glamorous than *dallas [1978-1991]*, but not as outrageous as *dynasty [1981-1989],”* she said.

Because of her declining health, Jane was absent throughout much of *Falcon Crest’s* final (1989-1990) season. She rallied, however, to the point where, in defiance of her doctor’s orders, she returned for the season’s last three episodes. In the final scene of the series, she raises her glass to either the vineyards or the series (no one was really, sure, as the moment was richly symbolic), “A toast to you, Falcon Crest,” she said, “and long may you live.”

On the last day of the series’ filming, she had told Hamner, “Honey, I’ve seen them come and go…mostly go. And now it’s time for me to make my exit. I’ll say this: It’s been a ride to hell and back. And I’m still here. Now I want to be alone.”

***

Golden age icon Loretta Young, Jane’s then closest friend, had married the famous dress and costume designer, Jean Louis, in 1993, when she was eighty and he was eighty-four. Young had been instrumental in motivating Jane to become a member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, informally known as “Lay Dominicans.”

[Lay Dominicans define themselves as “Men and women, singles and couples, living a Christian life with a Dominican spirituality in the secular world. We find our inspiration following the same spiritual path taken by many Saints, Blesseds and other holy men and women throughout the almost 800 year history of the Dominican Order.”]

As a means of living closer to her friend, Jane had moved into the upscale resort community of Rancho Mirage in Riverside County, near Palm Springs, 120 miles southeast of Los Angeles.

When Young died in 2002, Jane was very distraught. More than ever, she seemed to cling to her Catholic religion.

The year (2001) after Young’s death, Jane’s only biological child, her daughter, Maureen, died from melanoma. Jane told Cohan, “There’s nothing worse for a parent than to outlive her own children.”

She was further devastated when Reagan died in 2004. She issued a rare statement about him. “America has lost a great President and a great, kind, and gentle man.”

Cohan recalled going to see her on his final visit, when he found her bedridden and in seriously declining health.

She asked him to stay overnight with her. In her condition, that was obviously not a sexual overture. She told him she was very lonely and just wanted someone to hold her. “I need that like a plant needs water,” she said.

Jane Wyman, on the set between takes during the final season of *Falcon Crest*. Forlorn, she looks into her future. The chorus girl cutie of the 1930s had become an aging matriarch.

He stayed with her and comforted her, later commenting on what a “charming, bright woman she was as a person, not just a great actress.”

At the age of ninety, on the night of September 1, 2007, death came to her in her sleep. She had left instructions to be buried in her Dominican habit.

A funeral mass was held two days later at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in nearby Palm Desert. Michael Reagan delivered a short eulogy, asserting that “Hollywood has lost the classiest lady to ever grace the silver screen.”

In her later years, she had a favorite remark, “I am a little too old to be happy, but just old enough to be grateful.”

Many newspapers ran banner headlines, proclaiming, “THE FIRST MRS. REAGAN DIES.”

She had told Young and others, “I’m sure many headline writers will do that, but I would have preferred to be recognized as a star with my own achievements, rather than for a marriage I entered into decades ago.”

Let’s remember Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan not as old and decrepit—and ill—relics who survived to see the 21st Century, but as two kids in love with each other, or at least in love with love.

Late in her life, when Jane was shown this picture, she said, “God, we were gorgeous, and about to become the most publicized happily married couple of World War II.”

Special Feature: Hellcats of the Navy

"Ronnie and Nancy," as they were now called, never became the screen team they had dreamed about—a working duet equivalent to William Powell and Myrna Loy or Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy.

But they did make one attempt at it in *Hellcats of the Navy*, a 1957 release from Columbia Pictures.

For *Hellcats of the Navy*, Columbia granted Reagan the usual contractual clauses allowing a star to select his own director. Subsequently, Reagan opted for Nathan Juran, who had helmed him in *Law and Order* (1953). Then Reagan successfully persuaded the studio to designate Nancy as his co-star.

Juran had been an Oscar-winning art director for such films as *The Razor's Edge* (1946). A year after his direction of *Hellcats of the Navy*, he'd achieve a rank in "camp heaven" after directing the sci-fi horror flick, *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (1958), a libidinous romp that seemed perfect back then for a Saturday night date at a drive-in. *[Its storyline? After an aborted murder attempt, an alluring and scantily clad socialite, massively and majestically enlarged after an encounter with Aliens, seeks revenge on her lying, abusive, and cheating husband.]*

One evening, the co-starring, co-habiting, married couple sat down in their living room to read the script of *Hellcats*. It was based on a widely publicized book by U.S. Admirals Charles A. Lockwood and Hans Christian Adamson, about a real-life Naval operation that had unfolded in 1944. The film would open with an introduction by

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who had directed a naval campaign in the Tsushima Strait and the Sea of Japan during World War II. His mission's aim involved maneuvering a flotilla of U.S. submarines through underwater obstacles and heavy minefields. In the movie, Nimitz's character was portrayed by the actor Selmer Jackson.

The film's scriptwriters were credited as David Lang and "Raymond Marcus."

It wasn't until 1986 when an anti-communist U.S. president learned that the film-script had actually been written by a blacklisted screenwriter, Bernard Gordon, who had opted for "Marcus" as a pseudonym.

In the screenplay, Nancy is in love with Commander Casey Abbott (Reagan). Simultaneously, she's also involved in a minor romance with a member of his crew, frog-man Les Barton (Harry Lauter).

Abbott must struggle not to get his personal feelings mixed up with his high-profile role as commander.

Reagan, as Abbott, leading a fictional submarine, *U.S.S. Starfish*, is ordered to interrupt the flow of war supplies en route from Japan to voracious Japanese forces invading China. Most of the action takes place in the obstacle-studded, heavily mined waters off the Asiatic mainland.

As an actor, Reagan's worst problem was that he suffered from claustrophobia, a lifetime terror of small, enclosed spaces. For unrelenting hours at a time, he was forced to work with as many as sixteen cast and crew members, all of them packed like sardines into the tiny reconnaissance tower of a working submarine.

A dramatic point in the film occurs when Reagan, as Commander Abbott, has to make a "*Command Decision*," evocative of the 1948 Clark Gable film of that same name. In *Hell-cats*, when Reagan makes an equivalently crucial decision, he signals its weightiness to the audience by narrowing his squinty eyes, tightening his jaw muscles, and furrowing his brow, which was beginning to wrinkle at this stage of his middle-aged years.

As Nancy studied her character of Nurse Lt. Helen Blair in *Hellcats of the Navy*, she found she'd been cast in a "Love Triangle," perhaps evoking memories of her own life and the role played in it by Jane Wyman, the third part of a competitive trio that flourished prior to Nancy's marriage to Reagan.

When a Japanese destroyer bears down on them, Reagan orders his submarine to dive into very deep waters as a

means of avoiding enemy shells. Lauter, preoccupied with his duties as a frogman, and outside the sub on the waters of the wide open sea, is left to die. A few scenes later, audiences know that Reagan's competitor for the love and carnal affections of Nurse Nancy has descended to a watery, fish-bitten grave.

The submarine's chief officer, Lt. Commander Don Landon, and the film's third male lead is played by Arthur Franz, who had previously appeared in such war movies as *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) with John Wayne, and *The Caine Mutiny* (1953) with Humphrey Bogart.

Unlike Reagan, Franz had been a real-life hero during World War II, serving in the U.S. Army Air Force. His plane had been shot down over Romania, and he was incarcerated in a POW, from which he escaped and made his way to freedom.

Offscreen, in the photo above, actor and co-star Arthur Franz *(left)* is all smiles with the Reagans when the cameras weren't rolling. But on screen, he and the character played by Reagan were bitter enemies.

Audiences didn't find Nancy alluring as Reagan's girlfriend in this movie. She was clad in a starched and un-sexy uniform, droning her nagging lines to Reagan without a trace of charm. Obviously, she was more alluring to him as a wife in private than as his on-screen lover.

Throughout most of *Hellcats*, the characters portrayed by Reagan and Franz are locked into a bitterly competitive feud until the end, when Reagan, by now working as a frogman himself, is rescued by Franz. All is forgiven, and Reagan, without a rival in love, can at last claim Nurse Nancy.

She later wrote that the kissing scenes with Reagan were the easiest she'd ever played on screen, not that there had been that many.

In the final reel, Reagan agrees to marry Nurse Nancy. She later told Juran, "I had less trouble getting Ronnie to marry me on film than I did in real life."

Reagan's assignment as commander of the Hellcats involved retrieving actual Japanese mines from enemy-patrolled waters so that Naval experts could determine, in the safety of their laboratories, why they were resistant to detection by sonar.

Reagan was disappointed when he saw the final cut of *Hellcats of the Navy*. In his first autobiography, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, he stated that he had wanted to make a film that evoked the quality of *Destination Tokyo*, a suspenseful 1943 film that had co-starred Cary Grant with John Garfield. Such was not the case. Reagan lamented that Columbia was more interested in the budget than in the script, and strongly criticized the recycling of stock footage from the studio's archives.

Edmund Morris, Reagan's authorized biographer, said that *Hellcats* was "a turkey so many-feathered it practically squawked off the screen."

After it was finished, and for a brief time, Reagan considered retiring to his little stud farm to become a fulltime breeder of race horses, a lifestyle that evoked his role, and the character he developed, in *Stallion Road* (1947).

"*Hellcats* ended movies for me," Reagan said.

[Actually, it didn't. The ill-advised The Killers *(1964), still in his future, would represent his final adieu to films.]*

Critic Glenn Erickson defined the script of *Hellcats* as "completely derivative and cornball." He also criticized the lack of realism derived from its use of stock footage. David Krauss called the production "bargain basement," and evaluated both Reagan and Nancy as "stiff." He went on to say that Juran's direction was "as dry as a military briefing."

In his first autobiography, in reference to filming *Hellcats*, Reagan wrote: "Nancy and I had a moonlight farewell scene on the eve of my departure for the dangerous mission that was the climax of the story. The first thing I knew, Nancy was crying instead of saying the lines in the script, and then she was giggling between sobs, laughing at herself for having gotten so carried away that *[in her mind, at least]* she was really saying goodbye and sending me on a suicide mission."

In each of Nancy's memoirs, she had almost nothing to say about either her role or her involvement in *Hellcats*, except for a remark about kissing Reagan. In one memoir, she said the film was released in 1956; in another, she wrote 1957—and got it right that time.

Variety commiserated with Nancy for being stuck in such a thankless role.

The New York Daily News cited Nancy's performance as "providing subordinate romantic interest which does not get in the way of the film's primary offering—action."

Other reviewers were less kind, especially when the movie was released on DVD during Reagan's presidency. "Nancy and Ronnie had as much chemistry in their on-shore romance as did Wallace Beery and Marie Dressler in the 1933 *Tugboat Annie,"* wrote Kenneth David.

Chapter Fourteen

"Ronnie and Nancy"

The Long, Tortuous Road to Marriage, & The Dysfunctional Union of Two Competing Families

They Didn't Know It Yet, but the Fading (and Fired) Movie Star and the Failed (and Fired) B-List Starlet Had a Shared Rendezvous With Destiny

One blustery afternoon, Ronald Reagan in his "Bogie trenchcoat," took Nancy Davis to the marriage license bureau.

She shared her version of what love is. "It meant giving more than receiving, and it also meant sharing. I think you know you are in love when you no longer are the most important person you know. I would give my life for Ronnie. I feel lucky in that I have no doubt of my love and of my being loved.:"

Nancy Davis was disappointed that her very frugal husband, Ronald Reagan, had “deep pockets and short arms.” He didn’t want to spend money to hire a photographer to record the events associated with their wedding.

William Holden and his wife, the actress Brenda Marshall, however, hired a photographer to record their wedding reception and paid for a wedding cake. Knife in hand, Reagan looks like he’s about to attack the symbolic bride and groom crowning the multi-tiered confection..

She Became One of the Most Fascinating, Enigmatic, and Controversial First Ladies In American History—But How Did She Lure a Reluctant Reagan Into Marriage?

Nancy’s road to the altar was long and tortured, with many roadblocks and many detours. It would take two and a half years of steady pursuit on her part.

Before meeting Reagan, Nancy had composed a list of eligible bachelors in Hollywood, all of whom she considered worth marrying. Reagan’s name was at the top of the list. She decided to start at the top and work her way down the chart.

She opted to reach him through his friend, film director Mervyn LeRoy. For the previous few months, she’d received a lot of mail directed to “Nancy Davis” with information about rallies and meetings of the Communist Party. It was the era of Hollywood’s “Blacklist,” and she didn’t want to lose her chance at stardom for fear that she’d be mistaken for Red, or accused of socialist sympathies, or worse.

He told her he’d relay her concerns to Reagan, president of SAG, to see what he could do.

“But I’d prefer to speak to Mr. Reagan personally,” she said.

“First, let’s do it my way,” he said. “After all, I’m used to directing the scene.”

Über-Assertive, Now and Forever.

“I love to wear red, but I’m not a Red,” Nancy said. “If anything, I’m probably the most anti-communist starlet in Hollywood.”

Reagan had never seen Nancy in a film, not even *East Side, West Side*, a 1949 flick that had starred his friend, Barbara Stan-wyck, and in which Nancy had played a supporting role.

A hip Hollywood director like LeRoy knew Nancy’s real motive for wanting to speak to Reagan personally. “I think she wants to date you,” the director said.

“My calendar’s full, but I’ll consider it,” he answered. “I won’t ask you what she looks like, because I know that she must be attractive if she’s an MGM starlet.”

“Who knows? MGM might have signed her on as a threat to Marjorie Main. But, no, that’s not the case. Nancy is quite attractive, I assure you. I was the first director to discover Jane Wyman when I put her in a small part in *Elmer the Great* back in 1933. Maybe lightning will strike twice for you when you meet Nancy.”

Reagan told LeRoy that he’d think about dating her, but first, he wanted to investigate her placement “on a

commie mailing list."

Out with Nancy, Reagan, for some reason, chose to wear his glasses, although for years, he usually avoided being photographed in them.

As Nancy joked, "It's not true that women don't make passes at men who wear glasses."

"She's no Ava Gardner, but she's kinda cute," LeRoy said. "She's single. You're single. Why don't you take her out?"

"And disappoint two dozen other Hollywood cuties that night?" he said. "I may ask her out. Then again, I might not. For all I know, I'll fall for the hot little blonde I'm seeing."

"Marilyn Monroe?"

"Been there, done that," Reagan answered. "No, another Marilyn—Marilyn Maxwell."

"You're moving in on Frankie's territory, I see," LeRoy said.

Reagan took two weeks getting back to Nancy. He did discover that there was a movie extra, Nancy Lee Davis, registered as a screen worker who occasionally got a job as an extra. Her name, indeed, was on a list of movie workers who, between 1945 and 1952, were suspected of affiliations with the Communist Party. She had also supported members of the notorious, disgraced, and blacklisted "Hollywood Ten."

Reagan reported this to LeRoy, and the director subsequently called Nancy with news that her name had been cleared of suspicion. But she still protested, claiming, "But I want to speak to Mr. Reagan myself."

Reagan warned her, in his call to her the following day, that their meeting would have to be for an early dinner, since he was due at the studio at 5AM the following morning.

She responded, "I have the same problem."

As it happened, both of them lied, since neither was involved in any film being shot at the time.

The historic meeting of the future President of the United States with his future First Lady took place in October of 1949.

When he arrived at her doorstep, she later told friends, "He had both legs. I'd seen *Kings Row*, where they were amputated. But he was on crutches."

[He was still recovering from a broken leg he had injured in a charity baseball game.]

He took her to LaRue's on the Strip, which back then was a hip gathering spot.

She claimed she was immediately attracted to him, "finding him nice looking." She also viewed his mind as "stimulating and, unlike all other actors, he could talk about something other than motion pictures."

Over dinner, he discovered that she'd never seen a performance of Sophie Tucker, "The Last of the Red Hot Mommas." Tucker was his favorite entertainer, which surprised her. She thought his favorite singer would perhaps be Doris Day, his favorite comedian Jack Benny. But, no, it was Miss Sophie, with her raunchy jokes and her very Jewish humor, had been scheduled for an appearance at Ciro's later that night.

By the time this photograph was taken, Reagan had proposed marriage to Nancy. but when he first met her, he wrote: “Bells didn’t ring. Nor did rockets explode.”

As he told Robert Taylor, “Nancy’s pretty, but not what I expected. A bit reserved, unlike Ann Sothern or Ruth Roman. Her large hazel eyes are her best feature. Otherwise, she’s a rather demure brunette.”

After Sophie’s act, the other couples danced to the music of Xavier Cugat’s band, but Reagan couldn’t join in, because of his injured leg.

At the end of her show, Sophie joined them at table. “I adore Ronnie,” she said to Nancy. Then she turned to Reagan. “A brunette for a change?”

The last time she’d seen him was after her performance on Miami Beach, where he’d showed up with a blonde, Marilyn Monroe, then an aspiring starlet.

He was honest with Nancy, telling her that he’d fibbed about that early morning call. “I didn’t want to be trapped in a blind date that didn’t go well. It’ll soon be dawn, so you can say this date was a knockout.”

On her doorstep, he kissed her on the cheek and left without any promise of calling her again.

When Nancy first started dating Reagan, she was twenty-eight, though claiming to be twenty-six. “That sounds better.”

Although he failed to make any promises, Reagan called her at 11AM and invited her out for another night on the town. She later said, “We had dinner that night, and the next night, and the night after that. For about a month, we must have gone to every restaurant and nightclub in Los Angeles.”

Rumors circulated that during their first month together, he was spending his nights in her small apartment in Westwood, a suburb west of Hollywood near the UCLA campus.

In Nancy’s second memoir, she admitted that she and Reagan soon tired of going nightclubbing every night. “We started spending more of our time alone in my apartment, where we watched movies and ate popcorn.” Presumably, they found other amusements, too. She looked forward to his taking her to Chasen’s every Tuesday night for its weekly special, “Beef Belmont.”

People who knew Reagan well, including Dick Powell, claimed, “Ronnie didn’t immediately fall in love. He had to be very gently led into those pastures like a horse, and be assured that the green grass was for grazing and that he wouldn’t end up in the glue factory.”

After the first activity-filled month, Reagan didn’t call Nancy as frequently, perhaps only once or twice a week. She feared he was losing interest.

Biographer Laurence Leamer wrote: “For a woman who sought a courtly Spenserian romance, Ronnie might seem a strange choice indeed. He was a man too scared by past romantic failures to fall easily into an impassioned union typical of youthful first love. But Ronnie was the first man Nancy had ever met who measured up to Dr. Loyal. She loved Ronnie. She wanted him, a man whom she could admire uncompromisingly, the way she admired Dr. Loyal.”

“Ronnie’s heart was frozen,” Leamer continued. “To him, spring was not the harbinger of summer, but only of another winter. Nancy put up with all of Ronnie’s ambivalence. She listened to his endless political talk, as Jane had not, and loved every word. She thought his most banal political remarks rang with profound meaning. She looked at him with pure adoration.”

[When Nancy became First Lady, that loving and sometimes ferociously protective gaze became known as “The Look.”]

Had Nancy Davis not gotten pregnant (Patti was on the way), Reagan might have carried Doris Day across the threshold instead.

"I was a gentleman who preferred blondes, but married brunettes," he told his friend, singer/actor George Murphy.

Here he is, publicizing his second picture with Doris, *The Winning Team* in 1952 (the year he married Nancy).

It was the last picture he ever made at Warner Brothers, a studio where he'd worked since 1937.

As he later joked, "On the way out the door, I felt the pointed toe of Jack Warner's shoe in my most hidden spot."

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When Reagan didn't call, as he had before, she concentrated on her career and very soon—when she learned that he was dating other women, she started going out with other men. That was all too evident one noonday in the MGM commissary, when she heard a starlet at a nearby table bragging to her friends about a recent gift of jewelry from Reagan. So far, he had never given Nancy any gift, not even flowers.

Their 1952 baseball flick, *The Winning Team,"* choreographed a "movie version" of what a Reagan/Day nuptial might look like.

In the photo above, bride and groom—with Doris wearing white satin, a veil, and lace— dig into the fixings for a cold, Depression-era wedding supper prepared, Americana-style, by well-wishing friends.

She later heard that while he was making *Storm Warning* (1951), he was seriously considering proposing to

Doris Day.

Jane Wyman had heard that Reagan had been on the verge of marrying Nancy.

"Don't ask me why I'm so happy that the Davis girl is going out with other men," Jane told Joan Blondell. "I walked out on him, but I will cling to him at times for the comfort and security that only he can provide me. I know that if I ever got sick or something, and couldn't work, he'd be the first person to arrive on my doorstep."

As for Nancy, Jane learned she was still seeing Benny Thau at MGM.

"Ronnie didn't want to get too involved with Nancy," George Murphy recalled. "That's why he stopped seeing her so much. It was getting too god damn intense. Besides, I advised him to stick with blondes—no, not Marilyn Monroe but Doris Day. Doris was all that was fine and decent and would make an ideal First Lady if his dream of becoming president ever came true."

On one date, Nancy invited him to see her in *The Next Voice You Hear* (1950), wherein she co-starred with James Whitmore. After the movie, he told her, "Unpack your bags. You're going to be around Hollywood for quite a time."

On their dates, Reagan often shared his career woes with Nancy. In November of 1950, he gave a revealing interview to *Silver Screen:* "I'd love to be a louse on screen like Humphrey Bogart. You know, the kind of fellow who leers at the dolls and gets leered back. The guy who treats women rough and makes them love it. You know why I'd love to be louse? Because the public loves him. He makes money for his employers. He's talked about and swooned over. He grimaces forth from the pages of *Silver Screen* and people bring mouse traps to his doorstep. The louse business is, for sure, the open road to 'Fame in Films.'"

William Holden recognized that Reagan was in no hurry to make a commitment to another woman. "He was burned in his first marriage, and the pain still is deep. I understand why he wanted to keep dating other women. Of course, I'd call it more than dating."

Nancy discussed her own career problems with Reagan. She was featured in a number of picture layouts—in fact, *Movieland* heralded her as "A Star is Born." Despite the glamour of that connotation, she was photographed in jeans cleaning the house.

When director George Cukor saw the published version of these domestic photographs, he told friends, "The Hattie McDaniel image of a maid in *Gone With the Wind* is old-fashioned. The 1950s image of a maid should be none other than Miss Nancy Davis, who sure knows her way around a vacuum cleaner."

Hedda Hopper noted that Jane and Nancy each appeared in the same magazine. "Jane was all dolled up and looking glamorous, like a movie star should. In contrast, poor Nancy looked dowdy."

Jane and Nancy would never be mistaken for each other, although biographers over the years have noted a certain similarity in both of the "President's Ladies." Each has been perceived as a "strong-willed woman often displaying a fiery temper."

Despite the critical and commercial failure of many of her pictures, the studio insisted that Nancy continue to pose for publicity layouts. MGM sent her to the chic Amelia Gray's fashion shop in Beverly Hills for fittings of dresses from the latest Parisian designers, with the understanding that these dresses were to be borrowed for photo layouts. A sales clerk later said that "Miss Davis selected the wardrobe of a rich, thirtyish, unmarried society matron."

The stardom that Nancy had dreamed about did not come with the release of *The Next Voice You Hear* (1950). In that, she played a pregnant wife. "After that film, now I'm only offered roles for pregnant wives."

"Pregnant is something you don't want to get," Reagan cautioned.

"I noticed that when I go into a restaurant with you, the people at the other tables cast sly glances my way, checking to see if I'm showing any signs of pregnancy." Nancy said.

Rumors buzzed through Hollywood about Reagan's upcoming marriage to Nancy. In March of 1951, a columnist in *Variety* wrote: "Another date, this time for dinner at LaRue's on the Strip, adds fuel to the fires of romantic gossip raging about Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis. Expect an announcement of marriage any day now."

That didn't happen. A year would drift by. Another year. Then another six months, even though some headlines had already announced Nancy as "THE NEXT MRS. RONALD REAGAN."

The *Hollywood Reporter* trumpeted, "Nobody's seen an engagement ring, but Ronnie is wearing his heart on his sleeve, and there's a twenty-karat sparkle in the eyes of Nancy Davis."

Modern Screen reported, "Don't look now, but here comes the bride. Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis have had that 'about-to-be-married look' for more than a year now."

Louella Parsons weighed in with her take, writing in *Modern Screen*, "Are Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman haunted by their perfect love? Not long ago, I went to dinner at their home, and Maureen came in to cut her birthday cake. Her mother and father stood by her side, polite to each other and respectful—so different from those gay kids who went barnstorming across the country with me years ago. I turned away so they couldn't see the tears in my

eyes."

"I wonder—Do those embers of the once perfect love they shared still burn deep with haunting memories that won't let them forget?"

The report was unconfirmed, but one traumatic day, Nancy arrived to deliver something to Reagan at his apartment. It was perhaps a surprise gift she knew he wanted. After she knocked on his door, it was said to have been opened by a young actress, Christine Larson. Nancy left at once, taking the gift away with her. She was no doubt heartbroken.

During their weekends together, Reagan often shared his views with her on many subjects, as he was well informed. In most cases, even if she disagreed with him on a subject, she never argued. She was far more tolerant and sophisticated about homosexuality than he was.

He told her, "It's a tragic mistake and we should continue to view homosexuality as an illegal act. Participants should be subject to arrest and imprisonment."

When he became governor, he said, "Perhaps the only place in government that can employ homosexuals is the Department of Parks and Recreation."

In the media, that remark was widely denounced and defined as "vulgar, crude, ignorant, and tasteless." There were calls for "impeachment of the bigot."

Before Co-Ruling the Free World, Nancy Learns to Shovel Horse Manure at Her Boyfriend's Malibu Ranch

Nancy knew that their dating was getting more serious one night when he told her, "I really miss having someone to love—in fact, I hunger to have someone love me."

She later told her friends, "I knew at this point I had him."

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During the final year before their marriage, Nancy and Reagan were living together, mostly at her apartment, like husband and wife. Weekends were usually spent at his Malibu ranch, sometimes with Michael and Maureen, when they weren't away at school. When they were in town, the children lived with Jane.

The ranch lay half a mile inland from the Pacific. Once there, visitors discovered a rundown old farmhouse that was gradually being fixed up. In March of 1951, Reagan had paid $85,000 for the property, on which he raised horses. When the first colt was born—he described it as "a gorgeous dapple filly"—he named her "Nancy D."

Ranching was not Nancy's thing. Her expressed distaste for it may have caused her to lose Clark Gable. She wasn't going to let that happen again. On the ranch, she threw herself into the spirit of it all, although admitting to friends, "I carried water to the horses and even shoveled manure. The closeness of animals, bugs, and dirt was a bit of a stretch for me, but at least I got to work shoulder-to-shoulder with Ronnie."

Sometimes, when Reagan drove the children back to Jane, she would invite him inside, even if Nancy were with him. "Jane was perfectly nice to me," Nancy wrote. "Not only had she been married to Ronnie, but she was very much 'The Star,' and it was her house and her children. I felt out of place, and I was a little in awe of her."

Later, as their "Love Triangle" continued, Nancy became very angry at Jane when she learned that Jane had convinced Reagan not to remarry until she did. She was dating bandleader Fred Karger at the time. Jane felt it would be embarrassing to her if Reagan remarried while she was still unwed.

When he learned about Jane's upcoming marriage to Karger, he felt he could go ahead and propose to Nancy.

As more and more people in the film industry learned about Nancy's link to Reagan, she was often asked, "What is he really like?"

She had a pat answer: "The secret is that there really is no secret. He is exactly the man he appears to be. The Ronald Reagan you see in public is the same Ronald Reagan I live with. He is not a fraud or a phony."

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Reagan had seen Dr. Loyal and Edith many times, and both of them heartily approved of him. Loyal thought he was be "a good provider." Edith, on the other hand, told Nancy, "If I were twenty years younger, you would have me to fight off for this stud. He's a real catch."

When Nancy married Reagan in 1952, her movie career was drawing to a close. Months before the pre-defined end of her MGM contract, Nancy was told that it would not be renewed.

Mightier moguls than Nancy had already succumbed to the ax: Louis B. Mayer himself had resigned, more or less against his will, in the aftermath of a series of money-losing pictures he'd made.

As a means of softening the journalistic impact of her impending departure from the movie industry, Nancy preferred to tell reporters that she planned to retire from the screen and devote herself to her new role as a housewife and mother, a position that paralleled many of the beliefs and role models of the Eisenhower era.

But she still had a handful of undistinguished films to make for dwindling audiences to sit through. Worsening things was that she never really developed a fan base like Wyman and, to a lesser extent, Reagan.

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The prospect of remarrying perplexed not only Reagan but Jane, Michael, and Maureen, too.

While he was still dating Nancy, Reagan was rumored to have spent the night of January 5, 1951, with Jane, celebrating her birthday, and, one assumes, some shared memories. The next day, he placed an excited call to Dick Powell. "Janie and I have made up. We're going to remarry."

But in just two weeks, Jane apparently changed her mind. The reasons are not known, but June Allyson speculated, "I think Ronnie told her that one day, he wanted to be President of the United States, and she didn't want to spend the rest of her life on the road to the White House."

Louella Parsons told of a private talk she'd had with Jane, not for publication. She had asked the columnist, "What's the matter with me? Will I ever find happiness?"

For a while, Reagan dated starlet Penny Edwards. According to her, he told her one night, "I like you just fine. But I think I've forgotten how to fall in love."

Another of Reagan's dates was Ann Sothern, who had once co-starred with Nancy. "When I dated Reagan, he had two things on his mind, politics and Jane Wyman. Even when he was supposed to be hot and heavy with Nancy, I noticed it was Ruth Roman he invited to the premiere of his film, *The Hasty Heart* (1949).

Sothern said, "He told me he gave Jane a small poodle with a note—'This is to keep you company until your lovin' man comes home again.'"

When Jane started work on a new movie, *Three Guys Named Mike* (1951), Reagan sent her a large bouquet of red roses. "I know you'll be safe with Van Johnson. But I don't know about Howard Keel and Barry Sullivan. Especially Keel."

One night, June Allyson and Dick Powell invited Reagan over to dinner by himself. He wanted to talk to the couple, who had remained his close friends over the course of many years. Allyson had also maintained an intense friendship with Jane until they had a falling out.

Reagan was wondering if he could more or less incorporate both Jane and Nancy into an extended family, celebrating reunions with Maureen and Michael during communal weekends at the ranch. He had promised Jane she could go to the ranch any time she wanted for horseback riding.

"Ronnie," Allyson said. "That's not going to work out. Nancy won't like it. It's a stupid idea unless you're planning to set up a *ménage à trois*. And a *ménage à trois* will only take place in your sexual fantasies."

As Michael later said, "Back in those days, the press was trying to promote a feud between my mother and Nancy. When I met separately with each woman, they had nothing but derogatory things to say about each other. I agreed with whichever one I was with at the time."

When friends asked Jane if theirs was a feud like that of Joan Crawford with Bette Davis, she denied it. "I have no grudge against Miss Davis. To show that there are no hard feelings, I plan to attend the funeral of the bitch."

Before and after his marriage to Nancy, Jane tried to avoid attending events or private parties and dinners where she would encounter Nancy. Reagan had stopped bringing Nancy by her home when he drove over to return Maureen and Michael to their mother.

However, on certain occasions, they were trapped together. One such event occurred in 1964, when Maureen hosted a lavish reception at the time of her second marriage (*i.e.*, to David Sills). Nancy, Reagan, and Jane stood together in the reception line to greet their guests.

Although it was all smiles in the reception line, Jane and Nancy avoided each other for the rest of the day. Jane left early, privately telling Maureen, "Better luck with your second choice of a husband. I hope it won't be as disastrous as your marriage to that policeman—what's his name."

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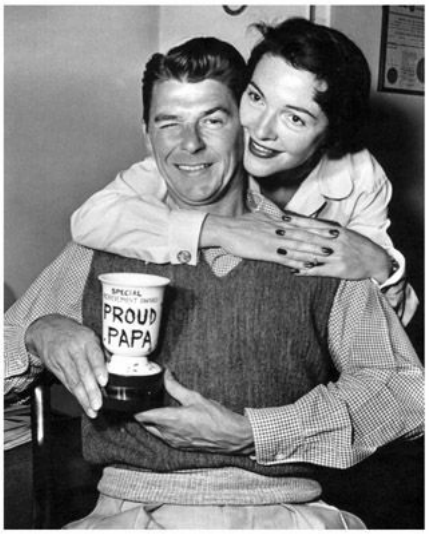
Joan Blondell described a last minute drama that transpired during the planning phases of the Nancy/Ronnie wedding.

“Jane came to see me and we talked and drank until around three o’clock in the morning,” Blondell said. “She wondered if she should stage an eleventh hour maneuver to get Ronnie back. She was determined to go to him in the pre-dawn hours and plead with him to remarry her. That ended when I reminded her that if she did that, she might have to get him out of bed with Nancy.”



Chains of love, Till death do us part: A proud, much-manipulated “Papa.”

“Later,” Blondell continued, “she told me that she had contacted Ronnie, and he agreed to meet her for a late breakfast at a secluded café in Santa Monica. I think she did ask him to take her back. But it was too late. He told her he was going ahead and marrying Nancy, even though he was still in love with Jane.”

“Ronnie won his victory,” Blondell said. “She wanted to be his wife again. Ronnie had always predicted she’d change her mind and want him back. But, according to Jane, he held out a compromise: He promised that during his upcoming marriage, he’d slip away and see her on occasion.”

“We’ll make love like we used to for old time’s sake,” he reportedly said.

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Before and after Reagan’s marriage to Nancy, Maureen, his older offspring, revealed her fears about his upcoming marriage to Nancy. “She’s still young enough to have children. Not only will I have to think about adjusting to half brothers or sisters, but I’ll be torn between two families. Please understand, siblings aside, my loyalty will always be to you and my mother. I love both of you dearly.”

“How are you getting along with Nancy?” Reagan asked Maureen.

“I find her sympathetic to the problems of a young girl like me growing up in Hollywood. But any motherly love I have will be reserved for mother.”

Patti Davis, daughter of Ronald and Nancy Reagan, was the prodigal daughter, dumping the Reagan name and using her mother's maiden name instead to symbolize her disgust with her father's right-wing political views.

As for her own politics, she was a pot-smoking liberal. At the age of 41, she posed for the July, 1994, edition of *Playboy*, appearing on the cover with the hands of a black man cupping her (otherwise naked) breasts. She also made a direct-to-video *Playboy Celebrity Centerfold*, the tape showing her cavorting in lesbian settings outdoors, followed by a solo masturbation scene.

Patti's first novel, *Homefront*, published in 1986, recorded fictionalized events inspired by her own childhood and teenaged years, an artistic choice which seriously pissed off her father's Republican friends.

"I understand that," he said.

[Maureen would later write a memoir, First Father, First Daughter, *in which she discussed the problems of Reagan marrying "The Other Woman." Adding to the complications of her family landscape, Nancy and Reagan eventually presented her with a half-sister and a half-brother.*

Maureen later said, "Dad married Nancy just in time. Patricia Ann Reagan was born by cesarean on October 21, 1952.

Years later, Maureen suggested that there was jealousy between her half sister and herself. She remembered sitting on the sofa in the Reagan living room, watching her father bounce Patti on his lap, later tossing her up in the air. Maureen wistfully, and perhaps with deep touches of envy, remembered when she sat on her dad's lap, and when he had tossed her into the air.

With Reagan, Maureen would always try to be the loyal daughter, presenting Patti in the most unfavorable light. "She even changed her name to Patti Davis," Maureen said. "I'm proud to be a Reagan. She's not!"

Indeed, Patti Davis grew up to be the "black sheep" of the family. She became known for her liberal viewpoints, many of which contrasted with her father's conservatism. She was pro-choice on abortion, and favored gay rights. Reagan did not.

She was also an author, not portraying her family in a positive light in The Way I See It, *in which she called her father, "cold, distant, and aloof to everyone except Nancy." She also charged Nancy with physical abuse.*

Ron Reagan, Jr. “Like father, like son” in every instance except his love of ballet.

Nancy’s mother was horrified in 1994 when Patti posed for Playboy.

On May 28, 1958, both Maureen and Michael would be presented with another sibling, born Ron Reagan, Jr. He, too, reportedly embarrassed his father when he dropped out of Yale to become a ballet dancer.

As President, Reagan was quizzed by reporters about his son’s sexual orientation. Reagan answered, “We checked him out. He’s definitely straight.”

One amusing incident occurred on Saturday Night Live, *during his father’s presidency. In a funny skit, Ron Jr. parodied Tom Cruise’s performance in* Risky Business *(1983) by dancing in his underwear—presumably while his parents were away— in a replica of the interior of the White House.*

Nancy and Reagan watched the show that night, but reportedly did not understand it. When it was explained to the President, Reagan asked, “Who is this Tom Cruise fellow?”

In 1988, one reporter confronted Reagan, “Is it true, as some have it, that your son is not only a liberal, but an atheist?”

“I’ll have no comment,” the President said.]

***

Reagan’s friends, Robert Taylor, George Murphy, William Holden, and Dick Powell, claimed that “Ronnie went through the jitters about marrying again.”

If both Tom Cruise and the President's son worked in a male strip club, which would women prefer? Your choice.

"I'm still in love with Jane, but I also love Nancy, but in a very different way," he explained to Murphy.

"Nancy," he continued, "will be loving and supportive. I know that about her. But Jane is a seductive little vixen. She'll betray you, infuriate you, but you keep going back for more of what she dishes out. I'll share a secret with you. Unlike Nancy, Jane talks real dirty in a guy's ear—What a turn-on!"

Reagan later admitted that during his courtship of Nancy, "I did everything wrong, doing everything that could have lost her if somebody up there hadn't been looking after me."

In his autobiography, he wrote, "In spite of my determination to remain foot-loose, in spite of my belief that the pattern of my life was all set and would continue without change, nature was trying to tell me something very important."

"I loved Jane, and I am still in love with her, but as a wife, she never understood me and my aspirations. Nancy is just the opposite. *She understands."*

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From the beginning of her relationship with Reagan, as Nancy later claimed, she sensed that acting was not providing fulfillment for Reagan. He seemed to want a career in something else, and she assumed that was politics, since he talked about that subject all the time.

Biographers have suggested that Nancy was the single most important source for leading Reagan out of the liberal camp into the right-wing den. But she denied that, claiming he was the one who got her interested in politics.

Before she married Reagan, Nancy consulted with Carroll Righter, Hollywood's reigning astrologer. He assured her that the "stars would shine on such a union." She felt confident to move ahead.

***

At long last, on February 29, 1952, that day arrived. At the marriage bureau, when they applied for a marriage license, an onlooker described their arrival.

"Ronnie looked a little pale in a turtleneck and trench coat, Nancy radiant in a white-collared black dress." It was the same black dress she'd worn on her first date with him.

Four days later, on the day of his wedding, Reagan was forty-one and had lost the youthful good looks that had drawn so many women to him during his early days in Hollywood. Nancy was thirty-one, although most of America thought she was twenty-six, because that's what was published in interviews.

In addition to their ranch, he would purchase a dream house along the Pacific Palisades.

In 1954, when he became a spokesperson for General Electric, that company would fill the house with every imaginable electric gadget designed for modern living, including a chandelier wheel with a dozen recessed colored lights, prominently positioned above their dining table.

William Holden was designated as Reagan's best man, his wife Ardis (the actress known as Brenda Marshall) serving as Nancy's matron of honor.

Nancy noticed that the Holdens weren't speaking to each other. They had had a fight the night before, after Ardis learned that her husband had had a fling with the bisexual actress, Judy Holliday, when they had co-starred together in *Born Yesterday* (1950).

Midway through the ceremony, Holden, with a few drinks in him, came up to Nancy. "Let me be the first to kiss the *new* Mrs. Ronald Reagan."

She quickly whispered to him. "You're jumping the gun. The ceremony's not over yet."

"No I'm not," Holden said, and kissed her anyway.

Nancy later claimed, "I certainly remembered that kiss from Bill. But I don't remember getting a kiss from Ronnie."

He had said he wanted no publicity. However, when they arrived at the Holden home for their modest reception, a photographer was waiting to record this historic event. Ardis had ordered a wedding cake.

At the reception, Reagan stood with Holden, looking over at Nancy and Ardis on the other side of the room.

"At least I know that with Nancy, I won't have a wife outshining me on the screen. No one is ever going to call me Mr. Nancy Davis, I can assure you."

"I'm with you, man," Holden said. "No one ever called me Mr. Brenda Marshall. That's what we get for marrying unimportant actresses, unlike Jane Wyman."

For their honeymoon night, Reagan drove Mrs. Ronald Reagan to the grandly historic Mission Inn in Riverside, where incognito movie stars often went for off-the-record trysts, especially on weekends. *[In 1940, Richard and Patricia Nixon had celebrated their wedding reception here.]*

After that night of passion, Reagan and Nancy set off to Phoenix to join Dr. Loyal Davis and his wife, Edith, who were vacationing there at the time.

Nancy later said, "Having a honeymoon with one's in-laws might have been a bit strange, I admit. But it worked beautifully, and Ronnie enjoyed the company of my parents who were so pleased with my choice of a husband."

As Edith told Reagan, "Honey, if you don't get it right the first time with Wyman, you're going to make it with Nancy. She'll be the best little wife a man could hope for, unlike those whores of Babylon out there in California."

During their drive from Phoenix back to Los Angeles, Reagan and Nancy were trapped in the worst sandstorm to hit western Arizona in twenty years. "The winds were harsh enough to make a coyote airborne," Reagan later said.

The winds at one point ripped the canvas of the retractable top of their convertible. For part of the ride, Nancy had to position herself on her knees on the front passenger seat, facing backwards, and holding the torn canvas together. Her hands became so frozen they had to stop periodically so that she could rub them together to help the blood circulate.

To some couples, the storm might have represented an evil omen. But for Nancy, at least, it wasn't so. She was totally optimistic.

Years later, as President of the United States, Reagan, one afternoon in the White House, told his aide (Secretary of the Treasury and later, Chief of White House Staff) the similarly named Donald T. Regan, "I found the ideal Cinderella. The shoe fit her little foot perfectly. As her Prince Charming, I promised to make her my Princess. Instead of that, I made her Milady and put her in a position more important than any damn run-of-the-mill princess. In fact, I plunged her into a life beyond her wildest dreams."

A Special Feature

White House Nights
Frank Sinatra & the Reagans
A Love Triangle

This photograph, taken on July 5, 1981 at the White House, on the occasion of Nancy Reagan's sixtieth birthday, was published on the frontpages of newspapers throughout the United States, even abroad.

Nancy was dancing, embraced in the arms of "the man of my dreams," Frank Sinatra, although he's wearing one of his worst *toupées*. She obviously regrets the intrusion of her husband, Ronald, who always suspected that "something was always going on between those two."

Originally, when he was still a pal of John F. Kennedy, Ol' Blue Eyes detested the Reagans. But when Bobby Kennedy, then Attorney General, made Frank *persona non grata* at the White House, the singer switched his political alliances.

He'd once said, "Reagan is a stupid bore who can't get a job in pictures." He'd also called Nancy, "A dumb broad with fat ankles who can't act."

But at this White House gala in 1981, he sang:

"I'm so proud that you're First Lady, Nancy,
Also so pleased that I'm sort of a chum.
The next eight years will be fancy as fancy as they come.
Nancy, Nancy, Nancy, with the smiling face."

"Gorbachev, Tear Down That Wall"

—Joyce Hodges

The 1930s-era starlet, Joy Hodges, was the woman who, early in the game, had filled Reagan in on the lowdown aspects of the entertainment industry during his first venture into Lotus Land. Consequently, she and Reagan became life-long friends. She lived through his presidency and beyond, dying on January 19, 2003, in Palm Springs, California, at the age of 88.

Auld Lang Syne: Two views of actress and *danseuse* Joy Hodges, from the era she welcomed then-newcomer Ronald Reagan to Hollywood.

Hodges once told reporters, "I got Ronnie his first pair of contact lenses and his first screen test. He was the first leading man in Hollywood to wear contact lenses, and he would take them out on a regular basis to show their then-new technology to friends."

When Reagan occupied the White House, he often invited her to dinner. Later, she commented, "At one party I found myself seated next to President Mikhail Gorbachev. I turned to him and said, 'Gorby, tear down that wall—and he did! Of course, Ronnie in Berlin later stole my line and it became his most famous statement

as president."

She recalled her final meeting with Reagan in January of 2001. "He looked at me and summoned up a name from somewhere deep in his memory. He called me 'Miss Jones.'"

She figured that he had recalled how she had played "Miss Jones" in the 1937 Broadway musical, *I'd Rather Be Right*, produced by Richard Rogers and George Kaufman. Its most memorable musical number was "Have You Met Miss Jones?"

The plot centered on a beautiful heroine (Miss Jones, as played by Hodges) and her boyfriend (Austin Marshall). The couple desperately needs to increase their income before they can get married. Before the final curtain, a show-biz representation of the President of the United States steps in and gracefully solves the lovers' dilemma.

"Ronnie probably remembered me from the play, or if not, at least as the subject of that song," Hodges said.

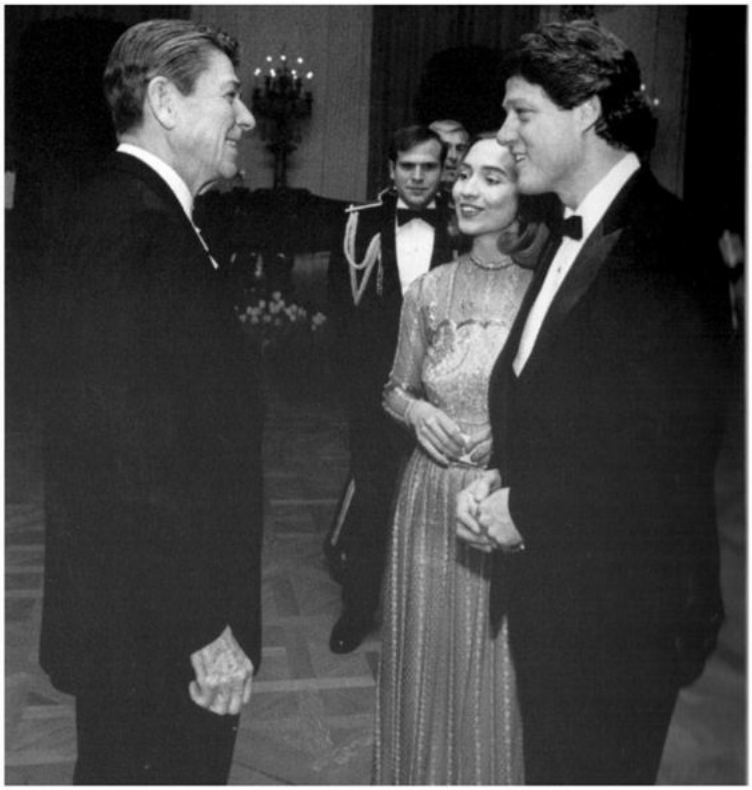
REST IN PEACE

In Memory of

Ronald Wilson Reagan

40th President (1981-1989) of the United States

February 6, 1911-June 5, 2004



At a White House Governor's Dinner, Ronald Reagan, 40th U.S. President, chats with Bill Clinton, the 42nd U.S. President, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, possibly the 45th U.S. President.

Near the conclusion of his first autobiography, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, Reagan was in a nostalgic mood. He remembered many of the people he had known, specifically acknowledging "May Robson, Alan Hale, Lionel Barrymore, Ethel Barrymore, Zasu *(sic)* Pitts, Eddy Arnold of the booming laugh, kindly Paul Harvey, roistering, scratching Wallace Beery, Charles Coburn (who amputated my legs), Adolph *(sic)* Menjou, and the greatest of all actors, Walter Huston."

Demurely, Reagan went on to label some of the less inhibited, more flamboyant actors he had known, specifically defining Ty Power, Errol Flynn, "Bogey," "Coop," Dick Powell, Wayne Morris, Clark Gable, and Jack

Carson, as members of “a special breed.”

Reagan ended his first (and relentlessly opaque) memoir on a reassuring, feel-good note, citing the usually rather blunt Clark Gable as saying, “The most important thing a man can know is, as he approaches his own door, that someone on the other side is listening for the sound of his footsteps.”

Referencing the happiness he’d found in married life with Nancy, and the wisdom he had found after the termination of his film career, he concluded, “(At last) I have found the rest of me.”

The Long Goodbye

In August of 1994, five years after his departure from the Oval Office, Ronald Reagan, with the ever faithful Nancy at his side, received the devastating news that he’d been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

Reacting to that, in November of that year, as autumn winds blew in from the Pacific, he penned a handwritten message to the American people. In part, it read:

“I have recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer’s Disease…
“At the moment I feel just fine. I intend to live the remainder of the years God gives me on this earth doing the things I have always done…
“I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life. I know that for America, there will always be a bright dawn ahead.
“Thank you, my friends. May God always bless you.”

From there, his health and his memory continued to deteriorate.

His friend, Merv Griffin, remembered visiting Reagan in his office in Los Angeles, at Century City. During that visit, the former President picked up a photograph of the White House. “This building looks familiar,” he said to the TV talk show host. “Where is it?”

Before he arrived in Hollywood, Reagan had been a gifted swimmer and lifeguard who saved 77 lives from drowning in the Rock River, near his home town of Dixon, Illinois.

But in retirement, he had to wear water wings and be propped up whenever he entered or departed from the waters of his pool by a security guard.

Flailing around for ways to fill his time, he developed and then defined a “special mission” for himself—gathering up magnolia leaves that had blown onto the pool’s surface. Recognizing the importance that Reagan associated with this task, Secret Service agents routinely collected bags of these leaves from other sites, placing them onto the surface of the pool’s water so he could then take credit for removing them.

Once a football star at Illinois’ Eureka College, Reagan, during his retirement, began to imagine that he had to get into uniform for the big game. “The team needs me!” he urgently and repeatedly told Nancy. He began to confuse scenes from his movies with his real life. Omnipresent were scenes from his famous football picture, *Knute Rockne— All American* (1940) that produced his all-time most famous line, “Win just one for the Gipper.”

One morning, the fast-deteriorating former president woke up sobbing, asking attendants nearby, “Where’s the rest of me?”—a question inspired by his critically acclaimed performance in *Kings Row* (1942), after a sadistic surgeon had maliciously amputated his legs. Decades later, from the depths of his dementia, he imagined that his own legs had been surgically removed.

The aging Titan would sometimes “cry like a baby” about taunts that his brother, Neil Reagan, had hurled at him, based on his belief that “Moon” had uttered those insults only a few hours before. Preceding him to the grave, his brother had died of Alzheimer’s Disease in 1996.

In reaction to her husband’s deterioration, Nancy, growing increasingly frail and having lost an alarming amount of weight, said “My heart is broken.”

As the first U.S. President to die during the 21st Century, Reagan passed on at his home in Bel Air, California, on June 5, 2004, not knowing that he had once been the most powerful elected leader in the World. His longevity defined him as the second longest-lived president in U.S. history, having survived 93 years and 120 days, just 45 days fewer than Gerald Ford.

After a state funeral in Washington’s National Cathedral, a ceremony presided over by then-president George W. Bush, Reagan’s body was flown back to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.

There, at a sunset Memorial Service and Internment Ceremony, Nancy, overcome with grief, lost her composure, crying in public for the first time that week.

She accepted the folded flag that had been draped over the coffin of her one-and-only husband. As she kissed the casket, she mouthed the words, “I love you,” before her sad departure.

Her final words were, “Ronnie’s long journey has finally taken him to a distant place where I can no longer reach him.”

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Ronald Reagan did not fear departing on another journey. He added a personalized footnote to his favorite poem, Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Crossing the Bar*, verses that were read at his Memorial Service:

Sunset and evening star.
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

“We have God’s promise that I have gone on to a better world, where there is no pain or sorrow. Bring comfort to those who may mourn my going.”

—Ronald Reagan

“Who is this strange woman and why is she kissing me?” Reagan might have asked on February 6, 2000 the occasion of his 89th birthday.

As part of the celebration, Nancy had given him a piece of cake and a kiss. Their 45th wedding anniversary, scheduled for March 4, would transpire in less than a month. But he didn’t know who she was. He had no idea that he had ever married her.

Acknowledgments

Jane Wyman, Nancy Davis, and Ronald Reagan (despite the latter two's "reveal nothing" memoirs) chose not to tell us very much about what used to be called their "salad days." Perhaps they were just being discreet, preferring to emphasize their triumphs rather than their compromises and indiscretions.

We at Blood Moon subscribe to Oscar Wilde's adage that there's nothing else to do with gossip but spread it around. So consequently, we have decided to do it for them.

It took some effort, actually decades of it, to assemble this portrait of the Reagans' "Love Triangle."

We were aided in our research by a vast array of collaborators in the film colony. Virtually everyone who ever worked with the Reagans had opinions and insights about them, both good and bad. If we listed all of them—some of them wanted anonymity—it would fill many dozens of pages.

Those people quoted in this book were viewed as newsworthy enough to have been the subject of individual interviews over the course of many years. As the Reagans became increasingly famous, many "lesser souls" wanted to talk about their involvements with Nancy, Jane, and Ronald.

The list is long and convoluted, but here is a sampling of some of the contributors:

Jack Carson (who was especially insightful about his best friend, Dennis Morgan); John Payne (from a hospital bed in New York, following an accident); Susan Hayward (when she was semi-retired and my neighbor in Fort Lauderdale).

There were so many others: Glenda Farrell, Frank McHugh, Eddie Albert, Wayne Morris, Pat O'Brien, Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, Allen Jenkins, Mervyn LeRoy, Priscilla Lane, Adele Jergens, Virginia Mayo, Ida Lupino, Phillip Terry, Ann Sheridan, Kent Smith, Audrey Totter, Rock Hudson, Raoul Walsh, Bruce Bennett, John Litel, Ray Enright, Tom Drake, Peter Lawford, Milton Berle, Bryan Foy, William Clemens, Lloyd Bacon, Anita Louise, Eddie Foy, Jr., Gale Page, Lewis Seiler, Michael Curtiz, Merv Griffin, Richard Thorpe, Alan Hale, Sr., Curtis Bernhardt, David Lewis, Jerry Wald, Viveca Lindfors, Alexis Smith, Peter Godfrey, Shirley Temple, Eve Arden, David Butler, Lewis R. Foster, Andrew Marton, Allan Dwan, and Nathan Juran.

As everyone in the business knows, the Hollywood Hills and the canyons of Manhattan are filled with (sometimes embittered) unpublished memoirs. It seems that everyone who was anybody, along with those who wanted to be, view their lives as worthy of a memoir. Year after year, most of these go unpublished

Blood Moon, however, receives some of these at regular intervals. Some representative titles have included: *I Was Tyrone Power's Secret Male Lover, Liberace's Secret Life*, and *My Affair with Oprah Winfrey*. Fear of libel often prevents the publication of many of these revelations.

Although many of their manuscripts never saw the light of publication, we are nonetheless grateful to the literary agencies operated by Bertha Klausner, Jay Garon-Brooke, and Ilsa Lahn for letting us wade through their "slush piles."

Manuscripts on Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwyck, and especially Paulette Goddard (written by her former secretary) were most helpful, as were portraits of Dick Powell, Dennis Morgan, George Murphy, Betty Grable, Lucille Ball, and William Holden. Long before us, other authors attempted separate manuscripts on the subjects of this book—i.e., "tell-alls" about Nancy, Jane, and Ronald.

One of our greatest contributors was Joan Blondell, a dear friend and house guest. She was very helpful about the early career of her "fellow chorine," Jane Wyman, and filled with wonderful stories about backdoor intrigue at

Warner Brothers in the 30s.

Another close friend, Van Johnson, on whose Manhattan terrace I spent many hours in the company of our mutual friend, songstress Greta Keller, had known and co-starred with Jane Wyman and (to a lesser degree) Reagan since World War II.

June Allyson was filled with revelations about the Reagans, especially in her later years, after she broke with Jane over a disagreement.

No one was more helpful than Stanley Mills Haggart, my former boss. He arrived in Hollywood during the Silent era and began writing about the film colony's fun and foibles in his voluminous diary. (It was never submitted for publication, and for good reason!) In the late 30s and early 40s, he had been Hedda Hopper's "leg man." In that much-envied and highly competitive position, he was often aided by his long-time companion, William Hopper (Hedda's son). William was a close personal friend of Reagan's, and appeared in bit parts in many of his early films.

Although Hedda couldn't print many of the indiscretions that Stanley and her son uncovered, confirmed, and delivered to her, she wanted to be keenly aware of what was happening after dark and during the pre-dawn hours of the industry that employed and fascinated her.

LOVE TRIANGLE

ITS AUTHORS

DARWIN PORTER

As an intense and precocious nine-year-old, **Darwin Porter** began meeting movie stars, TV personalities, politicians, and singers through his vivacious and attractive mother, Hazel, a somewhat eccentric Southern girl who had lost her husband in World War II. Migrating from the depression-ravaged valleys of western North Carolina to Miami Beach during its most ebullient heyday, Hazel became a stylist, wardrobe mistress, and personal assistant to the vaudeville comedienne Sophie Tucker, the bawdy and irrepressible "Last of the Red Hot Mamas."

Virtually every show-biz celebrity who visited Miami Beach paid a call on "Miss Sophie," and Darwin as a pre-teen loosely and indulgently supervised by his mother, was regularly dazzled by the likes of Judy Garland, Dinah Shore, Veronica Lake, Linda Darnell, Martha Raye, and Ronald Reagan, who arrived to pay his respects to Miss Sophie with a young blonde starlet on the rise—Marilyn Monroe.

Hazel's work for Sophie Tucker did not preclude an active dating life: Her *beaux* included Richard Widmark, Victor Mature, Frank Sinatra (who "tipped" teenaged Darwin the then-astronomical sum of ten dollars for getting out of the way), and that alltime "second lead," Wendell Corey, when he wasn't emoting with Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford.

As a late teenager, Darwin edited *The Miami Hurricane* at the University of Miami, where he interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt, Tab Hunter, Lucille Ball, and Adlai Stevenson. He also worked for Florida's then-Senator George Smathers, one of John F. Kennedy's best friends, establishing an ongoing pattern of picking up "Jack and Jackie" lore while still a student.

After graduation, as a journalist, he was commissioned with the opening of a bureau of *The Miami Herald* in Key West (Florida), where he took frequent morning walks with retired U.S. president Harry S Truman during his vacations in what had functioned as his "Winter White House." He also got to know, sometimes very well, various celebrities "slumming" their way through off-the-record holidays in the orbit of then-resident Tennessee Williams. Celebrities hanging out in the permissive arts environment of Key West during those days included Tallulah Bankhead, Cary Grant, Tony Curtis, the step-father of Richard Burton, a gaggle of show-biz and publishing moguls, and the once-notorious stripper, Bettie Page.

For about a decade in New York, Darwin worked in television journalism and advertising with his long-time partner, the journalist, art director, and distinguished arts-industry socialite Stanley Mills Haggart. Jointly, they produced TV commercials starring such high-powered stars as Joan Crawford (then feverishly promoting Pepsi-Cola), Ronald Reagan (General Electric), and Debbie Reynolds (selling Singer Sewing Machines), along with such other entertainers as Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Arlene Dahl, and countless other show-biz personalities hawking commercial products.

During his youth, Stanley had flourished as an insider in early Hollywood as a "leg man" and source of information for Hedda Hopper, the fabled gossip columnist. On his nightly rounds, Stanley was most often accompanied by Hedda's son, William Hopper, a close friend of Ronald Reagan's.

When Stanley wasn't dishing newsy revelations with Hedda, he had worked as a Powers model; a romantic lead opposite Silent-era film star Mae Murray; the intimate companion of superstar Randolph Scott before Scott became emotionally involved with Cary Grant; and a man-about-town who archived gossip from everybody who mattered back when the movie colony was small, accessible, and confident that details about their tribal rites would absolutely never be reported in the press. Over the years, Stanley's vast cornucopia of inside Hollywood information was passed on to Darwin, who amplified it with copious interviews and research of his own.

After Stanley's death in 1980, Darwin inherited a treasure trove of memoirs, notes, and interviews detailing Stanley's early adventures in Hollywood, including in-depth recitations of scandals that even Hopper during her heyday was afraid to publish. Most legal and journalistic standards back then interpreted those oral histories as "unprintable." Times, of course, changed.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Darwin joined forces with the then-fledgling Arthur Frommer organization, playing a key role in researching and writing more than 50 titles and defining the style and values that later emerged as the world's leading travel accessories, *The Frommer Guides*, with particular emphasis on Europe, California, New England, and the Caribbean. Between the creation and updating of hundreds of editions of detailed travel guides to England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Germany, California, and Switzerland, he continued to interview and discuss the triumphs, feuds, and frustrations of celebrities, many by then reclusive, whom he either sought out or encountered randomly as part of his extensive travels. Ava Gardner and Lana Turner were particularly insightful.

One day when Darwin lived in Tangier, he walked into an opium den to discover Marlene Dietrich sitting alone in a corner.

Darwin has also ghost written books for celebrities (who shall go nameless!) as well as a series of novels. His first, *Butterflies in Heat*, became a cult classic and was adapted into a film, *Tropic of Desire*, starring Eartha Kitt, among others. Other books included *Razzle-Dazzle*, about an errant female movie star of questionable morals; and an erotic thriller, *Blood Moon*, hailed as "pure novelistic Viagra, an American interpretation of Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde."*

Darwin's novel, *Marika*, published by Arbor House, evoked Marlene Dietrich for many readers.

His controversial novel, *Venus*, was suggested by the life of the fabled eroticist and diarist, Anaïs Nin. His novel, *Midnight in Savannah*, was a brutal saga of corruption, greed, and sexual tension exploring the eccentricities of Georgia's most notorious city.

His novel, *Rhinestone Country*, catalyzed a guessing game. Which male star was the inspiration for its lovable rogue, Pete Riddle? Mississippi Pearl praised it as "like a scalding gulp of rotgut whiskey on a snowy night in a bowjacks honky-tonk."

Darwin also transformed into literary format the details which he and Stanley Haggart had compiled about the relatively underpublicized scandals of the Silent Screen, releasing them in 2001 as *Hollywood's Silent Closet*, "an uncensored, underground history of Pre-Code Hollywood, loaded with facts and rumors from generations past."

Since then, Darwin has penned more than eighteen uncensored Hollywood biographies, many of them award-winners, on subjects who have included Marlon Brando; Merv Griffin; Katharine Hepburn; Howard Hughes; Humphrey Bogart; Michael Jackson; Paul Newman; Steve McQueen; Marilyn Monroe; Elizabeth Taylor; Frank Sinatra; John F. Kennedy; Vivien Leigh; Laurence Olivier; the well known porn star, Linda Lovelace; all three of the fabulous Gabor sisters, plus Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

As a departure from his usual repertoire, Darwin also wrote the controversial *J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson: Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women*, a book about celebrity, voyeurism, political and sexual repression, and blackmail within the highest circles of the U.S. government.

He has also co-authored, in league with Danforth Prince, four *Hollywood Babylon* anthologies, plus four separate volumes of film critiques, reviews, and commentary.

His biographies, over the years, have won more than 30 First Prize or runner-up awards at literary festivals in cities which include Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Hollywood, San Francisco, and Paris.

Darwin can be heard at regular intervals as a radio commentator (and occasionally on television), "dishing" celebrities, pop culture, politics, and scandal.

A resident of New York City, Darwin is currently at work on two biographies slated for release in 2015—*Peter O'Toole, Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, and Irish Rebel;* and *Bill & Hillary—So This Is That Thing Called Love*.

DANFORTH PRINCE

The publisher and co-author of *Love Triangle*, **Danforth Prince** is one of the "Young Turks" of the post-millennium publishing industry. He's president and founder of Blood Moon Productions, a firm devoted to researching, salvaging, compiling, and marketing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry.

One of Prince's famous predecessors, the late Lyle Stuart (self-described as "the last publisher in America with guts") once defined Prince as "one of my natural successors." In 1956, that then-novice maverick launched himself with $8,000 he'd won in a libel judgment against gossip columnist Walter Winchell. It was Stuart who published Linda Lovelace's two authentic memoirs—*Ordeal* and *Out of Bondage*.

"I like to see someone following in my footsteps in the 21st Century," Stuart told Prince. "You publish scandalous biographies. I did, too. My books on J. Edgar Hoover, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and Barbara Hutton stirred up the natives. You do, too."

Prince launched his career in journalism in the 1970s at the Paris Bureau of *The New York Times*. In the early '80s, he resigned to join Darwin Porter in researching, developing and publishing various titles within *The Frommer Guides*, jointly reviewing the travel scenes of more than 50 nations for Simon & Schuster. Authoritative and comprehensive, they were perceived as best-selling "travel bibles" for millions of readers, with recommendations and travel advice about the major nations of Western Europe, the Caribbean, Bermuda, The Bahamas, Georgia and the Carolinas, and California.

Prince, along with Porter, is also the co-author of several award-winning celebrity biographies, each configured as a title within Blood Moon's Babylon series. These have included *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!; Hollywood Babylon Strikes Again; The Kennedys: All the Gossip Unfit to Print;* and *Frank Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer*.

Prince, with Porter, has co-authored such provocative biographies as *Elizabeth Taylor: There is Nothing Like a Dame*.

With respect and a sense of irony about "When Divas Clash," Prince and Porter also co-authored *Pink Triangle: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Members of their Entourages*, as well as *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams*.

Prince is also the co-author, with Darwin Porter, of four books on film criticism, three of which won honors at regional bookfests across America, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. Special features within these guides included the cinematic legacy of Tennessee Wiliams; the implications associated with strolling down *Sunset Blvd.*, that "Boulevard of Broken Dreams"; behind-the-scenes revelations about the making of *Ben-Hur*, starring Charlton Heston. From *Flesh* to *Trash*, he previewed many of Andy Warhol's films and "unzipped" Marlon Brando. He also took a cinematic look at the legacy of Greta Garbo in the re-release of her movies of long ago, revisiting *Mata Hari*, *Anna Christie*, *Queen Christina*, *Anna Karenina*, *Camille*, and *Ninotchka*, among many others.

Prince, a graduate of Hamilton College and a native of Easton and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is the president and founder (in 1996) of the Georgia Literary Association, and of the Porter and Prince Corporation, founded in 1983, which has produced dozens of titles for both Prentice Hall and John Wiley & Sons. In 2011, he was named "Publisher of the Year" by a consortium of literary critics and marketers spearheaded by the J.M. Northern Media Group.

According to Prince, "Blood Moon provides the luxurious illusion that a reader is a perpetual guest at some gossippy dinner party populated with brilliant but occasionally self-delusional figures from bygone eras of The American Experience. Blood Moon's success at salvaging, documenting, and articulating the (till now) orally transmitted histories of the Entertainment Industry, in ways that have never been seen before, is one of the most distinctive aspects of our backlist."

Publishing in collaboration with the National Book Network (www.NBNBooks.com), he has electronically documented some of the controversies associated with his stewardship of Blood Moon in more than 50 videotaped documentaries, book trailers, public speeches, and TV or radio interviews. Any of these can be watched, without charge, by performing a search for "Danforth Prince" on **YouTube.com**, checking him out on **Facebook** (either "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions"), on **Twitter** (#Bloodyand-Lunar) or by clicking on **BloodMoonProductions.com**.

During the rare moments when he isn't writing, editing, neurosing about, or promoting Blood Moon, he works out at a New York City gym, rescues stray animals, talks to strangers, and regularly attends Episcopal Mass every Sunday.

BLOOD MOON Productions, Ltd.

BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS

Entertainment About How America Interprets Its Celebrities

Blood Moon Productions is a feisty and independent New York based publishing enterprise dedicated to researching, salvaging, and indexing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry. As described by *The Huffington Post*, "Blood Moon, in case you don't know, is a small publishing house on Staten Island that cranks out Hollywood gossip books, about two or three a year, usually of five-, six-, or 700-page length, chocked with stories and pictures about people who used to consume the imaginations of the American public, back when we actually had a public imagination. That is, when people were really interested in each other, rather than in Apple 'devices.' In other words, back when we had vices, not devices."

Reorganized with its present name in 2004, Blood Moon originated in 1997 as the Georgia Literary Association, a vehicle for the promotion of obscure writers from America's Deep South. For several decades, Blood Moon and its key players (Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince) spearheaded the research, writing, and editorial functions of dozens of titles, and hundreds of editions, of THE FROMMER GUIDES, the most respected name in travel publishing.

Blood Moon maintains a back list of more than 30 critically acclaimed biographies, film guides, and novels. Its titles are distributed by the National Book Network (www.NBNBooks.com), and through secondary wholesalers and online retailers everywhere.

Since 2004, Blood Moon has been awarded dozens of nationally recognized literary prizes. They've included both silver and bronze medals from the IPPY (Independent Publishers Association) Awards; four nominations and two Honorable Mentions for BOOK OF THE YEAR from Foreword Reviews; nominations from The Ben Franklin Awards; and Awards and Honorable Mentions from the New England, the Los Angeles, the Paris, the Hollywood, the New York, and the San Francisco Book Festivals. Two of its titles have been Grand Prize Winners for Best Summer Reading, as defined by The Beach Book Awards, and in 2013, its triple-play overview of the Gabor sisters was designated as Biography of the Year by the Hollywood Book Festival.

For more about us, including access to a growing number of videotaped book trailers, TV and radio interviews, and public addresses, each accessible via **YouTube.com,** search for key words "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions."

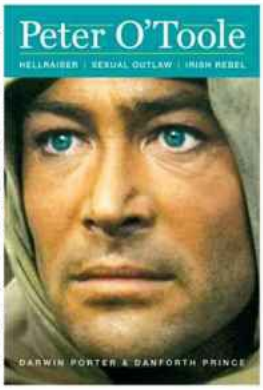
Or click on **WWW.BLOODMOONPRODUCTIONS.COM;** visit our page on Facebook; subscribe to us on Twitter (#BloodyandLunar); or refer to the pages which immediately follow.

Thanks for your interest, best wishes, and happy reading. Literacy matters! Read a book!

Danforth Prince, President
Blood Moon Productions, Ltd.

In the early summer of 2015, Blood Moon will release the grittiest, most unvarnished, and most comprehensive overview of the life, accomplishments, and scandals associated with the 20th Century's most astonishing (and most alarming) actor:

Peter O'Toole



One of the world's most admired (and brilliant) actors, Peter O'Toole wined and wenched his way through a labyrinth of sexual and interpersonal betrayals, sometimes with disastrous results. Away from the stage and screen, where such films as *Becket* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, made film history, his life was filled with drunken, debauched nights and edgy sexual experimentations, most of which were never openly examined in the press. A hellraiser, he shared wild times with his "best blokes" Richard Burton and Richard Harris. Peter Finch, also his close friend, once invited him to join him in sharing the pleasures of his mistress, Vivien Leigh.

"My father, a bookie, moved us to the Mick community of Leeds," O'Toole once told a reporter. "We were very poor, but I was born an Irishman, which accounts for my gift of gab, my unruly behavior, my passionate devotion to women and the bottle, and my loathing of any authority figure."

Author Robert Sellers described O'Toole's boyhood neighborhood. "Three of his playmates went on to be hanged for murder; one strangled a girl in a lovers' quarrel; one killed a man during a robbery; another cut up a warden in South Africa with a pair of shears. It was a heavy bunch."

Peter O'Toole's hell-raising life story has never been told, until now. Hot and uncensored, from a writing team which, even prior to O'Toole's death in 2013, had been collecting under-the-radar info about him for years, this book has everything you ever wanted to know about how THE LION navigated his way through the boudoirs of the Entertainment Industry IN WINTER, Spring, Summer, and a dissipated Autumn as well.

Blood Moon has ripped away the imperial robe, scepter, and crown usually associated with this quixotic problem child of the British Midlands. Provocatively uncensored, this illusion-shattering overview of Peter O'Toole's hellraising (or at least very naughty) and demented life is unique in the history of publishing.

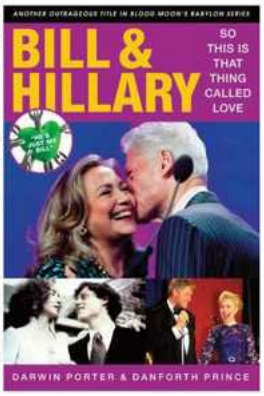
Available Everywhere in MAY, 2015

PETER O'TOOLE: Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel
Softcover, with photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-45-7

Coming Soon: A Pertinent Addition to the Political Rumpus of America's 2016 Elections and Beyond

Bill & Hillary

So This Is That Thing Called Love



Blood Moon, famous for its exposés of celebrity scandal in Hollywood and in the political camps of both the Kennedys and the Reagans, has AT LAST turned its focus onto the role THE CLINTONS have played in Washington's Babylon.

No other big-league power team has ever done it like Bill & Hillary. With the release of this book, Blood Moon will prove that Democrats can generate scandals even more provocative than their Republican counterparts.

Unprecedented and unauthorized, this book is savvy about the ways smart people sometimes compromise in affairs of the human heart. It's not about politics, but about the political world's most enduring love affair, and the role of the Clintons as the world's most famous couple. It's based on revelations from witnesses to the dramas of a hard-nosed but nonetheless romantic team who might once again take over the Free World.

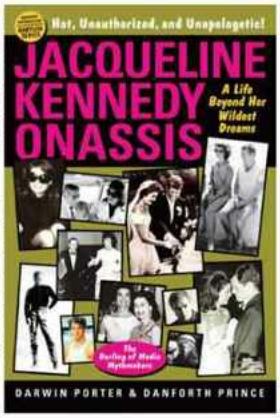
Its authors have studied virtually everything about the Clintons since their days as local celebrities in Little Rock. It all began when two students, meeting at Yale in 1970, united—based on their own brand of love—to launch "The Plan," events from which have already incited tragedy, triumph, screams of protest from sometimes horrified observers, and the ongoing fascination of celebrity-watchers everywhere.

Available Everywhere in the Autumn of 2015

BILL & HILLARY—SO THIS IS THAT THING CALLED LOVE
Softcover, with photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-47-1

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS

A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams



After floods of analysis and commentary in tabloid and mainstream newspapers worldwide, this has emerged as the world's most comprehensive testimonial to the flimsier side of Camelot, the most comprehensive compendium of gossip ever published about America's unofficial, uncrowned queen, **Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis**. Its publication coincided with the 20-year anniversary of the death of one of the most famous, revered, and talked-about women who ever lived.

During her tumultuous life, Mrs. Onassis zealously guarded her privacy and her secrets, but in the wake of her death, more and more revelations have emerged about her frustrations, her rage, her passions, her towering strengths, and her delicate fragility, which she hid from the glare of the world behind oversized sunglasses. Within this posthumous biography, a three-dimensional woman emerges through the compilation of some 1,000 eyewitness testimonials from men and women who knew her over a period of decades.

An overview of the life of Mrs. Onassis is a natural fit for Blood Moon, a publishing enterprise that's increasingly known, worldwide, as one of the most provocative and scandalous in the history of publishing.

"References to this American icon appear with almost rhythmic regularity to anyone researching the cultural landscape of America during the last half of The American Century," said Danforth Prince, Blood Moon's president and one of the book's co-authors. "Based on what we'd uncovered about Jackie during the research of many of our earlier titles, we're positioning ourselves as a more or less solitary outpost of irreverence within a landscape that's otherwise flooded with fawning, over-reverential testimonials. Therein lies this book's appeal—albeit with a constant respect and affection for a woman we admired and adored."

Based on decades of research by writers who define themselves as "voraciously attentive Kennedyphiles," it supplements the half-dozen other titles within Blood Moon's Babylon series.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS—A LIFE BEYOND HER WILDEST DREAMS
Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

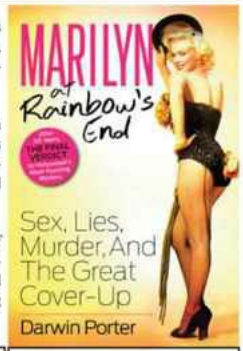
Paperback, Biography/Entertainment
6" x 9" 700 pages with hundreds of photos
ISBN 978-1-936003-39-6 Also available for E-readers.

This book illustrates why *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and why Marilyn Monroe was too dangerous to be allowed to go on living.

Less than an hour after the discovery of Marilyn Monroe's corpse in Brentwood, a flood of theories, tainted evidence, and conflicting testimonies began pouring out into the public landscape.

Filled with rage, hysteria, and depression, "and fed up with Jack's lies, Bobby's lies," Marilyn sought revenge and mass vindication. Her revelations at an imminent press conference could have toppled political dynasties and destroyed criminal empires. Marilyn had to be stopped…

Into this steamy cauldron of deceit, Marilyn herself emerges as a most unreliable witness during the weeks leading up to her murder. Her own deceptions, vanities, and self-delusion poured toxic accelerants on an already raging fire.



"This is the best book about Marilyn Monroe ever published." **—David Hartnell,** Recipient, in 2011, of New Zealand's Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to the entertainment industry, as defined by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Winner of literary awards from the New York, Hollywood, and San Francisco Book Festivals

MARILYN AT RAINBOW'S END

SEX, LIES, MURDER, AND THE GREAT COVER-UP, BY DARWIN PORTER
ISBN 978-1-936003-29-7 Temporarily sold out of Hard copies, but still available for E-Readers

"Darwin Porter is fearless, honest and a great read. He minces no words. If the truth makes you wince and honesty offends your sensibility, stay away. It's been said that he deals in muck because he can't libel the dead. Well, it's about time someone started telling the truth about the dead and being honest about just what happened to get us in the mess in which we're in. If libel is lying, then Porter is so completely innocent as to deserve an award. In all of his works he speaks only to the truth, and although he is a hard teacher and task master, he's one we ignore at our peril. To quote Gore Vidal, power is not a toy we give to someone for being good. If we all don't begin to investigate where power and money really are in the here and now, we deserve what we get. Yes, Porter names names. The reader will come away from the book knowing just who killed Monroe. Porter rather brilliantly points to a number of motives, but leaves it to the reader to surmise exactly what happened at the rainbow's end, just why Marilyn was killed. And, of course, why we should be careful of getting exactly what we want. It's a very long tumble from the top."

—ALAN PETRUCELLI, Examiner.com, May 13, 2012

PINK TRIANGLE

The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Famous Members of their Entourages

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

Softcover, 700 pages, with photos ISBN 978-1-936003-37-2
Also Available for E-Readers

The *enfants terribles* of America at mid-20th century challenged the sexual censors of their day while indulging in "bitchfests" for love & glory.

This book exposes their literary slugfests and offers an intimate look at their relationships with the *glitterati*—MM, Brando, the Oliviers, the Paleys, U.S. Presidents, a gaggle of other movie stars, millionaires, and dozens of others.

This is for anyone who's interested in the formerly concealed scandals of Hollywood and Broadway, and the values and pretentions of both the literary world and the entertainment industry.

***

"A banquet... If *PINK TRIANGLE* had not been written for us, we would have had to research and type it all up for ourselves…Pink Triangle is nearly seven hundred pages of the most entertaining histrionics ever sliced, spiced, heated, and serviced up to the reading public. Everything that Blood Moon has done before pales in comparison.

"Given the fact that the subjects of the book themselves were nearly delusional on the subject of themselves (to say nothing of each other) it is hard to find fault. Add to this the intertwined jungle that was the relationship among Williams, Capote, and Vidal, of the times they vied for things they loved most—especially attention—and the times they enthralled each other and the world, [*Pink Triangle* is] the perfect antidote to the Polar Vortex."

—Vinton McCabe in the NY JOURNAL OF BOOKS

"Blood Moon prides itself on mixing tabloid journalism, going to the source of gossip itself—okay, hearsay, or the quickly deteriorating minds of aging witnesses—with genuine moments of hard-work research (and there always is some of that in Blood Moon Productions' books) to come up with their titles.

"Full disclosure: I have been a friend and follower of Blood Moon Productions' tomes for years, and always marveled at the amount of information in their books—it's staggering. The index alone to *Pink Triangle* runs to 21 pages—and the scale of names in it runs like a *Who's Who* of American social, cultural and political life through much of the 20th century...The only remedy is for you to run out this February, in time for Valentine's Day, and buy *Pink Triangle*."

—Perry Brass in THE HUFFINGTON POST

"We Brits are not spared the Porter/Prince silken lash either. PINK TRIANGLE's research is, quite frankly, breathtaking. PINK TRIANGLE will fascinate you for many weeks to come. Once you have made the initial titillating dip, the day will seem dull without it."

—Jeffery Tayor in THE SUNDAY EXPRESS (UK)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Darwin Porter, himself an unrepentant *enfant terrible*, moved through the entourages of this Pink Triangle with impunity for several decades of their heyday. Early in 2014, he wrote a book about it.

"Every literate person in America has strong ideas about The Pink Triangle. This *exposé* of its members' feuds, vanities, and idiosyncracies will be required reading if you're interested in the literary climate of 'The American Century.'"

—Danforth Prince

THOSE GLAMOROUS GABORS

Bombshells from Budapest

Darwin Porter

Zsa Zsa, Eva, and Magda Gabor transferred their glittery dreams and gold-digging ambitions from the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Hollywood. There, more effectively than any army, these Bombshells from Budapest broke hearts, amassed fortunes, lovers, and A-list husbands, and amused millions of *voyeurs* through the medium of television, movies, and the social registers. In this astonishing "triple-play" biography, designated "Best Biography of the Year" by the Hollywood Book Festival, Blood Moon lifts the "mink-and-diamond" curtain on this amazing trio of blood-related sisters, whose complicated intrigues have never been fully explored before.

From *the New York Review of Books*: "You will never be Ga-bored…this book gives new meaning to the term compelling.

"Be warned, *Those Glamorous Gabors* is both an epic and a pip. Not since *Gone With the Wind* have so many characters on the printed page been forced to run for their lives for one reason or another. And Scarlett making a dress out of the curtains is nothing compared to what a Gabor will do when she needs to scrap together an outfit for a movie premiere or late-night outing.

"For those not up to speed, Jolie Tilleman came from a family of jewelers and therefore came by her love for the shiny stones honestly, perhaps genetically. She married Vilmos Gabor somewhere around World War 1 (exact dates, especially birth dates, are always somewhat vague in order to establish plausible deniability later on) and they were soon blessed with three daughters: **Magda**, the oldest, whose hair, sadly, was naturally brown, although it would turn quite red in America; **Zsa Zsa** (born 'Sari') a natural blond who at a very young age exhibited the desire for fame with none of the talents usually associated with achievement, excepting beauty and a natural wit; and **Eva**, the youngest and blondest of the girls, who after seeing Grace Moore perform at the National Theater, decided that she wanted to be an actress and that she would one day move to Hollywood to become a star.

"Given that the Gabor family at that time lived in Budapest, Hungary, at the period of time between the World Wars, that Hollywood dream seemed a distant one indeed. The story—the riches to rags to riches to rags to riches again myth of survival against all odds as the four women, because of their Jewish heritage, flee Europe with only the minks on their backs and what jewels they could smuggle along with them in their *decolletage*, only to have to battle afresh for their places in the vicious Hollywood pecking order—gives new meaning to the term 'compelling.' The reader, as if he were witnessing a particularly gore-drenched traffic accident, is incapable of looking away."

—New York Review of Books

About the Author:
Darwin Porter spent more than a half-century collecting anecdotes and interviews with virtually everyone ever associated with the Gabors, including a gaggle of Hungarian and Viennese eyewitnesses who remembered the Gabors before their American debuts. **Jolie Gabor**, the trio's mother, was a frequent guest within Porter's home in New York City, and for a period of three years, the Austrian-born cabaret singer, **Greta Keller** (Jolie Gabor's best friend and each of the three sisters' godmother) was a semi-permanent resident there. Jolie and Greta, "two shrewd and hard-nosed battleaxes from the mine fields of Old Europa," are included among the many sources which contributed to the hundreds of never-before-published revelations which permeate this astonishing triple biography.

Softcover, 730 pages, with hundreds of photos, ISBN 978-1-936003-35-8
Also available for e-readers

INSIDE LINDA LOVELACE'S DEEP THROAT

Degradation, Porno Chic, and the Rise of Feminism

Darwin Porter

"THIS BOOK IS A WINNER!" An insider's view of the unlikely heroine who changed the world's perceptions about pornography, censorship, and sexual behavior patterns forever

The Beach Book Festival's Grand Prize Winner: "Best Summer Reading of 2013"
Runner-Up to "Best Biography of 2013" *The Los Angeles Book Festival*
Winner of a Sybarite Award from HedoOnline.com

"This book drew me in..How could it not?" Coco Papy, *Bookslut.*

A Bronx-born brunette, the notorious Linda Lovelace was the starry-eyed Catholic daughter in the 1950s of a police officer who nicknamed her "Miss Holy Holy." Twenty years later, she became the most notorious actress of the 20th century.

She'd fallen in love with a tough ex-Marine, Chuck Traynor, and eventually married him, only to learn that she had become his meal ticket. He forced her at gunpoint into a role as a player within hardcore porn, including a 1971 bestiality film entitled *Dogarama.*

Her next film, shot for $20,000, was released in 1972 as *Deep Throat.* It became the largest grossing XXX-rated flick of all time, earning an estimated $750 million and still being screened all over the world. The fee she was paid was $1,200, which her husband confiscated. The sexy 70s went wild for the film. Porno chic was born, with Linda as its centerpiece.

Traynor, a sadist, pimped his wife to celebrities, charging them $2,000 per session, It became a status symbol to commission an "individualized" film clip of Linda performing her specialty. Clients included Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Milton Berle, Desi Arnaz, Marlon Brando, William Holden, Peter Lawford, and Burt Lancaster. The Mafia had found its most lucrative business—pornography—since Prohibition.

After a decade of being assaulted, beaten, and humiliated, Linda, in 1980, underwent a "Born Again" transformation. She launched her own feminist anti-pornography movement, attracting such activists as Gloria Steinem, and scores of other sex industry professionals who refuted their earlier careers.

Critics claimed that Linda's *Deep Throat* changed America's sexual attitudes more than anything since the first Kinsey report in 1948, that she super-charged the feminist movement, and that to some degree, she re-defined the nation's views on obscenity.

The tragic saga of Linda Lovelace changed beliefs about entertainment, morality, and feminism in America. This book tells you what the movie doesn't.

***Darwin Porter**, author of some twenty critically acclaimed celebrity exposés of behind-the-scenes intrigue in the entertainment industry, was deeply involved in the Linda Lovelace saga as it unfolded in the 70s, interviewing many of the players, and raising money for the legal defense of the film's co-star, Harry Reems. In this book, emphasizing her role as a celebrity interacting with other celebrities, he brings inside information and a never-before-published revelation to almost every page.*

INSIDE LINDA LOVELACE'S DEEP THROAT
The Most Comprehensive Biography Ever Written of an Adult Entertainment Star and Her Relationship with the Underbelly of Hollywood
Softcover, 640 pages, 6"x9", with hundreds of photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-33-4

WINNER OF FOUR DISTINGUISHED LITERARY AWARDS, THIS IS THE BEST BIOGRAPHY OF VIVIEN LEIGH & LAURENCE OLIVIER EVER PUBLISHED

Scarlett O'Hara, Desperately in Love with Heathcliff, Together on the Road to Hell

Here, for the first time, is a biography that raises the curtain on the secret lives of **Lord Laurence Olivier**, often cited as the finest actor in the history of England, and **Vivien Leigh,** who immortalized herself with her Oscar-winning portrayals of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind,* and as Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

Dashing and "impossibly handsome," Laurence Olivier was pursued by the most dazzling luminaries, male and female, of the movie and theater worlds.

Lord Olivier's beautiful and brilliant but emotionally disturbed wife (Viv to her lovers) led a tumultuous off-the-record life whose paramours ranged from the A-list celebrities to men she selected randomly off the street. But none of the brilliant roles depicted by Lord and Lady Olivier, on stage or on screen, ever matched the power and drama of personal dramas which wavered between Wagnerian opera and Greek tragedy. ***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*** is the definitive and most revelatory portrait ever published of the most talented and tormented actor and actress of the 20th century.

Darwin Porter is the principal author of this seminal work.

Roy Moseley, this book's co-author, was an intimate friend of both Lord and Lady Olivier, maintaining a decades-long association with the famous couple, nurturing them through triumphs, emotional breakdowns, and streams of suppressed scandal. A resident of California who spent most of his life in England, Moseley has authored or co-authored biographies of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Rex Harrison, Cary Grant, Merle Oberon, Roger Moore, and Bette Davis.

*"***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara** *can be a dazzling read, the prose unmannered and instantly digestible. The authors' ability to pile scandal atop scandal, seduction after seduction, can be impossible to resist."*

—THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DAMN YOU, SCARLETT O'HARA

THE PRIVATE LIFES OF LAURENCE OLIVIER AND VIVIEN LEIGH

Darwin Porter and Roy Moseley

ISBN 978-1-936003-15-0 Hardcover, 708 pages, with about a hundred photos and hundreds of insights into the London Theatre, the role of the Oliviers in the politics of World War II, and the passion, fury, and frustration of their lives together as actors in Hollywood.

Also available for E-Readers

PAUL NEWMAN

The Man Behind the Baby Blues, His Secret Life Exposed

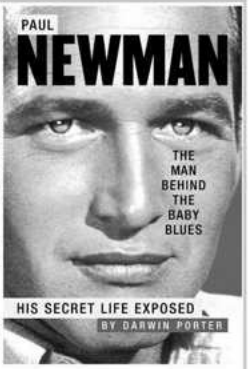
Darwin Porter

Drawn from firsthand interviews with insiders who knew Paul Newman intimately, and compiled over a period of nearly a half-century, this is the world's most honest and most revelatory biography about Hollywood's pre-eminent male sex symbol.

If you're a fan of Newman *(and who do you know who isn't)* you really should look at this book. It's a respectful but candid cornucopia of once-concealed information about the sexual and emotional adventures of an affable, impossibly good-looking workaday actor, a former sailor from Shaker Heights, Ohio, who parlayed his ambisexual charm and extraordinatily good looks into one of the most successful careers in Hollywood.

Whereas the situations it exposes were widely known within Hollywood's inner circles, they've never before been revealed to the general public.

But now, the full story has been published, as recorded by celebrity chronicler Darwin Porter—the giddy heights and agonizing crashes of a great American star, with revelations and insights never before published in any other biography.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: "There are guilty pleasures. Then there is the master of guilty pleasures, Darwin Porter. There is nothing like reading him for passing the hours. He is the Nietzsche of Naughtiness, the Goethe of Gossip, the Proust of Pop Culture. Porter knows all the nasty buzz anyone has ever heard whispered in dark bars, dim alleys, and confessional booths. And lovingly, precisely, and in as straightforward a manner as an oncoming train, his prose whacks you between the eyes with the greatest gossip since Kenneth Anger. Some would say better than Anger."

—**Alan W. Petrucelli,** *The Entertainment Report*
Stage and Screen Examiner, Examiner.com

Paul Newman, The Man Behind the Baby Blues
His Secret Life Exposed

Recipient of an Honorable Mention from the New England Book Festival, this is the most compelling and unvarnished biography of Paul Newman ever written.

Hardcover, 520 pages, with dozens of photos. **ISBN 978-0-9786465-1-6.** Also available for E-readers

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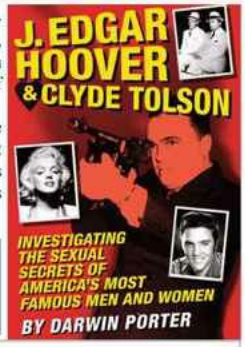

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—Paul Bellini, FAB Magazine (Toronto)

J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson

Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women

Darwin Porter

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MERV GRIFFIN

A Life in the Closet

Darwin Porter

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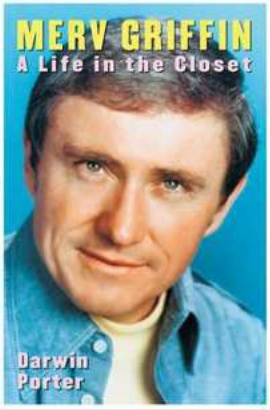

MERV GRIFFIN, A LIFE IN THE CLOSET

Merv Griffin began his career as a Big Band singer, moved on to a failed career as a romantic hero in the movies, and eventually rewrote the rules of everything associated with the broadcasting industry. Along the way, he met and befriended virtually everyone who mattered, including Nancy Reagan, and made billions operating casinos and developing jingles, contests, and word games. All of this while maintaining a male harem and a secret life as America's most famously closeted homosexual.

In this comprehensive and richly ironic biography, Darwin Porter reveals the amazing details behind the richest, most successful, and in some ways, the most notorious mogul in the history of America's entertainment industry.

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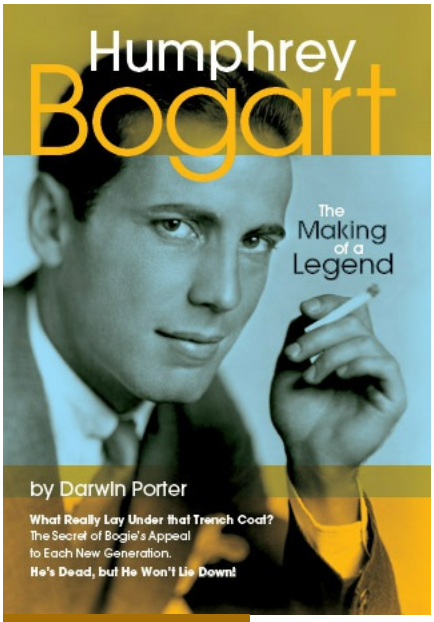

Humphrey Bogart
The Making of a Legend

The Gods bestow their gifts at random, and They decided to give Humphrey Bogart equal doses of good and bad luck. All those years of heavy drinking and smoking finally caught up with him in 1957. But, as compensation, the Gods granted him immortality.

Darwin Porter, in this revelatory biography, provides the greatest insight yet into how a young, struggling New York actor, Humphrey Bogart, became the movie legend, "Bogie," adored by millions around the world.

"Bogie, we hardly knew you." That's what readers will be saying after reading this daring, myth-shattering biography of the screen's most famous movie star. Award-winning biographer Darwin Porter reveals what really lay under that trench coat. Exposed with all their juicy details is what Bogie never told his fourth wife, Lauren Bacall, herself a screen legend.

It's all here. The screen icon's unknown affair with Bette Davis, his co-star in *The Petrified Forest*, and even details about his on-and off-screen romance with Ingrid Bergman during the filming of *Casablanca*—a secret liaison which has been falsely denied for years.

The Making of a Legend follows Bogie—originally known as "Hump"—from his birth on Christmas Day in 1899, through four marriages, and ending when he drew his last breath in January of 1957.

There's a revelation on every page. One tantalizing tidbit, for example, provides lurid details about how his third wife, actress Mayo Methot of "The Battling Bogarts," attempted to murder him.

In this biography, the mystery of Bogie's bumpy ride from Broadway to Hollywood has, like the enigma of *The Maltese Falcon*, been solved. He enjoyed affairs with the sexiest sirens of Hollywood's Golden Age, including Marlene Dietrich, Barbara Stanwyck,

Continued on back flap

Continued from front flap

Ann Sheridan, Tallulah Bankhead, Joan Crawford, and a host of lesser but in most cases, fiercely ambitious divas. Within the pages of this book, pre-Code Hollywood—flappers, Prohibition, bathtub gin, and sex of all persuasions—is re-created.

We learn about Bogie's longtime affair with Verita Thompson, a liaison that lasted longer than any of his marriages and which included a final deathbed declaration of their love.

As Louise Brooks told the author in Rochester, New York, "You've heard of serial killers. Bogie was a serial seducer. He just stood there waiting for women, who swarmed to him like moths to a flame. Once they appeared, he showed them a real good time. That included me."

Or, as Bette Davis told the author in Los Angeles, "For crime-outre, what a place Hollywood was back then. Women like Joan Crawford were sleeping with different partners at least four times a week. Bogart was in the Flynn before anyone ever heard of Errol. Hollywood was one giant bordello. Men with women, men with men, women with women, and the public never knew."

This revelatory book is based on dusty unpublished memoirs, letters, diaries, and often personal interviews from the women and the men who adored him. There are also shocking allegations from colleagues, former friends, and jilted lovers who wanted the screen icon to burn in hell. All this and more, much more, in Darwin Porter's newest celebrity exposé, *Humphrey Bogart, The Making of a Legend*.

One of the most prolific biographers in the world, Darwin Porter inherited the diaries, notes, and oral histories of writers and witnesses who had known and followed the career of Humphrey Bogart beginning in the 1920s. This remarkable compendium of information results from three generations of Bogart fans watching, evaluating, and recording the foibles and eccentricities of America's most famous movie star.

"In 1980, Darwin Porter inherited a vast but disorganized archive that had been compiled over a period of 50 years by eyewitnesses to the Jazz-Age shenanigans of Humphrey Bogart. Enriching it with information from players who either loved or hated Bogart (or both), Porter distilled this treasure trove of historic data into one blockbuster of a Hollywood read."

Danforth Prince

"Porter's biography is laced with gossippy gems. It also paints a sympathetic portrait of Bogart as a loyal friend who went out of his way to help others. He also had some scandalous skeletons in his closet."

The National Enquirer

"Porter's book uncovers scandals within the entertainment industry, when publicists from the movie studios deliberately twisted and suppressed inconvenient details about the lives of their emerging stars."

Turner Classic Movie News

"Humphrey Bogart was one of Hollywood's most celebrated lovers, his romance with Lauren Bacall hailed as one of the greatest love stories of the 20th century. But before they met, he was a drug-taking womaniser, racking up a string of failed marriages and broken relationships with some of the world's most beautiful women. Here, in an extraordinary biography drawing on a wealth of previously unseen material, veteran showbusiness writer Darwin Porter reveals the explosive truth behind Bogart's shady past."

The Mail on Sunday (London)

HUMPHREY BOGART

THE MAKING OF A LEGEND

History's Most Famous Male Movie Star
HUMPHREY BOGART
1899-1957

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HUMPHREY BOGART

THE MAKING OF A LEGEND

Another Hot, Startling, and Unauthorized Probe
of America's Entertainment Industry from

Darwin Porter

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE LEGACY OF
STANLEY MILLS HAGGART

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the pages ahead, a description of the source of each individual piece of information is positioned very close to the spot where that information actually appears. Also, within the pages ahead, direct quotations have been transcribed "as they were remembered" by the witnesses who originally heard the remarks. They're presented with the same nuances, and with the same phraseologies, that were used when those remarks were originally transmitted.

CHAPTER ONE

It was an idyllic setting, a picture postcard of Victorian life that still thrived in America before its last vestiges were swept away by the coming of the Great War.

Ever since the final summer of the nineteenth century, handsome Dr. Belmont DeForest Bogart and his successful artist wife, Maud, with her frizzy red hair and strong jaw, had come to a manicured spot on the shoreline of Lake Canandaigua, one of New York State's Finger Lakes, to relax and go sailing on his deluxe yacht*, Comrade*, moored just two hundred feet from their gingerbread-decorated, two-story Victorian manse.

A local brewer, Jonathan Mulhouse, had built the house in 1871 for his rotund wife and their equally hefty brood of six very fat children. Although Mulhouse himself looked like a lean and mean Abraham Lincoln, his children resembled his blubber wife more than they did himself. The Mulhouse family was the scandal of Seneca Point. The children were ridiculed for their weight and for a physical deformity inherited from Mrs. Mulhouse. None of the brood had a neck. Locals called them the "no-neck Mulhouses." This genetic flaw also didn't come from Mr. Mulhouse, who had one of the longest necks east of the Mississippi.

The ridiculous appearance of the Mulhouses was not the only subject of local gossip. Rumor had it Mrs. Mulhouse allowed all her children to drink beer from her husband's brewery even though they were underage.

It had been with a sigh of relief that neighbors learned in 1899 that a New York doctor and his wife had taken over the Mulhouse home. "To judge from the size of Mr. Bogart's yacht moored on the lake, I think they are rich New Yorkers," the Mayor, Frank Schmidt, proudly announced at a private dinner of the Chamber of Commerce. "From what I hear, the Bogarts are a most respectable family."

The arrival of the Bogarts at Canandaigua and their departure every Labor Day was considered a news event to be reported in *The Canandaigua Gazette*.

On the particularly lovely summer afternoon of July 5, 1913, the spire of the tower room of the Bogart home still stood proudly after the Fourth of July fireworks. The lawns sweeping down to the lake were immaculately trimmed.

The crops were at full bloom in the adjoining farmlands, and cows grazed in the surrounding pasturelands. Even the woods seemed quiet except for a young farmhand sneaking into the darkest part of the forest with one of the local wives whose husband was in New York City on a business trip. From his bedroom window, the teenage son, Humphrey, nicknamed, "Hump," looked out at the weeping willows that fluttered in the wind so gracefully that their movements seemed to be the work of a choreographer.

When Maud had first seen the fluttery willows and a bubbling brook running alongside their property, she'd dubbed their new home "Willow Brook." She set about to furnish it with crystal, tapestries, classical statues, precious china, antiques, and Oriental carpets.

The Bogarts' neighbors were invariably from Boston or New York, and they'd come to Seneca Point, a rich community directly south of& ;Canandaigua, to escape from the blistering summer heat of those two cities. Wealthy businessmen hobnobbed with bankers, newspaper columnists, presidents of colleges, and even a well-cared-for clergyman who was said to drink five bottles of wine a day.

Dr. Belmont DeForest Bogart and his wife, Maud Bogart

Willow Brook, their summer house on Canandaigua Lake,

It was at Seneca Point that young Hump first met two men called the Warner Brothers. They were not the brothers who built a powerful Hollywood studio that would bring Hump his greatest fame when he was no longer called "Hump" but "Bogie." These Warner Brothers, Henry and David, designed and constructed steamboats, including some showboats that sailed up and down the Mississippi.

Even more fascinating was another pair of brothers, Frank and Arthur Hamlin, who lived next door to the Bogarts. Their father was the local banker. Ever since Hump rescued Arthur from the lake when the youngster fell off the dock, the Hamlins had told Hump he could consider "our house your second home."

Although Hump enjoyed playing games with the boys, he mostly liked coming over to visit their mother, Mary Hamlin, in the afternoons where she gave him rich pastries and told him& of her life in the theater.

She wrote religious dramas which played across the country. It wasn't Hump's type of drama but he loved listening to her stories about life in the theater. She knew all the great actors of her day and confided the most intimate stories about their personal lives.

"It's a world of make-believe," she told Hump. "You can lose yourself in the world of the theater." Mary urged Hump and his playmates to launch an impromptu theater at the lakeshore near the bandstand, setting up their own summer playhouse.

Until meeting Mary, Hump had never considered being an actor. When it was first suggested to him, he told Mary that it wasn't his kind of thing. "Father wants me to be a surgeon, but I'd rather be a sailor."

In time, breaking from religious dramas, Mary Hamlin would write *Alexander Hamilton*, a play that became a hit on Broadway. Warner Brothers, Hump's future studio, purchased the rights to it and filmed it in 1931. The movie became one of the most successful talkies of that time.

In his bedroom, a noise distracted Hump, who went to look out the rear of his window, from which he had a good view of the carriage road that ran over a one-lane stone-built bridge at the rear of their manse.

Their cook was receiving a load of fresh produce from a local farmer. From a horse-pulled carriage, he could see the unloading of the largest, ripest tomatoes he'd ever seen, along with peaches, potatoes, carrots, and grapes so fresh that the aroma of the vineyard rose to his second-floor open window. Maud always insisted that she get "only the best" of the local bounty before it was shipped off to the stifling city markets of New York City or Philadelphia.

Seneca Point in those days was a staunchly Republican enclave even though only that summer, a young Democrat, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had arrived, ostensibly on what he'd told his cronies was a "hunting expedition." The daughters of the prosperous families of Seneca Point were said to have produced the loveliest single concentration of "female pulchritude" this side of Broadway. Roosevelt became enamored of one young belle, Beth Ferguson, whom he invited every afternoon to the lake for swimming. It was while showing off his prowess as a swimmer that Roosevelt had been stricken with a stomach cramp. When Beth saw his right arm go up into the air and then her boyfriend go under, she thought he was playing another one of& his many tricks on her. Since meeting her, he'd always chided her for being so gullible. At first& she'd thought that he was only pretending to be drowning. When he didn't surface for a while, she grew panicky and screamed for help.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

The family of Dwight St. Davids was having a picnic nearby along the shores of the lake. Beth screamed to them to rescue Roosevelt. Their youngest son, Peter, was home for the holidays from Princeton. Sensing what was wrong, Peter, an expert swimmer, dived into the cold lake and swam toward Roosevelt. Peter went underwater and emerged with Roosevelt gasping for air. Peter brought the body ashore and called for his other family members to help him carry the body to the nearby Bogart home.

When Dr. Belmont Bogart came out onto his front verandah, he encountered what he thought was a dead victim of drowning. He rushed to give the young man medical attention.

The commotion attracted the rest of the Bogart family. Hump, Maud, and the two daughters, Catherine and Frances, also came out onto the porch. They looked in horror as Belmont seemingly brought life back to the victim. When young Roosevelt was breathing properly once again, Belmont ordered that he be taken upstairs and put in Hump's bed.

Laid to rest on the soft bed upstairs, Roosevelt fell into a deep coma-like sleep. Belmont ordered Hump to stay in the room with the recovering victim in case he should experience a turn for the worse. "Make sure that he's breathing all right," Belmont said before heading downstairs to join Maud.

Hump resented spending the rest of the afternoon and evening guarding Roosevelt. A surly Irish maid arrived with a tray of food for his supper. She plopped down the tray telling him, "Eat it if you don't want to starve."

"I don't like turnips," Hump protested.

"Then throw the bloody things out the window," the maid said before going out and slamming the door.

With those turnips still uneaten on his plate, Hump had fallen asleep somewhere during the middle of the night. Before nodding off, he'd checked on Roosevelt. The young man was snoring loudly.

The following morning, it had been Roosevelt who awakened Hump. The doctor and Maud had departed on a shopping expedition, and had left Hump to have breakfast alone with Roosevelt after the doctor had examined him and had pronounced him fit.

Roosevelt appeared to be in his late twenties or even early thirties. It had been over the breakfast table where Hump finally got his favorite dish—ham and eggs—that he'd begun to learn who their mysterious guest was.

Even though innocent at the time, Hump soon realized that Roosevelt, who had quickly become "Franklin" to him, was not supposed to be at Seneca Point but had told his wife, Eleanor, that he was in Philadelphia on business. "Being an attorney allows me to go out of town on occasion," Franklin said,& "and seize the opportunity."

"Are you related to Theodore Roosevelt?" Hump asked.

"Actually, he's my fifth cousin," Roosevelt said, "but we're not particularly close. In fact, I married one of my cousins, Eleanor. A fine woman but a bit plain. Perhaps you'll meet her one day. If you do, please keep my visit to Seneca Point a secret."

Hump promised that he would.

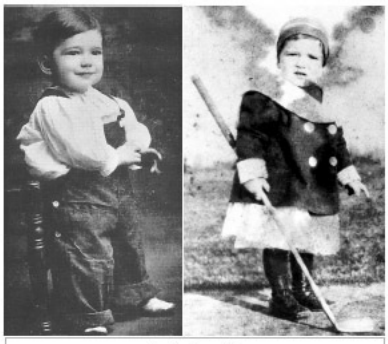
After thanking Hump for the hospitality and leaving a note for Dr. Bogart, whom he claimed “saved my life,” Franklin departed, planning to return to New York City. He told Hump he was heading for Washington, where he was going to become Assistant Secretary of the Navy. “Cousin Theodore held that post before moving on to become governor of New York and later president of the United States. Who knows? I might follow his trail.” Before leaving, Franklin said, “Since we share a dark secret, young man, I want to invite you to come and visit me in Washington when you grow up a bit more. Washington may not have as many beautiful young girls as Seneca Point, but I’m sure to find a suitable debutante for you.”

“That’s a promise I’ll hold you to,” Hump said before shaking the young politician’s hand.

“This is not good-bye,” Franklin said. “It’s just a temporary farewell until we meet again. Hopefully, under far better circumstances.”

The strange visit of Franklin Roosevelt to Seneca Point had been the highlight of Hump’s summer there. Otherwise, he found the days long, lazy, and slow. He craved action and wasn’t getting any excitement from anywhere except from books. He loved to read.

Back in his upstairs bedroom following a big lunch, he felt bloated. He liked to lie down after eating to digest his food.



Bogie, Aged 2

Maud always preferred to go with his father to sit on their large front verandah overlooking the lake. Over the lunch table, Hump had gotten mad at the mean family cook. Although the meal had consisted of two roasts, and a selection of seven fresh vegetables from the field, there was no ham& on the table. He always complained when he saw no ham.

Going downstairs for a glass of cold water, Hump looked out through the French doors onto the porch where his parents were resting in a large swing. He wondered if he’d ever grow to be as tall as his father, all six feet of him with shoulders so broad he could have been a football player. Even on the hottest days, Belmont never appeared outside the house unless he was dressed in a heavy suit of dark blue wool along with a white shirt and a stiff collar. He always ordered the maid to “make my collars extra stiff.”

Almost as tall as her husband, Maud was an Edwardian beauty. She invariably wore only mauve, lavender, or gray —mostly graceful silks that seemed to flow in the wind, or else heavily starched cotton dresses that were immaculately tailored. She had thirty pairs of high-heeled, high-button shoes, always with a lavender ribbon. The tiny shoes were like those of a little girl’s. Almost daily, Maud commented on her size two and a half feet. “They’re so tiny I don’t know how they carry me around. Some six-year-old girls have feet larger than mine.”

Remarks such as that always brought a compliment from Belmont. “In China I hear they bind women’s feet to make them as small, tender, and beautiful as yours. I don’t dare get you near a Chinaman because he’d kidnap you for his harem and make love to your feet all night.”

Returning with his cold water to take upstairs, where he was reading Joseph Conrad’s *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Hump paused once again to look out at the bucolic scene of his parents sitting in the swing on their verandah on this perfect summer day.

From his black leather satchel, Belmont removed a syringe. Maud was wearing a long-sleeved dress in soft tones of mauve with gray accessories. She unbuttoned the pearl buttons on her left arm and rolled up her sleeve. With his wife's forearm exposed in all its porcelain beauty, Belmont very gently inserted a needle into her arm. She closed her eyes and leaned back in the swing as if enjoying a respite from the hot summer afternoon by a cooling breeze blowing in from the lake.

After having injected his wife, Belmont removed his jacket and rolled up the sleeve of his white shirt. He then injected the needle into his own arm.

Hump had seen enough. He didn't know exactly what was happening, only that his parents were injecting morphine into their arms. Morphine, he'd heard, was to be injected only into sick people. His parents weren't sick. They'd never looked better and healthier.

Placing the glass of water on a nearby antique, Hump quietly tiptoed upstairs. He didn't want his parents to know he'd been spying on them in a secret moment.

Back in his bedroom, he was deeply disturbed by that scene he'd just witnessed on the porch. He picked up his book and tried to resume reading it on his bed.

Somehow he knew that what his father was doing was not right, but he didn't exactly understand why it was wrong. From the safety of his bedroom, he tried to think this out rationally. His father was a surgeon and a leading heart and lung specialist, earning $20,000 a year, so Hump figured his father must have a valid reason to shoot morphine into himself and into Maud.

An awful reality dawned. His parents weren't healthy at all. They were sick and that's why they needed the morphine, perhaps to prevent some incurable illness.

He dropped his Conrad book to the floor and sat up in his bed. This idyllic summer home, and their grand life in New York City would surely come to an end if his parents died. Who would raise him and his sisters?

A paralyzing fear swept over him. He had to find out what was the matter with them.

His world as he'd known it was now in jeopardy.

***

Two days after Hump had seen his father shooting morphine into his mother's arm and his own arm, he went to Maud's studio and knocked on her door. When working, she'd left instructions not to disturb her for any reason, "even if someone is dying." Showing her displeasure, she threw open the door. "What is it?"

"I saw the needles going into your arms," he blurted out.

She pulled him inside. "You're to tell no one, especially your sisters. Certainly none of the neighbors."

"If you're sick, I want to know," he protested.

Very patiently Maud sat him down and told him that three years before he was born, his father had been in a dreadful accident after he'd earned his degree at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons.

"Your father was an intern being driven in a horse-drawn ambulance going at top speed. The vehicle accidentally overturned when it hit an enormous pothole. Belmont fell out of the ambulance onto the cobblestones. The ambulance turned over on him, breaking five of his ribs and his left leg. The leg was not set properly. It had to be broken again and reset by more competent surgeons. Ever since that day, your father's health has declined, and he constantly suffers unbearable pain. He doesn't want you children to know the extent of his pain. He puts up a brave front for all of us."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Hump said. "That tells me a lot about father. But what's the matter with you? Why do you

need morphine?"

"I don't suffer as much as Belmont does, but I have this skin disease. The words won't mean anything to you. It's called erysipelas, a streptococcal inflammation. That means fiery hot, red skin that burns me so badly at times it's like putting my skin on a hot stove. Sometimes when I'm in here retreating from the world, it's because I can't show my face. Either my left or right eye will close completely. A whole side of my face will burst into flames. The condition will even spread to my breasts. Morphine is the only thing to cure it. Belmont thinks that the condition is so severe, the pain so unbearable, that I will be driven crazy if I don't take drugs."

"But won't morphine turn you and father into drug addicts?"

(above) Maud with Humphrey (below) Her illustration, later entitled "The Maud Humphrey Baby"

Enraged, Maud grabbed the back of Hump's stiff shirt and ushered him toward the door. As he stepped into the hallway, she said, "Don't you ever come into my studio again." She slammed the door in his face.

Humiliated, Hump rushed down the hall, colliding into one of the Irish maids, Jane Byrne, "Watch where in the hell you're going, you little shit," she cried out at him. She used the word "shit" all the time.

All the servants called him "the little shit," never Humphrey. It was "the little shit" this, or "the little shit" that. For the rest of his life, Hump would refuse to allow the word "shit" to be uttered in his presence.

He didn't understand why Maud always recruited from the lowest class of Irish servants, each of whom received $3.50 a week in pay. They had vile tempers, horrible manners, and terrible language. Without provocation, a servant would suddenly strike either him or one of his sisters. Complaints about the behavior of the staff to his parents went unheeded. They didn't seem to care.

When Hump had told Maud that the male servant, Liam Mangam, had taken off his leather belt and had beaten him severely, she'd said, "I'm sure he wouldn't have done that if you'd been behaving properly."

After Maud had ushered him from her studio, Hump wanted to run away or at least escape from their summer house for the rest of the day.

He stood in the living room, not certain where to go. Over the fireplace mantle Maud had hung a baby picture he hated. It was an idealized portrait she'd painted of him in 1900 when he was only one year old.

Known as the "Maud Humphrey Baby," the portrait had been reproduced across the country, becoming the most famous baby picture in the nation. It later appeared on the label of the best-selling brand of baby food of its day, Mellins Baby Food.

Later in life, the man then known as “Bogie” would say, “There was a period in American history when you couldn’t pick up a God damn magazine without seeing my cute little kisser in it.”

Maud was a true Victorian illustrator, who believed that babies should be cherubic, their faces round, their cheeks evoking chipmunks. If they also had ruby-red lips, a long white starched dress, curly blond ringlets, large trusting eyes, and a frilly collar, so much the better.

On a wall overlooking the dining room table hung another Maud portrait of him when he was two years old. He was as chubby cheeked as ever but his slickly combed hair was revealed, no more baby bonnet. He looked like Little Lord Fauntleroy in side-buttoned overalls with rolled-up cuffs and a billowing white shirt, again stiffly starched.

Hump was determined that, if not today, maybe tomorrow, he was going to grow up to be a man and not some powder puff.

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Later, on the same day he’d been banished from Maud’s summer studio, Hump wandered alone around the tranquil lake. Except for the turmoil going on in his own home, the setting looked like the fantasy life his Dutch ancestors had sought when they’d come over to help settle New York.

Hump always felt that it could be a dreamy life for all of the Bogarts if only his parents were different. They were cold and distant and never gave him the love he needed, not even a kiss on the cheek or a warm embrace.

Even though they were his parents, Hump didn’t know all that much about them, since they rarely mentioned their own childhoods. Both parents traced their lineage to Europe as far back as the early 16th century. Members of royalty were included among both Dr. Bogart’s ancestors and those of Maud.

Decades later, one royal link would be leaked to the press. It was reported at the wedding of Lady Diana Spencer to Britain’s Prince Charles, that his new princess was the seventh cousin of Humphrey Bogart on his mother’s side.

Dr. Bogart’s father, Adam Watkins Bogart, had run an inn for summer visitors to the Finger Lakes. Arriving from Holland in the 17th century, his family had farmed in Brooklyn, which until the 20th century had a “Bogart Avenue” in their memory. In 1853 the family moved to the Finger Lakes.

At Canandaigua, Adam had run a tough tavern, with a jailhouse in the basement. It was called Franklin House, and it was the only inn in Canandaigua, attracting men who smoked cheap stogies and wore muddy boots reeking of manure.

The woman he’d married, Julia, was considerably better off financially than Adam. After marriage, he moved with her to Jefferson House in the village of Watkins on Lake Seneca. There they ran a small three-story hotel with more than a dozen rooms to rent. It was here they gave birth to their first born, pretentiously naming him Cornelius Edward Bogart. Cornelius was killed at the age of six when he attempted to slide down the banister of stairs that led into the lobby of Jefferson House. He fell on his head on the black and white checkerboard Tuscan tile and died instantly.

Their second son, Belmont DeForest Bogart, was born in 1866, a year after the death of his brother. Julia was to live only two years after the birth of her second son. She developed a “mysterious” illness and lay in bed for five months, suffering. In her will, she left all her money to Belmont, and none to her husband, Adam.

In 1871, Adam sued her estate, eventually winning control of the money and his son. Julia had asked that Belmont be taken away from his father and placed in the care of either of her sisters.

After her death, Adam never remarried. Using Julia’s money, he grew rich when he created a method of lithographing on tin plates, a technique later used extensively in advertisements.

Maud had been born about a year before her husband on March 30, 1865, the daughter of a rich shoe manufacturer, John Perkins Humphrey, in Rochester, New York.

Her family was wealthy enough to finance her artistic career, sending her to the Art Students' League in New York from 1886 to 1894 and later to the Académie Julian in Paris where she'd studied with James McNeill Whistler. There were rumors that she'd had an affair with the fabled American painter, who was in his 50s when he first met Maud. Throughout her life, Maud never confirmed nor denied the rumor, saying, "It's for damn sure I didn't pose for *Whistler's Mother*."

It was in Paris that she'd painted her first nude. The model was the well-built former prizefighter, Rodolphe Julian, who frequently modeled in the nude at the *Académie* he'd founded. Some of the art students jokingly said that Rodolphe had founded the art school only so he could "show off his ample assets" before the art classes, as he'd often confess that he himself "knew nothing about art. I know what I like—and that's that."

Even though aging when Maud had met him, Rodolphe still kept his body as neat and trim as that of an Olympic athlete. In those days, only male artists were allowed to paint male nudes. Most art schools didn't even encourage female painters and, if they allowed them entrance, did not let them paint nude models either male or female.

At his *Académie,* Rodolphe changed all that. It was said that many young women signed up for his classes just to see what a man looked like in the nude. Many women at the time saw a naked man for the first time on their wedding night, with virtually no prior knowledge of the male anatomy.

"After looking at Rodolphe, and painting him, it's probably inevitable that we'll be disappointed with our husbands," Maud confided to a fellow art student, Mary Fielding, from Charleston, South Carolina.

Maud was known for her razor-tongued wit, and she found a perfect match in the equally sharp-tongued Belmont. Each could take the other down with biting sarcasm. Both of them passed this dubious characteristic onto their son, Humphrey.

Bogie's future director, John Huston, said the actor was known throughout his life for needling people, or "sticking in the saber," as Huston put it.

What his parents didn't pass on to their son was their political conservatism. Belmont was a Republican and a Presbyterian, Maud a Tory and an Episcopalian. Humphrey would grow up to become a liberal Democrat.

Born on Christmas Day, 1899, "a Christmas gift to his parents," as later reported by publicists at Warner Brothers, Humphrey DeForest Bogart came into the world at Sloane's Hospital in New York, weighing eight pounds and seven ounces. He'd been born six days before the end of the 19th century, and in later life always referred to himself as a "man of the last century."

He'd had an elongated foreskin, and his doctor father had recommended circumcision. Maud had been adamantly opposed, claiming that "was a barbaric Jewish custom."

Until he'd gone into the Navy at the end of World War I, Humphrey had lived with this extended foreskin. After his military service, when he ran into his former classmate, Doug Storer, at a tavern, he confided, "I had a doctor trim it a bit, but he left enough for me to still have fun."

Belmont himself in 1901 delivered his second child, a girl named Frances Bogart. Because she was chubby as an infant, Hump nicknamed her "Fat." When she grew up and lost her excess weight, she was called Pat. Two years later, another sister, Catherine, was born.

In his early years Maud and Belmont had big plans and high hopes for Hump. Belmont, dining at Luchow's, his favorite German restaurant on 14th Street in New York, boasted that his adolescent son would one day go to Yale and become a world-famous surgeon. "My wife says Columbia, but I definitely see the boy as a Yale man."

Hump's one and only attempt at performing surgery had ended in disaster when he'd attempted it when he was eight years old. His sister Catherine had developed a large boil with a pus-filled head. She begged her brother to puncture it, since Belmont was away on a hunting trip. Retrieving his father's first-aid kit, with its scalpel, needles, and cotton, he attempted to lance the boil with a needle. When it didn't work, he used his pocket knife. Immediately, a mixture of pus and blood shot with high velocity into his face. His screaming sister had to be rushed to the nearest

hospital before she bled to death.

One afternoon, about a month later, Hump found Maud terribly depressed, revealing that she'd learned some "very bad news." She told him that she'd visited an itinerant fortune teller who was passing through the Finger Lakes that summer. "Your son will grow up to enjoy fabulous wealth and will know many loves," the gypsy had told her. "But both of your daughters are destined for tragic lives."

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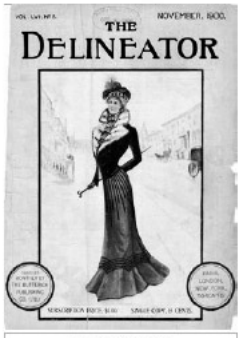
Hump was heartbroken to learn that Maud and Belmont had placed Willow Brook up for sale in August of 1913. If a buyer could be found, their summer home and their days at the lake would be over. Maud promised the children a summer cottage on Fire Island for the coming year.

She'd taken a position as an illustrator on the magazine, *Delineator*, and needed to be close to New York City, the magazine's base of operations. "The pay is fabulous," she told Hump. "Fifty-thousand dollars a year."



The Delineator
November, 1900

Walking down by the lake, Hump recalled his happiest times here when Belmont took him sailing on his champion yacht, *Comrade*. It was on that very lake that Belmont had taught Hump how to sail, a passion his son would enjoy until the day of his death.

In time, Belmont purchased a one-cylinder motor boat, which Hump had called *Desire*, and he went out, putt-putting around the lake all by himself. In later life, Bogie would tell friends that sailing on the lake by himself was "the only time in my life I've ever felt free."

His sister, Pat, later told friends that her brother went through a typical adolescent period when he developed crushes on males. "It was just a period," Pat said, "and in no time at all he grew out of it. He certainly didn't grow up to be a homosexual, as many of his leading ladies can testify."

That summer Hump made Belmont the focus of his attention. Belmont was tall and good looking, a strong man and avid hunter, a real outdoors type, everything that Hump wanted to be, but wasn't. When his father would invite him sailing, Hump was thrilled to have Belmont to himself and not have to share him with family or patients.

But after Belmont met his neighbor, Mrs. Harry Lansing, he no longer invited Hump sailing. Although a bit hefty, Mrs. Lansing was extremely beautiful to Belmont. He pursued the married woman when Maud wasn't present. Her husband, Harry, the son of a railroad tycoon, was never at home. Rumors were that he was an alcoholic. When not drinking, he was said to chase after other women.

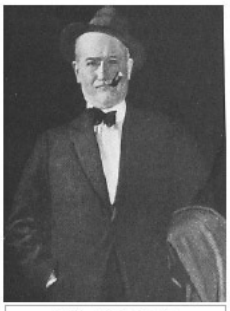
Sometimes Belmont would announce to his family that he was taking Hump sailing with him. But when they got to the lake, Mrs. Lansing would be waiting for the doctor. Belmont always gave Hump money to spend in town while he sailed away with Mrs. Lansing.

Out there alone on the lake, Belmont was surely making love to Mrs. Lansing, or so Hump suspected. They'd be gone for hours. Instead of going to town, Hump would often wait for him beside the pier, no matter how long it

took.

Perhaps Maud learned that summer of her husband's affair, or maybe she didn't. All Hump knew was that during those final days on the lake, before they returned to the city, Maud moved out of the master bedroom she shared with her husband and took a smaller bedroom on the top floor.

"I'm still going to be married to your father," she told Hump, "but one phase of our relationship is definitely over. You'll have no more brothers or sisters."



William A. Brady Sr.

That bitter rejection by his father was eased when Hump was introduced to Mrs. Lansing's daughter, Grace. Hump felt that she was the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen, even more stunning than Franklin Roosevelt's young mistress.

They'd met when Mary Hamlin had organized the resort's young people into the Seneca Point Players. Over his protests, she'd named Hump the producer and director and had cast& him as the lead in the players' first production, *Sunset in the Old West*. Mary had cast the Lansing daughter, Grace, as Hump's romantic female lead.

Before leaving for Seneca Point that summer, Hump had met a patient of his father's, William Brady Sr., a handsome showman and promoter and the son of Irish immigrants. Living next door, Brady had called on Belmont, claiming that "my cook has given me ptomaine poisoning."

Hump had also been in his father's office that day, and had found Brady a fascinating man. He regaled Hump with stories of his former life when he'd gone from shoeshine boy to newsboy, from stage manager to actor, and from comedian to play director. "Now I'm a producer," Brady said. "I also manage boxers, none of whom know how to throw a punch. That is, except for two winners, both heavyweight title holders, Jim Corbett and Jim Jeffries. I have luck with boxers named Jim."

Before Brady had been called into Belmont's office, the producer turned to Hump. "I have a son about your age, William Brady Jr. I'll introduce you to him. I'm sure you'll hit it off real swell."

Hump had to go to Seneca Point for the summer, but he eagerly looked forward to seeing young Brady when he came back to New York. Hump was in dire need of a male best friend.

When Brady Sr. learned that a local theater troupe was being formed at Seneca Point, he sent some discarded Broadway costumes to the Bogart family. Brady had just closed down a show on Broadway, *The Girl of the Golden West*, and he had plenty of outfits to spare, including chaps, boots, and western garb.

Hump tried on a ten-gallon hat that practically drowned his head, but he wore it in his first play anyway. He played the star, a role that depicted him as a "good man gone wrong." He'd become a gun-slinging bandit—that is, until he met the heroine of the play who "sets him on the straight and narrow path once again."

Grace, the female lead, won his heart in the play and also won his heart in real life. The audience around the bandstand peacefully watched this farce. They'd paid five cents each for tickets, plus another one penny for a glass of cold lemonade.

Throughout the rehearsals, thoughts of Grace had consumed Hump. The day after the play closed, he bribed one of the Irish maids to pack a picnic lunch for him. He'd invited Grace to go hiking in the nearby woods, and she'd accepted.

After their picnic on a blanket, he leaned over and kissed her. Decades later, Grace said she kissed him back, even though she'd never let a boy kiss her before. "He was handsome and charming, and I genuinely liked him. But he got carried away when I kissed him. He wanted to go farther."

As a summer rain fell across the meadow, Hump jumped up and begged her to strip off her clothing with him. Even though she remained fully dressed, he pulled off his trousers, shirts, and underwear and danced around her in the nude, urging her to take off her clothes too. "I'd never seen a boy's penis before," Grace said, much less one erect, and I was terrified. I started running across the slippery meadow heading for home, leaving him standing nude with his erection on the wet blanket."

He later told his friend, Peter St. Davids, "I'm not much of a lover, I guess.& I got the gal at the end of that stupid play, but not in real life."

Later when Grace Lansing had become Mrs. Gerald Lambert of Princeton, New Jersey and Palm Beach, Florida, she became friends with Bogie's first wife, Helen Menken, telling her of that summer on the lake with Humphrey. "I always regretted we didn't fool around that day," Grace said, "especially when he became a world famous screen actor. I could have claimed to be Humphrey Bogart's first love. But, alas, it was not to be."

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With no buyer was found for Willow Brook, the Bogarts returned to New York City, where Belmont resumed his practice, and Maud took up her job as an illustrator for the magazine, *Delineator*, a position she would hold for twenty years. The sole purpose of the magazine was to sell dress-sewing patterns manufactured by its parent company, the Butterick Pattern Company, in an era when many women sewed their own clothing at home.

The magazine was one of the first to publish pictures of females in nightgowns, bathing suits, and underwear. Mainly, it featured women appearing in fashionable clothing. Its backers hoped that America's women readers would fall in love with the illustration, then go out and purchase the Butterick dress pattern.

In spite of its focus on sewing patterns, the magazine also had pages devoted to serious fiction. Its editor was the novelist Theodore Dreiser, who printed pieces by such famous journalists as H.L. Mencken. Maud was especially proud of the magazine because it published articles about her favorite cause, women's suffrage.

One afternoon, Hump's mother invited her boss, Theodore Dreiser, and the famously caustic visiting writer from Baltimore, H.L. Mencken, back to her townhouse for afternoon tea. Both men were ostensibly there to meet the "Maud Humphrey baby," even though Hump was a growing adolescent at that time.

The Bogart sisters were not at home. Hump dressed himself formally, as requested by Maud. He eagerly awaited his introduction to both men, even though he wasn't quite sure who they were. Maud had talked at length about their status as "literary lions."

Dreiser was the first to enter the house, firmly shaking Hump's hand. "My, oh my," he said, "how that baby did grow. They're still publishing Maud's portrait of you as an adorable baby, though. You're easily as famous as the Arrow Collar Man or the Schweppes Commander."

Dreiser had not yet written his masterpiece, *An American Tragedy* which wasn't penned until 1925, but *Sister Carrie*, written in 1900 when Hump was one year old, had already been broadly distributed throughout the country. Dreiser had brought an autographed copy as a gift for the boy. "Maud claims you read one novel a week. Try mine. I must warn you, though. Even my publisher tried to suppress this book."

With perfect manners, Hump accepted it with genuine gratitude. It would be the first of many autographed books that writers would present to him as tokens of their esteem. They'd eventually include men as diverse as Ernest Hemingway and Truman Capote.

At that point, H.L. Mencken arrived, with Maud on his arm, both of them having overheard the friendly exchange between Hump and Dreiser. Bombastically turning to Dreiser, Mencken said, “Your publisher didn’t want to suppress *Sister Carrie* because it was racy; he wanted to suppress it because its style is so weak. There are lines in that novel that simply don’t work, like ‘he worked in a truly swell saloon.’ Calling a saloon ‘truly swell’ sounds inarticulate and unsavvy, and sometimes I wonder how you got away with it. I could go on and on, citing other examples.”

Averting his gaze from Dreiser’s angry eyes, Mencken extended his hand to Hump. “Hello, I’m H. L. Mencken.” Hump stammered his hellos.

Ignoring Mencken, Dreiser returned to his dialogue with Hump. “Please overlook the occasional unevenness in my style. I’m interested in bigger game, especially the expression of broader ideas. I write as a means of proving that history does not dominate a man, but that it’s actually an expression of mankind at its most creative. It is man who creates history, not history that creates men.”

(left to right) Theodore Dreiser, H.L. Mencken, and a pre-teen Humphrey Bogart

Taking off his coat, Mencken acerbically shot back. “Is that what we do?” he asked Dreiser. He turned back to Hump. “Be careful—reading *Sister Carrie* will stunt your growth.”

Smiling grimly at the insults, but holding his tongue, Dreiser got up, supposedly to pee. Maud showed him down the corridor to the toilet. Mencken sat down next to Hump on the sofa. “It was my reading of *Huckleberry Finn* at the age of nine that changed my life. It was, in fact, the most stupendous awakening of my entire life. It turned me into a bookworm and eventually a writer. Do you want to be a writer?”

“Father wants me to study medicine and follow in his footsteps.”

“Become anything but a shyster lawyer,” Mencken said. “I detest lawyers, especially Jewish lawyers. They are the worst.”

Hump silently noted that Mencken shared Maud’s anti-Semitism.

“After you’ve read the important books, go out and learn from life itself, taking all the worldly wisdom you can glean from the saloon keeper, the cop on the block, even the midwife, or especially the midwife if she performs a few abortions on the side. I figured being a newspaper reporter was the best way to meet people from all walks of life. After my first story, a five-line report about a horse thief, was published in the Baltimore *Morning Herald*, I was committed to journalism from that day forward.”

At that point, Maud came back into the living room with Dreiser, who looked over at Mencken. “Why don’t you move to New York and leave that hick town of Baltimore behind you?”

“New York is but a third-rate Babylon,” Mencken said. “I prefer the frowzier charms of Baltimore. Even that immense protein factory known as Chesapeake Bay.”

Dreiser had to excuse himself again to go up to Maud’s studio to look over some of her latest sketches.

Humphrey chose that moment to invite Mencken up on the roof to look at his pigeon coop. “Maud finds these birds disgusting and unsanitary. When I came down with pneumonia, she blamed the pigeons.”

Mencken didn't much like pigeons either. But he was entranced with the view of the New York skyline from the Bogart roof. The bracing air delighted him, and seemed to spark some crazed ambition within him. Hump suspected that he'd had a few whiskies before arriving at the Bogart house.

Mencken waved his arms in the air and seemed to be speaking to the world at large, and not specifically to Hump. "I want to be the native American Voltaire," Mencken said. "I see myself as the enemy of all Puritans.& I will become a heretic within academia—a one-man demolition crew of Victorian morality."

Later, Maud called them for tea in her little garden in back, although Hump suspected that both of these men would have preferred whiskey.

Over tea, Mencken continued to lecture Dreiser, albeit more diplomatically. "There is only one way to make money publishing books. You can write about only four subjects. First, murder stories. Second, novels in which the beautiful heroine is forcibly overcome by the handsome hero. Third, books about spiritualism, occultism and such claptrap. Fourth, any book devoted to Abraham Lincoln."

"Speaking of Lincoln," Dreiser said, "Someone recently submitted an essay for publication in my magazine. It's written by Theodore Ward, a historian, and based on extensive research. It's an exposé of the sex life of Abraham Lincoln, but I fear I cannot publish it, although it's a hell of an interesting article."

"Is it too controversial?" Maud asked.

"That it is," Dreiser said. "It maintains that Lincoln was a homosexual and had a five-year love affair with another man."

"I don't think that article will ever be published," Maud said.

"Maybe in fifty years the public will be ready for it," Mencken said.

As Maud was pouring tea for Dreiser, a large butterfly flew from a flower bush, winging by her head. Dropping her tea pot, she screamed as if ten rapists had surrounded her. She ran into the living room and up the steps leading to her studio.

Both Dreiser and Mencken looked to Hump for some explanation of this erratic behavior.

"All her life she's been terrified of butterflies," Hump said.

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It wasn't only Dreiser and Mencken who wanted to meet the Maud Humphrey Baby. The stigma of having posed for that illustration followed Hump throughout of his school days. He'd been mocked and ridiculed when he'd entered Delancy School, which he'd attended to the fifth grade. He still hadn't shaken the curse when, at the age of thirteen, he enrolled in Trinity School, which was housed in a sandstone building at 91st Street between Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues. An Episcopal institutional "for the training of young gentlemen," it was the oldest continuously operating school in the country.

Doug Storer, a classmate, recalled that virtually every day after school, a gang of bullies waited for Hump, calling him "sissy" or chanting, "rock-a-bye baby."

The confrontation sometimes led to Hump arriving home with a bloody lip and, on more than one occasion, a black eye.

At school, Hump had turned out to be a poor student, excelling in nothing, and with particularly low marks in German. Since Belmont, a classically educated descendant of the original Dutch burghers of New York, spoke fluent German, he had demanded that his son learn the language too.

Hump's grades in other classes were almost as bad. As the months went by, it became apparent to Belmont and Maud that their son would not follow in his father's footsteps as a surgeon.

“He’ll be lucky if he graduates from high school,” Belmont told Maud. To compound matters, Hump developed scarlet fever and had to repeat the eleventh grade.

Although Belmont had been a notable athlete, Hump did not willingly participate in organized sports unless he was forced to as part of the school curriculum. He told classmate Storer that he especially disliked wrestling. “I loathe such close contact with other guys. There’s one fucking guy who gets a hard-on every time he pins me down on the mat. I can feel the God damn thing pressing up against me.”

Storer remembers that there was a debate among some of the girls over whether Hump was “handsome” or “just good looking.” His classmate recalls that, “His appearance was always neat. I never saw him when he wasn’t well-groomed. He had a slim figure with very dark eyes and jet-black hair that was always plastered down to his head with some kind of cream. He showed up every day in a dark blue wool serge suit with a vest and a stiffly starched white shirt with detachable collars held on by gold-plated brass buttons. His black shoes were always highly polished. His ties were never garish but always in some somber color like navy blue or berry brown, the stuff bankers wore at the time.”

In winter he’d appear in a Chesterfield overcoat with a velvet collar.

The author, Eric Hodgins, remembers that “Bogart always wore a black derby hat, rain or shine. It set him apart from the other boys. Many a time he would get that hat knocked off his head. But he always picked it up, dusted it off, put it back on his head, and went on his way.”

Hump told Storer that he didn’t want to get out of bed sometimes, knowing that at three o’clock that afternoon a gang was waiting to taunt him. He was not a fighter and had never taken on one of the neighborhood toughs in combat. If Hump defended himself at all, it was to raise his hands to protect his face.

One cold January afternoon, the toughest guy on the block plowed his steel-knuckled fist into Hump’s face, breaking his nose. He’d run all the way to his father’s office at 245 West 103rd Street. The office on the second floor of the family brownstone was covered in a thick moss green carpet with beautiful mahogany paneling rescued from a townhouse in Chelsea which had been demolished. It was one of the few houses in the neighborhood that had a telephone, a necessity because Hump’s father was a doctor. Belmont had tended to his son’s nose, making emergency repairs before taking him to the hospital. All the way to the clinic, Belmont had chided Hump for not defending himself better. “When I was your age, I could beat up any boy in my home-town. Maud’s making a sissy of you. I hate the name Humphrey she gave you. That’s a sissy name.”

Even as Hump had moved into his teenage years, Maud had continued to dictate his dress. At formal school dances, she’d demanded that he wear white kid gloves and black patent leather pumps. “I was like a God damn teenage dandy,” Bogie later told his favorite director, John Huston.

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One afternoon Maud called her teenage son into her studio and revealed to him some of the male nudes that she’d painted in Paris. He was shocked because until then, he had known only her scenes of Victorian innocence.

For reasons not known to him at the time, she’d tried to explain to him when male nudity was acceptable and when it was not.

“When a man is nude and aroused, and is showing himself off, that is not acceptable,” she informed her son. “But when a man in a flaccid state is posing nude for an art class, that is acceptable. The men and women painting him have no actual interest in his sex. They view the body as a whole, as an object from which they can make an artistic statement. It’s the same when your father sees a nude man or woman in his office. He has them strip to examine them in detail. But as a doctor, he has the same disinterest in the nude body that an artist does while painting a nude in his studio. This is called sexless nudity.”

After that rather detailed and pedantic explanation, Maud invited Hump to accompany her that afternoon to her art classes.

At the Artists and Models Studio on Manhattan’s West 28th Street, Maud had been temporarily teaching classes to

young illustrators who wanted to become working commercial artists like herself. Since she was widely known as a Victorian illustrator portraying an idealized fantasy life of home and hearth, she'd been an odd choice to teach classes with nude models, although her background in Paris had prepared her for such an assignment.

When she arrived with Hump at the studio, she still hadn't told him why he was here. It turned out that Maud had been filling in during a sick leave of Duane Edwards, the regular teacher. To an increasing degree, Maud had been leaving the house on mysterious errands. Hump had heard her talking over the phone several times with someone named "Duane," and he'd suspected that Maud was having an affair now that she was no longer sleeping in the same bed with his father.

In a back dressing room, Maud told her son, "Remember what I said about nude modeling. There is nothing about the nude male body that we have to be ashamed of. Our regular model is not here today. He's just a young boy who models for classes. The class has painted mature models, both female and male, in the nude. This week we are painting young boys. I want you to model nude and fill in for our regular model who is sick."

Horrified at his mother's suggestion, Hump wanted to bolt from the building. Except for a medical examination, he'd never pulled off his clothes before anyone, and certainly not in front of women. Since he had no real basis for comparisons, and hadn't seen any pictures, he had not been certain just how he measured up with other boys his age.

He'd always been curious about other male genitalia, but when he'd been at a latrine with other boys, he'd always looked away, afraid to be caught gazing at them. He'd feared that because of his reputation as a sissy, all he would need was to be spotted glancing at the genitals of other boys. He'd never showered with other boys and had never seen his father in the nude either.

When he revolted at the idea of the posing session, Maud taunted him. "Don't tell me you're afraid to take off your clothes in front of artists. Are you ashamed of the way you're developed? You don't have to be."

As he looked at her, he began to think that he hated her. Defiantly, he began to peel off his clothes. Before he'd taken his trousers down, she turned and walked away.

A school custodian came into his dressing room, finding Hump standing there looking pathetically naked. He handed him a white robe, telling him to wear it out into the studio. "When you go up on the platform in front of the class, drop your robe and sit naturally on the stool I put there."

Humphrey Bogart
as an angst-ridden teenager

Years later, Bogie recalled how he'd come into the studio so embarrassed that he didn't dare look at anybody. He was red-faced but he did as he was told and dropped his robe, going at once to a large stool in the center of the platform. There he had braced himself for a long sketching session, crossing his legs.

The custodian came out and pried his legs apart, exposing Hump's genitalia to the painters. His heart was beating so fiercely at that point& that Hump didn't much care what happened next. His only thought was that Maud was there, along with the others, looking at her son in all his shame.

As the artists painted, Hump tried to think of anything except what was actually happening in the studio.

The session ended exactly at noon. Hump put on his robe and retreated to the rear where the custodian brought roast beef sandwiches for the artists. He'd offered one to Hump. Because he was hungry, he accepted, only wishing that it

had been a ham sandwich.

Maud remained in the studio evaluating the nude drawings of her son. At one o'clock, Hump was summoned back to the platform. The second time wasn't as traumatic for him. He still refused to make eye contact with any of the painters in the room, not even knowing whether they were men or women.

He was called back for a final session at three o'clock, and at exactly four o'clock, the day's work ended.

Fully dressed, he waited outside on the street for Maud. When she appeared, he was embarrassed to look into her face. "Now that wasn't so bad," she said. "You're to come back with me four more days this week. The good news is that you're going to get fifty dollars for your work. Imagine that. Fifty dollars, the most money you've ever seen at one time in your life."

She told him that he'd have to go home alone, as she had to visit a sick friend. She was obviously going to meet her new friend, Duane.

Hump stood watching Maud go up the street to her next rendezvous. A militant suffragette, she passed out pamphlets as she made her way along the crowded boulevard, calling on passers-by to give the vote to the women of America.

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His parents' names had appeared regularly in *Dau's New York Blue Book* since 1907, but Belmont constantly attacked his wife for "trying to climb the social ladder." The son of a saloon keeper, he couldn't care less about the opinions of New York society.

Every night at their New York home, their arguments were virtually the same. "When you're not social climbing, you're driven by your career like some God damn maniac," he'd shout at her when drunk.

Matching him drink for drink, Maud always stood up to him. She constantly reminded him that her profession brought in more than twice as much money as his did.

She claimed that she was known among the very upper crust of New York society, and enjoyed a national reputation as an illustrator, whereas he "consorted with river rats."

Instead of accepting invitations into some of the finest homes of New York, Belmont preferred the company of saloon keepers, mechanics, janitors, and truck drivers. He'd frequent the taverns of blue-collar laborers, preferring those saloons along New York's waterfront where he'd find "men of the sea." If he'd had enough to drink, he'd invite sailors back to his home to spend a night or even a weekend.

That had led to some of Maud's most brutal fights with her husband. "These bums aren't coming into my living room," she'd shout at her husband in front of the Bogart children. She'd demand that the doctor take his newly acquired sailor friend up to the fourth-floor bedroom, which was usually assigned to a servant. "You can sleep up there with him," she'd said. "Don't come to my bed tonight."

That had seemed like a strange remark to Hump, because Belmont, at least to his knowledge, hadn't entered Maud's bed in years.

She had also insisted that this "waterfront trash" eat in the kitchen with the Irish servants. To defy her, Belmont would also take his meals in the kitchen with the object of that evening's fascination.

Usually, a "river rat" would visit the Bogart home only once. Belmont's interest in these uneducated specimens he would pick up rarely lasted more than two or three days.

The exception had been a handsome, ruggedly masculine, and well-built "man of the sea," Lars Schmidt. Depending on what day of the week you asked him, Lars claimed to be Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish, and during one particularly frank dialogue, German.

Because he spoke six languages, had incredible good looks, and always dressed nicely, Maud had at first been attracted to his charm and personality. Even Hump had been fascinated with Lars. He'd entertain the boy with tales of all the shipwrecks he'd survived. The most fascinating adventure, as he'd related, was when his merchant ship had almost collided with another in the middle of the Atlantic. This ghost ship had seemingly come out of nowhere, appearing mysteriously in the fog.

"It was definitely a Swedish man-of-war from the 17th century," Lars had claimed. "Our crew could actually see seventeen sailors standing on deck as the ship passed us by. They were as lifelike as you are sitting across from me. We were awe struck as we watched the vessel drift away into the dawn. I've never seen anything like that before or since."

Whenever Lars came to the port of New York, he always arrived unannounced at the Bogart home. His parents' explosion over Lars had come one hot, blistering August day as the entire city was melting under a record-breaking heat wave.

It was so hot that when Lars had to walk outside his bedroom to go to the bathroom on the second floor, he'd wandered down the stairs stark naked. One of the Bogart daughters, Frances, had seen him nude in the hall and had run to her mother in her studio to report on this.

Maud had been furious and had climbed to the top floor to see what was going on. The door to the bedroom where her husband had slept the night before with Lars was wide open. She'd looked inside and found Lars in the middle of the bed playing with himself. He'd invited her in to join him.

She'd screamed and had run downstairs.

That night when Belmont came home after a day's work at the local hospital, she confronted him. "Lars is not a man," she shouted in front of the children and the servants. "He's a freak of nature. That is no penis that belongs on a man. A horse maybe. Frances will be ruined for life having seen such a thing. For all that poor girl knows, all men are built like that. Because of this, she'll never marry, and if she does, she'll be afraid to go to bed with her husband."

That night had led to a Bogart family drinking marathon and more violent arguments. Maud threatened that, "If Lars darkens this door again, I'm packing up, moving out, and taking the children with me."

Despite the enormous pressure, that drunken night didn't end Belmont's friendship with Lars. Whenever the sailor came to New York, the doctor packed a suitcase and checked into the Hotel Marseilles with Lars. A then-fashionable address, it lay across the street from the Bogart home, which was at 245 West 103rd Street.

Like any hotel, it operated like a world unto itself. The beer kings, the Rheingold brothers, called it home, as did Sara Delano Roosevelt, mother of Franklin.

When Mrs. Roosevelt learned of Belmont's rescue of her son during the nearly fatal drowning incident at the lake, she sent a servant across the street with an invitation for Dr. and Mrs. Bogart and their young son, Humphrey. She may not have known about the existence of the two Bogart sisters.

As Maud rarely accepted any social invitation and attended almost no parties, she tore up the invitation without telling her husband. Maud was offended by the politics of Theodore Roosevelt and didn't want to seek any more intimate contact with the Roosevelts after she'd reluctantly sheltered Franklin for one night at her summer home.

When Lars had some time off from sailing, he would go with Belmont on a train to Canada. Up there at an address never revealed to his family, the doctor and Lars would stay at a rustic hunting lodge owned by Belmont. Sometimes for weeks at a time, Belmont would neglect his medical practice, coming back to New York only when his supply of morphine had run out.

On one particularly long trip, Maud had talked to Hump. "There are men like your father who don't have natural instincts. He'd rather be socializing with riff-raff than in a good clean bed with his own wife. We stay together but only for the sake of you children. In time you'll understand what a loveless marriage is. Perhaps you'll even have one or two of your own."

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At one school dance during his early teen years, Hump asked Leonore Strunsky—nicknamed Lee—to be his date. It was the beginning of a friendship that would last for the rest of his life, because Lee in time would become famously married to another Bogie friend, the lyricist Ira Gershwin.

At the dance, just before Lee excused herself to go to the ladies' room, she'd asked for a glass of punch. While he was getting it for her, two older students in their senior year had deliberately bumped into Hump. "Still dressing like a girl?" one of them had taunted him.

Instead of trying to defend himself, Hump had escaped and fled to his school locker. Once there, he'd removed the Daisy Air Rifle his father had given him six weeks before. Belmont was a superb wing shot, and he wanted to pass his skill on to his son.

Running outside of the school hall, he'd taken the rifle and aimed it at all the red lanterns lighting up the night. He hit every one of them before the school custodian had found him, chasing him from the grounds.

He'd later walked in Central Park arm in arm with Lee, rather proud of his accomplishment. He'd known he couldn't take the boys on in combat, but in some way had felt he'd gotten revenge.

On a bench in Central Park, they'd indulged in some heavy necking. Lee not only let him kiss her, but told him that, "It'll feel much better if you stick your tongue in my mouth."

He'd done just that. She didn't object when he reached inside her dress and felt the firmness of her breasts. But she did not let him do any exploring below her beltline. "That's only for when we're married," Lee told him.

When he'd gotten home, after kissing Lee good night, he felt like a real man.

The moment he walked into the Bogart's living room, he knew that something was wrong. His father was there waiting for him, and he'd been drinking heavily. Maybe the doctor had also been drugged.

The principal from the school had already contacted Belmont about the lantern shoot-out. Coming up to his son, his father seemed to tower above his teenage boy.

Without warning, Belmont delivered several chopping blows to his son's face, loosening two front teeth and smashing his upper lip repeatedly until part of it was torn from the boy's face.

As he'd stood back, realizing the damage he'd done, the doctor seemed to sober up. Maud rushed into the room. Seeing her son, she screamed before turning to confront her husband. "You touch him again, and so help me God I'll kill you."

When the male servant, Liam Mangam, came up from the rear, having been aroused from his bed with one of the Irish maids, Belmont ordered him to carry Hump upstairs to his office.

Once there, the doctor sewed up his son's lip, but he was too drunk to do an adequate job. He ordered Mangam to summon a cabbie to take them to the nearest hospital.

In the aftermath of the injury, Hump's upper lip never healed properly. As every close-up in nearly every movie house in the world later revealed, Bogie's upper lip throughout his adult life bore the scar of that awful night. His lip was to remain partly paralyzed, giving him a slight lisp.

After surgery on his lip for the second time in five hours, Hump had been told that he'd have to go to the family dentist in the morning to replace those two missing front teeth.

The attending doctor at the hospital, John Kells, also gave the teenage boy a thorough physical examination. He recorded that he was 5 feet, 9 inches, weighed 110 pounds, had brown eyes, a fair complexion and light brown hair, his chest measuring 33 inches.

Belmont reported to Kells that his son had had a severe case of the mumps two years ago and that they had "fallen." That most often led to a temporary enlargement of the testicles, followed by a massive shrinkage to a withered pea.

Dr. Kells examined Hump's testicles, finding that he'd escaped from this curse relatively intact, although noting a swelling of the spermatic vein on the left side of the boy's scrotum. Both doctors agreed that this was a "congenital condition" and would probably not affect Hump's ability to father children at some point in the future.

At midnight, Hump, accompanied by a chastised Belmont and Mangam, was released from the hospital to return to the dismal life at 103rd Street.

During his first week home, Hump made one trip to the dentist, accompanied by one of the Irish maids. The dentist replaced Hump's two front teeth. Hump insisted on having his teeth in place before "my best gal," Lee Strunsky, came to visit him at the family brownstone.

Having never had a girl friend before, Hump was excited when Lee called to tell him that she was coming over at three that afternoon.

Maud ushered Lee upstairs to Hump's bedroom, where he was convalescing. From the look on his mother's face, Hump knew that Maud disapproved of this visit.

It wasn't until an hour later, after Lee had gone, that Maud stormed into his bedroom. "Don't you ever invite that stinking little tramp into my house again," she yelled at her son.

"She's a very respectable girl, and very nice," Hump protested.

"She's a slimy Jew," Maud charged. "I don't want a son of mine going out with a Jewess. These money-changers are the anti-Christ. They have no appreciation of the finer things of life. They're all about greed and chicanery. They are the bottom-feeders of life."

"Jews are just as good as anybody else," Hump said. "No better, no worse."

"You're a moronic fool if you think that," Maud said, her temper flaring. "If you ever again invite a Jew into my house, boy or girl, I will personally shut the door in their face. Is that understood, young man?" She turned and left the room, leaving Hump in total bewilderment. Since he didn't plan to give Lee up, he'd sneak away and see her in private.

Maybe, when he finished school, he might even ask Lee to marry him. That would really piss off Maud.

As Hump saw it, there was one major problem in their courtship. Lee wanted to wait until they were married before doing it.

Hump decided the time for seduction was at hand. In the days ahead, he was going to figure out a way to charm the bloomers off that pretty girl.

The way he saw it, a Jewish pussy could be just as hot as a Gentile one. Maybe even more so. Time would attest to the accuracy of that perception.

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In ways that anticipated the plots of some of the movies he'd eventually make in the 1930s for Warner Brothers, Hump did not get the girl in the final reel. He never knew exactly what happened to his budding relationship with Lee, but it ended almost as suddenly as it had begun.

All Hump found out later was that Maud had placed a telephone call to Lee. He never knew what his mother had said to his young girl friend, but Lee never saw him until decades later, and he did not press her for the answer.

He even went to her house, but a servant informed him that Lee was not at home, even though he suspected that she was upstairs hiding in her bedroom.

He would meet Lee later in life as a political ally and friend. He always referred to her as “my first girl friend,” even in front of her husband, Ira Gershwin.

A new friend had come into Hump’s life that made him forget all about Lee. William Brady Jr. was the son of the showman and promoter, William Brady Sr., whom Hump had met when this entrepreneur was a patient at his father’s office. Brady Sr. had promised an introduction to his son, who was Hump’s age, and in spite of the producer’s busy schedule, he remembered and set it up.

The moment he arrived at the Brady house and met Bill Jr., Hump almost overnight transferred his crush on Belmont to Bill. Bill was a handsome, precocious young man, filled with facile charm and a manly grace. He’d grown up in a world of famous names in both boxing and the theater, and he had a sophistication that Hump envied.

Many young girls were captivated by this dashing man, but once Bill met Hump Bill had no more time for the females in his life. The two young boys became fast friends. Soon after they met, they pledged loyalty to each other and a devoted friendship “for the rest of our lives.”

Friends and mentors of Bogie: Victorian actress Grace George, (*top photo*) and (*bottom photo*) her Edwardian stepdaughter, actress Alice Brady

When Hump was finally invited into the Brady home for chocolate milk and cookies, he was dazzled by the opulence of the parlor. Although Maud decorated her house elegantly, it didn’t have the ostentation of the Brady home, which some guests had described as “a Victorian stage set.”

Not only was Bill’s father famous, but so were his mother and step-sister. Hump was especially intrigued by Bill’s mother, Grace George, a bigtime star of her day who had appeared in many of her husband’s films or Broadway productions.

A darling of Broadway’s theater critics, George had gone from triumph after theatrical triumph that included appearances in George Bernard Shaw’s *Major Barbara,* as well as *Divorçons, The School for Scandal,* and *Kind Lady.* She was also a major talent scout for her husband, encouraging him to offer breaks to such newcomers as Helen Hayes in *What Every Woman Knows*. She also picked out the then-relatively-unknown Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., from a cast of hopefuls, persuading her husband to cast him opposite her in *Clothes,* even though “he’s not good-looking.”

The daughter from Brady’s first marriage,& born in 1892, was Alice Brady, a rising star in her own right. Seven years older than Hump, beautiful, and educated during a period of her life in a convent in New Jersey, she captivated Hump with her talent and charm. She had abandoned a budding career as a singer in grand opera, preferring instead a career as a Broadway actress. She had been appearing on Broadway since her debut as an ingénue in *The Balkan Princess* in 1911. Having made a name for herself in several Gilbert and Sullivan revivals, she had been in dozens of her father’s silent films shot for World, his film company. She’d first appeared on screen in 1914 in a flick called *As Ye Sow*. When Hump met her, she’d just filmed *The Gilded Cage*.

The first time Hump appeared in her living room, Grace George was polite but distant, and soon excused herself to go and read a script sent over by her husband. Alice remained behind to have a cup of tea, but it quickly became obvious that she was not smitten with Bill's young friend the way Hump seemed to be with her.

As she recalled years later, "He was just too young for me when we first met. But when Humphrey came back from the Navy, he'd matured a lot. I became very interested in him despite the difference in our ages."

Brady Sr. always gave his son all the free passes he wanted to Broadway shows, both his own productions and those of his rivals. Bill's father had dreams of becoming a theatrical producer as well known and successful as David Belasco.

Paying a nickel fare, Hump and Bill rode to 42nd Street on the rickety Broadway trolley, headed for a vaudeville show at the Palace Theater. Hump had never been to a performance at a major Broadway theater before, and he was immediately captivated by the bright lights and bustle. The show they were headed for was noteworthy in that it included, on the same bill, both Sarah Bernhardt, the greatest dramatic actress of her day, and the comic actor, juggler, and drunk, W.C. Fields.

Decades later, Mae West, co-starring with Fields in *My Little Chickadee*, and herself a Broadway star at the time of Hump's introduction to the theater, dismissed the claim that "The Divine Sarah" and Fields appeared on the same bill. "I'm sure Madame Bernhardt has other things to do than appear on stage with a low-rent, drunken comedian," West claimed. "If Fields thinks Bernhardt was there, he'd had too many drinks, as usual."

But despite Mae West's denials, Bogie maintained through the rest of his life that he'd seen Bernhardt on the same playbill with Fields.

When Bernhardt was rolled onto the stage in a wheelchair, Hump was shocked. He'd expected to see some tall and statuesque figure of glamour and intrigue. Instead he saw a pale and very frail hospital patient in her 70s, with frizzy red hair. In an accident in France, she'd slipped and had fallen, breaking her leg. Gangrene had set in, and her doctors had to amputate her leg. For her first U.S. performance, she had turned that tragedy into an advantage. Wearing a *poilu* (the uniform French soldiers wore at the time), she'd appeared in New York playing a French soldier who had lost a leg. She'd held a battered flag in her hand while standing unsupported on her still-remaining good leg. Hollow cheeked and colorless, she emphasized her deadly whiteness with a dense coat of chalk-colored *poudre-de-riz* on her face. Looking like a consumptive wraith, she evoked the mummy of an Egyptian Pharaoh.

But when Bernhardt spoke lines from Dumas *fils* ' *La Dame aux Camélias*, her beautiful voice radiated magic. Even from her wheelchair, she moved her body with the lashing grace of a panther.

Spellbound, Hump sat with Bill throughout the performance in a state of rapture. At the end, Bernhardt received a standing ovation that lasted ten minutes. Of her *voix d'or*, the writer, Maurice Baring, rhapsodized, calling her sound, "A symphony of golden flutes and muted strings, a silver dawn lit by lambent lightnings, soft stars and a clear-cut crescent moon."

After that day, Hump became addicted to the theater the way an addict is to heroin. He couldn't get enough of Broadway shows.

Back home that night, Hump poured out his enthusiasm for the world of the Bradys and his love of the theater. Maud was not impressed. "Not only are they in show business, they are Jews." Hump didn't care.

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As days drifted into weeks, Bill Brady was becoming more possessive of Hump, who no longer planned his own life but allowed his best friend to do it for him. At plays or at the cinema, Bill took to holding Hump's hand. Hump never objected to this and enjoyed the camaraderie. Even when Bill put his arm around him and walked along the streets of Manhattan or Brooklyn, Hump did not object. A lot of schoolboys in those days did that.

The word "homosexual" was just coming into vogue in avant-garde circles, but in the minds of most people, if such a thing existed at all, it was never spoken about. Many indulgent parents, especially those as sophisticated as Belmont and Maud, assumed that a young boy went through periods of infatuation with another boy his own age.

Even if extreme affection was displayed, it was taken for granted that this was just a “stage” a young man went through before meeting the girl of his dreams and settling down.

In spite of the domestic horror surrounding the shooting incident at school, and the subsequent injury to his lip, Hump had not lost interest in his Daisy Air Rifle. Nor had it been taken away from him by his father. The future actor, who would one day become a famous icon in a trench coat carrying a gun, spent hours in his room dismantling his gun and reassembling it.

He even carried it in the leg of his trousers and took it with him whenever he went with Bill to the theater. After a show let out, they would find nearly deserted streets where no cop could be seen, then shoot out the globes of gas lamps before scampering off into the darkness of an alleyway to hide if anyone tried to chase after them.

One late summer afternoon, Hump tired of his air rifle and wanted something more lethal. Before going over to Bill’s house, Hump went into the basement of the Bogart home and removed a .22 caliber pistol from his father’s collection which he kept there.

Über-divas
Alla Nazimova

and Sarah Bernhardt

Bill had been given tickets to see a performance that evening by Alla Nazimova. This Russian-born stage actress and silent film star was famous for her interpretations of works by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Hump was anxious to see her in the flesh, having read much press on her at Brady Sr.’s theatrical offices. It could not have been imagined by Hump at the time that he would one day live at the Garden of Allah in Hollywood which, as “the Garden of Alla,” had been Nazimova’s home before it was turned into a hotel and colony of bungalows.

But it wasn’t a work by Ibsen that Nazimova was performing that night. She was starring in *Bella Donna*, a frothy lust-and-revenge melodrama. Hump would have preferred a more classical introduction to her repertoire. After all, this was the electrifying actress who had brought Chekhov and Stanislavsky to the American theater.

Hump found the diminutive star “shatteringly powerful” and marveled at her “foreign sophistication.” This exotic

actress would, in fact, pave the way for the likes of silent screen vamp Pola Negri and, in time, Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich. In just a few years Nazimova would& select Rudolph Valentino as her co-star in the film *Camille* before stealing his wife, the stunningly beautiful Natacha Rambova, as part of a well-publicized and notorious lesbian tryst.

After seeing *Bella Donna*, Bill and Hump headed for a Broadway diner for a plate of ham and eggs for Hump and a hamburger for Bill. His friend told Hump, "Don't go falling for Nazimova. She likes to have sex with women— not men."

This was the first knowledge Hump had of lesbianism, although he would in the 30s and 40s appear with more lesbian stars than any other leading male actor in Hollywood.

He'd heard that boys fooled around together, and had late at night wondered if his own father might have some sort of "unnatural attachment" to the sailor riff-raff he brought to their home. Like Queen Victoria, he'd never given lesbianism a thought.

Bill claimed that Nazimova had fallen in love with his mother, Grace George, and had ardently pursued her, sending her roses every day, even expensive gifts, until Nazimova had tired of Grace's lack of response. By then, Nazimova had moved on, having fallen in love with another actress, Eva Le Gallienne.

Later, Bill promised to invite Hump up to his bedroom where he claimed he would show him some "dirty French postcards" he'd stolen from his father's files. Hump eagerly accepted that invitation. He'd never seen a picture of a man and a woman having sex together.

After a snack, Bill asked Hump to go with him to Coney Island to ride the Ferris wheel. Later the boys planned to shoot out some more bright lights.

On the fast-spinning wheel, something went wrong. The pistol Hump had concealed in his trousers blasted off. The bullet missed his chest, which could have killed him, but blasted into his right wrist. At first Bill thought that Hump was screaming at the thrill of the ride until Hump held up his wrist in agony as the blood gushed out.

Nothing could be done until the end of the ride. Knowing they would have to seek help from the police, Bill took the gun from Hump and tossed it into the night.

At the end of the ride, the manager saw that young Hump had been injured and immediately called the police. Hump, with Bill in attendance, was rushed to the hospital where a doctor discovered that it was a bullet wound. Until then, the police believed that somehow he'd been cut, perhaps by one of the moving parts on the Ferris wheel.

Hump lied to the police and to the doctor, claiming that during the ride a sniper had shot at them, missing Bill but hitting him. The police bought that unlikely story.

When the police drove Hump back home to Manhattan that night, Maud and Belmont were in the foyer waiting for him. After thanking the cops for their assistance, an angry Belmont didn't strike his son in the face this time. What he did do was to forbid him to carry guns any more. He said that he'd gone to his son's room and removed the beloved Daisy Air Rifle.

"It's time to ship you off to the Phillips Academy at Andover to prepare you for Yale," Belmont said.

"And I absolutely forbid you to see that Brady boy again," Maud said. "You were a good boy until you took up with the likes of that Jew."

"I'll go to the academy," Hump said to his parents. "But there's no way in hell I'll give up my friendship with the Bradys." He stormed upstairs to his bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

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With a bandaged wrist, Hump accepted Bill's invitation to visit his bedroom at the Brady house to view a collection of pornographic French postcards. They had been collected by his father on a visit to Paris and smuggled through

U.S. Customs, as was the way in those days of heavy censorship.

Today, in an era when pre-adolescents routinely watch porno on television, it's difficult to imagine the effect back then of a "dirty picture" on young boys at the height of their sexual potency.

Hump was fascinated by the sepia-toned photographs, one showing a young man with a large erection standing up while two bare-breasted women kneeled to service him. Another depicted the same man bedding one of the women. Yet another pictured him plunging down on a woman in the act of cunnilingus.

Bill became so excited by the pictures that he whipped out his penis and began masturbating, urging Hump to do the same. Reluctantly Hump pulled out his penis and he too masturbated to climax.

After putting the postcards back into their folder, Bill asked Hump to kiss him since he hadn't touched him during their sex together.

Hump agreed, providing Bill would swear not to tell anybody. "It's okay," Bill told him. "I've done this to other guys. All the guys at school do it."

Hump kissed him back. As he was to recall years later to his friend, Truman Capote, "It wasn't at all bad. It felt kinda nice. I didn't think anybody in the world loved me at the time, and it was good to know that Bill did. At first I kissed him because I felt I owed him a favor. After we kissed, I liked it a lot. It was the beginning of many kisses we'd exchange over the years. Our relationship never developed much beyond that. Kissing and playing with each other was as far as I was willing to go. I knew Bill wanted to do some of the things in those pictures, but I could never bring myself to it. I loved the guy, though."

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The marriage between Phillips Academy at Andover, Massachusetts, some twenty miles north of Boston, and Humphrey Bogart was doomed from the beginning, when he arrived there a week late for classes during an unseasonably cool September in 1917. Founded by Calvinists during the American Revolution, it was the finest prep school in the country. One of its stated purposes was to guard young men "against the first dawnings of depraved nature."

The Academy could name-drop like no other school, having historical ties with John Hancock, Paul Revere, John Adams (its fourth principal), George Washington (who gave an address there), and, in time, Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes and, much later, President George Bush Sr.

Belmont had graduated with the class of 1888, having excelled in baseball and football. He'd written his former schoolmate, Alfred Stearns, now headmaster, asking him to admit his son in spite of his poor grades at Trinity.

On the train to Andover, Hump read *Stove at Yale*, Owen Johnson's popular novel which painted a romanticized version of what college life was really like. To Hump, the novel read like a saccharine-laced fantasy. He'd also bought a newspaper that morning, as he always read the front page news carefully. The United States had entered the war on the side of the Allies on April 6, 1917. Before leaving New York, Belmont had told him that many of the students at Andover, along with some faculty members, had temporarily resigned or left the Academy to join the forces on the Western Front in Europe, battling the Kaiser's armies.

Assigned a spartan-looking cell, Number Five, at Taylor Hall, Hump felt that his steel cot evoked a prison cell. Up to now, he'd lived in grand comfort.

Next to Hump's room was the bathroom, shared by twelve other young men on the floor. A previous occupant of Hump's cell must have had an interest in boys taking a shower, because he'd carved a hole about the size of a baseball between Hump's room and the shower.

The marriage between Phillips Academy (above) and teenaged Hump was doomed from the beginning

Hump discovered that hole in the wall on his second day there when he went to remove the reproduction of an antique map of Massachusetts. Looking through the hole, he could have a perfect view of the genitalia of the young men showering. Fortunately, no one was in the shower room when he peeked in, or else he would have been embarrassed.

Lonely and sad to be away from Bill and the bright lights of Broadway, the seventeen-year-old Hump found himself facing a Puritan regime that was launched at 7:30 every morning at chapel.

Classes were boring and he wanted to drop out of Phillips Academy after the first semester until he met schoolmate Floyd Furlow, who also lived in Manhattan. The son of the president of Otis Elevator Company, Floyd was a fun-loving guy full of wicked humor.

Although only eighteen years old at the time, Floyd claimed to have had ten affairs with women, three of whom were married to some of his father's best friends. He also stashed away booze in his room and would invite his "favorites" on the floor to come and join him.

Floyd and his friends seemed to know much about the world. All of them had been to Europe and one of them, Philip Burton, had once been taken to Africa on a safari with his father.

Hump couldn't match these adventures, as he'd never been taken even to Canada on one of Belmont's hunting trips.

Frederick Boyce, the stern headmaster of Hump's dormitory, was also a physics teacher. With his white mop of hair, he stuck his eagle's beak into everybody's business. Boyce was known for raining hell and damnation onto anyone who violated house rules.

With his wife, Betty, and their three children, Boyce lived on the dormitory's main floor so he could observe the coming and going of all "my boys." Students were forbidden to use the entrance in the rear.

The only boy on the floor who Hump disliked intensely was a nerd who wore thick wire-rimmed glasses, Charles Yardley Chittick. Chittick wanted to study law at either Harvard or Yale. Hump suspected that he was a spy, reporting every infraction to Boyce.

Charles had the single cell directly opposite Hump's. Whenever they would meet in the hallway, neither spoke to each other. If they encountered each other in the shower room, Hump would turn his back to Charlie and conceal his genitals.

Charles had told Floyd that he considered Hump a spoiled brat, secretly resenting that Hump was invited to Floyd's drinking parties and that he was excluded. Both Floyd and Hump referred to Charles as "a bookworm."

Hump eagerly awaited the Christmas vacation when he could return to Manhattan and take in some Broadway entertainment and resume his friendship with Bill.

Ten days before Hump's anticipated return to New York, Dr. Stearns had written Belmont a bad report. "Your son appears bored in class, his mind dreaming dreams of God only knows what. He is indifferent to the school curriculum. He doesn't participate in sports or any school activities. He doesn't even try to maintain a respectable gentleman's C average. Although we are allowing him to return after the holidays, I must withdraw all off-campus privileges. He will be confined to his room, the library, the dining room, and his classrooms. Despite your earlier assurances to the contrary, I fear that your son is definitely not Andover material. Unless he improves in the

upcoming semester, I fear for the continuation of his academic career."

That Christmas, a few days before his eighteenth birthday, Hump was certain of only one thing: he didn't want to be a surgeon like his father, and he didn't want to go to Yale or Harvard.

Home from Andover for the holidays, Hump endured the criticism of his parents and listened to how disappointed they were over his academic record. He promised them he'd buckle down during the second term and make them proud of him, although secretly he had no intention of changing any of his behavior at the academy. None of the teachers inspired him, and their boring recitations of dates and historical events conveyed no drama for him.

On the first night of his return, Hump couldn't wait for the end of his reunion with his parents, so he could sneak out of the house to see Bill Brady. While at the Phillips Academy, Bill had written him almost daily, and Hump had answered every letter. At times Bill's letters were all that kept Hump from wanting to commit suicide.

At the Brady home, Hump was welcomed more lovingly by this Jewish family than by his own dysfunctional and coldhearted parents. Brady Sr. seemed genuinely interested in him, and Grace George and Alice Brady filled him in on all the news of their latest theatrical successes. Hump was particularly intrigued by the silent screen flickers Alice was making, although Grace George considered the movies a passing fancy and not worthy of the attention of a serious actor.

Once alone with Hump in his upstairs bedroom, Bill hugged Hump in a tender embrace and kissed him on the lips. "You're still my best buddy or did you mate with some other person up at Andover?"

"I'm still your best friend," Hump said. "For always. I'm pretty much a loner at school."

In spite of this pledge of devotion, Bill regaled Hump with tales of his recent sexual exploits. Hump was surprised that Bill had never mentioned this in any of his letters. "I met this girl," Bill said. "Priscilla Davenport. I know. A real dumb name. But she was terrific. She let me get into her bloomers any time I wanted. Those secret sessions you and I had together were just kid's stuff. I got the real thing and it was terrific."

"I can't match your record," Hump said. "I pursued a few gals at Andover but nothing happened. A harmless date here and there. Maybe a kiss. Nothing heavy. I'd like to meet this gal of yours."

"Too late for that," Bill said. "She moved to California with her family. Her dad's in the movie business. He thinks Hollywood will one day be the center of films. My dad knows a lot more about flickers than Priscilla's old man. Dad says the heart of the film colony will still be New York and New Jersey."

Hump had mixed feelings about Bill's relationship with Priscilla. He was both happy about his friend's scoring with a woman, yet jealous at the same time. For some reason he resented Bill's intimacy with someone else.

Those feelings of resentment disappeared later that afternoon when Alice Brady introduced Hump to her new beau.

Only slightly younger than Hump, Stuart Rose was the best-looking and most dashing teenager Hump had ever met. In his case, Alice didn't seem to mind that Stuart was younger than herself. She'd treated Hump like a kid, but related to the even younger Stuart like a man of the world.

Doughboy pizzazz: Hump's brother-in-law Stuart Rose

Precocious for his age, Stuart was a cavalryman in the U.S. Army and was home on leave. The Rose family lived on Riverside Drive, only a ten-minute walk from the Bogart home.

Alice had met Stuart when he'd come backstage to congratulate her for her appearance in the revival of *Little Women*, in which she played Meg, a role she'd first performed on Broadway in 1912.

"Since that first meeting, we've seen each other every day," she told Hump, as she took Stuart's hand and gazed into his eyes.

Caught up as they were in the theatrical productions of Brady, Sr., each member of the Brady family was preoccupied with his newest film, *Love Eternal,* being produced on a sound stage in Queens. Even the dignified Grace George, despite her oft-expressed disdain for "the flickers," was about to appear in her husband's movie, having agreed at the last minute to replace the film's original star, actress Beatrice Lane, who had suddenly fallen ill with pneumonia. Grace was co-starring in the movie with her stepdaughter, Alice Brady, who played the role of the naïve *ingénue,* and young Bill was working as the assistant director to his father.

One evening, when every member of the Brady family was caught up in some aspect of the film's production, Stuart Rose found himself alone for the evening. In the same position, Hump immediately invited him to dinner at Luchow's, the long-established German restaurant on 14th Street so beloved by his father, Belmont.

Throughout the evening, Hump became enthralled with Stuart, who entertained him with stories of his life as a cavalryman. "Women really go for a man in uniform."

Hump was amazed that a teenager even younger than himself had had so many exploits with women. Hump always remembered his introduction to Stuart as "one of the most memorable evenings of my life. With Bill I felt like I was a boy talking to another boy. With Stuart, I felt we were talking man to man. My blossoming friendship with him became a rite of passage into manhood."

When Bill called the next day to invite Hump to a Broadway play, Hump had to turn him down. He'd already accepted an invitation for horseback riding with Stuart, who had a lot of free time because Alice "was shooting some stupid movie during the day and appearing as Meg in *Little Women* at night."

Bill seemed disappointed that Hump had made a "new best friend" so suddenly. Nonetheless, to show what a good sport he was, he invited both Stuart and Hump to a Broadway musical to which his father had given him free tickets. But during the performance, Bill felt a little left out and neglected, as Hump devoted all his attention to Stuart, exaggerating his hell-raising exploits at Andover and his conquests of campus beauties.

Shortly before Stuart had to report back to military service, he came to the Bogart home to retrieve Hump for another afternoon of horseback riding.

Frances (Pat) Bogart was in the living room, and Hump introduced the good-looking Army man to his sister. Frances was almost the same height as her brother and had a shapely figure even then. When Stuart learned that she didn't have an escort for the school dance the following night, he volunteered his services.

Stuart was so captivated with Frances that he asked Hump if he could postpone their horseback ride for another time. He invited Frances to go for a stroll with him in Central Park.

After Hump returned to Andover, Frances wrote to him from St. Mary's School in Peekskill, New York. She informed him that she received a letter from Stuart almost every day. Hump wrote several letters to Stuart himself, but only a brief postcard every now and then came in reply.

Before his departure for Phillips Academy, he hadn't even bothered to call Bill to tell him good-bye and to thank him for his hospitality. But confronted anew with the loneliness of Andover, Hump started writing Bill again. Hump's temporarily deserted friend responded with enthusiastic letters, and their friendship resumed with only slightly less intensity than before.

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After his third week back at Andover, Hump's dormitory maniacally celebrated the end of a winning football game. Even the stern headmaster, Boyce, temporarily relaxed his iron-fisted rules and allowed the young men to celebrate the school's victory. Having no interest in sports, Hump had stayed in his room trying to study, hoping for some passing grades.

Some of the men on Hump's floor had slipped beer upstairs and were having a wild party, running up and down the corridor. When this party overflowed into the shower room, it appeared that some of the men were pouring beer over the heads of the others, as they showered.

Anxious to see what was going on, Hump turned off the lamp in his room, removed the antique map, and peered through the hole in the wall at the naked boys in the shower.

That was a big mistake. Somehow Charles Yardley Chittick, even without his horn-rimmed glasses, happened to notice a hole in the wall to the shower room. He detected someone spying on them.

Poking his fingers through the hole in the wall, Chittick encountered the framed map, which had fallen back into position as Hump had jumped back. The wire holding the map came unhooked, the print falling to the floor, its glass frame breaking. Terrified at having been caught peeking, Hump concealed himself in the corner of the darkened room.

"We've got a live one, guys," Chittick yelled to the other boys. "Bogart's spying on our dicks."

As Hump cringed in his darkened room, he heard catcalls and cries of "Sissy, sissy." One of the young men shouted inside the hole, "Look at mine if you want to see a big dick. I'll let you be my gal, Nancy boy."

The next day, humiliated, Hump darted in and out of his classes, hoping not to encounter any of his dorm mates. When he returned to his dormitory, Boyce was waiting for him and asked him to step inside the library. There Boyce appeared to be under reasonable control but his eyes avoided Hump's when he spoke. "Many young men go through certain periods of adjustment in their lives," Boyce said, like a professor giving a physics lecture. "These are natural things. It doesn't mean that these same boys can't grow up to become responsible citizens and loving fathers with a good wife and healthy children. I think you'll grow out of your present behavior. It will take time, though. In the meantime, you're confined to your room after classes let out for the day. You're to leave this building only to go to the dining hall. As for your new room assignment, there is a small one right next to my apartment. It used to belong to a janitor who worked here. You're to take that room. I've had your stuff moved downstairs. Your room upstairs will be assigned to someone else next term. Needless to say, that hole carved in the wall will be sealed up. I'll write Dr. Bogart and bill him for damages. To spare you, I won't tell him why you damaged the wall."

“But I didn’t…” Hump stammered in protest but soon realized that it was useless. He’d already been tried and convicted.

After the shower incident, the other young men in Hump’s dormitory avoided him, all except one, Floyd Furlow. Catching up with Hump after class one day, Floyd told him that he didn’t believe all the stories being spread. “If anyone’s a fucking sissy, it’s Chittick himself. I wouldn’t take a shower with him.”

Over a cup of coffee and a hamburger at a local café, Floyd told Hump that the only way he could salvage his reputation at the Phillips Academy was to have an affair. “I’ve been seeing this older woman regularly. Her name’s Medora Falkenstein, and she loves young men. She even likes to do nude drawings of them. I can set up a meeting. When the guys learn you’re seeing Medora, they’ll forget all about Chittick’s dumb gossip.”

At first Hump had raised a number of protests, including that he was confined to his room after class. “I’m not even supposed to be here right now,” Hump said, looking around the café. “I’ll tell Boyce I was studying at the library.”

“The Boyce family is sound asleep by ten o’clock every night,” Floyd said. “All the guys know that. Your new room is on the ground floor. All you have to do is open your window and slip out after the Boyces are snoring.”

Slipping out the next night, Hump was shaking a bit as he knocked on the door of Medora Falkenstein. He was a bit disappointed when she answered the door. A shade past forty, she was garishly made up and wore an artist’s smock. He wasn’t certain what her body looked like under that ill-fitting garment. But even if he wasn’t immediately smitten with her, Medora was enthralled with Hump.

She invited him in and gave him a large glass of Scotch. She also filled him with compliments about “what a beauty you are, far more so than Floyd, although I love that boy dearly.”

Hump later told Floyd that he fully expected to get laid that afternoon, and had wanted to get it over with, so he could slip back into the dormitory, letting Floyd spread the word the next day of his conquest.

Medora had her own ideas about sex and how she liked it. On his third drink, when Hump’s head was reeling, she showed him nude sketches she’d done of several boys on the campus, especially three of Floyd himself. She claimed that she’d moved to Andover just to be close to campus and “its never-ending supply of good-looking men.”

“Who buys this stuff?” Hump asked her.

“I deal exclusively with a private art dealer in Boston,” she said. “He has clients all over the country.”

“You mean women buy this?” Hump asked.

“Heavens no,” she said. “Men who like to be discreet. They pay top prices to see nude sketches of some of the country’s most beautiful young men in their prime. Perhaps you’ll pose for me one day.”

“I couldn’t do that,” Hump said, no doubt thinking of the time he’d posed nude for Maud’s art class.

“There’s a hundred dollars in it for you,” she said.

He was amazed at being offered that amount of money. It sounded like a fantastic sum. “I’ll think about it.”

“You don’t have something you’re ashamed of?” Medora asked, reaching to unbutton Hump’s fly. With deft fingers, she removed his penis. “My, oh my, what a big boy you are. Much bigger than Floyd and he’s not bad.” Before Hump truly comprehended what was happening, Medora skinned back the cap of his penis and descended on him, as he immediately hardened.

In later life Bogie would tell friends that Medora got him addicted to blow-jobs. “She was the first person who ever gave me one, and she was also the best. A suction pump. She never allowed herself to be penetrated so she had developed her technique of the blow-job to absolute perfection since that was her only thing.” Medora would masturbate herself as she performed fellatio on young men from Phillips Academy who ventured into her studio.

Afternoon visits to Medora became a ritual for Hump, who would go and see her right after his last class of the day. He managed to convince Boyce that he was spending the time in the academy library.

Eventually, since she always plied him with "hooch," as she called it, she didn't have much trouble persuading Hump to pose nude for her. After all, he didn't have anything to hide from her prying eyes that she hadn't seen in intimate close-up. Even buck-naked, he was completely relaxed in her studio, unlike his time in front of Maud's class when he'd been so nervous that he felt he'd shrunk a lot.

That was not his problem with Medora. Sometimes her sketching of him was interrupted when he'd get hard. She'd abandon her drawing and fellate him.

His sessions with Medora continued for nearly a month until one Saturday she invited him to come over around eleven in the evening. "My time with you is too brief. I want to make a night of it. Give you an around-the-world. It drives the boys crazy."

He wasn't certain what an around the world meant, but was intrigued at the prospect. That night a heavy snowstorm descended on Andover, and, anticipating his visit, Hump borrowed a pair of skis from the school athletic room and stored them in his tiny bedroom.

When the Boyces seemed to be deep into their nightmares and snores, he raised his window and slipped out of the dorm, attaching his skis and gliding his way to Medora's studio.

That night there were no nude sketches. Hump quickly learned that Medora's talented tongue could not only tame a hardened penis, but knew how to explore every crevice of a male body.

Regrettably when returning to the dormitory in the pre-dawn hours, Hump was greeted by Boyce who caught him trying to sneak back into his window with the skis. The two men wrestled in the snow. Boyce's coat was ripped, his head injured.

The next morning, Headmaster Stearns called Hump into his office, informing him that he was expelled and was to check out of the dormitory that day, taking the train back to New York. "You are not worthy of the Academy," Stearns told him. "I predict you'll be a miserable failure in life, and have so informed Dr. Bogart."

By three o'clock on that snowy day in 1918, Hump had told Floyd goodbye and was on the train to Boston where he'd catch a larger train bound for New York.

Fearing the wrath of his parents, he decided that before he reached Manhattan he would take charge of his own life. He was going to make some bold career move and announce it the moment he came into the Bogart living room.

Before the train neared the outskirts of New York, Hump had made up his mind. The United States had already joined with the Allies to fight Germany in World War I. He'd join the fray.

Beginning tomorrow morning he was going to enlist in the U.S. Navy and would write his friend, Franklin D. Roosevelt, of his decision. The date was May 28, 1918.

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If his parents had been cold and distant when he joined the Navy in the closing weeks of World War I, the Brady family was just the opposite. Brady Sr., Alice, Grace, and especially Bill Jr. were saddened to see him go. Each family member, promising to be on shore to welcome him home whenever his discharge might eventually arrive, had hugged and kissed him.

At the Bogart home, Maud would surely have dismissed such a farewell "as cheap theatrics common among Jews." She had given Hump a handshake, as had Belmont. His sisters, Frances and Catherine, had each kissed his cheek and wished him a safe return.

On June 19, 1918, a doctor at the Brooklyn Naval Base found that Hump was free of both syphilis and gonorrhea. In the event of Hump's death while overseas, he was told that his father would collect $35.90 per month for six

months.

If he thought life was regimented at Andover, Hump was hardly prepared for the severe discipline of basic training which began July 2 at the Pelham Park Reserve in New York.

By November 9, about four months later, he was pronounced fit for duty and assigned to the USS *Leviathan,* a transport ship with a trio of gigantic funnels and zebra-like camouflage stripes. He came aboard as a helmsman, but even before the ship sailed from Hoboken, New Jersey, news reached the crew of the armistice. Germany had surrendered on& November 11, 1918, and World War I was at an end.

US Navy Seaman
#1123062,
Humphrey Bogart

There was still a job for the crew of the *Leviathan,* however. Ironically, it had originally been commissioned as the *Vaterland* and assigned to transport the Kaiser's forces. However, when the United States and Germany declared war, the *Vaterland* was in Hoboken and was seized by the United States Treasury Department. After some repairs and alterations, it was rechristened the *Leviathan*. Capable of carrying 14,500 men, it was the largest transport ship in the U.S. Navy.

Although he'd never seen active duty, Seaman No.1123062 put on his sailor's dress uniform with its knotted cravat and white puttees for a victory parade in Brooklyn. The next morning he sailed for Liverpool.

The vessel had been assigned for the next six months to haul U.S. servicemen back from France and England. En route to England, a junior officer, Robert Browne, demanded that Hump carry away some coffee cups and dirty dishes that had been left on deck by the officers. "Not my detail," Hump informed Browne. The officer kicked him in the face, bloodying his nose. "When an officer speaks to you and issues a command, you obey orders, boy."

"Yes, sir," Hump answered. There is no further record of Hump showing insubordination to an officer. Quickly learning that the U.S. Navy was not a democracy, he was a dutiful sailor until his term of duty came to an end.

All those stories, many made up by Bogie himself or his biographers, about the action he saw in World War I were inspired more by the bottle than real life. Bogie was a lot tougher on screen in his trench coat, carrying a gun, than he was in his Navy bell bottoms. Before heading overseas, he was widely quoted as proclaiming, "I'm not afraid of death."

He had no reason to be. The naval historian, Richard Wright, in a report filed with the State Department, wrote, "No troopship coming to the coast of France or England by an American escort was successfully attacked. The U.S. Navy transported two-million troops without losing a single man."

That didn't mean that Hump was freed of all the horrors of war. He was forever scarred by what he'd witnessed when returning soldiers were brought aboard his vessel. The young and the healthy came back from the battlefields "without a scratch." But other, sadder men had lost legs or arms on the battlefields of Eastern France. Some soldiers who'd been the victim of mustard gas were permanently wrecked. "When I saw the suffering of these men, and even though I was just a teenager, the terror of war struck my heart," Bogie was later to say. "War no longer seemed the grand adventure it had when I first sailed."

In later years, it was widely publicized that Bogie had received the famous injury to his upper lip when the *Leviathan* came under German shelling. That was just a fanciful tale conjured up in Hollywood long after the war was over, the U-boat menace itself something for the history pages. In later years, Bogie was embarrassed by his lack of action in World War I, and often invented stories to impress his cronies.

Over the years, Bogie also took particular delight in describing shore leave when he'd take the train from whichever French port where the *Leviathan* had docked, heading for Paris and "all those French dames." Bogie described in detail to John Huston and others how he visited the city's famous *maisons de tolerance* —a graceful term for "whorehouse." Bogie later claimed that he'd spent an entire week at one bordello on the Left Bank, venturing out only for meals. "Everything I learned about sex I learned in that house with about a dozen French-speaking prostitutes including some from Siam and Africa."

The biggest problem with that story is that the crew of the *Leviathan* was never granted shore leave to visit Paris during Hump's entire tour of duty aboard the vessel. He did, however, dock in Southampton, England, and visited the Red Lion Pub which staged drag acts so popular with the English.

Bogie never liked to talk about the most dramatic event of his military career. In February of 1919, he was transferred from the *Leviathan* to the USS *Santa Olivia*, which would be sailing from Hoboken, New Jersey, to Brest, France.

For a final night of fun, he'd gone to The Gilded Cage, a notorious bar in Hoboken that catered to lonely sailors, relieving them of their money and their misery with "some of the most beautiful girls in Jersey."

The bar was run by a German-born lesbian, "Isak Smith," who claimed to be Swedish because of anti-German sentiment in the United States at the time. Apparently her real name was Isak but she changed her last name to Smith because it sounded American. Isak was said to have "auditioned" all the girls who worked in her bar before turning them loose to hustle sailors.

The Gilded Cage was famous for pushing drinks. Each working girl got a commission for every glass of overpriced booze she pushed onto a sailor. By the time many sailors reached a prostitute's bed, they were too drunk to perform although they were charged ten dollars anyway.

Hump had one-hundred dollars in his pocket, and he'd demanded the best-looking woman in the bar. When he left with a beautiful boozy blonde for a room in a nearby hotel, he was falling down drunk.

He had to report to duty at five that morning. As he later remembered it, his new-found girl friend had agreed to wake him up in time. The next morning her clock revealed that it was ten o'clock. The *Olivia* had sailed at seven that morning.

Putting on his trousers, Hump rushed to Naval Headquarters in Hoboken where he turned himself in. He was officially placed in the brig and fed a diet of only bread and water.

Branded a deserter, he very cleverly decided to call in a favor from none other than Franklin Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the Navy. He wrote Roosevelt, recalling their meeting and their night together at Seneca Point. True to his word and eager to return a kindness, Roosevelt intervened and got Hump's offense changed from deserter to "absent without leave."

Because of Roosevelt's intervention, Hump—despite his status as a deserter—received an honorable discharge at the Brooklyn Naval Yard on June 18, 1919, with a ranking as seaman second class—not the rank of quartermaster that he had hoped for. All that he had to show for his time in the service was twelve dollars in his pocket and a Victory

Medal—an award that was routinely given to every serviceman who had completed a term of duty in the Armed Forces.

At the Bogart home on his first evening back, he found the atmosphere even chillier than when he'd left. His sisters were away at school, and all Maud could manage was another handshake. Belmont was away working as a ship's doctor on a cruise to Florida.

"We can't help you at all," Maud told Hump. Their rich life with a house full of servants was over. "There is no more money, only debts." He learned that the summer home at Seneca Point had finally been sold, the profit having gone to pay off mounting debts. Belmont had invested the family money in a get-rich-quick scheme in Michigan timberland and had lost every penny.

Because of his severe drug abuse, his once-flourishing medical practice had fallen off severely as patients drifted away. That's why he took assignments as a ship's doctor aboard cruises for long periods of time.

Wandering alone on the streets of New York, Hump found himself in the same situation as many returning veterans. He was out of work, relatively uneducated, and not qualified for most professions.

He longed for that overdue reunion with the Bradys, knowing that loving and supportive family might help him decide what to do with his life. He especially missed Bill. But all of the Bradys, including Grace and Alice, were out of town touring with a roadshow.

Hump wrote Bill in Philadelphia. "Hurry back to New York and be my best pal once again. I miss you something awful. My life's a waste. I'm a failure."

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In desperation and out of cash, Hump tried to find a job. He was hired to work in the mail department of the National Biscuit Company for $25 a week. After a month, and after showing up late for work four times in only two weeks, he was fired. An entire month went by before he found a job with the Pennsylvania Tug and Literage Company, where he was hired to trace shipments reported lost. Part of this job involved inspecting tugboats. Hump had distorted his Navy service record, and had claimed during his job interview that he was qualified as a boat inspector, which he wasn't. After sending in a number of reports that his boss called "nonsensical," Hump was fired.

Out of work and unable to find another job, Hump asked Belmont for help. Belmont's ill-fated investments were handled by the Wall Street firm of S.W. Strauss & Co. Belmont's longtime friend and investment broker, Wilbur Jenkins, was a vice president of the company. After Belmont appealed to Jenkins, the company hired Hump as a "runner" for $30 a week. He was charged with delivering securities and stock certificates to brokerage houses and banks.

When Bill Jr. returned to New York, Hump told him that he "was going to start out like Horatio Alger and work my way up to becoming president one day." Although Hump hated the runner's job, he held onto the position because he needed the money to party with his friends. The post-war era had arrived, and Hump expressed his desire "to become a Jazz Age baby."

As much as he hated his temporary jobs, Hump loved the rediscovery of his old friend. Although both men actively pursued girls, Hump and Bill Brady seemed more bonded than ever. Their boy/boy sexual flirtation with each other was about to enter a new phase. Although Hump was still considered very good looking in an unconventional way, Bill had grown into a remarkably handsome man, eagerly pursued by both girls and older women.

The dashing Stuart Rose had returned from military duty and had resumed his friendships with both Hump and Bill. He spent most of his time dating Frances. When Frances was at school, Stuart joined Bill and Hump on their jaunts to the Playhouse, a theater that William Brady Sr. operated on West 48th Street.

Sometimes, Stuart invited Hump and Bill to one of his equestrian classes at the Squadron A Armory. Originally Hump had been afraid of horses, but he trusted Stuart and responded to his teaching. Stuart pronounced him the best pupil he'd ever had.

Bill was much more interested in “the theater and girls,” although he still joined in the rides. On Sunday rides in Central Park, they would sometimes be joined by John Cromwell, the director.

The only problem was that Maud insisted on dressing Hump in fashionable riding gear that she’d seen in English sporting magazines. Hump stood out as a bit of a dandy and terribly overdressed.

It was a time for making new friends and going to social gatherings in Greenwich Village. Bill and Hump learned to love parties in the village where they felt a part of bohemian life for the first time. If given a chance, Hump would sing at these parties. He had made another friend, Kenneth Mielziner, who was an actor using the name “Kenneth MacKenna.” Although he could not have known it at the time, Kenneth was to become one of Bogie’s closest confidants during his first attempt at a film career in Hollywood. Kenneth shared a brownstone on Waverly Place in Greenwich Village with his brother, “Jo” Mielziner, who was slated for future fame as one of America’s leading stage designers.

Kenneth later recalled that he and Hump “liked the same type of woman,” although the breed was never specified, since Kenneth’s taste ranged from blondes to redheads, from tall, skinny girls to shorter, more fully rounded ones. “When I was through with a girl, I would pass her on to Hump. My attention span with women was short at the time, and I quickly became bored. I picked up girls with greater ease than Hump who was still a bit shy around the fairer sex. He was all too eager to date my discards.”

By 1938, the situation would reverse itself when Kenneth married one of Bogie’s “discards,” his second wife, Mary Philips.

Hump was finding it harder and harder to report to work as a runner on Wall Street. Nights were for frequenting speakeasies, listening to jazz, smoking, drinking bootleg hooch, and chasing after pretty women. Stuart remained faithful to Frances, but partly because of their promiscuity, Kenneth, Hump, John Cromwell, and Bill nicknamed themselves “the pussy posse.”

If a woman had a choice of these men, she usually opted for Bill Jr., since he possessed great charm and personality. If a girl couldn’t get Bill, she settled for one of the other young men. Perhaps because he was smaller and less dynamic around women, Hump was often the last to get picked for a date.

For a very brief time, a young actor, James Cagney, joined the pussy posse. Hump and Bill felt uncomfortable around Cagney but Kenneth insisted on inviting him. Unlike Hump’s “sissy” upbringing, Cagney, a man of the streets, had joined gangs as a kid and had learned to use his fists. He was the tough city kid, actually living the role that Hump would play at Warner Brothers when he often vied for the same parts that Cagney garnered, or else co-starred with him. Cagney told Hump that he could not make up his mind: he wanted to be either a song-and-dance man or else a farmer.

Although Cagney exuded masculinity, when he first met Hump he was appearing as a “showgal” in a revival of a production called *Every Sailor*. Originally conceived as a morale-booster for members of the Navy far from home, its cast included many recently discharged sailors. As in the original, all the female parts were played by men. When one of the cast members got sick, a friend introduced Cagney to the producer, Phil Dunning, who hired him on the spot, providing he’d appear in drag.

Bogart's friend and competitor
Kenneth MacKenna

"Listen, for $35 a week, I'll come out nude if they want me to," Cagney told Hump. Cagney claimed that he looked great as a gal, especially when he painted his mouth in scarlet red in a "sort of bee sting," like screen goddess Mae Murray. Hump couldn't believe that Cagney could transform himself into a gorgeous dame. Cagney said that he'd show up for their next night on the town in full drag. "The men will flock around me like moths to the flame."

Indeed Cagney showed up two nights later dressed as a woman, and the pussy posse was stunned. Bill claimed that he would have asked Cagney for a date if he didn't know he had a dick under that gown.

Cagney demonstrated his skill as a vamp by capturing the attention of the handsomest man at the speakeasy. On a dare, Cagney disappeared two hours later with a young Wall Street broker. What happened later that night remains unknown. Cagney never told the pussy posse how the evening ended, and in his authorized biography, *James Cagney*, he makes no mention of having known Hump in their early days.

The next morning, hung over from an all-night party, Hump showed up late for work and was severely chastised by his boss on Wall Street. He was given documents to deliver to a firm ten blocks away. On the way there, he recalled having a splitting headache. Deep into his hangover, and barely able to continue down the block, he opted for breakfast at a coffee shop, hoping that would cure his pain. Shortly thereafter, three blocks from the scene of his ham and eggs breakfast, he realized with horror that he'd left the valuable documents in a briefcase perched on the coffee shop's coat rack. He hurried back, only to discover that the briefcase had been stolen.

"Knowing I was going to get fired when I returned to the office, I decided not to go back," Hump later recalled.

On an impulse and having given it no thought beforehand, he rode the subway to the theatrical offices of William Brady, Sr. Hump felt that he should have checked with Bill before asking his father for a job but there was no time for that.

Camping it up with James Cagney *(third figure from left)* in drag

William Sr. welcomed Hump into his office as he had remained a family favorite. Telling the elder showman of his

plight, Hump found him most sympathetic. “I just happen to have an opening,” Brady said. “As an office boy. The pay’s $35 a week.”

Hump eagerly took the job and was thrilled to be making that much money in 1920. “As you know, sir, Bill and I both love the theater. To be a part of it in some way would make me very happy.”

“Cut out all of this I-love-the-theater crap,” Brady said. “The Broadway stage is just fine, and I guess it’ll go on forever. But the future of mass entertainment lies in the flickers. From now on, I’m a movie producer.”

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Hump found his new job as an office boy exciting, as he would relate to an attractive brunette, Ruth Rankin, who he was dating at the time. He’d given her a handsome picture of himself in his full dress Navy uniform, and she kept the photograph by her bedside, which was always there to greet him during his frequent visits to that much-used bed.

Although Hump humped her frequently, he confessed to Bill that, “I don’t really love her.” Bill chided him, “You don’t have to love a gal to fuck her.”

After working for Brady for only a month, Hump was promoted to production manager of the Brady film studio at Fort Lee, New Jersey, his pay raised to $50 a week. His duties included renting props and paying off the actors in cash.

When Brady Sr. saw the first rushes of a film, *Life*, that he’d commissioned, he fired the director, Travers Vale, and assigned Hump to take over the job.

Knowing nothing about acting or directing, Hump found a beret and a pair of black boots in the wardrobe department and showed up the next day, thinking himself a budding Erich von Stroheim or Cecil B. DeMille. The stars of the film were Arline Pretty, Nita Naldi, and Rod La Rocque.

When Bill Brady Jr. visited the set on the second day of Hump’s tenure as director, he immediately fell in love with Arline Pretty, launching a hot, torrid affair that lasted exactly three days, until Nita Naldi reported for work. Bill immediately dumped Arline and chased after Naldi. Hump called his friend a “lovesick pup,” while denying that he was attracted to Naldi himself. Actually he wanted her and was jealous of Bill for capturing her so soon.

The witty and glamorous Naldi was Hump’s first experience with a screen vamp. Ironically, like Alice Brady herself, Naldi had been raised in a convent in New Jersey, where the Mother Superior happened to be her great-aunt. For someone with such a sheltered background, Hump thought Naldi had “street smarts.” On the first day of shooting, Naldi informed her young director, “Even though I’m supposed to be a vamp in this pisser of a flick, I don’t want to be photographed looking like Theda Bara buried for two-thousand years and just dug up.”

After five days of filming, Bill invited Hump to join him after work at a speakeasy in Fort Lee for a private conversation. “I’m in love with Nita and she’s in love with herself. I’m having the time of my life, but she says we can’t go on unless you get involved.”

Bogie's abortive debut as a helmer involved directing silent-film stars Arline Pretty (*top right*), Nita Naldi *(bottom left*) and Rod La Roque *(bottom right*) in *Life*.

"What in hell does that mean?" Hump asked.

"She wants you to join us in bed. Otherwise, it's no dice."

"You've got to be kidding," Hump said.

"C'mon," Bill urged. "It's not like we haven't known each other real intimate like. We already know that both of us are made of sugar and spice."

Hump didn't hesitate for long. A few drinks of bootleg gin lowered his inhibitions. He desperately wanted to seduce Naldi. Figuring if this was his only chance, and considering that Bill was such a close friend, he agreed to meet that night in Naldi's hotel room.

For the next ten days, shooting on *Life* slowed down considerably, as Bill, Naldi, and Hump spent as much as two hours a day in her makeshift dressing room. For reasons of her own, Naldi could no longer see either man at night.

She'd later confess to her Hollywood comrade and sometimes lover, Natacha Rambova, the second wife of Rudolph Valentino, that she'd let Bill get on her first before allowing Hump to mount her. "I wouldn't let either of them stay on long. When they started getting too excited, I'd make one get off and the other get on. I'd string this out for a long time before letting them have their well-earned climaxes. No woman in New York was more sexually fulfilled than I was."

Born Donna Dooley in New York City two years before Hump, Nita Naldi was the first of many screen vamps Hump would seduce. Fresh from the convent, she'd acquired an immediate job as a clothes model at $15 a week before joining the chorus line at the Winter Garden's Century Roof.

Hump might have fallen for Naldi, but the male star of the film, Rod La Rocque, had fallen for his director.

Born in Chicago of an Irish mother and a French father, Rod had played mainly "boy parts," often at a dollar a performance, before Brady Sr. cast him in *Life*. At the time he met Hump, he was living at a local YMCA with another aspiring actor, Ralph Graves. A closeted homosexual, known for his good looks, elegant profile, and—years later—for a real-estate fortune he developed by buying up then-undesirable California real estate, Rod quickly became a factor in young Hump's life. La Rocque had already appeared in a Brady theatrical production, *Up the Ladder*, with Brady's daughter, Alice. The play had bombed, but Brady Sr. was sufficiently impressed with the actor to give him a chance on film.

As Hump tried to direct Rod, the male star of the film had eyes only for Hump and not the camera. Rod even suggested that Hump direct him privately so he'd know how to play his love scenes with Nita Naldi. "I can play Naldi's part and you can be me in the love scenes."

Fellow sailors during his military duty had put the make on Hump, but he'd never been pursued by a homosexual as

aggressively as he was chased by La Rocque.

“The fucker even sends me roses and buys me chocolates,” Hump confessed to Bill. “Like I’m his best dame or something. He begs me to go out with him. I’m too nice a guy to punch him out. Besides, he’s the star of my picture, and I don’t want to mess up his face.”

Hump didn’t become La Rocque’s lover but offered some good professional advice when the actor came to him to discuss screen billings. “Here is my choice of names,” La Rocque said. He’d written down suggestions for screen credit on a piece of paper which he handed to Hump.

Roderick La Rock. Rodney La Rock. Roderick La Rocque. Rodney LaRocque or Rod LaRocque. Hump studied the sheet, then wrote, “None of the above. Make it Rod La Rocque. It’s catchy.”

When Brady Sr. back in New York saw the first footage of *Life* directed by Hump, he was horrified. In several scenes, the drunken cameraman had actually put Hump into the frame, frantically directing his players. “The fucking director is being photographed directing,” Brady screamed out in his office.

The news that came in that day was even worse. Two of *Life’s* bit players filmed in a speeding car were supposed to be fighting for control of the steering wheel as the vehicle raced toward a stone wall. Hump had instructed the actors, Betty Furnall and Adolf Brunnen, to wait for a signal from him, at which point they were to swerve the car out of harm’s way, avoiding the wall. Hump miscalculated.

When he finally signaled, the car had gone beyond the point of no return. It crashed into the wall, and an ambulance was summoned to take the two victims to a hospital. Although injured, they survived the crash and lived to send Brady their medical bills.

The next day Brady drove over to Fort Lee and personally fired Hump, taking over as director himself.

That same day, Nita Naldi informed both Bill and Hump that she couldn’t see them any more. While dancing at the Winter Garden in the chorus, she’d been spotted by none other than John Barrymore. She claimed that he had fallen in love with her and was going to cast her opposite him in his flicker, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

Sorry to see her go, Hump and Bill agreed that Naldi would be one of the many chorus girls that The Great Profile would pick up and discard. In this rare instance, however, Barrymore did indeed cast her in the role, and Nita Naldi went on to become one of the reigning screen vamps of the Twenties. Her biggest break came in Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Ten Commandments*, where she played the Eurasian temptress, Sally Lung, who contracts leprosy as a “wages-of-sin” payment for her evil ways. Her co-star? None other than Rod La Rocque himself.

Brady Sr. went on to salvage *Life*, eventually selling it to Adolph Zukor for $100,000. After he’d purchased the film, Zukor looked at it carefully, deciding it wasn’t worth releasing. He assigned it to storage where it managed to disappear.

When Bogie in later life learned there were no more copies left, he said, “Thank the Devil for that.”

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Out of work, Hump spent the next three weeks writing a scenario for a gory film, *Blood and Death*. He wrote the script at the 21 Club, then one of New York’s most famous speakeasies. Thinking that such a costume made him look more like a writer, he wore a tweed jacket and smoked a pipe.

Even though he’d been fired by Brady, Hump showed up at his office with his completed film script. Fearing rejection, Hump was surprised when “Mr. Showman” himself thought the script “could play.” He sent it over to a trio of producers he knew, Jesse L. Lasky, Samuel Goldfish (later Goldwyn), and Cecil B. DeMille. All three producers were too busy to read it, and they turned the script over to an office assistant, Walter Wanger. He skimmed it before tossing it into a wastepaper basket.

In later life, when Wanger had become one of Hollywood’s biggest producers and Bogie one of its biggest male stars, Wanger always claimed that “Bogart used to write for me.”

Wanger went on to produce such classics as Greta Garbo's *Queen Christina* in 1933, John Ford's *Stagecoach* in 1939, and even the ill-fated *Cleopatra* in 1963, co-starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.

Walter Wanger with Joan Bennett in 1943

Following a night of tabloid scandal in 1951, Bogie visited Wanger in jail. The previous evening in a fit of jealous rage, Wanger had shot a well-known Hollywood agent, Jennings Lang, in the groin. The agent managed the career of the then famous actress, Joan Bennett. "I was aiming for the fucker's balls," Wanger told Bogie, "but I missed." Bogie's reply: "So what in hell was the matter with my screenplay?"

By 1937, Wanger agreed to cast Bogie in *Stand-In* with his friends, Leslie Howard and Joan Blondell.

Hump wasn't off the Brady payroll for long. Brady Sr. claimed he had no peace at home, because his wife, Grace George, his daughter, Alice, and his son, Bill, kept urging him to give Hump another chance. Brady rehired Hump at $50 a week and sent him on tour as the stage manager for Grace's play, *The Ruined Lady.*

He toured with Grace for six months in East Coast cities, including Philadelphia and Boston. He did not fall for Grace, who remained faithful to her husband, but she later recalled that he always managed to find a female companion in the seedy hotels her husband had booked them in. Mostly they stayed in fleabags that accepted traveling actors. Many hotels in those days refused to accommodate actors because they gave loud, drunken parties late at night, tore up the furniture, and usually skipped town without paying the bill.

Bogie in later life would view that tour of *The Ruined Lady* as the most sexually liberating period of his life. "Everything I learned about women, I learned then. I'd had sexual experiences with the likes of Nita Naldi and others, but on the road I met all sorts of women—all shapes, sizes, whatever. I learned that some gals will do things to a man that respectable women never do. After that road show, I found a return to New York restrictive."

Co-starring beside Grace was a handsome young actor, Neil Hamilton, playing the *ingénu* lead. Although Hamilton was headed for a big career in Hollywood where he would become one of its most durable actors, Hump as stage manager wasn't impressed with him. He called Hamilton "the stuffed shirt model," because the actor had posed for so many shirt ads in magazines. Hamilton countered by calling Hump "Baby Food." Behind Hump's back, he referred to him as "Baby Shit."

On tour with Hamilton, Hump needled him for "having such a soft job. All you have to do is show up every night, mouth some writer's words, and get your paycheck." Hamilton always protested that there was more to acting than that.

Neil Hamilton

Before sending him out on the road, Brady had insisted that Hump understudy all the male parts in case one of the actors got sick. Before the final performance of *The Ruined Lady*, Hamilton developed the flu and called in to cancel.

The cast assembled that Saturday afternoon for a dry run with Hump as the male lead. He'd memorized all the parts, having heard them week after week. But facing the seats of the empty theater, he was paralyzed and couldn't remember one line of dialogue.

Fortunately for Hump, Grace also developed a fever, perhaps having caught the flu germs from Hamilton during their love scenes. When members of the prospective audience showed up that night, their money was refunded at the box office.

In spite of what Hump would later call "the disaster that never was," the ever-faithful Brady family continued to believe in his acting talent. In May of 1921, Alice Brady offered him a walk-on part in her play, *Drifting*. It was going to have try-outs in Brooklyn in hope of obtaining backers for a Broadway production.

Its director was John Cromwell, Hump's close friend who was also a stage performer himself. In time, he would become one of Hollywood's leading directors, known for turning out such classics as *Of Human Bondage* in 1934, *Algiers* in 1938, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* in 1940, and *Anna and the King of Siam* in 1946.

For Hump's stage debut in *Drifting* at Brooklyn's Fulton Theater, he invited everyone he knew. Maud chose not to go see her son on stage, still disapproving of his preferred choice of a profession. But the ever-faithful Bill Brady Jr. showed up, bringing with him Belmont and Stuart Rose. Stuart was still dating Frances. Hump's sister had just seen her husband-to-be march in the Memorial Day parade. All three were eager to see Hump on the stage, hoping it would be a triumph for him.

To Stuart's horror, he discovered that Hump was spectacularly miscast in the role of a Japanese butler. Alice played a *femme fatale*, an archetype that would be perfected by Marlene Dietrich in films of the 30s. In later life, Hump called her role "early Sadie Thompson." Kicked out of her home by her Puritan father, Alice's character ended up in Singapore "drifting" into a life of depravity before being rescued by a handsome American soldier who falls in love with her.

Director **John Cromwell**

Bogie made his brief appearance carrying a tray of pink gin fizzes. Trying to imitate a Japanese accent, he uttered the words, “Drinks for my lady and for her most honored guests.” Frances and Stuart slid down in their seats in embarrassment, although Belmont later said that he thought his son “did a right fair job.”

After he became a star, Bogie always derided the role as “the dumb Jap butler part,” as if anticipating the words of Erich von Stroheim who called his role in *Sunset Blvd.* opposite Gloria Swanson “the dumb butler part.” Von Stroheim made the role the greatest butler part of all time, whereas Bogie’s stage debut hardly merits a footnote in theatrical history.

Somewhere between the time the tryouts were held and the play’s Broadway opening, Hump and the slightly older Alice began a quiet affair, even though she had married James Crane.

“It’s a cordial romance,” Hump told Bill, who didn’t seem at all horrified that his best friend was sexually involved with his married stepsister. As Hump related to Bill, “We talk theater half the night and then get into bed together. Fortunately, Crane is out of town a lot. I get on top of her, do my job, then roll over and go to sleep,”

It wasn’t love, but it was sex. Actually it evolved more into friendship than anything else. Until her death, Hump would remain her steadfast friend.

Drifting did make it to Broadway and ran for sixty-three performances, even though Alan Dale, theater critic for the *New York American*, called the play “strangely protuberant.” Its Broadway run at an end, Brady sent Alice and Hump on the road with *Drifting.*

Two months into the run of *Drifting,* Alice announced to Hump that she was pregnant and was going to leave the cast. At first he was petrified, thinking that he might be the father. Alice assured him that the father was her husband.

After she bowed out of the show, she never resumed her affair with Hump, later referring to it as “that brief fling that often happens between actors.” For Hump, it would become the role model for a future series of involvements with actresses with whom he appeared on stage or in films.

Brady hired a fast-emerging young star of her day, Helen Menken, to replace his daughter. Arriving at the theater, Helen spotted Hump backstage. She told the theater manager, Glenn Wilson, “Daddy I want a taste of that.”

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A slender, beautiful actress, Helen Menken—because of her temper tantrums—was known as “the Irish Menk” in theatrical circles. She had moppish hair, a sort of auburn red, and her cupid’s-bow mouth was just as expressive as her hands, which Richard Schnel, a theater critic, had called “the most expressive on Broadway.”

She looked at the world through liquid dark brown eyes that sometimes left the impression that she was misty-eyed. Her face was thin and pale, made even more so by her excessive use of rice powder. She kept her figure because of an extraordinary diet of two boiled eggs a day and perhaps a leaf of lettuce. That dietary advice had been given to

her by the stage actress, Nazimova, who recommended it to all aspiring actresses as a guaranteed way of keeping one's figure. Nazimova, as Hump was to learn later, had introduced young Helen to the delights of lesbian love.

When Helen met Hump, she was already an established star, although not yet at the height of her fame. She'd appeared in Victoria Herbert's play, *The Red Mill*, to critical acclaim.

She'd also scored a success in 1918 in *Three Wise Fools*, a play by Austin Strong. Before her steady employment in the theater, she sold women's hats and also did some clothes modeling at department stores. Prospective employers always commented on her "narrow shoulders," preferring, even then, the more broad-shouldered look that in just a few more years would be popularized by Joan Crawford.

Helen had made her theatrical debut at the age of six when she'd walked out nude in a production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is said that the circumstances that surrounded Helen's true-life stage debut at the age of six inspired the creation of the fictional career of the character of Margo Channing in the 1950 film, *All About Eve*, starring Bette Davis.

Poorly educated and born into poverty, Helen had acquired a gloss of sophistication because of all her years in the theater. Born in New York City, she was the oldest of three children. For some reason of her own, Helen was proud to be a direct descendant of John Wilkes Booth.

Two views of Helen Menken

Hump was intrigued by her upbringing, which she called "my world of silence." Both of her parents were deaf mutes, although Helen had been born with perfect hearing. She learned to communicate with them in sign language. Whenever her parents would get into an argument, one of them would turn off the lights, ending a fight since they could no longer see each other to communicate.

Helen's mother earned $3.50 a week sewing identification badges for business conventions, but her father had never held down a job for very long. Helen herself had come from a rough-and-tumble background of acting in road shows and sleeping in seedy rooms above drunken saloons.

She remembered when one of these fleabag hotels near Trenton, New Jersey, had caught fire. "I climbed down from the second-floor window since the fire was raging up the only stairway. I raced out into the night and was standing out on the highway before I realized I was stark naked. It was twenty degrees that night."

For years she'd supported her family and had even managed to send one of her brothers to college. Helen herself had had only one and a half years of grade school. She didn't enroll in school until she was twelve years old.

Hump disliked Helen on sight. Because of Alice's sudden withdrawal from the play, he had only twenty-four hours to teach her her lines. He might not have liked her personally but was amazed at how fast she learned the script. Before the curtain went up the following night, she was letter perfect.

Unfortunately the play called for a series of eight complicated set changes. Deep into the second act, Hump and the stagehands in their haste had not secured the props. In the middle of Helen's big scene, the wall of a set collapsed on her, burying her in front of the audience. Hump had to pull the curtain before Helen, who had not been hurt, could resume her theatrics.

Helen tried to recoup her dignity but many customers walked out, demanding a refund on their tickets, claiming that they had purchased them to see Alice Brady.

Enraged, Helen rushed backstage to confront Hump. "You asshole!" she shrieked at him. "You little shit."

Because of the abuse suffered at the hands of Maud's ill-mannered and ill-tempered servants, Hump could not stand being called little shit. He kicked her in the rump, sending her sprawling onto the wooden floor. Jumping up, she aimed her sharply pointed high-heel shoe at his groin, scoring a bull's-eye assault on his testicles. Falling to the floor, he doubled over in pain, which is where she left him as she stalked off to her dressing room.

It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

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Within six weeks Helen was professing her love for Hump. That love was not reciprocated, although he later told his friend Bill that "she's great in the sack." She invited him to come and live with her at her flat at 43 East 25th Street in New York but only for four nights each week. The other three nights of her week, Helen enjoyed the "wild side" of New York with her newly discovered companion, Tallulah Bankhead.

Tallulah was a gorgeous and outrageous Alabama belle, living at the Algonquin Hotel on $50 a week sent to her by her daddy. Her stated ambition for coming to New York was: (1) to become the biggest Broadway star of all time; (2) to seduce John Barrymore, and (3) to "fuck Ethel Barrymore."

Hump had moved in with Helen without knowing much about her. In the first month or so, she kept him like a "toy boy," not introducing him to her friends or making him part of her glittering Broadway world. It was as if she couldn't decide what role he was going to play in her life.

Day by day Hump learned more about his new girl friend. A high strung, nervous woman with a bizarre (perhaps anorexic) diet and a tendency to drink heavily, she worried and fretted most of the day. She read Broadway news with a certain fury, often bursting into violent rages when a rival actress received a part that she felt she was "destined to play."

Although bitterly resentful of the success of other actresses, she encouraged Hump with his theatrical ambitions. "After all, you're no competition to me, darling. Be an actor out in front of the lights, not some God damn prop man. As a stagehand, you stink." She constantly ribbed Hump for that opening night when the scenery fell on her.

Helen had some peculiarities. Long before the world ever heard of Imelda Marcos, Helen spent a good part of her salary buying expensive shoes, even it if meant going without some of life's essentials. She adored her tiny feet, which to Hump evoked memories of Maud's small feet.

The only difference was that Helen demanded that Hump spend as much time in bed kissing, licking, and biting her feet, as well as sucking her toes, as he did in attacking other parts of her body. Helen would spend hours washing, bathing, and caring for her feet, with endless pedicures. She would fret over the right nail polish to use for her dainty toes.

In spite of her lack of schooling, she spoke perfect English. She said she'd learned to speak properly listening to other actresses on the stage, beginning with the star Annie Russell in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Helen's voice sounded slightly husky, something like that of the future actress, Barbara Stanwyck, Bogie's 1947 co-star in *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*.

Helen was much the same off-stage as she was on, which was very flam-boyant. She called everybody "darling," an appellation soon picked up by her protégée, Tallulah.

Almost overnight, Helen became the toast of Broadway. Austin Strong had "loved" her performance in his play, *Three Wise Fools*, and campaigned for her to be cast as Diane in his latest play, *Seventh Heaven*, which opened on Broadway in 1922 and became an immediate hit.

Hump himself was in the opening night audience and was dazzled by her performance. In the role, she played a street urchin in Paris. Her most memorable scene was when she took a bullwhip, and in her rage and despair, drove her mean sister out of the house.

Before meeting Helen, Hump had dated an aspiring young actress, Katharine Alexander. Briefly smitten with her, Hump pursued Katharine for a week or two. He'd never known anyone who'd been born and reared in Alaska, and was fascinated to learn of her experiences in the cold north. "I can take the chill off you," he promised Katharine. She never gave him a chance to prove that.

In spite of her sexual rejection of him, Hump and Katharine would become lifelong friends. She told him that she had never wanted to be an actress, but had studied to be a *concerte artiste.* For some strange reason, she seemed to take the greatest pride in her heritage. She was one-eighth Cherokee Indian.

"I've never had a squaw woman before," he jokingly suggested to her.

"Many conquests are better off dreamed than experienced in real life," Katharine told him. "I'll see you in your dreams."

When he introduced Katharine to the handsomer, taller, richer, better built, and more successful Bill Brady Jr., Hump's romance with Katharine came to an abrupt end. She fell at once for Bill. Hump showed little jealousy, and even suggested at one point that "we should share her," evoking their brief fling with Nita Naldi.

Tallulah Bankhead

After the third week, Bill would stand for no more talk like that. He'd fallen madly in love with Katharine, and planned to make her "my exclusive property." Within six weeks of meeting Katharine, Bill invited Hump to be his best man at their wedding. Hump asked Helen to accompany him.

Attending the wedding of Katharine and Bill must have given Helen an idea. Within weeks, she was urging Hump to marry her. She was proposing to him as if he were the prospective bride and she the groom. Hump didn't turn her down but didn't accept her proposal either.

He turned to his friend Bill for advice. "If I marry Helen," he said, "I'll be repeating Maud's pattern with Belmont. Strong woman, the bread earner, supporting weak husband."

"Forget about that," Bill said. "Marry the bitch. She's a friend of all the critics and knows all the big-name producers. She'll advance your career. Trust me on this one. If you scorn Helen, she'll cut off your balls. She's already kicked them. You may never work on Broadway again."

Hump remained uncertain and confused. At Helen's urging, he went to secure a marriage license, which he would carry around in his wallet for the next four years. In an interview on April 5, 1922, Hump told *The New York Times*, "I plan to marry Helen Menken." Because of Helen's prominence as a Broadway star, the paper gave it a headline.

Suddenly, all of Broadway became aware of the struggling actor, Humphrey Bogart. He hadn't even married her yet, and already Bill's advice was proving to be true. Almost overnight, producers started offering Hump parts, no doubt with a little urging from Helen herself.

With the *Times* announcing her engagement, Helen no longer had any reason to keep Hump a secret in the closet. Her toy boy (although men weren't called that then) could emerge into the full theatricality of her glittering world. He would meet for the first time Miss Tallulah Bankhead, whom he had confided in Bill was "Helen's other boyfriend."

CHAPTER TWO

Instead of being threatened or offended by Helen's sexual involvement with Tallulah, Hump was intrigued. He pointedly asked his friend Bill, "Just what do women do in bed together? I understand the kissing part, but the plumbing doesn't seem quite right."

In detail, the more worldly Bill tried to explain lesbian love and how it worked. Even so, Hump didn't quite get it.

That evening, Bill invited him to Harlem's Red Garter, a notorious nightclub that flourished briefly and illegally in the early 1920s until the police shut it down. Patronized only by male customers, the club specialized in presenting live sex acts on its small stage but only between women performers.

The lesbian black actress, Hattie McDaniel, was said to be a frequent patron of the club and was even rumored to have been a performer. Hattie would go on to greater fame playing Mammy to Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*. As a further irony, she was to become the lover of Tallulah Bankhead, as Tallulah in her declining years would readily admit to her homosexual "cunties," as she called her all-male entourage.

It was a wiser and more experienced Humphrey Bogart, man of the world, who escorted Helen to the 21 Club to meet Tallulah.

When Hump was introduced, her hair looked badly combed, yet it was radiant. Her mouse-brown dress, however, should long ago have been sent to the cleaners. "Forgive my appearance, darling," she said, aping Helen's habit of calling everybody darling. "I've just gone down on John Barrymore and haven't had time to make myself into a lady again."

"You look beautiful," Hump assured her. Actually he didn't know what to make of this Alabama bombshell, although he could understand Helen's fascination with her.

"I must ask a tiny favor," she said. "To catch the streetcar home, I need one tiny, little, small penny as I have only four cents in my purse, hardly enough for the five-cent fare."

"I don't understand why you're always broke," Helen said, ordering a martini from the waiter at 21. "You employ a French maid."

"I know, darling," Tallulah said. "Daddy sends me $50 a week, and I have to give the maid half of that. That means I'm penniless for three days a week."

"Fire the maid," Hump said. "My mother did when the family fortune disappeared."

"Perish the thought, darling," Tallulah said. "No respectable lady could live in New York without a French maid. It's simply not done."

Helen was the more established star, but Tallulah dominated the night. Hump concluded that Tallulah was the "man" in her relationship with Helen, his girlfriend the submissive female.

"You must meet my sister, Eugenia," Tallulah said to Hump, reaching over to caress his hand. "She's not a classic beauty like me, but one hell of a woman. Those stories about her being a lesbian are exaggerated. She lives in an apartment next door to Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald. They've been anxious to meet the two of you since the *êw York Times* referred to your coupling as a union of two Jazz Age Babies. Scott views himself as the world's expert on Jazz Age babies."

Since Tallulah didn't have any money, Helen invited her to join them for dinner at Sam's Vanity, a popular little restaurant that flourished for three months until its owner, Sam Martin, was fatally shot by his estranged wife.

At table, Tallulah stuffed herself, while claiming that Sam didn't know how to cook Southern fried chicken. After

dinner Tallulah invited them for “drinks and drugs” at the apartment of her friend, Napier George Henry Stuart Alington, the third Baron of Alington.” She called him “Naps” and claimed a passionate involvement. “John Barrymore for sex,” she said, “Ethel Barrymore if I can get her, but for true love, it’s Naps. That is, if he isn’t too busy fucking Noël Coward.”

Naps welcomed them into a plushy furnished Victorian apartment. In his mid-20s, he had a small delicate build, crowned by a mop of blond hair. His most sensuous physically was in his thick lips. He had a nervous habit of constantly licking the roof of his mouth, as if he were tasting honey.

Ushered into the living room, Helen, Hump, and Tallulah were served martinis by an English butler. Spread out on Naps’ glass-topped coffee table was a virtual shopping cart of drugs, including cocaine, heroin, and morphine, the substance so beloved by Maud and Belmont Bogart.

The heroin came in little vanity boxes, lined in red silk, evocative of Tiffany jewel boxes. Small hypodermic needles were arranged moonlike around the heroin boxes. For his drug of choice, Hump selected morphine, hoping to understand his parents’ infatuation with the drug.

Tallulah claimed that she found morphine boring and chided Hump for not selecting cocaine, which she said was the drug of the moment. Cocaine was enjoying the same type of popularity among New York’s jazz babies in the early Twenties as marijuana did among the hippies of the late Sixties. Instead of masquerade balls, “snow balls” were all the rage, and Tallulah said she attended two every week of her life.

The next day, when Hump related the drama of the previous night to Bill, Hump was a little vague on details, not that he was holding back information. He honestly claimed he couldn’t remember. “That morphine sent me into another world.”

All he recalled was that Tallulah and Helen started kissing on the sofa. “It was like a white girls’ show at the Red Garter.”

At one point Naps appeared nude in the living room and invited all of them into his bedroom.

“I don’t remember anything after that,” Hump claimed. “I think I have deliberately blotted out what happened next. I just don’t want to recall it.”

Somewhere before dawn, Helen and Hump had dropped Tallulah off at some mysterious apartment on West 51st Street, and Helen directed the cabbie to head for her own apartment.

Before stumbling out of the taxi, Tallulah extended an invitation to them for the following evening to meet the reigning literary darlings of the 1920s, novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda.

“I guess I got a real introduction to your world,” Hump said to Helen in the taxi.

“Darling,” Helen said, “Until tonight I didn’t think you were sophisticated enough to handle it. You’re a city boy but still a bit provincial.”

“Perhaps,” he said, “but after that Alabama hurricane and that fucking Naps, I was really initiated. It’s a night to remember. Better yet, it’s a night to forget.”

She reached over and kissed his cheek. “It’s only the beginning, my love. Our marriage will be perfect. A shared marriage.”

“This ‘country boy’ has never heard of a shared marriage.” “

We must not be selfish,” Helen said. “You’re a gorgeous man and I’m a devastating female. We’ll have to share our marriage with others.”

“You mean, carry on like we did tonight?” he asked.

“There will be others, so many others we can invite into our marriage bed. Variety, that’s the only way to guarantee that a marriage will stay vital and not become a bloody bore. We’ll ask Zelda and Scott tomorrow night what they think about that.”

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The following evening, Helen had to excuse herself because she’d been asked at the last minute to meet with a producer about a change of casting in her play.

Hump was the first to arrive at the Algonquin Hotel where he asked the receptionist to call up to Tallulah’s room. She claimed that she’d be down in the lobby quicker than it would take “Ethel Barrymore to slap my gorgeous face.” Hump had heard that Ms. Barrymore had slapped Tallulah’s face when the grand actress had walked into a party and caught Tallulah doing a devastating impression of her.

He was into his second drink when Tallulah showed up in the lobby in a fur coat borrowed from her much older friend, Estelle Winwood. Hump sat in a corner table. She walked over and kissed him on the lips. “Sorry Helen couldn’t make it tonight. I was hoping to be the meat in a sandwich between the two of you.”

As Tallulah started to launch into one of her many stories about the men and women pursuing her in New York, she was interrupted by the arrival of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, the darlings of the New York tabloids and the embodiment of the Jazz Age. The romantic couple was already deep into a bottle of gin which Scott carried in a pocket of his raccoon coat. In contrast, Zelda wore a thin red woolen coat.

Tallulah jumped up and kissed each of the Fitzgeralds on the lips before introducing them to Hump.

Scott had already written his novel, *This Side of Paradise*, recounting the adventures, romantic and otherwise, of a Princeton man. He’d also published *Flappers and Philosophers*.

Standing in front of Scott and Zelda in the flesh, Hump sensed that they were trying to become public manifestations of the flappers and “sheiks” he had described in his writing.

Shaking Scott’s hand, Hump found him rather effeminate. A woman newspaper columnist, Rena Willson, had only recently written a feature story about him. She had claimed that “Scott’s face dances between pretty boy and handsome, and his long-lipped mouth virtually cries out for lipstick and belongs more on a girl than a young man.”

F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald

As Zelda and Tallulah excused themselves to go to the powder room, Scott settled onto the banquette opposite Hump. Watching the women go, he expressed his disappointment that he wouldn’t have a chance to meet Helen tonight. “I’ve seen her latest play and thought she gave a brilliant performance.”

“I’ll convey that to her,” Hump said.

“Before the ladies get back, I’ve got to ask you something,” Scott said. “I read in the papers that you and Helen are getting married. Forgive me, but have you slept with her yet, or are you waiting until the wedding?”

Ever the kidder, Hump startled Scott by looking at him with a deadpan expression and saying, “In all honesty, I can say that I don’t recall.”

Scott weighed that for a moment then burst into laughter, putting his arm around Hump. “You’re my kind of man.”

With this trio, Hump hardly could slip in even the smallest observation. Scott, Zelda, and Tallulah had opinions about everything and everybody, and expressed them in such a candid manner as to shock society.

Tallulah went to the reception desk and placed a call upstairs to the room where John Barrymore was temporarily staying. She rushed over to Scott. “I tried to get John to come down and join us, but he’s entertaining some lucky gal. But he’ll speak to you on the phone.”

As Tallulah and Scott departed for their phone dialogue with Barrymore, Zelda slid closer to Hump. “Tallulah claims you’re a most satisfying lover, and I’m envious. Scott can’t satisfy me sexually. His equipment is too small.”

Hump had never heard a woman, much less a wife, make such an observation about her husband.

He studied her face carefully. Her dark honey-blonde hair had been given the world’s worst permanent. Her skin was pink and white, a delicate porcelain look. She had a sensual and alluring mouth and deep blue eyes that reflected a sparkling deviltry. If she had any imperfection at all, it was her sharp nose that was a bit beaky.

“The real reason Scott wants to talk to John Barrymore is that he has a crush on him,” she said. “Scott’s a fairy, you know. I’ll prove it.” She reached into her purse and produced a photograph, which she said she always carried around to parties.

Staring back at Hump was a stunning looking dame in an off-the-shoulder gown and black high heels.

“It was snapped for The Triangle Club at Princeton,” Zelda said. “Scott appeared in a play this way in drag, and his picture was circulated all over campus. He was hailed as the Princeton Play Girl.”

“Since there are no women undergraduates at Princeton,” Hump said, “men play the female parts. I know this actor, Jimmy Cagney, who launched himself in show business doing drag.”

“That may be true, but why was Scott chosen to play the beautiful show-girl?” Zelda asked.

Before he could answer, Scott and Tallulah returned. He seemed thrilled at having talked to The Great Profile himself.

The waiter kept the quinine water flowing to their table, and Scott kept lacing their drinks with gin. Hump was amazed that Zelda seemed to be encouraging Scott to drink. As Scott was engrossed in conversation with Tallulah, Hump leaned over to Zelda. “If you get him too drunk, he won’t be able to write in the morning.”

“That’s fine with me,” she said with a smirk on her face.

“But he’s a writer. Writers have to write.”

“Are you suggesting that I’m jealous of his work and want to keep him from writing?” she asked. “I have no reason to be jealous. In time I’m going to write fiction myself. The world can judge who is the better novelist.”

Drunk and out on the street again, Scott dared them to race toward the theater district. With Hump reluctantly trailing behind, Zelda, Scott, and Tallulah darted down the crowded sidewalk, not caring if they bumped into someone. They were like crazed young things without a care in the world.

Even though he ran to keep up with them, Hump felt that all of them were like some incorrigible undergraduates he’d known at Andover. With the wind blowing through his hair, Scott led them right into the dense traffic along Seventh Avenue. “We’ll defy death,” he shouted back at them.

Shortly after their arrival at a popular dance club, Montmartre, plenty of bootleg hooch suddenly became available. Both Tallulah and Zelda found the patrons “sluggish.” Zelda suggested that she and Tallulah take to the dance floor and enliven the joint.

As the orchestra struck up an inappropriate Highland Fling, Zelda whirled around the suddenly emptied dance floor turning cartwheels for the amusement of the crowd. Right on her heels was Tallulah, equally adept at turning

cartwheels herself. The only difference between the two performers was that Tallulah had forgotten to put on her bloomers.

At Scott's suggestion, the party moved to the Plaza Hotel. In those days newspaper photographers were always posted in the lobby, hoping to take pictures of celebrities coming and going.

Seeing the cameramen, Scott did a handstand in the lobby, as his picture was snapped. Getting to his feet again, he told Hump. "I'm sure to get my picture in the papers in the morning. I haven't been mentioned for an entire week, so I had to do something."

Zelda suggested to Tallulah that she and Hump join Scott and her in one of their favorite games on the elevator. Once inside the cage, she said that they were to ride up and down. When the door opened to let on new passengers, they were to shock the hotel guests by having Zelda kiss Tallulah on the mouth and Scott kiss Hump on the mouth. Hump didn't much like the idea of the game, but didn't want to live up to Helen's accusation of him as a country boy.

For about fifteen minutes that night, they rode up and down in the elevator with Zelda kissing Tallulah and Scott kissing Hump. And indeed the hotel guests were shocked, many expressing their disapproval with outrageous indignation.

Back in the lobby, one of the photographers approached Scott, telling him that he'd run out of film after the handstand photograph was snapped. He asked Scott to do it again.

"I've got a better idea," Scott said, grabbing Zelda's hand and racing toward the door. Followed by Tallulah and Hump, he ran over to the fountain, dropping his fur coat. "Let's go for a midnight bath," he shouted. "Last one in is an ugly duckling."

Scott jumped into the fountain and began splashing about, as Zelda and then Tallulah followed. Feeling like a fool, Hump jumped in with them as two shutterbugs snapped their pictures for tomorrow's tabloids.

Out of the fountain, cold and dripping wet, Scott raced toward a cab parked in front of the hotel with Zelda trailing him. When she reached it, Zelda turned and kissed both Tallulah and Hump on the lips.

Scott leaned out the window of the cab. "Remember," he said to both Tallulah and Hump. "You two pretty things should know that Oscar Wilde got it right. The only thing worse than being talked about is being forgotten." Zelda jumped in the back seat of the taxi with him, as they headed off into the night.

Still soaked from the fountain, Tallulah screeched for a second cab. "Since Helen and Naps are tied up with other engagements this evening," she said, "I guess that means you're stuck with me as your fuck buddy."

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Scripts were frequently offered to Hump by Brady Sr. Bill Jr. remained Hump's steadfast friend, and promoted Hump as an actor to his father, despite telling his stepsister, Alice, that Hump "really has no talent." Bill also confessed to her that the only reason he hyped roles for Hump was that he wanted him to have a weekly paycheck. "I'm tired of always picking up the bill at speakeasies."

Brady Sr. had revived *Up the Ladder*, a four-act play presented at The Playhouse on March 6, 1922. Originally, George Le Guere played the part of Stanley Grant. After a respectable run, when Le Guere opted to move on to other venues, Bill talked his father into giving the role to Hump. The play starred Nannette Comstock and George Farren. The original production had featured Rod La Rocque, who still wrote Hump letters, claiming that, "I'm mad about the boy," predating the Noël Coward lyrics.

Farren had starred in the 1917 screen version of *The Cinderella Man*. During rehearsals, Farren was always forgetting his lines. "No wonder," Hump later told Bill. "He was born before the Civil War."

It was during his appearance in *Up the Ladder* that Hump befriended the actor, Paul Kelly, who was also appearing in the play, but in a minor role.

When *Up the Ladder* closed, a play called *Swifty* followed. Brady Sr. offered Hump the role of the juvenile lead, Tom Proctor, described by playwrights John Peter Toohey and W.C. Percival as "a young sprig of the aristocracy." John Cromwell, a member of Hump's "pussy posse," was signed on as the director.

The male star was Hale Hamilton, not the more famous Neil Hamilton as many biographers have reported. Throughout their professional lives, the two actors were often confused because of their name similarity. Hump had worked with Neil Hamilton during the ill-fated production of *The Ruined Lady* with Grace George.

The female lead in *Up the Ladder* was played by Frances Howard, and Hump was immediately attracted to her. A flapper, Frances was hailed as one of the great beauties of Broadway. She'd already appeared in *The Intimate& Stranger*, starring Alfred Lunt and Billie Burke.

Frances Howard

Hale Hamilton

Frances was slender and well-proportioned with big dark eyes. Her features were so exquisitely chiseled, Hump called her a "fragile doll." Under bobbed raven-colored hair, she had a true peaches-and-cream complexion.

In spite of her strict Catholic upbringing, her years in show business had toughened her. Bill was the first to have an affair with her, calling her a "sexual predator in bed." When Hump pressed him for more details, he said, "You'll have to find that out for yourself."

Frances told Hump that she'd learned "all there was to know about men" when at the age of fifteen she toured with her sister, Connie, in an act billed as "The Howard Sisters." In between stage jobs, Frances doubled as both a fashion model and a chorus girl.

Hump was eager to fill in those three lonely nights a week when Helen was out with Tallulah and a pack of actresses called "the girls." Without telling Frances that he was engaged to Helen, he actively pursued Frances who kept turning him down.

Rehearsals on *Swifty* were going poorly. Brady Sr. wasn't pleased with Cromwell's direction, and had virtually taken over as "co-director." Brady placed himself in the back seat of the theater. During rehearsals, every time Hump uttered a line, Brady would shout, "What? Louder! *LOUDER!* " Handicapped by his lisp, Hump was mumbling some of his lines.

Growing increasingly despondent with what he saw on the stage, Brady brought in Ring Lardner as play doctor to save *Swifty*. But even such a writing talent could not do the job.

In his role in the play as that "young sprig of the aristocracy," Hump was said to have "deflowered" a girl in an Adirondack cabin and then deserted her.

In the play, Hump made his first appearance with a gun, a pose that would eventually become legendary for him. He was directed to rush toward Hale Hamilton, shouting, “I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you!”

Moving down to a front row seat for the final rehearsal, Brady had ordered Hump to repeat his big moment in the play a total of twenty times.

When Brady ordered Hump to do the scene yet another time, Hump was exhausted and near tears. Consumed with rage, he gave the role his all. When he’d finished, he looked over the pit at Brady in the front row. The showman was asleep or at least feigning sleep.

Screaming in rage, Hump ran off the stage and tried to attack Brady, but was restrained by both Hale and Bill Jr. The men took Hump into an alley and cooled him down, Bill offering a cigarette and Hale producing some brandy from a hip flask.

Opening night could proceed. What a disaster it was. Hale and Frances were trained professionals, and did the best they could. But Hump’s mouth became so dry he disappeared from the stage to get a glass of water, leaving Hale to “vamp till ready.” Hale at that point didn’t know if Hump would come back on stage or not. Finally, he did and the play proceeded to its dull ending, receiving very weak and only scattered applause.

The only blessing that came out of that night was that Hale wanted to go to a party and not accompany Frances back to her hotel room as she’d requested. Remembering that Hump had been repeatedly asking her out for a date, she agreed to go to the 21 Club with him. She told him, “I hope your performance later in the evening will be better than what you did on stage.”

After midnight, Frances invited him back to her hotel room, where he discovered what his friend Bill had already learned. Frances might look like a fragile doll but in bed she was a steel magnolia. “She taught me a trick or two,” Hump told Bill Jr. the next day.

When Hump woke up the following morning, Frances was already getting dressed. “You’re good,” she said. “Almost as good as Bill. But last night was our one and only time.”

“What’s the matter?” Hump asked. “Last night I had you crying out for more.”

“Occasionally I do it for fun,” she said, messing with her hair. “I waste few favors on struggling actors, especially bad struggling actors. I’ll never get ahead fucking the penniless. I’m determined to go to Hollywood where I’m gonna marry some bigtime producer or director. He’ll not only make me a star but I’ll become the wife of a millionaire.”

To Hump, Frances’ ambitions sounded like just so much morning after pillow talk. That’s why he was eventually astonished to read on April 23, 1925 that Frances had married her “dream man” in Jersey City.

She had found the perfect role for herself, a part that she would play for almost fifty years. She’d persuaded Samuel Goldwyn to marry her.

When he arrived at the Bogart home the morning after, Maud was waiting with the newspapers and his reviews.

Alexander Woollcott, the leading theater critic of his day, wrote of *Swifty* : “The young man who embodied the aforesaid sprig was what might mercifully be described as inadequate.” Bogie would carry around Woollcott’s review in his wallet for the rest of his life.

Only Helen Menken urged him to keep trying to become a successful Broadway actor. One day she altered that vision of his future profession. “I’ve decided you should be on the silver screen.”

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Helen was always vague, even to her husband-to-be, about how she had met Lillian Gish. Tallulah later claimed that she was the one who introduced Helen to Lillian, presenting Helen as “my discard” in the lobby of the Hotel Algonquin.

Discard or not, Helen seemed to mesmerize Miss Gish, who suggested that “a beauty like yourself should also appear in flickers. You’d look lovely in close-ups.” Coming from Lillian, the D.W. Griffith star who invented closeups, that was high praise indeed.

Through her close relationship with the more famous of the Gish sisters, Lillian herself, Helen arranged for a screen test for Hump in Lillian’s upcoming film, *The White Sister*.

The film script had been written by F. Marion Crawford and Walter Hackett. It had opened in September 27, 1909 at Daly’s Theatre in New York, having only a short run before it closed November 6. Lillian and Henry King hoped to resurrect this tired vehicle, as indeed they would one day as a film.

Two days later, in a barnlike studio in Astoria, Queens, Hump was introduced to the already legendary Lillian, who told him that in her upcoming film she hoped to capture a “spiritual fragility.”

Hump remembered that she maintained several quirky “little conceits,” which included referring to her Canadian friend as Gladys Smith, even though Gladys was known to the world at large as Mary Pickford. “Griffith used to pay Dorothy and me five dollars a day,” Lillian said. “Henry King and I hope to pay you considerably more.”

Dorothy, of course, was the other Gish sister, and was also famous as an actress.

King, the director, introduced himself to Hump just before his screen test and explained in rough outline the plot for *The White Sister*. Lillian was to play Angela Chiaromonte, the daughter of a rich Italian count killed in a fall from his horse. Lillian is cheated out of her estate by her older half-sister and is thrown into poverty. She’s saved by her engagement to a dashing officer, Captain Giovanni Severini, but he is captured by Arabs in an expedition to Africa. She dedicates her life to her lover’s memory by becoming a nun. She’s not aware that her lover has escaped and returned to Italy. The climax takes place against a backdrop of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

“Just my kind of part,” Hump told King, who apparently did not catch the sarcasm in the actor’s voice. Hump thought the script ridiculous but agreed to film the final close-up with Lillian minus the volcanic eruption.

The White Sister

Two views of Lillian Gish: *(top photo)* with Ronald Colman

He never saw the screen test but felt that he was very wooden with Lillian. “We had all the screen chemistry of yesterday’s bathwater.” To Hump’s surprise, both King and Lillian complimented him on his performance, claiming that they felt he had “real screen presence.”

Hump was asked to stay at the studio until after lunch. King was considering asking him to film one more segment of *The White Sister*, depicting when the captain first meets the woman who will become the love of his life.

When Hump returned from lunch, another actor was waiting in the reception room. An Englishman named Ronald Colman was eight years older than Hump. He appeared suave and debonair with a soft cultured voice that contrasted with Hump’s lisp. Hump, thinking the role was his, was upset to learn that Colman was also testing for the part. He not only “spoke pretty,” as Hump later recalled, “but he was also God damn good looking.” Colman, in fact, would

in a decade be voted “the handsomest man on the screen.” Both King and Lillian had seen Colman appearing in a Ruth Chatterton play and had been impressed with his performance.

Hump and Colman were interrupted when King came into the studio. With Colman’s permission, King penciled in a mustache on the clean-shaven actor, a tonsorial touch that would remain with the star for the rest of his life.

Even before the more polished Colman went before the cameras, Hump knew that the British actor had the part. He suspected that King and Lillian had tested him only as a favor to Helen. King called Colman into the studio and dismissed Hump, claiming it wasn’t necessary to stick around for that second scene.

Colman not only won the part of the tragic soldier hero in *The White Sister*, he went on to become one of Hollywood’s greatest film stars, pioneering a band of “gentleman heroes” on the screen. As Hump went from one “dumb comedy to another,” he watched Colman’s meteoric rise to film fame.

For the rest of his life, Bogie would refer to Colman as “that limey bum,” blaming the British actor for sabotaging Hump’s own screen career in silent pictures.

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One evening Bill Brady Jr. invited Hump to the opening night of his father’s 1923 Broadway production, *The Mad Honeymoon*. They sat next to George M. Cohan.

At the time, any aspiring actor was in awe of Cohan, “the man who owned Broadway.” The song-and-dance man of all song-and-dance men, Cohan was celebrated for his hit song, “Over There,” for which Franklin Roosevelt would one day award him the Congressional Medal of Honor. Cohan would go on to write such hits as “Give My Regards to Broadway,” “You’re a Grand Old Flag,” and “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy.” Ironically, Hump’s future film rival at Warner Brothers, James Cagney, would win an Academy Award for his impersonation of Cohan in the 1943 film hit, *Yankee Doodle Dandy.*

Fifteen minutes into *The Mad Honeymoon*, both Bill and Hump knew that the show would be a disaster. The only saving grace of the play was when a teenage actress, Mayo Methot, walked onstage as the maid. She had only five lines of dialogue, but brought momentary life to the dying play.

In their front row seats, Hump remembered being intrigued by her cupid’s-bow mouth and mass of blonde curls inspired by the MGM screen goddess, Mae Murray. Mayo had big, soulful eyes that looked out across the stage lights, seeming to make direct contact with the audience.

When the curtain went down, Cohan had nothing to say about the play. It received only scattered applause and was lambasted the next morning by all the leading critics of the day.

With his sharp eye for good theater, Cohan said nothing to Bill about his father’s opening night disaster, but asked to be taken backstage to meet the maid. “I have just discovered the next Lillian Gish.”

Hump was surprised, thinking that a comparison to Mae Murray—not Gish—would have been more apt.

When word spread that Cohan had come backstage, the stars of the play expected that Mr. Showman had come to greet them. They were startled at having been ignored. Cohan sought out Mayo and told her that she was terrific in the role. Mayo reached over with her cupid’s bow mouth and kissed Cohan right on his lips.

She shook hands with Bill and Hump but her eyes remained focused on Cohan. That very night he offered her the role of Leola Lane opposite him in his new production, *The Song and Dance Man*. Without even knowing what the role entailed, she accepted on the spot.

Hump remembered Mayo as a cute little blonde, and Bill and he would like to have dated her, even though Bill was married and Hump engaged. But it was obvious that Cohan had seen her first and had a lot more to offer her.

Mayo Methot *(top photo)* and George M.Cohan

Years later, Mayo recalled her first meeting with Cohan “which changed my life.” She also recollected meeting Bill Brady Jr., the son of the producer of *The Mad Honeymoon*. She had “no memory whatsoever” of being introduced to Hump. She later told an interviewer, “If someone had told me then that I would one day become the third Mrs. Bogart, I would have fallen on my cute ass.”

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Hump went back to working as a stage manager for Brady Sr. At night he frequented the speakeasies, spending every dollar he made. Sometimes Helen accompanied him, and often he was joined by Bill and his new wife, the always competent but never exciting actress, Katharine Alexander, who was forging ahead with her career playing wronged wives, society snobs, and respectable women. John Barrymore was in hot pursuit of her, but she claimed she was still faithful toBill.

Sometimes the director, John Cromwell, would also join the crowd as it made its way from such mob joints in Harlem as the Cotton Club over to Connie’s Inn. When they had more money, Hump’s party showed up at The Dover Club.

With Stuart Rose, Hump continued to go horseback riding in Central Park. Stuart and Hump also took up ice skating, usually with Hump’s sister, Frances. Stuart and Frances were still “an item,” as they called it.

Smoking his Andover pipe, Hump went sailing off Long Island whenever he was free from Broadway. He was seen frequently at Mayfair, an actors club, when he wasn’t at the Lambs Club, another hangout for actors. Often he took Helen dancing at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, and the 21 Club remained his favorite watering hole. He was also becoming known for his expert chess playing.

When a year went by and Hump wasn’t offered another role, he felt his career as an actor had come to an end. Unexpectedly, Rosalie Stewart, a producer, sent him a script, *Meet the Wife*, a comedy starring Mary Boland and Clifton Webb. Hump was offered the role of a young, fresh-faced reporter, Gregory Brown, in this three-act comedy by Lynn Starling, an up-and-coming playwright of her day.

Mary Boland was already an established stage star when Hump first met her. Born in Philadelphia in 1880, she’d begun her career at the age of fifteen, following the death of her actor father, W.A. Boland. Her film debut in 1914 was in *The Edge of the Abyss*. She’d become a star in 1919 playing the stately scatterbrain, Mrs. Wheeler, in Booth Tarkington’s *Clarence* opposite Alfred Lunt.

From the first day they met, Hump was fascinated by the male co-star of *Meet the Wife*. Clifton Webb and Bogie would become friends and remain so for the rest of their lives together. They were an odd couple. Webb was an immaculate dresser and had impeccable manners, but this young dancer turned actor was known along Broadway as

“Miss Priss.” Born in Indianapolis in 1891, he changed his name from Webb Parmallee Hollenbeck to Clifton Webb. Hump both affectionately and jokingly called him Parmallee.

Mary Boland

Known as “the Irritable Bachelor,” Clifton even then was a notorious homosexual, specializing in seducing young juvenile leads who appeared with him. The still handsome Hump became his chief target during rehearsals for *Meet the Wife*. Hump felt as ardently pursued by Clifton as he had been by Rod La Rocque when he’d directed that actor in the film, *Life*.

One night at a Harlem night spot, Hump decided to confront Clifton. “I’m not going to become your boy, and if you come on to me again I’ll punch you out,” Hump told him. “But I will be your friend. I like you a hell of a lot. I don’t take it up the ass.”

“Don’t worry, my dear fellow,” Clifton said. “I’m a famous bottom.” Clifton bent over the table and affectionately kissed Hump on the nose. Somehow this impulsive act endeared Clifton all the more to Hump. Never again did seduction rear its head.

Webb marked the beginning of a series of friendships—not love relationships—that Bogie would have with homosexuals, including the closeted Spencer Tracy and the not-so-closeted Noël Coward and Truman Capote.

Meet the Wife opened at New York’s Klaw Theater and would run for 232 performances, with Hump drawing a weekly paycheck of $150, which he spent immediately. A critic for *Theêw York World* gave Hump the first good notice of his career, referring to the role he played as that of “a handsome and nicely mannered reporter, which is refreshing.”

Two nights before the play closed, Hump had been up all night partying in the hot spots of Harlem. When he showed up the next day to perform in *Meet the Wife*, he was hung over and had had no sleep.

On stage during a pivotal scene, he forgot his lines and stood looking glazed against the scenery. Boland was forced to frantically ad lib and even had to feed him some of his lines, hoping he would pick up the rhythm of the play. When the curtain was pulled, she walked backstage and slapped his face real hard. “I’ll see to it that you never work again on Broadway.”

The next night, at the closing performance, he knew all his lines. However, after Act Two, as if determined to& sabotage his career, he disappeared into a dive& across the street, claiming he was starved and wanted a plate of ham and eggs. Somehow he completely forgot that he had to stick around to deliver four lines in Act Three.

Clifton Webb

When he did remember, he raced toward the theater door, just in time to hear the applause as the curtain went down. The stage manager, Bert French, who was also producing the play with Rosalie Stewart, slugged Hump, who struck back, hitting French in the nose just as Boland and Webb were taking their final bows.

Chiming in with Boland, French also threatened to end Hump's Broadway days. But Hump was heartened that Maud, without Belmont, showed up that night and praised his acting skill. Being Maud, she had to add a warning. "An actor will spend most of his life starving between parts, and you could have done so much more with your life."

His spirits were lifted when an out-of-town reviewer, Peggy Hill, of Atlanta, saw the play and informed her readers that "Humphrey Bogart is more manly and a lot handsomer than Rudolph Valentino. If I had to be carried away to a Sheik's tent in the desert, I'd much rather be in Bogart's arms than prissy Valentino's."

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Hump couldn't take Boland's threat to destroy his stage career too seriously. Bill Brady was producing a Broadway play with a part in it just right for Hump. Once again, when all else failed, he could count on the dependable, reliable, and steadfast Brady family.

Less than one month after *Meet the Wife* closed, Hump was offered his biggest role to date, the meaty part of an aviator in a play, *Nerves*, which was being both directed and produced by Bill Brady Jr. The play had been written by Stephen Vincent Benét and John Farrar, and contained only two acts, unusually short for that day. The first act takes place at a Yale house party where several couples, all on the same night, commit themselves to be engaged. The second act occurs in the officers' mess of a squadron of American aviators based in France during World War I. The wartime experience shatters the nerves of one of the aviators—hence, the title of the play.

The star of the show was the now largely forgotten Marie Curtis, who had just completed a run on Broadway in the play, *Time*. Earlier, her attempts at a career in silent films had bombed after she'd appeared as "Lady Dolly" in *Her Greatest Love*.

She played opposite Paul Kelly, only years before his international notoriety and jail term as a convicted man slaughterer.

Bill angered Hump by casting their longtime friend, Kenneth MacKenna, in the third lead over Hump's own fourth billing. Although they would eventually become bitter rivals over the affections of Mary Philips, Kenneth at the time was still a close friend of Hump's, and a faithful member of the coterie that still referred to itself as "the pussy posse," a group that included John Cromwell and Bill Brady, Jr.

Although not officially a member of the posse, Kenneth's brother, Jo Mielziner, signed on as stage designer. It was during rehearsals for *Nerves* that Hump realized for the first time what an immense talent Jo was. Born in Paris two years after Hump, Jo, like Kenneth, was the son of a Jewish and Irish marriage.

The same year Jo designed the sets for *Nerves*, he also created sets for *The Guardsman*. Written by Ferenc Molnar, it was an early Theatre Guild production that brought Jo to the attentions of the moguls of Broadway.

Before his death in 1976, Jo would go on to design the sets for at least 270 stage and film productions. His most memorable stage work included such classics as *Strange Interlude; Death of a Salesman; Carousel; The King and I; South Pacific; Look Homeward, Angel; Tea and Sympathy, Picnic,* and *The Emperor Jones*.

The young actress Mary Philips was cast as one of the supporting players in *Nerves*. Three years younger than Hump, Mary was born in New London and educated in a convent in New Haven. "In those days," as Bogie later recalled, describing his stage career, "I was always deflowering maidens fresh from some God damn convent." Mary characterized herself as a "staunch New Englander but with Irish wit and temperament." When she first met Hump, she later declared, she detected a strong Puritan streak in him.

She'd made her debut as a chorus girl showing off her bosom and her legs in the *Follies Revue of 1919*. It was what playwright James Kirkwood Jr. decades later in *A Chorus Line* would call a "tits and ass" part.

Mary would go on to appear in such productions as *Two Girls Wanted* and *The Old Soak*, which did good business

but would hardly merit a footnote in theatrical histories of the 20s.

Humphrey Bogart with Mary Philips

She had a pretty face with penetrating gray-blue eyes. She would often be compared, to her detriment, to the more successful actress, Ina Claire.

By today's standards of beauty, Mary had a long nose. Hump kidded her, calling it "the beak." "Where do you put that nose when you go to kiss a man?" he asked her during rehearsals. "That's for me to know and for you to find out," Mary told him.

Except for that nose, she had the most perfectly formed lips of all of Bogie's future wives. Her hands were her most attractive feature, and critics often wrote that they were "porcelain like and delicate."

Mary was short and rather small. "Just my type," Hump told Kenneth. She was understanding, sympathetic, and attractive but not flashy, as opposed to the more self-centered and narcissistic Helen. And in definite contrast to Hump's mother, Maud, she was supportive of, rather than critical of, men.

Mary's appearance as a fragile doll was deceiving. She was actually a sports-loving outdoor girl who excelled in tennis and golf. Her Irish temper matched that of Helen's.

During rehearsals, Mary infuriated Hump. In his big scene, when he was to be left alone on the stage, Mary walked toward the wings. "That was what she was supposed to do," Bogie later recalled. "But it was the damn way she walked off. I would have to wait until I saw Marilyn Monroe in the 1951 movie, *Niagara*, before I'd see a walk like that again. I confronted her back stage and accused her of upstaging me. That seemed to piss her off. She slapped my face and told me that she'd walk any way she damn well pleased, and there wasn't anything I could do about it. I wanted to punch her out. I'd hit ladies before and would again. But somehow that slap turned me on. I felt I could really fall for this gal."

The more he worked with Mary, the more intrigued Hump became. Mary told him that she could hold her liquor better than he did. Back then, Hump always said, "I don't trust women who don't drink. They'll betray you every time."

Kenneth was also growing increasingly intrigued by Mary. He even warned Hump to "lay off Mary. She's gonna become my gal, and besides you're engaged to Helen."

"Helen knows I see women on the side," Hump said. "Fuck you, asshole. Helen herself sees women on the side. Maybe I'll take Mary back to Helen's apartment. We could share her."

Kenneth punched him in the mouth. Before a major fight could break out, Bill Brady, Jr. separated the two actors. "You're like two fucking roosters fighting over the prize hen in the barnyard. Don't you guys know there are more than enough women on Broadway to go around? There are at least three showgals for every single male since at

least half the men in the theater are fairies. Enjoy! Enjoy! As for Mary, I've taken director's privilege. She got hired on the casting couch. For the duration of the play, she's my private piece and don't tell Katharine."

Both Kenneth and Hump were shocked to learn that Mary was having an affair with Bill. At the Hotsy Totsy that night, Kenneth and Hump repaired their friendship over several tall gin fizzes. "Let's don't let a woman come between us," Kenneth said. "If Bill is fucking Mary, that makes her a slut. We can pick up any slut we want in this club in five minutes. Wanta bet?"

Hump didn't take him up on the bet, knowing that what Kenneth said was true. Midnight found the two men, along with "two sluts," checking into the Hotel Baltimore. They seduced the women on the same double bed, switching partners around two o'clock.

Years later, Mary would rank the sexual performances of the three leading members of the pussy posse in this order: Number one, Bill Brady Jr. "because of his incredible technique"; number two, Kenneth McKenna because "of the sincerity in his eyes when he got on top of you," and, number three, Humphrey Bogart "because he always had a far and distant look in his eyes when he was making love to you, enough so that you always suspected that his mind was somewhere else."

Both Hump and Kenneth feared that Bill was jeopardizing his marriage to Katharine by going out to the speakeasies every night with Mary. "Never fear," Bill assured them. "Katherine specializes in wronged wife parts. I'm just giving her first-hand experience so she'll be a better actress."

One night Bill called Hump to tell him that he'd just bailed Mary out of jail. They had been caught staggering drunk from the speakeasy, Hotsy Totsy. When a cop tried to arrest Mary, she bit his finger down to the bone. She was hauled off to the pokey. Bill had had far more to drink than Mary, but he was not arrested. Brady Sr. posted a five-hundred dollar bail, securing her release.

Nerves opened at the Comedy Theater on September 1, 1924, a date that roughly coincided with the opening of *What Price Glory?*. *Glory* became the biggest hit of any play addressing the issues of World War I, and audiences and critics alike flocked to it instead of *Nerves. Nerves* would run for only sixteen performances, as critics ridiculed it and audiences stayed away in droves. Brady, Sr. denounced his son for producing such a flop.

Ironically, Hump received respectable reviews for his role in the play, enough—in Mary's opinion—to give him a "swelled head." Even Hump's nemesis, the critic, Alexander Woollcott, who'd denounced him as the "inadequate sprig" wrote, "Those words are hereby eaten."

Theatrical, venomous, and bitchy: Alexander Woollcott

Another prominent critic of the day was Heywood Broun, a well-known sports writer and columnist for New York newspapers, and also a leading member of the Socialist Party until he was expelled in 1933. Broun found Hump's performance "most effective." Hump couldn't help but be delighted when Broun faulted co-actor Kenneth's performance, claiming that the actor "suffers from trying too hard to make a feeble play take on the breath of life."

At the play's closing, Helen was preparing to take her own Broadway success, *Seventh Heaven*, to Los Angeles, leaving Hump at her apartment. Before departing, she told Hump that she would marry him but was too busy to fit a wedding into her busy schedule. "I'm at the height of my stardom," she told him, "and I can't let a little thing like

marriage stand in my way. Some stars like Bernhardt will last forever. In my case, I fear I will burn terribly bright, then flicker out." Unlike Hump, she spoke in highly dramatic terms, unusual for a person with so little formal education.

As Helen boarded the train to Los Angeles, going via Chicago, she told Hump that he didn't necessarily have to be lonely when she was away in spite of their engagement. She gave him the telephone number of "a young and very beautiful actress that I've been dating. Call her. She's very amusing. She and I are going nowhere fast in our relationship. Women, I fear, are mere playthings for her. She really prefers men. Besides no one can replace Tallulah — that whore—in my life."

Bidding Helen good-bye, Hump returned to the empty apartment. After three hours and drunk on gin, he dialed the number of Helen's actress friend. He was determined to find out the degree to which this mystery woman liked men.

On the other end of the line, a haunting, dramatic voice picked up the receiver. "Hello, this is Louise Brooks. Who's this?"

***

After one night with her, Hump was so mesmerized by Louise Brooks that he told Bill Brady that he wanted to break off his engagement with Helen and propose to "Brooksie" instead. He claimed that she was the best sex he'd ever had with any woman. "She's one earthy broad," Hump said. "We did things I've never even heard of before."

Bill was disdainful of Louise. "She's nothing but a teenage prostitute. She's shacked up with that high roller, A.C. Blumenthal, who's taking over for Ziegfeld. Brooks is a real casting-couch climber. I also hear she's a lesbian."

On their first date together, Hump had shown up at her hotel dressed for dinner, as she'd accepted his invitation to go to a supper club. When she opened the door to her room, she wore a sheer white nightgown with nothing on underneath it. "Come on in, handsome," she said, reaching for his hand. "We'll have room service send us a hamburger. That way, we'll have more time in the sack, as I have to get up early in the morning."

Hump was immediately taken with this "Kansas sunflower," a former Ziegfeld Follies dancer who'd also appeared in George White's *Scandals*. Her raven-black hair was radiant, and she'd styled it in a way that had already led to her reputation as "the girl in the black helmet." She wore it closely cropped in an exaggerated page-boy style.

As she invited him in and offered him some whiskey, he felt that he was encountering the Jazz Age flapper supreme, perhaps someone not real but a creation of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

"Helen tells me you're not rich but I agreed to see you anyway," Louise said. "I have this friend, Peggy Fears, who& dances in the Follies. She has a strict rule about& dating, 'No ice, no dice.' She thinks I should go out only with rich stage-door Johnnies. But I& also like to get plowed, and these old guys are too worn out for my tastes. That's why I turn to& guys like you. Trinkets are nice but getting plowed for fun is one of the joys of life, and I& want it all."

Two views of Louise Brooks

“I hope I won’t disappoint,” Hump said.

“I’m sure you won’t,” Louise said. “Helen has already given me a critique. I asked Helen if you were a redhead. She assured me you were brunette.”

“What have you got against redheaded men?”

“I absolutely refuse to go to bed with them,” she said. “Based on my experience, I have found that their pricks are always tiny and even misshapen, usually bent to the left and most unappetizing.”

“You’ve lost me there,” he said, downing the rest of his whiskey. “I’ve never done a survey.”

“Take my word for it,” she said, going over to him and kissing him on the lips as he sat in her sole armchair. When she finally broke away, she said, “You have the most beautiful lips I’ve ever seen in any man.”

“Thanks.”

“You’ve got this little scar on your upper lip. It adds character to your face. I especially like this quilted piece that hangs down in a tiny scallop.” She ran her tongue along it. “It’s an imperfection I find terribly appealing.”

“Hell,” he said, drawing back slightly, not at all comfortable with the conversation. “I should have it surgically removed.”

“I disapprove of surgically removing skin from men,” she said. “I hope you’re not circumcised because I delight in men with foreskins.”

“I’m all there,” he said, as she reached to fondle him.

“I like the feel of it,” she said. “You see I’m a basket-watcher. That’s why I spend a lot of time at the ballet watching men in form-fitting leotards. I hate most men’s trousers. Except for a few sailors who wear tight pants, they’re usually far too baggy.”

“You’re some gal,” he said, “I never heard a woman talk like you.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” Louise said. “An average size prick can offer some satisfaction to a woman but they always leave one unfulfilled. There are three things I like done to me, and only a big prick can do the job.”

“Just three?” he said.

“That’s right. Unless you can conjure up something new.” She rose from his lap, removing her nightgown to stand nude in front of him. “Audition time.” With her head she motioned to her empty double bed.

As Hump would later relate to Bill, “It was the wildest ride I’ve ever had in my life. If Brooksie had a hole somewhere, she wanted it plugged.”

After their time together in bed, both Bogie and Louise cleaned themselves up. While he put back on his trousers, she slipped into a red dress. “I’ve got this fabulous idea,” she said. “Get dressed. I want you to walk along Broadway with me. We’ll look at all the names up in lights and imagine that one day the names of Louise Brooks and Humphrey Bogart will be up there for all the world to see.”

As he was reaching for his trousers, she challenged him. “Edmund Goulding told me that all actresses should be compared to a flower. I can’t decide what flower to be? You decide for me.”

He looked her over carefully from her tiny feet to her helmet hairdo. “An exotic black orchid.”

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Like many actors of the 20s, including Gary Cooper, Hump went through a period where he tried to model himself after America’s reigning heartthrob of the screen, Rudolph Valentino, who had electrified audiences, especially women, with his performances in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* and *The Sheik*.

Although the men did not really look alike, Broadway writers often cited the physical resemblance between Valentino and Hump. Typical of the comments was an interview written by Elita Miller Lenz in 1924. “Humphrey Bogart is one of the few young actors along Broadway that can be classed as a Valentino type in color, which should help much in the matter of future popularity.”

Just for fun, Helen acquired a Sheik costume for Hump, which he wore to a masquerade ball at the Plaza Hotel. Helen herself appeared disguised as Agnes Ayres, who had starred opposite Valentino in *The Sheik*. Their photograph ended up in the New York papers.

Helen had even gone so far as to purchase pink silk underwear for Hump, after reading in a fan magazine that Natacha Rambova, Valentino’s second wife, insisted that her husband appear “only in pink bloomers.”

Whenever Hump pulled off his trousers in the bedroom of many a chorus girl, his partner for the evening often laughed at his “pink powder puff” underwear. However, when Hump slipped off what he called “those sissy drawers,” the laughter stopped as he went about his sexual maneuvering for the evening.

As 1924 drew to a close, producer and playwright Barry Connors offered Hump the role of the male lead in a three-act comedy directed by John Hayden. The play was *Hell’s Bells*, and it starred two women, the established Broadway actress, Olive May, and also Shirley Booth making her debut at the dawn of a stage and film career that would bring her international fame.

Connors described Jimmy Todhunter, the character Hump would play, as “a regular fellow of twenty-seven, well-educated, ambitious, self-reliant, and industrious.” The role would launch Hump into a series of juvenile parts, each of which required the standard costume for an *ingénu* of that era—white duck trousers and a blue blazer. Each of these early roles was radically more wholesome than some of the gangster and tough guy roles (among them Duke Mantee, Sam Spade, Charlie Allnut, and Captain Queeg) that Hump would later play.& But at least in the 1920s, Hump became known for playing “young sprigs.”

Shirley Booth

Hell's Bells would hardly be remembered except for one immortal line, which Hump delivered and which would forever haunt him, becoming part of the national vocabulary.

The director, Hayden, needed a device to move some actors off the stage to make way for a scene that focused only on his two leading actresses, Shirley Booth and Olive May. He devised a setup whereby Hump appeared on stage carrying a tennis racquet. Surveying the male actors, he asked of them, "Tennis anyone?" Even today, *Casablanca's* Rick is ridiculed for playing such a tooth-some juvenile with such a jejune image.

Although admitting that he had at one time or another delivered some of the most ridiculous lines ever written for the Broadway stage, Hump in later life repeatedly denied that he had come on stage and said, "Tennis, anyone?" in *Hell's Bells* or any other play. Hump claimed the line was, "It's forty-love outside. Anyone care to watch?"

However, Richard Watts Jr., longtime theater critic for *The New York Post*, claimed that he reviewed the opening night of *Hell's Bells* and that indeed Bogart did say that line. "I made a note of it but didn't publish it in my review."

When an attempt at a revival of the play was made in 1934 for a road show tour, Hayden's original script was discovered. The line about it being "forty-love outside" was indeed in the script as Bogie later claimed. But before opening night, Hayden had crossed over the line and written, "Tennis anyone?"

In later life Bogie often spoke bitterly of his early career on the stage. "With my hair slicked back, I'd appear in white flannels with pale blue knit sweaters, always carrying a tennis racquet. Those early parts made me feel silly and girlish. The god damn director would have me come out modeling the latest pinch-back sports coat with pansy neck cloths and a swishy new hairdo."

The star of *Hell's Bells*, Olive May, had been appearing on Broadway since Hump was one year old, introducing herself to audiences in *The Surprises of Love* on January 22, 1900.

During rehearsals Hump met and became briefly attached to Shirley Booth, who was one year older than he was. Those who know her today only as the irrepressible maid on the television series, *Hazel*, which ran from 1961 to 1966, may not understand the physical allure that Shirley had during her youth. In 1925 she was a lovely, gracious, and even beautiful woman. Born Thelma Booth Ford in New York City, she had had an even more miserable childhood than Hump. Her mother, Virginia Wright, was terminally ill, and her father, business executive, Albert J. Ford, was a brutal, stern father. Over her father's objections and at the age of fourteen, Shirley dropped out of school, determined to be an actress on stage.

Interviewed years later at her saltbox house in North Chatham, Massachusetts, she was reluctant to talk about her involvement with Bogie.

"I wouldn't call our first meeting an affair, more like a weekend together," she said. "He was a real gentleman, very polite and respectful of women, although I'd heard that he had a run-in or two with the star, Olive May. We were two frightened kids trying to make our way on Broadway, and we sensed a soulmate in each other, and perhaps turned to each other for a little comfort. I don't have much to say about that. On the few occasions we talked later in life, we both sympathized with each other about how long it took each of us to become a star."

Hell's Bells opened at the Wallack Theatre on the night of January 26, 1925. It was a flop, running for only fifteen performances. The only consolation for Hump was a claim by Alan Dale, critic for *The New York American*, that "Bogart gorgeously acted his role."

“I don’t know how it happened,” Bogie later said. “Maybe it was because I’d appeared in three comedies on Broadway, *Swifty, Meet the Wife*, and *Hell’s Bells.* All of a sudden I was typecast as a comedy actor on stage. The next few years would offer me nothing but a series of three-act comedies, most of them not funny.”

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Helen was a friend of Woollcott. She felt that Hump’s career would be advanced if he actually met some of the critics who would one day review his future plays.

He escorted her to a speakeasy, Tony’s, which was patronized by hard-drinking actors and writers. There Hump met the owner, Tony Soma, who loved artists and who welcomed him with great enthusiasm. That welcome would continue for years even when Hump went as long as three months without paying his large and forever mounting bar tabs.

Tony’s was the kind of watering hole where Dorothy Parker and Robert Benchley would go with Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald to celebrate Jack Dempsey’s four-round victory over Georges Carpentier. When Hump first saw all the celebrated patrons of Tony’s, he felt that it was another branch of the famous Algonquin Roundtable. One by one he met all of them.

He was first introduced to Robert Sherwood, who would one day write *The Petrified Forest* which would be Bogie’s last stage play, and also his best, and would be made into a film with Bogie and Bette Davis that would become the biggest break of his movie career in the 1930s.

Helen decided she had “to work the room.” Before she had finished making the rounds, she introduced Hump to the newspaper reporter, Mark Hellinger, who invited him for a drink at the bar. Even though he couldn’t afford it in those days, Mark was known for picking up everyone’s bar tabs. Hump and Mark liked each other at once, having no inkling, of course, what important roles they would play in each other’s future life.

Tony put his arm around Hump and invited him to frequent his bar and “make it your favorite. You’re always welcome here. In return, I want you to marry that Helen. She’s one good-looking woman, and I’m afraid some man is going to snare her if you don’t tie the knot.”

“I’ll think about it,” Hump said, although he showed up at Tony’s the following night without his bride-to-be.

After only two nights, Hump became a regular at Tony’s, often dropping in alone and continuing to meet and talk to some of the fabulous personalities of New York in the 1920s.

On nights when Hump drank too much, he’d become quite caustic. One night he insulted Gentlemen Jim Corbett, the boxing champ. He grabbed Hump by the back of the neck and tossed him out onto the rainy street.

Six months went by before Hump dared enter Tony’s again. When he did, he always sent a friend ahead of him to see if Gentleman Jim was among the patrons that night.

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When the newspaper reporter, Mark Hellinger, finally got around to inviting Hump for that night on the town, he made up for lost time. Mark’s world, then known as “gay Broadway,” was comprised of a square mile of real estate between 40th and 50th streets, bounded by 6th and 8th Avenue. If it wasn’t the world’s most glamorous mile, it was the most exciting, a district of dime-a-dance joints, speakeasies, chop-suey outlets, cabarets, theaters, movie houses, plush apartments for kept women, panhandlers, Minsky’s Burlesque, the Palace Theater, and even Spinrad’s Barbershop.

The barbershop was pointed out to Hump by Mark who suggested he should go in there tomorrow and ask for George. “If you’re going to be a big Broadway star, you’ve got to get your hair cut right,” Mark said. He also promised Hump to introduce him to his tailor. “The Jimmy Walker cut is the way to go.” Hump had heard about the political aspirations of this fancy dresser, whose career had included stints as a Broadway actor. He was also a talented musician, having written such songs as “Will You Love Me in December As You Do in May?” Rising through the ranks of Tammany Hall, Jimmy Walker was entering the mayor’s race.

Mark Hellinger

Hellinger was on a first-name basis with Jack Dempsey, Clarence Darrow, Theodore Dreiser, Ethel Barrymore, Florenz Ziegfeld, W.C. Fields, Eddie Cantor, Jeanne Eagles, Bobby Jones, and even Eleanora Duse and Aimee Semple McPherson. He spent his nights in some of New York's five-thousand speakeasies devoted to drinking "Staten Island or New Jersey champagne" at $35 a bottle or unreliable Bahamian Scotch at $20 a fifth.

During his rounds, Mark was accompanied by another reporter, columnist Walter Winchell. Hellinger eventually evolved into the world's first Broadway reporter, Winchell the first of the Broadway gossip columnists. The two men were seen together practically every night of the week, so much so that they were rumored to be lovers.

Disdaining Winchell's show biz gossip, Mark preferred heart-rending sob stories, filled with laughter and tears, with an O'Henry ending. Mark called his reporting "short stories about the people of Broadway," ranging from the long-legged Ziegfeld girls to the Irish immigrant cop on the block with a nightstick, to the little Sicilian hood who dreamed that he might one day take over Al Capone's crime empire.

Mark had invited Hump to El Fey club, run by bootlegger Larry Fay. (The club was named after him but spelled slightly differently.) Rumor had it that Fay didn't know how to spell his name. The club's hostess was the fabulous Texas Guinan, whose own club had recently been closed by the police for selling bootleg hooch.

Hump was eager to meet Guinan, a name known all over Broadway. The flamboyant show-biz personality and actress was born in Texas in 1884 as Mary Louise Cecilia Guinan. The robust Irish lass grew up on a small ranch near Waco where she became an accomplished horseback rider and roper. She went from there into live Wild West dramas, and in time ended up in the chorus line in such Chicago comedies as *The Gay Musician*.

In Hollywood, cast as the gun-girl heroine in a silent screen western, *The Wildcat* in 1917, this pistol-packing, barrel-riding queen of the West became America's first movie cowgirl long before the likes of Dale Evans. She went on to appear as a gunslinger in *The Gun Woman* in 1918 and *Little Miss Deputy* in 1919 before being lured by the aura of New York in the Roaring Twenties.

Texas Guinan

When Hump entered the bar with Mark, Guinan called out, "Hello, suckers! Come on in and leave your wallet on the bar." On meeting her, Hump liked her free-wheeling, devil-may-care aura. "I'm hanging out at Larry's dump," she said, "because the cops have padlocked my place. I don't have to worry about an automobile ride in New York. Taxpayers foot the bill. Unfortunately, my free ride from the city is always to jail. I've fucked Jimmy Walker six times. He owes me plenty of favors. When he becomes mayor, the cops will get off my back except when they come around to fuck me in the ass."

"You're my kind of gal," Hump said to Texas as Mark lost himself in the bowels of the club.

"I've got some special entertainment planned for you tonight in more ways than one," Texas said.

She ordered Hump a drink, although she always denied that alcohol was sold in her speakeasies. When his drink was served, she told Hump where Fay had stolen the booze. “The other night some of Fay’s hoods armed themselves with pistols, sawed-off shotguns, and Tommy guns,” she said. “They piled into a large boat and sailed ten miles out to sea where they hijacked a French freighter like a team of God damn pirates. They made off with five-hundred cases of whiskey, wine, champagne, and brandy. Fay didn’t go out on the raid himself. He was waiting on shore and paid a measly one-hundred bucks for the whole thing. He’ll make thousands off the stuff, especially when my brother, Tommy, waters it down at the bar.”

Surveying the club, she said, “I’m not doing too bad. When I was a movie star in Hollywood, I earned fifty dollars a week—those asshole cheats out there. Before the year is out in New York, I expect to earn $700,000.”

As the night progressed, she told him that a producer was here tonight, considering casting her in the appropriately titled Broadway review *Padlocks of 1925*. It took a while for the revue to be produced, and the title had to be changed to *Padlocks of 1927*.

“I’m gonna die young,” Texas told him. “But I’m gonna have a hell of a lot of fun along the way. What about you, Bogart?”

“I’m gonna die young too but I’m gonna have more fun than you,” he said.

“I’ll race you to the finish line, sucker,” she said before getting up to announce the star act of the evening.

In another one of the strange coincidences in Hump’s life, the act being introduced by Texas that night at El Fey was a dance routine by George Raft.

This was the same George Raft that would become the legendary Broadway dancer, the Hollywood tough guy, the gambler, and Don Juan himself with a life-long courtship with the underworld. Hump had read in Winchell’s column that Raft had taught the Charleston to Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, and later, the Duke of Windsor.

In his early reviews, Hump was called the Valentino of Broadway. But in Hollywood it was George Raft who’d be billed as Paramount’s “replacement” for the long-dead Valentino.

To Hump’s regret in the 30s, Warner Brothers eventually signed Raft to a stable of cinema tough guys that included Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney. Hump would often find that whenever he was competing for a choice film role, Raft got the part instead.

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Future movie stardom was hardly on Hump’s mind as he sat mesmerized, watching Raft dance to an audience of patrons consisting of millionaires and bluebloods mingling with nattily dressed hoodlums.

After introducing Raft, the brassy, shoot-’em-up gal, Texas herself, rejoined Hump at table. “Raft is the weirdest, maddest dancer you’ve ever seen,” Texas said in her tough, deep voice. She quickly waved at a couple entering to see Raft dance. “Fuck, I’m starting to attract the literati.” Hump recognized Robert Sherwood escorting Dorothy Parker.

“Raft mesmerizes my customers,” Texas said. “All eyes shine on Raft as he whirls faster and faster. Every night he stops the show. He’s taking in a thousand big ones a week.”

Hump didn’t need this running dance critique from Texas. He watched in fascination as Raft performed his mongrel dance, called “the Peabody.” It was a fantastic speed dance with all kinds of interpolations, a choreography strangely known as “cake-eating.” The dance was filled with dozens of twists, turns, and jerks.

The owner of the club, Fay, joined Texas and Hump at table. It was obvious that he’d been quarreling with Texas. Texas was attracting an upper-crust crowd of the Whitneys, the Vanderbilts, and the Astors, whereas Fay was inviting his hoodlum friends from Brooklyn. There was no place with such a mixed clientele in all of New York. An aristocrat like Vincent Astor could be spotted at the bar drinking with five guntoting and trigger-happy desperados.

George Raft, dancing..... in this case, with Carole Lombard

Hump was equally fascinated by Raft's incredible speed dance and by Fay himself. Bootlegger Fay looked like a tough hood from Brooklyn, perhaps an unruly labor organizer, more than the owner of a swank night club. Hump later claimed that he used Fay as his role model when he first had to impersonate a gangster in films.

After his performance, Texas brought Raft over to the table to meet Hump. "Here's the actor who's gonna marry Helen Menken." And although they were later to become bitter rivals for the same film roles, Hump liked Raft at once. The young dancer was actually the character that latter-day film fans thought Bogie was, even though his background and character were almost the complete opposite of Raft's.

Raft had slicked down his black hair with what appeared to be a whole jar of Vaseline, a hairstyle that had become known as the patent-leather look. Unlike the baggy suits of the day, he wore tight, form-fitting trousers and jackets, along with three diamond rings, one on his pinkie.

He spoke with such brutal honesty and candor about who he was and what he did that Hump was mildly surprised that he'd been so confessional to a stranger. "Listen, unless you're going to fuck Texas tonight, I can get you a hot date," Raft said. "I'll give you the phone number of this go-to-hell pussy, Grayce Mulrooney. She's my wife."

At first Hump thought that Raft was joking until he realized that the dancer was perfectly serious.

Jazz-age actors, gigolos and roommates George Raft *(top photo)* and *(bottom photo)* Rudolph Valentino

"She's alone every night." Raft pointed to a cute little brunette dancing in the chorus line. "That's Ruby Keeler, She's only fourteen and working for Texas and Fay illegally. I'm going to go for her tonight. I'm gonna make the big play. Sometimes I fuck young."

Two men in their twenties passed by their table en route to the men's room. In their tuxedos, each one looked like a twin of Rudolph Valentino. "Everybody's trying to get in on the Valentino act," Raft said contemptuously. "I've even read that about you."

"I don't think I'm going to become another Valentino," Hump said. "We're too different. Besides, I don't look that

good in Arab drag."

Raft laughed. "There's talk that I'll be the screen's next Valentino, although it seems like Ramon Novarro has beat me out. I know Rudy very well. We once shared a room together when we were going through rough days back in our taxi-dancing times, long before America knew what a Sheik was."

"I heard he was a gigolo," Hump said.

"You might call it that," Raft said, downing a whiskey. "We were both gigolos, hiring ourselves out on the dance floor for a buck. Rudy's first wife, Jean Acker, keeps writing me to go on the road with her in a dance act, imitating the act that Natacha Rambova and Rudy toured in. Acker wants the billing to read, 'Mrs. Rudolph Valentino and George Raft.' No way. I'm gonna be a star without any help from the Valentino name."

Raft told Hump that after work, and while still dressed in his tuxedo, he ran beer convoys. "I work not just for Fay but for Dutch Schultz and 'Legs' Diamond," Raft said. "Mostly I work for a guy called Big Frenchy. Sometimes we make heists when we raid our competition's booze being trucked into New York. You might think I'm a fantastic dancer, but I'm even better as a truck driver. I can cut corners on two wheels. Turn a truck on a dime and hold the fucker steady going eighty miles an hour, all the time ducking some trigger-happy fool."

He wasn't making this up, although it sounded like a script for one of the films both men would later make at Warner Brothers. Raft also wasn't lying about his driving skills. Because of his expertise learned on illegal booze heists in New York in the Twenties, he would one day save Bogie's life when the brakes gave out on a truck Raft was driving on the set of a film.

Texas returned to the table to warn Raft that she was about to introduce him for his second show of the evening. When Raft excused himself, Texas told Hump that since he had seen Raft dance, she had more entertainment planned for him. "But for the grand finale, you're coming to bed with me," Texas said, leaning over to kiss his lips.

One of the waiters ushered Hump into one of the backrooms where the focused beam of a movie projector revealed a room filled with a blue haze from the heavy smoking of the other male patrons. When the film went on, Hump could understand why these were called blue movies. The star of tonight's porn movie was a dancer who'd been a hit in stag movies and a star at private smokers before going on to Hollywood.

As the actress on film danced the Charleston in the nude, the cameraman told Hump her name was Lucille LeSueur.

Fast forward: It is 1954, and Hump, the "King of Hollywood," is escorting the "Queen of Hollywood" to the Academy Awards ceremony.

More than a decade after Louis B. Mayer had kicked Hump's date for the evening off the MGM lot, she'd bounced back to regain her throne as queen, although not for long.

With a mink stole draped across her shoulder and around her wrinkled neck, Bogie was taking out Joan Crawford, once known as Lucille LeSueur.

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The Broadway season was ripe for Bogie's women-to-be in 1925, carrying through the spring of 1926. Wife-to-be number one, Helen Menken, was appearing in *Makropoulos Secret*. Wife number two, Mary Philips, was a star in *The Wisdom Tooth*, and wife number three, Mayo Methot, was appearing in *Alias the Deacon*. Wife number four? The one-year old Betty Bacall was in a Bronx nursery in her diapers.

The actress, Mary Boland, had threatened to destroy Hump's stage career because of his unprofessional conduct when he'd appeared with her in *Meet the Wife*. When no suitable young actor could be found for her new three-act comedy, she reluctantly said, "Okay, get Bogart."

The Cradle Snatchers
(Top photo, left to right),
Mary Boland, Edna May Oliver,
and Margaret Dale conspiring; and

(bottom photo)
ensnaring a handsome college
student, Hump *(center figure)*
as a gigolo in their plot.

Cradle Snatchers was written by Norma Mitchell and Russell Medcraft and directed by Sam Forrest. It was a raucous and bawdy farce about three society women who sneak away with three handsome college men hired as gigolos. The plot thickens when the husbands show up at the same hideaway, thinking that it's a high-class bordello.

It was well-cast, especially with the enormously comical actress Edna May Oliver in a co-starring role. Hump played a minor role, that of Jose Vallejo. Also appearing in a minor role was another actor, Raymond Guion, whom Hump befriended.

Like Rod La Rocque, Raymond wasn't pleased with his name. After several drunken talks in speakeasies, he won Hump's approval for his new stage name. As Gene Raymond, Broadway's so-called "nearly perfect juvenile" would go on to be a successful film career as a handsome, blond-haired actor with a well-toned body.

His greatest fame came on June 16, 1937 when he married MGM's golden singing sensation, Jeanette MacDonald.

Back in 1925, both Raymond and Hump thought they'd found steady employment in *Cradle Snatchers*. Woollcott found Hump's performance "competent," but a visiting theater critic from Chicago, Amy Leslie, was more enthusiastic. She claimed Bogart was "as handsome as Valentino and as graceful as any of our best romantic actors." Opening on September 7, 1925, at the Music Box, *Cradle Snatchers* would run for 332 performances, the hit of the season.

For Hump, the highlight of the play's run was the night Louise Brooks showed up with her new boy friend, Charlie Chaplin. Hump's only regret was that no one in the audience actually watched the play that night, as all eyes were focused on Chaplin. He was, after all, the most famous man on earth. As one stagehand claimed, "I don't know who the president of the United States is, but I sure know who The Little Tramp is."

Louise had taken Charlie to see Helen perform that previous evening, and had even gone with the film star backstage to meet Helen. Louise later claimed that Charlie and she were bitterly disappointed in Helen's performance both on and off the stage. "It's the same show whether the curtain is up or whether she's in her dressing room taking off her makeup," Louise said. "She's so histrionic, so *t-h-e-a-t-e-r*. Her white, thin face is always ecstatically lifted up to her vision of The Drama. I never heard her talk about anything except the art of the theater. She ignored me and was trying to impress Charlie. It didn't work. He couldn't wait to escape from her clutches."

Like an awestruck fan, Hump was delighted to meet Charlie after his performance and even more pleased when Louise invited him to join Charlie, her sometimes girl friend, Peggy Fears, and herself for a tour of some East Side

speakeasies. The Little Tramp had developed a fondness for gypsy musicians newly arrived from Budapest. At the final speakeasy visit of the night, Charlie sat enraptured listening to a wild Hungarian violinist, Bela Varga, with an Albert Einstein coiffure, playing nostalgic music left over from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Invited back to Charlie's suite, the entertainment continued as Charlie did his impressions, the most brilliant being that of John Barrymore reciting the most famous soliloquy of *Hamlet* as he picked his nose. He then rushed into his bedroom and emerged in quick drag, impersonating Isadora Duncan dancing barefoot in a storm of toilet paper. His most comedic impression was left for last—that of how Lillian Gish would achieve orgasm if she ever went to bed with anyone but her sister, Dorothy.

Charlie Chaplin:
"A tramp"

Tired of performing, Charlie offered Louise and Peggy Fears five-hundred dollars if they would strip naked and perform lesbian love on the sofa in front of his eager eyes. Without hesitation, both women stripped down and got on the sofa, where Charlie, only twelve inches from the scene, played director. The performance must have excited him, as he disappeared inside the bedroom and emerged later totally nude.

Hump was shocked to see that Charlie had coated his monstrous erection with iodine. He proceeded to chase both Peggy and Louise around the living room, finally capturing Louise. As he disappeared inside his bedroom with her, shutting the door behind him, he invited Hump to enjoy Peggy Fears for the night.

After they'd gone, Peggy plopped down on the sofa. "Okay, big boy, show time! Strip down for action. Louise has already told me about you. For a change, I'm gonna lay you for free."

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Four years after taking out the marriage license—it was still valid—Humphrey Bogart wed Helen Menken on May 20, 1926. The wedding took place at Helen's apartment at 52 Gramercy Place.

Two views of Helen Menken

Hump selected his brother-in-law, Stuart Rose, as his best man. He'd wed Hump's sister Frances two years before. Many of Helen's friends, a regular *Who's Who in the Theater*, showed up. Some one-hundred and thirty guests crammed into the apartment.

Hump invited the Bradys, including Jr. and Sr., Grace George, and Alice Brady. His fellow pussy posse member, Kenneth MacKenna, was also a guest, as was Maud Bogart. Hump's father was at sea at the time.

Stuart was later to recall that the ceremony "was macabre, almost obscene." John Kent, a pastor at St. Ann's Church for Deaf Mutes, conducted the ceremony. He was deaf himself and had been asked to perform the marriage because both of Helen's parents, who were attending the wedding, were also deaf.

Unlike Helen's parents, the reverend had learned to read the service in a kind of warped guttural speech, a sing-song way of talking evocative of Helen Keller. Kent both spoke the words of the ceremony and performed in sign language.

The pastor couldn't hear Hump's "I do," although Helen delivered her "I do" in sign language. After the ceremony, Helen rushed over to Mary Boland where she gushed, "I've been so frightfully busy on Broadway and other stages, I just haven't found time to marry in all these four years, even though Humphrey urged me to do so every day."

When newsmen showed up with photographers, Helen became unstrung. She burst into hysterics. As Louise Brooks would later satirically observe, "For Helen, that wasn't hard to do. She did that every night on stage whether the part called for it or not."

Maud Bogart, Frances, and Helen's mother helped the just-married actress to her bedroom. One of the guests, Dr. Nathan Blomenthal, was summoned to sedate her. Hump did not bother to go into the bedroom to check on the condition of his new bride.

When they'd gone, he turned to Bill Jr. and Stuart. "I think I've made a dreadful mistake."

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The marriage with Helen Menken began with violence. There was no honeymoon, other than a dinner at Luchow's and a night alone in the apartment. Helen had a fat Cocker Spaniel named "Sam." She insisted on feeding the dog caviar, claiming, "It's his favorite food."

Hump countered that the mutt ate only caviar because there was nothing else in his bowl. Awakening early after their first night as a married couple, Hump went and got the dog a bowl of chopped meat. The animal was in the act of gobbling down the red meat when Helen came into the kitchen. She screamed at her new husband for feeding the dog hamburger and claimed it would give him worms. The fight accelerated until she slapped him severely.

Enraged, he punched her in the face and sent her sprawling on the floor. She couldn't appear on the street for two weeks, and Hump spent the time as a houseguest of Bill Jr. and Katharine Alexander.

When Hump and Helen finally spoke, it was by telephone, when she called to tell him that she was going to appear in a play called *The Captive*.

"What's the plot?" he asked sarcastically. "Do you get kidnapped by African cannibals?"

"Nothing like that," she said. "It's a play about lesbianism."

"Type casting," he kidded her.

"If that God damn drag queen, Mae West, can play a nymphomaniac in some shitty play called *Sex*, then I can play a lesbian in *The Captive* —and if you and the public don't like it, you can all go fuck yourselves." She slammed down the phone.

True to her word, Helen began rehearsals for what would be one of the most controversial plays in the history of Broadway of the 1920s. Deciding to make up with Helen, Hump attended rehearsals.

At the theater, he met the actor, Basil Rathbone, who was seven years older than him. Rathbone had been cast as the male lead in *The Captive.* Rathbone had been born in Johannesburg, South Africa, where his family had to flee to escape the Boers because Rathbone's father, Edgar Philip Rathbone, a mining engineer, had been accused of being a

British spy.

He had married Ouida Bergère in April of 1926. His union with this scriptwriter would last until Rathbone's death in 1967, although he told Hump that, "You are and I are destined to love many different women." When he said that, he, of course, was perfectly aware of Hump's marriage to Helen. He also told Hump that, "Helen has told me that she has had many real experiences as a lesbian, so she feels perfectly qualified in the role. When we open, though, I fear the revenge of the bluenoses, who are perfectly capable of tarring us, feathering us, and riding us out of town on a rail."

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When *The Captive,* starring Helen Menken, opened on September 29, 1926, it shocked and disgusted Broadway audiences. Only Mae West, in her play *Sex*, was generating more newspaper publicity. Unlike Helen, Miss West was enjoying the publicity and notoriety surrounding *Sex*. She was virtually rewriting the script every night, coming up with new and different *double entendres*. Eighty percent of her audience was male, and many of them were returning for a second, third, or even fourth viewing. Because West played it with different nuances and with different scripts and different ad libs every night, it was as if the audience was seeing a different play every time.

As West tried to lure more women into her audiences, Helen wanted more males to attend *The Captive*. Her audiences were nearly eighty percent female. Lesbians from as far away as London and San Francisco flocked to see *The Captive*, the first play on Broadway to deal with the subject of female homosexuality.

New York's district attorney, Joab Banton, was coming under increasing pressure from John Sumner's Society for the Prevention of Vice. Banton made frequent statements to the press, claiming that Broadway wasn't going to become as scandal-ridden as Hollywood. He cited the murder in Hollywood of the director, William Desmond Taylor, and the scandal involving the trial of screen comedian, Fatty Arbuckle, accused of raping the minor actress Virginia Rappé, causing her death.

Banton found no support from New York's playboy mayor, Jimmy Walker. Walker had attended both plays and claimed he liked them very much. "They're not family entertainment," Walker said, "but there's nothing wrong with having plays for mature audiences." Involved in a torrid affair with his mistress, Betty Compton, Walker was hardly a champion of morality.

When Walker departed for Havana in February of 1927 for a vacation, the acting mayor, Joseph B. McKee—known as "Holy Joe"—seized his opportunity to punish Broadway. He ordered Banton to "banish nudity and obscenity" from the Broadway stage.

An order went out on February 5 to have plainclothesmen from the vice squad monitor the productions of both *The Captive* and *Sex*. On February 9, Holy Joe had his evidence, and he issued orders to have the casts of both plays arrested and charged with offending public morals.

Basil Rathbone and Helen were in the middle of their play's second act when armed policemen stormed directly onto the stage and arrested both of them, along with the rest of the cast. The entire troupe was herded into a Black Maria (an armored paddy wagon used at the time for rounding up, among others, drunks and vagrants) waiting outside the theater. To her shock and surprise, Helen encountered West and some of the cast members of *Sex* within the same Black Maria.

Members of both casts were boiling mad. Each production had been jealous of the other play for the publicity and audiences it was generating. Suddenly, being herded together like cattle and thrown into the smelly, hot Black Maria for a bouncy ride to the police station had the effect of lighting a fuse.

Arguments broke out between the two casts. West felt that she had to defend "my boys," and Helen took it upon herself to champion the cause of the cast of *The Captive*. "We're at least normal," West announced to Helen. "I'm not the one who's up on stage appearing nightly as a sexual deviate."

Helen Menken, Broadway star and *Captive*, as she's led off to jail for her appearance in a lesbian-themed play

Unable to withstand such verbal assault, the already infuriated Helen moved toward West, grabbing her by her blonde hair. It was a wig. As the hairpiece fell to the floor, Helen stomped on it. West's own hair was matted down with a protective veil. Fearing she'd have to face newspaper photographers at the jail, West shoved Helen, sending her sprawling down onto the floor of the Black Maria, as West picked up her wig and began to make emergency repairs to it.

Rathbone graciously lifted Helen from the floor and dusted her off. Helen at this point was furious enough with West to attack her again, but Rathbone restrained her. "I hear you're not a real woman at all," Helen shouted at West. "I hear you're a female impersonator."

"You ugly bitch," West screamed. "If I could get to you, I'd tear every dyed hair out of your ugly head."

At the Jefferson Market Women's Prison, both Helen and West were booked. Hump arrived and rushed to Helen, taking her in his arms. With him were two attorneys from Charles Frohman Productions, Inc.

Before the night was out, the attorneys for *The Captive* had worked out an agreement with the district attorney's office. Helen and the rest of the cast and the producers would accept a proposal of "implied immunity" if they would withdraw *The Captive* from the Broadway stage.

West chose to go the opposite route, preferring to continue with her play *Sex*. Her attorneys would get an injunction from the Supreme Court, barring police shutdown until a trial was held.

The trial itself became a fashion parade for West, who appeared in a different, outrageous, and gorgeous gown for every court appearance. She often wore black satin, some outfits with bugle beads, others with georgette tops. West eventually was convicted for producing *Sex* and sentenced to a ten-day jail term and a fine of $500. She would serve only eight days of her sentence at Welfare Island, getting off for good behavior.

Alone with Hump, Helen remained in seclusion at her apartment, refusing to see anyone and turning down all interviews. In desperation, Hump called Bill Jr. "You know how high strung she is. The arrest has done her in. She's having a nervous breakdown, and I don't know what to do."

"For Christ's sake, call Belmont," Bill advised. "He can shoot her up with morphine, and everything will be okay."

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When she'd recovered, Helen secured an audition for Hump with the noted director, Guthrie McClintic, to test for the three-act comedy, *Saturday's Children* by Maxwell Anderson. Ironically, Hump knew that the part of Rims O'Neil was up for grabs because he'd already been called by his pussy posse cohort and the play's set designer, Jo Mielziner. Originally the actor, Roger Pryor, had created the role but he had dropped out of the competition after being hospitalized for bleeding ulcers.

McClintic liked Hump's audition and gave him the part. He had only hours to learn the role. Back at Helen's apartment she stayed up all night rehearsing him.

The star of the play, Ruth Hammond, virtually ignored Hump. All she'd said to him backstage was, "Mary Boland has already warned me about you." He thought that Hammond was unprofessional because she upstaged all the other actors.

Hump did not get along with the male star of the comedy either. The Hoosier actor, Richard Barbee, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, had gone to Princeton. Hump felt that Barbee too closely modeled himself after one of Fitzgerald's fictional characters and was not particularly convincing on stage.

Hump struck out with the stars of the play, but was befriended by two members of the supporting cast, Ruth Gordon and Beulah Bondi, both of whom would go on to become celebrated in the theater and in films.

If Hump was known as a kidder and a needler, he met his match when the director introduced him to Ruth Gordon, who was playing a minor role in *Saturday's Children*. Three years older than Hump, she was witty and urbane, known for making such remarks as, "The rich have no friends. They merely know a lot of people."

Despite her ribbings, he was immediately attracted to this daughter of a ship's captain. Their affair, launched the week after their initial meeting, lasted about as long as his romance with Shirley Booth. Gordon later said, "It was over before it even began. I think we had sex. But who remembers so far back, and what difference would it make if I did remember? He's got Betty now, and I've got Garson."

At the time she met Hump, Gordon didn't have playwright Garson Kanin, sixteen years her junior. She was married to actor Gregory Kelly, who would die in 1927.

Before heading for a prolonged run in Chicago, *Saturday's Children* would last for 310 performances on Broadway at& the Booth Theatre. The play was not all that Hump& was headed for, as his short-term marriage to Helen was rapidly coming to its predictable end.

Ruth Gordon in 1920

Newspapers were still comparing Hump's look to that of Valentino, but actually he more closely resembled the newspaper columnist, Ed Sullivan, who at the time wrote a Broadway gossip column for the *Daily News*. A rock-faced Irishman with a hot temper, Sullivan also had a painful shyness and a disdain for phonies.

Sullivan would later achieve international fame on CBS's variety program, *Toast of the Town (1948-55), later called The Ed Sullivan Show* (1955-71). The show became a national institution, introducing to American audiences such talents as Elvis Presley (Sullivan refused to allow cameramen to photograph him below the hips) and later the sensational appearance of the Beatles.

As he made his rounds across the scope of the Broadway speakeasies, Hump often had gossips come over to him, giving him hot tips for Sullivan's column tomorrow. Since Hump liked to put people on, he never revealed to them that he was an actor, not the newspaper journalist, Ed Sullivan. With a perverted and not altogether kind sense of humor, Hump would often confide some very indiscreet gossip to these strangers. That gossip in most cases got back to its target. Sullivan in the late Twenties found himself in a number of feuds with show biz personalities, never knowing the reason why.

One night, Hump wandered alone into the Mayfair Supper Club, since some of New York's prettiest and most available showgirls frequented the place. He was free to go out on the town because Helen was in Boston. She claimed it was on business, but Hump suspected that it was an off-the-record sexual tryst.

At a red leather banquette and at the best table in the club, New York's handsome and newly elected mayor, Jimmy Walker, was in the company of two long-legged showgirls, one blonde, one a redhead.

Walker was a dapper dresser, though not as flamboyant in attire as Gentleman Jim. Unlike the champ, who preferred to date drag queens, Walker preferred Ziegfeld showgirls when he was not occupied with his mistress.

The notorious Jimmy Walker, Jazz-Age Mayor (1926-1932) of New York City

“Hi, Ed,” the mayor called out to Hump. “Loved your column today. C’mon over.”

Hump thought that his ultimate coup would be to allow New York’s mayor to mistake him for Ed Sullivan. He came over to the mayor’s table and was introduced to the two “ladies” of the evening. Hump joined the party not only for dinner but for a round of drinking. Even though booze was prohibited, Walker always said that that law didn’t apply to New York’s mayor or his guests.

Still impersonating Sullivan, Hump entertained the mayor and his guests with racy stories about Broadway personalities, gossip so hot it couldn’t be printed in his column.

Later he joined the mayor heading for the men’s room and pissed beside him at one of the club’s porcelain urinals. The men did the obligatory pecker-checking, which caused the well-hung mayor to whisper, “Looks like you can take on one of the gals tonight as well as I can.” Shaking himself dry, Walker said, “I had planned to sneak away with both of them. But I’ve had a bad day. I’ve got a hell of a meeting tomorrow at City Hall. Some farthole is accusing me of being on the take. So please, my good boy, Ed, take one of the bitches off my hands for the night.”

“I’d be happy to oblige your Lordship,” Hump said.

Back at table, Hump had assumed that the mayor would select the blonde over the redhead, because Walker was well known for liking blondes. Surprisingly, he chose the redheaded stripper, Rhonda Miles, who billed her act—for some strange reason—as “Ringworm.” Into her second bottle of Staten Island champagne, Rhonda giggled. “When I first met Jimmy, he told me he only went for blonde fluff. I went and got myself dyed down there, and Jimmy is anxious to see the results. Tomorrow he’s gonna pay to have my whole head dyed blonde.”

Since he was ordered to do so by the mayor himself, Hump disappeared into the evening with the blonde stripper, who billed herself as Mabel Norman, perhaps in the hope that her audience would equate her stage name with the famous silent screen comedienne, Mabel Normand.

Without ever knowing why, Ed Sullivan found himself uncharacteristically thought of as a stud in the weeks ahead. Mabel Norman, thinking Hump was Ed, had given Hump’s performance in bed a rave review.

Sullivan never found out the reason for his sudden popularity with Broadway showgirls.

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Producer John Turek’s decision in 1927 to revive that tired old chestnut, a three-act farce, *Baby Mine*, was a move he’d regret. Turek had seen *Saturday’s Children*, and had been impressed with Hump’s performance, considering him ideal for the role of the straight-laced juvenile husband, Alfred Hardy, in Margaret Mayo’s successful play, which had run for 287 performances when it had originally opened back in 1910.

It was a great year on Broadway and Turek faced stiff competition from other shows, notably Sydney Howard’s oedipal melodrama, *The Silver Cord* ; Philip Barry’s witty *Paris Bound*, and Eugene O’Neill’s innovative *The Great God Brown*.

That 320-pound mass of blubber, Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle had signed to star as Jimmy Jenks in *Baby Mine*. The screen comedian had arrived in New York hoping for a comeback, following his acquittal on charges of raping and killing Virginia Rappé in a San Francisco hotel suite several years previously.

His once flourishing multi-million-dollar screen career was at an end, as his movies were boycotted in spite of his acquittal. In three trials for manslaughter, all the witnesses and even the district attorney had lied, frequently changing their stories. The first two juries could not reach a verdict but the third acquitted Arbuckle.

From their first meeting, Hump was antagonistic toward Arbuckle. Hump told Turek, "Frankly, I think whale blubber killed that slut, Virginia Rappé. But even sluts deserve to live. I heard Arbuckle is impotent. Can't get a rise out of his little dickie. That's probably why he had to use a milk bottle."

At first, rumors were spread that Arbuckle had raped Rappé with a jagged piece of ice. Later the rumor was changed, the jagged ice story giving way to a milk bottle. The bottle was said to have ruptured Rappé's bladder, causing her eventual death.

On the first day of rehearsals, and to show his contempt, Hump asked the stage manager to deliver an empty milk bottle to Arbuckle's dressing room. Hump had penned a note and attached it to the bottle: "Either call me in to handle your next piece of tail or use this on her."

After that, the fat comedian never spoke to Hump throughout the short duration of the play, except on stage when he had to.

Although Hump detested the star of *Baby Mine*, he told Bill Brady Jr. that he had fallen "madly in love" with the young actress playing the juvenile female lead in the show. She was the very lovely Lee Patrick, a smallish young woman with fair hair, which she wore bobbed like a flapper. Most directors found her face "kind instead of sexy."

Still very young, Patrick had not developed the persona of the brash, sassy blonde she would play in many of her upcoming sixty-five films. She is remembered today for playing the ditsy Henrietta Topper in the Topper television series. She also appeared in a number of film classics, playing second fiddle to Bette Davis in the 1942 *Now, Voyager* ; the 1945 *Mildred Pierce* with Joan Crawford, and the 1948 *The Snake Pit* with Olivia de Havilland. Ironically, one of her most remembered roles was as Effie Perrine, the secretary and confidante in the 1941 *The Maltese Falcon* opposite none other than Bogie himself.

Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle
Baby Mine

Hump found that his role of a priggish young husband in *Baby Mine* was silly and not convincing. Patrick played the role of his wife, an addictive flirt who maneuvers her way into a lunch alone with Hump's best friend. When he learns of this "transgression," Hump's character walks out on his wife. As part of the intricately contrived plot, Patrick "rents" three babies for an afternoon and, in a dramatic presentation, claims to Hump that all of them belong to her. Finally, Hump learns the truth about these ridiculous episodes, interprets them as minor but adorable quirks of his flirtatious wife's personality, and agrees to let her return to his home and hearth.

Hump's very Victorian role lacked style, grace, and humor, and he was forced to deliver such lines as, "My wife had the effrontery, the bad taste, the idiocy to lunch in a public restaurant with that blackguard." The blackguard referred to was supposed to be Hump's best friend in the play.

Throughout the early rehearsals Hump avidly pursued Patrick, giving her candies and flowers. She repeatedly turned down his overtures until the second week when she agreed to have dinner with him at The 21 Club. After a few drinks, he propositioned her, and she turned him down once again. Finally, she said, "I'll go to bed with you on one

condition."

"And that is?" he asked.

"That you'll marry me. I know you're already married to Helen. But everybody on Broadway knows it's not a real marriage. The reason I insist on marriage is that I long ago decided that when I go to bed with a man, it's going to be forever."

Startled, Hump almost left her alone in 21 and fled into the night until his hormones won the battle. He took her back to a hotel room where he seduced her "in the missionary position," as he later confided to Bill Brady Jr. "None of that Louise Brooks kinky stuff—not with a virgin."

After they'd had sex, Patrick cried for what was left of the night. In between sobs, she told Hump that she had fallen in love with him and that there would never be another man in her life but him.

The next day at rehearsals, she confided to him that she had disliked the sex intensely and that it had hurt her. "A friend of mine told me yesterday that the first time always& hurts, but it gets better the second and third time until a woman starts to enjoy it."

Lee Patrick

Hump told her that was true, and round two and round three—each played out in the same hotel bed—soon followed. But by the time the play opened, he was already losing interest in Patrick. As he confided to Brady, "It's too much like fucking a nun."

Baby Mine opened on the night of June 7, and the house was packed. Hump felt that audiences were more interested in seeing Arbuckle in the flesh than they were in going to the play. At the close of the final curtain on opening night, Arbuckle appeared before the audience, pleading with them not to believe all the bad press he'd received. He urged them to return again to his play and to bring their friends and relatives.

When Hump from the wings saw the fat comedian shedding tears in front of the audience, he found the act "pathetic." Audiences dwindled during the following nights, and Turek closed the show after only twelve performances.

Hump not only left the play at Chanin's Forty-Sixth Street Playhouse, he also told Patrick that their relationship was over. In her dressing room, she broke down and cried, threatening suicide. He didn't take that threat seriously.

Patrick went on to prove her claim that at heart she was a one-man woman and was "the true blue type." In time she met the writer, Thomas Wood, and married him, their union lasting for forty-five years.

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After the closing of *Baby Mine*, Hump was out of work for only a week. A sudden call from Chicago and he was asked to get on the next train leaving New York. An actor had taken ill, and the producers wanted Hump to repeat his role in *Saturday's Children* in which he'd appeared with Ruth Hammond and had had that brief affair with actress Ruth Gordon.

Out of work and glad to get another role, Hump agreed to go to Chicago and take over the part. At her apartment, he asked Helen if she'd go with him to Chicago since she, too, was out of work. She flatly refused, claiming she was negotiating to reprise her role in *Seventh Heaven* on the London stage.

Already in London and a sensation over there, Tallulah had written to assure Helen that, “The audiences will adore you, darling. Perhaps you won’t create the hysteria I do when I appear in my fancy lingerie, but you’ll go over just swell.”

Helen’s refusal to go to Chicago led to the biggest fight yet between the Bogarts, signaling the final deterioration of their shaky marriage.

“Me, go to Chicago?” Helen shouted at him. “I’m an actress, not a housewife, God damn you if you haven’t noticed that. A real actress, not some dumb little actor playing silly walk-ons with a tennis racquet for the mindless. Why in hell do you think I would want to sit in some fleabag Chicago hotel waiting for you to come home at night when the curtain goes down? Why indeed, when I could be the toast of London?”

“Say it like it is,” Hump yelled back at her. “What you mean is, you’d rather be licking Tallulah’s pussy than getting fucked by me.”

“You bastard!” She picked up a vase of flowers and hurled it at him, narrowly missing his face.

“You fucking lez,” he yelled at her, as she picked up another object, a silver platter her mother had given her. Before she could hurl this metal missile at him, he grabbed her wrist and forced her to drop it. As a final goodbye, he punched her hard in the face, scoring a bull’s eye. The impact was so forceful that he injured his own hand. She fell to the floor as he stormed out of the apartment.

That night in a speakeasy, he told Bill Brady Jr., “I hit her harder than I’ve ever hit anyone before. At the moment I struck her, I hated all women. I hated the power they’ve had over me. When I plowed my fist into her face, I was striking back at all women. Even Maud who made me pose nude in that art class. I was hitting every woman who has ever attacked me.”

“Maybe you’re not the marrying kind,” Bill said.

“Maybe I’m not.” He looked at Bill, knowing that he had cheated on his wife as many times as Hump had. “You can play the game. Lie to your wife. But I want to be free of any woman. That way I can’t be accused of infidelity.”

Over a few more drinks, Bill agreed with his friend that a Menken/Bogart divorce was inevitable. “You were completely mismatched,” Bill said. “Besides, Helen doesn’t need a husband. She needs a string of young and admiring actresses around her, some of whom she will seduce.”

“You’re right,” Hump agreed. “If she’d wanted a real man in her life, she would have stuck it out with me even though I’m not perfect.”

Bill’s wife, Katharine Alexander, was out of town for the weekend, and he invited Hump to spend the night with him until he was ready to catch the train for Chicago in the morning.

Five hours later at Grand Central Station, Bill had a strange, forlorn look on his face as he embraced Hump in a goodbye. Hump would remember that hangdog expression all the way to Chicago as he rode the rails.

Her face badly swollen, Helen was treated at a clinic in mid-Manhattan. Taking a taxi back to her apartment, she tried to conceal her large black eye from the doorman. She could make no more appearances until her wound healed.

Before signing the contract to go to London to appear in *Seventh Heaven*, she filed for divorce, waiving alimony but demanding that Hump return $2,500 which he’d borrowed from her and had never repaid.

She lied to reporters, claiming that she had been willing to give up her career and “make a real home” for Hump, but had suffered nothing but mental and physical abuse from him. “Sometimes he’d be gone for days at a time, and I never knew where he was or with whom. To him his stage career meant everything. A wife meant nothing to him other than a sometimes convenience.”

She found that the press was sympathetic to her fantasies. If anybody valued her stage career more than her home life, it was Helen M herself. She officially charged Hump with “desertion, cruelty, and abuse.”

His upcoming divorce was splashed all over the New York newspapers because the names of Helen Menken and, to a lesser extent, Humphrey Bogart, were well known on Broadway. In Chicago neither actor was known.

Fearing that Helen had permanently damaged his professional reputation, Hump wrote Bill Brady Jr. “All this crap that Helen has been tossing at me in the press is going to smell up my career on Broadway. I fear there will be no roles waiting for me when I come back. I’ll be blacklisted.”

Bill wrote back that Hump need not worry. “What are friends for?” he asked in a letter. “Between Dad, Alice, or me, a job will be waiting for you on Broadway. We’ll see to that.”

To forget Helen and the divorce mess swirling around him, Hump drank even more heavily than before—and that was a lot. After the curtain went down every night, he headed for the speakeasies of Chicago. He’d never realized it before, but Chicago seemed to have as many good-looking and available chorus girls as New York.

After the first week of making the rounds, he wrote Bill of his conquests. “So far, I’ve been having auditions nightly. On some occasions, two or three auditions a night. Want to know what I’ve concluded? There is not one single virgin in Chicago. If I find one, I’ll take care of that problem.”

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When Hump returned from Chicago, he continued to make the rounds of the speakeasies with Bill Brady and Kenneth MacKenna. MacKenna wasn’t playing around very much, as he was steadily dating that cute little blonde, Mary Philips, who had appeared with Hump and him in *Nerves*.

Married or not, Bill seemed to be free every night after the show to join Hump in a tour of the speakeasies, hitting clubs like Hotsy-Totsy, Chez Flo, the Bandbox, and the Clamhouse.

Hump was staring thirty in the face, and in between booze and chorus girls, he expressed fears about his future to Bill. “How long can I go on playing juveniles? Already I’m getting a little long in the tooth for the roles I’m cast into, some of which would be more suited to a nineteen-year old.”

“You need a real meaty part,” Bill said, “and I’m sorry I haven’t been able to offer you one.”

“I’m grateful for the work you’ve given me,” Hump said. “Don’t get me wrong. But I need something juicier.”

“Have you considered films?” Bill asked.

“What could I play?” Hump asked. “Scarface? This fucking lip of mine would look great blown up on the silver screen.”

“Get it operated on,” Bill advised. “You’ll never remove the scar but you could get rid of that scallop.”

“Maybe you’re right,” he said. “I’ll talk to my dad about it. After all, he was the one who gave it to me.”

When Hump visited his parents the following day, he found them separated. He hadn’t seen either Maud or Belmont for several months, nor had he called them. Belmont had become increasingly addicted to morphine, and had lost their elegant town house because of bad investments. He was forced to move into a small apartment in the East 40s.

Facing failing health and a declining medical practice, Belmont still went out on call as a ship’s doctor. When not at sea, he spent most of his time in bed. Maud lived in an apartment next door, and money from her art work supported not only her but took care of most of Belmont’s ever-growing number of bills.

Hump was saddened to see both parents in severe decline after having known such prestige and prosperity when they were listed in *Dau’s New York Blue Book*.

Hump called on Maud first. Her face was drawn into bitter lines, and she looked dissipated and filled with despair. “I go next door and cook his breakfast every morning. I also go over and see that he has a decent dinner—that is, when I can get him to eat anything. He has these attacks at times, and I have to hire nurses for him, paying out

money I can ill afford."

"What kind of attacks?" Hump asked.

"Attacks," she said, dismissing the question. "You always want to know everything."

"Are you guys going to get a divorce?" he asked.

"I have no intention of doing that," she said. "But your father's getting too weak to travel on ships any more. I fear he's going to be bedridden for the few years that remain to him."

"Are you still taking morphine too?" he asked.

"Why don't you go see your father and let me alone this morning?" she said. "I have a job. Not a well-paying assignment but a job, and I need to devote all my time to it—not to your questions."

"I love you," he protested. "I want to know."

"Do I interfere in your life?" she asked, her fury reflected in her stern face. "Did I ask you why you married a lesbian? Why you lay out drunk every night in speakeasies, picking up floozies like your father used to bring home sailor riffraff from the wharves? Do I interrogate you about why you continue in an illicit friendship with that Jew, Bill Brady? The stories spread about him."

"Bill is my friend, and he's going to stay my friend."

"Please leave," she said. "Just leave. My nerves are shattered."

Next door, Hump found Belmont in unusually good spirits, or else he was putting on a brave show for his son. The doctor carefully avoided talk of his failed marriage, his declining career, and his reduced circumstances in life. Unlike Maud, Belmont seemed eager to hear about his son's many "triumphs" in the theater, and Hump exaggerated his achievements and praise.

"The one thing I can't understand," Belmont said, "is why you're always compared to Valentino when there's a write-up about you in the press. I just don't see the resemblance. Besides, he's long dead."

"I don't get it either," Hump said. "There are worse comparisons, though. At least they don't think I look like that rapist, Fatty Arbuckle."

Hump told him that Bill Brady Jr. had suggested a possible career for him in films. He was hesitant to bring up his lip disfigurement since Belmont was to blame for that.

Without ever excusing what he'd done to his son, Belmont said, "I can't remove the scar, but I can do minor surgery and get rid of that scallop. After all, when you become a big-time movie star, and the camera moves in for a close-up, you don't need all that extra skin blown up to giant size on the silver screen. I'll operate this morning."

"You mean, right now?" Hump asked, wondering if Belmont was in any condition to operate on him and fearing that the surgery might lead to greater disfigurement.

"I didn't raise a sissy for a son," Belmont said, rising slowly from his bed. "Go into my clinic down the hall and take off your shirt. We might as well get this over with if you're planning to go to Hollywood one day. Since Valentino died early in life, and no other actor has replaced him, it might as well be my son, Humphrey Bogart. But you'll have to come up with a less sissy name than Humphrey for the marquee."

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Taking Bill's challenge of going to Hollywood seriously, Hump went alone to see *The Jazz Singer*, that partially talking picture starring Al Jolson. The word reaching New York was that in a year or two recorded human voices would be heard in all future films. Since many stars in Hollywood had awful voices, there was going to be a demand

for Broadway actors trained in speaking parts.

Hump still had his slight lisp, but at least he no longer had that scallop on his lip thanks to Belmont.

The Jazz Singer had been running for several months before Hump got around to seeing it, and he was impressed, trying to imagine his face on the silver screen. He'd also heard that the pay in Hollywood was much better than it was in the New York theater.

After seeing the film, he went a few blocks down the street to a Manhattan theater where the actress, Mary Halliday, was appearing in a play. On October 26, 1925, Helen had taken him to the opening of Halliday's play, *Easy Come, Easy Go*, and he'd liked the actress and wanted to call on her and wish her luck. He had learned that actresses like Grace George might occasionally recommend him for future roles in their plays, so he felt it was important to keep in touch with some of the many theatrical celebrities he'd met through Helen.

Backstage on the way to see Halliday, he encountered another Mary. Mary Philips, the actress with whom he'd appeared with his "second best friend," Kenneth MacKenna, in the 1924 play, *Nerves*. He'd all but forgotten Mary, but remembered that he'd objected to the sexy way that she'd walked offstage, upstaging his best scene in the play.

To his surprise, Hump saw Kenneth emerging from the men's room, walking toward them. Kenneth approached Mary and kissed her on the mouth, possessively putting his arm around her as if to signal his fellow pussy posse member to back off in case he had any designs on Mary.

After the actors paid their respects to Halliday, Hump invited Mary and Kenneth to join him for "drinks, fun, and maybe a little dinner" at Sardi's.

Over drinks, Mary told Hump how sorry she was to learn of the breakup of his marriage to Helen. "Frankly," Mary said, after a few drinks, "I was surprised she wanted to marry any man. The rumor along Broadway was that you and Helen kept a scoreboard every week to see how many young actresses each of you could seduce. In spite of your reputation as a ladies' man, I was told that Helen beats your score virtually every weekend."

Instead of making him boil, Hump laughed and ordered another drink. What Mary had just said to him was what he might have said to someone. It seemed she liked to kid and needle people as much as he did.

Kenneth remained aloof from their conversation. The more they drank and the more fun they seemed to be having, the more Kenneth resented it. He reminded Hump several times that he and Mary were seriously considering marriage. Although Kenneth could drink as much as Hump could, he ordered only bottled club soda. "Someone's got to keep a clear head. Otherwise the two of you will never find your way home."

When Kenneth got up to go to the men's room again, Mary slipped Hump her phone number and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Mae West is always telling stage-door johnnies to come up and see her some time. I can't think of a better way to say it."

"Invitation accepted." Then, as he was to tell Brady Jr., Mary did something that shocked him. She reached under the table and placed her delicate hand in his crotch, fondling him.

Kenneth was so anxious to return to table that he came back into the dining room still zipping up. Mary discreetly removed her hand from Hump's crotch. She was giving him a hard-on.

She had come a long way since her days in that New Haven convent. Hump was determined to seduce Mary, even though he knew that his friend, Brady, and obviously Kenneth had sampled the honeypot long before he'd get a taste.

Two views of
Bogie's second wife, Mary Philips

In the weeks ahead, Hump got to know Mary very well. She visited him three or four times a week at his apartment. Since she was unofficially engaged to Kenneth, she didn't want to be seen at any of the Broadway dives with Hump. Sometimes she would arrive a bit disheveled at Hump's apartment, and he knew that she'd just risen from Kenneth's bed. "It's sloppy seconds for me again today," he'd kid her.

Although she didn't have the professional stature of Helen, Mary was an established Broadway star when she met Hump. From that very first night at Sardi's, Hump realized that, especially when a total of five fans stopped by their table to ask for her autograph. Although they were also established actors on Broadway, neither Hump nor Kenneth attracted autograph seekers.

Hump later told Bill that he wasn't even considering marriage, "and if I do it will to be a Roaming in the Gloaming type. And if I marry anybody, it will be Mary Philips. New England and Irish, the perfect combination for me."

"If you do marry Mary, I can vouch that your future wife's not bad in the sack. That's one hot little number."

That provocative remark didn't make Hump mad because he already knew of the affair Bill had had with Mary. He sipped his drink and cast a steely glance at Bill. "Your wife's not bad in the sack either. Dear Katherine. I did have to teach her a few tricks, though."

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"Kenneth has officially proposed," Mary said one morning when rising from Hump's bed after a night of passionate lovemaking. "He's even bought the ring."

"Did you accept?" Hump asked, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

"I've asked him to give me a month to make up my mind." Completely nude, she towered over Hump who remained in bed. "At the end of the month, if I don't have an official proposal of marriage—engagement ring and everything—from one Humphrey Bogart, I'm marrying Kenneth." With that remark, she turned and walked toward his bathroom to repair the damages of the night.

The next few days were agonizing ones for Hump. At speakeasies, he had long, drunken talks with Bill about what he should do. "For God's sake, marry her," Bill advised.

"What about Kenneth?" Hump asked. "He is one of my best friends. I think if I take Mary from him, it will break his heart."

“There are a lot of beautiful women on Broadway who will mend Kenneth’s heart,” Bill said. “He’s one handsome guy. Most women think he’s far better looking than we are. He’s wildly popular with the gals. A month after your marriage, he will have forgotten all about Mary.”

The next night at Tony’s, it was painful for Hump to listen to Kenneth’s plans for his future life with Mary. “We’re not even married yet, and already we’re having fights.”

“What kind of fights?” Hump asked, more than curious.

“Stuart thinks I’m Hollywood material, and I’m planning to go to the coast.”

Hump’s brother-in-law, Stuart Rose, had become the East Coast story editor for the Fox Film Corporation.

“When do you think you’ll go?” Hump asked.

“As soon as Mary and I get married. I’m taking her to LA with me. A woman’s place is beside her husband wherever he goes. Mary believes that the theater is the only true calling for an actor. She thinks movies are for ridiculous types like the late Valentino or that daffy blonde, Mae Murray. Or larger-than-life types like Gloria Swanson or Erich von Stroheim.”

“You’ve got a problem, guy,” Hump said. “Don’t get Mary’s Irish up. That’s one determined broad.”

“So she thinks,” Kenneth said. “I’m more stubborn than she is. Within two years, I predict, I’m going to become the biggest male star in motion pictures. When I come home at night, Mary’s going to have a pot of Irish stew bubbling on the stove and my slippers waiting at the door.”

“Dream on,” Hump said, realizing how little Kenneth understood Mary’s fierce determination to succeed on the stage.

Exactly one day before Hump’s marriage proposal deadline with Mary ran out, he asked her to become his second wife. Remembering his four-year engagement to Helen, he told her he wanted to get married as soon as they could get a license and a minister.

Mary accepted and kissed him long, hard, and passionately. Even so, he was in for a surprise. It would be the beginning of many surprises in their years together. “I want to go and sleep with Kenneth tonight,” she said. “A night of grand love-making. I feel I owe him that.”

“Fuck that!” Hump protested. “You’ll do nothing of the sort. You’re my broad now. I’ve staked my claim.”

“What do you think I am?” she asked. “Some Broadway cow you own in your stable? A big tit bovine you’ve branded with a hot iron? When I agreed to marry you, I didn’t say I’d swear off other men. No marriage can work unless a husband and wife are free to have sex with others.”

Echoes of his recently failed marital arrangement with Helen resounded in his head. Did all Broadway actresses believe in an open marriage? Not wanting to repeat the mistakes he’d made with Helen, he turned on Mary. “What crap!” he yelled at her. “Many married couples are faithful to each other. Have you ever heard of the vow, forsaking all others?”

“I suppose the next thing you’ll throw at me is the perfect marriage of your parents. It was idyllic all right, just so long as Belmont could cruise the waterfront and bring home sailors. Or that Maud could have a discreet affair or two on the side. You told me that yourself.”

“My own parents are hardly an example I would want to follow,” he said.

“What about your marriage to Menken?” she demanded to know. “Everybody up and down Broadway knows that the two of you slept with everything that had two legs and could spread them.”

“My marriage with Helen failed,” he said. “I don’t want that to happen to us!”

“Maybe there’s going to be no God damn marriage,” she said. “What are you, some fucking Puritan? I’m not going to agree to marry you unless you let me continue to sleep with Kenneth. And maybe some other good-looking guys I meet. My only promise to you is that these guys will always be actors. That way, we’ll keep it in our Broadway family.”

“That is the sickest talk I’ve ever heard,” he said, turning from her in disgust.

“Yeah,” she said, confronting him. “But it sounds healthy to me. A lot healthier than those three-ways you and Helen had with Tallulah Bankhead. That cozy arrangement had all of Broadway talking. I’ve heard that you’ve even had three-ways with Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.”

“That’s a God damn lie.”

“You were seen kissing Fitzgerald in the elevator of the Plaza Hotel.”

“That was just some drunken game we were playing that night,” he said.

“When I fuck Kenneth tonight, I’ll make sure we’re drunk and that it’s all a game,” she said defiantly. “I don’t care what you say. I’m going to do what I God damn please.” She stormed out of his living room, heading for the door.

“Forget I ever proposed to a whore like you,” he shouted to her departing back. Even when stalking out of the apartment, she still had that same sexy walk she’d used on the stage in *Nerves*. “I wouldn’t marry you if you were the last blonde slut on Broadway, which you aren’t. Your type is a dime a dozen.”

Her answer to that was the loudest slamming of a door he’d ever heard.

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It was in Hartford, Connecticut on April 3, 1928, that the minor Broadway actor, Humphrey Bogart, aged 28, married Miss Mary Philips, the Broadway star. Whatever differences they had, they had momentarily suppressed them. They’d hardly worked them out.

Arriving two hours before the wedding, Kenneth had gone into seclusion with Mary, pleading with her to, “Marry me, not Hump.” Mary had wavered back and forth between the two men, deciding first on Kenneth, then on Hump. Years later, she would sigh and say, “I was really pissed off. Why can’t a woman have two husbands? I wanted to marry both of them.”

In time, she would.

Kissing Kenneth good-bye and telling him to leave Hartford, Mary turned down his proposal of marriage. She held out a promise to him. “When I get back to New York, I’ll still be your wife, but only on certain nights of the week.”

Bill Brady Jr. was Hump’s best man. The wedding was to take place at the home of Mary’s mother, Anne, at 24 Hopkins Street, an apartment in a building across from the old Hartford Public High School.

Only ten minutes before the wedding, Hump told Bill, “I’m a fool to go through with this marriage. It has all the earmarks of a disaster—just like my marriage to Helen. History is repeating itself. She’ll probably throw Kenneth a mercy fuck a few minutes before she walks in here to say ‘I do.’”

“Maybe the line should be changed to, ‘I just did,’” Bill said, joking with Hump and hoping to cheer him up.

After a tearful embrace, Mary finally appeared in front of the justice of the peace, her guilty eyes avoiding Hump’s. The couple exchanged marriage vows, even a promise to forsake all others, although Hump knew that was a meaningless promise.

After the ceremony, when he’d put a ring on Mary’s finger and kissed her, Hump stood in front of a bowl of punch with the justice of the peace. “We know what a fine star Miss Philips is. Or should I say Mrs. Bogart? But what kind of actor are you?”

“They call me a ‘white pants Willy,’” he said.

“What does that mean? I’m afraid I’m not familiar with show business terms.”

“A handsome but callow young man who is a staple in many drawing-room comedies.”

As they were at the train station heading back to New York, Hump and Mary got caught up in a torchlight parade for Hartford’s newest mayor, “Batty” Batterson, who’d just been narrowly elected despite widespread allegations of vote fraud.

After a one-night stopover in Manhattan, during which Mary was gone for two hours for drinks with Kenneth, Mary and Bogart headed for a two-week honeymoon in Atlantic City. “It was the beginning of ten years of deepening misery for me,” Bogie in the years to come would say in recalling his New Jersey honeymoon.

When the honeymooners returned to New York, Mary immediately called Kenneth who told her that he was leaving in the morning on a train bound for Los Angeles. He was going to break into the movies and had been promised a “really big part.”

Mary kissed Hump good-bye and told him, “I just have to spend this final night with Kenneth. I’m sure you’ll understand. After all, I’ve been with you for two entire weeks.”

He wished her a good time. He’d just read in a Broadway column that Helen had returned from her engagement in London. He called her apartment. After receiving her congratulations on his new marriage, he asked her if he could come over and spend the night.

“You’re always welcome,” she said.

After putting down the receiver, he headed for the shower. He wanted to look handsome and well-groomed for Helen.

That would mark the beginning of an affair with his first wife that would last for the entire duration of his marriage to his second wife, Mary Philips.

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The next week Hump went to the theatrical agents, Charles Frohman Productions, and signed on with them, telling them he wanted to break into the movies. As Helen’s representative, Frohman had secured lawyers for Helen and gotten her out of trouble when she was arrested for appearing in the lesbian play, *The Captive*. Even so, Hump wasn’t very cooperative, but one of the staff members, Sheila Crystal, took a liking to Hump and felt that he might photograph well. She’d already seen two plays in which he’d appeared. She was also aware that Broadway columnists still compared his looks to the dead actor, Valentino.

Hump left the agency thinking nothing would come of his signing on. In two weeks, Sheila called him. Even without a screen test, she’d secured him the male lead in a two-reeler, *The Dancing Town*. “The star will be Helen Hayes,” Sheila said. “That’s Helen Hayes with an s, not Helen Haye. Everybody gets those two gals mixed up.”

That night on his tour of the speakeasies with Mary, Hump was thrilled at the offer. He was disappointed in Mary’s reaction. “Films are just a novelty,” she said. “I think in a few years there will be no films. The theater is the only place for an actor. I told Kenneth that, but the fool wouldn’t listen. He’s dreaming of seeing himself up on that silver screen.”

“You’ve got it ass backwards,” he said. “All the big Broadway stars today will be forgotten a hundred years from now. Films like that crap Valentino made will still be shown.”

The day he went to meet Helen Hayes, Hump was excited to be working with her. He’d never met her, but another Helen, his first wife, knew her well. Both of them had gone to see Hayes in the Broadway play, *To the Ladies*, in which she’d appeared from 1922 to 1924. She’d had great success in Oliver Goldsmith’s ribald 18th-century comedy, *She& Stoops to Conquer*, and she’d followed that by playing Cleopatra in George Bernard Shaw’s&

Caesar and Cleopatra.

Helen Hayes

Hayes had married the same year that Hump had wed Mary Philips. Her husband was the very handsome Charles MacArthur, whom Hump knew casually from their long nights spent drinking at Tony's saloon. Hump was surprised that the demure and ever so elegant Hayes would marry a hard-drinking, hard-living playwright like Charles MacArthur, who was having his big Broadway success with his memorable play, *The Front Page*.

When Hump had first met MacArthur, he was having affairs with both Dorothy Parker and Ned Sheldon, the playwright with whom he had collaborated on the 1926 play, *Lulu Belle*. Hump knew that MacArthur swung both ways, but he didn't know if Miss Hayes knew that, and it wasn't his job to tell her. Bill Brady Jr. always claimed that, "MacArthur will drop his trousers for anybody, male or female, if he's drunk enough." Like his own marriage, Hump didn't give the Hayes/MacArthur union much of a chance.

Hayes was hardly the First Lady of the American Theater the day Hump met her at a studio in Queens. But she was every bit a lady. She was so tiny she made him feel tall. If modern generations have an image of Helen at all, it is of a grandmotherly looking woman with gray hair. But when Hump met her, Helen was "the serpent of the Nile," and she'd appeared in a number of flapper roles, although he felt that she was "too pure" to have any real sex appeal.

Over coffee, and waiting for the cameras to be set up, Helen confessed that she was planning to accompany her husband to Hollywood where he wanted to become a screenwriter for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. "Now that the flickers have learned to talk, maybe I'll consider a film career as well. Heaven only knows, I'm no sex pot who can do bathtub scenes like Gloria Swanson."

"I think you're a very sexy lady, and within the hour I expect to be making mad, passionate love to you."

"Heavens," she said, "I'm flattered. You're very handsome, not as much so as my Charles, but a very good-looking man. I'm faithful to my husband, though, even if he isn't to me."

Apparently, she already knew about her husband's extramarital affairs. "I wasn't making a proposition," Hump said. "I've read the script. It calls for us to make mad, passionate love."

"Oh, I see." She looked embarrassed. "It's in the script?"

"I suggest we at least do some heavy kissing before the cameras are turned on us," he suggested. "After all, if you and I are going to become movie stars, we don't want to appear like limp dish rags when we embrace on screen."

"You're probably right," she said. "Lillian Gish has always warned me that the camera—unlike the stage—picks up every facial nuance."

His lips already moist, he wetted them again as he went over to her in her dressing room and took her in his arms. He gently pressed his mouth down on hers. At first she resisted but soon gave in, reaching to put her small arms around him.

The kissing scene was going so well that he inserted his tongue ever so gently into her mouth, not knowing what she'd think of this French kissing. He seemed to be getting to her.

Although it was hardly called for in the script, he placed his hand on her thigh and started moving to the North Pole. He'd never know what might have happened because suddenly there was a rude knock on the door. The director wanted both of them on the set.

Hump would later recall that their love-making on the silver screen never matched their warm-up in Helen's dressing room.

Regrettably, there are no known copies of this two-reeler today, which starred two of the most famous actors of the 20th century, Helen Hayes and Humphrey Bogart.

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"I'm impotent." Hump walked with Stuart Rose along a serene lake near Fairfield, Connecticut where Mary and he were renting a house next to his brother-in-law and his sister, Frances.

"It'll pass," Stuart assured him. "Just give it time."

He took hold of Stuart's arm and confronted him. "Has it ever happened to you and Frances?"

"Can't say that it has, but it happens to a lot of men," Stuart said. "More than they'll tell you. My own father was impotent for two years before he got it back again."

"If only Mary didn't make it worse," Hump said. "When I can't get it up, she mocks me and ridicules me. I should never have married her."

Stuart looked deeply into Hump's eyes. "What's the real problem?"

"It's the kind of marriage we have," Hump said. "I think she's still in love with Kenneth. She sleeps around and tells me about it. She says that what she can't get at home she finds somewhere else. She claims most men don't have my problem."

"Where's Mary now?" Stuart asked.

"She's gone back to New York," Hump said. "We'll probably get a divorce. My reputation will be ruined on Broadway. No gal will want to sleep with me ever again."

The marriage was saved by a three-act comedy, *The Skyrocket*, that was set to open January 11, 1929 at the Lyceum Theatre. It was produced and directed by Guthrie McClintic, who had hired Kenneth's brother, Jo Mielziner, as the set designer.

Mary was cast as the star, with Humphrey playing her husband. After reading the script, he told Jo, "It's another one of those sprig parts. But I need work so I'll take it."

It was like a Broadway homecoming for Hump. Guthrie had directed *Saturday's Children* two years earlier, with Jo doing the sets. The script was one of those rags-to-riches-to-rags stories. Couple strikes it rich but money makes them unhappy. They go broke again and find true love and happiness in their poverty.

Hump's role as "Rims" in *Saturday's Children* had been minor, and he hadn't really gotten to know its director as he'd filled in for another actor after the show was blocked. Both Mary and he were eager to work with the director, Guthrie McClintic.

In their daydreams, Mary and Hump fantasized with each other about becoming the "second Guthrie McClintic and Katharine Cornell." And whereas Woollcott hadn't been impressed with Hump's stage "sprig," he was overwhelmed by Guthrie's wife, Katharine, calling her "The First Lady of the Theater." Helen Hayes claimed that position for herself as well, as did Lynn Fontanne, Cornell's two chief rivals for glory.

Even without Woollcott's usual hyperbole, Cornell was indisputably the reigning Broadway star of the second quarter of the 20th century. When she'd made her debut in 1921 in *Nice People*, her future husband, then a young casting director, saw her performance and recorded in his notebook. "Interesting. Monotonous. Watch."

By the autumn of that year, he'd married her, forming a theatrical union that lasted forty years until his death in 1961, in spite of the fact that she was a lesbian and he was a homosexual. At the time of his death she abandoned the

stage. “I can’t go on without Guthrie,” she told the press.

When Guthrie told his two stars, Mary and Hump, that his wife was going to visit for the final rehearsal, they were thrilled and were glad to have been warned. They planned to give their best performances during the rehearsal even if it left them drained for opening night.

Guthrie had also told them that Cornell, following such great theatrical successes as W. Somerset Maugham’s *The Letter* and Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence*, planned to manage her own productions in the future. Mary told Hump that if Cornell were impressed with them, she might hire them for one of her shows.

Divas and *grande dames*
Guthrie McClintic and his wife, Katharine Cornell

On the day of the final run-through, Guthrie delayed *The Skyrocket* for one hour, waiting for his wife. Cornell finally showed up. In a beautifully tailored suit, she took a seat in the final row of the theater. Like an imperial *grande dame*, she signaled her husband that the show could begin.

At the end of the performance, the curtain was pulled shut. When it was opened again, Mary and Hump stepped forward, hoping to hear the applause of Cornell. Guthrie told them that she’d left the theater but had written a note for them. It was addressed to “Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Bogart.”

Dear Aspirant Thespians,

Although you struggled, and I’m sure performed, to the best of your ability, this Skyrocket will never make it to heaven. Actually, the two of you are not to blame. The playwright, Mark Reed, deserves full responsibility. His mother should have smothered him at birth.

All good wishes,

Katharine Cornell

Somewhere during rehearsals, Hump had regained his confidence and his sexual prowess and was once again sleeping with Mary. The attack from Cornell destroyed his confidence once again. On opening night he was jittery and explosive.

To compound his fears of an impending disaster, Mary chose that horrendously inappropriate moment to confess to an infidelity that had been going on right before his eyes, even though he hadn’t seen it.

“I’ve been having an affair with Jo,” she said. “I guess I missed Kenneth now that he’s gone Hollywood. They say if a gal goes for one brother, she can go for another. Actually I find Jo better in bed than Kenneth. Brothers don’t make love the same way.”

Hump wanted to slap her, even belt her a good one, but was told that the curtain was going up. He was understandably nervous on opening night, especially after Mary’s revelations. Critics pronounced *Skyrocket* a “showy counterfeit.” One called it “spurious.” Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Bogart received only faint praise.

An out-of-town critic from Hartford, John Davenport, wrote, “It’s surprising that the two stars, Mary Philips and Humphrey Bogart, are in fact newlyweds. There is absolutely no chemistry between them on stage at all.”

Of all the critics that night, Davenport was the only one who got it right. *Skyrocket* quickly closed, and both Mary

and Hump found themselves out of work once again.

His bouts of impotence continued on and off for several months. He told Bill that his marriage was a “sometimes thing.” Mary seemed more excited to get a letter from Kenneth in Hollywood than she did in going out to the speakeasies with her new husband. Sometimes she’d disappear for a week at a time and never tell Hump where she’d been or with whom. “When I’m gone, feel free to date other women,” she told him.

No other woman interested him. It wasn’t that he wanted only Mary. He didn’t want any woman. One night when he’d been alone and drinking heavily in his apartment for three days, Bill Brady Jr. arrived unexpectedly, finding Hump unbathed, unshaven, and almost suicidal.

“I finally figured out what’s the matter with me,” Hump said, heading to the kitchen to pour himself another drink. “I’ve decided I’m a homosexual.”

“We all go through periods like that,” Bill said. “Our own relationship is a perfect example of that.”

“It’s worse than you think,” Hump said. “The other night I was trying to jack off. I willed my mind to think of Mary, but the thing that did it for me— the image that made me pop off—was thinking of what Stuart looked like naked.”

“I’m jealous,” was all Bill said. “Now come on, big boy, we’re going to give you a bath, sober you up a bit, and take you out on the town. Stuart will have to be put on the backburner. You’re my date for tonight.” Bill winked at him.

As the weeks went by, Hump continued to be filled with loathing of himself and self-doubt about his manhood. It was one of the most morbidly depressing periods of his life, and at times he contemplated suicide. He later told Bill, “I never get beyond the thinking stage of it. I just can’t see myself taking a razor to my throat.” Bill tried his best to cheer him up and break his mood.

Alone in his apartment on one of the blackest days of his life, Hump saw no future for himself, certainly no career in the theater. His marriage to Mary was rapidly deteriorating, in ways that evoked the earlier collapse of his marriage to Helen.

But ironically, he had resumed seeing Helen again whenever Mary was away. With Helen, he didn’t experience impotence, only with Mary. Helen always made him feel like a man.

One night at a speakeasy, when he’d been battling with Mary, he told her, “On those rare occasions with you when I can get it up—that is, when you’re not trying to take a razor to my balls—I feel you’re thinking about getting plugged by Kenneth and not by me.”

“A lady is entitled to her fantasies,” Mary had said, rising from her chair and staggering toward the bar to order another drink.

On that dark, rainy afternoon, as he drank alone and grew more despondent in his bleak apartment, the phone rang. Thinking it was Bill, he picked it up to discover Sheila Crystal on the line. His theatrical agent had gotten him another film job.

The great singing star of the Twenties, Ruth Etting, had seen Hump’s performance in the short-lived *Skyrocket*, and had told her backers that she thought “Bogart would be ideal as my leading man” in a ten-minute short she’d contracted to film for Warner Brothers’ Vitaphone Corporation.

Once again and without ever setting foot in Hollywood, Hump found himself cast in a movie opposite a famous woman star.

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Like Katharine Cornell, the songbird, Ruth Etting, was late on the first day of rehearsals for their film short. She’d been rehearsing for her upcoming Broadway show, *Whoopee!* She was Hump’s favorite recording star, and he always proclaimed that she had a “gorgeous voice.” He’d seen many pictures of her in the tabloids and had found her a& “great beauty.”

Two views of Broadway singing sensation Ruth Etting, alone and *(bottom photo)* with Humphrey Bogart

Etting lived up to her billing. When she finally did show up, Hump was dazzled by the sultry torch singer known as "America's sweetheart of song." Only two years older than Hump, Etting had been born in Nebraska. But, as he later told Bill Brady, Jr. "She looked like no cow gal I've ever seen." When introduced to him, he shook her gloved hand. She reached over to kiss him gently on the lips. "It's good for me to see you in the flesh and up close," she said, still holding his hand. "I found you very sexy and commanding in *Skyrocket* even if the critics didn't."

He looked into her eyes. He'd later say, "I never saw a woman's eyes dance before I met Ruth. We clicked from the very first. After only an hour together, we were confessing intimate secrets. She even told him that her secret ambition was to design clothing. "I design some of my outfits on Broadway," she said.

Later, when the film script called for him to come on to her, he found that his impotence had been miraculously cured. Fortunately they were seated at a table. Otherwise, the camera might have recorded one of his biggest erections.

Although he wanted to, Hump didn't put the make on Etting the first day. She gave him several opportunities and seemed to actively encourage him. Hump was afraid—not of Etting, but of her husband. She was married to the Chicago gangster, Martin Snyder, nicknamed "The Gimp" because of a lame left leg. He was promoting her singing career by throwing his weight around Broadway, using tactics he'd learned from a life on the streets in Chicago's underworld.

As work on the short film began, Etting confessed that she'd left "The Gimp" and planned to dump him. She also told Hump that she'd had a very brief affair with showman Florenz Ziegfeld when she'd starred in the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1927*, singing Irving Berlin's "Shaking the Blues Away."

When Hump didn't invite her out that night, she asked him to go on tour of the speakeasies. After a few drinks, she confessed that she was having an affair with the young singer, Bing Crosby. "The Gimp" was supposed to be fanatically jealous, but she seemed to be screwing around a lot, even when she was living with the gangster.

Shortly before midnight, Etting invited Hump back to her apartment. "I thought you'd never ask," he said.

Once in the apartment, she put on a record of one of her songs. She stood in front of her record player and told him to turn off the lights. Not knowing what was about to happen, he turned off the sole light in the room. "Lights," she called out after less than a minute.

When he turned on the light bulb again, Etting was standing nude in front of her record player. She sang "Love Me Or Leave Me" to him. As she sang, he removed his clothing. At the wrap of her song, he moved toward her, his erection guiding his way.

In one of the many ironies of Hump's life, that was not the last time "Love Me Or Leave Me" would figure into his

career. Nearing the end of Bogie's life in 1954, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer considered him for their upcoming picture, *Love Me Or Leave Me* conceived as a vehicle for Doris Day. The studio felt that Hump would be ideal cast as Etting's gangster lover, "The Gimp." Feeling the film was too much a star part for Day, he turned down the role, which eventually went to James Cagney, his longtime rival for gangster roles at Warner Brothers in the 1930s.

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As it had with so many other women, his affair with Ruth Etting ended almost before it began. "The Gimp" arrived back in New York and had a reconciliation with Etting. Bill Brady Jr. told Hump that "The Gimp" often assigned hit men "to beat up or kill any man who moves in on his lady love." Even with the dangerous gangster back in her life, Etting placed three more calls, hoping to arrange a private assignation with Hump. He was too afraid to return her calls.

Still sleeping with Mary, he had managed a one-night stand with a beautiful actress who had had a brief walk-on in the Vitaphone short, *Broadway's Like That*, in which he co-starred with Etting. Her name was Joan Blondell and her nickname was "Rosebud." To him, she was a blonde bombshell from Texas, and he'd been captivated by her youthful exuberance, expressive face, and popped-out eyes that seemed to devour whatever man they focused on.

Like Kenneth MacKenna, she was heading for Hollywood to star in a picture, *Sinners' Holiday*, with James Cagney.

After their one night of passion, Joan made him promise to "look me up if you ever come to Hollywood." She gave him a phone number where she could be reached in Los Angeles. He wrote it down but didn't expect to see her again.

As he said goodbye to Joan when he went down to see her off at Grand Central, little did he know that this would be "the beginning of a beautiful friendship," and that he would one day be co-starring with her in motion pictures. Not only that, their one-night stand would mark the beginning of one of the most enduring and long-running affairs of his life.

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Work came in the form of another three-act Broadway comedy, this one a superficial comedy by Laurence E. Johnson, produced and directed by David Belasco at the Belasco Theatre. *It's a Wise Child* was slated to open on August 6, 1929, starring Helen Lowell, Olga Krolow, Leila Bennett, Mildred McCoy, and George Walcott. No longer a co-star as he had been in *The Skyrocket*, with Mary, Hump got fifth billing in yet another juvenile part.

In spite of the many drawbacks of both the play and his role within it, Hump got to work with some of the biggest names on Broadway. First, Guthrie McClintic had been his director. Now, he was being directed by David Belasco, an influential powerhouse sometimes known as "The Bishop of Broadway." The theater, constructed in 1907, in which their play was to open, was even named after Belasco, who had emerged as one of the most influential men in the entertainment industry at the time. He had seemingly done everything in the theater, including the writing of a smash hit, *The Heart of Maryland*, about the Civil War. He had even selected the name "Mary Pickford" for the film actress who would eventually become "America's Sweetheart."

During the first week of rehearsals, Hump had been disappointed that Belasco, as director, spent so little time coaching him in his role of Roger Baldwin, a part he loathed. The comedy concerned a woman who falls for a young bank clerk as played by Hump. Already saddled with an elderly fiancé, she tells him she's pregnant with another man's child. Hump's role was conceived as that of a "transitional beau," and his character was described as "not one of those silly dancing and drinking men" but as "one of the best-looking men you were likely to ever meet, with the profile of a Greek God." In the final act, the beautiful heroine irrationally dismisses Hump as "just a foolish kid" when he tells her that he cares more about his job than he does about her.

Not particularly attracted to the aging star of the play, Helen Lowell, Hump made a play instead for the enchantingly lovely second female lead, Mildred McCoy, considering her "twice as beautiful as Mary." Mildred seemed fascinated with Hump and invited his amorous attention, even though she constantly refused to go out with him.

Word of Hump's flirtation with Mildred must have reached her beau. As rehearsals began one Monday morning, the

stage manager came backstage to tell him that Mildred's lover was sitting alone out front. He was none other than Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, the most famous "Indian" in America. Hump was even wearing a pair of canvas running shoes, "Long Lance Sport Shoes," named after him.

Long Lance was a darling of the tabloids, which exploited his alleged adventures as an athlete. He was said to have been trained by the legendary Olympic athlete Jim Thorpe and in addition, he was a war hero. He was also a journalist, biographer, public lecturer, pilot, Indian rights advocate, and was heading to Hollywood to become a movie star. Not only that, he was a boxer, having claimed that he had knocked out Jack Dempsey during a sparring match.

In the glittering world of New York society of the 1920s, hostesses vied in sending out invitations to this so-called full-blooded Blackfoot chief, who had captured the imagination of North America with the story of his life and the plight of downtrodden Indians. As a special dispensation, Woodrow Wilson had even appointed Long Lance to West Point.

Not everybody bought his story. There were rumors that he was not a Cherokee from Oklahoma at all. He'd become such a famous fixture on the American landscape that reporters were investigating rumors about his true identity. Reports were turning up from western North Carolina that Long Lance was descended from African slaves. He was dark skinned but not black skinned so he was able to pass as an Indian. Other rumors suggested that his actual father might have been a tobacco planter from England, who had moved to the Winston-Salem area and conceived Lance with a local woman of color, which would account for Long Lance's skin tone.

After the rehearsals, Long Lance went backstage to meet Belasco and other actors. In front of Hump, he kissed Mildred on the lips, asserting his territorial rights. He was an imposing figure towering over Hump. From that day on, Long Lance attended every rehearsal, always coming backstage to rescue Mildred.

After a few days, Long Lance's hostility toward Hump ended as he'd come to view him as no competition for& Mildred's affections. "What would she want with that little runt when she's got me?" he& asked Belasco one day, "After all, they don't call me Long Lance for nothing."

(top photo) Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance; darling of the tabloids, and the most famous Indian in America

(bottom photo) Jazz-Age heiress Anita Baldwin

He even invited Hump to join Mildred and him on a round of the city's speakeasies, where Long Lance dominated the conversation with tall tales of his exploits. Hump listened attentively and seemed enthralled, although later telling Belasco that he too believed that Long Lance was an imposter. "An imposter," Hump said, "but a glorious one."

As he got to know Long Lance better, Hump came to believe that he was indeed black but had assumed the Indian

identity to escape the restrictive segregationist policies of the South. Long Lance viewed himself as following in the tradition of what he said was his "remote maternal relative," Kit Carson, and was filled with fascinating tales of his experiences which allegedly ranged from being a rider in a Wild West show to fighting bravely as a Canadian soldier who'd won the Italian War Cross and the French *Croix de guerre*.

One day, Long Lance didn't show up for rehearsals, but cornered Hump when he was leaving the theater in the late afternoon. There was a look of desperation on Long Lance's face. Hump led Lance across the street as a means of talking to him privately. "You can have Mildred," Long Lance said. "She's all yours. In fact, I want you to take her off my hands."

"What's going on here?" Hump asked.

"One of America's most famous women has fallen madly in love with me."

"You mean, the very, very rich Anita Baldwin?"

"Anita and I are through," Long Lance said. "It's someone else. She's big. I can't tell you her name. But I've got to get rid of Mildred. You go after her. Maybe she'll fall for you. If not, she might fuck up this new thing I have going."

Hump said he'd always found Mildred sexy and appealing, and he'd do his best to lure her away from him.

"You're a swell guy, Bogart," he said.

That didn't sound like Cherokee talk to Hump. The two men talked for an hour, pledging eternal friendship to each other. Long Lance even promised to make Hump an honorary Cherokee.

Having been dumped by Long Lance, Mildred finally agreed to go out with Hump after the opening night curtain fell on *It's a Wise Child.* They were in a mood to celebrate when they hit Tony's. Many of the critics also descended on Tony's that night, having already filed their reviews of *It's a Wise Child*. Hump was eager to ask them what they had written but knew that that wasn't proper Broadway protocol.

Mildred and Hump waited for the reviews, which were lukewarm. She was disappointed that only three reviews even listed her, with no comment about her acting. Woollcott wrote that Hump played his role with "more than his usual vigor and sincerity."

Feeling despondent and wanting to be cheered up, Mildred invited Hump back to her hotel room.

The next morning he got one of the worst reviews of his young life. Over coffee downstairs in the breakfast room, Mildred confessed to him. "You and I have no future," she told him. "After enjoying the embrace of Long Lance for many weeks, I realize that you are that inadequate sprig reviewers are always citing."

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During the run of the play, the Wall Street crash of October, 1929 came tumbling down on the worldwide economy. Miraculously, the play survived the drop-off in business. Many other theaters shut their doors. At first Hump and Mary were unaware of how thoroughly Broadway would eventually be impacted by America's financial crisis. "In bad times, people need to be entertained," Mary told him. "They'll flock to the theater for escapism."

"Yeah," Hump said. "But how in the fuck are they going to afford the tickets?"

Even in the midst of the disaster, Hollywood agents had descended on New York, hoping to find "actors who know how to talk." Out on the West Coast the unattractive voices of many silent-screen greats were repositioning them into the dustbin of film history.

Stuart Rose had become good friends with the former Broadway producer, Al Lewis, who ran the New York office for Fox in which Stuart worked. Stuart's job involved reading plays, hoping to find one suitable to be filmed. He managed to persuade Lewis to give his brother-in-law a chance at a screen test. Stuart took Lewis to see *It's a Wise*

Child, and Lewis reluctantly agreed, although he wasn't impressed with the scar on Hump's upper lip.

Hump didn't think much would come of yet another screen test for him, but he performed a ten-minute segment from *The Man Who Came Back*.

When Lewis sent Hump's test to Fox in Hollywood, the studio wired him to sign Bogart for $750 a week. If he did well, an option called for his paycheck to go up to $1,000 a week, a virtual fortune at the beginning of the Depression.

Without checking with Mary, Hump signed with Fox. In their apartment that night, he tried to persuade Mary to drop out of *The Tavern*, a play in which she was starring on Broadway. He asked her to go on the train with him to Los Angeles. She refused, and violently so, leading to one of their biggest fights.

"You want to become a big-time movie star," Mary shouted at him. "Well, I want to become a big-time Broadway star. Bigger than your lez wife, Helen Menken."

"You're not talented enough to carry the train of Helen's gown on stage," he yelled back at her. "She's a bigger star than you'll ever be. I thought you'd jump at the chance to go to Hollywood. That way you could fuck Kenneth one night, me the next."

She stormed out of their apartment and didn't come back all night. Even if she had returned, Hump wouldn't have been there.

After having farewell drinks with Bill and Stuart at Tony's, Hump called Helen Menken and asked her if he could spend the night with her. She agreed, inviting him to come over right away. With his suitcase already packed, he hugged and kissed both Stuart and Bill good-bye, and took a taxi to Helen's apartment.

Waking up the next morning, he smelled breakfast cooking. Helen was freshly made up and had his favorite bacon and eggs on the table. It was Helen, not Mary, who accompanied him to Grand Central where he caught a train that would take him to Chicago and on to Los Angeles.

On the way to Chicago, drinking heavily, he mixed freely with the passengers, and, like a little boy, even showed some doubters his newly signed contract with Fox. After a few drinks, he told one Kansas City cattleman, who'd never heard of Humphrey Bogart, that those Broadway screen writers were right on the mark. "That screen fob, Valentino, is going to be replaced by me. I'm going to become the biggest movie star Hollywood's ever seen."

Humphrey Bogart

CHAPTER THREE

When the train pulled into Los Angeles, photographers rushed to snap pictures of the most famous passengers. In the confusion, Hump was ignored until he saw Kenneth MacKenna rushing to embrace him at the station. “Welcome to Hollywood,” Kenneth said. “Old buddy, old pal.”

Hump embraced him warmly. It was good to see someone from New York.

“My apartment’s waiting for you,” Kenneth said. “I even washed the toilet seat.”

Later, Hump read about the death of Long Lance. In 1932 he was found shot dead in the Arcadia, California home of Anita Baldwin. A pistol was by his side. A statement released to the press said that Long Lance, Chief Buffalo Child, had “absented himself from this harsh world by a pistol shot.”

But despite the “official” report, up until the day of his death, Hump claimed that Baldwin had killed her black lover, “the great Indian impostor.”

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En route in a taxi to Kenneth’s apartment, Hump looked for signs of resentment or hostility from Kenneth, finding none. Even though he’d been in love with Mary and had proposed to her first, he seemed to have forgiven Hump for marrying her instead.

Hump was candid with him, admitting that he and Mary were seeing other people and that the marriage had indeed been a mistake. Hump could have let it go at that, but he was the constant provocateur. He confessed Mary’s secret to Kenneth: that she was having an affair with Kenneth’s brother, Jo Mielziner. This news seemed to hurt Kenneth, and the moment Hump told his friend that, he regretted the confession.

Even when they got to the apartment, Kenneth didn’t say much as he showed Hump around. There wasn’t much to see. It was a sparsely furnished one-bedroom apartment—the two men, both lovers of Mary, would be sharing the same bed.

Kenneth was eager to talk about work, not Mary. He said he’d made a film, *Men Without Women*, co-starring Frank Albertson and Paul Page. The 70-minute film depicted the saga of 14 sailors trapped in a sunken submarine with not enough escape gear to go around. It was directed by John Ford.

“That Ford is one tough bastard,” Kenneth said. “His first words to me were, ‘I run a tight ship. I’m the officer in command and don’t forget it!’” He paused to light a cigarette. “I hope you never work with this Ford asshole. He nearly killed all of us.”

Eager to share news about his own success in films, Hump told Kenneth that Fox Studios had brought him out as a candidate for the leading role in *The Man Who Came Back*. Kenneth laughed when he heard the news. “You’re the fifth actor they’ve brought out as a candidate for that role. I was the first. None of us is going to get the role. It’s going to Charles Farrell, and he’s still stuck in the methodologies of the Silent Screen. He can’t even talk right.”

Hump felt that Kenneth had seemed a little too gleeful in informing him of this, no doubt paying him back for the revelation about Mary having an affair with his brother Jo.

The next day Hump got up early and reported to work at Fox Studios as a contract player. To his painful regret, he learned that Kenneth was right. Not only was silent screen star Charles Farrell already signed to play the lead in *The Man Who Came Back*, Hump had been assigned the job of giving him diction lessons.

Farrell became a big star just as the screen learned to talk, and he’d been famously teamed with Janet Gaynor, especially in their big hit in the 1927 version of *Seventh Heaven*. Ironically, *Seventh Heaven* had been Helen Menken’s most successful play a few years previously.

Only a year younger than Hump, Charles Farrell was the Brad Pitt of his day, and with his well-developed physique, had been doing half-clothed scenes on film back in the silent era. When Hump met the hunk in 1930, Farrell was decades away from his future role as mayor of Palm Springs, a position he was elected to in the late Forties.

Kenneth MacKenna posing with Humphrey Bogart on Fox Studios' squash courts in 1930

Hump had seen the film, *Seventh Heaven*, and felt it represented the sappy peak of silent screen romanticism, a gauzy, idyllic romance combined with wholesome vitality. Farrell was wholesome all right, and, in fact, was one of the handsomest actors Hump had ever known. Hump was quickly learning that film actors were required to be more beautiful and photogenic than stage actors.

Even though Hump was forced to work with Charles for six weeks, he took an instant dislike to the star. “I hope you don’t teach me your fucking lisp,” Farrell said. “You sound like a fairy.”

Hump wanted to belt him one, but he feared that Farrell with his athletic physique might flatten him.

On the third day of voice coaching, Farrell became so angry at Hump that he crushed his cigarette out in Hump’s palm. Hump winced in pain and rushed into the bathroom to run cold water over his wound. “You fucking conceited bastard,” Hump said. “Fox contract or no Fox contract, I’m going to lick you for that.”

“I’m sorry,” Farrell said. “I didn’t mean to do it. I’m mad at Raoul Walsh for making me take diction lessons from some lisping New York actor.”

His hand still stinging from the cigarette burn, Hump came out of the bathroom. “You’ve gone too far.”

“I’m really sorry,” Farrell said. “I don’t know what came over me. When I did that cigarette number on you, I wasn’t trying to hurt you. I was standing up for all silent-screen actors who are losing their jobs to Broadway thespians.”

“Listen, I need this job, and I want it to work out for me,” Hump said. “Let’s get on with it. God knows someone should teach you to speak English.”

Farrell said, “I still feel sorry about that cigarette thing. The third lead, the juvenile role, hasn’t been cast yet. I think you’d be ideal. I know you wanted the lead, but third billing in the latest Gaynor/Farrell film ain’t bad.”

“You’d put in a plug for me?”

“It’s a deal.”

When Hump got back to Kenneth’s apartment that night, his actor friend was jubilant. “I just got a call from Raoul Walsh. He’s cast me in *The Man Who Came Back* after all.”

The news stunned Hump. “You mean Farrell’s out of the flick?”

“Not at all,” Kenneth said, his face radiant. “I’ve been cast in the supporting part of the juvenile lead.”

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At long last Hump was freed from having to give diction lessons to Farrell. Fox gave him his first major film role, a picture called *A Devil With Women*, based on a novel, *Dust and Sun* by Clements Ripley. It was to star Victor McLaglen and Mona Maris.

Charles Farrell

His brother-in-law, Stuart Rose, was on a train to Hollywood, bringing with him a series of plays and novels from the New York office, with recommendations of each of them as a possible film scenario. Kenneth had invited Stuart to stay at his apartment, with Hump agreeing to sleep on the sofa.

When Hump met Stuart at the railway station in Los Angeles, he was eager for news from New York. Stuart, though seemingly glad to see Hump, was not forthcoming with much information, as if deliberately concealing what he knew about what was going on back East.

Stuart and Frances had not visited the Bogarts in weeks and didn't know how they were doing. He'd not seen Mary Philips either. Since coming to Hollywood, Hump had written his wife only two letters, neither of which was answered.

In a taxi en route to Kenneth's apartment, Hump detected that something had gone seriously wrong in Stuart's marriage to his sister, Frances. It wasn't anything that Stuart specifically said. That he said almost nothing about Frances left the lingering suspicion that the marriage was on the rocks.

Finally, Hump decided to press the issue. "God damn it," he said. "I want to know. How are my sisters?"

Anger flashed across Stuart's face. "Okay, if you must know. Catherine has become a hopeless alcoholic and is sleeping with every guy in town. As for Frances, she grows more mentally unstable every month. The last time I talked to your dad about it, he held out the possibility that we might have to put her in an asylum."

"My God," Hump said.

"I don't want to talk about it now with Kenneth," Stuart said. "It's too painful. Before I go back east, I'll let you know everything. I figured you had enough on your mind trying to launch yourself at Fox."

Once upstairs, Kenneth and Stuart warmly embraced. Each man's face lit up at the sight of the other. Up to that point, Hump never knew that Stuart and Kenneth were any more than casual acquaintances. But they related to each other like two best friends bonded at the hip.

As if suddenly aware of Hump in the living room, Stuart turned to Hump. "I bet our boy Kenneth has to fight off the beautiful gals out here in Hollywood."

His eyes downcast, Hump headed for the kitchen to get himself a beer. "Something like that."

He heard the phone ring. When he returned from the kitchen, Kenneth told him that he had to report back to the set of *The Man Who Came Back* to re-shoot a scene.

After he'd dressed, Kenneth again embraced Stuart warmly and agreed to meet back at the apartment later when all three of them would go out on the town.

After Stuart showered and dressed, he came into the kitchen and joined Hump at the table, accepting a can of beer. “The publicity department at Fox called me, and they want to begin your buildup. Since the scar on your lip can’t be concealed on screen, we’ve got to invent a cover-up story.”

“I got it.” Hump said. “But we don’t want to implicate Belmont in this.”

“No we don’t,” Stuart said. “The Fox publicist I talked to thinks we can claim that you were injured by a flying wooden splinter from a bursting shell when your naval vessel, *Leviathan*, came under fire from a German U-boat.”

“Neat story,” Hump said. “If anybody checked, though, I saw no action in the war. The *Leviathan* never came under fire. You’re good at embellishing. Can’t you come up with a better story, one that can’t be checked?”

Stuart excused himself and made some business calls to Fox Studios. When he came back, he said, “I think I’ve got it. We’ll have you stationed in Portsmouth. The Navy had assigned you to take a handcuffed prisoner—let’s call him Johnny Ireland—from the naval station to a military prison forty miles away. Ireland, let’s say, had been arrested in Boston and charged with desertion. At one point as you’re changing trains, let’s have Ireland ask you for a cigarette. As you go to light it for him, Ireland raises up his handcuffed hands, smashing you in the face, damaging your lip. We’ll then say that Ireland made a run for it. With some skin on your upper lip hanging by a thread, you take out a .45 and shoot the man in his left buttock, grounding him. We’ll have some Navy doctor sewing up your lip. Badly.”

“That’s kinda cute,” Hump said. “I like the ring of it. Let’s go for it.”

That fantasy, conceived by Stuart late one afternoon in a small Hollywood apartment, became, in time, a Hollywood legend.

***

It was Friday night and all of Hollywood seemed to be having a good time except Hump. Mary had said that during their separation he was free to date. So far, he’d met no one.

Joan Blondell

He then remembered that bouncy blonde bombshell, Joan Blondell, with whom he’d appeared in that Ruth Etting flick, *Broadway’s Like That*. He searched through his papers until he found her number.

Feeling a bit shy, he went to the phone. It was probably a useless gesture. A woman as sexy as Joan probably had guys lining up at her door, especially on a big date night like Friday in Hollywood. “What the hell,” he said, deciding to ring her up anyway.

“Say hello to Miss Dallas, honey,” the expressive face with the pop eyes said to Hump as she pulled up in front of his apartment house to find him already waiting on the sidewalk. “Miss Dallas, Texas, and I’ve got the pictures to prove it.”

“Good to see you out here in Hollywood,” Hump said, leaning in to kiss Joan on the lips. “Here we are: Two stars of tomorrow.”

“Get in, handsome.” Her big smile and big blue eyes lured him into the passenger seat of her secondhand 1927&

Dodge, with its dented fenders and ripped canvas hood tied down with a rope to keep it from flapping. “As you can see, this ain’t no Gloria Swanson limousine,” Joan said.

She drove toward Santa Monica, where she knew a small and charming Italian restaurant where they could dine quietly. On the way there, he brought her up to date on what was happening—or not happening—to his career at Fox.

With a youthful exuberance lighting up her kewpie doll face, she told him about her own career. “I’ve been out here long enough to know that Warners has got me pegged as a brassy, gum-chewing, wisecracking blonde floozy. Better that than no work at all.”

“I hear that back East a lot of us thespian hacks are out of work,” he said. “They call it a depression.”

“Jimmy Cagney and me are going to try to make the world forget its troubles,” she said. “They signed us both to five-year contracts. He gets the big bills. I get the small change. But it’s a job. I’ll take any part they want me to play. The only thing I’m fighting is my name change.”

“I think Joan Blondell is a great name for a movie star,” he said. “What did the Warner friars come up with?”

“Inez Holmes.”

He burst into laughter and reached for a cigarette, offering her one.

“Don’t laugh too loud,” she said. “You don’t think Fox is going to let you keep Humphrey, do you? Bogart is okay, but Humphrey. I’m sure they’re going to change it to something like Dale or maybe Cary. What about Brad?”

“Hell with that,” he said. “It’s going to be Humphrey Bogart or nothing. Don’t let them rename you Inez Holmes. Warners will take enough from you. Hold onto that name, girl.”

Over dinner he got to know her for the first time, as they’d hardly gotten acquainted in New York. Before the spaghetti was served, he’d learned that her father, Ed Blondell, had been one of the original Katzenjammer Kids. Joan was a true “born in a trunk” show biz woman, reared on vaudeville stages, having made her first appearance at the age of three months when she was brought out before the lights as a “carry-on” in the play, *The Greatest Love*.

“I grew up on the stage,” she said. “I’ve taken more baths in train station toilets than anyone.”

“How did you get the nickname, Rosebud?” he asked.

“We toured everywhere,” she said. “Ed even took the Blondells to China. My big number was called ‘In a Rosebud Garden of Girls.’ Since then, only my intimates are allowed to call me Rosebud. But before the night is out, I hope you’ll be calling me that.”

She leaned over and planted a light kiss on his lips.

“Before this night is over, I hope your rosebud and I are on intimate terms,” he said.

“Now, now,” she said. “No need to get vulgar. Let’s keep it clean.”

The waiter arrived with the veal parmigiana just as she was telling him how she came to be teamed with Cagney. Hump had told her that he’d known Cagney in New York. “He was a drag queen appearing in cabaret revues back then,” he said.

She seemed startled to hear that, and Hump deliberately didn’t tell her how Cagney was offered a drag role.

“That big cheese, George Kelly, spotted Jimmy and me trying out this dance number,” she said. “He cast us in *Maggie the Magnificent*. Kelly thought Jimmy looked like a fresh mutt, and I, of course, the blonde hooker with the heart of gold.”

“I’m hearing real good things about the two of you,” he said, reaching for her hand. “I’m just a little bit jealous. Are you guys shacking up?”

“So?” she said, smiling. “Do we really know what Mary Philips is doing in New York tonight?”

“ *Touché!”*&

After dinner they went for a walk along the Santa Monica pier, noticing the boats rocking from side to side as the water was choppy. He spotted a drunk throwing up over a rail.

Bogart as a second-tier actor romancing Mona Maris in a movie that almost ended his career, *A Devil With Women*

“I’m living with Kenneth MacKenna,” he said.

“And I’m living with three broads and sharing the rent,” she said. “But there are ways.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Have you ever tried it in the back seat of a broken down Dodge?”

***

On the Fox lot Hump encountered his director for *A Devil with Women*, Irving Cummings, for the first time. Hump was startled to learn that if *A Devil With Women* became a hit, the studio planned to co-star him in an ongoing series of adventure stories with the film’s big-name star, Victor McLaglen. Cummings seemed very excited at this prospect but Hump managed only a faint smile.

The idea of playing second fiddle to McLaglen, or to any other actor, in an ongoing series of B pictures wasn’t part of Hump’s dream before he came to Hollywood. He found the prospect so dismal, and the plot line so inane, that secretly he hoped that the picture would fail. Ironically, if the film had been successful, its success would probably have typecast Hump into the& kind of marginal bit player whose consequences might have haunted him for the rest of his career.

Cummings put his arm around Hump and walked him over to McLaglen’s dressing room. “You might as well meet the star of the picture. If my gut instinct is right, you’ll appear with him in at least twelve films, and I’ll direct every one of them. The McLaglen/Bogart films will be my old-age pension.”

When Cummings introduced Hump to the British actor, McLaglen had just emerged dripping wet from the shower. At that point an aide summoned Cummings to the set, leaving Hump standing alone with a jaybird naked McLaglen.

“Fix yourself a whiskey, kid,” McLaglen said, reaching for a thick towel. “Pour one for me too, letting it fall from

the bottle into the glass like a horse pisses."

(top photo) Boxing champ "Sharkey McLaglen," and (bottom photo) his later incarnation as Victor McLaglen, Hollywood actor

Hump poured the actor a drink and said, "I'm happy to be working with you Mr. *Mack-loff-len*."

"That's *Muh-clog-len*," he said. "Since you can't pronounce my name, just call me Victor."

During their two-hour wait before they were due on the set, Hump got acquainted with this famous and rambunctious star who stood six feet, three inches. His hair was jet-black, and he had a twinkle in his blue-gray eyes. Hump became more comfortable after McLaglen put on his drawers.

The son of the Right Reverend Andrew McLaglen, a Protestant clergyman in South Africa, the young Victor was the eldest of eight brothers. He tried to fight in the Boer War by joining the Life Guards, but the Reverend McLaglen tracked him down and, drawing on his persuasive powers and his political connections, secured his release.

Heading for Canada, he worked only temporarily on a farm devoted mainly to turnips before running off to become a professional prizefighter. That was followed by a tour in circuses, vaudeville shows, and Wild West shows. In these shows, he was billed as a fighter who would take on all comers in the audience. Any young man who could last three rounds with McLaglen was paid $25. He toured with these shows from America to Australia. In Sydney he fought heavyweight champion Jack Johnson, the champ knocking McLaglen out after six rounds.

When World War I broke out, McLaglen signed up with the Irish Fusiliers and was sent to the Middle East. Eventually he became the Provost& Marshal for the city of Baghdad, responsible for the military police.

With his pugnacious nature, he had hoped to resume his boxing career after the war but ended up being cast in the *Call of the Road* in 1920. From that day on, he became a popular leading man in English silents.

By 1924 he'd been lured to Hollywood to appear in *The Beloved Brute*. One role followed another, from *Women and Diamonds*, also in 1924, to *Beau Geste* in 1926. His own glory came to him when he played Captain Flagg in *What Price Glory* ? in 1926.

Described as a "British-born Wallace Beery," McLaglen was a two-fisted man of action. Under Raoul Walsh's direction, McLaglen's appearance in the antiwar film was a smash hit at the box office. Audiences delighted in the ribald, gregarious interplay between Flagg and his sergeant, Quirt, as played by Edmund Lowe. Little did Hump know on that first meeting with McLaglen that Raoul Walsh, in about a year, would team McLaglen as Flagg and Edmund Lowe as Sergeant Quirt in a derivative flicker loosely inspired by *What Price Glory?*, *Women of All Nations*.

Hump himself would appear in that movie. No longer viewed as a candidate for a costarring role opposite

McLaglen, Hump suffered ninth billing in the screen credits.

In *A Devil With Women*, McLaglen was cast in the role of Jerry Maxton, a soldier-of-fortune at large in a banana republic in Central America. He played a womanizer, romancing "anything in skirts," especially the fair señorita, Rosita Fernandez, as interpreted by Mona Maris.

In contrast, Hump played a supporting role of the clean-cut but wastrelly rich nephew of the country's wealthiest man.

In the film, McLaglen's job involves ending the reign of terror of the notorious bandito, Morloff, who is terrorizing the countryside. McLaglen falls for a woman gun smuggler. Alone with Hump's character, he's lured into the enemy camp, where the two men narrowly escape a firing squad. Maris's character of Rosita provides a refuge for them. The bandits are enticed inside Maris's hacienda where one by one McLaglen, the former prizefighter, knocks them out in a series of one-punch fights.

Director Irving Cummings

At the end of the film, McLaglen is ready to claim Rosita as his girl, but she tells him that her heart belongs to Tom Standish, the role played by Bogart. Hump in his first major film gets the girl in the final reel.

Today it appears amazing that Hump was ever cast in another movie after the release of *A Devil with Women*. A financial and artistic failure, with a stupid plot and mismatched actors, it should have ended his career. Fox executives wisely decided not to continue pairing McLaglen with Bogart, abandoning forever the notion of continuing their original idea about the ongoing series of adventure films. Later in life Bogie threatened to buy up all copies of the film and have them destroyed.

The director, Irving Cummings, was particularly brutal to the neophyte film actor. "McLaglen is biting off your balls and chewing them up on screen. You come off like some rich little twerp repeating one of your Broadway 'Tennis, anyone?' parts."

"God damn it, that's what the role calls for," Hump protested.

"We've got to come up with some business to make your character real," Cummings said.

The director probably gave Hump the worst advice he could. A stage actor unaware of how the camera picked up the tiniest facial nuance, Hump set out to match the almost constant ear-to-ear grin of the burly looking, battered, and brutish British actor.

The writer, Robert Sklar, in reviewing the film, said it best: "Bogart plays a coltish fool, tossing his head, slapping his knees, and laughing with his mouth open so wide you can almost see his tonsils. He looks like an actor who is uncomfortable not only with his part, but also with his body. He employs a few stock gestures that he repeats again and again: arms awkwardly held in front of his body; then pushing back his jacket; then fists at the belt; then into his pockets; then back to the belt, arms akimbo. Smiles, arch delivery of lines, more smiles."

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Mona Maris with her superb deep-throat technique was taking such good care of Hump on the set that he hardly had enough left for Joan Blondell in the evening. Joan wasn't free every night, only when Cagney could escape from the clutches of his "Willie."

Stuart Rose had left Kenneth MacKenna's apartment to return to the Fox New York office and his unhappy bed with Frances. Hump sensed that Kenneth wanted him out of the apartment so he could conduct his private life with greater secrecy.

When the apartment next door became available, Hump eagerly signed a lease and set out to buy some secondhand furniture. He didn't want to purchase anything too expensive, because he feared that his days as a Fox movie star were about to come to an end.

Kenneth was supportive, but Hump sensed that his host was relieved to see him go. When a phone was finally installed in his own name, he called Joan, only to learn that she was seeing Cagney that night.

"Don't worry," she said. "I ran into an old friend of yours from New York. I gave her your number. You definitely won't be lonely tonight."

"Who is it?"

"And spoil the surprise?" she said. "Have fun, duckie." She put down the receiver.

About an hour later, the phone rang. With some reluctance, he picked up the receiver.

"This is Barbara Stanwyck," the voice said. "Could this be the one and only Humphrey Bogart?"

"Miss Stanwyck," he stammered, fearing at first someone was pulling a trick on him. "I'm honored that you'd call me."

"Joan gave me your number," Stanwyck said.

"She said you were an old friend of mine," he said. "We've never met. Of course, I'd be honored to take you out."

"Never met!" Stanwyck said, mocking him. "In Brooklyn where I come from, when a man fucks a woman, he's met her."

"You and I…" Hump was totally confused.

"I'm Ruby Stevens," Stanwyck said. "That hot Jazz Baby from the chorus line. You told me I was the greatest fuck of your life."

No longer the tough-talking little chorus girl from Brooklyn, Ruby Stevens—a.k.a. Barbara Stanwyck—was now a take-charge movie star. Within two hours of her call, Hump found himself dressing in his best suit.

Stanwyck had shown up at the apartment house as the driver of her own sleek new car. "I know you struggling actors drive around in junk-heaps, and I have my image to think of," she'd said on the phone.

When he opened the door and a stunningly beautiful and elegantly dressed Stanwyck was standing there, he searched for some telltale clue in her face that this ravishing beauty, who was aspiring to become the new queen of Hollywood, was the same chorus girl he'd allegedly bedded. He found none but enjoyed it when she hugged him and kissed him succulently on the lips. He was certain that if he'd ever gone to bed with a dame like this, he would never forget her.

In his apartment, he went into the kitchen to make a drink for both of them. Coming back into the living room, she gulped it down. "C'mon, let's go."

On the way downstairs, she claimed she'd met him one night when he'd stumbled drunk from Texas Guinan's place. "I was working the honky-tonk next door."

Barbara Stanwyck in 1930

Something jolted in his brain, but he wasn't certain. He vaguely recalled picking up some thin girl. Unlike the other ladies in the chorus line, she had few curves and her legs were less well-developed than the others. In years to come, no one could accuse Barbara Stanwyck of competing with the gams of Marlene Dietrich or Betty Grable. With her pretty auburn hair and her blue eyes, he had been attracted to her but he still didn't remember bedding her. Fortunately, there was no motorcycle patrolman on duty that night. She made it to the Cock & Bull for dinner in record time.

Before the first course arrived, she announced,& "I'm the biggest star in this whole fucking room."

"You're sure as hell a bigger star than me," he said. "I'm not even a starlet."

They ordered steaks from a handsome blond-haired waiter, who was more beautiful than either of them. With his eyes, he made it clear to each of them that, if asked, he would easily be their bed partner for the night.

Stanwyck gave the most "manly" order. "Just sweep it over the brush fire lightly," she told the waiter.

It was one o'clock before they staggered out of the tavern. Although technically, she was too drunk to drive, Stanwyck took control of the wheels of her car anyway. Without anybody saying anything, it was just assumed that she was heading back to his apartment building.

Hump fumbled drunkenly with the key at his own apartment door. "Once again I'm going to get to fuck Ruby Stevens, and I'm drunk as a skunk for the second time."

"When aren't you drunk?" she said with a touch of hostility in her voice. She took the key from him and opened the door right away, entering the apartment before he did.

When he staggered inside, she slammed the door and locked it. "Let's get one thing straight, Bogart. I've got to warn you. When I take you to bed, I run the fuck."

***

In Hump's apartment, it was three o'clock in the morning. Stanwyck was right: she ran the fuck. Twice she'd mounted him. Both times he'd lain on his back as she did her gymnastics over him. He wanted more of that kind of loving, although he didn't plan to abandon his missionary position with Joan Blondell.

Stanwyck stood at his soot-streaked window clad only in a brassière, not bloomers, and looked out into the night, although his view opened onto a brick wall. The room was dark. Propped up in bed, he could only make out the glow of her fiery hot cigarette. She smoked like she acted in movies—with gusto.

Until he would meet Joan Crawford, Stanwyck was the most ambitious actress he'd ever known. It made stars he'd appeared with on Broadway, including Mary Boland and Shirley Booth, look like gentle ladies-in-waiting at the court of some dowager queen.

As Bogie would say later in life, "Ruby Stevens was one tough, sassy broad, but she had class. She was hard-boiled yet soft and vulnerable, a free-spirited woman who took no crap from any man. She was also one of the sexiest women I've ever known."

Yet, even though she'd seduce many men in her life, including William Holden, Robert Wagner, Glenn Ford, and

Gary Cooper, Hump suspected that in her heart she was a lesbian. It didn't appear that passion drove her to men. Stanwyck once told him, "I save my real loving, my gentle side, for women.& With men, things immediately revolve around power games."

He bolted up in bed, "My God, I must be sobering up. It's come back to me. I remember you when you were dancing at the Strand."

"Great!" she said in a harsh voice. "So, you aren't a retard. That proves that even as a teenager I can make a lasting impression on a drunk."

"You were one of the Keep Kool Cuties," he said. "You did that number with Johnny Dooley. 'A Room Adjoining a Boudoir,' if memory serves."

"Finally, you know who I am," she said, "even though I had to fuck you twice to jar that pickled brain of yours."

"I miss the Twenties back in New York," he said when she crushed out her cigarette and returned to bed for some pillow talk. "Speakeasies, dirty dances, bootleg hooch, plunging necklines, red hot jazz, flapper clothes."

"And big-dicked New York men," she chimed in. "Don't forget those."

"I didn't know too many of those," he said. "None at all, as a matter of fact."

Since she couldn't sleep, she decided to keep him up too. "It was Mae Clarke who taught me the joy of lesbian love. But, as you also know from tonight, I'm not completely weaned from men either. I don't want to deny myself any pleasure. Too much was denied me as a girl. As a woman, I'll go after what I want. If I want to get fucked by a man, you know I can go for that the way I bagged you tonight. If I want a woman, I'll chase her down and get her. I've already set my sights on that blonde German bitch, Dietrich. Who knows? Marlene, and me might become a thing."

"Invite me over," Hump said. "From what I've seen of Dietrich I'd go for her in a minute. I saw Mae Clarke in *Nix on Dames*. I'd go for her too. You've got good taste. You and Mae still an item?"

"We still are," Stanwyck said. "Me and Mae saw you on Broadway in *It's a Wise Child*. She thought you were kinda cute."

"I'll take you up on that invitation for a three-way," he said.

"You've got a date," she said. "Now let's get some God damn sleep. You'll talk my head off and keep me up all night. I've got to look gorgeous on camera tomorrow."

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"I heard you taught Farrell how to talk. How about teaching me how to shit? I'm constipated."

Bogie with Spencer Tracy in *Up the River*

Those unlikely remarks launched a friendship that would last to the grave between Humphrey Bogart and Spencer Tracy.

Hump reached to shake the actor's hand on the Fox set of *Up the River*. "Call me Hump."

"What kind of nickname is that?" Tracy asked. "From now on and henceforth forever more you'll be known as

Bogie."

Stocky, round-faced and not particularly handsome, Tracy was hardly a Hollywood hunk like Farrell. A former Jesuit prep-school student who once wanted to be a priest, the Milwaukee-born actor was Bogie's age and, like Bogie, had joined the Navy in the final days of World War I.

Tracy had captured director John Ford's attention on Broadway playing Killer Mears, a convicted murderer in an all-male cast. Tracy was waiting on Death Row in the play *The Last Mile*. Ford thought that he'd be ideal in the role of a character called "St. Louis" in the 1930 prison drama, *Up the River*, opposite the Ziegfeld beauty, Claire Luce.

Bogie was cast as the fourth lead, playing Steve. He'd never met Ford but the director had seen him in a matinee performance of *The Skyrocket* and had decided Hump would be suitable for a role in *Up the River*. Ford later told Bogie in Hollywood that, "I know your wife was the star of that play. But you have the talent. Mary Philips is no actress." Hump decided to use Ford's assessment of her talent in his next big fight with his wife.

On the set, Tracy put his arm around Bogie and led him toward his dressing room. "Ford's in the front office this morning. So in the meantime, let's you and me go have some whiskey. You are a drinking man, aren't you?"

He smiled at Tracy. "I've been known to put away a few."

After the first drink, Tracy delivered the bad news. "There may be no picture. Ford is meeting right now with Winfield Sheehan. In case you're that green around here, Sheehan runs this joint."

"What's the matter?" Bogie protested. "We have contracts. They brought us out from New York."

"That doesn't matter to those fuckers," Tracy said. "Sheehan's been looking at the gross over at MGM on the *The Big House*."

"I saw it," Bogie said. "Great picture. Bob Montgomery and Wallace Beery did a fine job."

"Don't forget my old pal, Chester Morris," Tracy said. "He was in it too. Trouble is, they did too fine a job. Sheehan knows our script isn't half as good. Reviewers would unfavorably compare our picture with *The Big House*. Also, Sheehan has seen screen tests of both of us. And he doesn't want us in the picture, even if he decides to go ahead with it."

"Fuck this!" Bogie said. "I should go back to New York. I'm spinning my wheels out here in this palm pasture."

"Have another drink," Tracy said.

In spite of the bad news he reported, Bogie relaxed in Tracy's presence. The actor had a soothing effect on him. To Bogie, he seemed like a sports loving man's man, with a big head and a boar neck. It was Tracy's well-modulated voice that drew Bogie to him.

As the morning wore on and Ford still hadn't shown up, Tracy and Bogie used the opportunity to drink more whiskey and to get to know each other. Each actor seemed fascinated by the other. There was a restlessness—even a self-destructiveness—about Tracy that intrigued Bogie. He would later claim, "Spence carried around a lot of that Catholic guilt crap."

At that stage in their friendship, Bogie didn't have a clue as to what Tracy had to feel guilt about, but he was determined to find out. Surely it wasn't something as simple as cheating on your wife. All men in Hollywood did that. With all the temptation out here, how could they resist?

Earlier he'd learned that Tracy had been married to a minor Broadway actress, Louise Treadwell, for seven years. "It was love at first sight," Tracy said. Bogie also learned that she'd given birth to a deaf son named John. "His deafness makes me suffer a lot," Tracy said. "Somehow I blame myself. Good, healthy, Irish boy sperm isn't supposed to create a child with birth defects."

"It's not your fault," Bogie assured him as he accepted another whiskey. He feared that if they kept drinking like

this, and Ford did show up, having saved the picture from Sheehan, neither of them would be sober enough to appear on camera.

“I was the terror of Milwaukee,” Tracy said. “A tough Irish kid. I got into at least three fistfights a day, taking on the Sauerkrauts, the Pollack sausages, and the Dago pizza pies. I was in and out of fifteen—make that eighteen—different schools before I finished the eighth grade.”

“You got me beat on that count,” Bogie said. “But I was kicked out of Andover. My father wanted me to be a doctor.”

“Welcome to the club,” Tracy said. “My old man wanted me to be a priest. I still think about it. I used to dream of myself as Monsignor Tracy, Cardinal Tracy, Bishop Tracy. Get this: Archbishop Tracy. Every time I think of what I might have been, I get goose bumps. Of course, I could never have been celibate. Not me. If there’s a whorehouse in town, I quickly become the best customer.”

Ironically, although Tracy obviously never became a priest, he ended up playing one in four memorable performances— *San Francisco* in 1936 with Clark Gable; *Boy’s Town* in 1938, *Men of Boy’s& Town* in 1941, and a final appearance, *The Devil at Four O’Clock* in 1961.

Spencer Tracy

“Before I agreed to do this picture with you, I saw a rough cut of *A Devil With Women*,” Tracy said. “I know you used to do some stupid juvenile roles on Broadway. But I never caught your ‘Tennis, anyone?’ act. Of course, that fascist, McLaglen, steals the picture from you and that cocksucker, Mona Maris. You bullshit your way through the film. One hammy disguise after another. Some clowns call that acting. I don’t. If our damn flick ever gets made, watch how I do it. Don’t let the camera see you running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Underplay. That’s the way to do it.”

As insulted as he was by Tracy’s advice, Bogie listened to it. He’d never overplay a character again. “There’s at least one thing I like about the script. I get the girl.”

“So you do,” Tracy said, pouring himself another drink. “On the screen you do. In real life, I’ve already got Claire. She’s about to show up here any minute. The moment I introduce the two of you, I want you to get the hell out of here. I’m horny this morning, and that Ziegfeld cutie is one mighty fine piece of tail.”

As if on cue, there was a knock on the door. Tracy signaled Bogie to open it.

Standing on the stoop was a stunningly attractive woman, Claire Luce. He recognized her from her photographs. “Can a lady darken these chambers? Or is it strictly a stag party?”

“Come on in. I’m Humphrey Bogart.”

“Call him Bogie,” Tracy chimed in. “Everybody does.”

Bogie stepped back to make way for her.

“Haul that cute ass over here,” Tracy said to Luce. “Give your daddy a kiss. I’m in the mood for a big, wet, sloppy one.”

Excusing himself, Bogie left the dressing room, shutting the door tightly behind him. Walking toward the set, he

encountered for the first time an angry John Ford, the blood vessels on his head looking as if they were about to pop.

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“I’ve just got back from the front office,” John Ford said to Bogie. “C’mon, let’s go for a drive. I’ve got to clear my head.”

As Bogie headed for the studio parking lot with the director, Ford didn’t say a word but looked like doom and gloom had cascaded down around him.& Bogie suspected that he and Tracy had been fired from the cast and had been replaced with two other actors.

Director John Ford

“Get in,” Ford commanded when they reached his car. He drove out of the studio and headed up into the hills. Back in those relatively traffic-free days, you could actually drive in Los Angeles.

As Ford floored the accelerator and took dangerous curves, almost missing them, Bogie was terrified, his eyes popping out almost as much as Joan Blondell’s. Ford kept his eyes glued on the curvy highway. Bogie wondered if Sheehan had fired him too. He even flashed on the possibility that he was playing a secondary role in a suicide run, with Ford planning to take the car, Bogie, and himself over the mountain. That would be like a& real life version of *Thelma and Louise* decades before that film was eventually shot.

“For God’s sake, man, look out!” Bogie shouted at him. He figured he didn’t want to plunge to his death without putting up some protest.

Ford braked the car suddenly, coming to an abrupt stop at a belvedere. When Bogie got out of the car, he noticed that if Ford hadn’t applied that brake in time he would indeed have destroyed the car. Ford had allowed himself only a foot of land. Bogie looked back at him. “I’d call that a close shave.”

“I’m a bit of a daredevil when it comes to driving,” Ford said.

“Could have fooled me,” Bogie said, still shaken from the experience. He figured that it would be safer to walk back down that mountain than to get into the car again.

Ford got out of the car and stood next to a still-unnerved Bogie. “I always come up here to clear my head. It’s the most beautiful view in Los Angeles.”

This was the first time Bogie had looked at the view. It was indeed panoramic. The director had a keen eye for locale.

“I’ve got a cast and crew waiting back at Fox, but no script,” Ford said.

“But I’ve read the script,” Bogie said.

“It’s been junked,” Ford said, sucking in the fresh morning air. “Fox Studios has decided that we can’t compete with *The Big House*. I’ve been ordered to turn our film into a prison comedy.”

“That’s a novel idea,” Bogie said.

“Get this,” Ford said. “I start shooting tomorrow morning.”

“Without a script?” Bogie asked, dumbfounded.

“I’ll stay up late every night and come into the studio with enough pages written to shoot for the day,” Ford said. “The God damn film is only ninety minutes long. I can do it. You’ll see.”

“From what I’ve read, it’s a pretty grim story to turn into a comedy,” Bogie said.

“In its present shape, it’s a piece of junk,” Ford said, “but I can convert it into a convict comedy. Slapstick and sentiment, that’s the way to go. Instead of hardened criminals, you guys can just be naughty boys. It’ll be artlessly disarming.”

Bogie wasn’t convinced.

“Right now I’m writing a scene in my head,” Ford said. “In the new version some prisoners stage a theatrical production for the chain gang. In this all-male cast, some of the prisoners can dress in drag. I’ll get some discarded gowns from Mae West. Right now I can see Tracy and that actor, Warren Hymer—or is it Hymen?—dressing up like women. They’ll make a break for it dressed like gals. Run off to New England to thwart the evil villain’s plan. When that mission is accomplished, they’ll voluntarily come back to prison and turn themselves in, in time to win the annual baseball game.”

“Sounds like a laugh riot,” Bogie said.

“Let’s go for it,” Ford said. “But first I’ve got to ask you a question. Do you have a pair of balls on you?”

“I’d call them that,” Bogie said, “although I’m sure there are a lot of guys in Hollywood with a bigger pair.”

“What I mean is, do you like to fuck women?” Ford said. “Most of those Broadway sissies they send over from New York, guys like Kenneth MacKenna, had rather water the pansies in their garden than fuck women.”

“I do my share of fucking,” Bogie said. “Maybe more than most men.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” Ford said. “I’m taking you to Louise’s. It’s the best little whorehouse in the West. All the Hollywood stars go there. Louise has her pick of the most beautiful women in America. All the cute little milkmaids who get off the train here wanting to be stars end up as whores, and the best of them end up with Louise.”

“I could always use a good piece of ass,” Bogie said.

“Get in the car,” Ford said. “We’re off.”

Committing his life into Ford’s hands once again, Bogie reluctantly got in. Ford drove even worse and more recklessly down the mountain than he did going up it. But, finally, they arrived alive at Louise’s, a surprisingly elegant bordello.

Louise appeared to be over fifty but it was obvious that she’d been a beauty in her day. She kissed Ford on the mouth. “John and I go way back,” she said. “He’s one cowboy who sure knows how to take care of a lady.” She paused. “If memory serves.”

“Meet Humphrey Bogart,” Ford said. “He’s an actor out of New York. Who knows? He might become one of your best customers.”

“I hope so,” she said, looking Bogie up and down. “I’d take you on for free.”

“He wants something young and cute today, dearie,” Ford interjected.

“Maybe some other time,” Bogie said, kissing the aging madam on the cheek.

“Okay, boys,” she said. “I hope you like blondes, though. Last night I had a large group of clients from Argentina. Those horny bastards wanted only blondes. I had to order every gal in my joint to dye her hair both on top and down

below.”

Dawn Night, aka
Glenda Farrell

“Blondes will be just fine,” Ford said.

Within thirty minutes, Bogie found himself entering a small cubicle of a room. It was dimly lit. But there was enough illumination to accentuate the curves of a very voluptuous blonde lying nude on the bed, wearing only a pair of black stockings and emerald-green high heels. “Come on in, good looking, and lock the door.”

“I think I’ve died and gone to heaven,” Bogie said, feasting his eyes on her luscious body.

She introduced herself as Dawn Night.

“That sounds like a real good name,” he said, as he unbuckled his trousers.

After their lovemaking, she became confidential. “My name is not really Dawn Night,” she confessed. “I just made that one up. I’m keeping my real name a secret for screen billing. I’m going to become the biggest female star ever to set foot in Hollywood.”

He’d certainly heard that line a lot from his previous encounters with chorus gals, except in New York the women always said “Broadway” instead of “Hollywood.” “What’s your real name? I won’t tell. That way, when I see your name up on the marquee, I’ll know to go in to see your picture.”

“Okay.” She giggled again. “If you promise not to tell.”

“Trust me, I won’t tell.”

“Not so fast,” she said. “Are you sure I can trust you? I mean, you’re an actor and everything.”

“Sure I know how to keep my lip zipped,” Bogie said. “I sorta dig you, and I’d like to see you again.”

“But not in this place. I won’t be working here much longer. I’ve appeared on Broadway. I’m just picking up some quick cash. I’m not really a whore.”

“Coming from some other gal I’d doubt that. But I believe you.”

“I’ve already made one film,” she said. “It was just a small part and I went unbilled. But I’ve got this great friend. She’s an actress and she’s gonna be real big. She’s helping me break into Hollywood.”

“What’s your friend’s name?” he asked. “Maybe I’ve heard of her.”

“Joan Blondell.”

He was startled but said nothing, masking his shock.

“Only the other day, Mervyn LeRoy was in here with me,” she said. “You know, the director? He’s promised to put me in a big gangster film. He said it’s going to be the biggest film of the year. It’s going to star Edward G. Robinson, and it’s going to be called *Little Caesar*. Robinson is going to play Rico Bandello, a two-bit hoodlum. Even if he is a star, you can have Robinson. When LeRoy casts me in the movie, I’m going to chase after the co-star.

That handsome hunk, Doug Fairbanks Jr., is going to play Tony Massara, Rico's best friend. Before the filming is over, I'm going to take Doug boy away from that whore, Joan Crawford."

"I think a lot of women—maybe a lot of men, too—would like to take that stud away from Crawford. Now tell me your name."

"Glenda Farrell," she blurted out. "Remember that name. Me and you will no doubt appear in some pictures together. You see, I'm going to become Queen of Warner Brothers."

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On the set of *Up the River* that morning, Bogie sat having bitter black coffee with his co-star, Claire Luce. Even though she was Tracy's temporary mistress, Bogie was plotting to see if he could take Luce away from his newly acquired friend. It was the beginning of a one-upmanship that would last until Bogie's death.

In the film, Luce played "Judy," an innocent young girl who was framed by a crooked stock salesman and sent "up the river."

Many chroniclers of Bogie's life have confused Claire Luce with Clare Boothe Luce, (1903-87), the talented, wealthy, beautiful, and controversial New Yorker, best remembered as a congresswoman (1942-46) and playwright who penned *The Women*. She was the first female American ambassador when Dwight Eisenhower appointed her to her post in Italy in 1952. The "Luce" was added to her name when she married magazine tycoon, Henry R. Luce, of *Time-Life-Fortune*.

A much more modest achiever, Claire Luce, the actress sitting across from Bogie, launched herself as a cigarette girl in Rochester, New York, and worked her way to Broadway as a chorus girl. She ended up having an affair with Flo Ziegfeld who cast her in *The Follies of 1927*.

As they sat idly by, Luce told Bogie that she'd fallen madly in love with Tracy and that he had promised to divorce his wife and marry her. Even though Bogie had just launched his friendship with the actor, he suspected that Tracy had used the same line on many a chorus gal.

From where he sat talking to Luce, Bogie spotted John Ford striding onto the set. Bogie would later claim that John Wayne learned his distinctive walk on screen by imitating John Ford.

Ford looked angry and hung over, as he'd been up all night trying to turn "this fucker of a prison drama into a God damn comedy."

Both Bogie and Luce were relieved to learn that they wouldn't have to face Ford's ire that day. Ford's assistant, Tom Hubbard, had told them that they weren't scheduled to go on camera. Nevertheless, Hubbard said that they had to appear at the Fox studio early every morning throughout the entire shoot in case Ford decided to use them.

Ziegfeld's "Folly"
Claire Luce with Humphrey Bogart

"As long as I get paid," Bogie said.

After a brief conference with Ford, Hubbard approached Bogie and Luce with a concerned look on his face. Always the curious one, Bogie wanted to know what was the matter. Hubbard called Bogie aside, as he didn't want to speak in front of Luce.

“The first scene involves Tracy,” Hubbard said, once he was out of earshot of Luce. “And he hasn’t shown up this morning. We know where he lives. The front office has a phone number for him. The phone rings off the wall. Ford said that if Tracy doesn’t& show up on the set by three o’clock at the latest, he’s casting Jimmy Cagney in the part. It seems that Cagney is free for two weeks and can play the role.”

“God damn it,” Bogie said. “This is Spence’s first starring role in a feature film. If he fucks this up, he’s finished in Hollywood. Word will spread like wildfire. I know he drinks a lot.”

“Would you believe that if the Pacific Ocean were alcohol, Spence would have it drained dry in a weekend?”

“Maybe I’d better try to find him,” Bogie responded.

Back in those days of lax security, all one had to do was arrive at a hotel’s reception desk, ask for a patron’s room number, take the elevator upstairs, and knock on the door. That is exactly what Bogie did when he arrived in the lobby of the Hollywood Plaza.

At room 401, Bogie pounded on the door. At first there was no answer. He pounded again. Finally, the door was opened just a bit as it was still bolted to a link chain.

“I’m Humphrey Bogart,” he said. “I’ve got to get in touch with Spencer Tracy. I’ve come over from Fox.”

Although he couldn’t see too well, it sounded like a young man behind the door. “Oh,” he said. “I’ve heard of you. You’re co-starring with Spence in his movie.”

“Let me in,” Bogie demanded in his most forceful voice.

“I guess it’s okay,” the young man said.

“I’m his friend,” Bogie said. “Here to help him.”

The young man unfastened the latch and let Bogie into the dark room. The light switch came on. Before Bogie stood one of the most beautiful young men he’d ever seen in his life. He was definitely movie star material himself. He wore only a pair of white boxer shorts, revealing his trim athletic build.

“I’m Lew Ayres,” the semi-nude man said. Suddenly, Bogie realized who this boyishly handsome man was. Everyone in Hollywood was talking about his success in the role of Paul Baumer in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Lewis Milestone’s World War I masterpiece based on Erich Maria Remarque’s novel detailing the horrors of war and its devastating effect on fighting men.

Lew Ayres

There was talk that the part, his third appearance on camera, might win him the Academy Award for poignantly portraying a young schoolboy thrown into the frenzy of war. In the film he was supposed to be bewildered by his loss of innocence. Bogie wondered how innocent Ayres could possibly be after a night with Tracy.

Without knowing the details, the evidence against Tracy was enough to convict. His new friend was a bisexual. Like all the great “womanizers” of Hollywood that Bogie knew or would know& in the future, from George Raft to Errol Flynn, these Romeos seemed to go for boys on the side.

Ayres headed across the suite’s living room and put on his trousers and an undershirt. Barefoot, he came back over to Bogie. “Spence was doing fine last night,” he said, “but as the night wore on, he drank more and more. He’s in

the bedroom there sprawled out totally drunk. I've been unable to get him up to go to work. I know he's due on Ford's set."

Bogie crossed the living room and looked into the small, almost alcove-like bedroom. There with the morning light streaming in, Spence lay sprawled nude near the edge of the bed, his mouth open. He was breathing heavily and his head fell over the edge of the mattress and seemed to hang in midair.

"Lew, my good man," Bogie said, turning around to confront Ayres. "Call room service for a big pot of strong black coffee. This here movie star, Mr. Spencer Tracy, and his juvenile lead are heading for the shower. I'm going to wake this drunken sod up if it kills me."

"You think you can?" a hesitant Ayres asked. "I've tried everything already."

"It won't be just the cold shower and the bitter black coffee," Bogie said. "My father's a doctor in New York. I drink a lot myself, and I've stumbled in at five o'clock in the morning when I was due somewhere at eight-thirty. Dad has these pills."

"What kind of pills?" Ayres asked.

"You know I'm not sure they have a name, and I have no idea what's in them. All I know is that when I force Spence here to swallow two of these little mother-fuckers, we're going to have him bouncing on John Ford's set with more energy than those two dancing fools, George Raft and Jimmy Cagney, combined."

When Bogie finally returned to his dressing room after a lengthy ordeal associated with awkening Tracy and hauling him back, in time for his scene, to the set, he spotted Ford's assistant walking purposefully toward him. "The front office has got another script for you," Hubbard said. "You're to start work as soon as Ford is finished with you."

Body and Soul
Humphrey Bogart with Charles Farrell

"What picture?" Bogie asked.

"The thing is called *Body and Soul."*

"Who's got the lead?" Bogie asked. "And what's my billing?"

"You'll get fourth billing," Hubbard said. "The star is Charles Farrell."

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Long before *Vanity Fair* "outed" Spencer Tracy in the post-millennium, and years before his homosexual dalliances became privately known to the likes of such gossip mavens as Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, Bogie was privy to his close friend's darkest secrets.

After the first day's shoot of *Up the River*, Tracy and Ayres invited Bogie to their suite for drinks, to be followed by dinner. From the first, Bogie took an enlightened view about their relationship. He didn't exactly encourage it but he didn't condemn it either. "I say if it feels good, go for it," Bogie told both men as he downed some of their whiskey. "It's no one's God damn business but your own."

"But there's the matter of my faith, my beliefs," Ayres protested. "I don't even like to look myself in the mirror in the morning."

“That’s a crock of ….” Bogie hesitated, searching for a word. He detested the use of the word “shit.” “That’s bull. Frankly, you guys are no different from anybody else I’ve met in Hollywood. Take myself, for instance. Nobody likes a broad better than I do. I’ve even had thoughts about taking Claire Luce from you.” He smiled at Tracy to indicate he wasn’t really serious. “But I’ve done some weird stuff on occasion. Name an actor on Broadway or in Hollywood who hasn’t.”

Tracy leaned back, his face and demeanor radiating calm in spite of any inner turmoil. “Bogie, unless you were born Catholic, unless you seriously wanted to be a priest, you can’t understand Catholic guilt.”

“Whatever the fuck that is,” Bogie said.

“I understand it,” the youthful Ayres chimed in. “It’s our faith that drew me to Spence. We actually met in church, not some bar.”

Bogie looked at Ayres with that keen eye he used to appraise someone he was meeting for the first time. “I must say, Spence old boy, you sure know how to pick ‘em. Lew here is prettier than most gals I know. Put some lipstick on him and a dress and I’d go for him myself.”

“All of this seems like one big joke to you,” Ayres said, confronting him.

“I didn’t mean to get your feathers ruffled,” Bogie said. “But I wish you guys would lighten up. I’m just trying to be a supportive friend to the both of you.”

Although Bogie’s friendship with Tracy would remain steadfast, even when they were fighting over a potential screen billing in a co-starring venture that never happened, or when they were up for the same coveted role, their love for each other never wavered, jealousy or not.

It was two weeks later on the set of his next picture for Fox, *Body and Soul*, that the director, Alfred Santell, introduced him to the film’s two leading ladies, each of them gorgeous, charming, and at least in his opinion, available.

They were Elissa Landi and Myrna Loy. He didn’t know which woman to look at first: the screen vamp Myrna Loy or the scion of the Habsburg Empire, Elissa Landi. The problem was solved for him, when Santell called Loy to the set for a scene with the picture’s star, Charles Farrell. Bogie hoped that Farrell would remember some of his speech training, but seriously doubted if he would.

Landi, in Loy’s absence, wanted to discuss the characters they’d be playing, Bogie was struck by her regal bearing, cultured voice, and aristocratic beauty.

Rumor had it that Landi was the secret granddaughter of “Sissi,” the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, the beautiful but strong-willed Bavarian-born wife of Emperor Franz Josef, who presided over the final years of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

“How should you be addressed?” Bogie asked, being a little provocative with her because he didn’t believe in aristocratic titles.

Landi took him seriously. “Countess would be fine.” As he was to learn later, the actress wasn’t a real countess. She’d just assumed the title from her mother’s second marriage to an Italian nobleman, Count Carlo Zanardi-Landi.

Known for having made a number of British silent films, Landi came to the attention of Fox when she’d appeared on Broadway in *A Farewell to Arms*.

“Just between you and me, I think this flicker we’re making is nothing but an old-fashioned hack melodrama,” Landi said. In addition to being an actress, Landi was also an acute critic and would go on to write several novels. Together, they tried to make sense out of some dumb, ill-conceived plot by Jules Furthman based on an unproduced and unpublished play called *Squadron.*

After reading the script, another tiresome piece about “The Great War,”& Bogie told Landi, “At least I know why

the play was never staged."

"As I read it, I'm thought to be this German spy named Pom-Pom, but it turns out that Myrna is the real German spy."

"It doesn't really matter," he said. "I understand that Fox is going to open it with a Mickey Mouse cartoon, a Fox Movietone, even a Hearst Metrotone newsreel, and a Mickey Mouse stage act. After all that, no one will notice what a stinker it really is."

"In the script, you're married to me for only four days before sailing, always wearing your aviator uniform, to France, where you pursue other women," Landi said. "If you were married to me in real life, you'd get such a workout you'd have no time for other women."

(left photo) Countess Elissa Landi with
(right photo) Myrna Loy

"Promises, promises," he said. "Since we're married—it says so right here in the& script—I guess that gives me conjugal rights."

"Perhaps," she said enigmatically. "You're rather cute." Getting up, she kissed him and excused herself, heading for her dressing room.

Later, when Farrell invited Bogie to lunch in the Fox commissary, Bogie accepted reluctantly and only because the actor was the star of the picture. There was no mention that Farrell had double-crossed him and pushed Kenneth for the juvenile lead in *The Man Who Came Back*. Perhaps Farrell had forgotten all about it.

As he was leaving Farrell's table, Bogie spotted Elissa Landi coming toward him. "I was told I could find you here," she said. "At 7:30 tonight, I'm giving a dinner party. Black tie. There's been a last-minute cancellation from Chaplin. Please, please fill in for him. I have to have another man to make my dinner party work. Would you pick up Myrna Loy?"

"Sure," he said, wondering where he could come up with a tuxedo on such short notice. "I didn't have anything planned for tonight."

She gave him addresses and some instructions, then hurried off. He was a bit excited to be attending his first formal dinner party in Hollywood.

After renting a well-worn tux for three dollars on Hollywood Boulevard, he drove back to his apartment house.

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As Bogie drove to pick up Loy to take her to Landi's formal dinner, he fantasized about all the big names who'd be there. Loy was beautifully dressed and waiting out on her front porch when Bogie pulled up at her house. She scanned the sky. "I think it's going to rain tonight."

"That wasn't the forecast," he said.

Noting an ominous cloud rising in the distance, she said, "We Montana belles don't need a radio forecast to tell us when a storm is coming."

In her black velvet gown, she looked lovelier than she did in the movies where she was most often cast as an Asian vamp. She was dressed with a high collar, although he suspected that most of the other women at the dinner would

be in plunging *décolletage*.

Noting that he was observing her high-button neckline, she said. “I have to wear this. The other night at a party, Clark Gable and his wife, Ria, offered me a ride home. Clark walked me to my door. As I was fumbling for my key, he gave me a monkey bite. His teeth marks are still on me. Our director, Santell, was furious when he saw that I had been branded like a Montana cow. Naturally, my first appearance on screen called for me to appear in a low-cut gown.”

“I hear that when Gable walks into a room,” Bogie said, “It isn’t a question of if a woman will go to bed with him. It’s a question of which one he’ll choose for the night.”

“Something like that,” she said.

As he drove toward Landi’s home, he said, “I’m real honored that you’re going out with me. If I can believe everything that Louella Parsons writes, I’ll be part of a long lineup of distinguished beaux. Let me see. Rudolph Valentino, John Barrymore, Gary Cooper.”

“I know all those men, of course, but there’s no romance,” she said.

“I heard that you and Cooper grew up on the same street together back in Helena,” he said.

“We did indeed.”

“Surely you must have played doctor,” he said.

“Not that,” she said. “But I did sneak off with him one late afternoon into the cellar at our house. We didn’t conduct any medical examination, however. We were looking for Mother’s last jar of apple jelly.”

As he drove and talked to her, he found that she was a witty, intelligent, and also beautiful woman. If anything, directors hid her true beauty on the screen with gaudy makeup, usually trying to turn her into an Oriental temptress.

“You look as American as blueberry pie,” he said. “Why do they always make you Chinese?”

“Beats me,” she said. “I’m just a Montana cowgal. Up against Anna May Wong in that flick, *The Crimson City*, I looked about as Chinese as Raggedy Ann. I’ve played Burmese, Chinese, a couple of Tijuana vamps, an islander from the South Pacific, and a hot-blooded Creole. The beat goes on. Darryl Zanuck just can’t believe that I can play a straight part, and I don’t know why.”

As he pulled into the driveway of Landi’s home, he was amazed at the parade of big and expensive black cars. His battered vehicle looked pathetic. Loy seemed unconcerned with such trivia. She was not a woman of pretensions.

In the golden light from Landi’s porch, he was awed by Loy’s copper-haired beauty and her delicate, porcelain-white skin. “Once we get inside that party, we’ll probably have no more chance to talk,” she said in her marvelous voice, which sounded like a hoarse flute.

Her sleek, sassy nose captured his attention. He’d never seen a nose like that, and he thought it was the cutest thing. Impulsively he leaned over and kissed her on the nose.

Little could he have known that in just a few short years, hordes of women across America would be going to the offices of plastic surgeons with pictures of the star, demanding that a “Myrna Loy nose” be carved for them as well.

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The party was in full swing when Bogie escorted Loy into the foyer where Landi was waiting to give each of them a kiss on their lips and welcome them to her home. She wore a stunning example of Parisian *haute couture*, an emerald-colored silk gown with a large emerald necklace, no doubt looted from the royal treasury of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As predicted, Loy was swept away, talking to various people she knew. The graceful hostess, Landi introduced Bogie to a circle of her friends clustered around William Randolph Hearst and his mistress, Marion Davies. In front of the other guests, Hearst chastised Marion for ordering another drink. She ignored his command.

The press tycoon returned to relating stories about his annual tour of European spas and was telling the group that while in Germany he'd attacked the Treaty of Versailles in an interview he gave to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. "I claimed it subjected the Teutonic peoples to the domination of non-German European powers, especially France. If there is one country I loathe above all others, it's France." He looked cautiously around the room. "I hope there are no Frenchman here tonight."

As Bogie made eyes at Davies and the blonde courtesan/actress winked at him, Hearst was reporting on yet another trip he'd made.

Finding Hearst a little too pompous for his tastes, Bogie puckered his mouth in a false kiss to Marion, but only when the media baron wasn't looking.

Some members of the English colony living in Hollywood were at the party. One of them was Basil Rathbone, whom Bogie had met during his appearance with Helen in the lesbian play, *The Captive*.

The two actors reflected briefly, with a tinge of bitterness, on how the New York police had shut down this play because of its strong lesbian theme. "God, if we'd been allowed to continue in that play, we would have been a *cause célèbre* all over America. Every paper in the country featured our predicament. We would have been sold out for months."

"Helen certainly did a lot for the lesbians of America," Bogie said. "The last I heard, Helen was still getting letters from the Sappho crowd from everywhere. Young women still send her slave bracelets. And most ironic of all— and probably missing the point completely— the deans of several women's colleges wrote thanking her for warning their students about 'the dangers of a reprehensible attachment.'"

"I was the one who suggested that Helen wear that ghastly white makeup," Rathbone said. "I thought it would convey the severe physical toll a woman must pay for having such 'perverse' thoughts about other women."

Both men laughed at that. "And the violets?" Bogie asked. "Throughout the play, we never saw Helen's pursuer, Madame d'Aiguines. But Helen's character was always getting nosegays of violets."

"We did some research on that," Rathbone said. "Sappho wrote about 'diadems of violets' on the Isle of Lesbos in the Seventh Century B.C."

"I hear *The Captive* and those damn violets have started a fad," Bogie said. "It's the fashion now for women in New York and Hollywood – I'm assuming there are no lesbians in the Middle West – to send violets to each other as a sign of their love." To his dismay, Bogie suddenly spotted the approach of an English actor he'd rather avoid.

Bogie was a bit chilly when introduced a second time to Ronald Colman,& remembering with bitterness how his screen test was compared unfavorably to that of the English actor's when they both competed for the male lead opposite Lillian Gish in *The White Sister.*

The talk was of the latest news about George Bernard Shaw, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Grace Moore, Irene Castle, Elsa Maxwell, and Daisy Fellowes. Knowing none of these people, except by their reputation, Bogie grew bored and wandered off.

In a city famed for grand entrances, the latest arriving guest was creating a sensation. All eyes in the room focused on the foyer. Dressed in a man's tuxedo, a blonde goddess stood under Landi's Viennese crystal chandelier, being welcomed by Landi, who kissed her on the mouth.

Right then and there Bogie decided that he was going to divorce Mary and propose marriage to this sultry, alluring Venus de Milo. Her escort was some foreign-looking man, perhaps German.

Bogie's fantasy woman was heading across the room in his direction. He virtually stood in her pathway.

Coming up only two feet from him, she smelled of the most exotic perfume. The scent wasn't overpowering but had great subtlety, a sensation for the nostrils.

He was convinced that her smile was the most provocative since the dawn of time.

"I'm told that God has a talent for creating exceptional women," he said, staring into eyes bluer than any alpine lake on a summer day.

"H-e-l-l-o," she said in her German-accented voice. "You are in my way. Do I have to kiss you or fuck you to make you move?"

"For now, I'll settle for a kiss," he said, standing up to her with more bravado than he actually possessed. His knees were shaking.

"Your wish is granted," she said, leaning in to give him a quick kiss on the lips. The four wettest lips in Hollywood, male and female, exchanged body fluids. He felt the flicker of her tongue. "Since the entire room is watching, including my very jealous director, that is all for now. Catch me later." She nodded her head at some people she knew across the big room and headed in their direction.

Marlene Dietrich

As he passed by, Josef von Sternberg glared at Bogie. Bogie felt that he'd just blown his chance to get cast opposite the star in any of her future movies.

Before stepping down into the sunken living room, she paused and looked back at him. "Not bad," she said, her tongue darting out ever so slightly as if to taste his kiss, which still lingered on her lips.& "What is your name?"

"Humphrey Bogart," he said.

"Your studio will change that," she predicted. "And, of course, you know who I am. *Marlene Dietrich*. I could be no one else but me."

He watched her go, as von Sternberg followed. Bogie's heart was beating faster, as he'd just fallen in love. He feared that he'd have to join a long line of suitors, both male and female, forming on her left and right.

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At 1pm on the afternoon of the following day, seated with Myrna Loy and his hostess of the night before, Bogie ordered a plate of ham and eggs in the Fox commissary. Both Loy and Bogie had thanked Landi profusely for inviting them to her dinner party the previous evening.

He'd learned that Landi was an avid equestrian. He told her that "second to sailing," he preferred horseback riding better than anything. After saying that, he smiled awkwardly, looking first at Landi, then at Loy, deciding they were two of the most beautiful women in Hollywood. "Of course, there *is* something I like even better than horseback riding or sailing."

Both women laughed. Loy affectionately stroked his cheek. It was just a flash, and it was quickly concealed, but Landi shot Loy a look that Bogie definitely interpreted as jealousy.

For the second time that morning, he was flattered by a female appraisal of him. Not knowing which woman to ask out first, the issue was solved when Loy went to the powder room to take the shine off Hollywood's cutest nose. After she'd gone, Landi said, "I'm going riding in the morning. If you want to drop by my house at six o'clock,

we'll head over to the stables."

"That's a bit early," he said, smiling at her, his eyes twinkling in anticipation, "but I'll be there. Maybe a little hung over. Bleary-eyed or not, I'm ready to race you."

She got up from the table to report back to the set. "You'll find, Mr. Bogart, that your horse can easily overtake mine."

Bogie spotted Loy returning from the powder room. This woman of quick wit showed her acute sensitivity when she looked first at Landi, then at him. "I'm afraid I might have intruded on something."

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High in the Hollywood Hills, Bogie and Landi brought their horses to rest at a shady spot beside a stream. It was one of those idyllic places that makes a New Yorker glad that he's moved to the West Coast.

Later, they were to learn from a stable hand that they'd stopped at the same spot where the Sheik, Valentino, used to take the screen vamp, Gloria Swanson, to make love to her.

On that far-away morning, as he got to know Landi, he decided then and there she was like no actress he'd ever met on Broadway, in Chicago, or in Hollywood.

Since she was illegitimate, he didn't think she wanted to talk about her relationship with Elizabeth, the Empress of Austria and the Queen of Hungary. To his surprise, he found that was about all she wanted to talk about. After all, "Sissi," as the queen was called, was one of history's most fascinating women, and Landi used her constantly as a role model.

"Sissi is something to aspire to," she said. "A fairy-tale princess and a liberated woman at the same time. Liberated I am, as you'll soon discover. Becoming a princess is not out of my reach."

"How do you plan to go about that?" he asked a little skeptically. "The Habsburg dynasty ended after World War I. There's no empire left—not even a throne."

"Oh, I won't have an empire to preside over like my grandmother, but I will become the biggest star in Hollywood. When that happens, I think many princes around the world will request my hand in marriage. It is not inconceivable for a Hollywood star to marry royalty and become a princess herself."

"A bit far-fetched," he said, "but I could see that happening."

"Sissi was always a dieting fanatic and an expert equestrian," she said. "You've seen this morning when I beat you in our race what a horsewoman I am. As far as the diet is concerned, I follow Sissi's regime, but I don't go on hunger diets like she did trying to obtain that elusive sixteen-inch waist. I eat exactly as Sissi did: a moderate portion of raw steak daily, a glass of milk, and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice."

"I'll have to try that," he said. "Or else convert you to my diet of ham and eggs."

"How grotesque," she said. "All that animal fat. Sissi also wanted to be a poet modeling herself after Heinrich Heine, whose work she adored. I too will write a great book and win many literary honors. Like Sissi, I too will become an inveterate traveler and see the world, attracting adoring crowds wherever I go. Everyone will want to see the beautiful princess, don't you agree?"

"I'm enjoying seeing the beautiful princess right now, even before she's crowned."

She obviously liked the sound of that, and her porcelain-like arms reached out for him.

"I've never been particularly intimate with royalty before," he said.

"As you seduce me," she said, "I'm going to imagine that I am the young Elizabeth hauled to the bedchamber of the

emperor, Franz Josef, I am only sixteen. He is much older. He rapes me on our wedding night. I'm a virgin."

"I've played a few parts in my day," he said. "But never a rapist emperor." He hugged her closer to him. "I think it's a role I can get into."

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In Landi, Bogie found a woman who was spectacularly satisfying, thereby inspiring thoughts that he should divorce Mary Philips and become deeply involved with Landi, despite the fact that he couldn't give her the fairy kingdom she wanted to reign over as queen. Before four o'clock came on Sunday morning, in her lavish bed, he'd promised her a different kingdom, based on the possibility of their joint reign as the King and Queen of Hollywood.

Although she'd remained tactful, responding passionately to his lovemaking, his comment provoked her first put-down. "It's in my destiny that I'm going to reign as the queen of Hollywood, I just know it. But I've heard from our director, Santell, that the future king of Hollywood won't be our star, Charlie Farrell, or even George O'Brien. I think they carry the stigma of the Twenties with them. John Gilbert is through. Santell claims it'll be one of these up-and-coming rugged he-man types like Gary Cooper or Clark Gable."

Her comments immediately diminished his erection. He turned over with his back to this empress wannabe and fell into a deep sleep.

When he awakened at eleven o'clock Sunday morning, he found her gone without a note. Her fat German maid with a Brunhilde bosom told Bogie, "Miss Landi has gone for a Sunday drive down to Laguna with Mr. Basil Rathbone. She said I should offer you breakfast before I sent you on your way. She made it clear that she doesn't want you here when she gets back."

"Tell Princess Landi thanks for a good time," he said, storming out the door in anger although the ham and eggs the maid was cooking smelled mighty good.

Back at his apartment, a call came in from George Raft, who told him he'd arrived in town and was staying at the Mark Twain Hotel on Wilcox Avenue. He wanted Bogie to meet him in the lobby at eight that night

"It'll be good to see someone from New York," Bogie said. "I'm homesick."

Raft was one Yankee dancer/actor who hadn't gone Hollywood. In black tie he was sitting in an armchair by a potted palm in the lobby of the Mark Twain Hotel, waiting for Bogie to pick him up. The beltline of his trousers seemed to come up to his armpits. He looked like he belonged, not on Wilcox Avenue, but on the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street, waiting for a blonde babe to show up.

Bogie too was in black tie, having never returned the tux he'd rented for the Landi dinner party. He figured he'd go into the shop tomorrow and buy the damn thing.

Raft jumped up from his chair and rushed to greet him. He seemed genuinely glad to see a familiar face from back East. "The prospect of a steak dinner with you brought joy to my heart."

"You're looking good, George," Bogie said.

"So are you, Hump, bigtime movie star."

"Out here they call me Bogie."

"So be it. Out here and back East they still call me George Raft. The one and only."

He glanced at his watch. "We've still got time before dinner. "Let's go up to my room for a drink."

Taking the elevator to the top floor, Bogie was ushered into Raft's cluttered room, which smelled of stale cigarette butts and booze.

“Don’t let these sharp clothes fool you,” Raft said. “I came out here with a big bank roll. Lost all of it at the track. I ain’t got but five bucks in my pocket. Can you lend me something till I get back on top again?”

“Sure thing, old pal,” Bogie said. “I just got paid today. Seven-hundred and fifty bucks. I’ll split it with you for old time’s sake.”

“Thanks, big guy,” Raft said. “I’ll owe you one for this. George Raft never forgets when someone does him a favor.”

“If you’ve got no money, how are you eating?”

“An old friend of mine, Ben Lieberman, owns the Angelus Drugstore downtown. He’s letting me run up a tab until my luck gets better. I’m getting fucking tired of BLTs.”

“That steak you mentioned will make up for it tonight.” He accepted the drink from Raft, bolting it down straight, as Raft poured him another whiskey. “So, good looking, how’s your love life?”

“A lot of gorgeous dames out here, even more than in New York,” Raft said. “They’re throwing themselves at me every night. I had this fling with Molly O’Day. I’m trying to drop her but she’s a clinging vine.”

“Great looking dame,” Bogie said.

“She was a looker,” Raft said. “But she got fat and…”

When Raft offered him a third whiskey, he turned it down, remembering that he’d promised Stanwyck he was going to ball her sober for a change.

“I saw that movie, *Patent Leather*, ten times,” Raft said. “I want to star in the talkie version of that film. I can just see myself as a cocky prizefighter who learns humility when he’s crippled at the end of the picture and can’t go to war like he wants. He’s a real hero. That scene at the end where he forces himself to struggle out of his wheelchair and stands up to salute the American flag as the band strikes up the national anthem, that’s the kind of role I want to play. I’ve got to get rid of this New York gangster image. Let Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney play the gangsters. From now on, George Raft is going to be playing all-American heroes.”

George Raft

“Hell, I’d love to play a gangster,” Bogie said. “I’m tired of these juvenile roles. I’m thirty years old, for Christ’s sake.”

“Tennis, anyone?” Raft said, bursting into laughter at Bogie’s expense, but only after he’d gotten his part of Bogie’s paycheck. He looked at his watch again. “By the way, have you fucked with Stanwyck yet?”

“Yeah, first as Ruby Stevens back in New& York although I was too drunk to remember it.”

“I haven’t fucked Stanwyck as Stanwyck, but Ruby Stevens and I sure got it on. I’ve also had Mae Clarke. She’s one hot piece. Clarke and Stanwyck will fuck anybody out here, male or female. If it’s on the hoof and moving, those two broads will go for it.”

“My impression is that everybody out here will fuck anybody, in any known combination,” Bogie said. “Of course, New York isn’t the sticks either.”

“Hell, I could be a bigtime movie star right now if I’d put out,” Raft said. “Take Rowland Brown, for example. He used to be this hotshot newspaper guy in Detroit. Now he’s the hottest young director in Hollywood. I went to the fights the other night and was having dinner at the Brown Derby with my pal, Owney Madden, and some other cronies. I get up to go to the men’s room. Brown follows me in. There are five empty urinals. He takes the one next to me as I whip out Blacksnake. He comes on real strong, and I’m about ready to belt him one. Then he tells me he’s Rowland Brown, that he saw me dance at this honky-tonk in Detroit, and wants to offer me the second lead in his new film, *Quick Millions*. In New York, only the blonde belles have to be experts on the casting couch. Out here in Hollywood almost as many guys have to shuck their bloomers.”

He tried to get Bogie to have another drink but was turned down. “Tell me, hot shot, if you’d been as broke as I am, would you drop your trousers for this cocksucker Brown?”

“Maybe,” Bogie said. “I’d certainly consider it. Getting a blowjob is no big deal. All you have to do is whip it out, close your eyes, and let some fag do all the work. While they’re at it, you can be dreaming of some beautiful blonde like Molly O’Day.”

“I guess you’re right,” Raft said. “Getting your dick sucked is no big deal. It’s not like you’re a fag yourself. Maybe I’d better call up Brown and reconsider his offer.”

“Maybe you had,” Bogie said, “because that’s the last paycheck you’re getting from me.”

“Not even if you saw me panhandling on the street?” Raft said.

“I’m a softie,” Bogie said. “I’d let you move into my apartment and sleep on the sofa. I wouldn’t let you starve.”

“I may have to take you up on that offer the way things are going.” There was a loud rap on his door, and he walked over to open it, revealing two large police officers. “You George Raft?” a tall, blond-haired cop asked.

“Yeah,” Raft said cockily. “What’s it to you?”

Without being invited, both of the policemen walked into the bedroom. “Who’s this guy?” the red-haired and equally tall cop asked, looking Bogie up and down. “One of your New York accomplices?”

“Accomplice in what?” Raft demanded to know.

“We’ll come clean with you,” the blond said. “We’ve arrested this stick-up artist. Another George like you except he claims his name is George Roberts. He’s being grilled at headquarters right now and is singing like a canary. He’s already admitted to a dozen robberies, and claims he had accomplices.”

“I’m not a stickup guy,” Raft said. “Look at me. Do I look like a guy who would stick somebody up? Look at my clothing—and the way I’m dressed.”

“When Roberts was searched, your name was found sewed on to his inner pocket, and he was well dressed too,” the blond said. “Real fancy tailor.”

“I can explain that,” Raft said. “I sold him that suit yesterday for thirty bucks to pay my rent here. I’m an actor. Temporarily out of work. I was forced to sell my suit because I was three weeks behind on my hotel bill.”

“You’re not fooling me,” the redhead said. “The Los Angeles police department has already been alerted to your coming out here. You’re a friend of Dutch Schultz.”

“Not exactly a friend,” Raft said. “He used to come into the club where I danced for Texas Guinan, but I never met him personally.”

Bogie knew that Raft was lying, having already been introduced to Dutch Schultz by Raft.

“What about the bootlegger, Owney Madden?” the blond cop asked.

“Owney and I go way back,” Raft said. “We grew up on the streets of Hell’s Kitchen together. He’s a good guy.”

“Yeah,” the redhead said. “Spent ten years in prison for being such a good guy. I think we’re gonna run you in for questioning.”

At this point, the manager of the hotel, Robert Parrish, came into the room since the door had been left wide open. “What’s going on here? We run a respectable hotel—no drunks, no whores.”

Raft looked desperate. “Tell them, Parrish. I sold you my ring last week. I’m having to sell my stuff from New York to raise money.”

“He’s telling the truth,” Parrish said, holding up what looked like a ruby ring encrusted with diamonds. “I’ve had it appraised. It’s worth five-hundred bucks.”

“I can vouch for George here,” Bogie said. “Squeaky clean, a real good guy. Just because this Roberts guy was caught in his secondhand suit doesn’t make George guilty.”

“Okay,” the redhead said. He turned to Raft. “Let this be a warning to you. We heard about you before you even hit town. This is not New York or Chicago, but Los Angeles, a clean-living town. If you think you gangsters can come out here and take over this town, you’ve got another thought coming.”

“I don’t like the look of you,” the blond said to Raft. “And I hate those pants of yours. I really hate your guts. We’ve had another complaint about you. At first we weren’t sure about it and our sergeant wanted to drop it, but I’m going back to the station to look into the case personally. Reopen it, so to speak.”

“You’ve got nothing on me!” Raft said. “What sort of complaint? It’s a lie.”

After some more questions and a few threats, the two policemen left the bedroom. Parrish stayed behind, shaking a finger at Raft. “You have until tomorrow to move out. We don’t want your type here. I think I’m going to post a sign in the lobby, ‘No New Yorkers allowed.’”

After he’d shut the door, Raft turned to Bogie. “I’d better go for that movie role and quick no matter what Brown wants me to do. It’ll look good with the police if I’m a bona-fide film star. I’ll do anything but take it up the ass. George Raft doesn’t get fucked by anybody. I’m the fucker, not the fuckee.” Raft looked at his watch again. “Hell, we’re running late.”

In a taxi on the way to the Roosevelt, Bogie quizzed Raft again about *Quick Millions*.

Raft said that it was the story of a truck driver who’d become a ruthless gangster. “That’s the star part,” Raft said. “I play his bodyguard.”

“What do you think Brown would say if I tried out for the role of the ruthless gangster?” Bogie asked. “I’d let him suck me off.”

“Too late. The lead’s already cast.”

“Fuck!” Bogie said. “What meathead got the part?”

“This new guy over at Fox,” Raft said. “Spencer Tracy.”

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After dinner with Raft, Bogie showed up the next day for the shoot of *Body and Soul*. A messenger brought him a note from Stanwyck. She wanted him to drive over to see her at Universal Studios, where she was starring in *The Locked Door*. Her message didn’t explain why she wanted to see him, but no one turned down Stanwyck. When his final scene was locked up, he drove over to Universal where Stanwyck had arranged an entrance pass for him at the gate. Even so, the security guards looked at him suspiciously before letting him drive onto the lot.

To his astonishment, the first person he encountered on the set was the picture's male star, Rod La Rocque. "The first and only actor I'll ever direct," Bogie said, embracing La Rocque warmly and not forgetting how the star had chased after him in New York. "Still got a crush on me?" he asked, teasing La Roque.

"Oh, that was so long ago, and I've gone through so many beaux since then. I gave my heart to Gary Cooper but he abandoned me for Lupe Velez. Not before I'd nicknamed him the Montana Mule."

"Sounds like you've been busy," Bogie said. "How's Miss Vilma Banky doing?"

"Talking pictures are not for her," La Rocque said. "Vilma and I make some joint appearances out here. As you might have guessed, ours is a somewhat unconventional marriage."

"I thought so," Bogie said. He noticed a handsome, blond-haired actor walking toward them.

"That's William Boyd," La Rocque said. "Even though he's got two inches less than Gary, he's all man. What a guy! He goes both ways. Barbara and I are sharing him during the filming of this stinker."

Bogie found himself shaking hands with this former favorite of the director, Cecil B. DeMille, who had cast Boyd as Simon of Cyrene in *King of Kings* in 1927. Before Bogie could become acquainted with America's future Hopalong Cassidy, a messenger came for him, summoning him to Stanwyck's dressing room.

In her dressing room, Stanwyck looked distraught. She told him that Raft had been picked up and arrested by the police "on some trumped up charge." She didn't explain what that charge was, but claimed she'd posted $1,000 bail for his release. "He's been kicked out of the Mark Twain," she said, "and he's got no place to go. He said you agreed to let him move in with you until he gets back on his feet."

"I guess so," Bogie said. "But that wasn't any writ-in-blood commitment."

"He needs our help," Stanwyck pleaded, "and I've got my own private life. I can't become his mother."

"Tell the fucker he can move in," Bogie said. "But I'm afraid I'm going to regret this."

"It'll be just fine," Stanwyck assured him.

Back at his apartment, as Bogie waited for Raft to show up broke but with expensive luggage and clothing, he received a series of phone calls. Far from being lonely and rejected as he had been when he'd first hit town, he suddenly felt like he'd been crowned King of Hollywood.

The first call was from Joan Blondell. Though still in tears at being dumped by Cagney who suddenly favored Mae Clarke, she was still upbeat and hopeful about the future. "He wouldn't be the first man who's dumped me."

Bogie immediately asked her out on a date for the following evening, and she readily accepted.

As he put down the phone, another call came in, this one from Hobart Henley, a director at Universal. Henley told him that since Fox didn't have any immediate roles for him, he'd been loaned out to Universal where Carl Laemmle Jr. had agreed to produce a remake of Booth Tarkington's *The Flirt*. Henley informed Bogie that he himself had already directed a previous version of *The Flirt*— in this case as a silent film back in 1913.

"What's the name of the newest version?" Bogie asked. "Still *The Flirt?* I know you guys retitle everything in the remakes."

" *Gambling Daughters*," he said.

"Which one of the daughters do I play?" Bogie asked. "Who's going to design my gowns?"

"An actor with a sense of humor," Henley said. "Some directors like that. I don't."

Joking aside, Bogie was hoping he'd been cast in the male lead but learned that part had gone to Conrad Nagel. He

couldn't help but notice that Henley was delaying telling him exactly what role he'd be playing.

"We have a great cast. Sidney Fox, ZaSu Pitts, Slim Summerville. The second female lead hasn't been cast yet but I expect to get notice from Carl tomorrow."

"And my part?" Bogie asked, fearing the answer.

"You'll play Valentine Curliss," Henley said.

"My character's called Valentine?" It sounded very dubious to him. "And the billing?"

"You get eighth billing," Henley said, "but I assure you your role of Valentine is absolutely crucial to the film. You'll walk away with the picture."

"Yeah, right," he said, feeling despondent. So much for a career in films. After only two pictures, one of them not yet released, he felt that Hollywood stardom was fast eluding him. After assuring Henley he'd show up for work, he put down the phone.

"Valentine," he said out loud, cursing the name of his new character without even reading the script. He wondered whom Fox would cast as the other female lead. "I'll probably get to kiss Marie Dressler," he said to the empty walls of the apartment.

The phone rang again. He thought that in spite of his lack of stardom, he was getting more calls than any star.

It was "Dawn Night" (Glenda Farrell). He'd been meaning to ring her up for a date but had temporarily put her on hold. "You may—just may, I can't promise it—be getting the biggest break of your life."

"Tell me about it," he said. "Right at this moment I could sure use one."

"Mr. Edward G. Robinson—I don't know what the G stands for—has just walked out on *Little Caesar* and Mervyn LeRoy."

"You've got to be kidding," he said. "I hear that's the greatest role in town. What feather got stuck up Robinson's ass?"

"You won't believe this, but Mervyn told me that Robinson had insisted on a scene in which he gets to display his legs."

"His fucking legs? Is this some kind of joke? Does Robinson think he's Marlene Dietrich?"

"The ugly mutt is proud of his legs. He's got this picture of himself in the tights he wore when he played Ottaviano in *The Firebrand*. He hangs it in his dressing room and shows it off to anybody."

"You're putting me on."

"After Mervyn balled me last night, and we indulged in some pillow talk, I suggested you for the role even though he thinks Cagney would be ideal if he can get him."

"Hell, I'd love to play a gangster," he said. "A role like that would get me out of this aging juvenile crap."

"I'll tell Mervyn you're interested, and if he wants me to, I'll set up a meeting," Farrell said. "You've got to strike now before they offer the role to Paul Muni. A lot of other actors will be lining up for the part. I might as well tell you. Mervyn is also thinking about that New York hoofer, George Raft."

"Raft?" he said in astonishment. "The fucker is moving into my apartment. Maybe that's okay. I could drown him in the bathtub."

"Mervyn thinks Raft might be even better in the role than Robinson. After all, Raft *is* a New York gangster."

“I won’t mention it to Raft tonight,” he said. “Get me in to see LeRoy as soon as we can. Of course, I’ve got this deal with Fox, but they might lend me out to First National. I’m getting eighth billing to appear in *Gambling Daughters*. A real comedown after my first two pictures.”

“I’ll call you first thing tomorrow,” she said, blowing kisses into the phone.

After he’d gone to the kitchen and had two beers, Raft still hadn’t shown up. There were many things he’d like to be doing tonight other than waiting around the apartment for Raft. The phone rang again. It was Kenneth wanting him to come over. Bogie explained that he was waiting for Raft who was going to be staying with him temporarily.

“Sorry, I’d like to see you tonight,” Kenneth said. “Since you moved out, I don’t see much of you.”

No sooner had he put down the phone than it rang again. Bogie welcomed the now familiar voice of Spencer Tracy. But he seemed despondent. Bogie soon learned that Lew Ayres had stopped putting out.

“He still sees me almost every night, but he just wants to hold my hand and talk religion,” Tracy said. “I mean, I believe in the church as much as anyone, but I like to work Lew’s sweet cheeks when we’re not praying together.”

“Can’t help you on that score, Spence,” Bogie said. “Not my scene. So what are you doing?”

“I’m still going to keep seeing Lew,” Tracy said. “He’s got a changeable nature. He can’t last long with this religion shit. He’ll get real horny one night and he’ll be over begging for me to plug him.”

“What you doing in the meantime?” Bogie asked.

“I’ll be fucking every woman in town,” Tracy said. “The one I’m going after next is Loretta Young.”

“I hear her tits are as cold as the Arctic.”

“I’m the guy to warm them up.”

Raft didn’t show up until after midnight. Staggering drunk to his doorway clad only in his underwear. Bogie showed Raft in and pointed him to the sofa. “There’s a fresh towel for you in the bathroom and…welcome.”

“You look drunk, my friend,” Raft said. “I never touch the stuff.”

Raft wanted to stay up and talk but Bogie had to get some sleep. He staggered back to bed. After Raft had unpacked the two suitcases he’d brought with him, Bogie was only dimly aware that Raft was making some phone calls. He hoped that they weren’t to his gangster friends back East, as he feared that Raft would skip out and leave him with a big phone bill.

Bogie was of two minds about getting some beauty sleep. He knew the role of Rico was not meant for a pretty face. He wondered if when he met Mervyn LeRoy tomorrow he should show up looking a little rough around the edges. That way, he might stand a better chance of getting the part than if he appeared looking young, handsome, and well-groomed, ready for another one of those “Tennis, anyone?” parts.

When Bogie awakened the next morning, he noticed Raft sprawled out nude on the sofa, his blacksnake in semi-erection. Bogie thought that his friend must be having a wet dream.

The phone rang, and he picked it up on the first ring, not wanting to wake Raft. It was his director, Henley, calling again from Fox about his role in *Gambling Daughters*. “The co-star of the picture has been cast, and she wants to meet you. She’s seen you on the stage in New York and admires your work.”

“That’s just great,” Bogie said, hung over, his head pounding from the effects of last night’s booze.

“Be at the studio at nine,” Henley ordered.

After hanging up, Bogie quickly called Glenda Farrell. LeRoy had left her house at six that morning, and had agreed

to meet with Bogie about the *Little Caesar* role that afternoon. “He’s not promising anything. I happen to know he’s testing Raft for the role at nine o’clock.”

“Does our friend know that?” Bogie asked.

“Of course, he does. Raft talked with Mervyn yesterday. Anyway, he’ll test you at two o’clock. I’m doing the test with Raft this morning. I’ll upstage him. Deliberately make him look bad so you’ll get the part.”

“Thanks, babe,” he said. “I’ll owe you a big favor for that.”

“See you at two, lover.”

After he’d hung up the phone, Bogie decided to pull a dirty trick on his new roomie. There was no way he was going to wake up Raft and get him to the studio by nine o’clock to test for the role of Rico.

“The part is mine,” Bogie whispered to himself in the shower. He was quiet as could be as he hurriedly dressed, having left the key and a note for Raft on the kitchen table.

At Fox he was anxious to meet the female co-star of *Gambling Daughters*, even though he viewed it as a nothing part. He had his heart set on *Little Caesar*.

Henley greeted him and asked him to be seated. “She’ll be here in a minute.” An assistant called Henley to the phone. Carl Laemmle Jr. himself wanted to speak to Henley.

Bogie was reading a newspaper but looked up when he heard footsteps walking across the sound stage. In a black and white polka dot dress, with wedge-heeled shoes, a blonde-haired young woman with a ridiculous hat was walking toward him. If he didn’t suspect that this was the star of the picture, he would have figured her to be a librarian from a small town in New England.

As he was to recall in years to come, it was a meeting that would forever change his life, both professional and personal.

She extended her hand to him. “I know who you are, Mr. Humphrey Bogart. Nice to meet a fellow actor from back East. I’m told you’re going to be one of my supporting players. I’m the star, of course. New England born and bred.” She extended her hand. “I’m Bette Davis.”

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He took an instant dislike to Miss Bette Davis. As he was to tell Kenneth and later everybody else he knew, “This high-strung Yankee bitch needs a good fucking. Someone needs to go in there with a stick of dynamite and blast open that squeezed-tight little pussy of hers, and I’m the man to do it.”

“So each of us is going to be making our first film, Mr. Bogart,” Davis said.

“I’ve already got three pictures under my belt,” he said, slightly angry that she’d obviously not seen any of them and hadn’t heard of them either.

Despite his having re-educated Davis in the nuances of his film career, she persisted all her life in claiming that she and Bogie made a joint film debut. That bit of misinformation also appeared in her highly unreliable memoir, *The Lonely Life*.

Before he’d finished his coffee with Davis, the first of many cups to come, Bogie sensed her fierce jealousy of other actresses. “Have you read the script yet?” she asked.

“No one’s given me a copy.”

“It’s about two sisters—one good, one bad,” she said. “A story about Midwestern provincialism. At first I thought I’d been cast in the role of the hellion. Imagine my disappointment when Hobart Henley informed me that Sidney

Fox is playing the bad sister. I'm ending up in the role of the timid mouse."

"I'm sure you'll be good in the part," he said. "Sometimes you can take a role that's not so flashy and run with it." His first impression of her was that she did look a bit mousy.

Bette Davis

But even at that early stage of her career, she was hardly timid. "Do you know how that whore Sidney Fox got the part?" She didn't wait for his answer. "Miss Foxy is sleeping with the producer, Carl Laemmle Jr. That's why. I'm quickly learning out here that it is who you sleep with that determines which role you get, not how talented you might be as an actress. The juicy parts go to sexual athletes like Joan Crawford. I heard from a very reliable source only the other day that any time Louis B. Mayer wants to be serviced, he calls in Crawford. Mayer sits in his chair, Crawford gets down on her knees and does her job. She's said to be an expert. From what I've been told, she's screwed every male animal in Hollywood except Rin-Tin-Tin, and I'm not so sure she hasn't had that dog too. I wouldn't& put it past her."

The only empathy Bogie felt for Davis on that long-ago morning evolved from their shared disillusionment with Hollywood. They both seemed to feel that they'd each made a serious career mistake in coming to Hollywood, and that they'd eventually fail out here and return to the legitimate theater in New York.

"My first assignment was absolutely unbelievable," she said. "It added a new meaning to the term, 'a casting couch.' In one day alone I had fifteen men lie on top of me, pretending to play a love scene with me. They arrived like wooden soldiers, one after the other, each whispering these lines, 'You gorgeous, divine darling, I adore you. I worship you. I must possess you.' Each actor's weight would then rest on my bosom as he kissed me passionately. The director would yell, 'Cut!' The next actor would then descend on me. Only Gilbert Roland had the sensitivity to see how shocked I was. Before he lowered his 170 pounds onto me, he said, 'Don't be upset. This is Hollywood. All actresses have to go through it.' He was the only actor that day who made me feel like a woman and not like some mannequin."

Davis was called away, but before the day ended, he'd meet each of the other actors starring in the film. From Tom Reed, one of the writers of the screenplay, he learned that the title had been changed from *Gambling Daughters* to *Bad Sister*.

Standing before him and measuring four feet, eleven inches tall, Sidney Fox, the film's other female star, might have captured the heart of the producer, Laemmle Jr., but she was way down the list on Bogie's chart of Hollywood *femme fatales*. Certainly she was no Stanwyck, Crawford, or Dietrich, although she looked mighty sexy when stacked up against the rather dull Bette Davis, whose cigarette smoke still lingered as he shook Fox's delicate hand. He'd call her "cute" instead of beautiful.

Ever the needler, he asked her, "Why do you have a man's name?"

Sidney Fox with Humphrey Bogart in *Bad Sister*

“Sure beats Humphrey,” she said.

“ *Touché*.”

She invited him to join her for lunch, and he accepted but told her he had a very important appointment in two hours. “It’ll have to be a short one.”

“Most men I’ve met out here promise me a long one but only deliver short.”

Over the lunch table, he looked startled. “You’re good.”

He liked her brassy way of talking and quickly learned that she was not your typical *ingénue*. She’d studied law at Columbia University before deciding to become an actress.

“So tell me about this guy, Laemmle,” Bogie& said. “Junior, that is. Is he going to make a big star out of you?”

“Carl’s okay but not all that great in the sack. The trouble with Carl is he can’t decide if he likes pussy or boy-ass. During the filming of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, he was pounding that cute little butt of Lew Ayres. I took Carl away from Ayres. Now I hear cute-stuff is getting it from your buddy, Spencer Tracy.”

“You’re a regular Louella Parsons,” Bogie said. “If this acting thing does-n’t work out for you, you can replace her with a column of your own. Does Carl have big things in store for you?”

“Not really, I fear, in spite of his promises,” she said. “Right now he believes that monster movies are going to take over Hollywood. He’s all into this Dracula and Frankenstein crap. Mama didn’t raise no monster.”

He laughed, but as he did he noticed the ominous approach of a messenger boy. Bogie was wanted on the phone. Excusing himself , he went to take the call.

It was Glenda Farrell. “Edward G. Robinson is back in the picture,” she said. “He’s made up with Mervyn. So you and Raft don’t have a chance. I’m sorry. I tried.”

He thanked her profusely, concealing his bitter disappointment. As he came back into the Universal commissary, he noticed that Laemmle Jr. had taken his place at Bogie’s table and had one arm wrapped around Sidney Fox. Bogie decided to let them eat in peace. He was outranked.

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With his hope of playing Rico in *Little Caesar* now a distant dream, Bogie walked up the steps to his apartment house. He’d read the script, and focused on his minor part in *Bad Sister*. In it, he’d play the role of Valentine Corliss, a city slicker who comes to a small town to swindle local businessmen.

At first, he was tempted to knock on Kenneth’s door, but figured he’d better check in with his new roommate, Raft, instead. The prospect didn’t thrill him. After the debacle of the *Little Caesar* casting this morning, Bogie wondered if he’d be competing against Raft in future film roles. Maybe he would-n’t have to worry about that dismal prospect. After the release of *Bad Sister*, he doubted whether Sidney Fox would ever recommend him for another role.

By giving him eighth billing, movie executives had already spoken. Even the prospect of having a hot affair with

one of his leading ladies appeared remote. Ms. Fox was already taken by the studio's big brass; and Davis had locked up her pussy and thrown away the key.

He wasn't going anywhere as a Hollywood film actor, but he was scoring with women and that was some compensation for a married man away from his New York wife. He wondered how Mary's own love life was doing. She was a good-looking woman with a charming personality, so he figured she was attracting a string of beaux, all of them actors no doubt.

As he came into his apartment, a man his own age was emerging from his bedroom. He looked startled to see Bogie but extended his hand. "Hi, I'm Rowland Brown."

"The director?" Bogie asked. "Well, tell me, old boy, did Raft get the part."

"He did indeed," Brown said, smiling. "Now I know why they call that handsome devil Blacksnake."

Disgusted with the way business was conducted in Hollywood—Davis had nailed it—Bogie impulsively took Brown's hand and pressed it into his own crotch, where the director took expert measurements. "What part do you have for me?" He pushed Brown's hand away and went to get himself a drink.

"Not bad, not bad at all," Brown said, searching for his pants on the far side of the room. " *Quick Millions* is already cast, but based on what I was just feeling, you're entitled to a role in one of my future pictures."

"Glad to hear that," Bogie said. After pouring his drink, he turned to Brown. "Now get the hell out of here, you faggot. This is where I live. I'm not running a God damn male bordello."

Without saying another word, Brown hurriedly dressed and left. After he'd gone, George Raft emerged from the bathroom stark naked, his black-snake in repose.

"That Rowland boy is not a bad cocksucker," Raft said. "I needed some relief after my disappointment today. For an hour or two yesterday, I thought I had the part of Rico in *Little Caesar* until I learned that ugly, fat, stumpydicked lumphead, Edward G. Robinson, was back in the role."

"You, play a gangster?" Bogie said mockingly. "You told me you wanted to be cast only as an American hero."

"What you want and what you get in life are two different things," Raft said. "I could play Rico in my sleep. Instead of that, I'm appearing opposite your pal, Spencer Tracy, in *Quick Millions*. Brown gave me the part. Sally Eilers is the leading lady. You've heard of her: Hoot Gibson's wife."

"Yeah, I've heard of her," Bogie said, turning from the sight of the naked Raft. "Why don't you put on some clothes? Your audition on the casting couch—or in this case, casting bed—is over."

Raft went into the bedroom and when he emerged, he was dressed as if ready to appear in the spotlight at Texas Guinan's club.

"I've got a date tonight," Raft said. "Jean Harlow. Eat your heart out, babycakes." He headed for the door.

***

On the set of *Bad Sister*, Bette Davis sharpened her nails on her *bête noir*, Sidney Fox, years before she dug into the much-abused flesh of her future rival, Joan Crawford. Even though only twenty-three years old and new to Hollywood, Davis flashed the kind of fierceness that would one day become legendary when she ruled as Queen of Warner Brothers.

Standing with Bogie to the side of the set, she said, "The director is totally insipid, the dialogue sucks. I should be playing the bad sister instead of the good one, and, to top it all, I have to wear this damn microphone in the shape of a corncob concealed in my breasts. They've got this large insulated wire attached to the wall. I virtually can't move in any direction. If I turn to face Conrad Nagel, my voice fades. I guess I'll have to speak all my lines to my stomach."

He laughed at that remark, finding that Davis both fascinated him but still annoyed him with all her whining. "You're taking home a paycheck, aren't you?"

"Christ," she said. "That's one way of looking at it if you care nothing about acting."

At the far corner of the set, Jack Pierce, head of studio makeup, along with two assistants, hovered around Sidney Fox. Barely able to control her fury, Davis said, "All Pierce did for me is to tell me that my eyelashes are far too short, my hair is nondescript, my mouth's too small, my neck's too long, and my face is as fat as a Flanders mare."

"That Pierce," Bogie said, finding that his assessment of Davis had been right on target. "He sure knows how to build up an actor's confidence."

"Instead of offering me some help with my makeup, he hovers around Fox," Davis said. "No doubt on orders from Laemmle. If only I were screwing the boss, things would be different. She's certainly the court favorite. You weren't here for her first scene this morning. Instead of the Hoosier accent the role calls for, her voice reeks of Mayfair. I could be so deliciously wanton and impudent as Marianne, the bad sister, instead of Laura, the good little Miss Two-Shoes." She picked up a copy of *The Flirt*. "Here's how Tarkington describes my character: 'A neutral tinted figure, taken for granted, obscured, and so near being nobody at all.'" She tossed the script down in her chair. "Ain't that a pip?"

Interrupting her diatribe, Bogie abruptly asked her. "I've got to know something. Are you still a virgin?"

She flashed her pop eyes at him. "First off, that's none of your damn business. But if you must know, I am and I'm proud of it. I've never even seen a set of male genitals—not even a picture of what they're like, and I don't intend to until I'm good and ready."

Ever the needler, Bogie came up with his practical joke of the day. He'd learned that in a scene to be shot that afternoon, Davis had to change a set of diapers on a baby rented for the day by Fox Studios.

Since Bogie was playing only a bit part and wasn't needed on the set, he got the permission of the director, Hobart Henley, to go to a local hospital to help the casting director find the right baby. "My father's a doctor," he told Henley. "I grew up with babies. I'll find one that will photograph perfectly and won't cry or take a crap when his diaper comes off."

The rather dim-witted Henley bought that. On the way to the hospital, Bogie told the casting director, Derrick Staunton, his plan. He was going to bribe a nurse to direct them to the baby with the largest genitals in the hospital.

"I thought all little boy babies have pee-pees about the same size," Staunton said.

"Not at all," Bogie said. "The dick on a baby can vary as much as the dick on a grown man. They come in all sizes."

After a fifty-dollar bribe, the nurse said there was a baby in the ward that was "truly remarkable," as she put it. "I can't wait for this kid to grow up. At his age, he's got more than my old man." He found that the blonde-haired nurse looked and acted amazingly like Joan Blondell.

Later, after obtaining the parents' written consent, and even arranging a signed contract stating the terms of the day's work with the child, Bogie drove Staunton and the mother of the baby back to the Fox lot. He hadn't actually seen the baby's genitals, preferring to take the nurse's words for it. To judge from the face of the mother, who sat in the back seat of the car, holding her child, she was right proud of her son.

That afternoon Bogie secretly assembled cast and crew for the unveiling. Henley ordered Davis onto the set and told her that she was to change the diaper of the baby. After being reassured that the diaper was clean, Davis proceeded with the scene, unfastening the safety pins and exposing the genitals of the baby.

A deep blush came over her face, but she was enough of a trouper to see the scene through to its end. Since red turns gray in a black and white film, her face came off as battleship gray when the film was later released.

As Bogie would later relate to Kenneth, "That kid had a set on him that would make some grown men envious."

At the end of the day's shoot with Baby Freddy, Davis stormed off the set where she encountered Bogie, who was laughing as if he'd pulled off the joke of the century. She immediately understood that he was behind the baby plot, and she would forever after refer to him as "that old heckler."

"If you want to see an even bigger one than that," he said to her, "try changing my diaper tonight."

"Mr. Bogart," she said, "you can keep your penis in your pants. You may have experienced the charms of every broad in Hollywood, but my name is not legs-apart Sidney Fox. Humphrey Bogart will never know Bette Davis in the Biblical sense."

"Yes, I will," he said. "Maybe not on this picture, maybe not even within the next few months. But at some time in our futures, Bette Davis is going to get intimately acquainted with Bogie Junior."

"That day will never come," Davis said before heading to her dressing room.

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There was a hint of desperation in Tracy's voice when he'd called. He claimed that he could not talk on the phone. Bogie had never heard Tracy sounding so flustered. Perhaps his network of romantic liaisons had backfired in some way. In direct contrast to Raft, who attracted trouble like a blonde beauty walking nude onto a construction site, Tracy tended to be very discreet.

When he arrived on the set, Bogie learned that Rowland Brown had summoned all the major players for a night shoot. He spotted Tracy sitting on the far side of the set in a director's chair waiting to be called for his scene. He was talking to an older man. Tracy didn't look desperate the way he'd sounded on the phone. Bogie walked up to him.

Meeting Kenneth in the hallway of their apartment house, Bogie had a brief exchange with him. "Kay Francis wants to marry me," he blurted out.

"You guys would be crazy to get married," Bogie said.

"Would you rather I go back to New York, get Mary to charge you with desertion, help her get a divorce, and then marry me? I'm still in love with Mary."

"Perhaps you are," Bogie said. "In the meantime, Miss Kay Francis herself seems to be keeping you busy. No, I don't want you to take Mary away from me. Marry Kay then. It'll be a good cover for both of you. Two of the biggest tramps in Hollywood pretending to be a loving man and wife."

"I'll marry Kay on one condition," Kenneth had said. "That you'll agree to be my best man."

Bogie crushed out his cigarette and headed for the door. "You got yourself a deal, pal. Name the time and place, and I'll show up. I own a tuxedo now."

At a night club that same evening, he encountered Bette Davis on the arm of Gilbert Roland. The handsome, dashing Roland excused himself to go to the men's room, leaving Davis alone with Bogie at the table.

"You're doing very well," Bogie said. "Gilbert Roland, no less. I understand every horny woman in Hollywood—and at least half the men—are after him."

"He's mine," she said smugly, lighting up one of her interminable cigarettes. "Of all the men I auditioned that day for the kissing scene screen test, he kissed the best and was the gentlest with me."

"You've seen your first set of male genitalia," Bogie said, recalling that well-hung baby on the set of *Bad Sister*. "The question is, have you seen what a real man has hanging?"

"A real man is something you're not, Mr. Bogart," she said. "If you must know, I'm going to surrender my cherry tonight, and I've selected Mr. Roland as the man for the job."

“Happy to hear that,” he said. “You’re certainly old enough to be deflowered. Personally I think a girl should be broken in well before her sixteenth birthday.”

“You’re such a prankster and such a juvenile, at least to judge by your antics on the set, that I would think a teenager would be just about your speed, and the perfect date for you. However, I prefer a real man, and I think you’d agree that Gilbert Roland measures up in every way.”

“How would I know?” he asked.

“I know you want me for yourself, but you can dream on,” she said, smiling as Roland returned to the table.

(top photo) Kenneth MacKenna (bottom photo) Kay Francis

“Three’s a crowd,” Roland said to him.

“See you around, pal,” Bogie said, hastily departing.

The persistent ringing of a telephone brought Bogie abruptly into his new day. His head was pounding, as he reached for the phone. It was Davis. At first he thought she might be calling to report on the loss of her virginity. That would come later.

“Ruthie has smashed up my car, and I need you to drive me to meet my new director, James Whale.”

Later that day he’d learn that “Ruthie” was Ruth Favor Davis, the mother of Bette and a former broad-shouldered girl from Ocean Park, Maine, who’d grown up as an incorrigible tomboy insisting that her family call her “Fred.”

“Forgive me,” he said. “I’d love to take you. But I have a headache from hell. I’ve got no work, so I plan to sleep all day.”

“Little wonder,” she said, considering how much you had to drink last night. “Whale is casting *Waterloo Bridge*, and I’m up for the lead. It’s the role of a prostitute. Before last night with Gilbert,I couldn’t have played the part. For him to get off, he likes to pretend that his girl is a Tijuana whore. In one night, I learned what it’s like to be a whore.”

“That’s good, but I’ve got to beg off,” he said, wanting to get her off the phone.

“The role of the Canadian soldier—the one who falls for me, not knowing I’m a prostitute—is also up for grabs. I’m asking Whale to let you test for the part. It’s not that Fox has rushed to offer you another role after *Bad Sister*.”

He suddenly perked up. A chance at a part— what every out-of-work actor wanted to hear. “Give me your God damn address, and I’m on my way.” He jumped out of bed in search of a pencil. “Fox doesn’t have a God damn thing for me. I’ll be over at your place in forty minutes.”

Heading for the shower, he noticed that Raft hadn’t come home last night.

Hoping that the cold morning shower would erase all memories of last night, he put his face up to the spout and cleansed himself. The day didn’t hold out too many good prospects—Bette Davis who’d been fucked by only one man in her entire life, and only the night before, and Director James Whale who no doubt had been fucked by a thousand men, maybe more.

Davis was nearly in tears, as Bogie picked her up and drove her over to Whale’s set. It wasn’t the loss of virginity that seemed to be bothering her. “Laemmle Jr. has seen *Bad Sister*,” she said. “I heard him tell someone that I had all the sex appeal of Slim Summerville.”

“I didn’t know he’d even seen the picture.” Bogie said. “Do you know what he thought of my acting?”

She reached for a cigarette and eyed him sharply. “I don’t think he even noticed you. He had eyes only for Sidney Fox.”

“Sorry to hear that,” he said, infuriated at actresses who could only talk about themselves.

“I’d be washed up if it weren’t for the cameraman, Karl Freund,” Davis said. “He said I had lovely eyes.” Thus, the film’s photographer became the first to discover “Bette Davis Eyes.” “They’ve got me doing a stinker called *Seed*, with this adorable John Boles. I could really go for him.”

“So soon after Gilbert Roland?” he teased her.

“Last night was the most memorable of my life,” she said, puffing furiously. “Gilbert is not a man. He’s descended directly from the gods. He told me he loved me. Even that he wanted to marry me. But this morning when I called his place, a woman answered the phone. I could swear it was Constance Bennett. Gilbert wouldn’t even come to the phone.”

“We men are no good,” he said with a slight self-mockery in his voice. “You’d better learn that sooner than later.”

“Believe you me, Bogart, I knew that before I got on the train to Hollywood.”

Davis quickly switched to how excited she was about the possibility of being cast as the lead in *Waterloo Bridge*, a play by Robert E. Sherwood that Bogie had heard about. Mary Philips herself had wanted to play the role on Broadway of the showgirl-turned-prostitute. It was a tragic story. The lead character feels that because she was once a whore she doesn’t have the right to her lover’s respect. The film ends with her suicide on Waterloo Bridge.

As Davis went to makeup, Bogie met James Whale. “Bette told me that the role of the soldier is still open,” Bogie said. “Fox doesn’t have anything for me to do and they’re paying me by the week. I’m sure they would be happy to lend me to you. Could I test for it?”

“Dear boy,” Whale said, patting him affectionately on the arm. “The part has just been cast. You know, it calls for a handsome leading man. The type women will swoon over. I don’t see you in such a part. Maybe character roles. A heavy perhaps.”

“They said that about Valentino in the old days,” Bogie said. “And look what happened.”

“My *dear* boy,” Whale said. “Trust me on this one. When it comes to casting, I’m never wrong. A natural instinct, I guess.”

A fey and vapidly handsome young man emerged from Whale’s office. The director introduced him to Bogie. “Meet the male lead in *Waterloo Bridge*. Humphrey Bogart, this is Kent Douglass.”

“I’m thinking of changing my name to Douglass Montgomery,” he said. “That’s Douglass with two Ss.”

“Why don’t you do that?” Bogie said, giving him a limp handshake. He was resentful of the actor, suspecting that he’d been sleeping with Whale as an incentive to getting the role.

“Would you gentlemen excuse me?” Whale said. “I think Bette Davis is ready for her test.” He turned back as if to seek reassurance from Bogie. “I don’t know what makeup did to her. But when you brought her onto the set, she looked mousy. Definitely unconvincing as a prostitute. After all, who would pay out good money to go to bed with Bette Davis?”

“Seems to me you’ve already made up your mind not to cast her,” Bogie said. “Why are you even bothering with the test?”

“I was ordered to,” Whale said. “You do what a studio boss tells you to do. Actually I saw Mae Clarke the other night opposite Cagney in *The Public Enemy*. Clarke has *prostitute* written all over her.” He turned and left, leaving Montgomery standing there awkwardly with Bogie.

As Bogie chatted with Montgomery, he realized that the young actor was making an assumption that he, Bogie, was also a homosexual. At the time, Montgomery was part of the growing influx of young homosexual actors arriving in Hollywood during the late Twenties and early Thirties at the birth of the Talkies. The list of gay, or at least bisexual hopefuls was growing by the day: Anderson Lawler, David Manners, Louis Mason, David Rollins, Richard Cromwell, Alexander Kirkland, Ross Alexander, John Darrow.

“When I came out here, I thought I’d be enjoying one handsome hunk after another,” Montgomery said. “It’s not been like that at all. I’ve been sleeping with creatures from the dark lagoon. Charles Laughton. I found him disgusting. When George Cukor’s fat lips worked me over, I closed my eyes and dreamed of God, mother, and country. William Haines and Eddie Goulding weren’t so bad.” He accepted a cigarette from Bogie. “I hear you’re a good buddy of Kenneth MacKenna. I certainly wouldn’t mind a date or two with him. How’s it been with you? What ghouls have you been sleeping with, if you don’t mind my asking?”

Eyeing him squarely, Bogie was eager to report this conversation to Kenneth later in the day. “I’ve decided on another route. For casting-couch advancement, I work the female circuit: Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Norma Shearer. Dietrich is perfect, but Garbo’s feet and especially that pussy of hers are too big. And Shearer has fat ankles. The most disgusting broad I’ve ever had to fuck? Would you believe Marie Dressler?”

At that point, Montgomery realized that Bogie was putting him on. He excused himself and walked away. It would not be the beginning of a beautiful friendship between the two men.

When her screen test was over, and Bogie had delivered Davis back to Ruthie, he hadn’t heard the last of her. For some reason, even though it was obvious that she held him in disdain, she’d found a kindred spirit in him and called him with frequent bulletins.

The following morning, Davis phoned him in all her rage and fury. “That God damn faggot, James Whale. Moby Dick, or so he thinks. I’m out of the lead. He’s cast me in some dull part as the sister. I’m repeating the part I played in *Bad Sister*. The mouse role. He cast Mae Clarke instead.”

“Your day will come.”

“Christ,” Davis screeched. “Now she’s fucking James Cagney. I guess it takes a whore to play a whore. In the film, I’m supposed to be nice to Clarke’s character. How can I be nice to her when I hate the bitch’s guts?”

“Because you’re an actress,” he said, “and a damn good one. If the part calls for it, you can do it.”

That seemed to please her. The next morning she was on the phone again as if she had to give him a daily bulletin. “Whale is out of his mind,” she charged. “There was a scene yesterday that called for a chamber pot to be placed under the bed. For realism, Whale insisted that the pot be half full of the real stuff. Christ, I hope they cut that scene out of the movie.”

“You getting on with Mae okay?” he asked.

“I guess,” she said. “I stand on the set watching her emote. I mouth her lines, saying them like they should be spoken and acted while she fucks up every scene.”

“I hear this Whale is a pretty good director,” he said, always wanting to take an opposing point of view.

“Whale is no director. He’s a traffic cop. He handles entrances and exits— and that’s it.”

The next morning, Davis had changed her opinion of Whale. He was not only brilliant, but “one of the greatest directors ever to hit Hollywood.”

“”What brought this on?” he asked.

“He wants me for the lead in *Frankenstein*.”

He laughed. “Now that’s a part you can play: The Bride of Frankenstein.”

“Remind me never to talk to you again, you son of a bitch.” She slammed down the phone.

Forgetting her promise never to speak to him again, she called the following week. “That God damn faggot said I came off horribly in my screen test for *Frankenstein*.” She seemed hysterical. “He said I’m totally wrong for the part. What a cocksucker he is. I’m off the picture.”

“Who’s getting the part?” he asked, genuinely curious.

“Christ, would you believe Mae Clarke? She’s so bad in *Waterloo Bridge*, he’s giving her *Frankenstein*. If he wasn’t a queer, I’d swear he was sleeping with the bitch. Whale can’t see talent if it were a roaring truck coming down the road about to run over the slime. Christ, I can’t stand queers.”

“Now, Bette,” he said, “You must learn to co-exist.”

“So I do,” she said. “But it’s God damn hard putting up with them. I dread the day when I’ll have to play a love scene with one of them and let them kiss me, considering where their mouths have been. Mae Clarke said that there are men who actually stick their tongues up men’s assholes. Have you ever heard of that?”

“Can’t say that I have,” he said archly.

“Oh, Bogart,” she said. “You’re such a kidder. You probably do that yourself.” For the second time in just a few days, she slammed down the phone on him.

But it wasn’t the last he’d hear of Bette Davis.

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The tough, one-eyed director, Raoul Walsh, called Bogie the next morning, telling him he’d been cast in the new Fox picture, *Women of All Nations*. Bogie was hopeful until Walsh informed him that he was playing the “seventh lead,” in a film that would once again team Victor McLaglen with Edmund Lowe. They’d be reprising their roles of Flagg and Quirt which had brought them such acclaim in *What Price Glory?*, which had originally been filmed as a silent in 1926 with Walsh himself as director,

Bogie remembered how the director of *A Devil With Women*, Irving Cummings, had hoped that the team of McLaglen/Bogart would prove so successful that they’d be cast together in several more films. No such luck. With box office revenues down because of the Depression, Fox was dipping into remakes of its past successes to sell tickets—hence, the cameras would be rolling once again on that rugged duo of McLaglen and Lowe.

“Who are the dames in the picture?” Bogie asked Walsh.

“Greta Nissen and Fifi D’Orsay,” the director said abruptly before ordering Bogie to report to wardrobe tomorrow at

seven o'clock in the morning.

Bogie hoped that his role might have some possibilities. As a fringe benefit, he thought he might be able to seduce that Scandinavian beauty, Nissen, and perhaps that little French cutie, Fifi D'Orsay.

That afternoon he was still hopeful when Fox sent a messenger over to deliver the script to him. He was surprised to see that the screenplay had been written by a man he knew. Barry Conners had also written the three-act comedy, *Hell's Bells*, in which Bogie had appeared on Broadway with Olive May and Shirley Booth. With the latter, he'd performed both on and off the stage, as he so fondly recalled.

After reading the script—he was hardly able to find his part—Bogie was bitterly disappointed. There was virtually nothing for him to do. Any one of a thousand, even 10,000, actors—could have played the part, such as it was. Bogie felt that it was more of "a brief appearance" than a role. It was clearly a showcase for Lowe and McLaglen, but not for him.

"It's nothing but a stupid caper," Bogie told Kenneth when he went next door to have a drink with him. "My career at Fox is nose-diving by the minute.& They could get some actor to do this for $25 a week instead of $750."

Bogie's only good luck that day was when he returned to his apartment to find a personal letter waiting for him from New York. At first he thought it was from his Mary. The letter was from Helen instead, informing him that she was coming to Los Angeles where she'd booked a bungalow at the Garden of Allah.

Even though the lesbian play, *The Captive*, had been closed on a charge of "indecency" by the New York police, there was talk of mounting a production in Los Angeles. To Bogie's amazement, Samuel Goldwyn had expressed interest in acquiring the film rights, even though the Will Hays office had forbidden the depiction of any type of "perversion" on the screen.

The next morning after wardrobe had fitted Bogie into a crisp new marine uniform, he stared at his figure in the mirror, thinking he looked rather striking.

When he ran into the director, Walsh, he looked Bogie up and down. "You come off as queer bait—perfect for what I had in mind."

Bogie's part didn't even merit a dressing room. He was assigned a locker room with the rest of the cast, which included the grips and the assistant cameraman. Since his part was so small, Bogie didn't even know why he was needed on the set.

There weren't even any women to flirt with, as Greta Nissen and that cute little Fifi D'Orsay were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps Walsh had them lined up for his casting couch that day.

As Bogie stood idly by with nothing to do, and feeling like a jerk, one of the co-stars of the film, Bela Lugosi, came up to him and introduced himself. "I saw you and Tracy in *Up the River,* " Lugosi said. "You guys did a good job."

"Count Dracula himself, I presume," Bogie said. Since neither actor had any work to do that day, Lugosi invited Bogie to the commissary for some black coffee.

Bogie relaxed with this Hungarian actor, born Be'la Ferenc Dezso Blaski in 1882 in the small town—now Romanian—of Lugosi.

When Lugosi ordered coffee from the waiter, Bogie said, "Now you've spoiled my illusion. I thought you drank only blood."

As coffee was served, Lugosi confided in Bogie after he'd promised not to tell Louella Parsons, "I really wanted a career in operettas. I have a remarkable singing voice."

"Blood curdling, I bet," Bogie said, kidding him.

"Actually before I had success as a monster," Lugosi said, "I scored well portraying Jesus Christ. Would you believe

I was also a sensation playing Romeo in Budapest in 1911?"

"About you, I could believe anything," Bogie said. "You're a remarkable man. I caught you on Broadway back in '27. I don't care how many roles you've played, you're stuck with that vampire count bit. No one does it better than you."

"I know," he said. "It's both a blessing and my curse. I made up a will the other day. In my will, I left instructions that I be buried in my Count Dracula cape."

Bogie laughed. "That means you'll be back! No grave will hold you."

"Speaking of men who are vampires," Lugosi said, "here's one of the stars of the picture coming toward us. Edmund Lowe. I'll introduce you, but make sure your fly is buttoned."

"Don't you look the spiffy marine!" said the slick-haired, debonair screen star.

"Don't you look like something yourself?" Bogie said, pausing to take in the costume of a top-hatted, silk-caped magician.

"With that cape and that hat, are you trying to take over my role as Count Dracula?" Lugosi asked.

"Actually, I'm doing a wardrobe test for this upcoming film, *The Spider,* " Lowe said. "I'm being considered for the lead." Lowe would win the coveted role that very year, his character in *The Spider* inspiring the look of the comic-strip character, Mandrake the Magician. "Now I've got to get to my dressing room and slip into my marine drag."

Two Views of *Women of All Nations*:

(top photo, clockwise from lower left), Edmund Lowe, Humphrey Bogart, and Victor McLaglen

(bottom photo) Victor McLaglen, Greta Nissen, and Edmund Lowe

"At least you have a dressing room," Bogie said. "Walsh has demoted me to the men's locker room."

"By all means, share my dressing room," Lowe said. "C'mon," I'm going there now."

The art director on the picture, David Hall, came over to ask Lowe something. He excused himself momentarily to speak to Hall.

"If you guys are going to share a dressing room, watch yourself around that one," Lugosi warned Bogie in a whisper.

"You've got to be kidding," Bogie said. "He's married to the most beautiful woman in Hollywood."

" *Everybody* in Hollywood has to watch himself or herself around Lilyan Tashman." With that enigmatic statement, Lugosi turned and headed& to his own dressing room.

When he'd finished his conversation with the art director, Lowe turned to Bogie. His fingers tightened around Bogie's arm. "Let's head for my dressing room now. I may even find some whiskey there."

“You’re my kind of guy,” Bogie said.

Lowe’s fingers tightened even firmer around Bogie’s arm. “And you’re my kind of guy too. I always believe that when you need a job done, call out the marines.”

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Edmund Lowe was most solicitous.

After he’d dressed in his own marine uniform, he made a slight suggestion about how Bogie could artfully diminish the impact of his scarred lip with a clever use of makeup. “Believe me, I know more about makeup than Marlene Dietrich,” he said. “We actors have to do for ourselves.”

Lowe even invited Bogie to accompany him to the set. He said all the things that Bogie had been wanting to hear since leaving New York. “You are a marvelous screen presence. You could be a big star different from all others. It’s the directors who are stupid.”

“I guess they don’t like my ugly mug,” Bogie said.

“That’s nonsense,” Lowe said. “You are very, very handsome, and very, very sexy. I read somewhere that the New York critics considered you as handsome as Valentino.”

“They must have had George Raft in mind,” Bogie said modestly.

“Actually I don’t think Raft looks like Valentino at all,” Lowe said. “You’ve got sex appeal. A heavy dose.” He leaned over in a confidential whisper to Bogie. “And from what I hear, you’re packing a powerful weapon in that tight uniform of yours.”

Bogie was flattered but also a bit embarrassed. “Who in hell have you been talking to.”

“I have many credible sources,” Lowe said enigmatically. “You’ve just hit Hollywood and already some of the top stars have fallen for you.”

“I wouldn’t exactly call it ‘fallen,’” Bogie said. “More accurately, they’ve bedded me and then forgotten me.”

“I know Stanwyck went for you,” Lowe said, “But now she’s chasing after my darling Lilyan.”

“With a woman as gorgeous as Lilyan Tashman, I bet I know where you are at night,” Bogie said.

“You are a truly adorable, darling man,” Lowe said before being summoned to the set. “I’m going to try to get Walsh to make your part bigger on this picture.” Before heading off, he paused. “I’ve got one better. I want you to be the co-star of my next movie.”

“Make me your Spider Boy?” Bogie asked.

Lowe seemed amused. “No, not that. I have various roles in mind for you.& I think you can be developed into one of the screen’s most romantic leading men.”

“You mean, the type who gets the gal in the final reel?” Bogie asked.

“Exactly,” Lowe said. “Scar or not, you’ve got the most sensuous lips. I like the way you always keep them wet. Dietrich knows that trick too.”

“With me, it’s not deliberate,” Bogie said. “I salivate a lot.”

“It would be like dying and going to heaven to get worked over by that succulent mouth of yours.” As if catching himself, he quickly added. “It would be any girl’s dream, I’m sure.”

“I was feeling pretty low today until I met Mr. Lowe himself,” Bogie said. “I think I’ll call you ‘High’ instead.

You've made me feel real good. And thanks for letting me share your dressing room. I don't feel like a third-class citizen any more."

"I've never met an actor in Hollywood I liked instantly like I do you. I've got a great idea. If you're not busy tomorrow night, would you come over and have dinner with Lilyan and me? I know she'll find you as fascinating as I do."

"I'd love to," Bogie said. "Sounds like my kind of evening. No red-blooded man in his right mind would turn down an evening with Lilyan. She's beautiful."

"What about me?" Lowe asked. "Am I chopped liver?"

Marital bliss: Lilyan Tashman & Edmund Lowe

"Not at all," Bogie said, realizing that no vain actor liked to be slighted. "Not chopped liver at all. More like a juicy T-bone steak."

"You've got that right, baby cakes," Lowe said before heading out to face Walsh's direction.

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In his grim and bleak apartment, Bogie found a note from Raft. He'd come into some money and was moving out. He thanked him for his hospitality.

Next day on the set of *Women of All Nations*, in their shared dressing room, Bogie felt uncomfortable stripping off his military uniform under the focused stares of Lowe. But after a few uncomfortable minutes, he decided "what the hell" and stripped down, as needed, anyway. He wasn't really an exhibitionist, but the actor in him appreciated the approval of an audience. Maybe all those stories about Lowe being a homosexual were true, and maybe they weren't. He was married to one of the most beautiful women in Hollywood, Lilyan Tashman.

Having gone through a marriage to Helen Menken, Bogie knew that a wedding band didn't mean a God damn thing in the theater or in Hollywood. After the dust had settled on his former marriage, Bogie was convinced that Helen preferred women. Even so, he fully expected to bed her when she reached Hollywood—no doubt at her bungalow at the Garden of Allah.

"Are you sure you don't want me to bring a date to your place tonight?" Bogie asked Lowe, as he buttoned up his fly.

"My Lilyan and I have already arranged a surprise date for you," Lowe said.

"I hope not some dog you're trying to push off on me," Bogie said, almost meaning it.

"Lilyan is a connoisseur not only of *haute couture*, but also of the world's most beautiful women," he said somewhat enigmatically. "Your date tonight one day will take her place alongside some of the world's most enchanting women. The likes of Cleopatra and Helen of Troy."

“You do like to tease a country boy from New York,” Bogie said. “I’m sure my date is Marie Dressler.”

“Time will tell, my dear, lovely boy,” Lowe said. He hovered near Bogie, who at first feared that the actor was going to kiss him. Instead Lowe took his hand and held it gently. “Until tonight, you adorable creature. Lilyan is dying to meet you. She’s going to wear her sexiest outfit, a little thing she picked up in Paris.”

“She’s your wife,” Bogie said. “Why would she wear something sexy for me? Even assuming your marriage is as open as mine, you said I already have a date.”

Lilyan Tashman

“Listen, pet, let’s don’t go into logistics right now,” Lowe said. “The night hasn’t even begun. We must go forward into that good night and welcome its surprises.” With that parting comment, he was out the door.

Bogie stood looking confused. He felt that he was heading for either the best or the most disastrous party of his Hollywood life. “Let the night unfold,” he said before checking his appearance in the mirror.

As he would confide in Kenneth the next day, he kissed his own image in the mirror. He felt that that kind of self-enchantment qualified him as a narcissist like every other actor in Hollywood. Giving himself a final smooch, he said, “Go for it, you good-looking mother-fucker.”

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Even though it had been announced as just a small, intimate dinner party, Lowe greeted Bogie at the door in full evening dress.

In his dark suit, Bogie said, “I didn’t know it was black tie.”

“Come in, dear boy,” the slick-haired actor said, taking his hand and guiding him into the foyer. “Dressed, and especially undressed, you’re most welcome at the humble Tashman/Lowe abode.”

It was actually a Beverly Hills mansion they called “Lilowe.”

With the grace of a ballerina, Lilyan moved from her garden into the living room, crossing the parlor to greet Bogie. Her movements were so perfect that they gave the illusion of being choreographed. Even before she’d kissed him gently on the lips, he’d fallen madly in love with her.

“Welcome to our home,” she said. “For once Eddie didn’t lie about your beauty.”

“The only beauty in this room is standing before me,” Bogie graciously said. “I’m a regular looking guy.”

“Don’t be so modest,” she said, looking over at Lowe with a smirk. “I never thought I’d ever say that to an actor. I’ve read in the press that you’ve been compared to Valentino.” As she seated him on the sofa next to her, he was awed by her beauty. She was dressed a little too flamboyantly for his taste, but still exquisite in a Parisian white satin gown with four diamond clasps. When she noticed him checking out her jewelry, she said, “If I happen to wear real diamonds instead of paste, who is to object?”

“Not me,” Bogie said, “providing I didn’t have to pay for them.”

As the maid served drinks, Bogie was eager to learn anything he could about her. He virtually ignored Lowe. Born in New York the same year as himself, she had toiled for years in the Silents, knocking on doors of casting offices and dancing in Ziegfeld's *Follies.*

Eventually, she forged ahead in the Talkies, creating a niche playing sophisticated but sarcastic blondes. The night he met her, she was an acknowledged social leader in Hollywood, consistently cited as the town's best-dressed woman.

Her home was spectacular. "Who's your decorator?" he asked. "He needs to do something—anything—to my rattrap apartment."

"You're looking at *him,* " she said. "My hobby is interior decorating."

"She also claims she decorated our Malibu Beach home," Lowe said. "But it was Jetta Goudal."

"Would you shut up?" she said abruptly to her husband before softening her features again when she turned to face Bogie. "Goudal helped, but I did most of it myself." Lowe merely rolled his eyes sarcastically, looking up at the ceiling.

"Oh, I forgot," Bogie said. He reached into the pocket of his suit and removed a small gift package wrapped with red satin ribbon.

Taking the box from him, she deftly opened it, her eyes lighting up in delight. "Miniature hands," she said, fondling the porcelain gift. "Thank you, darling." She reached over and kissed him again on the lips. "I'll add this latest pair to my collection." Reaching for his hand, she guided him into an adjoining room which was lined with glass shelves displaying what must have been the world's largest collection of miniature hands in all shapes and materials.

"I read in some column that you collected these little hands, and I wanted to add my paws to your other ones," he said.

"I will value your hands more than all the others," she said.

She was so convincing that for one brief moment he actually believed her.

As she directed him back into her sumptuous living room, he took in her figure from the rear, finding it slender and slinky. Her throaty voice evoked Garbo with a touch of Dietrich. He'd read that Eddie Cantor had called her face "fox-like."

As Tashman kept the talk bubbly, Lowe became cruder as he drank. As if jealous of his wife, his tone grew bitchy. "I've never known Lil to pay so much attention to a man. Usually it's the women at any party who have to watch out for her. No beautiful gal is safe going to the powder room with Lil at the party."

She patted Bogie's hand. "Eddie does exaggerate so."

"Whether it's a grand dame of the theater or a newly arrived teenage chorus gal from Broadway, Lil chases after them right into the powder room," Lowe said. "Often she seduces them in a private toilet stall. Her technique is amazing, I hear, and it's the talk of Hollywood."

As Bogie looked at her, he found this slander hard to believe. To him, she was the epitome of elegance and taste.

"They don't call her Latrine Lil for nothing," Lowe said.

No longer able to control herself, Lilyan glared at him. "And they don't call you a cocksucking son-of-a-bitch for nothing," she said. Still, to Bogie's surprise, she didn't deny her husband's assertions. When he became too graphic describing her seduction of Louise Brooks, she said, "forgive Eddie. When he's not sucking a big dick—he's a size queen, incidentally—the true feline that lurks in his heart comes out of her cage." To change the subject, she said, "Tallulah's in town looking for movie work and fucking that divine Gary Cooper. But that Montana cowboy has given her gonorrhea, so darling Tallu is temporarily out of commission."

“She told us about your marriage to Helen,” Lowe said.

“I’d rather not talk about it,” Bogie said, barely concealing his simmering anger.

“It’s all right with us,” she said. “With Eddie and me, you can let your hair down. After all, you and I have a lot in common. You’ve both known darling Tallu. I’ve also enjoyed Miss Helen Menken herself.”

At that point Bogie was ready to bolt from the room. What kept him glued to his seat was his utter fascination with Lilyan in spite of her vile talk. She could speak freely of her seduction of women, yet he felt that she also wanted to go to bed with him. All evening, to emphasize a point, she would reach out and touch him. He found her fingers on him thrilling and wanted her to feel more of him. He regretted that Lowe had arranged the surprise date, even though he kept assuring Bogie that an enchantress was on her way.

Even as she continued to touch and feel Bogie, Lilyan still spoke of women. “I’ve had nearly every major female star in Hollywood, but I struck out with Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, and Billie Dove.”

“Better luck next time,” Bogie said.

“So, now that you’ve seen a slice of our domestic life, what do you think of our ‘ideal marriage?’” Lowe asked. “That’s how all the fan magazines refer to our wedded bliss.”

Fortunately for Bogie, he didn’t have to answer that direct question. “Only last week I granted *Photoplay* an interview,” she said. “About how a woman can hold onto her man.” She flashed a look of contempt at her drunken husband.” I told the magazine that no man will tolerate a lazy woman for very long. I also told them that a woman has to look good for her man at all times. To quote *moi*, ‘I never appear before Eddie looking seedy or badly groomed.’”

“That’s a damnable lie,” Lowe said. “I’ve seen my bitch here looking very disheveled after she’s worked over some hot pussy and raises herself up with vagina juice dripping down her chin.”

“Whenever Eddie drinks, he becomes really vulgar,” she said. “You’ll find out more about that later.” Ideal marriage or not, she looked at him with total disdain. “I call him& sewer mouth. But, as I said, you’ll see what I mean as the night progresses.”

Style-setter
Lilyan Tashman

That evening did move on. It was nearly ten o’clock, and Bogie’s mystery date still hadn’t shown up. He suspected that there was no fourth guest, and that he was here for a three-way.

Enthralled by Lilyan, he wanted her alone, miles removed from her homosexual husband. He couldn’t even call up his friend, Tracy, to take Lowe off his hands for the night. Lowe wasn’t Tracy’s type.

The maid came in and announced that Lilyan was wanted on the phone. She rose gracefully, patted Bogie on the knee, and turned to her husband. “Can I trust you alone with this darling man?”

“I’ve already seen him jaybird naked in my dressing room,” Lowe said. “I restrained myself then, but just barely. I’ll be a good boy, although I can’t promise that I won’t salivate a bit.” When& she’d gone, Lowe took Lilyan’s place on the sofa beside Bogie.

Uncomfortable seated there, Bogie rose quickly to refill his own drink. Fortunately, Lilyan came back into the room in only a minute or so.

She looked jubilant. “Your surprise date is also doing the cooking tonight. We are so lucky. She makes the best goulash in Hollywood. Instead of cooking in my kitchen, she preferred to cook the goulash in her own home and is bringing it over.”

“Prepare yourself for a delightful evening,” Lowe predicted to Bogie. “And I don’t mean just the goulash.”

Growing a little bored with Lowe’s fabulous build-up, Bogie said, “Yeah, promises, promises.”

In fifteen minutes, the doorbell rang, and the maid went to answer it.

Not knowing what to expect, Bogie was startled when his surprise date came into the living room, after handing a pot of goulash to the maid.

After kissing both Lowe and Lilyan rather passionately on the mouth, she turned to him. He’d met her before, and, as before, he was overcome by her exotic allure and her beauty.

“Mr. Bogie man,” she said in her seductively accented voice. “We meet again.”

Not wanting to sound like some awed schoolboy, he said, “Did anyone ever tell you you’re one hell of a broad?”

“So many, many times,” she said, smiling at him before looking around the living room, finally focusing on Lilyan. A slight smirk came onto her face. “Someone in this room is going to get lucky tonight. I don’t know….” She paused as if confused about what to say. “What is the damn correct English? On whom I will bestow my charms?”

“If there is a God in heaven,” Bogie said, “and at times I seriously doubt it, I am hoping that he is looking with favor on me tonight, Miss Dietrich.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Bogie woke up the next morning fully convinced that he was a sexual degenerate. After he'd invited Kenneth over for coffee and conversation, he felt better. Drawing on his experience as a former member of the New York Pussy Posse, Kenneth convinced him that what Bogie was doing in Hollywood—no different from some scenes in which he'd participated in New York—was "just the norm out here."

Long after the world's greatest tasting goulash—"that Kraut sure knows how to cook"—was served, Dietrich and Lilyan had disappeared into her bedroom upstairs.

"My God, the evening turned into a scene out of Arabian Nights," he confided to Kenneth. "I don't remember it, just blurred scenes."

Kenneth was convinced the Bogie remembered everything, but didn't want to supply all the details.

"Before I left that house around four o'clock, I did a trick or two that even I hadn't thought about before," Bogie said.

"Like what?" Kenneth asked. "Tell me. I might be missing out on something."

"When you marry Kay Francis, I'm sure she'll teach you on your honeymoon. I'm saying no more."

"I'm still going to pursue women on all fronts, but I'm going to taper off when Helen comes to town," Bogie said.

"You mean Miss Menken?" Kenneth asked in surprise.

"One and the same," Bogie said. "She'll be staying at the Garden of Allah. I'm sure I'll be spending my nights there."

"Have you all but forgotten Mary back in New York?" Kenneth asked. "I'm still carrying a torch for her."

"Yeah," Bogie said. "Would you have stayed in New York if Mary had married you instead of me?"

"No way," Kenneth said. "I think my future is in Hollywood. But I think I could have convinced Mary to come with me."

"In a way I'm glad she's back in New York, because I'll be returning there soon," he said. "I still want to stay married to her. We'll wipe our slates clean and start all over again."

"Does she have a clue about what you're up to out here?" Kenneth asked.

"Not unless you've written her."

"My lips are sealed," Kenneth said, "I think at this point in our lives, we shouldn't stop to analyze what's happening. Let's just let the good times roll."

Suddenly, a messenger arrived from Fox Studios. Opening the package, Bogie learned that he'd been assigned fourth billing in his final film at Fox. Entitled *A Holy Terror*, it would be directed by Irving Cummings, who had previously guided him through *A Devil with Women*. He'd be appearing with the star of the picture, George O'Brien.

As he read the script, he was even more startled to learn that it was a western based on Max Brand's novel, *Trailin'*. In the film, Bogie was slated to play Steve Nash, foreman of the Drew ranch, who's in love with a character played by Sally Eilers.

The city boy from New York was about to play his first cowboy role.

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He'd had a lovely evening with Joan Blondell, during which she'd served what she described as one of her favorite dishes—mashed rutabagas mixed with mashed potatoes. Fortunately, she'd also baked a ham as well. That was his favorite. As he related to Kenneth the following morning, "Sex with Joan has become what I imagine it's like between a married couple who's been together for many many years. It's comfortable and safe, but completely without fireworks."

Kenneth seemed relatively unconcerned about Bogie's sex life that morning. He was distracted by plans for his upcoming wedding to Kay Francis. Once again, he secured a promise that Bogie would be there as his best man.

Bogie agreed for a final time, then reminded him that Helen Menken would be arriving in Hollywood soon and checking into the Garden of Allah.

"I adore Helen," Kenneth said. "Bring her to the wedding."

Some of Kay's friends are throwing some parties for us this week. We'd love it if you and Helen could come to any or all of them. I'll slip the invitations under your door."

"That sounds great," Bogie said, "Helen would meet some film people. She already knows everybody on Broadway."

"Wouldn't it be ironic if Helen became a bigger film star than either of us?"

"Things like that happen," Bogie said, lighting up his seventh cigarette of the morning. "But if I make all these appearances at all these parties, people will think I'm back with Helen. Hollywood is a small town. Word will get back to Mary."

"So what?" Kenneth asked. "Mary knows you're sleeping with other gals. And don't kid yourself. Mary hasn't exactly been behaving like a nun recently. I'm sure she has a steady stream of beaux."

"That's our marriage agreement," Bogie said. "It's OK for me to fool around with other women, unless that other woman happens to be Helen.& Mary won't exactly be thrilled by any of this."

"Maybe Mary will divorce you after all," Kenneth said with a wink.

Bogie clinched his fist and pretended to give Kenneth a sock in the jaw. "Still pining for Mary, huh? Here you are about to marry Kay, and you're still trying to steal my wife."

"Hey," Kenneth said, "I've got a sharp eye for a movie plot. How about writing a screenplay together about this romantic entanglement? I bet we could sell it."

"And maybe we couldn't," Bogie said. "About this wedding. Is it going to be a big affair?"

"No. The wedding itself will be very small. The guests include you, Helen, and one or two of Kay's friends. That's why Kay is seeing all of her friends and getting congratulations and, we hope, lots of presents before the actual marriage ceremony."

"Smart thinking," Bogie said, glancing at the clock. "I've got to go to work. Sounds like we'll have a gay old time this week with all the parties and everything."

"It's your chance to score this week," Kenneth said. "You'll be meeting some of the top broads in Hollywood. Too bad you'll be with your wife."

"My former wife," Bogie corrected him. "We're divorced, remember? And besides, even when we were married, Helen and I had an open marriage. And she's likely to be heavily booked during her time out here, spending time with some of her former girl friends, including Tallulah, who's also at the Garden of Allah."

“It’s going to be interesting,” Kenneth said. “I wish I could follow you around with a camera this week.”

“After the marriage, are you still going to be fooling around?”

“Sure. Kay and I both understand that our marriage will be mainly for show. I’m doing it to boost my career in Hollywood. Being married to a major movie star might help. That’s why you married Helen—to advance your career on Broadway.”

“Something like that,” he said. Kenneth’s words evoked a sour memory.

“Kay’s becoming big out here, really big. She’s defined as one of the top five actresses in Hollywood, with lots of attention from the press. Her fans want to see her with a handsome and adoring husband.”

“Good luck,” Bogie said. “Yours will be just one of many lavender marriages out here.”

“No, it’ll be a real marriage,” Kenneth said. “A complicated Hollywood marriage with lovers of all persuasions coming and going. I like women more than I like men. Just ask your wife. On the other hand, Kay likes women more than she likes men. But she’s very attracted to men. The first time I took Kay out, she said, ‘I’m not a star. *I’m a woman.* And I want to get fucked.’ We’ll just have to work out our sleeping arrangements.”

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It was a different Helen Menken he met at the train depot. Her immaculate clothes, even her hat, looked more Fifth Avenue than Hollywood and Vine. She had New York written all over her. He could not imagine a woman who looked less Californian.

As he rushed toward her to take her in his arms and kiss her, he encountered a woman no longer in the spring of her life. Her face was still young but it was more mature, a bit harsher, and a bit less forgiving.

She made no effort to probe into his personal life, other than to say, “A handsome devil like you must be the sensation of half the Hollywood cuties out here—that is, the few that George Raft hasn’t already subdued.”

“Something like that,” he said as nonchalantly as possible.

By the time they’d reached the parking lot of the Garden of Allah, Helen had brought him up to date on all the news of Broadway and several mutual acquaintances. No mention was made of his present wife, except one. “I saw Mary the other day,” she said. “She’s put on a few pounds, but the extra weight is agreeable to her figure. She’s getting work, but neither of us is the sensation of Broadway these days, the way we imagined it would be when we were younger. In fact, with so few shows because of the Depression, Broadway is a pretty dismal place.”

He wanted to ask Helen if she knew who Mary was dating or perhaps even shacked up with, but he restrained himself. “Sorry to hear about the depressed state of affairs. That’s real bad news for me. I’m planning to go back to New York and try for a job on Broadway. Fox isn’t going to renew me. They don’t know what to do with me. In a few weeks I’m leaving Hollywood for good.”

“It’s a ghastly place out here,” she said. “You and I are New Yorkers. We don’t belong outside the civilized world.”

“C’mon, let me show you to your new home.” He went around to the trunk to get her luggage.

She stood looking at the façade of the Garden of Allah, now functioning as a somewhat rundown colony of rentable cottages.

“I can’t believe that this was once Nazimova’s private home. I still see her on and off. It’s hard to imagine that she was once queen of MGM.”

“Garbo seems to have filled her shoes.”

“I suppose you’re right,” she said. “I didn’t think Garbo would survive the advent of talking pictures. I guess her

audience wants whiskey pronounced *viskey*."

"You talk real pretty," he said, "and look great. I hope to take you around to a lot of parties. Maybe some director will discover you out here and make you a big star like Garbo."

"Oh, Hump," she said, heading for the reception desk as if she already knew where to go. "The Twenties are dead and gone. That was a time for daydreaming. It's the grim Thirties now."

In the privacy of her bungalow, she told him that it was almost certain that a production of her lesbian play, *The Captive*, would be mounted on the stages of Los Angeles. "I'm out here negotiating the deal now." She paused. "That and other things."

For whatever reason, she chose not to tell him what she meant by "other things," which was a signal to him that he would be with her only on certain days, leaving the rest of her Hollywood sojourn a private affair.

"I don't get it," he said. "In New York, that play got you thrown into jail. What makes you think the Los Angeles police won't do the same thing? If anything, they're a lot more liberal in New York than out here. If what they define as perversion is depicted on the screen today, it's got to be hidden. No more Erich von Stroheim. He was the last of that era of decadence, I'm sorry to say."

"We'll see," she said enigmatically. "I have my assurances we're going forward with the project. I can't give you any details until I know more." She waved her arms theatrically. "Here I am installed in my new home in California but with yesterday's husband."

As she twirled around the room, that old sexual stirring came back to him. He still desired this woman.

"I know you just got into town," he said, "and haven't even unpacked. But I've got to know something."

"Whatever do you want to know," she said, coming up to him and kissing him on both cheeks. "You divine, handsome thing you. If anything, in maturity you've grown more beautiful."

"C'mon, Helen," he said. "Even on my finest day no one ever calls me beautiful."

"Handsome then." She kissed him on the lips. "Still keeping those lips moist for me, are you?"

"Yeah," he said. "I've got to know something. When a woman divorces her husband, does said husband have to surrender his conjugal rights, or can he reclaim them at any time?"

"It doesn't matter what the legal restrictions are with me," she said. "If you're talking about that marriage contract between Helen Menken and one Humphrey Bogart, I view the bond as unbroken. Said husband can reclaim those rights whenever he wants to."

"Glad to hear that," he said, taking off his jacket and beginning a striptease in front of her.

"If you're taking off your clothes, I guess you're glad to see me."

En route to the bedroom, she promised him lots of loving before her eight o'clock engagement. "When she heard I was coming to California, Lilyan Tashman wrote me. She wants me to come over for dinner tomorrow night as a means of celebrating my arrival in Los Angeles. As part of your Hollywood rounds, have you met up with the Miss Tashman yet?"

She did not wait for his response, but continued, "Both Katharine Cornell and Nazimova told me Tashman is absolutely divine. Even though married, I hear she has a thing for the ladies. I'll have to be careful that she doesn't seduce me, too."

That did it for him. As he mounted Helen and plowed her good, he was more zealous in his efforts because his brain was flashing images of Lilyan Tashman and not the picture of the woman beneath him. From the ecstatic look on her face, Helen was none the wiser.

Later, when he was spent and she too was exhausted, she whispered in his ear. “I don’t know who’s been letting you fuck them in Hollywood, but your technique has improved.”

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Bogie didn’t reach the set of *A Holy Terror* until eleven o’clock that morning. Sucked into the tangled affairs of his roller-coaster private life, he had paid little attention to the script. But when called for a wardrobe fitting, he began to take his role of Steve Nash more seriously. In full cowboy garb, he was to play the foreman of a ranch opposite that handsome, body beautiful stud, George O’Brien.

Greg Brooks had fitted Bogie with a beige-colored Stetson, a six-shooter, a gigantic red handkerchief, which he was to wear around his neck like a tie, a pair of black-and-white striped pants (for some reason), a black shirt, and a battered old leather jacket.

Even Bogie laughed at himself when he saw his image in a full- length mirror. He could never make a convincing cowboy on screen.

After carefully studying his figure, Brooks said, “something’s not right. You’re just too short to be a cowboy.”

“What do you suggest?” Bogie asked. “You got something to make me grow taller?”

Brooks thought for a minute before sending his wardrobe assistant to fetch a pair of shoes for Bogie. When he returned, Brooks insisted that Bogie put on a pair of elevator boots. “That way you can stand up with O’Brien eyeball to eyeball in your scenes together.”

Horrified, Bogie put on the elevator shoes and walked around the dressing room. “I’m walking on God damn stilts. I feel like a fucking dummy.”

George O'Brien

“You’re getting paid $750 a week, aren’t you?” Brooks asked. “That’s a lot more than a lot of actors at Fox are taking home. Why don’t you just wear the shoes and quit griping?”

“Griping is what I do,” Bogie said. “It’s my specialty.”

“Take off your shirt,” Brooks demanded.

“What?” Bogie asked, astonished. “Am I supposed to strip down for you? I’ve dealt with you little fairy boys from wardrobe before. With me, sweet cakes,& you can dream but not touch.”

“Don’t flatter yourself, Bogart,” Brooks snapped. “You’re not my type at all. I go for he-men. Now take off your shirt. We’ve got a real problem here.”

Although infuriated, Bogie still wanted to earn that paycheck. He pulled off his shirt. Brooks went over to a drawer and pulled out two strips of white padding. “For some of our insufficiently endowed actors, we fake it. Since you don’t have shoulders, I’ll create some for you.”

As reluctant as he was to do it, Bogie allowed Brooks to apply tape and padding to his shoulders. When Bogie put his shirt back on and stared at his image in the mirror, he was impressed. Unlike the elevator shoes, which he detested, the padding did make him look more like a fully developed man who could be the tough foreman of a ranch.

The person Bogie encountered on the set was Sally Eilers. “I’m sure he’s already told you,” she said in a low voice. “But when I’m not hooting with Hoot Gibson, I’m seeing your friend, Mr. Spencer Tracy. He’s a wild one.”

The existence of that liaison had escaped Bogie. When Tracy was with him, he spent more time talking about the men he was seeing instead of the women he was seducing. “He failed to fill me in on that one.”

“In the case of Spence, he’s got so many women he probably loses track,” Eilers said.

“That’s our boy Spence,” he said

On the set George O’Brien came up to Bogie and invited him for a drink in his dressing room. Minutes later, O’Brien poured him a whiskey before filling a glass most generously for himself. “Love your shoes,” he said.

“The less said about them the better. Couldn’t they photograph me standing on a rock or on a staircase looking down at you?”

O’Brien pulled off his shirt. As Bogie was to learn during the shoot of *A Holy Terror*, O’Brien took every opportunity to pull off his shirt. Bogie could-n’t help but admire his muscles, which reminded him of his own padded shoulders. Brooks was right. O’Brien didn’t need any padding.

O’Brien was quick to detect Bogie’s interest in his physique. Very bluntly he asked, “Are you a homosexual, like my best buddy, Spence?”

“Like hell!” Bogie said defensively. “I’ve got a lot of credentials to prove otherwise. I can summon witnesses if& necessary.”

George O'Brien, Spencer Tracy

“Don’t get so rattled,” O’Brien cautioned him. “I wanted to know who I have to fuck on this picture. I know that Eilers is after me. I’ve already done Brooks in wardrobe. The director’s not a fairy, or at least I don’t think so. Who knows? The picture’s not over yet.”

“Rest assured you can keep your pants on around me.”

“It’s good to clear the air in the very& beginning,” O’Brien said. “When it comes to sex I don’t like to beat around the bush. I come right out with it.” He laughed at his own remark. That sounds sexually suggestive, doesn’t it?”

“I’m beginning to think everything in Hollywood sounds sexually suggestive,” Bogie said.

He remained long enough to finish his whiskey, but his presence in O’Brien’s dressing room seemed so completely unnecessary that he quickly excused himself and left.

“Mama didn’t raise no cowboy,” he said to himself as he headed to his dressing room to change out of his uncomfortable Western gear.

After leaving the studio, he drove to the Garden of Allah to take Helen for dinner. He found her still dressing when he came into the room. He took her in his arms and kissed her with more than the usual passion. “I made a big mistake,” he whispered in her ear. “We should have stayed together. I should never have married Mary.”

“It was my fault,” she said. “All my fault that we broke up.”

His need for her—his need for any woman, but especially for her—was greater than it had been even when they’d had their reunion in Los Angeles.

Sensing that need, she said in a soft voice, “Dinner will have to wait.” She led him to her bed.

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The next morning on the set of *A Holy Terror*, Bogie, dressed in cowboy drag, had only one scene, after which he was finished for the day.

When O’Brien invited him for lunch, Bogie accepted. Although he wanted to order his typical ham and eggs, O’Brien had insisted that he ask for *huevos rancheros* instead. “The cook in the commissary is Mexican, and they’re really good.”

For himself, O’Brien asked for four raw avocados. “It’s my favorite food. For breakfast, I eat an avocado sandwich on white toast. For lunch I eat them raw with just a little bit of lemon juice. At night I always make guacamole, which I eat as an appetizer before I order a very lean and very rare steak. It keeps my skin young and beautiful.” He leaned over to Bogie. “Go on. Feel the skin of my face. Tell me skin like that can only be compared to a baby’s ass.”

“Hell, man,” Bogie said, “I don’t want to be seen sitting here in the commissary running my fingers across your cheek. People will think we’re a couple of fags.”

“Don’t be such a sissy,” O’Brien urged. “Go on. Rub my skin.”

When he sensed that no one was watching them, Bogie ran his fingers across O’Brien’s cheek. “That’s smooth skin all right, a hell of a lot smoother than mine. I’m not aging well. Starting tomorrow, I’m gonna go on the avocado diet like you.” He reached for a cigarette. “Smooth as your skin is, I’d rather be running my hands over the breasts of—say, Jean Harlow.”

“Relax, relax,” O’Brien told him. “You don’t have to assert your heterosexual credentials around me. I’m not going to put the make on you. You’re not my type. Either man or woman, I insist they have great bodies. You don’t look like you have any physical fitness regime at all. Wardrobe told me they had to pad your shoulders. And those fucking high-heeled boots you wear— that’s not my idea of a man who’s tall in the saddle like I like ‘em.”

Blowing smoke toward him, Bogie said, “I guess that means you’re not going to ask me out.”

Since neither man was needed on the set for the rest of the day, O’Brien invited him to go swimming at Santa Monica. Bogie said that he didn’t have any trunks. O’Brien told him that his house was on the way to the ocean, and they could drop off there and change.

An hour later, Bogie found himself in O’Brien’s home. Although the actor kept himself incredibly well groomed, he obviously didn’t have a maid come in too often to clean his house. It was a pigsty. Dirty dishes piled high in the sink were growing mold, and newspapers and magazines littered the floor. Cups of coffee and platters of half-eaten, long-rotted food were seen about the living room, and the dark wood furnishings looked as if they’d barely survived the Dust Bowl.

When O’Brien emerged from his bedroom, he was stark naked, a most impressive sight. Bogie could only dream of having a physique like the star. “You’re not my size,” O’Brien said to him. “A buddy left these trunks here. I think you can fit into them.”

“I’ll let you in on another one of my beauty secrets,” O’Brien said, as Bogie stripped down to get into his swim suit.

Observing Bogie’s less than perfect figure, O’Brien said, “We’ve got to get you on a new regime of a sensible diet and vigorous physical exercise to build up your body. You probably drink too much. I take it easy with the booze. I notice you lighting up a cigarette every minute. I confine myself to one after-dinner cigar, and I don’t inhale. Your hair too is a problem. You look like a man who is going to loose his hair before he’s forty. The trick is you’ve got to dry your hair thoroughly when you shower or go into the water. Water rots hair. If you keep your hair wet, it’ll start to fall out.”

At the beach O’Brien the athlete attracted a lot of attention. Several of his female fans approached him asking for autographs. The actor seemed in his element, and it was obvious that he adored showing off his body. After all, he

was called “The Chest.”

Bogart as a cowboy in *A Holy Terror*

The beach didn’t bring any cheer to Bogie, as he sat watching the adoration heaped on O’Brien by half the women on the beach. The star had made him feel inadequate, and he’d never been proud of his body. “How,” he asked himself,& “was he ever going to become a leading man in films without a great body?” As each day went by, he thought more and more about heading back to New York. Of course, that too could be a problem. Helen had told him that there were longer lines at the soup kitchen than at the Broadway theaters.

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One night at a party honoring Kay Francis and Kenneth, they had arranged for him to meet gossip maven Louella Parsons, claiming she might jump-start his film career and he could remain on the West Coast.

Bogie was ushered into a library. Seated in a large love seat beside the fireplace, Parsons was busy emptying her latest glass.

With his own drink in hand—he’d lost count of how many he’d had—he introduced himself to Parsons. She said nothing but motioned for him to sit down.

As unbelievable as it seemed at the time, Parsons still considered herself one of Hollywood’s “glamour gals,” although even then she was well on her way toward becoming the hag of Tinseltown.

She had removed a notebook from her purse into which she scribbled some information—probably misinformation—that had gotten trapped in her soggy brain. After that, she reached for her compact and smeared on an extra heavy application of blood-red lipstick, even more of a five-alarm fire tube than Clara Bow wore.

“Bogart,” she said, finally staring at him with those steely eyes that had seen too much. “I’ve been meaning to interview you but have been too busy. With every guy on Broadway getting off the train daily, how can I possibly interview every out-of-work actor who hits town trying to make a buck in Hollywood?”

“You’ve got a point there, pal,” he said, reaching for his drink which he’d placed on a coffee table.

Gossip maven Louella Parsons

“Even when I interview somebody, all I hear is their lies,” she said.

“Maybe that’s because the real and the illusional in Hollywood are inextricable,” he said.

“God damn,” she said harshly. “An intellectual. If there’s one kind of actor I positively hate, it’s an intellectual.”

“That I’m not,” he said. “You can print in your column that I was kicked out of Andover. Not only for poor grades, but for being a bad boy.”

“That’s it!” she said. She motioned to a whiskey bottle left on a table beside the French doors. “Pour me some of that and don’t be& stingy, baby. I’m misquoting a line from that Garbo flick, *Anna Christie.”*

“Yeah, I got that.” He also got up to get her that whiskey and to replenish his own supply. When he gave her the drink, he asked, “What did you mean by, ‘That’s it!’”

“I need a peg to hang a label onto you,” she said. “A college dropout. I bet that as the bad boy of Andover, you got into a lot of trouble with girls. Yeah, that’s it. I’m gonna call you the bad boy of Hollywood.”

“Seems like I have a lot of competition for that title,” he said. “George Raft, for instance.”

“Hell with him,” she said. “He’s nothing but a New York gangster. If he gets to play gangsters in movies, it’ll be type-casting.” Slugging down a hefty swig of that bootleg whiskey, she aimed her eagle eye at him once again. “I’ve got to ask you something right off the bat. That lisp of yours. It bothers me. I know you’re married, but are you a fairy like William Haines? Forgive me, but I have to ask. All the butterflies from Broadway are descending on us out here. It’s very hard to make fairies sound manly in my column. Just how many more times do I have to write that Ramon Novarro is still waiting for the right gal?”

They both chuckled at that, and he felt that he’d broken through to her. “I’m strictly a man for the ladies. I find myself having to keep repeating that. But I don’t expect you to take my word for that. I’m here with Helen Menken tonight. Otherwise, I’d show you what a man I am.”

“Yes, I’ve met your wife. Charming.”

He meant to correct her and say “ex-wife,” but he just assumed that the custodian of all gossip in Hollywood was well aware that he’d married Mary Philips. Considering the shaky status of his marriage to Mary, he didn’t plan to mention her in the interview.

“What were you saying?” she asked. “About my not taking your word for it. If I can’t take your word for it, exactly how do you plan to prove it?”

“I didn’t think we’d progress this far so soon into the interview, but I do find you very attractive,” he said. “If you have any doubts about my manhood, I’d like to demonstrate otherwise. What I’m saying is you can put me to the test anytime.”

She smiled. “You find me attractive, do you? My God, I’m just a working newspaperwoman trying to make a living in journalism. Hearst doesn’t pay me enough. I find myself having to fight off half the wolves in Hollywood.”

“I didn’t mean to insult you,” he said. “But you are one good-looking woman. What can I say? In spite of my lisp, I like glamorous women.”

“We’ll see about that,” she said, studying him carefully with a greatly renewed interest. “I’ve heard a lot of stories about you since you hit town.”

“I bet at least one of them is true,” he said smiling.

Her face looked puzzled. It was as if she weren’t communicating on the same level with him. “I seek the truth but I’m surrounded by lies. People talk lies. They live lies, and with good reason. If the real truth were known about half the stars in Hollywood, the American public would stay away from their movies in droves.”

“When we have our interview, I’m going to give it to you straight,” he said.

She reached for her notepad again. “Give me your private phone number in case I want to get in touch with you.” As he told her the number, she wrote it down in her drunken scrawl.

He felt that he’d carried his flirtatious joking with her far enough and was eager to drop the subject. He was certain that she wouldn’t remember his offer the next morning as she nursed her hangover. Even if she did, he knew that she’d never take him up on it.

“I meant to write you a note and thank you for that good review you gave Spence and me in *Up The River.* Mainly Spence, of course. I even carry it around in my wallet along with a review that Alexander Woollcott wrote of my Broadway appearance in *Swifty.* He wrote, ‘The young man who embodies the aforesaid sprig is what is usually and mercifully described as inadequate.’”

“Hell with that drunken Woollcott,” she said. “What did I write?”

He found her review tucked between some ten-dollar bills in his wallet. He read her own words to her. “Humphrey Bogart, talented New York juvenile, plays the part of Steve straight and does it very well.”

“That was very nice of me,” she said. “Actually I was very kind to you and Tracy. Frankly, I can skip prison dramas. They’re too grim for my taste. America is in the middle of a Depression. We need movies with glamorous women in glamorous settings doing rich, glamorous things. Americans should be treated to a fantasy when they go to the movies. It’ll take their minds off their troubles, their empty refrigerators, and all those mortgage foreclosures.”

He carefully put the clipping away. “About that juvenile remark.”

“What about it?” she asked imperiously, almost defying him to challenge her copy.

“It’s the juvenile thing,” he said. “I’m trying to get away from that. On Christmas Day, I’m gonna be thirty-one years old. I’ve played all those ‘Tennis, anyone?’ roles on Broadway. Out here I’m trying for more adult parts.”

“I didn’t know you were thirty-one,” she said. “You don’t look it on the screen. I thought you were much younger. That Helen Menken has literally robbed the cradle. She must be in her late forties or early fifties if she’s a day. Women can’t lie to me about their age. I can just look at a woman, no matter how much makeup she has on, and tell her exact age.”

“And as for men?” he asked.

“They can fool me,” she said. She gave him the look of a boa constrictor about to devour a young chicken for its supper. “Now that I know your exact age, I must say I’ll have to reconsider that very romantic offer you made me. I have an absolute rule. I never go to bed with a man in his twenties. A lot of young actors proposition me because they think they’ll advance their careers by sleeping with me. I’ve already slept with Clark Gable. With the pick of all the beauties in Hollywood, he went to bed with me. He also went to bed with that bitch, Adela Rogers St. Johns. She’s my rival, you know. She thinks she knows so much about Hollywood. I’ve forgotten more than she’ll ever know.”

“I heard that Gable was born in 1901,” he said. “Did he turn thirty before you guys bedded down?”

“I know I said a man has to be thirty. In Clark’s case, I made an exception. In many ways, I wish I hadn’t slept with Clark. Now my illusion about him is spoiled.”

“I hope I don’t disappoint,” he said, teasing her.

“I have a feeling you can deliver,” she said. “Sometimes one of us glamour gals can only laugh when these He-men take off their trousers. But I’ve discovered that some of you guys who look like a runt are surprisingly pleasing when you let it all hang out.”

She downed the rest of her whiskey and motioned to him that she wanted another refill. “Now let’s get down to this God damn interview. I know you’re physically attracted to me, but that doesn’t mean that I’m going to let you off easy. I don’t feel like a candy-ass tonight, believe you me.”

After her interview, she reached for his arm. “Escort me back into the party. Before leaving the library, she kissed him on the mouth. Her brewery breath was foul. “I’m flattered by your offer.”

He had hoped that she’d forgotten it.

“I’ll call you next week.” She looked up lovingly into his eyes. “I’m sure we’ll have a fine old time when we get

together again."

With Parsons on his arm, he came back into the main living room and shuddered at the prospect of facing her again, especially if they were alone.

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Back on the set of *A Holy Terror*, a message was left for him. "It's important that we get together—and soon!" It was signed "Miss D." He guessed that Miss D was actually Bette Davis.

Since her Hollywood star didn't seem to be shining any brighter than his, he wondered what she wanted with him. He suspected that she didn't really like him, so he doubted if romance were on her mind. Maybe she'd stumbled onto a hot script that would make both of them overnight sensations.

He needed something to happen and fast.

Hung over, disheveled, and burnt out, he headed for wardrobe.

Tapping his foot impatiently, Greg Brooks, known around the Fox lot as "the wardrobe mistress," said, "My, oh my, aren't *we* looking *déshabillée* today."

"Listen, you little faggot," Bogie said, "get out your fucking padding and your high heels and get it over with before I bash your skull in."

"Aren't we the ferocious *tigre* ?" Brooks said. "Didn't get any last night? Thank God you didn't call me." He licked his lips. "I was too preoccupied."

At that moment the director, Irving Cummings, came into the department.& Anger flashed across his face as he turned to confront Bogie. "Listen, asshole, and listen good. I can replace you tomorrow with any of about a thousand better actors. You're totally wrong for the part, and Fox is only using you because some idiot signed a contract giving you $750 a week. Actors like you I can get for $25 a week." He backed away from him. "You're hung over and you smell like a brewery. I'm reporting all of this to Carl Laemmle."

"Junior or senior?" Bogie asked provocatively.

The director glared at him and seemed out of control. "After we wrap this picture, you'll never get another job in this town. I'll see to that." Cummings stormed out of the wardrobe department.

Bogie tried to get a grip on himself. He'd wanted to punch Cummings in the mouth.

Later that day, and to punish him, Cummings made him shoot a simple scene forty-five times. The director seemed to be sadistically torturing Bogie and humiliating him in front of cast members.

Fortunately, he'd brought a flask with him. "Instead of becoming the greatest actor in motion pictures, I'm going to become the biggest star on Broadway?"

He stood at a safe distance from the dressing room of Sally Eilers. It was obvious that Tracy had been carrying on with Hoot Gibson's wife since they made *Quick Millions* together. Eilers was the first to leave, since she was due on the set.

After she'd disappeared, Bogie walked up to her dressing room door and knocked on it. In his underwear, with drink in hand, Tracy opened the door. Seeing who it was, he embraced Bogie warmly. "We're supposed to be best friends, and I never get to see you any more. Come on in."

"Aren't you afraid Hoot Gibson will show up with a six-gun?" Bogie asked.

"Not at all," Tracy said. "Sally has told me about the kind of marriage they have. Actually I learned today she plans to divorce him."

“It’s probably a smart career move for her,” Bogie said, accepting a drink. “Her star is rising. There’s talk she’s going to become big. Her sagebrush cowboy is riding off into the sunset.”

“Don’t knock sagebrush flickers,” Tracy kidded him. “You seem to be making an oater yourself.”

Sally Eilers

“It’s George O’Brien’s flick,” Bogie said with a sigh of despair.

“After I get dressed and have a drink or two with you,” Tracy said, “I’m going to head over to George’s dressing room. I like George a lot. He’s a real loving he-man, unlike that girl, Lew Ayres.”

“George and Sally on the same afternoon?” Bogie chided him. “You’re more of a man than I am.”

“We both know that,” Tracy said, smiling to erase the sting from his remark. “George and Sally are both on my plate for the afternoon. Tonight I’ve got a date with Jean Harlow.” When Bogie didn’t say anything, Tracy asked him, “Did you hear that?”

“Yeah, I heard it,” he said. “You and Harlow must have had one gay old time on the set of *Goldie*, a picture I think should be called *Blondie*.”

“Harlow’s an okay kid,” he said. “Mixed up in the head. A sick family life with her stepfather lusting after her, a mother who’s nuts, and an even worse situation emerging with this Paul Bern creature from the dark lagoon.”

“Spence, old pal,” Bogie said, pouring another drink. “I like you a lot. More than I like Kenneth MacKenna. He’s my pal, and I tell him everything that’s going on in my life, but I have a special feeling for you.”

“Are you coming on to me?” Tracy asked with just a slight touch of mockery in his voice, as if to leave open the possibility he might be joking.

“Cut the crap!” Bogie said. “I have a hard time accepting that part of your life. I mean, I can see you banging Eilers while the grips outside are dreaming of being locked between your spurs. I can see you dating your co-star tonight. Let’s face it: Harlow is the sex symbol of Hollywood. All the men want her. What I can’t even picture—don’t dare picture—is you and guys. George O’Brien, for God’s sake. Mr. Avocado Sandwich.

“I love you, Bogie, but I feel you’re very limited somehow. Many of the pleasures that God put on this earth for us to partake of, especially forbidden fruit, are not to be enjoyed by you. Your mind’s closed off.”

“My loss, pal,” Bogie said, “and that’s how I’m gonna keep it. But if you think for one minute I’m gonna picture you as a pansy like Ramon Novarro and Billy Haines, you’re wrong.”

“You said it all. I’m a man’s man in more ways than one.”

“But I hear from people who work with you that you fuck every pretty gal on the set of one of your pictures,” Bogie said. “Not just your female leads, but the secretaries, the script gal, the waitress who serves you a BLT in the commissary.”

“It’s true, I do,” Tracy said. “I also fuck beautiful guys. By the way, I’m a top. Screwing a man in the ass is different from fucking a woman. Another kind of satisfaction.”

“I know what you’re saying,” Bogie said “but I’ll never understand it. To me, you’re the least homosexual male in Hollywood.”

“You’ll learn as you go through life that we come in the most unlikely packages. The captains of football teams. The heads of industry. Boxers. Weightlifters. Generals. Even one of the presidents of the United States.”

“What president was a fag?”

“Abraham Lincoln.”

“I don’t believe that,” Bogie said. “You’re putting me on.”

“Read your history books,” Tracy said. “His lover was Joshua Fry Speed. You fuck too many women at night. You should take a night off and read a history book once in a while.”

“You’re one to talk.”

“I’m serious,” Tracy said. “Read about Lincoln and Speed, a handsome young man from Kentucky who slept with Lincoln for three years in a very narrow bed. Speed later wrote that no two men were more intimate than Lincoln and him.”

“Why should I doubt your word?” Bogie asked. “After these months logged in Hollywood, I’ve seen it all.”

“If I may correct you, you’ve seen a bit,” Tracy said. “But you haven’t seen it all. After another thirty years, you’ll have seen it all.”

***

Back at his bleak apartment, a sole letter had arrived. It was postmarked from New York, and he tore it open at once, knowing it was from his wife.

Dear Hump,

It’s been a long time with no word. Even between good friends, it’s been too long without contact. Between a husband and wife, it really marks the end of the marriage. I was prepared to go on in this relationship, at least a little while longer. However, when I read in Parsons’ column that you were back with Helen Menken, it was all too much. The bitch even referred to Helen as your wife and not ex-wife. It is as if I didn’t even exist. I know that many people still think of Helen as your wife. That’s because we did not have a marriage.

As you well know, during the first days of our marriage, I made love to Kenneth far more frequently than I did with you. It may be too late for us, but I realize now that I should have married Kenneth instead of you. He writes every other day, at least, and it is through him that I have had any news of you at all. Of course, Kenneth is a gentleman and leaves out all the bad stuff about you.

I’m sure you’ve had many affairs in Hollywood with beautiful women, actresses far more beautiful than me. There’s even talk in New York about you and Barbara Stanwyck, although I find that hard to believe. Unlike you, I’m no good at playing the field. I’m no saint but I do tend to focus on one man at a time. His name is Roland Young, and I’m sure you know who he is. He’s living with me, even though he’s married to Marjorie Kummer. He married her in 1921, but I have persuaded him to get a divorce and marry me. That means, of course, that I will soon be filing for a divorce from you. Let’s call it the marriage that never was.

Mary

“Roland Young,” he said out loud, carefully folding the letter. “A God damn limey.” He fully intended to show this letter to Kenneth. The way he saw it, if Mary still felt that she should have married Kenneth, it might affect his imminent plan to marry Kay Francis.

Maybe Kenneth should break off his engagement to Francis and marry his “true love” after all. After reading that letter, Bogie felt that he’d welcome the divorce, and he was ready to tell Kenneth that he didn’t have to hold back any longer, and could move in on Mary if he wanted to. But then his old jealousy of Kenneth came back again.

Unaware until he read her letter that Mary even knew Roland Young, Bogie had vaguely followed the actor's career. In the movies and in the theater, other actors kept tabs on their fellow thespians, never knowing when they would become a major competitor for a part.

Young had only recently starred in two films for Cecil B. DeMille—first *Madam Satan*, which co-starred Lillian Roth and Kay Johnson, and *The Squaw Man* with a big-name cast that included Warner Baxter, Lupe Velez, Eleanor Boardman, and Charles Bickford.

Bogie couldn't help but compare himself unfavorably with Young. He'd read in Parsons' column that Young was due back in Hollywood where a string of pictures was being lined up for him. Bogie himself, on the other hand, was facing unemployment in a Depression.

Stepping across the hallway, Bogie knocked on Kenneth's door. When he came to open it, he handed him a letter. "It's from New York. Your girl friend."

"My girl friend?" Kenneth asked, looking astonished. "I no longer have a girl friend in New York."

"You do now," Bogie said, handing him the farewell letter from Mary.

***

When he went back into his apartment, he decided to return Bette Davis's call. When she came onto the line, she told him that she was organizing a cocktail party for some co-workers. "I'm going to kick everybody out by seven-thirty, and I want you to stay on so we can talk privately. It's about our film future."

Roland Young

She'd said the right words, "film future," and he told her he'd be at her house within the hour. He took a wild guess that Davis had come up with a script that would save their fading careers, and he wanted to see what that New Englander had in mind.

As he arrived at the door to the Davis home, it was opened by her mother, Ruth. The look on her Puritanical Yankee face told him that she didn't approve of his coming to her house. To him, she was a& tenacious shrew who unduly fussed over her daughter, who was also her meal ticket. He'd heard that she was the stage mother to end all stage mothers.

In a fairly low-cut dress and with no makeup except a "slash" of lipstick, Davis greeted him in her living room. It was a unique party. In her devious mind, the actress had thrown a party for "Hollywood losers," a grouping that included herself. She'd invited some male stars she'd appeared with in unsuccessful films for "tea and sympathy." The sympathy was genuine, but the "tea" was actually whiskey.

She kissed Bogie lightly on the lips. "I think we should celebrate failure this afternoon," she said, appearing a bit unbalanced and giddy. "All of us are being referred to as box-office bombs."

She introduced him to Walter Byron, Pat O'Brien, James "Junior" Durkin, and a very handsome young actor, Frank Albertson.

Bogie found himself standing on the Davis back porch talking to Albertson. He'd appeared with Davis in *Way Back Home*, which had been directed by William Seiter. Originally entitled *Other People's Business*, the film had starred Phillips Lord, who was known across the country for the Seth Parker character he played on his regular radio show for NBC.

“I have to admit it,” Albertson said to Bogie, “I’m still carrying a torch for Bette. During the filming, I fell hook, line, and sinker for her. I’ve asked her to marry me. She’s going to give me her answer this weekend.”

“Good luck, pal,” Bogie said, not really meaning it. For some reason, he felt jealous.

Albertson soon drifted off, his tongue wagging in hot pursuit of Davis. Bogie couldn’t believe that Davis would return this young man’s affection. And she didn’t.

As Bette Davis’ star rose in Hollywood, Albertson’s twinkled out.

The next failure Bogie tried to engage in conversation was another handsome actor, Walter Byron. He’d appeared opposite Davis in *The Menace*, directed by Roy William Neill. The picture had initially been entitled *The Feathered Serpent*, then *The Squeaker*.

“It should have been called *The Stinker,* ” Byron said, deep into his booze.

It seemed only months ago that Walter Byron had been hailed in the press as “Hollywood’s new John Gilbert.” He had landed the male role of the year when he was cast as the roistering German prince opposite Gloria Swanson’s shy little Irish girl from the convent in *Queen Kelly*.

“Swanson told me I stood to be the next great male star of Hollywood,” Byron said. “Imagine my disappointment when Swanson and Joseph Kennedy pulled the plug on Erich von Stroheim. That film will never be finished. If that nutbag Austrian had had his way, the movie would have been nine hours long and cost millions.”

She introduced him to Pat O’Brien. O’Brien would join that exclusive club of James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson as one of Bogie’s most frequent co-stars in the future. O’Brien seemed to be a hard-drinking, witty Irishman with an insouciant charm.

As Bogie chatted amicably with O’Brien on that fading afternoon of long ago, the actor told him that he’d been very disappointed with his role in *Hell’s House* with Davis and Junior Durkin. “Bette is referring to it as the nadir of her career,” O’Brien said, “even before her career gets started.”

“Sounds like a great picture, pal,” Bogie said. “Remind me to save my quarter and not see it.”

As O’Brien drifted away, Davis herself came back, positioning herself next to him. He was having a difficult time getting used to her. She wasn’t the mousy actress he’d encountered on the set of *Bad Sister*. This was a new Davis with bleached blond hair. Somehow the new hair made her sexier and more alluring, although Jean Harlow would never have to fear competition.

She held Bogie’s hand as she told him, “For about an hour after I saw myself in that horrible movie you and I made, I contemplated suicide. Makeup tried to compensate for my small mouth by exaggerating its size with lipstick. My mouth looked like a tunnel. Crawford can get away with those ridiculously exaggerated lips. I can’t. Also, when I’m embarrassed or insecure, and I was both of those things, I smile crookedly.”

“My, oh my, aren’t we a litany of complaints today,” he said.

“That’s not all. My outfits stunk. It was obvious I didn’t have a hairdresser. Sidney Fox got all the attention. In *Way Back Home*, I looked a little better. I learned that Universal was ready to drop me until Berman—that’s Pandro Berman, the producer over at RKO—wanted to borrow me for that cornspun role. A guy named J. Roy Hunt, the cinematographer, actually made me look good for the first time ever on film.”

“You’re a regular *femme fatale*,” he said.

“Don’t you put me on, Bogart,” Davis said. “But actually, I did look rather pretty. A lot of directors in New York called me pretty. Maybe I am a *femme fatale* and don’t know it. Carl Laemmle—Junior, that is—thinks I have no sex appeal, but all my leading men fall in love with me.”

After her other guests—all losers—had left, Davis invited Bogie to remain behind for “some private conversation.”

He'd noticed that she'd become more self-assured and poised in the wake of having so many handsome young men, all of them co-stars, falling in love with her.

He too found her the most attractive and alluring he'd ever seen her, which was in direct contrast to his first impression of her. Even so, with her whitened hair and pop-eyed look, she still, at least to him, evoked a dime store Harlow.

It was as if she were still searching for a face and a look but hadn't found it yet, whereas Garbo had burst on the screen, even though very young, with a look and a poise that she'd always keep.

Meanwhile, both Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford, after some awkward beginnings, were finding their "look" and their screen presence. Davis seemed on a desperate and roughly equivalent search, and even without a camera, her intensity to find a screen persona filled the air with electricity.

After the departure of her other guests, when she came out to visit with him on the back porch, she turned off the overhead light, claiming it attracted bugs. But he knew the real reason.

Thankfully, the Wrath of God, Ruth Davis, had gone to bed early, complaining of a headache. For all this stage mother knew, each of her daughter's guests had left. Bogie suspected that Ruth disapproved mightily of the opposite sex, viewing men as "the enemy." She seemed so fiercely protective of her daughter that her behavior reminded him of a butch lesbian, guarding a prized nymphet from the menace of preying seducers.

Once they were seated on the porch swing, and with the warm night air blowing about them, Bogie was in the mood for romance.

Regardless of the outcome of the evening, he'd have a tale to tell Kenneth in the morning. In this case, he no longer cared if Kenneth reported his seductions to Mary. In some perverse part of his mind, he wanted Mary to know that many women, including stars, found him an attractive and a desirable bed-mate. Even if he returned to New York, and he was most definitely headed back there, he'd ride the train back East with a proven record of having seduced some of the biggest stars in the movies, even Marlene Dietrich.

On that back porch and to his unpleasant surprise, Davis didn't want to talk about their relationship or even their future career in films, assuming they had one.

She focused her talk on one beau back East, Harmon Oscar Nelson. "I call him Ham," she said, "and he calls me Spuds."

"Ain't that cute?" he said, slightly softening the sarcasm in his voice.

"He wants to be a musician," she said. "He's equally good at playing both the piano and the trumpet. But he'll never become a star doing either. He's also talking about becoming a radio singer like Bing Crosby."

"If he doesn't knock Bing down from the mike," he said, "maybe he'll become the next Rudy Vallée. But what about us? What's gonna happen to Miss Bette Davis and Mr. Humphrey Bogart? Or have you already told me what you think of me by inviting me to this party of losers?"

"Perhaps," she said. "My career seems to be collapsing. So does yours. Stanwyck and Crawford are moving up in Hollywood. You and I seem to be headed the same direction as those silent screen stars. Did you know that Louis B. Mayer was quoted as saying that at least one-third of the stars of 1928 are washed up, and he predicts that in the years to come, even more will fall by the wayside. I think he's right. Look around you. Vilma Banky, John Gilbert, Ramon Novarro, Bill Haines, Gloria Swanson, Pola Negri. Mayer has hated Chaplin since they got into a fistfight at the Hollywood Hotel, and he thinks Chaplin will never really make it in Talkies either."

"So, what are we going to do?" he asked. "I think we're stage actors. Both of us should return to Broadway. Maybe we'll take the train back East together."

"Is that a proposal of marriage?" she asked.

“I’ll soon be available. Mary has written that she plans to divorce me. She’s fallen for Roland Young.”

“I know of him,” she said. “From what I hear, if a woman manages to keep him close to her bed for three months straight, she’s set a world’s record.”

“I’m not broken up about it,” he said. “It wasn’t much of a marriage. My friend, Kenneth MacKenna, is in love with her.”

“The one marrying Kay Francis?” she said.

“One and the same.”

“I’ll never comprehend why men out here marry women like that,” she said.

Bogie lit a cigarette for her and one for himself, as they sat on that swing going up in smoke, the same way both of them would do later on the screen.

“Ham wants me to give up my career and marry him,” she said. “He claims he can support the both of us, and I should be a housewife.”

“And how do you feel about that?” he asked.

“I’m not sure what to do,” she said. “I’m very confused. I met Ham at the Cushing Academy. He was one year ahead of me. He is a very shy boy, awkward, gangling. I think he brings out my maternal instinct. He’s pleasant looking. He’ll never be handsome. He has a large nose.”

“That can be a promising sign in a man,” he said.

“What in hell does that mean?” she asked.

“I’m sure it’s not true in all cases, but Joan Blondell told me that a big nose or big feet on a man is a good barometer that something else is big on the man too.”

“Really?” she asked skeptically. “I’ve never heard such nonsense. I note that you don’t have a big nose. Nor do you seem to have particularly large feet.”

“There are always exceptions to the rule, as I’ve noted,” he said, smiling. “You can put me to the test anytime.”

“Ruthie still thinks I’m a virgin,” she said. “You know better.”

“Not from first-hand experience,” he said, putting his arm around her. “Poor Ham. Gilbert Roland is a tough act to follow.”

“Roland’s taken,” she said. “I’m all that Ham has in the world. Ruthie wants me to marry Ham and surrender my so-called virginity to him.”

“Too late for that now,” he cautioned.

“Indeed. I’ve already surrendered my virginity to Ham. It wasn’t a successful mating.”

“How so?”

“It seems that Ham has been a chronic masturbator since he was six years old. He’s given to premature ejaculation and can’t satisfy a woman. If I marry him, I’ll have to work for months—maybe more than a year—to train him.”

“I’m already trained,” he said. With an arm still around her, he began to feel her right breast. She did not object or pull away.

But she did take note of it. “I’m deliberately letting you have your fun,” she said. “I’ve been told that to be

sophisticated, I've got to take up smoking and drinking, which I've done. Apparently, letting a man feel your breasts is another way to be sophisticated. I went to a party the other night. No men clustered around me. I felt like the wallflower I did when I attended Newton High. Even the lesbians in the room were clustering around Kay Francis, paying me no mind. Suddenly I looked up into the face of the most beautiful young man I've ever seen. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. I knew I could fall in love with him at once. I've heard that he's breaking up with Crawford. I've also heard he's a great lover. What a headline I could make if he dumps Crawford, divorces her, and marries me. I would install myself at Pickfair with the cream of Hollywood society."

"At first I resented you talking about other men when you've got me," he said, "but I want to hear the outcome of this."

"Oh, he chatted briefly with me. Offered me a cigarette. I was wearing my most low-cut gown. Suddenly, he reached into my dress and fondled one of my breasts. I couldn't believe what was happening. Just like that he did it. The way you're feeling me right now tells me you're not disappointed. Mr. Fairbanks must have been used to bigger and better things. He withdrew his hand rather quickly. He told me I should put ice on my nipples the way Crawford does. And that was that. He just turned and walked away. I've never felt so humiliated."

"I think I can relate to that," he said. "From a man's perspective, it would be like a woman unbuttoning your fly, reaching in to measure the goodies, and then walking away after saying, 'Not enough there to mess up my mouth with.'"

They both laughed at that. "What say we forget the Fairbanks boy, Roland, Ham, and God knows who else?" he said. "You've got a man once billed as the next Valentino, even the next Clark Gable, and you're not taking advantage of the situation. You said yourself, you want to become sophisticated." He took her in his arms and kissed her deeply before reluctantly breaking away. "If you give me a chance, you'll find I don't suffer from Ham's problem. I also find your nipples divine. In fact, I wish to suck both of them."

She offered absolutely no resistance as he moved in on her. He wanted more. He pulled her as close as he could to him, as his hand traveled from one breast to the other. With his other hand, he began the glide up her leg, past her garter belt and along her creamy thigh. He was heading for homeport.

Just before he reached the honeypot itself, the porch light was switched on. In the harsh, unforgiving glare stood Ruth Davis, looking ferocious and clad in her bathrobe.

"Get out of my house!" she shouted at him. "How dare you fondle my daughter like she's some bitch in heat. The loss of virginity before marriage will ruin a woman's life."

He pulled away from Davis but hesitated to get up. His hard-on had risen.

Davis looked down, burying her head on her chest. She began to whimper.

"Get out!" Ruth commanded.

In defiance of her, he rose from the swing with an erection tenting his trousers.

His tumescent state was not lost on Ruth. "You're a slave to your genitalia, Bogart," she said. "A disgusting, perverted creature. My daughter is going to marry Ham Nelson, not you. I'm not going to let her surrender her most prized possession, her virginity, to a sexual predator. I hear you've had half the women in Hollywood. You offer nothing to my Bette but venereal disease and unwanted pregnancy."

"Good night, Bette." he said, adjusting his shirt in his trousers and heading to the door that Ruth held open for him.

Angered and humiliated, he walked rapidly through the living room. He vowed never to see Bette again. The way he figured it, a relationship between the two of them was out of the question.

How wrong he was.

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He couldn't believe it, but here he was in the Villa Carlotta apartment of Louella Parsons. She'd decided that trying to interview him was too difficult at Hollywood parties because of all the distractions. When she'd invited him over, she'd promised to give him her undivided attention.

Fearing that she might remember his offer of seduction, he could only hope that her husband, Dr. Harry Martin, was home that night. But when he got there, he learned that the doctor was administering to two of his patients, Lew Ayres and Douglas Fairbanks Jr., both of whom had come down with severe cases of the clap, according to Parsons.

"Docky," as Parsons called her husband, had launched his career as a urologist, but Bogie had heard that he was now known as "doctor for the clap" around Hollywood, having treated everybody from Gary Cooper to Tallulah Bankhead. In their case, there was an ongoing disagreement about which party had infected the other. Docky was also the "house doctor," or so it was said, for Lee Frances, one of the reigning madams of her day. Parsons' husband was said to have had more frequent and more intimate contacts with the genitals of stars, both male and female, than any other person in Hollywood.

Inspecting penises and vaginas didn't occupy all of Docky's agenda. Parsons saw to it that he was hired frequently as a technical adviser on films such as *Doctors' Wives* that required some very limited medical expertise. Parsons would then plug the film in her column, lavishing special praise on the technical direction. She'd even gotten Governor Clement C. Young to appoint Docky to the California State Boxing Commission "just for the hell of it."

At this point, a Boston bull terrier came into the living room and immediately jumped up onto Bogie's lap, practically knocking his drink from his hand.

"That's our adorable Pansy Parsons," she said, ordering the dog to get down from the sofa. The dog obeyed her but anchored itself close to Bogie's feet, eyeing him suspiciously as if he might make a tasty snack.

As Bogie sat across from Parsons, enjoying some of Docky's good whiskey, she told him about a startling new development in broadcasting that she and "my Docky" had seen in New York. They'd gone East for a gala dinner, where he'd been awarded an honorary degree at the American College of Surgeons. Bogie was later to learn that William Randolph Hearst and the power of his newspapers were instrumental in securing the undeserved award for Docky.

It seemed that Parsons had been asleep at her typewriter at the advent of the Talkies, and had written that, "Flickers that talk will soon shut up—a mere passing fad."

She didn't want news of such a misguided opinion to ever tarnish her reputation again, so she aggressively embraced the new technology. During their visit to New York, Docky and she had been invited to a television broadcast. "Television is sort of like radio, but with a big difference," she said. "A picture is projected."

"You've got to be kidding," he said.

"It'll be the death of the movies," she predicted. "One day people will sit in their homes watching a moving picture the way they gather today around their radio sets. It'll be like bringing a movie into your own home."

"I don't want to get into an argument with you over this, but, trust me, that day will never happen."

"It's gonna happen sooner than later," she said. "I predict that by 1935 half the homes of America will have a television set. They even told me in New York that it's soon going to be possible to show films on television in color."

"Hey, you're getting carried away. The idea of sitting at home watching a movie is hard enough to take. Watching a color movie on television—that's a bit much."

"No, I mean it," she said, "and they'll do more than just present light entertainment on a home screen," she said. "Football games will one day be broadcast live. Newsreel cameras will photograph late-breaking events and flash them into your home. Presidential inaugurations will be televised. In fact, the whole presidential race will one day be decided by television."

“I don’t get that,” he said.

“The two candidates will square off on television. The one who photographs best and handles himself better will win the race.”

“That means that an actor wanting to be president will have a better chance of becoming that than a non-actor who might be a great politician but lousy in front of a camera,” he said.

“Well,” she said, signaling him that she wanted a refill of her liquor. “I wouldn’t go that far. No actor I’ve ever known could possibly become president of the United States.”

At the urgent ringing of the phone in her library, she excused herself and heaved herself up from her armchair. When she returned, she told him, “It was from Docky. He went with Jack Dempsey and some other friends to Santa Barbara to see a boxing match, and later, Docky and Dempsey had a few drinks together in a tavern. Then Docky and the champ got into an argument. Before it was over, my Docky knocked Dempsey on his ass. What a man!”

Bogie would never know the true circumstances of this barroom brawl, or if Docky had indeed knocked out Dempsey.

“This will show that SOB, Benny Rubin, that low-rent vaudevillian, what a man my Docky really is.”

Born the same year as Bogie, Rubin was a famous stand-up comedian and fim actor whose career would span fifty years.

“I guess I don’t get it,” Bogie said. “Why would your husband need to prove his manhood to Benny Rubin?”

“Rubin and Docky were standing next to each other in the bathroom of a hotel at a party we attended recently. Rubin later spread the word around town about Docky. Rubin said he knows why Louella has a constant smile on her face. He claimed that thing hanging out of Docky’s fly looked like a baby’s arm with an apple in its hand.”

“Why did that make you mad?” he asked. “Docky should be flattered.”

“A baby’s arm,” she sputtered, practically spitting out her words. “He could have said a man’s arm. I can assure you that Docky, unlike Paul Bern, is a fully grown man.”

“We can assume that when your husband put on that show for Rubin, he was soft. I’m sure that when it’s hard, a man’s arm would be a more appropriate comparison.”

“Don’t try to pacify me,” she warned him. “I’ll see that Rubin is finished in this town.”

Ever since the episode of Docky vs. Rubin at the hotel urinal, Parsons had been running attacks on Rubin in her column. During his filming of *Marianne* with Marion Davies, Parsons printed the untrue allegation that Rubin got drunk and broke a violin over his wife’s head. On the set the next day, Hearst told Rubin that he would “call Louella and dress her down if you want me to.” Gallantly, Rubin told the newspaper czar that Parsons’ attacks kept his name in front of the public, and that the publicity would boost ticket sales.

Parsons tried to interview Bogie that night, but appeared far too drunk. He was explaining how helpful showman W.A. Brady Sr. had been during the launching of his Broadway career, and how he’d been directed by John Cromwell.

“I know those people,” she said, “and even wrote about them a few weeks ago. I said Helen Gahagan, the star of many a Brady play, was visiting Hollywood with her new husband, Douglas Melvyn. I also claimed that not so long ago Miss Gahagan was married to John Cromwell.” She held up her drink and looked at him imploringly. “Now what was wrong with that?”

“I don’t think Helen appeared in any Brady production,” he said. “I know she wasn’t married to John, and I think her husband’s name is Melvyn Douglas, not Douglas Melvyn.”

“Silly me,” she said. “I refuse to look anything up. I rely on the old bean. Basically, I was right, though. If it wasn’t actually Helen who appeared in Brady plays, it was someone like her. And Cromwell should have married Helen. She should never have married this Douglas or Melvyn, whatever in hell that one calls itself. He has no sex appeal whatsoever.”

“Gloria Swanson must disagree,” he said. “I read she’s cast him in her film, *Tonight or Never*.”

“Gloria also thought that that drunk, Walter Byron, was going to become some big shit in Hollywood when she cast him opposite her in *Queen Kelly*. What does she know? I also happen to know that she’s trying to hide her pregnancy from the camera. She has to bind herself into elastic underwear.”

As the evening and the drinking progressed, it was obvious to him that she wasn’t going to write a column about him. She was all too familiar with his lackluster films, and his “Tennis, anyone?” career on Broadway clearly bored her.

Throughout the evening she seemed obsessed with the phone, which never rang again. It was as if she were waiting for some late-breaking story about to happen. Finally, he found out what it was.

“I know the Lombard and Powell marriage is on the rocks,” she said, “but I’m after a bigger story that will shake up the world.”

“What might this earth-shattering news be?” he asked.

“It’s a double story,” she said. “The break-up of two marriages, the uncrowned king and queen of Hollywood and Tinseltown’s uncrowned prince and princess.”

“That could only mean Pickford and Fairbanks Sr. and his son, Junior, and Crawford.”

“Who else?” she said, seemingly impatient with him. “How clearly do I have to spell it out?”

As Parsons got drunker, she ranted about various brush-offs she’d received. She claimed that she’d told both Mayer and Irving Thalberg to send Garbo back to Sweden and to cast Jeanne Eagels in her roles. She’d also demanded that the studio give all Jean Harlow parts to Clara Bow, and she’d lobbied to have Blanche Sweet cast in the role of Diane in Fox’s *Seventh Heaven* instead of Janet Gaynor. Parsons seemed infuriated that the studios were not heeding her casting advice.

It was after midnight when she, on wobbly legs, rose from her chair. “You’ve been drinking,” she said to him, stating the obvious. “Since Docky won’t be home tonight, after having beaten the shit out of Dempsey, I suggest you stay over here at my apartment. Otherwise, I might have to write about your arrest for drunk driving.”

His worst nightmare had come true. She’d remembered his invitation to seduction. He’d challenged her to put his manhood to the test.

Faced with the horrific possibility of having to have sex with her, he evaluated her carefully, wondering if he’d be able to get it up.

He’d read somewhere that she was claiming that she was born in 1893,& which would make her only about six years older than him. He’d also heard that she’d been born in 1880, maybe even in the late 1870s. That would put her in her fifties.

Figuring that an actor had to do what an actor had to do, he braced himself for the challenge.

She took his hand, leading him to her bedroom.

“I have stage fright,” he whispered into her ear.

“What’s the matter?” she asked. “You already told me you weren’t some lisping faggot. Here’s your chance to prove it to America’s top newspaper-woman.”

“I mean if you objected to Rubin comparing your Docky to a baby’s arm—and that was when he was soft—I don’t know if I’ll measure up to your expectations.”

“Don’t worry,” she said. She suddenly lunged toward him, locking him in a tight embrace. Her lipstick-slashed mouth descended on him, and her tongue darted out like a rattlesnake’s. Her alcohol-tainted breath was foul, and he prayed for the strength to get through the evening.

When she finally broke away, she placed her bejeweled hand at his groin. “So, I didn’t get a rise out of you yet. I’ll have to revert to more drastic measures.” She took his hand again, leading the march to her bedroom. “I’m sure you’ll please me. Besides, you couldn’t possibly be any worse than Clark Gable—and no one could possibly fuck as badly as him.”

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Through Spencer Tracy, Bogie learned that Basil Rathbone had been secretly meeting with Helen about reprising his stage role in *The Captive* if the film, based on the Broadway play about lesbianism, ever made it in a watered-down version onto the screen.

Bogie was doubly hurt that he wasn’t being considered for the role of the male lead in *The Captive*. The way he figured it, it would be a cake-walk for him to play the role of a man who falls for a lesbian. He’d had so much experience with that in real life that the part wouldn’t be difficult for him at all. He felt that he needed a controversial film to call Hollywood’s attention to him, now that Fox was about to dump him.

Helen hadn’t been returning his calls, as she perhaps feared that he’d ask her to cast him in her film.

Bogie feared that he might encounter Parsons again. After the previous evening, he wasn’t too eager to run into the gossip columnist, and he never intended to have a repeat performance of their sexual marathon at the Villa Carlotta. On the other hand, he didn’t have to be ashamed of his performance. If he had to admit it to himself, he’d acquitted himself very well. He didn’t know if he were any better than “Baby’s Arm,” her husband, Docky, but he felt that when he’d left her bed, Parsons was one satisfied woman. After giving her multiple orgasms, he’d shown her what a man he really was.

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At a Hollywood party, he encountered Tallulah Bankhead again.

“Hump, my darling, I think you and I both are getting a little long in the tooth for Hollywood,” she said. “It’s for kids in their twenties, not mature adults in their thirties.”

“You look more beautiful than ever,” he said to reassure her.

“Don’t kid a kidder, darling.” She brushed back her hair and theatrically gazed at the fading sunset. “The bloom is off this big waxy magnolia. Somehow, film doesn’t capture my electrifying personality that I can convey on stage. The critics may be right. On screen, I’m just a pale imitation of Garbo. My face doesn’t seem to move right. My eyes don’t come alive. I’m not made for the movies.”

“Then let’s you and me hook up, go back to New York, and become Mr. and Mrs. Broadway,” he said, only partially joking.

“That’s the best offer I’ve had all day,” she said. “I might take you up on that. But I’ll have to get back to you.”

“What’s holding you back?” he asked, bending over and kissing her lightly on her scarlet-painted lips.

“Since one of my goals—the one about fucking Coop—has already been achieved, I have set two other goals for myself—and two more candidates to fuck before I leave Hollywood.”

“Since you’ve already had me, the best,” he said, “who else is there?”

“Garbo, of course. You’ve not plowed her yet, have you, darling?”

“No, but I got a blow-job from Marlene Dietrich.”

“That’s no distinction,” she said. “Marlene has sucked all of our cocks. My second goal is to bed Johnny Weissmuller with his ten uncut inches.”

“The Olympic swimming champ?” he asked. “I didn’t think he was your type. I hear he’s gonna become the new Tarzan.”

Basil Rathbone

“A darling Ape Man if ever there was one,” she said. “I met the film’s director, W. S. Van Dyke, the other night. Charles Bickford wanted the part but was turned down. Too old. Spencer Tracy’s latest flame, Johnny Mack Brown, lost because he’s not tall enough, although he seems to satisfy Spence just fine. You won’t believe this, but Clark Gable tried out for Tarzan too. Van Dyke decided that Gable wasn’t muscular enough and didn’t have Weissmuller’s inches. Weissmuller is the Ape Man, Gable more a chimpanzee.”

She excused herself. “Keep my bourbon chilling for me, darlings. I’ve got to take a& horse piss. Care to watch?”

As he was pouring himself a drink, he turned around to greet Kenneth MacKenna and Kay Francis. “My soon-to-be best man,” Kenneth said, kissing him lightly on the lips. Since “going Hollywood,” Kenneth had become very theatrical. No sooner had those lips left Bogie’s than they were replaced with those of Francis.

“Let’s get this God damn wedding over with and soon,” Bogie said. “These pre-wedding parties are beginning to wear me out.”

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“Mr. Humphrey Bogart, of New York, meet Miss Ann Dvorak, also New York born.”

He was at George Raft’s party, and the chorus girl standing in front of him couldn’t be more than nineteen years old. She had a lean, sharp face, not altogether to Bogie’s liking, yet he was immediately attracted to her. In a red silk gown that clung to her body like a Jean Harlow dress, she was one of the sexiest women he’d ever seen. The cleavage of that gown went virtually to her hips. With the wrong movement on her part, one of her breasts might pop out.

She took his hand and expertly guided him through a sea of gangsters assembled by Raft for the party where the liquor and champagne flowed.

In a corner at a small table, a waiter in a red jacket served them drinks, although Dvorak looked as if she’d consumed far more than her share for one evening. In the dimly lit room, she put one leg up over his. Her gown was split up to a creamy thigh, and he was certain she didn’t have on one stitch of underwear. He practically wanted to seduce her on the spot.

As they talked, he found her very direct and outspoken. Even though only a teenager, she didn’t seem to embarrass easily. He was convinced that Dvorak had been seducing men at least since the age of fourteen.

Ann Dvorak

The way she kept moving that creamy leg over his thighs was giving him an erection, a movement not lost on her. “So how are things?” he asked rather awkwardly.

“You tell me first,” she said.

“Marriage falling apart, career going nowhere,” he said. “The usual. What about you?” He’d no sooner asked that question than he wished that he hadn’t.

Dvorak revealed a ferocity of ambition matched only by Stanwyck herself. “I’m hot and getting hotter,” she said.

At that remark, he put his hand on her thigh and began a massage. “I’m convinced of that.”

“I don’t mean that way, silly,” she said. “I& mean, my career, Stud. I owe it all to Joan Crawford. When I was one of the hoofers in *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, I met Crawford. She fell for me in a big way. Howard Hughes had been calling her for a date, and she came up with this idea. Since she didn’t want Hughes, she took his call one day and agreed to go over to Hughes’ mansion. But instead of Crawford, it was me who arrived on Howard Hughes’ doorstep. And the rest is history or will soon be.”

“Well, pal,” he said, “so you fucked Hughes. What’s he going to do for you?”

“He put me under contract,” she said.

“He did the same with Harlow, but since then, he seems to be doing nothing for her,” he said, deliberately wanting to prick her bubble.

“I know that!” she said, a slight anger flashing. “With me, it’s gonna be different. He’s putting together this film called *Scarface*. It’s based on Al Capone, and Ben Hecht himself is writing the screenplay. Hughes wants Paul Muni to play Capone.”

“An Austrian-born actor from New York’s Yiddish Art Theater?” he asked in surprise. “Not Cagney, not Edward G. Robinson? What about George Raft himself—even me?”

“Oh, George is in the film. He plays my love interest, Guino Rinaldo. I play Muni’s sister, Cesca. I’m told that the scenes between Muni and me will border on incest. There’s even a role for Boris Karloff in the film. Hughes wants a lot of sex and violence.”

“Sounds like it’s headed for trouble with the censors,” he said.

“Hughes expects that,” she said. “And so does the director, Howard Hawks.”

“Two Howards working together,” he said. “Which Howard has branded you?”

She giggled and leaned over to whisper in his ear. “I’m balling both of them. To get ahead in Hollywood, Crawford told me it’s necessary to fuck both the producer and the director.”

“I wish I could fuck someone to get cast in a picture,” he said.

“Don’t worry, sugar,” she said between bouts of tonguing his ear. “When I become the biggest star in Hollywood, I’ll insist that you be my leading man.”

“Thanks, pal,” he said, his hand starting to travel up her thigh to his target of the evening.

She slapped it down and jumped up. “Let’s dance.”

He didn’t want to get up because of his erection but decided what the hell. The room was not well lit, and no one seemed to be paying attention to him.

In the center of the room, she moved her body into his so closely that they seemed to melt into each other. The way she was rubbing up against him, he thought he’d cream in his trousers.

After dancing around, he came face to face with Howard Hawks.

After a rather inauspicious introduction, Bogie sat in the same far corner of the room where he’d previously played seductive games with Dvorak. Across from him sat Hawks, who would play such an enormous role in both his professional and personal life in the years to come.

“Keep your mangy hands off Ann,” Hawks was telling him. “She’s already got Howard Hughes and Howard Hawks. She doesn’t need another ‘H’ in her life.”

“We were just getting acquainted on the dance floor, pal,” Bogie said. “Nothing more.”

“Don’t come within ten feet of her,” Hawks said threateningly.

“I’ll stay at least twelve feet away,” Bogie said jokingly, not taking Hawks’ anger too seriously.

I’m balling her,” Hawks said. “I find that teenage girls are the only thing that holds my interest. Don’t think I’m a pedophile. I only go out with girls in their late teens. No fourteen-year-olds.” He paused. “Maybe once or twice, but it’s definitely not a pattern with me.”

“Glad to hear that,” Bogie said. “If I ever have any daughters, I’ll keep them far away from Mr. Howard Hawks.”

“Listen, I’m not mad at you for trying to move in on Ann,” Hawks said. “You’re still green in Hollywood. You don’t know the ropes yet. I’ve issued my warning. If after you’ve been duly warned, you still cross Hughes and me, then I’ll cut off your nuts, assuming a little lisper like you has a pair.”

“Yeah, I’ve got a pair,” Bogie said. “They’re big enough, too. My problem is that I haven’t learned how to clank them like you’re doing. Or like Hughes is doing. And don’t let my lisp fool you.”

“Just wanted to be sure,” Hawks said. “I can’t even go take a piss out here in Hollywood without some queen falling on his knees.”

“You should be flattered by such attention,” he said. “That means you’re a real man. Queens go just for the big studs.”

“That’s one way to look at it,” Hawks said. “Nearly everyone I meet in Hollywood is a dirty little homosexual. There are a few bonafide heterosexuals out here, but not many.”

Film director Howard Hawks

“Name three,” Bogie said, challenging him.

“I’ll name three guys who’ve never had their dick sucked by a man,” Hawks said. “In order of importance. Howard

Hawks, Howard Hughes, Spencer Tracy. The rest I'm not so sure about."

"No contest there," Bogie said. "You're far more of a Hollywood insider than I am."

Hawks surveyed the party of gangsters. "I accepted George's invitation because I knew a lot of New York gangsters would be here since Owney Madden and his boys are in town. I'm soaking up atmosphere for my picture, *Scarface*, that Hughes is producing. I think the film is& going to be a big success. At least three of my actors are gong to be billed above the title."

"Call me Louella," he said. "I'd really like to know who they are. It's interesting to hear that somebody's making it out here on The Coast."

"Paul Muni, George Raft, and Boris Karloff," Hawks said.

"The fourth?" Bogie asked.

"Ann Dvorak herself," Hawks said. "I've got this incredible instinct for casting. I have a feeling that a lot of movie plots in these Depression days will be about life's losers, and she's perfect for roles like that. After *Scarface*, I think she'll have cornered the market on the portrayal of doomed gangster molls with prolonged death scenes."

"Sounds like a great career," he said. "Since I'm about to be dropped by Fox, what role have you got coming up for me? I'm gonna be in need of a job pretty soon."

" *Scarface* is already cast," Hawks said. "I think my next movie is going to be *The Crowd Roars*. I'm thinking of casting Ann in that movie, too, although I rarely work with the same pussy twice. She might play the second female lead. I want Joan Blondell to play the lead. The second male lead will be played by this faggot kid, Eric Linden."

"I've heard of him," Bogie said. "You said nothing about the male lead. I haven't read the script, and don't even know what the picture is about, but I think I'd be ideal."

"It's not set yet," Hawks said, "but I'm thinking of casting James Cagney."

"I knew Cagney back in my New York days," Bogie said. "He got his start appearing in drag."

"Bullshit!" Hawks said. "You're making that up. If I had to name three men in Hollywood who will never appear in drag, I'd cite Howard Hawks first, Howard Hughes second, and James Cagney third."

"Maybe I was mistaken about Cagney," Bogie said. "Too much rotgut whiskey out here in Hollywood pickles the brain."

"I don't know about you, Bogart," Hawks said. "When I was in New York, I saw you on Broadway in *Cradle Snatchers*. I wasn't impressed. I guess you noticed that when I made *Cradle Snatchers* for Fox, I didn't cast you in your stage part as Jose Vallejo. I cast Joe Striker in the part and changed his character's name to Joe Valley."

"I couldn't help but notice," Bogie said. "Don't judge me by those Broadway days. I've grown a lot as an actor since then. I need one big role and I'll hit it big. A part like *Scarface,* which could make a big name for Paul Muni, as you said. He's playing Al Capone, isn't he?"

"Yeah, but that's not the official word," Hawks said. "I was visited recently by a couple of Capone goons who insisted on knowing who *Scarface* was based on. They'd heard that it was based on their boss."

"How in hell do you get out of that one?" Bogie asked. "I mean Capone has a scarface. I heard someone tried to slit his throat."

"That's right, and the film is based on him," Hawks said. "But I convinced them that *Scarface* has nothing to do with Capone. I told them we're just calling it that to fool the public into thinking it might be about Capone. I said that's known as showmanship. The Chicago boys left me alone with my body intact and went away feeling like Hollywood insiders. Hughes was afraid the boys would go after him, but I assured him that I'd taken care of that

too. I told the Capone goons that Hughes was 'just the sucker with the money.'"

Dvorak approached them and reminded Hawks that they had another rendezvous that evening. She smiled at Bogie. "Maybe you'll be my leading man one day in a picture."

Hawks looked back at Bogie. "I don't see that ever happening." A frown crossed his brow. "On another point, I can assure you I'll never cast you in a film I'm directing."

"Sorry to hear that, pal," Bogie said. "Now you two love birds have a good night."

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Bogie floored the accelerator of his car, heading for the Malibu retreat of Spencer Tracy and his newly acquired friend, the matinee idol, Johnny Mack Brown.

It had been a night he didn't want to remember. Smoking incessantly and badly hung over, he found himself shaking uncontrollably. He felt that he was coming apart. He rarely thought about his wives (former and current), as he was caught up in a whirlpool with an eccentric cast of characters, most of whom he was meeting for the first time.

At Tracy's cottage, he pulled into the driveway. Emerging from the beach in a skimpy, form-fitting bathing suit was one of the handsomest men he'd ever encountered. He figured it could only be Johnny Mack Brown.

After Johnny had shown Bogie to his bedroom overlooking the ocean, and after he'd showered, Bogie joined the actor for a walk on the beach. Tracy was in the bedroom across the hallway recovering from a massive drunk.

Plopping down right on the sands, Bogie accepted a drink from the flask Johnny carried in his beach bag. "Spence told me that you and he have become asshole buddies and that I could tell you anything," he said in a slow Southern drawl.

"I love the man," Bogie said, "but asshole buddies is a bit much. We're more into the handshaking stage."

"Asshole buddies is just a Southern expression," Johnny said. "Let's drop that subject and talk of loftier matters. Like what ol' Spence did yesterday."

"If this is gonna be about what you guys do in bed, pal, I think I'll skip it," Bogie said.

"Nothing like that," Johnny said. "It was at the studio. As you know, Spence is battling Fox about the roles he's been assigned. I mean, a dreadful piece of shit like *Six Cylinder Love,* co-starring that queen, Edward Everett Horton. What a turkey! Yesterday, on the set, Spence had had his fill of the studio and probably the entire film industry as well."

"I don't think I want to hear the rest of this story," Bogie said. He closed his eyes and lay back to get sun. To his surprise, Johnny lit a cigarette for him and placed it in his mouth. "Thanks," Bogie said. "I don't usually let men light my cigarettes, though."

"You'll get used to it," Johnny said enigmatically. "Anyway, Spence showed up on the set of *She Wanted a Millionaire* in evening clothes. He'd been out drinking all night. He was taking out his frustrations with Fox by acting like a rebellious child. He didn't know his lines and he'd have been too drunk to say them even if he had. He went around making lascivious remarks to all the gals on the set, pretty or otherwise. He even went up to the fluttery Una Merkel and asked her if he could play with her pussy. Later he came up to the star of the picture, Joan Bennett, and bluntly asked her, 'Do you want to fuck?'"

"That's understandable," Bogie said. "I'd like a piece of Miss Joan myself. She's even younger and prettier than her older sister, Constance."

"It's more complicated than that," Mack Brown said. "The plot thickens. First, Spence was already furious that Joan got all the best lines in the flick. He told the press he's Bennett's prop, with dialogue best reserved for a wooden Indian. To make matters worse, the director, John Blystone, is in love with Bennett himself."

“God damn it,” Bogie said, sitting up and inhaling deeply on his cigarette. “This sounds like a more interesting plot than any of his movies.”

“That’s not all. Bennett slapped his face. When Blystone rushed over, Spence said to him, ‘The script is dishonest.’ Then he passed out.”

“No wonder our boy is part of The Irishmen’s Club in Hollywood,” Bogie said. “Those boys sure know how to drink. I drink all the time but I moderate it. Spence, I’ve noticed, either drinks or doesn’t touch the stuff. But when he drinks, he empties the equivalent of Lake Michigan. My father’s a doctor. He calls men like Spence a spasmodic alcoholic.”

Football hero and Hollywood actor Johnnie Mack Brown

“Well, he’s in one of those spasms this weekend,” Johnny said, “so be duly warned. I don’t know what Fox is going to do with him. When the crew revived Spence about an hour later, he immediately barged onto the set again, took out his dick, and pissed on an expensive sofa they were using in a scene. The same sofa where Bennett was supposed to sit.” He leaned back and eyed Bogie carefully. “There’s more. Then he went on a rampage. He turned over lamps, sending them crashing to the floor. There was this bookcase with glass doors. He picked up an ashtray and broke its windows. Finally he stood on an armchair and lunged for the crystal chandelier. He was swinging on the chandelier when he fell off, hitting his head against something. That caused him to bleed profusely. The big man himself, Winfield Sheehan, Fox’s director of production, had been called to the set. He saw it all.”

“Sheehan’s gonna can Spence,” Bogie predicted. “I just know it. Spence is gonna be on that train back to New York with me. We’ll start a club. Two former Fox stars pounding the pavements of Broadway looking for work.”

“I agree with you,” Johnny said. “Spence is a great actor, probably the greatest in Hollywood. But he’s been assigned a series of stupid potboilers, each with really bad scripts. And his pictures are bombing at the box office. Let’s face it? His behavior is outrageous. He’ll come right up to a woman and fondle her breast. Or he’ll reach up her dress. I mean, Spence is not a thigh man, he goes right for the honeypot at the end of the rainbow.”

“Maybe Sheehan will tolerate that kind of behavior in a big star cleaning up at the box office,” Bogie said. “Someone up there in the Garbo league. But you can’t make potboilers that lose money and pull such crap.”

“I don’t know why Fox hasn’t kicked him out on his ass by now. If I acted like Spence, I would have been canned long ago. To make matters worse, Spence will disappear for weeks at a time. He’ll lock himself up in a hotel suite and stage a big drunk.”

“I hate to see the guy suffer,” Bogie said. “He’s a real pal of mine, but he seems possessed by some hidden devil that’s got his soul.”

For the rest of the afternoon, Bogie was content to lie on the beach, drink, smoke, and listen to the sound of Johnny’s Southern drawl, which he’d come to find rather soothing. He needed this rest.

Hours later, Johnny said that Tracy had awakened and wanted to see him.

He found Tracy sitting on a narrow balcony overlooking the ocean. He looked sad and depressed.

“Good to see you again, pal,” Bogie said, giving him a warm handshake. “I hear you pulled a big one last night.”

“I’m glad you could come out,” Tracy said. “With all the assholes out here in Hollywood I’ve been dealing with, you’re the only pal that seems real.”

“I’m real all right, and fucked up too, but not quite as fucked up as you are,” Bogie said, sitting down beside the actor and lighting up another of his cigarettes.

“You’ll get no argument with me about that,” Tracy said. He looked at the evening waves washing up on the beach. “I don’t think I’ll ever be at peace with myself until I go to my grave.”

“That’s a pretty gloomy forecast,” Bogie said.

“There’s this thing inside me that’s like a demon tearing my guts apart,” Tracy said. “I can’t get rid of it. The only way I can keep it under control is to drink so much I temporarily drown it. But it always comes back. I think this beast within me will live there until my body dies, and then the God damn thing will move into someone else’s body.”

“If you don’t start taking better care of yourself, pal, the morticians will get you sooner than later.”

“Sometimes I wish that was true,” Tracy said.

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The following night, after he’d driven back to his apartment and had visited with Kenneth for an hour, relating all the events of the weekend, Bogie felt tired and retreated to his apartment. He planned to cook himself some ham and eggs, but was too short on energy.

No sooner had he stripped off his clothes and piled into bed than the telephone rang. Wearily getting up to answer it, he knew he wasn’t interested in accepting any invitations, even if Dietrich herself had called.

It was Helen, filled with remorse about her refusal to take his calls. “I was humiliated at seeing you with the most glamorous women in Hollywood. I felt old and ugly. I felt you didn’t love me or need me any more in your life and that you could have your pick of some of the most beautiful women in the world.”

“Your beauty is timeless,” he said. “Theirs is only of today.”

“Thank you, dear heart,” she said. I’m sorry I didn’t call back. Please forgive me.”

“We’ve done worse things to each other,” he said.

“Please come right over” she said, a sudden urgency in her voice.

“At this hour?” he asked. Even for Helen and a reconciliation, he wasn’t that interested.

It’s only ten o’clock,” she said. “Early for Hollywood.”

“You’re on the west coast now, not New York,” he said. “Stars have to go to bed early so that we can look gorgeous on camera.”

“Please,” she said. “Tonight is so important.”

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After hours spent with Helen, Bogie drove back to his apartment, expecting an early morning call from Fox, announcing that he was needed that day. When no call came in, he showered and dressed, deciding to drive to her apartment since she was not answering her phone. He feared that something might be wrong.

At the Garden of Allah, a young man at the reception desk told him that, “Miss Menken checked out this morning to return to New York.” Bogie asked if she’d left a message for him, but was told there was none.

Their night had gone so successfully that Bogie was absolutely shocked at Helen’s abrupt departure. Nothing in their time spent together suggested that she was going back to New York so suddenly.

Obviously, she'd decided that she didn't want to wander back into their old relationship, and decided she'd cut it off before it had a chance of growing again. He could never be certain about Helen. She was a woman of impulses, and obviously had acted on her impulse.

Nonetheless, he was angry at her. "After all that love-making," he said in a call to Kenneth MacKenna, "not even a god damn note. Men like us should never marry actresses."

"Maybe she got the part of a lifetime." MacKenna said.

"Maybe." Bogie put down the phone.

Just as he was about to leave, he heard the sound of loud, raucous laughter in the foyer. He spotted those two madcap Alabamians, Tallulah Bankhead and Anderson Lawler, asking the doorman to call them a taxi. Both of them had more in common than a birth state, having just survived separate affairs with Gary Cooper.

Tallulah seemed delighted to see him. "Hump, darling," she called to him. "We're going to Jimmy's Backyard tonight. If you'll go with us, I'll fuck you later and let Andy suck you off."

"An invitation like that sounds irresistible," he said, shaking Lawler's hand and kissing Tallulah on the mouth, feeling the serpentine darting of her tongue.

"Before she checked out," Tallulah said, "I ran into your adorable wife. Helen was furious. She told me about the double-cross. The producers want Barbara Stanwyck to costar in the film version of *The Captive*. They should have asked me." She laughed hilariously at something she was about to say. "Of course, I understand why they didn't consider me. No one would believe me in the role of a lesbian."

"You are the true epitome of ladylike refinement," Lawler said.

"You bet your cocksucking lips I am," she said. She leaned her head over to get a better view of Bogie. "We must get together soon and catch up on the latest Hollywood gossip. I'll tell you my tales. You can tell me your tales. Later, I'll show you my tail, and you can show me your tail. Not that I haven't seen it before, darling."

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It was late at night as Bogie wandered slightly drunk and alone on the hotel grounds in the aftermath of Kenneth's wedding to Kay Francis. He looked up several times at the windows of their bridal suite. He could only envy Kenneth the wedding bliss he was enjoying with the woman known for some reason as "the trapeze artist" in bed. He wondered if Kenneth would ever fall in love with Francis as much as he loved Bogie's own wife, Mary. Thoughts of her crossed his mind. He imagined that at this very late hour in New York his wife was in the arms of that "God Damn actor," Roland Young.

Bogie looked up one final time at the Francis/MacKenna wedding suite and headed off by himself into the night.

He could not have imagined that within a year Young would be at Warner Brothers appearing opposite Francis in *Street of Women*, and that Young and Francis would be engaged in a torrid romance.

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In Joan Blondell's dressing room at Warner Brothers, Bogie had just finished showering after he'd bedded her on the carpet in front of her vanity table. She was his kind of broad. He liked her tremendously, although he wasn't in love with her. She was loyal, dependable, and always there for him when he needed a woman's company. She was warm, loving, and forgiving, and he felt that he could confide anything to her and she'd protect his secrets or else overlook his weaknesses.

He suspected that this former clerk at Macy's Department Store would never make it as a big star, but as an actress she'd always show up for Warner Brothers, taking any part offered, never complaining, never going on suspension, even if they worked her into dizziness, even to the point of making four films at once.

She brought the same vitality to sex that she did to the gold-diggers she played on screen. She was brazen and fun to be with, and she didn't take herself too seriously. After bedding Blondell, he felt ten feet tall. He couldn't understand why James Cagney had dumped her.

After they'd dressed, he drove her over to the first screening of *Night Nurse*, the movie she'd recently made with Barbara Stanwyck and Clark Gable.

On the way to the screening, he asked Blondell, "After we've each gone through two or three more spouses, do you think we'll get married and settle down somewhere in Ohio, growing old and gray together sitting in our rockers on the front porch, watching people go to Sunday morning services?"

"I can see it now," she said. "Right before noon, I'll rise from my chair if my rheumatism will allow it, and head back into our little kitchen with its wood-burning stove. Ham and eggs for you, and rutabagas mixed with mashed potatoes for me. Those will be the diets we'll live on."

As Bogie sat in the theater holding Blondell's hand, he'd seen only fifteen minutes of the 72-minute film when he realized that *Night Nurse*, in spite of its stellar cast, was not going to win Oscars for anybody. Playing a tough, scheming chauffeur, a character called Nick, Gable manhandles the cast, including Stanwyck, but the female members of the audience seemed to like his testosterone-driven violence. He wondered if most women secretly wanted a man to beat them up.

Unlike her usual screen portraits, and in spite of Blondell's appraisal, Stanwyck played her typical dancehall gal on one note throughout. Blondell had exaggerated. Stanwyck not only didn't eat up the scenery, she seemed strangely subdued in her role of Lora Hart, a young woman hired by a rich, drunken widow to act as a private nurse to her children. Bogie felt that Blondell brought the only life and humanity to the film.

There was only polite applause at the end of the film. As the manager of the theater slipped the stars of *Night Nurse* out of the rear door, Bogie felt that that was an unnecessary precaution. He thought that Stanwyck, Blondell, and Gable could easily have walked out the front door without being overpowered by screaming fans demanding autographs.

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Knowing it was going to be his last day on the Fox lot, Bogie arrived three hours before his scheduled meeting with Winfield Sheehan, head of production. He was going to miss his paycheck of $750 a week. Although he'd meant to save most of it, he never got around to doing that, seemingly thinking the money would last forever.

He could only hope that his meager savings would tide him over in Depression-riddled New York until he found a job in the theater.

Maybe once again the Brady family might come to his rescue, as they had when he returned from his term of duty in the Navy. Bill Brady Jr. had been his best friend for many years, and before he left for Hollywood, Bogart had sincerely intended to write to him frequently. But in Hollywood Bogie had turned to Kenneth as his confidant instead. Those letters to family and friends back in New York were meant to be written but never were.

Bogie was uncertain where he would even stay in New York. It seemed hardly likely that Mary, as she prepared to divorce him, would want him living with her and that actor, Roland Young.

Bogie was sitting outside a sound stage on the edge of a curb, his face buried in his hands. He must have looked a pathetic sight when Herb Gallagher approached him. Bogie had seen the elderly man puttering about the studios, but had never spoken to him.

"Everybody knows Winnie is going to fire you this morning," Gallagher said. "But you're a young man. You'll find work at other studios. Maybe Warners. I'd have said Paramount but the smart money says that they're about to go belly-up."

Bogie looked up at the man, squinting his eyes to blot out the morning sun. "You're the janitor, right? I mean everybody here, even the janitor, is in on the details of my getting the boot?"

“I don’t mean to get you riled up,” Gallagher said, “but your pictures have bombed. You’ve bombed. Frankly, you were lucky to get that $750 a week. I don’t know how you conned them into that.”

“Hell, you even know what salary I was drawing,” Bogie said. “Are there no secrets in Hollywood?”

“You know the answer to that,” Gallagher said, spitting out some tobacco juice only three feet from Bogie. “I was fired myself by Winnie.”

“Then why are you still here?” Bogie asked, standing up in hope of avoiding getting hit with the next stream of tobacco juice.

“I was the chief script reader back in 1924,” Gallagher said. “When I turned down three scripts that later became hits at other studios, I was canned.”

“As I said, why are you still here?” Bogie asked.

“I know too much about Winnie to get the final boot like you’re about to get this morning,” Gallagher said. “Winnie let me stay on. Instead of reading scripts, I get to sweep up the sound stages. It’s a living.”

“I once thought Sheehan was going to be my big white hope,” Bogie said. “In spite of all the trouble he causes, Spencer Tracy still has a contract, and I don’t.”

“Maybe Winnie’s judgment about you is all wrong,” Gallagher said. “From the looks of you, I don’t see it, but you could go on to become a big star in spite of your ugly mug, puny body, your lisp, and that scar on your mouth.”

“You sure know how to make a guy feel good on the day he’s about to be kicked out in the midst of a Depression.”

“What the hell!” Gallagher said. “That’s how the game is played out here. Look at Pola Negri and Gloria Swanson. The two biggest screen vamps of the Twenties. Now they can’t get arrested. Look at John Gilbert. The biggest screen idol of the Silents.”

“I know, I know,” Bogie said impatiently. “I’ve read their biographies in the fan magazines.”

“In two, maybe three years, Winnie himself will be out the door when a better, more aggressive, and more talented producer comes along. Winnie doesn’t know that much about film-making any way. William Fox gave him the job because Winnie blackmailed him.”

“What sort of blackmail?” Bogie asked. “Sexual?”

“Nothing like that,” Gallagher said. “At one time, Winnie was the secretary to the police commissioner in New York. Fox Studios routinely violated the bylaws of the Motion Picture Patents Company. Somehow, and I don’t know how he did it, Winnie covered for them, keeping them two feet in front of the law during their time in New York. When Fox pulled up stakes and headed west, their boy Winnie came with them.”

“So that’s how you became head of production at a major studio,” Bogie said.

“Winnie didn’t know a fucking thing about movies when he got to Hollywood,” Gallagher said. “He was just a teenager when he joined the Army to fight in the Spanish-American War. After he came back to New York, he was a cub reporter and then a police reporter. He gave that up to work for the police commissioner. Now he’s making and breaking stars. In with Spencer Tracy, out with Humphrey Bogart.”

Gallagher was called back to duty, and Bogie wandered alone into the Fox commissary where only three tables were occupied. He decided to drink a half-dozen cups of black coffee before facing Sheehan.

In time, Bogie would realize that the janitor knew exactly what he was talking about. By 1935, when the Fox Film Corporation merged with Twentieth Century Pictures, Sheehan was out, having been replaced by a far more talented and brilliant producer, Darryl Zanuck, who had managed to get rid of Sheehan for $360,000 in severance pay.

As he sat drinking those endless cups of coffee, Bogie came to realize that his whole attempt to become a movie star was a bit ridiculous. At that very moment, he felt that he was the least likely candidate in Hollywood to ever become a movie actor.

When he'd made *Up the River* with Tracy, Bogie had had high hopes of stardom, but it had been a downward spiral ever since. He believed that he was better looking than Tracy, but his friend could act, and Bogie wondered if he even knew what acting was all about. Bogie could snarl and hiss, or even look vapid, but he couldn't be as natural or as convincing on screen as Tracy was. As the director, Raoul Walsh, had once barked at Bogie on the set of *Women of All Nations*, "Footage of actors like you end up on the cutting-room floor."

At eleven o'clock that morning, Bogie, jittery from too much coffee, was ushered into the office of Winnie Sheehan. The studio chief was known for his gregarious style and for some degree of charm, but Bogie found his dapper boss with his "black Irish features" and his legendary "ol' baby blues" rather dour today. At that time, Sheehan was known for chasing skirts and throwing the best parties more than he was celebrated for making great movies. Without looking up at Bogie, he sat at his desk going over some papers, not bothering to greet the actor or shake his hand. Sheehan routinely fired stars, directors, and studio executives every day.

"Bogart," he said in a sharp voice, looking up at him for the first time as he signaled for him to take a stiff armchair in front of his desk. "You're not only untalented, but you're in violation of your contract's morals clause."

"I've bedded a few dames since coming out to the West Coast," Bogie said. "Any law against that?"

"Not against that," Sheehan said. "If there was, I'd be locked away in the dankest cell. No one fucks higher on the list than Winnie Sheehan. Only A-list pussy. When I want a piece of ass, I go only for stars: Jean Harlow, Sally Eilers, Joan Crawford, Elissa Landi, Joan Bennett, Ann Dvorak, Myrna Loy, Sidney Fox. Even Helen Twelvetrees."

" *Even her* ?" Bogie said, rather mockingly.

If Sheehan knew he was being ridiculed, he gave no indication of it. "It's this *panz* stuff I'm concerned about." He reached into his top drawer and removed a candid eight-by-ten snapshot which he handed to Bogie.

Bogie studied the picture carefully. He was drunk at the time, and hardly remembered the photograph being taken. It was either at The Fat Black Pussycat or Jimmy's Backyard. In the picture Bogie sat between Edmund Lowe and Lilyan Tashman, with his arm around each of them. Also in the picture was Billy Haines, with his arm around Anderson Lawler. At the far left of the picture Charles Farrell was paying more romantic attention to Kenneth MacKenna than he was to the actor's new bride, Kay Francis.

"You not only go to *panz* clubs," Sheehan charged, "but I heard you attended an all-male lingerie party Richard Arlen threw for Kenneth MacKenna."

"That's true," Bogie said with candor. "I was seen there running around in my Skivvies." He handed the glossy photograph back to Sheehan. "For your bathroom wall," he said, a bite of sarcasm in his voice.

"That overseer of Hollywood morals, Will Hays, has been warning me about using dual-sex boys and lesbos in Fox films," Sheehan said. "If directors like George Cukor had their way, all men in film would be effeminate, flaunting their perversions on screen. I've had a study made of all Fox pictures by my assistant, Sidney Kent. His conclusion is that the sooner we get away from fairies and degenerates in our scripts, and the more family-oriented we become, the bigger the profits for Fox." He picked up a letter on his desk. "Here's what Kent wrote. 'The fairies must be sent packing back to New York where they belong.'"

"Unless I misread the scripts, I wasn't aware that I'd been playing flaming pansies on the screen," Bogie said.

"It's implied in your performances," Sheehan said. "Up against real hemen on the screen, guys like Victor McLaglen or Spencer Tracy, you come across like a lisping queen. I know you played all those faggot juvenile roles on Broadway, coming out in fancy sports dress with a tennis racket and cruising all the handsome men on stage, inviting them for a game of tennis. What the smart people in the audience realized was that you really wanted one of them to join you in the showers after the game."

Bogie chuckled at that preposterous summation of his stage career. “Hey, let’s don’t get carried away here. I never played any such part. Ask the directors like John Cromwell. And playwrights like Maxwell Anderson.”

“It was a subtle thing, and you were able to get away with it on the New York stage,” Sheehan said. “But the camera picks up the slightest nuance. For example, *Variety* a few months ago ran an article about all the pansy dancers and chorus boys used in musicals. It demanded that from now on, every studio cast real he-men as chorus boys. During the casting of musicals in the 30s, if a boy is too dainty and pretty, he’s going to be out on his ass. And fussy, over-marcelled hair is out too. Film-goers, especially male film-goers, resent seeing effeminate men on the screen. I’ve seen all the footage you’ve shot for Fox at the ridiculously overinflated salary of $750 a week. There must have been a typo in your contract. It should have read $75 a week, and even then you would have been overpaid. Let’s face the truth: You’ve got some effeminate mannerisms, and they’re even more intolerable because of your lisp.”

“So, you’re saying that I’m getting kicked out on my ass because I act like a pansy on the screen?” Bogie asked, not concealing his anger, which had flared suddenly.

“You amaze me with your perception,” Sheehan said sarcastically. “I think my point is obvious. My recommendation is that you give up acting. You and that co-star of yours in *Bad Sister*, Bette Davis, have no talent. Neither of you have presence on the screen. She looks like a little lost wren, and you look like a sneaky rat. You’re not ugly enough to play a villain like Edward G. Robinson, nor handsome enough to be a leading man like Joel McCrea. You’ve made your last picture for Fox.”

“I think I figured that out even before I came into your office today,” Bogie said.

“The camera, my boy, is an amazing thing,” Sheehan said in worshipful tones. “It creates an illusion of reality so great that it can surpass reality. All studios, not just Fox, have got to show a greater respect for the camera and not parade freaks of nature before it. Guys like John Gilbert, Billy Haines, Ramon Novarro.”

“And you’re adding the name of Humphrey Bogart to that list of queens?” Bogie asked in astonishment.

“If the shoe fits, wear it,” Sheehan said harshly. “Tomorrow’s screen belongs to the Clark Gables and the Gary Coopers. You won’t find those two out sucking dick or taking it up the ass any more. We’ve also got to have real he-men directors like Raoul Walsh, not fancy-pantsy George Cukor, directing real men like my latest discovery, Marion Morrison. For *The Big Trail*, I had him get rid of that pansy name and call himself John Wayne. Back in the Twenties, just as a means of getting ahead, Wayne occasionally let one or two of the male stars of his films suck his dick, hoping for a big break. And Clark Gable did the same thing. So did Gary Cooper. Wayne confided to me the names of guys who had gone down on him: Billy Haines in *Brown of Harvard,* John Gilbert in *Bardelays the Magnificent,* Richard Barthelmess in *The Drop Kick,* George O’Brien in *Salute* and again in *A Rough Romance,* and your faggot buddy, Kenneth MacKenna in *Men Without Women.* And now, like Cooper and Gable, Wayne is a star. He won’t have to drop his pants ever again for a Hollywood cocksucker.”

“When history books are written years from now, I’m sure they’ll credit Winfield Sheehan with bringing masculinity to the movies,” Bogie said bitterly.

Sheehan took him seriously. “And they’ll be right. I did pretty well with George O’Brien in *The Iron Horse*. George is one he-man. I nicknamed him ‘The Chest.’ In fact, I did all the publicity for *The Iron Horse* in 1924. I came up with the line, ‘George O’Brien is not a sheik or a caveman or a lounge lizard. He’s a man’s man and the idol of women.’ Not bad, huh?”

“That sure would have lured me into a movie house,” Bogie said, still amazed that Sheehan was taking his sarcastic remarks seriously.

“Just between you and me, Fox is on the verge of bankruptcy, and I’ve got to save the studio,” Sheehan said. “Lisping fairies on the screen won’t do the job for us.”

“You’re telling me that in the new Hollywood big-dicked studs will direct only big-dicked studs. Balls will be clanking so loudly technicians will have to tone down the sound track. John Wayne will come across like a giant phallus spewing semen into the audience.”

“Don’t disgrace yourself in front of me by getting carried away with too many of your sexual fantasies,” Sheehan cautioned.

“Okay,” Bogie said, wondering why Sheehan was prolonging this firing. “I’m out the door. Who’s next on your list? After you kick out the pansies on their ass?”

“I met with Joseph Breen yesterday,” Sheehan said. “As you well know, he works hand-in-glove with Will Hays to safeguard the industry from perversion. Breen is not only against sexual perverts on the screen but lousy Jews like Louis B. Mayer, too. Breen calls Jews the scum of the earth. A Jew will do anything for money. They’ll agree to any sexual taboo on the screen if they feel it’ll turn a fast buck. These money-grubbers will depict the vilest of scenes. Breen thinks the ultimate aim of the Hollywood Jew is to undermine Catholic morality.”

Bogie stood up abruptly. I’ve heard enough. I’ll be off the Fox lot in fifteen minutes. Watch me go. I’m not going to sit here any longer listening to your shit.” He actually used the word “shit,” which he detested when other people said it. But no word other than shit seemed to describe the garbage pouring out of Sheehan’s mouth.

“I’m one cocksucking pansy faggot queer lisping queen, one slimy sissy—a bumbling fluttery butterfly, lipstick-wearing, take-it-in-the-ass, dithery, unmasculine fruit.”

“That’s how I’d describe you,” Sheehan said. “And let me congratulate you on the honesty of your self-portrait. The most accurate I’ve ever heard.”

Bogie walked rapidly toward the door, opened it, then slammed it in Sheehan’s face as he headed down the corridor and off the Fox Studio lot.

Amazingly, when Bogie appeared to accept the Oscar as best actor for his role of Charlie Allnut in 1951’s *The African Queen*, he singled out Winfield Sheehan specifically for a special thank you for launching him into motion pictures.

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Bogie walked out onto the rooftop of his apartment building, watching the dawn break across the Los Angeles skyline. As he smoked his tenth cigarette since coming up to the roof, he pondered the Hollywood madness that had driven him here, where he’d actually considered, however briefly, taking a jump off that roof.

Kenneth was due back at his apartment that morning after a short honeymoon with Kay Francis. He too was moving out of the building to live with his new bride under whatever marital arrangements they’d worked out together.

In lieu of Kenneth, he thought he’d call Spencer Tracy and expose himself as a failure, but decided against that. He didn’t want Tracy to know how vulnerable he was and preferred for his newly acquired actor friend to maintain the illusion that Humphrey Bogart was tough like Tracy himself.

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Back in his own apartment, and safe after his lonely walk on the roof, he received a phone call from Bette Davis, who was demanding to see him. She’d been fired from Universal. Her party for losers had been completely accurate as a harbinger of events to come.

Although within the recent past, he had vowed never to see her again, he invited her over anyway, hoping that two actors, each of them kicked out of Hollywood, might be able to console each other.

The pain associated with his having been fired from Fox was enormous.

Opening the door, he took in the vision of a very distraught Davis, who had been crying. She immediately fell into his arms, sobbing more intensely and violently than she ever would on the screen.

She sat on the sofa across from him, as both of them enjoyed booze and cigarettes, two narcotics that would become lifelong addictions for each of them. Since storming into his apartment, she had talked incessantly about her career,

offering only minor condolences about his own dismissal from Fox.

“When I came to Hollywood,” she said, “America was in a great depression. It still is. Garbo had learned to talk, and the first thing she said was ‘ *Gimme a viskey.’”* Her imitation of Garbo was right on the mark. “Garbo is still talking. Dietrich had arrived to appear in high heels and expensive gowns running around in the sands of *Morocco*. She’s still dressing up, still running around. Norma Shearer had won the Oscar. Norma Shearer is still getting Oscar-winning roles. Hollywood is virtually intact. And it certainly won’t miss Bette Davis.” She looked over at him. “I’m not movie star material. Like you, Bogie, our faces weren’t meant to grace the silver screen.”

“If only we’d gotten the right parts,” he said defensively. He didn’t like admitting failure.

“As far as I’m concerned, both Carl Laemmles, Senior and Junior, can take their so-called 230-acre film factory and give it back to the mustard farmers from whom they took the land in 1915.”

“Considering the films those two creeps turn out,” he said, “maybe mustard greens would be easier to swallow.”

She seemed not to have heard his remark. “‘Bette from Boston,’ they called me. All the good parts went to that whoring bitch, Sidney Fox. She spent more time fucking Laemmle Jr. than she did on camera. *Frumpy* they called me. Odd-looking. Sexless. Somewhat ugly. Christ. *Somewhat!”* She virtually spat out the word.

“Look at all the guys who’ve fallen for you,” he said. “You’re hardly sexless. Why, all the losers at your party had the hots for you. Even me.”

She smiled at the remark. “If only that were true.”

As he got up to pour her another drink, she too rose to her feet and pranced around the apartment, with the same kind of stalking movement she’d demonstrate in several films. She was a woman with a violent temper and filled with turbulent emotions. “I’ve failed miserably in films. I can’t even stand to see myself on the screen. I’m that bad.”

“You came close to getting roles here or there that could have launched you,” he said, reminding her.

“Close,” she said with a certain contempt. “But miles from the goal. My one hope was that William Wyler would cast me in *A House Divided*. It was my last chance for success at Universal. Even though the women in wardrobe objected, I found this dark plaid cotton dress. The bodice fit real low, and I definitely showed cleavage. After all, let’s face it: My breasts are my most alluring physical asset. I’m sure you’ll discover that for yourself later.”

This was his first indication that he was going to get lucky.

“When I came onto the set showing my major assets pre-packaged in that dress,” Davis said, “Wyler took one look at me and dismissed me. I heard him tell his assistant, ‘Who in hell do these *ingénues* think they are? They think that if they show off a big pair of tits, they’ve got the part. Fuck! Hollywood is just one big tit.” She sighed before taking a deep drag on her cigarette. “I was so upset by him that I was tongue-tied during the screen test.”

Ironically, Wyler would become not only “the love of my life” for Bette, but her best and most favored director, guiding her through her classics, such as *Jezebel*, her consolation prize for not getting cast as Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, and in Lillian Hellman’s *The Little Foxes*, a role that had been created on the stage for her arch rival, Tallulah Bankhead.

“Laemmle Jr. called me into his office to fire me in person,” she said. “I think he enjoyed humiliating me, telling me that I had no future in films. After seeing us together in *Bad Sister*, he predicted the same fate for you.”

“I know that,” he snapped at her. “We’ve been over all that before.”

“I don’t know about you,” Davis said, “but I’m going to return to Broadway and become the next Lynn Fontanne.”

“Can I be your Alfred Lunt?” he asked. Although he’d meant his remark to be facetious, by the time he came to the question mark, it had become serious.

She looked over at him as if sizing him up. “You’re not homosexual enough to replace Lunt.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” he said. “Maybe we’ll be the next Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, but we’ll be more virile. Not as fey.”

“Maybe that’s not such a bad idea,” she said, her pop eyes widening as if the revelation just might be possible. “I could see the names of Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart in lights.”

“We could become the new king and queen of Broadway,” he said, daring to hope that such a dream might actually happen.

“You and I are not film people,” she said. “We belong on the stage. The theater is in our blood. We’ll get the right properties. Get Maxwell Anderson to write a play tailor-made for us. Maybe even Ben Hecht. He’d be great. We’ll become the next legendary acting team in Broadway history.”

He held his glass up to hers, and she toasted him back, saying, “Of course, your talent will never be as great as mine. But I think you can develop a real stage presence. Sometimes having a distinct personality is more important than acting talent. In my case, I was blessed with both talent and a personality.”

He listened patiently, though rather disdainful of her proclamations of her own greatness.

By ten o’clock that night, she’d agreed to go onto the roof with him for his final look at Los Angeles at night.

A wind was blowing in from the ocean, and the night had turned suddenly cold. Wearing only a thin cotton dress, she was shivering. “Hold me!” she commanded. There was desperation in her voice. Without her bravado, she appeared strangely weak and vulnerable, in need of a man’s protection.

“I’m here for you,” he said, moving toward her. He took her in his arms and kissed her passionately, feeling her quivering response. So great was her need for him that she was moaning softly. She knew that he knew that she was his for the taking, at least for the night.

“I need to feel like a woman again,” she whispered seductively in his ear. “Take me downstairs and make me feel like that woman I long to be, but never was.”

“You’ve got yourself a date, lady,” he said, kissing her once more. With one arm around her waist, he guided her toward the lone door on the roof, leading down the iron steps to his apartment.

Once inside the apartment, she appeared talked out. There would be no more need for words.

By four o’clock that morning, he’d made more passionate love to her than he had any other woman in his life. He’d made Bette Davis his woman. She hugged him with the kind of desperation a couple faces when they stagger blindly but bravely into a new but uncertain future. Throughout the night they’d clung to each other like two people& who, when dawn came, would face the gallows together.

On the air:
Humphrey Bogart with Bette Davis

Both of them had convinced the other that their future careers were entwined. Together they could make it as a team, or so they’d told themselves.

Before the night ended, she had begged him to marry her as soon as his divorce from Mary came through. “I didn’t

know what love-making was until I went to bed with you. I thought sex was something that men did to please themselves with women. Hop on, hop off. You taught me what a thrill it can be for a woman. You've taken me to another dimension, a place I didn't think I could find with any man. You've awakened a desire in parts of my body that I thought& were incapable of a sexual response."

She had obviously regained her articulation. He buried the sound of her voice when he'd moved over her again, giving her a deep, impassioned kiss. Even though he thought his entire body had been fulfilled as never before, he found himself hardening again.

After he'd finished both of them off for the last call of the evening, he urgently pleaded with her, "Get on the train in the morning with me," he said. "Let's go back to New York." Kenneth had agreed to drive him to the depot for his final good-bye to Hollywood.

Like a good New England housewife, Davis rose from his bed and began packing his luggage. But she turned down his invitation to leave with him that morning because, "It's impossible—that's why."

She did commit to him, though, claiming that when, "Ruthie and I shut down our house in the Hollywood Hills, I'll be on the next train east. It'll take about six weeks, but you can count on me to be there. In the meantime, you've got to search for a suitable apartment for us. In New York, we'll pound those sidewalks of Broadway together."

"I'll be in New York keeping the sheets warm," he said, "until your train pulls into Grand Central station." He kissed her on her nose as he headed for the bathroom.

Over breakfast, which included ham and eggs, Davis proved herself to be a capable cook. "You've liberated me as a woman," she claimed to him, her wide eyes popping with a new kind of joy and a dawning reality. "I'll be a better actress because of this night we spent together."

"The first of many such nights," he assured her.

She stood up to pour him some more coffee. "Miss Bette Davis, formerly of Universal Studios and now a Broadway star, will become the third Mrs. Humphrey Bogart. It is her first marriage. For Bogart, it is his third. He was previously married to Broadway actresses Helen Menken and Mary Philips."

"This past night in bed with you will have to last me for several weeks until we're together again in New York," she said. "There can be no other man for me but Humphrey Bogart."

He kissed her one final time, holding her long and close. He made a parting remark before rushing down those stairs where an impatient Kenneth was waiting to drive him to the station.

He turned back and looked with a nostalgic regret at the apartment house where he'd lived during his brief, ill-fated Hollywood career. All he could think about was Davis up there in his bathroom, applying lipstick to her face before she too left the building forever to return to her own home.

Each day for him would be a long one until she was with him in New York and cuddling him in that ample bosom that William Wyler had rejected.

All the way to the station, he wasn't really in the car with Kenneth, but remained still back in that apartment with Davis. His good-bye to her would stab at his memory forever.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was a dismal New York that greeted Bogie upon his arrival in 1931. Unemployment was at an all-time high, and the gaiety of Broadway in the Roaring Twenties had roared out. For every acting job, there were more than 3,000 hopefuls who showed up, trying out for a meager part to keep them out of the breadlines.

The great theatrical entrepreneurs, the Schuberts, had gone into receiver-ship. In 1929, two years before, some 250 theatrical productions had been launched for the then-prosperous audiences of Broadway. But in 1931, with America in the throes of a Depression, many of these legitimate theaters had been converted into movie house showcases for hastily produced Talkies being churned out by Hollywood.

The first person he called upon was Mary Philips. Unlike the woman who had written the "Dear John" letter she'd sent him in California, she now seemed to want to save their marriage. At least some of her change in heart derived from the fact that she'd caught Roland Young, her lover, involved in not one, but two affairs with other actresses and had left him.

"I'm just as much to blame for the failure of our marriage as you are," he confessed to her.

"I think we owe it to each other to give it one more try," she told him.

Against his better judgment, he agreed. That night he wrote Bette Davis in Hollywood, telling that he had reconciled with Mary.

Furious at his rejection, she did not respond. "I will never speak to Humphrey Bogart again as long as I live. He treated me like a Saturday night whore." She relayed her feelings to Kenneth MacKenna, hoping he would convey her fury to Bogie back in New York.

Her mother, Ruthie, praised Bette Davis' decision to have no further contact with Bogie. "The man gives me the creeps. He always looks dirty." It would be at the urging of Ruthie that her daughter, with some reluctance, eventually married Harmon Nelson Jr., a no-talent musician, in Yuma, Arizona, on August 18, 1932.

Even though he'd been separated from his family for sixteen months,& Bogie did not want to confront them again, yet nevertheless felt that he had to. He called first on Belmont, whose life had continued down a stairway to some dark gulf. Belmont was paralyzed and had been bedridden for the past four months in a dingy apartment at Tudor City in Manhattan.

His father told him that Maud was living upstairs, within the same compound but in another apartment. The ill-fated couple had not divorced. Instead of functioning as a wife, she'd become a caretaker, providing a hot cooked breakfast for him every morning. Each night at seven, she brought down a nutritious dinner.

After his visit with his father, Bogie called on Maud upstairs. She was living in greatly reduced circumstances, paying her own bills and Belmont's too with the meager earnings from her art work.

During the time Bogie had been away, she seemingly had aged ten years. Her face was drawn and bitter. She was chilly with him, not even extending her hand when she allowed him into her apartment. She didn't want to hear about any of his adventures in Hollywood, and had seen none of his movies. After about forty-five minutes, she asked him to leave because she had developed a migraine headache.

Before he left, she mentioned his sister, Kay (Catherine), whom she claimed had become "a hopeless alcoholic and the town whore."

Kay's drinking led to a rapid deterioration of her health. She died in 1937 of peritonitis after being rushed to the hospital when her appendix ruptured. Before an ambulance arrived, she was screaming in pain.

Frances Rose, his other sister, was in equally bad shape. Ever since she'd suffered through a painful childbirth, the

delivery lasting almost 30 hours, she'd become a manic-depressive. She'd been in and out of asylums, and regularly subjected to electric shock treatments.

When Frances was left penniless after her divorce from Stuart Rose, with a young child to care for, she had no one to turn to but her brother. Throughout the rest of her life, Bogie would support her "emotionally and financially."

"The Bogarts are in great shape," he told Mary upon his return to their flat that night. "Each one, in very separate ways, is on the way to hell. Maybe I'm next. It's a family curse."

"We'll make it," she said. "Just you see. It's always darkest before the dawn."

"Stop it!" he shouted at her. "I told you to quit going through life spouting clichés."

Bogie and Mary, "along with the rats and roaches," had moved together into a dismal apartment at 434 East 52nd Street. At night they spent their time listening to the radio and finishing off a bottle of booze. There was nothing else for them to do.

On this marriage's second time around, sex did not emerge as a vital part of their relationship. "I'm too depressed to get it up," Bogie told his friend, Bill Brady Jr.

Even after the first week's anniversary of his reunion with Mary, he had serious doubts that their second attempt at marriage would work out.

One afternoon, he came home to find her writing a letter to Kenneth, now married to Kay Francis. He asked her if he could read it before she sent it, and she refused, tearing the letter into shreds and throwing them into the wastepaper basket.

Not finding any regular work, he sometimes earned as much as five dollars a day playing chess for two bits a round on Sixth Avenue, and bridge at the Players Club, a venue frequented mostly by recently unemployed actors, of course.

After pounding the pavement, Bogie landed a small part in a British comedy called *After All*. It opened to lackluster business at Broadway's Booth Theatre on November 3, 1931.

Helen Haye, who was often confused with Helen Hayes, was the star of this ill-fated play.

Wearing a fake mustache, as required by the role he was playing, Bogie encountered *After All's* British playwright, John Van Druten, who invited him to a tavern on 46th Street, Bogie thought it was to talk about the play, but after a drink or two, Van Druten felt his crotch. Bogie turned down the playwright's offer of sex.

Van Druten, of course, would go on to dazzling success in the theater and in film adaptations, striking gold with such hits as *The Voice of the Turtle* and *Bell, Book, and Candle*. He was not as successful with Hump's play. *After All* closed after only twenty performances.

On the last night of the show, Elliott Baker came backstage. He was one of the many talent scouts working for Columbia, among other studios. He was looking for young actors for talking pictures.

Playwright
John Van Druten

He had seen one of Bogie's pictures and had been impressed with his role in *After All* in which he played an architect married to an invalid.

Invited out for a hamburger, Bogie was expecting another proposition like he'd received from Van Druten. To his shock and delight, the agent offered him a six-month contract at Columbia for $750 a week, a dream salary back then.

Once again, Bogie found himself on the *Santa Fe Chief*, traveling west across the vast expanse of& the American continent. This time he knew he was going to make it big.

The big difference was that Mary now sat beside him. In spite of her "beak" nose, she was hoping to get cast in movie roles herself.

Kenneth had secured modest lodges for them at a pretentiously named apartment complex, The Château Elysée. Meeting them at the train station, Bogie appeared dismayed at the extended kiss Kenneth delivered to his wife.

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Early in 1932, Bogie was awarded the second lead in a romantic comedy produced by Columbia entitled *Love Affair*.

An English beauty, Dorothy Mackaill, four years younger than Bogie, had been cast in the lead. Bogie found her "a stunner, with skin like polished porcelain." A former Ziegfeld Follies dancer, she'd been a bosom buddy of Marion Davies, mistress of William Randolph Hearst.

Mackaill had made silent films with Bogie's pal, George O'Brien, and had even co-starred with John Barrymore. She told Bogie that she was delighted to have him as a leading man, since the studios wanted young, fresh talent.

Love Affair
Humphrey Bogart in a starring role, at last....with Dorothy Mackaill

"My contract with First National wasn't renewed, and I'm free-lancing. I think if I don't build up a new following in Talkies, I'm through. Help me!"

He didn't know how he could help her exactly. He'd already told friends, "I'm hanging on as an actor by the skin of my left nut."

He worked closely with the director, Thornton Freeland, of North Dakota, who'd started out at Vitagraph back in 1918. "He was more a cameraman than a director," Bogie said, "but he claimed he'd photograph me so I'd look like a matinee idol. That's okay with me, if that's what was needed and wanted. I'd flunked as Fox's answer to Clark Gable, so I needed a new persona."

Love Affair is significant today only because it marked Bogie's first starring role. In it, he played an aeronautical engineer. His& lisp is more pronounced in this picture than in later films.

At the end of filming, Mackaill told Bogie, "Here I am, not even thirty years old, and my career is fading fast. Perhaps we'll have a bit hit with this."

They didn't.

Back at their apartment, Mary was often gone until late at night, and he suspected she'd resumed her affair with Kenneth. For some reason he didn't feel particularly jealous. Kay Francis often wasn't home with Kenneth, who was pursuing various affairs with other women, or so Bogie had heard.

Bogie's next job came when Columbia lent him to Warner Brothers, which would eventually become his signature studio. He was given a small part in *Big City Blues* (1932), which "pissed me off—I'm a leading man, not a bit player." The only good news was that he could resume his affair with the star of the film, Joan Blondell.

On the set of *Big City Blues* (1932), Bogie found Joan making two films at a time. She'd have to complete twenty movies before the studio allowed her to take a vacation. Even though both of them remained free agents, Bogie fitted comfortably into the relationship with her as if he'd never left it behind.

Cast as a New York gold digger, Joan had thrived as a Depression-era Showgal. "Chorus girls used to get pearls and diamonds," she wisecracked. "Now all they expect is a corned beef sandwich."

She told Bogie, "My dad always complains about my playing low-life gals of the night, but I seem to fit into those roles better than nun parts."

The San Francisco director assigned to the picture, Mervyn LeRoy, was A-list. His film, *Little Caesar* (1931), had started the gangster craze that Bogie would soon be cashing in on.

Eric Linden was the film's male star. He'd be a leading man in minor Hollywood fare from 1931 to 1941. In *Gone With the Wind*, he'd be cast in a small role.

When he met Bogie, he was cornering the Tinseltown market in portraying artistic, sensitive, smart but weak-willed juvenile males, those who hovered between boyhood and manhood.

"The first time I saw you in *Up the River*, I was totally captivated by you," Eric told Bogie. "You remind me of my father."

"I guess I must be getting old, kid, and I've been told a lot of things in Hollywood, but never that I reminded someone of their father. And, by the way, kid, I'm not an adoption agency."

"I didn't mean it that way," Linden said apologetically. "I hope we can become close friends."

"I've got a lot of bad habits," Bogie said. "Drink too much. I fart in bed. I leave skid marks on my underwear." He lit a cigarette. "And I'm a skirt chaser."

"With all your faults," Linden said, "I want us to become very close friends."

After talking with him for a while, Bogie became dismissive. "It's just not going to happen, kid. You're awfully cute, but it's not for me." He turned and walked away.

There would be a third film before Bogie returned to Broadway. Mervyn LeRoy liked working with Bogie so much he also cast him in *Three on a Match* (1932). Bogie found himself working in a movie that starred four women he'd seduced—Joan Blondell, Ann Dvorak, Glenda Farrell, and once again Bette Davis.

He felt awkward encountering Bette again after dumping her so ungallantly. But when he met her, she shook his hand, "Welcome back to Hollywood, Mr. Bogart." She made no mention of their brief affair, and for that he was grateful.

"I had these big pictures like *Cabin in the Cotton*," she said, complaining to Bogie. "Now I'm the third female lead, working with those two whores, Blondell and Dvorak." She seemed unhappy and couldn't wait for the movie to end.

When her short shooting schedule came to an end, Bogie told her, "I hope we work on another picture soon."

“It is my most fervent wish,” Davis said, “that that doesn’t happen, Mr. Bogart.”

At the wrap, LeRoy told her, “I predict stardom for Blondell, success for Dvorak, and unemployment for you, Bette.”

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Still in California, before he returned to New York, Bogie appeared in a Broadway-bound comedy, *The Mad Hopes*. It starred Billie Burke, who would later gain screen immortality as the Good Witch Glinda in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), with Judy Garland. Years before, in 1914, she had generated newspaper headlines thanks to her marriage to the theatrical impresario Florenz Ziegfeld.

Bette Davis (left) with Joan Blondell

The comedy with its giddy goings-on had been specifically written for Burke, but after its run in California, she wisely abandoned it as a means of avoiding the cynical scrutiny of Manhattan audiences. When it finally opened& on Broadway on May 28, 1932, it starred Violet Kemble Cooper, and no Bogie. It ran for only twenty performances.

At the end of his stage appearance with the ever pleasant Burke in California, he learned that Columbia was not going to renew his contract. Since there was absolutely no work in Hollywood film studios, he opted to return to his native New York City to see what his chances there might be.

After the train deposited him at Manhattan’s Grand Central Station, he headed back to the sleazy apartment he shared with Mary. Relations between them had became increasingly tense. During their obsessive search for work, they had each been leading separate lives. She would often come home late and had little to say. He noticed, however, that she still had time to write one letter a day to Kenneth back in California.

(top photo) Charleston (SC) socialite and film star Frances Fuller

(bottom photo) Ziegfeld Follies star and camp movie queen Billie Burke

Many Broadway theaters had closed. Most former theater patrons couldn’t afford a ticket. Movie tickets were a lot cheaper. Amazingly, Bogie managed to secure roles in five plays in a row, each with long rehearsal periods. Once

the plays opened, each of them flopped. He would later remember performances where there were no more than twelve to twenty people in the audience.

His first job came when he was cast as the third lead in a play called *I Loved You Wednesday,* which opened on Broadway at the Sam H. Harris Theatre on October 11, 1932. He was cast as a "sybarite with the morals of a tomcat."

The star of *I Loved You Wednesday* was Frances Fuller, who played Bogie's lover. This Charleston-born actress from a fine American family was related to Secretary of State and U.S. Supreme Court Justice James Francis Byrnes (1882-1972). Frances later became the director of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and was instrumental in developing the acting style of such& stars as Grace Kelly and Anne Bancroft.

She was strictly business with Bogie. "No hanky-panky with that stuck-up bitch," Bogie told another young actor in the play, Henry Fonda, who appeared briefly in a non-speaking part which called for him to sit onstage at a bar, wordlessly enjoying cocktails with another future star, Arlene Francis.

Henry Fonda had married Margaret Sullavan in 1931, but his marriage seemed as much a failure as Bogie's marriage to Mary. The two young actors shared their marital and career woes.

Bogie told Fonda one night, "I can play this aging juvenile just so long. My voice is deeper. My beard is darker. Makeup can hide only so much. If I don't get a good role soon, I think I'll be washed up."

"I don't think so," Fonda said reassuringly. "Once you get the right part, you'll be the biggest thing on Broadway, except for me, of course."

Sullavan showed up backstage one night, spending more time checking out Bogie than Fonda.

"I can't stand a man who's lousy in bed," she told him. "Fonda's a fast starter and a lousy finisher."

Bogie had never heard a woman talk in such graphic terms describing her husband. She seemed like such a castrating female that he shied away from her. He liked his women a bit more demure. Sullavan was far more aggressive, with a more pronounced streak of malice, than Barbara Stanwyck. Bogie genuinely liked Fonda and would encounter him on and off over the years.

Unhappily married: Margaret Sullavan *(top photo)*, and Henry Fonda

Years later, in the early 1960s, when Edward Albee wrote the play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?, he had Fonda in mind when he crafted the character of George, the Milquetoast husband who comprised half of an corrosive marital relationship in an outwardly genteel college town.

Fonda's agent arrogantly rejected the choice role without consulting him. When Albee's play became the hit drama of 1962, Fonda was furious.

Before the 1930s came to an end, Fonda would join the A-list of stars in Hollywood, fathering Jane Fonda and seducing Bette Davis, his co-star in *Jezebel*.

It came as a total surprise, a ironic shock really, when Bogie found himself cast with Margaret Sullavan in his next job, a Broadway play called *Chrysalis*, which opened on November 15, 1932, running for twenty-three performances at the Martin Beck Theatre.

Bogie's role was defined as "a patent-leather parlor sheik."

The play was a commercial disaster, even though it was cast with some of the most talented actors on Broadway, including Osgood Perkins, a famous actor of his day. He would become the father of an even more famous actor, Anthony Perkins of *Psycho* fame. He and Bogie shared long talks about the theater.

Bogie also befriended Elia Kazan, another actor in the play. He told Bogie he'd rather be directing the play instead of appearing in it.

Elisha Cook Jr., who would appear years later with Bogie in *The Maltese*

Falcon and *The Big Sleep*, was also one of the actors in *Chrysalis*.

Cook told Bogie, "When a director wants to cast a cowardly villain or a weedy neurotic, he calls on me."

On opening night, one critic blasted Bogie, calling him "an oily insect, who gets Sullavan drunk and instructs her, through many long and monotonous kisses, in what he refers to as 'the joys of propinquity.'" Brooks Atkinson found the play "astonishingly insignificant" and claimed, rather enigmatically, that "Bogart plays the wastrel in his usual style."

Mary Orr, an actress/writer whose short story, *The Story of Eve*, would eventually evolve into *All About Eve*, Bette Davis's most famous movie, also appeared in *Chrysalis*.

"While the plumbing was being fixed, I had to share a dressing room with Sullavan," Orr later recalled. "What a bitch! She claimed she was going to seduce Bogie that weekend. Sullavan told me, 'He's become a friend of Henry, and I always make it a point to seduce Henry's friends, especially James Stewart. Of course, in the case of Stewart, Henry does far more seducing of him than I do. My husband tries to make it with women, but he's basically a faggot.'"

One night, Sullavan asked Bogie to walk her home, and he reluctantly escorted her. She complained to him that she'd appeared in four Broadway flops in a row. "But I got great reviews," she hastened to add.

She invited him up for some "bootleg hootch," and he readily accepted. He warned her, however, that the U.S. government was deliberately poisoning some bootleg liquor to frighten the public away from alcohol.

She was angry that Fonda had gone off with James Stewart that night. "I can't be tied down to one man, especially a husband that's inadequate."

Before the night ended, Sullavan seduced Bogie. Shortly thereafter, she told Mary Orr, "Bogie's okay in bed. I mean, I've had better. But he's got the proper technique. He makes sure the woman is satisfied before he pulls off her."

Later, Bogie told Osgood Perkins that Sullavan was "one of the Red Hot Dames of 1932 Broadway."

Bogie's next Broadway play was a romantic comedy set in Paris, *Our Wife*. This time, Rose Hobart was the star, with Bogie playing her lover.

A stunning-looking actress, Hobart evoked Marlene Dietrich in appearance and dress. When on occasion Bogie took her out, fans often came up to her table, asking, "Miss Dietrich, may I have your autograph?" She always obliged, signing, "Love, Marlene."

Born into a family of musicians, Hobart had starred opposite Fredric March in his legendary *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932). Although he found her an attractive woman, Bogie did not put any moves on her, because the talk of Broadway was that she was involved in a torrid lesbian romance with a big Broadway star, Eva Le Gallienne.

Regrettably, *Our Wife* opened at Manhattan's Booth Theatre on March 2, 1933, the day President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared an emergency bank holiday. Only ten people showed up, each a member of the press. One newsman wrote that the play "is tamely acted and meagerly directed," a blow against Edward Clarke Lilley who helmed it.

Bogie earned fifty-six dollars the first week of the show. Even though the play lasted for twenty performances, the producers ran out of money and couldn't write any more checks after that.

After that, Bogie played a supporting stage role in an Italian comedy, *The Mask and the Face*, which opened on May 8, 1933. Produced by the Guild Theatre, it ran for forty performances. The farce was by Luigi Chiarelli as translated by W. Somerset Maugham. It had first been performed in 1916.

The play also starred Shirley Booth with whom Bogie had had a brief fling back in 1924 during the Broadway production of *Hell's Bells*. The two former lovers worked well together, never mentioning their previous tryst.

Judith Anderson

During rehearsals for *The Mask and the Face,* Bogie came into conflict with the formidable Australia-born lesbian, Judith Anderson. She would make a name for herself playing cold, imperious, or sinister women. When he met her, Anderson was years away from her Oscar-nominated performance as the lesbian housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, in *Rebecca* with Joan Fontaine. Exasperated during rehearsals when Bogie had not memorized his dialogue, she made a& suggestion, "You should seek another profession, perhaps ladling soup to the poor in the breadlines."

The cast also included Leo G. Carroll, who would later appear with Bogie in both *All Through the Night* and *We're No Angels*.

Critics referred to the *The Mask and the Face* as both "a dubious graveyard lark" and "a grisly farce." Bogie felt lucky that no reviewer mentioned him.

When he thought he'd never see his mug on a movie screen again, a call came in from director Chester Erskine, who was casting *Midnight* (1934) to be distributed by Universal. There was a small role in it for Bogie, and he gladly accepted when he heard it was to be filmed in New York and not on the West Coast. He was familiar with *Midnight* 's star, Sidney Fox, with whom he and Bette Davis had appeared in *Bad Sister*.

This 80-minute film, which also co-starred Henry Hull, would mark Bogie's first appearance on the screen as a gangster.

In the wake of *Midnight*, Bogie returned to the stage once again for a less-than-memorable role in *Invitation to a Murder*.

This play, a melodrama in three acts by Rufus King, opened on May 17, 1934 at Broadway's Masque Theatre, running for only thirty-seven performances.

Bogie played Horatio Channing, a member of a southern California family whose fortune was created by piracy. It was an old-fashioned mystery melodrama, featuring "the usual suspects"—trapdoors, ghosts, and all the other clichés. Critic Pollyanna Garland wrote, "Humphrey Bogart Humphrey-Bogart's his way through the role." The New York *Post* referred to it as "high-voltage trash."

This was Bogie's first stage interpretation of a villain, a part he later referred to as "a gruesome little mishap."

Sidney Fox with Humphrey Bogart in *Midnight* (1934)

In this murder mystery, Gale Sondergaard was the star, with support from Jane Seymour and veteran character actor Walter Abel.

Bogie admired Sondergaard, who would go on to a Hollywood career as one of the era's most formidable bad women. She became the first winner in the newly established Best Supporting Actress category in the lavish costume picture, *Anthony Adverse* (1936). Her promising career was later derailed when she became one of filmdom's& blacklist victims during the Red Scare of the Joseph McCarthy era.

Even though Bogie did not impress the critics in this play, he did attract the attention of Arthur Hopkins, the film's producer and director. A year later, when it came time to cast *The Petrified Forest*, Hopkins would remember Bogie's performance in this otherwise forgotten play.

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When Bogie couldn't find work as an actor, he was offered a job as a chess player at the sleazy Sportsland on Sixth Avenue in Manhattan's West Forties. He would sit in the window, taking on any member of the public who wanted to challenge him, for a fee of fifty cents, to a game of chess.

When he saved up enough money, he would go over to the "21" for a drink. The owners liked him and let him run up a big tab, which he could not pay until he was cast on stage in *The Petrified Forest* in 1935.

In September of 1934, Mary Philips appeared at the Sportsland Arcade to interrupt Bogie's chess game. She ran up to him. Her message was brief. "Belmont is dying."

At the hospital, Bogie stayed in the same room with Dr. Bogart, watching his life wane. He lived for another forty-eight hours, dying in his son's arms at Manhattan's Hospital for the Ruptured and Crippled on September 8, 1934, at the age of 67.

Belmont expressed no particularly articulate last words. He was unable to speak. However, he did seem to hear his son's last words to him. "I love you, Father." Bogie would tell Mary, "I should have told him that years ago, but I never could."

There was no one to accompany Bogie to Fresh Pond Crematory in Long Island. Mary was auditioning for a Broadway show, and Maud made it clear that she found the idea of cremation, as requested by her husband, "quite ghastly."

After his father was buried, Bogie returned to Maud's apartment. She was going through his papers. "He left $10,000 in debts and $35,000 in uncollected doctor's fees."

She handed him his father's old-fashioned ruby ring. He would wear it until his death, and it can be seen in his films over the years. He told Maud that as a point of honor, he would work to pay off the entire $10,000.

"Then I suggest you find some more profitable line of work than the stage and or B-list movies that no one wants to see."

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After a string of failures, with a career going nowhere, the "chess player, sometimes actor," as he called himself, had

a change of luck. He was plucked from oblivion. Had fortune not shone on him— *finally* —he'd have joined the hundreds of actors, male and female, who enjoyed brief fame in the Silents or had their fifteen minutes of fame in the Talkies during the 30s.

"I would have become a footnote in the history of the theater or the movies," he said. "I would make it as a footnote if that history were summed up in ten volumes. If only one volume, I would have been such an insignificant flea, I would not even have made it as a footnote."

When its producer and director Arthur Hopkins asked Bogie to audition for the coveted role of Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest*, Bogie renewed his friendship with Robert Sherwood, who wrote the play. Sherwood actually didn't want him to play Duke, preferring instead that he be cast in another role. Hopkins stood his ground, however.

At Bogie's audition sat Leslie Howard, the English actor, who was to become his friend. Howard agreed with Hopkins. Bogie would be perfect for the part.

After the audition, Sherwood changed his point of view. In *The Worlds of Robert E. Sherwood*, John Mason Brown wrote, "He thought of more than Bogart's masculinity. He thought of his driven power. His anguished eyes, dark eyes, the puffs of pain beneath them, and the dangerous despair which lined his face."

The character of Duke Mantee was inspired mainly by bank robber John Dillinger. Bogie actually resembled the real-life Dillinger.

Cast as an escaped convict, Bogie threw himself into the role and tried to live up to Sherwood's description of the character. "He is well built but stoop shouldered, with a vaguely thoughtful, saturnine face. He is about thirty-five and, if he hadn't elected to take up banditry, he might have been a fine left-fielder. He is unmistakably doomed."

During the course of the play, Duke holds its main characters hostage, including Leslie Howard, who played Squier, the romantic intellectual who believes that "my ilk" is becoming as ossified as the petrified forest in the Arizona Desert. Hostages are held at the Black Mesa Bar-B-Q.

Preview audiences in Hartford gasped at their view of the "new" Bogart. He was no longer a sprig with a tennis racket, but a gangster with a prison pallor and a three-day growth of beard.

Opening on Broadway at the Broadhurst Theater on January 7, 1935, *The Petrified Forest* starred Leslie Howard and Peggy Conklin, who portrayed Gabrielle Maple, the waitress heroine.

At last, praise came from Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times*, who asserted that Bogie "does the best work of his career as the motorized gorilla."

In a strange coincidence, Kenneth MacKenna had migrated back to New York to pursue his own luck on Broadway. Ironically, he was eventually hired as Leslie Howard's understudy in the Broadway version of *The Petrified Forest*.

Bogie's marriage to Mary Philips continued dysfunctionally, as each pursued his or her respective career in the theater. It was increasingly obvious that their link was held together by a not very sticky glue.

One late afternoon, Bogie told Mary that he was going to stay in the Broadway area for the three hours leading up to the show and wouldn't return home until after curtain.

But when he discovered that he'd either lost or misplaced his wallet, he called her to see if it were left in the apartment. There was no answer, so he made his way back to their apartment. On the floor of the living room, Kenneth was screwing his wife.

Bogie took one look at the coupling and then shouted into the living room. "Carry on, guys. Don't let me stop you." Slamming the door on his way out, he headed back to the theater.

At the theater, he reported the details of the seduction scene he'd just witnessed to Leslie Howard.

Right before the curtain went up that night on *The Petrified Forest*, Bogie received devastating news.

On September 26, 1935, his long-time best friend, Bill Brady Jr., had burned alive while drunk in his country cabin at Colts Neck, New Jersey when the building caught on fire. Ironically, Bogie had been invited to spend that weekend with Bill in his bungalow. “I could have been burned to death along with Bill,” he said.

Unusual for him, Bogie burst into hysterical sobs. Howard was going to ask his understudy to go on in Bogie’s place. But he pulled himself together in time to face the audience. Howard later asserted that “Bogart gave the best performance of his career.”

At Bill’s funeral, Bogie stood next to his mentor and long-time friend, Bill Brady Sr. He was now seventy-one years old. The two men embraced, as both of them sobbed for their loss.

Mrs. Brady came up and embraced Bogie. Before leaving that day. Mr. Brady turned to Bogie. “I always knew you’d be a great actor. I was the first to believe in you. I wish to see you return to Hollywood and make your greatest films.”

Mr. Brady’s wish came true. He sat through a showing of *Casablanca* three times. He saw each and every film Bogie made until 1950, when he died at the age of eighty-six.

With all the rave notices the Broadway version of *The Petrified Forest* received, it was only natural for Hollywood to take notice. Agents for Warner Brothers purchased film rights for the play, with the contractual obligation to cast Leslie Howard in the lead.

In spite of the rave notices generated by his performances in the play, Bogie was not rewarded with a firm contract to play Duke Mantee in the film. Instead, Warner Brothers took an “option” on his services, paying him a small fee to either cast him or not cast him, according to their perceptions and whims, into the movie role. “I was left dangling in the wind,” Bogie later said. “Am I getting the part or not?” he kept asking Mary. “According to this god damn option deal,” Mary told him, “they can drop you at the last minute and bring in George Raft or Edward G. Robinson. Your option deal means shit.”

The play could have run for at least another three or four months but Howard had grown tired of the part. He also nixed a road tour, feeling that an extension might hurt the eventual box office receipts of the movie. Thanks to his role as one of the play’s co-producers, along with Gilbert Miller, Howard had such power, and he ordered that the final curtain come down after 181 performances.

During the run of *The Petrified Forest*, Bogie had paid off all of Belmont’s debts, and still had two thousand dollars left in the bank.

Since he wanted to save his bankroll, he looked for a job in summer stock. Based on the reputation he’d built on Broadway, he was hired after only two weeks’ search, signing a commitment for a series of performances with Will Seabury’s Repertory Theatre Company in Skowhegan, Maine.

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In Skowhegan, in 1935, it was understood that he would appear that summer as a character within three separate plays.

The first was entitled *The Stag at Bay*, a cloak-and-dagger melodrama about the theft of a formula for poison gas. In it he also starred with Keenan Wynn, whom he would often encounter in later years in Hollywood. Keenen was usually seen in the company of Hollywood star Van Johnson, his long-time lover.

Ceiling Zero came next. A drama by Frank Wead, it was said to be the first play ever produced revolving around the life of a commercial airport as its theme. It had starred Osgood Perkins when it was first produced on Broadway in 1935. Bogie’s appearance in this summer stock production went unnoticed. But the Wead drama had legs. Warner Brothers optioned it for its 1936 film, also called *Ceiling Zero*, but Bogie wasn’t offered any role, the honors going to James Cagney and Pat O’Brien. Just a few years later, in 1941, Warners remade it. Re-titled *International Squadron*, the lead went to the up-and-coming Ronald Reagan.

For his *adieu* to summer stock and to the stage in general, Bogie found himself cast opposite the notorious fan

dancer, Sally Rand, in *Rain.* Far more famous as a coyly erotic dancer than as an actress, Sally was noted for her flirtatious ostrich feather dance and her balloon bubble dance.

It was Cecil B. DeMille who had assigned her the name "Sally Rand" years before, back when the now-aging star had first appeared in silent films. DeMille took what became her surname from the Rand McNally Atlas.

Rand became infamous throughout America thanks to the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, an event also entitled *Century of Progress*. She was arrested four times in the course of a single day, charged with "indecent exposure" while imitating a provocatively dressed impersonation of Lady Godiva riding a white horse down the streets of the city.

When she met Bogie, he found her a "stunner," as he later told his pals at Tony's in New York. At the time she was described as a "diminutive (5' 1") damsel with a knockout (35-22-35) figure."

She told Bogie she was tired of burlesque and that "the stage is my destiny."

"It's my destiny, too, when I can find a job that pays at least fifty bucks a week."

Rand had recently agreed to play W. Somerset Maugham's prostitute, Sadie Thompson, in his play *Rain*. A 1928 silent film entitled *Sadie Thompson* had starred Gloria Swanson. In 1935, Tallulah Bankhead had brought the character to Broadway in a revival.

Actually *Rain* was first seen on Broadway in 1922, starring the legendary Jeanne Eagels in a box office success. June Havoc, sister of Gypsy Rose Lee, the stripper, starred in a 1944 Broadway musical, *Sadie Thompson*. In 1932, Joan Crawford appeared in the film version. In 1953 *Rain* would be taken out of mothballs, the character interpreted once again by Rita Hayworth in the film *Miss Sadie Thompson*.

What happened that summer between Bogie and Rand remains a mystery. When he returned to New York, Bogie told his cronies that he had seduced her. "She was my steady piece up in Maine." Later, Rand denied that she'd had an affair with him. Simultaneously, however, she claimed that the impotent Paul Bern, husband of Jean Harlow, was "great in bed." So much for her honesty in reporting.

As far as it's known, there has been only one printed romantic link between Bogie and Rand. A long-ago article claimed, "After the curtain went down on *Rain*, the real action began with the young actor Humphrey Bogart and the aging Sally Rand, the famous fan dancer."

Even that was wrong. Bogie was born in 1899, Rand in 1904.

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After his immersion in Maine's world of summer stock, Bogie returned to New York City and Mary. She did not ask him what he'd done for private pleasures during his absence. And he chose not to grill her either.

Despite his many previous successes on Broadway the previous season, there were no immediate job offerings. On the slim chance that Jack Warner might take up his option and cast him as Duke Mantee, Bogie decided to take the train to the West Coast.

He asked Mary to go with him. She adamantly refused, devoting her attention instead to starring in a Broadway play, *A Touch of Brimstone*. "My career's about to take off—it's getting hotter and hotter," she told him. "What would I do in Hollywood? Sit around for three weeks waiting for you to finish the shoot? That is, if you even get the role."

Bogie decided to take the train by himself. Incidentally, Mary's co-star was none other than Roland Young. Still sexually involved with Kenneth, she resumed her affair with Young—and "his cheating heart," as she put it.

As Bogie entered the Garden of Allah Hotel in Hollywood, he picked up a copy of *Variety*. Later, by the pool, he read that Edward G. Robinson, a Warner Brothers contract player, had been signed to play Duke Mantee in the film version of *The Petrified Forest*.

Bogie was crestfallen and got horribly drunk that night. Leslie Howard had been vacationing in Scotland when he received a cable from Bogie. “Robinson set to play Duke Mantee. Help me!”

Immediately Howard notified Warner Brothers that if Bogie could not retain the role, that he was also pulling out of the cast. Jack Warner caved in.

Even with Howard as his champion, Bogie still had to get involved in more than a dozen screen tests before he was finally signed to the part.

Bogie was given only a three-week contract at $750 per week. This was the same wage he’d been paid in 1932. Bette Davis agreed to get involved with the film for $9,000, Howard taking in $62,500.

On the first day of shooting, Bogie once again encountered Bette Davis, and once again, previous intimacies seemed to have been forgotten, at least by her.

Smoking a cigarette, she came right up to him and didn’t welcome him to the studio. “I was rather looking forward to working with Eddie,” she said, referring, of course, to Edward G. Robinson. “I think he would have made a great Duke Mantee.”

“What am I?” he asked. “Chopped liver?”

“The trouble with you, Bogart, is that you cannot portray menace on the screen,” she said, blowing smoke in his face.

“Since I last saw you, I’ve learned menace.”

She looked at him skeptically. “That’s good,” she said in a voice already famous to movie audiences.

She told Bogie, “Leslie and I really didn’t get along when we made *Of Human Bondage* (1934). But now he’s very affectionate. I can show you my arms and shoulders.” She pulled back her dress to reveal bite marks across her skin. “At times I think he’s a dog. Did you know that he actually enjoys biting women?”

“As you well know, I prefer to plow into them instead.”

“No, I don’t know that,” she said with an imperial air. “You see, I’ve forgotten all about that.”

Her acknowledgment of these bites and nibbles was an odd admission from Bette. She told several friends, “Did you know that Leslie screwed every female star on every movie he was ever in, with the exception of me? I told him that I was not going to be plastered on the end of a list of his conquests.” Of course, what Bette sometimes said and what she did were two different things.

Bogart as Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest*

The director of *The Petrified Forest* was Archie Mayo, who on film more or less shot the play as it had been

presented on Broadway. He detested “that limey bastard,” Leslie Howard, but had praise for Bogie.

With Bette Davis, Mayo established an uneasy truce, having directed her in *Bordertown* in 1935. “I believe in giving that bitch wide berth,” Mayo told Bogie.

Ironically, both Bogie and Mayo would work together again on the film, *They Drive by Night,* in 1940, a movie that was inspired by Davis’ *Bordertown.*

“Davis and Howard had egos bigger than their talents,” he said. “Actually, Bogie was the only actor in a starring part in the film that did what I asked him to do. Later, of course, he became an S.O.B.”

Mayo said, “Bette seemed pissed off throughout the movie. She constantly complained that she was playing some little field mouse while Howard and Bogie were ‘eating up the scenery.’ She said she longed for a strong part like the one she’d played in *Of Human Bondage* with Leslie Howard.”

At the end of the shoot, Bogie gave Howard his warmest embrace, thanking him for all his support. The two actors agreed to “become friends for life,” although for Howard, that would be defined as only a few short years to& come.

The Petrified Forest

(top photo) Leslie Howard kisses Bette Davis
(bottom photo) Bogart frisks Leslie Howard

Before saying goodbye to Leslie Howard on the set of *The Petrified Forest*, Bogie and his mentor had made a vow. Bogie agreed to follow Howard’s precedent and seduce each of his upcoming leading ladies. What he didn’t know was that he’d occasionally be cast opposite a lesbian. These actresses were certainly beautiful and desirable, but many of them preferred not to share their charms with men.

Bogie would later name his second child Leslie in honor of Howard, who had given him his first big break. A baby daughter was born to Bogie and his fourth wife, Lauren Bacall, on August 23, 1952. *Time* magazine reported that the six-pound, five-ounce baby girl was a boy. But such was not the case.

Movie critics and fellow stars agreed that no man in the history of movies had turned the act of smoking a cigarette into such high drama. The juvenile sprig had become a Hollywood tough guy.

In spite of rave reviews, Jack Warner wasn’t all that impressed. He didn’t think Bogie had broad appeal.

At the time, Warner Brothers was in the throes of releasing a wave of& gangster films, and the studio decided that Bogie would be in a lot of them. There were, in fact, some twenty-nine films released in the five-year span between *The Petrified Forest* (1936), and *High Sierra (* 1941). Often he played a jailbird. He died in eight of them, once in an electric chair and once by means of a hangman’s noose.

Nine days after shooting on *Petrified Forest* ended in 1936, Jack Warner signed a forty-week contract with Bogie

for $550 per week. In signing the contract, Bogie agreed not to “offend the community or ridicule public morals or decency.”

The contract contained a complicated series of options, with the understanding that if all of them were activated before the end of 1941, Bogie conceivably could make as much as $1,750 a week.

The moment he signed the contract, Bogie became a tenant along what the studio referred to as “Murderer’s Row.” Fellow residents included Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, George Raft, Paul Muni, and John Garfield.

Eventually, Bogie became beloved by the press because he was one of the few actors in Hollywood who spoke what he felt. “Everybody else out here is hiding behind some fake image,” he said. “Nobody likes me on sight. There must be something about the tone of my voice, or this arrogant face—something that antagonizes everybody. I can’t even get into a mild discussion that doesn’t turn into an argument.”

Meanwhile, Mary’s star as a Broadway actress had dimmed, her latest play not attracting the audience that its backers had anticipated. After it closed after ninety-six performances, there were no more offers. She accepted her husband’s invitation to take the train to Los Angeles.

Once there, she spent Christmas of 1935 at the Château Elysée, where they celebrated Bogie’s birthday. Her first question upon arrival was, “Which stars have you fucked?”

“No one! I’ve been celibate. How about you?”

“Just the usual suspects,” she said frankly. By that, he knew that she meant Roland Young and Kenneth MacKenna.

Bogie seemed to want to assert his manhood now that he was a contract player, and she was an out-of-work actress. Before, he’d been married to an actress more famous than himself. After *The Petrified Forest* opened to big box office, “I started to clank my balls,” he told Spencer Tracy.

A few weeks later, Mary received an offer to return to Broadway to star in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, adapted from the James M. Cain novel. The property was considered too hot, too steamy for Hollywood. Later it would become one of Lana Turner’s most sensational movies. Mary had been cast opposite Richard Barthelmess, the silent screen star who would be making his Broadway debut.

Eager to “return to glory,” as she put it, she told her husband that she could never settle down, become a housewife, and have children. “I’m afraid, dear, that if that is what you want, you should not have married a Broadway star.”

Long after *The Petrified Forest* was distributed and screened around the world, the drama still had “legs.” Bogie himself would appear in future manifestations of this play.

In years to come, Bogie contracted to perform in a radio version of *The Petrified Forest*. Produced by the Screen Guild Theater, it was aired on January 7, 1940, starring himself alongside Joan Bennett and Tyrone Power.

The Petrified Forest would also be remade in 1944 as a retitled film called *Escape in the Desert*. This was a second-rate movie, with Philip Dorn in the Leslie Howard role. The gangster role of Bogie was reconfigured into that of an escaped Nazi POW, with Helmut Dantine taking the part.

In a touch of irony, *The Petrified Forest* would be performed again on live television in 1955, with a cast of Bogie and Henry Fonda. The Bette Davis role was played by a young actress named Lauren Bacall.

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When& Hollywood& director William McGann called Bogie to tell him that he had been cast as the lead in a 1936 film *Two Against the World,* he was at first delighted. But delight turned to disappointment when he learned that he was actually making a B picture reprise of a five-year-old A-list film, Edward G. Robinson’s *Five Star Final,* first released in 1931.

Two Against the World (1936)

(lower left photo) our hero
(lower right photo) Beverly Roberts with our hero

The original 1931 version of *Five Star Final* had been based on a play by Louis Weitzenkorn. But in Bogie's recycled and "watered down" version, scripter Michael Jacoby wrote a much weaker role for Bogie, a role utterly lacking any of Robinson's "fire" from the the original film The setting was switched as well: What had been a newspaper office in the original, became a radio station in Bogie's version. As part of the plot motivation, the radio station is hell bent on increasing the number of its listeners by any means it can conjure. Bogie never liked his role.

After Bogie rehearsed his first scene under the scrutiny of director McGann, he was not impressed. "The fucker spent more time watching the clock than in directing me."

Even though the director was aware of his schedule's time restraints, it was still not enough to appease top management.

Hal Wallis was the studio's chief honcho, but Bogie's boss was Bryan Foy, "The Keeper of the Bs," as he was known on the Warners lot. Bryan was the eldest son of vaudeville star Eddie Foy, and he had appeared on stage with his father as one of "The Seven Little Foys." From 1924 to 1963, he produced 214 films, one of which was the distinguished *Guadalcanal Diary* in 1943.

The first time Bogie met Foy, he rushed onto the set accusing McGann of running overtime and over budget. McGann protested that he had forty more pages to shoot. Foy grabbed the shooting script from him and, without reading it, ripped out twenty pages. Before storming off the set, he said, "Now bring this stinker in on time . . . or else!"

That's why *Two Against the World* ran for only sixty-four minutes.

Later, while analyzing that period of his life, Bogie claimed that in a lot of films during the late 1930s, "I was assigned one of two different types of leading ladies—either a star who'd arrived in Hollywood via the casting couch, or else a card-carrying lesbian."

When he met Beverly Roberts, his *Two Against the World* co-star from the latter of those two categories, he immediately recognized her as "one of the boys," from the latter of those two categories. Bogie liked this "tough-talking broad."

Roberts had been spotted singing in a New York City nightclub by a Warner Brothers talent agent and sent to Hollywood to appear with Al Jolson in the 1936 film, *The Singing Kid,* which was followed by her star part with Bogie.

She was signed on at Warner Brothers the same day Errol Flynn became a member of the troupe. Flynn met her that day and also became friends with her. Flynn later told Bogie, "Beverly and I have a lot in common. We both know how to take care of a woman."

Roberts became known for playing "tough-edged dames" on the Warner lot, mainly potboilers. In one film she played it particularly butch during her portrayal of a woman who's running a lumber camp. In another movie, she operated a fleet of buses. "I was women's lib before the term was invented," she said.

Later, Bogie asserted that “Beverly Roberts had more *cojones* than I did.”

When Roberts met actress Wynne Gibson during their filming of the 1938 feature film, *Flirting with Fate*, she met “the love of my life,” as she told Bogie. She meant that.

Gibson herself was one of the “lovelies” who appeared in the 1930s, making mainly B movies between 1929 and 1956. Roberts and Gibson would live together until Gibson’s death in 1987.

Also cast in *Two Against the World* was an actor named Carlyle Moore, Jr. Bogie in the future would appear with the same actor in both *Bullets or Ballots* and in *China Clipper.*

“The last time I encountered this Moore kid, sometime in the late 1930s, all he could talk about was ‘Ronald Reagan, Ronald Reagan, Ronald Reagan—he’s the handsomest man in Hollywood. He’s got a great physique, and he’s not stuck up at all. He’s the nicest guy.’ I let him blabber on. Moore did end up in Reagan’s *Knute Rockne — All American*. On Moore’s part, I think it was more than puppy love. Good luck to that kid if he thought he was going to get Reagan out of his pants.”

When *Two Against the World* was released, none of the cast, including Bogie himself, was pleased with the way the film had been ruthlessly shortened. Beverly Roberts and Carlyle Moore Jr. were among those who complained about how their roles had been cut.

Two Against the World was such a bad picture that Jack Warner delayed its release for months. “We’ll release it one day when every newspaper in America is on strike,” the studio chief said. “That way, no one will review it.

When the film was finally released, critics slammed it. For television, the movie was more temptingly re-titled *One Fatal Hour.* Today, *Two Against the World* is recommended “Only for diehard Bogie fans.”

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As author Jeffrey Meyers put it, Bogie in the mid-Thirties began a new phase of his career where he’d be “slapped, muddied, shaken, submerged and drenched; bitten, choked, cut, thrown, singed and burned.”

He reported early to work to a studio, Warner Brothers, that evoked a prison, with tough security guards at the gate. When he first arrived, he didn’t even own a car, so he showed up at the gate in a taxi.

His packed lunch was always the same every day—two cheese and tomato sandwiches, one hard-boiled egg, and a bottle of beer which he had to drink warm.

Unlike plush Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers was cost-conscious. In his first year under contract, Bogie would make four films back to back for release in 1936. Each was a B picture, with a minor director. Shooting schedules were tight, sometimes with as little as three weeks allotted.

Bogie often regretted that he’d arrived in Hollywood after the self-regulating Production Code came into effect on July 15, 1934. Strictly forbidden was subject matter which included “profanity, nudity, drug trafficking, sex perversion, white slavery, miscegenation, sex hygiene and venereal diseases, scenes of actual childbirth, children’s sex organs, ridicule of the clergy, and offenses against a nation, race, or creed.”

Cast members of *Bullets or Ballots* (top to bottom)

Joan Blondell,
Edward G. Robinson with Bogart,
and Barton MacLane

Jack Warner was terribly disappointed with Bogie's performance in *Two Against the World,* but decided to give him another chance since he already had him under contract. "Cast him in *Bullets or Ballots,"* he ordered Bryan Foy. "Make Edward G. Robinson the star and give Bogart fourth billing. That way, no one will notice the fucker. Throw in Joan Blondell for the floozy sex appeal."

Bullets or Ballots marked the first picture Bogie made with Robinson, but it was the fourth picture in which he was cast opposite Joan.

Joan Blondell had heard that this hardboiled drama had encountered problems with the Production Code. Joseph Breen, the censor, sent Jack Warner a warning, suggesting that *Bullets or Ballots* was the kind of movie we had "agreed not to make."

Joan introduced Bogie to their director, William Keighley, who had helmed her in *Penny Arcade*. This Philadelphian in *Bullets or Ballots* created a role model of the kind of fast-paced, tightly made film of which Warners would specialize in the next few years.

Bogie never liked phonies, and he was put off by what he viewed as the director's "continental manners," perhaps acquired during his tenure on Broadway in the early 20s.

Whenever his name came up in the future, Bogie would mock him, mainly when he cast James Cagney as the lead in the Technicolor epic, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). Of course, Keighley came to his senses and later cast Errol Flynn instead. Keightly himself was replaced by Michael Curtiz when Robin Hood, Warner's most expensive film of all time fell behind in production.

Bullets or Ballots marked the first of several films Bogie would shoot with Barton MacLane, a native of South Carolina. When directors wanted a furrow-browed tough guy, MacLane was on call. Cameras would move in on his squinty eyes and tightly clamped mouth. He seemed to pose a menace to whomever he encountered.

MacLane's character was modeled on Dutch Schultz, the notorious gangster and main patron of Polly Adler, America's most famous madam.

One afternoon between filming, on a particularly hot day, MacLane went to his dressing room and brought back a violin, and played it for Joan and Bogie.

“Not bad, not bad at all,” Bogie said. “For my next party, I’ll hire you for a sawbuck.”

Bogie was cast as “Bugs” Fenner a mobster. Before the film ends, he will kill a crusader against vice; MacLane’s character, and finally Johnny Blake (Robinson). In the final reel, Robinson, wounded by Bogie, finally guns him down.

When Bogie came up to greet Robinson, the shorter man studied him skeptically. Before their careers were over, they would make five films together, with Bogie eventually assuming the lead in *Key Largo* (1948). “I keep reading that you created the movie gangster. I guess you didn’t see *Little Caesar*. I do believe that I have become the prototypical movie mobster, and let’s get that straight. Did you hear my dying line?”

To Bogie’s astonishment, he delivered it again. “Mother of Mercy, is this the end of Roco Bandello?”

Born in Bucharest, Rumania, Robinson was no gangster, but a Renaissance man of great cultivation, a devotee of art and music. He would later collect some $3 million worth of art. At first he didn’t want to go to Hollywood, holding movies in disdain, preferring the stage. But after he hit the jackpot as the vicious gang leader in *Little Caesar*, he thought he could put up with all those orange and palm trees after all.

In spite of his charm, Bogie remained leery of him. “Let’s face it:& Robinson is the guy to beat.”

This good, tough gangster film more or less holds up today. In it, Robinson leaves the police force to crack a city-wide mob run by MacLane.

On April 17, 1939, Bogie signed with the Lux Radio Theater to broadcast a one-hour radio play of *Bullets or Ballots*. Both Robinson and Bogie reprised their roles, but Mary Astor stood in for Joan Blondell.

After his watching himself in his latest film, Bogie said, “I owe it all to Clark Gable with those big ears. Dames go crazy over him. He paved the way for all of us with ugly mugs—Robinson, James Cagney, and my dear friend Spencer Tracy.”

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With Mary still in New York, Bogie resumed his on-again, off-again affair with Joan. She told him she was tired of these dumb, wise-cracking roles and wanted to make it in drama. He worked closely with her and helped her through her scenes. She played a shady Harlem nightclub owner and gave an admirable performance when stacked against Bogie and Robinson.

When Bogie saw how Joan’s household was being run, he said, “Hot damn, woman. You’ve become a movie star at last. Do you need someone to look after your fan mail?”

“Joan was at the peak of her beauty, during the making of this film,” Bogie said. “In her wardrobe, she became a fucking garden of flowers. I didn’t know whether to water her or not. In spite of Dick Powell beating down her door, she threw me a few mercy fucks so I wouldn’t be so tense.”

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After *Bullets or Ballots,* Bogie was cast as the fourth lead in *China Clipper,* a 1936 release from Warners directed by Ray Enright. Bogie played Hap Stuart, a daredevil pilot and wartime buddy of Pat O’Brien, who had been cast as the lead. The screenplay by Frank Wead focused on the creation of the famous *China Clipper,* the plane that made the first passenger run from San Francisco to the Orient. The plot was inspired by Eddie Rickenbacker, the World War I aviation hero who went into the commercial flying business, a career move evocative of Howard Hughes.

Once again, Bogie was cast with Beverly Roberts, who played the female lead.

“We spent a lot of time in my dressing room having a drink,” he said. “Beverly could hold her liquor as well as I could. I told her that I hope in the future we wouldn’t compete for the same dames.”

Ross Alexander and Marie Wilson rounded out the cast. Also appearing in the movie was Wayne Morris, who

would go on to greater glory, if that was what it could be called. In *China Clipper*, he had only a bit part.

(top photo) Bogie
(bottom photo) Pat O'Brien

The son of Irish immigrants, with an ugly mug, O'Brien was an unlikely candidate to become a leading movie star in the 1930s. A friend of both James Cagney and Spencer Tracy, he never bonded as well with Bogie, although they worked together fairly smoothly.

Bogie called him "Hollywood's walking embodiment of Ireland." He once studied to become a Roman Catholic priest, but gave that up, although he often performed as "Father This" or "Father That" in films. If not a priest, he wore a cop's badge in movies. Politically, O'Brien and Bogie were oceans apart. Because of his extreme Right Wing views, Bogie called him "a near Nazi."

In the role of Dave Logan, Barton MacLane played a character inspired by Charles Lindbergh's conquest of the Atlantic on his history-making flight to Paris. In the movie, Logan plans a trans-Pacific airline.

In her usual "Dumb Dora" role, Marie Wilson pursued Ross Alexander. Bogie wasn't living up to Leslie Howard's challenge of seducing all his leading ladies. He found the well-stacked Wilson a sexy number with her ultra-blonde locks, her generous mouth, and her great big eyes.

Wilson had appeared in *Satan Met a Lady* (1936), starring Bette Davis. This was the second film adaptation of the detective novel, *The Maltese Falcon*. Davis would later say, "Marilyn Monroe's on-screen persona was a complete rip-off of Marie Wilson." Wilson would go on to gain national prominence with her hit interpretation of *My Friend Irma* on radio, TV, and film.

Wilson only looked innocent on the screen. In private she wasn't adverse to going to bed with a nice-looking man. Bogie took her out on two dates,& and perhaps he scored. He obviously told Leslie Howard, but didn't share much information with any of his pals.

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At long last Bogie came face to face with Ross Alexander, a young actor whose reputation had preceded him. Bogie already resented him for getting star billing over him as the third lead.

Standing 6' 1", he was hailed as the most promising young player at Warner Brothers. With his wavy brown hair and penetrating eyes, the Brooklyn-born actor seemed ideal for those romantic juvenile roles.

Although he'd never met Alexander, he was well known on Broadway. He was what Bogie called a "star fucker" and had seduced several famous actors or directors. He'd been the kept boy of a series of wealthy men, including the renowned John Golden, age 54, producer, playwright, actor, and songwriter.

Alexander was tormented about his homosexuality and tried to conceal it by marrying or else pursuing female stars. His marriage to Aleta Friele in 1934 had ended disastrously. In 1935, despondent over her marriage and career as an actress, she killed herself with a .22 rifle outside the Hollywood home she shared with her husband.

Alexander was also known to many of Bogie's friends or acquaintances, notably Henry Fonda. In fact, other than James Stewart, Alexander was Fonda's best friend. The two actors had met when performing in summer stock together, and on and off had lived together. On the Warners lot, the rumor was that they had been lovers.

It was said that Alexander had caught Fonda on the rebound while still carrying a torch for his former wife, Margaret Sullavan. "I'll always be grateful to Ross Alexander," Fonda said. "He restored my confidence in myself as a man after Margaret de-balled me."

Ross Alexander

"Ideal for those romantic juvenile roles"

Alexander was often photographed with Errol Flynn and his wife, Lili Damita, at swank Tinseltown soirees. The Flynn/Alexander affair intensified when Alexander was cast in Flynn's film, *Captain Blood*.

When Bette Davis heard that Bogie had been cast with Alexander in *China Clipper*, she called Bogie and reported an alarming story.

According to Davis, Alexander had developed an obsession about her. Although married, he& kept bombarding her with love letters. "He's not really in love with me," Davis said. "I heard he really wants both of us to divorce our spouses and marry each other. I am told he thinks I'm going to become queen of the Warners lot, and that I'll let him be my co-star in all my future movies."

"Jack Warner may have something to say about that," Bogie told her.

To confirm what Davis had said, Alexander asked Bogie to use his friendship with Davis to advance the actor's cause. "I desperately want to get cast in her next movie," he said. "We'll have a love scene together. Once I get her in my arms, I know she'll respond like a wildcat."

"Probably so," Bogie said. "Claws and all. That's Bette."

Every day a love letter was slipped under Bette's door. She didn't bother reading them, tossing them in the wastepaper basket.

When Davis was filming *Satan Met a Lady*, her husband, Ham Nelson, arrived at the studio for a rare visit. Attached to the door to her dressing room was one of Alexander's latest letters to Davis. It was addressed in large letters "TO MY BELOVED ONE, BETTE." Nelson ripped it off the door, opened it, and read it.

Storming into his wife's dressing room, Nelson confronted Davis, accusing her of having an affair with the young actor.

"That queer is having pipe dreams," Davis shouted at her husband. When she was called before the cameras, Nelson went to find Alexander, discovering him in the studio men's room, where he attacked him, slugging him repeatedly.

In spite of that, Alexander with a black eye did not stop writing love letters to Davis, posting one the very next day.

On the set of *China Clipper*, Bogie met a Boston-born actress, the dark-haired, rather beautiful Anne Nagel. He decided to pursue her only to find that his major competition was& Alexander himself. Privately, Bogie confronted him. “What’s& between this Nagel dame and byou?” he asked.

Marie Wilson *(left)* with Anne Nagel

“Anne and I are falling in love, and I plan to marry her,” Alexander said.

“What about Bette? Bogie asked. “I thought you were in love with her.”

“You of all people should know that it’s possible to love two women at the same time,”& Alexander said. “If Bette responds to my love letters and divorces that monster, Ham Nelson, I will get a divorce from Anne, assuming we go through with the marriage.”

“That makes perfect sense to me,” Bogie said before walking away to have a drink with Pat O’Brien in his dressing room. “Losing a gal to a bonafide queer,” Bogie told O’Brien. “That doesn’t say much for me as a man. Of course, Ross is sorta cute. If I get desperate one night, I might ask him to give me a blow-job.”

“You’re kidding, of course,” O’Brien said.

“That’s me. Bogart the kidder.”

Right after the release of the film, Nagel and Ross were married. Even so, he continued to write those love letters to Davis. His wife discovered some unfinished letters under his desk blotter. He told her, “I can’t help myself.”

Around Christmastime in 1936, Alexander picked up a handsome male hitchhiker and had a sexual encounter with him. Recognizing him from the movies, the hobo threatened to blackmail him if he weren’t given $10,000.

Alexander didn’t have the money but persuaded producer Bryan Foy to secure that amount from Warner Brothers. Alexander agreed to pay it back by having the studio deduct it from his future salary.

Growing increasingly despondent, Alexander on January 2, 1937, picked up the same .22 pistol that his former wife, Alete Friele, had used to commit suicide. He went to his barn and shot himself in the temple.

Warners reacted quickly to Alexander’s death and within a few weeks had signed another young actor to a seven-year contract. This former sports announcer was to be cast in the roles that the studio had intended for Alexander.

On the studio lot one day, Bogie was introduced to this affable newcomer who spoke in the same clear baritone that evoked Alexander’s voice.

“So, you’re the new kid on the block,” Bogie said. “Welcome to the prison.”

“Hi,” the young man said, extending his hand. “I’m Ronald Reagan.”

“I’m sure we’ll be co-starring together very soon,” Bogie said.

He never pretended to be a prophet, but in this case he was right.

CHAPTER SIX

Beginning in the mid-1930s, Bogie would establish his professional movie home at Warner Brothers, with whom he'd be associated for most of the rest of his life. He stayed with the studio until the late 1940s. Even after he formed his own production company, Santana, he continued to arrange for his films to be released through Warners, alternating them with less frequent releases through Columbia Studios.

"At Warner Brothers in the 30s, I became a one-man film factory," Bogie later recalled. "I turned out movies so fast that even today the plots are a big blur in my head. Sometimes, I went from one film into another so fast, I forgot what character I was playing. I figured the best way to deal with that was to play Humphrey Bogart, meaning play myself."

During his filming of *The Petrified Forest* for a 1936 release, the Hollywood press once again began to take notice of him. Louella Parsons had already discovered him during his first stint in Hollywood during the early 1930s.

Throughout the 30s, Daniel Mainwaring operated as Bogie's press agent, also functioning privately as both a novelist and screenwriter. His pseudonym was "Geoffrey Homes." With that name, he began to create myths and legends about Bogie, many of which got printed in newspapers as truthful and accurate facts. Perhaps as a means of getting tongues to wag, even though Bogie was playing a tough guy on screen, Homes claimed that during his spare time, the actor painted floral designs on teacups.

Homes continued to pile one myth atop another for processing by the gullible press of the mid-1930s. He spread the word to the press corps that Bogie slept only in Palm Beach suits, never pajamas. Other falsehoods he spread included stories about how Bogie would frequently slip away for late-night music gigs. According to one of Home's PR campaigns, Bogart was said to play the bull fiddle at a roadhouse in the San Fernando Valley, disguised with fake whiskers to avoid recognition from his fans.

When he had any free time from Warner Brothers, which was rare, Bogie, or so said Homes, retreated to an worm farm in Eastern Oregon. Homes told Bogie, "I'm amazed those dummies in the press actually go ahead and print all that shit."

One morning over coffee, Bogie read that "Geoffrey Homes, the noted author, is en route to the Mojave Desert to inspect the rattlesnake farm that he and Humphrey Bogart, the actor, recently purchased.

If Bogie believed that he'd be offered another role as meaty as that of Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest,* he was sadly mistaken, at least for the moment. He was ordered to report to work on a movie called *Isle of Fury,* a movie so horrible that Bogie would later deny any involvement in making it.

Jack Warner, on seeing the final product, also realized how truly awful it was, and delayed its release until Bogie had shot two more movies for the studio.

It was only during the first week of shooting that Bogie learned that *Isle of Fury* was a remake of *The Narrow Corner,* which had been a vehicle, released in 1933, for the showcasing of then up-and-coming star Douglas Fairbanks Jr. In some respects, *Isle of Fury* evoked Clark Gable's *Red Dust* (1932).

Released by Warners late in 1936, the sixty-minute tale of tropical adventure co-starred Donald Woods and Margaret Lindsay. With a fake, pencil-thin mustache, Bogie played the lead in a script which was loosely and awkwardly based on W. Somerset Maugham's novel, *The Narrow Corner.*

Its director was Frank McDonald, who had been born only a month before Bogie. A former railroad worker, McDonald seemed nervous and unsure of himself. Actress Evelyn Keyes once said, "I've never seen anyone as terrified of directing as Frank McDonald."

Isle of Fury
Its props and its octopus
inspired ridicule

In spite of his fears, McDonald churned out more than 100 pictures during the course of his long career, achieving his greatest success at Republic, grinding out popular westerns starring Roy Rogers and Gene Autry.

In a moment of candor, McDonald confided to Bogie, “Let’s face it: Both you and me are hacks turning out shit.”

“Don’t use that word around me,” Bogie said. “Why say shit when crap will do?”

Actually, from its inception, the script of *Isle of Fury* had been tailored for Pat O’Brien, who& dropped out three days before shooting began.

One scene in *Isle of Fury* got Bogie virtually laughed off the screen. The plot called for him to be attacked by a giant octopus created by the props department. It was suggested that McDonald should have made it a shark attack instead of some ridiculously artificial-looking octopus. The scene just didn’t work on screen, and the octopus was such an obvious fake that it provoked ridicule.

Years later, when asked about *Isle of Fury,* Bogie said, “I don’t recall making such a movie. Perhaps you’ve confused me with someone else. If I recall, that movie starred Errol Flynn.”

Months before, when shooting had ended on *The Petrified Forest,* Bogie and Leslie Howard had made a bet to see which of them could seduce a greater number of their respective leading ladies. Bogie felt that he was at an unfair advantage since he was often being cast alongside lesbians. An example included the picture-pretty brunette Margaret Lindsay, of Dubuque, Iowa. She was Bogie’s love interest in *Isle of Fury,* but her eye was trained on women, not at any man.

Bogie knew that Lindsay had starred on Broadway with Roland Young in *Another Love Story,* and he was interested in picking her brain for any information he could about Young. After all, rivaled by Kenneth MacKenna, Young was a contender for the love of Bogie’s wife, Mary Philips. Bluntly, Bogie asked Lindsay, “Is this Roland Young creature still banging Mary?”

Lindsay was equally blunt in her response. “Almost every night from what I hear. You’d better get back to Broadway soon if you expect to hold onto Mary.”

Meanwhile, Lindsay was playing an equivalent game of musical chairs. Before filming *Isle of Fury,* she’d been engaged in a torrid romance with actress Janet Gaynor. But when& Mary Martin took Gaynor from her, Lindsay turned her romantic affections onto another& actress, Mary McCarty.

Isle of Fury–a "tropical stinker" Bogart tried to forget.
(left to right) Donald Woods, Bogart, and E.E. Clive

This time the girl-on-girl romance worked, and Lindsay and McCarty became longtime companions.

Bogie never understood the long enduring success of his co-star, Donald Woods, who was born in Manitoba. “Now I

know why he's named Woods,"& Bogie told McDonald. "Donald is the most wooden actor on the screen."

Yet, in spite of that assessment, Woods would have a career that encompassed 75 films and 150 TV shows over forty years. He became known as "King of the Bs."

In the 1950s, long after his appeal as an actor had faded, Woods became a successful real estate broker in Palm Springs, where he tried to sell Bogie a weekend vacation home. His pitch was that Clark Gable had once used the retreat for secret trysts with beautiful young women or—get this—handsome young men.

"That's about the best sales pitch I've ever been offered in my life," Bogie said, facetiously, "but I must turn it down. Gable, huh? Who would have thought that?"

During the spring of 1936, Mary was still on Broadway, appearing in *The Postman Always Rings Twice,* which was doing lackluster business. In marked contrast, Bogie was getting roles in one film after another, and working so hard his friends decided he needed some female companionship to take him out of his frequent dark moods.

Producer Walter Wanger, with some involvement from Henry Fonda, planned a party for Joshua Logan, and he invited Bogie and some actresses from the studio. At the time Wanger was shooting *Vogues of 1938,* a film whose plot revolved around eight of the supposedly most beautiful "models" in the world.

At the party, the girls imported from the cast of the movie looked like cheap hookers, not the "lovelies" that Wanger had promised. Except for a few private talks with Fonda, Bogie sat by himself, although on occasion a gum-chewing cutie encouraged him to join the party, even visit one of the bedrooms upstairs.

A self-satirical portrait of humorist and arts critic Robert Benchley, shaving

At the end of the party, after the models had been driven home, Fonda asked Bogie why he didn't want to "roll in the hay" with one of them.

According to Fonda's biographer, Howard Teichmann, Bogie responded, "Anyone that would stick a cock in one of those girls would throw a rock through a Rembrandt."

The next day, at the Garden of Allah, Bogie paid a visit to the small writing studio of the corpulent Robert Benchley, the actor/humorist who'd been a founding member of the celebrated and gossipy Algonquin Roundtable in New York. Bogie had long been a fan of his, taking special interest in Benchley's sardonic theater reviews.

Through the open door of Benchley's studio walked a slim, panther-like woman with a seductive gamine face. Thanks partly to her distinctive, helmet hairdo, she was as alluring as when he'd seduced her long ago as part of an arrangement set up by his first wife, Helen Menken.

"Brooksie," he said, rising from his chair and giving Louise Brooks a lingering kiss.

"Your lonely nights are over," Brooks said, "at least temporarily." Then she gave Benchley a peck on the cheek.

"Here I am back in Hollywood, a has-been at twenty-nine," she said. "Got anything to drink, fellows?"

Benchley had three bottles of Scotch resting temptingly on his bar. As Bogie remembered it, at least two of those bottles would be finished off "before we heard the wild cackle of Tallulah Bankhead chasing a nude John Barrymore around the pool at three o'clock that morning."

It was at that very moment, 3am, that Bogie and Brooks staggered out of Benchley's studio. They were just in time to see Barrymore and Tallulah jump into the pool, splashing around as if trying to drown each other. Although in need of assistance himself, Bogie half supported Brooks as they made their way back to his own rental unit.

Since he didn't have an early morning call, Bogie slept soundly until eleven o'clock. When he woke up "with the worst hangover of my life," he found a note on the counter from Brooks.

"You're slipping, Bogie boy," it said. "You didn't even fuck me before you passed out last night."

When he encountered Benchley by the pool later that afternoon, his neighbor asked him. "How did it go? I'm all ears."

Not wanting to ruin his reputation, Bogie said, "It's always fun seducing my former wife's girlfriends. I feel closer to Helen that way." He looked over toward Benchley's studio. "Didn't we leave you with one bottle not emptied last night?"

"We did indeed," Benchley said, heaving his heavy body from its position deep within a chaise longue. "I'd always dreamed of becoming a bartender for the great Humphrey Bogart."

Brooks called later that evening to thank Bogie for his hospitality. She was mysterious about her whereabouts, refusing to tell him where she was, even when pressed. "An emergency came up, and I can't explain." He would never learn the reason for her sudden departure.

"You should have stuck around," he said. "I'm much better in the morning."

"I'm sure you are," she told him. "I was tempted to pursue what we never finished in New York, but I decided against that."

"Why?" he asked. "I didn't plow deep enough."

"It's not that, Bogie boy," she said. "I decided we are too much alike. Going to bed with you would be like fucking myself."

In the years to come, he was saddened to see the star of *Pandora's Box*, where Brooks played Lulu, the nymphomaniac, reduced to appearing as a chorus girl in a 1937 Grace Moore musical, *When You're in Love*.

In 1974, Brooks would share her memory of Bogie in her published memoirs *Lulu in Hollywood.* The most controversial piece of her Bogie portrait involved remarks she made about his lips. She alleged that he referred to them as "nigger lips." Instead of viewing his lips as a handicap, Brooks claimed that Bogie decided to take advantage of this "unusual feature," his observations being based on how much publicity Clark Gable had garnered from his big ears.

"Over the years, Bogie practiced all kinds of lip gymnastics, accompanied by nasal tones, snarls, lisps, and slurs," she wrote. "His painful wince, his leer, his fiendish grin were the most accomplished ever seen on film. Only Erich von Stroheim was his superior in lip twitching."

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From a successful stint in the 1920s on the stages of Broadway, Mayo Methot arrived at Union Station in Los Angeles in 1930, loudly describing her plans to "put the tinsel in Tinseltown." Humphrey Bogart lay in her future, but she had no memory of ever meeting him during the 1920s in New York. That was odd, as she'd previously been introduced to him in the presence of "Mr. Broadway," George M. Cohan, along with Bill Brady Jr.

Years later, defending herself for not remembering her inaugural meeting with the man who eventually became her husband, she said, "With Cohan checking me out, perhaps for a future stage role, how in hell could I remember a two-bit actor with a lisp? The town was full of them in those days."

This Oregon-born actress became known as "The Portland Rosebud," after she became famous for introducing the

Broadway show tune, “More Than You Know,” which became a standard across the country. She’d introduced the song in the musical *Great Day,* produced by Billy Rose and Vincent Youmans. In Hollywood during the 30s, she would never achieve the celebrity she’d known in New York.

When she arrived in Hollywood in 1930 and signed with Warner Brothers, Jack Warner didn’t know quite what to do with her and cast her within roles as either tough-talking dames or as unsympathetic second leads in crime melodramas such as *Jimmy the Gent (* 1933).

Directed by Michael Curtiz, who would later helm Bogie in *Casablanca*,& *Jimmy the Gent* starred Bette Davis and James Cagney. “Thanks to those two super-egos, I broke into Hollywood the hard way,” Methot ruefully claimed. “They didn’t make it easy for me.”

In Los Angeles’ Biltmore Hotel in 1936, at the Screen Actors Guild annual dinner, Bogie arrived stag, without an escort. He kept looking at the familiar face of a blonde-haired woman in a scarlet red dress with plunging décolletage. She smiled back at him several times. Finally, he realized that he’d met her before. She was none other than Mayo Methot, the former Broadway star.

Impulsively, Bogie rose from his chair. Plucking a small plaster nude from a nearby decoration, he made his way to her table. “Madam,” he said, “I hereby present this Oscar to you as the Most Beautiful Woman in the Room.”

It was the beginning of Bogie’s most turbulent relationship with any woman. He invited her to dance. As Mayo later related to Bette Davis, “We danced the night away. By two o’clock that morning, I found myself drinking& a nightcap in his bedroom at the Garden of Allah.”

(left photo) 1933 movie poster for a tough-guy film Bogart envied
(top right photo) James Cagney with iron-fisted director Michael Curtiz
(bottom right) a blonde version of Bette Davis as floozie with "the Gent," James Cagney

Since Mary was in New York at the time, this tryst was easy for Bogie, but not necessarily for Methot: At the time, she had a husband, Percy T. Morgan, the owner of the popular Cock & Bull, a restaurant and bar on Sunset Boulevard much frequented by the movie crowd.

Soonafter, Methot began spending many of her nights with Bogie, much to the annoyance of Mr. Morgan, who knew his wife was having an affair. But with whom?

Prior to Morgan, Methot had had an earlier husband. At the age of 19, she’d married Jack La Mond, a cameraman for Cosmopolitan Productions. Divorcing him in 1927, she migrated to Hollywood in 1930 and soonafter, she’d married Morgan.

It quickly became obvious to Bogie that Methot was not a fragile and demure hothouse flower. At a bar in Santa Monica, she ordered a vodka and tonic. After the waiter served it, she tasted it and spat it out. This is gin and tonic, you fucker!” she shouted at him.

“It’s vodka,” he said. “I poured it myself. I’m not taking it back. You can drink it since you’re paying for it.”

“Drink this, faggot!” she shouted, throwing glass, ice cubes, and gin in his face before storming out of the bar.

“I hate women who are spineless, brainless, clinging vines,” Bogie told Edward G. Robinson. “You know the type. They open their eyes wide and their mouths still wider and sigh, ‘Oh, you great big wonderful man.’”

On the Warners lot, Methot became known for her heavy drinking. Alcohol had begun to tarnish her former beauty.

“By the time she met Bogie, she was looking the worse for wear,” said Bette Davis.

One day, during lunch on the Warners lot, Davis said, “Bogart, you’re out of your mind. Mayo is insane. She and her husband staged a knock-out, drag out fight at the Cock & Bull that brought out the police. She was about to kill him.”

He smiled. “I adore take-charge women. Whenever I do something wrong, she tells me so. In case I don’t listen, she packs a good wallop. I’ve already nicknamed her Sluggy.”

“You know what I’ve decided,” Davis said. “You’re as much of a lunatic as Methot is.”

A few weeks later, at a Hollywood party, Louise Brooks sat in the corner, skeptically eyeing the drunken antics of Bogart and Methot. In her memoir, *Lulu in Hollywood*, she wrote: “He found her at a time of lethargy and loneliness, when he might have gone on playing secondary gangster parts at Warner Brothers for years and then been out. But he met Mayo and she set fire to him.& Those passions—envy, hatred, and violence, which were essential to the Bogie character—which had been simmering beneath his failure for so many years—she brought to a boil, blowing the lid off all his inhibitions forever.”

During the 1930s, Eric Hatch was a well-known writer of screwball comedies, including *My Man Godfrey*. Released in 1936, it starred Carole Lombard and William Powell. That same year, Eric and his wife, Gertrude Hatch, threw a party for Mayo and Bogie.

“It was a wild night,” Bogie later said. “Mischa Auer, the Russian character actor, at one point got so drunk on vodka he was crawling nude under the tables. Mayo put on music for an Argentine tango. With a jaybird-naked Auer, they did a burlesque of Rudolph Valentino. Mischa threw Mayo up in the air. That night, the whole room discovered that she’d forgotten to wear her panties.”

Suddenly, during one of the party’s particularly manic moments, the Hatch family’s maid came in to warn that Percy Morgan was at the front door, trying to retrieve his wife.

In her stocking feet, Mayo ran out the back door with Bogie in hot pursuit. They made their getaway. There was a rumor that Morgan was carrying a gun.

The next day, Bryan Foy heard the story and quizzed Bogie about it.

“I want the word to get out,” Bogie said. “Tell ‘em Humphrey Bogart is in town, and that the only way a man can know that his wife is safe involves strapping a chastity belt on her and locking her in a dungeon.”

During the days and weeks ahead, despite her status as a married woman, Bogie openly escorted Methot to private parties and frequently appeared in public with her.

Russian character actor
Mischa Auer
with his pet Dachsund.

"Drunk and crawling, naked,
under the tables"

“The final straw came when I invited Bogie to have drinks with me in the bar of the Cock & Bull,” Methot told friends. “It was a deliberate attempt to let my husband know that I had moved on, and that Bogie was my new love.

Percy sat at the far end of the bar staring at us, but he never came over. I think that signaled him that it was all over except for the actual filing for divorce."

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On Broadway, fading screen star Richard Barthelmess and Mary Philips, cast into a role as a "gas station strumpet," couldn't generate& enough magic to sustain box office for *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. The show closed after its move in April of 1936 to a smaller theater, the Golden. Throughout the run of the play, however, reports filtered through to Mary about how her husband was having a torrid romance with Mayo Methot, whom Mary knew from her Broadway days.

Uncharacteristically jealous, Mary opted to take the difficult air route to Los Angeles instead of traveling by train. That involved several refueling stops across the vast American continent, but she was in a hurry to get to the West Coast.

She notified Bogie that she was on her way, but her plane did not show up on schedule on April 26. He feared it had crashed somewhere. Finally, news reached him that the small aircraft had been grounded somewhere in Oklahoma because of a dust storm.

On the afternoon of the following day, Mary finally landed on the ground in Los Angeles, where Bogie was waiting to meet her.

Only the day before, out of respect for Mary's upcoming arrival, he had gathered together Methot's cosmetics and clothing from his studio, where they had been living together, and sent her packing.

It was not sunny California that greeted Mary as the plane set down. It was one of those cold, windswept days in Los Angeles that sends locals desperately searching for a coat of some sorts.

He embraced her on the runway and kissed her warmly. She would later tell her lover, Kenneth MacKenna, "The kiss was without passion, more like what a brother would give his sister."

Reviving a faded film star in a Broadway play that later became a Hollywood classic.

(left photo) Richard Barthelmess in the stage version of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, an unsuccessful play that co-starred *(right photo)* Mary Philips

Bogie moved Mary into his rented studio at the Garden of Allah, which Methot had vacated a day or two before. Even though Mary was temporarily back with Bogie, Methot began divorce proceeding against Percy Morgan. He'd been the ideal husband, yet she charged him with mental cruelty. The only cruelty she could cite in her petition involved his refusal to allow her to rearrange the furniture in their living room.

During the first week of Mary's return to Hollywood,& Benchley, now one of Bogie's close friends, decided to give a welcome-to-Hollywood party for Mary. She wanted to seek work in films at Warner Brothers, and Bogie had set up an appointment for her with Brian Foy, chief of those B movies he'd been making.

Three early views of Bogie's wife #3, Mayo Methot

"I'm a big Broadway star from a big town hoping to get work in B-pictures in a small town," she told Benchley. "But if I don't stay in Hollywood this time, I know my marriage to Hump is over. Hell, I'm still going to call him Hump. I can't get used to this Bogie shit. And, by the way, don't tell my husband I ever used the word shit."

Mary was not accustomed to the casual style of Hollywood parties, especially on a hot day. Those overcast skies had faded. At three o'clock that afternoon at the Garden of Allah, she emerged from their bungalow on the arm of her husband. As Benchley later reported to Tallulah Bankhead, "Mary looked like she could have headed the Easter Parade along Fifth Avenue. A vision in pink."

At about four o'clock, the thirty-odd guests of the party turned to witness the sudden emergence of Methot, who had appeared suddenly and without warning, seemingly out of thin air. Her hair and clothing were in disarray, and she looked angry and distraught.

Seeing her, Bogie moved to prevent her from entering the pool area, but she slugged him in the face, bloodying his nose. He struck her, knocking her onto the tiles surrounding the pool. She picked herself up and stood before him. Then, she kicked him in the balls. He doubled over in pain.

While he was trying to recover from the agonizing assault, Methot headed toward Mary, who was standing near the edge of the pool.

"We meet again, you little whore," Methot shouted at Mary. Sensing a catfight, the guests moved back. Benchley, as the host, did not intervene. "I only engage in verbal assaults, nothing physical," He later told Bogie. "I long ago learned not to come between two jealous women who are about to beat each other up."

"I am Mrs. Humphrey Bogart, and I plan to continue to be Mrs. Humphrey Bogart for many years to come," Mary said defiantly.

"He loves me—and not you," Methot shouted. "He told me himself that you're lousy in bed. I can satisfy a man. You can't. Maybe Kenneth MacKenna. But he's mostly faggot anyway."

"Get away from my husband," Mary shouted at her. "I forbid you to see him ever again."

"Forbid me?" Methot said. "Am I hearing right? I can chew a bitch like you for breakfast and spit her out." In an impulsive move, she moved toward Mary and pushed her into the deep end of the pool. In all her New York finery,

Mary seemed to be drowning. One of the male guests stripped off his jacket and jumped in to rescue her.

Methot stormed away toward the entrance. Bogie had recovered in time to kick her in the ass as she made a rapid retreat. He rushed over to comfort Mary, who was lying soaked and gasping for breath on the tiles.

“You know how to pick ‘em, Hump,” she said before Bogie carried her back to his studio.

Bogie turned around and surveyed the astonished guests. “Party’s over!” he shouted. “I want each of you to leave a dollar in the kitty. We Broadway actors sure know how to put on a show for you Hollywood types.”

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The next morning, the manager of the Garden of Allah rapped on the door of Bogie’s bungalow. Mary was still in bed when Bogie in his underwear answered the summons. “Yeah, what is it?”

“Mr. Bogart, we want you to check out of our hotel as soon as possible,” he said. “We’re a happy family around here. If you aren’t gone by tomorrow morning, I’m summoning the police to have you and Mrs. Bogart evicted.”

Thanks to a recent salary increase of fifty dollars a week, Bogie moved Mary into a small Mexican hacienda-style adobe house on 1210 North Horn Avenue, overlooking Sunset Boulevard. It was to be his first real home in Hollywood.

Their marriage was rocky, but both Bogie and Mary seemed to want to give it one final chance. Both of them understood that if they failed this time, their relationship, except for a divorce, would be over.

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Enjoying a break before shooting on his next picture, Bogie was called to Warners for a script conference. When it was over, he retreated to his dressing room for a Scotch and soda. There was a knock on his door. He opened it to find Methot.

Despite their recent and very public fistfight, Bogie let her in.

“I don’t know what went on inside that dressing room that afternoon, but the bitch was in there for four hours,” Bryan Foy said. “A grip spilled the beans. They came out looking like lovebirds. We can call that a reconciliation. Where was Mary Philips while all this was going on? No doubt slipping away to fuck Kenneth MacKenna.”

Foy revealed to associates that at Bogie’s request, he’d arranged a screen test of Mary. “She’s awful. She also photographs rather ugly, although she’s pretty enough in person. I’ll never understand why the camera favors some dames—and not others. My advice to her was to go back to Broadway.”

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With Mary’s career at a standstill, Bogie for the first time became the family’s only breadwinner. He was elated to learn that he’d been cast as the star of a new movie, a drama, *Black Legion*, to be released in 1937, with co-stars Dick Foran, Erin O’Brien-Moore, and the fast-emerging Ann Sheridan.

A publicity still for the grim and gritty *Black Legion* (1937), wherein our hero plays the male lead. (foreground, left to right), Erin O'Brien-Moore, Bogart, and Ann Sheridan. (background figures inspired by the KKK)

Archie Mayo, who had directed Bogie in the film version of *The Petrified Forest*, was the director. This time he'd cast Bogie as Frank Taylor, an embittered factory worker who joins the Black Legion, a Ku Klux Klan-inspired terrorist organization.

Black Legion was a grim picture, marking the first time Bogie played the lead in what eventually evolved into an A-list feature which showcased his talents. Erin was cast as his wife, Foran his best friend.

The same year, Erin O'Brien-Moore, a fetching beauty from California, appeared opposite Paul Muni in *The Life of Émile Zola*.

Two years later, tragedy struck when she was seriously burned in a restaurant fire. Her recuperation took years of surgery and rehabilitation. When she came back in 1948, she was assigned character roles, her chance for major stardom a forgotten dream.

Ann Sheridan was cast in a small and rather thankless role as the fiancée of Dick Foran, Bogie's co-star in the film. A New Jersey crooner, Foran was known around the lot as Warner Brothers' answer to Gene Autry, the singing cowboy. But occasionally Foran was cast in mainstream dramatic parts, as he was in *Black Legion*.

Bogie had worked with Foran before when he'd been cast as the athlete, Boze Hertzlinger, in the film version of *The Petrified Forest*. He had taken the role that Robert E. Sherwood had originally intended for Bogie (i.e., the role of the athlete, not the Duke Mantee part.)

Meeting him again on the set, Bogie told Foran, "You're much too good-looking and wholesome to have played Duke, although you could have livened that dismal drama by singing 'Home on the Range.'" Foran knew when he'd been insulted.

To complicate his life even more, Bogie, "torn between two lovers," had yet another woman enter his life. She was Ann Sheridan, the so-called "Oomph Girl."

Down to earth and ever so friendly, she approached Bogie on the set of *Black Legion* and introduced herself with, "How in the fuck are you, Mr. Humphrey Bogart?"

"You wanna feel it and find out?" he shot back.

She laughed hilariously. Like Carole Lombard, Sheridan was known for her potty mouth. In fact, around the Warners lot she was called "the hash-house version of Carole Lombard."

When Bogie met Sheridan, she, like Bogie, was struggling through a long involvement in Warners B pictures. There was something so frank and honest about her that he fell for her almost immediately.

Black Legion's on-screen fiancés
Dick Foran (*left photo*) and Ann Sheridan

"She has this come-hither look," he told Archie Mayo. "Show me a real man who can resist that deep, suggestive voice. I've got the hots for her."

"By the way," Archie responded, "isn't it a coincidence that your girlfriend's first name, Mayo, is my last name? And, come to think of it, how's your wife, Mary Philips?"

Bogie got the point and walked away.

During their first luncheon together, Sheridan described her philosophy of life. "What's the use of living if you can't have fun?"

Bogie later said, "There's one thing that dame isn't, and that's a phony. It's well known in Hollywood how I hate phonies, and the town reeks of them."

The following afternoon, when they weren't needed on the set, he invited Sheridan for a drink in his dressing room. Seated across from her, he studied her figure. "I hear you Texas gals are great in the haystack."

"Why don't you find that out for yourself?"

"No more B pix for Bogart!"
The New York Post

"I just might do that," he said.

"I can be had." As he later related to Mayo, she stood up and began to remove her dress.

At the time, Sheridan was married to an actor, Edward (Eddie) Norris. But, as she claimed, "Why should having a husband prevent a girl from workouts on the side?"

"Why indeed?" Bogie said. "Both of my wives played around on me. Why shouldn't I?"

"If we play this right, we can both have the security of marriage and a lot of fun whenever we're not with our devoted spouses."

"My sentiments exactly. You know what really attracted me to you?" Bogie said. "You smoke three packages of

cigarettes a day. My kind of woman."

His meeting with Sheridan that day would mark the beginning of a long friendship, both on and off the screen.

Black Legion remains one of Bogie's best early films. Upon its release, *The New York Post* proclaimed, "No more B pix for Bogart!"

He came to believe the press reports affirming that indeed *Black Legion* would make him a star. Although Bette Davis warned him not to get his hopes up—she'd been disappointed too many times herself—Bogie believed great scripts were on the way. A critic writing in the *New York American* even suggested that "the dynamic Humphrey Bogart would be ideal for the role of Rhett Butler in the coming *Gone With the Wind*, to be produced by David O. Selznick."

Black Legion generated a solid box office return, but not in the league with *The Public Enemy* (1931) which made James Cagney a superstar, or Paul Muni's *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932).

Nevertheless, Jack Warner was not impressed. His publicity department promoted the film by saying, "There's no Paul Muni in *Black Legion*, but there's Humphrey Bogart."

When the *Black Legion* was released, the KKK sued Warner Brothers, not for libeling their hate organization but for copyright infringement. The studio had used their symbol of a white cross with a black diamond in its center, positioned against a circular red background. The judge wisely tossed the case out of court, but not before ordering the KKK to pay legal costs.

Back at Bogie's house in West Hollywood, Mary was sometimes there, but more often not. During extended periods when she was missing, he called Mayo, who was beginning to frighten him by ratcheting up the pressure to divorce Mary and marry her.

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Ann Sheridan was the first to hear the news. She and Bogie had been cast together in *The Great O'Malley*, a police drama slated for direction by William Dieterle. The movie would star Pat O'Brien in his familiar incarnation as a cop. "We get third and fourth billing," Sheridan told him.

"Who got the second lead?" Bogie asked.

"Sybil Jason," she said.

He'd heard of this child star. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, she was being groomed by Warner Brothers as a rival to the box office champ, Shirley Temple.

On the set he met this child prodigy, who had learned to play the piano at the age of two. "Would you like to see me do my impression of Maurice& Chevalier?" she asked Bogie.

"Later, kid," he said.

Sybil didn't achieve the success at Warners that Jack Warner had hoped for, and the following year, he didn't renew her contract.

Ironically, her last two films were for Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox. He cast her opposite her rival, Shirley Temple, in *The Little Princess* (1939) and *The Blue Bird* (1940). Sybil abandoned the screen after that. “I had my fifteen minutes of fame,” she later recalled.

Born in the Rhineland of Germany, director William Dieterle was stiff and formal with Bogie when they first met on the set. He wore a large hat and white gloves. Throughout the entire course of the shoot, he would remove neither of them. His striking good looks had earned him roles in German films during the 1920s. He’d directed his first film in 1923, *Der Mensch am Wege*, which had co-starred a young Marlene Dietrich.

In 1930, he emigrated to Hollywood, where he took a job directing German versions of American films. His first movie, *The Last Flight* (1931), is today called “a forgotten masterpiece” by critics.

During the span of his long career, he would direct five different actors in Oscar-nominated performances, including Paul Muni, Brian Aherne, Walter Huston, Jennifer Jones, and Joseph Schildkraut. Alas, Bogie would not be a member of that distinguished list.

The Great O’Malley would be one of Dieterle’s less distinguished efforts. Bogie wasn’t impressed with the script, calling it “another cop picture for Warners. It was terrible, just& another of those dramas we turned out at that goddamn sweat-shop. Pat O’Brien was very good.& But then Pat is never bad.”

The Great O'Malley (1937)
An overzealous cop, an adorable tyke, and a war veteran on the brink earn each other's mutual respect. *(left to right, above)*

Pat O'Brien, Sybil Jason, Humphrey Bogart

“My fucking role’s too small,” Sheridan told Bogie. “Jack Warner said he cast me as a schoolmarm because I’d once studied to become a teacher. My Southern Baptist parents, real zealots, still want me to become a school teacher. They warned me that I’ll perish in hell if I play bad women on the screen.”

In the film, Bogie played a jobless veteran driven to crime to feed his family. His most dramatic& scene occurs when he tries to pawn his war medals for money to buy food. The surly pawnkeeper says, “Ten dollars for this junk? Why don’t you go on relief?”

Exploding in fury, Bogie responds, “The only things left to remind me I was once a man and you call them junk!” This is but a prelude to robbery and a vicious attack on the pawnbroker.

Later, the Warners publicity department got it all wrong when they advertised the film as AN IRISH COP VS. A GUN-MAD KILLER!

During the course of the filming, Bogie slipped away with Sheridan for “some Texas gal loving,” as she called it. In just a short time, she’d become his *confidante.*

He told her, “My marriage is all but over. Mary can’t find work in Hollywood, and she’s returning to New York to look for work on Broadway. But the die is cast. Guess who I’ll be working with in my next film? Mayo Methot herself. Oh, yes, and the star of this thing is what’s her face?”

Jack Warner claimed that Bette Davis went too far in realistic makeup when she appeared on the set playing an abused woman. "We're selling glamor, Bette. You look like shit!"

"Bette Davis," Sheridan said. "I heard the news this morning."

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Ever since his childhood days on Lake Canandaigua, Bogie had been devoted to sailing. With his increase in salary, he was able to purchase a 36-foot cruiser that he docked at the Newport Beach Yacht Club.

His "first mate" on these weekend trips, most often a sail to Catalina Island, was Methot. She talked often about marriage, urging him to file for divorce against Mary the way she'd filed for divorce against Percy Morgan. Finally, during a drunken sailing expedition heading back to Newport Beach, Bogie broke down and agreed to marry her.

Just before Christmas in 1937, shooting began on *Marked Woman*, directed by Lloyd Bacon, with Bette Davis getting star billing followed by Bogie in the second lead. The film also starred Lola Lane. Methot was cast into the small role of Estelle Porter, getting seventh billing. Even in such a small role, *Marked Woman* would remain her most famous& film appearance.

After reading the script, Bogie told Bacon, "This movie is about a bunch of whores."

"I know," Bacon said. "But because of the Production Code, we have to call them hostesses at a shady nightclub. But the plot is based on a notorious prostitution ring run by Lucky Luciano, the Sicilian gangster."

For greater verisimilitude, Bacon hired one of Luciano's henchmen, Herman (Hymie) Marks, to play the bit part of a gangster named Joe. Hal Wallis, the producer, objected, claiming that no one would believe Hymie as a hood. "He looks like a Presbyterian deacon."

San Jose-born Bacon was one of the Warners' "work horse" directors during the 1930s. As an actor, he had been known for supporting Charlie Chaplin in such films as *The Tramp* (1915).

Between 1920 and 1955, he directed more than 100 films, and would helm Bogie again in the immediate future.

Marked Woman

(top photo) Gordon Hart, as the judge, hears testimony as Bogie quizzes Bette.

(bottom photo) Mayo Methot "comes between" Bette and Bogie.

Bacon is known today for directing *Knute Rockne—All American*, starring Ronald Reagan as "The Gipper."& Even& during the Depression, Bacon was the highest paid director at Warners, pulling in $200,000 annually when many Americans were in breadlines.

Thomas Dewey, as District Attorney for Manhattan, became a household word in the 1930s when he tackled organized crime in New York City. His greatest achievement was the conviction of Charles ("Lucky") Luciano, the boss of organized crime throughout the entire city. On the side, Luciano ran one of the largest prostitution rings in American history.

Born in Sicily in 1897, Luciano became the father of modern organized crime in America and the first official boss of the modern Genovese crime family. Deported from the United States, he died in 1962.

In the wake of Luciano's conviction, Dewey became more deeply entrenched in national politics. In 1944, he ran as a candidate for U.S. president against Franklin D. Roosevelt, as he did again in 1948 against Harry S Truman.

Audiences who knew Bogie because of his role as a brooding gangster in *The Petrified Forest* were shocked to see him cast as a district attorney modeled on Dewey in *Marked Woman*. Viewed today, one scene is particularly laughable, when Bogie lectures one of the "hostesses," (in this case, Bette Davis) about what a bad girl she is.

In *Marked Woman, t* he role of Johnny Vanning, the pimp, was portrayed by Eduardo Cianelli. In his role, he terrorizes the women who work for him, forcing them into submission at his nightclub.

Ciannelli had a brilliant career in films, some 150 cinematic appearances. In time, he would work with major stars, including Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers, Gary Cooper, Rita Hayworth, Orson Welles, Anthony Quinn, and Marlon Brando. Bogie and he would eventually team again for *Passage to Marseille* (1944).

Meeting Bogie on the set, Davis was eager to tell him about her ongoing lawsuit against Warner Brothers, in which she'd protested the inferior quality of scripts she'd been assigned. In court, Davis had testified that her seven-year contract with Warner's was "a form of slavery."

In fighting the suit brought by their major star, the attorneys for Warner Brothers told the judge that Davis "was a naughty, overpaid young woman."

Even though she eventually lost the lawsuit, she was promised better scripts. The first of these was *Marked Woman*, whose dramatic possibilities appealed to her.

In *Marked Woman,* a young Jane Bryan was cast as Davis' kid sister. As the plot unfolds, Bryan is killed by the mob, which incites Davis to swear vengeance.

During the making of the film, Davis adopted Bryan and protected her as if she was her own daughter. She was worried that a "wolf-like Bogart" might attempt to seduce Bryan. Davis spent all her time with her between shots, talking, eating, or having a smoke. "I have made her my new discovery," she announced to Bogie, "and I want you,

and all the other horny bastards on the set, to keep away from Jane."

So mesmerized was Davis by Bryan that she used her influence to secure future roles for her in Davis' upcoming films, including *Kid Galahad, The Sisters,* and *The Old Maid.*

"What? Saving her for yourself? So, those rumors about Barbara Stanwyck and you are true?"

"You are a slimy beast, Bogart," Davis said. "But we have to get through this picture together."

"Your little sister is safe with me," he said. "She's far too demure for my taste. Besides, I have Methot to keep me company."

"Yes, a broken-down old hag with a drinking problem," Davis said. "Just your type. Now get out of my dressing room, I've got to make up my face."

"That should take all day," he said before she shoved him out the door.

Bryan had had a brief fling with Ronald Reagan when they made *Girls on Probation* (1938). But when she met Jane Wyman and they worked together on *Brother Rat* (1938), "I surrendered him to Wyman. They made an ideal couple."

After Bryan met and married the love of her life, Justin Dart, the head of the Rexall drug empire, she left films. Dart made his first million during Prohibition by cornering the market in bourbon and selling it as "prescription whiskey."

Both Bryan and her husband were instrumental in getting Ronald Reagan, the aspirant politician, to run for governor of California and later President of the United States. An ardent Republican, the drug king in time became one of the most trusted members of President Reagan's "kitchen cabinet."

For an actress who once thought of herself as young and beautiful, Mayo Methot in *Marked Woman* was assigned an unattractive role. In the film, the boss of the nightclub where she wants to work eyes her up and down, and is most skeptical. "Kind of old, ain't ya?" he asks her.

Methot's appearance in the film came across as hard and crass, and she looked particularly whorish. She earned $2,500 for five weeks of work on *Marked Woman*, with Bogie, a salaried player, taking in about $3,200.

Davis, in her role of a beaten-up whore attacked by a gangster's goons, decided to make herself look grotesque. She went to her doctor, F. Le Grand Noyes, and asked him to bandage her as if she'd been brutally beaten.

Swathed in bandages, she showed up at Bogie's dressing room. "How do I look, Bogart?"

He looked at her abrasions, swollen black eyes, horribly broken nose, and miles of bloody gauze. "Didn't you used to be the glamorous Bette Davis?"

"Even playing a whore, Bette comes off as a lady," Bacon told Bogie. "Now take your bitch, that Mayo Methot—she's one dame who could play a whore."

Bogie slugged Bacon, but since the two men were under contract, they made up the next day so the picture could continue.

In the film, as a crusading District Attorney, Bogie persuades clip-joint party girl (Davis) to testify against her mobster boss after her innocent sister is accidentally murdered during the course of one of his unsavory "parties."

There is a memorable scene at the end of the picture when Bogie, just for a moment, shows that he might be interested in pursuing Davis's character.

BOGIE: Where will you go?
DAVIS: Places.
BOGIE: But what will you do?
DAVIS: I'll get along. I always have.

When she saw the movie, Davis told Bogie, “I’m the one to watch. I go full throttle in this one. Frankly, I think as the DA you were a little slow and more than a little dull.”

Bacon fell ill during the shoot, and Jack Warner called in Michael Curtiz to fill in. After watching Curtiz at work, Bogie told Davis, “That illiterate is one hell of a pain in the ass to work with. He devours actors and spits out the bones.” Unknown to him at the time, Bogie was talking about the future director of *Casablanca*.

One of the stars of *Marked Woman* was Lola Lane, of the famous Lane sisters. Years later at his favorite Hollywood watering hole, Romanoff’s, Bogie told Peter Lorre that, “My claim to fame one day will be that I seduced each of the Lane sisters.”

Since Bogie was a kidder, he perhaps exaggerated, though Ann Sheridan later claimed that he “might have gotten around to at least Lola and Priscilla.” He made pictures with all of these Lanes.

Three of the Lane Sisters—Lola, Priscilla, and Rosemary—achieved success in the 1920s and 30s as a singing act. They later made a series of successful films, including *Four Wives* in 1939.

In *Marked Woman*, Lola played the role of Gaby, a prostitute in a clip joint working alongside fellow prostitutes Davis and Methot.

Lois Lane, the comic book and TV character who evolved into Superman’s girlfriend, was inspired by the name of the real-life actress Lola Lane, who played “Torchy Blane,” a fictional reporter in one of her 1930s films for Warners.

Although Davis consistently praised *Marked Woman*, particularly her performance within it, Bogie referred to it for years after as “just another Warners potboiler.”

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Bogie put through an early morning call to Bette Davis after he’d received the script for the boxing movie *Kid Galahad, s* cheduled for direction by the ferocious Michael Curtiz and starring Edward G. Robinson.

“Have you read this piece of crap?” Bogie asked. “It’s a joke. You’re to play a woman called Fluff, and I’m to be a guy named Turkey.”

“At least I know how to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear,” Davis said. “That’s something that can never be said for you, Mr. Bogart.” She abruptly put down the phone.

Bogie read the script one more time. It was a totally unsympathetic role for him, that of a crooked promoter in the boxing game. To make matters even more difficult for him, word was spreading that Jack Warner did not plan to renew his contract.

Budgeted at $416,000, *Kid Galahad* went into production on January 25, 1937. Robinson had agreed to do the picture for $50,000, with Davis taking home $18,000. The scandal involved the size of the paycheck that went to Wayne Morris.

Desperate for a movie role, Morris accepted a fee of only $66 a week for his appearance in the film, even though he’d been cast into the title role. For the entire picture, he was paid $396. When fan letters started pouring in, he immediately demanded that a raise in pay accompany whatever new roles he’d be assigned. “In *Kid Galahad,* I was green to the business. Back then, even a fifty dollar bill looked like good money to me. But I was a fast learner in the ways of Hollywood. And even though we didn’t particularly like each other, Bogie gave me some good advice about money.”

On the second day of the shoot, Bogie approached Curtiz and complained about the character he was playing. He felt that as the part was written, it was one dimensional. “Who gives a fuck?” Curtiz said. “I make this film go so fast nobody will notice character.”

Later, over coffee with Robinson, Bogie said, “I’ve got to learn to shoot better.”

“Exactly what do you mean?” Robinson asked.

“You see, it’s like this,” Bogie said. “We kill each other off in another shootout. I die right away, and they put a blanket over me. But my bullet didn’t go right into your heart, and you survive for a curtain speech in the arms of Bette Davis. You get to deliver this big Pietà-like death scene, while I’m covered up with a flea-infested blanket.”

“That’s show business,” Robinson said. “I didn’t write the script.”

“Thank God for that,” Bogart quipped, getting up. “If you had, I’m sure your fade-out would have been a fifteen-minute monologue.”

Later, as he met Davis going into her dressing room, she said, “I make it a point never to agree with you. But I’ve read the script. You are right. Warners has recycled the usual clichés of its boxing movies. Except for a few scenes in the ring, we can expect yawns—not excitement, except for what I’m able to generate.”

He noted that Davis would at least have cozy company on the set. She’d managed to secure a role for Jane Bryan, her pet. Tired of Davis’ barbs, he decided to get even with her.

During a conference with Curtiz, Bogie made a revelation. “You know, of course, that Davis is having a lesbian relationship with Jane Bryan.”

“I didn’t know that,” Curtiz said. “Don’t get me excited, Bogart. I’ve got a goddamn picture to direct. My secret passion is to watch two lesbians go at it.”

“Whatever gets to you, man” Bogie said. “Whatever.”

“You look like a smart ass,” Curtiz said. “You think you know fuck everything. You think I know fuck nothing. Listen to this: I know fuck all!”

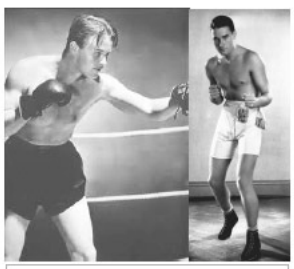
“I’m sure you know how to fuck,” Bogie assured him.

“Just ask Lili Damita,” Curtiz continued. He was referring to the actress wife of Errol Flynn. Curtiz had married her in 1925, the union lasting only a few months. “She told me I was best in the fuck, best than Flynn.”

“An impressive credential,” Bogie said. “Top of the morning to you.”

In *Kid Galahad*, super hunk Morris was being groomed on the Warner lot to become “the next Errol Flynn.” Morris welcomed the chance to appear with big stars in his role as a young bellhop transformed into a boxing champ. Many of the women working on the picture, especially extras, made themselves sexually and emotionally available to this blonde Adonis. He didn’t seem to want any of them, as he seemed fully booked up when he left the studio to wherever he was going that night.

Morris was the kind of California-born stud that Bogie generally detested. Standing 6’2”, he towered over Bogie. Morris was remarkably handsome by the standards of the day and had gone through the usual macho roles—football player, forest ranger.



Wayne Morris *(left)*, configured as the heir to the legacy of Errol Flynn *(right)*

After their initial handshake, Bogie had little to say to him. “Kid, how’s it hanging?” Morris looked shocked.

“It’s hanging just fine,” Morris responded, “but not for Bette Davis. Here she comes.”

Davis came up to Bogie and looked disappointed that Morris had fled so quickly. Although she almost constantly attacked Bogie, she became solicitious of him whenever she needed an ally. For now, at least, their shared Enemy No. 1 was their director, Curtiz himself. Over drinks in her dressing room, she related to Bogie the real reason Curtiz hated her so much.

During the early 1930s, Curtiz had tried to seduce her. “I was going through with it,” she said, “until he pulled off his pants. I mocked him like Mildred in *Of Human Bondage*. ‘A little piece of okra,’ I told him. He’s hated me ever since.”

“Bette, men do not like you to attack their manhood,” he warned her. “Fortunately, I never had any complaints from you.”

Jane Bryan.
Reagan lay in her future

Kid Galahad.
(*left photo*) William Haade stands between rivals Bogie and Robinson--both on and off the screen

She just couldn’t resist delivering another dig. “I was very inexperienced when I first met you. But after I was worked over by Franchot Tone, I know what a real man feels like. There are so few of them around Hollywood. At night, most of you guys are out screwing each other.”

Before he could get into a full-fledged bitchfest with Davis, Jane Bryan arrived at the door with tea. “Don’t touch the stuff,” Bogie said, walking out.

Bogie did not come into conflict with Curtiz during the shoot, because all of the director’s ire was directed at Davis. He’d directed many of her pictures and still considered her “a dumb bitch, ugly as shit.” He’d even objected to her being cast in *Cabin in the& Cotton*.

Davis’ animosity against Curtiz was so pronounced that she turned down *Mildred Pierce* (1945), the role and the Academy Award eventually going to Joan Crawford. At the time, Davis had said, “I absolutely refuse to do another film with Curtiz.” But on Oscar night, watching Crawford,& Davis’ curses and screams went on until morning, and could be heard down the block from her home.

During the peak of Bogie’s lesbian rumors about Davis, she fell big for the muscular Morris, who would later go on to become a naval hero in World War II.

Davis kept inviting Morris to her dressing room, and he kept declining. At one point, he asked Bogie, “How can I get this hot-to-trot mama off my back? I’m not into mothers this year.”

Morris was only 23 at the time, Davis 29.

“Why don’t you throw her a mercy fuck?” Bogie asked. “After all, she’s the star of the picture.”

“I get it up only for teenage gals,” he said. “Once I get going, I can go all night. Also, I like my gals weak and submissive. That hardly describes Bette Davis.”

“You got a point, kid,” Bogie said.

In her effort to get to Morris, Davis even went to Curtiz and asked him to write in a love scene between them, which he refused to do.

When Davis called in sick on February 18, Curtiz told Bogie, “She’s no good actress. Not really needed on this picture. Maybe with the big hen not protecting the chick, I will get to fuck the chick.” He no doubt was referring to Jane Bryan.

Curtiz and Davis weren’t the only members of the crew who did not like each other during the period when *Kid Galahad* was being shot. Both Davis and Edward G. Robinson held each other in contempt. She referred to Robinson as “mush mouth” and asserted, loudly and frequently, “pity the poor girls at Warners who have to kiss his ugly purple lips.”

Robinson was equally disdainful of Davis, complaining to Curtiz. “This hysterical broad is hopeless. She doesn’t belong in the picture.” Even though she’d been an Oscar winner, Robinson called her “an amateur.”

“I’m this torch singer, the mistress of Robinson,” Davis said. “Could any of my fans believe that I’d go to bed with Robinson? It’s another cardboard character. I told Jack Warner this morning that he’d better come up with a better script—or else!”

Robinson particularly objected to Davis’ hysterics during his death scene. He called a halt to shooting and asked Curtis, “Don’t you think Bette is crying too much?”

Robinson saved his final evaluation of Davis for his autobiography. “Miss Davis was and is every inch a lady—polite, mannerly, gracious, even self-effacing. But by today’s standards she could never have gotten a job in a high school production of *East Lynn*. I know it’s goatish of me to say it, but Miss Davis was, when I played with her, not a very gifted amateur and employed any number of jarring mannerisms that she used to form an image. In her early period Miss Davis played the image, and not herself, and certainly not the character provided by the author.”

In contrast, Robinson had a begrudging respect for Bogie and more than a touch of jealousy. “Bogie had a manner, a personality—yes, an immense talent—that has made him almost immortal. Working with him, I think I understood it better than his fans. For all his outward toughness, insolence, *brag-gadocio*, and contempt (and those were always part of the characters he played, though they were not entirely within Bogie), there came through a kind of sadness, loneliness, and heartbreak (all of which *were* very much part of Bogie the man). I always felt sorry for him—sorry that he imposed upon himself the façade of the character with which he had become identified.”

When the film opened to generally respectful reviews, many critics got it wrong. They predicted major stardom for Wayne Morris.

If Bogie ever wished to forget about his appearance in *Kid Galahad,* he would not be so lucky. In 1941, he’d be handed another script entitled *The Wagons Roll at Night.* After reading only ten pages of it, he said, “My God, this is a remake of *Kid Galahad.* The only joy that the remake brought Bogie was that this time, he’d be cast as the lead, playing the role formerly played by Robinson instead of his former supporting part.

As if these rehashes and reprises weren’t enough, Elvis Presley starred in a musical remake of *Kid Galahad* in 1962.

Robinson later commented on his shoot-outs with Bogie. “Almost inevitably both of us would get killed at the end of the films in which we worked together. Because we were both rotten, we had to get our just desserts. Will Hays and his successors said so in the motion picture code. The charade followed a precise pattern. When I was the reigning star, Bogie would be slain first, and I’d live another reel before I got it. As the years passed and Bogie became the reigning star and I was demoted to character roles, I’d get the bullet first and Bogie would live out another reel before he was struck down for his sins.”

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“Bogie,” came the distinctive voice of Ann Sheridan over the phone. “I’ve just met with Lloyd Bacon. He’s cast us in another movie together. It’s called *San Quentin.* ”

“I bet it’s a pip,” Bogie said. He got quickly to the point. “What is it for me? Fourth billing?”

“No, the second lead,” she said. “Pat O’Brien is the star, and I’m the love interest.”

“That you are, kid,” he said. “Don’t tell me: I’m a convict and I get shot and killed at the end.”

(top photo) Convict Bogie confronts prison captain Pat O'Brien in *San Quentin.*

(bottom photo) Ann Sheridan, as Bogie's sister, visits him in the pokey.

“You’ve already read the script,” she said.

“I didn’t have to. What’s the name of my character?”

“Joe Kennedy.”

“How original,” he said. “I think that name has already been used. Any nude love-making scenes between us?”

“Hell, no!” she said. “It’s not that kind of picture. You’re my kid brother in this flicker.”

“Then we’ll have to confine our love-making to the dressing room.”

“Fine with me,” she said. “You know I’m a gal who never turns down a deep dicking. I might as well warn you, though, I’m seeing another actor on the side.”

“Don’t make me guess.”

“David Niven.”

“The limey import.” Bogie said. “Frankly, I think all British actors should be banned in Hollywood. There aren’t enough jobs for home-grown actors.”

“Don’t send him back home to London yet,” she said. “I haven’t worn him out yet. There’s still life in the old boy.”

“He strikes me as a prissy Englishman,” he said. “Not my type.”

“I know what you mean,” she said. “But all Englishmen sound like faggots. In bed, it’s another story. His gals have nicknamed him ‘beer can.’”

“Don’t make me jealous,” he said. “See you on the set.”

“Incidentally, Barton MacLane has the fourth lead,” she said.

“That’s the first good news I’ve had all day,” he said. “The last time we appeared together, he was billed over me, and I’m the pretty one. What woman would want to go to bed with MacLane?”

“Actually there are some,” she said. “Regardless of what you look like, there’s always someone out there salivating over you.”

He hadn’t seen Bacon since he’d helmed Bogie in *Marked Woman*. On the first day on the set, Bogie came up to greet him, noticing how depressed he looked.

“This is not going to be the film that *Marked Woman* was,” Bacon warned his star.

“Let’s go for it,” Bogie said. “As long as they keep those paychecks coming in, you’ll continue to direct, and I’ll get by on what is called acting.”

Upon the film’s release, it was MacLane, in his role as a tough prison guard, who attracted the most attention, some critics calling his performance memorable. One reviewer wrote, “Humphrey Bogart gives a lackluster performance as a con in a lackluster Warner release, another one of the studio’s formula prison movies.”

Bogie took Sheridan to see the film. At the end and on the way out, she said, “there’s one real problem with this stinker other than the obvious. You’re playing my kid brother. Don’t forget that in real life you’re eleven years older than this cutie walking beside you.”

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Long after his intimacy had ended with Bette Davis, she still retained a surface friendship with Bogie, no doubt fearing they’d be cast in another movie together at Warners. Even so, he was surprised when she called him and invited him for lunch on the Warner lot.

She was already at table when he came rushing in. Sitting down beside her, he asked, “To what do I owe this honor, Miss Davis? I assume you don’t want to take up where you left off?”

“Count yourself lucky that you were so rewarded,” she said. “I’m sure it’ll rank as one of your all-time peak experiences.”

“My, aren’t you self-confident today,” he said.

“Today and every day, but that’s not why I’m here. I want to talk to you about a script. It’s a story set in Africa by C.S. Forester. Jack Warner has acquired it as a vehicle for me. My role is that of a prim, repressed missionary spinster. The male role is that of a Cockney River Rat. Henry Blanke is talking about giving the role to David Niven. When I heard the role called for a River Rat, one who hasn’t shaved in days, one who always looks unkempt and maybe a bit dirty, I thought of you.”

“I always like to be in the thoughts of a beautiful woman,” he said.

“Let’s get serious here. I could walk away with an Oscar for this role. The River Rat isn’t bad either—in fact, it’s perfect for you. Niven is too much of an English gentleman to handle the role. He belongs in a Victorian parlor, not on an old piece of junk sailing along a river in Africa battling the Germans. Let’s face it, Bogart. You need a meaty part. So do I, of course. We might eat up the screen with these roles. Will you allow me to advance you as a candidate for the male lead?”

“I’ve always wanted to play the captain of my own boat,” he said, “if that’s what the part calls for.”

“Of course, your boat is nothing but a piece of shit, hardly able to stay afloat.”

“That makes the story all the more intriguing,” he said. “I’ll keep the old tug floating with spit and guts.”

“That’s it exactly. If we play this right, I can begin preparing another speech to give on the night of the Academy Awards.”

“What about me?” he asked. “Don’t I deserve something?”

“That you do. If the competition isn’t too rough that year, river rats might be in.”

In the weeks ahead, the Warner producer, Blanke, and Bette did not agree on the film. Her major objection was to being photographed outdoors. “But, Bette,” he protested, “much of the action takes place outdoors.”

In the spring of 1947, Blanke, forgetting their past differences, once again presented her with the script for *The African Queen*. At this point her star was falling, and she had no objections to being photographed outdoors.

“I love the script,” she said, “and I want to do it. Do you still have David Niven in mind?”

“Not at all,” he said. “I’m pitching James Mason.”

“Mason is a fine actor, of course, but what about Bogart? He gets rattier and rattier-looking every day.”

“No, he’s totally wrong for the part.”

Mason may have gone before the cameras in 1947 opposite Bette had she not given birth to a baby girl, Barbara Davis Sherry, and felt in a weakened condition. She also feared location work in a remote corner of Africa, and the actual physical dexterity needed to pull off this role.

The film had not gone into production by the time Davis was kicked out of Warners, a reaction to the dismal box-office receipts generated by her disastrous *Beyond the Forest*.

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That summer, Bogie learned that he was one of twenty-one members of the Screen Actors Guild listed by the FBI as having “strong Communist Party leanings.” He became worried that such a listing would harm his career, as there was no basis for that charge. Although he viewed himself as an outspoken liberal, He had never been a member of the Communist Party and had no leanings in that direction. His appearance on that FBI list did not seem to affect his career.

In summer of 1937, for a change of pace, he agreed to perform a work by Shakespeare, but only on the radio, for the CBS Shakespeare Theater. Along with veteran actor Walter Huston and Brian Aherne, he appeared in *Henry IV, Part One*.

From New York, Mary Philips no longer wrote any letters. He inquired of actors returning to California from Broadway, but no one seemed to have any knowledge of her private life.

He told Ann Sheridan, “My marriage to Mary just needs a divorce.”

He continued to see Mayo Methot three and sometimes four nights a week, but he complained to Sheridan that “she’s too jealous, too possessive. I’ll never marry her in spite of my promises to her.”

On Broadway, Samuel Goldwyn had seen Bogie perform as Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest*. But when he acquired the rights to *Dead End*, the film adaptation of Sidney Kingsley’s Broadway hit play, he told his director, William Wyler, that George Raft would be perfect as the gangster, Baby Face Martin. The romantic leads and the star parts would go to Sylvia Sidney and Joel McCrea.

Raft, however, kept putting off a decision about whether he’d become involved, and he went around town asking

other actors, directors, and producers, “Should I take this role—or not?”

When Goldwyn heard about this, he called Wyler. “Get Bogie on a loan-out from Warners. Jack wants Miriam Hopkins for a role at Warners. We want Bogie. Do a trade-off.”

Raft’s indecision about whether to accept the starring role in *Dead End* would mark the beginning of a series of ill-advised decisions on his part. In every case, Bogie was ready, willing, and certainly able to fill in for his rival. “I took Raft’s rejects, and they turned me into a movie star, strictly A-list. Poor, stupid George Raft.”

“Who’s there to fuck in this movie?” Bogie asked Ann Sheridan in a call to her. “You know everything’s that going on.”

“I don’t know about Sylvia Sidney,” she said, but I do know there are two hot little numbers appearing—Wendy Barrie and Claire Trevor. Of course, you could always settle for Marjorie Main, but she’s lez.”

Wyler, who was roughly the same age as Bogie age, was definitely an A-list director, and Bogie feared he’d be too demanding. He began his career working in the Silents, launching a career that would span nearly half a century and see a record twelve Oscar nominations as Best Director, of which he would win three.

San Quentin. Bogart with (center photo) Marjorie Main as his mother, and (lower photo) Claire Trevor as hooker.

Firmly established as Goldwyn’s director of choice, Wyler tore into the script of *Dead End*, demanding dozens of changes. Bogie had been warned that he might be asked to shoot a take over and over again, as the director was known as “One More Wyler.”

Bogie was expecting fireworks on the set with Wyler, but the director reserved his fury for epic battles with Goldwyn. They disagreed over several key scenes.

Once, when Wyler saw Goldwyn coming onto the set, the director said, “Here he comes, clanking balls he doesn’t have.”

Years later, Wyler recalled his experience of working with Bogie on *Dead End*. “I found him very professional, very easy to work with. His acting was never hammy. It was very simple. Unlike Bette Davis, he also underplayed a scene. I think that’s the reason why his films stand up so well today. As an actor he obviously was limited. His range wasn’t great, but if he stayed within a certain range he was the best actor around.”

Bogie was less eloquent in recalling his work with Wyler. “He directed some of the best pictures ever made in Hollywood, especially if they starred Bette Davis. He did such films as *Wuthering Heights*, *Roman Holiday*, and *The*

Best Years of Our Lives. He even directed *Ben-Hur*. When film fans gather to watch Wyler movies, *Dead End* is hardly the first must-see& on their list."

Although Joel McCrea became one of the great stars of American Westerns, Bogie remained unimpressed with him. But he did like McCrea's self-appraisal of his own abilities—in fact, McCrea spoke of his modest talents with a certain soft contempt for himself.

(above photos) Two views of Sylvia Sidney

(lower photo) Random House publisher Bennett Cerf "Never legalize a hot romance"

And although Bogie did not admire McCrea's acting, he admired his thrift. He told Bogie that Will Rogers once told him, "Save half of what you make, and live on just the other half. I do that and more. I never carry around more than a buck in my pocket. I recommend you do the same. Buy property and more property. Go out into the unincorporated areas. One day that land will be a city suburb of L.A."

That was good advice, although Bogie never took it. "McCrea became a multi-millionaire in the late 40s," Bogie once said at Romanoff's. "My God, didn't he at one time own Thousand Oaks?"

When Bogie met Sylvia Sidney, the female star of the picture, he remembered her for "having the saddest eyes I've ever seen." She was just recovering from a failed marriage to Bennett Cerf, the famous publisher of Random House. Bogie remembered her sitting on the set between takes working on her needlepoint. Her marriage to Cerf technically lasted only three months.

"One should never legalize a hot romance," Cerf later said.

Referring to this Bronx-born actress, Bogie remembered that "her big, beautiful eyes looked like they were always on the verge of tears. In fact, she jokingly told me that Paramount paid her for every tear shed. Behind that small, vulnerable, long-suffering façade was a tough little number. She practically had 'survival' written on her forehead."

In later life, film critics have cited Sidney's role in *Dead End*, as the best movie& role she ever played. She was cast as Drina, a shopgirl, striving to fight her way out of the slums and into a respectable life. She would work again with Bogie in the circus melodrama *The Wagons Roll at Night*.

Playing Bogie's slum mother was Marjorie Main, the daughter of a minister. In the 1920s she had been a hoofer on Broadway. She was to achieve screen immortality in later years as Ma Kettle.

In Hollywood she was repeating her stage role in *Dead End*. "You're good," he said after watching her work.

“Too good,” she said, accurately predicting that *Dead End* would lead to a number of slum mother parts.

Bogie had already been made aware of Main’s lesbianism as the long-time companion of actress Spring Byington.

In spite of this, she had some deep emotional attachment to her late husband, Stanley LeFevre Krebs, who had died in 1935. The relationship struck Bogie as spiritual, not sexual. In the middle of a scene with him, she stopped and seemed to go into a sort of meditation.

When she’d come out of it, she turned to director Wyler. “It’s okay, I can go on.” She whispered to Bogie, “I don’t want to piss off Wyler, but Stanley was telling me from heaven how to play this scene with you.”

A British actress born in Hong Kong, Wendy Barrie was, in the words of Bogie, “a hot tamale, but she didn’t inspire lust in me. I held her off. She really wanted my body, though.”

Spencer Tracy, still one of Bogie’s best friends, had told him to “keep it zipped up” when he starred with Barrie. Tracy had begun an affair with her when they appeared together in a romantic comedy, *It’s a Small World* (1935).

“I’m still balling her,” Tracy told Bogie. “When I’ve had it, I’ll pass it on to you. Nothing wrong with sloppy seconds—nothing at all.”

“You and Claire Trevor are my kind of dames,” Bogie told Ann Sheridan. “She doesn’t believe in locking up her pussy like some dames,” he said. He loved talking dirty to Sheridan, since she seemed to get off on that. “Trevor is also a solidly professional actress, not great, but way beyond competent.” In fact, in all the cast of *Dead End*, Trevor would be the only one who would receive an Oscar nomination.

The Dead End Kids

Cast as Bogie’s ex-girlfriend, Trevor had a scene-stealing encounter with him. It is clear to Bogie’s character that she has become a prostitute, and a& sickly one at that. Some film critics claimed that it was that scene alone that earned the Oscar for Trevor.

He may have avoided Wendy Barrie, but “I scored a home run with Trevor,” Bogie later claimed. “It was in my dressing room. I made friends with some of the grips who promised to alert me if Mayo arrived on the set, especially if she was carrying a gun.”

At the end of the shoot, Trevor said she wanted to throw him “one goodbye fuck.” She suspected they’d work together again one day. “Any time some director needs a floozy, call me. I play floozies in my sleep.”

When she was eventually cast as Edward G. Robinson’s floozy in *Key Largo* (1948), Bogie and Trevor would meet again. But before that, Trevor, playing a “fence to a gang of safecrackers,” would team up with both Bogie and Robinson in *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse* (1938).

Bogie would also get to know Huntz Hall, a dopey-looking fidgety teenager, during the shoot. He, along with fellow actors Leo Gorcey and Billy Halop, would become famous as the Dead End Kids (also known as The Bowery Boys), and would continue to work with Bogie in future pictures.

When Bogie last encountered Samuel Goldwyn, he was preparing his acceptance speech for *Dead End*, almost certain that it would win an Oscar as Best Picture of the Year. He was terribly disappointed when the Oscar went instead to Warner Brothers’ *The Life of Emile Zola*.

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Mary Philips drove up to their house late one night after he'd gone to bed. When he heard her turning on the lights, he got up. In his underwear, he confronted her in the living room.

"I've come for my things," she said. "I'm moving out for good."

"Who is the lucky man?" he asked. "Kenneth MacKenna or Roland Young? Perhaps someone else."

"It doesn't matter now," she said, as she headed for the bedroom to start removing her clothing. In the bedroom, she turned to face him. "Don't try to stop me. It's over."

"Who's stopping you?" he asked. "Move out if you want to. I don't believe anybody should stay where they don't want to."

"Let's face it," she said, throwing three dresses on the unmade bed. "Ours was not a real marriage. If we ever had a marriage at all, it was in the 20s in New York."

"We had some good times," he said.

"I remember a few, too, but we've spent most of the 30s in the arms of other people. So it's time for me to move on. I'm very much in love."

"You won't tell me if it's Ken or Roland Young?" he said. "You owe me that."

"I owe you nothing," she said rather harshly. "With me out of the way, you'll be free to marry Mayo Methot, although God knows why. She's an old drunk. She's completely lost her looks."

"She isn't exactly a spring chick if that's what you mean," he said.

"I've got a great idea," she said. "While I finish packing, why don't you go sit out on the patio, breathe the night air, smoke a cigarette, and think about what might have been but can never be."

"I wish you luck," he said. "I know you haven't made the greatest films of all time, but back on Broadway you'll be the brightest star."

"That's very comforting," she said. "I guess I'll return the favor. I know you're getting a bit long in the tooth for a Hollywood matinee idol. As for looks, you're not the romantic type like Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, or Robert Taylor. But keep at it. When the 1940s roll around, and you're in your own 40s, I think you'll become one of the biggest character actors in Hollywood. I really believe that. It's not bullshit."

"Well," he said awkwardly, "guess it's time for that cigarette."

"When you come back in, I'll be gone," she said.

"I'll miss you," he said, a forlorn quality to his voice. "You were—and *are* —a great gal."

"I'll miss you, too. I'm sorry our marriage didn't work out. Perhaps you'll find someone some day. Ann Sheridan. Claire Trevor. Anybody but Mayo Methot. Please, Hump, reconsider. She's psychotic. If you go on with her, I think she'll kill you one day."

"If that's my fate, so be it." He smiled. It wasn't quite a smile but not a frown either. His face reflected a sense of loss and yet an eagerness to move on into the next adventure. "Good night, sweet Mary."

"Good night, Hump."

He turned and walked toward the patio. The day had been hot, but a sudden chill had come over Los Angeles. The winds were blowing, and there seemed to be crystals of sand in the night air. Surely that's what it was. It must be the sand tearing his eyes.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Spencer Tracy called Bogie to relate details about the latest public opinion poll about the casting of the leading roles in *Gone With the Wind*, the upcoming film adaptation of the best-selling novel by Margaret Mitchell about America's Civil War.

"That big film role you've been dreaming about may actually come true," Tracy said. "Read Lloyd Pantages column, *I Cover Hollywood*."

Over coffee, Bogie smoked a cigarette and read the following item:

"An opinion poll about how *Gone With the Wind* should be cast focuses on the following movie stars: For the role of Scarlett O'Hara, the major contenders include Miriam Hopkins, Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, Margaret Sullavan, Claudette Colbert, and Jean Harlow. And for the role of Rhett Butler, Clark Gable is the top choice, and, after that, in rapid succession: Cary Grant, Warner Baxter, Ronald Colman, Edward Arnold, Alan Marshall, Humphrey Bogart, and Basil Rathbone. As for the part of Melanie Wilkes, the unanimous decision falls into the lap of Janet Gaynor."

After reading it, Bogie called Tracy back. "I don't know what the debate is about. The choice is obvious: Jean Harlow for Scarlett O'Hara, Bogie for Rhett Butler."

"Have you actually read *Gone With the Wind* ?"

"Not a page, but I hear Gable's a shoe-in."

"Clark told me that he won't accept the role," Tracy said, "so you'd better start practicing a Southern accent. And don't forget to lose the lisp."

A few weeks later, over drinks and dinner, Leslie Howard and Bogie had a Hollywood reunion, thanks to director Tay Garnett having cast them in a Walter Wanger Production, *Stand-In* (1937), a romantic comedy about Hollywood. Joan Blondell would play the female lead. Behind a pair of spectacles, Howard had been cast as a straight-arrow financial analyst who winds up running a movie studio. Bogie, as "Douglas Quintain," plays a boozy producer trying to save a picture called *Sex and Satan*.

Over drinks and dinner, when it came time for the actors to tally their score of conquests of their respective leading ladies, Howard won. Bogie protested that he would have won if some of his leading ladies hadn't been lesbians.

Having just made *It's Love I'm After*, a zany comedy with Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland, Howard amused Bogie with the details of his campaign to woo both ladies into his much-used bed.

In 1982, when Davis was asked to comment on Howard's pursuit of her, she said, "Leslie Howard was definitely a great ladies' man. His wife used to say that the only leading lady he hadn't gone to bed with was Bette Davis."

"Don't see *It's Love I'm After*," cautioned Howard. "I only made that picture because I wanted to show Warners and its director, Archie Mayo, that I had a flair for comedy. And they paid me $70,000 to make it. I hope to get the same for *Stand-In*."

"Don't ask me what I'm taking home," Bogie said. "Small potatoes."

Howard amused Bogie with the details of his seduction of Merle Oberon, his co-star in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1935). "We were in my dressing room having sex, and my wife walked in on us. Seeing us in white heat, she indignantly asked me what I was doing. I blithely replied, 'Rehearsing.'"

Not wanting to be outdone, Bogie related escapades associated with his long-time girlfriend, Joan Blondell.

"I plan to seduce her," Howard said. "Hope you don't mind."

“We don’t have any exclusive rights to each other’s panties,” Bogie said.

Later, during the second week of the shoot, Blondell told Bogie that she found Howard adorable. “He’s just a little devil and just wants his hands on every woman around. He would hold your hand while looking into your eyes and rubbing his leg on somebody else’s leg at the same time, while having the gateman phone him before his wife arrived on the lot.”

As always, Bogie worked smoothly with Howard, as he had in both the stage and screen versions of *The Petrified Forest*. “We both shacked up with Joan,” Bogie said. “She’s got such a good heart about men and their desires.”

“I bet she does,” Ann Sheridan said. “I don’t know how the poor thing faces the camera. No energy left.”

In recalling his late 30s films, Bogie said, “Tay Garnett put Joan, Leslie, and me through our paces more or less well. He’d been an aviator in World War I and a gagwriter for Mack Sennett and Hal Roach. He’d been directing films since 1928. The list of his credits would stretch around the block, yet he’s a name almost no one remembers, except when he directed Lana Turner and John Garfield in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Garnett did on film what my dear wife, Mary Philips, failed to do on Broadway in the stage version. But, then, Lana Turner’s a tough act for any woman to follow.”

During the production of *Stand-In*, Howard seemed primarily obsessed with the formation of his own theatrical troupe. Using it as a vehicle, he was planning a new film production of *Pygmalion*, a 1938 adaptation of George Bernard Shaw’s play.

Howard was bursting with ideas and creativity, making Bogie slightly jealous, even though he was devoted to the actor. Throughout the shoot, Howard kept urging him to get better roles before he turned forty. “You’re a marvelous actor, but they’re putting you in crap.”

During the course of the shoot, Howard invited Bogie to join him for a screening of a Swedish film, *Intermezzo*, the story of a romantic melodrama about the affair between a famous but married violinist and a student of the classical piano.

“It stars a young actress named Ingrid Bergman,” Howard said. “She’s the next Garbo. Exquisitely beautiful, soft spoken, intelligent, and sexy in a way that show-gal types like our dear brassy friend Joan Blondell can never duplicate. She brings to the screen a raw emotional power that’s hard to find. I’m campaigning to have *Intermezzo* made into an English-language film, with me playing the violinist, Ingrid repeating her role as the pianist. What did you think of her?”

“I’m in awe,” Bogie said. “But more than that, I’m in love. Get her to Hollywood as soon as possible. When you finish seducing her, give her to me. Instead of Mayo Methot, I want Ingrid Bergman as my next wife.”

“Back in the 1930s and 40s, or even today, it was not unusual for a man to fall in love with a screen image,” said Claire Trevor. “Bogie talked about this Swede so much I think he was hopelessly smitten. He knew nothing about her. Maybe she was a lesbian for all he knew. I just knew that Leslie Howard, who screws every woman he meets, would get into& Bergman’s panties first. Bogie was waiting in& the wings, his tongue hanging out like a panting dog. That poor Swedish girl just wouldn’t have a chance when faced with those two.”

Joan Blondell
“Here’s looking at you, kid.”

In later years, perhaps to cover her infidelity, Blondell claimed that, “I did not warm to Mr. Bogart. He wasn’t a man one ever felt close to—nobody did. But I liked him.”

In private with trusted friends, she changed the scenario. “I liked him more than a lot. Perhaps he should have married me instead of Mayo Methot. Of course, there was that problem I was having with Dick Powell. I loved him too.”

In many scenes from *Stand-In,* Blondell stole the picture from Bogie and Howard, especially when she performed a savage travesty of Shirley Temple singing “On the Good Ship Lollipop.” She had snappy dialogue, as when she told Howard, cast as a visitor to the studio, that the star must never be “fatigued or mussed and above all she must never be so vulgar as to perspire. Her stand-in does her sweating for her.”

After all his heavy emoting on the stage and screen, Howard was praised by some reviewers for his attempt at comedy. Bogie, to his fury, was completely left out of many reviews. “I might as well have landed on the cutting room floor,” he told Mayo Methot.

“I’ll break a beer bottle over his head if I encounter Jack Warner,” Methot claimed.

“I believe you would,” Bogie said, cautioning her. “But that might be taking it a bit far.”

“Then I’ll break a beer bottle over your head for accepting such a dumb role,” she threatened.

“It’s love,” Bogie shouted, jumping up from his table in the bar. “Let’s drink to true love.”

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When *Stand-In* opened, because of its all-star cast, it drew a moderate box office but did little to advance the careers of any of its stars. Bogie told director Tay Garnett, “Every day I go to the mirror and notice another line under my eye. When will that big break come for me?”

(top left photo) Bogie and Leslie Howard were no Abbott and Costello in *Stand-In.* On the right, a rare photo showing Bogie without his pants.

“You have to remember that for much of the world there’s no such thing in life as the big break.”

“Yeah, don’t remind me,” he said. “See you& on our next picture, if there’s ever going to be one for me.”

“There is,” Garnett said, smiling.

“Wipe that smile off your face.” Bogie said. “Don’t tell me. I know already. I’m not even sloppy seconds, but the fourth lead once again.”

“No, you have the leading role this time,” Garnett said.

“Now you’re talking my language,” Bogie said.

“Not so fast,” Garnett said. “I hear it’s a hillbilly musical set in the Ozarks.”

“Don’t kid a kidder like me,” Bogie said, walking away. He’d traversed less than a block on the studio lot before he came to a standstill and lit a cigarette. “Could it be true?”

(center photo) Bogie is the referee between Nat Pendleton *(left)* and Louise Fazenda *(right)* in this Ozark hee-haw.

(lower photo) Bogie striking out with Penny Singleton

He put through a call to Joan Blondell. She had a friend in the script department who told her everything going on at Warners.

But when he finally reached Blondell, he found her in the hospital where she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown and also suffering from neuritis. She did indeed know about Bogie’s upcoming picture, *Swing Your Lady*, because she’d already been contracted for the role of the romantic female lead.

“It’s crap,” she said. “Some hillbilly romp. You’re supposed to be some low-rent wrestling promoter in the Ozarks. I don’t think it’s a good idea to jeopardize my health for this cornpone hee-haw.”

He agreed with her, remaining with her that afternoon. When she fell asleep, he read the script, detesting his role as the barnstorming promoter Ed Hatch interacting with a dim-witted wrestler, “Joe Skopapoulos,” to be played by Nat Pendleton.

Bogie lied to Methot, claiming that he was escorting his mentally ill sister Frances on a boat trip to Catalina Island. Instead he invited Blondell for a short recuperative holiday. It was while staying in a hotel in Avalon, on Catalina Island, that she sent a telegram to Jack Warner, asserting that she was not willing to jeopardize her health by appearing in *Swing& Your Lady*.

She also objected strenuously to working again with director Ray Enright, who’d helmed her in a string of pictures that began in 1933 with *Blondie Johnson*. More recently, Enright had directed her alongside Pat O’Brien in *Back in Circulation*. “I didn’t like the picture, and I didn’t like Enright,” she said. “I’m letting Jack Warner know that I’m tired of getting lousy parts in lousy pictures.”

Although shortly after that, the studio placed Blondell on suspension without pay, Bogie showed up on the first day of shooting ready to take the lead. Nagging doubts hung over his head. Several people—not just Blondell— had already told him, “It’s a lousy picture—it shouldn’t even be made.”

Like Blondell, Bogie wasn’t impressed with the picture’s director, Enright, who had once been a gag writer for Mack Sennett comedies. Three years older than Bogie, this Indiana-born director helmed 73 films between 1927 and 1953. “Fuck,” he told Blondell, “Enright first directed Rin-Tin-Tin. From the Wonder Dog to me.”

“Don’t make an enemy of him,” Blondell said. “If I know Jack Warner, Enright will be directing you again.” Bogie

found that out for himself when he showed up to shoot *The Wagons Roll at Night*.

When Jack Warner asked Enright how he thought Bogie was doing as the lead in *Swing Your Lady*, the director replied, “He shows up on time.”

“Talk about damning with faint praise,” Warner said. “I’d give Bogie better parts, but what beautiful gal would want to end up with his ugly kisser in the final reel?”

Bogie was shocked to learn that his leading lady was Louise Fazenda, whose husband, Hal B. Wallis, was the top producer at Warners. Behind his back, Wallace had become known as “The Prisoner of Fazenda.” He’d married Louise in 1927.

Cast into a comic role in *Swing Your Lady*, Louise had worked with Mack Sennett and had been a rival of silent screen comedienne Mabel Normand. Fazenda created the archtypical country bumpkin, with multiple pigtails, spit curls, and calico dresses, later inspiring both Minnie Pearl and Judy Canova.

Bogie met her near the end of her long and distinguished career. “I found her plain-looking, but a highly gifted performer,” he said. “Let’s face it: Wallis has his pick of the most beautiful women in America, but for some reason he chose Louise—you figure.”

In *Swing Your Lady,* Louise was cast as “Sadie Horn,” a mountaineer Amazon who plies the blacksmithing trade.

Based on the script, Bogie interpreted the film as a vehicle for the showcasing of Louise. In one hokey scene, she misunderstands him, thinking he’s asking her if she wants to wrestle him. As part of a deft physical assault, she throws him to the ground. Looking down at him, she says, “Now say Hootie Owl.”

In the second lead, the always-reliable character actor, Frank McHugh, was cast as “Popeye Bronson.” Coming from a theatrical family, this Pennsylvania-born actor, only a year older than Bogie, could always be counted on to deliver a standard but competent performance.

Often cast as a sidekick, providing comedy relief, he would eventually appear in some 150 films and TV productions and work with nearly every major star on the Warner lot. Bogie had worked with him previously in *Bullets or Ballots,* where he’d been billed right after Bogie.

After Blondell turned down the role of Cookie Shannon, the part was shortened and assigned to perky Penny Singleton.

Bogie told McHugh, “To judge from her pictures, she’s the only one who looks good enough to fuck on this stinker.”

In a previous incarnation of her career, back when she’d been billed as “Penny McNulty,” Singleton sang and danced with Milton Berle and Gene Raymond.

Bogie knew that Singleton had recently married. One day on the set, he took a bad fall and chipped his tooth. Singleton drove him over to meet her dentist husband, Dr. Laurence Scogga Singleton.

The much married Penny Singleton (top) also had eyes for Ronald Reagan

The following week on the set Bogie doubted how strong her marriage was. He spotted her with a handsome young actor who had been cast as Jack Miller in a minor role in *Swing Your Lady*. Recognizing him, Bogie walked over to shake his hand.

“Mr. Bogart, we meet again,” said the fresh-faced Ronald Reagan.

“I don’t mean to interrupt you two love-birds,” Bogie said, “but I wanted to say hi and wish you well.”

Reagan had been cast as a fast-talking sports reporter, which he’d been in real life. He told Bogie, “I don’t have much to do but make dumb wisecracks.”

“Don’t worry, kid,” Bogie said. “This is Hollywood. By 1940 you’ll be taking home your first Oscar. The good roles will come your way.”

“Thanks, Mr. Bogart. Or do you want me to call you Bogie.”

“Mr. Bogart will do,” he said. He turned to walk away. But he decided to make one final comment. His provocative remarks were already known on the Warner lot as “pulling a Bogie.”

As Reagan seated himself, Bogie looked him over carefully and then checked out Singleton as if appraising a heifer on the block. “Look, Penny, if this young and inexperienced guy can’t satisfy you, I’ll write down my number. Sometimes, in certain matters, experience is better than looks unless you like to break in novices.”

“I’m fully booked, Mr. Bogart, but thanks for the offer,” she said.

Unknown to Singleton, who was a brunette at the time, she was about to dye her locks blonde and appear as the comic strip character “Blondie” in a popular series that would run from 1938 to 1950.

Later, Bogie was surprised to learn that Singleton wasn’t the dumb bottle blonde he’d initially thought she was. She became the first woman president of an AFL-CIO union and led a strike by the Radio City Rockettes.

“The fucking bitch is a rabble-rouser,” Bogie told Ann Sheridan. “But the question remains, did Reagan get to fuck her?”

When *Swing Your Lady* opened, Bogie called Blondell. “You were right, babe. Across the country it was hissed off the screen.”

Swing Your Lady took in less than $25,000 at the box office, but Jack Warner wasn’t willing to let Bogie go. “Taking one more chance on the ass-hole, I’m upping his salary to $1,100 per week.”

In time Harry Medved and Randy Lowell would select *Swing Your Lady* to appear in their book, *The Fifty Worst Films of All Time (and How They Got That Way)*.

Realizing too late that it had been a mistake to make it at all, Jack Warner pulled the plug on *Swing Your Lady* after it had run for only two nights across the country. He quickly replaced it with another Warner feature.

Bogie told the press, " *Swing Your Lady* is the worst film I've ever made." Of course, he had expressed those exact sentiments about some of his other movies.

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Mary Philips had appeared as Nurse Ferguson in the 1932 adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms,* starring Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes, but her screen appearances were very limited. However, in 1936 and into the early months of 1937, she decided to give a film career one more chance.

For a few seasons, she worked on several films back to back, appearing in supporting roles but "never as a star," she said. All her films were released in& 1937.

Wings Over Honolulu starred Wendy Barrie and Ray Milland. Ironically, that same year Bogie appeared with Barrie in *Dead End*. Later, Mary told her husband that Milland had made a pass at her.

As Good as Married starred John Boles, Doris Nolan, Walter Pidgeon, and Mary. On set Mary spent most of her time talking to a fellow co-star, Katharine Alexander, who had been one of Bogie's first steady girlfriends— that is, until he introduced her to his best friend at the time, Bill Brady Jr., who moved in and stole Katharine's heart. On the set together, Mary and Katharine shared many memories of their days in New York.

That Certain Woman saw Mary and Katharine having yet another reunion when they were cast in a film starring Bette Davis and Henry Fonda. Mary later told Bogie that "Bette and I spent many long hours discussing you, and I must tell you her impression of you isn't exactly favorable."

"Tell me something I don't know," Bogie said.

On the set of *The Bride Wore Red,* Mary hardly got to meet her co-stars, Joan Crawford and Franchot Tone. "They were so into each other, and screwing so much between takes, that they didn't have time for any of us," Mary said.

In her films (top row), Mary Philips was always a minor player. She never made it in Hollywood movies the way she did on Broadway.

In the lower right-hand photo, Mary is remembered when she appeared with Bogie on Broadway in *Nerves* in 1924.

On the set of *Mannequin,* Mary was teamed against Joan Crawford who was co-starring with Spencer Tracy. Bogie felt nervous about Mary discussing him with his best pal, Tracy, and also with Crawford.

Mary was very blunt. "You may think Spencer is your best pal, but he put his hand up my dress."

"I'm not surprised," Bogie said, taking the revelation calmly. "I long ago told Spence that it was you who suggested that we 'date' other people when we worked on different coasts. He probably just wanted to check out what turned me on so long ago. Did you guys do it?"

"That is for me to know and you never to find out. Not only did the male star of the movie come on to me, so did the female star."

“If it’s Joan Crawford, I wouldn’t put it past her.”

During the final months of her marriage, Mary spent far more time in the bed of Kenneth MacKenna than she did with her husband. By the time a hearing was held as part of her divorce proceedings from Bogie, her marriage to him had ended long before.

In the sweltering heat of an August day in Los Angeles, Judge Ruben S. Schmidt called his court to order.

In one corner sat Bogie with his lawyer. On the other side sat Mary Philips in a demure gray dress that made her look far older than her years. She was accompanied by her lawyer, Harry E. Sokolove, and family friend and theatrical agent, Mrs. Mary Baker, who had made several attempts in the past to bring the estranged couple back together.

In the courtroom, Mary Philip’s voice was almost inaudible, despite her status as a Broadway actress used to projecting to the balcony. She seemed on the verge of tears, and her testimony was emotional and brief.

“My husband has told me that he doesn’t love me,” she said.

“How often did he tell you that?” the judge asked her.

“Frequently,” she claimed.

“My husband was rarely at home,” she continued. “When he came home, he never told me where he had been.” She was careful to omit her own infidelities with Kenneth MacKenna and Roland Young.

Mary Baker was called as a witness, and her testimony was brief. “In my presence, as a close friend of the family, I often heard Mr. Bogart tell his wife that he no longer cared for her. I also heard him say that ‘married life is too monotonous and does not give me the freedom I crave.’”

The court also heard testimony that the couple spent many months of their married life living apart on different coasts and that they had been separated since January 25, 1937.

The judge granted the divorce. Mary did not ask for alimony. It had been determined that as a working actress on Broadway during most of the span of their relationship, she had earned more money than Bogie did, and that she had often functioned in the past as her husband’s sole means of support.

(top) Mayo Methot to Bogie, "Did you divorce the whore?"

(center) David Niven. The ladies called him "beer can."

(bottom) The beautiful Ann Sheridan endorsing Chesterfields. She died in 1967 of esophageal cancer.

At the end of the courtroom proceedings, Bogie said nothing but shook her gloved hand. Her eyes did not meet his. The first to leave the courtroom, he walked out alone.

Waiting for him across the street in a coffee shop was a very impatient Mayo Methot.

Her first words to Bogie provoked the beginning of what would become hundreds of fights. “Well,” she said, “did you finally divorce the whore?”

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Months before the formal debut of their marriage, Methot and Bogie became known as “The Battling Bogarts.” Many of their feuds were carried out at public watering holes. David Niven in his memoir, *Bring on the Empty Horses*, described one such encounter:

He’d met Bogie when he had been loaned by Warner Brothers to Samuel Goldwyn to make *Dead End*.

The two actors agreed to meet for lunch one day at the Formosa Café, since both were aware that the other was, on occasion, dating Ann Sheridan.

“We did not like each other very much,” Niven claimed. “I found his aggressively tough and his needling manner rather tiresome. We parted with expressions of mutual respect and a determination from then on to avoid each other like the plague.”

Niven, along with other observers, noted that Methot, with “conspicuous cleavage,” matched Bogie drink for drink whenever they went out in public. But unlike her escort, she was unable to handle her liquor. It was obvious to many observers that she was becoming deeply entrenched as an alcoholic.

As part of a chance encounter one night at La Maze, a restaurant on Sunset Strip, Niven was seated six tables away from Bogie and Methot. His date for the night was Ann Sheridan. At that time, Methot was& unaware that Bogie was slipping off to see Sheridan on occasion, usually when they made a picture together. The two couples nodded politely to each other.

Later in the evening from their position across the room, Niven and Sheridan became aware that a burly drunk in a tacky yellow-and-green plaid jacket was trying to pick a fight with Bogie. “You’re not so tough,” the drunk shouted at Bogie. “I could knock you out flat with one punch.”

As a small man, Bogie usually tried not to engage in physical violence with drunks. But the bully kept stabbing his forefinger into Bogie’s modest chest.

“Suddenly, all hell broke loose,” Niven said. “Bogie threw a full glass of Scotch into his aggressor’s eyes, and at the same moment Mayo hit the man on the head with a shoe. Cries of rage and alarm rose on all sides, and the air became thick with flying bottles, plates, glasses, left hooks, and food.”

Niven with the Oomph Girl tried to duck under their table. The table was too small so they crawled to the nearest retreat. Within five minutes, Bogie on all fours crawled across the floor to them. Seeing them, he assured them, “Everything’s okay—Mayo’s handling it. I wish I’d brought a fork, though. I might be able to jab the bastard in the leg.”

Sheridan later said, “For David and me, it was a moment of high drama. For Bogie and Methot, it was just another typical night. More fun was on the way. Slashed wrists. An arson attempt by her on their house. Stabbing him with a butcher knife.”

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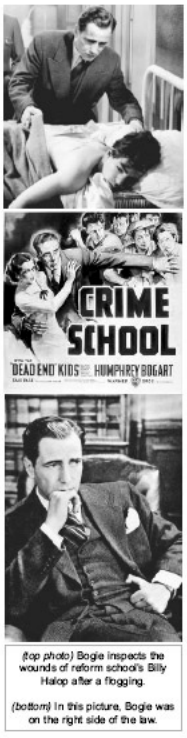
Bogie told Claire Trevor, Ann Sheridan, Joan Blondell, Spencer Tracy, and any friend who would listen, that, “I hate Jack Warner. The fucker blames me for the failure of *Swing Your Lady*. I hate Warner Brothers; I hate the parts I’m assigned; I detest the studio system itself. *Swing Your Lady* causes a greenish pile to form in my gut.”

Out on the town and keeping up appearances:
“The Battling Bogarts” meet “America’s sweethearts”
Ronald Reagan & Jane Wyman *(right)*

Mayo *(left)* is fuming. Both marriages were doomed.

Finally, over another drink, he asked Tracy, “Are you sure that Clark Gable is& not going to play Rhett Butler? What about Gary Cooper?”



(top photo) Bogie inspects the wounds of reform school's Billy Halop after a flogging.

(bottom) In this picture, Bogie was on the right side of the law.

With a heavy heart, Bogie awaited his next acting assignment.

No longer a gangster, Bogie found himself cast as the Deputy Commissioner of Correction, running a reformatory school in *Crime School* (1938). His leading lady this time was the unknown Gale Page, with Billy Halop, one of the Dead End Kids, co-starring. Once again, Bogie was appearing with the Dead End Kids, not only Billy but Huntz Hall and Leo Gorcey. Vincent Sherman, who would become an A-list director and helm pictures for Bogie, was the co-author of the screenplay along with Crane Wilbur.

Lewis Seiler, the director, rushed to welcome Bogie to the set as if he were a major star. "At least there's somebody on the Warner lot who respects me," he told Billy.

Bogie sized Seiler up as a lightweight and determined that he would more or less have to direct himself. Seiler had come to Hollywood in 1919 as a gag man and had worked in two-reel comedies before hooking up with Tom Mix during the 1920s in a series of Westerns. Before he left Hollywood, he would attach his name to two A-list pictures, *Pittsburgh* (1942), with Marlene Dietrich and John Wayne, and *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), with Preston Foster. Between 1923 and 1958, he would direct 88 films, most of them undistinguished.

Heading to Los Angeles from the northwest—Spokane, Washington, to be exact— Gale Page became one of Bogie's less distinguished leading ladies. Her most famous role would be with Ronald Reagan, not Bogie. In 1940 she appeared in *Knute Rockne—All American*.

In a phone call after the first week of shooting, Joan Blondell asked Bogie, "Have& you already fallen in love with your leading lady?"

"Gale's nice enough, a pretty brunette, but much too wholesome for me. Privately, Seiler and I have agreed that she was cast just for decoration in this potboiler. I predict she'll have a short career before retiring to the kitchen as a dutiful housewife rattling pots and pans."

Leo Gorcey was "full of himself" in Bogie's words, especially in the commissary when he was bragging that he'd played Joan Crawford's brother in *Mannequin*. "I'm not gonna be 'Spit' in the Dead End Kids forever."

"Did Crawford seduce you?" Bogie asked.

“Well, not really,” Gorcey said.

“Then you’re not going to be a star. Before you can become a really big star in Hollywood, you’ve got to get fucked by Crawford.”

Although Bogie had worked previously with Billy Halop in *Dead End*, he didn’t really get to know him until they made *Crime School* together. What caught his attention was one reviewer who called Billy “the next Humphrey Bogart.” Bogie’s response to that was, “the original Humphrey Bogart is still around and isn’t going to Forest Lawn any time soon.”

When he really met Billy and had some time to talk to him between takes, he actually came to like the kid. “He brought out the father side of me,” he told Blondell. “I don’t plan to have any kids in life, so Billy is the next best thing.”

Billy had been one of the original Dead End Kids on Broadway in that stage hit, *Dead End*, in 1935. Samuel Goldwyn had brought him to Hollywood. In the early 1940s Billy abandoned his association with the other Dead End Kids, seeking a career of his own. To his regret, he could land parts only in B pictures.

Even as early as the period when he met Bogie, when he was still a teenager, Billy was already battling alcoholism. In the decades to come, Bogie would stand on the sidelines, watching his protégé through a series of money problems and marital disasters.

Billy seemed pleased with the salary he was pulling in for *Crime School* : $275 a week. “But they’re gonna raise me to $650 a week—at least that’s what I was told,” he said to Bogie.

One night Billy’s car had to be hauled off to the garage. “Damn,” he told Bogie. “I’ve been screwing this hot chick. She’s a singer and has a gig tonight at this dance joint in Santa Monica.”

“Is it just for teenagers?” Bogie asked.

“No, it’s for grownups.”

“Well, my girlfriend, Mayo Methot, likes to dance,” Bogie said. “Tell you what. I’ll take you and your gal to Santa Monica, and we’ll have some fun. People seeing us together will think we’re your parents serving as chaper-ones.”

“It’s a deal.”

With Mayo in the front seat with him, and Billy in the back, Bogie drove to the house of Billy’s girlfriend.

The girl must have been looking out the window. Billy didn’t have to ring the doorbell. She came running out to the car.

Even younger than Billy, this teenager was a bundle of nervous energy. Without waiting for Billy to introduce her, she jumped into the back seat. “Hi, I’m Judy Garland. I know all about you from Spencer Tracy. He took my cherry when I was only fifteen.”

“Now that’s how I like a gal to introduce herself,” Bogie said. He’d never met a teenager like Garland before. Already, even though she was just breaking into Hollywood, she gave the impression of a battle-scarred show business veteran. Later he’d say, “When Judy sang ‘Born in a Trunk,’ I believed her.”

“I lost my virginity to dear old dad,” Methot chimed in as a rejoinder to Garland’s revelation. “I was only fourteen.”

“Now let’s keep it cooled down,” Bogie said as a warning to Methot. He couldn’t help but notice that she was already drunk. She’d taken a flask so they’d have liquid refreshment during the long drive to Santa Monica.

(top photo) Billy Halop with Bogie. "Like a son to me."

(bottom photo) Billy Halop with teenaged Judy Garland. Who stole the cherry? Billy or Spencer Tracy?

As the evening evolved, neither of "The Battling Bogarts" were able to fulfill their duties as "chaperones" who'd drive their "charges" back home. Billy took the wheel and delivered the smashing drunk chaperones back to Bogie's home, leaving his car parked in front. He and Garland took a taxi back to where they were going.

"That kid's got something," Bogie said about Judy Garland the next morning over coffee with Methot. "I found it thrilling to hear her sing. She really got to me. I think she's going to topple that Deanna Durbin from her throne."

"Deanna Durbin," Methot said with contempt. "She may be the favorite singer of Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, but I can't stand the little stuck-up bitch."

Later, when *Crime School* was released, Bogie told Spencer Tracy and Joan Blondell that "I am seriously pissed off." Because of the growing popularity of the Dead End Kids, they received top billing over him in *Crime School*. In posters advertising the film, the names of the Dead End Kids appeared in typeface larger than Bogie's in movie posters and newspaper advertising.

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Most mornings, usually over coffee, Bogie was a faithful reader of Sidney Skolsky's column "The Gospel Truth." In one of its editions he read: "Humphrey Bogart will marry Mayo Methot in September when his divorce from Mary Phillips (sic) is finalized. She will marry Kenneth McKenna (sic), who was formerly married to Kay Francis, who will marry Baron Barenekow."

(bottom photo)
Bogie with Priscilla Lane.

Did he really seduce all three of the Lane sisters?

"At least Skolsky spelled my name right," Bogie said.

Bette Davis phoned Bogie that week with the news. “I got the news before you did,” she said. “Warners has just informed me that you and I will be co-starring in a new film together, with me getting star billing, of course. It’s called *Men Are Such Fools*. I haven’t seen the script yet, but I just adore the title.”

Two weeks later, Bogie still hadn’t received a copy of the script. Instead, he got a call from Joan Blondell. “Duckie, it looks like we’re going to be starring in a new film together. It’s called *Men Are Such Fools*.”

“What about a certain Miss Bette Davis?” he asked.

“Oh, she’s out the door. I’m in.”

By the end of the week, Bogie learned that Blondell was out of the picture too, the lead female role now going to Priscilla Lane.

When Warner Brothers finally contacted Bogie that his next picture was to be *Men Are Such Fools*, and the director was to be Busby Berkeley, his reaction was, “You’ve got to be& kidding. I don’t wear feathers and boas, and I don’t dance, at least not on camera.”

Warners was insistent, however, claiming he’d be with such previous “film mates” as Penny Singleton and Priscilla Lane. The catch was that Bogie was assigned the third lead. The star of the picture would be Wayne Morris. “The big lug,” Bogie said. “If you look good on camera, you can be dumb as a carrot but shoot right to stardom.”

In addition to Singleton, Bogie’s other love interest in the film would be Mona Barrie, playing a sardonic vamp. Before hooking up with Lane and Singleton again, Bogie met the English-born Barrie, who’d begun her career as a teenage ballerina.

He told his director, Berkeley, “Talk about a kid who’s going nowhere in pictures. She’ll get two or three more film jobs, and it’ll be all over for that one. The only woman she can play on camera is the one who loses the man.”

It’s true that Barrie’s career would fade into the setting sun by the early 1950s, but in the meantime she would appear in secondary roles in some fifty motion pictures, earning a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Morris, as the film’s romantic lead, was being groomed as Warner’s answer to MGM’s Robert Taylor. Newspapers were billing him as “Hollywood’s latest hearthhthrob.”

“You’ve worked with Morris before in *Kid Galahad*,” Berkeley said to Bogie. “Do you think he can carry this picture as the male lead?”

“I think if you tossed Morris a football, he could run to the goalpost,” Bogie said. “As an actor, he’s tall and blond and some say handsome. I also hear he’s got a big dick.”

“The first qualifications are just fine,” Berkeley said. “But I don’t get that about the big dick. We can’t show that on camera.”

“Why not?” Bogie asked. “The day will come in film when you can. Why not be the first? Also showing big dicks on the screen will increase attendance from women and homosexual guys.”

“Bogie, you’re such a kidder.”

Based on a magazine article by Faith Baldwin, the plot of *Men Are Such Fools* was weak. Lane played a woman who wanted both a career and a husband simultaneously, with Morris playing her spouse, an ex-football star. Bogie was cast into the role of a sleazy advertising big shot who will help Lane’s career if she’ll be “nice” to him.

Bogie had initially thought he’d despise Berkeley on sight. But the two men bonded, each finding that the other was a drinking man. Although he’d reigned as one of the most creative directors in Hollywood, Berkeley was late into his career and deep into alcoholism when he made *Men Are Such Fools*.

“If I recall, and I do, Busby and Bogie drank a lot during the shooting of that picture,” said Priscilla Lane.

Although much of Hollywood thought Berkeley was gay because of his outlandish musical extravaganzas, he was a notorious womanizer.

Eddie Cantor said, after seeing *Golden Diggers* in 1937, “Only a flamer would feature 75 helmet-wearing dancers carrying drums and flags with 50 oversized white rocking chairs, each one big enough for three.”

Berkeley admitted to Bogie that he went from woman to woman, but had nothing but failed relationships. “I can’t satisfy a woman, yet I lust after them.”

“Sounds like you got a real problem there,” Bogie said, embarrassed at hearing such a personal revelation.

Busby Berkeley directed *42nd Street* (1933).

(bottom photo) Berkeley in a more pensive mood. To Bogie, he confessed, "I can't satisfy a woman."

Bogie told Berkeley he drank because he wanted to, but Berkeley said he did it to control his nervousness. He’d been through several highly traumatic experiences in 1935, his divorce from his fourth wife, Merna Kennedy, being the smallest of his problems.

He’d attended a party thrown by William Koenig to celebrate the completion of *In Caliente* (1935). On the way back home, he crashed into two cars.

Defended by hotshot attorney Jerry Giesler, Berkeley was put on trial for murder, not manslaughter.

Two passengers had been killed and five others seriously injured in the accident. Berkeley was badly cut and bruised. Hauled into court on a stretcher, he heard witnesses testify that they smelled liquor on his breath. They also testified that Berkeley whizzed down Roosevelt Highway, cut out of line, crashed headlong into one car, and then sideswiped another.

After two trials, each ending in hung juries, Berkeley was acquitted in a third and final trial.

“This Giesler sounds like a great phone number to have,” Bogie told& Berkeley. “I’m gonna need him when I finally get around to killing Mayo Methot.”

On the set, Bogie and Singleton shared their mutual despair over the bomb they’d made, *Swing Your Lady*. She also confessed that, “Ronnie got away from me,” meaning Ronald Reagan. “Among others, he’s dating a gal named Jane Wyman.”

Priscilla Lane came up to Bogie and said, “When you worked with my sister, Lola, on *Marked Woman*, she told me all about you, you wolf.”

“Did she also tell you how good I am in bed?” he asked provocatively.

“Watch those come-ons with me,” she said. “I look like a sweet and innocent gal, but I’m not. I might take you up on that.”

Maybe she did take him up on his proposition. Bogie remains the only source of his claim to his pals that he seduced each of the three Lane sisters.

He was yet to work with Rosemary Lane, but in a few months he’d be co-starring with her in *The Oklahoma Kid*.

During the shoot, Bogie shifted his attention to a young Carole Landis, who got 17th billing.

When he met her, he told her, “You are the most beautiful woman working in movies today.”

“A compliment like that will get you anywhere,” Landis said.

And so it did.

Landis got the part in the movie because of Berkeley, who was her boyfriend and supporter.

Landis agreed to date Bogie but they had to slip around and conduct a clandestine affair, since Berkeley was hot on her trail, wanting her to marry him, and Bogie had his stalker, the fierce and occasionally violent Mayo Methot.

Without attempting to make Ann Sheridan jealous, Bogie told her that “Carole is my kind of woman. She broke into show business on the casting couch. That’s how a gal should do it.”

He found Carole strikingly beautiful, but terribly insecure. She seemed to be searching for love and not finding it. He was certain that her extraordinary beauty would win her many men, but not one with whom she could ever build a lasting relationship.

Their affair ended when the shoot was over. “It was brief, but memorable,” he said. “Call it *An Affair to Remember*.”

Even though he no longer saw Landis, he remained intrigued by her.

When he saw the final cut of *Men Are Such Fools,* producer Hal Wallis said, “I should have junked the whole thing. Let’s re-title it *Hanky Panky in an Ad Agency*.”

No complete version of *Men Are Such Fools* exists today. In the footage that does exist, Landis does not appear. Just a few months earlier, she’d worked with the same stars, Wayne Morris and Priscilla Lane, on a picture called *Love, Honor and Behave*.

In the years ahead, Bogie often speculated that he should have married Landis instead of Methot. He eagerly listened to any news of her tragic final years in the 1940s and was titillated by the streams of gossip swirling around her.

In 1945, he heard that Landis was appearing in a Broadway musical called *A Lady Said Yes*.

Jacqueline Susann, who later became one of the world’s best-selling novelists, had been cast into the same show. The talk of Broadway was that Landis and Susann were sustaining a torrid lesbian affair. When Susann wrote her blockbuster book, *Valley of the Dolls,* she based the character of Jennifer

North on Landis.

Bogie was deeply saddened by the death of Landis, presumably by suicide. The date was July 5, 1948, and at the time, Landis was only twenty-nine years old.

Carole Landis entertaining the troops during WWII (Male figure on left is unknown)

Inset photo: Rex Harrison, "That Limey Bastard"

Landis had spent her last night with her lover, actor Rex Harrison. On the final evening of her life, he had told her that he would not divorce his wife, Lilli Palmer, that he planned to resuscitate his marriage, and that he was ending his affair. Reportedly, Landis threatened Harrison that she'd reveal the details of their affair to the newspapers.

A maid discovered her dead the next afternoon on the bathroom floor of her Pacific Palisades home. She'd overdosed on Seconal and had left two suicide notes, one for her mother,& the second for Harrison. The maid gave Harrison the note, and he destroyed it.

At a coroner's inquest, Harrison denied there was a second note and claimed he knew of no reason why Landis would consider killing herself.

There was underground speculation that Harrison was responsible for Landis' death, faking a suicide when it was actually murder. He apparently feared that a revelation of marital infidelity would destroy his stellar career.

Bogie always maintained that Harrison—"that limey bastard"—had arranged for Landis' death. "No one can convince me otherwise," he said.

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Since he had no real star power at Warners, Bogie more or less had to take whatever roles he was assigned. Often he found out what role he was slated for by reading the trade papers. Previously known for its black-and-white films, Warners was moving more and more into Technicolor.

He'd heard that George Brent and Wayne Morris were set to star in *Valley of the Giants,* a Peter B. Kyne story about lumber camps in the Northwest.

On March 30, 1938, he picked up a newspaper paper and read an item by Elizabeth Yeaman. Brent was off the picture, having been replaced by Bogie himself. "Oh, no, not Wayne Morris again," he shouted at Methot. "And, to top it off, my puss in Technicolor."

Yeaman predicted that *Valley of the Giants* "will be a bigger opportunity for Bogart, who has plugged along delivering villainous supporting roles, but always turning in a good performance."

Like so many previous casting announcements, this one fell through for Bogie. *Valley of the Giants* (1938) was filmed without him. Morris kept his starring role but Bogie's part went to Frank McHugh, appearing in the film with Claire Trevor taking the female lead.

When director Anatole Litvak sent over a script called *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse,* Bogie read it but wasn't impressed. To Methot, he disparagingly referred to this movie as "The Amazing Doctor Clitoris."

“I don’t even get to play Dr. Clit,” Bogie told Methot. “The lead goes to the ugliest man in Hollywood, Edward G. Robinson. Alongside him, I look like Tyrone Power. Ronald Colman turned down the lead. Smart guy, that Colman. Would you believe my character is called Rocks Valentine? Who makes up crap like this? Some of the other characters include Pat Pal, Rabbit, Tug, and Popus Poopus. One guy, Billy Wayne, plays Candy. If we ever have a son, let’s call him Candy. He’ll learn to be tough when the bullies beat him up every day in the schoolyard.”

This was one of the most bizarre gangster films Warners ever turned out.

As Dr. Clitterhouse, Robinson wants to understand the criminal mind. To gain first-hand knowledge, he becomes a criminal himself, committing several jewelry heists.

He joins up with a “fence,” surprisingly played by Claire Trevor, who negotiates deals with a gang of safecrackers headed by Rocks (Bogie himself).

In a weird twist, near the end, Dr. Clitterhouse gives Rocks a poisoned drink so he can study his reactions while he goes into his death throes.

On the set Bogie asked Robinson, “How many times are you gonna kill me in the movies before I die off?”

“I predict you’ll have nine lives.”

(bottom photo) “Beauty and The Beast”

Bogie is caught between The Beauty (Claire Trevor) and The Beast, (Edward G. Robinson), whom Bogie called “Dr. Clit.”

Bogie later claimed that Robinson had his mind on everything but playing the role of Dr. Clitterhouse. “All he talked about was the oncoming war in Europe. He was supporting every group opposed to Hitler and contributing a lot of dough. Because many of the groups he joined were pro-Stalin or pro-Soviet Union, he was later accused of being a Communist.”

By late 1949, Robinson was being attacked by such ilk as Gerald I.K. Smith, the moving force behind the Knights of the White Camellia, an anti-Semitic, anti-Black group. “Robinson is one of Stalin’s main agents in Hollywood,” Smith charged. “A part of the Stalin machine. He should be put in a Federal Penitentiary.”

On the set Bogie hoped to resume his warm, cozy relationship with co-star, Claire Trevor, but she was planning to marry CBS producer Clark Andrews, so she had cooled her ardor for him. “Let’s be friends,” she told him. And so they did.

Born in Kiev, Anatole Litvak, the director, was married to actress Miriam Hopkins when he arrived on the set to direct Robinson and Bogart in *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*.

“Miriam and I just might take your title away from you,” Litvak told him. “The Battling Bogarts” might be replaced& by “The Battling Litvaks.” Miriam and I had a knock-out, drag-out—as you Americans say—the other night. I left her.”

“Mayo and I don’t need an excuse to fight,” Bogie said. “What about you and Miriam?”

Three views of Miriam Hopkins

(top photo) “When I can’t sleep, I don’t count sheep. I count lovers.”

(middle photo) “When I became middle-aged, the phone stopped ringing.”

(bottom photo) Hopkins with Bogie’s director, Anatole Litvak. “Bette Davis, the greedy bitch, bedded my husband.”

“She found out about my affair with her arch rival, Bette Davis,” Litvak said.

“That’ll do it every time,” Bogie said. “Women are so different from men. We’re made to have affairs.”

“My dear boy, so are women,” Litvak said.

Three days later, Bogie was only mildly surprised to encounter Bette Davis slipping onto the set for a rendezvous with Litvak, whom she referred to as “Tola.” That same year of the Clitterhouse movie, Litvak would direct Davis in *The Sisters*.

With Davis and Litvak occupied in their torrid love affair, Bogie was left alone on the set to greet Gale Page, with whom he’d made *Crime School,* a film in which he’d been the star and Page his leading lady. Now in *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse,* he was reduced to third billing, but she fared even worse, having been demoted to sixth billing in her role as Nurse Randolph.

“I thought *Crime School* was going to make you a big star,” he said to Page. “At least, that’s what you told me. What happened?”

“You’re such a needler,” Page said. “I don’t need to be reminded about how I’m not setting the world on fire. Perhaps there will be a scene between us in this picture where I, as your nurse, get to stick a very long needle in your ass.”

“You’d do anything to see my ass, wouldn’t you now?” Bogie asked.

“You don’t have one of the great asses of Hollywood, in case you haven’t turned backwards for a look in a full-length mirror.”

“She turned her back on him and started to walk away. “Actually, I’m an ass man myself, and you’ve got a set of

buns,& baby."

"You'll never get to enjoy it," she said as her farewell greeting.

"An hour later, Litvak emerged from his bungalow, leaving Davis inside, presumably to repair the damage to her makeup. Bogie walked over to Litvak, but decided not to mention Davis. "I just encountered Gale Page," Bogie said. "Leslie Howard and I have this bet to see who can seduce the largest number of our co-stars, but I just struck out with Page."

"Don't bother with her." Litvak said. "I'll give you my wife's phone number. You can call up dear Miss Miriam Hopkins herself. She'd love to get deep-dicked by you. She's certainly not getting it from me."

"Thanks for the offer of your wife's sevices," Bogie said. "Bette Davis must not find out about this. She positively hates Miriam."

"I know," Litvak said. "Now get back before those cameras and try to give me some emotion this time."

As far as it is known, Bogie never revealed to any of his friends, not even Spencer Tracy, whether he took advantage of Miriam Hopkins' phone number—or not.

In the making of *The Sisters,* Davis had fought with her director over how a scene should be shot. She called Litvak "stubborn." He called her "very, very stubborn."

When Davis and Bogie met again, he asked her pointedly. "I heard you and Litvak broke up. What happened?"

"It was more than his being a very stupid director," she said. "I found out that he took Paulette Goddard to dinner at Ciro's and spent most of the evening under the table servicing the bitch."

Bogie had a major fight with wardrobe when he was asked to don a bathing suit and dive off the edge of a swimming pool. "I don't have the kind of body I like to show off," he said. "Get Wayne Morris, maybe Johnny Weissmuller."

Finally, Litvak got him to perform the scene in an old-fashioned "shoulder-to-thigh" suit.

John Huston, the future director of Bogie's *The African Queen* showed up on the set of *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*. He'd written the screenplay with John Wexley, who identified himself to Bogie as "a radical leftist."

That afternoon, Huston would encounter a trio of stars—Robinson, Bogie, and Claire Trevor, all of whom he'd eventually cast in *Key Largo* (1948), along with Bogie's fourth wife, Lauren Bacall.

Billy Wayne played so many bit parts between 1935 and 1955 that he lost track of the number of times he'd been cast as cabbies, sailors, reporters, and photographers. Bogie asked Litvak to introduce him to the boy playing "Candy." He expected him to be effeminate. If so, Bogie would rib him a bit.

"Hi, Candy," Bogie said, coming up to him. "I play Lollipop in this movie. Maybe we can get together and eat each other?"

Wayne studied him carefully. "You know that scar on your lip, Bogart? Would you like another?"

Bogie had several drinks with supporting players John Litel and Ward Bond. They were part of what became known as the "Warner Bros. Stock Company" in the 1930s, assigned to various supporting roles whenever they came up.

"I'm getting old, guys," Bogie told Litel and Bond. "If I don't make it soon as a number one movie star, I'll be playing character roles with you losers."

Always cast in no-nonsense roles, Litel would appear in more than 200 films. A few times he played the lead in B movies. Bogie would work with him again in *They Drive by Night*.

Gruff, burly, Nebraska-born Ward Bond became a familiar face to movie-goers of the 1930s and beyond. A favorite of director John Ford, Bond was John Wayne's best friend.

"What do you guys do all the time hanging out together?" Bogie asked.

"We go to bars, get drunk, and start fights," Bond said.

"Sounds like fun," Bogie said. One afternoon when Bogie was complaining to Bond that Warners forced him to make too many movies in one year, "Don't& be a fucking sissy," Bond said. "In 1935 I& acted in thirty movies."

Two views of Ward Bond, the busiest actor in Hollywood and John Wayne's best friend. Bond made a "death oath" with Bogie.

Bond himself would make at least 175 movies. One drunken night Bond and Bogie made a strange pact. Both of them agreed to die before their 60th birthday. "Who wants to live to be 60?" Bogie asked.

"Not me," Bond replied.

Although they may have forgotten their alcohol-sodden vows by the time of their deaths, both Bond and Bogie kept their promise to each other, each of them eventually dying at the ages of 57 and 58, respectively.

The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse earned a profit of $10,000, *The New York Times* calling it "sad and aimless," the kindest words they had for this turkey.

Bogie later claimed that the role of& Rocks Valentine was "one of my all-time least favorites."

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Also cast in the Dr. Clitterhouse movie was Max (Slapsie Maxie) Rosenbloom. Bogie found this former boxer fascinating with his cauliflower ears, fat lips, and punch drunk mug. Instead of chasing women on the set, as he usually preferred to do, Bogie spent long hours talking with Slapsie Maxie, a title bestowed on the boxer by Damon Runyon because of this less-than-classy style of slapping opponents in the ring.

Slapsie Maxie enthralled Bogie with his stories of the ring, but also his tall tales of his gambling and womanizing. He claimed he'd bedded Mae West, and Bogie did not find this unbelievable as Miss West was known to have "this thing" for boxers.

Bogie confessed, "I'm a coward. I run from a fight. But since I play a tough guy on screen, every bully goes after me."

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom learned that Mae West had a "thing" for boxers.

(bottom photo) A souvenir from his famous restaurant

Slapsie Maxie agreed to work out with Bogie in the ring to teach him how to defend himself. "I did okay in the ring before I ended up in Hollywood playing Runyon-like thugs and pugs. But I was never a strong puncher in my heyday. I developed this technique of a hit-and-run defensive type of boxing. I'll teach it to you."

"Actually, I wish you would," Bogie said. "Not just to protect myself from bullies, but for another reason. Career advancement. Hollywood is getting ready to make *Golden Boy*. I want the lead role of a boxer."

"Okay, I'll teach you to box," Slapsie Maxie agreed. The ex-boxer kept his promise, with Bogie working out in the ring with the champ, as Mayo stood on the sidelines, screaming, "Kill the fucker, Bogie. Kill him!"

Bogie continued to see Slapsie Maxie over the years.

In 1943, Bogie showed up at Hollywood's newest night club, Slapsie& Maxie's. Bogie's date that night was Ingrid Bergman.

In just a few years, the boxer, as Bogie observed, was suffering from Paget's disease, actually *pugilistica dementia*, as a result of continuous blows to his head which he'd endured as a boxer.

"Poor Slapsie Maxie," Bogie later said. "He taught me how to fight. Punch the fucker in the kisser, bloody his nose, and while he's recovering from the blow, run like hell."

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On the set Bogie encountered Ronald Reagan again. He was complaining about his meager part as a radio announcer. "They are not even letting me show my face in this film—just my voice."

"Would you say that's better than having to show your ass?" Bogie asked. "Listen to me, Reagan, you're a good looking guy—not my type, but good looking enough, I guess, although I prefer men with more kissable tits. I saw a picture of you without your shirt."

"You're kidding me," Reagan said. "I was told you like to put people on."

"You're gonna go to the top," Bogie said. "I've told you this before. You're going to become a bigger star than I could ever hope to be. It'll take a few more Bs for you, then it's Grade A prime rib beef movie roles for you. As for me, with my kisser, I'm stuck in the Bs. Jack Warner has told every director on the lot that I'm not good looking enough for a romantic role. He also considers me a midget. He complains I'm losing my hair. Then there's the question of my lisp."

"Yes, I was wondering about that," Reagan said. "I was told to stay away from guys who lisp in Hollywood."

“Good advice, kid.”

“I also got my report card from Jack Warner,” Reagan said. “A little bird told me.”

“You mean a certain secretary in Warner’s office, the one with the shapely legs.”

“Something like that,” Reagan said. “Warner thinks I’m nice looking—of course, that’s damning with faint praise. He says my best quality is my voice, very friendly. As for my acting, he thinks I’m a bit stiff but okay for B pictures. He thinks I have no comic timing, so I can only do drama. But, and here’s the rub, he thinks I have ‘no heat’ on the screen.”

“If you and I did a love scene together, we’d burn up the screen,” Bogie said.

“You’re such a kidder,” Reagan said. “I was warned about you. Fortunately, man-on-man kissing scenes will never be shown on the screen—we can thank God for that.”

“As I said, hang in there,” Bogie said. “You can play romantic leads throughout the 40s and into the 50s. If you’re still around in the 60s, highly unlikely, you’ll have to switch to villain roles.”

“What about you?” Reagan asked. “You still plan to be a villain in the 1960s?”

“No, not me,” Bogie said. “When the 60s roll around, I’ll be resting comfortably in Forest Lawn.”

“I’m going to hang around for two or three more years,” Reagan said. “If I don’t make it, I’m going back home, back to radio.”

Of his early roles, including *Swing Your Lady*, Reagan later said, “Remember the guy in the movies who rushes into the phone booth, pushes his hat to the back of his head while the tails of his trench coat are still flying, drops a nickel in the box, dials a few numbers and then says, ‘Gimme the city desk. I’ve got a story that’ll split this town wide open!’ That was me.”

Ronald Reagan in his only role as a villain. Whereas John F. Kennedy seduced Angie Dickinson (depicted with Reagan, above), Reagan, a future president, beat her up, but only on screen.

Bogie had met so many young actors like Reagan in Hollywood. As he told Methot, “They start out in bit parts, become romantic stars on the screen, and end up in character roles when the face sags. The hero often becomes an aging villain.”

Indeed that was what happened to Reagan in his last movie, *The Killers*, based on a story by Ernest Hemingway. He was cast as a powerful underworld figure who beats up on poor Angie Dickinson. A scene of him, with his face contorted in anger, was used against him when he ran for president in 1980. The head read: HE VIOLENTLY

BEAT UP ON ANGIE DICKINSON. AS PRESIDENT, HE'LL DO THE SAME TO AMERICA!

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As long as Bogie lived, he'd never forget the way Susan Hayward had approached him on the set of *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*. She was appearing in the film in a minor role.

"Hi, Rocks," she said, using the name of the character he was playing. "I'm Susan Hayward, and I've come to Hollywood to play Scarlett O'Hara. It appears we'll be working together, with you as my Rhett Butler."

He was so stunned by her approach that at first he did not have a ready answer, unusual for him. "You certainly have the hair to play Scarlett," he finally said.

"That's not the issue," she said, standing before him with a hand on her hip. "The question is, do you have the balls to play Rhett Butler?"

"Indeed I do," he shot back, "and I'm ready to start clanking them at any minute."

"Ronald Reagan's already beat you to me," she said.

This surprised Bogie, who felt that Reagan wasn't quite enough of a man to handle Hayward. As he would later tell Claire Trevor, "I wonder if *I'm* enough of a man to take Hayward."

"If you can deal with Mayo Methot, you can tackle Hayward."

The details are missing, but it appears that Bogie did have a brief fling with Hayward. It seemed to be a tryst he wanted to break off quickly.

Trevor later said that Bogie came to her one day with a horrible problem. "In bed, Hayward claws a man's back like a tigress. How am I going to explain that to Mayo?"

"I've got an idea," Trevor said. "Take her in the kitchen while she's cooking dinner. You remain fully clothed, with only your pants down. Pull up her dress and go at it. Tell her you were overcome with passion and couldn't wait to get to the bedroom and undress."

"Claire, that's why I love you so," he said. "What would I do without you?"

"Learn to live with it," she said. "I'm fully booked."

"The question was only rhetorical."

In later years, he would say, "Susan Hayward was a stunning beauty. But she had a savage heart. In many ways, her granite-hard Brooklynese, feisty spirit evoked Barbara Stanwyck. Susan made it the hard way. From the slums to the stenographers' pool, from the modeling agency to Hollywood's casting couch. She did it her way. What she lacked in talent, she made up for in fierce determination to become a star. We ended up working for different studios, but I think one of the great screen teams of all times would have been Humphrey Bogart and Susan Hayward.& Note the billing, of course."

Susan Hayward

In the final cut of *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*, you don't see Reagan but you hear his voice as a radio& announcer, a job he held before becoming a film actor.

As Hayward lamented to Bogie, “My part in the film ended up on the cutting room floor.”

“Welcome to Hollywood, babe,” Bogie said.

Even though Hayward and Bogie would never work together, she would appear in his life story as a morbid footnote. Bogie and Lauren Bacall were planning on filming *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.,* a script based on the novel by John P. Marquand.

After Bogie died, Bacall understandably dropped out. Warner Brothers re-titled this 1957 release *Top Secret Affair*, giving Hayward Bacall’s part and awarding her star billing. Kirk Douglas took the role originally slated for Bogart.

This box office bust was about an aggressive lady publisher seeking to discredit a distinguished war hero. “Too bad Bogie died,” Hayward said upon the release of the film. “I wasted my time and energy on this turkey. He should have lived to make his Last Supper.”

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Director Lloyd Bacon called Bogie with the news. “Jack Warner wants you to do another gangster movie. You play the most powerful gangland chief in Manhattan wanting to muscle in on the trucking business.”

“It sounds like something from the bio of George Raft, but I guess he turned it down. What’s the billing?”

“You’re the fucking star,” Bacon said.

“At least that’s an improvement.” Who’s the leading pussy?”

“Gloria Dickson,” Bacon said.

“Never heard of her.”

“It’ll be good working with you again, Bogie,” Bacon said, “without that Irish drunk hamming it up.” The director was referring to Bogie’s *San Quentin* picture, in which he’d co-starred with Pat O’Brien and Ann Sheridan.

The film, *Racket Busters,* was based on Thomas E. Dewey’s investigations of organized crime in New York City, specifically as they applied to New York City’s trucking businesses. George Brent, Bette Davis’ frequent leading man, was cast as Bogie’s co-star.

Even before meeting him, Bogie had many reasons to dislike Brent, whom he derided as having all the excitement of a tube of paste. His main objection was that Brent had been the lover of Bette Davis ever since the making of *So Big* in 1932. In the years to come they made a series of pictures together including *Golden Arrow* in 1936.

Brent was actually married to the star, Ruth Chatterton, and had little interest in Davis, who was still married to Ham Nelson. But Davis still managed to seduce him in her dressing room whenever they made a picture together.

The same year that *Racket Busters* was released, Brent had been reduced to playing third lead after Davis and Henry Fonda in 1938.

Gloria Dickson

Suddenly, as Davis moved up as the number one star at Warner Brothers, Brent's allure was fading at the box office, although he'd hang on for many years to come.

Bogie had another reason to resent Brent. While casting was being considered by Jack Warner, Bacon had promoted Bogie to play the role of trucker Denny Jordan.

The role of the male lead, an independent truck driver who later rats on the gangland bosses, was clearly the most sympathetic. Bacon cited *Black Legion* in which Bogie had played a similar role, and suggested he'd be excellent as Denny. Warner turned Bogie down, going for Brent instead.

Since Bogie had to work with Brent, he decided to conceal his hostility and accept his invitation for a game, just assuming Brent meant a game of golf.

Arriving at Brent's home, he was directed to a rifle range out back, one which used focused beams of light from photo-electric cells instead of real bullets.

Little tin rabbits painted in rainbow-hued colors raced across the target, but fell "dead" whenever Brent got a "bead" on one of them with the light from the photo gun.

After about fifteen minutes of target practice, Bogie asked Brent, "Got something strong to drink?"

The rest of the afternoon was spent listening to Brent discuss his role in IRA guerrilla fighting during the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1922). He later fled Ireland with a bounty on his head.

To end the day, Brent, a licensed pilot, took& Bogie on a sightseeing tour at sunset over the California coast.

On the set the following week, Bogie met his co-star Gloria Dickson. "Where you from, kid?"

"Pocatello, Idaho," she said.

"I thought Pocatello, Idaho, was a joke. I didn't know that somebody actually came from there."

Later he said to Bacon, "The gal looks familiar. I must have seen her in something."

"She made an auspicious debut in *They Won't Forget*," Bacon said.

“Yeah, I caught that one,” Bogie said. “But I was too busy watching Lana Turner’s tits bounce around in that tight sweater to pay attention to anything else.”

Dickson had just gotten married to Perc Westmore, so he gave her wide berth, although he told Bacon that Dickson “is definitely fuckable. But I’ve got my own bottle blonde at home. Think I’ll sit this one out.”

Bogie thought Dickson’s career would be short but not so tragic. In one of her last performances in *Crime Doctor’s Strangest Case*, she played the wife of a man who habitually started accidental fires with carelessly discarded cigarettes. Ironically, within just two short years, she would die in a house fire caused by a carelessly discarded cigarette.

Her footnote in history? Her image was the first natural color photograph in history to be transmitted by International News Pictures from Hollywood to New York.

After she’d died, Bogie was waiting in a dentist office, thumbing through some old movie magazines. He was surprised to find Dickson on the cover. The title of the article was THE LUCKIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD.

Racket Busters almost became Bogie’s last movie. His life was saved by the quick-thinking crew. As part of his portrayal of a racketeer in the story, he was instructed to stand on a platform with a bucket of highly toxic sulphuric acid, waiting to throw it over a truck of garden produce as it drove by. The director had ordered that real acid be used because it would raise smoke as soon as it hit the produce.

Just at the moment he was to toss the acid, Bogie lost his footing and fell into the moving truck with the bucket of acid over him. Had it hit his face, he would have been permanently disfigured for life.

Rushing to the scene, the prop men ripped off all his clothes, leaving him jaybird naked. He watched in horror as his clothing seemed to burn to pieces. Someone finally thought to bring him a blanket to cover up his nudity.

The doctor on call at Warners examined him for wounds or damage, but amazingly he had emerged unscathed from the lethal acid.

Instead of allowing him the rest of the day off, Bacon ordered that the scene be re-shot. Dry ice would be used instead of sulphuric acid.

On the set, Bogie couldn’t help needling Penny Singleton. “In seventh billing, huh?” he asked. “Just a few months ago you had star billing over me in *Men Are Such Fools*.”

“No gentleman would ever point that out to me,” she said.

“I’m not a gentleman,” he said.

“That was obvious from the first day I met you,” she said.

“I hear you just made a movie called *Blondie* where you’re the wife of Dagwood Bumstead. And you once told me you wanted to be a serious actress.”

“Didn’t you set out to be a serious actor?” she asked. “Now look at you. A fourth rate George Raft.”

“Okay, Singleton, I think we’ve traded enough barbs for one day. I’ve got to hunt up George Brent and needle him. You know, I’m billed over him?”

“Why I’ll never know,” Singleton said, turning and walking away from him. She paused and looked back at him. “Why can’t you be a gentleman like Ronald Reagan.”

“Because ladies like a man who treats them rough,” he said.

“Then I’m no lady,” she said.

“I’d already figured that out for myself.”

“Oh, let me out of here,” she said. “You just won’t let go.”

“Not when I’ve got hold of a hot pair of tits,” he said.

“You! You’re just insufferable. I don’t know how Mayo Methot puts up with you.”

“She doesn’t.”

That day he had lunch with the mustachioed character actor Walter Abel. He had a favor to ask. Abel was married at the time to the concept harpist Marietta Bitter.

Bogie began with an apology. “Of course, there’s no money in it but I’d like your wife to play her harp at my wedding to Mayo Methot.”

“I’m sure she’d do it,” Abel said. “I’ll ask her.” Bogie ordered ham and eggs, Abel preferring the blue plate special, beef stew. “You know, Bogie, you and I are the same age, but I just don’t seem to get the star parts like you. What have you got that I don’t have?”

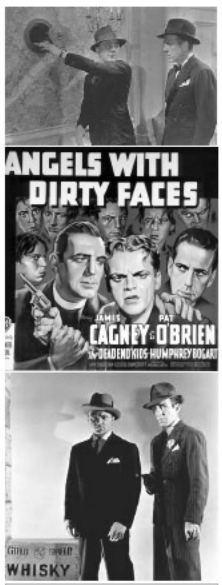
“Three extra inches, your wife tells me.”

“You just can’t give up that damn needling, can you?” Abel asked. “Not even when you’re asking a favor.”

“I’m a sicko.”

During the course of his long career, Abel would appear with some of the biggest stars in Hollywood, ranging from Bette Davis in *Mr. Skeffington* (1944) to Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor in *Raintree County* (1957).

At the end of the shoot, Brent came up and shook Bogie’s hand. “It’s been real swell working with you. I hope I’ll have the pleasure again.”



During the 1930s at Warner Brothers, Bogie lived in the shadow of James Cagney. Bogie envied Cagney, dismissing him as "a song-and-dance man trying to be a gangster on screen." Both men are depicted in the three images above.

At private parties, Bogie imitated Cagney as a cocky, fast-talking, conceited bundle of dynamic energy.

“Perhaps Bette Davis will cast us in her next picture where we’ll be two beaux fighting over her honeypot,” Bogie said. “Incidentally, speaking of that honeypot—it’s ginger if you remember—Bette told me you were a lousy lay.”

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At long last, Michael Curtiz, future director of *Casablanca,* brought Bogie together with one of his three arch rivals on the Warners lot, James Cagney. Thanks partly to his status as a major box office star, Cagney, of course, had been awarded the lead in *Angels with Dirty Faces,* with Pat O’Brien coming in second. Bogie and his friend, Ann Sheridan, had the third and fourth leads.

Bogie was also reunited with the Dead End Kids, Huntz Hall, Leo Gorcey, and Billy Halop. He preferred to spend his time with Billy and not the other boys.

Curtiz, riding the rest of his fame, at first objected to doing a gangster movie. But Hal Wallis insisted. “I know you conflicted with Cagney while making *Jimmy the Gent* with the little fart, but you also have the balls to keep *that one* in line.”

As critic Robert Sklar put it, casting Cagney as the lead criminal instead of Bogie gave the menacing figure “a violent comic energy, not a morose lethargy.”

Bogie played James Frazier, a crooked lawyer fronting for the mob. Wallis was hoping with the *Dirty Faces* movie to revive the gangster genre, which had catalyzed a stream of box office hits for the studio throughout the 1930s.

Bogie’s first words to Cagney were, “No longer in drag, huh? Don’t mess with me or I might spread the word around the lot about how you got your start in show business.”

Bogie and Cagney would never be friends—they were far too jealous of each other—but they tried to amuse each other with stories of their work at Warner Brothers.

At one point, Cagney related to Bogie what it was like making the film *Boy Meets Girl* (also set for release in 1938) with sexy, ‘dumb-blonde’ Marie Wilson.

Cagney knew that Bogie had appeared with Wilson in *China Clipper*. “Marie was required in one scene to sit on my lap, and the director had to shoot and reshoot,” Cagney claimed. “I kept& getting a hard-on. Marie later told everybody, ‘Sitting on Jimmy’s lap was like being on top& of a flagpole.’”

The Dead End Kids *(top photo)* thought gangster Cagney was a hero until he walked The Last Mile on his way to the electric chair. But Cagney onscreen, during that scene, became a wimp.

Bogie was known for delivering the last word before he walked away from a person. “That’s a good one, Cagney. But I heard Howard Hughes turned down a loan-out offer from Warner Brothers because he said you’re ‘nothing but a runt.’ As for exact measurements, I guess I’d better ask Noël Coward.”

“You know about that, you mother fucker?”

Bogie and Cagney made up the next day. After having recently been suspended by the studio, Cagney was eager to make this picture work. He viewed his role of Rocky Sullivan as a sort of comeback picture for him.

“I told Wallis that I was tired of doing just another gangster picture, and I wanted to make this one something special,” Cagney told Bogie.

What Bogie didn’t confide to Cagney was that he’d lobbied behind his back to play the role of Rocky himself.

“I haven’t read the script yet,” Bogie& said. “But I assume you’ll kill me in the final reel.”

“You got that right, kid,” Cagney said.

“I hope you go to the electric chair for it,” Bogie said.

“I do, but it’ll be the most dramatic last mile in the history of cinema.”

Pat O’Brien, in the first of his roles as a fighting priest, played Father Connolly, who struggles to keep the Dead End Kids from pursuing a life of crime. Cagney, a hero to the boys in the neighborhood, is trying to drag them along to hell with himself.

During his direction, Curtiz continued to butcher the English language. Cliff King, the still cameraman, asked Bogie to pose for some publicity stills.

Bogie was a bit fidgety during the shoot, and King asked him to “Please try to keep still while I make the picture.”

Curtiz overheard him, “You bum,” the director shouted. “When you make the movies you’re still, and when you take the stills, you move.”

In one explosive scene, real bullets were used, based on direct orders from Curtiz. Regrettably, neither Curtiz nor any of his assistants bothered to tell Bogie. When Bogie found out, he physically attacked Curtiz but two grips pulled him away before he could harm the director.

“I know you don’t like the word shit, so I’ll say crap.” It was Ann Sheridan talking over lunch. “I’m trying to make the best of this part but my character isn’t well defined. Rowland Brown [the creator of the original story] spends far too much time cocksucking than he does developing my character. What can I do?”

“Collect your paycheck and go on to your next picture,” Bogie said.

As it turned out, Sheridan wasn’t the little wren she feared she was. *Angels With Dirty Faces* marked her first big featured role in an A-list picture, and a turning point in her career.

During the making of the film, George Hurrell released his soon-to-be famous photographs of her, and they were published across the country. The publicists at Warners immediately launched a massive campaign, releasing these pictures in magazines and newspapers.

Bogie kept a cheesecake picture of Sheridan posing as the Oomph Girl in his dressing room until Methot visited and ripped it down before hitting him over the head with a liquor bottle, which caused a minor concussion.

During the shoot, the Dead End Kids terrorized the set. One afternoon, they held Bogie to the ground and stripped off his trousers. However, when they tangled with Cagney, he fought back, bloodying Gorcey’s nose. After that, they gave him wide berth, “Don’t fuck with me,” Cagney had told them. “I grew up in Hell’s Kitchen.”

One day, Judy Garland showed up on the set for a rendezvous with Billy Halop, whom she was still dating infrequently. Bogie generously lent them his dressing room for their tryst.

Afterward Garland came to him, “Oh, Mr. Bogie, a girl can’t make up her mind. Should it be Billy? Should it be

Mickey Rooney? I just don't know."

"If I was a gal, I'd go for the one with the biggest dick.

"That would be Billy, of course, and he's far handsomer, but Mickey is such a delight to be with."

"Play the field," he told her.

"I've got another problem," she said. "I think Louis B. Mayer actually wants to take me to bed. What can I do? He's the boss."

"Honey, do what every smart gal in Hollywood has done since movies began," he said. "Lie down on that casting couch and endure it. Just five minutes of horror, and it'll all be over. You've got the talent. You might become the biggest star at MGM. So go for it."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Bogie, for making up my mind for me. I'll let you know how it works out."

"When all these guys have broken you in real good, you come to me for some real loving," he said.

"I will, I will, I promise," she said.

"After these amateurs have worked you over, you can learn how a man does it."

Cagney was right about the movie's final dramatic scene, perhaps the most memorable he ever shot. Just before his execution, Father Connolly begs him to become a sniveling coward on the way to the chair. That way, he'll no longer be a hero to the Dead End Kids.

At first Cagney refuses his old friend. But at the last minute, he breaks down and becomes hysterical. Movie-goers over the years have pondered exactly what was going on in this final scene. Did the character Cagney was playing really turn yellow, and did he decide in the final moments of his life to give in to Father Connolly's last plea to him? Regardless of his motive, he destroyed himself as a role model for the young, potential criminals in waiting.

This is the movie that inspired Cagney impersonators. He twisted his neck, lifted his shoulders, and bit his bottom lip which became his signature act. He said he learned these ticks from a pimp in Hell's Kitchen who used to stand on his street corner.

Reviewer Harrison Carroll claimed that *Angels With Dirty Faces* "is the most grimly realistic gangster film that has come out of Hollywood since the early days of the cycle."

After the film opened, Cagney walked off with honors, winning the 1939 New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Actor. In addition, he was nominated for an Oscar.

One film critic claimed if there was only one Cagney film to place in a time capsule, it should be *Angels With Dirty Faces*.

Somehow Bogie got lost in all the buzz over Cagney. But Bogie was left with a steely determination to star with Barbara Stanwyck in *Golden Boy*. To do that, he had to renew his relationship with the Steel Magnolia herself.

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As she made preparations to marry Kenneth, Mary opened on Broadway in the comedy *Spring Thaw*. Appearing opposite her was her long-time lover, Roland Young.

One drunken night, Bogie called his old friend, Kenneth, when he found out he was making plans to marry Mary. "I keep hoping Mary will change her mind and come back to me before our divorce becomes final."

"Surely you don't mean that," Kenneth said in protest. "You never really loved Mary. I should have married her back in the 20s in New York. Tell me you don't mean what you just said."

“Of course, I mean it,” Bogie said. “Have you ever heard me say something I don’t mean?”

“Yeah,” Kenneth said, not concealing the anger in his voice. “You didn’t mean it when you told me I was your best friend.” He put down the phone.

Bogie’s best friends continually speculated that he was not in love with any of his three wives. Spencer Tracy once said that “in Helen Menken he found a mother figure. Young boy dominated by a strong mother ends up marrying mother. Classic case.”

“If Bogie were in love with any woman in the 1930s, it was Mary Philips,” Leslie Howard once said. “But they spent much of their time on separate coasts sleeping in the beds of other people.”

No one could accuse Mayo Methot of being anybody’s mother. Bogie once admitted to Ann Sheridan, “I don’t love Mayo. But I’m fascinated by her, and I love to beat her up, especially when she beats me back.”

On August 12, 1938, the Associated Press carried a notice that “Mary Phillips Bogart, known professionally as “Mary Philips,” whose divorce from screen actor Humphrey Bogart became final two days ago, and Leo Meilzinger, former husband to Kay Francis, also a film prominent, were married today at the office of the Justice of the Peace J. Fred Collins.”

The article noted that Meilzinger was known in the theatrical world as Kenneth MacKenna, a film editor for MGM in New York City. Kenneth was 38, Mary 37.

In some long-forgotten fan magazine of the 30s, Bogie gave a surprisingly candid interview on the dawn of his marriage to Methot.

“I love a good fight,” he claimed. “So does Mayo. We have some first-rate battles. Both of us are actors, so fights are easy to start. Actors always see the dramatic quality of a situation more easily than other people and can’t resist dramatizing it further. For instance, I come home from a game of golf. Maybe I’ve been off my drive. I slump into my chair. ‘Gosh, I feel low today.’ I start. She nods meaningfully. ‘Low, hmm, I see. You feel low. You come to see me and it makes you feel low. All the thrill has gone and . . . you feel low.’ And we go right on from there. We both understand that one of the important things to master in marriage is the technique of the quarrel.”

As an ominous sign, there were threatening storm clouds across Los Angeles on the morning of August 20, 1939. But by eleven the highly unpredictable skies cleared in time for the wedding of Humphrey Bogart, age 38, to Mayo Methot, age 35.

Bogie and Mary Philips had long been a friend of Mary and Mel Baker, who had agreed to host the wedding of Bogie to his third wife, Mayo. Mel was a comedy writer and Mary Baker a theatrical agent to both Mary Philips and Bogie. He had long forgiven her for testifying against him in Mary’s divorce case against him. Judge Ben Lindsay had agreed to perform the ceremony marrying Bogie to Mayo.

Methot arrived at her wedding to Bogie in a housedress that looked as if she’d slept in it. Her hair was ratty, needing to be washed and set.

Wedding bells for "The Battling Bogarts." A marriage made in hell almost didn't make it through the first day.

"I've got nothing to wear," she told actress Gloria Stuart. "I spent all my money on liquor, and that tightwad Bogart, the fucker, wouldn't give me money to buy a new dress."

"What a great way to start a marriage," Stuart said. She went to see Mary Baker, the hostess, who claimed she had something appropriate. She emerged with a beaded dress and a matching hair band that Joan Crawford might have worn in *Our Dancing Daughters*. Right before her, Methot pulled off her dress, revealing that she wore no underwear.

Appraising herself in the mirror, Methot turned to Baker, "Aren't you supposed to wear something borrowed at a wedding? Well, look at me now."

"What about some panties, darling?" Mary asked.

"Who needs them?" she asked. "If a man wants to fuck you, you should make it easy for him and not make him have to take off a lot of garments. Just pull up your dress and tempt him with your cooze."

Marietta Bitter and her harp provided the event's high point in culture, but another performer, Mischa Auer, stole the show. He attracted the most attention by crawling naked under the tables, putting an experienced hand up several of the women's dresses.

During the actual marriage ceremony, Bogie cried through the entire service. "If I were marrying Mayo Methot, I would cry too," said Spencer Tracy.

Long before the sun set that day, "The Battling Bogarts" were at it. After downing nearly half a bottle of Scotch, Methot in front of the guests, filled her hands with great globs of creamy wedding cake, walked up to her new husband, and crushed the gooey mess into his face, rubbing it in. Some gossip at the party had told her that her new spouse was having a torrid affair with Claire Trevor.

Bogie punched her back, knocking her down. She fell backward, crashing into a table of four enjoying the wedding buffet.

Bogie ran back into the house, and within an hour he and Mel Baker were driving down the coastal road toward the Mexican border. Methot spent her wedding night sobbing in the bed of Mary Baker, who tried to offer the new bride whatever comfort she could on her "honeymoon."

Two days later Bogie sent Methot a rubber plant, and "The Battling Bogarts" made up, at least for a few hours.

Methot told Mary Baker, "We managed to screw for a few hours before we started in again. It was over the Tijuana whores I suspected he'd sampled during our honeymoon."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Back from a real honeymoon in Oregon, where Bogie met his in-laws, he arrived in Hollywood with a steely resolve.

Over breakfast with his new bride, his face tightened into knots of determination. “God damn it, I’m gonna be a big-time movie star in spite of Jack Warner. It’s now or never. I’m seeing Barbara Stanwyck today.”

“I don’t have to be jealous of that bitch,” Methot said. “Bette Davis told me she’s lez. Her romance with Robert Taylor is just for show.”

“I want to star with her in *Golden Boy*,” Bogie responded. “Babs and I can heat up the screen with that film. If she doesn’t think I can quite handle the part, I’ll throw you in as the party favor for Stanwyck.”

Bogie ducked just in time to miss a flying plate that crashed into the wall behind him.

If Bogie had known how many young actors wanted to play the role of the boxer, Joe Bonaparte, in the screen adaptation of Clifford Odets’ Broadway play, *Golden Boy*, he might never have gone out for the role. Everyone from matinee idol Tyrone Power to newcomer Alan Ladd was competing.

Director Rouben Mamoulian estimated that some 5,000 actors, including a 17-year-old Dale Robertson, wanted the part. “My God,” Mamoulian said, “more guys wanted to play Joe Bonaparte than gals wanted to be Scarlett O’Hara.” [In all, 1,400 candidates for the role of Scarlett were interviewed. Of these, ninety were given screen tests.]

Methot reminded Bogie that he was nearly forty years old and didn’t have the figure for an appearance in boxing trunks. She accurately predicted that some twenty-year-old brat would get the part—“and it’ll probably make him a star.”

As payment for her forecast, she got a plate of unfinished ham and eggs thrown in her face. The last thing Bogie wanted was to be reminded of how old he was.

He was convinced that if Stanwyck would just return his calls, he could use his former connection to her to get the director to cast him. In preparation, he took boxing lessons every day and also violin lessons. In the play,& Bonaparte wanted to be a violinist before he was lured into the ring.

Unknown to Bogie at the time, a future co-star of his, William Holden, was also taking boxing and violin lessons.

Bogie tried to get two of the most coveted roles in Hollywood—that of the violinist/boxer in *Golden Boy* and also that of Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*.

He lost the roles to William Holden (depicted in all three images above) and Clark Gable, respectively.

Barbara Stanwyck *(bottom photo)* wanted Holden—and not just on the screen.

Finally, the call came in from Stanwyck, whose star was rising rapidly in Hollywood. It was not the kind of call he expected. At first she didn't even mention *Golden Boy*.

"Bogie, how's it hanging?"

"It's grown three inches longer since the last time," he said. "Wanna swing on it again?"

"No, I'm perfectly satisfied with Robert Taylor's four inches," she said. "Let cut the crap, Bogie. You know why I'm calling."

"I hear Samuel Goldwyn has signed you for *Golden Boy*," he said.

"That's the least of my concerns right now," she said. "The publicity people are pushing me for the role of Scarlett O'Hara. Can you believe such nonsense?"

"A gal from Brooklyn. I'm surprised. If you get it, you've got to sound like you have magnolia juice dripping down your chin."

"That's not all," she said. "I hear David Selznick wants us to do a screen test together. You, of all the actors in Hollywood, for the role of Rhett Butler."

"As dumb as it sounds, let's go for it," he said. "If we could pull this one off, we might become the biggest stars in Hollywood since Rin Tin Tin."

"They're going to get in touch with you," she said. "Now, more business. What's all this talk I hear that you want to play Joe Bonaparte. Are you out of your mind?"

"It's a great role, and I could do it."

"But you're forty years old," she said. "Almost. The kid in the movie should be in his early twenties."

Before she hung up, he convinced her to come to his gym the following day and watch him work out in the ring with Slapsie Maxie.

“I don’t want that retard,” she said. “I want to see you in the ring with a real man. I’ll bring along someone to get into the ring with you and duke it out.”

“You’ve got yourself a deal, Babe, or is it Babs?” he said.

“Miss Stanwyck will do,” she said after jotting down the time and place.

Stanwyck showed up with a stunningly handsome actor whom she introduced as& William Holden.

In *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*, Bogie marries Barbara Stanwyck *(top photo)* but falls for a neighbor, as played by Alexis Smith *(bottom photo)*.

The solution? Bogie plans to poison Stanwyck.

While Holden was in the changing room getting into his trunks, Bogie said, “I’ve never seen a boxer that good looking before. Where did you find him?”

“He’s not a boxer,” Stanwyck said. “He’s an actor. He’s also up for the role.”

At this point Holden returned, looking even younger and more gorgeous without his clothes. Like some boxing manager, Stanwyck ushered Bogie and Holden into the ring together. “May the best man win.”

The bout was short, not sweet. After only four minutes of sparing, Holden threw Bogie a punch that knocked him out.

When he came to, he was sitting on the sidelines, with a gym attendant and Stanwyck hovering over him. Holden had disappeared.

Bogie had a splitting headache, and Stanwyck appeared rather blurred before his eyes. “I didn’t quite come clean with you,” she said. “Holden was assigned the part yesterday. Better go back to those gangster roles, sweet cheeks.”

“You are an incredible bitch,” he said.

“There are side benefits from casting Holden,” she said. “In case you haven’t noticed, twenty-year-old cock tastes better than forty-year-old cock.”

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Two days prior to the screen test with Stanwyck and Bogie for the Rhett and Scarlett& roles, Selznick’s office sent Bogie a message, notifying him that the screen test had been cancelled.

Not only was Bogie's screen test cancelled, but the following week he received a memo from Selznick.

Bogie didn't expect any romantic fireworks when he was cast opposite Alexis Smith *(top photo)* in *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*. The same with Barbara Stanwyck *(bottom photo)*.

Bogie told his pal, Sydney Greenstreet, "I don't have the right equipment for these two lesbians."

"Mr. Bogart, although I admire your talent in gangster roles, you are not a serious candidate for the role of Rhett Butler. Although some polls list you as a candidate, you are not. As you should know, the role is completely unsuitable for you. You'd be laughed off the screen. In case you and Barbara Stanwyck haven't read the novel, it's set in Georgia—not Brooklyn. I have not determined who will play Scarlett, but I am more or less set on Gary Cooper for Rhett Butler. Kindest personal regards, David O. Selznick."

With a certain bitterness, Bogie watched newcomer William Holden and Barbara Stanwyck appear in one of the greatest films of 1939, perhaps the single greatest year in the history of motion pictures.

He vowed never to speak to Stanwyck again. Methot warned that if she encountered her at a party or in a public place, "I'll pull out every hair in her head."

Bogie watched in amazement as Stanwyck became the highest paid female star during World War II. At the end of the war, and after *Casablanca*, his own star had risen so high that he was offered star billing over her in *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*, slated for a 1947 release. For the opportunity to co-star with her, with his name above hers, he decided to forgive her and go ahead with the picture.

He told its English director, Peter Godfrey, that he could definitely honor his marriage vows while making this movie. "You've cast me opposite two lezzies-Stanwyck and Alexis Smith. Maybe the gals will connect—not me."

Bogie had already co-starred with Alexis& Smith in the 1945 *Conflict*, which included backup support from Sydney Greenstreet.

During the filming of *The Two Mrs. Carrolls*, Bogie and Stanwyck each realized they were miscast in this adaptation of Martin Vale's play that had brought such success on Broadway to the great Elisabeth Bergner and Victor Jory.

During the shoot, reporters provocatively asked Bogie how she could hook up with him on the screen when she had "pretty boy" Robert Taylor waiting back home at the ranch.

"I'm not good looking, and I admit that," Bogie responded. "I used to be quite pretty, but not in the league of Robert

Taylor. But I've got character on my face. It takes an awful lot of late-night drinking to put it there."

Godfrey allowed Bogie to mug shamelessly as the psychopathic artist who paints wives as "Angels of Death," then kills them with poisoned milk.

Warners held up the release of the film for two years. When it finally hit screens across the country, critics ridiculed and mocked it. The public cast its vote by staying away. The film would find new life in the 1960s when it was rediscovered by the French New Wave.

Stanwyck and Bogie made a valiant attempt to appear together one final time on the screen in *The Fountainhead* based on Ayn Rand's best-selling 754-page novel. This Russian-born philosopher novelist stood for "muscular capitalism and a disdain for the common herd." Stanwyck wanted to play the lead role of Dominique Francon who marries the book's villain but loves the hero, architect Howard Roark of unbounded ego. Bogie saw himself in that part of a rugged individual.

Kay Francis had once reigned as the highest paid female star in Hollywood, but when she made *King of the Underworld* with Bogie, she was on the way out the Warner Brothers' gate.

When Mervin LeRoy signed to direct, it was with the understanding that the stars would be Bogie and Stanwyck. Before shooting began, he was forced to leave the picture.

Called in to direct, King Vidor wanted Gary Cooper for the part of Howard Roark. "Stanwyck's too old to play Dominique. Not sexy enough. I want Ida Lupino."

In the end, Cooper retained the lead, appearing opposite the "new love of my life," Patricia Neal.

Bogie survived the rejection, but Stanwyck virtually "fired herself" on June 21, 1948, by sending a blistering communication to Jack Warner, expressing her wish to end their contractual obligations to each other. At the time, the studio was in financial trouble and was glad to see her go. *The Fountainhead* had marked her first defeat to a younger actress. "I had Gary Cooper long before this Neal bitch," Stanwyck told Bogie.

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It was a bittersweet reunion Bogie had with Kay Francis when director Lewis Seiler cast them together in the 1939 release, *King of the Underworld*.

Seiler had helmed him in *Crime School*, and the two men worked easily together. George Bricker, co-authored the screenplay with Vincent Sherman, who would direct some of Bogie's future pictures.

The offscreen Kay Francis *(center figure in bottom photo)* confessed to Bogie that she suspected her real-life husband of being a Nazi agent. The actor on the right is James Stephenson.

Sherman later admitted, “I was not proud of my work on this film.” It was a remake of *Dr. Socrates*, a Paul Muni film in 1935.

Bogie hadn’t read the script until the first day of the shoot. “I’m supposed to be a dumb gang leader who fancies himself as the next Napoleon,” he protested to Sherman.

“Don’t blame me. It wasn’t my idea. I just work here.”

“Kay,” he said, coming up to kiss her on the first day of the shoot. “Great to see you again. It looks like we couldn’t hold on to our mates, so they ended up marrying each other.”

He was, of course, referring to Kenneth MacKenna and Mary Philips.

“Mary’s welcome to Kenneth,” she said. “I’ve moved on.”

“True, true,” he said. “But at times I miss Mary, especially when Mayo is beating me over the head with a beer bottle. Mary was such a gentle person.”

“Then she won’t make it in this town,” Francis predicted. Over lunch that day, she shared her woes.

Francis told Bogie that her career was in serious decline, and she was hoping that their co-starring venture would pull her up again.

“Even though my pictures end up in red ink, I still have a contract,” she said. “In 1936, I took in $227,500, the highest paid star on the lot.”

“Don’t remind me,” he said.

“But I’ve been moving from one flop to another,” she said. “Jack Warner personally told me that I’m not worth my paycheck.”

“I fear he’s gonna tell me the same thing one day,” Bogie said. “Sooner than later.”

“I had a lavish dressing room, but they moved me out to give it to John Garfield,” she said. “You better watch that kid. He might take your roles. Right now they’re paying me $4,000 a week to do screen tests with unknown actors. I’m the only actress doing B pictures for a six-figure income.”

“Don’t worry, babe,” Bogie said. “I hear your latest beau is rich.” He was referring to Baron Raven Erik Barnekow,

with ties to the aviation business.

“He’s rich and handsome,” she said. “But there are problems. He’s so jealous, he’s a psycho. And, get this, he told me the other night that if I don’t stop wearing makeup he will leave me. Imagine an actress without makeup.”

“I shudder at the prospect,” Bogie said mockingly.

She leaned over to him to whisper something. “I know I can trust you. My husband makes secret trips to& Mexico. He refuses to discuss& where he’s been. I think he’s a& secret Nazi agent.”

Bogart, Methot, and their friend

“Sounds like a good plot for your next movie,” he said. “I could play the baron.”

The third star of the movie was James Stephenson, a British actor who was ten years older than Bogie. “Pretty late to be breaking into films, don’t you think, kid?”

“Better late than never,” he said. “Forgive the cliché. Jack Warner has signed me to play urban villains and disgraced gents. Incidentally, you’re my favorite star.”

“Good God, a newcomer to Warners with some taste,” Bogie said. “I’m not used to that.”

Bogie and Stephenson never& became close friends, but Bogie was happy for him when William Wyler cast him in the sympathetic role of the family attorney in Bette Davis’ *The Letter* (1940). In “my role of a lifetime,” he was nominated for Best Supporting Oscar.

With regrets, Bogie read in the paper that Stephenson had died at the age of 53 in 1941. He’d suffered a heart attack, and death was sudden.

He turned to Methot, “I fear I’m gonna die young too.”

“Impossible,” Methot said. “You’re already too old to die young.”

“I’m gonna get you for that, you broken down drunken hag,” he said, rising to chase after her.

Methot later told Bette Davis, “Our epic battles always end in hot sex, so starting a good fight is usually worth it.”

“How odd,” Davis said. “My battles with my husbands or lovers always begin after sex.”

Months later after filming on *King of the Underworld* came to an end, Bogie encountered Francis at a party. She looked awful and had gained at least twenty-five pounds.

Used to needling people, he resisted mocking her. Her last two years at Warners had been hellish enough.

“I was right about my baron,” she said. “He left me without a note and returned to Germany. He wanted to be by Hitler’s side during the invasion of Poland.”

Francis ended her career working on Poverty Row turning out undistinguished pictures for Monogram. “Poverty Row” was the name applied at the time to the low-rent, marginal studios that churned out cheapies.

Bogie never saw her again but was saddened to hear that she’d attempted suicide while traveling in a road show, *State of the Union*, in Columbus, Ohio.

She survived, and Bogie was relieved. “No one should choose Columbus, Ohio, as the place to die.”

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Heavy drinking destroyed many a career in Hollywood of both men and women. Regardless of how much Bogie drank the night before, he always showed up promptly for work the following day. He arrived at the studio in time to be made up, and he had always memorized his lines.

Nathaniel Benchley, in his portrait of Bogie, tried to put his heavy drinking into the context of the day, noting that if a man didn’t drink “he was considered some sort of fairy. It was a sign of masculinity to get drunk—a sign of a free man who did as he pleased—and it also fitted the tough guy image that was his trademark.”

Benchley later noted that Bogie “could be enchanting when sober, but savage when drunk. Since he didn’t show drunkenness in the usual manner, the only way to tell if he was sober was by what he was doing. He didn’t slur his words or stumble, but he did things that catalyzed an acute remorse the next day. The sober Bogart bled for what the non-sober Bogart had done.”

One example of his outrageous behavior occurred one night at the Café La Maze when Bogie spotted John Garfield at another table with a very young and very beautiful blonde actress, who looked somewhat like Lana Turner did years later when Garfield would appear with her in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

With a sense of despair, Bogie heard that Garfield would soon be replacing him in many of those bad boy roles at Warner Brothers. Bogie rose from his table with his glass of Scotch, approaching Garfield’s table. He tossed the liquor in the young actor’s face.

Garfield handled the scene with such style and sophistication that he amazed the other patrons, who thought he would attack Bogie. “Tastes good, man,” Garfield said. “Let me call the bartender to order another one since your glass is empty.”

Bogie had so embarrassed himself that he turned and walked out the door.

On some nights he was seen out drinking with Clifton Webb. Ever since his early days on Broadway, he and Webb had been friends—Bogie called him “Webby.” Often they would be seen leaving bars together with their arms around each other.

Since Webb was a notorious homosexual in Hollywood, rumors were spread about Bogie and the actor. But there is no evidence that the relationship ever became sexual.

On weekends, Bogie and Methot sailed on a small powerboat he’d purchased. Their destination was always Catalina Island, twenty-one miles west of Los Angeles. He nicknamed the craft “Sluggy,” as he and Methot staged some of their epic sea battles aboard the aptly named boat. One night Bogie tried to drown her, and she fought him viciously, scratching and bloodying him. Fortunately, he was between pictures.

When Bogie encountered John Garfield, "tomorrow's competition," he tossed a glass of Scotch into the young actor's face.

Whenever she wasn't beating the hell out of Bogie, Methot was a decent housekeeper at "Sluggy Hollow," a nickname for 1210 North Horn, in Greater Los Angeles. Bogie was making enough money to hire a black woman, the& very overweight May Smith, as their "cook and bottle washer."

He didn't like much variety in his diet, but the cook provided a lavish spread for guests.

Beryl Evelyn Wood Methot, his mother-in-law, was a frequent visitor from Oregon. Bogie called her "Buffy," and got on with her rather well considering that she was Methot's mother. One of the leading newspaperwomen of her state, Buffy enjoyed the respect of her daughter. Methot became rather docile whenever Buffy was living with them. Unlike Methot, Buffy could handle her booze and finished off many a bottle with Bogie long after Methot had gone to bed.

At one point, Bogie was heard at a party saying, "Buffy, old gal, I should have married you and not Mayo."

Ann Sheridan once visited the Bogarts when Bogie's mother, Maud, was there. "It was amazing," Sheridan said. "Bogie related to Buffy, but Mayo gravitated to Maud."

Disappointed at how her life had gone, Maud had moved to the West Coast where Bogie had secured a small apartment for her. That way, Maud could be not only with Bogie, but with her mentally ill daughter Frances. Maud earned a meager living by drawing sewing patterns for a company, her $50,000 annual salary a distant memory.

Maud told her son, "Belmont and I used to have our arguments. An argument, not a fight to the death. I really believe you and Mayo will one day kill each other." Maud was referring to a past evening when Bogie had taken a rope and chased Mayo into the garden, threatening to hang her from a tree.

On Sunset Boulevard, Maud lived only two blocks from Schwab's Drugstore, the center of social activity for Hollywood actors in those days. Bogie said his mother started hanging out there "and picking up all the gossip, which she later confided to me. This proper Victorian woman was treated like Lady Maud, because everyone knew she was my mother. One day I came to get her and caught her talking to Bob Hope. On another occasion she met Betty Grable."

In New York, Maud had been contemptuous of her son's attempt to become an actor. But at Schwab's Drugstore, she often approached gossip columnists like Sidney Skolsky, and introduced herself. "I'm Humphrey Bogart's mother. Would you like to hear what 'The Battling Bogarts' did last night?" Suddenly, after decades, she came to understand that her role as Bogie's mother was something to be flaunted.

At some point during the final years of her life, Maud began to lose her mind. On many a night, the police brought her back from Sunset Strip to Bogie's home after they came to know who she was. One night they found her chatting with about six prostitutes who worked the corner.

During one of her more rational moments, she confessed to Methot, "I think I'm going crazy like Frances Bogart Rose."

At times, Maud would say something to Bogie that made him fear that she was losing her mental stability. One example among countless others included:

MAUD: "I just can't believe that Frances has been confined and her husband hasn't come to see her."
BOGIE: "Mother, Stuart Rose divorced Frances years ago."

Whenever Frances recovered from one of her straight-jacketed seizures, she was allowed to go free again. But insanity would soon after seem to overtake her.

Like her mother, Frances too would get arrested in public places. One night she went out into the city topless, wearing only her panties. The headline the next morning read: BOGART'S SISTER ARRESTED ON SUNSET STRIP.

The Hollywood columnist and writer, Joe Hyams, who knew both Bogie and Frances, later claimed that Bogie loved his sister "who was tall and slender and had a short waist and long legs like Betty. In fact, they looked very much alike. And I think that was one of the reasons he fell in love with Betty."

The columnist, of course, was referring to Lauren Bacall, whose name at the time of her birth on September 16, 1924, in New York was Betty Joan Perske.

There were many dangers inherent whenever Maud wanted to sit out in the garden at the Bogart home. California was filled with butterflies, and whenever she saw one, she would scream and become hysterical. It would take hours for Methot to calm her down.

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A familiar voice came over the phone. It was director Lloyd Bacon. "I'm teaming James Cagney and you in a Western called *The Oklahoma Kid*."

"Am I the Oklahoma Kid?" Bogie asked.

"No, Cagney is. You play a black-clad guy named Whip McCord who is a gang leader. You guys hold up the stagecoach carrying government money to the Indians for their land. You'll also be working with Ward Bond."

"I don't have to kiss Ward, do I? Who's the pretty one?"

"Rosemary Lane," Bacon said.

"I have had the other two Lane sisters," Bogie said. "Might as well spread my goodies around to the third."

"You may not get so lucky this time."

Only moments before he's fatally shot on screen, Bogie tries to strangle Cagney *(top photo)*.

After the release of this outer, no one ever compared Cagney and Bogie to Roy Rogers and Gene Autry

"By the way, I assume I get killed in the final reel," Bogie said.

"You got that right."

"It's my first Western," Cagney said, greeting Bogie on the set. "And we're going to make it a good one. I just knew you'd be my evil adversary, since that's about all you know how to play."

"Compliments from such a big-time box office attraction like you are always appreciated," Bogie said. He noted that Cagney looked like a midget standing alongside his horse. "I hear you own a lot of horses. I bet you're an expert rider."

"Well, not really," Cagney said. "Don't tell anybody."

Cagney was assigned a horse who'd made dozens of Westerns. After the star straddled the animal and was taking in the sun the following day, the horse heard the assistant director's clapper and apparently thought it was a call to action. Taking off at break-neck speed, the horse raced toward the distant camera.

"I grabbed his neck and held on," Cagney said. "He came to a ditch and jumped it—about six to seven feet. I don't know how the hell I stayed on, but I did. We worked well together after that, once the horse found out I could hang on."

"Lola Lane, Priscilla Lane, and now Rosemary Lane," Bogie said, coming up to the female co-star of the movie.

"I hear you're telling everybody in town you seduced Lola and Priscilla, which I find hard to believe," Rosemary said. "Priscilla might have flirted with you, but she's a deeply religious woman. So is my older sister Lola."

"What about you?" he asked.

"I can be had for the price of a drink."

Bacon was aware of Bogie's claim to have& seduced all three of the Lane sisters, "but I don't think he made it with either one of them. Maybe he seduced them in his mind."

Years later Cagney recalled working with Bogie. “He and I never became friends, and we never saw each other after work, maybe only one time. We didn’t hate each other. We just didn’t care for each other that much. I don’t think he had any real friends—maybe Spencer Tracy. Nobody at Warners really liked him. Bogie said, ‘I beat ‘em to it. I don’t like them first.’ He hated just about everybody, but that was his aim—to hate them first. When it came to fighting, he was about as tough as Shirley Temple.”

As a hobby, Cagney liked to write poems. As he was driving along Coldwater Canyon Drive, he stopped for a traffic light, spotting Bogie in a sleek red sports car in the lane next to him. He was busy picking his nose, waiting for the light to turn green. “He wasn’t just picking, but really going for the big ones.”

The next day, Cagney left a poem tacked to the door of Bogie’s dressing room.

In this silly town of ours,
One sees odd primps and poses;
But movie stars in fancy cars,
Shouldn’t pick their fancy noses.

Bogart and Cagney as Oklahoma Kids: NYC boys camping out in the Wild West

At the end of the shoot, Bogie as Whip and his gang try to kill Cagney, who was playing the Robin Hood desperado. With Bacon directing, Cagney walks into the ambush set by Bogie and his men.

When Bacon called a wrap, Bogie sauntered over to him. “That scene should give audiences a laugh. Up to now in the picture my gang and I—all supposed to be dead shots—have fired 172 times at Cagney and haven’t hit him yet.”

“It’s called movie-making,” Bacon snapped back.

Viewed today, *The Oklahoma Kid* is pure camp, especially when Cagney sings “I Don’t Want to Play In Your Yard,” a number interrupted by gunfire. In another scene, he croons “Rockabye Baby” in Spanish to an actual baby.

The film is often remembered for a scene of Cagney rubbing the thumb and forefinger of his hand together and exulting, “Feel that air!”

When he saw the final print, Jack Warner said, “What were we thinking? Cagney is a street kid from Hell’s Kitchen. He’s no Hopalong Cassidy. Don’t put him in a Western ever again. As for Bogie, let’s cast him in ‘The Lisping Cowboy.’”

When Bogie sat through the final cut, he said to Bacon, “In that ten-gallon hat, Cagney looks like a mushroom.”

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Dark Victory, starring Tallulah Bankhead, had been a rather unsuccessful Broadway play during the 1934-35 season. David O. Selznick had once optioned it, hoping to cast Greta Garbo in the role of socialite Judith Traherne, who is dying of a brain tumor. She turned him down, as she was occupied making *Anna Karenina* at MGM.

When Warners took over the property, the studio briefly considered it as a role for fast-fading Kay Francis.

Davis told Bogie that she had "begged, cajoled, and pleaded for months to get Jack Warner to buy the property. His answer, 'Who wants to see a picture about a gal who dies?' But he finally gave in to my demands."

After Garbo bowed out, Gloria Swanson tried but failed to get the movie role.

Bogie even heard from Barbara Stanwyck, who was calling everybody she knew to get the role for herself. "I really hated missing out on the part," Stanwyck told Bogie. "I was encouraged when I heard Selznick had optioned it, and I told my agents to do *anything* go get it for me. Then I learned that Selznick, the fucker, was preparing it for Merle Oberon. When I played Judith on Lux Radio Theater, I thought I had it wrapped up. Then in stepped Miss Bette Davis."

Bogie played the third lead under George Brent. "I've been demoted," Bogie said to Brent. "When we made *Racket Busters*, you were my second stringer."

"The vagaries of casting at Warners," Brent said.

Bogie's old pal, Spencer Tracy, had turned down the role that eventually went to Brent.

Bogie couldn't help but notice that even though Davis' marriage to Harmon Nelson was crumbling, that didn't prevent Brent from visiting her dressing room for an hour in the afternoon between takes.

Edmund Goulding, directing Bogie and Davis, was "Hollywood's genius bad boy." The reputation of this London-born director had already preceded him. He was known for his heavy drinking, homosexual liaisons, and orgies. In fact, he was the most notorious director in Hollywood.

Goulding wisely cast the Irish actress Geraldine Fitzgerald in her American debut in a role where her character was "to act as a sort of one-person Greek chorus, so that the central doomed figure would not have to cry for herself."

Bogie never bonded with Fitzgerald, but met her at the peak of her career. This fine, passionate actress would go from *Dark Victory* to a star role in& *Wuthering Heights*, where, as Isabella, she is the best thing in the film. Laurence& Olivier, as Heathcliff, marries her on the& rebound.

(middle photo, center figures)
Bette Davis with Ronald Reagan

(bottom photos)
Two views of director Edmund Goulding

Bogie was so impressed with both of Fitzgerald's stellar performances that he called her and seriously urged her to reconsider starring with him in *The Maltese Falcon*, which she'd turned down. "I'd rather face suspension," which is

what happened to her. The part, of course, went to Mary Astor.

Cast in the movie was the inexperienced Ronald Reagan as Alex. He clearly did not like his role, preferring the part of Michael O'Leary, the stable hand, that was slated for Bogie. Someone on the set told Reagan that he was actually playing a homosexual, although such "perverted" characters could not actually be depicted on the screen at that time.

The gay producer, David Lewis, said Reagan "could not distinguish between playing a homosexual and being implicated as one. He clashed several times with Goulding. It was not only the role but personal. The director had come on to him."

Later, recalling making *Dark Victory*, Reagan said, "It wasn't the rewarding experience it should have been. I was playing the kind of young man who could dearly love Bette but at the same time the& kind of fellow who could sit in the girls' dressing room dishing the dirt while they went on dressing in front of me. For myself, I want to think if I stroll through where the girls are short of clothes, there will be a great scurrying about and taking cover."

Even as shooting began, Reagan was still pleading with Goulding to give him Bogie's role. "He's already got the lisp," Reagan said.

Dark Victory Dramas

(top photo) Reagan objected to being cast as Bette Davis's homosexual drinking partner

(center photo) Bogie lusts for Davis, a woman he can never possess.

(bottom photo) Bogie, as a lowly stable hand, takes time out "from shoveling horse shit."

When Bogie heard what Reagan had said, he decided to play one of his many practical jokes. The following day before lunch, he saw Reagan heading for the men's toilet on the Warner lot.

Although there were eight urinals lined up in a row, Bogie stood immediately next to Reagan, who was already urinating.

"To get even with the fucker and to frighten the hell out of him, I stared down at his dick," Bogie said to Goulding. "I leaned over close to him and whispered in his ear, 'I can take care of that thing for you.' Reagan didn't even finish pissing before he was zipping up and out of that toilet."

Throughout the remainder of his life, and despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Reagan always insisted in private that Bogie was a bona fide homosexual.

However, when it came time for Reagan to write his memoirs, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, he had only kind words for Bogie. "I've always been glad that some of my pictures teamed me with Humphrey Bogart. Here was a pro, an affable, easy person, fond of gentle ribbing. At this time he was yet to reach his ultimate potential, which came about during the war years in *Casablanca* —a part he was given after George Raft turned it down."

Originally, *Dark Victory* was to end on an anticlimactic scene with Bogie. According to the movie plot, after Judith's death, her horse was seen winning a race while its trainer, Michael& (Bogie) was seen crying. Sneak preview audiences in Pasadena mocked Bogie's tear-filled moment, and Goulding cut his scene.

Dark Victory became a hit at the box office, and marked Davis' third Oscar nomination in five years, although it did little for Bogie's career. "I spent most of the movie shoveling horse shit," he said mockingly, finally bringing himself to use the word shit.

One reviewer noted that Bogie played his role with a "creepy kind of sexuality and seemed terribly miscast and out of place. As for Reagan, he does-n't do much of anything but guzzle vast quantities of alcohol and generally embarrass himself."

Time Out London critic Tom Milne pronounced it "a Rolls-Royce in the weepie world."

Davis would lose the Oscar to Vivien Leigh that year for her portrayal of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, a role Davis had coveted.

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As a boost to his career, Bogie eagerly wanted to play the male lead in *The Old Maid*, which had been tailored as a vehicle for Bette Davis with a script based on a novel by Edith Wharton. Budgeted at $778,000, shooting on *The Old Maid* began on March 15, 1939, with Edmund Goulding directing.

Bogie was scheduled to begin working five days later, even though both Goulding and Davis would have preferred Alan Marshall. With a dapper manner and a mustache, he was suave and sophisticated. He was often described as the poor man's Ronald Colman or perhaps the discount version of David Niven. Bogie had met Marshall briefly and thought this Aussie-born actor was "a complete phony."

Hal Wallis, the producer of the movie, told Goulding he wanted "a George Brent or David Niven type" for the role. That Bogie was offered the part has never been fully explained, since no one seemed to want him.

On his first day, Bogie went to call on Davis and found her furious at Goulding. He'd cast Miriam Hopkins, her dreaded scene-stealing enemy as the second female lead. "I should cut off Jack Warner's balls," Davis told Bogie. "That's not all. I, the star, am getting paid $35,000 for this picture, while dear Miriam is hauling in $50,000."

In his first scene, Bogie knew he was bombing. Davis later recalled that unhappy Monday at Warners. "One of the funniest miscastings I remember was Humphrey Bogart playing a nineteenth-century romantic lover opposite me in *The Old Maid*. In the opening scene, he appeared in a flowing black cloak, running through a railroad station trying to catch up with me. As he pursued me along the platform, he looked so sinister that he seemed for all the world like a thug trying to kidnap me—rather than a hero trying to express his devotion."

"After watching him for a while, the entire cast became hysterical with laughter," Davis said. "When we finally subsided, Bogie said to Goulding, 'I guess you'll have to get yourself another lover boy.'"

Jack Warner interpreted Bogie's first day on the set with comtempt. "He's far too old and too ugly. Far too unconvincing to play the role of a man who wins the love of two women, especially two pussies like Hopkins and Davis. He's fired."

"Hal Wallis was the first to suggest George Brent," Warner said to Goulding. "Get Brent."

Goulding did just that.

"Maybe I'm lucky," Bogie told Methot. "Miriam and Bette will probably stage the biggest catfight in Hollywood

history."

Privately, Bogie was furious, as his drinking increased and his fighting with Methot intensified.

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Bogie reunited with director Lewis Seiler, who had helmed him in *King of the Underworld*. Cast as a petty crook, Frank Wilson, Bogie also reunited with his friend Billy Halop of the Dead End Kids.

When director Edmund Goulding cast Bogie as the romantic lead in *The Old Maid*, he was laughed off the screen when his first scenes were evaluated. Bogie was fired, leaving Bette Davis *(left)* to face her arch rival, Miriam Hopkins

The picture was *You Can't Get Away With Murder*. On the first day on the set, he met up again with Gale Page, playing the female lead. "It's old home week," he said to her, having worked with her in *Crime Schoo*.

"I detest Bette Davis," she said.

"The line forms on the right," he told her.

"Jack Warner was set to give me my big chance," she said. "Then Miss Jezebel intervened at the last moment. The greedy bitch took the role from me in *Dark Victory*. Now I may never become a big movie star."

"You weren't the only actress left out& in the cold," Bogie said. "Even Tallulah Bankhead called me—she used to be my first wife's girlfriend. She wanted to repeat her stage role in the film."

"What chance does a gal have up against such dragons as Bankhead and Davis?"

"Not much," he said. "They chew and devour little guys like us for breakfast."

Minus the Dead End Kids, Billy was cast as a hood from Hell's Kitchen who idolizes a small-time gangster as played by Bogie.

Years later, Bogie recalled very little about the film. "I played one nasty son of a bitch. Not a shred of humanity. Henry Travers, who played Pop in the movie, the Sing Sing librarian, got it right when he said my character is the kind of guy who's so crooked if he tried to go straight he'd crack. The only good thing I could say about the movie was that it didn't have Reagan or Bette Davis in it."

Playing a petty crook, Bogie threatens Billy Halop to keep him from "squealing." In real life, Bogie said, "I love the kid like he was my own son."

All he remembered later on was, “I got to meet Betty Grable, who I think had had an affair with Reagan—or was about to have one. Judy Garland had dropped Billy, and he’d taken up with this lady with the million dollar legs. I could go for Grable myself. She was one hot blonde. But I didn’t put the make on her since she had eyes only for Billy, and, of course, Jackie Coogan and Mickey Rooney and Desi Arnaz.”

Grable had been kicked around Hollywood for more than a decade. Even today it is hard to understand why she became the hottest female box-office attraction of the 1940s. Maybe it was those array of pin-up pictures of hers that lined footlockers from Bataan to Okinawa.

Bogie never got to know Grable, but he said he would have liked to. She married Jackie Coogan, the child actor and her co-star in *Million Dollar Legs* in 1939. Later she’d marry bandleader and trumpeter Harry James.

“Honey,” she said to Bogie, “Coogan taught me more tricks than a whore learns in a whorehouse.”

He’d already heard that when she was only fifteen, George Raft had taken her virginity. After that, she seemed to be giving it away—not only to Reagan, but to Tyrone Power, Victor Mature, Robert Stack, Artie Shaw, and lots of drivers she liked to fellate at truck stops.

Reflecting on Grable, Bogie told his director, Seiler, “That’s what Mayo Methot should look like but doesn’t. If she keeps letting herself go, people are going to take her for my mother. As for George Raft, he gets all the good roles that I should be playing, and gets to the fifteen-year-old virgins like Grable before I’ve had my chance to deflower them.”

When Bogie saw the ad for *You Can’t Get Away with Murder*, he was taken back. It read: SIXTY-THREE CENTS WORTH OF ELECTRICITY WOULD END THIS MENACE FOREVER!

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When Bogie heard he’d been cast as the third lead in *The Roaring Twenties*, to be directed by Raoul Walsh, he called his old friend from New York, Mark Hellinger. His short story, *The World Moves On*, had become the basis for *The Roaring Twenties*. “Listen, pal,” Bogie said. “I love you. But...”

“But what?”

Two views of the ultimate WWII pinup, Betty Grable

(top photo) as a child star with what would become "million dollar legs"

"Let's get together for a wet lunch at Romanoff's."

When Hellinger entered Romanoff's, all eyes turned to him. A nationally syndicated columnist, he looked like he'd somehow landed directly from Times Square. At table, Bogie was already deep into his second martini.

Hellinger had always been proud of his links to the mob on both coasts, and he seemed trapped in some time capsule from the 1920s. Unlike the other men of his day, Hellinger wore a tight-fitting suit with a midnight blue shirt and sunflower yellow tie. He could easily have been mistaken for either a gangster or a pimp. He'd arrived in a chauffeur-driven, bullet-proof Lincoln that had previously been owned by the notorious gangster, Dutch Schultz.

Seated at table opposite Bogie, Hellinger told him he'd just come from his doctor's office. "I don't have long to live. This burly doctor told me that this morning. As you know heart disease runs in my family. My parents died young. Since I last saw you, I lost my brother. I really loved him."

"I'm real sorry, pal, to hear this," Bogie said.& "Anything I can do?"

"Sure there is," Hellinger said. "Help me celebrate life. I'm doing so with three packages of cigarettes a day, a quart of brandy before the cocktail hour, and all the barbiturates I can get my hands on. There's a lot to be said for dying young. There's also sex, lots and lots of sex. You know I married this hot-to-trot showgal, Gladys Glad. She wants it morning, noon, and evening, and always a blast-off at midnight. She's not satisfied until all three holes are plugged."

Glad was a beautiful, ex-Ziegfeld showgirl he'd married in 1929, divorced in 1932, and would remarry a year later.

When their dialogue finally focused on the script for *The Roaring Twenties*, Bogie said, "I haven't read it yet. I know James Cagney is playing Eddie Bartlett, with me playing this guy called George Hally. I'm sure before the final curtain, Cagney will kill me like a buzzard, and perhaps die himself in a long extended death scene."

"You *must* have read the script," Hellinger said.

"No, I didn't," Bogie said. "I didn't have to."

"It's a bit of a gangster picture cliché, I admit that," Hellinger said.

"I can't believe how many more times in how many movies Cagney will be killing me," Bogie said. "Just once, can't I shoot the creepy little guy himself and give myself an extended, histrionic death scene?"

"Your day will come," Hellinger said.

"You play a ruthless bootlegger."

"The part should have gone to George Raft," Bogie said. "Let's face it, he *was* a ruthless bootlegger in the 1920s when I was a 'young sprig' on Broadway with a tennis racket, wearing a blue blazer and white shoes."

In the plot set at the end of World War I, Army buddies Cagney, Bogie, and Jeffrey Lynn, find their lives intertwining dramatically in this largely hackneyed script.

Mark Hellinger
"Live Fast, Die Young"

It had been a long time since Bogie had met the colorful director Raoul Walsh, who had voted against casting him in *The Man Who Came Back* way back when. Instead of giving Bogie a star role, he had assigned him the job of giving diction lessons to silent screen star Charles Farrell.

"So, we're working together once again," Walsh said. "When I first met you, I didn't think you'd go far or go anywhere for that matter. Now you're the leading male co-star in a Cagney movie. Who would have thought that?"

"Not you," Bogie said sarcastically, angry that& many years ago Walsh had not given him the break he so desperately wanted when he'd first arrived in Hollywood.

"Let's put bygones behind us and get on with the job of the day," Walsh said.

"Looks like I don't have much choice if I want to get paid at the end of the week."

"I'll go easy on you," Walsh said. 'Just be on screen the vicious son of a bitch you are in real life. It takes one to know one."

The director still had a patch over his eye, perhaps the same patch he wore back when Bogie first met him. He claimed that a jackrabbit crashed through the windshield of his car, permanently injuring his eye with the broken glass. Walsh's eye patch had become almost as synonymous as the jodhpurs worn by Cecil B. DeMille. To other listeners, he claimed that a buzzard in Arizona descended and plucked out his eye one scalding hot afternoon.

Years later, Walsh reflected on shooting a movie with both Cagney and Bogie. "I learned that a director must never kill off Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, or Gregory Peck," he said. "But when we 'shot' Cagney or Bogart, the audience and the box office loved it."

It was said that Walsh never let the truth get involved in a great story. He later claimed, "I was the one who made Bogie a star when I cast him in *The Roaring Twenties*. He was going nowhere until I put him in some of my other films. He was referring to *They Drive by Night* (1940) and *High Sierra* (1941). I also saved James Cagney's career."

Priscilla Lane had star billing over Bogie, much to his regret. "Well, well, well," he said sarcastically, "Little Miss Priscilla is rising fast. Who are you fucking?"

"You do reduce things to their most vulgar level," she said. "I'm not a casting couch kind of girl. Talent, Mr. Bogart —that's what I have. Right now

I'm getting the most fan mail at Warners except for Miss Bette Davis. No one can touch her."

"Who would want to?" he asked, ignoring his own past experience with the star. "Well, my advice to you is to keep it up. You look like Ginger Rogers. Can you dance?" He did not wait for an answer. "I hear you and Wayne Morris are shacked up."

Raoul Walsh
"A son of a bitch directing a son of a bitch."

"We are dating on occasion—nothing serious," she said.

"Well, keep him out of any future movies with me," Bogie said. By the way, ever since I've known you, you've worn the same brown leather shoes. Want me to buy you another pair?"

"Not at all," she said. "I wear these shoes in every scene of every movie. They're my good luck charm. What's your good luck charm?"

"My dick."

"You do know how to say the most enchanting things to a lady."

"You were lucky with your hit, *Four Daughters*," he said. "I didn't bother to see it, but I heard that Fannie Hearst tearjerker was meant to star Bette Davis and Errol Flynn. They turned it down."

"If you go to see it, and I hope you will, pay special attention to John Garfield. He's from the New York theatre, and I predict he's going to become the biggest male star at Warner Brothers. Jack Warner told me that he plans to make a screen team of John and me. He wants to make the two of us the biggest stars at Warner Brothers in the 40s. As for you, Cagney, Raft, and Edward G. Robinson, it's time you gave up those gangster roles and started playing father parts."

He just couldn't let her get away with that.

"Walsh told me your role as the singer Jean in *The Roaring Twenties* was inspired by the real Ruth Etting," he said. "I knew her in New York. Now that was a torch singer. What a woman! Perhaps Walsh can get Etting to dub your voice for such songs as 'Melancholy Baby' which you sing in this movie."

"You really can't help needling people, can you? Have you ever considered it as a mental illness instead of a virtue. I assure you I can do my own singing in any movie I'm cast in. Get it? I'm a singer. Got that?"

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Although there was nothing romantic going on between them, Bogie bonded with character actress Gladys George who blazed across Hollywood films in the 1930s and 40s. She was cast as Panama Smith. "She's my kind of broad," he told his director Walsh. "She worked in vaudeville since she was three years old," Bogie said. "No one plays a bad girl like Gladys. She's a gal who knows how to party, how to hold her liquor, and how to have a romance in a dark alley."

Gladys George
"My kind of broad"

When he more or less shared this point of view with Methot, she hit him over the head with a beer bottle in a bar. "The God damn part had my name written all over it—not Gladys George. I can play a role like that in my sleep. Listen, you better get me a job—or else. No one seems to want to cast me in anything. Living off your dough these

days, I'd even work for free."

Ann Sheridan had originally told Bogie that she was up for the role of Panama Smith, which was clearly based on the notorious nightclub hostess Texas Guinan. But at the last& minute Sheridan was assigned to another picture.

Cagney's character was based on the bootlegger Larry Fay. Bogie knew Fay and Guinan, and the movie sparked many memories of his life in the speakeasies of the 20s.

The real-life Fay didn't end as glamorously as Cagney in the movie. Fay was shot and killed on New Year's Day of 1932 when he told his doorman that he was forced to reduce his pay. The doorman pulled out his revolver and fatally shot his boss four times.

One scene between gangster Cagney and speakeasy queen Gladys George became legendary. She confronts a fatally wounded Cagney staggering up the steps to a church. He's just been rubbed out by Bogie. In his usual death scene manner, Cagney staggers back down diagonally and falls professionally face up and camera ready.

Kneeling next to him, George tells the police, "He used to be a big shot."

This line from Gladys George was inserted into the script at the last minute and was interpreted at the time mainly as a fade-out remark, nothing special at all. But somehow it caught on with movie audiences who remembered and often repeated it. At the begining of the 21st century, the line was still remembered. Members of the American Film Institute ranked George's last line as the number one most famous remark ever uttered in a gangster movie. B o g i e would work with George again when she was cast with him in *The Maltese Falcon*.

More *Bitte Nots*: Cagney with Bogart in *The Roaring Twenties*

In *The Roaring Twenties,* Gladys George had fourth billing, with fifth billing going to Jeffrey Lynn. Along with Bogie and Cagney, Lynn was cast as the third doughboy in the movie. A handsome, mild-mannered actor, he had been a former schoolteacher in Massachusetts. Unlike Cagney and Bogie, Lynn was completely without menace on the screen.

Before being cast in *The Roaring Twenties,* Lynn had had a notable success in 1938 when he had appeared with the& Lane sisters--Lola, Priscilla, and Rosemary--in *Four Daughters.* That film had been so successful it had spawned three sequels.

Bogie had only a few encounters with Lynn on the set. Either kidding or not, he asked Lynn, "Well, how do you score, pal? I've worked with all the Lane sisters, and screwed each one of them."

"I didn't even try," Lynn honestly claimed.

"Well, Priscilla's in this movie," Bogie said. "Here's your last chance."

"Not interested." Lynn said.

“You a homo or something?”

“I like the gals. But . . .” he hesitated. “If you must know, I’ll let you in on a secret. I’m having this thing with Paulette Goddard, but I don’t want Charlie Chaplin to find out. I met her when we tested together for *Gone With the Wind*. It’s almost definite that Paulette is going to play Scarlett, and I’m going to appear as Ashley Wilkes, Scarlett’s true love. In fact, every time Selznick wants to test a new actress for the role of Scarlett, he calls me in to make a screen test with the hopeful. These gals don’t have a chance. Paulette’s got it sewed up.”

In a touch of irony, the role of Ashley Wilkes, of course, would ultimately go to one of Bogie’s best friends, Leslie Howard.

Like many male stars of the late 1930s, who entered World War II, Lynn never recouped his former stardom when he returned from the battlefields. His career stalled and went into such a decline he took a job selling homes to baby boomers.

At the world premiere of *The Roaring Twenties*, Bogie escorted a drunken Methot to the gala affair, which brought out even Louis B. Mayer and Darryl F. Zanuck to the glittering event.

As the curtain was about to go up in the theater showing *The Roaring Twenties,* Bogie noticed that Hellinger was missing from his seat. He asked Gladys Glad where her husband had gone.

“He’s a nervous wreck,” said Glad, “Mark is sitting it out at the Cafe La Maze next door.”

Jeffrey Lynn
"Dreams of playing Ashley Wilkes"

Leaving the theater as the picture began, Bogie went next door to find Hellinger deep into his second glass of brandy.

“All those fucking guys in their penguin tuxedos and their whores in their glittering gowns—all of them judging me,” Hellinger said.

“They’re loving it,” Bogie assured him, getting him to agree to walk back to the theater next door.

Later he wished that he hadn’t. “We’d gone no more than ten steps before Hellinger threw up all over& my shiny new tux,” he told Methot.

At the end of the screening, Bogie accepted congratulations, but Cagney got most of the attention that evening. Bogie was eager to retire to La Maze for drinks with Methot. She’d washed most of Hellinger’s puke off him.

At La Maze, Bogie seated Methot in a chair just warmed by the brandy-drinking Hellinger. Bogie had dim hopes for *The Roaring Twenties* they’d just seen in its final cut.

Bogie reflected on the movie’s plot. “You know, it’s all long-gone crap— bootlegging, beer drop-offs, the Stock Market crash, Wall Street ticker tapes going beserk, burly men in tuxedos pushing around big tit blondes in Art Deco speakeasies. It’s all so pointless now. Much of the world is at war, and we Yanks will be in it soon. Instead of gangster pictures, like the one Cagney and I just did, I think *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* will be more what the public wants to see.”

In spite of Bogie’s dire assessment for the success of *The Roaring Twenties,* it was a big hit and drew rave reviews. *The Hollywood Citizen-News* joined the chorus, claiming “this is not just another Warner Brothers gang war drama.”

The strangest review appeared in a small Long Beach newspaper. The “critic” wrote: “It’s worth the price of

admission just to see Joan Blondell's new, laughable haircut." The problem with that review involved the fact that Blondell was not in the movie.

Although Bogie didn't see any future for *The Roaring Twenties,* the film in 2009 would be cited in *Empire Magazine* as number one in a poll of the "Twenty Greatest Gangster Movies You've Never Seen."

The Roaring Twenties would be the last film Bogie ever made with Cagney, and would be Cagney's last gangster film for a decade.

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Over breakfast the next morning, Bogie choked on his coffee when he read that Cagney had become the second biggest wage earner in Hollywood, topped only by Gary Cooper. Cagney had taken home $368,333 the previous year, which made him one of the highest wage earners in an America drifting down the long road into World War II.

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His agent, Mary Baker, known as Bogie's "eternal fairy godmother," hooked him up with a super-agent, Sam Jaffe, a tiny man with a gift for securing first-class roles for his clients. What Bogie couldn't do on his own in the& 30s, Jaffe did for him in the 40s when he shot up to become the highest paid actor in Hollywood.

"I had a real challenge when I took on Bogie," Jaffe recalled in an interview in London where he had gone into "exile" after his career in Hollywood faded. "Bogie was balding; he didn't have a great physique; he was aging prematurely. His boozing and wild living with Methot was beginning to show on his face. Middle age was not only advancing on Bogie, it was overtaking him."

The agent, Sam Jaffe (1901-2000), is not to be confused with the famous character actor with the same name.

Beginning as an office boy at Paramount, the agent had worked his way up through the ranks to become that studio's executive in charge of production. Then, after a brief stint at Columbia in the early 1930s, he broke away to launch his own talent agency.

In time, he would represent some of the biggest names in the business, not only Bogie and Lauren Bacall, but Peter Lorre, Fredric March, David Niven, Zero Mostel, Richard Burton, and Stanley Kubrick. Jaffe's career declined when he came under suspicion by the Red-hunting demons of Joseph McCarthy during his search for suspected Communists in the film industry.

"At one time I was the only man in Hollywood who believed that Bogie had a future in the movies," Jaffe said. "Most people thought he was just an aging drunk who beat up his wife in bars. But there was great intelligence and ambition there. I sought the help of Leland Hayward. What I couldn't do for Bogie, Leland could. But it was a formidable challenge. Of course, it didn't come easy. Before *High Sierra*, there were still some turkeys Bogie had to make for Warner Brothers."

When Jaffe confronted Jack Warner about his client's stalled career, the studio honcho said: "Here's how I see Bogie. Give him the lead but only in B minus films, sorta Barton MacLane roles. Make him the third or fourth lead in A-list films. Maybe a great film every now and then like *Dark Victory*. Bette Davis is A list, Bogie is B list. But in that big film, keep him in a minor role like the stable hand he played. Of course, if any film calls for a gun-toting killer who dies in the last reel, then that script has Humphrey Bogart written all over it."

"Throughout the entire 1930s, Warner never realized the potential of Bogie," Jaffe claimed. "But other producers and directors were taking notice, especially after seeing Bogie's performance with Bette Davis in *Dark Victory*. We got several offers for star parts for Bogie in A-list pictures. But Warner always said no, preferring to keep his low-paid contract player churning out those B-list potboilers."

Jaffe recalled some tantalizing offers that came in, including *Of Mice and& Men* (1939), based on the novella by John Steinbeck. The star role went to Burgess Meredith. Directed by Lewis Milestone, the film was nominated for four Oscars.

Bogie was also offered the star role in a remake of *The Valiant*, the 1929 film that had starred Paul Muni, a role that garnered that actor an Academy Award in the Best Actor category.

The American film producer, Walter Wanger, wanted Bogie to co-star with Joan Bennett, his newly married wife, in *The House Across the Bay*, a 1940 film directed by Archie Mayo, who had worked with Bogie before. He was to appear in the role of Steve Larwitt, an imprisoned gangster set to be released from Alcatraz. The part seemed perfect for Bogie. Ironically, George Raft was given the role. Usually it was the other way around, with Bogie taking parts that Raft turned down.

In time Bogie and Joan Bennett would become friends and make a picture together for Michael Curtiz. Paramount didn't want to cast Bennett as the female lead in *We're No Angels* (1955), but Bogie, who still had star power, interceded on her behalf. She was retained in her role of Amelie Ducotel. There were very few film offers for her after that.

"Even John Garfield, a newcomer to the Warners lot, was taking home a bigger weekly paycheck than Bogie," Jaffe said. "Garfield got $1,500 a week, Bogie $1,250. That contrasted with James Cagney taking in $12,500 a week; Edward G. Robinson pulling in $8,500, and George Raft $5,500."

"It was no, no, no from Jack Warner," Jaffe said. "Many of these roles could have sparked Bogie's diminishing career years before *Casablanca*. He had to stand in the shadows while others took the spotlight. Mistreated and mishandled by Warner Brothers, Bogie had a contract that seemed more like a jail sentence than anything else. We referred to Warner Brothers as 'the prison,' with Jack Warner as the warden."

Bogie's future director, Vincent Sherman, summed up Bogie's position at Warners as 1939 came to an end. "If it's a louse-heel you're looking for,' Jack Warner shouted, 'Get Bogart!'"

The most bizarre offer Bogie received was to co-star with Mae West and W.C. Fields in *My Little Chickadee* (1940). He was tempted to accept it, if Jack Warner would go along with the deal, which he doubted. Even so, at Jaffe's urging, Bogie decided to check it out.

He told Methot that it would be a "hoot" to appear with West and Fields— "a total change of pace for me. Maybe it would bring out my comic side. As you of all people know, I'm a laugh riot."

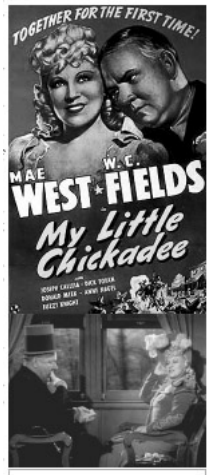
As later revealed to columnist Jim Bacon, Bogie claimed he went to the office of the producer, Lester Cowan. "I was handed a script. I had a few lines, then the next thirty pages would be blank except for the notation—'Material to be supplied by Miss West.' Another few lines for me and then thirty more blank pages. 'Material to be supplied by Mr. Fields.' The whole damn script was like that. I left quietly through an open window."

West heard that Bogie had bolted. She called Jaffe, whom she knew, and asked him to invite Bogie to her all-white apartment where she would explain his role to him and her part as Flower Belle Lee.

Bogie accepted the invitation, more to see Mae West than for any other reason. He had no plans to take the role. He told Jaffe, "Fields and West would chew me up in one bite."

Apparently, West did not hold a grudge against Bogie based on the long-ago catfight she'd had with his first wife, Helen Menken.

For reasons never fully explained, both West and her writing partner, Fields, wanted Bogie to play the romantic lead in *My Little Chickadee* (1940). He was offered the role of the "Masked Bandit," which eventually went to Joseph Calleia.



Vaudevillian flesh-eating dragons: W.C. Fields, Mae West

As Bogie recalled, West had arranged herself regally on a sofa in her immaculate living room. She had almost nothing to say about the film but covered a wide range of other subjects.

Obviously she had heard that he was a compulsive drinker, and she shared with him her views on liquor. “If you’ve craving a drink,” she said, “it means your nerves are screaming out for B-Complex vitamins, calcium, and other elements. It’s best to refrain. If you get offered a drink—say, at a party—just tell the hostess that you’re allergic to alcohol.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Bogie falsely claimed.

“I’m a great believer in a star maintaining his health,” she said. “I wanted you to play my lover in the film, but we may have to do something about your hair—perhaps a hairpiece would be in order. Of course, it’s better to have natural hair,” said the woman famous for her wigs. “To save your hair, tell your wife—Mayo Methot, if I can& believe the papers—to put you on a special diet. We’ll draw up a list of what you can eat. Beef heart, beef brains, lamb kidney, plenty of oysters, turnip greens, mustard greens, cabbage, raw wheat germ—and plenty of buckwheat and cornmeal.”

“Stop it!” she said. “You’re making me hungry.”

When not discussing health and regeneration, West talked about her favorite subject—herself. “Let’s face it, after all these years, I’m outrageously sexy, unlike all those lez actresses you’ve appeared with. We won’t even mention that older woman you married. The less said about that number the better. I’m an immortal sex symbol. I would never play a role that harmed my image. You’ve got to build an image like mine, but of a different sort, of course.”

“Like what kind of image?” he asked.

“First, you’ve got it all wrong. You’ve patterned yourself after the wrong guys in films. Take George Raft for instance.” She smiled amusingly at her own wit. “I’ve already had him, and you can definitely take him. You’ve got to come up with a different role model. I know back in the 20s they were talking about you being the next Valentino. Today, it’s different. Gary Cooper is the biggest thing at the box office. Tell Warners to start billing you as the next Gary Cooper.”

“But Coop is two years younger than me,” he said. “How can I be the next Gary Cooper?”

She thought for a minute. “We’ve got a problem here. Give me some time to think that one through.”

Methot and Bogie slugging away aboard the Sluggy

“Also, my dick isn’t as big as his—or so I hear.”

“Well, Mother Nature wasn’t always fair when she dispensed the goodies. Take me for instance. I’d venture to say that every woman on Earth would want to look like Mae West. But not one can match me. A man can’t do a lot about the actual size of his dick, but he can do something about what he thinks is the size of his dick.”

“I don’t understand that.”

“The trick is, select the right kind of woman. Go to bed with her. The right kind of woman can make a man with a four-inch dick feel like he’s got ten inches.”

“You’ve got a point there,” he said. “In other words, stop going to bed with Mayo Methot, who makes me feel I’ve got only an inch with nothing to spare.”

“Exactly,” she said. “Incidentally, Mr. Bogart, I’m just the kind of woman you need to make you feel like a big man in bed.”

“I’m sure you are,” he said. “But I didn’t mean to give you the wrong impression. I mean, I’m not small—in fact, I’m rather large, especially for a man of my size.”

“I’m sure that what you say is true, but Mae never accepted a man’s word for the size of his dick. I’m from Missouri by way of Brooklyn. Show me. As men from coast to coast can testify, a night in the bed of Mae West will rank as the most memorable of your life. When you die—say, around 1975,—your last memory will be of me and what we did in bed together.”

The next day, Sam Jaffe could not pry the final details of Bogie’s night with Mae West from him. Future film historians are left with a baffling puzzle.

Did Humphrey Bogart seduce Mae West that night—or did he not?

When he returned home the next morning, Methot had already answered the question for her husband. As he walked inside the door, a ceramic living room lamp sailed past his head, shattering on the ceramic tiles of the hallway’s floor.

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The year 1939 is still hailed for having produced some of the greatest movies of Hollywood. That year witnessed the release of such instant classics as *Gone With the Wind*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Stagecoach*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and many other memorable films.

Bogie would remember it as one of his least favorite years.

He suffered through the release of both *The Oklahoma Kid* and *The Return of Doctor X*. *Dark Victory*, of course, became a classic, except nearly all reviewers drew attention to two particularly inept miscastings within that Bette Davis film—Ronald Reagan’s part as the disguised homosexual companion of Davis, and Bogie as the Irish horse trainer who longs for her love.

In *The Return of Doctor X*, Bogie's first and only horror movie, Bogie received bad reviews for a role that had originally been intended for Boris& Karloff. In the decades to come, thanks to Bogie's chalky makeup and streaked hair, he evoked a punk rocker.

(middle photo) Bogie, one of the "living dead," struggles with Rosemary Lane in his search for fresh blood.

(bottom photo) Bogie appears in chalky white makeup in his first horror flick.

In the film, Bogie played a criminal who died in the electric chair, and then was brought back to life by the doctor, John Litel, who revived him.

The film's director, Vincent Sherman, remembered Bogie's first reaction to playing third lead in *The Return of Doctor X* (1939). "It's my first horror movie, Vince baby," he said. "I hear I play the living dead, lusting after Rosemary Lane in my ceaseless search for blood to sustain my second life beyond the grave. Wayne Morris as the lead! Why in hell do I have to play second fiddle to that stuck-up, no-talent, big-dick creep!"

"On orders from Jack Warner," Sherman said. "We are just the working stiffs on this turkey. It's movie hokum, but I've got to start out as a director with the first picture Jack Warner assigns me. Stick around and watch me go. We'll do some great pictures together in the 40s. Of course, with the way the world is, those will no doubt be war pictures."

Years later, in 1990, Sherman claimed that Bogie did not complain about getting trapped in *Dr. X*. "He was cast into one villain role after another. He came from the theater, as I did, and even if it was a cornball, crappy part, you tried to do the best you could with it. I was the one who suggested the white streak in his hair because he had been electrocuted. That's& right, he was electrocuted and not hanged. And I got the idea of him walking around with a rabbit and stroking it because that was life—that was blood. We gave him that pasty look because he had been executed and brought back to life."

"When I was assigned Bogie as one of the leads in *Dr. X*, I was told by the honchos at Warners 'to get him to play something besides Duke Mantee,'" Sherman said. "That was a reference, of course, to his role in *The Petrified Forest*. The thinking was that Bogie should always be cast as a heavy, not as a romantic leading man. I bought into that. It was inconceivable to me that he'd ever be cast as a romantic lover, appearing opposite Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*. But he became the idol of millions, more dashing to some fans than Errol Flynn himself."

"When I directed Bogie, I never knew if he'd show up beaten, stabbed, or bloody," Sherman recalled. "He was married to this vixen named Mayo Methot. She showed up on the set one day looking for her man. She rightly suspected that Bogie was having an affair with the script girl."

“I was ahead of her,” Sherman said. “I sent Bogie to my studio office to fuck the girl, because the first place Methot looked was in Bogie’s dressing room.”

“To get one up on Bogie, who thought he was so damn smart, I came up with an idea,” Sherman said. “Since she couldn’t find her straying husband, I invited the bitch for a drink. Before the night ended, I screwed the hot-to-trot harridan. Bogie was none the wiser. He showed up the next day, looking like the cat who swallowed the canary. But I was the one who got his whore. I went back to directing him in his cornball role in this hokey picture, and no one was ever the wiser. What Bogie didn’t realize was that Methot was getting as much on the side as he was.”

“Bogie’s claim to fame in the boudoir was that he had seduced all three of the Lane sisters when he worked with them in movies,” Sherman said. “I can’t vouch for that, but I did see Rosemary Lane, who had the female lead in *Dr. X*, emerge on two different occasions from his dressing room. Maybe they were just holding hands or going over the script together. But I doubt that. I really do.”

“Wayne Morris, the lead, looked good only when he had a hard-on, or so I was told,” said Sherman. “Since we didn’t show hard-ons back then, he didn’t look good on camera, certainly not as an actor. He tried to be funny in the film, once or twice. He fell into a room by leaning against a supposedly locked door which suddenly opened. That was really hilarious. Huntz Hall was the funniest thing in the movie except for Bogie risen from the grave as a leftfield mad doctor.”

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As Bogie moved deeper into middle age, a new and younger crop of stars was being groomed for the leading roles of the 1940s.

Although he’d worked briefly under the name of Stanley Morner, the newly emerged “Dennis Morgan” had been assigned three pictures for release in 1939, one of which was *The Return of Dr. X*. Although he’d be first and foremost a singing star, he would go on to do straight drama, Westerns, light comedies, and even war movies. He’d scored a hit when he sang “A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody” in *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936), using his Stanley Morner name. Sometimes he was billed as Richard Stanley.

“I hear you’re the latest sensation,” Bogie said, coming up to Morgan and extending his hand. “But what name will you be using next year?”

“From now on, it’s Dennis Morgan to the grave,” the handsome young actor said.

“I hope you’re not gonna take any jobs from me,” Bogie said. “I have a lot of people to support.”

“That will never happen, Mr. Bogart,” Morgan assured him.

Bogie didn’t believe him. “He was an ambitious actor with a gleam in his eye. I think he would have sold me down the river the first chance he got.”

Although some film historians deny it, Morgan admitted later in life that he, along with Ann Sheridan and Ronald Reagan, were briefly considered for the star roles in *Casablanca*. “I shudder to think what would have happened if I had fucked up a classic like that,” Morgan said.

“I don’t give a damn what all these so-called historians say, I was approached to play Rich Blaine in *Casablanca*,” he said. “Jack Warner himself talked over the role with me. Ronald Reagan was originally slated to play the Paul Henreid role before Warner considered him for Rick. Ann Sheridan was originally set to play the Ingrid Bergman part. Instead I made *Thank Your Lucky Stars* —Bogie was in that one too—and *The Desert Song*, that creaky operetta that was updated to include Nazis. My greatest regret in life was I didn’t get to play Rick. By the 50s, I was on the way out. At least I was remembered for a role in *Won Ton Ton*, *the Dog Who Saved Hollywood* in 1976.”

Dennis Morgan
"I, not Bogie, should have played Rick."

In the last months of her life, Maud recalled hearing a sound truck blaring along Hollywood Boulevard hawking *The Return of Doctor X*.

WHO IS THE VILEST FIEND IN HISTORY? WHO IS THE MONSTER
WHO LAUGHS AS HE KILLS? WHO IS THE VAMPIRE WHO
DESPOILS A WOMAN FOR HIS PLEASURE?

She called her son to complain. "At least they could have told the world they're talking about my son, Mr. Humphrey Bogart. If only Belmont had lived to see this cursed day."

(b/w photo) A very "noir" shot of William Holden ("the object of George Raft's affection") in *Invisible Stripes*

When the film was released, and as his marriage to Methot crumbled, Bogie was at his most despondent about his career.

Within a year or so, his luck would change. But first he had to survive a string of upcoming screen disasters. Only his most diehard fans would ever remember those films.

As Methot herself said, "I sat through two of them, saw only twenty minutes of the third one he made, and didn't bother to see the final two."

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Director Lloyd Bacon, who'd just helmed Bogie and Cagney in *The Oklahoma Kid*, cast him once again in *Invisible Stripes*, a film about the ethical struggles of ex-convicts on parole.

Bogie found his billing in fourth position behind George Raft, Jane Bryan, and William Holden humiliating. Jack Warner had decided to give Holden the lead over Bogie because of his success in *Golden Boy*, a role Bogie himself

had desperately wanted.

“Guess who I really wanted to play Raft’s brother?” Bacon said. “Not Holden. Wayne Morris.”

“Why in the fuck is it, that every picture I’m in the director wants to hire this no-talented big prick?” Bogie asked.

Bacon told Bogie that he was sorry he’d cast Holden in the film. “He’s just too damn inexperienced. But Raft seems to have taken him under his wing. Betty Grable told me that Raft is a& & switch-hitter.”

“I can confirm that,” Bogie said. “Back in the golden days of Broadway, Raft was banging his roommate, Rudolph Valentino.”

“Personally, I think Raft has the hots for Golden Boy,” Bacon said.

“I haven’t read the final pages of this script,” Bogie said to Bacon. “But let me guess. Both Raft and I are bumped off in the final reel?”

“You don’t even have to ask me that question,” Bacon said. “You already know it’s true.”

Bogie made his hostility to Holden obvious. One scene called for Holden, with Bogie riding on the seat behind him, to drive a motorcycle into a wall. “That S.O.B., he’ll crack it up!” Bogie shouted at Bacon. Bacon insisted, and Holden aimed the cycle head-on into a wall. Fortunately, both stars escaped unharmed.

Encountering Raft again, Bogie said, “Me and you old guys are slowly being replaced with studs like William Holden. They call them stars of tomorrow. What are we? Stars of yesterday.”

“You weren’t a star of yesterday,” Raft said. “I was. Not only that but Jack Warner personally told me that he’ll be lining up a whole string of pictures in the 40s and plans to star me in most of them.”

“That’s wonderful,” Bogie said, “not that Warner’s promises mean a damn rat’s fart. But don’t count on anything. They may not be making gangster movies in the 40s. Only war pictures.”

The female lead, Jane Bryan, was polite but reserved with Bogie. They’d last appeared together in the Bette Davis/Edward G. Robinson film, *Kid Galahad*. In *Invisible Stripes*, Bryan played “Peggy,” Holden’s girlfriend.

“Not only does Holden get third billing over me, but he gets the girl while I end up with a bullet,” Bogie said.

Bacon was tired of listening to Bogie complain. In a cutting dig, he said,& “There are stars in the making like William Holden, already established stars like George Raft, and stars that will never be.”

From Invisible Stripes:
Two views of George Raft with Humphrey Bogart, "working together but hating each other."

Bogie resented the close bond that quickly formed between Raft and Holden, both on and off the set. “George was my big brother in and out of the movie,” Holden said. “In fact if he hadn’t helped me, I might have been thrown out of the picture. He told Bacon to go easy on me.”

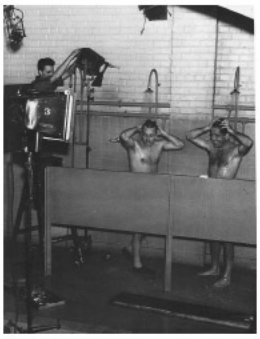
In one scene, though, Holden, straight from the boxing ring of *Golden Boy*, accidentally rammed his head into the socket of Raft’s left eye, causing damage to Raft that included bruises and stitches.

“He forgave me,” Holden said, “and I ended up sitting with him all night, applying cold compresses on his eye.”

Unlike his rather formal reunion with Jane Bryan, Bogie had a warm reunion on set with one of the supporting players, Lee Patrick. She came up to him and gave him a long, passionate kiss. “I have a right to do that,” she said. “Don’t forget you were my husband.”

“I don’t remember us getting married,” he said. “I drank a lot in those days. Still do, as a matter of fact.”

“No, you silly goose, you were my priggish young husband on Broadway in *Baby Mine*.”



Behind the scenes of *Invisible Stripes*: George Raft *(left)* and Bogie nude in the shower together. Raft showered with his shoes on. "We compared cock sizes with each other," Bogie said.

Later over lunch, she said, “I know you know how old I am, but don’t tell anybody.

“Actually, I don’t remember,” he said.

“I’m only two years older than you, but in Hollywood I claim I was born in 1911. A gal’s got to earn a living, right, and I’m not ready for grandmother parts yet.”

“Your secret is safe with me.” He looked at her intently. “Are you happily married—or shall we resume our shack-up?”

“I’m married to a great guy, Tom Wood. We’re really suited to each other.”

“Are you and I gonna be second bananas in film for the rest of our careers?” he asked.

“I’m afraid so in my case,”& she said. “I’m resigned to it. My last big chance came when I was considered for the lead in *Stella Dallas*. Alas, *Miss* Barbara Stanwyck snagged the role from me. So, whenever Jack Warner has a potboiler, and he needs someone to play a nurse, a floozie, whatever, he can call on me. I specialize in hard-bitten dames.” At the end of the lunch, she kissed him long and hard. “After going to bed with you, I know why they call you Hump.”

“I’m now called Bogie.”

Invisible Stripes played for a week in movie theaters along Hollywood Boulevard. During its run, Bogie invited Methot to go with him to see it after dinner at the Brown Derby. The meal went off smoothly, without any physical violence, even though patrons at the other tables waited for The Battling Bogarts to break into a fight.

But they left the restaurant without any altercation. As Bogie drove up to the Warners Hollywood Theater, he noticed that the marquee read: GEORGE RAFT AND WILLIAM HOLDEN STARRING IN *INVISIBLE STRIPES.*

Immediately, Methot accused Bogie of being a wimp for not demanding billing instead of Holden. “Next thing I know, Jack Warner will demand that you lick off Holden’s dingleberries on camera.”

That started it. The Battling Bogarts launched America’s entry into World War II before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

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Fast forward to September of 1953: The feud between William Holden and Bogie was still percolating when they appeared together on the set of *Sabrina*, a movie that starred the enchanting Audrey Hepburn. Bogie was the star this time, with Holden billed third. Soonafter, hostilities between "the two roosters" [director Billy Wilder's words] bubbled over.

Bogie admitted that "I always knew Wilder wanted Cary Grant for the part, but the faggot turned it down."

"Bogie's face was so weathered at this late hour in his life, I felt audiences would not believe that a cute little number like Audrey would go for this grandfatherly type," Wilder said.

In *Sabrina*, Bogie played a boring, workaholic tycoon, Larry Larrabee, with Holden cast as his playboy brother, David. Both are vying for the prize, young and beautiful Sabrina Fairchild, the daughter of their chauffeur.

When he made *Sabrina*, Bogie was fifty-four years old, but Wilder thought he looked "at least sixty-five, maybe more so."

Bogie staggered through *Sabrina* as best he could, but it was obvious to Hepburn that his many years of hard drinking had made him dyspeptic and ill. Unknown to the cast, Bogie was beginning to show the first symptoms of the cancer that four years later would claim his life.

"Paramount has given me a real problem," Wilder said. "I have to make the audience believe that Audrey would prefer weathered old Bogie to the handsome, dashing, and gorgeously blond Bill Holden, who was thirty-five but looked twenty-eight.

Bogie and Wilder feuded right from the beginning, with Bogie calling *Sabrina* "a crock of crap." He still didn't use the word shit. At one point, studying his new lines of dialogue, he asked Wilder if his young daughter had written it.

Between takes, Bogie reminded Holden that he was earning $300,000 for the picture, as compared to Holden's $125,000.

Directly to his face, Bogie called Wilder "a Prussian German with a riding crop." On other occasions, he called Wilder a "Kraut bastard" or "Nazi." When Wilder issued an instruction, Bogie mocked him by saying " *Jawoh!* "

(left to right in images above)

Bogie, Audrey Hepburn, and William Holden. Bogie may have won Audrey on screen, but Holden got her when the cameras stopped rolling.

When Hepburn flubbed her lines, Bogie said, "Have you considered staying home and learning your lines instead of going out every night?"

Holden later complained that on many a day on the set, he almost came "within an inch of knocking Bogie's teeth

out because of the insulting way he was treating Audrey and Wilder, too."

As he moved closer to death, Bogie became more and more insecure. He mocked Holden as "Smiling Jim," and ridiculed his good looks. "More matinee idol than a man." He even mocked his hair, whose color had been lightened for the role.

Holden snapped back at Bogie in the press. "He's an actor of consummate skill, with an ego to match."

At one point during a scene, Holden blew smoke in Bogie's face, making him ruin his lines. Bogie stalked off the set, shutting down production.

When Bogie's long-time friend, Clifton Webb, visited the set and asked what it was like working with Hepburn, Bogie replied, "It's okay if you like to do thirty-six takes."

Bogie recalled passing in front of Holden's dressing room at the end of the day, where, in the words of author Bob Thomas, "he could hear the rattle of ice cubes and the tinkle of Audrey Hepburn's laughter and Holden's hearty guffaw as they listened to Billy Wilder's witticisms."

"Those Paramount bastards didn't invite me," Bogie claimed. "Well fuck 'em."

Toward the end of the shoot, Bogie learned that Holden had fallen in love with the film's female star. "I really was in love with Audrey," Holden told Wilder. "But she wouldn't marry me. So I set out around the world with the idea of screwing every woman in every country I visited."

Irving ("Swifty") Lazar, who was Bogie's agent at the time, summed up the tense condition on the set of *Sabrina*. "Bogie thought that Wilder must humble himself before Bogie. But on a Billy Wilder picture, there is no star but Billy Wilder."

At the end of the shoot, Bogie dismissed Hepburn, Wilder, and Holden. "I'd rather drink a quart of rat's piss than work with either of them again. In fact, I've decided *Sabrina* is going to be my last picture."

That was just a drunken vow Bogie made at Romanoff's to Clifton Webb. Even on his death bed, he was planning to make another picture and another picture.

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Back in Hollywood in 1939, Bogie was given his latest assignment, a Western called *Virginia City*, to be directed by Michael Curtiz, whom he met at Romanoff's for a wet lunch to discuss its details. Both men were just a few short war years from making *Casablanca* together.

"I want you to wear a mustache," Curtiz said.

"Whatever Herr Director wants," Bogie replied. "More to the point, what's the billing?"

"You're the fourth lead," Curtiz said. "It's an Errol Flynn picture. You'll absolutely hate the fucker. He's nothing but a big piss."

"I can work with Flynn providing you write in some love scenes between us," Bogie said.

"You're such a kidder," Curtiz said. "Always make the joke."

"Who are the other co-stars?" Bogie asked.

"Miriam Hopkins and Randolph Scott."

"Oh, goodie-goodie, a super bitch and a cocksucker."

CHAPTER NINE

The dashing star of *Virginia City*, Errol Flynn, was remarkably different from Bogie. Self-destructive, sexually wanton, and reckless in his private life, Flynn, like Bogie, had started out at Warners at about the same time, although their careers would follow remarkably different paths. Whereas it would take years for Bogie to reach the top, Flynn burst like a dynamo upon the American public, a strikingly beautiful, romantic figure with enough charisma to obscure his limited acting talent.

Flynn was a swashbuckler, excelling at swordplay both on and off the screen. “I’m a devil-may-care ladykiller,” he said of himself, leaving out mention that he had a great fondness for young boy ass too.

“Robin Hood,” Bogie said to him on the set. “I almost didn’t recognize you without your green tights.”

“They were far too tight to hold my big bundle of goodies,” Flynn claimed.

“This is no reflection on working with you, but I hope this is my last western,” Bogie said. “I’m a big city boy who hates getting cactus in his ass and sleeping with rattlesnakes.”

“I hear you keep fighting for better roles,” Flynn said. “Not me. I keep fighting Jack Warner for more money. Miriam Hopkins is getting the same paycheck as me, $50,000. Randolph Scott is taking home $35,000. How about you?”

A handsome, self-destructive rogue: Erroll Flynn

“Would you believe $10,000?” Bogie said.

The hard-driving Michael Curtiz, of the short fuse, was furious at being assigned to helm another Western. “I know no God damn thing about Westerns,” he said. “Why choose me? All I know is that all that horse riding makes cowboys impertinent.”

“Don’t you mean impotent?” Bogie asked.

“Call it what name you want,” Curtiz said. “Let’s don’t fight over words. It means cowboys after all those years in the saddle become no good in the saddle. Get my river gush?”

“You mean drift, don’t you?”

“What are you?” Curtiz asked. “Some fucking English teacher? I know English better than you. That’s why dialogue’s my specialty. But you dumb actors can’t say words right.”

When not fighting with Flynn during the shoot, Curtiz directed most of his hostility toward Hopkins. “Cunt can’t ride horse,” he told Bogie. “Says it’s the time of month for her period. Cunt too old to have period, but claims her vagina’s bleeding.”

In the final days of 1939, the unit manager wrote Warners: “It grows more difficult each day for Curtiz to handle Miss Hopkins. They have utter contempt for each other. I have never seen such hostility. Perhaps you can fire her and hire Bette Davis instead. The last line is a joke, of course.”

“Oh, God,” Bogie told Ann Sheridan who came to visit him. “In the future I’ll have a rule. No more mustaches. I’m

dressed in black to let the audience know I'm a villain. I play this half-breed outlaw with a Spik accent."

"At least it's not that Irish brogue from *Dark Victory*," she said.

"Curtiz is always the same directing Flynn," Bogie said. "His fists are clenched, his face red with rage, and his voice constantly shouts 'You bum, you bum' to Flynn. Some of the hostility between the two is because they'd both married Lili Damita."

Bogie told Sheridan that she should be playing the saloon girl and Confederate spy, not Hopkins. "You could give it a sexy, comic touch," he said. "Hopkins is playing it like a *grande dame*."

Bogie with Randolph Scott
A faux cowboy in black
vs. the real thing

On November 13, 1939, Sidney Skolsky revealed to the public what was happening on the set of *Virginia City*. "There are plenty of feuds in the *Virginia City* company. Errol Flynn and Humphrey Bogart are feuding, Errol Flynn and Miriam Hopkins are feuding, and Mike Curtiz and Miriam Hopkins are feuding."

When Bogie encountered Ronald Reagan on the studio lot, the two actors agreed to break for a cup of coffee, with Bogie smoking a cigarette, of course. "I was set to play the Randolph Scott role, but another project kept me from it," Reagan said.

"Sorry we didn't get to work together," Bogie said. "But you might not have had time to learn your lines. That Jane Wyman is one hot little cutie."

"No, it's not like that," Reagan said. "She's not a nympho like Betty Grable. Jane and I believe in moderation."

"Good to hear that, pal," Bogie said. "I wish another project had come up for me instead of my playing a *bandito mexicano*. Talk about type-casting. Now I understand why you were cast as a latent homosexual in *Dark Victory*. You look like a latent homosexual."

"I could get insulted by that, but I know you're a ribber," Reagan said. "Actually I heard that Olivia de Havilland was set to take over the Hopkins role. Something went wrong."

"Maybe Flynn got tired of fucking her in all those pictures and wanted a change of vaginas," Bogie said.

"You're something else, Bogie," Reagan said, slightly embarrassed. "I don't think you're housebroken. If you don't improve your manners, how can Jane and I invite you over for dinner?"

Bogie told him, "I was raised with politeness and manners. That's the way I was brought up. But in the goldfish bowl of Hollywood, it's impossible to use them. Do you think politeness and manners would work on Michael Curtiz, much less Jack Warner? Dream on."

Flynn was mostly involved with his gang that included Alan Hale, Guinn "Big Boy" Williams, Bruce Cabot, William Lundigan, and Patric Knowles. Curtiz called them "raisers from hell."

"Don't you mean hell-raisers?" Bogie said.

“Whatever,” the director said. “The key word is hell.”

One night when the Flynn’s entourage didn’t show up, Flynn invited Bogie for a night of boozing, not womanizing. He later told Cabot, “I am amazed at the whiskey Bogie can drink and still stay on his feet. He drank me under the table.”

If any revelation emerged that night, it came from Flynn, who drunken-ingly informed Bogie that Mayo Methot, a wife Bogie hated but couldn’t live without, had been “royally screwed” [Flynn’s words] not only by himself, but by his pals Bruce Cabot and Knowles. All this had occurred when Methot was cast in a bit part in *The Sisters* (1938), a film that had starred Bette Davis, Flynn, and Knowles.

Bogie’s reaction to this revelation is not known. Perhaps it led to another fight between “The Battling Bogarts,” or perhaps he never brought it up. Considering his own record, he could hardly attack her for infidelity.

Far from seeming angry at Methot, he gave her a $15,000 diamond necklace for Christmas, the most expensive gift he’d ever presented to anyone. That piece of jewelry could be split up into various combinations of brooches, clips, and bracelets.

Jack Warner more or less ordered Bogie to attend the world premiere of *Virginia City* in Nevada. He told Methot, “I found myself drowning in a sea of rhinestone-studded cowboy suits, ten-gallon hats, and six-shooters.”

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With his fake mustache removed, Bogie rushed from the set of *Virginia City* to take the third lead in *It All Came True*.

After Bette Davis turned down the role, Ann Sheridan was cast as the star of the picture, playing a sexy nightclub entertainer described as “teasing, tempting, and a manhandler.” It was a good showcase for her, as she also got to sing “Angel in Disguise” and “The Gaucho Serenade.”

Bogie with Sheridan in *It All Came True*
“A teasing manhandler”

The ardor between Sheridan and Bogie had cooled, but they remained close friends and confidants. Playing Sheridan’s boyfriend was Jeffrey Lynn, who had second billing. Bogie, who had appeared in titles above him in *The Roaring Twenties*, was sorry to see himself demoted. “I think Jack Warner is gradually shoving me out the door,” he told Sheridan.

The director, Lewis Seiler, was not a temperamental Michael Curtiz, but a working professional who had helmed Bogie in *You Can’t Get Away With Murder*. Bogie expected to encounter no problems with him.

During the first day of the shoot, Seiler told him that James Stewart had originally been set to star in the film.

Stewart had a one-picture commitment to Warner Brothers.

When that didn't work out, Jack Warner conceived a new screen duo of George Raft teamed with John Garfield. "Garfield can do all those gangster roles that I used to give Bogie in the 1930s," Warner said.

But both Garfield and Raft pulled out at the last minute. With an undisguised contempt, Raft dismissed the role of the gangster in the film, *Chips Maguire*. "It's a Humphrey Bogart part," he told Jack Warner.

Bogie's close friend, the writer Louis Bromfield, came onto the set to bond with Bogie. He'd sold his story, "Better Than Life," for $50,000, which is the exact amount that David Selznick had paid Margaret Mitchell for her rights to *Gone With the Wind*.

Bromfield attacked screenwriters Michael Fessier and Lawrence Kimble. "They couldn't decide if Bogie was a villain or a good guy." When he saw the final cut, Bromfield praised Bogie's excursion into comedy. He played a mobster who was a sort of guardian angel to some aging vaudevillians, including ZaSu Pitts, in a rundown boarding house."

In fact, Bromfield was so pleased with Bogie's work that when the time came for Bogie to wed Lauren Bacall, he invited him to conduct the ceremony at his Malabar Farm in Ohio.

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Mark Hellinger, Bogie's pal and the associate producer, brought him the script for the next Edward G. Robinson film, *Brother Orchid*. Robinson had contracted to play Little John Sarto, with Bogie in the third lead as Jack Buck.

The female star of the picture, Ann Sothern, had been cast as Robinson's ever-faithful girlfriend. In this far-fetched yarn, Robinson goes from racket chieftain to a monastery.

James Cagney was originally set to play the Robinson role, but bolted at the last minute. Producer Hal Wallis had wanted Bogie's long-time friend, Lee Patrick, to play the& female lead as Flo, and Bogie was looking forward to working with her. At the last minute& Hellinger, against Bogie's wishes, appealed to Jack Warner to cast Sothern, and he agreed.

top photo: Robinson with Bogart
bottom photo: 1940s glam with Ann Sothern

When Bogie read the script, he told Hellinger, "Of all the films I've made with that runt, Robinson, this is the only one in which neither of us is killed."

Once again Bogie found himself working with director Lloyd Bacon, who had last helmed him in *Invisible Stripes*.

Bacon was anticipating tension between Bogie and his rival, Robinson. But Robinson said, "Everybody thought we'd be at each other's throat. Not at all. He was a pro in the best meaning of the word. Between takes we talked ominously about America's entry into the war. We saw it coming."

In the fifth lead was dependable Ralph Bellamy, best known for playing second leads who invariably lose the girl in the final reel.

“When you need an actor to play *anything*, get Ralph Bellamy,” Robinson said. “His range is limitless; his abilities unparalleled; his ego barely ever ruffled. He is the kind of star that made it possible to make pictures. Never getting the girl is a difficult role; it enables an actor to grow old gracefully. I cherish Ralph. I could not say the same about *Brother Orchid*.”

Bogie had a lot of respect for the British film actor, Donald Crisp, who would go on to win an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in the 1942 *How Green Was My Valley*. Bogie had worked with him before on such pictures as *The Great O’Malley* and *The Amazing Dr. Clitterhouse*.

When Bogie met him again, he’d just appeared with Laurence Olivier in *Wuthering Heights* (1939).

“We’re 19th century men,” Bogie said to Crisp, welcoming him to the set. “Tell me what it was like fighting the Boer War the year I was born?”

Crisp’s answer startled Bogie as it was so earthy. “All I remember was crossing pathways with the Prime Minister of Britain. A very young Winston Churchill and I took a horse piss together. I can assure you that if the PM had whipped out his dick in front of him, Hitler would have declared the war lost.”

Over a drink later that night, Crisp confided, “I’m not English, really Scottish. We Scots know the value of a pound.”

He did, indeed, becoming at one time in later life chairman of the Bank of America.

Bogie was introduced to Ann Sothern. From the cold winds of North Dakota, this sexy, good-looking, wisecracking blonde had originally appeared on the screen as Harriet Lake, her real name. She had wanted to be a singer, but movie producers had other plans for her, viewing her mainly as a comedienne.

When Bogie met her, she had just finished filming *Maisie* in 1939. The film proved so popular she would be appearing as Maisie in sequels up to 1947. She’d also been teamed with Gene Raymond in a series of films which, among many others, included *The Smartest Girl in Town* (1936).

“How is it working in picture after picture with the same guy?” Bogie asked.

“Gene Raymond is a jerk.”

“Thank you for confirming what I already know,” he said. Since you’re a married lady, and because I’m a New York gentleman who respects marriage vows, I won’t be pursuing you on this picture.”

“Are you talking about that jerk I’m married to, Richard Pryor?” she asked. “Me and him will be heading for the divorce courts one of these days. No doubt I’ll meet you and Mayo Methot there too.”

“Perhaps,” he said. “I’d leave her, but I’m afraid she’d hunt me down and kill me.”

“At any rate, drop by my dressing room late this afternoon,” she said, “and I’ll see if you’re man enough to handle me.”

The next day, Bogie told Hellinger, “I don’t think Sothern enjoyed me so much in the sack. As a consolation prize, she told me I’d be just the right fit for her old MGM cohort, Lucille Ball. It seems that Ball is alone for weeks at a time whenever Desi Arnaz is on the road.”

***

It was once again Mark Hellinger, its associate producer, who brought Bogie his next film script, *They Drive by Night*. Based on A.I. Bezzerides’ novel *Long Haul,* it was a drama about the rough-and-tough trucking industry.

“Who am I playing second lead to this time?” Bogie asked. “It has to be either George Raft or Edward G. Robinson.”

“You’re right on the mark,” Hellinger said. “It’s Raft. He plays your brother. You’re only the fourth lead. Ann Sheridan, your old gal pal, is the second lead, and Ida Lupino is in third position.”

“That Lupino is one hot dame,” Bogie said. “It gives me an incentive to work on this stinker.”

“You’re judging the script before you even read it?” Hellinger asked.

“Hell, I could play the role without& even reading the script.”

bottom photo:
Bogie, Ida Lupino and George Raft.
Driver Raft saved their lives that day.

Raoul Walsh, the testy director with the eyepatch, was called in to helm the stars. He’d last worked with Bogie in *You Can’t Get Away With Murder*.

Arguably, Walsh was the one who nicknamed Bogie as “Bogie the Beefer,” because he was always complaining about roles he received. “His acting experience resembled that of John Barrymore,” Walsh said. “Both hated, or appeared to hate, every part of the motion-picture industry. John damned it because of the long hours and Bogie echoed him: ‘They get you up before daybreak and work your ass off all day until sundown. In the theater I went to work at eight in the evening and was through by eleven; all the rest of the night and next day to play and catch up with my drinking. Working in pictures is for the birds.’ Bogie could go on like this indefinitely, and his invective never faltered.”

Tiring of his gripes, Walsh confronted him. “You like that fat paycheck at the end of the week, don’t you?”

With a scowl, Bogie said, “That’s the only kick I get out of this lousy business.”

The film version of *They Drive By Night*, at least in terms of some aspects of the plot, is derivative of *Bordertown* (1935), that had starred Bette Davis as the predatory wife alongside Paul Muni and Margaret Lindsay. In *They Drive by Night*, Ida Lupino took over the Bette Davis role, Raft was cast in the Paul Muni part, and Sheridan won the role previously played by Margaret Lindsay.

The plot was recycled once again in 1953 in a film, *Blowing Wild*, starring Barbara Stanwyck, Anthony Quinn, and Gary Cooper.

Ironically, during the casting discussions for *Blowing Wild*, Lauren Bacall had been the first choice to play the tempestuous wife of an oil baron, the role that eventually went to Stanwyck, but Bacall turned down the offer.

On the set of *They Drive by Night,* Bogie once again came into contact with Gale Page, with whom he’d previously starred in *Crime School*.

“My parts are getting smaller with each picture,” Page said. “I’m still hanging in there, but just barely. Jack Warner told me I look like an ordinary 1940s housewife. So any time a script calls for a drab but dependable housewife, I can do it.”

“Not all women were made to be the Oomph gal,” Bogie said. “Since not all women in the audience look like Lana Turner, the public will identify with you. You’re the type of gal a man brings back to meet his family before he marries her.”

“Thanks, Bogie,” she said. “I think I was just insulted but in the nicest way.”

Veteran actor John Litel, was also upset by his role with an eighth billing. “You know I’ve starred in movies. The *star*, carrying the whole fucking picture. You know that’s true.”

“Not really,” Bogie said. “The only pictures of yours I’ve ever seen were those you did with me.”

Although he was attracted to her, Bogie had only a passing relationship with the British/American actress Ida Lupino. The young star was too busy trying to get her role of Lana right, since this was her first picture for Warners. She announced to Bogie that “Bette Davis is a tough act to follow.”

“Even Bette Davis finds Bette Davis a tough act to follow,” he said.

Sheridan and Lupino clashed. It wasn’t a feud to equal Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins, but it was nonetheless lethal. “That two-bit British whore is stealing my thunder,” Sheridan complained to Bogie in his dressing room over drinks. “I could pull out every hair in the bitch’s head. Howard Hughes should have fucked me when I was fifteen years old—not that tight little pussy.”

Sheridan’s rivalry with the British import dated back to a 1934 Paramount film, *Ready for Love*. Ida Lupino had been the star of that movie, and Clara Lou Sheridan—Ann’s original name—had a walk-on.

“When the camera is on you, no one can steal the scene from you,” Bogie said, gallantly.

“Thanks for being so reassuring,” she said.

Sheridan was correct, however, in her belief that she was being upstaged. In a July 9, 1940 review in the *Hollywood Reporter*, a critic observed: “Ann Sheridan is in a tough spot because of little Ida Lupino. Annie looks great, and before Miss Lupino comes on the screen with so much the better of the parts, the redheaded Sheridan stands out. But after Ida gets working, she steals all the attention. But Miss Oomph is okay.”

The highlight of *They Drive by Night* involved Lupino’s scene in the courtroom where she went berserk, confessing to the murder of her husband, who had been portrayed by the veteran actor Alan Hale. The way she played it made her a star, landing her a seven-year contract at Warner Brothers.

Upstaged by a younger ingenue:
Ann Sheridan *(top photo)*
and Ida Lupino

In the 1920s, George Raft had driven a truck along Third Avenue in Manhattan, delivering bootleg liquor for the notorious gangster and bootlegger, Owney Madden. During his portrayal of a gangster on the set of *They Drive By Night*, Raft’s real-life experience paid off.

In one scene he was called upon to drive a truck down a steep California mountain road, with Bogie and Sheridan as his passengers.

Halfway down the hill, as the cameras were rolling, the truck went out of control, the brakes not working. Sheridan screamed and covered her eyes. Bogie shouted, “You’re gonna kill us!”

The speedometer reached eighty miles per hour. Spotting an embankment which was being dug out for another road, Raft swerved the truck up that embankment. Halfway up the embankment, the truck skidded to a stop.

Jumping out of the truck, Sheridan kissed him on the mouth. “I owe you the fuck of your life for that.”

Bogie merely said, “Thanks, pal,” perhaps embarrassed at all his screaming and cursing.

“Don’t thank me,” a shaken Raft said. “Write a letter to Owney Madden.”

They Drive By Night was completed in thirty-three working days for a budget of $500,000. According to the preview audiences at theaters on Hollywood Boulevard, it seemed unanimous that Lupino had stolen the picture from Bogie, Raft, and Sheridan. One writer asserted Lupino projected a “fascinating blend of beauty, danger, and deceit.”

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On March 13, 1940 Warner Brothers bought the screen rights to W.R. Burnett’s crime novel *High Sierra*, with a plan to star Paul Muni as its male lead. In 1936 Muni had won the Oscar for *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, and since then, he had reigned as Warner’s number one male star, even at age 45.

A decade earlier, Burnett had become famous for his crime novel, *Little Caesar*, based on the life of Al Capone and brought to the screen in a sensational performance by Edward G. Robinson.

John Huston was called in to tweak the script, but Muni rejected the first version. Warner then decided to ask Burnett himself to work on a screenplay for *High Sierra*. When Burnett’s version was submitted to the censors manning the Production Code, they objected to the “illicit” sexual relationship spinning around Ida Lupino with unmarried partners. They also found the words “damn,” “tramp,” and even “punk” objectionable.

Studio autocrat Jack Warner *(top photo)* , and *High Sierra* script doctor John Huston

& Ida Lupino was cast as the female lead playing Marie Garon, a dime-a-dance tramp willing to run off with whatever man came along.

In the wake of Muni’s rejection and the perception by the studio that he wasn’t really right for the role anyway, a revised script was submitted to George Raft. He turned it down, claiming he was not going to be killed off in any more films. Huston and Burnett then resubmitted the script to Muni who rejected it once again, even though he thought it had been vastly improved. He rejected it this time because it had been turned down by Raft.

Next in line, Edward G. Robinson said “no way,”& before the script was shopped to John Garfield. Even though he had no real star power at the time, he, too, rejected *High Sierra*. Exasperated, Jack Warner said, “Who else but Bogart? He’s a son of a bitch, but what actor isn’t?”

bottom photo:
Ida Lupino with Bogart

Even at the last minute, Warner almost didn't cast him. As he told his friend, Raoul Walsh, "Bogie's going around telling people I'm a fairy. But if you want to take a chance, go ahead."

Why Bogie spread the story that Warner was a homosexual is not known, perhaps in revenge for Warner's long ago taunting him about his lisp.

Hard at work on the screenplay, Huston was contemptuous of Raft. " *Everything* was intended for Raft at the time. I was not one of his great admirers. I thought he was a clown, walking around in his white suit with those padded shoulders and form-fitting hips, protected by bodyguards. He was very much a Mafia type and liked to display it. And it turned out the poor devil came to nothing. He refused everything that was thrown at him. And he refused *High Sierra*. You know, he was really an ignorant man. And I was delighted he didn't do our script because Bogie then got to play it. And I knew Bogie was a fine actor."

Huston said that what made *High Sierra* different from other gangster films was the way Bogie played Roy Earle. "We had seen bad guys, hundreds, maybe thousands of them before, but the bad guy Bogart played was a decent man. He had a sense of loyalty, a code of ethics. He could feel sorry for a neglected dog or a crippled girl and go out of his way to help them. He was essentially a loner, a man up against a system, and even though he knew how to use a machine gun and was on the wrong side of the law, he was likable. The way Bogart played him, you couldn't help rooting for Roy Earle."

Although they knew each other before, it was during the making of *High Sierra*, that Bogie bonded with Huston. For some reason, Bogie called his future director "The Monster & Double Ugly."

Author Axel Madsen said, "John was Bogie's kind of snake charmer, a natural-born anti-authoritarian, a guy with panache and style. Bogie thought John had more color than ninety percent of Hollywood's actors. In the future when John would call and say, 'Hey, kid, let's make a picture,' Bogie knew he was being conned but he also knew he would have a great time."

On the set of *High Sierra,* Bogie found every excuse he could to complain about the working conditions. He even attacked the packed lunches the crew was served. "I wonder when this sandwich was made? Last year? Christ, they feed the cons at San Quentin better than this."

“In spite of his eternal beefing, Bogie turned in a top performance, jerking tears when he paid for the young lame girl to have successful surgery and setting the audience on the edges of their seats during the robbery and long chase before he died,” Walsh said. “This performance made Bogart a star. He would never have to play bit parts again. He only grunted when he read the good things the critics had to say. His mind seemed to be busy with other things. I think he was still blaming Jack Warner for sending him that lousy lunch.”

At first, Lupino and Bogie appeared almost hostile to each other on the set. “I have a way of kidding with a straight face,” she later said. “So does Bogie. Neither of us recognized the trait in the other. Each thought the other was being nasty, and we were both offended.”

Detroit-born Joan Leslie got her first major role in *High Sierra*, playing a crippled girl. She would soon star with Bogie again. Bogie told Walsh, “I can never relate to good girls like Leslie. They’re so wholesome, so pure, like professional virgins. I don’t think she’ll go far in films. We need Lana Turner, Bette Davis, Ann Sheridan, Claire Trevor—you gotta be a bitch to make it big in Hollywood. This town is full of sweet, perky, young things like Leslie.” Later he said, “Imagine being little Joan Leslie, and peaking in your career at the age of twenty-one.”

Bogart—Very, very noir

As *High Sierra* was being filmed, Walsh came to Bogie with some good news. Muni and Jack Warner had had a violent argument and Muni was out the Warner door.

Warner had been on the verge of green lighting a film for Muni about Ludwig von Beethoven. When Warner told him the movie had been canceled, Muni exploded. He severed his relationship with Warners and tore up his seven-year contract. At last, the road opened for Bogie to get better scripts.

Barton MacLane appeared in *High Sierra*, but with a tenth billing. Bogie had worked with MacLane before in such films as *San Quentin*. He would appear with Bogie again in the Forties—in fact, MacLane’s name is kept alive to future generations because of his appearance in three of Bogie’s big movies of the Forties.

Bogie stayed mainly to himself during early filming. But he did meet and talk with some major actors in the supporting cast, including Alan Curtis. His role as Babe Kozak in *High Sierra* remains perhaps the most memorable of his career.

At the time Bogie met Curtis, he was on the dawn of marrying the Hungarian actress Ilona Massey, that shapely operatic blonde from Budapest.

Curtis discussed his marriage plans. “Massey is not a woman you marry,” Bogie said. “She’s a woman you have make you goulash and then you fuck her.” Curtis seemed insulted but Bogie was giving good advice. The marriage was virtually over in three months, although officially it lasted a year.

Perhaps the best actor in the supporting cast was a Kentuckian, Henry Hull, a thin man with a furrowed brow who specialized in playing practical oldsters or crotchety types. Over a drink, Bogie told him, “It’s great talking to one of the real pros in the business, *The Werewolf of London*.” He was referring to Hull’s 1935 hit. Both Hull and Bogie recalled their 1934 appearances in the film *Midnight* with Sidney Fox.

By this time, Bogie had been around the Warner lot so long that it became increasingly obvious that he was working with much younger “stars of tomorrow,” some of whom he held with a certain disdain. He was resentful of Arthur Kennedy, because he’d been discovered by James Cagney, who’d cast him in *City for Conquest* (1940) as his younger, piano-playing brother. When Kennedy brought up the name of James Cagney four times in different conversations, maintaining that Cagney was the best actor in Hollywood, Bogie finally interrupted. “You’re out of

your mind, fucker. Cagney can do only one thing well. Dress up in drag and pick up sailors to bed. I hear he's great at fellatio. Don't tell me he didn't put a good-looking guy like you on the casting couch."

Kennedy and Bogie would get along better when they starred together in William Wyler's *The Desperate Hours* (1955), where Kennedy played a policeman trying to capture Bogie.

Joan Leslie

One star of tomorrow who Bogie interacted with was Cornel Wilde, who had only a small role in *High Sierra*, but would go on to stardom. When Bogie encountered this bisexual actor from Hungary, he was fresh from having taught fencing lessons to Laurence Olivier for his 1940 Broadway production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Bogie had already heard the rumors about Olivier and Wilde. "What else did you teach Mr. Olivier?" Bogie asked.

"How to handle his sword," Wilde said.

"I can take that two ways," Bogie said with a smirk.

Years later, when Bogie was appearing in *Battle Circus* (1953) with June Allyson, he ran into Wilde in a restaurant. "How's it hanging, kid?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard?" Wilde said. "I'm in beefcake bondage. I've become the darling of the S&M crowd. In *At Sword's Point*, I was stripped and bound at the waist in a torture chamber where my chest was burned with a hot iron. In *California Conquest*, my next picture, I was again stripped to the waist and bound to a tree. I was lashed across my beautiful, golden chest with a whip."

"Sounds like kinky fun to me," Bogie said. "I'll have to hire some whore to do that to me."

As filming progressed, according to Walsh, Bogie was clearly falling in love with Lupino. At first they stayed clear of each other, but as the days passed they became cozier and cozier, taking lunch together, spending time in each other's dressing rooms, having drinks after work and delaying a return home to their spouses.

"Bogie knew such an affair could mean nothing but trouble for them," director Raoul Walsh said. "It was like they couldn't help it. As for Ida, I don't think she really loved Bogie, at least not as much as he loved her. She cared for him; she liked him. But I wouldn't call it love. Several members of the crew disagreed with me, and told me that Ida looked at Bogie with love in her eyes. I think the sex between them was good. Methot was no longer the sex object that she used to be. Also, like many men his age, Bogie wanted someone much younger and prettier on the hoof. Ida was in the relationship for sex. For Bogie, it either love or temporary insanity. If Methot caught him, I truly believe she would have shot him dead, just like Edward G. Robinson used to do on screen."

Cornel Wilde

Deeper into the shoot, Lupino and Bogie were drawn even closer to each other. "Too close," in the words of Huston.

Somehow Mayo Methot got word of this and began showing up on the set. “If I see that little limey floozy make one move toward my husband, I’ll yank out every hair in her overworked pussy.”

Dialogue director Irving Rapper said, “Mayo was so jealous of the younger, more beautiful Lupino that she was in a boiling rage. We expected violence on the set.”

Louis Hayward, Lupino’s husband, also showed up on the set. He’d seen a picture of Bogie in a bathing suit on his knees looking adoringly at Lupino as she rested on a chaise longue by a pool.

Born in South Africa, but reared in London, Hayward was sophisticated, urbane, and a light second lead that made him one of the less memorable leading men of his day.

Fearing a fist fight, and often reluctant to engage in battle, Bogie remained in his dressing room until Walsh told him that “the coast is clear. I ordered Hayward to go home.”

Methot hawkeyed what was going on when *High Sierra* was shot in a studio. But for seven weeks, the film was shot on location, including a fishing camp and the Arrowhead Spring Resort. The final scene, which included Bogie’s death on film, was in the Sierra Nevada of Eastern California, with Mt. Whitney looming in the distance.

Location shooting allowed Lupino and Bogie to spend their nights together, living almost like man and wife in full view of the crew. “They did little to conceal their relationship, which surprised me since both of them had jealous spouses,” Walsh claimed.

In September, the filming of *High Sierra* came to an end, and under its budget of $455,000. Bogie earned $11,200, with Lupino taking home $12,000. Walsh got $17,500.

At the end, Lupino and Bogie decided to go their separate ways. In later interviews, she treated him with respect, but denied that any affair ever took place between them. “He was the most loyal, wonderful guy in the world.”

Critics hailed *High Sierra* as the last gangster film of the Depression Era. Others called it “the most memorable of the twilight-of-the-gangster pictures.”

When Lupino went on to make *The Sea Wolf* (1941), the other stars included Edward G. Robinson and John Garfield. Bogie sent her a note: “Hanging out with my competition. Traitor.”

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Just as his career was starting to ascend into super stardom, Bogie was labeled a Communist. He likened the accusation to “a bolt of lightning hitting me.” His only political activity had been in the mid-1930s when he backed the striking, underpaid lettuce harvesters in the San Joaquin Valley, and when he had contributed $200 to the strike fund of another underpaid group of workers, the reporters on some Seattle newspapers.

A witch hunt, evocative of that led by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950s, had been launched by Congressman Martin Dies, a blond-haired bully who had been appointed head of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives. His claim to fame today is that he ordered his staff “to prove that Shirley Temple was a Communist.” Somehow he found Red propaganda in her motion pictures.

Dies opposed Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, labor unions, Jews (“especially those of New York”), and all black people. The latter he privately told supporters “should be shipped back to Africa where these jungle bunnies belong.” He didn’t particularly oppose homosexuals since he did not believe “that such perversion” ever took place on American soil.

Testifying before the Dies Committee in July of 1940 was John L. Leech, who called himself “chief functionary” of the local Communist Party in the Greater Los Angeles area. Before the committee, he named names of the leading Communists in Hollywood. Heading the list was Humphrey Bogart, followed by Fredric March, Melvyn Douglas, James Cagney, and Franchot Tone. On August 15, 1940 in a front-page story, Bogie was cited for attending Communist study groups and contributing $150 a month to Communist causes.

He issued a statement: “I have never contributed money to a political organization of any form. That includes Republican, Democratic, Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, or the Communist Party. Furthermore, I have never attended the school mentioned nor do I know what school that may be. I dare the men who are attempting this investigation to call me to the stand. I want to face them myself and not by a proxy to whom I am only a name.”

Only the year before, a trial examiner had labeled Leech “a pathological liar.” Even so, a newspaper head proclaimed HOLLYWOOD STARS ACCUSED AS REDS BEFORE GRAND JURY.

Congressman Martin Dies
"Shirley Temple is as red
as her panties!"

In a suite at the Biltmore Hotel, Bogie confronted Dies, who year round wore a piss-stained suit the color of eggnog ice cream with a red, white, and blue polka dot tie. Under extensive questioning, Dies could not find one iota of evidence that Bogie was or had ever been a Communist.

After the meeting, the Dies Committee exonerated Bogie, claiming that he was a patriotic American. However, unlike the front-page accusations, that item appeared on page 18 of the *Los Angeles Times*. The report stated that “the link of one Mr. Humphrey Bogart to the Communist Party does not appear to be founded in fact.”

All this did not escape the attention of Jack Warner. He was set to give Bogie star billing in his most important picture to date, *High Sierra*. At the last minute, he called his publicity department. “On all the posters, make it IDA LUPINO AND HUMPHREY BOGART STARRING IN HIGH SIERRA.”

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During the closing months of 1940, Maud Bogart was battling cancer at the age of seventy-two. On November 23, she lost the battle.

Methot called Bogie at the studio, telling him that his mother was dead.

Since she moved to her small studio on Sunset Boulevard, she still hadn’t become intimate with her son, but they had come to respect and admire each other.

He would later regret that they had not developed a more intimate relationship. He also regretted that she did not live to see him ascend to become the major star on the Warners lot. “When she died,” he told Methot, “I was still playing third or fourth leads in crappy movies.” She never lived to see me in *High Sierra*.”

That landmark movie opened in January of 1941, weeks after her burial.

Methot, who remained close to Maud, even though fighting with her son, handled the funeral arrangements. She was interred at Forest Lawn, which would see the burial of Bogie himself in the 1950s.

He cried as Maud was buried. All he could manage to say was, “She died as she had lived. With guts!”

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After *High Sierra*, Bogie expected Jack Warner to offer him the best scripts floating around the studio. To his disappointment, he was presented with *Carnival*, which seemed to be a cheap rip-off of *Kid Galahad*. The boxing ring of *Kid Galahad* had been changed to a circus setting.

Instead of a top-notch director, Bogie was assigned Ray Enright, the same guy who’d directed him in one of his

worst movies, *Swing Your Lady*.

Amazingly, the sluggish director had assembled a first-rate cast. Bogie would co-star with Sylvia Sidney with whom he'd appeared in *Dead End* in 1937. Joan Leslie was once again appearing with him, as was a charming and very talented young actor, Eddie Albert.

Bogie sarcastically told the director, "Great script. Instead of getting mowed down by Edward G. Robinson, I get killed by an insane lion in the final reel."

"All in a day's work," Enright said.

To add to his humiliation of starring in *Carnival*, Bogie was "the sloppy second" choice [his words]. Hal Wallis had at first offered the role to George Raft. Usually Raft was a poor judge of scripts, but not this time. He rejected it, but did not do so in a diplomatic way. "Go fuck yourself," he notified Warners.

Before going into general release, the film's original title, *Carnival,* was changed to *The Wagons Roll at Night*. The plot called for Bogie to play a traveling carnival owner Nick Coster, with Sidney as his girlfriend, Flo Lorraine. Eddie Albert played a lion tamer, Matt Varney, who falls for Nick's sister, Joan Leslie, cast as Mary Coster.

Bogie is the definite loser in this film, and it did nothing to establish him as the romantic hero he was about to become. Not only does his girlfriend, Sidney, fall for Albert, but so does his sister, Joan Leslie.

Bogie hated the film and did not want to see the final cut. He did encounter a fan while he was buying a new suit at a men's store on Hollywood Boulevard. "I didn't think you were *that* bad," the salesman told him.

Many articles have claimed that *The Wagons Roll at Night* was the first film in which Bogie got first billing. Actually, he'd had top billing in such 1930s features as *Racket Busters*, *King of the Underworld*, and *You Can't Get Away With Murder*.

On a trip with Methot to New York, "the battlers" had seen Irwin Shaw's hit play, *The Gentle People*. Bogie had gone backstage to chat with its star, Sylvia Sidney, who had gotten the best notices for *The Wagons Roll at Night*.

Franchot Tone, trying to escape the label of "Mr. Joan Crawford," was cast as the male lead, Geoff, a waterfront extortionist who is the terror of his neighborhood.

After the show, Bogie told Methot that he was "itching" to play the role in the screen version. He personally telegraphed Hal Wallis that he wanted the part.

Upon his return to Hollywood, he learned that Wallis was going to cast James Cagney. Cagney balked, and, once again, so did George Raft, who completely rejected the script.

Anatole Litvak, its director, pleaded with both Raft and Cagney to change their minds, but each of the actors adamantly refused. In desperation, Litvak turned to Edward G. Robinson, who in one afternoon read the script and immediately turned it down.

Bypassing Wallis at this point, Bogie shot off a telegram to the boss man himself, Jack Warner. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I AM THE LOGICAL PERSON ON THE LOT TO PLAY GENTLE PEOPLE. I WOULD BE GREATLY DISAPPOINTED IF I DIDN'T GET IT.

While in New York, Hal Wallis received a telegram from the coast. Ida Lupino had been cast as the female lead with script approval and arguably approval of her choice of leading man as well. Wallis read the wire. LUPINO REFUSES TO PLAY IN PICTURE WITH BOGART.

In later years Lupino denied that she had refused to work with Bogie. "We parted on the friendliest of terms," the actress claimed. "Hal Wallis, and perhaps Jack Warner, just did not want Bogie in the role. But they blamed me. Both of them preferred John Garfield. Even when Bogie was trying to get the role, the department had come up with what they thought was a novel idea. They were going to promote John and me as a new screen team. That never happened, of course. Ironically, pictures originally intended for John and me, such as *To Have and Have Not* or *Key*

Largo, went to Bogie and his& new bride, Lauren Bacall."

Merrily They Rolled Along

(upper photo) Bogie with Sylvia Sidney *(lower photo)* Bogie, Cliff Clark, Joan Leslie, Eddie Albert

One morning over Methot's too black coffee, Bogie picked up a trade paper. The headline read: BOGART OUT, GARFIELD IN.

Bogie took a small delight when *The Gentle People* —its title by now changed to *Out of the Fog* —opened to mixed reviews and dwindling box office returns.

He was out of work for only two weeks, most of which he spent battling with Methot, when the studio told him they were putting him back to work in *Manpower,* the latest George Raft movie. Each of them would play a power lineman vying for the affections of Marlene Dietrich, who had been lent to Jack Warner in a deal with Universal.

The powers behind the movie were well known to Bogie—Raoul Walsh as director, Mark Hellinger as producer. He'd also known Dietrich, but hadn't seen her in years.

When he read the script, he realized that it was a rip-off of Howard Hawks' 1932 film *Tiger Shark*, in which Edward G. Robinson had played a Portuguese fisherman.

Raft's bitterness and jealousy toward Bogie reached a boiling point on the set of *Manpower*. He even called Bogie's agent, Sam Jaffe, telling him "the role is completely absurd for your client. If he continues in this picture, it will ruin his career." Raft complained daily to Walsh and to the co-stars, including Dietrich.

Finally, Raft stormed into Jack Warner's office and told him bluntly: "I will walk off the lot today if Bogart stays in the picture."

After an hour of cajoling, pleading, and threatening, Raft got his wish. "I'll tell Walsh to fire Bogart this afternoon," Warner claimed. "Eddie is free."

He was, of course, referring to Raft's other rival, Edward G. Robinson.

Walsh went along with orders, but told Warner, "Your boy Raft is really stupid. He was offered *Manpower* last year when the script was called *Danger Zone*. He turned that down. The fucker doesn't know it's the same damn script."

Before leaving the set, Bogie called on Dietrich in her dressing room for a final *adieu*. She stood at the door and didn't let him in, as she was obviously entertaining someone. Was it George Raft himself? "I'm sorry you didn't stay longer," she whispered. "We could have gotten together and shared our goodies." She gave him a wet-lipped kiss and then shut the door. He heard a man's voice calling to her.

In the second week of the shoot, Raft was so furious at Robinson he asked Walsh if he would hire Bogie back. He and Robinson clashed every day. Not only were they vying for top gun on the screen, but battling offscreen for the affections of Dietrich. At one point they were caught by a *Life* magazine photographer punching each other out. After *Manpower* wrapped with a minimum of violence, Robinson wouldn't speak to Raft for the next fourteen years.

As Bogie was being laughed off the screen for his performance in *The Wagons Roll at Night*, he received an unexpected call from his new friend, John Huston. "My dream has come true. I'm going to direct a picture, and I want you to star in it."

"What character do I play?"

John Garfield

"You play a private detective named Sam Spade. It's based on a novel by Dashiell Hammett."

"What's this stinker about?"

"Well, it's about a bird."

"That sounds okay with me," Bogie said. "A bird I can handle. In my last picture, I got bumped off by a lion."

"My picture is called *The Maltese Falcon*," Huston said.

"Are you recycling that old Bette Davis movie, *Satan Met A Lady* ?"

"Indeed I am, but with a different twist," Huston said. "This is serious drama. Actually Ricardo Cortez was the first Sam Spade back in those bad old Depression days of 1931."

"Listen, I need a hit," Bogie said, "I can't keep appearing in all this recycled crap."

"Perhaps, you'll change your mind when I tell you who your leading lady in *The Maltese Falcon* is going to be. Miss Ingrid Bergman, late of Sweden."

Bogie paused for a long moment. "Ingrid Bergman. Leslie Howard told me a lot about her. Ingrid Bergman, you say. OK, I'll star in your fucking picture."

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There are various stories as to what caused Methot to stab Bogie with a butcher knife in their kitchen.

John Huston later claimed that Bogie told him the true story, or at least his version of what happened one night when Methot and her spouse were sitting in their living room drinking. At first, the talk was about politics. Bogie was a Roosevelt Democrat but Methot was politically conservative.

As related by Bogie, the evening got off to a bad start when Bogie suggested that Ingrid Berman "is the only true lady in Hollywood." They had just returned from seeing Bergman play a French governess in *Adam Had Four Sons*.

"Well, what do you think I am?" a drunken Methot asked.

"You did play a prostitute in *Marked Woman*," he said. "Type casting."

Within moments she'd gone to the bar and picked up a whiskey bottle, bashing it into his skull.

Getting up from the sofa bleeding and with a splitting headache, he made his way to the kitchen to get an ice pack.

Furious at her, he called back. "Jack Warner called me in the other day. He said with the release of *High Sierra*, I'm gonna be a big star, and I can no longer be seen around town with a blousy matron long past her peak—that is, if she ever had a peak. He said I need to have a young, beautiful wife more appropriate to my new status as a star. Someone like Ingrid Bergman or Ida Lupino."

Methot came into the kitchen and picked up a butcher knife. In a fit of madness she lunged toward him. Seeing her coming, he ducked. Instead of his heart, she missed, stabbing him in his back.

Bleeding profusely, he ran out the door and called on a neighbor in a house nearby. An ambulance was summoned, and he was taken to a hospital. As it turned out it was only a flesh wound but had bled so much it seemed more serious.

Unless Bogie was putting on Huston, he claimed that after he left the hospital he went to a nightclub and later spent the night in a Turkish bath.

He enjoyed seeing the state Methot was in when he took a taxi home the next morning. She had not slept all night and had been frantically calling all over Hollywood to locate her husband.

"She was a model wife for forty-eight hours," Bogie told Huston.

The following Sunday night, Bogie invited Methot to La Maze for dinner and drinks, lots of drinks. He was usually more modest, but as of late he preferred to believe the press generated by *High Sierra*, not *The Wagons Roll at Night*.

"You know what, your old man is going to become the new idol of American women," he told her. "All the hot tamales will be shaking it at me, telling me to climb up for the wildest ride of my life. I'm gonna be bigger than George Raft and Edward G. Robinson. The dames will adore me. You should read my fan mail. Half the women of America, or so it seems, are begging me to fuck them. I'm adored by my public."

"You fucking ham actor," she shouted at him, throwing her glass, filled with alcohol, in his face. She raced toward the door and started down the street. One of her high heels came off, and she stumbled, falling drunk onto the sidewalk. She managed to pick herself up and stepped off the curb, hoping to summon one of the cabs that lined up in front of nightclubs in those days.

In the meantime, Bogie, who had driven to the restaurant, summoned the valet to get his car, even though he was in no condition to drive. Behind the wheel, he headed down the street. Spotting Methot, he stepped on the accelerator, and the car lunged toward her.

As he later told Huston, "I think I wanted to kill her at that moment. If ever I were psychotic in my whole life, that was it. I was heading right toward her. But at the last minute, I swerved and narrowly missed her, although I felt my car sideswiped her body. I braked but the pavement was wet and I skidded right into a parked car."

Both Methot and Bogie spent the night in the same hospital room. A policeman came to investigate. Fortunately, he was a fan of Bogie's, and no charges were filed.

"As you know, I once made a movie called *San Quentin*," Bogie told Huston. "Had I not swerved that night, I would have ended up in that prison. And if I hadn't seen Mayo coming at me with that knife, she'd be in prison too, and I'd be lying next to Maud at Forest Lawn."

"Kid, my advice to you is to file for a divorce from this bitch," Huston said. "She brings out the worst in you. I want to become a director, and I want you to star in my biggest films. That can't happen if you're dead. I know you rose from the dead in *The Return of Doctor X*. But we're talking real life here. Divorce her! You're going to sooner than later. Why not now? Don't postpone it—or it may be too late."

“You’re right!” Bogie said. “I’m gonna go home tonight and kick the bitch out of my house.”

Portraits of a marriage: Three views of Humphrey Bogart with Mayo Methot

That was a promise he’d keep, but not right away. Even more spectacular wars would be raged between “The Battling Bogarts” before the final curtain.

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Huston later recalled that, “I got one of the most disappointing calls of my life when Jack Warner told me that he was going to offer the part of Sam Spade to George Raft. I had to call Bogie and tell him he was off the picture. No Ingrid Bergman. No Bogie.”

Since Huston didn’t want Raft anyway, he was delighted when he turned down the role. He called Bogie right away with the news.

By now Bogie felt he was a star and, although he wanted the part of Sam Spade, he regretted that he was still second choice—“still a sloppy second,” he told Huston.

Raft had told Jack Warner that he did not think the movie “would be an important picture.” He exercised a clause in his contract that stated that he did not have to work on remakes.

He also objected to Huston. “I’m too nervous to entrust my career to a director’s first assignment, this young John Huston. He’s far too inexperienced to direct me.”

After Raft turned down *The Maltese Falcon*, “Warner began to see him as a jerk,” according to Huston.

Bogie heard that the studio owed Raft $75,000 but that Raft nonetheless bought out his contract for $10,000 “just to get the hell off that Warners’ lot.”

Warner told friends he “practically ran to the bank to cash the check before Raft changed his mind.”

The long battle for roles between Raft and Bogie had at last come to an inglorious ending.

In the aftermath of the Bogart vs. Raft conflicts, Raft would make only one more movie for Warner Brothers, *Background to Danger* (1943), in which he was directed by Raoul Walsh with Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet

as his co-stars.

Background to Danger, ironically, was conceived as a spin-off of *Casablanca*. Because of the spectacular success of *Casablanca*, every studio in Hollywood was trying to duplicate its ambience.

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Bogie came off a two-month suspension to appear as the lead in Huston's *Maltese Falcon*. He'd refused to do *Bad Men of Missouri*, which was rare for him, as in the 1930s he'd more or less done what Jack Warner told him to.

Bogie's intended role in *Bad Men of Missouri* went to fast-rising Dennis Morgan, who vowed that he'd never take a part away from Bogie.

When Bette Davis ran into Bogie on the Warner lot, she'd already read that he'd be starring in *The Maltese Falcon*. "That tired old thing," she said provocatively. "You tell everybody you don't want to take Raft's sloppy seconds. Now you're taking mine."

Released in 1931, *The Maltese Falcon,* the original version, had starred Bebe Daniels with Ricardo Cortez cast as the detective. In the first version, Cortez played it much more as a ladies' man than Bogart in his version of 1941.

Davis was referring to her failed film, *Satan Met a Lady*, which was the second recycling of *The Maltese Falcon*. In 1936, she starred in the most unsuccessful adaptation of the drama, appearing in the Brigid role opposite Warren William. Within the Davis movie, detective Sam Spade had been turned into a lawyer.

Bogie was very disappointed to learn that Ingrid Bergman had only been considered, and that no firm offer had ever been extended to her.

"I will give you the world's greatest consolation prize?" Huston said. "

Who dat ?" Bogie asked. "Marjorie Main?"

"No, Rita Hayworth."

"That's great, pal," Bogie said. "If her father has stopped fucking her, maybe Rita will share some of her goodies with me. Send her on."

Before Bergman or Hayworth were considered for the role of the female lead, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, it had originally been pitched to 27-year-old Geraldine Fitzgerald, with whom both Bogie and Bette Davis had worked in *Dark Victory*. Wanting to play sympathetic parts, she turned it down. "Let Bette do those bitch roles," she said.

Huston then had to call Bogie with more bad news about the female lead. "Rita Hayworth is off the picture. But, get this, how about Olivia de Havilland?"

"First you give me Raft's sloppy seconds," Bogie protested. "Now you offer Errol Flynn's sloppy seconds."

Scenes from the 1941 version of *The Maltese Falcon*: *(middle photo)* Mary Astor with Bogie *(bottom photo)* Bogie, Peter Lorre, Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet

Finally, a contract for the female lead was finally signed, with Mary Astor, whom Bogie knew only slightly, having performed a radio drama with her.

Originally a child star, Astor had had a checkered past. As a teenager she'd been seduced by John Barrymore, and she'd even had an affair with Walter Huston during the filming of *Dodsworth* (1936). "She went first for the father, then for the son," Bogie said.

Her first husband, Kenneth Hawks, the brother of Howard Hawks, had died in a plane crash.

During her divorce from her second husband, Dr. Franklyn Thorpe, in 1935, her scandalous diary was entered into evidence in the custody fight for their daughter, four-year-old Marylyn Thorpe.

Among other revelations, it included juicy insights into her notorious affair with playwright George S. Kaufman. She confessed that the playwright was "the kind of man I'd go over a cliff for."

The diary also revealed her struggle with alcoholism and her various suicide attempts.

Usually, off-screen notoriety would be a detriment to a star's career. But in Astor's case, Huston hired her for the role because of her adulterous reputation. Astor described her role of Brigid as a "bitch cauldron" and a psychopathic personality.

"I'm a director at last," Huston said, rushing to embrace Bogie when he showed up on the set of *The Maltese Falcon*. "It sure beats sleeping on park benches in Hyde Park when I was a struggling scriptwriter in London. To keep from starving, I even sang cowboy songs to people waiting in line to get into the theater."

It was Bogie who welcomed Walter Huston, John's father, to the set. As a good luck gesture in honor of his son's debut as a director, Walter had agreed to appear in an uncredited cameo. John had promised Jack Warner, a tightwad, that he would not charge Warners for his father's appearance.

In his cameo, Walter, a sea captain sieved with bullet holes, appears in Spade's office. Mumbling a word or two, he delivers the falcon before falling dead.

During the first week of the shoot, Huston came to Bogie. "Let's talk man to man, kid," he told his star. "During the filming, Mary Astor is off limits to you. I'm taking director's privilege, and I'm the one who fucks the female star."

"That's okay with me, pal" Bogie said. "I don't want to end up in some sex diary."

Scenes from the 1931 version of The Maltese Falcon

(bottom photo)
Ricardo Cortez with Bebe Daniels

Bogie had several talks with Astor on the set. In spite of her scandalous life, he found her a sensitive, caring woman. He confided to her that he "hated the marriage trap."

"I don't like to be used, the feeling that another human being possesses me, that I always have to buckle down, turning out all those crap pictures to bring home the bacon."

When Astor, years later, heard about his upcoming marriage to Lauren Bacall, she approved completely. "The remarkable Bacall knew who he was and let him be who he was and what he was. In return, he was at last able to give something no other woman could grab from him— certainly not Mayo Methot or Mary Philips—and that was his total commitment."

In recalling her work with Bogie on *Falcon*, Astor said, "He wasn't very tall; vocally he had a range from A to B; his eyes were like shiny coal nuggets pressed deep into his skull, and his smile was a mistake that he tried to keep from happening. He was no movie hero. He was no hero at all."

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Bogie had fond memories of making *The Maltese Falcon*, and either was a friend or became a friend of some of the supporting players.

On the set, he invited "two of my all-time favorite" broads—Lee Patrick and Gladys George—to his dressing room for drinks. Patrick, a former girlfriend from the 20s, was cast as Effie Perine, the loyal, quick-thinking secretary of Sam Spade. This small role became one of her most enduring film characterizations. Patrick had been called in at the last minute. Eve Arden had been the first choice for the role of the secretary.

Years later, Patrick's final acting role was a reprise of the Effie Perine character she developed for *The Maltese Falcon*. In a reworking of the Sam Spade story, *The Black Bird* (1975) starred George Segal as Sam Spade Jr. In that movie, he was forced to continue his father's work and to retain his father's increasingly sarcastic secretary.

Gladys George, who had worked with Bogie before in *The Roaring Twenties*, received third billing, even though she played a relatively minor role. In *The Maltese Falcon* she was cast as Iva Archer, the faithless wife of Spade's partner, Miles Archer. The role became her most remembered.

According to Huston, Jerome Cowan was perfectly cast as Miles Archer, Sam Spade's sleazy partner.

In *The Maltese Falcon*, Bogie would be forever linked in the public's mind to two of his supporting players, Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet.

Working with Lorre on the set of *The Maltese Falcon* marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship between Bogie and the Hungarian-born actor, who had made a name for himself in the German theater before fleeing to America to escape the Nazis. Lorre was known as Warner's "resident pervert with an accent."

Like Belmont Bogart, Lorre was a morphine addict, having developed his addiction in the wake of a horrendously

painful gallbladder operation during the late 1920s. He first achieved fame as the psychotic child murderer in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931).

Lorre and Bogie became "close pals," in Bogie's words and would work in four more films together, not only the memorable *Casablanca* but the controversial *Beat the Devil*.

Lorre, incidentally, became the friend who would urge Bogie to marry Lauren Bacall in spite of the vast difference in their ages. "Five good years are better than none," he told Bogie.

The Maltese Falcon marked the first pairing of Lorre and Greenstreet, who would go on to make nine more movies together. "They became more famous as a couple than Romeo and Juliet," said Huston.

"I will always remember Peter Lorre and Sydney Greenstreet moving through some fog-laden street on the back lot of Warners," Huston said. "You could be sure that both of them were up to some heinous deed. I'd call them the Laurel and Hardy of crime. Even though they appeared in many films without each other, they are forever married as a pair of disreputable but fascinating evil-doers that won a place in our hearts forever. They may, in fact, become immortal long after we've forgotten Lana Turner and Rita Hayworth."

From the start, Lorre was Huston's first choice to play the role of Joel Cairo. "You will know that you're playing a homosexual," Huston said. "I will know that, and Bogie will know that. But according to the Production Code, we're not supposed to depict homosexuals openly on the screen. Those blue noses think that sucking cock or taking it up the ass isn't what men should do. So let's keep it our little secret, okay?"

Lorre defiantly played the role of Cairo as effeminate. In the movie, both his calling cards and handkerchiefs are scented with gardenias; he fusses about his wardrobe, and becomes hysterical when blood from a scratch spoils his shirt. He also virtually fellates his cane during an interview with Sam Spade.

In Hammett's novel, the character is more blatantly homosexual, and is called "queer" and "the fairy."

Greenstreet made his first on-screen appearance as Casper Gutman or "The Fat Man" in this picture. The 357-pound, 60-year-old British actor would forever be associated with Bogie's screen image.

The scene where Greenstreet tries to get Bogie to take a drink which is drugged was the performer's first appearance in front of a Hollywood camera.

Greenstreet fit Hammett's description—"flabbily fat with bulbous pink cheeks and lips and chin and neck, with a great soft egg of a belly that was all his torso."

Before making his first appearance on camera, Greenstreet turned to Astor, "Mary, dear, hold my hand; tell me I won't make an ass of myself!"

During his previous forty years, Greenstreet had been a prominent stage actor. Two decades Bogie's senior, Greenstreet had once been a tea planter in Ceylon before going on what he still called "the wicked, wicked stage" in London.

Suffering from diabetes and Bright's disease, Greenstreet made films for a period of only eight years, but he is among the best remembered and the most recognizable of all film actors. Greenstreet's film career ended not in a Bogie movie but in *Malaya* (1949), in which he had third billing after Spencer Tracy and James Stewart.

Lorre wasn't the only actor evoking a homosexual in the film. Elisha Cook Jr., who had appeared on Broadway with Bogie in the 1932 *Chrysalis*, was cast as the punk, Wilmer Cook.

Faces and a sense of *film noir* from the 1941 version of *Maltese Falcon*

(top photo) Humphrey Bogart
(middle photo) Elisha Cook
(bottom photo) Peter Lorre, Mary Astor, and Sydney Greenstreet

In the movie, Sam Spade refers to Wilmer as a "gunsel." The censors thought that meant a gunman. The Yiddish term gunsel, literally "little goose," was a vulgarism for a homosexual, similar to the Yiddish word "faigle" or "little bird." Gunsel usually meant a young man involved in a homosexual relationship with an older man.

Cook later claimed, "I was forever cast as a pimp, an informer, or a cocksucker."

The characters of Casper Gutman (Greenstreet) and Wilmer (Cook) were referred to in the *Falcon* film as "Fat Man" and "Little Boy." These were the names used for the two atomic bombs that were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in
1945, ending World War II.

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Arguably, *The Maltese Falcon* included more scenes wherein its principal actors smoked cigarettes onscreen than any film of the 1940s, surpassing even movies made by Bette Davis. Jack Warner hated to see actors smoke on the screen, claiming it would prompt smokers in the audience to leave their seats and walk out into the lobby to light up.

But the excessive smoking in *Falcon* actually contributed to the atmospheric tension of the convoluted story.

Jack Warner wanted to entitle the movie *The Gent from Frisco* because *The Maltese Falcon* had been the name of the 1931 version. But Huston insisted that the original title be used, and he eventually won the battle.

In thirty-four days, Huston ushered the filming of *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) to completion, one of the world's most classic films. If *High Sierra* didn't quite put Bogie on the A-list in Hollywood, *The Maltese Falcon* did the trick.

"Bogie was a second-class star who then became a big star after *The Maltese Falcon*," Huston said.

Or as Otto Friedrich claimed, "Bogie was released from his gangster roles and won audiences over by playing a good guy anti-hero. *The Maltese Falcon* was the movie in which he created the persona that not only made him famous for the rest of his life but gradually became his own permanent identity."

The climatic confrontation in the movie lasted for almost twenty minutes, taking up one-fifth of the 100-minute running time. All five principal stars were on camera, the shoot taking an entire week with a day off to celebrate July 4.

The closing line, “The stuff that dreams are made of,” was voted as the 14th most famous piece of movie dialogue of all time by the American Film Institute. It was Bogie who suggested that Huston use this paraphrase of a line from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

In 2007, the American Film Institute also ranked *The Maltese Falcon* as #31 among The Greatest Movies of All Time.

On May 18, 1950, the Screen Guild Theatre broadcast a thirty-minute radio adaptation of the movie, with Bogie as Sam Spade. His fourth wife, Lauren Bacall, performed the Mary Astor role.

After *The Maltese Falcon*, Huston would have only admiration for Bogie as an actor. “There was a devil in the kid, and Bogie made audiences aware of his demons. The devils were so obvious that it was like unzipping your pants and putting your dick on public display. When Bogie was uncaged, he was one of the most exciting creatures in the history of movies.”

Bogie’s acceptance of Huston as a director and his acceptance of the role of Sam Spade consolidated their life-long friendship and set the stage for collaboration on such later films as *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948), *Key Largo* (1948), *The African Queen* (1951), and *Beat the Devil* (1954).

The Maltese Falcon was nominated for Best Picture Oscar in 1941, but lost to John Ford’s *How Green Was My Valley*.

When he saw the finished cut, Bogie proclaimed, “I’ll no longer have to be a punching bag for guys like Cagney, Robinson, and Raft. The world is starting to discover what drives Mayo Methot crazy—and that is Humphrey Bogart has sex appeal. I’ve been denied love in nearly all my films. It’s time from now on that I get the gal in future movies. Old guys like me need love, too.”

CHAPTER TEN

Bogie was always getting a call, either from another actor or a director, which indirectly transmitted details about his next starring role. Jack Warner or Hal Wallis never contacted him personally, the way they did with George Raft.

The last time he'd seen the producer, Wallis, Bogie had reminded him, "I'm the new George Raft. Let's not forget that when assigning roles in the future. When did Raft last deliver a hit like *The Maltese Falcon* ?" He paused a few seconds. "You don't have to answer that."

This time around, it was director Vincent Sherman who called to tell Bogie he'd been cast in *All Through the Night* (1942) to be produced by Jerry Wald.

"Who are my co-stars?" Bogie asked.

"Conrad Veidt and Kaaren Verne," Sherman said.

"You've got to be kidding. "With a war nearly upon us, you put me in a film with Krauts. Don't you know there's anti-German sentiment out there? Who else?"

Listen, I had to settle for Verne," Sherman told Bogie. "I really wanted David Selznick's new discovery, Ingrid Bergman, but she wasn't available. At one point Warner wanted Olivia de Havilland."

"John Huston has his eye on De Havilland, so she's off-limits to me," Bogie said. "No use spoiling a great friendship. But that Swedish icicle, the Bergman dame. I bet I could melt her down."

"In addition to the leads, we've got an amazing supporting cast," Sherman claimed. "Some of the best supporting talent in Hollywood. Your new friend, Peter Lorre. But also Jane Darwell. She was marvelous in *Grapes of Wrath*. Frank McHugh. Barton MacLane. Wallace Ford. Phil Silvers. Jackie Gleason, William Demarest. Fucking comics they give me. And, for the lezzies, Judith Anderson."

"What's my character called?"

"Gloves Donahue, a bigshot Broadway gambler."

"Gloves?" Bogie asked. "What about Mittens?"

"Listen, the picture is all about Nazi agents," Sherman said. "It's very timely and all. Part of the film involves a Nazi attempt to blow up the Brooklyn Navy Yard. You're not going to bolt, are you?"

"I'll do the goddamn picture, providing you sign a blood oath that you didn't offer it to Raft first."

Unhappy with the script of *All Through the Night*, Bogie placed a private call to Irene Lee, the West Coast story editor for Warner Brothers. Contract players weren't supposed to do that, but Bogie said, "What the hell!"

"What's the hottest property you've got cooking on the stove?" he asked Lee, who was a fan of his.

"I've read a copy of this play that never got produced," Lee said. "It's called *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. It's set in Morocco. I sent it to Wallis, and he liked it. But he didn't like the title, though. *Algiers* was such a big hit that he wants to call it *Casablanca*. The lead role, Rick, owns a bar. There's this gal. They met in Paris."

(center photos) Conrad Veidt, Kaaren Verne
(bottom photo) Humphrey Bogart, *film noir* movie star

"Could I play Rick?"

"The role was made for you," Lee said. "But there's a problem. Wallis and Jack Warner see George Raft doing it."

"See you, kid," Bogie put down the phone.

By now, Bogie was openly telling anyone who wanted to listen, "Raft is a complete asshole. The day is coming, and it's coming very soon, when Raft will be taking my sloppy seconds. Mark my words."

Peter Lorre called Bogie to meet him for drinks at Romanoff's, where he was introduced to his female lead, Kaaren Verne. This Berlin-born actress had fled the Nazis in 1938. Bogie had never heard of her, and she explained why.

"The studio changed my name to Catherine Young," she said. "But since& Jack Warner thinks war with Hitler is inevitable, he told me to call myself Kaaren Verne again. He thinks there's publicity to be gained by a Teutonic actress who turned her back on Hitler and fled to America."

Before the second drink, Bogie had decided that Verne and Lorre had fallen in love. It didn't seem to matter that Verne was married to musician Arthur Young, and Lorre had wed Celia Lovsky in 1934.

Ever his provocative self, Bogie, now into his fourth martini, asked Verne, "What does a dame like you, a member of the superior race, want with this little Jew gnome?"

"There's more to Peter than meets the eye," she said.

"I hope so," Bogie said. "Judged from the outside package, he looks like a shrimp."

The affair between Lorre and Verne began during the making of *All Through the Night*, but neither of them would divorce their spouses until 1945, at which time they married each other.

Verne had played the lead for Vincent Sherman in *Underground* (1941), and they worked well together. "Finally," Sherman told Bogie, "you get the girl but only on screen. Our little Jew boy [a reference to Lorre] is pounding that Kraut pussy every afternoon in his dressing room before she goes home to hubbie."

Meeting Jane Darwell, Bogie virtually fell into her bosom. "You're my mommy on screen but I want you to be my mommy off screen too. I'm a new orphan, and I need my mommy."

"You can place that lovely head of yours in my bosom any night you want," Darwell told him.

Bogie's first greeting to Gleason was, "You look like the man who came to dinner and ate the guests."

On the first day of the shoot, Sherman complained to Bogie that Warner was giving him only $300 a week to direct the picture with a budget of $600,000. "Other directors are getting so much more."

Jane Darwell
"My bosom for you."

"Maybe you just ain't worth it," Bogie said just to rile him.

Bogie fitted easily into his role as a Damon Runyon New York type who has to outwit a ruthless pack of Nazi sympathizers.

All Through the Night was one of the first anti-Nazi films. Once war against Germany was declared, Hollywood began turning out such pictures by the hundreds.

Sherman explained to Bogie that he was forced& to use "this fat guy," Jackie Gleason, because he was pulling in $250 a week, and Warners had no role for him. The same problem was faced by Phil Silvers. Since there was no work for them at Warners, the studio let them both go soon after they'd appeared in *All Through the Night*. As comics in the years ahead, Gleason and Silvers, of course, became household names.

Both Sherman and Bogie had seen Conrad Veidt in *The Cabinet of Dr.& Caligari*, as had most of *tout* Hollywood.

In the film, Veidt delivered his usual "iron-fist-in-velvet glove" performance as a Nazi agent.

He told Bogie, "With America about to enter the war, I think I have a whole new career ahead of me in playing dreaded Nazis. Actually, I fled the Nazis. My wife is Jewish." By that time Bogie was calling Veidt "Connie."

He was accurate in his prediction. Predating *Casablanca*, Veidt's next film was entitled *Nazi Agent*.

Over drinks, Veidt told Bogie that there was another reason to leave Germany. "I was known as a staunch anti-Nazi," he said. "As such, I attracted the scrutiny of the Gestapo. A decision was made to assassinate me. I found out about the plot in time. I was able to escape from Germany before the Nazi death squad got to me."

One drunken night when Veidt had had too many beers, he asked Bogie if he could sing a song in his ear. Very quietly he sang "Where the Lighthouse Shines Across the Bay."

"It was the song I sang in my last German film *F.P.I.* in 1933," Veidt said. "My record was a flop."

"Yeah, my songs haven't been hits either," Bogie said jokingly.

Ironically Veidt's song became a hit in England fifty years later when it was discovered by disc jockey Terry Wogan.

Filming of *All Through the Night* went smoothly except on six different occasions when Mayo Methot showed up. She suspected that Bogie was having an affair with Kaaren Verne.

On the set of Veidt's previous picture, *Above Suspicion*, he had told Joan Crawford, "When I made *All Through the Night* with Bogie, I was shocked at the fighting that went on between him and his wife, Methot. I heard screaming one afternoon, and I opened the door to my dressing room in time to see Bogie chasing Methot across the sound stage. At the top of his voice, he was screaming, 'You dirty bitch! You filthy bitch! I'm gonna kill you, you broken-down old hag.'"

“I went to Sherman to see what was going on,” Veidt said. “He told me, ‘Get used to it. One day, sooner than later, one of them is going to kill the other. I hope it’s Methot who bites the dust. I need Bogie.’”

All Through the Night came under fire from isolationists, but Warner and Bogie, too, did not back down. Bogie’s response to such isolationists as Senator Gerald Nye was, “Go stick a fat dildo up your crusty ass.” Senator Bennett C. Clark charged Bogie with “creating war hysteria with such anti-German propaganda movies.”

At long last Bogie and Jack Warner were united in a common cause, fighting censorship and undue influence from Washington politicians who wanted to silence them.

Warner denounced isolationists, claiming, “I may be charged with being anti-Nazi, but no son of a bitch is going to call me anti-American.”

Bogie chimed in, telling the *Hollywood Reporter* that censorship “is the number one enemy of a free democracy. Let Josef Goebbels stay where he is in Berlin, licking the dingleberries off Hitler’s asshole.” The first part of his statement was printed, the second part was censored.

Bogie was not a joiner. But he did join the Fight for Freedom Committee, urging the entry of the United States into World War II.

He knew that an attack of some sort on American soil was imminent. He volunteered his thirty-eight foot, diesel-powered *Sluggy* for the war effort.

Southern California, with all its defense plants and refineries, was vulnerable to attack. After qualifying for the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, he piloted his *Sluggy* along the coastline one weekend, looking for enemy ships. Larger vessels had already been called up by the U.S. Navy.

All Through the Night was wrapped around the middle of October in 1941.

Ironically in the weeks preceding December 7, 1941, Warners was developing an action thriller for Bogie called *Aloha Means Goodbye*, involving a Japanese plot to attack military installations in Hawaii. It had been serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Bogie was due December 10 in St. Louis to appear at a Fight for Freedom rally with Melvyn Douglas and his politician wife, Helen Gahagan Douglas. Linda Darnell, a rising film star, was also slated to appear with Bogie and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, whose career would later be ruined by a Red-baiting young politician named Richard M. Nixon.

All plans were cancelled on December 7. Peter Lorre telephoned Bogie so that he’d switch on a radio for news about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In January of 1942, *All Through the Night* opened across the country and did better business than *The Maltese Falcon*. By then both Franklin Roosevelt and the Congress had declared war against both Germany and Japan.

There were no more protests against Warner Brothers for its anti-Nazi films. The America First organization, which had opposed the entry of the United States into World War II, had become history once Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Bogie specifically requested that Jack Warner star him in more anti-Nazi films.

He made another call to see how that play *Everybody Comes to Rick’s* — tentatively entitled *Casablanca* —was coming along.

In the meantime, Sam Jaffe negotiated a new contract for Bogie with Warners, a seven-year deal at $1,750 a week.

He had high hopes for his wartime future in films. Having already served in the military during the closing days of World War I, he was too old for the draft.

Expecting bigger and better pictures, he was immediately disappointed when he learned that the leading role in *The*

Big Shot, his next film, had been previously rejected by George Raft. “Another sloppy second,” he told his director Lewis Seiler, who had helmed him before.

When Bogie read the script for *The Big Shot* (1942), he interpreted it as just another aging gangster clinker. He told director Seiler that, “I thought we stopped making crap like this in the 30s.”

Bogie was disappointed that Mary Astor, his co-star in *The Maltese Falcon*, had turned down the role of the female lead.

“I saw a secret memo that Jack Warner sent to his directors,” Astor confided to him. “After this war is over, there may be no more pictures for either one of us to turn down. That’s why I’m desperate to take only the right roles. Warner has urged his staff to find new stars. To quote him directly, he said, ‘We just cannot go on being satisfied with the old ones because each day they become more unmanageable and less box office.’”

(lower photo)
Bogart with Irene Manning
“I took a bullet for him.”

“What you’re really saying is for me to avoid turkeys—or else,” Bogie said.

“Perhaps we’ll work again some day,” she said.

“Maybe in Grandpa and Grandma roles,” he said, before ringing off.

During the shoot of *The Big Shot*, Bogie was sleeping with Methot only on special occasions, whatever that was. He was looking to begin an affair. For a while he settled on his female co-star, the beautiful, sultry Irene Manning, an actress-singer from Cincinnati.

He recognized her from her appearance in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), as Bogie never missed a James Cagney movie. “I need to see what the drag queen is up to,” he told Methot.

Manning had been around since the mid-30s, appearing with Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. She quipped, “I left light opera for horse operas.”

Bogie may have seduced Manning—or maybe not. Neither party ever spoke of the matter. It was obvious to those on the set that he was attracted to her, but whatever there was between them was not recorded by any eyewitnesses.

“Instead of hot love scenes with Bogie in the film, I had to take a bullet for him in the final reel,” Manning said.

Bogie was even more attracted to the second female lead, a Spokane-born “starlet with promise,” the lovely and luminous Susan Peters.

But he backed away when he heard this young girl was dating Howard Hughes and also getting serious with actor Richard Quine, whom she would marry in 1943.

She’d been nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actress for her appearance in the 1942 *Random Harvest*. Bogie realized that Peters was one of those stars of tomorrow that Mary Astor had been talking about.

Bogie liked Peters and had several long talks with her between takes. He told Seiler she "treats me like a father. After all, I can't expect a nineteen-year-old gal to fall for me."

Obviously Bogie wasn't very good at prophesying his own future, as Lauren Bacall waited in the wings.

He was very saddened to pick up a newspaper on New Year's Day in 1945 to read that Quine and his bride, Peters, on a duck-hunting trip outside San Diego, had had an accident. Her rifle had discharged accidentally, the bullet lodging in her spine, leaving her permanently paralyzed from the waist down.

Peters would hang on to life until October 23, 1952, when she died. She'd lost her will to live and had literally starved herself to death, having not eaten in weeks.

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Bogie was in the doldrums, his marriage to Methot all but over except for the divorce. Three or four times a week, he went to the Finlandia Baths on Sunset Boulevard. Methot became convinced that it was a brothel. She was right, at least in one aspect. It was a brothel but not filled with women.

It was patronized by young actors, many of whom were gay. There is no evidence that Bogie ever participated in any of these gay activities going on at the baths, which in the 1950s would draw such actors as Rock Hudson.

Methot's ire at Bogie's Finlandia visits grew so pronounced that one night she set their home on fire. With the aid of the studio police at Warner Brothers, the flames were put out, and there was no newspaper publicity.

His wife's drinking, violence, and mental instability grew worse. On several occasions, he tried to get her to seek psychiatric help. "There's nothing wrong with me that a stiff drink and a stiff dick won't cure." In a bizarre touch, she went around all day and half the night humming "Embraceable You."

Bogie's depression was relieved when a call came in from John Huston. "How about being in my next movie, playing a character called Rick?"

At long last Bogie showed some excitement. "I've been waiting for months to play Rick. Jack Warner is finally green-lighting *Casablanca*."

"Not so fast," Huston warned him. This is a different Rick. Rick Leland. It's a war movie. The good news is you'll be reunited with Mary Astor and Sydney Greenstreet, minus Peter Lorre.

Huston sent over the script that afternoon, and Bogie immediately recognized the screenplay by Richard Macaulay as a rewrite of *Aloha Means Goodbye*, which he had been up for before December 7. It involved Rick's attempt to prevent a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Since he failed to do that, the plot was reworked to have Rick save the Panama Canal from a Japanese bomber.

As a title, *Across the Pacific* had been used by Warners for a silent feature in 1926, starring Monte Blue. For his own personal amusement, Huston gave Blue a small role in the 1942 version.

In a role originally slated for Ann Sheridan, Astor was cast as Alberta Marlow, a mysterious, sophisticated lady with whom Bogie has a light-hearted romance. Greenstreet was cast as Dr. Lorenz, an urbane spy for the Japanese.

Not only Bogie, but Astor, Greenstreet, and Huston claimed, "We miss Peter."

"One afternoon Peter donned a white coat and walked through a scene in which Sydney, Bogie, and I were being served breakfast on the ship," Astor recalled. "We didn't know John had made the switch with the actor who was playing the waiter. Peter was behind us, so we couldn't see him, and he served us, making tiny mistakes—holding a platter a bit too far away, just touching Sydney's arm as he lifted a cup of coffee. Finally, he leaned down and kissed me on the back of the neck, and we all broke up."

Peter Lorre

Having scored a hit with *The Maltese Falcon*, Jack Warner was eager to repeat the success of that film. He& used not only part of the same cast—Bogie, Astor, and Greenstreet—but similar dialogue, especially that spoken between Bogie and Astor.

Right from the beginning, Huston created a "deliberate ambiguity" in the character of Rick. Was Bogie a renegade? A gangster? Or ultimately the hero who saved the Panama Canal?

(middle photo) Bogie, in a jam, facing Sydney Greenstreet.

(lower photo) Bogart with Mary Astor

Before filming began, Huston warned Bogie that at any minute he might have to leave the movie. He was set to be called up for active duty, as he was close to being commissioned in the signal corps.

At the most crucial point in the film, Huston got his marching papers. In the plot, Bogie had been roped to a chair, and he was surrounded by a small army of Japanese soldiers with machine guns. There was virtually no way he could escape from that trap.

Huston had come to a stumbling block in the script, and he couldn't solve it. He told Bogie on the set that he'd been called up. "I'm out of here. Off to war."

"How in the fuck am I going to get out of this Jap trap?" Bogie asked.

"Don't worry about it," Huston assured him. In a call to Jack Warner, Huston said. "I'm off to the Army. Bogie will know how to spring himself from that trap."

Bogie's friend, Vincent Sherman, was called in to complete the picture.

In a talk with Warner that morning, the studio chief told Sherman, "It's not just the Army. Huston is having female

trouble. His wife comes in one door, and Olivia de Havilland goes out the other. The guy sometimes doesn't know what he's doing. Take over for him in the morning and finish the damn picture. I'm running out of money."

& In the film, Bogie manages to overpower a guard and take over his machine gun station in time to shoot down a Japanese plane taking off to bomb the Panama Canal. Bogie shouts, "I'm not easily trapped."

When someone pointed out to Sherman that this plot development was not believable, the director shot back. "If you ask me, we were lucky to get the bastard out of there at all."

As one reviewer noted, "The characters in *Across the Pacific* never got to the Pacific, much less crossed it."

Long after completing her last movie with Bogie, Mary Astor reflected on the man himself.

"I have heard people say he wasn't really a good actor," she said. "I don't go along with that. It is true that his personality dominated the character he was playing—but the character gained by it. His technical skill was quite brilliant. His precision timing was no accident. He kept other actors on their toes because he listened to them, he watched, he *looked* at them. He never had that vague stare of a person who waits for you to finish talking, who hasn't heard a word you said. And he was never 'upstage center,' acting all by himself. He was there. *With you*."

***

After Huston volunteered for Army duty and abruptly abandoned the film he'd been directing, there was a glitch. He was assigned an Army desk job with nothing to do. When Jack Warner heard that Huston was just waiting around for an overseas posting to the war front, he sent him the script of *The Killers* to work on.

The Killers was an adaptation of a short story by Ernest Hemingway. The film was to star two exciting new personalities, both of whom were gorgeous. They were Ava Gardner, who had became famous when she'd married Mickey Rooney, and the new sensation, muscular, strikingly handsome Burt Lancaster.

Director Vincent Sherman
"Saving Huston's ass"

Huston did not accept screen writing credits for *The Killers* because he did not want the Army to find out that he wasn't devoting his full attention to his do-nothing job, which consisted of just waiting every day for his orders.

One evening, after Huston had finished coaching Ava Gardner for her part in *The Killers,* the lady herself showed up on his doorstep. It was after midnight. He'd been having his ninth drink of& the evening on his outdoor patio, and he asked her to join him.

"She was jaw-dropping beautiful," Huston told Bogie. "Still with her North Carolina accent. The Tarheel farm gal has become a Hollywood goddess."

"Did you fuck her?" Bogie asked.

"She seduced me. She stood in front of me and pulled off her clothes and jumped in the pool. When she emerged wet, I had a towel waiting. I don't think I got to dry her off before we did the dirty deed."

Bogie was anxious to meet this goddess, and soonafter, a private dinner for three was arranged way out in the San Fernando Valley, presumably where no one in the film industry would see them.

Bogie remembered that drunken evening, where Gardner called him "honey chil'." He found her beguiling and

wanted to take her away from Huston and have her just for himself.

When Huston went to the men's room, Gardner provocatively said, "I saw a picture of you and your wife. Miss Mayo Methot. Is that really your wife or your mother?"

"You're good, kid," he said.

"I'm not just good, I'm the best."

At the end of the evening, Gardner succulently kissed Bogie right on the lips in front of Huston. "Some day let's make a picture together. Perhaps John will direct it."

"Considering how you look and how I look, I could only play your father," Bogie said.

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Fast forward to Rome in January of 1954. Joseph L. Mankiewicz was set to film *The Barefoot Contessa*, based on the tumultuous life of Rita Hayworth, who had turned down the role. "Too close to home," she said.

Mankiewicz had cast Bogie in the lead, with Gardner playing Maria Vargas. Cast as a loud-mouthed press agent, Edmond O'Brien had the third lead, for which he would win an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor.

Bogie played the world-weary writer-director Harry Dawes. He arrived on the set with his wig maker and long-time mistress Verita Peterson. In the first weeks of the shoot, Lauren Bacall had not yet arrived in Rome.

The wonderful camaraderie that had flourished between Bogie and Gardner during the war years did not exist on the set of *Contessa*. He got top billing, but he was drawing only half the salary that she was.

As a founding member of the Rat Pack, Bogie was a close friend of Frank Sinatra's. Gardner had just separated from him.

"I'll never figure you broads out," Bogie told her when they met on the set. Half the world's female population would throw themselves at Frank's feet, and here you are flouncing around with guys who wear capes and little ballerina slippers."

He was referring to Luis Miguel Dominguín, the celebrated Spanish matador with whom she was having an affair.

Although Gardner was putting away a massive amount of alcohol every day, Bogie told her he knew why she drank so little. "That's because when you're drunk you revert to your cornpone-and-molasses Southern accent. Then all your fancy friends will know you're just a hillbilly gal."

"That's what attracts them, honey chil'."

Mankiewicz was forced to shoot many takes of their scenes together. Either Gardner would flub her lines because of her "stage fright," or else the scene would be interrupted by Bogie's racking coughs, an early sign of the cancer that would eventually kill him.

Bogie would often halt production, "God damn it, Mankiewicz, can you tell the dame here to speak up? I can't hear a God damn word she's saying."

When he was actually speaking to Gardner on the set, he told her, "I think I'm good for another decade or so. Then maybe Betty will support me. She'll carry on for at least another forty years." He was, of course, referring to his fourth wife, Lauren Bacall.

Gardner was well aware of his affair with Verita Peterson. Bogie was also aware of her awareness. He told her, "When Betty arrives in Rome, I've got to stash Verita somewhere. We can't go carrying on right in front of Betty."

"I'll take her off your hands," Gardner said.

“Then those rumors about you are true,” he said.

“That’s for you never to find out, honey chil’. Now get out of here. I need a bullfighter’s fuck now. To go on camera having just been fucked makes my skin more radiant.”

Ava Gardner

“It makes my dick limp,” he said, exiting her dressing room.

“Mr. Bogart didn’t make my life any easier,” Gardner said. “He was always needling me, calling me the Grabtown Gypsy, and complaining that he needed a running start toward the set if he wasn’t going to be trampled by my entourage.”

Gardner also didn’t endear herself to Bogie after *The Barefoot Contessa* opened. Having learned that he didn’t like the word shit, she& penned the following note: “Bogie, just seen *Contessa*. I’m sure you’ll agree that I looked the most gorgeous I’ve ever been photographed. But, honey chil’, you looked like shit! Love, Ava.”

The review from Pauline Kael didn’t help much either. “ *The Barefoot Contessa* is a trash masterpiece: a Cinderella story in which the prince turns out to be impotent. It’s hard to believe Mankiewicz ever spent an hour in Hollywood; the alternative supposition is that he spent too many hours there.”

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In January of 1942 Bogie was disheartened to read an item in the *Hollywood Reporter*, claiming that Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan, the lovers in *Kings Row*, had been selected to head the cast in *Casablanca*, with Dennis Morgan as the third lead in this romantic triangle.

This may have been a trial balloon. Years later Reagan claimed that he was made no serious offer to play Rick. Speculative casting was a common practice to attract publicity for a forthcoming film.

The Barefoot Contessa (“Trash Masterpiece”) *(upper photo)* Bogart romancing Ava Gardner *(lower photo)* Vincenzo (Rosanno Brazzi) tells Bogie that Maria Vargas (Ava Gardner) is dead.

The producer Hal Wallis wanted to cast Bogie in the lead, Jack Warner preferring Raft. Warner prevailed.

Raft at the time was trying to escape the taint of gangster roles. In the films of the 40s, the Nazis had become the

gangsters of the 1930s. Raft felt that Rick Blaine, an ex-smuggler, was really a gangster. “The script doesn’t make clear why Rick can’t return to America,” Raft said. “Obviously he was involved in some illegal activity. I won’t do it.”

But after turning it down, he had second thoughts. He then notified Wallis that he would accept the role. It was too late. Warner had agreed to let Wallis cast Bogie.

“I had many regrets after I gave Bogart the role of Rick, the slick casino owner, in *Casablanca*,” Raft said. “But the part caught up with me in Cuba. In *Background to Danger*, the movie I shot in Havana, I starred in a real-life drama that was more exciting& than *Casablanca*. It had a live revolution as a background, and the bullets in the machine guns pointed at my head were real.”

The screenplay for *Casablanca* was based on an unproduced play, *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*, written by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison.

Lisbon was the major port of embarkation for refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe. The playwrights in their first draft set the scene in Portugal, but later transferred it to Casablanca, which was also one of the key stops for refugees on the run.

Samuel Marx had pitched the property to Mayer as an ideal vehicle for Clark Gable. Alison had envisioned him for the role. “Gable as Rick was my concept of a guy that I would like. I hated Humphrey Bogart. I thought he was a common drunk.”

Warners did not immediately get first dibs on the play *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*. Samuel Marx of MGM wanted to offer Burnett and Alison $5,000, but Louis B. Mayer vetoed the idea.

The script of the play arrived on the Warner lot on December 8, 1941, one day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The first script analyst at Warner who read the play, Stephen Karnot, called it “sophisticated hokum.” In his words, “It will play.” He sent it up to Irene Lee, head of the Warner story department. She liked the script and shot it at once to Jack Warner, who also liked it. He agreed to pay $20,000, the highest amount ever paid for an unproduced script.

Thinking of the success of the film, *Algiers* (1938), Warner had already ordered that the play be retitled *Casablanca*.

After several attempts to get a workable screenplay, Hal Wallis had long talks with& Julius J. Epstein and Philip G. Epstein, two brothers. These writers were known on the lot as “The Boys” or else “Phil and Julie.”

Identical twins, they were both bald and rather lanky, but each of them was known for their snappy dialogue, as demonstrated when they were called in “to fix” *Yankee Doodle Dandy* for James Cagney in his role of George M.& Cohan.

In its simplest format, the Epsteins created their romance/drama set in unoccupied Morocco during the early days of World War II. An American expatriate, Rick Blaine (Bogie), meets a former lover Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), with unforeseen complications. She is in essence torn between two lovers. Paul Henreid, as Victor Laszlo, would later be cast to fill the triangle.

To bail out the brothers, screenwriter Howard Koch was called in to develop a screenplay from scratch.

As a writer, Koch had already had a moment of notoriety. He was known for his dramatization of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*. That broadcast had convinced thousands of Americans that the country was being invaded by Martians.

Later, writers Casey Robinson and Lenore J. Coffee were asked to read both the Koch version of the play and the Epstein version. These two new writers found merit in both scripts. But Robinson beefed up the romantic angle.

Wallis considered casting Hedy Lamarr as Ilsa, because of her success in the film *Algiers*. In the final negotiation, MGM refused to release her. Hedy also objected to the unfinished script.

Months later, when both Bergman and Bogie were overseas entertaining the troops, Hedy, along with Alan Ladd in the Rick role, agreed to perform the screen drama in a 1944 radio show for the Lux Radio Theater.

A classic French beauty, Michèle Morgan was a serious contender for the role of Isla. Her enigmatic features and gloomy allure invited comparisons to a young Greta Garbo. Although she would be cast opposite Bogie in his upcoming *Passage to Marseille*, she did not click with American audiences. After the war, she'd go home to France where she became one of her country's most popular leading ladies.

"We'll always have Paris"

Her asking price of $55,000 was too high, since it was more than twice what Warner would have to pay Bergman.

Years later, when asked how she felt losing out on the pivotal role of Isla Lund in *Casablanca*, Morgan issued an enigmatic statement: "A woman can always deceive a hundred men but not a single& woman."

The Epstein twins were sent to meet with David Selznick to persuade him to lend the services of Ingrid Bergman, whom he had under exclusive contract. Although the twins were articulate on paper, they bumbled the plot, which had not really been worked out in their minds, when they had to deliver it face-to-face to Selznick.

" *Casablanca* is going to have a lot of schmaltz—lots of atmosphere, cigarette smoke, guitar music," Julius Epstein told Selznick. After nearly half an hour of describing the movie to a seemingly bored Selznick, Julius finally gave up and said, "Oh, what the hell! It's a lot of shit like *Algiers*."

"When Selznick stopped slurping his luncheon soup and nodded, I knew we had Bergman," Epstein later claimed.

Selznick agreed to lend Bergman to Warners for $25,000. It was a barter agreement. To sweeten the deal, Selznick agreed to lend Bergman for eight weeks in return for eight weeks of services from Olivia de Havilland. Selznick never used De Havilland but lent her to RKO to make the lackluster *Government Girl* instead.&

Off and on-screen views of Casablanca with Bogart, Rains, Bergman, and Henreid

"...a 'B' picture soon forgotten."
---Ingrid Bergman

"I didn't want to be Ilsa in *Casablanca*," Bergman said. "There wasn't that much for me to do."

But since she was under exclusive contract to Selznick, she had to go through with the deal; otherwise she'd face suspension. To prepare for the role and to understand Bogie's acting style, Bergman watched *The Maltese Falcon* six times.

Selznick wasn't as dumb as this exchange with the Epsteins made him appear. At the time, there was fear that Sweden might be joining forces with the Axis to fight the West. A Swedish actress might be viewed as an anathema to American audiences.& Greta Garbo had already retired and didn't face that problem.

Bergman was a politically naïve young woman when she filmed *Die vier Gessellen* (*The Four Companions*) in Germany. One of her biographers, Charlotte Chandler, claimed she at first interpreted the Nazis as only "a temporary aberration—too foolish to be taken seriously."

"Germany will not start a war," Bergman claimed. The actress later had a life-long guilt because she had so horribly misjudged the situation and was so slow to see the evils of Hitler.

Her estranged first husband, Petter Lindstrom, in a later attempt to embarrass his wife, claimed that she had been taken to a Nazi rally in Hamburg and later praised Josef Goebbels, the Third Reich's minister of Enlightenment and Propaganda, for giving "a fantastic speech." That was corroborated in another Bergman biography, Laurence Leamer's *As Times Go By*.

Amazingly, even after Germany invaded Poland and launched World War II in 1939, Bergman turned down a movie role in *So Ends Our Night*, which was based on an Erich Maria Remarque novel. Allegedly, the actress claimed that the script was "too anti-German."

Selznick wisely suspected that Bergman was a public relations time bomb waiting to explode. If word of her pro-German sentiments got out, it would no doubt have seriously& damaged her career. As it turned out, the script for *Casablanca* was perfect for her, portraying her as the supportive wife of a resistance fighter.

Two views of Ingrid Bergman
"She'd do it with doorknobs"
--Alfred Hitchcock

Weeks later, an anti-Nazi like Bogie told Peter Lorre, Michael Curtiz, and others that he was the one who "turned Ingrid's head around politically" during their time together.

"I educated her and warned her never to be heard speaking German again," Bogie claimed. "I told her, 'If it's called for you to speak German in a script, turn it down. And don't wear one of those new bathing suits seen at the North Sea resorts, where a Fraülein has the image of a swastika covering her vagina.'"

Warner and Wallis assigned their temperamental Hungarian director, Michael Curtiz, to helm *Casablanca*. "Curtiz has tamed Bogie before," Warner told Wallis. "I'm sure he can do it again. After *The Maltese Falcon*, Bogie is getting a little& too big for his breeches."

Bogie had long wanted to work with Bergman, and in *Casablanca* at long last he had the opportunity. He asked Geraldine Fitzgerald, who had appeared with him in the Bette Davis picture, *Dark Victory*, to set up a luncheon, since she knew Bergman.

The cover-up of what actually went on between Bogie and Bergman may have begun at that luncheon. Fitzgerald would later claim that the two stars of *Casablanca* rarely spoke to each other off camera, which suggested that they were feuding, which they were not.

Bergman herself may have asked Fitzgerald to spread that false story. At any rate, Fitzgerald was not in *Casablanca* and was not privy to what went on privately among the actors.

During the luncheon, Bergman confessed that the role she really wanted was that of Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), which she eventually won, appearing with Gary Cooper, who became her temporary lover.

Three views of infidelity:
Bogart with Berman

At the luncheon, Bergman pointedly asked Bogie, “How can I play Ilsa in *Casablanca* ? I’m supposed to be the world’s most beautiful woman. I look like a Swedish milkmaid.”

“If that’s what you think you look like, I’m taking up a new profession—that of milking cows.”

“Don’t be vulgar,” Bergman cautioned him. “I hardly know you.”

“When you get to know me, we can get down and dirty together.”

According to Fitzgerald, “The whole subject at lunch was how both Bogie and Ingrid could get out of making that movie. They thought the dialogue was ridiculous and the situations were unbelievable. I knew Bogie very well, and I think he wanted to join forces with Bergman, to make sure they both said the same things.”

There’s another problem here. Fitzgerald’s summary of the lunch with Bergman and Bogie may have accurately stated her position, but it left out the fact that Bogie had campaigned for months to play Rick Blaine. Why would he suddenly want to bolt from *Casablanca* ?

Because Paul Henreid was not available at& the time shooting began, Wallis and Curtiz considered Herbert Marshall, Dean Jagger, and Joseph Cotten for the role of Victor.

Henreid did not want to play Victor Lazlo, fearing that being placed in a secondary character role would ruin his burgeoning career as a romantic lead.

With a cast not fully decided, but with Bogie and Bergman in tow, principal photography began in May of 1942 on *Casablanca*.

The film’s scriptwriting team, which was composed of five writers, had not yet come up with a suitable script. Many problems in the plot had not been worked out. Some loopholes in the plot were never answered even after the film was released—for example, why had Rick been banished from America?

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On the first day of shooting, Curtiz received a telegram from Warner. “These are turbulent days and I know you will finish *Casablanca* in tops seven weeks. I am depending on you to be the old Curtiz I know you to be, and I am positive you are going to make one great picture.”

Bogie was rushing through the film because he had agreed to star in *Sahara* for Columbia in return for a Cary Grant commitment.

Desperately trying to get out of town

(top photo) Greenstreet, Henreid, Bergman
bottom photo: Henreid, Bergman, Bogart

“Bogie told Curtiz, “The audience won’t believe that a looker like Ingrid would fall for a guy with a mug like mine.”

Later, after viewing the first rushes with her, he changed his mind. “When the camera moves in on that Bergman face, and she’s saying she loves you, it would make anybody look romantic.”

Spencer Tracy advised Bogie, “This is the first time you’ve played the romantic lead against a major star. You stand still and always make her come to you. Curtiz probably won’t notice it. If she complains, you can tell her it’s in the script. You’ve got something she wants, so she has to come to you.”

The Blaine in the name of Bogie’s character came from Amory Blaine, the romantic hero of *This Side of Paradise* (1920), the first novel of F. Scott& Fitzgerald.

In spite of his initial complaints, Bogie was actually pleased with the role, yet didn’t want to admit it to anybody. In the first draft script sent to him, a reader had made this notation about the character of Rick Blaine. “Two parts Hemingway, one part F. Scott Fitzgerald, a dash of Christ.”

Bogie did demand that his character be made stronger. “The world is at war, and Rick is crying in his champagne about some whore he dumped in Paris.”

The difference in height between his stars caused some problems for Curtiz. Bergman towered over Bogie, who stood on a box in some scenes or else sat on a pillow. In one scene which was shot while Bogie and Bergman were sitting together on a couch—the famous “franc for your thoughts” moment—Curtiz directed Bergman “to slouch down.” Bogie also had to wear platform shoes in some scenes.

Rick’s *Café Americain* in the movie was modeled after the Hotel El Minzah in Tangier, former retreat of such vacationing stars as Errol Flynn and Marlene Dietrich.

Because of wartime restrictions on building supplies, Rick’s Café was one of the few original sets custom-built for the film. The rest of the sets were recycled from previous Warner Brothers films. As an example, the set which depicted the Paris train station was recycled from *Now, Voyager* (1942), which had starred Paul Henreid and Bette Davis.

Wartime restrictions also made it impossible for an actual airport to be used after dark because of security reasons. To solve that problem, Curtiz had a small cardboard cutout airplane made, which he filmed in forced perspective. To create the illusion that the craft was full-sized, he hired midgets to portray the crew preparing the plane for the famous take-off with Ilsa’s immortal goodbye to Rick.

A *film noir* legend
“By the time I was twenty-seven, I knew not to marry an actress, so I married four of them.”

At last, Bergman came together with her director, Curtiz, former circus juggler, strongman, and trampoline artist. His directional advice about how to play Ilsa was simple: “Just be yourself, Ingrid Bergman. Bogie will be himself, like the asshole could be anything else.”

But when she showed up the next day for filming, she encountered a very different personality. “Fortunately,” she later recalled, “I’d already made *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, so I knew about dual personalities.”

When Bergman appeared on the set, Curtiz& attacked her. “You’re playing a decent woman, not a whore from 10th Avenue. Take off pounds of makeup. No lipstick.”

Bergman pestered Curtiz, asking him, “Which man am I in love with?” Since the director hadn’t decided, he told her to “play it in between.”

Until deep into the shoot, Curtiz and the writers could not make up their minds about how the film should end. Bergman later said, “I never knew from day to day which man I was in love with, Rick or Victor.”

Curtiz discussed with his writers the possibility of having Rick run away with Ilsa. But he was warned that the censors might object. After all, Ilsa was married to Victor. Finally it was decided that Ilsa, although still in love with Rick, would remain with her husband.

The third lead, Paul Henreid, reluctantly showed up on the set long after shooting had begun.

He was about to enter the pantheon of film history for his portrait in *Now, Voyager*. In the film, he had put two cigarettes at once to his lips, lit them, and passed one on to Bette Davis. A legend was born.

Rivals on the screen, Bogie and Henreid did not get along. Bogie told Peter Lorre that Henreid was a "prima donna." Both Bogie and Henreid were gentlemen and managed to conceal their contempt for each other, although denouncing& each other privately. On the surface, they seemed like friends and even played chess& together between takes.

"Play It Again, Sam"
Two views of Dooley Wilson

Henreid told Bogie that when he'd appeared in a 1940 British thriller, *Night Train to Munich*, he got a lot of fan mail from women asking "Who was that cute Nazi in the movie?" It is believed that Henreid had some Jewish ancestors, hence his flight from Nazi-occupied territory.

Although Bogie was all smiles playing chess with Henreid, when the actor disappeared into his dressing room, Bogie attacked him to Curtiz. "Henreid is the biggest case of self-idolatry since I last fucked Hedy Lamarr. After lighting that cigarette for Bette, he pictures himself a matinee idol."

"Wait a minute, you slimy son of a bitch," Curtiz said. "You fucked the Austrian bitch? I saw *Ecstasy*. When she ran bare-assed naked, I got a hard-on."

"She called me one night, and we got together," Bogie said. "At the time, as you know, she was up for the role of Ilsa. She wanted to see if we had any sexual chemistry together. We did. And how! Her pussy is top of the line. I heard she once fucked both Hitler and Mussolini—not at the same time, of course. With Hedy, it may be the only time in my life where I had sloppy seconds after the *Führer*."

"You asshole," Curtiz obviously infuriated said. "The Lamarr cunt should have come to me. After all, I'm the director of this silly fairytale. How did it happen? An ugly guy like you born when Lincoln was president. Hedy Lamarr and Ingrid Bergman. Who's next? Betty Grable? Lana Turner? Veronica Lake? Rita Hayworth?"

"If you brag to me you fuck one of these cunts, I'll cut off your dick if I can find it," Curtiz threatened. You may be great with women off-screen, but you are lousy on screen. When you go to kiss Bergman, you look like you about to throw up. You're no homosexual, are you? Errol Flynn told me you were always looking at his crotch. Ronald Reagan told me you made a pass at him in the men's toilet."

"That was just a joke," Bogie protested.

"Don't speak to me rest of day," Curtiz said. "Just for fucking Hedy Lamarr, I'm gonna make you do one take thirty-two times."

Lamarr had made *Ekstase* (*Ecstasy*) when she was fifteen. She'd met the Fascist dictators during the course of her marriage (1933-1937) to Fritz Mandl, a Vienna-based arms manufacturer and multi millionaire. In those days she always appeared in public wearing a fortune in jewels, especially diamonds.

Two views of Paul Henreid

(top photo) Night Train to Munich (bottom photo), Now, Voyager, with Bette Davis

For *Casablanca's* supporting players, Curtiz had rounded up the usual suspects: Claude Rains, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, S.Z. Sakall, Joy Page, Dooley Wilson, and Helmut Dantine.

Claude Rains, in a brilliant screen portrayal, was cast as Captain Louis Renault, a corrupt Vichy opportunist who claims, "I have no convictions. I blow with the wind, and the prevailing wind happens to be from Vichy."

Freelancer Rains, arguably the single most talented actor in the cast, certainly had a lot to smile about in his role, as he'd jacked up his salary from Jack Warner to $4,000 a week.& "Let the shoot drag on forever for all I care," he told Bogie.

Rains would go on to appear in *Notorious*, the Alfred Hitchcock film that also starred Bergman.

The bulky Sydney Greenstreet played the small but pivotal role of Signor Ferrari, the jovial but sinister fez-wearing owner of the Blue Parrot, chief rival of Rick's Café. That was his day job. At night he was Casablanca's leading black marketer. Everything was for sale for a price, even a passport to get a refugee out of Casablanca and on the plane to Lisbon and freedom.

Conrad Veidt, on loan from MGM, was paid the same amount that Bergman was, $25,000. Originally Curtiz had wanted Otto Preminger for the role of Major Strasser, but at the time, he was under contract to Darryl F. Zanuck, who demanded a salary of $7,000 a week. Jack Warner turned Preminger down.

Veidt delivered his usual brilliant performance as the icily cold but elegant Gestapo major, Strasser, who likes vintage champagne and very cold caviar.

Many of the actors who played Nazis in *Casablanca* were in fact German Jews who had escaped from Hitler's Nazis. Veidt himself had hurriedly escaped Germany when he learned that the SS had sent a death squad after him because of his anti-Nazi activities.

Peter Lorre was cast as the creepy petty criminal Ugarte, selling "letters of transit," which he obtained through the murder of two Nazi couriers.

In a key moment, Lorre as Ugarte asks Rick, "You despise me, don't you?

Rick answers, "If I gave you any thought, I probably would."

The defining moment occurs when Lorre is trapped by the police in Rick's Café. He rushes to Rick, his eyes bulging with fright. "Rick," he cries. "Do something! You *must* help me!"

Rick shares his personal credo with Lorre. "I stick my neck out for nobody."

The unfortunate Lorre is hauled off by the police and assassinated.

S.Z. Sakall, cast as Carl the waiter, was from Hungary. Although he had fled from Germany in 1939, each of his three sisters died in a concentration camp.

Chubby-jowled Sakall had such rotund cuteness that he was nicknamed “Cuddles.” Bogie is claimed to have given him that nickname, but that does-n’t appear to be true. Sakall hated the part of the head waiter in *Casablanca* and turned it down. He finally took the role when he was guaranteed four weeks of work for $5,250. Sakall actually had more screen time than either Greenstreet or Lorre.

Wallis had considered hiring female musicians such as Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald, or Hazel Scott for the role that was eventually awarded to Dooley Wilson, who played Sam. Warners feared a backlash, especially in Southern theaters, for giving such a pivotal role to a black woman.

Wilson was a professional drummer who had to fake his piano playing. Since the music was recorded at the same time as the film, the piano playing was actually by Elliot Carpenter who performed behind a curtain. He was positioned so that Dooley could watch—and copy—his hand movements.

Curtiz was not without female companionship on the set. As Henreid revealed, “Curtiz, befitting the reputation of most Hungarians, was a practiced womanizer and was known to hire pretty young extras to whom he promised all sorts of things, including stardom, just to have them around and make passes at them at any odd hours when there was a break in shooting. He would choose any private place on the set, usually behind some flat in a secluded area. He’d have the grips move a piece of furniture there, a couch, or even a mattress—almost anything to soften his lovemaking.”

“But I didn’t go for Bergman,” Curtiz recalled. “I decided to give Bogie a chance. I had plenty of other broads to fuck on this picture.”

At one point Lorre secretly hooked up a mike to Curtiz’s dressing room. The whole crew heard a script girl screaming. “Oh, God! No! No! I can’t take it! More, more, more!”

For all the cast to hear, Curtiz shouted “Take it all, take it all—my balls too!”

One of the emotional highlights of the film was the “duel of the anthems,” between the French singing *La Marseillaise* and the Nazis warbling *Die Wacht am Rhein*.

Censorship continued to plague the film. Ilsa says, “Victor is my husband, and was, even when I knew you in Paris.” This was almost cut, as it suggested adultery. However, at a later point, she claimed that she thought Victor was dead at the time of her affair with Bogie. The censors then agreed to let the line stay.

As he stated in *Love and Death in Casablanca*, author William Donelley claimed that “Rick’s relationship with Sam, and subsequently with Renault, is a standard case of repressed homosexuality that underlies most American adventure stories.”

Hungarian S.Z. Sakall

That’s why one of the most famous of all straight love stories, the celluloid romance of Bogart and Bergman, always ends up on a list of most famous gay films.

Gays claim that the real love story is not between Rick and Ilsa, but between Rick and Captain Louis Renault, as played by Claude Rains.

One viewer claimed that for him, the most& interesting relationship in the movie is between Rick and Louis. “Theirs

is a relationship of almost perfect cynicism, one-liners, and claims of neutrality that provide much humor, as well as gives a necessary display of Rick's darker side before and after Ilsa's arrival."

Many famous movie reviewers, including Roger Ebert, knew that Rains was playing a "subtly homosexual police chief."

Rains as Louis is obviously besotted with the super-butch Rick. In Rick's presence, Rains becomes almost like a school girl. Gays picked up on such lines as when Louis says to Rick: "You were never interested in any woman."

Louis also tells Rick: "She [Ilsa] was asking questions about you earlier, Rick, in a way that made me *extremely jealous*." Rains said "extremely jealous" in such a way that only a redneck homophobe could not have picked up on what he meant.

At the end of the film, after Ilsa, accompanied by her husband, is airborne, the captain walks away with his man. Bogie famously drawls, "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." World War II audiences didn't get this homoerotic overtone.

The line, "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship" was voted No. 54 among "The 100 Greatest Movie Lines" of all time.

Wallis came up with this line after the film was finished. Bogie was called back to the Warner lot to dub it in.

In fact, *Casablanca* ended up having more famous one-liners than any other movie in history.

One of the most famous lines of the movie, "Play it again, Sam," was never uttered. The actual dialogue was, "You played it for her, you can play it for me. Play it!"

Casablanca
On the tarmac, in an artificial fog, an inspector confronts Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Bogart, and Ingrid Bergman

Ilsa says, "Play it, Sam, play 'As Time Goes By.'"

In name recognition, "Round up the usual suspects" came in No. 32, with "We'll always have Paris" voted No. 43.

Reportedly, the line, "Here's looking at you, kid," was improvised by Bogie when he appeared as a star in the little-seen film *Midnight* in 1934. The movie's line was voted the fifth most famous movie quotation of all time by the American Film Institute.

Bogie fell in love with the word "kid" when describing his screen women. In *Dead Reckoning* (1947), he called Lizabeth Scott "kid" twice. Again in *Tokyo Joe* (1949), he called the Czech-born actress Florence Marly "Hello, kid." Finally, in *Sirocco* (1951), he tells Marta Toren, "You're a sweet kid!"

Bogie added another line to the script other than the "kid" reference. He was given the line, "Of all the cafés in all the cities in all the world, she walks into my café." He changed it to, "Of all the gin-joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine."

When the Allies invaded Casablanca on November 8, 1942, Jack Warner went into a tizzy, as he was urged to incorporate the invasion into the film's storyline. Hal Wallis thought the invasion could be presented as an epilogue for the spring release of *Casablanca*. The producer was prepared to shoot a sequence in which Bogie and Claude

Rains hear about the invasion. However, Warner eventually nixed the idea, thinking the invasion worthy of a film all on its own and not just as an epilogue. It was decided to release *Casablanca* as a pre-invasion story.

Bogie had his greatest moment on film when he stood on the gray tarmac with those fog machines blasting away. In his rumpled trench coat and fedora, he looked into Bergman's eyes welling with tears.

"You're saying this only to make me go," Bergman says.

"I'm saying it because it's true. You belong with Victor. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not on it, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of your life. I'm not good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Here's looking at you, kid."

Rick (Bogart) sending Ugarte (Peter Lorre) to his doom

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As Laurence Leamer, Bergman's biographer, put it: "For Bogie, it was booze, blood, and brawls, a butcher knife in the back, a fistfight in the living room, pistol shots in the ceiling. It was a wife so jealous of Ingrid that he didn't dare get near his co-star. It was life as a forty-two-year-old& balding actor with an alcoholic wife, a drinking problem of his own, and a co-star so beautiful, so irresistible, so shrewdly professional, that he was likely to lose the movie to her."

Night after night, Methot fought bitterly with Bogie over his alleged affair with Bergman. Finally, Bogie had had it. He told Curtiz, "If you have the name, why not play the game? I'm going after the Swedish broad. I'm an ass man myself, and that gal's got ass."

As a Hollywood insider, Mrs. Humphrey Bogart, his third wife, knew much of what was going on, especially off camera. From the very beginning of her marriage, she'd suspected that Bogie was a "whoremonger" [her words], and she never changed that opinion. She'd known many actresses personally with whom he'd had brief flings in the 1930s.

Methot also knew that Ingrid Bergman's screen image had nothing to do with the private woman. Alfred Hitchcock, who directed her in several later films, claimed "She'd do it with doorknobs."

She was "Notorious" (the name of one of her movies) for having affairs with her leading men. They included Leslie Howard, co-star in *Intermezzo* (1939); both actor Spencer Tracy and director Victor Fleming on the set of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941); Gary Cooper in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943) and *Saratoga Trunk* (1945); Joseph Cotten in *Gaslight* (1944); Bing Crosby in *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945); Gregory Peck in *Spellbound* (1945); Yul Brynner in *Anastasia* (1956); Anthony Quinn in *The Visit* (1964), and Omar Sharif in *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (1964), plus numerous other actors and directors, including her "sponsor," David Selznick himself.

Why should Bogie be exempt?

The homosexual actor, Anthony Perkins, claimed that Bergman tried to seduce him on the set of *Goodbye Again* (1961). She did not succeed.

Spencer Tracy was quoted as saying, "Ingrid worked best when she was in love with her leading man. Beginning with Leslie Howard in *Intermezzo*, she seduced all of us." He'd made *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with her in 1941.

Larry Adler, the world's most famous harmonica player, whom Ingrid met on a USO tour in 1945, was egocentric

and a political leftist. Bergman's long talks with him turned into an affair.

Adler later said, "I think she needed to show her power over men. She wasn't coquettish or a tease. Ingrid wasn't interested in sex all that much. She did it like a polite girl."

In that opinion, Adler was a minority of one.

Bergman was wise not to allow any of the details of her affairs with her leading men of the 1940s to be revealed. Her virginal image as a model of propriety was shattered when her affair with the Italian director, Roberto Rossellini, was revealed in 1949. The affair and her subsequent pregnancy shocked her fans and sent her into exile from America for seven long years.

Although it seems silly today, her affair caused national outrage and she was denounced for her "immorality" on the floor of the U.S. Senate. In the wake of that, the press tore her reputation to shreds. She was temporarily "soiled" among puritanical moviegoers who refused to even tolerate her image on the screen.

Views of Ingrid Bergman with her leading menlovers *(top to bottom)*:

Leslie Howard, Spencer Tracy, Gary Cooper, and Joseph Cotten

One of Bergman's most famous off-screen remarks about Bogie was when she said, "I kissed Bogie. But I never got to know him."

Later among her friends in Sweden, when she had nothing more to lose career-wise, she admitted, "I did say that. Can't a woman say something that is not true? That happens all the time. Why should the world at that time have known about my private relationship with Bogie? I didn't announce any of my other affairs with leading men. Why should I have with Bogie? It would not have helped either of us. Besides, what went on between Bogie and me is our own personal business."

In an interview in her native Sweden in later years, she recalled, "What could I say? That we were carrying on passionately and had a brief but torrid fling? We were both married at the time. An adulterous affair—look at what happened to me later—could have destroyed my career. It probably would not have affected Bogie's own career that much."

There is no real proof that Bogie and Bergman had an affair. Likewise, there is no proof that they did not. Eyewitnesses claim they did, notably& Michael Curtiz, who had his finger on the heartbeat of every member

of the cast.

Views of Ingrid Bergman with more of her leading menlovers *(top to bottom)*:

Bing Crosby, Gregory Peck, Yul Brynner, and Anthony Quinn

When Curtiz found Bogie becoming “love sick,” he warned him, “Ingrid’s trapped in a bad marriage. For her fun, she fucks her leading men, then forgets them. Don’t fall in love with her. She’s poison. Other men fall for cunt, then regret it. She’ll break your heart.”

“After marrying Mayo Methot,” he said, “I no longer have a heart to break.”

He confided to Ann Sheridan that he’d fallen in love with Bergman and had asked her to marry him, after both of them had gotten divorces from Methot and Bergman’s Swedish doctor husband, Petter Lindstrom.

Bogie even gave Sheridan a review of Bergman in bed: “She’s great but won’t fellate me.”

Rossellini, Bergman’s future husband, had much the same complaint, claiming that his new wife would not perform fellatio on him, one of his major sexual pleasures. “She doesn’t do the things a whore does. For that, I have to go to a bordello.”

Claude Rains later told Bette Davis that when he dropped by Bogie’s dressing room for a drink, Bergman was adjusting her dress and Bogie zipping up. “I assumed that they had been rehearsing their love scenes,” he said sarcastically. “What else could it have been?”

Henreid also told Davis that Bogie and Bergman were having an affair.

“I’d heard that she ‘auditions’ all her leading men,” Davis snorted. “No doubt she’s trying to rival Joan Crawford in& that department.” Davis looked skeptically at Henreid. “Do you think you and Bogie will share her during the shooting?”

“I think I’m out in the cold,” Henreid said. “She told me I look too much like Petter.” He was referring, of course, to Bergman’s husband, Petter Lindstrom.

Spencer Tracy, Bogie’s pal, told George Cukor that Bogie and Bergman were having an affair, and gossipy Cukor spread the word.

Bob Williams, Bogie's publicist on *Casablanca*, later claimed. "I think Bogie fell in love with Ingrid. He was so jealous that if I brought anyone on the set, especially another man, to see her he was furious at me. He would sulk. I had a feeling he wanted Ingrid for himself."

Jack Warner seemed to know about the affair. When Bogie showed up late on the set two days in a row, Warner fired off a memo to Curtiz: "Tell Bogart to quit fucking the Swedish broad all night long and report on time. In one of the rushes, he looks sixty years old. Tell him to clean up his act. The Swedish pussy can wait until picture's end. Then he can have a whole fucking smörgåsbord."

Vincent Sherman, Bogie's sometimes director, claimed that Bogie told him that he had an affair with Bergman all throughout the shooting of *Casablanca*. "Forget all those stupid biographies that claimed Bergman and Bogie didn't have an affair. He fucked her during the entire making of *Casablanca*, and fell madly in love with her. In spite of that saintly look, that cold Swede was hot to trot once you got her pants off."

Methot frequented the set for confrontations with Bogie. She accused him of having an affair with Bergman. In this case she was right.

That chemistry was undeniable both on and off the screen, although biographers for years have perpetuated a myth, spread by Bergman herself, that she had almost no contact with Bogie off camera. Methot knew better.

Emotionally deranged even without provocation, she allowed her fury to bubble over one afternoon. Halfway through the shooting of *Casablanca*, the picture came close to not being finished, at least with Bogie and Bergman in the leads.

An anonymous letter had been sent to Methot. It read:

> *"When your errant husband isn't needed on the set, he disappears into the dressing room of Ingrid Bergman, the Swedish cow. The sounds coming from that dressing room can be heard all over the sound stage. Your husband can be seen leaving Bergman's room zipping up his pants. They are engaged in a torrid affair. How many nights does he come home late? You answer that question for yourself."*

The next afternoon Methot showed up on the set. Somehow she'd obtained a pistol. It was later revealed that she planned to shoot both Bogie and Bergman, hopefully after she'd caught them together.

When she got there, from a distance, she saw Bogie innocently playing chess with Lorre. She asked the script girl to direct her to Bergman's dressing room.

The script girl rushed to tell Bogie what was going on. Sensing trouble, he jumped up, according to Lorre, and raced to Methot. Confronting her, he discovered that she packed a pistol. He fought with her to wrest it from her tightly clenched fingers. The gun went off. Instead of shooting him, the bullet was fired into the air, alerting the entire crew.

Bergman emerged from her dressing room. Rather calmly she walked over to Methot.

"Mrs. Bogart," she said, "I recognize you from your photographs which do not do you justice. Your devoted husband here has told me what a wonderful person you are. It's an honor to meet you. I'm sorry they didn't find a role for you in this picture. I saw you in *Marked Woman* with Mr. Bogart. You stole that picture from both your husband and Bette Davis." Then Bergman, showing enormous grace under pressure, turned and walked away.

Methot seemed stunned and didn't know how to react. At this point Curtiz arrived with two stagehands. Lorre had told him what had happened. Curtiz ordered that Methot be forcibly removed from the set and barred from entering the studio gates again until *Casablanca* was wrapped.

Bogie's reaction to this drama taking place off camera is not known. He didn't want to speak about it to Curtiz, to Lorre, or to anybody.

Under the cloak of darkness. Bogie came and went from the place where Bergman was staying, since her husband was back on the East Coast with her daughter, Pia Lindstrom.

On the final night Bogie saw Bergman, he invited her to an out-of-the way restaurant to celebrate the end of filming.

It was on that fateful night that Bergman gave Bogie "the worst news of my life." She rejected his proposal to marry him after their respective divorces from Lindstrom and Methot.

She explained to him that she was going back to her husband in "dreary, boring" Rochester, New York. "There is no great romance there, but I have a daughter, Pia. I owe it to her to go back and be a mother. I can't leave either of them."

Bogie was said to have cried that night, and he was a man who didn't cry very often.

Although it may be apocryphal, Ann Sheridan later claimed that Bergman, as a final goodbye, told Bogie, "We'll always have Paris."

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Curtiz brought the film in just eleven days over schedule. Problems arose along the way. He constantly fought with Bogie over script changes, which delayed production. As shooting began, the actors did not have a working script. Curtiz handed them new pages of dialogue on the morning of each day's shoot.

Max Steiner complained to Curtiz about the song, "As Time Goes By." It's got to be cut from the final score," Steiner demanded.

"Like hell!" Curtiz shouted at him. "I love that song. You're an idiot!"

Casablanca, budgeted at $950,000 ran over budget, going $100,000 into the red, much to the fury of Jack Warner.

In one of his final interviews, Henreid revealed what had never been told before.

One night he was called back for "still" sittings with Bergman. Warners planned to use these photographs for publicity purposes.

Bergman seemed heartbroken. Henreid assumed that it was because her affair with Bogie was going badly. "I knew that she had broken it off with him, and she looked very sad," he said. "I was completely mistaken when she revealed what was really wrong. She went in and out of affairs with her leading men so quickly it did not seem to phase her."

She was actually heartbroken over the loss of the role of María in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the part having gone to Vera Zorina.

"Those idiots," Bergman told Henreid. "Picking Zorina of all people. She can't act. She just can't, and I'm good. I'm really good!"

Bergman with Roberto Rossellini "an international scandal"

Born in Berlin, Zorina was an American ballerina, musical theater actress, and choreographer. At the time she was considered for *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, she was married to the famous choreographer George Balanchine.

When word got out that Zorina had been fired from *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* and replaced by Bergman, her film

career was more or less destroyed in Hollywood. She never recovered from the blow. Although she tried for other major roles, she failed to find them. In 1946, she said good-bye to Hollywood.

In the middle of the photography session,& Bergman was called to the phone. During her conversation, she let out a yell that Henreid compared to that of "a tigress who has made a kill, a yell of such joy and triumph that I was stunned."

Returning to him, she kissed Henreid on the lips. "I got it! I got it! Zorina is out. I'm María. I got it! Paul, we've got to celebrate!"

It was at this point in his memoirs that Henreid drew the curtains, the way movie directors in the 1930s did when a man and woman faded into the bedroom to make love.

"That night," I learned what Bergman meant by celebrate," Henreid said. "It wasn't just the champagne. In spite of her cool demeanor, she was that tigress in bed, the same blood-curdling scream I'd heard on the phone when she got the part of María. Over pillow talk, as you Americans say, she told me that I was a much better lover than Bogie—much smoother in bed, more suave, more capable of making a woman feel like a real woman. She also told me that in spite of all the experiences he'd had with women, Bogie still approached a woman in bed with a certain schoolboy awkwardness."

Suave, sleepy-eyed Henreid, whose acting style was "as rigid as a board" in *Casablanca*, enjoyed only a passing vogue in the 1940s, mainly as a continental lover. Decades after his appearance in *Casablanca*, he expressed a bitterness against the movie. He especially disliked its director and Bogie himself.

Many of Henreid's fans assumed he was French born. Actually, the actor was Austrian, having been born in Trieste (now part of Italy) when that city was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

"Mr. Bogie Man was a nobody," he claimed shortly before he died in 1992. "That is, before *Casablanca* he was a nobody. He was the fellow Robinson or Cagney would say, 'Get him!' He was always a very mediocre actor with an extremely limited range. He was so sorry for himself in *Casablanca*. Unfortunately, Michael Curtiz was not a director of actors; he was a director of effects. He was first rate at that, but he could not tell Bogart he should not play the role of Rick like a crybaby. It was embarrassing, I thought, when I looked at the rushes."

Those negative comments about Bogie were deleted from his 1984 autobiography called *Ladies' Man*. Henreid's editor at St. Martin's Press felt it might harm the potential sale of the book.

"I would much prefer that I be remembered for my role opposite Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager*," he claimed. "If I had it to do over again, I would never have accepted the role in *Casablanca*."

The stories that Henreid spread in the interviews he gave during his later years did not appear in his memoirs and cannot be verified at this late date. Perhaps he was getting some long-delayed revenge on Bogie. Or perhaps the incident he described that night with Bergman really was true.

Much of the initial success of *Casablanca* resulted from the sweeping historical events that had inspired its plot. In November of 1942, Allied forces landed in Morocco, forming a beachhead at Casablanca. Then in January of 1943, the famous Casablanca Conference took place between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in a suburb of Casablanca. It was at this conference that Roosevelt announced that "unconditional surrender" would be demanded of the Axis powers.

Casablanca premiered at the Hollywood Theater in New York City on November 26, 1942. It was timed to coincide with the Allied invasion of North Africa and the capture of Casablanca. But it didn't go into general release until January 23, 1943, when it took advantage of the publicity generated by the Casablanca Conference.

After President Franklin D. Roosevelt returned from the war-time conference in Casablanca with Sir Winston Churchill, he asked for a screening of *Casablanca* at the White House ["Casa Blanca" in Spanish].

During its initial run, the film was a solid but not spectacular success. The legend would come later. In time, its characters, dialogue, and music would become iconic.

In its aftermath, many bizarre legends arose about the movie, including one that claimed that Jack Benny had appeared briefly in it.

Not all the reviews were raves, *The New Yorker* referring to it as only "pretty tolerable." *The New York Times*, in contrast, asserted that it "makes the spine tingle and the heart take a leap." *Variety* claimed that Bogie was "more at ease as the bitter and cynical operator of a joint than as a lover," and Bogie himself agreed with that review.

When Julius Epstein saw the final script, on which so many others had labored, he said, it contained "more corn than in the states of Kansas and Iowa combined. But when corn works, there's nothing better." He later expressed grave reservations about the script, calling it "slick shit."

"Casablanca is one of my least favorite pictures," Epstein said. "I'm tired of talking about it after thirty years. I can explain its success only by the Bogie cult that has sprung up after his death. I can recognize that the picture is entertaining and that people love it. But it's a completely phoney romance, a completely phoney picture. For instance, nobody knew what was going on in Casablanca at the time. Nobody had ever been to Casablanca. The whole thing was shot in the back lot. There was never a German who appeared in Casablanca for the duration of the entire war, and we had Germans marching around with medals and epaulets. Furthermore, there were never any such things as letters of transit around which the entire plot revolved. . . . the movie is completely phoney!"

Actually, there were some Nazis in *Casablanca* during the early 1940s. These Germans were arrested when the Allied invasion occurred. Those "letters of transit" were actually visas and exit papers which were eagerly bought by European refugees wanting to escape to Lisbon where they could subsequently arrange transport to New York.

Both Bogie and Bergman later claimed that they were wrong about the impact and the importance of *Casablanca*. "We thought we were making a B movie, and that was how it was viewed at the time," Bogie said. "I was used to making B movies. To me, *Casablanca* was just another assignment. It took me years to realize that it was a picture that ranked up there with *Citizen Kane* as one of the greatest movies ever made."

Bergman later said, "Regardless of how many more movies I make, or how many Oscars I win, when I die *The New York Times* will give me a front page headline that says 'CO-STAR OF CASABLANCA DIES.'"

Movie buffs have long pondered why Bergman and Bogie never made another film together, given their on-screen chemistry.

The success of *Casablanca* led Warner to plan a sequel. It was to be called *Brazzaville*. However, Bergman was not available. Geraldine Fitzgerald, whom Bogie had appeared with in *Dark Victory*, was considered for the role, before the project was killed. In the late 1990s, Michael Walsh's novel, *As Time Goes By,* was published as the sequel.

Portraits of two marriages:
(top photo) Petter Lindstrom with Ingrid Bergman
(bottom photo) Mayo Methot with Humphrey Bogart

For his role as Rick, Bogie took home exactly $36,667, in contrast to Lorre, who made only $2,333. Curtiz was the highest grosser, earning $73,400.

Following the release of *Casablanca*, Bogie would become the highest paid actor in Hollywood, and in the world for that matter. He would reign as Tinseltown's biggest star from 1943 to 1949.

After hitting it big in *Casablanca*, Bogie was no longer Duke Mantee, gangster at large, or Sam Spade, detective at large. After the release of *Casablanca*, he could& virtually play any character part he wanted, ranging from the seedy captain of *The African Queen* to the psychotic Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny*.

The date was March 2, 1944, the setting Grauman's Chinese Theater. When it was announced that *Casablanca* had been designated as Best Picture of 1943, the audience gasped. It had not been a heavy favorite.

Paramount's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or Warner Brothers' *Watch on the Rhine* were considered the major contenders. Bogie lost his chance for the Oscar, as Paul Lukas walked off with the Best Actor prize for *Watch on the Rhine*, in which he'd co-starred with Bette Davis. Claude Rains, nominated for Best Supporting Actor, lost to Charles Coburn for *The More the Merrier*.

Accepting his Oscar as Best Director, Curtiz said: "So many times I have a speech ready, but no dice. Always a bridesmaid, never a mother. Now I win, I have no speech."

Casablanca was nominated and won the Oscar as Best Picture of the Year.

Wallis rose to accept the Oscar until he noted Jack Warner hurrying down the aisle. It was an Academy tradition that the producer of the film accepts the Best Picture Oscar, not a studio head.

Wallis was so incensed that he never forgave Warner. Up to then Wallis had been regarded as the *Wünderkind* of Warners, but he left the studio shortly after that slight at the Academy Awards ceremony.

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Bogie invited Ann Sheridan to the *Casablanca* wrap party. Ironically, Sheridan was to have been the award-winning film's female star. With her was her newly minted close friend, a demure little brunette.

"Bogie," she said, "I want you to meet a good friend of mine and the best hairdresser in Hollywood. She can do wonders for that toupée of yours. Meet Verita Peterson."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“Who is this good-looking broad?” Bogie asked of Ann Sheridan.

“Those words were the first I ever heard from Bogie,” Verita Peterson recalled. “Romantic, don’t you think?”

“After that intro, Annie wandered off and threw herself at Michael Curtiz, so we figured we’d seen the last of her,” Verita said.

Verita Bouvaire Peterson, locked into an unhappy marriage to Robert Peterson, a studio technician, met a middle-aged but rising star, Humphrey Bogart, who was also locked into an unhappy marriage to Mayo Methot.

At the wrap party for *Casablanca*, she later recalled, “No one on the set, including Bogie and Michael Curtiz, knew they’d made a classic.”

“Bogie didn’t like to dance, but, honey, we danced the night away,” she said in an interview in 1998. “From that night on we were lovers.”

The attractive little brunette who would become his mistress and the “custodian of his toupée” was a hard-drinking beauty who could match Bogie drink for drink. “I liked to down the booze. He liked to down the booze. I could match him cuss word for cuss word, shot for shot. We did a lot of crazy things together, some of which I’d rather forget. It got a little kinky at times, but so what? The war was going to end one day, although when I met Bogie I thought we might lose it.”

“From the very beginning, Bogie told me he’d never marry me,” she said. “‘Marriage is a trap,’ he said. ‘I’ve been trapped too long. When I escape from Mayo, I never want to be trapped again. But we’ll have a lot of fun, and having fun is what life is all about.’”

“I couldn’t agree with you more,” she whispered into his ear as he whirled her around the dance floor.

Half-Irish, half-Mexican, Verita arrived in Hollywood straight from Arizona. “I didn’t know a God damn thing about acting, but I felt a gal like me could have a hell of a good time in Hollywood. When I won a beauty contest, Miss Arizona, I decided to try to capitalize off it. In fact, after a few auditions on the casting couch, I got a job at Republic.”

“I was cast in a Western and fell off my horse the first day and broke my arm,” Verita said. “I was soon out of Republic but got to fuck John Wayne and Forrest Tucker.”

“Then I got picked up by the pool one day by this Frenchman who’d come to America with a huge amount of French lace and a lot of beautiful hair from the convents of Europe,” she said. “Believe it or not, French lace is one of the best foundations for making great wigs and toupées. Because France had been invaded by Hitler’s armies, the lace was not available all during the war.”

“I’d inherited a lot of money from my grandfather who had died, and I agreed to stake this guy,” she said. “I bought a brand new car, figuring it would be the last one made until the war was over. I filled it with his wigs, toupées, and falls and started making the rounds of all the studios. That’s how I met Bogie’s pal, Ann Sheridan. They’d had this little fling, but once they got the fucking out of the way, they found they really liked each other and became pals.”

“I did wigs for women, but a lot of the men were having problems with their hair too,” Verita said. “I’d become a licensed hairdresser. I found the men more fun to work with than the ladies. Within a year, I’d been fucked by Ray Milland, Charles Boyer, and Gary Cooper. Not bad.”

Verita Peterson

“When I met Annie at Max Factor, she was just coming down from a fling with Ronald Reagan,” Verita said. “He wasn’t my type at all. He had to have his flings during the day because Jane Wyman kept him locked in a cage at night—just joking.”

“Gary Cooper was at the wrap party for *Casablanca*,” Verita said. “I’d already had him, so Ingrid Bergman was welcome to him. She was obviously making a big play for him, and they were about to make a movie together. Having dumped Bogie, she was pursuing her next leading man.”

That evening Bergman broke from Cooper long enough to come over and pay her respects to Bogie. He was seated with Verita at a makeshift table while the orchestra hired by Warners took a break.

“She came to our table and shook Bogie’s hand,” Verita said. “She pointedly ignored me, and Bogie didn’t bother to introduce us. He also didn’t rise to his feet. It was all very cold. She called him ‘Mr. Bogart’ and told him how much she’d enjoyed making *Casablanca* with him. It was total bullshit!”

“Annie had told me that Bergman and Bogie had had an affair, and that the Swedish bitch had broken Bogie’s heart,” Verita said. “I really think that’s why he turned to me so suddenly. He didn’t want to show up at the wrap party stag, looking rejected with tears in his eyes. I don’t know where Methot was. Bogie almost wanted to show Bergman that he, too, had moved on with his life. In a matter of days, Bergman was in Cooper’s bed and I was in Bogie’s, or rather Bogie was in my bed. Of course, all of us in this quartet had spouses, even Bergman, but what the hell. This was Hollywood!”

“It was one o’clock and we were still dancing,” Verita said. “In front of the whole cast and crew. Fortunately, Jack Warner had left. Bogie began kissing my neck. For the last thirty minutes, he hadn’t taken his hand off my ass.”

“You’ve got a great ass on you, ol’ gal,” he told her. “I’m an ass man myself.”

“That’s the most romantic thing a man has ever said to me,” she told him. “My brains must be in my ass, or otherwise I wouldn’t be dancing around the floor with you at this hour with everybody looking on.”

“Bogie was pressing hard against me,” she said. “I really felt him and more or less knew how this night would end. He kept kissing my neck.”

Finally, they left the studio’s wrap party. Bogie walking her to her car in the parking lot. “I thought he was gonna take me home and fuck me in the ass,” she recalled. “But he didn’t. At my car, he gave me a long, lingering French kiss and told me he’d call me tomorrow after I gave him my phone number. I never expected to hear from him again. Nor did I expect him to take advantage of that subtle invitation to sex I gave him—that is, if you call grabbing& his crotch subtle.”

Ingrid Bergman with Gary Cooper

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To her surprise, Bogie did call the next day, and they agreed to meet for lunch at the Smoke House, a popular actors' hangout across from Warner Brothers. He was already into his second martini when she came in, sliding into a booth alongside him. They talked only briefly of the night before, as he placed an order for his typical ham and eggs.

He got to the point quickly. "Where do you live and how do I get there?"

She explained that she and her husband, Robert Peterson, lived on Roselli Street in Burbank, and that he was away until six o'clock in the evening.

Within an hour of her return home, she spotted Bogie arriving at her house in his Jaguar XK-120.

"He walked so briskly to my door that he looked like an eager schoolboy about to lose his virginity," she said.

Within fifteen minutes inside the house, he had ushered her into the bedroom. It was the beginning of an affair that, with some interruptions, would last until 1955.

After that successful debut—"Bogie was a great lover"—he slipped off to see Verita whenever he could. "I feared the neighbors would spot him coming to see me and tell my husband about it," she said. "After all, *Casablanca* had made him one of the most recognizable faces in the world."

Indeed her worst nightmare came true. "No, it wasn't my worst nightmare. My greatest fear was that Mayo Methot would catch us. She was a stick of dynamite waiting to explode."

One afternoon after love-making, Verita feared that Bogie was too drunk to drive home. She put on a pot of coffee and led him into the shower. They both got into the booth together, and she turned on the cold water.

"At that moment my husband Bob came home early and caught us," she said. "He'd been tipped off by a nosey neighbor."

Still drunk under the cold shower, Bogie started attacking Bob for being "a son of bitch barging into a ladies' toilet."

"Bob didn't exactly see it that way," Verita said. "After all, I was his naked wife showering with not just another man, but *the* Humphrey Bogart, world famous movie star."

"Fortunately Bob wasn't a violent man," she said. "After storming and yelling, he barged out of the house. My marriage was over at that point. Actually, it'd been over for a long time."

She later claimed that "Bob could have ruined Bogie's divorce by getting us some unwanted front-page headlines, but he didn't."

Before the Petersons could file for divorce, Bob was drafted into the Army. They would remain married in name only until the end of World War II, at which time he filed for divorce, never naming Bogie as the reason why.

"My affair with Bogie continued," she said.

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In the wake of Pearl Harbor, with Nazi U-boats taking a horrible toll on Allied shipping, especially on the run to

Murmansk, Russia, Jack Warner had an idea. “Let’s make a movie about our Merchant Marines.”

He called in producer Jerry Wald who assigned John Howard Lawson to write the script based on a novel by Guy Gilpatric.

Bogie’s long-time director, Lloyd Bacon, was assigned to help the picture, to be called *Action in the North Atlantic* (1943).

Bogie had accepted the assignment before filming *Casablanca*. Like so many of his pre- *Casablanca* assignments, he was a second choice.

Bogie went into a rage when he picked up a copy of the *Hollywood Reporter* and read that Edward G. Robinson and George Raft were to star in the picture. When both stars pulled out, the role went to Bogie—“sloppy seconds again”—and Raymond Massey.

Bogie was very avant-garde in casting, telling *The Pittsburgh Courier* on September 26, 1942 that he felt an African American should play the ship’s captain. Most WWII films rarely gave lead roles to blacks. “In the world of the theater or any other phase of American life,” Bogie said, “the color of a man’s skin should have nothing to do with his rights in a land built on the self-evident fact that all men are created equal.”

Bacon directed Massey as Captain Steve Jarvis, with Bogie as his chief executive officer, Joe Rossi. For Bogie’s love interest, Julie Bishop was assigned.

Bogart with Raymond Massey

Bogie was surprised that Warners didn’t assign him a bigger name. Colorado-born Jacqueline Wells acted under her real name until 1941 when she changed it to Julie Bishop. She’d been a child actress in silent movies, appearing with Mary Pickford and Clara Bow.

Reasonably attractive, though not stunning in any way, she intrigued Bogie at first. “I made a pass at her but she didn’t receive it,” Bogie told director Lloyd Bacon.

Perhaps the reason for that was that she’d met her second husband, Clarence Shoop, a pilot, while filming the 1943 *Princess O’Rourke* with Olivia de Havilland.

“I thought while hubbie was up there in those blue skies, wifie would want a little male companionship down here on the ground,” Bogie said. “Where have gals like Ann Sheridan and Claire Trevor gone? Some of these actresses today at Warners are too tightly wound.”

Ruth Gordon, Bogie’s friend from “way back when,” was cast as Massey’s wife. Seeing her after a long time, Bogie came up to her, “Ruthie,” he said, “you look younger than the day I meet you. But I’ve always wanted to ask you something. Did we ever have sex back in the 1920s?”

“I’ll never tell,” she said, kissing him on the mouth.

Those future stars of tomorrow that Bogie feared as he neared fifty were popping up. He met Bernard Zanville who had the seventh lead.

Bogie liked Zanville even though at one point the lowly actor shouted at him, “You son of a bitch! You just don’t know your lines!”

Bogie not only forgave him for his outburst but suggested that he change his name to Dane Clark, and not “Brick Bernard,” as Warners had wanted. As Dane Clark, future movie star, the actor became known as “the poor man’s Bogart.”

Robert Mitchum, a future superstar, had one line of dialogue in the movie. Since he couldn’t support himself, he was hustling Clifton Webb on the side. Webb kept his private homosexual life from Bogie.

“Webby and I never spoke of such things,” Bogie told Verita Peterson.

Warners built a replica of a ten-thousand ton tanker on its sound stages. Wartime security restrictions would not allow movies to be filmed on vessels on the open seas.

Bacon had been the head of the U.S. Navy’s photo unit during World War
I. In *Action in the North Atlantic*, he used real live war combat footage.

At one point Bogie and Massey were drinking and watching stunt men& rehearse their escape from a burning vessel after it was torpedoed by the& Germans.

Dane Clark
(aka Bernard Zanville)

As Massey later related, “Bogie, after his fourth martini, faced me with that ‘Play it again, Sam’ look and said, “come to think of it, I guess I’m braver than you.’”

“Maybe so,” Massey said. “Are we going to let two men risk their lives to make us look good?”

“Are we men or mice?” Bogie asked. Bacon warned them, “If either of you idiots gets fried, it’ll be your fault and I’ll rewrite the script.”

The shot was potentially dangerous to its stars. As Massey later recalled, “The burning tanker was really terrifying, to actors as well as audiences. The effect was achieved by dozens of gas jets controlled through a set of valves which looked like an organ console. This was operated by the so-called “smokebun,” who could play his valves with such skill that the actors seemed to walk through the flames. And that’s what Bogie and I did. I got through the flames, but Bogie got his pants caught on fire, and we had to rip them off him. The director got what he wanted, even though Bogie was almost turned into a human torch.”

Midway through the filming, Bacon’s contract expired, and Jack Warner didn’t renew it. Bacon walked off the job, and Jerry Wald hastily hired Byron Haskin to finish the shoot.

Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the movie in a prologue, declaring “DAMN THE TORPEDOES, FULL SPEED AHEAD.”

Massey would make one more picture with Bogie, *Chain Lightning* in 1950, co-starring Eleanor Parker. In that one, Bogie was cast as a WWII bomber pilot, with Massey playing a jet manufacturer loosely based on Howard Hughes.

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In a 1943 release, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, Bogie appeared as himself in a “Calvacade of Stars” benefit. It reunited him with many Warner stars with whom he’d worked before—Bette Davis,& Errol Flynn, Joan Leslie, Ida Lupino, Dennis& Morgan, and even S.Z. Sakall from& *Casablanca*.

Bogie with "Cuddles"
(S.Z. Sakall)

Bogie’s friend, Mark Hellinger, produced this WWII distraction, which included appearances by John Garfield and Olivia de Havilland, both of them playing themselves.

In a patriotic skit, “tough guy” Bogie is intimidated by roly-poly “Cuddles” Sakall.

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At long last Bogie was able to fulfill his commitment to Columbia when he starred in *Sahara* (1943), a World War II action picture supposedly depicting the battlefields of the Sahara in North Africa. Actually, it was filmed in the desert of California. Originally *Sahara* had been cast with Melvyn Douglas and Glenn Ford in the lead roles.

Saying good-bye to Verita in Burbank, Bogie headed for what he called “a God forsaken hell-hole,” a reference to Brawley, California, which lies in the harsh Borego Desert of the Imperial Valley north of the Mexican border. The temperatures and the terrain evoked conditions in the Sahara desert, the setting for this war-time drama.

(middle photo)
Bogart with Bruce Bennett
bottom photo:
Bogart in command

The script was based on a 1937 Russian film, *The Thirteen*, and it evoked another film, John Ford's *The Lost Patrol* (1934). That film had starred Victor McLaglen and Boris Karloff.

Bogie's action picture showed a British-American unit stranded in the Sahara in the path of the oncoming Nazi infantry. Bogie, cast in the lead, played Sergeant Joe Gunn. The picture was directed by Zoltan Korda, who was the middle brother of filmmakers Alexander and Vincent Korda, all born in Hungary.

A former cavalry officer, Korda specialized in military action and adventure films, many of which were filmed in Africa or India. His greatest cinematic triumph was the 1939 *The Four Feathers*, starring Sir Ralph Richardson. He both directed and wrote the screenplay for *Sahara*, which was produced by Bogie's pal, Mark Hellinger.

Bogie bonded with most of the cast, whom he invited to his suite at night at the seedy Planter's Hotel for some heavy drinking.

Bogie found his co-star, Bruce Bennett, fascinating. "He was my kind of guy," Bogie later recalled.

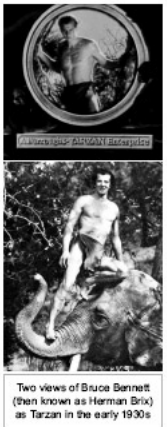
Growing up in the rugged lumber camps of Washington State, Bennett built up his physique. After playing football in the 1926 Rose Bowl, Herman Brix (his original name) won six national titles in the 1928 Olympics in the shot put category, eventually earning a Silver Medal.

He had been a screen Tarzan in the 1930s but had changed his name to Bruce Bennett when he wanted to escape the serials and become a legitimate actor.

In Gabe Essoe's book, *Tarzan of the Movies*, he wrote: "Brix's portrayal was the only time between the silents and the 1960s that Tarzan was accurately depicted in films. He was mannered, cultured, soft spoken, a well-educated English lord who spoke several languages—and didn't grunt."

Although she hated the blistering desert heat, Mayo Methot showed up on the set with a thermos of chilled martinis for her husband. Bennett and his wife, Jeannette, spent many nights with the Bogarts, even driving down to Mexicali with them for a picnic.

In later years, Bennett said, "We had a room next to Bogie's suite. Sometimes they'd fight all night. Many a night we heard the sounds of broken glass. Mayo was very unhappy. I think she knew she was losing her man but didn't know how to keep him. She would literally drink all day and night. Bogie did tell me that Mayo wasn't anything like the woman he'd married. 'She was very witty, very intelligent, and possessed a remarkable charm when I fell in love& with her,' he said. 'Now she's turned into a possessive, overbearing harridan.'"



Two views of Bruce Bennett (then known as Herman Brix) as Tarzan in the early 1930s

"She interrupted many a shoot," Bennett claimed. "She fought on the set with Bogie and even used her fists. She'd throw bottles at him. She gave him a big black eye and inflicted cuts on him. Korda often had to shoot around these damages that makeup couldn't hide. It became obvious to me that Mayo was mentally ill. Bogie confided to me that he thought his wife was 'a schizo'—his words—and I agreed."

“Finally, when we were alone, I asked Bogie: ‘why in hell do you stay married to someone like Mayo?’”

“I leave her for a week or so at a time,” Bogie told Bennett. “But I go back to her. On several occasions, she’s attempted suicide, and I don’t want to be responsible for her death.”

Bennett and Bogie became pals, and Bogie was instrumental in getting John Huston to cast Bennett in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948).

“Bogie was king of the hill at this time in his career,” said Bennett. “For the most part, he was very cooperative and friendly to the workers. But he just loved to drink. Every morning when the director came on the set, Bogie wanted to argue. Sometimes he would argue about something for an hour. It was really frustrating Korda. Finally I said to Korda, ‘Don’t you know what’s going on? Bogie drinks every night, and he needs to buy some time in the morning to get his head clear and learn his lines.’”

Born on the Mississippi River, the son of a steamer fireman on the river-boat *Robert E. Lee*, Rex Ingram was an African-American actor. When he met Bogie he’d finished his best known film appearance as the genie in *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940). He is also remembered for playing Jim, the fugitive slave, opposite Mickey Rooney in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1939).

To Bogie’s surprise, he found that Ingram was a licensed physician, like Bogie’s late father.

In 1949 Ingram pleaded guilty to a charge of violating the Mann Act when he transported a teenage girl to New York “for immoral purposes,” and drew an eighteen-month jail sentence.

Bogie liked Ingram and visited him in prison, telling him, “It’s too damn bad when a guy gets sent up the river for liking young pussy. I’ve been known to go for teenage pussy myself.”

The German-born actor Kurt Kreuger was befriended by Bogie who called him “The Kraut.” A strikingly handsome “blond God,” as the press called him, Kreuger was the third most requested male pinup at 20th Century& Fox, after Tyrone Power and John Payne. He complained to Bogie that he was going to have to go through all the war movies of the 1940s being typecast as a Nazi.

Two views of Rex Ingram *(lower photo)* as the Genie of the Lamp in *Thief of Baghdad*

“Don’t complain,” Bogie told him. “It beats a concentration camp.”

As quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Kreuger said, “I was running across the dunes when Tambul [Rex Ingram] jumped on top of me and pressed my head into the sand to suffocate me. Only Korda forgot to yell cut, and Ingram was so emotionally caught up in the scene that he kept pressing my face harder and harder. Finally, I went unconscious. Nobody knew this. Even the crew was transfixed, watching this dramatic ‘killing.’ If Korda hadn’t finally said cut, as an afterthought, it would have been all over for me.”

That’s not the story Bogie told when he got back to Los Angeles. He said he came onto the set and immediately saw what was happening. “I was the one who called cut. If I hadn’t, The Kraut would have bit the dust in more ways than one.”

Another member of the cast, Dan Duryea, who had graduated from Cornell University in 1928, had made his name

on Broadway in the play *Dead End*. Ironically, Bogie had starred in the film version.

Veteran Character Actors

(top photo) Dan Duryea
(middle photo) J. Carrol Naish
(bottom) Kurt Kreuger

Duryea was one of those "stars of tomorrow" that Bogie dreaded to meet, but he got along with him. The actor would go on to demonstrate a certain villainy on the screen.

When he had a brief fling with actress/girl about town Liz Renay, Duryea said, "I looked at my nude body in a full-length mirror. Ugly puss. So-so dick. A 155-pound weakling. No leading man. So I decided right there and then to become the meanest SOB in movies."

Like other actors such as Dane Clark, Duryea also became known as "the poor man's Bogart."

Bogie also bonded with Lloyd Bridges, the California-born actor who is best known today for his role of Mike Nelson in *Sea Hunt*, which was the top American TV series in 1958. "He was no dumb actor," Bogie said. "You could have a real conversation with this fucker,"

Shortly after making *Sahara*, Bridges left Columbia to enlist in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Near the end of the shoot, Methot was back in Los Angeles, as was Bridges' wife, Dorothy Simpson, whom he had married in 1938. Bogie invited him one night to drive across the Mexican border to sample the wares in a bordello.

"I picked the wrong chick," Bridges later said. "I got the clap. Bogie got a clean one and emerged unharmed. Perhaps he had so much alcohol in his body it killed all VD germs."

Bogie also liked character actor J. Carrol Naish, who, although of Irish descent, always ended up playing Latin, Arab, or East Indian characters. The year Bogie met him, he was also cast as Dr. Daka, the first villain to go up against Batman on the silver screen in the serial *The Batman* (1943).

For his appearance in *Sahara*, Naish would be nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor, losing as did Claude Rains himself (*Casablanca*), to Charles Coburn in *The More the Merrier*.

When Bogie and Bennett had their final drink together at the wrap party for *Sahara*, Bogie said, "I'm a professional. I've done pretty well, don't you think? I've survived in a pretty tough business."

Bennett claimed that, "Part of his survival was due to his great talent and his determination to pay the price, any

price, for success. But certainly some credit must be given to Dame Fortune and timing, as well."

(top photo) Bogie getting cosmeticized by Verita Peterson

(bottom photo) Cover of *Harper's Bazaar*, March 1943, introducing "Betty Bacal"

Shooting ended in April, and Bogie returned from the desert to Los Angeles. Since he didn't have to go to work until May, he spent most of his time aboard his boat, *Sluggy*. He developed a technique. Right before leaving for days at sea, he'd stage a big fight with Methot, then storm out of the door.

Sailing *Sluggy* in the Pacific, he'd spend the nights in the arms of Verita.

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Events were spinning around Bogie's future in 1943. Often he didn't know what they were, although his life would be affected by them.

While he was in the Imperial Valley shooting *Sahara*, the March issue of *Harper's Bazaar* fashion magazine came out. Its cover featured "Betty Bacal" an eighteen-year-old blonde from New York, who had a sultry, come-hither look. The magazine generated inquiries from Howard Hughes, who probably wanted to seduce her, David O. Selznick, and Columbia Pictures. But it was Howard Hawks, a Warner Brothers director, who ended up putting her under personal contract.

In the closing days of the shoot of *Sahara*, Betty Bacal (later changed to Lauren Bacall) arrived in Hollywood.

As Bacall settled into a new life, Mary Baker, still Bogie's agent and "guardian angel," negotiated a new contract for him at Warner Brothers that paid him $3,500 a week.

Production was set to begin in May on Bogie's next film, *Passage to Marseille* (1944). For some odd reason, the "s" was left out of the name of this Provençal city, and no one caught it.

Three views of Bogie as a resistance fighter. *(second from top)* with Michelle Morgan *(third from top)* with Claude Rains

Back in Burbank and with Robert Peterson away at war, Bogie spent many a night at Verita's home. His separation from Methot often stretched out for a week at a time. Sometimes she'd chase him from the house with an iron skillet.

"There was many a night he would arrive drunk on my doorstep at two or three o'clock in the morning, having fled from Methot," Verita said. "Once he escaped his house wearing nothing but his underwear. He always kept his keys in his car in case he had to make a fast getaway."

Inevitably the talk was of marriage. "He told me that he wanted to marry me as soon as I divorced Bob and he divorced Methot. I had reservations, but planned to go through with the marriage. We were in love with each other. I thought that once married to him I could straighten him out."

"All during the war, I couldn't file divorce charges against Bob," Verita said. "What could I do? Charge him with adultery? I also feared a scandal that would damage Bogie's career. Also I didn't want to call Methot's attention to me. If I did, she might show up at my doorstep with an ax. I was in a real dilemma. Bob thought I'd get over Bogie and would settle down to become his *hausfrau* when he came marching home."

"Bogie was talking with lawyers about divorcing Methot, and he urged me nightly to divorce Bob," Verita said. "Still, I held back. We began to fight and argue about our mutual divorces—not the brutal fights he and Methot had. All this fighting was putting a serious strain on our romance, except when we were sailing aboard *Sluggy*, as we did every weekend."

As Verita related in her memoirs, she claimed that one night they were sitting and drinking at her kitchen table. She said, "I told him he had lousy taste in wives, and that he chose them as a fighter would choose sparring partners. I also told him that he drank too much and that I drank too much when I was with him, and I told him that maybe our fiery natures were too combustible for marriage. I wasn't sure I could live with some of his characteristics, such as needling people to the brink of fight or flight."

The end result of that night in the kitchen led to an agreement between the two of them not to see each other until their divorce papers were filed. That way, she claimed, there would be no chance of her being named as a correspondent in his divorce proceedings against Methot.

Bogie agreed but in the weeks ahead he called several times and wanted to renegotiate their agreement. But she

remained steadfast, and he respected their deal.

Actor Leslie Howard Reported Lost With Big British Airplane

LONDON, June 3.—(AP)—British overseas transport plane, with actor Leslie Howard reported among its 13 passengers, was officially declared overdue and presumed lost today after reporting in a final message yesterday that it was being attacked by enemy aircraft while enroute from Lisbon to England.

Leslie Howard

Years later in New Orleans, Verita claimed, “It was the worst mistake of my life. I almost set up a situation where he’d meet some other dame. Separation seemed right at the time, but I was wrong. I blew my chance to become the fourth Mrs. Humphrey Bogart, and I have no one else to blame but myself. For Bogie and me, it was the final curtain. Or so I thought at the time. But life moves in very unpredictable ways. I never dreamed that what would happen between us would actually happen.”

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Although Bogie hadn’t seen Leslie Howard in many months, the two actors still wrote each other. “I loved the man and would always be grateful to him,” Bogie said.

On June 2, 1943, Bogie received the shocking news.

On a KLM/BOAC flight from Lisbon to Bristol, England, the plane carrying Howard had been shot down by a German Junkers-JU 88 aircraft over the Bay of Biscay. All passengers aboard had lost their lives.

There were rumors that the Nazis believed that Winston Churchill, who had been in Algiers, was on board. In his autobiography, Churchill expressed that a mistake about his activities might have cost Howard his life.

Subsequent research does not verify Churchill’s belief. Other authors have concluded that the Germans wanted to shoot down the plane in order to kill Howard himself. His intelligence-gathering activities had come to their attention. It is also believed that the Nazis wanted to demoralize Britain with the loss of one of its most outspoken and patriotic figures.

The Nazi high command knew the whereabouts of Churchill at the time of the attack on Howard’s plane. Also, they were hardly naïve enough to believe that the war-time prime minister would be traveling alone aboard an unescorted and unarmed civilian aircraft when both the secrecy and the air power of the British government were at his command.

It is believed today that the order to liquidate Howard came from Josef Goebbels himself. He had denounced the actor for “being the most dangerous propagandist in the British service.”

On hearing the news, Bogie went into a deep depression. He had his own theory as to why he thought Howard was assassinated in the air crash.

(lower photo)
Bogart conflicting with Alexis Smith

He claimed that Howard was on a top secret mission at the bequest of Churchill to dissuade Francisco Franco, Spain's dictator, from joining the Axis with Benito Mussolini and Hitler.

Bogie may have been right. Long after Bogie's death, a Spanish writer, José Rey-Xieman, in his book *El Vuelo del Ibis* (*The Flight of the Ibis*) documents Bogie's claim of the secret mission in convincing detail.

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Bogie was thrilled as he prepared to film *Passage to Marseille*. He would be reunited once again with "the gang"— or at least most of them— from *Casablanca*. But suddenly Jack Warner changed his mind and sent him a script called *The Pentacle*. This was a story of a man who kills his wife after their fifth wedding anniversary. At the time Bogie was trying to establish himself as a romantic hero on the screen or else an action hero. He did not want to return to the role of a villain, especially one who murders his wife.

Steve Trilling had become Jack Warner's executive assistant, and Bogie called him to denounce both the storyline and his part in it.

Trilling reminded him that he had promised "greater cooperation" after signing a fat seven-year contract. "This part has George Raft written all over it," Bogie said. "Give him *my* sloppy seconds."

Trilling promised rewrites. Bogie told him if they met his specifications, then he would agree to postpone *Passage to Marseille* and film *The Pentacle*.

When the rewrites arrived, Bogie discovered that it was still basically the same script with him playing the wife killer "with no motivation."

"I won't film this fucker," Bogie told Trilling. "You're an asshole to send it to me." He slammed down the phone.

Bogie's new contract had brought him a huge financial gain, but it did not bring him script approval. Jack Warner had refused to grant that.

Warner dug in his heels and got tough with tough guy Bogart. The studio had changed the film's title from the God-awful *The Pentacle* to the more commercial *Conflict*, but the weak plot remained unchanged.

Warner issued a threat to Bogie that he'd replace him in *Passage to Marseille* with French actor Jean Gabin.

Even a threatening call from Jack Warner refused to make Bogie change his mind. It became a battle of wills between a gigantic star and a studio head.

Exasperated, Warner slammed down the phone on Bogie but not before issuing a warning: "You'd better watch it that you don't get your left ball caught in a wringer."

One clever telegram from Warner evoked the song from *Casablanca*.

Dear Rick,
You must remember this. As time goes by, you must remember your contract. Or else Ilsa may not be the only person you're telling goodbye on the tarmac.
Jack Warner.

Soonafter, Warner fired off a telegram to super-agent Charles K. Feldman, who represented Gabin, who was known at the time "as France's answer to Spencer Tracy." Gabin was made a firm offer to star in *Passage to Marseille*.

Warner called the next day. "Bogart, I've made stars and I can break them. Only the other day a star from way back when was trying to get me to cast him as an extra in one of our upcoming movies. You've got no hair; you've got bags under your eyes, and you've got the physique of a Nazi general who's been held in a Russian prisoner-of-war camp for two years."

Willingly agreeing to go on suspension, Bogie told Warner, "Unleash your mad dogs on me."

But by now, Warner was harboring second thoughts about the box office allure of Gabin, who was being asked to carry a $2 million picture. His box office draw, strong in his home country, was virtually nil with American audiences.

Hal Wallis was the producer of *Passage to Marseille*, and Bogie was caught up in a battle of egos going on between Warner and his greatest producer, Wallis. Secretly Warner had been tipped off that Wallis was in secret negotiations with Darryl F. Zanuck to move to 20th Century Fox.

Warner fired off a telegram to Wallis, warning him that, "I, Jack Warner, am in charge of production at Warner Brothers, and I do not want any executive producer taking undue credit for my achievements."

Two weeks later, the agent, Feldman, responded to Warner's offer. "Gabin has refused the role in the Marseille picture. He did suggest that an S be added to the spelling of one of his favorite French cities."

Because of his loyalty to Bogie, Sydney Greenstreet announced that, based on the studio's bad treatment of Bogie, that he was considering pulling out of both *Passage to Marseille* and *Conflict*, as he'd been cast in each of them.

At the last minute, Bogie caved in. Shooting began on *Conflict*, starring Alexis Smith.

Originally Joan Crawford was slated for the female lead, that of Bogie's first wife. She read the script and sent word to Warners: "Joan Crawford never dies in her movies, and she never loses her man to anyone." She wrote that before *Mildred Pierce*, of course, in which she loses Zachary Scott to her own daughter, played by Ann Blyth.

Greenstreet came back on board when Bogie agreed to do the film.

Once again Bogie was reunited with Rose Hobart, with whom he'd worked before. She recalled that Methot arrived on the set to celebrate the fifth anniversary of her marriage to Bogie. "There was a certain irony here," Hobart& said, "since the plot concerned a man plotting to kill his wife on their fifth anniversary. I found it amazing that the Bogarts had not killed themselves a long time ago."

Bogart with Methot in 1944

As soon as Bogie completed *Conflict*, he rushed to the set of *Passage to Marseille* (1944), where he was reunited with many of his *Casablanca* stars, including director Michael Curtiz.

Missing was Ingrid Bergman. The French actress, Michèle Morgan, who had originally been asked to play Ilsa, was his female co-star. Although a stunning beauty, she and Bogie did not make sparks on the screen in this lackluster gathering of the clan.

Casey Robinson, one of the scripters for *Casablanca*, worked on the screenplay with Jack Moffitt, based on a novel *Men Without Country*. This was another World War II drama, depicting a Devil's Island escape marred by a flashback-within-flashback confusion. As WWII films go, it was not bad, but a disappointment considering the collective talent of its *Casablanca* stars that included Claude Rains, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, and Helmut Dantine.

"Bogart was a difficult man to relate to," Morgan said. "He was polite, but always seemed to have his guard up. I knew he was in an unhappy marriage. He appeared every morning on the set with an awful hangover. He was very hard to direct, and argued constantly with Curtiz."

Director Howard Hawks, who had cast Bogie in the lead for *To Have and Have Not*, his upcoming picture, brought his new discovery, Betty Bacal (to be billed as Lauren Bacall) to the set of *Passage to Marseille*.

She would recall the moment in her memoirs, *Lauren Bacall By Myself*. Hawks wanted to determine if there was any chemistry between his star and the young actress. He introduced Bacall to Bogie.

She wrote: "There was no clap of thunder, no lightning bolts, just a simple how do you do. Bogart was slighter than I imagined—five feet ten and a half, wearing his costume of no-shape trousers, cotton shirt, and scarf around neck. Nothing of import was said—we didn't stay long—but he seemed a friendly man."

Bacall may have had visions of appearing opposite Cary Grant, Tyrone Power, or Charles Boyer. Reportedly, she had not been impressed with Bogie on screen.

Lauren Bacall
Young, so very young

Biographer Joe Hyams quotes her as saying, "When Hawks said the star would be Bogart, I was disappointed and thought, 'How awful to be in a picture with that mug; that illiterate. He must not have a brain in his head. He won't be able to think or talk about anything.'"

Hawks had acquired the rights to the Ernest Hemingway novel, *To Have and Have Not*. He had long wanted to make a movie out of it, which he planned to both produce and direct.

He hoped to introduce Lauren Bacall to movie audiences, along with a supporting cast that included crusty old Walter Brennan and even Hoagy Carmichael.

The upcoming release of *Passage to Marseille* sparked controversy before it was shipped around the world. The domestic version showed footage of Bogie, in an act of vengeance, shooting down unarmed Nazi pilots escaping from their downed plane. The U.S. Office of War Information asked Jack Warner to cut this violent footage before sending the film abroad. Warner agreed, but told the office that Warner Brothers would retain the scene for domestic consumption within the United States.

Because of its broad similarities to *Casablanca,* including a recycling of most of its cast, *Passage to Marseille* did mediocre business, although most reviewers concluded, "It is no *Casablanca*."

Conflict, as Bogie had predicted, was a disaster of a film, as reflected by the poor box office. On viewing the movie, Jack Warner realized he'd made a mistake by forcing Bogie into the role. He delayed *Conflict* 's release for two years.

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An early morning call came in for Bogie, who was staying anonymously at a small hotel in West Hollywood. It was from Methot, who had somehow found out where he was lodging. “I’ve cut my wrists,” she shouted to him when he picked up the phone. “I’m bleeding to death.”

(top photo) Methot
bottom: Bogie with Bacall

In his pajamas and a robe, he drove to their home where he rushed upstairs to the bedroom. She hadn’t lied to him. Her wrists had been slit. He called immediately for an ambulance.

No one knows the exact details of what happened next, and neither Bogie nor Methot volunteered any information. It was an embarrassing incident that the Warners publicity department rushed to suppress from the newspapers.

The end result of that suicide attempt led to Bogie moving back in with Methot, much to the chagrin of Verita.

After Methot recovered, Bogie told Michael Curtiz, “The old men declare the wars, then send the young men off to get killed. I want to do something for the war effort.”

He asked Jack Warner if he could apply to the Hollywood Victory Committee and take his month-long vacation entertaining the troops overseas. Seeing the publicity value of such a tour, Warner agreed to it, not realizing that Bogie planned to take along the emotionally unstable Methot.

After an investigation from the F.B.I. cleared him of any Communism connections—once again—he was scheduled to travel abroad with his wife.

Bogie told Peter Lorre, “Here we are fighting Hitler and the Japs, but all the War Department is concerned with is do I have any Communist connections. Russia is our ally in this war. Why don’t they ask if I’m a Nazi spy? There’s word out there that Errol Flynn is flirting with some Nazis, although I find that hard to believe.”

In November of 1944, with the war still raging in Europe, Bogie, along with Methot, began a ten-week tour of North Africa, West Africa, and Southern Italy. Their itinerary would transit across 35,000 miles of war-torn terrain.

Along with the unhappily married couple were actor Don Cummings and accordionist Ralph Hark. Bogie dubbed them “The Filthy Four.” Guest appearances before thousands of GIs began with a local band playing “As Time Goes By.” The *Casablanca* legend was already in the making.

Onstage during some of the troop entertainments, Bogie apologized for not being “a dancing fool” like James Cagney in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. “Edward G. Robinson claims he had the most beautiful legs at Warners in the 1930s,” Bogie told the audience. That line always got a big laugh. “Not having gams like Robinson, I can’t show off my toothpick legs, but I’ll bring out my wife who was a Broadway stage beauty. Mayo Methot.”

“She’s the only real entertainer here,” Bogie said, knowingly or otherwise insulting Cummings and Hark.

Methot usually got heavy applause, and she sang some blues numbers and show tunes from Broadway of the 1920s. Her favorite song for entertaining the battle-weary troops was “More Than You Know.”

Bogart and Methot
Offstage and rowdy during a USO tour

From Berlin, Joseph Goebbels broadcast an attack on Bogie, referring to him as one of America’s most noted gangsters before he entered into films, perhaps confusing his past with that of George Raft’s. “That Humphrey Bogart is the best that America has to send abroad clearly demonstrates the complete breakdown of American morals,” Goebbels charged. “Under the dire command of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the whoremonger in the White House, the Americans are destined to lose the war.”

When Bogie landed in the actual city of Casablanca, GIs recognized him, each one demanding, “Show me the way to Rick’s. Is my first drink on the house?”

An officer in charge of their tour wrote back to his home in Pennsylvania. “The Battle of North Africa took on new meaning with the arrival of The Battling Bogarts. They are a disaster. They’re polite to each other on stage, but off stage they’re killers.”

One infantryman insulted Bogie by asking him, “Couldn’t Warner Brothers have sent Ann Sheridan instead of you and that wife of yours?”

“See that scar on my lip?” Bogie asked the soldier. “Do you want one for yourself? Back off!”

Freezing in the cold and in his long johns, Bogie with Methot arrived in newly liberated Naples to perform their show in the San Carlo Opera House, which had been spared during the many Allied bombing raids which rained destruction down around it.

Looking like a combat veteran himself, Bogie appeared on stage, hawking his tough guy image.& “Listen, you guys, I’m& formin’ a gang to take back& to Chicago. Any of you guys& wanna go back with me?”

Methot and Bogart
Hung over and on tour with the USO

No one laughed. The audience was filled with troops who were surviving on “inhuman rations” and often freezing in the winter cold. On a brief four-day leave, they were going to be sent back to fight Germans, and many expected the only way they’d see Chicago, or their hometown in America, was feet first.

When their supply of liquor ran out, the Bogarts switched to cognac, which Methot likened to rancid olive oil. “But we guzzled the stuff.”

Methot later claimed that "I fell in love with Bogie all over again when we were visiting wounded soldiers in a hospital outside Naples. One guy had had both legs and an arm amputated."

"The soldier from his hospital bed looked into Bogie's eyes and asked him, 'Will my gal still accept me like this?'" Methot said.

"She'll not only accept you but love you more than ever," Bogie assured the twenty-two-year-old.

In letters back home, Methot said, "We slept in blankets on the floor; we bounced in Jeeps for endless hours over incredibly rough roads; we trudged through mud, and we still did our stuff."

Bogie virtually had to offer a bribe to get a bed for Methot and himself in the Army's VIP Hotel in Naples. One officer reported that the Bogarts, back from an all-night party with the troops, had guns and started shooting up the hotel in the early morning hours. The sleeping officers at first thought it was an attack from the Nazis.

One general in his boxer shorts removed the guns from the Bogarts and asked them to check out.

Northeast of Naples in Caserta, the Bogarts had a reunion with Captain John Huston. Bogie renewed his friendship with the director, who was always contemptuous of Methot. He called her "The Rosebud."

Jealous of the camaraderie between Bogie and Huston, Methot tried to take over the reunion. She rose to sing.

"She was drunk," Huston recalled. "She couldn't sing. Everything off key. It was humiliating for Bogie to sit through it and have me sit through it."

Later in his film, *Key Largo*, starring Bogie, Huston would insert a similar scene, when he had Edward G. Robinson force Claire Trevor to sing off key.

When they returned to Naples, Bogie and Methot checked into a seedy hotel, where they staged a raucous all-night party for enlisted men. The noise was so loud that a general, lodging in a room across the hallway, knocked on their door. He ordered Bogie and Methot to go to bed and tell their guests to leave.

When Bogie refused, the general politely asked him again.

This time Bogie told the general to "fuck off." The next morning Bogie and Methot received a notice to leave Naples at once on the next available Army transport.

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They reached New York on the cold, rainy morning of February 15, 1944.

Arriving exhausted after a grueling flight, the Bogarts checked into the Gotham Hotel on Fifth Avenue. Jack Warner himself stayed there on his visits to New York. A wire was waiting for Bogie to report to Warners for the start of *To Have and Have Not*.

Bogie was in no condition to return to the Warner sound stages in California. He was also drinking heavily and needed a vacation. Instead of responding to the urgent request from Warner Brothers and Howard Hawks, he sent a telegram to Peter Lorre instead. "Mayo and I have the distinction of being thrown off two continents," it said.

Beginning at around midnight, the Bogarts wrecked their hotel suite, tossing lamps and furniture around. They woke up everyone on their floor. The manager was summoned from his bed to confront them. He asked them to check out at once and pay damages.

Bogie refused. The bill for damages was later sent to Warner Brothers. The studio chief ordered that the amount be deducted from Bogie's weekly salary.

Leaving an angry, confrontational Methot to face the hotel manager, Bogie fled the building without telling his wife where he was going. She was alarmed that in his drunken state, he might get run over in New York's wartime

traffic.

Returning, eventually, to the Gotham the following morning in time to check out at nine o'clock, Bogie faced Methot. She demanded to know, "What whore did you sleep with last night?"

For the first time in his relationship, Bogie decided to tell her the truth. "Helen Menken," he said calmly. "I asked her to remarry me after my divorce from you comes through." At that point, what remained of their hotel suite was wrecked.

Word arrived once again from Jack Warner, demanding that Bogie return to Burbank at once, since shooting on *To Have and Have Not* could not be delayed any longer. The studio chief threatened to hold Bogie personally responsible for the cost of any further delays on the picture.

Defiantly, Bogie sent word that he planned to remain in New York "with my divorced first wife, Miss Helen Menken, Broadway star."

Warner even threatened the Army that it would no longer send stars on USO tours if Bogart wasn't returned immediately. Then the studio chief was informed that Bogie was still under military jurisdiction. The Army issued orders for Bogie to fly immediately to Los Angeles.

Because of wartime conditions, there were no flights available. Bogie, along with Methot, was booked on the train, the Twentieth Century Limited. The reservations were for Thursday night. At the last minute Bogie bolted. No one could find him.

A call from the Army to Menken's apartment brought her to the phone. She denied having any knowledge of his whereabouts. Of course, she could have been covering for him, and no doubt was.

Methot was waiting at Grand Central Station Thursday night hoping Bogie would appear. Extreme manipulation and endless phone conversations had transpired behind the scenes. At one point Warner had threatened to sue him for breach of contract.

Two minutes before the train was set to leave the station, Bogie appeared without any explanation to Methot about where he'd been.

In Chicago, Howard Hawks, the director of *To Have and Have Not*, had a telegram delivered to Bogie's compartment on the train.

"We have an exciting new girl I want to appear opposite you in our film," he wrote. "Anxiously awaiting your arrival at Union Station when the train pulls into Los Angeles."

On the train heading west, Bogie was grumpy. He complained to Methot, "Hawks has lined up what he calls his protégée. We know what protégée means. He's cast some unknown teenage pussy opposite me. God damn, the bastard. That means I'll have to carry the picture on my own. He wants some of my major stardom to rub off on his latest crush."

When I agreed to do this God damn picture, I was told that Ann Sheridan was to be my co-star," Bogie said. "Now I get this schoolgal and clothes model. Just my fucking luck. Warner is sticking it up my ass once again."

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Co-starring Bogie and Methot, a three-minute short film, *Report from the Front* (1944), was released in theaters across the country. Its sponsor was the Red Cross Drive Committee of the Motion Picture Industry, and the distributor was National Screen Service. The film begins with the arrival in North Africa of the Bogarts on December 11, 1943, for their three-month tour entertaining the troops. They are shown visiting Army camps, military bases, hospitals, and field units.

Bogie handled the narration and issued an appeal for donations for the war effort.

Report from the Front marked the last screen appearance of Mayo Methot.

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Before a final casting decision was made about who would play the female lead in *To Have and Have Not*, Howard Hawks asked Lauren Bacall to do a screen test. It was with the actor John Ridgely, who was under contract for Warners.

Hawks wanted the scene “to be special” in his words, and he had written it himself. It became known as “the whistle scene.” In time it would become her most famous scene among her many screen appearances.

The lines were provocative.

At the doorway, as she is about to leave the room, she asks the main character.

“You know how to whistle, don’t you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow.”

Days after filming her screen test, she was told that Bogie had seen it. She feared his reaction.

Called to lunch with Hawks, she headed for his bungalow at the appointed time. Just as she was heading for the door, it opened. Bogie appeared. Having met with the director, he was just leaving.

This was her second meeting with the star. He appeared to evaluate her more carefully this time, taking in her tawny blonde hair, her triangular catlike face, and her penetrating green eyes.

Finally, he spoke, “I saw your test. We’ll have a lot of fun.”

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And so they did.

AMERICAN ICONS:
BOGIE AND BACALL

EPILOGUE

William Faulkner, "out of print and out of work," was hired by Howard Hawks to work on the script of Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*. To the chagrin of his rival, Hemingway, Faulkner contributed greatly to the snappy dialogue, much of it emerging from the beautiful lips of Lauren Bacall, who was cast as Marie ("Slim") Browning.

Critics claimed that *To Have and Have Not* was Hemingway's worst novel. When the Bogie/Bacall movie was released, other critics called it Hawks' version of *Casablanca*.

Cast as a tough skipper-for-hire guy named Harry Morgan, Bogie in the plot reluctantly becomes involved with the French Resistance. He also woos an equally tough character, as played by Bacall.

Hawks would later claim, "It wasn't Bacall that Bogie fell for; it was the character of Marie. She had to play Marie for the rest of her life. She should have fallen for me."

In their love scenes, you can practically see Bacall and Bogart falling in love for real. When she saw the movie, Methot agreed with that assessment. "Bogie's no good on the screen in love scenes. But in *To Have and Have Not*, it was clear to me he wasn't faking that kissing just for the camera."

Dolores Moran, who had fourth billing, had been cast as the lead actress, but her part was reduced to give Bacall more screen time.

Moran, along with Bacall, was promoted as a new screen personality. Bacall made it; Moran did not. A popular pin-up girl, she never struck it big in movies, although she appeared in major films such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* with James Cagney and *Old Acquaintance* with Bette Davis.

Moran languished in Hollywood, working sporadically. Near the end of her life in 1982, she claimed, "Had it not been for Lauren Bacall, I too might have become a screen legend. She stole not only Bogie, but my thunder. Had she not come along, I know Bogie would have fallen for me. I was his type."

In 1944 as February (a leap year) moved into spring, the forty-four-year-old Bogie fell in love with the nineteen-year-old Bacall. They didn't mean to—it just happened.

(third image from top)
Bogart with Dolores Moran
(bottom image)
Bogart with Bacall

During the shoot, Methot turned forty, but her beauty had disappeared somewhere in a bottle of Scotch. She'd gotten fat and no longer went to the hairdresser. Often she appeared without make-up, making her look even older than she was.

The immaculately groomed Bacall, in contrast, was the epitome of New York chic, looking for the most part as if she stepped from the pages of *Harper's Bazaar*.

During the early days of her courtship with Bogie, Bacall met him in the shadows, keeping their love affair a secret, although Hawks was aware of it from the very beginning.

Jack Warner told his colleagues, "In Bacall, we have another Marlene Dietrich in the making. After all, The Kraut isn't getting any younger. I hear she spends two extra hours painting her face before appearing in public."

In the wake of the success of *To Have and Have Not*, and Bacall's stunning screen debut, Howard Hawks cast the lovebirds in *The Big Sleep* (1946), with dialogue also written in part by William Faulkner, and music by Max Steiner. The third lead was played by John Ridgely, who had starred with Bacall in her screen test.

This *film noir* was the first movie version of Raymond Chandler's 1939 novel, featuring the character of detective Philip Marlowe. The plot was convoluted, and many fans did not fully understand it but went to see it because of the "Bogie and Bacall" phenomenon. Even the original author, Raymond Chandler, couldn't figure out who the murderer was.

Because of Bogie's ongoing affair with Bacall and his marital problems, his drinking became even heavier during the shoot and on some days he was unable to work.

When Chandler saw the finished cut, he claimed that Martha Vickers had delivered such an intense performance that she overshadowed Bacall. That led to much of Vickers' work ending up on the cutting room floor. She never forgave Hawks for that.

A stellar supporting cast was lined up for *The Big Sleep*, including Dorothy Malone and Regis Toomey. Bogie was reunited with Elisha Cook Jr.

If such a thing were possible, Methot increased her own consumption of alcohol. During one fight with Bogie, she fell down and broke her foot. Recovering in bed, and furious at the news of Bogie's affair with Bacall, she called her rival at three o'clock one morning in October. "Listen, you Jewish bitch—who's going to wash his socks? Are *you*? Are *you* going to take care of him?" At this point her marriage to Bogie was over except for the divorce.

On October 10, 1944, Warners announced the separation of Bogie and Methot, but, almost unbelievably, they had a reconciliation two weeks later.

On December 4, Bogie, following one of their most violent fights, ran out of the house for the final time.

At the wrap of *The Big Sleep* in January of 1945, Bacall returned to New York, and Bogie was hot to trot on her trail. That month he announced to columnist Earl Wilson that he and Bacall would marry.

Back in Hollywood, he filmed *The Two Mrs. Carrolls* (1947) with Barbara Stanwyck. This was followed by a May 10 divorce from Methot, in which she got two-thirds of his cash.

At long last, on May 21, 1945, Bogie and Bacall were married in Lucas, Ohio, on Malabar Farm, belonging to Bogie's friend, the writer Louis Bromfield, a descendant of Daniel Boone. Their honeymoon was spent cruising in *Sluggy* along the California coast.

By August 15, World War II was over, a Cold War about to begin. It appeared that Bogie had settled into a happy marriage. But there were complications.

It wouldn't be quite the storybook romance that publicists or even biographers have suggested.

(bottom image)
Martha Vickers
"an on-screen nymphomaniac"

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Back in Burbank, Verita Peterson had read in the papers that Bogie was seeing a young actress named Lauren Bacall. She didn't realize the seri-

ousness of the romance.

When his divorce from Methot came through, she thought, or at least hoped, that he might resume his relationship with her. News of his marriage to Bacall came as a shock to her.

"I was furious at first, then I cried for several days at the news," Verita said. "I took it so hard. I felt I'd been betrayed. I raged against Bacall, whom I viewed as an opportunistic Jane-come-lately. Perhaps irrationally, I did not blame Bogie for his action. It appeared that I had removed myself from the race too long. I was sick, and I hated myself for what I'd done. Now, thanks to me and my damned dispassionate reasoning, it was over. At least I thought it was over."

Three months later, a call came in from Bogie, asking her to lunch at the Smoke House where it all began. He told her he was glad to see his "sassy li'l bitch again."

(upper image) Hollywood promotes Bogie and Bacall *(lower image)* Verita Peterson

Before they could resume their old relationship, she had to needle Bogie the way he needled other people. "Who is this bitch anyway? Someone who just *drifted* into your life! A total goddamned *stranger*!"

Then Bogie said an amazing thing. "Pete, I've told you a hundred times. You're the only woman in my life."

Verita later said, "I started to walk out of the restaurant at that point. What did he mean that I was the only woman in his life? What about Lauren Bacall? She seemed like a woman in his life."

He tried to explain his marriage. "Okay, I did it again. I got drunk and I got married. I don't even know how the hell it all happened. But now I'm locked in again, and I gotta figure a way out of it."

She bluntly asked him, "Do you love her?"

"What the hell's love?" he asked. "We haven't a damn thing in common, and she's young enough to be my daughter."

By his third martini, Bogie made his pitch. He wanted Verita back as the keeper of his toupée. "Listen, Pete, how the hell can you go off and just leave me at the mercy of those fags over at Warners in makeup? I mean, they're prancing in and fluffing up my muff between every goddamn take."

"I knew what was coming," she later recalled. "He wanted me back to fluff his muff, but that could be taken two ways, and he meant it two ways. What surprised me was not that he pitched the ball at me but that I caught it. Without thinking I said, 'Of course, we can take up right where we left off.'"

Bogie and Bacall purchased Hedy Lamarr's secluded house called Hedgerow Farm at 2707 Benedict Canyon Road in Beverly Hills in January of 1946. At first Bogie liked the isolation of it, but in time he began to feel that "it is too remote."

Verita turned down the hairdresser job on *The Big Sleep*, perhaps because Bacall was in it, but she was back on board for the filming of *Dead Reckoning* (1947) for Columbia Pictures.

Bogie's *film noir* had been intended for Rita Hayworth but, because of a commitment to Orson Welles, she was not free. A sultry blonde, Lizabeth Scott, was cast instead by the director John Cromwell, Bogie's long-time friend dating back to the 1920s.

Bogie traded in his beloved *Sluggy* for the *Santana*, paying Dick Powell $50,000 for the fifty-five-foot championship racer which had once been owned by George Brent and Ray Milland.

Verita bowed out as hairdresser to Bogie on the film, *Dark Passage* (1947), for which he returned to the Warner Brothers lot to star with Bacall again. There, he was reunited with Bruce Bennett, who had remained one of his favorite people, and Agnes Moorehead, who had never been one of his favorite persons.

Cast as Vincent Parry, Bogie is framed for the murder of his wife. He escapes from San Quentin and alters his face with plastic surgery. The film is unusual in that the audience does not see Bogie's face until sixty-two minutes into the feature.

This is the first film in which Bogie wore a full hairpiece. It was designed by Verita, although she did not appear on the set.

For a while, Bogie was miffed that John Huston had walked out at a crucial moment during the filming of *Across the Pacific*. But he had to forgive him. After all, Huston was putting his life on the line to join the Army to defend his country during a time of peril. "And what were the rest of

(lower image) Bogart with Lizabeth Scott

us doing?" Bogie asked. "Making bad movies about the war."

Their friendship had been renewed when Bogie and Huston met up on the battlefields of Italy. Huston had always held Mayo Methot in utter contempt, but he had nothing but praise for Bogie's fourth wife, Lauren Bacall. The Bogarts became friends with Huston and his new wife, actress Evelyn Keyes, or "Scarlett O'Hara's Younger Sister" as she called herself in her memoirs.

Upon his return from the war, Huston and Bogie would make their greatest pictures together.

For the 1948 release of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Huston hired his father, Walter Huston, as Bogie's co-star in a picture that became a classic.

Ronald Reagan had desperately wanted to work with Bogie, in spite of certain reservations, but he was told that Bruce Bennett had been cast as "Colt," the role Reagan coveted.

The Treasure of Sierra Madre was John Huston's first film since his return to Hollywood. The plot concerned three Americans who set out into the depths of Mexico's mountainous country to search for gold. Bogie had never looked so disheveled. A critic wrote that by the end of the film he "became frighteningly inhuman—little more than a black mask, with white eyes, and a wolf grin."

Bogie's appearance in *Sierra Madre* was a far cry from that "sprig of aristocracy" on Broadway who invited guests out for tennis.

For his appearance on screen, Bogie needed Verita more than ever. By the time he arrived in Mexico to shoot scenes for *Sierra Madre*, he was almost completely bald. He'd been taking vitamin B shots to make his hair grow back, but it never really did. He'd opt to wear a wig for the rest of his screen life.

Huston put Verita on the payroll. She fitted his toupées in Burbank, but did not go on location to Mexico to fit them on Bogie's bald head.

A mistress who endured two of Bogie's marriages: Verita Peterson Thompson

When he saw the final cut of *Sierra Madre* with John Huston as director and Walter Huston as co-star, Bogie said, "One Huston is bad enough, but two are murder."

Bogie heard he hadn't been nominated for his magnificent performance of Dobbs in *Sierra Madre*. He claimed, "I wuz robbed!"

Laurence Olivier won that year for *Hamlet*, competing against Lew Ayres in *Johnny Belinda*, Montgomery Clift in *The Search*, Dan Dailey in *When My Baby Smiles at Me*, and Clifton Webb in *Sitting Pretty*.

"All those guys are homosexual," Bogie said.

"Don't get me wrong. I think Webby is a great guy, but everyone nominated, according to my sources, can perform fellatio better than Nancy Davis." He was referring, of course, to starlet Nancy Davis, who would later marry Ronald Reagan.

At Oscar time, it was Walter Huston who walked off with an Academy Award for best performance of the year in a supporting role in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

For his next film, *Key Largo* (1948), John Huston teamed Bogie and Bacall again in this *film noir* set in the Florida Keys. Huston also reunited Edward G. Robinson with Bogie, casting Robinson as a gangster once again, this time playing Johnny Rocco, based on Al Capone.

2nd, 3rd, and 4th images above, each from Key Largo,

Bogart, Claire Trevor, & Bacall; Bacall with Bogart; Edward G. Robinson.

Originally Huston had wanted Charles Boyer for the role, but Jack Warner had screamed at him that the French actor was box office poison.

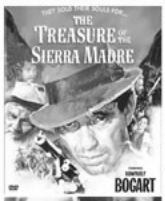
In supporting roles, Huston hired Lionel Barrymore, who performed in a wheelchair. Bogie also had a reunion with Claire Trevor, with whom he'd had a brief fling years before.

Bogie was cast in a sympathetic role—no longer a gangster. He played Frank McCloud, who visits a small backwater Key Largo hotel run by Barrymore and his daughter-in-law, Nora, the widow of Frank's WWII friend. Once there, he becomes trapped n the motel which Rocco and his gang have taken over.

Although major talent was involved, Trevor would take home the Oscar as Best Supporting Actress for playing Robinson's boozy moll. Her singing "Moanin' Low" *a cappella* was probably the scene that won her the Oscar. The Trevor character of Gaye Dawn was based on the real-life moll, Gay Orlova, of gangster Lucky Luciano. *Key Largo* would mark the fourth and final pairing of Bacall and Bogie.

Despite the fact that he was deep into its shooting, Huston had not yet conceived of a logical conclusion to *Key Largo*. Howard Hawks came to the rescue. During the filming of *To Have and Have Not* with Bogie and Bacall, he had produced goodly amounts of celluloid depicting a shootout on a boat. That footage did not make it into the film's final cut.

Hawks met with Huston and showed him how the unused *To Have and Have Not* footage could be spliced into the footage of *Key Largo* for a logical conclusion. When both directors saw the final cut of *Key Largo,* Huston said, "My God, your half-baked idea has popped out of the oven fully baked. I love you. Thanks, pal! I'll let you kiss me with tongue to thank you."



(center photo)
Bogart looking scruffy
(lower photo, left to right)
Bogart, Walter Huston, Tim Holt

In lieu of marriage, Bogie and Verita formalized their relationship as a business contract. In the future he'd have her written in as his personal hairdresser on all his movies. Agent Sam Jaffe drew up the contract. Beginning in 1949, she would work on all but four of Bogie's last eighteen pictures.

The contract gave her a reason to be seen in public with Bogie. Up to then, they'd had to slip around in shadows to see each other. In the future, she'd go on trips with him, arriving, for example, in New York with Bogie at her side.

When reporters inquired who she was, Bogie always said, "My hairdresser and my mistress." The newsmen thought he was joking about the mistress angle and never reported on that part of their relationship.

On December 20, 1947, Mark Hellinger had died, which ended Bogie's plans to join with him to co-produce films. Without Hellinger, he forged ahead to set up his own production company. As such, he was the first post-war actor to form his own production company, calling it Santana Productions after his boat.

By mid-year in 1948 Santana films produced *Knock on Any Door* for Columbia. Bogie starred with John Derek, then at his most beautiful.

The film was directed by Nicholas Ray. Bogie was cast as a lawyer, Andrew Morton, taking the case of Nick Romano (Derek), a troubled young man from the slums.

(center photo)
Bogart with John Derek

(bottom photo)
Director Nicholas Ray

Right before his death, Hellinger had purchased the rights to *Knock on Any Door* and planned to star Bogie and a young Marlon Brando.

In the movie, Derek says the line that would become the clarion call for a generation of disenfranchised youth—"Live fast, die young, and leave a good-looking corpse."

Bogie referred to Nicholas Ray as "a lightning rod," and was impressed with him. The director, who would go on to helm *Rebel Without a Cause* with James Dean, was openly bisexual and a heavy user of drugs and alcohol. Bogie told him, "Listen, pal, I'll join you in the alcohol, but I'll have to skip out on the bisexual stuff and the drug use."

At the time Bogie meet Ray, he was married to the sultry blonde Gloria Grahame, with whom Bogie would appear in *In a Lonely Place*.

That same year Santana also produced *Tokyo Joe* co-starring Alexander Knox, Florence Marly, and Sessue Hayakawa, the silent screen actor.

Tokyo Joe was the second of two films that Bogie would make with director Stuart Heisler. The other was *Chain Lightning* with Eleanor Parker and Raymond Massey. Although it was wrapped in 1949, it wasn't released until 1950.

On January 6, 1949, at the age of forty-nine, Bogie became a dad. At the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, Bacall gave birth to a six-pound, six-ounce boy, Stephen.

Bogie had wanted to star with Bacall again in the next Santana Production *In a Lonely Place*, a 1950 *film noir*, but Warner Brothers refused to lend her out. Instead, director Nicholas Ray cast his wife, Gloria Grahame.

In the film, Bogie stars as Dixon Steele, a cynical screenwriter suspected of murder. The movie, not fully appreciated at the time of its release, later became a classic.

During the shoot, Ray and Grahame became

(two images above)
Bogart with Florence Marly

(bottom image, below)
Bogart as aviator

estranged. Ray came home one night and found his wife in bed with his teenage son. Later, when he came of age, Grahame married her former stepson, Anthony Ray, with whom she had two children.

Bogie did not like the script for Warner Brothers' film, *Murder Inc.*, and told director Bretaigne Windust that he felt it was "old fashioned." He was cast with such veteran actors as Zero Mostel, Ted de Corsia, and Everett Sloane. The title was later changed to *The Enforcer* (1951).

Windust, a French-born theater, film, and TV director, became ill. Raoul Walsh took over, but insisted that he not be credited, wanting Windust to take the honor.

No longer a gangster, Bogie played a district attorney, Martin Ferguson, in this one.

In another film produced by his own studio, Santana, Bogie signed to star in *Sirocco* (1951), with one of his best array of character actors, including Lee J. Cobb, Everett Sloane, and Zero Mostel (once again). Cast as Harry Smith, Bogie plays a gun runner in French-occupied Damascus in the year 1925.

His female lead was Marta Toren, the Swedish-born actress who joined the pantheon of exotic European stars that Bogie appeared with in the late 40s and 50s.

Bogie found Toren intriguing because she was secretly dating Dr. Petter Lindstrom, the former husband of Ingrid Bergman. When a reporter visiting the set asked her about her romance with Lindstrom, Toren claimed, "I met him only once at a party."

After the reporter left, Bogie told her, "That's the way to tell 'em, gal. When a reporter asks me about my mistress, I always claim she's my hairdresser."

"Petter told me you were once in love with Bergman," Toren said. "Is that true?"

Ever the provocateur, Bogie said, "No, that was just a smokescreen. I was in love with Petter himself. I always felt that getting fucked by a Swedish doctor is one of the world's greatest thrills, and I'm sure you agree."

"I don't know," she said. "Howard Duff is not bad."

"But don't you think Ava Gardner is a tough act to follow?"

"Perhaps she is, but Duff prefers me."

"You sound like a genuinely bad girl." He said.

"Didn't you read the *Sirocco* script?" she asked Bogie. "That's the role I'm playing."

Although born in 1926, as opposed to Bogie's birth in 1899, they would die the same year in 1957. Toren succumbed to a brain hemorrhage.

The German director, Curtis Bernhardt, had helmed *Conflict*, one of Bogie's least popular films. He came back to direct him in *Sirocco*. When Bogie saw the finished cut, he said, "Curtis, dear old pal, you failed again. *Sirocco* is too set bound."

On his next film, Bogie scored a bull's eye, arguably his greatest movie, even better than *Casablanca* in the view of some critics.

It began with a call from John Huston, who told Bogie that "I have one hell of a script. The lead is a low life. As you are the biggest low life

left: Sirocco
Bogart with Lee J. Cobb

Above, top to bottom
In a Lonely Place
Bogart with lonely hands, and Gloria Grahame with Bogart

in Hollywood, you'd be perfect for it."

Over lunch at Romanoff's, Huston revealed the title. It was a screen adaptation of C.S. Forester's novel *The African Queen* (1951).

"That tired old thing," Bogie said. "Bette Davis has been hustling that script for years."

"I've read the book, and I know the role," Bogie told Huston after two martinis. "You and I both know I can do it. But working with Bette Davis in the wilds of Africa. That's a bit much even for me."

"Would you believe Katharine Hepburn?" Huston asked.

(center and bottom images)
Two views of
Bogart with Katharine Hepburn

"Katie's a friend of mine. Spencer Tracy's mother. She's a fragile-looking thing but tough as nails. She'll de-ball us before the last reel."

Within weeks, Hepburn, Bogie, and Bacall were sailing on the *Liberté* to the port of Le Havre in France. Bogie and Bacall would visit London and Paris before flying to Rome. From Italy, they would fly to Léopoldville in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire).

Arriving in darkest Africa, Bogie said, "At least this film gives me a chance to get out of a trench coat. It is my destiny to play Charlie Allnutt, and destiny is not a word I go around using."

"Here I am," he told Huston, "just where you wanted us. On the banks of the Ruiki River, deep in the Congo, a hundred miles from nowhere. Heat, soldier ants, and poisonous snakes—my kind of place."

Huston warned him that the river itself, which was black because of decaying vegetation, was filled with crocodiles. "Even worse than the crocs are parasitic worms. They're called *bilharzia*. They penetrate your skin and live off your flesh."

Of all of the stories told about the making of *The African Queen*, and there were hundreds of them—Katharine Hepburn even wrote a book about her adventures—Bogie topped them all.

"John had to recruit natives for crowd scenes in the jungle. The tribal chief got the idea that we were white cannibals and planned to eat his people. Huston asked for two hundred natives. But at first the chief gave us only ten. He sent some women—perhaps former wives—he was bored with and some unwanted children. He charged sixpence for the small kids, but a whole shilling for the larger kids. When he saw we didn't boil them in a pot, he allowed more natives to come and work for us."

In mid-June the mail from American brought some sad news. In a June 9 dispatch from Portland, Oregon, appeared this headline: MAYO METHOT, STAGE AND FILM ACTRESS, DEAD.

After Bogie dumped her, Methot went through her money quickly, as she sank deeper and deeper into alcoholism and depression.

Returning to Oregon to live out her final years, she died in a seedy motel room on the outskirts of Portland. Her body wasn't discovered until two days later.

In the jungles of Africa, Bogie read her obituary. His only comment was, "Such a waste."

(lower image)
Bogart with Kim Hunter

Near the end of the shoot, Bogie's patience with Africa and with Huston was running out. "I hate the fucking jungle," he told his director. "The blistering heat, and those bugs, those awful, never-ending bugs," Bogie said. "The only way to beat the bastards is to burn 'em, kill 'em. After you've done that, reward yourself with three double Scotches. I wanted to turn Hepburn onto Scotch, not the water. She didn't listen and spent most of two weeks sitting on the makeshift can."

The crew, at great expense and difficulty, moved to Uganda with the final scenes shot in a studio outside London.

Through it all, Hepburn kept her cool. "Damn Hepburn!" Bogie shouted at Huston. "Damn her! She's so God damn cheerful. She's got killer ants in her bloomers, a fungus-like mildew in her shoes, and she's so God damn cheerful."

The Best Actor Oscar competition for 1951 was the toughest in years. Bogie faced Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Montgomery Clift in *A Place in the Sun*, Arthur Kennedy in *Bright Victory*, and Fredric March in *Death of a Salesman*.

Broderick Crawford, who sat next to Bogie at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood, later revealed, "Bogie was a nervous wreck. He jumped up and

down and out of his seat a hundred times. When his name was announced, he was sweating blood. He was so flustered he fluffed his ad-lib, stammered a polite thank you, and stepped on Greer Garson's toe as she handed him the statuette."

(two lower images) Bogart as an army surgeon in Korea

with Keenan Wynn
and
with June Allyson

"Later, backstage, Bogie regained his nerve and became Bogie again," Crawford claimed. "He said that all this Oscar business was just bunk. He also said if the Academy wanted to know who the best actor of the year was, they should put each guy in costume and have him play Hamlet."

Fresh from his triumph in *The African Queen*, Bogie signed with 20th Century Fox to star in *Deadline—U.S.A.* (1951), directed by Richard Brooks, who also wrote the screenplay.

Bogie's leading lady this time was Ethel Barrymore, the grand dame of the theater. Bogie had already appeared with her brother, Lionel Barrymore in *Key Largo*.

A personal friend of Bogie's, Brooks had lined up a stellar cast that included Kim Hunter, who had famously appeared as Stella opposite Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Rounding out the cast were such veteran actors as Ed Begley, Paul Stewart, and Martin Gabel.

Bogie was cast as Ed Hutcheson, a crusading managing editor of a large metropolitan newspaper called *The Day*.

To get the feel of what it would be like to work for a real newspaper, Bogie hung out at the city room of *The New York Daily News*.

Years later when James Dean started to receive such acclaim, Bogie said, "I once made a movie with Dean," He was referring, of course, to *Deadline—U.S.A.* Cast as an extra, Dean appears only briefly in the movie.

Shooting had already begun when Brooks, Bogie's longtime friend, told him that Darryl Zanuck had wanted either Gregory Peck or Richard Widmark for the lead. "Here I am, a fucking Oscar winner, and still I'm getting sloppy seconds," Bogie said.

Brooks later claimed that *Deadline—U.S.A.* marked "the beginning of the end of Humphrey Bogart. He had a few good pictures left, but he wasn't the same man we knew and loved. He was arrogant, grumpy during the entire shoot, argumentative, and he never knew his lines. He was very sarcastic and snapped at the other actors, although he treated Miss Barrymore with the greatest of respect. How could he not?"

Richard Brooks immediately cast Bogie in *M.A.S.H. 66* (later changed to *Battle Circus*, 1953). As his co-star, June Allyson played opposite him. She'd been known as America's Sweetheart back in the 1940s. Keenan Wynn played the second male lead in this Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production.

When Brooks viewed the final result, he had to admit, "There is no on-screen chemistry between Bogie and June at all. When he had to kiss her, it was like he was kissing his maiden aunt."

Bogie already knew Allyson, as he'd purchased his beloved *Santana* from her husband, Dick Powell.

Set behind the front lines during the Korean War, the picture is not to be confused with the Robert Altman film *M*A*S*H* in 1970 or the long-running TV series of the same name (1972-83). Neither the TV series for CBS nor the Altman film would ever want to be associated with the lackluster *Battle Circus*, one of Bogie's lesser efforts.

The highlight of the film? Bogie accidentally set his left thumb on fire with lighter fluid while filming the scene in which his character of Major Jeb Webbe

Marrying profitably:

(top row) Bacall, Marilyn Monroe
(third photo from top)
MM, Bacall, and Grable
(lower photo) Attending the premier in 1953: Bacall, Bogart, and Monroe

accidentally burns some documents.

The accident is clearly visible on screen, as Brooks decided to keep it in. He later said, "The thumb burning was the most exciting thing in the movie. At least I got some real pain, not fake pain."

At the end of *Battle Circus*, Bogie told his friend Brooks, "Let's not make any more movies together."

On August 23, 1952, Bacall gave birth to a six-pound, five-ounce baby girl. Bogie named her "Leslie" in honor of his long ago friend, Leslie Howard, who had given him his first big break in *The Petrified Forest*.

Around the same time the Bogarts moved from their rustic Benedict Canyon house to a $175,000 roomy, whitewashed brick colonial manse in chic Holmby Hills next to Beverly Hills. David Niven arrived to see the new mansion and immediately told Bogie, "I thought it'd never happen. The ol' rebel himself has gone Hollywood."

(top photo) After the premier of *How to Marry a Millionaire* Bacall, Bogart, Monroe

(bottom photo) Truman Capote

For his final film with John Huston, *Beat the Devil* (1954), the director had assembled an all-star cast of Jennifer Jones, Gina Lollobrigida, Robert Morley, and Peter Lorre. *Beat the Devil* was intended as a tongue-in-cheek spoof of his early masterpiece, *The Maltese Falcon*.

Huston told Bogie that if Sydney Greenstreet had still been acting, "I would have cast him instead of Morley."

Many actresses were considered for the role of Gwendolen Chelm before it went to Jennifer Jones. Huston suggested either Jean Simmons or Audrey Hepburn. Bogie recommended an actress named Lauren Bacall.

Finally, the name of Ingrid Bergman was proposed. She was living in Italy at the time and could have easily played the role.

Bacall had a more intriguing offer. Coming out of retirement after three years, she had agreed to play one of the trio of gold diggers in *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), starring Betty Grable and her "replacement," Marilyn Monroe.

In an automobile accident along the Amalfi Drive in Italy, Bogie knocked out three of his front teeth, which hindered his ability to speak. He already had a lisp. Huston in an emergency hired a young British actor noted for his mimicry skills. He re-recorded some of Bogie's spoken lines in post-production looping. That actor was Peter Sellers.

Beat the Devil

(middle photo) Robinson with Lollobrigida
(bottom photo) Jennifer Jones, Bogart, Lollobrigida

Peter Lorre came to realize that *Beat the Devil* "was the fifth and last movie that I'd ever make with Bogie. He was ill at the time. In the hotel where we stayed, I heard him coughing. Some nights he seemed to stay up half the night coughing. I think cancer was already eating his body."

Lollobrigida was a star in Italy, but not in America. On meeting her, Bogie told Huston that "she makes Marilyn Monroe look like Shirley Temple." Huston countered, "Gina is built like an apartment house with balconies."

Bogie noted that "Jennifer Jones, when not getting marching orders from her husband, David Selznick, in Morocco, spent most of her free time running around the Amalfi coast trying to escape from the clutches of a tall, aggressive lesbian."

Morley didn't like any of the cast, calling Bogie "a man with no brain." He said Lorre "is an unlovely man in every way."

The convoluted plot tells of the adventures of a motley crew of swindlers and ne'er-do-wells, trying to lay claim to land rich in uranium deposits in Kenya. They are stalled in a southern Italian port hoping to travel aboard an ill-fated tramp steamer to Mombasa.

To hammer some sense into the disorganized script, Huston, on the recommendation of David Selznick, hired Truman Capote, who was living in Rome at the

time. Capote arrived in Ravello in a red overcoat that came down to his ankles with a ten-foot lavender-colored scarf. He was openly homosexual, and Huston feared he might conflict with Bogie, who always called everybody "a fag" if he didn't like them. To his surprise, Capote and Bogie bonded. After two days Bogie was calling him "Caposy."

Bogie told Huston, "He's the kind of guy you want to put in your pocket and take home with you."

"He's mine, you bitch," Huston shouted at Bogie so the entire cast and crew could hear him. The onlookers actually believed that Huston and Bogie were having a "gay catfight" over Capote.

For years Capote dined out on stories about the filming of *Beat the Devil*. "Everybody thought John and I were having an affair since we shared the same bedroom. Bogie spread the story, claiming the sounds coming from our bedroom were clearly of my screaming as John fucked me."

Capote also claimed that "I gave Bogie a blow job one drunken night. It was to settle a bet. I told him if I could beat him at arm wrestling three times in a row, he'd had to submit to a blow-job. He agreed. When I beat him, he went upstairs with me and unbuttoned his pants and took it out for me. He allowed me to blow him but warned me 'not to swallow.'"

Capote later claimed that he alone was the author of the screenplay. "All Huston did was play cards and drink while I wrote. He was like Irving Berlin, who had the little nigger boy in the trunk writing all his songs."

Back in Hollywood, Huston privately screened *Beat the Devil* for Bogie. Heavily invested in it financially, Bogie did not like it. "Only phonies will like it," he told Huston.

"a pathetic, babbling ruin"

Beat the Devil was the only movie Bogie ever made where audiences across the country lined up at the box office, demanding their money back.

Critic Roger Ebert later said that *Beat the Devil* was the first camp movie. In later years, Capote claimed, "When I wrote the script for *Beat the Devil*, I invented camp." Huston thought so little of it he did not renew the copyright, and today *Beat the Devil* is freely available to anyone to distribute.

Bogie had long been a friend of Dick Powell, who'd married June Allyson. But relationships between actors, even when they're friends, tend to become stormy when they're maneuvering for the same part. For a long time Powell had wanted to play Captain Queeg, the cruel and paranoid skipper in *The Caine Mutiny*.

The producer, Stanley Kramer, had arranged for Columbia to release the film. He had a production schedule of fifteen months. Powell went to him and practically begged for the role of Queeg.

"No way!" Kramer said. "Bogie was just in here, and I think he'd be a hell of a lot better as Captain Queeg than you."

Before settling on Bogie, Kramer considered Richard Widmark for the role of Queeg. Bogie demanded his usual top salary, and Kramer was reluctant to pay it.

"This never happens to Cooper, Grant, or Gable—only to me," Bogie told Bacall. He was actually too old for the role. He was fifty-five at the time of filming, but the captain was supposed to be in his early thirties.

Based on a novel by Herman Wouk, with music by Max Steiner, the screenplay had been written by Stanley Roberts.

Director Edward Dmytryk had lined up an impressive all-star cast headed by José Ferrer, Van Johnson, Fred MacMurray, Tom Tully, May Wynn, E.G Marshall, Arthur Franz, and Lee Marvin. An up-and-coming actor, handsome, blond-haired Robert Francis had been cast as Ensign Willie Keith.

Kramer later said of Bogie, "He has the damnedest façade of any man I've ever met in my life. He's playing Bogart all the time, but he's really a big, sloppy bowl of mush. I believe that the façade is a defense mechanism."

Bogie gave one of his most stirring performances as Queeg, especially in the courtroom scene where he rolls around those steel marbles in his hand. Of his character, Bogie said, "I don't know if he was a schizophrenic, a manic depressive, or a paranoiac—ask a psychiatrist—but I do know that a person who was any one of these things works overtime at being normal. In fact, he's super normal until pressured. And then he blows up. I personally know a Queeg in every studio."

Film critic Tim Dirks called Bogie's role "his last great film performance" although he would go on to make *Sabrina* (1954) and *The Barefoot Contessa* (also 1954).

The picture was a huge success, and Bogie found himself competing with Marlon Brando for the Best Actor Oscar. Brando had delivered a memorable performance in *On the Waterfront*. Bogie had competed and won against Brando for his role in *The African Queen*, triumphing over Brando's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. But this time around, Brando's role in *On the Waterfront* beat Bogie.

Ava Gardner, who had previously appeared with Bogie in *The Barefoot Contessa*, told Frank Sinatra, "I think he's dying. Sometimes we had to stop a

scene when Bogie was gasping for air."

At the end of the summer of 1954, filming began on *The Desperate Hours*, which would be released by Paramount in 1955. Produced and directed by William Wyler, the thriller co-starred Fredric March. The role of Glenn Griffin would be Bogie's last as a screen villain.

When the play was presented on Broadway, it was miscast with a young actor named Paul Newman in the Bogie role. Later Bogie called his role "Duke Mantee comes of age."

Bogie had a reunion with Arthur Kennedy, and the cast was rounded out by Martha Scott, Gig Young, and Mary Murphy. Dewey Martin, famous for a while as "Mr. Peggy Lee," was also in the cast.

The Desperate Hours

Bogart terrorizing
(middle image) Martha Scott and
(lower image) Fredric March

When Bogie saw the final cut of *The Desperate Hours*, he called Wyler. "I think I'm too old to play gangsters."

With tongue in cheek, the director said, "I'm thinking of casting you as a priest in my next movie. If that whore-mongering friend of yours, Spencer Tracy, can get away with playing a priest, so can Mr. Humphrey Bogart."

Right before Bogie's Christmas birthday in 1954, he signed a deal with Harry Cohn, the chief honcho of Columbia Pictures. With a stroke of Bogie's signature, his production company, Santana, became history, at least for him. The sale netted him a million dollars.

Verita Peterson had remained a constant in Bogie's life up until 1955. Since she had become an employee, he brought her into his family life, introducing her to Bacall. There is a photograph of her cutting the hair of Bogie's son, Stephen.

"It seemed hypocritical as hell for me to have anything to do with Bogie's home life, and while Bogie agreed with me in principle, he pointed out that it would raise suspicions if I didn't act as an employee of his normally would. And so I became more familiar with Betty and the two children than I wanted to under the circumstances."

Verita's affair with Bogie finally came to an end—with his full approval—when she married the producer Walter Thompson in 1955. But she would remain Bogie's friend and occasional companion to the end.

Verita remained married to Thompson until his death in 1975. A few months later she opened Verita's La Cantina on Sunset Boulevard. In 1982 she wrote *A Love Story, Bogie and Me*, revealing what much of *tout* Hollywood already knew.

In the 1990s she moved to New Orleans and opened a piano bar, naming it "Bogie and Me." When Hurricane Katrina was roaring down on the city, she refused the offer of a private jet to escape the storm's fury. "Lauren Bacall failed to chase me out of Hollywood. Katrina won't force me out of New Orleans."

Hardcover and paperback editions of Verita Thompson's autobiography

Writer Larry Cone encountered Verita in 2005 and wrote: "Verita Thompson, a woman in her late 80s—dressed to the nines in fishnet stockings and high heels—swirled to music with the rest of us. She once had an affair with Humphrey Bogart, we were told. She's a regular at the clubs and is treated with reverence by everyone."

Verita died in New Orleans on February 1, 2008. Under her pillow a maid found Bogie's long ago toupée.

In the spring of 1955, the Holmby Hills Rat Pack was born when Bacall surveyed the wreck of a four-day party in Las Vegas. "You look like a god-damn rat pack!" she told the boys.

A legend was born. After Bogie's death, Frank Sinatra not only became the leader of the Rat Pack, but he filled Bogie's shoes in another way, becoming the temporary boyfriend of Bacall.

From the set of *The Desperate Hours*, Bogie began filming *The Left Hand of God* for 20th Century Fox. His beautiful co-star was Gene Tierney, former mistress of John F. Kennedy.

Bogie worked again, with Edward Dmytryk, with a supporting cast of familiar faces, including Lee J. Cobb, Agnes Moorehead, and E.G. Marshall.

In the film, Bogie managed to be convincing posing as a clergyman with diverting results in this

Left Hand of God
(2nd photo from top)
Gene Tierney with Bogart

The Harder They Fall
(Bogart's Last Film)
Doomed boxer
(Mike Lane) with Bogart

drama set in post-WWII China. He called William Wyler, "At last I got to be a priest, even if a fake one."

At first he attacked Tierney for not knowing her lines. But when he came to realize how emotionally fragile she was, he softened his stance and began to help her in any way he could. He told Dmytryk that Tierney reminded him of his mentally ill sister, Frances.

Tierney was emotionally shattered at the end of her relationship with Prince Aly Khan. She would soon suffer a nervous breakdown and be sent to a mental ward for almost two years.

In spite of declining health, Bogie was convinced he could play Joseph in *We're No Angels* released in 1955. On the set he was reunited with his *Casablanca* director, Michael Curtiz. Age had only embittered Curtiz, who told Bogie, "I want to tell Hollywood to go fuck me."

"Don't you mean, you want to tell Hollywood to go fuck itself?" Bogie asked.

"I know what I mean." Curtiz snapped at him, "especially when it comes to fucking."

Curtiz had assembled an all-star cast, including Aldo Ray, Peter Ustinov, Joan Bennett, Basil Rathbone, and Leo G. Carroll. The film would prove to be only mildly entertaining, as it told of three escapees from Devil's Island who find refuge with a French family. Once there, the convicts extricate the family from their various dilemmas.

Robert De Niro and Sean Penn would remake the movie under the same title for a 1989 release.

In the autumn of 1955, Bogie would begin work on *The Harder They Fall*, his last motion picture. In this swan song, Bogie starred in a drama by Budd Schulberg in which he played a cynical sportswriter turned press agent. He realizes for the first time how badly prize fighters are managed.

The *film noir* was directed by Mark Robson. Two talented actors, Rod Steiger and Jan Sterling, backed up Bogie in his final appearance in this brutal, disagreeable story.

Bogie would soon be diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Robson found that his voice was not clear in some of the takes. Paul Frees, who appeared in the film as a priest, dubbed some of his lines in post-production. He could perfectly imitate Bogie. This re-dubbing was later denied by the studio.

In January of 1956, Bogie and Bacall reported to Warner Brothers for wardrobe tests on an upcoming film, *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.* But before production began, Bogie entered the hospital, where he learned that his cancer had invaded his esophagus and spread throughout his entire body.

Bogie called producer Milton Sperling. "I can make our film, but I've got to tell you, pal, I'll be dead in six months." His coughing spasms grew more pronounced and of longer duration. Warners was reluctant to go ahead with the film.

On February 29, 1956, Bogie checked into Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, where Dr. John Jones operated on him for nearly ten hours.

His esophagus was removed, along with two—maybe more—lymph nodes and one of his ribs. Bacall was told the cancer had been detected too late. The suggestion was that Bogie would not live to see Christmas and his birthday.

Weeks of chemotherapy followed. When his friend Joe Hyams asked how the treatments were going, Bogie said, "It's shit!" He'd never been known to use that word.

Bogie still went to Romanoff's, though he had no interest in food. He was literally a walking skeleton.

Verita Peterson Thompson came for a final *adieu*. He secretly told her, "I think Betty has fallen in love with Frank Sinatra. If she's not in love with him, then he's in love with my wife."

Bogie was furious when the press learned of his illness. He hated reading about his upcoming death. He claimed, "I'm down to my last martini. The only thing I'm fighting is to keep my head above the press."

Bacall and Sinatra in the late 1950s

In spite of his denial in an "Open Letter to the Working Press," he checked into St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica on November 26, 1956. His cancer had metastasized. Bacall was warned that her husband had only weeks to live.

***

Friends such as Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn, knowing he was dying, dropped by to pay their final respects in Bogie's home. Brave to the end, Bogie came down each afternoon to his living room to greet old friends like Raymond Massey at the five o'clock cocktail hour. When he could no longer walk, he was brought downstairs in a dumbwaiter.

John Huston was one of the last friends to see Bogie, flying into Los Angeles early in January of 1957. He was shocked to see the condition of his former star, whose weight was down to sixty-five pounds.

"His eyes seemed to bulge from his head," Huston said. "They were giant eyes. He looked at me, and I looked at him. If ever I wanted to cry, that was the moment. But I figured if he could be brave, so could I."

Bogie's last visitors were Tracy and Hepburn. They arrived at five o'clock on the evening of January 12. After chatting briefly with him, Hepburn kissed him on the lips. "I didn't say anything to him," she later said. "The kiss stood for it all."

Tracy bent down over him and also kissed him on the mouth. "Good night, Bogie."

With those haunting eyes, Bogie looked into the face of his decades-long friend. "Good-bye, Spencer."

An onscreen view of Spencer Tracy with Katharine Hepburn

The following day Bogie drifted into a coma. He would not come out of it.

Attended by two nurses, Bogie died at 2:25am on January 14, 1957.

Bogie's body was cremated, his ashes taken to the Gardens of Memory section of Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale.

On January 18, a memorial service was held at All Saints Church on Santa Monica Boulevard in Beverly Hills.

John Huston delivered the eulogy.

"He was endowed with the greatest gift a man can have—talent. The whole world came to recognize it. His life, though not a long one measured in years, was a rich, full life. We have no reason to feel any sorrow for him—only for ourselves for having lost him. He is quite irreplaceable. There will never be another like him."

Mary Astor, Bogie's co-star in *The Maltese Falcon*, attempted to explain the Bogie cult that grew by the thousands in the wake of his early death.

"The Bogart cult that has emerged is very understandable. There he is, right there on the screen, saying what everyone is trying to say today, saying it loud and clear. 'I hate hypocrisy. I don't believe in words or labels or much of anything else. I'm not a hero. I'm a human being. I'm not very pretty. Like me or don't like me.' We who knew him well liked him. *Bogie was for real*."

***

One of the nurses who attended Bogie in his final hour revealed to the press his final words:

"I should never have switched from martinis to Scotch."

HUMPHREY DEFOREST BOGART
1899-1957

REST IN PEACE

About the Author

Darwin Porter began his career writing about politics and the entertainment industry for *Knight Newspapers* and *The Miami Herald*. Today, he's one of the most prolific biographers in the world. His portraits of Paul Newman, Merv Griffin, Steve McQueen, Marlon Brando, Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, and Michael Jackson have generated widespread reviews and animated radio and blogsite commentaries worldwide. Some of his biographies have been serialized to millions of readers in *The Sunday Times* of London and *The Mail on Sunday*.

He's also the co-author, along with Danforth Prince, of *Blood Moon's Babylon Series*, Volumes One and Two.

Darwin is also the well-known author of many past and present editions of *The Frommer Guides*, a respected travel guidebook series presently administered by John Wiley & Sons Publishers.

Scheduled for upcoming release in 2010 are *Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*, co-authored with Roy Moseley, exploring the secret lives of Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh; and *The Kennedys, All the Gossip Unfit to Print*, about the peccadillos of America's most scandalous political clan.

Scheduled for release in the spring of 2011 are *Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer, All the Gossip Unfit to Print from the Glory Days of Ol' Blue Eyes*, about the 20th Century's most controversial and politically connected singer; and a biography of FBI Directors *J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson*, a story about celebrity worship and the dark side of the American saga.

When he's not traveling, Darwin lives with a menagerie of once-abandoned pets in a Victorian house in one of the outer boroughs of New York City.

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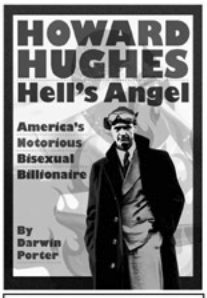

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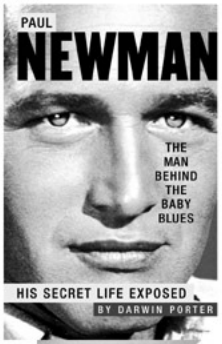

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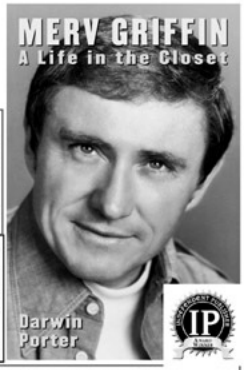
by Darwin Porter



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In this comprehensive biography--the first published since Merv's death in 2007--celebrity biographer Darwin Porter reveals the amazing details behind the richest, most successful, and in some way, the most notorious mogul in the history of America's entertainment industry.

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STEVE McQUEEN
King of Cool
Tales of a Lurid Life

by Darwin Porter

The drama of Steve McQueen's life far surpassed anything he ever played on screen. He followed in the footsteps of his mother, a prostitute, who eventually seduced him as part of an Oedipal fling. Earlier, he'd been brutally molested by some of his mother's "johns," and endured gang rape in reform school. In a bordello in Havana, he hired himself out as a sex object and porn performer.

Returning to New York, he hustled on the streets of Times Square. Later, in a borrowed tux, he became a "gentleman for rent," the toy boy of rich, aging women, two of whom included Joan Crawford and Lana Turner. When stardom finally came, the abused became the abuser. "I live for myself, and I answer to nobody," he proclaimed, "And the last thing I ever want is to fall in love with a broad."

The string of seductions that followed earned him an almost mythical status as a pansexual Love Machine. His A-list conquests included Jacqueline Bisset, Judy Garland, Lauren Hutton, Sharon Tate, Mamie Van Doren, Tuesday Weld, Natalie Wood, and Marilyn Monroe.

Publicly, he insisted that he loathed homosexuals, yet he often went to bed with them, especially if they were bikers or race car drivers. He had a tumultuous sexual relationship with James Dean, and a longer love/hate affair with Paul Newman. Other sexual liaisons developed with Peter Lawford, Sal Mineo, Rock Hudson, Chuck Connors, and George Peppard.

McQueen lived life at top speed, like the machines he raced so famously. His early death remains a source of lurid speculation, all of it explored within this pioneering biography by celebrity chronicler Darwin Porter.

McQueen: Screen hero. Rebel. Sexual Outlaw. Megastar. Loner. Male hustler. Street kid. Gigolo. Restless husband. Mysterious recluse. Brutal yet tender.Savage. And, in the words of Jacqueline Bisset, "a beautiful, beautiful man."

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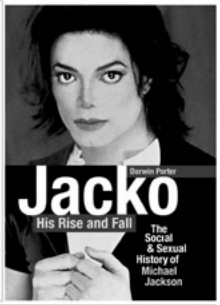

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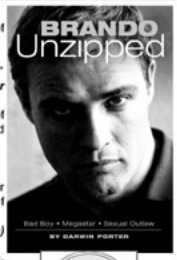

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This is one of our most visible and most frequently reviewed titles. A best-seller, it's now in its fifth printing, with French, Portuguese, and Dutch editions selling briskly in Europe. Shortly after its release, this title was extensively serialized by THE SUNDAY TIMES in the UK, and in other major Sunday supplements in mainland Europe and Australia

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Senior Life Magazine, Miami

"In Porter's biography of Katharine Hepburn, details about the inner workings of a movie studio (RKO in the early 30s), are relished.
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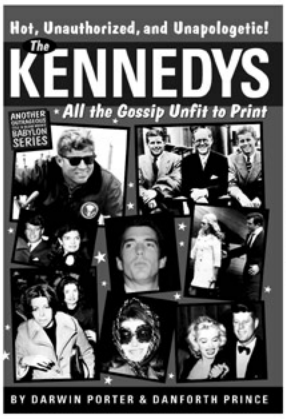

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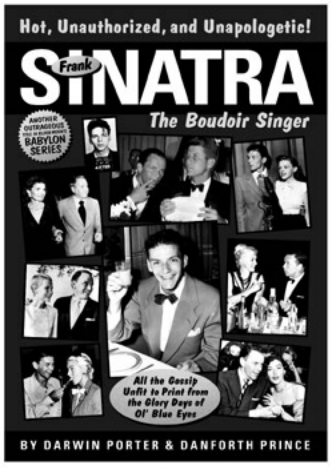

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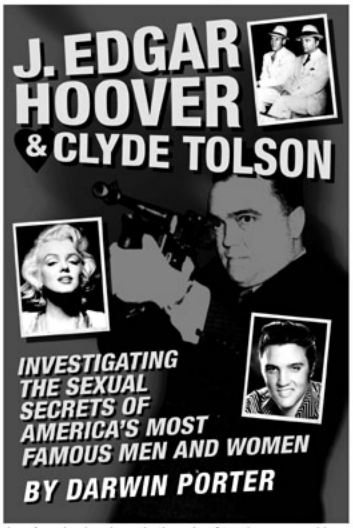

"For decades, America has been in the grip of two homosexual lovers, and there's not a god damn thing I can do about it. He's got us by the cojones, and he'll never let go." ***—Lyndon B. Johnson***

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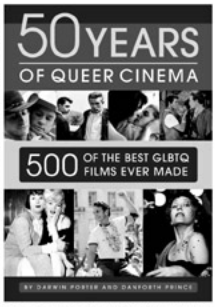

As late as 1958, homosexuality couldn't even be mentioned in a movie, as proven by the elaborate lengths the producers of Tennessee Williams swampy *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* took to evade the obvious fact that its hero, Paul Newman, was playing it gay. And in spite of the elaborate lengths its producers took to camouflage its lavender aspects, in-the-know viewers during the late 50s realized all along that Joe E. Brown was fully aware that Jack Lemmon wasn't a biological female ("nobody's perfect") in *Some Like it Hot* (1959).

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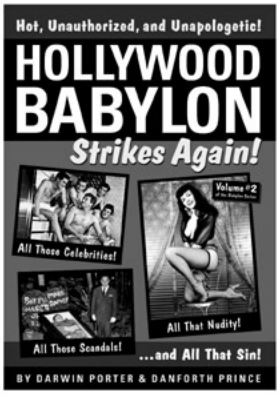

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Wild, orgiastic nights in pre-code Hollywood

Hollywood's Silent Closet

by Darwin Porter

"The Little Tramp" Charlie Chaplin (above) was one of the most recklessly debauched players in Hollywood

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Valentino, Ramon Novarro, Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Pola Negri, Mary Pickford, and many others figure into eyewitness accounts of the debauched excesses that went on behind closed doors. It also documents the often tragic endings of America's first screen idols, some of whom admitted to being more famous than the monarchs of England and Jesus Christ combined.

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Millions of fans lusted after Gary Cooper (background) and Rudolph Valentino (foreground) but until the release of this book, **The Public Never Knew**

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A banquet of information about the pansexual intrigues of Hollywood between 1919 and 1926 compiled from eyewitness interviews with men and women, all of them insiders, who flourished in its midst. Not for the timid, it names names and doesn't spare the guilty. If you believe, like Truman Capote, that the literary treatment of gossip will become the literature of the 21st century, then you will love ***Hollywood's Silent Closet***.

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In May of 2010, Blood Moon rented an $8,500 booth at **Book Expo, 2010,** the world's largest literary marketplace, and made a 75-minute movie about what happened during the maniacal goings-on that followed.

We offer it without charge to anyone who wants a lesson in how to maneuver their way through the shark-infested waters of the book trades. Watch it, download it, or share it, without charge, from the home page of

www.BloodMoonProductions.com

BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE of the 75-minute documentary it filmed in late May from the floor of America's world-famous and most important bookselling event, BEA 2010.

BOOK EXPO 2010: BLOOD MOON'S VIEW FROM THE FLOOR, represents history's first attempt to capture—close, in-your-face, uncensored, and personalized—the interactions, alliances, scandals, and dramas that explode for a small book publisher during a bookselling mega-event devoted to the marketing, pricing, and sale of its literary products.

Defined as a hybrid between a documentary and an infomercial, the film was conceived as a publicity and promotion piece by Blood Moon's founder and president, Danforth Prince: "Book publishers operate in a state of barely controlled hysteria, especially in this economic climate," he said. "Within this film, we've captured some of the drama of how books are promoted and hawked at a highly competitive event where everyone from Barbra Streisand to the Duchess of York was shaking his or her bon-bon to sell something."

"At BEA 2010, enemies, competitors, and authors evoked Oscar night in Hollywood before the awards are announced," Prince continued. "This film is the first attempt to depict, on video, how a small press swims in the frantic, shark-infested waters of the book trade. It's a documentation of a specific moment in America's mercantile history, with implications for America's reading habits and how consumers will opt, sometimes through digitalization, to amuse and entertain themselves in the 21st century."

During the footage he shot from within and near his booth #3784 at BEA, Mr. Prince was assisted by members of Blood Moon's editorial staff, and directed by Polish-born Piotr Kajstura, winner of several filmmaking awards and grants for his work with, among others, the tourism board of South Carolina.

BOOK EXPO 2010, BLOOD MOON'S VIEW FROM THE FLOOR.
© Blood Moon Productions, Ltd. Available now, electronically and without charge, from the home page of **BloodMoonProductions.com**

WHAT BOOK-INDUSTRY CRITICS SAID ABOUT THIS FILM:

Blood Moon Productions, which specializes in books about Hollywood celebrity scandals of the past--many of which were hushed up at the time--offered a feature-length video on BookExpo America 2010, which aims to give "nonprofessional book people an insight into book fairs"--while highlighting some Blood Moon titles. The narrator is Blood Moon president Danforth Prince, who interviews, among others, Carole Stuart of Barricade Books, Philip Rafshoon, owner of Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse, Atlanta, Ga., Graeme Aitkin of the Bookshop in Sydney, Australia, Eugene Schwartz of ForeWord Reviews, and a what seems like half of the staff of National Book Network, Blood Moon's distributor.

Shelf-Awareness.com August 3, 2010 (volume 2, issue #1247)

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"All he has to do to dominate a scene is to enter it." —RAYMOND CHANDLER

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"You don't have to say anything, and you don't have to do anything. Not a thing. Oh, maybe just whistle. You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow." *To Have and Have Not*

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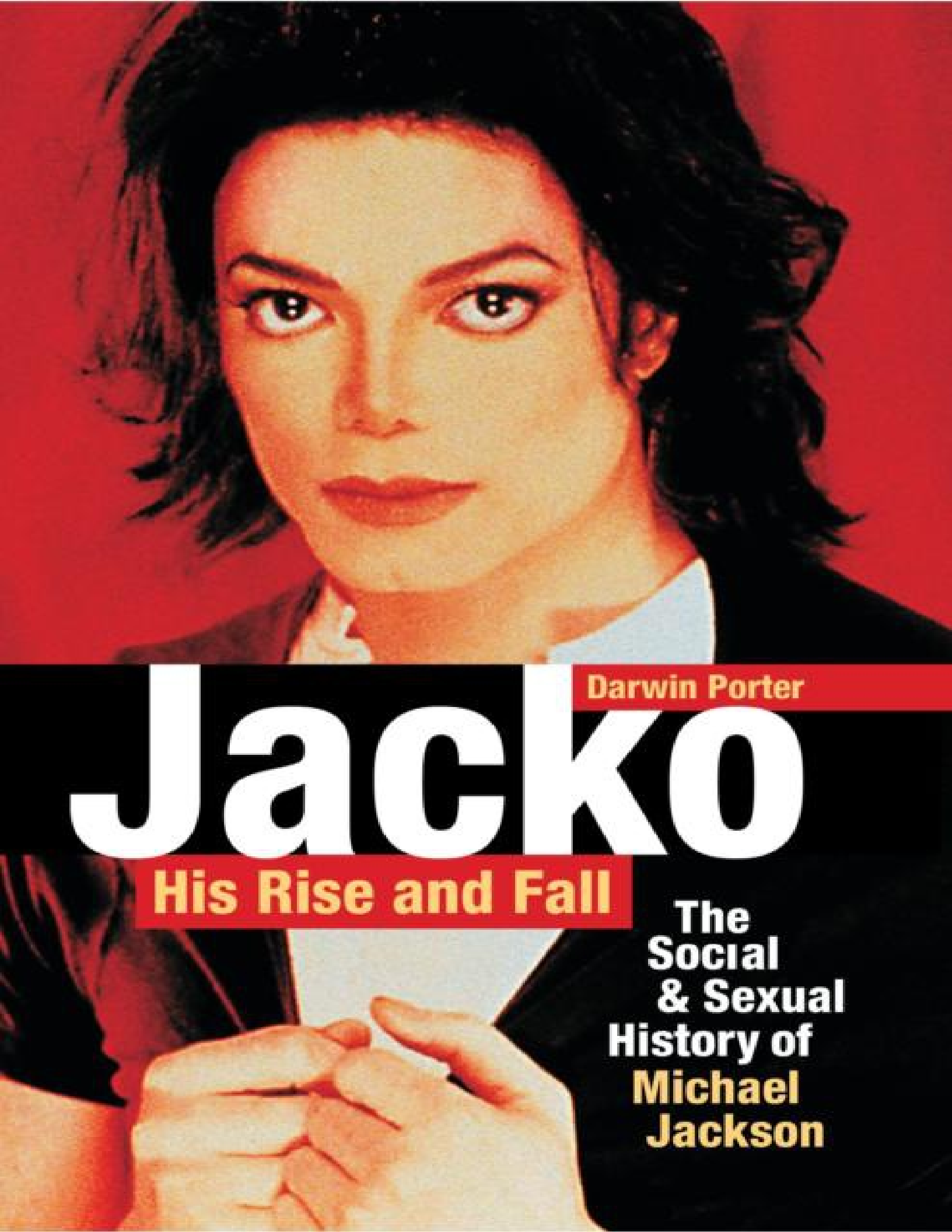
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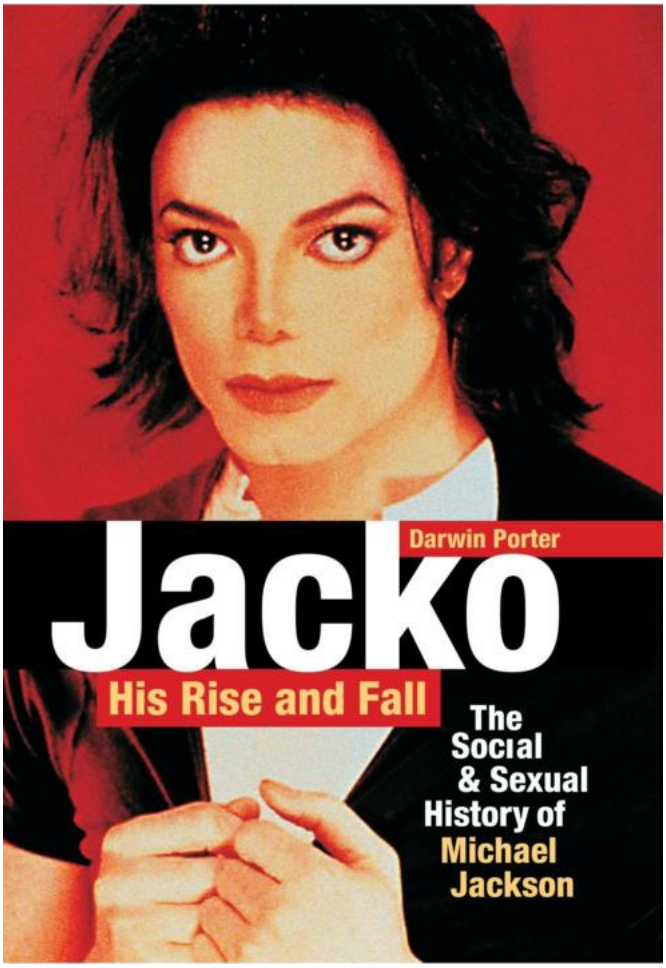
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"Michael Jackson is mass culture, not pop culture-he appeals to everybody. No one can deny that he's got a tremendous voice and plenty of style and that he can dance like a demon. He appeals to all ages and he appeals to every kind of pop listener. This kind of performer comes once in a generation."

The New York Times

Michael Jackson at the peak of his "Thriller" fame in the 1980s was probably the most famous person on earth. Undeniably, thanks to his reign as the King of Pop, he was the world's biggest superstar. He was also the most famous African-American entertainer in the history of show business.

But after the turn of the millennium, the front pages of such tabloids as The New York Post were screaming: PETER PAN OR PERVERT?.

How could Michael Jackson's career and personal life have gone so wrong?

To answer that, you have to look at Michael's roots in the grimy industrial city of Gary, Indiana, "murder capital of the U.S." Here on the scorching night of August 29, 1958, Michael Jackson entered the world.

"When Michael Jackson sings, it is with the voice of angels, and when his feet move, you can see God dancing. "

--Sir Bob Geldof

"I grew up in a fishbowl. I will not allow that to happen to my son. "

--Michael Jackson

"Sure he's a little afraid of people. When you have people that from the time you're a little kid, want a part of you, they want your clothes, they want your hair--you're going to get a little nervous around people. "

--Vince Paterson, choreographer

"He is one of the last living innocents who is in complete control of his life. I've never seen anybody like Michael. He's an emotional child star. He's in full control. Sometimes he appears to be wavering on the fringes of the twilight, but there is a great conscious forethought behind everything he does. He's very smart about his career and the choices he makes. I think he is definitely a man of two personalities. "

--Steven Spielberg

"He really feels that the audience deserves the best he can give them. He really has a very strong sense of responsibility, a strong sense of showmanship. "

--John Landis

"If it weren't for my desire to help the children of the world, I'd throw in the towel and kill myself. "

--Michael Jackson

Chapter One

It can be said that Michael's musical career began when he was only three and a half years old. His soft-spoken mother, Katherine, was in her small kitchen in Gary, Indiana, washing clothes on an old Maytag wringer machine that squeaked, rattled, and rolled, having seen better days. She'd come home early from her dreary job as a clerk at Sears.

As she turned around, she noticed her toddler singing and dancing almost like a professional. For one brief moment, she flashed on his becoming a black version of Shirley Temple before quickly ruling that out. Like her older boys, her youngest son belonged to the world of music.

When her gruff husband, Joe, returned home from a hard day's work as a crane operator in a local steel mill, she planned to tell him that yet another of his sons was musically talented. She had a gut instinct that Michael's talents might one day surpass those of Jackie, Tito, Jermaine, and Marlon.

Michael was the seventh of her children, as she'd recently given birth to not only her boys, but to two girls, Maureen and La Toya. Randy and Janet were yet to come.

"I remember seeing Michael dancing like it was yesterday," Katherine recalled. "He was singing at the top of his voice with powerful lungs I didn't know he had developed. I sensed he was not only born to dance but to sing as well. There was a joy I saw on his face that afternoon that I was never to see again. His singing and dancing were spontaneous. When he was forced to sing and dance under threat of a beating from my husband, Joe, that same joy wasn't there. But there was enough of it left to thrill the world."

Since the day he'd entered the world, Michael had grown up listening to rock 'n' roll and The Blues. Little Richard's voice was often broadcast throughout the house, singing "Tutti Frutti" or "Good Golly Miss Molly." In his wildest dreams, Michael could not have imagined that he'd eventually own the rights to both of those songs. The sounds of Chuck Berry or Otis Redding also echoed throughout the small bungalow.

At that time in his life, Joe wanted to be a musical star himself. His R&B band was called "The Falcons," and the boys in the band, the members of which included Joe's brother, Luther, rehearsed almost nightly in the tiny two-bedroom bungalow already overcrowded with the burgeoning Jackson family.

Young Michael

Sometimes when her husband was away on gigs with The Falcons, Katherine suspected that he was wasn't

remaining faithful to her. But she'd decided long ago to overlook his transgressions as a means of salvaging her marriage.

One afternoon, Tito went to the closet in Joe's bedroom and removed his father's most precious possession, his guitar. Playing with the guitar in the small living room, the boy broke one of the strings. Later that night, after supper, when Joe started to play his guitar, he discovered what Tito had done. He grabbed Tito by his neck and forced him into the living room. Having repaired the string, Joe demanded that Tito play for him. "I wanna hear you play that guitar. And you'd better be good! If you're not good, I'm gonna beat the hell out of you!" Although prepared for violence, hard-to-please Joe was impressed with Tito's guitar playing.

It was on that night that Joe realized that all his sons had musical talent. If he couldn't make it in the music world himself, maybe his sons could bring in big paychecks with Joe managing their money. He began to rehearse not just with Tito, but with his oldest boys, Jackie and Jermaine. As soon as he was old enough-well, barely-the apple-cheeked Michael joined in pounding those bongos. "The kid is a dynamo," Joe told Katherine.

"What have I been telling you?" she asked.

A few weeks later, Joe decided that his own career with The Falcons was going nowhere. He threw all the energy he'd used for his own music into developing the careers of his sons-and he was a brutal taskmaster, even beating them with a switch or a belt when one of the boys missed a note or a dance step.

Joe told the members of The Falcons that he didn't practice birth control. "One kid came right after the other. With all the hungry mouths to feed, I had to bring home a paycheck." He would later claim, "I sacrificed my own career for the sake of my sons. They were not grateful for what I did for them, especially Michael, the most ungrateful of them all."

"Even before our first record contract," Jermaine said, "we used to have to be in before the street lights came on. It was rehearse, rehearse, and then rehearse some more. We missed out on being kids. We could never play with the other boys on the block because we had to tend to business-and that meant making music."

Joe began to spend money he couldn't afford buying musical instruments for his children. This led to some bitter fights with Katherine, who needed the meager funds to put food on the table.

Joe used brutality to control his sons, Katherine preferring a more emotional and psychological approach in her possessiveness. Her family was her world. To lose her family would be tantamount to losing her reason for living.

Born in Arkansas but reared in dirt-poor rural Tennessee, where his dad taught school for fifteen dollars a week, Joe Jackson came up the hard way. He was determined to make it big. He learned to discipline his own children based on the harsh beatings and strict punishment he received from his own father, the iron-fisted Samuel, a devout Lutheran who "tolerated no sass from a snot-nosed kid."

The Jacksons (left to right) in the 70s:

Jackie, Janet, Michael, Tito, La Toya, Marlon, Randy, and Jermaine.

Joe's father had always proclaimed, "Spare the rod, spoil the child." Joe took his father's advice. Instead of a rod, he used leather belts, razor straps, and wire coat hangers evocative of Joan Crawford in Mommie Dearest. When none of those devices seemed to do the job, he balled up his fist and plowed it into one of his boys' noses. Blood would spurt out, but Joe succeeded in getting his point across.

Sometimes in the middle of the night, he would put on a fright mask and burst into the boys' room with a kitchen knife poised menacingly. The brothers' horrified screams could be heard throughout the working-class neighborhood.

Katherine was born in a small hamlet in Alabama that is no longer on the map. She sang spirituals in her church and listened to country music on the radio. Hank Williams was her favorite. Sometimes she'd take Michael in her lap and sing such old favorites as "Cotton Fields" or "Wabash Cannonball" to him.

Michael was about four years old when he noticed that his mother walked with a limp. When he asked her about it, she said that she'd been crippled with polio when she was a young girl growing up in the South. Claiming that musical talent was "a gift from God," she began to take him to the Sunday services of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Often only Maureen-nicknamed "Rebbie"- and La Toya would go with her. Her husband and her sons would rarely, if ever, accompany her.

Before she converted to the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Katherine had been a member of both a Baptist and a Lutheran church, until she learned that the ministers of each congregation were having extramarital affairs. As a Jehovah's Witness, she would eventually be confronted with evidence that her husband was also having extramarital affairs.

Katherine, Michael, and Joe Jackson, circa 1972

> Even so, she steadfastly stood by her new faith that condemned "fornicators (in this case her own husband and later her children), idolaters, masturbators, adulterers, and homosexuals." Most of these labels-and more-would eventually be applied to members of her own family. But Katherine never lost the faith that condemned many of the pastimes of her own offspring.

Michael became an ardent disciple of the Jehovah's Witnesses and remained so until that religious cult "disowned" him.

When Michael turned five, Katherine once again caught him singing in the falsetto of a toddler, this time in front of a mirror. He perfectly impersonated Jermaine's lead vocal. For the second time, she was awed by her young boy's amazing talent. It was hard to admit it to herself, but she concluded that Michael's vocalizing, despite his age, surpassed that of Jermaine's. Jermaine had been Joe's favorite, and his father had been grooming the boy as the lead singer. That night, Katherine confided to Joe, "I think we have another lead singer." She didn't say "a replacement" but "another."

Michael was summoned into the living room. There Joe demanded that he sing for him. "Joe was really shocked when he heard our boy," Katherine said. "So young, so talented." To an increasing degree, his parents realized that they had given birth to a very special talent.

After the first week of rehearsing with Michael, Joe made an unusual prediction of stunning accuracy. "The kid is going to become the biggest entertainer in the world."

When his brothers finally heard Michael sing, "all of us were shocked," as Jackie remembered. "Michael was practically in diapers, but we knew he'd be our lead singer. Jermaine's days as lead singer were over." He was shunted aside, leading to a life-long resentment and envy of his more famous brother.

By the time Michael was six years old, he sang in public at the Garnett Elementary School. Singing a capella, he chose "Climb Ev'ry Mountain" from The Sound of Music, performing brilliantly enough to impress hard-toplease Joe and bringing tears to Katherine's eyes.

That same year, "Ripples and Waves," the first name of The Jackson 5, began to enter-and win-talent contests in Gary. Joe financed a comical record by them called "Let Me Carry Your Books to School."

Michael not only replaced Jermaine as lead singer, but he began to take over in other ways too. Soon he was

choreographing their steps and even designing costumes for The Jackson 5.

The Jackson residence in Gary, Indiana

By the age of seven, Michael was performing professionally with his brothers. At a talent contest at Roosevelt High School in Gary, the brothers won by singing "My Girl," a hit song from The Temptations.

"I was scared," Michael later recalled. "Afraid we'd be booed off the stage. The audience might not like us. I was untested. But I also felt I could do it. I knew I'd not forget the lyrics or make one big mistake. I was determined, and I pulled it off."

Joe continued to arrange bookings for his sons, the entire troupe hiring out for only eight dollars for a performance. That was only the base pay. Audiences were enthusiastic about the boys, and on a good night the sons brought back one hundred dollars, all derived from tips, to help Katherine run the household.

While still working at the steel plant, Joe drove his sons to gigs at night. Sometimes he'd take a leave from work and travel cross-country with his boys in a small van.

Although Joe privately told Katherine how talented he felt Michael was, he didn't let his son in on that. In front of his brothers, Joe often denounced Michael. "You're one ugly fucker. I'm handsome. You couldn't be my son. Your mama must have fucked the milkman. You're also the dumbest piece of shit that ever got up to entertain an audience. The only way you can get a squeal from a woman is to crawl on the floor and look up her dress. You're so clumsy I'm ashamed to call you my son." When Michael seriously angered him, Joe took out a pocket knife and held it to Michael's throat, threatening to slit it.

As a little boy, Michael performed in the wildest and raunchiest of the honky-tonks of "Sin City," the nickname for Gary.

"When not in Gary, the Jackson brothers were appearing in the seedy dives of Chicago, a van ride of around 90 minutes from Gary, where most known perversions could be catered to," in the words of one habitue of the nightlife scene in The Windy City.

Michael got his taste of female nudity watching strippers peel down and tossing their G-strings into the hard-drinking crowd of men, with a few "butch dykes," as they were called, in the audience seeking a thrill as well.

After The Jackson 5 performed musical numbers, Joe ordered Michael to crawl around on the beer-stained floor, looking up the dresses of screaming but compliant women.

After these antics, customers would throw money on the dirty floor. Michael would scamper around in the filth, collecting both coins and dollars. Even though it was illegal for the Jackson boys to perform in these joints, because they were minors, no police interference ever occurred.

In time, Michael himself would become an alluring, sexually ambiguous figure, but he got his first taste of drag in a Chicago club euphemistically called Guys & Dolls. An alluring blonde, who looked like Dolly Parton did in the Seventies, appeared on the bill. Michael remembered that she had "history's largest boobs," but when that G-string came off, "she" became a "he," "although not much of one."

Michael and Papa Joe

Some sources claim that Michael deepened his appreciation of crossdressing at the Apollo Theater on 125th Street in New York's Harlem. At the Apollo, performers merely pulled off their wigs to reveal that they were men. But at Guys & Dolls in Chicago, they actually flashed their male genitalia.

Some of the honky-tonks the boys appeared in were known as "blood buckets" because of the violence that would occur on a rowdy Saturday night, particularly after midnight.

Regardless of how late he stayed up on Saturday night, Michael always got up to go to the Sunday meeting of the Jehovah's Witnesses with Katherine. Afterward, he would join her on door-to-door canvassing of his neighborhood, trying to win new converts to their evangelical movement.

Even after fame came to Michael, he still joined La Toya and Katherine on proselytizing trips to knock on the doors of neighbors' houses, soliciting their enrollment in the "Kingdom of Heaven." Michael wore disguises and usually fooled the adults. But the children often shouted at him, "I know who you are! You're Michael Jackson!"

Rebecca Lowe, a neighbor of the Jackson family in Gary, remembered years later seeing Michael come to her door. "He was well scrubbed and righteous looking, like a black choir boy. He didn't grab his crotch to simulate mas turbation. Nothing like that. He was always polite, even when we told him we were ardent Roman Catholics and wanted nothing to do with the Jehovah's Witness people."

Michael had just turned nine when Joe drove his sons to New York to perform at the fabled Apollo Theater. Louis Armstrong, Count Basic, Josephine Baker; each of those legends had appeared at the Apollo.

That night, the Jackson brothers won the Apollo's amateur night contest. "I have a date with destiny," Michael told the manager of the Apollo in one of the most melodramatic statements ever uttered by a nine-year-old. But, as those in show business and later the public were to learn, little pre-pubescent Michael Jackson was no average boy.

On one of the hottest August nights in New York, in 1967, The Jackson 5 faced "the toughest audience in the world," although the same is said for the patrons of La Scala in Milan.

Other "first timers" who broke in, appearing before the notoriously raucous audiences of the Apollo Theater, were Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Leslie Uggams, and Ella Fitzgerald.

To Joe's amazement, his boys got a standing ovation instead of being booed off the stage.

More bookings followed their win at the Apollo. The Jackson 5 hit Chicago, appearing at the Regal. In Philadelphia Joe got them a booking at the Uptown.

Upon their return to the Apollo, The Jackson 5 brothers were paid for their performance. On the same bill was Michael's role model, James Brown, the "King of Soul."

That night Michael stood in the wings, watching Brown's every move. It is said that Michael learned to "whiplash" a mike into place or "motorize a shuffle" across the stage by watching Brown do it first.

James Brown

In Rolling Stone, writer Gerri Hirshey claimed that "Michael's kindergarten was the basement of the Apollo Theater in New York. He was too shy to actually approach the performers The Jackson 5 opened for. He crept downstairs, along passageways and walls and hid there, peering from behind the dusty flanks of old vaudeville sets while musicians tuned, smoked, played cards, and divided barbecue. Climbing back to the wings, he stood in the protective folds of the musty maroon curtain, watching favorite acts, committing every double dip and every bump, snap, whip-it-back mike toss, to his inventory of night moves."

The writer was right. The Jackson 5, especially Michael, studied all the top talent of the day, especially James Brown. Michael later recalled that seeing Brown perform for the first time was "a magical night."

Brown was an unlikely role model for Michael, but nonetheless he was called "the Godfather of Soul." Born in Barnwell, South Carolina, he once served 26 months in prison for leading police on a high-speed chase in Georgia in 1988.

Like Michael in the future, Brown too would face charges of sexual abuse. But Michael couldn't have cared less about Brown's personal troubles. Even though still a kid, he knew greatness in a performer when he saw it. His judgment about Brown came true when the performer Michael so admired was voted the seventh greatest rock 'n' roll artist of all time by Entertainment Weekly.

An icon of the music industry, Brown had a great influence on soul music in the 1960s, funk music in the 70s, and rap music in the 80s. Michael avidly followed his hero's career. In 1992 Brown received a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award.

That night at the Apollo, when Brown learned that Michael was checking out his every move, he asked to meet

"that kid watching me."

Introduced to Brown, Michael was so in awe of his idol that he couldn't utter a sound. Sensing the problem, Brown did all the talking, even taking time to give Michael some advice. "Always keep changing your hair style-that way, the public will keep noticing you. And always stay thin by taking a lot of laxatives. Shit away the fat!"

In the weeks to come, Michael would be hailed as a "pint-sized James Brown."

"Right from the beginning, audiences responded to Mike," Jackie later said. "At the time he was into that James Brown stuff. He was a born mimic. He stole ideas from entertainers everywhere. He could see a performer do some trick just one time, and then he could immediately do the same thingit was amazing."

Michael and his brothers studied every move, every nuance the competition made. They often appeared on the same bill as The Temptations. With their close-cropped hair, The Temptations bounced onto the stage in their tight-fitting sharkskin suits and pointed Italian shoes. For their really big appearances, Motown's director, Berry Gordy Jr. insisted that the singers wear snappy, form-fitting tuxedos.

The Jackson brothers also appeared with such acts as Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, Little Anthony and The Imperials, and-more significantly-Gladys Knight and The Pips.

Gladys Knight and The Pips

"Michael picked up all our dance steps," Gladys Knight recalled. "He was like a sponge taking it all in. It was amazing how he could watch a routine and then make it part of his own repertoire, giving whatever he'd learned an original twist."

The Jackson brothers struggled to acquire an education while constantly performing, often far away from home.

"Most of our lives we had private schooling," Michael said. "I only went to one public school in my life-and that was in Gary. I tried another one in Los Angeles, but it didn't work out. We'd be in our class and a bunch of fans would break into the classroom. We'd come out of school and there'd be a bunch of kids waiting to take our pictures. Stuff like that. I stayed at that school for only one week. That's all we could take. After that, we had to enroll in private schools."

Katherine feared that time might be running out for her boys. "In a few years they'll look old and fat. They've got to make it now, especially since Michael looks so adorable." She forced her husband to record a demo tape and send it to Motown's founder, Berry Gordy Jr. But nothing ever came of it.

Bobby Taylor and The Vancouvers

By July of 1968, success of a modest sort had come for The Jackson 5 when they made another appearance at the Regal in Chicago, opening for Gladys Knight and The Pips. That performance earned them their most recognition to date as well as acclaim in the press.

"Everyone thinks we started at the top," Marlon said. "But we traveled around for five years before that. Five brothers and two sisters, all crammed into a Volkswagen van."

Gladys even called Gordy, her boss at Motown, to come and look at the show. He agreed to attend just to see her perform. He arrived in time to catch the end of The Jackson 5 appearance. "A very derivative act," he later said. "I'm underwhelmed. Let them keep learning their trade on the chitlin' circuit."

Role model, Diana Ross

He was referring to Apollo clone theaters across America that booked only black acts. On that chitlin' circuit, the Jackson brothers continued to find gigs-at least sometimes-but no stardom.

Over the years the accusation that Michael was a "midget" has been attributed to such popular acts as Sam and Dave or the Isley Brothers. It is not clear at this point who started the rumor, but word soon traveled the circuit that Michael was indeed a midget, and that Papa Joe was palming him off on audiences as a child.

In spite of Gladys Knight's promotion, Gordy at Motown sent word that "ol' Joe could take his boys and shove them where the sun don't shine." But another producer, Gordon Keith, agreed to sign the boys to his Steeltown label.

In April of 1968, their record, "Big Boy," was heard over WWCA radio in Indiana. "It didn't set the world on fire," Joe later recalled, "but it sold some copies."

Bypassing Gordy, Gladys Knight and performer Bobby Taylor got Ralph Seltzer, also a producer at Motown, to grant Joe's talented sons an audition in Detroit, not only headquarters of the U.S. automobile industry, but the home of Motown Records. In this unlikely setting, the studio was turning out hit records for Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and, of course, The Supremes with Diana Ross.

If Katherine became jubilant at the sound of Heaven, Joe responded in equal fashion to the word "Motown." It was not only the hottest record label in America, but evoked just how far a black entertainer could advance in show business. Joe once told Berry Gordy Jr.: "To me, Motown means that a black man can live in a fancy mansion with white servants, have money in his pocket, a hot pussy in his bed, and three big cars in the garage. It also means that my sons might one day have the name recognition of Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, and Dinah Shore."

Michael remembered "shakin' like a leaf in the wind" when he was brought before Seltzer to perform at the same sound studio where The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, and The Four Tops had scored big. After the band's performance of several songs was filmed, Seltzer thanked the boys for coming and shook Joe's hand. "We'll call you," he said, making it sound like a dismissal. Seltzer wasn't going to commit himself until he got the tape to Gordy.

Gordy was "forced" to sit through the film. At its end, he immediately instructed his staff to "sign them up. That little Michael's going to be a big star. Bigtime, that is."

When Gordy signed The Jackson 5, Michael was only ten years old. "But he had as much talent as Sammy Davis Jr., and Sammy boy was about as good as it gets," Gordy said. "In time, Michael will be even bigger than Sammy."

Thanks to earnings from their road trips, the Jackson family finally had a phone to receive the call from Seltzer, telling them to "get your asses back to Detroit," where boilerplate contracts awaited The Jackson 5. Without reading it, Joe signed for his sons on March 11, 1969. Gordy himself had bought out The Jackson 5 contract from Steeltown Records for a small amount of money. Gordon Keith later referred to the settlement as "peanuts."

If Joe had read the contract he'd signed, he would have learned that his boys would be getting a royalty of only 2.7 percent, the industry low.

Gordy mandated that, for the purposes of PR and media, he wanted it to be broadcast that The Jackson 5 had been discovered not by Gladys Knight but by Diana Ross. Ross had just achieved her 12th Number One hit for Motown, and was "hot." Already famous, Ross would, in time, become the best-selling female vocalist in music history. As such, her fictitious involvement in their "discovery" would add an attention-getting boost to Motown's introduction of The Jackson 5.

Michael idolized Ross. "She moves on stage like a panther and when she smiles her teeth shine like diamonds," he said. Before meeting her, he changed his clothing five times before arriving at a Christmas party at the Gordy mansion in Detroit. Gordy had booked the Jackson brothers to entertain his starstudded party held at this million-dollar residence with its marble floors and Grecian columns. Actually, at the time of the party, the house no longer func tioned as Gordy's main residence, as he'd moved to Los Angeles where he was deeply involved in a romance with Ross.

In her white silk gown, with sparkling diamond earrings, Ross made her appearance before the Jackson brothers. She was truly "The Supreme" of The Supremes.

She immediately gravitated to Michael, sensing he was the star of the family. "Cute boys are so delicious," she said, bending down to plant a kiss on Michael's cheek.

"I'll never wash my face again, Miss Ross," he told her.

"I insist on most people calling me Miss Ross," she told him. "But to you, it's Diana."

"Yes, Miss Ross."

"As Humphrey Bogart told Claude Rains in Casablanca, I think this is going to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

"Who is Humphrey Bogart?"

"Bogie?" she asked in astonishment. "You've never heard of him? Kid, I've got to take you under my wing. You've got a lot to learn."

For the early part of the evening, Michael followed Ross around the mansion. He was shown a portrait Gordy had commissioned of himself as Napoleon, dressed in full military regalia.

She felt uncomfortable with this young boy because of his constant stares. "He was soaking up my every move like a sponge with his wide eyes," she later said. Finally, she pinched his cheek aggressively, nicknaming him "saucer eyes."

The Jackson brothers, with Michael front and center

Wandering through Gordy's mansion, Jackie was also awed. "I'm sure the Queen of England doesn't live in such a big place. Out back was a golf course. There was also an indoor swimming pool. I'd heard rumors about nekked swim parties. I was scared shitless. All the big Motown stars were there that night to hear us. And here we were. So many little black brothers singing the same songs these dudes had already made famous."

> The night was a success as the Jackson brothers performed before such Motown pros as Smokey Robinson and The Temptations. Joe later told Katherine, "I think these high-ridin' daddies were just a bit nervous hearing my boys for the first time. Maybe jealous, as they witnessed firsthand tomorrow's competition."

Miss Ross

> While the careers of the Jackson brothers were being launched, there was trouble brewing in the family, if published reports are to be believed. In 1994, Simon & Schuster published Unauthorized, a book about Michael Jackson by biographer Christopher Andersen, whose other works include Madonna Unauthorized and Jagger Unauthorized.

In this shocker, which we assumed was vetted by S&S's attorneys for libel, appears this quotation: "While La Toya lay shivering next to Rebbie in bed, Joe would, according to La Toya, climb in with them."

Around the time Ross was introducing the brothers in Detroit, Andersen quotes La Toya as claiming that her father molested her and her older sister, Rebbie. "My father was like an animal," La Toya allegedly said. "I was ten or eleven at the time," the quote continues. "He'd say dirty things and touch my body inside my clothes. And I had to touch him in certain places."

The older sister, Rebbie, as well as family members, have denied these accusations. On the surface, they are libelous. But no charges were ever brought against Joe, and he never sued Andersen or S&S for libel.

As serious as these charges are, there were even more explosive accusations that followed.

At the time of Michael's sham marriage to Lisa Marie Presley, his publicist, Bob Jones, had to deal not only with that make-believe union but with another story that a newspaper tabloid was set to reveal. A reporter had come upon charges that Joe also molested Michael when he was a small child. Jones categorically denied such charges and was able to suppress the story, even though accusations were aired over late-night talk radio.

Of course, Jones would have no way of knowing whether these accusations of molestation were true or not. In his book, Michael Jackson: The Man Behind the Mask, Jones did report on a confrontation he had with Michael.

He quotes the singer as saying, "How do you know that thing with Joseph never happened?" A valid question, of course. Not getting a straight answer from Michael, Jones asked himself a question: "Was he telling me the story was true? He certainly acted in a manner that wouldn't confirm or deny."

Jones, who knew Joe Jackson, found the molestation charges "hard to believe."

But the rumors persisted. Some pop psychologists in talk shows have pointed out that child molesters in case studies were often the victims of molestation in their youths. Like many other episodes in Michael's life, these molestation charges, including those from La Toya, remain a mystery.

No sooner had these charges that Joe molested Michael been suppressed than yet another shocking story emerged. Whether true or not, the Jackson family could be counted on by tabloids for a scandal du jour. Although much has been written about the family in "Second Coming headlines," some of the most explosive stories were never printed.

Also around the time of his marriage to Lisa Marie, there were allegations floating around that as a pre-pubescent, Michael was "pimped" to pedophiles within the record industry as a means of promoting the advance of The Jackson 5. There is no evidence that this is true but the rumors-some of them quite convincing-still persist.

To our knowledge, the only person who tried to sell such a story was a sleazy record producer we'll call John Stoffer, who worked the Detroit music industry for some twenty years. He approached the National Enquirer with a very detailed account of how a nine-year-old Michael was allegedly delivered to his hotel room in Detroit. His account didn't specify who made the delivery.

For a fee of ten thousand dollars, Stoffer was willing to tell all. In his report, he gave a very detailed and specific account of how he'd allegedly sodomized young Michael. "The boy cried through the ordeal and even bled," Stoffer claimed. "But I liked that. You see, I'm quite small down there. I used to be basically straight, but several women laughed at the size of my organ. I turned to young boys-very young because I achieved great satisfaction in penetrating their tight, virgin butts. Michael was no exception. He was real tight. When I saw the pain I was causing him, it goaded me on and made me feel like more of a man."

Although Stoffer offered times, dates, and places that checked out, his charges could not be proven. The staff at The Enquirer decided not to publish the scoop, considering it too undocumented for publication. However, Stoffer did help promote and publicize The Jackson 5 and was instrumental in getting radio stations to play the group's records. In his dossier, Stoffer said that Michael was "delivered" to him on three different occasions, and that "each time the boy cried when he was penetrated."

A member of the Enquirer staff said, "We've published more stories about Michael Jackson than about any other modern celebrity, enough for our own book about the star called Freak! But what we've published is only a grain of sand on the beach. The Enquirer has been approached countless times by people trying to sell stories about Jacko. Some of them were obvious frauds. Others were quite convincing, but too shocking even for the Enquirer. Incidentally, I no longer work there."

On the road, traveling from "blood bucket" to "blood bucket," Michael learned about sex from his father. It wasn't exactly a healthy introduction.

Joe was a known womanizer. With Katherine safely tucked away at home, he could indulge his passions with other women, often quite young ones. Many women found him attractive, and he did possess sexual charisma.

Joe often flaunted his dates in front of his boys, sometimes bringing them back to his sons' bedrooms where the young women could give "my boys baby kisses and tuck them in for the night." Whenever that happened, Michael would turn over and bury his head in the pillow so he wouldn't have to kiss "one of Joe's whores." The other brothers were only too willing to be kissed on their mouths.

When the brothers stopped playing the honky-tonks, they were booked into black theaters as opening acts for performers who included James Brown, The Temptations, and Gladys Knight and The Pips. The Jackson 5 appeared in theaters from Boston to Kansas City, and from Washington, D.C., to Tucson.

Motown stardom wasn't forthcoming as month dragged into endless months. Gordy just wasn't pleased with any sound The Jackson 5 recorded. One song-a rip-off of The Temptations-was recorded forty times with no

satisfaction. The boys still lived in Gary, whose streets were giving way to the violence of an increasingly powerful drug culture. One night two thieves cornered Joe staggering home in the early hours. Thugs hit him over the head, removing the fifty dollars he carried in his wallet.

In Gordy's bank vault rested the contract that Joe had signed without reading it. Motown's chief honcho was now ready to start exercising the options granted to him. He decided the time had come to order the Jackson brothers to Los Angeles, where they would be directed to start recording at Motown's new studio. Gordy told Ross, "If Jackson had read the fucking contract, he would have found that I owned his gold teeth and the air the Jackson boys breathe. The only one in the group that's got any talent is the midget." This was an obvious reference to Michael. "That one's gonna set the world on fire. Sooner than later."

In a large van-made in Detroit, of course-Joe drove to California carrying Johnny Jackson (no relation), the group's drummer, and Ronny Rancifer, the keyboardist. Michael, along with three of his brothers, were given economy class air tickets to Los Angeles.

Along with eight-year-old Randy, the Jackson sisters as well as Katherine were left behind in Gary until Joe "could get the lay of the land," in Gordy's words. Later, a Motown executive in Los Angeles privately said, "California wouldn't be the only lay that Joe was scoping out."

As the plane flew over America's heartland, Michael was only ten years old with a birthday fast approaching.

On a smog-shrouded morning in Los Angeles-August 9, 1969 to be exact-Michael and his brothers landed in Los Angeles. On the way into town from the airport, Michael looked in awe at all the fast-moving cars, the palm trees, the oranges, the grand mansions. His eyes widened as he told Jermaine: "I have truly found Oz. No harm will ever come to me here."

One of Gordy's assistants delivered the boys not to a mansion but to a "hot bed" hotel on Santa Monica Boulevard, which was teeming with hookers, both male and female. Michael was given a room to share with Jermaine and Marlon. On the way to the dump, he heard through the paper-thin walls one woman telling someone: "That's twisted!"

In five weeks Gordy ordered that the boys be moved to another seedy address, the Hollywood Motel, which stood across from the famous Hollywood High, which so many children of stars had attended. By the late 1960s, the neighborhood had deteriorated. Drug pushers had moved in along with pimps recruiting the best-looking boys and girls to work as prostitutes. In a back alley, Michael spotted a blue-jeaned boy of sixteen or so standing against a wall while a balding, late middle-aged man performed fellatio on him.

It was while living at the Hollywood Motel that Michael began his famous practice of wearing sunglasses, even at night. "It's best to keep shaded day and night," he told Marlon. "That way no one can see the whites of your eyes. What you're really thinking. With sunglasses, you can hide from the world."

The boys worked almost constantly in Motown recording studios, although their songs still didn't please Gordy. On their first weekend off, Joe drove his sons to Disneyland. Michael fell under the spell of The Magic Kingdom. Joe laughed when Michael vowed that he was going to make so much money one day that he'd create a Disneyland just for his own pleasure.

On a command from Gordy, Joe drove his boys to the home in the Hollywood Hills where Diana Ross was living until Gordy could arrange for more luxurious digs in Beverly Hills-"a residence that is more fitting for a star of your magnitude."

As the boys sat in awe within Ross's living room, Gordy gave them the good news. "I know I haven't really liked anything you've recorded so far. But hang in there. I'm gonna make you black brothers the greatest thing since shit on a stick."

Gordy was a genius in sensing the gap in American culture that the Jackson brothers could fill. As British critic Simon Frith put it: "What Gordy realized was that out there was a generation of black kids with money to spend and

feet to dance and walls to hang pictures on. There had never been soul idols for clean-living black teens before, only sports figures and Martin Luther King Jr. Motown was going to give these kids idols and music and posters and fan magazines and T-shirts and TV shows and everything else."

At her home in the Hollywood Hills, Ross made a more spectacular appearance before Michael than she had at Gordy's Detroit mansion.

Michael would always remember her outfit, a black bolero jacket, a purple-colored lace blouse, and skin-tight toreador pants, along with towering stiletto high heels still known at the time as "Joan Crawford fuck-me shoes."

He compared her to a "Black Venus," whereas Jermaine told his brothers, "I got a hard-on that lasted for three days and nights."

Michael read that "the sensational eight-year-old Michael Jackson would be featured." "Miss Ross," he said. "There's a mistake. My age is given wrong here. On August 29, I'll be eleven years old."

As her surprise, Ross told the Jackson brothers that she was going to present them at the famous disco of the moment, Daisy, on North Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, the nighttime stamping grounds of stars that ranged from Mia Farrow to Peter Lawford. Ross handed Michael an invitation she'd sent out to tout Hollywood to attend the gala on the night of August 11, 1969.

Michael, aged 16

"As an eight-yearold, you'll be even more of a sensation," Gordy said. "This is show business, kid. It's all about image. The press will think you're a child prodigy like Mozart."

"Darling," Ross told the impressionable boy, "a certain liberty must be taken with the truth. It's not exactly a lie. It's just a mask to wear. Everybody in Hollywood uses a mask to deceive the world. You'll get the hang of it. One day you'll be deceiving the world like a pro."

In addition to being a great entertainer, Ross could have made a decent living as a prophet.

"Speaking of images, kid," Gordy told Michael. "Forget all that crap about you little studs being discovered by Gladys Knight. What a pip! Forget Bobby Taylor. That dude's history. From now on, it was Diana Ross who discovered you. Chalk that one up for the history books."

By the official count, 312 "intimate" friends of Ross crowded into the chic disco cum private club known as Daisy. The fire department had posted a warning, allowing the club to hold only 250 patrons at one time. It was rumored that Frank Sinatra even slipped in that night unnoticed, although other reports placed him in New York.

Exactly at ten o'clock in their Sherwood Forest green suede boots with forest green vests, the "Jackson brothers looked like dancing black faggots as they zip-a-dee-do-dah-ed on stage," a stoned writer from Rolling Stone said privately. The audience of show biz veterans went wild in their enthusiasm.

The most unlikely guest in the audience was Charlton Heston, who would later become a friend of Michael in a case of "the odd couple." Heston, an advocate of "a gun in every home," later claimed that, "I was awed by their performance. The Jacksons project a squeaky clean image. They were making their debut at a time that rock-and-roll reigned supreme. All the hippies were taking drugs but the Jacksons proved there was hope for American youth yet. In my opinion, The Jackson 5 can be an antidote to all the poisonous shit going on."

As the chic crowd milled about after the show, Ross became a one-woman public relations factory for the Jackson brothers, especially for Michael, who was introduced as "the sweet one."

"Jermaine is the sexy one," she claimed.

In front of one woman from a Los Angeles magazine, Ross ran her hand through Michael's Afro. "Don't you just adore it?" she asked.

The greatest accolade came from a Hollywood newspaper which proclaimed: "We predict The Jackson 5, especially pint-sized Michael, will dominate popular music in the 70s."

"Whatever it took to get the song done right, he was willing to go the distance. And that was impressive, since he was still just a little kid. "

--Hal Davis

"He spends a lot of time, too much by himself. I try to get him out. I rented a boat and took my children and Michael out on a cruise. Michael has a lot of people around him, but he's very afraid. I don't know why. I think it came from his early days. "

--Diana Ross

"Just the other day, you were a 9-year-old kid auditioning for me, and now here you are, the greatest entertainer in the world. Here you are the greatest entertainer in the world, presenting me with an award. Michael, Michael, I believed in you when you were nine. I believe in you now. And I will never stop believing in you. "

--Berry Gordy at the Jackson Family Honors

"When I see him dance and sing, it touches me, like a spirit; it moves me inside, sort of like the Holy Ghost. But it's more than singing and dancing; he manages to touch your soul. "

--Isaiah Thomas

"Michael Jackson loves putting out the charity singles because they support his no. 1 charity in the world-himself. "

--Richard Johnson

"If Michael Jackson came in this room right now, there would be no one in this room who could not stop looking at him. As long as you've got that power, you're never damaged. He has that power over anybody. If people can't stop looking at you, you're so interesting to people, there's no way you can be damaged. "

--Jermaine Dupri

Chapter Two

In just a few short weeks, as the first winds of autumn blew into Southern California, The Jackson 5 would make their TV debut on ABC's Hollywood Palace. When asked about her alleged "discovery" of the Jackson brothers, Ross told the press, "I don't mind letting the boys ride to fame on my skirttails."

Wanting money and glory for his sons, Joe demanded twelve-hour daily rehearsals. He controlled the group's every move, utterance, song number, and first press conference. "You've heard of stage mothers," said Gordy. "Joe was the granddad of all stage fathers. At times I got so mad at the fucker, I thought he'd descended directly from Hell." Gordy also claimed that he felt Joe wanted to isolate his sons from the outside world.

Gordy wanted to launch the boys with a hit record, and Joe was determined to see that the Motown honcho got his wish.

Gladys Knight was not credited as the eagle eye who'd first spotted the talent of the Jackson brothers. She also saw a potential hit song, "I Want to Be Free," taken away from her by Gordy and reshaped for The Jackson 5. It was later retitled, "I Want You Back."

"I was angry," Knight recalled. "Really angry. I felt I'd become chopped liver at Motown. Ali, show business! It's all in the game."

Gladys Knight and The Pips had been added to the Motown "stable of Soul" in 1966. From Atlanta, they scored many hits and stayed with Motown for seven years. Ironically, their biggest hit, "Midnight Train to Georgia," would come after the group bolted from Motown and signed with Buddha.

Although he hadn't officially moved out of Detroit, Gordy had purchased a home from Tommy Smothers, also in the Hollywood Hills. That way, he could slip away for nights spent in the arms of Ross, who lived nearby.

One night as he was watching Michael rehearse with his brothers, Gordy told Joe: "Michael's just a kid but he sings James Brown's `I Got the Feelin' with such feeling, inspiration, and pain. It's like he's experienced everything he's singing about, even though he's too young to know about adult emotions. Brown, on the other hand, knows all emotions."

That night, Gordy decided that Michael needed a lot more polish. At dinner the producer had noticed Michael still eating with his hands instead of using a knife and fork. "The kid is going to be a star," he told Joe. "To achieve that goal, he's gotta learn to behave like a star. I'm moving him in with Diana. He can watch what she does. Her polish and refinement will rub off on the boy. I just know it."

Miss Ross

Although Katherine objected, Joe moved Michael into Ross's Hollywood Hills home. The self-absorbed diva had little time for a growing boy, as she was completely involved in her own career. She was at a pivotal point, breaking away from The Supremes to become a solo performer.

Katherine's primary objection involved having her impressionable young son live in the same household where Ross was carrying on "a tumultuous Ava Gardner/Frank Sinatra type of affair." Gordy was married at the time.

The first night Michael spent in Ross's house, she warned him about the dangers of show business. "I think you're going to make it in show businessand make it big. For a while, fans will build you up-even the media. But there's a dark side to all of this. The press likes to build up people only to tear them down. Show business brings many things, fame and fortune among them. But it also exposes you to the world. Your darkest secrets might end up one day on the front page of some tabloid. Show business can hurt you, it can devastate you. It can become your worst nightmare. Fame carries such a terrible price that I sometimes wonder if it's worth it."

In her warning to Michael, Ross might have been seeing a vision of her own future. In the years to come, it became popular to bash her in the press. Both her persona and her music were trashed. She was often referred to even in print as a "bitch." Many of her black fans attacked her for "losing her blackness" by marrying white men. In the words of a security guard at Chi-Chiz, a black men's gay bar on Christopher Street in New York City, "There are three subjects so controversial, you should never, ever bring them up: Religion, politics, and Diana Ross."

Michael listened politely to his mentor, perhaps not truly believing her. Later he'd say, "To me, performing is like a dream come true. You live in grand mansions. You're driven around in fancy cars. You can buy all the clothes you want. You never have to go hungry again. No more settling for a bowl of tomato soup with a sweet roll for a meal. How can show business harm you? It can only reward you. As for the press, I think those guys will find me adorable. After all, I'm sorta cute. Besides, I have no dark secrets that would make tabloid headlines."

After a night spent in Ross's guest bedroom, Michael woke up refreshed and eager to get on with his career. Over breakfast, he told Ross, "I dreamed of a Neverland called California, never really knowing it existed. Maybe it was all a dream, like Oz." Once again, he compared California to Oz. "Now, this morning, my dream has come true."

Impatient to get to a recording studio, Ross patted his head after eating one scoop of low-fat cottage cheese and a dry piece of Melba toast. "Just you be careful that dream doesn't become a nightmare." As a final warning, she said, "And don't leave any doors and windows open. Stay in the house!"

Instead of "California Dreaming," most Hollywood celebrities at the time were obsessed with serial killings.

Ross herself seemed to live in fear and had stationed two security guards outside her home along with ferocious, man-eating guard dogs. The rich and famous of Hollywood, Bel Air, and Beverly Hills were also hiring bodyguards. When the supply in Los Angeles was exhausted, many guards were flown in from as far away as Tennessee.

Sharon Tate and six of her guests had been slaughtered by the drugcrazed, Satan-worshipping "family" of a lunatic, Charles Manson, who originally wanted to kill Doris Day and her son, Terry Melcher. Celebrities feared that other death squads in that drugged era would emulate the Manson family and also go on killing sprees, torturing and murdering victims. At every Hollywood party, the grisly tales of the murders were retold, even exaggerated, with a vivid recounting of the tortures the victims were forced to endure before their slaughter.

"Imagine," actor Gregory Peck asked friends, "being forced to eat our genitals before dying."

Michael didn't listen to all this talk and felt no fear. "I feel California is the safest place in the world," he said. "I saw a lot of horrible things before coming here. Those terrible dives that Joe booked us into. Here the sun shines brightly on us. America's going to love us, especially me."

During his first week in Ross's home, Michael watched her rehearse "Someday We'll Be Together," which would not only be her farewell song with The Supremes but would become a hit record.

Michael's first insight into heterosexual marriage had come from his own dysfunctional parents. In the Ross household, he learned about the rocky course of straight, off-the-record love affairs. When they weren't making love, Gordy and Ross were often fighting.

At Gordy's suggestion, her group was already being billed as Diana Ross and The Supremes instead of The Supremes. Under that label, the group with Ross as its lead singer had racked up at least a dozen hit records. Ross believed that she could do even better on her own.

Gordy and Ross had intense, often violent, arguments about the course of her career. He wanted her to be a crossover success, reaching more affluent audiences such as the largely white fans who flocked to hear big name entertainers in Las Vegas. She feared she'd lose her following of black devotees if she appeared to desert them. She also wondered about the future of The Supremes without her.

Perhaps Michael learned his lessons well ... or not. He too would one day break from his brothers to pursue a solo career, and he, too, would be charged with deserting his black audiences in pursuit of pop-read that "white"-fans.

In the days ahead, little Michael hid behind draperies or behind a sofa as he watched Ross's every move performed before a full-length mirror. He was spying on her every gesture, her every subtle motion. She was the embodiment of feline grace. He listened for every note coming from her thin voice, and in time would incorporate every oooh into his own music.

"Michael was Eve Harrington to Diana's Margo Charming," Gordy later said. He was referring to the 1950 movie, All About Eve. In that film, Bette Davis played an aging actress, with Eve (Anne Baxter) waiting in the wings to go on stage in her place.

Michael was a fast learner. "He took the best of Diana Ross and the best of James Brown, and threw in every move Jackie Wilson ever made," Gordy recalled.

One day Smokey Robinson showed up at the Motown studios and watched the Jackson brothers perform.

Having seen them on stage before, he was awed at how they'd improved and perfected their act since coming to California. In his autobiography, Smokey-Inside My Life, published in 1989, he wrote that Michael was the biggest talent since Ross-"and the accompaniment of his brothers, bad-ass singers and dancers themselves," only sweetened the stew pot.

On the few nights Ross was ever alone with Michael, she discussed her career concerns with him, especially about breaking from The Supremes. Even though he was at a tender age, she sensed he had a "gut instinct" about show business. After urging her to perform solo, he told her to "Go, girl go!" And she did.

The Jackson 5

On October 18, 1969, on Hollywood Palace, she introduced The Jackson 5 to America. Much of black America tuned in. So did millions of white Americans-potential new fans-hearing The Jackson 5 for the first time. A soul ballad, "Can You Remember?," was undistinguished. But when Michael sang, "Oooh, baby, give me one more chance," a line from "I Want You Back," he went over big. At long last, black teenagers in America had someone to identify with in an era of black pride. "The kids identified with them not as stars, but as contemporaries fulfilling their own fantasies of stardom," said Steve Manning, a long-time Jackson family retainer.

When the song was released as a single, it climbed slowly up the charts, becoming number one in the nation by January of 1970, when it topped "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head" on Billboard charts.

"`I Want You Back' took off like an aural steamroller," wrote Stewart Reagan. "It took off like a rocket and exploded with a nervous, frenetic pace that wouldn't let up. Its energy and freshness was made irresistible by the desperate passion of Michael's vocal. Here was a boy screaming for mercy as if his life depended on it. It reached the parts other records couldn't reach."

At first The Jackson 5 appealed to prepubescent jumpers and screamers.

Rolling Stone joined in high praise for Michael after the release of "I Want You Back," still considered one of his greatest records. "Catalyzed by a red hot performance from ten-year-old Michael," a critic wrote, "the record explodes off the turntable with an intricate Sly-influenced arrangement featuring some of the toughest bass, drum, piano, guitar playing on any soul record anywhere."

All the Jackson brothers, especially Michael, owe a debt to Freddie Perren, a writer-producer who worked on such hits as "I Will Survive," recorded by Gloria Gaynor. Perren produced and co-wrote that mega-seller, "I Want You Back." Assisting him to make pop music history for the Jacksons were his partners, Deke Richards and Fonce Mizell. Of course, Berry Gordy was also looking over the shoulders of his creative team, who were scoring one pop single hit after another for the Jacksons in the early 70s. The team that produced these early Jackson hits was nicknamed "The Corporation."

Sammy Davis Jr., whom Michael had always idolized, was also a host on Hollywood Palace that night, and Michael met him there for the first time.

Davis had already heard of the boy's prodigious talent, which evoked his own memories as a child entering show business when he was far too young.

"Did anyone ever tell you you have Shirley Temple dimples?" he asked Michael. Michael was dumbfounded at meeting Davis and couldn't immediately formulate an answer.

Davis invited the boy to his dressing room. Around Davis, Michael didn't have to talk ... only listen.

"I paved the road for you, kid," Davis told him. "When I started out, I was told that a nigger could never make it big in show business, except on the chitlin' circuit. I crossed over and won over whitey. You can do the same. Of course, you'll always have the haters and hecklers in the audience. I face those nightly."

"But I want people to like me because of my talent, not judge me by the color of my skin," Michael said.

"A worthy ambition," Davis said. "Keep that thought."

At the end of their talk, there was a knock on Davis's door. It was the stage manager, announcing the arrival of the performer's date for the evening. Michael stepped aside as a shapely young woman, who evoked Marilyn Monroe, brushed past.

"One thing a crossover career means," Davis said, "is that after you've made it you can always fuck white. Which brings up the big question of the night: Are you gay?"

"If you mean homosexual, I am not!" Michael said adamantly. "I'm a Jehovah's Witness. Our religion is strongly opposed to any form of homosexuality. It is against God's teaching."

Davis laughed. "I didn't expect such an answer. Not in show business where all of us guys, even the straight ones, get our dicks sucked from time to time. Even Sinatra told me he lets a gay stagehand occasionally cop his joint."

"Good night, Mr. Davis," Michael said. "An honor meeting you."

As Davis watched Michael rush off to join his brothers, he turned to the stage manager and said, "The kid's definitely gay, even if he don't know it yet.

As Michael departed, Davis called to him, "This is the last time I'm gonna share the stage with a scene-stealing, thirty-five-year-old midget. Try to upstage me, will you?"

When a startled Michael turned back, Davis smiled, claiming, "I was just joking!"

Only fifteen minutes earlier, Michael had kept dancing when Davis clearly wanted him off the stage. Davis practically had to take the boy by the nape of his neck and shove him out of the spotlight.

There would always remain a friendly rivalry between Davis and Michael, but they became friends of a sort.

In an interview with People Extra, Davis said of Michael: "He takes a step that you've been doing and then by the time he switches it around, you don't even recognize it. There is nothing new about thrusting your hips out, but when he does that with quick moves, the high kick out and that slow back-up step he does, people say, `Jeez, what is he doing?' And he never lays on a move long enough for you to figure it out. I'm sure if he worked with Nureyev or Baryshnikov, he would come close to that level. Can he tap dance? I don't know. But then again I'd hate to leave my dancing shoes in his vicinity."

In Davis's autobiography, Why Me?, he said: "Michael used to come by my house-'Can I borrow some of your tapes, Mr. D.?' And he'd go to my library and take what he wanted of the shows I'd done. Visiting me in Monte Carlo in July of '88, he said, `Y'know, I stole some moves from you, the attitudes.' I'd known that. It's terribly flattering for the young to feel that way about you. Especially Michael, who I think is the ultimate professional. A lot of young performers have become multimillionaires on ten big records, but they don't know how to bow and get themselves off a stage. Everything Michael does on a stage, though, is exactly right."

After his boys appeared on Hollywood Palace, an angry Joe confronted Berry Gordy. "What is it with Ross?" he asked. "She introduced my boys as Michael Jackson and The Jackson 5. Michael is no more a star than any of my other sons. All my kids are stars. Jermaine one day will sell more records than Michael."

Gordy later asked Ross why she'd made such an introduction, virtually renaming the group. She said: "You've heard of Diana Ross and The Supremes? Now you've heard of Michael Jackson and The Jackson 5." She turned and walked away.

One night when Ross came home late, she was startled to hear the sound of her own voice. Live. She had to pause for one minute before she realized that wasn't her voice but that of Michael. She slowly slipped into the room where she rehearsed her music.

There in front of her full-length mirror was Michael dressed as herself in her red toreador pants and bolero jacket. He even wore her Joan Crawford fuck-me stiletto heels. He was singing in perfect imitation her "Rock-A-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody," just as he'd heard it in 1966.

Ross walked over and abruptly cut off the music. Frightened, Michael turned around so fast he almost fell from his perch on those stiletto heels.

"Forget it, kid!" she said harshly. "There's room on this planet for only one Miss Ross." She stormed off toward her bedroom to call Gordy. "The kid's gotta go!" she shouted into the phone when she reached her lover.

In spite of this rejection, Michael was not to be deterred. In the years to come, he would continue to imitate Ross. When he became the chatelain of Neverland, he even insisted that his staff refer to him as "Miss Ross."

As the years went by, Michael began to rewrite the history of his stay at the home of Ross.

When he was in his late teens, he carried his imagination too far by suggesting that he had shacked up with Ross. "Diana Ross was my mother, my lover, and my sister-all combined in one amazing person." Mother, perhaps. Sister, perhaps. But not lover.

When Ross heard that, she was more amused than angry. "In his dreams!" was her only comment.

Gordy was shocked. "That's like Liberace claiming he had a long affair with Ava Gardner, and she told Twinkle-Toes that he was better in bed than Sinatra."

The story about a physical relationship between Michael and Ross is pure bunk. For starters, Ross is not a child molester. She never possessed any sexual interest in Michael, who was only eleven years old when he lived under the same roof with her. "He was just a cute kid I helped along the road to stardom," Ross said-and accurately so.

Motown Records' Berry Gordy, Jr.

Even though she has never publicly commented on Michael's sexuality, as a very hip woman she must have known for years where Michael's inclinations lay.

Ross had a more believable story to tell years later. "I looked at this little kid whirling around up there on stage, and I thought I was looking at myself. I couldn't believe it. I saw so much of myself as a child in Michael. He was performing all the time. That's the way I was. He could be my son."

After years of struggle, fame at last came to The Jackson 5. By December of 1969, the brothers made their debut album, trading once again on the fame of their sponsor, Diana Ross. Released in time for the Christmas buying market that year, the album was called Diana Ross Presents The Jackson 5, although she'd wanted to call it, Diana Ross Presents Michael Jackson and The Jackson 5. The album became the fastest-selling group record in the history of Motown.

To prick this promotional balloon, a critic for Rolling Stone wrote: "Given any kind of decent material at all, The Jackson 5 should be able to give us many years of good tight music. Who's this `Diana Ross' anyway?"

The opening sounds of "Zip A Dee Doo Dah" on their first album were played around the world. James Barker, a business traveler, remembered hearing the song at Heathrow Airport in London. When he got off the plane in Lagos, Nigeria, the same "Dee Doo Dah" sounds were heard. "My God," Barker said, "this Michael Jackson was just a kid and he could deliver a song with the evocative emotion of Marvin Gaye."

Barker, among millions of others, sensed what was happening. In spite of his age, the voice of Michael Jackson, a magnificent instrument, was destined to become an icon of pop music in the 1970s. Long before the release of his bestseller album, Thriller, Michael became a powerhouse at Motown, turning out some of its most

memorable music. The Jackson 5 helped create a type of music called "bubblegum soul." Other "bubblegummers" included their white rivals, the Osmond Brothers, and the Partridge Family with David Cassidy and his stepmother, Shirley Jones.

While making Diana Ross Presents The Jackson 5, the entire Jackson family moved into a house that Gordy had leased for the brood at 1601 Queens Road in Los Angeles. Katherine and the other children arrived from Gary to hook up with family members. Ross personally drove Michael to his new home and said a brief "hello" to Katherine, who flown to Los Angeles with La Toya, Janet, and young Randy.

For Katherine, it was her first plane ride and her first palm tree. She hugged Michael to her breast. "With your real mother now in California, you will no longer need a substitute mother like Miss Ross. There's nothing like the real thing."

Less than two weeks before Christmas, Michael and his brother appeared on The Ed Sullivan Show singing not only "I Want You Back" but "Can You Remember?" It wasn't quite the sensation that Elvis Presley and The Beatles created. But all eyes were on Michael that night, which was fortunate because his brothers performed awkwardly-Jermaine, for example, warbling off-key. At his TV set, Berry Gordy, along with sixty million Americans, watched the program with avid interest. He later said, "Their tempo was off. I was devastated." As always, Gordy was being too much of a perfectionist. The public ate it up, heralding the arrival of a phenomenal new group.

Gordy demanded that the Jacksons come up with a second hit, and that's what he got when Michael and his brothers recorded "ABC." Michael's perfect voice sang, "Shake it, shake it, baby." Michael knew the moment he heard the lyrics that "ABC" was going to be another hit. Gordy was skeptical. Michael turned out to be right.

On February 24, 1970, "ABC" was released. The song featured a rapid and driving bass line underneath a shrill but dynamic vocal by Michael. Amazingly, he could be surprisingly convincing when he sang about love, even though sounding like a castrato.

In less than two months, it had knocked The Beatles' song, "Let It Be," off the top of the chart. Bubblegum boys or not, The Jackson 5 sold nearly 2'/z million recordings of that solo. The third recording of the Jackson boys sold nearly two million copies.

In Las Vegas when he heard all three songs, Frank Sinatra was livid.

"Teenybopper shit!" he proclaimed in anger, forgetting that in the early 40s, he, too, was a favorite of bobbysoxers.

From his suite, Sinatra asked two of his henchmen, "What do I think of Michael Jackson? I'll tell you: he's a God damn faggot pickaninny!"

When he heard of that insult from Sinatra, Michael shot back:

"Sinatra's very overrated. I just don't understand why he has fans. He might be a living legend, but it's not because of his voice, `cause he's not much of a singer. When was the last time he had a hit? Back in 1942?"

By June, the third solo of The Jackson 5, "The Love You Save," broke out at the top of the Billboard chart, knocking out The Beatles with their "The Long and Winding Road."

Jacksonmania swept America. With success came bookings all over the country, beginning with their first concert appearance on May 2, 1970 in Philadelphia. "My God," one policeman said, "you'd think Elvis has arrived in town with The Beatles as his back-up. I've never seen such pandemonium. I rescued one girl, no more than thirteen, who was almost trampled to death."

The same hysteria greeted the Jackson brothers wherever they went. In one case, police foiled the plot of some overeager girls to rush the stage and strip the brothers "buck-assed naked." At some of their more unruly concerts, fans disrupted the performance. One night, a loud-voice teenage girl shouted: "Whip out your big black dicks!"

With the release of their next album, also called ABC, The Jackson 5 continued the tour. The hysteria mounted. Michael tried to get used to screaming fans, the flashing dome lights, the sirens wailing, and limousines pushing forward into dense crowds. But he couldn't quite seem to adjust. His brothers adapted but he didn't, often breaking into tears or else sobbing screams when he felt he was going to be killed by the mobs.

In contrast, the older brothers enjoyed the adulation, especially from hysterical female fans eager to get laid by one of the brothers. "We are big-time. We'll be on top forever. Legends in the making, and pussy lined up from New York to California, all a man would ever want. Islamic men who sacrifice themselves for Allah are promised forty virgins in Heaven. Hell, man, that many virgins are available to each of us in every town." This quote, most often attributed to Jermaine, may be apocryphal.

When the neighbors got a petition together complaining about the noise from the Jackson's Queen Road house, Gordy moved them to an ugly but comfortable motel-like house on Bowmont Drive. The stucco house rested on stilts and was filled with chocolate brown shag carpeting and plastic furniture in neon colors of green and pink.

Even though reunited under one roof with his family again, Michael years later admitted the depth of his loneliness. "I used to sit in my room and cry. It was so hard to make friends. I was cut off from kids my own age, except for my brothers and sisters. They never had the same interests that I did. I had a lot of feelings in me that I could never talk about. I didn't even understand some of my own yearnings. I wanted to talk about them with someone understanding. I certainly couldn't go to my father. He would understand nothing, maybe even beat me up if I confided too much. I loved my mother but she was bound by her faith, one of the most faithful of the Jehovah's Witnesses. If I told her things, she might think the Devil had taken over my soul."

"An understanding heart" was on the way. When both Katherine and Joe were out of the house late one afternoon, Michael was sitting alone in his bedroom staring vacantly out the window.

Frank Sinatra, bobbysoxer favorite of the 40s.

All of a sudden, a Lincoln Executive limousine pulled into the driveway of the Jackson home. A pink-uniformed chauffeur in black boots with a gold hat got out from behind the wheel to open the door for the passenger in the rear. It was the next door neighbor, Liberace, at the time one of the world's most famous entertainers. Stepping out of the limousine, he was a vision in white silk lame. In the foyer, he announced to a Jackson household servant that he'd arrived to "see the wee one."

Michael rushed downstairs to meet one of his show biz idols. But Katherine didn't trust the effeminate, flamboyant entertainer alone with her son, although she was eventually persuaded to leave them together in the living room.

Holding Michael's hand, Liberace told the young boy that he couldn't stay as he was already late for a party at the home of Rock Hudson. He giggled at the thought of it. "I'll probably be asked to play an organ or two tonight." He giggled away, then flashed a wide grin. Michael was almost overcome by the heavy intoxicating smell of Liberace's perfume.

He invited Michael to come to dinner next week to "meet a special friend-she's more outrageous than moi," he said, "if that's possible." He jotted down Michael's phone number. "I'll call you to set up a night. Toodle- loo!" The performer sashayed out of the living room, descending toward the driveway where the dashingly handsome chauffeur already had the rear door open.

Michael could not contain himself with excitement waiting for the invitation to come through. He kept wondering who the special guest would be, figuring that Liberace by himself would be entertainment enough.

Knowing that Katherine would never let him attend a dinner party at Liberace's house, Michael kept the news of the invitation from his family. When Liberace called and set the date, Michael still remained mum. On the Tuesday night of the dinner, he pretended to have a headache and went to his bedroom early. But he slipped out of his room and walked down the street to the entertainer's house.

The young man who opened the door was the chauffeur, except this time he was attired in forest green slacks with a white shirt open to his six-pack waist. He introduced himself as Paul Richardson, and it is because of him, and his later revelations, that the world knows what transpired that night.

Emerging from the rear of the house was Liberace himself, wearing scarlet-colored lounging pajamas. To Michael, he extended a hand on which rested a large jewel-encrusted ring on each finger.

Before his special guest arrived, Liberace insisted on taking young Michael on a tour of the house. As he made his way toward the garden down a long hallway, Liberace pointed out the pieces of value, including a desk he claimed once adorned Versailles, the property of Louis XV. He also showed Michael his sumptuous bedroom. "The bed belonged to Rudolph Valentino. He was before your time. The great lover of the silent screen. Both of his wives were lesbians." Michael was impressed with the garden, particularly its large piano-shaped pool.

Back in the house, Michael had to go to the bathroom. Paul led the way. After carefully locking the door, Michael took in the chandelier-lit room, the walls covered with murals of naked men, some with excessively large genitalia.

Michael waited alone in the living room. Paul stood nearby ready to take the drink orders. Michael noticed the young man observing him closely. It was fifteen minutes before Liberace appeared again. "I had to change into something more spectacular," he said. "I called my guest, and she's wearing red. I decided to get rid of my own red and wear these champagne-colored lounging pajamas. That way, I'll blend in." Michael couldn't help but notice that the entire room was in champagne colors.

Liberace pounced on the sofa next to Michael, and took the boy's hand. "First, let me tell you that I love your music. You're gonna be a big star. Not as big as me, darling. But real big."

"Thank you, sir." Michael checked out the ruffled silk. "You look great!"

"Thanks," Liberace said. "After Elvis came along, I have to appear more outlandish than ever, topping him every time. Of course, my onstage outfits are far more fabulous. I have a different outfit designed every month because they tarnish so fast. I do, however, remove the diamond buttons from suit to suit."

"When I start having stage clothes designed for me, I'll stick to sequins," Michael said. "Right now Katherine buys for my brothers and me off the rack."

Liberace

Liberace looked over at Paul and winked lasciviously. "A Scotch for me and a Shirley Temple for Michael." When Paul came back, Liberace was lamenting about how many charity events he was asked to play at every week. "The same will happen to you," he predicted to Michael. "Don't do any. Never... but never associate yourself with some kind of disease."

Liberace had more advice. "Never take sides in anything, especially politics. If you take sides, you'll alienate large segments of your audience. No one knows if I'm a Republican or Democrat. Come to think of it, I don't know that myself."

"I'll remember that, sir."

"Just call me Cuddles, dear boy."

At that point the doorbell rang, and Paul went to answer it. Michael could hear the sound of male voices, but only a lady was ushered into the living room. He stared in awe as a bejeweled Mae West in a floor-length red gown with a white sable coat pranced in. "Liberace invited me to come up and see him sometime," West said, just assuming Michael knew who she was. "Tonight I'm here to check out Liberace's gold organ." Liberace was at her feet kissing a white-gloved hand. Taking note for the first time just how young Michael was, she issued a command. "Kid, write down everything I say tonight. When you grow up, read it. You'll understand it then."

As West seated herself in a winged armchair across from the two men, she carefully arranged herself. "I saw Liberace on one of his early TV shows and fell in love. When reporters asked me what I wanted for my birthday, I said Liberace. One day he shows up on my doorstep wearing a large red bow. `Here I am!' he said. `Your birthday present.'"

A dog ran into the room and headed for Michael where he proceeded to raise his leg and issue a squirt of piss. Liberace looked on, amused. "This is my favorite pet. A Lhasa Apso."

"I think he likes me," Michael said.

"I like you too," West cooed. "I caught your act on TV with that Ross creature. That one is a bit too uppity for

her own good, but you were terrific."

Liberace seemed jealous that he was no longer the center of attention. Reclaiming the floor, he jumped up and headed for a 19th-century piano. "It once belonged to Frederic Chopin." He sat down and played "Mad About the Boy" from Noel Coward's repertoire, beaming his famous smile at Michael.

When Paul signaled that the butler was serving dinner, Liberace took a bow. Michael applauded. West did not. "Tonight we're having dear of Mum's potato pancakes," Liberace said. "I made the rock Cornish game hen with cherry sauce myself. All these recipes are going to be in my new book, Liberace Cooks!"

"I'm not the domestic type," West said, rising to her feet. "The boudoir is where I show my expertise. How about you, kid?"

"I just sing and dance," Michael said, following Liberace and West into the dining room lit by three antique Venetian chandeliers, one of which depicted a series of faces, each fashioned from black glass, that resembled Aunt Jemima.

Before seating Michael and West, Liberace pointed out the K on his silverware. "The set once belonged to President John F. Kennedy."

Somehow West made a romantic link in her head. "You know, that Marilyn Monroe bitch-speak of the dead-stole her whole act from me. I was singing about diamonds before she was born."

Over dinner and champagne-Michael was allowed to have one glass of bubbly-Liberace, his eyes twinkling, leaned over toward West. "There's this one rumor I want to know about. Do you have African-American roots? Did one of your ancestors pass for white?"

"I've heard that one a million times," she said, smiling at Paul who hovered nearby. "I'm not black. The rumor probably started because of my affinity for black music." She leaned over and patted Michael's hand. "Black music is the best there is."

"My parents always had progressive racial attitudes," she said. "We once entertained Bert Williams-of course, he was famous. I was just a little gal when I realized that black people are just like us, only of a different color. I've always believed that white men should not exploit women, black people, or gays." She smiled at Liberace.

"I grew up listening to ragtime," she said, continuing her monologue. "Ragtime is certainly rooted in African music. I remember when the Cakewalk, created by blacks, was the rage of the nation." She leaned toward Michael again. "Let me give you some advice, kid. You should develop a distinctive walk on the stage."

Did Mae West inspire Michael's future Moonwalk?

"I was a champion of blacks before it became fashionable," she went on. "I fought to get Duke Ellington cast in The Belle of the Nineties. I even was seen dining alone with Louis Armstrong, my reputation be damned. When a black performer was injured in a car accident in Las Vegas, I intervened and got treatment for the poor soul in a whites-only facility."

Mae West

When dessert arrived, West shooed it away, although Michael went in a big way for the baked Alaska.

West almost never drank alcohol except on this rare occasion. The champagne had made her tipsy. As the three of them settled into the living room, with Paul still hovering nearby, she provocatively asked Liberace: "Are you still against homosexuality like you said in that British court a decade ago?"

"Just because I wear fancy clothes and am a nonconformist, people always judge me," Liberace said.

"Let's cut out this horse manure," West said, "You're talking to your mama here. You're just as gay as those male chorines I cast in my play, Drag, way back when. Without you boys, I wouldn't have any fans left."

"You must understand, Mae, I'm trying to set a fine example before this impressionable young boy here."

He looked over at Michael. "You're just a little boy, and already I'm hearing rumors about you. Regardless of what the press writes about you, no matter how cancerous the innuendo, deny that you are a homosexual."

"Liberace's got a point," West chimed in. "I've spent years denying I'm a drag queen! Personally, I adore homosexuals. You might say I launched the gay movement by writing the first gay play. But, to me, homosexual sex is just a form of masturbation. A temporary relief of tension. No real satisfaction."

"Oh, Mae darling, if the boys could hear you say that," Liberace said. "They'd take away your crown as Queen of Sex."

"Not bloody likely, dearie," West said defensively. Ignoring Liberace, who seemed to have angered her, she focused once again on Michael. "Clean livin', kid, that's the answer, for a long career in show business. No drugs. Take an enema once or twice a day. There's putrid, poisonous matter in your body. I can't stand to take a shit that smells. Bad for my image. What if someone followed me into the crapper and it was all smelly? When you've cleaned yourself with an enema, and then you answer nature's call, your wastes are fresh - not putrid."

"Mae, are you trying to tell us your shit don't stink?" a drunken Liberace asked.

"It ain't Chanel Number 5," West said. "At its worst, perhaps the smell of beef stew."

"This has been a most enlightening evening for me," Michael said, "and I thank you for it. My parents might discover I'm missing, so I'd better be leaving. Miss West, meeting you and Mr. Liberace has been the grandest evening of my life. From now on, both of you in separate ways will be my role models."

"Thanks, dearie," West said. "The impersonators always do me."

"You couldn't have made a wiser choice than the two of us," Liberace said.

Michael, of course, never became another Liberace and certainly not another Mae West. But he passed his interest in West onto his younger sister, Janet, who in the future would deliver a brilliant impersonation of the fading star.

After his secret visit with two of the biggest legends in show business, it was back to work for Michael.

Michael's single, "Got to Be There," was released by Motown in 1970, following in the wake of the hit solo album by Donny Osmond, Michael's main competitor with young white girls. Michael later called it his "real breakthrough song; it was the one that said, `I'm here to stay!'"

Even though some Motown brass, including Gordy himself, feared that the song would fail, it, like the previous three singles, zoomed to number one on the charts, staying there for five weeks. "Got to Be There" was a ballad, and had "tender soul," in the words of one reviewer. Gordy liked the record but feared it wasn't a sound the public wanted to hear coming from the throat of Michael.

Michael's solo debut sparked jealousy among his brothers, especially Jermaine. A love song, it sold some 1'/z million copies. "It showed the world that Michael could do it on his own," Gordy said. "I felt he could be a big star just like Diana became when she broke from The Supremes. It must have sent a fright through his brothers, deflating their perpetual hard-ons." A month or so went by, but "Got to Be There" scored a bull's eye when Cash Box named it their number one hit.

One Motown executive claimed that "the Jackson brothers, especially that talented little Michael, in spite of his being a bit girlish, had become a meal ticket for Katherine and Papa Joe. He couldn't make it on his own as a musician, but he was living like a fat cat off his sons. He didn't relax either. He wanted more and more, and pushed his sons even harder than he had done in Gary. Michael had been out there on that stage shaking his ass since he was five years old. He was deprived of a childhood. I'm sure the experience ruined his life, as subsequent scandals proved."

In 1972, Michael used this hit song as the title of his first ever album, "Got to Be There," which also included "Rockin' Robin" and "Ain't No Sunshine." Sales were a modest 355,000 albums, although Gordy at Motown had anticipated a larger volume.

The Jackson 5 went on the road to promote their special sound and even broke attendance records at the Los Angeles Forum, selling almost 20,000 tickets. That night Michael did not endear himself to The Beatles, when he introduced "The Love You Save" as: "Here it is, the tune that knocked The Beatles out of number one." Even so, Michael and Paul McCartney would later become friends, then enemies.

Although their music was different, The Jackson 5 evoked The Beatles in the hysteria and pandemonium they caused on the road. One policeman in Los Angeles said, "The problem with The Jackson 5 was keeping them from being trampled to death. Kids pushed and shoved. If one of them fell to the ground, they were practically crushed under foot."

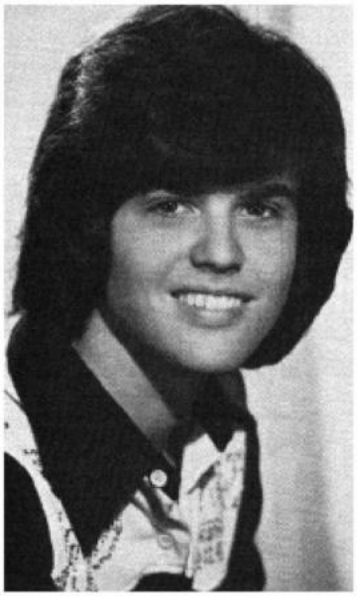
When The Jackson 5 stayed at a hotel, the manager had to double security. Young girls or even young women tried to break into their bedrooms, using any ruse or disguise. Often these impressionable fans pretended to be maids. Even the hotel's legitimate maids would steal the jockey shorts of the boys, not necessarily for themselves but to sell to fetish collectors. If a piss stain or a "skid mark" remained on the underwear, so much the better.

The Jackson 5 launched 1971 with a hit single, "Mama's Pearl," a return to bubblegum. Michael was extremely disappointed that after four number one hits, their latest release peaked at number two. Gordy told the brothers, "This is predictable. There's always next time."

Early in the year, the brothers made a sentimental visit back to Gary. Fans lined the streets of their old neighborhood, as their black limousine pulled up at 2300 Jackson Street, a thoroughfare which had carried that name long before the Jackson family ever made the address famous. After all the grand mansions they'd seen, their family home looked like a small hovel. Outside on the lawn, the neighbors had posted a big sign: WELCOME HOME, JACKSONS. KEEPERS OF THE DREAM.

That same year marked the biggest touring months ever for the brothers, as they played 45 cities that summer, plus another 50 cities before Christmas, an amazing feat. Wherever they went, they were hailed as "The Black Beatles." Berry was overheard telling associates at Motown: "Every time these brothers take a shit, gold nuggets drop out of their assholes!"

When they played Milwaukee, they attracted 115,000 fans to their concert. At New York's Madison Square Garden, all tickets to hear The Jackson 5 disappeared two weeks before they hit town. The night the brothers opened in New York, their show was disrupted after only ten minutes. According to The New York Daily News, "the barriers protecting the stage were smashed like so many pieces of kindling before the idol-crazed charge of pre-teen and teenage girls. Order had to be restored before the Jacksons could finish the concert."



Donny Osmond

As the 1970s dawned, Joe Jackson - the ultimate "stage father from Hell," as he was called - took pride in his accomplishments. All the beatings, all the rehearsals, all the terrorizing of his sons, had not made them love him. But he'd fine tuned the lavish talent of his sons. He had no regrets about his history of violence toward his children. "If I had it to do over again, I'd do it the same way," he said. "I don't want to brag, but looking at the kids, I think I've done a good job. It was hard, but it sure paid off."

In spite of their hysterical touring schedule, the brothers had time in 1971 to release two albums for Motown: The Third Album, featuring the hit record "I'll Be There," and Maybe Tomorrow, with such hit singles as "Never Can Say Goodbye."

The actor and composer Clifton Davis wrote "Never Can Say Goodbye." Unknown to Michael at the time,

Davis would later become a key player in a faux scandal with Michael that would sweep the nation and cause consternation among Jacko's fans.

"With their gaudy, psychedelic clothes, their trendy Afros, and their love beads, I thought The Jackson 5 was a hoot," said critic David Breen. "I gave them about eighteen months before they faded into oblivion. I saw no staying power in the group at all. Michael came across as a little faggy, and I thought he'd be too effeminate when he matured. In a way, I was right. But what I didn't understand was that the world was changing. Macho would not always prevail. Johnny Mathis wasn't the most masculine of men - and there were rumors - but he did all right. That `Stormy Weather' was a great hit. But the funniest act in show biz was Michael himself imitating Mathis doing `Stormy Weather. '"

Even though he was only at the dawn of puberty, some press members were writing that Michael was "androgynous." One writer claimed that "the first time I ever heard Michael Jackson sing, I thought he was a young girl. I still think that. Except he grew up to become a woman." Such press put-downs of Michael and rampant speculation about his ambiguous sexuality would in time become media fodder.

Although Berry, a black man, was one of the sharpest judges of pop music in the business, he failed to see the appeal of a new group, sometimes called the "white Jacksons"-that is, the Osmond brothers. This group originated in the closing year of the Eisenhower presidency as a barbershop quartet. By the Kennedy era, they were a regular feature on The Andy Williams Show.

George Osmond, the father of the brood, submitted a song to Gordy but was turned down. Eventually Osmond signed with MGM Records. With the baby of the family, Donny Osmond, imitating Michael's high-pitched voice and sound, the record, "One Bad Apple," became a megahit. Papa Joe went ballistic when he first heard the Osmonds. "They're stealing our act! Those little Goodie Two Shoes with their small white dicks!" He was furious at Berry for turning down "One Bad Apple," feeling it would have been an ideal record for his sons to record.

Executives at MGM Records plotted to launch the "lilywhite Osmonds" in direct competition to The Jackson 5. The word went out to promote Donny Osmond, then only thirteen years old, as a direct challenger to Michael.

Not to be outdone, Berry began to prepare a number of solo releases for Michael to put on the market. "Michael had so much more talent than Donny Osmond - and was so much cuter," a fan, Betty Barkin, said. "At first I loved the Osmonds and had a big crush on Donny, but Michael won my heart. I came to feel that the Osmonds were vanilla, Michael and his brothers chocolate - and I've always gone for chocolate."

The upcoming year, 1972, would see the music market saturated with Michael Jackson singles. His brothers, especially Jermaine, were very envious. "It's called sibling rivalry," Gordy said, pointing out the obvious.

On the road, Michael shared a room with Jermaine, perhaps the most sexual of his brothers, although Jackie too was known as a "ladies man." Disputes and jealousies would eventually drive Jermaine and Michael apart, but they nevertheless bonded together as boys.

Four years older than Michael, Jermaine was a sexual opportunist, as has been reported by many of the people who knew and worked with him on the road. At this point, Michael may have been too young to even know what his sexual proclivities were, but he learned his lessons in sex first hand from observing Jermaine.

In his startling 1994 biography published by Simon & Schuster, Christopher Andersen reported on an explosive claim made by Johnny Jackson. Johnny was called a "cousin" and originally had played drums with the Jackson brothers. "He shared our name but not our blood," Katherine said. Johnny reportedly told the chief of Steeltown Records, Gordon Keith, that he'd once walked in on a male relative of the Jackson family, catching him "sexually aroused" with Michael, who was only twelve years old at the time. The older relative, who was allegedly molesting young Michael, was not named. Of course, "evidence" such as this, even though reported in a book by one of the nation's leading publishers, must still be considered hearsay.

Jackson 5

Unlike many stars, Michael has never claimed that he was molested as a boy. He has been enigmatic in his responses, although on more than one occasion he has held out the possibility, without any definitive confirmation, that he was indeed molested. At this point, the truth may never be known.

What really happened while the Jackson brothers were touring together on the road has now become the stuff of legend, as various people have come forward with tantalizing stories. In his vanilla whitewash and boring so-called autobiography, Moonwalk, Michael portrays life on the road as harmless fun - "pillow fights, tag-team wrestling matches, shaving cream wars, you name it."

A favorite pastime for the boys was dropping balloons and paper bags filled with water off hotel balconies to burst onto innocent pedestrians below, giving them an unexpected shower.

In a rare confession, Michael did admit spying on women while they were on the toilet. In various clubs and chitlin' circuits in which he appeared, male performers would often cut or drill little holes as a means of looking into women's dressing rooms or else their toilets. "You could peek through one of these holes," Michael said. He admitted that he did. "I saw stuff I've never forgotten," he confessed, but left out mention of what kind of "stuff' he witnessed.

Michael's most notorious peep-hole vision occurred when the group was performing in London. One of his brothers urged him to "get a look at this!" Peering through the hole, Michael saw a vision of a completely nude Carol Charming.

At this point in her career, Charming no longer looked as she did when she played Lorelei Lee in the original Gentlemen Prefer Blondes on stage in 1949, the 1953 movie role going to the sexier Marilyn Monroe.

"Ugh!" Michael reportedly said when viewing the aging Channing's fallen breasts. "That's disgusting."

A writer for Rolling Stone later jokingly said, "The sight of Carol Charming in the nude turned Michael off women for life."

Like Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, like Elvis Presley, like John Lennon and the other Beatles, the Jackson brothers took advantage of their sex appeal in whatever city they were appearing. Female groupies followed the Jackson brothers back to their hotel suites where all the brothers, except Michael, enjoyed their sexual favors. "I was first seduced by the father, Joe Jackson," confessed Petula Robin, "in Philadelphia. He introduced me to both Jermaine and Jackie, and they seduced me too. I met Michael but seducing him was out of the question. I heard he didn't like girls all that much, and he was far too young."

In some respects, the brothers used their father as a role model. Away from Katherine, Joe reportedly slept with some of the more attractive Jackson groupies, both white and black, as if he were one of the performers himself. Perry Elkins, a stage manager in Milwaukee, claimed that "Joe used his sons as bait - in other words, `you sleep with me and I'll fix you up with Jermaine or Jackie,'" or whichever brother they fancied. "At his young age, Michael was off-limits," Elkins claimed. "One night I heard Michael lecturing his brothers that they were violating the tenets of their religion as Jehovah's Witnesses. If I recall, Jackie, or maybe it was Jermaine, just laughed Michael off. Except for Michael, I never knew one Jackson brother from the other."

The Jackson children

It appears that Jermaine, from the age of 15 or 16, seduced far more girls and women than even his promiscuous brother, Jackie. "Jackie would have his pick of the girls," Elton Jenkins, who once worked for Motown in Los Angeles, claimed. "He'd pick out the most beautiful and bring her back to his hotel room. But Jermaine would top him. On any given night, he'd line up at least three girls - one for midnight, one for one o'clock, and one for two o'clock."

Since Michael often shared a room with Jermaine, he would watch his older brother in action. Jermaine may have been deliberately showing off his sexual prowess to his younger brother. "I think it was part of that sibling rivalry Gordy was always talking about," Jenkins said. "Jermaine might have been trying to show Michael that although his kid brother was the star on stage, in the boudoir, Jermaine was the king."

Adele Ferguson, a secretary who lived in Tampa at the time, claimed that Jermaine was the greatest lover she'd ever experienced "before or since. He must have read the Kama Sutra from cover to cover. In one night he taught me sexual positions I'd never heard of. Until Jermaine, my boyfriends had been the missionary position types. While Jermaine and I were going at it, I just knew that Michael, with his saucer-wide eyes, was taking in all the action. In some ways, it made it more exciting for me to know that we were educating the kid about how to do it. After that night with Jermaine, my husband never really satisfied me. What a lover Jermaine was!"

Jermaine and Michael joined their other brothers on April 18, 1971 to appear on Diana! a TV special featuring Diana Ross. The highlight of the show was when Michael, only 12 years old at the time, came out to do his impression of Frank Sinatra in a tuxedo with a raincoat slung over his shoulder. Like Blue Eyes himself, Michael

wore the characteristic Sinatra brown fedora, tilted at a rakish angle. Michael parodied "It Was a Very Good Year."

Carol Channing

After the song, Diana, a vision in a metallic silver lame gown, and Michael presented a skit in which he played her lover who was leaving her.

In a hotel suite, Sinatra watched the skit in disgust. One of his henchmen reported that the singer was so outraged by Michael's imitation, that he took a bottle of bourbon and tossed it at the TV screen. "If I ever catch up with that little fag, I'll break his legs," Sinatra shouted. "No, not that! I'll hire two guys from Jersey to do it for me."

In addition to their career bursting into full bloom, the Jackson brothers experienced another milestone in 1971. They moved into a mansion at 4641 Hayvenhurst in affluent Encino, California, a property Joe had purchased for a quarter of a million dollars. Their Encino neighbors included such celebrities as Mike Connors, Dick Van Dyke, Dennis Weaver, and, Michael's favorite, "Soul Sister" Aretha Franklin.

On beautifully landscaped two-acre grounds, studded with orange and lemon trees, the estate contained six bedrooms, which meant that the Jackson siblings would have to double up.

Katherine herself made the room assignments, saving the master bedroom for Joe and herself. Michael's younger brother, Randy, became Michael's new roommate. La Toya and Janet shared a room, as did Marlon and Jermaine, and so it went. "For me, it would become an Alcatraz instead of a real home," La Toya was quoted as saying later in life when she fled Encino.

In the beginning, Michael was enchanted with the property, which included an Olympic-size swimming pool. He would live for years at Encino until there were too many eyes spying on his increasingly secret private life.

"I once delivered some demos to the Jackson family," Motown's Elton Jenkins claimed. "I must have arrived after a free-for-all. There was evidence of violence. I got out of there as soon as I could. That Joe Jackson had some temper. I didn't want to become a victim. As the years went by and more and more scandals were revealed, I came to realize that the address in Encino housed America's most dysfunctional family."

"Only in America can you be born a black man and end up a white woman. "

--Truman Capote

"I would kill myself if I couldn't be close to young boys."

--Michael Jackson

"You can't say somebody's guilty of a crime when you have no evidence to prove it...I hate the media for what they do to Michael, I do hate them."

--Whitney Houston

"He wasn't at all sure that he could make it on his own. And me too. I had my doubts. "

--Quincy Jones before Off the Wall

"Michael Jackson is like a skyscraper built on eggshells. "

--Former CBS Records executive (name withheld)

"He had a real intensity... People take him for a simpleton with a head full of silly songs, but he's a complex young man, curious about everything, who wants to go further and further. He behaves like an adolescent and, at the same time, like a wise old philosopher. "

--Quincy Jones

"Michael would rather cut his wrist than harm a child. "

--Elizabeth Taylor

Chapter Three

Michael would spend the rest of his life fretting over and eventually altering his appearance. His obsession with his looks began in 1971 when he broke out with "history's worst case of acne." At the same time, his body shot skyward. No longer was he mistaken for a midget.

"My years as a cute kid were suddenly over," he said. "I was a gangly adolescent at almost five feet ten inches." He spent a good part of the day staring at his reflection in the mirror. Every night seemed to bring a fresh pimple or two. "It was like having measles," he later said.

He became even shier around people. Some of the business associates in the record business Joe introduced Michael to didn't even believe he was who he said he was, but one of his "uglier brothers." For the first time in his life, he began to think of himself as "disfigured," and he longed to be beautiful like Diana Ross. He was all right as long as he was on stage, because heavy coatings of makeup obscured his bad complexion. "At night I lived with my demons," he said. "I came to hate mirrors as my pimples got worse." He gave up greasy processed foods such as hamburgers and French fries and began to consume a healthier diet, concentrating on fresh fruits and vegetables.

In addition to his acne, Michael had to endure the taunts of his brothers, who, for some reason, had taken to mockingly calling him "Liver Lips" or "Big Nose."

At the same time, Berry Gordy Jr. was putting pressure on Michael to make solo recordings. At first Joe opposed it, seemingly not wanting Michael to be a star on his own. Perhaps Joe thought he'd lose control of his boy if he broke away from his singing brothers. Berry went so far as to urge Michael to start rehearsals for an album all his own.

There were some bright moments along the way. In 1971, The Jackson 5 Show, a Saturday morning cartoon film, was launched on network TV. The brothers recorded the musical numbers for this animated series. Michael later said, "I couldn't wait to wake up on a Saturday morning and see myself in a fantasy cartoon." He was less enthusiastic when he learned that the entire group, including himself, was being paid less than $4,000 per episode. With this series on his own family, Michael began his lifelong fascination with animated motion pictures. He developed a consuming passion for all the commercial products inspired by founding father Walt Disney.

Someone at Motown, the identity of the person not known, showed Michael a Hollywood newspaper with its "Second Coming" headline: WALT DISNEY WAS A HOMO. The underground newspaper was published right before Christmas in 1966, following Disney's death on December 15. Michael apparently had no immediate reaction, but friends reported that he was almost in a state of shock, particularly when he read that Disney preferred to seduce young boys.

Someone suggested that Michael couldn't believe that the one artist responsible for bringing so much joy to young boys all over the world could also be capable of molesting them. At this point in his life, Michael could not have known that the same charges leveled against Disney would one day be brought against him.

Michael's watching of endless cartoons, his fondness for pets, and his silly little pranks, such as locking his brothers out of their hotel rooms without their underwear, were relatively harmless.

Many young performers pursued more dangerous games. At the start of the 1970s, Michael was often compared to the ill-fated young singer, Frankie Lymon, nicknamed "The Golden Throat." He was the first black teenage singing idol, and his success had inspired The Jackson 5 back in Gary.

In the 1950s Lymon was the lead singer for "The Teenagers," a popular group at the time, scoring such hits as "Goody, Goody." By the time he was only thirteen, Lymon could travel anywhere in America and hear his own voice on the jukebox singing "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?"

Walt Disney

Michael's adolescent voice in the early 70s evoked Lymon's soprano sounds. But their lives would take different turns as Lymon succumbed to drug addiction. At the age of eighteen, his career was all but over. In 1968, and only twenty-five years old, Lymon was found dead from a heroin overdose in New York, a syringe by his bed.

When he died, Lymon was survived by three wives. A polygamist, he never divorced any of his wives and remained married to three women up to his death.

Frankie Lymon & The Teenagers

When he heard of Lymon's death, Michael vowed that, "That will never happen to me." At this early age, he saw how drugs or alcohol could destroy promising careers. It is not known if he was also familiar with how a sex scandal could destroy a career as it had done with silent screen comedian Fatty Arbuckle and many other performers.

Instead of acquiring a drug habit, Michael remained deeply religious and committed to his faith as a Jehovah's Witness. He spent a lot of time reading the Bible. When he wasn't doing that, or rehearsing, he escaped into a fantasy world of cartoons or motion pictures that definitely carried the family seal of approval.

When Joe built a 32-seat screening room onto the 22-room Encino mansion, Michael began to spend hours

there watching films that an eight-yearold could enjoy. He was addicted to Shirley Temple movies, and he saw The Wizard of Oz with Judy Garland thirty-five times, little knowing that one day he'd be cast in the black version of this classic. He also began to collect animals as pets, and was particularly fond of snakes. Both he and Jermaine owned their own boa constrictors. "Mine is bigger than yours," Michael reportedly told his brother Jermaine, referring to his pet snake. "Dream on, girl!" Jermaine said. "I'm the best hung of all the Jackson brothers. Just ask any gal."

As the Jackson coffer filled with gold, Katherine no longer insisted that her children perform chores around the house. Servants began to appearmaids to keep the place clean, chauffeurs to drive them around Los Angeles (often to the recording studio), gardeners to tend the landscaped grounds and feed the animals, and cooks to prepare their favorite foods. Even though Michael had switched to a healthier diet, his siblings still preferred the soul food that Katherine had once fed them back in Gary.

Because fans held the Encino property under siege virtually day and night, the Jacksons had walls, iron gates, and police dogs to keep them out. Even so, the most ingenious fans found ways of getting onto the property. Occasionally, they even managed to invade the Jackson living quarters, and had to be forcibly ejected by armed security guards.

Michael's efforts to attend public school failed. He had been enrolled for less than two weeks as a sixth grader at the Gardner Street Elementary School in Los Angeles when fans crawled through the windows to get at him, seeking his autograph or a piece of his clothing.

When he was enrolled in Emerson Junior High School in elegant Beverly Hills, some fanatic called the principal of the school and threatened to bomb one of Michael's classrooms, killing him and all the other students. Subsequently, Katherine made a decision to withdraw Michael from Emerson. After that, a chauffeur drove him more or less regularly to The Buckley Private School in Sherman Oaks, where wealthy Californians, including an assortment of movie stars, placed members of their brood.

"That school had more faggots-in-training than Bill Gates today has quarters," said Buddy Epson, years later. He attended the school very briefly. "When we first met Michael, we just assumed that he was gay like us. I checked him out. If it walks like a faggot, talks like a faggot, acts like a faggot, and looks like a faggot, then what were we to assume? We had circle jerks in those days. We also went into the heavy stuff. A friend asked Michael to join one of our parties. Apparently, Michael not only turned down my friend but lectured him on the evils of being gay. He even brought religion into it. He was a Jehovah's Witness, or some such shit. Michael got really offended-at least according to my friend-when he was asked if black dicks are bigger than the pricks on white boys. We had some really big boys at that school, even though they were still pubescent, and we wanted to know how Michael measured up. But he came on like a preacher's son. We didn't pursue him after that. We got the impression he was some religious fanatic."

Actually, Michael only attended class occasionally, living on the road with his brothers most of the time. Joe had hired Rose Fine, a white tutor who gave the brothers private lessons, even traveling with them to and from their bookings. "I feel I was a mother to the boys in another life."

Michael never really got an education. To this day, his spelling is atrocious, as is his grammar, unless it's written out for him. (A rather scurrilous article in The New Republic, published in 1984, claimed that Michael was illiterate, which isn't true.)

When he did go to school, Michael was delighted to see his unpimpled image marketed on everything from T-shirts to lunchboxes. "I liked the red lunchboxes," he later said, "not the yellow or blue ones."

Newly organized fans waited outside their schoolroom doors or massed to ambush them when the brothers emerged from the Cow Palace in San Francisco or the Convention Hall in Philadelphia. "There is an explosion of adolescent chemistry that rivals the first teen bombs detonated by The Beatles," wrote author Albert Goldman. "Sheets of screams hang in the air, hysterically contorted mouths and hands rise to the lights, scrimmages clog the aisles-the air of the corrida, the cockfight, the gladiatorial combat fills the plastic vastness."

Katherine called her son "sensitive," and Bob Jones, who once was charged with hyping Motown's stars, referred to Michael as an "introvert," who stayed alone in his hotel room or in his Encino bedroom while his brothers were often out "raising hell." Sensitive and introvert are words often used to describe a young homosexual in the making, but Jones and Katherine apparently didn't mean to suggest that.

Sammy Davis Jr. had been right in fearing future competition from the "midget." Originally, Davis was to have recorded Maybe Tomorrow.

Gordy intervened and gave the song to The Jackson 5, thinking it would be a mega-hit for the brothers. He was disappointed, although the song did make it to the Top Ten but at the bottom of Billboard's chart.

Davis was "seriously pissed." But Sinatra, who liked to tease his pal, found it amusing. "You're being replaced as the hottest dancing Jungle Bunny in show biz," he jokingly chided his friend. Davis always hated it when Sinatra called him a Jungle Bunny, but smiled as if those words didn't hurt him.

In the wake of their successful album, Maybe Tomorrow, taking its title from the hit single, The Jacksons also recorded another album, sentimentally called Goin'Back to Indiana, which included a single with that name as well as their hit, "I Want You Back," and once again, "Maybe Tomorrow."

Goin' Back to Indiana was also the name of an ABC-TV special, which included, among other footage, film of the Jackson brothers during their triumphant return to Gary.

A comedy and variety show, it featured Diana Ross (then pregnant), Bill Cosby, Tommy Smothers, and a badly shaken Bobby Darin who arrived at the studio after a violent fight with the alcoholic star, his ex-wife, Sandra Dee, whom he'd foolishly married in 1960, divorcing her in 1967.

The Jackson home in Encino

Michael was delighted when Katherine applauded the show, although Joe told his sons that they "could have done better." Before Katherine's eyes, her sons were growing up and trying to break away from the harsh influence of Joe. Michael avoided his father whenever he could, but "stayed tied to his mama's apron strings," Gordy said.

It would take Michael a long time to escape the bondage of his family. The way out for many of the older siblings was marriage. At the age of eighteen, Tito broke away to marry Delores Martes on June 17, 1972. Called "Dee Dee," she was only seventeen at the time. He'd met her at Fairfax High School in Hollywood. Katherine and Joe only reluctantly agreed to welcome this Mexicana into the family and were turned off by her ghetto upbringing in the Dominican Republic and in New York's Harlem. Fearing that she might be "a gold digger," they insisted that Tito force her into a prenuptial agreement.

Maureen (Rebbie) had been the first sibling to flee the nest when in 1968, at the age of eighteen, she fell in love with Nathaniel Brown, another Jehovah's Witness. Joe opposed the marriage, but Rebbie stood firm, marrying Brown and moving to Kentucky. "She fled Joe's prison," La Toya claimed.

After he'd crashed his Datsun 240-Z, and incurred Joe's violence, Jackie didn't marry right away but moved out into his own "bachelor pad."

It was only natural that the older brothers spent more and more time thinking about girls-or, in some cases, their wives-and less and less about their music.

Michael was only thirteen when a reporter for Crawdaddy magazine inquired about his love life. He claimed he was "not old enough" to have a girlfriend. But even at that age, he could have had one if he wanted to. But he wasn't interested.

Female groupies were readily making themselves available to the Jacksons, even to Joe himself. One girl, Elizabeth Ashe, claimed that "I had Jackie first, then the daddy, then Jermaine. Jermaine was the best in spite of lover boy Jackie's reputation. Joe didn't turn me on at all. I just went along with it to get to the brothers."

Many of the sexual adventures of Jackie and Jermaine were conducted directly in front of Michael, in the same room. He feigned sleep, but the moans would have awakened the soundest sleeper.

Although Jermaine often preferred more than one girl per night, Jackie would select "someone special in the audience." That object of his eye would then be invited backstage and introduced to Jackie. In almost every case the girl ended up in Jackie's hotel room for the night.

Michael tried in vain to uphold the morality of his brothers. Often he would approach girls going to his brothers' bedrooms and beg them to go home. "It's against the teachings of God," he would tell a startled groupie. "It's a sin."

"Get out of my way," one determined fan, Betty Pittsfield, told Michael in Cincinnati, pushing him aside. "What are you? Some little faggot? I'm gonna sleep with both Jackie and Jermaine tonight."

Before heading for one of the bedrooms, Betty turned to Michael. "I bet you want to sleep with your older brothers yourself. You're such a little wimp." All she remembered was Jackie answering the door in tight-fitting white jockey shorts, nothing else. She looked back at Michael. Sobbing, he turned from her in disgust and ran down the hallway.

A poster for Ben, the movie

Over the years many female fans have come forward to discuss their one-night stands with the Jackson brothers. Some have claimed the boys were gentle, skilled lovers; others have spoken of violence.

One white girl, who was only sixteen at the time, claimed that she was brutally raped-"both front and back. I was a virgin. I was also made to perform oral sex on the brothers. Michael was in the room at the time watching everything. At four o'clock I left the room in tears. I felt used. They were no longer the sweet, clean-cut brothers they were on stage. They were monsters. I went home and found that I had bled all over my pants. I was afraid they'd made me pregnant. But I switched my loyalty. From then on, it was Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones for me. No more Jackson brothers. After that ordeal, I never had sex with another black man."

It was not as a sexual adventurer but as a singer that Michael had a breakthrough as a solo artist when he turned fourteen in 1972. He followed "Got to Be There" with another hit, "Rockin' Robin," a revival of Bobby Day's 1958 rock 'n' roll novelty song. "Rockin' Robin" shot to number two on the charts, proving once again that Michael, like Diana Ross herself, could make it without a group.

His next big single, Ben, also in 1972, was actually a paean to a rat. Most of his fans who bought the record didn't know that. Michael always had an affinity for rats or mice, feeding the hapless creatures live to his pet boa constrictor. In spite of its dedication, the song was a beautiful ballad, winning a Golden Globe award and an Academy Award nomination. Michael also recorded the theme song for the film version of Ben, which was released in 1972, telling the story of a boy who befriended a rat, the leader of a pack of vicious rodents. Ben was a sequel to another film, Willard, released in 1971. In an understatement, Michael said, "A lot of people thought the movie was a bit off," referring to Ben, "but I was not one of them."

The Jackson brothers meet Queen Elizabeth II

At one point in Ben, it sounds as if Diana Ross is singing. And for a few brief moments, especially in the melodrama of the lyric, Michael evokes Barbra Streisand.

Michael made Ben the title of his second solo album, released by Motown in 1972. This album included such favorites as "People Make the World Go `Round," "Everybody's Somebody's Fool," and "Shoo-Be-Doo-Be-Doo-DaDay." Even so, sales remained at the same relatively modest 350,000 or so that his first album, Got to Be There, generated. Three years would go by before Michael released another solo album. This time the results would be disastrous.

Michael was furious that in his acceptance speech on Oscar night, the writer of "Ben" didn't "thank me for singing the song that made it a success."

As an artist, Michael was growing increasingly rebellious. He complained to Gordy that, "They want me to sing in a certain way, and I know they are wrong." In Moonwalk, his autobiography, he claimed, "No matter what age you are, if you have it and you know it, then people should listen to you."

Joe regarded Michael's newly found independence with a certain dread. He welcomed the extra money that Michael was earning for the family through his solo recordings, but he feared that if his young son became too successful he might break away from his brothers. Actually the group could have been renamed "The Jackson 6," as "Baby Randy" had joined his brothers on stage.

Before Thanksgiving in 1972, The Jackson 5 (plus Randy) moved onto the world stage, as they flew to London's Heathrow Airport for a royal command performance in the U.K. for Queen Elizabeth II. Unaware of their popularity abroad, the brothers did not anticipate the extent of their fame. Jacksonmania in London reached mass hysteria, even threatening lives. Michael later reported that he was nearly strangled to death at the airport when two strong girls grabbed different ends of his bright red scarf. Show biz vets, facing screaming, souvenir-collecting fans, had long ago learned never to wear a scarf into a crowd. It was rumored that Michael nearly lost more than a scarf. One London commentator noted that a fanatical young girl had "grabbed Michael's weenie and had held onto it for life" until a security guard pushed her aside.

"There wasn't enough security," Marlon was quoted as saying. "Screaming fans completely blocked our silver Rolls Royce limousine. The car couldn't move forward without killing someone. Finally, we were forced out of the

Rolls just in time. The screamers tipped it over. We could have been killed. We were grabbed everywhere-and I mean everywhere-as the police hustled us off to different transportation out of the hellhole. I was practically choked to death by one girl. Our Afros were pulled out by wads of hair. I was scared shitless."

From the very beginning, Michael was never good at interviews, and often ended up being ridiculed. In London, he told a reporter for The Daily Mail: "I'm glad to be in England because I've always wanted to learn more about Napoleon."

Fans surrounded the Churchill Hotel in London where the brothers had been booked. On the night of their appearance at Albert Hall, the brothers feared they could not get through the crowds and into their limousine. The hotel's security called the London police. Officers arrived with water hoses to turn back the crowds.

To complicate matters, "some insane fool" booked the Osmond brothers into the Churchill at the same time. Fights broke out between the two warring camps of fans: the Osmond devotees vs. the Jackson fans. A doorman at the Churchill was knifed by a rabid twelve-year-old girl who'd run away from her home in Lincoln.

Things went more smoothly when The Jacksons flew to Glasgow for a command performance at King's Hall in honor of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, and the brothers performed brilliantly. "We're making history," Michael said gleefully.

Her Majesty was ushered backstage to greet personally each member of the group, including its star, Michael. He was shy and embarrassed in the presence of Her Royal Highness. One London reporter claimed that Michael "curtsied like a girl" when introduced to Queen Elizabeth.

Michael seemed even more jubilant when The Jacksons performed in Liverpool, hometown of the "Fab Four." The brothers broke even the attendance records set by The Beatles themselves. When they appeared at the London Palladium, The Jackson 5 concert was sold out. In the future, whenever the name of Elton John would come up, Michael was arrogantly dismissive of the performer. "Oh, yeah, him! He was our opening act at the Palladium."

Flying out of Heathrow and once again facing hysterical fans, The Jacksons met "wild mobs" in such cities as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Brussels, and Munich. In Munich, a limousine carrying the brothers was overturned and stripped so bare by souvenir hunters that it was left as a piece of junk. Fortunately, the brothers had been ushered out of the vehicle before it was ripped apart.

The mobs greeting The Beatles on the Continent of Europe years before showed some similarities in the mobs who turned out for a viewing of The Jacksons. But whereas the mass hysteria associated with the arrival of The Beatles translated into platinum records, it didn't apply to sales for The Jackson 5.

In fact, sales of The Jackson 5's singles began to fall on Billboard charts. Their song, "Sugar Daddy," barely made the Top Ten, appearing at the bottom of the list.

"Little Bitty Pretty One," a rhythm-and-blues number, had been a big hit when Bobby Day recorded it in 1958. By ripping off another Bobby Day number, also introduced in 1958, Michael had scored a hit single with "Rockin' Robin." But lightning did not strike twice. "Little Bitty Pretty One" never got beyond number thirteen on the charts.

The band's next single, "Lookin' through the Window," sold about a halfmillion copies, the same as "Little Bitty Pretty One." "Corner of the Sky," from the Broadway musical, Pippin, was a complete disappointment, selling about 350,000 copies, never moving beyond number 18 on Billboards charts.

"What's happening?" Joe asked Gordy, blaming him for his lack of promotion. Joe, with some degree of accuracy, suspected that Gordy was devoting most of his creative energies to the launching of Diana Ross as a big-time black film star. "The fans are mad for my sons," Joe said. "I just know the public is buying their singles."

Back in the United States, even a special for CBS didn't help their record sales. "The Jackson brothers are aging, becoming men, and they seem to have lost their special appeal," wrote critic Gavin Spacey. "Michael is the only one with any real talent. He seems dedicated, his brothers distracted, just going through the motions. The kid

should break away from his brothers and become a bright star in his own right. His brothers are just extra baggage he has to carry onto the stage."

Ross had made a film, Lady Sings the Blues, a biography of jazz vocalist Billie Holiday, which had been financed by her lover, Gordy. The film opened in the autumn of 1972 at Loew's State in New York, breaking the attendance record previously established in 1970 by the sappy Love Story starring Ryan O'Neal and Ali MacGraw.

Michael reportedly resented Ross's success with "Good Morning Heartache," a single release from the film's track album. "Gordy should have given me that number," Michael said. "I could have done it so much better."

Early in 1973, Lady Sings the Blues received five Oscar nominations, including a Best Actress nomination for Ross. Michael was envious, plotting to become a movie star himself. Gordy and Ross were heartsick when it was announced at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles that the Best Actress Oscar had been won by Michael's future friend and confidant, Liza Minnelli, for her brilliant performance in Cabaret. Michael reportedly danced a jig upon hearing the news, although in public he said that "I'm rooting for Diana. She deserves it!"

Whenever he could break free from his rehearsals, Michael visited Ross on the set of Lady Sings the Blues. "He gave me a creepy feeling when he stood watching Ross perform," said Larry Winsfield, who'd worked on the film in a lowly job. "Mostly I brought coffee to the crew. But I was fascinated by watching Michael's face. He seemed oblivious to everyone else. He was studying Ross with such concentration that it looked like he was stealing her soul. It was obvious to all of us who saw Michael on the set that he wanted to be in front of the cameras like Ross, not watching from the sidelines."

Long after the Oscar ceremonies, Michael was overheard telling a sound crew, "If I'd been given a chance like Diana, I wouldn't have lost the Oscar to nobody. I have the talent to re-create any black male entertainer. Can you imagine how great I'd be in The Sammy Davis Jr Story? For that matter, if they ever film The Diana Ross Story, I'd make the ideal choice as the star even though I'm a man. With the proper makeup and some plastic surgery, I could create Diana. When the movie of her life is made, she'll be too old to play herself. But I have the kind of face that will be forever young."

A movie career lay in Michael's future. But in the meantime, there were serious career problems that faced both him and his brothers. The release of "Hallelujah Day" in February of 1973 had been a disappointment, generating a sale of only 200,000 copies. That same year, another single, "Doctor My Eyes," went nowhere.

Michael himself, in his autobiography, Moonwalk, wrote of his own disappointment in such Jackson 5 singles as "Skywriter." In spite of its advanced musical arrangements for strings, Michael maintained that the song was not a good choice for his brothers. "Skywriter" also became both the lead song and the name of the latest Jackson album, released in 1973 and featuring such other songs as "The Boogie Man" and "I Can't Quit Your Love." Sales of the Skywriter album were disappointing, coming in under 120,000 copies.

As Michael moved deeper into the mid-seventies, he feared that The Jackson 5 might be on the road to becoming a "Golden Oldies" act, playing Las Vegas clubs and going on nostalgic tours. "I had this fear even when I was a young teenager," Michael claimed.

Joe shared Michael's concerns, despite the initial success of The Jackson 5 and their screaming fans. "If we don't play it right from now on, my boys might end up a flash in the pan," he warned Gordy. Joe had grown increasingly resentful of Motown, complaining that the company did not let them choose their own songs or even play their own instruments. He began to plot a means of breaking away from Motown and signing with another record company.

One possible explanation for the fall-off in sales was oversaturation of the market. Between Thanksgiving of 1969 until Christmas of 1971, Motown flooded the market with eight Jackson singles, plus a solo by Michael. They also released an astonishing five Jackson 5 albums, a total of 54 songs. Another factor involved the product's pricing: Teen fans of The Jackson 5 could afford the one dollar price of a solo recording, but not the five dollar cost of an entire album.

The rapid rise and almost fall of The Jackson 5 was not unique in the music business, where most teenage groups rarely last more than two years. The critic Pablo Guzman explained it: "The basic problem of teen idolatry is that teens grow up. Subsequent waves of new teens usually consider last year's model passe."

Selma Davis worked briefly at Motown, but overheard some heated discussions when Gordy was overseeing the filming of Mahogany, starring Diana Ross. "First, I learned that Jackie, Marlon, and Tito were viewed as having no talent, certainly not as solo artists. The bosses (at Motown) thought that Jermaine and certainly Michael could be successful as solos. But even before Joe Jackson bolted from Motown, the brass there knew that the end was coming. It was just a matter of time."

Along the way, and at an unexpected moment, came some hope. When "Get It Together" was released following "Skywriter," sales picked up. There was talk of a comeback for The Jackson 5. Michael himself liked "Get It Together," and it became the group's biggest success in the past two years. Discos throughout the land played the song. "It had a good, tough, low har mony," Michael wrote, "a sharper wah-wah guitar, strings that buzzed like fireplaces." Released in time for Michael's fifteenth birthday in 1973, "Get It Together" sold more than 750,000 copies, but reached only number 28 on Billboard's charts. Even so, The Jackson 5 were back-sort of thanks partly to the promotional efforts of producer Hal Davis.

At one point, Gordy may have dreamed of creating black versions of Paul McCartney and John Lennon out of Michael and Jermaine. But that dream, of course, was never to be realized. From the beginning, Jermaine was called the sexiest of the Jackson brothers. That seemed especially accurate when Jermaine's charms were compared to the boyish appeal of the androgynous Michael.

As critic Dave Marsh wrote: "Jermaine was cute, but his voice lacked the expressiveness of Michael's, and since he was not much of an instrumentalist and the group wrote none of its own music, it was difficult to present him and Michael as black analogues of Lennon and McCartney."

In spite of this, Jermaine later claimed "I had everything that Michael had and more," perhaps a reference to his sex appeal. That claim was an idle boast. His first album, Jermaine, was not as successful as Motown had hoped. Writing in Rolling Stone, Vince Aletti said: "Jermaine simply doesn't have the range and assurance of Michael-he's just right on the upbeat, bright number. But he's out of his depth, sometimes desperately, on other types of songs."

In 1973 the press was still writing about the Jackson brothers and their parents as "the ideal American family, a role model for other black families to emulate." But this fantasy was about to come to an end.

Scandal was brewing when Tito was arrested on April 17, 1973 by the Los Angeles Police Department. The charge was the purchasing of stolen TVs and stereos. Johnny Jackson, the group's drummer, was also arrested. Freed on $2,000 bail, along with Johnny, Tito was arraigned on October 12.

He refused to talk to the press that day. There were rumors that Joe had severely beaten him for destroying "the image of The Jackson 5."

By February, 1974, charges against Tito were dropped when Johnny pleaded guilty. There was speculation-pure heresay-that the drummer took the rap for Tito. Michael was horrified that one of his brothers "would even get messed up in something like this," and he vowed to Joe and Katherine that his own good name would never be attached to any scandal.

Joe might have worried about the reputation of The Jackson 5, but he had marital problems of his own. Michael was horrified when on March 9, 1973 Katherine filed for divorce in the Los Angeles Superior Court. She had been willing to overlook her husband's one-night stands, but not his ongoing affair with Cheryl Terrell, a fan of The Jackson 5 who reportedly had had a crush on Jackie, before Joe, then 46, grabbed her instead. Gordy warned Katherine that a nasty divorce would "kill your sons' careers." Katherine held firm in her insistence on divorce, even though she'd agreed to tour Japan with her family, including Joe, that summer. Later that year she would hear reports that Terrell was pregnant with Joe's kid.

In spite of threatened parental divorce, and sagging sales of their records, the Jackson brothers still remained a world phenomenon. They played to record audiences in Japan, China, and Australia, and traveled during a break in their schedule into Africa.

Japan and its people made a deep impression on Michael, who claimed that the country put him more in touch with his spiritual side. He discovered Buddhist temples, serene and beautiful "Teahouse of the August Moon" gardens, and Japanese art.

His brothers discovered Japanese girls, to whom they quickly became addicted. In their suites at the Takanawa Prince Hotel in Tokyo, the brothers reportedly stayed up late watching Japanese porn flicks on closed circuit TV. A picture was taken of the brothers at the Tokyo airport when they were leaving. The photo editor for Soul magazine later claimed that "Jackie still had a hard-on in the picture. Before I could feature it on the cover, I had to do a little air-brushing."

While in Tokyo, Michael had a reunion with Sammy Davis, Jr., who was appearing in a sold-out engagement there. Apparently, Joe had informed Davis that he was negotiating to book his sons into Las Vegas. Davis told Michael that, unlike his pal, Frank Sinatra, who was fascinated with Mafia dons, he, Davis, didn't like them at all. "But don't cross them," Davis warned Michael, "or else you might end up with cement shoes."

The entertainer warned Michael never to borrow money from club owners against future appearances. "I do that all the time to meet current expenses," Davis said. "I'm a big spender. Then when it comes time for me to appear, I've collected all the green ones and end up with nothing. I have to borrow against future earnings. That way, they always have me."

Michael promised him he'd never live beyond his means and go into debt. Obviously, in the future, Michael would not take "Mr. Wonderful"'s advice.

In spite of some jealousy, Michael and Davis would remain friends until the end. When Davis was fighting cancer in 1989, a tribute was hosted by Eddie Murphy. Michael encountered Davis who weighed only 92 pounds at the time. Both men knew that death was near for the entertainer. Michael sang "You Were There," a song that paid homage to Davis's role in helping to carve out a niche for black entertainers.

Backstage, Michael met some of the best-known African-Americans in the country, including Jesse Jackson, Mike Tyson, Richard Pryor, Magic Johnson, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Whitney Houston and Stevie Wonder were also on the bill, which included Sinatra as well. At the end of the tribute, Sinatra knocked on the door to Michael's dressing room and was ushered inside. Michael had heard some of the singer's more sarcastic remarks about him, and didn't look forward to a face-to-face confrontation.

Sinatra was full of compliments for Michael's music. Perhaps Sinatra didn't mean what he said. But when he wasn't mad or feuding, as was often the case, he had a great deal of personal charm, which won over Michael, at least temporarily.

"Kid," Sinatra was overheard telling Michael, "The press will build you up today, because they like to tear you down tomorrow. In show business, you're hot and then oblivion. Very few entertainers can make a successful comeback. I'm the comeback kid. Frankly, I thought you were washed up in the 70s. But who would have predicted Thriller? I'll tell you the truth. I didn't get off on that album. Not my kind of music. But I'm impressed by sales, and you are mighty impressive in that department."

"I think you're the greatest singer in America, Mr. Sinatra," Michael said.

"Thanks, but let's face it: The world doesn't want a voice anymore. They want loud songs. If there's enough noise in the background, anybody can make it today as a singer."

If Michael took that as an insult, he didn't let on. He smiled politely and gave Sinatra a wet, soft handshake, before heading for the next encounter.

Mike Tyson, one of the most frightening human beings ever to step into the boxing ring, was standing next to Goldie Hawn. They were watching a taped tribute from President George Bush (primero). As Michael came into their presence, Tyson extended his hand.

At last the two Michaels had met-one the supreme gladiator, the other a slightly effeminate singer with a soprano voice. Each was a king of pop culture.

When Tyson and Michael met that day, their big troubles and super disgraces were just months ahead of them. Tyson would lose his world championship to James (Buster) Douglas in Tokyo in February of 1990, and he'd be jailed for rape in 1992. Like Michael, in his future, Tyson too would face bankruptcy.

Mike Tyson

A hardened ghetto kid, born in Brooklyn in 1966, Tyson was actually eight years younger than Michael, although Michael looked more the kid. Michael and Tyson bonded at least for that day. "At twelve you were a big-time star," Tyson told Michael. "At twelve I was arrested for purse snatching." After chatting for fifteen minutes, Tyson offered Michael a chance to teach him to box.

"I'm a lover-not a fighter," Michael said. "You should know that."

"Lover of what?" Tyson asked.

"Don't believe the rumors," Michael said.

"Believe me, I don't judge anybody," Tyson said. "All holes are black at night."

Before Michael bid adieu, Tyson grabbed him in a bone-crunching embrace. "Your Thriller was the biggest-selling album in history. I was the biggest draw in the history of boxing. But life isn't about what you acquire. Life is about losing everything." "Iron Mike" could have been predicting both his own future and that of Michael.

Throughout their careers, the names of Mike Tyson and Michael Jackson were invariably linked in such stories as WHO'S THE BIGGEST NUT JOB IN POP CULTURE? Columnist Gino Bona wrote: "While these two celebrities couldn't be further opposites on the exterior, their careers have shared a common pattern over the past twenty years. Both Tyson and Jackson reached the pinnacle of their popularity in the 80s, plummeted into dire times in the 90s, and have spent the first couple years of the new millennium as undeniable weirdos."

Bona mockingly suggested that Michael wants to share his bed with children, whereas Tyson "wants to eat `em." The columnist also suggested that both men faced startling transformations, Michael going "from black man to white hermaphrodite" and Tyson "from the youngest heavyweight champ to America's second most beloved cannibal."

Writing for Knight Ridder News Tribune News Service, Sam Donnelton said that, "One sleeps with little boys,

dyes his skin and has shrunk his nostrils to the size of two straws. The other went to jail for rape, has offered to make another man `my girlfriend,' had a big tattoo etched across his face, and disappeared from training one week before his latest comeback fight." Donnelton filed this column in May of 2006, and was referring to Tyson's Showtime and pay-per-view fight with Clifford Etienne, in Memphis, Tennessee. After disappearing, Tyson, at least according to a London tabloid, was seen with an impressive erection at a wild orgy at his Las Vegas residence.

On September 13, 2003, Michael invited Tyson to Neverland for a charity event, although the press would not be allowed inside the gates. Tickets sold for $5,000 each.

This was the first time Michael had ever opened Neverland to members of the public. Reportedly he staged the event to re-establish a positive view of himself in the media.

Looking for but never finding Michael, Tyson showed up with a new girlfriend. He flashed a wide smile but warned photographers he didn't want his picture taken. "The gold in my teeth might interest the bankruptcy creditors."

After touring the grounds of Neverland, Tyson told the press: "I love the gorillas, and the camels in there are just amazing." To end the day, Tyson watched a title fight broadcast from Las Vegas and shown on the super-wide TV screens in Michael's den. As Tyson was leaving, one reporter called out to him: "Did you see Jacko-Wacko?"

"Maybe next year," Tyson said.

Back at the Sammy Davis tribute, and after his encounter with Tyson, Michael was greeting a star around every corner. When asked, however, he said that he didn't want to meet yet another Michael that night.

Michael Jordan.

"Never heard of him," Michael said.

"I guess I'm not Jacko's type," Jordan laughingly remarked when he later heard what Michael had said.

When Clint Eastwood, whom Michael had heard of, explained to him that Jordan was the world's greatest basketball star, Michael went up to Jordan and introduced himself.

By 1996 Michael had become more familiar with at least one aspect of Jordan's career. At Neverland, Michael watched Space Jam six times. In the film, Jordan appeared with some of Michael's favorite "actors": Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, and Tweety Bird.

Michael had also been impressed by Jordan when he was chosen by People magazine as "One of the 50 Most Beautiful People in the World." In 1997 People also named Jordan one of "The Most Intriguing People of the Century." Michael was further impressed-and perhaps jealous-when he learned that at the peak of his career, Jordan was earning $80 million annually from Nike and another $35 million a year playing in the NBA.

Michael was astonished when Fortune cited Jordan as sitting on a vast $400 million reserve of cash. "He's a virtual endorsement cash cow," Michael reportedly said. "I should have made those millions. So many of my endorsement deals, unlike Jordan's, didn't work out-and I'm plenty mad."

Michael was particularly impressed that Jordan had developed his own line of sports clothing, called JORDAN in the 1997-98 season. Although they didn't really fit him, Michael ended up acquiring-by means not knownthree of Jordan's custom-tailored silk shirts monogrammed either with "Michael" or just "MJ." They were in the colors of pumpkin, magenta, and midnight blue.

On the way out of his dressing room at the Davis tribute, Michael encountered another survivor of Hollywood's Golden Age: actor Gregory Peck. They talked pleasantly for a few minutes and seemed to genuinely like each other. Peck gave Michael his telephone number and asked him to call him some time. Michael agreed. He'd begun his love affair with stars of Hollywood's heyday. His passion for the older stars would only intensify as he got older himself.

Michael ran into Sinatra once again at the Davis funeral on May 18, 1990 at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills. Sinatra was talking to Shirley MacLaine and Dean Martin. "Kid," Sinatra told Michael, "we're laying to rest the best black male entertainer America has ever seen. He had more talent in his little finger than all the other small pricks who followed him."

Again, if Michael took this as an insult, he gave no indication. He didn't have to say anything. He was rescued from a response by the sudden appearance of Janet Leigh. She kissed Martin and Sinatra on the cheeks and turned to Michael to shake his hand. "I loved you in Psycho," he said to Leigh.

Before she could thank him, Liza Minnelli appeared, linking her arm with Michael's. "C'mon," she said. "I'll introduce you to Milton Berle if you haven't met him before. He's got the biggest cock in Hollywood, but don't take my word for it. Have you met Burt Reynolds? I hear he's got one of the smallest."

Michael seemed to ignore her remarks, but joined her anyway, mainly to escape from Sinatra. He looked around. "I wonder if this many people will attend my own funeral."

Michael's funeral lay far in the future. After winding up their tour in Japan, the Jackson brothers flew to Australia in the summer of 1973. Once there they would appear at concerts not only in Sydney and Melbourne, but in smaller towns such as Adelaide and Brisbane. While in Australia, The Jacksons also visited the Outback, meeting members of aborigine tribes. Michael later claimed that "they treated us like brothers."

When they returned to America, Joe continued to plot his break from Motown, which he thought would free his sons from bondage-at least musically. Then the unexpected happened.

The Gordy and Jackson families became linked through marriage on a gray, rainy day on December 15, 1973 in Beverly Hills. Hazel Gordy, Berry's daughter, married Jermaine Jackson at a gaudily expensive wedding at the Beverly Hills Hotel. "It was more about showing off than love," said a disgruntled member of Motown who was not invited.

The wedding ended up costing Gordy more than a quarter of a million dollars. Both the bride and groom were only nineteen years old. In its next issue, Ebony proclaimed the Gordy/Jackson link "the wedding of the century." Jermaine chose Marlon as his best man, and Michael was relegated to the role of an usher, a humiliation for him.

In a pearl white tuxedo with bugle beads trimming his lapels, Jermaine said his "I do" to Hazel, who wore a white satin gown with a white mink train "that stretched to Sacramento," one member of the wedding observed. When pictures were taken, the couple almost got lost against an all-white backdrop of 7,500 white camellias and white carnations, with nearly a hundred caged white doves and mounds of artificial snow.

"For a black dude's wedding to a black chick, this was the whitest wedding ever recorded on film," wrote a reporter for Ebony magazine. His words were censored as sounding "too racist." As if all this ostentation wasn't enough, the guest appearance of Smokey Robinson was greeted with loud applause. For the wedding of his friends, he'd written a special ballad for the occasion. Jermaine hugged Robinson, and Hazel gave him a kiss for his efforts.

Under heavy pressure from Gordy earlier that morning, Katherine, a vision in sapphire blue, agreed to drop her impending divorce from Joe to protect the careers of her sons. A vision in mauve and gray, Joe tried to address Katherine at the wedding, but she pointedly ignored him, even when they posed together as the "happy" parents of the groom.

Coretta Scott King, a friend of the Gordy family, was seen mingling with such celebrities as Lola Falana, Billy Dee Williams, Diahann Carroll, and even the Los Angeles mayor, Tom Bradley.

Mrs. King caused a lot of excitement among The Jacksons, particularly with Katherine, who admired her greatly. Michael didn't seem impressed, and Mrs. King may have sensed his alienation.

The widow of the slain civil rights leader, King was overheard talking privately and confidentially to friends. Media had bribed certain staff members of the hotel to report on any indiscretions being uttered by either the

Jacksons or their guests.

Hazel Joy Gordy marries Jermaine

"Michael is acting very petulant," Mrs. King remarked. "Dare I say jealous? He told me he was `not gaining a sister, but losing a brother, his best friend.' If you ask me, I think Michael has a crush on Jermaine. I could swear that Hazel's future husband doesn't think of Michael in that way at all. If I didn't know better, I would say that Michael is behaving like a jilted girl who has lost out to another woman. Surely my impression is wrong. Tell me I'm wrong!"

When Hazel-"my first born"-was only fifteen, Gordy discovered that she was in love with Jermaine. Someone on his staff showed him a fan letter his daughter had written to Jermaine: "I love you, Jermaine. You are my prince, my dream. I need you, Jermaine. I will love you forever."

Hazel would not love Jermaine forever, but she did not outgrow what Gordy called "puppy love" and continued her passion for Jermaine until he reluctantly agreed to marry her. At the time of his wedding, Jermaine was "playing the field," having almost any girl he wanted for the night. Some of his brothers speculated that Jermaine would not let a mere wedding band deny him the pleasures that came so easily to him every night.

Michael also had professional fears about the future direction of The Jackson 5. Tito's wife had been rather milquetoasty, never interfering. But Hazel was known for being strong-willed. She could use her influence as the daughter of the boss to push Jermaine into a role as the group's lead singer, thereby relegating Michael to a subservient role.

The sun finally came out, breaking through the overcast sky of southern California. But it didn't brighten Michael's spirit. He confided to Katherine and to others that "no good will come of this marriage."

Hazel and Jermaine flew to Europe for a four-week honeymoon, living in lavish suites and dining at only the most luxe restaurants from Paris to Rome. They spent the most time in Switzerland. Jermaine flew back to join his brothers, including Michael, on a ten-day tour of Senegal in West Africa. "The boys were determined to have a close encounter with their roots," wrote one Senegalese journalist.

And so they did. Michael was especially moved by the native music and the rhythms. He called it "eye-opening," as he experienced the sight of native Africans in tribal dress performing with drums, their music filling the air and mesmerizing him. "I've come back!" he shouted at the top of his lungs at the airport in Dakar. He didn't kiss the ground, but burst into tears of joy instead. In the years ahead, Michael would be accused of trying to change his skin color to white. But during those heady days in Senegal, he "became an African," in the words of the same Senegalese journalist.

Coretta Scott King

From Dakar, the day after their arrival, the brothers took a thirty-minute ferry trip to Gore Island where thousands of slaves were imprisoned during the late 18th century and for nearly half of the 19th century after they'd been captured in the wild. Here these wretched souls were detained under the most horrid of conditions before shipment to the New World, where they'd become slaves. Many of these hapless victims died in chains before reaching America. Reportedly, Michael became so upset at seeing the Maison des Esclaves, the prison for slaves constructed in 1775, that he vomited.

Michael's romance with Senegal was of short duration. He was appalled at the living conditions, especially when he visited a hovel in which a family of nine was crowded. "I've seen where they lived and slept on a dirt floor," he told reporters. "I've seen bigger doghouses in America." He was also horrified when he saw what the family had for dinner. The mother had bought three chicken heads which she boiled in an earthen pot over an open fire for some broth to feed her brood.

Later that night, Michael suffered an attack of diarrhea so devastating that he had to be hospitalized. He told his brothers that he "couldn't wait to get back" to the luxuries of their Encino estate. Their own accommodations in Senegal were horrid. Their bedrooms were not clean, and they didn't even have hot water.

"Stevie might want to live here, but count me out!" Michael was referring to Stevie Wonder, who announced to the press that he was planning to "fly away" from America and settle in Africa. After this grandstand play, the announcement of which was printed in newspapers across America, Wonder decided Africa wasn't that wonderful and canceled his plans to go into exile.

Before leaving Senegal, Michael announced to the press that, "Blacks are the most talented race on earth. They've got the beat. They've got the rhythm. Our music comes from Africa, and we musicians, especially in the United States, owe these tribes an enormous debt of gratitude. We must always remember that."

After making that lofty pronouncement, Michael was overheard by a flight attendant telling one of his brothers: "Now let's get the hell out of here!"

Upon their return to the United States, The Jackson 5 recorded "Dancing Machine," released as a single by Motown in 1974. "Spit out the bubblegum soul and record a song that America can dance to," Gordy told them.

Michael's voice was more mature-"he no longer sounded like castrati," wrote one critic-and the single went double platinum. It shot up to number two on Billboards charts. Young America could actually dance to Michael's high-octane "watch her get down, watch her get down." The more mature sounds coming from Michael's throat ended an ugly rumor that Joe was going to have his son castrated in the tradition of Italy back in the 1600s.

Rumors of Michael's castration became so widespread that on some occasions when he was mobbed by fans, overzealous girls-and in some cases, gay boys-reached out to grope him to see if his male genitals were still intact.

Or if he'd become transgendered.

"Boy soprano becomes a high-pitched tenor," said a Rolling Stone critic. "Dancing Machine" was played around the country as much as their former hit, "Never Can Say Goodbye."

Dancing Machine also became the title of The Jackson 5's latest album, which also featured such songs as "The Mirrors of My Mind" and "Whatever You Got, I Want." Producer Hal Davis, not always a winner, assembled the track for the album Get It Together. He built The Jackson's first disco concept album around this, and it reached only number sixteen on Billboard's charts. This album marked the end of The Jackson 5 being called "teenyboppers," although they still fitted that age category. Critic Pablo Guzman wrote, "Through disco, the Jackson brothers found a way to grow with their audience without puncturing teen fantasy."

On Cher's television series, "Dancing Machine" was heard by much of the nation, who tuned in to watch Cher and her guest, Michael, perform the number as robots. "Both Cher and Michael had hair that would stretch along the full length of the California coast," wrote one critic. "Both of them seemed in dire need of a hairdresser. Cher's pantsuit and a halter top seemed designed by a demented drag queen. Michael in his midnight black cutaway jacket, accented with silver accessories, seemed like a reject from Harlem's Apollo Theater."

Nearly all critics agreed that Michael was practically a Fred Astaire when it came to dancing, but Cher was no Ginger Rogers. "As a Cherokee she could perform tribal dances-and that was about it," another critic unkindly proclaimed.

At the end of the broadcast, Cher was exhausted from the strenuous workout the Jackson brothers had put her through. She was amazed at their seemingly boundless energy. To pay his respects, Michael visited her in her dressing room.

"So tell me, Michael, who in the fuck is the world's top diva: Moi or Diana Ross?"

"You both are big talents," he said, embarrassed at being put in such a spot.

"Okay, I'll concede that she's a better singer. Hell, I don't like the sound of my own voice that much. I'm a much better actress than I am a singer. Singing is like going to a party at someone else's house. Acting is like having the party at your own house." Cher would repeat this sentiment to various figures in show business. "What about you, kid? Plan to stick to singing?"

"I never told this even to my family, but I want to become a movie star like Diana. And not just in singing roles either. I want to win an Oscar."

"A noble ambition, but I don't know about that Oscar," Cher said. "Winning little baby Oscars with their cute butts is my fantasy. My ambition is to win as many Oscars, or as many nominations, as Katharine Hepburn."

"Who is she?" Michael asked. "Another singer?"

"You're in show business and you don't know Kate Hepburn?" Cher asked in astonishment. "Fuck, kid. Get real!" As a joke, she said, "Hepburn, my favorite actress, was Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With the Wind."

Not knowing that Cher was joking, Michael took this as gospel. "I'm gonna see that movie some day."

Again joking, Cher said, "Have the Butterfly McQueen part rewritten for you. You'd be great at it. Repeat after me, `Miss Scarlett, Miss Scarlett, I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' babies.'"

"I could do that!"

"Listen, take some advice from your mamma mia here. At first people laughed me off as a joke when I was breaking into the business. Some fucking joke! Before my career is over, I'll have one hundred million in the bank." Cher underestimated her potential, ending up with a vast fortune of $600 million.

"I was a shy kid living in a fantasy world," she said.

"I still live there," Michael said.

"Fine," Cher said. "But live in the real world too. I've heard stories about you. You're gonna be ridiculed like I was. But stand up to your critics."

"How can I do that?"

"By becoming so God damn successful that even your harshest critics can't hurt you. You can become so rich and powerful in show business that the hecklers won't matter any more."

Cher

"I hate it when people tell lies about me," he said.

"Deep down, we all do, but don't tell anybody I said that." She looked at the time. "Gotta go now. I've got a date with a hot young boy. A little older than you. You're still a bit young for me. You like girls, don't you?"

"I can take `em or leave `em," Michael said.

"Yeah, right! There's nothing wrong with liking boys. Who in hell wouldn't like boys? The world is filled with holes to stuff. Finding the perfect prick is like looking for the Holy Grail."

Appalled and intimidated, Michael thanked her profusely for letting his brothers appear on her show and quickly hurried from her dressing room.

Cher called after him. "Seriously, boy, I wasn't planning to seduce you."

In spite of their initial introduction, Cher and Michael saw each other from time to time, but never really became friends. Eventually, the publicity about child molestation and other accusations turned her against Michael.

By 2003, she was telling the press, "I don't really care what he does to his face. He could just erase it as far as I'm concerned. I don't like him anymore. And it's because of his children. I cannot imagine putting my children through what he puts his children through. I once saw him with one of his kids rolled up in a blanket, and I was thinking, `What kind of life is this?' He and I were friends when he was little. I watched him grow up and all that, but, you know, you dangle a baby over a balcony, that's it for me. If it was up to me, he wouldn't have those babies now. This guy is nuts. As an artist, I can't fault his art because he was brilliant. I wouldn't buy anything now."

Cher avoided a question about Michael's plastic surgery. Fans of Cher and Michael on the web asked this provocative question: "Which one has had more plastic surgery?"

Appearing on more and more TV specials such as Cher's was only one of Joe's schemes.

To show Gordy that he too could be an impresario, Joe established his own record company, calling it Ivory Tower International Records. "Ivory is not a good name for black groups," Gordy warned him. The first group Joe signed was an "all-gal" singing quartet from Ohio. It took as its name the awkward-sounding "M.D.L.T. Willis." As Gordy predicted, the group bombed. One member of the troupe bombed in more ways than one.

Joe told Jermaine that he felt Michael "is old enough to lose his virginity." Joe persuaded one of the members of M.D.L.T. (the exact identity of whom is not known) to go to Michael's hotel room and seduce him. The singer was only too willing. She also agreed that it was about time that Michael "knew the taste of a woman."

From all reports, the evening was a disaster. Joe secured a pass key and gained admittance to Michael's bedroom. The girl slipped in and apparently tried to get physical with Michael, but a row developed. There was pushing and even wrestling, with Michael fleeing to the balcony. He screamed at the girl to leave his bedroom and even promised "to pray for you." He told her that he wasn't like his other brothers, "seducing every slut in Los Angeles." Highly insulted, the attractive singer stormed out of Michael's bedroom and spent the next few years telling anyone even remotely interested that "Michael Jackson is a fag!"

Joe failed in this attempt to get Michael to surrender his virginity to a woman. But where daddy didn't make it, Michael's brothers hoped to succeed. One night they hired two of the best-looking hookers they could find-one blonde, one black-and sent them to Michael's hotel bedroom. Jackie, in a phone call to Michael, claimed the young women were friends of The Jackson 5 and wanted Michael's autograph.

Up until then, the brothers had been telling reporters that "Michael's no virgin." Tito even claimed that "my little brother's had more girls than all the other brothers combined." Of course, that was gross exaggeration. Perhaps it was done to camouflage the fear that Michael might be a homosexual. Even when he was fifteen, the whispering campaign had only begun and would greatly intensify in the years ahead.

Details are lacking but when the hookers were allowed inside Michael's room, they apparently let their intentions become known, especially when they tried to take off Michael's clothes. In panic, he tried to flee the room, only to find his bedroom door bolted from the outside. His brothers stood in the hallway, catcalling into Michael. "After you've finished with them, we get sloppy seconds," one of the brothers called.

To protect himself from the voracious women, Michael burst into tears. "What a turn-off," one of the hookers said. "Have you ever tried to seduce a guy who's crying like a five-year-old baby? No fun at all!"

The black hooker told one of the brothers, "Your pansy brother was reading the Bible when we left him."

"Getting Michael to surrender his cherry was a daunting task that no woman and I mean that literally-would ever be able to accomplish," claimed a Motown executive. "Even when they invented Viagra, it wouldn't cure Michael. Not that one!"

"Michael just wasn't interested in the opposite sex," the executive continued. "I suspected that he was gay from the first day I met him. I truly don't know how Joe Jackson felt on the subject. I knew that homosexuality was against Katherine's religion. I also saw that the brothers were embarrassed by all this gay talk. They wanted Michael to be a lady-killer. But he wasn't. He just wasn't. Nor would he ever be. Let's face it: unlike his older brothers, Michael is no pussyhound."

Although just beginning his teenage years, Michel became the one Jackson brother that the girls, and even older women, pursued now that Jermaine was married. "I have a son older than Michael," said Alexis Klucker of Alabama, "but I still wanted to seduce that little boy. I don't know why, but I wanted him. Pimples and all, it didn't matter."

One woman, Betty Scaff, was arrested on the grounds of the Jackson's Encino mansion. Somehow she'd managed to elude security and even the guard dogs. When Michael came out through the back door and headed for his own private zoo, she jumped out from her hiding place in the bushes. She attacked Michael and ripped off most of his clothes, demanding that he impregnate her.

Before she was hauled away by security, the woman proclaimed that if Michael would father a child with her, the kid would grow up "to become the second Jesus Christ."

In tears, Michael retreated to his bedroom to nurse his wounds and to brood for three days over this violent attack.

"I think Michael had every reason to fear women from that point on in his life," said Lennox Biggs, who once worked for Motown. "Girls grabbed his groin. They took wads of his hair. They demanded sex from him. And this one bitch even tried to rape him. How could he grow up viewing women as objects of love? To him, all women were sexual predators trying to take his precious virginity. Michael held onto that virginity-at least with women-like it was something worth protecting."

Joe failed to hook Michael up with a woman, but he got all his boys a booking into Las Vegas for the winter of 1974. Conditions were much improved for black entertainers there following the efforts of Sammy Davis Jr. When Davis first appeared in Las Vegas, he couldn't stay in the same hotel where he entertained all-white audiences.

Even during the mid-70s, Vegas audiences were still mainly white. Black acts didn't succeed very well there, unless they were crossovers, as The Supremes had demonstrated. Vegas nightclubs were also a showcase for the stars of yesterday, often booking nostalgic acts like pompadoured Frankie Avalon who sang "Venus" every night.

Gordy predicted that the Jackson brothers would bomb before the allwhite audiences, but Michael was more enthusiastic. "If Sammy can be a hit there, so can I!" he said.

Joe wanted his boys to open at "the top joint," which means the MGM Grand. The Osmonds had been a big hit there, and Michael felt he and his brothers could top them.

For their opening night, Joe ordered La Toya to go on the stage with her brothers. She was only seventeen. Imitating the Osmond act, he also brought in Randy, who was only twelve, and even Janet at seven years old. Joe created novelty acts, having Janet and Randy impersonate Sonny and Cher in a satirical skit.

On her own, little Janet got a standing ovation with her take on the "Come Up and See Me Sometime" gal, Mae West. To hear a seven-year-old say, "It's not the men in my life but the life in my men that counts," made for a hilari ous evening.

La Toya wanted to have more of a star role, but Joe wasn't impressed with her vocal range. He ordered her to lip sync. "Don't let one sound escape from your throat," he demanded, causing La Toya to burst into tears and run from the rehearsal hall. But on opening night, she obeyed her father's commands.

The Jackson 5 wooed the audience, especially Michael's acts, including his brilliant impersonation of Diana Ross. Later, when Ross heard what he'd done, she was "furious" at Michael for holding her up to public ridicule.

Another highlight of the show came when The Jackson 5 imitated The Andrew Sisters, the favorite singers of the boys who won World War 11.

Caught unaware by the sudden success of The Jacksons in Vegas, Gordy told the press, "I wanted to see the boys expand their musical horizon." Joe was furious when word got back to him. "The fucker predicted we'd bomb. Now he's taking credit for my success."

When the show opened at Radio City Music Hall in New York, Vince Aletti, a critic, was one of the first to write about the "new" Michael on stage. "No matter how much I love the other Jacksons, it is Michael who is the group's aesthetic focus. His stylized show-biz posing (the bends and turns, arms outstretched and sweeping the air in

front of him; little self-hugs with his head thrown back) is becoming a little disturbing, at moments even grotesque for a boy who's still a very skinny sixteen. But when he isn't being Engelbert Humperdinck, he's supreme and so controlled it's almost frightening. In his motel room, when he tells you he's in the 11th grade, it might seem strange, but it's believable. Seeing him onstage, dancing, and striding confidently out to the edge, you just know he's lying."

In the wake of the Cher special, the Jackson brothers continued to appear on national television, including a Bob Hope special. The Jackson brothers were booked to go on with John Denver and Ann-Margret. One Jackson brother was overheard backstage telling what he'd like to do with busty, leggy AnnMargret should he ever get her alone. "I don't think she's all that sexy," Michael said petulantly. "Just because you can't handle it," Jennaine said, "doesn't mean your older brother can't. Never call in a kid to do a man's work."

Although he had middle-of-the-road humor before the camera, and never said anything offensive on stage, Hope could be raunchy once he was in his dressing room. He could also tell very indiscreet stories about his rivals.

He informed Michael that Milton Berle also always stole his best jokes. "Uncle Milty dresses in drag all the time," Hope said. "Putting on women's clothes comes natural to him. He's got a real gay streak in him. In New York years ago, when we were both struggling, I shared a hotel room with Berle. He came on to me. Don't ever let him get you alone, kid. You'll be in for a surprise."

On their night off, Joe booked a private plane to fly his sons from Vegas to Lake Tahoe to the Sahara Hotel and Casino to hear one of their all-time favorites, Elvis Presley.

Elvis appeared dazed on stage that night, at one point looking in vain for his band but not really sure where they were. He wandered about bloated and drugged in a white jump suit. But the fans were loyal. One critic wrote, "Elvis Presley could have appeared last night with his big belly in a wheelbarrow, and his devoted fans would still adore him." One critic was even harsher: "Presley on stage last night looked like a bloated go-go girl from the 60s who had just been gang-raped by a rock band."

At one point Elvis stopped the show and walked forward toward the stunned audience. "You know where I might have ended up?" he asked the silent audience. "Flipping burgers in Memphis." That's all he said before launching into "Hound Dog," the lines of which he'd seemingly forgotten after having sung them countless times.

Michael was particularly shocked by the sound of Elvis's voice. "I didn't recognize it. It was not his `Hound Dog' voice of the 50s. More a childlike voice. Almost like I used to sound. He talked, instead of sang most of his song."

"Elvis was up there on that stage last night like a man crying out for someone to come and save him-yet knowing that no help would ever come," Joe said.

After the show, the manager personally came to the Jackson table to escort Michael backstage. He was terribly shy and almost shaking with nervousness, but Michael followed the director.

"The King wants to meet you," the manager told Michael.

As he was ushered into the dressing room of Elvis Presley, Michael could hardly have known that he was meeting his future father-in-law.

"Kings are supposed to compete with their predecessors and kings are supposed to marry other royals. Elvis's widow, Priscilla Presley, makes clear that she saw Michael Jackson as a scheming pretender, building Neverland to top Graceland, then courting Elvis's daughter to secure his lineage. But why shouldn't Lisa Marie Presley want the only man in the world as famous and powerful as her father? A man who might help her find her own way as a singer-songwriter, yet keep her in the royal arena to which she was accustomed?"

--Margo Jefferson

"When dancing, I felt touched by something sacred. In those moments I felt my spirit soar and become one with

everything that exists. I became the stars and the moon, I became the lover and the loved. "

--Michael Jackson

"I've recorded a whole lot of these pop musicians and Michael's the straightest of the goddamn lot. Ok, Michael's got a few quirks but everybody in California does. "

--Bruce Swedien

"One of the oddest things about Michael Jackson is that this 45-year-old former Motown child prodigy has remained a superstar despite all the Peter Pan fantasies, Potemkin marriages, cosmetic surgery, spending sprees and now criminal charges of child molestation. He is both a popular entertainer and a tabloid freak show. In that sense he is the perfect icon for the shame-free age: a television twofer. "

--Alessandra Stanley of The New York Times

"I feel guilty having to put my name on the songs I write. I do write them and compose them, and I do the scoring, lyrics, and melodies. But still. It's a...it's a work of God!"

--Michael Jackson

Chapter Four

Freddy Briggs, who worked at the Sahara, has been the only one who has come forward to give a personal account of the historic first and only meeting between the King of Rock-and-Roll and the King of Pop. Briggs attended to Elvis's wardrobe and other personal needs. "I even made him several peanut butter and jelly sandwiches," he said. "Elvis liked creamy peanut butter and preferred blackberry jam, at least during his stay at Lake Tahoe."

As Briggs later revealed, Michael was "tongue-tied around Elvis," calling him "Sir" and letting Elvis do most of the talking through slurred speech. Ironically, Elvis used to address men as "Sir" in his earlier days, but no more. "After he became King, he didn't need to be subservient to anyone," Briggs said.

Elvis greeted and was polite to all the Jackson brothers, but he knew where the talent lay, so he paid most of his attention to Michael, whom he spoke with privately.

The Elvis Presley that Michael encountered in Lake Tahoe was in a foul mood, although respectful of Michael. He'd just taken some unknown medication which seemed to wake him up and put him in a talkative mood. Based on his performance on stage, Michael expected Elvis in private to be a zombie, but instead the singer was strangely articulate, at least as long as the medication lasted.

"They all come to me for advice," Elvis, according to Briggs, told Michael. "If I have any advice to give you, it's `go solo.' You're the star of the act, the only real talent. You're letting your brothers and all that background music drown you out. I never let that happen to me, and you shouldn't either. Tell them to go fuck themselves. You're the show, boy, and don't forget it."

Michael politely thanked Elvis for this advice, looking at Elvis with a devotion that seemed so genuinely sincere that Briggs believed that it had touched Elvis in some deep way. At one point during their encounter, Elvis reached for Michael's hand. "I owe a debt to all you black boys and your music. Without the music of `the brothers' I heard back in the Forties, there would be no Elvis Presley today." He turned around and looked at himself in the mirror. It appeared that he couldn't formulate his next thought. "Who am I kidding? There is no more Elvis Presley. Like yesterday, Elvis Presley is dead and gone. The bastards killed him long ago. This bag of shit you see before you is all that's left of the great Elvis Presley."

"To me, you'll always be the greatest," Michael said in a soft voice. "Your music will live forever."

"That sounds like a suck-up to me, boy," Elvis said. "But even if you're lying, what you just said is appreciated."

"Do you have any other advice to give me," Michael said. "I mean, you've gone so far in the business."

"Sure, I have more advice, but I don't expect you to follow it. No one ever does. Don't become a really big and famous star. If you do, you'll live to regret it. Stardom-I mean really big stardom, not the Ann-Margret stuffmakes you pay such a price that it will destroy you. Nearly all really big stars have to suffer indignities and invasions of their private lives to such a degree that it's not worth it. If you become super famous, every little asshole in the world will be out to get you. They'll resent your fame and want to turn it into infamy, particularly if they can make a buck off you. Speaking of bucks, if you make the big ones, the world-or at least someone in the world-will figure out how to take it from you. It's happened to me. It'll happen to you. The press used to say I was a sweet Southern boy. No more. Have you read the shit written about me?"

"I don't read stuff like that," Michael said.

"I don't read it either," Elvis said. "If you do become big, don't read the papers, the tabloids, and those magazines. If you start reading what the fuckers write, it can destroy you. You won't even have enough courage to go on the stage if you read the shit."

Elvis: The Farewell Months

There was a knock on Elvis's door, which Freddy went to answer. Joe, along with his other sons, was waiting to take Michael away.

"Gimme your phone number, boy," Elvis said to Michael. "I'd like to call you some night, real late, and talk more with you. There are so many things I could tell you. I have this great hunch that in the 80s you're gonna become what I was in the 50s. Revolutionary. But with a totally different kind of music than mine."

As Michael headed for the door, Elvis reached to shake his hand but decided instead to lock him in a warm embrace. "Be good now, you hear?"

"I stayed up with Elvis until late in the night after Jackson left," Briggs said. "He seemed lonely and I was a big fan. At first when he invited me up to his hotel suite, I thought it was for sex, and I was most willing, even though I'm basically straight. You don't turn down a star. He didn't want sex. He wanted company. During the night he had me place several calls for him around the country. I called numbers but I didn't know who they were to. On the phone, Elvis talked for hours. He was incoherent. I think he made up a lot of things. He was paranoid, claiming the FBI was trying to kill him because `I know too much.' He also claimed that everybody who even remotely knew him was writing a book to expose him. There were three phones in the suite. At one point Elvis ripped one phone out of the wall and tossed it at the television set. I forgot what program was on, but Elvis didn't like what he was seeing."

From all reports, and there have been dozens, Elvis continued his habit of calling people in the middle of the night and babbling into the phone. At times he was completely irrational. Acquaintances reported that there would be long periods of silence before he started talking again. "Perhaps some of Elvis's stories were true perhaps not," Briggs said. "Those I heard sounded farfetched to me. But, considering Elvis and all the crap that happened to him, they just might have been true."

"I know for a fact that Elvis planned to call Jackson," Briggs said, "even though he referred to him as `the little nigger boy.' That was such a put-down of Jackson, but the way Elvis said it-and I know this sounds crazy-it was an affectionate reference."

"Like, would you tell your secrets to Michael Jackson?" Briggs asked Elvis.

"There's no way that Michael Jackson is gonna write a book about me," Elvis told Briggs. "No way. You can trust people who don't write books. From what I know, the kid can't even read and write. I hear his brothers never went to school. Not that I got much education myself. Living a life like I've lived is all the education I need. I've seen it all!"

"I don't get it," Briggs said. "Why would you tell Michael Jackson your secrets?"

"The kid has an honest face, and I know I can trust him with my most private secrets," Elvis told Briggs.

"Secrets are dangerous things," Briggs warned Elvis. "Why tell them to anyone? They might use them against you."

"Don't you think I know that?" Elvis asked. "But I've got to confess them before I die. It's a compulsion with me. I can't stop myself. I know it's crazy. I have to unburden myself, and I'm playing with fire telling all this shit about myself. I know it'll get in print one day for the world to learn about. There's a war going on inside myself. The good side of me wants to protect myself from all harm. But there's another side of me that is trying to destroy Elvis Presley. Not only abusing his body, but telling his darkest secrets so my fans will know what's really going on and will be revolted by me."

It was seven o'clock in the morning before Briggs finally left Elvis's hotel suite. Dawn had come, but you wouldn't know it if you were in the suite, because heavy black velvet curtains blotted out the day.

"When I was putting Elvis to bed, I couldn't resist," Briggs said. "I just had to slip off his jockey shorts and see what it looked like. After all, he'd been the sex symbol of the 50s, and I wanted to see what drove all those girls crazy-and also how I stacked up against the King. The first voyeur who's willing to give me five-thousand dollars will get a complete description of it, in all its uncut glory, even a description of Elvis's balls. So that I would never forget, I even sketched what I'd seen that morning. Before becoming a 'gofer' at some fucking hotel, I had wanted to be an artist. Here was my chance. I plan to sell reproductions of my sketches of Elvis's privates for big bucks to collectors."

Contrary to what he had told Elvis, in the months leading up to the death of the singer on August 16, 1977, Michael read every item he could find that had ever been written about Elvis. But calls from Elvis to Michael, spilling out dark secrets, never came to be.

After Elvis's demise, Michael became even more obsessed with the circumstances surrounding the death of the former truck driver from Memphis. In the immediate hours following Elvis's death, Michael repeatedly played such hit songs as "Jailhouse Rock" and "Love Me Tender." And ghoulishly, Michael became obsessed with learning the most minute details of the autopsy performed on Elvis by Dr. Eric Muirhead, chief of the department of pathology at the Memphis hospital where Elvis was taken. Michael learned that Dr. Muirhead, in an inch-by-inch study of Elvis's corpse, found that the skin was "pitted" with numerous needle marks, almost too many to count accurately.

What allegedly fascinated Michael even more was when he learned that Elvis's rib cage had been cut open with a saw, exposing his lungs and heart. Painstakingly, each organ was examined after removal from the body cavity. The organs were weighed and studied carefully. Elvis's much-abused liver was found to resemble "pate de foie gras," the French goose liver specialty served in luxe restaurants.

The large intestine was clogged with fecal matter. One intern at the hospital morbidly joked, "The doctors learned that the King was full of shit, maybe forty feet of it."

Michael also learned that Elvis's heart was greatly enlarged. More than a dozen drugs, including significant amounts of codeine, were detected in Elvis's blood stream. Quaalude appeared in a toxic amount.

The staff at the hospital seemed particularly concerned that the autopsy on Elvis would not become the source of scandal the way it had on the one performed on the slain John F. Kennedy in 1963. Therefore, they proceeded to conduct the procedure on Elvis with extreme caution and meticulousness. Even so, the debate over Elvis's death would rage for at least a quarter of a century and beyond, evoking the usual lawsuits, book exposes, and even medical disbarment.

The usual procedure in an autopsy is to examine each organ exhaustively and remove tissue samples, placing them into bottles filled with preservatives. After that gruesome procedure, the brain is returned to the skull and the displaced organs "stuffed" back into the body the way a cook might assemble a Thanksgiving turkey.

In the wake of Elvis's death, there was a rumor that his body parts had not been returned to his corpse, but were still preserved in a laboratory. Rumors also spread that Michael made an attempt to secretly purchase Elvis's enlarged heart. Allegedly Michael also wanted Elvis's large intestine with the fecal matter intact. These stories may have been just scurrilous gossip at the time, and they cannot be confirmed. But in his future, Michael would be accused of similar ghoulish acts with the dead.

After his now legendary meeting with Elvis, Michael's life began to spin out of control. A fan, Theresa Gonsalves, pursued Michael to Las Vegas. Only sixteen, she was invited by Katherine to stay with the Jackson family. At first she was disappointed with Michael, finding him "arrogant and stuck up." But she finally warmed to Michael and they became friends, a relationship that would last for four years. Finally, when The Jacksons went to dinner and Michael stayed behind, Theresa got to be alone with her idol. As dreams of romance played out in her head, she was disappointed when Michael took out his Jehovah's Witness Bible and lectured her. "It's a sin to have sex outside of marriage," he told her, promising to pray for her redemption.

Following Michael's appearance with his brothers in Las Vegas, he was eager to abandon the group. He decided to pursue another solo album, Forever Michael, which would be released in January of 1975.

But he was distracted in rehearsals when Joe announced to his sons that they had a half-sister. Cheryl Terrell had given birth to a daughter, Joh Vonnie. Joe was the proud father.

Still married to Joe, Katherine referred to the Terrells as "that whore and her bastard child." Michael later claimed that the news of the addition to the Jackson family "made me want to vomit."

Not to be deterred, Joe purchased a midsize but tasteful home for his unmarried girlfriend and his new daughter only a short drive from the Jackson's Encino mansion. After enduring her humiliation for weeks, Katherine finally exploded. She drove to the Terrell household and attacked her rival when she appeared in her driveway. Her husband's baby was fastened into the Terrell car for a shopping expedition. Katherine yanked the hair of Joe's mistress, slapped her face, and knocked her down on the gravel.

Hearing the news an hour later, Michael rushed to Katherine's bedroom to console his mother, to whom he was still devoted. He pleaded with his mother to call her attorneys and reinstate her divorce proceedings against Joe. Katherine agreed to do that and packed her luggage, flying to stay with her mother. Three weeks later, after Joe pleaded with her on the phone, telling her that "You are the only woman I've ever loved," Katherine reluctantly returned to the household. Michael was disappointed at her capitulation to Joe.

The Jackson family continued to expand when Jackie married Enid Spann, age twenty. Her father was black but her mother had been born in Korea. The family, especially Joe, opposed Jackie's marriage, which was eventually celebrated on December 6, 1974. Jackie was extremely casual about his wedding, showing up in denim and gym shoes, with a wedding band he'd purchased at K-Mart.

Even though he'd recorded Forever Michael during a period of turmoil, Michael hoped for its success. But the album bombed, never going beyond 101 on Billboards charts, selling fewer than 100,000 copies. Joe was furious when he heard of the disappointing sales. "No more solo albums for Michael," he said. Joe blamed the failure of the album on Gordy and his lack of promotion.

Forever Michael would be the singer's last album for Motown. Although the album was a failure, one song surfaced: "One Day In Your Life."

In a rare act of defiance, Michael called Gordy and arranged to meet with him alone. This had never happened before. Eager to hear what the real star of the Jackson family had to say, Gordy set up an appointment with Michael and didn't let Joe know what was going on.

Michael himself has admitted that his reputation is one of shyness. Although that is true, when he wanted something, he could have the resolve of a steel magnolia. The day Gordy met with Michael, the promoter saw a determination he'd never seen in any of The Jacksons, certainly not in his son in-law, Jermaine, and a resolve

unmatched by that of Joe himself.

"After that day, I never thought of Michael as a wimp," Gordy later said.

The secret rendezvous took place at the Gordy manse in Bel Air, California, on May 14, 1975. The meeting went badly, with Michael threatening to organize his family's abandonment of Motown, in spite of family ties through marriage. He poured out his frustration and unhappiness with the way Motown had controlled the group, not letting the brothers chart their own course with their own songs and instrumentation.

"Listen to me, kid," Gordy shouted at Michael in anger. "I picked you boys up in some Rust Belt hellhole in Indiana. You were playing stripper joints before I discovered you. Remember, without Berry Gordy, you'd be flipping burgers."

Finally, Gordy sighed. "I even let your brothers live in my own home. I moved you in with Diana Ross, a class act. I treated you like family. How can you even contemplate walking out on me after all I've done for you?"

That angered Michael. "Let me restate that. I respect you greatly. You're a genius in the business. But it's not a question of what you've done for us. It's what we've done for you. We worked our hearts out for one of the lowest royalty rates-perhaps the lowest in the business. A pathetic 2.7 percent." With that, Michael stormed out of Gordy's home. Their face-to-face encounter had utterly failed, and had, in fact, led to a lot of damage.

When Michael arrived home after the meeting, Joe had been tipped off by one of Gordy's household staff. He was waiting to beat Michael with a large thick leather belt with a steel buckle. When Michael came into the house, Joe didn't wait to have an argument. The sting of the whip slashed across Michael's face. When he realized what was happening, he fled from the house, outrunning his father. His whereabouts remained unknown for ten days.

To this day, no one knows where he went. But he was seen on Hollywood Boulevard three days later in a large sedan driven by an older man. When Michael finally did return home, Joe had cooled down considerably. He told Michael that he had decided that The Jackson 5 was "bolting Motown. It's our fuck-you to Jermaine's father-in-law."

Michael had nothing to say.

Joe called a meeting of all his sons, except Jermaine. Because of his marriage to Hazel, Joe didn't think he could trust Jermaine since "he's in the enemy camp." Michael joined in a vote with Jackie, Marlon, and Tito to split from Motown. Joe promised his sons that there was big money to be made at a much higher royalty rate at another record company. "You guys are big now because of me," Joe boasted. "I can make the deal of the century for you."

But other companies were not forthcoming with deals. The failure of Michael's recent album and the hit-or-miss sales racked up by the Jacksons didn't impress Atlantic Records, which nixed any hopes of linking their future to The Jackson 5.

Joe found a more receptive home at CBS Records, especially at its branch, Epic Records, which specialized in African-American entertainers.

Joe was happy to receive a check for $750,000 in upfront money. He also walked away with another half-a-million dollars for a development fund to produce Jackson 5 albums. Not only that, but he managed to negotiate an astonishing $350,000 per album as a guarantee against future sales, even if those sales didn't happen.

The advances were to be recouped from royalties, in a style that mimicked procedures that were prevalent in book publishing, but that rate was raised from 2.7 percent to 27 percent. "The decimal just disappeared," Joe boasted. And if sales shot up beyond the half million mark on an album, The Jackson 5 would get a 30 percent return. Epic did not grant complete artistic freedom, however, but allowed the brothers to select a trio of songs for each of their albums.

The bolting of The Jackson 5 from Motown was hailed as "the divorce of the century." Already in decline, Motown had lost such stars as Gladys Knight and The Pips, The Isley Brothers, The Four Tops, and The

Temptations. Gordy had also witnessed the decline of his other acts, including the once-supreme Supremes.

Gordy told a reporter, "The Jacksons say they aren't being paid enough. Hell, they've made millions off me."

Jermaine faced a painful dilemma: To remain, professionally speaking, with his wife, Hazel, and her father, or else break from Motown, following Joe and his brothers. "Jermaine voted with his dick," said a raunchy Motown exec. "He stayed in Hazel's bed and told old Daddy-Pooh to go fuck himself, which he should have done long ago. Besides, I heard that Gordy had promised to make Jermaine a star in his own right, instead of appearing in Michael's shadow."

Jermaine explained it differently to the press. "I wasn't choosing between two families. I was making a selection between two rival recording companies. Motown or Epic."

Angered by Jermaine's decision, Joe blasted back. "It's my God damn blood that flows through Jermaine's body-not Berry Gordy's."

The farewell performance of The Jackson 5 occurred in Las Vegas in a final show in the summer of 1975. Michael suffered more from Jermaine's loss than his brothers. "I depended on being next to Jermaine. And when I did that first show without him there, with no one next to me, I felt totally naked onstage for the first time in my life."

Berry Gordy had been a smart executive. Even though he lost the Jackson brothers, he still owned the entire Jackson 5 catalogue. He was also sitting on a mountain of unissued recordings that the group had stockpiled over the years. Had he wished, he could have flooded the market with these recordings, potentially wiping out the sales of future Jackson 5 records through oversaturation of the marketplace.

That didn't happen, and The Jacksons, especially Michael, were set to move on into what one critic called "a record-busting future."

Regrettably, Joe had to abandon the name "The Jackson 5." Thanks to not having read the fine print when he'd signed the contract with Motown, Motown owned the rights to the use of the singing group's name. Consequently, Joe had to rename his boys "The Jacksons."

At a somber press conference during the summer of 1975 at New York's Rainbow Grill, the Jackson brothers, along with Joe, but without Jermaine, announced to the world they were leaving Motown. The announcement was premature, as The Jackson 5 contract would continue until March of 1976. The brothers had jumped ship before they were actually free to do so, an act of disloyalty that wasn't lost on the ever-sharp Gordy. Nonetheless, at the conference, Joe claimed that Epic, unlike Motown, which had often focused on the release of their songs as singles, would concentrate on issuing albums.

Gordy fought back, ordering his attorneys to file a $5 million breach of contract suit. Later, in his rage, he upped the ante to $20 million, his claim for damages. Almost immediately, Joe countersued.

To show he was still in control of The Jackson 5, Gordy ordered the release of a new Jackson 5 album, called Moving Violation. As if to show that Joe was wrong in his charges of neglect, Gordy worked personally to promote and distribute the album. But even so savvy a promoter as Gordy could not make Moving Violation a hit.

Gordy had hoped for a breakthrough single on the album-perhaps the solo version, "Moving Violation" itself-or else "All I Do Is Think of You." But no such luck.

That September, Gordy, exercising the rights of his contract, demanded that Joe bring the brothers back to Motown for another recording session. Joe adamantly refused, calling Gordy "a bastard," "an asshole," and a "son of a bitch." Wiser than his father this time, Michael urged caution. "A contract is a contract," he told Joe.

Michael was right. It would take years for Motown's lawsuit to be resolved, but it finally was, when Gordy got $600,000-not $20 million-in damages he'd legally sought.

Gordy later said, "At that time, I didn't know the full extent of what losing an act like The Jackson 5 would mean. I also did not know that in the industry it was hunting season, and Motown was the biggest game in town. They were all after us."

Joe had been savvy about moving over to Epic. Their first Jackson single, "Enjoy Yourself," sold a million copies. Their second recording, "Show You the Way to Go," topped the charts in Britain, the first time the brothers had ever accomplished that. Randy, by this time, had joined the group, playing the bongos.

Billed as The Jacksons, the brothers released their first album for Epic in 1976. To introduce America to the group's new name, the album was entitled simply The Jacksons. "Enjoy Yourself," a rollicking disco-style song, was the number one single on the album. The album only reached number 36 on Billboard's charts. And as if he wanted to intentionally sabotage sales, Motown released Joyful Jukebox Music, another Jackson album compiled from previously recorded songs. Despite the fact that the competing album failed, it nonetheless diluted the allure of Epic's release. Meanwhile, on his own, Jermaine recorded his first Motown release, My Name Is Jermaine. It never got beyond number 164 on the charts.

Without Jermaine, Papa Joe moved ahead with what he thought would become "a big deal" for his sons.

Over Michael's objections, Joe signed his sons to star in their own TV series for CBS. Michael called it "that stupid summer replacement," fearing that overexposure on the tube would damage sales of their recordings. He protested the "ridiculous outfits" he and his brothers wore and the "silly comedy routines" played to canned laughter.

In spite of Michael's complaints, the four-week series of 30-minute programs was a groundbreaker for black entertainers, as no African-American family had ever starred in a series for TV.

The funniest moments on the show involved Janet's impersonations of Mae West. She stole all the lines West, with her hourglass figure, had made famous: "When I'm good, I'm very good. But when I'm bad, I'm better." After watching Janet on TV, producer Norman Lear cast her in the sitcom Good Times. A new star had emerged in the Jackson family.

After an initial flurry of success, CBS canceled the Jackson TV series in January of 1977. It had landed at the bottom of the Nielsen chart, ending up in 70th position. Michael later claimed that the show was canceled because he wouldn't agree to a new contract, but that was not true. The Jacksons weren't the only series booted. Variety show after variety show was canceled, including Sonny and Cher.

In New York the Jackson brothers performed at the Nassau Coliseum, setting box office records there. In spite of their hit-and-miss career so far, plenty of fans, often black teenagers, were willing to shell out big bucks to get a look at the Jackson brothers.

With the obvious sex symbol of the group, the more studly Jermaine, out of the picture, the girls began to fantasize about a date with Michael, in spite of his impossibly thin figure and fey manner.

Michael had seen The Wiz on Broadway an astonishing five times, little knowing that he'd eventually co-star in the movie version. Backstage he'd been introduced to Stephanie Mills, a small package of talent with a voice that was sometimes compared to that of the Broadway legend, Ethel Merman.

Promoters for Michael had been advising him to invite a girl out on a date to combat rumors of homosexuality, but Michael had steadfastly refused. Under growing pressure, he decided to give in and pop the question-a request for a date, that is-to the petite Mills, considering her harmless enough.

Stephanie was only fifteen when she starred as Dorothy in The Wiz, and was very disappointed when she lost the film role to Diana Ross, who was "far too old to play Dorothy." As a performer, Stephanie had been discovered by Michael's brother, Jermaine, and she had signed with Motown in 1974. Even after her eventual break from Motown, Michael continued to listen to Stephanie's songs, as, for example, when she recorded the highly danceable "Put Your Body In It" and "What Cha Gonna Do With My Lovin'?" Before their date was over that night, she'd told Michael: "God touched my soul and told me he was going to make me a star!"

Amazingly, perhaps to protect himself in case Mills got "too familiar" on their date, Michael also invited a most unlikely guest, Andy Warhol.

It's not exactly clear how Michael met the pop artist. The introduction perhaps had occurred through their mutual friend, Liza Minnelli, but there have been other claims as well.

The setting for the late-night outing of this "threesome" was Regine's on Park Avenue, then the most sophisticated nightclub in New York.

Of Sephardic North African descent, Regine was already of "a certain age" as she greeted Mills, Warhol, and Michael at the door of her club. Warhol had already kept Michael waiting for one hour. In front of Regine, Warhol explained why he was so late and thanked her for holding their table. "When I went to take a shower, I thought I detected crabs. And it took some time to get rid of them. I have a special solution. All gay men who sleep around know about it."

Dubbed La reine de la Nuit Parisienne, Regine seemed enchanted by Michael, although most of her attention was directed to a table of Brazilian millionaires who were demanding her presence. They had paid one-million dollars for five people to fly from Rio to New York for a glorious weekend. One busty, blonde American movie star, whose career was fading, had agreed to fly in from Los Angeles and fuck all five millionaires for a fee of $100,000 per customer.

Michael seemed entranced to watch Regine "work the room," as she mingled with the famous and the infamous, including both American and British "royalty." She seemed as comfortable with titans of industry as she was with upscale hookers, the idle and bored, the terminally jaded, and the socially ambitious.

To Michael's dazzled eyes, the setting was a gathering of the glitterati on New York's apres-midnight scene.

"It's all style without substance," Warhol told Michael. "A viper's nest of roiling ambition. All of it horrendously snobbish and artfully arch, and how I love it! A feeding frenzy for the tabloids."

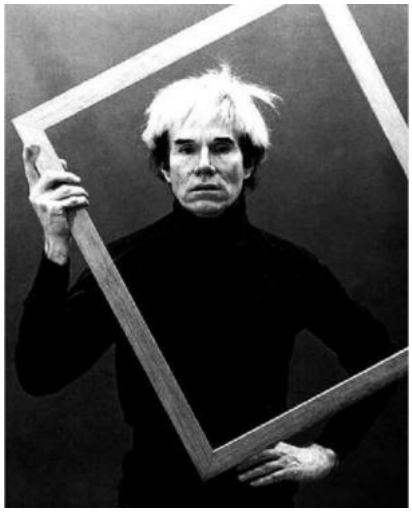
On the way into Regine's, Michael had passed the demimondaines of Europe (later known as Euro-Trash), shivering in gossamer dresses for the signal that would let them come inside.

At table, Mills made several obvious plays for Michael, but as Warhol would later tell Bianca Jagger, "The boy showed no interest at all."

At one point in the evening, Warhol startled Michael by saying, "I understand you Jackson brothers have to work like niggers in the cotton fields because you have no real money."

Michael politely asked him not to use the word "nigger."

"Please, this is no civil rights rally," Warhol said. "I am using the word as a form of endearment. You see, I'm always in the avant-garde. One day the word `nigger' will be perfectly acceptable. Right now queer is a bad word. But one day gays themselves will refer to themselves as queer. I know about such things."



Andy Warhol

When Mills got up to go to the ladies room, Warhol leaned toward Michael to whisper something confidential. "I want you to star in my next movie."

Michael's eyes lit up. The idea of making an Andy Warhol movie intrigued him. He wanted to know more.

"It's very experimental," Warhol said. "My film will show only your face in close-up for twenty minutes."

"And what am Ito do for that long?" a perplexed Michael asked.

"Forgive me, but I understand you're a virgin. I mean, I was told that your rectum has never been penetrated. In my film, I want to photograph only your face as a young and wellendowed model penetrates you for the first time. I also want to record every sound coming from your throat, including your cries of pain as you lose your cherry."

Stephanie Mills

Michael was rescued by Regine herself, who appeared in a stylish but old Chanel gown and asked him to step with her onto the dance floor. As she whirled around, she still greeted both friends and acquaintances. She even managed to continue dancing with Michael when one of her very handsome and blond French waiters handed her a crystal glass of champagne.

"No one can play the night as well as Regine herself," she whispered into Michael's ear.

Later, after Michael saw to it that Mills was delivered safely back to her room, Andy pressed an invitation onto him.

"It's a very special event I've been invited to, and I want you to go with me. Arnold Schwarzenegger is in town. He's German, maybe Austrian. He's got the world's most gorgeous body. He was Mr. Universe or something. Absolutely gorgeous. Tonight he's going to take off his posing pouch and appear nude in a number of poses for wealthy fans of body builders. It'll be thrilling. Tonight you'll get to see exactly what Mr. Universe is packing in that posing pouch. He's tantalized us long enough. I hear it's a thick, uncut Teutonic sausage."

"No, thank you!" Michael said abruptly. "I really must go. It's long past my bedtime."

Months later, Warhol would neither confirm nor deny if such a party for bodybuilder fans ever took place.

In the wake of Mills, Michael would soon be linked to another "girlfriend."

He may have brushed past actress Tatum O'Neal at a party Paul McCartney tossed in 1975 aboard the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California. She would have been only twelve years old at the time. Michael was seven- teen-"and ripe for plucking, darling-that's plucking with a P," said a gay friend of Cher's who had unsuccessfully tried to seduce Michael. "I wanted to be the first, but, alas, I got a lecture on morality instead."

Michael's relationship with the famous Beatle, and with Tatum herself, lay in the future.

It wasn't until April of 1977 that Michael and Tatum launched a much misunderstood friendship. It began at Jack Nicholson's On the Rox Club on Sunset Strip when Tatum showed up with her handsome, sandy-haired father, actor Ryan O'Neal, still remembered for his portrayal in that drippy 1970 film, Love Story. Tatum's father was one of the great womanizers of Hollywood. His seductions had included Mia Farrow, Melanie Griffith, Anjelica Huston, Bianca Jagger, Ali MacGraw, Liza Minnelli, Joan Collins, Oona Chaplin (widow of Charlie), and even Margaret Trudeau, wife of the Canadian prime minister. His most famous affair was with Farrah Fawcett. Both Berry Gordy and O'Neal had competed for the favors of Diana Ross. Gordy claimed that O'Neal had "the whitest damn teeth I have ever seen in my life."

Michael and Ryan were talking confidentially about the need for privacy. O'Neal told Michael, "I'm as moody and complex and private as anyone I ever knew-except you!"

In Moonwalk, Michael recalled, "I was sitting at this table and all of a sudden I felt this soft hand reach over and grab mine. It was Tatum. She touched me." He later claimed "I fell in love with her" and made the preposterous statement, "and she with me." Once again, as with Ross, Michael invented a love relationship that didn't really exist. Call his so-called "affair" with Tatum a friendship. She certainly characterized it as that.

Tatum had appeared in the 1973 film, Paper Moon, opposite her real-life father. She stole the picture from him as the tough-talking, cigarette-smoking orphan. At the age of ten, she became the youngest performer to win an Oscar. Before her subsequent decline and eventual marriage to tennis player John McEnroe, she was considered a "hot child actor."

As unbelievable as it sounds, twelve-year-old Tatum called Michael and asked him out on a date. He accepted. To his surprise, she took him to a dinner in Holmby Hills. It turned out to be within the notorious mansion of Hugh Hefner, the Playboy publisher. Ryan O'Neal was a frequent visitor to the mansion and a favorite of the "Bunnies," allegedly because of his great skill in the sack. On their first night together, Tatum and Michael watched part of the TV mini-series, Roots, by Alex Haley.

Michael was enthralled by Roots, relating his own experiences in Senegal to Tatum. At one point she became distracted and invited Michael to join her in Hefner's "hot tub," where male movie stars often cavorted in the nude with Playboy Bunnies.

When he protested that he didn't have a bathing suit, she called him a "square," but finally secured one for him from one of Hefner's waiters.

Apparently, a waiter at Hefner's mansion that night tried to sell a story to the National Enquirer that he'd spotted a "totally nude" Tatum and a "jaybird naked" Michael fornicating in the hot tub. The rumor spread like wildfire. One underground paper in Hollywood carried the headline: TATUM BUSTS MICHAEL'S CHERRY. Yet another scurrilous rag, skirting the laws of libel, proclaimed that GAY MICHAEL SAMPLES STRAIGHT SEX WITH UNDERAGE TEEN STAR.

Ryan O'Neal

Michael later suggested that all Tatum and he did that night was "look for shooting stars and share our deepest secrets." He later asked a question of a reporter for the Los Angeles Times: "Why do people insist on always finding something dirty in the most harmless pastimes?"

Tatum left early that night to go home, but Michael was invited to stay on by Hefner himself. The original Playboy had just emerged from one of the upstairs boudoirs where he'd been occupied for most of the evening.

"You're a virgin, I hear," Hefner asked Michael as a way of introducing himself.

Michael blushed but did not directly answer the question. "We've all got our dark secrets."

"I can introduce you to one of my `Special Ladies' tonight," Hefner offered. "She will rob you of your virginity forever."

"No thanks," Michael said.

"Come on, boy, live a little," Hefner urged. "I never recommend a brunette for the job of cherry stealing. A brunette is a type of woman you marry or at least take for a mistress. For the initial seduction, blondes are preferred, as they are always dangerous and forbidden, whether bottle or natural. They represent the forbidden sexuality, danger. As for redheads, they are a mere variation of the blonde. Also, danger. So what will it be: blonde or redhead."

"Mr. Hefner, I'm sure your Bunnies are wonderful," Michael said in a soft voice. "But at my age, the only Bunny I'm interested in is Bugs Bunny."

"Oh, I get it," Hefner said. "You're gay. Don't worry, I have several handsome waiters here who are most

accommodating."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hefner," Michael said, getting up. "But I've got to go. I really thank you for your hospitality."

Their personalities could not have been more different, but after that night at the Playboy mansion, Michael and Tatum developed an unlikely friendship.

Sassy and precocious, Tatum was the very opposite of Michael. She was hip whereas he was square. She was cynical, Michael dreamy-eyed. But nonetheless, Tatum and Michael bonded, perhaps because of the childhood trauma each had endured. Both had "distant" fathers.

But there were differences: Michael claimed that his mother, Katherine, was a saint. Tatum's own mother, actress Joanna Moore, was an alcoholic, drifting in and out of her daughter's life, often destructively.

As their friendship deepened, Tatum poured out her past angst to Michael. She described how her Darvon-addicted mother once left her and her brother, Griffin, locked away in a room for hours. "We had no choice but to defecate on the floor," Tatum said. One time Joanna went away for a weekend, according to Tatum, having locked Tatum and Griffin in a bathroom. "She simply forgot about us." Once Joanna left them locked in a garage where they had to eat dog food to survive. Tatum's life with her mother made Christina Crawford's upbringing with Joan Crawford, as related in the 1981 Mommie Dearest, seem like a garden party. In her memoirs, A Paper Life, Tatum claimed that Joanna "was freewheeling with her fists, coming from a generation that was big on beatings."

Oddly enough, both Michael and Tatum had adopted rats as pets. At a ramshackle ranch where Tatum lived with her mother, Tatum set out food for the rodents along with water. Her brother, Griffin, and Tatum adopted the rats as pets and gave them names.

Michael's love for his pet rats ended badly when he came home one day and saw Father Rat eating his young babies. Tatum's love affair with rodents ended when her mother's fifteen-year-old boyfriend claimed that rats had rabies and threw them in a pond "and made us watch them drown," Tatum claimed. "Since rats can swim, it took a very long time, and it completely freaked us out. I grieved for days."

With such an unlikely beginning, Michael and Tatum continued this "odd couple" relationship that he'd repeat with both genders throughout the rest of the 20th century.

Tatum did admit that she found her long drawn-out conversations with Michael so boring that she would often hand over the receiver of the phone to a friend who listened as Michael droned on and on.

She found Michael "incredibly sweet and innocent," surprising, she admitted for a world-renowned performer. "His usual subject was sex," Tatum said, although admitting that at the age of twelve, even though worldly for her years, she didn't have a lot to contribute on the subject, except what she'd heard coming from her father's bedroom next to hers.

If Tatum is to be believed, the so-called seduction that Michael once bragged about didn't really happen, and Tatum is most trustworthy, having written such a candid memoir. Having rarely, if ever, viewed a girl's bedroom before, Michael asked to see where Tatum slept. "He sat on my bed, and we kissed very briefly," Tatum confessed, "but it was terribly awkward." All she remembered was Michael, "sweating profusely," jumping up and apologizing, claiming he had to go.

At the time of Michael's so-called "affair" with Tatum, various publications were offering good money to the first girl-or woman-who seduced Michael, taking his virginity. Various bets were placed, and some incidents of dubious authenticity were reported in headline news in such national publications as The Star. Various actresses, models, and singers were said to have attempted to seduce Michael-but to no avail.

Even Margaux Hemingway got in on the act. Born in Idaho, she was the daughter of Jack Hemingway, son of the Nobel Prize winning author Ernest Hemingway. She met Michael at the height of her fame when she had a budding movie career and a one-million-dollar promotional contract with Faberge perfume. Her face was appearing

on magazine covers around the world.

In Key West, Florida, in 1996, a few months before her suicide by overdose in Santa Monica, California, Margaux told her hostess, Hazel Triplett, that she once had a standing bet with Tatum as to which one could seduce Michael first. Margaux, who stood six feel tall in her bare feet, claimed that she had encountered Michael on several occasions. She even took to calling him "Boopsie" and invited him to go hiking with her in Idaho-"I know all the best trails."

"I completely struck out, and as I understand it, so did Tatum," she said. "I tried everything, but Michael eluded me. I hear he was as fleet footed as Mercury and outran his father to escape beatings. He got away from me, too, even though I was fast on my feet in spite of my size."

Later in her life, as she plunged into drugs and alcohol, Margaux in her decline sent several urgent appeals to Michael to help her. It is not known if these letters were even delivered to him. Once she invited him to Cicada, one of Hollywood's hippest restaurants, to hear her sing the blues, but he never showed up. Margaux was desperate for money and was forced to declare bankruptcy and to appear in sexually kinky 13movies. At one point, she lent her endorsement to a psychic hotline and supported herself by autographing nude photos of herself in Playboy.

Griffin O'Neal

Margaux confessed that her last attempt to seduce Michael occurred one night at Studio 54 in New York. "He was there with the Liza Minnelli and Warhol crowd, and I went for him but he didn't go for me, although he did dance with me. I loved to dance. But somehow after he rejected me, I ended up feeling like a big potato from Idaho."

"Many doors were open to me because my last name was Hemingway," she once told Michael. "But to tell you the truth, I never cracked one of Papa's books. I have dyslexia."

Although Michael attacked rumors about himself for most of his career, he deliberately encouraged speculation about a romance with Tatum. Tout Hollywood wasn't to be fooled. At cocktail parties, some insiders of the industry were circulating far different rumors about Michael and his involvement with the O'Neals. As one made the party circuit in those days, the word was out that Michael had fallen not for Tatum but for her cute little brother, Griffin. If there were a crush-and this is pure speculation and gossip-it was strictly on Michael's part, not on Griffin's.

Griffin admired Michael's musical talent, and perhaps a friendship developed, but that was it. Tatum herself called her brother a "musical savant," and he was known for his skill not only at the drums but on the guitar. "He wasn't Liberace, but he could play a mean piano," his father said. Even Michael was impressed with Griffin's talents, and he would play the drums with Griffin, seemingly enjoying time spent with him instead of with Tatum. Tatum didn't seem jealous in the least, since she harbored no romantic fantasies about Michael.

These concerts between Michael and Griffin took place at 9897 Beverly Grove Drive in a house that had once

belonged to John Barrymore. At the time, Griffin was small for his age and had a slight frame. Since this was the type of young boy Michael was allegedly drawn to, rumors were rampant, although completely untrue. "When did rumors ever have to be true in Hollywood?" a future friend of Michael's, Marlon Brando, once asked. "In fact, rumors often reveal more about the people spreading them than the subject of the gossip."

According to Tatum, within the text of her autobiography, A Paper Life, Michael lectured Griffin on the evils of pot-smoking and tried to get him to give up the habit. But Griffin refused. An intimate of the O'Neals, Michael quickly learned the family secrets. It brought back painful memories of his own father when he witnessed Ryan physically striking Griffin. As the boy cried from his beatings, Michael tried to console him, wishing someone in his own family, especially Katherine, had done the same for him.

Also within her autobiography, Tatum revealed that her father had sometimes sent Griffin on drives in her BMW to secure drugs. Even though he was at the time too young to even legally drive a car, Griffin carried out these dan gerous drug runs anyway, and was once returned to the Barrymore/O'Neal house by the police. Michael seemed horrified when learning of these stories. Griffin was just thirteen at the time.

Michael was saddened by later events in Griffin's life as he struggled with substance abuse. In 1986 that would lead to a tragic boating accident that snuffed out the life of Gian-Carlo, the son of Francis Ford Coppola. Griffin was indicted for manslaughter in connection with that accident. The charges were later reduced to negligent boat operation, of which Griffin was found guilty.

Margaux Hemingway

At the time, Ruth Joanna Coffine, a Torontobased journalist, was attempting to write a book about the dysfunctional O'Neal family. She eventually abandoned the project, but not before completing a chapter devoted to the "Michael/Tatum affair," which she described like this:

"Michael was a virgin when he met Tatum, and a virgin when he left her," Coffine claimed. "There are two reasons Michael Jackson refuses to have sex with a girl in spite of literally hundreds of offers, most often from white girls. First, he's afraid of sex. His mother, Katherine, taught him it's a nasty thing to indulge in. Secondly, he doesn't give a damn for it. When his interest eventually surfaces, it might not even be a girl that Michael is attracted to, and I don't mean an older woman either. Tatum was ripe for the plucking, and stunningly beautiful. Her soft blonde hair

and `bassinet pink skin' was desired by every Lothario in Hollywood who had a Lolita fantasy. I really feel Michael could have seduced her-certainly one of his brothers would have gone for her-but Michael is, if you can believe him (and I don't), saving it `until the right woman comes along.' Yeah, right!"

Tatum was known as a "disco baby," dancing the night away at clubs, with older friends: the far more sophisticated Bianca Jagger, Cher, or Margaux Hemingway.

"Tatum was younger than Michael," Margaux once said. "In terms of experience, Michael seemed as naive as a nine-year-old girl, whereas Tatum talked like she had a track record to match that of Jayne Mansfield."

The faux romance between Michael and Tatum ended when he invited her to the premiere in New York of The Wiz, in which he'd been cast as the Scarecrow. Michael wanted to show up with "arm candy"-in this case, Tatum-and asked her to go with him. Tatum claimed that her talent agency protested violently, telling her, "You can't go to a premiere with a nigger." Tatum turned Michael down, and he was so insulted he would go for months without speaking to her again.

Michael's relationship with Tatum had begun impulsively and it eventually flickered out. However, in 1980, he would write the song, "She's Out of My Life." It was said to have been inspired by his so-called love affair with Tatum.

In the years ahead, Tatum had an outing or two with Michael and that was that. But she resurfaced in his life in 2003 when she went public to denyonce again-Michael's seduction claims. In a documentary, Living With Michael Jackson, Michael told Martin Bashir, a British journalist, that Tatum attempted to bed him, but he couldn't go through with it because he was overcome with shyness. Jackson claimed, "She told me to go over and lie on the bed. I lay on the bed and she slowly walked over, and she touched the button on my shirt to open it."

In the interview, aired on both British and American television, Michael said he covered his face with his hands and wouldn't let them down. "She just walked away," Michael said. "I was afraid." Tatum lashed back, claiming "Michael has a vivid imagination. Michael did come over to my house when my father was home, but at twelve years old, there was no way I was capable of being as mature or as sophisticated as he claimed I was."

Michael's encounters with Tatum were mild compared to other rumors sweeping the nation. Another faux romance. Rumors even made the headlines that Michael was going to undergo a sex change operation and become the "bride" of Clifton Davis. These allegations first appeared in Jet magazine.

Davis was a most unlikely "husband" for a future transgendered Michael. Born in Chicago at the close of World War II, Davis is familiar to TV addicts who saw him in the lead role in Thats My Mama in the 1970s and on Amen in the 1980s. He won a Tony Award for Best Actor in 1972 on Broadway for his performance in a musical version of Two Gentlemen of Verona. He was also a songwriter, writing The Jackson 5 hit, "Never Can Say Goodbye."

An ordained Seventh Day Adventist Church minister, Davis was astonished to be linked with Michael in a rumored homosexual relationship.

Marlon Brando, who always had his ear tuned to a good rumor, said, "If you're going to tell a lie, make it a big one. Whoever started this rumor wasn't satisfied with a potential same-sex marriage. They had to go all out and throw in the sex change. In a way, the rumor had a strange kind of logic. Davis is straight. If he ever were to marry Michael, he would insist that our friend transform himself into a woman."

Michael was unaware of the rumor until one afternoon on Hollywood Boulevard when he was casually browsing through a record store. One young man, perhaps no more than fifteen, rushed up to him: "Please, don't cut it off! Don't become a girl."

Without an explanation, the young man then ran screaming from the store. Later that night, Michael learned of the rumor linking him with Davis and the sex-change operation.

At the time, Michael had never met Davis. That meeting came later, in Las Vegas, when Davis, accompanied by Leslie Uggams, came backstage to congratulate Diana Ross on her spectacular appearance at Caesars Palace. Davis shook Michael's hand.

Unlike Michael, Davis was confident in his own sexuality and could regard the rumors with a certain detachment after his initial astonishment. "Michael," he said at the time of their initial meeting, firmly shaking his hand, "I think you'd make an ugly girl. You really don't have to go to such an extreme to have me become your husband." He laughed at the absurdity of it all.

"I am not a homo," Michael announced heatedly to Ross, Uggams, and Davis.

"We're all God's children," Davis said. "Be what you want to be."

"There's nothing gay about me!" Michael was overheard saying.

In the years to come, much of the world would disagree with Michael's assessment of his sexual preference and label him gay whether he was or not.

Although rumors about the sex change and his upcoming "marriage" to Davis eventually died their predictable death, the gay charges would remain forever.

In the political correctness battle, Michael lost the first round when he told one reporter for the Los Angeles Times that he found "homosexuality disgusting, and it's completely against my religion."

Being a homosexual himself, the reporter was immediately offended.

Some officials at Epic were horrified as well. Market surveys had shown that homosexual men and women formed one of the largest blocs of record buyers. The day he pronounced homosexuality disgusting, thousands of gay men agreed to boycott any of his future records. Public relations men in the record business apparently got to Michael, warning him "to cool it."

In subsequent statements to the press, he toned down his inflammatory rhetoric. "I am well aware that plenty of my fans are gay, and I appreciate that. I am not bothered by their choice of lifestyle. However, such a lifestyle is not suitable for me-I'm not gay! And that's that! I know the media will print what they will, but when they print that I'm gay, they are lying to the American public. There's not even the slightest gay streak in me. Just because I have a high, soft voice doesn't mean I'm gay. Millions of men throughout the world have soft, high voices-and aren't gay but married with children."

At times throughout his career, Michael seemed sensitive about his speak ing voice. Naturally, its high pitch inspired more rumors, one being that he took sex hormones to heighten the pitch of his voice, if such a thing were possible. Again, these rumorsperhaps accurately-were vehemently denied. "What people spreading those rumors were really saying," said an executive at Epic, "is that Michael is not a real man."

Clifton Davis

Like many Jehovah's Witnesses, Katherine herself was a homophobe. "I go nuts when I hear people calling my son, Michael, gay. He is not! A mother knows. He follows the teachings of our church which condemns the homosexual life. Michael reads his Bible every night. In it he reads that homosexuality is a sin against God's wishes. Michael does not disobey the will of God."

These protestations fell on deaf ears. Hundreds upon hundreds of fans stopped buying Michael's records. "How could I have boyfriend fantasies about him any more?" asked Alexis Philip, who was the president of Michael's fan club in one of its Ohio branches. "I was shocked to learn that he wanted to have a vagina instead of a dick-that's one of the most sickening things I have ever heard in my life. Before I learned the truth, I used to think Michael was a great singer. Today if I hear his voice on the radio, I cut off the station. I have also urged my girlfriends never to buy another Michael Jackson record."

Confronting a member of the press in Los Angeles, Michael faced a barrage of questions, all of which dealt with the gay issue. "I am not gay!" he shot back angrily, a denial he was repeating more and more. "I'm not a homo. Not in the least. People make up stories claiming I'm gay just to sell papers. The idea of me having sex with men is absurd. I would never do that. I refuse to cheapen myself like that. Just because I'm not seen in public with a lot of girlfriends doesn't mean that I don't have them. But I like to keep my private life private. I believe in protecting the privacy of the young girls I date."

The biographer, J. Randy Taraborrelli, once wrote: "Michael Jackson would never allow himself to have homosexual relationships, even if he did have feelings for other men. He is much too puritanical, a result of his religious background."

Of course, no one could ever make such a statement about another human being without inviting ridicule. As one more astute journalist put it, "We can never know what is going on inside the heart of another human being. We can't share their dreams and desires. Some people are homosexuals and haven't even faced up to it. It is foolish for one person to claim that another person does not have homosexual desires. How could we possibly know that? I've led a completely straight life all my years except for one or two very early and very tentative experiences with another boy when I was fourteen. It was nothing, really. But every few weeks or so, I ask myself if I'm not a secret homosexual. But I try to wipe it from my mind because I don't want to go there."

One night Michael Bennett and playwright James Kirkwood were discussing the casting of a Broadway musical, A Chorus Line, in a bar at the Astor Colonnade in New York. Kirkwood was the first to suggest Michael for one of the roles, and Bennett, after thinking it over for a while, finally agreed.

When the role was offered to Michael, he was thrilled but finally decided not to take the part of a dancer, who at the show's climax, reveals himself to be gay, with all the trials and controversies that his sexual preference has cost him. Michael's reason for turning down the role was "because people will think I'm actually gay myself-and not just playing the part of a gay in a musical." What Michael didn't seem to realize was that thousands of people were beginning to think he was gay whether he played gay on the stage or not.

The press speculation about Michael's alleged homosexuality began to reach unprecedented heights for an entertainer, a situation that would "become nuclear," as Kirkwood put it, in the years ahead.

In a cover story for Time magazine, Jack Cocks wrote that Michael's "high-flying tenor makes him sound like the lead in some funked-up boys choir, even as the sexual dynamism irradiating from the arch of his dancing challenges government standards for nuclear meltdown. His lithe frame, fivefathom eyes, and long lashes might be threatening if Jackson gave, even for a second, the impression that he is obtainable. But the audience's sense of his sensuality becomes quite deliberately tangled up with the mirror image of his life. Undeniably sexy. Absolutely safe. Eroticism at arm's length."

Michael spoke candidly to his vocal coach, Seth Riggs, about the popular conception that he was gay. "The other day a big, tall, blond, nice-looking fellow came up to me and said, `Gee, Michael, I think you're wonderful. I sure would like to go to bed with you.' I looked at him and said, `When's the last time you read the Bible? You know you really should read it because there is some real information in there about homosexuality.' The guy said, `I guess if I'd been a girl, it would have been different.' And I said, `No, there are some very direct words on that in the Bible, too.'"

If that statement were reported accurately, Michael was not only admitting that he would not practice homosexuality because "the Bible says not to," but would not partake of straight sexual encounters as well. His randy brothers obviously did not share Michael's reserve.

"Could it be true?" writer Phoebe Foggin asked. "Is Michael neither gay nor straight but asexual? He sure sounds that way. Or does he use religion as a shield to protect himself from reporters' probing questions?"

As time went by, Michael was having a hard time reconciling his "notorious" show business career with a draconian "Armageddon-around-the-corner religion," as defined by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Not only were Easter and Christmas "outlawed," and homosexuality forbidden, but extramarital intercourse between heterosexuals was condemned as well. Of course, oral and anal sex were out of the question, because gays indulged in such pastimes. As Barbara Grizzuti Harrison wrote in her book, Visions of Glory, Witnesses make it clear that, "you don't have to perform a homosexual act to qualify as a homosexual. If you have homosexual fantasies, you are a homosexual in your heart and God sees your heart."

Michael couldn't spend all his days denying that he was a homosexual. He also had to make music-and so he did, either with his less-talented brothers or without them.

Still known as "The Jacksons," the brothers, with Michael as lead singer, released their second album, Goin' Places, for Epic in the winter of 1977. It reached only number 52 on Billboards charts, which did a lot better than Jermaine's album at Motown. Consequently, executives at CBS began to have serious second thoughts about the Jackson brothers.

"Goin'Places performed dismally," said an officer at Epic. "We were bitterly disappointed as we had high hopes. Even so, we decided it was too early to boot The Jacksons. We rolled the dice and gave the boys much greater control over their next album. For all we knew, if it failed, it would be the last of The Jacksons. As for me personally, I never liked black music. I like my music just like I like my women and my coffee: White!"

Katherine particularly liked one single on the album, "Man of War," a plea for peace. She noted that when her sons were at Motown, Gordy steered them away from any kind of "black power" material, but she was glad to see her boys record a "message song," feeling it was a sign that the Jackson brothers, even Michael and Randy, were growing into men who took stands for what is right.

Tito claimed that people in the business began telling him that "your career, and that of your brothers, is history."

Everybody was disappointed except Michael. At least on the surface, he appeared both defiant and confident. "We'll come back bigger and better than ever," he assured both his mother and his brothers.

Greg Phillinganes, who had toured with Stevie Wonder, was recruited by CBS to work with The Jacksons on their new album, Destiny, helping them with the arrangements. Arriving at their Encino house, Phillinganes found the brothers "real enthusiastic and excited because this was the first time in their entire careers that they controlled the music. All of them could write, but I thought Michael and Randy were probably the strongest of the brothers."

Michael repaid the compliment by naming Phillinganes "Mouse," for some odd reason. The artist was anything but. The nickname was completely inappropriate, "except he did eat cheese," Joe claimed.

With hopes for a comeback, the Jackson brothers recorded their third LP for Epic. Destiny was released in 1978 and was reviewed as a "coming-ofage" album for The Jacksons. In that sense, it evoked The Beatles' album, Revolver. Michael himself selected the peacock as the symbol to use on the back of the album. "The peacock is the only bird that integrates all the colors of the rainbow into one. It can produce only this radiance of fire when it's in love. Love is what we're trying to represent in Destiny. To unite the races through the enduring symbol of love. Since politics can't save the world, give music a chance." The name of the production company handling The Jacksons' music became known as Peacock Productions.

"Ron Alexenburg of CBS Records made a total leap of faith in us," Michael later said, "and let us write and produce our own material, something Gordy at Motown had never done."

Alexenburg "showed the faith" that none of the other top brass at CBS had-in fact, the studio had seriously considered buying out The Jacksons' contract for $100,000 and assigning them to the dustpan of the music industry as a faded, not-very-significant act that belonged to yesterday. "We had about as much faith in the revival of the Jackson brothers as we did in reviving the so-called singing career of Tab Hunter," said one CBS executive.

Randy claimed that doing the Destiny album "was the greatest test for my brothers and me." Marlon Jackson vowed, "We'll show the fuckers that we're not washed up in the business."

All of The Jacksons were collectively credited for five of the eight songs on the album. The first single release on the album, "Blame It on the Boogie," flopped, but the brothers hadn't written that one. The song was written by three writers from Europe. One member of that trio, ironically, was named Michael Jackson (no relation).

Their own song in solo release, "Shake Your Body (Down to the Ground)" peaked at number seven on Billboards pop chart, selling two million records. Dick Clark declared it "the great dance record of the 70s." It was a joint effort of both Michael and his younger brother, Randy, and it shot up to become a platinum disc, generating across-the-board play on radio, becoming one of the most requested disco singles of 1978. Even Truman Capote and Lee Radziwell (Jackie's sister) were seen dancing to it at New York's Studio 54.

The final song on the album, "That's What You Get (For Being Polite)" was almost about Michael himself, in that it laments the woes of a "sensitive" young man who remains emotionally unfulfilled, as Michael was in his own closeted life.

After the release of the Destiny album, The Jacksons went on a nationwide tour, which left Michael so terribly exhausted at one point that he lost his voice. A specialist pronounced that his throat was coated with blisters. Marlon, standing close to Michael, had to sing some of his words for him. The audiences didn't detect that Michael was merely lip-synching.

The tour grossed $750,000 but Michael claimed, "I was very unhappy and stayed in my hotel room when I wasn't on stage. I came alive only when I was performing. That's the only time in my life I'm happy."

Joe forced Michael to grant interview after interview to reporters or magazine feature writers. Michael agreed

although the questions had to be funneled through Janet. Sitting next to her, Michael would listen to a reporter's question, then would hear Janet repeat it. He then told his answer to Janet, who relayed it to the reporters sitting across from Michael and his sister. "It was so bizarre," said Steve Demorest of Melody Maker magazine.

It was with Demorest that Michael first expressed his "very strong interest" in children, although he made the claim that, "I would never father one myself."

One reporter found that Michael offstage showed "no masculinity at all. He had mastered that breathless whisper of Jackie Kennedy which he interspersed with Marilyn Monroe's pre-coital, come-hither voice-with a few Minnie Mouse caught-in-a-mousetrap squeals thrown in for good measure. If he talked like that in a bar in Broken Bow, Nebraska, he would have been hauled out into a back alley and beaten up as a faggot. In other words, Michael didn't speak like John Wayne at all."

Despite the many rumors, instead of a hot sex life, Michael was devoted to his music. On the dawn of his 18th birthday, he found solace in his work.

Still fighting to gain more artistic control over his own voice and the words he sang, he said: "There's a lot of music inside of me that I haven't brought out. We put our hearts into other writers' songs but they're not the cure. They're not really us."

Michael used music to escape from his own personal insecurities about his looks. Acne continued to plague him. "I seem to have a pimple for every oil gland," he said. "My skin is too dark, my nose too wide." He knew that in time the pimples would go, but not his looks. He dreamed of having lighter skin. "As for the nose," he told his mother, "there are surgeons who can do something about that."

When Katherine told Joe that Michael might possibly be considering plas tic surgery on his nose, he replied: "If he goes through with that, I'll bash his face in, new nose and all, and then he'll really need to go to one of those butchers."

His brothers continued to tease him, making him feel even more insecure. All of them had learned to drive except Michael. For some reason, he was petrified to get behind the wheel of a car. "In that case," Joe told him, "you'd better earn enough money so that you can always afford a chauffeur in your future." Michael finally got a driver's license. By then, he was twenty-three years old.

During the 70s, Michael lived in an escapist world. Unlike some performers, such as Warren Beatty or Barbra Streisand, he had no interest in politics or the outside world. Robert Redford might express concern over the polluting of the environment, but all Michael saw of America was a hotel suite or else an auditorium.

After Gerald Ford became president following Richard Nixon's resignation, one newspaper reporter was startled to learn that Michael still thought Nixon was president. "Just who is president now?" Michael asked. The astonished reporter told him it was Gerald Ford. "I didn't know that," Michael responded, "but I never read newspapers, not even Variety. I find cartoons more interesting."

Michael's lack of education also showed up in his speech. He was still using such expressions as "don't got no."

But during the filming of The Wiz, co-starring Michael, Diana Ross topped even Michael in her ignorance of American presidents. When he noticed that Ross was edgy and nervous about a scene, director Sidney Lumet told her: "You have nothing to fear but fear itself."

"Catchy line," she said. "Did you make that up or steal it from someone?"

Lumet admitted stealing it from Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

"Never heard of him, but you should hire him to rewrite all my lines in this film."

Not satisfied with being a "mere singer" (his words), Michael harbored a secret dream of becoming a movie

star. His chance for film stardom came when Lumet offered him the key role of the Scarecrow in The Wiz, a 1978 black version of MGM's 1939 The Wizard of Oz. The Wiz had been a smash hit on Broadway, winning seven Tony awards. Budgeted at thirty million dollars, the film version of The Wiz would be the most expensive film ever produced with an all-black cast.

Jermaine was dead set against Michael accepting the role, even though at the time he was still married to Hazel and still at Motown with a career going nowhere. "You'll fuck it up!" he warned Michael.

Joe also was against Michael accepting the role, fearing that it might "make him into a big movie star-and then he'll bolt from his brothers." For years, Joe had been searching for the right film script in which "all my sonsnot just Michael-would be the stars." So far, he'd come up with no acceptable script.

The role of the Scarecrow seemed ideal for Michael, who admitted that he was "too bouncy for the Tin Man and too light for the Lion."

Michael nearly lost out on the role right before filming began when he suffered a lung attack on the beach on July 4, 1977. "They had to rush me to the emergency hospital," he later recalled. "The doctor said it was pneumothorax. That's bubbles on the lungs. Many slim people have this condition. The doctor also told me I had a mild case of pleurisy." At the time Michael stood five foot nine, a mere 105 pounds spread across a skeletal frame.

When he recovered and arrived at the studio to shoot the movie, he found make-up a grueling task and a painful ordeal. It took five hours every morning for make-up artists to transform Michael into his role. When they were finished, Michael faced the camera in a fright wig with a tomato nose. The heavy makeup left his skin blotched and marked. "My eyes were red and sore," he said. "At the end of the day, my fans outside would point at me and say, `Hey that guy's on drugs-look what it's doing to him!'"

The Wiz was inspired by the film that had brought fame to Judy Garland, who wandered far from Kansas and over the rainbow. Michael dreamed that The Wiz would launch him into a successful movie career as well. Even more than he wanted to be a singer, he craved fame on the screen, much as Madonna would do.

In The Wiz, Michael faced a tough act to follow. The Scarecrow role had brought screen immortality to actor Ray Bolger, who painfully had to see Michael's rendition of what had been his piece-de-la-resistance. After watching it, Bolger said, "The Wiz shortened my life by five years."

A savvy show biz entertainer, Bolger instinctively knew that Michael had not been inspired by his own interpretation of the Scarecrow, but by Charlie Chaplin instead. Like Chaplin, Michael too would later be accused of child molestation. Chaplin remained his favorite actor. "I wanted some of the quality of The Little Tramp in my Scarecrow," Michael claimed.

Michael had seen all available copies of Chaplin's films, including his favorite, The Gold Rush, released in 1925. In the words of one writer, Michael borrowed Chaplin's "disjointed, floppy movements and his shy, retiring onscreen character."

"I love acting so much," Michael told a reporter from The New York Daily News. "It's fun. It's just neat to become some character on the screen, another person different from yourself. That's especially true when you really believe you're the Scarecrow and not just acting. At the end of the day, I hate to take my makeup off. Sometimes I go home and keep it on while I watch old movies starring Katharine Hepburn or Fred Astaire. I've always hated the word `acting.' Or `I'm an actor.' What one should say is not that but `I'm a believer.'"

MJ with Miss Ross and Quincy Jones, 1973

The filming of The Wiz began in October and lasted until Christmas of 1977. The site was the old Astoria Studios in Queens, where the early greats of the silent screen had emoted. "It had a lot of dusty memories and cobwebs," Michael said. The studio had not been used since the heyday of the Roaring Twenties and the virtual birth of the cinema on a grand scale.

Michael's "girl friend," Stephanie Mills, who had played Dorothy on Broadway, desperately wanted to do the movie version. But one night Diana Ross woke up and decided she wanted to play Dorothy. She had star power back in those days, and the studio was willing to pay her one-million dollars.

Her Svengali, Berry Gordy, pleaded with her to abandon the dream of playing Dorothy. "You're not the right age."

"Dorothy is ageless!" Ross countered. At the time of her signing for the film, Ross was thirty-three years old. Ross claimed she could "outdazzle" Judy Garland in the part. Fresh from directing Equus with Richard Burton, Sidney Lumet knew Ross was wrong for the role, but signed on as director of The Wiz anyway.

An all-star black cast was signed up, including Nipsey Russell as the Tin Man, Ted Ross as the Lion, Richard Pryor as The Wiz, and even the legendary Lena Horne as Glinda the Good. Quincy Jones, who was to play a vital role in Michael's future singing career, signed on as musical director.

From the very beginning of their relationship, Michael was impressed with Jones, who grew up on the mean streets of Chicago's South Side, watching his mother descend into madness.

His credentials were awesome, including having played backup for Billie Holiday and touring with Lionel Hampton. During the course of his long career, he would arrange albums for Ray Charles, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, and Count Basic, even Frank Sinatra. Jones would also master virtually every form of American popular music, including African, jazz, urban, gospel, and, later, hip-hop.

Michael's one command to his musical director was: "I don't want our music to sound like The Jacksons. I want to be different."

During the filming of The Wiz, Jones "saw a depth that was never apparent in Michael before. I saw that Michael was growing up right before my eyes."

Jones found that Michael "had the wisdom of a sixty-year-old and the enthusiasm of a child." He also said,

"Beneath that shy exterior was an artist with a burning desire for perfection and an unlimited ambition to be the biggest entertainer in the world-make no mistake. He would watch tapes of gazelles, cheetahs, and panthers to imitate the natural grace of their movements. He wanted to be the best of everything-to take it all in."

Michael told Jones that "the curse of my life is that girls are always after me, even climbing over the walls in Encino to get at me." Later in their work together, he related an incident in which one young woman, escaping the Jackson security guards, slipped onto the property and lounged by the pool for hours before she was discovered and ejected. Later, the woman sued, claiming Michael was the father of "just one of my twins."

Although their dialogues would be fraught with future tension, the relationship between Ross and Michael went fairly smoothly during filming. "I owe her a lot she was my 'main' on the set," he said. "Always there for me with a helping hand or some advice. We were really close. I have to say, I love her!"

In spite of these protestations of devotion, jealousy reared its head between Ross and Michael. In the ballroom of the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn, Michael learned the dance steps too quickly to please Ross, who was struggling with even the simplest of routines. She called him aside one afternoon and charged him with deliberately trying to embarrass her. "I take much longer to learn the steps, and you get them right away. You're doing this just to show me up. Stop it!"

Michael apologized. In the next dance rehearsal, he deliberately flubbed the steps one time after another. Ross smiled proudly at his "mistakes."

Michael secretly watched in delight as two great divas, Lena Horne and Diana Ross, came together and clashed. "It was not a love-in," Michael said, seemingly taking glee at the bitchery going on between them.

Michael had great respect for the Brooklyn-born Lena Home, who was ethereally beautiful with a lucid singing voice. He knew the contribution she'd made to the advancement of black entertainers in America. During her early days as a performer, Horne had been identified as a "cafe au lait Hedy Lamarr" and "the chocolate chanteuse."

During her short time on the set with Michael, Home shared with him some of her triumphs and failures in show business, going back to the days when she was a chorus girl in the famed Cotton Club in Harlem. "And, yes, darling," she told a wide-eyed Michael, "I was one of the Blackbirds of 1939."

She explained to Michael that even when she appeared before the cameras in Hollywood of the 1940s, her songs did not blend with the plot. "That allowed racist theater owners in the Deep South to remove my segment without interfering with any of the action."

"You mean they wouldn't even let black singers entertain the devils?" Michael asked in astonishment.

Home also told Michael that when she was photographed for her original screen test at MGM, her face appeared so light that the studio feared that she'd be mistaken for a white woman.

Jackson and Ross, Los Angeles, 1984

"Is that cameraman still around?" Michael asked. "I want to photograph as white."

"Your own color is perfect the way it is," she told him. "I'm addicted to Godiva chocolates. Be what you are. It's a different time now for black entertainers."

Horne explained that the make-up genius, Max Factor, created a whole new line for her called "Dark Egyptian." Hedy Lamarr used this same make-up in White Cargo in 1942 when she played a half-caste African native.

Home laughed that Lumet, her son-in-law-soon to be her exson-in-law-was married to her daughter, Gail Jones. "I'm the wicked mother-in-law. A little nepotism never hurt nobody, honey. If you got it, use it. Press on with it."

On her last day on the set, Horne took Michael's hand and sang to him her signature song, "Stormy Weather."

Before their final good-bye, she gave him some advice. "It's not the load that breaks you down, kid, but the way you carry it. And, remember, be smarter than the people who hire you."

Horne would resurface once again in the lives of the Jackson family. Following Janet's so-called "wardrobe malfunction" debacle at the 2004 Super Bowl, Horne demanded that Janet be dropped as the star in a television biopic portraying Lena Horne's life and career. At first ABC executives resisted Horne's demand, but Janet's representatives told Variety that she abandoned the role willingly after Horne and her daughter, Gail Lumet, asked that Janet not take the part.

Michael dreaded it when The Wiz was completed and "cried all day," according to a crew member. "You could hear him sobbing in his dressing room."

After watching the final cut of The Wiz, Lumet called Michael, praising him as "the most brilliant actor since James Dean."

"Who is this Dean?" Michael asked.

The Wiz opened across the country around Thanksgiving in 1978 and was one big disappointment. "About as airy as an elephant dancing in quicksand," wrote one reviewer.

At least one hit song came out of it: "Ease on Down the Road," which Michael recorded with his mentor-"and my only one true love," Diana Ross.

Lena Horne

Many critics praised Michael's performance as the Scarecrow, blaming Lumet and Ross for creating "the bomb."

Michael cried for days in his bedroom in Encino. Katherine tried to get him to eat, but he refused food, subsisting on fruit juices. "I dreamed of being a movie star. Now it's all over for me." There was even an unconfirmed report that Michael attempted suicide.

The movie did rather well among black audiences but most white film patrons stayed away. Some critics thought that The Wiz "suffocated in its own lavish production," and that it missed the freshness and sparkle of the stage show.

Michael loved the film, feeling that it was "far superior to the Garland version," which it obviously wasn't, of course. "We made the story and the point more recognizable," he said somewhat enigmatically.

Ross, commenting on the film's failure at the box office, claimed, "I don't care that it didn't make the big bucks. The Wiz wasn't about some stupid movie as much as it was about moil"

That was her public front. Privately, she was reported to have been almost "suicidally disappointed" over the critics's attack on her interpretation of Dorothy.

Liza Minnelli went to see the film and privately told friends, "Thank God mother never lived to see this travesty." As an afterthought, she diplomatically added, "Michael was wonderful."

Despite the financial collapse of The Wiz, many film projects for Michael reached the planning stage. Michael himself felt he would be perfect cast as Bill Bojangles, the famous black dancer, but the movie was never made.

"I wanted the filming of The Wiz to last forever," Michael said three years later. "Working on the movie was the happiest time of my life. From now on, I'm going to dwell forever in the Land of Oz."

"It's the combinations that really distinguish him as an artist. Spin, stop, pull up leg, pull jacket open, turn, freeze. And the glide where he steps forward while pushing back. Spinning three times and popping up on his toes. That's a trademark and a move a lot of professionals wouldn't try. If you go up wrong, you can really hurt yourself. "

--Dancer Hilton Battle

"You look like an angel; you walk like an angel, but I got wise; you're the Devil in disguise.""

--Elvis Presley

"I see God in the face of children. And, man, I just love being around them all the time.""

--Michael Jackson

"Often isolated from other kids when he was growing up, Michael learned everything he knew from TV. Everything he saw on television that represented class and glamour was white. "

--Former aide to the Jackson family (name withheld)

"Pedophiles are often adults who never grow up and they have a unique ability to identify with children, a Pied Piper effect. Their homes are often shrines to children and exhibit a Disneyland like atmosphere.""

--Ken Lanning A Behavioral Profile of Pedophiles

"You want to see the boy next door? Then don't go see Michael Jackson, because he ain't the boy next door. "

--Sammy Davis Jr.

Chapter Five

During the making of The Wiz in New York, Katherine moved La Toya and Michael to a luxurious rented apartment on chic Sutton Place on Manhattan's East Side. Here Michael was to enjoy the taste of freedom and independence for the first time in his chaperoned life.

He also arrived in the New York of 1977, which, arguably, was the most decadent year in that city's history in the entire 20th century. Right before the AIDS epidemic struck, hip New Yorkers-both gay and straight-were on a sex binge. "If you couldn't get laid in New York at that time," said Truman Capote, "you had two heads and a lizard's tail."

In the apartment, La Toya took the luxury suite, a showplace boudoir with a large bed and a mirror above it. The decorator had been inspired by Mae West's bedroom in Los Angeles. She assigned Michael to the simple "maid's room," although he-not her-was the star.

The leased apartment rented for $2,500 a month, and was located on the 37th floor of a luxe apartment building "It was the type of place Joan Crawford might have rented," said Quincy Jones.

The apartment opened onto a balcony with a railing. To distract La Toya from her new addiction to eating chocolates day and night, Michael tried to frighten her by dangling himself precariously over the balcony, threatening to let go and fall to his death. He would, of course, later become notorious for dangling one of his children over another balcony.

Reclusive and shy for most of his life, Michael, at least temporarily, became "fun, outgoing, and a dancing fool," in the words of Wiz director Sidney Lumet. "I heard that he and La Toya were going out to the clubs every night. I was concerned if Michael could get up for early call at the studio. But regardless of how late he stayed out the night before, he was always on time for his appointment with the makeup boys."

One night at the Rainbow Grill, Michael was introduced to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who would play an important role in his future. "All memories of his goddess, Diana Ross, were forgotten when he encountered Jackie 0," said the gossipy Capote. "He developed a fixation on her. All he could talk about was her voice, which sounded a bit like Michael's own whispers. Her clothing. Her glamorous hair styling. Her manner. Her polite manners. Her sophistication. Until that meeting at the Rainbow Grill, I think Michael had wanted to transform himself into Miss Diana. But after meeting Jackie, I think then and there Michael raised the bar on his transgendered dreams. Instead of a black diva like Ross, he apparently decided that he wanted to transform himself into a white woman like Jackie. After all, she was the most famous and most admired woman in the world at the time. Who wouldn't want to walk, act, talk, and look like Jackie? Even moi. Actually, to tell the truth, if I could become a woman, I would want to be Marilyn Monroe. As Marilyn, I would fuck Warren Beatty, Robert Redford, Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, Burt Reynolds, Nick Nolte, Tom Jones-big dick that one-Robert Goulet, Rock Hudson, you name it. But I was more realistic than Michael. I knew I was trapped with my own voice and physicality and could never escape it. Even though a Little Black Sambo, Michael felt no such limitation. He truly believed the American Dream-in his case, that you could be born a poor black ghetto boy and grow up to become a rich white woman."

Michael's interest in Jackie was first piqued weeks before he actually met her. Bob Weiner, a reporter for the New York Daily News, invited Michael to his apartment for an interview and a home-cooked meal. While Weiner was in his kitchen preparing a chicken and rice dish, Michael amused himself by "grazing" through the wealth of books and photographs that were scattered across the apartment.

At one point, Weiner heard Michael let out a yelp. Rushing in from the kitchen, he spotted Michael staring at a celebrity nude calendar. One of the snapshots was of a nude Jackie. "I can't believe what I'm seeing!" Michael said. "Why would a woman like Mrs. Kennedy pose nude for the paparazzi?"

Weiner patiently explained that the picture had been taken on Skorpios with a hidden camera. Jackie had no idea that she was being photographed and that her privacy had been invaded.

Later, the former First Lady found out that her husband, Aristotle Onassis, had hired a Greek photographer to take the picture. Apparently, her husband felt Jackie was getting "too grand," and he hoped to embarrass her-"bring her back down to earth," as he allegedly said at the time.

Weiner later expressed surprise that he had "encountered an eighteenyear-old millionaire with his innocence intact."

After their first meeting, Michael virtually "stalked" Jackie, if the not always reliable Capote can be believed. "He showered her with invitations. If she had agreed, Michael would have taken her out every night. I don't know what she saw in this inexperienced black boy from somewhere in the Middle West, but Jackie told me that she was intrigued with Michael and his sheer audacity."

Truman Capote

"Of course, Jackie was a pro at gracefully turning down invitations and keeping ardent pursuers at arm's length," Capote claimed. "Everybody tried to fuck her after John Kennedy died--some succeeded. Marlon Brando, William Holden, Frank Sinatra, and, of course, such `family' as Robert Kennedy and Peter Lawford. She was far too hip to suspect that Michael's motives were sexual. That would have been laughable to her. But she was aware that she'd become his new role model."

"As of yet, I have no opinion of Michael Jackson," Jackie allegedly told Capote. "I am just formulating one. I can't figure him out. It seems he's stalled on the bridge between boyhood and manhood. He also seems strangely asexual. I honestly believe that even though Michael is an adult, he hasn't completely figured out for himself yet if he wants to be gay or straight. I, naturally, have my own ideas about where he's going, which road he'll take. I think his future sex life-that is, if he has a future sex life-is going to be very difficult for him. Fraught with hazards."

If Jackie did say that, and Capote maintained that she did, it was a perceptive observation about where Michael was heading in his future.

Jackie invited Michael to accompany her to the Robert Kennedy Tennis Tournament where she introduced him to her children, John Jr. and Caroline. Later, Michael would invite his newly formed friend, Capote, to escort him to another tennis match to watch young John play.

The son of the slain American president was just a teenager at the time, and had not come into his full male beauty with a chiseled physique that would contribute to his being referred to as "the hunk" in American media.

"Even though John-John was quite young at the time," Capote later recalled, "he was still a Prince Charming, even with all that long hair. It was obvious that afternoon that Michael was smitten with John-John. I was only

becoming aware of Michael's interest in teenage boys. I'd met John-John once or twice through Jackie, but had not paid much attention to him until that afternoon."

After the game, Capote said that John invited both of them to join him at some grill along Ninth Avenue because he said he was ravenously hungry. "But, first, we were also invited to join him in the locker room where he had to shower and get dressed. At the time, I didn't know that John-John was an exhibitionist. The world learned that much later. Before both Michael and me, John-John peeled off. He might have been just a boy at the time, but that was a man's cock he was flaunting at us. The kid was hung ... and hung big. Michael appeared fascinated. Jack Kennedy often took nude swims-Rose did too-at their estate on Palm Beach. Anyone who was interested knew that the President wasn't hung at all. So where did John-John get this octoroon dick? I think I know. From Jackie's daddy, Jack Bouvier-called `Black Jack.' His many girlfriends claimed Black Jack was hung like a horse."

John-John, grown up, with his brainchild, George Magazine, and Jay Leno

Capote admitted that he did not know the outcome of Michael's attempt to forge a relationship with the handsome young teenager. "I understand that Michael pursued John-John, and they were seen together on a few occasions. As everybody knows, President Kennedy's closest friend, Lem Billings, was a homosexual and was madly in love with John Kennedy all his life-a oneway affair, I might add. But John-John didn't seem ready, willing, or able to use his father's relationship with Lem as a role model for Michael and himself."

"Exhibiting himself in front of Michael was one thing-he did that in front of any number of gay guys-but carrying it farther than that was out of the question," Capote claimed. "Jackie always had homosexual panic fears about her son, especially when he wanted to become an actor. She may have intervened and nipped Michael's friendship with John-John in the bud. Somebody told her that Michael was collecting pictures of `the hunk,' all shirtless, and decorating his bedroom walls with them. I don't know for a fact if that were true or not. But it was enough of a rumor to cause concern in Jackie's head. In the future, she would continue to pursue her own relationship with Michael, at least on a professional level. But at a point not known to me, John-John faded from Michael's life. Unlike Madonna, Michael never really got a piece of John-John. In that kid's case, the line formed on the right and the left."

Capote, Michael's original guide to Studio 54, called the legendary dance club "very democratic, boys with boys, girls with girls, girls with boys, blacks and whites, capitalists and Marxists, and everything else-all in one big mix!"

And so it was.

In 1977, Studio 54 was the hottest night club in the entire world. You never knew who might show up on any given night: Jackie Onassis, Gregory Peck, or even Doris Duke, the planet's richest woman. Andy Warhol was a

regular. During the making of The Wiz, Diana Ross appeared frequently, even Elizabeth Taylor, Betty Ford, and Mikhail Baryshnikov, who wanted to dance with Michael as a lark but was politely and shyly turned down.

One night, Capote invited Michael to his favorite spot, the deejay's booth overlooking the dance floor. From this crow's nest, he had an ideal viewing spot. He told Michael that, "Proust would have loved this place. Too bad he's not around to record it. I think about all the dead who would have loved 54: Toulouse-Lautrec, Baudelaire, Ronald Firbank, Carl Van Vechten, Oscar Wilde."

"Who are all these people?" Michael asked, "And what did they die from?"

Capote stared incredulously at Michael. "They were lost souls who died for love," he finally said.

Constructed in 1927, the building itself was an old theater and TV studio. Before that it was once the home of the San Carlo Opera Company. The address was at 254 W. 54th St., off Broadway. Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager were the welcoming hosts if you were rich, famous, infamous, or just merely gorgeous. They invited "the right people," turning all others away.

Around the dance floor were silver banquettes. Under the balconies was a mirrored diamond-shaped bar. Overlooking both the balcony and the large dance floor was the infamous "Rubber Room," designed with thick rubber walls so they could be washed down with soap and water after a night of sex and drugs.

In the basement was the very private, invitation-only VIP Room, called the "sanctum sanctorum." With chain-link fences lining its perimeter, it evoked a prison. But night after night it was the most sought-after den of those denizens of the night who came here to pursue private pastimes devoted to drugs and raw sex.

Gloria Vanderbilt

The waiters from upstairs appeared frequently, but not to serve drinks down here. They were shirtless, wearing only white silk basketball shorts. Clients, both male and female, brought their toy boys of the night here to pull down those shorts and to fellate them. Minnelli got Rubell to let Michael enter into this chamber. He was reportedly shocked yet fascinated by the coke-snorting and the wild sex in various combinations of sexes, including three- or four-ways.

"The lounge made Sodom and Gomorra look like kindergarten," said a former employee.

"We just assumed that Michael was gay," said one of the busboys. "With that voice, that mincing manner, what else could he be? But he turned down guys who came on to him. It was rumored that even Calvin Klein invited Michael to his lair in the Pines on Fire Island but Michael rejected the invitation of the great underwear king."

Michael often spent hours on the dance floor. One night he was seen dancing with Gloria Vanderbilt, the heiress once known as "the poor little rich girl." Gloria was also known for her affairs, including liaisons with

Marlon Brando, Howard Hughes, and Frank Sinatra.

Night after night, Michael watched in fascination as Rollerena, one of the most amusing drag queens in New York City history, endlessly circled the floor on her roller skates.

On the main floor on any given night, Madonna might be seen chatting with Salvador Dali. Elton John might be spotted trying to pick up Patrick Taylor, a busboy who, regrettably, turned out to be straight. At the time, patrons treated the handsome busboys and waiters like Playboy bunnies. "Everyone, guys and dolls, tried to bed us, and most of them succeeded," said a former waiter.

The co-owner, Steve Rubell, personally welcomed Michael and La Toya to the club, where a cocaine-snorting, neon-lit man-in-the-moon would descend from the ceiling five or six times a night, his flashing red eye approving of all the coke-snorting going on. The smell of amyl nitrite cut the night air.

Michael and La Toya were there at the famous May, 1977, birthday bash for Bianca Jagger. She rode onto the main floor on a white horse led by a naked man.

A far greater tour guide to Studio 54 than Capote was Liza Minnelli. She became a "fixture" in Michael's life during the frenzied nights she spent at Studio 54, doing cocaine and partying the night away. Her health was fragile, and she was deep into relationships with both Martin Scorsese and Baryshnikov. When Michael caught up with her, she'd already missed seven performances of the musical, The Act, simply because she was not able to go on.

On one of Liza's "good nights," Michael had gone to see her perform in the Broadway musical, and had been deeply moved by her voice and movements on the stage. The next day, someone, perhaps La Toya, showed him a review written by John Simon, theater critic for New York magazine. In the harshest terms, the acerbic Simon had attacked the look of Liza's face, mocking it, especially her wide eyes.

"Like myself, Liza has always been insecure about her looks," Michael said. "After reading that mean-spirited attack, she was devastated and didn't even want to go on the next night. I know how she felt. When I was fourteen, a so-called fan mocked me for my awful acne. I stayed in my room for days with the curtains drawn. I couldn't even stand to look at my own face in the mirror. I cried day and night. I was ashamed to show my face to the world again. Poor Liza. Poor me. A performer's appearance is everything. When your look is mocked, it cuts into your heart like a sharp knife."

Michael remained steadfastly loyal to Liza, even though he could obviously see the toll that alcohol and drugs were taking on her. He dared not ask her to change her lifestyle, even though he suspected she was heading for a fall. The designer Halston told Warhol, who then told Michael, that Liza had arrived one night at his Upper East Side townhouse. Her face was partially concealed by a black felt hat to hide the damage. According to Halston, "Liza barged into my house and demanded that I give her every drug I had."

Liza Minnelli 1984

In spite of her drugs, heavy drinking, and her horrible appearance (at least according to John Simon), Liza still managed to snare what was then considered the sexiest man in New York. The Russian dancer, Baryshnikov, was hit upon by both men and women wherever he went. One night as Capote and Michael were observing Liza dancing with Baryshnikov on Studio 54's floor, Capote turned to Michael. "Unlike Rudolf Nureyev, Mischa actually likes women. He's also notoriously virile. I'm dying to sample that thick Russian sausage for myself. So far, no luck. But one night when he's really drunk down in the basement, I'll get him yet."

"How do you know if he can perform if he's all that drunk?" Michael asked. "The word is out," Capote said. "Mischa can get it rock hard even if completely wasted. He's Russian, my dear boy. Russians are always soggy with vodka."

In their private moments away from the frenzied heat of Studio 54, Liza and Michael bonded. Their friendship was forged partly because of their equivalently horrid showbiz childhoods.

Michael might have scorned his chain-smoking, Scotch-and-Coke drinking new friend, but he found her the most fascinating woman he'd ever known. Liza entered that rare pantheon of "friends for life" that would eventually include Elizabeth Taylor.

Compared to Judy Garland, Michael's father, Joe, was a pillar of stability. By 1969 Judy had attempted suicide twenty times, finally dying alone in the bathroom of her London townhouse.

Michael was impressed with the intensity of Liza's survival instinct, even though she currently was on a self-destructive binge. She told him that once when she was sixteen, her mother kicked her out of the house. "I had my plane fare and a $100 left over," she told Michael. "I went to New York, and I've never taken another penny from my parents."

Michael was mesmerized by her stories of growing up in Hollywood. She told of the fabulous parties thrown by Judy and her then-husband, Sid Luft. "At one of them, Lauren Bacall sang while Humphrey Bogart looked on in amusement. Judy had invited this newcomer to Hollywood. At least I thought she was a newcomer. Turns out she'd been around for quite awhile. Her name was Marilyn Monroe. She sat alone. No one would talk to her. I felt lonely, too, and I came over to sit with her and talk to her. She was so grateful for the company she practically cried."

Michael confided that he too had moments of great loneliness such as that.

Sometimes Liza could be seen sitting alone even at Studio 54 with Michael, just holding his hand, although romance was not part of the equation. "I'm vulnerable," she told him.

"It's one of your most appealing qualities."

"But I don't want to be vulnerable," she protested. "It's a secret. I don't want the public to find out I'm vulnerable. Oh, my God, the last thing I want to become is the second Judy Garland."

Michael was once asked what had drawn him to Liza since they were such different personalities. "She gives. Everyone else in my life takes."

One night, high on cocaine, Liza turned to Michael and said, "I'm tired of talking about myself. What do you think of me?"

"I like the way you crawled out from behind your mother's shadow."

Michael's devotion to Liza even earned her a paragraph in his autobiography, Moonwalk. "Liza Minelli (sic) is a person whose friendship I'll always cherish. She's like my show business sister."

Michael, who claimed "I love her," loved her so much he never learned to spell her name. But his editor, Jackie 0, should have known to spell Minnelli with two n's. The line, "my show business sister," was very revealing. Capote sometimes referred to Michael and Liza as "soul sisters."

"We get together and talk about the business," Michael wrote. "It comes out of our pores. We both eat, sleep, and drink various moves and songs and dances."

Michael, however, wasn't spending all of his time with his "soul sister." He was making the scene with other cultural icons eager to see what he was about. "Michael was on the long path to his own liberation and independence from his domineering family," Sidney Lumet allegedly said. "Michael was the meal ticket for the Jacksons, so they wanted to keep a close eye on him even though he was experiencing New York on his own terms."

At Studio 54, Michael met some of the cultural elite of the era, although he wasn't certain who some of the celebrities were. Truman Capote introduced him to Gloria Swanson. Michael was found under his Afro wearing a pale shantung-weave shirt and a scarlet-colored Ascot. The silent screen vamp, who immortalized herself by playing Norma Desmond in the 1950 Sunset Blvd., said, "Young man, in my day men went to a barber."

He also met the great diva of modern dance, Martha Graham, who sat next to Betty Ford. By that time, Michael had come to realize that her husband, Gerald, had been president of the United States.

Escorted by her mother, Teri, Brooke Shields was pointed out to Michael, but their relationship lay in the future. Years later, he could not recall meeting a brunette Madonna, but he did wonder who that old man was sitting next to her. It was William S. Burroughs, that "literary outlaw," junkie, wife murderer, and author of the underground classic, Naked Lunch.

Studio 54 functioned as Michael's major "Combat Zone," but he was spotted at other venues as well. He appeared at avant-garde gallery openings on the arm of his "date," Andy Warhol. At one such gathering in Soho, Warhol was overheard talking to Michael about what he wanted to do as a filmmaker.

"I want to depict homosexuality, lesbianism, sadomasochism, masturbation, drug use-even douching, and most definitely every known sexual permutation in the universe."

On another night at Studio 54, Warhol confided to Michael, as he had countless others, his plans to stage a musical on Broadway to be called The Velvet Underground.

Mick Jagger

"Mick Jagger and I have been planning this for years," Warhol said. "There's a great role in it for a black singer. In nearly all artistic productions today, you have to cast a token black. Perhaps you'll agree to take the part and make it your Broadway debut."

"As the token nigger?" Michael asked, seemingly offended by Warhol's remark. "I don't know about that."

"My protege, Paul Morrissey, wants me to produce a film starring Mick and Bianca Jagger," Warhol said. "It's to be based on Andre Gide's The Caves of the Vatican. Bianca and Mick will be cast as brother and sister. I guess I'll have to rewrite Gide because I want Mick and Bianca to commit incest in the film. Of course, I haven't read Gide. Maybe he's already come up with the incest thing all by himself."

"Actually, I heard that David Bowie and Jagger are considering dressing in drag and doing a remake of Some Like It Hot," Michael said. "I'm sure they'd be better than Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon. Some Like It Hot is my favorite Marilyn Monroe movie."

"Mine too!" Warhol chimed in, as he cruised the main dance floor of Studio 54. Suddenly, he showed astonishment. "Speak of the Devil! Here comes darling Mick now. I'll introduce the two of you."

As Mick Jagger talked to Michael for less than twenty minutes, he seemed to grow bored and invited both Warhol and Michael to go with him to Max's Kansas City Dance Club. Michael only reluctantly agreed to go along.

At Max's, Jagger continued to drink heavily. At one point Jagger asked Warhol to dance with him, and the two men took to the floor, creating a spectacle. Michael sat on the sidelines.

Warhol returned to table, but Jagger headed for the men's room. He was trailed by a string of gay guys hoping for a "sighting."

"Mick is hot!" Warhol told Michael. "Every time he goes to take a piss, a lot of guys follow him inside the toilet, hoping to get a look at his dick. I don't have to revert to such tactics. I've slept with Mick on several occasions. In fact, I'm mad about the boy."

Michael didn't know if that were true or not. He'd learned that Warhol often exaggerated. But as he later confided to La Toya, among others, "I think this time Andy was telling the truth."

For his part, Jagger always seemed to have mixed feelings about Warhol. In Robert Frank's film, Cocksucker Blues, Jagger called Warhol "a fucking voyeur"-and did so with a certain accuracy.

After meeting at Studio 54, Mick volunteered to introduce Michael to "the scene" in New York, taking the innocent young man to clubs Michael had never heard of.

"There's no way in hell that Mick could have found a simpatico soul in Michael Jackson," Keith Richards was reported to have said as an explanation for the time they spent together. "Mick is very bright, and I think he sensed future competition in Jackson. He wanted to study his every move, figure out what he was up to, what he was like, what he had that the world wanted to buy. 11

A music industry insider, Butch Wohlin, who worked briefly with both Jagger and Michael, said, "Mick was worldly wise. To him, Jackson must have looked like a prissy little baby. Almost everything about Jackson must have turned off Mick. That religious fanaticism. That little girl voice. His fear of drugs. His fear of sex. Jackson was the very opposite of Mick."

After touring the New York clubs with Michael, Jagger told Richards, "Jackson is a limp-wristed bore. Or at least I think he is. I never heard one word he ever said in that whispery voice of his. At the clubs I took him to, the music was too loud, and I'm not a lip reader. The kid is a total lightweight. He's like froth on beer. I'm the golden liquid itself. The alcohol that makes you drunk. The kid doesn't drink. Doesn't do drugs. I think the strongest drink Jackson ever ordered was a Shirley Temple."

As time would reveal, Michael may have learned more from Jagger than the rock star did from him.

"Long before Madonna grabbed her pussy on stage, long before Michael fondled his dick in front of an audience, Mick was crotch-grabbing years before," Wohlin said. "In Mick's case, and I've seen it, he had a lot more to grab. Jackson experienced a meltdown if it was suggested that he was gay. He appeared like such a sissy on the whole subject. Throughout his career, Mick has been exposed as a bisexual in print. Whether he is or not is another matter. But he didn't give a damn. Did Mick sleep with David Bowie? How in the fuck do I know? I wasn't concealed under Mick's bed with a recorder. Mick has a certain androgyny. So does Jackson. But what Mick had and Michael never would have was raw masculine power. You inherit that. You're born with it. When God handed out those male genes in Heaven, Michael was at the end of the food chain that day and got none of them. Madonna is far more masculine than Michael. The kid just doesn't have it. There's a rumor going around that he was born a hermaphrodite-and I believe that. He's certainly caught in that twilight zone between the sexes-neither girl nor boy. On the other hand, Mick got more male hormones than he knows what to do with."

"Mick may have given Jackson a few lessons in androgyny," Wohlin claimed, "but the kid didn't learn his lessons well. I think Jackson envied that Mick could wear lipstick and sashay around like a queen, yet still keep his image as a macho rocker. Jackson desperately wanted to learn from Mick what his secret was. How did he get away with that? Jackson never learned the secret. When he went out on stage with all that lipstick, all that sashaying around, he still hadn't learned the secret. But I'll let you in on the secret. Mick's public knew that behind the androgyny was a rocker with balls. Mick has balls. Michael Jackson does not!"

One night at a club in the East Village, Jagger showed up with Rudolf Nureyev, whom he'd met years before when he'd gone backstage after one of the Russian dancer's performances with Margot Fonteyn. In the great heyday of ambisexual New York in the late 70s, rumors were all over town that Nureyev and Jagger were "sometimes lovers."

At the club, Jagger introduced Nureyev to Michael, who later told friends, "Those two even look alike. God gave both of them the same mouth."

That night Michael was fascinated to hear an argument between Jagger and Nureyev. Jagger maintained that it took more talent to be a pop star than a ballet dancer. Looking over at Michael, Nureyev said, "Anyone can be a pop star. It takes incredible talent to be a ballet dancer."

Nureyev, at least for that night, won the argument.

Michael turned down Nureyev's offer of marijuana, but Jagger went for it. Again ... and again ... and again.

Within the hour, Jagger and Nureyev had taken to the dance floor, as the other dancers in all combination of sexes parted to make room for them.

"Those two pressed their bodies so close to each other that night I'm sure they both got erections," said Tom Felison, club manager. "They weren't dancing. They were fucking each other in front of everybody. It was the most overtly sexual dance I've ever seen. Nureyev ran his hands across Jagger's bare chest, then kissed him. It was Big Mouth meeting Big Mouth."

According to the manager, Michael witnessed the whole event with wideeyed wonder.

Suddenly, Nureyev, showing a big erection in tight pants, broke from Jagger and headed for the table where Michael sat on the edge of his seat, taking in all the action. With the grace of a swan, Nureyev reached for Michael's arm, pulling him onto the dance floor.

As an amused Jagger stood by, Nureyev began "the dance of love" with Michael, rubbing his well-endowed crotch against Michael's flaccid package.

"It was the most suggestive dance I'd ever seen," Felison claimed. "And I've seen boys and girls, even boys and boys, fucking each other on my dance floor. I realized that night that the suggestion of sexual mating can be far more erotic than the actual fucking. In the midst of all that heat, generated almost entirely by Nureyev, not by Michael, Jagger moved in from the rear. He too had an erection which he rammed up against Michael's butt encased in jeans. God, what a hot scene. Nureyev reached into Michael's shirt and rubbed his skilled hand across the nipples as he'd just done with Jagger. From the rear, Jagger was plowing his fingers into Michael's hair before lowering them to Michael's lips, presumably for him to suck on them. Michael was having none of that shit."

When Michael tried to break away, Nureyev yelled, "We've got ourselves a virgin, Mick."

With a sudden force, Michael bolted from the "human sandwich" of which he was a part. Bursting into tears, he fled from the club.

Not missing a beat, nor even seeming to care about their friend's departure, Nureyev resumed his erotic dance with Jagger.

"From the looks of things, those two climaxed in their pants before leaving the dance floor that night," Felison said. "Talk about two hot men!"

A long time would go by before Jagger would enter Michael's life again.

When not out with Jagger or Liza, Michael would continue to accept "dates" from Warhol. He was proud of the friendship, viewing Warhol as "The King of Pop Art."

Michael told Warhol that when he'd lived with Diana Ross, "she taught me how to appreciate art, and we often painted together, going out to record scenes from nature."

Warhol laughed in amusement, not really believing Michael. "How could Ross have taken time out for that?" he asked. "The only art Ross appreciates is what is staring back at her in the mirror."

When Warhol heard that Michael was bragging about his friendship with the "King of Pop Art," he corrected him.

"I'm also an artist myself, a filmmaker, a writer, publisher, interviewer, photographer, fashion consultant, set designer, record producer, and the world's greatest jet-setting trendsetter," Warhol claimed.

"You left out dog lover," Michael jokingly chastised him.

Warhol seemed to mull that over for a moment. "That too!" he said.

Warhol took Michael to the Sanctuary, a former church on 10th avenue where the altar had been turned into a sound booth. The DJ was dressed as a priest. "Look at those hookers over at the bar," Warhol pointed out to Michael.

"They're nuns!" Michael said, astonished.

"They're merely dressed as nuns," Warhol said. "They're actually drag queen hookers."

Warhol also pointed out that most of the boys dancing with each other on the floor weren't gay. "They just look gay. Actually, the Sanctuary has pioneered a new lifestyle. Here straight boys can dance with straight boys, and no one ridicules them for doing what they want to."

Warhol also took Michael to the Tambourlaine, a Latino night club that flourished briefly in the East 50s. He told Michael that their mutual friend, Capote, once showed up at the club with both Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Lee Radziwell. "Those sisters were wearing Hermes scarves to disguise themselves, but they were spotted and mobbed before the night was out," Warhol said.

Later, Warhol sadly informed Michael that the Tambourlaine had closed when a drug dealer from Harlem castrated one of his clients, a drag queen from Havana, for failing to pay him the five hundred dollars she owed him. "I made the bitch into a real woman," the drug dealer bragged, as he emerged from the women's toilet. The screams from the transvestite could be heard throughout the club.

One night Capote took both Warhol and Michael to Stage 54, a gay bar near the United Nations that attracted mainly black homosexuals serving the UN staffs of such countries as Nigeria and Haiti.

"Michael was turned off by the place," Capote said. "I suspected that Michael's desire was to fuck white."

The Studio 54 era and the New York scene were just a brief interlude in Michael's life. "It was a momentary diversion for him," Capote recalled. "In time, we would learn that he was far more interested in taking little boys to Disneyland than he was in hanging out with denizens of the night such as Bianca Jagger, Andy Warhol, Liza, and Mick. Or even moi as far as that goes. Foolish boy! With me, he was with the best. Going high class. I'm invited only to A-list parties. I also introduced Michael only to A-list people. Regrettably, the child didn't know how to behave. He was not meant to conquer high society as I'd done before him."

Capote might have been referring to, among other incidents, the coming together of Michael with the great designer, Halston.

Halston

One night at Studio 54, if Truman Capote is to be believed, the fashion designer, Halston, was mesmerized as

he watched Michael dance across the floor. Before the evening ended, Halston confided to Capote: "I'm in love with that boy. I'm taking him for my next lover."

Halston (actually Roy Halston Frowick, born 1932 in Des Moines, Iowa) was in his mid-forties when he first encountered Michael. "A bit long in the tooth for Michael," Capote cattily remarked.

At the time, Halston was still being celebrated for the pillbox hat made famous by former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. "He's designed hats for everybody from Gloria Swanson to Deborah Kerr," Capote said. "I'm sure if he plays it right, he can become Michael's milliner."

Halston never ended up designing hats for Michael, although he'd designed masks for Capote's famous Black and White Dance in the Grand Ballroom of the Plaza Hotel in 1966.

Halston made a striking, somewhat mysterious appearance with his mirrored sunglasses and all black attire. In the years to come, society's top dressmaker was accused of "looking like Darth Vader."

On the first night of hawk-eyeing Michael, the singer disappeared before the designer could meet him. On another night at Studio 54, under pressure from Halston, Capote finally introduced Halston to Michael. On this night, it was Michael who was dressed entirely in black, Halston appearing in a russetbrown ultra-suede jacket and tight-fitting red suede trousers.

He didn't really have to, but Halston tried to impress Michael, who at first didn't seem to know who the designer was, at least according to Capote. "The talk was of scent. . .perfume, my dear. Halston's perfume was the rage of New York. I wore it myself. Halston told Michael and me that he expected sales in the coming year to go beyond one hundred million dollars."

"He filled Michael in on the secrets of the fashion industry," Capote claimed. "We learned-actually I already knew this-that only three thousand women in the world could afford to buy a designer dress. But he felt his scent could reach millions around the world. At one point, Halston asked Michael if he'd wear his new perfume, and Michael agreed. Halston promised to send him a case."

That night, as Capote remembered, Halston showed his disdain for other designers. Both Gloria Vanderbilt and Calvin Klein were at Studio 54. Halston looked at each of them with a sneer. "Only a pig would put his name on a pair of blue jeans," Halston sneered.

Capote said that he, at Halston's request, left the designer alone to talk to Michael. "I learned some of the details later," Capote said. "After a long, apparently harmonious chit-chat, Michael suddenly arose from a banquette and abruptly left the club."

"What happened?" Capote asked when he rejoined Halston.

"I don't know why he got so huffy," Halston said. "All I said was, I want to fuck your beautiful cafe au lait ass all night. What's wrong with that? I ask many boys the same thing. No one turns down Halston but this uppity boy."

One night at Studio 54, Nureyev introduced Michael to his friend, Sterling Saint Jacques, an Afro-Italian singer with whom the dancer was having a tor rid affair. Son of the famous black actor, Raymond St. Jacques, Sterling was tall, handsome, and "lean and mean," as he put it. Michael seemed intimidated when the singer leaned in close to him as if he were going to kiss him. "And they call Frank Sinatra of blue eyes. I should be called young blue eyes. Have you ever seen eyes as blue as mine-and in a nigger's head too?" Michael quickly drifted away. Years later, Michael read of the singer's death of AIDS in 1984.

Michael had long since fled Studio 54 when "this mad, mad, mad world" ended abruptly. By the end of 1979, Rubell and Schrager were arrested by the IRS for income tax evasion and were sentenced to three years in prison. They served 13 months before parole. But Studio 54 would never be the same again.

A closeted homosexual, Rubell was diagnosed HIV positive in 1985, but denied his condition and continued

his lifestyle of heavy drinking and drug taking. This led to his death in 1989. Calvin Klein wept openly at the funeral. Michael was invited but chose not to attend.

On January 22, 1979, months after Michael's flirtation with Studio 54, the Jackson brothers, with Michael as the lead singer, embarked on another world tour, beginning in Bremen, West Germany. It was on to Nairobi, Kenya, with stops in Madrid, Paris, and London to follow.

In London, Michael learned that the latest Jackson album, Destiny, had gone double platinum. Michael's prediction of a comeback for the Jackson brothers was now a reality-in fact, long before the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton, Michael was calling his brothers "the comeback kids."

In England Michael turned a dangerous curve in his personal life.

Somehow evading security, star-struck Terry George, a 13-year-old Yorkshire lad, came knocking on Michael's hotel door in mid-February of 1979. With his tape recorder, Terry had come to interview Michael, his favorite singer, although the boy may also have told Paul McCartney that he was the favorite.

At the Dragonara Hotel in Leeds in the north of England, Michael himself came to the door but didn't open it until Terry told him that he was "only a boy of thirteen."

Michael invited him in and chatted pleasantly with the boy for nearly an hour. When Terry got up to leave, Michael invited him to return to his hotel suite the following day. Terry came by and was there to say good-bye to Michael when he returned to London. Before he left, Terry gave Michael his home address and phone number.

Three days went by before Michael called from London. A series of phone calls followed after Michael returned to California, mostly trivial talk but with many specific references to religion. Michael told Terry that he was a Jehovah's Witness and promised to send him a Bible.

By April the long phone conversations between Michael and the boy, some of which stretched out to more than three hours, had turned to sex. "Do you ever play with yourself?" Michael asked. Terry later said that, although red-faced at first, he finally admitted to Michael that he did masturbate on occasion.

Terry later revealed that he and Michael engaged in what is the equivalent of phone sex. According to Terry, Michael admitted to him that he often masturbated during their marathon transatlantic phone conversations.

Today, a grown-up Terry George has a website in England. Among other pursuits, he is a photographer, and his website features some of the best-looking hunks in the UK, most often in tight-fitting, basket-revealing swimwear. He's only a photographer of males in his spare time; otherwise he owns several companies and is said to be a multi-millionaire. One of his most successful projects has been the "Mr. Gay UK" competition, a pageant which he sponsors with his partner, Michael Rothwell.

After molestation charges against Michael surfaced in the 1990s, Terry was contacted by the press. The Mail on Sunday ran revelations about Terry's friendship with Michael. Terry called his interview with The Mail on Sunday "more like an interrogation." Soon UK readers by the millions were treated to a headlined interview: I HAD PHONE SEX WITH JACKO.

"I do not feel like a victim and I never did feel like a victim," Terry told the press. "We only stopped talking on the phone when my mum got a £350 phone bill. That was what put an end to the relationship, not anything Michael did."

On his website, Terry admitted that he had been contacted by detective Paul Zelis of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's department and told that Michael had pleaded not guilty to child molestation charges.

A defense of sorts is posted on the web. "It isn't illegal to love boys," the site claims. "It isn't illegal to hug and kiss them, unless they don't want you to. Even then it isn't illegal if you happen to be an older female relative. Ask any ten-year-old boy right after a family gathering. There is no age of consent law for hugging and kissing. It isn't

illegal to sleep in the same bed with them, or for unrelated men and boys to see each other naked. Each person who is attracted to boys is different from every other, and some of these dissimilarities are important. There are some whose exclusive interest (or nearly so) is in their own gratification. They use a boy with little or no regard for the youth's well-being, satisfaction, or happiness. The kidnappers, torturers, murderers, and real as opposed to statutory rapists come from this group. For boy lovers, the boy's gratification is important. The pleasures the boy lover derives, in no small part, from his role in the well-being, satisfaction, or happiness of the boy. Those who have long-term, loving relationships with boys come from this group. If you call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs does a dog have? The correct answer is four. Calling a dog's tail a leg doesn't make it one. It is the same with statutory rape. The law may call it rape, but it isn't. The failure of society to make reasonable distinctions between these two groups creates gross injustices."

When reached by the press during Michael's child molestation scandals, Terry said, "I have not been in contact with Michael since 1983, but the way he has been treated by the media has been wrong. I do not know whether he is guilty of abusing the other boys. I hope he is not. It has been so sad to see a man with so much talent fall from grace like he has."

As the 70s neared its end, personal pleasures for Michael gave way to career concerns. "I want to show that I can make it on my own," he told producer Quincy Jones. "My talent is my own-not my brothers. It doesn't belong to anybody else but me, and it doesn't depend on anybody else. I owe it to myself to show the world who I really am without any backup singers."

Michael and Quincy had become friends during the making of The Wiz, and Michael was delighted when Quincy signed on to produce an album with him. Michael later revealed that he was so thrilled to snare Quincy that "I didn't sleep for three whole days and nights."

During their long, drawn-out sessions of working together, which often extended into the early hours of the morning, Michael told Quincy: "Give me the ballads like `Mona Lisa' and `Moon River'-they'll live forever. A funky rock 'n' roll song will be number one for three weeks and then it's gone forever. I want to record the songs that last forever."

Quincy described Michael as "writing music like a machine-he could really crank it up." For the album, three of the songs were written by Michael, and many more lay in his bright future which would virtually explode into phenomenal success in the 80s.

Quincy nicknamed Michael "Smelly," because of his habit of calling a piece of music he liked "Smelly Jelly."

Michael deserved the nickname Smelly for other reasons. While recording the album, he refused to change his dirty jeans and T-shirts, even his jockey shorts. The odor got so bad that his fellow musicians in the studio complained of having to work with Michael in close quarters.

During the long recording sessions, Michael experienced two separate panic attacks, crying out that "I'm dying-help me!" On two different occasions, ambulances with dome lights flashing rushed him to Inglewood's Centinela Hospital. Each time he was placed in an oxygen tent and given sedatives to calm him down. The first time he came to, he gripped Katherine's wrist. "If the album doesn't succeed, I'll die-I'll just die!"

The album was originally meant to be called Girlfriend, named after the Paul McCartney song written just for Michael.

Michael and Quincy later agreed to change it to Off the Wall, named for what they speculated would be a hit single from the album.

It was Michael who solicited the former Beatle to write a song for his new album. McCartney's own version was released earlier, followed by Michael's later interpretation. In a surprise to fans, McCartney sings in a higher register than Jackson, and the English singer turned in a better recording in the opinion of Steve and Abes Record Reviews. "Jackson's rendition is light disco, with an awkward saxophone solo and a routine vocal. McCartney gives

the song a much broader emotional palette. McCartney's version of `Girlfriend' triumphs all over Jackson's."

This brought world outrage from Michael's fans, including one, Nu On, who posted his opinion on the web. It was typical of the blasts against reviews comparing Michael unfavorably to McCartney. "So your conclusion is that McCartney is a better singer, performer and artist than Jackson? Get fuckin' real. Maybe McCartney was a greater `artist' (his songwriting is amazing), but you can forget calling The Beatles better performers or singers. When it comes to their performances and singing, The Beatles (and McCartney) are untalented and lame, while Jackson is pure electricity. Have you ever seen The Beatles dance? They look like stiff, rhythm-less, epileptic puppets. And their `live' singing is mostly screeching. The Beatles are mostly a studio band that relied on `electronic chemicals' and a thousand different tricks to sweeten their sound. Next you'll claim that Paul McCartney is a better guitar player than Jimi Hendrix."

Ever the perfectionist, Michael worked for days to get the title track, "Off the Wall," just right. Within months, Michael introduced that song to the world with a piercing falsetto that his fans hadn't quite heard before.

Carefully directed by Quincy, Michael performed most of his vocals live.

"He wasn't at all sure that he could make a name for himself on his own," said Quincy before "Off the Wall" was released. "And me, too. I had my doubts."

Upon its release, "Off the Wall" sold eight or thirteen million copies, depending on which source you want to believe. Regardless of its actual sales, it is believed to be the largest selling album ever recorded by a black artist at that time.

The hit single from the album, suggestively titled "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough," was released as a single in September of 1979, shooting up immediately to number one on Billboards charts. Unlike the other records on the album, this single featured Michael's own overdubbed vocals. In essence, he was doing his own backup singing. "You might call it Michael Jackson and the Michael Jacksons," one critic jokingly suggested.

Privately the musicians in the studio speculated that Michael was still a virgin-at least with women-when he recorded "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough." But as one musician said, "Michael had seen that sexy Jermaine pound enough pussy in those hotel rooms to understand the meaning of the song."

Quincy had a hard time getting Michael to complete "She's Out of My Life," because he'd weep before the song's finish. "This went on for a month," Quincy said. "He could never get through the record without crying. Finally, in desperation, I left in the crying bit."

"She's Out of My Life" went top ten on the pop Hot 100, as did "Rock With You." After the release of these hit singles from the album, Michael Jackson became the hottest male recording star in the world.

In spite of its sales, "Off the Wall" is hardly a Michael Jackson tour de force. As critic Nelson George put it: "`Off the Wall's' aura is sweet, sunny and bright and characteristic of so much middle-of-the-road black 70s Pop-and offers philosophical bromides about rockin' the night away in place of any real personal vision."

Michael Jackson Album Reviews found their star giving off an aura of "undeniably adult sexiness." But then the critics later added a cautionary note-"that was before the words `Michael Jackson' and `sexy' became mutually exclusive."

The cover of the Off the Wall album pictured Michael nattily dressed in a tuxedo. As a unique touch, he wore white fluorescent socks, which were destined to become his trademark.

For the first time, fans were treated to a discernibly thinner nose. No longer could his brothers nickname him "Big Nose." "It wasn't quite Diana Ross's button nose," said an executive at Epic, "but Michael had obviously had some cosmetic surgery." In the years ahead Michael would become a regular customer of beauty butchers.

Later, it was revealed how this change in Michael's face came about. On the Destiny tour with his brothers,

he'd had an accident, falling down on stage and smashing his nose. With his broken nose, Michael went to a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills in the spring of 1979.

He ordered the surgeon to "transform my nose-I don't want my father's nose." When the bandages came off, "Joseph's nose"-at least on Michael's face-was history. It was the beginning of countless plastic surgeries in his future.

After the surgery, Michael asked the doctor, "What are you going to do with the part of my nose you removed?"

"Discard it, of course," the surgeon told him.

"No, I want to keep it," Michael protested. "It's my nose and it belongs to me."

As he was driven to Encino to recuperate, Michael gripped in his hand a glass vial. In it was preserved a bloody purple-red piece of nose cartilage. Beginning with this simple vial, Michael would, over the years, expand his bizarre collection of preserved medical oddities.

At this same time he also began the bizarre habit of collecting mementos of his seven nephews and nieces, all fathered by his brothers. The collection ranged from a discarded plastic replica of Donald Duck to soiled diapers-or so it was reported-from each child. The crusted brown contents from each child were still intact and carefully labeled and dated by Michael, members of the household staff at Encino later testified.

Even though Michael had gradually matured into an adult, his music was still geared to the youth of the world.

The greatest fan of Off the Wall was a fifteen-year-old girl, Roberta Flackson, born of trailer camp white trash somewhere in the Florida Panhandle. Her mother was a prostitute, her father of "unknown origin."

Since her mother had had sex, often of the unprotected variety, with so many men, she could not be certain who the father was.

Roberta suffered a background of child abuse. Her mother was not only a whore, but a drug addict who allegedly prostituted her own daughter to johns who wanted someone really young.

Eventually, when she was thirteen, Roberta fled the Panhandle, arriving in New York with money stolen from her mother's nightly earnings. When that money ran out, Roberta herself became a prostitute, allowing middle-aged men to pick her up and carry her to seedy motels in New Jersey or else to one of the hot-bed hotels that used to exist in midtown Manhattan in the 1970s.

Once, when arrested and questioned by the police, Roberta admitted that she was a prostitute, a profession she pursued for two reasons: one, to make a living; another, to buy all the Michael Jackson records and memorabilia she could. In an apartment on the Upper West Side that she shared with a much older prostitute, Roberta had stuffed every room with Jackson memorabilia. She played Jackson records day and night, especially Off the Wall.

When not plying her trade, she'd show up frequently on the set of The Wiz, and had to be forcefully removed by security guards. Somehow she learned that Michael and La Toya were living on Sutton Place. Between her nightly rounds, she hung out in front of the apartment building, hoping to get a glimpse of her idol. Even though he tried to avoid his number one fan, Michael frequently had run-ins with her when he was attempting to flee from her presence.

Finally, thanks to the urging of his friend, Theresa Gonsalves, Michael invited Roberta up to his Sutton Place apartment for tea. The girl was mesmer ized by Michael and didn't know what to say. Even so, it was difficult to get her to leave. Theresa had thought that once the fan met Michael, and her curiosity was satisfied, she'd leave him alone.

Not so. With money earned from whoring, Roberta flew to the West Coast. Whenever she wasn't working, she

stood at the gates to the Jackson Encino mansion hoping for a glimpse of Michael coming and going. Her presence became such a problem for him that he slipped in and out of the Jackson manse without her detecting him. He even used disguises to throw her off his trail.

Three weeks after she'd flown to Los Angeles, Roberta was found dead in a seedy motel off Santa Monica Boulevard. In her room was found all the Jackson memorabilia she'd collected. It is not known if Michael was even informed of the apparent suicide of his number one fan.

After the success of the album, Michael retreated to his room and rarely ventured out, except for secret visits to Disneyland. He donned several disguises, but finally decided the best camouflage was the enveloping black chador of a traditional Muslim woman. The only incongruity were those white socks and tennis shows which appeared right below the hem. Ironically, that was the same disguise he'd wear in the 21st century as an expatriate in the Middle Eastern country of Bahrain.

At the Grammy Awards in 1980, Michael expected many more prizes but won only a single Grammy as the best male R&B performer. Bitterly disappointed, he burst into tears in front of the audience. "One sore loser," a member of the staff of Rolling Stone was overheard saying.

"I was robbed!" Michael shouted, making a public spectacle of himself. "It's racism!" He vowed with amazing accuracy that his next album would be "the biggest in history."

Following the awards, Michael entered a deep depression and wouldn't leave his darkened room. It took a family tragedy to drive him from the house.

It was almost four o'clock in the morning, March 4, 1980, when an emergency call came in to the family home at Encino. Police had used equipment called "The Jaws of Life" to rescue the mangled body of Randy from the wreck of a Mercedes-Benz. At the wheel, Randy had lost control of his girlfriend's car along Cahuenga Boulevard.

It had been raining during the early morning hours, and the road was extremely slippery. Apparently, Randy had been driving at ninety miles per hour when he'd lost control of the car. "Like sailing on ice," in the words of one policeman, the Mercedes had glided across the street and into a telephone pole before coming to a jarring stop. Without his safety belt on, Randy was thrown forward into the windshield, cracking his pelvis and crushing both of his legs.

When the call came in, only Janet, La Toya, and Michael, along with both Joe and Katherine, were at their Encino home. All five piled into a family vehicle for the nervous ride to St. Joseph's Medical Center in Burbank.

At the hospital, the presiding doctor told a stern-faced Joe, "Your son may have less than twenty-four hours to live. We're doing all we can to save him."

Upon hearing the news, Michael burst into uncontrollable sobbing. "My baby brother!" he shouted. "Randy!" A nurse was asked to sedate him.

After Michael was brought under control, Joe also learned that the doctors might have to "amputate one or both" of Randy's legs.

"He's a performer and a dancer," Joe shouted at the doctor. "How can he do that without legs? You'll amputate over my dead body."

When a sedated Michael was brought in to see Randy, he started to cry again. Randy lay on blood-soaked sheets, with shards of glass from the windshield still imbedded in his face. In fright, Michael turned from the sight of him.

Later, he joined the rest of his family for a deathbed vigil. By ten o'clock, Randy had rallied but only slightly. Later, Michael learned that a male night nurse had nearly killed Randy when he'd administered a dose of methadone to the crash victim. The injection had been intended for a black heroin addict two rooms down.

After two days and nights, doctors determined that Randy's legs would not have to be amputated after all. "But I doubt if your boy will ever walk again," the doctor told Joe. "He'll be forced to live in a wheelchair for the rest of his life."

"There goes the fucking tour," Joe shouted angrily at the doctor. He'd wanted to send his sons on a national tour that summer, hoping to considerably beef up sagging family finances.

Michael paced the hallways at the Jackson's Encino home at night. "Why Randy?" he kept asking out loud and to no one. "Why, God, couldn't the accident have happened to someone not important? Someone who doesn't need legs to go on stage?"

During the uncertain duration of Randy's recovery, Michael would often break into uncontrollable sobbing of the kind he'd displayed upon hearing of Randy's dire condition. "It could have been me. Everybody in this household has been urging me to get a driver's license. I might be the one who will never walk again."

Katherine maintained an almost constant ritual of prayer. But, of the siblings, Michael was the most loyal. He stood by Randy, offering moral support as he went through a therapy so painful that he often cried out. Bravely he told Michael, "Fuck what the doctors say. I will walk again! You'll see."

The months went by, and Randy's legs seemed to improve every day. Katherine got to see her son not just walk on a stage again, but dance as well. "My prayers have saved my son."

When Katherine's mind wasn't occupied with Randy's recovery, she had to deal with an increasingly assertive Michael.

Now that he was a full-fledged adult, Michael decided to replace Joe as his business manager. He told Katherine what he planned to do. "It'll break your father's heart," she warned him, urging him not to fire Joe. Normally, Michael listened to his mother. Not this time.

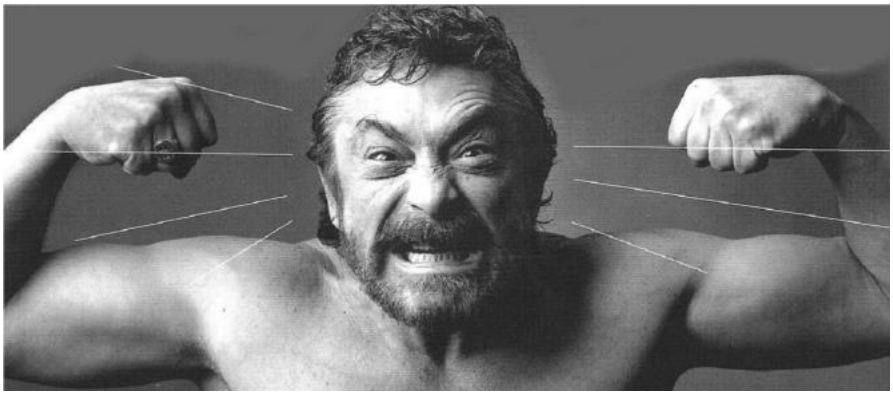
He appealed to David Braun, hailed as one of the best attorneys in the music industry. Diana Ross had recommended Braun to Michael. His other clients included Neil Diamond, George Harrison, and Bob Dylan.

As president of PolyGram Records, Braun in the fall of 1980 recommended John Branca, an aggressive 30-year-old New York tax attorney, to handle Michael's account. At the time of his first meeting, Michael liked Branca and stated his ambition-"to become the wealthiest entertainer on the planet and, last but not least, the biggest star in the world."

If Branca was shocked by such bold ambition, his face gave no indication. On the way home that night, he stopped off in a record store and purchased both Jackson singles and albums. Previous to their meeting, he had never heard Michael sing.

From that night on, Branca became almost more familiar with Michael's music than the artist himself. He certainly knew more about Michael's financial affairs than Michael did himself. Branca would dominate Michael's career for more than a decade, and he'd become the single key figure in his success in the music industry. "Michael stated his goal to me on our first meeting," Branca later said, "and I saw that he achieved both those ambitions expressed to me."

Immediately after signing with Michael, Branca barged into the office of Walter Yetnikoff, the controversial monarch of CBS Records who ruled over pop music's heyday in the 70s and 80s. Yetnikoff emerged as a key player in the careers of Bob Dylan, Billy Joel, Paul Simon, Barbra Streisand, Bruce Springsteen, and the Rolling Stones. In time he would become "the father confessor" to Michael.



Walter Yetnikoff

John Branca

One of Yetnikoff's secretaries confided, "He was in a constant state of blazing combustion," a condition usually fueled by alcohol and cocaine. Known as "the bully of the record industry," he was flamboyant, volatile, and tone-deaf.

"Two famous people came out of Brooklyn," he was fond of saying. "Mae West and Walter Yetnikoff. She's washed up. I'm still in there slugging away."

Yetnikoff originally had wanted to fire all the Jackson brothers, including Michael, but had become convinced that Michael could be turned into the biggest pop star of the 1980s. "Listen," he told Branca, "I can talk down Barbra Streisand, so I'm sure I'm up for any challenge the little Jackson boy will toss my way."

Before leaving Yetnikoff's office that day, Michael's new attorney secured for him an amazing contract. In an astonishing "giveaway" by CBS, Michael walked away with a 37% royalty rate. Michael had instructed Branca "to get me what Dylan gets," and that's exactly what Branca got.

Branca also negotiated with Johnny Mason, the lawyer representing Joe and his sons, a provision that Michael could break away from his brothers at any time without penalty. Joe ranted for days when he heard the terms, but didn't immediately confront Michael, fearing he might bolt from the group right away.

In addition to Branca and Yetnikoff, Frank DiLeo eventually became "the man behind Michael Jackson," forming a triumvirate that would take Michael to the zenith of his success in the 1980s. "Uncle Tookie," as Michael called him, would go on to orchestrate two hit albums for Michael, Thriller and Bad, plus two world tours that each met with overwhelming success.

A native of Pittsburgh-he once wanted to be mayor-DiLeo went from serving spaghetti and meatballs in a

seedy Italian trattoria to becoming national director of promotions for RCA Records when he was only twenty-one. He was known for his foul mouth, "assholes" being one of his favorite epithets. With this blustering, outspoken record hustler, Michael would form yet another of the many "odd couple" relationships in his life.

Michael and DiLeo were a study in contrasts. A secretary who worked for DiLeo said, "to see the two of them together at lunch was a sight to behold. Michael would order a glass of carrot juice and a spinach salad. DiLeo pre ferred a `triple bypass' burger smothered in onions, bacon, and Cheddar along with three Buds to help all that cholesterol go down his gullet."

In contrast to razor-thin Michael, the 275-pound DiLeo looked like a bookie left over from the cast of the film, Guys and Dolls, that had starred Michael's friend, Marlon Brando, and Michael's enemy, Frank Sinatra. "DiLeo smoked the kind of cigars Castro preferred, and at times I think he liked stogies better than women, although I'm not sure," said Luciano Pellegrini, who had met DiLeo in Pittsburgh. "He was more masculine than a bull in the ring, yet would be associated with the careers of two boys of dubious sexuality: Michael Jackson and Boy George." In addition to those artists, DiLeo also promoted Meat Loaf and Cyndi Lauper.

In time, Michael was so pleased with the promotional efforts of Uncle Tookie that he rewarded him with a Rolls Royce and a gold, diamond-studded watch among other prizes.

To celebrate signing a deal that granted him the highest royalty rate in the business, Michael joined the homeless.

Dressing up like a bum in soiled, ragged, and smelly clothing, he was driven to one of the seediest and most dangerous parts of Los Angeles. There he wandered among whores, pickpockets, winos, and bums, many of whom had contagious diseases. Attaching himself to a hobo who had managed to reach his 60s, Michael followed him on his rounds from garbage can to garbage can, scrounging for food or any object that could be used in an endless quest for survival. For some reason, the hobo had acquired the curious nickname of "Bearded Liver." Part of the pathetic figure's face seemed eaten away with cancer that was raging out of control and had never been treated.

When Katherine learned of Michael's disappearance, she sighed, "That Michael! He always was an inquisitive child."

"The next time he pulls a stunt like this, he's liable to get killed," Joe predicted.

When Michael later became friends with Marlon Brando, the actor confided in him that, "I did the same thing in the late 40s when I survived among the clochards of Paris. I didn't even have one franc on me. It was the happiest time of my life."

Michael got through his life as a hobo in seedy Los Angeles without incident. He wasn't so lucky months later in 1981 in Atlanta, Georgia, when he appeared in rags at an antique store, behaving strangely. He refused to halt when the store's owner, a Londoner, John Nolan, told him to. Instead of that, Michael concealed himself in a "Scarlett O'Hara armoire" rescued from some old plantation house.

Nolan called the police. Finally, Michael emerged and reached inside his breast pocket. The owner thought he was drawing a gun to shoot them. Nolan bashed his fist into Michael's reconstructed nose. Blood spurted out. While they were struggling, the police arrived. There was a station around the corner. Officer Jeff Green recognized Michael in spite of his disguise. "That's no hobo," Green said. "It's Michael Jackson in person."

When order was restored, Green considered charging Michael with criminal trespass, and Nolan with assault and battery, but charges were dropped.

Before leaving Georgia, Michael had another hostile encounter in the town of Macon. In a convenience store waiting for his vehicle to be filled with gasoline, a white man screamed "Nigger!" at him and accused him of stealing a candy bar. The man began to pound Michael, plowing his fists into him until his bodyguard rushed into the store and rescued the star. Assault charges were considered but never filed.

Back at Encino, enjoying the comforts of the Jackson mansion after his aimless wandering and countless disguises, Michael listened to the final cut of La Toya's first solo album, simply called La Toya Jackson.

Originally, Joe had pressured Michael to produce the album for La Toya, but he'd refused. "If my brothers and sisters want to strike out on their own," Michael said, "they are free to do so. But I'm not going to let them ride in on my coattails."

In spite of his refusal, Joe kept the pressure on Michael until he agreed to co-write and produce one song for La Toya's album, "Night Time Lover."

Suspicions were aroused when Michael heard the final mix and ordered that the song be recorded again. Katherine told La Toya, "Michael's jealous. He's scared that somebody in the family will be bigger than him, so he had to go back to the studio, make it different-and now it isn't as good." La Toya found that hard to believe.

Initially, La Toya had been dismayed when presented with some of the songs, especially her first single, "If You Feel the Funk." As a devout Jehovah's Witness, she feared that by recording some of the more suggestive lyrics, she'd be kicked out of her church. But Katherine, an even more devout Jehovah's Witness, told her to go ahead. La Toya reluctantly agreed.

Brett Stevenson was one of many who had observed La Toya when she was working on her first album. He claimed that, "All of us in the studio thought she was one hot pussy but had no talent as a singer. Instead of recording her songs, we wanted to go to bed with her. I felt that in spite of a poor voice, she had a fierce determination to become the female Michael Jackson. Old Joe showed up once or twice. I don't think he really had much faith in La Toya's talent as a singer either, although he kept goading her to move along with it. Actually, I heard that Janet is the only one in the family with enough talent to become a female Michael Jackson."

In the living room of the Encino home, Michael listened to the final album without saying a word. At its conclusion, he rose from his chair. "The album's a failure," he said to La Toya. "It'll bomb just like Jermaine did with his first solo album." Before heading upstairs to his bedroom, he assured his sister that she was beautiful and might have a better chance if she pursued a career as a model. Of course, Michael surely didn't mean she should pose nude for Playboy, which she would later scandalously do.

Randy's legs had miraculously improved, and he was walking on October 16, 1980, when he accompanied Janet and Katherine to the offices of Joe Jackson Productions at 6255 Sunset Boulevard. For months, Katherine had been hearing that her husband was having another affair, this time with one of his employees, a younger woman, Gina Sprague, who was descended from Mexican and Irish parents. She was only nineteen years old. Having confronted Cheryl Terrell, the mother of Joe's illegitimate daughter, Katherine was prepared to take on this younger and more beautiful woman. Although Sprague would later deny that she was having an affair with Joe, Katherine was convinced that they were lovers, enough so to take matters dangerously into her own hands as part of a public confrontation.

Based on her testimony to the Los Angeles Police Department, Sprague claimed that Randy, then 18 years old, and Janet, only 14, came into her office and attacked her.

In her testimony, Sprague told police that Katherine pulled her hair as Janet grabbed her wrist. Allegedly, Randy knocked Sprague from her desk chair, and she fell on the carpeted floor.

Apparently the victim was dragged out of the office, while Katherine pounded her face, calling her a "bitch" and threatening her if she didn't stop seeing her husband. Sprague also testified that Katherine took some blunt but unknown object from her pocketbook and hit Sprague nearly twenty times on her back and neck. Janet, Katherine, and Randy finally got Sprague to the stairwell of the office building, where her screams alerted security guard James Krieg, who came to her rescue.

The commotion created such hysteria that other employees began to gather to see what was the matter. Katherine, along with her son and daughter, fled from the building. Before going, she reached for a gold necklace

around Sprague's neck, yanking it from her. "This belongs to me, bitch," Katherine was heard to shout at Sprague before running away.

When Michael was called and told what had happened, he was reading all the material he'd collected on "The Elephant Man." Upon hearing the news about his mother, he didn't believe it. He claimed that his "Kate would never do that," in spite of the fact that she'd once attacked Joe's other mistress, Cheryl Terrell.

"My mother would never harm anyone," Michael said. "There is no gen tier person on the planet. This incident is a lie. It never took place. I know my Kate." For months afterward, Michael denied that the attack ever happened, referring to it as "a rumor spread by my worst enemies."

Despite Michael's denials, in the wake of the attack, Sprague filed a $21 million assault-and-battery lawsuit against Katherine, Janet, and Randy. Surprisingly, Sprague also named Joe in her lawsuit, although he was not one of the family members who ganged up on her. Later, Sprague testified that she was blackballed from working in the music industry. Five or perhaps six years went by before she was offered a job in the industry once again.

Michael refused to talk about the incident, although privately he voiced his concern, fearing that this scandal, which became the talk of Hollywood, could seriously damage his career as it was about to take off big-time.

In court, and in contradiction of eyewitness testimony, Katherine, Janet, and Randy maintained that the attack never took place.

That case could have been one of the sensational domestic trials of the decade, holding the Jackson family up to ridicule. Wisely, Joe's attorneys urged him to settle out of court. Various estimates have put the settlement as low as $75,000 or as high as $100,000. On July 21, 1983, Sprague's lawyers filed for a dismissal of the suit against the Jacksons.

When not agonizing over family woes, Michael buried himself into the story of John Merrick, the so-called Elephant Man, the English Victorian deformed by neurofibromatosis.

The story of Michael's fascination with the Elephant Man is a bit hard to piece together, because there has been so much written about it, so many misconceptions, and, last but not least, a series of lies from the Jackson camp itself.

During a live interview with Oprah Winfrey in 1993, Michael said that the story of the Elephant Man "touched me profoundly-it made me cry because I saw myself in the story. But, no, I never tried to buy the Elephant's Man's bones. What would I do with a bag of bones?"

He was being a bit disingenuous during that interview. On the question of bones and body parts, Winfrey might have asked, "Why do you need to keep a pickled human brain in your bedroom? Or a piece of preserved cartilage from your own nose?"

When director David Lynch released The Elephant Man in 1980, Michael is reported to have seen the film a dozen times. John Hurt played John Merrick, with other lead roles interpreted by Anthony Hopkins, Anne Bancroft, and John Gielgud. Michael was not alone in appreciating the film, as it was nominated for eight Oscars. But Michael seemed the most obsessive. He was reported to have purchased clothing and artifacts that had belonged to Merrick.

If a maid who worked at Encino is to be believed, Michael actually sat by his window for hours staring into space. He despondently and rhythmically tapped on the arm of his chair, holding his left hand in a distorted position. As the hours deepened, he pretended that a painful crippling was taking over his body. He kept repeating this verse:

'Tis true my form is something odd,
But blaming me is blaming God;
Could I create myself anew
I would not fail in pleasing you

"Merrick was a sideshow attraction," Michael is reported to have said. "Just what I am to the world. But in the end he was beloved by the Victorians. In time, I too will be loved, not by high society, but by the children of the world."

As the years went by and the world began to regard Michael more and more as a "Freak"-actually the title of a National Enquirer book about him-his identification with The Elephant Man grew and grew.

The Elephant Man would figure in Michael's future before the release of his album, Bad, in 1987. Wanting to attract bizarre publicity and make headlines, he arranged to view the bones of John Merrick kept in a glass case at the London Hospital Medical College.

Michael asked Frank DiLeo, Epic's production director, to announce to the press that he'd made a bid to purchase the skeleton for $500,000.

DiLeo sent ahead and even prepared a press release, claiming that "Michael Jackson has read and studied all material about The Elephant Man, and visited the hospital in London twice where Merrick's remains are found. His possible purchase of the skeleton of John Merrick is not for exploitation. Mr. Jackson cares about and is concerned with The Elephant Man as a dedicated and devoted collector of art and antiques."

John Merrick

The announcement generated millions of dollars of publicity. But an alert London reporter checked with the hospital and learned that no such offer had been made. The press announcement was a hoax.

Fearing a backlash, with his credibility on the line, Michael ordered DiLeo to make an actual offer of one million dollars for the bones.

"One million big ones for a sack of old bones," DiLeo reportedly told the hospital. The administration was offended, turning down the offer. "The Elephant Man is not for sale," said a hospital spokesperson. "In no way do we want to be part of a cheap publicity stunt."

Although free, the publicity generated by The Elephant Man ultimately boomeranged into headlines such as WACKO-JACKO'S IN THE CLOSET WITH THE ELEPHANT MAN.

Ultimately, the publicity campaign generated by Michael himself failed. He would never be taken seriously in the press again, and The Elephant Man only generated more press, most of it unfavorable, much of it devoted to ridiculing Michael as a public figure.

Although he was hardly grotesque like The Elephant Man, Michael himself still dreaded to look into the mirror. He decided that more surgical altering of his face was necessary, and he asked Dr. Steven Hoefflin to perform a second rhinoplasty. "With my new nose, I will never look like Joe ever again-no one will ever say that."

Abandoning the greasy "soul food" he loved, Michael became a vegetarian, losing his baby fat. He claimed he wanted to have a body as lithe as Rudolf Nureyev or Mick Jagger.

Eventually the dreaded acne that had plagued him for years began to clear up. With the second nose job, his face took on a different look. A remarkable transformation had begun. Those close to Michael privately voiced concerns that he was still not satisfied with his looks.

Speaking off the record, an executive of Epic said he felt that "deep down Michael just didn't want to be black like his brothers. He wanted to change his skin color. But how does a black boy become white? If there's a way, I predict Michael will find it, regardless of the cost."

As the 80s rolled in, Michael began to change his appearance drastically. His looks caused massive public interest, analysis, and an outcry from many of his fans, especially black ones.

Author David Buckley wrote, "If David Bowie was about psychic reconstruction through a personal style, then soul singer Michael Jackson was taking it all too literally and way too far. Jackson took home improvements literally and, by redesigning his face and skin tone, allegedly through elective cosmetic surgery, he gave the impression of being ashamed of his colour. Running through all this was a Peter Pan-esque androgyny. Jackson, with the body of a boy and the face of a strategically redesigned white/black, male/female hybrid, made a global impact in the 1980s through his plasticsurgery bisexuality. In a decade in which Western youths were subjected to increasing pressure to reconstruct their bodies through diet and exercise (with often fatal results), Jackson set himself up as the ultimate example of an individual trying to cheat nature. At a time when hundreds of thousands developed eating disorders and became ashamed of their natural size and shape, Jackson's quest for bodily `perfection' was another signal to youth that the current orthodoxy was both righteous and right."

With his increased earning power, Michael not only changed his face but financed the expansion and restoration of the Encino family home. The old lackluster ranch-style house, which Roy Rogers and Dale Evans might have called home, was completely gutted. In its place a Tudor-style mansion sprouted up, a far more luxurious retreat to the increasingly famous Jacksons. Michael owned fifty percent of the house, for which he paid half-a-million dollars, the rest belonging to his parents. Eventually Joe, strapped for cash, would sell his quarter interest to Michael as well, giving him three-fourths ownership with his mother sharing the rest.

Reconstruction of Hayvenhurst would go on for more than two years. While driving through West Sussex in England, Michael had spotted a country estate that intrigued him. He wanted it duplicated at Encino. The leaded stained glass with beveled panes would have made Elizabeth I feel at home.

When the estate was finished, black swans and flamboyant peacocks wandered the grounds along with llamas and deer, even a giraffe nicknamed "Jabar." His favorite pet was "Muscles," a ten-foot boa constrictor.

Michael's "folly," was the inclusion, within the reconfigured Encino estate, of an abbreviated version of Main Street U.S.A., his favorite part of Disneyland, which he continued to visit frequently.

Michael would also spend several hours every week watching films within the estate's on-site theater, a facility that provided plush scarlet-colored seating for 32 guests. His favorite film was Fantasia, which he is said to have seen one hundred times. For comedy, he preferred Charlie Chaplin or The Three Stooges. Fred Astaire movies like Royal Wedding were also among his favorites, as was Katharine Hepburn's Little Women.

The house itself was filled with Jackson memorabilia, including both gold and platinum albums used as wall decorations, along with family pictures, many depicting Michael with celebrities such as Liza Minnelli.

In all, Michael would spend nearly four million dollars "to turn Hayvenhurst into a fairytale."

While reconstruction was going on, Michael in February of 1981 purchased a three-bedroom condo at 5420 Lindley Avenue in Encino for $225,000, giving Katherine a share. Since the condo afforded privacy, Michael would later share it with a series of very young boys he'd invite for "sleepovers."

With his new estate at Encino and his increasingly celebrity status, Michael began to seek out other celebrities, some of whom were the most famous on the planet. Or, rather, celebrities began to seek Michael out.

Unlike many pop stars of his age who had no use for the established stars of the industry, Michael in his future would court some of the biggest stars of the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood.

One night in Los Angeles the most controversial star in Hollywood-at that time-walked across a crowded room and extended her hand to Michael in a firm handshake.

At the time of their meeting, he was aware of her reputation, knowing that she'd been variously ridiculed as a sex kitten in the film Barbarella, and as a political activist for her views on the Vietnam War. Her enemies called her "Hanoi Jane."

Standing before him was one of the most self-assured and beautiful women he'd ever seen, definitely with an independent spirit and a "mind of her own," as he'd later tell Katherine.

She was one of the most recognizable faces in the world. Although they were hardly the type of films he normally liked to see, Michael had sat through Klute in 1971 and Coming Home in 1978, each of which had earned her an Oscar for Best Actress.

"Hello," she said in her perfectly modulated voice, "you must be Michael Jackson. I'm Jane Fonda."

"Michael has a heightened sensitivity for the crying needs of this world. Through his 'Heal the World Foundation,' he works to preserve this planet's most precious resources-children, and the environment. He feels much of the same responsibility a parent feels-his children are all of our children. Michael brings so much to so many, he is one of the world's most precious resources himself. "

--Steven Spielberg

"The world sees me as this monstrous freak who abuses little boys. "

--Michael Jackson to Elizabeth Taylor

"He's taken a lot more control of his own life. When I made 'Thriller' I dealt with thousands of managers and record people and all this stuff and it's pretty clear to me that Mike makes his own decisions now... He has a lot more pressure on him now. There's a lot more jealousy. Michael, you know, is an old pro. People still think of Michael Jackson as little Michael Jackson like little Stevie Wonder, but you're talking about someone who was on the Ed Sullivan show, I mean he was making live performances and working hard from the time he was little.""

--John Landis

"Michael originally rang me up on Christmas day... and I didn't believe it was him. I didn't think it was Michael... eventually I said, 'Is that really you?' He was laughing on the phone, he said, 'You don't believe me, do you?'

--Paul McCartney, On the first time Michael proposed they work together

"Billy Joel and Michael Jackson. "

--Taylor Hanson, on his favorite singers

Chapter Six

In Jane Fonda's 2005 autobiography, My Life So Far, you can look in the index under the Js, and you'll find Jackson State University. But no Michael Jackson. Since he was the biggest entertainer in the world during the height of their friendship, and they became close personal comrades, it can be assumed that Jane's omission of Michael was a deliberate choice.

Jane devoted several pages to the making of the 1981 film, On Golden Pond, and Michael was a frequent visitor to the set, yet he is not included in her memoirs. She introduced him to her father, Henry Fonda, who was near death at the time, and to the indomitable Katharine Hepburn, with whom Michael formed the unlikeliest of friendships.

Perhaps Jane, and this is pure speculation, was offended by all the subsequent child molestation charges whirling around Michael, and wanted to distance herself from him. Jane has had enough controversy in her life, without having to defend Michael in public as Elizabeth Taylor has done without apologies.

At least before she moved to Atlanta and became a "Born Again," Jane was worldly wise and sophisticated. Born to Hollywood royalty, Henry Fonda and Frances Brokaw, Jane had led a privileged life, meeting screen legends and moving in left-wing political circles. From reports, she was mesmerized by the naivete of Michael. She might have considered him like a child, a very fragile individual, a wounded antelope in private life, but the epitome of a graceful panther on stage where every move is perfect. He might have seemed to be filled with a love for mankind, especially the children of the world.

Sharp, sexy, and strong, Jane could, in succession, play a call girl stalked by a killer, the writer Lillian Hellman, a timid wife involved in an erotic relationship with a paraplegic, a hardened newswoman, or a newlywed in a Tennessee Williams atypical stab at comedy.

Michael eagerly accepted her invitation to come to Squam Lake in New Hampshire where On Golden Pond was being shot.

He recalled the time fondly as they sat "all alone on a boat in the water just talking, talking, talking. We talked about everything: racism, Vietnam, acting, politics, even philosophers. It was like wandering into the Magic Kingdom. Miss Fonda knew so much about everything. Even though young, she was informed about all things, especially politics."

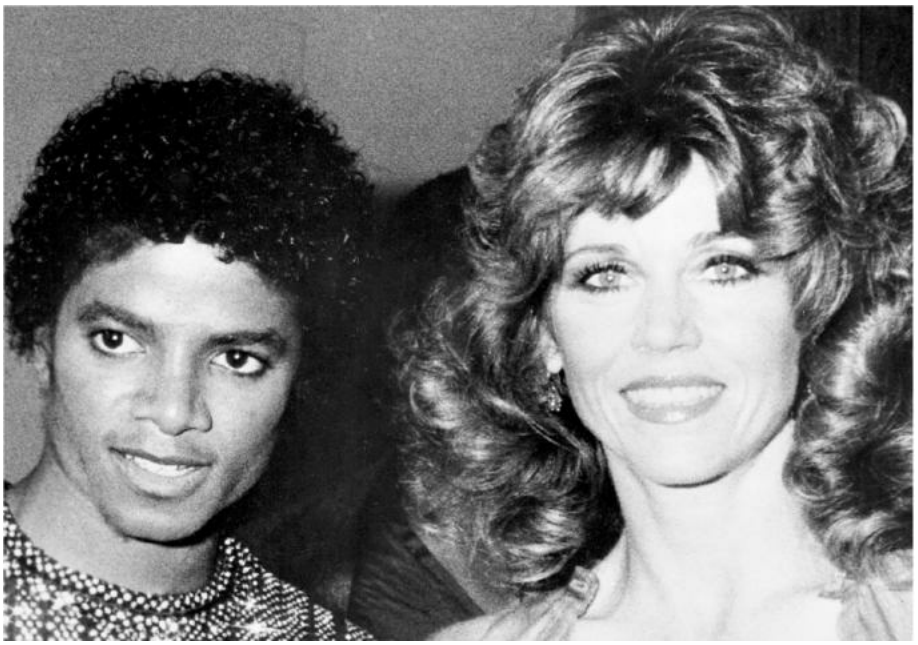
Michael might have listened to Jane talk about politics, and he may have absorbed much, but he was never to commit himself politically. "Unlike Jane, I don't think Michael ever learned the difference between a Republican and a Democrat," Katharine Hepburn once said.

Jane opened up to Michael and shared some of the private trauma she'd experienced in her own life, including the suicide of her mother. She spoke of the coldness of Henry Fonda to her, and how difficult their father-daughter relationship had been.

"We had the same psychic scars," Jane later said of Michael. "The tissue had never healed. We bonded by talking about how emotionally distant our fathers were from us."

Michael shared his own trauma of growing up under Joe's thumb-the midnight terrorizing, the beatings, and the punishments inflicted if he didn't get all dance movements and notes right. At one time, Michael told Jane, "I was so afraid of displeasing Joe that my vocal cords froze."

Although Michael became a far better-known entertainer than even Jane herself, she intervened and tried to help him launch a film career, the one form of the entertainment industry where success had eluded him. As Michael's chauffeur drove his sparkling new, cream-colored Rolls-Royce through the streets of Los Angeles, Jane conjured up the "perfect role for you-Peter Pan, a symbol of youth, joy, freedom."



MJ and Jane Fonda

Michael burst into tears. "How could you know?" he asked her. "You touched on my dream. I've always wanted to be Peter Pan, to lead lost children into a magical world of fantasy. My bedroom is filled with pictures of Peter and memorabilia. At times I dream I'm that lost boy of Never-Never Land."

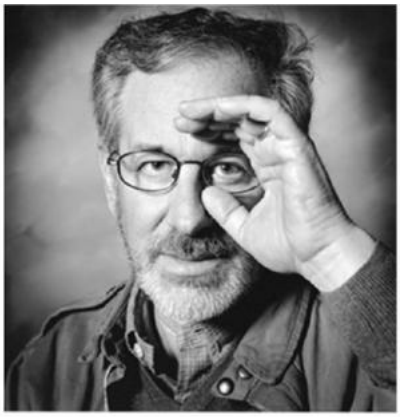
"The more I think about it, the more I know you're Peter Pan. You wouldn't even have to act it since you are Peter."

Jane, who had her own production company, said she'd like to produce the film. Then she learned that Francis Ford Coppola of The Godfather fame was planning a spectacular and costly version of Peter Pan. Encountering the producer at a party, Jane pitched the idea of casting Michael as Peter Pan to Coppola, who had his doubts. "A black Peter Pan-what a novel idea!"

Quincy Jones felt Michael might be brilliant as Peter Pan on the screen. "There's a downside, though," he cautioned. "Michael might keep playing Peter Pan even when the camera is not on him. Children are supposed to grow up-that is, all but one."

Later, when Michael shared his dream of becoming the screen version of Peter Pan with friend Marlon Brando, the actor said, "Forget it! Peter Pan is a wimp. Go for the role of Al Capone instead!" Michael later wondered if Brando was sincere or merely being the prankster he so often was.

Eventually, Steven Spielberg entered the race to film Peter Pan, but ran into trouble securing the rights. He was receptive, however, to casting Michael as a young Peter Pan. Later, an original script, Hook, was written. In this film, the role of Peter Pan called for an older actor, the part going to Robin Williams. Michael was extremely disappointed. At grim times such as this, he retreated to his darkened bedroom at Encino, "where I cried my eyes out."



Steven Spielberg

As the years went by, Jane would pop in and out of Michael's life, appearing at a dinner, a party, or a premiere. But in the 90s, when charges of child molestation against Michael became more shrill, she disappeared from the radar screen.

"She just wasn't there to lend her moral support," David Geffen is reported to have said. "Neither was Katharine Hepburn, Brooke Shields, or Jackie Onassis for that matter. Jane no longer returned Michael's calls, or so I heard." As far as that goes, Geffen too disappeared from Michael's life.

When Henry Fonda published his memoirs, Fonda My Life, in 1981, he too omitted any mention of Michael Jackson. But he'd met Michael during the filming of On Golden Pond, and in some strange way had bonded with him for a few days.

Knowing that her father could be difficult and closed off to people, Jane had been hesitant to introduce him to Michael. "I was in awe of my Dad," Jane told Michael. "As a girl, I used to do naughty things just to get his attention." She related an amusing story about how, when she was cast in the sexually provocative film, Barbarella, in 1968, she discussed with Henry the possibility of his appearing in a cameo role in the movie. "Will I have to take my clothes off?" Henry queried his daughter.

Before Jane introduced them, Michael had never seen a Henry Fonda movie. The taciturn Henry was sitting by a boat dock fishing. During Jane's introduction, her father's face was partially covered by a wide-brimmed hat as he was allergic to too much sun. He didn't look up or even acknowledge Michael on the first meeting. Michael was heartbroken, as he wanted screen legends to like him. It isn't certain that Henry even knew who Michael Jackson was.

"Dad, you must speak to Michael," Jane beseeched him. "He's one of the most important singers in the world."

"If he's so important, why haven't I heard of him?" Henry finally spoke up. "Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland I've heard of."

"People in the music industry think Michael is going to become the biggest star of the 1980s," Jane said.

"What do I care about the 80s?" Henry asked. "I won't be around to live through them."

Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn

At that point Michael walked up. "If you give me your address, I'll send you a postcard to wherever you are," Michael said.

Henry looked up at him as if he hadn't quite registered that remark. Finally, he broke into laughter. "Listen boy, I don't want to put up with you today, but come around this time tomorrow and I'll teach you to fish."

Michael showed up at the appointed time, and there was Henry impatiently waiting for him. He wore a different hat. When Michael asked about it, Henry told him that he had been given the hat by his co-star on the film, Katharine Hepburn. "She said it had been Spencer Tracy's favorite hat. Tracy and Kate were supposed to have been lovers. Frankly, in my opinion, I think they were more beards for each other than lovers."

Michael didn't understand what that meant.

According to Jane, Michael and Henry went fishing together every day for three days before either of them opened up to each other. "They would sit for hours in silence as both of them were incredibly sensitive and private people-not really comfortable with strangers."

On the night of the third day, Henry told his daughter, "That Michael Jackson is one strange young man. But, so what?"

Jane granted an interview to Gerri Hirshey of Rolling Stone. "Like Michael, Dad was also painfully self-conscious and shy in life. He really only felt comfortable when he was behind the mask of a character. He could liberate himself when he was being someone else. That's a lot like Michael."

At first, Henry had been unnerved by Michael's falsetto whisper, but later he said, "I guess he can talk like he wants to talk."

On the fourth day of fishing, the normally crusty Henry opened up more to Michael, who wondered when they were ever going to catch a fish. "There are only two fish in this lake," Henry said, "and both of those fuckers are too smart to get caught by us."

Michael sensed that Henry was visibly upset by something, although he wasn't revealing why. Finally, Michael asked, "What's the matter? I can tell something's wrong."

Henry took off his hat and reached for a newspaper article he'd tucked away there. He showed it to Michael. Some supposedly well-meaning friend had sent him an article by one "John Evans," which had appeared in an underground Hollywood paper. It was the most scurrilous article ever written on Henry, and certainly the most invasive ever published on his private life.

Very slowly, Michael read some of the more shocking revelations.

"Just because we perform in public, showing our asses, or at least our faces, to the world, that same public thinks it owns a piece of us," Henry said. "It thinks it's entitled to know all about us, even the most personal things. You'll find that true as you hang around longer in the business."

The article had dredged up rumors about Henry's past, including a report that he and his best pal, Jimmy Stewart, had been lovers when they'd roomed together during their poverty days as struggling actors in New York. It also was reported that Henry had gotten his start in the theater when he'd been seduced by Marlon Brando's mother in Omaha when he was quite young.

The most viperish part of the article quoted his first wife, actress Margaret Sullavan, who claimed that Henry had been a premature ejaculator. She labeled him "the one-minute man," and Evans reported that in his article. He also reported Henry's alleged response: "Maggie can make a man feel like he has two inches."

Henry was known for making homophobic remarks. Once he'd mocked George Sanders for "running after Tyrone Power with his tongue hanging out." When Sanders heard that, he curtly responded, "Henry Fonda is a Don Juan homosexual who has to prove himself with one woman after another."

Crumpling up the article and throwing it in the lake, Henry told Michael, "All the women, except my present wife, Shirlee Adams, have been sexual predators. Joan Crawford, not one of my wives, once called me in my dressing and invited herself by. She told me to be waiting for her in a jockstrap. I'm not impressive in a jockstrap. I fled the studio."

Months later, Michael was watching when Henry won his first Oscar for his appearance in On Golden Pond. Regrettably, Henry was too ill to attend the ceremonies, and his statuette was accepted by Jane. All the Fonda family and Michael knew that the Oscar was the veteran actor's last hurrah.

Michael became so close to the Fonda family that on August 12, 1982, he arrived at their Bel Air home in a black Rolls-Royce to commiserate with family members after Henry's death. That night, Michael got to see his first Henry Fonda movie. It was the 1940s film The Grapes of Wrath. He vowed one day to watch On Golden Pond.

Before Michael had ended his stay with Jane on that New Hampshire Lakeshore, he'd met yet another screen legend appearing in On Golden Pond, an actor even more formidable than Henry Fonda. Once again, the introduction was arranged by Jane.

If Michael needed a role model for a closeted life, or even an example of how to fool the world, he could find no better figure than Miss Hepburn herself. At the time of his meeting with her, she'd retired from the sexual wars and was an imperial diva who demanded that you play by her rules or else you'd be banished from her court.

Her youth was long behind her, and she often claimed that, "I wasted it in the idiot profession of acting."

When Jane had first introduced them, Hepburn had been put off by Michael's wimpy presentation of himself. "Men are worthless creatures," she later told Jane, "but if you are a man, then you should act like one-not some creature trapped in the twilight zone."

She did have one question for Jane, however. "Just who in the hell is Michael Jackson, and why should I bother?"

Gradually she warmed to Michael, even though at first he annoyed her. "He followed me around the set like a puppy dog in heat," she claimed. In him, she found the perfect listener. He had almost nothing to say, at least nothing of importance, and she had "the wisdom of the ages to impart to him."

She delivered one bon mot after another to him, and sometimes he wrote them down. She told him, "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun!" She recommended that he live his life on his own terms, not bowing to the social pressures of the world.

When she'd been young-her own father had called her "a raging bull"Hepburn had pursued the bisexual life, her longest affairs being with Laura Harding, the American Express heiress, and with Spencer Tracy, an abusive alcoholic who drank to escape the torment of his own closeted homosexuality. Hepburn invented faux romances with such unlikely candidates as Howard Hughes, while carrying on genuine affairs with women, many of them famous such as Claudette Colbert, Greta Garbo, Judy Garland, and Judy Holliday. Her male lovers had included Charles Boyer, John Ford, Leland Hayward, Van Heflin, George Stevens, and Jimmy Stewart.

"My privacy is my own, and I am the one to decide when it shall be violated," Hepburn told Michael. "Do whatever you want, but only behind closed doors. Don't let the world knock down your closed door. Bolt it if you have to."

Privately she told Henry Fonda and others that "Michael is a homosexual-only he doesn't know it yet. It's an obvious source of torment to him, and will cause him great grief unless he comes to terms with it. I know of such things." Was that a reference to her troubled relationship with the tormented Spencer Tracy?

There were things that Michael did that annoyed her. She didn't like him to wear sunglasses all the time. "A performer must show his eyes to the world. The eyes are the most important feature of the face. You can convey whatever the hell you're trying to just through the use of your eyes. It could be your most effective weapon. Sunglasses keep you hidden from the world. That's okay in private life. But on stage you must let the audience, however briefly, look into the mirror of your soul. Besides, those damn sunglasses make you look like a Harlem drug addict."

At the Grammy Awards in February of 1984 at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, Michael remembered Hepburn's advice. He removed his sunglasses "for the girls in the balcony."

Oddly enough, in a picture that Hepburn consented to pose for with Michael, it was she who was wearing the sunglasses-and Jackie Kennedy's 1960s style at that.

On the set of On Golden Pond in New Hampshire, Michael could sit patiently for hours, listening to Hepburn's "bits of wisdom" acquired over many a decade of what she called "my trials and tribulations. If you survive long enough, you're revered-rather like an old landmark building."

Long after Michael had left the set of On Golden Pond, he continued his phone dialogue with Hepburn. She said, "I always liked bad eggs, always, always-and always attracted them. I had a lot of energy and looked as if I was (and I was) hard to get. I wasn't mad about the male sex-perfectly independent, never had any intention of getting married, wanted to paddle my own canoe, didn't want anyone to pay my way."

In time, Hepburn introduced him to some of her grandnieces and grandnephews, some of whom belonged to the Jehovah's Witness clan. The actress held the cult in total disdain, but introduced her extended family members to Michael anyway. He often went door to door with them handing out pamphlets, many of which attacked "the sin" of homosexuality.

In 1981, at Michael's invitation, Hepburn agreed to go to her first rock concert, starring Michael himself, as staged at Madison Square Garden in New York. Thinking her grandniece would enjoy Michael's performance more than she would, Hepburn took the nine year old with her.

Hepburn wanted to see for herself what "all the fuss was about, all those hysterically screaming fans." Members in the audience that night included Andy Warhol, Victoria Principal, Tatum O'Neal, Jane Fonda, and Steven Spielberg.

"It's not my kind of music," Hepburn later admitted. "I prefer Judy Garland. But the boy can move about the stage. He's got the grace of Fred Astaire minus that bitch, Ginger Rogers, a woman I loathe to this day. That dyed blonde heifer and I competed for the queenly throne of RKO and also for the same beaus until I finally decided to let her have the worthless lot of them. I mean, who would want Lew Ayres for more than a night?"

Bob Jones, Michael's publicist, later claimed that "I saw a man who embarrassed himself at Katharine

Hepburn's house." He was referring to the night when Hepburn gave a dinner party honoring Michael at her Turtle Bay residence in New York. Michael had ordered his photographer to wait outside. After dinner, the photographer asked her if she'd pose with Michael for a picture. "Absolutely not!" she virtually shouted at him. "This is a private affairnot something to make the front page of the National Enquirer."

Before the night was over, Michael told her that he'd seen all her films. Several writers, including biographer Scott Berg, later claimed that Michael was "caught with his pants down. He was unable to name any."

Actually that was not quite true. Everyone from Liza Minnelli to Tatum O'Neal, even La Toya, knew that Michael was addicted to Hepburn movies. He loved her voice and her haughty air on camera. Of course, Little Women, with all its sentimentality, would forever remain his favorite but he also liked Adam's Rib and The African Queen. He didn't like Suddenly, Last Summer.

At the time of the Turtle Bay dinner, Michael had not seen the film, Gone With the Wind. When queried about which of her movies were his favorites, he included Gone With the Wind among his favorites. She looked flabbergasted. "That, my dear boy, was a role I lost to one Vivien Leigh. The producer, David O. Selznick, made the mistake of his life by not casting me as Scarlett O'Hara. Vivien won only one Oscar for her performance. I would have won three."

Now it was Michael's turn to look flabbergasted. "But I thought it was possible to carry home only one Oscar per performance."

She laughed at this and took his arm, leading him toward the door since it was her bedtime. "My dear boy, of course, you're right. I was speaking in hyperbole."

"What does that mean?" Michael asked.

"Go home and look it up in the dictionary," she advised.

Later, Michael did just that but never found the word. "How could I look it up in the dictionary if I don't know how to spell it?"

Irene Mayer Selznick, the daughter of Louis B. Mayer, was also invited to that dinner in Turtle Bay, at 244 West 49th Street, but politely turned down the invitation. Selznick told Bob Gottlieb, book editor: "Can you believe what she's done now?" Selznick asked Gottlieb, referring to Hepburn, with whom the bisexual Selznick had once had a love affair. "She's dared to invite me to dinner with-of all people-Michael Jackson! Just how low can she sink? Is Kate insane?"

To others of her friends, Selznick asked, "Just why is Kate hanging out with the likes of Michael Jackson? You've heard of white trash. Jackson and his whole family are black trash. The invitation to dinner is just another attempt of Kate's vulgar, even pathetic, desperation to keep herself in the news columns and to keep up with what she thinks is the current scene."

When Michael wasn't "hanging with" the elite of Hollywood, he was rehearsing, writing his own songs, or recording with his brothers. He still hadn't broken from them. Far from it.

In 1980, Epic released Triumph, the album that would be backed by a nationwide tour. "Can You Feel It?" was one of the hits from that album.

Carried to the far corners of America, the tour included the most intricate "lighting magic" and pyrotechnics of any of the Jackson road show appearances to date. After singing "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough" (not on the Triumph album), Michael seemingly vanished in a puff of smoke as a special effect created by the great magician Doug Henning.

In Atlanta, a major stopover on the tour, Michael told reporters: "I wish the world was full of children. I plan to have twenty children of my own and adopt kids, too." At the time of his appearance in that southern city, a series of

unsolved murders of black children was mysteriously occurring. As a sign of solidarity, Michael requested that about a quarter of a million dollars from his two shows there go to help needy black families.

The tour began in Memphis on the hot summer night of July 9, 1981, ending in a record-breaking four-night performance on other hot nights at the Forum in Los Angeles. When Joe finally tallied up the gross for his sons, it came to an astonishing five million dollars. "My boys are here to stay-they ain't going nowhere," Joe said. "They are the top of the heap, and I'm gonna see that's where they remain."

On the tour, the Jacksons-with Michael, of course, as the star attraction-played 39 cities. Michael hinted that this might be his last tour with his brothers. In an uncharitable moment, he said, "I'm fed up with all the screaming fans, the security problems, the different environments every night. I plan to continue to do records, but I want to devote time to making movies. I plan to become an even bigger film star than I am a singer."

Throughout the tour, Michael was constantly asked by reporters if he planned to split from his brothers and establish himself as a solo recording artist. His answer to Ebony magazine was enigmatic at best. "Yes and no!" Michael said.

An oddity on the Triumph tour was a song called "This Place Hotel." When Michael had originally written it, he'd called it "Heartbreak Hotel," but executives at Epic had insisted on a change of name. Michael later said, "I swear that was a phrase that came out of my head, and I wasn't thinking of any other song when I wrote it." No one believed Michael. How could he not have thought of Elvis's big-time hit when he wrote "Heartbreak Hotel?"

"As important as Elvis was to music, black as well as white, he just wasn't an influence on me," Michael claimed. "I guess he was too early for me. Maybe it was timing more than anything else. By the time our song had come out, people thought that if I kept living in seclusion the way I was, I might die the way he did. The parallels aren't there as far as I'm concerned, and I was never much for scare tactics. Still, the way Elvis destroyed himself interests me, because I don't ever want to walk those grounds myself."

"Heartbreak Hotel" (Michael's version) opens with a scream. The voice was that of La Toya. Michael himself admitted that this was "not the most auspicious start to a recording career."

Michael said that his version of "Heartbreak Hotel" had "revenge in it and I am fascinated by the concept of revenge."

Michael, watching the 1975 Hepburn film, Love Among the Ruins, heard her utter a line that had stayed in his mind. "There's no harm in a little revenge," Hepburn said to movie audiences, perhaps meaning it in her private life as well.

The performance attended by Hepburn at Madison Square Garden was recorded and later distributed by Epic as a two-album set in 1981.

Jacksonmania was sweeping the land. Wherever you went in America, including driving in your own car, you could hear The Jackson 5, The Jacksons, or Michael as a solo artist singing such 70s favorites as "Rockin' Robin" or "Ain't No Sunshine."

Like a Nora Roberts novel recycled from the 1980s to capitalize off her subsequent fame, Motown continued to release Jackson records from its backlog. In 1981, the company reissued the previously recorded "One Day in Your Life," which became Michael's first solo hit in Britain. That same year, Motown also released Michael's single, "We're Almost There."

After seeing Michael perform at Madison Square Garden, Spielberg was impressed. He decided at the end of the show that he wanted to approach Michael about narrating the storybook for the E.T. album for MCA. Michael had seen E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial three times and had cried every time. He was delighted to accept the offer, especially when he learned that he would be working with his friend, Quincy Jones, on the album.

But, first, Michael had one request. He wanted to meet E.T. Spielberg arranged for him to meet the extra-

terrestrial robot. "E.T. grabbed me in an embrace," Michael later said. "He was so real that I was talking to him. I kissed him before I left."

Michael told Ebony magazine that, "I really felt that I was E.T., and it was because his story is the story of my life in some ways. He's in a strange place and wants to be accepted, which is a situation I've found myself in many times. He's most comfortable with children, and I have a great love of kids. He gives love, and wants love in return, which is me."

MJ and ET

He also made an astonishing statement in noting that E.T. could lift off and fly away when he wanted to get away from this Earth. "I can identify with that," Michael said. "I also believe that a human being can fly. We just don't know how to think the right thoughts and levitate ourselves off the ground."

In an interview with reporter Gerri Hirshey, Spielberg said, "I've never seen anybody like that Michael Jackson. He's an emotional star child. Those were Michael's actual tears heard on the recording when E.T. lays dying."

Although many in the business have derisively dismissed Michael as a "flighty faggot" or "for being out of touch with reality," others such as Spielberg sensed a strong business sense in him.

Since turning 21, Michael had managed his own affairs, earning more money than any other singer in the history of music. When his contract with Joe expired, Michael took over the reins of his own career.

The downside to Michael's show business savvy is that he also was launched into a lifestyle as a big-spending performer who in time would squander millions and millions of dollars. "As a big spender, Michael would in time cause Elvis to blush in his grave," said Bob Jones.

Michael wasn't thinking about Elvis but the biggest-selling female singing star of all time when he flew the Concorde from London to Los Angeles after a visit with Paul McCartney. Diana Ross needed a hit solo for her new album, Silk Electric, for RCA.

Michael had a pet snake at Encino-called "Muscles"-and as he flew across the Atlantic the nucleus of a song came to him. "I didn't have a tape recorder when the song popped into my head," he said. "So I had to suffer through the faster-than-sound flight until I reached Encino. As soon as I did, I whipped that baby onto tape."

Both Ross and executives at RCA were surprised at the message of the song. It wasn't an ode to a snake but

extolled the joy of having the muscles of a man "all over your body."

"If written and sung by a male singer," said an executive at RCA, "`Muscles' would be as gay as a goose, as queer as a nine-dollar bill, as faggy as a drag queen at three o'clock in the morning at an all-male revue where the strippers show it hard. I don't give a fuck what Jacko says. The song is a paean to well-built hunks."

MJ and Paul McCartney

Whether Michael had a pet boa constrictor called "Muscles" or not, music critics found the song a "covert admission of sexual preference on Michael Jackson's part."

Ross more or less agreed when she told an audience of fans in Los Angeles, "I don't know if `Muscles' was supposed to be my fantasy ... or Michael's." The audience broke into catcalls and hysterical laughter at the remark.

"Miss Ross," as Michael called her, wasn't the only world-famous star Michael wanted "to make music with." As a kid, he'd listened for hours to the music of The Beatles. "Somehow," Quincy Jones said, "Michael wanted a piece of the action. Or at least a bond of some sort with Paul McCartney."

Michael had known McCartney since 1969, but they only became casual friends in the late 1970s.

At Michael's request, McCartney flew to the States in the spring of 1982 "to help out on an album," as he announced in London. It was later learned that he was going to record a duet with Michael for his new album, Thriller.

After a meeting at Le Cirque in New York with "an old mate," Yoko Ono, the ex-Beatle flew to Los Angeles for a recording session with Michael. The two stars sang a duet on "The Girl Is Mine," the first of seven smash singles to be culled from Thriller. As Christopher Sandford reported, "McCartney resisted Jacko's pleas for repeated takes of the song, preferring to nail his vocal and then affably sign autographs for the crew."

Recorded in 1982, the mid-tempo "The Girl Is Mine" was composed by Michael and McCartney as they watched Donald Duck cartoons and Fred Astaire movies. In the song, Michael delivers what was to become a famous line: "Paul, I thought I told you, I'm a lover, not a fighter." The song peaked at number 2 on Billboards "Hot 100." Even so, "The Girl Is Mine" is one of the lamest moments in the career of either Michael Jackson or Paul McCartney. It's an insipid melody, with a backing, in the words of one critic, "more appropriate to Barney the Purple Dinosaur than Motown."

There was worldwide interest in the duet between The Beatles' McCartney and The Jackson 5's Michael. In the song, two ardent suitors, Michael and McCartney, engage in a verbal fight for a "dog-gone girl." Their collaboration led to disagreements, and the record was almost never recorded. But in the end they managed to work out their artistic disputes.

Michael arrived in England on February 2, 1983, passing through Heathrow Airport dressed in military garb with a variety of unearned medals and garish sashes. He wore a surgical mask which an Immigration official made

him remove. Beefed up by an eight-man security guard, Michael was driven in a stretch limousine to the farmhouse of Paul and Linda McCartney in Sussex. In spite of his impressive reputation, the McCartneys assigned Michael only a small bedroom.

Perhaps McCartney would regret that farmhouse meeting with Michael for the rest of his life. During a long talk in the living room, McCartney told Michael of all the money to be made by getting into the music publishing field and acquiring copyrights to hit songs of the past.

John Lennon & Yoko Ono posing for the cover of their experimental 1968 album Unfinished Music No.1: Two Virgins

McCartney dazzled Michael with profits to be made from owning standards. He cited some of the songs he owned, including "Stormy Weather," the Lena Horne standard, or else "Autumn Leaves," featured in a Joan Crawford 1956 movie. He even owned that rock 'n' roll classic, "Peggy Sue."

Michael and McCartney sat and listened to many of the standards he owned, including Doris Day's "Sentimental Journey."

In one of the mistakes of his life, McCartney told Michael that "these golden oldies of yesterday brought in an annual income of nearly forty million dollars." Michael's eyes widened at the prospect of a whole new business opportunity for him, but he discreetly said nothing. "Paul's revelation gave Michael a terrible resolve," Yoko Ono was reported to have said later.

McCartney might have been the wealthiest man in show business, but Michael wanted to wear that honor for himself.

To McCartney's surprise, Michael, as savvy as he was about the music industry, didn't understand that a song earns money for its composer and copyright owner each time it sells in a recorded format, is played on the radio, or sung by another artist. The owner of the copyright can also license the song to advertisers, in some cases for large sums of money.

A return visit was in order for the McCartneys. This time Michael arrived on their doorstep dressed in a gold lame astronaut's suit. On this visit, Michael would record yet another song, "Say Say Say," at the Abbey Road Studios in London.

"Say Say Say" demonstrated both McCartney and Michael at the peak of their talent. Steve and Abe's Record Reviews claimed that the two performers "rode a great melody with a surprisingly chattery accompaniment to pop glory. It's a great arrangement that fills every corner with a different touch, combining the hallmark sounds of each performer." Produced by George Martin, "Say Say Say" as a duet for the unlikely pair evolved into a 1983 hit single for both McCartney and Michael. As a single, it stayed for six weeks at the top of Billboards "Hot 100" chart. Despite the high praise and glory it received, it contains such inane lines as "You know I'm crying oooh ooh ooh ooh ooh!"

This record was followed by "The Man," the third duet from Michael and McCartney, which was released on the former Beatle's Pipes ofPeace album. "The Man" sounds like a Michael ballad with limited input from McCartney. But who knew what the lyrics were about? One critic found them "so vague they must have been written by McCartney."

During this second visit to Sussex, Michael did not reveal his intention, at least not to McCartney, of acquiring the rights to the greatest of The Beatles' songs. With his Machiavellian intentions completely hidden, Michael blended into the local neighborhood, meeting the children who lived nearby. They called him "Mr. Mum," and he always had treats for them. Later in the day, he would help Linda prepare vegetables in the farmhouse kitchen, and end the afternoon reading Winnie-the-Pooh stories to the kids who flocked around him.

Months later, long after Michael's departure from his home, McCartney received a phone call from a reporter seeking his reaction to Michael's purchase of the ATV Music Catalogue. McCartney was stunned by the news. A quick call to Lee Eastman, and McCartney knew the tip from the reporter was true. Michael had outbid Warners, the Coca-Cola Corporation, and CBS, thereby acquiring control over each of The Beatles' songs written or released between 1964 and 1971.

When he first became aware that The Beatles' songs were available for sale, Michael had done a "hop, skip, and a jump," eerily evocative of Hitler's dance steps after the fall of France.

Many years before, John Lennon and McCartney had foolishly sold their copyrights to a publisher, Dick James, when they were young and naive about the music business. James went on to make a fortune from their music, which was controlled by a company called Northern Songs. In time James sold Northern Songs to Sir Lew Grade's ATV Music, Limited, for tax reasons.

McCartney himself had attempted to purchase this same catalogue for $20 million in 1981 when he tried to convince Yoko Ono to become his partner in the deal. But the widow of John Lennon turned him down.

Yoko thought her $10 million share was too much money. She would eventually have made tens of millions. One executive at ATV said Yoko's decision was one of the worst ever made in terms of money in the music industry. "With her profits, she could have fucking bought the Dakota." He was referring to the luxury apartment building on Manhattan's Central Park West, in front of which her husband, John Lennon, was murdered.

Headlines in 1984 blared the news of Michael's acquisition of the songs for $47.5 million, the largest publishing takeover by one person in the history of the music industry.

Many Beatles fans around the world reacted with outrage when they heard that Michael now owned The Beatles' songs. One fan wrote, "It's a humiliating kick in the crotch to Paul. It's sickening to know that he has to pay that little twerp royalties every time he sings a Beatles song. Jackson stabbed him in the back but good."

One music executive who didn't want to be named, said: "In spite of that little girl voice and that oh, so delicate manner, Michael Jackson is one hardnosed son of a bitch in business. But whereas old Joe made one stupid decision after another, Michael is more calculating. The smartest move he ever did was to hire John Branca, one hot-shot

lawyer, to acquire old standards and not just The Beatles' catalogue."

"A fish gets caught by opening its damn mouth," McCartney later said. "I should have kept mine shut."

McCartney went on to additional feelings of betrayal when he discovered that Michael even owned a $5 million insurance policy on his life. "My God, he'll make millions when I'm 64 and dead and gone." ATV itself had collected a life insurance policy on Lennon after he was assassinated.

McCartney was particularly enraged to learn that, as part of the deal, Michael would get fifty percent royalties for any performance, anywhere, on any Beatles' songs, with a 25% royalty going to him. Yoko took the final quarter-share, thanks to her role as Lennon's widow and heir.

The official date of Michael's acquisition was September 6, 1985. When he woke up the next morning, he owned 250 Beatles' songs, including such famous classics as "A Hard Day's Night," "Help!," "Eleanor Rigby," "Penny Lane," "Yesterday," "Strawberry Fields Forever," "Let It Be," "Good Day Sunshine," "Yellow Submarine," "Revolution," and "Hey Jude."

Yoko Ono, "A later portrait"

When Michael was told that he was now the owner of all of those Beatles' songs, he said, "I've found the Holy Grail, although I'm not sure what the Holy Grail is."

The ex-Beatle-and now "former friend" of Michael felt betrayed and used. He was understandably bitter about the way Michael had done business. "Our friendship suffered a bit of a blow," McCartney said in a statement noted for its restraint. "I've hardly spoken to Jackson since then, except to ask, `Will you give me a deal? I'm under a slave agreement.' Talk about stonewalling! He's worse than all of them."

When Michael was in Los Angeles shooting a clip for "Dangerous" in 1991, years after the infamous deal was concluded, he agreed to meet with McCartney. "Jackson was friendly enough but hardly in a mood to accommodate my request," McCartney said.

"You know, I've cried so much about this," Michael whimpered.

"Ok, but please, Michael, see your people," McCartney beseeched. "Give me a promise that you'll talk to your people about this." According to McCartney, Michael said, "I've tried. I have told them." In reporting his meeting with Michael, McCartney did not make it clear exactly what compensation he was seeking from Michael, but no doubt it was an increased share of the royalties.

In an interview on ABC, McCartney said, "Michael's the kind of guy who picks brains. When we worked together, I don't even think he'd had the cosmetic surgery. I've got photos of him and me at our house, and he looks quite different. He's had a lot of facial surgery since then. He actually told me he was going to a religious retreat and I believed him. But he came out of that religious retreat with a new nose. The power of prayer, I guess."

Branca seemed to understand McCartney's position and why the exBeatle was sad. "Whether Paul likes it or not," Branca reportedly said, "he has to pay Michael every time he performs a song he himself wrote between 1964 and 1971. Of course, he's pissed. But that's the law."

Under his so-called "slave manifesto," McCartney was to face more disappointment, especially when a trio of "old favorites" from The Beatles were turned into commercials. "Revolution," for example, was used to promote Nike.

In a long, handwritten letter to Michael, the ex-Beatle complained that "my good name, the reputation of The Beatles themselves, is being blown on rubber soles." He pleaded with Michael to respect their music and "my wishes" and stop exploiting the catalogue he'd acquired. McCartney never received an answer from Michael.

When Michael was confronted with charges of exploiting The Beatles, he looked surprised. "Why, I don't understand what Paul is belly-aching about. After all, he taught me everything I know about acquiring copyrights."

"I heard that Michael had told Branca to turn a deaf ear to Paul's protests," a music executive claimed. "Apparently, Michael told Branca to `let Paul rage, kick, and scream. Paul had his chance to buy the records. He was too cheap to part with $20 million of his $560 million fortune. He let that chance fly by. To hell with him. Exploit the catalogue! Make more money for me to add to the millions I already have.'" Branca did as he was told.

Michael continued to sell Beatles' songs to commercial concerns, with "All You Need Is Love" going to Panasonic. "Good Day Sunshine" went to Sunshine Bakeries. On hearing this, McCartney lamented, "My God, he's turning the song into an ode to an Oreo cookie-real cheeky of him."

"Jackson has trashed the reputation of The Beatles," McCartney charged. "He seemed so nice and polite when I met him. But he has a heart of gold, and I don't mean that as a compliment."

He also is reported to have said, "I'm in a shit deal and can't get out of it. Each day with Michael Jackson in charge, I take another bite from the shit sandwich he offers me."

Yoko Ono seemed comfortable with Michael's ownership of the catalogue, since it was generating millions for her, but not the potential millions she could have made with co-ownership with McCartney. She once was quoted as saying, "If I owned the catalogue, the press would say, `the dragon lady strikes again. '"

McCartney, or so it was rumored, felt greatly betrayed by Yoko when she allowed her son, Sean, then 12 years of age, to appear as one of the "lost boys" saved by Michael in his 1988 film, Moonwalker. The video closed with a rendition of "Come Together" from The Beatles.

Even though losing on the deal, McCartney also revealed that he would go to court to prevent what he viewed as unfair use of his legacy. He did win a court order barring sales of three bootleg Beatles movies. He also denied the Beastie Boys the right to use The Beatles song, "I'm Down." The group wanted to add new lyrics to the song, which McCartney found "too salacious."

In spite of the bitterness that McCartney still felt over Michael's purchase of The Beatles' songs and his use of them, McCartney spoke kindly of Michael when he first faced child molestation charges in the early 90s. Speaking to the Clarin, a newspaper in Buenos Aires, McCartney claimed, "Michael is not that kind of person."

When asked about Michael's drug dependency, McCartney said, "It's all very L.A.-I mean, Judy Garland and Elizabeth Taylor-these are people who became stars at a very young age. We, The Beatles, we were ordinary guys. When fame arrived, we went a bit crazy, but even so we had our feet on the ground. We had roots. We knew about life. Michael, instead ...Ah, well!"

As the years went by, McCartney became less reserved about Michael. In 2001, on The Howard Stern Show, McCartney claimed that Michael "won't even answer my letters, so we haven't talked and we don't have that great a relationship."

In a statement made in April of 2003, McCartney expressed greater reser vations about Michael, calling him "an unusual guy" and questioning his parenting skills. The interview was broadcast over the BBC. He claimed he felt sorry for Michael's children "being brought up under those veils."

That remark seriously angered Michael, who shot back: "I like some of Paul's songs. But he's a lousy performer. I can pack a stadium. He can't."

Songs by the Beatles were not, by any means, the first that Michael acquired. Long before his purchase of the ATV catalogue, Michael had ordered Branca to buy the rights to recordings by Sly & the Family Stone, a group that began in San Francisco in 1969 and eventually achieved worldwide fame before they disbanded in 1975. The band is credited with a critical role in the development of soul music, funk, and psychedelia.

The group's fourth album, Stand!, had been a runaway success, selling more than three million copies and giving birth to one hit single, "Everyday People." The Jackson 5 had performed a number from Sly's album during their first appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show.

The success of Sly & the Family Stone peaked in the summer of 1969. Sly's intense drug abuse began to affect his career but not before he became celebrated as the "J.D. Salinger of pop music."

Michael also acquired the rights to some of the recordings of Dion & The Belmonts (named after Dion's neighborhood in New York City's northern Bronx). Dion's most memorable song, released in 1968, was "Abraham, Martin & John." Two of Dion's biggest hits, "The Wanderer" and "Runaround Sue," were also purchased by Branca for Michael, as was Len Barry's "1-23" and the Soul Survivors' "Expressway to Your Heart."

At Encino, in the wake of his massive purchases, Michael could be heard listening to some of his new acquisitions. He played "He's So Shy" several times, a recording made by the Pointer Sisters. An R&B group from Oakland, California, they were a big hit in the 70s and 80s. Michael had something in common with them, as both he and the sisters had come from archly conservative religious backgrounds and had been taught that rock 'n' roll was "the devil's music."

Dion & The Belmonts

The ATV catalogue also contained some of the greatest hits of Little Richard, the selfproclaimed "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll." With a public persona marked by bisexual ambiguity, he would make his mark with such suggestive hits as "Tutti Frutti" and "Great Balls of Fire." He was voted the eighth greatest Rock 'n' Roll artist of all time by Rolling Stone, and The New York Times called this Georgia-born entertainer "the original wild man of rock 'n' roll."

Some critics claimed that both Michael and Elvis Presley "stole Fort Knox" from Little Richard's music and on-stage persona. When an interviewer once asked Michael what he thought of Little Richard, and if he were influenced by him, Michael delivered another one of his enigmatic responses: "Awop-bob-a-loo-mop-alop-bam-boom."

Although Michael surely has had conflicting feelings about Little Richard, Michael once said: "Without Little Richard's blueprint to follow, Elvis wouldn't have had a kingdom or been a king of anything."

When he acquired "Tutti Fruitti," Michael learned that the original lyrics contained this line: "Good goddamn, Tutti Frutti, good booty, if it don't fit, don't force it, you can grease it, make it easy." And all this from a Seventh Day Adventist minister "who devotes all my life to God."

The flamboyant Little Richard once told Michael, and the public in general, that "Rock 'n' roll is evil, because rock 'n' roll makes you take drugs, and drugs turn you into a homosexual." Aware of homophobia among his black fans, he renounced his own homosexuality, but since has back-pedaled in his anti-gay proclamations. Like Michael, he once was a Jehovah's Witness but only briefly. Like Michael's friend, Elizabeth Taylor, Little Richard also embraced Judaism.

On certain occasions, Little Richard and Michael ran into each other at social gatherings, but no great friendship ever seemed to develop between the two performers, often viewed as rivals. Little Richard could not have been happy when he heard the news that Michael had acquired the rights to some of his biggest hits and could exploit them any way he wished.

As Michael's career zoomed skyward, he faced family dilemmas. Once again, on August 19, 1982, Katherine quietly filed for a divorce from her errant husband, the man of many mistresses. She told Michael, "I can't take it any more." She was particularly infuriated that Joe was siphoning money from their joint funds to pay for his girlfriends.

The Pointer Sisters

During the divorce proceedings, Joe refused to move out of the Encino house. Michael accurately predicted that his mother would never escape her marriage. And so she didn't, the legal maneuvering over a divorce eventually sputtering, unresolved, to an end. Joe continued on the same path he'd traveled before-that is, to other women.

Little Richard

At the same time, Marlon, who was a year older than Michael, was also filing for divorce from Carol, his wife of seven years. "I still love my husband... desperately" she testified. Michael believed that, unlike Joe and Katherine, Marlon and Carol had a chance to work out their marital difficulties.

Michael was right. Marlon and Carol managed to iron out their problems and are still married today, making him the only one of the Jackson brothers to avoid the divorce courts.

After the "Victory" tour, Marlon grew disillusioned about performing with his brothers, especially Michael. On the last Jackson album, 2300 Jackson Street, he, like Michael, did not join in. Through a deal with Capitol Records, Marlon released his one and only solo album, Baby Tonight. It bombed, but in time he became a successful real estate agent in Southern California and a part owner of the Black Family Channel, a cable TV network.

Family problems were all but forgotten by Michael on one hot, muggy and overcast morning in Los Angeles when he was driven to Westlake Studios. The date was August 29, 1979.

Michael had once again teamed up with Quincy Jones to record an album. Only Michael seemed convinced at the time that they were going to make music industry history. From a stockpile of 600 songs, they narrowed the field to nine. At a cost of $850,000-perhaps a lot more when the final bills came in-they produced an album called Thriller.

Before he'd recorded the album's first song, Michael told Quincy and Rod Temperton, who was working with them, that "I want Thriller to not only do better in sales than Off the Wall, but to become the biggest selling album of all time." Both Quincy and Temperton smiled indulgently. Temperton, in the words of Quincy, was the only man in Hollywood whose body contained "not one drop of bullshit." But this breakthrough album Michael was demanding sounded like bullshit to him.

McCartney had already contributed "The Girl Is Mine," which was the first solo release from the album. The song peaked at number two on Billboard's chart, but it was a mere warm-up act, not a harbinger of what was about to happen to this album.

Songs written by Temperton ("The Lady In My Life" and "Baby Be Mine") were also selected for Thriller, as was "PYT (Pretty Young Thing)," a joint effort of Quincy and James Ingram. All these songs were solid pop numbers and contained in the words of Nelson George, "snappy rhythm tracks and bright, immaculate

arrangements."

The title cut was another Temperton tune, and it appealed to Michael's fascination with the supernatural. The recording was climaxed by a camp horror rap by the actor Vincent Price, "king of the macabre." Despite his towering height, large body, and a propensity to marry, Price was quite effete. Tout Hollywod knew he was gay. Upon meeting Michael, Price was so attracted to him that he made a pass. Informing Price that he was a Jehovah's Witness, a cult that "abhorred homosexuality," Michael turned down the proposition.

The star of countless horror films, Price worked on both the song on the album and in the video of the same name. For his work, he agreed to accept a flat fee of $20,000. If Price's agent had made a deal for his client to get a percentage of the total sales, the actor would have "won lotto," as he himself later admitted.

"Jackson gave me the shaft," Price later charged, "and no pun intended." He recalled that two of the Jackson brothers-"I can't remember their names"-showed up at his doorstep with a gold record plaque. Price was gracious to the brothers. But once the door was closed in their faces, he went into a rage. "What in the fuck am I supposed to do with this shit? Erect a shrine to it?"

Although initially attracted to Michael, Price became more and more bitter as Thriller went on to become the biggest selling album of all time. In the early 90s, when a reporter asked Price if he thought the child molestation charges against Michael were true, Price had a sarcastic reply. "They must be true," he said. "After all, Michael Jackson fucked me too."

In "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'," Michael rants against gossip and unwanted babies and compares himself to a vegetable on a buffet that fans can take a bite out of. He was obviously referring to fans grabbing and tearing at his hair and clothes.

The gorgeous dance ballad, "Human Nature," was the creation of John Bettis and Steve Porcaro. It allows Michael to express a certain sexuality. Back in those days he was still a handsome black man and could be taken seriously by young girls as a sex object.

But in retrospect, most of the success of Thriller as a whole was because of Michael's own songs, notably "Billie Jean," which even today is still his signature. In the song, Billie Jean is a bad lady, accusing Michael of fathering her child ("but the kid is not my son," the song claims). In real life, such an event would happen to Michael several times, as young girls showed up at the gates of Hayvenhurst with children in tow, each claiming that Michael was the father. One white woman evaded security guards and was eventually discovered inside the compound. The two sons who accompanied her were very Nordic looking, each boy with almost platinum blond hair.

Such women were said to be the inspiration for Michael to write "Billie Jean." But there is a more compelling story. "Ms. Paula Abdul is the infamous `Billie Jean' of the song," Enid Jackson once charged. She was married to Michael's brother, Jackie. "Michael wrote the song to vent his anger against Abdul and Jackie for having an eight-year affair while Jackie was married to me."

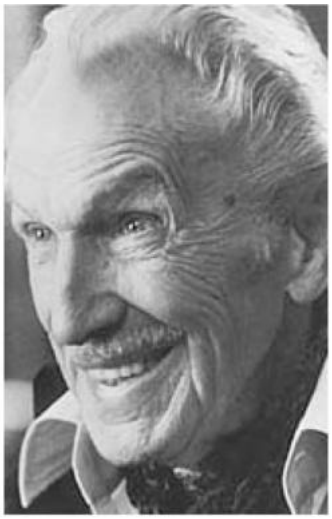
Other critics have suggested that Michael wrote the song to deflect suspicion about his own sexuality.

Before she became one of the most famous pop singers in the world, Paula Abdul-known for such hits as "Forever Your Girl," "Rush Rush," and "Straight Up"-had been an LA Lakers cheerleader. One day at a basketball game, she approached Jackie to ask him for his autograph. It wasn't long before Abdul was getting more than Jackie's autograph.

Even while still a teenager, she was also making a name for herself as a very talented choreographer. Jackie hired her to do the choreography for the video of the song, "Torture," in which Michael did not participate. Janet was so impressed with Abdul's work on the video that she also hired her to do choreography on her album, Control.

By then, Michael had long ago heard of his brother's affair from Enid. Reportedly, he was "uber-pissed" at what he felt was a betrayal from Janet.

Enid alleged that Abdul once called her from the hospital, claiming that she was having an abortion and naming Jackie as the father.



Vincent Price

When confronted with this allegation, Jackie denied the affair. But secretly, he continued to meet with Abdul. A suspicious Enid trailed her husband one night and caught Jackie with Abdul in the back seat of the Jackson family's Land Rover, a confrontation rumored to have ended in violence.

In time, this long-running affair between Jackie and Abdul would end in a divorce that was finalized in August of 1987.

Enid was Michael's favorite sister-in-law, and he deeply regretted the break-up of her marriage to his brother. Some of his bitterness about the affair definitely spilled over into "Billie Jean."

One of the most ridiculous rumors ever circulated about Michael was that Abdul had abandoned Jackie and moved in with Michael at Neverland. When questioned about this, Michael said, "I admire the talents of Miss Abdul on a professional level. As a person, I hate her!"

In 2005, Abdul made a comeback as a judge on Fox Television's Reality Show, American Idol.

Although he may not have admitted this lapse of musical judgment in his memoirs, Quincy Jones reportedly did not want to include "Billie Jean" in the Thriller album. Angered that his judgment was being questioned, Michael telephoned Yetnikoff, demanding that Quincy's name be removed from the album. The music mogul tried to pacify Michael, knowing that Quincy could have sued if his name had been erased.

In its own way, "Beat It" made history in the music industry. In a crossover move, "Beat It" was suddenly played throughout the land on "white rock stations" that rarely featured songs by black performers. "Beat It" was a heavy-hitting rock song that featured Eddie Van Halen, the rock guitar genius.

Quincy remembered that at one point the music was so hot that an electronic amplifier burst into flames. "I've never seen anything like that in forty years in the business." Ever since, "Beat It" has been singled out as the first song that cracked the rock radio color barrier.

Released as a single, "Billie Jean" began at a lukewarm number 47 on Billboard's chart of the top 100, but within six weeks shot to the top. The third single release from the album, "Beat It" also shot to number one on the charts. Michael became the first artist in Billboards history to have number one records on both the black and pop

charts.

But the phenomenal success of Thriller lay in the future. When Quincy, Michael, and the crew first assembled to hear the final mix of the album, Westlake Studios was permeated with gloom and doom. The album was pronounced a disaster.

Paula Abdul with Maria Shriver, 1991

"After all the great songs and the great performances and great mixes and a great tune stack, we had a 24-karat sonic doo-doo," Quincy said. Sobbing hysterically, Michael ran from the studio. It was decided that the album was not releasable.

Quincy knew how to save the album. It was back to work for all concerned, especially Michael who seemed desperate to have a hit. "It was like he was going to make it this time or die trying," Quincy said.

When Walter Yetnikoff heard the final cut of Thriller, he told Michael, "You deliver like a mother-fucker." In a whispery little voice, Michael replied, "Please, Walter, don't use that word with me."

On hearing the album, critic Vincent Aletti of New York's Village Voice had an ominous prediction. "In Thriller, Jackson has begun to part the shimmering curtain of his innocence-it's magic, it's unreal-to glimpse darker, deeper things. Once that curtain is ripped down, the view could be astonishing."

The album that both Quincy and Michael were once too embarrassed to release went on to chalk up a worldwide sale of 50 million copies, outdistancing such mega-sellers as Grease and Saturday Night Fever. It would also spend more than seventy-five weeks at Number One on the Billboard album charts, longer than any other modern pop recording. It also produced seven Top Ten hits, beating the records previously held by Bruce Springsteen and Fleetwood Mac.

No other album in the history of music had ever sold like that. Ten-yearolds purchased the album, as did some seniors who were young in 1917. Michael-mania spread around the planet.

The decade of the 80s belonged to Jacko, "King of Pop," and to Ronald Reagan, who was president of the United States as the Soviet Union entered its twilight zone. The name of Michael Jackson became one of the most famous in the world-or, as his fans claimed, "The most famous."

In listening to the album today, the songs make for a good pop album music, fun to sing and dance to, but Thriller doesn't quite "live up to its legendary reputation," in the words of Michael Jackson Record Reviews. The success of the album depended largely on Michael's imaginative videos, much of the action inspired by his own

visions.

Michael lived, breathed, and ate Thriller, devoting his entire life to guarantee its success. His "drive bordered on the psychopathic," in the words of Yetnikoff. Michael called the mogul day and night, demanding to know the latest figures of its worldwide sales. He was an artist obsessed with his own success, demanding more and more promotion. After weeks as number one, he wept uncontrollably when Thriller fell to number two position.

Quincy traveled with Michael on a world tour to promote Thriller, concentrating on Japan and Europe.

In Rome, Michael learned that his huge upcoming concert had been simultaneously scheduled for the same evening that Leonard Bernstein was conducting an orchestra at Vatican City. Michael had long been impressed with such smash hits as On the Town and West Side Story. Michael's own dance moves had been greatly influenced by West Side Story in particular. On a more personal level, perhaps Michael was intrigued by how a homosexual pursued a career-that of conductor of a symphony orchestra-that demanded a heterosexual facade.

Eddie Van Halen

The coming together of Bernstein and Michael did not exactly transpire as Michael had planned. When he met Michael, the conductor "virtually reached the bottom of Michael's throat" with what came to be called history's most prolonged tongue kiss. Michael should not have been flattered. Bernstein did that to many handsome young men he was introduced to.

When Michael finally broke away, he was astonished to hear Bernstein say: "I hear that AIDS can be acquired by an exchange of saliva. Let's hope that both of us are not entertaining something really wicked in our blood streams."

Bernstein invited Quincy to a private viewing of the Sistine Chapel which he'd arranged through his Vatican connections. Both men lay on the floor looking up at the Michelangelo masterpiece. Studying the artist's figures carefully, Bernstein exclaimed: "Look at that! Michelangelo doesn't know what a woman looks like. He was as gay as I am. Those are just guys with tits!"

At the end of the world tour, plans went forward to make a video of "Thriller." But the 14-minute video would be delayed by a year and a half after the release of the album.

Sales had slumped, but after the release of the video, the album once again repeated its steady climb up the charts. Fans around the world treated the arrival of the video like the premiere of a major film. Quincy Jones claimed that Michael's video "made a sensation in tandem with the rise of video as an art form."

In a very short time, Michael would become even more celebrated because of his videos. One eyewitness on the set where "Thriller" was filmed recalled the moment. "Jackson's body tenses. Energy shoots through his body like a bolt of lightning. As he faces the camera, he seems to spit out the lyrics. His usually fragile voice suddenly

takes on a dynamic tone. He can be heard over the deafening playback. He grips his left sleeve with his right hand and jerks it upward. He growls the chorus to the camera. He doesn't dance but seems to glide. He launches into one of his famous spins-a trio of turns in succession."

In the video, Michael is transformed into both a zombie and a werewolf, thereby challenging its director, John Landis, who had previously directed An American Werewolf in London. Landis cast Ola Ray as Michael's girlfriend. Because of Michael's strong religious beliefs, she concealed from him that she had been a Playboy centerfold in 1980.

Before she was tapped to appear with Michael in the "Thriller" video, Ray, who came from St. Louis, had appeared as a hooker in the 1981 film, Body and Soul. She'd also appeared as hookers in the 1982 Night Shift and in 48 Hrs., released the same year. "Thriller" was obviously the highlight of her career, but she continued to do minor film and TV work, appearing as a Playboy playmate in Beverly Hills Cop II, released in 1987.

In the "Thriller" video, choreographed zombies perform with Michael. He and the "undead" stage a fantastic song-and-dance number, which the Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for The New York Times, Margo Jefferson, called "Walpurgisnacht in suburbia."

The choreography in the "Thriller" video would have taxed the talents of Jerome Robbins. The dance sequences were filmed within the underground concourse at the Rockefeller Center subway stop in Manhattan. The video cost a million dollars.

After the airing of "Thriller" on MTV, and its subsequent worldwide success, all major stars-both black and white-demanded a music video to promote their recordings. A tie-in video with the release of an album became mandatory. Michael single-handedly had revolutionized the music business.

Two shorter but still successful videos were released from the Thriller album, "Billie Jean" and "Beat It."

By the time of his release of the video "Billie Jean," Michael had a new "wet look" to his hair. He'd plucked his eyebrows, now heavy with eyeliner. His dancing was slicker, his clothing more "with it." On one occasion he wore black leather trousers and a black leather jacket like Elvis Presley himself.

"Thriller"

The video, "Beat It," was a sort of mini-version of West Side Story, with the urban violence updated to the 1980s. It was the most viewed video during the summer of 1983.

With its theme of gang warfare, "Beat It" was as stunning as "Billie Jean." Actual gang members from the streets of Los Angeles appeared in the video along with professional dancers.

MJ in "Thriller"

The "Thriller" video had been paid for by Branca's skillful negotiations of distribution deals. Meeting with Michael, the two men conceived an even more daring plan: they'd make a documentary on the making of the hit video, and would call it "The Making of `Thriller.'"

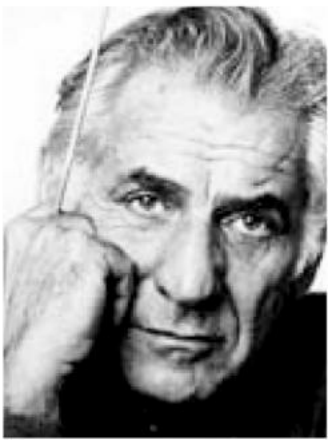
Yetnikoff was instrumental in getting MTV to participate financially. Before that, he'd denounced MTV as "racist assholes" for presenting only white performers. But MTV, recognizing the unprecedented appeal of Michael, finally came around, even putting up some of the money for the financing of the second "Thriller" video. These videos opened the doors of MTV to other emerging black performers.

Jerry Kramer was called in to direct "The Making of `Thriller.'" "As a professional, Michael is like a Zen monk," Kramer later said. "He's focused on a singular goal, his work, his art, which he constantly tries to take to a celestial level."

Long after the release of the "Thriller" video, a story leaked out to the press that under threat of expulsion from the Jehovah's Witness cult, Michael once ordered Branca to destroy the "Thriller" video, even though it had been financed by Vestron, Showtime, and MTV. Branca, at least in front of Michael, agreed to do that, but he had no intention of actually destroying the video. Finally, a last-minute compromise was reached thanks to the insertion of a disclaimer: "Due to my strong personal convictions, I wish to stress that this film in no way endorses a belief in the occult-Michael Jackson."

Later on, to pacify the more fanatical of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Michael, in an issue of Awake! on May 22, 1984, tried to distance himself from "Thriller." He promised, "I'll never do a video like that again! In fact, I have blocked further distribution of the film over which I have control, including its release in some other countries. There's all kinds of promotional stuff being proposed for `Thriller.' But I tell them, `No, no, no. I don't want to do anything on `Thriller.' No more 'Thriller.'"

Not all the Jehovah's Witnesses disapproved of Michael, although church leaders did. A radical cult within the sect itself came up with the startling belief that Michael was "an incarnation of the Archangel Michael, a symbol of the arisen Christ."



Leonard Bernstein

Wearing a pink shirt and a red bow tie, with black leather pants and a jacket, Michael appeared live at the 1983 hoedown celebrating Motown's 25th anniversary. Michael at first refused to appear, but was eventually cajoled into performing. He electrified audiences.

On stage Michael had a reunion with his errant brother, Jermaine, who had voiced criticism of Michael for "trying to be white" to the press. Berry Gordy pleaded with Michael to do a solo number from Motown's long list of hits, but Michael adamantly refused, preferring to lip-sync his rendition of "Billie Jean."

It was take that choice or leave it," Gordy later said. "I caved in just to get Michael out there on stage."

Some fifty million people tuned in to watch Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow. Michael startled audiences with his "Moonwalk." Actually he'd ripped off the dance, in which he seemed to be gliding in opposite directions simultaneously, from inner-city black break dancers in the 1970s.

From that night on, Michael also became known as "The Gloved One." Many fans thought he'd introduced the lone white-sequined glove that night. But he'd been wearing such a glove since the late 1970s. Sammy Davis Jr. thought Michael was paying homage to old-fashioned black minstrel shows, or making a tribute to Al Jolson. Motown 25 turned out to be the highest-rated variety show in the history of TV.

In less than a decade after Michael's Motown 25 appearance, Entertainment Weekly hailed the performance as one of the greatest entertainment moments of the 20th century. The article wrote of "a delicate young man with a choked voice, a white glove, and magic shoes. He took the microphone and began to write the next chapter of American music history. The moment Michael Jackson ripped into his single, `Billie Jean'-squealing, moaning, spinning, and finally taking the viewer's breath away, with his Moonwalkthe music industry had to throw away its old yardsticks of success."

Two of the greatest dancing stars of all time, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, watched Michael's "Moonwalk." The next day, each of them called Michael, asking to meet him. Although shy about meeting two of his all-time favorites, Michael eagerly set up times to see each of these talented stars of the Golden Age, from whom he had stolen so many of his own dance steps, adapting them, of course.

Both Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire were idols to Michael, and he also understood the different artistry of each dancer. Critic Steve Vineberg once noted that the two performers were a study in contrasts with different personal styles. He called Astaire "a natural aristocrat, movie musicals' closest equivalent to Cary Grant."

"If Fred Astaire is the Cary Grant of dance, I'm the Marlon Brando," Kelly said.

"Astaire was astonishingly lithe, perhaps the most graceful man who ever walked-let alone danced-across a

movie set," Vineberg claimed.

On the other hand, Vineberg found that Kelly evoked Jimmy Cagney. "Kelly's style was rooted in vaudeville and the brash, crowing apple-pie musicals of George M. Cohan," Vineberg said. "He was an athlete, a two-fisted Irishman."

The first telephone call of the morning to Michael at his Encino home was from Astaire. The dancer told Michael that he'd taped the show and had gotten up early that morning to watch the program again.

"You're a hell of a mover," Astaire told Michael. "Man, you really put them on their asses last night."

After Michael thanked him, Astaire said, "You're an angry dancer. I'm the same way. I used to do the same thing with my cane."

In the days to come, Astaire invited Michael over to his Beverly Hills home. There, Michael taught Ginger Rogers' former dance partner how to Moonwalk. Astaire was eighty-four years old at the time. So impressed was he with Michael's steps that Astaire asked Hermes Pan to come over one night, as he wanted Michael to teach the dancer/choreographer also how to Moonwalk.

Michael admired Astaire, but he also had great respect for the talent of Hermes Pan, the Nashville-born artist responsible for choreographing every one of the nine Astaire-Rogers 1930s gems as well as Fred and Ginger's 1949 screen swan song, The Barkleys of Broadway. Pan also choreographed Betty Grable musicals in the 40s and danced on screen with both the "Blonde Bombshell," as she was called, and Hollywood's princess, Rita Hayworth.

Michael asked Astaire how he climbed the walls and danced on the ceiling in the 1951 Royal Wedding.

Astaire finally admitted how this trick shot was done. "The whole room revolved, and I was on the ground the whole time. The camera, the cameraman, and the room all turn, and I'm the one who does the climbing. It required a special set. We called it the Iron Lung, and it was constructed by Bethlehem Steel. Not only did the camera and cameraman revolve 360 degrees, the light for the set revolved as well. It's too difficult to explain. But don't you dare copy it from me. That scene belongs just to me."

"I always remember the song you sang," Michael said, obviously in awe.

"You're All the World to Me," Astaire said. "I remember it well."

Long after he gave up dancing in public, Astaire still put on private shows, as he did one night for Michael. He sat at his drums and pounded out some rhythms, before getting up and performing a few dance steps for Michael.

"Better watch out!" Michael warned. "I'll steal those steps from you too."

"Feel free," Astaire said. "At my age, I'm glad to be walking."

Michael confessed that he used to sit in front of his television, using his video cassette's stop-and-rewind switches to dissect every dance step his mentor made.

"I stole that idea of going up on my toes from those classic movies you made back in the 30s," Michael told Astaire.

"Those were the days," Astaire said with a touch of nostalgia.

"Anybody who can sing and dance at the same time-and do both wellis pretty darned good," Astaire said. "And that's what Michael does."

Michael would later be nominated for an Emmy Award in the musical category. Even though he lost to Leontyne Price, he felt Astaire's compliment took away some of the sting of defeat.

When Michael's so-called autobiography, Moonwalk, was published, he dedicated it to Fred Astaire.

After Astaire's death in 1987, and when Michael was preparing his 1988 Moonwalker, a full-length feature film, he received a major disappointment. Michael choreographed a dance sequence in which he'd superimpose himself onto one of Astaire's films, becoming in essence the dancer's Ginger Rogers. It was a brilliant idea and would have made for a first-rate film memory. But the female jockey who Astaire married at the end of his life, Robyn Smith, refused to give Michael permission to use the footage.

When Sarah Giles composed her collection of remembrances about Astaire, she asked Michael to contribute. In Fred Astaire. His Friends Talk, Michael wrote: "I could only repeat what has been said and written about Fred Astaire's perfectionism and enormous, one-of-a-kind artistry. What I can reflect on is the inspiration he afforded me personally, being privileged as I was to see him work his magic. Nobody could duplicate Mr. Astaire's ability, but what I never stop trying to emulate is his total discipline, his absolute dedication to every aspect of his art. He rehearsed, rehearsed, and rehearsed some more, until he got it just the way he wanted it. It was Fred Astaire's work ethic that few people ever discussed and even fewer could ever hope to equal."

In the 1980s, many critics and writers called Michael the Fred Astaire of his era. Such a tribute was expressed by Sandy Duncan in People Extra: "Fred Astaire was to that era and that music, the way the music moved through him in the 30s, what Michael Jackson is to this era. You could put him behind a scrim and see his silhouette and you'd know who he was. It's like he's got a direct connection to God, because those moves just come from within him and through the music."

In the wake of Astaire's approval, Michael's other idol, Gene Kelly, also paid him a visit at Encino. Michael estimated that he must have watched Kelly dance with the cartoon figures, Tom & Jerry, at least a hundred times in the 1945 film, Anchors Aweigh.

Gene Kelly

In time Kelly would return the compliment, filming a taped tribute to Michael for his self-serving lovefest broadcast on Showtime cable TV.

Kelly enthralled Michael with his insider show business stories, admitting, "I wasn't nice to Debbie-it's a wonder she still speaks to me." He was referring to working with Debbie Reynolds on the 1952 Singin'in the Rain. Michael told Kelly that he thought this was the greatest movie musical of all time.

He warned Michael that if he ever became a musical star in films, he should get used to being overlooked by The Academy. "It's a form of snobbism," Kelly said. "Members feel that drama is more deserving of awards than comedy."

Michael complimented Kelly on his all-ballet film, Invitation to the Dance. "I was never allowed to complete the picture," Kelly said. "The plug was pulled on me. The version released in 1956 was never finished. I was furious. Of course, I got disastrous notices. I took to bed for three weeks."

He blamed the director, Vincente Minnelli, for the disappointing Brigadoon, released in 1954. "You see,

Vincente was in love with me .. . always was. When you're in love, you can't be objective as a director."

Kelly expressed his regret at his treatment of Judy Garland during the shooting of The Pirate in 1948. "She and Vincente were breaking up, and she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown and the beginning of a long and protracted illness," Kelly said. "Vincente didn't help matters by spending all his time in my dressing room panting after me like a puppy dog."

Michael appeared shocked at these revelations.

Kelly warned Michael, "Don't get carried away with your own brilliance in the studio. Both Vincente and I thought The Pirate was going to be the greatest musical of all time. At least we thought that for forty-eight hours. Perhaps only six people in America understood where we were going. In fact, Vincente kissed and licked my toes in gratitude for the performance I gave."

Before departing, Kelly told Michael: "So many men-women, toohave fallen for me. Judy herself, Peter Lawford. Noel Coward. Every chorus boy I've ever danced with developed a crush on me. As a lover, I never returned love. An artist can only love himself, and I'm sure you agree."

"How do you cope with all those gay rumors," Michael said. "They say bad things about me. That I'm a homosexual, and I'm not! How do you answer such questions?"

"Enigmatically," Kelly responded. "I tell my inquisitors that I'm not gay. Merely an Irish leprechaun. There's a difference you know."

At the door, Kelly gave Michael a warm embrace and a theatrical kiss. "You're going to be king in the 80s. For Fred and me, there's not much left except accepting lifetime achievement awards."

"Can you believe it?" Michael endlessly asked of anyone even remotely concerned. "The great Fred Astaire, the great Gene Kelly told me that I was just as great a dancer as they were in their prime. What can any future award mean to me when I get praise like that?"

Astaire and Kelly might approve of Michael, but not the members of his church, The Jehovah's Witnesses.

Michael might have tried to appease members of Jehovah's Witnesses and distance himself from Thriller, but he wasn't going to let the fanatical religious sect deter "me from the greatest night of my life." He showed up at the 1984 Grammy Awards to receive all those accolades for Thriller, and it would mark the pinnacle of his career. It would also turn into one of his most infamous appearances, launching him on the long road toward a forever tarnished reputation.

When Michael walked into the auditorium to receive his Grammys, he had child star Emmanuel Lewis on his left and the beautiful Brooke Shields on his right. The trio was, in the words of Walter Yetnikoff, "a menage a trois to make the Marquis de Sade blush."

"I didn't get destroyed by the press and fan mania and neither will Michael. He's very talented. He knows how to make records that people like. But he's a very straightforward kid. He has a great deal of faith. He's got a great deal of innocence and he protects that especially. Michael looks at cartoons all day and keeps away from drugs. That's how he maintains his innocence. "

--Paul McCartney

"I did it as a favor. I didn't want nothing. Maybe Michael will give me dance lessons some day. I was a complete fool, according to the rest of the band and our manager and everybody else. "

--Eddie Van Halen, on playing 'Beat It' for free

"No dope-oriented album ever sold as much as Thriller, and no vulgar artist ever became so famous as Michael has.

"

--The Rev. Jesse Jackson

"Thank God for Elizabeth Taylor. She protected me."

--Michael Jackson

"He wasn't ever really interested in money. I'd give him his share of the night's earnings and the next day he'd buy ice cream or candy for all the kids in the neighborhood. "

--Papa Joe Jackson

"My Lord, he's a wonderful mover. He makes these moves up himself and it's just great to watch. Michael is a dedicated artist. He dreams and thinks of it all the time. "

--Fred Astaire

Chapter Seven

The Grammy Awards in 1984 alerted keen observers to Michael's interest in young boys. In his future, these boys-with an occasional exceptionwould be white. Not so Emmanuel Lewis, an African-American who was born in Brooklyn in 1971, which made him thirteen years old when Michael took him and Brooke Shields as his "dates" to the Grammys.

Michael met the pint-sized actor-known at the time as "The Tallest 40 Inches in Hollywood"-at an awards ceremony. They became intense friends, a relationship that would last for many years. It was another odd coupling for Michael. Lewis was rumored to be a midget, but endocrinologists claimed he had all the potential for normal growth.

Speculation about the relationship became rampant when Michael and Lewis appeared in public dressed alike. They spent many happy hours even days-together. When Lewis went somewhere with Michael, he was often mistaken for Gary Coleman, the Diff'rent Strokes TV child star. Both of these performers are short, African-American in origin, and had starred in sitcoms about trans-racial adoptions.

Emmanuel Lewis

Lewis was twelve years old when his sitcom, Webster, premiered in 1983. The series finale would come just one day after his 18th birthday. Michael was a faithful fan of the series.

Before hitting it big on Webster, Lewis had starred in TV commercials, hawking fruit juice, glue, soup, toys, stereos, coffee, puddings, pizzas, and Burger King. He told reporters, "Though I'm still little, my heart and dreams are as big as ever."

It was during the making of those TV commercials that Michael became "smitten" (La Toya's words) with Lewis. Brazenly, Michael called the talent agent, Margaret Lewis, the young actor's mother, and asked her permission to allow her son to spend time at Hayvenhurst. Not suspicious at the time, she seemed delighted that a big star like Michael had expressed an interest in her son.

It was all fun and games, as they wrestled on the lawn at Encino, played cowboys and Indians, or petted the animals, including the boa constrictor, "Muscles," in Michael's zoo. Michael claimed that although boa constrictors could not devour the average person whole, Lewis was "just the right size for a tasty snack." In response, the child actor would run screaming into the house. Much time was spent in Michael's darkened bedroom watching movies. Sleepovers-later to become a notorious fixture in Michael's lifefollowed.

Steve Howell, who became Michael's unofficial videographer, captured on film many intimate moments between Lewis and Michael. "Yes, hugging and the most intimate cuddling," Howell was quoted as saying. "It's all on home video."

In March of 2005, In Touch Weekly, a tabloid, shocked Michael's fans by publishing a photograph of him, along with Lewis, lying in bed sucking on the nipples of baby bottles. "How retro!" a fan wrote Michael. "How could you? Talk about trying to relive your second childhood."

When he turned thirteen, Lewis received a diamond-and-gold "friendship" bracelet from Michael that allegedly cost $15,000. "It weighed more than Emmanuel did," said a Jackson family member. This was a great exaggeration, of course, but at the time, Lewis weighed only forty pounds.

Michael was twenty-five years old when he launched this strange friendship with a boy about half his age. Some family members, including La Toya, were often embarrassed by the whispering and giggling between the two, but Michael refused to talk about Lewis and asked that the Jacksons not probe into his personal relationships.

Freddie Mercury

Unlike La Toya, Michael's sister, Rebbie, always denounced those who speculated that her brother was gay. "That's inconceivable. Homosexuality is against the tenets of our faith," she said, referring to the Jehovah's Witness cult. "Anyone who turned out to be gay would be disfellowshipped, cut off right away." The statement is only startling in its naivete.

In 1983, Michael invited Lewis to attend a concert with him at the Los Angeles Forum to hear Freddie Mercury, the flamboyant lead singer of the group, Queen.

Previously, Michael had urged Mercury to release "Another One Bites the Dust" as a single. Soon after, it shot to number one on the charts, and since then, Mercury had been urging Michael to record a duet with him, as he had with Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger.

Michael and Mercury were often compared to each other, one critic claiming that, "Both artists have an androgynous image.. .their appearance has blurred the conventional and traditional barriers surrounding gender, race, and age in society."

Watching Mercury perform, Michael reportedly was awed by this BritishIndian singer, who was impressive not only for his powerful vocal abilities but for his charisma as a live performer. Later Michael went backstage for a reunion with Mercury, in the process introducing him to Lewis.

In his dressing room, Mercury was on the phone talking to his cats-yes, that's not a misprint. The mercurial singer was devoted to his cats and even dedicated his solo album, "Mr. Bad Guy," to his felines. Michael noted that Mercury was wearing a vest on which he'd painted portraits of each of his cats. The song, "Delilah," was written about his favorite cat.

Slamming down the phone, Mercury turned to Michael and Lewis. "Don't either of you ask my hand in marriage. I can't cook, and I'd be a terrible housewife. I'm just a musical prostitute, my dear." He uttered those lines to many visitors. Perhaps in deference to the presence of the obviously underaged Lewis, he didn't express another one of his favorite quips: "The bigger the better-in everything."

After Michael and the pint-sized actor had departed, Mercury turned to the stage manager. "I'm gayer than Michael, but I like my men six feet tall with twelve-inch dicks."

A reporter, David Rowland, once asked Michael who his closest friends were. He said, "Freddie Mercury, Diana Ross, Elizabeth Taylor ..." Rowland claimed that Michael then added the name of a kid standing beside him. "I didn't get his name. He looked ten years old, very cute, very blond, and blueeyed. It certainly wasn't Emmanuel Lewis."

Michael said, "My grown-up friends and this boy here are the only people in the world who don't want anything from me. They love me for myself."

When Mercury learned that he had AIDS, seven years before he eventually died from the disease, he was reported to have said: "I should have used Michael as a role model and dated only ten-year-old virgins."

In public, Michael sometimes defended his unusual friendship with Lewis. "I was Emmanuel's form of inspiration-he loved my humor and just hanging out and having fun. Not just with me, but my whole family."

"Michael is not only my friend, he's my family," Lewis claimed.

Michael's nickname for Lewis was "Manny."

Initially, Margaret Lewis didn't think that there was anything wrong about her young son pursuing a relationship with a big star like Michael. But when reports reached her that Michael and her son had checked into the Beverly Hills Hotel, registering themselves as father and son, she moved to sever the relationship. "There was something wrong here," she reportedly said. "The friendship didn't seem right. Michael was getting obsessional about my son."

Years later, in 2003, when Lewis was on The Howard Stern Show promoting the TV series, The Surreal Life, the controversial interviewer noted that Michael used to carry Lewis around like he was a little baby. Stern asked Lewis if Michael had been in love with him. Lewis seemed to want to drop the subject but Stern was persistent, asking Lewis if Michael used to bathe him. Stern also wanted to know if Michael ever "came on to you or fondled you?" Lewis denied that any incident like that ever happened. He later said, "I was ready to go over and kick Howard's ass for asking such questions."

Michael's other "date" at the 1984 Grammy Awards was Brooke Shields. Respected in later years as a Broadway actress, she was known at the time as a young Hollywood goddess, a sex kitten, a sensual starlet, an undergraduate at Princeton, and the scandalous star of 1978's Pretty Baby, 1980's The Blue Lagoon, and 1981's Endless Love.

In some ways, their early lives had run along roughly parallel courses. Michael had Papa Joe beating, pushing, and shoving him into early stardom. Brooke had a small-time actress, Teri Shields, the ultimate stage mother, placing her daughter in front of the camera before she was even one year old. As the Ivory Snow pin-up, Brooke was

once hailed as "the most beautiful baby in America." Francesco Scavullo, the celebrated photographer who changed her diapers for the Ivory Snow ads, once said: "Brooke was born beautiful, she stays beautiful, and she gets more beautiful every month."

Brooke's first biographer, Jason Bonderoff, described a startling event that happened to Brooke when she was only two years old. One afternoon in Central Park, Teri Shields was guarding the baby carriage containing Brooke. An elderly woman in large sunglasses and an Hermes scarf strolled by and peered inside the carriage. Teri thought that the woman's face looked vaguely familiar. Staring at the baby, the woman said, "The child is magnificent. She'll go far." Teri recognized the husky Swedish accent. Greta Garbo had predicted Brooke's future before walking on without another word.

Reportedly, Michael had refused to see Pretty Baby, a movie in which Brooke played a child prostitute living in a brothel. There were numerous nude scenes. The release of the film caused an outcry from right-wing fundamentalists and groups attacking child porn. Michael was also said to have boycotted The Blue Lagoon because of its nude scenes. The release of this film led to Brooke's testifying at a U.S. congressional inquiry, where she insisted that older body doubles had been used during the filming of her nude scenes.

Brooke had created a sensation, and made a cool million, when she'd posed for Calvin Klein in his jeans, plugging the slogan, "Nothing comes between me and my Calvins."

Neither Brooke nor her stage mother, Teri, seemed to have a problem with Brooke becoming romantically linked in the press with "a man of color," as one public relations agent privately commented years later. "Of course, in Michael's case, if a girl didn't like him black, he could switch to white," quipped one reporter.

Michael, perhaps because of his lower class origins, was intrigued by Brooke's aristocratic background. She was a descendant of Lucrezia Borgia, one of the Holy Roman Emperors (Charles V), King Henri IV of France, Prince Rainier of Monaco, and the Marquis de Sade.

Michael was said to have been jealous when he learned that Brooke was dating John Kennedy Jr. When Capote heard this, he said, "He's only jealous because he can't have John-John for himself."

Before her arrival at the Grammys, the actress had unsuccessfully sued photographer Garry Gross in an attempt to stop him from exhibiting or selling nude pictures of herself for which she'd (voluntarily) posed when she was only ten years old. She had tearfully testified in court that the photographs embarrassed her. But despite Brooke's tears, and despite the fact that some commentators had defined the pictures as "child porn," the court decided that Gross had the right to display the pictures.

After her 1983 disaster, the film Sahara, for which she'd been paid $1,500,000, Brooke took a four-year sabbatical from pictures to attend Princeton. Nonetheless, her promoters jockeyed, during that era, to keep her name in the press. What better person to date than Michael Jackson himself, as he rode the crest of his fame?

"Dating Michael was a way to get Brooke's picture on the front page of every newspaper in America," a publicist said. "And Michael needed to show up with a beautiful woman to prove he was straight. It was a match made in heaven."

Except it wasn't, as subsequent events on the actual night of the Grammys revealed.

Michael had already escorted Brooke as his date to the January 1984, American Music Awards, produced by "eternally young" Dick Clark. She had to share Michael with his other escorts of the evening, Emmanuel Lewis and La Toya. All four of them sat smiling as Clark claimed, "If 1983 wasn't the year of Michael Jackson, it wasn't the year of anybody."

According to La Toya, Michael was very reluctant to take Brooke once again to the Grammy Awards in February. His sister remembered Michael coming into the kitchen of their Encino home, joining Janet and her for a "confessional." Meanwhile, Brooke sat in the living room of the Jackson home, "cooling her heels," as Janet remembered. La Toya's claim was that Brooke was trying to cajole Michael into taking her to the awards ceremony,

which was destined to attract worldwide press coverage.

It isn't known why Michael was reluctant to take Brooke to the Grammys. Even if she were only "arm candy," he could use his association with her to defend against rumors that he was gay. And she would get national publicity. Even so, many members in the press, even thousands of Michael's fans, were suspicious of this coupling. Speculation appeared that Michael had paid Brooke anywhere from $10,000 to $25,000 for each of their joint appearances. None of the allegations from those provocative web postings was ever proven.

Janet Jackson may have referred to Brooke as "giraffe butt," but she was one of the most beautiful teenagers to emerge in the 1980s. Garbo had been right to an extent. Brooke did go far, but, as is usually the case in Hollywood, not as far as she dreamed. She did not, for example, become the next Ava Gardner, as some had predicted.

In one of the more fanciful paragraphs in his autobiography, Moonwalk, Michael falsely claimed that in addition to Diana Ross, "another love was Brooke Shields. We were romantically serious for a while."

Brooke has denied that there was any romance or love affair between Michael and herself, and she did so on national television. She'd met Michael when she was only thirteen, and they had bonded in their discussions over the difficulties associated with being a child star.

"There were a handful of child stars at the time-actress Jodie Foster, Michael, and myself among them-and we were friends because we shared an understanding of how difficult life was in the public eye," Brooke said. "When we were together, we were in a safe place. We could be ourselves."

Accompanied by both Emmanuel Lewis and Brooke, Michael arrived customarily late on the biggest night of his life, the presentation of the Grammys on February 28, 1984, at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium. The televised event would be watched by sixty million viewers.

Michael's major competition of the evening, Lionel Richie, spotted him backstage. Destined to become the big loser of the evening, Richie was overheard talking to Quincy Jones, "My God," he allegedly said upon seeing Michael's costume, "It's Sergeant Pepper and he's wearing more makeup than Brooke Shields."

Michael arrived at the glitzy gala, the music industry's Oscars, in full military uniform, his thin waist encased in a gold sash. A black sequined jacket with wide lapels fitted tightly over a pair of black sequined pants. Across his chest he'd hung a gold bandolier, and on each shoulder rested a mammoth epaulette. He skipped the tie but wore a white wing-collared dress shirt. Of course, he had on his trademark white socks and a spangled glove on one hand as well as a spangled wrist band. His eyes were concealed from his millions of fans behind dark aviator sunglasses.

Michael had been nominated for a dozen Grammys, and no star in the history of the academy had ever received such accolades, not even Elvis Presley. Even The Beatles had received only four Grammys, which one critic of the music awards called "a scandal."

The evening began with Michael winning Best Rock Vocal Performance by a Male for "Thriller." He had fully expected to win Best Song of the Year for his rendition of "Billie Jean," but he lost to The Police for "Every Breath You Take."

He bounced back, hitting the stage with Quincy Jones to accept Grammys as Producers of the Year for the Thriller album.

In many ways, the most meaningful Grammy was Michael's win for Best Children's Album honoring his work on E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial. As he accepted the award, his fans in the balcony broke into hysterical screaming as they rose to their feet shouting, "We love you, Michael."

More Grammys waited in the wings for Michael to pick up. Best R&B vocalist went to Michael for "Billie Jean," and he also won the Best Record award for "Beat It" and Best R&B Song Award for "Billie Jean."

One of the biggest awards of the evening, Best Pop Male Vocalist, went to Michael for "Beat It." Sisters La

Toya, Janet, and Rebbie joined him on stage in his great moment of triumph. He said, "My mother's very shy, she's like me, she won't come up." For this award, he even removed his sunglasses, as Katharine Hepburn had suggested to him. One male fan called from the balcony, "Take it all off, Michael."

The highlight of the evening, the Grammy for Record of the Year, also went to guess who?-Michael. Before millions, he was like a happy kid, jumping up and down. One of the presenters, pint-sized Mickey Rooney, called the ceremony "the Michael Jackson Show." He also entered the history books, having won more Grammy awards than any other musician before him, breaking the record set by Paul Simon, who in 1970 had walked away with seven Grammys for his album, Bridge Over Troubled Water.

When Michael in his falsetto announced, "I love all the girls in the bal cony," a member of the audience sitting behind Lewis and Brooke could be heard saying, "Yeah, right!"

This was also the night the infamous Pepsi commercials were aired for the first time. Since news of Michael's hair catching fire had been flashed around the world, more people watched his commercial than any other TV commercial in the history of the medium. "The executives at Coca-Cola were getting diarrhea watching it," said one of the producers of the Grammys.

Even as the commercial for Pepsi aired, lawyers for both Michael and the soft drink company were in negotiations about the fallout from this disastrous filming.

Despite the events transpiring on the stage, everyone in the auditorium seemed to be staring at the strange trio who sat up front: Michael, Lewis, and Brooke. What caused Brooke distress was Michael's insistence that Lewis remain perched on his lap. Finally, when she couldn't take the scrutiny any more, Brooke was seen tugging at Michael's arm. "Let's get out of here! Everybody's looking at us. I'm so embarrassed I think we should make a run for it."

Michael cuddled Lewis in his arms as he left the auditorium, heading for a waiting limousine surrounded by his bodyguards. An apparently enraged Brooke trailed them, looking neither left nor right as she made her getaway.

His previous "girlfriend," Tatum O'Neal, made two attempts to reach Michael, but was shoved aside by security guards. Behind his dark glasses, Michael either didn't see her-or didn't want to see her. "How quickly they forget," Tatum told her friends, perhaps jokingly. "Without me, there would be no Michael Jackson."

Later that night at the Rex, a deluxe restaurant, where a post-Grammy bash was held, Michael tasted caviar, drank a glass of champagne, and was embraced by Arnold Schwarzenegger, the future governor of California. He even received a kiss from Julio Iglesias, who was rumored to "have the hots" for his sister, La Toya. Orange-haired Cyndi Lauper greeted Michael with a wet kiss, as did Eddie Murphy, known to appreciate a "trannie" when he spotted one.

"Michael, darling," came a familiar voice. He turned to confront a still beautiful, but aging, Joan Collins. "Tell me, dear heart, the name of your plastic surgeon. I simply adore your nose job."

Neil Diamond approached him, reminding him that "your role models," Diana Ross and James Brown, had never received a Grammy-"and now you're carrying home eight." Music legend Bob Dylan also came up to Michael, expressing his ongoing disappointment that his revolutionary Highway 61 Revisited hadn't received a Grammy in 1965.

Michael not only won all those Grammys but over the years he would also bank a total take from Thriller that may have gone beyond the $150 million mark. "Move over Paul McCartney," Quincy Jones was reported to have said. "Show business is getting a new rich daddy-and he's black."

When Michael in his limousine dropped Brooke off at her hotel, L'Ermitage in Beverly Hills, she is reported to have said: "Why don't you, Emmanuel, and I get married? That will give the press something to write about!" The quote might have been apocryphal.

Back in his bedroom at Encino, Michael spent the rest of the evening talking to "my only true friends in life," a series of six mannequins. Brooke herself had considered the manufacture of a mannequin as a present for Michael until she learned that she'd have to devote three weeks of her life posing for it.

One week after the awards, one insulting reporter asked the question on everyone's lips, "Who do you love? Brooke or Emmanuel?"

Michael didn't answer but launched into an excuse for not marrying. "I don't like some of the things my brothers do to their wives. I'm never going to marry. I just can't take it. It's awful, marriage. I don't trust anyone enough for that."

Later, when he published Moonwalk, Michael had other comments about the lack of a woman in his life. "My dating and relationships with girls have not had the happy ending I've been looking for. Something always seems to get in the way. The things I share with millions of people aren't the sort of things you share with one. Many girls want to know what makes me tickwhy I live the way I live or do the things I do-trying to get inside my head. They want to rescue me from my loneliness. But they do it in such a way that they give me the impression they want to share my loneliness, which I wouldn't wish on anybody, because I believe I'm one of the loneliest people in the world."

When Brooke was promoting a romance in the press with Michael, she suggested there was some "real boy-girl interest" there. Years later, she'd be very candid and admit it was "only a friendship." Before "dating" Michael, she'd had another highly publicized romance, this time with the Saturday Night Fever himself, John Travolta. Like Michael, Travolta would live to see rumors of his alleged gay life splashed throughout the tabloids in blaring headlines.

When Michael was seriously questioned about his romance with Brooke, he admitted that he was still a virgin at the age of twenty-five despite his dates with the so-called Sex Kitten.

For the Grammy Awards, Michael-hired by Pepsi Cola-agreed to film what was to become the most controversial and highly publicized commercial of the 1980s. This Pepsi ad received more publicity than the Grammy telecast itself. One of the two Pepsi commercials became such a news event that many TV stations ran it for free as part of the evening news.

Michael turned out to be a hard bargainer with the soft drink company. Katharine Hepburn and Paul McCartney had urged him not to do commercials, fearing it would cheapen his image, but he went against their advice. He wrote new lines for "Billie Jean," helped conceive the Pepsi lyrics, and agreed to perform the new jingle, "You're a Whole New Generation," in the ads. Privately, he told Pepsi executives that he didn't drink Pepsi and that he'd refuse to do so on camera. "For that matter, I also don't drink Coca-Colahave no fears about that. I prefer natural beverages such as carrot juice or bottled water."

Michael's comments met a grim reception at Pepsi. "At the rate we're paying the mother-fucker," one disgruntled executive said privately, "he should down a whole God damn case of Pepsi in one gulp on camera. The arrogant little faggot." Even so, the company official emerged in public with a smiling face to welcome Michael aboard.

The commercials were to be filmed at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium in front of three thousand or so fans.

Throughout the filming and editing, Michael turned out to be a domineering diva. It was said that he made Bette Davis appear comparatively docile and cooperative. In complete dictatorial control, Michael demanded that Pepsi hire Bob Giraldi, who had directed him in the video, "Beat It." He also wanted and got the services of Michael Peters, who had worked on the videos for "Beat It" and "Thriller."

At first Michael refused to take off his sunglasses during taping. Giraldi urged, "But Michael, Pepsi is paying to see your face." He shot back that he would allow his face to be shown in close-up for only four seconds.

That too didn't go over with Pepsi executives. "If a TV viewer blinks, he'll miss the jerk's face," the same

disgruntled executive said. "Jackson should take a lesson from Gloria Swanson in Sunset Blvd. about how to deliver a close-up."

Michael also complained about the lighting, claiming it was as dark as the "Thriller" graveyard scene. An early version of the sequence showed Michael in a dance step that incorporated two spins. He demanded that it be cut. "I will allow Pepsi to show me in only one spin." On seeing the first cut, Michael sent word to Pepsi, "I hate the commercials and everything about them." He cited one segment that "made me furious. I am smiling in one of my dances, and I am never known to smile when I dance."

The astonished executive asked, "But Michael, if you never smile while dancing, how did the camera catch you smiling?"

Michael slammed down the phone.

Before the beginning of that day's filming, Michael had dropped his glove in the toilet when he went to urinate and had "screamed bloody murder," in the words of one of the cameramen.

"It sounded like a shrill woman," said a sound engineer, "one who had just had a 14-inch black dildo shoved up her tight ass. It was even more convincing than Janet Leigh's scream for Alfred Hitchcock in Psycho."

The famous glove was fished out, dried off by wardrobe, and placed back on Michael's hand.

Michael later told Giraldi that the accidental dropping of the glove in the toilet "is a bad omen. Maybe God is telling me not to go through with this Pepsi thing. It is, after all, a lie since I don't drink Pepsi. Maybe God will punish me for lying."

The first commercial was filmed without incident, depicting a group of children dancing in the street, one of whom is dressed as Michael in a red jacket from his "Beat It" video. Suddenly, the young actor, Alfonso Ribeiro, confronts the Moonwalker himself, and looks absolutely astonished. Then Michael and his brothers join the children in a song-and-dance routine that honors the Pepsi generation.

Michael became enchanted with the handsome young boy, and the professional relationship blossomed into a private friendship. When Ribeiro released his first single, "Dance Baby," in 1984, it was dedicated to Michael. Ribeiro went on to TV sitcom fame when he played Carlton Banks in the 1990s series The Fresh Prince of Bel Air, produced by Quincy Jones. Because of their age difference, there was speculation about the relationship between Michael and the young boy, but nothing approaching the "scandal" caused by Michael's association with Emmanuel Lewis.

Ribeiro, who today has developed a passionate interest in auto racing, was descended from parents who immigrated to New York from the Dominican Republic. In January of 2002 he married his girlfriend, Robin, and they have a daughter named Sienna.

In the second commercial, it was agreed that Tito-not Michael-would be seen drinking a Pepsi. In lieu of his face, Michael agreed to allow his gloved hand and his sequined socks to be filmed. "My fans will know it's me just by looking at my glove and socks."

The re-shoot began as Michael appeared at the top of the stairs in his famous cocksure pose with hip jutting out "like a Saturday night whore" in the words of one critic. The writer for Rolling Stone would have a different slant, calling the celebrated stance "a whole physical catechism of cool."

It was 6:30pm on the night of January 27, 1984. Michael faced a worn-out crew, exhausted after four days of filming and reacting to his often outrageous demands. But it was Giraldi who was holding the crew after hours. He wasn't satisfied with the intensity of the flash bombs in the previously filmed sequences. After the first bomb went off, Michael headed down the steps, dancing to the tune of "Billie Jean." For the second blast, the technical staff increased the intensity of the pyrotechnics. Suddenly, a piercing scream came from Michael, a sound that dwarfed his earlier yell from the toilet.

"Tito, Tito, I'm flaming," Michael shouted.

After a magnesium bomb was detonated two feet from Michael's head, his face disappeared in a cloud of bluish smoke, like the kind of haze that filled New York speakeasies in the Twenties. The intense heat of the magnesium bomb, amplified by the klieg lights, had ignited his hair. Flames shot from Michael's head as he screamed in horror. Yanking his jacket up over his head, Michael attempted, unsuccessfully, to put out the fire.

Security guard Miko Brando rushed to rescue him, putting out the flames with his bare hands, but badly burning his own fingers in doing so.

Michael was in such panic that he fought off rescuers trying to save him. They had to wrestle him to the ground, spraying him with a fire extinguisher. Jermaine later recalled that he thought at first that Michael had been assassinated by some crazed fan.

Michael defied the men wanting to slip him out the back exit of the theater. Although in pain, he still had enough media savvy to demand that he be taken out the front. He wanted the medics to let him keep his sequined glove on. A video of him on a stretcher covered with blankets, his head bandaged and taped, but with the gloved hand protruding from the wrappings, was shown on television broadcasts around the world.

With dome lights flashing, Michael, with Miko at his side, was rushed to Cedars Sinai Medical Center.

"Michael Jackson was no brave soul," one of the ambulance drivers later told the press. "He screamed all the way like a pig at castration time. I thought he was a complete sissy. I'd served in Vietnam and had seen patients with missing arms and legs, with their guts split open, bravely enduring their death. From Jackson, we got screams loud enough to curdle blood. Forget about any macho image for that boy. The kid is a piece of lavender-colored cotton candy."

Inside the hospital, Michael was well enough to take charge, refusing to wear the standard open-at-the-back green gown. "He felt it would expose his ass," a nurse said, "and he absolutely wouldn't put it on. We found another gown for him without the opening. He also didn't like the color of the first gown, calling it a `pissy green.' He told us he had to have a turquoise blue gown instead. He also refused a doctor who wanted to examine his entire body for any stray burns. Jackson was insistent that no one on the hospital staff be allowed to see his penis or ass. I don't know anyone who wanted to see them-I sure didn't."

Michael's plastic surgeon, Dr. Steven Hoefflin, arrived at the hospital and made a decision to transfer his client to the Burn Center of the Brotman Medical Center at Culver City. During the preceding months, Hoefflin had executed three separate nose job operations on Michael.

Later Hoefflin assured the press that his patient was doing fine and, except for some pain, was in no danger at all.

Under Hoefflin's skilled hands, Michael would later undergo laser surgery to burn off the scar tissue and presumably to allow his hair to grow back.

During his first night in the hospital, doctors tried to give him painkillers, but he fought them off, claiming, "I'm opposed to drugs of any type." But as the night lengthened, and his pain from the head burns grew more intense, he called one of the doctors back to administer those painkillers. Regrettably, Michael's decision to take the painkillers led to his becoming hooked on what Jacqueline Susann called "dolls" in her best-selling novel, Valley of the Dolls.

As Michael's most loyal fans maintained an all-night vigil outside his hospital, thousands of calls came in from around the world. Liza Minnelli, Diana Ross. Even Jackie Onassis, soon to be his editor, called to wish him well.

A special delivery arrived from President Ronald Reagan, dated February 1, 1984. "1 was pleased to learn that you were not seriously hurt in your recent accident. I know from experience that these things can happen on the set-no matter how much caution is exercised."

Following the accident, Michael threatened "to destroy Pepsi-Cola." A colleague told attorney John Branca, "If you play this right, your client will end up owning Pepsi."

When Michael first watched the tape of his hair catching on fire, he claimed, "They wanted to turn me into a human torch. I could have been disfigured for life, my career ruined. Pepsi will pay for this! When my fans watch this video, they'll never drink another bottle of Pepsi again!"

"But Michael you can't release that video of you on fire," Branca protested. "It's grotesque. Your fans would be horrified."

"I want revenge!" Michael shouted at his lawyer.

In the days ahead, Branca prevailed upon Michael to drop his plans to release the video with "the halo of fire." The version that was eventually released to the Associated Press was a short version that was greatly blurred.

Fearing Michael might sue, lawyers at Pepsi worked overtime to investigate the accident, They concluded that Michael might have caused the accident himself by dressing his hair with a very flammable oil. This line of reasoning, more than anything else, enraged Michael, who swore he wore only natural products on his hair.

Michael threatened Pepsi with a lawsuit. When executives offered to set tle for half a million dollars, Michael sent word, "I don't come that cheap."

After many negotiations, Pepsi finally agreed to give Michael $1.5 million in damages. That money came in addition to the most expensive celebrity contract in the history of advertising. For making the two commercials, Michael got $5 million. The commercials were so successful that they sent shock waves through Coca-Cola, the market leader. Privately, an official at Coca-Cola conceded that, "It was because of Michael Jackson that we agreed to come up with a new formula after nearly a century of towering success."

Less than ten days after Michael's release from the Burn Center, as a means of celebrating the ever-growing success of the album Thriller, CBS sent out invitations printed on white gloves to a $300,000 bash at the Museum of Natural History in New York The coveted ticket didn't quite equal the prestige of Truman Capote's black-and-white ball at the Plaza Hotel, but for tout New York, the party was the talk of the town.

More than 1,600 guests arrived, the men looking smart in designer tuxedos and the women in the latest couture. Michael showed up, most of his face concealed under a midnight black fedora, wearing a pair of jeans that contrasted with a commodore jacket that had more braid than that of the former dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo.

Michael made a dazzling entrance, his recent burns concealed by a wigmaker's toupee which had cost $5,000 and was made with human hair that matched Michael's own.

Walter Yetnikoff had begged Michael to sing for the occasion, but he arrogantly refused. Instead of a song, Yetnikoff read a congratulatory telegram signed by both President Reagan and his wife Nancy. Michael did stand up to accept the latest edition of the Guinness Book of World Records, listing him as the hottest selling solo artist in the history of music.

Once again, Michael's "date" was Brooke Shields, all six feet one inch of her.

The black-and-white duo met, among dozens of other luminaries, Donald and Ivana Trump. "For more than five minutes, The Donald and Jacko stood talking to each other," said Barry Evanston, who'd attended the party as a security guard. "I think each of them was trying to figure out how they could use the other one-in other words, The Donald was wondering how much money he might one day make off Jacko, and The Gloved One was trying to figure out how he could get The Donald to part with some of his dough. It was a friendship made in a Heaven where The Jacko/Donald yellow brick road was paved with gold bars."

Michael found Trump, one of the world's richest men, debonair, extravagant, and cocky. The billionaire real

estate developer was also smart, funny, and lived an extravagant lifestyle. Before Michael and Trump parted for the evening, he made a statement that startled Michael: "Let's face it, you and I are media fodder. You know, it really doesn't matter what the press writes about you as long as you've got a young and beautiful piece of ass."

At the party, Michael approached Calvin Klein, whom he'd known from his Studio 54 days, accompanied by Klein's favorite model, Brooke. "Calvin," Michael said, "I've got on a pair of your jeans. Unlike Brooke here, there is something that comes between me and my Calvins."

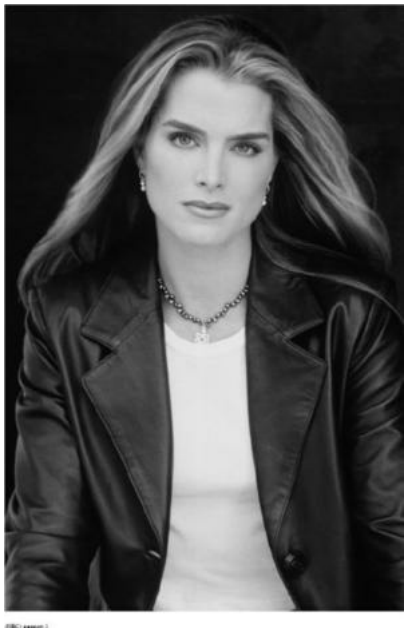
Brooke appeared delighted that she didn't have to share the evening with Emmanuel Lewis, who had stayed in Hollywood to film a segment of the TV sitcom, Webster.

As the evening progressed, she moved, with Michael to a private party, accessible only to the most important of the VIPs at the event, being held in Michael's honor within an inner sanctum of the museum.

There, her hopes were dashed when Brooke encountered Michael's other "date" for the night. Looking adorable in a custom-made tuxedo, an eightyear-old Sean Lennon rushed toward Michael for a big hug. Brooke looked around but found no Yoko Ono. Instead, young Sean was being protected by a bodyguard who looked like one of Al Capone's henchmen. Lewis would, in time, fade into history as the son of the slain John Lennon evolved into the role of Michael's new special friend.

"It's all too obvious," Brooke reportedly told Ivana Trump. "Michael prefers the company of young boys to me."

Ivana looked the statuesque Brooke up and down and suggested that, "You should get a real man, honey. I know at least eighteen at this party that would give their right nut to date you."



Bombshell Brooke, circa 1998

"Thanks, but no thanks," Brooke said.

Since the assassination of John Lennon on December 8, 1980 at 10:50pm in New York City, Michael had privately expressed a secret wish. "Some day I hope to become the second father to Sean."

In the months ahead, Michael's wish would come true.

A friendship would also emerge between Trump and Michael after that gala night. Associates of the highly articulate Trump often wondered what the two friends talked about, as they seemed to have so little in common. But Trump often bragged about his close friendship with Michael, although intimates in both camps wondered if that were really true.

As the 80s rolled on, Michael and Trump called each other occasionally. Despite the fact that Trump was one of the richest and most publicized men on the planet, Michael felt no embarrassment about breaking appointments with him at the last minute. "Just call Donald and tell him I have a headache," Michael would order a staff member on more than one occasion.

"If Michael could stand up Jackie Onassis, why not Trump?" David Gessler, who once worked for Trump, said. At first, Trump would respond with fury, but always seemed to forgive Michael for his rudeness.

In 1990 Trump showed the world that he could get Michael to fly into Atlantic City to open his new Taj Mahal Casino.

The paparazzi delighted in the photo ops at this lavish event. Michael showed up with a "special friend" who was quickly hustled upstairs out of camera view. After posing for pictures, Michael retreated to the lavish $12,000-a-night Alexander the Great penthouse suite on the 50th floor. Of course, the most expensive suite in Atlantic City came compliments of Trump himself. He knew what a small price that was to pay for the publicity Michael's appearance would generate for him.

Throughout their long relationship, Trump was always protective of Michael, even granting him "a secure address," protected from the press and paparazzi, when he housed him at New York's Plaza Hotel during the child molestation scandal of 1993.

And when Michael went on trial in 2005 on child molestation charges, Trump defended him during an interview with Larry King. "He's lived in Trump Tower, and I know him very well. And I knew what was happening with Michael Jackson. You know what was happening? Absolutely nothing. I had many people that worked for me in the building, and believe me, they would tell me if anything was wrong. I'm going to stick up for him, because nobody else is. I don't believe the molestation charges filed against Michael."

As late as the summer of 2005, when news about Michael's scandals had spread around the world, Trump realized that he'd be a sell-out in Las Vegas. He offered Michael a long-term contract for a series of ongoing performances, and the establishment of a personal headquarters for him in Las Vegas, evocative of deals made by Wayne Newton and Celine Dion.

Trump's Las Vegas partners, Phil Ruffin and Jack Wishna, courted Michael aggressively, offering terms for performances at the New Frontier Hotel and Casino. Wishna warned that if Michael signed on with them, "There will be moral clauses in the contract." He predicted that Michael would draw more than the $80 million Dion grossed in 2004.

On his next trip to New York after the CBS party, Michael checked into the Helmsley Palace. He paid $2,000 a night for a triplex which only CEOs, oil sheiks, and A-list movie starts rented. Efforts were made not to alert the press that he was in New York.

Hoping not to be recognized on the street, he adopted various disguises. At a Kool and the Gang concert at Radio City Music Hall, he was spotted wearing a beard and a bushy Afro. His date was Tatum O'Neal, which came as a surprise to his fans, since earlier, he had dropped her.

During that trip, a staff writer for The New York Daily News spotted Michael shopping on Fifth Avenue dressed as a woman. Outfitted in a chic woman's pants suit, he wore false eyelashes, heavy coatings of pancake makeup, scarlet red lipstick, and mascara.

Soon after, Michael arrived in a chauffered stretch limo at a Manhattan recording studio. There, he offered Mick Jagger a limp handshake before their rehearsal for a duet, "State of Shock," which had been selected as the

first single within the Victory album.

When the idea of their duet had first been proposed to him, Jagger-envious of Michael's success-had refused the offer of recording with him. "You've got your family-you don't need me. Ask Jermaine to record with you." But eventually, Jagger succumbed to Michael's whiny pleas and agreed to make the record at the A & R Studio.

"State of Shock" would go on to become a hit, the only really successful song from the lackluster Victory album. But neither artist left the studio that day with anything good to say about the other.

"Froth on the beer," Jagger told his friends. "The kid's a lightweight, as limp as his handshake and as boring as a pussy that's already been worked over ten times."

Two days later, when Michael heard the recording, he flew into a rage, claiming that "it's so bad it's unreleasable. I'm good. Mick's awful. He can't sing. I don't get it. How could someone with absolutely no talent become a star? Look at his record sales and compare them with mine." Actually, upon its release, "State of Shock" boosted Jagger's career, propelling him farther along on his road to independence from his fellow stoned Stones.

Partly because of Michael's phenomenal success, Jagger became obsessed with him, grasping every detail he could learn both about his private life and his financial deals. Mainly, he wanted to know how many records he sold. Arthur Collins, an executive at Atlantic Records, remembered Jagger storming into his office, demanding to know, for example, how many records Michael had sold in France.

Meanwhile, from her digs at Princeton University, where she was enrolled as a student, Brooke was bubbling with enraged jealousy. Michael had not called her, and it was only through the tabloids that she learned that Michael was in New York. Even worse, instead of selecting her as his date for the Kool and the Gang Concert, he had invited Tatum instead.

As it turned out, Brooke and The Donald weren't the only celebrities who wanted to pose for photographs with Michael. About this time, an invitation arrived from the Reagans, summoning Michael to the White House.

Brooke had a motive for calling Michael. She wanted to be his "date" for his meeting with the Reagans. When Brooke finally got through to him, and learned about his invitation to the White House, she proposed that she accompany him to Washington.

Michael adamantly refused, putting down the phone.

The story behind the story about why Michael had been invited to meet the Reagans was revealed years later.

The invitation to the White House had not originated from the Reagans, but had come about through Elizabeth Dole, the homophobic Secretary of Transportation and the wife of failed presidential candidate Robert Dole, who ran a lackluster campaign against Bill Clinton in 1996 before becoming a spokesman for Viagra.

Dole had called Michael's attorney, John Branca, asking permission to use "Beat It" as background music for a thirty-second TV commercial aimed against drunk driving. When Branca informed Michael of this, he flatly refused. But upon reconsideration, he granted permission, "But only if I'm invited to the White House to receive an award."

When Branca conveyed Michael's request to Dole, she said that she thought the award ceremony could be arranged.

To White House advisors, Dole suggested that Michael receive some kind of humanitarian award, as a means of thanking him for his role in showing young people how successful a life could be if it was "free from alcohol and drug abuse." Later revelations about Michael's own drug and alcohol abuse would make a mockery of this award.

At least one official at the Reagan White House bitterly opposed the idea of an award for Michael. That official would later become one of the most powerful men in America.

In 2005, long after Michael's presidential citation, researchers found several memos from a Reagan White House lawyer, John Roberts. Yes, the John Roberts who now presides over the U.S. Supreme Court. In his memo, he protested the idea of granting an award to Michael, stating that it would be demeaning to the President. "If one wants the youth of America and the world sashaying around in garish sequined costumes, hair dripping with pomade, body shot full of female hormones to prevent voice change, mono-gloved, well, then I suppose 'Michael'-as he is affectionately known in the trade is in fact a good example. Quite apart from the problem of appearing to endorse Jackson's androgynous lifestyle, a Presidential award would be perceived as a shallow effort by the President to share in the constant publicity surrounding Jackson."

Dole managed to short-circuit objections from Roberts by appealing directly to the more star-struck Nancy, who approved the granting of a citation for Michael. She believed that his appearance would benefit her "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign. Consequently, the path was officially cleared for Michael's arrival in Washington for the presentation, which was scheduled for May 14, 1984.

In preparation for his upcoming visit to Washington, Michael ordered several dozen military-style costumes, and spent many hours in his hotel suite trying them on, rejecting one after another.

In grand style, like a visiting head of state, Michael arrived at the White House in the first of three black limos. The other two contained members of his entourage.

Holding Nancy's hand, Ronald Reagan stepped onto a stage on the South Lawn of the White House to greet Michael. "Well, isn't this a `Thriller.' Welcome to our eight-star hotel," President Reagan said. Reagan often called 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue by that name because of the White House's army of butlers, maids, and cooks. Shaking Michael's hand, the ungloved one, he said, "Nancy and I haven't seen this many people since we left China." He was referring to the hundreds of Michael's fans amassed at the gates to the White House. "Just think, you all came to see me! No, I know why you're here-to see one of the most talented, most popular, and most exciting superstars in the music world today."

Nancy stood a few feet from Michael and the President. "Doesn't he know to remove his sunglasses?" she asked in a loud whisper to two guards standing nearby. "You don't greet the President of the United States wearing sunglasses." A sudden thought occurred to her. "I bet he's had an eyelift."

Ronald, the King of Pop, and the former Nancy Davis

Reagan read from prepared remarks actually written by Norman Winter, Michael's publicist. "At this stage of his career, when it would seem he's achieved everything a musical performer could hope for, Michael Jackson is taking the time to help lead the fight against alcohol and drug abuse." At the end of his brief speech, Reagan presented Michael with a hastily made plaque awarded for "your humanitarian efforts."

Michael thanked the President and told him how honored he was. Suddenly, he realized he'd ignored Nancy. In a whisper, he added, "Oh, and Mrs. Reagan too." Nancy beamed.

After accepting the award, Michael raised his white gloved hand to the fans outside the gates. The glove had been designed by Bill Whitten. It had taken 45 hours to sew on 1,500 round Viennese crystal rhinestones. The fans responded by screaming WE WANT MICHAEL.

After waving to the crowd, the President and Mrs. Reagan escorted Michael through the Rose Garden to the Oval Office. Reagan had to excuse himself to answer an urgent call in another room. Michael and Nancy sat together for a brief chat, even though there were several other people in the office, including members of Michael's entourage. Secretaries and other members of the White House had virtually deserted their posts that day to get a look at Michael. Phones went unanswered.

Nancy offered Michael a chocolate chip cookie, which he refused. "They are Ronnie's favorite. I keep them in every room of the White House."

Holding Michael's hand, Nancy told him she admired his bugle-beaded Sergeant Pepper jacket, though she had far too much taste to truly like it. She'd later tell friends that Michael looked like some potentate from a banana republic. He wore a sequined gold sash with sequined gold epaulets, a vision in electric blue.

He returned the compliment, admiring her outfit, which was a white, perfectly tailored, and endlessly chic Adolfo-designed suit.

MJ with Nancy Reagan

"It's hard to know how to dress as First Lady," she confided. "If you dress like a lowpaid soldier's wife, you're Mamie Eisenhower. The press calls you dowdy. If you don't smile enough, like Pat Nixon and Rosalynn Carter, you're a steel magnolia. If you dress up a lot, you're an Imperial Queen Bee. Take a political stance and you're labeled a control freak bitch. Only this morning, a paper in Washington reminded me that I'm not Eleanor Roosevelt and pointed out that I don't have Jackie Kennedy's beauty-or her style. That's not all. The article said that all my movies were bad."

"I didn't know you made movies before coming to the White House," Michael said.

"My movies weren't as good as Ronnie's," she said.

"He made movies too?" Michael asked in astonishment. "You and the President were in movies? I'm amazed this has been kept secret."

"Neither of us were as big a star as Ronnie's first wife. Jane Wyman. Oscar winner."

"The President was married before? Is his wife dead?"

"She's very much alive from what I hear," Nancy said.

"I didn't know a divorced man could become the President of the United States."

"Ronnie did."

"I'm a Jehovah's Witness," he said. "We don't believe in divorce."

"You're against Christmas too," Nancy said, "or so I heard. But don't quote me. Ronnie and I don't want to offend any religious groups. We need all the support we can get."

"I hear your son is a ballet dancer," Michael said. "I admire that. You don't expect the son of Ronald Reagan to be a ballet dancer and take all the heat from the press."

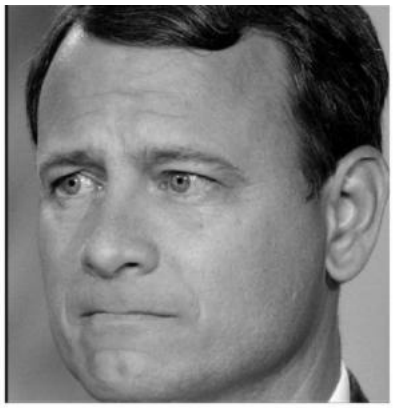
"We're proud of him," Nancy said. "You forget: We were performers too."

Michael and his entourage were escorted out of the room, and Nancy waited behind to join her husband.

Trailing Michael at the White House reception was a handsome young man, who appeared to be Michael's "date" for the event. "He looks very young," Nancy was heard to say. "A Billy Budd type. I was surprised that Michael didn't introduce us."

"He is Michael's personal assistant," Winter said.

"Oh, I know of such things," she said. "I should, after all those years in Hollywood. At any rate, the boy is certainly good looking, whoever he is."



Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, John Roberts

Arriving at the Diplomatic Reception Room, Michael was horrified to see about eighty adults assembled there to greet him. He turned and fled to the privacy of the bathroom off the White House Library where a future president, Bill Clinton, would conduct a dalliance or two.

Frank DiLeo, Michael's manager, ran after him, but the door had been locked.

"I won't come out until there are children here-not adults!" Michael threatened. "I was told I'd be greeted by children."

At this point, Nancy had heard about the commotion and was summoned. But Michael refused to open the bathroom door, even to the First Lady in her own house. Learning of his demands, she ordered the Secret Service to round up all the children he could find on short notice. "Even if you have to grab some toddlers waiting outside the gates."

The mysterious young man appeared and called out through the door to Michael. Michael opened the door just enough to let his special friend in before slamming it shut and bolting it again.

Within less than ten minutes, the men of the Secret Service had assembled nearly twenty children and had ushered all adults from the room.

When DiLeo told Michael that the children were waiting, he slowly emerged from the bathroom, followed by his young friend.

Along with Mr. and Mrs. Reagan, Michael greeted the children. Then, Nancy invited Michael into the Roosevelt Room to meet top White House aides and their families.

"Will there be children?" Michael asked Nancy.

"Yes, some."

At the end of the session, Michael was escorted to a waiting limousine. Nancy turned to two of her guards. In front of witnesses, she asked, "Is it true? Did he undergo a sex change? I think he did. And that mysterious young man. What about him?"

No one ventured an answer.

"I hope the kid is legal," she said, before heading to her bedroom to change. "We don't want any scandals coming from this White House."

As she was leaving, she turned to address her staff one more time. "The Duchess of Windsor once said that no one can be too thin. I'm pretty thin. But that Jackson boy, he must weigh only ninety-five pounds. That's not only dangerous, but makes one look cadaverous."

She was almost right. Michael's weight had dropped to 102 pounds, which his doctors defined as anorexic. On some days, it was reported that Michael existed on only one carrot and a dozen snow peas.

The following day, the Kremlin, reacting to Michael's visit to the White House, banned all of his music, especially the album Thriller, from the Soviet Union. Michael was attacked as "a singer who sold his black soul for white profit." In a statement, Soviet authorities claimed that Michael was serving the Reagan administration by diverting the American public's mind away from its real problems.

After the glories of Washington, back in Encino trouble was brewing within America's so-called "most perfect African-American family." Since 1978, Papa Joe had co-managed the Jackson brothers, assisted by the management team of Ron Weisner and Fred DeMann.

But as the months dragged on, the business relationship inevitably soured, Joe accusing the managers of "stealing from my boys." He made the accusation but offered no proof. Of course, those reckless charges were vehemently denied by Weisner and DeMann.

Michael's other brothers had always believed, with a definite resentment, that their managers were devoting most of their time to Michael. So when Michael became upset with DeMann and Weisner and fired them, his other brothers dismissed the management team as well. At this point, Michael more or less had already turned over management of his career to Frank DiLeo and John Branca.

Before agreeing on new managers, Michael had even had a secret meeting with the flamboyant Colonel Tom

Parker, the money collector for Elvis Presley. The meeting ended badly after Parker looked Jackson up and down and appeared skeptical about the star's appearance, voice, and manner. Parker later told some of his cronies, "I don't manage faggot nigger boys."

Michael's heroine, Diana Ross, also pushed to manage his career, hoping to sign him with her own newly formed company, R.T.C. Management. Privately, Michael was horrified at the suggestion, feeling that she hadn't been that brilliant at managing her own career. Too cowardly to turn her down, he went for weeks refusing her phone calls until she finally gave up.

Joe went public with his charges, crying "leeches" to the press and accusing DeMann and Weisner of "trying to break up the brothers." In a startling statement, he claimed, "There was a time when I felt I needed white help in dealing with the brass at CBS."

DeMann claimed that Joe did not enjoy "a good relationship with anyone whose skin is not black."

Joe countered that he was not a racist. "I wouldn't have hired a lot of people that aren't black to work for me if I was a racist."

Michael was horrified that Joe was raising the race card. He issued a statement claiming, "To hear him talk like that turns my stomach. I don't know where he gets that from. I happen to be color blind. I don't hire color. I hire competence. The individual can be of any race or creed as long as I get the best performance. Racism is not my motto."

During their press war with their white management team, the other brothers met in private and decided not to renew their managerial contract with Papa Joe as well.

Given the boot by his sons, Joe forged ahead anyway, hoping to interest all his sons, including Michael, in "starring in the largest grossing tour of all time." Knowing that Michael would be a key to the success of the tour, Joe wisely asked Katherine to be co-promoter with him. "If anybody can persuade Michael to tour with his brothers, it's Katherine," Joe was quoted as saying.

Even though he'd been fired, Joe told the press, "I was there when it started, and I'll be there when it ends." To prove to the world that he was still in charge of his boys, and to make some much-needed money, he recovered quickly from his disappointment about being booted, and concocted the idea of another nationwide tour for his sons, including the hard-to-pin-down Michael.

As Joe could have predicted, Michael was the lone holdout, the other brothers agreeing to go on the road again with their parents as managers. Eventually, however, thanks partly to Katherine's careful persuasion, Michael finally agreed to join his brothers on the road.

The tour would be sponsored by Pepsi Cola. In return, the Jacksons had agreed to film two commercials, which eventually led to the disastrous hairburning incident and the feud that resulted between Michael and the soft-drink company. But in spite of that, Pepsi was contractually obligated to sponsor the "Victory Tour."

Joe startled his entire family, especially Michael, when he announced that he was negotiating with Don King to manage the tour.

The flamboyant, Don King, who often wore a white fur coat, diamond rings, and a gold necklace, looked like the biggest pimp in Harlem. The silver-tongued promoter was ridiculed for his hair sticks that stood straight up, looking as if he'd been electrocuted. But he was even more famous for his spectacular boxing promotions, including Muhammad Ali's "Thrilla in Manila" and the Sugar Ray Leonard-Robert Duran fight that seemingly half the world watched.

Michael was fully aware of King's racy background. The promoter got his start in the illegal numbers business in Cleveland. In December of 1954, he shot and killed one of three men trying to rob one of his gambling houses. He didn't go to jail, as prosecutors determined that the death was a "justifiable homicide."

Trouble, also in Cleveland, came again for King. He beat a man to death twelve years later. He told police the victim owed him money. King was convicted of second-degree murder, but the trial judge reduced the conviction to manslaughter. King served only 3'/z years of the sentence before he received a pardon from James Rhodes, the governor of Ohio at the time.

On November 30, 1983, King called a press conference in New York at Tavern on the Green, the highlight of which was a 15-minute documentary congratulating himself for his achievements. A Washington reporter, Cody Shearer, labeled the event "media history's most abominable press conference."

Michael arrived cuddling Emmanuel Lewis in his arms, to the shock of some members of the press. "What's going on here?" one of them asked in a whisper so loud it could be heard throughout the room. "Something queer this way comes." He was told to shut up.

Even though King referred to Michael as "the golden voice of song," Golden Throat refused to take questions, after introducing his mother and his sisters. After that, he sat glaring at King, not even disguising his hostility.

King did most of the talking, as the brothers followed Michael's example and concealed part of their faces behind sunglasses. The Victory album was announced for release on July 2, 1984. Despite its inaugural hype, many fans were disappointed. The brothers performed songs individually and didn't follow their already proven success of having Michael or even Jermaine sing the lead vocals. Amazingly, the "Victory" tour would not include one single song from the album of the same name. For the tour, the errant brother, Jermaine, rejoined the brood. The tour could have been billed as the "Jackson Six."

Jermaine had sought his release from Motown after his career as a solo artist had gone bust. "Being the son-in-law of Motown's president was not a long-range missile launch for Jermaine," Marvin Gaye said. "Berry Gordy Jr. was glad to see Jermaine go."

Later, in his New York hotel suite, Michael watched the videotape of the press conference, and he was disgusted. Summoning his brothers to his suite, he announced, "I'm the biggest star in the world! There's no way I'm gonna be an opening act for this sleazeball," referring to King of course. "What a creep!"

After the press conference, Michael became increasingly furious at King, issuing instructions to Branca to define, as noted below, the terms of their dealings with King:

A. King may not communicate with anyone on Michael's behalf without prior permission.

B. All monies will be collected by Michael's representatives and not by King.

C. King may not approach any promoters, sponsors, or other people on Michael's behalf.

D. King may not hire any personnel or local promoters, book halls, or, for that matter, do anything at all without Michael's prior approval.

Later King was fired as the tour promoter and replaced by Chuck Sullivan, who caused more problems. Because of the terms within his contract, King stayed with the tour but in a figurehead capacity.

In an interview with Playboy in 1988, King discussed his frustrations promoting the "Victory" tour. "The suits went after me," he claimed. "They did their usual thing. They told Michael, `You know, a black guy can't do this. And King is a racketeer. Michael, your image is at stake here.' His image? What Michael's got to understand is that Michael's a nigger! It don't matter how great he can sing and dance; I don't care that he can prance; he's one of the greatest mega-stars in the world, but he's still going to be a nigger megastar."

King found it "ludicrous" how Papa Joe was pushed aside, not only by Michael but by all his sons. "There is no way Michael Jackson should be as big as he is and treat his family the way that he does. No way! Nothing can justify that. He feels that his father did him wrong. There can't be so much wrong his father did him-Michael, after all, is the biggest star there ever was in the music business. His father may have done some wrong, but he also had to

do a whole lot of right. Whatever it was, Michael could reprimand, chastise, teach-'If you did it wrong, Dad, don't do it wrong no more.'"

King concluded his interview by claiming that, "I see that Michael has nobody black around him-nobody. So therefore, he is, in effect, a pseudowhite."

When Chuck Sullivan, owner of the New England Patriots of the National Football League, signed on as a promoter, he had harsh demands for Michael's fans. Each fan would have to order a total of four tickets and would have to send in a mail order for $120. There would be no guarantee of a specific date, a certain seat, or even a ticket itself.

This caused an outcry. Even though these high ticket prices had not been Michael's idea, he was the one accused of "greed."

"We thought you were kind and loving to your fans," wrote Betty Lou Garghrin of Long Island. "But I think you're just a bloodsucker." Michael was stunned, even deeply hurt by such criticism, blaming Sullivan for such bad press and disastrous public relationships.

Sullivan and King were an ill-fated duo at the negotiating table. The bombastic boxing promoter labeled Chuck Sullivan "Charlie the Tuna." Sullivan lost $20 million as promoter of the tour, and "Victory" was not a victory for him. His company, Stadium Management Co., was forced into bankruptcy, and the Sullivans eventually had to sell the New England Patriots.

Even though Michael "fought against it," and in spite of his reservations, he threw himself into rehearsals and the actual stage appearances, "giving each performance everything I could." Before setting out, Michael demanded yet a third rhinoplasty from Dr. Hoefflin. "The first two didn't really do the job-the nose must be even thinner," were his instructions.

The "Victory" tour by the Jackson brothers was one of the pivotal events of 1984, a year that saw Vanessa Williams resign as Miss America, the death of jazz great Count Basic, and the birth of The Cosby Show on NBC.

Between July and December of 1984, The Jacksons bombarded America, with more drama transpiring off stage than on. Fans suspected that it would be the last time Michael would ever tour with his brothers. When the tour ended in Los Angeles, Michael proved them right by proclaiming, "This is our final farewell tour as a family." In fact, he had wanted to call it "The Farewell Tour," but he'd been voted down by his brothers.

The "Victory" tour opened in the heart of America: Kansas City. Despite bouts of depression, Michael found amusements wherever he could. He laughed hysterically when a fully clothed Frank DiLeo lost his balance and fell into a hotel's swimming pool in Kansas. In Washington, DC, Michael grabbed a handful of money from DiLeo's pockets and tossed the hundred-orso bills to screaming fans below, causing a riot. It was well known that DiLeo usually carried a wad of cash to handle "MJ emergencies," as he put it.

Michael chased DiLeo around a hotel suite with his boa constrictor, Muscles. Terrified of snakes, DiLeo pulled a gun and threatened to shoot the monster, even though the reptile was harmless. When boredom set in, Michael reverted to the old tricks of his childhood. He would take a bucket of water and run out to the edge of the atrium, tossing the liquid down onto people dining below, especially at Hyatt hotels.

Tensions between the brothers were rampant. Michael always got the best accommodations and the best transportation. And whereas the brothers flew commercial airlines, Michael traveled by private jet, including in one instance, a luxurious craft belonging to Meshulam Riklis, the zillionaire husband of Pia Zadora.

The darkest point of the tour came in August, 1984, when the Knoxville News-Sentinel published anonymous letters threatening to kill Michael and assassinate many of his fans. Three concerts had been scheduled in that Tennessee city, but because of those letters, they were abruptly canceled. Hours later, the telecast of the Olympics was interrupted to announce that the "tour was back on again." Under tightened security, the concerts were presented without incident. Michael was delivered to Neyland Stadium in an armored Wells Fargo truck.

Rumors that Michael was gay rose to a crescendo during the "Victory" tour. There was even wide speculation that Michael had been castrated to maintain his falsetto voice. In a new CBS comedy album, Eddie Murphy had a line, claiming-and accurately so-that Michael was "not the most masculine guy in the world."

Joan Rivers was at the peak of her fame in 1984, when she often hosted the Johnny Carson show. Her two favorite subjects of ridicule were an overweight Elizabeth Taylor and Michael's sex life. "Is Michael Jackson gay?" she'd ask her audiences. "Please, he's as queer as a three-dollar bill." One night she claimed, "Michael Jackson is gay. He makes Liberace look like a Green Beret." Her audiences burst into hysterical laughter.

Entering the fray was Louis Farrakhan, "National Representative of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and The Nation of Islam," who did not find anything amusing about Michael. He urged his devoted followers "not to practice Michael Jackson's sissified ways." Many of Farrakhan's disciples felt that Michael was transgendered and was deliberately blurring the dividing line between male and female.

One black writer claimed: "The white man has always feared the black man's superior sexual power. As we know, black men are superior to white men in both the bedroom and in the boardroom. Along comes Michael Jackson portraying the black man as a faggot! He has set back AfricanAmerican advancement twenty years. He is trying to take our power from us. Slave owners in the 19th century used to castrate their unruly black male slaves. By castrating himself and singing in falsetto, Jackson is playing into whitie's game plan for us: To rob us of our manhood and remove the black sexual threat."

Of course, charges that Michael Jackson had been castrated are ridiculous, as photographs taken by Santa Barbara police authorities-today resting in a bank vault-can prove.

The outspoken Joan Rivers continued her attack. One night she asked her audience, "Ever wonder what happened to Michael Jackson's other glove? It's in Boy George's pocket!"

Rivers was reacting to a story that had run in a late summer edition of the National Enquirer. In bold headlines, Michael and Boy George, the selfadmitted "queen" and lead singer of Culture Club, were alleged to be immersed in a hot affair. In less bold headlines, Michael was also rumored to be having simultaneous affairs with Wham's George Michael and Queen's Freddie Mercury. It appears, however, that he was having affairs with none of those homosexual entertainers.

Michael was so upset by the headlines linking him with Boy George that he called his publicist, Norman Winter, and burst into tears. The publicist had seen stacks of mail pouring in from young men and girls from around the world.

A typical letter from an impressionable young girl read: "Michael, Michael, tell me it's not true. You and Boy George! How could you! That's disgusting! My great dream has been to grow up and marry you and have many beautiful children with you. Now the news about you and that horrible creature from Britain has destroyed my dream. I want to die!"

Another letter from a young gay man read: "Michael, I am so happy to learn you are gay. My greatest dream is to fuck you all night. My former lover said that I'm the best top he has ever had. I can go for hours. I know from the faggy way you move around the stage that you are a bottom. My goal in life is to become the dream-man of all bottoms and all size queens. I'm enclosing a nude picture of myself so you can see how impressive I am. It's all yours, baby. I'm ready and willing and able to send you to Paradise!"

In the middle of the "Victory" tour, and in a startling development in September of 1984, Michael, enraged and fed up with the gay rumors, called a press conference. But he didn't show up. However, his manager, macho, cigar-smoking Frank DiLeo did. He shocked reporters when he read from a two-page document.

For some time now, I have been searching my conscience as to whether or not I should publicly react to the many falsehoods that have been spread about me. I have decided to make this statement based on the injustice of these allegations and the far-reaching trauma those who feel close to me are suffering.

I feel very fortunate to have been blessed with recognition for my efforts. This recognition also brings with it a responsibility to ones admirers throughout the world. Performers should always serve as role models who set an example for young people. It saddens me that many may actually believe the present flurry of false accusations:

No! I've never taken hormones to maintain my high voice.

No! I've never had cosmetic surgery on my eyes.

Yes! One day in the future I plan to get married and have a family.

Any statements to the contrary are simply untrue.

I have advised my attorneys ofmy willingness to institute legal action and subsequently prosecute all guilty to the fullest extent of the law.

As noted earlier, I love children. We all know that kids are very impressionable and therefore susceptible to such stories. I'm certain that some have already been hurt by this terrible slander. In addition to their admiration, I would like to keep their respect.

While reacting to all these gay rumors, Michael also received some disturbing news from a couple of a more heterosexual nature.

His youngest sister, Janet, had eloped with James DeBarge. She was only eighteen at the time, her groom twenty-one. Michael was adamantly opposed to the marriage and told family and associates that "Janet betrayed me." He never explained just how her marriage had betrayed him.

When she was just sixteen, Janet had met DeBarge, and they'd become close friends. Tall, dark, and handsome, he seemed like an ideal candidate for marriage, except for the fact that each of the Jacksons knew some dark secrets about him. There had been reports of drug and alcohol abuse. Katharine insisted that "the boy is completely wrong for my Janet."

In a touch of irony, the singing DeBarge brothers had been groomed by Motown during the early 80s as heirs to the departed Jackson 5. Originally formed in 1978 and hailing from Grand Rapids, Michigan, the quintet was comprised of four brothers and one sister, "Bunny." Before he married into pop royalty in 1984, DeBarge had recorded such 1980s classics as "Who's Holding Donna Now?" and "All This Love."

In a terrible case of bad judgment, the newlyweds moved into the Jackson's Encino mansion. DeBarge would later call it "The House of Fear." Living with the Jacksons put a severe strain on the marriage, and DeBarge and Papa Joe often engaged in denunciations of each other that sometimes evolved into physical violence. At one point, or so it was rumored, Papa Joe threatened to kill his son-in-law.

When DeBarge was in residence at the Encino house, he reported that "Michael was a sad, lonely figure, wandering around looking for love, which he seems to find only in Bubbles."

Bubbles was not a stripper, as the name suggests, but Michael's pet chimp. As such, he became the most famous-and the most controversial-chimp in the world.

Michael might not have actually found love, but DeBarge reported that during his stay at Hayvenhurst he saw a number of boys coming in and out of Michael's bedroom. These boys, or so the Encino bodyguards reported, ranged in age from nine to fourteen. Michael's excuse to DeBarge was that he was auditioning the boys for future videos. Many of DeBarge's charges were later dismissed as "nonsense" or "fantasies" by loyal members of Michael's camp.

Nonsense or not, DeBarge, along with bodyguards at Neverland, were called to testify against Michael in 1993 when young Jordie Chandler brought charges of child molestation against his former friend.

Joan Rivers

In anticipation of his trial, when Michael heard that DeBarge was going to testify against him, he was furious. Michael recalled going into the newlyweds' bedroom late one night and slipping under the covers with Janet and DeBarge to discuss deep, personal secrets. He viewed DeBarge going public with those secrets as "a betrayal."

As Michael had predicted, his sister's marriage was doomed from the start. There were rumors that they'd had a child together, but this was never confirmed, and there was also much speculation about an abortion.

On January 7, 1985, after a tumultuous marriage, Janet's link to DeBarge was annulled. Over the years she has said little, at least publicly, about her brief, unsuccessful marriage. "You don't have to hold onto the pain to hold onto the memory."

On those nights alone with Janet and DeBarge, Michael would sometimes discuss how painful it was to have the tabloids publish their accusations of homosexuality.

"Michael Jackson made charges of being gay sound like a case of leprosy," said gay activist Kevin Macmillan. "He alienated the entire gay community the way that Tom Cruise would do in years to come. The signal that both Cruise and Jackson gave out was that to be gay was the most scandalous and horrible thing that could happen to a guy. Thanks a lot, fellows."

In contrast to Michael's petulant response to gay charges, his sister, Janet, would handle future gay rumors about herself with far more style and sophistication. Unlike Michael, Janet was far more savvy, knowing how to retain, and not alienate, large segments of her fans.

In 2001, she was asked by a reporter from Ehony, "There have been questions about your sexuality. Some have asked if you're gay or bisexual."

"I don't mind people thinking that I'm gay or calling me gay," she said candidly. "People are going to believe whatever they want. Yes, I hang out at gay clubs, but other clubs too. I go where the music is good. I love people regardless of sexual preference, regardless of race. No, I am not bisexual. I have been linked to dancers in our group because we grow close. I grew up in a big family. I love being affectionate. I love intimacy and I am not afraid to show it. We fall asleep in each other's arms. We hug, we kiss, but there is nothing beyond that. Because Rene and I broke up, it's like people need some sort of drama, some sort of gossip."

She was referring to her long-time Mexican companion, Rene Elizondo. It has been whispered that Rene was really her husband. Reporter Joal Ryan once claimed that Rebbie, Janet's older sister, said that Janet and Rene had "eloped years ago."

Rene often worked with Janet, co-writing songs for her 1997 release The Velvet Rope.

Rebbie's remarks, broadcast over an Atlanta radio station, exploded into a national issue. But a spokesperson

issued a quick denial. Janet claimed, "We're not married, only in spirit."

Janet achieved notoriety when the 1993 cover of Rolling Stone came out. Rene is standing behind her covering her bare breasts with his hands. In 1997 she made another startling quote, this time to Ebony. "It was Rene's idea that I get my nipple pierced. I gave him a choice of two areas, and he chose the nipple."

During their thirteen-year relationship, some reporters referred to the duo as "Yin and Yang."

Boy George

After what could hardly be called a restful interlude at Encino, it was time for Michael to hit the road again with the continuation of the ill-fated "Victory" tour.

In Philadelphia, Michael met Bruce Springsteen, who had come to see "what in hell is this Jacko shit all about?" Michael was awkward and tongue-tied around the American rock and folk singer, who was competing in world markets with rival tours and albums. Springsteen's Born in the U.S.A. was a big hit, selling 15 million copies in America alone. The album became one of the best-selling in music history, with seven singles hitting the top ten.

Springsteen asked Michael about the recent grosses on Thriller.

"I never learned to count that high in school," Michael said. "All I know is that you, me, and Prince have gone to Pop Heaven."

Springsteen and Jackson would meet again in 1985 to record "We Are the World," but the two artists seemed to have little interest in each other.

Sensing an arrogance in Michael that was off-putting, Springsteen gave him some advice which he'd repeat often to other stars. "I believe that the career of an artist can last as long as you look down into your audience and can see yourself, and your audience looks up at you and can see themselves, and as long as those reflections are human, realistic ones." He turned and parted, leaving Michael somewhat bewildered at the words he'd just heard.

Watching Springsteen go on his way, Michael became petulant, even bitchy. "I don't know why they call him The Boss. Personally, I think he's much overrated. He can't dance, and he can't really sing. Off key at best. I'm bigger than The Beatles ever were. Not only that, but I'm much bigger than Elvis Presley. If they called Elvis the King, what about me?"

The stage manager raised an eyebrow and said: "The Queen, perhaps."

The next day he was fired.

The Jacksons' final show at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles was not a sell-out. DiLeo had to give away hundreds of tickets. In his hotel suite, Michael was screaming in rage. On his final night of the "Victory" tour, right before he went on, he heard that a federal grand jury in New York had indicted Don King on twenty-three counts of income tax evasion. "Couldn't happen to a nicer guy," Michael said.

On stage that historic night of December 9, 1984, Michael stood in front of his brothers and shouted at the audience: "We love you all! It's been a long twenty years since my brothers and I have entertained you together. Love to all." In a gesture of brotherly love, Michael blew pretend kisses at his brothers on stage.

In his autobiography, Moonwalk, Michael unrealistically summed up his experiences on the "Victory" tour. "It was a nice feeling," he wrote, "playing with my brothers again. We were all together again." The actual gossip associated with the tour suggested at the time, however, that Michael wasn't even speaking to his brothers during the last weeks of the tour, and that Michael claimed privately that The Jacksons would have been washed up long ago without him.

Another segment of Moonwalk repeated a rehearsed, much-repeated response from Michael about the gay issue, a question which had repeatedly been raised during the "Victory" tour.

"I believe in relationships," Michael wrote. "One day I know I'll find the right woman and get married myself. I imagine myself with thirteen children."

When the "Victory" tour ended in Los Angeles, it had played to more than two million fans, grossing $50 million, breaking the $30 million record set by the Rolling Stones in 1981.

The success of the tour spilled over into the Victory album, which also sold more than two million copies.

Sean Lennon, son of the slain ex-Beatle, became Michael's new "best bud" in spite of the significant age difference. Sean had been only five years old when John Lennon was assassinated in New York, and the boy was only nine when he began to "hang out" with Michael.

In the wake of her husband's death, Yoko Ono, Sean's mother, ordered 24hour security guard protection for her offspring, fearing kidnapping or something much worse. Despite her concerns for her children, Yoko seemed willing to entrust her beloved son to Michael, allowing the older entertainer to spend hours or even days and nights at a stretch with Sean.

Many mothers who delivered their young sons to Michael over the years might have been overwhelmed with the magnitude of his stardom, might have been swayed by money, or else might simply have been naive. This was not the case with Yoko Ono, one of the most sophisticated women in the entertainment business. For most of her life she'd known and befriended homosexuals and was hip to what was going on. Obviously Michael didn't set off any alarm bells within her, or else she would hardly have sanctioned turning Sean over to his care and feeding.

For his part, Michael got to enjoy the company of a handsome and charming young boy. There must have been the added thrill of knowing that Sean was the son of the one Beatle that Michael most admired, considering John far more talented than his former friend, Paul McCartney. "As a musician, John's talent extended to his toenails," Michael told Yoko, who agreed, of course.

Although extremely protective of Sean's health and welfare, Yoko never tried to be a domineering, smothering mother. She prided herself on rearing her son without the normal restraints imposed on one so young. In other words, if Sean wanted to urinate in the back seat of a limousine, he was free to do so without fear of reprimand. Apparently, Yoko took the point of view that limousine covers could always be re-upholstered. Yoko had received death threats against her son, but she felt that because of Michael's heavy security at Neverland, she had nothing to worry about . . . except perhaps Michael himself.

To a journalist from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Yoko once said, "Every mother worries, but I want Sean to pursue what he wants to as long as it's good for him. I try to avoid a situation where mother and son stick to each other too much. He has many friends, he communicates with many people."

Suddenly, Sean and Michael were seen everywhere, popping up at Broadway shows-only musicals-and other events. The young boy often spent nights in hotel suites with Michael, even weeks at Neverland.

At Neverland, the staff would often hear Sean and Michael playing the song, "Beautiful Boy," which John

Lennon had written for his son.

Sean once startled Michael by telling him that for many years he did not know about John's previous life as a Beatle, and he kept no memorabilia or records at The Dakota where they lived in New York. Sean claimed that he learned about his father's musical background when a babysitter showed him a copy of Yellow Submarine (1968).

Dark-haired and almond-eyed, Sean was amazingly bright, often making quotations unusual for one so young. In 1983, he said, "Peace is a good thing. So is smoked salmon."

Michael was obviously taken with the boy's Eurasian attractiveness and charm. He often spoke of Sean's "rosebud mouth." The youth did not resemble either Yoko or John Lennon, but had his own distinctive look and features.

The young boy told Michael of his "undying love" for his father. "I can't tell you how many times I walk into a store or mall and hear him singing," Sean said. "I get this really nice feeling, like he's still around. It's almost magical."

Once he showed Michael a photograph taken at his birthday party when he'd turned seven. On the picture, he'd superimposed a picture of John and then had superimposed two large tears on his father's cheeks. "He's crying because he couldn't be at the party too."

As Sean got to know Michael more intimately and to trust him, he admit ted that he didn't want to be "just a clone of my father," but an artist in his own right, capable of making his own distinct music. "The whole `son of John Lennon' thing was dumped on me, and I didn't ask for that. All my father's friends are waiting for me to fail in my dream, figuring I can spend the rest of my life living off the old man's money."

Sean told Michael that he (Michael) and John (his father) "had it easy when it comes to making music. To both of you, writing music and singing is second nature. To me, it's very hard to make music." He asked Michael if he'd teach him "the tricks of the business," and Michael agreed to, although he was far too self-absorbed in his own issues to really do that.

"One day my music will bring people up in the world," Sean said. "Just like your music does."

When Sean was thirteen, Michael cast him in his film, Moonwalker.

With Michael, Sean shared some of his deepest fears, mainly of being gunned down as John had been in 1980. One night Sean revealed something that he'd told only his closest friends. "I absolutely believe that my father was killed on orders from the CIA who was bossed around by Ronald Reagan. Revolutionaries like my dad are always historically killed by the American government all except Castro, and they sure tried hard to get him. The belief that Mark Chapman was some crazy guy who killed my dad for personal reasons is insane or naive."

Later, during the 1990s, as child molestation charges against Michael were aired, one New York journalist tried to reach Yoko for her reaction, knowing her own son had spent a lot of time in private with Michael. The reporter wanted to know if Michael had ever been a substitute father for Sean and did Yoko consider the singer a good role model. She had no comment.

In 1993, Sean's relationship made blaring tabloid headlines in Britain. James DeBarge, the former husband of Janet Jackson, made some explosive charges in a taped conversation with a police informant. During the time he'd been married to Janet, he'd slept in a bedroom next to Michael's. He claimed that he'd walked in on Michael and Sean, catching them "together in a sexual way."

Bruce Springsteen

"All the boys who visited at the Encino house slept in Michael's bed," DeBarge reportedly said. He admitted to doing some spying on Michael.

Or so it was reported in the press. DeBarge could not be reached to confirm or deny these reports.

As his young special friends matured, Michael most often lost interest, although with certain boys, such as Macaulay Culkin, a lasting friendship emerged.

The last known encounter between Michael and Sean occurred in 2001 during a reception at Tavern on the Green in New York City's Central Park. The invitation-only gala followed Michael's big 30th anniversary celebration at Madison Square Garden.

A reporter for the British tabloid, The Sun, was seated at a table next to Yoko and Sean. He noticed Michael enter the room and head immediately to greet Yoko and her son. Ignoring Yoko for the moment, he turned on Sean with an accusatory tone in his wispy voice. "You never return my calls," Michael charged. "I leave messages for you all the time, and you never call back."

In spite of what appeared to be a rebuff to Michael, Sean has always been respectful of him in the press. "If it wasn't for Michael Jackson, I probably wouldn't make music now," Sean once said. "Thriller changed my life completely."

In 1984 Michael stood at the zenith of his career. He was celebrated throughout the world, even in countries that many people had never heard of before. "He was not just the King of Pop, but King of the World," Quincy Jones said.

On a windy day in Los Angeles, when Michael came home again, there was a distinct chill in the air. He sensed something ominous, and he couldn't put his finger on it.

Wherever he went, whatever he did, the world was watching him and judging him. There seemed to be eyes everywhere, as if hidden cameras had been installed in every corner of Hayvenhurst. He once told Diana Ross that he had no dark secrets to hide, and therefore had no fear of the press.

But now, at the age of twenty-six, he had many secrets, none of which he wanted to share with the world, or even with intimate friends.

He could be himself only around children "because they have no masks," he told his mother Katherine. "Adults are filled with lies and deceit. Kids will tell you the truth. You can share your innermost secrets and desires with them."

What Michael didn't know then, but what he surely knows now, is that not all children are alike. It's true that some children will hide your secrets and never tell them to the world. Other kids will splash your innermost desires on the front pages of tabloids. At this early stage of his life, Michael hadn't learned to tell the difference between the two types of young boys he'd select for "special friendships."

Nor had he fully realized that adults have ways of prying secrets, some times with manipulative pressure, from the minds of children, revelations that could destroy certain people who engage in dark desires.

He knew that he was too famous to escape the voyeuristic attention of the world, so he decided that, unlike a child, he would wear a mask when he was out there-his reference to the world that existed outside the Encino compound. He would conceal his true nature and create a fake persona deliberately intended to deceive. "I want the world to see me not as I am, but as they want me to be," he once told Katharine Hepburn.

"Good luck," Hepburn told him. "I've been doing that for years and getting away with it. I don't really care what anybody writes about me, as long as it's not the truth."

Back at Encino, Michael was leaving the family compound with an unknown blond-haired boy of great beauty, a Tadzio, perhaps no more than twelve. He was going on a shopping expedition to buy the child as many toys as he wanted.

La Toya ran after him. She had an urgent message. "The First Lady of the World is on the phone, and she wants to speak to you," La Toya said.

"You mean, Nancy? I've already been there, accepted that award."

"More famous than Nancy," La Toya said.

"That could be only one person," Michael replied.

Racing back into the house, he nervously picked up the receiver. In a whispery voice, he said, "Hi, this is Michael."

On the other end of the phone, an even more famous whispery voice greeted him. "Michael, you dear. It's been far too long. As they say in the Garment District, have I got a deal for you. This is Jackie Onassis!"

"I think Michael appeals to the child in all of us. He has the quality of innocence that we would all like to obtain or have kept. I think he is one of the finest people to hit this planet, and, in my estimation, he is the true King of Pop, Rock and Soul. I love you Michael. "

--Elizabeth Taylor

"When I met him, it was really love at first sight. I think when you get to know Michael, you understand the nature of his charisma. He looks at the world with the innocent eyes of a child. "

--Sophia Loren

"Jackie twisted my arm to make me write Moon walk."

--Michael Jackson on Jackie Kennedy Onassis

"To many people Michael Jackson seems an elusive personality, but to those who work with him, he is not. This talented artist is a sensitive man, warm, funny, and full of insight. Michael's book, Moonwalk, provides a startling glimpse of the artist at work and the artist in reflection. "

--Jackie Kennedy Onassis

"I expected it to be difficult, and it was. Michael's a perfectionist. "

--Colin Chivers, director of the 'Smooth Criminal' video

"I ripped off a couple of solos, and he liked the first one. It was my choice too. He seemed to go on emotion rather than technique, which is how I've always worked. "

--Steve Stevens, guitarist for 'Dirty Diana'

Chapter Eight

In 1984, after the "Victory" tour, Michael returned to Encino's Hayvenhurst, which by then had become the best-known celebrity mansion west of Elvis's Graceland. From there, he would launch friendships with three of the most celebrated people of the 20th century: Jackie Onassis, Marlon Brando, and Elizabeth Taylor, while still hanging onto friendships with such media events as Katharine Hepburn, Liza Minnelli, and Jane Fonda, and such minor celebs as the much younger Sean Lennon.

When Michael accepted the call from Jacqueline Onassis, she was working for Doubleday in New York and was at the time the most celebrated editor in publishing. Her boss had given her a budget of $300,000 to offer Michael for his memoirs, although in his mid-twenties he was a bit young to be penning an autobiography. One editor at Doubleday told Jackie, "If Michael agrees to this, we should call his memoirs An Unfinished Life."

After exchanging pleasantries about their few previous meetings, Jackie got down to business and pitched the offer of a memoir.

"My life has only begun," he protested.

"There's such a great interest in you-millions of fans around the worldthat we at Doubleday wanted to hear your story as you saw your life. The early years. The struggles. The incredible success. What it's done to you."

"If memoirs are such a great idea, then why haven't you written one?" he asked provocatively.

"Doubleday has a standing offer with me of $5 million for my autobiography, but I possess too many secrets. A memoir from me couldn't be honest, and therefore I won't write one."

"I know you must have many secrets-not only your own but the intimate details of so many other famous lives. But what secrets do I have? I'm still a virgin. Never been kissed. At least not on the mouth."

"That's a unique story in itself," she said with a slight sense of mischief.

"Imagine a man living for a quarter of a century and still a virgin. You and my late husband, Jack, had a lot in common.

"Now you're pulling my leg," he said. "I'm told that when you let your hair down, you have a wicked sense of humor."

"If you only knew," she said. "One time at the White House, I was doing this really horrendous impersonation of Lady Bird Johnson. Guess what? In flies Lady Bird herself."

"I'm also told you like gossip."

"I don't deny that."

"Then I think you'd be very disappointed in any memoir I wrote," he said. "I have no gossip to share."

"Perhaps I would be disappointed," she admitted candidly. "But I don't really expect you to tell everything. But because you're the biggest star in the world, we at Doubleday want your story."

"I don't know..."

She'd later recall that he seemed so hesitant, yet wavering. "Let me fly to the coast and pitch this idea to you in person. As you know from having met me, I'm very persuasive."

"That you are." He hesitated again, leading her to conclude that he was one of the least articulate men she'd

ever encountered.

"I'm not going to debase myself in any book," he warned. "The tabloids already do that for me. Do you know a good libel lawyer?"

"I never sue for libel," she said. "Let the jackals write what they wish. Just tell your story from your heart. Just be Peter Pan. That's all you have to do."

"I'd like that!" He agreed to a meeting in Los Angeles.

"I'm packing my bags," she promised.

After putting down the phone, he was eager to tell family and friends of this remarkable offer he'd just had from Jackie. "I remember every word of the dialogue," he claimed.

Privately he confessed that he had little or no interest in writing a memoir. "As for that $300,000 advance, that's peanuts in the music business," he said. "We count in the millions." He confided to his family that if he agreed to do the memoir, he would have a chance to solidify his friendship with Jackie. "Imagine me, Michael Jackson, born in a bungalow in Gary, and growing up one day to be friends with Jackie Kennedy Onassis. She gave me her private phone number in New York. Imagine that!"

Jackie and her assistant, Shaye Areheart, flew to Los Angeles in the autumn of 1983 to convince Michael to write his autobiography. Their initial meeting was to be a luncheon at Chasen's, a posh Los Angeles restaurant. Jackie and Areheart arrived on time and were kept busy as well-wishers came to their table. In a city known for famous movie stars, Jackie outdazzled all of them-all except Michael. Their meeting was scheduled at one o'clock. By two-thirty, he hadn't shown up, and Jackie and Areheart went ahead and ordered lunch.

Jackie Onassis, hailed as the world's most desirable woman, wasn't used to be being stood up. Initially embarrassed, she decided to forgive Michael. "He's very shy," she told her colleagues. Privately she was enraged.

The woman who'd charmed Charles de Gaulle and Nikita Krushchev didn't give up that easily. She called Michael the following morning, using her most seductive voice. At first he seemed intimidated and didn't want to take her call. Finally, he relented. He came to the phone and pleaded for her to forgive him for his rudeness. "The idea of writing an actual book devoted to my personal life paralyzed me," he said. "I changed costumes three times that morning and was ready to go. Then at the last minute I got cold feet."

Before the end of their conversation, he invited her to tea that afternoon at Hayvenhurst. When a chicly dressed Jackie arrived at Encino, she found only two staff members. Michael had ordered the rest of the household to leave, including photographer Steve Howell, who wanted to capture the historic coming together of this famous pair on film. "He kicked us out. We didn't get to see her. All of us were horribly disappointed and mad at Michael for his insensitivity."

Michael was awed by Jackie, considering her the epitome of grace, style, and charm. Once he'd held Diana Ross in such awe, but seemingly had graduated from that, moving on to bigger game. "And what bigger game could there have been than Jackie Onassis?" Howell asked. "My God, she was the most famous person on Earth meeting the second most famous person on Earth."

"It was a lovefest," said a staff member who was allowed to remain behind to serve tea. "Jackie and Michael were practically cooing at each other. I couldn't tell where Jackie's whispery voice ended and Michael's whispery voice began."

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

As Jackie would later reveal, "I didn't end up interviewing Michael. He ended up interviewing me."

"How do you live with the dread that every time you walk out your door fans or the paparazzi are waiting to take your picture?" he asked her.

"I consider the alternative," she said. "Life as a recluse. A Georgetown widow peering out through the draperies at throngs gathered on the street in front of my house. That wasn't an option for me, so I moved to New York. Of course, I can't take the rush of people at times. Perhaps that's why I married An. He could almost guarantee my privacy when he wasn't invading it himself." She was referring, of course, to her second husband, Aristotle Onassis.

"How do you handle being a celebrity?" he asked.

"I don't know anything else," she said. "It comes easy for me. I couldn't imagine being unknown. Almost from the beginning of my life, I was on stage or being exhibited somewhere. Of course, not the kind of notoriety that came later. Actually, I've often pondered your question myself. Maybe I would miss the fame. At first anonymity sounds wonderful, at least the freedom it would give you. Imagine going shopping on Fifth Avenue without the gawkers and the paparazzi. I've asked a few movie stars what it was like to have known world adulation, then neglect. Gloria Swanson once told me, `It's like the parade has passed me by.' She said she missed the adoring fans and the hysteria they once generated for her."

At the end of the afternoon, Michael still hadn't agreed to write his memoirs. Instead he proposed The Michael Jackson Scrapbook. "You know, a picture of my boa constrictor, Muscles. My first report card. The first song The Jackson 5 ever recorded. Stuff like that."

"I once compiled a book devoted to memorabilia of an early trip to Europe with Lee," she said, obviously turned off by the idea of a Jackson scrapbook. She was referring to Lee Radziwell, her sister.

The next day Michael invited Jackie on a tour of Disneyland, with him serving as her personal guide. "He knew all the hidden corners, the names of all the animals, the thrill of every attraction," she said. "I found it boring, but he was mesmerized. I think he has the heart of an eight-year-old."

After that day at Disneyland, Jackie seemed fascinated by the subject of Michael's sexual orientation. For such a worldly woman, this was out of character. Among others, she discussed it with J.C. Suares, who would become the book designer for Moonwalk. According to Suares, "She repeatedly asked me if I thought Michael liked girls."

She even discussed it with Peter Lawford, thinking that as a Hollywood insider he might know something. "I have never known Jackie to be so intrigued with someone's sexual orientation," Lawford later said. "She was one of the most sophisticated women in the world. Both she and Lee included many homosexuals, especially those in the

arts, among their best friends. Truman Capote. Rudolf Nureyev. Jackie even had a distant kinship with gay author Gore Vidal."

She confided to Lawford, who was to die the following year, that, "When I first met Michael in New York in the late 70s, I just assumed he was gay, but hadn't admitted that to himself yet. After seeing him so many years later on his home turf in Encino, I think he's figured out he's gay. But his gayness, I suspect, has a strange twist to it."

"What do you mean exactly?" Lawford asked her.

"I mean, it's not gay like two handsome men who look like Paul Newman and Rock Hudson getting together. I have great intuition about these matters. Michael is gay, but his gayness is different. There's something fishy going on here. Something he's hiding from the world, something that will never be revealed in Moonwalk. The book will hardly be a candid confession, but a glossy, glitzy thing. Michael's mythology of himself. But in spite of what I've said, I predict it'll be a bestseller."

The staff at Doubleday was eager to hear Jackie's impressions of Michael even before she eventually landed the deal to publish a memoir, not a scrapbook.

"He seems to have no perspective on his life" she claimed. "That's understandable. He's only twenty-five. Of course, I've met men his age who ruled kingdoms. I think he's more interested in projecting an image of himself than he is in telling any truth. Maybe his truth would completely destroy his image."

It took Michael two weeks to make up his mind to go ahead with his book and accept Jackie's offer. "Of course, I'll need a ghostwriter," he told her.

"I can arrange that," she promised. She confessed that she'd been less successful in pursuing other celebrities. "I even went to your rival, Prince, and tried to get him to write a memoir. He turned me down. There have been other rejections. Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo, Ted Turner, Brigitte Bardot, Barbra Streisand, Barbara Walters, Rudolf Nureyev."

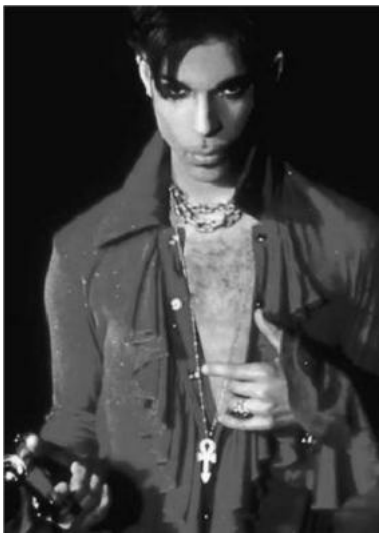
"I've heard of some of these people, but some of those celebs are too obscure," he said. "Their biographies won't sell."

She concealed her astonishment.

Jackie amused friends with her description of Hayvenhurst. "It's La La Land," she claimed, "with a damn chimpanzee running amuck. Jack would have hated it, and Ari would have called in moving vans to cart off every tasteless stick. I haven't seen such kitsch since I saw photographs of Mrs. Khrushchev's home. Animals in cages. Tacky awards and trophies. Jackson family pictures. Furniture that only a demented queen could have purchased. It wasn't even nouveau riche, not even `Jewish Renaissance,' but artifacts from the Land of Oz. Let me put it this way: Michael decorates like he selects his wardrobe."

In the months ahead, Jackie, from her publishing base in New York, listened to Michael's endless demands and insecurities about the project. She also read one disappointing chapter after another. Finally, in despair, she told her staff, "Dealing with the mercurial Mr. Jackson is like being in a train wreck-worse, an airplane crash."

Prince may have turned down Jackie's offer to write his memoirs, but he accepted an invitation to visit Hayvenhurst. Perhaps curiosity propelled him to Encino, not the prospect of any friendship with his rival, Michael. Privately, he'd ridiculed Michael and was flabbergasted at his phenomenal success. Michael was equally jealous of Prince.



Prince

Michael poured out his frustrations over Prince to his attorney, John Branca. "Prince is darkly sexual, a man of mystery," Michael said. "Sinister even. In spite of that `Thriller' video, I'm still known as Goody Two-Shoes. Squeaky clean. Why don't fans regard me as sexually dangerous?"

Branca reportedly did not have an answer for that.

Michael became upset when he learned that Branca's firm was also representing Prince. "There can be only one King of Pop," he warned. "I don't believe in sharing the throne."

The press constantly linked the two bizarre young megastars, and many music fans gravitated into either pro-Michael or pro-Prince cults. But whereas Prince was by reputation known as a sexy womanizer, Michael had to keep on fighting gay rumors.

"I don't understand it," Michael said. "He's very effeminate. He wears lots of makeup. His dress isn't macho. Far more girlie than my own clothing. But he's called a stud. How could he be? He's only a midget."

During the summer of 1984, Purple Rain, recorded by Prince and topping the charts, was even more successful than the Victory album. Reportedly Michael was so jealous of Prince that he'd go into a rage at the mention of his name. Dozens of people heard him making uncharitable remarks about the performer. "He's a copycat," was only one of Michael's charges. "He's ripping me off!"

Purple Rain made Prince a megastar, selling more than ten million copies in the U.S. alone and resting comfortably for 24 weeks as number one on Billboard's charts. Critic Gabe Fowlkes said, "Catapulting off the Purple Rain soundtrack, Prince combined dance beats with powerful guitar riffs to create music that even Nancy Reagan could bust a move to. And unlike Michael Jackson, Prince does not sing as if he's been castrated."

Later, Michael was heard telling people "how weird" Prince was, little realizing that he would one day be known as WACKO JACKO. "I don't like anything about him. He can't sing, and there's an awful aura about him-a bit creepy."

The one thing that Michael especially resented was the film, Purple Rain. Prince had succeeded in the movies where Michael had failed with The Wiz.

Michael was seen slipping into a private screening of Purple Rain at Warner Brothers. Before the lights went on, he'd left the screening room and headed for his waiting limousine. He could only bite his lip in frustration as he

watched Purple Rain with Prince become the "sleeper" of the summer. Prince had a hit movie, an achievement denied Michael. His jealousy was aggravated when the film won an Oscar for best score.

Later, when Michael was quizzed about the movie, he said, "I've already told you. Prince can't sing. Now I know he can't act. I acted in the role of the Scarecrow in The Wiz. That was real acting, not something you are likely to see in Purple Rain."

Michael told Quincy Jones that he found Prince's music offensive, "vulgar in the extreme. Imagine writing a song about mutual masturbation." He was referring to "Jack U Off' in Prince's Controversy album, released in 1981.

Down the road, Michael would not concern himself with Prince as much as with two new rivals who had emerged on the scene-notably Janet, his sister, and the outspoken Madonna.

At the door to Hayvenhurst, the five-foot-tall Prince presented himself to the Jacksons-in this case Michael was joined not only by La Toya but young Janet. Prince had not come to admire Michael, which he didn't do at all, but to try to learn "what makes the dude tick." Prince would not learn anything, as Michael remained almost silent for the entire evening, observing Prince with great skepticism. In lieu of confronting such a rude host, Prince turned his attentions almost entirely to La Toya, hoping-but failing-to seduce her.

Prince promised La Toya "a trip to Paradise!" She wasn't interested. Later, she asked her brother, "What did the little creep think? That I was some Saturday night whore hot to trot?"

Michael finally managed to speak when he showed Prince to the door after a disastrous evening. "Good night," he said in his whispery voice.

One of Prince's bodyguards came inside and presented him with a package, which he then gave to Michael. It was some twigs and leaves from a sycamore tree along with some metal charms and the tail feathers of a peacock. There was also a tape. Prince told Michael to play the tape backwards.

As the door closed on Prince, Janet came up to stand beside her brother. In her best Mae West impersonation, she said, "I chew little sausages like that for breakfast."

Upstairs in his bedroom, Michael played the tape. "It sounded satanic," he told Frank DiLeo in a late-night phone call. "I think it's voodoo. Prince has put a hex on me. I'm sure he's a warlock."

"Now, now, Michael, it'll be okay," DiLeo assured him. He also reminded Michael that thousands of people had accused him of being a warlock after Thriller was released.

"That's different," Michael said, dismissing such charges. "I think Prince's gift came directly from the Devil himself. I want you to round up someone to break the spell tonight-perhaps somebody from Haiti. Prince's hex on me has got to be lifted. Otherwise, my career will be destroyed."

DiLeo said he would, then turned off the light and went back to sleep. The next morning Michael had completely forgotten about his instructions to his manager.

A year later, Prince and Michael were set to record a duet for the We Are the World album. But Prince didn't show up. Michael was furious until he was reminded that he once stood up a person far bigger than Prince, Jackie Onassis herself. Michael didn't have an immediate response for that.

When asked why he didn't show up, Prince told his associates, "The guy is silly, a wimp."

Does Michael deserve credit for converting Prince to the Jehovah's Witness far-right cult? Prince himself claimed that it wasn't Michael, but his mother's dying wish that he convert to the controversial religion that rejects everything from blood transfusions to the occult.

Following in the footsteps of the former "King of Pop," Michael himself, Prince now proselytizes door to door

trying to convert unsuspecting innocents to the draconian world of Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Michael Jackson got the boot from us," said one of the Jehovah's Witnesses-and Prince may be next." She noted a report about Prince in the London Mirror that the "androgynous performer promotes Jehovah's Witnesses in Minneapolis, wearing his trademark mascara and dressed in a tailor-made suit with stack heels. He arrives at doorsteps in a limousine surrounded by four bodyguards."

The last known comment Michael made about Prince was, "He's a cherry moon with too much mascara." Michael was no doubt referring to Prince's 1986 film, Under the Cherry Moon.

During their visits to Hayvenhurst, neither Jackie nor Prince had been impressed with the chimp, "Bubbles."

"But he had become the love of Michael's life," according to a former staff member at Encino who didn't want to be named. She didn't like the chimp either, especially when she had to round up his dirty diapers. Michael always insisted on changing Bubbles' diapers himself.

"I was fired for no apparent reason," she said. "Maybe I saw too much." She didn't reveal what "too much" meant.

Michael rescued the chimp, "Bubbles," from a cancer laboratory where he was about to be used for medical experiments-or he didn't, depending on which story or which sources you want to believe. Whether he faced certain death or not, Bubbles was brought to Hayvenhurst, where he became the most pampered chimp in history.

The Star introduced Michael and Bubbles to the world under the headline: MICHAEL JACKSON GOES APE. NOW HE'S TALKING WITH HIS PET CHIMP-IN MONKEY LANGUAGE. Other supermarket tabloids filed even more bizarre stories. The National Enquirer claimed that Prince was using ESP and mental telepathy to drive Bubbles insane.

Michael obsessed over the baby chimp, even dining with him at table or throwing occasional "Alice in Wonderland" tea parties for him. "He came to regard the chimp as a human being," said Bob Michaelson, who visited Hayvenhurst on several occasions. The chimp knew benefits no other monkey had ever known: Limousine rides, his own hotel suite during road trips with Michael, even a personal bodyguard. Two dozen sets of Michael/Bubbles matching outfits were designed. Bubbles was perhaps the only chimp in the world associated with a custom-made tuxedo.

As the years went by, and as Bubbles matured, Michael grew bored with the chimp, the same way he did with young boys as they aged. Bubbles had also gotten hard to manage, once jumping up on the bed and landing in Michael's face after he'd had another nose job.

Eventually, Michael would adopt two additional, and younger, baby chimps, Max and Alex. Bubbles had designer clothes named after him, even a line of toys. But eventually, he was sent away in disgrace from Hayvenhurst, and ended up sharing a cage with two dozen other chimps, his days of glory behind him.

On March 3, 2005, columnists for The New York Daily News startled readers with a gossipy item, JACKO AND CHIMP TALE: IT GETS HAIRY. Uncovered was a 1993 interview that James DeBarge, former husband of Janet, gave to a police informant in Britain back in 1993. Revelations were subsequently published in Britain's Daily Star.

"The sex charges against Michael Jackson grow more bestial by the day," a columnist wrote. "Just when you thought the King of Pop's reputation couldn't sink any lower, it turns out Jackson's former brother-in-law, James DeBarge, has claimed the singer was up to some inappropriate monkey business with his chimp, Bubbles."

"He was changing Bubbles' diapers and just got carried away," DeBarge claimed in the 1993 interview. When Bubbles dropped out of sight, rumors were spread at the time that Papa Joe shot the chimp after he caught him in bed with his son, but this gossip was not true.

Miko Brando

The allegations brought an avalanche of letters to the newspaper and postings on the web. One reader facetiously wrote, "Parents of young boys who live near Michael's Neverland Ranch thank Bubbles for the sacrifices he made so that their sons could have a night or two off." Another reader jokingly asked, "Is anyone old enough to remember the old song, "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles?" Many readers wrote in with outrage: "It's blatantly obvious that he is mentally ill. Padded cell, straitjacket, throw away the key."

The Bubbles and Michael stories weren't the only tales relayed through the tabloids during 1984. At the peak of his career, Michael received tributes as well as condemnations. The News of the World's color supplement hailed him as "The World's Hottest Property." But Britain's Melody Maker magazine put him on its list of "Ten Fruitcakes," because he bathed in Perrier water and talked to inflatable geese. There was a report that he was working on a new project, a video in which he'd wear a purple dress that catches on fire.

The Fashion Foundation of America's 43rd annual survey of custom tailors and designers named President Reagan, The Catholic Archbishop of New York City, and Michael Jackson as America's best dressed men-all that in spite of the archbishop's gowns and Michael's tacky military outfits.

In Sevran, France, in July of 1984, an "obsessed" teenage boy committed suicide when his parents refused to finance plastic surgery to make him look like his idol, Michael Jackson.

Michael was extremely upset by this report of a suicide and turned to Miko Brando for support. (Miko happened to be not only Michael's security guard, but the second-eldest son of actor Marlon Brando and Marlon's second wife, Movita Castenada.) Michael had grown closer to Miko after his security guard had put out the fire in his hair during the filming of the Pepsi commercial.

With Miko Brando employed by Michael, it was inevitable that he would eventually meet The Godfather himself. He'd seen the film fifteen times, as he was as fascinated by crime pictures as he was by Disney cartoons. Michael told friends, "Now that I'm the biggest entertainer in the world, I need to associate with names as big as me. Jackie Onassis, and, yes, Marlon Brando. Perhaps Elizabeth Taylor one day."

The "odd couple" friendship of Michael and Marlon began in the living room of Marlon's home on Mulholland Drive in Los Angeles. Before an astonished Michael, Marlon placed a $10,000 check on his coffee table. He asked Michael for an I.O.U. for the same amount. The request flabbergasted Michael until Marlon explained that it was a contest. "Whoever lets out the biggest fart takes home the prize," Marlon said. "I have to warn you, I've been eating beans all afternoon."

Marlon Brando

Michael giggled and covered his face, later claiming that Marlon "had a potty mouth." But he kept returning to Brando's home time and time again, and Marlon also became a frequent house guest at Neverland.

Sometimes Quincy Jones joined Michael for an evening with Marlon. Jones and Marlon had known each other since the late 1940s when the actor was appearing as Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire on Broadway. With fellow actor Sidney Poitier, Marlon used to hang out with Jones late at night at Small's Paradise in Harlem. Marlon regaled Michael with stories of his early days in New York, when he always wore a red fedora hat. Jones was at Marlon's side when they attended the funeral of the assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Jones always called Marlon "Leroy," and Michael was envious of the bond between the two longtime friends.

"Tennessee always confused the real me with the fictional character of Stanley Kowalski," Marlon said to Jones. "And Michael still thinks of me as Don Corleone."

When Michael told Marlon that Jackie Onassis was going to be the editor of his autobiography, Moonwalk, Marlon leaned back on his sofa. "I fucked her but just once. She told me that it was the best fuck of her life."

"Now, Marlon, you know she wouldn't talk dirty like that," Michael said.

Ignoring him, Marlon went on, "I fucked Nancy Davis before she married Ronald Reagan. But I never got around to Pat Nixon, Bess Truman, or Mamie Eisenhower."

"Oh, Marlon," Michael said, covering his ears, which he would always do whenever he thought Marlon was "talking vulgar."

Their friendship began gradually but deepened in the 1990s. Toward the end of his life, Marlon was telling his friends, "Michael Jackson is my best comrade-in-arms."

The biggest project between Marlon and Michael never got off the ground. Marlon worked on a screen treatment, which he hoped to present to director Martin Scorsese. In the proposed scenario, Marlon cast himself as God, with Michael playing the Devil. "It's typecasting, of course," Marlon facetiously told Michael.

Alarmed over Marlon's burgeoning weight, Michael arrived one night bringing Marlon fresh vegetables from his organic garden. What made the evening rather bizarre was that Michael arrived dressed in a pink-and-chartreuse Pinocchio outfit, complete with a long nose.

"I'm astonished to see you as Pinocchio," Marlon said.

"I like to dress up," Michael said.

"I know that," Marlon said. "It's the big nose I don't get. I thought you'd spent millions of dollars on plastic surgery trying to get rid of a big nose."

Marlon found that a friendship with Michael had fringe benefits. It was reported that he used Michael as his personal bank, at one point borrowing a million dollars from him.

Regardless of the stress Marlon faced in his life, Michael was there for him. He idolized Marlon and came to regard him as a father figure.

Marlon was no great father, no more than Michael's real father, Papa Joe, had been. Except for Miko, Marlon had two dysfunctional children, Christian and Cheyenne. One night Christian shot Cheyenne's lover and was sentenced to ten years in prison for the assassination. Cheyenne was pregnant at the time of the slaying.

She'd later accuse Marlon of molesting her, and eventually, at the age of 25, she would commit suicide. Throughout this painful ordeal, Michael stood by Marlon. When charges of child molestation were raised against Michael, many of his other famous friends deserted him. Marlon, however, along with Elizabeth Taylor, was there for Michael. "He did the same for me," Marlon told his friends. "I can't turn my back on him now. Molestation charges have been raised against me too. I know what it feels like."

Michael had confided in Marlon that he was suffering emotional distress over Janet's marriage to James DeBarge and that he was delighted when Janet eventually filed a petition to nullify the marriage.

Martin Scorsese

Marlon tried to soothe his nerves, telling him, "I'm emotionally distressed over my own marriages, such as they were. My final conclusion is this: No man should ever marry and obligate himself to a woman. A man should be free. Even when I was married, I still insisted on being a free man. Sometimes I brought my girlfriends home to meet my wife ... or wives."

"I'll never get married," Michael promised him.

"You know, I can believe that." Marlon chuckled at his own humor.

Michael shared with Marlon his experiences in filmmaking and often asked the actor-sometimes hailed as the greatest of the 20th century-for advice. Francis Ford Coppola, who had directed Marlon in The Godfather, was also directing Michael in a 17-minute film for Disney, which would be released in 1986. Steven Spielberg, Michael's friend, was originally going to direct but had to cancel because of a conflict in his schedule. Cast opposite Michael as Captain EO was Anjelica Huston, playing The Supreme Leader.

Amazingly, the film took more than a year to shoot and cost $20 million, which, of course, was more than a million dollars a minute. It ranks as the costliest short ever made.

Michael was cast as an intergalactic song-and-dance man fighting to save a planet from the evil designs of the villain, Anjelica Huston. Disney characters such as Captain EO's flying space monkey, "Fuzzball," pop in and out.

Michael tested Coppola's nerves in this musical sci-fi short by refusing to work on Mondays. He would only rehearse while wearing his sunglasses on a stage that was completely dark. Coppola couldn't even see his moves, much less direct them. He couldn't have heard the director's cues anyway because Michael demanded that the background music be played at full blast.

He had an infuriating habit of disappearing right before he was to be in one of his scenes. Actually, he was often hiding behind a prop. After the crew had searched frantically for him, with production costs mounting, he would suddenly appear on the set. "I don't know why you're complaining," he told Coppola. "I've been right here all along, waiting to go on."

Other than getting overpaid, Michael found a fringe benefit in working on Captain EO. It came in a ten-year-old package named Jonathan Spence. Members of the crew reported to Todd Gold, a reporter for People, that the cuddly twosome would "hug and nuzzle a lot." Reportedly, nothing sexual was going on, but that didn't stop crew members from gossiping behind Michael's back. The blond-haired actor was called "an early version of Macaulay Culkin."

MJ in Captain EO

Little Jonathan seemed a devoted companion to Michael during filming. Not only did he fetch him such delights as a freshly made glass of chilled passion fruit juice, but he could be seen mopping Michael's brow after rehearsal.

When not resting, Jonathan and Michael dueled with water pistols. One day a food fight caused $3,000 worth of damage in Michael's expensive trailer. Michael was also fond of ordering custard pies. He and Jonathan would "ambush" crew members in ways that evoked slapstick comedies from the silent screen. "When I got a pie in the face, I wanted to choke the shithead," one crew member said in disgust. "But he was the Michael Jackson, and I didn't want to cross the faggot. He was a diva. There's never been a greater diva in all of Hollywood than Miss Jackson."

When Coppola's final cut for the ultra-expensive video was approved, Disney planned a release of the film at only two specially constructed theaters-one at the Epcot Center at Disney World in Orlando and the other at Disneyland in Anaheim.

At the September 21, 1986 premiere of Captain EO at Disneyland, a nonstop 60-hour party was staged that drew such names as Jane Fonda, Jack Nicholson (who showed up with co-star Anjelica Huston), Sissy Spacek, and George Lucas. The only no-show was Michael himself. Actually he was spotted at Disneyland that day, wearing a large black hat and hiding behind a heavy gray beard. He was seen boarding the roller-coaster called "Space Mountain."

Captain EO was hardly a triumph for Michael. One of his young fans, Joseph P. Ulibas, said, "I saw it and was disappointed even at my young age. Dude, they promised me a movie, and all I got was some singing, dancing, and overacting. They burned a ton of money on this `movie.' What I would like to know is what did they spend it on? For one thing, it wasn't on acting lessons. I can tell you that for sure."

To generate news before the premiere of Captain EO, and in a moment of indiscretion, Michael launched a secret publicity campaign to show the world that he was "bizarre," not that anyone on the planet needed much convincing at this point.

That was the word he wanted to be characterized as, although later this campaign would spin out of control and backfire on him. He set out to tantalize the press with his eccentricities, and the media, especially the tabloids, not only bought his self-styled "bizarre" act but invented stories of their own, making Michael appear far more idiosyncratic than he already was.

One morning he woke up and ordered one-hundred surgical masks in various colors. From the moment he first appeared in public wearing this mask, he was photographed. Pictures of him in disguise appeared on the front pages of newspapers around the world. "Isn't this fabulous!" he told Frank DiLeo, "The whole world is talking about me and my mask." Although most often appearing in white, he sometimes chose a colored surgical mask to match his outfit of the moment.

"He looked really fetching in magenta," DiLeo was heard to say. His manager went along with Michael's affectations, although the gruff, macho pro fessional secretly must not have approved. He did admit, however, that Michael knew how to attract the attention of photographers and reporters. "If he hadn't made it as a singer, he could have hired out as a publicist."

Michael actually needed the surgical mask to cover up his chin while recovering from another plastic surgery operation performed by Dr. Steven Hoefflin. Somewhere along the way, Michael had seen Kirk Douglas performing in the 1960 film, Spartacus. He'd been intrigued with the cleft in the actor's chin and wanted the facial feature for himself. Dr. Hoefflin agreed to perform the operation.

To come up with the famous Douglas cleft, the surgeon had to drill two tiny holes in Michael's jaw. Once this delicate procedure was carried out, a plastic prosthesis was inserted. After the wound healed, Michael hardly looked like the macho actor but at least he had his photogenic cleft.

Weeks later, Michael returned to Dr. Hoefflin's office to have a permanent eyeliner applied. This less-difficult operation involved the insertion of black dye injected directly into the eyelids. When that operation also succeeded, Michael surveyed the results and seemed pleased. "Now I'll have no more need of eyeliner. I'll mail all my mascara to Prince."

At this point in his life, Michael chose as a role model an unlikely candidate: Howard Hughes, "The Aviator." He had never heard of this former American hero until someone in a newspaper story suggested that Michael's wearing of the surgical mask evoked Hughes's phobia about germs. From that day on, Michael read everything he could about America's first billionaire, not only his accomplishments in aviation, but his private life too.

Michael read that he was not only a womanizer, according to press reports, but also learned that he was a closeted homosexual, carrying on a long-term affair with Cary Grant and other male stars who included Errol Flynn. Michael became intrigued with Hughes on many levels, especially in his success at leading a private life that wasn't exposed to public view until after his death. Michael wanted to learn how this hero managed to cover up his bedtime activities with men while "enjoying" a press that linked him to some of the most famous women of the 20th century, including Ava Gardner, Katharine Hepburn, and Ginger Rogers.

Michael also learned that in addition to breaking aviation records, Hughes had become a successful movie producer. He ordered a copy of Hughes's film, The Outlaw, that had starred Jane Russell and Jack Buetel. Michael learned that the world believed that Hughes had been hotly in pursuit of the busty and buxom Russell but that secretly he had the hots for Buetel, who played Billy the Kid.

Michael, too, wanted to be linked in the press with famous women dangling at his side like "arm candy," while indulging his private passions away from the prying eyes of the world.

Unless it was by the hand of a "special friend," most often a cute little boy, Michael, like Hughes, ordered that he never be touched. Like Hughes, he wanted doors opened for him, as he did not want to touch a knob that might be contaminated by germs.

Howard Hughes

Michael made such frequent appearances at toy stores that staff members wondered where he was stashing this vast array of items. He wasn't. Once Michael and one of his special friends had played with the toys for one day, Michael's staff was ordered to destroy the toys as a means of protecting him from germs and contamination.

Throwing precautions aside, Michael would sometimes expose himself to germs, just like the eccentric billionaire. In spite of his obsession with germs, Hughes preferred oral sex, often servicing women who had several different partners a week. Michael too seemed to forget about hygiene when he "French kissed" Bubbles or seemed to delight in changing soiled diapers and wiping the chimp's ass.

He continued to visit Disneyland but made a new demand on park attendants, whose supervisors were willing to do his bidding because of all the publicity he generated for the amusement park. Michael was one of the world's most agile dancers on the stage, yet he demanded that he be transported around Disneyland in a wheelchair. Fans who recognized him thought that he'd injured himself during a dance rehearsal. He hadn't. When he arrived at an attraction of his choice, he'd jump out of the wheelchair and be as agile as he was when performing the Moonwalk.

Toys weren't the only items Michael was purchasing for his amusement. For display alongside a human brain in a jar of formaldehyde and his own nose cartilage also preserved in a jar, he purchased the mummy of a young Egyptian boy for $3 million. He also acquired the boy's mummified pets-a lion cub, a lizard, and a rat which were buried with this son of a noble family. The pets were entombed with the boy to keep him company in the afterlife. Michael became intrigued with that idea and asked his lawyers to draw up a codicil to his will. Upon his death, his pets at the time were to be killed and mummified to join him in his grave.

At this time in his life, he also commissioned a portrait for placement above the headboard of his bed. His own portrait appeared in the center, and he was surrounded by five figures he viewed as his "equals." Sharing the oil painting with him were Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Mona Lisa, and E.T. Each of the figures, including Michael himself, was painted in Napoleonic poses in full military regalia. Each followed Michael's example of wearing a white sequined glove and aviator sunglasses.

Cary Grant

Wanting to generate even more publicity before the opening of Captain EO, Michael conceived one of the most ingenious publicity stunts yet, the equal of the Elephant Man story. Behind the scenes, he enlisted the support of The National Enquirer, which would break the story. A photographer arrived to take a picture of him sleeping inside a tube-like hyperbaric chamber made of see-through plastic. The Enquirer ran the story-MICHAEL JACKSON'S SECRET PLAN TO LIVE TO 150. The story claimed that by sleeping in this $175,000 contraption, Michael could stave off the aging process and not die at the ripe old age of ninety but live for an additional six decades at least.

After its first exposure in the national tabloid, the picture of Michael in the chamber ran worldwide.

Michael had encountered the machine when he was at the Burn Center being treated for burns after his hair caught fire during the Pepsi commercial. The machine was none too safe, and because of its 100% oxygen content, hospital employees approached the chamber wearing fire-retardant clothes to assist burn victims who were temporarily placed in the chamber to flood their body tissues with life-giving oxygen. Trained personnel knew of the dangers associated with the chamber, including the possibility of an oxygen-fed fire breaking out or else oxygen toxicity to the patient.

The tabloids weren't the only publications writing about Michael. After the worldwide success of Thriller, even Time magazine wanted him for a cover story. Surprisingly for an entertainer who deliberately courted bizarre publicity, Michael rejected Time's request for an interview. A reporter for Time, Denise Worrell, had to settle for interviews with Papa Joe and Katherine instead.

On a tour of the Jackson's Encino compound, Papa Joe, escorting Worrell, knocked on Michael's bedroom door. When there was no answer, he opened the unlocked door to show her Michael's mannequin-studded room.

To the surprise of both Worrell and Joe himself, they discovered Michael sitting in the dark room lit only by the glow of a TV set turned on low. Michael did not introduce his friend, who looked like a boy in his late teens. Michael seemed embarrassed at this invasion of his privacy and extended a weak handshake to Worrell, which she would later claim felt "like a fluffy cloud."

Michael had nothing to say to the correspondent, but averted his eyes and turned back to watching the television screen. Papa Joe seemed embarrassed. Worrell, although she really wanted to interview the reclusive star, turned and left the room quickly, followed by Joe. "I'll have a word with you later," Joe was heard warning Michael. Joe turned apologetically to Worrell. "Michael has only just discovered who Greta Garbo was, and he's trying to imitate her."

MJ in hyperbaric chamber

As Worrell was leaving the Encino mansion, a perplexed Katherine came up to her. "Don't get the wrong idea!" she said. "Michael isn't gay!" As Worrell drove away, she remembered Papa Joe's final words to her. "Get it right in your article on Michael. He's definitely not gay! Joan Rivers is broadcasting lies about my son. He's gonna sue!"

Katherine might have put up a bold front to a journalist from Time magazine, but in private she often expressed her despair to her children. "Michael hangs out so much with all those white boys." She went on to assert that if he wanted to play with children, there were lots of nieces and nephews for him to pick from.

Bob Michaelson, who once worked as a business partner with Michael, said, "There is a popular misconception that Michael was always in the company of young boys. Actually he was often seen with many handsome guys in their late teens. They were always white, always good looking, and always discreet. He was not seen with any girls or young women. Not that!"

Except for those special friends, Michael continued to pursue friendships with his equals, an array of personalities that now firmly included Marlon Brando. He continued to see Liza Minnelli, although admitting privately, "I would have preferred Judy Garland but she's dead."

"Jackie Onassis is definitely my equal," he claimed, although he was beginning to wonder about the status of Diana Ross.

He did not include Brooke Shields on that list as an equal. "I love people like Brooke who are talented but who work so hard," he said. "Brooke is a nice gal but she's not Elizabeth Taylor. That's the kind of woman I want to be seen with."

The Oscar-winning actress, darling of divorce lawyers and diamond dealers, was about to enter Michael's life.

Elizabeth had certainly heard of Michael Jackson, but was not familiar with his music. Her son, Christopher Wilding, was a devotee, however. Like many stars of her era, Elizabeth's taste in music ranged from Judy Garland to Frank Sinatra, although she'd enjoyed Elvis Presley as well. The rock 'n' roll star had once sent her a note, "Would you like to shake, rattle, and roll with me?" But she'd never answered it.

In the 80s, Michael was enjoying-or else detesting-the same kind of scandalous fame she'd experienced during her love affair with her Cleopatra costar, Richard Burton, in Rome. But now, instead of her escapades, it was Michael's adventures-real or imagined-that dominated the headlines.

With the onset of age-Elizabeth was now fifty-two-her beauty was fading, although she still made a stunning presence.

Michael had even more money than she did, a reported $300 million in his coffers, most of it from his hit album, Thriller. He was only twenty-six years old. In spite of Elizabeth's long and successful career, she estimated, "I can scare up only $80 million, if that."

When a maid in her Bel Air home announced that "Mr. Michael Jackson is on the phone," the megastar was skeptical. "Why would Michael Jackson be calling little of me?" she asked the maid, not expecting an answer. "A duet, maybe? Tell him to call Diana Ross." The maid returned to the phone, but came back soon. "No, it's really Mr.

Jackson," she said. "I'd recognize that girlie-man voice anywhere." Still thinking one of her friends was playing a joke on her, Elizabeth got up to answer the phone.

But even after talking to Michael, she still wasn't convinced. Some of her friends delivered great impersonations. But when fourteen tickets to Michael's concert at Dodger Stadium on February 27 arrived, she was convinced that she'd been talking to the star himself. "A perfect gift for Christopher," she told her maid, "and I didn't have to pay a cent for it. He can invite all his young friends."

When the concert began, Elizabeth was extremely disappointed with her seats. Even though given the VIP box, she did not have a good view. After twenty minutes, she rose to her feet and left.

When news of her walkout reached Michael backstage, he was devastated. He called her the next day and, as Elizabeth remembered, "We talked for three hours. About everything. Mostly about having to go into the business without having a chance to grow up first. We truly identified with each other. I found him sweet and sensitive, not at all bizarre like the stories I've read in the tabloids. Not that I read tabloids, of course, but stories-most often outright lies-are written about him. As you know, I've been a tabloid scandal for years, so I know what he feels like. I told Michael that reporters must have slept under my bed to write the crap they do."

In his biography, Moonwalk, Michael summed up his relationship with Elizabeth this way: "I'm inspired by her bravery. She had been through so much and she is a survivor. I identify with her very strongly because of her experiences as a child star. When we first started to talk on the phone, she told me she felt like she had known me for years. I felt the same way."

Michael and Elizabeth were so compatible over the phone that they agreed to meet in person. He invited her to the set of Captain EO. Later, she told her friend, Roddy McDowall, "Being with Michael brings back memories of Monty." She was referring, of course, to her loving relationship with her longtime companion, the homosexual actor, Montgomery Clift, with whom she'd appeared in the 1951 A Place in the Sun.

On the set of Captain EO, Elizabeth seemed to revert to childhood herself. She joined Michael and Little Jonathan in their messy food fights in his trailer.

A few weeks later, she invited Michael to her home, where he showed up with a "date," Bubbles. "I find Michael very dear," Elizabeth later recalled. "He was very childlike. Not childish. Childlike. I could identify with that. He took me back to the days when I was shooting National Velvet with Mickey Rooney. The only difference is that Mickey was sexually aggressive. I didn't know at the time any details of Michael's private life, but he came across as very asexual. In other words, I didn't think he was going to rape me. With Rooney, you could never be sure."

If Michael were indeed gay, as rumors had it, he could find no more supportive friend and champion than Elizabeth herself. She had always been the most gay-friendly actress in Hollywood, and in time she'd become an AIDS activist.

In the months to come, Michael was seen frequently at Elizabeth's Bel Air home, talking with her for hours at a time. He even established a "hot line" to her manse so that they could talk at any hour of the day or night without going through staff members.

Both Michael and Elizabeth liked ice cream and sampled various flavors. He told her that he was considering manufacturing his own brand of ice cream which "will be the tastiest on the market because of a secret ingredient."

"What secret ingredient? Mother's breast milk?" she asked facetiously.

"Something even more startling," he told her. "An ingredient I learned about in Africa. The saliva of a rhinoceros."

When she received an invitation from President Nelson Mandela to join Michael on his tour of South Africa, she gracefully declined, speaking to Mandela personally. After putting down the phone with Mandela, Elizabeth

asked friends, "Why do famous people want to meet only famous people?"

When Michael returned from the tour, he resumed his friendship with Elizabeth. Her staff often reported seeing him cuddled in her arms on a sofa watching TV.

"It was hardly a love affair, as some tabloids have suggested," said Bert Overfield, who covered this burgeoning friendship. "No sex. But lots of love. Michael himself spoke publicly about Elizabeth. `She's my Wendy.'" Michael was referring to Wendy Darling, one of the characters in Sir James M. Barrie's Peter Pan.

Michael believed so strongly in the Barrie story that he once confided a secret to Elizabeth. "We can fly, you know. We just don't think the right thoughts to levitate ourselves. I'm studying with these two gurus."

"Don't take me with you," she warned him. "I'm too much of a blimp to get airborne. And don't jump off the Empire State Building, thinking you're Superman. You might come crashing down to Earth."

In talks with Michael, Elizabeth learned of "deeper, darker secrets." He claimed that he had the power to foresee his own death, "just knowing" that it would come in the year 1998 when he turned forty. So confident was he in this myth that he started to sign his name, "M.J., 1998." Recipients of his notes did not know what the "1998" stood for, and rumors spread among Michael's fans that the world was going to end that year.

Elizabeth, who did not turn out to be a prophet, told him, "With my history of ill health, I fear my world will come crashing down on me long before 1998."

During their long hours of conversation, he shared with her his fascination with sideshow freaks of nature, those unfortunate souls who used to be showcased in circuses. He was especially intrigued with the lives of Siamese twins and how they lived together. He was also fascinated with bearded ladies, and he once showed her a picture of a two-headed baby. She found it grotesque. "Sometimes I feel like a freak too," he said.

In spite of all these oddities, Elizabeth would one day announce to the press, "He's the sanest person I know. There is nothing weird about him."

In describing his friendship with Elizabeth to friends, Michael claimed that she was "a combination of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Diana in the same body." At one point he even compared Elizabeth (the actress, not the queen) to Mother Teresa.

When she heard that remark, Elizabeth said, "Michael had better check with Teresa herself before making a comparison like that. I've been called Jezebel, the Whore of Babylon, and a home-wrecker, but never Mother Teresa. How can he compare me with that prune-faced Mother Teresa?"

When a rail-thin and much-altered Michael flew to London in March of 1985, he attended Madame Tussaud's to unveil his wax model. Elizabeth turned down the invitation to accompany him. It was his first public visit to England since the Jacksons toured there in 1979.

One member of the ever-cynical London press, noting a photograph of Michael displayed beside his wax figure, wrote, "I can't tell which one is the dummy."

That wasn't all. Michael began to look whiter in all his photographs. The press speculated that he was using Porcelana, a skin-bleaching cream. Several writers for magazines commented on his "new, feminine look." One reporter claimed, "Michael Jackson was never the most masculine of men. Now with all the tweezing of the eyebrows, all that makeup, that heavy lipstick, I could swear he's transgendered. I'm going to follow him to the toilet, assuming he still uses the men's loo. I bet he'll go in a booth and squat to pee. Stay tuned, dear readers."

Back in Los Angeles, Frank DiLeo referred to claims that Michael had had his skin lightened by chemical, even surgical, means as "preposterous."

Quincy Jones commented publicly about Michael's "strangeness." He said, "When you start in this business as

young as he did, at age five, it's hard to get a realistic point of view on life. Considering the background, and what happened to him in recent years, he's surprisingly sane. I've seen dudes with one record go absolutely nuts. You've got to have a strong center to handle it, and I think Michael has that. I'd rather have a kid who's talking about the Elephant Man's bones than one with a pound of cocaine. Any day!"

Michael called Barbara Walters to attack a 20/20 report that he was a "plastic surgery addict." A hip, savvy news hen like Walters wasn't fooled for a minute, but she listened patiently as Michael explained that the change in his looks was because of a change in his diet.

MJ with his wax effigy

Later, Walters, or so it was rumored, laughed off Michael's explanation, telling her staff, "It's all those fruits and vegetables he eats-the raisins, unsalted nuts. Or maybe it's the popcorn. Yes, definitely. It's the popcorn making him turn white."

In April of 1985, Michael also made the news with another Elizabeth, this one the Queen of England. Buckingham Palace announced that the image of the Queen could not appear with Michael Jackson on a stamp issued in the British Virgin Islands. The statement claimed, "The Queen will not appear on any stamp which portrays a living person." It was suggested, however, that if any image had to appear with the Queen, William Shakespeare would be an acceptable candidate.

This rebuff was a great humiliation to Michael and a setback to him in one of his desires. For years, he'd had a dream, as expressed to his aides, to have Her Majesty confer British knighthood onto him. "No one deserves it more than I do," Michael was alleged to have said.

The Queen had bestowed knighthood on such figures as Sir Winston Churchill. And in the future, she'd elevate Michael's friend, Elizabeth Taylor, to the status of Dame of the British Empire. Sources close to the Queen said privately that Her Majesty appreciated the Jackson brothers performing before her, but that she had no intention of granting him a British knighthood. If reports are to be believed, the Queen found the whole idea "horrid."

Teaming with Lionel Richie, Michael composed a song for African famine relief. With the help of Quincy

Jones, Michael came up with the basic music for "We Are the World." Demo cassettes of "We Are the World" were sent to various artists who had agreed to participate in the recording. The initiative for the relief program was started by Bob Geldof with his "Band Aid" in Britain. He spoke of seeing "120 people die slowly in front of you" after a visit to Ethiopia.

To impress Richie with his A-list friends, Michael invited the star to join him for dinner with Elizabeth Taylor. "We talked about isolation and what you do when you're lonely," Richie later recalled. "Michael seemed amazed to learn that Elizabeth often went out alone without security guards."

They told Richie that they sometimes disguised themselves and went to see movies in Westwood. "We always sit in the back holding hands," Michael said. "She's my new best girl." Richie wondered, but then rejected the possibility that Michael and Elizabeth were having a May-December affair.

From the very beginning of their relationship, Elizabeth had to be aware of Michael's special friendships with young boys. She often saw Michael with these children. Years later, in 1999, when she was asked about this, she didn't really answer, but excused Michael by claiming, "He is magic. I've long known that magical people, especially artists, have genuine eccentricity. That is, perhaps, what drives them to create magic in media."

A friend of Elizabeth's, who did not want to be named, claimed, "Even if Michael is nabbed as the King of Child Porn, Elizabeth will stick up for him and make excuses. She's a gutsy broad, but also a very sweet woman and fiercely loyal to her friends-take Rock Hudson, Montgomery Clift, and James Dean, for example."

When Michael told Elizabeth he wanted to direct his next music video himself, she called her friend Eddie Dmytryk "to show Michael the ropes." A Ukrainian, the liberal director had made Crossfire in 1947. It had been one of the first Hollywood pictures to decry anti-Semitism, for which he earned an Oscar nomination as best director. He later became a victim of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee and an infamous member of the blacklisted "Hollywood Ten."

At the time of his meeting with Michael, the director was teaching film at UCLA. Dmytryk would later recall several meetings with Michael at his Neverland ranch. "He had dolls everywhere-perhaps he never had a chance to be a kid himself. Little dolls, big dolls, life-size dolls, and lots of cuddly teddy bears. I met Jordie Chandler there, the same kid who would later bring a lawsuit against Michael. A nice kid and rather bright. Perhaps fourteen at the time. I didn't see anything sexual going on between them, but it might be possible."

Knowing that Dmytryk was a sophisticated man of the world, and a discreet one, Michael confided a secret in him. "I once wanted to look like Diana Ross and a lot of people say I do. But now I want a different look. I'm going to have my appearance altered to look like Elizabeth as she was when she appeared with Mickey Rooney in National Velvet in 1945. I've seen the picture fifteen times."

Although it was later denied, Michael did create a "shrine" to Elizabeth at Neverland. Michael's publicist, Bob Jones, confirmed the existence of the shrine to Elizabeth. Several visitors saw it before it was locked permanently, its exhibits ultimately removed and put into storage when the white-heat friendship between the two legends dimmed somewhat. Within the shrine, on giant video screens, Elizabeth's films such as A Place in the Sun, Cleopatra, and National Velvet played twenty-four hours a day. Michael refused to show Butterfield 8, the 1960 film in which Elizabeth won an Oscar for her portrayal of a prostitute. "It's okay with me," Elizabeth was quoted as saying. "I thought the picture was lousy too and didn't want to make it."

Michael designed the wallpaper himself. It portrayed a series of little heads of Elizabeth. For the walls not covered with paper, Michael demanded that the painters come up with the exact violet of Elizabeth's eyes, but they never were able to match the exact shade.

Elizabeth interested Michael in the cause of fighting AIDS, and he not only donated money for her charity but was her escort to functions in Los Angeles staged to raise money in the battle against a disease that was killing off many of her friends. It claimed Rock Hudson, her costar in Giant, on October 2, 1985.

Michael boycotted the 12th Annual American Music Awards ceremony. He sensed what was to come. Unlike his great success in 1985 with Thriller, he failed to win any of the awards for which he was nominated.

Many of the artists who attended the awards ceremony later showed up at midnight to meet Michael and to record "We Are the World."

Quincy Jones posted a sign outside the studio that read: LEAVE YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR. The artists came from the worlds of pop, R&B, country, whatever. Among those who appeared were Harry Belafonte, Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner, Bette Midler, Willie Nelson, The Pointer Sisters, Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, Dionne Warwick, Bruce Springsteen, and Diana Ross, who went around asking for autographs. "How could she embarrass me like this?" Michael asked. "She's too big a star to ask for autographs."

Leaving the studio after a long night, Michael confided that he hadn't had dinner. He was going home to demand that his chef prepare him a plate of steamed okra.

One critic of the video claimed that all the stars except Michael had, indeed, left their egos at the door that night. He demanded that his solo recording be taped privately and away from the rest of the stars. "He wanted to be different and set aside from the other celebrities," said one of the recording staff. "Like he was special, better than the rest of the singers. In the video, a shot begins at his sequined socks and his Bass Weejun shoes. He's so big he doesn't need to show his face right away."

Michael was overheard bragging, "Fans will know me the moment they see my socks. Try to photograph Bruce Springsteen's socks. No one will know who he is. No one!"

"We Are the World-The Video Event" became the ninth best-selling video cassette of 1985, and "We Are the World" as a single record became the first ever to go multi-platinum, staying number one on Billboard's charts for a month. The song's sales raised more than $40 million. At the Grammy Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles in February of 1986, "We Are the World" won four awards.

Quincy Jones, Lionel Richie, and Michael Jackson, 1985

In June of that year Michael celebrated his success with "We Are the World" by undergoing yet a fourth operation on his nose, demanding to have it made even slimmer, although it was quite thin as it was. He claimed that he would soon turn twenty-eight, and he wanted to celebrate with a thinner nose, even though Jehovah's Witnesses

aren't supposed to observe birthdays.

After he'd recovered from the operation, Michael told friends, "I can hardly rehearse my music any more. I spend all day looking at my reflection in the mirror. Dr. Steven Hoefflin is a wonderful plastic surgeon. Because of me, he's called `The Plastic Surgeon to the Stars.' Not just movie stars go to him. Even Ivana Trump uses him."

Michael also reminded anyone interested, even Paul Anka, who clearly wasn't, that "lots of famous stars in the past had nose jobs, even Elvis Presley. Marilyn Monroe not only had her nose done, but her breasts. You don't think for a moment that those breasts were actually hers, do you?"

At one point, Frank DiLeo wondered why his client bothered with such expensive nose jobs and then went out in public with a surgical mask. "The last time he was spotted, or so I heard, he was wearing a gorilla head mask with fur. King Kong all the way."

On May 12, 1986, it was announced at a press conference in New York that Michael's new look would be showcased in Pepsi commercials. Michael, according to a contract negotiated with the soft drink king, Roger Enrico, would be paid a record-breaking $15 million. This time he wouldn't have to split the millions with his brothers, and, according to his demands, would not have to be seen "drinking one drop of the vile soda." Pepsi also agreed to sponsor Michael's first nationwide solo tour, although no dates were announced for that momentous event. Under most endorsement deals, an artist is usually paid in installments. Michael demanded the entire $15 million up front.

MJ and Bob Jones

When the mega-check cleared, Michael was not in a mood for celebration. No longer was he thinking of the competition from Prince, but a challenge coming from "down the hall," a reference to the Encino manse where he still lived on the same floor as his younger sister Janet. Family members had overheard the second-most talented member of the Jackson clan claiming that her new album, Control, was going to sell more copies than the record-busting Thriller.

Even Papa Joe had told her, "You'll be as big as Michael-not bigger, but as big." Janet was in the throes of her own management crisis, as she, like Michael and her other brothers, wanted to break from her father, turning to others, such as John McClain, a young executive at A&M, for career guidance, much to her father's rage and fury.

After studying the latest photographs of Janet, Michael was enraged. He stormed out of his bedroom and rushed downstairs to confront Katherine. "Janet's even stolen my nose and had a plastic surgeon build an exact copy for herself. Not only that, she sounds like me. She looks like me. She's stealing my dance steps."

Katherine was hardly reassuring. "You started a trend. Everybody in the family, even your father, is trying to look like you, with a little help from plastic surgeons. That is, all except Jackie. He's pleased with the face God gave him."

With Control, Janet showed the world that she was no longer Daddy's Little Girl. She finally sacked Papa Joe as her manager and teamed with Terry Lewis and Jimmy ("Jam") Harris, two multi-talented music men, to create the

album. Joe predicted failure, but Control went on to sell eight million copies and won Grammys for Lewis and Harris. Reportedly, Michael was furious at the album's success, especially when it spawned such hit singles as "What Have You Done for Me Lately?"

Michael complained bitterly to his publicist, Norman Winter, that both La Toya and Janet were altering their faces to look more like him. "You've got to do something about it," Michael demanded of Winter.

"But I'm not a plastic surgeon," he protested. "Otherwise, I would make La Toya look like a female Little Richard and Janet Mike Tyson in drag."

Michael was not amused at Winter's sarcasm. "The way it is now, La Toya is often mistaken for me when she goes through airports or lounges of deluxe hotels. Why would anyone mistake La Toya for me? Do you think I look like a girl?"

Winter had no comment.

Michael's fury spilled over onto Diana Ross when he learned that she was marrying a white man, Arne Naess, the Norwegian shipping millionaire who lived in Oslo. At first there had been rumors that he'd attend their wedding the following February, even functioning as best man for Naess. But later, he sent word to Ross that he was turning down her invitation to the wedding-"and future invitations as well."

Ross suffered public humiliation. "He has Elizabeth Taylor now," she told friends. "What does he need with the woman who was responsible for launching his career. Fuck him! Instead of ordering his chauffeur to call him Miss Ross, he's probably demanding to be called Miss Taylor now."

When Elizabeth heard what Ross had said, she replied, "Meow!"

Janet

Ross got her revenge two years later when Michael broke his stonewall silence and requested her appearance on a Showtime special for television. It was to be a tribute from "loving friends" to Michael's career and life. Ross cabled that she could not make the commitment because of her busy schedule.

"What do I need her for?" Michael ranted. "I've got Elizabeth Taylor. Sophia Loren. Gene Kelly. And Quincy Jones and Sean Lennon, and anybody else I could get if I really wanted them. She turns me down and I'm a bigger

star than Greta Garbo in her heyday!" He had been reading books about the reclusive Garbo.

At one point, Michael told Winter that he would "henceforth and forever more" associate only with celebrities who were his equal. He didn't want minor celebrities being photographed with him "and trying to get a big break by feeding off my fame."

He made some exceptions to that. Bodyguards at Hayvenhurst would later report a parade of young boys, ranging in age from nine to fourteen, being slipped into Michael's bedroom at night. In spite of this clandestine activity, Michael was still living with his parents at Encino. One guard estimated that over a three-year period "at least three dozen young kids were slipped in." He could not offer an explanation about why parents would allow their offspring to spend the night with an entertainer "approaching the big 3-0" in age.

One guard would later testify that all the boys were white and often blond and blue-eyed. None of them was black, as was the case with Emmanuel Lewis. Sometimes these boys would stay in Michael's bedroom for almost a month. Other boys were sent packing after only a one-night "sleepover."

All meals were prepared for Michael and the toy boy of the moment and delivered on a tray which rested outside his door. Michael would issue orders that he not be disturbed for days at a time.

According to La Toya, Michael would often keep seeing the same boy on and off for more than a year at a time. After they got "too old," the boys were dropped. Some were not willing to get the boot, and often had to be bought off or coerced out of the house with expensive gifts.

In a disturbing revelation, La Toya reported that Katherine, in a search of Michael's room when he was out of town, discovered a stash of checks. To La Toya, Katherine called her son "a fucking faggot." As a devout Jehovah's Witness, she was homophobic, as were many other members of her cult.

Sophia Loren

Checks in varying amounts- $100,000, $200,000, $300,000, even $1 million-had been written to parents of boys Michael had entertained for prolonged sleepovers. Even checks for the purchases of Rolls-Royces were found. Apparently, Michael gave away these expensive vehicles the way Elvis gave away Cadillacs.

La Toya warned Michael that he was courting a potential public scandal and might also be setting himself up for future blackmail. "Some of these parents might come back in the future and demand more money when whatever you gave them is spent."

He turned a deaf ear to her. "I love kids," he said. "We're just playing games-that's all there is to it. Case closed."

When not entertaining young boys, Michael entertained lucrative proposals for various endorsement deals. He was offered nearly $30 million by entrepreneurs to sponsor a line of Michael Jackson clothing. Copies of the clothes he wore in such videos as "Thriller" or "Beat It" were approved by Michael, but there were so many delays and indecisions on his part that the clothing did not make an impact on the market. Rip-offs of Michael Jackson clothing, especially garments made in China and Japan, saturated the market, such a vast exploitation that it virtually destroyed the authentic MJ label.

Likewise, an attempt to launch a line of toys called "Michael's Pets" also failed. There would have been a talking Muscles and a talking Bubbles. At one point it was reported that Michael became so jealous of all the media attention focusing on his chimp-and not on himself-that he nixed the deal.

He sent word to the toy manufacturers, "Let us not forget that it is Michael Jackson-not Bubbles-who is the star of this show." The line of toys never took off either, although Michael was said to have kept nearly $25 million in various marketing advances, including a line of Michael Jackson sunglasses.

"Michael Jackson ended up screwing everybody," said entrepreneur Bob Michaelson, who called his would-be partner "a sleaze."

Rip-off Michael Jackson clothing-some of the garments bearing a label MADE IN TAIWAN-flooded America. Kids attending schools from Oregon to Florida were wearing Michael Jackson sneakers, Michael Jackson T-shirts, and even carrying Michael Jackson lunchboxes. All of this merchandise was unauthorized, and the legitimate promoters who had originally contracted with Michael to use his image "went belly-up," in the words of one failed clothing manufacturer.

Among entrepreneurs in the business world, Michael became known as a "ruthless son-of-a-bitch." One irate manufacturer said, "Behind that whispery little Marilyn Monroe voice, that face of supposed naivete, there beats a heart of gold. Hold onto your shirts should you ever have the misfortune to cross his path. He'll take it off your back. Not only that, he'll take your pants, your shoes, your socks, and, as a final fuck-you, your jockey shorts."

The business community wasn't the only sector furious at Michael Jackson. Jehovah's Witnesses were still upset about Thriller. They were as yet unaware of the future accusations that would link Michael with molestation of young boys. By February of 1987, Michael and the Jehovah's Witnesses had had it with each other. Michael was deliberately promoting a self-styled "bizarre" lifestyle, which the ultra-conservative church leaders found "repulsive," in the words of one of their elders. "In our church, men do not wear lipstick and enough makeup to look like a Saturday night whore," a spokesman said. "Unlike his mother, Mr. Jackson is not a true Jehovah's Witness. His lifestyle is not compatible with the teachings of our church."

William Van De Wall, speaking for the Watchtower Bible Society, said it was Michael's wish to separate himself from the church. "For one violation alone, he could have been disfellowshipped," Van De Wall claimed. "He attended a birthday party for Elizabeth Taylor. Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays. This has been made perfectly clear to Mr. Jackson from the beginning. He deliberately mocked our beliefs by attending the party for this much-married and scandalous movie star."

According to the terms of the church, Katherine would go against church policy if she ever spoke to her son once he was "disfellowshipped." Even so devout a Jehovah's Witness as Katherine had no intention of obeying this rule. She was riding around Los Angeles in a maroon-colored Rolls-Royce, a birthday gift from Michael, with whom she'd maintain a loving relationship long after he withdrew from the church.

Freed from the heavy rules of his cult religion, one of the world's most intolerant and severe, Michael would increasingly pursue that self-proclaimed "bizarre" lifestyle that he wanted. But he didn't spend all his time with cute little boys locked away in darkened bedrooms. He actively added to his list of friends a growing number of the most famous names in Hollywood, deciding that Liza Minnelli, Elizabeth Taylor, and Katharine Hepburn, although good for openers, weren't enough.

Even Robert De Niro showed up at Michael's for dinner. "Except for Frank Sinatra, whom Michael detested, he loved all Italians, because of his continuing fascination with the Mafia," Brando said. "Even though I'm not Italian, I had made that movie-so I qualified. But Michael seemed to think every Italian had a link to the mob, and this utterly thrilled him. He once told me he loved his manager, Frank DiLeo, because of his Italian name. He even entertained Martin Scorsese. Believe you me, Scorsese has no links to the mob. The one entertainer who did have a link to the mob, that piece of wop shit, Sinatra himself, turned Michael off and was never invited to one of his Italian nights like I was. Of course, I'm sure Sinatra wouldn't have gone to Michael's had he been invited. Oh, didn't I tell you? Ava Gardner once said I was a much better lay than Sinatra. Apparently, at times he was impotent. My noble tool has never failed me and never disappointed any woman. Or man, for that matter."

As the 80s deepened, and work continued on his latest album, Bad, which was delayed for months, Michael befriended the rich and famous. All of these elite members of the "Old Guard" in Hollywood wanted to meet the most famous entertainer in the world. In fact, Ronald Reagan one time called Michael-not to give him another award-but to chat with him for about fifteen minutes.

When Brando heard that, he laughed. "Perhaps Reagan needed Michael's advice on how to run the planet," Brando said facetiously. Brando could not tolerate Reagan. "God knows someone sane should give Reagan some advice. Bad actor. Bad president."

To Michael's doorstep came a host of stars, all odd couplings for Michael. Gregory Peck. Charlton Heston. Sophia Loren. Cary Grant. "I think most of them were driven by curiosity," Brando said. "Let's face it: all of us are in show business. It's only natural for stars to want to meet fellow stars. Peck and Heston didn't show up for the stimulating conversation. I love Michael dearly, although I never got around to fucking him. But, let's face it, at the table he doesn't have much to say. But it's fun to watch him get through a dinner giggling into his white-starched napkin. His maids must have a hard time getting rid of the lipstick smears."

When macho Charlton Heston came to dinner, Michael wanted to impress "Moses" with his straight credentials. He told the preposterous story that at least once a week he retreated to Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion "where I enjoy my own private harem."

Whether Heston fell for this is not known.

Heston may have been the most conservative A-list actor that Michael would ever meet. His name had never been linked to any woman other than his wife, Lydia Clarke, a former drama student.

Heston's advocacy of "two guns in every home" and his right-wing political conservatism did not open many doors to him in Hollywood. Michael may not have been aware of Heston's political positions, although he was familiar with some of Heston's films.

Michael had seen his 1968 Planet of the Apes five times. Heston once said, "Nudity is never erotic, except in the bedroom." Yet he became the first major American male film star to show his ass in a movie.

Heston himself admitted that he was "too dull, too square, and too Protestant." As such, he fitted in with the public image that Michael promoted of himself. He still used the excuse that he was a virgin because his church dictated no sex before marriage. Heston seemed to live by that rule too. "I'm not a drunk," Heston told Michael, "and I've had only one wife. I don't cheat on her, and my kids aren't runaways."

He seemed to like Michael, or at least the image that Michael was projecting of himself. Later, when Heston learned that Michael might be a molester of young boys, he retreated in horror from his former friend. "I have never

been an advocate of the homosexual lifestyle," Heston said.

"No one ever accused me of being a champion of gay rights. Child molestation is perhaps the most evil form of sex known on the planet. If Jackson has been guilty of such crimes, he should be sentenced to prison for life. Once in prison, he may learn the evils of molestation first hand."

Heston even lectured Michael on the "necessity" of keeping firearms in the house. "It seems to me ethically questionable to expect a policeman earning $35,000 annually to risk his life to protect a citizen. We've got to protect ourselves, turn our homes into armed camps if necessary. Even women should be trained to use weapons." He offered to teach Michael how to shoot, and he also invited Michael to his own home to see his gun collection. Michael never accepted either offer.

Witty, urbane, and sophisticated, Gregory Peck was the very opposite of Charlton Heston. Michael had little to say to Peck, but was seemingly fascinated by his long career and stories of the personalities he'd encountered. With his deep, modulated voice, Peck could hold a listener Spellbound, the name, of course, of one of his first movies, released in 1945. During the making of that film, he'd enjoyed a torrid affair with Ingrid Bergman.

He told Michael stories about his life that he'd never told an interviewer. "People talk about you wearing lipstick," Peck said. "I did you one better. Once I was a tour guide at Radio City in New York. As a gag, the manager had me dress up in drag one night and come out as one of the Rockettes."

Charlton Heston

Michael told him that he'd cried while watching his 1962 performance in To Kill a Mockingbird.

Peck thanked him for the compliment but preferred to speak of movies that were never made. "Two years before Mockingbird, I was cast opposite Marilyn Monroe in Lets Make Love," he said. "Believe it or not, I was cast in a singing and dancing role. Now don't get fired up. My singing and dancing-have no fear-would not have offered you any competition at all. I dropped out when Marilyn's hubby at the time, Arthur Miller, downgraded my part and built up Marilyn's. Even so, Marilyn and I really bonded. I saw she was self-destructing. I tried to save her. But making love to a woman every day isn't necessarily the way to save her. She told me that if I married her, we'd be the happiest couple on the planet. Dreams, my friend, are sometimes better left as such and never translated into reality."

"Marilyn Monroe would have frightened me to death," Michael said. "Too much woman."

Peck and Michael also talked about the increasing infringement of the media into a star's private life, and Peck sympathized with the ongoing invasions of Michael's privacy. "It's second rate to expose one's insides to the public," Peck said. "I don't like the tendency of all these actors to go on TV and tell all. It's in poor taste. The only self-revelation I go for is in my screen performance. The public doesn't need to know that I fucked Ava Gardner."

Michael wanted to know how Peck got his start, and the actor laughed. "On the stage. I once worked with the

great Katherine Cornell, a famous stage actress long before your day. She told me that I'd never make it as a film star. `One of your ears is larger than the other,' she said, as if I didn't already know that."

One night Peck arrived unexpectedly at Michael's door, asking for the copy of the 1987 film Amazing Grace and Chuck that Peck had made with Jamie Lee Curtis. As a good neighbor, he'd lent the film to Michael but had to pick it up because a film exhibitor had received a defective copy. Peck wanted to get a good print in time for an eight o'clock showing of the film in a neighboring town. Peck returned later for a visit with Michael.

He surprised Michael by telling him that political groups were being formed to run him for President in the 1988 elections. "These foolish people think the world will be improved considerably if I replace Reagan in the White House. Then there are those who think Paul Newman should run as president with me running as vice president."

Gregory Peck

"The day has come," Michael proclaimed. "Movie stars taking over the role of politicians."

Peck amused Michael by reading to him an article that suggested Charlton Heston should run as the Republican candidate for President, with Peck taking up the Democratic banner. "Peck has nothing to compare with Heston's Moses," the actor read from the newspaper column, "although Peck's portrayal of Douglas MacArthur cannot be taken lightly."

Peck facetiously said he feared that if he ran for President, his previous roles, where he played "certifiable lunatics," would be used against him. He included Captain Ahab in Moby Dick and Dr. Josef Mengele in The Boys from Brazil.

"I also suffered traumatic anxiety in Spellbound, and in Twelve O'Clock High I went to pieces under the strain of sending bombers on missions where they might die."

"I don't know," Michael said. "I've watched with my friend, Bubbles, Bedtime for Bonzo many times. It didn't keep Reagan out of the White House. Incidentally, if Bedtime for Bonzo is remade, I want Bubbles to play the lead. Perhaps you'll take the Reagan role in the remake."

Peck told Michael that "about as close as I will ever get to the White House is a visit I paid there when Richard Nixon was president. He kept praising my performances in films, and told me that in all of them I stood for the American way of life. I asked Nixon, `Which films were your favorites?' I fully expected him to say To Kill a Mockingbird. Everybody goes for that one. Nixon said he thought I was most memorable in Red River, Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, and Sands oflwo Jima. I didn't want to embarrass the President but he had confused me with John Wayne."

One night Peck informed Michael that he'd signed with Michael's dear friend, Jane Fonda, to make a movie

called Old Gringo.

Michael and Peck remained friends for a quarter of a century. Peck often went riding with Michael on his ranch, Neverland, and the actor was amazed that Michael had seen To Kill a Mockingbird so many times that he had actually memorized all the dialogue.

Unlike most of Michael's fabled friends, Peck defended him when charges of child molestation arose. He even called Michael "a model parent," and posted a letter on Michael's website, defending him.

During many happy visits to Neverland, Peck saw up close how Michael was with his children, Prince Michael I and Paris, from his marriage to Debbie Rowe, his dermatology nurse. Peck even lived to see Michael as a parent to Prince Michael II by a surrogate mother.

At Michael's 30th Anniversary Celebration at New York's Madison Square Garden in 2001, an aging and ailing Peck taped a glowing video tribute. He'd kept his good looks as he matured, but he died in June of 2003. When Michael heard the news broadcast on TV, he cried for hours at the loss of such a steadfast and loyal friend. "The others deserted me," Michael claimed. "They won't take my calls. But Gregory was always there for me."

On Monday, June 16, 2003 Cardinal Roger Michael Mahoney, archbishop of Los Angeles, held up funeral services for 20 minutes because of Michael's late arrival at Peck's funeral. The moment he walked into the church, Michael realized he was inappropriately dressed. For the occasion, he'd worn a red jacket. To his dismay, he discovered that all the ushers were wearing a similar red jacket. Michael demanded that the services be further delayed until he could send for a black jacket, but the archbishop refused to accommodate him any more.

After the services, Michael shook hands with Harry Belafonte and Anjelica Huston, with whom he'd costarred in Captain EO. He stepped up in front of Greta Konen Peck, the hairdresser Peck had married, and offered his condolences.

She was 92 years old, and she took Michael's hand and gently squeezed it. "My husband admired you very much." Holding back tears, she said, "The story is over. No more Kilimanjaros to climb." She was referring to the 1952 movie, The Snows of Kilimanjaro, that her husband had made with Susan Hayward and Ava Gardner.

The friendship that existed between Charlton Heston and Michael, or even Gregory Peck and Michael, surprised Hollywood. His forming a relationship with Sophia Loren shocked insiders. "What are those two doing at night together?" asked reporter Donald Wolper. "I can guarantee they're not getting together for sex."

For all the world to hear, the forever chic and still glamorous Neapolitan proclaimed, "When I met him, it was love at first sight," she said.

In 1988, when Michael performed in Paris, Loren, in stunning couture, showed up to greet him. To the show, she'd invited an entourage of two dozen guests. When Michael appeared in Switzerland that same year, the continenthopping Loren was also there to greet him.

Loren also appeared at Neverland for dinner with Michael, but claimed she wouldn't show up if he invited his "best friend," Marlon Brando.

"When we made that 1967 disaster, A Countess from Hong Kong, your Mr. Brando told me that `my tits and ass are too big,"' Loren confided to Michael. "What about his tits and ass being too big? Fatso!" The picture had been directed by a 77-year-old Charlie Chaplin, who still remained Michael's all-time screen favorite.

Anjelica Huston

Marlon later said, "Michael Jackson is the only person in the world who appreciated that movie."

When Michael expressed his admiration of Loren's performance in the film, she said, "How very kind. But one reviewer found that Brando and moi had `about as much passion as that of a pair of love-wracked halibuts.' How right he was."

"Is it true that Marlon told Chaplin at the end of the shoot..." He hesitated, not wanting to say the words.

"Brando informed Chaplin, `You can take this fucking film and stick it up your ass-frame by frame!' Your Mr. Brando has such a way with words."

Michael was fascinated by Loren's background and eagerly listened to stories of her private life. Her upbringing had been even more difficult than his own, as she'd been born in a ward for unmarried mothers in Naples. She went on to become a star and international sex symbol, cooking spaghetti for Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia and dining with the Queen of England.

Michael was particularly interested in Loren's impression of working with his movie star pals-not just Brando, but Gregory Peck in Arabesque in 1966, and even Charlton Heston in the 1961 El Cid. "I was going through my epic period," Loren said, making it sound like an apology.

Michael was eager to learn what he could about Cary Grant, with whom Loren had appeared in the 1957 The Pride and the Passion and the 1958 Houseboat. One of Michael's all-time favorite films was Bringing Up Baby. Grant made the film in 1938 for RKO opposite Michael's friend, Katharine Hepburn. "I like leopards-that's why I liked the movie," Michael said.

He asked Loren if she could arrange for him to meet Grant. "Ask your friend Katharine Hepburn to set it up," Loren said, somewhat dismissively.

Weeks later Michael learned that Grant had fallen for Loren, filling her dressing room with fresh roses every day during the making of Houseboat. "I knew he loved me," Loren later said, "but he never came right out and said so-that's not his style." In spite of her wooing by the handsome actor, Loren chose to stay with Carlo Ponti, her husband. Michael later learned that Loren had even spurned the advances of President John F. Kennedy.

In March of 1987, when Motown Productions launched a special for Showtime's cable network, Motown on Showtime. Michael Jackson, Loren went on the air as an expert on Michael Jackson. So did Elizabeth Taylor, joining Yoko Ono and Gene Kelly. Two people refused to cooperate: Diana Ross, still angered by Michael's boycott of her wedding to Arne Naess, and Michael himself. Michael's refusal to participate in his own tribute could only be viewed as arrogance by Motown's Berry Gordy Jr.

When he heard that Ross had turned down Motown's request to host his tribute, Michael attempted a lame explanation to the press. "I was jealousthat's why I didn't go to the wedding," he falsely claimed. "I wanted to marry Diana myself. The fourteen-year difference between us doesn't matter to me."

At this point in Michael's career, not one member of the press, even the most gullible, believed him. To an increasing degree, his straight talk was met with greater and greater skepticism.

Michael got even with Ross. Even though he was not participating in the Showtime "lovefest," he had total control over the project. The American public heard that Ross had taken credit for discovering The Jackson 5, but Michael now began dismissing that claim as publicity hype. "Not a word of truth to it," Michael said in direct contrast to statements he'd made since the 70s.

Michael was once overheard backstage at a concert talking to people he perceived as stagehands, not knowing that Jonathan Reeves was a freelance reporter who lived and fed on the fringe world of celebrities. "I can't be seen with run-of-the-mill celebrities, people like Richard Gere or Cindy Crawford. With my status in the world, I need to hang out with Jackie, Elizabeth, or Marlon. Sophia Loren is definitely A-list. I mean, she even won an Oscar. I'm proud to be photographed with her. She's so elegant, so beautiful, and, also, the world's best chef."

An artist's portrayal of MJ and Sophia Loren

Before the child molestation charges went public, Loren was always there for Michael, at least at public events. In January of 1990 she attended a star-studded event at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. Honorees included Michael's friends, Elizabeth Taylor and Gregory Peck. But it was clearly Michael's night when he won The American Cinema Award as "Entertainer of the Year." Michael showed up in a midnight black military uniform. Parading to the podium with an army of six bodyguards, he was presented the great honor by Loren herself. She had been photographed accompanying Michael to the awards ceremony which was hosted by Michael Douglas.

"The 90s had arrived," said Peck years later, "and Michael was king. But his incredible world was about to end."

When Cary Grant learned that Michael wanted to meet him, he came to call. At first the coming together of Michael with Grant appeared to be another one of the singer's many "odd couple" relationships. Yet the two superstars had more in common than might be obvious at first.

Grant was witty, sophisticated and urbane, whereas Michael was inarticulate and lacking a social presence except when he was on stage. Grant was seductive and could even be menacing on the screen. Michael was not. But both could be mysterious, as each star led a closeted life. Both were born into poverty.

Seated before Michael and fifteen minutes into the conversation (with Grant doing most of the talking), he informed Michael that he used to perform in musicals. "Never could carry a tune, though. I used to stand on stage

and mouth the words. A singer behind the curtain warbled for me. I was also an acrobat and a juggler if you want me to teach you some lessons."

"I want to have a screen presence like you have," Michael said. "How did you do it?"

"It was an accident," Grant confessed. "In my early pictures reviewers found I had an amazing asexuality. Of course, I was cast with all the wrong women. In Blonde Venus, there was no heat between Marlene Dietrich and me. At that time I didn't know that I was supposed to actually act a love scene. She had eyes only for her director, Josef von Sternberg, and certain ladies. She was later asked what she felt about me. `I had no feelings,' Dietrich said. `He was a homosexual.' Wasn't that a charming reply?"

"Other people have said the same thing about me," Michael confessed.

"I know that! They've spread fag rumors about me for years. If someone wants to say I'm gay, what can I do?"

Grant was not being candid with Michael. He cared a lot about "fag rumors," sometimes suing. Even at the end of his life, he sued comedian Chevy Chase for saying, "I understand he was a homo," on Tom Snyder's Tomorrow talk show. At one point, Chase, billed as "the next Cary Grant," referred to the actor as brilliant but added, "What a gal!" Grant sued Chase for slander for $10 million, settling out of court for perhaps a million.

Michael complimented Grant on his movie appearances, including his favorite film, Bringing Up Baby. But he told him he also liked him in North by Northwest, a film Grant had made for Alfred Hitchcock.

"I turned down Lolita to make that one," Grant said.

"What's Lolita about?" Michael asked.

Grant looked stunned that he hadn't heard of it. "It was a degenerate film about child molestation. Do you think I could have played a child molester? It was based on a novel by Vladimir Nabokov. About a man lusting after a young nymphet. Sir Laurence Olivier also turned it down. James Mason took the role and made it a classic. Even so, I'm glad I turned it down. Originally, Nabokov's publisher wanted him to rewrite the book, having the older man lust for a young boy. A sort of Tadzio. You know, Death in Venice and all that. The first script I was shown had Lolita cast as a boy, a kind of Lolito. Like bloody hell would I ever appear as a homosexual in film, much less as a childmolesting homo. A chicken hawk we'd call it. I did enough of that when I got intimate with Katharine Hepburn in Sylvia Scarlet. Presumably in the film, I thought Hepburn, with short hair and trousers, a boy. Yet George Cukor in one scene had me undress for the bed I was supposed to share with her. I look her over, thinking it's a boy, and say `It's nippy tonight. You'll make a proper hot water bottle!' Personally, I think child molestation is repulsive."

It is not known if Grant at the time knew of Michael's interest in young boys and was indirectly criticizing him.

As the evening progressed, Grant pointedly looked at Michael. La Toya that night was in and out of the room; otherwise, we'd know nothing of this encounter between Grant and Michael.

"I read the other day that you said you planned to get married and have a family," Grant said.

"Yes, that is my dream," Michael said. "Many children to love."

"I don't advise it," Grant said. "I forget how many times I've been married. Every one of my wives left me. I don't know why. Maybe they got bored, real tired of me. My first wife accused me of being a homosexual. All the women, except Betsy, have accused me of being a homosexual. Virginia was just the first."

He was referring, of course, to Virginia Cherill and Betsy Drake.

Although Michael's meeting with Gregory Peck developed into a longtime friendship, his association with Grant was relatively short. Neither performer seemed to have any desire to pursue the other after one evening.

The following morning, Michael called Katharine Hepburn to ask her about her long-ago costar.

Tight-lipped and uncooperative with the press, Hepburn could be surprisingly outspoken in private. "Oh, yes, Cary Grant," she said. "If I recall, he was a supporting player to me in a film or two. Cold as the Arctic night. Ego as large as Mount Rushmore. A tightwad, but so am I. A self-hating homosexual. Never told the truth in his life, a compulsive liar. Took LSD for psychiatric reasons, or so he said. Married unhappily so many times you'd think he would finally learn that he hates women. Such a charming presence on the screen. Such a lonely heart off screen."

Michael, when not "hanging with the stars," was under great pressure to come out with a follow-up album to Thriller.

With more than sixty songs written, he had ample material from which to make the final selections. Driving himself to the verge of a nervous breakdown, he had an almost pathological desire to top Thriller. "I want to be the only Jackson on the charts." He was referring, of course, to the runaway success of sister Janet's Control album. His resentment of Janet's success became so strong that he began to ridicule her physicality. "You have the fattest thighs in the family," he told her.

The Bad album would be long in the gestation period. Many of Michael's hopes and dreams for the album never materialized. Originally, he'd wanted to record a duet with Prince to determine which one was "really bad." Michael told his producer, "that Prince could do all those James Brown imitations I used to do, and I could do my famous Moonwalk." Quincy shipped Prince a tape of the song. "It's shit!" Prince told his aides. "Send word to that gal I want nothing to do with her album."

Michael was also rebuffed when he wanted to record a duet with Barbra Streisand called "I Just Can't Stop Loving You." The diva sent back word: "You've got to be kidding. Me in a love duet with Michael Jackson? Ronald Reagan and I would be more convincing."

Michael was also rejected by Whitney Houston. "I don't understand," she said. "Does Michael want me to sing the girl's part-or is he saving that for himself?"

Quincy suggested that Diana Ross be asked. "Why should I revive her career?" Michael said.

In lieu of Streisand or Houston, Michael chose the unknown Siedah Garrett, a protegee of Quincy's, for the duet.

Eight of the ten songs on the LP were written by Michael, who also sang both lead and background vocals. He also wrote "Leave Me Alone" on the CD bonus track. In addition, he duetted with Stevie Wonder in "Just Good Friends." An adaptation of a gospel song, "Man in the Mirror," was sung with Andrae Crouch.

During their work together, there were false rumors circulating about a romance between Michael and Siedah Garrett, perhaps spread by Michael himself. She looked a lot like him. One headline claimed JACKSON AND LOOKALIKE MULLING MARRIAGE.

A member of the Bad crew later sarcastically said, "About the only phallic image Siedah ever saw was an eighteen-foot python that Jackson had three guys carry to the studio to frighten the shit out of her."

A California singer two years younger than Michael, Garrett was a talented artist who had previously performed in a duet with Dennis Edwards of The Temptations. Released in 1984, "Don't Look Any Further" was a Top 5 R&B hit.

Michael liked this African-American singer and songwriter as a friend, never a lover, and even hired Garrett to tour with him from 1992 to 1993 in his Dangerous trek around the globe.

But he never really forgave her when she supported Madonna as a backup singer and dancer on the "Re-Invention" Tour in 2004. Garrett's signing with Michael's "nemesis," Madonna, should hardly have come as a surprise to Michael, as Garrett had also sung backup vocals for Madonna in "True Blue" in 1986 and "Who's That

Girl?" in 1987.

The Jackson/Garrett duet, "I Just Can't Stop Loving You," was the first single release from the Bad album. Its release was a good omen for the success of the album itself. The song shot to Number One on Billboard's charts, but, regrettably, fell fast. Within fourteen weeks, it was off the charts completely, a short run for such a big hit in the music industry.

Garrett is still known today for co-writing Michael's worldwide hit, "Man in the Mirror," which was included in the Bad album. A lot of fans thought Michael was the co-author of "Man in the Mirror," but it was really another songwriter, Glen Ballard.

The second solo from the album, the namesake song, "Bad," sold nearly 11 million copies around the world, climbing to Number One on the charts in twenty-three countries. It was released in October of 1987.

The Bad album would produce five Number One songs, including the wonderfully melodramatic "Smooth Criminal." "Another Part of Me" was also a hit, as was "The Way You Make Me Feel." Michael denied that his solo, "Dirty Diana," was a dig at Diana Ross, with whom he was on the outs. Steve Stevens, a former guitarist for Billy Idol, performed with Michael on "Dirty Diana." But, in the words of one critic, "These two talents couldn't rescue this song."

Evoking silent screen vamp Gloria Swanson, the original album cover depicted Michael's face covered with a patterned lace net. Walter Yetnikoff at CBS Records exploded when he saw this cover, "What in hell's going on here? The cover says `Bad,' not 'faggot!'" A picture of Michael in street punk black leather was submitted instead.

After endless delays, the Bad album was completed by June of 1987 and released that September where it made its debut as Number One on the charts.

"What a way to celebrate your twenty-ninth birthday," Michael said. Now that he'd cut himself off from the Jehovah's Witnesses, he could celebrate birthdays, which he'd always adored anyway.

As one reviewer, in an attack on the album, put it: "Even when Michael's `Bad,' he's good, at least in sales." The solo single, "Bad," shot to Number One but collapsed within a five-week period. As Frank DiLeo knew from the beginning, Bad was not going to be another Thriller.

Glowing reviews flooded the media, including Rolling Stone, its critic claiming that Michael "can out funk anybody anytime."

But was Michael the funkiest? His "Bad" solo was attacked by many critics from black magazines. "If this is the blackest Jackson can get, better bring out the tarbrush." That line for Ebony magazine was killed before printing. Allegedly, it was written by "one seriously pissed-off black dude."

Even if Thriller could not be topped in sales, Bad would sell twenty-five million copies worldwide, making it the second biggest selling album of all time, an impressive achievement for any performer, but one viewed as a failure by Michael, who had so desperately wanted to beat his own record.

In spite of its success and all those hit singles, Bad, as an album, when heard today, is rather disappointing. For example, one critic wrote that the song, "Dirty Diana," a moody techno-metal excursion, "could have used a little less fake crowd noise and a little more Eddie Van Halen." Another critic complained of the "programmed synthesizers and cheesy backing chants that are everywhere." Basically, Bad has emerged as a fine dance pop album with some "catchy (albeit lightweight) tracks," in the words of one reviewer. The sad news is that Michael by the year 2006 never did anything to top this minor effort. Not a good track record for the so-called "King of Pop."

Siedah Garrett

In 1987 Michael hired a Texas-born publicist, Bob Jones, to take over as his head honcho of communications for MJJ Productions. Leaving Motown, Jones signed on with the King of Pop, a label he bestowed on Michael.

Bob Jones had worked with the Motown greats, including Diana Ross herself, along with Stevie Wonder, Lionel Richie, The Temptations, Smokey Robinson, and The Supremes. But he'd never encountered a performer like Michael Jackson before. In the weeks and months ahead, he would be forced to handle one bizarre episode after another, some of the best of which he recorded in a memoir, Michael Jackson: The Man Behind the Mask, published in 2005. The book claimed that "It was Jones who was forced to put out public relation fires and give a positive spin to each successive bizarre story relating to the superstar."

Jones occupied an eyewitness seat as he watched entertainment's biggest star destroy himself "with self-hatred and self-indulgence." His was the unenviable role of explaining and interpreting to the public Michael's "fraudulent marriages and poisonous family relations," as well as his drug abuse and voodoo ceremonies. But before things

began to unravel, Jones got to jump aboard the bandwagon promoting Michael during the last great success of his career, the Bad album, the Bad videos, and the Bad world tour.

Millions tuned in on August 31, 1987 to watch Michael Jackson: The Magic Returns, a 30-minute TV special that traced his rise as a star. It was the sixth highest rated show of the week. Forbes Magazine named Michael as the ninth highest paid entertainer, with a two-year estimated earnings of $43 million.

Along with the success came minor annoyances. A woman calling herself "Billie Jean Jackson," a resident of Illinois, filed a $100 million lawsuit, claiming that Michael was the father of her three children. It turned out that her actual name was Lavon Powlis.

"My God," Yetnikoff proclaimed, "if this so-called `Billie-Jean' proves her case, Michael's reputation as a straight-shooter is made." But, like all paternity suits brought against Michael, this one failed. There wasn't the slightest proof that Michael even knew who the strange woman was, much less had fathered her children.

For six weeks, Michael worked on the "Bad" video at Brooklyn's Hoyt Schermerhorn subway station. Rather unconvincingly Michael cast himself as Daryl, a kid from the ghetto who'd gone away to a private school. Upon his return, he finds he no longer fits in with his street gang. His old gang members taunt him singing, "You don't down with us no more, you ain't down, you ain't bad."

When the video switches from black and white to color, Michael appears wearing fingerless gloves. Along with his backup dancers, he sings and dances, eventually uniting these West Side Story rival gangs. The famous director, Martin Scorsese himself, was the helmer on the video, Steven Spielberg having turned down the job.

Michael looked bizarre and outlandishly overdressed in his black leather motorcycle outfit, a modern interpretation of Marlon Brando's more macho outfit in the 1953 film, The Wild One.

Dancers who worked in the video with Michael, including Greg Burge and Jeffrey Daniel, claimed that Michael was trying to rip off West Side Story, insisting that they watch the film time and time again.

One of the dancers, who didn't want to be named, ridiculed Michael's costume: "He came out like a dominatrix, dressed in black boots with silver heels and buckles, lots of buckles. The leather jacket made him look like a motorcycle mama, his metal-studded wristband a bondage queen, and there were enough zippers for every drag costume between San Francisco and New York City. And chains-yes, girl, chains-enough for any S&M parlor."

In spite of the ridicule the costume generated, Michael took credit for designing it. It was later revealed that James O'Connor, owner of a punk rock store on Hollywood Boulevard, not only designed the costume but sold it to Michael for $291.34. "Even with the black surgical mask he wore into my store, I knew who was buying the costume from me," O'Connor claimed. The costume would later be auctioned off for $30,000.

That Kirk Douglas cleft Michael had placed in his chin through surgery came as a shock to his loyal fans.

At least the Douglas comparison was a macho image. But with the release of the "Bad" video, Michael suffered through unwanted comparisons to Joan Crawford, especially in his heavy use of pancake makeup. This was the beginning of the comparisons with Crawford. They would reach their peak, especially around the world, when he was photographed just before his infamous trial for child molestation. One headline at the time ridiculed him as THE DAUGHTER OF JOAN CRAWFORD.

Bob Jones

The "Bad" video cost two million dollars, maybe a lot more, and Michael was largely blamed for the production going over the budget. One assistant on the film said, "Jackson spent most of his time telling the director of Taxi Driver and New York, New York how to direct." He was referring, of course, to Martin Scorsese.

The "Bad" video marked the first time Michael was filmed tugging at his crotch. "Was his underwear too tight?" Quincy Jones asked facetiously.

"Maybe he wanted to see if it were still there, or had atrophied from lack of use," one of the dancers cattily remarked.

The "Bad" video shoot moved to the 125th street subway stop in Harlem. A few blocks away, Madonna was shooting her video of "Who's That Girl?" When a break came for her, she invited herself to Michael's set. It was while watching him that she first saw him grab his crotch. Madonna was no stranger to crotch grabbing herself. But she seemed shocked at Michael's doing that. She was overheard to remark sarcastically, "Maybe he's trying to find some non-existent balls!"

The release of the "Bad" video sparked a fire sale in Michael Jackson merchandise. From posters to coat hangers, MJ memorabilia was the rage of the hour. Michael Jackson was a subject of amusement, often ridicule, on all the late night talk shows, even making imaginary appearances (never in person) on such TV sitcoms as The Golden Girls.

In night clubs from San Francisco to Miami, Jackson impersonators ruled the night. One performer, Valentino Johnson, spent $50,000 to have his face surgically altered to look more like Michael. But, as Yetnikoff pointed out, "How is he going to keep up with Michael's ever-changing face?"

With a white sash tied around his waist like Astaire, Michael also shot the video for "The Way You Make Me Feel." In it he appeared with Tatiana Thumbtzen, a Florida-born dancer.

She auditioned and won the role for "The Way You Make Me Feel" video, beating out some two-hundred other girls. For her four days of dancing, she was paid $4,000, playing a mini-skirted seductress.

Tatiana took her very limited and very unromantic experiences with Michael and fashioned them into a book, The Way He Made Me Feel, which she dedicated to "My Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ," not Michael.

As a ballet student, she had dreamed of working and dancing with Michael. In 1987 that dream came true for her, but there would also be a downside.

In her confessional, she admitted that she had a "big crush" on Michael the day she met him. During the shoot, when she accidentally fell on her ass, Michael rubbed her butt. "I could not believe it!" she later said. "Michael was flirting with me. I thought if anyone had ever questioned his manhood, here was his or her answer."

In the video's final scene, Michael and Tatiana hug. Many fans were disappointed, as they'd wanted the romantic duo to kiss, but Michael was against that.

He complimented her walk, finding it "very sexy." In Tatiana's view at the time, that was a "compliment from a heterosexual male." Michael liked working with Tatiana so much he invited her to join him on the Bad tour. At the time, she was still hoping for some romantic involvement, although up to now he'd never asked her out. Their most intimate encounter came when he asked to borrow some of her face powder to touch up his makeup. Magazines began running articles calling Tatiana MICHAEL'S GIRL.

During the Bad tour, at New York's Madison Square Garden, Tatiana made a daring move. "I landed a kiss right on his smacker!"

In explaining why she kissed Michael, she said, "I looked into his eyes, and he did this really sexy thing-he bit his lip-and just looked at me with this look that was so incredibly sexy. I pulled him close and as I was about to kiss him I felt the hand on my hip and before I knew it we were locked into this kiss."

No one had ever seen Michael kissing a girl in public-or in private for that matter. Backstage, Michael's manager, Frank DiLeo, gave her the evil eye, but later, mother Katherine seemed to applaud her action, "giving me a big bear hug."

A different reaction came from Michael's security guard, Miko Brando. Enraged and shouting at her at the top of his lungs, he yelled, "How dare you fucking take advantage of him like that! You fucking bitch! Who the fuck do you think you are? I cannot believe you fucking took advantage of him like that in front of all those people!" Later, Tatiana was fired from the Bad tour. She was replaced by Sheryl Crow.

Months later, Tatiana dated Michael's rival, Prince, but claimed, "We curled up in bed like kittens, and simply fell asleep."

"Michael was the Peter Pan squeaky-clean one, and Prince was the sexually overt one," Tatiana claimed. But if he was such a sexual creature, why didn't Prince seduce her? Seduction was also something she'd never get from Peter Pan.

Tatiana Thumbtzen

Tonia Ryan, the co-author of Tatiana's autobiography, said, "Every other red-blooded male in America was going after Tatiana-Eddie Murphy, Prince, Robert De Niro, Matt LeBlanc, but Michael didn't even go out on a date with her. You do the math!"

In the wake of the first child molestation charges against Michael in 1993, Tatiana was interviewed by everybodyfrom Howard Stern to Maury Povich. The question was always the same, "Did you sleep with him?" Tatiana later claimed that she felt that if she'd admit to having had sex with Michael, it was "going to validate his manhood" and perhaps make it appear more likely that he was innocent of those child molestation charges. Although not admitting to sex, she lied and told TV audiences that she'd dated Michael for a year. "In my fairytale mind, I thought that he would come looking for me to thank me. Boy, was I wrong!"

Bubbles and MJ: Friends forever

Ultimately, although Tatiana had initially tried to defend Michael, she ended up feeling used by him. She became part of an image to make Michael appear straight to the public. Her "dream," of working with Michael turned into a "nightmare."

"I now realize that when you are blessed, you may be cursed as well," she said.

On the Bad tour, Michael preferred the company, not of Tatiana, but of some very "special friends."

Michael had a saying that became his guide to living: "No wenches, bitches, heifers, and hoes."

Instead of female company, Bob Jones claimed that the King of Pop favored blond-haired young boys. "In my experience with Michael, once a boy turned fourteen or fifteen years old, ties were severed."

Even though it was still the 1980s, Michael, as he went on the "Bad" tour, was already living the lyrics of his 1993 single, "Keep It in the Closet":

Whatever we do whatever we say now
We'll make a vow to keep it in the closet.

"He is very curious and wants to draw from people who have survived. People who have lasted the course. He is not really of this planet. If he is eccentric it is because he is larger than life. What is a genius? What is a living legend? What is a megastar? Michael Jackson-that's all. And just when you think you know him, he gives you more... There is no one that can come near him. No one can dance like that, write the lyrics or cause the kind of excitement that he does. "

--Elizabeth Taylor

"There is a considerable 'ick' factor when it comes to Michael Jackson. Though acquitted of child molestation, most

people have been repulsed by his admission to sleeping in the same bed with children, even if it was non-sexual. He also carries plenty of baggage given his eccentric behavior over the years and plastic surgery that has reduced him to a disturbing visual image. "

--Nekesa Mumbi Moody

"Michael never really had a childhood and I think he is trying to experience it in later life. I would tell him to keep the knowledge that he is innocent and hold his head up. "

--Frank DiLeo, Michael Jackson's former manager

"Michael can go out and perform before 90,000 people, but if I ask him to sing a song for me, I have to sit on the couch with my hands over my eyes and he goes behind the couch. He is amazingly shy. "

--Quincy Jones

"In my heart, I was saying, 'I love you, Diana. Shine! And shine on forever because you are the true princess of the people. "

--Michael Jackson on Princess Diana

Chapter Nine

Michael never forgave the magazine, Rolling Stone, for the way it embarrassed him in February of 1987. Its readers voted him worst artist in a staggering number of categories. Worst male singer. Worst album (Bad). Worst video ("Bad"). Worst dressed. Worst single ("Bad"). Worst hype. Most unwelcome comeback.

Other organizations, including the American Music Awards, were more indulgent with his output. "Bad" was chosen as Best Soul/R&B Single, though Michael lost to Paul Simon as Best Pop/Rock Male Vocalist. Janet won for Best Pop/Rock Video for "When I Think of You."

The gamblers in Las Vegas were betting heavily on Michael to make another clean sweep of the Grammys in 1988, for which he'd earned four nominations. Bad had been nominated for Album of the Year. Both Michael and Quincy Jones were nominated for Producer of the Year, and Michael was also nominated for Best Male Pop Vocal and Best Male R&B Vocal.

The night seemed to belong to Michael as he performed live at the 30th annual awards ceremony, his first TV performance in five years. He sang and danced to "The Way You Make Me Feel" and "Man in the Mirror." For his performance, Michael got a standing ovation, and Quincy Jones told him, "The night is yours."

In a startling development, Michael lost all four Grammys. As Diana Ross was presenting the award for Album of the Year to U2 for The Joshua Tree, Michael collapsed backstage and had to be revived.

A sore loser, Michael told his handlers, "I refuse to attend another one of these stupid award presentations. The backers are white racists. They want to use me just for ratings-not to get the honors I deserve."

Bob Jones, his publicist, claimed that Michael tended to play the race card any time he felt "victimized." Otherwise, as Bob suggested, "Michael seemed to want to join the white race."

Regaining his composure, Michael stormed out of the auditorium where the Grammys had been presented, vowing never to return.

As the star of the Pepsi commercials that were aired during the Grammy telecast, Michael was clearly the winner, at least financially. Along with the millions of dollars he earned, Michael met a new young friend with whom he'd launch another one of his "special relationships." His name was Jimmy Safechuck, and Michael would be so enchanted with the good-looking boy he'd invite him to go with him on the Bad tour.

When Michael met the blond, blue-eyed California-born boy, it was early in 1988. Jimmy was only nine years old, Michael a ripe 3-0.

The boy appeared with Michael in one of the Pepsi ads. In the commercial, Jimmy, cast in the role of a young fan, enters Michael's dressing room, finding it empty. He tries on Michael's sunglasses and even dons one of his fedoras and one of his sequined jackets. Suddenly, he looks up and is startled, seeing Michael in the doorway. "Looking for me?" Michael asks.

Jimmy had been told that Michael's appearance at the doorway would be shot at some later date and that he should look startled at an empty space. That look on Jimmy's face was for real when Michael, without Jimmy's knowledge, suddenly appeared in the frame.

From the moment of their first meeting, Michael became enchanted with Jimmy. The man and boy were seen together virtually all the time, often accompanied by Jimmy's parents. Once, when the parents invited Michael for dinner, he arrived in a Rolls-Royce with his own food.

A relationship of extreme intimacy between the boy and Michael was maintained on and off for parts of 1988 and 1989, although there were other "special relationships" going on at the time with other boys. Jimmy and Michael

were often seen in public wearing the same costumes, man and boy identical designs.

Michael not only obtained the permission of Jimmy's parents to allow their son to go on the Bad tour, but he eventually hired both the mother and father as well.

Jimmy Safechuck and MJ

On the Bad tour, Jimmy often appeared on stage with Michael, both wearing identical bondage outfits, apparel evocative of the S&M shops on Christopher Street in New York City. Michael at the time seemed oblivious to the speculation the two costumes generated.

A crewmember, who toured with the Bad troupe and didn't want to be identified by name, claimed that "Michael in those days thought he was King of the World and did pretty much what he Goddamn pleased. He must have known about the rumors circulating about him and the kid, but he made no attempt to conceal his affection for the boy. Although the Bad tour crew felt they were underpaid, considering the grueling schedule and long hours, and those crowds, this Safechuck boy was getting a king's ransom spent on him. Michael would take him shopping in Europe-you name it, toys, games, clothing, anything the kid desired. Michael once rented an entire amusement park just for the kid and himself. There were reports it cost him as much as $50,000."

The sales department at Hamley's in London, the largest toy store in the world, still remembers the visit of Michael where he held Jimmy's hand. "Michael even bought puppets of himself for the boy," said one clerk. "And also some puppets of Stevie Wonder. They made off with at least three dozen dolls and teddy bears. Every computer game that fascinated the kid was purchased without objection by Michael."

He generously gave Jimmy's parents a stunning new 1989 Rolls-Royce. With all the gadgets and extras, the bill came to $200,000. That wasn't all. Jimmy's parents were also given, or so it was reported, "His and Hers" Mercedes. "Transportation won't be their problem in the future," said an aide to Michael.

When Jimmy, who turned ten years old during the Bad tour, caught the flu, so did Michael. Two performances of the Bad road show had to be cancelled while Michael and his young friend recovered in a hotel suite.

Michael had learned to dance the Moonwalk sideways, and he taught its intricate steps to the very talented Jimmy, who appeared on stage dancing the same routines as the star himself. The Motown 25 TV special showed pictures of Michael and Jimmy trading dance steps with each other.

On his shopping spree with Jimmy in Los Angeles, Michael ran into trouble when he visited the Zales Jewelry Store in the Simi Valley Shopping Center. Appearing in a wig, with false teeth and a mustache, Michael aroused the suspicions of the manager, who telephoned the police.

Michael was on the verge of being arrested until he took off the disguise and showed the officers who'd been

summoned to the scene his identification. He explained that he had to wear disguises or else he'd be mobbed and the store overrun. The police let him go, and the manager was filled with apologies. But by this time Michael, who had come in to make large purchases, refused to patronize Zales.

It was said that Frank DiLeo urged Michael to break off his relationship with Jimmy because of the ugly rumors. In London, one member of the press actually suggested, in print, that the relationship was "perverted." By now, his fame was so great that Michael couldn't appear in public, even in disguise, and not attract unwanted public scrutiny.

Michael forced himself to separate from Jimmy after putting up a strong fight to stay with the boy. He later claimed, "I'm so terribly lonely without him. It's a sad day when my public determines who I can have for a friend. The difference in our age is not a problem for me."

It was later reported, and widely distributed on the web, that when Jimmy and Michael went their separate ways, the boy received a "large cash gift."

At the time of Michael's trial on a charge of child molestation in 2005, prosecutors sought Jimmy out to question the young man as a potential witness. Reportedly, he claimed that "nothing happened" during his short friendship with the star.

The Bad world tour was launched on September 12, 1987, coming to an end on January 27, 1989. In his first-ever solo tour, Michael appeared on stage 123 times, playing to an audience of nearly 4.5 million fans in 15 countries (including the U.S.) on four continents.

When the grosses were tallied, the tour had taken in $40 million but would end up costing Michael money. Throughout the tour, millions of dollars had been spent on an ultra-deluxe lifestyle, including the simultaneous availability of a jet, a helicopter, and a bus. Millions had been expended on every desire, and the show itself was one of the costliest ever mounted for a singer.

As Michael launched his Bad tour, rumors were rampant. It was falsely announced that Michael was going to star in the lead role of Phantom of the Opera, to be directed by Steven Spielberg. Around the same time, rumors circulated that Michael was planning to buy Motown Records. Adding fuel to the speculative fire was Michael's appearance, at the American Cinema Awards, with Sylvester Stallone and Sophia Loren.

Michael's so-called romance with a blonde, 25-year-old woman, Karen Faye, was just another attempt to give Michael a straight image. Faye, who was in love with another man at the time, had worked as Michael's makeup artist on the Captain EO video-nothing more. It turned out that Michael himself had ordered an aide to feed the story of the fake romance with Faye to the National Enquirer.

Karen Faye

Faye herself was very defensive and supportive of Michael. "There is one special person who has given me more in my life than anyone. His name is Michael Jackson. It was the luckiest day in my life when this magical man

sat in the makeup chair before me."

"If you believe that Karen Faye and Michael were lovers, then you'd surely believe that Rocky and Michael were lovers," said a Hollywood publicist. "Friends, yes. Lovers, no way, Jose."

Again, in another attempt to deceive his fans, a faux romance was promoted between Michael and Sheryl Crow, who had joined the Bad tour. Born in Kennett, Missouri, Sheryl was four years younger than Michael. In time she would emerge as more than a mere backup singer for Michael, and would enjoy a successful career on her own. Between 1994 and 2002, she would win nine Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist and Best Female Rock Vocalist, earning a place at Number 44 on VH1's 100 Greatest Women of Rock 'n' Roll.

Michael got on harmoniously with the singer, even enjoying Krispy Kreme doughnuts with her after the show. But as one stage manager said, "That was all the sugar that romance ever fueled."

One of the most glamorous women ever to play the guitar, Sheryl went from backup singer to international star, and Michael was said to resent her success. With her blonde hair and flowing locks, she exuded sex appeal. Michael was said to envy Sheryl's glammed out red-carpet outfits, and her todie-for body, as the entertainer arrived to receive Grammy after Grammy.

During her two-year Bad tour, Sheryl remained silent as rumors spun out of control about a torrid romance between her and "The Gloved One." Later, when she became a staple in the music industry herself, she squashed all that gossip. "He never took off that glove for me," she reportedly said. In time to come, with artists such as Celine Dion and Wynonna Judd singing songs she'd written, Sheryl no longer needed to publicize her link to Michael. If anything, she seemed to want to distance herself from him.

More convincing were reports that Brad Pitt and Sheryl had shared a romantic involvement when they were students at the University of Missouri, but this gossip was never confirmed.

The pretend romance was carried out in public when Michael duetted with Sheryl in the song, "I Just Can't Stop Loving You." He actually caressed her thigh in what was called "the most heterosexual performance of his career."

Sheryl Crow

Instead of promoting a romance with him, Sheryl was instructed by Michael's manager "not to make eye contact with him unless performing with him." There would be no more kissing scandals, as in the case with the Florida dancer, Tatiana Thumbtzen. Since Sheryl had no romantic interest in gazing into Michael's eyes, she could easily comply with this draconian ruling.

One member of the Bad troupe claimed that, "I just couldn't believe how far Jackson's contempt for women had gone. Not only was he horrified at the idea of fucking a woman, he didn't want what he called `one of those heifers' even looking into his eyes unless it was officially mandated. What a guy!"

Sheryl would also work with Texas-born Don Henley, the American rock musician who is the drummer and one of the lead singers and songwriters of the band The Eagles. She once spoke about the difference between working with Don Henley and Michael. "The difference between Michael Jackson and Don Henley is quite obvious, in that Michael is very reclusive and Don is the type of person that makes you part of his family. He takes care of you and spends time with you. You are an equal with him, whereas with Michael, he didn't even know our names."

The Bad tour opened in Kansas City and was a smash hit. Michael was entertaining crowds within the same arena where he and his brothers had played during their famous "Victory" tour four years earlier, but now Michael was performing solo.

Bob Jones recalled visiting one of Michael's hotel suites during the tour. "I had never seen a suite that had been so destroyed. Lamps, tables, and chairs were thrown about. Food wrappers and all sorts of other garbage covered the floors, tables, and bed. The housekeeper had been paid off not to tell."

For three nights in March of 1988 Michael performed at Madison Square Garden, an event attended by Elizabeth Taylor. A benefit concert was performed for the United Negro College Fund, and Michael was presented with an honorary degree in front of, among many others, Yoko Ono and Liza Minnelli.

Even though the benefit was to aid young African-Americans, Michael was criticized in some black magazines for devoting all his attention to "certifiably white" stars such as Taylor and Minnelli and virtually snubbing such black entertainers as Whitney Houston.

Still miffed at Michael, Diana Ross did not respond to his invitation to the benefit. President Ronald Reagan found time to send a videotaped message. With the usual Reagan brand of humor, the President said, "Let me be the first to call you the new Dr. J." This was the benefit concert in which Tatiana Thumbtzen kissed Michael on the lips, feeling his entire body stiffen except in his groin.

Michael often didn't accept invitations, especially personal ones, such as the christening of Diana Ross's second son, Evan, with the Norwegian millionaire, Arne Naess. But along with Little Richard, he showed up at the 1988 wedding of his attorney, John Branca, to Julie McArthur. Bubbles came dressed in a hand-tailored tuxedo, and immediately "fell in love" with the handsome hot stud, Don Johnson, of Miami Vice.

Caught up in the hysteria surrounding his Bad tour, Michael still had time for two of the most significant events in his life: his move out of the family compound in Encino and the publication of his long-awaited and ultimately disappointing autobiography, Moonwalk.

Michael's move from Hayvenhurst in Encino to Neverland was long overdue. His family was seeing "too much" of his private life and interfering with his intimate time, especially when he wanted to be alone with his young friends. The 2,700-acre ranch in California's Santa Ynez Valley is located at 5225 Figueroa Mountain Rd., 5 miles north of the town of Los Olivos, about a two-hour drive north of Los Angeles.

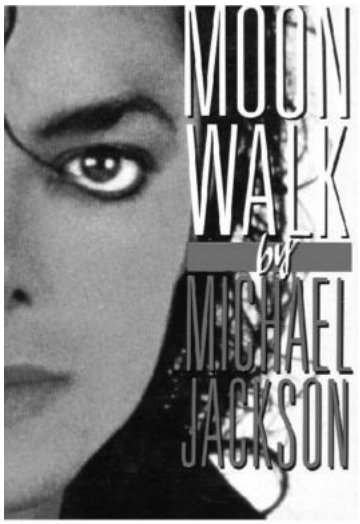
Michael had fallen in love with the property when he'd visited Paul McCartney and his wife, Linda, here. They too were considering buying the property, but it wasn't for sale at the time.

When the ranch came on the market in the spring of 1988, Michael went for it, but he was a tough negotiator, acquiring the property for $17 million, even though the asking price was $35 million. Along with the budget purchase price came an array of European antiques. TV and radio media, not knowing the actual purchase price, reported that Michael paid $28 million for the ranch. He immediately changed the name from Sycamore Ranch to Neverland, in honor of the fictional island in the story Peter Pan.

One of Michael's former publicists (not Bob Jones), who had been dismissed from the star's staff, privately told reporters, "I'm sure Jackson selected the location because it's across from a nursery school. If the tots there were too young for his blood, there's also a prep school nearby filled with goodlooking young boys, who have never had an older man `Beat It' for them."

Michael immediately set about securing the property from fans who might learn of his new address. Soon

Neverland had a police force and was entered by an iron and steel gate which was topped by a mammoth gilded crown, symbol of the King of Pop.



His autobiography, from Doubleday

After Neverland was renovated to his specifications, Michael threw a "warming bash," inviting friends and associates, but deliberately ignoring Papa Joe and Katherine. "I found out about Michael's new home by watching the TV news," Papa Joe said. However, Michael did invite his brothers and sisters, including Janet and Randy, to the housewarming.

Michael assured such friends as Elizabeth Taylor and Jane Fonda that, "You can come to visit me at any time. I'm less than a thirty-minute helicopter ride from Los Angeles."

Attending the housewarming were some of Michael's new celebrity neighbors, including Steven Seagal. Handsome actor John Derek, known for marrying some of the most beautiful women in show business, showed up with his voluptuous wife, Bo Derek, who'd enjoyed such success in the 1979 comedy, 10. "He is my Svengali-like mentor," she told Michael. She later was surprised when she was asked to sign a release, swearing that she'd never divulge to the press anything she'd learned during her visit to Neverland.

Michael also had another seductive neighbor, Cheryl Ladd, a staple of 1970s pop culture and the actress who replaced Farrah Fawcett on the hit TV series, Charlies Angels.

Even during the Bad tour, when Michael was performing around the world, he flew back to California for visits to Neverland as often as he could.

When Moonwalk was released on April 20, 1988, following four years of ghost-writing, Michael was in Liverpool, appearing in the hometown of The Beatles on his Bad tour.

He called home to apologize to Joe for his revelations in the book. His father had already gone on television in April of 1988 denying Michael's allegations. Joe called his discipline of his boys "little spankings." Also interviewed, Marlon Jackson claimed that Michael was accurate in his revelations of the beatings. "We were hit-and hit often," Marlon charged.

The prediction of Michael's editor at Doubleday came true, as the former First Lady, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, watched Moonwalk sell nearly half-amillion copies in 14 countries, topping the bestseller list of The New York Times.

Michael dedicated the book to Fred Astaire, and it carried an appreciation signed by Jackie. "To many people, Michael Jackson seems an elusive personality," she wrote. "But to those who work with him, he is not. This talented artist is a sensitive man, warm, funny, and full of insight. Michael's book, Moonwalk, provides a startling glimpse of the artist at work and the artist in reflection."

Bo Derek

That was the public face she put on the book. In private she expressed her disappointment, revealing that Doubleday had turned down the first version-"not juicy enough. The second version wasn't a whole lot better. As juicy as a dried-up turnip."

Jackie oversaw much of the promotion for the book, including full-size cutouts of Michael in stores. A hand written note by Michael claimed, "one of the reasons I haven't given interviews over the years is because I've been saving what I have to say for my book. Love, Michael." In spite of that claim, he had almost nothing to say in the book that his fans hadn't already heard or read elsewhere.

The reaction of his fans was as diverse as those fans themselves. One reader got carried away claiming Moonwalk was "the single greatest autobiography I have ever read in my life." This statement could be true, if we knew how many autobiographies, if any, this rabid fan had read. Other more realistic reviewers, such as Terry Callen, of Gloucester City, New Jersey, found the book, "A total whitewash.... The world as Michael Jackson thinks it should be." Another savvy reader, also from New Jersey, found Moonwalk "the most blatantly bogus and self-serving autobiography since Joan Crawford wrote her self-tome in the 60s."

The Jackson family was uniformly negative about Moonwalk, especially Michael's brother Marlon, who found three-fourths of the book "a lie." La Toya also expressed her disappointment. "Cold and impersonal. What did he leave out? The beginning. The middle. And the end."

At the same time Katherine was also shopping her version of life with the Jacksons. She called it The Jackson: My Family, and sent a draft of her autobiography to Jackie at Doubleday. "All vanilla with no chocolate sauce," Jackie wrote to her publisher. The book was filled with such fairytale revelations as Michael telling his second-grade teacher, "Someday I'm going to live in a castle."

In spite of her troubled, often violent marriage to Joe, she wrote, "Occasionally when Joe and I are lying in bed at night, one of us will become nostalgic: `Remember when...?' Before we know it, we're reliving one of the countless special moments in our family's past: Our kids' living room sock hops, The Jackson Five's public debut at a department store in Glen Park, Illinois. Joe will never admit publicly that he can be just as sentimental as I, so I just did it for him." She ends on an upbeat note, visualizing herself "watching the grandkids perform as professionals someday." Her book was eventually published by St. Martin's Paperbacks and released in 1990.

John Derek

Flying into Narita Airport in Japan on September 9, 1987, Michael was besieged by fans, as police struggled valiantly to keep him from being mobbed. He was angered when 300 photographers arrived to take pictures of Bubbles, who had flown into Tokyo on a separate flight. "Just who in the hell does this chimp think he is?" Michael asked. "Once again forgetting who the real star is. Me!" He also seemed resentful that Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone presented a ceremonial sword to Bubbles-and not to Michael.

When he was installed in grandeur on the 10th floor of Tokyo's Capitol Hotel, Michael was informed that the rooms would henceforth be known as The Michael Jackson Suites.

After Michael launched a total of fourteen sold-out performances at Korakuen Stadium in Yokohama, he was told that the Japanese had dubbed him "Typhoon Michael." In less than a month, he played to nearly half a million fans at fourteen concerts in three Japanese cities. The world press, covering the Japan tour, seemed to go wacko over Jacko, Today proclaiming-"No pets, no plastic just raw sex." News of the World, using a politically incorrect term, proclaimed "Japs Go Whacko (sic) over Raunchy Jacko."

On the Bad tour, journalist Paul Voth accurately summed up media reaction to Michael. "Even as he triumphed on his world tour, the papers at home and abroad began an assault on Michael that would last for years. Speculation about his nose, his skin, his sexuality-slowly but surely a trend developed. The media concentrated less and less on Michael's musical contributions in favor of the much more profitable stature of portraying him as a weirdo with strange habits and ideas."

On September 14, Michael's manager, Frank DiLeo, informed the world press, including ten journalists flown in from London, that stories that Michael purposely lightens his skin "are preposterous."

In Australia, the press was not so kind. Michael was routinely labeled "Wacko Jacko." One Aussie journalist proclaimed, "In a word, Michael Jackson is a nut case."

Michael responded by writing a letter to People magazine that would have gotten an eighth grader an F in English: "Do not judge a man until you've walked 2 moons in his mocassins (sic). Most people don't know me, that is why they write such things in wich (sic) most is not true. I cry very often because it hurts and I wory (sic) about the children." The letter didn't turn the tide against the lingering wisecracks about him. It did, however, prove to the world that Michael couldn't spell.

Even late-night TV comedians began to suggest that there was "something queer" going on between Michael and Bubbles. "The question is," one raunchy comedian said in a Las Vegas night club, "Is Bubbles the top or the bottom?"

Privately Michael didn't turn such a kind face to the world as suggested by his child-like letter. Hearing of lagging ticket sales among the Aussies, he threatened to fire his entire managerial staff, including DiLeo, if the Bad album didn't top the sales of Thriller. Sales were so poor in Perth and Adelaide that concerts were cancelled.

Comments in the local bars, particular ly among cricket players, were nasty, some claiming they weren't going to pay eighty dollars "to see some dancing nigger faggot. If we want to see dancing, we've got our own aborigines."

Some of the press in Australia was more favorable, reporters labeling Michael "Crocodile Jackson." But for what reason, as that was hardly his image? British journalists wrote about "The Peter Pan of Pop." But some London reporters were fascinated by the stories that kept popping up that Michael was interested in young boys and that he preferred their company to that of a beautiful young woman. Many of his female fans continued to make themselves available to Michael, but he showed no interest. One journalist wrote, "Instead of the Peter Pan of Pop, I'd call him The Pied Piper, luring young boys to God knows what fate." Michael was furious when he heard that and threatened to sue.

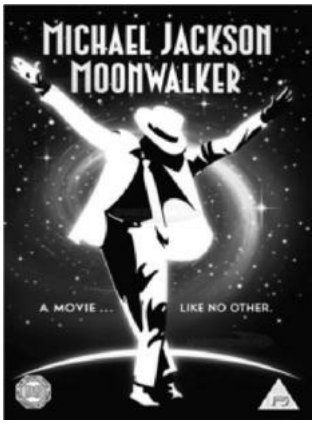
One Australian journalist noted, "Jacko is grabbing his crotch more frequently. He really should masturbate in his dressing room before `coming' on stage. His disgusting performance isn't suitable for children. Actually he doesn't seem to show any crotch at all-rather a concave. Maybe those rumors are true-that he had his pecker cut off."

"Now they're attacking my manhood," Michael lamented. "Who do these jackals think they are, Madonna?"

In January of 1988, Michael turned up in Las Vegas, watching a performance of "Siegfried & Roy" at the Frontier. Meeting the performers backstage, Michael was invited to spend the following day with them at their plush home in the desert. "A gay time was had by all," wrote a cynical Las Vegas reporter.

Siegfried and Roy worked with Michael on creating illusions for his show. To show his gratitude, he wrote their theme song, "The Might in the Magic." A tape of Michael performing the song opened the duo's future shows.

Flying to Pensacola, Florida, for rehearsals for an all-new show, Michael also brought his chef with him. It was reported that Michael existed for several days on a diet of fresh flowers.



He wanted to open the new show in Atlanta but Pepsi, his sponsor, objected. "Not in the home of Coca Cola," Michael was told by Pepsi executives.

Instead, Michael and his troupe opened his U.S. tour in Kansas City. It was reported that backstage before he went on, Michael assembled his troupe together to pray to God to "make us funky!" To judge from the show itself, God granted their request.

Right before leaving Kansas City, Michael was told that his Standing Room Only performances there had brought in $750,000, topping the previous record set by Elvis Presley.

Michael danced a jig of joy. "Who's The King now?" he asked.

It was on to New York and Madison Square Garden. Michael was delighted when a Newsweek reviewer compared his Moonwalk as equivalent in fame to Charlie Chaplin's wobble. The Little Tramp still remained his

favorite performer.

Back in the Midwest, Michael landed in St. Louis. To the extreme disappointment of his fans, Michael almost immediately came down with the flu and laryngitis. The culprit who exposed Michael to the infection was reportedly a thirteen-year-old boy introduced as "Peter." Somehow Michael had met this handsome child in New York and had invited him, along with his parents, to tour with them, even on future dates in Europe.

Michael had been seen with Peter so frequently that he touched off tabloid speculation. One journalist even claimed that Michael "bought the kid by giving the parents a Rolls Royce." It was later revealed by Steve Chabre, former head of MJJ Enterprises, that Michael did indeed purchase a Rolls for Peter's parents, as well as a luxurious house in California's San Fernando Valley.

A former garbage collector, Peter's father was hired to go on the road with the Bad troupe. As publicist Bob Jones noted, "On every stop of the tour, Michael and Peter stayed locked in Michael's suite."

While Michael was occupied with Peter, Bob and Michael's chief of security, Bill Bray, had to keep the boy's parents distracted with shopping jaunts. Michael placed no limit on the amount of purchases the parents could charge.

Recovering from "Peter's flu," Michael flew to his home state of Indiana to appear at the Market Square Arena in Indianapolis on March 18, 1988. Although publicly he remained smiling, Michael was overheard saying, "Indiana is a great state . . ." He paused. "To leave."

With Peter by his side, Michael speeded up his tour, playing in Denver, Hartford, and Houston, where he invited Vice President George Bush to attend. The offer was spurned. Next on the tour was Atlanta, where Pepsi, in a reversal of a previous decision, decided to take on the CocaCola giant on its home turf, slathering the town with Pepsi advertising.

Siegfried and Roy

Arriving in Chicago, Michael received the Key to the City from its mayor, Eugene Sawyer.

The leader of the Nation of Islam, minister Louis Farrakhan had denounced Michael's "Victory" tour and had urged a boycott because of Michael's "Jheri-curl, female acting-he's a bad role model for our young boys." But in a grand gesture, Bob Jones invited Farrakhan to a performance. At Michael's request, Eddie Murphy had already given him tapes of Farrakhan's orations.

That night the controversial minister was won over, proclaiming Michael "A Special Messenger of Entertainment." In subsequent speeches, Farrakhan would praise Michael, who would later contribute $25,000 to Farrakhan's "Million Man March" on Washington, DC, on October 16, 1995.

Bob Jones delivered the money in his own name, as Michael didn't want his name used. "This is how Michael operated: Always willing to hang someone else out to dry and cover his own ass," Bob charged. "You see, if the media and public found out that Michael Jackson donated anything to an event sponsored by the Nation of Islam, he'd lose his Jewish friends and a lot of his fan base would turn against him."

After playing in Dallas and Minneapolis, the troupe flew to Europe, landing at Rome's international airport on May 23, 1988. It was time for a reunion with his new friend, Sophia Loren. He escorted her to a party thrown by Franco Zeffirelli, the movie director, at his elegant Rome villa, but Michael spent all the time playing with a gaggle of pajama-clad children and refusing to mingle with tout Roma.

The U.S. Ambassador to Rome, Maxwell Rabb, personally escorted Michael on a private visit to the Sistine Chapel. "Diana Ross taught me to love art," he told the ambassador.

Frank DiLeo had tried to arrange for a private meeting between Pope John Paul II and Michael, but the pontiff canceled at the last minute. Privately he let it be known that, "I don't want to become part of the Michael Jackson publicity machine."

Louis Farrakhan

In October of 1996, Michael decided that if he could not get an audience with the Pope, he wanted to own a piece of him. Reading that the Pope in Rome had successfully undergone surgery for an inflamed appendix, Michael sent an offer to the Vatican to purchase that appendix for a million dollars, noting that such a bequest could be most useful to aid Catholic charities. The private secretary to the Pope did not respond to the offer.

Suffering from laryngitis, Michael played to audiences of 75,000 at concerts at Flaminio Stadio in Rome. Attending were two celebrity guests, Sophia Loren and her rival, Gina Lollobrigida. Lollobrigida confided to Michael, "I haven't spoken to the bee-tch in twenty years until you brought us together for the paparazzi."

Michael had been booked in Rome's deluxe Lord Byron Hotel. With time on his hands, he drew pictures in ink on the white, stiffly starched bed linens, including a self-portrait. After Michael had checked out, a maid at the hotel auctioned the doodles, getting $5,000 for Michael's profile.

Later, Michael was furious to learn that his concerts in Rome and also in the city of Turin in Italy's Piedmont had been illegally taped. These unauthorized tapes eventually made their way into the United States and Britain, although they had to be hawked underground.

Among the 55,000 fans who attended Michael's concert in Basel, Switzerland, was Elizabeth Taylor. It was during their time together in Switzerland that Michael astonished Elizabeth by proposing marriage to her. Both the glamorous mega-star and Michael would later deny the proposal of marriage, but intimates of both parties have insisted over the years that it happened.

To Michael, a May-December marriage to the aging star made a lot of sense. Before flying to Switzerland, he'd even discussed his proposal with Katharine Hepburn, who'd appeared opposite Elizabeth in Tennessee Williams's Suddenly, Last Summer, released in 1959.

"Would she expect sex?" Katharine reportedly asked, obviously being facetious.

"No, not at all!" Michael said, taking the question seriously. "It wouldn't be that kind of relationship."

A gossipy friend of Hepburn's was seated with her when Michael visited the star at her Turtle Bay townhouse in New York City.

"Then go for it if Elizabeth's willing," Hepburn advised. "I was married once. I made it clear from the beginning that there would be no sex after I said `I do.' Since my groom wasn't particularly keen on the opposite sex, that proved no hardship for him at all. I invited his boyfriend along on our honeymoon to Bermuda."

Pope John Paul II

Hepburn told Michael that reporters would stop calling attention to the fact he was not dating if he were married. "You don't ask married men what young girls they're taking out," Hepburn said. "It's not done."

Elizabeth turned Michael down ever so politely, her confidante, Roddy McDowall later said. "Marriage was proposed to Elizabeth by some of the most important men in the world, including a former president of the United States who offered to divorce his wife for her."

Michael, according to McDowall, made a counter-offer, promising to donate $5 million a year in AIDS research if she'd give him her hand in marriage. Still, she said no.

"As my personal history has shown, I'd make a terrible wife but a great friend," she said. "Let's be friends for always. If you need me, wherever you need me, I'll be there."

"That sounds very much like Diana Ross," he said.

"Did you ever propose marriage to her?" she asked. "I think I read that someplace."

"You are the only person in the world I'll ever ask to marry me," he said. "You could lead a life of luxury. Everything you want, all the jewelry you could ever wear."

"But Michael, I already lead a life of luxury. I have more gems than is good for me, with more on the way."

"Rock Hudson, Montgomery Clift, and even James Dean proposed marriage to me, but I told each of them it wouldn't work," she claimed. "It wouldn't have, you know? The same with us. It wouldn't work."

"But you'd be free to have lovers on the side," he said.

"That's a right all my husbands have retained in marriage," she claimed, "and a privilege I've always reserved for myself as well."

"Is your decision final?" he asked.

"Final and forever more," she said. "Now, let's not speak of this again. However, as compensation, I have a few stray children I'll let you adopt."

Before he flew out of Switzerland, Elizabeth promised him that even though she wouldn't marry him, she'd let him host her next wedding.

Before leaving Elizabeth and Switzerland behind him, Michael had one more "house call" to make. He'd solicited and received an invitation to visit Oona Chaplin, the widow of his all-time film hero, Charlie Chaplin, whom Michael always referred to as "The Little Tramp." Chaplin had died in 1977, and Michael wanted to bring flowers to his gravesite near her home in Vevey, Switzerland.

The Oona Chaplin Michael encountered was not what he expected from the famous widow. Her appearance shocked him. She came into her living room wearing tight-fitting clothes more suited to Tatum O'Neal or Brooke Shields. Her appearance was rather unkempt, and she wore too much makeup, as if trying to erase twenty years from her face.

She spoke of the "lonely years after Charlie died" and told Michael that The Little Tramp ended his life in a wheelchair. "I was his watchdog and nurse day and night, waiting on him hand and foot. He fired all the nurses I hired for him."

Oona joined Michael for the pilgrimage to Chaplin's gravesite. She spoke with a certain pain about her previous life and how she'd been dominated by two powerful men, both her famous playwright father, Eugene O'Neill, and Chaplin, whom she'd married in 1943 when she was just seventeen and he was fifty-four. "My father cut off communication with me when I married Charlie," she said.

She was surprised that Michael did not know who Eugene O'Neill was, but she patiently explained to him the significant role he'd played in the American theater.

Back at the Chaplin house, she led Michael into the bathroom. At first he protested, "I like to do my business in private."

"No, no, you silly boy." In the bathroom she removed a bottle labeled "shampoo." Drinking half of it, she offered him the bottle. "Want some?" she asked. He declined. "It's not shampoo, ducky. But liquor. My family hides my bottles from me, but I outsmart them."

Oona was living up to her reputation. Before meeting her, Michael had heard stories about her wandering the streets of Vevey at night in her bare feet, dressed in a nightgown. She'd shout obscenities to passersby. The tolerant policemen never arrested her, but drove her back to the safety of her home, where they would put her to bed.

Bizarrely, Michael wanted to know about the body-snatching caper that occurred one rainy night on March 1, 1978, at the Vevey cemetery where Chaplin was buried. A Bulgarian and a Pole had stolen her husband's coffin and had held it for ransom, demanding 600,000 Swiss francs. Eventually they were arrested, and Chaplin's body returned to Oona, who arranged for its second burial.

Oona Chaplin

"Imagine what grave-robbers would ask for my body if they ever snatched it when I die?" Michael asked, inserting himself into the drama.

"They're not going to get my body," she told Michael. "In my will I've demanded that my coffin be encased in a solid block of concrete two feet thick."

"But what if you're buried alive," he asked. "You'll never escape if you wake up in a coffin like that."

"That's something you need not worry your pretty head about," she said.

Before leaving, Oona startled Michael by making a request. "More than anything in the world I want to meet the divine Mel Gibson. Do you know him? If so, please introduce us. I'll fly to Los Angeles. If you don't know Mel, maybe some other handsome hunk in Hollywood. You won't believe the checks I've written to handsome men after Charlie died. I bought a luxury apartment in New York for one of my favorites. Like Charlie, he was very well endowed."

Whether Oona knew it or not, she was preaching to the choir. Michael himself had written many a check, but to males who were slightly younger than those Oona so desperately desired. And much larger checks awaited Michael's penmanship in his future.

Because she was trembling, he took her hand. "Aging courtesans in Europe used to give sound advice to young girls. Spend your youth with a rich old man so that you can enjoy old age in the company of a handsome hunk."

On June 27, Michael launched his concerts at the Pare des Princes in Paris. In attendance were Grace Jones and the designer Patrick Kelly. The mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, presented Michael with La Grande Medaille de la Ville de Paris, an honor usually given only to visiting heads of state. Michael accepted the honor but turned down the invitation to a formal state dinner. He had other plans.

Bob Jones later claimed that those other plans concerned "Peter," who had suddenly reappeared. Michael was staying at the grand luxe Hotel Crillon in the heart of Paris. Later, Jolie Levine, an aide to Michael, discovered a mysterious sheet in the star's bedroom where he'd been sleeping with Peter. Evocative of the incident at the Lord Byron in Rome, Michael had drawn a picture in ink of himself and Peter on the sheet.

"Also written on the sheet was what amounted to a love note to the boy," Jones claimed. "The sheet was my first tangible clue that Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, was up to no good with this young kid." Jones and Levine smuggled the sheet out of the hotel to prevent it from falling into the hands of the tabloids.

Bob told Frank DiLeo of his discovery. Michael's manager, according to Bob, topped him with a story of his

own about an incident that occurred during Michael's trip with Peter to the Cote d'Azur. In Nice, DiLeo "found a sheet painted with human feces." Bob claimed that one of Michael's favorite words was "doo-doo." Now he knew why.

Michael had succeeded in making friends with two of the most famous women on the planet, Elizabeth Taylor and Jackie Kennedy Onassis. He had only one more conquest to make it a triumvirate. He wanted to befriend Princess Diana, the third woman he most admired in the world.

Michael's dream was realized on July 16, 1988, at the third concert of the Bad tour at Wembley Stadium. He'd flown into Heathrow Airport on July 11 with his personal doctor, dentist, throat specialist, and chiropodist. In addition, he brought with him a masseur, a manicurist, a hair dresser, a personal chef, two secretaries, and eight "minders."

Backstage he met the lady of his dreams, Diana, the Princess of Wales, for the first time. She seemed somewhat awed by Michael, later telling friends, "He is the most famous man I've ever met."

Another famous man, Prince Charles, stood at her side. Although formally polite, he was hardly in awe of Michael, who did not make his kind of music. As a student at Cambridge, the Prince of Wales had played Barbra Streisand recordings night after night. With that great diva, the Prince would have an on-again, off-again affair.

Michael seemed greatly disappointed that the Prince and Princess of Wales did not bring Prince William and Prince Harry to this special presentation. He'd had Bad tour jackets specially made for the boys. Recovering from his disappointment, Michael presented the royal pair with two checks-one for 100,000 pounds for the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, another for 150,000 pounds for the Prince's Trust for disadvantaged children.

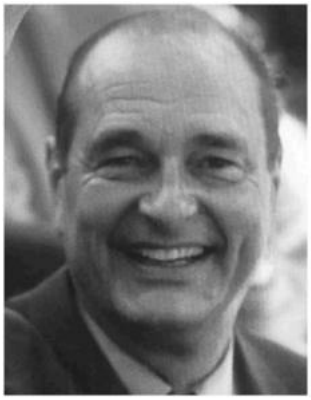
Not only that, Michael presented them with a framed set of cassettes and compact discs of Off the Wall, his mega-selling Thriller, and Bad. He'd heard that he was the favorite pop star of the Princess.

Embarrassing the Prince, Michael asked him why he didn't bring his sons to the concert. "William is only six years old, Harry just three," Charles said. "There's a thing called bedtime."

Michael made a special request to the Prince, telling him that his pet chimp, Bubbles, had been denied entry into England. He asked the Prince to intervene so that he could be reunited with his pet. Charles smiled politely, saying nothing.

In parting, Charles astonished Michael by saying, "I hear you dance very well. The next time you're in London, you must come by and teach me how to dance. I'm a bit awkward on the ballroom floor."

Even before flying into London, Michael had debated removing the song, "Dirty Diana," from the evening's performance. He felt that it might offend the Princess, although it was not about her. At the last minute, Michael changed his mind and decided to perform "Dirty Diana" after all. The reaction of the Princess was carefully recorded. She seemed to like the song. Standing up from her seat, she danced with the music. Seated beside her, Charles sat in obvious discomfort. At the song's end, Diana applauded wildly, as



French President Jacques Chirac

Charles remained motionless, looking like he'd rather be somewhere else.

MJ, Princess Di, and Prince Charles

Michael later told the press, "I was so excited at meeting the royal couple. I'm very, very happy that they came to watch me perform. I thought the Princess was just wonderful." He made no mention of Charles.

After the concert, Michael was told that the royal couple had left the stadium in a limousine to avoid the crowds. Two other famous guests, he was told, were waiting backstage to greet him: Joan Collins and Ava Gardner.

He received the glamorously dressed Collins first for a very brief meeting. He'd met her once before. In front of people, she said, perhaps facetiously, "If you ever want to switch, darling, and try a woman for a change, you're welcome to lose your virginity to me. Countless other men have made such a sacrifice for me." Michael seemed embarrassed.

A more modestly gowned Ava Gardner followed, her great beauty of the late 1940s and early 50s a memory long faded but forever immortalized on film.

"Sugartit!, I loved your performance. I hear 01' Blue Eyes himself is jealous of you-not for your singing, but for how much money you make."

"Weren't you the actress that married Frank Sinatra?"

"One and the same, honeychild."

"What was it like being married to a man like that?" he asked.

Prince William in uniform

"I could write a book," she said. "He was great in the sack. Our troubles began while I was on my way to the bidet."

"I don't understand what that means," he said, looking puzzled.

"I'll explain it to you, but in the next lifetime, love," she said, air-kissing him on both cheeks. "You put on quite a show, child. If I ever do another musical like Showboat, I'll ask the studio to use your voice to dub for me." She turned and walked away.

When she'd gone, Michael told an aide, "I can see why Sinatra divorced her. She's not gentle like Elizabeth. Or as kind as Sophia. She seems like a very brittle woman. Maybe she's mad because she's lost her beauty. With the breakthroughs in plastic surgery these days, stars don't have any more excuses to look old."

Ava Gardner

After Michael flew back to the United States, he began to call the Princess at least once a week. Since he was such an international star, she accepted the calls, at least at first. Most often they talked about children. "I live for my

children," she confided to him. "They are my joy, the reason I get up in the morning."

Both of them talked openly about the increasingly invasive and aggressive paparazzi and how difficult it was to live while stalked constantly the moment one left one's door.

Michael told the Princess that he admired her sense of style and grace so much that he'd dressed up one of his mannequins to resemble her, complete with a blonde wig and a diamond-studded tiara. He had seen Diana photographed in what she called "my Elvis dress." White and sequin-studded, the dress had a matching jacket with a turned-up collar. Diana told friends that she "felt both funky and feminine" when wearing the dress, "which I probably do too often, but I can't stand the idea of giving it up-it's my favorite."

Michael informed the Princess that he talked with her plastic version for hours.

"What do you talk about?" she asked.

"Mostly children," he said. "Our mutual love for them. How difficult it is to be shy and yet a public person. How to deal with the media. Our fears that it might one day destroy both of us."

Whether Michael deliberately promoted these stories or not, his so-called romantic link to Princess Di began to appear in the tabloids. The Star reported that Michael "at long last" had fallen for a woman, the object of his affection being Princess Diana herself. Not only that, but Diana, according to reports, wanted to star in Michael's next musical video in which she would dance with him. These reports were ridiculous, of course.

A student of media, Donald Tracy, said, "More lies have been printed in the tabloids about Michael Jackson than any celebrity in history. Why? I ask myself. Because the truth-at least until the child molestation charges became public domain-would be devastating. From the very beginning, I think reporters were too savvy to believe all that hype about Michael and women.

But they printed the stories anyway because Michael was hot copy, and they had to write something about him."

Michael sent lavish gifts to Prince William in London, but not to Prince Harry, who was a bit young, even for Michael's taste in special friends. These presents were always carefully rewrapped and returned to Neverland, with the same suggestion, written endlessly. "The Princess thanks you for such marvelous gifts, but William is already blessed with so many things given to him by his parents. He does receive gifts from well-wishers around the world. It is our policy to return these gifts with the suggestion that they be given to other children in need. Think of the joy that would bring."

Michael was said to be offended by this rejection, but that didn't stop him from sending even more expensive presents. He also kept beseeching the Princess to allow William to fly to Neverland. The more rejections he received, the more passionate he became in his campaign to entertain William for a sleepover.

While she was still speaking to him, Diana told Michael that she'd nicknamed William "Billy the Basher," because he liked to play rowdy sports. She said, "Like us, he has the paparazzi following him everywhere. Even if he rides his bike across the palace yard, it's a front page tabloid event."

One night the Princess told Michael that William had at long last chosen his desired profession. "I want to be a policeman," the boy said.

She claimed, "I informed him that his future role had already been determined at birth. `You're going to be King!' I told him."

Michael hastily added, "I'm a king too. The King of Pop."

"I think I heard that somewhere," Diana said jokingly.

Prince William became an obsession of Michael's. He'd framed a blowup of the young Prince taken on his first

day at Wetherby School in 1987, wearing his regulation red shorts, which were mandatory even in the middle of winter. Under a hat and smiling, the Prince was seen dressed in a red tie with red-trimmed stockings and waving at the crowds. He carried a Postman Pat lunchbox. Michael ordered his staff to send William a Michael Jackson lunchbox.

Princess Di, 1985

During his brief marriage to Lisa Marie Presley, Michael taunted her, claiming he had this ongoing affair with Princess Di. It was reported that Lisa Marie was jealous, although for what reason is not known. Certainly she had no sexual interest in her husband. It must have been for some other reason, perhaps resenting that Michael had such a world-famous friend.

When Bob Jones heard that Michael was creating some imaginary affair with Princess Di, he said, "Give me a break! The King (i.e., Michael) didn't have a relationship with Princess Diana. He admired her, and a number of calls were put into Diana's people on behalf of Michael. He badly wanted to be friends with her, but apparently she wasn't the least bit interested."

Bob claimed that he personally made calls to Kensington Palace. Instead of getting Diana on the phone, "a polite gentleman" answered. "I told him that Michael had matters he wished to discuss with the Princess," Bob said. "I was told to write down the subject matter in detail, send it along, and they'd get back to me. To my knowledge, none of those calls was ever returned."

Finally, through this "polite gentleman," Michael was told in rather harsh terms that no more presents for William would be accepted but would be returned unwrapped to Neverland. Michael was also told that because of prior commitments, William would not be available to be Michael's guest at Neverland-"not at the present time, not in the near or even distant future." At the bottom of the carefully written note, the Princess had scrawled in her own handwriting:

"Michael,

Please stop sending gifts! They aren't wanted. And please stop calling. Your calls will not be returned. Best wishes in your future career."

It was reported that Michael, after receiving this note, stayed in his bedroom at Neverland, crying for three days and refusing to eat except for a cup of vegetable broth a day.

Princess Di wasn't the only dilemma facing Bob Jones as Michael's publicist. Within a few months after signing on, Bob came to believe that his new employer was a racist.

In his book, The Man Behind the Mask, Bob writes: "Michael Jacksonbeneath the bleached skin that has made him a grotesque caricature of a female alien-was black too. He was also the weirdest and most inexplicable of

racists. His favorite word to describe blacks, his original race, was Splaboo. Yep, Splaboo. It was a word he used a lot, a word he used around people such as Macaulay Culkin."

Bob also noted in his memoirs that Papa Joe always "favored lightskinned black folks" and that "Tito, Jackie, Janet, and many of the younger generations have selected white or non-blacks as their mates."

Michael was never known as a public champion of black people, as was his close friend, Marlon Brando, or many other stars such as Harry Belafonte. As Bob and the rest of the world were observing in the late 1980s, Michael's skin color became a source of endless tabloid speculation. He was in denial of his own pigmentation, which was changing before the eyes of his fans.

In his role as a spokesman for Michael, Bob was constantly asked what Michael was doing to change his original skin color. Through it all, Michael continued to deny skin bleaching and plastic surgery on his nose. "I guess he didn't want to look like a Splaboo," a security guard at Neverland said sarcastically.

To make himself even whiter, Michael smeared his already-bleached skin with white makeup, creating a freakish aura. Bob noted that Michael, between 1972 and 1998, had so much plastic surgery that "he went from being a really handsome African-American kid to an awful facsimile of a Caucasian woman.

Skin pigmentation wasn't all that was on Michael's mind during the late 80s as he installed himself at Neverland.

The tabloids followed his every move, reporting on one scandal after another whether true or not. One astonishing report may have had some authenticity to it. Michael was terrified of being recognized by his fans when he ventured out of his house. To prevent that, he adopted many disguises. One day he heard that some Swiss scientists were close to developing a potion that would make people invisible-movies, of course, have been made with that theme. Michael seemed willing to invest $1 million in that potion if it could make him invisible. He told some of his staff at Neverland that, if invisible, he could give some of the potion to Bubbles too. That way, both of them could go shopping at various malls, including toy stores, and not be molested by the public. How an invisible man could go into a toy store and buy merchandise without attracting attention was never explained.

After several futile attempts, Michael realized that the invisible potion, if such an elixir existed, was only in the early planning stages, far too soon in its development to make him disappear any time soon.

Far more obtainable-or so he reportedly felt at the time-was a desire to acquire another skeleton. He'd failed to secure the bones of the Elephant Man. But out there in a Los Angeles cemetery, with the traffic whizzing by, rested the bones of the world's most enduring sex symbol, Marilyn Monroe.

He'd heard that the heirs to her estate were "one greedy bunch," as his friend Marlon Brando had charged. Brando later reported that Michael had talked seriously of making an offer of $5 million to secure MM's skeleton. "I just went along with Michael for the ride," Brando claimed. "I thought, of course, it was just a .joke. My mistake was in not realizing that Michael's doesn't joke. I like to play practical jokes on people all the time, especially if they are close friends."

As a great actor, Brando maintained a serious face when he told Michael what he might do with Marilyn's bones. "Marilyn and I were lovers," Brando said. "Our affair began right after the war when I picked her up at a sleazy bar in New York. It continued on and off right up until her murder. In fact, hours before she was killed, we had a date to get together for dinner."

Marilyn's fate?

Brando's suggestion, if Michael could have her corpse removed from the Mausoleum of Memories at Westwood Memorial Park, was not to keep Marilyn's bones hidden away at Neverland. "First, I'd have a designer put Marilyn's bones in a bikini," Brando said. "She loved diamonds-even sang about them. Definitely a diamond tiara and a diamond necklace are in order. The costlier the better. I'd install her as an attraction on Hollywood Boulevard, charging fifteen dollars a ticket. People would gladly pay that. But it can't be just a stack of bones. I'd lay her out in the center like a funeral parlor. An open casket. But all around I'd have wide screens showing some of her famous moments. That walk in Niagara. That satiny pink gown she wore when she sang `Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend' in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. Her walk at the rail station in Chicago in Some Like It Hot. Her singing `Heat Wave' in There's No Business Like Show Business. Newsreels of Marilyn and Joe DiMaggio. Her standing on that subway grate in The Seven Year Itch as a blast of hot air blows her skirt up to her panties. Definitely pictures of her in New York, in that skin-tight gown singing `Happy Birthday' to President Kennedy."

Michael told Brando that he thought "all your ideas are just great."

After Michael had left his house, Brando called one of his friends. "The kid actually thought I was serious. I was just talking shit like I like to do for fun. He really believed me. I must be a better actor than I thought I was."

Goddess

Like Prince William, the bones of Marilyn Monroe eluded Michael. But he still wanted to live in a fantasy world, one he could create at Neverland. After recovering from several setbacks, he pulled himself up out of his bed to oversee construction, on the grounds of Neverland, of "another Disneyland," one far greater than he'd created at Hayvenhurst. "I don't have to dream, but can live in my dream," he told staff members.

At Neverland, Michael experienced the first real freedom he'd ever known in his life. At long last he was free of his smothering mother, Katherine, and dictatorial Papa Joe. He also did n't have his siblings, especially their mates, interfering or, worse, judging his lifestyle.

Michael's freedom didn't extend to his employees, each of whom was forced to sign a confidentiality agreement. "He ran Neverland like Himmler might direct a concentration camp," said one disgruntled employee who had been fired because he'd violated a cardinal rule. "I talked to one of the other employees. We were not supposed to talk to each other. We were also told to look down at our navels when Michael walked by." As an afterthought, he added, "It was Jackson who should have bowed his head in shame."

In the years ahead, employees-most of whom were no longer working at Neverland-reported that dozens of young boys were dropped off at the guarded front gate and handed over to Michael's "security force." One of Michael's special policemen would then assist the boy into a fanciful carriage pulled by a Clydesdale.

After he had been escorted to the main hall of Neverland, the boy du jour was taken to Michael's bedroom. After securing clearance, the boy was allowed to enter the room. At such times, Michael himself would be lurking behind the door but would not appear within its frame. The aide would not see him in the flesh. Presumably the boy wouldn't get to feast his eyes on Michael until after he entered the darkened room.

When staff members did see Michael in his room, as when making a delivery, he was often in tight white briefs, but always in full makeup. Sometimes he'd be discovered in bed with a young boy, each nude from the waist up, a sheet covering their lower bodies.

Later, one employee told the police, "I don't know how Michael contacted the parents of these young boys and gained their consent to deliver a ten-year-old, or even a twelve-year-old, to Michael's den. How did he make contact with them and get their permission? I know he did that because it was the parents, sometimes just a mother, who would deliver her son to Neverland. Sometimes a boy would stay only a night, with his mother waiting to pick him up the next morning. In one case an especially beautiful wide-eyed boy, probably the best-looking kid I've ever seen in my life, was delivered to Michael's room where he stayed nearly a month. Michael must have really dug that kid."

There are just some things MJ can't have

Two courses of introductions have been suggested. Michael often invited young boys, including some young girls, to Neverland to enjoy its Disney-like attractions. Once the children were at play, he would select those boys whom he'd like to get to know better. Often he made his selection when they were playing shirtless or else wearing a swim suit to jump into his pool.

Another method of contact was through dozens of model agencies in Los Angeles, many of whom specialized in child models for both TV and print advertising. Michael would order publicity photographs of these boys sent to Neverland. Staff members reported that he would spend the good part of many a day studying each photograph carefully and evaluating it. His excuse to the agencies was that he was planning to make musical videos involving child actors, as he'd done in the past. It was reported that Michael seemed especially interested in the lips on a young boy.

Johnny Ciao was employed as a chef at Neverland during the greater part of 1988. During that time, he witnessed a parade of boys being entertained by Michael. One boy, who "looked like an angel," was estimated to be only eight years old. Staff members felt that the oldest boys Michael entertained were thirteen years of age-rarely sixteen or seventeen.

In a move he'd later regret, Michael hired Mark and Faye Quindoy, a Filipino couple, to manage his Neverland estate. They would later spill many of Michael's secrets to the world, appearing on such shows as Geraldo Rivera's Now It Can Be Told. When child molestation charges first appeared, and the Quindoys were questioned by California police, the couple agreed to testify against Michael. They would later sue Michael for $300,000 back pay and also sue his envoy, Anthony Pellicano, who denounced them as "cockroaches and failed extortionists."

Having replaced Johnny Ciao, Faye Quindoy became Michael's personal cook, preparing such treats as a Mickey Mouse Cake and the Seven Dwarfs Pizza. Her husband presided over Michael's small army of 15 armed guards, 32 groundskeepers, and two animal keepers, even a fire "brigade" of one firefighter.

When Michael and his special friend of the moment tired of his own Disneyland at the ranch, he'd asked Mark Quindoy to drive them to Solvang, which, like Neverland, lay in the Santa Ynez Valley. Because of its association with early Danish settlers, the town offers a taste of Scandinavia in California, with much of its architecture in the traditional Danish style. There is even a copy of the most famous statue in Copenhagen, the Little Mermaid, as inspired by the tale of Hans Christian Andersen.

One day Mark drove Michael to Solvang, accompanied by a seven-yearold boy who was spending his nights in Michael's bed.

After pulling a four-wheel-drive Chevrolet Blazer into Solvang, Mark accompanied Michael and the boy as

they explored the town, stopping at a mammoth dollhouse Michael was considering duplicating at Neverland.

On the way back to the ranch, Mark later reported that he was astonished to witness Michael in an embrace with the boy-"like a lover, kissing him passionately. It was just like a boy kissing a girl in the backseat," he later testified. He claimed that the boy put up no protest but just sat there quietly tolerating it even when Michael wet-kissed him on the lips. "Michael began kissing him everywhere-his neck, head, arms, shoulders, and body. I was utterly stunned-appalled that he could do that to a seven-year-old boy. The kid stayed for another three weeks at Neverland before departing with his mother, who had been staying in Michael's guest house. The next day a nine-yearold boy showed up and began his sleepovers in Michael's bedroom."

Years later, when contacted by investigative reporters while living in Manila, the Quindoys admitted that "Jackson chose one boy at a time. The kids were assaulted with sounds and lights. Lewd things went on right under the noses of the parents." The couple claimed that they did not go to the police because "we were just witnesses, not victims."

One big question has been raised-but never quite answered: Why did mothers allow their kids to be alone all night with an adult male in his bedroom? Rabbi Shmuley Boteach said, "No one has suggested that women have sunk so low that they would prostitute their own children in order to benefit from proximity to a superstar." He cited the case of Michael Jackson as "a frightening new sickness in the American soul. The pursuit of money and celebrity has driven some Americans to use their own children as the means by which to obtain rewards. Just when you thought that respect for women in our popular culture had reached its nadir, along comes a new stereotype: the mother as pimp."

Michael's bedroom was on the second floor of Neverland's main residence, a manor-style building with nearly a dozen additional bedrooms. There were an extra four bedrooms within an elegant and rather tastefully decorated guest house in back.

The Quindoy witnesses

He had ordered that a secret playroom be constructed next to the manor. Like Michael's perpetually darkened bedroom, this playroom was strictly off-limits to other employees. Sometimes Michael would spend all day in this playroom with his special friend of the moment.

Michael not only maintained a shrine to Elizabeth Taylor, but he created the Shirley Temple Room. He'd seen all of her films, including Wee Willie Winkie and The Little Colonel, many of them countless times, and had decorated the room with film posters of his favorite Shirley Temple flicks. He'd also collected lots of Temple memorabilia, including a pair of patent-leather Mary Jane shoes that she'd worn in one of her movies. He'd also purchased curly haired wigs sold in the 30s to young girls whose mothers wanted them to look like the chubby-cheeked toddler.

Michael was especially intrigued with a series of shorts Temple had made in the early 1930s. Called Baby

Burlesks, these films starring young kids spoofed movies and stars of the early Talkies. Viewed today, these seemingly innocent films have been called "baby porn," attracting every pedophile in America-that is, those who desired young girls instead of young boys.

To more mature and cynical audiences in the decades to come, Temple became a joke and was endlessly spoofed. One critic wrote, "She was precocious to the point of nausea, overemphasizing every goody-goody line, pouring on each inflection of cheer and wringing forth every tear in a manner that had nothing whatsoever to do with real acting." But Michael didn't agree with that. He was a self-admitted "sucker" for a Temple movie any time she wanted to take a ride on the Good Ship Lollipop. He even ordered a Shirley Temple mannequin, dressing it in baby pink with a pink bow holding up her curly coiffure.

One day he invited Mrs. Shirley Temple Black to visit Neverland, and she accepted his invitation. In her 60s and rather matronly, Temple had hesitated before accepting the invitation. Her nervousness was evident when Michael greeted her in the foyer of Neverland. "Are you disappointed in me?" she asked.

"Of course not," he said. "I'm honored."

"I'm always embarrassed to meet fans of my pictures from the 30s," she said. "I feel I've betrayed them by growing up. Even worse, growing old."

"You are not old," he assured her. "You'll be forever young in your films which will also live forever. The world will always remember you as young."

Michael appeared before Temple in full makeup, including mascara, eyeliner, and Honey Glow.

Not missing a beat, nor even appearing startled that she was greeting a man in heavy makeup, Temple studied Michael's face momentarily and said, "I like Honey Glow myself."

As he ushered her into the Shirley Temple Room, she took his hand and searched for his eyes behind his sunglasses. "Like you, I sacrificed my youth to entertain others," she confessed. "But by 1949 the studios told me I can't be a cute little girl forever. Now let's look around this Shirley Temple Room. I'm sure it'll bring back so many memories."

Mrs. Temple Black became the U.S. Ambassador to Ghana and later Czechoslovakia. At the time of her meeting with Michael, the two stars exchanged autobiographies, he giving her a copy of Moonwalk and she presenting him with her tome, Child Star.

Mrs. Temple Black grew up. Michael never did.

For his master bedroom at Neverland, Michael purchased an oversized red velvet and gold throne, "fit for a queen," as a member of the Neverland staff jokingly suggested. He also had a four-poster bed. But for extreme privacy, he ordered the construction of a Secret Room. It was entered through a ten-foot walk-in closet packed with childish novelties and other bizarre artifacts. A door was hidden at the rear of the closet behind an array of Michael's favorite military costumes.

A narrow, carpeted stairwell, lined with rag dolls, led to the windowless, eight-by-seven-foot secret chamber.

In the 90s when the police searched Neverland, trying to find evidence to prove a case of child molestation against Michael, they accidentally stumbled upon this private hideaway. The room, police discovered, was sparsely furnished, containing an oversized sofa, upholstered in a satiny pink, a Trinitron TV, and a bed covered with pillows depicting Peter Pan and Tinkerbell. A bugeyed, red-headed Troll Doll was placed in the center of the bed. There was also a Mickey Mouse phone. For art, pictures of smiling babies in diapers lined the walls.

When the existence of the secret room became known to the public, reporters labeled it Michael's "creepy lair." When Michael was not entertaining a boy in his bedroom, he would take the child out to enjoy the grounds at Neverland, which included Michael's Disney-esque attractions and his animal menagerie.

His private zoo was complete with tigers, lions, and giraffes. There were also two elephants, the baby elephant a gift from Elizabeth Taylor. Michael ordered that the animal be painted in his favorite shade of pink.

A "Lawrence of Arabia" camel was part of the menagerie, as was a baby llama called "Puddin' Pie." There were enough pink flamingos to rival their nesting ground on Inagua Island, in The Bahamas. Michael also had a cage of chimps, supplying them with papayas, mangoes, and boxed fruit juices.

Throughout the park were waterproof pictures of Michael holding hands with children. Both parents and children, even such famous guests as Elizabeth Taylor and Gregory Peck, were invited to enjoy Michael's fantasy park.

Security guards from the Nation of Islam required each guest to sign a waiver agreeing not to carry cameras. Later cell phones were added to the forbidden list. If a visitor violated the mandate, he or she might be escorted from the grounds of Neverland by a guard.

One of those guards reported that Michael threw rocks at his lion to make him roar. He could often be seen riding his Ferris wheel with a series of boys.

One guard claimed, "I can't count the number of young boys who rode with Michael on that Ferris wheel, his arm locked possessively around them. All the young kids were instructed to call Michael `Daddy.'"

Shirley all grown up

Sometimes he would simultaneously hold the hands of two boys as he escorted them around his amusement park, whose white-painted Victorian gazebos and ornate street lamps evoked fin de sie- cle Paris. He even had treehouses built on the property. He'd climb up to one of these getaways in the sky with his favorite of the moment.

After Michael adopted child star Macaulay Culkin as his favorite, he installed a water pistol range, "Mac and Mike's Waterforts," for some epic water pistol battles. Ice cream flavors came in an astonishing array, including one Michael himself created-kiwi fruit and peanut butter. One arcade played rap music all day, although Michael had ordered a sound engineer to edit out "the curse words."

He told his adult visitors that his flowerbeds cost him $300,000 a year to maintain. "I can't stand to see a flower die," he said. "When a flower withers, I order one of my gardeners to dig up the bulb and replace it immediately with one that will bloom again."

Lunch was always provided for the kids invited to Neverland. "The kids skipped the vegetables and main courses and went immediately for the desserts," said a former cook. "After a big lunch, they'd spend the rest of the day eating pink cotton candy or devouring bags of popcorn. All of them went home with a belly ache."

When the builders of Neverland thought they were finished with the project, Michael demanded more-his own

steam railway, a fun fair, a cinema, and a make-believe Indian village. When everything was finished, Michael hired a Charlie Chaplin impersonator to wander the grounds, amusing the children, who usually didn't know anything about the silent screen star.

After Michael's guests had departed, he often retreated to "The Giving Tree" overlooking a lake. Here he would write lyrics, including the song, "Childhood":

People say I'm not OK
'cause I love such elementary things.

It's been my fate to compensate for the childhood I've never known.

Trolls and Peter Pans found in secret room

For truly private getaways, Michael rented a so-called bachelor pad in the summer of 1989, calling it "The Hideout." Actually it was a condo on the 14th floor of The Westford, a luxury housing unit at 10750 Wilshire Boulevard. When the police, in years to come, raided the condo, it was discovered that it didn't have a bed, only a sleeping bag and a large-screen TV

Many of Michael's special friends were taken surreptitiously to The Hideout. Often parents, usually a mother, delivered her son to Neverland. Michael sometimes, later in the dark of the night, took the boy to the condo.

When it was later revealed that Michael had a "secret address," one story was headlined: AT LONG LAST MICHAEL JACKSON DISCOVERS GIRLS.

Perhaps not believing what he wrote, one journalist claimed that Michael-"rather belatedly"-was discovering girls and now had a rendezvous condo for his private assignations.

"This was all a big joke, and the reporters writing such shit probably didn't believe it themselves," said Robert Estelle. "The story about the fuck pad turned out to be true. Only the reporters at the time got the genders confused."

Life was not all fun and games with young boys at Neverland. Michael worked on a 93-minute music video cassette Moonwalker, which included a montage of live footage of himself in concert. With Michael, of course, cast as the main character, Moonwalker also contained a series of fantasy pieces. Even fat boy Frank DiLeo, Michael's manager, appeared in the video, along with familiar faces such as Mick Jagger or Sean Lennon playing themselves. One of the dancers was Michael's nephew, Jermaine Jackson Jr.

Elizabeth Taylor as "Herself' appeared uncredited in archive footage. Michael originally wanted to release Moonwalker in theaters but budget restraints forced him to take it straight to video release.

Peter Pan pillows for the kids

The most disturbing part of Moonwalker wasn't associated with its view of the shrine to Ms. Taylor, but Michael dancing with what supposedly was the Elephant Man's skeleton.

Darkest corners of secret room

Upon its release, Moonwalker was a hit, even outselling the former number one best-selling music video of all time, "The Making of Michael Jackson's `Thriller.'" For twenty-two weeks Moonwalker held its position as Billboard's Number One video cassette. After that, it was knocked down to number two by the release of Michael Jackson: The Legend Continues.

The video racked up sales of $30 million. But Michael had invested $27 million, making his cut less than $3 million, even less when final expenses were deducted.

"He blamed everybody," an aide said confidentially. "He even threatened to fire DiLeo. Jackson shouted, screamed, and raged, placing responsibility on everybody but the one person responsible for the low return-Michael Jackson himself. When he wasn't screaming about Moonwalker, he was screaming about the final tallies coming in on the Bad album, even though it was the second best-selling album of all time. Jackson wanted one hundred million copies sold, not the fifth of that he actually got. We felt he was so unrealistic in the big sales he demanded that he'd become delusional."

After five years of being "inseparable," Michael, for reasons of his own, fired his Uncle Tookie, Frank DiLeo. From all reports, DiLeo had been a successful manager for Michael, the most temperamental star in Hollywood. His manager had stood by Michael through many a disaster.

He had his attorney, John Branca, do the dirty deed. Getting DiLeo on the phone, Branca told him, "Michael called this morning. He's decided he doesn't want to work with you any more."

Putting up a brave front, DiLeo said, "If the kid has mandated that, it's okay with me." That very day he set about trying to find another job. Ironically, he succeeded where Michael hadn't-in the movies. He was cast in Martin Scorsese's Goodfellas, appearing with Robert De Niro, and in both the Waynes World movies with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey.

The Westford

There was much speculation about why Michael fired DiLeo, but only the impulsive star himself knows for sure. At times Michael blamed DiLeo for the tabloid "Wacko Jacko" image. He also blamed him that the album, Bad, didn't top Thriller in sales. He also felt that DiLeo was taking far too much credit for Michael's own achievements. Because Michael would not face the press, and DiLeo had to go on for him in front of TV cameras and microphones, he was becoming increasingly well known. Michael also claimed that DiLeo was getting "too bossy and possessive."

One member of the Bad troupe claimed that "Michael Jackson was seriously pissed about everything. DiLeo, a real sweet, good guy, who lived, breathed, and slept the advancement of the career of Michael Jackson, became the fall guy."

To friends, DiLeo expressed his hurt feelings, "It was cowardly not to call me personally and tell me I was out the door. I treated him like my own son."

Michael didn't want to meet DiLeo's demand for $5 million in severance pay. But when the man Michael once called "my shield of armor, my other half"threatened to go public with "secrets to make the tabloids blush," DiLeo got his $5 million check.

On Diane Sawyer's Good Morning America TV show in 2004, DiLeo gave a somewhat enigmatic answer to a question about why Michael fired him. "I think it was, he fired me because it was politically asked of him. There was an outside record executive with a big-time lawyer and one executive at Sony that would like to see Michael's power cut in half. And getting rid of me was half the power."

DiLeo's final word on Michael: "He's part Howard Hughes, part E.T. Michael Jackson begs description." Like Howard Hughes, who employed a so-called press agent, Johnny Meyer (actually his pimp) to handle many of his least pleasant tasks, the reclusive Michael hid behind DiLeo for a good part of the 80s.

Kenny Rogers, the country music star, was in the unique position of knowing both the King of Pop and the King of Rock and Roll. "Michael is the Elvis of his generation," Kenny said. "Like Elvis, Michael too is locking himself away from the real world. That's an extremely unhealthy way to live. I know what it's like to be mobbed by fans every time you go out. It can be terrifying. But, he's seen out so rarely that when he's spotted, it's a major event-and he gets mobbed. Even so, he's got to learn to get out more."

At Neverland, Michael ventured out very rarely and always in disguise. In spite of invitations from Katherine, he avoided a return visit to Hayvenhurst.

"There were weird things going on at Neverland, but unlike life at Encino, no violence," said a former maid who'd worked at both estates. "The difference between Neverland and Hayvenhurst is that family fights often occurred at Hayvenhurst. Except for Michael, the acorns didn't fall far from the tree."

She was referring to the sons of Papa Joe. In many ways, at least in their domestic lives, they emulated their father's own behavior and unhappy mar riage.

A good example of this involved Michael's brother Jackie: Even though Enid Spann's marriage to Michael's brother, Jackie, had ended in August of 1987, Jackie was later arrested on a charge of harassing his former wife. Arriving at her home, where she was entertaining, Jackie kicked in her French doors, sending shards of glass flying.

She called the police, who later charged Jackie with violating a restraining order issued by a judge.

Jermaine's marital problems seemed even more dramatic than those of Jackie. After a tumultuous marriage to Hazel Gordy, during which Jermaine frequently cheated on his wife, the marriage had wound down by 1988, and would eventually end in divorce. But before it did, Jermaine would start another family with Margaret Maldonado, eventually fathering two children with her-Jeremy and Jourdynn. At one point both Margaret and Hazel were pregnant with Jermaine's babies. As Enid Spann once claimed, Jermaine showed up with his three-month-old son at Marlon Jackson's birthday party in December of 1986, with a pregnant Hazel at his side. In August of 1988, Jermaine, while visiting his ex-wife, Hazel, attempted to rape her. She screamed as he forcefully held her down, but managed to escape by biting his arm.

Randy's romantic life would grow even more complicated than those of his brothers. After reportedly having as many affairs on the side as his older brother, Jermaine, Randy married Eliza Shaffe in May of 1989, an ill-fated union that would produce one child and end in divorce in 1991. The divorce was acrimonious, and Eliza later filed a criminal complaint against Randy, charging that he beat her during her pregnancy. He pleaded no contest to the wife-beating charge and in November of 1991, he was sentenced to a twoyear period of probation. When he violated that probation, a judge sentenced him to one month in jail. Katherine appeared in court to plead her son's case. She was successful in getting the judge to change his decision. He agreed to commit Randy for 30 days to the Pine Grove Mental Hospital where he underwent domestic violence counseling.

Margaret Maldonado

Eliza was photographed by the press in front of Randy's Wilshire Boulevard condo carrying a sign that accused him of being a "Dead Beat Dad." She needed money to support their daughter, Steveanna, and Randy wasn't making the payments a judge had ordered. In the midst of all this turmoil, according to Margaret Maldonado, Randy launched an affair with the beautiful model, Paula Barbieri.

This Florida-born woman, who like La Toya herself, would pose for Playboy magazine, later became famous because of a romance she conducted with another black man. Paula broke up with O.J. Simpson on June 12, 1994, the day that Nicole Brown, the athlete's ex-wife was murdered. Nonetheless, Paula stood by Simpson through his fifteen months in jail, and she later wrote a confessional, The Other Woman: My Years with Of. Simpson -A Story of Love, Trust, and Betrayal.

It is not known whether Michael was even aware of Randy's involvement with Paula, but he avidly watched Simpson's televised court case. Later, when news of his own trial was broadcast on TV, he remarked, "O.J. drew better ratings than I did."

Randy's affair with Paula would not last long. But his affair with Alejandra Loaiza, a Colombian, would have far-reaching implications for the Jackson family. The attractive young woman had already had a traumatic life before arriving at the Jackson compound. Her mother had served time in a California penitentiary as a convicted cocaine dealer.

One day Alejandra confessed to Margaret Maldonado that she'd already had "several abortions" at Randy's

request. Apparently, he preferred unprotected sex but didn't want to have a "bunch of babies" running all over Hayvenhurst. "My brothers have already brought enough kids into the world," he said. After an on-again, off-again affair, Randy finally married Alejandra in 1992 and would eventually sire three children with her.

To complicate matters even more for America's most dysfunctional black family, Jermaine would later marry Alejandra following her divorce from Randy on March 18, 1995. Jermaine and Alejandra were married in a secret ceremony at the Hotel Bel-Air. Della Reese administered the vows.

Reese, who toured as a teenager with gospel great, Mahalia Jackson, is an ordained minister of the Church of Understanding Principals for a Better Living in Los Angeles. Katherine could only have been horrified at the choice of Reese as the presiding minister at her son's wedding. Reese's church has come under fire from the Christian Right, since it refers to itself as "Christian," but does not accept the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Diane Sawyer

Margaret later said, "I tried to figure out how I was going to explain to my children that their Aunt Alejandra was now their stepmother, and their cousins, Randy Jr. and Genevieve, were now their stepbrother and stepsister. And that their Uncle Randy's girlfriend was now sleeping with their father. Talk about family values run amuck." Reporter Diane Dimond, on Court TV, raised a provocative question, "Do the children call Jermaine Uncle or Daddy or what?"

Alejandra Loaiza and her children

Even Tito wasn't immune from marital discord. His 1972 marriage to Delores V. Martes ("DeeDee") would also end in divorce in 1990. DeeDee discovered that Tito, following the Jackson pattern, had been unfaithful to her. He had three sons with DeeDee. As they grew older, they formed a group called "3T," releasing two albums, Brotherhood in 1995 and Identity in 2004. The first album included the hit, "Anything and Why" which they performed with their uncle, Michael himself.

Many of the Jackson family's domestic dramas unfolded without making headlines in the tabloids. Instead, the media continued to focus on Michael, who could always provide some kind of hot, sensational story. He rarely spoke to his associates about his family problems. Weeks before he fired Frank DiLeo, Michael told his manager, "I hate confrontations, and I abhor violence."

Obviously the private lives of the Jackson family members weren't going well. And for the most part, their professional careers weren't going anywhere either.

From Neverland, Michael told his siblings they had to "go it alone" with their album, 2300 Jackson Street, named after their small bungalow in Gary, Indiana. Janet and Rebbie joined their brothers-all except Marlon-in the album. Like Michael, La Toya also refused to join the group. Released in 1989, the album fared poorly, reaching only 59 on Billboards charts. "I always told my brothers that without me, they're headed for oblivion," Michael once told Frank DiLeo.

Della Reese

Some of Michael's brothers, notably Jermaine, blamed him for "sabotaging" sales of the album, although how Michael did that was never made clear.

With the release of 2300 Jackson St., the Jackson brothers' contract with Epic Records was fulfilled. It would not be renewed. No record company seemed interested in committing themselves to an expensive contract with the Jackson brothers unless Michael was part of the deal.

In distinct contrast to the failure of his brothers, Forbes Magazine in September of 1989 listed Michael as the number one highest-paid entertainer for the second consecutive year, with a two-year estimated earnings of $125 million. By December of that year, Entertainment Tonight had named Michael "The Most Important Entertainer of the Year." Rolling Stone proclaimed Thriller the number one album of the 80s, and the best-selling record album in the history of the music industry.

Michael Jackson would go down in music history as the undisputed star of the 1980s. His triumphs, both artistically and financially, stunned the industry. He had become the 1980s' most enigmatic entertainer, a man of mystery.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Margo Jefferson, stated it this way: "Was he man, boy, man-boy, or boy-woman? Mannequin or postmodern zombie? Here was a black person who had once looked unmistakably black, and now looked white or at least un-black. He was, at the very least, a new kind of mulatto, one created by science and medicine and cosmetology. Biology defines a mulatto as the sterile offspring of an animal or plant species. Michael Jackson's sperm count, I'm relieved to say, is one of the few things we know nothing about. We are reasonably certain he chose not to produce offspring by traditional means: here again, science joined nature to do his bidding."

The 80s were drawing to a close. Michael would never again experience such heady days of glory. The 90s were coming, a decade so dreadful for Michael that he would on several occasions contemplate suicide.

Diana Ross's early prophecy was about to come true for him in a very personal way: "The world likes to build a star up to tear him down," she said.

"Michael Jackson loves children-but mainly if they're dropdead gorgeous, and in some cases even ready to drop dead. If Michael Jackson would just agree to be a pedophile, we could have our kook and eat him too. "

--Michael Musto

"Forget about the superstar, forget about the icon. If he was any other thirty-five-year old man who was sleeping with little boys, you wouldn't like this guy.""

--La Toya Jackson

"It was a child's dream, with every kind of soda in the world there, every kind of candy. A two-floor arcade, a carnival and a movie theater.""

--Macaulay Culkin, on Neverland

"He never had a childhood. He is having one now. His buddies are twelve-year-old kids. They have pillow fights and food fights. "

--Bert Fields, a former attorney of Michael Jackson

"We had very similar experiences in childhood. We're both going to be eight years old forever in some place because we never had a chance to be eight when we actually were. "

--Macaulay Culkin

"Michael Jackson is just a successful pop singer, after all. Maybe this particular American life is just too strange to stand as anything other than its once-glorious, now-pathetic self. But in the end we walk away, shaking our heads in befuddlement. Maybe it's better to just put on 'I Want You Back/smile sadly and leave it at that."

--Martha Southgate

Chapter Ten

In his mind at least, Michael's "affair" with Princess Di lasted until her tragic death in the summer of 1997.

"I had a concert on the day the news broke," Michael said. "My doctor woke me up to tell me Diana was dead. I collapsed. I fainted. He had to give me smelling salts to revive me, and I cancelled my show because I simply could not perform. I just broke down. I wept and wept for weeks afterward."

He spent all the day watching news reports of the death of the princess with her lover, Dodi Fayed, his other friend, in a car crash in a Paris tunnel while they were being chased by paparazzi on motorcycles.

"She used to confide in me," Michael told his friends. "She'd just call me on the phone, and we would talk about everything that was happening in her life. The press was hard on her in the same way they were hard on me, and she needed to talk to someone who knew exactly what she was going through. She felt hunted the way I feel hunted. Trapped!"

When he was interviewed by Barbara Walters on TV, Michael admitted, "I fell back in grief and started to cry, upon learning of Diana's death. I said there's another one real soon. I feel it coming. There's another one, and I pray it's not me. Please don't let it be me. And Mother Teresa came."

Dr. Steven Hoefflin

When Walters asked Michael if he were psychic, he said, "I don't want to say that but I've done it before." Michael's claims about his link to Princess Di contradicted reports made by staff members, such as Bob Jones. "Diana had desperately wanted me to meet her children," Michael said, "and we talked about it many times, but I never got the chance. Dodi talked very highly of the boys. He says they are wonderful, and he had some good times on holiday with the boys and Diana."

In seances during the months that followed, Michael reportedly spoke to the spirit of the since-departed Princess Di. According to Michael, she assured him that she was "in good spirits," and asked him to intervene in the parenting of Prince William. According to Michael, the Princess told him, "William should be brought up by you-not Charles."

It is believed that Michael met Dodi in 1987 in the office of their mutual plastic surgeon, Dr. Steven Hoefflin. Michael was trying to erase the final traces of his "Negroid nose," whereas Dodi didn't like "my Arabic beak."

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, three years before Michael, Dodi was the son of billionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed.

Even before they met, Michael was impressed with Dodi's achievements in the movie industry, especially as they related to the 1981 Oscar-winning hit, Chariots of Fire. Michael was also impressed that Dodi's father owned

Harrods in London, the world's most famous department store, and the Ritz in Paris, the world's most famous hotel.

Dodi's father had made a fortune by working for Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi. It is said that Khashoggi had been involved in almost every single conspiracy theory in the latter part of the 20th century, ranging from Watergate to the Iran-Contra affair.

Michael met Dodi as his eight-month marriage to the American model, Suzanne Gregard, was coming to an end. Dodi grew up in a world of privilege, dividing his time between family homes in Egypt and France. He also had homes in New York, Paris, London, Los Angeles, and Switzerland. An avid night-dubber, he was addicted to fast cars and even faster women.

Long before Diana, there were so many other women. Critics of Dodi called them his "trophy women" and suggested he was a Middle Eastern social climber.

Like Michael, Dodi had also dated Brooke Shields, but his dating with her was for real. Dodi, to make Michael jealous, would speak of his conquests of famous or infamous women, including Winona Ryder, Cathy Lee Crosby, Mimi Rogers, and the notorious Koo Stark who in 1982 had launched a scandalous affair with Britain's Prince Andrew. "I was far superior in bed," Dodi bragged.

Dodi Al-Fayed

Dodi's romance with Barbra Streisand had ended long before he met Michael. Again, Dodi liked to bring up the name of the diva to "send Michael into a jealous rage."

A gossip columnist reported, whether accurately or not, that Streisand once said, "Tina Sinatra and Michael Jackson may find the fire in Dodi. I never did."

In addition to bonding with Dodi, Michael had another reason for wanting to know him. At the time of their introduction, Dodi was contemplating his role as an executive producer of the Peter Pan story, and, of course, Michael still dreamed of playing "the boy who wouldn't grow up." The picture, after it was abandoned by Spielberg, later resurfaced as Hook. Michael lost the role.

He also claimed that he and Dodi discussed "night after night" the launching of other films starring Michael, with Dodi being the executive producer. "We laughed and joked about the mischief and mayhem we'd create in Hollywood," Michael said. "Dodi has taken a lot of flak in this country, which is so unfair. He is one of the sweetest, kindest men you could ever know. The problem is that people judge people before they even know them. To me, he is like a big Santa Claus. He loves giving, he's very wise, creative, talented, and kind-hearted."

Apparantly, Dodi loved fast cars. Long before his death in Paris, Dodi, once or twice with Michael positioned beside him in the back seat, sometimes ordered his chauffeur to "hit the floor" with the gas pedal. Michael was often shaken by the danger but apparently never objected. Months after the death of Dodi and Princess Di, Michael said,

"There but for the grace of God go I."

One night when Michael was engaged in a private rendezvous at Dodi's house, two men arrived to evict Dodi. His house was one of the most expensive rentals in Hollywood, but Dodi had written a bad check to his landlord who wanted him evicted. In the film industry, Dodi had a reputation for writing bad checks. A producer who refused to be named claimed that "Dodi was a deadbeat, a bad guy."

Was Dodi's relationship with Michael sexual? That was the question at Hollywood parties for several months late in the 1980s. The answer might never be known. Dodi is dead, and Michael doesn't speak of such things. Michael's detractors claim that there was definitely "something there, more than a friendship, but we couldn't call it love." Even so, the two men seemed very devoted to each other.

Although Michael and Dodi had enjoyed a close bond, Michael didn't seem jealous when his friend launched an affair with Diana. "They were a match made in heaven," Michael claimed. "I thought they were beautiful together. It was lovely to see them like that. Diana was a wonderful person with a good heart. She went around the world as a philanthropist just like Mother Teresa. Diana proved that she really, really cared about people, children especially. The way I do."

Michael later confided to friends that he understood why Jackie Kennedy "married that beast, Onassis. There was this extraordinary circus going on around Jackie. Onassis offered her a chance to escape from that. For that same reason, I think Diana will marry Dodi. But there's a big difference. Jackie did not love Onassis. Diana loves Dodi. Of course, I love both of them."

The gay rumors linking Michael with Dodi remained confined mainly to insider Hollywood. But after a brief lull, the gay rumors about Michael resurfaced once again in the media during the late 80s and early 1990s. This time they would never go away.

Katherine Jackson's memoirs were released in 1990 and in her book this member of the homophobic Jehovah's Witness cult denied the rumors about her son. Either naively or with calculation, she claimed, "Michael is not gay." One of her reasons she cited for her son not being gay is that the "Bible speaks against homosexuality and he's very religious." By now, however, this absurd defense had become a tired cliche. In her memoirs, she claimed that Michael "wants to settle down and get married one day. We've talked about it. And he will." In this case, mama knew best. Her son would eventually "marry" not only once, but twice.

For her book, Katherine engaged Rebbie, her oldest daughter, in the cultural war raging around her younger brother. Even though Rebbie was far removed from what was actually going on at Neverland, she provided a quotation for her mother's book: "If Michael were married, the gay rumors would stop immediately."

Within Katharine's memoirs, Rebbie concluded with a statement that was particularly unconvincing to an America growing more hip, more cynical, and more skeptical than ever about her brother. "Just being around him and hearing the little things that he says about women tell me he's definitely heterosexual." That remark brought guffaws to some reviewers of Katherine's tome.

Michael's purported homosexuality was not the only angle pursued by the media. Because of the extraordinary changes in his physical appearance, they began to speculate even more daringly. One tabloid raised the question, IS MICHAEL JACKSON DEAD?

The journalist speculated that Michael might have died and that the "money men" behind him had substituted another singer and dancer to fill his shoes. As wild as this seemed, precedents for such scenarios aren't unknown. Some writers, for example, have died, but their estates have kept churning out novels in their name.

Tabloids not only focused on Michael but began to tear away at the public relations hype associated with the so-called loving Jacksons themselves. Papa Joe helped fuel that speculation by telling People magazine: "We wonder why things have changed like they have, why Michael doesn't seem to care about his family. The few times we've spoken to him, he seems glad to hear from us. But when you talk to other people, they say Michael doesn't

want to be involved with his family."

Caught up in personal matters and spending days, even weeks, in his private quarters at Neverland with his boy of the moment, Michael often neglected business. But on September 13, 1989, he showed up for a press conference in Los Angeles. Officials of LA Gear announced that they had just signed Michael to a multi-million dollar two-year endorsement deal.

A lot of the journalists at the conference suggested that LA Gear had hired the wrong Michael-"perhaps they meant to hire Michael Jordan, not Michael Jackson," one reporter facetiously suggested.

For the $20 million he was being paid, Michael made a major concession to the sportswear company. He discarded his black loafers and white socks and showed up wearing a pair of LA Gear tennis shoes in black with silver streaks. LA Gear was retiring its spokesperson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the basketball star. With its elaborate Hollywood-style palm trees and fog machine, the press conference cost LA Gear $50,000.

Michael's comments before reporters were very brief: "I am very happy to be part of the LA Gear magic, and I hope we have a very rewarding, successful career. Thank you."

Reporters noted that Michael appeared nervous and anxious, and he seemed like he wanted to flee from the press conference. One writer described Michael "in a panic to escape, like one of his pet rats if cornered menacingly." That reporter was right in his assessment. Regrettably for Michael and LA Gear, a concealed microphone picked up Michael's desperate plea to one of the company executives. "You've got to help me!" Michael said in a whimpering voice that verged on tears. "Get me out of here or I'll faint. Don't let them ask me questions!"

After Michael had fled into the fake fog being generated as part of the special effects, reporters openly jeered. "It was a total disaster," said Ronald Bank from a newspaper in Sacramento. "To think I drove all the way to Los Angeles to see Jackson run out of the room while blowing an insincere kiss. That lady's not to be believed! I'm convinced that Jackson not only thinks he's Marie Antoinette, he's become the Queen reincarnate!"

When reporters heard this, especially Michael's whimpering, they popped questions at Robert Greenberg, the company CEO. "Why have you hired a spokesman who can't-or won't-speak?"

The chairman was obviously embarrassed but tried to put a good spin on Michael's disastrous performance. "Pepsi couldn't get Michael to drink that soft drink," he said. "But at least we got Michael to show up at the press conference in our shoes-not bad."

Even though his days as Michael's attorney were numbered, John Branca had pulled off this amazing deal between Michael and LA Gear. Word got out that Branca, in the interests of his client, had "walked off with the company store."

The Michael Jackson sneakers released by LA Gear

When terms of Michael's deal leaked out, many of his fans were horrified. "With that kind of money at stake, he had to become a cry baby at that press conference," said Terri Carroll. "What a baby! What a wimp! That kind of money equaled the net income of some struggling Third World countries, and he's whimpering. I resign from the Michael Jackson Fan Club. I can only conclude that in a starving world, he's collecting millions for doing practically nothing-and behaving like a jerk!"

The deal with LA Gear was the sweetest ever made with a celebrity. It entitled Michael to a royalty on every pair of shoes sold, plus stock options. At the time of their ill-fated deal with Michael, the company was hauling in $800 million a year. If, after Michael's involvement, sales of the product increased, Michael would be entitled to a percentage of all annual sales in excess of $1 billion.

As part of the LA Gear package, Michael had promised to release an album-its working title was Decade, which would include some new songs, as well as cuts from three of his earlier albums, Off the Wall, Thriller, and Bad. For this album, Michael was offered upfront money of nearly $20 million. To everyone's embarrassment, Michael defaulted and Decade was delayed, postponed, and eventually abandoned altogether.

There were the inevitable lawsuits, LA Gear filing a $10 million lawsuit against Michael, charging him with fraud and breach of contract. Michael's lawyers shot back with a $44 million countersuit against LA Gear, making similar charges against them. The case was eventually resolved out of court, and the LA Gear campaign with Michael fizzled to an embarrassing death. Based on Michael's previous litigation with Pepsi and LA Gear, word spread through the business world that Michael, with his lawsuits, was a dangerous entertainer to sign contracts with.

"Michael simply didn't get his act together," Papa Joe later said. "If he had, he could have made millions and millions, not only from LA Gear, but from the album itself."

That wasn't the only business deal falling flat for Michael. Inspired by his ownership of copyrights to The Beatles' songs, he also tried to acquire Motown's catalogue from Berry Gordy Jr. The catalogue, known as "Jobete," was for sale for $200 million, but Michael was willing to pay only $135 million.

Michael had dreamed of acquiring the Motown hits of The Supremes which had starred his sometime friend, Diana Ross. If he could acquire the catalogue, he'd also control the music of, among others, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, and Smokey Robinson.

A smart musical entrepreneur like Gordy knew the exact value of his treasure trove, and he said no to Michael

unless he was willing to come up with the full $200 million. When Gordy wouldn't budge, Branca called Michael and asked if he could increase his offer. Michael slammed down the phone, and the potential deal collapsed.

Business deals weren't working out, but by 1990 it seemed that everybody in the world was honoring Michael Jackson and his gravity-defying dance moves on music videos.

Even President George Bush wanted to get in on the act, following in the footsteps of the Reagans. In April of 1990, Bush invited Michael for a return visit to the White House where he was formally proclaimed "Entertainer of the Decade."

In the Rose Garden, the ceremony was sponsored by Washington's Capital Children's Museum, and Michael was being honored for his work with children's welfare.

Lacking Reagan's smoothness and charm, Bush had little to say to Michael, who showed up in military garb with wide red sashes. Barbara was more relaxed with the singer, introducing him to her dog Millie and telling him she wore red shoes for the occasion when her spies told her he'd arrived at the White House "all trimmed in red." She may have been aiming her sardonic wit at Michael, but he took everything she said at face value. Later, after Michael's departure from the White House with his entourage and three limousines, Barbara said, "I am underwhelmed."

In their wake, reporters crowded around the President in his pin-striped suit. One journalist asked Bush if he'd ever heard a Michael Jackson song. The President did not answer, but asked the reporter a question instead. "Why does he wear that red arm band and those red stripes on his pants? Was he in some school marching band?"

Between business endorsements and award ceremonies, Michael took plenty of time out for pleasure with his "special friends." Peter, the boy who had figured so prominently into the Bad tour, was replaced by another young white boy that Michael's publicist, Bob Jones, identified as Damon Patrick.

Instead of thinking that Michael was asexual-perhaps an early opinion-the publicist concluded in his book that "Michael did indeed have some sort of sexual drive, and it wasn't the least bit natural."

During her son's sojourn at Neverland, Damon's mother complained that the security guard often prevented her from seeing him. And although Michael hired a tutor for the young boy, Damon reportedly learned very few lessons. Throughout much of his stay, he was locked away in Michael's bedroom.

According to Bob Jones, the relationship with Damon was short-lived. But it was rumored that Michael paid out four million dollars when his involvement with Damon came to an end.

Michael still dreamed of a career in the movies. In this ambition, he was goaded on by David Geffen, who had a dream of producing a big-budget musical for the pop superstar.

In many ways, this movie power agent and record industry mogul pursued power, money, and fame even more than Michael himself. Since Geffen had launched his own record company in 1980, selling Geffen Records for a huge profit ten years later, Michael had eagerly followed its progress. Geffen began spectacularly, signing John Lennon in 1980 in what would become the ex- Beatle's last recording contract.

Geffen's other achievements included producing Risky Business, the vehicle that made Tom Cruise a star. He was also the man who bankrolled Andrew Lloyd Webber's Cats.

Over the years Michael had known him casually and was thrilled when Geffen, along with Steven Spielberg and Jeffrey Katzenberg, founded DreamWorks SKG, the first all-new Hollywood studio to be established in more than half a century.

Michael envied Geffen's success and wanted to hook up with him, each man vying to become the biggest mogul in the entertainment industry. "If my role model, Howard Hughes, can do it, so can I," Michael told Geffen among others.

Geffen flattered Michael, telling him that, "Quincy Jones has taken too much credit for your own genius. It's time to move on from him."

Michael predicted to Geffen that the 1990s "belong to me. If people thought I was the most successful artist of all time in the 80s, they ain't seen nothin' yet. I'll double my success in the 90s, and I'm starting the decade as the highest-paid artist in the history of the music industry. Not bad."

At the time Michael met Geffen, the entrepreneur was still in the closet, leading a somewhat heterosexual life. He almost married Cher. Unlike Michael, however, Geffen would consensually "come out," which he did in 1992, albeit under some degree of pressure.

"I like men, I like women," Geffen declared. "I'm an equal opportunity seducer." After that announcement, it is estimated that a goodly percentage of the handsomest actors in Los Angeles sent Geffen their resumes, hoping to become his next toy boy. Along with another friend of Michael's, Elizabeth Taylor, Geffen became a champion warrior in the battle against AIDS.

Much of Hollywood thought Geffen already had a toy boy in Michael himself.

The world in the early 90s wasn't that familiar with Michael's sexual pattern, so rumors swirled through Hollywood parties that the ruthless producer "who would stop at nothing to get what he wanted" was having an affair with the ruthless singer/dancer "who would stop at nothing to get what he wanted."

"They should be lovers even if they're not," one producer said. "Even man and wife, David being the man, of course. Together, this dynamic duo, wearing Batman and Robin tights, could take over not only Hollywood, but lay America itself at their feet."

"If David Geffen is not actually plugging Jackson in the ass, he's doing it spiritually," said an executive at CBS Records who didn't want to be named. "Before Jackson takes a crap, he calls Geffen to get his OK. Geffen has total power over Jackson's career. In that little girl voice of his, Jackson calls Geffen two or three times a day. Jackson wants Geffen's advice on everything. I hear all the time that Geffen and Jackson are having sex. But Geffen is not the type of man Jackson would be attracted to. Perhaps if Geffen had been born in 1980, we could get some action here. Of course, there is the Jewish question, but I don't want to go into that."

Finding the right script for Michael proved a daunting challenge, even for Geffen. As head of Geffen Pictures, he offered Michael the script of Streetdandy, which had been written by Tom Hedley, co-writer of Flashdance. Michael read the script "but is giving me all this reluctant debutante shit," Geffen claimed.

He ultimately despaired of finding a proper script for Michael, telling his partners, "It's got to be Busby Berkeley meets E. T, with Stars Wars as a backdrop."

As Christmas of 1990 rolled around, Michael could only note that Geffen, at the age of 47, had risen from a job in the mailroom of the William Morris Agency to become "the richest man in Hollywood," according to Forbes magazine.

Geffen's good will temporarily soured when Michael failed to show up in Florida for the opening of the spanking new Universal Studios Theme Park in Orlando, as Michael had agreed. It was said at the time that Michael Eisner, the CEO and chairman at Disney, had asked Michael not to appear at the opening of a competing theme park, claiming that if he did, it would "damage the wonderful friendship you have with Disneythreaten it even."

Michael, as he admitted himself, was "caught between a rock and a hard place." There was a way out. On June 3, 1990, Michael suffered what was originally announced in the press as a mild heart attack. An ambulance rushed him to Saint John's Hospital in Santa Monica, where he was booked into a room across the hall from Elizabeth Taylor. Ironically, she'd been rushed to that same hospital, suffering respiratory problems. Although her illness was real, Michael's might have been faked.

David Geffen

The next morning Elizabeth wheeled herself into Michael's room carrying a white lily which Michael added to a vase of black roses ordered by La Toya from her hotel in London. When Elizabeth left, he spent the day receiving phone calls from well-wishers. He expected Liza Minnelli to call, but President Bush?

While in the hospital, and for reasons known only to Michael, he asked the staff to perform an HIV test on him. These tests are always highly confidential, but someone on staff leaked the results to the press. The test came out negative. One doctor asked, "If he's the virgin he publicly claims to be-you know, saving it for marriage-why does he want to be tested for AIDS?"

Except for a young man who was evicted after sneaking into the hospital with a plan to assassinate Michael, he rested well in his room and miraculously recovered after a week of rest.

Geffen wanted Michael to sever his ties with Branca, his faithful and sometimes spectacularly successful long-time attorney. Somehow Geffen managed to convince Michael that the attorney was getting "too much pork, leaving you with the bone." That wasn't true, of course. To pry Michael away, Geffen fanned the fires of Michael's jealousy. Geffen reminded him that Branca's law firm represented not only Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones but the dreaded Prince, who was still Michael's nemesis.

"Not just Jagger," Michael said. "What about George Michael? The New Kids on the Block? Branca even represents the Jim Morrison estate. One thing is for sure: He won't be representing my estate when I die."

"Correction," Geffen said. "If you die. You're going to live forever."

Michael became furious when he learned that the "Steel Wheels" tour of Jagger and his Stones broke the record set by Bad to become the most successful rock tour in the history of music.

Within days of his release from the hospital, Michael sent Branca word, "Your services are no longer required." Michael didn't want to face the attorney directly, so he had Richard Sherman, his accountant, deliver the bad news.

Michael fired Branca at the wrong moment, just as the attorney was ready to consummate a deal with Warner-Chappell for the acquisition of the James Brown catalogue. "It would be a great triumph for Michael to own the songs of James Brown," Frank DiLeo once told associates. "Imagine it. Michael had stood in the wings watching James Brown, his idol, perform at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. Then, presto, one day he ends up owning the fucker's catalogue. As for those people spreading rumors that Michael is gay, that's bullshit! They don't know what they're talking about. Michael Jackson is definitely not gay!"

In the beginning Geffen not only wanted to make Michael "the biggest of movie stars," but he wanted to sign him for Geffen Records. Regrettably for the promoter, Michael was locked into a firm contract with CBS Records. Geffen learned that the price of freeing Michael from CBS would have been costlier "than the gross national product of Uganda."

As head of CBS Records, Walter Yetnikoff stood in Geffen's way.

Geffen was producing the new Tom Cruise movie, which would be released in 1990. It was called Days of Thunder, and Geffen wanted Michael to supply a song for the soundtrack. Michael agreed but called Yetnikoff and told him that he wasn't going to allow Geffen to have the song.

Yetnikoff nixed the deal on Days of Thunder "at Michael Jackson's whining insistence," Yetnikoff claimed. In his memoirs the intensely competitive and sometimes abrasive Yetnikoff admitted that he taunted Geffen over his "sexual bent-I'd chase after him into gay clubs and demand his hand in marriage."

When Yetnikoff sent word that he'd like Geffen to give his new girlfriend lessons in how to give a blow-job, Geffen exploded. A new feud between Yetnikoff and Geffen was born.

Geffen wanted revenge, and he began to undermine Yetnikoff to Michael, hoping to get him out of his contract so that he could sign with Geffen Records. Michael owed CBS four more albums.

But unknown to either Michael or Geffen, Yetnikoff's reign at CBS was already drawing to a close. Within months he'd be out the door. By September 4, 1990, Yetnikoff was ousted as CEO of CBS Records. One of the reasons for his demise was his deteriorating relationship with the label's mega-seller, Michael himself.

"What the hell!" Yetnikoff said on the way out the door. "Sex, booze, power, prestige, money, glory. I tasted it all!"

When Michael was informed of Yetnikoff's departure, he said, "You're talking history. Yetnikoff is yesterday. I'm here today. What about me? What does this mean for my career?"

When Geffen heard of Yetnikoff's demise, he said, "Ding dong, the witch is dead!"

With Frank DiLeo, John Branca, and Walter Yetnikoff out of Michael's life, he needed a new manager. Geffen had a best friend, Sandy Gallin: Enter Gallin into Michael's life.

During the period he remained friends with Michael, Geffen helped him set up both a new legal staff and a managerial team to replace Yetnikoff, Branca, and DiLeo, who had guided Michael through his great triumphs, including Thriller. Under a new team, Michael would never achieve the worldwide sales he'd done in the past, although his notoriety would grow. Instead of millions flowing in, millions would flow out.

Previously, Gallin had worked with, among others, Dolly Parton and Neil Diamond. As a producer, Gallin had been a personal manager or agent to stars, including Cher and Whoopi Goldberg. He also went on to produce feature films such as Father of the Bride and the Oscar-winning documentary, Quilt.

When trouble loomed in Michael's future over child molestation charges, Gallin rose to his defense. He said, "Michael's innocent, open, child-like relationships with children may appear bizarre and strange to adults in our society who cannot conceive of any relationship without sexual connotations. This is not a reflection of Michael's character; rather it is a symptom of the sexual phobias of our society."

For his trouble, the movie editor of the Los Angeles Times, Claudia Eller, "outed" Gallin as a homosexual in a major cover story.

Michael also hired Bert Fields and Lee Phillips, who were attorneys for Geffen, and later, Allen Gruman. As his management team fell into place, Michael paraded through Neverland in "Windsor red robes, imitating a king. He even wore a gold crown," his housekeeper, Blanca Francia, would later claim. That was not all Francia would

claim in the years ahead, based on her having introduced Michael to her son, Jason. But before that happened, she witnessed the arrival of young Wade Robson at Neverland where he became one of Michael's all-time special friends. This eight-year-old Australian from Brisbane, with his platinum blond crew-cut, was exceedingly handsome with a certain macho air about him. Wade had been born in 1982, Michael in 1958, but they quickly became "great pals" in spite of the age difference.

Sandy Gallin

Wade later claimed that, like Michael, he'd shown an affinity for dancing "even before I was out of diapers." Michael had met him in 1987 when he was only five years old. Wade had recently won a dance contest. At one of his Australian concerts, Michael had invited him up on the stage. Later, Michael said that "Wade showed off moves dancers ten years his senior couldn't have pulled off." The young boy had learned to dance by watching Michael's music videos, especially "Thriller."

Michael invited the Robsons and their son to California. After a short stay, Wade's father seemed none too happy with the arrangement and returned to Australia. But Wade's mother, Joy, found Neverland "the happiest place on earth." She was soon on Michael's payroll and given a shiny new RollsRoyce.

Joy roomed in the guest cottage, and Wade was invited for nightly sleepovers in Michael's bedroom. Soon Michael had nicknamed him "The Little One," and was very affectionate with the boy.

Michael and Wade often danced together, and Michael became so impressed with Wade that he cast him in such videos as "Black or White," "Jam," and "Heal the World." Some of Michael's casting demands stirred up a lot of unfavorable press. Michael strong-armed Pepsi into hiring Wade for a commercial, even though the role should have gone to an African Americannot a blond-haired white boy.

In the commercial, Michael sat at a piano, singing "I'll Be There." Tenyear-old Wade played a young Michael, his blond crew-cut concealed by an Afro wig and his porcelain white skin darkened by computerized colorization. Having a white child play young Michael was soundly condemned by African-American publications.

As Wade grew older and Michael moved on to other special friends, Wade became successful on his own, directing stage shows and videos for such stars as Usher and Britney Spears. He would later spearhead the Wade Robson Project on MTV, a dance version of American Idol.

In 2005 when Michael went on trial on charges of child molestation, both Wade and his mother, Joy, came back into Michael's life. Prosecutors wanted to know exactly what happened between Wade and Michael during his sleepovers at Neverland in the early 90s.

Bert Fields

On the witness stand, Wade admitted to sleeping in the same bed with Michael but claimed that nothing sexual ever took place. "We slept in the same bed, but we both were fully dressed in pajamas. It's a huge bed. He sleeps on one side, and I sleep on the other."

Under severe cross-examination by prosecutor Ron Zonen, Wade admitted to other sleepovers, not only at Neverland, but at his mother's apartment in Hollywood, at Michael's secret condo hideaway at Century City, and even in a hotel suite in Las Vegas.

Wade Robson

Wade refuted another eyewitness, Blanca Francia, Michael's maid. In front of the world, she claimed that she once found Michael and Wade in bed together-"and they were naked from the waist up." Whether true or not, she also claimed that she walked into Michael's bathroom, finding Wade and Michael laughing and showering together. On the tiled floor she spotted Michael's white BVDs and the boy's "neon green Spiderman briefs," which she often laundered. On the stand, she claimed she slipped out of the bathroom without either Michael or Wade noticing her.

When asked to confirm or deny the maid's testimony, Wade said, "It simply never happened."

The prosecutor zeroed in on Wade. "If you knew that the person, the thirty-five-year-old man who was sleeping with an eight-year-old boy, possessed a great quantity of sexually explicit material, would that cause you concern about that person's motivations while he was in bed with a boy?"

Wade looked uncomfortable and paused a long time before answering. "Yes," he said in what amounted to a whisper.

Zonen forced Wade to look at a book seized at Neverland. Called Boys Will Be Boys, it featured naked pictures of young boys aged 10 to 13. His face growing stern, his shoulders drooping, Wade was also forced to look at another book, A Sexual Study of Man, in which masturbation, oral sex, and sodomy were depicted.

"Would you be concerned about a person who possesses that book crawling into bed with a ten-year-old boy?" Zonen asked.

"Yes, I guess so," Wade said in a soft voice.

It is believed that Wade's testimony about his long-ago sleepovers at Neverland went a long way in helping Michael retain his freedom.

As charismatic as Wade was, an even more charismatic blond-haired boy entered Michael's life after Michael saw the box office hit, Home Alone: Macaulay Culkin.

At Neverland, Michael watched the film repeatedly. One day he saw it three times. His staff felt that he had become obsessed with Macaulay, at least with what he saw on the screen. He hastily invited the beautiful young boy to Neverland, and Macaulay called with his acceptance. The first time he spoke with the Home Alone child, Michael must have stayed on the phone for at least three hours.

He seemed mesmerized by the sound of Macaulay's voice and eagerly awaited his arrival at Neverland. "I never knew him to show so much excitement in his life," a security guard claimed.

Michael immediately ordered posters from the movie, depicting Macaulay with his hands on his face screaming. The concept was based on the famous painting, The Scream, by Edvard Munch.

Wade all grown up

Macaulay Culkin, the most famous and the richest child star of his time, was born in New York on August 26, 1980. By 2005 he would play himself in archival footage appropriately titled "Michael Jackson's Boys" for TV.

"Mack," as he's known to his intimates, broke into show business at the age of four, appearing in a bevy of off-Broadway shows.

After writer John Hughes recommended that director Chris Columbus cast Macaulay in his script, Home Alone, released in 1990, the rest is movie history. The movie went on to earn $285 million in the U.S. alone, making it one of the highest grossing movies in the history of the cinema. Internationally, Home Alone would gross $550 million.

His next film, My Girl (1991), was another hit for Macaulay and featured his very first screen kiss. In 1992 he filmed Home Alone 2: Lost in New York, and it was another hit. In 1993 Macaulay earned $5 million for appearing in The Good Son playing a murderous little demon. In contrast, his salary for the first version of Home Alone was $100,000.

The child star's luck changed in 1994 when he turned 14 and appeared in a series of duds, including The Pagemaster, Getting Even with Dad, and Richie Rich. For the last two films, he was paid $8 million, the highest fee

ever for a child star. When the most famous child star of all time, Shirley Temple Black, heard this, she said, "I worked for peanuts-perhaps a banana or twoin the 1930s."

After his early success, it was a long road downhill, although Macaulay was considered for the male lead in Titanic in 1997. He lost the role, of course, to Leonardo DiCaprio.

Macaulay and Michael, after they first met, bonded on the issue of show business fathers. "Michael and I had an understanding about my difficulties with my father. He knew what that was all about. He'd lived some of my shit with his own father. It's not like I can just bump into people on the street and say, `Oh, you too!' It doesn't happen that often. Michael's still a kid. I'm still a kid. We're both going to be about eight years old forever in some place because we never had a chance to be eight when we actually were. That's the beautiful and the cursed part of our lives."

A former stage and child actor, Christopher (Kit) Culkin was his son's manager for a while. There were many disagreements. At one point Macaulay claimed that his father "was overbearing-very controlling."

Macaulay Culkin and MJ

When the cheeky ingenue with the impish grin arrived at Neverland, Michael was captivated.

Macaulay found Neverland "a child's dream-every kind of soda in the world there, every kind of candy. A two-floor arcade, a carnival, and a movie theater. Neverland is still the only place on earth where I feel absolutely, onehundred percent comfortable."

When not playing video games at Neverland, Macaulay and Michael were often spotted at various California malls, shopping for toys. Their shopping carts would overflow with talking robots, water blasters, and battery-powered laser guns. On one occasion, Michael bought Macaulay a twelve-inch doll bearing the likes of Kevin McCallister, the suburban imp the child star portrayed in Home Alone.

One salesclerk told the press that "the two giggled their way up the aisleokay for Culkin since he was only a kid, but a bit suspicious for a thirty-fouryear-old man."

At one of the shopping malls, both Michael and Macaulay were recognized. "I think Jackson became really

jealous of the Culkin kid," said the owner of a local store. "These girls were so young that Jackson seemed old enough to be their father. They were screaming for Culkin like he was all four Beatles in one little boy. Jackson stood by and watched the adulation of these pre-teen fans. It must have brought back memories of when he was a child star."

Michael's younger brother, Kieran Culkin, born in 1982, was also invited for sleepovers at Neverland. Like Macaulay, Kieran was an actor, appearing in the remake of Father of the Bride in 1991 and Nowhere to Run in 1993. Kieran had made his debut playing Macaulay's cousin in the 1990 Home Alone. He would later go on to bigger movies such as the The Cider House Rules, released in 1999.

"Kit" Culkin, Macaulay's father, maintained that no abuse of his children ever took place during their visits to Neverland. He did, however, discover Rory, Macaulay's two-year-old brother, sitting on the floor with Michael, both drinking from baby bottles.

In June of 1991 Michael invited Macaulay and his parents for a vacation in Bermuda, and they accepted. The most cynical members of the press hinted that the King of Pop and the beautiful blond-haired child actor were actually "on a honeymoon."

Macaulay and Michael stayed at the Hamilton Princess in the penthouse suite, with the Culkin parents located in less spectacular digs on the sixth floor. On the island, Michael and Macaulay played games, shopped, and went swimming or diving. When devilish, they dropped water-filled balloons on passing tourists seven floors below.

In Bermuda, Michael did not endear himself to the local populace. When a taxi driver told him there were fewer than 60,000 people who lived on the island, Michael shot back: "I draw more fans than that at one of my concerts."

At one point in their Bermuda vacation, Michael and Macaulay were seen riding the waves in a speedboat. Their captain was H. Ross Perot, who maintained a lavish summer home on island. He'd failed in his bid for the presidency, losing to Bill Clinton.

In Bermuda, Macaulay told a journalist, "Michael is fantastic, he's not weird."

Bored with the entertainment possibilities on Bermuda, Michael, on June 21, 1991, paid for the private performance of a musical to be presented at his hotel for Macaulay and his parents.

After Bermuda, Macaulay and Michael flew to Disney World in Florida, enjoying the amusements there for a few days before winging their way back to Los Angeles in a private jet. The rest of Michael's staff returned to California aboard conventional commercial flights..

Kieran Culkin

The intense bonding between the child star and Michael continued. On August 26, Macaulay arrived at Neverland to celebrate his 11th birthday.

So enchanted was Michael with Macaulay that he couldn't wait for him to finish his location shoot on the set of Home Alone 2. Michael flew to Winnetka, Illinois, to visit with his special friend.

Reportedly, Michael was disappointed when Macaulay told him he was marrying Rachel Miner in June of 1998. Both the bride and groom were only seventeen, Michael predicted the marriage wouldn't last. And it didn't. Rachel and Macaulay were divorced in August of 2000.

When Michael, by whatever means, became the father of "Prince Michael I," he asked Macaulay to be the godfather of his infant son, and the former child star eagerly accepted.

Once a picture materialized of Michael's first child, a baby with blond hair and a cherubic face, bloggers went to work, claiming that Macaulay was not only the godfather of Prince Michael I but had supplied the semen for the artificial insemination. This report cannot be confirmed.

Michael reportedly urged Macaulay not to sign on for the role of a gay club kid who kills a drug dealer in the edgy drama, Party Monster, released in 2003. The co-director of Party Monster, Fenton Bailey, said, "It doesn't matter how good Macaulay is in the film. The question is, Will people allow him to re-invent himself after a time in the wilderness?" He was referring to Macaulay's "retirement" from the screen. Apparently, the answer was no. Millions of Home Alone fans stayed away from Party Monster.

Most of Michael's special friends ended their relationship with the superstar when one of them turned fourteen. Not so with Macaulay. The friendship endured the turn of the millennium. "I love him," Macaulay once said. "He's a good friend of mine. He's affectionate but he never touched me or interfered with me."

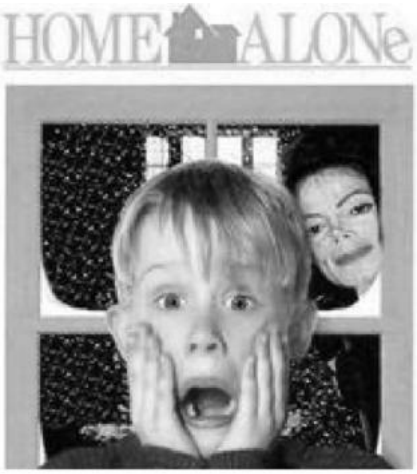
Michael stood by Macaulay's side as the child actor suffered through intense agoraphobia and panic attacks, which sometimes made it impossible for him to leave his bedroom. From the first, Michael was sympathetic to Macaulay's plights, as he too had suffered these same panic attacks. He noticed that Macaulay fidgeted constantly. He'd run his hands through his beautiful blond hair, and he was also in the habit of playing with the rubber bands he frequently wore like bracelets on his wrists.

Like Michael, Macaulay had a horror of being recognized by fans who still remembered him from his Home Alone days. To disguise his blond looks, he sometimes dyed his hair a rainbow of shades. He admitted to Michael that he frequently spent eight hours a day in his bathroom, regarding it as a "sanctuary." He even installed a TV and DVD system there to keep him amused. "It's a rather tortured existence," he admitted.

Macaulay, all grown up.

To calm his nerves, Macaulay was taking the anti-anxiety drug, Xanax, along with Clonazepam, an addictive sedative used to treat chronic nervousness and seizures. These drugs, along with marijuana, were discovered in his car during his arrest in Oklahoma on September 17, 2005, on a charge of speeding. When police discovered the pot

and the medication without prescriptions, he was arrested, later pleading guilty to misdemeanor drug charges.



At the time of Michael's child sex trial in 2005, Macaulay had turned twenty-four. Consistently, he admitted having shared Michael's bed at Neverland, but staunchly denied that "anything untoward happened."

Staff members at Neverland contradicted Macaulay's defense of Michael. Philippe LeMarque who served as majordomo at Neverland for about ten months after the departure of Mark Quindoy, testified in court about Macaulay and Michael.

On the stand, LeMarque claimed that Michael called him at two o'clock one morning, demanding French fries for Macaulay and himself. When he called security and asked the whereabouts of "Silver Fox" (Michael's code name), a guard claimed he was in the video arcade. Entering from the more obscure second door, LeMarque claimed that as he came in, "I saw Michael groping the kid," meaning Macaulay. "He did not see me, so I stopped and quietly tiptoed back and re-entered through the other door."

Adrian Marie McManus, a former maid at Neverland, also took the stand, claiming that Michael groped Macaulay in a "smooch session" in the library at Neverland. She told jurors that she spied Michael planting "his razor-thin lips all over the young Home Alone star's face-and rubbing his hands on his body. I was coming out of the bathroom by his bedroom where I was cleaning up the area. I could see Mr. Jackson in the library. He was kissing him on his cheek. His hand was by his leg at his rear end." She also testified that the child star lived up to his reputation as a trouble maker.

McManus had replaced Blanca Francia as Jackson's personal chambermaid. A middle-aged Latina, McManus worked at Neverland from August 1990 to July of 1994 which was the "peak" of the bizarre friendship between Michael and Macaulay.

On May 11, 2005, Macaulay took the stand in Michael's trial, calling accusations that he was molested "absolutely ridiculous." Macaulay bridled at prosecutor Ron Zonen's suggestion that Michael might have molested him without his knowledge while he was sound asleep. "I find that unlikely," Macaulay told the court.

He was even questioned about the pornography police seized from Michael's bedroom. "Overall, he's still a human being," Macaulay said. "I don't find it inappropriate." He added that at the age of twelve he kept a copy of Playboy under his bed.

Macaulay's 45-minute appearance on the witness stand was viewed by legal analysts as a brilliant performance. Former prosecutor Ann Bremner, said, "He's a great witness. Unflappable. Jurors are well aware that Culkin is a trained actor."

Macaulay is so rich today he doesn't have to work unless he wants to. Just how rich is he? He once said, "I

could sit around with my thumb up my butt watching TV and my kids would still go to college."

In the post millennium, the sweet-faced young boy, who became filmdom's most unexpected superstar, said, "I've had all the fame anyone could want, and I ran away from it. Maybe Michael will do the same thing one day."

At the time Michael was involved with Macaulay, he launched a faux affair with Madonna, each hoping for-and getting-maximum tabloid exposure.

Representatives of both Madonna and Michael each alerted the press and the paparazzi that they'd be dining together at the chic Ivy Restaurant in Los Angeles. Madonna arrived dressed in vampiric black, and Michael was attired in angelic white satin. Although the meeting had been touted as a romantic rendezvous, each of the two rivals left in separate limousines. It was almost impossible for two such widely diverse personalities to overcome their jealousies and actually like each other, but once it was launched, the show had to be played out.

"You might have been the hottest pop artist of the 80s," Madonna said to Michael. "But Prince, George Michael, and Whitney Houston-and moi-certainly gave you a run for your money in the second half of that decade."

Material Girl

"All of you are very good," Michael said in a voice so low it was almost a whisper.

Not getting the response she obviously wanted, Madonna ribbed Michael. "So you made one big album and a Pepsi commercial where you caught your coiffure on fire."

Michael became defensive. "The world has recognized me as its greatest entertainer. I'm the biggest."

Madonna reminded him that newspapers and magazines polled in 1989 had named her "Artist of the Decade." Michael had nothing to say to that. Nor did he need to be reminded. When that news had been announced, an enraged Michael had called his manager at the time, Frank DiLeo. "Was it Madonna who recorded Thriller?" Michael screamed into the telephone. "Madonna who produced the best-selling album of all time? I think not!"

Madonna didn't stop there. "Honeychild, at the end of the 90s, I'll also be voted Number One Artist of the Decade. Not Prince. Not Whitney Houston. Not Bruce Springsteen. Not George Michael, and you can forget Phil Collins." She deliberately left Michael off the list. "Madonna will be the Mamma Mia of that decade too."

"How do I fit into this picture?" Michael asked, obviously peeved at her provocation.

Madonna answered, but it wasn't what he expected. "When I'm tired of one of my toy boys, I'll pass him on to you."

Michael requested carrot juice blended with spinach when the waiter approached, Madonna preferring a stronger libation. After the waiter left, she looked at Michael skeptically, as if annoyed. "The restaurant is candlelit," she said. "You don't need sunglasses." She reached for his glasses, jerked them off, and threw them to the floor, stomping them with her stiletto heel.

"Don't try to hide from the world behind sunglasses," Madonna warned him. "Be comfortable with yourself whether it's with a boy-even a woman, God forbid-or perhaps a menage a trois." Her outrageous talk shocked him. "I lost my virginity to a woman," she claimed. "Moira McPharlin. She fingerfucked me."

At one point during dinner, she turned to him. "I don't like blow jobs. But I do like getting head-but only nonstop for a day and a half. What about you?"

"Oh, Madonna," Michael said, giggling into his napkin.

To blow Michael's mind, at least according to one of Madonna's gay dancers, she told Michael, "Of all the people I've bedded, do you know who's the best hung in Hollywood? Sandra Bernhard."

The staff at the Ivy did what it could to keep the paparazzi away from Madonna and Michael, not knowing that the two mega-stars wanted to be photographed and have their pictures in the tabloids.

Later that night, Michael was heard saying, "Madonna sure knows how to market herself. If only she could sing and dance." This was just one of many digs at his rival-all in a similar vein-that he would make over the course of her career.

When Cher heard about the outrageous publicity Madonna was getting by exploiting Michael, she said, "Madonna could afford to be a little more mag nanimous and a little less of a cunt!"

Madonna agreed to be Michael's "date" for the 63rd annual Academy Awards ceremony. As the paparazzi went wild, Madonna arrived in a white sequined Bob Mackie gown wearing $20 million dollars worth of diamonds on loan. Her dress was cut so low she almost had a wardrobe malfunction.

People Weekly wrote that "Michael Jackson looked positively legendary in gold-tipped cowboy boots, a blinding diamond brooch and-in a dramatic sartorial departure-two gloves."

Barbara Walters, speaking on TV, said, "They looked like caricatures, they seemed untouched, larger than life." Privately, Walters (and this rumor cannot be confirmed) claimed that she felt Madonna was exhibiting Michael "the way a Bearded Lady might be put in a circus of long ago."

Before millions of fans around the world, Madonna sang Stephen Sondheim's "Sooner or Later," which had been nominated for Best Song from the film, Dick Tracy, in which she'd co-starred with her lover of the moment, Warren Beatty. Much to Michael's obvious discomfort, the song won the Oscar.

After the ceremony ended, Michael escorted Madonna to the uber-trendy Spago's for an Oscar bash. Michael greeted many stars he knew casually, including Anjelica Huston, with whom he'd appeared in Captain EO. After their entrance, once Madonna and Michael had their pictures taken, they split up. Michael was seen chatting with Diana Ross, with whom he still maintained an uneasy relationship.

He reacted in horror as Madonna spotted Beatty. "Hey, Warren," she shouted. "Some guys in the press are asking me how big your dick is. I told them I never measured it. I hope that was the right answer."

Actually, Madonna, or so it was reported, wanted to seduce Michael as one of her rapidly growing corps of high-profile conquests. "I've had Prince," she told her bevy of gay dancers. "Why not Michael? Of course, there's a downside. After the mighty sword of Sean Penn, I'm not used to pinpricks." At Michael's expense, the dancers laughed.

A former friend claimed that Madonna was speaking the truth. "It's no joke, size matters to her. She's not

interested in somebody who's not above average. That's why she sought out Mick Jagger, John F. Kennedy Jr., Jack Nicholson, Bob Riley, and toy boy Tony Ward."

Author Andrew Morton, in his biography, Madonna, wrote that Madonna "later told one of her lovers that she indeed tried to seduce Jackson shortly after the Oscars-but confessed that her bedside manner failed to arouse his interest. The same lover recalled her description of the scene: `They were on the couch at his place and she would put the moves on him and he would stick out his tongue for a second. When they touched he would start giggling like a little boy. Nothing happened because he was giggling too much. That was one man she was not able to conquer.'"

In spite of their lack of chemistry, some time later Michael and Madonna were seen once again together at Spago's. As rumor had it, they were going to perform a duet on Michael's upcoming album, Dangerous. But nothing came of it. The two artists were simply incompatible.

At dinner, Michael preferred unseasoned boiled carrots, while Madonna ordering more sophisticated fare. The meal lasted three hours, and the couple was seen leaving the restaurant arm-in arm, then went their separate ways in separate limousines.

The press continued with its media buzz about the two superstars. It must be assumed that journalists who wrote these romantic fantasies didn't actually believe them, even for a moment. On April 15, 1991, Madonna and Michael shared the cover of People magazine, but staff members hardly predicted the sound of wedding bells in their future.

The press queried Madonna about those rumors of a romance. She didn't really answer the question but proposed something else. "I have this whole vision about Michael. We're considering working on a song together. I would like to completely re-do his whole image. Give him a Caesar. You know, that really short haircut, and I want to get him out of those buckly boots and all that stuff. What I want him to do is to go to New York and hang out for a week with the House of Extravaganza, a group of vogue-ers. They could give him a new style. I said, `Could you give this guy a make-over for me?' because I think that's really what he needs."

Madonna stealing MJ's "crotch" move

Daringly, she made it clear to the press that she felt Michael "was in the closet." As depicted in her film, Truth

or Dare, she was one of the most gay-friendly artists in the business, surrounding herself with gay dancers. Jokingly, but with a dash of conviction, she suggested that her dancing entourage of boys could help Michael "come out."

She even described what an evening with Michael was like. "First I beg him not to wear his sunglasses and of course he complies, because I'm stronger than he is. Then we exchange powder puffs-we both powder our noses-and we compare bank accounts."

Reportedly, Michael raged for days when Forbes magazine in September of 1991 published its list of the highest-paid entertainers. Madonna ranked number four with a two-year earning streak of $63 million. Michael had fallen to number five with a combined two-year gross of $60 million. Madonna sent him an autographed picture of herself. On it she scrawled: "Eat your heart out, Michael! I've got bigger tits too."

Again, Michael went into a rage at Neverland, firing three employees that day who got on his nerves. "That heifer! Damn her!"

When Madonna learned that Michael was referring to her as a heifer, she shot back, "I'd rather be a cow than a drag queen from outer space."

Madonna wasn't the only one casting an envious eye toward Michael. Sibling rivalry was rampant within his own family, as Janet competed furiously with Michael on the charts. June of 1991 found older brother Jermaine not exactly concealing his jealousy of Michael from the tabloids. "I could have been Michael," Jermaine claimed. "It's all a matter of timing, a matter of luck."

That same month, Jermaine released "Word to the Badd" to the world at large. The song was highly critical of Michael, attacking his bleaching creams and his endless plastic surgery.

Reconstructed. Been abducted. Don't know who you are. Once you were made. You changed your shade. Was your color wrong? Could not turn back. It's a known fact. You were too far gone.

When he heard the recording, a furious Michael called his mother, Katherine, ordering Jermaine to be evicted from Hayvenhurst, the Encino compound. Michael owned most of the property.

Since he also paid the bills on the compound, he had that right. Only the intervention of the matriarch of the family pleading with Michael kept Jermaine from getting the boot. "Your brother's got no place to go," Katherine pleaded. Eventually she won a reprieve for Jermaine. Michael visited Hayvenhurst only rarely. When he did, Jermaine was ordered to keep out of his sight.

"Word to the Badd" was released during the same week as "Black or White," Michael's hit single. The two brothers battled on the public air waves, with Michael emerging the victor, of course.

Appearing in London on the BBC, Jermaine attempted to explain why he wrote a song so highly critical of his brother, an almost unprecedented event in the music industry.

"I tried to put some phone calls to him and I didn't get a reply. It's a number of things but it's nothing that we couldn't have worked out had we spoken. But I wasn't granted an opportunity. The overall message is an older brother telling a younger brother to get back to reality."

Michael was irked at the snide comments made by both Jermaine and Madonna. But he flew into a rage when he heard reports claiming he had an "unnatural relationship" with Macaulay Culkin. He decided that a counterattack was needed to fight against press reports, some of which left the clear suggestion that he was a pedophile, long before such accusations were officially charged.

Michael wanted his publicists to spread stories that he was having a series of involvements with beautiful young women. Shoshana Hawley, a Las Vegas showgirl, was singled out as a suitable "date" for Michael.

They were spotted four times attending a pageant at the Excalibur Hotel in Las Vegas. One newspaper wrote a

completely misleading story about Hawley and Michael, headlining it, SPARKS FLY BETWEEN DANGEROUS DUDE AND CASINO CUTIE. There were even reports that Michael and Hawley were spending days at a time in his hotel suite in Vegas.

The press got it all wrong. Michael was spending his nights in a sleepover with Brett Barnes, a ten-year-old, good-looking boy from Australia, where Wade Robson had originated. Brett, like Macaulay, was destined to become one of Michael's all-time "special friends."

Only two years behind schedule, "Black or White" was the first single released from Michael's upcoming album, Dangerous. On its first day of release, Michael triumphed over Madonna playing on 96% of 237 of the nation's Top Forty radio stations. With her "Like a Prayer," Madonna had set a previous record of 94%.

Before Christmas of 1991, "Black or White" was the number one single in the country on Billboards top Pop Singles Chart, making it the fastest rising single since The Beatles released "Let It Be." Through Christmas and into the first of the year, 1992, "Black or White" held strong. In music history, Michael became the first performer to have number one pop hits in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Before sales died down, Michael eventually sold one million copies of "Black or White."

Production costs associated with the "Black or White" video rose to an astonishing $7 million. Michael brought back John Landis who had done such a brilliant job in directing the "Thriller" video. This time around, Michael and Landis often bitterly disagreed on how to film the video. At one point, Michael shut down production and retreated to his trailer, where he refused to come out for the rest of the afternoon. Thanks partly to this extravagant diva behavior, costs soared.

The eleven-minute video, or so the PR hype would have us believe, was designed to promote racial harmony throughout the world. Michael appeared in the video with Balinese dancers, American Indians, a tribesman from the Sudan, and Macaulay Culkin. Still enchanted with Macaulay, Michael had cast the young boy in the video. The Home Alone star was one of a group of children surrounding Michael.

Many of the fast-escalating costs of the video were associated with having Macaulay on the set. With Michael, he fired squirt guns and tossed waterfilled balloons at the crew. Tiring of that, the child star and Michael set off stink bombs, testing the patience of Landis. As a further insult to the director, he had to endure a custard pie in the face, a gift from Michael that was hurled in imitation of a gag from the silent screen.

"We had to put up with unbelievable shit," said one of the crew members. "It was disgusting. We could forgive this Home Alone kid. He was just a devilish imp. But Michael Jackson! What the hell! This silly little turd is pushing forty and acting like an eight-year-old on drugs."

Another crew member claimed that Michael "was completely infatuated with the boy and would let him do anything. When I got a lemon meringue pie in my face, I wanted to plow my fist into both of them. But, then, I would never work another day in Hollywood, and I have a wife and kids to support. I find both Jackson and Culkin arrogant little pricks. They seemed to think they own the world, and, I guess, at that point in their lives they did. We had to take their shit and smile. Incidentally, I hate lemon meringue pie. If it'd been chocolate fudge, I might have forgiven them."

When the video for "Black or White" was released, it is estimated that some 550 million fans around the world saw it, watching in fascination as a panther on screen was transformed, through a skilful use of computer graphics, into Michael.

In no previous video had Michael been so sexually explicit. He not only caressed and grabbed at his crotch, but was seen zipping up his fly. Thousands upon thousands of protests came in to the Fox network, which had exclusive rights to air the video. Fans objected to both the blatant sex and also to the depictions of crime and violence. Michael is seen smashing the windows of a parked car and tossing the steering wheel through a shop window.

After meeting with Fox executives, Michael agreed to cut the last four minutes of the "Black or White" video.

He issued a statement to the press:

"It upsets me to think that Black or White' could influence any child or adult to destructive behavior either sexual or violent. I've always tried to be a good role model and therefore have made these changes to avoid any possibility of adversely affecting any individual's behavior. I deeply regret any pain or hurt that the final segment of Black of White' has caused children, their parents or other viewers. "

Controversy over the video launched a media blitz. One newspaper suggested that "Jackson has really gone insane with this one." The furor only goaded the public's interest, which was a good omen for the eventual release of the album, Dangerous.

Michael wasn't the only Jackson sibling generating comment in the press. Stories were rampant that La Toya was writing a tell-all memoir and shopping it to New York publishers.

La Toya, born in 1956, never obtained the fame as a singer that Michael and Janet did. What resentment she has about that is best left to her private thoughts. She'd had such minor achievements as hitting #17 on the Billboard Singles Charts in 1980 with her recording of "If You Feel the Funk." The first Jackson woman to have a solo career, she released her first album in 1980 and went on to record six albums, four in the 90s. Her biggest hits were "You're Gonna Get Rocked," "Heart Don't Lie," and "Bet'cha Gonna Need My Lovin'."

La Toya didn't have the voice, the charisma, or the dancing skills of either Michael or Janet, and her career eventually fizzled. Even abandoning Polydor Records for RCA produced only lukewarm results among the record-buying public.

As he worked on his own Dangerous album, and pursued his own diversions, Michael grew increasingly disturbed about what La Toya might write about him in her memoirs. He'd already been embarrassed by the publication of Katherine's book, even though his mother, predictably, was kind to him. But he feared La Toya's recollections, especially if she printed stories about his being molested as a child. For some reason, he seemed to dread this type of revelation more than anything else she might tell a world audience. He ordered John Branca, who was his attorney at the time, to write La Toya a letter, threatening a lawsuit if such revelations were made.

Dominated by her parents for years, La Toya was demonstrating independence for the first time in her life. Papa Joe himself had picked a shadowy figure, Jack Gordon, to help manage La Toya's career. For four years, he'd run a Nevada whorehouse. He'd also spent some time in prison.

Gordon had once tried to bribe Harry Reid during his tenure, in 1978, as chairman of Nevada's Gaming Control Board. For $12,000, Gordon wanted Reid to approve two new, carnival-like gaming devices for casino use. Reid allowed the FBI to videotape the attempted bribe. At one point, as registered on the videotape, Reid put his hands around Gordon's neck and said, "You son of a bitch, you tried to bribe me." Gordon was subsequently arrested, convicted in federal court in 1979, and sentenced to six months in prison.

Reid eventually went on to greater glory, becoming the senior United States Senator from Nevada and the Senate Majority Leader during the admin istration of "the second Bush."

In 1988, La Toya, to the surprise and horror of her family, fled from Hayvenhurst with Gordon. In September of 1989, La Toya, age thirty-three, married Gordon, provoking yet another violent reaction from her family. After her marriage, La Toya telephone Katherine. "I've disowned you," La Toya shouted into the phone. "All of you."

Hoping to make a fast buck, it was Gordon who was urging La Toya to write the tell-all. Gordon claimed, accurately or not, that Michael called one night to offer his sister $12 million if she'd drop plans to publish her memoirs. La Toya has never confirmed that.

Gordon himself had once confronted Papa Joe and Katherine with a proposal. For $5 million, he claimed that he could get La Toya to stop writing. Although Gordon may have exaggerated the millions, it is believed that there were behind-the-scenes offers to get La Toya to dispense with her book.

In 1991 the respected writer, J. Randy Taraborrelli, was set to publish his unauthorized biography, Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness. The author's literary agent, Bart Andrew, revealed to the media that agents on Michael's behalf had offered $2 million not to publish the book. Taraborrelli allegedly refused, claiming that he could not be bought off.

La Toya and Gordon found interest in her memoirs at Putnam. When he heard this, Michael threatened to purchase the publishing firm for $85 million and suppress the memoirs. It was the editors at Putnam themselves who turned down La Toya's memoirs after reading the first draft-"not enough juice." She eventually found a willing publisher at Dutton, which issued her memoirs in 1991.

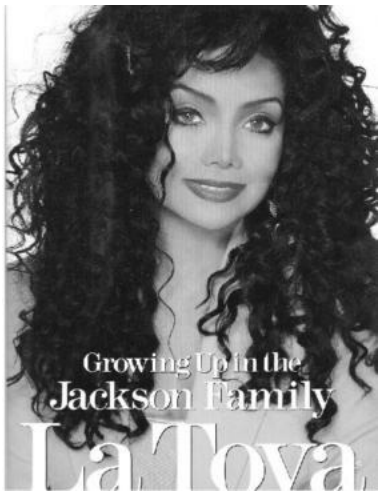
For her book, a gleeful La Toya was paid $500,000, and she could only note that that was $200,000 more than Jackie Onassis at Doubleday had paid for Moonwalk.

La Toya's memoirs hit The New York Times bestseller list and remained there for several weeks, eventually selling more than one million copies.

Michael escaped condemnation in her memoirs, but La Toya didn't spare either Papa Joe or Katherine. She wrote of her father's brutality not only to her but to her brothers and sisters. She claimed that Joe once beat her and left her bleeding on the bathroom floor of their Gary, Indiana, bungalow. She said that her brothers just stepped over her when they wanted to use the bathroom, as they feared getting involved.

At the last minute, La Toya pulled the plug on an allegation of sexual abuse at the hands of her father, although in media interviews, she suggested that she had been a victim of incest.

La Toya and Katherine had once been "best friends," but in her book, La Toya turned on her mother, revealing her not as a kindly matriarch, but as a Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde. She went on to assert that at one point her mother offered her medication that she knew could kill her if she took it.



La Toya's autobiography

One startling statement in La Toya's memoirs, perhaps engineered to cause maximum embarrassment to Katherine, claimed that her mother said that "Hitler's one mistake-he didn't kill all those Jews. He left too many damn Jews on this earth, and they multiplied."

The talk-show/tabloid circuit went for La Toya big-time, as interviewers goaded her to reveal even more shocking allegations about her family than she already had in print. She did detail the physical and psychological abuse she and her eight brothers and sisters had endured at the hands of Papa Joe. She even claimed that Joe and Katherine once tried to kidnap her and bring her back to Hayvenhurst to break her emotional involvement with her

manager, Jack Gordon.

Like Michael, La Toya had been raised as a Jehovah's Witness. She asserted that the elders of the church had ordered Michael never to speak to her again because she had "missed too many meetings." She found him sobbing on Janet's bed. He couldn't go through with the harsh dictates of his cruel church, and they maintained their friendship until Michael freed himself from the dictates of this cult.

Although a darling of the media, because she made "hot copy," La Toya came in for her share of attacks. One reporter wrote, "Michael may have earned the moniker `Wacko Jacko,' but La Toya is as crazy as any of her siblings. With a modicum of talent and a lot of nerve, she has parlayed her name into a career. She has received more publicity for her antics than for any of her recordings."

Harry Reid

In 1987 La Toya had electrified her fans by posing nude for Playboy. Some eight million copies of the magazine sold within one month. It was the most sensational issue since nude pictures of Marilyn Monroe were published. When Playboy came out, La Toya's brothers responded in horror, Jermaine calling to denounce her as "a piece of shit."

Michael was more sympathetic, telling her that he knew why she'd posed: To strike back at her parents and at the Jehovah's Witnesses who had brainwashed her for years. He claimed that he grabbed his crotch on the stage for the same reason. "I want them to know I'll do what I want to do. They no longer control who I am."

Sexy Janet

As two-faced as ever, Michael called Katherine and expressed his "moral disgust and total outrage" at La Toya's photographs in Playboy. He informed Katherine that he'd changed his private phone number and vowed never to speak to La Toya again.

Michael had visited Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion and had seen the photographs that La Toya had posed for-"that ruins the family image. That's it! There's nothing left."

The magazine came out with eleven pictures of La Toya. In one she posed naked with a sixty-two pound boa constrictor-not "Muscles"-slithering between her shapely legs, suggesting a massive phallus. La Toya received $1 million from Playboy for the photo session.

Madonna, who was also fond of her own big breasts, seemed jealous of La Toya when Madonna appeared on The Arsenio Hall Show. She claimed that La Toya had undergone breast implants. "I know because people have told me," Madonna charged. "It's obvious that La Toya's bosom has grown in just a week."

La Toya countered, "Madonna is the one who's undergone breast surgery. It was her only chance to look anything like a woman. I saw a photograph of her where she showed one of her new breasts. I've gotta tell you, they're still not as good as mine."

Gordon called Arsenio Hall and offered "my wife for a night," so that the talk show host could determine for himself if La Toya's breasts were real.

Jack Gordon, throughout most of the 1990s, managed not only La Toya but John Wayne Bobbitt, Paula Jones, and even the so-called illegitimate son of Elvis Presley.

On the night of June 23, 1993, Lorena Bobbitt, a manicurist from Ecuador, cut off the penis of her husband, John Wayne Bobbin, as he lay sleeping in their Manassas, Virginia, home. Realizing that her husband's penis might be surgically re-attached, she grabbed the severed appendage and raced off in the family car, flinging it out the window. After a diligent search, the local police located the part and Bobbitt had his manhood restored, after grueling surgery in a nearby hospital.

Gordon sensed there was money to be made in theatrically exploiting Bobbitt. In the main, feminist political activists were against John Wayne Bobbitt and pro Lorena Bobbitt, but millions of American men stood behind him, especially when Lorena later testified that she severed the penis "because he was selfish and wouldn't give me an orgasm."

When Gordon informed Michael of his new client, he was fascinated. Michael was never known for reading newspapers, and he misunderstood the situation. He seemed to think that the penis was discovered but never reattached to its rightful owner.

According to Gordon, Michael made an offer to purchase the penis and to add it to his collection of carefully preserved medical oddities, one of which included a human brain. Gordon never revealed the amount of money Michael was willing to pay for the severed penis, but jokingly said: "It was such a generous offer that I had a good mind to get Bobbitt to agree to have his prick cut off again for Michael."

Bookings were forthcoming for John Wayne Bobbitt, as Gordon managed his career, getting him an appearance on The Howard Stern Show. On the air, the controversial TV host offered Bobbitt $10,000 if he'd whip out his penis and show it to TV land. Bobbitt refused, but he eventually agreed not only to reveal his penis but to show it fully erect, seducing women in a number of XXX-rated films, which were eagerly bought by male collectors.

Bobbitt also played himself in a shameless hardcore docudrama, John Wayne Bobbitt Uncut. Directed by veteran adult film star, Ron Jeremy, the film was delivered to Michael for his viewing pleasure. He reportedly viewed it several times, although critics noted that Bobbitt, after his slicing, "seems to have lost an inch or two." One reviewer wrote, "John Wayne Bobbitt exploits himself to the nth degree, by selling everything he has-all 4'/z inches of it."

La Toya (right) with Patti Labelle 2004

When American men were no longer interested in Bobbin's saga, he broke with Gordon and moved to Nevada where he found work in a brothel. At the same time, and with a certain irony, this staunch Republican also became the minister of a Las Vegas church.

In 1999 he was convicted of grand larceny. He was sentenced to five years pro bation for his role in the theft of more than $150,000 in clothing from a Fallon, Nevada, store. Archie Blake, the district judge, ordered him to pay $5,000 restitution and serve 100 hours of community service. On February 28, 2003, his probation was revoked, and this underground celebrity was sent to prison.

Sexy La Toya, centerfold

Gordon took on another controversial client, and informed Michael that he did not only "plan to make big bucks off of her, but I may topple the U. S. government as well." At first Michael seemed to treat this as an idle boast, until he discovered a news program or two when flipping channels on TV for the next cartoon.

Paula Corbin Jones was born in Lonoke, Arkansas, on September 17, 1966. A former state employee, she would sue President Bill Clinton for sexual harassment, claiming that on May 8, 1991, she was escorted to his hotel room, where Governor Clinton crudely propositioned her. She claimed she'd kept quiet about the incident until 1994.

Fascinated by the case, Michael followed the developing story on TV. He advised Gordon that Jones should undergo rhinoplasty as he himself had done. He also suggested that he was willing to fly Jones to Los Angeles for a possible meeting with Elizabeth Taylor. Michael promised that Elizabeth would get rid of Jones's "big hair" and make up her face in "more subtle shades." The meeting never came off, and Elizabeth may have been completely unaware that her services were being offered to Jones.

Gordon's plans for Paula Jones, including a multi-million dollar book deal, never came off. Clinton eventually paid $850,000 to Jones but issued no apology, in exchange for her agreement to drop her appeal.

Gordon did get Jones in print, securing a deal with Penthouse for her to pose nude. She appeared in the December issue: "PAULA JONES UNCOVERED! She Shows All and Tells All: How the Far Right Used and Abused Her to Destroy Clinton." Michael compared Jones's nude spread with that of La Toya. "La Toya wins," he told some of his brothers. "Clinton chose the wrong girl."

As if Jones and Bobbitt weren't bizarre enough clients, Gordon took on another job to promote the career of "Elvis Presley Jr." His original name was Phillip Stanic, and he was born in the same town as Michael-Gary, Indiana. Phillip entered the world the day before Christmas in 1961.

He later had his name legally changed to Elvis Presley Jr., claiming that his birth mother was Angelique Delores Pettyjohn, a walk-on for Elvis in his movie Blue Hawaii.

Elvis Jr. was short and stocky. He is not handsome and bears little resemblance to the King, but he learned the Elvis moves and transformed himself. In the words of one critic, "He got the look down pat."

Gordon promoted Elvis Jr. as a singer in night clubs, proposing a multimillion dollar deal for Michael to sign a contract for an extravaganza in Vegas, with Elvis Jr. as his opening act. Elvis Jr. said he believed that "my father gave me up for adoption because having a child out of wedlock in that era could have had an adverse affect on his career."

Although Michael refused Gordon's offer, he was intrigued by Elvis Presley Jr. and wanted Gordon to provide him with all the details about the young man's life. Michael was especially intrigued to learn that Elvis Jr. started his career as a clown in the circus at the age of five. By the time he was twelve years old, he was training lions, tigers, and other animals. When only sixteen, he began singing in the lesser-known lounges in Vegas.

Gordon claimed that Michael, in disguise and at his invitation, slipped in to a lounge one night to hear Elvis Jr. sing. "He is not the son of Elvis Presley!" Michael later told Gordon.

Gordon wanted to keep Elvis Jr. impersonating Elvis Sr. as he was in his "Hound Dog" years, complete with jumpsuits and sideburns. But eventually Elvis Jr. pulled the plug. "It wasn't me," he said. "I can't live my life as him."

Unlike Lorena Bobbitt, La Toya didn't cut off Gordon's penis, but their marriage was frequently violent.

On one occasion, in their luxurious New York apartment, Gordon plowed his fist into La Toya's face. Blood splattered on the white marble floor of the couple's bathroom. Before she could escape from his attack, he picked up a heavy oak dining room chair and crashed it into her back. An ambulance carried her to Lenox Hill Hospital where Michael called her the next day, urging her to "dump him." Although she told her brother that she would, she was back with Gordon a few days later.

John Wayne Bobbitt

La Toya wrote of physical and emotional abuse from Gordon for ten years. "He grabbed me and said `I own you,'" she claimed in an interview in 2005 on 20/20.

Earlier she had revealed that her husband had booked her into strip clubs and had falsely advertised that she would appear in the nude. Not only that, but he tried to coerce her into making hard-core porn films.

To Michael's relief, La Toya finally divorced Gordon in 1997. "1 had to get rid of all the cancer in my life, beginning with my husband." She placed the entire blame on her former husband for causing an alienation between Michael and herself and other family members, especially Katherine. The family seemed to accept that explanation, Papa Joe claiming that his daughter had been "brainwashed."

In the spring of 1992, La Toya signed a $5 million year-long deal with the landmark Moulin Rouge in Paris. She was the single greatest attraction ever booked in this world famous theater. "Just think about it," Gordon told her. "You'll appear on the same stage that made Josephine Baker a legend in the 20s."

On that same stage, other acts included an assortment of French comedians, acrobats, jugglers, and one performer who wrestled three live crocodiles plus a topless snake charmer who danced with a six-foot boa constrictor evocative of Michael's "Muscles."

During this time La Toya was also honored as one of the ten best-dressed women in the world by the designers of Milan and Paris.

Fortunately, in ways that perhaps reflected a growing maturity and wisdom, she eventually toured with Bob Hope and the USO in support of the servicemen and women fighting the first Gulf War, and she also worked with Nancy Reagan in her "Just Say No" anti-drug campaign.

The following year, in 1993, when charges of child molestation against Michael were first aired, La Toya, standing alone among the Jacksons, led the attack against him. She accused Michael of paying hush money to the parents of his accusers. "He would stay in his room at Hayvenhurst for days on end with young boys."

At the Wailing Wall in Tel Aviv, Israel, and while accompanied by Gordon, La Toya delivered a statement heard around the world: "I love him a great deal. But I cannot and I will not be a silent collaborator to his crimes against small, innocent children." This was viewed by the media as the harshest and most damning statement one sibling had ever uttered against another in the history of the entertainment industry.

She also renewed charges that her own mother, Katherine, had once again denounced Michael"That damn faggot, I can't stand him."

Paula Jones

Gordon jumped into the fray, charging that "Michael used to have the LAPD in his back pocket-but no more." He also leveled more charges against Michael, claiming that he'd learned that her brother "had paid hit men to assassinate La Toya if she ever returned to America."

Londoners woke up to read The Sun and its screaming headlines: LA TOYA TO BROTHER: CUT OUT THE BOYS! In the story, La Toya claimed that she'd warned Michael five months previously to "stop spending so much time with young boys."

After their divorce, Gordon continued to call La Toya, making threats against her, even death threats. And, post-millennium, he announced plans to "write the tell-all book of tell-alls about La Toya, Michael, and the Jackson family."

He called it Never Neverland: The True Story of the Most Powerful Family in the Music Industry. The slippery Svengali began to release revelations to the press, hoping to interest a publisher in his startling expose.

During his time with La Toya, Gordon claimed that he witnessed Michael "injecting himself with some kind of fluid to whiten his skin. He would look in the mirror and say, `I'm getting lighter, I'm getting lighter.' I don't know what the fluid was, but Jackson was getting lighter. I saw him do it in 1985. Boxes containing this mysterious fluid were delivered to Jackson's house every day."

One night at the Jackson compound in Encino the following year, Gordon claimed that "I saw a monkey set

ablaze as part of a voodoo ritual in the Jackson backyard at Hayvenhurst. They asked me to leave and never talk about it again." Other writers, with credentials more impressive than Gordon's, would also link Michael with voodoo rituals.

In another monkey story-in this case, a tale about a pet chimpanzeeGordon charged that he'd witnessed Michael "abusing his pet chimpanzee, Bubbles. He beat him a lot. I saw him punch him, kick him in the stomach. The chimp was on the ground crying. Jackson used to say `he doesn't feel it. He's just a chimpanzee. I have to discipline him.'" The first of the beatings that Gordon claimed he witnessed occurred in Encino in 1985.

Branca, Michael's attorney at the time, denounced the accusations of Michael's former brother-in-law. "These are all absurd, made-up, outrageous allegations. Consider the source. It's a joke. I don't believe that anyone will believe anything that comes out of Jack Gordon's mouth."

"Elvis Jr."

Nearing the end of his life, Gordon told a reporter, "I've had cancer four times. I feel like the book should have been written a long time ago. It's about time the world learns what the Jackson family, especially Michael, is all about. All that family does is tell one lie after another. Of course, they'll denounce anything I say about them. But I was around them for a long time, and I saw plenty. I've lived long enough to see much of the truth about Michael made public. There's a lot more here that's going on. They want to conceal the truth and claim everybody's a liar. You want the truth? Michael Jackson and all his family have engaged in a deliberate campaign to conceal the truth from their public. With good reason, I might add."

In a November 25, 2003 interview with Rita Cosby, Gordon gave other damaging testimony against Michael.

GORDON: I saw him take children into his bedroom and the children would stay there three or four days and they would come out and there would be a noticeable change in their behavior from a happy child to a very despondent-you know, unhappy child.

COSBY: What do you believe?

GORDON: What do I believe? Well, I believe he's a pedophile.

COSBY: You do?

GORDON: In every sense of the word.

On April 19, 2005, at the age of 66, after a drawn-out battle with cancer, Gordon died in a Las Vegas hospital.

Reportedly, La Toya sent a security expert to eyewitness his burial, wanting to make sure his death was for real. "I was fearful of his lies and death threats," she said.

Upon hearing the news, Michael reportedly said, "The world is now a better place."

After her divorce, La Toya "disappeared" for a number of years. "I didn't know what to do with my life." At one point she started going out again, disguising herself in a suit, mustache, and goatee. "Everyone thought I was a guy," she said. "Actually everybody thought I was Michael. They didn't know if I was a girl or guy."

Her appearance led to media speculation, and rumors spread among the Los Angeles underground that La Toya was a lesbian. The same charges had been leveled against her younger sister, Janet. These charges appeared in a June, 2005, interview that La Toya granted to journalist Paul E. Pratt.

> PRATT: In the song's lyrics, `Just Wanna Dance,' you mention kissing a woman on the neck and dancing chest to chest. Have you had sexual interaction with a woman?
>
> LA TOYA: It's a question I prefer not to answer.
>
> PRATT: What would you like your fans, in particular, your gay fans, to know about La Toya Jackson?
>
> LA TOYA: I want to say that it's because of my fans, in particular my gay fans, because they tend to be a little more outspoken about their feelings,
>
> that I have gotten the inspiration to do this. It's because of them I'm `Startin' Over.'

Her album with the same name was released in 2005.

After years of being sheltered by her parents and under the domination of her husband, La Toya, along with Janet, has emerged as the most sophisticated of the Jackson family. Michael's comments on homosexuality were offensive to the gay community and cost him thousands upon thousands of fans. La Toya proved the more tolerant one. On gay marriage, she said, "It is so difficult in the world for people to find love, true love. When people are in love, I don't see anything wrong with it in the world. If they choose to live their lives and get married, why should we interfere? A lot of people don't agree with me, but that's how I feel."

Imagine Michael making such a socially advanced statement.

Post-millennium, La Toya's views about her brother changed markedly during his renewed charges of child molestation. "We're all behind him 1,000 percent," she said. "The public hears so much that's not true."

She said, "Michael knows my heart. I have always been with him in my heart. He knows the influence of somebody else who made me do something against my will." She was clearly referring to Gordon. "My family knew I didn't want to do what I did, but I couldn't say no."

On 20/20 in 2005, she also said, "I love my brother. Michael is one of the sweetest persons on this earth. You have no idea. He is so misunderstood."

Another woman who loved Michael was Elizabeth Taylor, but not enough to marry him. On his "red hotline," with a direct link to Elizabeth Taylor's Bel Air mansion on 700 Nimes Rd., a call came in for him at midnight. Michael was engaged in a sleepover with Macaulay Culkin.

"Guess what?" said Elizabeth (or so Michael later claimed). "I've gone and done it. I got down on beaded nylon and popped the question to Larry." It was a hot night in June of 1991 when Elizabeth placed the call to Michael, her confidant.

On that very same night, he agreed to host their wedding at Neverland. By July of 1991, Elizabeth was about to enter into her eighth and final marriage, this time to a husky, thirty-six-year-old truck driver, Larry Fortensky, who boasted a six-inch penis, according to a former wife. Elizabeth had met him when both of them were in rehab at the Betty Ford Clinic in 1988.

She told Michael, "I have the hots for him." She also claimed that he planned to continue working even after they were married "because he doesn't want to be a kept man. It's his way of maintaining his balls."

When she met Larry at the rehab center, he'd been driving an off-road Caterpillar dirt compactor. But he'd become a self-described "walking night mare," with his consumption of hard liquor, pills, and pot, and had voluntarily checked himself in.

He soon bonded with Elizabeth. Fellow inmates watched the romance blossom as he hauled her around the grounds in a wheelchair. Outside the clinic, he took her out on their first date together, dropping into McDonald's for their supper. Elizabeth, who had dined in some of the world's greatest palaces, liked the taste of the Big Mac and became addicted to the burgers, which only increased her waistline.

"There's only a twenty-one year age difference between us," Elizabeth told Michael, "but Larry just loves my not-altogether-fallen breasts. We have passionate sex."

When he'd first introduced himself to Elizabeth, Larry had said, "I'm from Stanton, California. Bornthere 100,000 Heinekens ago." He'd been born in 1952 in the wake of Elizabeth's big success with A Place in the Sun opposite Montgomery Clift.

He also told her that he'd gone to Pacifica High School but had dropped out, so he warned her that he wasn't very well educated and dreaded "meeting all your fancy friends."

One of those friends Elizabeth wanted Larry to meet was Michael. Before his association with Elizabeth, Larry had the typical hard-cut prejudice against gay people. From what he'd read, Larry just assumed that Michael was gay.

But they did meet and, in spite of their widely different backgrounds, became friends of a sort. "I don't give a shit if people in the tabloids are making fun of me for marrying a woman so much older," Larry said. "You like to hang out with younger companions. I like to hang out with and make love to an older woman."

Michael said that he didn't see anything wrong with that. "I'm happy if Elizabeth is happy, and she seems to be. But does she really have to pose for that magazine cover holding a condom? Naughty, naughty."

In time, Larry would meet many of Elizabeth's other gay friends, including Roddy McDowall and millionaire Malcolm Forbes.

The "wedding of the year" took place in October of 1991 at Neverland, Michael picking up the tab of $1.5 million. Two American presidents attended, Ronald Reagan with his wife, Nancy, and Gerald Ford. There were 160 other guests.

Larry invited members of his family, except his father with whom he was on the outs, and Elizabeth invited both children and grandchildren. Michael invited his Hollywood Golden Age friends such as Gregory Peck. Merv Griffin arrived with "arm candy," Eva Gabor, and even Diane von Furstenberg put in an appearance and was seen talking to-of all people-Phyllis Diller.

In return for his generous hosting of their wedding, the Fortenskys pre seated Michael with a rare albino bird from the Amazon. It was rumored to have cost Elizabeth $25,000.

After the wedding, Jack Gordon called with another one of the many getrich-schemes he had come up with for Michael. So far, Michael had rejected all of Gordon's "deals," but Gordon never stopped trying until the two men discontinued their association.

Gordon later recalled Michael as saying, "I wanted to marry Elizabeth myself. But I understand why she chose Larry over me. But her marriage has given me an idea. I'm going to get married myself My new bride is not as famous as Elizabeth but her father was."

"Just who might that be?" Gordon asked. "I'm all ears, and I want the rights to the photographic coverage."

"I'm not telling," Michael said. "I haven't even dated her yet."

"What makes you so cocky?" Gordon asked. "Maybe the bitch won't even be attracted to you."

"Sexual attraction is not part of the deal," Michael said adamantly. "There are other things."

"Yeah, money," Gordon snapped.

"That too, to the tune of $15 million dollars."

"For $15 million, I'll marry you myself-and I'm a straight arrow."

"There will be more than money on the table," Michael said. "I'll agree to spend millions more on launching her singing career."

"Oh, my God," Gordon said. "You're going to propose marriage to a singer. I want her management contract."

"You're always wanting something." Michael said, slamming down the phone.

"It's being offstage that's difficult for me. "

--Michael Jackson

"Thank God for Michael Jackson. He has helped me so much. These songs on Dangerous will determine how my career will be. I was worried that people were getting tired of my music. I don't know what the future holds, but whatever happens I'll always have this."

--Teddy Riley

"Michael Jackson is the least weird man I know. My childhood and Michael's childhood are so similar and so strange. "

--Elizabeth Taylor

"Whatever we do whatever we say now well make a vow to keep it in the closet. "

--Michael Jackson "Keep It in the Closet"

"Michael's vision is to present the most spectacular, most state-of-the-art show to the world that it has ever seen, and that's the goal we're moving toward.""

--Benny Collins On the "Dangerous" tour

"I was glad to pose nude for Playboy. It forever squelched the rumor that Michael and I are the same person. "

--La Toya Jackson

"Because with time my skin condition has gotten worse. I have vitiligo and I'm totally allergic to the sun. I'm not even supposed to be outside actually. Even if I'm in the shade, the sun rays can destroy my skin. "

--Michael Jackson

Chapter Eleven

At the dawn of the 1990s, Michael seemed to be making a career out of receiving awards. Most often, he didn't show up to accept these honors. When he did, he became notorious for giving a brief and predictable speech, always of the "thank you very much, I love all of you" variety.

On ABC's Good Morning America, host Charlie Gibson referred to Michael Jackson as "a guy who made one big album and a Pepsi commercial where his hair caught on fire." Appearing with him, Tina Brown, then editorin-chief of Vanity Fair, defended her choice of Michael on the cover of one of that magazine's recent editions. He was pictured with his long hair blowing back in an unseen wind. "We chose Michael Jackson because he is the premier entertainer of our time," Brown said. "He's the biggest!"

Michael did put in an appearance at the Beverly Hilton Hotel for the unveiling of a portrait that he had commissioned of himself. Called "The Book," it depicted Michael in a chair holding a book on his lap. In the background was a statue of Peter Pan. A Japanese businessman paid $2.1 million for the painting. This was the highest amount ever paid for a portrait of a living person. When Whoopi Goldberg heard of this, she remarked sarcastically: "You've got to be kidding!"

With the collaboration of his new manager, Sandy Gallin, Michael took more of a hands-on approach to his own career, leaving Gallin free to pursue his other clients, who included not only Whoopi, but also Dolly Parton and Neil Diamond. When Dolly heard that she and Michael were being managed by the same agent, she was reported to have said, "Don't forget! I have bigger tits than Michael Jackson unless he goes back for plastic surgery again."

Michael refused to attend the 1990 Grammy Awards. It was just as well. If he'd gone, he would have seen Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation 1814" edge out "Moonwalker" for Best Long Form Video of the year.

One award Michael received was later to cause ridicule and embarrass meat. The homophobic Los Angeles Council of the Boy Scouts of America created an award and named it in honor of Michael, its first recipient. On September 14, 1990, he accepted the Michael Jackson Good Scout Humanitarian Award for his "humanitarian efforts" and fund-raising.

Michael Eisner, CEO of the Walt Disney Company, presented the award to Michael, who appeared in a black and gold military costume with sunglasses. In a brief acceptance speech, Michael said, "On behalf of the millions of past, present, and future Boy Scouts, I will try to abide by your motto of being prepared and always extending a hand to others."

Joan Rivers ridiculed his short speech. "I bet he'd like to extend a hand to a cute little boy scout. Why? To `Beat It,' of course!"

Michael slowly moved ahead with his long-delayed new album, Dangerous. He set unrealistic goals for himself, demanding of his back-up musicians that they produce an album that would top the sale of Thriller. Privately, Sandy Gallin had his doubts that Michael would ever top the sale of Thriller. Dangerous would eventually sell thirty million copies worldwide. Michael had an even loftier goal. He said, "I want to create something like Beethoven did so that people would still listen to it in a thousand years from now."

When Forbes magazine published its list of highest paid entertainers for 1990, two black men ranked as number one and two. Michael was furious that he came in after Bill Cosby. "Cosby does a little dance to open the show," Michael said. "But he can't dance. I mean, not a step! And for not being able to dance, he earns $100 million in two years as opposed to me."

With Walter Yetnikoff and John Branca out of the picture, Michael proved a hard-assed negotiator when it came time in 1991 to talk turkey with Sony, the new owner of CBS Records. Tommy Mottola, who would later be denounced by Michael, took over for Yetnikoff.

Up front, Michael demanded an $18 million advance for each album. Not only that, he wanted to split expenses and profits fifty-fifty with Sony, an unheard-of request in the industry. He also wanted to start his own record label. "What next?" Mottola asked. "Pay for his flight to the moon?"

The staff at Neverland reported that Michael shouted and ranted for three days and nights, even firing five of his team, when he learned that sister Janet had signed with Virgin Records for a contract estimated to be as high as $50 million, the largest recording deal in the history of the industry.

Michael struck back, signing a deal with Sony that might bring him up to $1 billion, at least in potential earnings. Not only was the amount unprecedented, but so was the deal, which included film, record, and TV options. The fifteen-year contract, after much bickering, finally granted Michael the right to start his own record label, Nation Records. For being CEO of the company, Michael would be paid $1 million a year.

He also got Sony, again after much bickering, to grant him a seventy percent profit on all video rights. Since Sony owned Columbia Pictures, it was announced that Michael would also be making his first film for that company.

In rebuttal, Janet's people, as they are called in Hollywood, announced that her deal with Virgin Records did in fact exceed "the record segment of the contract" signed by her brother with Sony. But the Wall Street Journal soon shot down Janet's claims, estimating that the record portion of Michael's Sony deal would be "worth at least $60 million," a good $10 million more than the terms defined by his younger sister's contract. Michael's rivalry with his older brother, Jennaine, receded into the background as he seemed to an increasing degree to be pitted against Janet. A fan in Chicago, Laraine Maven, said, "I don't have much allowance to spend in a record store. If it was a question of buying Janet or buying Michael, I'd go for her, since she sings better."

In 1992 the Guinness Book of World Records asserted that Michael's Sony deal was indeed the largest contract ever signed in the music industry.

For his first movie role at Columbia, Michael wanted to depict Little Richard, but so did Eddie Murphy. "Eddie wouldn't be believable as a Tutti Frutti," Michael shouted at Gallin. "I practically own Little Richard. Get the role for me. Tell Eddie to star in ... dare I say the title, Mother Fucker! "

Back at Encino during this time in 1992, Margaret Maldonado Jackson, now living with Jermaine, was in the process of producing a mini-series called The Jacksons: An American Dream. Her problems were detailed in her memoir, Jackson Family Values: Memories of Madness, ghost-written by Richard Hack and published in 1995.

Among Margaret's travails, La Toya threatened legal action if her likeness was used in the mini-series. In January of 1992, a nationwide search that rivaled the hunt for an actress to play Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With the Wind was launched. More than three dozen young actors were needed to portray the Jackson family at three different stages in their lives. Margaret not only had La Toya to deal with, but Michael himself. Reports surfaced, but were later denied, that Michael demanded actors playing him to be white.

December, 1989 edition of Vanity Fair

Margaret finally got Michael to agree on the cast, and made some intriguing choices of her own. In the end, a talented actor, Jason Weaver, played young Michael, with Alex Burrall and Wylie Draper starring at later stages of his life.

Margaret cast Holly Robinson, familiar to audiences for her appearances on 21 Jump Street, as Diana Ross. For her lover, Berry Gordy Jr., Margaret cast Billy Dee Williams. The first black Miss America (later dethroned), Vanessa Williams, was cast as Suzanne de Passe, who, as a Motown executive, played an instrumental role in launching The Jackson 5.

Margaret recalled, "Seeing the actors re-enact segments of their lives brought back all the love, the pain, the anticipation, the heartache, and, in several cases, the anguish as memories came flooding back."

As the head of his own record company, Michael signed up some other family members to his label. But his motives may have been suspect. Some executives at Sony privately claimed that there was a feeling that the King of Pop wanted only one Jackson in the recording studio, Michael himself. Of course, there was nothing he could do about Janet. At this point, she was beyond his financial control.

"I think Michael secretly wanted to sign the other Jacksons as a means of suppressing them instead of promoting them," said a Sony official, speaking confidentially. Michael did release a recording by his older sister, Rebbie, and one by Tito Jackson Jr., both of which showed a great deal of promise, but reportedly he then went on to sabotage the promotion of both of these recordings.

Michael had begun what was for him a long, arduous, and costly project, his long-awaited Dangerous album. In a surprise move, he did not use Quincy Jones as the producer, even though the very talented Jones had brought Michael his greatest success.

He decided to go with Harlem-born Teddy Riley as producer. Riley was famous for a new musical genre, called "New Jack Swing"-or "Swingbeat" in Britain-and had pioneered the sound with such R&B performers as Keith Sweat.

New Jack Swing eventually translated into hiphop soul. Riley had also worked with Boy George. By 2006, Riley was at work with a New Jack Swing revival.

Teddy Riley

The album, Dangerous, premiered on Billboard's top album chart at Number One in 1991, as Michael himself had predicted. It had been produced at an estimated cost of more than $12 million, an industry record. CBS Records shipped out four million copies.

In addition to the title song, "Dangerous," the album featured such songs as "In the Closet" and "Remember the Time," the latter dedicated to Diana Ross. Michael was feeling better about her again. As a political message, he recorded "Heal the World."

Internationally, Dangerous would eclipse the sales of Bad, as 32 million albums disappeared around the world, even in East Germany. Not all of these were legitimate sales. On November 20, 1991, a group of armed men stole 30,000 copies of Dangerous from an air freight terminal at the Los Angeles airport.

In spite of strong sales, critical response to the album was for the most part unfavorable. The Los Angeles Times asked: "How dangerous can a man be who literally wants to please everyone?" The reviewer called the album "a messy grab-bag of ideas and high-tech non sequiturs, with something for everyone from the man who has everything-relatively tame, wildly unfocused." Another critic asserted, "Michael Jackson desperately wants to be a classic star like his good friends Elizabeth Taylor and Katharine Hepburn."

Teddy Riley, the producer of the Dangerous album, said that Michael talked a lot about what he'd done to his face and skin during their production work. "I'm quite sure if Michael could have done it all over again, he would not have done what he did," Riley said. "But there's no turning back. Once you change your description, you're stuck with it. You can't get your own face and your own skin back. But he is still Michael Jackson, still the talented man that everybody grew up on."

Although at least three music videos were generated by the Dangerous album, the video associated with the single "Remember the Time" generated more than its share of strife.

John Singleton, director of Boyz N the Hood, was hired to direct it, opting for, in full cooperation with Michael, a setting in ancient Egypt.

In a surprise move, Michael decided to cast Eddie Murphy in the video, despite the fact that it was widely assumed that the two men detested each other. Throughout the 80s Murphy had made a career in stand-up comedy routines which sometimes viciously ridiculed gays and their vulnerability to AIDS. Even Richard Pryor found Murphy "a little too mean," and Michael was frequently the butt of Murphy's jokes.

John Singleton

Michael, of course, was aware that Murphy had mocked him on nationwide television and made fun of him in club acts, but despite all that, the two men worked harmoniously together, concealing whatever private feelings they might have had about each other. Murphy was cast as the Pharaoh Ramses, playing opposite the glamorous actress and supermodel, Iman, who played his wife, Queen Nefertiti. Before signing on, Murphy, joking or not, said, "There ain't gonna be no scene with me kissin' no faggot!"

Born in Somalia, the exotic Iman became the wife of David Bowie on April 24, 1992. Channel 5 ranked her #29 in their roster of "The World's Greatest Supermodels." Iman later proclaimed, "I had breast enlargement to quiet that noise in my head and fill the gaping hole in my self-esteem."

Iman confided that she would not be able to show the video to her father, a strict Muslim. Her father was the Somalian ambassador to Saudi Arabia. "Nudity and erotic video are against his religion, and has been a major conflict in our family. Even my being a model goes against my father's religion. At the end of the day, I'm my father's daughter. If there are any naked pictures up when he comes around, I hide them."

She'd posed topless for the 1985 edition of the popular Pirelli Calendar. She had also performed in a music video for Jermaine Jackson, "Do What You Do."

In Michael's video, Eddie Murphy, as the Egyptian pharaoh, sends his guards chasing after Michael, who manages to elude them and ends up with an embrace and a kiss from Iman.

Michael seemed to freeze during his kiss with the delectable Iman. "I wouldn't freeze, man," Murphy said. "That would sure get a rise out of me."

Later, reviewers attacked the kiss as "the most unconvincing in the history of the movies." One critic wrote, "if Michael Jackson was trying to assert his heterosexual credentials in this video, he failed miserably. If Sir Winston Churchill had ever been forced to kiss Adolf Hitler, I think the British prime minister would have pulled it off with more fervor." Singleton begged Michael to film the scene over again, but Michael retreated to his dressing room for the rest of the day. Sobbing, he was found watching The Little Mermaid.

Magic Johnson was also cast in the video. Privately, Michael told his producer that he wanted to limit his contact with the athlete. He'd heard that he had HIV, and Michael, perhaps unaware of how the disease is transmitted, was overly sensitive.

The director wanted his actors in Egyptian dress, which meant showing some leg. But Michael refused, allegedly because his legs were still "as brown as an acorn," whereas his upper torso had turned white. To the horror of the wardrobe department, Michael insisted on wearing black pants underneath his Egyptian dress.

Later, Michael agreed to a minor participation in Murphy's 1992 album, Love's Alright. In the video of the song, "WhatZupWitu," Michael and Murphy appear in a Technicolor-like dream together. The Boys Choir of

Harlem also makes an appearance. The video was so horrid that it was at first released only in Japan. Later when it reached the United States in 1999, MTV voted it as "one of the 25 worst music videos" in history.

For yet another video from the Dangerous album, Michael filmed "In the Closet," as if dangerously courting more ridicule from Joan Rivers. "In the Closet?" she shrieked. "Michael, tell us something we don't know."

If his kiss with Iman was a bomb, he hoped to right that wrong by hiring another supermodel, the ravishingly attractive Naomi Campbell.who had been chosen by People magazine as one of the 50 Most Beautiful People in the World.

A Californian, Herb Ritts, who had directed videos for both Janet Jackson and for Madonna, signed on as the director of "In the Closet."

As a director of music videos, Ritts was an odd choice. He was mainly known for celebrity photography, taking pictures of everyone from Jack Nicholson to Mick Jagger. His photos had graced album covers, including Madonna's True Blue in 1986. He'd photographed Cindy Crawford for both the July 1988 and the October 1998 issues of Playboy. As a respected photographer, Ritts gained unprecedented access to many of his subjects, including a paralyzed Christopher Reeve and a post-brain surgery Elizabeth Taylor.

During the publicity associated with "In the Closet," Ritts proposed a daring concept: Michael would pose nude for a centerfold for publication in either Vogue, Elle, Harpers Bazaar, Vanity Fair, or Rolling Stone.

When he saw the horror of Michael's face, Ritts assured him that in his photo shop he could make a penis look bigger. Ritts later claimed that Michael burst into tears at the suggestion and ran away from him. Ironically, despite his horrified reaction to Ritts' proposal, within just a few short months, Michael would be posing nude for a Santa Barbara police photographer-definitely against his wishes.

For six weeks prior to the filming of a third video, Michael hired a personal trainer "who looked like Arnold Schwarzenegger." Since he didn't plan to show his legs, they worked mostly to build up his upper torso.

In spite of all his efforts, Michael still emerged, in the words of one critic, "as the 97-pound weakling in all those old Charles Atlas ads where bullies on the beach kick sand in his face, embarrassing him in front of his girl."

On location in Palm Springs, Michael and the artfully underclad Naomi executed their videotaped maneuvers together. Naomi comes on strong, provocatively wrapping her bare legs around Michael's waist.

In the video, she reveals that she should have been a film star-not just a "supermodel." In contrast, in the words of one critic, "He absolutely froze as Naomi comes at him like a tigress. Michael was out of his element with a hottie like Naomi."

On a trivial note, Princess Stephanie of Monaco was credited with supplying the female vocal. The final track also included a brief appearance by rapper Heavy D, and an appearance by superstar Michael Jordan. In the video, he dances and plays basketball with Jordan. Michael, even at this late date, was still confusing Magic Johnson with Michael Jordan. To resolve the confusion, he developed a somewhat insensitive way of differentiating the two athletes: "Oh, Jordan is the one who's not HIV positive."

Some TV stations, perhaps because of Naomi's sexy dance, refused to air the video. But despite their lack of cooperation, and despite Michael's frigidity, "In the Closet" emerged as the third consecutive number one hit from the Dangerous album.

Back at Neverland the staff was being supervised by Bill Bray, Michael's grizzled chief of security. Michael once referred to him as, "The father I never had." But Bray needed help, and Michael hired Norma Staikos, a stocky, middle-aged immigrant from Greece. According to a staff member at Neverland, "She wore a frown set in stone."

"Michael had his father in Bray," said a disgruntled staff member. "Now he found another mother in Staikos. She soon became the virtual chatelaine of Neverland." The same staff member claimed that Staikos operated

Neverland "like the Gestapo-we were terrified of her. Firings were frequent. You never knew from day to day whether you had a job or not."

After a few weeks, Staikos issued orders that the security guards at the gate were not to record the arrivals of "the little boyfriends," some of whom began appearing at three o'clock in the morning. As increasing numbers of young boys arrived at Neverland, Staikos became vigilant in her efforts to blot out evidence of that, as if sensing some future trouble for her employer.

Hired as an assistant to Staikos was Orietta Murdock of Costa Rica. Apparently, Murdock was hired because Staikos thought she was a Latina. But when Staikos met Murdock's sister, whose skin was much darker, both Staikos and Michael learned that Murdock was black. Michael said, "I prefer to think of her as Latina instead of black."

Herb Ritts

Murdock was assigned to organize letters and photographs from Michael's young fans. "I felt bad seeing Michael separate the photos and reading the letters he saw with children's handwriting," Murdock later said. `Black kids and kids older than thirteen didn't interest him. And when he was reading a letter and realized that it was from a little girl, he threw it in the trash. He kept and took to his room only the photos and letters from white, Latin, and Asian children. As for the rest, he told us it was useless to answer them, so we had to fake his signature. It was a shame that those children didn't fit into his racial tastes."

MJ and Naomi Campbell in "In the Closet"

After Murdock was fired, she filed a complaint on January 29, 1991 with the Equal Employment Department

of California. "I was fired and intimidated for being black. Michael doesn't like black people. He would say that he wasn't black, but a chameleon. He used creams and white make-up like they use in the theater since he didn't like to look black. He called his black guards Big Gorillas." In addition to accusing the singer of being racist, Murdock also charged that he was a child molester.

At least one of Michael's "special friends" would disagree with Murdock. He was Brett Barnes, a 23-year-old, out-of-work roulette dealer when he took the witness stand to testify in Michael's behalf during his trial in 2005 on charges of child molestation. Like another one of Michael's special friends, Wade Robson, Brett too was from Down Under.

He claimed that Michael "did not have wandering hands," refuting the testimony of an ex-Neverland maid. "And I can tell you that if he did, I wouldn't be here right now ... I wouldn't stand for it," Brett said. He also expressed his anger that he'd been referenced at the trial as one of Michael's alleged victims. "It's untrue, and they're putting my name through the dirt," he testified.

Marie Lisbeth Barnes, Brett's mother, testified that her son had slept with Michael "just on occasion." Brett's older sister, Karlee Barnes, recalled that her brother and Michael spent about 365 nights alone in his bedroom.

When the police made a search of Neverland in 1993, they discovered Brett living at the ranch. At the time, he was eleven years old. While Michael was on the Dangerous tour in Europe, Brett stayed behind at Neverland with his mother and sister. The police raid reportedly left the boy trembling and insecure.

He was questioned by the police, and vehemently denied that any improper behavior ever took place between the star and himself. He did admit that Michael was affectionate-"more like a big brother. He's a best friend, except he's big." Under more intense questioning, he also admitted that he'd slept in Michael's bedroom at night. "He slept on one side, and I slept on the other," the boy said. He added, "It was a big bed." He later defended Michael on KNBC, a television station based in Los Angeles.

After the raid, Michael called Brett at Neverland to reassure him that "this is all a big mistake-it'll blow over."

A rabid Jackson fan, Brett was actually five years old and in Australia when he first tried to approach Michael, who was on tour there at the time. In the late 80s, Brett, with his older sister, had come to the airport to greet his idol. With him, Brett carried a handwritten letter with his telephone number.

He didn't actually meet Michael that day, but his letter obviously reached the star. In a few days, Michael called Brett. It was the beginning of several long phone dialogues.

In 1991 an invitation arrived with airplane tickets for Brett, his mother, and sister. Off they went to California to visit Michael at Neverland. Many such visits would follow in the future.

In the wake of the raid on Neverland, the press began a search, reporters hoping to find pictures of Michael photographed with young boys. Literally hundreds of such pictures turned up in newspaper and magazine files. After the raid, these pictures took on a more ominous aura.

Photos were found of Michael with a young Australian boy-not Brett Barnes but a child identified as "Brett Jackson." Michael had introduced Brett as "my cousin," erroneously passing him off as one of the Jackson family members.

The most unusual photo depicted Michael taking time out from his Dangerous tour in 1992 to escort two young boys to Euro Disney, south of Paris. In the picture Brett stands between Michael on his right and a mysterious young boy on his left.

The world had never seen such a plastic face on Michael Jackson before, the result of endless surgeries. His nose had shrunk to the size of that of the mysterious nine-year-old in the picture. Michael flashes Chiclet-white teeth and has an unreal aura about him.

Brett's face is partially hidden, because he is sucking his thumb. But, finally, the mystery boy was identified by some eagle-eyed editor. It was the face of the Bavarian prince, Albert von Thurn and Taxis.

Born on June 24, 1983, Prince Albert was the world's youngest billionaire, with an estimated net worth of $2.1 billion, according to the Forbes Rich List. His 30,000 hectares (74,132 acres) of woodland in Germany is one of the largest forestry holdings in Europe. He grew up in one of the family castles, Schloss Emmeram in Regensburg, but also had other residences in Germany and throughout Europe, including Russia. How Michael linked himself with such aristocracy and was allowed to travel with this rich and unusual child is not known.

Michael certainly could not wow Prince Albert with money and toys, as the young Bavarian was obviously very wealthy in his own right.

Brett Barnes

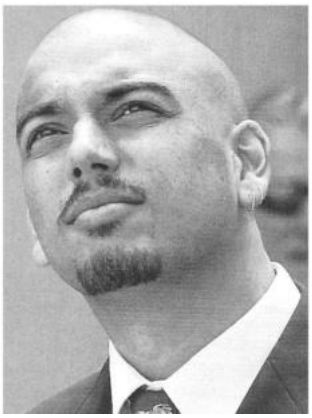
In the wake of the Euro Disney photograph, pictures of Michael and Brett traveling together began popping up in dozens of archives. Wearing a baseball cap and a jacket far too large for him, Brett was photographed arriving in London with Michael in March of 1992.

In London, Michael and Brett paid a call on the dying comic, Benny Hill, who was in a hospital suffering from having had a heart attack. Other than Charlie Chaplin, the English comedian was the artist Michael most admired. Michael loved Hill's cheeky humor, songs, and impressions. As a fan of Benny Hill, Michael was in good company. Greta Garbo and Walter Cronkite were also devoted to Hill's humor. After Hill's death, Michael, through his agents, tried to acquire the artist's memorabilia, hoping to make a shrine to him at Neverland.

It's estimated-there is no way of knowing the exact amount-that Michael spent a quarter of a million dollars entertaining young Brett on their five-day swing through London. They stayed at the swanky Dorchester Hotel where hysterical fans gathered outside to wait for Michael.

Both the man and the boy were housed in the hotel's most luxurious suite on the ninth floor. Michael had arrived in London with two dozen staff members, who occupied the entire eighth floor of the Dorchester. The entourage consisted of, among others, a manicurist and a full-time doctor.

While at the Dorchester, Michael and Brett purchased some $10,000 worth of toys, which they played with at the hotel, abandoning the items when they checked out for a flight aboard the Concorde.



Brett all grown up

Young Brett traveled and slept with Michael during a twelve-day tour that carried them to four continents, including five African nations.

On one lap of the journey through Europe, Michael and Brett reserved the entire Orient Express just for themselves. "Talk about luxury," said one of the staff members aboard the train. "No potentate in history ever traveled in such style."

It was during this tour that Brett came to realize that he was about to be replaced as Michael's special friend. As he and Michael raced through more than a dozen countries, Michael was on the phone at night-sometimes talking for as much as three hours-with a young boy in California called Jordie Chandler.

Albert von Thurn and Taxis

Brett and Michael were next seen in Las Vegas where they were photographed as they viewed the magical act of Michael's friends, Siegfried and Roy. Later Brett shared Michael's suite at the Mirage Hotel & Casino.

Invitations had gone out to Brett and Michael to attend Elizabeth Taylor's much-hyped birthday party, for the celebration of her "Big 6-0." It was staged at, of all places, Anaheim's Disneyland. The star was said to be "bitterly disappointed" when Michael didn't show up.

Publicist Bob Jones believed that the Disneyland bash would be a "sure bet" for Michael to attend. But it was later revealed that Michael and Brett were locked away in the most luxurious suite at the deluxe Helmsley Palace in New York. "The Queen of Mean," Leona Helmsley herself, had personally greeted Michael and Brett, welcoming them to her hotel.

Michael seemingly would do everything for Brett, even calling the manager of the Sportsworld in Paramus, New Jersey. For an undisclosed price, Michael got him to empty the park at 9:30pm, giving patrons their money back so that he and Brett could enjoy Sportsworld and its 175 video games by themselves. The couple stayed until

two o'clock in the morning, and Brett later said he had "one of the best times of my life."

In 1993, Jordie Chandler, about to become Brett's replacement, met his rival, Brett. In Los Angeles, Michael had come to pick up Jordie in a limousine. In the back seat, Jordie noted Brett with his big eyes, sitting on Michael's lap. There was a slight resemblance between the two boys. Jordie may have been jealous at the open affection displayed between Brett and Michael. He later told his father that the experience had made him "a bit uncomfortable."

Dr. Richard A. Gardner, the leading authority in California on false claims of child abuse, conducted a series of psychological tests on Jordie on October 6, 1993. In this interrogation, the name of Brett cropped up. Jordie refuted Brett's claim that Michael had never violated him sexually.

According to Jordie, "if he [meaning Michael] wanted me to do something with him, he would say that Brett did that with him, so that I would do it. And, like, if I didn't do it, then I didn't love him as much as Brett did."

That Michael could juggle far more than one "special friend" in his life became evident in testimony provided by El Salvador-born Blanca Francia, who was the star's personal maid from 1986 to 1991. Her testimony became vitally important because she had been granted access to the inner sanctum of Michael's bedroom, where she'd discovered-long before the police-pornographic materials. Blanca had seen the pictures and books first. She later claimed that she'd also seen "inappropriate touching" between Michael and young boys.

Blanca was not adverse to making money off what she'd witnessed. Television's Hard Copy paid her $20,000 for an interview. But she won lotto when Michael paid her $2.4 million when she threatened legal action against him for fondling her handsome young son, Jason Francia.

At Michael's jury trial in 2005, Jason was the only witness who came forward and claimed that Michael had molested him, beginning when he was only seven years old. After five years of therapy, he had become an evangelical Christian, devoting part of his life to working with troubled young people when he wasn't selling auto parts.

Before the world, Jason testified that Michael had taken him twice to his hideout condo. In his testimony, he claimed that Michael and he had played "tickling games" in which the star would move his hands over Jason's genitalia on the outside of his shorts. "Pretty much at every tickle thing there was money," he said. Allegedly, two of these molestations took place at the hideout and the third molestation occurred at Neverland when Jason had turned ten.

This time, according to Jason, Michael's hands went inside his pants. But when tears welled in the boy's eyes, Michael stopped.

During the investigation of Michael in 1993, Jason was questioned by the police in the Jordie Chandler case. At the time, Jason was thirteen. He denied that he'd been molested. Later, however, he changed his testimony and asserted that he had been molested after all.

Lawyers for Michael intensely grilled Jason over why he'd changed his story when first interviewed by police investigators. "In the beginning, I thought I could hold them off and make them go away. I didn't want to tell anybody I had been molested." The implication was that he was ashamed and embarrassed by the incidents.

When defense lawyer Tom Mesereau confronted Jason with his conflicting statements made during a series of interviews with police and prosecutors over the years, Jason uttered a tearful response.

"In the fifth grade, I told my friends I knew Michael Jackson and it was cool. They didn't believe me but it was cool. In junior high, it was no longer cool to know somebody who had issues with kids."

Before the trial, Blanca had given interviews, shedding light on what was going on behind the closed doors of Neverland. One of those interviews was with Diane Dimond, an investigative reporter for TV's Hard Copy. In that ses sion, Blanca made it clear that she had not wanted her son to become another one of Michael's "special friends."

The former maid also made the claim that she once entered a room and caught her son on Michael's lap. She also claimed that she once found her son "so close" to Michael in a sleeping bag at his hideout. Later, when she was taking him home, Jason confessed that Michael had given him three hundred dollars. "Three hundred dollars for a seven-year-old?" Dimond asked in astonishment.

Jason wasn't the only young boy Michael had tempted with money. A maid at Neverland claimed that one twelve-year-old boy risked killing himself when trying to retrieve an Easter egg hidden in a crystal chandelier by jumping off a balustrade. The eggs were filled with one-thousand dollar bills. "Why would you do that?" the maid asked the boy. "I'd do anything for money," he replied.

Blanca claimed that she was not fired, but that she quit her job. "I got tired of what was going on-Michael sleeping with boys and taking showers together. I think I saw too much."

In an interview with reporter Dimond, Blanca claimed that the string of boys who visited Neverland were always prepubescent, ranging in age from seven to twelve years old. Other witnesses' accounts differed with Blanca's testimony, claiming that some of the boys were thirteen or fourteen. No one stepped forward to claim that any boy was six years old or younger.

She also claimed that Michael preferred to pick boys who came from split families . . . "a divorced mother or single mother." Apparently, such parents were easier to manipulate than a mother and a father within a more traditional marriage.

Several witnesses, including Blanca, have suggested that Michael was intrigued by the mouths of young boys, especially the lips of Macaulay Culkin. Blanca once found Polaroid snapshots Michael had taken just of close-ups of the lips of his "special friends."

All the boys were nicknamed "Rubba" by Michael. Rubba may have meant that boys sat on his lap and rubbed up against his privates-hence, the name.

Jason Francia

Blanca said she was never tempted to go to the police, and that she was manipulated by Michael with money and gifts. "I didn't want to lose my job," she said.

Blanca was grilled as to why parentseven those who stayed in Michael's guest house while their sons slept in his bedroom in the main house-allowed such activity. "I think they just looked the other way as long as they were getting money or expensive gifts like jewelry."

A mystery still surrounds Blanca after she gave a sworn deposition in the case of Jordie Chandler. Even though she had enough money to retire after her settlement with Michael, she, for reasons of her own, continued to work at

menial jobs. She obtained a job working for a senior citizen.

Still living in Santa Barbara County, she bicycled to work every morning. On the way to work, she was struck by a car. This caused rampant speculation and a flurry of rumors that a hit man had been hired to kill her but had not succeeded. The police investigated but no charges were ever filed.

Throughout all of Michael's involvements with these young boys, and his subsequent legal troubles, Elizabeth Taylor remained a steadfast friend.

Over the years, this friendship has caused much speculation in the press. Elizabeth always had an answer to reporters who questioned her about her involvement with Michael. "We love each other," said Elizabeth. "Michael and I. If nobody understands that-or doesn't dig it-then tough shit!"

Gloria Berlin, the real estate agent who sold Michael Neverland, asked him why he wanted a place so big for just one person. She quoted him as saying, "I plan to adopt twenty-nine children and marry Elizabeth Taylor."

"But she's old enough to be your grandmother," Berlin said.

"But I love her. I just love her. I love her. I love her."

Of course, these remarks reportedly were said before Elizabeth's marriage to Larry Fortensky.

Michael's relationship with Elizabeth was viewed very differently by others, opinions often in total conflict. One of Michael's former publicists at Epic completely dismissed the friendship. "The relationship is this," she said. "He brought her just as much publicity as she brought to him. He also bought her a lot of jewelry in appreciation for her `friendship.' They used each other."

The press often put yet another spin on the relationship. "They're just two former child stars being kids again," wrote Cynthia Lambert. "Food fights. Cotton candy. Taylor's a grandmother but she can still revert to being a kid again."

One of the most far-fetched tabloid rumors was that Elizabeth visited Neverland for "treatments in Michael Jackson's hyperbaric chamber." One headline claimed: TAYLOR PLANS TO STAY FOREVER YOUNG.

It is true that this unlikely pair of Elizabeth and Michael has stood by each other through "Thick and Thin," a song Michael attempted to write about their friendship but which was never finished.

"Elizabeth was always there for Michael and Michael for Elizabeth," Frank DiLeo once said, forgetting that Michael had skipped out on her 60th birthday bash at Disneyland.

It is not known how many presents Michael gave Elizabeth over the years, but it was rumored to have been more than $5 million worth of jewelry alone. Michael generated millions more in publicity for her.

"Let's face it," said publicist Howard Brackett. "Taylor hadn't made a movie since dinosaurs walked the Earth. By hanging onto the arm of Michael, she generated untold press. All that notoriety helps her sell that Goddamn perfume and the jewelry she designs. Anyone would want to be a friend of Michael if he gets all that publicity for her. What I don't understand is this: exactly what does Michael Jackson get in hanging out with Elizabeth Taylor?"

Another publicist, who refused to be named, said "Michael basks in the glow of having a fabulous friend like Elizabeth. I've heard that he even tells tricks, `I'll introduce you to Elizabeth Taylor.' Even that story doesn't make sense to me. Why would a nine-year-old boy want to meet Elizabeth Taylor? Superman, maybe. Even Tom Cruise, though I doubt that. But Elizabeth Taylor, who became a star back in the days of a kid's grandparents?"

To Michael's credit, he did respond to Elizabeth's call for help in the plight of AIDS. He contributed freely of his time and money, as when he showed up for a benefit she wanted him to attend in September of 1985. Elizabeth had called major stars such as her former lover, Frank Sinatra. He told her, "This is just another of your lame duck

causes-back away from it! It's going to hurt you."

Fortunately, along with Michael, Elizabeth got Betty Ford and Barry Manilow to show up and lend their names to the cause.

Michael also generated a lot of good publicity for himself, portraying both Elizabeth and himself as two crazy kids who didn't grow up. Reportedly, they engaged in food fights and tried to "tickle each other to death" until one of them cried uncle. At Neverland one staff member reported seeing Elizabeth sneak up on Michael and burst a red water balloon over his unsuspecting head.

Blanca Francia, Michael's maid, painted a different portrait, suggesting that this "odd couple" had more of a business relationship than a friendship. At one point she referred to Elizabeth as "Poor Lady," because Michael neglected her for the most part when she came to visit Neverland.

"Michael was just playing with her," Francia charged. "Everyone knows they're not close." She claimed that during one two-week visit, Michael saw Elizabeth only once for dinner. Reportedly, when Elizabeth went looking for Michael to talk to him, he made himself unavailable, instructing Francia to tell the star that he was sleeping.

"I feel so bad for her," Blanca said. "She goes to Neverland and wants to talk to someone. The staff is not allowed to talk to guests, so she's by herself. Michael just wanted to stay away from her."

Mark Quindoy, the majordomo, more or less agreed with the maid's assessment. "Michael's relationship with Ms. Taylor is pure farce. They just use each other to promote their own images." He too agreed that during a twoweek visit to Neverland, Michael had dinner only once with Elizabeth. "In contrast, he not only had breakfast, lunch, and dinner with Macaulay Culkin, he slept in the same bed with him."

It was February 4, 1992, and Michael had just put down the phone, after receiving a "good luck" call from Elizabeth. Dressed in black leather with a red armband, he went from his dressing room down the Art Deco staircase of Radio City Music Hall in New York to appear at a press conference. In the background, reporters heard the sound of "Black or White."

For some $20 million from Pepsi-maybe a lot more Michael announced a worldwide Dangerous tour. It was to be publicized as "The Greatest Show on Earth." He claimed that with the success of the tour, he might raise as much as $100 million for children's charities. Since he didn't need the money, Michael-falsely or otherwise-said that his aim was to "spread global love" among the children of the world.

He had formed The Heal the World Foundation in 1992, hoping to bring aid to underprivileged children. Even though he was doing it for charity, his critics were unrelenting. On the Dangerous album, Michael had inserted his version of the foundation's theme song. One music critic called it "a Hallmark card knockoff of `We Are the World.'"

With interruptions, cancellations, and much dreaded headlines, the Dangerous world music tour would be launched by Michael on June 27, 1992, grinding to a crashing end on November 11, 1993. Some 3.5 million fans would hear him in 69 different concerts, the biggest tour any performer had ever done until Michael broke his own record with his HIStory follow-up in the years ahead.

Germany, Britain, France, even Romania, lay before him. However, because of medical problems with his vocal cords, he had to cut short the tour, resuming it in December of 1992 in Japan.

In another record-breaking deal, Michael sold the film rights to his Dangerous tour for $21 million, the highest deal ever scored for a live concert. The footage was shot in Bucharest. When HBO aired the film in October of 1992, it played to fans in 61 countries, receiving the highest TV ratings in history.

Some of the countries Michael-accompanied by Brett Barnes visited were on the continent of Africa, which he hadn't seen in nearly two decades. Wherever his plane touched down, he drew bigger crowds than either Nelson Mandela or the Pope.

Before arriving in Africa, Michael made certain that his own frozen blood was flown in. Associates reported that he was terrified of contracting AIDS. He feared that if he became ill during the tour and needed blood transfusions, he might be injected with tainted blood. "The only blood I trust is my own," he told his aides. "See that it's shipped wherever I go."

Like his role model, billionaire Howard Hughes, Michael was almost paranoicly germ-conscious, once suggesting that he wanted a Plexiglas shield erected between him and his fans. But he was warned that there would be an outcry against this. Bob Jones himself felt that such a move would be a public relations disaster. Nonetheless, word of the Plexiglas shield made it into the press. Eventually Michael abandoned the plan.

Even before his plane touched down in the Republic of Gabon, the local press was raising provocative questions. One headline read: IS MICHAEL JACKSON REALLY BLACK? Articles about his changing skin color were appearing not only in Africa, but in newspapers around the world. Prior to the example set by Michael, most of the world didn't believe that it was possible for a black man to change his skin color to white.

Doctors, presumably experts, were interviewed on the subject. From Europe, Dr. Hans Geiler (country of origin unknown) issued a statement that a black skin could be turned much lighter by the use of "certain bleaching agents." A group of compounds known as "Hydroquinones," or so it was claimed, could make dark skin much lighter-"but not quite white."

Obviously bleaching agents worked better on a light-skinned black or a mulatto than on persons whose skin was extremely dark or "blue black," claimed one doctor, a plastic surgeon, who didn't want to give his name, fearing a "backlash from people of color." As if the world didn't already know this, the doctor warned, "Race is a delicate issue to discuss."

Thousands of people use Porcelana's Skin Lightening Serum with Hydroquinone, the only FDA-approved ingredient to effectively lighten skin discolorations.

Michael was said to travel with tubes of Hydroquinone. In the past it had been noted that he used Porcelana, a bleaching cream. La Toya was also rumored to have used Porcelana on her beautiful face.

It was alleged that Michael had studied the makeup techniques of George Masters, which he perfected with Marilyn Monroe in years immediately prior to her death. It was called the "white-on-white look." Makeup expert Mitchell Geller claimed that Masters "transformed Marilyn from Technicolor to 'frosted' way before that became the fashion."

As his skin grew whiter and whiter, Michael developed an aversion to the sun. The hot sun of Africa held a particular terror for him. "The direct sun must never touch my face," he warned aides. One way to conceal his face was to wear large hats. In time, he began to travel with an aide who held a large umbrella, most often black, over his whitening head.

MJ crowned King of Sani

It was believed that much of Michael's look came from heavy applications of pancake makeup. He really coated it on. When any aide delicately suggested that he might be using too much, Michael quoted a statement by Masters, who was acclaimed as the leading makeup artist of Hollywood. Masters once claimed that upon Elvis Presley's return from a tour of duty with the Army in Germany, "he was wearing more pancake makeup and more mascara than Marlene Dietrich and Joan Crawford would ever dare."

Attracting thousands of hysterical fans, many of whom were later injured, Michael touched down in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, a port on the Gabon River near the Gulf of Guinea. He was there as the guest of Omar Bongo, the country's president. Although advertised as a good will tour, Michael's trip was financed by the government ministry, it was later revealed.

Omar Bongo was one of the most controversial of all African leaders, having assumed the presidency of Gabon in 1967 at the age of 32, the world's youngest president at the time. At the time of his death in 2009, he'd served as the world's seventh longest serving ruler. If he picked up the tab for Michael, he could well afford it, as Bongo was one of the globe's wealthiest heads of state, an empire attributed mainly to oil revenue and alleged corruption.

Bongo emerged in headlines again in 2005, when a Senate investigation revealed that lobbyist Jack Abramoff had offered Bongo a chance to meet with President George W. Bush in exchange for $9 million. Ten months later, on May 26, 2004, Bongo was photographed talking head to head with Bush himself.

In Gabon, grade school children turned out to greet Michael, carrying a banner that proclaimed: WELCOME HOME MICHAEL. The sounds of drums filled the air. One nine-year-old boy cried out, "Michael is love, love, love! I want to be like him."

A British journalist, Peter Hodges, was at the Gabon airport to witness the arrival of Michael and his entourage. He later wrote provocative copy. "Michael Jackson often flaunts his arrival at airports with handsome young boys. Not so in Africa. The word was out that he wanted his companion, Brett Barnes, to be kept away from the lens of carnivorous paparazzi. Even so, I got to see the kid get off the plane after the paparazzi went chasing after Michael. In London, Jackson had passed the boy off as 'Brett Jackson,' his cousin. I later learned that Brett hails from Sydney, Australia. He was one charismatic and gorgeous boy, fit competition for Tadzio." The journalist was referring, of course, to the young boy beauty in the Thomas Mann novel, Death in Venice.

In Gabon, President Bongo presented Michael with the Medal of Honor, an award often reserved for visiting Heads of State such as Nelson Mandela.

Before the good will tour of Africa was over, Michael would visit not only Gabon, but the Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Egypt, discovering "Michaelmania" wherever he landed. He logged 30,000 miles in 11 days. His 26-person entourage was flown on a Boeing 707 executive plane. It came complete with a stateroom, a private bathroom, an open bar, lounges and dining areas, and lots and lots of video and audio equipment.

One picture of Michael, with his arms outstretched, his hat removed, was published around the world. Said to be "deeply moved," he was photographed in front of the world's largest church, the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, in Yamoussoakra, capital of the Ivory Coast.

The highlight of the African safari for Michael came in the Cote d'Ivoire, a little country that had declared itself independent of French colonial rule back in 1960. Even so, by as late as 1969, the Sanwis of Krinjabo wanted to break away and form an independent kingdom. Michael was taken to the Ivory Coast village of Krinj abo, not far from the border with Ghana. The Sanwis had invited Michael for a coronation ceremony to crown him King.

A little boy born into near poverty in Indiana was welcomed to Africa like a ruling dignitary and long-lost son. But it wasn't long before sentiment began to shift against him.

Attired in black trousers and a "flaming" orange shirt, Michael was fanned by four teenage, bare-breasted girls during his coronation. "Kings" and chiefs from nearby villages came to town to watch Michael's crowning. Medicine men chanted incantations as they poured precious gin on the dry parched earth in honor of the memory of

their Krinjabo ancestors.

The traditional tribal chief of Krinjabo, Amon N'Djafolk, placed a crown of gold on Michael's head and pronounced him "King of Sani." In a whispery voice, Michael said, "Merci beaucoup. Thank you very much."

He was draped in a traditional gold and orange robe. When he was crowned, he accepted a long golden chain, a symbol of authority. Placed on a golden throne and decked out in tribal drag, Michael, in the words of one reporter, "looked more like a Queen than a King."

Regrettably, Michael insulted the villagers by removing his royal robe immediately after the ceremony. In the local newspaper, a reporter wrote that "Michael Jackson's communication talents are lacking." It was later noted that this was "only one of a series of gaffes and other troubles that caused Michael to abandon his African trip after a week. Originally he had wanted to visit the continent to film scenes for a "Return to Africa" video.

Not all was a disaster. During his visit, Michael went to schools, churches, and institutions for mentally retarded children. In his childlike way he bonded successfully with these children born into a world that was radically different from the glitzy life that Michael knew in America.

Omar Bongo

Without his surgical mask, he hugged and kissed children, some of whom had AIDS. The tour organizer, Charles Bobbit, said, "I was impressed with the interaction between Michael and the children. He sat on the bed with children who were deformed and children who were ill. He sat there and talked to them, hugged them, cuddled them."

His feelings were expressed in the song, "Why You Wanna Trip on Me," part of the Dangerous album.

They say I'm different
They don't understand
But there's a bigger problem
That's much more in demand
You got world hunger
Not enough to eat
So there's really no time
To be trippin' on me . . .

Throughout the tour, Michael kept touching his nose. Noting this, Africans were offended. It appeared that Michael was holding his nose to avoid the raw smells of Africa. He was said to object in particular to hunks of meat rotting in the sun and attracting flies.

The editor of Gabon's leading newspaper was direct in his attack. He called Michael "the sacred beast of America. Holding his nose, he reminds us that we are undeveloped and that our sewer system doesn't equal that of

California. When he comes into contact with us, he reminds us that we don't have the luxurious marble bathrooms of rich movie stars in Hollywood. As he passes our markets, he seems horrified at our rotting foodstuff, noting that we lack refrigeration. What are we to make of this strange creature among us? He's not a black man. But not quite white either. He's neither man nor woman but some androgynous thing caught between the sexes. That might be all right in a frail little boy. In a grown man, such an effeminate character, who speaks with the voice of a little girl, is frightening. Maybe it is up to the people of Gabon to turn up their noses at Michael Jackson-not the other way around!" The scalding editorial didn't diminish the crowds who turned out not to greet Michael, but to worship him.

The ever-sharp publicist, Bob Jones, rushed to Michael's defense. "We would not be here if we thought your country smelled," Jones announced in Gabon. "You are our roots. The air here is fresher than anywhere else." The publicist dismissed the nose touching as "just a nervous tick Michael has." But there may have been more to the nose touching than Jones had suggested.

Reports began appearing in America and London that Michael's nose was in danger of collapsing. Before the debut of his Africa tour, he may have endured a total of six rhinoplasties. The suggestion was that during his sixth operation, a hole had appeared in his right nostril that had to be "packed" and stitched. These stitches may have caused the itching and nose scratching he experienced in Africa. In London a plastic surgeon speculated that Michael might one day have to wear a plastic nose.

Back in Africa, Michael told Bob Jones that the African tour was evolving into a disaster. He cancelled a safari-"I wanted to see the wild ani- mals"-and also sent his regrets to Kenya. Instead, he and Brett flew back to London.

Even though Michael fled Africa, Amon N'Djafolk, who'd crowned him King of the Sanwis, paid a surprise visit to Michael to Los Angeles three years later at the time of his marriage to Lisa Marie Presley. The exalted ruler had called Michael the "prodigal child of the Bible" before placing a crown of gold upon his head.

"King N'Djafolk is more than a symbol," Michael said in Los Angeles. "He is the spirit of his people and the father of his subjects. His person is sacred and inviolate."

For some reason, Michael arranged a meeting between the King and attorney Johnnie Cochran, who had not only represented Michael during charges of child molestation, but achieved world fame as the chief defense attorney for O.J. Simpson. The purpose of the Cochran/N'Djafolk meeting was never revealed, but it may have been an attempt to get the attorney to convince Michael to invest his millions into the economy of the emerging nation.

En route to London after the 1992 African trip, Michael received a disturbing report. For every legitimate sale-say, 30,000 copies-of his album Dangerous, piracy sales amounted to 800,000 copies. In Thailand alone, piracy sales comprised 98 percent of his record market.

Once in London, speculation about Michael's nose reached a crescendo. In addition to those six rhinoplasties, plus the chin cleft, a virtual laundry list of Michael's other surgeries was being published in the press. He was rumored to have had his upper lip "thinned." Before-and-after pictures of Michael were run, more or less confirming that this was true.

He also was said to have had several face-lifts, although "God only knows why" Joan Rivers said on TV. "It's yours truly who needed the massive facelift-not Michael Jackson."

He was thought to be trying to replicate the image of Marlene Dietrich in the reconstruction of the contours of his face, which included everything from a "lifting" of the skin covering his forehead to bone grafts on his cheeks and jaw.

He was even rumored to have had several surgeries to remove crow's feet and bags from around his eyes. Why at this relatively young age he needed such massive surgery-more suited to a seventy-year-old-was not reported.

Even though it was believed that he'd gone under the knife any number of times, the press might have grossly exaggerated the extent of the work done on his face.

Michael became particularly outraged when he played to nearly 375,000 fans at London's Wembley Stadium. The Daily Mirror was delivered to him at his suite at the Dorchester. The more he read about himself, the more enraged he became. In an article by Rich Syke, Michael was called "Scarface" and a "cruelly disfigured phantom." The article also made the claim of a hole in Michael's nose-"like an extra nostril"-and asserted that one of Michael's cheeks was higher than the other. "Michael now looks like a grotesque burn victim," the article said. "His nose is so deformed it looks like misshapen plastic." Michael ordered his new attorney, the hotshot legal ace Bert Fields, to sue for libel.

In addition to the conventional press, several highly visible websites distributed trenchant comments about the rapidly evolving saga of Michael's fast-changing face. Anomalies-unlimited.com posted the most authentic history of Michael's face. Their "blithering, yet witty commentary" (their description) suggested that in 1987 Michael's face had "gone from a beautiful cocoa bronze to fish belly white-on his nose he now sports little teeny triangles for nostrils and a sharp razor ridge you could grate cheese on." The website suggested that by 1993 Michael's current color-subject to change, of coursewas "toilet paper pink" and that his massive plastic surgery could be interpreted as "self-mutilation."

Fans took notice that by 1997 Michael's Kirk Douglas cleft chin had disappeared to be replaced with a fake chin implant. "The sides of his face are stretched taut, his nose isn't pointing north any more, and it's anyone's guess what the hell he did to his skin this time. He's getting his face done at the local morgue. He's a ghoul and seems to be a sick puppy with all this stuff he's done to himself."

By 1999, as Michael turned 41, his fans once again noted a dramatic change in his appearance. Anomalites-unlimited.com now compared Michael to "The Joker," Batman's arch-enemy. "New chin again. Nose again. New cheeks. Smaller jaw. The gaunt look is replaced by rounder fluff. Rumor has it he transplanted some pubic hair to make a goatee in an attempt to butch up, but the thought is too repulsive to dwell on."

Sporting the Kirk Douglas cleft

At the turn of the millennium, Michael had yet another face, again duly noted on the web. "Oh, this isn't looking good . . . a goatee! Ack! Is that pubic hair? Suddenly, his jaw is an inch longer. He got his eyes pulled so tight he looks Oriental, and they've ceased to line up properly. His lips have a hint of that lizard-lock smile you see on people who have overdone the facelifts. Good thing Japanese Anime cartoons are taking America by storm, so this is kind of fashionable."

By the time Michael turned 42, former admirers were posting on the web news of his "wrecked face." Anomalies-unlimited.com described a "fakenose-tip prosthesis hanging off as well as scars. The pink little beak nose of 1997 seems to have expanded once again."

The shocking photographs the world saw of Michael, appearing without makeup (could that have been true?) gave him eyes as wide as Joan Crawford. But it wasn't Crawford that Michael was compared to, but her nemesis, Bette Davis, as she looked in Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?

Finally, in 2004, a year before his trial on a charge of child molestation, Anomalies-unlimited.com concluded that Michael had gotten a new nose, thanks to the brilliant carving technique of a German plastic surgeon, Dr. Werner Mang. Michael was alleged to have gotten a new nose constructed from cartilage from his ear.

A former publicist, refusing to be named, said, "For a while, Michael didn't really have a nose. It was in 1999 that Dr. Steve Hoefflin, who had done Michael's earlier plastic surgeries, refused to touch up his nose again. In true Jackson style, Michael refused to take no for an answer and went to Europe to get his nose jobs there. Eventually with all of the cauterizing of the blood vessels, there was no circulation to the tip. The tip of the nose eventually turned sort of a black color and began to fall off. He later had a waxy kind of prosthesis made that attached on the end. However, he eventually found a doctor who was able to take some cartilage from his ear and re-sculpt his nose. Some people still believe he has a prosthetic tip, but it's all sculpted now."

As late as Michael's trial in 2005, plastic surgeons around the world were still giving their opinions to the press about the ethics of too much plastic surgery.

While testifying in his defense during a court trial in Santa Monica, Michael removed the surgical mask he routinely wore. He revealed that the tip of nose was scarred and discolored, the skin tissue dangling from it.

"It appears to me that he's had numerous surgeries on his nose, and it appears he's had something to widen his chin, perhaps a chin implant," a leading New York plastic surgeon, Thomas Loeb, told UPI. Dr. Loeb had performed reconstructive surgery on many celebrities, even notorious ones, such as Paula Jones.

On the question of "When is there too much plastic surgery?" both the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery have refused to discuss the ethics of cosmetic procedures. "The position of the medical profession has been that everything the customer agrees to is fair game so long as the risks are fairly presented," said Steve Miles, a professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota's Center for Bioethics.

Dr. Robert Kotler, who at 61 had performed more than 5,000 procedures during 27 years of practice, wrote a book called "Secrets of a Beverly Hills Cosmetic Surgeon." He was the most outspoken critic of Michael's nasal cosmetic surgery. He boldly stated that, "You can't take a black person and make him white." He went on, "there was a point with Michael where the work looked great. After the second operation it looked good, a marvelous result. If he, in his mind, was unhappy and wanted to continue, no doctor had to go along with a misguided adventure. Jackson was in the wrong in wanting to go beyond what was reasonable, and the doctors who went along with his request, I think didn't exercise their best judgment."

The original Kirk Douglas cleft

Dr. Kotler not only claimed that Michael Jackson "has gone way too far, but Marie Osmond looks perpetually surprised, her eyebrows are a bit high. I think Joan Rivers has reached the limit as to what is reasonable or has gone just a step beyond."

In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary and the posting of pictures of Michael's changing face over the years, he was still maintaining, post-millennium, that "I've had two procedures done on my nose-nothing more, noth ing less."

Joan Crawford and Bette Davis in Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?

Many members of the press were calling Michael's new appearance the "wet shaggy dog look." Strings of wet-looking black hair hung down over his eyes. "In those WWII movies, Veronica Lake adopted the peek-a-boo look with a bang covering her eyes," wrote Betty Fielding. "Michael wouldn't settle for that. He must spend an hour before the mirror each morning getting all that gel just right to make those strings of hair hang just so. His new hair design must have been the creation in Los Angeles of the Queen of All Hairdressers. Or could the stylist have been Michael himself? Bizarre. What's next for Michael? He bleaches his face. Why not go all the way and bleach his hair as well?"

His new look was the most obvious when he showed up at the 1993 Soul Train Awards in Los Angeles to accept three awards. Eddie Murphy greeted him backstage and was astonished to see him in a wheelchair. He told Murphy that he had sprained his ankle while dancing but was going on anyway. On stage he performed his "Remember the Time" song as dancers pranced around him.

Michael walked away with three awards, which he accepted to thunderous applause. "At least he didn't show up in a surgical mask," Murphy told reporters backstage. One journalist claimed that after the ceremony he saw Michael, in the back of the theater, get up out of his wheelchair and walk without a limp to a waiting limousine. That sighting could not be confirmed by other reporters.

Since his face wasn't being worked over and in the process of healing, Michael began to make more appearances, showing up at the Grammy Awards in 1993 to accept a Lifetime Achievement Award. The honor was presented to him by Janet Jackson. Plastic surgery had made her look more and more like her brother. Aware of this, Michael moved in close to her and announced to the audience, "See, me and Janet are really two different people."

The statement was confusing to those who hadn't read the press speculation that Michael had two identities-one when he appeared as a Jackson sis ter and the other as himself. But it wasn't Janet the speculation whirled around but La Toya. One reporter provocatively asked, "Have you ever seen a picture of Michael and La Toya together?"

Of course, they were two different people, but it was alleged that La Toya had had plastic surgery done to make herself look more like her brother. The resemblance between Michael and La Toya was even greater than the lookalike appearances of Janet and Michael.

Fans were wondering why Michael was popping up everywhere after leading a life as a recluse when not performing. Inquiring minds wanted to know, and an answer emerged.

In the decade since the release of Thriller, his popularity had slumped. In a California-based survey of music industry honchos, Michael was placed #14 on a list of stars, far behind such rivals as Madonna or even Janet Jackson herself.

"Michael, by his own hand, had transformed himself into a freak," said one music executive who refused to be named. "Skin bleaching, hyperbaric chambers, the Elephant Man, the fantasy world of Neverland, and the persistent gay issue that was about to explode in his face-it had all become too much. And, to make matters worse, it wasn't just the gay thing. Parts of the world have grown more accepting of gays, and certainly all media attracts thousands of gays. But there were rumors of child molestation that were making the rounds even before the Jordie Chandler press explosion. That was too much. Some of the world-not all-might forgive gay. On the other hand, the suggestion that an artist is a pedophile will make some people go ballistic. But Michael had become such a famous artist, with so many fans around the world, that he'd retain a certain fan base through it all."

Michael also popped up at the NAACP Image Awards. Reporters from black newspapers cornered him, asking him if he had tried to cast a white boy to play himself as a young child in a Pepsi commercial. He'd denied this persistent rumor before, and he would deny it again on that night of the NAACP ceremony. "I'm a black American, and I'm proud of my race. I'm proud of who I am." He would more or less repeat this same statement when cornered by Oprah Winfrey on television.

He also accepted an invitation from the Clintons to attend one of their inaugural balls on January 19, 1993 in Washington. The first daughter, Chelsea, or so it was said, was "ecstatic" upon meeting the King of Pop. Pictures taken of the two of them together have her looking on adoringly.

As part of the event, Michael led an all-star chorus of "We Are the World." Later, he shook hands with the new president, Bill Clinton. Unknown to each of them, both Michael and Clinton would face charges of sexual harassment before the 90s came to an end.

In Washington, Michael checked into the Madison Hotel. Along with him was a young boy (unidentified), one of his "special friends." All that the staff remembered about the visit were requests for the pressing of military costumes and several orders for strawberry ice cream to be delivered to Michael's darkened suite.

The press reported that prior to the inaugural festivities, Michael had agreed to perform before the newly elected President, but had demanded that the other dozen scheduled balls be cancelled so that "I can be the sole performer." This rumor gained such vogue that Bert Fields, Michael's attorney, had to hold a press conference to deny them. Even so, rumors didn't go away. Oprah Winfrey pointedly asked Michael on TV: "Did you tell President Clinton that you had to be the only person there singing?"

"That's the stupidest, craziest story that I have ever heard," Michael said, barely concealing his anger. "That's not even in my heart. I would never say anything like that."

In spite of all these denials, aides to President Clinton, speaking off the record, said that such a request did arrive "from Michael's people." At this point, the truth can't be confirmed.

Michael's appearances at The Soul Train and Grammy Awards were dwarfed by the audiences who tuned in to watch a televised appearance, at Neverland, with Oprah Winfrey on February 10, 1993. His appearance on this show has become legendary. But in reviewing a transcript years later, it is much tamer than the reports written about it at the time.

Oprah did move in on some delicate topics, but surely this skilled interviewer didn't expect Michael to answer

any of her questions truthfully. Among other untruths, he made up love affairs with women, including Brooke Shields, which did not exist, and denied bleaching his skin.

President Bill Clinton and MJ

As the world tuned in, Oprah was allowed to ask Michael whatever questions she chose, although she showed remarkable restraint.

Before air time, Oprah was introduced to Jordie Chandler, Michael's new "special friend" who would soon file charges of sexual molestation against the King of Pop.

It was estimated that 90 million people around the world watched Oprah fire questions at Michael, making it the fourth most watched show in television history, top place going to the final episode of M*A*S*H.

On her show, Michael blamed the press for the stories about the hyperbaric chamber ("it is a lie") and of his attempt to buy the bones of the Elephant Man ("and why would I want some bones?). What he didn't tell was that he was behind the planting of those stories.

Michael had only good things to say about his family, with one exception. Papa Joe was singled out for condemnation.

"I love my father," he said. "but I don't know him. To me, my mother's just wonderful. She's perfection. I just wish I could understand my father. There were times when he would come to see me and I would get sick both as a child and as an adult."

In a blatant attempt to deceive the public, Michael claimed that his use of plastic surgery "was only two things," admitting to a nose job. He later said, "I've never had my cheekbones done, never had my eyes done, never had my lips done and all this stuff."

When asked if he bleached his skin, Michael pretended that "as far as I know of there is no such thing as skin bleaching. I have never seen it. I don't know what it is. I have a skin disorder that destroys the pigmentation of my skin; it's something that I cannot help. It's in my family. My father said it's on his side."

He may have been suggesting that he had vitiligo, a genetic skin disease. The disease is closely related to

albinism. Those who have vitiligo experience the loss of pigmentation in small oval-shaped patches of their skin. That is because skin cells, known as melanocytes, fail to produce and store melanin, which is largely responsible for the uniform pigmentation of the skin.

In the aftermath of the Oprah broadcast, La Toya among others, asserted that Michael had been using bleaching creams for years. Michael's claim that vitiligo runs in his family has never been confirmed.

Oprah even asked him why he grabbed his crotch while performing.

In his reply, Michael wandered. "I think it happens subliminally. If I'm doing a movement and I go `bam,' and I grab myself ... it's the music that compels me to do it. You don't think about it ... it just happens. Sometimes I'll look back at the footage and I go, `Did I do that?', so I'm a slave to the rhythm."

When asked if he dated, Michael introduced the name of Brooke Shields. He even claimed, as he had before, that he was in love with her. Watching TV with her mother, Brooke reportedly burst into laughter at this revelation. Michael also admitted that he'd been in love with "another girl," but refused to name her.

MJ on The Oprah Winfrey Show

Oprah even asked him, "Are you a virgin?" Michael answered, "I'm a gentleman," and therefore was not willing to discuss "something that is private." When pressed for more details, Michael admitted that he was too "embarrassed" to answer the question.

At one point Elizabeth Taylor appeared from out of the wings, making a surprise visit to the set. In front of the camera, she denied that Michael ever proposed to her. "And I never proposed to him." It was in front of Oprah that Elizabeth delivered her famous and often repeated line: "He is the least weird man I have ever known." She had such bubbling praise about Michael that after the telecast, rumors circulated that she had been paid two million dollars by MJJ Productions for her worldwide endorsement. Again, like so many aspects in the life of Michael Jackson, this rumor cannot be confirmed.

The broadcast ended with Michael taking Oprah on a royal tour of his own Magic Kingdom.

His appearance did not exactly convince the world he was not weird in spite of Elizabeth's glowing enthusiasm. On late-night TV, Jay Leno quipped that "the Elephant Man called and wanted to buy Michael's bones." In a cover story, Entertainment Weekly asked a provocative question: CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS GUY?

One scalding critic, on reviewing Michael's performance with Oprah, wrote: "He was obviously lying on camera, but the evidence was right before millions of viewers. No longer a so-called `Negro,' he was all aglow in an albino whiteness, the ghost-like effect only heightened by the unfortunate choice of a coral-colored lipstick best reserved for an aging Joan Crawford in Technicolor as when she appeared in Torch Song."

Special friends such as Jordie Chandler, who had watched Michael's interview with Oprah Winfrey, had to go to school during the day. That often left Michael alone. Sometimes he was photographed with adults, especially his friend of many years, Michael Milken, the notorious "junk bond king" of the 1980s. Milken was another "odd couple" relationship for Michael.

At the peak of his career, Milken earned between $200 and $550 million annually. A United States attorney aspiring to higher office, Rudy Giuliani, went after Milken, charging him with 98 counts of racketeering and fraud. Milken was indicted by a federal grand jury. Entering into a plea bargain, Milken pled guilty to six lesser securities and reporting violations. He was forced to pay $900 million in fines and served only 22 months in prison between 1991 and 1993. Even after his release, he still had one billion dollars of his personal fortune intact.

This impressed Michael. The two men began to hang out together, ostensibly talking about launching an entertainment cable TV network aimed at children.

When criticized for hanging out with Milken, Michael defended him. "Michael Milken is my friend because he has been through the fire, as I have, and emerged better for the process. He has been misunderstood, as I have been, and harshly judged by those who had no right to assume they knew this man without ever spending an hour in his company."

Michael often flew with one of his special friends to Las Vegas where he was seen with not only Milken but with Steve Wynn, the Mirage Casino owner. Michael later said that he liked Las Vegas because "people here don't judge you as they do elsewhere." He could also spend hours at a time playing video games with young boys he flew in, later retreating with these special friends to the privacy of a hotel suite where, in Michael's words, "you can order anything you want, even a pink elephant delivered to the parking lot if that is your desire."

Michael was photographed with Milken and Wynn on a pirate ship during the grand opening of the Treasure Island Hotel. Steve Miller, a former Las Vegas City Councilman, once wrote that his hometown was a perfect place for both Milken and Michael Jackson to use as a haven from the world.

Winfrey "embarrassing" MJ

Even after Michael's trial on a charge of child molestation in 2005, Miller said, "I realize Jackson was found not guilty, but I still like to use the Milken example to show the forgiveness of Nevadans when it comes to prominent people who have had run-ins with the law. After the six-week trial revealed so much about his personal life, it's no doubt Jackson will need a lot of forgiving if he wants to continue his career. But, if he chooses to seek social acceptance in Sin City, he'll be making the right choice!"

That piece of civic boosterism, however, seemed rather fragile after the first charges of child molestation were aired against Michael by Jordie Chandler. As Michael made his way through the casino of the MGM Grand on New Year's Eve in 1993, a drunken crowd greeted him, many with angry shouts. CHILD MOLESTER! PERVERT! SUCK ON THIS, FAGGOT! Yet earlier in the day, he'd signed autographs for several kids.

In a black chador, looking like a repressed Arab woman, a disguise he'd don in the future, Michael toured the MGM Grand Theme Park with Milken. In the evening he was in his braided Sgt. Pepper drag when he showed up at the MGM Grand again to hear Barbra Streisand in concert. Introduced by the great diva, Michael received a thunderous applause, so maybe Steve Miller was right in his assessment of Vegas as "a second chance town."

Although Michael occasionally toured amusement parks with adults who in the past had included not only Milken but also Jackie Onassis, he much preferred to enjoy these attractions with children, whose ranks now included Frank and Eddie Cascio.

Michael, even back in the 80s, had a sharp eye for beautiful boys. Once, when visiting New York, he was introduced to the concierge of New York's Helmsley Palace Hotel, Dominic Cascio. Cascio greeted Michael warmly. During a discussion of the star's needs at the hotel, Michael spotted a picture of Cascio's two sons, Frank and Eddie. They were just babies at the time, but Michael stayed in touch with Dominic and his interest in the boys continued over the years. A meeting was arranged. Michael sent occasional presents to the boys as they grew older. By the time Eddie turned nine and Frank a robust thirteen, they were entertained at Neverland where, it was reported, "they played day and night."

Michael continued his kindnesses to the Cascio brothers while still entertaining Brett Barnes and his new young friend, Jordie Chandler.

Michael Milken

The year was 1993, the very same year that Michael would take the young Cascio brothers on a world tour-with their parents' permission, of course. This was a blatant act on Michael's part, as charges of child molestation against him were being aired at that time around the world. But instead of at least trying to be discreet, he openly traveled with these two underage boys and allowed himself to be photographed with them, which only caused more speculation about what he was up to.

As headlines about Michael and child molestation blazed, he traveled with the two young boys in August, September, and October of 1993. Diane Dimond, the investigative reporter, stated the obvious. "It seemed odd that a man accused of molesting a prepubescent boy would continue to travel with two of them."

She even traced the parents to their home in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, where they ran Aldo's Restaurant. Both parents, according to the reporter, asserted that "we trust Michael Jackson with our sons."

Michael's main interest was in Frank Cascio, who would later change his name to Frank Tyson. He slept with Michael in his suite whenever they traveled together. In the words of publicist Bob Jones, Michael "adored the young fellow. Michael even had clothes made for Cascio so that the youngster would look just like him. Michael Jackson would even cancel business meetings if Frank instead wanted to go to Disneyland or just play with water guns or just sleep."

Dominic Cascio and his wife, Connie, often traveled on the road with Michael, serving as "advisors" to him. Once, when Bob Jones confronted Michael about the "impropriety" of having the Cascio brothers in his suite,

Michael exploded in anger, sending his publicist back to the States from Romania.

The Cascio brothers were a pleasant diversion for Michael, although a life-long friendship would develop with Frank, who would become Michael's trusted aide. But in 1992 and 1993, the one boy who occupied Michael's thoughts both day and night was Jordie Chandler. How could things have gone so wrong between them?

When they had first come together one bright May day in 1992, Michael's world was so very different. Elvis was no longer "The King" since Michael had replaced him on the throne. He presided over his fans as the king of music and was, indeed, a crowned king of a tribe in West Africa. Those were heady times.

When he first gazed into the beautiful face of Jordie, with his dark skin, beautiful hair, delicate eyes, and fine bone structure, the boy looked so innocent and trusting.

Michael, of course, would have no way of knowing that Jordie would have the power to bring Michael's carefully structured kingdom to an end, a drama that would be played out before the world.

"With Michael you can establish in a few days the kind of good friend relationship it takes years to develop with most people. Or at least that's what you believe. He's the opposite of intimidating. He's accessible and vulnerable. You get the feeling that not only would he never hurt you, but also that he's incapable of hurting you.

It's like finding a bird with a broken wing. In some ways Michael's a little broken. You become protective of him. You want to nurse him back to health. You want to make him happy. But deep down a strange phenomenon is taking place.

In believing that you're safe and in control, you let your guard down and become vulnerable to manipulation without realizing it. His ability to sense who you are and how you can be manipulated is highly refined. By the time you figure out that the helpless sparrow is actually a vulture that can rip the meat off your bones, it's too late.

He goes to great lengths to make you believe he's giving and generous. But he's smart and cunning, like a fox on the hunt. You must remain emotionally remote with Michael to be safe. He means business. He's all business.

Nobody controls Michael Jackson. Nobody! He either controls you by manipulating you emotionally or by paying you obscene amounts of money. Either way, you are going to be controlled. "

--Evan Chandler

"Unfortunately for Michael, when you reach his level of stardom, there is not much you can do...You are up there alone setting a precedent, making history-a living legend. Many people hate to look up and so they must try to bring him down. It's been the same throughout history, from Mozart to Lennon. "

--Adrian Grant from Michael Jackson: Live and Dangerous

"He hums things. He can convey it with his voice like nobody. Not just the lyrics, but he can convey the feeling in a drum part or a synthesizer part. "

--Bill Bottrell, co-producer of Dangerous

Chapter Twelve

Driving incognito down Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles, Michael's Rolls-Royce broke down. The nearest auto repair shop and car-rental firm was called Rent-a-Wreck. Its owner, David Schwartz, came to offer assistance and was startled to encounter the pop star. Schwartz picked Michael up in his own van and drove him back to his shop, after calling a tow truck to haul the vehicle in for repairs.

In his office, Schwartz called his wife, June. Within minutes she'd arrived at Rent-a-Wreck with her daughter, Lily, age 5, and her 12-year-old son, Jordie Chandler. The startlingly handsome young boy caught Michael's eye. He was instantly smitten.

It was not the first time the man and boy had made contact with each other. After Michael's hair was set aflame in the Pepsi commercial, Jordie had written him a fan letter and Michael had called, thanking Jordie personally for his concern. Jordie also had a younger half-brother, Nikki, the product of his father's marriage to his new wife, Nathalie Chandler.

For most of his young life, Jordie had worshipped Michael Jackson. The boy knew how to moonwalk to the sound of "The Way You Make Me Feel," and the child's grandmother had even knitted him a sequined glove.

Jordie Chandler

At the shop, Michael presented Jordie with a copy of Dancing the Dream, a coffee table book published by Doubleday under the supervision of Jackie Onassis in 1992. It was a sappy tome for aficionados only. Elizabeth Taylor wrote the purple introduction, claiming that when she heard the name of Michael Jackson, she thought of "brilliance, of dazzling stars, lasers, and deep emotions." The words didn't sound like the gutsy and irreverent broad we all know and love, the woman who on a winter's night in Gstaad would call Peter Lawford a "cocksucker" for bringing Richard Burton back drunk to her chalet.

After giving Michael his telephone number, Jordie took the book home with him that night and read every word, studying the pictures carefully.

Astonishingly, full-page color photographs appeared of Michael as Julius Caesar (Marc Anthony would have laughed); Henry VIII (Charles Laughton would turn over in his grave); Napoleon (Josephine would have said, "Not tonight!"), and as Romeo (without his Juliet).

In this vanity book, Michael revealed to all the world that, in spite of his pretensions, he was not a poet:

Who am I?
Who are you?
Where did we come from?
Where are we going?
What's it all about?
Do you have the answers?

Jordie Chandler (also known as Jordy or Jordan) was born in January of 1980, making him twenty-two years younger than Michael. His father, Evan Chandler, was a Jewish dentist and aspirant screenwriter in Los Angeles, and his mother, June, came from the Caribbean island nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, from black and Chinese ancestors. Their multi-racial son had an extraordinary beauty, as has been frequently reported in the press.

The next day Michael telephoned Jordie and "we talked for hours," the boy would later testify. It was the beginning of a phone romance that would last for weeks, preceding Jordie's actual visit to Neverland.

Beginning with Michael appearing at Rent-a-Wreck, he placed daily phone calls, some lasting three hours, to Jordie. As was later revealed in the police investigation of Michael, these calls began in May of 1992 and lasted until February of 1993, the latter marking the end of the first leg of the Dangerous tour.

When not phoning, Michael sent notes: "I have such golden dreams for you. You are my new inspiration."

In late February, Jordie, along with his half sister, Lily, and his mother, June, was invited to Neverland. They would return to Neverland nearly every weekend (Jordie had school during the week). During those early visits, all the Chandlers stayed in the guest house. Invited earlier for a sleepover, and occupying Michael's bedroom in the main house, was Brett Barnes.

Michael began to woo Jordie, Lily, and June with expensive presents. One night at the local branch of Toys "R" Us , which had opened after hours just for them, Michael spent $12,000 on gifts for Jordie and Lily.

During Michael's initial courting of Jordie, it's estimated that he spent $250,000 on gifts for the family, showering June with such elegant presents as $25,000 in jewelry and Jordie with $20,000 worth of computer equipment.

Michael was obviously buying their friendship and, in the case of Jordie, perhaps his love. One night in FAO Schwarz, the famous toy store of New York, Michael spent more than $75,000 on toys for his friend, although earlier, he'd refused to buy a million-dollar solid gold Monopoly set.

In the civil lawsuit Jordie later filed against Michael, he claimed that it was because of these expensive and lavish gifts that the pop star was "able to seduce the plaintiff and thereby defendant Michael Jackson was able to satisfy his lust, passions, and sexual desires."

June's first concern about Michael was raised in February of 1993 when Jordie and she took a two-hour limo drive to Santa Barbara. A young boy sat in the front seat with Michael. June later reported that Michael hugged and caressed the boy, kissing him often on the ear and cheek-soft, lingering kisses.

She reported that this blatant display ensued during the following day on a three-and-a-half hour drive to Disneyland.

On a spectacular outing on April 9, 1993, Michael flew the Chandlers to Las Vegas, checking them into a lavish $3,500-a-night suite at the swanky Mirage Hotel. After Lily and June had retired for the night, Michael invited Jordie to join him in bed to watch The Exorcist. Jordie was horribly frightened by the movie, particularly when the demon-possessed nine-year-old Linda Blair violated herself with a crucifix. Michael cuddled the boy to comfort him and asked him to sleep over with him that night.

Sharing the same three-bedroom suite occupied by Michael and Jordie, June discovered the sleepover

arrangement the following morning when she found that Jordie's bed had not been slept in. She went searching and found Michael in red silk pajamas and Jordie in sweatpants sleeping in each other's arms in the pop star's bedroom. Immediately she protested such an arrangement.

Nikki and Jordan Chandler

According to Jordie's testimony, Michael, in tears, seemed shocked and extremely hurt by her suspicions. He claimed, "We are a loving family. There's nothing wrong with my sleeping with Jordie. You should allow it because it's simple and fun-and you shouldn't set up barricades. You don't trust me? Why can't he sleep in my bed? There's nothing wrong. There's nothing going on."

Author Victor Gutierrez

That night June received an $18,000 diamond-and-ruby bracelet personally delivered by a representative of Cartier's.

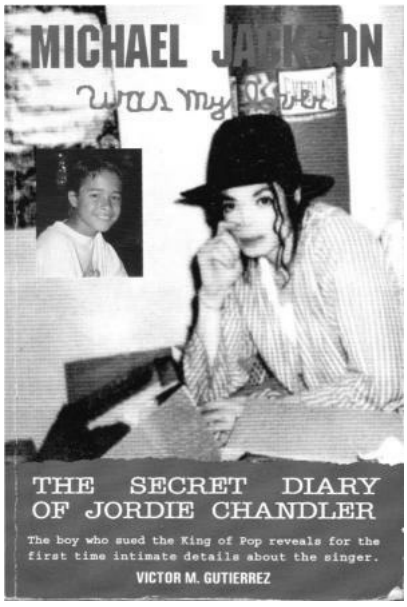
Michael's seduction of Jordie began gradually with slight protests. He didn't want Jordie to close the bathroom door when showering. "It's okay for us to be naked with each other," Michael assured the boy. These maneuvers graduated to hugs and long, lingering kisses on the cheek.

Beginning with the incident that occurred with the screening of The Exorcist, Michael and Jordie would sleep together in beds from Monte Carlo to Orlando until their intimate relationship came crashing down in flames in July of 1993.

Soon, according to testimony later delivered by Jordie, it was mouth-tomouth kissing with tongue insertions. At first Jordie's protests brought tears to Michael. "Just because most people believe something is wrong with it doesn't make it so," Michael told the boy. In the nights to follow, again according to Jordie's testimony, both the man and boy took turns lying on top of each other with erections.

Jordie would later reveal some of Michael's private vocabulary-erection was "lights," cum was "duck butter."

In April of 1993 Michael stayed for one month at June's modest home in Santa Monica, sleeping in a bed with her son. Journalists who got news of Michael's relationships with June and Jordie at first misinterpreted it, speculating that Michael was trying to create a ready-made family by marrying June and adopting Jordie as his son. The National Enquirer even managed to run a picture of Michael with June, Lily, and Jordie under the banner: JACKO'S NEW FAMILY.



The infamous expose

When Evan Chandler dropped by to call on his ex-wife and visit with his son, he was surprised to find Michael in residence. During his visit, Evan snapped a now infamous picture of Michael sitting in Jordie's bedroom. In striped silk pajamas, Michael with stringy black hair is wearing a black hat. He'd coated his lips with a very bright ruby-red lipstick, and is in full pancake makeup with a Band-Aid on his nose. He'd applied a thick black eyeliner. The picture was later used as the cover photo on a notorious book, Michael Jackson Was My Lover: The Secret Diary of Jordie Chandler, written by Victor M. Gutierrez, an investigative journalist. Instead of white socks that day, Michael wore one sunflower yellow, the other as bright as a Christmas orange.

A bright, well-educated, and concerned parent, Evan was initially suspicious of Michael and the obsessive attention he was showing Jordie. In spite of that, Michael overcame Evan's doubts and for a very brief time the two men bonded. But the relationship almost ended before it had begun. The first time Evan was alone with Michael, the dentist bluntly asked the pop star: "Are you fucking my son up the ass?"

Raymond Chandler, Evan's brother, claimed that "Michael giggled like a schoolgirl, but never batted a false eyelash. `I never use that word,' he responded."

Michael bragged to Jordie about all the powerful people he knew and promised to introduce the boy to many of them, including Elizabeth Taylor. When he learned that Ronald Reagan was operating out of an office near his Century City condo, he called Reagan's office and solicited an invitation to come by. Ostensibly Michael wanted to welcome the former president to California and to thank him for the hospitality that Nancy and the President had shown to him during his visit to the White House in the 80s.

Surprisingly, Michael's request for a meeting was granted, although Reagan's aide warned Michael to "make the visit short."

Michael arrived at Reagan's office accompanied by Jordie, who sat close to him in the back of a limousine. After a security search by Reagan's Secret Service staff, Michael and Jordie were ushered into the office of the former leader of the Free World.

Jordie had expected to meet an old man and therefore wasn't surprised by Reagan's appearance. But Michael later claimed that, "I was devastated." This was not the leader of charm and grace that Michael had encountered on the White House lawn. Reagan seemed to have aged twenty years, not ten, and Michael was not at all certain that the former president knew who he was.

President Reagan

Reagan knew enough to realize that Michael was a singer, and he seemed to assume that Jordie was the star's son. "I have a son of my own," he informed Michael as if it was a revelation and not a fact known around the world. "He dances in the ballet, or at least I think he does. Maybe not."

The president spoke nostalgically of how Nancy and he would drive along the California coast listening to Michael's music. He claimed that he particularly liked "Surfin' U.S.A." and "Sweet Little Sixteen." Suddenly, Michael realized that Reagan was not talking about him, but The Beach Boys.

Raymond Chandler

To avoid embarrassment, Michael tried to change the subject. He noted a photograph of the White House placed on a shelf near Reagan. Michael picked it up and began to comment on his visit there, perhaps in the belief that it would refresh the president's memory.

Reagan asked to see the picture, staring at it for a long moment. "This house looks familiar," he said. "But I don't think Nancy and I would like to live there. It's too big, too impersonal."

Reagan's mind seemed to wander. To Michael's utter astonishment, he was left with the impression, as he'd later report to friends, that he felt that Reagan did not recognize the White House or even know that he had for eight years been the President of the United States.

After thanking Reagan, Michael retreated, holding the boy's hand as he made his way out of the building. When Michael later learned that Reagan suffered from Alzheimer's disease, he was not surprised.

The most spectacular trip that Michael ever took with Jordie and June, and one that attracted world attention, occurred in Monaco when Michael accepted an invitation to attend the World Music Awards, where he was to be honored as the "World's Best-selling Record Artist of the Era."

Michael's publicist, Bob Jones, related that on the plane from Los Angeles to Paris, "Michael and the young boy were hugging and very close. They held hands and Michael lovingly gazed into the boy's eyes much like a man would gaze into the eyes of a woman he's in love with. He'd kiss him on the cheek, rub his arms, pet him and inexplicably lick the boy's head."

After the plane landed in Nice, the Jackson party flew by helicopter to Monaco where a stretch limousine took them to their $2,500-a-night suite at the Hotel de Paris. Jordie was installed in Michael's quarters, called the Sir Winston Churchill Suite. The next day Michael took Jordie to meet Prince Albert at the palace, with its memories of Grace Kelly. A French newspaper tabloid, perhaps falsely, speculated that Michael asked to purchase some of the wardrobe left by the prince's mother, the late Grace Kelly who'd died in an auto accident in 1982. His offer was politely refused.

Throughout most of the trip, Michael stayed locked away in his hotel suite with Jordie. The staff at the Hotel de Paris referred to Michael and Jordie as "the honeymoon couple." Michael instructed his aides to take June on as many carte blanche shopping expeditions as she wanted.

The royals of Monaco: Caroline, Albert, and Stephanie

At the actual awards ceremony, Michael was to be seated between Prince Albert and the actress Linda Evans. At the last moment, Michael insisted that Linda be moved and Jordie given her seat. Actually Jordie didn't need a seat, as he spent most of the ceremony sitting on Michael's lap in front of 500 million TV viewers around the world. Michael planted frequent kisses on the boy's head. Bob Jones reported that at the actual awards ceremony he heard guests saying, "Did we miss the wedding?"

Reporters in Monaco claimed that Michael, even though in public view, could hardly keep his hands off young Jordan, even running his right hand up and down the boy's leg. An aide to Prince Albert found the "spectacle disgusting!" But Grace Kelly's son had seen it all and didn't indicate the least surprise, at least not publicly.

Princess Stephanie was overheard saying, "Jackson is out of his mind." As the world looked on, Michael and Jordie giggled; they nuzzled each other's noses, and Michael stroked the boy's hand. At one point Michael's hand moved dangerously close to the boy's crotch.

They were attired in matching outfits, both of them in Johnny Cash black with red armbands like Chinese

soldiers. Not only that, but both of them wore mirrored sunglasses.

Jordie was thirteen at the time but looked no more than ten years old. If fans had been aware the boy was actually thirteen, and that he had at least a six-inch penis, Michael's behavior would have been beyond outrageous.

Princess Caroline invited Michael as the guest of honor at a banquet at the palace. Michael did not show up for the dinner, which infuriated her Royal Highness. The daughter of the late Princess Grace was not used to being treated with such lack of respect. At her royal banquet, Caroline vowed that "Michael Jackson is off my guest list forever!" She settled for entertaining Luciano Pavarotti, instead.

While this dinner was taking place, Michael and Jordie remained within their hotel suite. It was later learned that Michael bathed naked with Jordie. This was the first time that either of them had seen the other nude. "Michael Jackson named certain of his young friends who masturbated in front of him," Jordie later testified. "Michael Jackson then masturbated in front of me. He told me that when I was ready, he would do it for me. While we were in bed, Michael Jackson put his hand underneath my underpants. He then masturbated me to climax. After that, Michael Jackson masturbated me many times both with his hand and with his mouth. Michael Jackson told me that I should not tell anyone what had happened. He said this was a secret."

Jordie

According to Jordie's later testimony, Michael would orally copulate the boy. Or, in Jordie's words, "Michael masturbated me with his mouth." He also testified that Michael "ate my semen."

After Monaco, Michael and the Chandlers flew to Paris for a visit to Euro Disney. Not getting enough of Disney in France, they flew to Orlando, visiting The Magic Kingdom. Later Jordie reported that Michael asked him to "suck on one of his nipples and twist the other one while he masturbated."

In his later testimony, Jordie also claimed that Michael tried "to make me hate my mom and dad." Gradually Michael began to say to Jordie, "I love you." He got Jordie to reply, "I love you, too."

He also got the boy to recite vows such as "Live at Neverland with me forever." Another very revelatory "wish" that Michael got Jordie to recite was "never grow up."

Following June's divorce of Evan in 1985, she received custody of Jordie. Both June and Evan later remarried, not successfully. When Evan began hearing reports of Michael befriending his son, he at first was flattered. There were rumors that he "wanted in on the action," meaning he hoped to benefit financially from Jordie's involvement with Michael. Evan also had a secret wish that Michael, with his MJJ Productions, might help him in his fledgling screen career. Instead of extracting teeth, Evan wanted to write screenplays, as did many other people in Hollywood.

He'd already sold one script to Mel Brooks, the comedy director. Jordie had given his father the idea for Robin Hood: Men in Tights, which was filmed as a spoof of Errol Flynn's successful 1938 version of The Adventures of Robin Hood. The film that Evan wrote bombed at the box office, but nonetheless, the dentist still clung to his dream.

As stipulated within his custody arrangement with June, Jordie eventually showed up to spend a week with his

father. To Evan's surprise, his son was accompanied by Michael.

Evan was shocked when Michael announced that he was going to share Jordie's bed. Against his better judgment, and although he found it troubling, the father did not object to this. He later said, "What father in his right mind wouldn't suspect something?"

During his visit, Evan quizzed his son when Michael went to take a shower, asking him if there had been any intimate contact between Michael and himself. Jordie denied that his relationship with the star was sexual, but Evan suspected that his son was concealing the truth.

On the morning of the third sleepover, Evan discovered his clothed son sleeping with a pajama-clad Michael whose left hand rested on his son's covered crotch.

That day Jordie and Michael, even in the presence of Evan, showed extreme familiarity with each other. Jordie had never been that affectionate with his own father. But Evan wondered if it were more than affection as he watched the man and boy play together like children. Evan asked himself a painful question: "Is Jordie in love with Michael?"

Even so, Evan did not move to put an end to the relationship, as he allegedly viewed Michael as a "cash cow." He even asked Michael to build an extension onto his home. When the zoning board would not allow that, Evan asked Michael to buy him a larger house. Michael indicated that he might do that.

But in the days and weeks that followed, Michael stopped showing up at Evan's house with Jordie. In fact, an entire month went by that Jordie did not even call his father.

Evan was growing despondent and troubled over Michael's intimate relationship with his son. In his diary he wrote that he felt "alienated, sad and frightened" about his son, especially when he learned that Jordie had made several unsupervised visits to Neverland.

Disturbing news reached Evan that June was going to withdraw Jordie from St. Matthew's School and allow him to accompany Michael on the second lap of the Dangerous tour that autumn. Feeling cut off from Michael, who had ceased to visit and call, as well as from Jordie, Evan decided to battle June for custody rights. Perhaps he hoped that would get Michael to pay him some attention and listen more attentively to his requests, especially about his screenwriting career.

Geraldine Hughes

Evan called a famous attorney in Century City, Los Angeles, Barry Rothman, who did not specialize in custody issues. A well-known entertainment lawyer, Rothman specialized in making deals for rock groups or even rock stars. His legal secretary, Geraldine Hughes, later wrote a pro-Michael Jackson book called Redemption, published in 1997. In her revelations, she was highly critical of her former boss. "Although I have never met a real-life demon

straight out of the pits of hell," she wrote, "after encountering Mr. Rothman I knew what it would feel like."

In Redemption, Geraldine claims that Evan "admitted to hiring Mr. Rothman because of his unethical business dealings. He [meaning Dr. Chandler] needed someone that did not mind bending and/or breaking the rules."

Somehow Michael learned that Evan was consulting a lawyer. Michael knew of Rothman's reputation in the music industry, and feared having to deal with him on a confrontational basis.

Michael called his lawyer, Bert Fields, to alert him that there might be trouble ahead and to warn him to stand by "to put out brush fires." To an increasing degree, Michael was relying on this Harvard-educated celebrity attorney who had represented many stars, including The Beatles, Warren Beatty, Dustin Hoffman, John Travolta, and Tom Cruise.

After the warning, Fields did what many a movie star did when he or she gets into trouble. He hired the notorious Anthony Pellicano.

Pellicano had been L.A.'s favorite celebrity detective for years. "When the stars need a wise-guy to leave a dead fish and a rose on somebody's windshield, allegedly, they know who to call," wrote Bob Sheffield in L.A. Confidential. As a Sunset Boulevard gumshoe, no one came near topping the behind-the-scenes chicanery of Pellicano.

Michael viewed him as "just the man" to deal with Evan. Over the years Tom Cruise would call Pellicano for his services, as would Sylvester Stallone, Rosanne Barr, Kevin Costner, and Farrah Fawcett. Other clients would include "bloody glove" cop Mark Fuhrman of the O.J. Simpson murder case and Michael's future mother-in-law, Priscilla Presley.

Pellicano had been involved in everything from the investigation of the JFK assassination to Steven Seagal's alleged mob ties. He made a reputation for himself as one of Richard Nixon's tape experts during the Watergate trials. If someone in Hollywood threatened to sue a star, Pellicano was called in to dig up dirt on the accuser.

Anthony Pellicano

The son of Sicilian immigrants, he grew up in the seedy, criminal-laden Chicago suburb of Cicero in the 1950s.

Elizabeth Taylor had already endorsed Pellicano. In 1977, grave robbers dug up the body of Taylor's third husband, Mike Todd, ostensibly looking for a 10- carat diamond ring that was widely believed to have been buried with him. After a well-publicized search, Pellicano discovered the missing body in the Forest Park cemetery in Illinois, where it lay hidden under a canopy of dead leaves. After that, Elizabeth sang the praises of Pellicano and helped launch his career as a private investigator. In time, Pellicano's clients even included the National Enquirer.

Elizabeth Taylor, Mike Todd

When Michael and Pellicano came together, both were at the peak of their careers.

But in February of 2006, Pellicano would make national headlines when he, along with six others, was indicted on a charge of conspiring to wiretap, blackmail, and intimidate dozens of celebrities, including Sylvester Stallone. The 220-count federal indictment outlined a web of payoffs to police, hightech eavesdropping, and other skullduggery.

Before that, on November 21, 2002, FBI agents in Los Angeles raided Pellicano's offices, finding two practice grenades modified to function as homemade bombs as well as enough military grade C-4 plastic explosives to take down a passenger jet.

After his arrest, Pellicano pleaded guilty to illegal possession of dangerous materials and was sentenced to thirty months in federal prison. Theoretically, his release had been scheduled for February 4, 2006, but on February 3, based on a new indictment of charges of wiretapping and racketeering, he was transferred to the Los Angeles County Jail.

Meanwhile, during ongoing negotiations with Fields, Evan regained custody of his son for one week, beginning on July 12, 1993.

Fields had worked out this agreement, and it was endorsed by Michael. But, unknown to Michael, Evan wanted private time with his son to gather more information about his relationship with the pop star.

During the week Jordie lodged with his father, one of his teeth was extracted on July 16.

A pivotal moment in the drama came when Jordie sat in his dental chair. If later testimony is to be believed, Jordie revealed to Evan that Michael had touched his penis. Later Evan would be accused of "planting" the idea of molestation in Jordie's head while the boy was under anesthesia. Evan consistently denied this accusation.

"I know everything," Evan said, lying to his son. "I know about the kissing, the jerking off-and the blow jobs." He claimed that he'd bugged Jordie's bedroom on those nights he'd spent with Michael in Evan's house. Threatening his son, he warned him, "If you lie to me, I'm going to take Jackson down." Looking frightened, Jordie burst into tears. Between sobs, he admitted to having had sex with Michael.

When the charges against Michael were later made public, Jordie's visit to his dentist father became a media event. Writing in GQ magazine in October of 1995, Mary Fischer claimed, "In the presence of Dr. Chandler and Mark Torbiner, a dental anesthesiologist, the boy was administered the controversial drug, Sodium Amytal. It was after this session that the boy first made his charges against Jackson."

Doctors have claimed that patients are very liable to emotional manipulation after taking Sodium Amytal. Ray

Chandler, Jordie's uncle, would later claim that his nephew was not given Sodium Amytal that day. A search of Dr. Torbiner's records show that Jordie was administered doses of Robinul and Vistaril instead.

Since Jordie had been taken from him, Michael was seen once again with Brett Barnes, shopping the real estate market in Beverly Hills. In addition to Neverland, Michael said he wanted a "real house-not just a condo"-closer to his business interests in Los Angeles.

The real estate agent later reported that she had no idea at the time that Michael was in any kind of legal trouble. "He chased the young boy through the house and at one point they collapsed on each other in a pile on the floor, giggling and tickling each other's ribs. They seemed to be having a romp. But within days I heard of the child molestation charges. I just naturally assumed that the boy house-hunting with Michael was Jordie Chandler, only to learn later it was the Brett Barnes kid."

In spite of Michael's obsession with Jordie, which consumed his nights and most of his waking hours, his career continued. Free Willy was released into movie houses, depicting a boy's effort to free a whale from a theme park. This was the first release for Michael on his new MJJ Records label, featuring "Will You Be There," the film's theme song.

The song rose rapidly on Billboards charts, the film becoming a sleeper hit. Michael showed it to Jordie a dozen times, neither man nor boy tiring of it. Each night before Jordie fell asleep, Michael inserted his tongue into Jordie's ear, then sang the lyrics of the song to him.

In our darkest hour
In my deepest despair
Will you still care?
Will you be there?

Michael had decided to change the name of his record company from Nation Records to MJJ Records. He was furious when his sister released Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation 1814, feeling Janet had "taken the word nation for herself."

Evan did not return Jordie to the care of his mother at the appointed time, and, through Rothman, demanded that June sign a stipulation which would forbid Jordie from any further communication with Michael. June signed the agreement. Even so, Evan refused to return the boy once he had June's signature on the agreement. Later, June claimed that she was cajoled and manipulated into signing.

Geraldine, Rothman's legal secretary, revealed that since August 16, 1993, Evan had been negotiating with Michael "for money in exchange for not going public with the suspicion of child molestation."

In court, June prevailed, and Evan was ordered to return Jordie to his mother. Increasingly desperate, Evan played a dangerous card, at least from Michael's point of view. Evan took the child not back home to his former wife but to see a psychiatrist, Dr. Mantis Abrams.

For Michael, as events subsequently revealed, this would become a fatal blow to his reputation.

Dr. Abrams became Jordie's psychiatrist. Their first session together on August 17, 1993 lasted for more than three hours. Under intensive questioning, Jordie admitted that Michael, in the words of the psychiatrist, "orally copulated" Jordie but "he did nothing oral to MJ and nothing anal happened."

In Florida, Jordie alleged that he protested sexual contact with Michael, but was threatened that if he ever told anyone "about what we did, you'll be sent to a juvenile hall for punishment." According to the psychiatrist's report, Michael revealed to Jordie the names of "other boys I've done this with."

After hearing Jordie's testimony, Abrams was bound by California law to report the boy's charges to the Los Angeles Department of Children's Services. Jordie was called in for intensive interviewing by staff member Ann T.

Rosato. After grilling him, Rosato was convinced that he was telling the truth, that Michael was committing sex acts with the boy.

The Los Angeles police were also called into the investigation. Officers known only as "E. Cateriano" and "J. Calams" arranged for Jordie to be interviewed by them as well. In their report to their superiors, the two officers concluded, "The boy is telling the truth."

Police and prosecutors in Santa Barbara began an investigation of Michael to determine if he were indeed a pedophile and had engaged in sexual activities with minors. If convicted of such charges, of course, a man could go to jail.

June's husband, David Schwartz, and Evan were on friendly terms, even though both men had married the same woman. Evan learned from Schwartz that his marriage to June was unraveling. "I rarely see her," Schwartz claimed. "She spends all her time with Michael."

Howard Weitzman and Anthony Pellicano

In a conversation taped by Schwartz, Evan is heard telling him, "Jackson is an evil guy. If I go through with this and blow the whole thing wide open, I win big time. I will get everything I want. She [meaning June] is going to lose Jordie, and Michael's career will be over. He has June in his pocket. She likes the glitzy life that he can provide for her too much to give it up. I'm convinced she'll allow Jackson sexual access to our son again. I will be granted custody and June will have no rights whatsoever."

In a further comment, Evan claimed that "Jackson is going to be humiliated beyond belief. He will not believe what will happen to him. It'll be beyond his worst nightmare. He will not sell one more record. The facts are so overwhelming. Everyone will be destroyed in the process."

Fields, Michael's attorney, helped June obtain a court order that demanded the return of her son.

But through his attorney, Evan countered with a court order of his own, forbidding June to allow Jordie to accompany Michael on the Dangerous tour. With Michael hovering in the background, the battle lines over Jordie were forming.

On August 4, 1993, Evan, with Jordie at his side, met Michael and Pellicano in a suite at the deluxe Westwood Marquis Hotel in Los Angeles. Evan later wrote, "Michael looked Jordie straight in the eyes, smiled, and denied charges of sexual molestation. It was a chilling smile-like the smile you see on a convicted serial killer who perpetually declares his innocence despite the mountains of evidence against him. I knew it right then. Michael Jackson had not only molested my son but he was a criminal! It was suddenly all so obvious-June had been fooled, Jordie had been fooled, I had been fooled-the ENTIRE WORLD has been fooled by this fragile, pitiful creature with an absolutely brilliant criminal mind."

For some mysterious reason, Evan's attorney, Rothman, did not attend the meeting, which lasted five minutes. But Evan reported to Rothman later, and, from all reports, the two men agreed to seek $20 million in punitive damages from Michael. Hearing of this offer, Pellicano presented a counter-offer: to purchase three of Evan's screenplays over a three-year period for $350,000 each. Evan rejected the offer as too little. When he delivered additional demands to Pellicano, the detective was astonished-"and I've seen it all."

Evan wanted a trust fund set up for Jordie for $20 million. But that wasn't all. He also demanded that Michael purchase four of his screenplays for $5 million each.

Michael told Pellicano that "I don't want to pay one cent to the Chandlers. If anybody pays, let it be my insurance company."

Based on his perception that Fields needed a back-up attorney, Michael hired Santa Monica lawyer Howard Weitzman, one of the most influential attorneys in America, to work with Fields. His list of celebrity clients included Marlon Brando, Magic Johnson, O.J. Simpson, and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

On August 20, 1993, at the debut of the most disastrous trip of his life, Michael flew to Bangkok for the second part of his Dangerous globetrotting. This time there would be no Jordie flying with him.

Two and a half weeks after the Westwood Marquis confrontation, Michael checked into a luxurious suite at the Hotel Oriental in Bangkok.

News of the child molestation allegations first reached the world when KNBS in Los Angeles broadcast the revelation of the police raids on Neverland and on Michael's Century City condo.

"Pop star Michael Jackson is the subject of a criminal investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department," came the startling news over the radio. At first listeners didn't know that the investigation was based on a charge of sexual molestation from a young boy. That tantalizing piece of news was actually revealed by Pellicano himself.

The detective went before television floodlights to deny all charges. He suggested it was part of an extortion attempt. He also noted that this was but one of some three dozen attempts that cropped up every year to extort money from Michael. He also claimed that the family of the young boy was attempting to milk $20 million from Michael.

Evan was furious, angrily denying he was a blackmailer. Instead he portrayed himself as a "morally offended parent" who wanted to protect his son from further sexual advances from Michael.

IS PETER PAN THE PIED PIPER IN DISGUISE? asked one headline. Newsweek raised another provocative question, IS HE DANGEROUS OR JUST OFF THE WALL?

Only hours before, the police had raided both Neverland and Michael's lavish condo in Century City. Armed with search warrants, the police were looking for evidence that he was a child molester. Accompanying the officers was a locksmith with instructions to break into Michael's secret playroom at Neverland where in most cases only his special friends-usually young white boys-were permitted to go.

Police seized evidence, including boxes of photographs and video tapes. Among the possessions the police hauled away was a picture book, The Boy: A Photographic Essay, featuring prepubescent boys with their undeveloped penises exposed.

Within his Bangkok suite, Michael's telephone was urgently ringing. It was his criminal attorney, Howard Weitzman, calling from Los Angeles with some very disturbing news.

Michael listened intently in stunned disbelief to the details of the raids on Neverland and his condo.

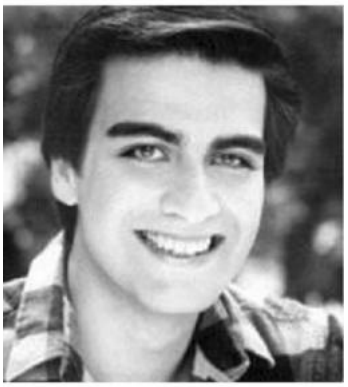
"I love children," Michael shouted into the phone at Weitzman. "The whole world knows that. How could they do this to me?"

After his discussion with Weitzman, Michael went on a rampage, breaking chandeliers and upturning and smashing furniture in his suite, even tossing vases of fresh flowers out the window.

"He came unglued," reported a staff member at the hotel. "When I was delivering a tray to the room, I spotted the American entertainer running screaming from room to room. He looked like a crazy man. I put down the tray and fled from the room. The entire suite was a wreck. I reported it to the manager so he could assess damages."

At first, reporters in Los Angeles rallied to Michael's defense when polls showed that only twelve percent of the public believed the accusations against Michael. Most TV viewers felt that he was the victim of extortion.

Shortly thereafter, a staff member of the television show Hard Copy claimed that a representative of Papa Joe, Michael's father, had approached the show and asked $150,000 for him to appear before the camera to talk about Michael's legal troubles. When Hard Copy turned that down, Papa Joe's staff made a counteroffer of $50,000. But negotiations broke down because the TV studio wanted Katherine to appear with her husband, and Papa Joe could not produce his wife.

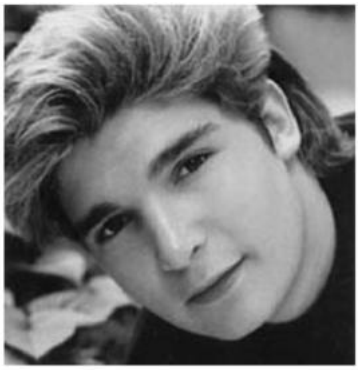


Eddie Reynoza

One staff member said, "Maybe old Joe could come on and tell how he used to frighten little Michael by telling him there were bad men in the audience with guns who would shoot him onstage if he didn't make the right moves. I don't know why my boss insisted on Katherine, who was known for sweeping everything under the rug and prevaricating."

Jordie's name was initially withheld from the media because he was a minor.

Even so, everybody who knew Michael Jackson, and many who didn't, seemed to take to the air waves to deliver their opinions on radio and TV about Jordie's accusations. The most sensational charges emerged from Eddie Reynoza, who charged that "Michael Jackson raped me when I was 16 years old." The boy claimed that he was auditioning for a music video when Michael spotted him. In his 1993 charges, Eddie claimed that he was "drugged, dumbed down with alcohol, and sexually assaulted."



Corey Feldman

Eddie went to the police and the press with charges of his rape, but some journalists attacked his credibility. Today, Eddie, an actor, is hoping to see a television movie made of his story, with his alleged rape by Michael being the centerpiece of the plot.

As a rising young child actor, Corey Feldman, who has appeared in more than 100 feature films, said that Michael befriended him when he was a young boy. Feldman claimed that the pop star never molested him or touched him inappropriately.

But he did reveal in an interview on 20/20 that he felt some of Michael's actions were questionable. He charged that Michael tried to persuade him to look at nude magazines.

In a sensational interview, Feldman revealed that he had been one of a group of child actors in Hollywood who were preyed upon and "molested by a gang of Hollywood pedophiles." He did not name Michael as part of that group. The former child star did admit to sleepovers with Michael, including one in a hotel room when Michael slept on a cot, giving Feldman the bed. "I was molested as a child but not by Jackson," Feldman said.

Known for his roles in such movies as Gremlins, Feldman ended his friendship with Michael in 2001. Later he released "Megalo-Man," a song highly critical of the pop star.

On the verge of a nervous breakdown, Michael managed to get through his first performance in Bangkok, but he had to lip-sync his way through the show, much to the disappointment of dozens of fans who realized what he was doing. "I could have stayed home and listened to my CD instead of seeing him live," said one disgruntled fan, who demanded that the box office return the hefty price he'd paid for a ticket.

Just hours before his scheduled second appearance on stage in Bangkok, Michael canceled the show. A doctor reported that Michael had succumbed to the heat and humidity prevalent in Thailand. The singer reportedly had become dehydrated. The doctor ignored the fact that Bangkok was experienc ing unseasonably cool weather, and that the auditorium where Michael was scheduled to appear was climate controlled.

Within his Thai hotel suite, Michael ingested inordinate amounts of Valium and Percodan, which were mixed with his regular painkillers. A maid reported to the press that she'd come upon the star in his bedroom. "He was crouched in a fetal position," she claimed. "He was actually sucking on his thumb like a little baby."

In a call to his mother, Katherine, Michael warned her that he'd commit suicide rather than face arrest. Michael's chief of security in Thailand, retired police officer, Bill Bray, placed a 24-hour suicide watch on Michael, taking his threat to kill himself very seriously.

On August 25, 1993, Michael placed a call to Elizabeth Taylor, pleading for her help. The star told him that she believed he was innocent and begged him to be strong and not harm himself. She promised to fly to his side. Significantly, Michael turned to Elizabeth instead of Katherine, his mother.

Having survived an emotionally turbulent relationship with actor Montgomery Clift, among countless others, Taylor was an old hand at playing Fairy Godmother and Maternal Savior, taking troubled young men, often homosexually oriented, and pressing them into the warmth of her ample and much-photographed bosom.

From Bangkok, Michael flew to Singapore for the continuation of his concert tour, arriving there in a fragile state.

Meanwhile, dressed in a white sweat suit, Larry Fortensky stood by the side of his bride, Elizabeth, as she spoke to journalists during her long flight to Singapore. Clad in a sweat suit herself-only hers was baby pinkElizabeth said, "This is the most awful thing that could happen to a man like Michael who loves children and would never harm one of them. I believe that Michael will be vindicated." She went on to claim that Michael was "the victim of extortion."

At the Singapore airport, at 2am, Larry and Elizabeth, "with a ton of luggage," were seen getting into a limousine which took them to a penthouse suite at the Raffles Hotel, one of the ten most famous in the world. Leaving Larry to sleep off the flight, Elizabeth went at once to see Michael across the hall.

Elizabeth arrived in Michael's suite at 3:30 that morning. She found him sucking his thumb "and curled up like a two-year-old boy in his bed."

She dismissed the guards, telling them that "the suicide watch is over. I'll take charge." She surmised that Michael had taken an overdose of painkillers, which had caused him to go berserk. He would not be the only friend of this Golden Age Hollywood star who had done that.

She urged him to fly to the Betty Ford Clinic, where she'd met her pres ent husband, Larry, then an inmate there, too. But Michael told her, "I have no intention of ever setting foot in Los Angeles again."

He seemed revitalized the following day, his birthday (August 29), when Elizabeth gave him a party to celebrate his turning thirty-five. She even got him to eat a piece of birthday cake, as he'd suffered a dramatic weight loss and was living on cups of vegetable broth.

That night, in front of his Singapore fans at the National Stadium, all 45,000 of them sang "Happy Birthday, Michael." His only reaction was to turn to one of his managers, "Isn't that song copyrighted? Will I have to pay royalties?"

The following night, he could not go on. Sobbing hysterically and threatening suicide, he fainted and the performance was canceled. In a local hospital, Michael underwent a brain scan to try to determine why he was suffering "from history's worst case of migraines." No physical cause could be determined by the presiding physicians.

After Singapore, Michael, along with Larry and Elizabeth, flew to Taiwan. Papa Joe and Katherine, along with Michael's brothers, each having flown in as a gesture of support for Michael, were waiting to greet their errant son.

Katherine hosted a family luncheon for Michael, to which she pointedly did not invite Elizabeth and Larry.

Perhaps feeling rebuffed, the Fortenskys flew back to Los Angeles. Elizabeth had been angered by remarks that Katherine allegedly told a reporter when boarding a plane in Los Angeles. "I'm his mother-not Elizabeth Taylor-and I'm flying to the side of my son, even though I'm not Cleopatra reincarnate."

Much of tout Hollywood continued to rally behind Michael, including Sharon Stone speaking at the MTV Awards in Los Angeles. "I firmly believe that if this family has-or ever hadevidence of abuse, it would have surfaced by now. All I know is that if a child of mine had been abused, I would not have been making deals."

Frank Cascio and MJ

Back in Los Angeles, Evan Chandler was working day and night to bring down Michael. Evan had obtained a high profile lawyer, the "fighting attorney," Gloria Allred, to represent Jordie. She immediately called a press conference, announcing that her thirteen-year-old client was "more than ready, more than willing, and more than able to confront his molester in court."

This ballsy attorney perhaps was too aggressive for the Chandlers. She really wanted a criminal suit against Michael, whereas the Chandlers preferred civil action so that damages could be claimed. The attorney charged that such a strategy would make the parents look too "money grubbing." Allred was removed from the case, and a more modest but also competent attorney, Larry Feldman, was hired instead.

On September 14, 1993, Feldman filed a civil suit for Jordie. He was in the eighth grade, aged thirteen.

In Jordie's civil complaint, Michael was charged with:

(1) sexual battery

(2) battery

(3) seduction

(4) willful misconduct

(5) intentional infliction of emotional distress

(6) fraud

(7) negligence

As this suit was being filed, Michael, in another part of the world, confronted soaking rain and large crowds as he marched with Russian soldiers in Red Square with the Kremlin in the background. A large banner (in English) was unfolded for his benefit: MICHAEL, RUSSIA LOVES YOU!

Flying to Tel Aviv, Michael met a different set of people. Although many citizens of Israel are as liberal as some of their counterparts in New York, others are staunchly conservative and almost violently anti-homosexual.

Flaunting convention, and under indictment on charges of child molestation, Michael landed in Israel with the Cascio brothers, Eddie, 9, and Frank, 13, in tow. When they went to visit the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, angry protesters threw stones at them. The trio fled into a waiting limousine which was also pelted with stones as it made its get-away. En route to their hotel, signs greeted Michael: GO HOME, PERVERT. YOU'RE AN ABOMINATION!

Under pressure, the American Friends of the Hebrew University, originally planning to give Michael the Scopus Award for his humanitarian activities around the world, abruptly withdrew the honor they were about to bestow on him.

Not all the people of Israel agreed with these arch conservatives. It was estimated that some 85,000 fans filled a local auditorium at two sold-out concerts. One student outrageously proclaimed Michael as "our new Messiah. He's come back to Earth to save us!"

In Los Angeles, Michael's attorneys, Fields and Weitzman, denied that he was "in hiding" in the French Alps to avoid arrest in California. Actually, he was.

Desperately needing a rest, Michael, in a break on the Dangerous tour, accepted an invitation to fly to Geneva, where he was driven with the Cascio brothers to the chic enclave of Gstaad and Elizabeth Taylor's luxurious villa where she'd previously romped with Richard Burton, other husbands, and lovers.

Michael, Frank, and Eddie were guarded by Elizabeth's security force, each of whom earned one hundred dollars a day. At this point, Michael's addiction to painkillers reached dangerous levels. "He was a ticking time bomb," one of Elizabeth's security guards leaked to the press. "A male version of Marilyn Monroe flirting dangerously with death, almost inviting it."

In Gstaad, Michael was informed that his trusted aide, Norma Staikos, was being sought by the police for questioning. He demanded that she be given tickets to her native Greece. Staikos flew there and into exile, far from the authorities in Santa Barbara.

When queried about why a key witness, Norma Staikos, the duenna of Neverland, had flown away, Howard Weitzman said, "I know she's coming back, and I've told this to the police. To use the word `flee' is egregious."

The National Enquirer managed to obtain an exclusive interview with Jordie. The boy was quoted as saying, "I imagine Michael Jackson is pretty scared right now, really scared. And he should be, because what he did to me is a really bad thing."

When Michael left Elizabeth's villa in Gstaad, he was confronted with about a dozen angry mothers holding up signs. One read: SAVE OUR CHILDREN. Another in bold red letters demanded: PIED PIPER, LEAVE OUR BOYS ALONE! Yet another merely requested that Michael: GO HOME!

MJ and Norma Staikos

Abandoning Gstaad, Michael and the Cascio boys flew to Buenos Aires aboard a red-winged 747, a private jet,

to continue the course of the Dangerous tour. They checked into a marble-clad mansion which Michael had rented for $12,000 a day. The villa, administered by the nearby Park Hyatt Hotel, was often reserved for visiting heads of state.

Daringly and provocatively, as if flaunting the charges against him, Michael appeared on the balcony of the mansion, in his pajama top, with Frank and Eddie. The brothers, "looking cuter than any two boys have the right to," in the words of one woman journalist, waved to the crowds.

Johnnie Cochran

A few moments later, after they'd retreated inside, Michael reappeared. At least his arm, still clad in pajamas, reappeared. He waved a copy of Child, a magazine for parents, at reporters who seemed shocked at such outrage.

Back in Los Angeles, because of the hysteria generated by his case, Jordie temporarily dropped out of school. He was grilled by psychiatrists, questioned by prosecutors, and "trial rehearsed" by his attorneys. Later, Evan discovered a picture that his son had drawn of himself. It depicted Jordie on the roof of a tall building ready to jump to his death. It was later reported that this was not necessarily a suicide drawing but an expression of fear on Jordie's part at being forced to testify against his formerly close sleepover buddy.

Michael's attorney, Bert Fields, antagonized authorities by firing off a letter to the police commission. He charged the police with using "scare tactics and intimidation" in the young boys they questioned. Not only Jordie, but Brett Barnes, Wade Robson, and Macaulay Culkin. The press reacted with astonishment to Fields' next move: He filed a motion in Santa Barbara, asking that the case against Michael Jackson be postponed for six years. At that time the statute of limitations would have run out, and the Chandlers would have no case, not even a criminal one.

Meanwhile, Michael's lawyers were concerned with more than just "little boys coming out from under rocks to tell nasty tales about Michael," as one member of Michael's legal team claimed. A business deal was concluded with EMI, which announced a five-year agreement to administer Michael's rich ATV publishing catalogue, which included all of those Beatles hits. The deal called for Michael to get $40 million upon signing what potentially could be a $100 million-plus-transaction.

Both Fields and Weitzman advised Michael to fly to Los Angeles to face charges. Michael reportedly "threw a fit" when neither Fields nor Weitzman could assure him that he would not be arrested if he set foot on American soil. Michael's trusted security aide, Bill Bray, denounced Fields for hiring Pellicano, who, according to Bray, "is far too notorious to put on this case." Bray urged Michael to hire Johnnie L. Cochran, "the best black lawyer in America when it comes to something criminal."

The next stop on the tour was Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, of course, and there were genuine fears that Federal agents might come aboard the plane and remove Michael in handcuffs to be photographed before the world's paparazzi. "Even the New York Times would run that picture on its front page," Michael predicted.

Michael, deeply addicted to Codeine, Percodan, and Demerol, continued to call Fields daily with the same question: "Will I be arrested if I fly back to America?"

Instead of Puerto Rico, Michael opted instead to fly into Mexico City on October 24, ordering his attorneys, Fields and Weitzman, to join him there to plot strategy. Michael also requested that his dermatologist, Dr. Arnold Klein, join him in Mexico City as well.

As part of a tantalizing detail whose implications would extend deep into Michael's future, he also invited Dr. Klein's assistant to fly to Mexico too. A tough woman, known as a "biker babe" or "motorcycle mama," Debbie Rowe would become Michael's second wife and the bearer of two of his children.

Dr. Klein is an internationally renowned dermatologist. Michael could find no greater expert on skin disorders in America. In the early days of the AIDS crisis, Dr. Klein was the first physician to diagnose a case of Kaposi's sarcoma in Southern California, which marked the beginning of a life-long commitment to fighting the disease. This commitment established a dialogue with Dame Elizabeth. Klein eventually helped establish the Elizabeth Taylor Center for AIDS Research, Treatment and Education at UCLA.

Word was spreading that Jordie had identified "marks" on Michael's genitalia, and that the pop star wanted Klein to "disguise the evidence." Reportedly, Michael went into a "screaming rage" when he learned that the Santa Barbara police could force him to undergo a strip search.

On November 8, 1993, while the Jacksons were attending Samuel Jackson's funeral-he was Michael's grandfather-police raided Hayvenhurst in Encino. With a search warrant, more than a dozen officers fanned out through the premises, including Katherine's bedroom. But mainly their attention focused on Michael's bedroom which he no longer used, having more or less abandoned it and many of its contents.

Dermatologist Dr. Arnold Klein

All the dolls, fancily dressed mannequins, and expensive toys were left just as they were the day Michael moved to Neverland. Katherine had insisted on this. Before the raid ended, the police had rounded up seventy-five boxes of evidence, including videotapes, magazines, and photographs belonging to Michael.

Distraught and suicidal once again, Michael called Elizabeth at her home in Los Angeles, pleading with her to come to Mexico City "to rescue me." Within eleven hours, Elizabeth and her construction worker hunk, Larry Fortensky, were flying south. In Mexico, the Fortenskys discovered that Michael was suffering a complete nervous breakdown. The night before, Michael had overdosed on Percodan.

Sleeping in the room next to him, Elizabeth maintained a 24-hour suicide watch until Michael pulled through this latest crisis. Once again, she urged him to admit himself to the Betty Ford Clinic.

The hotel manager later told the press that he had to send three of the hotel's security guards to Michael's suite to subdue him. "He was threatening to jump out the window. He was butting his head against the stucco walls. There was blood on the walls. He'd vomited on the expensive Oriental rugs. The guards managed to hold him down as he

struggled. `Let me kill myself,' he shouted. `I want to die!'"

Later, when he seemed under reasonable control, Michael took magic markers and began to write his initials, MJ, over all the walls and on every surface. One of the security guards called the manager, who said Michael should be allowed to continue. "If that will subdue him, let him go for it. I'll bill him-and bill him good-when he checks out of this hotel to the relief of everybody."

Somehow by November 12, Michael was able to perform at his final concert in Mexico City, delivering a lackluster performance and acknowledging the Fortenskys as his special guests of honor. But instead of going on to San Juan, which his hectic schedule called for, Michael greeted Elizabeth backstage. Then, in the dark of night and concealed in a blanket in a limousine, he was driven to the Mexico City airport. There, an MGM Grand 727 (a chartered jet) waited to take him to London.

Afraid of Heathrow and its paparazzi, the private charter landed at Luton Airport on the outskirts of London. After disembarking, Michael, along with the Fortenskys, was taken to the Charter Nightingale Clinic, an establishment originally founded by Florence Nightingale.

As the world asked, "Where's Michael?" an audio-taped message was released to the media:

`As I left on this tour I had been the target of an extortion attempt, and shortly thereafter was accused of horrifying and outrageous conduct. I was humiliated, embarrassed, hurt and suffering great pain in my heart. The pressure resulting from these false allegations coupled with the incredible energy necessary for me to perform caused so much distress that it left me physically and emotionally exhausted. I became increasingly more dependent on the painkillers to get me through the days of the tour. My friends and doctors advised me to seek professional guidance immediately in order to eliminate what has become an addiction. It is time for me to acknowledge my need for treatment in order to regain my health. I realize that completing the tour is no longer possible and I must cancel the remaining dates. I know I can overcome the problem and will be stronger from the experience. "

Later that night, Elizabeth and Larry, with a Michael Jackson look-alike, flew to Switzerland in a deliberate campaign to trick the media.

Meanwhile, federal marshals waited in vain at the San Juan airport for Michael's arrival. The plan was to hold him for questioning about the child molestation charges. When a plane arrived from Mexico City, Michael was not aboard, of course.

On the morning of November 12, Michael's publicist announced that the remainder of the Dangerous tour had been canceled, and that Michael's addiction to painkillers began when his hair caught fire in 1984 during the taping of a Pepsi-Cola commercial.

When confronted with the cancellation of the remainder of the tour, executives at Pepsi breathed a sign of relief. Some youth organizations were threatening a boycott of the soft drink. "When Michael canceled the tour we were sponsoring, we were off the hook," said an executive off the record. "There's no way that Pepsi wants a spokesman who's implicated as a child molester."

In contrast, at least publicly, executives at Sony stood by Michael, affirming their "unconditional and unwavering support."

Weitzman then called Michael with horrific news. The police had obtained a warrant for a strip search, although there was a fear that Michael had been out of the country long enough to "alter" the identifying markings on his genitals. "There is no way in hell I'm going through with a strip search," Michael shouted. "Get me out of this, or else find new employment. I'll hire a lawyer who can get me out of this. I've never heard of anything so humiliating!"

During all this turmoil, Michael had five bodyguards he trusted-Leroy Thomas, Donald Starks, Aaron White, Morris Williams, and Fred Hammond. However, by 1995 he turned on them and fired them. The men sued Michael

for wrongful dismissal, claiming that the only reason they were fired was "because we knew too much." One security guard reported that Michael had called him, asking him to destroy a photograph of a nude boy, perhaps ten years old, that was in a bathroom in the family home at Encino. The bodyguards' case was thrown out of court in July of 1995.

Michael had been slated to perform the theme song and appear in a video for the film Addams Family Values. But he dropped out. Nevertheless, his image appeared in the final release. A kid sees a Michael Jackson poster and recoils in horror.

The November 29, 1993 cover of People magazine blared the headline: MICHAEL JACKSON CRACKS UP.

As part of a separate development, Fields made some indiscreet statements to Judge David Rothman of Santa Barbara County on November 23, 1993 when he was fighting for a delay in the trial. "You have a DA sitting up in Santa Barbara County about to indict, and if they do, we are going to have a criminal trial very soon." Judge Rothman rejected Fields' request for a delay, scheduling the trial for March 21, 1994.

Michael was infuriated that his attorney was even daring to suggest that a trial was imminent. Weitzman, recognizing potential damage, claimed that Fields had "misspoke." Hearing of this, it was reported that Elizabeth Taylor, working through her own lawyer, was behind the move to oust Fields. Michael abruptly fired him. With Fields removed from the case, so went the investigative skills of Pellicano.

Michael sensed that he needed a powerful figure on his legal team. As his security guard, Bill Bray, had recommended, Michael hired the high-profile lawyer, Johnnie Cochran, who would later be immortalized in 1995 for his role in the O.J. Simpson trial, "that great trash novel come to life." During the Simpson trial, even Margaret Thatcher and Boris Yeltsin dropped their busy schedules to watch its televised proceedings, especially the skill of Cochran in evading overwhelming evidence against Simpson.

Cochran's first assignment from Michael involved a confrontation with the insurance company, Transamerica. Michael wanted the company to pay for any cash that flowed to Jordie. When the executives there received Michael's outlandish demand, they went into an emergency huddle. Before the day was over, they had rejected Michael's claim. To retaliate, Cochran began to fire off threatening letters.

He warned the company that if they did not participate in the settlement, "Mr. Jackson will pursue all civil remedies available to him against Transamerica for a host of claims, including failure to pay defense costs, failure to contribute toward settlement costs, and/or for punitive damages for bad faith."

Russ Wardrip, a claims analyst at Transamerica, shot back that Michael Jackson's policy covered injuries in an accident-"not acts of sexual activity."

Although Transamerica officials had valued Michael as a client, executives privately expressed astonishment that any celebrity could possibly think that an insurance policy would cover a client's criminal child molestation. Cochran admitted privately to friends that he hated writing such a letter to Transamerica, knowing how spurious the claim was.

In his dossier, Wardrip also asserted that acts of child molestation are "inherently intentional, wrongful, and harmful,"-and hardly accidental.

In one of the most amazing stories ever recorded in the insurance industry, Transamerica under "heavy beating up" by Cochran agreed to pay an undisclosed amount. Even more amazingly, Michael rejected the offer. "I want them to pay every penny-not just part of the settlement to the kid."

Under Cochran's direction, Michael's camp upped the ante to nearly a million dollars, but that is only a fraction of what Evan was willing to settle for now, as he saw a vast fortune possible for Jordie and money for himself.

In addition to Cochran, Michael wanted John Branca back on his legal team, not for his defense in the child molestation case, but to handle his increasingly complicated business affairs. After three years in exile, Branca was

back. Michael immediately demanded that the attorney ask for an even higher royalty rate from Sony than that which had previously been agreed upon.

Under the urging of his new attorney, Cochran, Michael agreed to return to Los Angeles. Shortly before dawn, he was smuggled out of the Charter Nightingale Clinic where he was driven in a "hearse-like" ambulance to Heathrow. There he boarded a 727, the property of one of his greatest admirers, the Sultan of Brunei, who was also the owner of London's very posh Dorchester Hotel, an address that Michael often used during stays in that city. As the richest man on the planet, the sultan could afford such indulgences. On the plane, Michael was accompanied by Frank and Eddie Cascio.

The jet set down in Boston for refueling before flying on to Billings, Montana. Fearing arrest on the ground, Michael refused to disembark to clear Customs. Consequently, a U.S. Customs official boarded the plane to check Michael's passport.

With the young boys, Michael landed at Santa Barbara where he concealed himself within a stretch limo that had been waiting to take him and his young charges to what he thought was the safety of Neverland. Outside the gates of the estate, reporters from magazines, newspapers, and TV waited feverishly.

On January 16, 1994, against the advice of both his attorneys and his mother, Katherine, Michael hosted his annual party for 250 underprivileged children at Neverland. Black Entertainment TV covered the event. But one newspaper asked, "Has Peter Pan become the Pied Piper?"

After the event, the Northridge earthquake struck across California, causing billions of dollars in property damage and even the loss of life.

The earthquake became oddly symbolic for Michael, as his Trophy Room at Encino, with all his platinum records, was severely shaken. And at the Hollywood Wax Museum, the head fell off the Michael Jackson effigy.

Within three days of his secret return, news people accurately surmised that Michael was once again in residence at Neverland. The circus lights were switched on within his own private theme park, and the carousel began grinding out the sounds of "Like a Virgin" once again. The song became oddly symbolic, since Michael had hired a team of psychiatrists to maintain-in court if necessary-that he was a virgin in spite of all the crotch-grabbing and simulated masturbation on stage.

Appearing on both Hard Copy and CNN, Katherine still continued her increasingly tired defense of her son as a straight shooter. "Sometimes you look at a person's face and you can say, `Oh, my God, that guy is gay.' Michael is not gay."

Such appearances inflamed the gay community. "Every time Katherine Jackson opens her mouth, she costs Michael thousands and thousands of gay fans," said an activist in Los Angeles.

In references to Michael's attackers, brother Jermaine claimed that "Michael is ready to kick some butt!"

Eventually, Michael met privately with Cochran. There were no minutes made of their confidential chat, but the end result was the ordering of Cochran "to buy Jordie Chandler's silence no matter what the cost." Cochran went on to inform Michael that all appeals had been exhausted. He would have to agree to be photographed in a strip search at Neverland on the morning of December 20, 1993.

Jordie later told police where "mottled pink spots" on Michael's scrotum and buttocks were, although mottled seems an odd word for a thirteen-yearold to use. Apparently, he also testified that there was "a dark splotch" at the base of Michael's penis, but it was underneath, where it was not immediately visible.

Jordie testified that the first time he saw Michael in the nude and noticed the spots, he mocked the star. "You look like a cow!" Michael was furious. Jordie had also drawn a detailed picture of a nude Michael.

Detail from the cover of the Dangerous album

The prosecutors in California threat ened to handcuff and arrest Michael and haul him to jail if he didn't agree to strip and have his nude body photographed. As Cochran told him, "You don't have much choice. In jail, they could strip you and photograph you any time they wanted."

Tom Sneddon, the Santa Barbara District Attorney who would become Michael's nemesis, was part of the entourage who descended on Neverland at 4:45 in the afternoon. Gary Spiegel was the office photographer for the sheriff's department.

Michael was forced to strip and have his genitals photographed. During the ordeal, Michael, in the nude, stood helplessly by, looking at a picture of Elizabeth Taylor at her most beautiful from the 1951 release of A Place in the Sun.

Also present was Michael's Beverly Hills dermatologist, Dr. Klein, as well as a personal doctor, David Forecast, who practiced medicine in London.

Although calling two detectives "assholes," Michael cooperated to a degree but only to a degree, refusing to submit to all the photographs authorized by the court. Later Michael issued a statement to the press:

It was the most humiliating ordeal of my life-one that no person should ever have to suffer. It was a nightmare, a horrifying nightmare. But if this is what I have to endure to prove my innocence, my complete innocence, then so be it. I shall not in this statement respond to all the false allegations being made against me, since my lawyers have advised me that this is not the proper forum in which to do that. I will say that I am particularly upset by the handling of this matter by the incredible and terrible mass media. At every opportunity, the media has dissected and manipulated these allegations to reach their own conclusions. I ask all of you to wait to hear the truth before you label or condemn me. Don't treat me like a criminal, because I am innocent.

His statement was met with skepticism in the press, and voice stress experts denounced the tape as "a pack of Jackson lies."

"The stress in his voice clearly goes off the chart," claimed Dr. Martin Markowitz from his offices in Atlanta.

Too many persons witnessed Michael posing nude to keep their mouths shut. An assistant in the photo lab where the films were processed claimed, "It's of normal size. There is very little pubic hair. It's light brown, not jet black. His penis is white but with a brown blotch or two. There are pink and brown patches on his testicles, which are not large."

Bob Jones later claimed, "The boy turned out to have an unerring eye for accuracy."

On the dawn of a civil trial, life wasn't going smoothly for the Chandlers either. Threats arrived daily, including a dead rat in a box. Evan Chandler's dental office was ransacked and subjected to bomb threats. After

death threats came in for the Chandler attorney, Larry Feldman, a security force from the U.S. Justice Department was assigned to protect him.

After violent arguments from both parties, a settlement was agreed upon with the Chandlers, a sum so high it would have devastated the fortunes of most rich people.

According to the agreement, Michael pledged to place $15,331,250 to be held in trust by the minor's attorneys, plus another $2 million as an extra signing bonus. Both June and Evan were to receive an additional $1.5 million each, up front. There was more. Larry Feldman and his legal team were to be paid an extra $10 million. In all, financial advisers estimated that Michael's total cost from the case, including his own legal fees and lost revenues from Dangerous, amounted to more than $100 million, maybe a lot more.

Based on prevailing interest rates and if the funds in the trust were invested wisely, Jordie could make "multiple millions of dollars more as long as he and his parents and his attorneys kept their mouths shut," according to reporter Diane Dimond.

The final agreement was signed on January 25, 1994.

Both Larry Feldman, representing Jordie, and Cochran, representing Michael, spoke to the press. Feldman, referring to Jordie as "the boy," claimed that he "is very happy with the resolution of this matter." Still maintaining Michael's innocence, in spite of the huge pay-off, Cochran claimed, "The time has come for Michael Jackson to get on with his life." Privately he told colleagues that he detested child molesters and "despised" working on the case. He also told associates that "I feel Michael was completely in the wrong. The way he was carrying on, he was headed for big trouble." Cochran accurately predicted that there would be additional "Jordie Chandler cases in the future if Michael didn't reform. Personally, the way he was cavorting with those Cascio brothers, even as child molestation charges against him raged, I don't think he's learned his lesson ... even now!"

Michael waited months for the media circus to die down before speaking out about the settlement:

I asked my lawyer if he could guarantee me that justice would prevail. He said that he could not guarantee what a judge or jury would do. So I said that I have got to do something to get out of this nightmare ... all these people were coming forward to get paid on these tabloid TV shows. And its lies, lies, lies. So I got together with my advisors and they advised me in an unanimous decision to resolve the case. It could go on for seven years.

Although prosecutors in Santa Barbara didn't want Michael to escape from their clutches, their criminal investigation into Michael's alleged child molestation began to wind down.

Janet Reno

When word reached the prosecutors that the Chandlers were "making a deal" with Michael, they knew their criminal case against him was collapsing. At the time of the Chandler case, California law stated that a child could not be made to testify to confirm molestation charges. "Without Jordie, we've got no real case to present to a jury," a police officer said, "and then there's the question of Jackson's fame. What if everybody on the jury loved Thriller?"

Feldman denied that there had ever been a private understanding that Jordie would not testify in the event that criminal charges against Michael would be filed anytime in the future. But despite those denials, prosecutors suspected that an agreement had been established between Michael and Jordie's father. "Because Jordie has removed himself from the picture, our case has been shot full of holes," a staff member of the district attorney's office, who refused to allow his name to be printed, told a reporter in Los Angeles

Appearing on Nightline, a New York attorney, Raoul Felder, told America that "If people believe that Michael Jackson paid millions of dollars and didn't get a promise that the boy wouldn't testify, then they also believe in the tooth fairy. The settlement sends a terrible message. That statue on the courthouse should hang its head in shame that this could happen. If you're rich, you can buy justice-pure and simple."

Allegedly, Michael threatened a lawsuit, but most lawyers agreed that Felder was allowed to speak his mind under fair comment and criticism of a very public event.

The matter even went to the White House, where Bill and Hillary Clinton were now in residence. Within the very recent past, they had warmly welcomed Michael to Washington and considered him a friend. Attorney General Janet Reno met privately with both Bill and Hillary, reviewing the evidence that Michael had transported Jordie across state lines (Nevada and Florida, for example) and had even taken him abroad to such countries as Monaco and France. It was alleged that President Clinton was reluctant to intervene in a high-profile case against a black person, particularly in the wake of the 1992 L.A. riots over the arrest of Rodney King. "Leave it to those guys in Santa Barbara," Clinton told Reno. "We're not getting involved with this one. I have enough problems as it is without alienating the black community."

Michael was never forced to go into court. Neither was Jordie. In January of 1994, LAPD prosecutors announced that they were not moving forward with the case because of lack of evidence. They also announced, on January 24, that there wasn't enough evidence to charge Evan Chandler with extortion. Jordie dropped the charges against Michael.

Right at this time, Reuters News Service dropped a bombshell. A bulletin went out that the photographs of Michael's genitalia did not match Jordie's description of them. This was in total contradiction to other reports, including those made by police investigators who had minutely examined photographs of Michael's private parts.

"Money talks," said a police investigator who didn't want to be named. "Or, should I say, money silences. Millions can silence even the most talkative witness."

Terry White, once the Santa Clara, California, District Attorney, in his review of the evidence, claimed that there was "more than enough evidence" to indict Michael and probably convict him on charges of child molestation.

"Although it is hard to put a price on the emotional suffering of child abuse victims," one reporter wrote, "at least the young boy will not have to work another day of his life, and can live in the lap of luxury that he'd enjoyed as a twelve-year-old at Neverland."

Years later, Maureen Orth, writing in Vanity Fair, had a different spin. "Jordie Chandler's life has been completely broken by his association with Michael Jackson. He went to college, he manages his own money. He's a very attractive, bright kid but I don't think he really is able to have a normal life. He can't go anywhere without being identified as the Michael Jackson boy. People want to know all about Michael and how much money did Jordie get."

Many celeb friends, such as Elton John, wondered in public why Michael settled out of court if he were indeed not guilty. But the ever-steadfast Elizabeth Taylor, in a press release, stood by him. "As one of Michael's closest friends, who is convinced of his innocence, I agonized over the daily avalanche of lies, innuendos, and slurs, none of which Michael deserved. Michael's love of children is one of the purest things I have ever seen; it shines like an extra sun. In spite of the media's distorted lens, I was repeatedly touched by the faith that so many of Michael's friends and fans had in his complete innocence."

In the closing weeks of World War II, some Neapolitan women painted lipstick on the mouths of their young

teenage sons and offered them for sale to U.S. servicemen for purposes of sodomy. "If that sounds amazing," said Lieutenant Jerry Grayson, "maybe you don't know what hunger tastes like in your gut."

After word leaked out to the world that Michael had paid millions to Jordie, dozens of women from around the world sent letters to Michael, including nude pictures of their young sons, offering their offspring "as a companion." Some of the letters were so explicit that authorities considered filing charges against the mothers.

Michael had been warned that prosecutors in California "were still watching him like Big Brother."

"But his habits didn't change," Bob Jones said. "He still paraded around the globe with little boys. These little boys were costing the King millions upon millions."

James Hahn, who was a city attorney (later mayor) of Los Angeles, privately said that "Michael Jackson had better be very, very careful because authorities are watching him."

Publicity about the Jordie Chandler case died down except for a scandalous book in 1995, but it forever tarnished Michael's image, in spite of the settlement or because of it.

Jordie was back in the news again in 2005 when Michael actually did go on trial, this time in a criminal case alleging child molestation of another young boy.

At the time of that trial, Jordie refused to testify against Michael. It was learned that he hadn't seen his mother, June, for the past eleven years.

Jordie, at the age of 26, was back in the news again in 2006 when he charged his father, Evan, with "life threatening physical abuse."

The former dentist was charged with striking Jordie on the head from behind with a 12 '/2 pound dumbbell. His father was also charged with "spraying my eyes with Mace and trying to choke me." The alleged incidents occurred in August of 2005, just two months after Michael's acquittal in another kiddie sex case. At the time of the alleged assault, Jordie was said to be living with his father "somewhere in New Jersey."

Jordie's uncle, Raymond Chandler, who practices law in Santa Barbara, wrote a shocking book, All That Glitters: The Crime and the Cover-Up, published in 2004. He was not bound by the confidentiality agreement signed by Michael and Evan Chandler on behalf of his son.

In this book, Raymond Chandler had this conclusion:

The difference between Michael Jackson and any ordinary pedophile is one of degree, not kind. Using his stardom and fantasy world he created at Neverland, Michael could entice a child in a way that no other pedophile could hope to match. But beneath the facade of fame and fortune lies a child molester no different from the one down the street. "Come to my house, I'll give you candy. " Its as old as the hills.

"Just think, nobody ever thought this would last. "

--Michael Jackson, 1994 On his marriage to Lisa Marie Presley

"In an insult to transvestite men everywhere-who can look pretty damn good in a dress and makeup and can project alluring female charm-when Mike does this, he doesn't even have the decency to stop grabbing his crotch every 1.0045 seconds and allowing that image for us. "

--www.anomalies-unlimited.com

"All of Hollywood has plastic surgery! I don't know why the press points me out. It's just my nose, you know. "

--Michael Jackson

"I've seen this. I've seen it a lot. I have seen him with children. They don't let him go to the bathroom without running in. They won't let him out of their sight. They even go to bed with him.""

--Lisa Marie Presley, explaining Michael's relationship with children

"He's not gay, I really feel certain of that. Many times, a goodlooking girl would walk by and Mike would whisper, 'Hey, what do you think of her? She's somethin' else, isn't she?' His brothers are much more open in the way they pursue women, but Michael's discreet. He's a gentleman. "

--Tim Whitehead (Michael's First Cousin)

"Michael continues to be completely fucking insane ill flipped crazy out of his gourd lost his shit incomprehensible what the fuck got in that boy do you even remember back when he used to be cute and talented and oh my god. "

--www.AnilDash.com

Chapter Thirteen

After lengthy delays and postponements, the taping of the Jackson Family Honors took place on February 19, 1994 in Las Vegas. The setting was the luxurious MGM Grand Garden before a crowd of 15,000, some of whom had to be virtually pulled in off the street to fill the seats.

Promoters handed out WE LOVE MICHAEL signs to teenagers. There was speculation that Michael would not even show up, but he did. Celine Dion and Smokey Robinson performed, as did Michael's discoverer, Gladys Knight, but the highlight of the evening was Janet Jackson singing "Alright." But despite the presence of these other five-star entertainers, the audience was eager to hear and see Michael on stage.

To hysterically cheering fans, the King of Pop suddenly appeared, looking incredibly thin in a black military jacket with a gold-leaf pattern. He'd come out on the stage to present an award, one of the Jackson Family Honors, to Motown's Berry Gordy Jr., with whom he'd had a troubled relationship, one that had even involved lawsuits. Michael went into his usual kiss blowing and "I love you!" pronouncements. For once, he took Katharine Hepburn's advice and left the sunglasses in his dressing room. After a suck-up speech praising Gordy, Michael welcomed the Motown mogul onstage to receive his honor.

Later, Michael returned to the stage to present another Jackson honor to Elizabeth Taylor, claiming that she was "one of the most celebrated women of the 20th century." He thanked her for her "unwavering strength and support" in the middle of all his "trials and tribulations."

Elizabeth came on, blasting the tabloids for their constant attacks on Michael. She even asked the public to "stop buying the garbage." She called Michael "the brightest star in the universe." Later, critics without evidence claimed that Michael must have paid Elizabeth two-million dollars for her glowing tribute.

Suddenly, things began going wrong at the lovefest. Elizabeth announced, "I know you'd like to hear Michael sing, but he doesn't have any music prepared." Boos went up from the audience. "Don't boo," Elizabeth admonished the audience, "it's an ugly sound."

Michael did, however, join family members and other guests onstage for the song, "If Only You Believe." Janet was not to be seen. She'd left word with the stage manager, "Tell them Janet Jackson has left the building."

The following morning, USA Today headlined the event: JACKSONS NO THRILLER WITHOUT MICHAEL SOLO. Some fans had paid as much as $1,000 per ticket hoping to see Michael sing. Many other headlines also appeared expressing the disappointment of loyal fans, whose numbers would fade year by year as their faith in Michael waned.

Instead of watching the lackluster Jackson Family Honors, most viewers tuned in to the Olympics instead. Whitney Houston suggested that attacks on Michael might be because he was black, although at this point he didn't look black. Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam, agreed with Houston. On Arsenio Hall, he claimed that the King of Pop was being "treated like a slave on a plantation because of a charge that has yet to lead to a criminal charge." The controversial Muslim had attended the taping of the Jackson Family Honors.

After the show, Katherine Jackson was subpoened to testify against her son. Michael's attorney, Howard Weitzman, shot back in anger, denouncing the DA's office for trying "to humiliate Michael Jackson and harass him. In all the years of my experience, I've never before seen the mother of the target of an investigation called before the grand jury. It's just done in real poor taste."

In the aftermath of the Jackson Family Honors, Gary Smith, its co-producer, sued the Jacksons for $2.2 million, alleging that cast and crew had not been paid, including his own fee of $400,000. In a damaging report, it was revealed that the show had taken in $4.5 million, only $100,000 of which went to charity, although it had been billed as a charity event.

La Toya appeared in Las Vegas. But when Katherine told La Toya she wouldn't be allowed onstage without signing a gag order, she slammed down the phone on her mother and boarded a plane that night for Nashville with her husband, Jack Gordon. Arriving in a pair of cowboy boots in Tennessee, La Toya announced she was in Nashville to record an album of country songs. Gordon predicted, "La Toya Jackson will be the next country/western heartthrob." A Nashville music critic had another prediction: "Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn can sleep peacefully with their boots on. They need not fear La Toya Jackson."

The Jackson Family Honors was an attempt at image building and spin control, but it failed to impress "Walt's Boys." Officials at Walt Disney World met in secret February 25, 1994, and decided to yank Captain EO from its Orlando theme park. Although Michael had not even been charged with child molestation, the suspicions and the publicity were just too much for Disney officials. They pulled the plug. The film was replaced with a 3-D movie, Honey, I Shrunk the Theater.

After the Jackson Family Honors, Michael met privately with Elizabeth to share a secret with her. He told her that he was going to get married, only the bride-to-be didn't know it yet. He declared-no doubt falsely that "I'm in love with Lisa Marie Presley."

Although Elizabeth had spurned Michael's offer of marriage, sources reported that she was clearly jealous of the much younger Lisa Marie. At one point the superstar was heard contemptuously referring to Lisa Marie as "a punk rocker." Elizabeth and Lisa Marie probably suspected that each of them had shouldered the responsibility of rescuing Michael from himself. Elizabeth was quoted as saying, "I've saved Michael countless times-and I can do it again. I will do just that!"

Privately, Lisa Marie agreed with members of the family that Katherine Jackson was mother enough for Michael. "He doesn't need another interfering mother image in his life," Lisa Marie is reported to have said, referring pointedly to Ms. Taylor. "He needs me. Someone young and vibrant, like he is. Someone who can cuss and get low. Like Michael, my future is ahead of me. His future is ahead of him. It's been a long time since Elizabeth had a hit with Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. And who is this Tennessee Williams anyway? I always thought his songs were pure cornpone. Elvis hated him."

No doubt Lisa Marie was confusing Tennessee Williams with the country singer, Tennessee Ernie Ford.

Separated from her husband, Danny Keough, whom she'd married in 1988, Lisa Marie was in Las Vegas during the taping of the Jackson Family Honors. With her, she'd brought her children, Danielle Riley, born in 1989, and Benjamin, born in 1992.

Prsicilla Presley, Lisa Marie (aged 3) and Elvis, circa 1971

She got a call from Michael inviting her for a date on February 2, 1994 at the Sheraton Desert Inn where The

Temptations were performing. Normally, Michael would have slipped into the concert after the lights had been darkened. But he wanted to parade one of America's most famous daughters through the front door with the regular customers. Lisa Marie looked stunning in a low-cut black gown. During the performance, they were seen holding hands in a section called "King's Row," appropriate seats for the King of Pop and the daughter of the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Many observers referred to it as "the romance that never was," but at least the Jackson/Presley alliance had more of a reality bite than Michael's earlier "love affair" with Princess Di.

The outspoken La Toya, when she heard about the date, denounced it as a sham, claiming that Michael was "just kidding the public. It's an obvious public relations exercise aimed at portraying Michael in a more manly, heterosexual light. But girls are not part of Michael's life. He's not interested in them."

Back in California, Michael entertained Lisa Marie and her children at Neverland. He later told the press, "One of the things that most attracted me to Lisa is that she gets along swell with the animals in my own zoo."

Reportedly, staff members at Neverland were surprised at Michael's interest in Lisa Marie. "In all the months I've worked here," said one member of the staff, "I always saw him with young boys-never a gal, particularly one who looked hot-to-trot like that Presley gal."

Regardless of what he might have thought personally, the very hip Donald Trump invited the couple to visit his luxurious estate, Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach. He later told the press, "They looked like any other lovey-dovey couple to me."

J. Randy Taraborrelli, in his The Magic & the Madness, reported that the first time Michael made love to Lisa Marie was at Mar-a-Lago. Taraborrelli quotes an unnamed source, identified only as "another one of Lisa's confidantes":

She [Lisa] said it was intense, it took her breath away. I have no idea what they were doing, or what he was doing to her but since she gravitates to the unconventional, she was out of her mind over this guy. Maybe its hard for some to believe, but true, just the same.

The unnamed source was right on at least one point-"it's hard for some to believe."

Taraborrelli later wrote that Lisa Marie's "sexual chemistry" was so intense with Michael that she "wasn't about to give it up." The author, who would later write a biography of Elizabeth Taylor, found himself standing virtually alone in the world with that point of view.

Years previously, close to Lake Tahoe, a seven-year-old Lisa Marie Presley had first laid eyes on Michael Jackson during one of his performances with The Jackson 5.

She came back into Michael's life through the intervention of a mutual friend, an artist from Australia, Brett Livingston-Stone, who had painted a portrait of Michael that had sold for $2 million. Strong called Michael to ask him if he'd listen to a tape of Lisa Marie singing, hoping that he might produce an album for her. "Send it over," Michael said.

Lisa Marie did better than that. With her tape in hand, she showed up in person to see Michael. Accompanying her was her husband, Danny Keough.

After listening to the tape, Michael told Lisa Marie that she had "promise." During her meeting with Michael, the star is alleged to have told both Lisa Marie and her husband, "Listen, I'm not gay! Don't let these false eyelashes and red lipstick fool you."

Lisa Marie later admitted that she was impressed that "Michael could curse just as good as the rest of us cotton pickers." It has been alleged that Michael shared with her some indiscreet gossip he'd picked up when attending President Clinton's inaugural in Washington. They both acknowledged that the new president was a rabid Elvis fan. Clinton, or so it was rumored, once told some cronies that one of his greatest dreams in life "was to fuck Elvis's daughter."

"A lot of people have that fantasy," Lisa Marie was alleged to have said.

"Let them dream on," Danny interjected.

When Lisa Marie later confessed to Michael that her marriage to Danny was falling apart, Michael actively pursued her with flowers and presents. Privately she told friends that "even though Michael is a little bit cute, he's very immature compared to Danny. I still love Danny. I will always love Danny even though we might divorce."

Divorce Danny she did, rushing into a secret marriage to Michael Jackson. Far from the paparazzi and the ravenous tabloids, the wedding took place on May 26, 1994 in La Vega, an obscure village in the Dominican Republic. Two months would go by before the world learned of this bizarre marriage. None of the Jacksons had been invited.

Lisa Marie's divorce papers had arrived only on May 6. Seemingly she was rushing impulsively from one marriage into another.

Before flying to the Dominican Republic, Michael and Lisa Marie signed a prenuptial agreement.

Civil Judge Hugo Francisco Alvarez conducted the wedding in Spanish but with an interpreter.

Michael tried to use more flaming red lipstick than his bride, or so it was reported. His face was partially hidden under a wide-brimmed black hat, the type worn at ferias in Seville. His ponytail was slicked back, and his cowboy belt would have made John Wayne proud. Lisa Marie also wore a black hat evocative of a flamenco dancer.

"Michael looked like a little boy lost," said Judge Alvarez. "He stared at the floor throughout the ceremony."

Alvarez called the ceremony "surprisingly without any passion. When I asked him if he'd take Lisa Marie for his lawfully wedded wife, he turned to me and said, `Why not?' When I pronounced him and Lisa Marie man and wife, he was reluctant to kiss her. She had to pull his face to hers to kiss him on the lips. There were no tears of happiness-no joy, no laughter. I felt I was presiding over a funeral-not a wedding."

The only enthusiasm Michael showed was for the judge's tie which depicted Fred Flintstone. "It's a great tie," Michael told him. "I love Fred Flintstone."

"Although he complimented my tie, I never heard him say he loved Lisa Marie," the judge claimed. Judge Alvarez was "loose-lipped" and informed a Dominican newspaper about details associated with the wedding. However, his observations were dismissed by the press at the time as "some of the most ridiculous rumors ever spread about Michael Jackson."

For their honeymoon, the couple retired to Casa de Campo in the south, a resort built by the now-defunct Gulf + Western. On their honeymoon night, Michael stayed in a villa on the grounds of the resort, with Lisa Marie occupying a less opulent lodging, known locally as a casita, some five miles away.

During the course of his wedding night, away from any potential interference from his bride, according to the staff, he placed a call to Elizabeth Taylor, informing her of the marriage. For reasons known only to herself, Elizabeth was said to have broken into tears. Sobbing, she is alleged to have said, "Michael, how could you? Her, of all people. She'll ruin your life!"

MJ and Lisa Marie

When confronted by a reporter two days later in Los Angeles, Elizabeth snapped, "That's the most ridiculous rumor I've ever heard. Michael Jackson is a sane and reasonable man. Marrying Lisa Marie Presley would be an insane act. He is not crazy!"

After their "wedding night,"

Lisa Marie and her new groom were seen leaving the Punta Aguila airport (which was renamed in 2000 as La Romana International Airport) in a private jet. Their flight plan listed their final destination as Los Angeles.

Lisa Marie

But instead of California, they landed in Orlando where Michael, in a Fu Manchu disguise, was seen escorting his new bride around Disney World.

After that, they flew to New York where Donald Trump housed them in a luxurious twelve-room complex on the 65th floor of the Trump Tower. The apartment normally rented for $125,000 a month, but its occupancy was presented as a gift to the newly married Jacksons. Obviously, Trump knew about the secret marriage, but wasn't talking. "I know how to keep a secret," he later said.

At the Trump Tower, photographer Dick Zimmerman snapped pictures of the newlyweds. In his review of the body language of the two subjects, writer Nick Bishop said: "In the photos, Michael and Lisa Marie are draped all over each other, but Michael's eyes are always focused on the camera. He plays exclusively for the lens. He touches Lisa Marie when they're draped all over each other, but he does it lightly and tentatively. She, on the other hand, is obviously into it. She touches Michael with real enthusiasm. She throws herself toward him. He merely leans into her, holding back, watching the camera."

During their honeymoon in Budapest, Michael was working on shooting a video for his new album, HiStory. On many a night, Lisa Marie was said to have eaten Hungarian goulash on her own.

When asked months later to comment on her marriage, Lisa Marie ducked the question. "Elvis liked to wear uniforms, so does Michael. Elvis loved amusement parks. My Daddy used to rent out Memphis's Liberty Land. Michael has his own amusement park."

Back in Los Angeles, Lisa Marie began married life by going to her own plastic surgeon. Press reports claimed that her "breasts looked perkier" when she recovered. She may also have had her thighs trimmed. Earlier she'd complained that child birth had caused her breasts to sag. As for her thighs, she told friends that they "looked like two blobs of Jell-O that Elvis was so fond of eating." She may also have had some acne scars removed.

In the aftermath of the wedding, Elizabeth Taylor invited Lisa Marie and Michael to her lush home in Bel Air. While strolling with Lisa Marie through her luxuriant gardens, Elizabeth reportedly advised her "to go for the diamonds. I never turned down emeralds either." When Lisa Marie told her she didn't like expensive jewelry, the world-class gem collector informed her, "Then put the gems in your safe for your old age. As Marilyn sang, `These rocks don't lose their shape.'" She also gave Lisa Marie a fashion tip. "Always find out what outfit Michael is wearing when he takes you out. Top him! Dress even more glamorously than he does."

Lisa Marie later reported Elizabeth's comments to Michael. "How retro this woman is. She belongs back in my daddy's heyday."

On August 1, 1994, Lisa Marie herself, through a press agent, announced that she had become "Lisa Marie Presley-Jackson." She promised to "dedicate my life to being the wife of Michael Jackson. We both look forward to raising a family and living a happy, healthy life together."

In her statement, she claimed that she was very much in love with Michael. She said that news of their marriage was kept a secret to avoid turning the "happy occasion into a media circus."

"People wouldn't think I was so crazy marrying Michael if they saw who the hell he really is," she said. "That he drinks and curses and is funny and doesn't have that high voice all the time. I once had this romantic idea that I could save him and we could save the world. But then I realized Michael was constantly at work, calculating, manipulating. He scared me like that."

From New York, Lisa Marie called her mother, Priscilla, in Los Angeles to tell her she'd married Michael. "Yup, I did it!" Lisa Marie said. Her mother's screams could be heard all the way from Los Angeles to the Trump Tower in New York. "Are you crazy?" It cannot be confirmed, but Priscilla was said to have called Michael a "black faggot." She was also alleged to have said, "Elvis will rise from his grave. In a life of making stupid decisions, you win the prize for this one. I can't believe you've made me the mother-in-law of Michael Jackson. Weirdo. Wacko Jacko. Just don't have any kids with him, not that I have to worry about that!"

When Lisa Marie slammed down the phone on Priscilla, she told her new husband, "I gave her the finger in marrying you."

Priscilla was distraught at the news. "Picture this, the former wife of Elvis Presley, and now today the mother-in-law of Michael Jackson. What a Thriller!"

In the days and weeks to come, Michael and Lisa Marie would make even more headlines, including one within a tabloid that proclaimed: THE CENTURY'S ODD COUPLE MARRIAGE!

After charges of child molestation were leveled against Michael, and in the wake of his marriage to Lisa Marie, John Evans, a reporter, wrote: "Priscilla Presley should know all about child molestation from her own life. After all, she was only fourteen when Elvis became smitten with her when he was stationed in Germany. She should identify with her new son-in-law. She is reported to have regular chemical peels to get rid of wrinkles and unwanted brown spots. Maybe she can give Michael tips about how to get rid of that alleged brown spot on his dick."

The media responded in a frenzy of headlines, The London Times calling the secret wedding, "A Marriage from Mars!" TV talk show host David Letterman evoked riotous laughter when he told his audience, "If he comes home with lipstick on his collar, you can be pretty sure it's his own."

The astrologer for The New York Daily News told her readers that "according to the stars, the marriage has not been consummated."

Bulletins were flashed around the world: The King of Pop had taken as his bride the daughter of the King of Rock 'n' Roll. "It wasn't really an interracial marriage," said a TV commentator (in Spanish) in Santo Domingo. "By now, all of us know that Michael Jackson is white."

One journalist went even further. "It could happen only in America. Michael Jackson was born a black boy. Now he's become a white woman. Does that make Lisa Marie a lesbian for marrying him?"

Bob Jones, Michael's publicist, alleged that, "the poor girl seemed genuinely smitten with Michael before she realized that she had been the victim of a heartless scam." He alleged that Michael's real intent in marrying Lisa Marie involved not only adding a "testosterone boost" to his soiled image, but a desire to gain control of the Elvis Presley songbook, evocative of the way he had secured copyrights to The Beatles' songs.

Michael, of course, would never own the complete Presley catalogue. However, unknown to many of Elvis's fans, Michael did own several of the Presley songs as part of his Sony/ATV Music Publishing Company.

Jones faced a public relations nightmare. Even though the press was not fully aware of all of Michael's activities, as they became in the years ahead, reporters knew enough to realize that this bizarre wedding smacked of a publicity stunt. Jones, fending off the vultures, said privately that he knew that Michael "had no desire for a woman-not the natural desires that straight men have."

As the press inquired deeper into how the pop star came to marry Lisa Marie, Michael said, "We were in my living room at Neverland having a glass of wine after we'd watched that old film All About Eve, with Bette Davis. We both love that movie. I just walked over to her, reached into my pocket, and pulled out a knock-you-dead diamond ring. `You wanna?' I asked her. Other than that, I never popped the question or got down on my knees."

When Michael was asked about the interracial aspects of his marriage to Lisa Marie, he said, "Somehow it seems appropriate. When Elvis was first heard on radio, listeners initially thought he was black."

The marriage was greeted with cynicism in the press, some commentators even suggesting that it was a business move to unite the music houses of Graceland and Neverland. A lavender marriage was suggested: That is, a marriage of convenience wherein one or both of the parties is trying to conceal the fact that one or both of them is gay.

Journalist Nick Bishop claimed that Michael entered into a marriage to Lisa Marie to combat charges of homosexuality with young boys. "Because Michael Jackson settled with the Chandlers, the perception of him on the street among many people is that he is a compulsive pedophile, a sexual addict in a way that most people find repellent. People these days often turn up their noses at the mention of his name. He is reviled by many and seen as

decadent and deeply troubled. He didn't take his own marriage seriously and neither did anyone else with an IQ in the double digits. This move was clearly the old wedding bells as the ultimate sexual bearding trick, and of course it didn't work."

A PR agent privately said, "Michael Jackson married Elvis's daughter just to publicize his greatest hits album." He was referring to HiStory. "He needs all the help he can get with that album. I think most of his fans will desert him."

Jack Gordon, La Toya's husband, said that Michael had promised Lisa Marie a music career as a condition of her marrying him. He would never deliver on that promise. Gordon had other comments to make. "It's one thing to get married, but to Elvis's daughter was totally absurd. Something went wrong in that marriage, and Lisa Marie will soon be telling all. Michael will be destroyed."

Graceland

Comedian Dennis Miller cited the wedding as conclusive evidence that Elvis was not alive. "If Elvis were alive, he would have put the kibosh on it."

Weeks after news of Michael's marriage was made public, fans sent letters to him claiming, "You married the wrong Lisa Marie Presley. The woman you married is an imposter."

Had only one such letter arrived, it would have been ignored. But hundreds of letters had to be reckoned with. Some of Michael's aides set out to discover what the fuss was about and came up with the startling news that a young Swedish girl, Lisa Johansen, was filing claims that she was the real daughter of Elvis and Priscilla Presley.

Not only that, she was detailing her story within an autobiography, I, Lisa Marie: The True Story of Elvis Presley's Real Daughter. Her so-called memoirs would eventually be published in 1998 in China. Perhaps fearing legal action from the Presley empire, copies were published underground but surreptitiously sold in the United States and Britain.

In her tome, Lisa Johansen makes it rather clear that the real Lisa Marie Presley would not have married Michael Jackson.

According to Johansen, after the untimely death of Elvis when she was nine years old, the aspirant Lisa Marie was "whisked from an idyllic life in America to the obscurity of a comfortable exile in Scandinavia." She claimed that family members arranged this exile for her own safety, because there had been reports of kidnapping attempts. In Sweden, she lived with a kindly family and assumed a new identity as Lisa Johansen. According to instructions, recited to her at Graceland, she was to live in Sweden until she came of age and could take her "rightful place as the sole heir of a huge estate."

After reaching maturity, the Lisa living in Sweden attempted to reach across the Atlantic to Tennessee to claim her legacy as Elvis's daughter. She naively states in her book that she expected to be received by "a loving mother and friends eagerly awaiting her return to Graceland."

It took no prophet to predict that such would not be the case. Lisa claimed that at every turn she was blocked by "powerful and sinister forces." Along the way, the Lisa living in Sweden reported that she had been shocked when pictures "began to appear of an imposter, a young woman claiming to be Lisa Marie."

"Her public high jinks and questionable antics, and a circus-like marriage to controversial entertainment legend and paparazzi favorite, Michael Jackson, led millions of loyal fans of the late Elvis to question whether this person could be his real daughter," she said.

It is not known if Lisa Johansen has ever submitted to a DNA test to prove that she is actually Elvis's biological daughter. The young woman's odyssey to reclaim what she views as "my estate" has taken her into the courts and even to Graceland. Once there, she charged that representatives at Graceland, including Priscilla, had tried "to vacuum up every photograph depicting me with my father."

In one of her more blatant accusations, she charged that as a young girl she had been forced to submit to plastic surgery, a procedure that left "scars behind my ears. No one had cut off my fingers; but instead, they surgically altered and disfigured me, to keep me from being identified."

Reportedly, the Lisa Marie in Sweden continues to fight to this day to reclaim what she feels is rightfully hers. She concludes, "It is really not important what has gone before, and no matter what else happens in the future, I am who I am. I am the real Lisa Marie."

Michael Jackson and Elvis's daughter remained hot copy in the tabloids for months, as former staff members came forward to reveal behind-thescenes insights into the marriage. A former maid, Adrian McManus, even testified that she used a media broker to sell stories to the tabloids, including one which claimed inside knowledge of the star's sex life, or lack thereof, with Lisa Marie. Several staff members said Michael and his bride never slept in the same room, alleging that intercourse was not part of this marriage. McManus maintained that she never saw Lisa Marie enter her husband's bedroom.

Maids reported that Michael often left out expensive lingerie in his bedroom to make it appear that he was sleeping with Lisa Marie. It was also alleged that he'd bugged her bedroom and monitored her phone calls, the way his role model, Howard Hughes, used to do with Ava Gardner.

Another maid at Neverland said, "I have no doubt that Michael was still a virgin-at least with women-on the day he married Lisa Marie Presley. I am firmly convinced that he remained a virgin throughout his short marriage to her. I don't think they ever touched, except for one big kiss at a public event."

The marriage became fodder for late-night comedians. Jay Leno proclaimed that Michael and Lisa Marie stopped off in Austria after a trip to Budapest. With a smirk, Leno said, "Lisa Marie bought Michael a beautiful, beautiful wedding gift-the Vienna Boys' Choir."

An army of other sources-named or unnamed-could probably be summoned to claim that Michael never had sex with Lisa Marie during their entire marriage. The obvious conclusion is that no one really knows for sureexcept Lisa Marie and Michael. But whatever evidence there is suggests that even though Lisa Marie may have been momentarily infatuated with Michael, sexual play wasn't part of the equation.

"His new bride inherited the famous Presley lip curl," said journalist Peter Godsend. "Perhaps when Michael kisses his new bride, if he ever does, he fantasizes that he's kissing a young and handsome Elvis before the bloat."

Unlike most of his extended family, whom he could control financially, Michael could not dominate Lisa Marie by tightening the purse strings. In time, she would have far more money than he did.

To make himself appear wealthier in front of his new bride, Michael had his publicists exaggerate the terms of his contracts. For example, one-million dollars on paper became fifteen or twenty million dollars when reported in the press.

If reports are to be believed, Michael might not have wanted Lisa Marie, but he wanted to adopt her children,

Danielle Riley and Benjamin. It is alleged that he offered their father, Danny Keough, $1 million if he'd allow Michael to adopt the children, but the offer was rejected.

In fact, Danielle Riley didn't want Michael to adopt her. Shortly after she met him for the first time, she ran away, screaming. She later told Lisa Marie, "He's weird, mother. You warned me about men like him. You said they'd offer me candy to go with them. The first time I met Michael, he offered me candy. Just like you said."

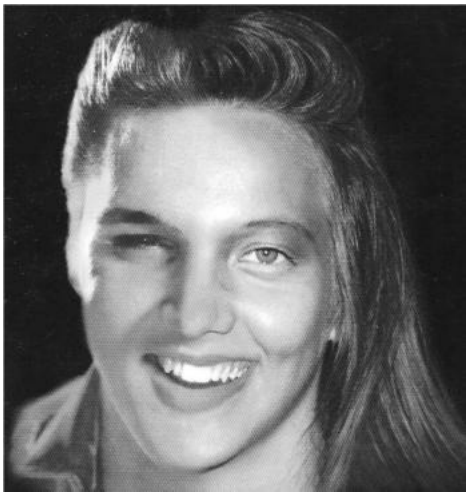
Michael resented Lisa Marie driving over to Encino without him to introduce herself to her in-laws at the Jackson compound. Lisa Marie became friends with Rebbie, the older sister, and also bonded with Janet. Michael told his staff that he didn't want Lisa Marie associating with her in-laws.

She and Michael couldn't agree on much, including food. Like her father, Lisa Marie preferred such soul food as collard greens in bacon fat, corn bread, Southern fried chicken, and sweet potato pie. Apparently, Michael preferred not to be reminded of his own humble origins, preferring a plate of steamed fresh organic vegetables from his own gardens at the ranch.

In one of their talks, according to a friend of Lisa Marie, Michael told her that "the ghost of Elvis haunts me. He's a white person with a black person's voice. I want to make films like he did-only good films, not bad films like he did. But I won't play Vegas. I'm offered millions but I won't perform in his old stamping ground. I'm bigger than Elvis. That's why I can't perform in Vegas."

Lisa Johansen: the real Lisa Marie Presley?

On another occasion, he told his wife, "Nobody in the music business understands me because I'm a genius. At least thousands of my fans understand that. But the people who control the industry don't give me my due because I'm black. So I decided to become white to get my due."



Lisa Johansen, in a photo montage, trying to prove her status as the daughter of Elvis Presley

Their first official appearance as man and wife came on September 8, 1994 at New York's Radio City Music Hall on the occasion of the 11th Annual MTV Video Music Awards. Before the world, Michael said, "Just think, nobody thought this would last." Then he grabbed Lisa Marie and gave her a lingering kiss in front of 250 million viewers on television. The next morning, one headline proclaimed: LIPLOCK PROVES MICHAEL JACKSON STRAIGHT SHOOTER.

An authority on body language, Maxine Fiel, claimed that it was "the performance of a lifetime." However, Fiel felt that Lisa Marie pursed her lips "like you do when you kiss your uncle, not your husband."

Lisa Marie had her own reaction. Before the applause died down, she walked off the stage and was seen wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. She later said, "I thought the kiss was stupid. I hated it. I felt used. All of a sudden, I've become part of a public relations campaign for Michael. What am I? Just some prop?"

From all reports, she felt that she'd been "callously used" to help her husband's seriously damaged public image. Her belief that she was being used for promotional purposes was soon reinforced. "It would be `come and meet me here,' and when I turned up there would be photographers everywhere."

Soon after, Michael asked Lisa Marie to join him in a video, entitled "You Are Not Alone" in which it would appear that Michael was genuinely attracted to women.

Within it appeared a provocative semi-nude scene of the two of them within a pink-and-lavender landscape inspired by the 1920s illustrator Maxfield Parrish. There have been many published reports that Michael showed his genitals in this video and that, prior to its release, a computer process blurred his privates.

That report was probably untrue. "There's no way that Michael's going to show his dick," said an employee of MTV who saw the original video. "He's spent a few million trying to get those nude pictures of himself returned from the Santa Barbara DA's safe to Neverland. He's never going to show the full monty to the world. Who do you think he is? Richard Gere?"

Eventually, writers Sean Kelly and Chris Kelly released a satirical parody of the Jackson/Presley union, entitled HERstory. Referring to them as "The Oz Couple," and configured as a faux diary that had supposedly been penned by Lisa Marie, it asked "How could a simple country girl hope to find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and talented extraterrestrial?"

Within the context of this so-called "diary," the Kellys have Lisa Marie writing:

Dear Diary,

I had an early call and we were on the set all day shooting the video for a song, You Are Not Alone. 'Here's a Polaroid." (Running immediately adjacent to the "diary entry" is a picture of the Jacksons semi-nude.) The contrived "diary" entry continues: Its supposed to be real and all so both of us were actually NAKED for hours rolling around on this bed in front of the cameras under these lights which made me hot in more ways than one (get it?). Although he was careful that I never got a real look at his famous Spotted Thing, I actually thought we might end up doing `it.' But at six o'clock Michael said cut, and I got up and put on my clothes and left.

The famous kiss

Security guards at Neverland reported that whenever Lisa Marie came to visit, she always left the property before midnight to drive her children back to their own $4 million home in Hidden Hills.

Even after the passage of many weeks, reporters continued to speculate about the state of the marriage. One particularly outrageous rumor making the rounds asserted that Michael wanted a child with Lisa Marie, and that he had a candidate in mind as the secret father. That candidate was Michael's long-time friend and traveling companion, Frank Cascio. Michael, according to the rumors, was committed to witnessing the moment of conception wherein Frank, without a condom, would penetrate Lisa Marie. Neither Lisa nor Michael ever commented on this outrageous rumor.

According to the staff member, Michael was "filled with anxiety and tension whenever Lisa Marie came to visit. He was particularly irritable on those days, and obviously didn't welcome her presence, especially when he was keeping boys in his room, which he continued to do even after the Jordie Chandler fiasco."

Occasionally they would talk, usually in the presence of others, as it seemed that Michael sometimes didn't want to be alone with his new wife.

He warned her that if she attempted a musical career, she would inevitably be compared to her father, perhaps unfavorably. "I think that there is that huge mountain to climb," she told him. "Oh, people always think about him

when they think about me. There will always be some of that, and I must embrace it and understand it. I have to find a good balance between my own identity and the role of always being the daughter of Elvis Presley."

In one bizarre story that may have only the slimmest basis in truth, Michael was said to have promised Lisa Marie that he'd build a replica of Graceland in the greater Santa Barbara area. But then the pop star changed his mind. He came up with the idea of moving into the actual Graceland. To do that, however, he would have to get the approval of his mother-in-law, Priscilla, who runs the board that controls Graceland. "She would never have gone for that," reported a publicist.

When the married couple traveled to Memphis for a Pay-Per-View tribute concert to Elvis on October 8, 1994, they stayed at the Adam's Mark Hotel, but in separate suites. Michael even refused to visit Graceland, where he once said he wanted to live. When Priscilla asked him to perform as part of the evening's entertainment, reports say that he refused, declaring, "I'm not appearing on a bill with other singers, especially one called Dwight Yoakam." Priscilla later told friends in Memphis, "Lisa Marie is married to a jerk."

Within Michael's presence, Lisa Marie once spoke candidly about her role as one of the most famous offspring in music history. "I could capitalize off Elvis in a zillion cheesy ways. Just look at Natalie Cole for example. She raised daddy from the grave for a hit song. I might not be the greatest of singers, certainly no female Elvis, but I plan to bring a sense of my own identity to my music. I'm not going to go through life singing `Hound Dog' to a bunch of drunks at a night club in Memphis."

She also revealed that she and Michael talked about how hard it had been "growing up in a fish bowl. I'm not someone who desires or wants attention, and that's why I'm different from you," she told him. "I became famous the day I was born. But I've never been one of those people who run around, you know, walking every red carpet and going to every opening of every envelope, touting Presley perfumes and singing Elvis cover songs. I don't want attention."

Michael and Lisa Marie agreed to a joint appearance on ABC Television just before the release of his HiStory album. The host was a very friendly Diane Sawyer, who didn't ask the really tough questions. At the appointed time, Michael and Lisa Marie showed up at ABC with a phalanx of attendants, including attorney Johnnie Cochran.

"You Are Not Alone" video, Lisa Marie, left, and MJ

Eventually aired on June 14, 1995, the Sawyer interview took place on the old MGM set on the Sony Pictures lot in Culver City.

The world was watching as Michael and Lisa Marie faced Diana Sawyer on Prime Time Live. "I was seventeen," Michael said in a voice evocative of a little girl, "when I first met Lisa Marie. And she was seven."

It was obvious that they hadn't rehearsed their stories enough, since there were contradictions. Michael claimed that he'd kept in touch with her over the years. Lisa Marie said they had not been in contact.

At one point she said that children "won't leave him alone-they follow him into the bathroom." As claimed by

some members of Michael's staff at Neverland, that even included young boys taking off their underwear and joining Michael in the shower. "Didn't it ever occur to Michael Jackson to lock the bathroom door if he wanted privacy from young kids?" a commentator asked after viewing the show.

Cynics had their tongue in their cheek when the couple discussed their dream of having children-something that would never happen. They even talked about leaving America, possibly moving to Switzerland. Lisa Marie denied that her marriage to Michael was one of convenience. "Why would I marry somebody I didn't love? I admire him, I respect him, and I love him. He's in the studio, I'm in the kitchen. We run around the same house and we're normal people. And we don't sleep in separate bedrooms." Actually, Lisa Marie was not being truthful. Michael's staff leaked news to the press that they not only slept in separate bedrooms, but in separate houses.

Michael also denied that the drawings made by Jordie Chandler matched police photographs of his genitalia. "There was nothing that matched me to those charges," Michael alleged. He was backed up by Lisa Marie, who said, "There was nothing."

When Michael told Sawyer that "The whole thing is a lie," he breached his confidential settlement with Jordie Chandler.

At one point the question-and-answer session went like this:

SAWYER: What is a thirty-six-year-old man doing sleeping with a twelve year-old boy or a series of them?

MICHAEL: Okay, when you say "boy, " its not just boys. I never invite just boys to come in my room. Thats ridiculous. And thats a ridiculous question. (The question was not ridiculous but rather pertinent, and Michael's answer was an obvious lie.)

MICHAEL: I guess you want to hear it, the answer I'll be happy to answer it. (He obviously was anything but happy.)

MICHAEL: I have never invited anyone into my bed, ever Children love me, I love them. They follow me, they want to be with me. But anyone can come in my bed-a child can come in my bed if they want. " (Critics, who mocked Jackson, later cracked, "I bet many a kid has cum in Michael's bed.")

Observers who had expected Sawyer to be confrontational later asserted that "she had all the fierceness of the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man."

A hesitant Sawyer was edging up to the big question of the night. "I didn't spend my life as a serious journalist to ask these kinds of questions, but I'm not oblivious to the fact that your fans have one question they most want ..."

With defiance on her face and disgust in her voice, Lisa Marie interrupted, "Do we have sex? Okay. Go ahead. Is that what you were going to ask? Yes! YES! Yes!"

Sawyer was called a "wimp" by Brad Dilford, a journalist, who later said that "Sawyer did not challenge Michael on any of his more questionable claims." Sawyer was also accused of several misstatements, including that Michael had been cleared on child molestation charges. Actually, the DA was officially keeping the case open until the statute of limitations would take effect in 1999.

On the show, Michael denied that the police in their raid on Neverland and on his secret condo had seized books with pictures of nude boys. The police, however, maintained that they did confiscate such materials.

United they stood

Actually, Michael left himself an out. When Sawyer asked if material depicting young, undressed boys had been found among his personal effects,

Michael replied, "No, not that I know of, unless people sent me things that I haven't opened."

In a review of the show, journalist Julene Snyder said, "Putting the two on live TV may have seemed like a good idea at the time, but it's hard to say which came across worse on camera. Lisa Marie quickly established herself as a tough, if inarticulate, cookie, who'd fit right in at a rundown trailer park. She is not now, nor has she ever been, a brain surgeon. Her quote in the current issue of Vibe magazine, which sports a nearly life-size headshot of hubby on the cover, starts off sweetly enough but quickly degenerates into a convoluted hiss of rage: `Michael is a true artist in every fact of his natureextremely aesthetic and very, very romantic. This is who he truly is despite degrading comments made in the past by certain larva. I can't wait for the day when all the snakes who have tried to take him out get to eat their own lunch and crawl back in the holes from which they came. We know who they are and their bluff is about to be called.'"

After the interview was aired, Tom Sneddon, the Santa Barbara DA who had been involved in the Jordie Chandler controversy, claimed that Michael had lied. "His statement on TV is untrue and incorrect and not consistent with the evidence in the case."

An enraged Evan Chandler witnessed the interview in which his son was virtually called a liar. Michael also claimed that the settlement is "not about all this crazy, outlandish money. No, it's not at all." There was no suggestion that the settlement was in the millions.

In the aftermath of the airing of the interview, Evan Chandler filed a $60 million lawsuit against Michael. In the suit he named not only Michael, but Lisa Marie Presley, Diane Sawyer, and ABC News. Attorneys for Lisa Marie eventually got her dropped from the suit, claiming that she had never been a party to the Chandler settlement. And eventually, a judge dismissed charges against Sawyer and ABC.

Matters were settled privately between Evan and Michael's lawyers. The terms would never be made public, but as regards the Chandler affair, Michael would never again utter a statement such as "the whole thing was a lie."

During the Sawyer interview, Lisa Marie had burst into anger when questioned about whether her Church of Scientology may have urged her to marry Michael, perhaps as a means of gaining a rich convert. "This is crap," she said. "I'm sorry. It's, like ridiculous. It's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. I'm not going to marry somebody for any reasons other than the fact that I've fallen in love with them. Period. And they can eat it if they want to think anything different!"

She has admitted that she was expelled from boarding school because of illegal drug abuse, especially cocaine. She later claimed "I got off drugs because of my religious conversion." When she was ten years old, she had a crush

on the actor John Travolta. When meeting him for the first time, they developed a friendship in spite of their age differences. The actor is credited with encouraging her membership in the Church of Scientology, an organization to which her mother was already devoted.

Lisa Marie with her son, Benjamin, 2001

Lisa Marie did make an attempt to convert Michael to her cult religion, though he found some of her conspiracy theories bizarre, including the church's attempt to link Adolf Hitler to the psychiatric profession. Tom Cruise might have fallen for that, but not Michael.

Lisa Marie's attempts to convert Michael to Scientology failed miserably, in ways that reflected Priscilla's earlier (failed) attempts to involve Elvis. Lamar Fike, one of Elvis's cronies, claimed that he was with Elvis when he visited the Scientology Center in Los Angeles. Elvis went in and talked to church leaders. When he came out, Elvis said, "Fuck those people! There's no way I'll ever get involved with that son-of-a-bitchin' group. All they want is my money." According to Fike, "Elvis stayed away from Scientology like it was a cobra. He'd shit a brick to see how far Lisa Marie's gotten into it."

On the Sawyer show, Lisa Marie claimed she was sharing Michael's bed at Neverland. Actually, following the show, she left for Hawaii and a family vacation with her ex-husband Danny and her two children. They shared a suite on the Big Island. Her publicist maintained that Lisa Marie was involved in a "family reunion trip. They're the best of friends."

That was evident to guests of the 3,200-room Mauna Lani Bay Resort who saw her walking about the gardens, holding hands with Danny and kissing.

Whenever Lisa Marie came back to Neverland, she inevitably got into an argument with Michael. It became obvious that this surreal marriage was heading for the divorce courts. Michael went "ballistic" when little Benjamin accidentally pulled off his wig. In anger, Lisa Marie took her children and fled from Neverland, vowing never to return.

In August of 1995, when Lisa Marie was spilling her woes to Priscilla, her mother urged her to "Dump the jerk! You should never have married the selfish bastard in the first place. Come to your senses and kick this freak out before these allegations of child molestation taint you too." For a change, Lisa Marie decided to take her mother's advice, even though it would take her a few months.

It was obvious to the entire staff that Lisa Marie's days at Neverland were numbered. She was particularly incensed when she learned that Michael was planning to build a villa on the grounds of Neverland to house Macaulay Culkin. Her patience with Michael and his obsessions with boys was running out. Constantly she complained that she was living in a zoo, with screaming children racing about with no one to discipline them.

Michael confronted her with evidence from a private investigator he'd hired to tail her. The detective reported on "many liaisons with Danny" which had taken place throughout the course of her marriage to Michael. Lisa Marie allegedly screamed back at him, "I had to get it from somebody."

In anger, Michael deserted his "fairytale marriage" and flew to Europenot with Lisa Marie but with his eternal favorites, Eddie Cascio, now 11, and Frank Cascio, a ripe 15. The trio was seen at Euro Disney.

Lisa Marie had also flown out of Los Angeles, heading for another reunion with Danny in Hawaii and another "family vacation." All she would say to reporters was, "I'm a chip off the old block. Elvis liked Hawaii too." Privately she told friends, "Danny and I are soul-mates who should never have split. He's the father of my children."

Holding hands with Danny once again right in the lobby of their hotel in front of other guests, they were talking about getting back together again, discussing Lisa Marie's upcoming divorce from her "non-husband." A plan was set into motion in Hawaii.

At the release of HiStory, Michael made a number of commitments, which for reasons of his own he decided not to honor. One involved an HBO special, One Night Only, that had promised to rope in a global audience of some two-hundred-fifty million viewers.

During rehearsals for the HBO event, Michael collapsed. By ambulance he was rushed to Beth-Israel Medical Center where doctors reportedly found an "irregular heartbeat and dehydration."A newspaper the next morning asked a provocative question-"Dehydration? Doesn't he drink enough Pepsi?" The answer to that was that he drank no soft drinks at all.

Michael, however, resisted his advisers when they urged him to allow Lisa Marie into his hospital room. He relented when told that his refusal to see her would be a disastrous public relations move. Among the other visitors rally ing to his side was Diana Ross.

Consequently, Lisa Marie was allowed to call on Michael at the hospital to discuss the terms of their impending divorce. Michael agreed to a payment of $15 million, but in exchange for that, he wanted some sort of guarantee that Lisa Marie would not speak about their marriage. . .ever. He most definitely didn't want her writing a tell-all autobiography. "I'm far too young to record my life," she responded. In addition, she asked for ten percent of the royalties on Michael's HIStory album, which he conceded.

The actual terms of the divorce would be ridiculed across America. On the Tonight Show, host Jay Leno quipped, "This is going to get ugly. According to divorce lawyers, you know, Lisa Marie is entitled to half of all the noses Michael acquired."

According to a nurse, who overheard the famous pair fighting, part of their argument involved their continuing debate over Danny. Michael, apparently, still had his private investigator following them. Not only that, but having bugged her private quarters at Neverland, where she stayed only during daylight hours, he claimed that on several occasions he had heard her having "phone sex" with Danny. He confronted her with this, and she responded in fury, enraged not so much by the fact that Michael knew details associated with her involvement with her former husband, but because of the fact that her phone had been bugged.

Lisa Marie denounced Michael in his hospital bed, accusing him of having spent their marriage "locked up in his bedrooms with young boys," instead of trying to be a husband to her. Often when Lisa Marie had called Neverland, he refused to take her calls. But she learned from the maid, Adrian McManus, that if Frank Cascio called, he was to be connected immediately.

At some point during that dialogue at the hospital, Michael ordered Lisa Marie from his room. In the corridor,

a nurse overheard her shouting, "I'm outta here. And I'm not coming back."

In the wake of her split from Michael, Lisa Marie began to get her life together again. She spent more time with her children and saw a lot more of Danny. There was talk of a remarriage after her divorce from Michael. Danielle and Benjamin were happy to have daddy back home again. But impulsively Lisa Marie fell for her tall, blond bodyguard, Luke Watson, and Danny was out the door once again.

Lisa Marie made an appearance at the 12th annual MTV Awards on September 7, 1995 at Radio City Music Hall, the setting of their infamous kiss a year before. This time she sat through her husband's appearance. She'd not seen him in two months. She watched him grab his crotch and seemed disgust ed. "Elvis would never have been so tasteless," she later said. Before the curtain went down, she'd mysteriously exited the theater to avoid paparazzi and her husband.

Lisa Marie later said that "the last straw" in her marriage to Michael came when he gave an interview to TV Guide, claiming that she'd told him that Elvis had had a nose job. "This is bullshit!" his daughter charged. "And all this from a guy who claims he's had only two nose jobs."

On January 18, 1996, in Los Angeles Superior Court, citing "irreconcilable differences," Lisa Marie at the age of 27 filed for divorce from her husband, Michael, who had turned 37. In her petition, Lisa Marie Presley-Jackson also called for the restoration of her original name, dropping the Jackson from it. A sexless, loveless marriage of twenty troubled months was coming to a notoriously publicized ending.

"The divorce was more predictable than the marriage," said Memphis music critic Stanley Booth.

Journalist Karen Schoemer summed it up: "No more strangely unwarm hand-holdings, no more endless speculation over whether they did or whether they didn't. No more prime time TV interviews with the two of them sitting stiff and pretty as alabaster statues, trying to convince the world of their deep love for one another when they barely seemed able to make eye contact. It wasn't the romance of the century, but it was the kind of twisted royal wedding our celebrity-glutted minds deserved."

On January 19, The New York Post said it all: JACKO GETS THE SACKO!

When the news of the divorce was reported in the press, it was revealed that Lisa Marie's petition to the court was a "basic, boilerplate, bare-bones document that leaves virtually all options open," at least according to her Beverly Hills attorney, Douglas Bagby. "She reserved the right to address community property issues and other asset concerns at a later date, to ask that Jackson pay her attorney fees, and to state her assets at a later time," said journalist Janet Gilmore.

"The marriage was a mere publicity stunt," said a member of Michael's staff, who refused to be named. "On Michael's part, he was trying to distract attention from the child abuse allegation. As for Lisa Marie, what was she thinking? She must have been `All Shook Up.'"

Lisa Marie, in calling it quits, admitted that her marriage to Michael occurred during "a moment of madness." The world agreed with her, especially Priscilla.

Staff members at Neverland reported that they had heard Michael screaming at Lisa Marie, "Your fame comes from DNA. I'm the genuine star."

In public, at least, Lisa Marie had steadfastly maintained Michael's inno cence in child molestation. Yet Rick Stanley, the stepbrother of Elvis, claimed that she confessed to him that she'd come upon videotapes at Neverland that "caused me great distress." She refused to discuss the exact nature of those tapes, but Stanley alleged that she learned "the sick truth about Michael and did indeed know that her husband had an unusual interest in young boys."

Lisa Marie later told a friend, "I feel deep guilt over my marriage to Michael. I brought shame on my father. I suppose that's why I'm having these awful dreams."

The story of Lisa Marie's involvement with the Jackson family did not end with her divorce from Michael. Gossips began speculating about the intriguing possibilities when Lisa Marie in 1998 began "dating" Janet Jackson. They were spotted at such New York clubs as Life, allegedly embracing and even kissing. This does not necessarily prove a lesbian involvement. Janet, for years, has been known for what some have termed her excessive embracing and loving "fondling" of her friends, and Lisa Marie was no exception. A waiter at one club claimed that the famous pair had been spotted "with their tongues down each other's throats," but this is only heresay and can't be verified.

When asked about her emerging new friendship with Janet, Lisa Marie, according to some reports, claimed that she was helping Janet get back into shape for her Velvet Rope road tour. It's true that Janet's weight at the time had ballooned by forty-five pounds. Although on most occasions she has a "sex kitten" figure, she could, during bouts of depression, become bloated, much to the delight of the paparazzi who seemed to know whatever fast-food hamburger joint she happened to have patronized during the previous week.

On many occasions during their joint forays into the world at large, Lisa Marie and Janet wore disguises, but they were often recognized in spite of their efforts to conceal their identities. They were seen shopping on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills and on Fifth Avenue in New York. They went to offBroadway plays together, and "like two ladies who lunch," according to a waiter, were seen together at a swank Manhattan eatery. Their club nights were much wilder, particularly as the evening moved toward the early morning hours.

Lisa Marie was the star guest at Janet's launch party for her seventh album, The Velvet Rope.

Elvis's daughter warmly embraced Janet when she seemed near tears after one of Michael's fans thrust a review at her. In the review, a music critic claimed, "Janet Jackson is a failed cloning experiment, with all of Michael's foibles and bizarre personal quirks but none of the musical or visual talent."

Lisa Marie not only consoled her former sister-in-law, but accepted her invitation to be her "date" at the upcoming MTV Awards.

When reports of this strange friendship reached Michael, he was furious, fearing that Lisa Marie was using these occasions to gossip about him to his sister. "Who knows the tales she'll tell about me," Michael was reported to have said.

Lisa Marie sent word to Michael, via Janet, that as a devotee of Scientology she had been taught "not to hold anger in my heart." In a card to her former husband, she scribbled, "All is forgiven." A friend of Lisa Marie's claimed that she once told her, "Who wouldn't want to hang out with Frank Cascio-that's one hot man." That alleged quote cannot be verified.

After their divorce, Michael tried to mend his broken friendship with Lisa Marie, and she eventually accepted an invitation to join him on his HiStory tour in both London and South Africa.

In Johannesburg, Lisa Marie told friends that she hoped to spend some quality time with Michael as a means of re-establishing a relationship with him-"strictly as friends," she hastened to add.

But in South Africa, she was disappointed to find Michael spending all his free time with a young boy from Norway, who appeared to be only thirteen years old if that. "All I remember about the kid is that he was cute and was never seen without a red baseball cap, a gift from Michael," Lisa Marie said. At the time the press was unaware of the identity of this boy. In time both photographs and his real name would be revealed. In South Africa, Michael-and only when forced to do so-introduced him as his "nephew."

Once again Lisa Marie allowed herself to become a "prop" in a photo opt for Michael when she accepted an invitation to be photographed with him, along with her two children, at a tribal ceremony that took place in the seedy town of Phokeng, some ninety miles to the north of Johannesburg. At the time he was deep into his second marriage, and Michael shocked the world when he appeared with Lisa Marie on his arm. That naturally led to press speculation that the ill-fated duo were getting back together.

Back in Los Angeles, Debbie Rowe, Michael's new wife, reportedly said, "If Michael Jackson [she always

referred to him by his full name] wants to date his ex-wife, and I want to date my ex-boyfriend, that is nobody's business but our own."

Under the shade of a red-and-white umbrella at least five feet wide, Michael arrived at the tribal ceremony like a king for his induction into a tribe known as the Bafokeng Ka Bakwena ("People of the Crocodile"). With some 325,000 members, the tribe was not among the poor and needy of Africa, as they owned the second-largest platinum reserve on earth.

On hearing of Lisa Marie's adventures in South Africa with her ex-husband, one underground columnist in Hollywood wrote: "Lisa Marie is back with Michael while still dating Janet. The next thing you'll read in this column is that Elvis's daughter is having a three-way with Jermaine and La Toya. I wouldn't put it past this `Hound Dog!'"

Even after her friendships with Janet and Michael had cooled, throughout the rest of her life Lisa Marie would be plagued with probing questions about her marriage to Michael.

On The Howard Stern Show, the host asked her to describe Michael's genitalia. She refused. She did answer Stern's question about whether she had "dabbled with chicks?"

"Just one," she said. "It's not like I haven't had an urge, but I just . . . I like to keep it at bay."

In a candid conversation with Playboy, she claimed that her preference in sex was "porn style-I am a little dark on the subject. I like it rough, the way they do things in porn movies."

In trying to explain her association with Michael to Playboy-of all magazines-Lisa Marie said, "Yes, there was a physical attraction. He's not sexually seductive, but there is something riveting about him."

If attorney Johnnie Cochran is to be believed-and after the O.J. Simpson trial there remains much doubt as to his veracity-Lisa Marie made an astonishing call to him one night. Reached in New York, he came to the phone to hear the distraught young woman pleading for his intervention in getting Michael back.

"I don't want him gone from my life," Cochran later quoted Lisa Marie as saying. "I know the marriage didn't work out. But we didn't give it a chance. I think I could make him love me. But to do that, you've got to prevent his marriage to that nurse."

Cochran promised to intervene on her behalf. But he told friends in New York that there was really nothing he could do. "Michael wanted someone to make babies for him, and Debbie Rowe seems willing. Lisa Marie wanted romance. Something, in my opinion, I believe she would never have gotten from Michael. I can't believe that after completely ignoring her during the marriage that she could even entertain the idea of wanting him back. She never had him in the first place. Personally, I think it was just one of those crazy ideas that occurs to young people in the middle of the night. Lisa Marie is smart enough to know that the marriage was doomed from the start. Or was she? I know why Michael married her. The reasons were selfish. The question remains, why did she marry him? She's got all the money in the world. Everyone who surrounded Michael wanted his money, Lisa Marie could buy and sell her husband. Surely she didn't want Michael for sex? Not that! Oh, please, never that!"

In 2003, six years after Lisa Marie filed for divorce, stories about the Jackson/Presley relationship were still generating headlines. It was reported that Michael was trying to reunite with Lisa Marie as a means of retaining custody of his three children.

After divorcing Michael, Lisa Marie drifted from relationship to relationship until she finally fell in love with actor Nicolas Cage, marrying him on August 10, 2002. Michael learned that their relationship was tempestuous, even though they would not finally divorce until May 26, 2004. In the months that preceded Lisa Marie's divorce from Cage, it was reported that Michael wanted to reactivate the Jackson/Presley alliance.

As reported in the press at the time: "Jackson wants to re-marry Lisa Marie, who divorced her husband, actor Nicolas Cage," one account stated. "Jackson apparently believes he has a better chance of evading an investigation

into his suitability as a father-promoted by his dangling of baby Prince Michael II over the balcony of a German hotel last month-if he is in a stable relationship."

It is not known if Michael actually proposed to Lisa Marie again. But when hearing reports of this potential offer, she was alleged to have said, "I won't be used again!"

In March of 2003, during the course of a particularly candid interview , Lisa Marie-rather unconvincingly-maintained that she did have sex with the pop king. She said that "he was just a normal guy" underneath his eccentric exterior. Reporter Phil Blackman said that "surely Lisa Marie is putting us on with that comment."

She also said that she was "smitten with Michael until the relationship turned ugly at the end. I absolutely fell in love with him. He was just a typical man when I began to date him." Again Blackman found her statement difficult to swallow. "How, even on the darkest night, could she really believe that Michael Jackson by any stretch of the imagination was a typical man? Maybe after having Elvis for a father, Michael Jackson might have been typical but I doubt that."

When Lisa Marie eventually got around to releasing her debut album on April 8, 2003, on Capitol Records, she did it on her own without Michael's help. Bought mostly by Elvis fans, To Whom It May Concern reached number 5 on Billboards Top 200 albums chart. When Michael first heard her album, he referred to it as having been sung by "a brawny collection of Sheryl Crowish pop rockers."

During her promotion of her album, in references to her previous marriage, Lisa Marie said that she felt "powerless." "I was part of a machine. I saw things going on that I couldn't do anything about. Don't ask me what sort of things, because I'm not going to answer. But just stuff."

In an interview with Rolling Stone, she claimed that "I never thought for a moment that someone like him could actually use me for a reason like that. It never crossed my mind, and I don't know why-I'm sure it crossed everybody else's."

At the same time, she admitted that she was "terrified" when her husband kissed her on the mouth at the opening of the 1994 MTV Video Music Awards. "That was not my idea, by the way." When asked if Michael was trying to prove that he was straight by kissing her, she said, "Yeah, but again, I wasn't looking at it like that. See, if I had been, that wouldn't have happened."

When asked in 2004 how she felt about Michael, she claimed, "It's really bizarre. I feel nothing."

Her second album, Now What? in 2005 reached number 9 on Billboard's pop charts and was certified gold. Unlike her first album, Now What? included a parental advisory sticker.

In March of 2005, as a means of promoting her album, Lisa Marie appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show. "Do you think that he loved you as much as he could?" the talk show diva asked Elvis's daughter in regards to Michael.

"Yes, as much as he was capable of loving somebody," she said. Oprah then asked if Lisa Marie felt that Michael had used her. "All signs point to yes on that. I can't answer for him." On the show she admitted that she felt uncomfortable talking about Michael. "This seat is hot!" she said. Later she told the Associated Press that Michael was the "most toxic" of her many relationships. "I don't want to bash him. I don't hate him. I don't have any of that going on."

No great fan of her former son-in-law, Priscilla also spoke to Oprah on camera, suggesting that Michael may have used her daughter in the hopes that Lisa Marie would have his children. "That would ensure his connection to Elvis's legacy," she claimed. "There's something very calculating and manipulative about how he does things."

For reasons known only to herself, Lisa Marie continued to issue bizarre statements about Michael that "the whole world knows aren't true," in the words of one reporter. He was referring to her comment about her ex-husband's second marriage to Debbie Rowe. "With me, Michael did redeem himself in the end and things are better between us now. It was not a fun time for either of us. He's happily married and has a baby coming now, which is

great!" Lisa Marie's claims of Michael's "happy" second marriage brought ridicule in press offices around the country.

As Elvis's only recognized child, she inherited his entire estate when she turned thirty. In August of 2005, she sold 85 percent of the estate's business holdings to CKX, Inc., excluding Graceland itself.

Although long since divorced, Michael still followed the career and activities of Lisa Marie, learning that in February of 2006 she had married Michael Lockwood in a ceremony in Kyoto, Japan. She was thirty-eight at the time. It was her fourth marriage. The best man was Lisa Marie's first husband, Danny Keough. Michael was not invited to the wedding.

Lisa Marie's final word on both her marriage to Michael and to "hothead" Nicolas Cage was, "I was really into this lioness thing with Michael and wanted to protect him," she claimed. "How could I be so naive? One needs to protect oneself from Michael."

"As for Nick, we're both so dramatic and dynamic that when it was good, it was unbelievably good, and when it was bad, it was just a fucking bloody nightmare for everybody," she said. "If you lined up all the men I've been with in a row, you'd think that I was completely psychotic."

Neither Nicholas Cage nor Michael had any comment about Lisa Marie's remarks.

On the website, "NNDB: Tracking the Entire World," the sexual orientation of Lisa Marie is listed as "bisexual," her occupation, "relative."

During the course of his marriage to Lisa Marie, in the wake of the Jordie Chandler out-of-court settlement, Michael found himself embroiled in yet another lawsuit. In December of 1994, in a "wrongful termination" suit, five former employees, including Michael's maid, Adrian McManus, filed a lawsuit against the star and seven members of his staff. The suit charged that the employees were repeatedly subjected to retribution for their agreeing to help Santa Barbara authorities with the criminal investigation of Michael and for their testimony before a grand jury.

Joining McManus in the suit were security officers Kassim Abdool and his assistants, Ralph Chacon and Melanie Bagnall, one of the few women who worked in security. The final plaintiff was longtime office manager, Sandy Domz.

In Michael's opinion, his staff "had been only too willing to cooperate with the grand jury." For doing that, the former Neverland employees cited "a pattern of intentional, willful, and malicious conduct designed to threaten and intimidate" them. The plaintiffs also charged that they had been threatened with bodily injury, even subjected to death threats. It was also revealed that Neverland security forces had installed an elaborate "Gestapo-like" system of wiretapping, and that Michael himself often eavesdropped on the personal calls of his employees.

One Neverland employee charged that the "surveillance equipment at Neverland was so intricate, as was the telephone-tapping system, that the CIA should hire Jackson's OSS officers," a reference to the special force-known within Neverland as the Office of Special Services-that Bill Bray, Michael's most devoted employee, had brought to Neverland to "protect Michael from all harm."

All three of the female plaintiffs charged that the OSS officers had subjected them to sexual harassment. McManus also claimed that one of the officers "threatened to slice my throat if I ever revealed Michael's private life to the press."

The plaintiffs never revealed exactly what they told the grand jury, but their testimony was believed to have been devastating in the Chandler vs. Jackson case. Abdool said that he, along with his aide, Ralph Chacon, delivered a jar of Vaseline to Michael's suite. It was not explained why Abdool's assistant, Chacon, delivered that one jar of Vaseline. Chacon reported that he saw "two young boys" in the room with Michael, before he took the jar and slammed the door in their faces.

Sandy Domz had gone so far as to call the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department to reveal that "illegal

wiretaps" were being carried out at Neverland. In September of 1994, the employees, claiming they could no longer tolerate the harassment and intimidation at the ranch, quit their jobs.

It wasn't until shortly before Christmas of 1994 that they found an attorney, Michael Ring, in Santa Barbara who would take their case. In the suit, Michael was charged along with his employees, specifically Bill Bray, but also James Van Norman, Jerome Johnson, Tony Coleman, Andrew Merritt, Bettye Bailey, and Marcus Johnson (no relation to Jerome).

In his defense of the Neverland employees, Ring faced a battery of the highest paid attorneys in California, the firm of Katten Muchin Zavis & Weitzman.

Their case may have been lost shortly after it began, when Judge Zel Canter ruled that any evidence from the Jordie Chandler civil case would not be permitted in court. Since the plaintiff's entire case depended on the harassment they were allegedly subjected to during the Chandler case, the die was cast. The trial, which was a disaster from the beginning, would slog onward from September 15, 1996 to March 17, 1997.

Lisa Marie on Oprah's infamous couch

Michael's defense team suffered a near-mortal blow when Jerome Johnson, one of the co-defendants, seemingly switched sides during pre-trial hearings, claiming that he backed up the allegations of the former Neverland employees. As an elite member of the OSS, Johnson said that his sole job was to apply "pressure on the staff by harassing them." Johnson filed an official decla ration with the court, backing up the allegations of the "Neverland Five," even though they were suing him. Privately, he told a reporter that he was deeply religious and "I can no longer participate in the lies of Michael Jackson. I can't sleep at night thinking about what I have done for Jackson."

In April of 1995, Jerome Johnson, for "his act of betrayal," was terminated at Neverland after seven years of employment there. In addition, Michael's lawyers cut Johnson loose from the case, leaving him with no lawyer until he hired the defense attorney, Charles Matthews.

On January 24, 1996, a blackmail note was delivered to Michael's business office, demanding that $7 million be wired to a bank account in San Francisco. Each plaintiff was quizzed to see if he or she had sent the note. All of them testified that they did not. Judge Zel Canter ordered that a DNA swab be taken from each participant in the case. According to court reporter Diane Dimond, a match came back. Apparently, the envelope that contained the note had been licked by the wife of Jerome Johnson.

In 1996, when Johnson appeared at the trial, something akin to despair showed on the faces of the plaintiffs. Apparently because of the incriminating note, Johnson pleaded the Fifth Amendment and refused to repeat or validate any of his earlier testimony-testimony that had verified the claims of the plaintiffs. After this setback, it became increasingly obvious that the plaintiffs' case against Michael Jackson was lost.

Even so, reporters were astonished at the verdict. Michael was found innocent of all charges. But in a countersuit the star had filed against these employees, they were ordered by the court to pay one and a half million

dollars to Michael for various transgressions. McManus, for example, was charged with "stealing souvenirs from the ranch for resale to Jackson fans." Having no money to pay the judgment, the plaintiffs filed for bankruptcy.

After the case, one juror, who refused to give his name, said, "Most of us on the jury, with one notable exception, were very impressed with Michael's talent and his stardom. It was hard to throw the book against him. Some of us felt that he'd suffered enough humiliation-not to mention losing millionsin that Jordie Chandler case we'd all heard about. Most of the plaintiffs struck us as disgruntled former employees hoping to catch a free ride on the gravy train."

Disgruntled employees at Neverland were not the only ones hoping to catch a ride on the MJ gravy train. Victor M. Gutierrez, an investigative journalist living in Los Angeles in 1995, wrote the most sensational book ever written about Michael. It was called Michael Jackson Was My Lover, and it was reported to be The Secret Diary ofJordie Chandler.

The story came to the attention of America when Gutierrez appeared that year on Hard Copy, the TV show. On the air, he claimed that he knew of a videotape containing footage of Michael Jackson molesting a boy.

Nicolas Cage with Lisa Marie, circa 2001

His source allegedly was "the mother" (unnamed) of the young boy. It was rumored that the child was Jason Francia, the son of Michael's former maid, Blanca Francia. Later Gutierrez reportedly told the National Enquirer that his source had been Margaret Maldonado, who had been married to Jermaine. On hearing of the rumor that her son, Jeremy, was filmed having sex with Michael, Maldonado threatened to bring a lawsuit against the National Enquirer if the paper ran the story. "I will end up owning the paper," she threatened.

Hard Copy correspondent Diane Dimond did report the allegations, though the National Enquirer never published the story. Gutierrez had told Dimond that he'd seen a "27-minute video of the King of Pop in a compromising position with a boy." The Hard Copy reporter later repeated those allegations on a Los Angeles TV station.

In retaliation, Michael issued a $100 million slander suit against both Gutierrez and Hard Copy. An investigation into the matter revealed no copy of the video to back up the journalist's claim.

At one point the writer claimed that Elizabeth Taylor and Gil Garcetti, the Los Angeles County District Attorney, could verify the existence of the videotape. Of course, they could not and did not. On October 15, Judge Reginald Dunn ruled that the story was false and that Gutierrez had "acted with malice" and was therefore liable for presumed and punitive damages. On October 15, 1996, the jury awarded Michael $2.7 million in the slander suit, and Gutierrez filed for bankruptcy in October of 1997.

"Jurors told us that they not only wanted to compensate Mr. Jackson and punish Victor Gutierrez, but to send a

message that they are tired of tabloids lying about celebrities for money," Michael's attorney, Zia Modabber, told the Associated Press.

In April 14, 1999, Modabber spoke to the press once again. "Unfortunately, anybody can walk into a courthouse with a couple of hundred dollars and file a lawsuit. It doesn't take any more than that. And if you hap pen to be suing Michael Jackson or any other celebrity for that matter, you are going to find yourself all over TV. You can tell the whole world about your scandalous accusations and people are going to listen to you."

Gutierrez fled to Chile and wrote his book Michael Jackson Was My Lover. It was published in Santiago, Chile, in March of 1996, with a subsequent second edition printed in January of 1997. It was subsequently banned from sale in the United States, and as such, the "tell all" has become a highpriced collector's item.

The book was illustrated with very intimate private photographs of young Jordie, even of the bed where Evan Chandler found his son sleeping with Michael in a sexual position. Candid photographs of Jordie's naked torso were also published under the caption, "Jackson's Taste." One photograph displays what are purported to be five pairs of underwear worn by Jordie, both boxer and jockey shorts. Gutierrez alleges that "the singer kept these in his room, including some with shit and urine stains."

In the book, private documents not previously available to the public were also published, even the drawing that Jordie drew during the sexual abuse scandal that depicted the boy committing suicide by jumping off a building. It is not known how Gutierrez obtained these documents, which included some of Evan Chandler's handwritten notes to his attorney, Barry Rothman. The authenticity of these documents has never been challenged.

The most controversial diagram is a sketch of Michael's penis which was drawn by Jordie and presented to his father on October 24, 1993 at 11:45pm. The boy, staying up late that night, even dated the time of submission. The following morning, after studying the sketch, which included notes about "spots and marks" on Michael's body, Evan Chandler turned his son's document over to the police. It is not known how this secret document became available to Gutierrez, but it did, and he subsequently published a replica of it in his book.

In his author's acknowledgements, Gutierrez thanks many people whom he alleges contributed to the book, including two of Michael's former maids, Blanca Francia and Adrian MacManus. He also thanks such formerly intimate friends of Michael as Wade Robson and even detectives of the Sheriff's Department of Santa Barbara and officials and detectives of the Child Abuse Unit of the LAPD.

Despite the controversy raging around them, Gutierrez's book and its illustrations are far too detailed and "insiderish" to be easily dismissed. It is obvious that Gutierrez had inside knowledge culled from many sources. It's also obvious that he secured documents and illustrations not available to other journalists and biographers.

In the book Gutierrez draws some shocking conclusions:

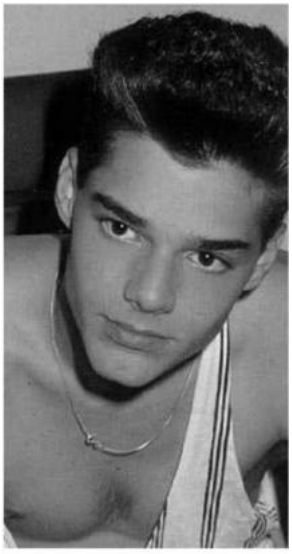
Jackson loved Jordie. The King of Pop had had sexual relations with many children, but Jordie was special. Jordie was his lover his companion. He desired him physically and couldn't be separated from him. He was his top priority, his life, the only person he wanted close to him. Thats why he told Jordie "I've never gone so far sexually with a boy as I have with you. " Jordie felt the same. He was attracted to his friend, his idol, and lost his virginity, so to speak, with him. He enjoyed sex with his fiend. He received his friend's attention, care and gifts.

As late as April of 2005, Michael Jackson Was My Lover: The Secret Diary ofJordie Chandler was still making news. Karma Longworth reported that Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato of "World of Wonder," the production company behind films that included Inside Deep Throat and The Eyes of Tammy Faye, had optioned Gutierrez's book for the movies.

The Spanish language edition of the book, unlike the English version, contained a description of Michael's "alleged inappropriate dalliance with singer Ricky Martin," according to Longworth.

Months after the event, it was revealed that the raid on Neverland had turned up two trunks filled with pictures of young Ricky Martin.

In the Spanish language version appears a statement that was translated into English as follows: "Amongst the photographs confiscated by the police during the raid [a reference to the first raid on Neverland], the detectives found some of an unidentifiable Hispanic boy. Later they discovered that they were of Ricky Martin, the singer and ex-member of the band, Menudo, who is now an actor on the North American soap opera General Hospital. Even though the photographs of the now-actor were taken from magazines and promotional stills, they sufficiently indicate a liking towards the exmember of Menudo."



Ricky Martin

There is no evidence that Ricky Martin, as a member of Menudo or as a successful solo singer of such hits as "Livia' La Vida Loca," ever had a relationship of any kind with Michael.

Rumors about Martin's sexual preference have appeared frequently in the press, but Martin has denied charges of homosexuality.

Martin joined the Latin boy group, Menudo, in 1984 at the tender age of twelve, when he first came to Michael's attention.

The police concluded that the then-minor, Martin, "never reached the point of knowing Jackson." In an interview, the singer was asked about the photographs found at Neverland. He indicated his surprise but admitted that he had always thought "that the King of Pop had a platonic liking towards me." At one point Michael invited the Menudo boys for some photographs but Martin claimed that he was not a member of the group yet. "When I did join the group, I was fully aware that Jackson liked Menudo. But I never would have thought that this man would have kept photographs of me when I was a young boy. The police never contacted me, because I never knew Jackson."

Although no one has successfully linked Martin sexually with Michael, the Puerto Rican singer did shock his fans in December of 2005 when he bluntly told American Blender magazine that he "loved giving the golden shower" to his partners. Martin later posted a message on his website, claiming that he "regretted his frankness and wished I had kept quiet."

As Michael's looks deteriorated after 2000, Martin was named by People magazine as one of the "Fifty Most Beautiful People in the World." In 2006 People en Espanol bestowed the same honor upon this handsome man.

One of his most ardent fans posted this message on a website: "Ricky baby, you can piss on me in the early morning, before lunch, twice in the afternoon, and all night long. But why waste it down the bathtub drain? It's my

favorite cocktail. Better than cerveza."

In a startling report in La Cuarta Diario, under the head (translated into English) VICTOR GUTIERREZ PLANS HIS REVENGE, the journalist is quoted as saying, "This time, the Neverland ranch will be mine." It is not clear how Gutierrez planned to take over as the chatelain of Neverland. Perhaps by counter-suing Michael?

Despite these legal woes, Michael continued to plan public appearances, the release of a new album, and a major upheaval in his private life ... and not one that revolved around a boy.

During the declining months of his relationship with Lisa Marie, Michael seemed less concerned with his wife than he was with his latest album.

Released in the summer of 1995, HiStory: Past Present and Future, was divided into two different segments-HiStory Begins and HiStory Continues. The first collection featured Michael's all-time hits such as "Billie Jean," "Beat It," "Bad," and "Black Or White." The songs on HiStory Continues were new, including "Scream," "Smile," and "Tabloid Junkie." Some of these songs were autobiographical, a musical and poetic record of what had overtaken him during the previous two years. Executives at Sony were clearly worried about sales during the week leading up to the release of the album.

Michael launched his HiStory world tour in Prague in the Czech Republic on September 7, 1996, ending it in Durham, South Africa, on October 15, 1997. He performed a total of 82 concerts to some four and a half million fans in 58 cities, 35 countries, and 5 continents. This was the first album in which Michael showcased his instrumental talent, playing keyboard and synthesizer, guitar, drums, and percussion on the album.

Fans who bought his HiStory album confronted a more aggressive Michael, especially in the single, "They Don't Care About Us." In the song, Michael laments, "I'm tired of being the victim of shame, you're throwing me in a class with a bad name, I can't believe this is the land from which I came."

One of his finest compositions, "Strangers in Moscow," was also on the album. The first single from the album, "Scream," was a duet with the other successful sibling in the family, Janet. In "Scream," Michael laments, "Stop pressuring me, stop pressuring me." Janet also made an award-winning video of the song with her by now-notorious brother.

The most controversial song from the album, "They Don't Care About Us," brought angry protests from the Anti-Defamation League because of its anti-Semitic lyrics. "Michael Jackson has an anti-Semitic streak," claimed Abraham Foxman, the director of the Anti-Defamation League. "It seems every time he has a problem in his life, he blames it on Jews."

"Jew me, sue me, everybody do me, kick me, kike me," Michael sang.

The reaction of Jews was so hostile that it forced Michael to apologize. He changed the lyrics, claiming most unconvincingly that "the song was intended to fight prejudice." Considering the original lyrics, virtually no one bought the defense. Michael would later solicit but not receive-Louis Farrakhan's support following the outcry raised by his song.

Privately, Michael wanted the Islamic minister to launch a "holy war" against Jewish music executives in the industry.

Astonishingly, Michael claimed that Jews objecting to his anti-Semitic lyrics were, in fact, "persecuting me" for his tirades. This showed an amazing lack of sensitivity on his part. The Jewish community, of course, had a legitimate right to attack the anti-Semitic lyrics. But nonetheless, Michael seemed to want revenge for the Anti-Defamation League's attacks on his lyrics.

Farrakhan wisely opted to sit out this dispute. "If Jackson wants to take on the Jews, let him," the minister said. "I'll battle them in my own way, without getting involved in Jackson's music wars." On October 16, 1995, Farrakhan had denounced Jews as "financial bloodsuckers" at his "Million Man March."

With HiStory, Michael-at least in initial sales-showed that he could still "cut it" at the age of 40. The album sold 18 million copies before tumbling from the charts. It appeared that the mind-boggling sales associated with his Thriller days during the 1980s were over.

Much of the reaction from the press was unfavorable. Julene Snyder, a San Francisco based freelance writer said. "Thus far, outrageously expensive promotion (a reported $30 million) for HiStory: Past, Present and Future, Book I,' has been characterized by remarkably poor judgment by people who really should know better. The deeply disturbing neo-fascist trailer for HiStory-rife with screaming children, fainting girls, marching soldiers, helicopters and explosions-climaxes with the unveiling of a huge statue of the singer, and a young blond boy's dewy look as he shouts, `Michael, I love you!' As if that weren't peculiarly creepy enough, the next shot follows a helicopter as it flies through straddled-apart legs of the statue-fairly ambiguous imagery, given the circumstances. Jackson, who clearly craves adulation as much as any junkie needs a fix, has announced a tour of 40-foot statues of himself, starting with one floating down the Thames in London. Can you say overkill?"

Many other artists would have considered HiStory a smashing success, but Michael was bitterly disappointed in its sales, hoping again for another Thriller. Critics in the music industry said that Michael's most loyal fans already owned the hits on the album and didn't want to buy the same music twice. "Not only that, but the new songs weren't strong enough to offset the added cost of the album," or so wrote critic Bob Griffith.

Michael faced yet another disappointment when he learned that Eagles: Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975 was threatening to catch up with Thriller's record-breaking sales.

An American rock music group formed in Los Angeles in the early 70s, The Eagles, were among the most successful recording artists of that decade. Two of their albums, Eagles. Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975 and Hotel California, rank among the ten best-selling albums of all time. On December 7, 1999, the Recording Industry of America honored the group with an award for the "Best Selling Album of the Century" for their Greatest Hits album, which chronicled the high-flying 70s with what they called "life in the fast lane" and the pursuit and unraveling of the American dream.

While touring with HiStory, Michael released a mini-movie, Ghosts, a horror story. In the plot, Michael is appropriately cast as a "weird man" who's living in a haunted house on the hill. Directed by Stan Winston, Ghosts had a mixed reaction. As one reviewer noted, "I think commercially his best days were behind him but this is still an excellent video and far exceeds a lot of crap put out there today."

In 1997 he also released a "remix" album, Blood on the Dance FloorHIStory in the Mix, featuring five new songs, two of which had heard featured in Ghosts. The other eight songs were remixes from the HiStory album. Ironically, even though many of its songs were re-releases from earlier albums, Blood became one of the biggest remix albums ever, selling seven million copies globally.

Michael's onstage behavior, meanwhile, had become increasingly imperial and in some cases, bizarre, so much so that Michael sometimes suffered from the outrage these acts seemed to catalyze in the minds of competitors. In 1996, in London at the Brit Awards, Michael selected "Earth Song," as his big number. At the end of "Earth Song," Michael in dazzling white was hoisted over the stage in a crucifixion pose and was then surrounded onstage by children and a rabbi yearning to touch him. As one former fan put it, "Jackson rose to Grace amidst the steaming pile of sub-Disney doodoo."

Jarvis Cocker

The quasi-religious assumptions of the choreography proved to be too much for Jarvis Cocker, the outspoken lead singer of the British band, Pulp, who immediately raced onto the stage and in front of millions of onlookers, shook his ass derisively at Michael. Michael did not conceal the look of shock on his face when he registered that his "big number," in front of millions of onlookers, wasn't going off as had been previously planned. At no point did Cocker ever threaten Michael. But in a rock-hooligan kind of prank that was permeated with comic, or absurdist, relief, Cocker, who was joined at some point onstage by his friend, Peter Mansell, made it abundantly clear that he did not wholeheartedly approve of Michael's act. In quick reaction, Michael's security forces chased Cocker across the stage and eventually, out of the range of the cameras.

Cocker later admitted that the prank had been conceived as a protest against Michael's "quasi-religious pretensions." Cocker went on to say that because of the accusations of child abuse still swirling around Michael, he found Michael's inclusion of under-aged performers "distasteful."

Later, Michael's guards falsely asserted that Cocker had injured a child dancer during his on-camera escapade. Partly as a result of that, Cocker was hauled to a nearby police station where he was questioned in an hours-long interrogation that began at lam. Subsequently, Cocker was released, and no charges were filed against him.

Pulp

Michael later told the press that he felt "sickened, saddened, shocked, upset, cheated, and angry" at the caper, calling Cocker's behavior "disgusting and cowardly." On hearing that, Cocker countered, "My actions were a protest at the way Michael Jackson sees himself as some kind of Christ-like figure with the power of healing. The music industry allows him to indulge his fantasies because of his wealth and power. People go along with it even though they know it's a bit sick. I just couldn't go along with it anymore. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision brought on by boredom and frustration. But also, I find it very insulting to be accused of assaulting children."

Ironically, the protest generated headlines worldwide. Sales of Michael's single, "Earth Song," soared, as did

the Cocker album, Different Class. And despite the somewhat childish way in which Cocker had protested Michael's self-portrayal as an object of religious veneration, Cocker had a point. A video later showed that in their denunciations of Cocker's protest, Michael's staff had lied. "It was the bouncer's arm, not Cocker's, that went up and accidentally thumped a child in the face," a report concluded. The March edition of Melody Maker even suggested that Cocker should be knighted.

Just when it seemed that Michael had run out of surprises for the press, a new woman, a "motorcycle mama" who was anything but demure, entered his life.

Michael had known her for some time, ever since as an assistant to Michael's dermatologist, she had applied Benoquin, a bleaching cream, to his scrotum, trying to make the pink spots on dark skin even out into a harmonious whole.

Michael evoking Christ.

"I go around the world dealing with running and hiding. I can't take a walk in the park. I can't go to the store. I have to hide in my room. You feel like in prison. "

--Michael Jackson

"I would never do this for money, I did this because I love him. That's the only reason I did this. "

--Debbie Rowe, wife #2

"How do you square Jackson's preoccupation with childhood innocence with the pseudomilitary iconography of his wardrobe and the flashes of violence in his videos? Or the business savvy that led him to purchase the lucrative song catalogs of The Beatles and Sly Stone with the gross financial mismanagement that may soon cost him those catalogs?"

--Toure

"See, we both like to write in private. And now we know why. 'Cause we talk to ourselves. Lines just come zinging out. You have to have someone who you respect hear you sound stupid. If

--Lionel Richie on writing "We Are The World"

"My friendship with him is the most important thing to me, and if this marriage gets in the way of that friendship, then we'll put that marriage aside. "

--Debbie Rowe

"I really screamed at him. Michael, you've got to change your behavior. Mainly with children, because again, although you know you are innocent and you are doing nothing to them, it just doesn't look good. It doesn't look right!"

--Uri Geller

Chapter Fourteen

"Who the hell is Debbie Rowe?" Madonna asked a roomful of her cohorts. One of her hairdressers responded that she was a "motorcycle mama" and that he'd dated one of her biker boyfriends.

Madonna wasn't alone in asking that question. If news of Michael's marriage to Lisa Marie had electrified the world, the pop star's second marriage came as a shock, catching the hound dogs of press and paparazzi unaware.

On November 15, 1996, about a year after his divorce from Lisa Marie, Michael took Debbie Rowe, a nurse, as his second bride. This time the bride didn't have fame, beauty, or money.

The zaftig blonde, thanks to her role as the assistant to Michael's dermatologist, Dr. Arnold Klein, is credited with "making Michael white."

She had known Michael for fifteen years, and reportedly is the only woman, other than his mother Katherine, who ever saw him completely undressed.

Debbie Rowe

Rowe, accompanying Dr. Klein, had flown across the world to minister to Michael during his tours, and she had reportedly given him massages and rubdowns. "I'm familiar with his body, and I can identify any markings on his buttocks," she said, supporting a claim that a biopsy of Michael's scalp revealed that he was suffering from Discoid Lupus, an autoimmune disease causing hyper-pigmentation, which either darkened or lightened the skin. If he did indeed suffer from Discoid Lupus, as Dr. Klein was rumored to have diagnosed, Michael would have to avoid all exposure to the sun throughout the rest of his life. People suffering from Discoid Lupus, especially those with prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, often develop coin-sized red bumps upon the skin, the surface of these lesions looking "warty."

At the time of his marriage, Michael falsely claimed that "Debbie and I love each other. I fell for this beautiful, unpretentious, giving person that she is, and she fell for me."

Her first attempt at childbirth had miscarried, but Rowe was several months' pregnant when at the age of 37 she married Michael in his suite at the Sheraton on the Park Hotel in Sydney, Australia, where he was on the second lap of his HiStory tour. Rowe related stories about romantic evenings, wherein Michael filled her bedroom with exotic fragrances, but technically, those romantic interludes didn't occur on their wedding night. As the continuation

of a pattern that Michael had established with his first wife, wife number 2 also spent her wedding night alone.

As part of the ceremony, her husband presented her with a 2V2 carat diamond, set into platinum, but all she got from him physically was a peck on the cheek, not "the big kiss I'd been expecting." As she lay alone in a $3,000-a-night suite, she cried herself to sleep, or so she said. Later she told friends that "my honeymoon night was the most disappointing of my life."

Accompanying Michael during his honeymoon was an eight-year-old boy, his origin unknown, nicknamed "Tony." Michael claimed that the good-looking boy was his nephew, although that wasn't true. While Rowe was confined to her hotel suite, Michael and Tony were photographed attending the opening night of the film, Ghosts, and also paying a visit to Sydney's Taronga Zoo.

"The marriage and the entire setup with Debbie Rowe was nothing more than a sham," Michael's former publicist, Bob Jones, claimed. "Michael Jackson wasn't the least bit interested in Debbie Rowe. He was only interested in her churning out those blond-haired, blue-eyed babies." Jones added a provocative comment to the effect that Michael didn't want to have a "splaboo," the pop star's standard reference for a black child.

Debbie Rowe with MJ

During their marriage, Michael and Rowe never lived together.

Nick Bishop, in The National Enquirer, reported that Rowe had been "passionately in love" with Michael for 15 years and was his most ardent fan, claim ing that "he broke my heart when he married that Lisa Marie." She reported that he was distraught when he and Lisa Marie could not have a child and that she volunteered, "Let me try to get pregnant with you." She also said that Michael burst into tears of joy, as they went to his bedroom "and started to make love-he was fantastic, once he got started."

She reported that as a kind of foreplay to their lovemaking, Michael sometimes dressed up, once donning a suit of armor "so he could be a knight conquering a peasant girl. Another time he dressed as a pirate." It cannot be ascertained if these were mere fantasies on Rowe's part, the equivalent of stories of humans being abducted and then "violated" by aliens aboard space ships.

Bishop reported these fantasies, but as a good reporter he also wrote, "Few will believe this rigamarole when subsequent events are factored into the equation. Debbie sounds like an intelligent and well-paid shill, and yet

another sexual beard, but this one was assigned the role of breeder as well."

Privately, associates of Michael said that he wanted to have children of his own, and that he was "shopping for a breeder," who would agree to be artificially inseminated. He found such a candidate right under his nose: Debbie Rowe, who originally came from Australia and had formerly been married to a so-called "computer wiz."

Rowe must have realized at the very beginning that her marriage to Michael would be a sham. In complaints to her friends back in California, she was already predicting divorce only weeks after her marriage. Perhaps she longed for the days when, as a biker chick-comfortable in the seat of a Harley-Davidson-she rode like a Hell's Angel.

She was said to "curse like a sailor and swill tequila like a Mexican bandit." In the media she's been portrayed as a dumb blonde. Yet others have called her "cool and calculating, a show-me-the-money type of woman with a womb for rent if one put millions of dollars on the table."

During her marriage to Michael, Rowe was said to have dated former biker boyfriends.

In 1996, the year he married Rowe, Michael launched another special friendship. Omar Bhatti, a young man from Norway but with a Pakistani background, lived intermittently at Neverland. Michael told the staff that Bhatti was his biological son, but absolutely no one believed him.

The world first heard of Bhatti in 1996 when the 12-year-old amazed Michael with his talents as an imitator outside his hotel in Tunis in Tunisia. Bhatti was invited into Michael's suite and a friendship emerged when Bhatti brought him a beautiful rose. Soon the young boy and Michael were traveling the world together, with Bhatti on stage performing as "The Mini-Jackson."

The relationship became so close that Bhatti and his family sold their home in Holmlia, outside Oslo, and moved to Neverland. During the months that followed, Bhatti lived with Michael, whom he proclaimed as "my idol."

The friendship would continue for years. Bhatti was even seen later in Colorado visiting with Michael and his children, Prince, 7, and Paris, 5. Bhatti is said to have remained extremely loyal to Michael, and supported him when he went into drug rehab. Ironically, in 2004, eight years after their initial meeting, the then-20-year-old Bhatti, by now a dance artist in his own right, was arrested in Oslo for possession of drugs. The arrest occurred only ten days before he was scheduled to perform at the anti-drug event, Norway Cup, the world's largest soccer tournament for young people.

Bhatti and two of his teenage friends were visiting Neverland at the time of its second police raid. In the aftermath of the raid, Bhatti refused to speak to the press after tabloids ran a front-page photo of Michael and him.

During the raid, Bhatti was questioned by police about Michael's activities. Jeffrey Ellis, a police investigator, later claimed that when he broached the subject of pornography to Bhatti, the boy "became nervous and seemed to have trouble forming a sentence. It was almost like a stutter." From Bhatti, prosecutors got no case. Ellis reported that when the boy was asked about the consumption of wine and alcohol, referring to Michael's now famous "Jesus Juice," Bhatti displayed "that same type of uneasiness that I noticed when I started talking to him about Michael's pornography."

With an unknown father donating the sperm, Prince Michael Jackson was born on February 13, 1997 at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. After delivery, Michael took the baby from Rowe, because "I don't want you to become too attached to it." Obviously there had been some agreement between them for him to do that. Reportedly there was a contract, establishing "ownership" of the baby and also promising to award her with millions if she stayed married to him and bore him yet another child.

After the birth of her baby, Rowe was banished from Neverland, showing up soon thereafter on the streets of Phoenix.

Omar Bhatti

Reports of artificial insemination were consistently denied by both Jacksons in spite of surface evidence to the contrary. Gordon Rowe, grandfather to the children, publicly stated that his daughter had privately told him that the birth was by artificial insemination. Rowe allegedly told friends that "I'm just the vehicle carrying Michael's babies."

Taken from his mother, the newborn was deposited into the back seat of a stretch limo and driven to Neverland, where a professional nurse had been hired to care for the infant. In the weeks ahead, even though Michael would hire a bevy of nurses and nannies to look after the newborn, he insisted on overseeing most of the child's care himself.

Omar Bhatti with MJ

One could almost imagine a derisive hoot coming from Madonna after she read Rowe's quote: "I have married and had a baby with a man I will always love. And I am on top of the world." Even if those sentiments had been true, Debbie was slated to slide off the top of that world very soon.

Michael often insisted on changing his son's diapers himself. And although Prince Michael's name was elegant and regal, he nonetheless had to endure the nickname his father bestowed upon him: Baby Doo-Doo.

"Being called Baby Doo Doo by Dada is the kind of thing that could scar a kid for life," said writer Marcus Errico in 1997. "We just hope Jacko isn't a literalist."

Most reports indicate that Michael designated Dr. Klein as the godfather of his son, with Elizabeth Taylor appointed as his godmother. Other reports relay that instead of Dr. Klein, Macaulay Culkin had been named as the godfather of Prince Michael.

After Michael named his first son Prince Michael, Jermaine responded more or less in kind by naming his own son, "Jermajesty."

In 1997, Rowe and Michael released a joint statement to the press that virtually no one believed. It read: "Deborah is adamant about setting the record straight that Michael is the father of the child [a reference to Prince Michael], the pregnancy is not the result of artificial means, that she has not been paid to have Michael's baby, and that she is not seeking or filing for divorce."

Whereas in the past Michael had faked illnesses to avoid unpleasantness, it now became obvious that he wasn't opposed to the use of Prince Michael as a means of avoiding an engagement. As its date approached, he decided that he did not want to fly to Modena, Italy, to perform with Luciano Pavarotti at a charity concert. In a press release that attempted to justify his non-appearance at the event, he claimed that his son "had suffered a seizure and nearly died." That later turned out to be completely untrue, although Rowe was said to have "gone into a frenzy" when she heard the news for the first time as it was broadcast over television.

As Michael was celebrating becoming a father, the press recalled that in the early 90s Jordie Chandler had been "the apple of Michael's eye."

Meanwhile, Jordie Chandler, having turned seventeen in 1997, was a rich young man worth millions of dollars in bonds and shares. Reportedly, he frequently dabbled in the stock market with the help of a financial guru, Jeffrey Hahn, vice president of the Santa Monica Bank. Jordie had even acquired a partial ownership of the Bank of New York. He'd instructed his financial aides to buy the Crossroads School when he noticed how much the annual fees were.

He was known to pop up at ski resorts in Tahoe and Vail, and to depart spontaneously on scuba-diving trips to The Bahamas and surfing excursions in Florida.

At the time of the birth of Michael's first child, Jordie was still awaiting the final installment of Michael's payments to him, due in June of 1999. As Michael's lawyers had cleverly planned it, that coincided with the date when Michael could no longer be prosecuted over sex abuse allegations.

Jordie, reportedly, was said to have abandoned watching TV broadcasts on the day Debbie gave birth to a son. "I can't bear to watch," he said. Instead he donned a pair of Armani pants and played roller hockey outside his home with his half-brother, Nikki.

In a surprise move, also in 1997, Michael fired his long-time personal managers, turning his career over instead to Prince Alwaleed, a member of the Saudi royal family. He'd met Michael in 1994 at Euro Disney in Paris. With the prince, Michael established Kingdom Entertainment as a development vehicle for film projects, theme parks, hotels, and restaurants. The prince would also be charged with the development and organization of Michael's future world tours. The union of the unlikely pair would be short lived and not meet its expectations.

MJ with Omar Bhatti

Again through the participation of an unknown father, another child, Paris-Michael Katherine Jackson, was born to Rowe on April 3, 1998 at the Spalding Medical Clinic in Beverly Hills. Ironically, when his son had been born, Michael had rented the VIP floor at Cedars-Sinai and hired ten security guards to protect the security of his son. However, when Paris came along, she was assigned only one security guard and her room at Spalding was decidedly modest. Rumors began to circulate that Michael was "hurting financially," and these stories with specific details would mushroom in the months ahead.

According to reports at the time, Michael was so eager to take this child to Neverland that he went to the hospital and removed her at once, even with placenta still covering her body. He wrapped her in a towel and waited to give her a bath when he got her home.

One employee reported that when she brought the baby to Michael at Neverland, she had to pass under life-size mannequins of a Boy and a Girl Scout. Once inside the room, she saw a large painting of Jesus Christ, with blonde hair and blue eyes, complete with a Sacred Heart.

Even as late as the birth of his second child, the press was still publishing ridiculous headlines such as MICHAEL STILL PINES FOR LISA MARIE. That report may have originated when a maid saw a picture of a pre-school Lisa Marie with Elvis resting on the pop star's nightstand.

In 2004, J. Randy Taraborrelli, in a revised edition of his biography of Michael Jackson, The Magic & the Madness, wrote that even though Michael had remarried, Lisa Marie Presley was "still the one who had his heart."

In a review of the book in England, Howard Turner addressed that assertion. "Yeah, right! Anyone who believes that also believes that we have a fairy godmother, that Grace Kelly was a virgin, that John Grisham is the world's greatest writer, that Iraq possessed an arsenal of nuclear bombs, and that George W. Bush will go down in history as America's greatest president. And, finally, they also believe that Michael Jackson, unlike the rest of us, never had a homosexual desire in his life."

In the wake of the birth of two children, Michael was still plagued with financial difficulties. His family was even worse off.

In 1999 both Janet and Michael came in for unwanted headlines claiming that the two multi-millionaires were standing by as their own family faced financial ruin. In March, both Joe and Katherine filed for bankruptcy,

claiming debts of nearly $35 million.

Neither Michael nor Janet, according to reports, offered financial assistance. To raise immediate cash, Katherine auctioned off a Rolls-Royce given to her by Michael. Katherine asked the court to exempt her two mink coats from being seized. Michael had bailed out his parents in the past, but seemed immune to helping them out of their latest difficulties. In 1995, he'd already written Joe and La Toya out of his will.

But as the century came to an end, Michael was reported to be avoiding bill collectors. He wanted to keep his children from view as well. When seen in public, they were veiled. But in the autumn of 2000, the children were playing in a limousine outside their hotel waiting for their "father" to appear. Prince Michael stuck his head out the window and was photographed by a paparazzo. "There's no way in hell that child could have been fathered by Michael," said a Los Angeles pediatrician off the record. "The kid has light blond hair and is whiter than the Queen of England. He looks exactly like Macaulay Culkin at that age."

In a rare statement about his children, Michael said, "I've never had so much fun in all my life. That's the truth. Because I'm this big kid, and now I get to see the world through the eyes of the really young ones. I learn more from them than they learn from me. Children are always the best judges to monitor something."

In the future, Michael would provide a devastating look into his private world and admit sleeping with young boys in Martin Bashir's now notorious TV documentary, aired in 2003. In that future expose of his private life, he would claim that the two children born to Rowe were biologically his. Both children have white skin and light complexions. Michael's claim on TV would be met with derision in the press.

In legal papers filed later, Rowe claimed that she'd agreed to refrain from sex for six months to "avoid any possibility of semen being introduced into my body other than by way of surgical artificial insemination."

It was reported that Dr. Hal Danzer, a Beverly Hills specialist, performed the insemination which led to the births of both of the Rowe-Jackson children. Rowe claimed that for her services she received a payoff of $3 million from Michael.

After contradictory statements in the 1990s, Rowe in 2006 allegedly told an Irish newspaper that Michael was not the father of their two children, Prince Michael and Paris. She claimed that both children were conceived using anonymous semen purchased from a sperm bank. To the Sunday World, Rowe said, "Michael knows the truth-that he is not the natural father. He has to come clean. I have no information whatsoever about the identity of the donor for either child. There was an agreement of confidentiality with the sperm bank."

Then, to confuse matters even more, Rowe attacked the Sunday World, denying that she ever gave such an interview. In putting a spin on the situation, her lawyer, Iris Finsilver, declared that Rowe would "never make a press deal that might risk her visitation rights-she never spoke to any newspaper." The Sunday World, however, stood by its story.

As could have been predicted, Debbie eventually asked for a divorce, and she got her wish on October 9, 1999.

In 2006 when Rowe took Michael to court in a custody battle, legal doc uments revealed details of their divorce settlement. According to these documents, Rowe was to be paid $900,000 a year in "hush money" after she split from Michael. The ex-Mrs. Michael Jackson also picked up a $2.5 million mansion in Beverly Hills and a lump sum of $4 million.

In her court filing, Rowe said, "I have just been advised by Michael's inner circle that he is abusing drugs, and I was even given the name of a physician that is prescribing all of Michael's medications, which I fear is dangerous not only to Michael but also to my children."

Having deserted her small apartment, Rowe had moved into a lavish million-dollar home in Beverly Hills. There was no question where she got the money to pay for this upgrade in lifestyle.

Despite the fact that her contract called for her to remain married to Michael for six years, Rowe told her

friends, "I can't take it anymore. That's why I had to file for divorce."

Myung-Ho Lee, Michael's former business manager, claimed that Rowe had threatened that if Michael didn't pay $10 million as part of their divorce settlement that she would "spill the beans" on family secrets. Ironically, Rowe had surrendered her parental rights at the time of the divorce. And later, during Michael's trial for child molestation, Rowe revealed that she had never met her own children until they were three or four years old. She also revealed that during that period, she was never presented to her children as their mother, but as "a friend of your Daddy's." Michael later told a friend, "I bought all rights to my kids."

As the terms of the divorce were released to wire services around the world, weird speculation arose. The most outlandish rumor was that the former King of Pop had sought help from scientists in the hopes that he could clone both male and female versions of himself. Reporter Nick Bishop even speculated that "the two children could even be a kind of Victor/Victoria experiment in artificial breeding."

While Katherine and nannies minded the children, and while Rowe pined for "my lost love," videotapes revealed that Michael was entertaining three, and sometimes four, adolescent boys at Neverland. He filmed these videotapes himself, always asking the boys to remove their shirts as part of the filming process.

As a means of settling his divorce payments, and to meet mounting millions in other obligations, Michael borrowed $140 million in a loan from Union Finance and Investment Corporation.

Myung-Ho Lee arranged the loan, but later sued Michael, charging that the star failed to fulfill a number of commitments that Michael had made to him as a reward for having secured those millions. In June of 2003, Michael settled the lawsuit with Myung-Ho Lee, the terms of which were not divulged.

Lee's lawsuit was one of about a hundred such lawsuits filed over a two year period during the late 1990s. Marcel Avram, who handled details associated with Michael's tours during the 90s, also sued when the star cancelled "Millennium Concerts" in Honolulu and Sydney, respectively.

Avram sued for $25 million, winning his case, but subsequently receiving only $6 million to make up for lost profits. It was during Michael's testimony in this trial that photographs of his bandaged nose were splashed in media around the world. For perhaps the first time, Michael's fans and enemies alike could witness firsthand the disastrous results of "just one nose job too many."

At the debut of the 21st century, Michael continued a pattern of involvement in other lawsuits as well, both minor and major. Most of them weren't associated with charges of child molestation, but with demands from merchants who asserted that Michael had reneged on previous purchases. One of the more spectacular examples included Michael's alleged promise of $1.6 million to Sotheby's for the acquisition of two 19th-century paintings-one of a cupid and the other of a woman holding a boy and a sheep.

Although Rowe had been restrained by a gag order, she continued to issue statements about Michael, including one she revealed in February of 2003. She said that if "Michael called me tonight and said he wants to have five more, I'd do it in a heartbeat." Michael had enlisted Rowe's help, asking her to appear on a TV documentary to counter the damaging portrayal of British journalist Martin Bashir, who exposed Michael on the air in 2003.

Fox won the bidding war to air the two-hour TV special, The Michael Jackson Interview: The Footage You Were Never Meant to See, narrated by Maury Povich. In the special, Rowe said, "My kids don't call me mom because I don't want them to. They are Michael's children."

Within the televised tell-all, Rowe also claimed that it was her decisionnot Michael's-to cover the faces of her two children with scarves whenever they appeared in public, citing a possible kidnapping threat. "I don't want a Lindbergh baby," Michael had previously said.

Although Rowe had formally relinquished her parental rights in 2001, she was pursuing a lawsuit late in 2005 that requested the immediate return of their children from the Middle East. In that lawsuit, she accused Michael of "abducting" Prince and Paris. In legal documents she filed with the court, Rowe went on to assert that she had seen

the children only once since the summer of 2005, when she won limited visitation rights.

But as events unfolded, Rowe's lawsuit would face many hurdles. And in the interim, as lawyers for both sides wangled, Prince and Paris remained in the Middle East, held in check by the gloved clutches of Michael himself.

Attorney Raoul Felder claimed that "Even if Rowe got Jackson back into court, it could be opening a can of worms that would get them both into trouble. Maybe the law will do what it should have done in the first place and take custody away from both of these two."

A presupposition of the legal system of both Bahrain and Dubai, as endorsed by Islamic tradition and according to many legal experts, maintained that a court order originating in Los Angeles would not be enforceable.

Felder went on to say that if the case indeed ever came to court, a judge might justifiably confront Rowe with, "How did you ever allow your children to be with Michael Jackson in the first place? It's a tough Rowe to hoe."

In spite of the legal muddle and disagreement emanating from these issues, in 2005, a judge decided that proper court procedures had not been observed in 2001 when Rowe was denied custody rights, even though she had volunteered to give them up at the time.

Rowe apparently changed her mind about abandoning her rights as a parent after Michael was charged with child molestation and began associating with the Nation of Islam, which espouses anti-Semitic causes. Rowe, who is Jewish, was deeply offended by this association.

In 2005, Tom Sneddon, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney and a figure who would emerge as one of Michael's most aggressive nemeses, subpoenaed Rowe for an appearance in court. Sneddon's motivation involved his belief that her testimony would damage Michael in front of a Santa Barbara jury, where he was facing charges of child molestation in the Gavin Arvizo case.

On the stand, Rowe appeared to want to get back into Michael's good graces, despite that fact that she had, in a separate legal maneuver, inaugurated a lawsuit to reinstate her custody rights over her children.

The prosecution hoped that Rowe would depict Michael "as a coercive cad and lousy dad." To everyone's surprise, she did the opposite, presenting instead a lively defense of her former husband. During a full three hours on the stand, she praised Michael repeatedly. She ended her largely favorable testimony by blaming Michael's associates for the pop star's troubles and claiming, "I've always considered him a friend. . .generous to a fault and a brilliant businessman." She denounced the un-indicted co-conspirators as "opportunistic vultures."

Earlier sheriff's deputies had claimed that she'd called Michael a "sociopath" who referred to their children as "my possessions." But she didn't repeat or admit those charges on the witness stand.

Later, Detective Sergeant Steve Robel took the stand to repeat Rowe's original damning testimony. "But it was too little, too late," said a source on Michael's defense team.

At the end of the day, her favorable testimony about her ex-husband's character was defined as a startling setback for the prosecution. On the stand, however, Rowe did admit that "Michael's henchmen" had promised her visitation rights with her kids if she agreed to "gush" about the pop star in a video made to counter the damaging effect of the Bashir documentary.

In court documents filed in July of 2006, Rowe asserted that she was flat broke and that Michael owed her hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorney fees and other costs. She claimed that her legal fees and mortgage, plus other expenses, had left her with only $173,000 in the bank, all her other monies from Michael having been spent.

Five years after divorcing Michael, Rowe said, "If you fall in love onceand if you're lucky enough-it's forever. I'm not one of the lucky ones." At her Beverly Hills estate, she burst into tears three times during an exclusive interview with Entertainment Tonight. She claimed that she was studying to become a forensic psychologist and had been breeding prize-winning horses. "I don't know that it would be fair to me to have a relationship with anyone

because I'm trying to figure out what I want," she said.

It was later revealed that Rowe was indeed owed $1 million in back alimony from Michael and that she had been forced to sell her 21/2-carat diamond wedding ring on eBay. The star's attorneys countered with the charge that Rowe had "violated a confidentiality agreement by appearing on Entertainment Tonight."

After much bickering, a secret deal between Michael's lawyers and Rowe was concluded in late September of 2006. The terms were not announced. "We're still dealing with the details but it addresses all of the disputes between the parties," said Marta Almli, the lawyer who represented Rowe. The attorney refused to say what the settlement involved. It was rumored that Rowe received both a "large monetary payment" and was granted visitation rights with her two children, Prince Michael and Paris.

Debbie Rowe

In spite of mounting financial difficulties, continuing lawsuits, and payouts to Debbie Rowe, Michael still seemed to think he had the funds to pursue whatever whim came into his head. In June of 1999, he spent $1.54 million to purchase the statuette associated with the Oscar Best Picture award that David O. Selznick had won for Gone With the Wind in 1939. The former King of Pop was spending far more money than he generated.

Not since the days of Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton, who seemed obsessed with spending herself into the poorhouse, has a media headliner wasted so much money or owed so much. His bestseller album, Thriller, for which he was paid $100 million, should have set him up for life.

Fans were asking, "Where did all the money go?" After all, Michael had made the most successful album of all time and had amassed a fabulous fortune. How could he end up in debt, his life in ruins?

To pay for his mounting debts, Michael went to Bank of America, initially taking out a loan for $70 million, which was followed by another loan for a staggering $200 million. These were in addition to loans from Union Finance and Investment Corporation. For collateral Michael put up his ATV catalogue, including dozens of Beatles' songs, which he owned jointly with Sony. His other assets included not only Neverland, but royalties from his own music, such as "Billie Jean" or "Beat It." His music is estimated to have a market value ranging from $75 to $90 million.

In reviewing Michael's assets, a former Bank of America official, who did not want his name used, said, "We were shocked to find out just how many songs Michael owned. Of course, everybody knew about The Beatles' catalogue. But I was unaware that he owned some of the songs of Elvis Presley, even Madonna. When we drew up an estimate of his publishing rights, it came to $450 million, which we thought would more than guarantee a loan in the millions. A singer who had earned at least half a billion in his lifetime was turning to the songs of other artists such as John Lennon and Elvis to save his financial hide."

In 2001, as a means of securing the loan from Bank of America, Michael offered as collateral his two most valuable assets-a fifty percent stake in his Sony partnership and the rights to his own music library.

This was not the first time Michael had used The Beatles' catalogue to raise much-needed cash. After the lukewarm reception of his HiStory album, he had set up a joint ownership of his ATV Music with Sony, for which he was paid an astonishing $95 million. "Hot damn and save the Queen," Paul McCartney reportedly said when hearing of this fabulous outflow of cash. There was a certain irony in this deal. Signing the agreement was Sony honcho Richard Rowe, the son of the late but not lamented Dick Rowe. Originally Dick Rowe, a senior Decca Records A&R executive, had turned down The Beatles, claiming "they just aren't commercial."

Martin Bashir

Michael had long been infamous for his choice of sometimes bizarre pals he hung out with. In December of 2003, he was linked with another in a long list of "strange bedfellows," in this case the flamboyant Alvin Malnik, no stranger to scandal himself. Michael later claimed that he was taken to Malnik's house in Miami Beach by Brett Ratner, the film director, who had promised to show him a "house so beautiful it will make you catatonic."

The multi-millionaire Malnik has been "fodder" for federal files since the 1960s and has been called the successor to mob moneyman Meyer Lansky.

In 1966, the U.S. attorney in New York indicted Malnik on charges of using the mail to defraud investors, but in 1971 prosecutors dropped the case.

In 1993, a New Jersey Gaming Commission linked Malnik to organized crime figures, a charge he has denied. The commission in its report concluded, "The evidence establishes that Mr. Malnik associated with persons engaged in organized criminal activities, and that he himself participated in transactions that were clearly illegitimate and illegal."

Malnik was the owner of The Forge, the trendy South Beach hot spot to which he took Michael on a "date" (no homosexual reference intended). It was reported that Michael and Malnik "bonded at the hip," becoming such fast friends that Malnik offered the pop star the use of his lavish mansion in Ocean Ridge, Florida. Later, from a base in Miami Beach, Michael even hosted a 70th birthday party for Malnik at The Forge, inviting such glitterati as Smokey Robinson, B.B. King, and even the famous attorney, F. Lee Bailey.

Rush & Malloy in the New York Daily News reported that guests "were surprised to see how openly affectionate the 44-year-old musician was toward several boys who appeared to be in their teens." A Miami headline asked the question: IS JACKO MARRIED TO THE MOB?

The Forge had actually opened in 1969, attracting everybody from Richard Nixon to his shady pal, financier

Bebe Rebozo. In previous years, even Richard Burton and Frank Sinatra had patronized the club.

Malnik also owns Title Loans of America, a national chain lending money legally at high percentage rates, sometimes as much as 22%.

Michael was said to have turned to Malnik for help in paying off millions of dollars of debts. Malnik began giving Michael financial advice, something he also has supplied to the ruling family of Saudi Arabia. To reporters, Malnik denied that he lent Michael the $3 million needed for him to post bail when he was charged in 2003 with molesting a 12-year-old, cancer-ridden boy.

In February of 2004, a $70 million loan came due from the Bank of America, and Michael had no money to repay it. Through the aid of Malnik, Michael got the loan extended. Advisers to Michael told the press that the star's links to the Nation of Islam, the black separatist group, has "scared banks off and hurt Jackson's ability to make more money." Two groups of investors, each prepared to make business deals with Michael, had backed away when criminal charges were filed against him for child molestation.

Financial sources disclosed that in the late 90s and post-millennium, Michael was spending about $20 to $30 million annually-more than he earned. "The result is an ongoing cash crisis," Duross O'Bryan, a forensic accountant, testified at Michael's child molestation trial in 2005. The accountant also testified that Michael has long-term liabilities of about $415 million. According to that estimate, the $475 million (plus) value of his assets outweighs the value of his liabilities by at least $60 million.

After being fired by Michael, publicist Bob Jones later commented on Michael's financial woes. "Look, when you spend $2 million a month, you run into these problems. This guy has been unable to face the fact that he no longer brings in income to support his spending habits. Buying expensive gifts for Elizabeth Taylor, Marlon Brando, Liza Minnelli, and other so-called friends, along with the millions he's had to pay these boys, their attorneys, his lawyers, and others-all of this has caught up with him."

By now hundreds of incidents associated with Michael's reckless spending had seeped into press reports. On his way to visit Elizabeth Taylor at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, Michael made an impromptu stop to pick up a $10,000 bottle of perfume as a gift. Speaking privately, the store owner said, "I sure was glad to unload that bottle although I wondered what Elizabeth Taylor, of all people, needed with another bottle of expensive perfume. Surely she has enough scent."

At one point, faced with $10 million in legal fees on child molestation charges, Michael defaulted on his Bank of America repayment loans once again. Bank of America sold his debt to a New York company, Fortress Investment Group, which specializes in "distressed debt."

Over the next several months, Michael failed to make payments on the loan, giving Fortress the right to foreclose. In a last-ditch effort on the part of Michael's attorneys, the star won the right to extend the loan, allowing Michael more time to accumulate funds.

The refinancing saved Michael from bankruptcy but deprived him of part of his share of the music catalogue.

Fortress also held a $70 million loan on Neverland.

In October of 2005, Michael defaulted on loan payments to Fortress. Ominously December 20, 2005, was to have been the deadline for foreclosure on the assets Michael had posted as collateral when he'd secured loans.

In August of 2006, it was revealed how Michael may have bailed himself out of his massive debt. In papers filed in Manhattan, a financial group, Prescient Acquisition Group, claimed that it helped Michael refinance $272.5 million owed to Fortress and arranged a $537.5 million loan related to his ownership interest with Sony in The Beatles' song library.

The court statement contained the first news of how Michael had escaped but only temporarily-a debt load deemed "almost impossible." But although Prescient had maneuvered adroitly to set up those remarkable loans, they

now faced another problem, and that's why they were taking the singer to court. According to officials at Prescient, Michael owed them $48 million in administrative fees for their role in having arranged the refinancing.

Until the day he died, Michael's finances would remain in disarray. Some attorneys have asserted that lawsuits will keep those finances in chaos long after his burial.

Taking time off from his financial woes, Michael flew to New York to attend a gala.

As Bill Clinton was leaving office, Michael agreed to attend the annual New York Charity Ball of his friend, Denise Rich, whose billionaire husband, Marc Rich, was pardoned in an 11th hour decision by Clinton. Denise had wanted Paul McCartney to be the headline act. But he cancelled for "private reasons." He was replaced by Michael himself, who welcomed the opportunity to sit alongside President Clinton and his first lady, Hillary.

Denise staged her annual Angel Ball for her G&P Charitable Foundation for Cancer Research in November of 2000. Michael showed up at the grand ballroom of the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York, where he greeted, among others, Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell, Stevie Wonder, Rod Stewart, Dionne Warwick, Natalie Cole, and Gladys Knight, who had been instrumental in her initial "discovery" of The Jackson 5. The gala went off without a hitch, allowing Michael to forget his troubles, at least momentarily. But once he returned to Los Angeles, he began the compilation of an enemies list evocative of Richard Nixon during his ill-fated final term. The pop star wanted revenge.

"I'd rather receive praise from my fans than think about the people on my enemy list," Michael said as he flew to New York in March of 2001 for his induction into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, making him the youngest solo artist to achieve that coveted award. The ceremony was conducted in New York at the Waldorf Astoria.

Michael put in an appearance, but arrogantly refused to perform. To get away with that, he arrived on crutches, claiming a leg injury that was faked. Rumors were flying that night that the star was "too high" to perform even though those charges may have been unfounded. Nonetheless, he was inducted into the Hall of Fame before the evening ended, an honor he richly deserved, of course.

That same month he flew to England for one of his most bizarre public appearances. At the Oxford Union in Oxford, he broke down in front of the audience, sobbing for his lost youth.

He claimed that he had wanted to be a typical little boy, building tree houses and having water balloon fights. "But my father had it otherwise and all I could do was envy the laughter and playtime that seemed to be going on all around me." Still sobbing, he went on to say that he wanted "the weight of my past lifted from my shoulders."

He was in Oxford to launch his charity, "Heal the Kids," aimed at bringing parents closer to their children.

A reporter for The Mirror in London, Sue Carroll, was at the gathering and filed this report: "The one thing that Jackson did not look like last night was a dad. There was a distinct resemblance to Liz Taylor, perhaps a touch of Pinocchio, his sister Janet even ... but an old-fashioned father, hope. He hobbled on stage with an injured right foot, bearing crutches but looking as though he had just stepped out of a Chanel boutique. His black hair was glossy and beautifully blow-dried, his lips were a fetching pink, and there was eyeliner to emphasize his dark eyes. From where I was sitting in the gallery, it was impossible not to be fascinated by that nose, which looked so small and manufactured. It was hard not to see this as some bizarre freak show."

"All of us are products of our childhoods," he told the audience. "But I am the product of a lack of childhood. An absence of that precious and wondrous age where we frolic playfully without a care in the world." In a very revealing statement, he claimed, "If you don't have the memory of being loved, you are condemned to search the world for something to fill you up."

At New York's Madison Square Garden, on September 7 and 10 in 2001, just prior to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, two special concerts were staged by Michael in celebration of his 30-year career as a solo artist. Nearly fifty million viewers would later watch one of the concerts when it was broadcast on November 13, as a CBS Television special. Celebrities appeared onstage to pay tribute to Michael, including his rival, Ricky Martin.

Liza Minnelli put in an appearance, as did Britney Spears, Gloria Estefan, and Ray Charles.

Michael also showcased songs from his new album, Invincible. The first single off the new album, "You Rock My World," was accompanied by a video that starred Marlon Brando and actor/comedian Chris Tucker.

Tucker and Michael were friends. Once they were seen together in Las Vegas, leaving their separate hotel suites to emerge onto the gaming floor. "People had to touch me," Michael told Tucker. "Everywhere I turned, I felt hands on me. Other than the Pope and the Queen of England, I'm the most recognizable man on the planet."

Justin Timberlake and `N Sync also were billed on the 30th anniversary TV special. The pop heartthrob's girlfriend at the time, Britney Spears, also appeared on the anniversary program, performing "The Way You Make Me Feel" with Michael. But that footage was later cut from the broadcast. "Too damn bad," said Spears. "Just too fucking damn bad!" her sometimes friend Paris Hilton echoed.

At Madison Square Garden, in one of the most bizarre appearances in a lifetime of bizarre appearances, Marlon Brando-who had been paid a million dollars for his involvement-came onstage to confront a mostly youthful audience, some of whom weren't necessarily aware of who he was. Gigantically overweight and aging, Brando took a seat and introduced himself, "You may be thinking, who is that old fat fart sitting there." He then removed his watch and informed the audience, "In the last minute, 100,000 children have been hacked to death with a machete." After rambling on for ten minutes, the 77-year-old Oscar winner was booed off the stage. "He played a madman in Apocalypse Now," said a witness. "Now I know Brando wasn't acting."

Brando's appearance was considered so boring that it had to be cut from the final televised show.

Following the Brando debacle, the show peaked when The Jackson 5 reunited with their performance of such bubblegum former hits as "ABC."

Bob Jones revealed that a reunion with Michael's brothers "was purely a money move on his part. The last thing in the world Michael wanted was to perform with his brothers. He made it clear to all who worked with and for him that his family was to be kept as far away as possible. This is a man whose dressing room was off limits to his parents. He would have only little boys in his dressing room."

During the historic early-morning events of September 11, 2001, Michael was still asleep. Most Americans learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center and The Pentagon by watching the dramas unfold on television. Michael was awakened by a mysterious call from a friend in Saudi Arabia, telling him of the attacks. He immediately panicked and wanted to flee New York. But he was also concerned for his friends, Elizabeth Taylor and Marlon Brando, who were still in New York at the time.

Immediately, Michael placed several emergency calls seeking an underground shelter for himself, for Elizabeth, and for Brando. He did not seem concerned about members of the Jackson family, who at the time were also in New York.

In an interview with Vibe magazine, Michael said that "Marlon Brando was on one end of the hotel, his security was on the other end, and Elizabeth Taylor was at another hotel." In the wake of the attacks, after vehicular traffic was once again allowed in and out of Manhattan, instead of heading for an underground shelter, Elizabeth and Brando were hauled by Michael to a "secure location" somewhere in New Jersey.

It was sister Janet who eventually rescued those members of the Jackson clan remaining in New York. Since airplane transit in and out of the city had been disrupted, she rented Winnebagos to drive them back to California.

Later, Michael asked other major stars to join him in a post 9/11 tribute. Reporter Clay Risen revealed their reaction to Michael's request. He was turned down. "It couldn't have happened to a freakier guy," Risen wrote. "The King of Pop is a star pariah. Michael Jackson's invitation to sing on a September 11 tribute was turned down by a platoon of big-name stars."

Only weeks after the attack on the World Trade Center, Michael's lackluster Invincible album was released. He

was hoping that income it generated would save him financially. But in eight months, it sold just six million copies worldwide, a poor return on the $40 million spent to produce it, and the $25 million Sony had spent to promote it.

By now, it appeared that Sony had lost its patience with Michael. As long as the pop star made money, they could overlook his eccentricities. When it appeared that he couldn't, one Sony executive confided, "Michael Jackson is a drain, a money pit."

"For a guy who sold Thriller, this can only be an indication of his diminishing popularity," said Tom Vickers, the music consultant. "Jackson is the last person to realize his fan base no longer exists," Vickers said. "For most people, he's the car wreck we slow down to rubber-neck. People have a ghoulish fascination that has little to do with his singing or dancing abilities and everything to do with his freakish looks and behavior. A shrinking core of devotees may continue to buy his music, but they can't sustain his lavish lifestyle. Mainstream interest in Michael Jackson as an artist is over!"

Craig Marks, editor of Blender, the music magazine, echoed similar sentiments. "I don't think he has earning potential on the music side anymore. He has it on the TV side, on the rubbernecking freak-show side. People will tune in to watch him do anything, but they don't buy his records any more. It's almost impossible to hear his records and not conjure up that scary, weird guy."

Invincible

One music executive said, "Our customers prefer the oldies-the darker complexion and the big nose."

Increasing numbers of critics were reappraising Michael's phenomenal music career. American writer and soul expert, Ben Edmonds, didn't see him as a fallen genius. "Everything about Michael Jackson's career has been so managed and produced that it's really hard to tell where his collaborators end and where he begins. In Thriller and Off the Wall, you don't really know how much of it is Michael and how much is Quincy Jones, the producer. We don't see him as a human being, but he might not see himself that way either. He may be like Andy Warhol: A completely empty vessel apart from his own fame. We just don't know, because we're never allowed to see beyond the surgically altered face."

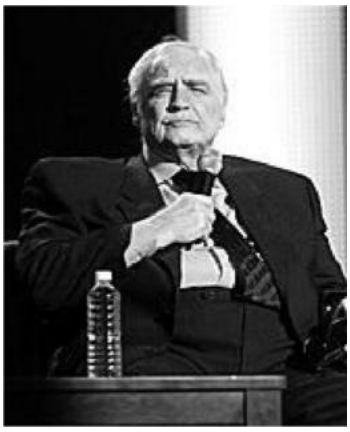
Despite his legal troubles and declining record sales, Michael's ego, from all reports, had expanded greatly. Associates, even if speaking off the record, began to weigh in with informed opinions. One executive claimed that "Jackson wants to be in that pantheon that includes Mozart, Walt Disney, Elvis Presley-and let's throw in Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly for good measure."

Michael was reported to have said, "The rules that apply to common folk don't apply to me. I can get away with whatever I want because I'm Michael Jackson. I not only walk forward, but I can walk backward as well."

In December, after the September 11 attacks, National Enquirer reported that, "A bizarre-acting Michael

Jackson is hooked on drugs and booze and his frightened family flew across the country to save his life." It was then reported that Michael had rejected his family's plea for him to seek treatment in a clinic such as Betty Ford that Elizabeth Taylor had previously recommended. "Michael is succumbing to drugs and alcohol," one source reported. He was hooked on Demerol and "drinking vast bottles of Jesus Juice," (i.e., wine). Demerol was said to have made him so mentally sluggish that he was "walking around his hotel suite like a zombie."

When Bob Jones was told that one can't believe what one reads in National Enquirer, the publicist said, "Well, that is just not the case. Over the years, so-called insiders and Jackson family members themselves sold stories to the Enquirer. Michael Jackson even sold pictures to the tabloid."



Marlon Brando, three years before his death

As a good friend, Marlon Brando tried to intervene to help Michael, asserting that Michael's appearance as a high-profile film actor could generate millions, thereby resolving many of his financial woes. As a means of improving his acting technique, Brando invited Michael to attend an acting workshop that he was teaching.

Critics have chastised, or ridiculed, Michael for "cross dressing," but he learned what cross dressing really was when he, along with Sean Penn, went to an acting class in Los Angeles presided over by Brando, who was holding private invitation-only acting workshops for special VIPs in Hollywood.

On the first day of class, the curtain opened to reveal the corpulent star dressed as a woman. Under a long blonde wig with the kind of scarlet lipstick Betty Grable and Lana Turner wore in World War II movies, Brando conducted the improvisation class. "I didn't want my acting classes to be a drag!" Brando later quipped to Sean Penn.

Driving his teacher home in a limo, Michael confessed to what he called "some astonishing news." He shared with Brando the fact that he was about to become a father for the third time, and presumably told Brando how he'd come to acquire a second son in his life.

Mysteriously Michael presented this other son to the world in February of 2002. The world learned that the child's name was Prince Michael II. Against overwhelming evidence, Michael still insisted that his first two children had been born "the natural way"-that is, his having had sex with Debbie Rowe. But insofar as this new child was concerned, he confessed that Prince Michael II was the result of artificial insemination, although in one interview he contradicted himself, stating that "I had a personal relationship with the mother."

Changing that testimony, a few weeks later he said that his own sperm cells were used with a surrogate mother. At one point he claimed that the mother was black, later stating that he didn't know the identity of the mother. It is highly unlikely that Prince Michael II is black, as the child is very blond, like a possible clone of Macaulay Culkin. Debbie Rowe testified that she didn't give birth to Michael's second son and that she doesn't know who his mother is.

MJ

The child became world famous in November of 2002 when Michael suspended the nine-month-old infant over the edge of a fiftyfoot balcony at the legendary (and massively restored) Adlon Hotel in Berlin, where, during the 1920s, Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich had carried on a torrid affair.

Stunned fans watched in horror as Michael precariously held the baby with only one hand and lifted him over the railing. Clad only in a romper suit, "Blanket"-his nickname-struggled to break free. A white cloth had been placed over his head to prevent the paparazzi and "crazed fans" from photographing him. Fortunately, Michael pulled the infant back to safety before he accidentally plunged to his death.

Responding to worldwide protests, Michael claimed that he'd held Blanket very tightly and that the infant was never in any real danger. "I got caught up in the excitement of the moment. I would never intentionally endanger the lives of my children."

Uri Geller, the psychic and Michael's friend, told the press that he suspected that Blanket wasn't really Blanket at all, but a fake child made of plastic. "Michael would never do such a thing like dangling a real child over that railing."

Liza Minnelli also rushed to Michael's defense. "I don't see a picture where he is dangling the child nervously. I see him holding him up above a railing for the press to say hello to the kid."

In California, child protection officers held secret talks to decide whether to inaugurate proceedings to determine if Michael were a fit father. They even debated the launch of a formal investigation. "Why on earth," reporter Alison Boshoff asked, "has this obviously disturbed man been allowed to father a brood of three `motherless' children in the first place?"

At the time he was dangling "Blanket," over the edge of the balcony in Berlin, The Independent Sunday in London concluded "The last decade of Michael Jackson's life has hardly been the most glorious phase of his career, but the events of the last six months have seen him slide downwards at unprecedented speed. If Jackson was ever the `King of Pop,' there seems little doubt that his crown has now been broken into small pieces."

On March 16, 2002, Michael stashed Blanket, along with his other two children, with nannies while he attended the most bizarre wedding of the year, the nuptials of his faithful friend, Liza Minnelli, who at the age of 55 was marrying David Gest, 48, another close friend of Michael's. Michael shared best man honors with his brother

Tito. Elizabeth Taylor was matron of honor, sharing the position with Marisa Berenson.

The whole world knew who Minnelli was, of course, but Gest, the American TV producer and concert promoter, was little known outside the entertainment industry until his marriage to the great diva.

The couple met when Gest produced the 30th anniversary concert for Michael in New York in September of 2001. Three months later, and despite her track record in marriage, which had included an ill-fated union with the brilliant homosexual entertainer, Peter Allen, Minnelli was talking marriage once again.

Liza called Michael to tell him that, "I'm the happiest I've ever been. I nearly died, but I'm alive and dancing my buns off. Fuck encephalitis. Fuck hip replacements. Everything I've been through was worth it to find David."

Gest had known Michael since he was a teenager, and had even picked up memorabilia from the pop star, including a rhinestone-studded glove which "Mr. Minnelli" two years later offered for sale on eBay for $250,000. In an interview he gave Dateline NBC, Gest revealed that he grew up in Encino with the Jackson family as his neighbors. He claimed that "we played together and did everything normal kids do."

Not only was Gest a close friend of Michael's brother, Tito, he'd even dated La Toya, or so he claimed. As teenagers, Gest, Michael, and some of the Jacksons used to go to DuPars on Ventura Boulevard in Los Angeles to eat pancakes. In the back seat, Michael would take a squirt gun and shoot at Gest.

Michael and Gest shared at least one love in common. It was reported that one entire section of Gest's New York apartment was devoted to Shirley Temple memorabilia, evoking Michael's special room for the moppet star at Neverland.

Many friends intervened to try to prevent Minnelli from marrying Gest, but Michael reportedly approved of the marriage of "my two best friends." A close friend of Minnelli claimed, "Gest is forever courting old-time actresses like Jane Russell and Janet Leigh. We hope that Liza won't be used to satisfy David's desire for stardom."

At the time of his marriage to Minnelli, the press speculated about Gest's sexual orientation, but he always maintained that he was straight, citing that he had at one time been romantically linked to Ruth Warrick. Ms. Warrick, a 1940s film actress and soap opera diva, died in 2005 at the age of 89. An intimate friend of the author of this biography, she confided that there was and had never been a romance between Gest and herself-and that privately, "I knew he was gay."

The website, "NNDB-Tracking the Entire World," lists Gest's sexual orientation as a "matter of dispute."

The timing of the Minnelli/Gest wedding at New York's Marble Collegiate Church on Fifth Avenue was held up by Elizabeth, who forgot her shoes. She arrived at the wedding without makeup and wearing slippers. The wedding ceremony was delayed because Elizabeth had to send for her shoes back at her hotel, refusing to take part in the ceremonies until she had the proper footwear.

MJ dangling his child over a balcony in Berlin

After that, the ceremony went off with few hitches, even though Elizabeth seemed to struggle with the wedding rings until best man Michael intervened to help her.

Before entering the church, Michael, Elizabeth, and the other invited guests were searched for hidden cameras. Apparently, Gest and Liza had left word to search all guests, failing to provide an exemption for the famous best man and matron of honor. A full unit security team blanketed the wedding.

Hundreds of rubber-neckers lined Fifth Avenue to watch fleets of black limousines arriving with such guests as Gina Lollobrigida, Petula Clark, Tony Franciosa, Robert Wagner, Joan Collins, Carol Charming, Lauren Bacall, Janet Leigh, Mia Farrow, Patricia Neal, and Diana Ross. Turning down Liza's invitation were Elton John, Michael Douglas, and Liam Neeson.

"As long as David and Liza keep trying, they will make it," said actor Mickey Rooney, a long-time friend of Liza's mother, Judy Garland. "I wish them the best of luck." The bride walked down the aisle to the sounds of "Unforgettable," sung by Natalie Cole.

Liza had seventeen bridesmaids, Gest making do with only fifteen groomsmen. Performers at the reception ranged from an aging Tony Bennett to a troubled Whitney Houston.

The private planes rented, the hairdressers, the champagne, and buckets of Beluga caviar were paid for by a $600,000 offer from National Enquirer for exclusive photo coverage and a deal struck with a British tabloid. One source was quoted as saying, "Tabloid star darlings may poo-poo the supermarket rags, but their checks never bounce!"

As predicted, the Gest/Minnelli marriage didn't survive long, lasting a year and a half. In October of 2003, Gest sued his former wife for $10 million, claiming that she had "been violent and physically abusive" during their marriage, blaming it on her "persistent alcoholism," according to his affidavit. Minnelli denied the accusations, claiming that Gest was simply after money.

During the breakup of the Minnelli/Gest marriage, Michael was torn in his loyalties between his two friends, listening patiently to both sides of their stories. Gest returned that loyalty to Michael, maintaining his faith in Michael during the pop star's child molestation trial in 2005. Gest even wanted to produce yet another documentary, a TV special showing the accused child molester's "world." The estranged husband of Minnelli also vowed to be a friend to Michael whatever the outcome of his trial. "I can't just turn on him," Gest told the press. "I would feel very sad if Michael is convicted. I'm not gonna turn my back on him-that's not my style. Never has been."

But by May of 2006, Gest might have been wavering in his loyalty, as he announced that he was going to expose "some shocking revelations" about Michael in a forthcoming autobiography. He announced that among his upcoming "bombshell revelations," he knew "where the skeletons of the past are buried."

In his tell-all Gest promised to reveal "secrets regarding Michael Jackson's sex life." Gest's co-author, Mark Bego, told the press that Gest is going to reveal such tidbits as Joe Jackson paying a prostitute to have sex with his son and young Michael being propositioned for sex by a male record executive. After some of the other international headlines and revelations about Michael, these so-called "revelations" seemed Sunday school tame.

As for Minnelli, Gest said, "I know stories, but I don't know what will make it into print."

A wacko story released by the New York Post on July 12, 2006, was headlined GEST'S BED IS STRAIGHT. In it, Gest's burly British bodyguard, Imad Handi, claimed that his boss likes African-American women. "He would talk about what he did with women, and that he likes to use whipped cream and cherries," Handi told Post reporter Dareh Gregorian.

Handi issued these statements in reaction to a lawsuit filed by Charles Beyer in federal court. Beyer claimed that Gest and Handi sexually harassed him, charging Gest with making crude comments about his manhood: "I bet you have a small penis." Beyer also charged that Gest sent him lewd written communications which included the words: "Shake my penis, make sure it feels good, wash it in hot water and dip it in chocolate fudge." Beyer also

charged that "Mr. Minnelli" grabbed "my rear end on several occasions and once grabbed my crotch." In spite of the Post headline, the story did little to convince New Yorkers that Gest was indeed as straight as he has claimed.

When Michael returned to New York later that summer, it was not to attend a wedding but to launch "the press war of 2002." Bitterly disappointed over his declining record sales, he took on Sony in a counteroffensive. First, he made the false accusations that Sony had demanded $200 million "to pay them back for marketing costs." Sony had done no such thing-in fact, Sony had invested millions of its own funds in what could only be called a disappointing comeback for Michael.

Stewing in his juices, Michael struck back a few weeks later, viciously attacking Sony mogul, Tommy Mottola.

Earlier in the day, in Harlem, Michael had denounced Tommy Mottola as a racist. "He's very, very devilish," he charged. Michael brandished a poster of Mottola with horns superimposed on his head, a tail on his posterior, and a pitchfork in hand. He also claimed that Sony had not "done enough" to back Invincible because Michael was black. "That's the first time I ever heard Michael call himself black," said a music critic for Rolling Stone magazine.

Many singers who had previously signed with Sony, including Ricky Martin and Mariah Carey, defended Mottola. But members of the Jackson clan backed Michael, claiming that racism had ended their professional relationship with Sony.

The charges of racism were ridiculously false. Mottola had previously been married to Mariah Carey, who is part black.

For support Michael picked up such heavyweights as the Rev. Al Sharpton and his former attorney, Johnnie Cochran. The pop star was demanding that a commission be set up to investigate all record companies-not just Sony-to see if they were exploiting black recording artists.

Sharpton later said that when he made the appearance with Michael, he didn't know the pop star would attack Mottola as racist. Privately Sharpton didn't seem to agree with Michael's slander. Sharpton claimed that Mottola had "always been supportive of the black music industry."

"Music moguls are liars," Michael claimed. "They manipulate history. If you go to the record store at the corner, you won't see one black face. You'll see Elvis Presley and The Rolling Stones. The attack on me began after I broke Elvis's sales and The Beatles's sales. It's a conspiracy. I was called a freak, a homosexual, and a child molester."

Only 150 rag-tag but diehard fans in New York joined Michael in his pathetic protest. At one point Michael falsely accused Mottola of using "the N-word."

Sony shot back, calling Michael's remarks, "ludicrous, spiteful and hurtful." Nonetheless, allegations of racism by Michael put pressure on Sony to sever ties with Mottola. By January of 2003, he was no longer head of Sony Music Entertainment.

After attacking Sony, Michael decided to pitch a sequel of Moonwalk to a group of publishers meeting in Stamford, Connecticut. In a new autobiography he was envisioning, he would "set the record straight," perhaps another one of his Freudian slips.

He bitterly attacked the interview Diane Sawyer had done with him for ABCs Primetime. This startled the publishers, because Sawyer had herself been attacked for a "candy ass" interview in which she'd "sucked up" to Michael, allowing him to deliver his version of the child molestation questions.

The wedding party: David Gest, Liza, MJ, & Liz

One of her rivals, who didn't want to be named, accused Sawyer of "ass-kissing. For an exclusive interview, Sawyer sacrificed her journalistic integrity. I didn't believe a word Michael said. He should have paid ABC and put Sawyer on his payroll."

"How could Sawyer do that to me?" Michael asked the assembled publishers. "She should have categorically denied that I was a pedophile on nationwide TV." What was not asked was how could Sawyer know if Michael were a pedophile or not?

Before the publishers departed from his hotel suite, Michael assured them, "I'm just a regular all-American guy. Nothing more, nothing less." The stunned publishers filed out, heading for the hotel bar.

The next day Michael told an executive at Simon & Schuster that he was considering retiring from the music world and devoting the rest of his life to writing children's books. The publisher assured him that S&S would be delighted to look at any children's book that he might write.

After the Stamford meeting, no publisher got back to Michael with an offer to print his second installment of memoirs. Michael was shocked by the lack of interest, having told associates that "my new memoirs will make millions." The project died.

Michael felt humiliated at the rejection. Later that summer, on August 29, 2002, more embarrassments were on the way, some of them exhibited and played out in public. At MTV's Annual Video Music Awards, Britney Spears presented Michael with a birthday cake, making an offhand remark that he was "The Artist of the Millennium."

In a rambling acceptance speech, Michael accepted a trophy that was meaningless. Everyone on stage received the same trophy. Nonetheless, Michael seemed to assume that he was actually being honored as "Artist of the Millennium." In a subsequent remark allegedly delivered by Spears, she may have said, "Michael Jackson should be singing `Fly Me to the Moon.' He's already on Jupiter."

Michael faced more rejection and ridicule when writers filed their reports of the event. MTV quickly announced that Michael was mistaken, claiming that the channel had "merely wanted to wish him many returns on his birthday." More media attacks were on the way.

Forbes called his career "a franchise in demise." Soon his critics were calling him "Pop's Lost Boy." Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, on CNN, said, "My criticism of Michael is his self-absorption. The whole celebrity thing, where he needs to feel like he's worshipped." As one former fan on the web said, "Michael Jackson loves fairy tales. He's become a fairy tale and even Neverland can't contain him as he wanders over the rainbow. Sorry, Michael, but that

pot of gold has eluded you now."

Michael's troubled year of 2002 concluded on a sour note. The magazine, People, named him "the biggest loser" of 2002. The pop star beat out George Michael (arrested in a men's toilet) and Robert Blake (charged with the murder of his wife) as the winner of that dubious honor.

People wasn't the only magazine causing trouble for Michael. Unknown to him, additional revelations about his private activities were being investigated for publication in Vanity Fair.

Just when the world thought it had heard every bizarre story ever associated with Michael Jackson, along came "Michael watcher" Maureen Orth. Vanity Fair's April, 2003 issue contained an article she had authored. In it, she revealed that Michael had paid $150,000 for the activation of a "voodoo curse" to kill former friends-now "A-list enemies"-Steven Spielberg and David Geffen.

The actual voodoo ceremony, according to Orth, occurred in 2000. In Switzerland Michael was said to have undergone a "blood bath" as part of the ritual. Presumably "blood bath" meant that Michael had actually bathed in blood. One can only speculate in wonder at that claim. In a separate lawsuit that Myung-Ho Lee, the star's former business manager, filed it was revealed that Michael ordered him to wire the $150,000 to a bank in Mali, into an account controlled by a voodoo chief named "Baba." Baba was expected to sacrifice forty-two cows as part of an extended ceremony, Vanity Fair reported.

The story left a lot of unanswered questions. What was the link between Switzerland and the voodoo priest in Mali? Where did the killing of the cows take place? Presumably in Mali. Or one might ask an even more provocative question. Is this widely published story really true?

The witch doctor was said to have intoned a series of chants during the massacre of the cows. The individual name of each recipient of the curse was articulated before a cow's head was chopped off. "David Geffen be gone! Steven Spielberg be gone!"

In the Vanity Fair article, it was revealed that twenty-five persons made Michael's list of people he wanted dead. He was assured by the voodoo witch doctor that everyone whose name appeared on the list would "soon be dead." An immediate mass demise of everyone on the list never happened, according to reports, but we can't be sure about the long-term affects of the blood-drenched voodoo ceremony. After all, only the names of Geffen and Spielberg were revealed in the article. It is not known who the other 23 intended victims were, but surely it included some prosecutors in the Santa Barbara area.

Tommy Mottola

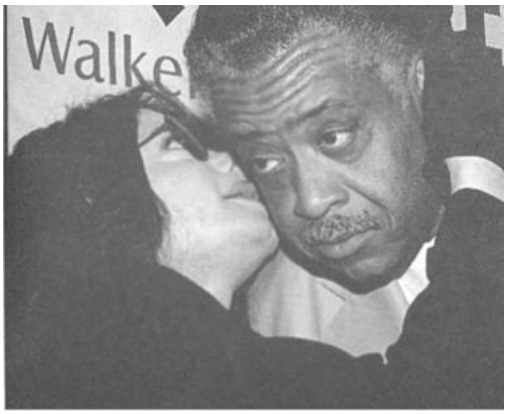
Shortly thereafter appeared yet another bizarre story in Vanity Fair, alleging that Michael, in addition to placing curses on perceived enemies, had made several serious (at least for him) attempts to create money "out of thin air." A mysterious Egyptian woman, claiming links to the ruling elite of Saudi Arabia, appeared in Michael's

life.

The Egyptian woman, once called "a modern-day Cleopatra," was identified only as "Samia." She is alleged to have escorted Michael to a basement apartment in the Swiss city of Geneva where she reportedly showed him $300 million in cash. She promised him that he could have the money and a multimillion-dollar yacht stashed at a port on the French Riviera, plus a spectacular European villa "if you do what I ask."

Her demands were articulated in detail when three of her male associates flew into Los Angeles where they were driven to Neverland for a private meeting with Michael to discuss the deal. At the meeting, according to Myung-Ho Lee, Michael was ordered to produce one million dollars in cash. Lee also testified that he paid $20,000 to an armored truck company to deliver the million dollars. Of course, if someone had $300 million in a bathtub, stashed away, why would they need a million from Michael? It seems insane that someone would give Michael $300 million, plus a yacht and villa, in exchange for a million in cash.

It is not known if Michael turned over the money that day or not. According to Lee, he was flown by Michael back to Geneva to consult yet another voodoo doctor who put on a "show of sound, lights, and pigeons" before opening the door to reveal a bathtub filled with $50 million. According to testimony, this new voodoo man said that the money would disappear unless Michael paid "thousands of dollars for the slaughter of poultry and other animals." Again, this story raises far more questions than it answers. It, in fact, makes no sense at all.



MJ whispering to the Rev. Al Sharpton

Perhaps the voodoo story would never have surfaced if Lee hadn't brought a lawsuit against his former employer. Lee's lawsuit was inaugurated at the same time that approximately fifty legal procedures were being filed against the pop star annually. By 2000, Michael had become the most frequently sued performer in the history of the entertainment industry. Aside from child molestation charges, most persons suing Michael charged him with unpaid bills.

In an interview on The O'Reilly Factor for Fox News Network, Bill O'Reilly questioned Maureen Orth. After reviewing, on camera, the voodoo charges she had raised in Vanity Fair, she then cast doubt on Michael's muchlauded charity work. "I think he's manipulating his own image," Orth said. "He's declaring he's a champion of children and children's charities, but the charities aren't raising any money. There's $100,000 that was given to one charity, shuffled over to another, that is now being investigated for not being reported properly."

More and more people, not just Vanity Fair, were realizing there was money to be made in exposing the private life of Michael.

Within the passenger compartment of a private jet flying from Las Vegas to Santa Barbara, two "buggers" filmed and recorded Michael during private conversations, perhaps hoping to sell the footage to the tabloids. It was revealed that the owner of XtraJet, Jeffrey Borer, had instructed Arvel Jett Reeves, owner of Executive Aviation which provided maintenance for the fleet, to install the secret video equipment.

It is not clear how the secret recording came to the attention of law enforcement officials. Perhaps an employee of the airline tipped off authorities, who investigated and found that indeed an illegal recording device was used. In March of 2006, within a Los Angeles courtroom, each of them pleaded guilty to one felony count of conspiracy. Borer was sentenced to six months of home detention and fined $10,000. Reeves was sentenced to eight months in prison and ordered to spend six additional months in a halfway house-and to pay a $1,000 fine.

Michael's biggest expose was yet to come, this time on television.

On February 6, 2003, ABC broadcast a two-hour documentary produced by Britain's Granada Television, featuring correspondent Martin Bashir, the British television journalist known for a notorious interview he had inaugurated with Princess Diana. In that interview, Di had spoken of her lover, James Hewitt, and her husband's mistress, Camilla Parker Bowles.

MJ presented with an award by Britney Spears

Bashir's interview with Michael was one of the most controversial TV shows ever aired and it would have devastating effects on the pop star's personal life. In one of the most foolish decisions of Michael's life, he granted Bashir "unfettered access" to many aspects of his private life for an astonishing total of eight months. After watching the broadcast in horror, Michael immediately filed complaints with the Broadcasting Standards Commission and Britain's Independent Television Commission.

When the TV show was aired in Britain in February of 2003, some 15 million Brits had tuned in. To be granted air rights Stateside, ABC paid anywhere from $4 to $5 million.

In tears, Michael confessed that the raw wound of his father's alleged sadism made Michael "regurgitate" whenever he saw him.

Bashir went on to question Michael about plastic surgery. In an astonishing statement and in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Michael still insisted that he'd had only two operations on his nose to help him breathe better so that he could hit the high notes of his vocal range.

Teresa Wiltz, writing in The Washington Post, said, "Perhaps the most poignant is the scene where Michael sits with Bashir in his movie screening room, watching old television of himself performing `I Want You Back' with The Jackson 5. The camera jumps from the young Michael-cute, brown, innocent to the middle-aged Michael-ravaged, white, and clinging to the illusion of innocence, and that moment says more than nearly two hours of shock TV that comprises Living With Michael Jackson."

Michael admitted that he'd wanted children so badly that he often walked compulsively around Neverland, playing with baby dolls.

But, like any other parent, he also showed that he could become annoyed with his child. When Blanket cried, Michael brusquely shoved a baby bottle in the veiled infant's mouth to shut him up.

In the interviews with Bashir, Michael freely admitted that he slept with young boys in his bed. As an afterthought, he added that "little girls were also included." According to staff members at Neverland, there is no evidence that Michael ever slept with young girls.

One of MJ's victims?

In the most astonishing of the interview's footage, Gavin Arvizo, a 12-year-old cancer survivor who would later bring charges against him, sits cuddling with Michael, his head nuzzling against the star's shoulder. Gavin clutches Michael's hand, relaying testimony about spending many a night in Michael's bed, and seemingly not aware at the time of how damning these revelations were.

"Why can't you share your bed?" Michael asked on the program. "The most loving thing is to share your bed with someone. I am Peter Pan."

Bashir reminded him that "you're Michael Jackson." "I'm Peter Pan in my heart," Michael countered.

On camera, Bashir also documented Michael's big-spending habits that showed very few signs of slowing down, despite his dwindling cash reserves. On camera, Michael was shown spending $100,000 in two hours on clothing in a New York store. But the most astonishing footage showed him spending $6 million in Las Vegas on art objects which included antique urns, vases, and a marble chess set.

The broadcast was seen by 27 million viewers around the world. Later, Michael claimed that the footage was deliberately edited to portray him in a bad light.

This set off a feeding frenzy among the media, Fox alone offering $5 million to broadcast out-takes. The out-takes were eventually shown, with Marc Schaffel, the gay porn producer, emerging as the orchestrator of the deal. On that show, Michael claimed-once again-only two trips to the plastic surgeon, but later, on NBC's Dateline, partly in reaction to that statement, a plastic surgeon was interviewed, insisting that the star had had as many as 50 separate operations on his face.

In November of 2003, Michael needed money, but seemed to be in no shape to release an all-new album. He was not above cannibalizing his past when he agreed to release his Number Ones album of previous hits.

The album recycled such by-now-familiar songs as "Beat It," "Billie Jean," and "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough." It also included the previously unreleased R. Kelly ballad, "One More Chance," which was sung by Michael. One of Michael's fans posted his reaction to this new release on the web. "R. Kelly should have kept the song to himself."

R. Kelly, of course, was one of the biggest-selling male vocal artists of the 1990s. Like Michael himself, Kelly frequently wears a mask, a Zorro mask. And also like Michael, he's had his problems with child molestation issues. In 1994, when he was in his 20s, he married R&B singer/actress Aaliyah, who was only 15 at the time, but the marriage was subsequently annulled. On August 25, 2001, Aaliyah and eight other people died when their plane

crashed in The Bahamas.

Maureen Orth

In June of 2002, Kelly was arrested in Winter Haven, Florida, after prosecutors in Chicago indicted him on 21 felony counts of child pornography. The soul star was led away in handcuffs as fans gathered to shout "We love you," in much the same way they'd reacted to Michael. Kelly was eventually acquitted of the charges. Had he not been, he might have faced up to 15 years in prison.

Of course, Kelly's arrest had nothing to do with the sales of Michael's Number Ones album. It was Michael's own arrest that may have hurt sales. From reports, it appeared that Michael was too weak to produce an entire new album and was forced to cancel the announced Resurrection, which was to be the follow-up album to Invincible. Wanting to get something on the market, he released Number Ones instead, filled with recycled songs from his previous all-too-familiar repertoire.

Even though the songs it contained were recycled from earlier albums, the Number Ones album sold six million copies worldwide. Michael, who had predicted that at least forty million copies would be sold, defined this figure a great disappointment.

On November 16, 2003, Joe Jackson gave a now-infamous TV interview with Louis Theroux in which the father-often called a "ruthless Svengali"became furious at the suggestion that his famous son might be homosexual. "I can't stand gays!" Joe shouted. He was also asked if he'd like to see Michael settle down with a partner. Joe shot back, "What do you mean by `partner?"'

"A boyfriend or a girlfriend," Theroux replied.

The question seemed to infuriate Majestik Magnificent, Michael's former personal magician, who'd accompanied Joe to the interview. "He is Michael's father and you're going to sit there and say he has got a boyfriend. How much more disrespectful can you be? You should just say a girlfriend or wife, not insult Mr. Jackson."

When Theroux, on camera, asked why the question was disrespectful, Joe interrupted him. "Because we don't believe in gays. I'm sitting here saying right now, he's not with no boys. OK?"

Majestik then continued to object, on camera, protesting loudly, "Michael's not gay...You have to be gay to have a boyfriend and I'm telling you, Michael is not gay!"

Before walking angrily off the set, prior to the scheduled end of the interview, Joe claimed that he had never beaten his son. "You beat someone with a stick. I whipped him with a switch and a belt."

Two days after his father's interview, Michael was at the Mirage Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, where he'd gone to shoot the video for R. Kelly's "One More Chance."

For nearly a month, Michael had been holed up at the hotel where a waiter reported that nearly three dozen boys, some of them "German or Austrian" were seen coming and going at all hours of the day and night. Inside his lavish suite, Michael was said to be drunk or drugged and hadn't dressed for three weeks, appearing in a long dashiki robe dyed a deep, almost purplish scarlet.

On the morning of November 18, 2003, an assistant manager of the hotel sent Michael an urgent message, asking him to evacuate the hotel that night. The other, usually affluent, residents of the hotel had lodged several complaints about the noise level, especially the blasting rap music heard day and night.

R. Kelly

"Somebody on Michael's staff seemed to be recruiting good-looking boys from the Strip," claimed a waiter. "All of them looked to be around sixteen, maybe older-none really very, very young."

Michael had demanded that food from room service be left at the door. But the assistant manager wanted to see firsthand the condition of Michael's suite to assess damages before evicting him from the hotel. Using a pass key he entered the suite to witness a scene of devastation. "It looked like a hurricane had blown through," he later said.

Elegant sofas and armchairs had been burned by cigarette butts. Liquor bottles were scattered everywhere. And since room service waiters weren't allowed in, rotting food had never been removed. Broken glasses with stale booze were seen everywhere. At first glance, it appeared that Michael would have to pay at least $50,000 in damages, maybe more. About seven young boys, some in jockey shorts, were sprawled about the suite.

From the bedroom, the assistant manager heard Michael's whispery voice. He appeared to be sobbing. "Oh, God, no!" Finally, he raised his voice in a bellowing rage. "Not again!"

It was only later that the assistant manager learned the news that Michael was hearing on the phone. Once again, Federal authorities had raided Neverland, based on allegations made by the 12-year-old boy, Gavin Arvizo, who had appeared all cuddly with Michael on the Martin Bashir TV documentary. Soon radio and television stations were carrying the news that an arrest warrant for Michael had been issued based on multiple charges of child molestation.

"Here we go again," Bob Jones said. "Only this time Michael may not escape the noose tightening around his neck."

"He loves genres that emphasize mutable identities, carefree cartoons and horror tales. And it's mutability that makes his dancing so special. That ability to turn a lames Brown funky chicken smoothly into Josephine Baker's knock-kneed Charleston. He has the ability to be liquid and percussive all at once, to create an aura of suspense and improvisation. "

--Margo Jefferson

"He understands the value of copyrights and that his public eccentricities-pajamas, umbrellas, sunglasses, top hats, children in masks, etc., going right back to hyperbaric chambers and the Elephant Man bones-are all part of a well-choreographed game to keep the public interested in his fading celebrity. "

--Roger Friedman

"We have watched as we have been vilified and humiliated. I personally have suffered through many hurtful lies and references to me as Wacko Jacko.' This is intolerable and must stop. The public depiction of us is not who we are or what we are."

--Michael Jackson Responding to a TV movie about his family's troubles

"Given Mr. Jackson's having shared his bedroom with boys, while not illegal in itself, was deeply troubling. Given the fact he was acquitted, but still highly suspected by many adversaries, he must never again submit himself to the appearance of wrongdoing. He really has to make that modification-and substantially so-and I think he will. I don't know any of his fans who would not advise him now to please avoid the appearance of impropriety. "

--The Rev. Jesse Jackson, June 2005

Chapter Fifteen

On November 18, 2003, some 70 investigators from the Santa Barbara County sheriff's and district attorney's offices stormed Neverland. A cabal of 20 officers were assigned to search the 2,700-acre ranch as part of an ongoing criminal investigation. No immediate arrests were made, and Michael remained in seclusion in Las Vegas. In case Michael had actually been in residence at Neverland, police also had an arrest warrant in addition to a search warrant.

Police officers spent two full days crawling over the ranch, looking for videos and photographic evidence. In Santa Barbara, Tom Sneddon, the district attorney, urged Michael to "get over here and get checked in." At the time, Michael was still in Las Vegas.

Michael charged that the raid on Neverland was deliberately timed to sabotage the release of his new album, Number Ones. Sneddon claimed he knew nothing about the release of any album. "Like the sheriff and I are into that kind of music," he said sarcastically.

Sneddon, who had failed to build a case against Michael in the Jordie Chandler scandal, seemed determined not to let that happen again. He told associates that "Jackson won't be able to moonwalk his way clear of the long arm of the law this time." Since 1993, California law had changed, and it was now permissible for prosecutors to force alleged child abuse victims to testify against their accused molesters. "The Jordies of the future can't be silenced with millions," Sneddon said.

Michael faced a formidable foe in Sneddon, who was serving his sixth term as the county district attorney. Sneddon had such a reputation for tenacity that he was called "Mad Dog" by his associates.

Michael had even written a song about the prosecutor calling it "D.S.," changing Sneddon's name to Dom Sheldon. The lyrics of Michael's song said he was being sought "dead or alive."

You know he really tried to take me
Down by surprise
I bet he missioned with the C.I.A.
He don't do half what he say
Dom Sheldon is a cold man
He out shock in every single way
He'll stop at nothing just to get his political way.

As news of the latest allegations of child molestation were leaked to the press, Stuart Backerman, spokesman for Michael, blasted them as "outrageous, false, and scurrilous. When the evidence is presented and the allegations proven to be malicious and wholly unfounded, Michael will be able to put this nightmare behind him."

Most of Michael's celebrity friends ran for cover when charges of child molestation were once again leveled against him. Not so 71-year-old Elizabeth Taylor, who slammed the media for acting "abominably" toward the entertainer. "I thought the law was `innocent until proven guilty.' I know he is innocent, and I hope the media all eat crow. I believe Michael will be vindicated."

Earlier in 2003, Elizabeth's friendship with Michael had been shaken when he didn't turn up for a date with her at Neverland. In anger, she refused to invite him to her star-studded birthday bash. But he repaired the fractured relationship when he sent her 1,000 sterling silver roses.

MJ's mugshot from the Santa Barbara County jail

The question on everybody's lips was, "Is it possible for a grown man to share his bed with pre-pubescent boys and not be guilty of something?" Oliver James, a psychologist, weighed in with his opinion: "It's quite clear that he has a kind of pedophile personality. The idea that he is regressed and is arrested in his development is one way of thinking about it, but if you want to know why he repeatedly has young boys in his home, that doesn't explain it. You have to look at the trauma that he suffered-physical abuse, being beaten up in a really vicious way, combined with some kind of sexual abuse."

Although some press reports main tamed that Michael's cohorts had placed him on "a suicide watch," he managed to pull himself together and fly on a leased Gulfstream IV plane from Las Vegas to Santa Barbara, where he was driven to the county jail.

On November 20, Michael, his hands cuffed behind his back, was led into the county jail and booked on charges of child molestation. Inside the Inmate Reception Center, he was fingerprinted and photographed. Later, before a field of microphones, he referred to the allegations against him as "a big lie."

Before his release, Michael posted $3 million bail and surrendered his passport. An arraignment was set for January 9, 2004, before a judge in the Santa Barbara Superior Court.

After the sheriff's department posted Michael's booking photograph on its website, Michael's dilemma became the most famous celebrity arrest in the history of entertainment, even more so than the time police arrested Frank Sinatra.

In the mug shot, Michael's heavily made up head tips to the right and his eyebrows are sharply arched. His wide-open eyes were later compared to those of Joan Crawford. He'd painted his thin lips a scarlet red, and his nose looked chiseled, the result of countless plastic surgeries.

Specific charges against Michael were not defined with any specific detail or legalese at the time, but police revealed that they would include multiple counts of "lewd and lascivious acts with a child under the age of 14."

Emerging from the jail after his booking, Michael waved and flashed a Vfor-victory sign at screaming fans. He blew a kiss to photographers before stepping into a dark Chevrolet Suburban with opaque windows. He was then driven to the airport for his return to Las Vegas.

Back in Las Vegas, he moved into the penthouse suite of the Regency Tower at the Las Vegas Country Club, the same building where sister La Toya has a condo. En route to Nevada, Michael dressed in drag-black flowing

clothes and a dark hat as well as a veil.

MJ's fans with gestures of support

Katherine Jackson angrily responded to the charges, claiming that "there are two sets of rules in this country-one for the white people and the other for the black people."

His mother wasn't the only family member weighing in on the side of Michael's defense. In an interview with CNN, Jermaine proclaimed Michael's innocence. "I'm sick and fucking tired of people," he angrily said. "This is nothing but a modern-day lynching."

In the wake of his arrest, the damage to Michael's singing career was immediate. In February of 2003, ABC, NBC, and Fox had each won huge ratings by exposing bizarre aspects of Michael's private lifestyle to the world at large. But in November of the same year, following the latest police raid on Neverland, intense pressure was put on CBS to cancel a music special which had been scheduled for airing on November 26 and linked to Michael's latest album, Number Ones, his collection of previous hits.

In an article that appeared in The New York Times, Alessandra Stanley predicted that if CBS had actually gone ahead and shown the program, "many millions would certainly watch. His fans aside, people watch Mr. Jackson for the same reasons they watched O.J. Simpson's Bronco ride, forest fires in California, and the finale of The Bachelor. It's scary, grotesque, and fascinating."

As his defense attorney, Michael hired Mark Geragos, the son of an Armenian-American lawyer, who was at the time also handling the Scott Peterson murder case. Geragos insisted that he could easily juggle the two cases. Geragos had previously won two high-profile acquittals-one for Whitewater scandal figure Susan McDougal and another for Roger Clinton, Bill's half-brother, on a drunken driving charge. He'd also defended stickyfingered actress Winona Ryder during her shoplifting trial.

In response to Michael's detractors, Geragos said, "What we have here is an intersection between a shakedown-someone who's looking for moneywith somebody doing an investigation who has an ax to grind."

He was referring, of course, to Tom Sneddon's "ax." Geragos claimed that the boy fabricated the kiddie sex story in the hopes of a payoff that was equivalent to the $25 million that was paid out to Jordie Chandler in 1993.

Paul Barresi

With the exception of Elizabeth, most celebrities, including Lisa Marie, issued a "No comment!" to the press, Virtually everybody else who had worked for Michael or been employed by him weighed in with an opinion as to his guilt or innocence.

Paul Barresi, a former legman for the controversial private investigator Anthony Pellicano, who at the time was in prison, revealed Michael's "modus operandi for entertaining children. First, he wins the parents over. They become just as mesmerized as the kids. Then he puts the parents in separate buildings. He naps all day intermittently with the kids in the tepee or different places so that kids are well rested. Then he frolics and plays with the kids all through the night while the parents are sleeping."

At first the name of Michael's teenaged accuser, charging him with sexual molestation, was either not known to the press or else known but not revealed by the media because of his age.

But soon his name would become a household word. Gavin Arvizo was born in 1989 to David Arvizo and Janet Ventura-Arvizo in California. He had an older sister, Davellin, and a younger brother named Star. Ironically, Gavin's mother, who eventually would acrimoniously divorce her 37-year-old truck driver husband, David, would become "Janet Jackson" because of her marriage in 2004 to U.S. Army major Jay Jackson.

Born into a poor Latino family, Gavin lived with his parents, his brother, and his sister, in a rough urban neighborhood in East Los Angeles. Their home was a box-like studio apartment. At one point they were so poor they'd lived in a horse stable.

The question repeatedly asked by the media was how Gavin came to meet Michael in the first place. The Arvizos had read countless stories about Michael's involvement with Jordie Chandler, which could have alerted them to the potential danger associated with having their underage son hang out with the pop superstar.

Eventually the story of how Michael met Gavin came to light: In 2002, Gavin lay in a hospital bed in Hollywood suffering from a cancerous tumor in his stomach. He was befriended by Jaime Masada, the owner of the Los Angeles comedy club, Laugh Factory, who also ran a summer camp for underprivileged kids. Masada promised Gavin that if he'd start eating and building up his strength, he'd introduce him to any star he wished to meet. Gavin listed Chris Tucker, Adam Sandler, and Michael Jackson in that order.

Jaime Masada

Masada managed to get Tucker and Sandler to visit Gavin, and eventually he even contacted Michael himself. Masada later expressed his regrets for having introduced Gavin to Michael. "You hate to think you may have brought the boy to the lion."

Michael called the hospital and spoke to Gavin when he was only 10 years old, shortly after he'd had a 16-pound tumor removed from his stomach. The pair became friends and Michael invited Gavin, with his family, to Neverland. But the friendship did not last and calls from Michael eventually ceased. However, in 2002 Michael called Gavin again. "You want to be an actor, right? I'm going to put you in the movies." The "part," it turned out, was in the Bashir TV documentary. After appearing within the documentary, Gavin became Michael's beloved "Doo Doo Head," the star's nickname for his new pet.

Neverland staff member Talia Mandel reported on Gavin's appearance during his first visit to Neverland. "He was really sick-looking and pale. He was little and skinny and had no hair and no eyebrows as a result of cancer treatments. He told me that Michael was helping him recover from cancer, but I don't know exactly what he was doing."

According to Gavin's claims, Michael did not begin to abuse him until after his appearance in the Bashir TV documentary. The show was filmed in 2002 and was not aired until 2003.

During the very few months when Michael got to know his future enemies, Janet and her son, Gavin, they had the run of Neverland. As poor people from the ghetto, Gavin and Janet felt they'd arrived at paradise on earth. Just as Michael had seduced Jordie Chandler's family, so he set out to woo the Arvizos with a lavish lifestyle and expensive presents.

He paid for Gavin's mounting medical expenses, and he hired a limousine to take him to and from chemotherapy sessions. When Janet separated from her husband, David, Michael even leased an apartment in Los Angeles for her new boyfriend. Janet asked all her children to call Michael "Daddy" when "Sugar Daddy" might have been a more appropriate term.

Gavin Arvizo

The honeymoon ended after Gavin revealed during his statements on the Bashir TV documentary that he was sharing Michael's bed at night. Massive criticism, exacerbated by Gavin's cuddly appearance, followed in the wake of the program. Janet claimed that Michael had not secured permission from her for Gavin to appear on the show.

Later, Michael came to Janet and got her permission to allow Gavin to appear on Michael's own TV show, which was being produced as a formal "rebuttal" to the Bashir documentary. Consequently, Michael dispatched his videographer to tape an interview with the Arvizos, during which they would insist that Michael's relationship with Gavin was innocent and pure.

During that taped interview, Janet issued a statement that would later be used against her at Michael's trial in 2005. "I'm appalled at the way my son has been exploited by Martin Bashir. The relationship that Michael has with my children is a beautiful, loving, father-sons-and-daughter one. To my children and me, Michael is part of my family."

In front of cameras, Janet went on to claim that Michael was "good to us-in no way were we unhappy with anything he has said or done."

"If Michael knew at the time that they were going to make these accusations, making this tape was obviously a crafty thing to do," Michael's personal videographer, Hamid Moslehi, later said.

At the time, Janet also signed an affidavit clearing the pop star of any wrongdoing. However, in November of 2003 she claimed that she was "confused and coerced" when she put her signature on the document.

On February 18, 2003, after being besieged with complaints from all over the country, the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office began a formal investigation. The Santa Barbara District Attorney, Tom Sneddon, seemed only too willing to endorse a child molestation case against Michael again, having failed to inaugurate a trial in the Jordie Chandler case after the boy was bought off.

It has never been determined what went wrong between Michael and the Arvizos. One day they were singing his praises to authorities, but within weeks they turned on him. Janet consulted with attorney Larry Feldman, the lawyer who had represented Jordie Chandler in his case against Michael in 1993.

Then Feldman arranged for Gavin to be interviewed by Dr. Stan Katz, a psychologist. Gradually, during a series of interviews with the psychologist, Gavin related incidents of alleged child molestation by Michael. The case heated up when Katz, in compliance with the laws of California, was obligated to turn his reports over to state authorities.

Janet Arvizo Jackson

Katz told authorities that he believed that the Arvizo family had not been honest in their previous testimony and now were coming forward with the truth.

In April of 2003, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department had more or less concluded its investigation without unearthing any really damaging evidence against Michael. But in June of that year, the Sheriff's Department received Katz's damaging report, in which allegations were made that child molestation had indeed taken place despite previous denials of wrongdoing from the boy's family. After the receipt of the Katz conclusions, members of the Sheriff's Department began interviewing family members, especially Janet and Gavin, for inconsistencies in their previous stories.

It was learned that the relationship between Janet and Michael had soured when she blew up after being told that he had served her cancer-stricken son wine, which she maintained "might have killed Gavin." Later, she would learn about more serious charges, including claims that Michael had masturbated her son and even taken nude pictures of him at Neverland.

During the course of their own pre-trial investigation, Michael's defense members discovered a scandal involving the Arvizo family. On August 27, 1998, they had been caught in a shoplifting sting in a JC Penney store in West Covina, California.

Both boys had been sent out of the store with concealed clothing which hadn't been paid for. Janet would later claim that her sons were modeling clothes for the chain, although there was absolutely no evidence of this.

Security detained both the father and mother, plus their two sons, including Gavin, age 8, charging them with stealing clothing. Both the Arvizos were arrested and charged with theft and battery, for allegedly hitting the security guards. The charges were dismissed on March 11, 1999 in Los Angeles Municipal Court.

In a counter offensive, Janet then filed a $3 million civil complaint against the store, charging that their boys were "beaten, battered, falsely arrested, falsely imprisoned and falsely accused of criminal conduct" by store personnel.

Two years later she added a new charge to her original complaint, claiming that during her arrest by two male

security guards she was "sexually fondled on my breasts and pelvic area." A psychiatrist hired by the store claimed that she'd rehearsed her sons to back up this outrageous story that seemed "suddenly remembered" at the last moment.

Gavin Arvizo with MJ

In yet another outrageous claim, she charged that she'd suffered broken bones during the fray. Not only that, but that both Star and Gavin had also suffered broken bones during the incident, although there was no medical record at the time to support such a charge. David Arvizo seemingly didn't want to get involved with the charges. He was having his own problems with Janet, as they headed for the divorce courts.

In an out-of-court settlement, JC Penney agreed to give the Arvizos $137,500 to avoid the expense of litigation and possibly an even larger and more damaging award from a jury.

During the period when the Arvizos were filing charges against Michael, David, because of his ongoing feud with his former wife, had had no contact with Gavin or his other children during the previous 18 months. But he defended Michael as "a class act whose parenting skills always seemed good when I was around. When my son was very sick and had not eaten for 18 days, Michael got on the phone and prayed for him. When Gavin lost his hair from the chemotherapy, Michael was the one who told him he was still handsome. Michael took him out and showed him the stars in the sky."

Ironically, as David was praising Michael's parenting skills, his own were coming under fire. On September 29, 2001, he had been charged with inflicting bodily injury on a current spouse. He pleaded no contest to spousal abuse and was sentenced to 60 days in jail, plus three years probation.

David, or so it was claimed, kept his daughter a prisoner in his car for 2'/z hours threatening "to kill your mom and your whole family." The teenage girl, at the time aged 15, told the police that the incident happened outside her school on November 13, 2001. Consequently, the judge issued a restraining order, stating that David was not to come within 100 yards of his former wife, Janet, or any of their three children.

On November 13, 2001, David violated the restraining order and allegedly beat all three of his children, including Gavin. On June 25, 2002 he pleaded no contest to one count of child abuse-one that involved his daughterand consequently, the other charges were dropped. He was sentenced to one year in prison and also ordered to enroll in one year of parenting classes.

The local press also joined in the attempt to discredit the Arvizos, especially Janet. News broke that Janet had falsely solicited funds for Gavin's medical bills during his treatment for cancer, even though, according to Celebrity Justice, medical bills had been paid in full by Gavin's father. "Janet Arvizo is after money," charged Connie Keenan, editor of the Mid Valley News in Southern California. On a TV talk show, Keenan charged, "my gut level-she's a shark!"

In the months before the trial, as Michael's legal team dug up whatever dirt they could on the Arvizos, Santa

Barbara prosecutors were also busy hunting witnesses-in all cases young boys-who might testify that Michael had molested them. The office cast a wide net.

One boy of "special interest" to the DA was found to be living in El Salvador, another in South Africa. Police were also said to be quizzing the son of a professional athlete in England. Sneddon, the prosecutor, was going over all the evidence seized in raids very carefully, including explicit letters and poems said to have been written by Michael to Gavin.

The Jackson family was outraged when Jeremy Jackson, the son of Michael's oldest brother, Jermaine, was questioned by police. The boy was asked, "Did your uncle ever have an improper contact with you?" The nephew denied that any impropriety had ever taken place.

On December 18, 2003 Michael was charged with molesting Gavin seven times and subjecting the boy to "substantial sexual conduct." The allegations appeared in a nine-count complaint.

Michael was hit with charges of committing a lewd act on a child and two counts of plying the boy with an "intoxicating agent." The incidents, according to court documents, occurred in February and March of 2003.

On Christmas night of 2003, Michael sat down with correspondent Ed Bradley, giving his first interview since his arrest to the 60 Minutes reporter.

"Before I would hurt a child, I would slit my wrists," Michael insisted to Bradley. He restated his belief that "it's fine to sleep with children why not? If you're going to be a pedophile, if you're going to be Jack the Ripper, if you're going to be a murderer, it's not a good idea. That I'm not."

He also claimed that "I won't live at Neverland ever again. It's a house now it's not a home anymore. I'll only visit." He also told 60 Minutes that police "manhandled me" at the time of his arrest, and he claimed that "I'm still in pain it's hurting me very badly. I'm in pain all the time." He said he suffered a dislocated shoulder from the way he was cuffed and handled during his arrest.

Janet Jackson & Justin Timberlake performing during Superbowl's halftime, February, 2004

He also charged that he was locked in a toilet for 45 minutes after he asked to use the facilities. He said the room was smelly because feces were thrown all over.

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department refuted Michael's charges, claiming he was "treated with courtesy and professionalism throughout the arrest and booking process."

Michael wasn't the only Jackson family member involved in scandals. La Toya had created nationwide sensations when she'd posed in a state of partial undress for Playboy in March of 1989 and again in November of 1991. On February 1, 2004 sister Janet was involved in "Nipplegate" at Super Bowl XXXVIII in Houston, Texas.

During the Super Bowl's halftime show, Justin Timberlake and Janet reached the final line of their suggestive song, singing "I'm gonna have you naked by the end of this song." Timberlake theatrically, and unexpectedly, pulled off a strategic part of Janet's costume, revealing a view of her right breast to millions of viewers on live TV. The rather ample breast was adorned with a large, sun-shaped nipple shield, a piece of jewelry worn to accentuate the appearance of a nipple piercing. In horror, CBS producers immediately ordered their cameramen to cut to an aerial view of the stadium. But Janet's breast had already been broadcast around the world. In the aftermath, a record-breaking 200,000 Americans lodged complaints against CBS.

Both Janet and Timberlake stated that the exposure was a case of "wardrobe malfunction." No one believed them.

Reporter Keith Olbermann wrote, "Well, look at it this way. In an incredible role reversal, a Jackson is accused of having their clothes intentionally ripped off them by a boy."

Michael was reported to be either "horrified" at the incident, or else "amused." Take your pick.

Michael's friend, Marlon Brando, wasn't one of the 200,000 people complaining. He told friends that "Janet had balls" to pull a stunt like that, revealing that one of his favorite pastimes when he was her age was "mooning."

Janet, apres nipplegate

Former friends had deserted Michael in the wake of his scandal, and he was sorry to hear that his sister's career had also been damaged. It was reported that soon after the incident, Lena Horne cancelled a project wherein Janet would have portrayed her in a filmed retrospective of her life. But, like Elizabeth Taylor, Brando remained a faithful friend to Michael until the very end.

Early in 2004, when Brando ventured out of his house for the last time, it was to visit Michael at Neverland and to sympathize with his plight. Reportedly, Brando warned Michael not to press the charge of police brutality too strongly because if he couldn't prove it, it might hurt his credibility later on as a witness in his own defense.

Apparently he said nothing to Michael about child molestation, but later expressed misgivings about Michael's relationships with young boys.

Whatever "misgivings" Brando might have had about Michael might have been revealed to confidants, but they were never revealed to California's legal authorities.

As part of what was referred to as "the biggest witch hunt since the Spanish Inquisition," the Los Angeles D.A.'s office called in Marlon Brando for questioning about what he knew of the sexual abuse charges leveled against Michael. Officers questioned the corpulent star for an astonishing seven hours before letting him go.

Michael was known to place long late-night calls to Brando, from whom he sought advice on personal matters. An officer in the D.A.'s office claimed, "We wanted to know just how personal those matters were and did they concern boy love." Reportedly, Brando denied knowing anything about Michael's sex life and claimed that the pop star had never confided "anything pertinent in the abuse case."

While at the D.A.'s office, Brando learned that Brooke Shields, who had "dated" Michael, had also been subpoenaed. Why she was called was not made clear, but she duly appeared without counsel, although there was no information that she had that was pertinent to the Arvizo case.

The final conversation between Brando and Michael was strictly private, but sources close to Brando reported that the actor made Michael a final promise. "If any of those child molestation charges ever stick to you, I'll get you out of the country and get you a safe refuge in Tahiti. Don't worry. I can do it!"

This was no idle promise on Brando's part. On June 5, 2003, the actor granted Michael sanctuary on one of the Pacific islands he owned "for the rest of Jackson's natural life." Brando transferred unrestricted use of a half-acre on the islet of Onetahi in the French Polynesian atoll of Tetiaroa to Michael.

Brando died of lung failure at the age of 80 on July 1, 2004. Some of the star's ashes, along with those of his long-time lover, Wally Cox, who had died in 1973, were scattered in Death Valley. The rest of Brando's ashes were spread in Tahiti where he maintained several real estate investments and a private island.

Michael was reported to have "cried for three days and nights" upon learning of the death of his beloved mentor.

After the actor's death, when news of Brando's "misgivings" about Michael's involvement with young boys was leaked to the press, some friends wondered if Brando's criticism of Michael wasn't a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

A former business manager for Brando, Joan Corrales, weighed in with an opinion. She'd been fired by "The Godfather" as co-executor of his will only 12 days before he died. Subsequently, she filed a $5 million wrongful termination suit in Los Angeles. She not only charged him with sexual harassment for exposing his genitals to her, but she claimed that he had a "disturbing" attraction to underage girls and vividly described his "terrible fixation" on minors.

"Brando derived pleasure from sharing his stories of sexual exploitation-including his sexual escapades with minors," Corrales charged.

In her testimony, she confirmed that the rotund recluse had deeded a Polynesian island sanctuary to Michael.

"Brando and Jackson were birds of a feather," said a source close to both men. "Both of them had an unnatural fixation on minors."

Michael kept his promise not to live at Neverland. In January of 2004, he moved out of the ranch and rented a nine-bedroom mansion built in 1991 in Beverly Hills, complete with a 36,000-square-foot ballroom and theater and two regulation-size bowling lanes. Owned by a Chinese painter, it was on the market for $20 million. When there were no takers, Michael rented the property for $70,000 a month as part of a one-year lease. The mansion was

allegedly secured for him by Leonard Muhammad, the advisor of the Nation of Islam. Reporters couldn't help but note that the rented mansion overlooked a children's park and playground.

A few days later, on January 16, 2004, Michael, aged 45, arrived late for his arraignment in Santa Maria, California on child molestation charges. In a whispery voice, he pleaded "Not Guilty." Inside, the courtroom was packed, and outside, some 3000 people, including hundreds of hysterical fans, waited shoulder-to-shoulder with news media from as far away as Norway and Japan. Some fans had crossed the deserts of Nevada in cars called the "Caravan of Love."

Jermaine

When Michael had arrived in a black sports utility vehicle, a roar had gone up for him. A huge black umbrella shielded his white skin from the California sun. One news reporter said he looked "like a cross between Mary Poppins and Mary Tyler Moore." He wore a silk armband and rhinestone-studded boots for his arraignment. Making a surprise appearance was his superstar sister, Janet, who only smiled as Michael repeatedly claimed, "I love my fans!" Brother Jermaine, Joe Jackson, and mother Katherine were part of his entourage.

Upon Michael's arrival, stern men in dark suits with walkie talkies were posted every few feet, forming a wall around Michael. These radical Muslims were from Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam.

Reporters worked overtime, investigating and subsequently filing stories about Michael's new link with the Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan.

During its turbulent history, the controversial black militant group has issued statements claiming that "whites are devils who must be destroyed." The group, whose membership is estimated at 20,000, has referred to Jews as "bloodsuckers" and campaigned aggressively for a separate African-American state.

Journalist Geoffrey Wansell asked, "So has the androgynous former child star from Gary, Indiana, who spent years undergoing plastic surgery apparently designed to make him look white, suddenly decided to return to his roots? Or is it a final, desperate effort to stave off the long arm of the law? Michael will do anything-anything-that will keep him out of prison, one former colleague told me this week. He clearly hopes the Nation can help him do that."

Unlike his brother Jermaine, Michael had not become a Muslim. It was reported that he was still a Jehovah's Witness, but despite that detail, Farrakhan had stationed Leonard Muhammad, his son-in-law and chief of staff, within the Los Angeles office of Michael's lawyer, Mark Geragos.

In reaction to this, a member of Michael's staff, who refused to be named, resigned in protest at the Nation's increasing control over Michael. "These people are basically brainwashing him," the former employee charged. "They tried to do the same thing with Whitney Houston. They offer a false sense that they can control everything. Everybody is afraid of them. They pretty much keep Jackson semi-captive."

It has been suggested by Michael's worst critics that he wanted to align himself with Farrakhan-sometimes called "the black man's Hitler"-as a politically correct anti-racism stance, perhaps a last-minute attempt to win the support of black Americans, whom he'd frequently shunned. O.J. Simpson, who had courted white women throughout most of his life, had also solicited the Nation for support when he faced criminal charges of murder.

Michael was said to have prayed with Farrakhan and to have been fascinated by his story of being swept up into a UFO and taken to the larger mother ship. Michael wanted to know if these extraterrestrials looked like E.T. Farrakhan reportedly told Michael that the UFO "mother wheel" was piloted by a dozen young men who were in perpetual orbit above the Earth, prepared for a signal from Elijah Muhammad to unleash total destruction on all the "white devils" of Earth, but rescuing all people with black skin. The question is, does Michael still believe the words of his former hit single where he famously sang, "It don't matter if you're black or white"?

"With friends like Farrakhan and those boys from the Nation of Islam, Michael Jackson doesn't need enemies," or so claimed reporter David Keller, reportedly writing a book on the black militant group.

Back at the courthouse, as members of the Nation of Islam guard gazed ominously at the proceedings, Judge Rodney Melville fumed at the sight of Michael buzzing theatrically into the courtroom 21 minutes late. "Mr. Jackson, you have started out on the wrong foot with me," the judge said. "I will not put up with that. It's an insult to the court."

After leaving the courtroom, Michael headed for his SUV, hoisting himself up onto its roof. In doing so, he gave no indication of the shoulder injury he'd claimed to have received from police "manhandling." In the background, music blared from boom boxes. From his perch on top of the SUV and from under an umbrella, he blew kisses into the air and even performed a few dance moves, whipping the crowd into a frenzy.

Members of the Nation of Islam distributed invitations to fans, inviting them on the following day to a bash at Neverland "in a spirit of love and togetherness." Hundreds of fans showed up the next day for fried chicken, turkey dogs, and ice cream, but Michael was a no-show. His fans rode the Ferris wheel and stared in awe at the snakes. But their hope that Michael would appear was never realized.

MJ on top of the SUV

At the arraignment, news leaked that Gavin Arvizo, the accuser, was in poor health. He'd lost a kidney, his spleen, and an adrenal gland in surgery to remove a large, cancerous tumor. Gavin was reported to "be in hiding." A spokesperson claimed, "The boy and his family are very private people."

Even though Judge Melville had imposed a gag order, news still leaked from the courtyard to the press. It was learned that Gavin had supplied police with drawings of Michael's genitals, just as Jordie Chandler had done in 1993. The boy also claimed that Michael stole his underwear during his visits to Neverland. It was also rumored that the star kept the underwear of many of his overnight guests, presumably as souvenirs, especially if they were urine-stained.

At the end of January, some details about Maureen Orth's upcoming piece in Vanity Fair was released to the press. In the article, she revealed that Michael allegedly seduced boys by giving them a Coca Cola can filled with white wine, calling it "Jesus Juice." Red wine was named "Jesus Blood."

In March, 2004 the grand jury convened to hear the child molestation charges against Michael. The key witness was, of course, 14-year-old Gavin Arvizo. The proceedings were secret, but many of the details of Gavin's testimony were revealed. The boy told the grand jury that he had been molested by Michael at least seven times early in 2003. Gavin said that Michael "loosened me up with Jesus Juice and showed me pictures of naked women before sexually molesting me at Neverland." Obviously this was a different Gavin from the boy who had appeared on the Bashir TV documentary cuddling with and praising Michael. The accuser's psychologist, Stan J. Katz, was also brought forward to testify.

In the months preceding the trial, as prosecutors worked day and night trying to secure young boys to testify that Michael had molested them during visits to Neverland, it was a 45-year-old man who leaked the news of a sexual relationship with Michael.

Scott Thorson had been the former lover of Liberace. He announced to the press that he'd also had an affair with Michael shortly before he split with the flamboyant piano player in the early 80s. The staff at the National Enquirer reported that Thorson had passed a polygraph test and was ready to testify in the singer's child molestation case. The former male model claimed that he could prove useful to prosecutors if Michael's attorneys claimed that he was thoroughly straight and had no interest in boys.

Judge Rodney Melville

According to Thorson, he said that he'd met Michael in 1979 in Las Vegas, but that the two didn't have their first sexual encounter until a while later in an apartment in London. In his testimony, he charged that he was trying on some new clothes when "Michael motioned me over to the bed where he was lounging." Thorson said that they also had another sexual tryst the following evening after a dinner party.

"Michael felt comfortable enough to make the first move on me, and I didn't resist," Thorson claimed. "Michael begged me to leave Liberace, but I had to say no."

An attorney for Michael, Steve Cochran, claimed that Thorson's account is "total trash."

Thorson was evicted in 1982 from Liberace's home in Los Angeles after he became addicted to painkillers and other drugs. The former model later sued Liberace for palimony.

No sooner had headlines about Liberace's former lover faded than new headlines blared on April 22, 2004: GRAND JURY INDICTS JACKSON. There was no immediate official confirmation. The grand jury had spent three weeks hearing from witnesses.

Four days later, it was revealed that Michael had decided to replace his legal team. One of Michael's lawyers, Benjamin Brafman, a New York criminal defense lawyer, said that "serious conflicts had been brewing for weeks" among Michael's legal team, the members of which had also conflicted with Jackson family members. "Mark Geragos and I are stepping down-or, as the Jackson camp suggests, being replaced," said Braftnan.

Still representing Scott Peterson for allegedly killing his pregnant wife, Laci, in late 2002, Geragos also claimed that "I will no longer represent Mr. Jackson."

A new defense team would be led by white-maned Thomas Mesereau Jr., a Los Angeles lawyer whose best-known recent client had been the actor Robert Blake, who had been charged with murdering his wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, three years previously. A 53-year-old, 6-foot-3-inch bruiser, Mesereau had boxed and played football at Harvard, and had also represented Mike Tyson during a 2001 California rape investigation.

Liberace with Scott Thorson

Assuming control of Michael's defense, Mesereau flew to Orlando to meet privately with Michael, who at the time was visiting Disney World with his three children.

On April 30, 2004, in Santa Maria, Michael arrived in an SUV to greet a diminished crowd of only 150 fans. Facing new charges, he entered the courtyard flanked by his new lawyer. Gone were the Nation of Islam bodyguards, who had been supplanted by a small cadre of security guards.

He pleaded "Not Guilty!" to all 10 felony charges.

Count one was for conspiracy involving abduction, false imprisonment, and extortion, alleged to have occurred between February 1 and March 31, 2003. Counts two to five charged lewd acts upon a child under the age of 14. Counts four and five also alleged that a third person, "James Doe," witnessed the acts. This was an obvious reference to Gavin's younger brother, Star. Count six cited an "attempt to commit a lewd act upon a child under the age of 14," and counts 7 to 10 charged Michael with "administering an intoxicating agent" to Gavin to assist in the commission of child molestation.

Mesereau, in a brief statement, told reporters that the case was about "the innocence and the complete vindication of a wonderful human being named Michael Jackson." Before driving away in his SUV, Michael waved and flashed a peace sign.

In May of 2004, Michael's defense team sought for the reduction of his $3 million bail, claiming it was excessive and that it violated Santa Barbara County standards for bail. The prosecutor objected, arguing that the star might choose to live the rest of his life as "a wealthy absconder" rather than face a life term in a California prison. It was pointed out that Michael was known and "adored" in many countries in the Middle East and Africa, countries that had no extradition treaties with the United States. In June of 2004, Judge Melville refused to lower Michael's $3 million bail.

During this time, some reporters inaugurated a policy of posting daily bulletins about the Michael Jackson case. In lieu of hard news, rumors were printed, none more bizarre than stories circulating that Michael was dead.

These rumors grew and grew until Raymone Bain, Michael's new spokeswoman, was forced to declare, "My client is not dead. Michael Jackson is doing just fine." Bain wrote a "Michael Jackson Is Not Dead" press release. "I had been up since 3 in the morning getting phone calls from reporters all over the world! The rumors were rampant! It's my job to correct the record."

A Hollywood publicist told the New York Daily News, "When you have a client who is clearly three sandwiches short of a picnic, you need to protect him with grace and dignity. And a press release that announces to

the world that your client is not dead certainly reinforces the notion that he's a total nut bar."

The sudden appearance of Bain as a spokesperson raised the question of "Whatever happened to Bob Jones?" Michael's long-time publicist. After 17 years of brilliant service, Jones had been dismissed by Michael. Two bodyguards showed up at Jones's residence to retrieve Jackson memorabilia. "He never betrayed Jackson," one source claimed, "although he easily could have, as he was the keeper of many secrets."

Jones was said to be "dismayed and shocked" at Michael's abrupt firing of him. Since Jones never signed a confidentiality agreement with MJJ Productions, that left him free to write a memoir of what it was like representing Michael.

One by one, most of the Hollywood elite during the summer of 2004 began to avoid Michael, not accepting his calls and not returning his urgent messages.

In the past, Michael had succeeded in getting a superstar like Madonna to go out on a "date" with him for publicity purposes. But in July of 2004, he struck out with another superstar, Nicole Kidman, 37. He called her and asked if she'd be his date at the upcoming MTV Awards, but the former wife of Tom Cruise politely declined.

"I had never even met him," Kidman told the press. "It was a little strange. I did decline but, hey, the way my love life is going I took it as a great compliment. I keep thinking of those photographs of Michael in a shocking wig at Disneyland looking ridiculous. So call me crazy, but it just didn't tempt me to want to accept." Some Hollywood wag facetiously suggested that Michael would have had better luck if he'd called Tom Cruise instead.

In August of 2004, the state attorney general's office concluded that Michael had not been "manhandled" by the sheriff's deputies who took him into custody. The findings were contained in a three-page letter which Martin A. Ryan, chief of the attorney general's California Bureau of Investigation, sent to Santa Barbara County sheriff Jim Anderson. Ryan's office had assigned a dozen people to investigate Michael's charges, and collectively, they spent more than 2,500 hours looking into them. A spokesperson in Ryan's office, who refused to be named, claimed, "It's pure and simple. Michael Jackson lied. He was treated with dignity and respect, something not always accorded to child molesters, especially when they go to prison, where they are often attacked by fellow inmates."

Nicole Kidman

On August 16, 2004, Michael, dressed completely in white and accompanied by La Toya, Janet, Randy, Jackie, and Jermaine, watched prosecutor Tom Sneddon get grilled. During court proceedings, the district attorney lost his temper twice and was consequently rebuked twice by the judge. Watching it all, Michael giggled both times.

Michael was not required to attend the grilling, but apparently wanted to see his nemesis questioned. Michael believed that Sneddon nurtured "a vendetta against me."

As Michael emerged from his double-decker bus, he was greeted by cheering fans. He read a sign: IF MICHAEL JACKSON IS PETER PAN, THEN TOM SNEDDON IS CAPTAIN HOOK.

In a series of legal maneuvers, Mesereau was trying to get evidence that had been previously accumulated by private eye Bradley Miller tossed out of court. Mesereau claimed that in November of 2003, Sneddon had violated lawyer/client privilege when his men smashed their way into Miller's office, confiscating computers, documents, and papers pertaining to Michael. At the time, Miller had been a private investigator working for Geragos, who was Michael's original lawyer in the case.

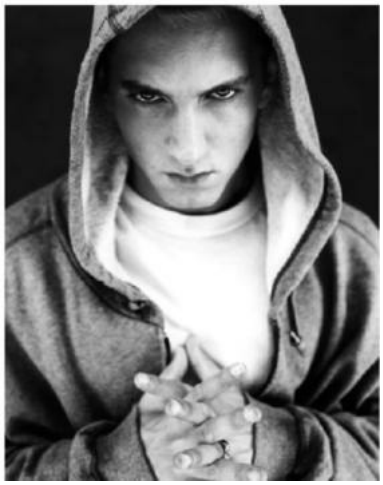
During his 31/2 hours on the witness stand, Sneddon clung to his claims that he was unaware of a professional relationship between Michael's former lawyer, Geragos, and the private dick, Miller.

During his interrogation on the stand, it was learned that Sneddon, in his search for damaging evidence on Michael, had also videotaped testimony from Janet Arvizo. Her testimony was recorded in the summer of 2003 in the wake of the disastrous fallout from the Bashir TV documentary. In front of investigators from the sheriff's department, Janet claimed that "Michael's henchmen" had pressured her family to relocate to a new home in Brazil, all at Michael's expense "because there was people that were gonna kill the children and me-um, mostly my children." On public TV in September of 2004, Janet appeared again to make more claims, asserting that she and her children "were chosen by God" to take on Michael. In a police video obtained by The Insider, Janet was shown telling people that "God knew that we weren't gonna fall for any of their money. That it was gonna be justice more than anything."

Even before the trial began, Michael had become the butt of jokes-in magazines, on talk radio, on television, and definitely in newspaper cartoons. He rarely responded to attacks. But in October of 2004, derision by a fellow performer made the pop star "hip-hoppin mad." In response, he issued a public attack, slamming Eminem's new music video, the controversial "Just Lose It."

In the music video, Eminem mocks Michael about the child sexual abuse allegations he was facing. In one scene Eminem is dressed up like Michael, sitting on a bed with little boys jumping up in the background. The lyrics say, "Come here little kiddie, on my lap. Guess who's back with a brand new rap? And I don't mean rap, as in the case of child molestation." Other scenes in the video mock Michael's nasal plastic surgery and hair-burning incident during the filming of the Pepsi commercial.

"I am very angry at Eminem's depiction of me in his video," Michael told radio host Steve Harvey. "I feel that it is outrageous and disrespectful. It is one thing to spoof, but it is another to be demeaning and insensitive."



Eminem

Of course, Michael had far more than Eminem to worry about. Michael's attorneys had been desperately trying to get Judge Melville to dismiss charges or else throw out evidence. In his ruling of October 16, 2004, the judge refused, claiming that the police had acted properly when they'd searched Bradley Miller's office.

As Michael neared his trial date, more suspicions were aired about his past activities with young boys-many of them anonymous, but some of them minor celebrities in their own right. One such case involving "names" surfaced in November of 2004.

It was revealed that teen pop singer Aaron Carter had spent an unsupervised night with Michael, "my idol," at Neverland. Aaron was only 15 years old at the time. He'd gone to Michael's 45th birthday bash at Neverland with his older brother, former Backstreet Boy Nick Carter. The next day, Nick told his mother, Jane Carter, that Aaron refused to leave Neverland, so he left his younger brother there.

His mother claimed she was in panic until Aaron came home about 24 hours later, never giving his mother an explanation of what went on during his absence. "I don't know if he was alone with Michael," June claimed to celebrity interviewer Daphne Barak on Access Hollywood. June later said that prosecutors grilled Aaron about his time at Neverland. "I have no idea what he told them," June said.

Aaron did admit spending time in Michael's bedroom but mostly "we had innocent, fun-like dance lessons and rode around the ranch." Aaron reportedly also told his mother that Michael gave him a Bentley, but he never brought the vehicle home. Later Michael denied giving the teenager the expensive car.

When June called Michael, he reportedly told her, "Nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened. All we did was hang out."

Michael's show-biz involvements were ground to a virtual halt as police grilled one boy after another. His upcoming trial dominated the headlines, which is why the world took little notice of the November 16, 2004 release of Michael Jackson, The Ultimate Collection Box Set, a flashy-looking assortment of five separate CDs. It contained 13 previously un-issued recordings dating back to as early as 1969 and forward to the post-millennium. It also presented an unreleased 1992 live concert and contained 57 tracks of hit singles. But the glory days of Thriller sales were long gone.

On December 3, 2004, just weeks before Michael was scheduled to go on trial, police-armed with a search warrant-once again raided Neverland. Investigators entered the estate at 9 a.m., remaining there for three hours, but issued no statement as to the reason for the raid. Michael was leaving Neverland at the time of the raid, but did not stick around to see what the police were doing. When he heard about the raid, Mesereau raced more than 150 miles from Los Angeles to the Los Olivos ranch to monitor the search.

Within days, Mesereau filed a motion to dismiss the child molestation charges on the grounds of "vindictive prosecution and outrageous government conduct." The defense also asked Judge Melville to suppress all evidence seized at Neverland under the latest search warrants. According to reporters, Michael's lawyers even wanted a DNA sample taken from the star destroyed.

Around Christmas in 2004, private videos of Michael went on the market. The footage was shot in 1996 by Dr. Allan Metzger, who taped scenes from the HiStory tour as well as scenes from Michael's wedding to Rowe. Although in the wedding scenes Rowe looks more attractive than she usually does, Michael allegedly looks like a freakish goon. As for what the film contained, a source who'd seen the footage claimed, "You see Michael bitching and moaning about his fans. He says he doesn't like them to touch him and gets really upset when they storm his limo."

Metzger did not release the tapes himself and was "shocked and aghast" to find the video being peddled. He said he thought the tapes were locked in a safe. It was reported that an estranged member of Metzger's family managed to procure the damaging tapes.

More damaging video was on the way.

Brothers, Aaron and Nick Carter

Directed by Helen Littleboy and narrated by Mark Strong, Michael Jackson's Boys aired on television in 2005. It used interviews with friends, family, journalists, and many young boys who had been involved with Michael over the years. Boys included Frank Cascio, playing himself. Jordie Chandler in archive footage also appeared as himself, as did the array of the "usual suspects," including Macaulay Culkin, Terry George, Emmanuel Lewis, Jimmy Safechuck, and others. Archival footage was also used of Lisa Marie and Brooke Shields.

Some fans immediately attacked the film as "very dangerous, one of the most biased pieces of television I've seen in a long time." The show clearly left the impression that Michael "grooms" young boys for a relationship but "rejects them once puberty hits."

The impending trial had all the elements for a great show business special. The defendant was arguably the most famous personality in show business, the only performer who rivaled Elvis Presley and The Beatles in worldwide name recognition. Charges of child molestation were expected to bring lurid testimony from shady accusers. Over-the-top courtroom histrionics could be expected. For defense witnesses there was talk of an all-star cast, including Dame Elizabeth herself.

In a perceptive article, journalist Amy Sohn wrote that Michael might as well be on trial for much more than child molestation, citing "body dysmor- phia, bizarre wardrobe, narcissism, racial-identity disorder, transgenderism, makeup wearing, and poor parenting. Jackson is a walking set of contradictions between male and female, gay and straight, man and boy, abused and abuser."

Even as charges swirled around Michael, many parents defended the pop star, claiming the accusations were lies and asserting that it was still safe for their kids to visit Neverland if invited.

In Los Angeles, Gaynor Morgan told the press that she had no objection to her ten-year-old son, Alex, visiting Michael. "It'd be fine for him to stay and spend time ... and you know, confident," Morgan said in a slightly awkward statement.

Sally Thomas of Dallas defended Michael, claiming that her five-year-old son, Travis, had visited Neverland as a participant in a Make-a-Wish Grant. "I don't think Michael sees himself as a middle-aged man when he's with these children, because he's out there playing just like they are," said Thomas.

One reporter concluded, "That leaves some to complain that Michael Jackson may be Peter Pan-but it's the parents who are in Neverland."

As defenders came forward to praise him, Michael saw his hopes dashed on January 31, 2005. His lawyers had

been working feverishly behind the scenes to have charges against their client dropped, but 4,000 summonses had been mailed out to county residents. Jury selection had begun, as court officials hoped to find a dozen "impartial" jurors. Because of so much pre-trial publicity, nearly every prospective juror had already formed an opinion, and most of them seemingly believed that Michael was a child molester.

During the jury selection, everyone who was even remotely connected with Michael real or fantasy wise-talked to the press. A resident of Phoenix, Hans Schmidt, came forward, claiming he had tapes in which Michael asserted that he pined for "a woman to love." Schmidt maintained that these tapes would prove that Michael was straight.

On the tapes, the singer allegedly expresses his dislike for his nappy hair, calling it "nigger hair." He also mentioned his battle with anorexia. Even so, during the filming of these tapes, he was reported to have shared a dessert with a beautiful blond-haired boy. In the New York Daily News, columnists provocatively speculated: "Let's hope it wasn't the English dessert Jackson mentions a fondness for in another conversation: Spotted Dick."

Finally, the court selected 12 jurors, each of whom claimed that they wouldn't allow Michael's celebrity to affect their final decision as to his guilt or innocence. The jury of four men and eight women was made up mostly of whites. No jurors were black, but at least three appeared to be Hispanic and another Asian.

Some of the final jurors, ranging in age from 20 to 79, were Michael's fans; four parents of young children; a woman whose grandson had been convicted of a sexual offense, and a man who had visited Michael at Neverland when he was a child. Eight alternates were selected-four men and four women ranging in age from 19 to 81.

The trial that would last for 73 days began on March 1, 2005, and would involve the state calling 90 witnesses, the defense 50. Some 700 pieces of evidence, including pornography, would be introduced into the official record. But perhaps none of these exhibits was as bizarre as a collection of barebreasted plastic "Barbies" in S&M gear.

The perils of plastic surgery

As a means of demonstrating Michael's attraction to young boys, the prosecution introduced two books featuring nude prepubescent boys. The books had been seized during the 1993 raid on Neverland and never returned. The pictures were of boys who took part in the 1963 film adaptation of Lord of the Flies. One book, The Boy: A Photographic Essay featured many photos of nude boys, including some explicit depictions of genitalia.

In TV coverage, reporters Diane Dimond and Nancy Grace emerged collectively as Michael's bete noire. Each

of them would later insist that Michael got away with some serious charges of child molestation, all of it coming at great cost to his music career and personal reputation.

Judge Rodney Melville ruled that witnesses, including young men, could be summoned to court to testify if Michael had ever sexually abused them. In most cases, evidence of past behavior had not been admissible against a defendant. However, in 1995, the California Legislature changed that, passing a law that in cases of child molestation, testimony from the past could be allowed. The judge cleared the way for the prosecution to introduce testimony that Michael had made moves on five other boys, including Macaulay Culkin. However, even before his appearance in court, Culkin had consistently denied that Michael ever molested him.

In pressing for the introduction of boys from Michael's past, Sneddon told the judge that Michael's actions with these youths were inappropriate, including "kissing, hugging, and inserting his hands into their pants." He also claimed that "there was a pattern of grooming," or preparing the boys for molestation, but did not elaborate.

Sneddon wanted testimony from Jordie Chandler, but the boy had refused to appear, reportedly fleeing the country. Nonetheless, the DA wanted the jurors to see the cute young boy with his dark hair and doe eyes. A larger-thanlife photograph of Jordie was shown to jurors on an overhead projection screen. Attorney Larry Feldman, who previously had brokered Jordie's $25 million settlement with Michael, claimed that Jordie was much better looking than this photograph revealed. "I can tell you, at that age he was adorable," Feldman said. When the picture was shown in court, Michael did not look up at it but stared straight ahead.

Michael's critics suggested that both Jordie and Gavin represented a type, in that each had dark eyes, dark skin, short dark hair, and what was called a "pixieish look." Perhaps Sneddon was indeed hoping to prove that Michael had a type, although the dark looks of Gavin and Jordie wouldn't account for the blond-haired Home Alone allure of Macaulay Culkin.

The most crucial day was March 10 when the jury got a look at Gavin Arvizo for the first time. All courtroom observers agreed that the case against Michael would hinge on this teenager's testimony. At the time of his court appearance, Gavin was 15 years old.

Astonishingly, the defendant himself did not show up on this crucial day, as noted by Judge Melville who took the bench at 8:35 a.m.

Michael's attorney, Tom Mesereau, explained that he was in Cottage Hospital in Santa Ynez being treated for a serious back injury. Melville came down harshly. "I'm going to issue a warrant for his arrest. I'm forfeiting the bail."

Michael got the message loud and clear. His motorcade came screaming up to the courtyard. Getting out, Michael shuffled in slowly, wearing designer pajamas. Seated in the courtroom in these pajamas, he had to face Gavin accusing him of taking him to bed. Without emotion he sat rigidly, listening to Gavin claim that Michael had told him it was necessary to masturbate or else he "might rape a girl."

As Gavin sat across from Michael, the boy was being carefully screened by the jury. With his closely cropped hair, he looked older, bolder, and stronger than in previous pictures. In all, he cut a sympathetic figure and had a pleasing demeanor.

He stared straight at Michael as he made his charges, explaining that "I was kind of hypnotized by Michael and Neverland when we met in 2000."

Michael set ramrod straight as he stared back at the teen. Gavin testified that on his first night at Neverland he was invited to sleep in Michael's bedroom with both Michael and Frank Cascio.

He testified that Cascio, now calling himself "Frank Tyson," surfed the web for porn that featured women between the ages of 15 and 25. Gavin testified that Michael masturbated him and tried to get him to touch his genitals. "He grabbed my hand but I pulled my hand away because I didn't want to do it," Gavin claimed.

Adult materials found at Neverland included some 75 magazines of straight porn, as well as four gay-themed

books. Some of these publications had the fingerprints of the two Arvizo brothers on them, both Star and Gavin. Both boys claimed that Michael showed them these adult materials, alleging it was for the purpose of lowering inhibitions to sexual behavior, a charge Michael denied, but not on the stand.

MJ arriving at his trial in pajamas

Allegedly, Michael showed the boys pictures of topless women while asking, "Got milk?" He was also said to have leaned in and whispered to Prince Michael II, who was sleeping nearby, "Prince, you're missing some pussy."

Gavin also charged that Michael not only showed him porn, but got him intoxicated on wine as a prelude to seduction.

During police investigation into the case, Gavin had initially claimed that he'd been molested "five to seven times." But on the witness stand, he could only describe in detail two occasions where he claimed that the pop star had molested him.

Under cross-examination, he grew argumentative with the defense, especially when he was painted as a juvenile delinquent with behavioral problems, who had been schooled by his mother to lie under oath for financial gain and to pester celebrities for money. The jury seemed to waiver between sympathy for Gavin as a cancer victim and exasperation at the venality of the entire Arvizo clan.

His sister, Davellin, 18, had stubbornly denied that Gavin had disciplinary trouble at his school. Yet nine teachers, according to school records, claimed he was a "classroom nightmare," citing such offenses as fighting, disrupting class, refusing to obey teachers' orders, and being defiant. Gavin did admit that he often misbehaved in class and never did his homework.

Gavin was forced to admit that he had twice told a school official that the King of Pop never molested him. Wincing, Gavin was forced to recount a conversation he'd had with Dean Jeffrey Alpert at his school in the spring of 2003. "I told Dean Alpert he didn't do anything to me," Gavin admitted.

In another coup for the defense, the boy admitted that many of the glowing things the Arvizos had said about Michael in a 90-minute rebuttal video, filmed on February 19, 2003, were true. Then both Star and his sister claimed that the family was coerced into making the rebuttal video. News accounts carried on March 15 said that Gavin "lost his halo" in court.

In rebuttal, Gavin claimed that "I didn't spill my guts" to the dean because "I feared cruel taunts from my classmates if word got out."

Under questioning by Sneddon, Gavin claimed that after the Bashir documentary was aired, showing him holding hands with and nuzzling the pop star, he was "mercilessly ridiculed by schoolmates. Kids would laugh at me and say, `That's the kid who got raped by Michael Jackson.'" According to testimony, Gavin was repeatedly called "a faggot" by his classmates.

Mesereau was successful in getting Gavin to acknowledge that he and his family came and went at their leisure from Neverland, refuting his mother's previous claims that they had been held at the ranch against their will.

After 13 hours on the stand, Gavin was asked how he felt about Michael today. "I don't really like him anymore. I don't think he's deserving of the respect I was giving him as the coolest guy in the world."

The prosecutor, Sneddon, attacked Mesereau in his defense of Michael, calling it "a scorched-earth, take-no-prisoners approach." Sneddon alleged that Mesereau was particularly caustic in his cross-examination of Gavin. "He left the boy bewildered and stammering contradictions over three days of testimony. Mr. Mesereau was as abusive, as mean, as obnoxious as you could be to a child witness," Sneddon told the judge. "Victims don't want to show up because they don't want to go through what the accuser experienced."

After Gavin's testimony, Michael made a rare appearance on the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Sunday TV show. The star claimed that he was a victim of conspiracy "just like other black luminaries," citing Nelson Mandela as an example. He noted that some of the press had noticed that he was crying when hearing Gavin's testimony about child molestation. "I was in a great deal of pain," Michael said. "I was coming out of the shower and I fell and all my body weight, I'm pretty fragile, all my body weight fell against my rib cage." It was physical pain, not emotional pain, that caused him to tear, he claimed.

In April of 2005, in the midst of the trial, Michael managed to attend the funeral of attorney Johnnie Cochran Jr.

Michael joined O.J. Simpson, along with other celebrities who included the Rev. Jackson, in paying tribute to the controversial lawyer. It is not known what words O.J. Simpson and Michael exchanged with each other, but both Michael and O.J. could thank Cochran for extricating them from sticky mess- es-O.J. for an alleged double murder, and Michael for getting Jordie Chandler and that earlier issue about child molestation off his back. Cochran died on March 29, 2005, at his home in Los Angeles, where he'd been suffering from an inoperable brain tumor.

The Rev. Calvin Butts, pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, referred to Cochran "a great warrior for justice." In a dissenting voice, writer Paul Stefani in 2006 said, "I guess he was all that if you call helping a wife murderer and a child molester beat the rap."

Back at the trial, Davellin Arvizo testified that she saw Michael kissing her brother on the cheek and head while her family lived at Neverland during February and March of 2003. "When I was in his bedroom one time, he had his arm around Gavin and they were hugging over and over, and kissing over and over," she charged.

Gavin's younger brother, Star, was also called to the witness stand. While on the stand jurors learned that Michael had nicknamed him "Blowhead." Star told the court that on two occasions he'd seen Michael lying on his bed at Neverland, groping Gavin with his free hand while Michael played with himself. On yet another occasion, Star claimed that he and Gavin were on Michael's bed watching TV when Michael walked in with a full erection. "It's natural," Michael was alleged to have told the two brothers.

At one point, Star claimed, Michael grabbed the mannequin of a little girl and pretended to hump her in front of the brothers.

Star indicated that when he saw Michael fondling Gavin, both his brother and Michael were unaware of his presence. "I saw directly into the bedroom, and my brother was on top of the covers," Star claimed. "I saw Michael's left hand in my brother's underwears and his right hand in his underwears." He said he saw the alleged molestation

as he climbed a stairwell leading to the pop star's bedroom.

Prosecutors bolstered Star's account by proving that the boy would have had a line of sight to Michael's bed from the top of the stairs.

On the stand, Star also testified that Michael had shown Gavin and him copies of such porn as Barely Legal and Juicy, Ripe and Ready.

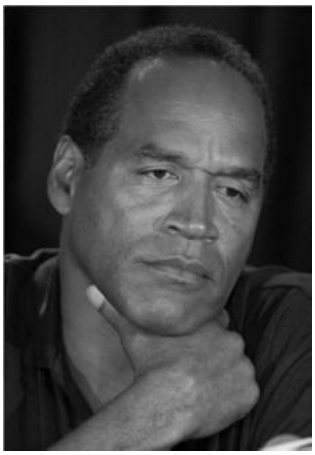
When Mesereau cross-examined Star, the attorney scored points by revealing that the magazine, Barely Legal, seized in a raid on Neverland, was actually published in August of 2003, months after Michael allegedly had "shown" it to Gavin and Star. The teen also couldn't explain why the door to Michael's bedroom had been left unlocked or why no alarm had been triggered by his secret approach. Previously he had claimed that there was a system of keypad locks and a warning bell in the hallway leading to this very private master bedroom.

Star testified that for amusement Michael, acting like an overgrown teenager, made obscene crank calls to anonymous people. When one woman answered her phone, Michael, according to Star, asked her about the size of her genitals.

The boy was forced to admit that he'd lied during previous depositions, including one taken in 2000 as part of a lawsuit the Arvizos filed against JC Penney. Star claimed that his father never hit him and that his parents never fought. Under Mesereau's stern questioning, the boy was forced to concede that he'd committed perjury.

The teen was also forced to admit that he'd given conflicting accounts in previous statements to a psychologist. Very forcefully, Mesereau pointed out that Star had given three different versions of what he claimed he witnessed Michael doing to Gavin's body. The attorney said, "In one version, Mr. Jackson's hand was outside the boy's clothes; in another, it was inside, and in a third Mr. Jackson was `rubbing his penis' against the boy's buttocks."

If Star appeared to be an inconsistent witness, his mother, Janet, was even worse on the stand. In retrospect, some court observers claimed that her appearance on April 3 lost the case for the Arvizos. Even before she appeared in court, the defense had sought to portray both her and her family as "gold diggers who saw Mr. Jackson as a celebrity fall guy to be milked for cash."



O.J. Simpson

On the stand, Janet was a loose cannon and, thanks to her erratic courtroom outbursts, the most explosive witness in the case. A mercurial character, she rarely gave a straight answer to any of the defense team's questions. She repeatedly said, "It's burned inside my memory" or "money doesn't buy happiness." It was also claimed that she exploited her cancer-stricken son for money and at one time spent $7,000 shopping and dining out at the same time she alleged that Michael was keeping both her and her family "captive."

In five days on the stand, the mother "ranted, raved, and refused to answer questions." Many of her replies were nonsensical. The 36-year-old woman kicked off her testimony by invoking her Fifth Amendment right against selfincrimination on questions about alleged welfare fraud. She admitted that she'd lied under oath in an unrelated court case.

Dressed in pink, Janet was often sarcastic in court but at one time she broke down on the witness stand, asking those in the courtroom, "Please don't judge me." In her testimony she claimed that she'd seen Michael lick her son's forehead like a cat. She alleged that the head-licking incident occurred on a charter flight from Miami to California in February of 2003.

At the time, she did not intervene to stop it. "I thought I was seeing things."

She also testified that Michael and his "henchmen" told her that there were unnamed "killers" out to get both her and her children in the wake of the damaging Bashir TV documentary in 2003.

Mesereau was known for trying to box accusers in with "yes" or "no" answers. Defiantly, Janet made rambling speeches to the jury instead. At one point she looked at Michael across the courtroom and said, "He managed to fool the world. Now, because of this criminal case, people know who he really is. He really doesn't care about children. He cares about what he was doing with children."

In a combative day on the stand, she was forced to admit that she'd once told sheriff's deputies that she feared Michael had a plan for her and her family to "disappear from his Neverland ranch in a hot air balloon."

There were times such as this when the court erupted in derisive laughter at her answers.

Thomas Mesereau

Janet had claimed that she was being held against her will at Neverland, but defense witness Angel Vivanco, a chef, claimed that Janet got a deluxe body wax at a spa and sipped champagne with one of her "captors." Vivanco charged that Janet was a "flirtatious mom," who downed bubbly with Michael's "henchman," Dieter Wiesner, at the kitchen bar at Neverland. According to Vivanco, the pair left together "for parts unknown." Vivanco's charge of Janet's cozy session with Wiesner flew in the face of her previous testimony when she described Wiesner as one of the two threatening men she called "Germans," who made "my life hell at Neverland."

To help the defense's case, an employee, Kate Bernard, asserted on the stand that she drove Janet to the Bare Skin Aromatherapy Day Spa in Los Olivos for a deluxe body wax. It was suggested that if Janet were indeed being held "captive," she could have escaped at any time.

Joe Marcus, ranch manager at Neverland, also countered Janet's testimony, stating that the Arvizos were "happy" to be at Neverland. When he would take Janet out on a shopping trip, he claimed that she was always

anxious to get back to Neverland. Marcus also said that Janet and Gavin "never complained about anything." Marcus was part of a string of current and former Neverland employees called by the defense to counter disgruntled former staff members who testified against Michael for the prosecution.

Prone to emotional outbursts wherein she would snap her fingers at jurors, Janet could not explain why, if held hostage at Neverland, she didn't call the police, since it was shown that she had unrestricted access to a telephone. She also couldn't give a reason why she never called for help when Michael's aides took her to public places such as restaurants, beauty salons, stores, and even government offices where she repeatedly encountered law enforcement officials and said nothing.

To counter charges of kidnapping, defense attorney Robert Sanger produced the gate log at Neverland, naming Brian Barron as the guard on duty February 12, 2003, when the Arvizos left the property at 1:38 a.m.

A tall, red-haired cop, Barron moonlighted at Neverland for five years. He'd also noted that the Arvizo family returned voluntarily a few days later. In other tantalizing tidbits, not related to the case, Barron recorded a secret visit of the Rev. Al Sharpton on June 23, 2002, and from Ed Bradley, the 60 Minutes correspondent, on February 8, 2003. A visit by Elizabeth Taylor had been scheduled but she never showed up.

After these revelations, Sanger tore into the mother. "She lies for gain. She's lied and cheated her way through life-that's what she does."

Janet claimed that in the wake of repeated death threats, she'd become so afraid for herself and her children that the Arvizos escaped "in the dead of the night" in one of Michael's Rolls-Royces. They were not to see Neverland again and future encounters with Michael would occur in court.

Janet was the big loser at the trial. She not only lost her case against Michael but later faced charges of welfare fraud and perjury. A five-count felony indictment against her came down in October of 2005. She was charged with a single fraud count and four instances of lying to secure nearly $19,000 in welfare payments to which she was not entitled. During the Jackson trial, she'd refused to answer questions about how she'd obtained welfare payments despite having more than $30,000 in the bank.

On November 13, 2006, Janet, aged 38, was found guilty of welfare fraud. As part of a plea bargain, she agreed to repay $13,606 to the State of California.

She was ordered to repay the rest of the money she'd illegally acquired and to complete 154 hours of community service before April 27, 2007. If she complied, the felony charge would be reduced to a misdemeanor and she'd not have to go to prison.

After Janet's appearance, legal experts weighed in on Michael's trial, even before the prosecution had wound up its case. Michael Cardoza, a defense lawyer and former Alameda County (CA) prosecutor, predicted that "Jacko may moonwalk over the DA's weak case." At the worst, a hung jury was predicted. "I wouldn't have let her anywhere near my case," said Cardoza, referring to the accuser's wacky mom. "Her testimony hurt more than it helped."

It wasn't just Janet's testimony that came under fire. The defense called witnesses to counter some of Gavin's claims, especially a charge that Michael had supplied him with alcohol during a cross-country flight from Los Angeles to Miami.

The defense called a corporate flight attendant for Xtra-Jet International, Cynthia Ann Bell, to the stand. She disputed the accuser's claim that Michael had urged Gavin to "tank up on Jesus Juice" to shake off his fear of flying aboard a February 7, 2003 flight to Miami. She maintained that the King of Pop never shared his soda can of wine with Gavin, claiming that she'd kept an eye on both Michael and Gavin throughout the flight.

The pretty blond jet hostess did admit that Michael was a "very private drinker," who downed almost two bottles of white wine, hidden inside a diet Coke can, during the cross-country flight.

She also testified that she never saw Michael "inappropriately touch the accuser or any child." Gavin had testified that he had drunk "at least a whole can worth of wine from Jackson's Diet Coke container" during the flight. His sister also testified that she saw Michael pass the can to her brother. "They were sipping it back and forth."

Bell also attacked Gavin for being "a rude and discourteous loudmouth, who threw mashed potatoes and raised a ruckus when his chicken wasn't warm enough." In her testimony, she also said that Gavin showed off an expensive watch Michael had given him. She quoted the boy as bragging to her, "Jackson will buy me anything I want."

It had been announced that many big names would appear in court for the defense. Most of them, such as Elizabeth Taylor, were never summoned. Judge Melville barred "bombshell" testimony from CNN talk show host Larry King. With jurors out of earshot, the CNN host testified that the attorney, Larry Feldman, who at one time represented the accuser, told him that the boy's mother was a "wacko," a term most often used for Michael himselfand "that she was just in it for the money." Melville ruled that this was "hearsay" testimony and was inadmissible.

As a key witness for the prosecution, Dr. Stan Katz took the stand. He was the one who had transmitted Gavin's allegations against Michael to authorities in June of 2003 when the boy was only 13.

On the stand, the psychiatrist claimed that, "It would be highly unusual for a 12- to 13-year-old boy to make false accusations against a male," Katz claimed, although there is massive evidence to dispute that.

Katz was known to TV audiences for his appearances on the NBC-TV reality show, Starting Over.

Mesereau attacked Katz's credibility by citing a book he'd written, in which the psychiatrist claimed that forty percent of child abuse claims are false.

Surprisingly, when comedy club owner Jaime Masada took the stand, he bolstered the claim of Janet. He testified that the mother, in a hysterical phone call, claimed, "I can't leave Neverland Ranch. They're holding me and my kids against my will." He remembered the call as coming through early in 2003. He quoted Janet as shouting, "Oh my god, they're holding me here." As Masada remembered it, she was sobbing.

Masada claimed that it was not Janet but the father, David Arvizo, "who was the one who pestered me for cash when the boy had cancer in 2001 and 2002." According to Masada's testimony, David, then unemployed, often "hit me up for gasoline money or rent."

Masada is accredited with setting into motion the meeting between Michael and Gavin. In court he disputed the defense contention that the mother was a scam artist. Masada is the owner of the Laugh Factory Comedy Club on Sunset Strip. Arriving in America from Iran when he was 14 years old, Masada built a comedy empire in Los Angeles. He met Gavin in 1999 at a comedy camp he sponsored for disadvantaged children. At Gavin's request, Masada put him in touch with Michael.

George Lopez, the star of the ABC sitcom, George Lopez, was called as a witness for the prosecution. He recalled that he met Gavin's family in 1999 at a Sunset Strip comedy club and became close to them when he learned of the boy's illness. "I was invested in them," he testified, "and I saw a lot of myself in that family." But he said that the father kept calling him asking him for money. At one point, the father accused Lopez of stealing $300 from Gavin's wallet, which had been left behind at the comic's house. Obviously the relationship soured after that. "What am I supposed to tell my son?" David asked Lopez. The comedian curtly replied, "Tell him that his father is an extortion 1St."

A pivotal moment in the case came when the judge ordered Michael to remove his trademark surgical mask. For all the world to see, Michael was hardly ready for Norma Desmond's famous close-up. Photographs revealed scarred lips and a nose seemingly held together by Elastoplast. One reporter called the look one of a "borderline sci-fi scenario."

Throughout the trial Michael looked pale and frail under a pageboy haircut. He often wore military jackets with a red armband and a pocket crest. He always painted his mouth scarlet and wore dark sunglasses. As one juror later

said, "If I was being charged with molesting a young boy, I would have left the tube of lipstick laying on my vanity table."

On May 11, jurors saw two videotaped interviews which described Michael's pure love of children, comparing himself to Princess Diana, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Mother Teresa. "Since these figures are dead," Michael said, "there's not a voice for the voiceless, and I've been doing it for many years."

On May 18, Rijo Jackson, Michael's 12-year-old cousin, took the stand. His testimony cast grave doubt on the innocence of the Arvizo brothers. Rijo stated that he saw Gavin steal wine and money and secretly watch porn on TV while masturbating. Rijo also testified that Star took part in misbehaving during visits to Neverland. He said both brothers asked him to join them in masturbation as they watched an X-rated TV channel showing naked women cavorting. Rijo said that he went to tell Michael what the boys were doing. "But he didn't believe it," Rijo claimed.

Brushing aside tears, the doe-eyed boy described his X-rated encounter with complete believability as he told of Gavin and Star "doing nasty stuff." The pony-tailed cousin's account was important because Gavin had testified that he never looked at porn or engaged in sexual conduct unless Michael was there "to coach me."

The testimony of Jay Leno on May 23 was a disappointment. Michael's lawyers hoped that Leno would take the stand, accusing the Arvizos of trying to weasel money out of him. But he testified that he was never asked for money.

Headlines claimed that Leno had bombed and that the Tonight Show funnyman was no stand-up guy for Michael. His testimony appeared to contradict statements that he had made earlier to investigators for the Santa Barbara sheriff's department. During that session, the 55-year-old comedian claimed that the Arvizos were "sort of looking for money" and that he felt he'd been targeted as their next "mark."

The following day Michael's defense team concluded their case without bringing the pop star to the stand. The prosecution had two and a half months to summarize their case, the defense resting after less than three weeks. Michael did speak on videotape, referring to himself as "a childlike spirit surrounded by adults who have deceived and betrayed me."

Psychiatrist Dr. Stan Katz

The final witness for the defense was comedian Chris Tucker, who called the Arvizos "cunning and relentless in the pursuit of money, gifts, and free trips" from himself and other celebrities.

On May 26, prosecutors lost a bid to show the jury photos of the pop star's allegedly spotted penis. The bid had called for presentation of those photos alongside Jordie Chandler's illustration of a distinctively marked penis that was alleged at the time to have been inspired by Michael's penis. Judge Melville said, "I'm going to deny bringing in evidence of the blemished penis. I find the prejudicial effect would far outweigh the probative value."

In his argument for the prosecution, Ron Zonen claimed that Michael had a discolored spot on the underside of his penis which could only have been seen if the penis were erect.

The jury did not get to see pictures of Michael's penis, but a number of other curious parties did-but only if willing to pay big bucks for that dubious privilege. As early as October of 1994, The Amsterdam News in New York was reporting that photos of Michael's genitals were floating around Hollywood. "They're either duplicate photos of those held by the D.A., or fakes, according to our sources," claimed reporter Abiola Sinclair. One source, who requested anonymity, said that the pictures were smuggled out and that the negatives are on the market.

Another anonymous source, who had seen the actual photographs of the nude Michael and also the pictures being hawked as the real thing, claimed off the record that "They're the genuine article-that's Jackson's dick all right! But I don't know how copies became available. Just too many people have seen and dealt with these photos. After all, if Tom Sneddon had had his way, not only the jurors would have seen Michael's prick, but in time the entire world. As has been shown time and time again, it's hard to keep pictures private if a star poses nude or makes a sex video. It's going to get out. Take Paris Hilton, whomever."

In their closing arguments on May 27, prosecutors were allowed to show a 70-minute video of Gavin's first interview with the police on July 7, 2003. In denim shorts and wearing a blue shirt, Gavin claimed, "He put his hands in my pants. He started masturbating me. I told him I didn't want to do that and he kept on doing it. I told him no. He said he wanted to show me how to masturbate. I said no. Then he said he could do it for me. He grabbed me. My private area. He touched me for a long time."

George Lopez

On June 3, in closing arguments, Zonen, for the prosecution, once again dragged out Michael's porn collection, showing the jurors the cover of a book called A Sexual Study of Man. "It shows everything one man could possibly do to another man," Zonen told the panel of eight women and four men.

On June 3, during closing arguments, the defense claimed that the Arvizos were "con artists, actors, and liars." Prosecutors claimed that Michael had lured the vulnerable cancer survivor "into the world of the forbidden in his bedroom and molested him." Zonen charged, "The lion on the Serengeti doesn't go after the strongest antelope. The predator goes after the weakest."

On the dawn of the jury's verdict, journalist John M. Broder accurately predicted that regardless of the outcome Michael's "secrets have been laid bare and his psyche picked apart as if by carrion birds. Even if he is acquitted, many people will continue to believe that he harbors an unhealthy fondness for young boys."

En route to court on June 13 to hear the verdict, Michael rode with his family with a Bible open on his lap. He was rocking back and forth, saying, "They tried to do this to Job. Now they are trying to do it to me. Why me?"

On 2:25 p.m. that day, the jury of the Superior Court of the State of California determined that Michael was not guilty on all counts.

As he heard "not guilty" seemingly repeated endlessly, Michael sat motionless for five minutes as the possibility of nearly 20 years behind bars was finally lifted.

Judge Melville declared, "Mr. Jackson, your bail is exonerated and you are released." Wiping tears from his eyes, Michael walked out of the courtroom after exchanging joyous hugs and handshakes with his attorneys. Tom Mesereau said, "Justice was done. The man's innocent and always was."

Fans celebrated outside the courthouse, cheering and waving signs. Both the investigation and trial had lasted an astonishing 574 days.

Outside the courthouse Michael, weak and frail, walked slowly with a solemn face.

One loyal female fan released one white dove for each count on which Michael was acquitted. Confronting his fans, Michael blew kisses to them before disappearing into a black SUV for the trip back to his fantasyland estate. This time there were no dances of victory atop the van.

Foiled in his second attempt to bring Michael to "justice," Sneddon was clearly angered at the verdict. "No comment!" he snapped at reporters.

One woman juror said she was offended at Janet Arvizo "snapping her fingers at us. `Don't snap your fingers at me, lady,' I said to myself."

On the east coast, hundreds of people, both anti-Michael and pro-Michael, gathered in Times Square, where a giant screen heralded news of the star's acquittal.

Elizabeth Taylor issued a statement. "Thank God Michael is vindicated for all time. Now maybe people will leave him alone."

After Michael's victory, his attorney, Mesereau, told Barbara Walters in an ABC interview, "I may have saved Michael's life. I don't think he would have survived prison."

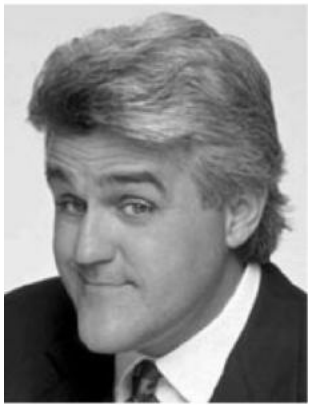
In yet another statement, the attorney went on to say that Michael had learned a valuable lesson. "He's not going to make himself vulnerable to this kind of thing anymore."

Robert M. Sanger, another defense lawyer, reported visiting Michael at Neverland a few hours after the verdict came in, finding him extremely grateful that the trial turned out as it did.

"There was a strong sense that the charges were preposterous and that it would be bizarre for a jury to believe these people were telling the truth, let alone beyond a reasonable doubt." Having represented Michael for 12 years, Sanger claimed that the trial was a "long, long battle for Michael to clear his name. He's finally gotten a resounding acquittal, an exoneration!"

As Michael was driven back to Neverland, loyal fans had gathered at the gates to greet him. ALL OF US HERE AND MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD LOVE AND SUPPORT YOU.

The next day the number of fans had dwindled to only a few loyalists, but an estimated 200 members of the media lined the rural road, watching as cars came and went through the guarded gate. Everybody wanted to see Michael leaving Neverland but had to settle for Joe Jackson instead. He claimed that his son was "exhausted and resting" before his vehicle disappeared inside the gates.



Jay Leno

This may have been Joe Jackson's last visit to Neverland. For public relations purposes, Michael had wanted a show of solidarity from the Jackson family. But sources close to the pop star claimed that once the trial ended, he didn't want to see any of them. And in the wake of the trial, after he'd fled the country, it was claimed that he no longer accepted their phone calls, even those from his pleading mother, Katherine.

In a post-verdict interview, juror Raymond C. Hultman, a civil engineer, said, "I would tell him not to sleep with boys. It's not something that's normally acceptable in this society." Hultman said that he believed Michael might have molested boys in the early 90s, but that the "prosecution in the latest case had failed to provide sufficient evidence. I had what I thought were some valid reasons to believe this child had been molested, and his demeanor seemed genuine." But Hultman felt that the "prosecution's timetable did not make sense."

Even though he was found not guilty by a jury of his so-called peers, Michael seemed disgusted and even furious at what he'd been put through in America. He vowed never to set foot on American soil again. Two weeks after his acquittal, he flew to distant Bahrain, an island nation in the Persian Gulf, one linked to Saudi Arabia by a bridge.

If Michael thought interest in him had waned, he was mistaken. Beginning in the summer of 2005 and lasting through the year of 2006, he made more blaring headlines around the world than any other person in the entertainment business, exempting the fluffy coverage of the Brad Pitt/Angelina Jolie romance.

Almost everything Michael did-known or perceived merited a headline.

In Bahrain, Michael was the guest of the royal family, specifically Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the son of Bahrain's king, Sheik Hamad. His Majesty reportedly didn't welcome Michael and resented his son's fascination with the superstar. Unlike the prince, the ruler reportedly didn't like the media coverage and notoriety the disgraced pop star would bring to his tiny country.

Local news accounts reported that Michael's home in Bahrain was filled with "personal boy servants," and that he constantly had an "entourage of several young boys wherever he went." Michael was said to have been delighted to discover that Bahrain has a branch of Toys `R Us.

Michael's attorney, Tom Mesereau, refused to say if his client would relinquish his U.S. citizenship and seek immigrant status in Bahrain.

Rashid Bin Abdulrahman Al-Khalifa, an officer in the ministry of information, predicted that Michael would not be given citizenship. "Citizenship," he said, "is not easy to get here in Bahrain-even for Michael Jackson. But he may stay indefinitely as long as he owns property here."

The local press in Bahrain claimed that Michael had invested $1.5 million in two villas and a plot of land in the

country's manmade Amwaj Islands.

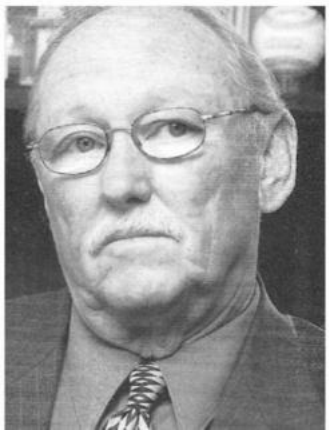
The Amwaj Islands are popular with Bahrain's oil-rich set, many of whom maintain second homes here. It's a secluded area within eyesight of mainland Bahrain. There's even a posh private school for Michael's sheltered, veilwearing kids.

In 2005, papers were publishing stories about "the curse of the Jacksons," as newspaper reporters who included Patricia Shipp were updating the public on the famous and once-rich family. Much of the data had already been published and made known for the public, and the financial plight of Michael himself had been extensively written about. Of all the family members, Janet seemed in the best financial shape. Both Joe Jackson and Katherine Jackson were perceived as being in "financial peril."

It was reported that Marlon, at the age of 48, was having trouble keeping up the $9,000 monthly mortgage payment on his $2.2 million California mansion. Back in 2001, Randy, 44, admitted to bankruptcy fraud when he failed to list his ownership of a sports utility vehicle in filing his claim. After a string of flop solo albums, Jermaine at 51 had moved back into the Encino house but reportedly traveled to the Middle East to meet with leaders of the Muslim faith. Tito at 52 was appearing at small venues performing on his blues guitar. Jackie turned 54 in 2005 but had not appeared in public since 1989, when he released a solo album that bombed.

Even though he lived in exile in Bahrain, the lawsuits against Michael continued. The most bizarre and most high-profile of the lot was filed in Los Angeles by Marc Schaffel. It offered additional embarrassing insights into Michael's private life, much of which had already been laid bare during the Arvizo case.

Michael had long been known for his "odd couple" relationships, and none was more exotic than his hookup with a gay porn producer, Marc Schaffel. Their link originated in October of 2001 for a performance of "What More Can I Give?" at the United We Stand charity concert for victims and survivors of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Performing in Washington, DC, 27 artists joined together onstage for the observance, including such big names as Ricky Martin, Julio Iglesias, Mariah Carey, Celine Dion, and Justin Timberlake. The event raised $3 million.



Tom Sneddon: District Attorney

"What More Can I Give?" was available for paid download on the Internet and a video was shot of it. However, the single was never commercially released as had been planned. Michael blamed Sony's Tommy Mottola, his favorite target, for the single's cancellation. But the release may have had more to do with Michael's involvement with Schaffel. Later a catalogue featuring the song, "What More Can I Give?: Michael Jackson and Friends," was released instead.

"What More Can I Give?" was expensive to produce but was cancelled by Sony when its executive producer, Schaffel, was revealed to have a background in gay porn. As Michael tried to distance himself from Schaffel, various corporations, including McDonald's, claimed only minimal involvement in having sponsored the song.

Michael's involvement with Schaffel-not only in association with the charity recording, but in other projects as well-came to light during the autumn of 2005 when Schaffel sued Michael, threatening to "tell all" in court. In the producer's suit, he claimed that Michael owed him $800,000 for producing two TV specials in 2003 and $2.3 million for personal loans he'd made to the star during the previous two years.

In his lawsuit, Schaffel alleged that he had been promised twenty percent of the gross returns on the TV specials he produced and which had been aired on Fox in rebuttal to the damaging Bashir TV documentary of 2003. The Fox specials produced by Schaffel were sold to a British TV station for $10.6 million. Schaffel's documentaries of Michael were flattering portraits. Schaffel went on to claim that the pop star had used them to repair some of the damage to his reputation caused by the Bashir TV show.

Michael's attorney countersued on October 18, 2005, claiming that Schaffel had failed to pay costs related to the production of the charity song, "What More Can I Give?" The producer was also charged with keeping $250,000 worth of sculptures and paintings that belonged to Michael. Michael's lawyer, Brent Ayscough, also claimed that the porn producer had tried to get a lien placed on Neverland. In all, Michael charged that Schaffel owed him $600,000.

MJ in a burqa with one of his sons

Michael had "divorced" himself from Schaffel after learning about the producer's previous background in gay porn. In testimony that was videotaped Michael never appeared in court himself-the pop star said that he had been shown a film directed by Schaffel, depicting "two guys naked from head to toe. Schaffel was telling them what to do with each other. They were touching their penises." After seeing the film, Michael claimed that he wanted to distance himself from Schaffel and his X-rated movies because "I'm no fan of gay porn."

Michael's videotaped deposition was shown to jurors in July of 2006. "I just thought this association with Schaffel wouldn't vibe with the charitable work I've done," Michael claimed in his testimony. "I wanted to be diplomatic about it. I didn't want to embarrass him."

In the video, Michael claimed, "I'm sure he got money," referring to Schaffel. When asked how he could be so sure, Michael said, "Because he always seemed to be happy." The lawyer responded, "Money doesn't buy happiness."

In court, Schaffel countered by dishing the dirt on Michael, claiming that he flew to Brazil on several occasions

to try to adopt boys for Michael. In his testimony, he charged that these "boy searches" occurred twice a year between 1999 and 2001. "1 would go between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Mr. Jackson definitely wanted to adopt some boys."

In other testimony, Schaffel charged that in addition to the "adopt scheme," he flew to Buenos Aires to pay $300,000 in "hush money" to prevent another child molestation scandal. It was alleged at the time that a Ruby Martinez and her son, David, had "knowledge of past abuse allegations against Jackson dating back to the 90s."

Schaffel initially sued for $3.8 million but his claims were eventually cut by his attorney to $1.4 million before his client actually appeared in court.

In all, Schaffel claimed that he'd paid out $8.9 million for Michael since 2001 but had been repaid only $6.3 million. He also stated that he wanted to get paid while Michael might still have the cash "because he's a ticking financial time bomb." In Schaffel's suit, he alleged that all payments to him stopped once Randy Jackson took control of Michael's finances in June of 2004.

Marc Schaffel

In his complaint, Schaffel alleged that the pop star's need to borrow money "accelerated when Jackson's increasingly more frequent and excessive use of drugs and alcohol impelled him into irrational demands for large amounts of money and extravagant possessions." On an interview with ABC News on Good Morning America, Schaffel speculated that Michael's dependency on painkillers and pain medication led him to "call me in the middle of the night seeking loans for one of his spending sprees."

"When Michael would be on drugs, he would call me at two, three, or four in the morning. Very distorted. And he would say, `Oh, can you give me $70,000 tomorrow? There's this table I saw. I gotta have it for my living room. '"

Schaffel even brought Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor into his trial. He claimed that Michael asked him to raise $1 million to pay Brando for appearing in a music video and on stage at Madison Square Garden. Schaffel said he was also asked for $600,000 as a loan to buy Elizabeth Taylor a piece of jewelry in exchange for her appearing on Michael's behalf. That exact appearance by Dame Elizabeth was not specified.

Schaffel's own appearance on ABC led to more speculation that Michael was indeed "buying the friendship" of Elizabeth, as had been alleged so many times in the past. Schaffel also claimed that he'd lent Michael at least $100,000 to finance shopping sprees and help him make payments on a RollsRoyce Phantom and a Bentley Arnage.

There were more claims. In 2001, after the September 11 attacks in New York, Michael called the producer wanting half a million dollars in cash for access to an underground shelter to protect "my loved ones," which the public learned in this case was Elizabeth and Marlon Brando, not the Jackson family members who were also in

New York at the time.

Attacking back, Michael's spokeswoman, Raymone Bain, denied the ABC show, calling Schaffel's remarks "slanderous" and claiming he could not be trusted because of his close ties with the porn industry.

During the Schaffel trial, a tantalizing tidbit emerged. In a raid on Neverland preceding the Gavin Arvizo trial, sheriff's deputies also raided the Calabasas, California home of Schaffel. The speculation was that the gay porn producer had videos that he'd taken of Michael in sexual situations with young boys. The confiscated items were loaded into a police van for investigation, but "no smoking gun" was found. A lot of gay porn was discovered, but none featuring Michael.

At the actual Arvizo trial, Schaffel was named as one of the un-indicted "co-conspirators," who had "tried to quiet" Gavin Arvizo and his family.

The jury in the Schaffel/Jackson trial listened to phone messages Michael left for the producer. In one such message, jurors heard the very high-pitched voice of Michael saying, "I like you. I love you . . . I really want us to be friends and conquer the business world together."

Attorney Thomas Mundell, representing Michael, put up a vigorous defense, at one point claiming that Schaffel pocketed $400,000 from a Japanese company for rights to the charity record and that he used the funds as a down payment on a house.

Mundell also read to jurors a voice mail message from Michael to Schaffel. "Marc, please, please never let me down. I have been betrayed so much by people. Be my loyal, loyal friend." In conclusion, Mundell went on to say, "Members of the jury, Marc Schaffel was not Mr. Jackson's loyal friend. I ask you to send him from this courtroom with nothing."

The battling attorneys were bitter in their closing words to the jury, Schaffel's lawyer, Howard King, called Michael a "cagey, calculating witness" who took advantage of the producer. The pop star's attorney, Mundell, countered that Michael was the "victim of financial manipulation" by a former associate. "I resent that Mr. Schaffel is portrayed as some sort of parasite hanging on to Mr. Jackson," King said angrily.

Mundell shot back: "I don't see the evil, conniving puppet master he saw. I see the gentle, easily influenced artist who pays little attention to business matters."

In July of 2006 a jury of twelve, equally divided among men and women, deliberated for nine hours after hearing ten days of testimony. In their verdict, they granted Schaffel $900,000, citing Michael's breach of contract with the producer. The jury also granted Schaffel $300,000 for his out-of-pocket expenses in flying to Buenos Aires to offer hush money to a family with dirt on the pop star. But in a split verdict, they also awarded Michael $200,000 believing that Schaffel skimmed that amount from the proceeds of the unreleased charity recording of "What More Can I Give?"

In November of 2005, in the midst of the Marc Schaffel brouhaha, a new eruption occurred when Michael faced headlines accusing him of antiSemitism. These were old charges first aired in 1995 when he released the song, "They Don't Care About Us," in which he referred to Jews as "kikes."

A Jackson family attorney, Brian Oxman, responded that anti-Semitic messages, which were later broadcast on TV, were actually "telephone conversations recorded without permission." The phone messages were recorded in 2003 but not leaked to the press until 2005.

Michael's words were broadcast on ABC's Good Morning America. In the recording, Michael states that Jews rob performers of their money. His exact words were, "They suck them like leeches." The message was left for Dieter Wiesner, who had filed a $64 million lawsuit against Michael, claiming fraud and breach of contract. Wiesner, as Michael's former business advisor, was one of the un-indicted "co-conspirators" involved in Michael's child molestation trial.

"I have been with the Jackson family for 15 years," Oxman said. "And I'm Jewish. I have never once seen anything anti-Semitic from him or from his family."

The day after ABC aired the telephone answering machine message, the Anti-Defamation League demanded that Michael apologize. "Michael Jackson has an anti-Semitic streak and hasn't learned from his past mistakes," said ADL director Abraham Foxman.

More unwanted publicity came late in 2005 in the form of a book by Pulitzer Prize winner, Margo Jefferson, who published a short treatise on the star. Only 138 pages, On Michael Jackson claimed that the performer "speaks to and for the monstrous child in us all." An African-American, Jefferson has long been an admirer of Michael's. But she also paints a devastating portrait of the entertainer. She raises some disturbing questions about sexual desires in young boys, particularly at the ages of 12, 13, 14, and 15. Such boys are not necessarily "innocent," she said, noting that "they are curious, they have sexual desires, as well as impulses, and they want to act on them. I am not trying to turn Michael's accuser, Gavin Arvizo, into a youthful seducer. I am simply trying to say there was almost no public acknowledgment of these everyday facts, known to anyone who has had a child, spent time with children, or remembers being a child."

Those children that Michael had once befriended-at least most of them-had turned into adults. In the fierce sun of Bahrain, Michael had plenty of time to acknowledge Sean Lennon, son of John, as he turned thirty in 2005. Sean, a holdover from Michael's "boy crazy days," had grown into a man, although Michael reportedly had been disappointed that Sean had not realized his dream in music. "How could anyone, even a son, follow in the footsteps of a father like John Lennon?" Michael asked. "My own father, Joe, was a failed musician, so I didn't have to compete with his record like poor Sean has to do. It's the same with Lisa Marie. She's no female Elvis-let's face it."

Although a multi-millionaire and the reasonably attractive son of a music legend, Sean stunned the world when he virtually advertised for a lady companion. He told the press that it could be, "Any girl who is interested but she must be born female and between the ages of 18 and 45. She must have an IQ above 130 and must be honest. She must not have any clinical, psychological disorders ... and a kind heart. Clearly beautiful-but beauty on the inside is more important-but no deformities, third legs, fifth nipples." In a statement so bizarre as to seem unbelievable, the rich singer/songwriter claimed that, "I'm completely alone and I'm completely miserable."

When Michael read this astonishing statement, he reportedly said, "I'm in the same boat as Sean." As an afterthought, he added, "Of course, I have the children, but sometimes even they are a mixed blessing. As I get older, I realize that parenting can be an annoying task at times."

Taking over most of that parenting for Michael in Bahrain was Grace Rwaramba, a native of Rwanda, who was the nanny to his kids. The rumor mill swirled around Michael and the nanny when the press reported that Michael was planning to wed Grace so that she could become the actual mother-not the stand-in-for his kids.

The trouble with that report was that Grace was already wed, having married Stacey M. Adair in Las Vegas on February 26, 1995. The couple had not lived together, however, for years.

Adding to the tabloid fodder, it was rumored in the press that Grace had also been involved in "romances" with two of Michael's brothers, Jermaine and Randy. Grace has denied introducing Michael to the Nation of Islam and has blamed his problems on Satan.

It was believed that Michael considered marrying Grace when a California appellate court restored Debbie Rowe's parental rights. If he were in a marriage, or so it was believed, it would help his legal status as a parent and sole custodian for his three children.

Reporter Roger Friedman claimed that, "Rwaramba is widely disliked by the Jackson camp, by nearly all of his family members, and his remaining two or three employees. They see her as a social-climbing gold-digger who wants what's left of Jackson's money."

Friedman had reported in 2005 that Grace was "drugging Jackson and keeping him isolated from family and

friends." She's been with Michael and his three kids since he fled to Bahrain. "Family members and business associates who want to speak with Jackson must call the nanny, who decides what calls are put through to the abundantly weird singer," Friedman claimed.

Because of his ties to Grace and her links to the Nation of Islam, and because of Michael's previous links to that group, rumors also circulated that he was prepared to convert to Islam, as had his brother Jermaine, who was also said to be urging his brother to convert. It was even claimed that Michael was planning to erect a mosque in Bahrain.

A spokesman for Islamic causes said, "Thousands of people are embracing Islam. Michael Jackson is just one of them." Michael's spokesperson, Raymone Bain said, "Michael is looking to give something back to the country that has welcomed him so openly."

Michael caused a media storm when he entered the women's restroom in a shopping mall in Bahrain. A representative claimed that the singer did not understand the Arabic sign and mistook the bathroom for a men's room.

Bain claimed that Michael left the women's room as soon as he discovered what it was. But witnesses said that he did not leave the toilet at once and was spotted applying makeup in the mirror. Upon his exit, he was recognized and a mob began to gather. He hid out in a bookstore until the police arrived to escort him out of the mall.

Relations with Bahrain soured when he was pilloried for appearing in a Muslim abaya robe, garb which is traditionally worn by females.

Every time Michael appears in public, including a surprise visit to the water park in Dubai, it is widely reported in the press. He rented the entire Wild Wadi Park and appeared here in a white Lycra body suit that exposed just his nose and eyes. A lifeguard told the British tabloid, The Daily Express, "He looked even stranger than usual. His body is very skinny and Lycra does him no favors."

Although in exile and cut off from family members, Michael was believed to have stayed in contact with brother Jermaine, who was reportedly flying to Bahrain to see friends there. In fact, Jermaine, a Muslim, was believed to have been responsible for Michael's move to that country in the first place. But while Jermaine was still publicly defending his brother, reports reached Michael-and later the press-that he was actually shopping a book, hoping to cash in on Michael's trial and subsequent notoriety.

Allegations made by Jermaine were leaked to the New York press. In the never-published book, Legacy: Surviving the Best and the Worst, Jermaine claimed that a "sperm donor" was responsible for the birth of Michael's two children with Debbie Rowe in spite of the pop star's insistence that the kids were fathered in "the natural way."

"It was like a sanctioned black market," Jermaine claimed. Michael's brother did not explain how Michael acquired his third child, Prince Michael II. The mother of "Blanket" has never been identified.

In his book proposal, Jermaine is alleged to have suggested that daughters Rebbie and La Toya may have been molested by Joe Jackson and that young Michael himself may have suffered abuse from an "important businessman."

Jermaine, according to news reports, even suggested his father "may have set up Michael to be somehow victimized by older men."

Jermaine also claimed that all of Michael's brothers feared he was gay when they toured as The Jackson 5. He noted that all the other brothers fell in love with women. "But, Michael, well, he wasn't interested," Jermaine said. "We used to quietly say that we couldn't have a gay brother."

Sean Lennon

Other allegations by Jermaine accused Michael of being "devious and calculating" in squashing the brothers' solo musical careers and paving the way for himself alone. Jermaine said that Michael hated Jews, including David Geffen, Steven Spielberg, and Jeffrey Katzenberg, because "They stole the idea for Dreamworks from me, including the boy-on-themoon logo."

Jermaine said that Michael preferred such drugs as Demerol, his eternal favorite, but also Vicodin, codeine, cocaine, Percocet, red wine, and good of Jack Daniels. Giving us an insider look at the troubled star, Jermaine's still unpublished book was drafted by Stacy Brown, who had co-authored with Bob Jones the book, Michael Jackson: The Man Behind the Mask.

If Jermaine is to be believed, his brother's behavior with his own nephews had left the family shaken. In one incident recalled, Michael was found sitting on a bed with Tito's young sons and "holding them in a disturbing manner" following the death of their mother in the mid-90s.

The bombshell proposal also alleged that Jermaine feared Michael might be guilty of child molestation but backed him at the trial because he thought the pop star "would commit suicide in prison." He also alleged in the eightpage proposal that Michael was "an out-of-control drug and booze abuser with a calculating mean streak and a thing for young children."

"With all those drugs in his system, does Michael really know what he does with these kids?" Jermaine asked. "I don't want to tell you my brother's innocent. I am not certain that he is."

Most of the so-called revelations in Jermaine's proposal, including far more devastating ones than he outlined, had not only been heard but often published before. One publisher who looked at the manuscript said, "There's nothing new here."

In New York, news was leaked that publishers who'd seen the proposal turned it down when Jermaine refused to say definitely if Michael were guilty in his kid-sex case. HarperCollins and St. Martin's were two publishers who reportedly "passed" on the badly written proposal.

Reporter Michelle Caruso had a different spin, claiming that "Jermaine pulled the plug on the book after Michael got wind of it and went ballistic, threatening to sue and toss Jermaine out of the family home."

Even that family home was under threat.

By the summer of 2006, four notices of pending foreclosure were delivered at the Encino home of the Jackson family. Hayvenhurst is listed on the real estate market as being worth about $7 million. Michael had failed to make a $2 million mortgage payment on the property, and the Jacksons did not have that much cash. Janet finally came

through for her parents, delivering the money to pay the back mortgages.

Journalist Roger Friedman said that, "A pattern has developed in which Michael Jackson refuses to pay a bill-or get someone to pay it for him-until legal action of some kind has been commenced against him."

That was certainly the case at Michael's once-beloved Neverland.

By March of 2006, Neverland had gone dark. No more laughing children. No more arcade pulsing with rap music. No one waiting at the gate with ice cream for the kids. "I don't think he'll be back any time soon," said a security guard at the gate to Peter Pan's Castle. He refused to give his name. "I signed a confidentiality agreement," he claimed.

In June of 2006, the animals at Neverland were moved to new homes, the two tigers, Sabu and Thriller, were being cared for by actress Tippi Hedren, animal rights activist and former star of Alfred Hitchcock's The Birds. Her fiance, Dr. Martin Dines, Michael's long-time vet, said that the animals are all being moved out into "happy new environments." Despite reports that the animals were being mistreated, Dr. Dines insisted that they were in good condition, including four giraffes and two orangutans remaining. "I visit once a week," he said. "There has never been a lapse in the care and feeding of the animals."

The doctor's reports contradicted other claims. A former employee at Neverland said, "The poor underfed animals are looking as sickly as Jacko himself." Animal rights groups became enraged at these charges and demanded action from state officials.

Those state officials, especially in the California labor department, were moving in on Michael on yet another front, fining him on March 9, 2006 $169,000 for failure to cover workers' employment insurance.

Michael not only paid this fine, but shelled out another $306,000 to Neverland employees for back pay. By coming up with the funds, Michael escaped court action. He ordered that Neverland be closed except for a skeletal crew he's forced to keep on. Today, Neverland is in search of a buyer.

In March of that year, stories about the collapse of Neverland weren't the only headlines making the news. In the past, Michael's critics had often accused him of being an extraterrestrial. Although said in jest, those claims took on a more serious face that spring.

Mike Luckman, director of the New York Center for Extraterrestrial Research, claimed that Michael, late in 2003, "indicated to me that he is open to making contact with otherworldly beings." The revelations reportedly occurred in the famous magic store, Abracadabra, on 21st Street in New York's Chelsea district.

Luckman also claimed that Michael wanted to build an airport for aliens, perhaps set up the landing strip in the Nevada desert. "Michael wants to welcome the extraterrestrials to earth and film the landing." According to Luckman, the pop star also confided to him that, "I am from another planet myself." Luckman quoted Michael as identifying his home planet as "A Capricious Anomaly in the Sea of Space located just beyond our solar system.

In July of 2005, Luckman had revealed that Michael had been so afraid of dying in prison that he planned to have his body frozen. "Michael discussed having his remains cryogenically preserved so that he might be brought back to life," according to Luckman. Michael, or so it was said, has taken GH3, the Romanian-developed drug said to make you live longer. It was also claimed that Michael had invested millions in DNA research in the hope of engineering perfect offspring. "Michael has gone to extreme lengths to achieve immortality," Luckman claimed.

Raymone Bain, spokesperson for Michael, called Luckman's account "pure bull."

Luckman only raised more charges of "Wacko Jacko." But Elizabeth Taylor, appearing on CNN's Larry King Live in May of 2006, defended Michael, as always. She startled viewers, however, by admitting that she once frolicked in bed with Michael and his nephews, claiming "there was nothing abnormal about it. We were all in bed watching Disney movies on TV."

On the show, his close pal erroneously predicted that Michael probably would never return to the United States. "Really, why should he?" she asked. "He's been treated like dirt here." On the show she also denied reports that she was suffering from Alzheimer's.

Reportedly, Michael was delighted at Elizabeth's appearance, which he hoped would help counter the constant newspaper cartoons, routinely depicting him as a pedophile. He showed his old anti-media hostility when GQ magazine ran a picture in its May edition of a look-alike wearing a Bedouin outfit. The imposter is shown wearing one white glove and with his head shrouded standing on a sand dune. Michael wanted GQ to apologize and withdraw the edition from newsstands. The baffled editors responded that the image was clearly satirical.

That same month, Michael, in an attempt at the rehabilitation of a failed career, made his first public appearance. He flew to Japan to greet fans, launching his return at a bash at Tokyo's Yoyugu Olympic Stadium. "I look forward to saying hello to my huge fan base in Japan," Michael said before his arrival in Tokyo.

In Tokyo, Michael visited an orphanage where he told 140 kids that, "I love you." He wore sunglasses and a white T-shirt under a black doublebreasted suit with gold buttons and a red armband. He shook hands and signed autographs at his first public appearance since his acquittal of child molestation charges.

While in Tokyo, he accepted MTV Japan's "Legend Award" during a Yoyugu Olympic Stadium ceremony.

If Michael did indeed want to re-launch a faltering career, Japan was a wise choice as a venue, because his fans there reportedly had remained the most loyal, while millions of other former admirers, especially in America, had deserted him in favor of other singers such as Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake.

Back in Bahrain, Michael dramatically severed his ties with his Bahraini lawyers, accountants, and business managers and hired a New York-based firm "known for restructurings and turnarounds." Publicist Raymone Bain announced that she had been named general manager of the new Michael Jackson Company, which replaced the old MJJ Productions. Through Bain it was also announced that Michael would be leaving Bahrain and settling in Europe, perhaps Ireland or maybe France.

What had gone wrong?

The Bahrain dream had actually ended in February of 2006 when it was reported that Michael had a falling out with Sheik Abdullah bin Hamad AlKhalifa.

Reports coming out of Bahrain in the late summer of 2006 claimed that the Prince's father didn't like Michael hanging out in the Bahraini capital when his son wasn't there to play host to him. King Hamad was 57 years old in 2006, but the young prince was only 31 years old. Michael turned 48 in Bahrain so he's closer in age to the King than he is to the Prince.

King Hamad was reportedly angry that his son had spent millions of dollars entertaining Michael and his entourage and not one bit of money had been earned from their record company, Two Seas, which the two men had set up.

Within days of news stories that the welcome sign had been removed for Michael in Bahrain, the pop star claimed he'd discovered a conspiracy among his former attorneys to force him into financial ruin. His spokesperson, Raymone Bain, claimed that the pop singer had discovered documents that detailed the conspiracy to drag him unwillingly into a bankruptcy court.

Bain did not name the former attorneys charged with conspiracy to bring Michael down. She also refused to state who provided these secret documents to Michael. It wasn't clear why Michael's former associates would want to force bankruptcy onto him-or what they had to gain from such a maneuver.

"That's what we'd like to find out," Bain said. "Michael has always been suspicious that some of those whom he entrusted to act on his behalf may not have acted in his best interest."

Raymone Bain

To stage his "spectacular pop comeback," Michael decided that he wanted a "hot new manager," and found one in Guy Holmes, who had helped launch the "Crazy Frog," an audio/animated cell phone ringtone that soon after became one of the most popular mobile phone accessories in America.

Michael had become fascinated with Axel F., the animated cartoon frog character. Holmes said that though Crazy Frog had originally been mainly for kids, "it seems to be that it also attracts a lot of adults who haven't grown up," which might just might-include Michael.

Cellular News asked a provocative question, "Will we get a duet between Crazy Frog and the so-called King of Pop?"

In Britain, another headline asked CAN CRAZY FROG REVIVE A CAREER THAT CROAKED?

Michael was reported to have signed an exclusive recording agreement with the Bahrain-based Two Seas Records, and Holmes was tapped to be the CEO of the Two Seas label while still remaining chairman of Gut Records.

A music industry insider claimed that "Holmes is a genius for helping older acts stay in the limelight," citing how he masterminded Tom Jones's pop makeover with the 1991 album Reload.

Holmes flew to Bahrain to sign the star at the age of 47. Michael announced, "I am incredibly excited about the new venture and I am enjoying being back in the studio making music." He announced that his new album would be ready for release in 2007.

While preparing for a comeback in Bahrain, Michael was interrupted at his studio with an urgent call from his California lawyers. New charges of child molestation had been filed against him in the Orange County Superior Court in California. In papers filed, a twenty-year-old man charged that the pop star had "plied me with drugs and alcohol and then molested me." The man's name was not released to the newspapers at the time.

Charges leaked to the press cited Michael for "repeatedly and forcefully" sexually molesting the boy beginning when he was only two years old. In addition, charges accused Michael of "burning and torturing me."

The plaintiff also claimed that Michael "forced me to undergo unnecessary plastic surgery." The young man's lawyer, Michael Mattern, said the most glaring surgical procedures performed on his client gave him "noticeably red lips, resembling the garish makeup Jackson often wears in public, and a pronounced cleft chin."

Larry King

There was more. The plaintiff also charged that both Michael and Sony stole his song ideas and lyrics.

The plaintiff's name wasn't new to the police. During the raid on Neverland in 2003, Santa Barbara County authorities announced that they wanted any "past or new Jackson accusers to step forward." The young man surfaced at the time and was interviewed by police at length. But reportedly the law officials didn't believe that the boy's story would stand up in court.

Michael's lawyer, Tom Mesereau, denounced the charges as "ridiculous on their face-they will be vigorously defended." It was doubtful if the case would even come to court since a judge might refuse to hear it unless he felt the charges had some validity.

This Orange County case was just one of many that would be filed against Michael in 2006 by plaintiffs seeking damages for alleged molestation. Jordie Chandler walking off with $25 million in 1993, a story repeated endlessly in the Gavin Arvizo trial, had obviously attracted a lot of attention among future plaintiffs.

With Gavin Arvizo's name being mentioned again in the papers in the wake of this rather ridiculous new molestation case, the question was raised, "Whatever became of Gavin Arvizo?"

He was found in Orange County living under an assumed name, hoping to escape death threats leveled at him by crazed Michael Jackson fans.

The cancer survivor told reporters that the "day Jackson was acquitted was the worst day of my life. I thought on that day that my life couldn't get any worse. Why didn't they believe me? I told the truth. Why didn't they believe me?"

Gavin, at the age of 16, also confided to a reporter that his own mother, Janet, had "turned her back on me. She blames me, not herself, for the courtroom loss." Reportedly, she even blamed Gavin for the welfare fraud charges filed against her, since his claims about Michael led to the discovery of her own misdeeds.

Gavin was still living with his mother, but he said that she treated him "like dirt and won't let me go to counseling to deal with my trauma."

One source reported that Janet screams at her son. She was quoted as saying, "You allowed him to touch you. You allowed him to do it. It was your fault the jury didn't believe you."

Unlike Jordie Chandler, who was enjoying the life of a rich young man, Gavin in the summer of 2006 rode to work across town on his bike where he was employed in a fast-food joint. He buys his own food because Janet allegedly refuses to cook for him. With Jay Jackson, her new husband, she had two more children.

In a press interview, Gavin said, "I wish I had never met Michael Jackson. He ruined my life, and I've nothing to show for it except trouble."

His brother, Star, said, "I am just plain angry at the world. I saw Michael Jackson molesting my brother!"

Back in Bahrain, in a surprising story, it was reported that Michael was undergoing a major revamp to make himself appear more macho, at least according to author Michael C. Luckman who wrote: Alien Rock. The Rock 'n' Roll Connection. "He's been seen working out, wearing shorter wigs and less makeup," Luckman said. It was also reported that Michael was holding talks with a Las Vegas hotel about a long-term performing deal similar to what Celine Dion has.

But when Michael was spotted with his children touring England, France, and Ireland, there was no evidence that he'd become a "macho man." In Ireland, he was reported to be considering linking his name with a theme park aimed mainly at children, although why investors would want a man accused of child molestation linked with a kiddie theme park remained a mystery. That can be filed alongside reports from Stockholm in 2003 that Michael had once been "seriously considered" for the Nobel Peace Prize.

If Michael indeed moved to Ireland, he might have a companion, as it was reported that he'd acquired a genuine Irish ghost trapped in a bottle. According to BBC News, the century-old ghost was bricked up in a window by a priest following a failed exorcism. An agent representing Michael did the bidding for him, managing to secure the ghost on eBay for only $473.33.

News of the Irish theme park was but one of several multi-million dollar projects Michael was said to be considering. News of these never-to-be projects were coming at the press so fast that Michael was held up for ridicule.

Tim Nelson of the St. Paul Pioneer Press greeted Michael's Irish pronouncement with the skepticism that was due. When hearing that Michael was taking the helm of a $100 million Korea-based venture fund that will invest in entertainment-oriented Internet companies, Nelson listed nine other Jackson projects that went belly up. "Coming soon to a vacant lot near you!" he wrote.

Among the failed projects of "Neverland Pictures" was the filming of The Nightmare of Edgar Allan Poe, with Michael as the star. That went the way of the giant resort near Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and the huge "Majestic Kingdom" theme park in Detroit.

MJ with Guy Holmes

No one got to drink the new soft drink, Mystery, that was going to wipe out Pepsi, Michael's old alma mater.

In partnership with Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, Kingdom Entertainment never got launched as a "family values" global entertainment empire with a theme park that could be a home for cattle afflicted with mad cow disease.

That $500 million World of Children Amusement Park was never built in Poland. A few projects got off the ground, including a German manufacturer who produced flat stereo speakers with Michael's image on them. They were priced at $620. Only they didn't sell. No one wanted one.

While Michael and his children lived in luxury at the former home of the Astor family, Cliveden, in the English countryside, his "comeback" was announced. His highly anticipated first stage appearance since his trial was scheduled for November of 2006 at the World Music Awards in London.

Traveling by limousine to London with his trio of kids, Michael ensconced himself at the pricey Hempel Hotel where his entourage was charged $100,000 a night.

On the night of the presentations, Michael arrived at the auditorium two hours late. Emerging from the limousine, he waved and blew kisses at fans who were angry for having to wait so long for a glimpse of The Gloved One. The words he mumbled to the press were barely comprehensible.

At the ceremony, Jon Bon Jovi, the New Jersey rocker, snubbed Michael and didn't want to present him with an award "because of the stigma of his child molestation trial."

Forever the diva, and much to the disappointment of his still-loyal fans, Michael came on stage and sang only two verses of "We Are the World" before the music went dead. He was backed up by an army of apple-cheeked children. The fans had been told that Michael was going to sing "Thriller" instead. Chris Brown, wearing the familiar red leather of the original video, sang "Thriller" onstage, but he failed to placate the angry crowd. Boos were heard across the auditorium.

"However many times he told us he loved us-and there were too manyand however much we yelled and screamed and pinched ourselves, his performance was a shambles," said a disappointed London fan. Even so, one loyalist held up a banner that read THE KING IS BACK.

The reclusive King of Pop received a Diamond Award given to artists who sell more than 100 million albums. At the last minute, the host of the show, Lindsay Lohan, presented the "Diamond" to Michael.

It was later reported that Beyonce even had to go to Michael's dressing room and persuade him to come onstage. "He didn't want to come out of his room," Beyonce later told reporters. The delay caused her to miss her transAtlantic flight home.

Her greatest fame would come just months after she stood at the door to Michael's dressing room with the release of Dreamgirls, the film adaptation of the hit 1981 Broadway musical about a 1960s singing group loosely based on Motown's Supremes.

Beyonce was cast as the Diana Ross-based character, Deena Jones. After her "rescue" of Michael, he later said, "I know the real Diana Ross, not the mock version."

She had her own comeback to Michael, "Don't you think it's scary that you rarely meet celebrities who are normal? I do normal things, walk in the park. I don't want to be off on my own diva planet. I want to be on earth."

Beyonce

Breaking his vow about never returning to America, Michael in the closing hours of 2006 flew to Atlanta, Georgia, where he traveled by limousine to Augusta for the funeral of his beloved mentor, James Brown.

With hugs for the Rev. Al Sharpton and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Michael joined 9,000 other mourners, including the squabbling members of Brown's family, to pay his respects at the goldplated coffin. Michael bent down and seemed to place a gentle kiss on Brown's forehead.

Michael later said, "James Brown is my greatest inspiration ever since I was a small child. When I saw him move, I was mesmerized. I've never seen a performer perform like James Brown, and right then and there, I knew that was exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Reports leaked out that Michael, ending his self-imposed exile, was settling in Las Vegas-that "forgiving town"-to revitalize a dormant career.

If his appearance at the posh shopping mall at Caesars Palace in December was any indication, Michael could still cause a mini-riot, which is just what he did when he appeared here on one of his famous shopping binges. In a black leather jacket, protected by three hotel security guards, Michael was surrounded by hundreds of fans or else rubber neckers.

"Yes, he's here, and, yes, we're working on projects," said Jackson pal and entrepreneur Jack Wishna. "But we're not willing to disclose anything yet.

Jeff Beacher, a savvy observer of the Nevada scene, said that "Jackson's best shot at jump-starting a dead career is Vegas. Vegas is about wild, weird, and crazy. If Michael Jackson is going to come back, this could be the place to do it."

Wishna hinted that the fallen star is seeking to score a "long-term hotel showroom deal like Celine Dion."

Reporter Bob Shemeligian quoted an anonymous Vegas producer as saying, "Jackson has no known offers and is here with hat in hand, looking to generate any buzz he can."

Of course, the Las Vegas comeback, like so many other announcements, turned to dust.

"There is no way to know what was on Michael Jackson's mind as he journeyed from boy to man and partway back, from a brown-skinned man to one so pale he required an umbrella when he was out in the sun, and from a pop star with a quirky but defined masculinity to one who seemed most comfortable in a more nebulous zone. What seems clear is that all of it was considered. All of it was intentional. "

-Guy Trebay

"Like Elvis, Jackson was once beautiful, outrageous, a revolutionary without politics who shook down the walls between black and white. He had the hits, the style, the ego, the talent. He was the King of Pop and he needed only to fill in the life. He married Elvis' daughter. He bought the rights to some of Elvis'songs. Elvis owned Graceland, its name a symbol for a deliverance the singer prayed for until the end of his life. Jackson had Neverland, a fantasy for a child-man for whom money meant the chance to live in a world of his own. He did, and did not, want to be Elvis. "

-Hillel Italie

"We want to celebrate this black man. He belongs to us, and we shared him with everybody else."

-Jamie Foxx

"He may not be the King of Kings, but he's the King of Pop. He was a gift from God. "

-The Rev. Carolyn Herron

"Mr. Jackson was to music what Michael Jordan was to sports and Barack Obama to politics-a towering figure with crossover appeal, even if in life some of Mr. Jackson's black fans wondered if he was as proud of his race as his race was of him. "

-Marcus Mabry

Chapter Sixteen

In the months to come, after the legal dust had settled, Debbie Rowe, mother of two of Michael's children, was found living in an ugly, rundown desert town, Palmdale, 60 miles north of Los Angeles. When the press caught up with her, she allowed them to interview her in her modest, ranch-style house.

Out here in the fresh air, I feel much better than I did during my marriage to Michael," she said. "No one knows me here in Palmdale. I don't talk to anyone. I just get on with my life, breeding horses. I'm up at 6am with the animals. I experience the most extraordinary sunrises. I have a boyfriend. He's a murder cop."

Today, her body is bloated almost beyond recognition.

Legally, at least, there seemed no doubt that Debbie Rowe was the mother of two of Michael Jackson's children. But even-that-was challenged in court.

During the summer of 2007, Michael was still being pilloried as a weirdo, but so were some of the lawsuits brought against him. None was more bizarre than that filed by Nona Paris Lola Jackson, a 36-year-old woman in Britain. Her case was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court.

The Jackson woman (no relation) sought joint physical custody of Prince Michael I, Paris, and Prince Michael II ("Blanket"), claiming that she was the mother of all three children. This absurd case was not ruled in her favor. "I feel the evidence fails to link her to these children," the judge said.

It had long been speculated that Michael was not the actual father of Prince Michael I and Paris. In the wake of his death, speculation was rampant that the actual sperm donor was none other than the celebrity dermatologist Arnold Klein, whose patients include Elizabeth Taylor. Rowe had been the doctor's assistant at the time she met Michael. An insider told Us Magazine that "Klein is the dad. He and Debbie signed an agreement saying they would never reveal the truth."

Michael had packed up and left Neverland after he was acquitted of child molestation. He put the 2,700-acre estate on the market, hoping to pay off $200 million in debts. But at first there were no takers for the tacky ranch.

Some developers looked at it, thinking the property could be razed and reconfigured as a housing development.

Soccer star David Beckham once expressed an interest in acquiring Neverland. One of Michael's hobbies as a recluse was collecting newspaper and magazine photographs of the British sports star, including within his collection some sexy and revealing candid shots.

A maid reported that Michael's bathroom had a shower curtain emblazoned with three frontal nudes of the soccer player. These nudes are widely available on the web, and are the source material for illicit posters hanging in the bedrooms of David Beckham fans worldwide.

But, as tantalizing as they are, these photographs have never been authenticated, and may be fakes. Nonetheless, Michael was so taken with them that he had them specifically commissioned from a Las Vegas novelty outlet as a means of embellishing his bathroom.

It should be noted that it was a likeness of a fully mature man, and not a young boy, that adorned Michaels' shower curtain.

In April of 2007, reporters buzzed with the news that a collection of 2,000 of Michael's personal items-each of them allegedly retrieved from Neverland-would go onto the auction block at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Everything was up for grabs, including Michael's bright red military jacket with gold buttons and the black and white fedoras he'd worn during live performances of his hit song, "Billie Jean."

Michael expressed his horror that his treasure trove was being offered to the public at auction, with the intention of settling a debt to a New Jerseybased delivery company. He immediately threatened legal action. Not only Michael, but other members of the Jackson family contested the ownership of a number of lots in the auction. Richard Altomare, the chairman of Universal Express, claimed to have purchased the memorabilia from Henry Vacaro, the pop star's former business partner. Vacaro, Altomare claimed, had been awarded the "artifacts" as part of a bankruptcy case against Michael.

Lawyers representing Universal Express warned Michael that he'd face embarrassment if he pressed forward with his case.

It was reported that Altomare was holding back a number of items for sale, including portraits of naked boys and sex toys, each of them allegedly culled from Neverland. When these objects were appraised and catalogued as part of the upcoming auction, it was revealed that the subjects of two of the paintings within the collection were of naked boys.

One of the appraisers recognized the faces of the boys-one was a likeness of a very young Macaulay Culkin, the other of a young Sean Lennon, son of former Beatle John Lennon. The portraits had been painted by Michael himself, but it cannot be ascertained if they'd been composed from live studies, whether they were figments of Michael's imagination, or perhaps painted from memory. Sean's naked portrait evoked memories of his father when he posed nude for an album cover with this wife, Yoko Ono.

Whitening creams and various sex aids were uncovered among the arti facts from Neverland, including some dildos with full erections that appeared to have been modeled by boys.

Potentially even more embarrassing were sealed court documents associated with Michael's sexual molestation charges. They included photographs, mandated by the Santa Monica courts, of his genitalia.

"This is stuff we have kept from the auction out of respect to Mr. Jackson," Altomare said." The guy has troubles. We all have skeletons in the closet. If Mr. Jackson hadn't put up a fuss, I might have quietly, discreetly, just given the personal possessions to him. I'm a gentleman. But if he pisses me off, I may end up auctioning them."

In May of 2007, lawyers for Michael appeared in a Las Vegas courtroom and dropped efforts to block the auction of the pop star's memorabilia. Gregory Cross, a lawyer for Michael, said, "The matter's been resolved." He refused to describe the terms of the agreement, which settled the April 2007 lawsuit.

That summer, Michael flew to Japan to meet with some of his most loyal fans. While there, he greeted about 3,000 U.S. troops and their family members at a U.S. Army base south of Tokyo. At Camp Zama, Michael walked around shaking hands and speaking shyly with the soldiers. "Those of you here today are some of the most special people in the world," he told the crowd.

This was Michael's second trip in less than a year to Japan, where he attended parties, including an extravagant gala in Tokyo. Michael referred to these events in Tokyo as "fan appreciation events." He was the guest of honor at one party where 400 people each paid $3,500 for a buffet dinner, an entertainment revue that featured several Japanese M.J. impersonators, and a chance to take photos with The Gloved One. Each guest got thirty seconds with the pop star.

Wearing a black-and-gold Roberto Cavalli suit, Michael appeared on stage at the end of the six-hour party to read a brief thank you note. He did not perform.

Previously, he had appeared in Japan in 2006 to accept an MTV Japan award.

Back in America, Michael had reason to fear the public. When he was recognized, angry people often screamed "PERVERT" at him, even though he was accompanied by his children. "That must have been painful to hear for this father of three out on a shopping trip to a bookstore with his kids in tow," said a family security guard.

If not assaulted with verbal attacks, Michael had to endure overzealous fans. "If you get trapped, it's not fun,"

he told journalist Mark Ellen. "They start kissing you and tearing your clothes and tearing the hair out of your head. In Europe, a girl opened her wallet to reveal a piece of my hair. `Look,' she told me, `I took this out of your head two years ago!'"

In Las Vegas throughout 2007, Michael weighed proposals for his future, all of which included performing as the centerpiece of live shows. His spokeswoman, Raymone K. Bain, denied rumors that he had failed to find a Las Vegas venue for his show. She also denied a rumor that he would soon appear on American Idol.

"Mr. Jackson did not move to Las Vegas to shop a Vegas show," Bain said. "He's in Las Vegas because he likes the city and finds it a convenient location to record with artists, songwriters, and producers."

Perhaps assuming that an appropriate Vegas venue might be forthcoming, Michael came up with a dramatic proposal for advertising his appearance. Plans called for a fifty-foot robotic replica of himself, its feet planted upon the desert sands "Laser beams would shoot out of it so it would be the first thing people flying in would see," said Mike Luckman, of Luckman Van Pier, consultants to large entertainment conglomerates. "Neon's wonderful, but it's old school."

In Las Vegas, it now appears, Michael wasn't doing all that work that Bain kept suggesting. "He spends most of his time in bed, avoiding work in any recording studio," said an inside source who didn't want to be named for fear of losing his job.

On June 30, 2007, his one-year lease on a Las Vegas mansion ran out. He'd agreed to rent the house from Luke Brugnara, a self-made San Francisco realtor, who seemed eager to regain control of his 20-room, 11-bathroom manse in Sin City.

Roger Friedman of Fox News claimed that in Las Vegas, "Michael Jackson may at last be living out his greatest fantasy: Living as Elvis Presley in his final days."

In the aftermath of Vegas, Michael, the two Princes, and Paris appeared to be living as nomads, landing wherever they could find an oasis.

In mid-August of 2007, they moved in with the Cascio family in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, remaining there until the first week of November.

Later, they stayed with the supermarket billionaire, Ron Burkle, at his Beverly Hills home, just behind the Beverly Hills Hotel. Michael had already been booted out of several other residences he'd rented in Las Vegas and Washington DC.

While still in New Jersey, Michael was seen shopping for Hallowe'en costumes with his children in the Boulder Run Mall. "He wore a black turban covering his neck and his face," said a clerk. "I knew it was him. His voice was high-pitched."

One news report said he turned up with his "three sons," Prince, Paris, and Blanket. Paris, a girl, of course, was so heavily masked that it would have been impossible to determine what her gender actually was.

And the lawsuits kept coming. In November, the law firm that had handled side work during Michael's 2005 child molestation trial sued Michael for their (unpaid) fee. A judge in Los Angeles ordered the singer to pay $256,000 in legal fees to Ayscough & Marar to cover the cost of successfully suing him. With that ruling, Michael's legal bill owed to the firm rose to $430,000.

He had countersued the firm in 2006, claiming that one of its lawyers had threatened to expose confidential information about him to the media. But Superior Court Judge James Chalfant dismissed Michael's lawsuit, ruling that it lacked merit.

Although many fans-or former fans-were asking, "who cares?", Michael's Neverland went into foreclosure the same month. Based on Michael's owing $23.2 million in back payments, the property was seized by the mortgage

lender. Implode-O-Meter.

But despite the loss of Neverland, 2008 loomed as a bright spot within what had been a rather bleak decade. His landmark 1982 album, Thriller, was being re-released in celebration of its 25th anniversary. Its promoters were hoping that lightning would strike twice, as they put it.

"It's hard to believe that 25 years ago, Quincy Jones and I embarked on an album named Thriller " Michael said in a breathless video message released by his record company, Sony BMG. "It is my hope that Thriller continues to live on for each new generation to discover."

In the re-configured Thriller album, on the soundtrack of "The Girl Is Mine," Michael ordered that all traces of Paul McCartney's vocals be obliterated. The revised and re-issued album included a tune composed in 1982, but not previously released, "For All Time."

Editor Mark Ellen, writing for The New Statesman, summed up the rerelease of Thriller. "Listen to Thriller today and it has dated only very slightly, and principally because the songs have been over-exposed for so long. The framework of their sound still seems as nervy and energizing: The computerdriven drums, the winding synthesized brass figures, the dry and slightly claustrophobic ring of studio trickery. It's not a record that belongs outdoors, it's for a contained space with low ceilings and strip lights. Everything about it still seems artificial, including the person performing it. There's no real colour or warmth, and no real feelings. Songs are either set in a fantasy world of PG-certificate horror, or cast in some social context beyond the singer's capabilities. Almost every lyric is about girls-dreams, hopes, heartbreak, loss, proprietorial fights, stand-offs with rivals-yet never, even at the time, did you imagine that he was singing about his own life."

In May of 2008, the Library of Congress honored Michael's album Thriller by including it as one of twenty-five selections within the National Recording Registry, defining their action as the library's attempt to save America's aural history for recordings deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

The 2008 re-release of Thriller brought the inevitable lawsuits. John Landis, who co-wrote and directed the original video associated with the album, filed suit. Asking for unspecified damages in a courtroom in Santa Monica, Landis charged that Michael had failed to pay him royalties for the project during the previous four years.

In his suit, Landis claimed that he was owed fifty percent of the profits from both the original and the revised Thriller projects, charging Michael with "fraudulent, malicious, and oppressive conduct."

The bad news came with some good. The Broadway producer, James Nederlander, announced that he had purchased the rights to adapt Thriller for the stage. Despite the profits generated by the re-release of Thriller, Michael was still in desperate need of cash-and plenty of it. Millions, in fact.

During the spring of 2008, he went back to work in a recording studio, recording an album, or at least trying to. At the Palms Recording Studio in Las Vegas, he temporarily abandoned his children so he could concentrate. His backers announced, "He has also sworn off women for the time being." That evoked a laugh in newsrooms throughout America.

In one context, the story was technically accurate. Around that time, a woman in Michael's orbit, the nanny to his children, Grace Rwaramba, was actually "dumped." According to an inside source, "One day she was simply no longer around."

As a means of raising some cash, Michael once again considered following in the footsteps of Celine Dion and other entertainers who had moved, at least temporarily, to Las Vegas. He weighed offers of a long-term singing engagement, seriously considering Vegas as an option for the summer of 2008.

Colony Capital, the private equity group that purchased the loan on Neverland, also owned the Las Vegas Hilton and was a major shareholder in the Station Casinos chain. As such, they could have provided a venue for Michael to pay back his debt. While this deal, which eventually fell apart, was being negotiated, Michael was living briefly in Pahrump, Nevada, about 60 miles west of Las Vegas.

During the spring of 2008, reporters for The New York Post, Stacy Brown and James Fanelli, began an investigation into what had happened to "The Jacko clan"--an update on other "whatever happened to..." stories filed previously by other reporters.

Janet Jackson, then aged 41, had emerged as the most successful of the siblings, worth $150 million. When her parents were confronted with the possible loss of the family mansion at Hayvenhurst, she bought a home for her mother, Katherine, in Las Vegas.

Both parents, Joseph Jackson at 79, and Katherine at 77, were living in Vegas. Joseph was hustling various all-girl singing groups, and Katherine was a stay-at-home housewife.

La Toya, at 52, was living with a rich boyfriend in Beverly Hills and occasionally judging beauty and singing contests. Rebbie Jackson, at 57, was married to a prosperous "commercial giant," Nathaniel Brown.

The boys, each a former member of the once-famous Jackson 5, were not doing as well.

Tito, at 55, was playing minor gigs, some for $500 a night. Randy, at 46, was taking odd jobs like fixing cars in a garage in Los Angeles. Marlon, at 51, was stocking grocery shelves at a Vons Supermarket in the wake of having his home foreclosed by bankers.

Jackie, at 56, was trying to produce records by his sons while trying to launch an Internet clothing business. Jermaine, at 54, faced millions of dol lars in tax liens from federal and state agencies.

The brothers could have crawled out of their financial holes if Michael had agreed to tour with them as part of a reunited Jackson 5, but until the end, Michael refused.

Debts to the Internal Revenue, child support, bad advice, and even worse investments, divorces, and perhaps pride drove The Jacksons off a cliff.

Even though Michael had previously signed his brothers to his personal record label, MJJ, he refused to release any of their music. Bob Jones, Michael's former friend, asserted that "Michael's mission was to make sure his family was broke, and he accomplished that through the industry, which mostly kowtowed to him."

The family had filed for Chapter 11 in 1997, citing debts of nearly $50 million, in the wake of of the collapse of Jackson Communications, Inc.

On his 50th birthday, on August 29, 2008, Michael, wearing oversized "Jackie Kennedy sunglasses" showed up at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas, wearing mismatched pants and a suit jacket. He told ABC's Good Morning America that he still could do all his celebrated dance steps--"and more." In his barely audible voice, he didn't explain what "and more" meant.

Michael went on to say, "I think the best is yet to come in my true humble opinion. People see some of the things I am doing and they say, `Why don't you show this to the world? People don't know you do these things.' And maybe they will."

It was reported that Michael hadn't spoken to his brothers since he'd been freed of child molestation charges. On his birthday, his brothers tried to contact him to settle a debt of $840,000 Michael owed them in royalties from their long-ago Jackson 5 hits. But Michael's handlers kept the brothers at bay.

In spite of Michael's lack of cooperation, Jermaine Jackson went ahead and claimed to the press that the Jackson brothers were rehearsing for a nationwide concert tour, this announcement garnering massive publicity.

But on November 7, Michael pulled the plug on his siblings' hopes and ambitions. Through a spokesperson, he announced, "My brothers and sisters have my full love and support," he said. "We've certainly shared many great experiences, but at this time I have no plans to record or tour with them. I am now in the studio developing new and

exciting projects that I look forward to sharing with my fans in concert soon."

No sooner had he issued that statement than headlines assigned him a new name: AL-JACKO, reporting that Michael had converted to Islam and officially changed his name to Mikaeel. A former Jehovah's Witness, Michael donned Islamic drag at a ceremony at a friend's mansion in Los Angeles.

Michael, as reported, sat on the ground floor of the mansion wearing a tiny hat. An Imam was summoned to officiate at the ceremony.

Showing up to help Michael, or Mikaeel, celebrate the conversion was Cat Stevens, the British singer who had previously changed his name to Yousef Islam in the wake of his own conversion to Islam.

That same month, Sheik Abdulla bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the second-born son of the King of Bahrain, sued Michael for $7 million, the case filed in London at the Royal Court of Justice. The Sheik had itemized every penny of the money he claimed Michael owed him, including within the total a $35,000 utility bill he had paid as a means of keeping the electricity on at the Neverland Ranch. Also included on the Sheik's requests for reimbursement were the costs of a round-trip air ticket for the transport of Michael's hairdresser, and the cost of a carton of Michael's favorite frozen Haagen-Daaz ice cream that His Highness had personally paid for.

In his affidavit, the sheik asserted that Michael had walked out on a deal. According to the court document, Michael had agreed to allow the Sheik to produce the superstar's next album and to publish another of his autobiographies.

In the days leading up to the trial, London papers revealed that Michael no longer even had a bank account in his own name. His former aide and nanny, Grace Rwaramba, claimed at the time that she put some of the money given to Michael by Sheik Abdulla into her own bank account as a means of paying household expenses. At one point, she testified that those funds had exceeded a million dollars in cash.

For a year, Michael had been a resident of Abu Dhabi, living in a palace owned by Sheik Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the emirate's king and father of the Sheik bringing the lawsuit.

In November of 2008, Michael reached an undisclosed settlement with the Bahraini prince.

Also during that November of 2008, the news broke that "the days of wine and roses, giraffes, and late night visits from Macaulay Culkin" had formally come to an end at Neverland. Michael filed a grant deed, transferring ownership of Neverland to the Sycamore Valley Ranch Company, a joint venture between himself and Colony Capital, a real estate investment company. The owner of the company, Tom Barrack, bought up Michael's debt in May when he defaulted on the ranch's mortgage, which had ballooned to $24.5 million.

Right before Christmas of 2008, investigative journalist Ian Halperin stunned the world with an announcement that Michael was gravely ill, suffering from a rare illness known as Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. The condition was defined as so severe that Michael would need a lung transplant, even though doctors reportedly claimed that because of his weakened condition, such an operation might kill him. He was also said to be suffering from emphysema and chronic gastrointestinal bleeding.

Halperin also claimed that Michael could barely speak, and that "the vision in his left eye is 95 percent gone." Reports such as these continued to surface right up until Michael's untimely death six months later.

In January of 2009, The National Enquirer ran a frontpage headlineMICHAEL JACKSON, 6 MONTHS TO LIVE! How could they have known?

In the Enquirers article, an anonymous "family friend" was quoted as saying, "It's tragic. His condition is just so far gone. I'd be surprised if he lasts six months. Painkillers and booze have caught up with him. The only way he was able to cope with the stress of sex scandals and a roller-coaster life involved masking the pain with substance abuse. But the end result is an addiction that will hill him." This so-called friend turned out to be aprophet.

A newspaper report about Michael's health during the post-millennium years appeared almost weekly in some newspapers. Britain's Sun reported that Michael had cancerous lesions on his body and pre-cancerous cells on his face. In vivid contrast, at around the same time, one of Michael's doctors, Dr. Tohme Tohme, claimed, "He's in perfect health-no diseases whatsoever."

In February of 2009, just after Michael denied that he was suffering from a potentially life-threatening lung disease, new health rumors surfaced. He was said to be receiving treatment for a MRSA-type superbug, the skin infection allegedly occurring during his most recent plastic surgery. Reportedly, he was receiving treatment at a Beverly Hills clinic.

Adding credibility to the rumor, a picture was snapped of him on his way to treatment at the clinic. He was wearing his usual sunglasses and a surgical mask.

The fear arose that MRSA, a particularly virulent form of staph infection, might develop into a flesh-eating disorder that would devour his skin. The disease is resistant to conventional antibiotics.

In spite of growing reports about his ill health, Michael himself, in February of 2009, ordered an auction of some of his treasures from Neverland, including a campy and pretentious 1995 portrait of himself in Elizabethan dress, holding a crown poised atop a pillow. One of the most valuable treasures to go up for auction was a 1999 Rolls-Royce Silver Seraph limo with an interior the star had adorned with 24-karat gold doo-dads. "It looks like something that royalty would ride in," said Darren Julien, head of Julien's Auctions, the organization that-orchestrated the April 22-25 sale in Beverly Hills.

Other memorabilia included the glittery white glove worn by Michael during his stage performance of "Billie Jean" and a robotic effigy of Michael Jackson that a special effects team had specifically commissioned for the 1988 film Moonwalker.

Even the gates at Neverland were put up for auction. Michael gave his blessing to the auction, but retained selected pieces for himself "that were personal and sentimental."

By March of 2009, the world was learning about Michael's attempt at a comeback scheduled for the 02 Arena in London. In Britain, headlines blared: WILL IT STILL BE A THRILLER? Backers of the King of Pop's concerts hyped his return as "the mother of all comebacks."

There was fear that the once-golden brand of entertainment conjured up by Michael had been tarnished beyond repair.

"Because of what's happened to him and how he's lived his life over the last twenty years, he's made it very difficult for people to "out" themselves as Michael Jackson fans," said John Aizlewood, a British music writer and broadcaster. "These concerts are a huge opportunity for rehabilitation."

The announcement of Michael's comeback was not always greeted with glee, especially by a cynical press. Writing in The New York Post on May 15, 2009, columnist Cindy Adams declared:

> "Michael Jackson, still alive and kicking-although not as high-is now doing a Streisand. Making his 3, 000th comeback. I mean, it's time he should put his feet up, take his hat off pack his nose away and join the YWCA like other retired ladies. But, no. Some people would say Michael's followers these days are mostly financiers, bankruptcy lawyers, Arab princes, little boys, and plastic surgeons. "

By private jet, Michael arrived in London to make a "special announcement" about the series of concerts to be held at the domed 02 Arena beside the River Thames, the stadium holding up to 20,000 fans. Other performers previously slated for concerts there had included Britney Spears, Prince, and Led Zeppelin.

It came as no surprise that the cynical and skeptical British press did not interpret Michael's arrival in London

"as the Second Coming," in the words of one reporter. Only a small group of curiosity seekers joined the press and paparazzi outside Michael's hotel. When interviewed, some members of the public admitted that they weren't fans at all, but had come to the neighborhood hoping for an autograph from Michael, which they'd subsequently sell on eBay.

Michael's most recent live performance in Britain had not been particularly successful. Configured as part of the 2006 World Music Event Awards, he'd been scheduled to perform a rousing rendition of "We Are the World." Michael had disappointed his fans that evening by singing just a few lines before hastily exiting from the stage.

In London, Michael informed The Daily Express that he had at last "shaken off"those child molestation charges. He said that he had made contact with an adoption agency in Britain and planned to "follow in Madonna's footsteps" and adopt an African child. "I feel my British fans really understand me. For me, the London concerts will make a new beginning."

Only two dozen people, including members of the press, showed up for Michael's announcement that he'd be making a comeback in London at the 02 Arena. This lack of interest did not forebode well for the concerts.

"I'll be performing songs my fans wanna hear," he told his meager audience. "This is it.This is my final curtain call. When I say this, I really mean it."

The tour was promoted by AEG, the world's second-largest promoter. Tim Leiweke, the company's president, told Billboard magazine that "Michael is not mentally unstable. He's also passed a physical at our company's behest. The man is very sane, the man is very focused, the man is very healthy. I think he has been dragged through the mud."

British bookmakers went to work, taking bets that Michael would not show up for this gig. William Hill, plc, the largest bookmakers in the UK, was offering 5:1 odds that Michael would be a no-show. A spokesman for the company, Graham Sharpe, said bets were being made in record numbers. "Once people start buying tickets they may well want to have a bet that he won't show, up as aform of insurance," Sharpe told the press.

The broadcaster, John Aizlewood, predicted that the ever-erratic Michael would show up for the concerts. "This is Michael Jackson playing his greatest hits-some of the greatest hits in the history of music-live. It is a great event. I think even Michael Jackson won't blow it."

It need not be pointed out which side won all those bets in London.

At lam on the morning of March 14, 2009, one million tickets for the concert series went on sale. By 11:45am that same morning, they were all gone. The first of Michael's string of London concerts had been scheduled for July 8. The original commitment had been for only ten gigs. Based on the number of advance tickets sold, the number of concerts was soon increased to fifty. After they went on sale, tickets sold out in just five hours, a world record. They sold at the rate of 40,000 a minute, as Michael's fans swamped the Ticketmaster website.

"This was undoubtedly the busiest demand for tickets for an event which we have ever experienced." Truer words were never spoken by Chris Edmonds, managing director of Ticketmaster United Kingdom.

As director general for his London comeback, Michael turned to Simon Fuller, the man who gave the world the Spice Girls and the Beckhams. After several meetings, Fuller turned him down. Michael then sought help from Simon Cowell, the American Idol judge. Cowell delivered a firm, "No thanks."

Time proved that both Fuller and Cowell were correct in refusing any involvement in Michael's London concert series. Ironically, despite Michael's various injuries and accidents, and his massive potential for drama, his backers of the London concert series, AEG, maintained till the very end that he was in perfect health, having recently passed, they asserted, a recent 4'/z -hour physical exam conducted by independent doctors.

In May of 2009, as Michael rehearsed for his London concerts, a $44 million lawsuit was levied against him by Raymone Bain, a former spokeswoman and one of his former partners.

In her suit, she claimed that he'd reneged on a promise to give her a ten percent cut on deals she helped negotiate. That included the refinancing of both his music catalogue and the 25th anniversary re-release of his Thriller album.

The suit also demanded compensation for her participation in his upcoming string of London concerts, which-if they'd been completed-might have netted him more than $400 million. In the wake of his death, that suit, like so many others, lands in muddy waters. As regards why she had initiated the lawsuit, Bain told the press. "I have been left no choice."

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Michael Jackson went out of life singing and dancing, contrary to some salacious reports. In preparation for his series of upcoming concerts, he performed a dance of death.

He could still do the Moonwalk, even though he was at death's door," said his bodyguard, Miko Brando. In front of a large, brightly lit backdrop, the frail, alarmingly thin Michael executed grueling routines. On the backdrop was lettered an eerie prophecy. THIS IS IT.

In the immediate aftermath of Michael's death, some of the biographers rushing their books and articles into print asserted that the performer, just prior to his concerts, was virtually a member of the "walking dead" and on the verge of burial. But Kevin Mazur, a photographer, reported a radically different scenario two days before the star's death. "The magical Michael Jackson was back," he said. "I felt the same adrenaline rush as when I photographed him for the first time moonwalking."

Lighting designer Patrick Woodroffe told the BBC that "Michael's old dazzle was back."

Only three weeks before, Michael had shown his stamina while filming a video production called Dome Project. Celebrity chronicler Ian Halperin claimed that Michael told "a pal" (unnamed) that he "didn't have what it takes anymore because he had lost his voice and dance moves."

Those working out in the studio at the time have bitterly refuted those accusations, denouncing them as mere sensationalism. Photos released of Michael's final dance routines refute Halperin's claims.

There was more. Michael reportedly told some unknown party, "I'm better off dead," confessing to another close friend, "I'm tired of living." These quotes appear to be fabricated.

Both Brian Oxman, a spokesperson for the Jackson family, and longtime friend Miko Brando, claimed that Michael spent the last full day of his life rehearsing for his upcoming commitments in London. Brando claimed that he saw no telltale signs that Michael was in any trouble.

A different view was expressed by Oxman. "At rehearsals, his use of medications had gotten in the way, along with the injuries which he had sustained previously. He had broken a vertebra, and he had a broken leg from a fall on the stage," Oxman claimed.

As part of his agreement with AEG, Michael had forced the promoters to hire a personal physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, to accompany him on tour at a salary of $150,000 per month.

On the morning of June 25, it was Dr. Murray who discovered Michael in bed, experiencing cardiac arrest. He spent a reported five to ten minutes delivering CPR before rushing downstairs to call a security guard. There was no land line phone in the star's bedroom. After summoning help, the doctor returned to Michael's bedroom to resume his efforts at rescuscitation.

A half hour went by before Michael's "enablers" called paramedics. In cases of cardiac arrest, that much elapsed time is often fatal.

A Los Angeles 911 dispatcher was contacted at 12:21pm Pacific Time. Michael was identified during the call

simply as a "fifty year old man." The address listed was 100 Carolwood Drive in Los Angeles.

The dispatcher ordered the caller to move the unidentified man off the bed and onto the floor.

Michael's security officer told the dispatcher, "He's not responding to anything to...no, no. He's not responding to CPR or anything, sir."

"We're on our way," the 911 dispatcher assured the caller.

When paramedics arrived, they tried to resuscitate the fallen star for 42 minutes before finally rushing him to the UCLA Medical Center. Once admitted, Michael spent another hour on an operating table as doctors worked in a futile effort to keep him alive. Doctors delivered electroshock treatments to Michael's chest and inserted a breathing tube down his throat in an attempt to revive him.

He was declared dead at 2:26pm Pacific Time.

After his body was removed from the hospital, it was flown by helicopter to the coroner's office.

Detectives from the Los Angeles Police Department's Robbery-Homicide Division searched Michael's $100,000-a-month rental in Holmby Hills, following orders from Chief William Bratton. They didn't announce what they were looking for, but presumably a cache of drugs was high on their list.

Detectives were seen removing two large bags of evidence from the mansion, and they also carried off a lot of prescription medications. Dr. Murray's BMW was towed from Michael's home as evidence.

In London, Grace Rwaramba, the former nanny, told the press that "I had to pump Michael's stomach many times because he'd taken too many pills."

At the time of his death, the tragic star weighed only 125 pounds, and was the King of Pill Popping: Zoloft, Demerol, Vistaril, Paxil, Prilosec, Vicodin, Dilaudid, and Xanax. The Los Angeles County Coroner's Office, according to spokesman Craig Harvey, said, "There was no indication of foul play."

A medical expert claimed that if one doctor had prescribed all these drugs, it would "spark a criminal investigation."

An autopsy revealed that Michael's lithe body was riddled with needlemarks and scars and that his scalp was nearly bald. Some sources have denied the baldness, claiming that Michael wore "transplanted" hair. In his stomach was found only partially dissolved pills.

A source claimed, "He was skin and bone, and he had been eating nothing but pills in the days before he died. Injection marks all over his body, and the disfigurement caused by years of plastic surgery show he'd been in terminal decline for some years."

Four fresh injections around his heart no doubt came from failed emergency attempts to pump adrenaline into the chambers of his heart. Three of these injections had penetrated and damaged the walls of his heart. A fourth had missed the target completely and struck one of his ribs, three of which had been broken during futile attempts at CPR.

One autopsy was official, as mandated by the Los Angeles coroner. The other was private, as requested by the Jackson family.

Producer Marc Schaffel issued an "I told you so." Suing Michael for $3 million, he told ABC News, "Everybody around him knew it was only a matter of time before something like this happens. I have said before that if he continued using drugs at this rate, he'd be dead by the time he was fifty."

At the time of his death, Michael may have been sitting on close to 100 unreleased music tracks. It is predicted

that many of these songs will be released in the years ahead as a means of paying the massive debt accumulated by "a millionaire who lived like a billionaire."

Had it not been for reckless spending, Michael could have lived comfortably, as he took in $75 million a year from the rights to his own megahits, as well as those of the Beatles.

Subject to change, Michael's 79-year-old mother was named temporary guardian of Michael's three children. Filing petitions in the Los Angeles Superior Court, she also sought to gain control of the reputed hundreds of millions of dollars that go along with her guardianship. Of course, in theory, that money is supposedly earmarked for the children.

Before Michael's body had turned cold, Katherine sought to be designated as "special administrator" to her son's estate, which would put her in control of the star's billion-dollar music catalogue.

In her petition, Katherine claimed that her son's two children with his second wife, Debbie Rowe, "have no relationship with their biological mother."

As of this writing, the mother of the third child, Prince II (Blanket) has never revealed herself.

During the weeks following Michael's death, Rowe seemed to loom as an uneasy threat for the Jackson family, an outsider with the potentiality of seeking custody of her two biological children.

In the immediate aftermath of Michael's death, when press caught up with Rowe, she told reporters, "I offered him my womb," She went on to assert that after Paris was born, Michael had dumped her because of her future inability to bear children. "It left me all torn up inside," Rowe said, "unable to have more kids."

On the last day of June, the Jackson family acknowledged that it had a copy of a 2002 will that Michael had signed. Reportedly, the superstar left the bulk of his estate to his mother, Katherine, his children, and some of his favorite charities. He avoided naming his father in his will. The will also designated Katherine as the guardian of his three children.

The attorney, John Branca, wrote the will for Michael and was named coexecutor along with John McClain, a record-industry executive. The will puts all of the singer's assets into a trust fund, sources said. Branca had represented Michael in 2006, and was reportedly re-hired eight days before Michael's death.

Appearing before CNN cameras, Joe Jackson touted his new record com pany before expressing condolences for the passing of Michael.

Because of the sensitive nature of Michael's legal history, and the many child molestation charges in his recent past, Barack Obama played it cool, maintaining a bit of distance from the proceedings, and having his press secretary, David Axelrod, announce his condolences. He later wrote a personal note to the Jackson family.

On NBC's Meet the Press, Axelrod said, "The president obviously believes that Michael Jackson was an important and magnificent performer. Yet in his condolences, the president felt it necessary to point out that Michael Jackson led a sad life in many ways."

Later, the president decided to deliver some personal comments about Michael on tape, asserting he "will go down in history as one of our greatest entertainers. I grew up on his music--still have all his stuff on my iPod. I think that his brilliance as a performer was also paired with a tragic and, in many ways, a sad personal life."

JACKO IS BACKO screamed the headlines. His death sent sales of his songs, albums, and videos skyrocketing. Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble reported that they'd sold out of Jackson CDs and DVDs within minutes after his death was announced.

A California real estate developer claimed that Neverland Ranch will "become a California Graceland. There are work crews in there restoring everything," he said. The spokesman didn't want to be named.

Michael's three children, or so it is predicted, are going to grow up rich. But just how rich? They stand to inherit a 50 percent share of a music catalogue valued at $2 billion. But it is estimated that because of his lavish spending habits, Michael left behind $500 million in debt. Creditors emerging from the woodwork will surely tie up probate courts for years to come.

Even before his funeral rites, Michael's promotion company announced that "one of the greatest albums of all time" was on the way. Filmed versions of the rehearsals he choreographed in anticipation of his aborted string of London concerts will be released on CD and DVD.

These rehearsals were taped at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. AEG, the sponsors of Michael's London concerts, are said to be "sitting on a treasure trove of material. "There's a huge core fan base that's going to suck up anything," said an official.

Lisa Marie Presley told the press that "like my father, Michael feared he might die in a similar way. He stared at me very intensely and said with an almost calm certainty, `I am afraid that I am going to end up like Elvis the way he did.'"

In 1977, Elvis was just forty-two years old when he keeled over at his Memphis mansion. Like Michael, the cause was cardiac arrest and, like Michael, it may have catalyzed by years of pill popping.

Lisa Marie concluded, "Somehow, Michael knew exactly what his fate would be some day-more than anyone else knew-and he was right."

Even though Michael had refused to take his calls and also to join in any of his schemes, Jermaine Jackson gave an overly melodramatic statement of doubtful sincerity when he spoke of his brother's death. He described the final moments he spent with the body of his legendary sibling.

"I kissed him on the forehead, and I hugged him, and I touched him. I said, `Michael, I'll never leave you. You'll never leave me.' To see him there, lifeless and breathless, was very emotional for me. He went too soon. I don't know how people are going to take this, but I wish it was me."

Fortunately, Jermaine will never have to actually make the choice of his life over his brother's.

In London, AEG announced that half of the fans who had purchased a concert ticket for $85 had agreed to accept a special commemorative ticket in lieu of a refund. Insurance compensation would also add money to AEG's coffers. "Maybe Michael's failure to follow through on those London concerts won't represent such a loss after all," a spokesperson for AEG announced.

Most friends or acquaintances close to Michael followed a policy of not speaking ill of the dead. Michael's mentor, Quincy Jones, brought more reality into the preceedings by admitting that his longtime pal had been "freaky."

He also stated, "I'm angry because Michael wanted to turn himself white." A report leaked from the coroner's office asserted that Michael's entire body was white. Previously, it had been rumored that Michael's legs were still brown-skinned, and that that had been why he would never reveal them, even when called for as part of the choreography of a music video.

"It's ridiculous, man!" Quincy said. "Have you ever seen his kids?" He obviously didn't want them to be black. We talked about it all the time. He claimed he had this skin disease, that he had a blister on his lungs--all that kind of bullshit!"

"Michael was a Virgo, set in his ways," Quincy said. You couldn't talk him out of it--the chemical peels, and all that stuff. His death hurts my soul, man It's just a lump down there."

When the record producer was asked if he had ever considered his late superstar as odd, he said, "Everybody does his own thing. I've met every freak in this business."

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In the immediate wake of Michael Jackson's death, over the July 4 holidays, headlines screamed of a memorial service being planned within the Staples Center in Los Angeles, where the star had conducted his last rehearsals. A Web site was created to dispense tickets for the free event. The moment it went online, the site was swamped with 500 million hits within 90 minutes. That translated into 120,000 hits per second. But because there was only a total of 17,500 available seats, it meant that getting a ticket was akin to hitting the Jacko-Pot. Many so-called fans who were actually awarded tickets tried to hawk them on eBay, offering them online for as much as $25,000.

In Los Angeles, the memorial service at Staples Center was conducted on July 7. The day began with a private ceremony under tight security at Forest Lawn Cemetery. After the service, family and friends filed into a 32-car motorcade heading for the Staples Center. In the cavalcade was a hearse bearing Michael's body. The star-studded memorial service went smoothly, despite the fears of the Los Angeles Police that pandemonium might break out, and that hordes of fans--none of them with tickets--might mob the arena.

The huge crowds the police feared never showed up. But 2,500 journalists and the flotsam and jetsam of the world's paparazzi turned out en masse.

To fill in the tedious hours before the memorial service began, television commentators had to speculate on almost anything as a means of filling the time, including the cost of the memorial service to the virtually bankrupt Los Angeles. One Fox commentator wondered about the suitability of having named Katharine Jackson guardian of Michael's three children, fretting aloud about how "Grandma Jackson watched her own children being abused at the hand of her husband." The inference was that she wasn't qualified as a guardian in light of the the fact that in the past she'd done little to protect her own brood, especially Michael.

Nancy Giles of CBS News asserted that Michael was "a trailblazer in the same way President Obama is." Nearly all media people agreed that Michael's death was a milestone in African-American history.

There were many attempts to wipe away the unpleasantness associated with the previous ten to fifteen years of Michael's troubled life. All the scandals. All the plastic surgeries. All the conflicting beliefs and appearances of little boys. Diplomatically, ABC news anchor Charles Gibson said, "People have gone back to the music."

The titans of the music industry gathered to pay tribute to the fallen star. But despite of the array of talent, including the Jackson family siblings, the arrival on stage of the rose-draped coffin was "the ultimate rubberneck moment," in the opinion of The New York Times.

Michael Jackson's Memorial Service, July 7, 2009

Michael's body presumably was in that casket, but not his brain. While Mariah Carey was blowing the high notes in the hit song, "I'll Be There," coroners were examining that brain. "As soon as we are done with the brain, we will return it," said Assistant Chief Coroner Ed Winter. "There is a whole series of tests that will be done."

Each of the Jackson brothers wore a single, jewel-encrusted glove as a tribute to their fallen comrade. They also wore matching yellow ties and red roses. It was Marlon who gave the longest speech. Brother Jermaine presented a simple rendition of his brother's favorite song, "Smile, Though Your Heart Is Breaking." Motown legend Smokey Robinson read notes from well-wishers who, for various reasons, could not attend. These included Elizabeth Taylor, Diana Ross, and Nelson Mandela.

Stevie Wonder delivered a moving rendition of "Never Dreamed You Would Leave This Summer." At the end of his song, Wonder walked over to the coffin. "Michael, why didn't you stay?" he asked.

An obviously pregnant Jennifer Hudson came out onto center stage to sing her rendition of "Will You Be There?"

The glittering event also featured presentations by Lionel Richie and Usher, among others.

Wanting to milk the event for whatever personal publicity he could glean, the Rev. Al Sharpton gave a speech dripping with racial overtones. There was a poignant moment, though, when he turned to Michael's children and insisted, "There wasn't nothing strange about your daddy. It was strange what your daddy had to deal with." His aside was met with thunderous applause.

Not everybody looking in on the services agreed with the controversial minister. It was claimed that millions of Americans were outraged by the media blitz associated with Michael's death. Some wrote columns, especially Andrea Peyser in The New York Post.

She referred to the theatrics at Staples Center as a "dog- and pony show-a memorial as dignified as a Vegas lounge-lizard act combined with the entertainment value of a carnival freak show. From the accolades, prayers, and cries of grief, you'd think you were witnessing the death of a saint, not an accused serial pedophile who hated the skin in which he lived. He was an amoral walking skeleton."

Conservative columnist Bill O'Reilly came down heavily on Michael, likening his demise to that of his late father-in-law, Elvis Presley. "While Presley was mourned primarily as a great entertainer, Jackson is being sold as much more. In fact, if you listen to Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, the troubled singer was the second coming of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At the memorial service, Sharpton put forth that Michael Jackson brought blacks and whites together, teaching us all how to love. Wow, who knew? A black icon? Jackson bleached his skin to make it lighter, and presumably paid white men to donate sperm for his three in-vitro children, at least two of whom were car ried to term by a white woman. Does that sound like a black icon to you? What is really going on here?"

Despite the many glittering stars in attendance, an eleven-year-old girl stole the show. It was Michael's daughter, Paris, whose voice had never been heard before in public, and whose face had been concealed from public view throughout most of her young life.

With great hesitancy, she said, "I just wanted to say..." Then she teared up. Aunt Janet, standing nearby, swept up the girl's hair and said, "Speak up, sweetheart, and get close."

Paris began again. "Ever since I was born, Daddy has been the best father you could ever imagine." Her voice cracked, her mouth quivering with emotion. "And I just wanted to say I love him so much." Tears streamed down her face as she fell into the arms of Janet.

Paris then joined with her older brother, Prince Michael I, aged 12, and Prince Michael II (Blanket) in a family embrace. Then an usher gently directed Michael's children off the stage. At that point, Blanket stole the spotlight as he clutched a white-gloved plastic doll-effigy of his father.

At the finale, each of the performers, along with the Jackson family, gathered to sing, "We Are the World" and

"Heal the World."

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Soul crooner Pharrell had made a prediction in a video teaser touting the 25th anniversary re-release of Thriller "Whether he's 90 years old and moonwalking at lmph, the world will be right there to watch."

In 2048, on the upcoming anniversary of Michael's 90th birthday, new generations of fans will no doubt be watching Michael moonwalk. But it won't be happening at 1 mile per hour. His delivery will be widely available on whatever electronic medium is in vogue at the time, and he'll be electrifying.

Wearing black loafers and white socks, he'll tilt his black hat, punctuate his gazelle-like moves by balancing on his toes like a ballet dancer, thrust his crotch forward, and moonwalk across the floor in a way that appears effortless.

In a red leather jacket, Michael Jackson will be boogeying backward at the same time he's fast-footing it forward into the 22nd Century.

"My heart, my mind, are broken. I loved Michael with all my soul."

Elizabeth Taylor

"I feel privileged to have hung out and worked with Michael. He was a massively talented boy-man with a gentleman's soul. His music will be remembered forever."

Sir Paul McCartney

"I can't stop crying. This is too sudden and shocking. I am unable to imagine this."

Diana Ross

"Michael was and will remain one of the greatest entertainers who ever lived. He was exceptional, artistic, and original. He gave the world his heart and soul through his music."

Berry Gordy, Jr.

A Cast of Thousands

(Author's Epilogue)

Compiling the history of Michael Jackson's life and death with any degree of fairness and accuracy is a daunting task. During the past thirty years, he's been the most written about and talked about celebrity in the entertainment industry. A comprehensive bibliography listing everything ever written about him would require a massive encyclopedia of its own.

In my assessment of the source material associated with the life of the entertainer, I depended on what I hoped were reliable witnesses. Regrettably, some of the sources closest to Michael Jackson, for reasons of loyalty or selfinterest, were sometimes deliberately misleading, often uttering statements that shed favorable light on situations that by anyone's estimate were either embarrassing or legally compromising.

Complicating matters, Michael himself has sometimes opted to camouflage details about his personal life, contributing in the process to the mountains of misinformation that now litter the MJ moonscape. In some cases, Jacko seems to have done this almost obsessively, despite his protests about the "lies" (his words) which subsequently appeared about him in the press.

About 30 years ago, I became fascinated by Michael, the Jackson family, and their collective talents, and consequently began compiling information pertaining to their metamorphoses into American legends. Since then, a great number of people-some celebrated, some unknown- provided valuable insights into what tended to happen whenever The Gloved One removed that glove. People from all walks of life, from executives to service personnel, offered information about what was going on behind the carefully guarded doors of the houses and hotel suites Michael occupied throughout his hectic life. Members of Michael's domestic and professional staff also presented intriguing stories to me. Some of them spoke publicly; others preferred the security of anonymity as if still-long after the termination of their employ ment-they feared retribution.

Lawyers, celebrities, show business executives, friends, enemies, other reporters, alleged lovers, classmates, teachers, and cultural critics, many with contradictory opinions, have also weighed in heavily during the compilation of this biography. In some cases I quoted their words as they appeared in previously published articles; sometimes I quoted them after direct encounters and interviews with me.

As for bias in the task of documenting Jacko, whenever it was perceived that a source might be self-serving or deliberately misleading, I quoted that source directly, so that his or her point of view would be presented merely as an opinion and not as a definitive conclusion from a historian. Over the years, based on my perception that they were unreliable, I discarded dozens of "Ihad-a-close-encounter-with-Michael" stories. And as might be expected, the stories included those who praised and those who damned. Some were brutally and unrelentingly negative; others were phrased like mystical tributes from life-long fans. Some, including a few from Elizabeth Taylor, were effusive to the point of being suspect in and of themselves.

Since so much of Michael's life has been played out on the world stage, my researchers, especially Monica Dunn, and I have tried to focus on stories that had previously not been widespread.

The biographer's role is never easy, and determining the "truth" in matters of history and the human heart is always, at best, subjective. But within these pages, I've done my best to portray, as fairly and objectively as possible, the life, death, and legacy of Michael Jackson.

Darwin Porter

July, 2009

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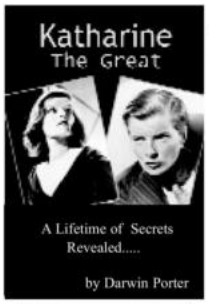

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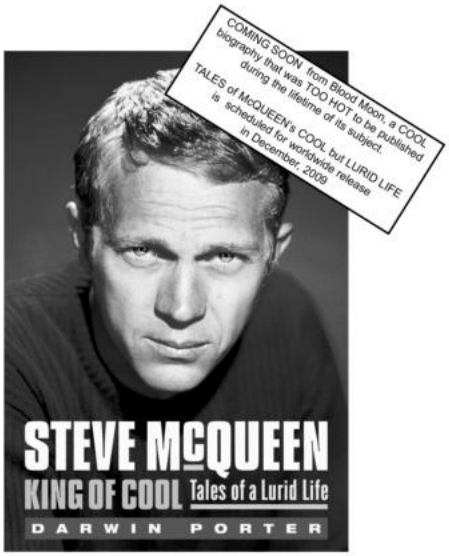

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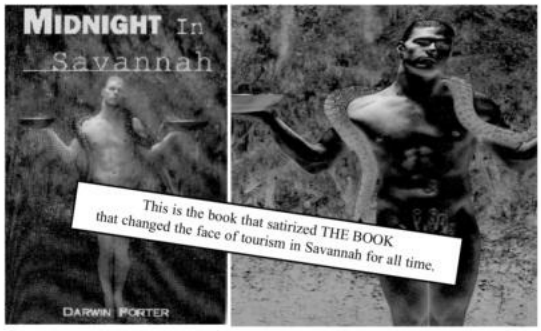

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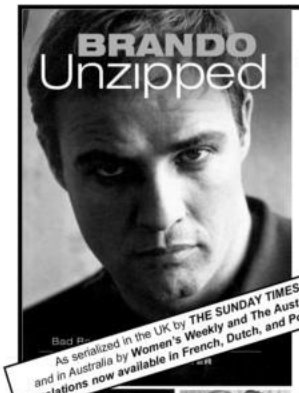

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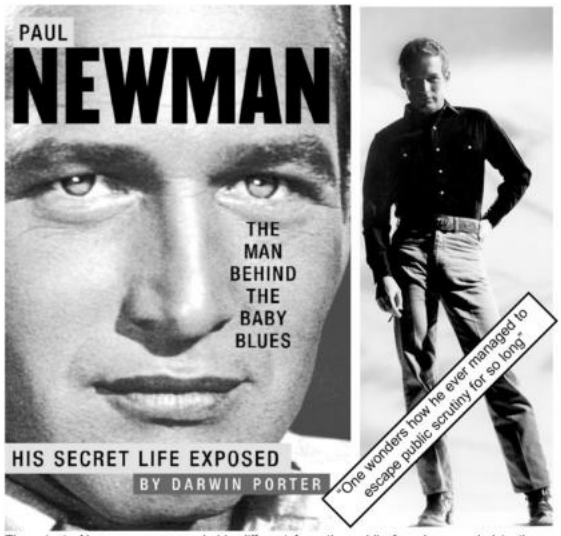

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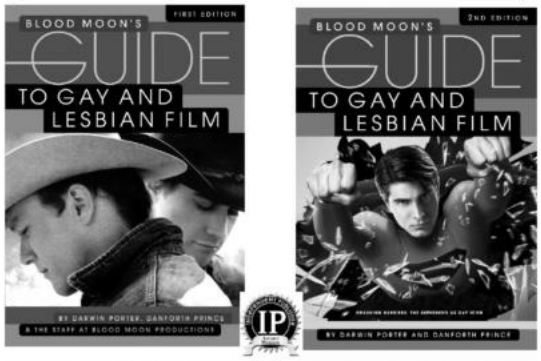

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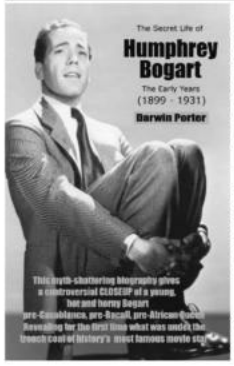

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About the Author, Darwin Porter

This biography was authored by Darwin Porter and originally released in 2007, during the lifetime of MJ, who presumably was aware of its existence and opted to allow its sale and distribution to proceed without any legal protests or publicly expressed objections.

At the time of its release, it was the only significant biography of Michael Jackson published during the previous 15 years, a remarkable circumstance considering the superstar's widespread fame and controversies.

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Porter is also the author of Hollywood Babylon-It's Back!, a prize-winning anthology of celebrity indiscretion that was defined by some critics as "the hottest compilation of inter-generational scandal in the history of Hollywood," and "The Ultimate Guilty Pleasure."

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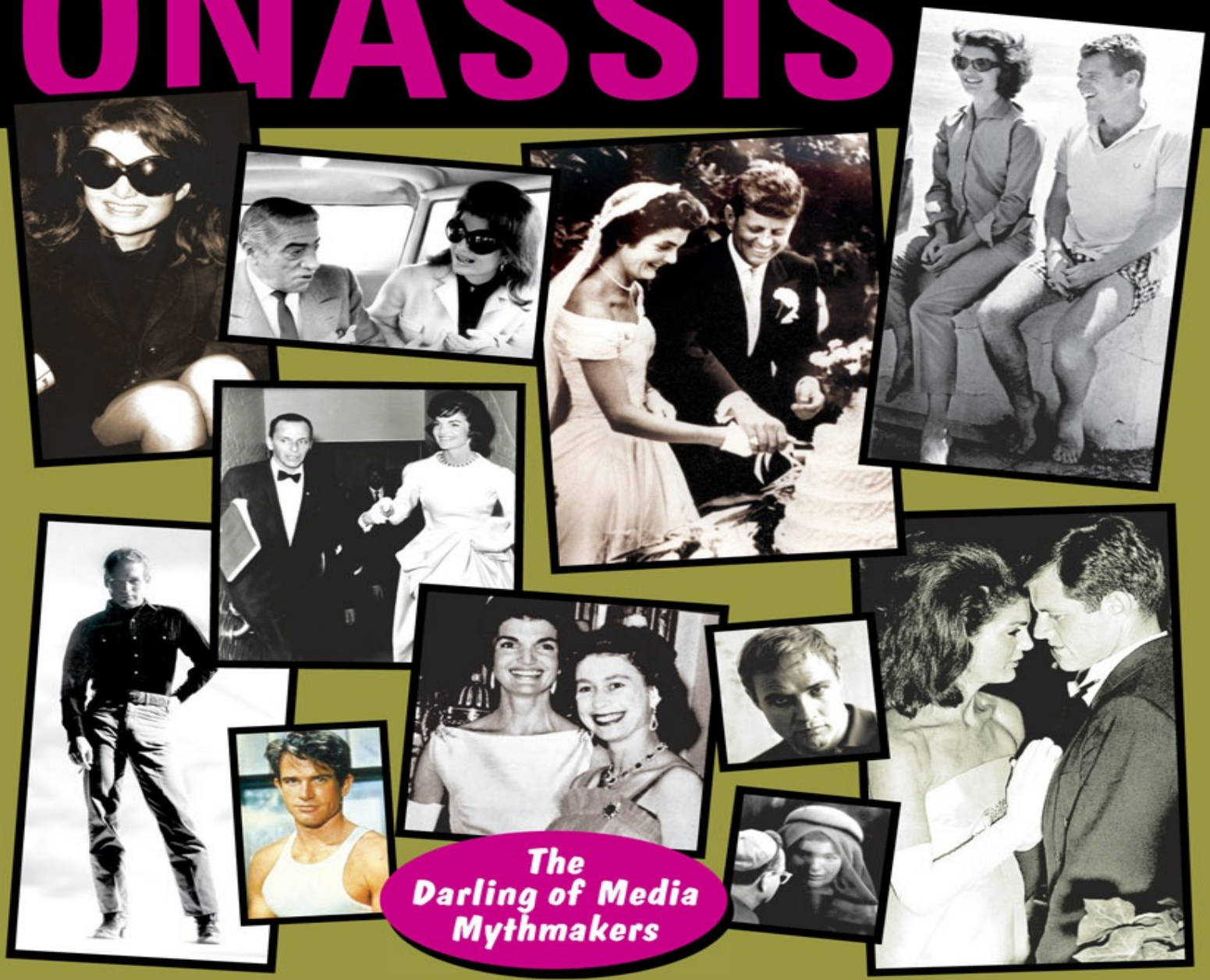

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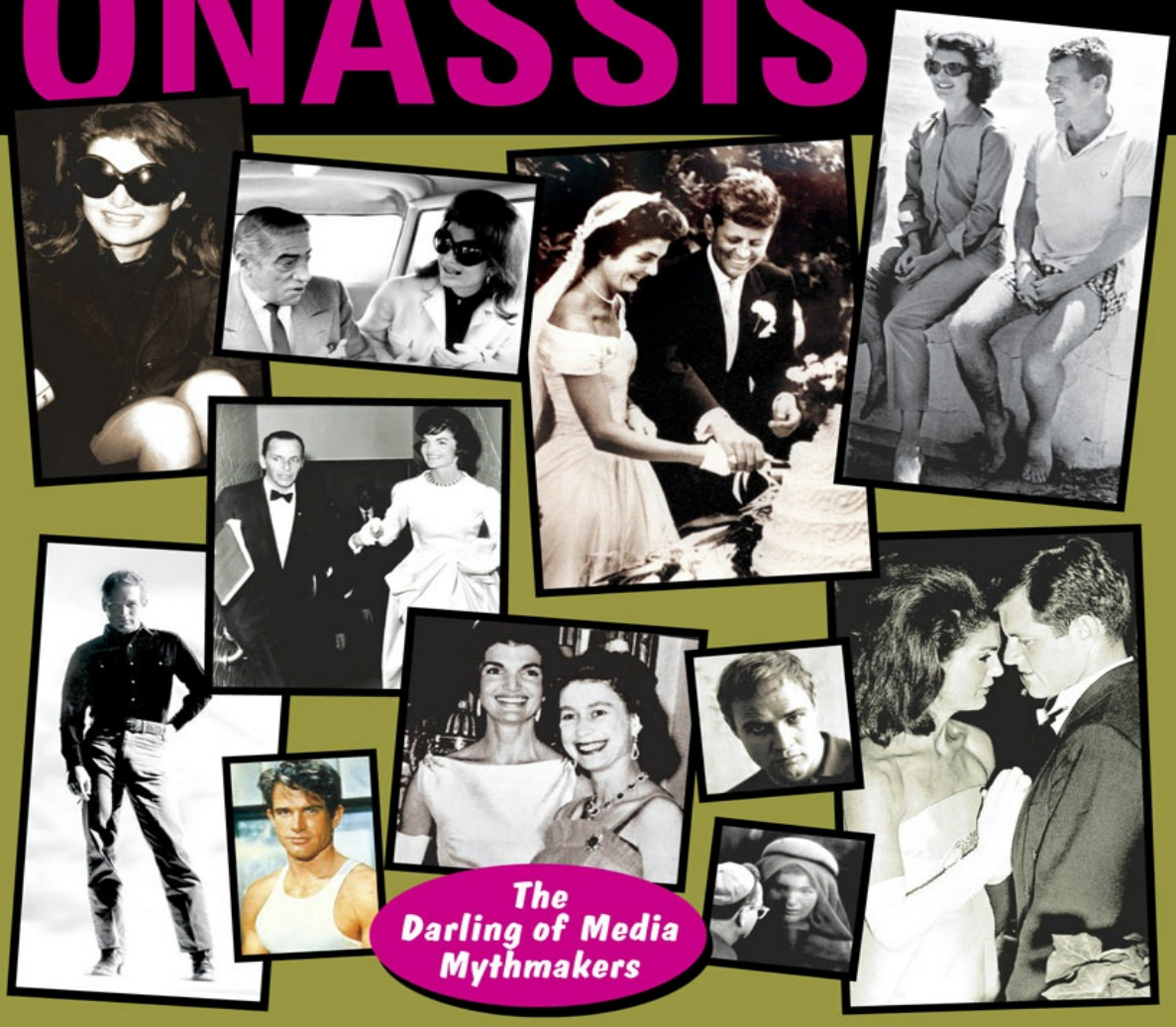
A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams



The Darling of Media Mythmakers

DARWIN PORTER & DANFORTH PRINCE

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS

A LIFE BEYOND HER WILDEST DREAMS

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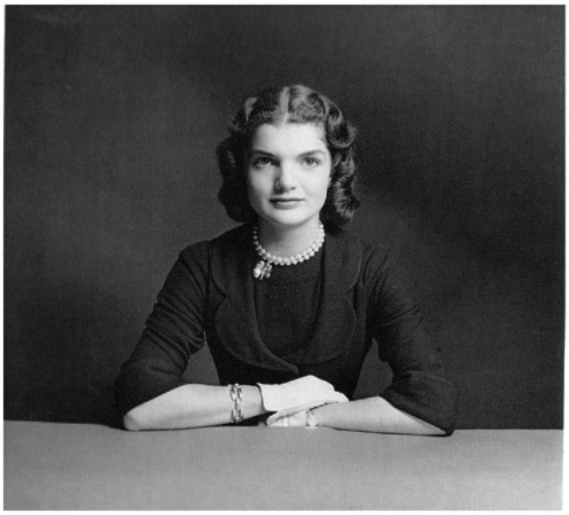
A LIFE BEYOND HER WILDEST DREAMS



DARWIN PORTER & DANFORTH PRINCE

A Special Memorial Edition

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS
A LIFE BEYOND HER WILDEST DREAMS

Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

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THIS BOOK COMMEMORATES THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN FIRST LADY

JACQUELINE BOUVIER KENNEDY ONASSIS

JULY 28, 1929-MAY 19, 1994

From the Publisher, regarding

BLOOD MOON'S ANNIVERSARY EDITIONS

This biography of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is the first of a series of special memorial editions commemorating the 20th, 30th, and even the 60th anniversary of the deaths of some of the leading and most enduring icons, male and female, of the 20th Century.

With the passage of time, increasing numbers of post-mortem, behind-the-scenes secrets have been uncovered. These latter-day revelations challenge the image these celebrities presented of themselves to the world. A case in point is Joan Crawford appearing in film clips proclaiming what a wonderful "Mommie Dearest" she was, or James Dean in film shorts promoting car safety.

Despite the glare of publicity that spotlighted these personalities during their lifetimes, they somehow managed to conceal much of their private lives behind a decorative veil of mystery. Today, thanks to different presuppositions about media, libel laws, the *paparazzi*, and the western hemisphere's armies of reporters and their willingness to publish and distribute exposés, such concealment might be impossible.

By now, most of the public knows that among other conquests, John F. Kennedy seduced a number of movie stars. At least they know about Marilyn Monroe. But how many fans are aware of the male movie stars Jacqueline seduced? You'd be surprised.

Drawing from countless sources compiled over many decades, Blood Moon has accumulated amazing and tantalizing information about American icons who until very recently remained enigmatic. In upcoming releases, the glow of Blood Moon's lunar light will shine on their secret loves, their betrayals, their heartbreaks, their triumphs and tragedies, their valiant battles against personal demons, their international adventures, and their inevitable falls.

These anniversary editions will be perceptive, sensitive, and unbiased "warts and all" portrayals, the kind demanded by Oliver Cromwell when he sat to have his portrait painted.

We will compile these books with no desire to topple any deity from his or her pedestal. Our ultimate aim involves a desire to understand more clearly these iconic personalities within their sociological contexts, since they continue to fascinate us into the 21st Century.

The dust has settled on these figures. The time has come to sweep away the sands of time to see what they concealed. Fasten your seat belts—it's going to be a memorable ride.

Best wishes to all of you, from all of us.

Danforth Prince, President,
Blood Moon Productions

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RECORDING THE VOICES
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: Its Authors

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO:

WILLIAM WALTON
LEM BILLINGS
SENATOR GEORGE SMATHERS
STANLEY MILLS HAGGART
TRUMAN CAPOTE
PETER LAWFORD
GORE VIDAL
LETITIA BALDRIGE
JOHN H. DAVIS
ROY COHN
AND WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO JOHNNY MEYER

PLUS A CAST OF THOUSANDS OVER THE DECADES,
SOME OF WHOM DID NOT WANT TO BE NAMED

BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS
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ABOUT HOW AMERICA INTERPRETS ITS CELEBRITIES

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Prologue

It was a time of mourning in front of 1040 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. A candlelit vigil was being staged at the apartment house of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Her more ardent admirers had gathered, along with tourists, the idle curious, and the inevitable reporters and paparazzi. Word had spread that life was ebbing fast for the world's most famous woman.

Inside, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, in a bedroom lit by antique lamps, was spending her final hour on earth, slipping in and out of consciousness from a morphine-induced sleep. At her bedside were her final lover, Maurice Tempelsman, along with her beloved children, John Jr. and Caroline.

At 10:15PM, Thursday, May 19, 1994, the attending doctor pronounced her dead at the age of sixty-four—"too young to die."

Someone spread the word to Fifth Avenue. Many fans began to weep, evoking that day in Dallas in November of 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

The following morning, John Jr. appeared on the street, looking composed in a tailored dark blue suit. In what would later be called his finest hour, he addressed the crowd:

"Last night, at around 10:15, my mother passed on. She was surrounded by her friends and family, and her books and people and things she loved. She did it her own way, and on her own terms, and we all feel lucky for that, and now she is in God's hands."

Days later, he revealed to the Kennedy family his mother's final words to him. "Please, promise me you'll give up piloting your own plane. ***Please!"***

"I will, mother," he promised. "Trust me. I will."

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Chapter One

Baby Jackie and Black Jack Bouvier

Jackie Grows Up with "The Black Prince" Her Gambling, Womanizing, Bisexual Father

At the 1934 Southampton Horse Show, **Jackie** stood—both emotionally and physically—between her mother, **Janet Lee Bouvier**, and her father, **Black Jack Bouvier**.

From the beginning of their long and complicated sisterhood, **Lee Bouvier** *(in the carriage)* lived in **Jackie's** shadow.

Torn from the pages of *The Great Gatsby*, Black Jack Bouvier helped define the Roaring Twenties. He was seductive, charming, dangerous, and, in the words of his wife, Janet, "a barnyard rooster."

His legitimate daughters included Jacqueline and Lee Bouvier. His illegitimate twins, and boy and a girl, were sent to Britain.

A womanizer, Black Jack was also bisexual, indulging in numerous affairs with both young men and women, often on the same night. He was a hedonist, a rogue, a gambler, a scoundrel, a rascal, a libertine, and a heartbreaker, leading a dissolute life which featured promiscuous sex and other vices he claimed were "not fit to mention in polite company." A moneymaker who dabbled with high risks, he also spent recklessly.

Janet, holding her happy daughter, **Jacqueline**, was unaware of the oncoming Wall Street crash that would mar their lives.

This was the man who functioned as Jackie's role model for her future husbands, John F. Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis. Because of the early examples her father established, she was perhaps able to indulge, or at least overlook, their frequent betrayals and infidelities.

Perhaps Black Jack loved "my darling Jacqueline," too much, at least in the opinion of Janet.

Black Jack himself, *[formally known as John Vernou Bouvier III]*, later recalled that "My daughter, Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, could have chosen a more opportune time to come into the world. She was born on July 28, 1929. In October came the great Wall Street Crash, plunging the world into a depression. I suffered terrible losses that day."

"I was called Black Jack by my friends, because of my dark skin color," he claimed. "My enemies had their names for me. Sometimes, the ladies referred to me as The Black Sheik, claiming that I looked like Rudolph Valentino. I was also called 'The Black Orchid.' My favorite nickname was 'The Black Prince.' When Jackie started going to the movies, she said if I'd gone to Hollywood, I would have given Clark Gable competition. After all, we had the same mustache. Jackie got her good looks from me—or so they say."

"I was a stockbroker, but not a conformist," he said. "A bit of a maverick. My motto came from Martin Luther. 'He who loves not wine, women, and song, is a fool his whole life long.'"

Born in 1891, Black Jack was the oldest son of Major John Vernou Bouvier, Jr. He was one of five children, each of whom would become a future aunt or uncle of Jacqueline Bouvier. These included Black Jack's younger brother, William Sargent Bouvier, nicknamed "Bud;" Black Jack's sister, Edith; and two strawberry blonde twins, Maude and Michelle Bouvier.

Black Jack had graduated from Yale in 1914 at the bottom of his class. His classmate, Tom Collier, later said, "He never opened a book, but practically seduced every virgin who came on the weekends, hoping to pick up Yale undergraduates in the local taverns."

> *"Your Relationship with Jackie is Unnatural"*
>
> —Janet (Jackie's mother) to Black Jack

"No one could believe it. On some nights, he had three or four girls waiting downstairs to be serviced. What a stud! He would bop one and then summon the next. He treated girls something awful, but they flocked to him. We called him 'The Great Lover.' From what I observed of him in the shower, he had one powerful weapon."

Black Jack's Society Seductions

"The Merry Widow" and the Richest Teenager in the World"

When the United States entered World War I, Black Jack was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in the Army Signal Corps. Black Jack wrote Collier, "While waiting for this dirty little war to end, I'm spending all my time in the smoke-filled, honky-tonk, back alley bars and brothels of the Carolinas."

After the war, he acquired a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

His friend, Louis Ehret, a wealthy realtor, said, "Jack was reckless with money. He ran up huge gambling debts. What he didn't drink, he pissed away on women. I think he invited half of New York to his apartment at 375 Park Avenue. Women flocked around him like moths to the flame. He even shacked up with Mae Murray, who'd starred in Erich von Stroheim's *The Merry Widow*. Quite a contrast. his dark skin against her powder puff whiteness. One night he went home with Texas Guinan after we visited her speakeasy. He once told me that he'd impregnated at least a dozen women, arranging back alley abortions for them."

"The biggest scandal that circulated about him was that he was seducing his twin sisters, Maude and Michelle," Ehret claimed. "They loved to party as much as he did. Some women wanted both Bud and Jack in their beds at the same time." The reference was to his alcoholic brother, William Sargent Bouvier.

Black Jack got to taste the beestung lips of silent screen vamp **Mae Murray,** "the Merry Widow" herself.

"Bud could drink even more than Black Jack, if that were possible," Ehret said. "The Major eventually cut Bud off, calling him a 'contemptible parasite and dirty nuisance.'"

Black Jack went every day to the Maidstone, the most exclusive country club of East Hampton. If the weather was fair, Black Jack would strip down and sunbathe nude in the courtyard, much to the delight of the society ladies passing by. Some of them would stop and stare in disbelief. As Kathleen Bouvier wrote, "He never saw any reason to conceal what the good Lord had given him. And by his own reckoning, he had given him just about everything. His seductiveness lay in his aura of unquestionable masculinity. He looked like the concrete realization of a young girl's dreamy fantasy, a glamorous sheik who would whisk her off to his tent in Araby."

One night at a dance at Maidstone, Black Jack met Janet Norton Lee. She was the second of three sisters, the others being Winifred Norton Lee and Marion Norton Lee. Janet could be seen whizzing along the roads of Long Island in her own car. She lived in a big house attended to by servants, and she had spent a year at Sweet Briar College and another year at Vassar.

She bragged that she was "a descendant of the Lees of Maryland," a reference to a rich and prestigious family. Actually, she was descended from Irish immigrants who had fled the potato famine in their home country.

Edie Beale, Jackie's cousin, once revealed a family secret. "Janet wasn't in love with Black Jack. She fell hard for his younger brother, Bud. From what I heard, Bud taught Janet about the birds and the bees. She wanted to marry him, but the Lee family objected to him because he was a notorious alcoholic. So guess what? She married his alcoholic brother, Black Jack instead. You figure it out."

Even so, Bud agreed to be his brother's best man at his wedding to Janet Lee, his former lover, at St. Philomena Church in East Hampton on July 7, 1928. *The East Hampton Star* heralded it as "The Social Event of the Season."

At his wedding reception at the Savoy Plaza Hotel in Manhattan, Black Jack had a fierce argument about finances with his new father-in-law, James Thomas Lee.

Socialite Alexandra Webb, a "friend" of the family, said: "Janet married Black Jack because he was in the Social Register. He married her because her father operated a bank. She was a bitch and he was a bastard, and in the end, both were disillusioned. From such a union emerged Jackie, who inherited all the bad traits of both her mother and her father, but hid it with such charm and grace she enchanted the world."

After their wedding, Black Jack, with Janet, sailed for a five-week honeymoon aboard the *S.S. Aquitania* to Europe.

Janet got a preview of her future life with her new husband. During the crossing, he neglected her shamefully. It was only toward the end of the voyage that she discovered why. In the immediate aftermath of her discovery, she threw a major temper fit, breaking the large wall mirror in their cabin.

By the time they checked into the Ritz Hotel in Paris, some harmony had been restored to their marriage. But their truce lasted for only three nights. That's when he disappeared to the Folies Bergère, later retreating to a seedy hotel on Place Pigalle with three of the shapeliest of the showgirls.

As Cole Porter later claimed, "He also took delight in seducing some of the prettiest of the transvestites at the Carousel. He told me it added spice to his table of delights. 'Variety in the bedroom,' he claimed. 'That's what life is all about. A man gets tired of the same old thing every night.' I knew then that Janet would never be able to contain this man's voracious appetites."

Heiress **Doris Duke** on the dawn of "all those tobacco millions."

Aboard the *Aquitania*, Black Jack had met a chaperoned sixteen-year-old, Doris Duke, heiress to tobacco millions and in the coming years, the richest woman in the world.

Both of them were very inventive about finding ways to slip away with each other. Even at that young age, Duke was a very independent young woman and often did exactly what she wanted.

After his return to Wall Street, Black Jack boasted to his fellow stockbrokers that, "I deflowered the heiress. The greedy little bitch couldn't get enough of me. We found plenty of places on board the ship for a rendezvous. With a few bribes to the staff, we had any number of compartments open to us for an hour or so. By the time I returned to Janet's bed at night, I was exhausted and went to sleep."

Black Jack also told Cole Porter and other friends that he regretted he'd married Janet. "If I had been free, I think I would have wooed and romanced Doris and married her, ending up with control of all those tobacco millions."

Jackie Is Conceived and Parented by Competitive Daredevils

Jackie's mother, Janet Lee Bouvier, was twenty-two years old when she gave birth to Jackie. Friends hailed her as a "daredevil" horseback rider. She later imparted her love of horses to her daughter. In one letter, a classmate described her as "aggressive as hell and intent on marrying a wealthy man."

Jackie grew up in East Hampton in the home of her grandfather, "the Major." On a fourteen-acre estate, he'd built a mansion in the style of an English manor house. He called it Lasata, American Indian for "Place of Peace." It was anything but.

As Jackie grew older, she became a voracious reader. One of her favorite novels was F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. She later claimed that Lasata had been torn directly from the pages of that novel.

Her grandmother was Maude Sargent Bouvier, who indulged her husband, a stern chauvinist and American patriot, a brash and boastful man with a waxed mustache who always dressed in three-piece suits and a high, starched collar.

The Major was called "a *belles lettres* dilettante and a professional curmudgeon behind *pince-nez* glasses."

Jackie later referred to Maude as "a kindly Victorian relic, who turned a blind eye to her husband's mistresses. The Major neglected her and would go for weeks without speaking to her. She lived with heartbreak and witnessed all four of her children get divorced; another had died young. The siblings hated each other, but somehow Maude put up a brave front. She was the glue who held the Bouviers together as a family unit, if indeed such a dysfunctional family could be called a unit. They were more like bickering tribesmen. Lasata was a nightmare place."

In her teens and in riding togs, **Jackie** poses between **Black Jack Bouvier** *(left)* and her grandfather, "The Major," also known as **John Vernou Bouvier, Jr.**

The most devastating critique of the Bouvier family's ancestral pretensions was delivered to the world at large by Truman Capote, who later, after their marriage, became a friend of both Jack and Jackie Kennedy. Like Jackie, Capote was a social butterfly, and he liked gossip even more than she did.

"The Bouviers were *poseurs*," Capote said in later life after Jackie had dropped him from her list. "They wanted it to appear that they had had breeding, power, and money for centuries. But their geneology was invented. The Major traced his family back to French aristocracy, but they were cabinetmakers. He even created a fake coat-of-arms. It was a total lie. He fooled his own family, including Jackie, who seemed to have adopted the loftiest of Marie Antoinette principles. You know, *noblesse oblige* and all that shit."

"In 1925, the Major had published *Our Forebears*, a work of total fiction," Capote claimed. "In that book, he traced the Bouvier family roots to one François Bouvier, circa 1553, of the ancient house of Fontaine, near Grenoble in the French Alps. This long-ago aristocrat had no connection to the Major's family at all."

"Jackie was descended from cabinetmakers, household maids, ironmongers, tailors, shopkeepers, tavern owners, farmers, and chimney sweepers," Capote charged. "In case you don't know French, 'Bouvier' translates as oxherder, which more or less sums up Jackie's forebears."

Jackie's little sister, Caroline Lee Bouvier, was born on March 3, 1933, the inauguration eve of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first term as president. She would live forever in the shadow of her older sister, Jackie, creating a jealous rivalry that would last until the end of Jackie's life.

It began during childhood and continued throughout Jackie's time in the White House and beyond. Sometimes, the competition involved a battle over men, as in the case of Aristotle Onassis, whom Lee thought might marry her until he proposed instead to Jackie. Lee was also rumored to have had an affair with Jackie's first husband, JFK, as well.

Lee's biographer, Diana DuBois, said, "Lee lived close to the legend, but never became one herself."

After Jackie's birth and throughout her early years, Janet had an uneasy feeling that Black Jack was taking too much interest in his daughter. He insisted on bathing with her in the large marble Bouvier tub in the master bathroom.

Janet was repulsed when she heard her daughter's squeals of delight.

"What is he doing to her now?" she repeatedly asked the maid.

His mother, Maude Bouvier, saw nothing objectionable with her son's bathing habits. "It shows how loving my son is to his Jackie." To Maude, Black Jack could do no wrong.

One night, Janet grew suspicious about what was going on in the bedroom. She entered silently and flipped on the light. She pulled back the bed covers to discover a nude Jackie in bed with Black Jack, who had a large erection. She yanked a screaming Jackie from her husband's bed and refused to let him bathe or sleep with Jackie ever again.

Even after that incident, Black Jack continued to worship his daughter. "She practically swooned every time he came home," Janet later said.

Even when Jackie tossed a chocolate cream pie into the face of one of her despised teachers at a school social

event, Black Jack never disciplined her. “She’s got a free and independent spirit—that’s all,” he told his mother, Maude. She constantly bragged to her socialite friends, “Jackie is going to grow up to become the female image of my son.”

As Jackie grew older, Black Jack called her “Jacks,” and he even bragged to her about his sexual exploits. When he visited her at Miss Porter’s School in Farmington, Connecticut, they played a special game. Jackie would point to various mothers of her classmates. “Have you had that one, Daddy?”

Caught hand-holding on camera, **Black Jack** had just emerged from four hours in the woods with **Virginia Kernochan**, his golfing partner. At the Tuxedo Park Riding Academy, a fence-straddling **Janet** *(far right)* seemed oblivious to their affair until this candid photograph was developed.

“Not yet, but check with me next weekend,” he’d tell her.

Growing up, Jackie witnessed many fights between Janet and Black Jack. “Often, they were violent,” Jackie recalled. “Janet got many a black eye. Sometimes, the fights turned bloody when inanimate objects were used. Father got so awfully drunk that I had to bathe him, mopping up the vomit and urine and changing his bed sheets.”

Each of Jackie’s parents communicated very different signals. From Janet, she came away with a negative self-image. According to author Tina Santi Flaherty, Jackie was told that her hair was “too frizzy, your size ten feet too big, your shoulders too broad, and your eyes set too wide apart.”

In contrast, according to Flaherty, Black Jack told her how to attract men: “To be noticed in a crowd, walk to the center of the room, put on a dazzling smile, and keep your chin up. Don’t let your eyes dart around the room. Never act as if you’re looking for someone. They should be looking for you. Remember, style is not how rich you are, but a state of mind that puts quality before quantity. That’s what makes you a Bouvier.”

To Jackie’s chagrin, Black Jack and Janet separated in 1936.

After their estrangement, when Black Jack came for her on weekends, she had waited for hours in advance of his arrival. She ran screaming, “Daddy, Daddy” to his car and fell into his arms. In Manhattan, they shared horse-and-buggy rides in Central Park, lunch at Schrafft’s, and shopping expeditions on Fifth Avenue.

Following his separation from Janet, Black Jack moved into a two-bedroom apartment at 125 E. 74th Street, where he could date at his pleasure, entertaining a number of very young and beautiful women who succumbed to his charm.

A young broker on Wall Street, Hugh (the same name as Jackie’s future stepfather) Brunfield later told an investigative reporter that “for six glorious weeks I was Black Jack’s boyfriend. But one weekend when Jackie arrived, he moved me out and rented me a room at the Westbury Hotel. I was dying to meet Jackie, but he wouldn’t allow it. He told me I was too effeminate, although he didn’t object to that in bed. In bed, he always wanted me to be the woman.”

“But, alas, he told me one night that he was no longer going to be my husband. He’d taken up with a 20-year-old female dancer on Broadway, whom he’d met at a party thrown by Cole Porter.”

Black Jack teaches Cary Grant How to Walk

“I’m Mad About Black Jack” —Cole Porter

Years would pass before young Jackie learned that her beloved father also had affairs with men. According to author Edward Klein, “When Jackie was a young girl, she heard her father heap contempt on ‘faggots.’ The nuns and priests taught her that homosexuality was a sin.” Fortunately, Jackie didn’t inherit any of her father’s prejudices, and she later became a friend and confidant of many homosexuals, including Truman Capote. Klein claimed, “She started to accept the fact that, like homosexuals, she herself was not what most people considered ‘normal.’ In a way, she was ‘almost normal,’ just like her gay friends.”

Charles Schwartz, in his biography of Cole Porter, revealed that “Some of Cole’s most intense affairs were with men from distinguished families. Cole, for instance, was reported to have been very much taken at one time with Black Jack Bouvier.”

“I’m just mad about Jack,” Cole told his gay friends. Both men had been in the same class at Yale.

Composer **Cole Porter** expressed his feelings for Black Jack in lyrics—“Mad About the Boy.”

Somehow, the Bouvier family became aware of the affair between Black Jack and Cole. “Jack was very bi-,” claimed Schwartz. “He joined, from time to time, Cole and actor Monty Woolley during their hunts for working-class males. And not for bridge purposes.”

Franklyn Ives, an insurance executive in New York, claimed that Black Jack had trouble keeping his fly zipped. One of his favorite Manhattan watering holes was Cerutti’s, a gay bar on Madison Avenue. In those days, gay bars were not legal, so many homosexuals invited their gay-friendly women friends to accompany them to the bar so the police would not raid it, which they sometimes did when they found only men drinking at a tavern.

Black Jack paid **Cary Grant’s** rent in return for favors.

It was here at Cerutti’s that Black Jack first encountered Archibald Leach, an entertainer from Britain who would ultimately become the movie legend Cary Grant, according to Ives.

Cary liked to sing Cole Porter songs, including “You’re the Top,” which for homosexuals had a double meaning not often understood by straight audiences of that day. Ironically, he would end up playing Cole Porter in the movie *Night and Day* (1946) although references to the composer’s homosexuality could not be presented on the screen.

The film's plot had to be almost totally fabricated.

Black Jack and Cary met around the piano where musician Garland Wilson entertained nightly.

When Black Jack met Cary, Cary was living as the lover of George ("Jack") Orry-Kelly, the costume designer, a relationship explored in Marc Eliot's biography, *Cary Grant*. To support himself, Cary was a paid escort, his handsome features and athletic body making him highly desirable as a gigolo. Cary made it clear to all his clients that he was employed just for his "social services but not boudoir duty."

Black Jack, or so it is said, advised Cary about his clothes and even helped him get rid of his lingering British "singsong lilt," as Black Jack called it. "If you want to go to Hollywood you've got to speak like a radio announcer, without any accent at all."

Black Jack later recalled that "I taught Archie how to walk. Before that he walked with acrobatic rubber legs because of his former life as a street acrobat."

When Orry-Kelly kicked Cary out of his apartment, he went to live in a rented room at the NVA Club in the Times Square area. Black Jack paid his rent. Janet became aware of this, and widely distributed the news among her family and friends, hoping to discredit Black Jack.

Cary later dumped Black Jack when Cary took up with Reginald Hammerstein, the younger brother of Oscar Hammerstein II. He was casting a big new musical, *Golden Dawn*, for the autumn. Archie (i.e., Cary) and "Reggie" soon became a frequently spotted-together item in the nightclubs. Black Jack often encountered them, but by then both men had moved on. At one point Black Jack was rumored to be dating a young married couple as part of a *ménage à trois*, socialites from East Hampton.

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Later in life, Jackie drew up a list of men she'd like to seduce. Cary Grant was included on that list. Her husband, JFK, also found Grant appealing. Sometimes, he'd instruct a White House telephone attendant to connect with him, telephonically, from the Oval Office "Just to hear that impeccable voice."

Once JFK popped the question to Grant. "Are all those tales about you and Black Jack really true?"

"Please don't ask for the truth," Grant said. "I always believed it's wrong to lie to the President of the United States. Let's close the case."

Black Jack Meets His Future Son-in-Law, "A Mick from Boston."

In spite of a failed attempt later at a reconciliation with Janet, the Bouvier's divorce seemed inevitable, eventually transpiring in 1940. Black Jack was ordered to pay $1,050 monthly to support Janet and to maintain their daughters. He was granted visitation rights on weekends.

The support money was difficult for him to raise, as he was involved in various lawsuits for the repayment of loans. In addition, the IRS was in pursuit of him for back taxes.

The divorce was finalized when Jackie was eleven. Two years later, in 1942, Janet would marry Hugh Auchincloss, a wealthy investment banker. He had three children from a previous marriage and would have two more with Janet.

Jackie's new stepfather introduced her to a more lavish lifestyle than she'd ever known. Throughout her high school years, she divided her time between two estates. One was Hammersmith Farm, a 28-room mansion with thirteen fireplaces and views overlooking Narragansett Bay outside Newport, Rhode Island. Most of the farmhands had been drafted, so Jackie had to feed 2,000 chickens a day.

The other estate was Merrywood, lying on forty-six acres fronting the Potomac River in Virginia.

After Hugh Auchincloss became the stepfather of Jackie and Lee in 1942, Black Jack saw less and less of his daughters for a long while. When they were not in school, they were at the Auchincloss estates, either Hammersmith Farm or Merrywood.

Black Jack's drinking became so severe that on three different occasions, he checked himself into a rehabilitation program at the Silver Hill Sanitorium in New Canaan, Connecticut. He was a patient there in 1944, in 1946, and again in 1947. But after each of those sojourns, once he was released, he began to drink again.

One night in Manhattan, during February of 1953, Black Jack met John F. Kennedy. Jackie announced to her father, "This is the man I'm going to marry."

"I hope he doesn't take after his crooked father," Black Jack said.

She later told friends that the two men got along well. "I expected them to talk about politics and sports, but they even talked about other women in front of me," she later lamented.

Even though JFK was a “god damn mick,” Black Jack bonded with him and saw him on a number of occasions, even inviting him for lunches at the Stock Exchange Luncheon Club on Wall Street.

One of the most scandalous stories spread by Cole Porter, Black Jack’s former lover, was that one night Black Jack and JFK got really drunk and arranged for a showgirl hooker to visit his small apartment. According to Porter, both of them seduced this girl in the same bed. Porter always claimed that more than wanting to have sex with the young woman, Black Jack was motivated by wanting to see his future son-in-law “nude and erect—and in the saddle.”

After meeting his future son-in-law, **John F. Kennedy**, Black Jack told Cole Porter, “I could go for that cute Mick myself.”

Porter also charged that later, Black Jack was attracted to Lee’s first husband, Michael Canfield, whom she’d taken up with after dropping out of Sarah Lawrence College. While working at *Harper’s Bazaar*, she had been offered a screen test by the staff at Paramount’s New York City office, but ultimately, she turned it down.

Michael Temple Canfield, the adopted son of publisher Cass Canfield, a Marine and a combat veteran, had graduated from Harvard.

Perhaps out of jealousy, Porter later said, “I don’t think Black Jack got to see his other future son-in-law in action, but I’m sure Michael could have dropped his shoes under Black Jack’s bed any night. I’ve known of many closeted, rich, gay homosexual men who ‘auditioned’ their future sons-in-law by taking them to bed, especially if he were a gigolo marrying into the family fortune.”

Janet embarked on a campaign to exclude Black Jack from her older daughter’s wedding and from all the festivities surrounding it. A series of pre-ceremony dinner parties were scheduled, and Janet eliminated her former husband from all of these events. Reportedly, his feelings were seriously hurt, which drove him to drink even more. The only time he encountered his daughter was for five minutes at a wedding rehearsal, at which point Janet stayed on the other side of the room and did not speak to him.

“It is the father’s role to give the bride away, and I plan to escort her down the aisle,” he said loud enough for both Jackie and Janet to hear him.

At Hammersmith Farm, the day of the wedding dawned bright and clear. Janet gave her daughter her rosepoint lace veil, perhaps forgetting that it was the same veil worn at her own (disastrous) wedding to Black Jack.

Jackie detested the gown Janet had purchased for her, and a fashion writer, covering the wedding, seemed to agree, attacking it “as an atrocious mass of tissue silk taffeta, with excessive ornamentation of ruffles, tucks, stitching, and flowers.”

For “something blue,” she wore a blue garter from Janet.

Black Jack had taken a room at the Viking Hotel in Newport. John E. Davis and Harrington Putnam, married to Black Jack’s twin sisters, were sent to retrieve him. They discovered him drunk and naked in bed. “He was cursing Janet, calling her every bitch, slut, whore, cunt, and some other names not in Webster’s,” according to Putnam.

In this 1947 photo, **Jackie** was just about to turn eighteen and become an "independent woman" when she stood with **Black Jack**, dressed in clothes appropriate for post-war Wall Street.

Janet was alerted and immediately asked her husband, Hugh Auchincloss, in lieu of Black Jack, to walk Jackie down the aisle of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. Janet sent word that she'd hired two armed security guards to eject Black Jack if he dared show up at the wedding.

Black Jack was also excluded from the wedding reception at Hammersmith Farm, which attracted some 1,300 guests, many of them drunken Irish politicians from Boston, friends of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy.

Later, from her honeymoon in Mexico, Jackie wrote her father, telling him that, "In my mind you symbolically accompanied me down the aisle."

Male friends from Wall Street, fellow stock brokers, often visited Black Jack in his New York City apartment. Sometimes he received them drunk and nude, lying on his couch next to two or three bottles. At other times, he was clad in blue—never white—boxer shorts. These friends reported that he always seemed in a bitter mood and would frequently launch into loud tirades. He was seeing less and less of Jackie and Lee.

"He was very prejudiced," said stockbroker Edward Smythe, "like many WASP men of that day. It was kike this or kike that. He also attacked micks, and had a special hatred for Joseph P. Kennedy, who had been the chairman of Franklin Roosevelt's newly established Securities and Exchange Commission. Kennedy had outlawed some of the various techniques and regulations that had previously allowed Black Jack to profit on the stock market. It was ironic that Kennedy later became Jackie's father-in-law. It wasn't just the Irish. Black Jack called Frenchmen frogs and Italians WOPs."

In contrast to his exclusion from Jackie's wedding, Black Jack did attend Lee's wedding to Michael Canfield on April 18, 1953 at Washington's Holy Trinity Church, and also the reception at Merrywood. But friends later reported that he came away depressed, realizing how luxurious life was at the Auchincloss estate where Hugh could give his daughters far more than he could with his more limited means.

At Merrywood, Black Jack heard the rumor that his son-in-law was actually the bastard son of a married English noblewoman and Prince George, the Duke of Kent, the younger brother of King Edward VIII. *[After a brief and hysterically controversial reign, Edward VIII was "demoted" to Duke of Windsor after abdicating his throne.]*

The Canfields, it was said, had adopted the man who married Lee Bouvier as a means of avoiding a scandal. Later, when Black Jack appraised photos of the legitimate son of the Duke of Kent and compared it to a photograph of his illegitimate son, Michael, he said, "The two boys do look very much alike. It seems the rumors are true."

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During the final months of his life, Black Jack became a bitter recluse. The summer of 1957 was dying, and so was he. When Jackie heard that he was ill, she cut short her visit to Hyannis Port and flew to his side.

As she told Lee and Janet, he was "very bitter toward me. He claimed that he used to be the man in my life, but ever since my marriage to Jack, I'd come to him only when I needed a favor."

Unknown to Jackie at the time, Black Jack, after a lifetime of alcoholism, had developed cancer of the liver. In

agony, he was taken by ambulance to Manhattan's Lenox Hill Hospital on July 27. Tests showed that the cancer had advanced rapidly. There was no hope for him. Jackie visited him in the hospital, but was not told of his cancer.

After her visit, she commuted to Newport, where she spent her birthday (July 28).

On August 3, a call came in that Black Jack was in a coma and was not expected to come out of it. Jackie flew to New York, but it was too late. The former *bon vivant* had died at the age of sixty-six after years of dissipation and chronic alcoholism.

Years later, Jackie lamented not his death, but the fact "that he didn't live three more years to see Jack elected President of the United States and me First Lady."

Jackie took charge of the funeral arrangements and even composed an obituary for publication in *The New York Times*. From one of Black Jack's mistresses, she acquired a photograph of him that she wanted to appear as part of that obituary. "He looked so debonair, so handsome," she said.

She chose St. Patrick's Cathedral as the site of his funeral service, with a burial at the family plot in East Hampton.

Her cousin, Edie Beale, said, "I cried through the service, but Jackie looked very stoic. She didn't shed a tear. In fact, she selected so many summer blossoms like white bachelor buttons that it looked like a June wedding. Eight of Jack's mistresses showed up, heavily veiled. One of these women was overheard telling Jackie, 'After your father made love to me, no other man will ever do.'"

"It was my first experience burying a man I loved." Jackie later said.

In remembering him, Kathleen Bouvier said: "Throughout New York and the Hamptons, his notorious seductions, his cars, and his horses left an incredible impression. After his death, they are like fingerprints in the dust, the lingering last notes of a sonata."

In his will, Black Jack divided his estate equally between Jackie and Lee, giving each of them $80,000. Jackie immediately purchased a sleek white Jaguar sports car as a Christmas present for JFK. She was terribly disappointed when he traded it in for a new Buick. "Politicians can't be seen driving around in a white Jaguar," he told her.

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After divorcing Hugh Auchincloss in 1976, Janet entered into a third marriage in 1979 to Bingham Morris, an investment broker. He had been her childhood friend. They separated in 1981, but had never divorced at the time of her death.

Janet died of complications arising from Alzheimer's disease on July 22, 1989 in Newport at the age of 81. Her last coherent words to her daughter were, "I didn't give a damn about your being First Lady. It was a real invasion of my privacy."

Jackie directed that her mother's funeral be held at the Trinity Church in Newport, where she was buried next to her second husband, Hugh Auchincloss.

Chapter Two

Jackie in Europe (and Engaged)

"An American Geisha" Auditions Ivy League Beaux

How Jackie Surrendered Her Virginity in a Paris Elevator

In 1947, in Newport, **Jacqueline Bouvier** was named “Debutante of the Year.” With her face and flair, she dazzled society at her coming-out party wearing a $59 dollar off-the-rack gown.

After graduating from college, **Jackie**'s first job was as an **"Inquiring Camera Girl"** in Washington. She wanted to pursue "the big fish in the pond," the Senate's most eligible bachelor, John F. Kennedy, or the already-married Richard M. Nixon. Instead, they ended up going after her.

Deep in the 1980s, long after her tenure as First Lady and at least a decade after the death of her second husband, Jackie Kennedy Onassis recalled to friends, "I will always remember 1947. It was my year, my coming out. I was named Debutante of the Year, signaling to all those handsome *beaux* in the Newport area that I was available for courting and eventually, marriage."

On August 16 of that year, two years after the end of World War II, 300 A-list guests were invited to see 18-year-old Jacqueline Bouvier, wearing a pearl necklace and an off-the-rack white gown, glide down the stairs at her stepfather's Hammersmith Farm Estate outside Newport.

In 1947, her first car, a black Mercury convertible, meant freedom to **Jackie**.
"I plan to lure many a beau into the back seat of my car," she boasted, with laughter, to Gore Vidal and others.

She later said, “My aim was to look fresh and virginal, with the slight suggestion that I was in prime form for deflowering.”

That party was followed by a formal dinner and dance at Newport’s Clambake Club, where Jackie danced with at least two dozen prospective beaux the sounds of the Mayer Davis’ band. That musical group was often hired for major society events.

Jackie was disappointed that Newport’s most famous resident, tobacco heiress Doris Duke, did not respond to her invitation. Partly in jest, Jackie later told fellow debutante Rose Grosvenor, “I shall get even with Duke for that snub by one day seducing her husband.” She was referring to Porfirio Rubirosa, the Dominican playboy.

Writing under the pseudonym of Cholly Knickerbocker, Igor Cassini, a gossip columnist for the Hearst newspaper syndicate, said: “The Queen of the year for 1947 is Jacqueline Bouvier, the regal brunette with classic features and the daintiness of Dresden porcelain. She has poise, is soft spoken, and intelligent, everything a leading debutante should be. Her background is strictly ‘Old Guard.’”

Ironically, Igor was the brother of fashion designer Oleg Cassini, who would become Jackie’s favorite designer during her White House Years...and a “sometimes lover.”

Igor also informed readers that Jackie was now studying at Vassar, the exclusive college for High Society’s daughters. Dorothy Parker had once quipped, “If all the Vassar girls were laid end to end, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

The college was located outside Poughkeepsie, New York, within an easy commute from Manhattan, allowing Jackie to take the train for visits with Black Jack in his small apartment.

Jackie was clearly the Belle of the Ball—that is, until her younger sister, Lee Bouvier, made a late entrance into the club. In contrast to Jackie’s virginal white, Lee wore a strapless pink satin gown studded with rhinestones.

Two Guys, Each Named John, Preface Her Eventual Marriage to Another John

She tottered in on a pair of three-inch high heels and had on a pair of long black satin gloves like Rita Hayworth had worn in *Gilda*.

Two ambitious debs, **the Bouvier sisters** *(Lee is on the right)* set out to lure beaux, but only the marrying kind, and only if they’re rich.

To Jackie, Lee looked like a little girl dressing up in her mother’s elegant clothing. But the stag line didn’t agree, deserting Jackie to hover around Lee.

Soon, she was dancing with the handsomest beaux, whirling around the danced floor beneath a ceiling studded with tiny blue lights twinkling like the stars above.

After only fifteen minutes of watching Lee upstage her, Jackie made another vow, delivered with a steely determination to Rose Grosvenor, her fellow debutante: "That's the last time Lee will ever do this to me. Never again will the little bitch lure the spotlight away from me."

In the years to come, Jackie more than honored that vow. Beginning that night in Newport, Lee would forever after live in her older sister's shadow, with a rare exception occurring in 1950, when she was designated as "Debutante of the Year."

After Jackie's debut, her parents agreed to combine their resources and purchase her first car, a black 1947 Mercury convertible. When she posed in front of it, she could have been any attractive housewife from some typical American suburb at the time. She had not yet learned to set off her special look and beauty that one day would electrify the world.

She was extremely proud of her convertible, knowing that it gave her a freedom of movement she'd never enjoyed before. Her stepbrother, Gore Vidal, once went for a ride around Washington, D.C. in her convertible. She told him that she planned to "audition" many a beau in her back seat, "but not go all the way."

"Before she could become the *numero uno femme fatale* in the world, she was still clinging to that outmoded idea that she had to go to her wedding bed a virgin," Gore said. "But I think that in a few short months, she got rid of that outdated idea."

Charles Pearson, a Navy veteran and cohort of John F. Kennedy, told Gore, "The best way to get Jackie is to mix up a batch of lethal martinis and get her really tight. Her inhibitions just fall away. She becomes really hot and doesn't seem to know just how hot she is."

Back at Vassar, Jackie was clearly bored after the excitement of Newport. Her recently published recognition as a debutante did not make her popular—if anything, her fellow classmates resented her.

It didn't help that the gossip columnists had discovered her. Walter Winchell at the time was the most popular columnist in America. He wrote about Jackie's poise, claiming, "What a gal! Blessed with the looks of a fairytale princess, she doesn't know the meaning of the word 'snob'!"

At Vassar, Charlotte Curtis, who later became an editor at *The New York Times*, roomed next to Jackie. "I don't think she liked college, calling it 'that goddam Vassar.' She was smart, a straight A student, though she downplayed her intellect. She told me that she didn't want any beau to find out that she just might be smarter than he was."

After her launch as a debutante, Jackie began to date virtually every weekend. Most of her young beaux were from Ivy League colleges, and she could be seen with them at gala functions at the Waldorf Astoria, the Plaza, or at the St. Regis Hotels in Manhattan.

There, she stayed in the small apartment of her father, Black Jack Bouvier. One weekend, tired of the drabness of his living quarters, she redecorated, charging new furnishings, fabrics, and expensive accessories to his ever diminishing bank account. He was furious, but he ultimately forgave her.

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One day over lunch at the Plaza, Black Jack asked Jackie about the kind of man she wanted to marry. She told him that men who looked like Greek gods didn't interest her. "I like a man with a funny nose, Clark Gable ears, irregular teeth, a keen intelligence, and a sense of humor. He must also have feet bigger than mine. When I meet a prospective beau, I always look at what size shoe he wears, preferring to see him in a size twelve. Size seventeen, of course, is just too much."

Gore Vidal later gave his appraisal of Jackie during her post-debutante period. "Before she reached twenty, Jackie had perfected the technique of an American Geisha. When I first met her, she spoke in a normal voice. After going without seeing her for several months, I met a very different young woman. I had lunch with her in Washington, and discovered she spoke like the recently emerging starlet, Marilyn Monroe. Her voice...how can I describe it?...came out like a whispering *coo* as if emerging from the throat of a twelve-year-old girl."

"When a man talked to Jackie, she focused all her attention on him, dreamily looking into his eyes. She concentrated with total fascination, as if she were with a celestial version of Abraham Lincoln, returned to Earth to deliver the Gettysburg address. It was, 'Oh, Gore, you are so smart. Oh, Gore, you are truly, truly fabulous.' In addition to praising a man's insights, regardless of how stupid the utterances, she developed the art of flirtation."

"Unless she drifted off," Gore continued, "into some dull marriage, I saw her becoming the mistress of some powerful man, perhaps a future President of the United States. I felt she might hook up with someone like Nelson Rockefeller. He was quite a ladies' man and eventually there would be talk of him running for President. He certainly could afford Jackie. So I saw her becoming a 20th Century Madame de Pompadour, or even a Madame du Barry, but more Pompadour."

A distant relative and early friend, author **Gore Vidal**, defined Jackie as “an American geisha who speaks like that starlet, Marilyn Monroe.”

As her homosexual friend, Gore would talk about sex with Jackie without threatening her, discussing aspects of it that she would never talk about with a straight man, especially one of her beaux. Once, when the subject of masturbation came up, he admitted that on some occasions, he “jerked off as many as three times a day.”

“About two is all I’ve ever managed,” she said. “Sometimes it provides relief after one of my boyfriends has gotten me all hot and bothered that evening.”

“Pass the unsatisfied, unfulfilled studs on to me,” he jokingly recommended.

It has been suggested that during her time as a student at Vassar, Jackie had more beaux than any other young woman. But that was not the impression of Betsy Gardner, a student from Syracuse, New York, who wanted a career as a fashion designer. “She never mentioned dating anyone, although I learned later that she did date on weekends. She was so secretive. I once was invited into her room, where I discovered five pictures of her father, whom she called Black Jack. With a nickname like that, he must have been a gambler. Whenever I talked to her, it was ‘Black Jack said this,’ or ‘Black Jack did that.’ I hate to say this, but I think she was in love with her father. She was not alone among the girls of Vassar who were in love with their fathers.”

Because of the distance involved from Vassar, Jackie visited Hughdie Auchincloss and Janet at Hammersmith Farm at Newport, or at Merrywood in Virginia, only on holidays or else once a month. She privately agreed with Gore that Hughdie was “a stuffed shirt,” although spending hours happily locked in his library with his porn collection.

Janet ruled their residences like a tyrant, hiring far more servants than needed. One servant had only one job, and that involved keeping all the toilets sparkling clean. Jackie heard that once, Janet got into fight with a cook in her large kitchen and threatened her with a kitchen knife.

As Jackie confided to Gore, “I think Janet is coming unglued.”

Her mother was almost fanatically interested in the young men Jackie was dating, finding all of them unsuitable. Jackie agreed, defining her beaux as “beetle-browed bores.”

Peter Reed, a college student from Newport, claimed that he took Jackie out on at least ten dates, most often to the Newport Country Club. “I was really horny back then,” he later admitted. “But I got nowhere with her in spite of repeated attempts. A rumor surfaced that I was the man who took Jackie’s cherry. *It only it were true*. It didn’t happen. She was amusing and intelligent, but a bit tight-assed when it came to sex. I got a peck on the cheek when I delivered her to her doorstep—and that was that. In contrast, friends of mine knew her future husband, Jack Kennedy. He was screwing anything that didn’t have two heads.”

WASPS Who Sting: Financier **Hugh Auchincloss** and his new wife, the former **Janet Lee Bouvier**. “Hughdie was not a pretty face, but he had money,” Janet claimed.

While at Vassar during her freshman year, Jackie dated a number of students from Yale, including Jonathan Isham. “She wasn’t really interested in me, not really. I was no more than an escort, taking her to places like the Yale Bowl. Mostly she dated men to sharpen her skills, getting in practice to catch the big fish.”

Gore later told a tale about Jackie’s dating that seems impossible to believe, although many people in her circle claimed that it was true. If true, that would make Jackie appear pathological.

Even at eighteen, she was a chain smoker, a nasty habit that probably accelerated her relatively early death at the age of 65 in 1994.

“She liked men—and in some cases, adored them,” Gore claimed. “But she resented having to turn herself into a geisha, since she was too smart for that. According to Janet’s dictates, she had to appear dumb before her men.”

“Her precarious financial situation forced her into this subservient position, which she hated. Sometimes, she would sit for an hour or so listening to the inane rantings of some jerk of a date, seemingly hanging onto his every word. Finally, when she could take it no more, she would stub out the glowing ember of her cigarette on the back of his hand. That certainly was a dramatic way to end the relationship.”

Ferociously possessive, Black Jack systematically objected to all of Jackie’s choices of beaux. He also assumed that his daughter was having sexual intercourse with all the men she dated, applying his own standards of behavior to her. He wrote to her, complaining that he was afraid that he would lose her to some “gink who you think is so romantic because he wears his mother’s pearl earrings for dress shirt buttons because he loves her so.” He warned Jackie to wait until she was twenty-one before making a serious commitment.

She began avoiding weekends with her father, spending them instead at Yale. When she grew bored with the men at that university, she switched her allegiance to men from Princeton.

When weekend after weekend passed without her showing up at his apartment, Black Jack wrote a warning to her. “A woman can have wealth and beauty and brains, but without a reputation, she has nothing.” He also told her to play hard to get and not give her body to just any boy who comes along.

Young, handsome, and promiscuous, **Black Jack Bouvier** was Jackie's "ideal dreamboat." She always kept this photo by her bedside.

As her father sank deeper and deeper into alcoholism, he became increasingly unreasonable. When she arrived at his apartment showing off her then fashionable very short "poodle cut"—a look that accentuated her luminous eyes — he was infuriated. He went into a rage, claiming that she had ruined her looks.

On another night at the Waldorf Astoria, at a dance he also attended, Black Jack objected to how close a young man was holding his daughter. He wove his way through the dancing couples to reach her. In his fury, he ripped her pearl necklace from her neck, breaking the strands and sending the beads cascading to the floor. This caused panic among the women nearby, who feared they would slip and fall.

In the aftermath of this incident, both Jackie and Black Jack were ejected from the hotel by security guards.

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Jackie was known to sustain an ongoing fascination—some said love affair—with Europe. Her fascination for the Continent began with a series of three trips, each quite different from the other two.

In the summer of 1948, Jackie accepted an invitation to tour Europe with two young friends of hers, Judy and Helen Bowdoin, stepdaughters of Edward F. Foley, Jr., Under Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The third girl was Julia Bissell, of Baltimore. Helen Shearman, Jackie's former Latin teacher at the Holton Arms School, agreed to travel with them as chaperon.

Jackie later admitted, "It was not the way I wanted to travel, but I was so anxious to see Europe, I agreed to go along, chaperon and all. We had only seven weeks, and every day was rigidly scheduled. There were things I wanted to see on my own, but I had to give in to the group's wishes. Fortunately, there were some highlights. Mr. Foley, because of his position, opened many doors for us, beginning in London."

Jackie, along with her party, was invited to the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, although they did not get to meet King George VI or his Queen Consort, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, or even Princess Elizabeth or Princess Margaret. However, Jackie did get to shake the hand of Sir Winston Churchill. In fact, she was so delighted to meet him, she got into the receiving line twice to shake his hand again. When he looked into her eyes, he said, "You're quite pretty. Your face looks familiar."

Holding up the “V” for Victory fingers, **Sir Winston Churchill** wished he were forty years younger when he first met Jackie.

Later, on the French Riviera, while visiting the chic resort of Juanles-Pins, she met Churchill once again. “You’re that pretty girl who got into the line twice to shake my hand at Buckingham Palace, aren’t you?” he asked. She took in his flabby body, clad at the time in a loose-fitting bathing suit.

“Shaking the hand of Sir Winston Churchill has been one of the greatest honors of my life,” she told him.

“If only I were only forty years younger, I might honor you in another way.”

[Jackie had another meeting with Sir Winston in Nassau with her new husband, John F. Kennedy. They were invited aboard a yacht in which Sir Winston was sailing around The Bahamas. “He was very solicitous of me, but didn’t recall our former meeting,” she said. “Jack wore this white dinner jacket, and Sir Winston mistook him for a waiter and ordered a brandy. Jack dutifully served it from the ship’s bar.”]

“The schedule of our tour of the Continent was grueling,” she recalled, “one of those ‘if it’s Tuesday, it must be Belgium’ tours. There was a motor trip through the Cotswolds, then off to Paris and its Louvre; a dart through the Loire Valley with stopovers in Avignon to see the old papal palace. Then off to Zurich with all those banker gnomes before the beauty of sailing on Lake Lucerne. A stopover in Interlaken to see the Jungfrau. The cathedral of Milan, the Romeo and Juliet romance of Verona, before gliding along in a gondola on the Grand Canal in Venice. The Duomo and the Academy of Florence before two days in Rome—The Colosseum, the Spanish Steps, the Roman Forum, the Villa Borghese. A return to Paris.”

“Our final night in Paris, we visited Le Boeuf sur le Toit,” Jackie said. “Marlon Brando was in the club that night. I had thrilled to his performance on Broadway in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. I was eager to introduce myself to him, but unfortunately, he was sitting in a booth engaged in commando activities with that black singer, Eartha Kitt.” Jackie later admitted, “I was google-eyed.”

[Months after she’d left the White House, Brando would become one of Jackie’s temporary lovers.]

Back home, she told Black Jack, “I got tired of my traveling companions and bored with my drip-dry blouse and washing out my panties every night in a small sink. The next time will be different. On my own and at my leisure.”

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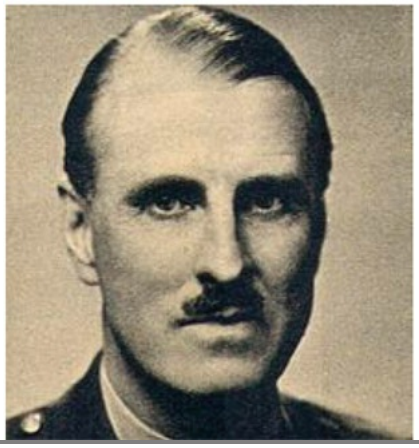
Jackie did not want to spend her sophomore year back among all the restrictions at Vassar. An opportunity arose when she read about a program called Smith College Junior Year Abroad. Studies, including time at the Sorbonne in Paris, were being offered to young women who qualified. “Having left my soul in Europe, I was eager to return. Naturally, Black Jack opposed it.”



The Russian prince, **Serge Obolensky,** was Vice Chairman of the Board of Hilton Hotels. In 1916, he'd married Catherine Alexandrovna Romanov, daughter of Alexander II of Russia. Later, he married Ava Alice Muriel Astor, daughter of John Jacob Astor IV. In 1943, during World War II, he captured the Italian island of Sardinia with a crew of only three men.

Thinking she might not be accepted, as she was not otherwise a Smith College student, she toyed with the idea of becoming a photographer's model. Her experience as a fashion model had been extremely limited, and strictly amateurish. They had included striking appearances at fashion shows in Newport and in East Hampton, where she'd startled audiences by coming out "in the latest gypsy fashion."

Once again, she met opposition from Black Jack, who warned her, "Only whores are fashion models."

Haute Society, Grand Chic: In 1975, for old time's sake, **Jackie** dances with **Obolensky**, her former beau, just three years before his death.

Black Jack also lodged strenuous objections to her latest beau, Serge Obolensky, a White Russian prince, age 58, who had fled from St. Petersburg at the time of the Russian Revolution. Considered the best waltzer in New York, he took Jackie out almost every evening—dancing, of course.

Jackie was only nineteen at the time, and Black Jack loudly and frequently asserted that the prince was old enough to be her grandfather.

She reminded her father that his female lovers could well have been among her current classmates at Vassar. She was referring to one in particular—Sally Butler, a strikingly beautiful brunette who evoked the screen image of Norma Shearer. Black Jack had proposed marriage, but her parents had violently objected because of Black Jack's age and his reputation as a womanizer and a possible homosexual.

To maintain harmony, Jackie gave up her prince. She began to sink into despair, not wanting to return to Vassar and resenting the control that Black Jack and Janet maintained over her life. She longed for independence. Just as she entered her deepest period of gloom, a letter arrived from Smith College announcing that she'd been accepted

for a year of study abroad in various cities of Europe, most notably in Paris at the Sorbonne.

Jackie spent the first six weeks of the program participating in an intensive French language course in Grenoble, in the French Alps, passing with top honors. She also found time to fall in love with twenty-three-year-old Jean Ferran, who had a French father and an Italian mother, who'd emigrated to France from across the mountains in neighboring Italy.

Extraordinarily handsome, with strong legs from mountain climbing, Ferran was a guide. He made a dazzling appearance, standing six feet, two inches, with a muscular build, deep blue eyes, and blondish hair. To her, he looked more German than Mediterranean, but he insisted he was French and Italian, although he spoke perfect German, as she learned later.

Ferran had graduated from the University of Grenoble, and she discovered that he, like herself, was interested in French literature. He introduced her to the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Stendahl, both of whom had lived and written in Grenoble. Through Ferran, she also became acquainted with the lively music and arts scene that flourished in that high-altitude city.

For the first time in her life, she paid the restaurant and tavern bills, as he told her he had very little money.

On weekends, he took her on biking trips or else hiking through the mountains.

Their favorite hangout was La Table Ronde, the oldest café in Grenoble, a favorite of the 18th-century writer and philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. "I came to adore French fondue," she later said.

When she left Grenoble and returned to Paris, she was befriended by Catherine Grant, from Bristol, England, who had also studied in Grenoble. Jackie shared details of her romantic adventures with Ferran, confessing, "Jean and I experienced French kissing...all over. But I didn't want to get pregnant."

"I was in love," Jackie told Grant. "I even considered marrying Jean and becoming his mountain woman, as ridiculous as that sounds."

"My last night with him was memorable in more ways than one—both good and horrible," Jackie said. "He begged me to surrender my virginity, but I held out. We made love in every other way, though."

"It was dawn when we went for our final walk watching the vendors set up their stands at the place aux Herbes," Jackie said. "I told Jean that I'd fallen in love with him and was prepared to stay in Grenoble with him. I was shocked when he told me that our love affair had—'Like all good things'—come to an end. He confessed that he lived in a small cottage outside of town, on the other side of the Isère River. He told me he had an Italian wife, as well as a boy, age 2, and a girl, age 5. They'd gotten married when they met at the university several years before."

"We kissed goodbye on the square," she told Grant. "It was so romantic, so French, so very heartbreaking."

In Paris, at the Café de Flor, discussing life and love with Grant, Jackie became very upset when her new friend suggested that Ferran might be a gigolo.

"After thinking it over, I think you're probably right. He did suggest to me that he needed money because he'd spent all his time with me and that he had neglected his guide duties. I gave him a hundred dollars. But I don't regret it. It was enchanting while it lasted. Now it's over. It was a learning experience. Actually, for a brief time, it was fun paying a man's bills for a change. Up until then, all my dates had treated me like a hothouse flower. I felt more in charge."

Two weeks later, Jackie's heart had apparently mended. Meeting with Grant for coffee, she said, "As authors have known for centuries, the young heart is a fickle heart. Since I last saw you, I've fallen in love again. My new beau is divine."

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In Paris, Jackie enrolled at the Sorbonne, the prestigious university noted for its famed school of arts and science, and for its origins stretching back to the Middle Ages. She chose French history and literature as her major field of study.

She did not want to live in a dormitory, but chose to stay instead with an aristocratic but impoverished French family.

In the un-chic side of Paris' otherwise rather chic 16th Arrondissement, Jackie moved into 78 avenue Mozart, lodging with the family of the Comte de Renty, who had died a horrible death in a Nazi concentration camp.

His widow, la comtesse Guyot de Renty, took in American students as boarders, including Susan Coward, whom Jackie had known in the States. She renewed her friendship with Coward and also bonded with Claude de Renty, one of the family's daughters, who was Jackie's age. They would later tour through Germany and Austria together. The countess's 23-year-old daughter, Ghislaine, who had recently been divorced, also shared the apartment with her four-year-old son, Christian, whom Jackie eventually defined as a "terrorist."

From America, Janet sent care packages because there were many shortages in France. Coffee and sugar, plus

other canned foodstuffs, were much appreciated in the De Renty household.

Once Gore learned that Jackie was living in Paris, he sarcastically quipped: “She’s going to study at the Sorbonne, but she really went to have a good time and to lose her virginity.”

For a brief time, Jackie became romantically involved with Ormande de Kay, a young American who wanted to write screenplays. They began to see each other every night, and became patrons of such “literary cafés” as the Café de Flor and Deux Magots. At La Coupole in Montparnasse, Jackie caught her first glimpse of Albert Camus, one of her favored literary lions.

Ormande and Jackie became quite serious about their relationship. When he had to return to America, Jackie promised to be faithful to him, a vow she would not keep. However, she did resume dating him upon her return to the States.

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Before her arrival in Paris, Black Jack had warned her not to marry “one of those post-war impoverished counts on the make for an American heiress.”

Ignoring his advice, she almost immediately met the young, handsome, and debonair count, Paul de Ganay, who was studying at the Sorbonne with her. He was one of four brothers from a Franco-Argentine family whose story evoked memories of the Rudolph Valentino film, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

Paul was from a wealthy family, not impoverished at all, as Jackie soon learned when he invited her for her first weekend at the elegant Château de Courances, some 36 miles south of Paris.

There, Jackie met Paul’s family, and was introduced to some members of French high society. Whereas in Paris, she dined with Paul at the long-enduring French bistro, Brasserie Balthasar, at the château over the coming weeks, Jackie attended balls and parties. “She was an instant success with French society,” Paul recalled. “Always surrounded by eligible young men when she entered a room. I tried not to be jealous.”

During that winter in Paris, Jackie had other beaux, though she saw Paul frequently. She was involved with him to the degree that she agreed to travel to Madrid with him one Easter, where they stayed together at the Ritz Hotel. From Madrid, he drove her to Toledo. She especially wanted to see the house once occupied by the painter, El Greco.

“Ultimately, Paul and I became friends,” she said, “not lovers.”

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Jackie developed another link to French high society, which in many ways turned out to be an even more important liaison than the De Ganay family.

At Vassar, she’d become friends with Jessie Leigh-Hunt Wood, whose father, Henry Leigh-Hunt (1886-1972), had inherited a vast tract of real estate in Las Vegas. Jessie’s celebrated mother was the French novelist, poet, and journalist, Louise Lévêque de Vilmorin, nicknamed “Lulu.”

A legendary hostess, and muse to, among others, the French composer Francis Poulenc, she was the chatelaine of a château at Verrières-le-Buisson, Essonne, a suburb southwest of Paris, and the heiress to a fortune of her own. Once Jackie was introduced to Lulu, the elegant *grande dame* found her “enchanting.” Soon, Jackie was being invited to her fabulous parties and balls, where deposed post-war kings met with movie moguls from Hollywood, decadent millionaires, and an occasional politician such as the president of France.

Into this mixture Lulu also invited prominent painters, writers, musicians, and ballet dancers.

The celebrated French novelist, **Louise Lévêque de Vilmorin**, nicknamed "Lulu," introduced Jackie to the dazzling world of France's *literati*, plus leading ballet dancers, musicians, and artists.

Prince Jean-Louis de Faucigny-Lucinge claimed that, "Not since the Age of Enlightenment has society found itself so close to artists." Poulenc himself found in her writing "a sort of sensitive impertinence and *libertinage."*

Many observers claimed that the lessons Jackie learned from Lulu influenced her later decision to invite America's leading artists to the White House when she presided there as First Lady.

At the château at **Verrières-le-Buisson**, a suburb of Paris, Lulu presided over gala parties, fabulous balls, and elite dinners for tout France, the members of whom she introduced to impressionable Jackie.

At these parties and balls, Jackie was introduced to the cream of international society. Once night, she attended a dinner party that Lulu hosted for Elie de Rothschild and his mistress, Pamela Churchill, who had been married to Randolph Churchill, Sir Winston's son, during World War II.

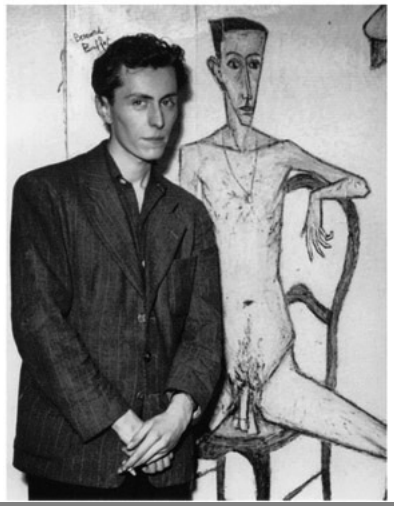
When **Pamela Churchill**, mistress of **Elie de Rothschild**, went to powder her nose, the multi-millionaire made a pass at young Jackie.

[The much-married Pamela would later trailblaze her way through the ranks of the very wealthy, thanks partly to her final marriage to a W. Averell Harriman, heir to a railway fortune, her role as a fundraiser for Bill Clinton's Democratic Party, and her eventual designation as U.S. Ambassador to France.]

When Pamela excused herself "to go powder my nose," the Rothschild heir propositioned Jackie on the terrace.

One night at a ball, she got to dance with Prince Aly Khan. As she later told Susan Coward, “I felt a steel bar pressing against me. Now I know why Rita Hayworth married him after dumping Orson Welles.”

Jackie also got to meet Jean Cocteau, the influential and endlessly controversial *enfant terrible* of the postwar arts scene in France, and his lover, the devastatingly handsome French actor, Jean Marais. Cocteau described to her his difficulties in bringing Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* to the Parisian stage. The two men invited her for a night on the town in Paris when she returned to the Sorbonne, and she gratefully accepted, wondering if she could steal Marais from Cocteau’s iron grip.



Bernard Buffet with *oeuvre*, perhaps a self-portrait.

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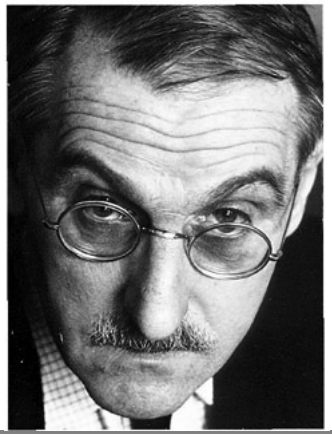
Jackie looked forward to every weekend she was invited by Paul to visit Lulu at her château. She began to meet some of the most prestigious figures in France, even some from England.

She’d become enchanted with the work of the French Expressionist painter, Bernard Buffet. A painter whose postwar fame was rivaled only by that of his legendary enemy, Pablo Picasso, Buffet was a modern “anti-abstract” master who had made a colossal fortune from his work by the age of 30 and who, at the age of 71 and the victim of Parkinson’s disease, committed suicide in 1999. Jackie was introduced to Buffet and his then-lover, Pierre Bergé, who later left him for a long-term relationship as the companion and business partner of the fashion designer, Yves Saint Laurent.

Businessman and promoter **Pierre Bergé** *(right)* abandoned Buffet to pursue, beginning in 1961, a personal and professional alliance with **Yves Saint-Laurent** *(left)* that eventually defined the fashion designer as one of the most celebrated in the world.

Buffet, among other achievements, was known for his portraits. He was intrigued by Jackie's face, and asked her if she'd pose for him at his studio in Paris. She agreed and attended two sessions as his model.

But when she showed up for the third session, the concierge told her that Monsieur Bergé and Monsieur Buffet had left for an extended trip to Rome. She had not been notified, and she always wondered what happened to her unfinished portrait.



"I judged **Jean Anouilh** on his plays, including *Antigone*, and ignored all that gossip about some former Nazi connection," Jackie claimed.

[Although Jackie had been stood up by Buffet, she later became one of his chief defenders. In the 1960s, Buffet's reputation as an artist was seriously attacked, especially by Picasso, who denounced him as a "purveyor of kitsch, a mere faiseur *(i.e., routine artisan)."*

Buffet would endure a half-century of mockery until a Renaissance of his works occurred during the 21st Century.

Jackie always maintained that it was Buffet's lightning success and wealth, just after World War II, that turned the art establishment against him. "His paintings sold too well," Jackie said. "Jealous artists like Picasso hated him for that."

She had many arguments with André Malraux about Buffet's merits, maintaining that Malraux had been unduly influenced by Picasso's dour negativity.

Jackie also claimed that Buffet lost many of his homosexual defenders in the art world because later in life, he seemed to switch his sexual orientation and got married.

"Buffet was not appreciated in his homeland," Jackie said, "but was widely praised in such countries as the United States and Japan. I adore his work. If only he'd finished that portrait of me. Damn it all!"]

At one of Lulu's parties, Jackie had an extended conversation with Jean Anouilh, the French dramatist whose 50 years of artistic production ranged from tragic drama to absurdist farce. Fortunately, she'd seen a recent production of his best known work, *Antigone*, which he'd written in 1943 as an politically pertinent adaptation of Sophocles' classic drama. Jackie noted that some of the French guests at Lulu's *soirée* shunned Anouilh, and she later learned that some critics had accused him of being a Nazi sympathizer during the Occupation of France by the Third Reich.

Many critics felt that *Antigone*, which the Vichy government allowed to be performed, was supportive of the Occupation. Perhaps for that reason, Jackie reasoned, he was passed over for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962 when she was in the White House.

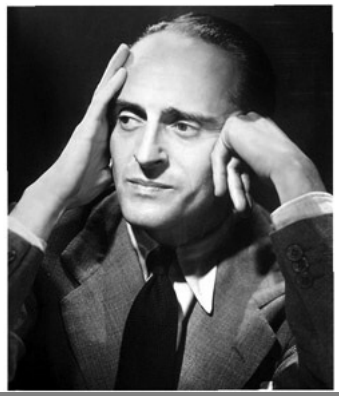
The French writer and filmmaker René Clair, who had directed silent films, had returned to his native France after World War II. The son of a soap merchant, Clair told Jackie that the films he had made in America were more commercial and mass-market than his personal tastes as an artist would have preferred. He cited *I Married a Witch* (1942) and *It Happened Tomorrow* (1944) as examples. At the time of their first meeting, he asked Jackie if she were an actress. She told him that that had been "my schoolgirl fantasy."

"Your French is beautiful," he told her, "with a lovely, lovely accent. I am going to produce a film, sooner than later, based on Faust's *La beauté du diable (Beauty and the Devil*). I'd like you to audition for a role in it."

She told him she'd be flattered, but when she called the number he'd given her, he no longer seemed interested. "There went my one chance for stardom," she told Janet. "I assume that Clair would have cast me as the Beauty instead of the Devil."

In spite of her rejection by the director, Jackie continued to follow his career, even when younger Parisian critics

attacked him as a representative of *cinéma de qualité*, a pejorative term loosely translated as "the cinematography of old men," dominated by a nostalgia for their younger days.



Filmmaker **René Clair** held out a dazzling prospect to Jackie: "Why not become a French-language movie star?"

She wrote him a personal letter of congratulations upon his election to the *Académie française [an organization which regulates the French language by determining standards of acceptable grammar and vocabulary]* in 1960.

In deference to her role as First Lady of the United States, he wrote back. "In all my film career, my greatest mistake was in not casting you as the female star of *Beauty and the Devil*. I will regret it until my dying day."

The most famous married couple Jackie met through Lulu was Duff Cooper, the 1st Viscount Norwich, along with Lady Diana Cooper, widely acclaimed as "the beauty of the century."

The son of a society doctor, Duff Cooper was a conservative British politician who had loudly opposed then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy, as represented by the 1938 Munich Agreement with Adolf Hitler. Hitler and Josef Goebbels consequently labeled Cooper as "one of the three most dangerous warmongers in England."

Jackie was always welcome to attend parties and intimate dinners thrown by **Duff and Lady Cooper** at the British Embassy in Paris. The Nazis had considered Duff as one of the three most dangerous men in Britain.

Under Winston Churchill during World War II, Cooper had served as Minister of Information—read that "Minister of Propaganda." In 1944, at the liberation of France, Duff was named British ambassador to France. He and Lady Diana moved to Paris, where they became immensely popular with the French.

Leaving office in 1947 after he was knighted, he and his stunningly beautiful wife decided to live in France, settling into a villa in Chantilly, within an easy commute from Paris.

Without question, **Lady Diana Cooper** was a great beauty, but was she really the most beautiful woman of the 20th Century?

When Jackie met Lady Diana, she addressed her as Viscountess Norwich, who responded, “Please, call me Lady Diana. The Viscountess label sounds like a porridge.”

The Coopers were enthralled with Jackie’s charm and beauty. She became a privileged member of their entourage, invited to their parties and dinners. On several occasions, she visited them on weekends at Chantilly.

One night, sitting alone on her terrace, Lady Diana confided to Jackie, “My beauty is fading. I’ve had a long reign carrying the torch as the most beautiful woman born in the 20th Century. But like the sky over our heads, it is twilight time for me.”

“I intend to pass on my crown to you. I think you’ll go far. You have the potential to become the media darling of the latter part of the 20th Century, following in my footsteps. Of course, a lot will depend on who you marry. It is still a man’s world and is likely to remain so—at least for the rest of this century.”

“Your forecast of my future, Lady Diana, is a bit beyond my imagination.”

“I will not be around to see the end result, but I predict you will lead a life beyond your wildest dreams.”

One evening, in Paris, Jackie was surprised when Duff invited her for dinner at Maxim’s. She fully expected to see him dining with Lady Diana. But instead, she found Lulu sitting with him in a banquette. When an equivalent invitation was extended to her a second time, she came to realize that her role to some degree was that of a “beard” to conceal the affair between Duff and Lulu.

Once, when Jackie was staying over at the Cooper villa in Chantilly, Lady Diana admitted that she knew of her husband’s affairs. “Lulu and his other mistresses may be the flowers, but I am the tree.”

It was said that Jackie learned how to handle the womanizing of her future husband, John F. Kennedy, by following Lady Diana’s long ago example of how to deal with a marriage to a high-ranking philanderer.

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Jackie’s most prestigious invitation came from Comte Etienne de Beaumont, the society don of Paris. In March of 1949, as a celebration of a return to prosperity after the austerities of France during the Nazi Occupation, he staged a spectacularly glamorous costume ball, *Le Bal des Rois et des Reines*, within his sumptuous mansion in the rue Masseran in the city’s very stylish 7th Arrondissement.

In London's Bloomsbury district, the greatest love story was that of **Violet Trefusis** *(left)* and **Vita Sackville-West**, a lifetime saga of lesbian love, cross dressing, bewildered husbands, outraged mothers, and interludes of illicit sex, cruelty, and humiliation. Jackie was intrigued.

Jackie came dressed as Marie Antoinette, mingling with the comtesse de Ganay, who appeared as the Empress Joséphine. Jackie noted that since three of the male guests arrived at the ball outfitted in one way or another as Napoléon, the "empress" had her pick of three potential "husbands."

Many of the most elegant costumed women at the ball wore creations designed by Christian Dior or Jacques Fath. At one point, Jackie stood next to Violet Trefusis, dressed as Queen Victoria. Her companion, poet Vita Sackville-West, came as Voltaire.

[Trefusis was an English writer and socialite who is chiefly remembered for her lesbian affair with Sackville-West. When Trefusis was four years old, her mother, Alice Keppel, became the favorite mistress of Albert Edward (Bertie), the Prince of Wales, who became King Edward VII in 1901. He paid visits to the Keppel household many afternoons, while Keppel's husband, who was aware of the affair, gracefully made himself absent. Trefusis, incidentally, was also the great-aunt of Camilla Parker-Bowles, who later married England's Prince Charles.]

Back in Paris, while still studying at the Sorbonne, Jackie still managed to slip away on most nights for her ritual cocktail hour at the bar of the Ritz Hotel, once patronized by Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. She was always accompanied by an ever-changing *beau du jour*, as she called her boyfriends, many from the Sorbonne itself.

After the Ritz Bar, Jackie and her male companion would often have dinner at Chez Allard, her favorite Left Bank bistro. Even on a school night, dinner would be followed by a visit to one of the *boîtes*. Only very rarely did she go to the Folies-Bergère, with a rare exception involving a night when she went to see the black American expatriate performer, Josephine Baker.

Jackie was also intrigued by the seedy side of Paris, especially the world of the *demimonde*. She was taken to Le Carousel on three different occasions, a cabaret that promoted itself as a showcase for the world's most beautiful transvestites.

[Ironically, Le Carousel became one of the favorite Parisian bars of her second husband, Aristotle Onassis.]

When author and filmmaker **Jean Cocteau** met Jackie, he found her enchanting and, days later, invited her, along with his lover, **Jean Marais** *(below)* to tour underground nocturnal Paris with them. "You and Jean are beautiful, and I am not," Cocteau lamented. "My greatest regret in life is in not having been born beautiful."

As proposed during their inaugural meeting, Jean Cocteau and Jean Marais eventually got around to inviting Jackie for a tour of underground Paris. They landed at La Vie en Rose, patronized mainly by homosexuals who billed it as “The Meat Rack,” because of the easy availability of pickups.

Some nights, she preferred out-of-the-way restaurants where she could listen to gypsy violinists who had fled from Budapest at the time of the Nazi takeover.

Her favorite jazz club was Le Caveau de la Huchette in the 5th Arrondissment. In another day, it had been frequented by both Robespierre and Jean-Paul Marat, each an essential figure during the bloodshed of the French Revolution. On many an evening, Jackie could be seen gliding down to this deep medieval cellar to hear jazz. One night, she was delighted by a surprise guest appearance of Louis Armstrong.

Cocteau’s lover, **Jean Marais**, starring as Xiphares in Racine’s *Mithridate*, performed in November of 1952 at the *Comédie française*. In 1950, his legs were voted “the most beautiful in France.”

At one Left Bank *boîte*, Count Paul took Jackie to see the chanteuse, Juliette Greco, who became all the rage in 1950s Paris during that city’s “flowering of existentialism.” Greco’s friends and supporters, Jean-Paul Sartre and his brilliant mistress, Simone de Beauvoir, also attended her opening. Greco appeared on stage clad in what was a very avant-garde statement at the time, a black leotard.

In one of the dimly illuminated booths, Jackie spotted Marlon Brando again. He was no longer with Eartha Kitt. She’d deserted him for the Dominican playboy, Porfirio Rubirosa. Count Paul told her that Brando was now in hot pursuit of Greco herself.

One of her most memorable nights was when Count Paul took her to La Java, a famous old *balmusette*, a time-honored dance hall where both Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier had appeared before they became legendary. When the newspapers announced that Piaf would appear in a nostalgic acknowledgement of her early years as an unknown, and then a rising young star, Jackie wanted to go. She’d never heard Piaf sing live before.

“The Little Sparrow” made a spectacular entrance on the arm of her lover, Marlene Dietrich. The German star was dressed in a white tuxedo similar to the one she’d made famous in her 1932 film, *Blonde Venus*, with Cary Grant.

"The Little Sparrow" (**Edith Piaf**, *left*), was in love with tuxedo-clad **Marlene Dietrich** *(right)* when the German *femme fatale* showed up at La Java (a Parisian nightclub) to hear Piaf sing. But did Dietrich really make a pass at Jackie that night?

During the course of the evening, Dietrich spotted Jackie and seemed attracted to her. At one point, she approached Jackie's table and asked Count Paul if she could "borrow" Jackie for a dance.

Jackie later said, "I'd never danced with a woman before. Dietrich held me very close. It was so romantic, but I was not a card-carrying lesbian. Besides, she had Piaf."

[In 1957, during her marriage to JFK, Jackie hinted to her husband that she and Dietrich might have become more intimate that night in Paris than they really were. She did it not only to upset him, but to make him jealous. She'd just learned that both Joseph P. ("Papa Joe") Kennedy and his son JFK (Jack) had, at various times, seduced Dietrich themselves.]

Ever since she'd studied ballet, Jackie had retained her love of the dance. "Instead of a ballerina, I became a balletomane like Gore Vidal."

In Newport, she'd become friends with a fellow debutante, Elizabeth de Cuevas. In Paris, Elizabeth introduced her to her father, George, the Marquis de Cuevas, an impresario who invited Jackie to the Paris Opera.

*[Born in Chile, **George de Cuevas** (Jorge Cuevas Bartholín, 1885 – 1961) was a choreographer and ballet impresario who was best known for the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas (also known as the Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo, Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas, or later, the de Cuevas Ballet by American theatergoers) that he formed in 1944.]*

The event was the opening of his company's fall season, featuring Rosella Hightower and Tamara Toumanova. Attending a performance were ballet dancers, Margot Fonteyn and Michael Somes. The Marquis introduced the stars to Jackie.

All of them, including Jackie, were invited to a party the Marquis was giving on the Île St-Louis after the performance. Jackie eagerly accepted.

A balletomane, like her friend and distant relation, Gore Vidal, Jackie was more thrilled to meet these ballet legends. In London, she'd seen Somes and Fonteyn dance at the Royal Ballet. She'd also seen Fonteyn dance in 1949 during the Royal Ballet's tour of the United States. Jackie regarded her as one of the greatest of classical ballet dancers, though she seemed rather reserved, perhaps snobbish, when introduced.

"God had a talent for creating glorious men," Jackie wrote in her diary about the British ballet dancer, **Michael Somes** *(depicted above)*. "Surely, Michael stands as one of His more glorious achievements."

In contrast, Somes, Fonteyn's escort for the evening and her sometimes lover, sparked certain fantasies in Jackie, as she'd later reveal. She called him "the most beautiful man animal on the planet."

The guru of American ballet, Lincoln Kirstein, had asserted that Somes was "an absolutely magical creature," and other balletomanes hailed him as "the finest British male dancer of the century."

Jackie had heard that the more experienced Fonteyn had taken the dancer's virginity, even though she was two years younger. Somes had danced in 1938 with Fonteyn, performing in the ballet *Horoscope*, choreographed by Constant Lambert and Frederick Ashton. It was rumored that Ashton had fallen madly in love with Somes. In time, Ashton would choreograph twenty-four more ballets for him to perform.

Tall, dark, and handsome, Somes was the man of Jackie's dreams, even though she'd later admit "I don't normally go for a Greek god."

Gore had told her that whenever Fonteyn and Somes performed, there were more Stage Door Johnnies lined up for him than for the ballerina herself. According to Gore, Somes freely dispensed his sexual favors to both men and women when Ashton or Fonteyn didn't have him otherwise occupied in their boudoirs.

When the subject of Ashton came up later that night, Somes told Jackie. "He is my Diaghilev. Before I go on stage, he always tells me, 'Dance like a god.'"

At the party, Jackie virtually monopolized Somes, as Fonteyn was distracted by too many adoring friends. Jackie found that he had a certain bitterness in his voice, a self-castigating edge.

She confided that she, too, had once considered being a ballerina.

When Fonteyn became aware of Jackie moving in on Somes, she came over to investigate.

Somes looked embarrassed. "Jacqueline here tells me she once studied ballet herself."

Fonteyn looked skeptically at Jackie. Then she peered down at her feet. "I'm not sure that ballet slippers come in your size." She turned and walked away.

Before leaving the party, Jackie secretly agreed to meet Somes at the Ritz Bar at seven the following evening. Conveniently, he was staying in a suite at the Ritz, and Fonteyn would be otherwise engaged.

At the bar, she was reported to have found Somes more enchanting than he had been the night before.

But here, a curtain is drawn. She did not immediately speak of the time she spent in Somes' suite at the Ritz.

Years later, at Peter Lawford's beach-fronting home in Santa Monica, she talked to her brother-in-law about her sexual experiences before marriage. She told him that she tried but failed to hold onto her virginity while studying in Paris—"out of fear of pregnancy and not for any moral reasons."

"When I first enrolled in Vassar, I learned that the other girls were trying to become adept at fellatio until they could get that wedding band on their fingers. I held out for a long time in Paris. My night with Michael Somes—I called it my glorious night—I satisfied him with every means at my disposal except number one."

"Marlene Dietrich and I consider fellatio and cunnilingus our two favorite forms of sex," Lawford drunkenly

confessed.

"I'd heard that about you, Peter, but I didn't know until now that it was true," she said, to tease him. "Michael told me that if he and I ever had children, our kids would be the most beautiful in the history of humankind."

"Modest fellow, wasn't he?" Peter said.

[Somes would remain the lead male dancer with the Royal Ballet from 1951, the year Jackie met him, until the arrival of Rudolf Nureyev in 1962. In spite of the difference in their ages, the incoming Russian also replaced Somes as Fonteyn's lover.

In a touch of irony, Jackie would eventually compete with her sister, Lee, for the affection of Nureyev as well. "What a tangled web he weaves," Jackie once said about Nureyev's complicated love life.]

A young **André Malraux** poses in Saigon with his first wife, **Clara Goldschmidt**, whom he taught to steal Buddhist icons from Cambodian temples

Of all the men and women Lulu introduced Jackie to, none stood out in her mind as much as the brilliant and dashing but roguish André Malraux. At one of Lulu's parties, Jackie met this celebrated novelist and art theorist. She'd later proclaim, "André is the most fascinating man I've ever met."

He had been appointed by Charles de Gaulle as his Minister of Information (1945-1946), and later as the first Minister of Cultural Affairs (1959-69). When she met him, Jackie had already read, in French, his novel, *La Condition Humaine (Man's Fate)*, which he'd written in 1933, winning the Prix Goncourt.

At the time Jackie became involved with him, Malraux was married to his second wife, Marie-Madeleine Lioux, a concert pianist and the widow of his half-brother, Roland Malraux.

[After Malraux's 1966 divorce from Madeleine, he came to live in Lulu's château at Verrières-le-Buisson, where Jackie had first met him.]

When Lulu observed Malraux's interest in Jackie, Lulu called her aside. "Go for it, darling. André and I had a torrid affair in 1934, but that was so long ago. We emerged the best of friends. Today, he treats me like his mother instead of his passion."

"André didn't speak English very well, but I loved to hear him talk in French," Jackie later said. "He had such an elegant turn of phrase, as when he told me, 'Art is an object lesson for the gods.'"

She also said, "Listening to André makes me feel as if I'm on a raft. It's very exciting, very exhilarating, and very dangerous. I have to hang on for dear life because I don't understand everything he says in his rapid French."

He fascinated her with stories of his adventurous life, as he moved from the literary salons of Paris in the 1920s to colonial Cambodia, and on to Cochin China *[French Cochinchine, the southern region of Vietnam during the French colonial period]*, ending up on the battlefields of Spain during that country's Civil War. A member of the French Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France, Malraux had been captured by the Gestapo, but later escaped.

Sometimes, Lulu was their host, making available one of her upstairs bedrooms for Jackie to meet privately with Malraux. She let them read what became her most famous novel (it was entitled *Madame de...)* before it was published in 1951.

[In 1953, Jackie would see the movie version of Lulu's novel, It became a celebrated film called The Earrings of Madame de... *starring Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux, the French actress who had been married to Porfirio Rubirosa.]*

Malraux had his own cultural statement to present as a gift to Jackie. Published in three volumes, it was called

The Psychology of Art (1947-49).

During Malraux's courtship of Jackie, he took her to several visits to the Louvre. "He made art come alive for me as I'd never seen it before. André is a 20th century Renaissance man."

At one point, they stood for almost an hour in front of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the lady with the enigmatic smile who would play such a key role in each of their futures.

To her friends in Paris, Susan Coward and Claude de Renty, Jackie confessed that she regretted that "I did not go all the way with André. I'm still morbidly afraid of getting pregnant, and I refuse to have an abortion if I do. My life would be ruined if I had a child out of wedlock and my chance of a proper marriage dashed. But André and I found many, many other ways to make love. What a man! He's the only Frenchman I've met that I truly wanted to marry."

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A CIA operative, John Gates, nicknamed "Demi," was another beau who fell in love with Jackie. In America, he had known both of her parents, Black Jack and Janet. Because of that, Jackie often confided in Demi about her difficulties with both parents and their obsessive attempts to control her life.

She claimed that she was well aware of Black Jack's indiscretions, and that Janet had once learned of them as well. They'd sailed on their honeymoon aboard the *Aquitania*. On that honeymoon, Janet realized that Black Jack was not going to be a faithful husband.

He was seen leaving the stateroom of tobacco heiress Doris Duke at three o'clock in the morning. At the casino at Biarritz, he gambled away all his money the first night. Consequently, Janet gathered up her reserve of cash and went to the casino and won it all back before four o'clock the same morning.

Jackie let Demi escort her around to various venues, but she was never as serious about their relationship as he was. "Who wouldn't love Jackie?" he once asked. "I remember that summer night at St-Jean-de-Luz. Gypsy violins were playing; the full moon made her hair lustrous, and she was astonishingly beautiful."

Jackie went on to other beaux, but she and Demi still stayed in touch. When he flew from Madrid to London for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June of 1953, he dined in Mayfair with Jackie. To his astonishment, he learned that she was engaged to John F. Kennedy, whom Demi knew.

He warned her against marrying JFK, confiding that his cousin in New York always lined up an array of beautiful women every time JFK flew into the city. "He's a compulsive womanizer," Demi said. "He never can be true to one woman—it's not his nature."

As he remembered it, she didn't look too surprised, as if she were well aware of that fact. She protested, 'But Jack's the only one pursuing me who has a lot of money.'"

After the coronation, Jackie flew to Paris to do some shopping before taking an Air France flight from Orly Airport to Boston. She occupied a seat near one of the most famous and instantly recognizable pop icons of that era:

"A young girl, sort of prim and proper, had the seat opposite me," Zsa Zsa Gabor recalled. "She rudely kept staring at me throughout most of the flight. She wasn't very attractive and had this kinky hair and bad skin. As the hours dragged on, she finally got up the courage to speak to me. She complimented me on the beauty of my porcelain skin, and had the nerve to ask me how I took care of it. There was no way in hell I was going to give her my beauty secrets."

"The little wren with the bad skin soon realized that I'd had Jack before her," claimed **Zsa Zsa Gabor.**

"Because I was Zsa Zsa, the customs men in Boston cleared me at once—not this ugly little duckling with the pimpled skin. To my surprise, I found Jack *[JFK]* in the waiting room. He rushed to me, hugged me, and lifted me off the ground. Obviously, he wasn't in back pain that day."

"Oh, *dahlink*," Zsa Zsa said to him. "You seem in the mood for a repeat performance." She was referring to his seduction of her during his previous visit to Hollywood.

"Can't now," Jack told her, "But I'd love to. You'll always be my sweetheart. You know I've always been in love with you."

"At that moment, the Little Wren from the airplane appeared," Zsa Zsa said.

"Zsa Zsa, I want you to meet my *fiancée*, Jacqueline Bouvier. Jackie, this is Zsa Zsa Gabor, the best thing to come out of Hungary since goulash."

"I'm honored, I'm sure," Jackie said in a tiny, almost meek voice.

"Miss Bouvier shot daggers at me," Zsa Zsa claimed. "For the first time, I think she realized that I had been having an affair with her future husband. I told Jack what a beautiful girl he had. I also warned him, 'Don't you corrupt her morals.'"

Jackie looked straight into Zsa Zsa's eyes. With a little smirk, she replied, "He's already been there, done that."

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Even though Jackie had turned down Demi's proposal, she still maintained a friendship with him. When she was First Lady, she invited him to the White House to a party that she and JFK were hosting for Eugene Black, the head of the World Bank.

Demi noticed that marriage had not changed Jack's ways. "I saw him leave the room with a mother. (I won't name her.) He was gone twenty minutes and returned to the room to reclaim her daughter. He then disappeared with her for another twenty minutes. Jackie could not help from noticing."

One of JFK's best friends, Senator George Smathers of Florida, echoed Demi's claim. "No one was off-limits to Jack—not your wife, your mother, your sister, even your daughters."

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Jackie's virginity, which she'd protected so ardently, could not be safeguarded forever. She may have wished that it had been André Malraux "who made me a woman," but it was someone quite different.

While still in Paris, Jackie began to date John Marquand, Jr., son of the famous novelist *[John Marquand, Senior]* who developed a reputation as the chronicler of American aristocratic WASPs. Marquand, Senior became first known for his commercially successful stories about the Japanese detective, "Mr. Moto." In 1938, he'd won the Pulitzer Prize for his biography, *The Late George Apley*. At the Shakespeare bookstore on Paris' Left Bank, Marquand, Jr., purchased copies of his father's novels for Jackie to read. She read one or two of them, mainly as a means of better understanding the family dynamic of this new man in her life.

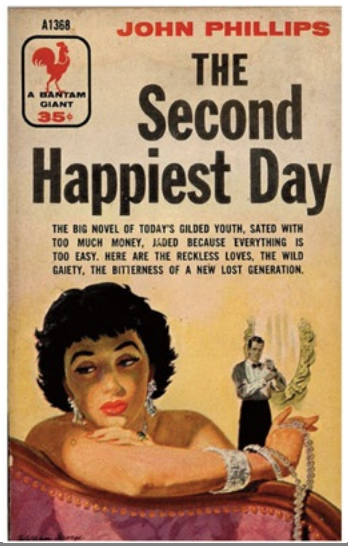
Eventually, they found themselves frequenting a smoky Parisian *boîte* named "L'Elephant Blanc"

Evenings at "The White Elephant" found Jackie lighting one Gauloise after another and downing Grasshoppers *[made from equal parts crème de menthe, crème de cacao, and either fresh cream or vodka, or both, shaken with ice and strained into a chilled cocktail glass]*, which that summer was her favorite cocktail.

Seduction was slow in coming. Marquand Jr., told his friends, "Jackie will not go all the way. She'll give me a blow job, but she won't let me screw her in the missionary position."

Perhaps Jackie had too many of those Grasshoppers at the White Elephant, but one night, after escorting her there, Marquand got lucky. In fact, as he later told some male friends, "She was so hot to trot she couldn't wait until I got inside my apartment. I figured I'd better go for it before she changed her mind."

And so he did, as related in Edward Klein's book, *All Too Human, The Love Story of Jack and Jackie Kennedy*. "In the creaky French elevator, Jackie let herself get carried away. She was in Marquand's arms, her skirt bunched above her hips, the backs of her thighs pressed against the decorative open grillwork. When the elevator jolted to a stop, she was no longer a demivierge," *[a term translating as "a "a partial virgin," and indicating a woman who engages in promiscuous sexual activity but who retains her virginity*



The famous novelist, John P. Marquand, Sr., didn't want his son, "Junior," using the Marquand name, fearing that readers might be confused. So Marquand, Jr., published his novel, ***The Second Happiest Day***, under the nom de plume of "John Phillips." It was marketed by its publisher as "The big novel of today's gilded youth, sated with too much money, jaded because everything is too easy. Here are the reckless loves, the wild gaiety, the bitterness of a new Lost Generation."

Was the book's title inspired by his seduction of Jackie in a Paris elevator? Marquand, Jr., never revealed what his first happiest day was.

The elevator had stalled on the second landing. Actually, it was in good working order. Marquand had used the deliberately stalled elevator as a seduction technique on several other young woman he'd previously invited upstairs for a drink.

Jackie later told confidants that she surrendered her virginity "only on my wedding night." That was not true. Jack Kennedy himself confessed to several people, including his brother, Bobby, and to Florida Senator George Smathers, that he and Jackie were having an affair months before their wedding.

According to her gossipy friend, author Truman Capote, "Virginity was something Jackie wanted to get rid of as soon as possible. She knew that her sister had lost hers, and, as the older sister, she didn't want to be the last to sample what a man had to offer. If my calculations are correct, she went to bed with at least five guys before Jack sampled the honeypot. Certainly John P. Marquand, Jr., takes the honors as the first in a string of get-lucky beaux."

After their "love-in-the-lift" seduction, Jackie and Marquand Jr., began a passionate affair that lasted until she returned to America.

Janet Auchincloss, Jackie's mother, had trained her daughters "to grow up, look chic, behave yourself, and marry a rich man."

When her mother discovered that Jackie was having an affair with Marquand, she violently objected. "Writers are always poor as church mice."

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After the initial excitement and novelty wore off, Jackie broke up with Marquand. During her vacation from the Sorbonne, she traveled third class to Austria and for a tour through parts of a devastated post-war Germany. Her companions were her roommates, Susan Coward and Claude de Renty. "I'd never traveled on a train before with chickens and geese."

In Vienna, during the sullen peak of The Cold War, Jackie was arrested by the occupying Russian army, which controlled a sector of the city. Under a hot spotlight, she was brutally grilled for three hours by a fat senior officer of the KGB. She had been arrested for photographing buildings and was suspected of being an American spy. In tears, she was finally let go.

Leaving Vienna, she journeyed to the ruins of Hitler's Bavarian retreat at Berchtesgaden. Later, she visited the site of the former concentration camp at Dachau, where so many prisoners had lost their lives. For weeks afterward, she was haunted in her dreams with visions of gas chambers and torture chambers.

Back in Paris, she reconciled with Marquand Jr., forgetting whatever it was they'd argued about before she left.

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Jackie and John (Marquand Jr.), as a romantic couple, were seen at fashionable places around Paris, eventually returning to their former haunt, the White Elephant. “I was still in love with John, and he was passionately in love with me,” Jackie recalled. “I chose not to listen to mother. After all, I was grown up and wanted to live my own life. Besides, isn’t a woman supposed to take a husband for richer or poorer?”

In 1978, Kitty Kelley published a pioneering biography called *Jackie Oh!* that was highly controversial. The public at the time, although fascinated with Jackie, knew virtually nothing of her affairs, only her marriages to John F. Kennedy and later to Aristotle Onassis.

Kelley was the first author to reveal, in published form, an overview of Jackie’s first love, John P. Marquand, Jr. In fairness to Kelley, she admitted that Jackie’s reaction to sweaty intimacy might be more “apocryphal than authentic,” but as the tale goes, Jackie, upon losing her virginity, said in disappointment, “Oh, is that all there is to it?”

When Kelley’s book appeared, Marquand Jr., was ridiculed by his friends, one of whom asked, “Did Jackie have to ask you if you were in yet?” Marquand denied the conquest of Jackie’s virginity, but by this time, there were additional links that bound him to his memories of Jackie. He had married Susan Coward, her roommate. Susan’s first cousin, Michael Canfield, had become the first husband of Lee Bouvier (later, Radziwill).

“The Kelley story reflected on me a hell of a lot more than it did on Jackie?” Marquand said. “What kind of asshole would make claims on the maidenhead of Jacqueline Bouvier and go around bragging about it? Not only that, but the rumor made me sound less than manly. The story became so prominent that when I was having lunch one day with Jackie I brought it up,” Marquand recalled. “She completely dismissed it and asked me to drop the subject.”

“It’s pure bullshit” she responded. “I don’t know where on earth Kelley got such a story. I certainly didn’t tell her, and I know you didn’t either. It’s categorically untrue. But I’m too much of a lady and you’re too much of a gentleman to sue. Besides, the press would have a field day with a lawsuit like that. Kelley would sell five million books in hardcover alone.”

But apparently, Marquand made up that story about his chivalrous reaction and Jackie’s demure response to Kelley’s revelations. To his close friends (all male), he told a very different story, claiming that Kelley had been right all along.

Vidal dismissed Marquand Jr., and Jackie’s denials: “Jackie did lose her virginity to John in that elevator. He was a friend of mine and he told me the truth.”

After the resumption of her affair with Marquand, Jackie returned to America to confront Janet once again. This time her mother slapped her hard on both cheeks, “trying to knock some sense into you.”

As Jackie later told her sister, Lee, “Mother never hit me before. She’s also withdrawn my allowance. I’m going to have to figure out a way of making money myself.”

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Shortly after her return to America from her tenure (and adventures) in Paris, Jackie enrolled in George Washington University in Washington, D.C. for her final term, seeking and eventually winning a bachelor’s degree in French literature. Her dating continued at an accelerated pace, and she made promises to young men she could not possibly keep. As she told her sister, Lee, “I’m weaving such a deceptive web with so many beaux, I feel like Mata Hari.”

In 1951, after a junior year in Paris, Jackie (*first row*, *center*) was surrounded by lots of men when she earned her bachelor of arts in French literature from George Washington University. “I was hit upon at least once a day, and sometimes a girl can’t say no.”

She somehow resumed her relationship with Ormande de Kay, the young American she had previously dated in Paris, and she became "engaged to be engaged to him." When she slipped off to date other men, she made up some engagement or some project that would make her unavailable to him.

De Kay was with her the day she heard from the editors of *Vogue* that she'd won that magazine's 16th annual *Prix de Paris*, a writing contest open to college seniors. To win the prize, she competed with 1,280 other contestants from 225 colleges. The winner would be offered a one-year contract as a trainee in *Vogue* office, half the time in Paris, the rest in New York. Jackie had won by submitting an essay on fashion, a personal profile, the makeup pages for a mock issue of the magazine, and a personal essay entitled "People I wish I had known."

She'd chosen Sergei Diaghilev, the Russian ballet impresario who'd had an affair with Vaslav Nijinski. She'd become fascinated with Diaghilev once when she'd harbored a young dream of becoming a ballerina, and her awareness of his role in the world of dance had been intensified by her dialogues in Paris with the ballet dancer, Michael Somes.

Another of her choices was Charles Baudelaire, the French poet. She wrote, "He could paint sinfulness with honesty and still believe in something higher." Her final choice was Oscar Wilde, the witty but disgraced Victorian author and man-about-London who had been jailed after a conviction on a charge of homosexuality.

Both Black Jack and Janet urged Jackie not to return to Paris, citing the year she'd already spent abroad. Jackie was ultimately persuaded not to accept the award, but in the end, it was her own decision. After mulling it over for weeks, she announced, "I have decided against a career in fashion."

To reward her decision, both parents offered Jackie a summer tour of Europe. Lee would join her upon her own graduation from Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut, which Jackie had also attended. Lee would eventually return from Europe to matriculate as an art history major at Sarah Lawrence College.

A week after winning the award, and on a date with De Kay, he told her that the Navy was shipping him to fight in the Korean War. The agreement was that they would wed upon his return.

[Mail deliveries to the front lines in South Korea were hardly efficient. In January of 1952, Jackie wrote a "Dear John" letter to De Kay that he did not receive until mid-April.

She wrote of their "affair of the heart, remembering those romantic walks they'd had together along the banks of the Seine in Paris."

"I want you to be the first to know that I've found the love of my life, the man I want to marry. I am now engaged to wed John F. Kennedy."

De Kay survived the Korean War and returned home. But he didn't see Jackie until May of 1956, when she invited him to a small dinner party at Hickory Hill in Virginia, where she and JFK were living. He found that Jackie was pregnant and expecting a child due in September.

"The talk was all about politics, and I was surprised that Jackie had become the wife of such an ambitious politician. Jack, already a senator, told us that he would seek the Democratic nomination for vice president on a ticket with Adlai Stevenson. Bobby was planning to move to New York and run for Senator from that state. Young Teddy was going to move to Arizona, where he would later challenge Barry Goldwater for his Senate seat."

De Kay had already heard that Jack was a womanizer. "As we boys would say about him, Jack would spawn with any woman who had two legs that twitched."]

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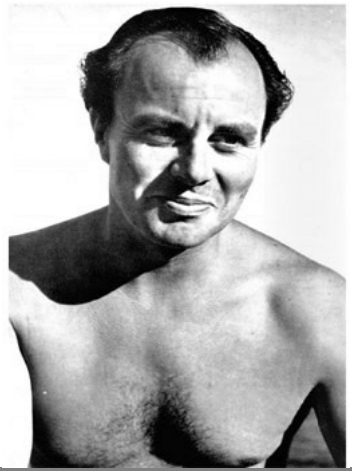
On June 7, 1951, from the Port of New York, eighteen-year-old Lee Bouvier and twenty-two-year-old Jacqueline Bouvier set out to their first trip to Europe together. It was financed by Hugh Auchincloss after much persuading from Janet, who had been been pestered for months by her daughters to let them go.

Gore Vidal predicted, "It will be a round of men, men, and more men. I'm sure half the eligible bachelors—and some not so eligible—will be lined up to welcome them, presuming wrongly that they are rich debutantes like Barbara Hutton and Doris Duke when they set out to conquer Europe. I expected one of them to land a prince or at least a count." In Lee's case, Gore's prediction would in time come true.

Left on the dock was Michael Canfield, a blonde-haired "beauty of a Harvard man" that Lee had been seriously dating and would ultimately marry. This Harvard University senior had been her most frequent escort, but they also went out with other people. In Lee's case, she was also dating Canfield's stepbrother, Blair Fuller.



When Jackie danced with **Prince Aly Khan**, he'd told her, "I only think of the woman's pleasure when I am in love, and I'm in love with you."

She didn't believe him.

Lee and Jackie were armed with letters of introduction, but not a lot of money, forcing them to travel third class aboard Cunard's *Queen Eliza beth*. To their horror, the debutantes found themselves sharing a tiny little compartment in the bowels of the ship with a 90-year-old woman who liked to walk around in the nude.

At night, Lee and Jackie dressed in their Newport gowns and escaped to the first class deck, leaping over a large fence and "whizzing down the flight of stairs, leaping over another fence, and finally arriving there." With guilty faces, they spent part of their evenings dodging the ship's officers. Lee later wrote, "I have this fear that Jackie and I will soon be caught in the act. The whistles will blow. The ship will halt while we are condemned."

Nonetheless, every night at sea, they managed to slip into the ballroom. Lee wrote about one dance where Jackie managed to capture the sexy purser whom Lee had been lusting for all day.

Virginia-born **Nancy Astor,** eventually elected a Member of Parliament, was, by some estimates, more regal than the Windsors themselves

Lee ended up with one Iganovich Illiwitz from Persia. "The only thing I could see in the whole room was his nose—and then he tried to point out his family to me. It was the same nose on the same face of every one of them, only it came in all sizes."

Jackie had already warned her about "the sexual quirks" of men from the Middle East. Jackie was already a veteran of an up-close-and-personal encounter on a dance floor with a "very erect" Prince Aly Khan.

Jackie had already been to London, and she made herself Lee's guide to the city where her younger sister would live after her marriage to Prince Stanislas Radziwill.

Through Janet's intervention, and based on a reference from Hugh Auchincloss, one of the most coveted

invitations in the U.K. soon after arrived for Jackie and Lee.

It was from Nancy Astor, Viscountess Astor, to Cliveden House, one of the most lavish and stately homes in England. Jackie was thrilled. She had read about it as the meeting place in the 1920s and 30s of the Cliveden Set, a coven of intellectuals.

Although its roots extended deep into the 17th Century, Cliveden House, a Victorian three-story mansion, had been designed by Sir Charles Barry on the banks of the Thames in Buckinghamshire, near London. It had been rebuilt in 1851. Its gracefully sprawling English Palladian design included vast acreages of parks and gardens, and house party guests who included Charlie Chaplin, Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, Franklin D. Roosevelt, T.E. Lawrence (i.e., Lawrence of Arabia), and such authors as Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, and Henry James.

Born in 1879 in Danville, Virginia (USA), to a distinguished family of landowners with roots to the antebellum South, Lady Astor was the survivor of a spectacularly unhappy marriage to a drunkard in Virginia. After their divorce and her subsequent emigration, in 1905, to the U.K., she met and married her second husband, the very wealthy American expatriate, Waldorf Astor. Born in the United States, his father had moved his family to England when Waldorf was twelve and raised him as an English aristocrat.

Eventually, the witty and endlessly controversial Nancy became the first woman to sit as a Member of Parliament in the British House of Commons, despite her birth in America. She still retained her regal beauty and her saucy, piquant wit when Jackie and Lee met her.

One of the most stately of the stately homes of England, **Cliveden House** stands on the banks of the River Thames in Buckinghamshire, outside London. It has been the setting for many a scandal, including a "mini-scandal" instigated by Jackie.

Actually, when the Bouviers met her in 1951, her reputation had become seriously tarnished. Before the war, and publicly supported by her close friend, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr. *[who had been appointed by President Roosevelt as U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James's]*, she had wanted to appease Hitler. Astor maintained that Nazism would solve the problems "associated with Communism and the Jews." With deep hatred, her critics on both sides of the Atlantic had publicly denounced her as "Hitler's spokeswoman in Britain."

Ambassador Kennedy, to judge from their correspondence, was also anti-Semite. In one letter, written by Kennedy to Astor, he stated his fear that the "Jew media" of the United States would undermine the stability of the West: "Jewish interests in New York and Los Angeles are already making noises to set a match to the fuse of the world."

In one letter to the ambassador, Lady Astor surmised that "Hitler is no menace. He looks too much like Charlie Chaplin to be taken seriously."

In spite of the Viscountess's unfortunate racial and political opinions, Jackie found Lady Astor a woman of charm and wit. "While you're in England, marry a rich Brit like I did," Lady Astor advised Jackie. "Although I must say, the only thing I like about rich Brits is their money. But if you succeed, I must warn you. The penalty for being rich is to be bored by the same people who used to snub you."

Lady Astor was born in near poverty "because my father had lost his slave labor after the Civil War. It would be wonderful to bring back slavery. But since that is now allowed, I told this group of Negroid students that they should aspire to be servants in the households of the wealthy."

Jackie only smiled at her opinions, each of them increasingly outrageous as their time together wore on.

In her final advice to Jackie, she said, "Regardless of how long you live, never admit to being more than fifty-two."

While Lee was engaged with other guests, Jackie wandered off to inspect some of the rooms. She climbed the stairs, hoping to get a peek into Lady Astor's bedroom. A door was open onto one of the upstairs corridors. As she walked by, a man called out to her. She was astonished to find it was Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., a movie star in his own right, and the son of Hollywood's most famous swashbuckler, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. Fairbanks Jr., invited her in, and she entered his room, where he was adjusting his tie and tuxedo jacket in preparation for dinner that night.

She knew that during World War II, he'd been assigned as a U.S. Navy Reserve to Lord Louis Montbatten's commando staff in Britain. Jackie read that in 1949, he'd been made an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. A confirmed Anglophile, Fairbanks was a frequent visitor to England after the war.

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., told Marlene Dietrich, his lover, "During my 'private time' with Miss Jacqueline Bouvier, I wish she had spent more time talking about how wonderful I was and less time trying to get me to reveal secrets about Joan Crawford."

Jackie also knew him to be an ace seducer, having married Joan Crawford when he was only nineteen and having had affairs with everyone from Laurence Olivier to Marlene Dietrich.

What happened at Cliveden in 1951 between Jackie and Fairbanks is not known. Apparently, she didn't confide her encounter to Lee. A servant later reported that Fairbanks closed his bedroom door behind her, and they were alone in his bedroom together for at least half an hour.

She went alone downstairs to the party, and he didn't descend for another half hour.

This secret encounter remains one of the unsolved mysteries of Jackie's life, of which there would be many more in the years to come.

[Douglas Fairbank, Jr. had first met John F. Kennedy in 1940 when Secretary of State Cordell Hull arranged for him to go on a fact-finding tour of South America, ostensibly to investigate the effects of Latin American public opinion of U.S. motion pictures. In actual fact, he had been a spy, sent to gauge how sympathetic these nations were to Nazi ideology. Before going, he enrolled in daily classes at the Berlitz School of Languages in Manhattan to learn at least basic Spanish and Portuguese.

"I sat next to a polite, rather toothy young fellow, about twenty-three years old. He was modest and charmingly impressed to be, as he said, 'in a language class with a movie star.'"

Weeks later, Fairbanks shared adjoining seats with that young man on an airplane returning to the United States from Panama.

From here, we "Fast Forward" the narrative to 1962, when Fairbanks is standing in the Oval Office of The White House with the same man, watching TV coverage of astronaut John Glenn orbiting the Earth.

"How's your Portuguese, Doug?" the man asked.

"Still rusty, Mr. President," he replied.]

Back in London, Janet had arranged for her daughters to attend a party at the home of her friend, Jane du Boulay, who had married a prominent Englishman, Guy de Boulay. During the course of the evening, when the Bouviers told him that they needed to buy a car for the continuation of their tour through Europe, he sold them his Hillman Minx for 500 pounds.

[The Hillman Minx was a series of relatively inexpensive, relatively staid, middle-sized family cars produced by the Japan-based Isuzu Motors under license from a British distributor between the early 1950s and 1964.]

In that car, they embarked on the mandatory tour of the English countryside, stopping in both Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon before continuing to the Cotswolds.

At Dover, they took the car ferry to the coast of France. From there, they headed for Paris.

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Paris was Jackie's favorite city. She told Lee that she was tempted to live there permanently and not to return to America, except for holidays. When she got there, she launched herself and her younger sister into a whirlwind of activity, including renewals of former friendships and attendance at fashion shows, museums, the ballet. They also

went shopping, although their budget was limited.

Lee was introduced to Jackie's friend, Claude de Renty, and Lee got to see where Jackie had lived in the rue Mozart during her days at the Sorbonne, somehow managing to survive with no heat and scarce hot water.

Claude later recorded her impressions of Jackie and her sister: "Jacqueline was dark, serious, moody, and extremely curious about the world. Lee, blonde and very much the kid sister, appeared perhaps easier to get to know. She was easygoing and affable, but far less profound that Jacqueline. Jacqueline possessed an intensity that Lee clearly lacked."

From Paris, Lee and Jackie drove to Poitiers, 207 miles to the southwest. As a student of French history, Jackie had read a lot about this historic medieval city, the capital of the region of Poitou, an area linked during the Middle Ages to such famous names as Joan of Arc and the Black Prince. Jackie was seeking a reunion with her former beau, Paul de Ganay, who was serving in the French military.

It was a sunny day, and the Bouviers arrived in strapless sundresses, creating quite a stir when they confronted Paul's regiment. His commander asked him, "Are you engaged?"

"To both of them," Paul responded, gallantly.

Jackie's sexual attraction to Paul was a strong as ever, but being with Lee inhibited her movements, of course.

However, Lee was checking out the young men as well, recording in her journal that she encountered "The two best-looking officers this side of Paradise. They wore blue berets and had lovely gold cords twinkling underneath their arms."

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Driving across the Pyrénées and heading into Spain, Jackie and Lee reached Pamplona in time for the festival of the running of the bulls. Jackie had read about it in one of her favorite novels, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*.

At the bullfights, the two American beauties nearly caused a riot. Throughout the day, a virtual army of animated young Spaniards had pursued them, but the number of their potential *beaux* eventually narrowed down to five. Obviously, Jackie and Lee weren't enough women to go around, so a fight erupted. The police were called.

Two of the potential suitors were quite ardent. Lee and Jackie had promised to meet them for breakfast the following morning at nine. But they fled from the hotel at six o'clock that morning for the long drive to Madrid.

Dressed in their dark suits, the two young men of Navarre showed up at the hotel only to be informed by the manager that the two *norteamericanas* had left Pamplona at dawn.

Driving into Madrid, the raucously festive, wine-soaked atmosphere of Pamplona during the running of the bulls seemed like a distant world. Under the iron grip of Spain's Fascist dictator, Francisco Franco, the capital of Spain appeared dark and gloomy. As Jackie wrote to Janet, "It was clearly a police state, but we had some exciting invitations, so we decided to make the best of it, if we didn't get arrested as had happened to me in Vienna."

Armed with an invitation, they arrived at the elegant home of the Marqués de Santo Domingo, who showed them his celebrated painting of the Madonna that he claimed was worth millions. He later drove them west to Ávila, where he let them walk along the top of the ancient, once-fortified city walls. He told them that he had the authority to grant that permission, because he owned the walls.

Their next visit was to an elegant country house, El Quexigal, a 16th century former monastery that had once been visited by Philip II. Here, their hosts were the Princes Christian and Alfonso Hohenlohe, who shared their treasures with them, including museum-worthy crown jewels and paintings by Old Masters. Later, as Lee recorded in her journal, after Alfonso put a record on his Victrola, the two princes jitterbugged with Jackie and Lee to the sound of "Wave the Green for Old Tulane."

Later, Jackie took in their collection of Flemish primitives and sat in the chair where Christopher Columbus had plotted his epic sail across the Atlantic to the New World.

Back across the Pyrénées, they stopped over in Provence for a few nights before continuing along the French Riviera "where we did not break the bank at Monte Carlo."

In school, Lee had become fascinated by the Italian Renaissance. She'd written Bernard Berenson, the celebrated expert on Renaissance art, and in response, he had invited Jackie and her to his Villa i Tatti, his Tuscan estate.

When they met him in his garden, he was eighty-six years old, but still sharp of mind. Before talking about Da Vinci or Michelangelo, he gave them some sage advice, "Never marry a man unless he constantly stimulates your mind. Of course, stimulation of the body would be of use, too."

In Italy, **Bernard Berenson**, a leading expert on Renaissance art, survey's Canova's nude statue of Pauline Borghese, Napoléon's sister. The question remains, did Jackie, during her time in Venice, also pose for an artist drawing nude sketches of her?

He'd become rich by authenticating pictures by Old Masters, separating them from the fakes. He then took five percent of the painting's appraised value, which could be a considerable sum.

When he heard they were headed for Rome, he told them to shop the Flea Market there—"perhaps find a genuine Titian that I can authenticate for you for my usual commission."

After visiting Berenson, they drove to the site of their next invitation at Marlia, the former home of Napoléon's sister, Ellsa Baciochi Bonaparte, the Duchess of Lucca. They checked in for a week at the home of Count Peccí-Blunt. Their son, Dino, was half American. He immediately quizzed them about his friend from Boston, John F. Kennedy. The Bouvier sisters had not met him.

Jackie and Lee caused a bit of a scandal when they left early one morning and didn't say goodbye to their hosts. The aging Countess Anna Peccí Blunt was particularly offended, later claiming that the two young visitors "took French leave and had no breeding or manners." Jackie's excuse was that they had to leave early and didn't want to disturb the countess at that hour.

Both sisters wanted their stay in Venice to be leisurely, enough time for Lee to take voice lessons and for Jackie to have a private tutor to improve her sketching. She was fortunate to have a dashing young Venetian artist as her teacher. He was later described as "an American girl's dream of what a handsome, sexy, charming Italian male would look like."

It was later rumored that Jackie posed for nude sketches for the budding artist. Today, those sketches would be worth a fortune, but if they exist at all, they have been lost to history. How could he know that his model would become one of the century's most alluring personalities, not to mention First Lady of America?

So far as it is known, Jackie is America's only First Lady suspected of having posed for nude sketches—or, years later, to be secretly photographed in the nude?

Returning to Paris, Lee and Jackie prepared to go home. They had to sell their Hillman Minx to Harrison Davidson, a young American missionary who planned to drive it to the Sahara desert, after a sea crossing from Spain into Morocco. Lee recorded that he looked "like he'd just escaped from Benny Goodman's String Quartet."

In her journal, Lee wrote: "He wanted our car cheap because every $5 he spent on himself meant one more African child would starve to death. We were slaughtering a whole tribe, but his conscience would let him starve only 206 of them."

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During their ocean crossing back to America, the sisters compiled a scrapbook of their adventures, with the intention of presenting it to Janet and Hugh Auchincloss, who had financed their trip. Lee did the writing, and Jackie drew the illustrations. The journal was mostly about themselves, not the treasures they'd viewed. "It was our confection to make Mummy smile," Lee claimed.

The scrapbook featured whimsical poems, intricate illustrations, and candid snapshots of themselves. Jackie jokingly said that their scrapbook should be entitled "*Lah De Dahs Across the Pond"* or "*Life Among the Noblesse,"* or even "*Lollygagging in Europe."*

Discovered in an attic years later, the scrapbook, formally entitled *One Special Summer*, was published by Delacorte Press in 1974. It was of interest, for the most part, for the insights it provides about the pre-celebrity lives of two young sisters on the dawn of world fame.

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With the glitz and glamor of Paris behind her, Jackie returned to Washington, D.C. She didn't want to be trapped in McLean, Virginia, where her mother had married Hughdie and moved Jackie and her sister, Lee Bouvier, into a small mansion, Merrywood.

Jackie could not live very well on the fifty dollars a month that Janet and Hughdie gave her, so she decided to try to find a job, preferably one in journalism.

At Merrywood, she'd met Arthur Krock, the chief of *The New York Times'* Washington Bureau. Privately, Krock was a "media fixer" for the powerful Kennedy clan of Massachusetts. Krock was in close contact with the patriarch, Joseph P. Kennedy, a former movie mogul and bootlegger during Prohibition. He'd been appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James's on the eve of World War II, but was recalled by President Franklin D. Roosevelt for his well-publicized efforts to keep the United States out of World War II.

Krock was also a close friend of Frank Waldrop, editor of the now defunct *Washington-Herald*. For reasons of his own, Krock had a policy of hiring "pretty little girls," even if they lacked experience. He'd previously hired two women who happened to be rooming together in Washington, Kathleen ("Kick") Kennedy, Joseph Kennedy's daughter, who later died in an airplane crash over France in 1948.

He'd also added to his staff her friend, Inga Arvad, a blonde and beautiful Danish journalist.

Nicknamed "Inga-Binga," she'd had a torrid pre-war affair with Kick's brother, John F. Kennedy, whom Inga had nicknamed "Honeysuckle." Before becoming JFK's "hot-to-trot mistress," she had been a companion of Adolf Hitler at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. *[That relationship and its many ironies are more fully explained in the special feature*, JFK and the Nazi Spy, *at the end of this chapter.]*

Although somewhat reluctant, Waldrop hired Jackie as an inquiring photographer, but in a follow-up note to his friend, Krock, he wrote a devastating critique of her physicality:

"I fear you exaggerated the looks of your friend, Miss Jacqueline Bouvier. She is well-groomed, speaking like a Newport debutante, and has perfect manners. But physically, her looks leave much to be desired—no breasts, a bit gawky, feet larger than those of Greta Garbo. Hands more suited to a steelworker, and bad skin, with lots of imperfections on her face. Her wide mouth evokes that of a baby bird waiting for Mama Bird to bring it the worm. She is also skinny, and her oculist has to design a pair of glasses that stretch across the Golden Gate Bridge for its frame to reach both of her widely spaced eyes. She has a certain charm, like that of a puppy, but she also reminds me of a piece of clothing that was put away in a drawer without being properly dried."

Fortunately for Jackie, the young men in Washington didn't agree with Waldrop's assessment of her physical charms.

At first, she turned down dates from what she defined as "The Werewolves of the Fourth Estate." One young editor, who had been rejected by her, called her "No Tits Wonder."

Her job at the *Washington-Herald* involved surveying "average citizens" about their reaction to hot-button, but not particularly threatening, issues of the day. In addition to photographing her subject, she had to ask her interviewee a question and print the answer. One of the first questions she asked some of her subjects was, "If you had a date with Marilyn Monroe, what would you talk about?"

Many evenings, instead of dating, Jackie stayed in her snug little apartment writing a screenplay. Ironically, it centered around one of America's First Ladies, Dolley Madison, the occupant of the White House when it was burned by the British in 1812. Jackie presented a warts-and-all portrait of Dolley, depicting her as a "snuff tobacco addict who was the focus of gay company dancing to violins." *[Of course, "gay" had a different meaning then.]*

She added drama to her plot by exposing an attempt by the British to kidnap Dolley and to bring her back to England to parade her through the streets of London in chains.

Later, Jackie wasn't able to find a film studio interested in her scenario, even though she'd enclosed a glamorous picture of herself with the completed script and a cover letter saying, "I will be willing to play Dolley Madison in my first screen appearance. A possible leading man for me might be Henry Fonda."

Jackie settled into her newspaper job with a lot of other highly competitive young women who were known around the office as underpaid "Tillie the Toilers."

Jackie wrote a postgraduate screenplay about the life of former First Lady **Dolley Madison**, hoping to star in the biopic.

By the spring of 1952, she had her own byline as "The Inquiring Fotographer." Most of her subjects were unknown people, some of them randomly encountered in the supermarket. But on at least two separate occasions, she met famous personalities. She asked Eleanor Roosevelt, "When did you discover that women were not the weaker sex?" the former First Lady chose not to respond. A rising politician from California, Richard Nixon, was asked, "What do you think the future of women in politics might be?"

Caught in Jackie's lens, the young senator from Massachusetts was a playboy politician. She had marriage on her mind. He didn't.

"By all means, a woman before the end of this century will no doubt be president of the United States," Nixon predicted. But then he asked her not to print that. "I don't want to anger my male constituents," said the future U.S. president to a future First Lady.

Abandoning her hoped-for career as a screenwriter or perhaps a movie star, Jackie reconsidered the viability of newspapermen as potential dates. "I don't plan to marry a reporter, but perhaps through their connections, I might meet a beau who's rich. On her first date with Chicago-born Charles Bartlett, she did just that. In time, he would introduce her to a rising young politician from one of America's richest families. Bartlett had met John F. Kennedy in 1945 after his navy tour of duty had come to an end. They'd been friends ever since. Bartlett would later say, "I became a historical footnote as the man who brought Jack and Jackie together as the 20th Century's most famous couple. But first I tried to score with Jackie myself."

"She was such a darling girl, but there were limits," he later confessed. She was very cute, very sweet, and unsullied—or so I thought at the time. Once night in my car, my hand started traveling north in her long skirt. I got as far as New Hampshire, but Maine had a road block. I never made it to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

She soon dropped Bartlett in favor of John White, who had once worked for the *Times-Herald*, but was now employed by the State Department. "For a woman to attract me, she has to be elfin," he later said. "Jackie fitted that description at the time."

"When I met Jackie through Bartlett, I was moping over a lost love, Kick Kennedy," White said. "Even though she'd found other men, she was still the love of my life. I was in mourning over her death in 1948. Kick and I used to double date with Jack and Inga."

Jackie remembered White as "a literary ex-Marine. His apartment was lined with books. He even had a stack of books by his toilet bowl."

When I first dated her, she was hung up on the poet Sappho from the island of Lesbos," White said. "At first, I thought she was a lesbian herself, since she resisted all of my sexual assaults. But she dropped Sappho and decided she was the reincarnation of Madame Récamier."

"As the new Madame Récamier, I will have my salon in Washington that will become the envy of the world," Jackie told him. "Every night, I will assemble the most celebrated people in America—Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Ernest Hemingway, Carson McCullers, Tennessee Williams, Pablo Casals, Walter Lippmann, and Irene Dunne."

"But the week after, she'd forgotten about those goals and had come up with something more obtainable," White said. "She freely admitted that she wanted to marry a rich and powerful man, and be the power behind the throne."

"I prefer him to be American, but I would settle for a British man, perhaps even a Frenchman," she told him. "If a Brit, I would want him to look like Prince Philip."

"I think that later in life, when Jackie was First Lady, one of the reasons she didn't get along with the Queen Elizabeth was because she was jealous that Elizabeth had gotten Philip instead of her," White outrageously claimed.

Jackie was constantly meeting close friends of the Kennedy siblings, but had not met any of them directly. White's best friend was William Walton, a former correspondent for *Time-Life*. In war-torn London, he'd become the best friend of Joseph Kennedy, Jr., JFK's older brother, who later died in a plane crash over France during the summer of 1944.

"Bill" was older than Jackie, and she would sit at his feet, listening to his fascinating stories, including how he and Ernest Hemingway had "liberated" the bar at the Ritz Hotel in Paris in the wake of the Nazis fleeing toward their Fatherland.

"Bill was a darling man," Jackie recalled, "one of the most sophisticated I'd ever met. He made me realize that I needed to marry a man with imagination, but they were hard to find, almost impossible. In the Eisenhower Fifties, the emphasis was on conformity. But I thought having an open mind was what counted."

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Even though both Bartlett and Jackie had moved on to other partners, they still maintained a friendship. She even attended his wedding to Martha Buck, the daughter of a wealthy tycoon.

Jackie often visited the Bartlett home in Georgetown, where Martha announced one night that she was pregnant. "My husband still seemed interested in Jackie, and I decided something had to be done," Martha said. "I urged Charlie to introduce Jackie to an eligible young man. He just had to get over his fascination with Jackie, who had gone on to other beaux."

Bartlett knew that Jackie had become frustrated in her choice of men, although, unknown to him at the time, she'd been dating the very epitome of a 1950s-era Washington conformist, a stockbroker, no less.

Unaware of that, Bartlett invited only Jackie to a small dinner party that he and Martha hosted at their home in Georgetown. "I decided to play Cupid and introduce Jackie to my dear friend, Jack Kennedy. I'd met him in Palm Beach at a night club right before he declared his candidacy for Congress. Now it was Senator Kennedy, and maybe one day he'd be President Kennedy or at least Vice President Kennedy."

"Jack was a skirt chaser, and I knew that if he wanted to become president, he'd have to find the perfect wife, not some grumpy frump like Bess Truman or some lesbian like Eleanor."

"Jack was a wild thing. He and I used to chase around Washington. When he'd see a pod of beauties, he'd say to me, 'I smell poontang in the air'—crap like that. Before he knocked up half the population of Georgetown, I thought Jackie could settle him down."

"I'd like to report that Jack meeting Jackie was a historic moment, love at first sight, as dramatic as the meeting of Marc Antony when he boarded Cleopatra's barge," Bartlett said. "They did seem to like each other, but it was so very casual. At least, Jack was intrigued enough to walk her out to her car, which was parked outside my house. He told me later that as he walked down the street with Jackie toward her battered old Mustang, he invited her for a drink at this tavern in Georgetown."

"The sound of a barking fox terrier in the back seat of the Mustang ended Jack's possible conquest that night," Bartlett said. "I didn't know it, but Jackie's mysterious beau had accompanied her to my house. Since I didn't know of him, I didn't extend him an invitation. He agreed to wait for her in the back seat, sleeping until our dinner ended. He was then planning to take her to one of the late night clubs in the area."

"When Jack saw that she already had a guy, he fled into the night. He later told me that he went home with two 'young maidenheads,' as he referred to them, that he'd picked up in that same tavern where he'd invited Jackie."

Two days later, I learned the name of this guy that Jackie had been secretly dating," Bartlett said.

The handsome young man, who looked like Robert Redford in 1960, was John Grinnel Wetmore Husted, Jr., three years older than Jackie. He was the son of a banking family from Hartford, Connecticut, spearheaded by John G.W. Husted, Sr., and Helen Armstrong, who were in the Social Register.

"Young John was that stockbroker conformist that Jackie said she never wanted," Bartlett said. "But here she was, locked, presumably, in his arms every night. Later, when I quizzed Jackie about Husted, she told me that he

was really ‘too immature’ for her and that his work as a stockbroker was ‘far too tame for me,’ her exact words. But she continued to date him for months.”

“Later, when Husted and I became friends, and I invited him to my club for a game of tennis, I found out a lot more about him,” Bartlett said. “After the game, we stripped down in the locker room and headed for the showers together. At that point, John’s attraction to the ladies was on full display.”

Husted had attended Oxford University in England before returning to the United States at the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. He enrolled in St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire, before joining the American Field Service in World War II. After the war, he went to Yale, graduating in 1950.

His parents were friends of Jackie’s father, Black Jack Bouvier, and also friends of her stepfather, Hugh D. Auchincloss.

When Jackie was working as an inquiring photographer for the *Times-Herald*, she met Husted at a party in Washington. She found that he was a “wonderful dancer,” and that he liked her looks, “especially those high cheek bones, and those sensuous lips, although she was a bit of an ice princess.”

“On our first date, I took her to the Dancing Club in Washington,” Husted said. “It was filled with debutantes and preppy school boys—very proper, very formal. Jackie fitted right into this atmosphere. She was fun to be with and had a sharp sense of humor.”

“On our second date, she complained to me that her limited budget allowance and small salary from the newspaper didn’t allow her enough money for the clothing and shoes she needed,” Husted said. “I remember walking along on a street with her. She stopped and really wanted these alligator shoes displayed in a window, but couldn’t afford them. I felt rotten that I couldn’t buy them for her. But just taking her out for dinner nearly bankrupted my own limited budget.”

“Sometimes when I was free, I made the rounds with her when she was an inquiring photographer, asking people stupid questions,” Husted said. “One question I remembered was, ‘Should a married man be forced to wear a wedding band?’”

“One weekend, I took her to meet my mother in Bedford,” Husted said. “That was a disaster. My mother hated Jackie on sight, finding her pretentious. Privately, she told me that Jackie was nothing but a gold-digger, although I had no gold at all and only $213 in the bank. Driving back to Washington, Jackie made funny, but sarcastic, remarks about my mother’s cooking and home decoration.”

“I did better with Jackie’s father, Black Jack Bouvier, in New York,” Husted said. “At first, he seemed delighted that Jackie was dating ‘some man from Wall Street’ and might live in New York if we got married. But over a drink, when Jackie was out of the room, he warned me, ‘The marriage will never work, but in the meantime, I’m happy for the two of you.’”

“When I met Janet Auchincloss, I thought she was a dreadful woman,” Husted claimed. “She obviously didn’t approve of me, because I was making only $17,000 a year, hardly enough for Jackie, or so her mother believed. Later, Jackie told me that Janet wanted her to marry someone at the top of the ladder of success, not someone on the bottom rung trying to climb up.”

Janet was very frank in discussing a possible marriage of her oldest daughter. “You wrote in your yearbook that you didn’t want to be a typical housewife,” Janet said to her daughter. “Picture it: A dull life watching every penny for years to come. Flour up to your elbows. Washing the skid marks out of his underwear. Maybe three or four children running around the house driving you mad.”

Jackie told friends that the man she would marry “had to be intelligent, handsome, charming, rich, and filled with an unbounded ambition to succeed, perhaps having homes in Palm Beach, Manhattan, and Beverly Hills. I also want him to have the personal magnetism of Black Jack.”

Jackie could be rather blunt at times with her beaux. Before dating Husted, she’d told John D. Ridley, whom she’d gone out with on a few dates, “You’re going nowhere—not in the world and not with me. Let’s bid *adieu.”*

After only a few dates, Husted claimed that he fell in love with Jackie. He asked to meet her one snowy night at the Westbury Hotel in Washington, where he planned to pop the question. She was two hours late, but when she did show up, “we splurged on cherries jubilee. I finally got up the courage to propose marriage, and she accepted.”

“Swallowing a bitter pill,” Janet agreed to host an engagement party at Merrywood, with an announcement about the engagement in the newspapers. The night of the party, Husted talked privately with Hughdie, who was drunk. “He was an anti-Semite and hideously ugly, looking like a stern Presbyterian minister,” Husted said. “I dreaded having Janet and him as my in-laws.”

That was the night that Husted presented Jackie with an engagement ring. Its central sapphire was flanked with two diamonds he’d removed from an old ring of his mother’s.

Ralph Gentry, a business associate of Hughdie, was at the party. He recalled, “John and Jackie didn’t look like a good match to me. They stayed on opposite ends of the room, talking to their separate coterie of friends, Janet was

seriously pissed off, and Hughdie was drunk and didn't seem to give a damn. After all, she wasn't his daughter. I could tell that Jackie wasn't pleased with her choice of a lifetime mate, but was going along with it because it's what debutantes did in those days."

During her engagement to Husted, Jackie was introduced to his first cousin, Helen Chavchavadze, a brunette *divorcée* with two young daughters. Originally a Husted, she had married David Chavchavadze, the son of a Romanoff princess who had been reared in a palace in St. Petersburg. Jackie was fascinated by Helen's life in Europe and her marriage to a real Romanoff prince.

Her future friend, Ben Bradlee, recalled meeting Helen, finding her "totally pretty, well-educated, and interesting, with a feminist mother who believed in freedom and rebellion."

[Jackie and Helen became friends, although not seeing a lot of each other. However, in 1959, when JFK was contemplating a run for the presidency, Jackie invited Helen to a party at their Georgetown home. At the gathering honoring her sister, Lee, Jackie introduced Helen to JFK. "We talked about Russia, and he seemed fascinated by me," Helen recalled.

"I didn't hear anything from Jack until the summer of 1960, when Charles Bartlett, his friend, called me and requested that I come to this party in Georgetown. He told me that Jack Kennedy specifically requested that I come to the party."

"I went and had a reunion with Jack," Helen said. "When I was driving home in my little Volkswagen, I realized I was being followed by a man in a white convertible. When he pulled up beside my Volks, I saw that it was Jack."

"How about following me home?" he yelled to her.

"I accepted," Helen said. "Three hours later, I was in his bed. It was followed by three other secret meetings when Jackie was away."

"One night, I encountered Jack again at a party at the home of the columnist, Joseph Alsop, and his boyfriend," Helen said. "Jack was there, but he was rather cold to me. Months went by, and he became president. Weeks after the Inauguration, Jack showed up at my doorstep unannounced. He was with one of his best friends, Senator George Smathers of Florida, another skirt-chaser. Fortunately, I was in my apartment alone. After drinks, George departed, and Jack and I resumed our affair. I just assumed that the Secret Service was guarding the building."

"After that night, Jackie invited me to several small dinners at the White House, but the President and I never got together alone ever again. In fact, my last invitation from Jackie came only nine days before his assassination. I hoped she never found out that I had betrayed her, but I found Jack just too irresistible."]

In Nantucket in the 1980s, Husted spoke of his long ago love for Jackie. "Back then, I was protecting her reputation and her virginity, claiming that our relationship was very chaste. I didn't exactly tell the truth back then. We made love, but not the type that would get an unmarried girl pregnant."

"I don't want to get too personal here, but Jackie and I went as far as we could back then without going all the way. It was called heavy petting. I don't know what it's called today. Most of these liaisons took place in the back seat of my car. If we pressed them hard enough, most girls give in after they'd dated a boy for a long time. Giving in meant giving a boyfriend a blow-job or masturbating him. Jackie and I had some intensive back seat sessions getting acquainted with each other's anatomies."

"Our engagement came to an end one weekend when I took the train from New York to Washington to see her," Hulsted said. "We had dinner together, but nothing else. At the airport, a kiss on the cheek. I didn't discover it until later, but when she told me goodbye, she'd slipped her engagement ring into my coat pocket."

"When I discovered it on the train, I cried all the way back to Manhattan."

Jackie was too embarrassed to write John a "Dear John" letter, so she asked Hughdie to do it for her. He did as she asked, quoting Husted a familiar refrain from Alfred Lord Tennyson: *"Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all*." Hugh added a P.S.—"And I should know."

Husted said, "I felt Jackie and I would have gotten married if it were not for that bitch of a mother of hers. That Janet! She was a tigress. But months later, I found out why Jackie had really called off the wedding. She'd taken up with this whore-mongering, red-haired Irish politician from Boston. There was no way that I, a lowly stockbroker, could compete with Joseph Kennedy's bootleg millions being dispensed rather generously to his son."

Honeysuckle and Inga-Binga JFK and the Nazi Spy

While working at the *Times-Herald*, Jackie came across the first scandal she'd ever heard about her future husband, John F. Kennedy. It would be the first of many scandals to come.

JFKs scandals with women predated his 1953 marriage to Jackie. And whereas Aristotle Onassis maintained mistresses, and in some cases, boys, using them for adultery during his marriage to Jackie, Ari's philandering was mild compared to what she had experienced during her marriage to Jack Kennedy throughout the 1950s and later during his short term in the Oval House.

In November of 1941, JFK served as an ensign in the U.S. Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C. One night at a party, he met Inga Arvad, who later claimed "He took me to bed that very night—three times before dawn broke...I called him 'Honeysuckle.' He nicknamed me 'Inga-Binga.'"

At the age of 15, she'd won the Miss Denmark contest, thanks partly to her thirty-six inch bust and her eighteen-inch waist. Born in 1913, she was four years older than Jack.

In 1936, at the voluptuous age of 23, Inga, by then a journalist focusing on celebrity gossip, had been Adolf Hitler's widely publicized companion at the 1936 Summer Olympics. But between 1941 and 1942, during the darkest years of World War II, she evolved into the mistress of John F. Kennedy.

Inga Binga Arvad.

Prior to her association with Jack, she had been mesmerized by the Führer, writing, for publication, "You immediately like him. He seems lonely. The eyes, showing a kind heart, stare right at you. They sparkle with force." Hitler told her, "You are the perfect example of Nordic beauty."

Inga's youthful liaison with the Reich and its chief mass murderer would follow and plague her until her death from cancer in 1973 in Nogales, Arizona.

Inga also maintained an affair with Hitler's *Reichsmarschall*, Hermann Göring, whom she described as "very kind, very charming, and insatiable in bed."

She also functioned for a time as the mistress of the notoriously controversial Axel Wenner-Gren, the fabulously wealthy but oft-disgraced Swedish industrialist rumored to have promoted the interests of the Third Reich to, among others, the Duke of Windsor and his scandalous Duchess. Wenner-Gren's mammoth yacht supplied fuel to Nazi U-boats in the North Atlantic.

From the beds of Berlin, the brilliantly multilingual Inga had migrated to the mattresses of Washington, where she got a job as a writer/reporter on the *Washington Times-Herald*. There, she wrote a gossip column documenting the exploits of the movers and shaker in America's capital. Powerful men fell in love with her, including America's best-known financier, Bernard Baruch, who was 71 at the time. A friendship with Kathleen (Kick) Kennedy led to an eventual meeting with JFK.

Her torrid affair with Jack Kennedy captured the attention of Kennedy-hater J. Edgar Hoover at the F.B.I. He told his lover and chief assistant, Clyde Tolson, "The bitch is the Mata Hari of Washington, and that upstart Kennedy brat is fucking her and giving away naval secrets which she's reporting back to Hitler himself."

Hoover called Captain Seymour A.D. Hunter, JFK's superior officer. "Jack Kennedy is revealing naval secrets to some Nazi bitch," Hoover charged.

It was agreed that JFK could not be dismissed or disgraced because of the powerful position of his father. "I'll tell this Kennedy boy that he's going to be transferred to a naval unit at sea. That way, he'll learn no secrets to share with the Nazis. In the meantime, I'll give him a desk job in Charleston, out of harm's way."

Consequently, in January of 1942, JFK was assigned to a station in South Carolina in the frenzied aftermath of the Japanese attack (December 7, 1941) on Pearl Harbor. "Inga came down a few times and I fucked her, but right now I've rounded up three Scarlett O'Haras to fuck," he wrote to his friend, Lem Billings, "So I told Inga to go back to Hitler."

JFK had seemed to know that Hoover's G-men were following him and bugging his rooms. One night in bed

with Inga, he addressed the hidden microphones: “Whoever is listening, the next sound you hear will be of me fucking her.” He also said, to witnesses, “Hoover’s on the take from the Mafia, which pays his heavy gambling debts. With the high cost of dresses and wigs these days, he needs financial assistance from the Mob.”

Some Kennedy historians have concluded that the Nazi spy scandal was Hoover’s attempt to end the Kennedy dynasty before it had begun.

Chapter Three

The Newport Debutante & the Senate's Most Eligible Bachelor

Jack & Jackie Get Married! Their Mexican Honeymoon: A Recipe for Marital Disaster

On September 12, 1953, out in a field, the happy bride, **Jackie** herself, is surrounded by all three Kennedy brothers (from left to right, **Teddy,** standing to her immediate left, **JFK**, and **Bobby**). **Lem Billings** (positioned between the bride and JFK) seems to be coming out of her bridal veil, and Senator **George Smathers** is seated on the ground to the immediate left of the bride. JFK later told Smathers, "I broke a hundred feminine hearts the day I married Jackie."

"With my big, manly hands and Greta Garbo feet, my mother, Janet Auchincloss, told me that it was unlikely that an A-list beau would find me feminine enough to marry," Jackie told Lee Bouvier and others as she recalled her life in the early 1950s. "Mother thought I was too masculine. There were times I didn't know who I hated more—Janet or myself."

"She attacked my love of French culture and criticized me for always reading a book," Jackie said. "She told me that men aren't attracted to brainy women. 'Men want to have all the brains in the family, not the wife,' she said."

Call it Brother Love.
Three handsome Irish-American brothers—*left to right*, **Teddy, Jack, and Bobby**—were destined to fall in love with Jackie. In very different ways, she would love all three of them intimately.

"She also told me I had to change—or else. I began to work on my appearance and my clothes. Instead of my usual voice, I developed this whispery voice. I tried to be sexy. I'd gone to see Marilyn Monroe in *Niagara*. Men found her sexy. I felt if I talked like Marilyn, I could interest men. Of course, I could never have her breasts."

"Charles and Martha Bartlett were dear friends of mine, and they decided that the one man I should marry was John F. Kennedy, even though he was Irish. Black Jack Bouvier, my father, never had much good to say about the Irish, referring to them as 'Micks.' Beginning at a dinner party in the Bartlett home in 1951, I met JFK three times before he became really interested. To him, at first, I was just another debutante from Newport, possibly an easy lay, as he would call it—nothing more."

"At one dinner, the Bartletts hosted, Jack Kennedy disappeared before dessert was served with this beautiful blonde," Jackie recalled. "I didn't think I had a chance with him, though I found him handsome enough. I heard the Kennedys were rich, and that's what every girl in my crowd dreamed about—marrying a rich man."

Jackie didn't record a physical description of JFK when she first met him, but others did. He was six feet tall, weighing only 150 pounds. His ears protruded a bit, and he had tousled reddish brown hair. Like most of the Kennedys, he had flashing white teeth.

He was not a good dresser, wearing baggy clothes. Because of various illnesses, he often had a sickly yellowish hue to his skin.

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In contrast to JFK's physicality, Jackie was far more turned on by the rugged, masculine charms of the handsome movie actor, Burt Lancaster. Some aspects of her crush reached the "fantasy fulfilled" level when she met him while sailing aboard the *Queen Mary* to England. It was part of a trip financed by their parents in 1951. Her sister, Lee, was also aboard.

"Imagine me marrying a man allergic to horses"

—Jackie Bouvier

On the sailing's second day, Jackie set out, alone, to explore the ship. She wandered onto a balcony overlooking an open air gymnasium positioned on the starboard side of the sundeck.

Nick Cravat *(left)* and the swashbuckling actor, **Burt Lancaster,** rehearsed some of their acrobatics they'd later perform on camera in *The Crimson Pirate*. Jackie, standing on an upper deck aboard the *Queen Mary*, looked down at the pair as they rehearsed and worked out. As she later told her confidant, William Walton, "Marlene Dietrich had Burt booked at night, but he and I managed to slip away for some heavy fondling. You might say I'm 'fondle' of him."

A group of young women had gathered to watch two men as they rehearsed various acrobatic routines. Jackie immediately recognized her screen idol, Burt Lancaster, who was working out with his friend, the rather short Nick Cravat. During Lancaster's gig as an acrobat with the Barnum & Bailey Circus, they had performed together.

Both men were headed for Britain, where they would appear in the 1952 release of *The Crimson Pirate*, a swashbuckling film produced by Norman Productions for Warner Brothers. After the film was distributed, critics cited the "splendid and improbable acrobatics from Burt Lancaster and Nick Cravat, just the ticket for bloodthirsty schoolboys." From her perch on the balcony, Jackie got a bird's eye preview of the forthcoming screen action as they rehearsed their routines.

Jackie's biographer, Edward Klein, wrote: "Lancaster was at the peak of his physical prowess, a tall, broad-shouldered Adonis with blue eyes, a toothy grin, and a thick mane of hair. He swung gracefully from one horizontal bar to another, performing twists, flyovers, and somersaults. He landed lightly on his feet and threw open his arms, flashing his legendary smile in the direction of Jackie."

As she later told William Walton, but not her sister, "I was mesmerized by Burt. Janet claimed I could not attract men, but here I was, sailing on the *Queen Mary* with Burt showing great interest in me."

Two hours later, a freshly showered and dressed Lancaster introduced himself to Jackie on deck. "I think we've met before," he told her.

"Not officially," she said. "I'm Jackie Bouvier, your biggest fan."

As they strolled the deck, he told her about the film he and Cravat were rehearsing. "I'm a swashbuckler in the 18th Century in the Caribbean. Nick and I are going to play it for laughs, a sort of spoof of the genre. This is going to be one lusty, gutsy film. Nick and I are going to throw everything into it. I predict it'll take five years off my life."

If Jackie entertained any romantic fantasies about Lancaster, they were crushed that night when she discovered him dining romantically with Marlene Dietrich. The *femme fatale* was showing her age only a bit. She was obviously highly skilled at makeup.

Jackie and Lee were booked into tourist class, although, wearing their best clothes, they frequently slipped into First Class.

Jackie had long heard the rumors that Joseph P. Kennedy, JFK's father *["Papa Joe"]* had had an affair with Dietrich in the 1930s. She wondered if he'd passed Dietrich onto his son, JFK.

Jackie's hopes were raised the next day when she returned to watch Lancaster and Cravat work out. Marlene Dietrich was nowhere to be seen.

As she'd later relate to Walton, "Burt and I managed to slip away to his suite later that afternoon. She confessed that he seduced her "only half way— there was a lot of fondling and groping but not of the type that leads to pregnancy."

Although Lancaster had the rather devouring Dietrich to face at night, he and Jackie did manage to slip away for yet another "fondling interlude." In fact, he enjoyed being with her so much that he invited her to visit him on the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples, where outdoor filming of *The Crimson Pirate* would begin.

As she relayed to Walton, "I desperately wanted to, but didn't dare." Somehow, she managed to conceal her flirtatious involvement with Lancaster from Lee.

As Jackie recalled, before the end of the transatlantic crossing, she and Lancaster would say their "lip-sucking

goodbyes" in one of the ship's utility closets where the crew stored the mops they used for swabbing down the decks.

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In 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, JFK read *Seven Days in May*, a novel by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey II, finishing it in two nights. Its fictional but chilling plot focused on the U.S. military's scheme to overthrow the government. The novel's conception, or so JFK believed, had been influenced by the right-wing anti-Communist political activities of General Edwin A. Walker after he resigned from the military. The believability of the novel's plot was reinforced by the aggressive lobbying of Curtis LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, who favored a preventive first strike nuclear option against the Soviet Union.

Burt Lancaster *(left)* stars with **Kirk Douglas** in a film, *Seven Days in May*, about a military coup against a sitting U.S. president. JFK read the novel and was fascinated that the film was being made, but he never lived to see it.

Based on delicate and highly embarrassing motivations, the Pentagon did not want the film to be made.

But in 1963, JFK had a chance encounter with Kirk Douglas, who was in the pre-production stage of the novel's movie adaptation, with the understanding that the film would co-star himself, Burt Lancaster, and JFK's former sexual conquest, Ava Gardner. Even before it was released, the film—as produced by Joel Productions, an outfit partly owned by Douglas himself, faced fierce opposition from the Pentagon. At the time, Douglas was in Washington for conferences with the novel's co-authors. At a fancy dinner buffet, he met JFK.

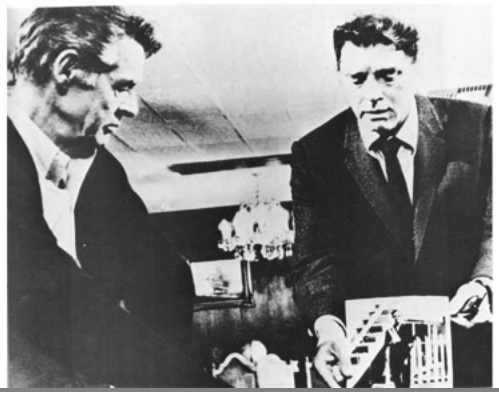
[In reference to the novel's plot, JFK said to Douglas, "Who knows? It could have happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis. A lot of military brass wanted all-out war with the Soviets."

At that initial meeting, before bidding Douglas goodbye, JFK requested that a copy of the film be rushed to the White House when it was completed. "I'll show it at a private screening with the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

JFK's endorsement of the movie went even further. While JFK, Jackie, and their children were vacationing in Hyannis Port during July of 1963, the President granted permission for the film's crew to use the White House exterior as a background for the film's opening riot scene that featured supporters of a disarmament treaty brawling with the treaty's opponents. After eight years of tricky negotiations, the U.S., spearheaded by JFK, had signed a test-ban treaty around the same time.

Because of JFK's assassination in November of 1963, the month originally scheduled for the film's distribution, the release of Seven Days in May *was delayed until February of 1964. After seeing it, Jackie sent Lancaster a note, praising his performance.*

He wrote back, "Dear Jackie, I have such fond memories of you. My greatest regret in life is not asking you to marry me aboard the Queen Mary."



Robert Ryan *(left)* and **Burt Lancaster** star in the political thriller, *Executive Action*.

Released ten years after the assassination in Dallas, its story was inspired by the possibility of a right-wing conspiracy to kill JFK.

Jackie was horrified.

A decade later, in 1973, *Lancaster made yet another film whose plot centered around a U.S. President. Jackie's reaction to that movie would be very different from what it had been for* Seven Days in May."

It was entitled Executive Action. Its plot unfolds *in 1963, based on a powerful, right-wing coven of Americans plotting the assassination of President Kennedy because of his liberal stand on Civil Rights and because of his rapprochement with the Soviet Union.*

Fearing that the sensitive issues it raised might be problematical for her, Lancaster, a liberal Democrat, wrote Jackie during the production of the film: "We are committed to the project," he wrote. "All the actors are working for Equity minimum. After a good deal of private research, I am convinced there had been a conspiracy and the possibility that Lee Harvey Oswald had been set up as a communist fall-guy. Everything we say in Executive Action *is based on evidence. If I had not been certain that this was the case, I would not be making this film. I was a Kennedy man, and I knew there would be an outcry in some quarters, but I've never worried about what the public thinks. The only thing I took into consideration was the validity of the script."*

Jackie asked William Walton to arrange a private screening of Executive Action. *She did not want to be photographed leaving a movie theater that showcased a film about JFK's assassination.*

After seeing the movie, she opted not to respond to Lancaster's letter. "I was horrified," she told Walton. "At one point during the screening, she let out a loud and terrible gasp," he later said.

She also confided to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The idea that Jack's assassination would be made into a film for public entertainment is appalling to me."]

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Most of the data about JFK dating Jackie, eventually marrying her, and sharing a Mexican honeymoon with her came from proposals that both Lem Billings and William Walton submitted to publishers but never expanded into published memoirs.

[Whereas Walton had been a confidant of both JFK and Jackie, Billings had been a friend and associate of JFK since their schoolboy days in 1933.]

In 1951, after Jackie's return to Washington from her trip to Europe with Lee, Charles and Martha Bartlett continued their role as matchmakers for JFK and Jackie. Martha later confessed, "I knew that *[my husband]* Charlie and Jackie had once dated. They were still flirtatious with each other. To protect my interests, I wanted to get Jackie married off as soon as possible."

JFK resumed dating Jackie again, although she'd heard that he was also going out with a lot of other women. She knew that he had been sworn in as a U.S. Senator on January 3, 1953, and assigned to room 362 of the Senate Office Building. The office across the hall was occupied by Richard Milhous Nixon, who had been sworn in as Eisenhower's Vice President, the second youngest in history, about two weeks later.

Charles had informed Jackie that Papa Joe's ultimate aim involved his son running for President of the United States. "Actually, Joe Sr., had wanted his oldest son, Joe Jr., to run for President, but, as you know, he died in a plane crash over France during World War II."

One of Jackie's most memorable dates with JFK involved his invitation for her to one of the January, 1953

Inaugural Balls of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Jackie got not only to shake the hand of the President of the United States, but also to be greeted by Mamie Eisenhower. Ironically, although at the time it seemed like just another of those "Beyond My Wildest Dreams" moments, Jackie would replace Mamie as First Lady and *chatelaine* of the White House only eight years later.

On her first visit to Hyannis Port, Jackie was introduced to the Kennedy clan. Its members included JFK's parents, Joe and Rose, along with his younger brothers, Bobby (with his wife, Ethel) and Teddy, and JFK's sisters, Jean, Eunice, and Patricia.

That afternoon (JFK took her boating), she saw him for the first time in a bathing suit. She recorded in her diary: *"Jack is no Burt Lancaster. He has a funny body, skinny, with toothpick legs. His best feature is his handsome face. He is most charming when he smiles. Actually, Bobby seems to show a more romantic interest in me than Jack does. He is even skinnier than Jack, if such a thing is possible. He's married to this aggressive creature, Ethel, who went to college in Harlem of all places. I wonder if she is part mulatto—she doesn't look it. But Harlem!"*

"I have no idea what man Teddy will become, or how he will look in the future, but right now he lusts after me like a lovesick puppydog. It's obvious he has a crush on me. So far, I have avoided being alone with Bobby. I think if I went out alone on a boat with him, he'd rape me. He's rather cute, so I wouldn't put up much of a fight."

Both **JFK and Jackie** were beaming on their wedding day at Hammersmith Farm outside Newport, Rhode Island. In the background, their smiles are replicated in the background by **Lem Billings**. Only close friends were invited, 1,200 in all.

The local paper claimed that their wedding "far surpassed the Astor-French wedding of 1934," an event which had been massively covered in the press as a High Society highlight two decades before.

During their afternoon together out on the water, JFK saw Jackie for the first time in a bathing suit. She would remember his cruel jab for years to come. "I think I have bigger breasts than you do."

"As a matter of fact, I find your chest rather motherly," she quipped, showing evidence of the caustic wit for which she'd later be famous nationwide. He turned and walked away. She figured that although he could deliver the jabs, he was not too good on the receiving end.

For her first dinner with the Kennedys, Jackie wore a strapless pink cocktail dress. The sisters reminded her of "a gaggle of cackling geese," and they mocked her as "The Debutante."

Ethel asked her, "Do you think you're dining at Buckingham Palace, *Jacque-leeeeen*? The *queeeeeen* wants to be *seeeeeeen*."

Jackie later recorded, "This ugly, catty woman says the most revolting things through her buck teeth."

She would later record, "Old Joe was the only one with table manners. The rest of the Kennedys are like pigs. Teddy almost cried when he claimed that Bobby took more than his share of the mashed potatoes."

The next day, she sat with Joe on the veranda watching the Kennedys play touch football. She later said, "He seemed to be evaluating me to see if I were suitable as a potential bride for his son."

Lem Billings, JFK's best friend, a relationship that had begun at Choate in 1933, had arrived that afternoon and joined the football game. He was much stronger and had a more solidly built frame than JFK.

Joe looked at Lem with contempt. "Jack insists on bringing that queer here every summer. He sleeps in Jack's bed, bathes him, whatever. When they deliver the laundry, Lem removes Jack's underwear and personally irons it.

I'm not sure, but I think he wipes Jack's ass every time my son takes a crap."

"Do you think there is something unnatural here?" Jackie asked, growing alarmed.

"I don't understand the relationship—slave/master, or whatever," Joe answered. "But people are beginning to talk, accusing Jack of being a homosexual, even though he is widely known as a ladies' man. At thirty-five, it's time for him to settle down with a good wife."

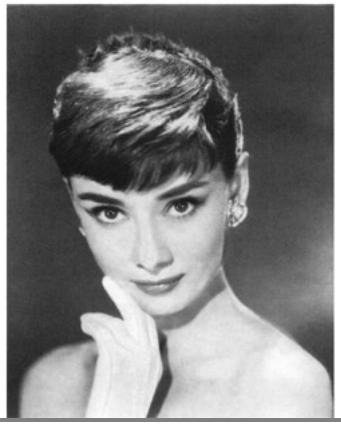
At that point, Ethel came onto the veranda. "Come along, Jackie and join the game. With those clodhoppers of yours, you can kick us a field goal."

After a lot of protesting, Jackie joined in, despite her (accurate) perception that the Kennedys were too rough for her. Bloody noses were frequent. The game soon ended when one of Teddy's beefy friends from school fell on Jackie and broke her left ankle during one of the scrimmages.

After that day, she referred to the Kennedy sisters as the "Rah-Rah Girls" and came up with a subtly disdainful name for Rose, labeling her *Belle Mère*.

"She didn't go over with the Kennedys, except for Joe," Lem recalled, "and he was the one who held the purse strings. He not only condoned the upcoming marriage, he ordained it."

The next day, Jackie, on crutches, was hobbling by the open door to Joe's study. She overheard his conversation with Bobby and JFK. It seemed that they were mulling over what kind of political wife she'd make. She lingered in the hallway, eavesdropping.



A svelte, brunette competitor: **Audrey Hepburn**

JFK expressed doubt about marrying her. Bobby feared that "Jackie is too high class for the average American voter."

Joe assured his sons, "She'll be fine. American women can gravitate to high class broads. Jack, you once told me you'd fallen in love with Grace Kelly and wanted to marry her. Take that other high class broad you're having an affair with, Audrey Hepburn. No tits, like Jackie, but she's high class."

"I think I'm still in love with Audrey," JFK said. "I know she's in love with me. Perhaps I should marry her."

"No way," Joe said. "She isn't Catholic, and you can't marry an actress. Can you imagine a U.S. President married to an actress?"

[In 1953, Joe had not anticipated the political rise of actor Ronald Reagan on the arm of a former MGM starlet, Nancy Davis.]

In silence, Jackie slipped out of the hallway. On crutches, she hobbled across the lawn toward the sea. She needed time alone to think most seriously about this strange new world into which she'd stumbled. She felt unwanted, fearing her beau really wanted to be locked in the arms of Audrey Hepburn, not her.

"Visits to Hyannis Port were a disaster for her," Lem said. "The Kennedy girls resented her. Rose flatly told her, 'The American people aren't ready for a political wife like you.'"

Born three weeks before the birth of his cousin, Jackie Bouvier, John H. Davis became her confidant. She felt she could always trust him. He would later write two well-researched books, *The Bouviers, Portrait of an American Family;* and *The Kennedys, Dynasty and Disaster*.

Davis claimed that at first, Jackie didn't take dating JFK seriously. When she heard he wanted one day to run for President, she dismissed that aspiration as "quixotic, chasing windmills across the plains of La Mancha."

"She was rather contemptuous of the Kennedy family," Davis claimed. "I remember her exact words."

"The Kennedy's are terribly bourgeois," she said, "and Jack has all these allergies. Imagine me being married to

some man who is allergic to horses."

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A lot of Jackie's courting took place in the back seat of JFK's car, according to Lem Billings. "He would take Jackie back there to neck," Lem said. "One night, a trooper drove up and got out of his patrol car, shining his flashlight into the back seat. Jack had removed Jackie's bra and was playing with her tits. When the trooper recognized Jack, he apologized and said. 'Carry on, Senator,' before retreating."

"If Jack didn't have sex with Jackie before marriage, I would be amazed," Lem said. "He practically had sex with any woman he wanted. Of course, they were never caught in the act except once or twice."

He might have been referring to an incident as related by author Edward Klein.

The actor, satirist, and comedian, Morton Downey, Jr. grew up next door to the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port. His father, Morton Downey, Sr. had purchased JFK's used, 1950 two-door Plymouth for his son's nineteenth birthday.

JFK, Jackie, Downey, and Downey's friend, Kennedy loyalist Joey Gargan, attended Papa Joe's screening of *The Winning Team* in the basement of one of the buildings in the Hyannis Port compound. Released in 1952, it starred Doris Day and Ronald Reagan, who interpreted the life of baseball's pitching great, Grover Cleveland Alexander.

[Alchoholism and poor health force a ball-playing legend (as played by Reagan) out of baseball, but because of the tireless efforts of his wife (as played by Doris Day) he gets a chance for redemption and a return to the game he loves and to, as the film's title suggests, The Winning Team.*]*

The neighborhood's Wise Guy, Kennedy commentator and TV comic, **Morton Downey Jr.**

After the screening, Joe invited Jackie for a tour of an adjoining room lined with glass-fronted display cases with a collection of dolls from every continent. He told her that he used to invite his mistress, silent screen vamp Gloria Swanson, into this room. "She couldn't get enough," he boasted.

On another evening, JFK's new car was under repair in a local garage, so consequently, he asked Downey if he could borrow his old Plymouth to take Jackie to a party at the Wianno Yacht Club in Osterville, a six-mile drive west of Hyannis Port. Downey agreed, with the understanding that he'd be attending the same party, but that he'd get there as a passenger in Gargan's car.

On the way, Downey spotted his car, the used Plymouth, parked on a side road near a ridge.

Downey assumed that JFK was inside, necking with Jackie. He and Gargan parked a distance away and sneaked up on the car. When they reached it, in unison, each of them yelled, "SURPRISE!"

Downey heard Jackie scream through one of the half-open windows. When he aimed his flashlight inside, he discovered that JFK, alarmed by the sudden assault, had bumped his head on the steering wheel. With her panties down, Jackie was lying on her back, her head adjacent to the passenger-side door. Her left leg was slung across the seat back, and her dress was riding above her waist.

JFK, as he pulled up and fastened his trousers, chased the two men down the hill, but they ran and then drove away.

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In the late spring of 1953, just before his engagement, the *Saturday Evening Post* prepared and ran an article on

JFK entitled *THE SENATE'S GAY YOUNG BACHELOR. [Of course, the word "gay" had a different, non-homosexual, connotation back then.]*

"We both liked movies, but our tastes were different back then," Jackie said. "He preferred westerns with John Wayne, even though he was a right-wing Republican. I liked French films, and I preferred Edith Piaf; he liked Irish ballads, particularly 'Danny Boy.'"

"I loved horses; he was allergic to them. He loved hanging out with the Kennedys at Hyannis Port. I detested the place."

"He could be cruel. Right in front of his friend, Lem Billings, he said, "If I had life to live over again, I would have had a loving mother and not some ice queen like Rose; a different father, unlike the bully I was born to, and even a different wife. I'd have been a Protestant instead of a Catholic, and perhaps English rather than Irish."

Jackie ran from the room in tears.

As their marriage date approached, with great reluctance on both sides, Jackie and JFK just seemed to drift toward the altar. The jet fuel for their romance and dating was supplied by Papa Joe himself. He still had great control over his son, and he more or less demanded that he marry Jackie—"and make an honest woman out of her. There are too many rumors about you. The worst is that you're a homosexual. That almost equals a reputation that you'll fuck anything in skirts—age, color, looks not really mattering, just so long as the bitch has a hole to plug at either end."

The inevitable meeting between Rose Kennedy and Janet Auchincloss ended in the disaster that JFK had predicted in front of Jackie. Each of the strong-willed women objected to anything the other proposed about the wedding. "I don't want that old drunk, Black Jack Bouvier, showing up at my son's wedding and disgracing him," Rose said.

"I prefer a quiet wedding—just a few close friends," Janet said.

"Hell, no!" Rose protested. "Joe wants this to be a media event. It'll be covered by the national press. He's already a U.S. Senator, and one day he'll be President of the United States. Now, he's marrying a future First Lady of the Land."

Since the mothers of the newlyweds-to-be could not agree, Joe flew to the Auchincloss home, Merrywood, and confronted Janet. He was used to shouting down some of the most powerful men in the United States, so he got his way. Their meeting was private, but Jackie could hear him shouting.

When he stormed out of the house, Jackie tried to comfort her mother. "This hateful Mick is gauche and venal, a hard-nosed bastard who'll destroy anyone who stands in his way," Janet asserted. "He presented me with a dossier on Black Jack, Hugh, and myself that reads like some horrible magazine exposé. He was very abrasive, very abrupt, quick to anger."

Joe won the battle and the wedding plans were made "his way."

At Van Cleef & Arpels in Manhattan, JFK purchased Jackie's engagement ring—a two-carat, twinned, square cut diamond and emerald band.

On June 23, 1953, JFK's engagement to Jackie was announced on front-pages across the country. A headlined story in the *New York Daily News*, "Senator Loses Bachelorhood to Camera Gal," read: "Hopeful debutantes from Washington to Boston, from Palm Beach to Hollywood, can begin unpacking their hope chests. Those thousands of Boston teenage girls who squealed like Sinatra fans every time young millionaire John Kennedy campaigned at their high schools will get the bad news this Friday."

On their first weekend after the announcement of their engagement, Jackie, at Hyannis Port, was astonished to find *Life* magazine photographer, Hy Peksin, there to do a photo spread on them. He told her, "I want some leggy cheesecake poses of you. Just make like you're Marilyn Monroe."

Meet the in-laws, **Rose** and **Joe Kennedy, Sr.**

Jackie could barely tolerate Rose, but bonded with Papa Joe. At her first Kennedy family communal meal, Jackie noted that Rose ordered sirloins for Joe and herself, but served hot dogs to the rest of the brood.

"Jack and I had a few romantic moments," Jackie said. But in her diary, she confessed, "He has never yet told me that he loves me. As for his family, they are a pack of barbarians except for Joe."

To celebrate his upcoming marriage, JFK shocked Jackie by announcing he was going without her on a two-week Mediterranean cruise with Senator George Smathers and Torbert H. MacDonald, whom he affectionately nicknamed "Torby." A former college roommate, Torby would soon enter politics, becoming a member of Congress representing Massachusetts.

"I plan to fuck every beauty in every port," JFK told Smathers.

Jackie was very hurt that JFK was abandoning her. She confided in Estelle Parker, a fashion designer in Newport and Palm Beach, "If you marry a Kennedy, you know what to expect," she said. "They treat their women like second class citizens. I don't really want to be the wife of a politician. Also, I know nothing about running a household. I know it's a *cliché*, but I don't know how to boil an egg. It's raw and gooey inside, so I assume it must be boiled for at least thirty minutes. And what do you do if it cracks and all that gooey yellow and other stuff, which looks to me like male semen, runs out?"

While JFK was abroad, womanizing, Jackie, in Newport, was acquiescing to Janet's demands for her wedding gown. "It was being made by a colored woman, Ann Lowe," Jackie said, "but mother didn't want that known."

"Right before the wedding, Lowe's studio was flooded, and Jackie's gown was completely ruined. "Two girls and I worked night and day to make another wedding gown for Jackie," Lowe said. "I was supposed to make at least $700 profit on the gown, but it ended up costing me $2,500."

When Jackie tried on the gown, she detested it, but Janet forced her to wear it anyway. "The only thing I liked about it was the blue garter I wore."

On his return from the Mediterranean cruise, JFK confessed to Smathers, "I'm too fucked out to get it up one more time, even for my bride. I feel I've had enough poontang to last a year. I'm sure you found out that the pussy of a Mediterranean gal tastes like garlic and olive oil."

He got back in time to attend two engagement parties—one thrown by Janet and Hugh Auchincloss at Hammersmith Farm; the other by friends of the Kennedy family, the Harringtons, in their house overlooking the verdant acreage of the Hyannis Port Golf Club.

JFKs wedding gift to his bride was a $10,000 diamond bracelet. Chuck Spalding later remarked, "Jack and Jackie, at least in the press, became one of the most written about romantic couples of the 1950s. Little did they know what was in store for them. Of course, Jack would become one of America's most celebrated and loved presidents,. As for Jackie, a life would unfold for her that was beyond her wildest dreams."

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In Newport, the morning of September 12, 1953, dawned bright and sunny. Some 3,000 spectators gathered in

front of St. Mary's Church. The police had to be called in for crowd control. There was nationwide interest in the marriage, which attracted reporters from New York and Washington. The so-called "gay senator," age 36, was marrying the Newport debutante, age 24.

Some 750 invited guests were crowded into the church. Lee Bouvier Canfield was Jackie's matron of honor, and JFK selected Bobby as his best man, although both George Smathers and Lem Billings had hoped, unsuccessfully, for that official recognition."

Richard Cushing, Bishop of Boston, officiated, and a tenor sang "Ave Maria." An apostolic blessing was transmitted from the Pope in the Vatican. Hugh Auchincloss gave the bride away, as Black Jack Bouvier lay drunk in his suite at Newport's Viking Hotel. Jackie later told Janet, "During the ceremony, I looked into Jack's face. He was very distressed, looking like a prisoner standing before a judge who was issuing a life sentence in prison."

Lem Billings, JFK's dearest and most loyal friend, shed tears. Jackie's eyes met his. She knew he wanted to be in her shoes. After all, she was marrying the only man he'd ever loved…and would ever love.

Chuck Spalding had noted that after the wedding ceremony, and before he left the church, JFK removed his wedding band. "Jack didn't want it to appear that he was out of circulation."

After the wedding, at the reception at Hammersmith Farm, JFK ignored Jackie and worked the room like the aspiring politician he was. After he'd shaken everybody's hand, he was seen in the corner devoting all his attention to a striking blonde who looked like the British actress, Dinah Dors. She had arrived on the arm of a married Wall Street broker, a friend of Joe Kennedy's.

Jackie noticed that JFK and the blonde were drinking champagne. Her tongue darted out and licked the rim of a champagne glass. She then handed the saliva-rimmed glass to JFK, whose tongue also darted out to lick the rim. "The Mating Game," Jackie said to Bobby, who stood by her side. He whispered into her ear, as she later revealed to Walton. He told her, "Don't worry, Jackie. Whatever happens, I'll always be there by your side, loving you, protecting you."

Leaving the blonde, JFK walked over to them. "It's time for a group photograph," he said. Jackie was directed into a group that included a teary-eyed Lem Billings; an already drunk Teddy; and Bobby, of course, with JFK and Jackie in the middle, flanked by Sargent Shriver, Smathers, and Spalding.

Jack and Jackie confronted a wedding cake that had been trucked down from Quincy, Massachusetts, by a Kennedy aide. JFK chose the song, "I Married an Angel" for his first dance with his new bride. But Joe Kennedy, the "orchestrator" of the wedding, almost immediately cut in.

Bobby shocked everybody when he said, "If I weren't married, I would be the one who had just wed Jackie today."

His older brother gave him a sharp side glance, then flashed his soon-to-be-famous smile for the cameraman.

After the Newport wedding, Jackie and JFK flew to New York and checked in for two nights in a honeymoon suite at the Waldorf-Astoria, which Papa Joe had booked for them.

For the first hour and a half within the suite, JFK was on the phone talking to men she didn't know.

In the bedroom, she prepared herself, putting on a sexy see-through black *négligée* made in Paris.

When he entered the room, he slipped off his clothes and was gone in the bathroom for a long time. She waited

impatiently in bed. When he finally emerged, as she confided later to Walton, he was nude and erect.

"He came to bed but didn't kiss me," she claimed. "He plopped down on the bed. He told me, 'I have this awful pain at the base of my spine. You'll have to get on top.' There was sharp jabbing pain that didn't last very long before it was over. He turned over in bed. 'I've got to get some sleep,' he told me. 'It's been one hell of a day. I'm bone tired. See you in the morning, kid.'"

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Jackie had decided that Acapulco, a port city in Guerrero, on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, would be ideal for their honeymoon. With JFK, she moved into a pink-sided villa owned by Don Miguel Aléman, the President of Mexico and an old associate of Papa Joe's. "The house was like a dream villa, with terraces overlooking the ocean," Jackie recalled later. "It was also staffed by lovely servants."

After the second day in residence here, JFK seemed bored, except when they went dining and dancing at night. He openly flirted with beautiful Mexican*señoritas* who were dancers at the various clubs. During the day, he played tennis, caught a nine-foot sailfish, and studied Spanish from a Berlitz guidebook. Occasionally, he made quick, passionate sex with her, but finished quickly.

On his fourth night in the villa, he revealed to her the contents of a mysterious alligator bag, which he would frequently take into the bathroom with him.

On that memorable evening, he came clean with her. He reached into the medicine bag and removed a needle. "Don't worry, babe," he said. "I'm not a junkie. But now that you're my wife, you need to know about the shots I have to take. I have Addison's disease."

She was not familiar with the disease, and he explained it to her.

[Named after Dr. Thomas Addison, the British doctor who first described the condition in 1849, Addison's disease is a rare, chronic endocrine disorder in which the adrenal glands do not produce sufficient steroid hormones. Patients suffer from abdominal pain and weakness. Treatment involves replacing the absent hormones with hydrocortisone and fludrocortisone. Victims suffer from muscle weakness, fever, weight loss, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and headaches, along with night sweats.]

He showed her his penis, which had streaks of vermilion. "This discoloration comes and goes."

That was not all. He also told her that he suffered from prostatitis, an inflammation of the prostate gland, which caused him a chronic pelvic pain. He told her that because of his prostatitis, he had intermittent urinary infections. He informed her that when his semen was examined, it was found to contain pus cells. "Sometimes I have to have a prostate massage."

He saved the worst revelation for last: Before the war, he had developed a case of gonorrhea which his doctor, William P. Herbst, was able to cure. But he had also contracted a Chlamydia infection, which he had never cured. He had to explain to her that Chlamydia was a sexually transmitted infection of the urethra that causes a white discharge from the penis. He told her that he often experienced a burning sensation during urination, and that sometimes his testicles would swell or else become so tender and sensitive, he could not stand for them to be touched.

She shivered at the bad news when she heard that Chlamydia could be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sex, and that women got it frequently. An infected mother could pass the disease onto her baby during vaginal childbirth.

She asked him if she were in danger having intercourse with him.

"Anything is possible," he answered. "That's why I carry around this medicine to prevent something like that from happening."

She later told Walton, "After all those confessions, I could never truly be free of my fear that I'd come down with a venereal disease. Childbirth, I knew, was also a potential problem."

"I felt he should have told me all this before marrying him," she confessed to Walton, "After hearing all that, he still wanted to have sex with me. It was all I could do to get through it. I was glad it came and went quickly before he fell asleep."

On the following night, he told her that he had to meet with some business associates of the Mexican president.

As the night hours wore on, she drifted around the villa in her *négligée*, standing a long time on the moonlit terrace. Finally, she decided to go to bed.

When he came in, she noticed it was five o'clock in the morning. "It was one tequila night with those guys," he said. "They don't know when to end an evening, and I didn't want to insult them."

It would be years later that she learned he'd spent the night with the screen actress, Merle Oberon. Although older than JFK, she had still retained her porcelain skin and photogenic beauty.

[Once married to the British producer, Alexander Korda, Oberon had starred with Laurence Olivier in one of Jackie's favorite movies, Wuthering Heights. *Jackie was up on Hollywood gossip, and knew that Oberon was a notorious nymphomaniac. She'd even managed to seduce Prince Philip, along with Darryl F. Zanuck, James Cagney, Ronald Colman, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, David Niven, and Rex Harrison, among a host of other stars.*

In later years, Jackie learned that Oberon had also seduced Teddy Kennedy shortly before the midnight plunge of his car at Chappaquiddick. Teddy was married to Joan at the time. When Oberon asked Teddy if he feared exposure by dating her, he told her, 'The American people will like me whatever I do."

The morning after JFK's return from his long night out was a bit tense.

"Because of my father, I was used to infidelities, but Jack's womanizing hurt me greatly," she said to Walton. "I knew that women didn't find him a great lover. He certainly wasn't. He wanted a quickie and then he was back on the phone talking with some silly politician. When he did have sex with me, he would turn over and go to sleep right away. There I was listening to his snoring and almost crying at my lack of fulfillment as a woman."

Viva Mexico!
Merle Oberon was a major-league diva in London and in Hollywood, and even more of one in Mexico. Here, she appears with **Laurence Olivier** in *Wuthering Heights*.

After Mexico, JFK and Jackie flew to Los Angeles, where they were the house guests of Marion Davies in Beverly Hills. She had been the mistress of press baron William Randolph Hearst, a former friend of Papa Joe.

They remained in the area for three nights, or at least Jackie did. JFK told her that he had to drive to Palm Springs to meet with some business associates of his father. "Actually, Dad wants me to get in with these guys, because when I run for higher office, we'll have to count on them to put up a lot of money for my campaign."

As Jackie later told Walton, "I actually believed my charming husband. It was years later that I learned that Jack had spent the weekend in Palm Springs with Marilyn Monroe, a rendezvous arranged by either Peter Lawford or Frank Sinatra."

In a rental car, JFK and Jackie drove north to Santa Barbara for a stay at the San Ysidro Ranch and Resort in the foothills of the Santa Ynez mountains. Papa Joe had made the arrangements. It had been one of his hideaways during his long-ago affair with Gloria Swanson.

In Santa Barbara, JFK spent a lot of time talking to associates back East. He frankly admitted he was bored. "As you know," he told Bobby Kennedy and others, "it's the chase that excites me. Once you capture a girl and can have it any time you want, the thrill is gone."

"Jackie is a bit prim and proper in bed," he told Charlie Bartlett. "As you know, I'm really turned on by a big-tit slut who'll do anything in bed you ask."

At the resort, the restaurant manager reported that Jackie and Jack at table hardly evoked romantic newlyweds. He told a reporter, "During the meal, the senator read a copy of the *Atlantic Monthly* he requested from me. He didn't say a word to his bride. Their picture had run in the paper that day, announcing what a happy, gorgeous couple they were. They didn't appear that way to me. They were anything but. While he read, she just stared into space at the ceiling and picked at her food."

JFK seemed bored at the ranch, but the following morning he came up with a solution. He suggested that she fly back to Hyannis Port, and that he'd join her there in a few days. He wanted to fly to San Francisco for a reunion with some of the men who had served with him in the Navy during the war.

Jackie agreed that he could fly to San Francisco, but she demanded he take her along.

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In San Francisco, their hosts were Paul B. Fay, Jr., and his wife, Anita Marques. JFK called Fay "Red" because of his striking mane, and the two former naval heroes warmly embraced. Both of them had commanded torpedo boats during the war, and each had been attacked by the Japanese.

Despite his status as a Republican, Fay had backed JFK when he'd run for Congress in 1946. When JFK became president, he would reward Fay by designating him as Under-Secretary of the Navy.

Jackie was amazed at how both men bonded. For the first time on his honeymoon, JFK was laughing, drinking, and having fun. In the White House, she'd refer to Fay as "the court jester." He had become one of the two or three best friends JFK ever had.

He told Jackie, "I married Anita here, but Jack was trying to get me to wed Eunice."

Jackie later claimed, "I was just dumped on Anita, who agreed to show me the Bay area. Paul and Jack went off to the center of town to do whatever they wanted to." She later accused Fay of "hooking Jack up with hookers."

At one point during their trip, JFK confessed to his friend, "I am too old yet too young to be married to anyone."

[In later life, Jackie would come into conflict with Fay because of the revelations published in his 1966 autobiography, The Pleasure of His Company. *This was one of the first biographies focused on the assassinated president.*

He sent Jackie a copy of the galley proofs before publication, and she raised a long list of objections. Actually, she didn't want the manuscript published at all, viewing it as "too invasive not only of Jack's privacy, but of my own."

"It is also filled with vulgarities," she wrote in a letter to Fay. After going over her proposed deletions, he defied her and published the manuscript in its original form. "It was my life with Jack, and she has no right to censor it. I knew Jack better than anyone."

Fay made a shocking revelation in his book, claiming that JFK told him that he was seriously considering not running for President in 1964. "He said he had become discouraged during the Cuban Missile Crisis in having to deal with the fanatical fringe of the nation's top military brass. Jack thought he might support the candidacy of Bobby Kennedy, who surely would have pitted himself against Lyndon B. Johnson."

JFK referred to **Paul B. Fay, Jr.** *(left)* as "my fuck buddy," a term that dated from their days together in the Navy during World War II, when he and Fay liked to go on "hooker hunts" together. When JFK became President, he made Fay Under-Secretary of the Navy. Jackie dismissed Fay as "the court jester."

After Jackie and JFK flew out of San Francisco, heading back East, Fay told his wife, Anita, "There is just too much tension between Jack and Jackie. She's not his kind of woman. He's a wild Irishman, and she still thinks she's a Newport debutante. I predict they'll be talking about divorce in 1954."

Fay's prediction came true.

"Of course, Papa Joe will do anything, pay out anything, to keep her married to Jack," Fay predicted. "Divorce would destroy Jack's chance of moving on to a higher office."

In his 1966 book, Fay remembered sitting next to JFK flying west to Los Angeles aboard Air Force One. “The President looked out at the clouds, gazing wistfully at them,” Fay claimed. “’Redhead,’ he said to me. ‘We travel pretty well. So let’s enjoy it. It’s not going to last forever.’”

And indeed, it didn’t.

Chapter Four

Jackie's Married Life: No Magic, and No Fireworks, but Lots of Adultery and Life-Threatening Surgeries

Suicidal, Jackie Submits to Electro-Shock Therapy

During their honeymoon in 1953, **Jack and Jackie** slipped into a photo booth for this candid snapshot. “I never met a gal like Jackie before,” the bridegroom proclaimed.

With fears of survival for his son, an aging **Joe Kennedy** accompanies **Jackie** to the hospital of Special Surgery. JFK had undergone a life-threatening operation on his back.

After their honeymoon, JFK and Jackie returned to Washington. She later said, "We lived like gypsies, moving from place to place, including rented homes and in some cases, a hotel."

Their first home together was a 19th-century townhouse at 3321 Dent Place, in Georgetown. Dent Place was filled with a number of buildings that housed student apartments, since Georgetown University was just a short walk away. Often, when she appeared on the street, the male students whistled at her. Janet's diagnosis about her lack of appeal to the male sex seemed more and more ridiculous.

Bored as a housewife, schoolgirl **Jackie** says goodbye to **her new husband** before heading for Georgetown University for postgraduate study.

He's off to the Senate and lunchtime orgies at the Mayflower Hotel.

When the lease on the rented house on Dent Place ran out, they moved into a hotel.

In her college yearbook, she had vowed "never to be a housewife." But in her first year of marriage, she found herself fulfilling the definition of that word.

"I tried to cook, but I was awful at it. I even took cooking lessons, but I never mastered the art. I tried to make

some brownies, but they turned out like sludge from the dark lagoon. Whatever I cooked I burned. Once, I knocked over a boiling pot and had to be rushed to the hospital to be treated for second degree burns. My skin was purple."

Sometimes, at dinner, her new husband rejected her cuisine, settling for a Dagwood sandwich or else six grilled hot dogs, followed by five chocolate candy bars.

Her taste in food was remarkably different from that of her husband. She preferred a French cuisine. She claimed, "Jack liked everything with cream and sugar, and even took three heaping spoons of sugar in his coffee. I would try to see that he had an exquisite supper. But he often rejected it, pushing his plate away. He'd say, 'God damn it, Jackie, why can't I have a juicy hamburger?'"

"Jack began to take me out to dinner until he found room in his budget to hire a full-time cook and a maid."

"He was almost never home," she said. "He was always gone, always making speeches somewhere in the country." It was estimated that he made 100 speeches in some 100 cities a year.

Jackie told Charles Bartlett, "It's possible to love a politician without loving politics, but it's impossible to marry one without becoming part of his career."

Illusional Nightmare: JFK Gets "Nursed" by Grace Kelly, and Jackie Gets Hit Upon by Lydon Johnson

Trying to be "the Senator's housewife," in Georgetown was often a disaster for Jackie. JFK could call from his office at eleven in the morning. "I've invited forty people over for lunch," he'd announce. "What are you serving?" With so little time to prepare meals for such a horde of political cronies, "with their smelly cigars and muddy boots," she would frequently panic.

"A political wife has to entertain a motley group," she said. "They come into your house with their cigarettes or cigars, burning your upholstery and dropping their butts in your French vases. They'll break your Sevrès ashtrays and leave beer bottles and stale midnight pizza on your carpet."

Lem Billings often lived in their house. "Where there's Jack, Lem was not far behind," Jackie said.

Lem himself was astonished to find his dear friend leaving a party in Washington one night with a pretty young woman. It was humiliating for Jackie, but she pretended not to notice. "He was treating Jackie the way old Joe treated Rose," Lem said.

"I was hoping that Jack would settle down when we got back from our honeymoon," Jackie said. "But I soon discovered that Washington's so-called 'gay swinging bachelor' was still swinging. We lived in Georgetown and attended a lot of parties. Jack often humiliated me by leaving with another woman. Lem Billings, his faithful lap dog, would drive me home."

"One night, Lem told me that I'd married a compulsive womanizer—'No one woman can ever satisfy Jack,' were his exact words to me."

"Lem was in the same boat as I was," Jackie said, "and in a way, I felt sorry for him. He lusted after Jack far more than I did, and he was so totally unfulfilled. I once told him, 'Get on with your life. You'll never have Jack, so stop trying. Find some other guy and settle down with him.'"

Two married playboys, Senator **George Smathers** *(left)* of Florida and his carousing playmate, **JFK**.

In Havana, they indulged “all of our fantasies,” Smathers later claimed.

“That is not possible,” Lem told her. “For me, it’s Jack or no one.”

According to reports, the cronies who most aggressively supported and enabled JFK’s sexual exploits included Senator George Smathers of Florida, and a very big man, William Thompson, who stood 6 feet, 4 inches. “He was the original Babe Magnet and known for his endowment,” Smathers said. “Bill and I had gone to the University of Florida together, so I knew how women were attracted to him. He rounded up gals for Jack.”

With household help, Jackie was free to follow her own interests. She enrolled in a course on American history at Georgetown’s University School of Foreign Affairs. Sometimes, when JFK was scheduled to address the Senate, she would attend and make notes on how he might improve his performance, even rehearsing him in his gestures. Sometimes she helped him write his speeches, even inserting points originally made in French by Voltaire or Talleyrand.

Fellatio in JFK’s Senate Offices

On several occasions, Jackie’s cook prepared meals for JFK which she took to his Senate office. He preferred to eat lunch in his office and not waste hours chatting with fellow politicians in the Senate Dining Room. His favorite dishes were Boston baked beans and clam chowder, which would be re-heated on an electric hotplate in his office.

One day when she telephoned his office, he told her that his secretary had taken sick and that an “office temp” had replaced her. He asked Jackie if she’d bring his lunch to the office, as she usually did.

Although she told him that she had a class, she realized after she hung up that she had gotten her dates mixed up. Consequently, she opted to bring his lunch to him in the Senate after all. When she telephoned his office, there was no answer. Thinking that the office temp was not yet on duty, she went to the Senate Building anyway and found no one staffing her husband’s reception area.

Carrying his lunch, she entered his office without knocking. Almost immediately, she noticed the look of panic on his face. Within a few seconds, she realized that some person was giving him a blow-job from under his desk. At first, she thought it might be Lem Billings.

Apparently, her husband was too far gone to have the aggressor withdraw, and as she looked on, JFK experienced an orgasm.

When the person *[the office temp]* under the desk realized that Jackie had entered the premises, she rose to her feet in shame and hurriedly ran past her and out the door.

“Jack, you really should hire secretaries with a greater sense of style,” were Jackie’s first words to him. “That fire engine red sweater and that Kelly green skirt with those hideous brown shoes don’t make it.”

He rose to his feet and went immediately to his bathroom to clean up. “Thanks for bringing my lunch,” he called to her.

When he came back into the room, adjusting the belt in his trousers, he said, “You must have known when you married me: I can never be faithful.”

“As I can plainly see,” she said. “I’m sorry I can’t satisfy all your sexual needs. But I’ve never been great at blow jobs. I have this gag reflex.”

“It’s not that,” he said. “I can’t help myself. It’s a compulsion. I will try harder, but I can’t make any promises.”

“Neither can I,” she said, coldly, placing his lunch on his desk. “Enjoy!” Then she stormed out of his office.

[Peggy Ashe, the office temp, was employed in the Senate Office Building for only two weeks before she was dismissed. Later, in need of money, she tried to sell an exposé of Senator Kennedy to Confidential *magazine for $500. The magazine rejected her offer. In those relatively demure days of American media, even* Confidential *was gun-shy about printing such salacious material about a popular Senator.*

In her proposal, Ashe claimed that the senator was a “fast shooter and had an average size, uncircumcised penis with a crooked slant to the left.”]

After fleeing from JFK’s Senate office, Jackie almost literally collided with Lyndon B. Johnson, who was on his way to see JFK about some Senate business. For months, she’d heard complaints, mainly coming through Senator George Smathers, that LBJ was constantly angered by the publicity that media outlets had devoted to JFK.

Smathers quoted LBJ as saying: “Edward R. Murrow should have ME on *Person to Person*, not Jack Kennedy. Who does this young whippersnapper think he is? Sometimes he’s so sickly yellow he looks like a Chinaman. He has Addison’s Disease, you know. He’s never done anything in the Senate, whereas I AM the Senate. He doesn’t even know how to fart like I do, a big Texas chili fart.”

“How is Jack’s back today?” LBJ asked in his Texas drawl.

“He’s doing all right for the moment,” Jackie said. “Some secretary just performed fellatio on him, so he’s in good enough shape for that.”

At first, LBJ appeared as if he hadn’t heard her correctly. Then he broke into a grin. “You know, honey, if Jack is neglecting you for some other gal, you can always count on me. As you’ve probably heard, everything grows big in the State of Texas.”

She broke away, hurrying along the corridor wanting to flee from the building. How could she have known that within the course of fewer than ten minutes, she’d just had two horrendously embarrassing encounters with both the future President and with the future Vice President of the United States?

She was distant and remote from JFK as they flew from Washington to Hyannis Port for the weekend. Once at the Kennedy compound, he ignored her, spending time huddling with his father. She drifted about, eventually encountering Ethel Kennedy sitting on a veranda. The two women had never liked each other, but that afternoon, they bonded cordially.

Always rivals, the New Englander, **JFK**, and the Texan, **LBJ**, became strange, applauding bedfellows for the sake of their beloved Democratic Party.

“How’s married life treating you?” Ethel asked.

“In all honesty, I must admit I’ve been disappointed,” Jackie said. “I expected fireworks.”

“In marriage, you don’t get fireworks, you get children.” Ethel responded.

Nine Years Before His Assassination in Dallas, A Catholic Priest Delivers Last Rites to JFK

“Throughout most of 1954, Jack lived in constant pain,” said Lem Billings. In October of that year, he collapsed while walking and could not get up. Help was summoned. After being examined by a doctor in Washington, he was urgently advised to check into the Cornell University Medical Center in Manhattan.

Jackie flew to Manhattan with him, where he was admitted to the hospital for X-rays and preliminary examinations. For ten years, he’d suffered excruciating pain. He had previously, in 1944, endured spinal surgery.

Jackie visited the hospital every day and was mildly perturbed to see that he had hung a cheesecake poster of Marilyn Monroe on the wall of his hospital room. Monroe had posed for a leggy bathing suit shot that emphasized her crotch.

During each of her visits, Jackie had tried to make herself appealing to him, although she feared she couldn’t compete with the obvious charms of Miss Monroe. She was staying with her sister-in-law, Jean Kennedy Smith, at her Manhattan apartment. Before visiting JFK, she’d gone to the Helena Rubinstein Beauty Salon on Fifth Avenue. There, she had met “Mr. Kenneth” *[Kenneth Battelle]* who would become her all time favorite hairdresser.

During JFK’s hospitalization, Jackie was a devoted, dutiful wife. Lem was even more attentive, helping JFK in and out of bed. He even put on his socks and slippers and spoon fed him.

After extensive examinations, doctors concluded that JFK needed major back surgery, even though the Kennedy family physician, Dr. Sara Jordnal, who was associated at the time with Boston’s Lahey Clinc, thought it was too dangerous. Jordnal feared that JFK’s wound would not heal properly because of the complications associated with his Addison’s disease.

When Jackie was asked, she deferred to her husband’s judgment. He told her, “I’d rather risk my life in surgery if it would make me walk again instead of spending my life on crutches. That image of me on crutches would ruin

my chance of ever getting elected again to office."

Jackie reminded him that Franklin D. Roosevelt had guided America through the Great Depression and World War II while confined to a wheelchair.

The day of surgery arrived. Both Lem and Jackie were there to kiss him before it began, each realizing that it might be for the last time.

Lem remembered meeting with Joe Kennedy, Sr., the day before the surgery. "Usually, he gave me wide berth, but this time, he held me in his arms," Lem said. He was sobbing. "We're going to lose Jack the way I lost my other son, Joe," he told Lem. "I've called in Father Cavanaugh for last rites."

That night, Lem returned to his apartment and remained awake through most of the night, sobbing. In contrast, Jackie—at least on the surface—seemed to have an iron will, but later confessed, "Inside, I was falling apart, but I felt I had to appear strong."

The chief surgeon, Dr. Phillip Wilson, assisted by three other doctors, performed a "double-fusion" surgery on JFK's spine. It was an extremely delicate operation, and one single mishap could have left the patient paralyzed for life.

When the surgery ended, even though the operation appeared to have been successful, Dr. Jordnal's worst fears came true. A life-threatening infection set in. For three entire weeks, Jackie and Lem visited JFK's bedside twice daily.

JFK didn't want to reveal a direct view of his wound to Jackie. Instead, he asked Lem to inspect it and to "give me the awful truth."

He instructed Lem to pull down his bedcovers, exposing the back side of his nude body. "Is it raw and oozing?" he asked Lem. "Is the fucking wound still open? Is that green pus spewing out of it? How does it smell? Like a shithouse, huh?"

Eunice Kennedy Shriver in the late 1940s, about the time she was dating Joe McCarthy, until her father squelched it.

Lem inspected it carefully. "The wound just isn't healing," he reported. "It still looks like a raw piece of meat."

Letters were pouring in from some of the most distinguished men in America—Lyndon B. Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, Bernard Baruch, even Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Bobby had also flown to New York and was a frequent visitor at the hospital. On December 2, 1954, he reported to his older brother, "You sure missed the bullet in the Senate."

He was referring to the Senate vote, 67 to 22, to censure he notorious Joseph P. McCarthy, chief orchestrator of the communist witch hunt. Papa Joe had once contributed to McCarthy's campaign, and Bobby himself had worked on his investigating Committee as Chief Legal Counsel. Not only that, but Eunice Kennedy had once dated McCarthy to the point that there was even talk of marriage.

Whose reputation will they destroy today? On a witch hunt for "Commie pinkos," Senator **Joseph McCarthy** *(left)* is photographed in a huddle with his chief henchman, the notorious attorney, **Roy Cohn**.

When JFK's friend, Chuck Spalding, came to visit, JFK asked him, "Even though I detest some of the shit McCarthy pulled, how can I vote to censure him? Against my wishes, my own brother worked for him. How can I renounce McCarthy when Bobby was one of his killer henchmen?"

Charles Bartlett also came to visit JFK, finding him in remarkably good humor. "He was laughing and joking with me, and throwing darts at Marilyn Monroe's poster pussy. He told me that there were about a dozen or so nurses on duty. "I've already had about five of them," he claimed. "Since my back is out, I have to settle for blow jobs."

At a party in Manhattan, Bobby had chatted with Grace Kelly, who had gone to Hollywood to become a movie star. He knew that JFK had dated Kelly when she was working as a model in New York City during the late 1940s, and that Papa Joe was a friend of Grace's father, Jack Kelly.

At the party, Bobby had asked Kelly to visit with her former suitor in the hospital. "He's feeling really lousy and may not live. Please consider it. He'd love to see you."

She willingly agreed, but set her own agenda. She planned to borrow a nurse's uniform and come into his hospital room "to give him a rather invasive medical examination. Yes, a thermometer where the sun don't shine."

The following day, Kelly entered his hospital room. Medicated at the time, he did not immediately recognize her. Striding to his bedside, she ripped the sheet away, exposing his half-erect penis.

"Turn over!" she commanded. Reluctantly, he followed her orders, and she inserted a thermometer into his anus.

As she'd later tell Bobby as well as her friends in Hollywood, "After that business with the thermometer, I ordered him to turn back over. 'Forgive me, but I've got to take a sample of your semen,' I told him. He looked startled, but agreed."

"Do you want me to masturbate into something?" he asked her.

To his surprise, without revealing her identity, she plunged down on his penis, performing an act of fellatio. Finally, after his climax, she raised herself up as he looked down at her. "My God! It's you, Grace! Bobby sent you!"

When Jackie heard about Grace's visit, she said, "I am not amused."

Cosmo Girl **Grace Kelly**, emerging superstar, in 1955

The next day, during her visit to the bedside of her husband, JFK didn't mention Grace Kelly's impersonation of a nurse. Additional rivalries and ongoing conflicts with each other lay in each of the women's futures as First Lady of America and Her Serene Highness, the Princess of Monaco.

At the hospital, JFK's doctors informed Jackie that his wound simply would not heal, and that they were beginning a much more aggressive treatment. Because of his Addison's disease, they opted to surgically insert pellets of corticosteroid hormones directly into his thigh. She was told that that form of treatment would extend his life for between five and ten more years.

When Lem arrived for a visit the next day, he noticed that the treatment had to some degree bloated his friend's face.

JFK whispered to him, "All these hormone injections are causing my fucking libido to rage out of control."

Eventually, the Cornell physicians decided that JFK might recover better at the Kennedy compound in Palm Beach. He was wheeled out of the hospital on a stretcher. Jackie, along with a private attendant and nurse, transferred with him by ambulance to La Guardia, where they boarded a plane to Florida.

George Smathers called on JFK one day while Jackie had gone shopping for supplies. "I was shocked," he recalled. "He looked like something that had been dug up in the graveyard. He was always a skinny guy, but he must have lost forty pounds. He had to lie on his stomach because of the back pain."

"I've always considered myself Jack's best friend, but there is a limit to how far I would go. He actually asked me to remove this greenish gauze and put on some fresh. I did. But when the gauze came off, I stared into this smelly, pusladen hole with green stuff oozing out, I nearly threw up. I don't know how Jackie stood it."

Two local doctors in Palm Beach decided that the infection that had developed after the surgery in Manhattan was still not healing. It was determined that he would need more surgery to deal with a situation that was threatening his overall health, and perhaps his life. Consequently, they arranged to have him sent back to the Cornell Medical Center in New York.

On the plane back to New York, Jackie held his hand all the way, looking into his eyes as if sharing the pain. He entered the hospital once again, going into the ward that dealt only with the most difficult of surgeries, those requiring the most advanced treatments.

The night before surgery, Jackie met with Papa Joe. He told her that the chief surgeon had warned him that this second operation was even riskier than the first, and might even be "potentially lethal."

Arriving in Palm Beach in 1954, **JFK** was hoping to recover from dangerous spinal surgery he'd had in New York. Fearing for his life, **Jackie** joined him in the ambulance ride to the Kennedy compound.

"I gave them permission to go ahead, because I truly believe that Jack will die without it," Joe told Jackie.

That morning, Jackie sat close to Jack, as he held her hand. The pair had never been so close. Very upset, Eunice was there, but trying to be flippant as a means of easing her nervousness. "Jackie," she said. "This is all your fault. It's your cooking that put him here."

No one laughed.

When JFK regained consciousness after the surgery, Joe was away, but Lem and Jackie were by his bedside. The prognosis was that the operation had been a success, and that he would heal properly this time, although it would involve a long period of convalescence. Consequently, JFK and Jackie flew together back to Palm Beach.

With time on his hands, JFK grew reckless. Overcoming her disgust at the pus, Jackie had been taught how to bandage his wound, a task she executed every day.

He requested that she secure certain history books about America during its early stages. During the course of his reading, he came up with an idea. "I want to write a book. I'll need you and maybe some others, perhaps Ted Sorensen. I want to call it *Profiles in Courage*. Courage is something I had to have to get through all that surgery."

Profiles in Courage: Who Wrote It?

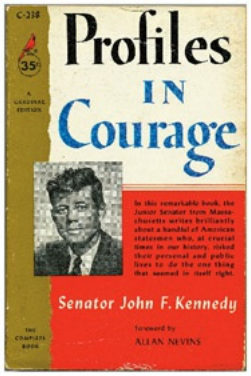
With Jackie collating the research, often based on historical volumes from the Library of Congress, JFK began to write passages for the book from his bed in Palm Beach, where he continued to recuperate. He couldn't yet sit up, but he could use a writing board, positioning it in any way he could from whatever position that was the least uncomfortable for him at the time.

Profiles in Courage progressed slowly but steadily, as more and more research came in from Jackie. He couldn't work for long periods of time, but she often stayed up way past midnight providing him with the data he needed.

It was Jackie who eventually found a publisher for the book, taking it to Harper Brothers *[later, Harper & Row]*, where she had lunch with Cass Canfield, the company's longtime President and Chairman. Her sister, Lee Bouvier, was married at the time to Michael Canfield, his son. After reading the manuscript, Canfield, with the full cooperation of his company's editorial board, published it.

Knowing that the book might help JFK politically, Papa Joe, out of pocket, launched a major promotional campaign. He even hired young men to buy up copies of *Profiles* at retail outlets around the country, enough to *segué* it into a bestseller.

In 1957, the book would win the Pulitzer Prize. It consisted of eight short biographies, each describing acts of bravery and integrity of eight U.S. Senators. Those who were profiled included John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, and Sam Houston of Texas. It became a bestseller, but a controversy still exists because of the widespread belief that most of it was written by speechwriter Ted Sorensen.



Columnist Drew Pearson asserted, “John F. Kennedy was the only man in history that I know who won the Pulitzer Prize for a book that was ghostwritten for him.”

Eleanor Roosevelt later stated, “I wish Senator Kennedy had a little less profile and more courage.”

JFK is seen reviewing a manuscript with speechwriter **Ted Sorensen**, Rumors still persist that it was Sorensen who really wrote *Profiles in Courage*. Jackie later told Gore Vidal, “My own contribution was huge.”

Compiled, with JFK’s guidance, by a long list of editors, researchers, secretaries, and advisers, the book had clearly been a joint effort. Presumably, Sorensen functioned as its principal writer, in collaboration with Jules Davis, Jackie’s Professor of History at Georgetown University, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur Holcombe, and James McGregor Burns, all of whom were heavy contributors. The preface was written by Alan Nevins.

At this point, exactly who wrote what part of the book, or how much, might never be determined. Certainly, Jackie’s contribution might have been awarded with a co-authorship, but other than a brief acknowledgement, such credit was not included in the final product.

Orgies Within JFK’s Suite at the Mayflower Hotel

“FDR never wanted to be photographed in a wheelchair, and I don’t want to have my picture taken on crutches,” JFK announced after a seven-month absence from his responsibilities within the Senate.

Back on duty, he was still under a doctor’s care, having selected Janet G. Travell, who would become his chief physician during his occupancy of the Oval Office.

He followed her regimen of non-surgical treatments, which included exercises, along with hot baths, heating pads, and massages. He wore corrective shoes, one of them a quarter-inch higher than the other. It was Travell who introduced him to his famous rocking chair. She recommended that he sleep on a cattle-tail hair mattress She also gave him some disturbing news: “All that life-threatening surgery may have been unnecessary.”

Jackie asked the doctor if she could give him a shot of something that would relieve him from constant pain. Travell advised that there was, but that if she used it, her husband would have no sensation below the waist. After advising JFK of this he refused to allow the shot to be administered, telling Jackie, “We can’t live with that lack of sensation, now can we?”

During the early summer of 1954, JFK announced his return to the world of politics by throwing an enormous bash for some 400 guests at Hyannis Port. Many Congressmen were invited, along with their wives.

Jackie couldn't tolerate most of the politicians' wives. "They talked about the potty-training of their grandchildren." For reasons of her own, she referred to them as "pigeons."

She discovered that she was pregnant. She protested that their little house on Dent Place was too cramped with a child coming on.

Consequently, on October 15, 1955, JFK and Jackie purchased a historic property in McLean, Virginia, in the vicinity of the Auchincloss family's Merry-wood manse, paying $125,000 for it. Named Hickory Hill, it included both a stable and a swimming pool on its grounds.

Jackie redecorated the house, favoring Wedgwood-blue-and-white-satin upholsteries and antique furniture. Hickory Hill was set on one and a half acres of rolling pastureland close to the Potamac River in Virginia, about a thirty-minute drive from Washington. It had once belonged to General George Mc-Clellan, a commander in the Union Army.

Three months into her pregnancy, she had hardly settled into their new home when she suffered a miscarriage.

JFK did not seem unduly concerned with the mishap, and often didn't return at night to Hickory Hill. Pleading his bad back as the reason, he had rented a suite on the eighth floor of the Mayflower Hotel, infamous for being a convenient venue for off-the-record assignations by U.S. Senators.

Jackie had hoped that JFK's many illnesses would seriously limit his womanizing, but, if anything, they seemed to goad him on. As relayed through Charles Bartlett, JFK said, "I fear I don't have that much time left, and I want to get it while the getting's good."

As Robert Parker, the former *maître d'hotel* of the Senate Dining Room revealed in his 1987 book, *Capitol Hill in Black and White*, JFK operated a virtual bordello at the Mayflower between 1955 and 1959, the debut of his most intense campaigning for the White House. At the time, Parker worked for Harvey's Restaurant.

For a time, **JFK** and his new bride, **Jackie**, lived at Hickory Hill, a historic residence in Virginia, before selling it to Bobby and Ethel.

Jackie later said, "They're turning our house into a breeding factory. When will those two stop having kids?"

[Harvey's, a restaurant very close to the Mayflower Hotel, was a favorite venue for JFK's most dangerous enemy, J. Edgar Hoover, who went there almost every day for lunch with his adjunct, Clyde Tolson.] JFK called Harvey's almost nightly with takeaway food orders. "He always seemed to have a party going on," Parker claimed. But whereas Parker diplomatically defined the goings-on as "parties," others interpreted those events as orgies.

Sometimes from his Senate office, JFK would telephone Harvey's and ask for the restaurant's staff to prepare his suite at the Mayflower for an "event." Harvey's staff members would stock the bar and deliver *hors d'oeuvres* along with buckets of ice, Many times, a waiter found JFK alone in the suite with only one woman. Most of the women weren't famous, but some of them were media headliners.

Tempest Storm became America's most fabled stripper, famous for her "Million Dollar Treasure Chest." Both Elvis Presley and JFK enjoyed her ample 44DD charms.

One waiter reported having sighted Audrey Hepburn there. Another reported that JFK was "shacked up" with Betty Grable; yet another found him alone in the suite with Marlene Dietrich, who had already sustained an affair with his JFK's father, Papa Joe.

Frank Sinatra was a frequent visitor, and he also provided JFK with "Hollywood hookups."

An "odd couple" pairing sighted at the Mayflower included Tempest Storm, America's Queen of Burlesque, who was performing at the Casino Royale, a District of Columbia cabaret-style strip club that drew politicians. Tempest later claimed that JFK admitted to her that, "Jackie is very cold to me."

Tempest also said, "In my memory, Jack Kennedy's sex drive lived up to his legend. The man just never wore out."

In a confidential discussion with George Smathers, JFK admitted, "I'd rather be screwing Tempest Storm than a dozen Marilyn Monroes. She's got better hygiene than Marilyn, and doesn't let a man leave her bed until he's completely satisfied on all levels. And those tits can't be beat."

From the Oval Office, JFK used to call **Judy Garland** to hear her sing "Over the Rainbow." At the Mayflower Hotel in Chicago, he had other uses for her golden throat.

Eventually, however, Tempest was stolen away from the arms of JFK, ending up in the bed of Elvis Presley in Las Vegas.

After settling into his marriage to Patricia Kennedy, Peter Lawford, a member at the time of Sinatra's Rat Pack, also bonded with JFK. He, too, supplied him with a bevy of Hollywood beauties and Las Vegas showgirls.

JFK was rather open in his dating dramas, almost flaunting his affairs in front of Jackie. She felt a constant sense of humiliation.

Until she became pregnant again, in May of 1956, she talked about a divorce.

JFK's nemesis at the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, had already compiled a massive, and growing, file on him. His suite at the Mayflower was staked out. Hoover demanded to know who was coming and going. His voyeurism was titillated when an agent reported that Judy Garland had spent three consecutive nights in JFK's suite.

Hoover also learned that the Massachusetts Senator had staged some orgies within the suite. One FBI informant reported a particularly amazing scene. Prior to the hotly contested Democratic primary of 1956, Senator Estes Kefauver had successfully won the Democratic party's nomination as Vice President on the ticket with Adlai Stevenson, edging out JFK, who had eagerly sought the nomination. To the amazement of the FBI informant, there didn't seem to be any particular bitterness on the part of JFK.

The informant filed a report with the FBI that astonished its chief. "Kefauver and JFK, in front of other guests, were having sex with two prostitutes hired for the night. At one point during intercourse, the Senators switched partners and continued until they were satisfied, lifting themselves off the women, who lay on the carpet, at about the same time. Kefauver and JFK headed toward his bathroom together to wash up."

Sir Winston Finds Jackie Charming But Doesn't Think JFK Is Presidential Timber

In 1955, JFK had become a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He invited Jackie along for a two-month tour of Europe. Its itinerary included ten days in Communist-dominated Poland.

In Rome, Pope Pius XII warmly received them, as did Clare Boothe Luce, the American Ambassador to Italy at the time. It was during this trip that Jackie claimed that Madame Ambassador made a lesbian pass at her. She later shared that impression in the historic tapes she recorded for Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in 1964, in the immediate wake of her husband's assassination.

After Rome, JFK and Jackie flew to Paris, where she had a reunion with her sister, Lee Bouvier Canfield. During the day, Jackie and Lee visited fashion shows and shopped for antiques in off-the-beat locations in Paris. JFK claimed he had "political meetings," but she suspected he was enjoying some of the city's secret pleasures.

One of the most important figures in postwar French politics, Geôrges Bidault, staged a lavish private dinner for them, with Jackie designated as the translator. Bidault later defined her as "a bundle of wisdom and charm."

[During the course of a controversial career that spanned virtually every important development in France's history from the end of World War II until the late 1960s. Bidault functioned, depending on the era and the government empowered at the time, as France's President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Secretary. He was also the controversial director, during the Algerian crisis, of France's shadowy far-right paramilitary, L'Organisation de L'Armée Secrète, and was for a brief time exiled to Brazil before returning to France after being granted amnesty in 1968.]

After their high-level meetings in Paris, JFK and Jackie flew to Nice for a short vacation on the French Riviera. Papa Joe, repeating a pattern he had maintained for decades, had rented a villa on the grounds of the exclusive Hotel du Cap on the Cap d'Antibes.

Long before she dazzled Charles de Gaulle, Jackie enchanted the controversial politician, **Georges Bidault**, one of the major power brokers of postwar France.

Aristotle Onassis had anchored his luxurious yacht, the *Christina*, at the nearby port of Cannes. Hearing of their presence, he invited them aboard for a reception he was hosting for Sir Winston Churchill.

Churchill was unaware that he had met both JFK and Jackie in London on several different occasions when they were younger.

He detested Papa Joe and remembered him unfavorably from the eve of World War II, when he functioned as the U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. "The son of a bitch wanted us to surrender to Hitler," Churchill told Onassis. "When we desperately needed America's help to prevent a Nazi takeover of all of Western Europe, he did everything he could to prevent the United States from entering the war."

In this press photo from 1940, **Joseph P. Kennedy**, U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, stands beside **Sir Winston Churchill**, who despised him. They bitterly opposed each other on the eve of World War II.

Churchill, however, had heard that Joe's son might become the next President of the United States, despite his status as a Catholic in a largely Protestant nation.

Onassis sent a messenger to the Kennedy's rented villa on Cap d'Antibes, inviting them to come aboard. They were instructed, however, to arrive sharply at 7:15pm and to be off the yacht at 8:15pm. Churchill was steadfast in his wishes to have his dinner served at that time.

Jackie appeared gorgeously gowned in a Christian Dior outfit of pink satin, and JFK wore a tailored white jacket. The man once known as the "Lion of Britain" seemed enchanted by Jackie and was devoting most of his attention to her. She later claimed that she felt that Churchill didn't consider JFK as presidential timber and virtually

ignored him.

As Onassis' biographer, Peter Evans, later wrote: "Jackie had a withdrawn quality that wasn't shyness and wasn't boredom either. Churchill commented on the way she yielded to her husband rather than be eclipsed by him. He was surprised to hear her speaking fluidly to French guests in their own language. Her accomplishments, as well as her good looks and her youth, were obviously an asset to Kennedy in his public life as well as in his private one."

Onassis himself was mesmerized by her, telling Churchill and his other guests, "There's something damned *willful* about her, something provocative about her. She's got a carnal soul."

Churchill warned Onassis: "Forget it! She's much too young for an old man like you—and especially me. My salad days are but a distant memory."

John F. Kennedy, "The World's Worst Husband"

During their short trip to Poland, JFK strained his back and once again had to appear in public, photographed against his wishes, on crutches. That infuriated him, and he returned to America in a sour mood.

Once again, Jackie announced that she was pregnant, expecting to give birth to yet another child in September of 1956. There was growing talk that JFK would be nominated as the candidate for vice president on the 1956 Democratic ticket with Adlai Stevenson designated as the candidate for president.

The Democrats would face a big challenge from the Republicans. Papa Joe didn't want JFK to run, fearing that Ike would win again in a landslide.

"You and Adlai will go down in defeat," Joe warned. "He's a closeted homosexual, and you're Catholic. And your detractors will insist that it was your religion that caused the Democrats to lose."

Following the beat of his own drummer, JFK campaigned relentlessly throughout the country. He was absent every weekend. Even his friend, George Smathers, pronounced JFK "the world's worst husband."

"As far as Jack is concerned, I might as well be living in Timbuktu!" Jackie asserted, ruefully.

Against her doctor's advice, Jackie was seven months pregnant when she attended the August, 1956 Democratic Nominating Convention in Chicago. Not savvy about politics, Jackie was guided through the event by Josefa Moss, sister of Lyndon B. Johnson, who advised her on what events to attend and what she should say when she got there.

Chicago was experiencing a tremendous heat wave at the time, and at one point, in the Convention Hall, Jackie fainted. However, she begged her assistant not to tell JFK, fearing that he would send her back east.

Two days later, during the course of Pearl Mesta's raucous champagne party for politico wives at the Blackstone Hotel, she almost fainted once again. Mesta, famous as "the hostess with the mostest," was not impressed with Jackie, defining her as a "beatnik," as members of the Beat Generation were labeled in the 1950s. According to Mesta, "She came to my party without hosiery. Her husband arrived wearing a tuxedo with brown loafers. They are obviously not trained in the social graces. I'll not support a Kennedy."

Jackie remembered these insults when she became First Lady. Mesta, who had been the most sought-after guest and hostess in Washington, did not get invited to one White House party.

At the convention, Jackie did little to conceal her distaste for reporters, especially Maxine Cheshire, the society reporter for the *Washington Post*. When she saw the journalist approaching her, although deep into her pregnancy, she lifted up her skirt and ran toward the exit. She later referred to Cheshire as "my bugbear."

Rather than designating the candidate himself, as he had the legal right to do, Stevenson threw the vice presidential nomination to an open vote on the floor. In spite of frantic backstage maneuvering, JFK lost to Estes

Kefauver of Tennessee.

These two frumpy dames, each a major Washington insider during their respective heydays, emerged as Jackie's *bêtes noires*. On the left is **Bess Truman**, wife of Harry S Truman, who had little regard for the Kennedys.

On the right is the legendary Washington hostess, **Pearl Mesta**, U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg (1949-1953), who thought Jackie was a Beatnik.

Still acutely distressed at not being on the ticket, JFK had to face the delegates at the convention as ringing endorsements of "Stevenson and Kefauver in 1956" resounded through the hall. It was not until later that he became aware that his brave acceptance of his defeat and his willingness to operate as a team player had elevated his status into that of a hero for the Democrats.

Historian James McGregor Burns wrote: "This was his great moment, the moment when he passed through the political sound barrier to register on the nation's memory. The dramatic race had glued millions to their television sets. Kennedy's near victory and sudden loss—the impression of a clean-but boy who had done his best who was accepting his defeat with a smile—all this struck at people's hearts in living rooms across the nation. In this moment of triumphant defeat, his campaign for the presidency was born."

In a call to his father on the French Riviera, Papa Joe told him, "Hold off until 1960. Then run as President."

Out of the public eye, and after his defeat, JFK was enraged, blaming others for his loss of the nomination. Even though Jackie was scheduled to give birth to a child within weeks, he told her that he and Teddy Kennedy were going sailing in the Mediterranean.

Estes Kefauver, the Democratic politician from Tennessee known for wearing coonskin hats, looked like an American Puritan during his anti-pornography campaigns and his pursuit of organized crime.

Privately with JFK, he was a player at some of the orgies within the Mayflower Hotel.

Jackie went to stay with Janet in Newport. She told her mother that she was seriously considering a divorce.

Her mother's reaction was violent. "How in hell do you plan to support yourself? You'll never find a husband as rich as the Kennedys. Hang in there. You'll end up with millions. This may be the only chance you'll have, unless you can get Nelson Rockefeller to marry you. At a party, he was overheard telling Jack's friend, George Smathers, that he'd like to fuck you."

"Perhaps you're right," Jackie responded. "But I just can't see myself spending the rest of my life with Jack Kennedy. It's not going to happen."

"Need I remind you that you're pregnant?" Janet said.

"When I poured out my woes to Janet, she told me that a real woman would be able to satisfy her husband sexually, and would be able to keep him from straying," Jackie later told her sister, Lee.

From Paris, JFK called Jackie, telling her that after a stopover there, he and Teddy would fly to Nice to join Papa Joe at his rented villa on the Côte d'Azur.

Once again, Onassis heard of the Kennedy visit to the South of France, and subsequently, he invited the brothers aboard the *Christina*, where Sir Winston Churchill was once again an honored guest, as before.

Because JFK had come close to winning the vice presidential nomination on the Democratic ticket, Churchill decided to pay him some attention.

He spent two hours onboard talking about politics with JFK, advising him not to conceal his Catholic religion if he ran for president in 1960. "Americans will admire you more if you come out front with it, be proud of it. Have a Profile in Courage—yes, I read your book."

The next day, Senator George Smathers joined Teddy and JFK for a cruise aboard a 42-foot chartered yacht with some unknown women, identified as "party girls."

During the course of the Kennedy brothers cruise, on August 23, 1956, in Newport, Jackie collapsed. She was suffering from severe abdominal cramps. Rushed to the Newport Hospital, it was revealed that she was hemorrhaging. Although attempts were made to save the baby girl, she died before she could draw her first breath.

It had been impossible to call JFK by transatlantic phone, since he claimed that his rented yacht did not have a ship-to-shore radio. Actually, it did.

However, when Jackie woke up, she looked into the eyes of Bobby Kennedy, who was holding her hand. He'd been there for four hours. He leaned over and gently kissed her lips.

"You said you'd be there for me, and you are," she said, softly.

A nurse informed her that her baby had been stillborn. The news had made frontpage headlines in Newport. "I would have named her "Arabella," she told Bobby.

Bobby handled the arrangements for the burial of the infant.

When his yacht chugged into Genoa on August 26, three days after the death of his daughter, JFK learned most of the awful events that had befallen his wife during a phone call to Jackie.

Smathers warned him, "If word of this *[your off-the-record carousing, particularly its co-incidence with the death of your child]* gets out, you can kiss the presidency goodbye."

Two days later, JFK arrived in Newport and rushed to visit Jackie in her hospital bed. JFK didn't seem to take the stillbirth with too much pain. If anything, he seemed annoyed. At a dinner party on the evening of his first night back, at Newport's Clambake Club, he appeared in good spirits.

When asked what went wrong, he told some of the other guests, "Jackie probably gave the kid nicotine poisoning. She's like a smoke stack."

Her spirit wasn't lifted the next day when JFK visited her, informing her that "Ethel's dropped another kid, a girl."

Shortly thereafter, JFK left on a campaign tour for the Democratic ticket, knowing that if he didn't, he would not be nominated in 1960.

Jackie told him that she did not want to return to Hickory Hill. "I can't face that nursery I had decorated for our baby."

After she recovered, Jackie flew to New York to visit Lee, who was living apart from her first husband, Michael Canfield. Eventually, Lee's marriage would be annulled.

"I wish I could get my marriage annulled," Jackie told her.

On her first day in New York, there was a call for her from Joe Kennedy. He wanted to meet her the following day for lunch. She knew its purpose involved discussing the rumors swirling around her personal plan to divorce his son.

Papa Joe Makes Jackie an Offer— Or Did He?

At Manhattan's very chic *Le Pavillon*, in the Ritz Tower Hotel, the owner, André Soulé, warmly welcomed Papa Joe and Jackie. In 1941, he'd opened his restaurant in part with Kennedy money.

She was shocked by Joe's condition. Nearly seventy years old, he had deteriorated rapidly in the aftermath of a recent prostatectomy, and he was visibly shaking.

She'd later report to William Walton what Joe talked to her about. He told her he'd heard that she wanted out of the marriage. "If you leave, it will cost Jack the presidency," he said. "Without you, Jack would lose everything he's hoped and dreamed about. He doesn't know what a valuable asset you are."

She told him that she didn't like being the wife of a politician. She also confessed, "I'm not the child-bearing type like Ethel, who's a virtual breeding factory, turning out little Kennedys."

She was unusually frank with him. "I feel your wonderful clan is a bit overpowering for me. Their interests are not my interests. I want to do something else with my life than attend family dinners and play touch football."

"I know how rough it can be if you're not born a Kennedy," he said.

"I also feel locked away every night at Hickory Hill," she said. "Jack is always somewhere else, and he constantly complains about the commute."

"The second problem, I can easily handle," he promised. "I'll arrange for you to move back to Georgetown. As for Hickory Hill, I can sell it to Bobby and Ethel for their ever-expanding brood, but for the same price you paid for it, of course. No profit for you and Jack."

He chose that moment to warn her, "There is danger facing you as a divorced Catholic woman. I suggest you put a divorce out of your mind."

There is great debate about whether he made a financial offer during that luncheon. In her aptly named memoir, *Bitch!*, Lady Mary (May) Sommerville Lawford *[the mother of Jackie's brother-in-law, Peter Lawford]*, claimed, "Old Joe Kennedy offered his daughter-in-law a check for one million dollars. After thinking it over, she shot back, 'Make it tax free and it's a deal.'"

Unlike Joan Crawford's daughter, Christina Crawford, Peter Lawford, JFK's brother-in-law, didn't refer to his mother, **Lady May**, as "Mommie Dearest." Instead, he accurately referred to her as "**Mother from Hell**."

Also within her book, Lady May said, "Jackie Kennedy was a clever girl, such a good business woman."

Time magazine also reported on the one-million dollar offer. Several critics, however, have challenged the story.

When challenged, Jackie never confirmed nor denied it. Once, responding to a question about it from a reporter, she said, "Only one million? Why not twelve million?"

According to rumor, the most controversial aspect of Jackie's discussion during her meeting with Papa Joe was not reported at the time. She allegedly told him that the cost of her staying with JFK would rise to twenty million dollars "if he brings home any venereal disease from any of his sluts."

Joe agreed, claiming, "If that happens, Jackie, name your price."

Her deep disillusionment with her marriage did not escape media scrutiny. Columnist Drew Pearson, a Kennedy hater, was the first to run an item about it. The news was later picked up by *Time* magazine.

Papa Joe was a man of his word, calling JFK two weeks later with the news he'd rented a house for them in

Georgetown at 2808 P Street. They would live there until May of 1957. At that point, Joe found another house for them, this time for purchase. “It dates from 1812,” Jackie said, “and it leans to one side and the stairs creak, but it’s a sweet little house.” It was a three-story brick-built Federal-style house with a rear garden planted with magnolia trees.

Jackie did a lot of the redecorating herself, though she relied a lot on a well-known, high-society and occasionally intimidating decorator, Mrs. Henry Parrish, whose nickname was “Sister.” She later described Sister as “a hatchet-faced woman who looks like George Washington.”

Jackie filled the house mainly with antiques, later donating some Louis XVI cane dining room chairs to the White House.

In 1957, even in her new home, her marriage continued to deteriorate. JFK could no longer explain the need for a hotel suite since he was living in Georgetown. But he kept that suite anyway, and she heard through gossip more and more stories about the orgies going on there.

One rumor had it that his affair with Marilyn Monroe had continued. On an ironic note, he was also said to be seducing Betty Grable, the big 1940s star that Monroe had replaced at 20th Century Fox.

The night Jackie learned she was pregnant again, she got a full report on JFK’s continuing affairs. It became too much for her nervous system. When Jack returned to P Street after one in the morning, she was downstairs, waiting for him, drinking heavily, and dressed only in her slip.

Perhaps their most bitter fight ensued, with accusations going back and forth. At one point, she could no longer handle the pressures of the marriage. Barefoot and dressed only in her slip, she ran out into the street in the heavy rain coming down on P Street.

JFK ran after her. She was screaming so loudly that nearby neighbors turned on their porch lights. Getting herself back into the house, JFK wrapped her in a blanket, gave her a brandy, and called for an emergency long distance limousine. While waiting for its arrival, he phoned Valleyhead, a private psychiatric facility in Carlisle, Massachusetts, a favorite haunt of celebrities having nervous breakdowns.

“When two attendants arrived to escort Jackie out to the ambulance, she screamed at them, “No! NO! I won’t let you do this to me. I saw *A Streetcar Named Desire*. They did this to Blanche DuBois. I won’t let you do it to me.”

Then, she felt the sting of a needle. After that, she remembered only the distant sound of rain as blackness overcame her.

“The Second Most-Horrible Nightmare Ride of My Life”

Until the end of her life, Jackie ranked her November, 1963 limousine race through the streets of Dallas as “the most nightmarish ride of my life.”

But as she told Janet, William Walton, and others, a transit that was almost as horrible was her transfer to the Valleyhead Psychiatric Clinic for electroshock therapy.

Jackie later claimed, “When I woke up, I realized I had been committed by Jack to a house of crazies, and I was still sane, or at least I thought I was. The place seemed normal enough, like any hospital, but I knew it wasn’t. The crazies were probably lurking in the closets, ready to pounce.”

Very little is known about the week that Jackie spent at Valleyhead. Not wanting to attract undue attention, JFK did not visit her there. He sent her cousin, John H. Davis, the author, to check on her. He registered at a nearby motel and visited her daily.

Although he was warned not to tell anybody, he did talk to family members. The word spread. Papa Joe warned the Kennedys to keep Jackie’s confinement a dark secret. And although JFK himself was not being treated for any psychiatric disorder, he feared that the fallout from his wife’s confinement could seriously harm him politically.

In the original draft of his book, *Jacqueline Bouvier: An Intimate Memoir*, Davis included a section about Jackie’s confinement at the clinic, but at the last minute, pressure was brought to bear on him to remove the revelations from the final published product, even though Jackie had already been dead for four years when his memoir was published in 1998.

[Joe Kennedy was right in his assumption that revelations associated with electroshock therapy could damage a political career. Around the same time that Jackie was receiving such treatments, so was Thomas Eagleton, a U.S. senator from Missouri from 1968 to 1987. Suffering from nervous exhaustion and depression, the same symptoms attributed to Jackie, he was hospitalized for a while, with disastrous political consequences, at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota,

It almost had to happen. At some point, Jackie could no longer hold up under the strain of being married to the philandering JFK. Suicidal, she was sent by ambulance to the **Valleyhead Clinic** in Carlisle, Massachusetts, where she underwent electroshock therapy.

In 1972, the Democratic nominee for president, George McGovern, selected Eagleton as his vice president to run against Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew.

In August of 1972, at McGovern's request, Eagleton withdrew from the presidential race and was replaced on the ticket by Kennedy-in-law Sargent Shriver. Weeks previously, Teddy Kennedy had rejected McGovern's offer to run on the ticket with him.]

Joan Mears, a nurse from Boston, was later fired from the clinic for drinking on the job. To retaliate, she tried to sell a story to *Confidential*, but pressure was exerted on the magazine's publisher. It was widely surmised that Joseph Kennedy had bribed the publisher to squelch the scandal.

Mears had been the nurse who had escorted Jackie to a sparsely furnished room at the rear of the clinic. Jackie remembered the walls painted "this sickly green color."

She wasn't certain what she was being prepared for, but Mears greased her temples and checked to confirm that all metal objects, such as jewelry, hairpins, or whatever, were removed from Jackie's body.

Then two doctors and another nurse came in to administer the treatment.

When Sylvia Plath's poignant memoir of her emotional breakdown, *The Bell Jar*, was published in 1967, Jackie read it three times. The treatment described in the novel paralleled her own experience.

[As part of a horrible coincidence, Sylvia herself had been subjected to shock treatments at Valleyhead, with dire consequences, in a series of treatments. In The Bell Jar, *Plath wrote: "Then something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world. 'Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee,' it shrilled, through an air crackling with blue light and with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant."]*

After three separate treatments, Jackie was scheduled for release from Valleyhead on a Sunday morning. JFK asked his close friend, Chuck Spalding, to drive from Washington, D.C., to Carlisle and bring Jackie back to Georgetown. As Spalding remembered it, she spoke hardly a word during the long motor ride back.

He later reported that both of them had hoped to find JFK waiting for them when she returned home. "I remember she searched around for some note, but there was no message. I hated to leave her, fearing she might harm herself, but I had this urgent appointment. I kissed her goodbye on the cheek. She looked forlorn. Being the wife of Jack Kennedy was a tough job for any woman."

Jackie was deeply touched when she read **Sylvia Plath**'s *(photo above) The Bell Jar*. Its author had written vividly about her horrible

experiences with electroshock therapy at Valleyhead.

Jackie would later reveal to Janet and others that coming back to that empty house after what she'd been through caused her to seriously contemplate suicide. "I went into the bathroom and found some of Jack's Gillette blades. I thought I would run a hot bath and get into the tub and cut my wrists and just let them bleed, as I faded away. I don't think the clinic helped me. I felt more depressed after I got back home than I did before I left."

"Having been through two failed pregnancies, I didn't feel loved. I didn't feel life was worth living. Even if Jack became president, imagine the scandal that would be uncovered about his past life, about me. I didn't think I could live through it."

When JFK finally arrived that evening at the Georgetown house at around eight o'clock, she remembered him being more loving than he'd ever been. "Somehow, at least for that night, I thought that life was worth living."

Jackie's friend, Paul Mathias, the New York correspondent for the France-based *Paris-Match*, said, "Jackie was hurt very young in connection with both her father and mother. She never came out of the shock she experienced growing up. I don't think she was born happy. She filled her days as best as she could, but she suffers a lot. From the beginning of her relationship with Jack, she knew about his other women. It pained her a great deal. I have great compassion for her. It sinks into me more and more, just how irreversibly unhappy she is."

[As far as it is known, Jackie contemplated suicide only one more time in her life, and that was in the wake of JFK's assassination in Dallas. That was revealed when Richard McSorley, a Jesuit professor of theology at Georgetown, visited her at Bobby Kennedy's Hickory Hill. She told him, "I don't know how God can take Jack away."

He later said that Jackie had provided a brave front for the nation, but privately, she seemed to have begun to unravel. He recorded details about their series of meetings with Jackie in his diary, for which he would later be severely criticized.

After his first meeting with her, he became her confidant and confessor.

Jackie feared that her mental condition might deteriorate the way Mary Todd Lincoln's did after her husband was assassinated.

During her third meeting with McSorley, she asked him, "Do you think God would separate me from my husband if I killed myself? Wouldn't God understand that I just want to be with him?"

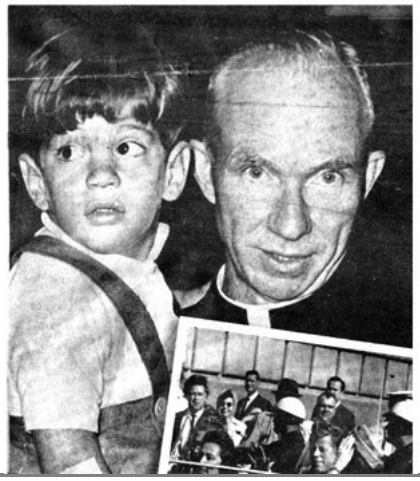
McSorley told her that she had to live for the sake of her children. "Don't mourn the dead, but get on with the living."

He found her not easy to console. She even asked him if he would pray to God to take her life.

"Yes, if you want that. It's not wrong to pray to die."

On their last meeting, she said she was still contemplating suicide, but would not make a rash move without giving it serious thought. If she did kill herself, she said, "I hope my suicide will set off a wave of suicides. I'd like that because I want to see people leave their misery behind. I was happy when Marilyn Monroe died. She is out of her misery now."

During her phone call to McSorley, she told him that she was much better now because love had entered my life in a way I never expected."



Father McSorley holds John-John in his arms. He urged Jackie not to commit suicide in the aftermath of JFK's assassination, and to live for her children.

He started to congratulate her, but she interrupted him. "It isn't a love of which the Catholic Church would approve. In fact, the love I'm experiencing now would be called ungodly in the eyes of the Church. I wouldn't even dare to confess it to you."

At that point in her life, she was seeing Bobby Kennedy almost every day.

"Then may God save your eternal soul," the priest told her.

She never called him again.

Her suicide threat of 1964 was not made public until after the priest died in 2002. His private papers were donated to Georgetown University, and his diary was leaked to the press.]

At Last: One of Jackie's Babies Is Born Alive

Since JFK didn't like condoms, at least with his wife, and since he did not want her to practice other forms of birth control, it came as little surprise in March of 1957 when Jackie told him she was pregnant again. She had accurately predicted that her father, Black Jack Bouvier, who had died in August of 1957, would not live to see the birth of his grandchild.

The big event occurred three months after her father's death, on November 27, 1957, the day after Thanksgiving, when Jackie gave birth to a baby girl by caesarean. She weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces. When JFK first saw her, he pronounced her "as robust as a sumo wrestler."

She was named Caroline Bouvier Kennedy, and she became the lone survivor of her immediate family.

Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston presided over Baby Caroline's christening at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

To free Jackie, and to attend to Baby Caroline's needs, JFK hired a gray-haired British nanny, Maud Shaw. Consequently, Maud's arrival allowed Jackie the freedom to leave for weekend horseback riding in Virginia's hunt country. She also joined JFK on frequent trips to Hyannis Port, where he had acquired a home near that of Papa Joe and Rose, and close to that of his younger brother, Bobby.

Rose told Bobby, in front of Jackie, that "Your intimate embracing and kissing of your sister-in-law is completely improper." However, that did not deter Bobby.

Patricia Kennedy Lawford expressed another, cruder, observation: "Every time Bobby takes Jackie in his arms, he gets a hard-on. It's just a matter of time for those two. Once, when I went boating with them, I told them, 'Get a room!'"

After Caroline's birth, politics dominated Jackie life once again.

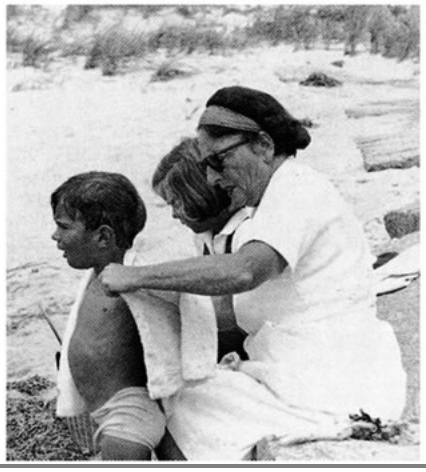
In 1958, when JFK entered the race for election to a second six-year term in the U.S. Senate, he did not plan to serve until the end of its tenure. He hoped to be in that post only until his election as President in 1960.

He called on Jackie to help him with his campaign. In Boston's North End, he asked her to address a crowd of 1,000 Italian-Americans. Although her Italian wasn't as good as her French, she went over wonderfully with the prospective voters. Many in the audience thought she was "an Italian woman married to a Mick husband."

Based partly on her knowledge of (and talent for) foreign languages, JFK began to realize what a vote-getter his wife was. Consequently, he organized speaking engagements where at least some of the address was conducted, by Jackie, in Spanish, Italian, or French, as part of JFK's appeal to ethnic minority voters—Puerto Rican, Mexican, Haitian, and Italian—throughout Massachusetts.

During the campaign, an enemy of Jack's became her own enemy. For the first time in her life, she became confrontational with politicians and in some cases, statesmen. One of them was a fellow Democrat, Dean Acheson.

[As United States Secretary of State (1949-1953) during the administration of President Harry S Truman, he played a major role in defining American foreign policy during the Cold War.]

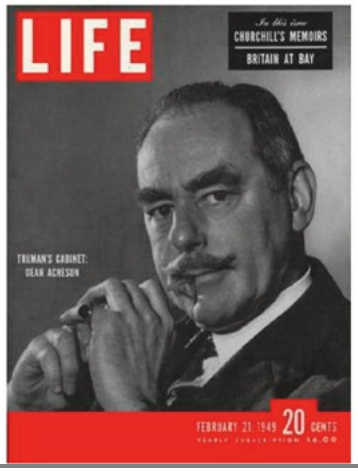


During Jackie's absence, **Maud Shaw** became a second mother to **John-John** and his older sister, **Caroline.** Shaw incurred Jackie's ire after she distributed intimate details about the time she had spent working for her in the White House.

Acheson had told her stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss, something that got back to her: "Joe Kennedy is nothing but a social-climbing bootlegger who is ostracized by Boston Brahmins and had to buy his spoiled brat of a son a seat in Congress."

Jackie's charm didn't work on Acheson, who remained implacably opposed to her husband. As late as April of 1960, he vowed to Truman that he would do everything he could to block the Democratic Party's nomination of JFK as their presidential candidate.

Privately, Acheson said, "I don't want Joe Kennedy running the government if his son is elected. Old Joe is a Wall Street wheeler-dealer and a corrupt moneyman whose political mentor was John Francis Fitzgerald. *["Honey Fitz" was the disreputable former Mayor of Boston and the father of the woman Joe eventually married, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy.]*



Dean Acheson, Truman's Secretary of State, appeared on the cover of the February, 1949, edition of *Life* magazine. He was one of the leading Democrats opposed to the candidacy of JFK. He publicly referred to Joseph Kennedy, Sr., as a bootlegger and to JFK as a spoiled brat. Privately, he defined Jackie as "a paid concubine."

As a political wife campaigning for her controversial husband, Jackie had her critics. Mary Tierney, a journalist who worked for the *Boston Herald-Traveler* interpreted her facial gestures as dominated by an "inane smile looking as if it had been fixed in place by a plasterer."

When Jackie flew to Los Angeles with her husband, her beauty did not escape the attention of producers and studio heads. Darryl F. Zanuck was said to have offered her a contract at 20th Century Fox. "She looks more like a movie star than the movie stars I know—and I know all of them."

On election night, when the results came in, JFK and Jackie learned that he'd been re-elected as Senator from

Massachusetts by nearly 900,000 votes. She kissed him and congratulated him. “You’ve just taken a giant step toward becoming President of the United States. They’ve already begun to chisel your face on Mount Rushmore.”

Like Sinatra and Lawford, JFK Seduces Movie Stars

In 1956, with the national spotlight on the candidate vying for a place on the Democratic ticket, the press began focusing on JFK as never before. There were two issues associated with his campaign that troubled many voters, notably his religion as a Catholic *[with the implication that his loyalty to the Pope would take precedence over his Oath of Office]* and also his youth and inexperience. House Speaker Sam Rayburn referred to him as “that little piss-ant Kennedy.”

JFK also feared that news of his Addison’s disease might be leaked to the press. Even more compelling, he lived in anxiety that some sex scandal from his past might derail his campaign, especially if J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I. turned over even part of the dossier he had compiled about him. Jackie was fully aware of JFK’s very real fears.

To close friends like Lem Billings and George Smathers, JFK revealed that his increasing use of cortisone had greatly increased his libido, which had been at a high pitch anyway since he’d been fourteen years old.

“Not only am I hot to trot day and night, but I have occasional feelings of euphoria where I just have to knock off a piece.”

In 1956, JFK was seeing a lot of Frank Sinatra and his brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, who were more or less functioning as his pimps. Always intrigued by Hollywood gossip, JFK grilled them for news of their latest Hollywood conquests and the sexual availability of a particular actress. Sometimes, he needed their help in introducing him to a particular star; but on other occasions, he managed it himself.

JFK had long been enamored with the beautiful British actress, Jean Simmons, who was married at the time to the swashbuckling British actor, Stewart Granger.

Ever since JFK had seen Simmons interpret the role of Ophelia in the film version of *Hamlet*, starring Laurence Olivier, he’d found her enchanting. To his male friends, he likened her beauty to that of Elizabeth Taylor.

He’d heard that Howard Hughes, who had placed Simmons under contract at RKO, also lusted after her. As Granger later revealed in his autobiography, *Sparks Fly Upward*, he became so enraged that for a time, he actually plotted to kill Hughes.

As retaliation for thwarting his hopes of seducing her, Hughes got revenge by refusing to release her from her contract with RKO for a co-starring role with Gregory Peck in *Roman Holiday* (1953) at a competing studio. The role went instead to Audrey Hepburn, which made her a star and earned her an Oscar as Best Actress of the Year.

Five years after the Simmons/Granger furor over Howard Hughes and *Roman Holiday*, when JFK learned that Simmons was in Boston, filming scenes from *Home Before Dark*, he opted to pursue the woman he had so long desired.

After beating down the door of **Jean Simmons** in her hotel room in Boston, JFK was left with an unresolved question: Did the British actress remind him of Elizabeth Taylor or of Jackie herself?

[Released in 1958, Home Before Dark *focused on Simmons as the conflicted female lead playing Charlotte, a delicate, elegant woman who battles for sanity after her escape from a mental institution.]*

Simmons would later confess to friends, “Jack practically beat down the door to my hotel room until I finally opened it. What I discovered was a man of such charm and grace that it would take a woman far stronger than me to

resist him."

Apparently, she told a more limited version to her British husband. Their marriage had already begun to disintegrate, and she would eventually divorce Granger in 1960.

She told him that in Boston, a very attractive U.S. Senator was wooing her with flowers and banging on her door. "He had such a lovely smile I nearly let him in."

"What's his name?" Granger demanded.

"He's very important—John F. Kennedy."

"Never heard of him," he said.

"You will," she predicted. "He's going to become the next President of the United States."

When JFK flew again to Los Angeles, he arranged to meet privately with both Simmons (at the Beverly Hills Hotel), and also with Marilyn Monroe, with whom he'd continue his on-again, off-again affair. But he had another younger star in focus as well.

She was twenty-two-year-old Lee Remick, who was six years younger than Jackie, and who had been grotesquely billed as "America's Answer to Brigitte Bardot." She'd caught JFK's attention when he saw her as the sexy, baton-twirling majorette in Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957). JFK was determined to have her.

He learned that she had married Bill Colleran, a movie director and TV producer, in 1957. For JFK, a married woman was not someone to avoid, but a challenge for him to seduce.

It was made easy for him when he met with Peter Lawford. By a strange coincidence, he discovered that Lawford was having an affair with Remick. Lawford became so smitten with Remick that he confessed to JFK that he was considering divorcing his sister, Patricia, so that he could marry her.

To Lawford's dismay, JFK was spectacularly unsympathetic to his plight: "You and I believe in sharing the wealth. See that Remick is delivered to my suite tomorrow night."

Appearing on the cover of *Life* in 1960, perky actress **Lee Remick** was involved in a delicate balancing act with the Kennedy clan. She was involved in sexual affairs not only with JFK, but with Bobby Kennedy and brother-in-law Peter Lawford too.

Despite his declaration of love for Remick, Lawford had never been known to disobey an order from JFK. As Lem Billings once said, "When Jack cracked the whip, Peter jumped through the hoop."

In another ironic *segué*, JFK would later learn that Bobby was also having a torrid affair with Remick, who had told him, "I'm bored with my marriage."

Dazzled by the power and prestige of the Kennedy brothers, Remick became a highly visible spokesperson for the Democratic Party, strongly backing JFK. She later told her favorite co-star, Jack Lemmon, "I fucked Jack because he was President of the United States. And I fucked Bobby because I fell in love with him after I fell out of love with Peter."

Lemmon later said, "Dear, dear Lee suffered from a lack of self-esteem. By seducing some of the biggest names in America—the Kennedy brothers, Gregory Peck, Peter Lawford, even Frank Sinatra—she felt needed and wanted. But in the end, all these men dropped her. She was used. When she came to realize that, she felt even worse about herself."

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JFK's next conquest of a movie star occurred not in Hollywood, but in Washington.

The name of Sophia Loren, the luscious Neapolitan beauty, always pops up in the usual round-ups of JFK's move star conquests, including within Mart Martin's *Behind the Bedroom Doors of 201 Famous Women*. Kennedy biographers, including Christopher Andersen, have also published accounts of it.

La Bella Napoletana, Sophia Loren, attracted the roving eye of JFK, along with half the men in the world. As it turned out, she proved not to be an easy conquest, even when he switched on the fabled Kennedy charm.

In 1957, Sophia had rejected a marriage proposal from Cary Grant after they co-starred together in *The Pride and the Passion*. Instead, that same year, she'd married Carlo Ponti, Sr., the pudgy, art-collecting producer or co-producer of such major-league films as Federico Fellini's *La Strada (1954)*, Luchino Visconti's *Boccaccio '70 (1962)*, *Marriage Italian Style (1964)*, David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago (1965)* and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup (1966)*.

[In 1962, Sophia's sister, Anna Maria Villani Scicolone, would wed Romano Mussolini, the youngest son of the Fascist former dictator of Italy, Benito Mussolini. They would produce a spectacularly controversial daughter, Alessandra Mussolini, born in 1962, who became a high-fashion model, a pop singer, an actress, and an Italian politician with a complicated platform that has included advocacy of everything from feminism and gay rights to neo-Fascism.]

Sophia Loren's niece, **Allessandra Scicolone Mussolini**, became one of the most controversial politicians in Italy, a neo-Fascist. Her mother had wed the youngest son of the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini.

Jackie was out of town, in Virginia, when JFK and his highly promiscuous bachelor friend from the U.S. Senate, George Smathers, attended a party at the Italian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

At the party, JFK was dazzled by the entrance of Sophia Loren. He told Smathers, "She's the sexiest doll I've ever seen—those lips, those tits!" Loren was only twenty-four at the time, and a celebrated beauty.

According to reports, JFK did not want to approach Loren directly, because a romantic overture would have compromised him in front of his many political enemies at the party. Instead, he asked Smathers to "play the pimp for me."

Consequently, Smathers approached Loren, who was standing with Maxine Cheshire. The Senator from Florida incorrectly assumed that Cheshire was Loren's chaperon, as he was unaware that she was a Society Reporter for the *Washington Post*.

After introducing himself, Smathers pointed out JFK across the crowded room before inviting her to a late night champagne supper at Kennedy's Georgetown residence.

According to author C. David Heymann, Cheshire could see Kennedy through the open doors leading out onto a

terrace. “He was impatiently rocking back and forth on his heels.”

When Smathers returned to JFK and conveyed the information that Loren had politely rejected his offer, JFK sent Smathers back for another try.

When Loren rejected the second offer, Smathers sized up Cheshire, and then said to Loren, within earshot of Cheshire, “Oh, what the hell… You might as well bring your friend along. We’ll make it a foursome.”

Again, Loren refused.

When Smathers reported the second rejection to JFK, he flashed anger. “God damn it, I should have known better than to send a boy to do a man’s job.”

According to Andersen, Smathers later said, “I never saw Jack strike out with anybody if he really wanted to get together with them. He just kept at it until he wore them down. Miss Loren was no exception. She went with Jack, all right, and I understand that they had a wonderful time.”

Ms. Loren has neither confirmed nor denied this report.

While still in Washington, JFK launched one more affair before flying away on a political campaign.

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Pamela Turnure was a Jackie lookalike and a Georgetown debutante. A graduate of the exclusive Mount Vernon Seminary, she was first hired as a receptionist at the Belgian Embassy in D.C. JFK was introduced to her at Nini Auchincloss’s wedding.

It was obvious that he was immediately attracted to this strikingly beautiful brunette, with her sparkling green eyes and a slim figure like that of his wife. During conversations with her, he found her bright and well educated. She was said to have been dating Prince Aly Khan, who had previously been married (1949-1953) to screen goddess Rita Hayworth.

JFK soon became a regular late-night visitor to her apartment. The only problem, as it turned out, was that Pamela had a fanatical Catholic as a landlady. Florence Kater recognized JFK and was outraged. So outraged, in fact, that she made it her life’s mission to expose the Senator’s adulterous affair.

She managed to take a photograph of JFK exiting from Pamela’s apartment at three o’clock, during the early morning hours of July 11, 1958. She had copies made and mailed them to every major newspaper, magazine, and TV station in the country. But except for a veiled reference to it in *The Washington Star*, very few, if any, other media published her revelations. Infuriated, Kater then sent the photos and data to J. Edgar Hoover at the F.B.I., who merely added them to his ever-growing dossier on the Senator and future President.

Kater went so far as to place a tape recorder in the air vent funneling into Pamela’s bedroom, so that she could record the sounds of her lovemaking with JFK.

Two years later, during the 1960 presidential campaign, when JFK was running for the country’s top office and heading the Democratic ticket, Kater would show up at Kennedy rallies with picket signs denouncing him as an adulterer. When JFK flew for a meeting with Harry S Truman in Independence, Missouri, Kater flew on the same plane.

In front of Truman’s residence, she picketed the candidate.

She also appealed to Joseph P. Kennedy, who dismissed her as a kook, and she even sent data to Richard Cardinal Cushing in Boston, who advised her to devote her time to other, more worthy causes.

Pamela Turnure. Why is it that so many women in JFK's entourage look like debutantes?

Finally, in 1961, after JFK had been entrenched within the Oval Office, she picketed the White House, even on rainy days.

Jackie, of course, learned about the affair. That's why, in 1961, it came as a surprise to Kennedy insiders and in-the-know media when she designated Pamela as her press secretary.

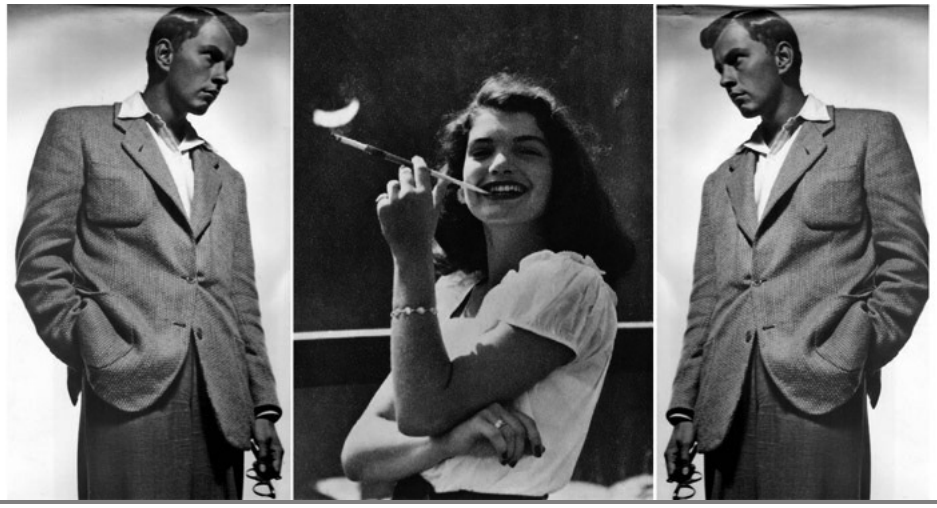
When her social secretary, Letitia Baldrige, asked her why she had employed the known mistress of her husband, Jackie replied, "That way, I can keep an eye on her."

Chapter Five

Gore Vidal and the JFKs

Confronting the World's Most Famous Couple

Jack and Jackie Reveal Their Secrets to America's Most Cynical Social Historian



Beautiful and mischievous, **Jackie Bouvier** became a chain-smoker for life. She later claimed that her "quasi-relative," author **Gore Vidal**, depicted above on each side of her, taught her to be cynical about men. For years, he was her confidant. She told him amusing tidbits about her life and the Bouviers. "My *mère*, Janet, has this nightmarish fear that I'll marry an Italian."

At a party in Georgetown, in December of 1948, John Galliher, a friend of Gore Vidal's mother, Nina Vidal, introduced the young novelist to Jacqueline Bouvier. "In time, I was a sort of quasi-relative of hers because we had shared a mutual stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss," Gore said.

She had specifically sought an introduction to Gore because he was well known in Washington circles, and she felt he might get her started in journalism or photography, perhaps as an actress, a profession she coveted even more.

In 1960, when Democrat **Gore Vidal** ran for a congressional seat in a mostly Republican district of New York State, his campaign ad was privately mocked by his opponents. They suggested that the "you'll get more" slogan and his hand measurements were falsely referring to the size of his penis.

Jackie arranged to meet Gore for future lunches. Before she left, Gore claimed to Jackie that Galliher, a rich, bisexual Washingtonian, "came on strong to me. He told me, 'I've gone to bed with your mother, and I'd like to go to bed with you.'"

Galliher later claimed to literary critic Leo Lerman that Nina was "a very earthy, sexy woman. She told me that Gore was a ballet dancer, so I figured he was gay. Not only that, but he was very attractive back then, a very handsome young man."

Nina Vidal, after she divorced Gore's father, Eugene Vidal, married Hugh (Hughdie) Auchincloss, a rich Washington stockbroker. Nina, with her eleven-year-old son, Gore, moved into his home, Merrywood, a fifty-acre estate on the south bank of the Potomac River in McLean, Virginia. The house itself was a neo-Georgian brick building evocative of Mount Vernon in design, but not as big.

After Nina divorced Hughdie, he married Janet Bouvier, the mother of Jackie and Lee Bouvier, who subsequently moved into Merrywood to fill the void left by Nina. That's how Gore came to know these soon-to-become famous sisters, who would become better known, of course, as Jackie Kennedy and Lee Radziwill.

"Both sisters were brought up like geishas," Gore claimed. "To get money out of men."

"The relationship between Jackie and Lee was sort of S&M," Gore claimed. "Jackie was the S, Lee the M. Intense rivalry was sometimes combined with sisterly intimacy before their relationship turned sour. Lee was always the loser, Jackie the eternal star."

"I Must Share Jack With Other Women"

—Jackie to Gore

Gore claimed, "I never profited from my relationship with Jackie. In fact, it was the reverse. When she first started out as a reporter in Washington, she claimed she was my sister. She got all kinds of interviews with people by telling them that. She profited a lot more from our relationship than I ever did."

On his years at Merrywood, where he lived, Gore said, "It was a peaceful life, a bit Henry Jamesian, a world of deliberate quietude removed from 20th Century tension. It was a life that gave total security but not much preparation for the real world."

After divorcing Black Jack Bouvier, **Janet Lee Bouvier** married Hugh Auchincloss. Here, she poses for a magazine story entitled "What Jackie Kennedy Has Learned from Her Mother." Jackie ridiculed the article, claiming, "The only thing Janet taught me was how to marry a rich man."

Merrywood had sexual memories for me," Gore recalled. "I was inspired when I came across Hughdie's vast collection of pornography. I first had sex with a girl in the basement of Merrywood. My first sex with a boy was on the white tile floor of one of Merrywood's bathrooms."

"Jackie later told me that it was Hughdie's mammoth cache of porn that taught her about the birds and bees." Gore claimed.

In his 1967 novel, *Washington, D.C.*, Merrywood was used as a setting. He renamed it "Laurel House."

Years later, Gore also wrote about Merrywood in an article for *Look* magazine, referring to its "golden ambience."

By then, John F. Kennedy had not only married Jackie, but was no stranger to Merrywood. During a meal with Gore, he asked, "What's this golden shit you're talking about at Merrywood?" he asked. "It was more like *The Little Foxes."*

JFK had seen Lillian Hellman's 1941 movie, *The Little Foxes*, starring Bette Davis as a majestic but ruthless bastion of the upper-class *bourgeoisie*. The film dealt with the greed and corruption of a crumbling, financially compromised, Southern family.

Both Gore Vidal and Jackie grew up at **Merrywood**, Hugh Auchincloss' great estate overlooking the Potomac River.

An Auchincloss relative told Jackie "Life at Merrywood was all about the sound of slamming doors, great feet thundering up and down the steps, slapping across faces, vile oaths, and Hughdie sitting sort of slumped in the middle of it."

Gore detested Janet, Jackie's mother. "She didn't belong to the class to which she aspired, and in a sense joined by marrying Hughdie. I think that made her very nervous. There were also rumors that she was Jewish. She wanted

to control Jackie. Her obsession was seeing that she wed someone rich. She broke up Jackie's first engagement because the poor guy didn't make enough money."

"Janet was a small woman with a large pigeon bust that neatly balanced low-slung buttocks set atop sandpiper legs," Gore said. "Her sallow face was a great curved nosebeak between small, fierce dark eyes. With me, she was her usual rude, 'poisonivied' self. Jackie certainly didn't inherit her tiny breasts or her looks from her mother."

Between sessions at their respective boarding schools, both Jackie and Gore at different times lived at Merrywood. "Jackie, Lee *[Radziwill]* and I had no money, contrary to what people think. Mr. Auchincloss was very rich. But we were not, and we had to survive out there in the world. That's why I had to work, and why Jackie and Lee had to marry well."

Engaged to JFK, Jackie confided in Gore. "I want more than anything in the world to be married to him. We're having what I call a spasmodic courtship. To be a part of his life as his wife, I'm willing to share him with other women."

Later, when Jackie married John F. Kennedy, then a young congressman, Gore was not surprised.

"Of the available Catholic women in the country, Jackie was about the most glamorous, and the Kennedys were regarded as a big step upward and an ongoing victory over the WASPs," Gore said.

When she married JFK, Gore said, "Jackie had been raised to play the modern equivalent of the classic courtesan role. At least, she closed her eyes to Jack's philandering. Their marriage was an 18th Century affair: a practical union on both sides."

Kitty Kelley, Jackie's biographer, said she was attracted to Gore because "He was witty, sexy, brilliant, talented, successful, charming, and an entertaining gossip. Being able to dish the dirt was a criterion for friendship with the Kennedys. They relished famous people who could discourse about their peccadillos."

Gore defined Jack as a better gossip than Jackie, a marvelous repository of information, such as what Marlene Dietrich liked to do in bed, or what Joan Crawford called her vagina. "When I met Jack, he wanted to know the current crop of beauties who slept around," Gore said. "He once asked me about Jean Peters, who was married at the time to Howard Hughes."

"I hear he likes to fuck young male actors, so he must leave Jean alone a lot at night," JFK said. "How about setting up something between Jean and me? I think she's the pretty version of Jackie, with better skin."

In 1956, in Washington, Gore and Jackie saw a lot of each other, often lunching together and, occasionally chatting with Eleanor Roosevelt.

Jackie was a reporter and photographer, but Gore knew that her dream was to become an actress. "She was fascinated by actors and went to bed with a surprising number of them that the public never knew about—I mean more than the usual suspects—William Holden, Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra, and Warren Beatty."

He once took her to a rehearsal for a teleplay he'd written called *Honor*, part of the *Robert Montgomery Presents* series.

"Jackie was much taken with Dick York, the youthful star," Gore said. "She also flirted with the aging Ralph Bellamy. She later told me she'd rather be a movie star's wife than a senator's wife—'It's so boring.'"

Ironically, it would be Gore himself, not Jackie, who first bedded York.

After they left the rehearsal, Jackie told him, "Jack also loves movie stars, especially if their names are Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Hedy Lamarr, Marilyn Monroe, June Allyson, Peggy Cummins, Arlene Dahl, Rhonda Fleming, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Susan Hayward, Sonja Henie, Janet Leigh, Jayne Mansfield, Kim Novak, Lee Remick, Jean Simmons, Gene Tierney, and Lana Turner, to get us going. But Old Joe *[Joseph P. Kennedy]* hates actors."

"Well, not all actresses," Gore quipped. "For instance, Gloria Swanson, to name the obvious, but also Dietrich, Crawford, Greta Garbo, Phyllis Haver, Sonja Henie, Constance Bennett, Evelyn Brent, Nancy Carroll, Betty Compson, Viola Dana, and Marion Davies shared with William Randolph Hearst."

Then, Gore continued, provocatively including an accusation about Jackie's husband, "And father and son sometimes seduced the same star—Dietrich, for example, but also ice-skating Henie and the indomitable Joan Crawford," Gore said.

"Oh," Jackie said rather impatiently, "The curse of being married to a Kennedy man."

"In New York a few weeks later, I took her to Downey's, the poor man's Sardi's, a place frequented mostly by out-of-work actors," Gore said. "She first met Paul Newman there, a future lover. She also met Shelley Winters, and John Ireland was there. I told Jackie he had the biggest prick in Hollywood. She was fascinated by that tidbit of information, perhaps planning to date him in her future. Everyone wanted to know who Jackie was. I told them, 'She's a new starlet at Warner's.'"

With his pencil mustache, **Zachory Scott** specialized in screen portrayals of duplicitous, spineless cads, most memorably opposite Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*. Jackie learned that on that rare occasion, during his portrayal of that role, he actually went to bed with a woman.

"After Downey's, I took her to a party at the home of Zachory Scott, who had thrilled her with his devilish looks playing opposite Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*, one of her favorite movies," Gore said. "He was married to Ruth Scott, an actress from Mississippi and longtime friend of William Faulkner, who wrote the play *Requiem for a Nun* for her. When Ruth was out of the room, I noticed Zachory whispering to Jackie in the corner. I thought they were setting up a rendezvous. Why not? Jack played around. Why not Jackie? She called her affairs 'revenge fucks.'"

"At least three of the actresses at Zachory's party had been bedded by Jack—Gene Tierney, Crawford, and Janet Leigh," Gore claimed. "Jack had already begun his collection of beddable stars that would, in time, outdo those of his father. Jack was the Big Dipper, Joe the Little Dipper."

"The lads of Merrywood," as **Gore Vidal** *(center)* called them, assembled for the wedding of Nini Gore Auchincloss to Newton Steers. **Jack Kennedy** *(shown in profile, standing second from the right in the rear)* also attended.

The only thing Gore remembered about the wedding was that he got to see the penis of the future president when they "shared" a urinal.

Back in Washington, I discreetly asked Jackie how it had gone with Scott."

She looked disappointed. "I think he would have preferred going to bed with Jack instead of me."

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In 1957, Gore was one of the groomsmen, along with JFK, at the wedding of Gore's half-sister, Nini Gore Auchincloss, to Newton Steers. Nini's stepbrother-in-law was Senator Kennedy. At the wedding, Jackie, in her second trimester of pregnancy, was matron of honor.

The marriage took place in Washington, D.C., at St. John's Church, aptly labeled "the church of the presidents."

[In his 1995 memoir, Palimpsest, *Gore wrote of St. John's: "For over a century, Presidents, on a Sunday, would wander across the avenue that separates the White House from Lafayette Square and its odd little church, whose chaste Puritan tower is topped by an unlikely gold Byzantine dome—metaphor?"]*

“My main memory of the event was sharing a urinal with Jack Kennedy and checking out the penis of the future president of the United States,” Gore said. “Of course, a thousand women and his best friend, the very gay Lem Billings, knew what Jack called ‘my implement’ far better than I did.”

In his memoirs, Gore claimed that after the wedding reception at Merry-wood, Jackie took the new bride, Nini, upstairs to one of the large bathrooms. “Jackie showed the innocent Nini how to douche post-sex, with one foot in the bathtub, the other on the white tiled floor. There was no bidet.”

Jackie had advised Nini to use the white kind of vinegar. “If not properly diluted, you can burn your insides out.”

She later joked to Gore, “Can you see Eleanor, Bess, or Mamie lecturing a bride on the finer points of the female douche?”

Later, Gore looked out the window at the wedding party on the lawn. He became aware of an odd curve in the upper vertebrae of JFK’s back, just below the neck. Later, Lyndon Johnson would refer to JFK as “that spavined hunchback.”

“An odd feeling came over me then,” Gore said. “I just knew that one day Jack was going to be President of the United States.”

Gore’s final memory of that wedding day involved standing next to Teddy Kennedy. “He raised high his champagne glass and then poured its contents over his own handsome, youthful head.”

In addition to the wedding reception for Nini, Janet Auchincloss staged another event at Merrywood to celebrate the success of her husband’s former stepson, Gore himself. The National Theatre in Washington was presenting his play, *Visit to a Small Planet*.

Even though he didn’t like Janet, viewing her as a schemer and a social climber, Gore was honored by the event. He was most conciliatory toward her. But despite Gore’s status as the guest of honor, Janet showed utter contempt for him, seating him at the children’s table during the dinner that followed the cocktail party.

Later, he and Jackie headed upstairs to look at his former bedroom, which had been hers during her residency there. By the time of Gore’s return to Merrywood for the party, Janet was using it as a storage area for linens. The beds were still in the crowded room, to be used in case of an emergency for overflow guests.

In what had previously functioned as his boyhood bedroom, Gore saw once again the twin beds he’d shared with Jimmie Trimble, “the love of my life,” a soldier killed on Iwo Jima during World War II. Jackie told him that she and JFK had occupied those same beds when they’d returned from their honeymoon.

“One morning, Jack didn’t have a clean shirt, so I gave him one of those Brooks Brothers shirts you left behind,” Jackie said. “It fitted him perfectly.”

At the party, before going back downstairs, Jackie and Gore talked rather clinically about their mutually shared stepfather. “Nina told me she had sexual problems with him,” Gore said. “She claimed Hughdie was incapable of having an erection. To conceive children, Nina had to use a spoon to help matters along.”

He later said, “Jackie knew exactly what I meant. I didn’t have to explain it to her.”

On leaving the room, he noticed an embroidered pillow on Jackie’s bed. It read: “Better *nouveau rich* than not rich at all.”

In a 1969 article in *Playboy*, Gore said, “I was unaware of Jackie until the Forties. When she was an inquiring photographer in Washington, a budding Brenda Starr, she used her alleged kinship with me to open doors, since I was, pre-Kennedy, the family notable. That got her in to interview everyone from Eleanor Roosevelt to Richard Nixon. At any rate, I certainly knew what her childhood was like, since it was pretty much what I had endured at Merrywood.”

In 1956, Gore visited Jack and Jackie at their home in Georgetown. JFK had failed in his bid that year for the Democratic Party’s nomination as their Vice Presidential candidate on the same ticket with Adlai Stevenson.

Gore recalled JFK coming out of the bedroom looking disheveled. “He wore only a bathrobe, and it was open, revealing the family jewels.” Gore said. “He was not a shy person. One time at Hyannis Port, he came out of the house wrapped only in a towel. At one point, when he was fixing himself a drink, Jackie and I looked on when the towel fell off him. He walked around for five minutes before putting that towel back on.”

Once, during sex, JFK nearly drowned **Hedy Lamarr,** "the most beautiful woman in Europe."

Gore remembered another occasion when he was sitting with Jack and Jackie as they read newspaper accounts of Grace Kelly's 1956 wedding to Prince Rainier of Monaco. "It was humiliating for her, but Jack looked over at Jackie, then looked at pictures of the blonde-haired bride, and he said, 'I could have married her.' It was known by the inner circle at the time that he'd had an affair with Grace. From that day forth, Princess Grace became somebody in Jackie's life she could not abide."

"If you're bisexual, you might have been attracted to Jackie," Gore claimed. "Her body was androgynous, broad-shouldered, flat chested, with long, muscular legs, large hands and feet. The only thing she didn't possess was a cock. She confessed to me that her aim in life was to attract men. As such, she was a subtle, practiced flirt. One day on a boat off the coast of Hyannis Port, her bare leg brushed against my hairy one. She ignited an erotic fire by deliberately rubbing up against me, but nothing came of it."

Gore claimed that he and JFK, from all reports, had much in common sexually, in that each of them was more interested in their own sexual satisfaction than in giving pleasure to a partner.

Hedy Lamarr claimed that JFK liked sex in a hot bathtub with the woman on top. "In an impulsive move, he pushed me backward," she said. "My head was under water, and I felt I was drowning. This caused a vaginal spasm. But he had his orgasm. I never spoke to him after that underwater adventure."

[This revelation was made to Darwin Porter at a party at the apartment of their mutual literary agent, Jay Garon. Garon had signed Lamar as his representative for her tell-all memoir, Ecstacy.]

"I can be certain of one thing: He saved the real kinky stuff for his other sexual partners," Gore claimed. "I think that with Jackie, JFK performed the sex act in the old-fashioned way. Unlike another First Lady who would rule the White House in the 1980s, Jackie was not skilled at fellatio, at least that's what Jack told me back in the days when we talked about sex with each other. Rimming was definitely a no-no. From what Jack said, Jackie considered that a disgusting sexual practice. Of course, Jack had his gay friend, Lem Billings, around to perform that act for him."

From The Best Man to Gore's Exile from Camelot

In 1960, Gore had run as the Democratic candidate for Congress in what was identified at the time as the 29th Congressional district of New York State. *[In 1960, the term "29th District" applied to the traditionally Republican enclaves of Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Schoharie, and Ulster Counties, in southern New York State. Gore at the time lived within that district, at Edgewater, a historically important home on the banks of the Hudson River, in the village of Barrytown, near Rhinebeck.]*

John F. Kennedy was still a senator when he came to Hyde Park to campaign for **Gore Vidal** *(left)*, who was running for a seat from the 29th Congressional District in New York. Despite the pain in his back, JFK had flown to the small airport at Hyde Park to deliver a speech promoting Gore.

Eleanor Roosevelt was Gore's supporter and friend. She told JFK that she didn't want him to become president because he'd been pro-McCarthy. She also cited other "deviations from liberalism."

His Republican challenger, J. Ernest Wharton, beat him by a margin of 57% to 43%. Gore received the most votes of any Democrat in half a century, largely because Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, Paul Newman, and Joanne Woodward aggressively campaigned for him.

Gore had called Kennedy to tell him, "Eleanor wants Adlai Stevenson to run for a third time, even though he failed twice against Eisenhower. But the best I can do is to get Eleanor to be less hostile to you. She still has bad memories of the feud between Old Joe *[U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph P. Kennedy, JFK's father]* and FDR *[Eleanor's husband, Franklin Delano Roosevelt]*."

Eleanor told Gore that in 1941, FDR had invited Joseph Kennedy for a weekend at their estate north of New York City, Hyde Park. "Kennedy was alone with Franklin for no more than ten minutes in his study when I was summoned. Franklin asked Kennedy to step outside. Then he turned to me, his voice shaking, "I never want to see that man again as long as I live. Get him out of here.'"

JFK did arrive in Dutchess County, despite the bad blood associated with his father's visit in 1941. JFK eventually came to Dutchess County to support Gore in his campaign there as a Democrat. A headline in the *Hyde Park Independent* asserted, "KENNEDY STUMPS FOR GORE."

"Vidal has the will and the vigor and he understands the need for action in this changing world," JFK said.

Meeting privately with Gore, JFK told him, "I hope your private life doesn't become an issue in this campaign."

Gore shot back, "I hope *your* private life doesn't become an issue, too."

JFK had not wanted to campaign on location for Gore, figuring his political capital could better be spent elsewhere. "He came at the urging of Jackie," I later learned," Gore said. "I think that was one of the last favors Jackie ever did for me. Our relationship in the early 1960s was soon to head south."

Later, Gore sent both JFK and Jackie his script for his latest play, *The Best Man*, before they eventually saw it on Broadway. One night, as JFK was reading the script, *[whose characters included a womanizing politician named William Russell]*, he asked Jackie, "Is Gore writing about me?"

Weeks later, in New York City, on December 6, 1960, with flashbulbs popping, President-elect Kennedy,

accompanied by Jackie, entered the Morosco Theatre for a performance of *The Best Man*.

During the performance, when the candidate's sexual promiscuity was mentioned, Charles (Chuck) Spalding, a Kennedy aide, noted that JFK "appeared quite nervous. He gave me a lightning look before sinking lower in his chair."

After the play, Gore dined with Jack and Jackie. "If you had not won the presidency, I would have emigrated," Gore told JFK. "I'm only sorry I won't be in Congress this January to help balance in some small way the powers of darkness gathering there."

JFK's crowded schedule had allowed him only one night in New York before moving on to other venues. When confronted with the choice of which play he'd attend, JFK had opted for a performance of Gore's *The Best Man* rather than *Camelot*, a touch of irony.

In the aftermath of that embarrassing evening, Kennedy told Gore, "When I take office, I'll keep you in mind. The ambassadorship to Mali is open."

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During the peak of JFK's presidency, in the dying days of the summer of 1961, Jackie invited Gore to visit the president and herself at Hyannis Port. Gore was staying at the time in nearby Provincetown.

On the way, he was stopped by a police car when he tried to enter the Kennedy compound.

He encountered Jackie in a pair of pink Capri pants with a windbreaker, fresh from waterskiing. She was making daiquiris.

When JFK appeared, in chinos and a blue shirt, "He had an odd yellow glint, a manifestation of Addison's disease," Gore said. "He looked older than his photographs."

Jackie told Gore she found the White House claustrophobic. "You're never alone there. You sit in a room and try to write a letter and someone comes in."

Failed presidential candidate George McGovern once called on Gore for lunch. He claimed that when he'd met Jackie, she told him that she overheard "Joe, Jack, and Bobby discussing Jack's career. They spoke of me as if I weren't a person, just a thing, a sort of asset, like Rhode Island."

At the dinner Gore attended in the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port, Bobby managed only a handshake and a brief hello to Gore. Months before their violent argument at the White House, Bobby contemptuously referred to Gore and others as "Jackie's fag friends."

Over the Kennedy family table in Hyannis Port that night, Gore learned a deadly secret. "Jack and Bobby were preparing to go to war with the Soviet Union if that country ever moved its troops across the border in an attempt to occupy West Berlin."

"It was on that same night that Jackie weighed in with her political opinion. "Yes, it would be better to be Red than dead—not maybe for myself, but for the children." Gore was shocked to learn that Jackie was such a pacifist, that she preferred surrender rather than risking the lives of her family.

"I did learn some tantalizing news from Jackie before I became *persona non grata,"* Gore said. "Jackie told me that if Jack had not been assassinated *[in Dallas in November of 1963]*, he would have dumped Lyndon *[Johnson]* as a running mate in the '64 election, and offered the public a Kennedy/Kennedy ticket. The plan was for Bobby to run in 1968 and serve two terms, followed by Teddy *[Edward Kennedy]*, serving two terms beginning in 1976."

During her years in the White House, Jackie also visited Gore in Provincetown in heavy disguise, wearing a blonde wig. But she was nonetheless recognized. He slipped her in to see a local theatrical production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. After the performance, he suggested that, while in disguise, both of them should visit the local lesbian bar.

"She seemed fascinated, and she did peek in at all the butches and lipstick lesbians dancing together. But as First Lady, she didn't dare enter."

She later said, "Jack is very sad. He's holed up in Hyannis Port and not meeting his requirement of a new girl every day. So he's reduced to coming to my bed twice a week."

Throughout the 1950s, and up until 1961, when Jack and Jackie took over the White House, they remained friends with Gore. In large part, that was based on Gore's infinite knowledge of Hollywood gossip. When Jackie was out of the room, Jack quizzed Gore endlessly about female stars. In noteworthy contrast, Bobby continued to hold Gore in contempt.

At one point, when Gore and JFK stayed up late drinking, JFK confessed. "I married the wrong sister," referring, of course, to Lee Radziwill. "I guess it was inevitable that Lee and I would eventually crawl between the sheets."

[In the late 1970s, Jackie told her sister-in-law, Joan Kennedy, that she'd learned about Jack's affair with Lee.]

Briefly, during the early months of the Kennedy administration of the White House, Gore was welcome at

Camelot. As he admitted, “I was part of the Kennedy Court. What that meant was that I was called upon for escort duty. ‘Gore, dear,’ Jackie would call me. ‘Please escort Rose to the Metropolitan Opera.’ My picture escorting Rose Kennedy would end up on the front page of the *Journal-American*.”

Gore soon learned how Rose managed to deceive the press. As she was entering the Opera House, a reporter admired her stylish dress. “Where did you get it?” he asked.

“La Divinissima,” Opera superstar **Maria Callas**, “trashing Jackie.”

“From Klein’s bargain basement,” she replied.

Gore, however, knew that it was an *haute couture* confection from Balenciaga.

One night in 1961, at the beginning of JFK’s presidency, Jackie invited Gore to the White House.

“That night at the White House, I got a little drunk, and my hatred of Bobby spilled over when he demanded that I take my hand off Jackie’s shoulder,” Gore claimed. “Even before Jack was assassinated, Jackie was hot to trot with her brother-in-law, and *vice versa*. Bobby told Jackie never to invite ‘the drunken fag’ to the White House again—and she didn’t. From that date on, our friendship more or less came to an end, although we’d encounter each other on two or three occasions in the future, including an outing to see *Deep Throat*.”

“The feud with Bobby did liberate me as an essayist,” he said. “I was free to criticize Bobby in print as harshly as I wanted, even to attack Jackie’s future marriage to Onassis. So maybe for my literary reputation and political objectivity, it was perhaps just as well that Bobby and I almost came to blows, so to speak.”

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Gore wasn’t around when Jackie married Aristotle Onassis. When a reporter asked his opinion of the union, Gore said, “Highly suitable. The best way to replenish a dwindling bank account.”

When Jackie was accused of marrying Onassis for his money, Gore said he understood such transactions. “I was once seduced by an old man of thirty, my absolute cut-off edge, who gave me ten dollars. So I, too, like Jackie, had once been a small player in the commodities’ exchange market.”

Throughout the course of Jackie’s marriage to Onassis, Gore was no longer socializing with her. But he did recall an encounter with opera diva Maria Callas *[the shipping tycoon’s longtime mistress]* in Rome. “Maria was getting ready to make *Medea*. And Pasolini was there. But all she wanted to talk about was Jackie. Very funny about her. She talked about the jewelry Ari had presented to Jackie.”

“I know those jewels,” Callas said. “They’re nothing. They’re second rate, except the ruby earrings are quite good. I remember those, and I almost took them, but they really weren’t right for me. The rest of what he gave her is pure trash. But, of course, Mrs. Kennedy wouldn’t know the difference, would she?”

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For Gore at the White House, Camelot came and went very quickly.

On November 22, 1963, Gore, with his companion, Howard Austen, was in a movie theater in the beach town of Ostia outside Rome. Gore heard a buzz in the audience, with the constant mention of the word “Kennedy.”

“Howard and I went outside, where we learned that Jack had been assassinated in Dallas. Immediately, we made plans to fly to Washington.”

Later, he was barred from entering the church where JFK’s funeral was conducted. “I wanted to use the occasion for a reconciliation with Jackie, but I suspected Bobby’s hand barring me, even at the edge of the grave.”

“I paid my obeisance to Jack, even though I had to do so at a distance. Howard and I then flew to Hollywood, where we watched the first rough cut of *The Best Man*, a movie which had been inspired in part by the character of Jack.”

Gore's novel, *Two Sisters*, was published in 1970. It failed to attract a wide audience, although many people who read it thought it was suggested by Jackie's relationship with Lee Radziwill. The book's character of Marietta Donegal was a devastating caricature of Anaïs Nin. "Despite my protests, Marietta Donegal revealed her not altogether fallen breasts," Gore wrote.

Over the years, it had been reported to Gore that Jackie had told people, "Actually, I don't know Gore Vidal, although, of course, I'm aware that he writes books, which unfortunately, I have not had a chance to read."

In October of 1975, as Gore turned fifty, he shared a chance encounter with Jackie at the Ritz Hotel in London. "Halfway down, the elevator stopped to admit another passenger, a woman in a white trench coat. Our eyes met in mute shock. It was Jackie Kennedy Onassis. Except for two or three occasions when we got together, our friendship never recovered from the night Bobby Kennedy ordered me from the White House in 1961. I did escort her to see Linda Lovelace in *Deep Throat*, but the evening didn't go well. After the screening, she complained of a headache and called off dinner."

In the Ritz elevator, I turned my back on her to discover in the mirror a smudge of ink on my brow. As I used a handkerchief to remove it, the lift opened. In her best Marilyn Monroe voice, she said, 'Bye bye,' and vanished into Piccadilly, where she was mobbed."

Gore's final word on Jackie: "I will forever remember her boyish beauty and the life-enhancing malice that were a great joy to me."

In this 1961 photo, at the insistence of Jackie, **JFK** *(left)* and **Gore Vidal** *(center)* attended a horse show, even though **Jackie** *(right)* knew her husband was allergic to horses. While she took in the show, Jack, seething at being there, indulged in indiscreet gossip behind her back.

Chapter Six

"The Resident White House Queer"

Lem Billings

"The First Friend" Quietly Moves into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Much of the world was at war when this picture of a carefree young **Jack Kennedy** with his constant companion, **Lem Billings** *(right)* was taken in 1940. The setting was the Kennedy compound at Palm Beach. A World War would soon separate the "inseparable companions," who had remained in each other's orbit since 1933.

In snowbound New England, **Lem** straddles his buddy **Jack** for a romp in the snow. Most teen friendships fade with the passing of school semesters, but the bond between these two young men would last “until death do us part.”

When Jackie Bouvier started dating John F. Kennedy, it was inevitable that she’d soon meet Pennsylvania-born Kirk LeMoyne Billings, affectionately known for decades within the Kennedy family as “Lem.”

Jack referred to him as “Lemmer,” “Leem,” or “Moynie.” Lem often called his beloved friend either “Ken” or “Kenadosus.”

It is said that Lem fell in love with JFK as they showered together in the Connecticut-based Choate School for Boys in 1933. The bond they formed that year at prep school lasted a lifetime. Jackie once said, “The love between those two lasted even beyond the assassination in Dallas.”

On a summer vacation in 1937, **Jack Kennedy** *(left)* toured Europe with his “best friend for life,” **Lem Billings**, his roommate at prep

school. Lem was a homosexual in love with Jack.

In France, Lem proposed to Jack that they become “lovers for always” and live together after graduation, but Jack told him, “I’m hopelessly heterosexual.”

As David Michaelis in his book, *Best of Friends*, wrote: “For Lem, Jack was the best thing about life at school. Jack knew how to create the kind of fun that lightened the mood of everyone around him,. His innate gaiety and zest for living challenged even the most caustic, passive members of his class. His high spirits were contagious. For Kennedy, Billings was more than just a partner in school crimes. He was the first intimate friend Kennedy had found outside his family. Lem’s passionate readiness to experience the world enhanced Kennedy’s cool curiosity. In Billings, Kennedy had a unique ally.”

From the very beginning, Lem seemed to want to make Jack his lover. But Jack, at least initially, turned down his sexual advances. However, he did not turn down the offer of friendship.

Friends claimed that Lem had been in love with Jack all his life. On the other hand, Jack was “in love with Lem being in love with him.” Every night at school, Lem even polished Jack’s shoes.

As biographer Mart Martin noted, JFK “was the frequent recipient of non-reciprocal fellatio from Lem.” But whenever a woman was available, the over-sexed JFK dumped Lem and pursued whichever female he could conquer.

“Lem Billings is Jack’s Other Wife”

—Robert Kennedy

“If you love Jack, you’ve got to love Lem, too. It’s a package deal.”

—Jackie

“Of the nine or ten men who were close to the President, I would say that Lem was Number One.”

—Eunice Kennedy Shriver

At Hyannis Port, Joe Kennedy didn’t like Lem when he arrived for the summer, but he did tolerate him. “He showed up with a battered suitcase and stayed forever.” Joe asked Jack, “Oh, my God, must you bring this queen?”

Jack seemed determined, so Joe gave in. When he was in the movie business in Hollywood, Joe had gotten used to being around homosexuals.

“Jack is liable to go and knock up some girl,” Joe said, “and then we’ll be in the shithouse. You know, the Cardinal preaches against abortion. At least Lem gives Jack some relief. As for Lem, I don’t know what he does for relief, and I don’t much care. He at least keeps my boy under control.”

Lawrence Quirk, in *The Kennedys in Hollywood*, wrote:

“Joe did not want Jack impregnating any of the girls he dated, and he was of the old-fashioned school that held that masturbation was sexually wasteful, so if Jack allowed Lem to pleasure him, worse things could conceivably happen to anyone as undisciplined, rowdy, tomfoolery-perpetrating, and cynical as Jack was during his teen years and indeed into his twenties.”

At one point, Ralph (Rip) Horton was assigned to room with Jack and Lem at Choate, although Lem resented the presence of a third party because he wanted to be alone with Jack. Although Lem tried to keep his love for Jack a secret, it soon became obvious to Horton.

Horton was interviewed by Nigel Hamilton for his book, *JFK’s Reckless Youth*. “In Lem, Jack found a slave for life. It was amazing how Lem was abused. He did Jack’s laundry. Late at night, he’d run out in the cold weather to buy a pizza. Jack’s back was always hurting, and Lem became his unpaid masseur, a job he relished.”

While at Choate, Jack and Lem were still virgins, at least with women. Then one day Jack heard through Horton about a whorehouse in New York City’s Harlem, where each of them could get laid for only three dollars. Lem was reluctant to join Jack on this quest, but ultimately, Jack persuaded him to go.

Peek-a-Boo! Guess Who?

First the madam of the whorehouse showed them porno films “to get them in the mood.”

For some reason, Jack insisted that both he and Lem should lose their virginity to the same prostitute. Jack went first. Always a quick man on the draw, he was back in only ten minutes.

Lem followed him and gave the prostitute three dollars. But he had another way of getting off. He later confessed in a book proposal he circulated after JFK’s death that, “I closed my eyes, thought of Jack, and jerked off.”

After that session, Jack became infected with gonorrhea, a disease that plagued him for years, according to historian Robert Dallek, who wrote *An Unfinished Life, John F. Kennedy 1917-1963*. JFK managed to get a doctor to supply him with creams and lotions, but because of his rampant promiscuity, he carried some sort of venereal infection for the rest of his life

[JFK, according to doctor’s reports, never got rid of venereal disease, because his Addison’s disease seemed to fight against the huge doses of antibiotics that he repeatedly ingested. And because of his rampant promiscuity, he constantly re-infected himself. No evidence exists that he told any of his array of sexual partners that he was infected, and, in many cases, he may have infected his partners. He did confess to Jackie about his diseases during their honeymoon.]

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Over the years, when they were separated, JFK wrote Lem almost pornographic descriptions of his sexual exploits. Sometimes, he also revealed the most embarrassing medical details, as when he wrote to Lem from his hospital bed in London:

Lem Billings *(left)* is seen here relaxing on a chaise longue in Palm Beach with his pal, **Jack Kennedy,** during the winter of 1937. Mother Rose Kennedy liked Lem and thanked him for looking after her son and being so protective of him.

“*Today was the most embarrassing, as a doctor came in just after I had woken up and was reclining with a semi-erection. His plan was to stick his finger under my pickle and have me cough. His plan quickly changed when he drew back the covers and there was JJ. Maher quivering with life.”*

Lem and Jack had jointly nicknamed his penis “JJ. Maher.” JFK frequently used that reference in subsequent letters to Lem over the years.

Even though Jack loved Lem, he constantly mocked him. After these photo-booth pictures were taken, **Jack** studied them and called **Lem** *'Pithecanthropus Erectus”* (the walking Ape Man), a jab about Lem’s high forehead and his clumsiness, including his “simian walk.”

In July of 1937, during vacation from their respective studies, Lem experienced the most intimate and romantic period with Jack that he’d ever known or would ever know again. That summer, they went on a tour of Europe together. Jack paid half of Lem’s fare but claimed that he expected the money back after Lem graduated from Princeton. Joe agreed to pay for the transport of Jack’s Ford convertible as extra baggage aboard the same ship that carried them to Le Havre in France, so they could jointly and conveniently tour Europe together. Since Lem had little money, Jack agreed to stay with him in cramped lodgings throughout the course of their trip, usually in rooms without plumbing. “We ate frightful food and slept for forty cents a night.”

Before he’d left for Europe, Joe had encouraged Jack to “get laid as often as possible.” Jack later claimed, “I can’t get to sleep unless I’ve gotten off. If I go for twenty-four hours without an orgasm, I suffer these crippling migraine headaches.” Fortunately, Lem was there night after night to provide relief.

Years later, Lem revealed in a book proposal that whatever hotel they’d checked into would often assign them a single bed, “and I got to hold Jack in my arms all night. It was wonderful. He was very horny, and I took full advantage.”

Lem cried when they returned to the States on September 16, 1937. “I was so sorry that the trip was over. I knew in my heart I’d never have Jack all to myself like that ever again.”

Jack and Lem endured long separations during the war. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, both Lem and Jack tried to enlist, but both were at first rejected, Lem because of poor eyesight, Jack because of his chronically bad health. In 1942, Lem joined the Ambulance Corps, which didn’t care about his bad eyesight, and saw action in North Africa. Later, through his receipt of a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve, he got involved in wartime maneuvers in the South Pacific.

Lem *(left)* hoists a very young **Teddy Kennedy** with some help from Ted’s older brother, **Jack** *(right)*.

Jack was too sickly to qualify for active duty, but he demanded that Joe use his influence to get him into the Navy. He, too, served in the South Pacific, and was commanding his PT 109 torpedo boat when a Japanese destroyer

split it apart. His heroic rescue of his crew later was used for political advantage when he ran for Congress after the War.

(Left to right) **Jack, Teddy, and Lem** were snapped in 1958 at Teddy's wedding. He's examining a wedding gift from one of his ushers, and seems gleeful to have it.

Honorably discharged in 1946, Lem went on to attend Harvard Business School. After his graduation, he held a variety of jobs, including a stint as an executive at Lennen & Newell, a Manhattan-based advertising firm. He invented the 1950s candy drink, "Fizzies," for the company, adding fruit flavor to disguise the sodium citrate taste of Bromo Seltzer.

Lem continued in his devotion to Jack, although it was painful to watch him making love to a series of young women. Lem could only dream that Jack's lovemaking be directed at him.

But Jack never deserted Lem, and reserved time every week for them to get together. Their lovemaking became a ritual. Jack would strip completely naked for one of Lem's prolonged massages, which always led to a sexual climax on Jack's part. Lem later told Truman Capote that he "got off by going into the bathroom and jerking off with Jack's semen still in my mouth. At my climax, I swallowed his offering."

Truman Capote later claimed that "Lem at Studio 54 was always bragging about fellating Kennedy in Lincoln's Bedroom."

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When Jack started dating Jacqueline Bouvier, Lem tried to discourage her from marrying him. He presented a barrage of reasons why Jack would not make a suitable husband. "You're a horsewoman," he told her. "Jack is allergic to horses. He has more allergies than he can count. He breaks out in skin rashes, and some gland on his body is always swollen, often in his throat. He suffers coughing fits and sneezing spasms at the least whiff of dust. He's got a weak stomach—just bland foods, nothing spicy. Spicy dishes make him vomit."

"He wants only milk and butter dishes, demanding New England clam chowder at least twice a day. He drinks three creamy chocolate malts a day. He likes hot chocolate with lots of sugar for breakfast, throughout the day, and at dinner. He consumes a mountain of calories, yet remains a skeleton."

"He's got this asthmatic condition that comes and goes, mostly comes," Lem claimed. "There's something far worse than that. I'm reluctant to tell you. He's had venereal diseases that doctors can't fully cure, and he has to take daily injections. "I think he's infected several women. His doctors told me that if a woman contracts what he has, she might never have children—perhaps a miscarriage. Bobby claims that if a mosquito bites Jack, the insect will die immediately from blood poisoning."

Dysfunctional trio?
Prior to his marriage to **Jackie**, **JFK** (left) looks on as **Lem Billings** hugs his bride-to-be. Although he would always resent the presence of Jackie, Lem on the surface pretended he adored her.

"Jack constantly has high fevers and often experiences these awful seizures where he just collapses on the floor and has to be carried to bed. Sometimes, he just seems to lose it and goes bonkers, running nude out of his bedroom and screaming into the night. Bobby and Teddy, or a house servant, often have to restrain him and carry him back to bed, where sometimes, he has to be tied down."

Jackie not only had Lem to cope with, but also Langdon Marvin, who had been JFK's schoolmate at Harvard. The godson of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Langdon was sophisticated, witty, and an accomplished athlete, a so-called macho man. He had worked for JFK when he'd run for Congress and was one of his most loyal supporters. Jackie had heard rumors that Langdon procured beautiful young women who were willing to go to bed with her future husband.

Within a short time, Jackie came to realize that both Lem and Langdon were closeted homosexuals, and she suspected that both of them were in love with JFK. A heavy drinker, Langdon one drunken night cornered Jackie at a party. In a bitchy mood, he told her, "The only reason Jack is marrying you is because people are starting to call him a fairy. In this country, if you're not married when you're approaching 40, you're suspect."

She was not startled by his claim, as she'd already heard it from other sources, too.

He also told her the truth about JFK's injured back. "We made up that story that his back injury came from a football mishap at Harvard. We were covering up the fact that he was born with a congenital malformation of his spinal column. He's been a sort of invalid all his life. That's a dark secret that could prove deadly for a career in politics."

At the Alaska State Fair, **JFK** is seen in this rare picture taken of him campaigning for the presidential elections with his ever-faithful companion, **Langdon Marvin.**

Lem and Marvin competed for attention from JFK, and both of them had opposed his marriage to Jackie. She accused both of them of "wanting Jack for yourselves."

"There are some things you might need to know if you're serious about going through with this ridiculous marriage," Langdon told her. "Morning after morning, I've watched him emerge from the bathroom before beginning his daily dress-up ritual. I've often dressed him myself."

"If you haven't already discovered it, he wears an eight-inch wide cloth brace. Not only that, he wears a corset like a woman. His left leg is shorter than his right, and he has to have special shoes made with an orthopedic lift. Honey, you'd be marrying a mess. My advice is, don't do it. If you're looking for a rich beau, why not Nelson Rockefeller? He's handsome and he's rich. I once showered with him in the locker room of a private club. Baby, there's meat there for the poor."

Langdon then confided another morbid secret. "Jack believes he will not live beyond forty. So he takes his pleasure while his candle still burns. That includes lots of women. As he told me, 'I need to get it while the getting's good.' He also claimed that even if he marries, he'll continue to chase after what he calls 'poon.' After all,' he said, 'JJ. Maher has to be satisfied."

"Who in hell is JJ. Maher?" she asked.

"I don't think you're being honest with me," he said. "Surely, knowing Jack, you've met JJ. Maher. Some gals know him for only twenty minutes before he introduces them to JJ."

"Oh, I see."

Langdon had yet another revelation. "Get used to seeing him shooting some mysterious drug into his thighs. I've seen him get dressed hundreds of times. Right in front of me, he shoots that mysterious liquid into his veins."

Later, Jackie told Ted Sorensen, "I discounted half of what Langdon and Lem told me, although some of it may be true. I'll find out, I'm sure. They're not exactly impartial. Frankly, I think either of them would like to be Jack's bride if such a marriage were possible."

When he realized that JFK's marriage to Jackie was inevitable, Lem said, "Both of them came to understand that they were alike, at least in some respects. They had taken rather bad circumstances at birth and made the most of themselves, at least as best as they could. Even their names, Jack and Jackie, are similar. Two halves of a single wheel. They are actors who constantly applaud each other's performance."

Finally, Jackie decided not to allow herself to be swayed by the jealousy of either Lem or Langdon. In 1953, she married the relatively young senator. At the wedding, Bobby was overheard saying to Eunice, "Now Jack has a second wife." He was no doubt cynically referring to Lem as the first one.

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Fresh from his honeymoon in Mexico, JFK confided to both Langdon and Lem that he had also seduced other women during the trip, continuing to do so when they landed in Los Angeles and later in San Francisco.

"Jackie was new to marriage, and perhaps she thought Jack would settle down after marrying her," Lem said. "Even back in Washington, and I saw this on many a night, she couldn't understand how he would dare disappear from a party with some pretty young thing and leave her humiliated and stranded. You can't say I didn't warn her. I love Jack more than I will ever love anyone, but I have to admit he's a rake. He really doesn't have much sensitivity when it comes to understanding women."

"I knew that Jack and Jackie had similar interests that drew them together, but when I had lunch with Jackie after the marriage, I began to realize that it was their differences that were pulling them apart," Lem claimed. "Almost immediately after marrying him, she became the neglected wife. Jack had many interests and many people in his life. Back in 1933, I tried to monopolize him, but I soon realized how stupid that was."

"I felt that both Jack and Jackie were withdrawn, bitter people, who had become disillusioned by life. Jack covered his disillusionment far better than Jackie, who was a woman of dark moods. You never knew where you stood with that one."

"Jackie told me that she never wanted to confront Jack about his adultery or how he tormented her. As for Jack, he was glad she didn't. He detested confrontation. Both of them constructed a façade to hide his womanizing and family strife. She once told me, 'Jack and I are like icebergs—the public life above water, but the far deeper block of ice submerged.'"

Months later, when Jackie suffered a miscarriage, Lem blamed it on her anguish over Jack's constant womanizing." I visited her several times after her miscarriage. She was morbid and depressed. I asked her where Jack was."

"On the road, I guess," she told him. "I haven't heard from him in three days."

As regards JFK's political career, Lem campaigned vigorously for the man he loved, helping him win both the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries in 1960. He was also instrumental at the Democratic Convention in luring

delegates away from Lyndon B. Johnson.

Beginning in 1961, after Jack became President, Lem was a permanent fixture at the White House, advising Jackie about redecorating, and JFK about how to deal with Russia. He was assigned a permanent bedroom on site.

At the White House, the staff referred to Lem as "First Friend." As Jackie recalled to Democratic Senator George Smathers (Florida), "Just one weekend in my life, I'd like to have my husband to myself, but Lem is always there, bathing and massaging him, even putting on his shoes and socks."

"I never had to have a pass to get into the White House," Lem recalled. "All of the Secret Service men knew who I was."

Some people resented Lem's presence within the White House. That deeply cynical and always provocative distant relative of Jackie's, author Gore Vidal, referred to Lem as "the resident queer."

Historian Herbert S. Parmet claimed, "Lem subordinated his own life to his friend. Members of the President's staff thought of him as a handy old piece of furniture."

Lem Billings was a knave, a courtier, and the court jester during the reincarnation of Camelot. Here, he's seen on the lawn of the White House in 1961. The Secret Service nicknamed him, "First Friend."

Even members of the press learned about Jack's homosexual liaison with Lem, but never printed any stories about it during JFK's presidency. Prior to the late 1960s, homosexuality in print was the love that dared not speak its name. Jack was also protected because the press almost never ran stories about his extramarital affairs.

It was painful and humiliating for Lem, but Jack forced him to arrange liaisons for him with some of the world's most alluring women. Lem was also assigned the often unpleasant task of getting rid of a woman after Jack was finished with her. Lem didn't try to get rid of Marilyn Monroe. The stakes associated with that particular affair were so high that Jack entrusted the task to his chief troubleshooter, Bobby.

Charlie Bartlett, a Washington correspondent for the *Chattanooga Times*, recalled, "It was a tense time in the Cold War. If the Russians had found out that the President's best friend was a homosexual, it would have been valuable information to them."

Vidal said, "I think Jack felt quite comfortable in the company of homosexuals as long as they were smart enough to hold his interest."

No one questioned Lem's fanatical loyalty to JFK, but friends were often critical of the relationship. Senator Smathers found Lem "childish_and emotionally demanding of JFK. Lem was very jealous, and would throw a hissy fit if he felt that Jack was not paying him enough attention. Lem would almost demand that Jack stop running the country and spend time with him."

"On the other hand, as people betrayed Jack and took advantage of him, he knew he could always count on dependable Lem, even from the first day he moved into the White House," Smathers said.

"He even summoned Lem to take leave from his advertising job in New York and fly to Washington to help Jackie with her renovation of the White House. He had impeccable taste and even advised her on antiques and how to secure them. Jack told me that Lem gave Jackie more self-confidence in her own judgment and helped her get rid of many of her insecurities. Incidentally, I was Jack's best straight friend, Lem his best gay pal."

After a heavy day of renovation in the White House, Lem and Jackie retired for drinks on the Truman Balcony. "It was here that we concluded that neither of us would ever have Jack all to ourselves," Lem recalled. "He needed far more friends than Jackie and me. He got something from everybody—Chuck Spalding, William Walton, Charlie Bartlett, and Ben Bradlee, even the 'Irish Mafia.'"

"He liked to talk over old times in the Navy with Red Fay and made him Under-Secretary of the Navy," Lem said. "Jack liked to pal around with Ray, although I didn't care for him. Sometimes, they would sneak out of the White House to see a movie in a Washington theater, which always pissed off Jackie and the Secret Service. I remember once, they slipped out to see Kirk Douglas in *Spartacus*. Jack wanted women for sex, of course, but he turned to men for companionship. I'm not his only friend who has claimed that."

In the beginning, Jackie had wanted to get rid of Lem, but over a period of months, she came to respect him, especially in his appreciation of the arts and for his knowledge of American antiques. Many of his suggestions for renovating the White House and its choice of furnishings came from him, even though she later took credit for them.

"There was no great love between them," Bartlett said. "They were rivals for Jack's love. Poor Lem was always the third person at what Jackie hoped would be an intimate dinner with her husband. Apparently, Lem never heard the expression, 'Three's a crowd,' but Jack insisted that Lem be there. I don't think Lem ever really liked Jackie, but he did come to respect her. He felt she was more a great mother than a wonderful wife. He thought she did a fine job with Caroline and John Jr."

Lem and Jackie had more in common about art, literature, music, poetry, antiques, and even exquisite food than did Jackie and Jack," Bartlett said. "They also had one incredible bond, and that was their mutual love of the President."

Jackie had told Bartlett that once JFK became President, she felt his need for Lem would fade. The opposite was true. In the White House, he needed his trusted friend more and more, as they mulled over the Soviet Union, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the increasingly troublesome Vietnam, and tensions in Berlin.

"Lem didn't actually make any decisions, or so I believe, but he provided the President with the best listening ear in the country," Bartlett said. "He knew Jack's mind better than anyone, and he was also intimately familiar with every inch of Jack's body, so to speak."

When JFK and Jackie escaped to their country home, Glen Ora, in Middleburg, Virginia, it was Jackie herself who'd invite Lem. She had a reason. JFK also expressed his boredom at staying there, complaining that there was nothing to do.

She wanted to go horseback riding through the countryside and felt guilty at leaving JFK alone with no one to talk to.

While she went riding, Lem endlessly amused Jack as he had since their school days. Jackie noted that Lem and JFK seemed to speak in code, since they had had a longer relationship with each other than Jack had had with any other friend, except his family. He often concealed from Rose, Joe, and Bobby some of his most notorious secret maneuvers.

Lem soon discovered that White House dinners alone with the First Couple weren't peaceful. He recalled their most brutal fight was after the President decided that it would look better if he, a wealthy man, turned over his $100,000 government salary to charity. Jackie protested, claiming that she needed the money for herself and for her children, especially for the provision of clothing. "It's not just to wear on my own back, but John and Caroline need so many things."

But JFK adamantly refused to change his mind about the salary.

After the assassination, Lem did not expect to hear from Jackie again. But she sometimes called him, wanting to talk about Jack. On occasion, she spoke of the assassination and how her life had changed.

She also shared her fear that JFK Jr. might "grow up to be a little faggot, without a strong male role model."

She claimed that one day, she was horrified when she heard her son refer to one of the Secret Service agents as "Daddy."

"I can't have that," she said.

"It's okay," Lem assured her. "He needs a strong male to look up to."

She exploded in rage. "How in hell would you know? You're gay! You don't know a god damn thing about raising a kid." Then she slammed down the phone.

But she called the next day and apologized. "It was just my anxiety talking. I sense something in my little boy. A rebellious streak. His ultimate role model may be what he hears about his father. I think he might grow up to be like Jack in many ways. Like his father, I doubt if he'll ever be faithful to any one woman, at least not for long."

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Langdon Marvin continued to be intimately involved in JFK's life, although not as closely as Lem. He was a researcher and campaign aide, often described as a "legislative factotum"

He also continued as JFK's pimp, most notoriously supplying the presidential candidate with a hooker an hour or so before he faced Richard Nixon in the first debate in September of 1960. Langdon told Chuck Spalding and others,

“I know the exact type Jack likes. Nine beautiful brunettes, followed by an occasional blonde, a sort of Marilyn Monroe clone.”

Both Jack and Jackie were concerned with Langdon’s notorious pickups in seedy bars in the slum side of Washington. On May 2, 1954, a party was given to celebrate Langdon’s 35th birthday.

On that occasion, JFK escorted Jackie to the 1925 F Street Club, a Greek Revival building dating from 1849. *[Laura Gross, a once celebrated Washington hostess, had rented the historic home in the 1920s, entertaining the Washington elite. Until it closed in 1999, the F Street Club entertained not only JFK, but Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Fidel Castro, and Nikita Khrushchev.]*

The party’s guest of honor showed up with two bandages on his face and a slight limp. Jackie found out later that in a bar, he’d tried to pick up a soldier, who had beaten him severely.

Privately, at the party, she cornered him, suggesting that he should meet some nice young man and settle down. “Some night you’re going to meet Mr. Wrong and then it’ll be curtains for you. You’ve got to cut down on the booze. You’re destroying yourself.” Although he promised to heed her advice, he quickly resumed his dangerous pickups after his body healed from its bruises.

The party was attended by Jackie’s stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss. He was deeply offended, not by Langdon, but by JFK himself.

Auchincloss later reported to Janet and others on JFK’s behavior, claiming that he had outrageously flirted with Priscilla Johnson, a beautiful young woman who had been a political researcher for JFK.

“A lot of people thought I was a Jackie lookalike,” Priscilla later revealed. “If that’s what he wanted, the real thing, Jackie herself, was sitting right across from me, trying to divert her eyes from what was going on. I couldn’t believe it. With his wife only a few feet away, and with a clear view, he was coming on to me.”

JFK never altered his womanizing, and his friend, Langdon, continued his dangerous cruising and heavy drinking. After some drinks, he often made scenes at parties, and once, he struck Lem in the face, perhaps in a jealous rage.

“It was something to see,” Gore Vidal claimed, “watching Lem and Langdon vie for the role of resident White House queer. Lem was in control. Langdon was not. On several occasions, JFK had to discipline him. When intoxicated, he often groped hunky members of the Secret Service, a real macho group.”

“I never heard the complete story, although that little monster, Truman Capote, spread the scandal,” Vidal said. “It was known that the President often got an erection while being massaged. Just ask Sinatra’s African-American valet.”:

“Apparently, if the bitchy menace, Miss Capote, is to be believed, one night in JFK’s bedroom, Langdon was giving the President a massage. Apparently, he chose that moment to take advantage of the President’s erection. Jack might have allowed Lem to do that, but he wasn’t open to the idea of Langdon doing it.”

“From what I heard, he had two members of the Secret Service remove Langdon from the White House. From then on, he was *persona non grata.”*

“I ran into Langdon at a Georgetown bar two months later,” Vidal claimed. “He was furious. He had heard that Bobby had posted his picture in the guardhouse of the main gate to the White House, along with pictures of several others who also had been barred from entering the grounds ever again.”

According to Vidal, Langdon was outraged. “Year after year, I broke my balls for Jack, and this is how I’m treated. My crime? One night I lost control and did what I’ve always wanted to do with him. I couldn’t help myself. He should have understood that. He always knew how I felt about him.”

“Apparently, he allows Lem to do the unspeakable, but he treated me like shit,” Langdon claimed. “I should write a book and bring down his Presidency. I think Bobby was behind my getting kicked out. I just know Jack would have forgiven me. Bobby hates me. He always has. I also know plenty of dirt on him, too. I might ruin him if he ever tries to run for President himself.”

According to Lem’s biographer, author David Pitts: “For Lem, Jack’s death in Dallas was the end of the world. It wasn’t so much that he never got over it. He didn’t want to get over it. By all accounts, it took months for him to resume even the appearance of a normal existence. He just couldn’t let go of the man who had been the most important person in his life since he was seventeen years old. Consumed by his memories, he talked about Jack constantly to his friends, and especially to the younger generation of Kennedys for whom he was the repository of so much information about the president in his younger days. For Lem, it was as if John Kennedy was not completely gone. Almost everything he said and did for the rest of his days was somehow connected to Jack.”

Since JFK didn’t leave any money in his will for Lem, his loyal friend later found himself in dire financial condition. At one point, he approached biographer Lawrence (Larry) Quirk about writing a tell-all book.

Based partly on the discussions they shared regarding the publication of a biography about JFK, Lem developed an intimate relationship with Quirk. As stated by him, “Lem confided in me that theirs was a friendship that included

oral sex, with Jack always on the receiving end. Lem believed that this arrangement enabled Jack to sustain his self-delusion that straight men who received oral sex from other males were really only straights looking for sexual release."

After careful thought, even a talk with Jackie, Lem decided to drop the idea. Jackie warned that such a book would not only destroy her friendship with him, but would alienate him forever from the Kennedy family.

After the loss of JFK in 1963, Lem drew very close, even intimately so, to Bobby Kennedy. Jackie felt that Lem was trying to replace Jack with Bobby, as she was doing herself.

Since 1934 Bobby and Lem had always been friends. Drawn together by their mutual sorrow, Lem and Bobby bonded as never before in the years leading up to Bobby's run for presidency in 1968,

Bobby and Lem even took vacations together as they did in 1967 at Waterville, New Hampshire. The year before, at the exclusive Lyford Cay in The Bahamas, they were seen together "in and out of their swimming suits."

A maid found them sleeping together in the nude, but Lem never commented on whether his relationship turned sexual or not. He did say, however, that "Bobby is our best hope for resurrecting Camelot."

Then, according to those who knew him, Lem "went to pieces in the worst way" after Bobby, too, was assassinated in 1968.

In the wake of his father's assassination in 1968, Lem became like a second father to Robert Kennedy, Jr. They were seen together during a trip he took with the boy to Egypt in 1968.

After JFK's assassination in Dallas, **Lem Billings** seemed to shift his affections to **Bobby Kennedy** *(right)*. Once again, Jackie found herself competing with Lem for the love of a Kennedy brother.

As author David Pitts put it, "They hacked their way through the Columbian bush with machetes, rode llamas across Latin America, confronted poachers in Kenya, sampled ranch life in Mozambique, and navigated a previously unexplored Peruvian River."

"David Kennedy and Christopher Lawford often went with them. "Bobby *[Junior, that is]* got a lot of magnetism from Lem's fixation on him," said Chris.

Somewhere along the way, Lem decided that Bobby Jr. (not JFK Jr.) was the next best shot for carrying the torch of Camelot.

Although he tried to become a surrogate father to the children of RFK, Lem made all the wrong moves. He turned his apartment into a "candy store" of illegal drugs, with ongoing inventories of pot, cocaine, hash, LSD, even the more dangerous heroin. After 1968, according to Quirk, during the peak of flower power and its socially violent aftermaths, he often plied Robert Kennedy, Jr. and Christopher Lawford (son of Peter Lawford and Patricia Kennedy) with drugs and became a dedicated user himself.

After RFK's assassination, according to Quirk, "These boys developed severe drug habits. Instead of firmly helping them to combat their addictions, Lem joined them and became as big an addict as they were."

Perhaps Bobby Jr. was the second man Lem truly loved. Lem was devoted to him, and they traveled the world together, most visibly in trips to exotic and obscure corners of South America. Through young Bobby, Lem was perhaps reliving some of his school days with Jack. The bedroom next to Lem's in his apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan was always referred to as "Bobby's room."

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John Kennedy was away in Palm Beach with Lem Billings when JFK Jr.—soon to be called “John-John,”—entered the world prematurely, on November 25, 1960, at Georgetown University Hospital, weighing little more than six pounds.

Hearing that John Jr. had been born, Jack and Lem flew back to Washington. John-John was too young and Jackie was too protective of her boy to allow him to spend much time with Lem. Her friend, author Truman Capote, called it “Jackie’s homosexual panic.”

On occasion, Lem was allowed to take the beautiful, long-haired boy on an outing, such as when they visited Warner Brothers’ Jungle Habitat Wildlife Preserve in West Milford, New Jersey, in 1972.

But when Jackie feared that Lem was taking far too much of a sexual interest in John-John, she cut off the relationship.

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Lem lived to see New York City’s Stonewall Riots of 1969 and the advent of the gay revolution, but he never participated. He remained in the closet all his life, and ultimately, he refused to be associated with any book about the Kennedys wherein a publisher would insist that he preview the sexual aspects of his relationships. “I couldn’t do that to Jack,” Lem said to the literary agent Jay Garon, who politely informed him that without revelations of his sexual relationship with JFK, he could not get “a super advance.” Garon, perhaps accurately, feared that without the description of sex, the memoirs would evolve into “just another one of those thousands upon thousands of ‘friendship with the Kennedys’ books.”

Upon his death in 1981, Lem’s will specified that his cooperative apartment at 5 East 88th Street in Manhattan be left to RFK Jr. A New York realtor, called in to evaluate its worth, found it piled high, almost to the ceiling, with old newspapers and magazines. He later reported that he also discovered an arsenal of drug paraphernalia. Surprisingly he found scattered human feces on the floors and carpets. Insiders surmised they resulted from Lem’s drug and alcohol abuse during his final days.

It was appropriate that Bobby Jr. be designated as the mourner who would deliver Lem’s eulogy, and part of it stated, “He felt pain for every one of us, pain that no one else could have the courage to feel. I don’t know how we’ll carry on without him. In many ways, Lem was a father to me and he was the best friend I will ever have.”

Eunice Kennedy Shriver ended the funeral by saying, “I’m sure the good Lord knows that Heaven is Jesus, Lem, Jack, and Bobby loving one another.”

Rose Kennedy had a slightly different interpretation after hearing news of Lem’s death. “The Good Lord has summoned Lem to Heaven to look after his beloved Jack.”

In 1935, three “roomies” at Princeton, **Ralph** (Rip) **Horton**, **Lem Billings** (center, identified here as “Leem”), and **JFK** (identified here as “Ken”) sent out a joint Christmas card to friends and family. They posed sharing only one tuxedo, with Horton getting the top hat, Lem a giant white bow tie, and Jack the jacket.

The card read, “We’re puttin’ on our top hats, tyin’ up our white tie, and brushin’ off our tails.”

Chapter Seven

Jackie's Road to the White House

At the Los Angeles Democratic Convention, Marilyn Defines JFK as "Very Penetrating"

Three Kennedys, **Rose** *(left)*, **Jackie** *(center)*, and **John F. Kennedy**, greeted the world on Election Day in November of 1960. Shortly after it was announced that Richard Nixon had been just barely defeated. JFK flew to Palm Beach, where news reached him that his pregnant wife had begun hemorrhaging. The President-Elect returned at once to Washington.

It was a difficult birth. The boy who was later known as "John-John" had emerged into the world prematurely.

Overheard at a Washington reception:

ACTOR RONALD REAGAN: *"Good to see you, Jack—it's been a long time. I hope old Joe is okay. People in Washington tell me you plan to run for President. I'm sort of interested in that job myself."*

SENATOR JOHN F. KENNEDY: *"Unlike you, Ronnie boy, I not only want to be President, I WILL be President!"*

In 1960, Jack and Jackie became the most photographed couple in American history.

On January 20, 1960, in the U.S. Senate Caucus Room, JFK declared his run for the presidency. His announcement came as no surprise to the politically savvy.

The perfect wife of the better candidate poses for *Life's* pre-election- puff piece for the edition of August 24, 1959

Jackie falsely assumed that after he announced his bid for the presidency, that his philandering would at least be put on hold until Election Day. She figured that if he made it all the way to the White House, his every action would be under a microscope, and that it wouldn't be possible for him to commit adultery.

Up until then, Frank Sinatra and Peter Lawford had kept him supplied with a bevy of beauties, especially at parties in Las Vegas and Palm Springs.

J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I. files on JFK had ballooned into several volumes, documenting liaisons which included sexual links with two mulatto hookers in Manhattan and a battalion of showgirls.

He had made at least two trips to pre-Castro Havana to resume his affair with Florence Pritchett Smith, the wife of the aging Earl T. Smith, still the U.S. Ambassador to Cuba.

But even after his announcement to the Senate, JFK added to his list of movie star seductions, picking up glamorous additions who included Sophia Loren, Jean Simmons, and Lee Remick. In Washington, he carried on affairs with both Pamela Turnure and Mary Pinchot Meyer. *[They happened to be roommates.]* Meyer was the beautiful, rebellious, and socially adept ex-wife of a top CIA official.

Even such a womanizer as "Gorgeous George" Smathers warned JFK that he'd better taper off on his "poon-tailing it."

JFK responded, "The American voter doesn't care how many times I get laid."

When he wasn't talking about women to his pals, JFK at Hyannis Port discussed nothing but politics.

As was made clear to Jackie, it was Joe Kennedy, not her husband, who was orchestrating the primary campaign. "We're going to sell Jack like cornflakes," he told her. "However, I'm too controversial. I've got to pull the strings for my puppet." Privately, she was enraged that he referred to Jack as a puppet. Did he plan to run the country if Jack were elected?

JFK Pursues Socialites, Strippers, and Sam Giancana's Gun Moll.

Frank Sinatra was an early supporter, flying with Peter Lawford, whom he'd nicknamed "Brother-in-Lawford," to Palm Beach to confer with JFK and Joe. In honor of the candidate, Sinatra even changed the name of his "Rat Pack" to "the Jack Pack."

In Florida, Joe received Lawford and Sinatra in a screened-off area beside his swimming pool, where he lay completely nude on a chaise longue. When they approached him, he was barking orders by phone to Chicago. It appeared that he had "bought" the endorsement and support of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

Joe wanted to employ Sinatra as a major-league fundraiser for members of the Hollywood elite. As for his son-

in-law, he ordered Lawford to “Keep your god damn mother’s mouth shut.”

Senator **George Smathers**, known as “Gorgeous George,” in his youth, was one of JFK’s closest comrades during their “sex hunts” together, even showing up in pre-Castro Havana.

[He was referring to the abrasive and outspoken Lady May Lawford. She’d told columnist Walter Winchell that her daughter-in-law, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, “was a bitch, a real bitch. She has millions, but lets Peter pay all their bills.”

Lawford was unsuccessful in persuading Lady May to remain quiet. When JFK flew into Los Angeles for a campaign rally, she rented an elephant and paraded it down Wilshire Boulevard with a large sign, urging voters to support JFK’s nemesis, Richard Nixon.]

After he returned to Hollywood from Palm Beach, the first campaign contribution Sinatra sent to Joe was for $25,000 from Marilyn Monroe. More checks from other movie stars would soon follow.

Pierre Salinger, press secretary to JFK, warned both Jackie and the President that the injections they were receiving from Dr. Feelgood (Max Jacobson) might be discovered by the press.

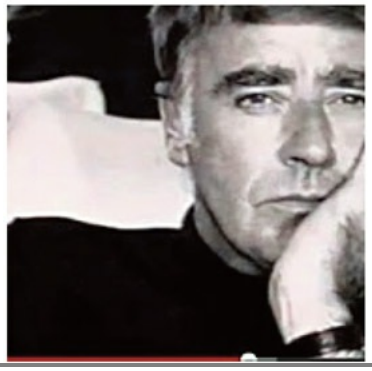
As for Jackie, during the campaign, her private life seemed to have been put into storage. Wherever she went, everybody seemed to be either talking about or working for JFK’s campaign.

She witnessed how much her husband depended on Theodore C. Sorensen, who everybody called Ted. The tall, dark, Nebraska-born speechwriter was only slightly older than Jackie, but JFK defined him as “my intellectual blood bank.”

Bobby was the campaign’s manager and Steve Smith *[JFK’s brother-in-law because of Smith’s marriage to JFK’s sister, Jean]* was in charge of the campaign’s logistics and financing.

Jackie got along with Pierre Salinger, the campaign’s press secretary. He was of French descent, a *bon viveur*, a gifted pianist, and a war veteran.

Key foreign staffers, along with JFK and Jackie, flew aboard the *Caroline*, a 10-passenger DC-3, a gift from Joe Kennedy. It had been configured with a curtained-off area for sleeping, a small dining area, reclining chairs, and a galley that always had a supply of JFK’s favorite food—creamy New England clam chowder with lots of butter.



Pete Dye, the famous golfer, lived next door to **Peter Lawford** *(depicted above)*, JFK's brother-inlaw, in Santa Monica. "It was nothing but *La Dolce Vita*, a goddamn whorehouse when the president came to visit," Dye claimed. "He even hustled my wife and wanted to fly her to Hawaii."

The airplane became the nerve center of Jack's campaign, where he constantly huddled with "the Irish Mafia," David Powers and Kenneth O'Donnell. While they talked of nothing but politics, Jackie retreated to the back of the plane, where she read the novels of the Beat Generation's Jack Kerouac. *On the Road* was her favorite.

Aboard the *Caroline,* when Jackie wasn't there, the lone stewardess, Janet Des Rosiers, massaged JFK's neck and combed his hair.

JFK's road to the White House was paved with bruising primaries in which Jackie participated in 1959 and during the early part of 1960. Either separately or by JFK's side, she showed up at rallies in New Hampshire, California, and Ohio, concentrating at the beginning mostly on Wisconsin and West Virginia. There were side trips to New Jersey and Rhode Island. The tiniest state was the one most familiar to her because of her deeply entrenched ties to Newport.

Part of JFK's "Irish Mafia," **Kenneth O'Donnell's** official title was White House Appointments Secretary, but he was the President's political right hand—"troubleshooter, expediter, and devil's advocate." He was known for being blunt. When the President, in his view, steered off course, O'Donnell would say, "Jack, you're full of crap on this one!"

The primary in New Hampshire was easily won by JFK, partly because he was from the neighboring state of Massachusetts. The Democrats in New Hampshire interpreted JFK as "one of our own."

But snow-covered Wisconsin and especially coal-mining West Virginia were on the horizon, and at least in the beginning, considerably less welcoming.

The days and nights on the campaign trail became a big blur for Jackie. Sometimes, she could hardly remember what state she was visiting. "One day," she recalled, "we touched down in seven cities or towns. It's amazing how I survived. Even with all his back pain, Jack seemed to have more stamina that any of us, arising at six in the morning and still shaking hands in some dirty convention hall after midnight. It's amazing we didn't die in a plane crash. He ordered the pilot to fly through thunder and lightning, through hailstorms and blizzards, even piercing Jack the Ripper, London-type fogs."

Ben Bradlee, who joined the campaign on occasion, noticed that “Jackie seemed to pull some invisible shade across her lovely face. She was physically present, but her spirit was somewhere far, far away.”

Salinger defined it differently: “Jackie breathes all the political gas in the air, but doesn’t inhale.”

In March of 1960, JFK was scheduled to fly from Wisconsin back to Washington to face a crucial vote on civil rights legislation before the Senate. By that point, he trusted Jackie enough to make her the star of his campaign, and even, when necessary, to campaign without him. During his absence, brother Teddy agreed to migrate to Jackie’s side as they traveled from small town to small town, giving speeches.

It was never proven, but apparently, Teddy, during the campaign, confessed to Jackie that he’d always been in love with her ever since that day she’d arrived on JFK’s arm at Hyannis Port.

Apparently, she held him at bay, perhaps suspecting that she would not always be able to control his amorous yearnings.

Still in the early stages of her pregnancy (with what turned out to be John-John), she campaigned with Teddy in snow-covered Wisconsin. Their major challenger was Senator Hubert Humphrey of nearby Minnesota, who was also seeking the Democratic nomination that year.

She was horrified to learn that the American electorate was polarizing into opposing Protestant and Catholic camps. She also felt that Humphrey was “shameless” in his appeal to Protestant voters. There was rampant speculation that if JFK were elected, he’d take his marching orders from the Pope, not from the electorate and the laws of the U.S. Constitution.

The second member of JFK’s Irish Mafia was **David Powers**, one of the President’s favorite storytellers, baseball authorities, political statisticians, and traveling companions. He remained on LBJ’s staff for a year after the assassination, then he directed, till 1994, the JFK Library.

Teddy became less visible within the cam paign after JFK returned to Wisconsin, having voted for the Civil Rights Legislation in Washington.

One rainy night at some truck stop outside Madison, Wisconsin, both Charles Bartlett and Jackie were stunned when JFK made an astonishing statement. “If the Democrats don’t give me the nomination, I’m voting for Nixon.”

When JFK won the Wisconsin primary, narrowly defeating Humphrey by only 106,500 votes, Teddy asserted that it was Jackie who had made the difference. The press differed with Teddy, citing the fact that a large percentage of Wisconsin voters were Catholic, like JFK.

Judith Campbell Exner at the peak of her allure

Protestant West Virginia would be their most daunting challenge.

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On February 7, 1960, taking time out from his hectic campaign schedule, JFK flew to Las Vegas to attend Frank Sinatra's opening at the Sands. While there, he began his second most dangerous romantic liaison, one almost as hazardous as his relationship with Marilyn Monroe.

Judith Campbell (later, Exner) was so apolitical that when she had been introduced to JFK, she had never heard of him, unaware that he was a candidate for President of the United States. She only knew movie stars like Frank Sinatra or Peter Lawford. "I didn't even know he was married," she later said. "All I knew was that he was gorgeous. After one night of lovemaking, I fell for him."

Sam Giancana, Al Capone's replacement, shared a gun moll with the President of the United States.

As described by Sinatra's valet, George Jacobs, "Judy was the perfect Eisenhower era pinup of the girl next door. That she charged for her wholesomeness was beside the point. Judy would go on to infamy as the fourth corner of a triangle that included Sinatra, Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana, and JFK. But before his son took a bite off the poison apple, the father was there first. Talk about chips off the old block!"

In the late 1950s, when Joe Kennedy had visited Palm Springs, Sinatra had "paid for an expensive gift to him," Judith Campbell herself.

As Judith had matured, admirers defined her as "a little bit of Jackie Kennedy, a little bit of Elizabeth Taylor." She was married to a minor, alcoholic actor in Hollywood films, William Campbell, who was abusive to her.

Actually, through Joe's intervention with the mob, Giancana was helping Kennedy get elected, especially in the "swing state" of Illinois. He provided both union support and campaign money.

As the head of a crime empire, Giancana was held responsible for more than two hundred murders by the year JFK ran for President. He was Chicago's Mafia boss, a successor to Al Capone, dealing in everything from protection rackets to numbers games. Arrested more than seventy times, he had served time in prison, including three times for murder. Johnny Roselli, who represented the Chicago mob on the West Coast, was also involved in an affair with Judith.

JFK was mesmerized by Judith. Under "ordinary" circumstances, it might have been a one-night stand, but it wasn't. He kept thinking of her. She was shocked on April 6, 1960, when he sent her a plane ticket and money to fly to Washington.

Instead of meeting her in some out-of-the-way hotel, he invited her to dinner at the townhouse he shared with Jackie in Georgetown.

"I learned that Jackie was away," Judith said. "We did it that night in the same bed where he slept with her."

"He told me that Jackie was no good at the oral stuff, and that he had to turn elsewhere for that. He also told me his greatest sexual fantasy was to go to bed with Shirley MacLaine and me at the same time. That never happened."

"You'd think that I, America's sex symbol, would be enough for Jack, but he wanted a three-way," lamented **Marilyn Monroe** to her best girlfriend, model Jeanne Carmen.

Judith was summoned again in July of 1960, during the Democratic Nominating Convention in Los Angeles, where his interest in three-ways was blossoming. He arranged a three-way with herself and Marilyn Monroe, Judith later claimed.

Before their coming together, JFK had ordered Sinatra to have Judith made up to look like Elizabeth Taylor. "Marilyn detests Elizabeth, and vice versa, so I know I'll never get those two into bed at the same time," JFK told Lawford. "At my little three way, Marilyn will be real, of course, but instead of Elizabeth, I'll have to settle for Judy, who's merely the mock."

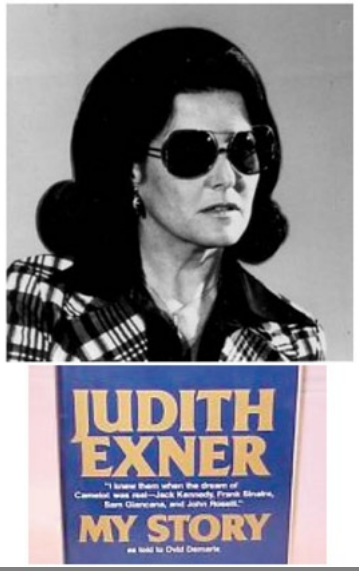
In time, Judith would evolve into one of JFK's most notorious relationships, even inciting a warning from J. Edgar Hoover, who appeared in the Oval Office to reveal what he knew about this dangerous liaison to both JFK and Bobby.

In a tense meeting, **J. Edgar Hoover** *(center)*, Director of the F.B.I., came to the Oval Office to warn his boss, Attorney General **Robert Kennedy** *(right)*, and **President Kennedy** about the dangers of further involvement with Sam Giancana's mistress, Judith Cambell.

Judith later admitted she delivered "gobs of money" from California "businessmen" to the Kennedys, and also carried $250,000 in cash from Washington to Giancana in Chicago.

During a period of eighteen months, between 1961 and 1962, she was the President's link to the Mob. In that capacity, she crisscrossed the nation, carrying messages from Washington to Florida, from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Judith also revealed that she carried payoffs, in cash, into the White House from California-based defense contractors wanting government business.



Judith, older, sadder, wiser, and more bitter, poses for a press photo from 1976, during pre-publication promotion of her book, *My Story*, published in 1977.

One night during dinner at the White House—Jackie was away, of course—JFK introduced Judith to Bobby. As she told columnist Liz Smith, "He squeezed my shoulder solicitously and asked me if I was OK carrying these messages from Jack and him to Chicago. 'Do you feel comfortable doing it?' Bobby asked me. I told him I did."

Her most memorable moments in the White House came that night after dinner when she retired with the President to his quarters. "Jack stripped down and got into bed, while I went to the bathroom to freshen up a bit. When I came back into the room, all the lights were turned off. I crawled into bed with Jack. To my surprise and shock I found it was Bobby in the bed with me. He was completely naked."

"I always thought Bobby was the cuter Kennedy, and I was only too glad to have sex with him too," she said. "As we were going at it, Jack, also nude, crawled into bed with us. After Bobby shifted my body to accommodate Jack, the president entered me from the rear. I became the meat in a Kennedy sandwich."

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The death of Marilyn Monroe on August 5, 1963 had a profound effect on Judith. She feared that Marilyn had been wiped out by either the mob or by friends of the Kennedys, eager to see that they remained in power. "I became afraid for my life. I knew too much. I wanted out."

"When the President called me to come to the White House for another roll in the hay, I didn't let him know that I was leaving him," she said. "I arrived at the White House in the usual way. I don't think Jack suspected a thing."

"When we came together, I told him, 'I can't see you anymore—it's too painful, too dangerous.' Even when I told him that, he still wanted to be intimate with me for one final time. I was still in love with him, as much as that was possible, and it broke my heart to tell him goodbye. I never saw him again after that cold day in Washington."

After that final sexual encounter with JFK, she discovered she'd become pregnant. "Since I knew it was Jack's child, I called him at the White House, not knowing if he'd speak to me. He came to the phone right away."

"When I told Jack I was pregnant and wanted to have his child, he went ballistic," she said. "First he claimed our kid might belong to Sinatra—'Let Ol' Blue Eyes pay for it.' He also claimed that the child might belong to either Sam or Roselli. But the timing wasn't right. I knew he was the father. During sex together, he refused to wear a condom, claiming it deadened the sensation for him."

"I pleaded with him to let me have the child, but he insisted that I have an abortion," she said. "Both of us were devout Catholics, but he demanded I abort our baby. As I always did, I gave in to him."

Finally, JFK said, "Do you think Sam would help us?"

"I realized then I wasn't going to get help from him, and I called Sam. Unlike the President, he was very loving and caring and arranged for me to have the abortion at Chicago's Grant Hospital on January 28, 1963, even though such an operation was illegal. The President's kid was not to be."

The public did not know of the JFK/Judith Campbell link until more than a decade after the President was

assassinated.

The goal of the Senate's Church Committee was to investigate the CIA's involvement with organized crime in its effort to have Fidel Castro assassinated.

To her shame and regret, Judith was called upon to testify. Word of her links with JFK and Sam Giancana had become widely discussed throughout Capitol Hill.

Judith appeared before the Church Committee in 1975 with her new husband, golfer Dan Exner, whom she'd married in April of that year.

It was then that Jackie began to learn the details of this bizarre relationship Judith had sustained with JFK. "I knew about Jack's affairs," she told her friends. "I made only one request. Don't humiliate me in public. Don't let an involvement with one of your prostitutes be exposed to the public. Now, with this Judith creature giving testimony of their affair, I felt humiliated. I'd dreaded for so very long that this day would come. Everyone had wanted to keep me in the dark, especially "Butch" and "Sundance" *[i.e., her nicknames for JFK's aides and confidants, Kenneth O'Donnell and David Powers]*.

Judith's final words on JFK were spoken shortly before she died at the age of 65 on September 24, 1999, having suffered from breast cancer, and after years of furtively living in fearful anonymity. "I think the Camelot myth should be demystified," she said, "and the Kennedy legend examined for its reality."

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On the campaign trail in 1960, Jackie dreaded going to West Virginia. To her, it was like a foreign country. She once claimed that the people of West Virginia were "fanatical Christians who handled poisonous snakes, coalminers, and moonshine-drinking rednecks."

Despite Joe's objections, JFK had entered his name into the West Virginia primary. West Virginia was a state that was ninety-five percent Protestant. Jackie became furious when columnist Joseph Alsop wrote, "Kennedy operatives are arriving in West Virginia with bags bulging with greenbacks."

Democratic officials in West Virginia feared that JFK and Jackie represented too much glitz and glamor "to meet the smell test with most West Virginians."

Eunice Kennedy urged the campaign not to allow Jackie a role in West Virginia. "Wait until those hillbillies get a look at this French-speaking, coutureclad, foxhunting gal with her little tiny voice."

"Jackie looked like a movie star, and JFK reminded me of a wealthy, Palm Beach playboy," said Keith Phillips, a campaign volunteer. "And there was that god damn Pope thing."

But as he campaigned in the state with Jackie, Phillips changed his mind. "The crowds seemed pleased with her, the men finding her hot, the women thinking she wore clothes like a princess. Muriel Humphrey was so downhome, she reminded me of a cow chewing her cud in the pasture. She didn't go over well. The public wanted Jackie's glamor, perhaps having tired of ugly Eleanor, 'Plain Jane' Bess, and drunken Mamie with those awful bangs."

Jackie had never been subjected to such close scrutiny from the press. "I felt my every move was being watched and reported on. I attracted a lot of female viewers, especially shoppers. I felt they were more interested in looking at what I was wearing than in Jack's message."

Laura Bergquist covered the Democratic Primaries in 1960 for the then popular *Look* magazine. She shared her somewhat negative appraisal with her readers. "Maybe it was the Irish Mick in JFK, but he neglected Jackie something awful. I don't think he took women seriously, as human beings you work with on a political campaign. I admired Jackie's intelligence, but he was just discovering the asset that she would ultimately become. It took him a while to realize just how valuable she was on the campaign trail. I think she survived all that powerful Kennedy clan by being very private and stubborn, carving out her own existence."

After a few grueling days, Jackie told the press that she'd begun to enjoy campaigning. That was not really true. She found the accommodations uncomfortable and not her style—"more suited for truck drivers sharing a communal shower," she lamented. The greasy food offended her delicate palate.

She said, "You shake hundreds of hands in the afternoon and hundreds more at night. You get so tired you catch yourself laughing and crying at the same time. But you pace yourself and get through it. You just look at it as something you have to do. You knew it would come, and you knew it was worth it."

When she was campaigning, she regretted spending so much time away from Caroline. "The official side of my life takes me away from my daughter a good deal," she said. "If I were to add political duties, I would have practically no time left with my child, with another on the way. My daughter and my soon-to-be-born baby are, of course, my first responsibility."

"I know it's going to be very difficult to raise two children in the middle of all this publicity and attention. I hope my children will be able to lead a normal life when Jack comes to live in the White House, which I know he will,

because he's sure to win."

Privately, she told her staff, "This campaign has turned me into a piece of personal property. I don't want that for my children, either my daughter or my newborn. I don't want them to experience life like that."

She said, "I was shocked by the grinding poverty in West Virginia. It was my first exposure to the awful misery Appalachian families endured. The sight of hungry children was horrifying to me. I soon had to drop out, because of my pregnancy, but not before I witnessed a side of America I'd never seen before."

There were mishaps along the way. In an unguarded moment, a photographer snapped a picture of Jackie smoking a cigarette. When it was published, JFK was enraged. He had warned her not to smoke in public, and, in fact, he didn't want her to smoke at all, but she insisted.

On May 10, the day of the West Virginia primary election, Jack and Jackie had flown back to their home in Georgetown. He was despondent. "I'm going to lose the election because of my religion."

To cheer him up, she'd invited his friends, Toni and Ben Bradlee, for dinner.

All through the meal, JFK kept jumping up to call Bobby in Charleston for the latest results. Early returns did not look promising.

"Hoping to distract Jack, I suggested something silly, like going to a movie," Jackie said. "The Bradlees thought that was a good idea, and all of us convinced Jack to go."

As regards their choice of what film to see, JFK and Jackie wanted to see Elizabeth Taylor and Katharine Hepburn battle it out in *Suddenly Last Summer*, based on a play by Tennessee Williams. But when their quartet finally reached the movie theater, the film had already been playing for twenty minutes.

Impulsively, Jackie suggested that their foursome go to an X-rated movie house across the street for a screening of *Private Property*, the story of a slutty wife who seduced every delivery boy or repairman who comes into her home. Amazingly, on the eve of the West Virginia primary, JFK risked getting caught leaving a porno house.

By the time they returned to the Kennedy townhouse, the phone was ringing furiously. Bobby was on the line. "Big Bro!" he shouted. "You're the victor!"

Later that same evening, JFK and his wife boarded the *Caroline* to fly back to West Virginia. Jean Kennedy Smith, JFK's sister, went with them. Jackie remembered running into horrible weather. "At one point, we felt the plane was going to crash. Jean screamed for her husband."

Jackie later shared her memory of JFK's victory celebration in Charlestown with Gore Vidal. "I got a preview that night of how it was going to be during Jack's presidency. His campaign workers more or less shoved me aside. The night belonged to Jack. I ended up sitting in the back seat of our limousine all alone and crying until Jack was ready to fly back to Washington."

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Next on their agenda was a visit to Louisiana as the guest of Earl Long, the flamboyant governor of Louisiana, who was engaged at the time in an affair with Blaze Starr, the stripper promoted by her managers as "the girl with the fabulous front."

Stripper **Blaze Starr** found JFK "a voracious lover."

Blaze Starr, who became a notorious stripper beginning in 1950, was born in 1932 as Fannie Belle Fleming in a

log cabin in remote West Virginia, fifty miles from the nearest school. She was one of eleven children, and she ran away from home at the age of fourteen. Discovered working in a doughnut shop, she was lured into stripping by Red Snyder, who became her first manager. “I’d never even shown my belly button before.”

During his tenure as a Senator in Washington, JFK patronized strip clubs and often had affairs with women who caught his eye. One night at a strip joint, he became entranced by Blaze with her red hair and voluptuous (38D-24-37) proportions.

That night, according to her memoirs, he invited her back to his apartment where they had sex. In spite of a bad back, she found him a voracious lover, who couldn’t seem to get enough. Senator George Smathers of Florida, who often visited strip joints in Washington with Jack, claimed “the sight of a red-haired pussy used to drive Jack into rapture.”

Miss Starr had a different appraisal of the flamboyantly corrupt Louisiana governor Earl Long: “Earl is getting so he can’t cut the mustard no more!”

In an interview she gave in 1989, Blaze admitted that she visited Jack’s apartment “several more times.” Smathers was under the impression that Jack had sex with Blaze on eight different occasions, and had nothing but the highest praise for her as a lover. “She lives up to her name,” Jack told Smathers. “The gal is on fire.”

Jack would not be the only politician to bed Blaze. In 1959 she was appearing in a strip joint, the Sho-Bar, on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. One night Earl Long, the long-time and spectacularly corrupt governor of Louisiana, escorted by two policemen, came into the club. The brother of the notorious Huey Long of Louisiana, Earl termed himself “the last of the red hot poppas” of politics. When he met Blaze, he was serving his third term as governor.

After the show, Earl came backstage and introduced himself. He stayed around for the second show. At the finale, he shouted to her, “Will you go to dinner with me tonight?”

“Can I trust you?” she shouted back.

“Hell, no!” he yelled at her.

Their affair, launched that night, became the scandal of Louisiana.

When JFK and Jackie arrived in Louisiana during JFK’s campaign for President in 1960, Earl invited both of them to the joint where Blaze was stripping. Jack didn’t want Jackie tagging along, but she insisted, claiming she’d never been to a strip club before.

After the show, Earl introduced Jack and Jackie to Blaze. Both of the Kennedys knew that Earl was having an affair with the stripper. Blaze later admitted in her 1974 autobiography, “In front of Jackie, I pretended I’d never met Jack before. We pulled it off.”

Earl later invited all of them back to the Roosevelt Hotel for a late-night party. Jackie bowed out and returned to her own hotel, but Jack accepted.

“When Earl was elsewhere talking to some of his political cronies, Jack and I slipped away to have a quickie in the closet,” Blaze claimed in her memoirs.

Kennedy aide Langdon Marvin estimated that “Jack spent at least twenty minutes in that closet with Blaze while I guarded the door.” Later JFK told Marvin that he amused Blaze by telling her that in 1923, President Warren Harding had seduced Nan Britton, a 23-year-old fan whom some observers claimed had been obsessed with Harding since her middle teens, in a broom closet at the White House.

A short time after the Kennedys departed from New Orleans, Earl fell on bad days. Learning of her husband’s affair with Ms. Starr, his wife, Blanche Revere Long, managed to have him committed to a mental institution. But since he was still governor, and because the hospital was a state-funded institution, he fired its administration and escaped. “Uncle Earl,” as he was called, died in 1960 and never got to see JFK take over the White House.

JFK had become so stimulated during his previous seductions of Blaze that he proposed to his aides that immediately before each of the four upcoming television debates scheduled against Richard Nixon, he needed a stripper—a hired prostitute, that is—delivered to his room.

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Later, after taking a break at Hyannis Port, Jackie joined the campaign trail, visiting Maine, Delaware, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

Many of their campaign stops were disastrous. JFK found that he had little name recognition in some parts of the country. When he landed in Portland, Oregon, there were only three people to greet him, one of whom was Congresswoman Edith Green. With Jackie beside him, he bravely carried on.

In a lilac-colored Chanel suit, she greeted some fishermen at a boatyard. They didn't know who she was, but one of the aromatic men told her she was "one hot tomato."

She had a hard time making small talk, asking them, "Do you ever catch salmon? My favorite dish is salmon tartare."

One night along the Oregon trail, they stopped at a sleazy roadside joint, the 'Er Buck Motel, which catered to hookers. A six-o'clock breakfast was served at Ma's Kitchen next door. Ma's specialty consisted of three eggs fried in lard, three slices of bacon, a slab of ham, one pig sausage, and fried potatoes. Jackie settled for coffee and toast.

At some stopovers, JFK had trouble finding someone whose hand to shake. At one point, he was reduced to approaching motorists at redlights, hurriedly reaching into their car for a handshake and an introduction, with a plea to "vote for me."

Straight from makeup, the Democratic candidate for President, **John F. Kennedy** *(top photo, left)*, was lean, tall, suntanned, and dressed in a Savile Row suit. He faced the Republican candidate, Vice President Richard M. Nixon *(top photo, right)*, who sported a suspicious-looking five o'clock shadow and no makeup. When JFK was asked to pose with Nixon, he barely looked at him, turning his face to the camera instead.

Whereas JFK hijacked all the attention, Nixon looked deflated, especially when compared to the "movie star allure" of his opponent.

JFK had just emerged rejuvenated from the bed of a hooker. Nixon had emerged from a bed at Walter Reed Hospital, where he'd injured his leg, with a dreadful knee infection setting in.

Before JFK went onstage, Bobby Kennedy gave his brother some final advice: "Kick him in the balls, Jack!"

During the weeks that followed, Jackie's doctors advised her to leave the campaign trail and to stay at home. She

was viewed as particularly vulnerable because of her previous difficult pregnancies.

However, in Georgetown, she worked as much as she could by answering letters, taping television commercials, and giving interviews to newspapers and magazines, and to TV newscasters. She also continued her authorship of a weekly syndicated newspaper column, "Campaign Wife," which was mailed out to potential female supporters.

Her column was chatty, not political. "In these lonely autumn days at Hyannis Port, I follow my husband's campaign with rapt attention. I showed Caroline newspaper pictures of her father receiving an Indian war bonnet."

She was referring to JFK's stopover in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where the chief of the local Indian tribe placed a feathered headdress on him. He took it off almost immediately, as he refused to be photographed wearing any head gear, even the top hat he was given at his inauguration, although he did put it on briefly. He also refused to be photographed while eating.

At Hyannis Port, she said, "Thank God I've escaped all those dreadful chicken dinners where I was forced to sit at the head table wearing a dreadful corsage. I couldn't even smoke a cigarette while listening to some old clodhopper windbag."

She also didn't like a lot of JFK's campaign workers, privately referring to them as "lackeys, jackals, flunkies, and imbeciles."

***

During their early days in Congress, JFK and Nixon had called themselves friends, although their allegiance was to opposing political parties. Joseph Kennedy even contributed money to Nixon's early political campaigns. But before their first televised debate in September, in Chicago, their relationship had turned poisonous. JFK had labeled Nixon "a filthy, lying son of a bitch and a very dangerous man."

To retaliate, Nixon called JFK a "bare-faced liar and a son of a bitch. No, in his case, the son of a rotten bastard who wanted to lick Hitler's asshole." Of course, these stinging evaluations were delivered privately to colleagues and staff members.

JFK's aide, Langdon Marvin, later revealed that half an hour before show-time, JFK demanded that a women be sent to his suite at the Ambassador East Hotel. Their liaison took only 15 minutes. Emerging from his suite after his seduction of the hooker, JFK proclaimed, "I'm ready and raring to face Nixon."

Before the call girl arrived, JFK had relaxed for three hours, listening to recordings by Peggy Lee from the 1940s.

Many listeners who heard the debate on radio, including LBJ, asserted that Nixon had won. But those who saw it on television "watched a young Adonis debate a man with a five o'clock shadow," in the words of one commentator.

In an attempt to correct that impression, during the next three debates, Nixon came onto the stage wearing more pancake makeup than a movie star from the silent screen.

After Chicago, JFK began to draw crowds larger than those associated with any other presidential candidate in history. "My god," said one reporter, "I thought Elvis had hit town." But instead of Elvis, it was Jack Kennedy. Girls screamed after him like a rock star. When he was surrounded by crowds, he often felt hands, both from horny women and gay men, grabbing his crotch.

Paul Douglas, the Democratic senator from Illinois, defined JFK's fan base as "jumpers, shriekers, huggers, lopers, and touchers." A reporter for *Life* magazine called them "gaspers, gogglers, swooners, and collapsers." Senator Stuart Symington noted that everybody wanted "to touch Jack, to feel him, or, in some cases, grope him. Some women seemed to experience orgasm when they put their hands on him."

***

Because of her pregnancy, Jackie did not attend the 1960 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles. Her sister, Lee, did. She was now married to Prince Stanislas (Stas) Radziwill. Every night, she called Jackie to give her a full report, with plenty of gossip thrown in about her errant husband.

At a $100-a-plate fundraising dinner at the Beverly Hilton, JFK was surrounded by the Democratic elite, including Adlai Stevenson and Lyndon Johnson.

He had also invited a number of stars with whom he was alleged to have had affairs, including Angie Dickinson, Janet Leigh, and Rhonda Fleming. His special favorite, Judy Garland, sat next to him in Jackie's place. He met with her later to resume their long-standing affair.

Milton Berle also attended, informing Tony Curtis, "I have the biggest dick in this room. Why can't I get all the dames?"

That summer, JFK found himself pursued by the press as never before. He could no longer be as open and up

front about his affairs as before. During the Convention, his secret hideaway was an apartment in a building owned by Jack Haley, who had starred as "the Tin Man" in the 1939 classic, *The Wizard of Oz*.

One night, JFK arranged to meet Marilyn Monroe in that apartment for about two hours. In anticipation of that liaison, he managed to elude his Secret Service detail, something he was able to do even after he become President of the United States.

After he'd seduced Marilyn, he was sneaking out of the building when he encountered three reporters and a photographer waiting outside. Somehow, they'd trailed him to the apartment dwelling. He ran back into the building and—since another photographer was stationed at the rear door—managed to elude his pursuers by precariously navigating his way along and down the building's fire escape on the east side of the structure.

Like the star of a Mack Sennett comedy, he climbed over a neighbor's fence, only to be chased by a bulldog in someone's back yard. Finally, making it to safety, he ran to his waiting limousine with the reporters hot on his trail. Later, he offered the lame excuse that he was only visiting his father.

Right before JFK was nominated to run as president, Harry S Truman resigned as a convention delegate from Missouri. Privately, the crusty former president told his cronies, "I don't want to participate in a convention where the candidate's nomination has been bought and paid for." After saying that, he made a Freudian slip. "I think Joe Kennedy is far too young and inexperienced to be President." Of course, he had meant to refer to "John" Kennedy, not his aging father. Like Roosevelt, Truman genuinely detested the Kennedy patriarch.

To his aides, Johnson continued to express his literal disgust of JFK, continually referring to him as "that spavined hunchback." He also had other epithets, which included "that sickly little shit," or "the scrawny fellow with rickets."

As far as it is known, Johnson was never involved in the plot to steal JFK's medical records from the office of Janet Travell, JFK's doctor. In a heist evocative of the Watergate burglary during Nixon's administration, two hired thieves broke into Travell's office and made off with JFK's medical file. The most tantalizing detail it revealed was that he had Addison's disease.

Amazingly, when John Connally, the governor of Texas, later held a press conference and made this revelation, it received little press coverage.

Ironically, on the morning of November 22, 1963, when JFK and Jackie were getting into the limousine with the governor of Texas, he reminded Connally of that long-ago press conference. "Addison's disease or not, I'm still here."

Early in the campaign, Lady Bird had pleaded with her husband not to relinquish his powerful role as Senate Majority Leader as a prerequisite to accepting the post of Vice Presidential running mate in the 1960 elections. Later, when Clare Boothe Luce asked him why he hadn't heeded his wife's advice, LBJ responded, "L'il darlin', let me tell you. One of every four presidents has died in office. I'm a gamblin' man. I'll pray every day that little shit is shot."

A Kennedy hater, Johnson held JFK in utter contempt, but retained a special loathing for his brother, Bobby, calling him, "a vicious little rattlesnake."

Johnson told his aides, "One day, Jack might sit in the Oval Office behind his desk while some hooker gives him a blow-job, but it will be old Joe Kennedy, that crooked bastard, who will actually be running the country. He'll bring back Prohibition so he can make millions again as a bootlegger and rum runner."

The most outrageous rumor spread across the Convention Hall may not have come from Johnson, but it was nonetheless propagated by his aides. It was widely rumored that JFK and RFK were "a couple of fags." One rumor spread by the Johnson camp involved their possession of candid snapshots of Bobby and Jack dressed as drag queens at a wild late-night gay party in a penthouse along the Strip in Las Vegas. No such photograph ever surfaced.

Jackie was horrified to learn that JFK had selected Johnson as his vice presidential running mate. Her husband had never expressed anything but disdain for the candidate. "I guess he had his reasons," she told Patricia, Eunice, and Rose at Hyannis Port. "The State of Texas comes to mind."

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Knowing how unpopular he was, and how his close involvement in his son's campaign would be viewed as a liability, Joe directed the scenes from Marion Davies' home in Beverly Hills. He'd known her since his early days in Hollywood when she was the mistress of press baron William Randolph Hearst.

To secure more votes, Joe paid for a hooker to service any delegate who wanted one. Peter Lawford was ordered to round up an armada of prostitutes. He was also requested to round up male hustlers to service female delegates, pending their interest, as well.

Whenever he could spare the time, JFK shacked up with Monroe, among other women. Although she was still

married to playwright Arthur Miller, she told JFK, “It’s all over between Arthur and me except for the divorce.”

So-called well-meaning friends in Los Angeles kept Jackie’s phone busy, reporting on all the gossip that Lee didn’t already tell her.

“It sounds like a god damn bordello out there,” Jackie said.

Her husband had become so brazen in his affair with Monroe that they were seen dining together at Puccini’s, a Los Angeles eatery in which Sinatra was a major investor. Peter Lawford, Marilyn’s former lover, went along as a “beard.”

When JFK excused himself to go to the men’s room, accompanied with two Secret Service men, Monroe confided to Lawford, “Last night, Jack was very Presidential, very penetrating. I think I made his back feel better.”

When Lawford repeated that quote to his friends, it became one of Monroe’s most quoted sayings.

“Jack was out of control,” Lawford told Sinatra and several other friends. “By the time dessert was served—cherries jubilee—Jack was finger-fucking Marilyn, who never wore any underwear.”

On July 16, on her small TV set in Hyannis Port, Jackie watched as JFK addressed more than 100,000 Democratic delegates assembled into the Los Angeles Coliseum. Only an hour before, he’d been involved with Marilyn Monroe in his hotel suite.

After his speech at the Convention, JFK joined Monroe, Lawford, and other trusted aides for a skinny-dipping party at Lawford’s beachfronting home in Santa Monica. “When Marilyn took it all off, all the men’s eyes were riveted,” Lawford claimed.

The party became so boisterous that irate neighbors called the police. Thirty minutes later, three armed officers burst onto the terrace adjacent to the Lawford family’s swimming pool, inaugurating the process of arresting Lawford, JFK, and Monroe. But after one of the officers identified the presidential candidate in the buff, the arrests were called off.

It was reported that Marilyn gave the police “quite a show” before donning a white terrycloth robe. JFK also took his time getting dressed, promising the officers that when he occupied the White House, he’d grant them a Presidential Medal of Honor.

“Wouldn’t that have been some photograph,” Lawford later told his wife, Patricia. “Jack, Marilyn, and me, with it all hanging out, being herded into a police van and hauled off to the Santa Monica police station?”

Despite plans to return after the party to Boston, JFK delayed his return an extra day for additional time with Marilyn in his Los Angeles hotel suite. According to Peter Lawford, he directed her to “perform every sexual trick she’d ever learned.”

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Before JFK’s arrival back at Hyannis Port, Jackie summoned “Mr. Kenneth” to fly from New York to create her now famous bouffant hairdo.

During JFK’s absence, she had conducted an hour-long question-and-answer news conference with a select group of reporters on the front veranda of Joe Kennedy’s house. After the press conference, in anticipation of his arrival, she seemed to become angry at her husband, no doubt based on all the reports reaching her about Monroe. She retreated to her bedroom and refused to go to the airport to greet him. Finally, the Kennedy sisters prevailed on her to go. “Otherwise, if you don’t show up, it’ll fuel rumors,” Eunice told her.

Eventually, Jackie acquiesced and with her mother, Janet Auchincloss, was driven to the airport, where she boarded the *Caroline*. Lawford was standing beside JFK as Jackie approached to greet her husband. “There was no kiss, no hug,” he later said. “Her first words to her returning husband were, ‘Jack, is Marilyn Monroe such a vote getter for you that she’ll sweep you into the White House?’”

Later, her husband insisted that she join him in New York for a pre-election parade. In the advanced stages of pregnancy, she feared another miscarriage, another stillborn, or at least a difficult birth. Finally, he overcame her protests.

Back on the campaign trail, this time in New York, she made several stops throughout the city, speaking Spanish in Spanish Harlem, French in the Haitian ghetto in Brooklyn, and Italian in Little Italy. Hearing how well she was going over with Spanish-speaking audiences, Nixon cried foul. “Mrs. Kennedy is taking unfair advantage; after all, Pat doesn’t speak Spanish.”

The big event that compelled some two million New Yorkers to line the streets was the parade through the “Canyon of Heroes.” Both JFK and Jackie occupied tenuous perches above the back seat of a Cadillac convertible.

Fans were so frenzied they almost yanked Jackie from her precarious seat. “They could have caused a miscarriage,” she charged to JFK when they returned to their hotel suite.

At one point, the crowds rocked the Cadillac with such force that they almost turned it over. Ironically, many of

the fans lining the sidewalks at the time were too young to vote, evoking the crazed bobbysoxers who pursued Frank Sinatra during the early 1940s.

At the end of the parade, JFK turned to Jackie, saying, “That would have been a great time for someone to take a shot at me.”

***

On election day, November 8, 1960, Jackie joined JFK in traveling to the West End Library in Boston to vote. Actually, she’d already voted by absentee ballot. Later, she told Ted Sorensen and others, “I voted for only one candidate—and that was Jack.” When that remark was heard by others, she angered Democrats seeking lesser offices.

On election night, which Jackie later referred to “as the longest in my life,’ she waited for the polls to close on the West Coast. For dinner, she had invited Ben Bradlee, among others. Her friend and confidant, William Walton, also made an appearance, sparking a jealous fit from Lem Billings. Before Walton, Lem had been “Jack’s best gay buddy,” but to an increasing degree, Walton was becoming very close to JFK as well.

The Kennedy clan had gathered in Hyannis Port to await the returns. “We were all edgy and snapping at each other,” Jackie recalled.

At 10:30pm, when early returns indicated that JFK was in the lead over Nixon, Jackie offered her congratulations.

“Don’t make me President yet,” JFK warned her. “The night is young.”

JFK at one point disappeared. As it turned out, he was with his friend, Larry Newman, who had secretly voted for Richard Nixon.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Newman said. “He was in a neck-and-neck race to become President of the United States, and all he could talk about was fucking women, wondering if his ‘poon train’ would be derailed when he became President.”

Newman lived across from the Kennedy compound. He used to have drinks with JFK at Manhattan’s fabled Monkey Bar. He recalled that “Jack flirted with every pretty girl in the bar. I don’t think he really wanted to be married, but in politics, he had to be.”

While JFK was away on the campaign trail, Newman saw Jackie almost every day. In Hyannis Port, there was local speculation that they might be having an affair, although there is no evidence of that. Perhaps JFK’s real reason for visiting Newman on election night involved confirming whether the rumor about his possible affair with Jackie was true. But Jack never brought up the subject, returning within the hour to the Kennedy compound, much to the relief of the Secret Service.

By 11:30pm, “Milhous,” as Jackie called Nixon, had surged ahead and was winning. Completely exhausted, almost dangerously tired, JFK went to bed.

It was late the next morning that TV announcers issued a bulletin: Final returns indicated that JFK had plowed ahead by just 115,000 votes out of a total of 70 million cast.

When Bobby heard the news that Nixon had conceded, he immediately asked an aide, “Where’s Jackie?” Later, David Powers expressed his amazement that Bobby wanted to tell Jackie the news before alerting JFK that he was President of the United States.

When informed that Jackie had gone for a walk along the beach, a place long deserted by the summer crowds, he ran after her. In the distance, he spotted her kerchief-covered head as seagulls circled overhead. He ran up to her, taking her body, heavy with child, in his arms and kissing her passionately.

“Congratulations! You are the new First Lady. You’ll go down in history along with Martha Washington, Abigail Adams, and Ida Saxton.”

“Who in hell was Ida Saxton?”

“William McKinley’s wife,” he answered. “She spent all her time in the White House in bed crotcheting more than 3,500 pairs of slippers.”

“Whatever I do as First Lady, I’ll top that,” she vowed.

Holding her close, he kissed her again, although he could be observed by two Secret Service men. Slowly, he walked with her back to the house. “Don’t you think Jack should be awakened and told he’s the President?” she asked.

“Might as well,” he said. “I don’t think we can keep it a secret from him for long. Imagine going to sleep not knowing if you’d become President or not.”

Back at the house, Jackie said it would be the thrill of Caroline’s life to let her go upstairs and wake up JFK. “Tell him your father is the new President of the United States,” she instructed her daughter.

Jackie not only faced competition from Marilyn Monroe, but from another very sexy star, **Angie Dickinson**. Jackie delivered her appraisal to William Walton: "Marilyn is a sexy tiger; Angie a sex kitten."

Seated once again in the living room, Jackie told David Powers and Eunice, "All my life I've dreamed of living the life of a storybook princess. As of today, I must live the life of America's Queen."

Two hours later, hung over from lack of sleep, JFK asked Jackie to accompany him to the Hyannis Armory, where a mob had gathered.

She put on a red scoop-neck dress and a string of pearls, but covered them with her purple coat as a means of concealing her pregnancy.

At the Armory, she joked with reporters, "You didn't expect me to show up in sable, now, did you? I, too, can wear the Pat Nixon simple cloth coat that Nixon constantly refers to when he and Pat want to look like one of the 'little people.'"

JFK's acceptance speech was short, concluding, "So now my wife and I prepare for a new administration and a new baby."

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At the age of thirty-one, Jackie, the wife of America's 35th President, became the third-youngest First Lady in U.S. history. Both Mrs. Grover Cleveland (Frances Folsom) and Mrs. John Tyler (Julia Gardiner) were only in their twenties.

Jackie told a reporter at Hyannis Port, "It's really frightening to lose your anonymity at my age."

In the aftermath of the election, as JFK was selecting his Cabinet, and making other decisions, Jackie heard a disturbing report that JFK was having an affair with Angie Dickinson, the sweet, sexy, blonde, bright-eyed, and cat-eyed movie actress with the engaging smile. She was two years younger than Jackie and a hell of a lot sexier.

Columnist Joe Alsop told Jackie that Angie had spent three nights in Palm Springs with JFK, presumably at the home of Frank Sinatra, but that was never confirmed.

The closest Angie ever came to suggesting an affair was during an interview with *TV Guide:* "I have always found powerful men attractive—take Frank Sinatra, for instance, or JFK. From the first moment I met Jack, I was hooked, like everybody else. He was the sexiest politician I've ever met. He was the killer type, a devastatingly handsome, charming man—the kind your mother hoped you'd marry."

Once, in 1961, during Jackie's occupancy of the White House, she had left for Virginia. Forgetting something vital, she returned, unannounced, to the White House. It was rumored that during her brief return, before she rapidly exited the building again, she spotted Angie heading for the President's quarters.

In Hyannis Port one morning, after the elections but before they took occupancy of the White House, JFK announced to her that Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson would be arriving within two hours.

When the new Vice President and America's Second Lady turned up, Jackie stood on the veranda with her husband to shake their hands. Then she went back into the house and retreated upstairs to her bedroom. After his visit with JFK, LBJ announced that he was leaving. Both he and Lady Bird wanted to tell Jackie goodbye, but she refused to come down.

After JFK was elected president, she met often with the Secret Service, sharing her fears with them that her husband might be assassinated or her daughter, or her child to be, kidnapped and held for ransom…or something even worse. "She was almost obsessed with these fears," said agent John Walsh.

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On November 25, 1960, just 17 days after his father was elected President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr., entered the world via caesarean birth. Weighing six pounds, three ounces, he was immediately placed in an incubator. From the moment of his birth, he would spend the rest of his short life in the public spotlight.

[As he was growing up in the White House, he came to be called "John-John," a name he despised. A reporter at the White House had heard JFK calling to his son, "John…John!" Misunderstanding him, the writer had interpreted the child's nickname as "John-John." It soon became a household word across America.]

Although he was out of town during the birth, JFK had flown from Palm Beach to Washington to be by Jackie's side. When he entered her room, she was still a bit hazy from the sedation. She looked up at him and in her whispery voice said, "Jack, I have given birth to a future President of the United States."

Chapter Eight

Jackie & Her Pregnancies

She Blames JFK for Her Miscarriages After He Infects Her with Chlamydia

Dead Kennedys (Arabella and Patrick); Lives Never Lived
Caroline and John Jr.: "At Last, I'm Fulfilled as a Woman"

"Mama's Boy," **John F. Kennedy, Jr.**, looks adorable as he's held in the arms of his loving, devoted mother in Palm Beach in 1963. At last, Jackie had given the Kennedy clan the son and heir apparent that had been tacitly demanded of her. Regrettably, the birth of the child that followed John-John would escalate into a heart-breaking tragedy.

During her honeymoon with JFK in Mexico, he had told her that he wanted to have five children—"but never as many as Bobby. I think that before little brother and Ethel give up fucking without birth control, they'll have a dozen or two. They should never have gone to see that movie, *Cheaper by the Dozen."*

Don't get too ambitious," she said. "After all, I'm not Ethel cranking out babies like rabbits."

Jack and Jackie Kennedy were doting parents with **Caroline**.

Jackie's problem pregnancies made her feel inadequate. She told Jack, "I can't crank out kids like an Ethel rabbit."

Very privately with his closest friend, Lem Billings, JFK voiced his fear that he might not be capable of fathering a child because of his various diseases. Lem advised him to consult with a Dr. William P. Herbst, a well-known Boston urologist, to have his sperm count tested. The results indicated that he was capable of fathering a child. Even so, in spite of his constant consumption of medications, he still continued to experience a slight burning sensation when urinating. Up until then, no doctor had been able to prescribe medication that relieved him of that pain.

Jackie's gynecologists also warned her that she was "so high strung you might experience difficulty having a baby."

After she'd married JFK, she announced within months that she was pregnant. He was delighted, desperately wanting an heir. Papa Joe had cautioned him, "A politician without a wife and family doesn't go over with voters."

Rose also wanted a grandson. "I want it to be a boy, and I demand that you name him John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr."

Maybe because the pearls were fake, **Jackie** lets **John-John** use them as playthings. *Faux* or not, these simulated pearls sold at auction for $211,000 in April of 1996, two years after Jackie's death.

"Our son, Joseph, died before he could carry on Joe's name and immortalize it as President of the United States. I want you to be President and I want your son, John Jr., to follow in your footsteps to the White House. A father and son as President, as you well know, is not unknown in American history. Remember John Adams and John Quincy Adams? *[John Quincy Adams, the sixth U.S. President, who served from 1825 to 1829,* was *the son of Abigail Adams and John Adams, who served as the second U.S. President, holding the office from 1797 to 1801.]*

As Jackie delivers a stillbirth, JFK Cruises the Mediterranean, with

Prostitutes, Aboard a Raucous "Booze and Babes" Tour

"I know my history, Mother," JFK said. "But I hope my term of office turns out better than John Quincy Adams. He claimed that the four most miserable years of his life was the presidency."

Jackie had told her confidants, including Janet, "If I can deliver that boy that Jack wants, I think I can make him settle down and stop philandering."

She was wrong. During and after her pregnancy, she continued to receive reports that her husband was womanizing as never before.

Three months into her pregnancy, she suffered a miscarriage.

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She noticed that JFK took trips without her any time he wanted to, and she decided to follow his example. Despondent over both her miscarriage and her failing marriage, in the summer of 1954, she announced to him that she was about to fly to London to see her sister, Lee, who was in an unhappy marriage to Michael Canfield.

JFK objected to her trip, but she packed her luggage and went anyway, staying with Lee at her charming little mews house in Belgravia.

Once in London, Jackie was impressed that Lee, without her husband, had become the darling of the social set. It was obvious that she was also indulging in affairs on the side. Canfield stayed home most nights drinking heavily, while Lee and Jackie went nightclubbing.

Lee's social calendar was full, and Jackie found endless diversions—a yachting trip off Torquay on the Devonshire coast, cocktail parties in Mayfair; lunch at Ascot; a weekend at Blenheim Palace, the ancestral home of Sir Winston Churchill.

Both Jackie and Lee flew to Paris on a shopping expedition. When she returned, Canfield privately sought Jackie's advice. "How can I hold onto Lee?"

Jackie was blunt with him. "Make more money!"

Lee and Jackie bonded over their failed or failing marriages. As Lee's biographer, Diana DuBois wrote: "Jack's never-ending infidelities humiliated Jacqueline, so they were both, albeit for different reasons, unhappily married and childless."

The Canfields had rented a villa during the month of August in Antibes, on the French Riviera, a former haunt of Picasso. Jackie was invited to join them on their vacation, and consequently, she flew with them to Nice. Their mutual friend, an Englishman, Peter Ward, along with his future wife, Claire Baring, also joined them. The two couples and Jackie appeared daily at the chic, cliff-hanging, swimming pool of the Eden Roc Hotel on Cap d'Antibes, the former haunt of F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda.

Ward later revealed that one afternoon, Jackie exclaimed that she had left her husband for good. "Her exact words were, 'I'm not going back to him. Jack doesn't need me. He's had all those other women.'"

In spite of her troubles, Jackie seemed intent on having a good time. She was seen entering the casino at Cannes with Queen Soraya of Iran. Stavros Niarchos, the Greek shipping tycoon, invited her aboard his luxurious yacht. She became friends with the fabulously wealthy Jayne Wrightsman, who was married to the oil and gas millionaire, Charles Wrightsman, famous for their contributions of 18th century French furniture to the New York's Metropolitan Museum. Jackie flew to Venice with Jayne, who became her lifelong friend. The traveling house party often drove to dinner at St-Tropez, a very fashionable fishing village which the French sex goddess, Brigitte Bardot, was about to make even more celebrated.

By mid-August of 1954, JFK had flown to her side. After a night together, they announced that they had reconciled. Apparently, JFK had falsely promised that he was going to give up other women and settle down with her.

But on the very next day, when Jackie and Lee had gone into the Old Town of Nice, JFK showed signs of straying yet again. He soon disappeared with a beautiful brunette model and was gone for two hours. He was back in time to receive his beloved bride, Jackie, who was none the wiser. Or was she?

Whatever their differences, Jackie agreed to fly back with her husband and began life anew at their country home, Hickory Hill.

By January of 1956, Jackie announced she was pregnant again.

"Was your Husband Your Only Sexual Partner?"

—Questions posed to Jackie after the stillbirth of Arabella

Based on her previous miscarriage, Jackie wanted the birth of her first child to be perfect. She'd spent days designing a nursery for her son or daughter at Hickory Hill, although she "just knew it's going to be a little girl." She also dreamed that she'd grow up to be an equestrienne like her mother, so symbolically, Jackie placed a rocking horse in the corner of the room.

Of course, should it be a boy, she could make emergency changes to the nursery, getting rid of the frieze of frolicking pink Easter bunnies and croaking chartreuse frogs and substituting depictions of toy soldiers and sailboats instead.

Her husband with the roving eye shocked her when he informed her that he was leaving for a two-week cruise of the Mediterranean with Senator George Smathers and his youngest brother, Teddy. Smathers would later define the trip as "a Booze-and-Babes" cruise.

She objected, but finally relented, agreeing to pack his luggage. Just to show him that she was aware of what was about to happen, she placed a carton of condoms between his socks and his underwear, in one of his suitcases.

Since she felt lonely and isolated at Hickory Hill after he'd gone, she retreated to her bedroom at Hammersmith Farm, outside Newport, where Janet welcomed her. For the most part, she remained in her room, morbidly depressed and smoking constantly. One morning, she woke up late. It was already eleven o'clock, and the sky was gray and gloomy.

Making her way downstairs, she found the house deserted. A coffee pot was on the stove. As she poured herself a cup, she felt dizzy. Warm blood was running down her leg, spilling out onto the tiled kitchen floor.

She collapsed in pain, screaming for help. Her cries summoned the cook, who was on the back porch. When she spotted Jackie on the floor, she also began screaming. No one answered, so she rushed to the phone and called an ambulance.

Within thirty minutes, Jackie was being hauled into the emergency room of the Newport Hospital. Somewhere along the way, she passed out, and didn't regain consciousness until four hours later.

As Jackie lay in her coma, an incident occurred that was kept out of the press. During her confinement, a crazed young man planted four sticks of dynamite outside her hospital window. Her room was on the ground floor. Before he could detonate the bomb, a gardener spotted him and hit him over the head with a shovel, knocking him out.

The hospital staff did not want the incident reported, and no charges were filed, although the unknown (potential) assassin was hauled away by the police.

What happened to him after that is not known.

Interpreting it as a dangerous and upsetting distraction from the serious medical issues at hand, Jackie was not informed—at least at the time—of the incident, her doctor fearing it could only add to her stress level, which was already far too high.

Still in a daze, she woke up in bed four hours later, feeling great pain. Her insides seemed to be throbbing. Through bleary eyes, she saw JFK's face. No, it wasn't Jack. It was someone who resembled him.

Opening her eyes more fully, she saw Bobby at her bedside. With tears in his eyes, he bent over her and kissed her lips gently. "Thank God you're alive," he said.

"Oh, Bobby," she said, "Thanks for coming. Where's Jack? Where is my baby?"

"It was a little girl," he said. "She's gone to heaven."

She burst into tears, and he held her in his arms, comforting her. Through sobs, she told him, "I was going to call her Arabella." Then she seemed to gasp for breath. "Does Jack know?"

"I'm trying to reach him," he said. "He's at sea. Perhaps off the coast of Elba. There doesn't seem to be a radio on his yacht."

As she started to denounce her husband, Bobby intervened. "Don't condemn him. He can't help being Jack. Besides, you have me, and I'm a better man than my older brother will ever be."

"I believe that, Bobby," she said, reaching for his hand.

[Although Ethel was said to dislike Jackie, she had reportedly been instrumental in sending Bobby to her side in the hospital, asserting, "Jackie is not as tough as she pretends to be."

Ethel, herself in the final stages of another yet pregnancy, thought that Jackie needed Bobby's presence more than she did. "Jack is still whoring around the Riviera," she told her husband, who was already well aware of that.]

As Bobby went outside, as part of an attempt to place yet another call to JFK, Jackie's doctor entered the room.

In polite terms, he told her the details of Arabella's birth, which had been part of an attempt at a caesarean section. There was more bad news. "I hate to tell you this, but I must, as your doctor. We tested your blood. You have Chlamydia."

Before JFK had explained it to her during their honeymoon in Mexico, she had not known what this venereal disease was.

"It's easier to detect in men than in women," the doctor said. "In women, the virus seems to hide in the uterus. It's very dangerous for a pregnant woman to have Chlamydia. The bacteria travels from the cervix through the fallopian tubes, which could lead to a stillbirth."

"How long have I had this horrible disease?" she asked.

"It's hard to say," he said. "For at least two years, I would estimate. The only way to get the disease is through sexual transmission."

"You mean, my husband gave it to me?" she asked.

"I'm not saying that," the doctor said. "Forgive me, I know nothing about your personal life. But you could have picked it up from another sexual partner and passed it on to your husband. You must tell him. He surely has it."

"There were no other sexual partners," she said.

"Then your husband is the culprit."

"In other words, JACK KILLED MY BABY!" she said.

"I wouldn't go that far. There could have been other factors. But you must be treated for this disease. You must eradicate it from your body. Will your husband be arriving? I must talk to him."

"He'll be arriving all right, perhaps in my dreams. Or, in this case, in my nightmares."

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Based on his respect for an Irish Catholic tradition, Bobby waited three days to allow the infant's spirit time to leave its body. After that, he had Arabella's corpse placed in a miniature coffin at a local funeral home. The label on the coffin did not say "Arabella Kennedy," but "Baby Kennedy Girl."

He watched as her body was lowered into a tiny grave at Newport's St. Columba's Cemetery overlooking Narragansett Bay.

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While Jackie had been in a hospital recovering from the stillbirth of their daughter, JFK was sailing the Mediterranean with Senator George Smathers and Teddy Kennedy. Along for the ride were at least eight hookers hired for the occasion. The agreement was that, whenever asked, each of the buxom young women would service whichever man requested her services.

In Newport, both RFK and Jackie were distressed that ship-to-shore radio contact could not be established as a means of reaching the seafaring Senator. A photo taken during the cruise surfaced years later. Based on America's then-daunting moral code, had it been published during the mid-1950s, it might have derailed JFK's future as a politician.

The photograph, shot at a distance obviously from the perspective of another boat, depicted JFK sitting on deck while two nude women were swimming off the side of the yacht. Another two women were depicted sitting in a lifeboat immediately above him.

When the photograph surfaced years later, several forensic experts, including Jeff Sedlik, *[a Los Angeles-based consultant and testifying forensic expert witness on issues related to photography and imaging]* asserted that the photo was authentic, and snapped in August of 1956 during JFK's two-week cruise of the Mediterranean.

Prior to the debut of their cruise, Teddy and JFK had spent two nights in Paris carousing and bedding showgirls who otherwise performed at the fashionable Lido night cabaret. They then flew to Nice, where they joined Smathers. For a while, they stayed at Papa Joe's rented villa on the Côte d'Azur. All three men discussed JFK's future in politics with Joe. Before sailing away again, Teddy lined up a bevy of women to sail with them, paying each of them $500, a considerable sum in the 50s.

When Bobby, in Newport, telephoned Joe, his father informed him that JFK had already sailed away into the azure unknown, and that he was out of range of telephone or radio contact. He estimated that his son's yacht was somewhere offshore from the island of Elba.

Later investigations challenged the claim that there was no ship-to-shore radio. It was reported that Evelyn Lincoln, JFK's secretary, was in radio contact with him. French Maritime law mandated that boats and yachts have an onboard radio.

Allegedly, Lincoln informed JFK that his daughter, Arabella, had been stillborn. Apparently, he had responded that he'd prefer to finish the cruise because at this point, "there is nothing that I can do," and swore her to secrecy.

After learning about his inner-family tragedy, he sailed on. Smathers later claimed to his cronies that JFK

sampled all eight of the onboard hookers, but ultimately settled on a preference for "Poppy," a beautiful, golden-haired, large-busted showgirl who danced at the casinos of Monte Carlo, Nice, and Cannes. Her legs were said to rival those of the 1940s movie star, Betty Grable, whose left leg in 1943 was voted "the world's most beautiful."

News of JFK's mysterious lack of availability began to leak. Author Edward Klein quotes one unnamed journalist who attacked the young politician's "terrible obtuseness, his awesome, willful insensitivity that had defined the emotional parameters of his marriage. He had shown what he truly felt—more accurately, what he did not feel. Even after he heard about the stillbirth, he had initially wanted to stay on the boat, to enjoy himself, to relax. He had little apparent regard for Jackie and her anguish."

His not rushing back to comfort Jackie turned out to have been a bad political move. *The Washington Post* headlined a frontpage story—SEN. KENNEDY ON MEDITERRANEAN TRIP UNAWARE HIS WIFE HAS LOST BABY.

By the time the yacht reached Genoa on the Italian Riviera, Smathers spoke bluntly to JFK: "Get your ass to Newport or else you're washed up in politics. Leave the babes to Teddy and me. If you don't justify yourself in the press, American housewives will vote against you in spite of the fact you're one cute fucker, although no match for 'Gorgeous George' here."

JFK arrived in Newport through some difficult transportation connections. He rushed at once to Jackie's hospital room. There, he found his wife heavily medicated. The doctor had already warned him that she was suffering through a deep depression.

Even in her dazed state, she seemed to sense a presence by her side. JFK bent down to place a gentle kiss on his wife's lips.

Still drugged and only half awake, she delivered her first words to her errant husband, "Oh, Bobby, thank God you're back. I need you so. Don't ever leave me!"

Caroline Kennedy

JFK in Sexual Tryst During Jackie's Delivery of "Buttons"

In early November of 1957, Joe Kennedy turned over his apartment at 270 Park Avenue in Manhattan to JFK and Jackie during the final weeks of her latest pregnancy. She had flown to New York because she believed she could get the best medical care available at New York Hospital. After two failed pregnancies, she didn't want to take any chances with her latest delivery. She even gave up smoking,even though her self-restraint would be only temporary. Her sister, Lee, still in a shaky marriage to Michael Canfield, had flown from London to occupy the Park Avenue apartment with JFK and Jackie.

When Jackie entered the hospital in preparation for Caroline's birth, it was rumored that JFK began to pay special attention to Lee. He would later reveal to George Smathers, Charles Bartlett, Lem Billings, and others, that he seduced Lee while Jackie was in the hospital.

Nini Gore Auchincloss later made the claim that Lee had confessed to her that she'd had sexual relations with JFK during that interlude on Park Avenue. Nini reportedly said, "The bedroom door was open and Jack and Lee were inside. From the living room, Michael could hear them making love. They did it openly, in spite of his presence in the adjoining room."

In the hospital, unaware of what was transpiring within the apartment on Park Avenue, Jackie concentrated on giving birth to a healthy baby. She'd been cured of venereal disease. On November 26, Caroline came into the world, prompting Jackie to define it as "the happiest day of my life."

Beautiful and regal in her own right, Princess **Lee Radziwill** lived in the spotlight. But even in that glare, she remained in the perpetual shadow of her more famous older sister.

For years, she reappeared perennially on the list of the world's ten best-dressed women. She found friends and lovers throughout the pantheon of international celebrity.

Janet Auchincloss and JFK had waited impatiently in the waiting room. Janet scolded her son-in-law. "I'm glad you decided to make an appearance for this delivery."

When Jackie recovered consciousness after her anesthesia, her first vision was of her husband coming toward her with Baby Caroline cuddled in his arms.

When he turned the infant over to its mother, she asked him if she could name her Caroline Bouvier Kennedy in honor of her sister, whose full name, at birth, had been Caroline Lee Bouvier.

JFK, who had just emerged that morning from Lee's bed, willingly agreed.

Lem Billings was their first visitor at the hospital. He later told Jackie, "I really pissed off Jack. He took me to the ward where there were at least a dozen babies. He told me that your daughter, his daughter, was the prettiest and asked me to point her out. I picked what I thought was the prettiest baby. It wasn't Caroline. Now he's not speaking to me."

Jackie was in a bad mood and really didn't want to tolerate Lem that afternoon. She looked at him skeptically: "Too bad that Jack can't impregnate you. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Familiar as he was with Jackie's cutting barbs, he chose to ignore her put-down. "Jack was delighted with his daughter, whom he had nicknamed 'Buttons.' He talked about her all the time. He was like a little boy who'd been given this wonderful toy for his birthday. I think Caroline's birth helped stabilize his shaky marriage to Jackie, at least for a month or so. The birth brought them closer together."

Joe Kennedy called immediately and discussed with his son the political advantage of Jackie having given birth, although he had hoped it would be a boy. "If it had been a boy, he might have grown up to become President of the United States one day."

When Lee and others came to visit Jackie, she told them that her own self-esteem as a woman had been restored by this successful birth. She and JFK designated Lee as Caroline's godmother, with Bobby named as the godfather.

After giving birth, Jackie remained in the hospital for two weeks, complaining that she felt too ill at that point to leave.

A hired nurse, Luella Hennessey, tried to teach JFK the fine art of bottle feeding and diaper changing. But when JFK faced Caroline's first smelly potty, he fled. "Let the nanny do it."

He was referring to Caroline's English nanny, Maud Shaw. She would later write a memoir entitled *White House Nanny*. Published in 1964, after her husband's assassination, Jackie read it before publication and, as was her way, wanted to censor it.

Shaw had written, “The moment that Caroline whimpered or dirtied her diaper, Jackie and the Senator would turn the infant over to my care. Mrs. Kennedy refused to breast-feed Caroline. When it came time to feed her, JFK didn’t have the patience with her bottle and would immediately hand the baby girl over to me, as if passing on a football.”

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In November of 1960, on the night of the presidential election, Caroline, at least, became a footnote in U.S. history. During JFK’s heated race against Richard M. Nixon, votes were still being counted when JFK collapsed into bed at four in the morning.

At 9:30AM the next day, Nixon conceded and JFK was announced as the 35th President of the United States.

With Jackie’s permission, Caroline ran into his bedroom. He called out to her from the bathroom, where he was soaking in the tub. “Daddy, daddy,” she shouted. “You’ve won. You’re the president!”

He rose suddenly from the tub in joy, giving Caroline her first glimpse of the male anatomy.

As First Child in 1961, Caroline became a media event, in spite of Jackie’s attempts to shield her from the press. JFK battled with his wife over this issue, who wanted to keep her locked away from the public eye. In contrast, JFK called in photographers whenever Jackie was away.

As one journalist wrote of the blue-eyed, golden-haired child, “Not since Shirley Temple rode to box office fame in the 1930s has one child received such international coverage as the President’s daughter, not even Margaret Truman and her failed attempt to play the piano.”

John F. Kennedy, Jr., “The Most Famous Baby in the World,” “A Future President”

In November of 1960, Jackie was under a great deal of stress, realizing how much smoking alleviated her tensions. But her newborn baby was due in early December, and consequently, she had temporarily given up cigarettes.

Also, in the wake of her husband’s electoral defeat of Richard Nixon, she was also jittery about her upcoming move into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Her friend, the syndicated columnist Igor Cassini *[aka Cholly Knickerbocker, the brother of her her favorite fashion designer, Oleg Cassini],* came to visit her at her home in Georgetown. He later reported, “She was obsessing about the danger her husband and daughter were facing now that they were preparing to move into the White House. She told me that the Secret Service had informed her how easy it was to kill a President.”

“All it takes is a lunatic with a gun,” one of the agents had informed her, “providing he’s willing to give his life for the President’s.”

Jackie was also concerned that her children might be kidnapped.

Right before the birth of their baby, JFK had flown to the LBJ ranch in Texas to confer with his new Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson. After that, JFK had flown to Palm Beach for a brief sojourn with his aging parents.

Back in Washington, he attended Thanksgiving dinner with Jackie and Caroline, along with his faithful companion, Lem Billings.

Jackie was disappointed when her husband informed her that he could not stay in Washington, but instead promised a return in early December for the upcoming birth of their next child. He claimed that he had to meet with political aides in Palm Beach to discuss his transitional government, including recommendations for Cabinet members.

To get **Caroline** to adore her baby brother, Jack told her that the boy belonged to her. She became very protective of him, overruling her parents if she felt "something not right for my baby." Lem Billings claimed that Caroline and **John-John** "seemed like twins."

Right after JFK left Washington, Jackie began experiencing labor pains. Even though her baby wasn't due—at least based on the prognosis of his doctors—she suspected that the infant was about to make an appearance.

Evelyn Lincoln called JFK to tell him that Jackie had been rushed to a hospital. 'I'm never there when Jackie needs me," he lamented to his Secret Service.

From Palm Beach, he took the press plane back to Washington. While airborne, he was told at 1:17am on November 27 that he was the father of a newborn baby boy, named John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr. Delivered by means of a cesarean, the premature baby was slightly underweight, weighing six pounds, three ounces. The infant was experiencing respiratory problems, and was in an incubator, but otherwise seemed healthy.

Arriving at the hospital, JFK was immediately confronted by the Secret Service with news of a crisis. It feared the Jackie might have been the target of an assassination attempt, very similar to the one she'd experienced at Newport in 1956 during the traumatic stillbirth of Arabella. In Newport, she'd been more vulnerable because of her location in a room on the hospital's ground floor. In Georgetown, she was assigned a room on the fifth floor.

JFK was told that a young man had been apprehended at the Georgetown Hospital when he tried to enter an elevator. He was unshaven and wearing scruffy clothing, arousing the suspicions of the Secret Service.

He was apprehended by two agents and was found to be carrying five sticks of dynamite, in circumstances equivalent to the earlier attempt against Jackie in Newport.

The young man was grilled, and the Secret Service called the bomb squad of the U.S. Army. Two officials then arrived to carefully remove and dispose of the dynamite.

JFK learned that the young man lived in Dallas with his mother. *[His father was unknown.]* He revealed nothing of his motivation other than saying, "I hate Kennedy."

As President-elect, JFK then made a major decision. After conferring with his aides, he decided he didn't want to begin his administration with frontpage news about a threatened assassination of his wife and child. He wanted the young man exiled to Dallas under the supervision of a Secret Service agent. The agent was asked to instruct the Dallas police to keep this young man under surveillance as a possible life threatening assassin..

JFK decided not to inform Jackie of this, fearing "She's under enough stress already. Now I want to see my boy."

He was then directed to wherever Jackie was staying, with their child, for a look at his newborn. "What a beautiful baby," he said. "I think I'll name him Abraham Lincoln."

After a few hours of visiting and comforting Jackie, he went to make some urgent phone calls. She asked to be wheeled down the hospital corridor by a nurse to see her son in incubation.

As she was wheeled down the corridor, a photographer jumped out of a broom closet and snapped her picture. She screamed for the Secret Service. One of the agents knocked the photographer to the floor, grabbed his camera,

and exposed the film.

By all indications, the man was about to be arrested, but Jackie urged the police not to. “If he’s arrested, it will lead off the evening news even if war is declared.” At the time, she did not know of the existence or the motivation of the potential dynamiter.

As America’s newest First Lady, she made only one statement. “My major effort will be devoted to my children. If Caroline and John turn out badly, nothing I could do in the public eye would have any meaning.”

She remained in the hospital for a week. When John Jr. was diagnosed as medically out of danger, he was brought into her room to be with his mother. She protectively cuddled him and received visits from his father at least three times a day. On the second visit, he brought Caroline.

JFK told Jackie that Caroline had been afraid that her mother would give birth to another “daddy’s little darling.” She seemed relieved that it was revealed that her sibling was a boy—not a girl. JFK told her that John Jr. was her birthday present.

Maud Shaw, the nanny, later claimed that, “For about a year, Caroline referred to the boy as “my baby,” and gave me strict orders about what I could do and not do.”

From around the world, thousands of gifts poured in, from clothes to toys, but small animals were also shipped. JFK ordered that they be given to centers for needy children.

Jackie was overwhelmed by the thousands of cards and letters addressed to her. She asked to receive only letters from famous people, such as Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt pointed out that her children had been considerably older when she and FDR had occupied the White House. “Nonetheless, you and your children will be living in a fish bowl with the entire world staring as you, your boy, your girl, and your husband swim around.”

JFK attended John Jr.’s christening on December 8. Jackie dressed him in a lace gown that Rose had had made for JFK in 1917.

When she was well enough to leave the hospital, Jackie was driven by limousine to confer with Mamie Eisenhower at the White House for the traditional meeting of a retiring First Lady welcoming the newly arrived one to show her around.

Mamie had been alerted that a wheelchair would be necessary, with the communication that Jackie had been experiencing periods of dizziness. Mamie balked at that, informing the Secret Service that she would not be the one to push Jackie around the White House in a wheelchair.

The Belle of the White House, supplanted by Jackie’s arrival: **Mamie Eisenhower**

After hearing that, Jackie decided to abandon the idea of a wheelchair and that she’d proceed on a walking tour with Mamie unaided. She later claimed that “Eisenhower’s wife was very distant, frigidly cold in her greeting. She seemed most anxious to be through with me.”

After the tour, during a limousine ride back to Georgetown, Jackie informed her social secretary, Letitia Baldrige, “I’m appalled at the White House. It is so unkempt. Doors needed to be painted. A lot of the wallpaper has yellowed. It looks like an emporium decorated by a wholesale furniture store during a January clearance. I don’t want my children to grow up in such an uninviting place. There will be lots of changes when I take over.”

That afternoon, she bundled up John Jr. and flew with him to Palm Beach to join Caroline and JFK, who were already there. Perhaps as a preface to the inauguration jitters to come, the family had arranged to spend Christmas together.

In the Kennedy compound Jackie had won the allegiance of a servant, who fed her information about her in-

laws, and especially about JFK. Of course, she slipped the servant a hundred dollar bill quite frequently.

To her dismay, she learned that JFK had resumed his affair with Florence Pritchett, the wife of Earl E.T. Smith, the former U.S. ambassador to Cuba. Florence had been an old flame of her husband. Considerably younger than JFK, she'd begun her affair with JFK after his return from World War II. It was rumored that they first made love on the beach between their respective houses. *[Flo, as Jack called her, lived with her parents in a house immediately adjacent to the Kennedy compound.]*

JFK, according to Lem Billings, had wanted to marry her, but Joe had objected, "You can't marry a divorced woman and still be president."

[ALL IN THE FAMILY: Ironically, Flo's husband, Smith himself, had previously dated Janet Auchincloss, Jackie's mother, during the breakup of her marriage to Black Jack Bouvier.]

During his time in Palm Beach, prior to his presidential inauguration, and before Jackie's arrival there for the celebration of Christmas, 1960 she also learned that JFK was carrying on an affair with the 22-year-old Georgetown debutante, Pamela Turnure. Simultaneous with their affair, JFK was urging Jackie to designate Turnure as her Press Secretary.

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John Kennedy, Jr. moved into the White House in February of 1961 and was given one of the largest rooms in the building. Jackie had already transformed it into his nursery. He'd inherited his sister Caroline's crib, from which Jackie had removed the pink bows and replaced them with blue ones. The contents of his bottle, prepared on a nearby gas stove, was fed to him at six every morning. His morning nap was the south-facing view from the Truman Balcony, which its namesake had added to the White House in 1948. The White House itself was seeing its first resident infant in nearly seventy years.

Overnight, John Jr. had become most famous baby in the world, and he'd grow up to become America's Prince Charming, idolized by millions, especially when the cute little boy attended his father's funeral after the assassination. In 1999, millions more mourned JFK Jr.'s own untimely death in a private plane crash.

But before his tragic death at the age of 39, a glamorous life unfolded for him as the adorable son of the two most glamorous figures ever to inhabit the White House.

Almost from the date of John's birth, there were threats from kidnappers—some real, some unsubstantiated from the "merely deranged." He was assigned a special three-man Secret Service team to protect him.

The Director of the FBI ordered that all these threatening letters be sent to him, so that his agents could investigate each of them separately.

J. Edgar knew that the kidnapping of the most celebrated baby in the world would instantly provoke an international incident, dwarfing the infamy of the Lindbergh baby. "We don't want to be caught asleep when some kidnapper hoists a ladder to Junior's bedroom at the White House and hauls off this precious cargo. Jack Kennedy would have our heads."

From the very beginning, J. Edgar was fascinated by the infant. A spy he had planted within the White House fed him information. He learned that the nannies who changed John Jr.'s diapers nicknamed him "Big Boy." J. Edgar concluded that the boy had inherited his penis from the Bouvier side of his family, not from his father.

J. Edgar's informants picked up and filed the most esoteric and trivial information on the young boy. He didn't like children's theater because he wanted to see dramas "where someone gets their head chopped off." From Moscow, Nikita Khrushchev sent him a Russian puppy named "Pushinka." The boy also loved to visit a snake farm near Camp David where he would let a harmless cobra he named George crawl all over him.

John Jr.'s first attempt at a presidential "assassination" was when the communist dictator Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia was giving a speech at the White House. Playing upstairs on the Truman Balcony, Junior dropped a toy gun, its fall into a maze of television cables caught on camera, causing consternation among the Secret Service.

The kidnapping threats would continue throughout John Jr.'s life, and grew especially heavy during his second year at the New York University School of Law. He refused the FBI's offer of around-the-clock police protection.

A fellow classmate, Baird Jones, told biographer C. David Heymann, "Kidnapping threats were commonplace. I happened to know the people who ran the mailroom at NYU. One day they showed me some of the threatening letters. It was incredible stuff, totally insane. One card stipulated that unless several million dollars changed hands, John would be kidnapped or killed. It surprised me that John was able to go about his business—ride his bike around town, get on the subway—without the slightest hesitation."

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the FBI files on John Jr. have been published, but they are among the most censored ever released by the Bureau. Almost none of them make any sense as the wording, for the most part, has been completely blacked out with a heavy pen. Many contain only the most innocuous words, as the juicy details

have been censored.

Throughout JFK Jr.'s FBI file, the word "kidnapping" occurs the most frequently, although there are also references to "abduction."

As informational sources, because of their edits, the files are virtually worthless, and many of the really scandalous have been removed. One document dated October 10, 1996, states: "Supposedly, this was aborted because . . . scheme did not work. . . . was in charge of the plan and for making all the arrangements for the kidnapping. The plan also involved . . . who. . . . After kidnapping Kennedy, he would be taken to. . . . Kennedy would be held there until. . . ."

Patrick Kennedy:

His Death a Foreshadowing of What Was to Come

During the last months of JFK's presidency, the papers headlined the news that Jackie, the First Lady of the land, was pregnant again, after having survived the successful births of both Caroline and John Jr., who was now identified in the press as "John-John," a name he would come to hate.

In August of 1963, Jackie was enjoying a bright, sunny day on Squaw Island, a community less than a mile from the Kennedy Compound at Hyannis Port. *[Squaw Island is part of the Massachusetts mainland, and not an island, as its name would imply.]* JFK had rented Brambletyde, a large, rambling, gray-shingled house, for the summer. A Secret Service command center was installed within a trailer on the grounds.

With two agents of the Secret Service trailing behind, Jackie went for a walk along the seashore, listening to the sound of the seagulls, imagining what JFK was doing in Washington, and wondering what her life would soon be like if her husband ran again for President during the upcoming elections of 1964.

At one point, she became dizzy, tripped, and fell. Something horrible seemed to be happening within her body, which was wracked with a sharp, jabbing pain. She couldn't rise to her feet. She let out a blood-curdling scream, which caused her Secret Service agents, enjoying a smoke, to rush to her side. They virtually had to carry her back into the house.

As the pain continued, she was put to bed. Fortunately, her doctor, John W. Walsh, was vacationing nearby. Within 15 minutes, he was rushed to her rented home. A professor of obstetrics at Georgetown University Medical School, he gave her a quick examination, realizing just how serious her condition was. He asked the Secret Service to summon a helicopter to fly her at once to the military hospital at Otis Air Force Base near Falmouth on Cape Cod.

Within thirty minutes, Jackie, still clutching her stomach, was airborne. A four-room suite had already been prepared for her at Otis by the time she was wheeled in.

After a fifteen-minute examination, three doctors determined that she should have a caesarean at once. The Secret Service sent word to JFK of Jackie's emergency.

Her ordeal on the operating table at Otis was best reconstructed in a novel by Ruth Francisco, a fictionalized account of Jackie's agony, as it appeared in "*The Secret Memoirs of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, published in 2006.

"I go to a frightening purgatory, where disembodied voices swirl around me. Hot lights roast me, and cold instruments prod my body. I push aside the darkness as through murky water, reaching for my baby. I catch glimpses, little fingers, an eye, his lady's slipper bottom, obscured by seaweed, appearing, disappearing, as the ocean respires. The water pitches and tosses me, and I become conscious of its rhythm, its breathing labored and tired. I know breathing is the problem, breathing is the danger. A wave picks me up and throws me against the ocean floor, knocking me out."

A very weak and frail child, Patrick Bouvier Kenedy, was delivered, weighing only four pounds, ten ounces.

The doctors determined that Patrick, based on his not-fully-developed lungs, was suffering from Neonatal Respiratory Disease. He was placed into an incubator.

When Jackie came out of sedation, she was given a full report of her newborn son's distress. Weeks later, she would confide to Janet and a few other close friends her fear that she'd played a part in Patrick's breathing maladies because, in spite of her vows, she had resumed her heavy chain-smoking based on the stress of being First Lady.

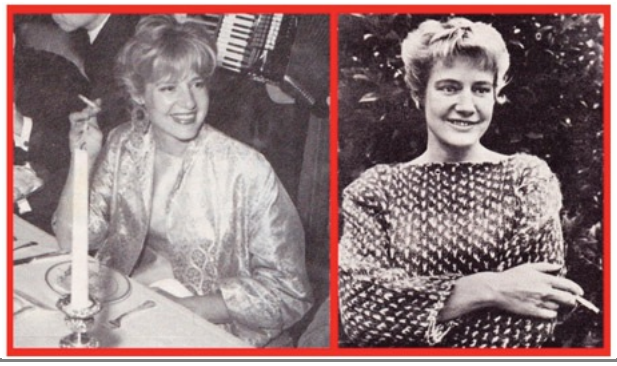
She'd later say, "Patrick's death was a horrible foreshadowing of the end of my days with Jack. I lost a husband and a son. All within a period of months."

She had a premonition that Patrick would not survive, and from her hospital bed, she ordered that the infant be baptized at once.

The President was airborne when word reached him about the distress of his son. He was headed for Hyannis Port at the time.

Just before he boarded the plane, he had enjoyed the sexual favors of Mary Pinchot Meyer in the Lincoln Bedroom of the White House. She was the sister of Toni Bradlee, the ex-wife of Ben Bradlee, a high-placed executive of *[and later Executive Editor at]* the *Washington Post*. Meyer herself was the ex-wife of a former official at the CIA, Cord Meyer. Author Nina Burleigh, in her book *A Very Private Woman* wrote that after her divorce from Meyer, Mary became "a well-bred ingenue out looking for fun and getting in trouble along the way." Jackie referred to Mary as "The Jezebel of the White House."

JFK's secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, later claimed that she recorded the number of Meyer's visits to the White House between January of 1962 to November of 1963 as a total of thirty. In fact, she had a romantic encounter with JFK right before he flew to Dallas. She later admitted that in the White House, she had snorted cocaine and smoked pot with the President. Allegations from Timothy Leary, a friend of Meyers, claim her involvement with LSD and hint at her expressed interest in experimenting with it with JFK.



Years after its grisly conclusion, *The Washington Post* hailed the affair of JFK and **Mary Pinchot Meyer** *(subject of both photos, above)* as *"Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* Meets *Camelot."*

Meyer's subsequent unsolved murder has never been solved, nor has her diary, in which she documented details about her affair with the President, ever surfaced.

[On October 12, 1964, Mary, at the age of forty-four, was mysteriously shot, dying instantly from a bullet wound fired at close range into the back of her head, and another directly into her heart, during a promenade along a canal-fronting tow-path near her Georgetown studio. A soaking wet, disheveled-looking alleged bystander, Raymond Crump, was arrested and charged with her murder, but when he went to court, a jury acquitted him. When Crump came to trial, Judge Howard Corcoran, an appointee of Lyndon B. Johnson, ruled that Mary Pinchot Meyer's private life could not be disclosed in the courtroom. A jury later acquitted him. Mary's murder is still listed as unsolved.]

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From Boston, a leading pediatrician, Dr. James E. Drorbaugh, was rushed to Otis Air Force Base by helicopter. He examined Patrick thoroughly, and was therefore able to report on his condition to JFK when he arrived at the hospital.

The President's first question stunned the doctor: "Will my son be retarded?" JFK asked. Perhaps he was remembering his younger sister, Rosemary, who had been born mentally retarded and was subsequently sent to an asylum.

The doctor told JFK that Patrick needed to be delivered by helicopter to the Children's Hospital in Boston, which was the best equipped to deal with Patrick's respiratory problem.

JFK agreed, but requested that the infant be taken first to Jackie's hospital room.

With JFK at her side, she held her infant son for ten minutes before he was transferred, by helicopter, to Boston. That was the last time she'd see him alive.

The Boston Globe ran a blaring headline—BABY SPED TO BOSTON. A secondary story said, "Whole World Taken by Littlest Kennedy."

Except for reports on Patrick's condition, other news in America virtually ground to a halt.

Only junior doctors were on duty at the Children's Hospital in Boston that day, as the senior pediatricians were away on vacation.

The Boston Globe

BABY SPED TO BOSTON

Has Trouble Breathing; Kennedy Stands by Here

Whole World Taken By Littlest Kennedy

Powers to Head N.H. Sweeps

'He's a Kennedy --He'll Make It'

4 Days Will Decide Infant's Chances

In 1963, the nation was watching the fate of "the littlest Kennedy."

Dr. Alexander S. Nadas, a pioneer in pediatric cardiology, the finest in the nation, was summoned, although he could not arrive until the next day. In the meantime, Patrick's breathing had grown worse, and far more labored.

In Boston, Dr. Welton M. Gersony remembered JFK as "tanned, calm, cool, and very polite." Once again, the President pressed Dr. Gersony to reveal if the boy would be retarded.

"Right now, Mr. President, we can't possibly know that," the doctor said. "Our aim now is to save his life."

An urgent call came in from Lee Radziwill, who spoke to JFK. She informed him that a Dr. Samuel Z. Levine, a Manhattan pediatrician, had saved the life of her infant, who was also a "preemie," *[a nickname for a premature baby]*.

Secret Service agents located Levine strolling in Manhattan's Central Park and immediately hustled him onto a plane to Boston.

JFK wasn't so polite when he met Dr. Levine. "I'm very impressed with the efficiency of government," the doctor said.

"It's about time you doctors learned that," JFK snapped. "Now get in there and save my boy's life."

At the time, the only treatment that could be recommended was a pressurized device called a hyperbaric chamber, which would increase the oxygen levels in a patient's bloodstream. In most cases, it was used in the treatment of "blue babies"—that is, infants with congenital heart defects that deprived them of adequate amounts of oxygen. On three previous occasions, "preemies" without other recourses had been placed within such chambers, but without success.

Before placing Patrick in the chamber, doctors warned JFK that access to the heightened oxygen levels in the chamber might cause blindness. Without consulting Jackie, JFK decided to take the risk.

[Dr. Drorbaugh later wondered, "Did I do the right think in recommending Patrick for that blue baby chamber?" Medical experts estimate that if Patrick had been born in 2014, under the same conditions, his chance of survival would have been about 95 percent better than it was in 1963.]

The doctors gave a detailed explanation to JFK about Patrick's condition, which was then diagnosed as Hyaline Membrane Disease. *[That malady is referred to today at Respiratory Distress Syndrome.]* He was told that Hyaline referred to a glassy membrane that had formed in Patrick's air sacs, impeding his ability to extract oxygen from inhaled air.

The President was also informed that some 25,000 babies every year were affected with this disease, but he was assured that previous preemies had survived and gone on to great glory, namely Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, and Sir Winston Churchill.

Lem Billings flew to JFK's side. He remembered, "Jack got down on his knees and prayed like he'd never prayed before for his son to live. He promised that if God would let Patrick live, he'd even give up what he called 'poon.' He also promised that if Patrick's life could be saved, that he would not run for the presidency in 1964."

For an hour, JFK stood at glass partition, looking in at Patrick in his attempt to breathe regularly. Finally, he left to visit Jackie in her hospital room. In the early hours of the morning of Friday, August 8, 1963, he was awakened by a doctor, who told him that his son was dead. Sedated, Jackie was still asleep.

"When his boy died, it almost killed the President," Larry Newman, a Secret Service agent, later said. "He went into a private room and for about an hour, we could hear him crying. It was more like moaning. It was the deepest form of anguish."

In spite of his grief over Patrick's death, JFK was also aware of its political implications. David Powers, his aide, overheard him telling Jackie. "We must not create an atmosphere of sadness at the White House because that would not be good for us, or for anyone—certainly not for the country, and not for the work I have to do."

Author J. Randy Taraborrelli wrote about Jackie sitting alone in the White House nursery that she'd decorated for Patrick: "As days turned into weeks, Jackie fell into a disturbing melancholy, staring off into space, crying unexpectedly, and losing her appetite. No one knew what to say to her to console her, nor did they know how to handle her sudden crying jags and her many questions about her own responsibility in Patrick's death."

Before Patrick was buried, JFK had placed a silver money clip, affixed to a St. Christopher medal, inside his coffin. It had been a gift from Jackie. When she heard what he had done, she asked her secretary, Mary Gallagher, to call Tiffany's and get a replacement as her gift to JFK.

Baby Patrick was the first Kennedy to be buried in the large family plot at Holyhead Cemetery in Brookline, Massachusetts. It had recently been purchased by Joseph Kennedy as a kind of communal Kennedy mausoleum. JFK stood looking at the open grave, just before the coffin, whose color was that of a polished elephant tusk, was lowered into the ground. He put his hand on the coffin. The Secret Service agents saw his tears.

"Farewell, my son," he said softly.

Jackie later had many teary nights fretting over Patrick's unfinished years. "His precious little life was over before it had begun."

Ghoulish Exhumations

Digging Up the Graves of the Kennedy Infants

James Auchincloss was the half-brother of Jackie. When she married John F. Kennedy in 1953, the young boy carried the wedding train of his half-sister up the aisle. Nicknamed Jamie, he was the son of Janet and Hugh Auchincloss.

At age six, Jamie had visited the White House and got to sit on JFK's desk in the Oval Office. He liked to talk politics with the President.

Janet claimed that "Jamie hero-worshipped Jack. He was so proud of his charismatic brother-in-law.

"It's because of Jack that I've become the first Democrat in the history of the Auchincloss family," Jamie proclaimed.

As Hugh Auchincloss's financial problems intensified, Janet often took out her frustrations on Jamie, treating him unfairly. He was not allowed to know that his father was having money problems.

Relationships between Janet and Jamie were often troubled. He once drove virtually nonstop from Washington to Newport, covering the distance in a then-record eight hours, only to have her attack his sloppy dress. After their confrontation, Jamie immediately got back into his car and drove another eight hours back to Washington.

On that dreadful day in November of 1963, Janet heard the TV blaring with news about the assassination of JFK. She called Jamie at the Brooks School. It was Jamie who spoke first. "Mummy, I think he's dead."

In the emotional days that followed JFK's assassination, Jamie was forced to attend a final funeral that he considered "ghoulish." In the immediate aftermath of her husband's death, Jackie had become obsessed with returning her dead children, both Arabella and Patrick, to positions beside their father's grave.

Jackie insisted that her mother supervise the exhumation of Arabella's coffin. At Newport's St. Columba's Cemetery, Janet witnessed the excavation of Arabella's grave. Janet took the coffin and its rotting contents for temporary storage to her farm at Hammersmith.

Jackie called Cardinal Richard Cushing and asked him to oversee Patrick's disinterment from the Kennedy grave site at Brookline, Massachusetts, the following day.

Subsequently, flying together on the same plane, Caroline, Janet, and Ted Kennedy brought the coffins of Patrick and Arabella to Washington.

Jamie was invited to the funeral, but he was haunted by the coffins of the dead babies. At Arlington National Cemetery, in a December 5, 1963 ceremony scheduled during the dead of night as a means of avoiding the press and photographers, Jamie, along with Jackie, Bobby, and Ted, watched the reburials. Jamie later said, "Jackie needed to do this and she did—at night, in the dark, by the Eternal Flame."

Jamie became interested in photography during his second year at New York City's Columbia University. He didn't know that this relatively harmless hobby would one day lead to his downfall when he was found guilty of taking pictures of nude or semi-nude young boys.

In 2009, Jackie's relative was indicted on 25 counts related to child porn. Within the courtroom of Jackson County (Oregon) circuit judge Mark Shiveley, Auchincloss pleaded guilty to two felony counts for encouraging child sexual abuse. The judge sentenced him to serve thirty days in jail on each count, concurrently, as part of three years of supervised probation. The judge also ordered that Auchincloss be formally registered as a convicted sex offender and that he agree to undergo psychiatric treatment for his affliction. In addition, he was ordered not to have any "unauthorized contact" with minors.

[As early as 1994, the year Jackie died, the family seemed aware of Jamie's sexual proclivities. He did not receive an invitation to Jackie's memorial service.

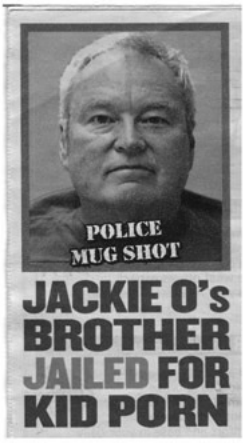
She was buried at Arlington, next to JFK and near her two babies, Arabella and Patrick.

Jamie had called and asked for an invitation to attend Jackie's burial but was rudely told that he was not invited. "But people know me," he protested to the Auchincloss family. "If I'm not there, it would look bad."

He was told that the family could not prevent him from showing up, but that he would have to stand outside and pay his respects that way.

"Farewell, Jackie," he called out from his position as a family outcast outside the church, as her casket was carried away by pallbearers.]

Partick Kennedy's grave at Arlington



Chapter Nine

First Lady of Camelot

"I Hate that Name, It Sounds Like a Race Horse"

—Jacqueline Kennedy

Flying on Dr. Feelgood's Speed, Mythmaking Jack & Jackie Are Idolized by Millions

A vision of loveliness in pink satin, First Lady **Jacqueline Kennedy** never looked better than when she appeared at a White House gala on May 11, 1962. She easily dazzled the French culture minister, **André Malraux** *(far left)*, and his jealous wife, concert pianist **Marie-Madeleine Lioux**. Even **JFK** *(right)* looks on with admiration.

"I am the woman who has everything, including the President of the United States."

—Jacqueline Kennedy

After their electoral victory, in December of 1960, while JFK and Jackie had retreated to Palm Beach, before the rigors of the inauguration, Clint Hill of the Secret Service informed them of their new code names. JFK would be identified by his security forces as "Lancer" *[how fitting]*, and the First Lady would be known as "Lace."

When **President Kennedy** was asked to help dig a hole during a tree-planting ceremony in Ottawa, he seriously injured his back. He had to be flown back to Washington where Dr. Feelgood was waiting to give him injections of "speed."

During their transition into their seats of power, however, the new First Couple almost died.

On December 11, 1960, JFK didn't want to get out of bed to attend Sunday mass at St. Edward's Church in Palm Beach. Jackie insisted that he go because the press and the public would be expecting him. "The world will be watching," she told him.

She had still not recovered from her exhausting tour of the White House conducted by Mamie Eisenhower a few days before JFK's inauguration. Mrs. Eisenhower had not readily made a wheelchair available to her, as she had requested.

Death lurked outside the Kennedy compound. For two hours, a suicide bomber, Richard P. Pavlick, had been waiting with seven sticks of dynamite. As the Secret Servicemen drove the President-elect out of the Kennedy compound's driveway, Pavlick intended to step on the accelerator of his vehicle, plowing his car into JFK's. He expected that the explosion would not only kill himself, but JFK and three Secret Service men too.

At the last minute, Jackie appeared with Caroline to tell JFK goodbye. Their nurse, Luella Hennessey, also appeared, carrying John-John for a goodbye kiss from his father.

As Pavlick later testified, "I just couldn't do it. My aim was to kill Kennedy, but I couldn't blow up Jackie and her kids, too." According to his later testimony, Pavlick decided to attempt to kill Kennedy later.

Despite His Injuries and Illnesses, JFK Transforms the White House into "Poon Heaven" Jackie Becomes the Most Talked-About Woman in the World

His plan was never completed, of course. Three days later, while still plotting an assassination, Pavlick was arrested for drunk driving. The police discovered the plot. He was later charged with attempted murder and, after a trial, sentenced to fourteen years in prison.

When Jackie was informed of the assassination attempt, she said, "My family and I are nothing but sitting ducks in a shooting gallery."

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In the afternoon, both father and son, Joe and Jack, received their male guests, including some reporters, in the nude. They sunbathed in the screened-off "Bull Pen" near the Kennedy swimming pool. George Smathers

sometimes joined them.

Later in the afternoon, JFK would walk along the beach, trailed by the Secret Service, to the home of Earl E.T. Smith, who had been the U.S. ambassador to Cuba.

Perhaps with her husband's knowledge, Florence Pritchett Smith, the wife of the ambassador, sometimes spent two hours with the President-elect before he headed home for dinner with the Kennedy family. Jackie usually stayed in bed, claiming she could not hold down food.

En route to Washington for the inauguration, Jackie had her spirits lifted when Evelyn Lincoln, JFK's secretary, told her that she'd just been voted the "Most Admired Woman in the World," Beating out Queen Elizabeth and all other challengers. Jackie would top that poll every year until 1966.

Their Georgetown house was in disarray, with boxes being sent either into storage or else to the White House. "Pierre Salinger was practically holding press conferences in my bathroom," Jackie later lamented. "I finally told Jack he had to move out while I finished packing."

The President-elect went to live with his gay friend, William Walton.

"I didn't even know he was coming until I heard it announced over the radio," Walton said. "Within minutes, the Secret Service were knocking on my door. When Jack arrived, I offered to give him the master bedroom and sleep in my guest room, but Jack wouldn't hear of it. He shared my bed until he moved to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. In the middle of the night, I would wake up and could hardly believe it. Here I was lying in bed with the newly elected President of the United States. Those few precious nights would become the most glorious of my life—and I will say no more."

Arriving at the White House on the first day of their occupancy, Jackie was directed to the Queen's Bedroom because she felt weak. She had to reserve her strength for the evening's festivities. JFK told her that he'd be sleeping across the hallway in the Lincoln Bedroom.

A blizzard was about to hit Washington, and she dreaded inaugural night. Dr. Janet Travell was summoned to give her a Dexedrine, which pepped her up considerably. She warned Travell that she might need another to get through the evening's five inaugural balls.

That morning after riding to the Inauguration with Mamie Eisenhower, Jackie felt that she might get sick in the bitter weather.

She had watched as a bare-headed JFK, the first U.S. President born in the 20th Century, delivered an inspiring Inaugural Address, ending with his message of "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." She'd later tell him that that speech would go down in the history of oratory, along with Pericles' Funeral Oration and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. At the inauguration, she got to hear Robert Frost stumble through a poem of his, and Marian Anderson give a belting rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner."

For the Inaugural lunch, the interconnected families gathered—the Lees, the Bouviers, the Kennedys, and the Auchincloss clan, feasting on caviar, shrimp, and lobster.

Joe Kennedy confronted Letitia (Tish) Baldrige, demanding to know who all these people were, since he was picking up the tab.

"They're all a part of your extended family," she told him.

"Okay, I'll fill their bellies today, but don't ever invite this motley crew again," he warned.

Later, at the White House, the mansion overflowed with this extended family. Jackie didn't want to deal with any of them, and she headed up to the Queens Bedroom. She'd need more Dexedrine to get through the night. When cousins tried to come upstairs to inspect the Presidential quarters, they were turned away by the Secret Service.

As one of the worst blizzards in its history hit Washington, Jackie managed to attend only three of the evening's five balls. "Everybody said I looked dazzling," she later claimed, "but I felt like hell."

At the first ball, she was escorted inside by the Entertainment Coordinator, Frank Sinatra. At that time in her life, she detested him, claiming that he was "always pimping for Jack."

Unlike Jackie, JFK wanted to attend every event he could manage, even when he could stay for only a short while.

Jackie later said, "Jack had a little boy's sense of wonder and excitement. He loved greeting all the celebrities who had flown in to wish him well, everybody from Bette Davis to Ethel Merman."

At one point during one of the festivities, she was uncomfortably seated between Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird. JFK excused himself and sneaked away for about half an hour. Jackie later heard the rumor that during this short interim, he had seduced Angie Dickinson, who was being escorted to the gala by JFK's friend, Red Fay. It might be apocryphal, but Angie was reported to have said, "It was the greatest seven minutes of my life."

Before the end of the third ball, Jackie's energy had faded despite the pep pills, and she asked JFK if she could be excused. He could attend the final two balls on his own, although she suspected he would not be alone for long.

One of Jackie's spies later told her how JFK topped off his pre-dawn morning after retreating from the fifth and

final Inaugural Ball. The Secret Service delivered him to Dumbarton Street and the Georgetown home of the gay columnist Joseph Alsop. A group of JFK's most loyal cronies had gathered there for a nightcap with the President-elect.

After the drinks, his brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, took him into the library and introduced him to six Hollywood starlets imported for the occasion. Later, JFK whispered to Lawford, "Instead of *[these lesser]* starlets, if I weren't under such heavy scrutiny, I could have spent the night with Angie Dickinson and Kim Novak."

More and more, as a means of maintaining his sexual appetite, JFK was opting to position himself as the third member in various *ménages à trois*. Lawford had no trouble rounding up various bevies of starlets. "It seemed that every woman in Hollywood wanted to sleep with the handsome, dashing, newly elected President of the United States."

JFK made his selection—one a brunette, another a redhead. He disappeared upstairs with them, heading for Alsop's bedroom, which had just recently been vacated by a Washington pageboy from the Senate. *[Alsop, one of the premier political commentators of his era, freely admitted to his gender preference as a homosexual after an infamous attempt by a Soviet agent to blackmail him, based on an incident in a Moscow hotel room in 1957.]*

"What stamina!" Alsop said to Lawford when he came back into the living room. "On what must have been the longest day of his life, he's still raring to go."

"If you have what he has shot into his blood stream, you'd be up to hear the first rooster crow, too!" Lawford said.

After a round of seductions from some very talented young women, JFK was returned to the White House by the very discreet Secret Service, just as the first streaks of dawn broke through the overcast sky.

It would be the first day of his new Administration.

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On her first morning in the White House, the sound of hammering woke Jackie up. Carpenters were preparing a pink room for Caroline and a blue nursery for John Jr.

She decided to remain in bed, as she was exhausted and was still recovering from the cesarean birth of her son.

There was a sudden knock on her door before it was thrown open. In barged JFK, accompanied by an aging Harry S Truman. Looking disheveled, she was horrified and pulled a quilt over her exposed breasts.

The former President seemed embarrassed by his intrusion and apologized for disturbing her. "I'm sorry," he said. "Jack and I thought you were up. Please excuse me. Good luck in your new home." Then he quickly departed.

"Thank you, Mr. President," she said to his departing back.

"Catch you later, sweetheart," JFK promised. "How many women have entertained two American presidents at the same time in her boudoir?"

When she did get up, she headed for the bathroom, where she discovered that her toilet overflowed. In an attempt to take a shower, she found that the nozzle ran only cold water.

Jackie's social secretary, **Letitia Baldrige**, was the arbiter of social etiquette. She handled the thousands of invitations directed at the First Lady. "Jackie's usual response was, 'Send Lady Bird instead of me.'"

"The plumbing was last installed during the reign of Rutherford B. Hayes," she later told friends. In the bedroom, she found no bookcases. "Didn't Mamie know how to read? There wasn't even a wastepaper basket."

After coffee, she met with Steve Cotrell, the contractor in charge of some of the structural renovations which had

already been inaugurated prior to her arrival at the White House. “I’m going to dread living in this dump,” she said. “It’s as much a dungeon as Lubyanka. *[a reference to the KGB’s notorious prison in Moscow.]*

As she toured the rooms scheduled for additional renovations, she said, “Too much Mamie pink. Everywhere I look, I find bad taste. Oh God, the White House is cold and dreary. I don’t think I’ve seen anything like it, but then, I haven’t visited many prisons. I can’t bear the thought of moving in. I hate it, hate it, hate it!”

She visited the office of her social secretary, Tish Baldrige, and was horrified at the number of committees, social clubs, and special interest groups requesting her presence. She was invited to attend the National Gallery of Art, where the venue included her presiding over award presentations to America’s distinguished women. “There’s no way I’m going to stand in line and shake the hands of 4,500 guests.”

“Tell Lady Bird to go in my place,” Jackie ordered. “The same goes for invitations from the American Red Cross, the Girl Scouts of America, and the Georgia Hogcallers.”

“Some school reporters from Vassar, your alma mater, want to interview you,” Baldrige said.

“Tell them I’m not well,” Jackie said. “Also, I’m not into visiting distant relatives, women’s clubs around America, the Dairy Association, or any charity event. Need I go on? I think you get the point.”

“I want you to extend a series of invitations to the country’s leading poets, dancers, artists, and musicians. Perhaps George Balanchine of the New York City Ballet. Perhaps Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev would visit and maybe perform. I’m interested in having Pablo Casals appear. I know he’s living in exile in Puerto Rico and that he said he will not perform in any country that recognizes Franco *[Francisco Franco, the Dictator of Spain]*. But I think he’ll accept an invitation from me.”

“One more thing: Lem Billings is always bragging about how he became friends with Greta Garbo on the Riviera. I’ve always wanted to meet her. Even if she’s mostly a recluse, I’m sure she would consider a private invitation to the White House. Set it up. Of course, we’ll have to invite Lem, too.”

Calling a meeting of the entire White House staff, she presented each of them with a Letter of Agreement for them to sign, in which they would be ordered not to talk about life in the White House or write about it after they left. Of course, in time, many of those agreements would be largely ignored as staff members wrote what it was like inside the White House during the reign of Camelot.

At the end of the first busy day, she retired with JFK to one of the upstairs sitting rooms. He lit a match to an already laid fire. The smoke immediately backed up from the chimney, forcing them to flee to another part of the house.

On Jackie’s second day, she continued her march through the rooms of the White House. To her horror, she noted that it was filled with Victorian mirrors. She ordered the staff to remove them. “I detest Victorian mirrors,” she said.

She was also alarmed at the parade of tourists through the White House. She immediately cancelled all afternoon tours, claiming that they interfered with her renovations.

Meeting with the housekeeper, she established new rules. “Bath and hand towels were to be changed three times a day. Sheets were to be changed even if JFK and herself had taken only a twenty-minute nap.

She also met with the accountant who kept track of White House expenses. He told her that the Senate had appropriated $50,000 for renovations to their private quarters.

[Within a month of living in the White House, Jackie had spent the entire budget. Through the influence of Senator Smathers, she was able to get the Senate Budget Committee to appropriate another $125,000. That money was quickly absorbed in renovations. She told Tish Baldrige, “Thank God I have some women friends, Jayne Wrightsman and Bunny Mellon, who will donate millions to help me finish the renovations.”]

She further strained her budget by bringing in a coven of personal servants—a valet for JFK when Lem Billings wasn’t around, a governess for the children, a private masseuse, a press secretary, a social secretary, a hairdresser three or four times a week, with the understanding that “Mr. Kenneth” would be flown in from New York a few hours before any gala or state dinner.

She told her aide, “I have to face my husband’s mistress every morning now that he’s hired Pamela Turnure as my press secretary.”

Meeting with Pamela, she outlined her rules. “I won’t pose for photographs. I won’t grant interviews until Jack announces he’s running for re-election in 1964.”

She also made a daily visit to the office of Pierre Salinger, the White House press secretary. She was distressed at the personal items being written about her and her family. “Someone is obviously supplying inside information to *Women’s Wear Daily*, all this focus on my wardrobe. My every move seems to be spied on. That dinner for the Shah of Iran and his Empress. That paper even wrote about what food I served on what expensive dishes, even my gown for the evening, contrasting how I stacked up against the Empress.

Her hostility toward the press became so strained that JFK had to warn her, “You’ve got to suck up more. After

all, I plan to run for re-election."

"Jackie was always at war with the press," Salinger said. "I don't understand why. She got a massive amount of favorable copy. Seemingly everybody was writing about her style and grace. In spite of all that, she was constantly pissed off at the press."

Her first dinner party was an informal affair attended by, among others, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. and Joseph Alsop. Composer Leonard Bernstein was the guest of honor.

Both JFK and Jackie were unaware of how the theatrical and very effusive Bernstein traditionally greeted his hosts. Before she knew what was happening, when she reached to shake his hand, he quickly moved in on her, darting his tongue into her mouth.

Standing next to her, JFK was astonished, but decided to handle it with humor. "Don't I get one?"

"You sure do," the famous conductor said, moving in on the new President, whose mouth was soon after invaded by the infamous Bernstein tongue.

The guests gathered around the first couple, drinking champagne and devouring caviar, which Jackie told them was a gift from Nikita Khrushchev.

Unlike Mamie, the new First Lady liked French chefs, jewelry, the cultural elite, lavish dinners, fancy hairdos, beauty, style, high fashion, ballet troupes, Shakespearean actors, jazz musicians, opera singers, Nobel laureates, *et al*.

Just for fun, she'd do something unorthodox, such as throwing a "Twist" party where she twisted with Robert McNamara, U.S. Secretary of Defense. Indiscreetly, she was overhead saying, "I should have married Robert instead of Jack."

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Jackie's hope that JFK would cut down on his womanizing after his move into the White House was quickly abandoned as reality set in. From reports that reached her, he seemed more dedicated to his adulterous affairs than ever before.

It was said that once JFK took over the White House, he inaugurated a "revolving door policy"—that is, with beautiful young women coming and going.

Even when Jackie was in residence, JFK would slip away to a remote room within the White House for a sexual tryst, especially when he was so well-protected by the Secret Service. According to Senator George Smathers, women "were lining up to fuck the President." Or, as Shirley MacLaine so colorfully phrased it, "Better that he fuck one of us—and not the country."

Sometimes, Jackie had long talks with her trusted friend, William Walton, who was frequently at the White House. She confessed that since moving in, she'd confronted JFK only one time about his womanizing. "What is this overpowering need you have for other women?" she asked.

According to Jackie, he looked sheepishly at her and said, "I don't know. I honestly don't know what drives me."

"He sounded like a guilty little boy," she told Walton.

Despite his marriage to Jackie, Jack still remained the capital's most eligible bachelor," Ted Sorensen said, sarcastically.

The men of the Secret Service, nearly all of whom took their responsibilities of protecting the President very seriously, were alarmed at the women he let into the White House without security clearance—elevator operators, hotel maids, hat-check girls, desk clerks, airline stewardesses, showgirls, and an occasional Hollywood star such as Jayne Mansfield. On several different occasions, she was "imported" from the West Coast into the White House just to service JFK.

"It was something else during the so-called 'Reign of Camelot,'" said Traphes Bryant, the kennel-keeper of the White House. *[His memoir*, Dog Days at the White House, The Outrageous Memoirs of the Presidential Kennel Keeper, *evaluated some of the revolving door scandals associated with JFK's tenure. The notorious book was not devoted just to the care and feeding of man's best friend. It was the first book to reveal the numerous affairs of JFK and made the charge that he had an insatiable appetite for women. It is also the original source for a story that's been repeated in countless books: As the revelation goes, Jackie was in the President's bed when she discovered a woman's panties between the sheets. She held up the panties she had found with two fingers in much the same way that she would hold up a dead mouse. She said to the President. "These are not my size."]*

"I had to check with someone in security," Traphes revealed. "I took the elevator to the upper rooms. When the door opened, I saw three nude women running down the corridor. You wouldn't see that when Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hoover were living here."

"Everyone assigned to the White House, except a spy or two I had, seemed to be doing Jack's bidding…I mean, covering up for him," Jackie claimed. "I heard reports that many of the White House secretaries made themselves available to my husband. His two favorites were nicknamed 'Fiddle' (Priscilla Weir) and 'Faddle' (Jill Cowan)."

"I met Fiddle and Faddle on several occasions," said Smathers. "They were a couple of dogs, but Jack was always hot for them."

"In his own peculiar way, I think Jack loved Jackie," Smathers said. "The other gals were just bimbos going through that revolving door. I can't believe how many women, married or otherwise, were willing to do his bidding, both on the home front and abroad. After all, he was the President of the United States."

During Jackie's first trip away from the White House, as she headed with the children to her country home in Virginia, JFK staged the first of his nude swimming pool parties in the basement of the White House. These parties pleased him so much that they became a frequently scheduled ritual. He got so daring one time that he staged a poolside orgy when Jackie was in residence. A Secret Serviceman, standing at the door leading into the pool area, barred her from entering, which infuriated her. That led to one of her biggest fights with JFK.

"I was often invited when Bobby, Teddy, and Jack were nude, and in the pool with at least five naked women for fun and frolic," Smathers claimed.

"Sometimes, my friend, Lyndon, joined us in these nude frolics in and beside the pool," Smathers said. "He was always proud to show off what he called 'Jumbo.'"

Smathers and others noted that more and more, JFK was moving from one-man, one-woman sex to orgies. Three-ways also became more prevalent. Once when Smathers was with him at the pool, he seduced a young woman and then ordered her to perform fellatio on his aide, David Powers, while he looked on as a *voyeur*.

On many a week, Jackie spent only three nights in the White House. It even became a joke on TV, one comedian signing off with, "Good night, Mrs. Kennedy, wherever you are."

"Jack encouraged her to go away so that he could turn the White House into poontang heaven," Smathers said. "I've known a lot of horndogs in my day, but never any man with Jack's libido. He just couldn't get enough."

Even though she was married at the time *[to a bisexual husband]*, Patricia Kennedy Lawford maintained a pattern of sexual promiscuity that evoked that of her Presidential brother. Smathers estimated she seduced half of the 'hunks' in the Secret Service.

"Most of the guys were straight," the Senator said, "but sometimes, or so I heard, they unzipped for Pat's cocksucking husband, Peter Lawford. After all, he was the President's brother-in-law, and none of the men wanted to lose out on a good job."

"Right in front of my wife, a drunken Eunice one night at a White House party made a play for me. I couldn't believe the audacity of this gal. She was drunk and she groped me. Loud enough for people around her to hear, she said, 'I wonder if it's really as big as they say.'"

Joseph Paolella, of the Secret Service, later claimed, "Our job was to prevent Jackie from walking in on an orgy, or else finding the President in bed, banging one of his bimbos. Mrs. Kennedy knew what he was up to, but didn't want it to be rubbed in her face. At all costs, we were to avoid embarrassing situations."

"The President made it difficult for us when he invited hookers into the White House, especially when Mrs. Kennedy was home. Most of the White House secretaries also seemed only too willing to service the President. Once or twice a week was okay for me, but JFK seemed to need it two or three times a day. I blamed it on the medication Dr. Max Jacobson was shooting into his veins."

Smathers said, "I've shaken the hands of eleven Presidents in my life, including Franklin D. Roosevelt's. Only two of them were faithful to their wives—Harry S Truman and Richard M. Nixon. The rest, at some point or another, especially my good friend, Lyndon, slipped."

[Smathers was wrong about Nixon's fidelity to his wife, Patricia.]

In spite of his womanizing, the handsome and relatively young new President brought a spirit of macho vitality and adventure to the White House, not seen since the days of the Rough Rider himself, Theodore Roosevelt.

Of course, there were times of great tension, including the Bay of Pigs disaster and the Cuban Missile Crisis. "Even Jack kept his libido in check during those tense days when we felt that Washington was going to be blown up," Smathers said.

"During the greatest tensions, Jackie remained loyal to him. He tried to get her to remove herself and the children from the White House, but she steadfastly refused, saying that she'd stand by his side, along with Caroline and John-John, until the atomic blasts blew them into tiny little specks of dust."

President Kennedy was unsuccessful in adding the elusive **Greta Garbo** to his list of movie star conquests. He'd had far better luck with Marlene Dietrich.

At a White House dinner, Jackie asked Garbo if she planned a comeback in films.

"So many offers," she answered. "Even the role of Hamlet. Of course, the usual scripts—D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Jean Cocteau is working on a script for me, even Orson Welles. Visconti wants me to film Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. I don't know if I'll come back or not."

Greta Garbo Arrives for Dinner at the White House

In the spring of 1961, Lem Billings flew to France for his vacation, heading for the *Côte d'Azur*. On the French Riviera, at Cannes, a mutual friend introduced him to Greta Garbo, the "retired-from-and-tired-with-the-world" screen goddess.

Over a light lunch, they became fast friends, although "The Sphinx" was usually far more reserved, especially around strangers she had just met. But Lem, thanks to his wit and his charm, warmed and amused her Nordic heart.

He was awed by her fading beauty and her aura of mystery. He'd seen all of her talking pictures.

"Lem amuses me," said the so-called "gloomiest Scandinavian since Hamlet."

Within two days, they'd become fellow travelers, renting a car together and heading east toward the Italian Riviera. For three nights, they lodged at the chic little town of Portofino, near its colorful harbor. Rex Harrison invited them to his nearby villa for dinner.

After Lem's return to the White House, he fascinated JFK and Jackie with his stories about traveling in Europe with Garbo. Jackie was rather jealous of Lem's friendships. She had always wanted to meet Garbo herself, and, as First Lady, had sent her five separate invitations to the White House, all of which Garbo had rejected.

JFK had had a fascination for Garbo ever since Papa Joe had relayed the details of the affair he had had with her during his Hollywood years.

"If you know Garbo so well, why don't you invite her to the White House so Jack and I can meet her?" Jackie asked.

Lem promised that he would. The next day, he told them that he had talked to Garbo, who had agreed to come to dinner at the White House, but only if it were a small and intimate affair. "I can't stand having a lot of people around me," she'd told him.

Four nights later, Jackie had arranged the schedule so that Garbo would arrive an hour earlier than Lem.

When the White House usher presented Garbo to Jackie, she was surprised by the star's first words: "Imagine the two most famous women in the world coming together in the White House, of all places."

Jackie wanted to escort her on a tour of the private rooms of the White House, including the Oval Office. In the Lincoln Bedroom, Garbo pulled off her shoes and plopped down onto the large bed. Jackie was amazed at how playful she was.

Jackie came up with the idea of a prank she could pull on Lem, who had bragged so often about his friendship with the actress. "I want you to go through the evening pretending you've never met Lem. We'll not tell Jack, so he won't be in on the gag."

"What an amusing idea," Garbo said. "As an actress, I haven't had a role to play in many a year."

When Lem arrived, he joined JFK, Jackie, and Garbo, who were sitting in the private living room in front of the fireplace, having drinks.

"Lem," Jackie said, "I want you to meet our guest of honor for the evening, Miss Greta Garbo. Our dear friend, Lem Billings."

Lem looked at Garbo, then looked in bewilderment at Jackie. "But…but, I don't understand. Greta and I are the dearest of friends. When we vacationed together in France and Italy, she introduced me as her lover."

Garbo cast a skeptical eye at Lem. "I don't know this man," she announced.

"Greta!" He was astounded. "Remember Portofino? We spent our summer vacationing together. We vowed to be friends for life. How could you forget? It was so recent!"

"You poor, dear soul," she answered. "There are so many Garbo impersonators running about. Someone fooled you. Perhaps it was a clever transvestite pretending to be me. I am imitated by so many people."

Throughout the meal, an unsuspecting JFK repeatedly chastised Lem for having invented his tale about a friendship with Garbo. "The next thing I know, you'll tell us that Marlene Dietrich stays with you when she's in New York. That you and your dear friend Katharine Hepburn are lovers."

Trying desperately to jog Garbo's memory, Lem recalled experiences they'd shared and places they'd visited together, even exact dates. "Remember going with me to Chez Tétou at Golfe-Juan? In fact, it was you who suggested it. The world's best bouillabaisse?"

"I never eat bouillabaisse," Garbo said. "I'm allergic to shellfish."

For dessert, you asked for a simple powdered croissant with grandmother's strawberry jam bottled last winter," Lem reminded her.

"I eat grandmother's jam only in Sweden, but it's not something I would order at a seafood restaurant on the Côte d'Azur," Garbo claimed.

Not in on the prank, and with some effort, JFK finally convinced Lem that he'd been tricked by a clever Garbo lookalike. "I can't imagine how you were fooled. No woman has the century's most magnificent female face other than Greta. You really owe her an apology."

At that point, Jackie laughed. The joke had gone on long enough.

"Oh, Lem, darling," Garbo said, rising to kiss him. "My dear boy. Forgive us for teasing you so. How naughty of us." Then she burst into laughter, evoking a pivotal scene from her 1939 film, *Ninotchka*.

Lem later told JFK, "Throughout most of the dinner, I was dying…just dying. It was one of the worst nights of my life. I don't think I'll ever recover."

When Garbo departed after eleven, Lem asked Jackie what she thought of her. She hesitated before answering. "I think she was intoxicated."

Lem noted that JFK stayed with Garbo after dinner longer than he'd ever done with any other visitor to the White House.

Later, Garbo shared details of the evening with her friend, Cecil Beaton, the celebrated photographer who immortalized the nuances of her face. "Did the President ask you to spend the night?"

"I was invited, but I rejected the invitation," she said. "I stayed in a suite he'd booked for me at the Mayflower Hotel. I knew his father intimately a long time ago, and I was happy to meet the President and his First Lady. However, I feared that if I spent the night in the White House, the President might slip into my room. I'm told the young man is often visited by ladies of the night…or should I say, ladies at night? My English…so very poor."

The next morning, Garbo called JFK, who was in the Oval Office. She wanted to thank him for the evening. He told Evelyn Lincoln that he would take her call, the contents of which he'd later share with Lem. At one point, he asked Garbo if she'd slept comfortably at the Mayflower.

"I didn't, actually," she answered. "I was awake for most of the night. I had this horrible nightmare about Mara. All Swedish children know the myth of Mara. On the surface, she is this beautiful woman. But that is a mere façade, a disguise to conceal the evil that lurks in her wicked heart. In my nightmare, she attacked me in my sleep, pouncing on top of me and reaching inside my body to twist and to rip out my heart."

"What a horrible experience," he said. "Could I drop in for lunch?" Could I comfort you and protect you from this dreadful witch?"

"Comfort me?" she said. "Oh, Mr. President, I'm old enough to be your mother."

"Marlene didn't have any objection to my age," he said.

"During the war, that Berlin whore took on half the Allied Army," Garbo said. "I'm more discriminating than that."

"I sometimes like to follow in Dad's footsteps. He told me about his involvement with you *femmes fatales* during his days in Hollywood—first you, then Marlene. I've already been with Marlene. That leaves only you."

"Mr. President, as you well know, the dream, the fantasy, is always better than the reality."

"I think you're missing out on something here," he said. "Like that Mata Hari character you played, you might get me to spill government secrets over pillow talk. You could peddle that information to Khrushchev."

"I must tell you why I am turning down the offer," Garbo said. "You are so divine that I know if I have an intimate encounter with you, I will fall hopelessly in love with you…forever. I can't stand to have my heart broken again. It has been broken so many times in the past. Mr. President, you are an intelligent rogue. Possessing great courage and vision. In some ways, you and I are soul mates, doomed forever to wander the world, our restless hearts knowing no fulfillment. Good morning, you darling man." Then she put down the phone.

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[In 1963, Garbo was horrified to hear the news that JFK had been assassinated in Dallas. She stayed glued to her television that day, and according to Beaton, sent Jackie, at the White House, a personal letter of condolence:

"Dear Mrs. Kennedy,
I, too, have known the pain of unbearable loss. Though it does not seem possible at the moment, I can only trust that one day, love will re-enter your heart again. One chapter closes, another opens before you. I wish you and your children a long and happy life after you survive this tragedy, and I know you will. Mr. Kennedy suffered the greatest loss of all—an unfinished life."
With my love and respect,
Greta Garbo."]

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[In 1968, Jackie learned a shocking fact after her marriage to Aristotle Onassis. Before asking Jackie to marry him, he had proposed to Garbo, who had turned him down.

The star later told Beaton, "I think Ari is divine, but he is not to be taken seriously as marriage material. He's like a naughty little boy at times. He amuses himself by pushing people, male and female, into his swimming pool. Not only that, but he seats guests on a barstool aboard his yacht. The stools have been upholstered with the foreskin of whales. Then he asks his guest, 'How does it feel to be sitting on the world's biggest prick?'"]

Dr. Feelgood,

the "Bat Wing and Chicken Blood Doctor"

It was the summer of 1960 in New York, and JFK's close friend, Charles Spalding, of the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in Manhattan, was feeling rundown. Through Senator Kennedy, he had met Prince Stanislas Radziwill, an exiled Polish prince who would become famous for his marriage to Jackie's sister, Lee Bouvier Canfield. Over drinks, Radziwill heard about Spalding's rundown condition and recommended a visit to Dr. Max Jacobson, who could give him some energy-boosting shots.

The next day, Spalding walked into Dr. Jacobson's waiting room. He later reported that the clients who were waiting there resembled a *Who's Who* of the entertainment industry—they included Zero Mostel, Johnny Mathis, Eddie Fisher, and Alan Jay Lerner. Spalding also reported seeing three "actresses" in there as well. Actually, they were diarist Anaïs Nin, singer Mabel Mercer, and stage and screen star Margaret Leighton.

Later, JFK, who was campaigning in New York City at the time, encountered Spalding, whom he found had been transformed into "a bundle of energy." When he heard that Spalding's bursts of energy had resulted from shots available from Dr. Jacobson, JFK said, "I want some of what you got."

Dr. Max Jacobson, known as "Dr. Feelgood," may have helped alter America's cultural and political history by treating and drugging JFK, Jackie, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley, among many others. He accidentally killed his own wife, Nina, with an overdose of his "magic formula."

The next day, Spalding, in a call to Dr. Jacobson authorized by JFK, asked that his office be cleared for a visit from the presidential contender. With some reluctance, Jacobson agreed to go to all that trouble, even though it meant rescheduling appointments.

At first, JFK felt the doctor looked like a mad scientist. As he later reported to Spalding. "Big thick glasses, dirty fingernails, a thick German accent, a barrel chest, potbelly, a formidable personality in spite of his disheveled look. His private office was as unkempt as he was."

JFK didn't ask what was being shot into his veins. All he knew was that it worked. "I was suffering severe back pain," he told Spalding, "And low energy. But after those shots, I became Superman, ready to rape seven Lois Lanes. I had enough energy to fuel a jet."

That visit was the beginning of a doctor/patient relationship that would last until the President's death in November of 1963. JFK even summoned him to Hyannis Port, where he avoided introducing him to Jackie and the Kennedys, but met with him, privately, in a bungalow for more injections.

During their talk, Jacobson could *[and did]* readily drop an impressive list of his patients' names. In addition to Sir Winston Churchill, they had included Marlene Dietrich, Frank Sinatra, Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Nelson Rockefeller, Judy Garland, Mickey Mantle, Yul Brynner, and Hedy Lamarr. His patients had nicknamed him, "Dr. Feelgood," or "The Miracle Man."

JFK confessed that he'd already fucked four of Jacobson's clients—"just the females"—and he quickly became dependent on the quack. He even had a code word ("I am Mr. Dunn") he used when he called Feelgood's office. Later, when Jackie became a patient, she was codenamed "Mrs. Dunn."

Surprisingly, even from the beginning, JFK never asked what was being injected into his blood stream. The shots were later revealed to contain amphetamines, animal hormones (often from sheep), bone marrow, enzymes, human placenta, painkillers, steroids, and vitamins.

After he received the injections, JFK felt invigorated, the weakness, pain, and fatigue in his muscles disappearing.

A potential disaster occurred at the Hotel Carlyle in Manhattan. In the spring of 1962, Jacobson was summoned to JFK's suite for more injections. After giving the President his shots, the doctor left the hotel. For about an hour, JFK reported that he was feeling invigorated.

But suddenly, as described by a Secret Service agent, he began to act strangely. "He started running around the room waving his arms. At one point, he stripped off all his clothes." The two agents on duty at the time didn't know how to handle him.

He opened the door and ran naked down the hotel's corridor. Fortunately no one else was in the hallway at that time. The agents captured the nude president and half carried / half dragged him back into his suite.

They had to forcibly hold him down onto the bed and tie his arms. Dr. Lawrence Hatterer, a Manhattan psychiatrist, was summoned to the President's bedside. He told the agents that JFK was experiencing a drug-induced mania, bordering on a psychotic reaction, as an aftereffect of Dr. Feelgood's shots. Dr. Hatterer injected JFK with an anti-psychotic drug, which subdued him.

After that, JFK reportedly drifted off into a deep sleep and didn't wake up until ten o'clock the following morning. One agent reported that when he awakened, the President had no memory of his breakdown.

Within three days, he had resumed his injections from Jacobson.

In the latter days of his presidential campaign, Jacobson flew to JFK's side to inject him with shots before his first debate with Richard Nixon, the Republican challenger who had been Dwight Eisenhower's Vice President. Although that day he'd been suffering bouts of severe back pain, JFK before the camera was young, handsome, and vigorous, in marked contrast to Nixon, who appeared with no makeup, looked pale, and had a five o'clock shadow which some viewers interpreted as sinister.

Throughout the final months of the campaign, JFK continued to receive injections from Jacobson, who sometimes joined him on the trail. Even for a healthy man, the campaign would have been grueling, and JFK depended on Jacobson's injections as a means of boosting his sagging strength.

After the elections, by May of 1961, confronting an exhausting series of foreign trips, JFK began to worry that Jackie was not up to the strain. He told Smathers and Spalding, "Giving birth to John Jr. by cesarean was very difficult for her, and she's never quite recovered. She also suffers great depressions."

JFK asked Jacobson to fly to Palm Beach, where, after receiving his own shots, he introduced him to Jackie. He told Jacobson about his upcoming trips, which included visits to Canada, France, Austria, and England.

In Florida, JFK and Jackie were staying at the elegant home of Charles and Jayne Wrightsman. When an agent of the Secret Service escorted Jacobson to Jackie's bedroom, she complained of her migraine, "one of the worst I've ever had." After a preliminary examination, he asked her "to bare your butt." He injected a shot into her left buttock, the first of many such injections to come.

Before he left her room, she claimed that her migraine had disappeared within five minutes, and she felt in better spirits once again. From that day forth, she became one of his patients.

He was by her side to shoot her up before she flew to Ottawa on her first official visit to a foreign country. JFK didn't fare well in his meeting with Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, but Jackie was a hit with the Canadians. In a red wool suit designed by Oleg Cassini, she reviewed the red-coated Royal Canadian Mounted Police. She was even praised by the Speaker in Parliament for her "beauty, grace, and vivacity. America's First Lady has captured our hearts," he proclaimed.

Disaster came when JFK and Jackie were invited to a tree-planting ceremony on the grounds of Government House in Ottawa. Jackie took a shovel and scooped up only a small bit of dirt, but JFK, in a macho stance, dug into the ground like a ditchdigger. Although he concealed it, he suffered back spasms and agonizing pain. He flew with Jackie back to Washington and had to be secretly lifted off Air Force One onto a stretcher.

Back at the White House, "Mrs. Dunn" put through a call to Jacobson in New York. Arrangements were made for him to fly at once to Washington in a private twin-engine Cessna. He was secretly slipped into the White House to give shots to the stricken President. He later visited Jackie in her bedroom and administered shots to her as well.

It was during the four days he spent in Washington that Jackie made arrangements with him to accompany them on their upcoming State Visits to Paris and Vienna.

The doctor made a discovery while treating the President. He found that—as procured for him by a Secret Service agent—he'd been taking the highly addictive drug, Demerol. Jacobson asserted that the drug interfered with his amphetamines. Consequently, JFK promised to abandon Demerol. Jackie learned the identity of the agent and fired him.

When Jackie heard that her friend, Truman Capote, was also receiving shots from Jacobson, she put through a call to him. He told her that, once injected, he could go for almost 72 hours without sleep, working at a feverish speed. He also confessed that "after I've been 'shot up,' my libido rages out of control. One night at the Plaza Hotel, even five of New York's best hustlers couldn't satisfy me."

What Capote didn't tell her was that when coming down from Jacobson's shots, the patient often experienced severe depression, an emotional void, and bouts of paranoid schizophrenia.

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Reporters were getting suspicious about the Presidential comings and goings of Dr. Feelgood, who had attracted unwanted publicity because of his celebrity clientele. Consequently, whereas JFK wanted him to accompany them to Paris and Vienna, he didn't want reporters to see Jacobson boarding or exiting from Air Force One.

So he had Evelyn Lincoln book a conventional seat to Paris aboard an Air France jet. Paid for by taxpayers, the plane would carry only two passengers, Jacobson and his wife, Nina.

Later, Jacobson complained to Jackie, "With all those flight attendants, and the plane to ourselves, we expected the greatest service of all time. But it turned out to be the worst. The French staff decided to party all the way to Paris. During the flight, some of the staff joined *[or reinstated their memberships in]* the "Mile-High Club," a reference to in-flight seductions in the toilets.

In his unpublished memoirs, Jacobson recalled his time with both JFK and Jackie in Paris and Vienna.

In Paris, after a night in an expensive suite, he was picked up by the Secret Service and delivered to a private château *[a grandly imposing "hotel particulier"]* on the Quai d'Orsay.

After administering shots to JFK before he headed out for a round of appointments, Jacobson waited to be ushered into the Queen's Bedroom.

Jackie was having her hair styled by Alexandre, a celebrated Parisian hairdresser, who was crafting a bouffant hairdo inspired by 18th century antecedents as a means of accentuating her prominent cheekbones. "A beautiful face needs foliage around it," he grandly and poetically announced.

Before she received her injections, Jackie told Jacobson, "In Paris, I'm a bigger star than Jack is."

On the bed were two satin gowns. She was trying to decide which of them to wear for a grand dinner that Charles de Gaulle was hosting for the President and herself that night at the Palace of Versailles.

At one point, Jackie rose to her feet and ordered everybody out of the room, including Alexandre.

When they were alone, she turned to Jacobson and dropped her robe, revealing her nude body. She turned her back to him. "I'm ready for my closeup, Mr. DeMille!" *[She was parroting an iconic phrase from Gloria Swanson's* Sunset Blvd *(1950).]*

Facing Jackie's shapely buttocks, Jacobson injected his "magic elixir" into her left buttock.

The next morning's headlines in Paris would proclaim, "MADAME DE POMPADOUR RETURNS TO VERSAILLES."

In Vienna, Jackie Enchants the Soviet Pig

In Vienna, the Secret Service picked up Jacobson from the very posh Bristol Hotel and delivered him to an elegant private residence in the Viennese suburb of Semmerings. It was within that building, the residence of the American Ambassador to Austria, where JFK would receive Nikita Khrushchev later in the day.

Jacobson visited Jackie's bedroom first and administered her shots before she left to make her appearances for the day.

In JFK's bedroom, Jacobson encountered a President with severe back pain. He recalled how tense he was, anticipating the arrival of the belligerent Soviet dictator. "I feel like shit," JFK confessed. Like Jackie, he dropped his robe, except he still had on his jockey shorts. He pulled them down and lay face down on the bed, inviting Jacobson to administer the shots into his buttocks.

After his long meeting with Khrushchev, JFK reappeared in front of Jacobson two hours later. "It's not going well. We just had a big fight over Berlin, where he virtually threatened to attack America. I need more shots. But first, I've got to take a piss."

The rest of the Summit didn't go well. JFK later claimed that Khrushchev bullied him and even insulted him by referring to him as "The Boy." Ironically, that was the same appellation that Lyndon Johnson used to refer, privately, to JFK.

Jacobson later lamented, "My shots got rid of the President's back pain, but didn't give him the testosterone he needed to stand up to the fat Soviet pig."

When Jackie and JFK were outside the borders of the U.S., Bobby, who had grown increasingly alarmed over the injections they were receiving, slipped into the Lincoln Bedroom and removed five vials of Jacobson's elixirs. He sent them to the FBI lab for analysis.

Larry Newman, a Secret Service agent, was particularly alarmed at the doctor's close link to the President and his First Lady. "He could shoot poison into the President's veins for all we knew. He arrived with this dirty bag of who knows what chemicals. We'd heard that some of his patients had gotten hepatitis from his shots."

Newman went on to denounce Jacobson, defining him as "a batwing and chicken blood doctor. He came and went from the White House like those women who arrived to service the President through the revolving door."

The report from the FBI revealed that the vials contained large dosages of steroids and amphetamines.

When JFK returned from Paris and Vienna, Bobby confronted him and urged him to quit taking the shots. "Hell with that!" JFK shouted at him. "I don't care if his vials contain horse piss. The point is, they work for me."

When Jacobson heard that Bobby was having him investigated by the FBI, he wrote JFK a personal letter, telling him he was going to resign. JFK responded, "Like hell you are! I need you. I can't hold down the job of President without your shots." He then prevailed on Jacobson to stay on, even though JFK and Jackie never paid for any of his services. He donated his time and shots.

At one point, JFK urged Jacobson to relocate into the White House so that he would not have to slip around and

administer shots to them in secret. Jacobson turned down that request, claiming, “Some of my 400 other patients would die without my aid.”

Senator George Smathers also became concerned with JFK’s reliance on Dr. Feelgood. “In Palm Beach, playing golf, he told me he had to have these painkiller injections every six hours. One day on the course, he fell over. We carried him into the locker room and cleared everyone out. He pulled down his pants and dropped his jockey shorts. Then he lay down on his belly on this cot and turned his butt up to me. He instructed me how to use this syringe and a needle about three inches long. In the months to come, I think I saw more of Jack’s lilywhite ass cheeks than I did my wife’s butt.”

Often, Jacobson was able to treat JFK in New York during the President’s frequent visits. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Swedish-born Dag Hammarskjöld, had died in a plane crash on September 18, 1961. JFK flew to New York on September 25 to address the U.N.’s General Assembly.

The President hailed Hammarskjöld as “the greatest statesman of our century.” Privately, Jackie held him in total disdain, defining him as “a jealous queen.”

Her confidant, Adlai Stevenson, fed her information about the bitchy things Hammarsköld had said about her: “Jackie Kennedy is not that beautiful,” he had told Stevenson. “We have hundreds of girls in Sweden far more beautiful than her.”

He also criticized Jackie for not attending events in her honor. “You can’t pick up a newspaper without finding her plastic smile plastered on the front-page. She’s treated more like an Empress than a First Lady. All this acclaim for her is not merited.”

In Manhattan, Jacobson rushed to JFK’s penthouse suite at the Hotel Carlyle, where he administered shots before his speech.

The doctor often experimented with new ingredients within the brews he configured as injections, finding that cells extracted from the livers of baby lambs gave Jackie renewed life. At one point, he experimented with cells extracted from the inner organs of electric eels, injecting them as part of a medley of other compounds into her blood stream.

Jacobson was amazed that in the midst of their various crises, such as Khruschev’s threats to blow up America during the Cuban missile confrontation, JFK and Jackie were deeply intrigued by Hollywood gossip about his clients.

They were especially interested in hearing news about Jacobson’s patient, Eddie Fisher, and his wife, Elizabeth Taylor.

Jacobson told the First Couple intimate details about what the singer had confessed to him about having had sex with Taylor.

“She likes to strip naked and crawl on the floor on her hands and knees, begging me to enter her from the rear,” Fisher had said to Jacobson, who passed his comment on to the President and First Lady.

“She would purr like a sex kitten, begging for more,” Fisher had claimed.

Fisher would later sustain an affair with Pamela Turnure, one of JFK’s mistresses. Jackie later told Capote, “It was all so incestuous, with everybody doing everybody else.”

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The date was November 3, 1963. In Palm Beach, Jacobson was scheduled to meet with the President for the final time. When he saw them and administered their shots, he discovered that Jackie was tense and apprehensive about their upcoming trip to Texas. “The President seemed in good spirits, particularly after my shots, but I was disappointed that they didn’t invite me to fly down with them.”

“I’ll always remember them standing in the sunlit garden,” Jacobson wrote in his unpublished memoir. “Jackie even kissed me on the cheek, and the President shook my hand. He seemed so grateful to me that he looked for a moment like he wanted to embrace me. But he didn’t. What a handsome couple! In just days, they would be involved in a tragedy that changed the history of America.”

[Although Jacobson’s memoirs were submitted to at least fifteen publishers in Manhattan, all of the editors rejected it. The doctor had opted to disclose anecdotes that were far too revealing about his celebrity clients, most of whom were still alive and could have filed libel suits. Nonetheless, the manuscript was read by a number of editors, who leaked spicy details about his claims to the press. At the time, reporters seemed interested only in the drug taking of JFK and Jackie during their time in the White House.

In 1975, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs seized Jacobson’s supply of ingredients. After a review, his medical license was revoked by the New York State Board of Regents.

In the wake of Jackie’s death in 1994, her son, John F. Kennedy, Jr., asserted that he fully believed that the

doctor's injections had brought on his mother's lymphoma. His accusation was based on a report from the American Multicenter Cohort's study of 2,500 patients who had been heavy users of amphetamines.]

"I Am the Man Who Accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris"

—JFK

"John Kennedy is our President, but Jacqueline is our Movie Star."

—Tish Baldrige

In 1961, Press Secretary Pierre Salinger arrived in Paris, meeting with French journalists and spreading various myths about America's handsome young President and his beautiful First Lady. He made it a special point to relay stories about Jackie's French forebears.

He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. The French may have chopped off the head of Marie Antoinette, but they were still fascinated by royalty, as represented by Jackie. Before she returned to French soil, television shows had already glorified her presence, her charm, and her grace. She was called the most cultured woman ever to fill the post of America's First Lady.

At Orly Airport, the French President, Charles De Gaulle, and Madame Yvonne de Gaulle, waited on the tarmac to greet America's First Couple.

JFK soon realized that the crowds had turned out for a glimpse of Jackie and not himself.

Walking down the airplane steps, she dazzled in a navy blue silk suit and black velvet pillbox hot.

The screams went up: "*Jacquiii! Jacquiii! Jacquiii!"*

As one reporter said, "Jackie was the Queen of America arriving with her Prince Consort."

The French military greeted them with a 101-gun salute. The *président du Conseil Municipal de Paris* ***[i.e., the Mayor]*** stepped forward to present Jackie with a $4,000 diamond watch. Kennedy aide David Powers privately remarked. "This is the kind of turmoil that will not be equaled until the Second Coming."

The French President had declared the Kennedys arrival in Paris as a national holiday. Escorted by fifty roaring motorcycle policemen, the De Gaulles and the Kennedys were driven into Paris. Along the route, thousands upon thousands of Parisians waved American flags at them. Jackie was seated in a bubbletop Citroën with Yvonne de Gaulle, whom she would later define as, "small and mousy."

For their final ride into Paris, the motorcycle-riding policemen relinquished their positions to the Republican Guard, elegantly costumed equestrian attendants wearing glittering gold helmets topped with red plumes. As they entered Paris through the Porte d'Orléans, the crowds swelled to mammoth size.

Astride their snorting black horses, the Republican Guards led the Kennedys into "The City of Light," as French fighter jets roared overhead.

As America's First Couple arrived in front of the 19th-century façade of the Palais des Affaires Étrangeres, on the Quai d'Orsay, fronting the Seine, Jackie was escorted to the *Chambre de la Reine*, which had last been occupied by Queen Fabiola of Belgium. Within minutes, she was basking in a silver mosaic tub in a bathroom whose walls were layered in mother of pearl.

Within the hour, Alexandre, who had styled the hair of everyone from Greta Garbo to Elizabeth Taylor, arrived to apply the crowning touches for her luncheon date at the Élysée Palace with De Gaulle.

Meanwhile, in the *Chambre du Roi*, JFK was soaking in a gold-plated tub the size of a ping-pong table. He would spend part of his time in Paris soaking in this tub as a means of easing his back pain.

A future President, Lyndon Johnson, would often receive aides while sitting on his toilet outside the Oval Office. In contrast, in Paris, JFK welcomed his aides and some of his visitors while soaking in the tub. He even invited Janet des Rosiers *[the stewardess aboard the Caroline]* into the bathroom. "I'm not bashful," he told her, "but you'll understand why I can't stand up for you."

Later, both JFK and Jackie appeared downstairs, ready to be driven to the Élysée Palace where De Gaulle was hosting a lavish luncheon for them.

For her wardrobe, she had chosen a pale yellow silk suit with a matching hat.

Arriving at the Elysée, the Kennedy limousine was driven through the Grille de Coq where the Republican Guard saluted them with the sound of trumpets and drawn swords. She arrived at the palace bursting with "youth and beauty," in the words of *Le Figaro*. Time later reported, "The radiant young First Lady was the Kennedy who

really mattered."

They were welcomed by Nicole Alphand, the wife of Hérvé, the U.S. Ambassador to France. Jackie was surprised when she kissed JFK and hugged him. She didn't know until later that Nicole had been one of his lovers.

JFK had arrived in Paris humiliated by Fidel Castro and the Bay of Pigs disaster. He dreaded flying to Vienna to confront the bellicose Nikita Khrushchev. Aides had warned him that both De Gaulle and the Soviet dictator viewed the United States as an impotent paper tiger.

Both JFK and Jackie were apprehensive about their luncheon with the notoriously chauvinistic De Gaulle. He had little love for U.S. presidents and still harbored hostility toward the policies and behavior of Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt during the aftermath of World War II. He also resented NATO, viewing it as an attempt by Britain and the United States to undermine the independence of France.

Seated with Jackie at the head table, he found her enchanting and was astonished at her mastery of the French language.

At one point, Jackie became enraged at the translator. Her husband's dry wit was not being properly presented. She dismissed him and took over herself as the official translator. No one in the history of diplomacy had ever done that.

As David Powers later remarked, Jackie was in essence trying to seduce De Gaulle with her whispery voice.

When not translating between the leaders, she talked with De Gaulle, chatting about everything from Louis XVI to the later Bourbons. "Her knowledge of my homeland and French culture was a glorious surprise," he told the press.

He later told André Malraux that at first, he thought she was like a little girl until she opened her mouth. With perfect manners, she sampled *langouste*, followed by *pâté de foie gras* and *noix de veau Orloff*.

As a gift to De Gaulle, she presented him with an original letter the Marquis de Lafayette had written to George Washington. Her friend, Jayne Wrightsman, had purchased it for $90,000.

She told De Gaulle that she'd named her French poodle "Gaullie."

He would later say, "She is a charming woman, even ravishing, with beautiful hair and dazzling eyes."

Even JFK was impressed with Jackie's performance. He later said, "It would be as if Madame de Gaulle sat next to me and discussed Henry Clay."

[The very influential lawyer, politician, and orator Henry Clay, Sr. (1777-1852) represented Kentucky in both the U.S. House of Representatives (including three terms as its Speaker) and the U.S. Senate. He also served as Secretary of State from 1825 to 1829. He lost his bids for the U.S. presidency in 1824, 1832, and 1844.]

Later in the day, while JFK was meeting privately with the U.S. Ambassador to France, Jackie retreated to her palatial lodgings on the Quai d'Orsay, in preparation for the lavish banquet which De Gaulle had organized for them that evening at the Palace of Versailles.

She needed hours to prepare herself. Alexandre was back on the scene, creating another spectacular bouffant hairdo for her. Her big chignon was topped with a fragile diamond tiara.

She had a choice of two gowns to wear to the palace—one by Oleg Cassini, the other by Hubert de Givenchy. She knew she'd get better press if she wore Givenchy's ivory-colored silk zibeline with a bodice embroidered with silk floss and seed pearls. The skirt was bellshaped, and she wore long white gloves.

Consuelo Crespi, a fashion consultant in Paris working for *Vogue*, would approve the dress but attack Alexandre's hairdo as "not becoming to Mrs. Kennedy."

With flags fluttering and with JFK at her side, Jackie, in an eleven-car motorcade, arrived at what used to be the headquarters and nerve center of the Sun King *[Louis XIV]*. Her arrival was met by a thunderous roar and hundreds of exploding flashbulbs.

At Versailles, De Gaulle descended a pink marble staircase, telling Jackie, "You look as if you just stepped out of a painting by Watteau."

The eyes of the 150 guests assembled in the *Galerie des Glaces* (Hall of Mirrors) turned and stared as Jackie entered the fabled room on De Gaulle's arm.

It was **Jackie** *(right)*, not Madame **Yvonne de Gaulle** *(left)*, who was the epitome of French style and chic. Some reporters described Madame de Gaulle as "looking like a yard goods saleswoman." In the middle was **JFK** *(left)* confronting an often hostile **De Gaulle**, critical of many U.S. policies.

Following the banquet, De Gaulle escorted Jackie into the Palace's *Opera Royale*, where they saw a ballet first performed for Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour. The theater was lit with flaming torches.

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Jackie was thrilled to be back in the city where she'd experienced some of her happiest moments as a student at the Sorbonne.

She had been nervous about meeting Charles de Gaulle, but eager to see his Minister of Culture, André Malraux. The press was unaware that she and Malraux had indulged in some "heavy dating" during her time in Paris. He had always topped her list of the world's most fascinating men. In years gone by, they had reportedly come close to consummating their love affair, but, in Jackie's words, "not gone all the way."

Very *Louis*, very *ancien régime*:

Two views of two savvy and sophisticated Francophiles outcharming each other at Versailles.

Malraux still seemed all things to Jackie—a romantic adventurer, a daredevil, an eccentric art historian, a hero of both the French Resistance in the early 1940s and the anti-Franco movement during Spain's Civil War in the 1930s.

Privately, Jackie told only her closest friends that she wanted her husband to establish a cabinet post entitled "Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs," a post occupied with panache, in France, by Malraux himself. She even hinted that she might like to hold down the position herself.

In the years that had passed since her last seeing Malraux, Jackie had had access to at least some of the gossip swirling around him. His claim to have had "metaphysical talks" with Josef Stalin during his visit to Russia in 1934 have been largely discredited, although Malraux insisted that such conversations took place. She'd also heard that he'd run out of money during his visit to Cambodia, and that he had ordered his first wife, Clara Goldschmidt, to steal statues from a Cambodian temple.

When he tried to sell these treasures, he was arrested but later allowed to go free because of his powerful connections within Cambodia's French colonial government.

His claims to have been a close friend of T.E. Lawrence *[a.k.a. Lawrence of Arabia]* went unchallenged because they were frequently sighted and photographed together. Less well-authenticated was the rumor that in the course of one drunken night, Malraux had sodomized him.

Philosopher Raymond Aron wrote that Malraux was "one-third genius, one-third false, and one-third incomprehensible." Journalist Katherine Knorr claimed, "As De Gaulle's pal, Malraux is the court intellectual and occasional buffoon."

While JFK was away, Malraux arrived at Jackie's residence and, as she later told her confidants, "We fell into each other's arms."

When she congratulated him on his new post, he expressed disappointment. "I wanted to be an *homme d'etat* (great statesman) like De Gaulle, but alas, I am only a *ministre d'état."*

La crème of the French intelligentsia, **André Malraux** also welcomed Jackie to Paris. Jackie had long been captivated by his *La Condition Humaine*, which had won the prestigious Prix Goncourt literary award in 1933 and had elevated Malraux to global attention. She wasn't attracted just to his mind, but had repeatedly called attention to "what a striking figure he is, and how beautifully he speaks."

He became her tour guide, escorting her on a very private visit to the Louvre, where they talked about art and she saw recent acquisitions that were new within the vast galleries. Malraux arranged for the room exhibiting the *Mona Lisa (La Giaconda)* to be screened off for her private, up-close viewing.

She was shocked at the condition of that painting, later asserting, "Its pigments were fading, almost disappearing. Some colors had completely gone since Da Vinci's day."

"We have to put a wooden brace on its back to tighten the split that has developed," he told her.

At some point during the viewing, he suggested that he might arrange "the unspeakable"—the transport of the *Mona Lisa* to Washington, D.C., and New York for viewings by vast numbers of Americans. "I'd be taking a real chance, of course. No ancient painting on wood travels well because of atmospheric changes. It is very fragile, unlike my love and devotion to you, which remain as strong as ever."

During her tour through the Louvre with Malraux, Jackie made an off-hand suggestion. She broached the topic of the international significance of great art. "You should lend us some of your artworks," she suggested to Malraux. "I would love to see Leonardo da Vinci's **Mona Lisa** *(depicted above)* again and show her to the Americans."

He turned to her and smiled. "I'll see what I can do." The "unthinkable" was about to happen.

The rest of the day was spent touring and lunching with Malraux. Lunch was at La Celle St. Cloud, the former secret hideaway of Mme de Pompadour

Over lunch, Malraux and the First Lady indulged in indiscreet gossip about foreign leaders whom both of them had met. She claimed that the West German leader, Konrad Adenauer, was *un peu gaga [i.e., "a little bit confused."]*. In contrast, she defined the Shah of Iran "a pompous ass." She and Malraux speculated about how the

aging Shah sexually handled his much younger wife, Farah Diba.

Jackie also confessed that she despised Queen Frederica of Greece. Years later, Malraux would dedicate his book, *Anti-Memoirs* to Jackie.

Later, they drove, along with the Secret Service, to Malmaison, ten miles from Paris. The house had been purchased by Joséphine, wife of Napoléon, in 1799. It was here that she died in 1814 at the age of 51.

The curator at Malmaison later suggested that Jackie flirted outrageously with the Minister of Culture during their tour. "Why not?" he asked. "He was dark and handsome, and she looked like a porcelain doll. A harmless flirtation. We Frenchmen do that all the time. When America's First Lady toured Malmaison, her smile was charming, but when she looked at André, it revealed a certain carnivorous quality. When Mrs. Kennedy was in the room, André had eyes only for her."

Meanwhile, JFK was addressing 400 members of the press at the Palais de Chaillot. Before TV cameras, he said, "I do not think it altogether inappropriate to introduce myself to this audience. I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it."

Malraux later described Jackie in his memoirs as *allumeuse ["incandescent, or someone who gives one hope]* and he also suggested that she was *(une femme) qui craque l'allumette [a woman who lights a match and consequently, a fire]*. He ultimately concluded that she was also a *coquette*.

His jealous and musically talented third wife, Marie-Madeleine Lioux, who had not been invited to the lunch at La Celle St. Cloud or on the tour of Malmaison, was more dismissive of Jackie's charms, defining her as "intelligent but superficial."

After the Kennedys flew out of Paris, Malraux met with De Gaulle, telling him, "The wife of the American President is unique."

The senior French statesman agreed that she was, responding, "I can see her in about ten years on the yacht of a Greek petrol millionaire."

De Gaulle's prediction was clairvoyant.

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[In May of 1962, André Malraux, with Marie-Madeleine Lioux, were entertained at the White House by the First Couple. Of the many state dinners Jackie had presided over, she seemed to pay more attention to this than to any of the others.

The first day of Malraux's sojourn in D.C. began when Jackie was scheduled to meet with a group of visiting foreign students. She instructed her press secretary to tell the group that she was not feeling well.

Within the hour, however, she'd dressed chicly and was seen slipping out the back entrance of the White House to escort Malraux without his wife on a tour of Washington's National Gallery of Art. She appeared in a shocking pink strapless dress revealing a lot of her shapely bare shoulders. As before in Paris, Malraux was awed by her beauty.

During his tour with Jackie, the three paintings that impressed him the most were Rembrandt's Girl with a Broom*; El Greco's* Christ Chasing the Money-lenders from the Temple*; and Domenico Veneziano's* Madonna With Child.

For the dinner she had scheduled at the White House that evening, Jackie had invited luminaries from the art world, including such theatrical personalities as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller (who had survived his recent—in 1961—divorce from Marilyn Monroe), and Hollywood director Elia Kazan.

When Miller entered the room, she whispered privately to him, "Our mates are known to stray a bit." She was, of course, referencing Monroe's affair with JFK.

Miller was shocked to be seated by Jackie at the head table. "She was bringing me in out of the cold," he claimed. He was referring to the days when he had been accused of being a Communist by the witch-hunting Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy.

Tennessee Williams arrived rather drunk and drugged, although his powers of observation were still sharp and trenchant. "I suspected that Jackie and André have their sexual secrets," he accurately surmised. "I'm sure there has been some hot sex between them, although I have no actual proof. To me, he seemed like one hot Frenchman. I heard that he was once captured by the Gestapo, and that his testicles were tortured, but from the looks of him, I bet those balls were back in working order."

Other guests included the world-renowned choreographer, George Balanchine, who had arranged for Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev to perform a pas de deux at the White House.

Composer Leonard Bernstein showed up, as did critic Edmund Wilson, along with artists such as Andrew Wyeth and Mark Rothko. Novelists and poets included Robert Penn Warren, Archibald MacLeish, Saul Bellow, and

Thornton Wilder.

As the party wore on, and as the champagne flowed, Malraux and Jackie seemed to enjoy their own private amusements. She even did a few impressions for him, including one of Queen Elizabeth.

Gore Vidal later said, "Jackie did the world's best impersonation of the Queen, topped only by my own impersonation of Eleanor Roosevelt."

Jackie also invited aviator Charles Lindbergh, who rarely made public appearances.

The dinner at the White House was conducted in two separate rooms, with Madeleine designated as the guest of JFK in the State Dining Room, and with Jackie entertaining Malraux in the Blue Room. As toastmaster, JFK said, "We all want to take part in life's numerous adventures, but Mr. Malraux has left all of us behind."

Jackie asked Lyndon Johnson to give the welcoming speech in the Blue Room. Before that, she'd told Malraux, "Lyndon is an American original, a figure out of Mark Twain. You must meet his Lady Bird and hear her Texas drawl. I call them 'Uncle Cornpone and his Little Pork Chop.'"

Two days after the formal dinner, JFK and Jackie invited Malraux and Madeleine to spend Sunday with them at their private residence, Glen Ora, in Virginia.

Leaving JFK and Madeleine in the house, Malraux and Jackie went horseback riding in the early afternoon, after a light lunch. She said that they would return at four o'clock, but they didn't get back to the house until seven. Their abandoned spouses didn't question them.

Back in Washington, Jackie met privately with Malraux in her private quarters within the White House, demanding that her staff not disturb her during her final moments with France's Minister of Culture. Such privacy led to speculation.

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On January 8, 1963, Jackie was vacationing in Palm Beach but flew back to Washington to accept the custody of The Mona Lisa. *It had been shipped from Paris under heavy guard to the National Gallery in D.C., with the understanding that it would, after a predetermined number of days, move on to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City*.

Malraux had returned to Washington for the unveiling. Before her departure from Palm Beach, Jackie had told her secret to JFK. She was pregnant again.

But no one noticed that when she appeared at the National Gallery with diamond earrings, wearing a gown crafted from mauve-colored chiffon embroidered with pearls and crystals.

She was warmly received by Malraux, who seemed to want to be alone with her. She informed him that because of his generous gesture of bringing the Mona Lisa *and* Whistler's Mother *to Washington, she would arrange for the Smithsonian Institution to ship, for exhibition in France, the Hope Diamond as part of an upcoming exhibition of historic French jewelry in Paris. Prior to Jackie's intervention, the Smithsonian had rejected Malraux's request*.

JFK also showed up at the reception to welcome Malraux. The low point of the exhibit came when a paparazzo snapped a picture of him in an intimate conversation with a beautiful young French woman. JFK ordered the Secret Service to confiscate the photographer's camera.

The Da Vinci masterpiece had traveled to America under heavy guard and within atmospherically controlled conditions, aboard the S.S. France. It had arrived at the National Gallery under police escort.

Malraux's address, which had to be translated, went wrong when his microphone went dead. The Culture Minister proclaimed a new heyday for what he defined as "Atlantic culture." Publicly, he had nothing but praise for JFK, although privately, he'd told De Gaulle, "Jack is no FDR."

The big debate that ensued in the National Press was "Who has the better smile, Mona Lisa or Jackie Kennedy?"

Jackie and JFK invited Malraux to visit them at Hyannis Port. When he got there, the First Couple took him boating.

Privately, she said her farewell to him. There is no record of their exchange. With credit to a phrase coined by Marcel Proust, perhaps they shared a "Remembrance of Things Past."

After its display in Manhattan, when the Mona Lisa was shipped back to Paris, Malraux said, "It's sad for Da Vinci's masterpiece to leave America's shores where La Giaconda made so many fans. But I don't feel all that bad, since America has its own Mona Lisa in the face of Jacqueline Kennedy."]

Khrushchev Bullies "Boy Kennedy"

& Cops a Feel of Jackie Under the Table

Air Force One, carrying thirty-five of Jackie's trunks, landed at the Vienna Airport in heavy rain. After being welcomed by Austrian officials, Jackie headed for a rendezvous with Nina Khrushchev, while JFK was driven to the private residence of the American ambassador in the Semmering mountains outside the city.

A chicly dressed Jackie encountered Khrushchev's wife, the cunning, fat, and dowdy Nina, who looked like a bag lady. Later, when asked about her, Jackie said, "She is a very kind woman, the type you'd prefer as your child's babysitter."

JFK's "Summit" with the Soviet dictator quickly degenerated into a *[his words]* disaster.

He told columnist James Reston, "It was the worst day of my life. Khrushchev ridiculed me over the Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba. The bastard savaged me. He treated me like I was some inexperienced young boy."

When the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, heard that, he said, "Kennedy at last has met a man who is impervious to his charm."

"When JFK returned to Washington, he told Lem Billings, "The son of a bitch threatened me with nuclear war if I did not recognize East Germany's control over West Berlin. When I warned him that a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia might result in the deaths of seventy million people, he looked at me and said, 'So what?'"

A State dinner had been scheduled for that evening at Schönbrunn Palace, the rococo 1,400-room summer residence of the Austrian Hapsburgs. As JFK and Jackie arrived, the thunderous crowds shouted "*JAC-QUI!*!"

At Schönbrunn, Khrushchev demanded to be seated next to Jackie. He may have dismissed JFK as a statesman, but he was obviously excited by the charm and beauty of his wife. She appeared seductive, creating a sensation in a skintight pink mermaid dress designed by Oleg Cassini. She had awed De Gaulle with her knowledge of French literature, and she tried to impress Khrushchev with her knowledge of Russian literature, talking about the works of Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Pushkin.

To her amazement, the dictator seemed unfamiliar with the Russian classics. He launched into telling her how many teachers there were in the Ukraine, as opposed to a much smaller number during the reign of the Czars.

East (in the form of **Nina Khruschev**, *right*) meets West, midway, in Vienna,

(Yes, Jackie won, hands-down, but considering the competition, did she really have to be THAT stylish?)

"Oh, Mr. Chairman," Jackie said, demurely. "Don't bore me with statistics."

After dinner, a ballet troupe appeared at their table, throwing flowers. "The dancers are throwing the flowers at YOU, Mr. Chairman," Jackie said.

He shrugged off the compliment. "No, it's for your handsome husband who is being honored. If you want to keep him, don't let him out of your sight. Viennese women are known for being very seductive."

At one point, she informed him that she knew the names of the dogs the Soviets had sent into Outer Space—Belka, Laika, and Strelka. She'd heard that one of the dogs had given birth to puppies, and she requested one from him, "The puppy is on its way," he promised.

Two months later, the puppy was delivered to the White House. Jackie made a gift of it to Caroline.

Outside, the roar of voices shouting *JAC-QUI! JAC-QUI!* could be heard in the banqueting hall as she discussed Russian horses and Ukrainian folk dances with Khrushchev.

At one point, Khrushchev was asked if he'd like to pose for a picture with President Kennedy.

"NO!" he said, looking at Jackie, "I'd much rather pose with Mrs. Kennedy."

The next day, some newspapers reported that the seemingly carefree Mrs. Kennedy was intoxicated on Austrian wine. It was also rumored that at one point during the dinner, the Soviet dictator had placed his chubby hand on Jackie's knee, feeling up her dress.

Headlines in Vienna blared: *SMITTEN KHRUSHCHEV IS JACKIE'S HAPPY ESCORT. FIRST LADY WINS KHRUSHCHEV*.

The next day, JFK and Jackie attended a service within Vienna's magnificent Gothic cathedral, St. Stephens. The archbishop of Vienna officiated, and a Mozart hymn was performed by the celebrated Vienna Boy's Choir. A prayer ending the service called for world peace. Leaving the church, whereas JFK remained stoic, Jackie was seen weeping.

During their final meeting, JFK told Khrushchev, "The United States will not abandon West Berlin. It's going to be a damn cold winter."

As JFK and Jackie boarded the plane for London, Khrushchev was known to have told his aides, "Kennedy is a weak boy. The power behind the throne is Mrs. Kennedy. She's the one ruling that god damn country."

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After Vienna, JFK and Jackie flew to London for a private visit with her sister, Lee Radziwill. The occasion involved the christening of Anna Christina ("Tina"), whose father was Prince Stanislas.

Diplomatic gestures, genuine smiles, and the promise of a puppy from Outer Space characterized the "summit" between **America's First Lady** and the Soviet Dictator, **Nikita Khrushchev.**

Like Jackie, Lee had experienced a difficult delivery. Tina had been born three months premature, weighing less than three pounds. She had spent three months in an incubator, but had survived against grave odds. Therefore, her christening was an event to be celebrated.

On the eve of the christening, JFK and Jackie dined with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip in the State Dining Room of Buckingham Palace. In the court circular that described the occasion, Lee and her husband, Prince Stanislas, were listed as "Prince and Princess." In a loud contradiction, however, the London tabloids headlined the news that Her Majesty had never granted a royal license for the Radziwills to use those titles in Britain.

In London, the Windsors, **Prince Philip** *(left)* and **Queen Elizabeth** *(second from right)* entertain a chicly dressed **Jacqueline** and **JFK**.

Her Majesty liked Jackie more than she did a future First Lady, Nancy Reagan, whom the Queen privately accused of flirting with Philip.

Jackie was not returning immediately to the U.S. She planned to fly with Lee, her sister, to Athens.

Before her departure, JFK warned Secret Service agent, Clint Hill, that "At no point are you to let Mrs. Kennedy cross paths with that bum, Aristotle Onassis."

While Jackie toured Greece, JFK retreated to Palm Beach. Once there, he told Senator Smathers, "I am nursing my wounds, getting over my humiliation in Vienna by seducing two White House secretaries, listening to Frank Sinatra records with a little Peggy Lee, and drinking lots of daiquiris. In addition to my bad back, all I have to worry about is an impending nuclear war."

Restoring the White House "Mrs. Kennedy Thinks She's Marie Antoinette"

After her return from Europe, where "I wowed the masses," Jackie embarked with a fierce determination on her sweeping restoration of the White House. She told JFK and William Walton, "I want to make the White House so grand that Charles de Gaulle will be ashamed of his tacky old Versailles."

J.B. West, the building's Chief Usher, privately told other White House staffers, "I think Mrs. Kennedy thinks she's the reincarnation of Marie Antoinette."

Even before she occupied the White House, Jackie had begun articulating ideas for its transformation, consulting with Sister Parrish (Mrs. Henry Parrish II), and drawing up possible plans.

She learned that there was virtually nothing among the furnishings dating from before 1948. "People come from all over the world to see the White House, and it should be filled with antiques or furnishings owned by former Presidents, something with history attached to it. We're going to begin a restoration. I hate the word 'redecoration.'"

"When Mrs. Kennedy arrived at the White House, she was well versed in its history," said James Roe Ketchum, the building's curator. "She immediately earned our respect."

No sooner was her plan leaked to the press than she faced an assault from Republicans. It seemed that their fear was that Jackie would turn the White House into a monument to Kennedy.

She needed a vast array of contributors and committees to help her carry out her grand scheme,. She hired the decorating firm of the House of Jansen, which previously had restored the Palace of Versailles. The firm's clients included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

She also turned to a leading French decorator, Stephane Boudin, and she sought the cooperation of Henry Francis du Pont of the famous chemical family. He was viewed as the leading authority on American antiques. These two strong-willed personalities immediately conflicted, with Jackie forced to serve as mediator.

upper photo: Cover of *Life* magazine, September, 1961

lower photo: Restoring the White House

She also formed committees and set up a White House Restoration Fund as a means of shifting the costs of these financial burdens away from the taxpayers. Collectively, she referred to all these experts and committees she created as "my Politburo."

She also became the supervising housekeeper, issuing almost daily bulletins and memos to the staff. She wanted each of the building's 29 fireplaces ready to be lit at any time of the day or night, and she demanded that all 412 door knobs in the White House be polished weekly.

She also brought in her wealthy friend Bunny Mellon, an acclaimed horticulturist, to restore the White House Rose Garden. Today, it is used for press conferences. Jackie later said, "the beauty of the garden even impresses hard-nosed reporters."

For her collection of historic antiques, not everything had to be donated. The White House had in storage, either in its basement or in a cavernous warehouse in Fort Washington, across the Potomac, in Maryland, a treasure trove of relics. From storage, she rescued many pieces that previous First Ladies had discarded. These included the "Hayes Desk," which Jackie moved into the Oval Office. It had been crafted from timbers salvaged from the mid-19th century three-masted sailing vessel, the *HMS Resolute*, which had been trapped in Arctic ice during an exploratory search commissioned by the Royal Navy, and during which its crew had suffered unimaginable horrors. The desk had been a gift from Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes, cementing Anglo-American friendship.

Jackie discovered the White House china that Mary Todd Lincoln had purchased during the early months of the Civil War. On that same day, she turned up James Monroe's gold and silver flatware.

She supervised everything down to minor details, including the banishment of the lighting fixtures in the State Dining Room. She said it deepened the lines in a woman's face. As replacements, she ordered sconces whose candles cast a more forgiving light.

Antique wallpaper was found in a historic Maryland residence, and she ordered craftsmen to painstakingly have it removed and repasted onto the walls of the White House's diplomatic room. The cost: $12,500.

Lacking a budget, she persuaded wealthy donors to contribute, ending up with 160 antique paintings. These included such treasures as a $250,000 portrait of Benjamin Franklin owned by Walter Annenberg, the Philadelphia publisher. Jackie reminded all these donors that they could benefit from a tax deduction.

Truman Capote claimed that Jackie pursued the rich "with gleeful malice. She loaded her various committees and subcommittees with as many wealthy bluebloods as she could find—and then milked them for all they were worth."

By the end of the restoration project, Jackie was no longer the debutante from Newport. She had evolved into an independent-minded woman and had become very assertive. When Arthur Krock *[a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner]* and his wife, Martha Krock *[a society columnist for the Washington Times-Herald]*, were invited to dinner at the White House, Martha got drunk and chastised Jackie for skipping out on several events where the First Lady was to have been honored.

Paul Mellon with **Bunny Mellon** during the Johnson administration. They were called "the most self-effacing billionaires in the world."

Jackie smiled politely, but the next day, she ordered her social secretary to permanently remove the Krocks from the White House guest list.

Her near decade-long marriage to JFK had experienced its low points. There were times when both of them seemed out of love with the other, a condition accelerated by his constant womanizing.

But as First Lady, Jackie won her husband's respect and maybe even his love. They bonded as never before, becoming true allies, one feeding off the other. One writer claimed that they "fused like two nuclei," sending off explosions of solar energy.

A clever money-raising device involved the publication of a magazine entitled *The White House: A Historic Guide*. It has sold five million copies over a span of time, the money going into the White House Restoration Fund.

For the most part, Jackie's restoration work met with press approval. In the first issue of *Newsweek*, published in 1962, appeared this comment: "Jacqueline Kennedy has made more changes in the White House than any woman in 143 years. This alone entitles her to at least a footnote in history. Her style and influence could easily give her some highly readable paragraphs in the main text of history."

Jackie's chief critic was reporter Maxine Cheshire, who wrote several scalding articles about her for the *Washington Post*. Cheshire exposed the dissension, the arm-twisting used in raising money for the White House restoration, and made several allegations, including that many of Jackie's acquisitions—hailed as genuine American antiques—were actually fakes. She cited such specifics as a desk in the Green Room that had cost $20,000 and hailed as an antique, but which was really a reproduction.

In response to this, JFK telephoned Philip Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post*, to complain about Cheshire's articles. Graham and JFK had been longtime friends, often going "philandering together." But Graham did not stop the publication of the articles.

"You've reduced Jackie to tears," JFK said to Graham.

At the White House, Jackie was devastated by Cheshire's exposé. She turned to Henry Francis Du Pont, who offered a sympathetic ear. "Cheshire is the most malicious of the harpies," Jackie said. *["Harpies" was Jackie's word for the female members of the Washington Press Corps.]*

On the verge of tears, Jackie said, "That dreadful woman had done what she can to make my life miserable and the lives of my children. I'm trying to do something wonderful, with your help, in restoring the White House, only to have this bitch trash us in the *Post."*

“The price, my dear, of being in the public eye,” Du Pont responded.

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In 1962, Jackie finally agreed to allow cameras into the White House as part of a guided tour that she would conduct. The program would later be viewed by some 60 million viewers around the world and would win both Emmy and Peabody Awards.

She had worked on the script itself, but often ad-libbed on camera.

Many of her off-the-cuff remarks were not historically accurate. A crew from CBS had to return to the White House to re-record some of her lines.

During the telecast, she claimed that Lincoln had been her favorite president, although she had “the strongest affinity,” she said, for Thomas Jefferson.

Jackie carried through on her restoration project, simultaneous with JFK facing one crisis after another—turmoil in the U.S. steel industry, civil rights conflicts in the South, the Bay of Pigs, the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the threat of a nuclear attack from the Soviet Union.

To an increasing degree, she stood up to her husband. Noticing how gloomy he was at the end of a day, she asked him, “Where is all this Irish wit and charm you are said to possess?”

Laura Bergquist, writing for *Look*, claimed, “Mrs. Kennedy is always trying to deflate JFK’s ego, and he strikes back, criticizing ‘her self-contained privacy,’ as he puts it.”

As 1963 deepened, Jackie asked her secretary, Mary Gallagher, “Do you think I’ve done enough as First Lady?”

Gallagher assured her that her many accomplishments guaranteed that she had.

“Good!” Jackie responded. Then she said that she was going to curtail most of her public activities and spend more time with her husband and children.

“Jack desperately wants this child I’m giving birth to,” she told Gallagher. “Unlike in my past when I exerted myself too much, I’m going to look after myself. I must succeed in this pregnancy after many failures of the past.”

Then she turned and gazed out her office window. “You might say I’m taking the veil.”

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Jackie Kennedy was startled when JFK asked her to go on a goodwill visit to India and Pakistan in March of 1962 without him. She agreed, but with the stipulation that her sister, Lee Radziwill go with her. The crowds in both countries became hysterical, crying out, “*Jackie Ki Jai! Ameriki Rani!”* (“Hail Jackie, Queen of America!”)

Jackie drew bigger crowds than Queen Elizabeth during her visit as head of the British Commonwealth. “Nothing else happened in India while Mrs. Kennedy was here,” asserted the *Times of India*. “Her presence completely dominated the Indian scene.”

She picked up a small fortune in gifts, including necklaces studded with diamonds, rubies, and pearls. Of course, there were the invariable protests, some critics attacking Jackie for wearing high fashion in a poverty-stricken country. Jackie told the press, “I only buy second hand, and everything at the Ritz Thrift Shop.”

Her itinerary was planned for her, but she did insist on viewing the erotic carvings of the Black Pagoda of Konarac, especially one of a woman making love “to two violently tumescent men at the same time.”

Back in New York, she told Truman Capote, “I’ll have to try that position some time.”

The Newport debutante of 1950, **Lee Radziwill** *(left)* and **Jackie**, the Newport debutante of 1947, were riding high during their state visit to India and Pakistan. These lovely sisters drew far larger crowds than the Queen of England during her visit to the sub-continent.

Chapter Ten

Jackie's Debut as a Fashionista

The First Lady Makes Oleg Cassini a Star

He Returns the Favor by Making Her…. With Papa Joe's Permission

Caught in the act, **Jackie Kennedy**, the new First Lady, was photographed dancing intimately with **Oleg Cassini,** whom she'd dubbed the New Frontier's "Secretary of Style." Rumors of a secret romance between the designer and his favorite fashionista circulated among the Washington press corps.

Oleg Cassini *(left)* is seen chatting with the First Couple. “I do think my social position as a close friend of the Kennedys helped to raise the status and image of American designers throughout the world.” He recalled that his most fun night at the White House was when he and JFK got drunk, and Oleg dressed in drag.

In the post-war years, in Palm Beach, Oleg Cassini, the fashion designer, and his younger brother, Igor Cassini, a gossip columnist, had become friends with Joseph P. Kennedy *[“Papa Joe”]*. They were often seen playing golf together.

Oleg found Papa Kennedy “mischievous with owlish eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses, with a knowing smile and a puckish sensibility that mocked his very direct manner.”

In New York, both men appeared on the arms of stunningly beautiful girls once a week at Joseph’s favorite restaurant, La Caravelle. Despite the fact that Joseph was married, he seemed to have no problem being seen in the company of a beautiful woman. But when Oleg started dating Joe’s daughter, Eunice, the Kennedy patriarch abruptly put a stop to it. “She’s not your type,” he told Oleg.

At least some of the credit associated with the image projected by **Jackie** during the Camelot years derives from her aesthetic collaboration with Oleg Cassini.

Here, positioned on the cover of *Jacqueline Kennedy, The White House Years*, the First Lady appears in the white double-satin gown he designed for her to wear to some of JFK's inaugural balls in January of 1961.

And that was the end of that burgeoning romance.

Oleg and his younger brother, Igor, moved into the world of what was then called café society, a world peopled by playboys such as Porfirio Rubirosa, or heiresses like Woolworth's Barbara Hutton or "Big Tobacco's" Doris Duke.

Igor, later nicknamed café society the "jet set," a term that caught on in the 1950s.

At first, Igor, whose friends called him "Ghigi," became the more famous of the two brothers, writing a gossip column for the Hearst newspapers under the pen name of "Cholly Knickerbocker." It was he who eventually designated Jackie as 1947's Debutante of the Year.

The columnist Liz Smith worked for a while as Igor's journalistic assistant. She defined the Cassini brothers as "a pair of Lotharios," likening them to pirates who slept around.

In 1941, Oleg married the Hollywood beauty, Gene Tierney. Although their marriage survived for twelve stormy years, they had periods of separation. Right after the war, Tierney informed her estranged husband, who was living elsewhere, that she was carrying on an affair with movie idol Tyrone Power as well as another with "a handsome young congressman from Massachusetts," *[John F. Kennedy]*.

"Oleg Cassini's remarkable talent helped Jackie and the New Frontier get off to a magnificent start. Their historic collaboration gave us memorable changes in fashion, and style classics that remain timeless to this day."

—Teddy Kennedy

At the outbreak of World World II, Oleg joined the U.S. Coast Guard, but later served in the U.S. Army as a cavalry officer. A bisexual, he was said to have had an affair with actor Victor Mature during the war years, when both of them served in the Coast Guard.

Even though—when deprived of the company of women—they were lovers, back on land they often competed for the attentions of glamorous (female) movie stars.

One drunken night, Mature confessed to him how he destroyed Oleg's once-budding romance with Betty Grable and subsequently took her for himself: "I told her you had syphilis. That's why she dropped you like a hot potato," Mature said. "My exact words were, 'The Cassini family has had it for years. It's the talk of Europe. Everyone knows the Cassinis have syphilis."

Moving through romantic interludes with Gene Tierney (whom he married), Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, and eventually, Jacqueline Kennedy, Oleg, an American fashion designer born to an aristocratic Russian family, was a first-rate "babe magnet."

He developed his reputation designing gowns for Paramount Pictures, but his legacy survives based on his role as the designer for First Lady Jackie Kennedy. He created "The Jackie Look," and his innovative A-line sheath and Empire strapless dress continues to be influential throughout the world of 21st Century High Fashion.

Oleg had designed for stars who included Tierney (his wife); Joan Crawford, Jayne Mansfield, Natalie Wood, Betty Grable, and Marilyn Monroe.

10—Mon., Mar. 20, 1950 *** New York Journal-American

The Smart Set
by Cholly Knickerbocker

Cholly Knickerbocker Observes:

Registered U. S. Patent Office.

Lucius Ordway and Ellen Fraser a Duet; Dorothy di Frasso Is Here on Business; Walter Brooks Dating Jeanne Miller

THE GOSSIP MILL: Lucius Ordway, the Palm Beach squire, is escorting Ellen Fraser to all dinner parties. Ellen is one of the best friends of Lucius' estranged wife, Kay Denckla Ordway, who hasn't yet divorced her husband for the simple reason that "Mr. Ordway hasn't asked me for one yet."

The Cassini Brothers: How smart hustlers from Imperial Russia competed for glamour, money, fame, and acknowledgments from "the smart set:"

Above is a typical news flash (March 20, 1950) from the gossipy world of **Cholly** (Igor) **Knickerbocker** (Cassini).

When Christina ("Tina") Cassini was born on November 19, 1948, there was speculation that her actual father might be Howard Hughes, Tyrone Power, producer Charles Feldman, or perhaps JFK.

As Maureen Orth, writing in *Vanity Fair*, said: "Deeply conscious of his romantic image, Oleg Cassini wanted to be seen only with 'top top girls.' Grace Kelly, who fell madly in love with him, was a top top girl, but Marilyn Monroe, he confided to journalist Joe Klein, who ghostwrote his autobiography, was just 'a little polo pony.'"

He had first met Jackie shortly after her marriage to JFK, but he did not become her exclusive couturier until 1961, when she was First Lady. She dubbed him "Secretary of Style."

In 1953, at Manhattan's El Morocco, Oleg was introduced to Jackie. "Even though she just married, she was there with Stanley Mortimer. He was married at the time to Babe Cushing, who would later marry Bill Paley of CBS. As Babe Paley, she would become the world's best dressed woman."

Young love gone awry

Oleg Cassini with 1940s film beauty **Gene Tierney**

"I found Jackie charming and envied Jack Kennedy for having married her before I got my chance," Oleg later said. "From the beginning, of my relationship with her, I was flirtatious. At one point, I told her that I was sorry that she'd gotten married and missed out on two catches like Stanley Mortimer and me."

"I was a bit surprised to have discovered Jackie out on a date with Stanley—if that was indeed what it was," Oleg said. "Did Jack give her that much freedom? In those days, it was suspicious for a married man and a married woman to be seen going out together. As for Jack, he spoke to me openly about his affairs, which he did not plan to terminate even though married. The last time I saw him, he told me that even on his honeymoon, he had two other women. I wondered at the time if Jack and Jackie had what came to be called 'an open marriage.'"

Victor Mature "The King of Beefcake," poses as the meat in a sandwich formed by a double view of **Betty Grable**, the most famous cheesecake of the 1940s.

In a deliberate act of character assassination, Mature later confessed how he sabotaged Oleg's budding romance with her.

In 1961, Oleg was in Nassau in The Bahamas on a hot date with actress Jill St. John. His male companion was Pat De Cicco, the Hollywood hustler who was once married to heiress Gloria Vanderbilt.

A phone call from Washington came in from the White House with a request. He was told that "Mrs. Kennedy is in a hospital in Georgetown, having given birth to a son. She wants to see some of your sketches in the next few days if you could visit her in her hospital room."

After putting down the phone, Oleg realized that he had no sketches to show her. He didn't even have a sketch pad. After buying supplies, he sat by a swimming pool and feverishly drew sketches of dresses and gowns for the First Lady.

For Cassini as an avant-garde designer, there was life before Jackie. Above, two designs by Cassini, *Left* from 1950; *Right*, from 1958.

"I had dressed stars before. I decided that Jackie, for all purposes, was being treated like a movie star. In time, she would face so many movie cameras it would have made a hundred *Gone With the Winds*. I was determined, if I became her designer, to have her dominate the social samurai in which she moved so gracefully."

With the first of his rough sketches, he flew from Nassau via New York to Jackie's hospital bed in Georgetown.

He landed in Washington with about twenty sketches. When he was ushered into her hospital room, he was disappointed to see her surrounded by sketches from other American designers—(Ferdinando) Sarmi, (Norman) Norell, Andreas of Bergdorf Goodman.

Jackie's New Frontier Vs. frumpy, judgmental antecedents **Bess Truman** *(left)* with **Mamie Eisenhower**

But before that afternoon faded, he had convinced her that she needed only one designer to give her a unified look—"Let's call it 'The Jackie Look.' You don't have to confuse the public by showing up one day in a Dior, the other day in a Chanel."

"Nothing French," she said. "I have strict orders from Joe. Only American designers can be used."

"Then select me," he said. "I'm as American as apple pie."

In his memoirs, **Oleg Cassini** proclaimed, "I will not participate in fashionable innuendo and false gossip about **Grace Kelly.** We were in love. We were engaged to be married—no more, no less."

In reference to being in Cannes with Grace during her filming of *To Catch a Thief*, he said, "She was at her most charming and magical at that time."

"You're as American as Russian caviar and French champagne. But you're on."

"Thank you," he said. "I just know you and Jack will usher in an American Versailles at the White House."

"I'm sure you understand," she said. "Right now, the White House looks like a Statler Hotel. I want to transform it, redecorate it, and make it the social and intellectual capital of America, inviting the greatest writers, painters, and musicians, as well as ballet dancers. Only the best French food and wine will be served. Gone forever are the days when Bess Truman ordered that greens with what she called 'fatback' be cooked every day for Harry."

Jackie told Oleg, "That dowdy, dreadful Mamie, with her bangs, is out the door. I want to bring youth, glamour, taste, and elegance to the White House and to Washington itself. If you're going to be my designer, make sure that no other woman wears your creations. I don't want to see any little fat woman hopping around in the same dress or gown you created for me."

He immediately had an idea. Jackie was no Bess Truman or Eleanor Roosevelt. She was already known for her taste and elegance. "I felt that with the right clothing, I could turn her into a fashion icon of the 20th Century. I began to feel this handsome couple, the most powerful in the world, would go down in history alongside Caesar and

Cleopatra, or Napoléon and Josephine. You noticed that I left out Hitler and Eva Braun. Maybe Hitler with Marlene Dietrich could have pulled it off for Germany, not a *hausfrau* like Braun."

When Jackie agreed to endorse Oleg as her fulltime designer, she had already promised to wear a gown designed by Andreas of Bergdorf on the night of the inauguration. But she agreed to wear a design by Oleg at the pre-Inauguration Ball. *[Scheduled for January 19, 1961, at the National Guard Amory in Washington, the gala was staged by Frank Sinatra.]*

Oleg designed a white double satin gown with elbow-length sleeves, a two part bell-shaped skirt, and a princess-shaped bodice. She ended up preferring it to the Bergdorf gown.

The white gown turned out to be ever so appropriate," Oleg said. "On the night of the gala, Washington experienced one of its worst blizzards. Jackie emerged as the glittering Snow Queen."

As snow was falling over Washington, Jackie came into the giant room accompanied by the glitter of emeralds and diamonds on her ears and throat, borrowed from Tiffany's.

Oleg also designed the outfit she wore to the actual Inauguration ceremony, which would be outdoors. His choice for Jackie featured a fawn beige wool coat accessorized with a small sable collar and muff, accompanied by a matching pillbox hat. He was later furious that Halsted was credited with designing her pillbox hat, which Oleg claimed that he'd created.

Igor, Oleg's brother, defined in his column "the little girl look—a flaring, baby doll appearance as adopted by a grown woman."

Joseph Kennedy told Oleg, "Don't bother them at all about the money. Just send me the bill at the end of the year, and I'll pay it. But be discreet. Don't let on about the cost. I don't want to hurt Jack politically."

"When I designed for Jackie," Oleg said, "I was thinking of a hieroglyphic torso—broad shoulders, slim torso, long neck, narrow hips, good carriage, perhaps Cleopatra herself. I called it my 'A-look.' Simplicity plus. I would use the most sumptuous fabrics in the purest interpretations."

After becoming Jackie's exclusive designer, Oleg said his staff had a frantic time. "There must have been an order for a hundred gowns a year. We constructed three mannequins with Jackie's exact measurements, and I also hired a New York model who had Jackie's duplicate figure. I signed on a draper and a cutter. I also had to hire a *première* to research fabrics and colors. I had eight staff designers, and all of them kept busy. Jackie kept calling, 'I've got nothing to wear.' Once I had to rush to Washington just as Air Force One was departing for Paris and on to Vienna to meet Nikita Khrushchev." *[Cassini was referring to the June, 1961, Summit Meeting between JFK and then-Soviet dictator Khruschhev, convened with the express purpose of discussing the future of a divided Berlin.]* "I unloaded her wardrobe right onto the plane. She let me know that every batch of clothing must contain gowns or dresses in her two favorite colors—pistachio and shocking pink. She told me, 'My tastes are simple. I like only the best.'"

Two Cassini Designs worn by Jackie, as exhibited by New York's Metropolitan Museum

"When Jackie arrived at the White House, she had no clothes," Oleg said. "For about ten days, she wouldn't go out. I remember her asking me, 'Can you hurry up, because I have nothing to wear.' The popular idea is that Jackie

arrived with hundreds of dresses. The reality was that she'd lived in controlled simplicity. The moment she was in the White House, she was another person. She was suddenly confronted with so many things to do, and she had to play the part."

"After Jack and Jackie moved into the White House, I think he fell in love with her all over again," Oleg said. "Up to then, he'd regarded her as a political liability. His opinion changed when Jack saw her popularity soar. Americans caught 'Jackie Fever.' As First Lady, wearing my clothes, she awed the world, even though she disliked politics. In spite of her youth, she'd found the ideal role as Queen of America, or Princess, if you like. She could be witty, but also decisive and authoritative about getting her way. She was also unpredictable. Whenever I arrived at the White House, I never knew what mood she'd be in."

"As Jackie's designer, I became known as the 'Dr. Feelgood of Couture,'" Oleg said. "I saw such an intimate side of Jackie and got to know her body, perhaps more intimately than did her husband. I even selected panties and brassieres for her. I analyzed every inch of her body and created designs not only to enhance her stunning beauty, but to conceal her flaws. I had the power to envision a Jackie that she wanted to exhibit to the world. Naturally, with such intimate body contact, sexual fantasies arose on both of our parts. It was inevitable that one thing would lead to another. After all, Jackie and I were only human, with both our strengths but also our temptations."

One fashion critic said Cassini's unique designs for Mrs. Kennedy "ushered in a new era of timeless simplicity based on clean lines and crisp forms and opulent and luxurious fabrics."

"If I am America's Queen, as the press calls me, it was Oleg who dressed me for the part."

Throughout America, young girls from age 12 to senior citizens at 80 copied the look of simple, geometric dresses in sumptuous fabrics and pillbox hats with elegant coiffure.

Jackie may have enjoyed worldwide approval and appreciation, but she also aroused jealousy, especially in Ethel Kennedy. At a party in Palm Beach, Truman Capote told Oleg, "Ethel has the mind set of a vulture. She is insanely jealous of Jackie—and not just for her stealing Bobby's love after Jack died. If Jackie throws a big party at the White House, Ethel will throw a lavish shindig at Hickory Hill. Jackie is an obsession with Ethel. She tries to outdo Jackie, but fails miserably. Jackie once told me that Ethel was 'a baby-making machine—wind the bitch up and she becomes pregnant.'"

Sometimes, copying Jackie had disastrous consequences, especially for leopards. She appeared in a leopardskin coat and matching hat, the combined cost of which totaled $3,000, and was photographed for the cover of *Life* magazine. After that, there was such a rush on leopard skin coats that the entire species became endangered.

In later reflections, Igor—as documented in his column—was rather critical of Jackie. "She had always been in love with money, first, and power, a closesecond. She proved the adage that power corrupts. It corrupted her. Once she became First Lady, she changed—and not for the better."

Although Oleg and JFK were friends, he didn't like Jackie appearing on best-dressed lists. "God damn it," he said. "The New Frontier is going to be sabotaged by a bunch of faggy French couturiers."

Jackie made a promise she didn't plan to keep: "I will even resort to muumuus if it will save you political embarrassment."

Letitia Baldrige was forced to issue a statement to the press: "Mrs. Kennedy realizes that the clothes she wears are of interest to the public, but she is distressed by the implications of extravagance, or over-emphasis, and the misuse of her name by firms from which she had not bought clothes. For the next four years, Mrs. Kennedy's clothes will be by Oleg Cassini. They will be designed and made in America. She will buy what is necessary, without extravagance—and you will often see her photographed in the same outfit."

The last statement was misleading. As First Lady, Jackie was almost never photographed wearing the same outfit twice, with the exception of that pink Chanel suit that she was wearing that November day in Dallas.

Hubert de Givenchy later claimed that Oleg stole many of his designs and then copied them for Jackie. Letitia Baldrige more or less confirmed that, claiming privately that Jackie and Oleg often took original designs from other couturiers and copied them, taking care to use different colors and different fabrics.

Partly because his father, Joseph Kennedy, was paying for Jackie's wardrobe, the President took little interest in her dress. He did have a few stipulations, however. "Never wear brown. I can't stand brown dresses on a woman. And don't ever wear those Joan Crawford flowery patterns."

Jackie herself insisted that turquoise was a forbidden color. She told Oleg, "It makes me look sallow." Once, when Oleg presented her with a collection of newly designed, specially crafted dresses, she modeled them for JFK, who rejected them: "Hell, send those dresses back. They make you look like a gypsy."

JFK had another demand: He heard that the millinery industry was in trouble. Millions of American women weren't wearing hats anymore. He demanded that Jackie wear headgear—"and be photographed wearing a hat."

For the most part, he ignored her wardrobe and rarely took note of her hairdo. However, one day at the White House, he walked into Jackie's room. "Mr. Kenneth" *[Kenneth Battelle; who was cited by* Vogue *magazine in 1961*

as being the celebrity hairdresser that "almost every famous female head in the world has gone or will go to."] had flown in from New York specifically to style Jackie's hair. As the finishing touches were being applied, the President took one look at Jackie's hair-do. "What in hell, Kenneth, are you trying to ruin my political career? Redo that hair-do. She's Jackie Kennedy—not Marie Antoinette at the Court of Versailles."

Jackie acquiesced to her husband's demand. Kenneth restyled her hair, but kept the bouffant. "What he'd done was make my customary bouffant even more pronounced so that I resembled Madame de Pompadour."

She sometimes issued specific instructions to Oleg—"a two-piece summer dress with a straw hat," or "a white dress with black polka dots." Some outfits were rejected outright. Others, such as a red wool hunting jacket, met her approval, but was sent back to be remade with a fabric that "is not so heavy."

Jackie and Lee Radziwill wore the designs of Oleg and created a sensation in India and in Pakistan during her much-publicized visit, Jackie had only one complaint. "I wish I had ordered more wardrobe."

[During their goodwill visit, March 12-21, 1962, Life *magazine estimated that Jackie wore 22 different outfits throughout the course of her trip, in New Delhi alone, changing her clothes 5 times in a single day. According to correspondent Anne Chamberlin, "Her every seam has been the subject of hypnotized attention from the streets of Delhi to the Khyber Pass."]*

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JFK*: "How would you categorize me? Romantic or erotic?"*
OLEG CASSINI*: "Definitely erotic. In fact, you would be right up there with the greats in history, with Don Juan and Casanova, because you have the physical attributes, but also the charm to seduce. The only thing you lack is time, and, of course, you're married."*
JFK*: "But I can maneuver around those roadblocks."*

When JFK and Jackie moved into the White House, they inaugurated what Robert Frost called "the age of poetry and power." Of course, that era soon came to an abrupt end. Even so, Jackie's sophistication and grace continued to enthrall America and the world.

Oleg became a frequent guest. As Jackie wrote to him, "Every time you come to Washington with designs for me, please plan to stay for dinner. You amuse Jack. The poor President and his wife are so bored in this dreary *Maison Blanche."*

Sometimes, she complained about JFK to Oleg. "I'm trying to bring culture to the White House. But he doesn't like opera and he dozes off listening to symphonies. The only music he really likes is 'Hail to the Chief.' I want to bring the Bolshoi Ballet to Washington, but he has warned me in advance, 'I don't want my picture taken shaking hands with all those Russian fairies.'"

During Oleg's reign as Jackie's designer, rumors were rampant that they were having an affair. It was commonly spoken about, especially at parties in Palm Beach. Both Igor and Oleg denied such reports, although in later years they confessed that it was true. "For my brother to have admitted to an affair with Jackie would have destroyed his career," Igor said in later years. "Retributions from the powerful Kennedys would have been fierce."

Oleg's "dating" of Jackie came to the attention of Joseph. Oleg recalled sitting out on a terrace with the Kennedy patriarch in Palm Beach, watching the sunset.

"Look, Oleg," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if you had some ideas about Jackie. If the situation were different, and I was twenty years younger, I'd have some ideas about Jackie, even though she is my daughter-in-law. But the question is: Truth versus perception. The worst thing, to my mind, would be to have the perception but not the reality—that would be silly, a real donkey's game. You understand?"

Oleg later said, "I understood perfectly. He was granting me license to move in on Jackie, but telling me to keep it discreet, which I did, of course. Unlike my brother, Igor, who publishes any rumor he's ever heard, I know what discretion means."

Oleg later said that he more or less began a role as Jackie's escort because JFK was often in horrible back pain, and was in no condition to shake a thousand hands and dance around the floor.

"I took Jackie to parties in New York and Palm Beach," Oleg said. "We had quiet dinners together. She was a very sexy, vibrant woman who needed the love of a man. Jack was too ill to accommodate her. One thing led to another, when you put an oversexed man with a girl who wasn't being serviced."

"I introduced her to my best friend, Porfirio Rubirosa, who told me in the locker room of a golf course that within two months he'd be Jackie's lover. I didn't think he could pull that one off. But then I changed my mind. I never met a woman yet, from Doris Duke to Barbara Hutton, the two richest women in the world, from Marilyn Monroe to Joan Crawford, who didn't take off their panties for Rubi."

“One night, Jackie arrived with Peter Lawford in Palm Beach,” Igor said. “I had a small party. Peter excused himself, complaining of a headache. He went to my bedroom to rest, or so he said. He spent three hours there calling people in California. He left me with a huge phone bill. I later mentioned this to Jackie. She said, ‘Oh, that’s Peter. He makes most of his long distance phone calls from the White House and lets the taxpayer pick up the tab.’”

Oleg also developed a close friendship with JFK. “We would sit for hours and talk about our favorite topic—beautiful women. He was especially intrigued with what made a woman a star, knowing that I had seduced many of them. He was banging Marilyn Monroe at the time. I’d already had her. He’d also banged my former wife, Gene Tierney, who had wanted to marry him.”

“I’d hate to have to compete against you for a woman,” JFK told Oleg.

Dinners were often informal affairs at the White House, with only a few trusted friends. Charles (Chuck) Spalding was always there, as was JFK’s best friend, Lem Billings. “Everybody knew that Lem was gay, but nobody ever said anything,” Oleg said. “Whatever relationship existed between Lem and Jack was kept private. But, except for a separation during the war, they had been close buddies in a friendship dating back to their schoolboy days in 1933.”

“Lem made me uncomfortable. On several occasions, he propositioned me, but I wasn’t interested. I didn’t like to be alone with him.”

“I never knew what Jack would demand of me,” Oleg said. “One night, he asked me to show fellow diners how to do the Twist, which was all the rage. I got up and showed them how. Jackie picked up on it right away, and she and I were wildly dancing the Twist, which I had learned at the Peppermint Lounge in New York. On another occasion, I was asked to teach Jack’s friends the Hully-Gully. I had just returned from Paris where that dance was all the rage.”

Oleg was such a close friend that he was even invited to the White House for dinner after JFK gave one of the most famous speeches of any American president, warning of the Cuban Missile Crisis and threatening the Soviet Union with a “full retaliatory response.”

Oleg later revealed that Jackie in her Pucci pants presided over a meal that included filets of sole Véronique and *canard à l’orange*. “She was the perfect hostess, as always. She tried to be upbeat and cheerful, but the tension was reflected in her voice. It was a difficult evening to live through. But at least we were still alive, waiting for an attack from Soviet missiles.”

Oleg had only one criticism of the dinner. The White House steward served a 1959 Pouilly-Fumé. “Here we were facing the end of the world, and the best thing the White House Steward could come up with was a three-year-old wine.”

Over a cigar and brandy, JFK told Oleg, “We have twenty chances out of a hundred that we’ll be at war with Russia.”

Ethel Kennedy was at the dinner. She said, “If this is the end of the world, it’s God’s will. We’re in God’s hands now.”

“In that case, let’s drink a toast to tomorrow,” Jackie said.

Everyone clinked glasses around the table, except Ethel, who looked at Jackie as if she were staring down Nikita Khrushchev himself.

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“After the threat had passed, Jack and I discussed what he might do after he left the White House,” Oleg said. “One night, upstairs in the White House, he suggested that he might like to go in with me in the couture business. Perhaps he was joking. He said he could fit the dresses on and off my models, even recommending that I might want to design brassieres and panties. ‘I’d be particularly good in taking those garments off the models,’ he claimed.”

“On a serious note, I told him that I was considering launching a line of men’s shirts to get away from the traditional white,” Oleg said. “I want to see men walking up and down Fifth Avenue in deep, rich colors—canary yellow, royal purple, navy blue, emerald green, chocolate brown.”

“I’ll be your model and start wearing them,” JFK promised. “When I’m photographed wearing them—it’s got to be in color—I can do for colored shirts what Jackie did for the pillbox hat.”

Oleg even discussed with JFK the prospect of turning him into the best-dressed man in the world, rivaling the title then held by the Duke of Windsor. “I could make you as important in the world of men’s fashion as Jackie is to the women,” Oleg promised. He later claimed that “The President was intrigued with my suggestion, which the assassination brought to a horrible ending.”

To implement his plan for the President’s wardrobe, Oleg suggested getting rid of his socks with holes in them, his frayed shirts, and his baggy, well-worn suits. Shortly before JFK’s death, Oleg had launched his campaign to

reshape JFK's wardrobe by presenting him with two dozen of the world's most beautiful ties. "Of course, I had to tell him that his nonchalant elegance transcended anything he wore."

"The President and I often discussed my interest in the plight of the North American Indian, but he'd grow bored and switched to more gossipy topics," Oleg said. "We once discussed who had the greater sex appeal—Errol Flynn or Tyrone Power."

JFK stated his belief that the image of Power on the screen was more romantic, whereas the image of Flynn was entirely erotic.

Knowing that Oleg had seduced both Jayne Mansfield and Gina Lollobrigida, JFK asked him which actress had the better breasts. "I've had Jayne, but I never fucked Gina," JFK told him.

"I'd cast my vote for Gina," Oleg said. "She is absolutely erotic in everything she does. There is a quality of sexuality about her every movie. She is Thoroughbred, whereas Jayne is a mere polo pony, like Marilyn Monroe."

Sometimes, JFK and Oleg, for their own amusement, would characterize their friends or enemies as either a bird or a dog. Jackie was a fawn; Joseph Kennedy a wise old owl; Bobby a basset hound; J. Edgar Hoover an old toad; Oleg a Siamese cat; and JFK an Irish setter.

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The last time Oleg saw JFK was in early November of 1963 at a private dinner party at the home of Jean Kennedy Smith in her Fifth Avenue Apartment in Manhattan. Oleg remembered Adlai Stevenson being there, advising the President not to fly to Dallas. "There's danger there," Stevenson warned. "I was just there, and I felt the hatred."

The President ignored the warning. At the door, Oleg asked him, "Why are you going? America will never have another President as wonderful as you. We can't afford to lose you. Please don't go."

"I feel I must," JFK said. "I also feel I'll be perfectly safe."

On November 22, 1963, Oleg was in his studio when an assistant entered. "Turn on the radio!" he shouted.

Oleg flipped on the radio just in time to hear a bulletin being broadcast out of Dallas. THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD.

"I never really recovered from Jack's death," he later said. "From time to time in the years to come, Jackie and I would have a quiet dinner together, often at her apartment. The dream that we'd dreamed in the glorious days of Camelot had long faded. After Jack's death, our business arrangement came to an end, but we remained friends. But nothing between us was ever the same again."

"I recalled the many nights Jack and I talked about women," Oleg said. "He always asked, 'Does she have *'It?*'"

"*He* had *It*. He had it in spades, and we have not seen it since."

One drunken night in Palm Beach, Oleg confessed a secret to Igor, who was not very good at keeping secrets. "I never knew until Jack died, but I was in love with him, not with Jackie."

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After Camelot had come and gone, *Women's Wear Daily* noted, "There is no doubt that Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy probably did more to uplift taste in the United States than any woman in the history of our country."

Cassini's design for Jackie to wear during an audience with the Pope. Basic black and *über*-demure, in silk & wool jersey.

Oleg read an article by journalist Sarah Crichton that he felt accurately conveyed Jackie's legacy with American women.

"She would be the last woman we could idolize. We were not allowed to believe fairy tales any more. Today, no one woman can ever embody all our dreams. But we fell in love with Jackie in a simpler time. When we wanted to grow up to be princesses, she was our princess. And later, when we wanted to be independent, she was independent."

PILLBOX MANIA Catering to the Jackie craze: Four Jackie lookalikes modeling designs by Oleg Cassini

"She made it all look so easy, when for the rest of women, it always seemed so hard—the mothering, the wifing, the beauty routine, the 'stay interesting' thing. We balanced books on our heads, desperate to move like models, but the books always slid. Instead of standing like angels, we looked like chickens. We fussed with Peter Pan collars and bizarre undergarments and Toni home perms that never turned out right."

"And then there was Jackie, with her chiseled collarbones and elegant, clear arms—arms that could juggle babies, dance with giants, rein in large animals. Most women felt so uncomfortable in their skins, but she was radiant in hers."

Chapter Eleven

Jackie Oh! and MM

—The World Knew Them by their Nicknames

"Jackie, I want you to meet Miss Marilyn Monroe"

—Truman Capote

Sharing Poisonous Secrets Jackie-Oh! in a Face to Face with JFK's Mistress

Truman Capote *(center)* was "The Missing Link" between **Jackie Kennedy** *(left)* and **Marilyn Monroe** *(right)*. During a secret meeting in midtown Manhattan, the gossipy author brought them together for the first time, an event he secretly recorded.

Both Marilyn and JFK, her lover, died while young. Social commentator David Marshall speculated about what might have happened had they lived:

"Her back stooped from osteoporosis, munching carrot sticks and sipping Dom Perignon, Marilyn would sink into her sofa one autumn evening, slide in one of these made-for-TV movies, and smile at just how wrong the filmmakers had gotten it all. Still, she might have mused, 'It made a lovely story.'"

"I never thrilled and throbbed to the manly charms of Jack Kennedy. He's an Irish clunk. Oh, I admit, he has a vulgar appeal—but then, the Kennedys are such a vulgar family!"

—Truman Capote

"I knew Jackie since her days when she was a college student working for Vogue *magazine in New York. I don't know what is wrong with Jackie, except that she is very out in orbit somewhere."*

—Truman Capote

"*Talk about 'in orbit.' Truman Capote is one to talk. He was born on Jupiter, emigrated to Mars, got kicked out of Venus, and reached Earth via the Moon one night with the help of Dracula."*

—Gore Vidal

"Marilyn Monroe is nothing but a publicity seeker and self-promoter of the most venomous sort. She is a vulgar slut, a part-time lesbian, a full-time nymphomaniac, and a greedy little bitch. She's also unbalanced. From what I hear, there's a serious hygiene problem. She masks the foul odor with Chanel No. 5 when soap and water might better serve her."

—Jackie Kennedy to Lem Billings

Before she died in 1962, **Truman Capote** recalled a talk he'd had with **Marilyn** on the night he took her dancing.

"I told her, 'Why cry over Jack or Bobby? Between the two of them, they can't raise a decent hard-on.'"

"'Oh, Truman,' she chastised me. 'You've always been such a size queen.'"

Truman Capote had been privy to Jackie's early days of romance with the senator from Massachusetts. "From the beginning, Jackie knew that her husband was dating other women. She even knew that he had begun his affair when Marilyn was the most famous movie star in the world and Jack a relatively unknown senator. At times when I saw her she was coming unglued. I don't think she can stand the pressure of being a politician's wife. I think she'll snap."

Her friend, Paul Mathias, said, "Jackie was hurt very young in connection with both her father and mother. She never came out of the shock of growing up. I don't think she was born happy. She fills her days as best as she can, but she suffers a lot. I have great compassion for her. It sinks into me more and more just how irreversibly unhappy she is."

"Jackie hated being a political wife," Capote said. "She had more sophistication than Bess Truman or Mamie Eisenhower. She was naïve in certain respects, shrewd in others. She couldn't tolerate those women. She made fun of their dowdiness and slobbering devotion to their husband's political careers. She detested Lady Bird Johnson. 'They're such pigeons,' she used to tell me."

Truman's Bitchy Putdowns of the Kennedy Men, Especially JFK

Jackie and Truman had long, drawn-out discussions about the affairs of the Kennedy men, including the founding papa, Joseph P. Kennedy, and his relationships with actresses such as Gloria Swanson. "I don't think Jackie realized what she was walking into when she married Jack," Capote said. "He was in constant competition with his old man to see who could nail the most women. Jackie wasn't prepared for quite such blatant womanizing. She hadn't expected to find herself stranded at parties while her husband went off with somebody new."

In her anger one night, Jackie told Capote, "Jack has a miniscule body and a huge head." Capote was far more direct. "All those Kennedy men are the same. They're like dogs, having to stop and pee on every fire hydrant."

"In the 1950s, I used to have dinner with her and Jack when they had this awful old apartment on Park Avenue around 86th Street. But mostly, Jack was out of town, and she and I would have dinner or go to the theater by ourselves. We used to sit around talking until four or five o'clock in the morning. She was sweet, eager, intelligent, not quite sure of herself and hurt, because she knew that he was banging all these other broads. She never said that,

but I knew about it rather vaguely."

Truman attended dinner parties with "Jackie and Jack" in the 1950s, during the first years of their marriage. At one such party on Park Avenue, he showed up with Babe Paley, the wife of William Paley, then chairman of the board of CBS.

After dinner, Jackie and Babe left for a brandy in one part of the apartment while the men retired for brandy and cigars in the library. "Some high roller from Texas was recounting his experiences with a $1,500-a-night call girl in Las Vegas," Capote claimed. "He knew her telephone number and her specialties—sucking cock, rim jobs, around the world. He knew how well she did it, how long, how deep, how big a cock she could take, and what she could do with it that nobody else had ever done."

"That's how he talked. It was nauseating, a real stomach-turner. Jack was lapping it up, practically taking notes. He did write some names and numbers on a scrap of paper for future use. Later when he and Jackie were leaving, she asked him what the men had talked about. 'Plain old politics,' he lied to her. But Jackie knew the score. She knew everything!"

"What I don't understand is why everybody said the Kennedys were so sexy," said Capote. "I know a lot about cocks—I've seen an awful lot of them – and if you put all the Kennedys together, you wouldn't have a good one. I used to see Jack when I was staying with Loel and Gloria Guinness in Palm Beach. I had a little guest cottage with its own private beach, and he would come down so he could swim in the nude. He had absolutely nuthin'! Bobby was the same way; I don't know how he had all those children. As for Teddy – forget it! I liked Jack, and I liked many things about Bobby. But I wouldn't have wanted him to be president. He was too vindictive. Teddy is crazy. He's a menace. He's a wild Irish drunk who goes into terrible rages. I'd want anybody to be president before Teddy!"

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"Marilyn Monroe is a bisexual, hypnotized nymphomaniac, a Mae West caricature."

—Cecil Beaton to Truman Capote

Cecil Beaton, Truman's close friend and fellow homosexual, photographed Marilyn Monroe and shared his impression of the dazzling star with Truman.

"She's bisexual," Beaton told Truman. "Also narcissistic, unkempt, with a hygiene problem, a hypnotized nymphomaniac, as spectacular as the silvery shower of a Vesuvius fountain, an undulating basilisk. Her acting is pure charade, a little girl's caricature of Mae West. She's like two straws in a single soda, running nylons, and drive-in movies for necking—a composite of Alice in Wonderland, Trilby, and a Minsky burlesque queen."

Coup d'Etat: America's Next First Lady?

MM to Truman: "Jack told me, only last week, that he plans to divorce Jackie and marry me.

In spite of this appraisal, Capote became one of the few known friends of both Jackie and Marilyn. He was so enchanted by Marilyn that he lobbied for her to appear as Holly Golightly in the film version of his novella, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a role she eventually lost to Audrey Hepburn.

He was also privy to her affair with JFK and later, to her affair with Bobby Kennedy. He was around to see her rejected.

In a conversation, Capote listened as a drugged and slightly demented Marilyn shared her dream with him: "Jack told me only last week that he plans to divorce Jackie and marry me. No later than 1964, I will be by his side when he seeks re-election. Imagine me, First Lady of the land. I had ambitions when I was struggling in the early days. With Jack, I will preside over America from 1964 to 1968 as his First Lady. I'll be a very different First Lady from Jackie. I'll be more human, more down to earth. I was the most dreamy starlet to ever arrive in Hollywood. I dreamed of becoming the biggest movie star of all time, bigger than Betty Grable, Lana Turner, and Ava Gardner. That dream came true for me. But in my wildest imagination, I never dreamed I'd become First Lady of the United States."

Capote learned that Jackie was so upset over her husband's affair with Marilyn that she had checked into to Valleyhead, a private psychiatric clinic in Carlisle, Massachusetts, for electroshock therapy.

In the great tradition of Southern storytellers, Capote was clearly the master. Regrettably, he dined out on more stories than he recorded on paper. There is no doubt that he was aware of many of the secrets of the rich and famous, some of whom he betrayed by writing thinly disguised portraits of them when he published excerpts from his unfinished novel, *Answered Prayers*.

One night in Key West in 1969, Truman told an astonishing story that he claimed would eventually appear as an entire chapter in his upcoming novel. Listening with eager ears were his hosts, Tennessee Williams and his longtime

companion, Frank Merlo; James Leo Herlihy (author of *Midnight Cowboy*); and the co-author of this book, Darwin Porter.

All biographers assume that Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy never met face to face, although they occasionally shared the bed of the same man—namely President John F. Kennedy.

Each woman had met the rising young Massachusetts politician in 1951: Marilyn on May 15, Jackie at a different party 12 days earlier.

By the time the Kennedys moved into the White House, the new First Lady was aware of her husband's affairs with other women, including Marilyn. Jackie called it, "the curse of being married to a Kennedy man."

According to Capote, Jackie plotted her revenge. That would come on the night of May 19, 1962. On learning that Peter Lawford had asked Marilyn to fly in from the West Coast and sing "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" to JFK in Washington, Jackie placed a secret call to Marilyn one week before the event. She advised Marilyn to make the song "as sexy as possible because Jack will adore it." Marilyn told her that she thought that was a "great idea," and that designer Jean-Louis was putting the finishing touches on a dress that Marilyn was describing as "just flesh and diamonds."

SING TO ME, DARLIN! Trying to please the Birthday Boy

View of **Marilyn** from behind the scenes at Madison Square Garden, May 19, 1962

Appearing late at the televised event, Marilyn walked onto the stage to sing her song. As columnist Dorothy Kilgallen later so aptly put it: "It was like Marilyn Monroe was making love to the President in direct view of 40 million Americans." Jackie wisely had skipped the event to go horseback riding in Virginia.

Although officially, the President had thanked Marilyn for singing "in such a sweet and wholesome way," backstage he was furious, blaming Peter Lawford for the disaster. Meeting privately with Marilyn, JFK whispered to her that their affair was over, even though he invited her back to his suite at the Hotel Carlyle for "a farewell fuck." He warned her never to call the White House again. Belatedly, Marilyn realized that Jackie had tricked her.

Back on the West Coast, Marilyn was fuming and "full of fury," in Peter's words. She phoned him one night to inform him that she was going to call a press conference next week and reveal her long-running affair with the President. She also said that after her press conference, "Mr. President can kiss a second term good-bye."

Peter beseeched her not to, but fully believed she'd do it. He placed a call to Bobby Kennedy, urging him to warn the President. Peter also claimed that Marilyn was growing more and more dependent on drugs, and that she sounded "unhinged."

It is not known how Jackie learned about Marilyn's threat, but apparently she did. Through Peter's help, she placed another call to Marilyn and asked to meet secretly with her at Capote's apartment in Manhattan the following week. The author had agreed to play host at this secret rendezvous.

Marilyn flew in from the West Coast to New York, where she checked into the Hotel Carlyle, earlier site of several secret trysts with the President.

Years later, in Key West in 1969, Capote either was being deliberately vague or did not want his audience to know the exact date of this rendezvous. Obviously it had to have occurred some weekend during June or July of

1962. He did reveal the time of the meeting in his apartment, placing it at around ten o'clock in the evening. He claimed that Marilyn arrived first, looking "camera ready" in a white satin gown with a white sable, even though it was summer. Jackie, according to Truman, arrived twenty minutes later and wore a plain black and severely tailored business suit.

Marilyn sat on a sofa opposite Jackie, who preferred Capote's favorite armchair. "Marilyn oozed charm, but Jackie was distant," he recalled.

After social pleasantries were exchanged, Jackie asked Capote to excuse himself while they conducted private business. He said that he retreated to his bedroom with a drink, and before the evening ended he had a few more. Eventually he drifted off to sleep.

Bitchier than Thou: **Truman Capote**

A loud pounding on his bedroom door woke him up at around one-thirty a.m. Opening it, he encountered a hysterical Marilyn, her makeup smeared. She too, or so it appeared, had been drinking heavily. The First Lady had left the apartment.

"It's all over!" Marilyn sobbed to him. As best as he could ascertain, Marilyn had agreed to call off the press conference. She also said that Jackie had forgiven her for her affair with her husband, saying that "only a cadaver can resist Jack when he turns on the charm." Jackie's icy facade had "melted" at some point in the night as she begged Marilyn "not to publicly humiliate me in front of the world." She also pleaded with Marilyn not to make her children victims of a divorce. According to Marilyn, Jackie even spoke of how John-John's face "lights up when his daddy walks into the room."

True to her word, Marilyn, who had only weeks to live, never held that press conference. But through the rest of June and July, Peter reported to Jackie that Marilyn was continuing to make threats against the Kennedys. When Jackie learned that Bobby Kennedy was flying to Los Angeles, she asked him to call on Marilyn to see what kind of trouble she might make for the Kennedys.

Long after Marilyn's death, and long after the assassination of her husband, Jackie told Capote: "Sending Bobby to comfort Marilyn was like sending the most succulent lamb into the wolf's lair. Bobby didn't have a chance. He'd already had an affair, and was still in love with Marilyn."

Marilyn was found dead in her bed early on the morning of August 5, 1962. Murder? Suicide? The debate will go on as long as the public still remembers the star's brief and incandescent, but tragic life.

One of Capote's biographers (who doesn't want his name revealed) tried to track down this story by hiring a private detective. He later refused to answer questions about the date of the alleged meeting between Marilyn and Jackie, even though he was not going to write about it in his biography. He had a policy of not running stories unless he was able to confirm them with some other source, but wanted to keep the detective's report secret in case he wished to write about it in the future.

All that he would confirm was that Marilyn, on a summer night unspecified, left the Hotel Carlyle around 9:30 and was helped into a private limousine, not the hotel's usual car service. Jackie was also in New York that night to attend some charity event, but called and cancelled at the last minute, citing flu-like symptoms.

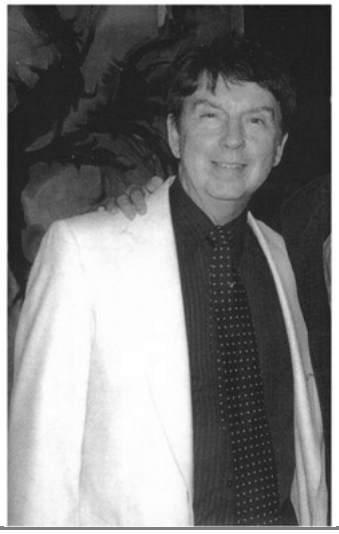
There were no *paparazzi* to record where the two most famous female icons of the 20th century went on that

historic night, which adds veracity to Capote's account, although the Secret Service had to be aware of Jackie's whereabouts. The detective, according to the biographer, concluded that "in all possibility" Capote was telling the truth.

After Capote left that 1969 social gathering in Key West, Tennessee virtually echoed the detective's report. He told his remaining guests that, "I think we have to entertain the possibility that Truman indeed is spilling the beans."

Two months before her death in 1962, Capote dined with Marilyn. "In spite of all the pain she was suffering from both Jack and Bobby Kennedy, she had lost a lot of weight for the film *Something's Got to Give*," he said. "George Cukor had been set to direct her. There was a new maturity about her. She wasn't so giggly anymore. If she'd lived and held onto her figure, I think she would have looked gorgeous and glamorous for years. Bobby and Jack didn't really kill her, at least in the literal sense."

"They did pay one of her best friends to keep quiet about their affairs with her," Capote claimed. "The friend knew where all the skeletons were. After Marilyn died, Peter Lawford gave this friend a year-long cruise around the world. For that entire year, no one, not even the police, knew where she was. A cover-up, for sure."



John Cohan

[Years after Marilyn met with Jackie, celebrity psychic to the stars, John Cohan, added a tantalizing dimension to the Marilyn/Jackie confrontation in New York. Cohan had been a confidant of Capote's and had 'channeled" psychic readings for him every year.

According to Cohan, the afternoon before the arrival of these two celebrated ladies at his apartment, Capote hired a technician to install a hidden microphone and camera. "This was a moment in history I wanted to record for posterity," he said.

Capote told Cohan that he wanted to have the film "to hold over Jackie's head for years to come." Months later, he showed the film of Marilyn interacting with Jackie to Cohan.

"Jackie looked very matronly in the film," Cohan said, "but Marilyn photographed beautifully. At one point, Jackie had MM in tears, I recall. It appeared that Marilyn took money from Jackie. Before presenting it to her, Jackie opened a large envelope and showed Marilyn all the cash. She also showed Marilyn pictures of the President tossing darts at a pinup poster of Marilyn on the wall. Before leaving, Jackie, in a surprise move, patted Marilyn's head."

"As years went by, Truman perhaps grew bored with the film...or whatever," Cohan said. "He told me that he sold it to Merv Griffin for a lot of money. He also told me, 'There is just too much out there on Marilyn, and I'm sick and tired of the whole mess.'"]

"The Beautiful Widow & the Rich Frog"

—Capote, discussing Aristotle Onassis

"In Manhattan, Jackie included me among her guests when she seemed to shed her widow's weeds,"Capote said.

“She was the most famous woman in the world. Every time she set foot outside her Fifth Avenue apartment, the paparazzi were on her ass.”

“In October of 1964, she threw this party in honor of John Kenneth Galbraith, who had been JFK’s ambassador to India,” Truman said. “Jackie was a dazzling vision in white, wearing a long silk gown and a sleeveless ermine jacket.”

“I hung out with Lee Radziwill, Teddy Kennedy, Bunny Mellon, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, and Theodore Sorensen,” Capote said. “At one point, I danced the frug with Jackie to Killer Joe Piro’s disco beat. I noticed that Jackie’s future husband, Aristotle Onassis, appeared for a few minutes. But I saw him boil with anger when he spotted Jackie dancing with her lover, Bobby Kennedy.”

Family ties, family romances **Bobby and Jackie**

As Kitty Kelley, Jackie’s biographer, described the scene, “The guests represented the glittering façade of Camelot, the touch-football games, the parties at Hickory Hill where people were thrown into the swimming pool with their clothes on. They were the beautiful people. They arrived in Cadillac limousines. Their common bond was their idolatry to the memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.”

Rich, frustrated, competitive, and an enemy of RFK, **Aristotle Onassis** was waiting in the wings.

More than four years after the assassination of her husband, on December 10, 1967, Jackie attended her first public event since his death, a $500-a-plate dinner for the New York Democratic Party. Accompanying her was brother-in-law, Robert Kennedy.

Behind her back, Capote betrayed her friendship. Unknown to Jackie—at least at the time—he spread the rumor that, “Jackie is having an affair with Bobby.”

“Even though those rumors appear to have been true, it was a dastardly thing to do,” said Tennessee. He severely chastised Capote for gossiping about Jackie. “The poor woman has suffered enough. Give her a rest. If she is finding some comfort, even some love with her brother-in-law, she should be left alone to do so. The human heart, and its needs, sometimes follows unorthodox patterns. Of all the people on this earth, you and I, as artists, should know and respect that.”

“Ethel must have known about the affair,” Capote said. “Everybody in *tout* Washington did. It went on for months and months. But when Bobby decided to run for president in 1968, he had to tell Jackie it had to end between them. With Bobby gone as her lover, Jackie took stock of what was available to her. For years, Aristotle Onassis had pursued her.”

“Jackie had warned me that Camelot was on the verge of collapse,” Capote said. “She was going to announce her engagement to Ari, the Greek frog with all those ships and an airline.”

“The only way I’ll get worse press is if I ran off to marry Eddie Fisher,” Jackie said.

“I knew about their engagement six months before it became public,” Capote said. “Lee Radziwill and I had become close, and she always told me what was going on.”

“All those rumors that Jackie was going to run off with Lord Harlech were just a creation of the press,” Capote said. “Harlech never pretended to be anything more than a friend, perhaps with an occasional bump in the night. I’m happy for whatever makes Jackie happy—we’re great friends. Who can blame Jackie and Lord Harlech, on occasion, for heeding nature’s call?”

When Jackie returned to New York after her marriage to Onassis, she met for lunch with Capote.

“I’m sure you’ve read all those reports about all the fabulous amounts of money I received as part of a pre-nuptial agreement with Ari,” she told Capote. “There is no such agreement. It’s a god damn lie. I don’t have any money. When I got married, my income from the Kennedy estate stopped. So did my widow’s pension from the U.S. government.”

“I made no premarital agreement with Ari,” she said. “I know it’s an old Greek custom, but I couldn’t do it. I didn’t want to barter myself. Except for my personal possessions such as jewelry, I have exactly $5,200 in my bank account. Everything else I charge to Olympic Airlines.”

Chapter Twelve

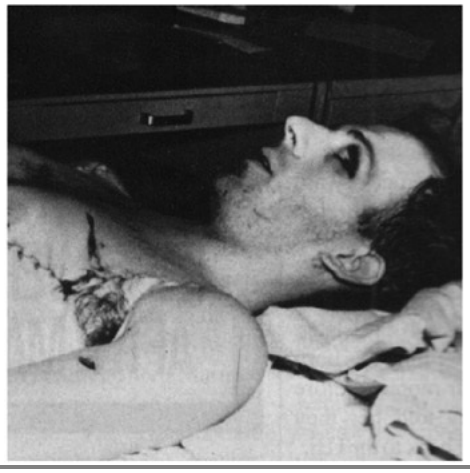
Assassination

JFK and Jackie Fly to Texas for a Date With Destiny

Gunshots from Dallas are Heard Around the World

The Thousand Day Reign of Camelot

The autopsy photographs released of the slain **John F. Kennedy** are even today the source of raging controversies. By most accounts, the back of JFK's head was blown away by at least one bullet, yet it was alleged that, "acting on orders from the highest levels of government," the autopsy photos were doctored and re-touched.



After being gunned down by Jack Ruby, an event broadcast on nationwide TV, **Lee Harvey Oswald** was rushed to the hospital, where he

died. Seen here, sewn together after his autopsy, his body revealed no secrets. Many details about Oswald's role in the assassination died with him.

"God dammit, I hate flying to Texas. I had to practically wring Jackie's neck to get her to go with me. I just hate to go. I have a terrible feeling about going."

—Jack Kennedy to Senator George Smathers

"I didn't want him to go to Texas. I was afraid for him. A lot of people in the South and a hell of a lot of people in Texas hated Jack. They'd like to see him dead, and there are a lot of guns in Texas. Up to the last minute, I begged him not to go. I claimed he could plead illness with his back. He appeared almost fatalistic on our final night together. He told me, 'If God wants me to end my life on Texas soil, then so be it.'"

—LeMoyne Billings

"Both Bobby and Adlai Stevenson warned Jack it was dangerous landing in Texas. But Johnson practically begged him to go to save his own political neck."

—Jackie Kennedy

"If anyone wants to kill Jack or me, it won't be difficult."

—Robert F. Kennedy

"I woke up this morning with the strangest feeling. You know how I always feel something in my gut before anyone else has a clue? Well, this morning I felt I was going to become President of the United States before nightfall."

—Lyndon B. Johnson to Lady Bird

The President and Jackie Kennedy, carrying a bouquet of red roses just given to her, land at Dallas' Love Field and begin the transit to their waiting limousine for what was to have been a high-profile but otherwise uneventful ten-mile drive through downtown Dallas.

It would quickly escalate into a ride into the history books.

"There can be little doubt that the Warren Commission came to the unvoiced conclusion that it might be all for the best if Oswald turned out to be homosexual. That would have the advantage of explaining much even if it explained

nothing at all. In 1964, homosexuality was still seen as one of those omnibus infections of the spirit that could lead to God knows what further aberration."

—Norman Mailer

"Don't Go to Dallas, Mr. President."

—Billy Graham

John F. Kennedy had continued his womanizing through most of November of 1963 in New York, Palm Beach, and Washington. In Manhattan, he was introduced to Eva Gabor and invited her back to his hotel suite at the Carlyle. A decade before, a few months before his marriage to Jackie, he had seduced her older sister, Zsa Zsa.

Critics of the President have suggested that he may never have loved Jackie, but used her as a vote-getting "trophy wife."

It's true that JFK and his wife had grappled with his infidelity since their wedding in 1953, and they also had arguments over money, shopping, their in-laws, and even their furnishings and art work. He attacked her drug dependence, but she countercharged that he was "the ultimate druggie in the White House."

Perhaps it was another Kennedy myth, but those close to JFK and Jackie claimed that the President fell in love with her—really in love with her—for the first time in Texas, beginning with the flight there. The recent death of Patrick had brought them together as never before, and he revealed a sensitive side of himself.

They had coped with his venereal disease, and with undisguised bitterness, she had reminded him that he had probably been the source of her infertility and/or difficult childbirths—a miscarriage, a stillbirth, and the most crushing blow of all, the loss of their second son, Patrick.

Each of them had been deeply traumatized by Patrick's death, and each was still somewhat shaken as they prepared, despite repeated warnings, to embark on their intricately scheduled fence-mending trip to San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Austin, which would culminate with a weekend visit with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird at their ranch outside Austin.

Johnson had urged the trip, fearing that a split in the Democratic Party might cost the party the Lone Star State in the upcoming elections of 1964. The liberal Texas Senator, Ralph Yarborough, was feuding with both Johnson and the state's conservative governor, John Connally, who was also a Democrat. The party was split in the middle, and Johnson hoped that a visit from JFK and Jackie could bring some much-needed harmony.

At the time of their visit, Texas Democrats were taking a beating on civil rights, as racism was rampant in the state. LBJ had warned JFK that some of the racists were likely to shout NIGGER LOVER at him and post ugly signs.

"I can deal with that," JFK assured him. "Bobby and I get those hate attacks all the time."

Completion of their visit's elaborate itinerary, with so many stopovers, receptions and motorcades, would be grueling to both JFK and Jackie.

At the White House, JFK kissed Caroline and John Jr. goodbye for the final time, the little boy crying out for his daddy and pleading with him to take him to Texas, too. The First Couple assured the First Son and the First Daughter that they would be back before the week was over.

"Lancer" (JFK) and "Lace" (Jackie) parted from "Lyric" (Caroline) and "Lark" (John Jr.) and flew away. *[Those were the Secret Service's code names for the individual members of the First Family.]*

As JFK, with Jackie, boarded Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, he was delivered a telegram from the evangelist, Billy Graham. "Last night, God spoke to me," Graham wrote, "warning me to tell you not to get on that plane. Don't go to Texas today!"

"Hell with that!" JFK said to Jackie and others. "Graham is a preacher, not a prophet. C'mon, Jackie."

The first stop on their complicated itinerary was in San Antonio,

Clint Hill, a Secret Service agent, had been given primary responsibility for guarding Jackie. The agent specifically assigned to JFK was Roy Kellerman, a 48-year-old veteran who had previously protected FDR, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower. At six feet four, he was an imposing figure, a twenty-three-year veteran with the Service. On the plane en route to San Antonio, he sat with Hill.

As the plane landed, Jackie looked out the window. It was 1:30PM local time. She was told that some spectators, 5,000 in all, had been gathered at the airport since 5AM that morning.

Johnson and Lady Bird, along with Governor John Connally, had arranged themselves at the bottom of the plane's steps to welcome them to Texas. They would meet them at each of their other stops during the course of that trip. Obviously, each greeting was, to some degree, a photo and publicity opportunity and had been arranged that way in advance.

Looking like a Chanel model stepping out from the pages of *Vogue*, Jackie was a vision in taste, wearing a short-sleeved white suit with a narrow black belt and elbow-length white gloves. She wore a black beret to keep her hair in place.

Many of the Kennedys' screaming fans held up signs: *KENNEDY IN '64*.

From the airport, they rode through downtown San Antonio in a custom-made, custom-converted Lincoln Continental whose extra "armor" had increased its weight from 5,215 pounds to a massive 7.800 pounds.

Along the motorcade's route, some 125,000 locals turned out to greet them. The tour ended at the then-new Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, where JFK gave a warmly received speech.

After the formalities, the San Antonio visit was pronounced a success. The Kennedy/Johnson-with-Connally parties returned to their respective airplanes for the 45-minute flight from San Antonio to Houston.

It wasn't until 2012 that it was revealed that JFK had sex with Jackie during Air Force One's 45-minute flight between San Antonio and Houston. William Manchester, the author of the 1967 book, *The Death of a President*, told author Philip Nobile, who wrote for *Esquire*, that Jackie had described the circumstances, to him, discreetly but directly. Having named him as the assassination's official chronicler, she sat with Manchester for many a daiquiri-fueledhour, revealing intimacies about her life with the President. *[Jackie's relationship with Manchester is more fully described in a subsequent chapter of this book.]*

Manchester asked Nobile not to reveal him as the source of that revelation until his death, which occurred in 2004.

In his book, Manchester suggested intimacies without providing graphic details. For example, he wrote that the First Couple enjoyed "their last hour of serenity" within the small bedroom aboard Air Force One.

After JFK's death, Jackie evolved into a formidable censor, demanding discretion during Manchester's compilation of his book. Ultimately, the dozens of fundamental points they disagreed on involved them in a legal feud, played out in the tabloids.

[Actually, JFK's last hours of serenity with Jackie did not occur within Air Force One, but in Fort Worth in their hotel suite, as part of their final night together. Jackie's ten hours of tapes and notes of her interviews with Manchester have been sealed off from the public in the Kennedy Library, based on her direct and very clear instructions, until 2067.]

As Jackie relayed to Manchester, at JFK's climax she remembered looking up to see a bucolic painting of a French farmhouse. She also recalled the rock-hard mattress that had been installed in the room for his back.

"Their life together now had nearly a full day to run," Manchester wrote. "The tyranny of events and exhaustion would begin to close in when they finished the two-hundred-mile lap to Houston. Privacy was limited aboard the plane, confined to a tiny blue cabin racing 30,000 feet above the tessellated green and brown plains of Central Texas. The President emerged with a fresh shirt."

Following the seduction aboard the aircraft, Jackie had for the first time become a member of the "Mile High club." JFK had long been a charter member.

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On November 21, 1963, the President's advance security had already arrived in Houston in anticipation of his visit. The Johnson/Connally party had already flown ahead so they could officially greet them when they landed at the airport in Houston. As had been predicted, the turnout was even larger and more enthusiastic than it had been in San Antonio.

Jackie was tired, but upon landing and exchanging greetings with the Veep and with the Governor, she headed for a nearby fence, behind which awaited a crowd of eager fans. Normally, she didn't engage in this kind of person-to-person encounter, but she had agreed to do whatever it took to get JFK re-elected. She followed his example of handshaking.

After more minutes of that than she could endure, she transferred to another Lincoln limousine en route to Houston's Rice Hotel. The vehicle was crowded, with the Governor squeezed in between them. She despised him. After all, he was "the dirty bastard" who had spread the word that JFK had Addison's disease during the 1960 campaign.

In front of their hotel, a huge crowd had gathered. More endless handshaking. Jackie complained to Hill of being tired and wanted some time alone to rest.

Assisted by Mary Gallagher, she slept for an hour, then showered and began to prepare for her delivery of a speech in Spanish at the League of United Latin American Citizens.

She checked her appearance carefully before emerging in a fashionable black cut-velvet dress with long sleeves. She wore a three-strand string of pearls. A hairdresser had ensured that her bouffant was perfectly coiffed.

After the President's speech, she addressed the audience in Spanish, which thrilled them. Shouts of *VIVA JACKIE! VIVA JACKIE!* rang through the large room.

Later, at the Sam Houston Colisseum, JFK paid tribute to Congressman Albert Thomas. After that, they departed for the Houston International Airport, where they boarded Air Force One for the flight to Carswell Air Force Base near Fort Worth.

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After a fifty-minute flight, JFK and Jackie arrived on the ground at Fort Worth at 11:05PM, to be greeted once again by Lyndon and Lady Bird.

Johnson later said, "I felt like a god damn idiot flying ahead so I'd be able to welcome the Kennedys to every Texas city. But the assholes running this campaign trip insisted, and Lady Bird made me promise to cooperate. If Kennedy fucks with me and drops me from the '64 ticket, he'll experience what it's like to jump into a barrel of Texas rattlesnakes."

Because of the lateness of their arrival, Jackie did not expect a large crowd. But when she and JFK stepped off the plane, thousands of people were present, cheering their arrival. To her surprise, a lot of school children, way past their bedtimes, had also been brought by their parents. It was a particularly riotous crowd, shouting and calling her name, a real Texas welcome.

After thanking and handshaking with the crowd, Jackie joined her husband in yet another Lincoln convertible. Because it was near midnight, the top was raised. They were driven to Fort Worth's Hotel Texas for the night. Outside, another large crowd had formed. The shouting was so loud, the crowd seemed almost hysterical.

After checking into their suite, with separate beds in different rooms if they wanted them, the President spent the last night of his life. It would be memorable for her.

In *The Dark Side of Camelot*, Seymour Hersh wrote, "While frolicking pool-side with one of his sexual partners, JFK tore a groin muscle. He had to wear a stiff shoulder-to-groin brace that locked his body in a rigid upright position. It was more constraining than his usual back brace, which he'd continued to wear.

[Although designed to ease his pain, this contraption may ultimately have led to his death. The two braces made it impossible for him to bend in reflex when he was struck in the neck by a bullet fired the next day in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald. The President had remained erect to receive the final and fatal shot.]

After Jackie showered and came into his room in a *négligée*, she found him stripped of braces and lying nude on the bed.

Somehow, the sight of her seemed to sexually arouse him again, as he had been during that commute from San Antonio to Huston aboard Air Force One.

She didn't understand how he could want sex when he was in pain. He'd obviously shot himself with more of Dr. Jacobson's "speed," and he wanted her again. She, too, was aroused.

"I need it again," he told her. He was sensitive that she might not be fully recovered from Patrick's recent birth and death. "I might hurt you."

She wanted to satisfy him. She straddled him, moving her body up and down over him. As he had so many times before, he gave her the orgasm she wanted before he collapsed underneath her, exhausted after time spent on the campaign trail. She put a blanket over him before switching off the light on his nightstand.

In an unguarded moment, several weeks after the assassination, she would share a description of this intimate moment with William Manchester, who would commit it to writing, only to have it locked away, with the understanding that it wouldn't titillate future generations until its release in 2067.

Back in her own bedroom, she was not able to sleep. She wandered about, dreading the upcoming day. Impulsively, she pulled back the draperies and was greeted with a pink neon sign proclaiming BEST RIBS IN TEXAS. That sign would advertise its outrageous claim throughout the night.

JFK was the first to arise, striding forth to the pavement outside the hotel with his Secret Service men, to be greeted by a yelling and screaming crowd calling his name. If there were any disappointment, it involved the fact that the spectators didn't get to see Jackie, who was still in her bedroom, trying to wake up.

Hands waved frantically at JFK as he climbed onto the back of a flatbed truck to address his audience.

Their location in downtown Fort Worth made Kellerman nervous. There were a lot of tall office buildings with open windows fronting the large square. The agent felt that a crazed gunman with a rifle would evaluate JFK as an easy target.

At the beginning of his speech, he said, "There are no faint hearts in Fort Worth," which brought wild cheers.

After his speech, he left the podium and headed back into the hotel, entering its Grand Ballroom, where 2,000 people had purchased tickets for a formal breakfast.

Dozens of people began chanting *WHERE'S JACKIE? WHERE'S JACKIE?*

JFK sent Hill to her bedroom at 9:10AM and virtually demanded that she appear at once.

In the living room of her suite, Hill noticed that she was already dressed in a pink Chanel suit, with its navy blue collar. When she heard how desperately her husband needed her, she'd put on a pillbox hat and accompanied Hill downstairs.

In the ballroom, she heard the loudest applause of her trip so far. Many men and women stood on their chairs to get a better look at her. Everybody seemed to be commenting on her beauty. A reporter from *The Wall Street Journal* said that Jackie "looked like a woman who jumps out of a cake."

At the microphone, JFK said, "Two years ago, I introduced myself in Paris by saying I was the man who accompanied Mrs. Kennedy to Paris. I am getting somewhat the same sensation as I travel around Texas. Why is it that nobody wonders what Lyndon and I will be wearing?"

By the end of breakfast, both Jackie and JFK concluded that Fort Worth had been an even bigger success for them than San Antonio or Houston.

Jackie followed JFK and Hill back to their suite. The aide, Kenneth O'Don-nell, was there to review the day's schedule: "You have just thirty minutes before we fly to Dallas."

Buoyed by the success of her appearance at the breakfast, Jackie said, "If you want me, I'll go anywhere with you on the campaign trail for '64."

"How about California in two weeks?" he asked.

"It's a deal," she said.

He turned to O'Donnell. "You're my witness, Kenny. You heard her."

"I did indeed, Mr. President, and I have found that our First Lady is a woman of her word," O'Donnell said.

"Let's go for it," JFK said. "California here we come."

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Aboard Air Force One, en route to Dallas, a 13-minute flight from Fort Worth, Kenneth O'Donnell handed JFK a copy of the *Dallas News*, pointing to a black-bordered advertisement that referred to him as "fifty times a fool for signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty." It had been paid for by the American Fact-Finding Committee.

E. M. ("Ted") Dealey, publisher of the *Dallas News*, had called JFK "a weak sister. Instead of leading the nation on horseback, the people of Texas think you've been riding Caroline's bicycle." Ironically, a commemorative statue of the publisher's father stood in Dealey Plaza, soon to become one of the world's most infamous public spaces.

JFK handed the newspaper to Jackie. "You know, last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a President. I mean it. There was the rain and the night, and we were getting jostled. Suppose a man had a pistol in a briefcase." He mocked pulling the trigger of a gun. "Then he could have dropped both the gun and the briefcase and melted away in the crowd."

She paid no attention to the paper, but complained and worried about how her hair would survive in an open-air limousine instead of a bubble top. She had wanted a bubble top but he'd overruled her. "The people will want to see me."

In yet another early morning newspaper from Dallas, he'd read accusations that he was soft on communism while he allowed his brother, the attorney general, to prosecute loyal Americans. That ad was paid for by the right-wing John Birch Society, who had labeled him a "Communist sympathizer."

"We're heading into nut country today," he told her.

Before disembarking from Air Force One after it winged in for a smooth landing at Dallas' Love Field at 11:30AM, JFK said, "Jackie, it's show time!"

JFK, with his wife, walked down the ramp to a boisterous crowd of supporters and enemies. He managed to read only one ominous-looking sign: *HELP KENNEDY STAMP OUT DEMOCRACY!*

Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson waited at the bottom of the ramp to welcome them.

This was the fourth time during the course of this trip that they had appeared in advance of a Kennedy arrival to greet them as they descended the steps of their aircraft.

On the surface, at least, the Kennedys and Johnsons were on friendly terms, but privately, when alone with their friends, Lyndon mocked JFK. In contrast, JFK insisted that Lyndon looked like a riverboat gambler. Jackie did him one better: She performed devastating impressions of "Uncle Cornpone and his Little Pork Chop."

Jackie was greeted with calls of her name. The sounds evolved into a chant: *WE WANT JACKIE!*

When she'd heard that the weather had suddenly cleared and turned hotter, she discarded her coat. She squinted her eyes into the sun during her descent of the ramp. She asked O'Donnell, "Do you think we've arrived in Mexico by mistake? It's fucking hot. I'll be drenched in this wool suit."

Directly in front of **Jackie and JFK**, seated on their respective jump seats, are **Nellie Connally** and her husband, **John Connally**, the Governor of Texas.

A few minutes after this picture was taken, both Governor Connally and JFK would be wounded, either critically or (in the case of JFK) fatally.

Following in JFK's footsteps, she headed to the fence, where she was presented with a large bouquet of red roses. The traditional Texas welcome involved the presentation of yellow roses, but florists had run out, so red roses, the symbol of romantic love, had been substituted instead.

Aide David Powers told O'Donnell, "The President is going to be exposed to half a million people before he sleeps in LBJ's guest room. All it takes is one psycho with a rifle stationed at an office window."

JFK didn't want to look too pretentious and nixed the idea of two Secret Service men riding guard on the back of the limousine. He gave the order, "Keep the Ivy League charlatans off the back of the car." Later, as events in the motorcade began to escalate, Hill would disobey that order.

O'Donnell had protested, "Sir, this is not Kennedy country. We're not in Boston anymore."

"Where did you get that line?" Kennedy quipped. "Sounds like you're ripping off Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz."*

Jackie was seated on JFK's left in the open-topped convertible's back seat, with Nellie Connally taking the jump seat *[a not-very-comfortable seating platform that can be folded up and out of the way when not in use]* near Jackie, and with her husband, Governor Connally, taking the jump seat near JFK.

Feeling that she was melting in the bright sunlight, Jackie reached for her sunglasses, but JFK warned her to put them back into her purse. "The people of Dallas will want to see your face," he said.

She'd resented riding with the Connallys. Before disembarking, she'd told JFK, "I hate that smug Connally with his petulant, self-indulgent mouth. I just can't bear sitting with him in the limousine listening to him praise himself and put you down."

"Let's be friendly," he had cautioned her. "He may challenge me for the nomination in '64."

The presidential motorcade left Love Field at 11:55AM, heading on its ten-mile downtown run to the Trade Mart, where JFK was to address 2,000 guests. In some places, the wildly cheering crowds fronting their route stood twelve people deep.

They were scheduled, before the day ended, to face another motorcade in Austin, a reception, a dinner at a fund-raiser, climaxed by a helicopter ride to the LBJ Ranch outside Austin.

***

As Franklin D. Roosevelt might have said, November 22, 1963 would be a day in American history that would live in infamy. Almost everyone in the world heard of that day, and would remember it for the rest of their lives. Thousands would come forth with "eyewitness" accounts, even though many of them were nowhere near the motorcade.

Robert Morton, an avid Kennedy fan, even though his wife was a staunch Republican, was also a bird watcher. That morning, he had arrived at Dealey Plaza before anyone else. The route of the motorcade had been published in the newspaper. He decided that the best vantage point to see Jack and Jackie was from a grassy knoll whose summit rose a few feet higher than the pavement of Elm Street.

As he looked around him, no one else had appeared on the knoll. He glanced at his watch. It was 7AM.

In the air, high above the looming bulk of the Texas School Book Depository, he saw a flight of birds winging

in, eventually landing on the roof of the building. He prided himself in knowing all the bird species, but didn't recognize this type of bird. They were black but they weren't crows.

He was amazed he couldn't identify the species. The birds didn't stay long. Something must have frightened them. Maybe someone had come onto the roof. In the distance he saw a young man with a rifle pointing down at Elm Street where the motorcade would pass by. He was aiming his rifle at the street.

But he didn't seem to like this stake-out and quickly disappeared inside the building. Morton wondered if this could be a possible assassin. He thought at first that he should report it to the police, but decided against it. He didn't want to appear to be a fool.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, more and more people appeared on the grassy knoll. After seeing that man with a rifle, Morton had become suspicious of everyone. He felt the knoll would be an ideal perch from which to assassinate a president. Three men who stood together looked suspicious. They were obviously from out of town, and were wearing overcoats although the weather hardly called for that. Did one of the overcoats conceal a rifle? It seemed to him that a lot of people in Dallas would like to see Jack Kennedy end his presidency on this particular day.

At seventeen, the twisted killer, **Lee Harvey Oswald**, joined the Marines, reading Marxist tracts in his spare time. His fellow soldiers called him "Faggot," "Mrs. Oswald," and "Ozzie Rabbit."

He was court-martialed twice—once for shooting himself in the arm with an illegal gun. He was court-martialed again for pouring a drink over the head of his sergeant.

He later fled to the Soviet Union, where he tried to revoke his U.S. citizenship. The Reds didn't want him, a Moscow psychiatrist diagnosing him as "mentally unstable."

In the distance he saw the motorcade approaching. He was relieved because he'd grown tired of waiting for it and he was hungry. The three men were still there and hadn't removed their overcoats even in the noon-day sun. Morton moved as far away from them as he could.

The next few minutes would become a blur, although until the end of his life he would attempt to describe what he saw that day to anyone willing to listen to him.

He heard the sound of gunfire but wasn't sure where the shots were coming from. Everything happened so suddenly. Eventually, all he could remember was the sight of those three men in overcoats running from the grassy knoll.

Morton later told his wife, "I think those strange black birds landing on the roof of the Depository was a very bad omen. A very bad omen indeed."

***

On the morning of November 22, in the home of Lee Harvey Oswald, the clock alarm went off exactly at seven o'clock. Oswald's wife, Marina, had risen at 6:30 and was in the kitchen preparing a light breakfast. When she heard the alarm, she assumed that her husband would be getting up to go to work at the Texas School Book Depository, a job he hated. "I'd much rather read books than sell them," he'd told her.

After ten minutes, when he hadn't come into the kitchen, she went to see what was happening, finding him still asleep. He'd been up for most of the night, pacing the floor. She wondered if he were planning to leave her for another woman. He hadn't been very attentive lately.

She shook him awake. He bolted up in bed, looking alarmed. He checked the clock. “Fuck!” he shouted to her. “I overslept. I’ll miss my ride to work.”

She returned to the kitchen and asked him if he could grab something she had prepared for breakfast.

“Don’t have time,” he shouted back at her, racing out the door. Through her kitchen window, she watched him go. He was carrying “a package of some sort…in a heavy brown bag. What was it and why would he be taking it to work?”

As it was later discovered, the package contained a mail-order Italian rifle he’d purchased shortly before JFK’s arrival in Dallas.

A neighbor, Linnie Mae Randle, was also standing at her kitchen sink and looking out the window as she saw Oswald approach her carport carrying a package. She’d later describe it as “something in a heavy brown bag.”

He opened the rear door of her brother’s car and put the package in the backseat.

She told her brother, Buell Wesley Frazier, who also worked at the Book Depository, that Oswald had arrived and was waiting for him in the car. Taking a final sip of coffee, Frazier glanced at his watch and got up. He kissed his sister goodbye and hurried outside to the carport. Oswald was already in the passenger’s seat.

Getting into the driver’s seat, Frazier noticed the brown package resting on the rear seat. “What’s that?” he asked.

“Just some curtain rods,” Oswald said.

Fearing they would be late for work, Frazier didn’t ask any more questions, but he would later wonder why Oswald was taking curtain rods to work. Should-n’t he have left them at home?

Breaking the speed limit, Frazier parked his car about two blocks north of the Depository, the only available space nearby.

Oswald seemed nervous and in a big hurry as he quickly removed the package from the rear seat. Without thanking Frazier for the ride or saying goodbye, he walked rapidly ahead.

All the way to the employee entrance to the Depository, Oswald stayed at least fifty yards ahead of Frazier and never once looked back. Frazier thought that was strange, but then, he had always considered Oswald an oddball.

The last time Frazier ever saw Oswald was the sight of him entering the Depository with that mysterious package.

***

At Dealey Plaza, Abraham Zapruder, a maker of women’s garments, was a 58-year-old camera buff who had been born in Russia, and who had come to Dallas via Brooklyn. Unknown to him at the time, this home-movie hobbyist was fated to become a footnote in American history.

He had arrived at a spot on Elm Street, not far from his office, hoping to film the presidential motorcade. The 26.6 seconds of footage he’d later capture—486 frames, without sound—will probably be shown in American history classes three centuries from the day he took it. His images were blurry, but nonetheless vivid. The film was shot in color, Jackie’s pink outfit dominating the frames.

Historians still debate exactly what those silent, shaky frames mean. Did Oswald act alone, or were there other shooters?

A.O. Scott, writing in 2013 for *The New York Times*, put it in perspective. “Zapruder can be seen as a pioneer of citizen journalism, a resourceful amateur who caught something crucial that the professional news media somehow missed. Now, everyone with a smartphone is a potential Zapruder.”

As amazing as it sounds, at least five eyewitnesses later reported seeing a young man standing at the window of the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository with a rifle at “port arms” *[i.e., slung diagonally across his body, with one hand on the barrel and the other hand on the stock.]*

From the Plaza below, a married high school student, Aaron Rowland, directed the attention of his young bride, Barbara, to the man in the window. “See that Secret Service agent stationed there to protect the President?” he said to her.

Robert Edwards and Ronald Fischer had walked to Dealey Plaza from the county auditor’s office, where both of them worked. They, too, saw a man stationed with a rifle at the sixth-floor window. Howard T. Brennan, a Dallas pipefitter, looked up at the Hertz billboard *[it displayed the current time and temperature]* atop the Depository. He, too, saw a young man standing motionless in the window. Ironically, none of these eyewitnesses were alarmed at the sight. For whatever reason they had, they did not report the man to any of the policemen stationed within the plaza.

U.S. flags were flapping in the wind as William Greer, the driver of the presidential limousine, turned onto Elm Street heading for Dealey Plaza, a three-acre, triangular shaped park with grass and concrete pergolas. As the limousine neared the Depository, Nellie Connally said to JFK, in one of the most ironic statements made on that

fateful day: “Mr. President, you can’t say Dallas doesn’t love you.”

“No, you can’t,” the President said, waving at the crowds. A rumor spread that Nellie claimed that she heard Jack’s promise to his wife. “After last night, there will be no more women—only you. That’s one promise I’ll keep for the rest of my life.”

Jackie is alleged to have responded, “Oh, Jack, if only you meant that.”

She had been nervous throughout the ride. Motorcycles from the Dallas police had backfired several times, sounding like gunshots. She became jittery, and would later testify that when she heard the first shot, she thought it was motorcycle backfire.

Jackie was looking directly at her husband, who was on her right, although she’d later claim she was looking to her left. But the Zapruder film shows her looking to her right.

She would always remember a quizzical look on her husband’s face. He raised his right hand as if to brush back his tousled chestnut hair. But his hand never reached his head, but fell down limply. When he reached again for the top of his head, it wasn’t there. It had been blown off.

[What had happened was this, at least for those who adhere to the “Magic Bullet” theory, which was said to have caused several wounds before exiting. The bullet was later found, almost undamaged, at Parkland Hospital.

The first shot hit JFK in the back, exiting through his neck, where it then hit Connally in the back, exiting his chest, hitting his wrist and then exiting and entering his leg. The seemingly impossible bullet then shot out of Connally’s leg and fell onto the limousine’s floor.

The second shot missed the limousine, but hit a curbstone, wounding an onlooker, James Tague, who was standing near the overpass.

The third shot was the fatal one, causing a massive wound to the President’s head. It entered his skull above and to the right to the bony point—called the occipital protuberance— at the back of his head, where it broke into fragments. The larger fragment shot out of his right temple, the smaller one exiting the right parietal area. Two additional fragments remained in his skull.]

Agent Roy Kellerman, from his position in the limousine’s front seat, heard JFK cry out: “My God, I’m hit!”

Connally was the next to cry out, “No, no, no! They’re trying to kill all of us!” He slumped over onto Nellie’s lap, and she heroically covered his body with hers.

“My God,” Jackie screamed. “They’ve killed Jack! They’ve killed my husband!”

At this point, JFK’s body jerked into the air like a marionette before falling back against the seat. She screamed as her hand scooped up a bloody mess, including part of his brain. His blood cascaded down onto her pink suit.

It was so sudden. Like spurts from some grisly fountain, she had been spewed with blood, brains, and even bone fragments. The vision would haunt her to her grave.

His body lurched forward toward her.

Her next move became the subject of endless speculation. Perhaps in a kind of primeval shock, she jumped up and blindly sprawled across the trunk of the open-topped car.

Accidentally, when she jumped out of her seat, landing face-down on the trunk, she kicked JFK’s gun-blasted, bullet-riddled head.

To many viewers of Zapruder’s film, it looked like she was trying to escape from the death car.

She would later claim—and agent Hill backed her up on this—that she was trying to retrieve a blob of his brain. To others, it looked as if she were assisting Hill, to help pull him into the car, which had accelerated as Kellerman was demanding that they get to the nearest hospital immediately.

Kellerman’s shouts could be heard. “Let’s get the fuck out of here! We’re hit!”

In the follow-up car, it was Lady Bird who first screamed, “My God, they’ve shot the President!”

Over the radio, Kellerman sent an urgent message to the follow-up limousine, the one carrying Lyndon and Lady Bird. Agent Rufus Youngblood was aware of what had happened and had hustled the Vice President—who in essence was the President at this moment—to the floor, covering his body with his own.

Without officially being sworn in, Johnson assumed leadership of the Free World while crouched down on the floor of a speeding limousine.

In an almost Herculean effort, Hill had caught up with the speeding car containing the wounded President, landing on the footstand on the car exterior’s left side. He grasped a small handrail for balance.

From there, he thrust his body forward onto the trunk and grabbed hold of Jackie. Using all his force, he pushed her back into her seat, where she collapsed. He would later recall the pool of blood and tissue like a vile confetti.

He covered the President’s body and that of Jackie with his own body in case there was another (or other) gunman/gunmen. The President lay motionless, a gaping, fist-sized, blood-soaked hole visible in the back of his head. Hill knew, on seeing that, that the Presidential torch had passed to Johnson.

Under his body weight, he heard Jackie’s sobbing. “Jack, what have they done to you? I love you!”

[In a memoir, Hill described the sound of the third shot, likening it to "something hard hitting something hollow, like the sound of a melon shattered onto cement." In the same instant, blood, brain matter, and bone fragments exploded from the back of the President's head. His blood, parts of his skull, bits of his brain, were splattered all over me—on my face, my clothes, in my hair."

With Jackie underneath him, and with his right hand, Hill pounded the door frame in his anger and frustration, knowing the President was dead and that the Secret Service had failed him. He knew that although the President might still be breathing, he was technically dead, or at least brain-dead.]

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Of the 178 witnesses at the scene on that fateful day, 61 claimed the shots came from a grassy knoll in front of the presidential motorcade. Some believed the shots came from the Depository itself. Others stated that they were not certain where the shots originated—"perhaps from several directions."

The official conclusion was that three bullets had been fired within a span of six seconds from a window of the Depository, and that the lone assassin was Lee Harvey Oswald.

The number of rounds of gunfire and the identity of the assassins will no doubt be debated a hundred years from now.

As in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, conspiracy theories abound.

***

Sirens wailing, the Kennedy motorcade rushed to Parkland Hospital with a moribund President, a comatose Governor, and a shocked-to-her-core First Lady.

Greer, the agent driving, pulled the Lincoln into Parkland's Emergency Entrance at 12:36PM. The staff had been alerted, but in their dumbfounded confusion, they had not hauled out any gurneys *[metal stretchers with wheeled legs]*. Kellerman screamed for two gurneys.

A doctor later reported that if JFK had been anybody else, he would have been pronounced DOA *[Dead on Arrival]*.

From the jump seat, Connally had to be removed before JFK's dying body could be lifted out and rushed into an emergency room.

There was a problem. Jackie held firmly onto the body, JFK's head cradled in her lap. She was refusing to let go, and Hill did not want to use force.

"I'm not going to give him up," she shouted at him. "You know he's dead. Let me alone!"

HAPPIER TIMES

On July 30, 1960, **Lady Bird Johnson** joined **Jackie Kennedy** at her Hyannis Port home, following the nomination of their respective husbands for the 1960 Democratic ticket.

The agent figured out why she was so stubborn. She didn't want people to see the slain President with part of his head blown off. Consequently, Hill ripped off his jacket and used it to cover JFK's blasted head. "No one will see him now," he assured her.

She released him and he was wheeled down the corridor of the hospital. She fol lowed into the corridor, where no one spoke to her, perhaps because they were so in awe of her presence within this living page of American history.

She sat down on a bench outside the door and began smoking, one cigarette after another.

She was still holding a part of the President's brain in her bloody kid glove.

Immediately after he rushed into Parkland Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson, with a frantic Lady Bird at his side, approached the Secret Service. "Is he dead? *Tell me, God damn it.* Am I the President of the United States?"

Kellerman replied, "We don't know yet. But it appears hopeless."

"Imagine not knowing if I'm the President," Johnson said. "What if Russia launches a nuclear strike?"

Lady Bird, the new First Lady, made her way down what she called "a corridor of silent people" to console the former First Lady, just now dethroned.

She discovered Jackie—"her eyes great wells of sadness"—and told her, "I wish to God there was something I could do, you poor child."

Jackie did not look up and did not respond to the new First Lady.

In the examining room, where nurses had cut off JFK's clothing, he lay nude on the operating table in front of the crowd of people, both from the hospital staff and the Secret Service. No pulse could be detected, but his body seemed to be in the throes of gasping automatically for his final breath. Then a faint heartbeat was discovered.

He was given blood transfusions. Having been told that his blood type was Type O, RH-Positive, he was injected with Type O, RH-Negative *[a medically acceptable practice, Type O, RH-Negative being universally compatible with any other blood type.]* But it didn't really matter at this point.

Drugs were administered in a hopeless attempt to revive him. Even though they knew it was too late, doctors went through the motions of trying to save him. A breathing tube was inserted into his throat, but it didn't work because of his neck wound. Another doctor performed an emergency tracheotomy.

In the corridor, Jackie clung to her fast-fading last hope. She vowed that if her brain-damaged husband lived, she would look after him for the rest of his life, the way Rose Kennedy had cared for Joe after his stroke.

Jackie confronted Dr. M. T. ("Pepper") Jenkins in the corridor. According to the doctor's later testimony, "I noticed that Mrs. Kennedy's hands were cupped in front of her, as she circled around. She was cradling something. As she passed by me, she handed it to me. I took it. It was slimy. I determined it was a big chunk of the President's brain tissue. Long before TV programs were interrupted around the world with a bulletin, I knew that John F. Kennedy had gone to meet his maker."

At this point, Jackie broke away from the doctor and headed for the trauma room, where a burly nurse attempted to block her way. She shoved the nurse aside and came into the room. The nurse chased after her. As she grabbed Jackie's arm, she slapped the nurse really hard. Stunned, she let go.

Dr. George Burkley interceded. "Let Mrs. Kennedy by. She's got a right."

Suddenly, a cardiac pacemaker was wheeled into the room. Dr. William Clark, a neurologist, began to administer a closed-chest cardiac massage, knowing that it was futile. With the compression of JFK's chest, blood gushed from the wound in his skull, dripping into a coagulating pool on the floor, making for a slippery, ghoulish sight.

A priest, Father Oscar Huber, had been delayed by traffic, but was now delivering Last Rites. He placed a white and purple ribbon on JFK's shoulder. The ancient Catholic ritual of Extreme Unction began—*Si capax, ego te albolvo a peccatis tuis. [If possible, I absolve you of your sins.]*

Jackie dropped down onto the bloody, slippery floor, as she heard the final words spoken over JFK's body. "Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord." Then the priest anointed the President's head with oil.

In a barely understood murmur, Jackie said, "Let perpetual light shine upon him."

After he'd finished, the priest turned to Jackie. "I extend my deepest sympathy and the sympathy of the Church."

She wanted to know—if JFK were dead when the priest had administered the sacrament, would it have had any meaning?

Father Huber responded, as overheard by those crowded into the room, "I believe his soul had not yet left his body, so it was a valid sacrament."

A white sheet was placed over JFK's body. Dr. Robert McClelland reported what happened next:

She approached the corpse and pulled back the sheet. "His mouth is so beautiful." She reached down and planted her final kiss on his lips. "His eyes are open, looking at me for one last time. She kissed his chest, his leg, and even his penis.

Then a Secret Service agent came up and covered the slain President's body again with the sheet. But as Jackie was being led out of the room, she discovered his right foot sticking out from under the sheet. To her, his foot "looked whiter than the sheet." She bent over and kissed it.

In the meantime, a Secret Service agent had ordered a bronze coffin from the local funeral parlor. "The best you have."

Thirty minutes later, the body was placed in the casket. Jackie demanded to see the corpse one final time before flying out of Texas. A nurse helped her remove her bloody kid gloves. She took off her wedding band and placed it

on his little finger. “Goodbye, forever, my darling,” she said.

***

The pilot of the plane was Air Force Col. James B. Swindal, a veteran of World War II and the postwar Berlin Airlift. He’d become President-Elect Kennedy’s personal pilot in 1960. From a portable radio inside the cockpit, he first heard that JFK had been assassinated.

“We were in a sort of bind,” he recalled, “because there was no place on Air Force one for a casket, and we sure didn’t want to put it in the cargo hold. Back in the rear were seats for stewardesses, Secret Service, and other passengers. So we unbolted these seats—about four rows—and made a space about the size of a couch. I also ordered that the plane be loaded to the limit with fuel to stay aloft for as long as possible in case the assassination was part of a Soviet attack.”

***

Back at Parkland, Dr. Earl Rose, the Dallas County Medical Examiner, had unexpectedly arrived on the scene. He informed the Secret Service that a Texas law required that an autopsy be performed on the corpse before the body could be removed from the city limits. Therefore, he had come to claim the body.

“Listen, you god damn son of a bitch,” Agent Kellerman said. “Get out of our way or I’ll blow your fucking head off. Fuck your local ordinances. This is the President of the United States.”

Rose was pushed aside. He could have alerted the Dallas police for a standoff, but chose not to.

Outside the hospital, Jackie refused to ride in front, but demanded to be driven to the airport in a position directly beside the coffin.

The body, within its coffin, was put into a waiting hearse for delivery to Dallas’ airport [Love Field], where Lyndon Johnson was impatiently waiting. He was refusing to become airborne unless Jackie was aboard. When the hearse arrived at the side of Air Force One, it was discovered that the casket would not fit through the aircraft’s doors until its brass handles were removed, a task the by-now exhausted Secret Service set about with hysterical single-mindedness.

Jackie boarded the aircraft, receiving sympathy from everybody she encountered. She entered the little bedroom where JFK had made love to her.

To her horror, she discovered Johnson sitting on the bed, dictating a letter to his secretary, Marie Fehmer. “Hold in there, little darling,” he said, before quickly exiting.

After that, Jackie sat in her seat, smoking a cigarette. Lady Bird came to the rear of the aircraft and asked her if she’d like to change out of her blood-stained clothes.

She refused. “When I return to Washington, I want them to see what they have done.” Jackie said.

After Lady Bird had departed, David Powers came and sat down beside Jackie, taking her hand.

“Oh, Dave,” she said. “This is the first day of the rest of my life. A life without Jack. I still have my children. I must protect them at all costs.”

Johnson had wanted to delay the release of the news about the President’s death until Air Force One was airborne. He feared a conspiracy, or perhaps an attack on the United States.

But bulletins were already being flashed around the world. In all its capitals, phones were urgently ringing. One of the most publicized events in the history of America was unfolding, minute by minute.

Within the hour, an industry of conspiracy theories was launched that would lead to some 2,000 books, countless television shows, and endless newspaper articles. The first conspiracy theory that originated was that JFK had been assassinated as part of a communist plot.

Near the front of Air Force One, Johnson faced General Godfrey McHugh, JFK’s Air Force aide, who urged him to order the pilot to TAKE OFF at once. When Johnson refused, McHugh protested.

Still in Texas, and still on the ground, the oath of Presidential Office is administered to **Lyndon B. Johnson** by a female Texas judge, with **Lady Bird** *(left)* and a shell-shocked **Jackie** looking on.

"I am the President," Johnson shouted at him. "You'll follow my orders!"

McHugh shot back, "I have only one President. He's lying in the rear in the coffin." Then he stalked away.

Arriving by police escort, a Dallas Judge, Sara T. Hughes, summoned urgently as a player and legal witness to the unfolding dramas and transfers of power, came aboard.

Johnson sent an aide to summon Jackie from the rear of the plane. "Mrs. Kennedy, the President wants you to attend the swearing-in ceremony."

At first, she hesitated, but then changed her mind and walked toward the front of the plane. With a rather blank look, she stood to Johnson's left as he was sworn in as the new president of the United States, using JFK's personal Bible, and with Sara Hughes presiding.

After the ceremony, Johnson thanked Jackie and expressed his sympathy.

At 3PM, the plane finally became airborne, after some continuing squabbling as to which legal entity had jurisdiction over the President's body. The former President had been dead for two hours.

Word reached Air Force One that a ferret-faced young man had been arrested after killing a Dallas police officer, J.D. Tippit. Tippit had stopped Lee Harvey Oswald for questioning.

***

On November 22, when the recently slaughtered body of a U.S. President lay in a hastily selected coffin aboard Air Force One, speeding toward Washington, elsewhere in the world, the business of government was grinding on in a perilous way.

Burkett Van Kirk, chief counsel for the Republican minority on the Senate Rules Committee, was hearing damaging evidence from Donald Reynolds, a Washington insurance broker, that Lyndon Johnson and Bobby Baker had accepted payola. Also, reputation-destroying evidence had been provided stating that President Kennedy at the White House had engaged in an extended sexual liaison with a communist spy, who may have been employed by the KGB to learn and then transmit vital U.S. government secrets.

Even Lady Bird Johnson was implicated for accepting gifts she'd selected from a sales catalogue.

The hearing was interrupted when a hysterical secretary burst into the chamber with breaking news out of Dallas. "A Secret Service agent just called from Texas," she shouted. "An assassin blew off Kennedy's head."

The committee members looked at each other in stunned disbelief. It seemed pointless to be investigating the misdeeds of a dead president. Political bases and public opinion had to be attended to, as the power structure in Washington had just become radically unhinged. What did it matter anymore that Lady Bird got a free deluxe stereo and some advertising money for one of her radio stations, and that Lyndon had done some arm twisting to encourage people to come forth with gifts?

The sexual misdeeds of JFK and his communist prostitutes were hardly worth investigating anymore. In fact, to air such charges would probably invoke the condemnation of the American people, who were no doubt about to go into a prolonged state of mourning.

From this moment forth, each of the committee members would be facing the press with only praise for America's slain leader.

***

At the precise moment that JFK was shot in Dallas, an undercover CIA agent in a Paris hotel was presenting former Cuban student radical, Rolando Cubela, with a “poison pen,” an actual fountain pen designed for the assassination of Fidel Castro.

Although this sounded like something out of a James Bond movie, the pen, with its syringe full of poison, was to be presented to the Cuban leader with the secret understanding that somehow it could lead to his death when he used it. Cubela was still trusted by Castro’s inner circle and was still allowed to meet with him privately.

THE SURVIVOR: **Fidel Castro**

“The bastard was going to hire his assassins to kill me. Now he’s dead, and I’m alive!”

Since the details of such a mission have never been made public, it remains a mystery how the poison in the pen could enter Castro’s blood stream. Somehow the pen, filled with Black Flag 40, a commercially sold insecticide, was to be used like a hypodermic needle. Was Cubela instructed to jab the point of the pen into Castro’s arm or hand? If he had done so, it would surely have been a suicide mission.

***

At his home, Hickory Hill, Robert F. Kennedy had just had a swim in his backyard pool. Ethel had prepared him a tunafish sandwich for lunch.

The phone rang in the hallway. Ethel picked up the receiver. “This is J. Edgar Hoover. I must speak to your husband. Get him at once. At once!”

On the phone, the FBI director was blunt. “The President has been shot in Dallas. I’m told he’s either dead or has only moments to live. His brain was splattered everywhere. Lyndon thinks he’s next. He suspects a nuclear attack any minute on the United States.”

***

Two days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a veteran who’d served with Oswald in the Marine Corps, spoke to a reporter: “One night in a bar he [Oswald] told me that he was going to become the second most famous man in America and would go down in history books.”

One of the most iconic photographs taken in the 20th Century depicts **Jackie**, still in her blood-stained dress, facing a bitter homecoming in Washington. Adjacent to **Bobby**, who's holding her hand, she watches as her slain husband's body is unloaded into a waiting ambulance before it was rushed to Bethesda Hospital for an autopsy.

En route to the hospital, Jackie told Bobby, "The last thing Jack said to me about Lyndon was that he's incapable of telling the truth."

The former marine claimed, "I chided him. Oh, sure you will. What's your ambition? To become President of the United States? With your record, you can forget that. What a pipe dream."

***

Under darkening skies at Andrews Air Force Base, several thousand U.S. Air Force personnel gathered to honor their slain former Commander-in-Chief at the moment his slain corpse was offloaded from Air Force One. Senators, Congressmen, Cabinet Members, and the extended Kennedy family, along with friends, gathered for this historic event shortly before six that evening. Security was the tightest ever known in Washington.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy, without attracting the attention of the press, bounded up the portable stairwell a second or two after it had been wheeled into place near the front of the aircraft.

The moment he was admitted inside, he rushed along the aisle toward the back of the plane, bypassing the newly sworn-in President Johnson, without one word exchanged between them, even though, technically, LBJ was his new boss.

Ignoring everybody aboard the plane, even JFK's closest aides, Bobby headed straight for Jackie and held her tightly in his arms.

Her first words to him were, "Oh, Bobby, I can't believe Jack is gone."

He confirmed that the Dallas police thought they had captured the assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. "He's a communist."

"Don't tell me," Jackie responded. "A silly little communist." She burst into tears. "That means Jack's death had no meaning. He didn't have the satisfaction of being killed for his championing of civil rights."

Bobby ordered Kennedy aides to block LBJ from coming to the back of the plane, where he had wanted to be photographed disembarking with the slain leader's casket. It was Bobby himself who was shown holding Jackie's hand as they were photographed with Mary Gallagher and Clint Hill as the casket was removed from the plane by a hydraulic lift. A six-man Marine Honor Guard carried it to a waiting Navy ambulance.

Jackie had demanded that only Navy doctors at Bethesda Hospital perform the autopsy. "I didn't want those Texas butchers cutting into Jack," she told Bobby.

Refusing to return to the White House and her children, she asked to travel in the Navy ambulance, sitting beside the casket with Bobby all the way.

At the hospital, while doctors performed the autopsy, she was escorted to the presidential suite on the building's seventeenth floor. With Hill serving as gatekeeper, she received the extended members of the Kennedy clan.

It was 2:45AM when Hill notified her that the autopsy had ended.

The autopsy, both its procedures and its results, are still controversial. Amazingly, no forensic pathologist was present. An unidentified pathologist later studied the evidence, and said, “The JFK medical evidence is so confused and contaminated with false and deceptive information that the only way to truly know the truth about JFK’s death would be to exhume the body for a proper autopsy by objective pathologists not under government control and filmed in a public setting, with neutral witnesses.”

Perhaps on orders from Robert F. Kennedy, a number of body materials removed from JFK’s body and examined at the initial autopsy later disappeared. These include the President’s damaged brain, blood smears, organ samples, and certain tissue sections. Allegedly, RFK didn’t want this body tissue preserved for display in some museum exhibit. Also, some latter-day historians have surmised that perhaps they didn’t want anyone to dissect the body tissues for evidence of either Addison’s disease or use of controlled substances by the President. But if, indeed, RFK did order the destruction of this material, he almost had to have the approval of Jackie herself.

[When Ramsey Clark became Attorney General, Jackie called him, requesting that he suppress all autopsy X-rays and photographs of “my husband on that marble slab.” Although he at least appeared to respect her wishes, JFK’s autopsy photos are available today to anyone who knows how to surf the Internet.]

Aides Kenneth O’Donnell and David Powers had purchased a mahogany casket at a nearby mortuary since the one from Dallas had been damaged during its frantic transit from Parkland Hospital to Washington, D.C.

At around 3AM, a Kennedy motorcade, followed by a Navy ambulance carrying his body, included Jean Smith, Ethel Kennedy, and Robert McNamara, headed for the White House and arriving at 4:24AM. A U.S. Marine Honor Guard at the Northwest Gate greeted the fallen leader.

Jackie told Bobby, “I departed this place with a young, vibrant husband. This morning, I’m bringing back a corpse.”

Still wearing her blood-stained suit, Jackie found her way into the East Room, where the casket rested on a catafalque identical to the one used in the funeral of Abraham Lincoln in 1865 in the wake of his assassination by John Wilkes Booth at the Ford Theater.

Before going upstairs to look in on her children, she met privately with Kenneth O’Donnell. He returned her wedding band, which she’d placed on JFK’s finger at Parkland Hospital. “I thought you’d want this back.”

She received it gratefully, with a little sob, thanking him.

Some nineteen hours had passed since she’d left the Hotel Texas in Fort Worth. She removed her clothes and took a long, hot bath.

She summoned a White House doctor, who gave her Amytal, thinking that it would make her sleep. Before drifting off, she recalled, “My body was in a state of panic. I didn’t think I had enough energy to get through the funeral. I’d never before been called upon to have such resolute willpower. I knew the eyes of the world would be turned upon me, and I was afraid I’d fail them.”

She fell into a deep sleep that lasted for only three hours. “At first, I didn’t seem to know where I was,” she recalled. “Then I felt like the weight of the world had come in on me.”

Her children’s nanny, Maud Shaw, had already informed Caroline of her father’s death, telling her, “Little Patrick needs his father in heaven.”

When John Jr. woke up, Jackie had to tell the little boy, “Your daddy is gone.”

He looked perturbed. “Did Daddy take his plane with him?” he asked.

“Yes, he flew away in the plane,” she answered.

“When is Daddy coming back?” the boy asked.

She did not answer, but clutched him and held him tightly.

“Mom, you’re smothering me,” he protested.

“There are things I must teach you today,” she said, “including how to salute.”

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Lem Billings desperately wanted to see Jackie, but she did not make herself available. Of the many friends and family who gathered, he was the most distraught. Family friend Francis McAdoo claimed, “Lem didn’t want to live. He was wrecked for years to come. I don’t think he ever recovered. At first, he was stunned and shocked. Then he became morose. He couldn’t believe JFK was dead.”

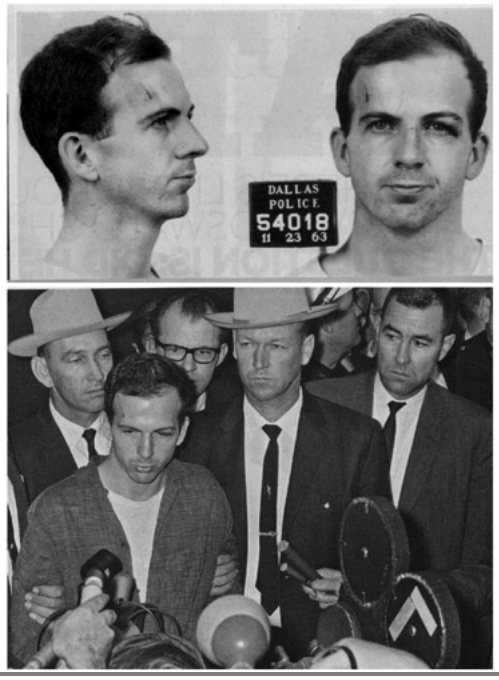
As regards Lem, Bobby recalled, “He took it harder than anyone except myself. He was completely devastated. Everything he had lived for seemed pulled out from under him. In the weeks ahead, he practically wandered around in a coma, as I did myself.”

In the next few hours, Jackie asked Ted Sorensen to research the funeral of Abraham Lincoln at the Library of Congress. She was hoping for inspiration during the arrangements she was organizing for his burial.

Mary Gallagher helped Jackie with her wardrobe, discovering that she owned only one black dress. It was the same outfit she'd worn in the Senate Building when JFK had announced his intention of running for President.

As it happened, she did not own a pair of black hosiery, so Jackie sent Gallagher to Garfunkel's Department Store to purchase three pairs for her. Rose Kennedy *[a veteran observer of many previous funerals]* lent Jackie a long black veil.

Like Billings, William Walton, JFK's longtime ally and confidant, was reduced to sobbing. At one point, after hearing the news of Jack's assassination, he became hysterical.



upper photo: Recently beaten by Dallas policemen, a dazed **Lee Harvey Oswald** poses for his mug shot.

lower photo: Detectives wearing Texas style hats hold Oswald firmly in place as he announces, after being formally charged with JFK's murder, "I did not kill anyone. I don't know what this is about."

His role in the assassination of JFK is still hotly debated.

Meeting with Jackie, she evaluated his condition: "Bill, please, pull yourself together. I need you. You've got to help me get through the funeral. Both of us must be strong."

Walton was one of the few people around her whose taste she implicitly trusted. She asked him to be the arbiter of anything connected with the funeral, subject to veto from either Bobby or herself.

She later applauded him for the choices he'd made, except she was shocked when he showed up at the funeral in a tan gabardine suit. "What happened to basic black?" she asked.

"I got caught in the rain with my one black suit, and it was ruined," he told her.

Bunny Mellon, the multi-millionaire horticulturist, was called in to oversee the floral arrangements. Jackie told her that JFK hated "all those pur ple wreaths and gold ribbons, looking like Harlem or Coney Island."

In the aftermath of that conversation, Mellon went to the White House's Rose Garden and cut white roses, chrysanthemums, two-lipped blue salvias and sphinx Hawthorne branches, using their shapes and colors as inspiration for other floral arrangements to come.

As funeral preparations were being organized, Jackie was notified by Bobby that Oswald had been assassinated in Dallas by someone named Jack Ruby, a Dallas strip club owner. TV cameras were tuned in to the actual event. *[It happened during a publicly televised transfer of Oswald between holding cells.]* Under heavy guard, he was fatally shot in full view of television cameras, who broadcast it around the world, much to the shame and dishonor of the Dallas police department. Shot at 11:21AM, Oswald would die at 1:07PM at Parkland Hospital, where JFK had died two days earlier.

Trembling from the news, and not fully understanding what was going on, Jackie was escorted to the East Room to watch as JFK's casket was transported from the White House to a position beneath the rotunda of the Capitol

Building.

The coffin was carried out of the White House through the building's North Portico and placed on a caisson pulled by six white horses. It was the same caisson that had carried the body of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945.

Jackie appeared in public holding the hands of Caroline and John Jr. Bobby directed her into a limousine holding Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson. Together, they rode to the Capitol rotunda, noting hundreds of thousands of mourners and the idle curious linking the edges of windswept Pennsylvania Avenue.

At the Capitol, a Marine military band played a moving rendition of "Hail to the Chief."

Nine military pallbearers removed the flag-draped casket from the caisson and carried the heavy burden up the thirty-six steps to the Rotunda, placing it in a position directly beneath the highest point of the dome. After the eulogies, Jackie and Caroline knelt before the coffin and kissed the flag that covered it. Onlookers were weeping.

A State Funeral, modeled on that of Abraham Lincoln, was almost entirely choreographed by the widowed Jackie.

"We're going to tell Daddy goodbye," she told Caroline. "We'll kiss the flag, knowing he's inside.

Then Jackie returned to the White House, making final preparations. She had asked that the rotunda be left open to the viewing public throughout the night. Some one-quarter of a million people would pass through to view the casket.

The night before the funeral, there had been an intimate dinner at the White House for twelve. Jackie did not attend. Surprisingly, as sometimes happens during wakes, the mood was jovial, at least for a little while. Someone even snatched Ethel's wig and placed it on the head of Robert McNamara, the usually rather dour Secretary of Defense.

The guest list was rather bizarre, having included comedian Phyllis Diller and Aristotle Onassis. Bobby later asked, "Who invited Onassis?" Perhaps to embarrass him, Bobby drew up a semi-legal document in which the Greek shipping tycoon agreed to turn over half of his wealth to the struggling poor of Latin America. To the astonishment of the Attorney General, Onassis signed it. Of course, both of them knew that the document was not enforceable.

The mood became somber when the dinner guests filed into the East Room to pay their final respects. The mood was one of "Good night, sweet prince."

After the guests had departed, Jackie asked Clint Hill to accompany Bobby and herself to the White House's East Room for a viewing of the coffin. The Honor Guard was there, and Hill asked them to turn their back on the coffin for a private viewing of the body. The last time Bobby had viewed JFK, he had been alive. When the coffin was opened, RFK began to cry silently, and tears also fell from Jackie's face too.

She placed two letters, a thin one and a longer one, into JFK's left hand. She'd written a letter to him that took two hours to write. She had also asked Caroline to write her own letter.

She'd selected a blue-gray suit for JFK's burial in the mahogany casket. Because of his massive head wound, a great deal of makeup had been applied to his face. When Jackie first stared at him, she let out a small gasp. "Poor Jack, my darling. It looks like a waxworks from Madame Tussaud's."

Then she turned and asked Hill for a pair of scissors. When he returned with a pair, she cut off a lock of JFK's chestnut hair.

It was Bobby who lowered the casket's lid for the final time. It was 12:46AM.

At the entrance to the East Room, both Bobby and Jackie turned for one final look. She began crying, and he walked her to her bedroom, which he entered, and locked the door behind him.

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Jackie announced that she wanted her husband's funeral service at Washington's Cathedral church of Saint Matthew the Apostle, the patron saint of civil servants, the seat of the Catholic Archbishop of Washington, even though it wasn't big enough to hold all of the invited guests. (In this decision, out of loyalty to JFK's Catholic origins, she deliberately bypassed the larger *[Episcopalian]* Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul *[i.e. the Washington National Cathedral]*.

She refused to be driven to the funeral, but planned to walk.

It was a quarter of a mile to the church, but she said she didn't want to be seen "riding in some fat, black Cadillac" behind the horse-drawn coffin.

When Johnson heard this, he, too, agreed to walk along with the procession, even though the Secret Service warned that he could be the victim of an assassin. He refused to listen. "Damn you, pansies. I'm in charge here. I'll walk!"

Éamon De Valera, blind and in his eighties, agreed to walk, too, "in honor of my fellow Irishman." *[De Valera, The New York City-born product of an Irish mother and a Cuban father, was a violently dominant political figure in 20th-Century Irish history. During a political career that spanned more than fifty years, from 1917 to 1973; he served multiple terms as Head of the Irish government, sometimes with fierce opposition from the English. Latter-day evaluations of his life and career have varied, with some historians defining him as devious, divisive, and emotionally unstable.]*

During the procession, De Valera's son was at his side with a hypodermic syringe in case the exertion brought on a heart attack.

Towering over all the other visitors was the stately looking Charles de Gaulle, whose security guards didn't want him to attend the funeral. After their arrival in Washington, they also urged him not to take the walk. He refused their request. "I had to attend the funeral, even though Kennedy and I had had our differences. Frenchman all over my country are crying as if they'd lost one of their own. I'd be impeached if I didn't come."

It isn't known whether Queen Elizabeth would have walked all the way to St. Matthews. She was pregnant and sent Prince Philip instead. He walked in the cortege.

Jackie, Bobby, and Teddy walked behind the horse-drawn funeral caisson holding JFK's casket in a ritual inspired by equivalent symbols during the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln, less than a century before. It was led by a riderless black horse, its stirrups hanging backward from the saddle. Ironically, the horse was named "Black Jack," the nickname of Jackie's father, Black Jack Bouvier.

A British journalist filed this report: "Jacqueline Kennedy has today given the country the one thing it has always lacked, and that is majesty."

Subdued drumrolls marked the progress of the procession from the sidelines.

At St. Matthews, Jackie was seated up front with John Jr. on one side of her, Caroline on the other. She listened tearfully as Richard Cardinal Cushing delivered Low Mass. He had a hard time with his harsh raspy voice, a by-product of both emphysema and asthma.

In the middle of the service, John Jr. grew restless. In a loud voice, he asked, "Where's my Daddy?"

A Secret Service agent, Robert Foster, took him to the anteroom, where the little boy practiced saluting.

At the end of the service, Luigi Vena, a tenor from Boston, sang "Ave Maria." At the climax, JFK's casket was carried from the front of the church and down the aisle to the sounds of "Hail to the Chief."

Outside the church, a black-veiled Jackie stood rigidly with her children watching the casket being loaded for its transport to Arlington Cemetery. The military rendered a salute to its fallen commander-in-chief.

A woman and her priest: The public face of a private moment

Jackie leaned down and whispered something in John Jr.'s ear. Thrusting his small shoulders back, he raised his right hand and performed what may be the most famous farewell salute in history.

There are those who say the little boy with his elbow cocked at precisely the right angle, exposing his dimpled knees in short pants and wearing bright red shoes, created a poignancy that made him overnight America's uncrowned prince.

After that, Jackie sent Caroline and her son back to the White House, while she got into a limousine for the ride to Arlington.

As JFK was laid to rest, Air Force jets flew overhead, one of them dipping its wing in a final salute. A Secret Service agent warned Jackie of the upcoming 21-gun salute. They were afraid that the sound would evoke the gunfire of Dallas. She trembled as she listened to seven riflemen each fire three separate volleys in honor of the slain President.

After Jackie was handed a lit torch, she moved toward the gravesite to light the Eternal Flame. The flag that had draped the casket was ceremoniously folded and presented to her.

Sergeant Keith Clark, the Arlington bugler, pointed his instrument in Jackie's direction as he played Taps. He experienced difficulty because of his trembling lips.

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After her departure from Arlington, Jackie, during the limousine ride back to the White House, told Bobby, "After Arlington, my responsibilities as First Lady are over. I've become a private person again.

That was not quite true. Waiting at the White House to receive her was an array of foreign dignitaries, come to pay their final respects to JFK. Some 220 representatives from 92 countries were at the White House, including ten prime ministers and eight heads of state. Among the guests were Haile Selassie of Ethiopia; West Berlin's Mayor, Willy Brandt; King Baudouin of Belgium; and Queen Frederica of Greece (whom Jackie despised).

She had a private meeting with De Gaulle. He had been awed by her charm and beauty in Paris. But after the funeral, he met a more determined Jackie, who chastised him for having soured French-American relations.

She went upstairs to meet with Prince Philip, who had gone to present John Jr. with a birthday gift. Ironically, the little boy's birthday was on the day he buried his father.

When she walked in on them, she found the Royal Consort playing with her son on the carpet.

Before Philip, she executed a swift curtsey and turned to John. "Did you make a bow to His Majesty, son!" she asked.

"I did, mother," the little boy said as his nanny entered the room to fetch him.

Jackie sat on the sofa with the Prince. She didn't know if he'd ever heard that he was one of the ten men she'd

named as the most desirable in the world from the prospective of a woman.

After sending her regards to the Queen and best wishes for her upcoming pregnancy, she thanked the Prince for coming to the funeral.

At the door, he bent down to kiss her goodbye. As she'd later tell William Walton, "I was shocked. It wasn't a kiss on the cheek, but a real man-to-woman kiss. I think in another life and under different circumstances, we could have been lovers."

After receiving her final dignitary, Jackie turned to Bobby. It was shortly before midnight. "Let's go see our friend," she said.

He notified Clint Hill to get a White House limousine ready.

At Arlington, they could see the Eternal Flame burning in the distance as they walked to the grave site, kneeling before the tombstone for a silent prayer.

At the end, they each stood up and took in the nighttime view of the Potomac and the lights piercing the darkness from the capital's various memorials.

It was time to return to the home she had occupied from 1961 to 1963. She would soon be leaving it.

Journalist Mary McGory would later write, "Mrs. Kennedy held the nation together while she broke its heart."

The End of Camelot

Don't let it be forgot
That there was once a spot
For one brief shining moment
That was known as Camelot.

In Washington, Jackie told the story of JFK's assassination over and over again to her closest friends. By so doing, she seemed to be purging herself of that day of horror in Dallas.

Capturing the heart of a nation. **A star is born.**

"Governor Connally was squealing like a stuck pig," she said time and time again. "Jack died bravely, without making a sound. At his last moment of life, he had this wonderful expression on his face."

In the aftermath of the funeral, Jackie granted an interview to historian Theodore H. White, writing for *Life* magazine. She told him that she and JFK used to lie in bed listening to a recording of the Broadway musical, *Camelot*. White picked up on this angle, and in his article, he likened the Kennedy presidency to Camelot.

A legend was born.

The myth of Camelot, in the view of many, was, historically at least, a flawed image. But ordinary citizens picked up on the epitaph bestowed, and the Camelot myth lasts until this day. It suggests something noble, tragic, magical and mythical.

Jackie told White, "I want to rescue Jack from all those bitter people who are going to write about him in history."

Long after her departure from the White House, bags of mail continued to be delivered to her. Most of them expressed admiration for her or for JFK and offered heartfelt sympathy. Interspersed with these condolences was the occasional hate letter, one woman calling her a BLOOD-STAINED SLUT!

In the waning days of 1963, she had time only to answer those from prominent people. From Paris, André Malraux cabled, "*Nous pensons à vous and nous sommes si tristes." [We're thinking of you, and we are so sad."]*

From London, a message from an unknown man was delivered to her because of its sentiment, "With the death of President Kennedy, every man in the Free World is a Kennedy."

Richard Nixon cabled, "I'm sorry that fate made Jack and me political enemies. I admired him intensely."

She answered Nixon, who had come so close to defeating JFK in the 1960 Presidential elections.

"I knew Jack's death could have been prevented, and I will never cease to torture myself with that. Whoever thought that such a hideous thing could happen in this country? I know how you must feel, so closely missing the greatest prize…and how you must commit all your family's hopes and efforts again. Just one thing I would say to you. If it does not work out as you have hoped for so long, please be consoled by what you have—your life and your family. We never value Life enough."

Jackie learned that immediately after the assassination, Bobby issued orders that all of Jack's papers were to be moved to the most secure room of the White House and protected 24 hours a day by armed guards. As soon as possible, the hoard would be moved to another (unidentified) location, with strict security.

He also selected trusted aides to review, screen, edit, and in some cases destroy the President's papers and certain tapes. After that process was completed, the documents were shipped to the Kennedy Library, where the most sensitive would be locked up and rigorously guarded for a predefined term of a hundred years.

The widowed Jackie, wearing Rose Kennedy's black veil of mourning, lived her finest hour as she bid farewell to her slain comrade.

Charles de Gaulle, who marched behind her in the funeral procession, later announced, "She gave an example to the world of how to behave."

Jackie heartily approved of how Bobby handled that process.

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In the weeks following the assassination, Jackie became the most publicized woman on the planet, a media event like nothing any woman in history had ever received. She attracted adoring crowds wherever she went. "I feel like a monument," she told Bobby, "not a woman."

She recalled walking by a newsstand in Georgetown, trailed by a crowd of curiosity seekers. She stopped to notice herself on the covers of a dozen magazines.

"I was no longer Queen of America," she told her friends. "I was now its Pop Princess."

Until 1968, she remained one of the most admired women in the world. The picture of the black-shrouded woman in "widow's weeds" seemed forever etched in the public's mind.

She'd become a widow at the age of 34 and much of her life lay before her, although it would not be a long life.

In the years to come, after her move from Georgetown to Manhattan, she began to damage her pristine image. She got into legal disputes with photographers, such as Ron Galella, and with authors such as William Manchester. These legal disputes tarnished her image. In 1968, she did the unthinkable: She married the Greek shipping tycoon, Aristotle Onassis, a notorious international celebrity.

Given the Camelot mystique, the public, and even members of her own family, were shocked. The tabloids had a field day. On late-night TV, she became a laughing stock.

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It wasn't until June 5, 1964, that she was called to testify before the Warren Commission. "I was looking to the left when I heard these terrible noises. You know. And my husband never made a sound. So I turned to the right. And all I remember is seeing my husband. He had this sort of quizzical look on his face, and his hand was up. It must have been his left hand, just as I turned and looked at him, I could see a piece of his skull, and I remembered it as flesh colored. I remember thinking it just looked as if he had a slight headache. No blood or anything. And then he sort of did this *[She raised her hand]*, putting his hand to his forehead and fell into my lap, and then I just remember falling on him and saying, 'Oh no, no,' I mean, 'Oh, my God, they have shot my husband,' and 'I love you, Jack.' I remember I was shouting. I just being down in the car with his head in my lap. And it just seemed an eternity. You known, then, there were pictures later of me climbing out the back. But I don't remember that at all."

***

As late as April of 2012, conspiracy theories still swirled about JFK's tragic death. Dr. Cyril Wecht, known for his inquiries into the deaths of Elvis Presley and JonBenet Ramsey, demanded that the President's corpse be exhumed from Arlington and a new autopsy performed. Wecht claimed that he was convinced that a second medical procedure would show that "there had to have been two assassins." He also charged that a second autopsy would reveal a massive cover-up by the Warren Commission.

***

In the aftermath of JFK's assassination, Jackie coasted for several years as the grieving widow of Camelot, trying to rear and educate her children.

As the 1960s came to an end, she fell from her pedestal, becoming the tabloid sensation known worldwide as "Jackie O."

Her marriage to Greek shipping tycoon, Aristotle Onassis, brought her international notoriety and condemnation.

The press interviewed former classmates. "Our nickname for her was "Jacqueline Borgia," said Sheilah Bottoms.

In spite of such criticisms, *Variety* proclaimed her as THE UNDISPUTED TOP FEMME IN THE WORLD.

Her new daughter-in-law, Christina Onassis, labeled her "The Black Widow. What amazes me is that she survives, while everybody around her drops. She's dangerous. She's deadly. She decimated at least one family, the Kennedys, and now she's after mine."

Some of Jackie's previous comments, which had been ignored by the press, now came back to haunt her. It was reported, for example, that she had called Rose Kennedy "a dinosaur" and a "dimwit."

The always provocative and relentlessly gossipy Truman Capote weighed in, too: "Bunny Mellon remains Jackie's friend only because she is terrified of her. Her secretary, Nancy Tuckerman, is no more than an indentured slave. Jackie may not have seduced the number of men I have, but she's had more than her share."

As the years went by, public opinion continued its campaign to pierce chinks in her armour.

At first, she refused to fly on Onassis' Olympic Airlines "because it reeks of feta cheese," which she loathed.

She demanded a discount at Manhattan's Bonwit Teller because of "all the free publicity I give you."

Other magazines and other biographers continued to amass negative publicity about her.

Ted Sorensen talked to her of the shift in public image that evolved for the most part in 1968 and during the eight years that followed.

But in reference to her armada of fans then abandoning her, "They'll come back," Jackie predicted. "I'll end my life a beloved figure—you wait and see. Right now, I'm going through my Diva period. If Maria Callas can be a diva, watch me go."

Wayne Koestenbaum in *Jackie Under My Skin*, wrote, *"Jackie triumphs because her style is aristocratic. And yet her 'high-class' status is only a vehicle for intangible spiritual victory. Jackie rules and ascends to Nirvana, not just because she's rich and refined, but because we think she deserves to win—because we've thrown out our own id's capital behind her, and imagine that beneath the glamour there rests a sad, grimy alterity, a previous incarnation of sour-smelling muumuus. Jacqueline Borgia will conquer her enemies. You can't refuse such a fairy-tale character destined for victory. She's 'top femme' because she seems not to care. She pretends indifference to fame and supremacy. Meanwhile, she achieves, through her blasé composure, perpetual glory. Her injunction, 'Do not look at me,' means that look we will."*

Chapter Thirteen

History's Most Famous Dress Was a Rip-Off Chanel

A Pink Artifact of Glamor, Splattered Body Parts, Bloodshed, and Tears

Often, **Jackie** as First Lady didn't like to wear the same garment more than once. An exception was a copy of a Chanel pink suit, which was destined to play a role in history. She wore it October 24, 1962 when entertaining the Maharaja and Maharini of Jaipur at the White House.

Months later, on November 22, 1963, blood-stained with her husband's blown-out brains, she wore the suit on the flight back from Dallas aboard Air Force One.

"I looked over my shoulder and saw, in the President's car, a bundle of pink, just like a drift of blossoms, lying on the back seat," said Lady Bird Johnson, recalling the fateful, blood-spattered motorcade that raced through the streets of Dallas on November 22, 1963.

That "drift of blossoms" she referenced was actually the figure of Jacqueline Kennedy, the 34-year-old wife of the slain President, crouching for cover, wearing the rose-colored Chanel suit that became an iconic emblem of the tragedy.

Fashionista dragon/Nazi collaborator, Jackie-hater, role model for the "you can't be too rich or too thin" crowd, and the woman known for having the best fashion taste in Europe, **Gabrielle Chanel** appears in one of her trademark suits

In her book, *Jackie Style*, the fashion expert, Pamela Keogh, wrote: "The outfit is a terrible talisman of American history and heartbreak. But despite symbolizing a very sorrowful moment in our nation's past, it also shows Jackie's stoicism."

As journalist Cathy Horyn wrote, "If there is a single item that captures both the shame and violence that erupted that day, and the glamor and artifice that preceded it, it is Jackie Kennedy's blood-stained pink suit, a tantalizing window on fame and fashion, her allure, and her steely resolve, the things we know about her, and the thing we never quite will."

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What is the history of this dress?

The infamous pink suit was an exact copy—a knockoff, really—of a Chanel wool *bouclé*, two-piece suit lined with navy blue silk.

The original first appeared on a French model, a Jackie lookalike, in a fashion feature in the September 1, 1961, edition of *Life* magazine. By coincidence, the picture of First Lady Jackie appeared on the cover of that same magazine. Perhaps in flipping through its pages, she discovered the suit and decided to have one made for herself.

The suit was crafted in Manhattan by an expert tailor, Jack Horowicz, who during World War II had been imprisoned in a Polish concentration camp because he was a Jew. Freed by the Allied Armies, he drifted to Munich, where he opened a small shop. "I made dresses or gowns for American Army officers' wives, who were with their husbands stationed with the occupying forces in the area."

In 1952, he emigrated to America, settling in New York, where he became a "finisher" after joining the ILGWU (International Ladies' Garment Workers Union). Highly skilled, he also operated as a sample maker for Oscar de la Renta, working from a base on 39th Street in Manhattan between Broadway and Seventh Avenue, across from Dubrow's Cafeteria.

His son, Michael Horowicz, said, "There was much excitement when my father worked on the First Lady's suit. Jackie ordered it in an East Side boutique one year before her husband's assassination. The finishing work was farmed out to my father at the De la Renta Shop, and he went about the task in painstaking detail. It was his proud achievement to present it to Jackie, whom he admired greatly."

A Dress that Will Live in Infamy

The original (authentic) Chanel suit had been displayed at Chez Ninon, a Park Avenue salon where Jackie was known as an occasional customer.

Journalist Jane Rudley wrote: "It was routine for Jackie and her sister, Lee Radziwill, to cherry-pick pieces by Givenchy, Chanel, and Pierre Cardin and have them copied relatively on the cheap by their favorite designers, including Oleg Cassini."

Jackie first appeared in the "Chanel-inspired" suit at Camp David in November of 1961 when she wore it to Sunday Mass.

She also was photographed in the suit with her sister Lee in London during March of 1962, when she lunched with Queen Elizabeth II. She wore the suit to greet the President of Algeria at the White House and again on October 24, 1962, when she met the Maharaja of Jaipur and his wife, also at the White House.

Reportedly, for the first time during their marriage, the President took an interest in the wardrobe that Jackie planned for their trip to Dallas. He said, "All those rich Texas broads at our dinners will be showing up in minks and diamonds. I want you to dazzle them by showing them that good taste can be simple but elegant." She complied with his requests.

An aide, Mary Barelli Gallagher, assembled Jackie's wardrobe. "It was feared that it might be raining, so I packed a raincoat in a darker shade of pink for Mrs. Kennedy. But that day in Dallas was bright and sunny, so she left the jacket on Air Force One."

On that horrible day in Dallas, Clint Hill was the Secret Service agent assigned to protect Jackie. He later recalled, "Mrs. Kennedy looked fluorescent against the dark blue of the car carrying the President and the First Lady. She stood out so much in the car because of the color of that suit. It was like the sun just illuminated it."

After the assassination, with part of JFK's brain in her hand, Jackie stood at Parkland Hospital in tears. In that dress, she kissed JFK for a final time before heading, under heavy security, back to Air Force One, where the new president (Lyndon Johnson) refused to be airborne without her.

Aboard Air Force One, flying back to Washington with the slain President's body, Lady Bird asked Jackie if she wanted to change her garment. But Jackie insisted on wearing the blood-soaked Chanel as she stood beside Lyndon Baines Johnson as he was sworn in as the new president.

She told Lady Bird, "Let them see what they've done!"

Later, Lady Bird, in her diary, recorded the event. "Somehow, that was one of the most poignant sights—that immaculate woman, exquisitely dressed, and caked in blood."

One of the most iconic pictures, flashed around the world, was of Jackie wearing that dress and holding the hand of Robert F. Kennedy when she arrived back in Washington aboard Air Force One.

Apparently, Jackie wore the suit all through the night after her return to the White House. The next morning, she gave the suit to her personal maid, Providencia Paredes, who placed it in a dress box. In July of 1964, it was turned over to the National Archives, accompanied with a note from Janet Auchincloss, Jackie's mother. The note read: "Jackie's suit and bag—worn November 22, 1963."

As a means of preserving the historical authenticity of the garment, curators—following standard conservation practices—agreed that the blood stains and other residue would remain, and that the garment would not be washed or cleaned.

Other garments preserved for history include the suit and cloak worn by Abraham Lincoln when he was assassinated. Mrs. Lincoln had given them to a family friend, and the garments remained in that family's custody until the 1950s, when the American Trucking Association raised the money and purchased them as a gift to the National Archives. Other valued garments include Napoléon's death coat and the shoe dropped by Marie Antoinette on her way to the guillotine.

The pillbox pink hat that Halston designed for Jackie has mysteriously disappeared, as have the white gloves she wore that day. But the dress rests in a climate-controlled vault within the National Archives in Maryland.

Jackie's blood-spattered hosiery, folded within a white towel, rests with the suit. Her navy-blue shoes, handbag, and navy-blue blouse are also preserved for posterity.

Technically, Caroline Kennedy owned the outfit and its accessories. But in 2003, she made a gift of them to the National Archives, with the provision that they not be publicly displayed until 2103, a century after the year of her donation, and 140 years after her father's assassination.

Martha Murphy, who is the chief of special access at the archives, said the dress is the only item associated with the assassination that has a restriction. Otherwise, the public can view the suit President Kennedy was wearing at the time of his assassination. Also on view is the rifle used by Lee Harvey Oswald.

"The dress won't see the light of day in my lifetime," said fashion writer Pamela Keogh. "For that, I am grateful. To my mind, there would be something very ghoulish about it being put on display."

Shortly after the assassination, a genuinely ghoulish trend involved the dozens of women who ordered copies of Jackie's suit, as well as copies of her pillbox hat for them to wear at various events. Also, the Chanel knockoff has been copied dozens of times as part of various Hollywood scripts. One of the most recent of these occurred when Minka Kelly wore a version of it in Lee Daniel's film, *The Butler*. Gennifer Goodwin re-created Jackie's pink suit in the TV series *Killing Kennedy*, which aired on *The National Geographic Channel* in November of 2013, marking the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination.

Caroline’s terms will likely be renegotiated by her descendants after her death.

Chapter Fourteen

Bobby Kennedy

The Lancelot in Jackie's Camelot

A Shared Tragedy Evolves Into an Abiding Love

THE LOOK OF LOVE. In the wake of JFK's assassination, **the former First Lady** and **the Attorney General** became lovers. Here, flanked with his wife **Ethel** on one side and with Jackie on the other, one wonders what expression Bobby is returning to Jackie from the threshold of her home in Georgetown.

Bobby Kennedy and Jackie, before the cameras roll at Hyannis Port on May 29, 1964, less than a year after his brother and her husband was assassinated in Dallas.

The program, discussing the late President's spiritual legacy, and filled with tremulous sensitivity, was broadcast from the home of Joseph P. Kennedy.

It was the beginning of a love affair, and it was captured on film by a paparazzo. Just two weeks after Dallas, Jackie, along with Caroline and John-John, moved into the Georgetown home of Averell Harriman, using it as a temporary shelter. Bobby and Ethel came to call.

Only the night before, Jackie had wept for hours, unable to sleep. At Bobby's parting glance, Jackie smiled demurely, a promise of more to come in their relationship. Newsman Ben Bradlee, a close friend, recalled, "Bobby was almost catatonic for several days. It was like he was glued to Jackie. If he left her for a moment, he became jittery, unable to focus on business."

Family, family, family…The roots of Jackie's allure went deep, as shown by the fascination of Bobby for his sister-in-law in this retro-photo from the early days of the JFK's marriage. From left to right, Teddy, Jackie, JFK, and RFK.

Chuck Spalding added to the post-assassination memory bank. He accompanied Bobby and Jackie to a private hour of mourning alone with the President's coffin the night before the burial. "They were actually conversing with his corpse, both of them…I mean, car rying on a long conversation. They later told me that they could actually hear Jack's voice speaking to them. It was eerie. Both of them had become unglued."

In one of the most famous pictures ever taken in Washington, Bobby Kennedy was on hand to comfort Jackie when she arrived at the airport with the coffin containing the body of her assassinated husband in 1963. She was still wearing her blood-stained pink Chanel suit, wanting to show the world what "they" had done to Jack.

In the days and weeks ahead, no brother-in-law in Washington political life ever stood by his sister-in-law with such devotion. Along the way, Bobby fell in love with Jackie.

A photograph of Jackie and Bobby walking hand in hand at the president's funeral was flashed around the world.

"The family that fucks together stays together," said Truman Capote mockingly, referring to the post-assassination affair that began between Bobby and Jackie. The author was kept abreast of the affair by his close friend, Jackie's sister, Lee Radziwill.

Before Jackie in the early months of 1964, there had been Lee herself. As author Christopher Andersen claimed, "A decade before the assassination, Lee's first husband, Michael Canfield, had listened in one room while his wife made love to Jack Kennedy in the next.

"Bobby was a father to Jack's children, and a husband to his widow"
—Senator George Smathers

According to various biographers, Lee herself may have been among the first to get in on the family fun.

Andersen claimed that while Jackie was in the hospital giving birth to Caroline, JFK seduced Lee while her first husband, Michael Canfield, listened to the sounds from his position in the living room outside.

During the early months of 1964, Lee threw two parties for Bobby Kennedy in London. Guests present later claimed that she showed "more than a passing interest in the Attorney General."

As Capote recalled, "Lee also wanted to sleep with Bobby, and Bobby, like all those Kennedy men, was not one to pass up the opportunity."

By the winter of ’64, Jackie and Bobby had become lovers. As revealed in Secret Service files, he was her almost constant companion, either dining in New York at the Four Seasons, tongue kissing at a private club, *L’Interdit*, in Manhattan, or spending long nights either at the 950 Fifth Avenue apartment of Steven and Jean Kennedy Smith, or at her Fifth Avenue apartment.

Coates Redman, who worked for the Peace Corps in Washington and who was a friend of Ethel’s, claimed that “Bobby was always rather bedazzled by Jackie, but RFK never intervened to halt the endless humiliation inflicted on the First Lady by her goatish husband. I’d say I’m ninety-nine percent sure they had an affair. You used to go to dinner parties and talk to people who lived near where Jackie lived on N Street just after Jack died. Bobby was constantly there. All hours. And you could see how they had a mad, morbid attraction to each other because they were the two persons most wounded by the President’s death.”

In the wake of his brother’s death, Bobby began spending nearly every evening at Jackie’s Georgetown house at 3017 N. Street, which had become Washington’s number one tourist attraction. Apparently, they spent hours talking in front of her fireplace. Eventually, he started spending entire nights with Jackie, leaving Ethel alone with the children.

Jackie’s close friend, Nancy Dickerson, said, “After Dallas, no one would have believed that Saint Jackie and Saint Bobby were sleeping together, even though they made it obvious. It would have been considered sacrilege. But Jackie and Bobbie were definitely having an affair.”

Nancy overstated her conviction that no one would believe it. At the time, Jackie and Bobby were two of the most carefully watched people on earth. Dozens of people learned of their affair, but the press did not report on it. In those days, the press wasn’t even writing about the numerous affairs of JFK, including his involvement with the late Marilyn Monroe.

Peter Lawford, Bobby’s brother-in-law, was one of the first to break the news. He told his wife, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, that “With Jackie, Bobby is now filling in for Jack *in all departments.”*

Jackie and Bobby began to show up everywhere together.

When Jackie flew to New York, the hotel staff at the Carlyle reported that he shared Jackie’s suite. She even went with him when he called on Herbert Hoover in his suite at the Waldorf Towers. It was so obvious to the ex-president that they were in love that he wisely cautioned them that the nation would be shocked to learn of such a liaison.

“Jackie relied on Bobby for everything, and he adored her,” said his close friend Chuck Spalding. He was aware that the Kennedy brothers often passed women on to each other. Bobby had “taken over” the affair with Marilyn after the President had broken off the relationship. Even their father, Joseph Kennedy, passed women on to his sons —or vice versa. Marlene Dietrich was an example of such “an exchange.”

Capote claimed, “She and Bobby carried on like teenagers, even in public. I used to sit with them at Le Club in New York. They were holding hands, kissing, and dancing as close as two leaves stuck together in a storm. They were lovebirds in every respect. Bobby was crazy about Jackie. Jackie confided to me that Bobby was thinking of ditching Ethel and marrying her.”

Not just Capote, but more and more people kept coming upon Jackie with Bobby “sightings.” Bruck Balding, an investment counselor on Long Island, found his two famous guests locked in a passionate embrace when he entered his stables one morning.

On a Pepsi corporate jet, with a host of celebrities, Jackie and Bobby flew to Keene, New Hampshire, for a week of skiing. Ethel was not invited. “Bobby hovered over Jackie,” Sammy Davis, Jr. claimed. “It was like he owned her. I had a drink with them in their suite late one night. Jackie was dressed in a beautiful silk robe, but Bobby was walking around in his underwear.”

The affair continued after Jackie moved to New York into a luxurious apartment on Fifth Avenue. RFK’s driver, “Jim,” reported that he often dropped his boss off at the apartment at around ten o’clock every evening, picking him up the following morning.

The lovers flew to Palm Beach and the Kennedy compound for a holiday. Socialite Mary Harrington reported that from her third-floor window she could look out onto the Kennedy property. “One morning, I saw Jackie sunbathing on the grass,” she said. “She had on a black bikini bottom, but no top. Bobby emerged from the house in white swim trunks and knelt down beside her. He kissed her passionately and fondled her breast with one hand. With the other, he felt between her legs outside her bikini. Later, with a towel thrown around her bare breasts, Jackie disappeared inside the house with Bobby.”

Author Gore Vidal, who was distantly related to Jackie, saw the affair in a rather cynical light. “I suspect that the one person Jackie ever loved, if indeed she was capable of such an emotion, was Bobby Kennedy. As Lee *[a reference to her sister, Lee Radziwill]* had gone to bed with Jack, symmetry required her to do so with Bobby.”

“Bobby just didn’t seem to realize that screwing Jack’s widow wasn’t going to bring his brother back,” said

Senator George Smathers. “There’s no way that Bobby was going to divorce Ethel.”

Russell Gilpatric, a future lover of Jackie’s said, “Bobby became the central core of Jackie’s life after Jack was killed. She had no brother to turn to. Bobby had her back and acted *in loco parentis*, including John-John and Caroline in his own family gatherings. Bobby attempted to fill in as father to Jackie’s now fatherless offspring. In short order, he was also performing another of Jack’s roles.”

In the wake of the assassination, Bobby became a surrogate father for John Jr. and Caroline. He played a significant role in their education and, as John Jr. grew older, talked to both children about serious issues such as civil rights.

Biographer Kitty Kelley wrote, “Bobby Kennedy spent more time with his sister-in-law and her children than his own, and Jackie leaned on him for everything. She even considered at one point asking him to adopt Caroline and John-John, feeling she could not raise them by herself. He gave as much as he could, offering her all his love, support, and protection.”

Taki Theodoracopulos, the heir to a Greek shipping fortune, became a right-wing journalist and columnist. Back when he called himself “a young, good-for-nothing playboy and professional athlete,” he lived with Peter Lawford for a while at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel in New York, but moved out, charging that Kennedy’s former brother-in-law was a drunk and a bully.

The exclusive bar at the hotel soon became a rendezvous for cozy *tête-à-têtes* between Jackie and Bobby. Since Taki was often in the bar, he later reported on their romantic liaisons. Lawford had told him that Jackie was sleeping with Bobby. “The press knows about Jack’s many affairs when he was in the White House, and they didn’t write about them, but Bobby’s got them fooled with his altar boy act. He’s no more an altar boy than I am.”

As Lee’s biographer, Diana DuBois, wrote: “Taki’s sightings of Jackie and Bobby’s *tête-à-têtes* were hardly isolated observations. In the months after Dallas, there were many such incidents of hand holding in public and kissing. But so unwilling was the public—and the press—to cock an ear to anything that would diminish the Camelot myth that no one ever wondered if Guinevere and Lancelot were sleeping together now that Arthur was dead.”

“Everybody on the inside knew of Bobby’s affair with Jackie.” said FDR Jr. “They carried on like a pair of lovesick teenagers. People used to see them at Le Club, their torsos stuck together as they danced the night away. I suspect Bobby would like to have dumped Ethel and married Jackie, but there was no way in hell that was going to happen. They were staunch Catholics.”

Jackie sent a letter to C. Douglas Dillon, Secretary of the Treasury, telling him that she did not need Secret Service protection during the graveyard shift *[i.e., between 11pm and 7am]*. “It is pointless for them to stand in the cold all night outside my apartment building on Fifth Avenue.”

Privately, Pierre Salinger, JFK’s former Press Secretary, suggested that was because Bobby could come and go during those hours without being identified on the Secret Service logbook.

Perhaps the most romantic moment for Jackie came on Easter weekend in 1964. Ethel took Caroline and John Jr. with her own children on a ski trip to Sun Valley in Idaho. Along with Lee and Stanislas Radziwill, Bobby and Jackie went to Antigua in the Caribbean for a vacation in the sun. With them on the trip was Chuck Spalding.

The Kennedy party were house guests of Paul and Bunny Mellon at the very exclusive Mill Reef Estate, overlooking Half Moon Bay. Jackie liked Antigua so much that Bunny even offered to build her a vacation home on the island.

[Rachel Mellon, the heiress to the Listerine fortune and a fabled horticulturalist, fine arts collector, and designer of the White House Rose Garden, was often the “beard” concealing Jackie’s affairs.

Ted Sorensen claimed that Bunny, as she was nicknamed, was the only friend who knew about all of Jackie’s affairs, and concealed them from the press.

For hideaways, Jackie often used Bunny’s homes in Manhattan, Washington, D.C., her apartment in Paris, or her various vacation retreats on Cape Cod, Antigua, or Nantucket, even her estate at Oak Spring, Virginia, near Upperville, where she entertained Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. Jackie favored this retreat for secret trysts with her lovers because Bunny and her husband, Paul Mellon, raised horses here.

As journalist Robert D. McFadden wrote of Bunny Mellon after her death in 2014 at the age of 103, “Like many other fabulously wealthy people, Ms. Mellon lived largely out of the public eye, shielded by lawyers and public relations retainers, unlisted addresses and phone numbers, and retinues to shop and buy tickets.”

According to friends, Jackie used Bunny’s “barricade of gates against the public” to conceal certain aspects of her private life.

"Why can't Jack be more discreet like **Bobby**?" **Jackie** had asked, according to William Walton, in 1962 when her husband was to some degree "flinging his affairs in my face." In contrast, Bobby conducted his affairs "like a secret agent operating undercover."

As their affair evolved, Ethel became the neglected wife of Hickory Hill.

McFadden claimed that Bunny was "fresh-faced, slender, ebullient, radiating confidence, and a dazzling figure in a swirling cotillion or at the taffrail of a steamer.

Jackie trusted her taste explicitly and valued her discretion. "Unlike the rest of us," said Sorensen, "Jackie knew that Bunny wouldn't be writing a tell-all."]

Spalding later said, "Jackie and Bobby were like two school kids in love. They were very close, holding hands, taking long walks on the beach under a moonlit sky. They were always whispering secrets to each other. Bobby and Jackie had separate rooms, but he would slip into her room at night, leaving early in the morning before the household rose."

On their own, Bobby and Jackie also visited Sun Valley, and also journeyed to Aspen, Colorado. They went on weekend trips to Vermont. One skier remembered them laughing and hugging each other as they tumbled into a snow-bank.

Later that night, in an *après* ski lounge, when there were just a handful of guests, most of whom were drunk, Bobby lay with his head in Jackie's lap, as she combed his bangs with her fingers.

In the summer of 1966, Kenneth McKnight, a former administrator of the Commerce Department during JFK's presidency, recalled keeping an appointment with RFK (then a New York Senator) at his office in Manhattan.

It was scheduled for 8pm, when the staff had gone. He walked down the corridor, where the door to RFK's office was half open.

He heard voices inside and looked in. "Bobby was on the sofa and Jackie was on his lap, planting little kisses on his face and neck. She had her arms wrapped around his neck. Of course, when they saw me, it became all business. I knew Jackie. She introduced me to Bobby. I wanted a job with him. She quickly left."

Sometimes, Jackie complained to William Walton and others that Bobby was too dependent on her, that he was draining her of her strength. "Everyone thinks he's taking care of me, but in essence, I'm looking after him. He became a basket case after Jack was shot. I'm giving him a reason to go on living."

In Manhattan, Bobby and Jackie were often spotted at such hotels as the Algonquin. On a summer day, they often appeared casually, she wearing a blouse and slacks, he in a polo shirt and khaki trousers.

On some occasions, she could be seen with her head on his shoulder, even kissing his neck, as he sipped a vodka and tonic.

Sometimes, in attempts to be discreet, they were seen entering Jean Kennedy Smith's apartment when she and her family were out of town. One doorman remembered them entering at 2am, with Bobby departing the next morning at 10:30AM.

Capote later claimed he received almost daily updates on the Bobby/Jackie romance. He taped a series of interviews in 1976 for film producer Lester Perksy. He called the Bobby/Jackie liaison "the most normal relationship either one ever had. There was nothing morbid about it. It was the coming together of a man and a woman as a result of bereavement and her mental suffering at the hands of her late, lecherous husband. In retrospect, it seems hard to believe that it happened, but it did."

British journalist Peter Evans claimed in his book, *Nemesis*, that both Eunice Shriver and Ethel were aware of Bobby's affair with what Ethel called "the widder."

"Ethel may have been naïve, but she wasn't that naïve," Evans maintained. "In fact, Ethel had reached the same conclusions as Capote about her marriage. Thanks to their children, her husband's Catholicism, and his concern with the Kennedy legacy, she realized that their marriage was largely intact."

Allegedly, Jackie reported the affair to her suitor, Aristotle Onassis. He later told his cohort, Johnny Meyer, "By going public with the details of the senator's affair, I could bury the sucker. But I'd lose Jackie in the process. But can't you just see those headlines?"

Edward Klein, author of *Just Jackie*, said, "There were many who thought that Jackie secretly wanted to replace Jack with Bobby. And it was true that if Bobby could have been divided in two, Jackie might have considered marrying the half that was devoted to her."

When news of Bobby and Jackie first became public, Kennedy defenders wanted to sweep the scandal under the carpet or bury it forever in some deep closet. But FBI and Secret Service reports, released in 2007, more or less confirmed the affair. The Bobby/Jackie liaison was reportedly active between the years 1964 and 1968.

Amazingly, for years RFK had previously enjoyed a reputation somewhat akin to that of a choirboy. But from all reports, Bobby was as much of a sex addict as his brothers, only he was much more discreet and in general he preferred that his women be smarter than Jack or Teddy did. He once told aide David Powers, "Unlike Jack and Teddy, I don't get off on bimbos."

When Bobby began his affair with Jackie, he had previously enjoyed the beds of everyone from singer Rosemary Clooney to Princess Grace Kelly. He'd also seduced two of the same blonde bombshells that his brother had, notably Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield.

Author C. David Heymann alleged that Jackie's affair with Onassis drove Bobby into the arms of actress Candice Bergen, whom he met in 1965 when she was nineteen. Both Shirley MacLaine and Catherine Deneuve recalled seeing Candice and Bobby together at a party in Paris. Their affair even made the society pages of *Paris-Presse*. Capote alleged that Ethel found out about her husband's sexual tryst with Candice. "They weren't being furtive, they were being rather obvious."

With Ethel and the children left behind at Hickory Hill, RFK's Virginia estate, Jackie and Bobby intensified their love affair during the latter part of 1964. "Bobby and his brother's widow did little to hide their affection for each other," wrote biographer Christopher Andersen. "They continued embracing, kissing, and holding hands."

Classified Secret Service files revealed that the romantic pair were in each other's company several times a week.

Clare Boothe Luce, a long-time friend of Joe Kennedy, Sr., later exclaimed, "Well, of course, everybody knew Jackie and Bobby were involved, if that's the right word for it. At least everyone who knew them was aware of what was going on between them."

Spalding was one of the most intimate members of Bobby's entourage, and a compelling witness to the Jackie/Bobby affair. "Bobby's love for Jackie helped restore her emotional health after that horrible assassination. I really believe that Bobby was happier from 1965 until early 1968 than he ever was in his life. He still loved Ethel and his kids, but he really wanted to marry Jackie, but didn't dare. After all, he planned to run for president. I often went on vacations with Jackie and Bobby. I didn't stand over their bed watching them make love, but I know they often went into a single bedroom at around eleven o'clock at night and didn't emerge until noon of the next day."

In the months ahead, communal sightings of Bobby and Jackie became frequent. Dozens of persons close to both of them reported evidence of their affair. These included socialite Audrey Zauderer (later Audrey de Rosario) who lived at ultra-exclusive Round Hill, a villa compound and resort in Montego Bay, Jamaica. She claimed they were having an affair—"absolutely!"

The family's nanny, Maud Shaw, claimed that Jackie and Bobby had separate bedrooms, but they "kept dodging in and out of each other's boudoir, making no secret of their dalliance."

The German screenwriter, Bernard Hayworth, also on vacation at Round Hill, reported seeing Jackie and Bobby swimming and sunbathing at a secluded cove. "He began massaging her back and kissing her neck," Hayworth claimed. To grant them their privacy, Hayworth turned and left before the action heated up.

Columnist Victor Lasky wrote: *"If the Kennedy dynasty is restored, it will be Ethel Kennedy (with whom she has little affinity) and not Jackie who will occupy the center of the stage. There cannot be two First Ladies in the White House. Yet the fact that she is doomed to be discarded by her brother-in-law should he become president has not deterred Jackie from doing all she can to further Bobby's political fortunes. And because they frequently holidayed together, often without Ethel, there have been rumors that something untoward was going on."*

The New York Times bestselling author, C. David Heymann, has almost made a career out of investigating the private lives of the Kennedys, publishing intimate biographies of Jackie, RFK, and even John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Caroline.

More than any other investigative reporter, he introduced the secret love affair between Jackie and Bobby to the

world, even though it was an open secret in Washington in 1964.

The book, *Bobby and Jackie*, is loaded with revelations about their affair, and of Jackie's attempts to learn as much as possible about what Bobby had been up to before their affair was launched.

Jackie even found out about the sex act between Bobby and Marilyn Monroe that had been secretly videotaped in the blonde bombshell's bedroom.

J. Edgar Hoover had called Clark Clifford, former Counsel to the President during JFK's administration, to his office to show him the film and discuss possible fallout from it. No one knew how many copies had been printed.

At a dinner party in New York hosted by *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland, Jackie confronted Clifford for more details, but he denied any knowledge of the explosive film.

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After Bobby and Jackie separated as a means of saving his political career, there were other reports that the Kennedy family's youngest brother, Teddy Kennedy, also pursued Jackie, even though she was married at the time to Aristotle Onassis.

"It was no secret that Teddy also had the hots for Jackie," Capote told Bill and Barbara (Babe) Paley at one of their dinner parties at Round Hill, Jamaica. The story was just too fascinating for the guests to keep to themselves. By the time they returned to the States, Washington and New York society was abuzz with the hushed-up whispers.

Whether it was true or not, Capote amplified his story, claiming that on one drunken night at his apartment, Jackie even rated the sexual performances of the three brothers. On her scale of 1 to 10, Bobby got a 9, Jack a 6, and Teddy a 3.

"With Teddy," Jackie allegedly confided, "it was like going to bed with a college freshman. Bobby was the one with the power and the drive. He seduced a woman like he was going after Jimmy Hoffa."

When Capote asked her to describe Jack's performance, she refused. "Just go to any party in New York, Washington, or Hollywood and ask around. You'll get your answer."

When RFK decided to run for President in 1968, he told Jackie he had to end their love affair "because too many eyes would be watching." She understood that the intensity of their love could not continue under these new circumstances. It had been dangerous enough before. "Our love will endure," she told him.

He told her that if he did not win the presidency, "I will come back to you. In the meantime don't run off with Onassis." That was a warning she would not heed.

Other friends claim that it was actually Jackie who broke off their sexual involvement, although their close friendship would continue. Knowing how much he wanted to be President, Jackie told him it would be best for them not to see each other for a while as a means of protecting his political future. She urged him to return to Ethel and his brood.

Here, **Ethel and Bobby Kennedy** appear in public together after Bobby wins the Indiana Primary in 1968.

Peter Lawford claimed that Bobby came to him after the rejection. "He took it really bad. He cried all night and into the next day. I didn't know he was capable of such tears, because he could be pretty stoic."

The actor did not condemn the affair, and later said, "After Jack died, Jackie threatened suicide on more than one occasion, although she couldn't stand the thought of leaving her children alone in the world. But she came close to killing herself. Her love affair with Bobby may have saved her life."

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Throughout Bobby's race to the White House, Jackie was seized with nightmares that he might be assassinated. On that dreadful pre-dawn in June of 1968, she learned that lighting had indeed struck twice.

At 3:45AM, she received an urgent call from London, where it was already morning. The news of Bobby's assassination was already being broadcast.

"Jackie!" Lee Radziwill said, urgently. "Bobby's been shot. It just happened."

There was a long silence on the phone, and then a blood-curdling scream. "No, it can't have happened!" Jackie shouted into her receiver. "The only two men I've ever loved. Shot!"

Then she slammed down the phone.

Within minutes, Chuck Spalding was on the phone with an eyewitness account of the slaying of RFK within the kitchens at the Ambassador Hotel.

She demanded that she be flown to Los Angeles at once. En route, she kept repeating, "It can't have happened. It can't have happened."

Spalding met her at the Los Angeles airport. Jackie demanded, "Give it to me straight. No bullshit."

"He's dying," he told her.

She let out a scream like a trapped animal.

In the hospital room, Ethel sat by her husband's side, whispering her love for him into his ear. Getting up when Jackie entered, she embraced her. "I'm so glad you're here." Then she very graciously surrendered the room so that Jackie could spend some time alone with her dying husband.

At 12:45AM on a Thursday morning on June 6, 1968, RFK's doctors approached Jackie and Ethel to tell the widows the grim facts. "There is no brain activity," Dr. Henry Cuneo said. "He's only being kept alive by artificial means. There is no chance ever of recovery."

Ethel ran screaming down the corridor. "I won't do it! I won't kill Bobby!"

With nerves of steel, Jackie confronted the doctor. Very calmly she told Dr. Cuneo, "I am speaking for the family. We want you to disconnect the respirator. I'll sign the consent form."

After the respirator was disconnected, she came into the room. She stood there as RFK breathed on his own for five minutes. Then he stopped. He was dead. It was 1:44AM. Within minutes, bulletins went out around the world.

Robert Francis Kennedy was dead at forty-two years of age.

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Most of the world, except for his enemies, went into mourning.

At the White House, President Lyndon Johnson was awakened with the news. "I couldn't stand the shit," he said. "But send Air Force One to Los Angeles to bring the body back to New York."

En route East, Teddy sat alone with the casket. Ethel and Jackie were seated next to each other up front, but really had nothing to say.

Once in New York, Jackie placed a call to her trusted friend, Roswell Gilpatric, the Under Secretary of Defense during JFK's administration, "Oh, dear God, please tell me. This is just a bad dream. The dawn will come. I will wake up. Please, please tell me that. When will my nightmare end?"

The burden of yet another assassination—this time of Bobby—became almost too much for Jackie. After the funeral on June 8, 1968, at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, Lady Bird Johnson encountered Jackie. "I found myself in front of her and called her name, putting out my hand. She looked at me as if from a great distance, as though I were an apparition. I murmured some words of sorrow and walked on. . . ."

After that funeral, Jackie's anger turned to bitterness. As Heymann wrote, "If she had felt any doubt or obligation to consider the impact of her actions on the political prospects of the remaining Kennedys, they were resolved by the shots that ended Bobby's life. Once again it did not matter who had pulled the trigger, or for what twisted reason."

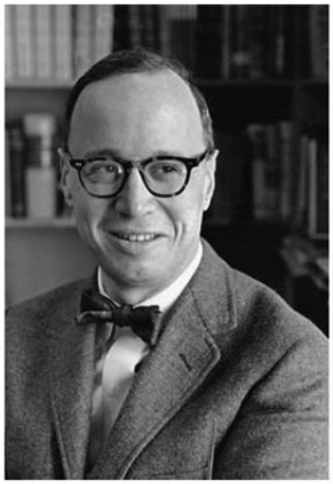
Chapter Fifteen

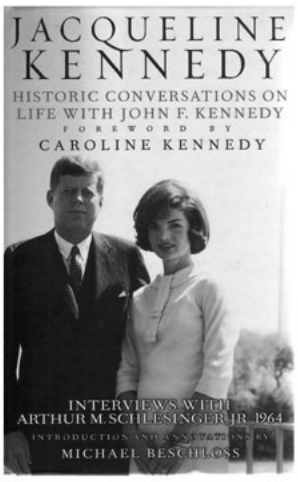
The Kennedy Tapes

Jackie's Recorded Dialogues with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Jackie's True Feelings for Friends and "Frenemies"

Her Candid Quotes were Heavily Censored, but Many Leaked Out Anyway





In 1963, **Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.**, *(left)* asked President Kennedy to dictate his own reminiscences for a possible memoir. Although he dictated an occasional memo, and taped hundreds of hours of his White House meetings and phone calls, there were never any introspective "recorded memoirs of my life."

In contrast, in 1964, after her husband's death, Jackie agreed to record seven extended conversations with Schlesinger, ranging from a discussion of JFK's back problems to the quirks of Lyndon Johnson as a running mate. In 2013, an edited version of these conversations *(center photo)* were released to the public.

In the candid snapshot from 1959 *(right photo)*, a straw-hatted **Jackie**, with **Jack** beside her, is seen catching up on her reading.

"I was always a liability to Jack until we got to the White House, and then he came to view me as an asset, telling me I was the most compelling spouse Washington had ever seen. Before that, I was viewed as a snob from Newport, who had bouffant hair and wore French clothes and hated politics. But he never insisted I change my image and get a little frizzy permanent and be like Pat Nixon."

—Jacqueline Kennedy

In September of 2011, Caroline Kennedy released—as audio recordings on CD, accompanied with their transcripts in book form—the interviews her mother gave to the Kennedy family's court historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. These historic conversations were recorded early in 1964 in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

In very candid, sometimes shocking revelations, she shared her memories about "The Reign of Camelot." Although these tapes had been suppressed for forty-seven years, with the Jackie's reported stipulation that they should remain under wraps until 2039, Caroline decided to "prematurely" release them on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of her father.

In the tapes, Jackie does not deliver an overview, or insights about, the assassination. In lieu of that, she was simultaneously involved at the time in a series of detailed conversations with William Manchester, with the understanding that he would be writing a book which would later be entitled *The Death of a President*.

[Whereas the Manchester tapes, whose history is explored in a later chapter of this book, were specifically envisioned as dark, highly emotional source material pertinent to the assassination of JFK, the Schlesinger tapes were envisioned as Jackie's statement about her family's brief reign over Camelot, information she considered pertinent as documentation of Jack's life and accomplishments, with the understanding that Jack himself would never be able to write his memoirs.

And whereas Jackie later regretted that she had talked so candidly to Manchester, and whereas she later sued him to prevent him from publishing secrets she had revealed to him earlier, she had no equivalent discord with the more pliable, more cooperative, Schlesinger, whose interviews, presumably, did not evoke the pain and latter-day trauma of her dialogues with Manchester.

Publishers offered Jackie millions of dollars as an advance, but she refused to write an autobiography or memoir of her own. On the morning after her death, *The New York Times* reported, "Her silence about her past, especially about the Kennedy years and her marriage to the President, was always something of a mystery."

> *"Lady Bird is a hound dog...De Gaulle is an egomaniac... and Martin Luther King is a terrible man"*
>
> —Jacqueline Kennedy

Beginning on March 2, 1964, the date of Jacqueline's first recorded conversation with Schlesinger, Jackie became the first former First Lady to submit to hours of intensive recorded questioning about her public and private life.

[That Caroline released the Schlesinger tapes before the scheduled time is surprising, because she had previously been perceived as a protective tigress ferociously guarding the gates to Camelot.

In April of 2011, The History Channel was on the verge of broadcasting a TV miniseries about Caroline's parents, and she used her influence to get the $30 million show removed, or at least downgraded, from the national spotlight. Eventually, with a lot of conjecture in the press about who had influenced what, the miniseries was broadcast on another channel (Reelz). Katie Holmes, former wife of Tom Cruise, portrayed Jacqueline, and Greg Kinnear was cast as JFK. Reportedly, Caroline was horrified at the impersonations.

Even before it was cast, the series faced a barrage of attacks. Ted Sorensen, former speech writer for JFK, calling it "character assassination." The series was widely attacked for alleged historical inaccuracies and for presenting an unflattering view of the titular family.

Reviewers in the United States gave the series a mixed reaction, Hank Steuver of the Washington Post *finding it, "All ends up being as harmless as a game of Kennedy paper dolls." Mark Perigard of the* Boston Herald *found it*

"an absorbing addictive drama, with some authentic performances, but not history."

Alessandra Stanley of The New York Times *wrote, "There is something wonderfully Kennedyesque about a backroom campaign to discredit a series that claims the Kennedy White House had more than its share of backroom shenanigans." She praised Tom Wilkinson, cast as Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., portraying his as a "ruthless, tyrannical striver who grasps for power, promoting his sons to establish his rule and cement his legacy."]*

Since Caroline, based on the legal terms associated with the original recordings, was in the power seat, she instructed Schlesinger, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, to edit out certain revelations that were "too hot or too personal." But in 2011, since so many editors and technicians had been exposed to the unedited tapes prior to their release, a more complete version of what was on some of those recordings leaked out. Many provide fascinating insights from a First Lady the press had defined as "The most mysterious, fascinating, and feline woman in American political history."

Maureen Dowd, writing in *The New York Times, said, "Jackie maintains her reputation as JFK's best image wizard, a novelistic observer of history, and the most deliciously original, glamorous, and compelling political spouse we'll ever see."*

Another quote emerged, one that had been expunged from the official, Caroline-sanctioned version, something that Jackie revealed about the morning prior to her husband's assassination. Caroline objected to its inclusion in her officially sanctioned version, claiming, "It makes my mother look flighty."

Apparently, Jackie in Fort Worth, Texas, had told JFK about a nightmare she'd experienced the night before their transit to nearby Dallas:

"We were riding in an open-topped car, and I was talking to you. It began to pour, and I realized the rain was really blood. It would drown us if we didn't flee the limousine."

Reportedly, he tried to reassure her. "Don't worry about it. It'll be okay, sweetheart. It'll be fine. You'll see."

At some points during her dialogues with Schlesinger, Jackie was said to have asked him to turn off the recording device whenever he veered too dangerously close into her own affairs. "In the years to come, biographers will no doubt write hundreds of books about me, and I'll leave it up to them to expose my indiscretions. I admit I've had a few, and no doubt will again, because I am a healthy woman with desires. But I will never be what my former friend, Gore Vidal, called profligate."

She later became incensed when she heard rumors that at parties, Vidal was mimicking Truman Capote, another former friend. "Vidal has this whole routine, so I am told, where he does a ten-minute impression of Capote, claiming that I was screwing my big Negro chauffeur while John-John and Caroline were whimpering in the back seat."

Jackie also refused to discuss how she handled her profligate husband's many reported affairs, but it was inevitable that she would eventually be asked about JFK's affair with Marilyn Monroe.

"I knew all about it," she revealed to Schlesinger. "I knew about the affairs with other actresses as well—Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Gene Tierney, Hedy Lamarr, Lana Turner, Sonja Henie, that ice skater. "Jack knew many, many women, and he broke my heart with his philandering, but sometimes I got even with him."

One of her genuinely startling confessions was that, "I had an arrangement with my husband. I agreed to turn a blind eye if he would be discreet and not flaunt his affairs. On occasion, when he violated our agreement, I pursued my own kind of revenge. I think bitter women call it 'the revenge fuck.'"

Of course, those revelations didn't make it into the final version that was eventually sanctioned and endorsed by Caroline. Nor did Jackie's comments about Marilyn Monroe's notorious rendition at New York City's Madison Square Garden of "Happy Birthday, Mr. President," on the occasion of his birthday in 1962.

"I suspected Marilyn would do something outrageous for the occasion," Jackie said. "That's why I fled to Virginia. I didn't want to be humiliated. Later, I heard that she'd hired my hairdresser, Kenneth Battelle, to style her coiffure somewhat like mine, right down to the bouffant twist with a flip to the left. Many reporters later commented on how similar our 'little girl' voices were."

"I thought Marilyn was doing a send-up to me," she said. "It was as if she were showing millions of Americans on television that she was more desirable than I was. Up to then, most Americans had seen me on television during mytelevised tour of the White House, where I was respectably clad in a simple linen sheath. Marilyn seemed to be flaunting her sexuality—not only to Jack, but to the world, inviting unfavorable comparisons."

Instead of indiscretions, those who listened to the "officially sanctioned" tapes heard only a flattering portrait of JFK. In a breathy voice, Jackie praised him for his "loyalty, sensitivity, and courage," traits consistent with the Camelot vision she was steering and myth-making for future generations.

She did not reveal that JFK was on drugs and had Addison's disease. However, she did address issues associated with his back pain, including what she claimed was unnecessary surgery performed on him in 1954 that had threatened his life.

She also claimed that her political opinions were identical to those of her husband, a claim that led columnist Dowd to define the recordings as "Memoirs of a Geisha." Historian Michael Beschloss, who wrote an introduction to Caroline's edited compilation of Jackie's recorded conversations, warned that that particular claim by the former First Lady should be taken "with a warehouse of salt."

"I could never conceive of voting for a politician of whom my husband did not approve," Jackie said in the tapes. "I just knew his opinions were going to be the best."

Dowd didn't agree. "The young Jacqueline Kennedy underestimated herself in those dark days of long ago. She had plenty of opinions of her own, tart and tantalizing."

Jackie's interviews were recorded at the dawn of the feminist movement in America. She had not yet transformed herself into a woman who later would give an interview to *Ms*. magazine, claiming that women cannot live through men. When she first arrived at the White House, she admitted, "My relationship with Jack is rather terribly Victorian or Asiatic, perhaps best represented by a Japanese wife."

At the time, according to Dowd, "Jackie considered her main job to be distracting and soothing her husband and making sure the children were in a good mood when the leader of the Free World got home. She did not see herself as an Eleanor Roosevelt, waiting to pester FDR about some pressing political matter."

After listening to the tapes, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, wife of historian Richard Goodwin, said, that the tapes "certainly don't resemble the Jackie that we knew later on, not the woman who married Onassis, not the woman who became an editor filled with strong opinions. By that time, she had become a different woman."

In the Schlesinger tapes, Jackie does reveal some highly personal details about life in the White House. "The night Jack took the oath, I was recovering from a caesarean section and only made it to the inaugural balls when the White House doctor, Janet Travell, gave me Dexedrine."

She also discussed, briefly, the Cuban missile crisis. "Jack did consider the fear of a possible assassination after his victory over the Russians. He told me, 'If anyone's going to shoot me, this would be the day they should do it.'"

During the peak of the crisis, when she was told that there was a possibility that Soviet nuclear missiles were imminently capable of hitting every major city along America's eastern seaboard, including New York and Washington, she refused to take her children and herself to a relatively safe area, perhaps underground in Colorado. As she reported saying to JFK, "I just want to be with you, and I want to die with you—and the children do too—than live without you."

Puncturing Egos

Here's What the Young Widow Said, on Tape, to Schlesinger, about Some of Her Contemporaries

Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Jack told me of a tape that the FBI had of King when he was in Washington for the Freedom March. He said this to me with no bitterness or anything, how King was calling up all these girls and arranging an orgy at his hotel. I told Jack (that) King was such a phony then. Much later, Bobby revealed to me that some of King's orgies were on tape. It was very painful to learn that he was on tape making fun of Jack's funeral."

Lyndon B. Johnson: "Jack once said to me, 'Oh, God, can you imagine what would happen to this country if Lyndon were president?' I first got along with Lyndon but later turned against him. He'd call me and ask, 'How's my little girl?' I wasn't his girl, little or otherwise. He was a man with an enormous Texas ego. He certainly had his gaucheries, and Bobby hated him. Lady Bird had to put up with a lot."

"Oh well, I think everyone was disappointed because of all the people Jack could have chosen as a running mate, we liked Lyndon the least."

Edward (Teddy) Kennedy: "There was marked difference in style between Jack and his younger brother, Teddy. Jack never—he never said, 'Hi, fella,' or put his fat palm under your armpit, or, you know, any of that sort of business. It was embarrassing to Jack. As is known to half the world, Teddy became one of my 'newspaper romances,' and I'll say no more about that. Arthur, edit out that last line."

Nikita Khrushchev: "It's going to be a cold winter," Jack told me after meeting with Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna. The Soviet dictator was a naked, brutal, and ruthless power who thought he could do what he wanted with Jack. He could be jolly, but underneath, he was very tough."

[In his own memoirs, Khrushchev wrote of Jackie: "Obviously, she was quick of tongue, or, as the Ukrainians say, she has a sharp tongue in her head. Don't mix it up with her: She'll cut you down to size."]

Adlai Stevenson: "I always thought women who were scared of sex loved Adlai. During the campaign, Jack was given a bushel of data about Adlai's homosexuality, including two arrests that J. Edgar Hoover had information about. But Jack refused to let his staff smear Adlai. He did tell me that he thought Adlai had a real 'disease' in not being able to make up his mind." *[Jackie to Schlesinger: "Cut out the gay references."]*

Lady Bird Johnson: "Any time Lyndon would talk, Lady Bird would get out a little notebook—I've never seen a husband and wife so—she was sort of like a trained hunting dog. He'd say something to me as innocent as, 'Does your sister live in London?' Lady Bird would the write down Lee's name and 'London.'"

Indira Gandhi: "In 1961, Jack and I spent a weekend with Prime Minister Nehru and his daughter, Indira, at Hammersmith Farm, the Auchincloss residence at Newport. As a joke, Jack took Nehru on a tour of the great marble mansions of the robber barons, claiming, 'I want you to see how the average American lives.' The joke bombed. Indira was a real prune—bitter, kind of pushy, a horrible woman. I just don't like her a bit. It always looks like she's sucking a lemon."

John Connally: "As you know, the Governor of Texas, John Connally, rode *[in the limousine]* with Jack and me on that fateful day in Dallas. I truly detest him. He had spread the word that Jack had Addison's disease. His last words to Jack were to tell him about a poll in Texas that had him running way ahead of Jack on the ticket. Jack told him, 'That doesn't surprise me.'"

Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The columnist, Joe Alsop, told us that Nixon 'would be the worst president of the United States with the possible exception of Eisenhower.'"

Charles De Gaulle: "He was an egomaniac. In the beginning, he'd been my hero, but he really sunk down. He poisoned *[France's]* relations with Jack and the United States. I named my French poodle after him. Jack used me as a go-between in his difficult talks with De Gaulle. Hubert de Givenchy designed the gown I wore at the state supper at Versailles. Jack told me at one point De Gaulle whispered in his ear, 'Your wife knows more about French history than most French women.' At least I appreciated that."

Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Charlatan is an unfair word. He was a bit of a *poseur*. Jack was cool toward him because of Joe's painful break with FDR in 1941 over intervention in Europe. Jack also resented Eleanor's hostility toward him at the 1960 Democratic convention. To the best of my knowledge, Eleanor was our first lesbian First Lady, although there could have been others. On second thought, strike that last line."

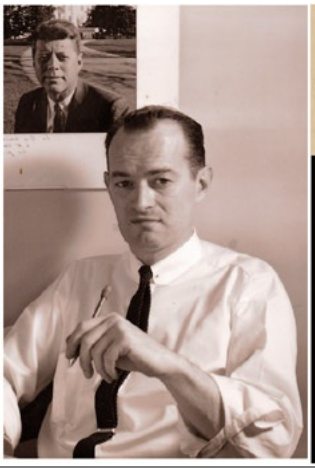
Claire Boothe Luce: "She was so macho she could be a lesbian. In 1955, when she was U.S. ambassador to Italy, she entertained Jack and me at a party for the French Premier, Georges Bidault. I was the interpreter for Jack and him. Clare stood so close when she talked to me, I thought she was coming on to me. The next year, when Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] entertained her at his villa on the French Riviera, she did come on to me in our private cabana. On second thought, strike the last two lines, but leave in my suspicion that she was a lesbian."

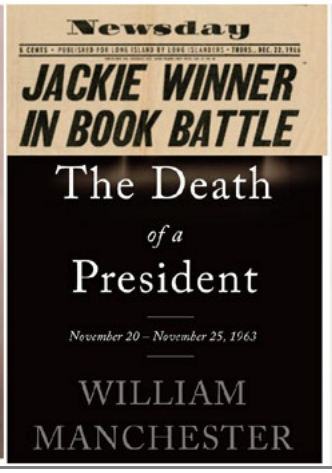
Chapter Sixteen

Jackie Vs. William Manchester "The Battle of the Book"

& Jackie's Feud with Ron Gallela

"The Most Co-Dependent Celebrity/Paparazzo Relationship in History"





In the immediate aftermath of JFK's death, his widow, **Jackie Kennedy**, asked **William Manchester** *(left photo)* to write the authorized account of the assassination. Two years later, the ordeal nearly destroyed him, both emotionally and financially. His book was finally published in 1967 and became a bestseller, but only after a bitter year of relentless, headline-generating controversy over the manuscript. It pitted the struggling writer against two of the most powerful and charismatic personalities in America, Bobby Kennedy and Jackie.

Jackie and Bobby may have thought they had won their battle with Manchester, but in the end, it was a personal and public relations nightmare for both of them.

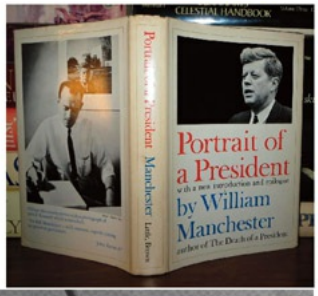
"I thought Manchester's book would be bound in black and put away on dark library shelves."

—Jacqueline Kennedy

Pierre Salinger, JFK's former Press Secretary, called Jackie with the news: "I just heard that Bennett Cerf, at Random House, has contracted for that Jim Bishop guy to write a book about Jack's assassination."

Jackie took the news with a certain sense of horror. "That hack?" she said.

Previously, she had had a feud with Bishop when JFK had practically given him the run of the White House during research for his book, *A Day in the Life of President Kennedy*.



Midway through his Presidency, **JFK** invited **Jackie** to go sailing on a Coast Guard yawl with him. She was photographed reading a copy of William Manchester's reverential biography of her husband, *Portrait of a President*, published in 1962.

It was Manchester's flattering "first portrait" that prompted her to commission him to write the officially authorized overview of the assassination in Dallas. According to the keepers of Camelot, that was one of her worst mistakes.

When Bishop was "wandering at leisure," she discovered him going through her wardrobe closet, counting the number of her dresses and gowns, and checking the labels. Later, she discovered Bishop in Caroline's bathroom, watching as her daughter was bathed by her nanny.

"I'm sorry you gave him the run of the White House," Jackie told her husband. "He was a god damn nuisance."

Bishop's previous titles had included *The Day Lincoln Was Shot; The Day Christ Died;* and *The Day Christ Was Born*.

His latest work, *A Day in the Life of President Kennedy*, was in galley form when it was sent to the President in November of 1963. In a touch of irony, JFK took the manuscript with him to read on that fatal trip to Texas. He had not even read the first chapter on the day he was shot.

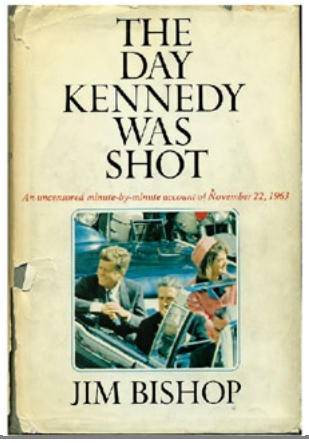
In the wake of the assassination, Jackie was not pleased with Bishop's view of her late husband's days in the White House. Nor was she pleased with what he wrote about her.

She was reported to be "mortified" to hear that Bishop would be the first to write about JFK's assassination. For Random House, Bishop had entitled his latest book, *The Day Kennedy Was Shot*. Jackie found the title objectionable and decided to call Cerf at Random House.

"God damn it, you can't tell America I'm a chain-smoker"

—Jackie to Manchester

In her call to Random House, Jackie was put through to Cerf immediately. She pressed her case, urging him not to publish Bishop's book. He explained to her that he had already signed the contract. He also told her, "If I turn down the book, every major publisher in New York will want it. It's got 'best-seller' written all over it."



"Jim Bishop was nothing but a damn hack," Jackie told William Manchester. "But Jack gave him the run of the White House. When I caught him going through my lingerie drawers, I thought he was a sexual pervert."

Finally, in desperation, Jackie called Bishop at his home in Florida. She informed him that she was going to authorize her own writer to craft a book on the assassination, and she urged him to bow out.

"There can't be two books on the assassination," she told him.

"Are you kidding?" he answered. "There will probably be more books on this assassination than on the Lincoln shooting."

[Bishop was right. To date, there have been at least 2,000 books published on JFK's assassination, perhaps more.]

Later, Bishop said, "Jackie thinks she can copyright JFK's assassination."

The journalist forged ahead and completed his book in 1968, a year after a competitive book by William Manchester had been published. Bishop's publisher was Funk & Wagnalls, not Random House, as originally choreographed by Cerf. As predicted, Bishop's book became a best-seller.

***

Jackie called around in her search for an author of a book on the assassination, phoning Ted Sorensen first. She asked him if he'd do it, but he turned her down, as he planned to write a book about the span of years he had spent working for, or within the orbit of, JFK.

She got the same negative answer from the Kennedy's family friend, a historian of 20th Century American politics, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

She agreed to cooperate with both Sorensen and Schlesinger on their respective books, with the stipulation that they would refer to her only as "Jacqueline" or as "Mrs. Kennedy," never as "Jackie." She also wanted her marriage to JFK to be depicted in loving terms, with no mention of his philandering.

Pierre Salinger suggested she should pitch the idea of a book to William Manchester, whom he agreed to call to see if he'd like to take on this massive research project.

Manchester would later claim that Jackie had "picked me because she felt she could manipulate me."

His first book on JFK had been entitled *Portrait of a President: John F. Kennedy in Profile*. Originally published in 1962, it was described by some critics as an "adoring" account of his first year and a half in the Oval Office.

Manchester had interviewed JFK for his book. "At the end of the day, we'd sit out on the Truman Balcony. He'd smoke a cigar and I'd have a Heineken."

The ex-Marine, a square-jawed, dark-haired, and solidly built man, bonded with the President, who was five years older than he was. Like JFK, Manchester had earned a Purple Heart. *[Whereas Manchester had been wounded during fighting in Okinawa, the president had been wounded during his command of PT-109 in the Solomon Islands of the South Pacific.]*

As a history professor, Manchester had evaluated JFK as "brighter than I was, braver, better-read, handsomer, wittier, and more decisive. The only thing I could do was write better."

The offer to write a book that specifically focused on Kennedy's assassination arrived when Manchester was living with his wife, Judy, and their three children in Middletown, Connecticut. Judy called to him: "Salinger's on the phone."

Getting up, Manchester assumed it was his friend, J.D. Salinger, author of the famous *The Catcher in the Rye*. It turned out to be Pierre Salinger.

"I felt I couldn't turn down Jackie Kennedy, so I finally agreed," Manchester recalled. "So almost overnight, I became a jobless, middle-aged, and highly educated vagrant." As a means of completing such a daunting task, he'd had to resign his teaching post at Wesleyan University.

For the JFK book, he was given only a $36,000 advance. The writing project stretched out over two years, and he ran out of money. After he'd spent the advance, he had to dip into his meager savings.

Early in their negotiations, Jackie and Manchester had agreed that royalties from the book would be donated to the John F. Kennedy Library.

Manchester recalled his first meeting with the former First Lady on April 7, 1964. "She appeared in a black jersey and yellow stretch pants, and I was struck by her camellia beauty. She looked like a woman of twenty-five. I felt I was in the presence of a very great tragic actress. Her instincts were completely feminine, or so I thought at the time. Ultimately, I was to discover the tigress who lurked under her skin. But on that long-ago day, it seemed impossible to think of her burning a bra or denouncing romantic love as counter-revolutionary. She had the quality of feminine helplessness, a kind of submissiveness, to the male animal. A vulnerable person who needed a man to protect her. How I misjudged her!"

Jackie promised to give Manchester her full cooperation, and she agreed to spend ten hours with him tape recording her thoughts on what she called "the nightmare of the century." She was later criticized for this statement, some critics citing World War II and the Holocaust as events far more catastrophic than the Kennedy assassination.

She also instructed her secretary to contact key people within JFK's administration, requesting that they "give full cooperation" to Manchester.

"Jackie withheld nothing during those tapes," Manchester claimed. "Future generations will be tantalized by her revelations. If only Mary Todd Lincoln had made tapes following Lincoln's assassination. Later, Jackie would claim that I kept plowing her with daiquiris to loosen her tongue. She also accused me of taking advantage of her vulnerability."

For his research on the book, Manchester interviewed at least 1,000 people connected with Kennedy or his administration. Only one person, Marina Oswald, widow of the assassin, refused to be interviewed. Over a period of at least two years, he put in one hundred hours of long, tedious work per week to turn out a completed manuscript of 1,201 pages.

Manchester's book was a detailed chronicle of JFK's final days during that fateful November of 1963. Beginning with a reception for him at the White House before his flight to Texas, it traced the motorcade in Dallas, the assassination, Jackie's reaction to seeing her husband's head blown half off, the drama at the hospital, the sad trip back to Washington aboard Air Force One, where LBJ was sworn in as President, and the friction between the JFK camp as it surrendered power to the LBJ cohorts. It also detailed the shooting of the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, who—while virtually surrounded with Dallas law enforcement officers—encountered a bullet from Jack Ruby, the hot-headed owner of a strip club in Dallas.

Historians who read the galleys of Manchester's book almost universally agreed that Jackie should be pleased with it. Her husband was not only portrayed as a 20th Century King Arthur from Arthurian legend, but LBJ emerged in the traitorous role of Mordred.

[LBJ was mortified by the reference comparing him to Mordred. "Who is this Mordred faggot?" he asked his staff.

In Arthurian legend, Mordred was both the son and nephew of King Arthur, because the king had had sex with his own sister. The prophet and wizard, Merlin, had predicted that King Arthur's own son would one day kill him. When King Arthur heard that, he sent 40 of his baby sons out to sea to die. Only one son, Mordred, survived.

At age 15, Mordred became a knight to King Arthur and was invited to sit at the Round Table.

At age 27, Mordred died. In the Battle of Camiann, King Arthur stabbed Mordred in the stomach, killing him. But at the last second, Mordred crushed the king's head with a sword, mortally wounding him. Merlin's prediction had come true.

LBJ was furious when he learned who Mordred was in the Arthurian legend.

"I don't want to be connected in any way to all this Camelot shit that Jackie likes to perpetuate."]

When he had completed the manuscript, Manchester wrote Jackie, "Though I tried desperately to suppress bias against a certain eminent statesman who always reminded me of somebody in a Grade D movie on the Late Show, the prejudice will show through."

Jackie wrote back, "I don't care. Mr. Lyndon Baines Johnson deserves whatever you can dish out."

She had originally told Manchester, "As far as I'm concerned, you can drop Lyndon in the middle of the shark-infested Atlantic Ocean. But first, put on the heaviest pair of concrete shoes you can find."

Although Manchester had investigated all his personal savings into researching and writing the book, a ray of hope emerged. Gardner ("Mike") Cowles, the publisher of *Look* magazine, then one of the most popular periodicals in America, rivaling *Life*, called with an offer. He would give Manchester $665,000 for the book's exclusive serialization rights.

Calibrated against the currency of the late 1960s, some economists have estimated that amount as equivalent to $5 million of today's currency. Manchester was overjoyed. All his struggles seemed to have been worth it.

"The moment that news was revealed in the press, all hell broke loose," Manchester said. "Jackie Kennedy virtually declared war on me, backed up by an armada called Bobby Kennedy."

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When Jackie heard of Manchester's offer from *Look*, she exploded. "I will not allow him to cash in on Jack's death. Why would I want to be a party to such a ghoulish thing? It makes me shudder. I must stop him, even if I go to court."

At this point, she had not read the manuscript, which had already been shipped to her. She asked her personal secretary, Pamela Turnure, to read it and to compile a list of objections. Reportedly, Turnure took that assignment very seriously (some said with an almost "missionary zeal") and drew up a long list of objections, recommending that "a ton of personal references" to Jackie and her family be eliminated.

When Manchester was confronted with this, he was furious. "What is a secretary doing, censoring the work of a noted historian?" he asked.

When a copy of the manuscript arrived at the office of Bobby Kennedy, he turned it over to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Dick Goodwin, and Justice Department aides Ed Guthman and John Siegenthaler to vet.

Manchester telephoned Jackie, who agreed to see him at Hyannis Port, where she was vacationing with her family. The book, by now entitled *The Death of a President*, was still in galleys. First, she invited him to go boating with her. Quite a distance offshore, she suggested they swim back to land. "She was like a fucking Amazon," he recalled. "With seemingly no effort, she swam ahead, leaving me trying to follow her breathlessly. I practically drowned."

Later, after we'd changed back into our clothing, we had a kind of showdown in her living room. Although she hadn't read my book, she was filled with opinions. I found them unrealistic, unreasonable, actually a bit crazed. Her objections were ridiculous. She seemed scornful of all books on JFK, not just mine. There was a savage look to her. That was not the woman I'd encountered before. To all my objections, she had one response—'JESUS FUCKING CHRIST.'"

She outlined a list of objections, from Turnure, to the Manchester book. She wanted all references to her chain-smoking and drinking removed. She resented that he'd written of her vanity, how she searched her face every morning for the first wrinkles. She also objected to the revelation that she and JFK had slept in separate beds on his final night on earth, although it was revealed that they'd had sex.

She was horrified at a description of JFK's head wound as examined and revealed at the hospital in Dallas. For some reason, she also protested the revelation that she'd removed her wedding ring and put it on JFK's finger, using Vaseline to slip it on.

She also protested the book's revelation that JFK liked to walk around the Lincoln Bedroom in his underwear—or else, on occasion, nude.

Manchester had been told that he could use any material from the ten hours of taping he had previously orchestrated with Jackie. Suddenly, she rescinded permission, refusing to allow him to use any of her revelations. She demanded that all the tapes be sealed until the year 2067 *(i.e. 103 years from the date of their original recording in 1964]*. They remain today, sealed in the Kennedy Library, waiting to tantalize listeners of a future generation.

Manchester also quoted from letters Jackie had written to JFK in the White House while she was cruising with Onassis aboard his yacht. She wanted all mention of those letters removed from his book.

In the weeks ahead, catering to her demands, Manchester made endless revisions until he finally revolted.

"I feel my manuscript, a work of honesty and integrity, was being deluded and eventually wrecked. I finally said I would not tolerate any more revisions. That's when Jackie went after both Harper & Row and *Look* magazine."

Jackie was willing to alienate Manchester's publisher, Harper & Row, which had long been a friend of the Kennedys, having previously published JFK's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Profiles in Courage*. The company had also published Bobby's book on his battle against Jimmy Hoffa and the Labor Unions, *The Enemy Within*.

Ironically, during Jackie's threatened lawsuit against them, Harper & Row was represented by Cass Canfield, whose son, Michael, had previously been married to Jackie's sister, Lee Radziwill.

Jackie personally placed a call to Gardner ("Mike") Cowles, the publisher of *Look*. Whereas he agreed to

postpone the book's serialization for several months, she demanded that he cancel it completely. He told her that contractually, he could not do that. Furious at his refusal, Jackie hired a top-drawer lawyer, Simon H. Rifkind, to represent her interests.

As a final resort before legal action, Jackie offered to pay Cowles a million dollars not to serialize the book, an offer he spurned.

Following in the footsteps of Manchester, Cowles visited Jackie at Hyannis Port to discuss the *Look* serialization and her objections. "She had hardly offered me tea in her living room at Hyannis before her arguments began. When I turned down her demand that I abandon the serialization, she called me a bastard and a son of a bitch."

"She became hysterical. Where was that stoic woman who had stood so heroically at Jack's funeral? She even accused me of trying to cause her children great pain. Later, I learned she'd encountered some trouble when she appeared with her children in public."

Whereas Jackie wanted privacy for herself, she was almost fanatical in screening her children from public exposure. She was not always successful. One afternoon, when she went to retrieve John-John from school, a group of boys playing ball on a nearby field chanted at him: "YOUR FATHER'S DEAD! YOUR FATHER'S DEAD!"

The most terrible moment for Jackie occurred when she was leaving her church on All Saints Day in Washington. Suddenly, this crazed woman emerged from the crowd outside, grabbing hold of Caroline. She shouted, "Your mother is a wicked woman. She's already killed three people. She's lied to you. Your father is still alive!"

The Secret Service finally pulled the woman away from Caroline.

"Jackie went overboard to maintain her privacy," Ted Sorensen later admitted. "If a friend so much as mentioned her name to a reporter, she struck that person from her list."

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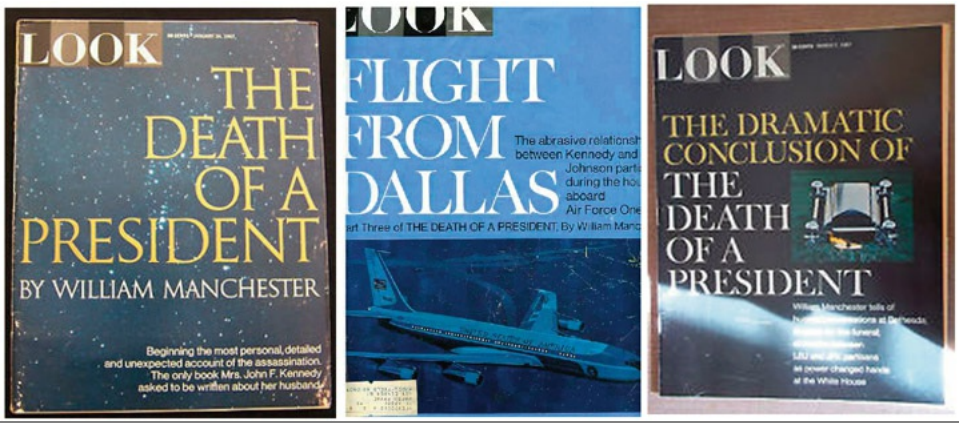


Look beat out *Life* for the serialization rights to Manchester's book, paying $665,000, the highest ever paid for a serialization, the equivalent of $5 million in today's currency.

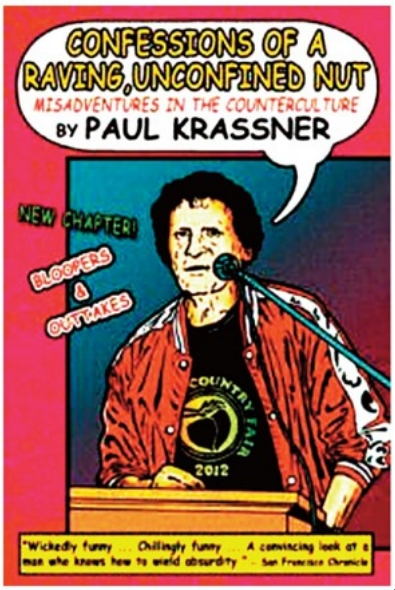
Manchester, who was broke, was delighted, but Jackie wanted the money to go to the Kennedy Library. The author's son, John Manchester, later said, "I think that Jackie Kennedy looked at my father as not being in the same social class as her, and it was part of her notion that he could be pushed around, that he was malleable. When it looked like he was going to get wealthy as a result of all this, she was upset."

All these legal maneuvers caused Manchester to suffer a nervous breakdown. He had also drained his bank account.

He told his friends, "I admired Jackie. Now I don't know. The widow is asking me to rewrite history. She wants me to distort the truth. With demands arriving every minute, my book is being shredded…ruined, really. I can't believe she's this venomous."

After weeks of legal dispute, a settlement was reached by a battery of lawyers. *Look* went ahead with its serialization, but in the version it printed, 1,621 words had been removed from the 60,000-word manuscript. Jackie also managed to censor many passages from the Manchester book. Ultimately, whatever victory she announced was Pyrrhic, because all the material she found objectionable had already been leaked to newspapers.

Jackie's legal tangles with Manchester generated tabloid headlines and frequently negative reactions. For the first time, she began to lose popularity with the American public.



One of the most outrageous satirical magazines ever published was ***The Realist***. **Paul Krassner** shocked almost everyone when he wrote and published an allegorical article based on the (untrue) premise that President Lyndon B. Johnson, aboard Air Force One, returning from Dallas with the body of the slain president, had sexually penetrated the bullet hole wound in the throat of JFK's corpse.

Krassner's trashing of the tragedy infuriated the dead president's supporters and strengthened their resolve to sanitize their authorized version of events associated with the latter days of Camelot.

Even though she claimed she had emerged as the winner, public opinion eventually shifted against her. Manchester, the underdog, emerged as a sympathetic figure, Jackie as the brutal censor destroying his livelihood with her millions and with malice.

Literally thousands of Americans voiced their opinion that "Mrs. Kennedy is trying to trample on the right of Freedom of Speech. She shouldn't do that. It's wrong!"

The New York Times did not sympathize with Jackie. They wrote, "History belongs to everyone, not just the participants. Having made her original decision asking that the book be written, Mrs. Kennedy cannot now escape the consequences."

Liz Smith headlined her column JACKIE COMES OFF HER PEDESTAL.

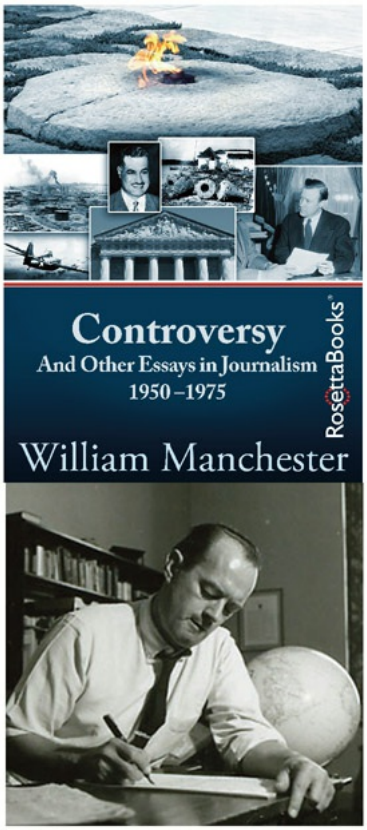
On December 29, 1966, Gallup announced that for the fifth year in a row, Jackie had topped the poll as the most admired and popular person in America. About a month later, on January 31, 1967, a Louis Harris poll revealed that her popularity had nose-dived by 33 percent.

The National Enquirer in a survey of her life from 1963 to 1966, headlined their article FROM MOURNER TO SWINGER.

With a spectacular sense of irreverence, the satirist, Paul Krassner published an article, "The Parts That Were Left Out of the Kennedy Book," which imagined, as fiction, censored material far more outrageous than anything that Jackie deleted.

[Krassner's mocking "revelations" were published in The Realist, *a pioneering magazine of social-political-religious criticism and satire. During its brief, controversial heyday, contributors included Lenny Bruce, Ken Kesey, Richard Pryor, Joseph Heller, Woody Allen, Jules Feiffer, Mort Sahl, and Terry Southern. It was intended as a satirical, tongue-in-cheek hybrid incorporating some aspects of* Mad *magazine. Edited and published by Paul Krassner, and flourishing from 1959 until 2001, it was regarded as a milestone in the American underground or countercultural press.*

One of the magazine's most controversial pranks involved the grotesque (and fictional) "revelation" that Lyndon Johnson, aboard Air Force One, had sexually penetrated the bullet-hole wound in the throat of JFK's corpse.



A respected and reputable scholar, **Manchester** managed to remain objective and neutral in his latter-day appraisal of the Jackie controversy in his analysis of *l'affaire Kennedy*.

Krassner, even in his wildest imagination, never believed that someone would seriously believe that that outrageous allegation of presidential necrophilia actually happened. Yet some readers, who should have known better, actually believed—and were enraged by—this libelous satire.

"Now I know why Jackie is protesting some of this material," wrote one reader.

In an attempt to explain why some people believed, word for word, his outrageous "allegory," Krassner said, "My article worked because Jackie had created so much curiosity by censoring the book she authorized. I wrote what was a metaphorical truth about LBJ's personality presented in a literary context. The imagery was so shocking, it broke through the notion that the war in Vietnam was being conducted by sane men."

The Realist*, which wasn't realistic at all in regard to the satire it published about JFK's bul let wound, was, incidentally the first magazine to publish conspiracy theories about the assassination itself.]*

In yet another irreverent, no-holds-barred satire on Jackie and her censorship, comedian Saul Shapo created a scenario wherein Jackie discovers Marilyn Monroe in her husband's bed after a night spent together in Fort Worth, Texas.

Shapo wrote. "Fully emerged from mourning, Jackie was photographed dancing, skiing, riding in a New Jersey hunt, cruising along the Dalmatian Coast, greeting European nobility, and visiting Acapulco, the West Indies, and Spain."

Although the full extent of Jackie's attack on Lyndon B. Johnson won't be known until the release of the tapes, she was referring to him as "that goddamn Lyndon," to Manchester. To justify her enmity, she cited such incidents as LBJ's refusal to allow Secret Service men to wear their PT-109 ties during his new administration.

Although mention of it did not appear within any of the drafts of Manchester's book, word leaked out that the tapes revealed Jackie as having stated: "Lee Harvey Oswald was just a patsy—part of a larger conspiracy to kill Jack."

Based on what she said, headlines of tomorrow will proclaim: JACKIE KENNEDY BLAMES LBJ AND F.B.I.'S HOOVER FOR HUSBAND'S ASSASSINATION.

"They wanted to bring down Jack," she was reported to have said on the tapes. "Jack was prepared to dump

Lyndon on the ’64 ticket and run Bobby instead as Vice President. Jack wanted to fire Hoover. Once Lyndon took office, he sent word to Hoover that he could run the F.B.I. ‘for life.’”

Later, Bobby warned her that her tape-recorded attack on Johnson might alienate powerful Democrats who could harm his future career in politics.

On January 9, 1967, Jackie was on vacation on the Caribbean island of Antigua, where she was the guest of her billionaire friend, Bunny Mellon. Madame Mellon had generously offered to purchase a scenic plot of land and erect a Caribbean villa for the permanent use of Jackie and her family, but she was turned down.

During that sojourn in Antigua, one afternoon after returning from the beach, Jackie sat down and wrote to LBJ at the White House.

“William Manchester claims that I told him that I objected to you calling me ‘honey.’ I did not object. Considering some of the names I’ve been called, ‘honey’ seems to be the sweetest designation.”

LBJ was spectacularly gracious in writing Jackie about the Manchester project. “Lady Bird and I have been distressed to read the press accounts of your unhappiness about the Manchester book. Some of these accounts attribute your concerns to passages in the book which are critical or defamatory of us. If this is so, I want you to know while we deeply appreciate your characteristic kindness and sensitivity, we hope you will not subject yourself to any discomfort or distress on our account.”

Gore Vidal reviewed Manchester’s book in *The World Journal-Tribune:* “One hopes for once the story will be different—the car swerves, the bullets miss, and the splendid progress continues. But each time, like a recurrent nightmare, the handsome head is shattered.”

By 1997, Manchester’s accumulated royalties had exceeded the $1 million mark, all of which was donated, as stipulated in the original agreements, to the Kennedy Library.

Book covers for two editions of **Maud Shaw’s memoir**. Jackie found the book “an invasion of privacy.”

Manchester himself, in 1977, published a book of essays, *Controversy*, a cadenced and thoughtful retrospective examining the attempts of Jackie and Bobby to censor his book, comparing it, with dry academic rigor, to early conflicts confronted and resolved by historians trying to archive and define complicated moments in American political history.

Jackie, The Censor of Books

In addition to her schemes about blocking William Manchester’s work, Jackie also threatened writers who were composing other books on JFK. She told Ted Sorensen, “Everybody who’s even shaken Jack’s hand is trying to write a book about him.”

By the time *Esquire* published, in June, 1967, this satirical caricature of **Jackie** sleigh-riding with **Eddie Fisher**, her image had gone from that of a heroically grieving widow to that of the international, globe-trotting **Jackie-O**.

Jackie even took on her young German chef, Annemarie Huste, who had written an article for Weight Watchers. Her actual article did not mention Jackie, but the editor placed on its cover this headline: JACKIE KENNEDY GOURMET CHEF PRESENTS HER WEIGHT WATCHER RECIPES."

At the time, Jackie was trying to "starve myself into a size 8 instead of a size 12." She tried to prevent the article, but it was too late. It was already on the newsstands. In retaliation, Jackie fired Huste.

Jackie was also unable to block publication of Huste's cookbook. Her main objection was that Huste had written that Caroline was a better cook than her mother.

It was also revealed that Jackie had paid Huste only $130 a week. "I am so miserable and depressed, and I miss John-John and Caroline so much," Huste wrote. "I don't think I'll ever be able to work for another family again."

Jackie went so far as to force an agreement from Mr. and Mrs. Quing Non Wong, who had purchased her home at Wexford, in Virginia Hunt Country. Jackie had helped design and furnish the home herself. She sold the house for $225,000 with the stipulation that the Wongs "will not call in *Architectural Digest* the next day."

She also went after Paul Fay's book on JFK, entitled *The Pleasure of His Company*. John Kenneth Galbraith, acting on Jackie's behalf, tried to get Fay to delete "thousands of words" from his text.

Fey had been one of the president's closest friends, and even before censorship, his book was largely a favorable portrait. But for some reason, it offended Jackie, who never spoke to him again. When he sent her a $3,000 check for the Kennedy Library, she returned it.

Nothing seemed to shock the tabloid world more than **Eddie Fisher**'s marriage to **Elizabeth Taylor** after the death of her (third) husband, Mike Todd.

Fisher had dumped "America's Sweetheart" (Debbie Reynolds) in anticipation of his union with "that evil temptress," La Liz.

But then along came an even more shocking marriage--that of Jaqueline Kennedy to Aristotle Onassis.

She enlisted Sol M. Linowitz, the chairman of the board of Xerox, to go to London in an attempt to suppress Maud Shaw's book, *White House Nanny*. She particularly objected to Shaw's claim that she, not Jackie, had told Caroline of JFK's assassination. Linowitz did not succeed.

In her book, Shaw had written that she told Caroline "Your father has been shot. They took him to the hospital, but the doctors couldn't make him better. So your father has gone to look after Patrick. Patrick was so lonely in heaven. He didn't know anybody there. Now he has the best friend anyone could have."

Jackie and Eddie Fisher

In 1965, Jackie became notoriously linked in print with crooner Eddie Fisher, who had been married to Elizabeth Taylor. Jackie appeared on the cover of *Esquire* with this quote: "Anyone who is against me will look like a rat—unless I run off with Eddie Fisher."

Jackie was referring to the adoration of her public in her battle with author William Manchester, who had been commissioned by the Kennedy family to write *The Death of a President*. She found the revelations in his book "too personal," and was taking legal action against him.

She was wrong about the public standing steadfastly behind her. Within a few months, their sympathy shifted to the beleaguered author, Manchester himself, who was harassed and threatened with legal action by two charismatic American icons, Bobby Kennedy and Jackie herself.

Actually, unknown to the public, Jackie did meet Eddie Fisher when he was dating Pamela Turnure, who at various periods of her life had been both her girl-hood friend and later, her press secretary at the White House. Jackie had been made aware of the rumors that JFK had had an affair with Pamela.

One night, Fisher, in Las Vegas, sat at Frank Sinatra's table, along with Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop. He told these "Rat Packers" that "Pamela made a big mistake during our affair. She fell in love with me. As for Jackie, she told the world that the public would lose respect for her if she ran off with me," Fisher said. "She didn't run off with me, but she sure had the hots for me. The last time Pamela, Jackie, and I had dinner together, our former First Lady couldn't keep her hands off me. She was real touchy, feely that night. If I hadn't been with Pamela, I would have taken her home and plowed her."

Commemorating Camelot (in Bronze)

On her last day in the White House, Jackie placed a plaque in the Lincoln Bedroom. It read: "In this room lived

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, with his wife, Jacqueline, during the two years, ten months, and two days he was President of the United States."

When Richard and Patricia Nixon took over the White House, one of their first actions was to order the removal of the plaque.

Jackie and the Paparazzo Fight It Out in Court

Newsweek called him "*Paparazzo Extraordinaire*" and *Time* labeled him "The Godfather of American *Paparazzi* culture." And Jackie Kennedy called him names that were unprintable.

Ron Gallela became the most controversial celebrity photographer in the world.

A Bronx native, son of an Italian immigrant, Galella had been an Air Force photographer during the Korean War. In time, he developed a virtual obsession with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, with whom he'd have legal battles. The *New York Post* defined that obsession with her as "the most co-dependent celeb-*paparazzo* relationship ever."

Jackie wasn't the only celebrity Galella tangled with. Marlon Brando, on the night of June 12, 1973, punched Galella in the face outside a restaurant in New York's Chinatown. He broke the paparazzo's jaw and knocked out five of his teeth. Galella sued and his case was settled for $40,000.

Long before the introduction of cellphones, Galella ruled the night during the 1960s and 70s, hiding behind potted plants and leaping out in front of moving cars containing famous people such as Elizabeth Taylor, who once threatened to kill him.

Ever since she moved into her apartment on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, Galella began to stalk Jackie. He seemed to know every time she stepped out the door. He was waiting there to record the event.

Like Brando, Jackie got violent with a paparazzo only once. Aristotle Onassis, her husband, invited her to the screening of the semi-pornographic Swedish art film, *I Am Curious (Yellow)*.

As she was leaving the theater, a photographer (not Galella) snapped her picture. With a quick bit of judo she'd learned somewhere, she flipped him to the street onto his butt.

It is estimated that Galella took 4,000 photographs of Jackie. He never attempted to publish anything that made her look less than attractive. Jackie had gray teeth, and the Galella photos camouflaged that by photographing her in bright light. He also softened the wrinkles around her eyes, and he never caught her smoking or drinking. He followed her to Capri, to Brooklyn Heights, and to Manhattan eateries such as "21," but at his peak he made only $15,000 a year hawking her pictures to the media.

In 2013, he would issue a 400-page book—*Jackie: My Obsession*. His photographs of Jackie were published all over the world, some editors considering them "the most beguiling, glamorous, and dramatic" of her life.

Every time Jackie hit the streets, her stalker, **Ron Gallela**, was there, snapping candid shots of her. He was so relentless in his pursuits that she sued.

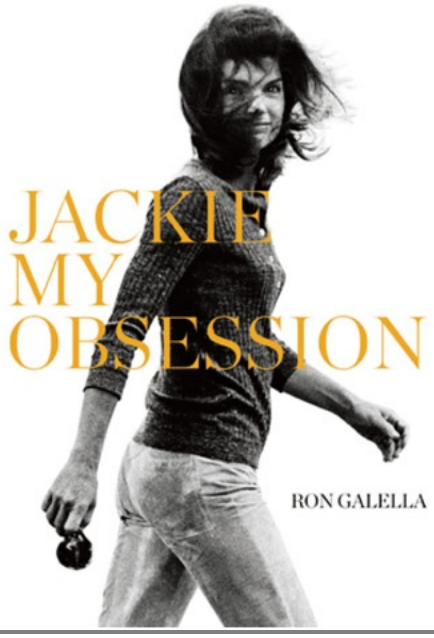
She accused him of tormenting her.

Jackie had a major run-in with Galella in the autumn of 1969. She was riding with John Jr. in Manhattan's

Central Park, both of them on bicycles. All of a sudden, Galella leaped from behind a clump of shrubbery, frightening them. The young boy swerved and almost crashed. Only days before, Galella had followed Caroline to Brearley School, which was having a carnival. He pursued the young girl and snapped candid shots of her, frightening her, at least according to Jackie.

In February of 1970, Galella even flew to Athens, where Jackie joined her husband, Ari, on his private island of Skorpios. To reach the island, Galella bribed a local Greek fisherman to take him there. He came ashore, where he found that security was lax. He wandered about, taking forbidden pictures of the compound, though he did not encounter either Ari or Jackie.

When Jackie left for a vacation on Capri, he followed her to that island offshore from Italy's Amalfi coast. Once there, he stalked her along the island's narrow streets as she went on a shopping expedition, attracting crowds of locals and tourists alike.



Even though she detested Ron Gallela, when he published his book, ***Jackie by Obsession***, the photographs it contained were hailed as her most alluring and glamorous. "These were movie star photographs, not First Lady photographs," wrote one critic.

In clash after clash, week after week, Jackie came to regard Galella as a menace to her life and safety. After one unpleasant conflict with him, she ordered her Secret Service attendant to apprehend him and take him to the nearest NYPD precinct for a booking. Once there, she charged him with harassment and reckless endangerment.

Through her lawyers, she sought an injunction barring him from coming within 200 yards of her Fifth Avenue apartment and within 100 yards from her person or her children.

On another occasion, she asked Ari to intervene with Galella to make him stop.

Ari put his arm around Galella and politely asked him to quit stalking his wife. "Why do you do this to her?"

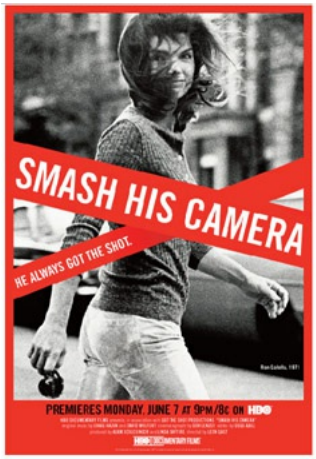
"You have your job, I have mine." Galella answered.

"She has had so much tragedy in her life," Ari said.

"True, but life goes on, and I'm not deliberately trying to cause her pain," Galella said. "I need to make a living, and the world has hunger for pictures of Jackie and her kids," Galella said. "I'm trying to meet this insatiable demand on the part of the public."

"Don't do it any more," Onassis said.

"You might convince me to give it up if you gave me a job at Olympic Airlines," Galella said.



Details of the Gallela vs. Jackie saga were eventually collated into an HBO documentary. Its press and PR material focused on "that brilliant hipster shot" of the former First Lady.

"I will, but it pays only one dollar a week," Onassis said.

In all, there would be two trials against Galella, one in 1972, and another in 1981.

In 1972, Jackie could take it no more and went to court seeking $6 million in damages, although she knew the sum was ridiculous, since Galella didn't have that kind of money.

Ari warned Jackie not to bring Galella to trial, claiming it was bad for her image, making her look vindictive.

Even though she'd suffered a dramatic loss of popularity during her legal maneuvers with William Manchester, she decided to ignore Ari's advice and pursue Galella through the courts anyway.

Infuriated, Galella filed a $1,300,000 countersuit, charging her with assault, false arrest, malicious persecution, and unlawful interference in his work as a *paparazzo*. In her brief, Jackie's lawyers claimed that she lived in "dreaded fear" of leaving her apartment building, where she stated that she was "an absolute prisoner," trying to avoid his lens. She also sued for mental anguish.

In her case against him, Jackie summoned her Secret Service brigade to testify against the photographer. A Federal judge *[incidentally, he'd been appointed by JFK]* ruled in her favor.

In the U.S. District Court in New York City, Federal Judge Irving Ben Cooper dismissed Galella's countersuit. He imposed his demand, forbidding Galella to come within 150 feet of Jackie, or within 225 feet of John Jr. and Caroline, or within 300 feet from her 1040 Fifth Avenue apartment building.

Galella appealed and won a better deal in a higher court, allowing him to come within 25 feet of Jackie, and within 30 feet of her children.

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Jackie brought a final case against Galella right before Christmas of 1981. Although Galella had been ordered not to come within 25 feet of her, he had defied the court order. On July 21, she emerged from Manhattan's Hollywood Twin Movie Theater on 8th Avenue at 47th Street, where she'd seen the movie adaptation of the Thomas Mann novel, *Death in Venice*.

Out on the sidewalk, she came face to face with Galella. "He was right in my face, only a foot away," she claimed. On the street, she tried to hail a taxi, but he was jumping around her, taking pictures from all angles.

His dance around Jackie began to attract onlookers, and she soon found herself mobbed by people calling out her name.

He followed her to Martha's Vineyard over the Labor Day weekend. She and her companion, Maurice Tempelsman, had gone boating. Galella decided to pursue them in a rented boat of his own. Whether it was true or not, she claimed that his craft nearly crashed into the boat carrying Tempelsman and herself.

After that, Galella followed her to the Winter Garden Theater in Manhattan, where she and Tempelsman were attending a performance of the Twyla Tharp Dance Company. Galella entered the theater to snap candid shots of Jackie.

In court again, Galella was ordered to pay $10,000 in damages to Jackie and prohibited from ever taking another photograph of her, although he claimed that that ruling violated his First Amendment rights.

The sum total of the financial expenses associated with Jackie's lawsuits exceeded half a million dollars, most of

it paid to her lawyers at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, and Garrison. Ari had deposited a $50,000 retainer, but he refused to pay the rest of the legal bill, ordering Jackie to pay it out of her allowance. Finally, Ari's friend, the notorious gay lawyer, Roy Cohn, negotiated the fee down to $235,000.

Jackie's case against Galella finally came to its inglorious end.

Chapter Seventeen

Trashy Novels / Trashy Screenplays: The Entertainment Industry Exploits Jackie

Enraged, Jackie Demands Censorship

The Eruption of Truman Capote's Feud with Jacqueline Susann.

Her "Fictional Gold-Digging Adventuress" is Inspired by Jackie

The beaded, bare-chested **Irving Mansfield** was **Jacqueline Susann's** agent, and her husband, too, when she wasn't pursuing her deeply secretive lesbian life.

Susann's "little Capon," as she called author **Truman Capote**, engaged with her in poisonous public bitchfests. He warned her, "Don't take on a Southern queen, baby."

A writer named Jacqueline (Susann) wrote a description of her more famous namesake: "**Mrs. Kennedy**, whose eyes are as far apart as New York and Florida, wears sunglasses that would protect her from an atomic blast."

It was gossipy Truman Capote who first alerted Jackie that Jacqueline Susann, although stricken with terminal cancer, was struggling to complete her final novel, *Dolores*.

"From what I hear, it's based on a First Lady whose presidential husband has been assassinated, and on her eventual marriage to one of the richest men in the world, who owns a fleet of oil tankers. I'll give you only three guesses."

Jackie dreaded what Susann would write about her. But in the meantime, with an amused, yet horrified, eye, she watched Capote's own battle as it unfolded with the best-selling pop culture novelist.

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Capote fought three famous duels in his life—one with Lee Radziwill, one with Gore Vidal, and one with a dying Jacqueline Susann, the author of the megaselling, pill-popping *Valley of the Dolls*.

Some witnesses called it 'The Catfight of the Decade," and it starred two writers—one the brilliant Capote, the other a popular, bestselling hack (Susann).

In New York, in 1967, Capote had attended a screening of Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*. Susann herself had walked out on its premiere, objecting to the way her novel had been adapted to the screen.

Capote had cackled so loudly during the screening that the manager had escorted him out of the theater and refunded his money, asking him not to return.

Donald Windham, Capote's friend and fellow author, said, "As unlikely as it seems, Truman was jealous of Jacqueline Susann. He felt about her as Gore Vidal had felt about him. She had taken over, or at least he felt she had taken over, his place on the bestseller list. She had proven he was not the only person in the world who could get a million dollars worth of free publicity. He was to make cracks about her on various TV shows. I knew this, but it had not occurred to me that he considered her competition, that he coveted her subject matter, and that he thought, 'I could do that better than she could.'"

The feud actually began in 1966, after the release of the Susann novel, *Valley of the Dolls*. Truman took potshots at her on a TV talk show.

Susann heard it, and the next day she told reporters, "I'm flattered that a writer of Capote's standing should regard me as a competitor. However, I don't think authors should castigate one another in public. After all, writing is such a lonely profession."

On the West Coast, Capote continued his attack on Susann's novel. "She doesn't write, she types."

Extremely angered, Susann waited until July of 1969 to strike back, when she appeared on *The Joey Bishop Show*. She'd been trained as an actress, and she was good at impressions, so she did a hilariously funny interpretation of Capote's high, lispy voice. He just happened to be watching the televised show that night, and he swore vengeance.

With a single exception, Vidal and Capote did not agree on anything. But on one subject, they were in harmony: Jacqueline Susann was a bitch. Vidal had never read a Susann novel, but he had encountered her several times in various green rooms, where both of them had waited to be called for their respective appearances on nationwide talk

shows.

"Jacqueline Susann is making you the carnivorous heroine of her latest novel. It's like a warmed over version of Valley of the Dolls."

—Truman Capote to Jacqueline Kennedy

Vidal recalled "her large dark eyes whose thick false lashes resembled a pair of tarantulas in a postcoital state."

Even though **Truman** *(left)* was a frequent television guest on *The Tonight Show*, starring **Johnny Carson**.
"Carson *(right)* is consumed by rage!" the author claimed. "Under the calm surface, there are tornadoes!
He can be very mean—there's not an ounce of kindness in that man!"

Carson resented it when the author took control of his wife, Joanne. One afternoon, Carson caught Capote going through her closets, saving what she could safely wear, and tossing out the rest.

Susann had made a dangerous enemy. She was lying in bed with her husband and agent, Irving Mansfield, watching *The Tonight Show* starring Johnny Carson.

Suddenly, Capote was announced. He bounced out onto the set and began to gossip about Susann.

"Jackie Susann would be great for the part of Myra Breckinridge instead of Raquel Welch. Jackie is a born transvestite who wears marvelous wigs and sleazy dresses. In essence, she is a truck driver in drag."

There were gasps in bedrooms across America, with those in the in the Mansfield household being among the loudest and tinged with rage. Capote's attack appeared in all the gossip columns the next morning.

Mansfield defended his wife, opting to focus on her wardrobe: "Jackie is one of the best dressed actresses on TV. It's incredible to me that a taped show would not have edited out Capote's slander before it was aired."

Under pressure, Carson claimed that he would give Susann equal time on the air.

Although it had been uttered as a joke, Capote's "truck driver in drag" reference had a certain ring of truth. In a sense, Susann's somewhat harsh, dark features and jet black hair evoked certain masculine attributes.

That morning, Susann, wearing a Chanel suit, sent to the office of the high-profile attorney, Louis Nizer, and urged him to sue Capote for libel.

A shrewd lawyer, Nizer warned Susann that although she might have grounds for libel, it would be an uphill battle, involving enormous attorney's fees. He also informed her that she was on weak ground, because she'd previously mocked him on television as a homosexual, drawing unflattering attention to his own physical attributes.

Nizer told her, "Words are like chemicals. Some combinations fizzle. Others explode. But I don't think we can prove that Capote has actually damaged you in any serious way, certainly in no way for which a court might find damages."

Eventually, she acquiesced to Nizer's advice, expressing regret that, "We can't see this little worm squirm under cross examination."

On September 8, 1969, Susann appeared on Carson's *Tonight Show*. The audience waited; Carson waited; but Susann kept them in suspense. At no point did she even mention Capote's name. Finally, as they were going off the air, Carson, in desperation, asked, "What do you think of Truman?"

"Truman…Truman?" she asked. "I think history will prove he was one of the best presidents we've ever had."

Capote became a formidable enemy, and he did not let up. About two months later, as a joke, he appeared on *Laugh-In* dressed up "like Jackie Susann, in a black leather suit, a truck driver in drag."

When Susann was asked about this by reporters, she responded, "Does an eagle chase a butterfly?"

She didn't clarify which of them was the eagle, but it was widely assumed that she was using the butterfly

analogy to describe Capote, since Latinos (pejoratively) refer to homosexuals as *mariposas* (butterflies).

Capote still wouldn't let go. In an interview with *After Dark*, a theatrical magazine in Manhattan, he falsely claimed that Nizer had warned Susann not to press her libel case, because Capote had a secret weapon he was going to use against her. He would assemble a dozen men in drag who resembled Susann. He had already recruited three dark-haired men from a transvestite bar and displayed pictures of them. Amazingly, each of them resembled Susann.

Susann went on the warpath again, demanding that Nizer press a libel case against Capote.

She told Nizer, "Now the little capon has gone too far. I want you to cut off his balls for this—that is, if you can find them. I'll lend you my tweezers."

Responding to Susann's wishes, Nizer wrote a letter of warning to Capote, which elicited yet another attack, phrased in the form of a mock apology.

Capote confronted reporters, "I do apologize to truck drivers everywhere for comparing these fine warriors of the road to Jacqueline Susann. Forgive me, one and all."

He wrote to Nizer. "How pleasant to have a letter from the admirable Mr. Nizer, *even* a scolding one. It is so well written: If only your client, Miss Susann, had your sense of style!"

"I gave merely an aesthetic opinion—a spontaneous observation. Bitchy, yes, malicious, no. I have no malice for your client; on the contrary, I respect her as a very professional person who knows exactly what she's doing and how to do it."

"On the other hand," Capote wrote in his letter, "I suggest you examine a few remarks Miss S. made about me—as recently as an interview three weeks ago in *The Los Angeles Times*. Over and again, she has implied that I am a homosexual (big news!) and a lazybones jealous of her productivity. As far as I am concerned, I couldn't care less if she won the Nobel Prize—so did Pearl Buck."

While all this was going on, Capote reinforced his war machine, enlisting his vast network of gossipy "spies" to supply him with all the lowdown, past and present, on Susann.

He learned that she had launched herself professionally as a lingerie model making $25 a week, and then invented a slanderously pejorative observation about how she lost the job, remarking to anyone who would listen, "Her overripe vagina was so large and hairy that it showed through the thin *négligée* fabric she modeled."

He had also heard that Susann had engaged in a number of lesbian affairs, including one with the blonde-haired actress, Carole Landis, when they worked together on Broadway in the 1945 production of *A Lady Says Yes*. In *Valley of the Dolls*, Susann had modeled the character of Jennifer North on Landis, who, in 1948, had committed suicide, in part, at least, because of her failed affair with Rex Harrison.

Privately, Susann had told friends, "How sensual it had been for Carole and me to stroke each other's breasts." Capote leaned that in 1959, Susann had had a brief fling in Paris with the fashion designer Coco Chanel, and that Susann had been rumored to have had a long-running affair with the bisexual Ethel Merman. He added those tidbits and more to his destructive arsenal. Suitably armed, Capote defamed Susann far and wide as he made his gossipy rounds through High Society.

Jackie Kennedy later said, "As a *voyeur*, I watched Truman's drama with that Susann creature unfold. For the first time in my life, I had sympathy for a media event like Elizabeth Taylor. I had once dreamed of being a movie star. They were the kinds of interviews and publicity I might have been subjected to."

The Trashing Of Jackie

And Her Reconfiguration As Pulp Fiction

Even without ever becoming (technically) a movie star, Jackie Kennedy became the unwitting subject of films and novels. One of the most visible of these was *Dolores*, Susann's last novel. It launched Jackie Kennedy as a protagonist in pulp fiction.

Some of the "facsimiles" inspired by Jackie used her real name: others used a fictional name, but made it obvious who the subject was.

Three of the most commercially successful included *The Secret Letters of Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy*, a novel about a fictional "correspondence that might have been," by Wendy Leigh; *The Secret Memoirs of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, a novel by Ruth Francisco; and *The Widow*, a novel by Pierre Rey.

Dolores

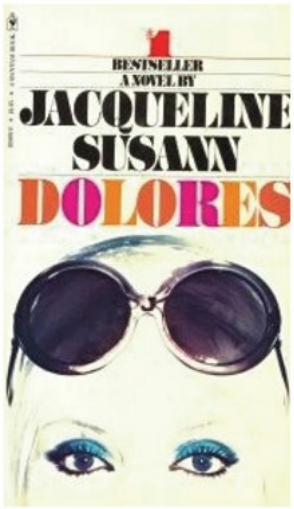
An excerpt from *Dolores* appeared first in 1974 in *The Ladies' Home Journal*. When it was published in book form that same year, Jackie was said to have read it in less than an hour, although she denied reading it at all to her friends. Its cover was graced with a pair of beautiful eyes with huge sunglasses raised above them, resting on her forehead.

According to its bareboned plot, after the assassination of her husband, an elegant, universally adored woman, Dolores finds herself strapped for cash, and unable to sustain her extravagant tastes.

She is lonely and unfulfilled as a woman until she meets "a love machine" named Barry. He's great in the boudoir, but lacks the bank account to support her in style. Still in love with him, she must look elsewhere for a rich man to marry.

Unless a reader had been living on Mars in the 1960s, he or she knew who "Dolores" really was. The clue appeared in the book's opening chapter when Dolores disembarks from Air Force One during her final hour as First Lady. Aboard the plane is the body of her dead husband, James T. Ryan, mowed down by an assassin's bullet.

There appears this statement: "She might not be the President's wife anymore, but she would hold on to her newly acquired fame. She loved seeing the crowds that followed her and the Secret Service men in attendance. She would still be entitled to Secret Service men for herself and her children."



The focal point of this book cover (those mammoth sunglasses) were **Jacqueline Susann's** device for signaling to readers that she was writing a thinly disguised *roman à clef* about Jacqueline Kennedy.

During the months that followed, Dolores meets Baron Erick de Savonne, who owns a larger fleet of tankers than Aristotle Onassis, with vast holdings in the Middle East. He lives lavishly and keeps a ballerina who is past her prime.

Even a dummy could figure out that the mistress was not a ballerina, but an opera diva named Maria Callas.

The novel—actually a short novella—ends on a strange note at the Ritz Hotel in Paris shortly after Dolores weds the multi-millionaire.

Thousands upon thousands of hate letters are arriving denouncing her as a gold-digger. The pristine reputation of the grieving widow at the husband's funeral had been shattered. Now, her reputation is being trashed because of her marriage to this "rich beast."

The night before the wedding, Dolores has terrible visions of her wedding night with Erick mauling her. "She could almost feel his lips slobbering on her."

The novel ends suddenly as she lies in her bridal suite wearing a white satin nightgown.

Erick is changing into a gray suit.

"Where are you going?" she asks.

"To my mistress…she's waiting," he tells her, and then he leaves her…untouched.

Presumably, because of the coincidence of her fatal illness and the publication of *Dolores*, the final chapters were written by Susann's friend, columnist Rex Reed.

To combat those rumors, her publisher wrote a note at the beginning of the novel, claiming that Susann not only finished *Dolores* before her death, but that she was able to revise it to her satisfaction. Only the most misinformed of readers actually believed that.

In *Dolores*, Susann described a character she named "Horotio Capon," the painter friend of Dolores' younger sister (who was an obvious reference to Lee Radziwill. Capon is described as "a plumb little man, a blondish pig, who had written a best seller five years ago. He hadn't written anything since, but he was making a career of going on talk shows and attending celebrity parties. He had also turned into a lush."

There was one scene that particularly infuriated Capote as it obviously described an imagined encounter between Norman Mailer and him. Mailer's name was changed to Tom Holt in the novel.

As Susan described it, "Capon clamped his pudgy little hand on Tom Colt's arm and gushed, 'I've read everything you wrote.' His voice squeaked, and he smacked his lips in ecstasy, lowering his eyes. 'My God, but I adore your work. But be careful about getting caught up in the rat race of television. Look what a whore it made of me."

After Susann's death, her husband, Irving Mansfield, aggressively promoted *Dolores*, along with his late wife's other works such as *Valley of the Dolls*. By a coincidence, Jackie happened to wander into the Doubleday Bookstore on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Mansfield was in the store on a promotional tour, hawking Susann novels, especially *Dolores*, of which Jackie was the fictional centerpiece.

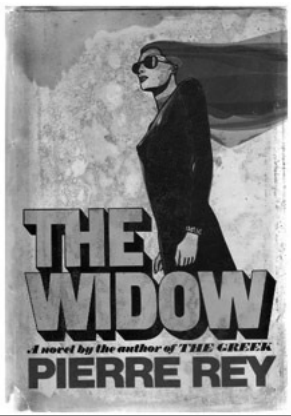
As he recalled, "Mrs. Onassis stopped and looked down on my display with utter contempt. She did not look me in the eye. She made an exaggerated gesture as if to hold her nose from the pollution. It was rude and ugly. She turned abruptly and walked out of the store. It was obvious the disdain in which Jackie held my own dearly departed Jackie."

The Widow

Before *The Widow*, published in 1977, Pierre Rey had written *The Greek* (1974), a story about one of the richest, most powerful men in the world. *The Widow* takes off where that novel ended, following "the Widow" through her trials and tribulations, based loosely on Jackie's life. In fact, a Jackie-like image with large sunglasses is depicted on the cover.

In the book, Peggy Baltimore Satrapoulos (read that as "Jackie Kennedy") is the widow of both the assassinated U.S. president and a Greek shipping magnate.

In the first chapter, Rey has *la scandaleuse*, Peggy, entering into a new marriage to a man known as Herman Kallenberg. In one graphic scene, Kallenberg is preparing for his wedding night. He ruminates:



Pierre Rey's novel, *The Widow*, traces the tangled life of the most sought-after woman of the century as she fights for a fortune and her future in the world of jet age society.

He named its heroine **Peggy Baltimore Satrapoulos**. Readers were clearly aware of who he was referencing.

"Until now, Peggy had curiously rejected his advances. As soon as he had brought her to heel, he intended to pay her back for that humiliating refusal as well as for the insane gifts he'd been forced to shower on her. His old anxiety seized him again: How would she react to his tiny phallus? She must know about it for, sadly enough, Kallenberg's penis was as famous as Cleopatra's nose. The Greek (read that as Aristotle Onassis) had been hung like a horse—women tell all kinds of stories. But horses have to die, too, and the Greek's remains had long since provided a meal

for the fish!"

Later in the novel, she contemplates marriage to another eccentric, eighty-year-old billionaire Archibald Knight. He has a repulsive habit. Ever since 1925, he has carefully collected his fecal matter and urine until he has collected 18,000 jars labeled with date, time, and weight. The contents of the oldest jars have turned gray. At times, he had discovered that he excreted more than he had ingurgitated.

Some associates at G.P. Putnam's, the publisher of *The Widow*, sent Jackie a copy of the book. In front of her secretary, she tossed it into a wastepaper basket.

The Greek Tycoon

Actor Anthony Quinn, growing up impoverished in Mexico, "wanted to be Napoléon, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Martin Luther King, Jr., Picasso, and Jack Dempsey, all rolled into one."

What he never dreamed of being was Aristotle Onassis, until he was offered the title role in *The Greek Tycoon* (a character named Theo Tomasis) on the screen. Released in 1978, it co-starred Jacqueline Bisset as Liz Cassidy, obviously based on Jackie Kennedy. Bisset played the beautiful widow of an assassinated president of the United States.

In the movie, the Greek had first met Liz when she was married to President Cassidy (played by James Franciscus), who starred as the charismatic senator from Massachusetts.

Starring **Anthony Quinn** as Onassis, and yet another **Jacqueline (Bisset)** as Jackie, *The Greek Tycoon* was a frothy, tepid fabrication loosely based on the life and romantic adventures of the late President's widow.

A private screening was scheduled for Jackie, who renounced the film as "the trash version of my life, obviously inspired by the lurid pages of a Harold Robbins novel. "Why did the producers bother to use fictional names?" she asked staff members. "Guess who is the humble Greek peasant who rises to become a mogul, owning oil tankers, Mediterranean islands, and airlines. And who might be the handsome blonde James Cassidy, who is elected President of the United States? And his widow, Liz Cassidy, who survives him to hook up with the Greek tycoon? And what imagination did it require for the writer *[Morton S. Fine]* to have the president appoint his brother as Attorney General? Surely that couldn't have been Bobby?"

The film opened at the time the public had begun to tire of so-called jet set movies. The heyday of such films as *The Carpetbaggers* were the 1960s. Writing in *The New York Times*, Vincent Canby evaluated *The Greek Tycoon* "as witless as it is gutless. It recalls a sort of newspaper journalism you don't see much anymore—the Sunday supplement recapitulation of a famous murder, divorce, or other scandals put together from the morgue clips. It's the literature of vultures."

Variety denounced the picture (which had been produced on a bare-boned budget of $6.5 million) as "trash, opulent, and vulgar." *Time Out London* called the move "glossy travesty. Upmarket exploitation pics tend to make it on the merest meal of money, sex, and scandal, and this effort just reeks."

"I understand Quinn walked off with a million dollars—and that was good for him," Jackie said.

Until the release of *The Greek Tycoon*, Quinn had considered himself a friend of the Kennedys and a political backer.

A year later, on a hot day on the French Riviera, Quinn and his wife were dining in a seafront restaurant in Cannes, enjoying the bouillabaisse.

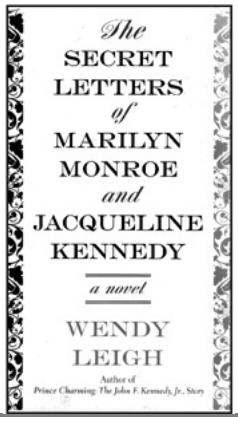
As Quinn looked up from his table, he spotted Jackie entering the restaurant, accompanied by an unidentified male friend.

She walked right by his table, their eyes not meeting, although he'd waved at her, hoping she would stop by. With a nod of recognition, she passed by, heading for her own table.

For Jackie, Anthony Quinn no longer existed.

She did not tell her associates that although Bisset was voted as the most beautiful actress in the world, "I hope I look better than that. She should stick to that wet T-shirt."

[She was referring to Bisset's celebrated underwater scenes in the movie, The Deep (1977).]



Marilyn Monroe did not actually write these (fictional) letters to Mrs. Kennedy, but perhaps she should have.

Two legends—the much-respected wife and the sexy mistress—come together as friends in this novel. Readers know, of course, that they'll inevitably clash.

Jackie Onassis was dead before Bisset once again portrayed her on the screen. This time, it was as part of a 2003 teleplay called *America's Prince: The John F. Kennedy, Jr. Story."*

The Secret Letters

of Marilyn Monroe and Jacqueline Kennedy; a Novel

Reviewed as "an audacious example of epistolary eavesdropping," Wendy Leigh's novel, *Secret Letters*, envision an imagined, artfully contrived, and purely fictional private correspondence between Marilyn Monroe and Jackie. Leigh has Marilyn writing to Jackie on July 9, 1962, shortly before the star's death. Marilyn confesses her love for Jack at their first meeting on May 15, 1951 at the home of her lover, producer Charles Feldman.

Marilyn writes: "When Jack focused those eyes on you, you really felt it. First he stared at your left eye, then at your right. Each eye at a time, never together. I felt like he was raping me with his eyes. I blushed from head to foot: A real flush. All over my body."

"We had sex that same evening, at a bungalow he rented for us at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Jack had magic for me. That night and always. He was a cute guy who set me on fire and that when I woke up in his arms, I felt safer, more special than I ever had before. I've had so many men, stronger, sexier, taller, and bigger than Jack. But no one ever reached into my heart, body, and soul like he did."

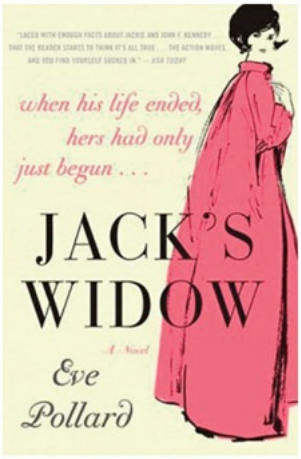
Jack's Widow

In *Jack's Widow*, a "fictional" 2006 novel by Eve Pollard, the writer even explored the inner workings of Jackie's marriage to Onassis.

In this book, clearly advertised as a work of fiction, Jackie's marriage to Onassis was described as the romantic adventures of a woman who "*went from a Greek god to a goddamn Greek,"* and with the slogan, "*When his life ended* [a reference to the assassination of JFK], *hers had only just begun*."

Avon, its publisher, ran a disclaimer: "While many of the characters portrayed here have some counterparts in the life and times of Jackie Kennedy Onassis, the characterization, dates of events, time frame, and incidents presented are totally the products of the author's imagination."

Within the pages of *Jack's Widow*, the heroine's honeymoon, at least, had gone well. "The sex had been exciting," Pollard wrote. "Jackie was enthused by Ari's zest for lovemaking and the extraordinary nights of courtship had taught them both a great deal about what pleased the other."



Romance writer **Eve Pollard** expressed in a fictional format a tantalizing tale of what might have been, entangling the image of the widowed Jackie into a scandalously juicy thriller.

But the marriage soon turns sour. "As if he were fighting to obliterate the world's resentment, he demanded to be given more caresses, more kisses, more sensual thrills and excitement," Pollard wrote. "He was insatiable and made love to her frequently and often quite roughly. She was desperate. Now not only did the whole world think she had married a monster—on occasion, she was starting to agree with them."

Although defined as "total trash" by Jackie herself, the novel got a few good reviews. *Kirkus* asserted, "Pollard supplies morsels of Camelot lore that will satisfy fans hungry to learn the regal widow's secrets." *USA Today* found *Jack's Widow* "laced with enough facts about Jackie and John F. Kennedy that the reader stars to think it's all true."

Near the end of the novel, Jackie discovers a Fabergé picture frame enameled in translucent apple green and gold. "What a gift," she says. "It must have cost a fortune." When she examines the card that came with it, she realizes it was intended for Maria Callas but delivered to her by mistake. Now she knew the truth. During her entire marriage to her, Ari had continued his affair with the opera diva, in spite of his denials.

In an evocative moment, Pollard wrote, "She would make love to a husband who she was sure had betrayed her. She had done it before."

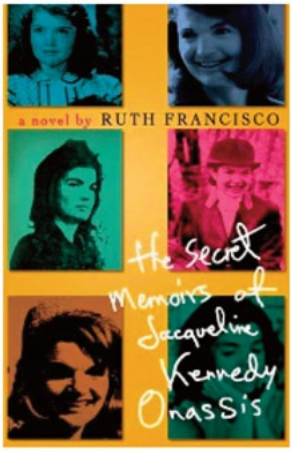
Ironically, way back in 1969, during an era that journalistically, at least, might be defined as "more innocent," Pollard had written a mainstream, conventional, relatively short (159 pages) and rather staid biography of the former First Lady—entitled *Jackie*—in which she stuck to the facts.

The Secret [Fictional] Memoirs Of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Also published in 2006, *The Secret Memoirs of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* was a novel by Ruth Francisco. The writer re-imagines Jackie's feelings and thoughts between the lines of recorded history. Although fiction, much of it rings true, even to so-called experts who have devoted years to exploring Jackie's life. Some of the scenes would shock the faint of heart. For example, Francisco as a novelist can intrude into secrets of the boudoir.

The novel contained graphic depictions of Jackie having sex, including on her wedding night.

Ironically, Francisco's depiction of her, as fiction, may have been historically accurate. Jackie is seen on her wedding night, sitting up in bed "perfumed and powdered, her body trembling with anticipation, her heart fluttering like a butterfly."



Jackie once famously said, “I want to live my life, not record it.”

To some degree, **Ruth Francisco**, in a “fictional” format, might have done the job for her. Rather brilliant in its concept, her provocative novel about Jackie goes where a biographer can’t, exploring and articulating some of her unspoken passions and emotions.

JFK enters the bedroom from the bathroom. “I need you on top, baby,” he says to Jackie. “He lies on his back and pulls me on top, his penis, cool and sharp, stabbing into me. He jogs my pelvis up and down like a milk shake, his eyes squeezed shut, wheezing, *ahhh*, squeezing my buttocks. His muscles tense, vibrating, then collapses.”

That’s it for her, as she’s left panting and unsatisfied with a fierce ache inside her. “Disappointment settles of me like a hunter’s net. He taps my thigh. ‘I’m beat, kid. Let’s get some sleep.’”

In yet another sex scene, Francisco depicted Jackie in the bathroom, brushing her hair in the mirror.

She writes, “Jack wants sex on demand, anytime during the day or night, without kisses or affection. He just comes up to me from behind, lifts my nightie, and enters me. He hugs and puffs for a minute or two. My hips bang against the sink, hurting—His oozy sweat smells vaguely chemical from the drugs he takes. I study his face in the mirror, twisted and red, and try to see the man I fell in love with. I see only anger and frustration and an anonymous violence that alarms me. As if I weren’t there at all.”

These fictional accounts coincide with what many women who had had brief sexual encounters with JFK had claimed.

In May of 2004, in *Vanity Fair*, journalist Salley Bedell reported that “Jackie Kennedy found sex with Kennedy unsatisfying because he goes too fast and then falls asleep.”

She was quoting from Jackie’s friend, Dr. Frank Finnerty, who advised her that sex could be more enjoyable if she and Jack engaged in foreplay.

“I may be the first person who ever talked to her in this way,” Dr. Finnerty claimed. “The sex got better, but the President continued his womanizing. But Jackie no longer had reason to believe that their difficulties with sexual intimacy had been her fault.”

Chapter Eighteen

America's Queen Vs. The Literati

Competitive Bitchfests: Jackie is Repeatedly Embarrassed by Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal, & Truman Capote

NORMAN MAILER *(left)* said: "The first time I met Jackie Kennedy, she gave me a hard-on. But later, I began to see a darker side of, especially after I referred to her, in print, as 'The Wild Witch of the East.' She thought of herself as Madame de Pompadour, a real royal phony."

GORE VIDAL *(center)* said: "After frequently defending JFK's policies on television, I became known as an unrewarded apologist." One night William Walton, in front of Jackie at the White House, asked Vidal, "Why don't you ask Jack for something? You'll probably get it." That would have been, of course, a payoff for not writing about Jack's health."

"The only job I want is Jack's," Vidal responded to Walton, as Jackie listened.

"Then, without being asked," Gore later wrote, I was put on the President's Advisory Council on the Arts. I made it a point never to attend a meeting or reply to a letter. I didn't believe that any government as philistine and corrupt as ours should involve itself in the arts in any way."

TRUMAN CAPOTE *(right)* said: "I met Jackie in the mid-1950s, when we became friends. She was married to this relatively unknown senator from Massachusetts. Jack liked me and used to call me from the White House. He bragged that his phone operators could track me down anywhere, even at a gay leather bar in the Village. One night at a party at Babe Paley's house, I bragged about how intimate I was with Jackie, so intimate that she'd sometimes invite me into her bedroom as she was dressing for the evening. That indiscretion was repeated to her, and it was enough to cause her to drop me, as she had so many other people who had been close to her."

"She's a Starlet Who Could Never Learn to Act"

—Norman Mailer

After Jackie spent time with Gore Vidal in Washington, she realized that he was compulsively competitive with both Truman Capote and Norman Mailer. All three of these young novelists had vied with each other in the late 1940s to see which of them would emerge on top as the novelist of the decade—Capote

because of his *Other Voices, Other Rooms;* Vidal because of his *The City and the Pillar* and *Williwaw;* and Mailer because of his novel about World War II, *The Naked and the Dead*.

When **Jackie** wasn't feuding with **Norman Mailer**, she often encountered him socially, as in this scene from October 3, 1978, in New York City.

"Sometimes, he could be sane, but often, he behaved like a psychotic," she claimed. "Like many other artists, he had a very dark side. A kinder description would be 'creative malady.'"

Jackie had read all four books, deciding that *The Naked and the Dead* was the best novel to emerge from the mayhem and bloodshed of World War II. Vidal had a different opinion. "I never read all of it…just couldn't get through it. But I thought it was a clever, admirably executed fake. It was artificial plumes on an eagle's wings."

Vidal confided to Jackie that Mailer had interpreted his novel, *The City and the Pillar*, as "disgusting—two fags getting it on and one killing the other."

Vidal said he came face to face with Mailer in 1952 at the Manhattan apartment of the actress, Milly Brower, who lived on 4th Avenue.

"I went over to Mailer and extended my hand," Vidal told Jackie. "To piss him off, I said. 'I see I'm better looking than you are.'"

"But you can't get the women I can," Mailer shot back. "Not that you would know what to do with one if you caught her."

"From what I hear," Vidal told Mailer, "we're both sexual marauders, so at least we have something in common."

As a devotee of literature, Jackie wanted to get to know famous American novelists. What she didn't want was a personal involvement in their petty feuds. Increasingly, she found herself a virtual sounding board as one author attacked another in front of her. In time, however, she would develop her own, intensely personal, feuds with each of these novelists.

Mailer Physically Assaults Gore Vidal: Jackie, a Witness, is Horrified.

First, there was Norman Mailer. Her relationship with him began peacefully enough.

When John F. Kennedy was running for president in 1960, Mailer wrote Jackie and requested an interview at their compound in Hyannis Port. Eager to meet Mailer herself, she asked her husband to agree to the interview, which would eventually appear in *Esquire* magazine.

Everyone at the compound that day was wearing casual sportswear, but Mailer showed up in a formal black suit more appropriate for a funeral. As he admitted himself, "I was sweating like a goat."

In her soothing yellow-and-white living room, Jackie asked him to take off his jacket while she poured him iced verbena tea with a sprig of fresh mint.

As Jackie offered Mailer his tea, she provocatively said, "Perhaps you'd like something stronger."

He knew that she was aware that during the previous month at Provincetown, he'd been arrested on a charge of drunkenness and rude and disorderly conduct.

She introduced him to her fellow guests, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.; Prince Stanislas Radziwill; Peter Maas of the *Saturday Evening Post;* and Pierre Salinger, press secretary to JFK.

Jackie was obviously pregnant, and Mailer sensed that although she wanted no part of a political campaign, she was still trying to be the dutiful wife. He later described her mood as one of "quiet desperation."

Mailer was impressed by the young presidential candidate, although originally, he'd considered him too conservative. "He won my heart by praising my less successful novel, *Deer Park,"* Mailer recalled. "Everybody I met had good words for *The Naked and the Dead*. But *Deer Park!* He was my kind of guy!"

Later, when she was alone with JFK, Jackie gave her own review of *The Deer Park.* "The novel is a documentation on the oversexed imagination of the American male."

Prior to Mailer's arrival at Hyannis Port, the Democrats had released what became a celebrated campaign poster. It featured a swarthy, scowling Richard Nixon with the tag line, "Would you buy a used car from this man?"

Before the debut of his own dialogue with JFK, Mailer interjected an unexpected and unpleasant surprise by showing his hosts the Republican party's response to the Democrat's campaign poster.

Mailer read it to JFK in front of Jackie: It proclaimed, "If you bought a used car from Jack Kennedy, you would trust him and you would buy the car, and then after you'd bought the car, he'd drop by to pay a visit and see that it was working. And then he'd seduce your wife."

"I really don't know what that ad means," JFK said.

Before Mailer, Jackie had never been written about by such a hawk-eyed novelist, who noted such details as her "surprisingly thin but not unfeverish calves." This was no female reporter asking the standard questions put to the wife of a political candidate. "There was an air of self-indulgence about her, subtle but precise," he wrote. "She disappeared at least half a dozen times. One was certain she liked time to compose herself."

Although he was sexually attracted to her, he did not lose his keen powers of observation, commenting on "her elusiveness and concealed cruelty."

He wrote: "Jackie Kennedy was a cat, narrow and wild, and her fur was being rubbed every which way. Over tea, I noted something droll and hard that came into her eyes as if she were a very naughty eight-year-old indeed. There was something quite remote in her. Nice willed, not chilly, not directed at anyone in particular, but distant, detached. She had a keen sense of laughter, but it revolved around the absurdities of the world. She was not unlike a soldier who had been up at the front for two weeks. There was a hint of gone laughter. I liked Jackie Kennedy. She was not at all stuffy. She had perhaps a touch of that artful madness which suggests future drama."

Mailer also focused his sharp perception on JFK as well, writing that his most characteristic quality "was the remote and private air of a man who has traversed some lonely terrain of experience, of loss and gain, of nearness to death, which leaves him isolated from the mass of others."

When **Norman Mailer** introduced Jackie to his wife, **Adele Morales**, a Spanish-Peruvian artist, the future First Lady bonded with her and engaged in intense discussions about art. Later, Mailer accused his wife of having lesbian tendencies and of wanting to seduce Jackie.

Mailer and Adele were photographed (above) on December 21, 1960, just after their appearance together in court, where she had refused to sign a complaint against him. He'd been arrested on charges of stabbing her, puncturing her cardiac sac. Miraculously, she survived.

He wrote of JFK's "Dozen faces, with his appearance changing with the mood. He would seem at one moment older than his age, forty-eight or fifty, a tall, slim, sunburned professor with a pleasant weathered face not particularly handsome. Five minutes later, talking to the press on his lawn, his appearance would have gone through a metamorphosis., He would look again like a movie star, his coloring vivid, his manner rich, his gestures strong and quick, alive with that concentration of vitality a successful actor always seems to radiate."

The interview at Hyannis Port had been scheduled as a two-day event. Jackie suggested that on the following day, Mailer might want to show up with his second wife, Adele Morales (Mailer), a Spanish-Peruvian painter.

Mailer had met the sensual beauty just after she'd broken up with Jack Kerouac. Before Adele's arrival at Hyannis Port, Mailer had warned Jackie, "She has elemental and primitive qualities."

Jackie bonded with Adele, finding a mutual appreciation for art. Jackie later learned that she'd taken some very esoteric art appreciation courses.

The day went well, and as a quartet, Jackie, Adele, Mailer, and JFK formed a warm camaraderie over lunch, although JFK, the campaigner, was interrupted frequently by phone calls.

[In 1960, Jackie was shocked to read in The New York Times *that Mailer had stabbed Adele with a pen knife, and that she'd survived. At a Saturday night party at their home, she had denigrated his work and denounced him as an inadequate lover.*

He loudly responded by accusing her of having had a lesbian affair. At their party, an argument ensued, and he pulled out a two-and-a-half inch pen knife and stabbed her in the upper abdomen and again in her back. One of the wounds was close to her heart. Her cardiac sac had been punctured by the knife.

As Adele lay on the kitchen floor, one of the male guests at their party tried to help her. Mailer snarled, "Get away from her. Let the bitch die."

That following Monday, Mailer appeared on the Mike Wallace TV show, announcing his intention to run for Mayor of New York. Later on the show, when he (and the show's viewers) were confronted with questions about the stabbing, Mailer claimed that he had done it "to relieve Adele of her cancer."

Eventually, Mailer turned himself in to the police. A psychiatrist issued a report that he was having an acute paranoid breakdown and delusional thinking. He was diagnosed as both "homicidal and suicidal."

In a hearing before a judge, Mailer was sentenced to the psychiatric ward at Bellevue.

Later, Mailer pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of assault and was given a suspended sentence. Morales made a physical recovery and divorced Mailer in 1962.]

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When Mailer and Adele departed from Hyannis Port later that afternoon, Jackie felt assured that the magazine article he'd submit to his editors would have positive effects for JFK during the election.

When Jackie read Mailer's article entitled *"Superman Comes to the Supermart,"* after it appeared in *Esquire* in November of 1960, she sent him a handwritten letter praising the piece. Thus began a sometimes turbulent relationship that would stretch out over many years.

He responded to Jackie, perhaps with a touch of egomania, "I think my piece had more effect than any other single work of mine, and I think this is due as much to its meretriciousness as to its merits. I think my calling JFK 'the Existential Hero' was a matter of great historical moment. My article added the one ingredient Kennedy had not been able to find for the stew—it made him seem exciting. It made the election appear important. Around New York there was a turn in sentiment: One could feel it. Kennedy had glamor. Until now, of course, you have always provided glamor for him."

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Mailer later admitted he'd made a mistake when he wrote Jackie to announce that in the near future he planned to write a biography of the Marquis de Sade, hoping to reveal "the strange honor of the man." He believed, in error, that as a student of French literature, she would appreciate both the project and his role as its creator.

She did not respond to his letter. When *Esquire* assigned him to write an article about Jackie, she refused his request for an interview.

He was reduced to writing an impressionistic overview of her instead. It was very critical, and he referred to her as "The Wild Witch of the East." He even attacked her "cultural timidity" in her choice of the writers and artists she invited to the White House. "Her guest list," Mailer wrote, "should include Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Norman Mailer himself."

"What we need and what she could offer us was much more complex than the public image of a Madame de Pompadour in a tea-dance dress. Would the Kennedys be no more intelligent than the near past, had they not learned America was not to be saved by Madison Avenue, that no method could work which induced nausea faster than the pills we push to carry it away."

To conclude, Mailer denounced Jackie as "a royal phony."

[Ironically, John F. Kennedy, Jr. would eventually hire Mailer to report on and analyze the 1996 Republican and Democratic conventions for publication in his magazine, George.*]*

In 1962, at a Manhattan cocktail party, Jackie was introduced to Mailer's third wife, Lady Jeanne Campbell, the

voluptuous, bright, and beautiful daughter of the roguish Ian Campbell, the 11th Duke of Argyll. Lady Jeanne was widely famous as the favorite granddaughter of the British press baron, William Maxwell Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook).

[Behind a very polite mask, Jackie had reason to dislike both Mailer and his newest wife: Whereas Norman had written an unflattering magazine article about her; Jackie's husband, between 1955 and 1959, had reportedly had an on-again, off-again affair with Lady Jeanne.

AN UNLIKELY SPITFIRE who aged with dignity: **Lady Jeanne Campbell**, legendary for having sustained affairs with JFK, Nikita Khrushchev, Henry Luce, Fidel Castro, and a turbulent marriage to literary bad boy, Norman Mailer.

Before taking up with JFK, Jeanne had been the lover of Henry Luce, the founder of Time/Life, Inc. In 1961, she'd ditched Luce for Mailer.

Jeanne and Mailer were frequently quarreling partners in one of the most turbulent "literary marriages" of the 20th Century. He was known to have dangled her by the ankles from a second-story window. When she read the unflattering portrait of herself in his novel, An American Dream, she publicly defined it as "the hate book of all time."

In her own memoirs, she wrote: "Norman and I fought so much we could empty a room quicker than any couple in New York. Even the hosts would put on their hats and coats and leave."]

Before leaving that cocktail party in Manhattan, a drunken Mailer crudely confronted Jackie with the threat, "Tell Kennedy that if he fucks my wife again, I'll see to it that he's singing soprano in the choir."

In November of 1963, for *The Evening Standard* in London, Lady Jeanne, as a journalist, reported on JFK's funeral.

[Lady Jeanne lives in legend, along with Marilyn Monroe, as the only woman—so far as it is known—who had sexual liaisons with John F. Kennedy, Fidel Castro, and Nikita Khrushchev. Marilyn was introduced to Nikita on his one-time visit to Hollywood, where he was hosted by 20th Century Fox. Later, Lady Jeanne interviewed Castro in Havana and Nikita in Moscow. "Powerful men were interested in my mother because she was intelligent," Cusi Cram, Jeanne's daughter, later claimed.]

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In addition to her own frequently embarrassing relationship with Mailer, Jackie became almost obsessed with how he antagonized, and tangled with, Gore Vidal. Early in her relationship with Vidal, before she drifted away from him, he gave her firsthand information about his competitive and upsetting exchanges with the controversial Mailer.

Jackie found herself in a difficult role, as, for a while, at least, she functioned as a kind of sounding board for Mailer's feuds with both Capote and Vidal.

Early in her relationship with Mailer, she accused him of "deliberate cruelty." It was her response to Mailer's observation, in print, of what he had defined as a "concealed cruelty" of her own. As she told Vidal, "Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* insisted that deliberate cruelty was the one thing she could not forgive."

Jackie was referring to Mailer's published (and highly unflattering) review of her famous guided tour of the White House, which had been broadcast on TV on Valentine's day of 1962 to an audience of 46 million viewers.

In *Esquire*, Mailer wrote, "The voice was a quiet parody of the sort of voice one hears on the radio late at night, dropped softly into the ear by girls who sell soft mattresses, depilatories, or creams to brighten the skin. She moved like a wooden horse and looked like a starlet who will never learn to act. The show was silly, ill advised, pointless,

empty, dull, and obsequious to the most slavish tastes in American life."

After that, although she wanted to drop Mailer from her address book, her ability to do that somehow eluded her.

"Over the years, I encountered him frequently, especially when I became an editor in New York. We were always showing up at the same parties. There was no way to avoid him."

Because of her pregnancy, Jackie did not attend the 1960 Democratic convention in Los Angeles. But Vidal spoke to Jackie on the phone, delivering "delicious tidbits" to her. He did tell her that he had run into Mailer at the convention.

"He came up to me and started yelling at me," Vidal said, "saying, 'I hate you! You're too successful!'"

Jackie was eager for gossip about any of the famous names Vidal had met at the Convention. He revealed that he had been assigned to a dining table hosted by Charlton Heston, with whom he'd worked in Rome during the filming of *Ben-Hur*. "He introduced me to his friends, Gary Cooper and Bing Crosby. Later that night, I attended this party hosted by Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh."

In his overview of the event, as delivered to Jackie, Vidal avoided revealing one tidbit of scandal: He'd gotten drunk at the party and had indiscreetly confronted Leigh, asking her, "So how was Jack Kennedy in bed?"

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Still mourning the assassination *[June 6, 1968]* of Bobby Kennedy, Jackie did not attend the Democratic National convention *[August 26-29, 1968]* in Chicago. But she avidly watched it on television, especially the soon-to-be-notorious confrontation between Vidal and William Buckley, Jr.

Pierre Salinger spoke to Jackie about what Vidal had told him about Mailer.

"Mailer was real cozy with that right-wing creep, William Buckley. In fact, he was brown-nosing the fascist. Does that mean he's gone over to the enemy?"

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Jackie seemed fascinated by Vidal's points of view about Mailer. "Each time he speaks, he must become more bold, more loud, put on a brighter motley and shake more foolish balls. He certainly knows how to advertise himself. He called *Life* a dirty magazine and said Eisenhower was 'a bit of a woman.' Who knows what outrageous things he'll say tomorrow?"

Even though they were out of physical touch, Vidal continued to send Jackie his essays and, in one instance, a critical appraisal he wrote about Mailer.

"*There has been from Henry Miller to Norman Mailer to Charles Manson a logical progression. The Miller-Mailer-Manson, or M3 for short, has been conditioned to think of women as, at best, breeders of sons; at worst, objects to be poked, humiliated, killed*."

When Mailer read that, he admitted, "Something blew inside my brain."

Gore also mailed Jackie his 1971 review of Mailer's latest book, *Prisoner of Sex*, his response to the women's liberation movement:

"*Mailer's essential arguments boil down to stating that masturbation is bad and so is contraception because the whole point of sex between man and woman is conception. Well, that's what the Bible says, too. He links homosexuality with evil. He claims that the man who gives in to his homosexual drives is consorting with the enemy. Worse, not only does he betray a moral weakness by not fighting those drives, but he is a coward for not daring to enter into competition with other Alpha males for toothsome females*."

As the years went by, Jackie tried to avoid both Mailer and Vidal whenever she could. In 1965, the director, Harold Clurman, escorted her to a production of *Tartuffe* at the Washington Square Theater in Greenwich Village, New York City.

Norman Podhoretz, the editor of the magazine *Commentary*, invited Jackie and Clurman to an après-theater dinner party at his home. The "little Jewish boy from Brooklyn, as Podhoretz satirically defined himself, was enjoying the trappings of celebrity, money, and success.

Jackie agreed to be a guest, with the stipulation "that Norman Mailer will not be there."

Two days later, Mailer commented on his explusion from "the Queen of America's Court."

"I guess Jackie still hasn't forgiven me for writing that terrible review of her White House tour," he said.

In language uncharacteristic of Jackie, she once said, "**Janet Flanner** is one tough old broad, but I adore her *Letters from Paris*."

After the dinner party, Jackie herself became the subject of another bad review, this time from Podhoretz's wife, Midge Decter. "Jackie Kennedy is the world's oldest sixteen-year-old."

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In mid-November of 1971, Jackie learned that Vidal and Mailer were scheduled for a joint appearance together on *The Dick Cavett Show*. Although she had another engagement, she cancelled it to stay home to watch the telecast.

She later heard that when Mailer and Vidal came together in the waiting room before going on the air, Mailer, using an assault technique lifted directly from the rough-and-tumble of a soccer field, opted to "headbutt" his rival, causing Vidal pain. A few moments later, Mailer was overheard announcing that he planned, after facing the TV audience, to "smash the fucking teahouse," whatever that meant.

Homoeroticism Among the Beat Generation Gay shenanigans *On the Road* with **Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady**

Also waiting to go on was Janet Flanner, the celebrated Paris correspondent for *The New Yorker*. Mailer's behavior shocked her. Jackie had always been a faithful reader of her insightful and widely read "Letters from Paris" column.

Flanner and Vidal had already discussed Mailer's threat with Cavett before Mailer was introduced. When Mailer came out in front of the TV cameras and refused to shake Gore's hand, Cavett asked him why.

"I have to smell Vidal's works from time to time, and that has made me an expert on intellectual pollution. He has a weak and shameless intellect. The contents of his stomach are no more interesting than the contents of the stomach of an intellectual cow."

In response, the audience booed. Mailer briefly tried to win them back, pleading for understanding. "I've had to face cowards like Vidal, who kicked me in the nuts." Although that remark drew some short-lived applause, Mailer went downhill from that point on.

Mailer then accused Vidal of publicly bragging "about what you did to Kerouac."

"Well, he didn't die," Vidal answered.

The audience was baffled. Mailer was referring to Vidal's widely gossiped-about claim that he had had anal sex with Kerouac, which—in Mailer's opinion—had led to Kerouac's drinking himself to death. After the show, Mailer explained to Flanner what he had wanted to say, but couldn't. "When Vidal fucked Kerouac in the ass, he took the steel out of his *cojones*."

During the program, Cavett was clearly siding with Vidal, provoking Mailer into asking him, "Why don't you

look at your question sheet and ask a question?"

"Why don't you fold it five ways and put it where the sun don't shine?" Cavett shot back.

After sitting through the show, Jackie later gave her own review: "I'd grant it five stars. It's real entertainment, the best thing on TV this year."

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Mailer greatly offended Jackie again with his 1973 biography of Marilyn Monroe, entitled *Marilyn, a Biography*. In the final chapter of the controversial book, Mailer suggested that agents of the FBI and CIA ordered the murder of Marilyn based on the implications of her affair with Robert F. Kennedy, who had few friends in either of the agencies.

Her former husband, Arthur Miller, delayed his response until the 1987 publication of his memoirs, *Timebends*. In it, he scathingly wrote: "Mailer was himself in drag, acting out his own Hollywood fantasies of fame and sex unlimited and power." Miller's editor removed the last line: "Mailer obviously wanted to be Marilyn himself."

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It would be six years before Vidal encountered Mailer again. The occasion, in 1977, was at a chic Manhattan party given by socialite Lally Weymouth, the daughter of Katharine Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*. The party was in honor of Princess Margaret, who telephoned shortly before her scheduled arrival that she was suffering jet lag after her flight from London and that she wanted to go to bed.

Weymouth quickly shifted the theme of her party, morphing it into an event to honor Jackie instead.

Both Mailer and Vidal attended the event, in its early stages staying separated and on opposite sides of the room.

As chicly dressed Jackie entered on the arm of journalist Peter Hamill, all eyes focused on her. She was greeted by an array of celebrities who included author William Styron, Marella Agnelli, Jerry Brown, John Kenneth Galbraith, columnist Joseph Alsop, Gay Talese, William Paley, Barbara Walters, Lillian Hellman, Sam Spiegel, and Susan Sontag.

Appearing unexpectedly, almost from out of nowhere, Mailer stood before Jackie, monopolizing her time.

Aware of their former friendship, Weymouth, in her role as hostess, went over and asked Vidal if he'd like her to escort him over to greet Jackie.

"No way!" Vidal said. "I'll stay here in my corner. She knows where to find me if she wants to talk to me."

He looked over at Jackie's side of the room, where Mailer was talking to her rapidly, "as if fired up about something." When she moved on to another conversation with someone else, Mailer, with a glass of gin and tonic, headed over to Vidal.

Jackie had told Mailer that she rarely saw Vidal, except for a movie date, since Bobby Kennedy had thrown him out of the White House in 1961. Mailer came up to Vidal, who remained seated on a sofa. Jackie glided over to within ten feet of these two antagonists to hear what was going on, even though she seemed absorbed in what Alsop, JFK's gay friend, was saying.

"You look like an old Jew," Mailer said.

Vidal responded, "Norman, you *are* an old Jew."

After he said that, Mailer tossed his gin and tonic into Vidal's face and then threw the glass at him too. It hit Vidal on the mouth, causing his lower lip to bleed. For a few moments, Vidal blacked out.

When he regained consciousness, the first person he noticed was Jackie standing nearby, surveying the scene. After delivering one long, stern look, she turned on her heels and moved away.

Mailer later told her, "I was going to fist him, but first I used an old street fighter's trick of blinding your opponent."

Mailer then grabbed Vidal by the arm, trying to force him to rise to his feet. Vidal tried to fight Mailer off. Both of them struggled with each other, ripping the other's jacket.

As the hostess, Weymouth rushed to the scene, but was asked by others of her guests not to interfere.

She later apologized to Jackie "for this outrage. I thought I was inviting civilized people to my party. What if Princess Margaret had been here? Mailer and Vidal are behaving like two drunken sailors in a bar."

"Oh, Lally," Jackie said. "You couldn't buy such entertainment as this."

Finally, Howard Austen, Vidal's long-time companion, pulled Mailer off Vidal. Mailer stumbled back, falling against Max Palevsky, who stumbled and spilled his champagne onto Weymouth's gown.

In the meantime, Sam Spiegel, the Austria-born film produder, rushed to Mailer's side, urging him to once again attack Vidal. At this point, super-agent Sue Mengers rushed to Vidal's side, wiping the blood off his lip with her

delicate lace handkerchief.

Mailer shouted at Vidal, “Listen, you faggot, get up and come out on the street and fight with me like a man.”

Austen volunteered that he’d fight him instead.

Mailer looked with contempt at Austen. “A nine-year-old pansy could beat the shit out of you, you little asshole.”

Mort Jankow, another guest, later said, “I think the Vidal/Mailer fight ranks as one of the great moments in modern American literature.”

About a year later, in 1978, Vidal and Mailer came together once again, this time at a party following the National Book Awards. Mailer staggered into the reception area drunk, and became instantly enraged the moment he spotted Vidal.

“Without warning, he blindsided Vidal, knocking him back onto the buffet table,” said an editor, one of the other guests.

Vidal straightened himself up and turned to Mailer with a slight smirk: “Well Norman, once again words fail you.”

“Capote’s a Ballsy Little Guy.”

—Norman Mailer

“He Should Know…I Seduced Him.”

—Truman Capote

During the time that Jackie was still on speaking terms with Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, and Norman Mailer, each of them conveyed their opinions of their rivals to her.

One afternoon in the summer of 1971, Capote invited Jackie for lunch at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan. Invariably, the subject of Mailer and Vidal came up. “Out of all those people who began publishing when I did, right after the war, there are only three left that anybody knows about—Gore Vidal, Norman Mailer, and me,” Capote told Jackie.

“There has to be some ‘X’ factor, some extra dimension that has kept us going,” Capote continued. “Really successful people are like vampires: you can’t kill them unless you drive a stake though their hearts. The only one who can destroy a really strong and talented writer is himself.”

A month later at a party in Manhattan for authors, publishers, and editors, Jackie encountered Norman Mailer. At one point, he spoke to her about Capote. “Truman and I never became great friends. But we never became enemies like Vidal and myself. Truman and I were neighbors when we both lived in Brooklyn. One afternoon, we strolled into an Irish bar on Montague Street for a long talk. He came in wearing a lavender gabardine cape.”

“I thought, ‘My god, I’ve walked into this drunken den of sour male virtue with a beautiful little faggot prince. I figured that the bar flies would pick a fight with me but they didn’t. If I looked, walked, talked, and acted like Truman, I’d die of adrenaline overflow.’ He was just being himself, and he didn’t give a flying fuck what others thought of him.”

“Both Jackie and Mailer respected Capote as a writer, claiming that he wrote some of the best and most evocative sentences of his generation. “A Marxist might look at *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* and think it’s a charlotte russe,” Mailer said. “But it captured a capsule of time of life in New York.”

“I once in print claimed that Capote is a ballsy little guy,” Mailer said, “but he always exaggerated. He rewrote my line, changing ballsy to the bravest man in New York. He had no right to tamper with my simple little quote. I wrote to him and said, ‘Come on, Truman. You may be a ballsy little guy, but you’re not the bravest in New York. There are guys waiting in line in New York to be the bravest.”

“Of course, there was a kind of bravery there,” Mailer admitted. “I saw that first hand when we were both booked on *The David Susskind Show* with Dorothy Parker. I wasn’t that experienced in facing the TV camera. At first, I did all the talking, but when Susskind turned to Truman, he went to the races. Once the audience got used to that voice of his, he had them laughing hysterically.”

For the movie version of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the two stars posed for *Life* magazine with the author, who looked like a prisoner himself, on a lonely road in Kansas. **Scott Wilson** *(left)* was cast in the role of mass murderer Richard Hickock, with **Robert Blake** (right) playing Perry Smith.

"The next day, my friends called me, and all of them claimed that Truman had KO'd me," Mailer said. "There he was, a little faggot in gaudy colors being exactly who he was and getting the audience to laugh with him, not at him. He didn't lower his voice. He didn't keep his wrist from limping. I was floundering all over the place with these huge philosophical and long speeches, and he was zinging me with one *bon mot* after another."

Like Jackie, Mailer was also impressed with Truman's *In Cold Blood*, and he found inspiration to write his own "non-fiction novel," *Armies of the Night* about his involvement in protests against the Vietnam War.

"Going to Kansas to research *In Cold Blood* was the best thing that ever happened to Truman," Mailer said. "It made him more macho, and that meant a great deal to him. In fact, to be more masculine was more important to him than to any other gay guy I knew. He didn't want to be perceived as a homosexual."

The killers described in Truman's "nonfiction novel" were **Richard Hickock** *(left)* and **Perry Smith** *(right)*, who massacred four members of the Clutter family one bleak night in Western Kansas.

During the research for *In Cold Blood*, Capote fell in love with Smith when he was incarcerated and awaiting execution.

"In Kansas, he met all these macho types, and some of their testosterone got implanted in our little faggot."

"But, alas, as the years went on, Truman got fatter instead of leaner and meaner, like Gary Cooper. Then he did the unforgivable: He became boring. Before that, he considered bores the curse of the earth, and then he became one himself. He had all these opinions, especially about crime, that no one gave a rat's fart about. Not only that, as he aged, he began to look like J. Edgar Hoover. Of course, he despised drag queen Nellie Hoover, who kept a burgeoning FBI file on Truman, or so I heard."

"Hoover keeps a fat file on everybody in public life," Jackie said. "I'd love to read what his boys have dug up on me."

At a party the following year, Jackie encountered Leonora Hornblow, wife of Arthur Hornblow, Jr., the novelist and friend of Capote's. At this party, Jackie heard some astonishing gossip. Truman confided to the Hornblows that

one night, he'd seduced Norman Mailer.

When he heard that, my husband got up and walked out of the room." Leonora told Jackie. "Arthur just couldn't believe it, and didn't want to hear another of Truman's lies. He claimed that there was no man he couldn't seduce. Norman Mailer? I wouldn't believe that if I saw it happening here on the carpet!"

When Vidal heard Capote's boast about having seduced Norman Mailer, he said to Jackie, "He's such a liar, but on every other Thursday, he tells the truth. I mean, the mutt seduced John Garfield and Errol Flynn, and he gave Humphrey Bogart a blow-job on the set of *Beat the Devil*. Did he seduce Mailer, perhaps? James Baldwin once told me that Mailer confessed to him one night that he was a closeted homosexual, but that he had consciously chosen to go the other way. Baldwin also claimed that Mailer viewed the American Negro male as a walking phallic symbol."

"I also remember meeting one of Mailer's wives at a party in Manhattan one night—I don't remember which one," Vidal said. "She confided in me that Mailer came home late one night, and she asked him where he'd been. 'Guess what?' he said to her. 'I just fucked a black drag queen.' The way I figure it, if it's a full moon, Mailer and Capote are likely to do *anything*."

"Truman Lost His Crown as Society's Mascot"

—Norman Mailer

Jackie turned down Truman Capote's invitation to his Black and White costume ball, scheduled with fanfare at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel for the evening of November 28, 1966 and hailed as the Party of the Century. Ostensibly, it was because it was uncomfortably close to the anniversary date (November 22, 1963) of JFK's assassination.

But the day after the party, she made many calls, including one to Lee Radziwill, to find out what she had missed.

Capote had been warned by Babe Paley not to invite Mailer to the party, which had been conceived to celebrate the release of Capote's *In Cold Blood*. "I hear he's very disruptive when he gets drunk and sometimes picks a fight," Babe said.

As it turned out, Babe was correct in her prediction of future violence from Mailer. After only an hour of heavy drinking at the costume ball, he became belligerent.

Editor Norman Podhoretz was close at hand when Mailer got into a rather violent argument about the Vietnam War with McGeorge Bundy, who worked at the White House.

"They had ugly words, Podhoretz said, "most of them coming from Mailer. It got so rough that Mailer invited Bundy to step outside to duke it out with their fists."

Bundy told Mailer, "You are very silly, acting like a naughty little boy."

In Mailer's view, "Bundy pissed me off by pretending to have superior knowledge. He told me I didn't know much about Vietnam and the war, that all I knew was how to protest. I was brave that night, because I was drunk. He looked in better shape than me. Hell, I was roaring mad, and I wanted to kill him. He didn't take up my challenge, and walked away."

"At that point, Lillian Hellman butted her fat dyke ass into the fray, as she always took the side of the person who had the most clout," Mailer claimed.

"Mailer, how dare you threaten Mr. Bundy," Hellman scolded.

"Get lost, bitch," Mailer said. "I don't give a damn whether you wrote *The Little Foxes* or not."

A fellow guest, William Buckley, Jr., was also at the ball. He said, "Mailer was challenging everybody to a fight that night, not just Bundy."

Hellman faded away, soon to be replaced by the former star of *The Little Foxes*, Tallulah Bankhead, who detested Mailer. "Oh, you're the young man who doesn't know how to spell fuck," were Tallulah's first words to him.

[In The Naked and the Dead, *Mailer's publisher, in a misguided fit of prudery, had insisted he substitute the word "fug" for "fuck."]*

"I was real proud the next day," Mailer said. "*Women's Wear Daily* awarded me the worst dressed man at the ball. I showed up in a dirty gabardine raincoat with my black tie. At any rate, I saw Mia Farrow there. I understood why Frank Sinatra, a child molester, liked to fuck her. All in all, I had to hand it to Truman. He pulled off a grand ball. I don't think I've ever went to anything grander, even if the cowards I challenged there were afraid to fight me. The ball was better than any of Truman's books."

"I know I said Truman was a ballsy guy, and I meant it at the time," Mailer said to Jackie. "But as time went on, those balls got swollen at a certain point, and he just lost it. He became very different in the end. He should never

have tried to be the mascot of café society. He thought being society's darling was a great triumph. But it turned out to be the cause of his failure and decline."

Jackie didn't need Mailer's analysis of Capote's downfall, as she had a front row seat to the oncoming disaster, thanks to reports from Lee Radziwill, who had been his friend for so long.

"Truman became devoured by his social life," Jackie claimed to her sister. "By his beautiful so-called swans. I was never that close to him to be one of his swans. In many cases, those swans were ugly ducklings, but beautifully attired and groomed. He was wasting his creativity hanging out with the likes of Babe Paley."

"He should never have started that unfinished novel, *Answered Prayers,"* Jackie said to Lee. "Naturally, I didn't appreciate his unflattering references to me. Of course, café society—or what's left of it—tossed him to the sharks. What in hell did he expect, having publicized those horrible caricatures of his friends at the time? Naturally, you had to drop him when he tried to drag you into that lawsuit with Gore Vidal."

"Truman was unrealistic," Jackie said. "He told me he was going to expose his society friends, but he didn't anticipate their reactions. I warned him that his friends would be friends no more."

"I'm such a powerful figure," he had told Jackie, "that they wouldn't dare not accept my phone calls."

"But suddenly, when *Esquire* came out, Truman was not longer the amusing trinket who had entertained them. Now, he was entertaining the public with their foibles and their very dark secrets."

"With drink and drugs devouring his body like a cannibal, I just knew he would never finish *Answered Prayers*," Jackie said. "He lied to me and told me it was almost ready to send to Random House, which it wasn't. The book had died within him a decade earlier, and he hadn't buried it yet. He said that the novel would seal his position as the Proust of the 20th Century."

"I'm comparing myself to Proust to you because you're about the only person I know who's actually read him," he said to Jackie.

"He burned his bridges and then looked back in nostalgia," Jackie said to Bennett Cerf. "He faced the more tranquil oasis on the other side of the river bank. But he could neither swim nor take a boat to it. It was too late for such a crossing. He couldn't swim over to that bank because he'd be washed away by the raging current. Truman drowned in his own excesses."

Chapter Nineteen

Jackie's Taste for A-List Movie Stars

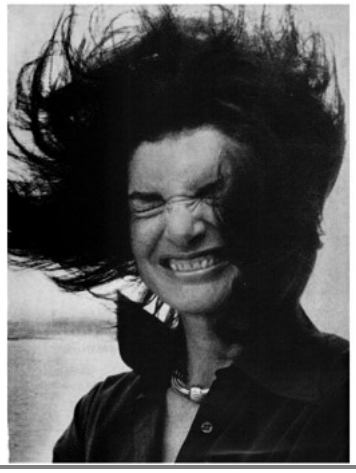
After Dates with Sinatra and Brando, She Awards Top Honors to William Holden

Jacques Lowe, JFK's personal photographer, shared a close-up of the private lives of President Kennedy and his First Lady. "They pretty much led separate lives. Jack was jumping in bed every night with some woman, but it wasn't always Jackie. As an Irishman, he viewed women as saints or whores. You have fun with your mistress, sex with your wife for procreation."

Senator George Smathers said, "Don't feel sorry for Jackie because she was married to 'Roto-Rooter.' She may have had a *wham, bam, thank you, ma'am*, type of husband, who was a very selfish lover. But she received in one week more propositions from men, some of whom sent pictures of their erections, than either Elizabeth Taylor or Marilyn Monroe. Of course, I'm guessing at that. Jackie was very selective, but she enjoyed many liaisons as Bathsheba knew David."

Revelations about Jackie's affairs continued into the 21st Century. *The New York Daily News* waited until June 25, 2009 before headlining her affair with Marlon Brando. The public had first learned of the affair in Darwin Porter's biography, *Brando Unzipped*, published in 2005. Many readers insisted that it was unrealistic to expect American icons, such as Jackie, to be held to conventional standards.

"It's just too damn bad," wrote Kerry Chilham. "Jackie was a human being with the inevitable marital conflicts and sex drives."



Aboard a yacht in New York Harbor, **Jackie** was caught in a gust of wind. Her whole life had seemed like a hurricane.

"Jackie liked men—maybe not as much as I do, and she did not lead a monastic life," said her former confidant, Gore Vidal. "She was pretty good at concealing her affairs, but she had her share. There was one thing that Jackie, JFK, and I shared in common: All three of us were priapic."

A distant relative of the Roosevelt family, who preferred to remain anonymous, wrote, "Former Presidents of the United States—and yes, that includes our dearly beloved Franklin Roosevelt and even his wife, Eleanor—have been involved in sexual dalliances. It began with our founding father, that hustler and whoremonger, George Washington, and even went on to include our two gay presidents, Abraham Lincoln and James Buchanan."

Tracy Connor, a staff writer for *The New York Daily News*, wrote, "The Queen of Camelot was heart-wrenchingly aware of the sexual affairs of President John Kennedy during his years in the White House."

She may have been pained by his flagrant philandering, but, as has been revealed in countless articles over the decades, she was no stay-at-home wife. She had her own flings, affairs, romances, and one-night stands, especially with a select few of her favorite movie stars. Most of them were fleeting passions, dispensed like the last rose of summer.

As tabloid stories touted Jackie's romances, many outraged readers expressed their disbelief—"Oh, no, not Jackie!'" Many were still trapped back in the days of the grieving Camelot widow, forgetting that she had married Aristotle Onassis for financial gain instead of love.

Other readers were more sophisticated, including Maressa Brown who wrote: "Although we thought 'Poor Jackie,' upon considering Jack's cheating dog behavior, she was no innocent flower herself. In an attempt to get back at her husband, she had affairs with the likes of actor William Holden, among others."

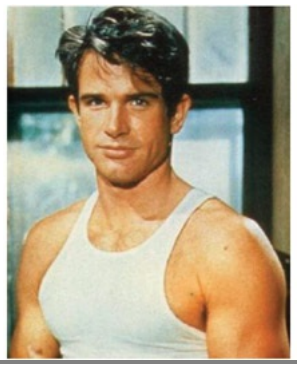
Super agent Swifty Lazar said, "When it came to movie stars, Jackie didn't go for Sunny Tufts, Lawrence Tierney, Dane Clark, or Brad Dexter, those B-minus stars. She went for the big box office attractions. She certainly had good taste."

In the text that follows, Jackie's conquests are presented in alphabetical order

Her "Casting Couch" Included Paul Newman and Gregory Peck,
But presidential hopeful Howard Hughes received a resounding "NO!"

Warren Beatty: "The Sexiest Man Alive"

In some quarters, Jacqueline Kennedy was considered "The Most Desirable Woman in the World," and actor Warren Beatty was hailed as "The Sexiest Man Alive." Ironically, that same title would later be bestowed on her son, JFK Jr.



After a screening of *Bonnie and Clyde*, Jackie told Lee Radziwill and Truman Capote, "There's no way in hell that **Warren Beatty** can be impotent. Some day, I'll have to conduct my own personal investigation. Hopefully, neither of you will have beaten me to him."

Their relationship got off to a rough start. According to rumors, Warren was a bit hard to get.

Of course, at the time, he had virtually every woman at his feet, with gay men left to dream about what might have been.

Warren's reputation had reached the White House. His sister, Shirley MacLaine, had told reporters that "Sex is Warren's hobby." Joan Collins had confided to friends, "Three, four, five times a day, every day, was not unusual for him, and he was able to accept phone calls at the same time."

The homosexual playwright William Inge had fallen madly in love with Warren Beatty and fashioned two screen properties for him, *Splendor in the Grass* (1961) and *All Fall Down* (1962). Natalie Wood fell in love with him during the filming of *Splendor*.

Both those young stars came together on the rebound. "Warren was depressed because his sweetheart was in England," Natalie said, "and I was devastated over the end of my marriage." *[Her references were to Joan Collins and Robert Wagner.]* She also claimed that "Warren and I spent hours ruminating and analyzing each other's problems."

"Yeah, right," said the jealous Inge. "I'm sure they did when they took time off from fucking."

After her stunning, Oscar-winning performance in the Tennessee Williams' drama, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), Vivien Leigh decided once again to interpret one of the playwright's *grandes dames* on the screen. She agreed to star in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961) cast (or was it miscast?) opposite Warren as the Italian gigolo. Vivien told her lover, Jack Merivale, "I think he's had some casting couch sessions with Tennessee."

The German actress and chanteuse, Lotte Lenya, befriended Vivien during the shoot, and became her confidante. "At first she disliked Warren intensely, really didn't care for him at all, but he exerted a powerful charm and ended up seducing her."

Jackie saw all three of these films and decided that Warren was the most exciting actor to come along in a decade. When she was told that the film, *PT109* had not yet been cast, and consequently, she suggested that Warren would be perfect cast as a young JFK during his career in the Navy. "He'd be charismatic in the role—and oh, so handsome, just like Jack."

JFK gave Jackie some disappointing news: "I've already promised the role to Frank Sinatra."

Jackie wanted Warren Beatty to play her husband as a naval lieutenant during World War II in the movie, *PT 109*.

She didn't get her wish. The role went to **Cliff Robertson** *(depicted in both photos, above)* instead. In spite of high hopes, the picture was a failure.

"Oh, he's a little Italian sausage," Jackie protested. "You're an Irish Catholic. Sinatra would probably get that dreary Angie Dickinson to play me."

"Sorry, sweetheart, but the story ends years before I met you."

When Sinatra turned it down, JFK was open to the idea of Warren appearing as him on the screen. He sent Pierre Salinger, his press secretary, to Hollywood "to feel Warren out. Watch out, Pierre, that he doesn't seduce you," JFK jokingly warned.

In April of 1943, **Jack Kennedy** *(standing in photo, above)* was sent to the Pacific as commander of a patrol torpedo boat. One night, his boat was sliced in half by a Japanese destroyer. Two of his crewmen were killed.

With the survivors, Jack towed one of his badly injured comrades to safety by clutching the strap of the fellow's life jacket in his teeth and swimming the breaststroke for five hours to reach an island.

After he received it, Beatty said, undiplomatically, "It's one of the worst scripts I've been offered this year. Very poorly written. I don't want to disgrace myself by appearing in it."

Peter Lawford brought Salinger and Warren together at his home. Salinger had heard reports that Warren was "all mixed up."

"Quite the contrary," Salinger claimed. "I found him intelligent, very personable, and thought he'd photograph very handsomely as a young Navy lieutenant."

Halfway through his discussion with Warren in Hollywood, Salinger thought it was a "done deal," that Warren would definitely accept the movie role of JFK in PT 109. "Then he delivered a bombshell."

"I loathe Bryan Foy and under no circumstances can I work with him," Warren said.

Salinger's heart sank. Foy happened to be the producer of PT 109.

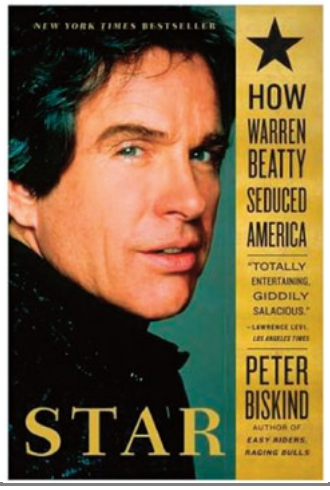
Salinger brought the bad news back to Washington. Warren wouldn't do the picture. Finally, JFK and Salinger suggested Cliff Robertson, who was then thirty-six years old.

Jackie was furious when she heard of this. "I don't know who in hell Robertson is, and I don't want to know. Invite Warren for dinner at the White House. I'll sit next to him. Before the evening is over, he'll definitely agree to play Jack. I can be very persuasive."

Amazingly, and to Jackie's frustration, Warren refused to take any more calls from the White House.

Jack Warner, head of the studio set to release *PT 109*, wanted to cater to the wishes of the White House. He called Warren and told him that JFK wanted him to fly to Washington "to soak up some atmosphere." Arrogantly, Warren sent word back to the president. "Come to Los Angeles and soak up some atmosphere. We have a lot of hot babes here. I'll introduce you around."

Salinger couldn't reach Warren, so Jackie said, "I'll have my social secretary put through a call to him. He'll definitely talk to me."



What do Candice Bergen, Leslie Caron, Cher, Julie Christie, Jane Fonda, Anjelica Huston, Bianca Jagger, Diane Keaton, Madonna, Mary Tyler Moore, Vanessa Redgrave, Diana Ross, Jean Seberg, Carly Simon, Barbra Streisand, and Elizabeth Taylor have in common with Jackie Kennedy? Answer: **WARREN BEATTY!**

But Warren did not accept her call, which infuriated her. "The better looking they are, the more arrogant they are," she told her secretary. Even a personal handwritten note from Jackie on White House stationery went unanswered.

Within a period of a year (1962), Warren was offered seventy-five scripts, including *PT 109*. His rejection caused ripples that extended deep into the power structures of both Hollywood and Washington. The actor allegedly told the press, "If the President wants me to play him, tell him to come to Hollywood himself." Later, that remark was cited as an example of Warren's "narcissistic behavior."

After *PT 109*—starring Robertson—opened and flopped, JFK encountered Warren at a social gathering. "You sure made the right decision on that one," the President told the actor.

But although his post-production banter had been friendly with JFK, it was a lot less so with the President's brother. When Warren encountered Robert Kennedy in an elevator, all that the attorney general said to him, was "You're the guy that turned down my brother in *PT 109*." No further words were exchanged. Warren later issued a statement, denying the quotation attributed to him. "Even as a joke, I never said it, never thought it. Actually, I don't believe there is any actor who wouldn't be pleased at being considered for the role of President Kennedy as a young man. I turned down the script for the simple reason I did not feel I was right for the part."

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The aging Lothario didn't enter Jackie's life until the late 1970s when Warren was no longer celebrating "The Sweet Bird of Youth."

By then, the former First Lady had gone through two husbands, was working as an editor at Doubleday, and lived in a luxurious apartment on Fifth Avenue.

It was to this apartment, on December 20, 1978, that Jackie decided to invite a list of celebrities who included Andy Warhol and Bob Colacello of *Interview* magazine.

Warhol later claimed that "Jackie was mad as hell when Warren showed up with Diane Keaton on his arm. I suspect Jackie had planned to seduce him that night, and Keaton was needed like a third arm."

When Warren called Jackie the next day for a date, she accepted. Their dates were casual, but confidants of Jackie claimed they usually ended "with a roll in the hay." *[Since Jackie and Warren were not seen out together, it was assumed that their times with each other were conducted as part of private dinners at her apartment.]*

"Jackie was not serious about Warren," Truman Capote claimed. "She was using him like a plaything. She was attracted to him just for his looks, not his brain. In fact, she told me he can't even formulate a complete sentence at one time."

When Warren was interviewed on *Entertainment Tonight* in 1997, the host asked him if he were sleeping with Jackie. Beatty denied it, but was not convincing in his denial.

The relationship ended one night after an intimate party at Jackie's apartment. Warren was in the corner talking to about four or five male guests. One of Jackie's woman friends overheard his conversation. She went to Jackie and

told her that “Warren is bragging about having gone to bed with you.”

Jackie walked over to Warren and asked to see him alone. As she started to confront him, she noticed Colacello nearby. She quickly shut up and walked away. She didn’t want her private conversation with Warren reported in *Interview* magazine.

She liked to think she was the most discreet person on earth, and she couldn’t tolerate Warren gossiping about their sexual trysts.

After that, Jackie was no longer available to receive Warren’s calls. “Let him go back to Joan Collins, whoever in the hell that is,” she told Capote.

One afternoon at Doubleday, Jackie’s secretary presented her with a just-published list of the rumored sexual liaisons of Warren. It included the usual suspects, such as Jane Fonda, Vanessa Redgrave, Barbra Streisand, and Natalie Wood. But what horrified Jackie was her own name on the list, followed by Lee Radziwill and Christina Onassis.

“I don’t like sharing men with my former daughter-in-law and my sister. Of course, it’s not incest, but....”

She never finished her sentence.

Marlon Brando, Jackie’s First Seduction After JFK

“I could have been a contender!” Marlon Brando might have said, had he continued pursuing Jackie after his inaugural fling with her in 1964.

A shirtless **Marlon Brando** appears in his most celebrated role, that of the brutish Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

When her closest confidants inquired about Jackie’s time with Brando, she said, “I have enjoyed all of his performances.”

“She’s the most famous woman in the world, and I’m the most famous—and the best—actor, so we would have made the perfect couple.”

Jackie had long admired Brando, especially his “sexy performance” in Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and during the depths of her depression in the months following JFK’s assassination, she was eager to meet him. That happened during the period when Marlon’s best friend, George Englund, the writer, producer, and director *[he’d helmed Marlon in* The Ugly American *(1963)]*, was dating Jackie’s sister, Lee Radziwill.

A double date was arranged, as revealed in Englund’s memoir about Marlon, *The Way It’s Never Been Done Before*. “There were Secret Service inside and outside the Averill Harriman House in Georgetown,” Englund wrote. “We felt like college boys calling on our dates. We were shown into the living room and there were two of America’s prettiest people. Jackie and Lee rose to greet us.”

About three months after the assassination of JFK, George Englund, a close friend and partner of Marlon Brando, was separated from his wife, Cloris Leachman, and spending a lot of time with Jackie’s sister, Lee.

Lee had invited Englund to visit her and Jackie in Washington, and she asked him to bring Marlon along for the visit. The two sisters were staying at the home of the former U.S. Ambassador to both Great Britain and the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, who had lent Jackie his home as a refuge following the assassination of her husband in Dallas.

At the house, guarded by the Secret Service, Englund introduced "the two best known people in America," Mrs. Kennedy and Marlon Brando. Fueled by martinis, Marlon told them about his travels in the South Pacific during the filming of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) and discussed his work on behalf of Native Americans.

In turn, Jackie demonstrated how Jawaharlal Nehru *[Prime Minister of India, 1947-1964]* taught her how to stand on her head to meditate. Although a bit tipsy, Marlon followed suit. He would continue the practice throughout the next three weeks. Finally, complaining of headaches, he gave up head stands.

Jackie suggested that all four of them go to her favorite French restaurant in Washington, the Jockey Club. It was the evening of January 29, 1964. At the restaurant, the party was ushered to the most private table. But nonetheless, someone spotted the quartet and tipped off the press. Within half an hour, paparazzi and reporters descended in record numbers to cover Jackie's first social appearance since the funeral of JFK.

Abandoning hope of having dinner in privacy, the quartet fled through the restaurant's kitchen door.

Back at Jackie's temporary home, and still hungry because they had to skip dinner, Marlon went into the kitchen and prepared some omelets for them. Jackie, Lee, and Englund sat in her living room, going over the recent, traumatic events in Dallas.

Once the omelets had been consumed, Jackie turned down the lights in the living room and put on Wayne Newton's rendition of "Danke Schoen." Englund and Lee began to dance and neck, and they were soon joined by Marlon and Jackie.

To the sound of the soft music, Jackie danced close to Marlon "pressing her thighs against me." As Lee and Englund wandered off, Marlon—as described in the first draft of his memoirs, joined Jackie on the sofa, where, they began to make out passionately.

"From all I'd read and heard about her, Jacqueline Kennedy seemed coquettish and sensual but not particularly sexual," Marlon wrote in the first draft of his 1999 autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*.

Joe Fox, a friend of Jackie's and an editor at Random House, prevailed upon Marlon to cut that sequence out of what was eventually published.

"If anything, I pictured Jackie as more voyeur than player," Marlon wrote. "She kept waiting for me to try to get her into bed. When I failed to make a move, she took matters into her own hands and popped the magic question, 'Would you like to spend the night?' And I said, 'I thought you'd never ask.'"

"Some people thought Jackie was more of a voyeur than a practitioner—that she liked to watch," claimed Gore Vidal in his memoirs. "I'm not at all convinced of that. She and Jack both loved gossip and could go on talking endlessly about other people's sex lives, but I always got the distinct impression that she was very interested in sex the same way that Jack was very interested in sex. It was a game for them, and they both played it."

Some published accounts have asserted that Marlon had had too much to drink that night and turned down Jackie's invitation for sex. Because of his drunken state, according to these claims, he feared he'd be impotent and would damage his reputation as one of the world's greatest lovers.

He denied these reports to his best pal Carlo Fiore. "I have never been circumcised, and my noble tool has performed its duties through thick and thin and without fail. Jackie was the recipient of my skill in the boudoir. Proof of that was when she called me three weeks later and invited me for a repeat performance."

After Marlon departed from her home the following morning, she told him, "It was good to know that I have not forgotten how to laugh and be happy."

Jackie's friend, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., claimed that Jackie was "enchanted" by Marlon and found him "extremely attractive." Chuck Spalding, another close observer of the Jackie scene, said, "Like half the other women on the planet, Jackie found Marlon Brando completely irresistible."

She followed up her seduction with a thank you letter to Marlon, claiming that "I found the omelets wonderful and the conversation even more wonderful." She asked him not to tell anyone, but invited him to join her for a secret weekend in New York away from the prying eyes of the press. In Manhattan she had checked into the Hotel Carlyle, where JFK had enjoyed trysts with Marilyn Monroe, among others.

The second seduction took place at a small apartment on Manhattan's swanky Sutton Place, which belonged to some unknown friend of Jackie's.

In that section of his memoirs never published, Marlon wrote of her "boyish hips and her muscular frame. I'm not sure she knew what she was doing sexually, but she did it well."

He later told Fiore, "In some ways it was like fucking a very beautiful boy, and you know how I like to do that."

In his infamous 1956 interview with Truman Capote, Marlon had admitted that he had "gone to bed with lots of men. I'm not gay. These men are attracted to me, and I was doing them a favor."

After his two brief episodes with Jackie, Marlon, back in Hollywood, wrote her a letter in which he proposed marriage. He claimed that his own marriage to Movita Castenada, the Mexican actress, survived in name only. "I can easily get a divorce," he wrote her. In the letter he promised that he could provide privacy from the press and

comfort for Jackie and her children on an island in the South Pacific.

Jackie found his proposal "amusing" and filed it with some 2,000 other offers she'd received, including one from a Greek shipping magnate that looked the most promising, at least in terms of financial gain.

In 1974, after Jackie had become Mrs. Aristotle Onassis, Marlon had a violent run-in with Ron Galella, America's most notorious paparazzo, breaking Galella's jaw and knocking out some of his teeth. Galella was known to all tabloid readers for his constant harassment of Jackie. After his release from the hospital, Galella sued Marlon for half-a-million dollars. The lawsuit was settled out of court for $40,000.

Jackie reportedly was "thrilled that Marlon was still out there, looking out for me."

William Holden: Jackie's "Golden Boy"

When Jackie married Senator John F. Kennedy on September 12, 1953, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Newport, Rhode Island, it seemed unlikely that the paths of this seemingly happy couple would ever cross with those of Audrey Hepburn and William Holden

When he made *Picnic* in 1955, **William Holden** told its producers, "I'm too damn old and too conservative to do a striptease."

When Jackie met him two years later, she disagreed. "He was so very sweet, so classy," she told producer Charles Feldman. "Thanks for letting us use your house. Incidentally, did you see that movie, *Love in the Afternoon*, with Bill and Audrey Hepburn?"

But both Jack and Jackie were products of an era when devoted movie-goers developed crushes on their favorite stars. Jackie told her sister, Lee Radziwill, that she'd become enchanted with William Holden ever since she saw him portray a beautiful, tormented boxer, Joe Bonaparte, in the 1939 film version of the stage sensation *Golden Boy*. "He exudes masculinity," Jackie claimed.

Likewise, when JFK saw *Roman Holiday* (1953), he told his aide, David Powers, "All little boys jerk off at night dreaming of a fairy princess. When I saw Audrey, I knew at once that she was that fairy princess with whom I could live happily ever after. Unfortunately for me, somewhere along the way, reality set in, and I made the most politically acceptable marriage I could."

From the very beginning, Jackie had been aware of JFK's womanizing, but she did little about it. However, by 1956, she became furious when he did not visit her bedside during the stillbirth of her daughter.

Later, she was informed that he had been "shacked up at the time *[of her stillbirth]* with some bimbo."

She wanted revenge and would wait until the opportunity arose.

That came in January of 1957 when she went with her friend, William Walton, a gay artist and former journalist, on a ten-day trip to California. As President, JFK would later appoint Walton to head the White House Fine Arts Commission.

Producer Charles Feldman invited Jackie to a party at his home in Beverly Hills' Coldwater Canyon. It was here that she first met Holden, who had long been her screen idol.

Holden became a household word in 1939 when he starred opposite Barbara Stanwyck in *Golden Boy*. During production of that movie, he also became bisexual Stanwyck's lover.

Holden had already appeared in such classics as *Sunset Blvd*. (1950) and *Born Yesterday* (1950), and later, he'd

win an Oscar for his role in *Stalag 17* (1953).

Although he suffered from alcoholism and clinical depression, he managed to conduct affairs with such luminaries as Grace Kelly.

Jackie was immediately captivated by him. He'd always been one of her screen idols. Up close and personal, he was even more charming, the archetypical macho American male, with a strong open face and a disarming smile.

Regrettably, at least from Jackie's point of view, Holden was at the Feldman party with his wife, actress Brenda Marshall, whom he'd married in 1941 and with whom he had two sons. When Brenda went out on the terrace to talk with friends, Jackie seized the opportunity to speak privately with Holden.

Jackie told Holden that she was staying at a cottage on the grounds of the Beverly Hills Hotel and suggested that "it would be marvelous if we could go horseback riding in the morning. It's no one's business but our own."

As author C. David Heymann so accurately pointed out, "Jackie would regard Jack's wanderings as an inevitable feature of upper-class wedlock. Also, she would respond with several affairs of her own."

Holden not only showed up for horseback riding, but launched a week-long affair with Jackie. She did not want to be seen entering the Beverly Hills Hotel with such a famous actor, so Feldman agreed to give them the use of his house during the day.

After Jackie had flown out of Los Angeles, Holden during a drunken evening with Feldman, said, "I had to teach Jackie how to suck cock. She told me that Jack had never insisted on that. At first she was very reluctant, but once she got the rhythm of it she couldn't get enough of it. If she goes back to Washington and works her magic with Kennedy, he will owe me one."

Jackie later told Capote, "I've gone to bed with men who have had a problem with hygiene. Not so Bill Holden. He was a compulsive bather before and after sex. He told me he took four showers a day."

Jackie later told Lee Radziwill, "William Holden reminds me of Black Jack. I don't mean in looks. They both love the bottle and adventure. And they're both reckless in love. Regrettably, they both were Republicans."

Jackie also revealed to both her sister and to Capote that she'd confessed her affair with Holden to her husband after her return to him in Washington. She revealed all to JFK, even saying, "Unlike some men I know, William Holden is not a selfish lover. He's very skilled under the sheets."

JFK's reaction is not known. From all reports, he clearly interpreted Jackie's behavior and its subsequent confession for what it was: Payback time.

Although the story may be apocryphal, JFK became so excited by his wife's confession that he seduced her on the carpet of their home.

All that love-making after Holden seemed to have paid off. Jackie announced to JFK in April of 1957 that she was pregnant again. This time she would see the child to term, giving birth to Caroline.

In 1959, when Holden took up residence in Switzerland as a means of avoiding US income taxes, he became the object of public vituperation. Even the future U.S. Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy, cited Holden as an example of "the rich who pervert our tax laws," and RFK's wife, Ethel, publicly referred to Holden as "a traitor."

Letitia Baldrige was photographed with **the First Lady** in 1963.

She later said, "Jackie dazzled heads of state with her knowledge of foreign languages. She knew how to make conversation with princes, ambassadors, and potentates of all kinds. She completely made over the tired, frumpy White House. She was a completely disciplined creature. If she put on two pounds, she would eat nothing the next day. She watched the scale with the rigor of a diamond merchant counting the carats. She set about the task of becoming the most gracious First Lady in the history of America."

Holden confessed how he eventually got even with RFK. “I had Jackie Kennedy,” he claimed, “while she was married to Jack. She had long told friends that she thought I was the sexiest man in Hollywood. Word got back to little Bobby, and he was seriously pissed off at me. Later, I learned the fucker was also getting into Jackie’s pants.”

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Although it wasn’t widely known at the time, Jackie’s affair with Holden continued on and off until 1965, when they drifted apart. The setting for their secret trysts was most often New York.

Several friends knew of Jackie’s affair with Holden. They included artist William Walton, Director of the White House Fine Arts Commission; author Truman Capote; and Letitia Baldrige, the etiquette maven who at the time was Jackie’s Social Secretary.

As Jackie’s assistant, Baldrige was often the person who arranged for Jackie’s rendezvous with Holden. The two women had known each other since their days at Vassar, and Jackie affectionately called her “Tish.”

The First Lady trusted Baldrige, knowing she was the epitome of discretion. It was only after Jackie’s death that Baldrige spoke of the affair, and that was only after she had learned that Jackie had confessed the affair to author William Manchester. Her “confession” *[as discussed in another chapter of this book]* was locked away at the Kennedy Library for future generations to ponder.

“Mrs. Kennedy was in love with Bill—he didn’t want me to call him Mr. Holden—for a very, very long time,” Baldrige claimed.

When Jackie’s gossipy, treacherous friend, Truman Capote, learned about Jackie’s fascination with Holden, he filled her in on what he called “the dirt.” He knew that Jackie had seen all of his movies, including *Sunset Blvd*. (1950); *Born Yesterday* (1950); *Stalag 17* (1953); *Sabrina* (1954, and co-starring Audrey Hepburn); and two movies with Grace Kelly—*The Country Girl* (1954) and *The Bridges of Toko-Ri* (1955).

Capote informed Jackie of Holden’s past seductions of beautiful women, including Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, Barbara Stanwyck, Gail Russell, Shelley Winters, Lucille Ball, and Dorothy Lamour.

“After Holden seduced her, I know that Jackie became mad about the boy,” Capote claimed. “I envied her. I was also mad about the boy myself. She told me that ‘He was totally into women and gave of himself completely. She claimed that he was sensitive to a woman’s needs and didn’t just take a woman selfishly as a means of satisfying his libido. I think that was a subtle dig at her husband.”

“If she had any complaint about Holden at all, it was that he treated her like a goddess. I remember her exact words. She said that ‘Bill handles me like his special angel—never the whore. It’s a wonderful feeling, but at times, I’m slightly embarrassed by being placed on a pedestal.”

“The only thing that upset me was when Mrs. Kennedy would cancel an important engagement I had set up for her and rush off for a secret rendezvous with Bill,” Baldrige said.

“I don’t care how important the person or group was. Mrs. Kennedy fled when Bill called unexpectedly and wanted to get together, as he was passing through New York, rarely Washington,” Baldrige said. “At the last minute, I’d have to get her mother, Janet, to fill in for her, even, on occasion, Rose Kennedy.”

Although she left her job at the White House six months before JFK was assassinated, Baldrige remained Jackie’s loyal friend and ally. Even after her departure, The First Lady used her “for special arrangements,” and they spoke to each other at least once or twice a week.

Eventually, Baldrige wrote three books that capitalized on her brief but shining White House career, but they were of a vanilla nature that didn’t alarm Jackie. “It was my moment in history, and I knew I was part of something incredible,” Baldrige told the press.

Privately, she confessed, “I knew every time a mouse ran across the floor of the Oval Office—yes, about the President’s womanizing and all that. I was also privy to Mrs. Kennedy’s love affairs. However, none of that good stuff got into my books, which were mostly about menus, etiquette, or recipes. I deliver only a few minor ‘shockers,’ such as Mrs. Kennedy calling Helen Thomas and other White House newswomen ‘the Harpies.’”

To an increasing degree, Jackie turned to Walton as her confidant, especially when Capote began to spend most of his time with her sister, Lee Radziwill.

Walton was a gay man, and she felt she could confide her sexual secrets to him. Some nineteen years older than Jackie, he was frequently her escort, and he was adept at arranging for Jackie to slip away and meet with Holden, “covering her tracks,” as he told his close friends.

Gregarious, intelligent, and sophisticated, Walton became particularly close when he helped her redecorate the White House. He was such a good friend that Jackie invited him as a guest to the Kennedy’s first Thanksgiving dinner (November, 1961) in the White House.

“A lot of people didn’t know it, but Mrs. Kennedy had this wild, romantic streak in her,” Walton said. “She

would always come back after visiting Holden with a gleam in her eye. I think she was truly in love with him, even though aware of his personal problems—and those included alcoholism and his ever-constant depression."

"One time, she sounded like a romance writer when she told me that the most exciting moments in her life occurred when Bill was making love to her, and his face was right over hers, and he looked deeply into her eyes," Walton said. "As I recall, she said, 'He makes me feel like a real woman, unlike some of the cads I have known.'"

"Jackie had only one regret about keeping her affair with Holden a secret," Walton said. "She often wondered how word could be leaked to Princess Grace in Monaco. She had heard that Grace had fallen madly in love with Bill when they'd worked together in pictures. Jackie was very competitive with Grace, knowing that she'd slept with the President. Maybe she was seeking some sort of revenge by sleeping with Holden, hoping to make Grace jealous."

Walton also added a footnote to American history. Holden's best friend was Ronald Reagan. Through that connection, Jackie secretly became acquainted with the future two-term American President of the 1980s.

"Sometimes, Reagan helped arrange meetings between Jackie and Holden," Walton claimed. "I don't mean to imply that Reagan was a pimp. I prefer to call him a discreet facilitator. Reagan attended a few private dinners between Jackie and Holden, always disappearing after dessert was served."

Even though she'd long ago lost touch with him, Jackie continued to have a special crush on Holden. When she was free to pursue a possible marriage to him, she decided it was too late. Descriptions of his alcoholism had reached her, filling her with despair. "Such a waste of a life from such a talented and charming man," she said.

Through Capote and other friends, she kept up with him and was horrified as he descended deeper and deeper into alcoholism. "If I had married Bill instead of Jack, I could have saved him," she told Capote. From a friend in Rome, the author had learned that the actor had been charged with drunk driving and manslaughter in Italy.

His Ferrari had crashed into a small Fiat on the *autostrada*. The driver of the Fiat was killed instantly. Holden was pronounced guilty in an Italian court, but got off easy. The judge gave him an eight-month suspended jail sentence after he'd settled $80,000 on the victim's widow.

In his unpublished memoir of his years as a confidant of both JFK and Jackie, Walton said that she had told him that it was then-President Reagan who called her on November 16, 1981, from the White House, to report to her that Holden had been found dead in Hollywood.

The actor had been drinking heavily and fell, hitting his head on a coffee table. He lapsed into a coma and never regained consciousness. Several days passed before his body was discovered. Normally, his maid came in five days a week, but she had retired, and Holden had not yet hired a replacement.

As Jackie reported Reagan's conversation with her, the President said, "Bill was beloved by millions, but died alone."

In the film, ***Sabrina*** (distributed in the U.K. as *Sabrina Fair*), **William Holden** fell in love with **Audrey Hepburn** both on and off the screen. But when he shared a "deadly secret" with her, she broke off their affair.

Through tears, Jackie said, "Mr. President, you and I may stand on different political fronts, but we do share something in common. Both of us loved Bill. He spent a good part of his life trying to rescue endangered animals in Africa. But it was Bill himself who was an endangered species—a nice guy."

[Weeks later, Jackie gasped in horror when she learned the gruesome details of the discovery of Holden's body. On November 16, 1981, when Bill Martin, the manager of Holden's apartment building, became alarmed when the

actor hadn't been seen in many days. He let himself into Holden's apartment with a passkey. As an autopsy later revealed, "The body was in an advanced state of decomposition, with maggots present and a large amount of putrefaction present, as evidenced by the tissue separation and blisters with fluid present. It is theorized that he probably started vomiting blood, and possibly lacerated the lower portion of his esophagus. He apparently had been dead for days. The alcohol level in his bloodstream was 2.2.

Coroner Dr. Thomas Noguchi concluded that Holden at first did not comprehend the seriousness of his injury, even though a phone was just inches from his head. Apparently, he'd tried to stop the bleeding but then passed out from the loss of blood. It was estimated that he was dead within 15 minutes of his fall.]

JFK's Love Affair With Audrey Hepburn Love, Infidelity, Politics, and the Movies

Shortly after the April, 1953 wedding of her sister, Lee Bouvier Radziwill, to Michael Canfield, Jackie, the roving reporter with a camera, interviewed Senator John F. Kennedy in Washington. Across the hall she also interviewed Richard Nixon, the Vice President of the United States.

After her eventual marriage to JFK, Jackie revealed to him that his future opponent for the office of President "had made a pass at me. The pass was not intercepted."

Senator Kennedy told Jackie how much he admired the Veep and that he'd contributed $1,000 to Nixon's campaign in 1950 when he'd run a smear campaign against Democratic Senator Helen Gahagan Douglas ("she's as pink as her underwear"). But despite its auspicious beginning, the Nixon/JFK friendship, tenuous even at its best, would not endure for very long.

JFK called Jackie the next day and invited her out on a date for dancing at the Blue Room in Washington, D.C.'s Shoreham Hotel. She bought a new gown for the occasion, but when he came to pick her up she was disappointed to see that he'd brought along his buddy, David Powers, as a kind of chaperone.

Powers, part of JFK's "Irish Mafia," helped the young naval veteran win his first election to Congress and then served as his personal aide and confidant throughout his short presidency,

After that night, JFK began to date Jackie, and she learned to get by without flowers, gifts, or love letters. He also had a strict rule, "No touching in public, there are photographers everywhere."

Meeting with David after work, JFK told him that he'd fallen in love with Jackie. He produced four pictures of Jackie and himself which had been snapped by an automatic camera in a photo booth in a penny arcade, "I could tell from the adoring look on each of their faces that they were in love."

Later in life, David said, "My friend Jack was full of surprises. Take the night he arrived late at my apartment in Boston."

JFK had come to him to talk over "a very pressing matter. I'm in real trouble."

David thought he'd been caught up in some scandal, no doubt having impregnated a married woman.

Sitting with a drink in David's living room, JFK said, "I'm in love with Jackie. But I'm also in love with Audrey Hepburn." He carried a picture of her which he pulled out of his wallet and showed to David.

Hepburn's face had been world famous since her appearance with Gregory Peck in *Roman Holiday* (1952).

The knockout *gamine* looked and behaved like a Princess in the picture and also in real life.

"I'm having a very secret affair with her," JFK told David.

"I'll say this for you, you sure do have good taste in women," David told him.

"Pencil thin and doe eyed, that Hepburn was some dish," David said. "She was ravishingly beautiful. Throughout her life she would appear as the epitome of class but without the snobbery. She was real. Jackie—and I loved the gal dearly—was much more pretentious."

"Audrey dazzled us the first time she walked into Senator Kennedy's office," said JFK's secretary at the time, Mary Gallagher. "With her black-and-white dress, with a long-stemmed scarlet red umbrella, she was impressive. She had the grace of a swan, the movement of a gazelle."

"Believe it or not, Jack's staff didn't know he was having a torrid affair with Audrey," David said. "Remember this was the Fifties. The image of a movie star and a handsome United States Senator, much less a future President, was not in everybody's mind back then. It would have sounded too far-fetched. Audrey escaped detection on the radar screen, even though she was seen leaving his Georgetown residence at three or four o'clock in the morning."

"All of us on Jack's staff knew that he was dating Jackie—not just dating her, but in love with her," Gallagher said. "Believe it or not, we didn't think anything was going on between Audrey and Jack. How naïve we were back

in those days."

When Joseph Kennedy heard of Jack's "two loves," he called him to Hyannis Port for a face-to-face, father-son talk. "You want to be President one day, don't you?"

"You know that father," JFK said.

"Then it's got to be Jackie, even though her father—that Black Jack faggot—is a complete shit. Hepburn is a cute little piece," his father continued. "But she's foreign born. She's not Catholic. She's about to make a movie with William Holden and Humphrey Bogart. At least one of them will end up fucking her. I'm putting my money on Holden. Take my advice. Audrey for fucking, Jackie for marriage."

Joe Senior was right. By the time "Jack & Jackie" announced their engagement, Audrey had returned to Hollywood to star in *Sabrina*. When the cameras weren't on her, she was indeed maintaining a torrid affair with Holden.

Jackie, who loved gossip, heard about the Holden/Hepburn affair. At one point, Holden planned to leave his actress wife, Brenda (Ardis) Marshall, to marry Audrey. Audrey had even predicted, "I think we could have beautiful babies together."

But he was forced to tell her the truth. He'd had a vasectomy after the birth of the second of his two sons. He could have no more children. She was devastated, as she desperately wanted to have children. Finally, even though she was in love with Holden, she told him she couldn't marry him. This time, Holden was devastated.

"After Audrey refused to marry me," Holden said, "I fucked my way around the world. My goal was to screw a girl in every country I visited. I'd had practice being a whore. When I was a young actor starting in Hollywood, I used to service actresses who were older than me." *[He was referring to Barbara Stan-wyck.]* "I'm a whore. All actors are whores. We sell our bodies to the highest bidders."

Audrey was very sad to learn about the marriage of Jack with Jackie. "It could have been me," she told Gregory Peck. "I know that Jack in his heart was in love with me and wanted me to be his wife. He was forced to choose Jackie for political reasons, for his career."

Two gay authors, both friends of Jackie's, weighed in with their views of the marriage.

"Jackie was always a 'cash 'n carry' kinda gal," said Capote.

"Jackie married Jack for the money," said Gore Vidal. "There weren't that many other openings for her. Actually, if she hadn't married Jack, she would have married someone else with money, although it wasn't likely she would have gotten someone as exciting as Jack as part of the bargain. When given a choice of glory or money, most people choose glory. But not Jackie. She also wound up with plenty of the latter, of course, but she didn't need that like she needed to be rich."

What the world didn't know at the time—and what Jackie later found out—her husband's affair with Audrey continued on and off until the year of his death (1963).

The whole world seemingly remembers Marilyn Monroe singing her erotic version "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" on May 29, 1962, only months before she was murdered.

It was **Audrey Hepburn**, not Marilyn Monroe, who sang “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” to him during the last year (1963) of his life.

Here, Miss Hepburn is depicted as Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* (1964), as costumed by Cecil Beaton.

But far fewer people know that it was Audrey, another movie queen and a former lover of JFK, who sang the final “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” to him a year later, on May 29, 1963.

Hepburn had been invited to the White House to sing “Happy Birthday” on the occasion of JFK’s forty-sixth year on Earth, which would be his final one. Her rendition—presented in front of a very private gathering of cronies—resulted in enthusiastic applause.

Afterward, she stood with singer Eddie Fisher in a receiving line to greet the president. “I knew they had been lovers, and the President seemed genuinely pleased to see her again,” Fisher said. “Had Audrey pleased Joseph Kennedy as a prospect for marriage, she, not Jackie, would have been the First Lady of the land.”

“Kennedy’s face lit up like a Christmas tree, when he came up close and personal with Audrey, who looked lovely,” Fisher said. “He whispered something in her ear. I suspect it was an invitation for their final fuck—for old time’s sake, you know.”

Jackie had her own surprise planned for the day of JFK’s birthday that year. Even though it was raining, she had organized a cruise down the Potomac aboard the presidential yacht *Sequoia*. Bobby and Teddy Kennedy were obvious choices on the guest list, as was the ever-faithful Lem Billings. David Niven and Hjordis, his wife, were among the surprise guests. *[After Niven’s return to Hollywood, he said, “I think that Lem Billings would eat Kennedy’s shit if he asked him to.”]*

Jackie may have been a bit impish in having invited the Nivens on board the cruise. She’d learned that her husband was having an affair with Hjordis. Audrey, however, was definitely not included on her guest list.

“If I’d invited all of Jack’s lovers, the *Sequoia* would have sunk into the Potomac,” Jackie said later.

Capote, a friend of both Jackie and Audrey, told the actress that “Jackie is very jealous of you. There are those who say that you out-Jackie Jackie herself.”

Before JFK even boarded the *Sequoia* that afternoon, rumor had it that he had already deflowered Audrey in the

Lincoln bedroom.

Even though her dignity might have been trampled upon during at least some of these events, Audrey retained an affectionate memory of the President, and always spoke with nostalgia of "what might have been."

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On Friday, November 22, 1963, Audrey was on the verge of a nervous breakdown during the filming *My Fair Lady* in Los Angeles, where daytime temperatures hovered between 110 and 118 degrees Fahrenheit. She'd been in bed for three days under a doctor's care, and had just returned to work. George Cukor, the film's director, was on the set discussing a scene with Audrey when a grip's portable radio brought news of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

"I was too shaken to make the announcement or tell the crew," Cukor later said. "I asked Audrey if she'd do it. I knew how close she'd been to the President."

Putting up a brave front while holding back tears, she said, "I'll do it." She was trembling as she took the microphone and announced to the cast and crew, "The President is dead. Shall we have two minutes of silence to pray or do whatever you think is appropriate? May God have mercy on us all."

Months after JFK was assassinated, in one of Audrey's rare instances of immodesty, she spoke about the President to her closest friend, the French actress Capucine.

"I adored him. I think I made a big mistake in not marrying him. My greatest role should have been First Lady. Many members of the press claim that I have more grace, style, and flair than Jackie herself."

Audrey carried a picture of JFK around with her for years. She had cut Jackie out of the photograph and in its place, imposed a picture of herself instead.

Howard Hughes; Bisexual, the Aviator Flies After Both Jack & Jackie

For a very rich and very decadent bisexual like the fabled aviator and movie mogul, Howard Hughes, the amorous pursuit of both a husband and his wife is not all that unusual. Howard, during different eras, pursued both a young John F. Kennedy during his visit to Hollywood in 1940, and, much later, after the assassination of her husband, an older Jacqueline Kennedy.

Even though she was carrying on an illicit affair with her brother-inlaw, Robert Kennedy, it is believed that Jackie gave serious attention to an offer of marriage from **Howard Hughes**, the billionaire aviation and movie mogul.

He wanted to run for president, and he wanted her to hit the campaign trail with him, knowing they would attract record crowds. But before she'd accept his proposal of marriage, she made her highest ever demand on his bank account.

The story begins just before the outbreak of World War II, when JFK, loaded with references and addresses from his famous father, arrived in Hollywood and met actor Robert Stack, who became his best friend.

Between other romances, Howard had become smitten with Robert and invited him to go sailing one Sunday afternoon. The young actor asked if he could bring a friend from Boston. Howard reluctantly agreed, thinking it might be one of Robert's young starlet girlfriends. In those days the extraordinarily handsome actor was making the rounds, seducing "a starlet a minute," as he put it. Howard would have preferred to enjoy the actor's charms alone

but agreed to play host to whomever Robert opted to bring along for their weekend sail to Catalina.

On the deck of the rented *Sea Queen*, Howard was introduced to the young John F. Kennedy, who was dressed like a sailor, all in whites. “He’s Ambassador Kennedy’s son,” Robert said, introducing the young newcomer, who was twenty-three years old and a recent graduate of Harvard. He’d just published a book, *Why England Slept*, which had been ghost-written for him.

Howard detested the young man’s father, Joseph Kennedy, their feud stemming from the time the liquor dealer had been a power broker in Hollywood. On a few occasions, both men had seduced the same women, notably actresses Constance Bennett and Nancy Carroll.

When Howard later thanked Robert for inviting the young man for the weekend, Robert knew Howard was smitten. John soon became “Jack.” Howard confided to Robert, “He has the most perfect blue eyes I’ve ever seen on a man.”

The moment Jack flashed his soon-to-be-famous smile at Howard, the tall, thin, very rich Texan bonded with the New Englander, with his natural charm and grace. It was as if Howard had waited all his life to meet the perfect Prince Charming. The only problem was that the gleam in this young man’s eyes was not directed at Howard, but at every beautiful woman in Hollywood. Over dinner that night, Jack told Howard that, “I want to fuck every woman in Hollywood.” He called it “celebrity poontang.”

A lifelong lover of gossip, Jack admired and was intrigued with Howard and was eager for anything he might reveal about the many legendary stars he’d seduced. During his sojourn in Hollywood, Jack wanted to use Howard as his role model. “You’re the swordsman out here,” Jack told Howard. “No doubt about that. Even Dad admits it’s true—and he’s bedded a few beauties, not just Gloria Swanson. I’m the new boy in town and I want to follow in your footsteps.”

Robert Stack formed an immediate friendship with young John F. Kennedy when he first arrived in Hollywood.

Stack said, “Jack was the only man in Tinseltown better looking than me, and all the hot tamales on the West Coast took notice. He really needed a date book. I’ve known him to have sex in the afternoon with a woman, sex at cocktail time, sex after dinner, and even a sleepover after midnight, each with a different woman.”

Previously, Robert had amused Howard by telling him that Jack, although he’d just arrived in Hollywood, had already orchestrated a total of eight seductions, each time with a different woman.

“I’ve known many of the great Hollywood stars, and only a few of them seemed to hold the attraction for women that Jack does,” Robert said. He noted that even before his handsome friend entered politics, he’d just look at a woman and she’d “tumble.”

“Unlike me, Jack had completely versatile taste in women—blondes, brunettes, redheads, young ones, mature ones, gals with large breasts, gals with lemons for breast,” Robert said. “Regardless of the girl, he always insisted on shapely legs.”

Aboard his yacht, Howard seemed voyeuristically eager for details about young Jack’s string of conquests.

Before they reached Catalina Island, Robert realized that both Howard and Jack were experienced sailors “born to ride the waves.” “The men quickly bonded,” he claimed. Robert said that he never informed Jack about Howard’s homosexual streak. “I figured Jack could take care of himself. Many gays had come onto him.”

Somehow Howard and Jack struck a harmonious note with each other, especially during discussions of their sexual conquests. Robert later admitted he felt left out. At that point the only woman that both Howard and Jack had each had some form of sexual contact with was Marlene Dietrich. “That didn’t surprise me, since Marlene did

anything in pants or skirts, although she never got around to me," Robert said.

On Catalina Island, Jack wandered off for about five hours," Robert said, "so Howard and I just assumed he'd gotten lucky. We know for a fact that he boarded another yacht in the harbor. The following Sunday we went for a nude swim. I couldn't help but notice that Howard checking out Jack's equipment. Of course, Howard himself had all of us beat."

Robert said that he wasn't surprised when another invitation for another weekend was extended by Howard. "This time I was excluded, and it was all right with me. I got mixed up with Howard in the first place because I thought he was going to advance my career. But by 1940 I'd come to realize that Howard wasn't going to do a god damn thing for me. He just wanted Hollywood's handsomest boy—namely me—to hang out with him."

"Jack told me he was going to Palm Springs for the weekend with Howard," Robert continued. I didn't warn Jack not to go. Why shouldn't he go? He dropped a bomb on me when he told me that Howard had convinced him that he should pursue a career as a motion picture star, even though the ambassador, his father, wanted him to go into politics one day. Two days before Jack left to join Howard in Palm Springs, I noticed that he kept looking at himself in every mirror he passed. I think every good-looking guy and beautiful gal in the world dreams of becoming a movie star. Why should Jack be an exception? He said, 'I can just hear his dad shouting at me: No Kennedy becomes a movie star.'"

The details of that weekend in Palm Springs remain sketchy. The only source for what happened was Stack, who wasn't even there. He later reported that he "learned a little bit from Jack and not a lot more from Howard himself."

Howard had obviously set up the weekend to impress Jack. He seemed to bask in the flow of Jack's admiration for him. Jack had been bragging about his conquests to Howard, but the older man wanted to show the younger one that he too could round up two "hot dates" for the weekend.

After the Palm Springs weekend, Howard continued his hopeless pursuit of Jack, who'd soon be heading back to the East Coast. Howard didn't get to see Jack in action, but he did take him to the private studios of a tall black masseur, who called himself "Nobu." During the war years, Nobu, from some unknown country, was famous in Hollywood for his thorough massages, which involved masturbating his clients, both male and female, to the "mother of all climaxes." His patrons included Errol Flynn, Lana Turner, Paulette Goddard, Joan Crawford, and Howard himself.

Although it later became fashionable for certain masseurs in New York and California to give massages that involved sexual climaxes, in Nobu's time no one did that except prostitutes hired for that purpose.

Jack told Robert that Howard took him to be worked over by the "magic hands" of Nobu. Both men lay nude on separate beds in Nobu's studio while sensual music played. "I got this big erection," Jack later confided to Robert. "By the time he was finished with me, I was splattering the ceiling. I've never seen anything like it. He really knows how to touch the right spots."

Although Nobu may have been a peak experience in Jack's life, other masseurs have reported that he always got an erection when being massaged, even by a man. Frank Sinatra's valet, George Jacobs, wrote in his memoirs, that he gave Jack a massage in Palm Springs when he was the guest of his boss. "By the time I rolled him *[meaning Jack]* over to do his trunk and thighs, he had an enormous erection."

From all reports, Howard never got to experience Jack's erection first hand. Robert speculated that Howard made one attempt and failed to win Jack over. Such an occurrence may have happened during Jack's final weekend on the West Coast before his return to the East Coast. This time Jack was picked up and delivered to a beach house in Santa Monica which was owned by Marion Davies.

"I knew Jack was looking forward to it," Robert said.

"I fully anticipated that he'd arranged to have Rita Hayworth, Lana Turner, and Betty Grable there. To Jack's disappointment, when he got to Santa Monica, he found that he was the only invited guest."

"I don't know exactly what happened that weekend because Jack never told me everything," Robert said. "And Howard abruptly changed the subject a week later when I inquired."

"The following Monday morning, when I was telling Jack good-bye, he told me that he never wanted 'to see Howard Hughes again—that guy's too much of a creep for me.'"

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A blaze of gunfire on November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas, Howard Hughes' home state, ended the reign of Camelot. Howard was sitting with his pimp, Johnny Meyer, discussing plans when news came over his television set that President John F. Kennedy had been shot in a motorcade. The extent of his wounds was not immediately known.

Before his own death, Meyer had shopped a tell-all book about his former employer. As part of its sales

proposal, he claimed that in the immediate wake of the assassination, Howard dropped all of his plans and stayed glued to the television for the next eighteen hours without sleep.

"I knew that bossman had known young Jack Kennedy years before," Meyer claimed in his book proposal. "I also knew that Howard hated old man Kennedy and wasn't a particular admirer of the 'left wing' politics of his son. Yet he stayed glued to that set like he'd lost his best friend. I just didn't get it. It was weeks before I learned the full extent of bossman's scheme. He wasn't mourning the slain president. He was planning to replace him!"

In the year of Kennedy's death, Howard refused to face business emergencies. He either postponed decisions or ignored them completely. "There were more than brush fires to put out," Meyer said. "There were bonfires. Everybody on the planet was suing Howard, sometimes successfully."

The spring of 1963 had gone badly for Howard. On February 11, 1963, he had refused to appear for deposition in a TWA lawsuit. On May 13 of that same year, a Federal judge in New York had awarded TWA a default judgment for Howard's refusal to show up. He was ordered to pay his own airline $135,000,000 in damages and sell his own stock. "That was a bitter pill for Howard to swallow," Meyer said.

"I think Howard was lusting for other worlds to conquer, but he hadn't made up his mind what those worlds would be," Meyer said. "By 1967, he would channel his fading energy into acquiring the Desert Inn Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, the first step on the road to building an empire in Las Vegas and becoming King of the Desert."

When he got cleaned up and dressed, **Howard Hughes** looked respectable enough to consider running for president. From his delusional mind, he made a bid for an unbeatable electoral accessory: THE WIDOW JACKIE

In the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination, Howard began to develop a dream that was far greater than Las Vegas. In September of 1960, he'd turned fifty-five, and with his gray hair and declining health had begun to refer to himself as middle aged, even though he hated the term. "Who in the fuck decided that a man in his fifties is middle aged?" he once asked Meyer. "How many men do you know who are a hundred years old?"

As November faded into a bleak Christmas of 1963, Howard began to take stock of himself. He'd conquered many fields—more or less successfully—including aviation and motion pictures. Satellites his company manufactured were orbiting the planet, bringing *I Love Lucy* into homes in Bombay and Sydney. TWA was flying passengers across the globe. But three years before Kennedy's assassination, Howard had lost control of TWA.

"One time he turned to me and I'd never seen such a pathetic look on his face," Meyer said. "Normally when I looked into his eyes, I saw a feudal baron of immense power staring back at me. Even though we'd been asshole buddies for years, and I knew all his secrets, those blazing eyes of his sent shivers through me. Howard scared the shit out of me, he was so vindictive. I never wanted to cross him. I like eating too well, as one look at me will quickly reveal. He'd already turned on his business manager, Noah Dietrich, and made him the enemy. I knew he could do that to me as well."

"He seemed obsessed with Kennedy's assassination and couldn't wipe it from his mind," Meyer claimed. "I don't know how he got it, but he'd obtained a copy of the Zapruder film, which he watched endlessly. He must have seen it a thousand times. He wasn't just watching a home movie, but studying it with the eyes of a cobra."

A Dallas-based manufacturer of women's garments, Abraham Zapruder just happened to be shooting a home video recording of Kennedy's Dallas motorcade at the precise moment of the assassination. Had he not done so, the actual assassination would not have been captured on film. Zapruder sold his historic film to *Time Life* for $50,000, although Howard thought that it was worth at least two million—"maybe more"—he confided to Meyer.

"He was watching it for some clue, although I didn't know what at the time," Meyer said. "At first I thought he was seeking some clue as to who shot Kennedy. But he had something else on his mind."

"Mrs. Kennedy is being portrayed in the press as the grieving widow," Howard told Meyer one day after viewing the Zapruder film for at least three playbacks in a row. "But I see something else there. This woman is a 'me-first' type gal. She's a survivor."

In the weeks to come, Howard ordered Meyer to gather up all the information he could about those HUGHES FOR PRESIDENT clubs that had sprung up across the country in the wake of his August, 1947 testimony in front of Senator Ralph Owen Brewster's Senate committee. Although they had virtually disappeared, Howard instructed Meyer to "reactivate them—money is no object."

Howard's plan began to reveal itself to Meyer more fully. Howard had more or less assumed that Lyndon B. Johnson, a fellow Texan, would seek and win the presidency in 1964. "Howard announced to me that he was going to run for president in 1968 on the Democratic ticket even though he was an arch-conservative," Meyer said. "He wasn't a Democrat. Neither was he a Republican. Politically, Howard lived in limbo land."

The way Howard saw it, his chief competitors for the 1968 Democratic Presidential nomination would include Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert Kennedy. Richard Nixon, he surmised, would seek the nomination on the Republican ticket.

"Howard felt he could eliminate Nixon by offering him bribes," Meyer said. "He believed that Nixon was such a crook that he'd accept any bribe. Once Howard had him where he wanted him, he'd release news of Nixon's dirty deeds to the press, which would destroy his political career and cost him the election."

"But how do you plan to knock out Bobby Kennedy and LBJ?" Meyer asked Howard.

"Howard looked at me for an astonishing moment, then said, 'I plan to marry Mrs. Kennedy!' You could have knocked me over with a feather. At first I thought he was joking, but when I saw that steely look in his eyes, I knew he was determined."

"My surprise wasn't over," Meyer claimed. "Later that day, he told me that I was to be the go-between in negotiating a marriage between Mrs. Kennedy and himself. It was to be a marriage of convenience. I was to contact Mrs. Kennedy and offer her ten million dollars if she'd marry Howard and campaign for him in the 1968 election. For her cooperation, he would also set up separate trust funds for her children, John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Caroline Kennedy."

"Tell Mrs. Kennedy that I'll reinstate her in the White House," Howard said. "She can return in triumph, and I'll promise to give her unlimited power for a First Lady. I understand that dame loves power."

"I'll pay for the next goddamn redecoration of the White House—if that's what it takes to please her," Howard told Meyer. "That's not all. I'll even call that shithead Oleg Cassini, whom I hate, and tell him that Mrs. Kennedy will have *carte blanche* to order clothes from him, as many outfits as she wants even if it's three gowns a day. Tell her I'll also open charge accounts—the ceiling's the limit—at both Tiffany's and Cartier. I'll also provide 24-hour-a-day security guards for her and her kids."

Meyer said that he made at least eight attempts to get in touch with Mrs. Kennedy, via hand-delivered courier and by telephone, as he'd easily obtained her private number. "She would not answer my letters, nor take my calls," Meyer said. "Someone else always answered the phone at her house. Sometimes it was a man, but more often a woman. One time, the voice on the other end sounded like Bobby Kennedy."

"It must have been three o'clock in the morning in Washington, D.C., when Mrs. Kennedy finally returned my call," Meyer said. "I was in bed with, of all people, *[the tap-dancing Big Band era star]* Ann Miller. I had lured Ann to my bed with three pieces of incredibly expensive jewelry that Howard had originally given Ava Gardner and that she'd thrown back at me, telling me to return the jewelry to Howard. I never did. I presented the gems to Ann, who seemed willing to give me a night of pleasure for the stones. I don't mean to imply that Ann was a hooker. But, unlike Ava, she respected the value of Howard's baubles."

"Mrs. Kennedy's voice came over the phone wires," Meyer said. "I would have recognized that little girl voice anywhere. 'Mr. Meyer,' she said. 'This is Jacqueline Kennedy. I've received your latest letter and would like for you to fly to Washington Tuesday night to meet with me. I'm at least willing to hear what Mr. Hughes has to say.' She proceeded to give me instructions on how to reach her. After doing that, she gently put down the phone."

"I could swear she was drunk," Meyer told Ann.

The next morning, he informed Howard of the news, and "Bossman seemed elated. His plan to take over the White House, and ultimately the nation—maybe the world—was about to be launched. I'm not exaggerating when I say world. Howard believed that the man who controlled the White House in 1968 could ultimately control the world. He even had a plan to wipe out the Soviet Union in a sudden, unexpected missile attack. 'With Russia out of the way, no one will stop me,' he told me."

Meyer flew to Washington and at the pre-designated hour appeared at Mrs. Kennedy's Georgetown dwelling,

finding her alone in her house. “She even answered the door herself,” Meyer said. “She asked me if I wanted tea but I requested a drink instead. I was trembling all over. I mean, here I was in the presence of the most famous woman on the planet. In terms of fame, she ranked up there with Helen of Troy, Catherine the Great, and Cleopatra.”

Meyer recalled that he sat on a sofa facing Mrs. Kennedy, who occupied a winged armchair, positioning her legs in a typical “debutante pose—all prim and proper.”

“I tossed out Howard’s offer to her even though I knew I was treating her like a hooker,” Meyer said. “She didn’t seem shocked—nor even surprised.”

“In that little girl voice, almost a whisper, she finally said, ‘I thought it was something like that.’ I remember her leaning back in her chair and saying, ‘You go back to your Mr. Hughes and tell him I’ll accept his proposal of marriage, but not for ten million. I put a higher price tag on myself than that. Tell him my price tag is fifty million. Also my attorneys will set up trust funds for each of my children. Enough money to give each of them a lavish lifestyle, if that’s what they want, for the rest of their lives. I like the offer of 24-hour security protection. But the Hughes Tool Company will have to agree in contract to offer that protection not only for the rest of my life but for the rest of the lives of both John and Caroline.’”

“Of course, Mrs. Kennedy,” Meyer said, “I’ll take that counter-offer back to Mr. Hughes.”

He then remembered Mrs. Kennedy leaning forward in her chair. In almost a whisper she said, “There is one final thing, Mr. Meyer. A delicate issue. Mr. Hughes will have to agree, and put it in contract form, that marriage to me will not entail conjugal visits.”

“That hit me like a lead balloon,” Meyer claimed. “But I told her I’d also convey that request to Howard. Frankly, I think Howard would have accepted the offer. He wanted to marry Mrs. Kennedy to gain political power unlike anything he’d ever known. He wasn’t marrying her to get some pussy, although with her brunette hair and good looks, I think she could have gotten a rise out of boss-man. But his libido was pretty much shut down by 1964.”

Meyer flew back to the West Coast, conveying the astonishing news to Howard. “The financial terms didn’t bother him at all,” Meyer claimed. “Bossman knew he’d have to pay many more millions to get into the White House, and he seemed prepared to do that. He said he was going to delay for three weeks a formal response to Mrs. Kennedy, which he was going to deliver in person, meeting her at a secluded cottage on Martha’s Vineyard, which I was to rent and secure for him. I went ahead with plans for the Martha’s Vineyard rendezvous, but it never came off.”

At this point, Meyer hesitated in his remembrance, claiming that what he was about to reveal was so shocking that “it defies believability.”

“Howard delivered his answer to me in about three weeks, more or less, but it wasn’t the message that Mrs. Kennedy was waiting to hear,” Meyer said.

“He had concluded that he could not run for president because of one thing: He’d have to shake the hands of half the male and female population of America, if not the world.”

“In the years to come, I’ll have to shake all those slimy paws,” he said. “Some of whom will have just emerged from the toilet after wiping their ass and not washing their hands. The germs will surely kill me. I can’t make the run. I have to thank Mrs. Kennedy for her acceptance, but withdraw the offer. I can’t go through with it!”

“Frankly,” Meyer said, “even though bossman instructed me to, I didn’t have the balls to write or call Mrs. Kennedy with the turndown. It was too goddamn embarrassing. But perhaps my visit to Mrs. Kennedy jarred her into a new reality. I’d heard that she’d been drinking heavily, was in a deep depression, and was carrying on an affair with her brother-in-law after her husband’s assassination. At least, I got her thinking in the right direction. Another rich man, but not Howard Hughes, lay in that gal’s future.”

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Meyer did not appear again in Jackie Kennedy’s life until after she married Aristotle Onassis. When Hughes was finished with Meyer, he hired himself out to Ari as a “spy, cover-up, flunky, procurer, asshole-wiper, whatever you want,” Meyer said. “I’d do everything but rim jobs, although in spirit I do those too.”

To Meyer’s surprise, one of his jobs involved spying on Jackie after her marriage to “The Greek.”

Years after their initial encounter, when Meyer came face to face with Jackie again, no mention was made of their earlier negotiations. At first she was cold and distant with him until he learned how to break through to her. He soon found out that she loved indiscreet gossip, and since Meyer was more informed about the secrets of the nation’s personalities than Walter Winchell, Hedda Hopper, and Louella Parsons, she slowly began to let down her guard.

One day he relayed to her the latest gossip about two of her dearest friends, Truman Capote and Bobby

Kennedy, who lived in the same New York City apartment complex near the United Nations.

One night, **Peter Lawford** confessed to JFK a sexual problem he was having with the president's sister, Patricia. "I go to bed with her—after all, she's my wife, and she's into it—but I can't get it up for her. I'm not impotent, because I did fine with two call girls the night before."

"I have the same problem with Jackie," JFK confessed. "Alas, the curse of married life. Why does society make us take wives?"

One night a drunken Capote had encountered Bobby in the elevator and propositioned him, asking him if he could give him a blow-job. At first Meyer thought Jackie would respond coldly. But she smiled, lit a cigarette, leaned back and said, "If I know Bobby, he accepted. I hear Capote has mastered the art. I was never good at that."

From that moment on, Jackie accepted Meyer into her good graces, often inviting him for a private luncheon. Sometimes she had special requests: "Tell me all you know about Lyndon Johnson's mistress."

One afternoon after Jackie's second marriage, Ari sent Meyer with her on a shopping expedition to Athens. They lunched together in a little out-ofthe-way Turkish restaurant.

"I know Ari has hired you to spy on me," she said. "But since we've become *confidants*, why don't you tell me the most hideous secret you've ever learned about Ari."

At first reluctant to do so, Meyer was eventually won over by her charm.

"Ever since he was a boy and raped by a Turkish lieutenant in his native land, he discovered he has a gay streak in him," Meyer claimed. "But with a very perverted twist. He has a boy stashed in an apartment in Paris, another one in Athens. They are only kids. I've met both of them. They're each in their late teens. Ari likes to beat them severely before sodomizing them."

She looked startled. "Sometimes," she said, "it's better not to know everything."

Peter Lawford, Jackie's Errant Brother-in-Law

Jackie had long resented her actor brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, knowing that he was her husband's Hollywood pimp, lining up movie stars or wannabee actresses for JFK to seduce. She also knew that Peter had been the "go between" for JFK during his sexual trysts with Marilyn Monroe.

Peter had wed JFK's sister, Patricia Kennedy, and Jackie was well aware that the unhappily married couple were never faithful to each other throughout the course of their ill-fated union.

Since his heyday during Camelot, Peter, according to biographer Lawrence Quirk, has frequently been vilified as a "playboy, opportunist, bisexual, nymphomaniac, drug addict, alcoholic, and pernicious sycophant to both Frank Sinatra and the Kennedys." But despite those extremes, Quirk nonetheless, from personal encounters, remembered him as a kind and gentle man.

In Honolulu, **Peter Lawford and Jackie** are seen disembarking with their children for a "family vacation" that became the source of international rumors.

Was she actually having an affair with her former brother-in-law, the White House pimp for her late husband?

In his biography, *A Woman Named Jackie*, C. David Heymann wrote that "Peter provided JFK with every imaginable amenity from dates with actresses and showgirls to a California safehouse where Kennedy could carry out his West Coast assignations. Peter often acted as a 'beard' for JFK, distracting the press and providing a convenient front for Jackie's benefit."

"I detest Peter Lawford," Jackie had told her friend, William Walton, in 1962. "He's nothing but Jack's pimp."

But by the summer of 1966, she'd softened her position on Peter. This time, she told Walton, "Up to now, I've been blaming Peter for Jack's womanizing, and that's wrong. Ultimately, it was Jack who was responsible. Of course, Peter did his bidding, but what else could he do? I, of all people, know how difficult it was to say 'no' to Jack, especially when he became President."

She decided to call Peter with an invitation to go on a vacation with her in Hawaii. At the time, he did not know that she wanted to use him to make her boyfriend, architect John Carl Warnecke, jealous and perhaps goad him into a proposal of marriage. He, too, would be enjoying a holiday in Hawaii with her. "I'll divide my time between them," she told Walton.

Peter was already divorced from Patricia when he and Jackie agreed to fly to Hawaii together. Even so, he felt there might be some negative publicity if he became too intimately linked with the former First Lady.

He asked his best friend and business manager, Milton Ebbins, if the trip would be all right, fearing that it might generate bad publicity. "Why not?" Ebbins asked. "Mrs. Kennedy will be traveling with her children, Caroline and John-John, and you'll be with Christopher and Sydney. Just call it a family affair."

"Yeah," Peter said, "but I was afraid that the press might view it as an affair, forgetting about the kids. I already rejected Jackie's sister, but I don't think I could turn down the lady herself if she came on to me."

"Don't flatter yourself," Ebbins said. "Take the trip. It'll be fun."

Peter always claimed that Lee Radziwill had made a play for him in the early 60s when they were taking a stroll through Hyde Park in London. He said that he had turned her down "because I had too much respect for her husband."

From gossip, Lana Turner, Peter's former lover, heard that he would soon fly to Honolulu with Jackie. Lana took a dim view. "If Lee Radziwill wanted him, Mrs. Kennedy might also want Peter. After all, sisters sometimes go for the same guy. I hear Jackie has a high libido. I can personally vouch for the libido of John Kennedy. I, of all the stars in Hollywood, knew what a strong sex drive he had."

Flying out of New York on June 6, Jackie arrived in San Francisco with her children, where she rendezvoused with Peter, his son Christopher, and his daughter Sydney for the ongoing flight to Hawaii.

At the Honolulu Airport, Jackie's arrival was greeted like that reserved for a head of state. Some five thousand spectators showed up to see her, along with Peter and their children.

Outside the airport, Pat Lam, from Hawaii's Department of Transportation, showed up to put two *leis* around Jackie's neck, which seemed embarrass her. But her actual emotions were hidden behind a pair of wraparound

sunglasses. As the trade winds blew through her hair, a local band played the "Hawaiian War Chant" as a hula troupe swung their hips.

Eager to flee, Jackie waved hello and disappeared inside a Lincoln Continental.

She was driven to an elegant home on fashionable Kahala Beach, a mile from Diamond Head. She was paying $3,000 a month to the owner of the house, Senator Peter Dominick of Colorado. Incidentally, he was a Republican.

A *paparazzo* snapped the arrival of this Kennedy/Lawford party departing from their plane in Honolulu. Patricia Kennedy Lawford (Peter's ex-wife) had given permission for Peter to take their sons to Hawaii, but Ebbins hadn't informed her that Jackie would be along.

When Patricia found out, Ebbins claimed she wasn't just boiling mad, she was livid. She'd told friends that she'd long suspected that Peter "had this thing for Jackie." Rather sarcastically, Patricia added, "And you know Jackie. She's the girl who can't say no."

The so-called "Hawaiian honeymoon" of Jackie and Peter lasted for seven weeks. To keep up appearances, Jackie technically lived in her rented ocean-front house. Peter's hideaway cottage on the grounds of the Hilton was just down the beach.

In Hawaii, Peter perfected the famous cigarette routine that Bette Davis and Paul Henreid did so well in *Now, Voyager* (1942). Over cocktails in the Hilton bar, he was seen placing two cigarettes between his lips, lighting each of them, and then handing one to Jackie.

Writing for a local paper, reporter Gwen Holson tracked every public move she could of Peter and Jackie. She was hoping to sell a *exposé* to a national magazine. "Throughout their vacation," Holson said, "Peter acted like Jackie's gallant husband. He took her everywhere, and he behaved like a father to her children. Lawford was very familiar with Hawaii, and he became Mrs. Kennedy's tour guide. He introduced her to all his friends, and they were great as a couple, dazzling everyone."

"Lawford even threw this big garden party for Mrs. Kennedy at the Kahala Hilton. *Tout* Honolulu turned out to greet her. Everybody wore their finest clothing, and we expected Mrs. Kennedy to turn up in an Oleg Cassini original. She arrived in a light beach shift with sandals."

"In front of everybody, Lawford hovered over Mrs. Kennedy, even taking her hand to guide her over to the next group of friends to show her off. Unlike that whispery Marilyn Monroe voice she used on camera, Mrs. Kennedy spoke in a normal voice."

"I know that Jackie spent a lot of time at the beachfront house Lawford had rented on Oahu. I paid a servant one hundred dollars for the lowdown. She virtually confirmed on the Bible that Mrs. Kennedy and Lawford slept together. Today, it would be front page tabloid news, but back then no respectable paper wanted to touch it."

"But rumors were flying over Honolulu, and I think many mainland newspapers made veiled references to reports of an affair between Lawford and Mrs. Kennedy. We now know that Jackie slept with Bobby. Why not Lawford?"

Peter, at this point in his life, was deeply troubled, and reportedly, Jackie rallied to his side. He was worried, now that he was cut off from the Kennedy clan, that he would not be offered any more film roles, at least good ones. He admitted to Jackie and to others that he had been too imperial when he was the president's brother-in-law and had made a lot of enemies, including Frank Sinatra. He also feared that he could not provide for his children in a style worthy of patterns already established by the Kennedys, and that his kids would lose respect for him.

"I'm going to find a life after the Kennedys, and I'm sure you will too," Jackie said that in front of other guests, as if she wanted other people to believe it. Few did. After his separation from the Kennedy connection, everything went downhill for Peter.

In Hawaii, Peter got to know Jackie as never before. Such prolonged intimacy between the two of them would never be repeated. In the future, Jackie would, to an increasing degree, withdraw more and more from Peter, based perhaps on burnout after their Hawaiian holiday and on his growing dependencies on liquor and drugs..

"Jackie wasn't completely honest about herself," Peter said. "She doctored up her family background. She told social fibs to avoid having to make appearances. She would tell the press practically anything to get them off her back. She obviously had known about Jack's affairs. She told me she knew. She said she once caught him in the act."

When author Truman Capote heard about a possible Peter/Jackie affair, he said, "I'm not at all surprised. Jackie, dear heart that she is, believed in the revenge fuck. She'd always known that Peter supplied Hollywood actresses to Jack. By fucking Peter, she was probably getting even with Jack, even though his bullet-riddled body was in the grave."

Years later, when funds were running so low he could hardly pay his rent, Peter sold the story of his role as his brother-in-law's pimp to a tabloid. In the article, he claimed that JFK would examine women "like he was admiring some fine China."

On vacation in Hawaii, architect **John Carl Warnecke** proved a better lover for Jackie than a bodyguard for her children. After an underwater accident, Caroline ended up on crutches and John Jr. fell into a campfire and later had to have skin grafted onto his buttocks.

Commenting on his marriage to Patricia, he said, “I always felt that her love for her father took precedence in a funny way over her love for me. She worshipped him.”

On the day of their departure from Hawaii, Jackie didn’t want to create another scene at the airport, so she kissed Peter goodbye in the privacy of her rented home. He didn’t know it at the time, but for the most part, their intimate relationship had come and gone with the trade winds.

John Carl Warnecke, the Architect of Love

Within two hours of Peter’s departure, John Carl Warnecke had arrived on her doorstep and into her arms. When Jackie returned to the U.S. mainland, she shared information about some of her Hawaiian adventures with her friend, William Walton.

Later in life, Walton tried to understand the nature of her romantic attachment to Warnecke. “She knew that he was, like Jack, a womanizer. In fact, he had quite a reputation with women. He also appealed to her artistic sense, as he was a man of impeccable taste. They could talk for hours about art and architecture.”

“He had an artistic vision that she very much appreciated. Yet there was a sense of mystery and danger about him. She told me she also found him very sexy. He was also a charismatic figure like Jack. When Warnecke walked into a crowded room, people noticed him. If Jackie was on his arm, they practically formed a circle around the couple.”

Warnecke was in Hawaii as part of his contracted commitment to redesign the state’s administrative centerpiece, the Hawaiian State Capitol. *[Completed in 1969 in the “Hawaiian international” style (an adaptation of the Bauhaus style), it was designed through a collaboration between John Carl Warnecke and Associates and Belt, Lemon and Lo (aka Architects Hawaii, Ltd.)]*

At first, the trip had gone smoothly, until two accidents marred, to some degree, the holiday. On a sharp piece of coral reef, Caroline suffered a deep cut on her left foot while swimming in front of their rented home. Warnecke rushed her to the local hospital, where her wound required six stitches. She was next seen at the Kamehameha Day Parade on crutches.

Caroline’s accident was followed by something more serious. John Jr. had gone on a camping trip to Kapuna Beach on the island of Hawaii. At one point, he lost his footing and fell backward into a pit of burning coals. Screaming with pain, he used his right arm to push himself upward.

That led to first and second degree burns on his hand and forearm.

John Walsh, Jackie’s Secret Service agent, rushed him to a hospital. His buttocks were also severely burned, and in time he would need a plastic surgeon, Dr. Eldon Dykes, to restore his skin. The blisters and severely burned

sections of his skin had to be surgically removed.

In spite of the disasters that had befallen her children, Jackie decided to stay another month in Hawaii. She and her charges moved into one of the buildings on the eight-acre Koko Head estate owned by Henry J. Kaiser. *[Kaiser and his wife were also in residence at the time, occupying the estate's main house.]*

Kaiser, an American industrialist, was famous for launching Liberty Ships during World War II. After the war, he formed Kaiser Aluminum and Kaiser Steel. The tycoon would die in 1967—the year after Jackie's occupancy of his estate—at the age of 85.

The Kaisers often entertained John Jr. and Caroline, taking them to beaches and on tours, even to the Pacific Coast League baseball games. For the most part, Jackie was involved with Warnecke, who would fly by helicopter to the estate whenever he wasn't otherwise busy with plans for the Hawaiian state capitol.

Apparently, Mr. Kaiser did not approve of Jackie's romantic attachment to Warnecke, and he placed a call to Bobby Kennedy on the U.S. Mainland, hoping that he might intervene.

"Take it from me," he told Bobby. "John Warnecke, that whoremonger, is not an appropriate beau for Jackie. I know you will want to protect her reputation."

Bobby listened carefully, because the Kaisers and the Kennedys had long been friends.

Walton later said "Bobby called Jackie and gave her a talking to. She did not tell me what Bobby told her, but her relationship with Warnecke soon came to its painful end."

Warnecke wanted to show Jackie the sights of Hawaii. Once, on a trip to Maui, they took off together without John Walsh, her Secret Service agent. He also flew her to the "Big Island," as Hawaii is called, and they spent the night together in Laurance Rockefeller's guest cottage on Parker Ranch.

He even took her trekking into the Kauai Mountains, where locals often went to hunt wild boar. He also knew the secluded beaches of the islands, where the paparazzi would not intrude.

For him, the highlight of the trip came when he brought her to his own five-bedroom home on Black Point, off Diamond Head Road. He pointed out the master bedroom she'd share with him when they got married. She also selected the bedrooms for Caroline and for John Jr.

During her stay, Jackie made rough drawings of how she'd redecorate, like she did in the White House.

She was overheard telling a servant, "If I didn't know better, I would swear that Bess Truman or perhaps Mamie Eisenhower decorated this house."

Warnecke had hoped that Jackie would set a date for their upcoming wedding. But she did not, holding him off. She needed to think more about it, she informed him.

During a final visit with the Kaisers, she told them, "It is not at all certain that John and I will be married. He has promised great privacy for me and my children, an escape from the world if I live with him in Hawaii. He has even gotten a promise from the local newspapers like the *Star-Bulletin* and the *Honolulu Advertiser* that they will not allow their photographers and reporters to harass me."

"But I'm not so sure," she continued. "I never intended to use Greta Garbo as my role model. After all, it was Garbo, not me, who said, "I *vant* to be *alone."*

[For more information on the outcome of Jackie's interlude with John Warnecke, refer to chapter 20.]

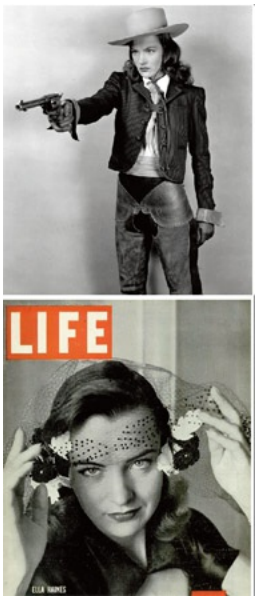
Love Triangle

John Warnecke, Jackie, and Ella Raines

Lem Billings, a noted homosexual, was JFK's best and most enduring friend. But occasionally, he also bonded with women, and at one point considered marriage to two of them.

First came JFK's "favorite" sister, Kathleen Kennedy, nicknamed "Kick," who became a special friend to Lem. He dated her in the 1930s before she moved to England. Privately, he told friends that "Kick reminds me of Jack in drag. They look alike. She has the same self-deprecating humor and Irish wit." During the most intense period of their dating, Lem, at JFK's urging, proposed marriage to her.

Aware of his gender preference, she handled his offer gently, reminding him, "Lem, you and I both know you're not the marrying kind."



Lem was greatly saddened when he learned that Kick, during a vacation in the South of France, had died in an airplane crash near Cannes on May 13, 1948. Sharing the twin-engine De Havilland Dove with her was Lord Peter Fitzwilliam, a 37-year-old British lord, whom she'd married.

Lem's next platonic girlfriend was the sultry brunette movie actress, Ella Raines, a sensitive but tough-talking babe, who had migrated from Wisconsin to Hollywood and into the bed of film director Howard Hawkes.. He had attempted, with the help of Charles Boyer, to transform her into a film star to rival Joan Bennett.

Although noted for her work in film noir and in Westerns, she never made it to superstardom, but mostly worked as a back-up beauty for bigger stars like George Sanders, Randolph Scott, and Charles Laughton. Her career was finally reduced to appearances in Republic Pictures cheapies.

Three views of **Ella Raines**, lower photo: with **John Wayne** in *Tall in the Saddle;* and *(middle)* on cover of LIFE magazine in 1944. Unknown to either women, both Ella and Jackie competed for the boudoir adoration of architect John Carl Warnecke. Sometimes, he managed to visit the beds of both of "my goddesses," as he called them, on the same day.

Ella and Lem developed an intense friendship, but she discouraged talk of marriage.

One night in the mid-1960s, Lem introduced her to John Carl Warnecke, who at the time was also having an affair with Jackie. He was entranced by Ella. According to Lem, their affair began the night he introduced them.

"I did some fancy stepping to keep Jackie from finding out about them, because I knew she would never forgive me, viewing it as a betrayal," Lem said.

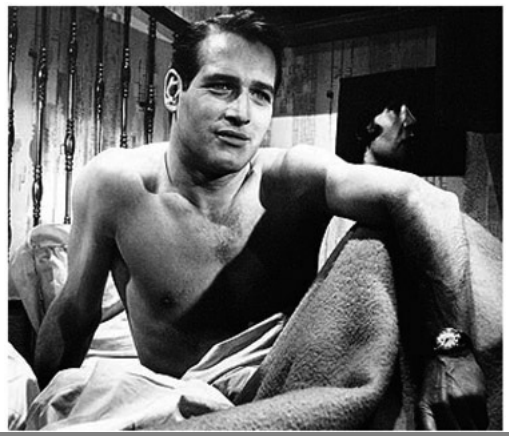
"Ella's affair with John lasted only about eighteen months, but she was rhapsodic in her praise of him as a lover," Lem claimed. "She told me he was hung like a donkey and could go all night—lucky

Ella, lucky Jackie."

Paul Newman Jackie Claims His Penis Was Identical to JFK's

Before he'd even met Jackie Kennedy, Paul Newman had campaigned vigorously for JFK, contributing both his money and his time.

In the wake of JFK's assassination, during the 1964 presidential campaign, Paul decided to throw his political support behind Lyndon B. Johnson. He later told Lem Billings, "I am sadly disappointed. I thought Johnson would de-escalate the war in Vietnam. From this day on, I've become leary of politicians."



In 1968, after the assassination of Bobby Kennedy in Los Angeles, **Paul Newman** was among the first to successfully get a phone call through to Jackie to express his condolences. "I want to come to you and hold you, and tell you it'll be okay. You'll go on."

She later told Lem Billings, "I think Paul wanted to come and live with me. For how long, I don't know. I got the feeling he wanted to replace Bobby in my life."

But as time would tell, he did not have that fear about First Ladies.

Every straight or bisexual male has his fantasy woman. For Paul Newman, he still considered Elizabeth Taylor one of the most enchanting women of her time. But, as he'd once told intimate friends, "Jacqueline Kennedy is the most desirable woman on the planet. Our Helen of Troy."

In 1968, after her brother-in-law, Robert F. Kennedy, announced that he was going to run against Eugene McCarthy for the Democratic nomination for president, she placed a discreet call to Newman, who was backing McCarthy.

He was thrilled to be speaking to her and hearing that famous voice that in some way reminded him of Marilyn Monroe. He agreed to meet her in the bar of the Hotel Carlyle in Manhattan—the same hotel where John F. Kennedy had had sexual trysts with Monroe.

The sale of her home in Georgetown in Washington, DC, had allowed her to purchase a Fifth Avenue apartment, but despite that, she chose to meet him at the Carlyle Hotel, perhaps as some kind of symbolic assertion of her independence.

Of his many involvements with famous personalities, Newman's short-lived link with Jackie is clouded in the most mystery and the subject of the most speculation. A doorman reported that he arrived at the pre-designated time of eight o'clock in the evening, and was seen leaving the following morning around 8:30, hailing a taxi and quickly disappearing. He wore dark sunglasses and a hat. The sunglasses were familiar; the hat was not. Even so, the staff at the Carlyle recognized him and spread the word. The story was too good, too hot, to keep to one's self.

Susan Strasberg claimed that within days, the rumor was making the rounds at Downey's Restaurant, sometimes known among hipster New Yorkers as "the poor man's Sardi's," where it quickly spread through the grapevine to Washington and on to Hollywood.

The only recognizable name who spoke openly about the night Newman spent with Jackie in her hotel suite was Truman Capote, her treacherous friend. In Tennessee Williams' New York apartment, Capote claimed that Jackie had confessed to him "only some of the details of that night."

Capote asserted to many of his friends that one night he and Jackie, drunk on champagne, named the three movie stars they'd most like to seduce. For Capote, the size of their appendages seemed to dominate his selection of John Ireland, Steve Cochran, and Rock Hudson.

As her most-desirable sexual candidates of choice, Jackie named Marlon Brando, William Holden, and Paul Newman, claiming, "I've already attained two-thirds of my goal." At that time, she was referring to Brando and Holden, not Newman, whom she was yet to meet.

Newman loomed in Jackie's future, and when Capote found out that they had finally met within her apartment, "I was all ears when she wanted to talk about it."

"When she'd had enough champagne, Jackie often would become outrageous, not the 'steel butterfly' so often depicted on camera," Capote claimed.

One night at a White House gala, when she'd had more than her share of the bubbly, Jackie took off her shoes and danced and flirted with every handsome man in attendance, much to the annoyance of her husband, who hawkeyed her every move. Perhaps she was paying him back for his own sexual trysts with his women *du jour*.

Even JFK had told associates that "Jackie is known for developing crushes, like on Warren Beatty. But she's very fickle. They don't last long. She becomes bored quickly."

That night Newman met Jackie, he encountered a very different woman from the brave but beleaguered widow he'd read about in the press. Sitting opposite him was a flirtatious and attractive woman with a mischievous gleam in her eyes, not the grieving widow of a slain American president.

In a secluded corner of the bar at the Carlyle, Jackie, in dark sunglasses, greeted him. He kissed her on both cheeks. She casually pointed to a man in a dark business suit sitting a few tables away. She told him that he was a member of the Secret Service assigned to guard her. "He's also my lover," she allegedly told Newman. If he were shocked, he masked it effectively. He even assumed that she might be joking because it was unbelievable that she'd be this frank with him.

Upon his arrival, he'd presented her with a porcelain rose, which was investment enough for him, even though he'd heard she would spend as much as $100,000 on an antique snuff box.

From what Capote learned, Newman spent a good part of the evening hearing about the Kennedys. Jackie was very supportive of Bobby, and urged Newman to switch the allegiance he'd developed to Eugene McCarthy.

One speculation she may have shared with Newman that night was her belief that her husband, had he managed to dodge the assassin's bullet, would not have been re-elected. "His indiscretions had become so plentiful, so well known, that they would have made headlines during the campaign and would have destroyed him."

Alone in the hotel suite with Newman, she is alleged to have repeated her standard selling points with Newman, as she did to anybody she was hoping to "win over to our side." She spent at least an hour extolling the virtues of Bobby Kennedy. Allegedly, she asserted that she personally knew McCarthy, but that she believed that he was a one-issue candidate, and that his political obsession revolved solely around "the war." She reportedly expressed it as, "that God damn Vietnam War."

She went on to warn Newman that there were other issues associated with the upcoming race, including the War on Poverty. "Bobby can offer hope to the downtrodden that McCarthy can't. Bobby is a candidate whose stand on the issues, not just the war, is all-encompassing. He can save this nation from itself. That is, if he can save himself from an assassin's bullet. They've already killed one Kennedy in this country. They might strike again." Supposedly, she never revealed who "they" were.

The most provocative shared indiscretion of the evening, if Capote is to be believed, is that Jackie confided to Newman that she'd never been able to satisfy her husband sexually. "Perhaps I can change that state of affairs with you tonight," she may have told him.

After their one night together at the Hotel Carlyle in New York, there is no evidence that Jackie and the actor ever connected sexually again. Lem Billings asked Jackie why not. "He was always on your fantasy list of actors to seduce."

She startled him with her confession. "It was the most amazing thing," she said. "Paul and Jack have an identical penis. It was like getting seduced by my husband all over again. It was eerie."

At least for one night, Jackie may have convinced Newman to switch his political alliance. But in the sober light of morning, after his departure from the Carlyle, he remained in McCarthy's camp. He later told Tony Perkins, "I faced more temptation that night than Antony when he met Cleopatra."

Of course, when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles in June of 1968—allegedly by Sirhan Sirhan, although rampant speculation about the assassination remains—Newman's support of Jackie's brother-in-law as a candidate became a moot issue.

Howl!, a scandal sheet emanating from New York City's East Village that flourished for only two months during hippiedom's "Dawning of the Age of Aquarius," was the only newspaper, if that's what it could be called, that

carried the rumor. The headline, as were all that short-lived paper's headlines, was blunt and to the point: PAUL NEWMAN FUCKS JACKIE O.

***

Jackie and Paul Newman may not have always agreed on politics, but both of them found each other compatible as friends. Jackie was one of the first to call and express her sympathy to Paul when his son, Scott Newman, was found dead.

During dinner one night, Jackie told Newman, "I read a quote about you from Janet Leigh. She said, 'Paul makes you respond to him. That is the basis of his sexual appeal.' Is that true?"

"You'll have to answer that yourself," he told her, raising an eyebrow. "After all, you're qualified to do so."

"*Touchée*," she murmured.

"When Janet and I made *Harper* (1966) together, I stole a gimmick from Bobby Kennedy. For my character of Lew Harper, I borrowed Bobby's technique of listening to people without actually facing them."

"Bobby always referred to that as 'The Sideways Approach,'" she said.

Rather flirtatious with her, he said, "I hope he didn't do everything sideways."

"Not at all," she said. "During sex, he was on top, with his eyes boring into mine."

Gregory Peck, "The Handsomest Man in the World"

"Gregory Peck is the ultimate movie star. You know, there's nobody handsomer or more gentle or more romantic on the screen, I think. For all ages."

—Liza Minnelli

Gregory Peck failed his first screen test, as his features were considered "too large and irregular." He ultimately prevailed, of course, even though his left ear was larger than the right, he was hailed in the movie magazines of Hollywood's Golden Age as "The Handsomest Man in the World."

What did **Gregory Peck** and JFK have in common? Both had seduced Marilyn Monroe

In time, Peck would celebrate his triumphs, but later plunge to the depths of heartbreak, feeling the pain of what he viewed as "my many failures." Yet he always bounced back, never more gloriously than when he played Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

As Hollywood actors go, Peck was known to cheat on the two women he'd marry over the course of his life, but only rarely.

He famously seduced Ingrid Bergman when he co-starred with her in *Spellbound* (1945), and he'd also seduced Ann Todd, his co-star in *The Paradine Case* (1947). His really sleazy affair was with Barbara Payton (*Only the Valiant; 1952)*, who later became a drug-addicted, alcoholic prostitute in Las Vegas and other towns.

Peck had long been a supporter of JFK, and on occasion, Jackie had written him a note of gratitude. Ironically, she had invited Peck to a White House dinner scheduled for December 10, 1963. Of course, those bullets in Dallas ended all plans for that gala dinner.

Jackie detested fund raising, but, out of devotion to Bobby Kennedy when he was seeking the presidency in 1968, she worked the phones, soliciting donations for his campaign. One call was placed to Peck. He not only graciously accepted it, but made a $10,000 contribution.

During his subsequent visit to New York, Peck invited Jackie for dinner at "21." She accepted, even though it meant canceling another engagement.

Over dinner, he expressed some of his fears about surviving in the New Hollywood. "All in all, I'm sort of old fashioned, and my name is not Tab, Rory, Rock, or Rip. I'm considering a name change to 'Boulder.'"

"Perhaps you could change it to Whip? Jackie said, teasing him. "How about Lash?"

After the assassination, Peck narrated a film, *Years of Lightning, Days of Drums*, for the United States Information Agency. In it, he praised JFK for such accomplishments as the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress *[a ten-year, multibillion-dollar aid program for Latin America]*, civil rights, and the Space Program.

According to reports, Peck went home with Jackie that night after dinner at "21." Later, he accepted an invitation from her to go horseback riding in Virginia. Both were avid equestrians. Peck owned "Different Class," the thoroughbred Steeplechase racehorse. It had been favored to win the 1968 Grand National, but came in third.

They may have talked about religion, as both Peck and Jackie were Roman Catholics. He confessed that he had once seriously considered the priesthood. He did not always adhere to Catholic doctrine, however, not agreeing with the church's stand on homosexuality, abortion, and the ordination of women.

[In spite of his contributions to Bobby's campaign, President Lyndon Johnson, one of Bobby's most bitter adversaries, honored Peck in 1969 with a Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. Jackie cabled her congratulations, but did not attend the ceremony.

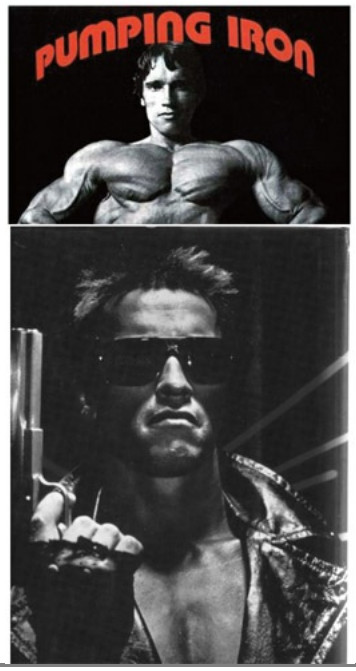
At the time of Peck's weekend with Jackie, he was married to the French journalist, Véronique Passani. In 1953, after traveling to Rome from her base in Paris, Passani had interviewed the actor during his filming of Roman Holiday *with Audrey Hepburn.]*

Jackie may have quizzed Peck about Marilyn Monroe, since she knew he was originally envisioned as her co-star in what became her last picture, the unfinished *Let's Make Love* (1960). Peck and Monroe were said to have had a brief fling.

However, when her husband, Arthur Miller, rewrote the script, Peck's role was greatly diminished while Marilyn's was lengthened. After reading the revised script, Peck dropped out of the cast. He was replaced with the French actor/singer Yves Montand, with whom Marilyn had yet another affair.

As Jackie later told William Walton, "Gregory didn't stick around long enough for it to be called an affair. Perhaps a *passion de passage* would be a more accurate term. I'd definitely consider him marriage material if I hadn't made too many other promises."

Columnist Earl Wilson wasn't exactly subtle when he inserted the following blind item in his syndicated column: "What Hollywood matinee idol is said to have made a famous widow *Spellbound* on his trip to New York? *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* obviously had *The World in His Arms* when he spent the night at her apartment, leaving at *Twelve O'Clock High*. Perhaps he knew her as *David* came to know *Bathsheba*, and no doubt he made a *Gentleman's Agreement* not to reveal the (*Macomber*) affair. The question is, did this *Designing Woman* experience *Moby Dick?"*



When Jackie first met bodybuilder **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, she came face to face with a man with a perfectly muscled body and a fierce ambition. She never suspected that he'd become a member of the Kennedy clan—and a Republican at that.

On his wedding day (April 16, 1986) to Maria Schriver, Jackie said, "That goes to show you what Austrian charm, talent, and sheer bravado can do for you."

Arnold Schwarzenegger: Jackie's "Crush" on the Governator

A young Arnold Schwarzenegger, an aspiring Austrian bodybuilder, was first mesmerized by Jackie Kennedy, then First Lady of America, at the 1961 Summit Meeting in Vienna between the United States and the Soviet Union. He'd entered Vienna eager to join the throngs amassed to see America's exciting new President and his glamorous First Lady.

Arnold's mother, Aurelia Jadrny, a brunette, was relieved when she discovered Jackie's picture pinned up on her son's bedroom wall, along with an array of male bodybuilders in the briefest of posing straps. Up to then, she had expressed her fear to her husband, Gustav Schwarzenegger, once defined as "an Austrian version of Cary Grant," that their son was a homosexual. "He covered his bedroom walls with pictures of nude men," she protested.

Years would go by before Arnold actually met Jackie, and that was in 1976, after he'd completed the filming of his movie, *Pumping Iron*.

In Manhattan, Jackie made a sudden appearance at Elaine's, the fashionable East Side restaurant, where a party was being hosted in Arnold's honor as a means of promoting his movie. No one expected her, and her mere presence at such an unlikely event caused a stir. Arnold appeared somewhat tongue-tied when he was introduced to her.

Of course, his press agent didn't miss the opportunity to have a paparazzo snap a photo of them together. It then appeared in newspapers across the country. One reporter even suggested that that photograph transformed Arnold into an overnight celebrity.

Jackie warmly embraced Arnold and kissed him, then moved on to greet such illustrious guests as the aging movie star, Paulette Goddard, former wife of Charlie Chaplin, and Andy Warhol. At the time, Jackie was an editor at Viking Press.

When asked what he thought of Jackie, Arnold gave an unusual reply: "She likes very much where I came from."

Barbara Walters was there, telling Jackie that when she touched Arnold's arm, she was amazed at how soft it was.

"That soft arm, as you call it, can turn into a very threatening machine," Jackie warned Walters.

Despite its designation as a movie about bodybuilding, the premiere attracted some of New York's most coveted

glitterati, including Paul Simon, Tom Wolfe, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Carly Simon.

Jackie later saw *Pumping Iron* at a private screening, and delivered her own review: "Many people wrongly consider bodybuilders grotesque, and accuse them of being gay because of the tortuous demands and long hours spent on their bodies to make a Mr. Olympia or Mr. Universe. But Mr. Schwarzenegger has shown in this film that musclemen are deeply motivated to train their bodies, but they are also men with the same fears, ambitions, and desires of men with less physical attributes."

It was reported that the director/producer George Butler wanted to use Jackie's evaluation for publicity purposes, but she refused to grant permission.

Almost overnight, Arnold burst onto the scene, evolving from a "gym rat" into a figure pursued by high society. Even Diana Vreeland *[the fashion mogul who influenced* Harper's Bazaar, Vogue, *and later, the fashion collection at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art]* told Jackie, "The boy is charming—just charming. That accent is utterly divine."

Jackie, along with Patricia Kennedy Lawford, attended a party for Arnold hosted by Fiat heiress Delphina Ratazzi. Once again, Warhol appeared, as did Charlotte Curtis *[a top-tier columnist for The New York Times, and eventually a celebrity in her own right]* and a host of other media headliners.

By that time, Arnold had hired a publicist who made the claim that "Jackie is begging" to be permitted to edit Arnold's next book, following the publication of *Arnold: The Education of a Bodybuilder* in 1977.

Jackie's friends were amazed. "Did I hear that right?" asked Vreeland. "Jackie wants to edit a book about Arnold's bodybuilding and run pictures of him in revealing posing straps."

So far as it is known, Jackie's crush on Arnold never went beyond her wildest dreams.

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Arnold—originally billed as Arnold Strong after his arrival in the America in the 1970s—was a 30-year-old bodybuilder when he met Maria Shriver, a 21-year-old *ingénue*. Arnold himself defined it as "instant chemistry," after he spotted Maria at a 1977 tennis-related charity event in New York.

Politically, they were worlds apart: He was a staunch Republican and she was a Kennedy Democrat, part of a political dynasty.

When Jackie heard that Arnold was dating her relative, Maria Shriver, she was mildly shocked. She told Truman Capote, who bruited it around town. "I would think that Arnold was too much man for Maria, who is so sweet." She went on to say, "Arnold will fit right into the Kennedy family, whose men have always sought their sexual pleasures outside the beds of their wives."

After Arnold became the biggest movie star in the world, revelations about his past were exposed in the tabloids. It was learned that Arnold's father, Gustav Schwarzenegger, with his "Hitler-style mustache," had been a member of the Nazi party. Arnold himself had been a great friend of the disgraced Kurt Waldheim, former U.N. chief who participated in Nazi atrocities during World War II.

In 1992, *Spy Magazine* reported that in the 70s, Arnold "enjoyed playing and giving away recordings of Hitler's speeches." During the filming of his 1977 *Pumping Iron*, he was rumored to have said on camera that he "admired" Hitler, although the director wisely removed that controversial footage from the film's final cut.

Columnist Bob Herbert in *The New York Times* stated the case for the opposition: "He may once have admired Hitler for whatever reasons, but, I'm sure if you asked Arnold Schwarzenegger whom he admires most, the honest answer would be *'Ah-nold!'* Welcome to the world of undiluted narcissism. The man has spent a lifetime pirouetting in front of cameras and mirrors, contemplating his navel and every other part of his once-buff bod. Adoration is the thing. In the mad, mad, world of Hollywood stardom, the undiluted narcissist doesn't have to worry about what to say. Image is everything."

Jackie was awed by the rapid rise of Arnold as the world's number one movie star, particularly after the release of his most famous role, *Conan the Barbarian*, in the "sword-and-sorcery/adventure film" released in 1982. She watched in amazement as the seven-time winner of the *Mr. Olympia* contest dominated the action movie genre. "He has not just real muscle, but box office muscle," Jackie said.

She attended the wedding of Maria and Arnold at the church of St. Francis Xavier at Hyannis Port. Ronald Reagan cabled his congratulations (at the union) and his regrets (about not being able to attend the ceremony). Jackie showed up in a smart navy blue suit with a white triangular inset. The crowd that gathered outside the church gave her the loudest cheers.

Both Jack and Bobby Kennedy had been altar boys at this church. When Jackie spotted Arnold and Maria together at the altar, she told Arnold's mother, Aurelia *[who wore a violet suit under a mink coat]*, "Maria is certainly one lucky young woman."

Jackie's children, John Jr. and Caroline, also attended the wedding, and Maria's father, Sargent Shriver, gave the bride away.

Even Jackie was impressed with the wedding cake, weighing 425 pounds and towering seven feet high with eight tiers. Arnold danced the first waltz with his bride to the sound of Peter Duchin's seven-piece band. Another dance was with Jackie, who seemed to "melt into his muscled arms," in the words of one of the wedding arrangers from the Robert Isabell Company in New York.

He also noted that Jackie took delight in eating a *Mozart Kugeln*, a chocolate confection filled with marzipan, said to be Arnold's favorite treat. "In addition to those muscles, Arnold knows what's good," Jackie told her fellow guests at her table, which, like the others at this lavish ceremony, was draped in rose-colored linen with a basket of flowers that included Queen Anne's Lace.

Kurt Waldheim, the disgraced politician from Austria, did not show, but cabled his regrets.

Instead, Arnold proposed a toast to honor Waldheim, saying, "My friends don't want me to mention Kurt's name, because of all the recent Nazi stuff and the U.N. controversy, but I love him and Maria does, too, and so thank you, Kurt."

Reporters noted that Jackie "turned visibly pale at the toast." Later, she told Teddy Kennedy and others, "I don't know why Arnold doesn't want to distance himself from an accused Nazi. His association with Waldheim can only harm him."

Arnold told reporters for *People* magazine and *The New York Daily News*, "Kurt has just had a bad press."

At the posthumous sale of many of Jackie's most personal possessions, Arnold Schwarzenegger showed up to purchase this **Norman Rockwell portrait of JFK.** "My kids have Kennedy blood in them," he said.

One reporter shot back, "So did Adolf!"

In the wake of the wedding, Waldheim was elected President of Austria, winning 54 percent of the vote. That didn't please Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Laureate, who said, "Waldheim's election by the people of Austria is a stain on that country and all of mankind." Posters advertising Arnold's support of Waldheim had been plastered across Austria during the weeks prior to the elections there.

In 1976, Arnold posed in the nude for the celebrated photographer, Francesco Scavullo for a *Cosmopolitan* centerfold. "He was nude and most cooperative, very charming and a delight to photograph. But after seeing the nudes, he seemed to feel they were too personal, as they depicted his genitalia. He changed his mind and asked that the pictures not be published. I put them in a bank vault and gave him my solemn promise that I would never publish them."

Jackie's friend, William Walton, claimed that she made an effort to obtain copies of these photographs, but he did not know if she succeeded or not.

The photos of Arnold that appeared in the 1977 edition of *Cosmopolitan* followed the example set by an earlier centerfold, Burt Reynolds. No views of genitalia were shown. The "full monty," as the English say, had been artfully concealed.

In 1978, Arnold again posed nude for the talented homosexual photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe, the pictures becoming a hot seller in the gay porn world. "I have absolutely no hang-ups about the fag business," Arnold said.

One hot summer afternoon, following his marriage to Maria, Arnold and Jackie both attended a pool party at Hyannis Port. They were seen engrossed in conversation about art. Later, Arnold confessed, "I like hanging out with successful people. If you hang out around low foreheads, it means you are a low forehead yourself."

Arnold talked to Jackie about how much he liked to paint late at night after the members of his household had gone to sleep. He would retreat to his office upstairs, light a fire, and play soft music. Sometimes, he painted until

two or three o'clock in the morning. He told her that once, he painted a bucolic scene of the Austrian countryside of his youth. It featured snow-covered mountains looming in the background. "For the cows, I colored them blue or purple," he said. "If you make the cow its true color, it's boring."

More than one biographer has suggested that both Jackie and Teddy Kennedy tried to influence Arnold to switch from the Republican Party to the Democratic side.

Maria told her family, "Don't look at him as a Republican. Look at him as the man I love. And if that doesn't work, look at him as someone who can squash you."

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Both Maria and Arnold were said to have been greatly saddened at Jackie's untimely death in 1994.

In 1996, still a Republican, Arnold issued a warning to his party: "You're going to lose until you become a party of inclusion, that you love the foreigner that comes in with no money as much as a gay person, as a lesbian, as anyone else."

That year, he appeared at a Jackie Onassis auction of personal possessions, spending $750 on memorabilia. He purchased items which included JFK's golf clubs plus a portrait of the President by Norman Rockwell, plus dozens of other items. "I was a big fan of Jack Kennedy and Mrs. Onassis, and I think it would be great for the kids to know where part of their blood comes from."

Jackie, of course, did not live to see Arnold successfully run for governor of California. Although she predicted that he would never be faithful to one woman, she perhaps would still have been horrified at all the publicity surrounding his breakup with one of her favorite relatives, Maria. Surely she would have been mortified to hear that he'd fathered a love child with the family's housekeeper.

Perhaps what would have offended Jackie the most were the stories that came out during his race for Sacramento. Newspaper after newspaper compared Arnold's womanizing to that of JFK.

During his race for the governor, Arnold was accused of sexual harassment and was labeled "Governor Groper" in the press. At least 16 women came forward describing his previous episodes of sexual misconduct during the filming of his movies.

On the set of *Terminator 2*, one female crew member claimed he walked over to her and pulled out her breasts, exposing them. Another alleged when she went to his trailer to summon him onto the set, she discovered him performing oral sex on a woman. He looked up at the script girl, telling her, "eating is not cheating."

He told *Esquire* magazine, "When you see a blonde with great tits and a great ass, you say to yourself, 'Hey, she must be stupid or must have nothing else to offer, which is the case many times.'"

Finally, Arnold called a press conference, admitting "I behaved badly sometimes."

Frank Sinatra: Jackie and the Boudoir Singer

"Even in the pre-JFK years, Jackie had more men per square inch than any woman I've ever known."
—Letitia Baldrige, longtime friend and social secretary

Past differences aside, but with many future dramas to come, **Jackie** and **Frank Sinatra** were most gracious to each other during the Inaugural Ball in January of 1961.

"*The Kennedy media image that shielded Jack's peccadilloes also protected Jackie, and neither one could divorce the other while in the White House. 'We are like two icebergs,' Jackie said, 'the public life above the water, the private life submerged.'*"

—Dr. David Eisenbach, political historian

During his 1960 campaign for president, JFK, in Jackie's opinion, was seeing too much of Frank Sinatra. She voiced her suspicion to Peter Lawford that "Sinatra seems like an endless wagon train hauling young women to Jack,"

Whenever possible, Jack took time off from the campaign to party with Frank, sometimes in Las Vegas and sometimes in Palm Springs. Party time meant available women, and Jackie knew that.

She was particularly furious about his dangerous liaison with Judith Campbell Exner, who had been introduced to JFK by Frank. Jackie was enraged when she learned that Exner had "slept over" with JFK at their Georgetown home when Jackie was out of town.

Behind JFK's back, Frank called him "Chicky Boy." Somehow Jackie found out about that nickname and used it to taunt her husband when she discovered yet another of his infidelities, many of which had been orchestrated by Frank himself. She referred to the young women that Frank set up for JFK seductions as "lollipops."

JFK asked Frank to organize the roster of entertainers slated to perform at his 1961 inauguration. Frank gladly accepted and later claimed that the gig was the highlight of his life.

During the frenzied weeks he spent arranging the events, Frank was on the phone day and night, getting commitments from an impressive array of leading stars, each of whom promised to perform, onstage, at the President's inauguration. Ella Fitzgerald was willing to fly in from Australia, and Shirley MacLaine agreed to wing in from Tokyo. Frank located Gene Kelly in Switzerland, where he was shacked up with a male ski instructor. Sidney Poitier flew back from Paris. Ethel Merman got permission to leave her Broadway show, *Gypsy*, for a single performance in D.C. Frank even got Eleanor Roosevelt to agree to show up, although she really would rather have seen Adlai Stevenson as president instead.

Frank Sinatra *(left)* and **President Kennedy** during the reign of Camelot. Frank felt he should be named "Secretary of Bimbo Procurement."

Jackie disagreed, referring to the crooner as "The White House pimp."

Joey Bishop signed on as master of ceremonies, and Leonard Bernstein agreed to conduct an orchestral rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Frank brought his girlfriend, Juliet Prowse, although he planned to devote most of the evening to Jackie herself. Because of their interracial marriage, Sammy Davis and Mai Britt were not on the guest list, but Kennedy loyalists Janet Leigh (one of JFK's mistresses) and Tony Curtis were invited, as were Bette Davis, Jimmy Durante, Mahalia Jackson, Harry Belafonte, Milton Berle, and Nat King Cole.

In one of the most embarrassing moments during his organizing of the event, Peter Lawford had to confront Sammy Davis, Jr., and Frank with the bad news: Bobby Kennedy didn't want Sammy to perform with the other stars.

"Bobby feels he's too controversial," Peter explained." He turned to Sammy. "This planning to marry a blonde Swedish actress is a bit much even for the liberal Democrats to take," Peter said. "Bobby is afraid we'll lose our Democratic base because of Sammy. They might even vote Republican next time."

At first, Frank balked, threatening to walk out the door, but Sammy urged him to stay on. "It's not the first time that this darkie was shown the back exit," Sammy said.

Dean Martin called Frank, "I'm too busy on this shit movie in Hollywood to come. By the way, who won the election? I was drunk that night."

The pre-inaugural gala of January, 1961 was "the biggest night of my life," Jackie said. She was about to become the First Lady of the land. Elegantly attired and coiffed, she was escorted up the steps of the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C.

As host of the proceedings, a tuxedo-clad Frank was her escort. At *The Washington Post* an editor saw this picture and asked, "Where is JFK?" A reporter replied, "He's probably in a broom closet somewhere, fucking Angie Dickinson."

At the time, Jackie held Frank and his Rat Pack, whose members included Peter Lawford, in disdain, claiming that the Kennedy family was merely star struck. "The Rat Pack is the wrong image for you, Jack," she told her husband. She was credited with eliminating the presence of the Rat Pack during JFK's quest for the presidency.

Even though he had escorted her into the ballroom, Jackie kept Frank "at arm's length." Later, she changed her mind about him. "Once you melted his protective façade, he was one of the most sensitive men I ever met, so unlike Jack."

Finally, the inauguration got underway in spite of Washington's worst snowstorm. John F. Kennedy was the epitome of youth, and surely no First Lady had ever looked as glamorous as Jackie that night—not Martha Washington, Mary Todd Lincoln, and certainly not Mrs. Calvin Coolidge or Bess Truman.

Arriving at the National Guard Armory, Jack and Jackie were treated like the newly crowned King and Queen of the World, despite the snowdrifts blowing across Washington.

Frank opened that gala with his hit song, "That Old Black Magic." Except for this performance, the lyrics were changed to "That Old Jack magic."

"It wasn't Black Magic, it wasn't Jack magic, it was Jackie magic," Frank said. "I literally came under her spell, and before my life ends, I'll be god damn if I'm not going to get her."

Back in Hollywood, Frank, over drinks, discussed the inauguration with Lawford. "I was speechless when Jackie emerged from that limousine with that bouffant hairdo. I wanted her just for myself and to hell with Jack. She wore a long white gown—the women reporters called it 'organza'—along with sparkling jewels. She literally left me speechless. I got a hard-on. Fortunately, I was able to conceal it as I escorted her up the steps to the armory, thanks to my heavy duty jockstrap."

One evening during the early weeks of his presidency, based on JFK having told Jackie that he wanted to dine alone with her, she was expecting a romantic evening. But when she came in for dinner, she discovered Frank with Jack, discussing women. The moment she entered the room, they abruptly changed the subject.

It turned out that JFK had created what he called "a dynamite idea for a film," and he wanted Frank to star in it, playing himself as president. The plot involved a Texas-based *coup d'état* and a plot to forcibly remove a sitting president from his office.

Ironically, after JFK's own assassination in 1963, that half-formulated idea became a central point in many of those claims about how Lyndon B. Johnson had engineered the assassination of JFK, as a means of elevating himself to the status of president.

In later years, Jackie and Frank discussed JFK's premonitions about how he was going to die in Dallas.

In April of 1961, some malicious person, no doubt a Republican within the F.B.I., sent Jackie an anonymous letter which asserted that the Bureau had learned that *Confidential* magazine had affidavits from two mulatto prostitutes in New York stating that Jack and Frank, from within a suite at the Hotel Carlyle, had had sex with both of them. The anonymous letter went on to assert that the magazine would soonafter release the story to the world at large.

Without alerting her husband, Jackie placed a call to Frank himself for verification. At first he denied it, but then he relented, admitting the story's validity after he learned that the report was about to be printed.

"You created this mess. Now get rid of it!" Jackie reportedly admonished Frank. Then she slammed down the phone. It is believed that Frank then called Joe Kennedy, who had gotten him involved in the campaign in the first place, and persuaded Joe to buy off the magazine for $50,000. The story was never run.

Jackie later told Peter Lawford, “My call to Sinatra may have saved Jack’s presidency in its early stage.”

This same unknown informant within the F.B.I. also sent Jackie a detailed report from Belden Katelman, who was identified only as a Las Vegas investor. In the report, Jackie read that Frank and JFK had shared a suite at the Sands during the campaign and that Peter Lawford had also arrived for a visit. “Show-girls from all over were seen running in and out of the Senator’s suite at all hours of the day and night,” the report alleged.

After he was elected president, JFK often called Frank just to talk to him. The President was especially interested in hearing about the latest young movie stars, especially those Frank had already seduced.

One night over an after-dinner drink, Jack told his brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, “I should really invite Frank to the White House. Throw something special as a means of thanking him for all he did for me in the campaign.”

“That’s impossible,” Peter said. “Jackie hates Frank.”

“The next time Jackie goes horseback riding in Middleburg, ask Frank to come and see us,” JFK said.

Peter called Frank that very night and found him elated by the invitation. Two weeks later he flew to Washington where a limousine was waiting to drive him to the less-frequently used southwest gate of the White House as a means of avoiding photographers.

Peter later whispered to JFK, “I think Frank wanted us to send Air Force One to fly him here from California.”

“People don’t get what they want in life,” JFK said, “except for me.”

JFK himself escorted Frank on a personalized tour of the private rooms of the White House. The tour ended with Bloody Marys on the Truman Balcony.

The next day, Teddy Kennedy and both Patricia and Peter Lawford accompanied Frank on a private Kennedy plane to Hyannis Port where they went boating on a yacht.

After his arrival in Washington, Frank hooked up with the President for a sail on the Potomac, this time aboard the Kennedy yacht, the *Honey Fitz*.

Before they had a falling out, JFK would lavishly entertain Frank, in league with other celebrities who included both Judy Garland and Audrey Hepburn, at Washington’s Mayflower Hotel, where he maintained a suite. Jackie was never invited, but she was made aware that Frank often arranged the presentation of beautiful starlets for the president to sample.

As a senator, JFK had used the Mayflower Hotel, in the words of one observer who worked in the White House, as “his personal Playboy mansion.”

In 1962 Marilyn Monroe called Jackie at the White House, and, surprisingly, the First Lady took the call. The two women would meet months later within Truman Capote’s New York apartment. On their initial call, Marilyn urged Jackie to step aside and divorce her husband so she could marry him.

Jackie later told Peter, “Marilyn really must have been on something. Welcome to reality, something she obviously doesn’t know anything about.”

She was furious that Marilyn would have the audacity to actually call her. “The woman has no shame,” she told her secretary. “I know she calls Jack at the White House. But phoning me is unforgivable. I blame Frank Sinatra for all of this.”

Through Peter, Jackie sent word to Frank that “you are no longer welcome at the White House.”

Years would go by before they made up. The flare-up with Frank occurred at the same time that Bobby Kennedy began to go after some of Frank’s mob associates, including Sam Giancana, Johnny Roselli, and Mickey Cohen. Ultimately, it was Bobby who warned Jackie to steer clear of Frank.

On March 16, 1974, Peter Duchin, the pianist and band leader, brought Jackie and Frank together again after a long alienation.

In an interview with Duchin, Sarah Bradford, author of *America’s Queen*, claimed that as a friend of both Jackie and Frank, Duchin managed to convince them to bury their hatchets.

In the wake of their reconciliation, Frank invited her to attend his concert in Providence, Rhode Island. Claiming “that sounds like fun,” she accepted. He sent his plane to pick her up.

Accompanied by Peter and Cheray Duchin, Jackie flew to Rhode Island, where she hooked up with Frank after the show. They then flew on his private plane back to New York where a limo waited to whisk them into Manhattan for a late dinner.

Reportedly, at the end of the meal, Jackie told Duchin, “I don’t think Frank is my type.”

“Nothing happened,” Duchin told Bradford. “I think either she would have told me or Frank would have told me.”

Perhaps Duchin’s impression is right. Nothing happened on that particular night. Their brief fling would occur later.

One night in Manhattan, Fiat czar Gianni Agnelli, the richest man in Italy, arranged to have dinner with Frank. “We Italians must stick together,”

"The Rake of the Riviera," as Agnelli was called, had what he termed "a monkey curiosity about gossip." Pamela Harriman had once kept him amused about what was going on in London and Paris, but Frank was the best source for the peccadilloes of Hollywood scandal. Over the course of their dinner, Agnelli revealed a scandal of his own: While Jackie Kennedy had been married to the President, he had asked her to seek a divorce and marry him.

When Frank Sinatra had dinner with his friend, the Fiat czar, **Gianni Agnelli**, the singer learned that he'd seduced Jackie years before, when she was First Lady.

"Maybe she was addicted to Italian salami," Frank joked. "I'm next. She'll probably want a steady diet of it when I finish with her."

[For more information on the Jackie/Agnelli affair, see the following chapter.]

Jackie had met Agnelli when she went on a holiday—during the presidential administration of her husband—to Ravello, Italy, to visit her sister, Lee Radziwill. The two-week holiday stretched on for a month.

Wild stories began in Washington and spread to Los Angeles. One report claimed that the CIA had received on order to retrieve Jackie's diaphragm from the White House and have it sent by plane to Ravello.

Agnelli told Frank, "I was in love with Jackie. But we decided to view our relationship as a summer romance."

"You've got me excited," Frank said. "Up to now, Jackie has disliked me very much because she knew I pimped for her husband. But now, you've convinced me that this babe can be had."

In 1974, Frank called Jackie and invited her for a performance at the Uris Theatre in New York. She accepted the invitation. To the awe of the audience, he sat in the center of the theater with Jackie, listening to his opening act of Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie. At intermission he excused himself and left to perform. During his performance on stage, his seat was occupied by a member of the Secret Service.

After his performance, the romantic pair had a late night dinner at the 21 Club in Manhattan. He was in a playful mood and over dinner, he joked with her.

"After Jack died, you were quoted as saying that you'd have the respect of the American people, just so long as you didn't run off to marry Eddie Fisher. Why didn't you say Frank Sinatra instead of Eddie?"

"I figured he needed the publicity and you didn't," Jackie shot back.

Before their final brandy of the evening, she offered an editorial proposal: "Frank, you must write your memoirs. I'll volunteer to be your editor."

"There are just too many things I've done in my life that I'm not proud of," he told her.

"Perhaps we can skip over the really horrible ones and tell a tantalizing story at the same time," she responded.

"Perhaps. Let's you and I sleep on it."

"Is that an offer?"

In separate limousines, they left 21 Club for the Hotel Carlyle for a sexual tryst. Ironically, this was the same hotel where her husband had had several sexual encounters with Marilyn Monroe.

Jackie must have been impressed with Frank's performance, because he was invited back for "a second show." This was not to be the beginning of a long-running affair. They would not be alone together until almost another year had passed.

Many Jackie watchers felt that that time at the Carlyle marked the end of the Jackie/Sinatra affair.

Not so. In J. Randy Taraborrelli's *Sinatra: Behind the Legend*, he reports another sexual tryst between Jackie and Frank, this one occurring at the singer's suite within New York City's Waldorf Towers in 1975.

Several sources, including Sammy Davis Jr., confirmed that afterward, claiming that Jackie and Frank

"connected" on rare occasions, Frank bragged about his conquest of the former First Lady. One source, an employee of Frank's, told Taraborrelli that he dropped Jackie off at the Waldorf and picked her up there the following morning. According to the book, Ethel Kennedy may have been instrumental in convincing Jackie not to accept any more of Frank's calls.

When Truman Capote asked Jackie about the rumors that linked her, romantically, to Sinatra, Jackie jokingly said, "I should have stuck with Eddie Fisher."

Capote told Jackie, "I don't know how you could let Frank get away. He let me feel it one night, and I'm a good judge of cocks, having seen enough of them in my day. If I were you, I would still be swinging on it. Of course, it wasn't as big as that of Porfirio Rubirosa, who seduced your sister-in-law, Pat Kennedy."

Frank met Jackie one final time in New York. It was in 1994, at 21 Club, when Jackie was an editor for Doubleday. Spotting her, he asked the maître d' to invite her to his table. She accepted.

Without mentioning their shared past with each other, she urged him once again to write his memoirs.

"As I've said before, I can never do that," he told her. "Too many secrets. But for you, I'll think about it one more time."

She had long ago forgiven him for sharing Judith Campbell Exner with President Kennedy, and for the role he played in bringing Marilyn Monroe back into JFK's life. At the end of the dinner, as she got up to leave, he kissed her, on the lips, goodbye.

The next morning he sent her a bouquet of exquisite flowers and a bottle "of the most expensive perfume in New York." He wrote: "You are America's Queen. I can't write those memoirs. God bless you, always. Love, Frank."

He knew her days on this Earth had grown short, and when he heard of her death he wept bitter tears. "I could have loved her. She could have loved me. The saddest words are always what might have been."

At Jackie's funeral, on May 24, 1994, Frank sent two dozen red roses but didn't show up.

GLORIA SWANSON TO JACKIE: *"I HAD ARI FIRST, DEARIE!"*

Jackie encountered silent screen vamp **Gloria Swanson** *(photo below)* at a party, decades after her heyday. For years, Jackie had been hearing stories about Swanson's long-running affair in Hollywood during the late 1920s with her deceased father-in-law, Joseph P. Kennedy. Virtually unknown to the world, Swanson had also had an affair with Aristotle Onassis.

At the party, Swanson provocatively told Jackie, "I got to Ari first, dearie. In fact, Ari sent Johnny Meyer to meet with me recently. He's heard talk that I might write my memoirs, and he doesn't want me to mention our affair."

"I told Meyer that I was surprised Ari thought I would want to rake up our long-ago friendship at this point. I also told him to tell Ari that his 'injunction' is a compliment to my memory but an insult to my integrity."

What Swanson didn't tell Jackie was that Meyer had arrived at her swank apartment in New York with $250,000 in cash to offer her for the removal of Ari's name from her upcoming memoirs. She refused the money. "Great stars have great pride," she said, using the famous line of Norma Desmond in *Sunset Blvd*.

"I got her to agree not to mention you, and I saved you a quarter million," Meyer later told Ari. "Sounds like bonus time to me."

HOW MARILYN TRIED TO KILL BOBBY KENNEDY AND WHAT JACKIE SAID ABOUT IT AFTERWARD

As First Lady, Jackie immediately became suspicious of David Powers, who had been Jack's longtime aide and intimate friend. She believed that Powers was concealing the facts associated with Jack's obsession with having his "daily dose of sex."

After JFK was assassinated, Powers wrote a book, *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye*, in which he claimed that every time Jackie left Washington, he and the president dined together. Then the president, according to Powers, said his prayers like a good Catholic and

went to bed alone. When Jackie read this, she said, “What a piece of fiction!”

Infuriated over Jack’s sexual conquests, Jackie often left the White House in a huff. But she had a spy (or spies), who told her what went on during her absence.

She was especially concerned whether Marilyn ever visited the White House in disguise. Her friends at the Hotel Carlyle in New York said that on occasion, Marilyn had arrived disguised in a brunette wig, hiding behind large sunglasses, the kind that Jackie herself was often photographed wearing.

When Jackie read a play, *The Best Man*, written by her distant relative, Gore Vidal, she knew at once that the character of William Russell had been based on her husband. In the play, the womanizing character wonders how, after he becomes president, he’ll be able to sneak women into the White House.

In an impudent mood, Vidal gave copies of the play to both Jack and Jackie. Each of them read it in bed. Jackie asked her husband if the character of William Russell reminded him of anyone in politics. “Not at all,” Jack said. “It’s pure fiction.”

At one point before the election of 1960, Jackie confronted Bobby, warning him that her husband’s affair with Marilyn might jeopardize his chance of ever occupying the Oval Office. “I think if the American public knew that their future president was cheating on his wife and humiliating his family, those same people would not vote for Jack.”

Jackie was aware that Bobby knew the details of Jack’s affair with Monroe, but he never revealed any of them to Jackie.

But in 1965, in the midst of his own affair with Jackie, Bobby did tell her that on the last day he saw Marilyn, only hours before her death, she had become a candidate for a padded cell. He confessed that in the midst of a violent argument, she’d taken a butcher knife and tried to stab him in the chest. He overpowered her, knocking her to the floor and wrestling the knife from her hand.

“Marilyn may have died at a convenient time,” Jackie said. “She could have brought down the Kennedy House of Cards.”

Chapter Twenty

Jackie's Lovers, Listed in Alphabetical Order

Friends and Flings—What's Love Got to Do With It?

JFK Orders Paternity Test on Caroline and John, Jr.

Although **Jackie**, on occasion, sometimes dated—or at least slept with—men her junior, she admitted to her confidants that, "I'm often drawn to older men, sophisticated men, men of the world, men of experience." Perhaps by coincidence, many of these men were rich, earning for her a reputation as a gold-digger.

At various galas, parties, and openings, mostly in Manhattan, Jackie most often arrived with an escort. Only on very rare occasions did she arrive alone somewhere.

During the course of her life, she apparently received solicitations from three U.S. Presidents, namely Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, and Gerald Ford. Often, presidential hopefuls, including Adlai Stevenson and George McGovern, dated her, hoping that lightning would strike twice—a reference to her role in JFK's winning of the presidency, of course. Perhaps these men hoped that Jackie wanted to be First Lady a second time.

In 1994, as Jackie Kennedy Onassis was dying of cancer in her Fifth Avenue apartment in Manhattan, she summoned Nancy Tuckerman to her side. The woman had for years been her most devoted female friend.

Tuckerman had been Jackie's White House social secretary. Originally, they had met when they'd roomed

together at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut.

For her farewell to life, Jackie was getting her documents in order. One of her primary concerns involved destroying letters written to her by lovers or wannabee beaux over the decades, from when she was married to either JFK or Aristotle Onassis, but mostly from her years as a twice-widowed American icon. Many of the letters were quite passionate, and Jackie didn't want them published after she was gone.

In his book, *Farewell Jackie. A Portrait of Her Final Days*, Edward Klein wrote about the letter burning. "There was a passionate letter from the writer, John Marquand, Jr., Jackie's first great love." *[He was alleged to have taken her virginity in a Paris elevator.]* "Another letter, equally ardent, came from Rear Admiral Guérin, the French naval attaché during the Kennedy administration. There had been rumors that Jackie and the dashing French admiral were carrying on an affair. The rumors were true, and the letter went into the fire. Ditto a love note from Gianni Agnelli."

After the death of Aristotle Onassis, Jackie tried to change her public image from that of a gold-digger to a working woman and single mom when she became an editor in New York. The antagonistic press once again became her ally.

Gore Vidal, however, remained cynical about her. "She didn't let her part-time employment cramp her style. No one could keep up with the men who came and went in her life. One night it might be Peter Duchin, the musician, or perhaps the scenic designer Oliver Smith, maybe Peter Beard, the photographer and writer, even Carl Killingsworth, the so-called King of CNBC. Brendan Gill wrote for *The New Yorker* for 60 years, and Jackie was seen on his arm. Of course, many of her dates were gay."

She was, on occasion, escorted by Thomas Hoving, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. She also went out with Karl Katz, a museum director and conceptualist.

> *"In the years immediately after Onassis' death, Jackie's name was linked as usual to a number of men, some of them lovers, some just friends. Even the occasional one-night stand. Jackie moved with the times, doing exactly as she pleased in matters of sex."*
>
> —Sarah Bradford, biographer

For a brief time, there was rampant speculation that she might wed Senator George McGovern, who'd run unsuccessfully against Richard Nixon for president. Several gossip columnists speculated that he was ready to divorce his wife, Eleanor, to marry Jackie. Vidal claimed, "From what I heard, George took her out on five different occasions. I doubt if sex entered the picture—but who knows for sure?"

No sooner was McGovern out of the picture than Jackie was seen in the arms of Alejandro Orfila, the dashing Argentine ambassador to the United States and the General Secretary of the Organization of American States.

At a gala at the Kennedy Center, Jackie swept into the Bicentennial Ball with Orfila. Nelson Rockefeller was there. He told friends at his table, "Jackie looks like the Queen of the United States, being restored to her throne after years of exile with Onassis."

That very night, Jackie bestowed love and kisses on Henry Kissinger, Teddy Kennedy, Rose Kennedy, and President Gerald Ford. Ford was overheard complimenting her, "If only you'd met me when I was a male model on the cover of *Cosmopolitan."*

She jokingly told him, "To my knowledge, you're the only president who was a male model. If Ronald Reagan makes it to the White House, he'd challenge your claim. After all, he used to pose for beefcake."

The dancers made room for Jackie and her handsome beau, Orfila, forming a circle around them on the dance floor. Rockefeller somewhat snidely suggested, "I think Jackie has ambitions to become the next Evita Perón."

Whereas she was seen in public with all these escorts, with some, of course, she had a more intimate relationship than with others. What was not known at the time was that she was slipping around for very rare sexual trysts with Frank Sinatra during the time he spent in New York. It was also rumored that Jackie had had an affair with Dean Martin, Sinatra's fellow Rat Packer.

Actually, what happened was this: Sinatra's flight into New York was delayed because of bad weather. He called Dean Martin at the Plaza Hotel and asked him if he'd take Jackie, with his apologies, out to dinner.

Later, Martin and Jackie were seen dining together at the Plaza in the Oak Room. Columnist Earl Wilson appeared and spotted them. He just assumed Martin and Jackie were having an affair. He asked his companions, "Is there a former lover of Shirley MacLaine's that Jackie hasn't tried to seduce? Perhaps she's getting back at Shirley ever since JFK asked Peter Lawford if Shirley had red pussy hair."

Both Sinatra and Martin were said to have become intimate with MacLaine during the making of the 1958 hit, *Some Came Running*. However, Martin later said, "I love her, but her oars aren't touching the water these days."

Jackie was also known for stealing Journalist Peter Hamill, MacLaine's boy friend of seven years, from her.

There was speculation in the press as to why Jackie and MacLaine were attracted to the same type of man. Parallels were also drawn between MacLaine and her marriage to producer Steve Parker and Jackie's marriage to Onassis.

MacLaine had told the press, "I don't have to worry about my husband growing tired of me because I never see him."

Likewise, Jackie's marriage to Onassis was characterized by long absences. At one point, he called her whenever he planned to fly into New York, thereby allowing her ample opportunity to wing her way off to Paris, or wherever.

One aggressive newspaper reporter from the *New York Daily News* asked Jackie, "What do you think of Shirley MacLaine?"

She snapped, "Check with Martin Rackin."

Rackin was a producer who'd made a dishy comment about the actress. "Shirley MacLaine is a disaster, a fucking ovary with a propeller, who leaves a trail of blood wherever she goes. A half-assed chorus girl, a pseudo-intellectual who thinks she knows everything; wears clothes from the ladies of the Good Christ Church Bazaar."

Jackie may have gotten the ultimate revenge on MacLaine. She eventually seduced her younger brother, Warren Beatty.

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After her departure from the White House, when Jackie was still living in Georgetown in Washington, she invited Margot Fonteyn to spend a weekend with her. Onstage, the British *prima ballerina* had danced frequently with Jackie's intimate friend, Rudolf Nureyev.

Recalling her weekend, Fonteyn later told friends that she was surprised at how candid Jackie had been with her. "She told me that she knew that her husband, President Kennedy, had been a womanizer. She also said that he had suspected her of having had numerous affairs, too."

"Behind my back, Jack had paternity tests performed on both John Jr. and Caroline," Jackie told Fonteyn. "Apparently, the results pleased him. They proved that my children came from his seed."

Charles Addams

Jackie As a Manifestation of Morticia

In 1966, between marriages, Jackie had a momentary fling with Charles Addams, the cartoonist known for his darkly humorous and macabre characters, some of which included the Addams family.

Friends speculated that Jackie was just trying to make Bobby Kennedy jealous, but it appears that she found Addams an amusing companion and competent lover. "His sense of humor is different from that of anybody I know," she said. "And I adore his artwork."

"Roguish and a bit crazy, but utterly fascinating," was how Joan Fontaine described cartoonist **Charles Addams**: "I took up with him, though I feared that Greta Garbo was a tough act to follow. The last person I expected him to be involved with was Mrs. Kennedy."

His fans didn't know that in private, Addams was known as a lady killer, making A-list conquests who ranged from Joan Fontaine to Greta Garbo.

His biographer defined him as "a well-dressed, courtly man with silvery back-combed hair and a gentle manner."

Seventeen years older than Jackie, the New Jersey born cartoonist was a distant descendant of U.S. presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams, despite the different spellings of their names. He had always been artistically inclined, "drawing with a happy vengeance," according to his biographer.

In Westfield, New Jersey, a spooky house on Dudley Avenue *[the police once caught him breaking into it]* became the inspiration for the Addams Family manse in his cartoons.

Jackie found Addams very social and debonair, but eccentric. He told her that his first job in 1933 involved working in the layout department of *True Detective* magazine. He had to retouch photos of corpses, removing the blood stains.

He also told her that he found the inspiration for his cartoon character, Morticia Addams, in his first wife, Barbara Jean Day, in 1942.

Jackie found Addams' previous marriages fascinating, especially when he told her that in 1954, he'd married another "Morticia look-alike" in the form of Barbara Barb. "She was a lawyer, a very clever fox, who tricked me into giving away all my legal rights to the TV and film franchise for the Addams Family. She also took out an insurance policy on me for $100,000. I consulted my lawyer, who told me to see Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity* (1944), in which Babs plots to murder her husband for his insurance money. I immediately divorced my second wife in 1956."

Addams often escorted Jackie to the movies or the theater, where she complained that people were always staring at her. He told her to let her hair down instead piling it up into a towering bouffant, and he also advised her not to wear large sunglasses in darkened theaters because that only drew attention to her. "Follow my advice and people won't notice you so much," he said.

The first time Addams visited Jackie's apartment, she told him, "I can't trust my servants. I think all of them are writing books about me. They always try to eavesdrop on my conversations, and I suspect they are going through my garbage."

"Jackie was an enigma never solved," Addams told his friend, the columnist Doris Lilly, former lover of Ronald Reagan. "She once left me a handwritten note. Out of curiosity, I took it to the best handwriting analyst in New York. It was not signed, so he didn't know it had been written by Jackie. He carefully analyzed it. Later, he told me, "You sent me the script of an egomaniac."

Addams had first met Jackie during the summer of 1964, when she was still recovering from the trauma of JFK's assassination that previous November in Dallas.

James Fosburgh, director of the Special Committee for White House paintings, once invited Jackie and Addams to spend a weekend with him at his country home in Westchester County.

Often as zany as his Addams Family cartoons, **Charles Addams** *(upper left)* is seen wearing the armored head of the headless "soldier" standing behind him.

Anjelica Huston *(upper right)* played Morticia in a later movie adaptation. In the bottom photograph, Gomez and Morticia were played by **John Austin** and **Carolyn Jones** in the popular 1964-66 TV series.

Jackie told her relative, John H. Davis, "I had no desire to become Charles' next Morticia. I would have had to wear my hair down."

A fellow guest included Kitty Carlisle Hart, who had been married to the playwright Moss Hart.

"All of us tried to show Jackie a good time, since she'd suffered through so much," Hart said. "To my amazement, Charlie was showing a romantic interest in her. I didn't think she would respond to him, but she did. An unlikely couple, they seemed captivated by each other."

"Each of us had separate bedrooms, but it became obvious that Charlie was slipping into Jackie's boudoir at night," Hart claimed. "The next afternoon, we played a silly game around the swimming pool."

"Instead of our present careers, the point of the game was to reveal what we would have preferred to be. Charlie said he wanted to be Harry James, the leader of a big band, married to Betty Grable. I wanted to be the world's leading movie star, a rival of Katharine Hepburn. Jackie surprised all of us, announcing that she would have preferred being born a falcon."

"Jackie and I later, in private, had a heart-to-heart talk if you can forgive the pun," Hart said. "I had lost Moss, and she had lost Jack. We talked about the adjustments a widow has to make. We shared our grief. I was shocked when she gave me a very graphic description of that day in Dallas."

"She described the horror of seeing the President's brain blown away, pieces of it falling onto her," Hart said. "She was filled with regrets. She felt if she'd moved in a different direction, she might have prevented it. She even claimed that she wished that she'd taken the bullets for him."

"It was ghastly hearing her talk," Hart said, "but I knew she needed to un-burden herself. I was glad to see her moving on with Charlie. After all, she still had most of her life to live. She began to date Charlie, to the surprise of all of us."

Jackie was seen leaving Addam's apartment in Greenwich Village, and she also slipped away with her Secret

Service for weekend visits to his home at Sagaponack, Long Island.

The affair ended abruptly when Addams bragged to friends, including George Plimpton, about how well Jackie performed in bed. “Seducing her is like living a fairy tale,” he told his friends.

One night at the Restaurant “21” in Manhattan, Addams was dining with his friend, Doris Lilly.

“He could not stop bragging about Jackie and his involvement with her,” Lilly later said, although she didn’t write about it in her column. “I felt he was being indiscreet. Since they moved in somewhat the same circles, I feared word would get back to Jackie.”

“In a coincidence of the type found in a Charles Dickens novel, Jackie, with some escort I didn’t recognize, entered 21 that night,” Lilly claimed. “The *maître d’* was directing her right by our table. Charlie spotted her and stood up to welcome her warmly, extending his hand. She stared straight through him as if he were an apparition.”

When Jackie was out of hearing distance, Addams sat down and said to Lilly: “What a bitch!” What a god damn fucking bitch!”

That marked the end of their affair.

Gianni Agnelli

Jackie and the Uncrowned King of Italy

Jackie Kennedy had long been impressed with Gianni Agnelli, the czar who ran Fiat during the jet age. She once called him “the godfather of the male style,” and was said to have envied Pamela Harriman when she became his mistress.

Many *fashionistas* hailed Agnelli as one of the most stylish men of the 20th Century. Men in the West copied—or tried to—his casual elegance and inventive style. *Esquire* magazine named Agnelli one of the five best-dressed men in the history of the world.

Agnelli’s own favorite appellation was “The Un-crowned King of Italy.” He also liked being called “the James Bond of *vroom.”*

He was also nicknamed *L’avvocato (*“Lawyer”) because he had a law degree, but never practiced. In France, because of his promiscuity, he was known as “the Rake of the Riviera”.

While President Kennedy remained behind at the White House, **Jackie** *(far left)* was vacationing along Italy’s Amalfi Coast with Fiat czar, **Gianni Agnelli** *(far right)*, hailed by *fashionistas* as “the most elegant man on Earth.” On those moonlit nights, and in spite of his wife being present, love was in the air between “Jackie and Gianni.” Regrettably, it attracted the attention of the world press.

Not just women, but other playboys such as Gunther Sachs and Porfirio Rubirosa were also attracted to him and his world of private jets "flying anywhere," martinis in heavy glasses, secluded coves along the Adriatic, and his pick of his era's most desirable women. They included not just Pamela, but big-bosomed Anita Ekberg; the beautiful Linda Christian *[wife of Tyrone Power]*; and the French actress, Danielle Darrieux, former wife of Rubirosa.

Agnelli never wore the same outfit twice, usually showing up in the latest bespoke suit created by Caraceni, with a Battistoni shirt.

When Jackie got to know him, she often wrote down some of his comments. "To be a man of elegance, you should be interested in everything—art, design, cars, sports—all things to express beauty."

When Agnelli appeared with the top two buttons of his shirt unfastened and his tie askew, it was not by accident, but a deliberate attempt to create his own artful style without formality. He defined it as "casual grace."

He was a tall man, very fit and slender, with wide-set eyes. He was intelligent, witty, charismatic, sophisticated, a man of the world, the personification of Continental elegance. When he walked into a room, everyone took notice. Whenever he was around, there was a sense of excitement in the air, as if something big was about to happen.

"He was an icon," said Pamela Harriman. "I can just picture him skiing on the face of a Swiss mountain at Gstaad, with a cigarette dangling from his lips, perhaps jumping nude from his yacht off the coast of Sardinia in August."

The press called him "unflappable, punctilious, nonchalant—at all times an aristocrat." Robert Rabensteiner, fashion editor of *l'Uomo Vogue*, claimed, "His life was his art. It was a beautiful life, and he lived it uniquely."

In August of 1962, during the peak of JFK's brief regime in the White House, Lee Radziwill and Prince Stanislas rented the elegant Villa Episcopi at Ravello, along the Amalfi Coast south of Naples. It was a 900-year-old, 12-room palazzo overlooking the Bay of Salerno.

Jackie was invited to bring Caroline and to join fellow house guests, including Gianni and Marella Agnelli, Benno Graziani *[the celebrity photographer for Paris-Match]* and his wife, Nicole, and C.L. Sulzberger. *[Cyrus Leo Sulzberger II (1912 – 1993) was The New York Times' lead foreign correspondent throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and a member of the family that owned that newspaper.]*

JFK was reluctant to let Jackie go, but since the Radziwills would be there, and since Caroline would go along, he finally agreed, even though he had always been suspicious of Agnelli.

Sulzberger would record details about the gathering in his book, *The Last of the Giants*, published in 1970. In it, he stated, "Jackie was a strange girl and also strange looking, but quite lovely in spite of the fact her eyes were too far apart. She is a good athlete, swims, water-skis, and dances as well and has a fine figure. She has an odd habit of halting constantly as she talks, a kind of pause rather than a stutter, so sometimes you think she's through saying something when she isn't."

"I didn't have the impression that she was particularly brilliant, despite her reputation for being so, or that she was unusually cultivated. Speaks good French and some Italian. A rather typical society girl, but sweet, exceptionally fond of Caroline, and somehow on the whole, unspoiled."

He later recalled to friends, "To say that Jackie and Gianni were mesmerized by each other would be putting it mildly. They were enchanted, in spite of her sister and Gianni's wife being with us. Jackie and Gianni, those two love-birds, managed to slip away for several trips together."

Agnelli's wife, Marella, *[Marella Caracciolo dei Principi di Castagneto)* was a discreet noblewoman and a well-known fabric designer. She managed to excuse herself whenever she wasn't needed or her husband preferred to be alone with Jackie.

At one point, Edoardo Agnelli, who had been born to the couple seven months after their marriage in 1954, showed up. He had been born in New York, making him an American citizen. Jackie soon discovered that he had no plan to become a Fiat czar in the footsteps of his father. He was interested in mysticism, and, at Princeton University, he had studied religion.

[In 2000, about six years after Jackie's death, Edoardo committed suicide by jumping off a bridge in Turin, the city where Fiat was headquartered; where his father had been born; and where, he would die.]

Agnelli arranged various excursions with Jackie in his 82-foot yacht. They even went so far as Naples to dine with an old Neapolitan count and his young mistress.

Trailed by the paparazzi on their every outing, Jackie and Agnelli walked through the ancient streets of Ravello, having a Campari at a café opening onto the Piazza del Duomo.

One moonlit night, on the deck of Agnelli's yacht, they danced barefoot to the sounds of a mandolin band. There were strolls along the beach after midnight.

As *Vanity Fair* claimed, "The tam-tam of international gossip worked with full rhythm; the paparazzi shot one photo after another, while the fantasies of the reporters went crazy. Jackie and Agnelli were often photographed on his blue sailing ship, or having drinks on one of the hotel terraces in Ravello, always at each other's side."

In the White House, JFK had been sent one photo too many of his wife with Agnelli, one of them picturing the two of them swimming together. JFK cabled her—"MORE CAROLINE, LESS GIANNI."

Before flying home, the "love story" of "Jackie and Gianni" had captured the curiosity—but not necessarily the approval—of the world.

Much of America was outraged, especially women. One group, Concerned Citizens of America, threatened to picket the White House after Jackie's return.

She was sent a cable "Would you not better serve the nation and the President by returning to his side? We have honored you greatly with the position of First Lady of our land, and we only ask that you not violate the dignity of that title."

Jackie's response? She was photographed the following night dancing the Twist with the Duca di Sangro at a night club, The Pirate's Den. Columnist Drew Pearson wrote: "How can a man handle the problems of a nation when he can't handle his wife? She's off dancing wearing a red blouse, red slacks, and red shoes with some aristocrat until four in the morning. Doesn't she have enough respect for her husband to be a good wife?"

Jackie and Agnelli received even more attention when they sailed over to Capri. Jackie already knew some expatriates on the island. Her first greeter was a Texan, Robert Hornstein, the heir to the Puss 'n Boots cat food fortune. She knew him only slightly.

Notorious, and much sought-after on Capri for his scandalous *La Dolce Vita* parties, he greeted Jackie with a gift of a dozen of the most expensive and beautiful silk scarves made in Italy.

On Capri, flamboyantly dressed in loose-fitting, purple-colored cotton pants and red *espadrilles*, he showed up at the pier to greet her. He welcomed her to the island and also invited her to his villa on the Via Tragara, "the Park Avenue" of Capri. In the garden behind his villa was the most exclusive nightclub on that very fashionable island.

Jackie had requested to meet Princess Irene Galitzine, who was sometimes compared to a Russian version of Coco Chanel, and who operated exclusive fashion boutiques in Florence and Rome. The most celebrated fashion designer on the Italian scene, she had created "Palazzo pajamas," which had become the virtual uniform of the international set.

On Capri, the paparazzi stalked them. Agnelli, with Jackie on his arm, escorted her to the Galitzine's rented Medici villa.

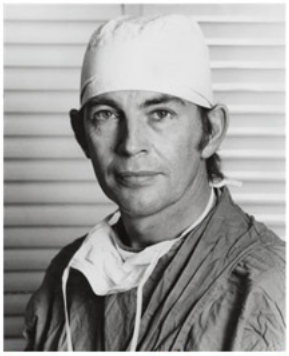
Ushered into the designer's bathroom, Jackie ordered a vodka after making a selection of palazzo pajamas, choosing a design in lime green Thai silk. After that stiff drink, she made a spectacular appearance at dinner.

Later, she and Agnelli went to Horstein's nightclub, where she danced the Twist and the Cha-Cha before departing aboard the Agnelli yacht for the return trip. They sailed against the backdrop of a pre-dawn sky. It was rumored that on this romantic ride, Agnelli proposed to Jackie, claiming he would divorce Marella and urging her to divorce JFK. She didn't give him an answer, but agreed to go below with him for what is known as a "farewell fuck."

***

[Jackie's friend, Robert Horstein, fell on bad days.

Semiramis Zurlo, a voluptuous, melodramatic sculptor of Ottoman descent, told Vanity Fair: *"Bob was a professional snob, loving flashy names and titles. Sexually, though, he preferred local fishermen and sailors, but only the really hot ones. One time, as a joke, Joan Crawford worked as a waitress for him at his club. Many guests thought she was just an impersonator.*



Jackie once listed **Dr. Christiaan Barnard** as “one of the most desirable men in the world.” Of course, she revised that list from time to time.

When she finally met him, he stole her heart.

Zorlu said, “Horstein was alleged to have bit off a local boy’s penis during a wild, alcoholic-fueled night. To keep his parents from going to the police, he gave them his villa. After that, he disappeared from the island and was never seen again.”

Dr. Christiaan Barnard

Jackie Gave Him Her Heart

A classically handsome heart surgeon from South Africa, Christiaan Barnard had long intrigued Jackie. Seven years older than her, she had first heard of him in 1950 when he did postgraduate work on a two-year scholarship in cardiothoracic surgery at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, studying under open-heart surgery pioneer Walt Lillehei.

One of Jackie’s college classmates, Sarah Hagan, had dated the surgeon and had fallen in love with him, sending Jackie a picture.

Born into genteel poverty, the son of a wilderness missionary, Barnard possessed touseled good looks, a ready wit, and a genius for thoracic surgery.

Short of money in Minneapolis, Barnard had mowed lawns, delivered newspapers, and washed cars. He’d seen *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and, like Scarlett O’Hara in the movie, he vowed never to go hungry again. He told friends that if he couldn’t make lots of money in the medical profession, he’d marry an heiress. Although he did make money in surgery, he also married an heiress.

Like the rest of the world, Jackie heard of Barnard once again on December 3, 1967, when he performed the first heart transplant on a human. He would later confide to Jackie that he had first experimented by transplanting hearts into fifty dogs. “For a dying man to make a decision for a heart transplant is not a difficult choice,” he once told her. “If a lion chases you to the bank of a river filled with crocodiles, you will leap into the water, convinced that you can swim to the other bank before the reptiles devour you. At least you have a chance at life, which is what one of my heart transplants provides.”

[The history-making event occurred when Denise Darvall, a 25-year-old woman, was brought into the hospital following a car crash. Her heart was still beating, but her brain no longer functioned. At the moment of her death, Barnard removed her heart and surgically installed it into the chest of Louis B. Washkansky, 55, a businessman suffering from end-stage coronary artery disease. The patient survived for only eighteen days, dying from pneumonia that overwhelmed his weakened system. Today, inprovements in anti-rejection drugs have made the procedure almost routine.]

The surgeon had ignited a firestorm in South Africa when it was revealed that he'd transplanted the heart of a white woman into the chest of a black man. Later, he infuriated some white South Africans when he publicly supported Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first post-apartheid president.

Almost overnight, Barnard was propelled into the jet set. When he arrived in New York, Jackie was among the first to call him with congratulations. He invited her out to dinner. Thus began a series of shared evenings.

In the movie, *Never So Few*, **Frank Sinatra** is paying special attention to the Italian sexbomb, **Gina Lollobrigida,** but she, like Jackie, gave her heart to Dr. Barnard.

She told friends such as Truman Capote, "Christiaan is my dream man. Utterly charming. A great conversationalist."

She learned that sudden fame had taken a toll on his personal life. In 1948, he'd married Aletta Gertruida Louw, a nurse, divorcing her in 1969.

He broke with his second wife, Johannesburg socialite Barbara Zoeliner, in 1982 after twelve years of marriage.

His final marriage was to a 24-year-old model, Karin Setzkorn, daughter of a multi-millionaire. His friends warned Barnard, then in his late 60s, about the dangers of marrying a young woman. "It may prove fatal," said his fellow surgeon, Dr. Denton Cooley.

Barnard replied, "Well, if she dies, I'll get a younger one."

Even though Jackie took extreme precautions for secrecy while they dated, word leaked out that Barnard had spent a weekend with her in her Fifth Avenue apartment.

Apparently, he and Jackie had discussed the downside of international fame. His point of view, as expressed to others, differed from Jackie's: "Any man—or woman, for that matter—who says he doesn't like applause and recognition is either a fool or a liar. Success gives you the courage to go on and do even more."

On the other hand, she complained about the exposure of her affairs. "I want less publicity, I should date men who are not household names. I can't even go out with a man before the boys of the press have me marrying him. Everyone I date is rumored to be my next husband."

Jackie was spotted dining in Manhattan with Barnard at both The Sign of the Dove and at Jimmy Weston's. At the latter restaurant, they encountered Frank Sinatra, who joined their table. A waiter later claimed that the singer sat with them for three hours.

The surgeon had seen only one of Sinatra's films, *Never So Few*. Released in 1959, it starred Gina Lollobrigida, an actress rivaling Sophia Loren as Italy's reigning sex symbol. The picture also starred Steve McQueen and Peter Lawford.

"How dumb I was," Jackie later told Lawford. "Christiaan spent a lot of time grilling Frank about Lollobrigida."

"I gave my heart to Christiaan," she said to Lawford, "but he returned it."

Within weeks, she read in the gossip columns that Barnard was having a torrid affair with Lollobrigida.

As Jackie related to Lawford, “What is it with me? Sex symbols give me so much competition! First, Marilyn Monroe competing for Jack; now Gina Lollobrigida putting designs on Christiaan.”

Jackie’s romance with the surgeon fizzled out soon after it began. However, the two stayed in touch over the years.

In 1985, long after the termination of their brief fling, he sent her a carton of Glycel, an expensive “anti-aging” skin cream. Apparently, it didn’t work, and was forced off the market by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Noting that Jackie was concerned with wrinkles, he also suggested she visit the Clinique La Prairie in Montreux, Switzerland, a spa and wellness center with which he was associated as a research advisor. She graciously rejected his suggestion.

In later life, during Jackie’s tenure as an editor within Manhattan’s publishing community, he wrote novels and sent her his manuscripts for her comments and consideration. Although she praised his skill as a novelist, she privately told her senior editors, “Christiaan’s skills as a writer will never equal his medical achievements.”

Barnard survived Jackie, dying in September of 2001 in Cyprus. The first reports claimed that he died of a heart attack, but an autopsy showed that his death was caused by a severe asthma attack. Plagued by arthritis, he had retired from surgery in 1983. When he died, he was set to embark on a promotional tour for his latest book, *50 Ways to a Healthy Heart*.

His daughter, Deidre Visser, told the press, “My father could stand being alone, but he could not stand loneliness. The man belonged to the world.”

André Meyer

Jackie and “The Picasso of Banking”

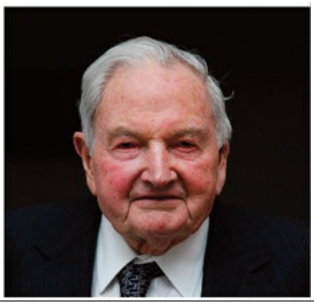
The French-born Wall Street investment banker, André Benoit Mathieu Meyer, was in love with Jackie, but there was a problem: She was not in love with him. Another thing: Born in 1898, he was thirty years older than she was.

Launching his banking career at the age of sixteen in the Paris Bourse (Stock Exchange), he rose with lightning speed in the industry, enjoying a decades-long association with the famous firm of Lazard Frères. When the Nazis took over France, Meyer fled to the West.

But he returned after the war and became, in the words of David Rockefeller, “the most creative financial genius of our time, launching such innovations as automobile financing. The media labeled him, “the Picasso of banking.”

In the United States, he was soon drawn into the orbit of Joseph P. Kennedy and later, into the entourages of Jackie and JFK. He became their financial advisor. Over the years, he was a lifelong friend to Jackie, although he wanted more out of the relationship than friendship. But she held him at bay. Once she introduced him to Lyndon B. Johnson, who was impressed. Later, during Johnson’s presidency, he often called on Meyer for advice.

Jackie was drawn to Meyer not just for his financial wisdom, but for their shared interest in art. She was dazzled by the paintings in his private collection, which included works by Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Claude Monet, and Marc Chagall. In time, he amassed one of the finest collections of 19th Century European art in private hands. She vacationed with him at his retreat in Crans-sur-Sierre in the Valais region of Switzerland.



David Rockefeller claimed that André Meyer was the first financier for Jackie. “He could take a one million dollar investment of hers and turn it into five million. He had the Midas touch.”

Jolie Gabor, mother of the three celebrated Gabor sisters, including Zsa Zsa, claimed that André Meyer liked to bring all his mistresses together at the same party. “None of us could compete with Jackie, however.”

When she was First Lady, and upgrading the furnishings at the White House, Jackie got Meyer to donate a $50,000 Savonnerie carpet. When she later wanted an apartment in Manhattan, he secured for her a spectacular 15-room, five-bedroom apartment on the 15th floor at 1040 Fifth Avenue at 85th Street.

She paid $250,000, which was a great bargain even back then. He arranged for her to stay in a suite at the Carlyle while $125,000 of renovations were completed. Later, when raising money for the Kennedy Library, she got him to contribute $250,000.

When Jackie was in love with Bobby Kennedy, she wanted to spend every evening with him. Of course, that was not possible, so she often called Meyer to escort her to various events—a Broadway play, the opera or ballet, the latest art exhibition.

Meyer maintained a lavish residence within the Carlyle, and Jackie often attended his cocktail parties. As Meyer’s biographer, Cary Reich, claimed, “Jackie constantly toyed with Meyer. What drove him to distraction was her breathless, little-girl-lost manner in which she addressed him. It was, ‘Oh, André, what should I do?’”

“Women flocked around Meyer,” said Jolie Gabor, a friend of his. “He often gave parties inviting many of the women who had been his mistresses. But the moment Jackie walked into the room, he had no time for us. He ignored his other guests and devoted all his attention hovering over Jackie, catering to her every wish. Naturally, we were jealous. But which of us could compete with the great Jackie Kennedy?”

“With her, you never knew if she’d snatch your husband away,” Gabor said. “When I visited with my young husband, I made sure he was in chains before I let him go inside. Jackie was skilled at stealing other women’s husbands, at least for a momentary diversion. I was glad that my dear Zsa Zsa made love to her husband. It served Jackie right.”

Meyer became the chief fundraiser for the Kennedy Library and later managed its $60 million endowment. He also grew very close to Bobby Kennedy, who appointed him manager of the various trust funds established by his father, Joseph P. Kennedy.

When Meyer learned that Jackie intended to marry Aristotle Onassis, he repeatedly urged her not to. “He has great charm and intelligence,” Meyer told her. “But he is rough, yacht or no yacht. He will not make you happy. And then there is his reputation, casually casting Maria Callas and your own sister overboard. There are rumors—more than rumors, actually—about his homosexuality. Did you know that he maintains a pretty young boy installed in an apartment in Paris, and another in Athens, to provide some diversion and variety in his sex life when he tires of women? How very Greek of him.”

Word reached Jackie that Meyer had died in Lausanne, Switzerland, on September 9, 1979. Gianni Agnelli, another of Jackie’s beaux, was at his bedside. Agnelli later told her, “André’s last words to me were, ‘Make sure Jackie’s all right.’”

He died fretting about a former First Lady who, largely because of his investments, had millions.

Years later, Dr. Henry Lax, a Swiss-born doctor who operated out of an office on Park Avenue, claimed that Jackie had once admitted to him that she’d had a one-night fling with Meyer.

“She told me it was not very satisfactory, and she had no desire to continue it,” he said. “Even so, André had much that attracted Jackie to a man—money, power, and the dignity of age.”

Peter Cook

"I Loved Cuckolding JFK"

After Jackie's death in 1994, London's *Daily Mail* broke the story that Jackie and Peter Cook, the English actor, satirist, writer, and comedian—described as "the finest comic talent of his generation" and "the funniest man ever born"—had had an affair.

"All of us were part of the British invasion," claimed TV host David Frost. "Our inside joke was that **Peter Cook** invaded Mrs. Kennedy." Cook is pictured above *(left)* with his partner, **Dudley Moore.**

The news brought an avalanche of mail from readers, including this comment from Stephen Harris of Totnes, Devon: "So basically, Jackie was cheating on John Kennedy with Peter Cook. Peter was cheating on his girlfriend, Wendy Snowden, with Jackie. JFK was cheating on Jackie with just about every skirt in Washington. All the while, Bobby Kennedy was in the company of Lee Remick. (No doubt Ethel was at home looking after his brood.) If you take away the music, the 60s generation was altogether a pretty pathetic bunch. Red arrow me if you like, but anybody looking at the 'norms' of modern society and wondering where it all began to go wrong, need look no further than the 1960s."

One of Jackie's classmates, Deborah James, once wrote: "Peter Cook was about eight years younger than Jackie. She always had this thing for the English schoolboy look, varying it by dating older men."

Before she'd been introduced to Cook, Jackie had been amused by his satire, which usually promoted as anti-establishment comedy. She'd seen a tape of his performance at the Edinburgh Festival impersonating Britain's Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan. Cook was part of a four-man troupe, "Beyond the Fringe." Its other members included Dudley Moore, who would go on to major stardom, Alan Bennett, and Jonathan Miller.

Through channels, Jackie extended an invitation to Cook to perform at the White House. But he very arrogantly turned her down, asserting, "We're not some fucking traveling cabaret troupe." He sent word to Jackie that if she wanted to see his group, she could do so on Broadway.

Surprisingly, Jackie was not insulted. During one of her visits with JFK to New York in 1962, they went to see *Beyond the Fringe*.

After the curtain came down, the President and Jackie went backstage to congratulate the group. JFK wandered off somewhere. Bennett later claimed, "Jackie went into a huddle with Peter. She was all over him. Stroking his arm, laughing at his humor. At one point, she was heard telling Peter, 'Oh, you're so naughty,' responding to something he'd whispered into her ear. I later learned from Peter that they had a fling. In New York, he escorted her to a party or two while JFK went back to Washington."

Jackie was known to have made an appearance one night at Cook's apartment in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, where he lived with his future wife, Wendy Snowden, whom he eventually married in 1963. Cook and Snowden's fellow guests included model Jean Shrimpton, and actors Terence Stamp and Albert Finney, each a talented actor and designated participants in that era's "British invasion."

Journalist Glenys Roberts claimed, "When he first met Jackie, Cook had not yet become the predatory satyr that he was in later life. He was a handsome, romantic lad with floppy hair and a slender figure."

When members of his entourage asked Cook about the rumors of a fling with Jackie, he told them, "I put the double knight's move on her."

It didn't take Snowden long to hear about Cook's fixation on Jackie. At this stage in their marriage, Jackie and JFK had drifted apart because of his numerous affairs. "According to her contemporaries, she was by no means the virginal bride suggested by her squeaky little voice, pillbox hats, and prim Fifties frocks," wrote Roberts. "Because of her unsatisfactory marriage, she had a reputation as something of a scalp-hunter."

Snowden went to Puerto Rico for a brief vacation, but returned unexpectedly. Upon her return to the apartment she shared, she was told by Cook's chef that "Peter is at that new Manhattan club, Strollers. Jackie Kennedy is there tonight, I heard."

"Peter went into a panic seeing me," Wendy said. "He introduced me to Jackie. She was tall and slender, with thick black hair and a vermillion mouth, immaculately groomed in an expensive black dress with a diamond pin. She had a little girlish laugh."

There was speculation that Jackie abruptly ended her affair with Cook when their relationship became too public.

She would see him one final time on Broadway when she and Lee Radziwill attended one of his performances of his show, *Good Evening*. As he confided to his wife at the time, Judy Huxtable, an actress and model, "I began an affair with Lee."

The *Daily Mail* also claimed that Cook had an affair with Lee. If so, this would not be the first time that the sisters had become sexually engaged with the same men. The others had included John F. Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis, among others.

Cook was reported to have become even more promiscuous in the years that followed. Following the collapse of his marriage to Snowden, he developed a standard and oft-repeated phrase which he communicated to any of "the birds" who flirted with him, "I am cheating on my wife with other girls, but I could fit you in if you want it."

After the collapse of his marriage to Snowden in 1971, Cook became "a bloated bloke," as described by the London press. One reporter asserted, "He was knee deep in unopened bills and empty liquor bottles."

He would marry two more times before his death on January 9, 1995, outliving Jackie by only one year.

In the years after his death, a minor planet *[20468 Petercook, in the main asteroid belt]*, was named after him.

"Jackie Kennedy and a planet—not bad for a little Devonshire lad, the son of a colonial civil servant," said TV host Davis Frost.

Robert D. L. Gardiner

and the Purloined Cigarette Lighter

In March of 1966, Jackie met Robert David Lion Gardiner, the New York socialite, at a dinner party at the apartment of Lady Jeanne Campbell on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Robert David Lion Gardiner with his wife, **Eunice**. "You don't just accuse the former First Lady, Mrs. Kennedy, of being a thief."

He was there with his wife, Eunice Baile Oates, a former British model many years his junior. While his wife conversed elsewhere, Gardiner seemed very impressed with Jackie "despite the vacant look on her face."

Her fascination with Gardiner stemmed from the fact that he, along with his niece, Alexandra Gardiner Creel Goelet, owned Gardiner's Island, one of the largest privately owned islands in the world. He called himself "the 16th Lord of the Manor."

Jackie was most curious about how he came to own such a valuable piece of property. *[Gardiner's Island, part of East Hampton, New York, in eastern Suffolk County, is located in Gardiner's Bay, between the two peninsulas stretching eastward from the eastern end of Long Island. It is the only American real estate still intact as part of an original royal grant from the English Crown.]* Gardiner's ancestor, Lion Gardiner, an English settler, purchased it from the Montaukett Indians in 1639. According to Gardiner, "He traded the island for one large dog, one gun, some powder and shot, some rum and several blankets, worth in all about five pounds sterling."

Gardiner referred to the Fords, the Du Ponts, the Rockefellers, and later, to the Hollywood tycoons who purchased property on Long Island as "the nouveaux riche."

Before the dinner party ended, Gardiner had invited Jackie to stay with him at his sumptuous East Hampton estate. He promised to take her to Gardiner's Island on his boat, showing her around its 27 miles of coastline and introducing her to its 3,350 acres of forests, streams, and buildings, some of which dated from the 17th Century.

Little is known about what occurred during Jackie's private visit to Gardiner's home in East Hampton when his wife was away. There was a lot of speculation linking the two of them. He may have revealed his romantic fixation on her—or perhaps not. He later wrote praising her "high cheekbones and striking looks, with her dark hair, which she obviously inherited from my friend and her father, Black Jack Bouvier."

That weekend, during a tour of the island, he told her fascinating stories of its origins, beginning when his family received a charter from King Charles I of England. "It is rumored that Captain Kidd buried his treasure on the island," he told Jackie. "We're still looking for it." He also revealed that former First Lady, Julia Gardiner, the wife of President John Tyler, had been born on the island. "She used to be called 'The Rose of Long Island.'"

Julia Gardiner married the widowed President, John Tyler, and ruled over Washington society during their short reign in 1844-45. Like

Jackie in another century, “The Rose of Long Island” completely refurbished the drab White House, but, unlike Jackie, used her family’s fortune to do so.

[Young Julia Gardiner, the wife of aging John Tyler, was First Lady only from 1844 to 1845. Tyler married her during his term as President, at a ceremony in the White House. A coquette who had spurned his previous offers of marriage, she was a buxom, dark-eyed beauty who had attracted dozens of male suitors. Like Jackie, she was accused of being an outrageous flirt.

She met President Tyler in 1842, and he was said to have been mesmerized by her, although thirty years her senior, and still in mourning for his dead first wife, Letitia.

After Julia’s father was eviscerated by an explosion on the deck of the Princeton *in 1844, Julia decided she needed a man in her life. At twenty-four, she became the youngest First Lady up to that time to occupy the White House.*

She traveled about in a four-horse carriage and set about to refurbish the White House with her family’s money. She had garish new livery made for the staff, and she selected a dozen female companions to accompany her as “ladies-in-waiting.” The press dubbed them “The Vestal Virgins.”

For her Grand Finale Ball, the most lavish in the history of the White House, she ordered “oceans of French champagne” and danced with nearly every ambassador from the nations of Europe.

That night, she introduced the polka to Washington, and got the Marine Band to play “Hail to the Chief” for the first time, a tradition that continues to this day. She was such a skilled dancer that a New York publisher printed “The Julia Waltzes” so that the masses might dance to her favorite tunes.

After retirement, John Tyler, then in his 70s, continued to sire children, ending up with a brood of fifteen.

In later life, Julia fell on bad days financially, but insisted on being addressed as “Mrs. Ex-Presidentress.”

Reading about Julia’s financial woes, Jackie vowed she’d never let that happen to her.

FUN FACT: Julia bore Tyler seven of his children. When Tyler was born, George Washington was President. When Julia and John Tyler’s youngest daughter, Mary, died, Harry S Truman was President. The combined lifespans of John Tyler and his youngest daughter, Mary, represent a span of thirty-two presidents, or more than 150 years.]

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Jackie’s closest friends referred to her fling with Gardiner as “a passing fancy” or “the whim of a moment.” Whatever it was called, it ended badly.

After a dinner with Gardiner at his East Hampton home, he and Jackie retired to his oak-paneled library for a French cognac and an espresso.

According to Gardiner’s later defamations, Jackie reached into her purse and removed a cigarette from a package. Spotting a gold cigarette lighter on a pink marble-topped table, she picked it up and lit her own cigarette.

The lighter belonged to Gardiner’s wife, Eunice Bailey Oates. To Gardiner’s astonishment, Jackie snapped open her purse and put the gold lighter inside.

He wanted to say something, but did not want it to appear that he was accusing Jackie of stealing the lighter. He thought she might have chucked the lighter into her purse without thinking. So he decided to “smoke her out.” He went to his humidor, positioned near the fireplace, and removed a cigar, cutting off its tip. He turned and looked for the lighter. “Have you seen my wife’s lighter? It’s usually here on the coffee table.”

She looked around the room. “Well, she must have taken it tonight. It doesn’t seem to be here. I don’t have a clue as to where she left it.”

“I thought I saw you use it,” he said.

“Never,” she answered. “I carry around my own lighter. It’s made of gold…perhaps that’s why you were confused.”

Gardiner later asked his friends, “What was I to do? Search her purse like that of a common thief? After all, she is one of the world’s most celebrated figures, a former First Lady who should be treated with respect.”

The following morning, Jackie returned to Manhattan. Before her departure, over breakfast, she lit her cigarette with a silver lighter she carried in her purse.

On the evening after her departure, Gardiner had a drink with the novelist, William Styron and some of his other friends. He told them about the incident. The story was too tantalizing for them to keep it to themselves.

The rumor soon spread from East Hampton to Manhattan. When it hit the party circuit, the story was that Gardiner was accusing Jackie of kleptomania, evoking a similar charge made against actress Hedy Lamarr, one of JFK’s former lovers.

After Jackie married Aristotle Onassis, his lawyer, Roy Cohn, told him that Gardiner was still spreading the story of Jackie's alleged theft two years before. "People are gossiping about Jackie something awful," Cohn claimed.

Onassis asked Jackie what she knew about the lighter.

"Nothing," she said. "I always carry my own lighter."

"Then the son of a bitch is lying," Onassis said. He called Cohn the next morning. "Write that Gardiner a letter threatening him with a multi-million dollar lawsuit if he doesn't stop libeling my wife." Then he paused. "But just in case he's telling the truth, enclose a check for $5,000. Don't admit to anything. Just say, if you're so desperate for a god damn cigarette lighter, go buy yourself one at Tiffany's and shut your fucking mouth about Jackie, you lying son of a bitch."

Gardiner's gold cigarette lighter didn't resurface until after Jackie's death in 1994. Caroline Kennedy, probably unaware of its origin, put it up for auction at Sotheby's in Manhattan, along with other Jackie possessions.

The Marques de Garrigues

"I Would Have Posed Nude for Goya"

—Jackie

Antonio Garrigues y Díaz-Cañabate, the Marques of Garrigues, had supported Franco's Nationalist forces, using sabotage and propaganda, during Spain's Civil War in the late 1930s. He had befriended the young and very handsome Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., during the Kennedy brother's involvement in the conflicts of war-torn Spain.

Throughout most of the war, the Marquis had opted to live in Madrid during the time when it was controlled by Revolutionary forces opposed to Franco. Garrigues had worked as a spy, an undercover "Fifth Columnist," secretly working to advance Franco's (fascist) agenda through propaganda distributed at night. In the brochures he secretly published and distributed, he urged the people of Madrid to change their allegiance away from the monarchy and to support the fascist forces of Franco—or else risk having Madrid bombed out of existence.

AS POSH AS IT GETS: **Antonio Garrigues y Diaz-Cañabate** *(left)* with **Queen Sofia** and **Juan Carlos** of Spain, chat with **JFK** *(right)* at the White House

Garrigues toured the battered city streets of Madrid with Joe Jr., distributing subversive literature. When men from the local militia stopped him, Garrigues claimed that he was merely showing Madrid to a foreign friend.

When JFK, Joseph's younger brother, became President, Franco appointed Garrigues as the Spanish ambassador to Washington, thinking that his long-ago link with the Kennedys might help in some way to relieve tension between his repressive dictatorship and the United States.

A frequent visitor to the White House, Garrigues interpreted Jackie as "the century's most enchanting woman." Reacting to that, she became highly susceptible to his charms.

Even after the assassination of her husband, Jackie stayed on good terms with the Ambassador. As reporter Michael Mullan, wrote, "She dropped in on him as she dashed between continents."

In January of 1966, she stayed with Garrigues in Rome, where he had become Spain's Ambassador to the Vatican. It was he who introduced Jackie to Roman nobility, escorting her to parties, lavish dinners, and accompanying her during her shopping sprees through Rome's exclusive boutiques.

The Duchess of Alba was said to have posed for Goya's notorious **The Naked Maja**. Jackie told Garrigues that if Goya were still around, she would have posed for an equivalent portrait.

She called on Princess Irene Galitzine, one of Italy's leading fashion designers and socialites. After Garrigues arranged for Jackie's private visit to the Vatican, he took her to Princess Galitzine's exclusive salon, where the designer agreed to have her staff work overtime making an elegant yet restrained black dress for her upcoming audience with the Pope.

Because Jackie was seen so frequently around Rome with Garrigues, the tabloid press wrote that she was planning to marry her Spanish host, a sixty-two-year old widower with eight children.

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As a lark, Jackie flew to Spain to attend the annual *fería* in Seville, a sixday, post-Lenten fiesta of parties and bullfighting. She was the guest of the Duke and Duchess of Alba. Garrigues accompanied her as her escort.

As in Rome, there was rampant speculation in the Spanish press that Garrigues was set to become her third husband.

After her return to Madrid, he arranged a private dinner, unknown to the press, for himself and Jackie with King Juan Carlos.

Rumors about the impending marriage of Jackie to Garrigues became so prevalent that Angier Biddle Duke, the then-U.S. Ambassador to Spain who had previously been JFK's White House Chief of Protocol, summoned a press conference in Madrid on April 20, 1966. "On behalf of Mrs. Kennedy," he announced, "I wish to make it crystal clear and completely understood that there is no basis to rumors of an engagement to the Marques de Garrigues."

Garrigues made no statement at all, and some commentators seemed to think he was enjoying the rumors swirling around about Jackie and himself.

Right before she flew out of Spain, Garrigues proposed marriage to Jackie. Ever so graciously, she rejected his offer. "Spain is one of the most fascinating countries in the world," she told her suitor. "But it is not for me. You already have a Duchess of Alba. You don't need another. Of course, if Goya were still around, I might become his second *Naked Maja*. I'm sure he would have done a painting of me that would hang in the Prado for centuries to come."

Roswell Gilpatric

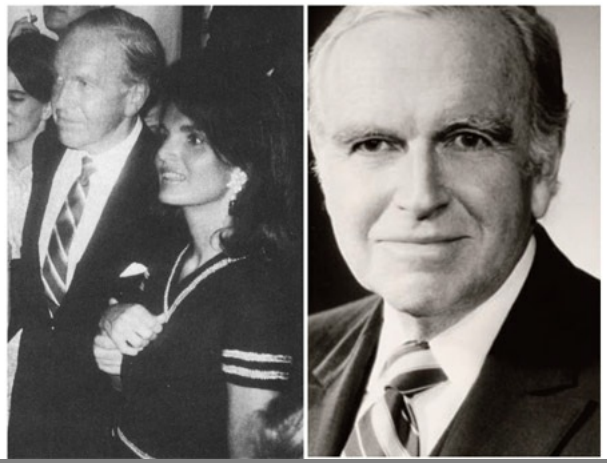
Jackie is Cited, in Court, as "The Other Woman"

In the early 1960s, those heady days of Camelot in the White House, Roswell Gilpatric was cast as Sir Lancelot, as suggested by the Washington Press Corps. The publisher of *The Washington Post*, Katharine Graham, claimed that "Jackie was doing to Jack Kennedy what Guinevere did to King Arthur."

Madelin Gilpatric, the third wife of Roswell, once said, "I wish the First Lady would stop chasing after my husband."

Gilpatric, 23 years older than Jackie, was already in his 50s when he became seriously involved with Jackie. When she had to bow out of JFK's campaign for the presidency in 1960, Gilpatric flew to her side to comfort her. She was pregnant at the time with John Jr.

Although hardly a household name today, Yale graduate Roswell Leavitt Gilpatric, a prominent New York corporate attorney, later became a high-placed official in JFK's administration.



A high-powered New York corporate attorney, **Roswell Gilpatric** had been Undersecretary of the Air Force during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower. Of Jackie's many beaux, he surfaced near the top and stood by her when she needed him the most.

He had been a childhood friend of Nelson Rockefeller. In the White House, JFK used to question Gilpatric about Rockefeller's womanizing, asking how such a prominent politician managed to get away with it. That was ironic. The President was getting away with "it" on a far more epic scale than Rockefeller.

Gilpatric was a towering figure during the Kennedy years in the White House. He not only managed to seduce the First Lady, but he became a trusted adviser to the President too. Previously, under Dwight D. Eisenhower, he'd been Undersecretary of the Air Force.

Kennedy appointed him Undersecretary of Defense in 1961 because he considered his boss, Robert McNamara, "Too inexperienced in the ways of Washington." Gilpatric was also a trusted adviser to JFK during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He urged the President to follow a course of limited action, resisting the call of the hawks to bomb Cuba out of existence.

In most cases, however, he'd been a staunch Cold Warrior, part of Operation Mongoose, launching dirty tricks against Fidel Castro in Havana.

He also argued for major U.S. involvement in Vietnam as a means of thwarting a complete communist takeover.

JFK's longtime aide, Ted Sorensen, once wrote: "Gilpatric, whom the president calls 'Ros,' made himself an indispensable figure in the Kennedy administration."

Jackie came to view Gilpatric as such a supportive friend that she relied on him more and more. Of course, she was aware that he would never be faithful to a mistress or girl friend, as he was known in Washington circles as a ladykiller, although his conquests, in his own estimation, never equaled those of his boss, John F. Kennedy.

JFK became aware of Jackie's romantic attraction to Gilpatric. "I don't understand it," he told Bobby Kennedy and others in the White House. "He's not that handsome. Perhaps it's the father image thing."

One evening, in front of her guests at the White House, Jackie defended Gilpatric's appeal. "I think he's one of the most attractive men in Washington. Men just can't understand why women find him sexy. I find men over sixty sometimes more attractive than younger ones. General Maxwell Taylor is a marvelous example, keeping himself lean and fit. Many of Jack's classmates have let themselves go and look awful. General Taylor is over sixty, plays tennis, and keeps fit, as does Ros."

She got to know Gilpatric in the privacy of Camp David when she was seven months pregnant and JFK was in California checking out military installations and Marilyn Monroe. After spending quiet, restful hours with Gilpatric, Jackie wrote: "I loved our time in Maryland so very much. It made me happy for a whole week."

As she neared childbirth, Jackie wrote from Hyannis Port, thanking Gilpatric for his recent visit there. "It was so thoughtful of you to write me about my baby. It was such a happy time being with you, and I thank you so much for coming to see me, as you did at Camp David. And now that I don't have all those ladies' lunches to go to, I hope I can come and see you and Madelin some time in May or June."

That invitation never came from Madelin, who had long been jealous of Jackie because of the attention being heaped upon her husband. *[Madelin's marriage to the five-times-married Gilpatric eventually ended in divorce.]*

In 1963, just weeks before JFK's assassination, Gilpatric came to visit Jackie, telling her that he planned to

resign his government post and resume his law practice in Manhattan.

She later wrote him: “I feel sorry for whomever succeeds you, and I will never really like them—no matter who they turn out to be. They will always live in your shadow, and no one else will be able to walk in your shoes.” The letter was effusive in praise of him, expressing the sadness his leaving would cause her.

“Please don’t worry, my darling,” he wrote back. “You’ll never get rid of me. If you ever need me, I’ll come running.”

He predicted that “there will be many happy moments between us, not only in New York, but elsewhere.”

His prediction came true.

During her first visit to New York after Gilpatric had moved there, reporters and photographers followed Jackie, thinking she was dating him. She shocked the press when they discovered that her escort was actor Kevin McCarthy, a long-time friend of Montgomery Clift.

However, the very next night, Gilpatric was seen escorting her to the chic Colony Restaurant in Manhattan.

In November of 1963, Gilpatric was devastated by news about JFK’s assassination in Dallas. He was waiting at the White House for a private visit with Jackie when she returned from that fatal trip, devastated, in her blood-stained pink suit.

In March of 1968, after Gilpatric turned sixty-one, Jackie invited him as her escort for a trip to the Mayan ruins of the Yucatán, in Mexico. The paparazzi was on her tail, and reporters were filing stories that Gilpatric, already married, would soon be her next husband.

Annoyed at the massive press coverage, she told him, “I’ve given up. From now on, I can’t concern myself with what the press says about me. I’m like a public commodity. Let them have their fun at my expense. To hell with the bastards!”

Both Gilpatric and Jackie found Mexico romantic, especially on warm moonlit nights. A paparazzo managed to take a picture of them kissing. Hand in hand, they scaled the pyramids and went on horseback rides at night along the beach. During the day, they explored the ruins of Chichén Itzá.

Gilpatrick continued to deny rumors of their affair, although reporters bribed room service waiters and maids, who claimed that Gilpatric was sleeping in Jackie’s bed in her suite at night.

“Mrs. Kennedy has long been drawn to intellectual companions,” he told the press. “She is a person in her own right. She doesn’t like the peephole publicity of *Women’s Wear Daily*. But she knows that she is a public figure of interest to the world. She prepares herself to meet the press. Before we landed in Mexico, the plane had to circle around until she was camera ready to face the mass of photographers.”

Publicly, he stated: “Mrs. Kennedy has long had a tremendous interest in visiting the Yucatán. She had read a lot about the Mayans and has been fascinated by pre-Columbian art.”

Writing in *Women’s Wear Daily*, Agnes Ash said: “There was a lot of public smooching and hand-holding in full view of the press. Jackie was all over the place. At one point, she jumped into a stream, fully dressed. John Walsh, her Secret Service agent, had to go in after her. Another time, she climbed one of the Mayan pyramids and posed like the Queen of England opening Ascot.”

In general, the Mexican press was lavish in its praise of Jackie, and their favorable reports were broadcast widely, both in Spanish and in translation. The American media, however, had for the most part been banned by Jackie from accompanying her, with the noteworthy exception of Ash. But after her latest article, Jackie turned on her, too.

After that article appeared, Jackie tried to get Ash removed from the traveling press corps. Mexican police threatened Ash that she might end up in a local jail. At one point, the phone service in her hotel room was cut off.

Jackie called Rose Kennedy at Hyannis Port, asking her to use her influence with John Fairchild, the editorial director of *Women’s Wear Daily*, to suppress Ash’s articles on Jackie in Mexico. Fairchild turned down the requests, running the articles intact.

In the middle of her trip, Jackie received news that Bobby Kennedy had announced that he would seek the Democratic nomination for President in the 1968 race. When queried by reporters, Jackie said, “I’ll always be with him with all my heart. I shall always back him.”

Gilpatric reported that Jackie was deeply concerned about Bobby’s run for the presidency. “She didn’t want him in the race. She told me that the same thing that happened to Jack might also befall Bobby. She feared for his life.”

“There is so much hatred in America,” she said. “In fact, more people hated Bobby than hated Jack. I repeatedly warned Bobby not to run, but he told me he’s not afraid. He seems fatalistic.”

Although Bobby had dismissed Jackie’s fears for his safety, her concerns were prophetic. Gilpatric was by her side in Mexico when she received an urgent call from J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I. He had tracked her down.

Very bluntly, he told her that Bobby, after delivering his victory speech, had been shot in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, and that he was still alive, but barely.

In response, she screamed into the phone. When she slammed down the receiver, she turned to Gilpatric, who held her in his arms. “It’s happening again. They’re killing Kennedys.”

Back in New York, Gilpatric was by Jackie’s side at New York’s Kennedy Airport when he placed her aboard a private jet belonging to IBM’s Thomas Watson for her flight to Los Angeles to be by the bedside of the dying Bobby Kennedy.

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After Bobby’s funeral, Jackie was seen with a number of escorts, including gay author Truman Capote. She was also seen with William Walton, a correspondent for *Time* magazine. A bachelor, he had been a paratrooper in World War II, where he was a friend of Ernest Hemingway. Like Jackie, Walton was obsessed with celebrities, and he invited “the big names” to his galas. She was also drawn to his landscape paintings, particularly of old Cape Cod.

Jackie is seen out on the town with her close friend and confidant, **William Walton**. She admired his taste in art, and he liked her choice of Husband Number One.

As Walton told his gay friends, “Jack can put his shoes under my bed any time.”

Another escort was Godfrey McHugh, an Air Force major a decade older than her. A world traveler and the survivor of dozens of military missions, he enthralled her with stories of his exploits around the world. As a bachelor, he was a popular guest on the dinner party circuit.

On at least three occasions, Robert McNamara, JFK’s Secretary of Defense, was seen escorting Jackie to various events. John Kenneth Galbraith, the economist, was also a reliable escort, as were Franklin D. Roosevelt and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Charles (Chuck) Spalding, one of the Kennedy family’s oldest friends, also took Jackie out, as did Michael Forrestal, who had flown with Jackie and Lord Harlech to Cambodia and Thailand.

Jackie was perhaps avoiding seeing so much of Gilpatric at this time, because she didn’t want to get involved in his divorce proceedings from Madelin.

When Madelin Gilpatric filed for divorce, she claimed in her petition that “My husband’s sycophantic devotion to Mrs. Kennedy broke up my marriage. I won’t go into the sordid details except to suggest that my husband and the former First Lady were very, very close. It was a particularly warm, intense, and long-standing relationship.”

Somehow, Jackie managed to juggle all these escorts. At the same time, she more or less escaped notice by the press that she was being pursued by Aristotle Onassis. Gilpatric later said, “Perhaps the boys of the press didn’t catch on to what was going on in spite of the rumors. That’s because no one believed the gossip.”

When asked about Jackie’s marriage to Onassis, Gilpatric said, “She once told me that she felt she could count on him. It was an attribute she looked for in all her friends.”

Having suffered through the publication of nude photos of herself *[snapped with the collusion of her husband on Skorpios]*, Jackie endured yet another personal embarrassment in 1970. Love letters she’d written to Gilpatric had been stored in his vault. But according to Gilpatric, someone who knew the combination to his safe at Cravath, Swaine & Moore stole the letters and made them public. Charles Hamilton, the Manhattan autograph dealer, was auctioning them to the public. The contents of the letters were subsequently leaked to the press.

Onassis, who by then had then already been married to Jackie for two years, was said to be devastated by one of the “Dear Ros” letters Jackie had written while aboard his yacht, the *Christina*, during their honeymoon.

He told Johnny Meyer, his aide, “What a fool I’ve been, a god damn fool. I now know what a calculating woman Jackie is, coldhearted and shallow.”

“Dear Ros,
I would have told you before I left—but then, everything happened so much more quickly than I had planned. I saw somewhere what you said and I was very touched—Dear Ros—I hope you know all you were and all you will ever be to me.
With my love,
Jackie.”

Biographer Christopher Andersen said, “Ari was mortified. He behaved as if his manhood had been dealt a deathblow. He did not particularly mind being characterized as a voracious cretin, a barbarian at the gates, or even a crook. But he could not bear the idea of being publicly cuckolded—not by the woman who was spending his millions with abandon. He was convinced that the whole world was laughing at him.”

Actually, Onassis could hardly castigate Jackie for her letter to Gilpatric, because he had by then resumed his long-standing love affair with opera diva Maria Callas.

Under subpoena from the court, the love letters from Jackie to Gilpatric were seized and eventually returned to him as his personal property.

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Suffering from prostate cancer, Gilpatric died on March 15, 1996, two years after Jackie’s death. .

Right before his passing, he finally admitted to his closest friends that in spite of his frequent denials over the years, he and Jackie had been lovers.

“I was devoted to her—madly in love, so to speak. She had strong feelings for me, too. I was going to divorce my wife to marry her.”

“The highlight of my affair with her was that trip to Mexico. I had never had such a romantic experience with any woman. She was so incredibly free and open with me, completely giving of herself. That’s why her marriage to Onassis came as such a shock to me, although I concealed my pain.”

“Even though Jackie is gone, gone, I am just as much in love with her today as I ever was. We’ll meet again on some distant shore, I just know.”

John Glenn

Did the Astronaut Send Jackie Into Orbit?

Truman Capote claimed that Jackie’s love affair with astronaut John Glenn took place inside her head. “Call it an escapade of the imagination, a mind fuck like she had with Robert McNamara or General Maxwell Taylor, even Henry Kissinger, though what she wanted with that fat slob I’ll never know.”

Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth aboard *Friendship 7* on February 20, 1962, when Jackie was First Lady. She stayed glued to her television, eager for news of his history-making flight into space. He was aloft for nearly five hours, landing safely. He became the first American to orbit the Earth and the fifth person to reach Outer Space.

Overnight, Glenn became a national hero, designated as the centerpiece of a ticker-tape parade in New York that evoked Charles Lindbergh’s historic flight to Paris aboard *The Spirit of St. Louis*.

JFK and Jackie entertained Glenn at the White House, Jackie praising him for his courage.

She raved about Glenn to C.L. Sulzberger, foreign affairs columnist for *The New York Times*. “He is the most controlled person on Earth. He would be a fine ambassador to Moscow.”

She told her friends, “John is the kind of man a girl should marry—what a guy, so strong, so brave, so masculine, so handsome. He’s like that football hero in college we fantasized about.”

The astronaut bonded so well with the Kennedys that he became a personal friend of Jackie, Bobby, and JFK. On February 23, 1962, JFK flew with him to Florida, attending a parade at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, where he awarded Glenn a NASA service medal.

JFK described, to Jackie and others, his intention of using Glenn to his political advantage, as he had been the most visible player associated with the success of Kennedy’s space program. At the time, the Americans and their

scientific savvy were behind the Soviets, who had sent Yuri Gagarin into space as early as April, 1961.

Vice President Lyndon Johnson also recognized Glenn's political value. "He is one of those good old clean-cut American boys—war hero, churchgoer, family man, small town values. He could produce a lot of votes for the Democrats. If only he were a Negro."

The New Frontier's leaders gathered at least once a month at Bobby's Hickory Hill, which had once been owned by Jack and Jackie. During the summer of 1962, Bobby and Ethel staged an outdoor dinner and dance for Patricia Kennedy Lawford and her husband, actor Peter Lawford.

It was a riotous party that ended up with some fully clothed guests getting thrown into the swimming pool. Glenn became such a frequent visitor that one reporter claimed, "Hickory Hill has become his *lunching* pad ever since he got back from Outer Space."

Astronaut **John Glenn** was featured on the cover of *Life* magazine on February 2, 1962, when he became the first person to orbit the Earth.

He also sent First Lady Jackie into orbit. She confided to friends that he was her dreamboat, but how far into Outer Space her relationship with him went remains as mysterious as the dark side of the moon.

JFK wanted Jackie in Washington to greet the arriving President of Ecuador, who had cabled that he was especially interested in "meeting America's glamorous First Lady." Jackie turned JFK down, claiming she had another engagement. JFK called his mother, Rose, and asked her to fill in for Jackie. He announced to the press that the First Lady was ill.

However, photographs appeared in newspapers the next day, showing her water-skiing at Hyannis Port in a strapless bathing suit with her "handsome hunk," John Glenn. JFK was furious.

In July, 1963, *The New York Daily News* ran this item:

"Star athletes, including the Kennedy family and John Glenn, teamed up today to stage a dazzling three-hour water show in Lewis Bay. The undisputed star was Jacqueline Kennedy wearing a skin-tight, one-piece black-and-white bathing suit and then a flaming pink one. Jackie was in the pink number when she skied in tandem with a grinning spaceman, Col. John Glenn. Both wore mono-skis and put on a show for a flotilla of boats."

In Washington, Jackie's attraction for Glenn did not go unnoticed. There were rumors of an affair, although no smoking gun was ever found. Senator George Smathers, a Democrat from Florida and one of JFK's closest friends, claimed, "I think it was just an affair of the heart, not of the groin, but one can never be sure in these matters."

Glenn was such a family friend that he was in Los Angeles with Bobby in 1968 when he was assassinated. He was later one of the pallbearers at Bobby's funeral.

Teddy Kennedy had told Jackie that he wanted to run for the nation's top office in the 1976 presidential race. However, the drowning accident of Mary Jo Kopechne on July 18, 1969, in a car that he was driving put an end to

that dream. The scandal from the island of Chappaquiddick practically overshadowed the coverage of the United States putting a man on the moon.

With Teddy out of the race, Jackie suggested that Glenn might be the ideal candidate to seek the Democratic nomination for president. In 1974, he'd already been elected Senator from Ohio.

"As a senator, he'd be in a perfect position to run for president," Jackie said. "Being a national hero would also help. Better that than a peanut farmer from Georgia."

In anticipation of the 1976 elections, Glenn was listed as one of the Democratic candidates for the vice-president under a ticket spearheaded by Jimmy Carter, but he lost to Walter Mondale. In 1984, he attempted to be nominated as the Democratic party's candidate for president, but lost once again to Mondale, who eventually lost the election to a Republican, Ronald Reagan.

Although Glenn on occasion, escorted by a widowed Jackie to public events, the nature of their relationship has remained a mystery. Glenn was born in 1921, and he ever plans to write about the nature of his friendship with Jackie, especially if they ever became intimate, he had better get to work on the tell-all manuscript.

Pete Hamill

How Jackie Stole Shirley MacLaine's Boyfriend

Truman Capote, Jackie's duplicitous friend, indiscreetly told his high society friends that Jackie had grown tired of older men dominating her life. "She has millions of her own money, and she earned it the hard way—by sleeping with Onassis until he got tired of her and went back to hearing Maria Callas hit the high note in bed."

He also claimed that "For a few times in her life, Jackie wanted to be the one in charge, the one with the purse strings. It was at this time that Jackie shopped for a younger stud. Along came Peter Hamill, who certainly knew his way around a woman's boudoir. After seven years of shacking up with Shirley MacLaine, he must have learned all the maneuvers in *Kama Sutra*."

A famous New York columnist, **Peter Hamill**, once wrote a novel called *Loving Women*.

He was just the man for that challenge. Just ask Shirley MacLaine or Jackie Kennedy.

Columnist Earl Wilson wrote, "Jackie Onassis is captivated by Peter Hamill. He is handsome in a rugged, masculine way. He has the toughness of one of those newspaper reporters in a 1930s movie at Warner Brothers. He is very bright and possesses a kind of personal magnetism. Of all of Jackie's many conquests, he would rank up there at the top as a babe magnet. She also admires Hamill's mind and his endless battles waged in the New York tabloids against social injustice. He is a friend of the working man, and a very, very special friend of Jackie O's."

Hamill started dating Jackie right before Christmas of 1976. Before that, he'd been with Shirley MacLaine, who had been a supporter of the Kennedys, including Jackie.

The musician, Peter Duchin, remembered taking Jackie to Shirley's Broadway opening of her show, *One Woman at the Palace*. He accompanied Jackie backstage to congratulate the star. All that goodwill changed when Jackie started dating Hamill.

Six years younger than Jackie, Hamill is an American journalist, columnist, and novelist. He came to Jackie's attention when he became one of the four men who disarmed Sirhan Sirhan in Los Angeles after he'd shot Robert F.

Kennedy.

Hamill had been editor of the *New York Post* and also of the New York *Daily News*. Jackie admired his columns, calling them "the work of a testosterone-fueled maverick."

His columns sought to capture the unique flavor of New York City's politics and sports, with a particular focus on crime in the city.

Some critics referred to Jackie and Hamill as "the odd couple," and wondered how a relationship between the two of them developed.

In 1968, the body of the assassinated Robert F. Kennedy had been flown from Los Angeles to New York aboard Air Force One.

After a funeral at Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, *[during which Jackie snubbed Lady Bird Johnson]*, she rode in a 12-car funeral train that carried the coffin to Washington for burial at the Arlington National Cemetery, site of JFK's tomb.

Previously, Hamill may have believed the image of Jackie as the Ice Queen. On the train, he was accompanied by his longtime girlfriend, Shirley. She later said, "Jackie was very regal, as only she can be, with this marvelous sense of anticipatory dignity. She was always able, somehow, to anticipate when the train was going to lurch or when it would bump, and queenlike, take hold of something so that when the bump came, she wasn't disturbed or dislodged."

Years later, Shirley would be sounding a more discordant note about Jackie.

An outrageously dressed **Shirley MacLaine** had something to cry out about. Her nemesis, Jackie Kennedy, not only seduced her boyfriend, Peter Hamill, but her brother, Warren Beatty, too.

A friend of Hamill's, who did not want to be named, claimed that "Pete and Shirley were on the verge of breaking up before he started dating Jackie. I gathered from Pete that he wanted to marry Shirley, but she kept turning him down. I can't read his mind, but I think he has a better chance of becoming Jackie's husband."

During the time, Shirley was involved with Hamill, she was in a "trans-Pacific open marriage to Steve Parker, the Tokyo-based producer. He'd been her husband since 1954, but the couple preferred to remain in different parts of the world.

When he'd first started dating Jackie, Hamill said, "I like her and I think she likes me. There's nothing clandestine about it. It doesn't alter my relationship with Shirley—things are still the same between us. She knows I'm taking Jackie out."

That doesn't seem to be true. Close friends of both women often commented on their rivalry and jealousy of each other.

After hearing Hamill's comment, Helen Gaillet, a photographer, said, "Ha! They should ask Shirley how she feels about Jackie. Our former First Lady runs through men like she runs through clothes."

In Manhattan, Jackie and Hamill were seen everywhere, often popping in at P.J. Clarke's late at night for a hamburger. They were also seen at such high-profile places as Elaine's, where they were given the best table in the house.

A waiter at the Top of the Tower Restaurant *[in the Beekman Tower Hotel, in Manhattan at First Avenue and East 49th Street]* reported seeing them holding hands and looking into each other's eyes "as if tomorrow belonged to them. He made her laugh. They were obviously sexually attracted to each other."

People magazine once assessed the Jackie/Hamill coupling:

"Money aside, the burning question remains about Mrs. O. How's her love life? The answer enigmatic, as always. Currently standing out from a pedigreed but lackluster cast of escorts is New York's biographer of the under-class, columnist Pete Hamill. He and Jackie are just pals, says Pete—an assessment her friends wholeheartedly endorse. 'He's fun for her to go out with,' says one. 'But the chances of her marrying him are slim.' She does telephone Hamill at his office, though, and if he's out, leaves the hard-to-ignore message: 'Tell him Mrs. Onassis called, please.'"

One night at P.J. Clarke's, Frank Sinatra spotted Jackie eating hamburgers with Hamill. He later told Sammy Davis, Jr. and Dean Martin, "Jackie definitely has the hots for Pete. But I don't think they'll get married. Pete doesn't have enough dough for a high-class dame like Jackie."

[Hamill had always been a great fan of Sinatra and once wrote a book about him called Why Sinatra Matters. *Hamill concluded that "Sinatra's audience at the beginning was primarily female; it ended up primarily male. He helped humans trained to silence—or emotional numbness—to express some of their deepest emotions."*

At one time, Sinatra proposed that Hamill might ghostwrite his autobiography. Aware that such a book would immediately become a best-seller, Hamill agreed, but on one condition—that Sinatra come clean about his women, his link to politicians, and his connections to the Mob. Sinatra agreed to the first two conditions, but balked at the final requirement. "I don't want someone knocking on my fucking door late at night," he told Hamill.]

On a few occasions, Hamill escorted Jackie to his favorite bar, the seedy Lions Head in Greenwich Village. Called "the writer's bar," it was the venue where Dylan Thomas drank himself to death.

Author Lindsay Van Gelder spotted Jackie and Hamill at a private screening of the film, *Welcome to L.A.* (1977) at the MGM Building in Manhattan. "In her breathless little voice, she was whispering sweet nothings in his ear and flirting outrageously. Her eyelashes were fluttering."

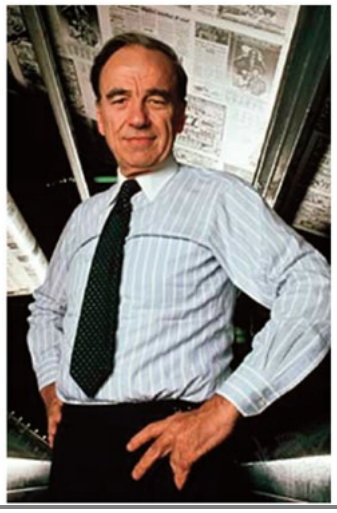
Long a Kennedy supporter, Hamill had experienced an outrage when Jackie married Aristotle Onassis in 1968. At the time, he was a columnist for the *New York Post*. He vented his rage in a 1971 column, which later became notorious.

"Many marriages are put together the same way as the Jackie/Ari deal, although the brutally commercial nature of the contract is often disguised with romantic notions about love and time. Some women can be bought with a guarantee of ham and eggs in the morning and a roof over their head; others with a mink coat on the anniversary of the sealing of the contract. Ari bought one of the few reigning international objects, the unapproachable widow of a slain prince, buying her the way another might buy a Lear jet or a Velásquez. But understanding Jackie Kennedy is a more complicated matter. For part of her adult life she was hidden behind the Kennedy publicity machine; she spent another crucial part, after the murder of her husband, enshrined as some national object of veneration.

"She was not, of course, the victim of that veneration; she encouraged it, indulged it, created the desire for more knowledge by cultivating the image of her aloofness. The price of an art object increases in direct ratio to its rarity.

"It is outrageous to think that someone will spend $120,000 a year on clothing in a world where so few people have more than the clothes on their back. It is obscene that a woman would have more money in a month to use on applying paste to her face and spray to her hair than the average citizens of Latin America could earn in 100 years."

After submitting the column, Hamill almost immediately retracted it, submitting another more vanilla version. "I was just too vicious to Jackie," he later said.



Press baron **Rupert Murdoch** betrayed Peter Hamill by publishing an outdated column of his wherein he labeled Jackie a courtesan for marrying Onassis.

But although the column was killed, it was filed away in the morgue at *The Post*. By the time Hamill started dating "The Widow Jackie" in 1976, he was writing for the *Post's* rival and competitor, the *New York Daily News*.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, after Hamill's departure from the *Post*, Rupert Murdoch, its owner, perhaps in an act of vengeance, *[and certainly as a means of boosting circulation]* ordered that Hamill's 1971 column be printed, under the teasing headline: *WHO WROTE THIS?*

For four days running, excerpts from his (original) column ran on Page Six of the *Post*.

Finally, on the fifth day, the *Post* featured a picture of Jackie and Hamill dating. The caption read: "In 1971, Pete Hamill wrote of Jackie Onassis that it looked as if no courtesan ever sold herself for more. He didn't approve of her marriage to Ari, you see. Times change, and so do Pete's opinions, and now, the gossips are saying that Mrs. Onassis, 48, will make Hamill, 42, her third mate."

Hamill exploded in fury, feeling he'd been double-crossed. He immediately called Jackie and explained the situation, blaming everything on Murdoch. She seemed to forgive him, but he may have sensed a coolness from her.

There was a suspicion that Jackie never really forgave Hamill for his 1971 "retracted but published anyway" opinion. For appearances' sake, she showed up on November 17, 1977 at his publication party, celebrating the release of his novel, *Flesh and Blood*, a book that dealt with the controversial theme of mother-son incest. The party was held at O'Neal's Ballroom, across from Lincoln Center. Guests noticed that Hamill was seen chatting briefly with Jackie, but for the most part, they remained in opposite corners.

She didn't stay long, and she was escorted out by Denis Hamill, Peter's younger brother. He hailed her a taxi. Later, he said, "A date with Jackie is like taking out a big, bright red fire engine."

Hamill still shared weekends with Jackie, Caroline, and John Jr. There were trips to Hyannis Port, where he was with her on the day Elvis Presley died. He flew to Memphis, inviting Caroline to go with him, so she could write her own story. He was also instrumental in getting her a job at the *Daily News*.

Jackie showed up at the 1977 premiere of *The Turning Point*, starring Shirley MacLaine and Anne Bancroft and directed by Herbert Ross. At the premiere, Jackie and Shirley gave each other wide berth.

Ironically, Ross would marry Lee Radziwill in 1988. Shirley didn't like the younger Bouvier sister either, often doing an imitation of her pretentious manner behind her back.

Writing for *The New York Times*, Alex Witchel interviewed Hamill in 1994, the year of Jackie's death. "This is a man from a bygone era, before bodies required preservation like works of art. But he's far from unattractive. He says he has had romances with Shirley MacLaine and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, but turns a little bit pale at the prospect of a rehash. 'I'm a happily married man,' he says, reaching for a cigarette. 'Only a cad would talk about his life that way.'"

Peter Davis

It Wasn't Meant to Last

After breaking with Hamill, Jackie became a cougar *[a woman with an eye for younger men]* before the term was invented. She took up with director Peter Davis, who was about eight years her junior.

She'd been impressed with his TV documentary on FDR, a series consisting of 26 episodes. For the documentary, he'd interviewed members of the Roosevelt clan, their friends and enemies, and whatever cabinet members were still alive from that era.

An older Jackie, perhaps tiring of aging men, became a cougar when she chased after the younger **Peter Davis,** a documentary filmmaker.

He turned out such award-winning movies as *Hearts & Minds*, a film that was critical of the U.S. presence in war-torn Vietnam.

At one time, Davis had been married to the novelist Johanna Mankiewicz. Her father, Herman J. Mankiewicz, had written *Citizen Kane* with Orson Welles. Johanna's brother, Frank Mankiewicz, had been Bobby Kennedy's press secretary.

Davis won an Oscar for his documentary, *Hearts and Minds*, about the U.S. military presence in Vietnam.

Davis and Jackie were spotted together at such events as the Robert F. Kennedy Celebrity Tennis Tournament in Forest Hills (Queens, NY). Ronald Capil, a reporter, sat near them. "Instead of watching the game, Jackie was whispering in his ear. They huddled close together, holding hands."

The next week, Davis was seen aboard a chartered plane with Jackie flying to Hyannis Port. A week later, she was seen driving him to the airport in Caroline's red BMW. At the airport, she kissed him goodbye.

No one had a video camera or a tape recorder in Jackie's bedroom, but observers concluded that they were having an affair. They were seen all over Manhattan, and Davis was spotted coming and going from her Fifth Avenue apartment.

Richard Merryman, correspondent for *Life*, once invited Davis to a party at his brownstone in Greenwich Village. He asked his host if he could bring a date, "I nearly fell over," Merryman later claimed. "His date was Jackie Onassis."

Merryman also commented on Hamill's affair with Jackie. "It was never meant to end in marriage—and both parties knew that. For Peter, it was a momentous event that comes only once this time around. It was quite wonderful for him as long as it lasted. But from the beginning, it had an expiration date on it. He took it as it unfolded. When it was over, he expressed gratitude for having known a goddess, an icon, and such an imposing person, however briefly."

The literary and film agent, Swifty Lazar, later said, "After Onassis and a lot of other men, Jackie was

discovering the delight of young flesh. Why not? She was still beautiful, worth millions, and had the intoxicating aroma of being the most famous woman on the planet, the former wife of a slain American hero."

Davis was not made to last, However. In a touch of irony, Jackie's next affair was launched with Shirley MacLaine's younger brother—none other than Warren Beatty, that "walking streak of sex from Hollywood."

David Ormsby-Gore (5th Baron Harlech)

His Offer to Make Her Lady Harlech

Lord Harlech (David Ormsby-Gore) was JFK's alltime favorite foreign minister. He told Jackie and others, "I trust David as much as I would a member of my own cabinet."

During JFK's reign, Lord Harlech, Britain's ambassador to the United States, played golf with the President at Palm Beach or went sailing with him off the coast of Hyannis Port. When JFK was out of Washington, Harlech was often Jackie's escort for an evening.

With JFK in the White House, Lord Harlech became practically a resident himself, supplying the President with Cuban cigars, which were otherwise banned to Americans. He played a major role in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and he also helped to promote the first ever Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union. Jackie later praised "David's influence on Jack. He urged Jack to act like a statesman rather than a politician."

In the late 1930s, Lord Harlech had been known as David Ormsby-Gore, before he was raised to the peerage after the death of his father, William Ormsby-Gore, 4th Baron of Harlech. David had bonded with a young Jack Kennedy when he studied in Britain during the ambassadorship (1938-1940) of his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., at the Court of St. James's.

Lord Harlech's close friend, the celebrated photographer, Cecil Beaton, defined Jackie's appearance as "somewhat Negroid." But **Lord Harlech**, as can clearly be seen in this picture, was enchanted by her.

The press, however, was premature in hailing the former First Lady as the next Lady Harlech.

That early bonding carried over into JFK's term in the White House, when Lord Harlech was the British Ambassador to Washington, D.C. JFK's sister, Kathleen Kennedy, had married a first cousin of Lord Harlech, Billy Cavendish, *[aka Lord Hartington]*, heir to the Duke of Devonshire. JFK's beloved "Kick," as he called her, had died in an airplane crash over France in 1948.

Jackie told friends, "David might be a British Lord, but he's far from stuffy. During his years in the White House, Jack adored him. Both of them had had reputations as playboys when they were young. David likes fast cars, racing, and jazz. He's very indulgent toward his five children. Some of them are hippies."

Jackie had met Harlech's younger daughter, Alice, who had been engaged to Eric Clapton in 1969. They had lived together for five years but never married. She later died of a heroin overdose in 1995. Another daughter, June, had an affair with Mick Jagger in the 1960s. The Rolling Stones' song, "Lady Jane," was said to be about her.

A son, Julian, had become a male model in London. Harlech told Jackie, "God knows what kind of modeling he's doing. I hope it's not in his birthday suit." In 1974, Julian fatally shot himself.

After JFK's assassination, Jackie received thousands upon thousands of letters from around the world. But her secretary knew to bring her Lord Harlech's. In his sympathy note, he wrote: "Jack was the most charming, considerate, and loyal friend I have ever had. I mourn him as if he were my own brother."

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., said, "David has a nice urbanity and a rather sardonic view of people and events." Economist John Kenneith Galbraith said, "David has *savoir-faire*, the savviness and wisdom that Harold Macmillan

had 25 years ago."

Ted Sorensen once asked Jackie, "Why Lord Harlech? You have your pick of all the eligible men in the world, even royalty if you wish."

"I like him because he likes to wear lilac shirts and purple ties," she said.

Lord Harlech escorted her to one of his favorite restaurants in Manhattan, Trader Vic's at the Plaza Hotel. On another occasion, they flew to Atlanta to visit the Georgia plantation of John Jay Whitney, former ambassador to Great Britain. Harlech embraced "Jock," his longtime friend, telling Jackie that Jock had once been engaged to the formidable Tallulah Bankhead.

Lord Harlech was with Jackie in fun-loving moments, but also during times of tragedy. He stood at her side during the funeral of the slain Bobby Kennedy. He'd been one of the pallbearers.

She also told friends such as Martha Bartlett, "I do not plan to marry David. Cuddling up to him is like cuddling up to an encyclopedia."

Reportedly, Lee Radziwill said, "Lord Harlech is far too unattractive a man for Jackie to marry." She made that statement just months before her sister married Aristotle Onassis.

To challenge rumors of a torrid romance with Jackie, Lord Harlech confronted the press, "Mrs. Kennedy and I have been close friends for thirteen years, but there is no truth to the story of a romance between us. I deny it flatly."

In England, Lord Harlech, who had been noted for occasionally driving on Britain's motorways at 140 mph in his Gordon-Keeble, took Jackie for a visit to his inherited 400-acre estate, Woodhill, at Oswestry in Shropshire. *[The Gordon-Keeble was a high-performance, problem-plagued sports car made in England between 1963 and 1967. Only 100 of them were ever assembled before the company went bankrupt. Ninety of them are registered today as highly collectible, highly esoteric examples of a terribly stylish dream gone bust.]*

She also dined with him at his posh flat in London's Kensington district. Princess Margaret was his guest one night as she had wanted to meet and to chat with Jackie in a private setting.

Not all of Lord Harlech's friends were impressed with Jackie's look. The photographer and art director, Cecil Beaton, recorded his impressions of her in his diary, defining her as "an over-life-size caricature of herself. Huge baseball players' shoulders and haunches, big boyish hands and feet; very dark, beautiful, receptive eyes. A somewhat Negroid appearance, the suspicion of a mustache, and very dark hair."

Jackie did not like Lord Harlech's role as Britain's national film censor, as, in theory, at least *[and unless it involved something to do with the assassination of JFK]* she opposed censorship of media. Harlech responded that he was the most lenient film censor in British history, and that he'd ordered only a few minor cuts from the film version of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the movie adaptation of the notoriously pornographic novel, *Fanny Hill*.

In 1967, Jackie flew to Ireland with John Jr. and Caroline, wanting them to see the homeland of their ancestors. Their father had been wildly popular in Ireland.

Lord Harlech flew in from London as her escort.

Arriving in Dublin, her hawknosed escort faced banner headlines—JACKIE: FROM FIRST LADY TO LADY HARLECH.

For her family holiday, Jackie had rented a spacious Georgian home near Waterford. When she'd flown into Shannon, she'd been mobbed by her admirers and by curiosity seekers. Her husband had been a beloved hero in Ireland.

On the way to her rented residence, the road was lined with well-wishers. At Waterford, in her rented Georgian residence, the servants formally lined up in the entry hall to greet her. "It looked like a Royal reception," she later recalled.

She wrote to friends back in New York. "Can you imagine? Forty-nine bedrooms and only one bathroom."

While in Ireland, Jackie went with her children to Dungastown, ancestral home of the Kennedys. She also visited the Waterford Glass Factory, purchasing chandeliers for the Kennedy Center.

She was seen with Lord Harlech at a state dinner in her honor at Dublin Castle, where she emerged in a bright green, full-length gown of chiffon wearing a white ermine stole, a fashion plate to delight the Irish paparazzi.

Lord Harlech took her to the Irish Sweepstakes, to a performance of the Dunhill Players, and to Toomey's Irish pub. He even went shopping with her for Irish tweed riding habits, and he spent the Fourth of July watching John Jr. attempt to play Gaelic football.

In Ireland, Jackie went swimming but nearly drowned in the rip tide roaring along the Irish coastline. She later wrote: "The water was so cold that one could not hold one's fingers together. I am a very good swimmer and can swim for miles and hours, but the combination of the current and cold were something I had never known. There was no one in sight to yell to."

"I was becoming exhausted, swallowing water and being swept more out to sea. Suddenly, I felt this great porpoise at my side. It was Mr. Walsh *[John F.M. Walsh]* of the Secret Service. He set his shoulder against me and

together we made it back to the spit of land. Then I sat on the beach coughing up sea water for half an hour while he found a poor itinerant and borrowed a blanket for me."

Jackie would make one more high profile trip with Lord Harlech, as their relationship became tabloid fodder.

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In Washington, Robert McNamara defined Jackie's upcoming visit to Cambodia as a good will tour, hoping that she'd charm that country's ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who had severed relations with the United States because of the war in neighboring Vietnam.

After JFK was assassinated, Prince Sihanouk had gone on the air in a nationwide broadcast. "We must thank the divine protection after causing the complete destruction of Cambodia's enemies."

The speculation about the upcoming marriage of Lord Harlech to Jackie accelerated when she flew with him to Cambodia to visit the ruins of Angkor Wat.

On the arm of Lord Harlech, Jackie created a sensation at the airport at Phnom Penh, Cambodia's largest city and capital.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia seemed to take delight in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, defining him as "the enemy of our people." He nonetheless staged a royal welcome for Jackie and her new lover, Lord Harlech.

Little girls had sprinkled the red carpet with rose and jasmine petals. Walking along the carpet, Jackie looked sensational in an emerald green mini-skirt and short white gloves. The prince received her under a canopy-covered golden throne.

She spoke to the people of Cambodia in French. "President Kennedy would have wished to visit Cambodia. He would have been attracted to the vitality of the Khmer people, a quality he showed in himself and which he so admired in others. By your warm greeting today, you have shown that you recognize his dedication to peace and understanding among all people."

The prince had staged a gala dinner for Jackie and the British Lord at his official residence, the Chamcar Mon Palace, built on the banks of the Mekong River during the French colonial occupation of Cambodia. With the prince, she stood on his panoramic terrace watching a parade of caparisoned sacred white elephants.

The next night found Lord Harlech and Jackie in Angkor, where they visited the ruins of a lost civilization. With her lover guiding her, Jackie took off her shoes and wandered barefoot "into this living history book." Her way was lit with hundreds of candles and spotlights.

Although the prince appeared to be mesmerized by Jackie's appearance, he did not soften his negative opinion of America. In Angkor, he held a press conference. "America did not come to Asia to help the yellow people!" he charged. "They came to exploit Asia as a neo-colonial power. America's criminal aggression against Vietnam is a threat to our own country."

In the city of Sihanoukville, Jackie stood on a flag-festooned platform to dedicate Avenue J.F. Kennedy. A problem that day involved Lord Harlech's attempt to usher Jackie into a black Lincoln convertible. She covered her face in horror, the vehicle evoking the one where she'd taken her last ride with JFK in Dallas.

Ultimately, overcoming her horror, Jackie got into that limousine, whereupon Sihanouk, also a passenger, directed the chauffeur to drive them past the wreckage of a downed American airplane. He turned to her, saying, "You Americans have killed many people."

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After her visit to Cambodia, many countries in the area were inviting her tobe their guest. She chose neighboring Thailand, where she expected a reception that wasn't plagued with political overtones like her visit to Cambodia.

King Bhumibo and Queen Sirikit, often called "The Jackie of the Far East," housed them in the Royal Palace in Bangkok and threw a gala reception for them. It included a performance of Thailand's Royal Ballet.

Lord Harlech had escorted Jackie to the celebrated Temple of the Emerald Buddha, and accompanied her on a shopping trip the next day.

Although pressure for her to do so was intense, Jackie turned down an invitation to visit U.S. troops fighting in Vietnam. The press was almost unanimous in its denunciation of her decision, claiming that it would have been a great morale builder for the soldiers. She also politely rejected a visit to Manila, and was consequently criticized in the local papers for not flying to the capital of an important U.S. ally.

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In 1968, after hearing of her marriage to Onassis, Lord Harlech, with a slight quiver in his voice, said, "Mrs. Kennedy has been a very close friend for fourteen years. I hope she will be very happy."

In contrast, Coco Chanel, on the same day, expressed a very different point of view. "Everyone knew she was not cut out for dignity. You must not ask a woman with a touch of vulgarity to spend the rest of her life over a corpse."

When Lord Harlech had wed Pamela Colin in 1969, a year after Jackie's wedding to Onassis, she had told the British press, "If Jackie had wanted David, he was hers for the asking."

At one point, Lord Harlech had told his friend, Lord Jenkins of Hillhead: "Marriage to Jackie would not have worked. To begin with, I'm not wealthy enough to support her in the style that she would want. It would also have been like having a sixth child. Jackie requires the kind of adoration that a child asks for. She demands constant attention day and night. Also, like the legendary Marilyn Monroe, she is never on time. I would have spent half of the rest of my life waiting for her to show up."

President Kennedy once said that he trusted **Lord Harlech** as much as any member of his Cabinet. But was that trust misplaced? The baron coveted JFK's beautiful wife.

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In the years before he died, after denying it for most of his life, Lord Harlech finally admitted to his friends in England that he'd had an affair with Jackie. "The press was on to something," he said. "Jackie and I were secret lovers. We were thrown together for many nights, and love was bound to blossom."

He recalled one time when he'd flown to Boston to attend the annual meeting of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, where he was a trustee. "Jackie and I shared a double suite at the Ritz-Carlton with connecting doors. One morning a room service waiter, delivering us an early breakfast, caught me in bed, jaybird naked, with Jackie."

Lord Harlech would die in a car crash in western England at the age of 66 on January 26, 1985. Ironically, the first Lady Harlech, Sylvia Thomas, eighteen years before *[in 1967]* had also died in a car crash.

With Teddy Kennedy as her escort, Jackie had attended Lord Harlech's funeral in the tiny 12th-century parish church at Llanfihangely-Traethau (St. Michael's on the Beaches) in northwestern Wales. She created a sensation in this remote part of Britain. She told the press, "My husband and Lord Harlech shared a sense of history and a joy in politics. They both thought of public life as the greatest and most honorable adventure. Teddy called Lord Harlech the most intelligent man he had ever known."

Fighting back tears, Jackie was escorted out of the graveyard that flanked the modest church.

One reporter from London described Jackie's appearance at the church as "the weeping black widow," which must have embarrassed the present Lady Harlech, Pamela Colin. The appearance of the paparazzi had disrupted the funeral.

A few days later, when Lady Harlech was planning a quiet, post-burial memorial service in honor of her late husband, she received a note from Jackie, asking if she could attend. In reply, Lady Harlech wrote: "Quite honestly, Jackie, I don't want to see a Kennedy at this memorial service. Because I've gone to great trouble to do this for David, I don't want this to turn into a three-ring circus that you made at his funeral, attracting all those reporters and photographers."

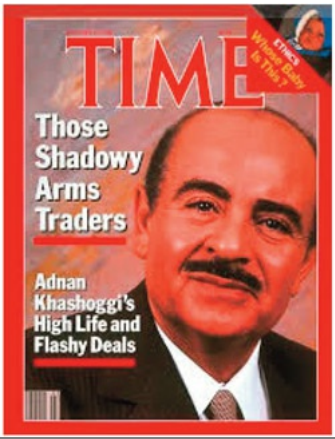
Jackie told friends she was extremely insulted and did not want to speak of Lord Harlech ever again. "I've had to learn to bury the past and live for today."

She did speak of Lord Harlech again on her deathbed in 1994. She told Bunny Mellon and others, "I truly loved the baron. When he proposed, I was swayed by the modest lifestyle he could offer me in Britain. That changed my mind, and I married Ari instead. My stupid mistake has haunted me for years. If only I had said yes, I'm sure I would have been much happier."

Adnan Khashoggi

Jackie in a Billionaire Sultan's Harem?

It might be assumed that Jackie's interest in Adnan Khashoggi stemmed from the fact that in the early 1980s, he was considered one of the richest men in the world, sitting on a mountain of cash that totaled about $40 billion in U.S. dollars.



In the 1980s, the era of flamboyant lifestyles, Jackie was often seen being escorted by the fabulously wealthy **Adnan Khashoggi**.

Ultimately, he became too exposed, too hot, and too controversial for her to handle.

Born to a Turkish family of Syrian ancestry in 1935, he was educated in universities in Ohio and California, but abandoned his studies to seek his fortune—and that's what he found.

Khashoggi was somewhat ostracized from Saudi society, criticized for his "flamboyant lifestyle" and "Western ways." He was also attacked for making money off Saudi weapons deals.

Bebe Rebozo, Richard Nixon's best friend, frequently sailed aboard Khashoggi's yacht, *Nabilia*, the largest in the world. Reportedly, Jackie once went aboard on a secret excursion. In 1983, she'd attended a screening of the James Bond film, *Never Say Never Again*, starring Sean Connery. The *Nabilia* was featured as one of the locales in

the movie.

In spite of his shady dealings, Jackie seemed attracted to Khashoggi's money and lavish lifestyle. During a visit to Spain, she made a clandestine visit to his lavish estate at the chic resort of Marbella, along Andalusia's Costa del Sol.

He had constructed one of the most ostentatious villas along the resort-studded coastline, throwing extravagant parties that attracted movie stars, politicians, and celebrities famous for being famous.

[In 1985, celebrity chronicler Robin Leach claimed that a five-day birthday party thrown by Khashoggi in Vienna for his oldest son was the most extravagant in European history.]

In 1980, Khashoggi told Jackie that it cost him $250,000 a day just to maintain his lifestyle.

"Do you you actually mean 'per day?'" she queried.

In Manhattan, Khashoggi was seen escorting Jackie to premieres, elegant dinners, or to galleries and the theater.

During Ronald Reagan's second term, Khashoggi was implicated in the Iran-Contra scandal as a key middleman in the arms-for-hostages exchange. That had led to his arrest in Switzerland, where he was accused of concealing funds.

He was held in a Swiss jail for three months before being extradited to the United States, where he was released on bail and later acquitted.

In 1990, a Federal jury in Manhattan again acquitted Khashoggi from charges of racketeering and fraud.

By this time he'd become too controversial for Jackie to be seen with, although she continued to read about him and keep abreast of his activities. In *Vanity Fair*, she read an article about him written by Dominick Dunne. "Lavish villas, perfumed *houris [voluptuously beautiful maidens]*, costume balls, fabulous deals with foreign powers, and Oriental potentates—Adnan Khashoggi's life was a 1980s remake of *The Thousand and One Nights."* Dunne also revealed that he'd been forced to sell his fabulous yacht to Donald Trump for "a mere trifle of $30 million."

"He understood high visibility better than the most shameless Hollywood press agent, and he made himself one of the most famous names of our times," Dunne wrote.

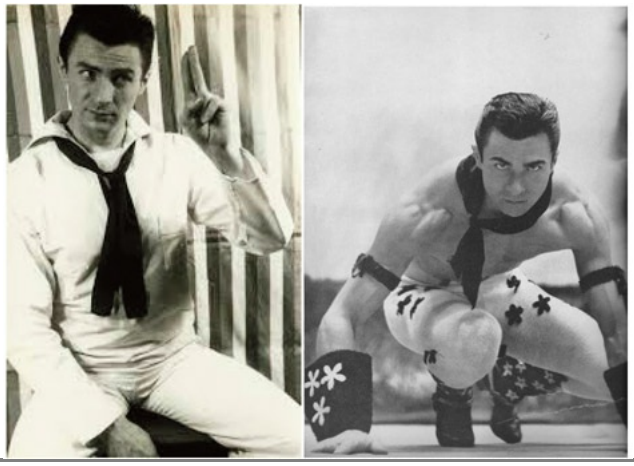
Jackie was dead before his financial empire began to crumble. But once, when asked, she said, "Adnan dared dream dreams that no one else dared to dream."

John Kriza

Jackie Falls for "Billy the Kid"

Long before the arrival of Rudolf Nureyev on America's shores in the 1960s, John Kriza was hailed as the sexiest dancer in ballet.

Gore Vidal had been attracted to him after seeing him perform the title role in the 1938 version of *Billy the Kid. [With avant-garde choreography by Eugene Loring and music by Aaron Copland, it was the most electrifying dance composition America had seen till then.]* Kriza created gasps in the audience, especially among females and homosexuals, when he appeared on stage as the notorious outlaw, wearing a brief white bikini and leather chaps. The dance stunned audiences, and became the most acclaimed and controversial dance within his repertoire.



Two balletomanes, Gore Vidal and Jackie Kennedy, competed for the passions of ballet superstar **John Kriza**, famous for dancing the

title role of *Billy the Kid*, and depicted in both photos, above.

Kriza mesmerized even larger audiences when he performed a key role in Jerome Robbins' *Fancy Free* (1944) on Broadway, playing a sailor on shore leave, setting out to sample the sights and diversions of New York. *Fancy Free* was later adapted into a movie musical, *On the Town* (1949), with Frank Sinatra cast in Kriza's stage role.

In time, Kriza would work for all the major choreographers, not just Loring, but Jerome Robbins, George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Léonide Massine, and Antony Tudor.

Vidal later recalled, "As the leading balletomane of New York, I pursued dancers from the dance after the curtain went down. It was a glorious time. I didn't dare fall in love with John Kriza, because the competition for him was too stiff. But we had great fun while it lasted."

In his memoirs, Vidal wrote, "Many men and women fell in love with Johnny, who responded wholeheartedly in an absent-minded way. He had a large car that he called Florestan, and together, we drove down the east coast of Florida, receiving the homage of balletomanes in their beachside houses."

Born in Illinois, the scion of blue collar Czech immigrants, Kriza was associated with the American Ballet Theater from 1940 to 1966.

"Johnny was about the sexiest thing that ever wore a pair of tights," Vidal told Tennessee Williams.

His infatuation did not evolve into a grand passion, although they continued to have sex together for a number of years. His ballet company toured America.

Vidal said, "Johnny had at least three boyfriends in every major city, often young husbands. He had a beautiful body and was worshipped by his fans. He also attracted equal numbers of female fans because he was bisexual."

On several occasions, Vidal escorted Jackie Kennedy, a fellow balletomane, to performances. One night, he invited her to see Kriza perform as Billy the Kid.

"I'd been to the theater with Jackie before," Vidal said. "But when Kriza pranced out onto that stage, her eyes lit up. She seemed mesmerized by him. After the curtain went down, she practically begged me to take her backstage to meet Johnny. Since I was used to sharing him, I didn't feel any particular threat from Jackie."

"Backstage, Johnny seemed enchanted by Jackie. I knew it was incumbent on me to be their pimp. I invited both of them for lunch that Saturday afternoon at my apartment."

"They showed up for lunch, but I might as well not have existed," Vidal recalled. "Those two had eyes only for each other. I'd never seen Jackie so flirtatious, and she was a notorious flirt. They were really turning each other on."

"I did the honorable thing any good host would do," he said. "After the luncheon, I lied and said I had an appointment. Actually, I had nothing to do, but wandered off to see Bette Davis in what many fans interpreted as her worst picture. I loved Bette in it. Instead of *All About Eve*, I still think Bette in *Beyond the Forest* was Mother Goddamn at her best. I would later write two movie scripts for her, *The Catered Affair* and *Scapegoat*, but I fell in love with Bette on the screen that day. Of course, Bette off the screen was a different matter."

"In the movie house, I got lucky and picked up a handsome male secretary to one of the justices of the Supreme Court," Vidal said. "I won't 'out' the justice, but his secretary told me he often allowed His Honor to perform fellatio on him, claiming 'It's part of the job, I guess.'"

"When I got home at around ten o'clock that evening, having had a divine time, Johnny and Jackie had gone. She had graciously written me a note thanking me for my hospitality. I'm sure she had a lot to thank Johnny for, too."

"When she became First Lady, Jackie invited Johnny to perform at the White House. Later, he danced for Nikita Khrushchev in the Kremlin."

"The world lost a superb specimen of manhood when Johnny drowned in 1975 in a freak accident in the Gulf of Mexico, near Naples, Florida."

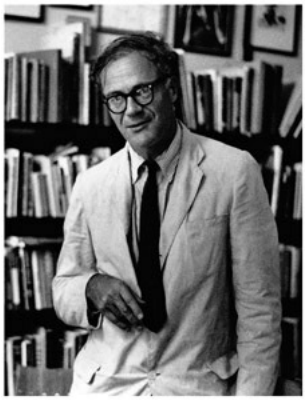
Robert Lowell

An Obsession With Jackie Lands Him in the Mental Ward of a Hospital

Poetry-loving Jackie had long admired the works of the Boston Brahmin, Robert Traill Spence Lowell IV. When he learned of her interest, he sent her an anthology of his latest poems, along with an edition of Plutarch's *Lives*. After reading them, she turned them over to Bobby Kennedy, her fellow poetry lover.

A correspondence between Jackie and Lowell followed. They eventually met in 1962 when she invited him to

the White House to meet André Malraux, France's minister of culture.



When Jackie started dating poet **Robert Lowell**, she didn't know that his best friends had nicknamed him "Cal," short for Caligula, the notorious and debauched Roman emperor.

When she finally broke off from him, the words spewing forth from his mouth were anything but poetic.

Jackie and Lowell bonded that night, and in the coming years, he became one of her escorts.

Both Lowell and Jackie shared a mutual friend, *politico* Blair Clair, who also had been one of JFK's best friends.

"Robert seemed captivated by her, his initial attraction turning in time into a sort of obsession," Clair claimed.

Lowell had roots buried deep in New England, his ancestors having come over on the *Mayflower*. He had descended from such towering historical figures as William Samuel Johnson, a signer of the U.S. Constitution, and Jonathan Edwards, the Calvinist, North American theologian.

Lowell labeled himself "thick-witted, narcissistic, and thuggish," and was defiantly proud that his friends had nicknamed him "Cal" after the notoriously debauched Roman emperor, Caligula.

His previous wife had been Jean Stafford, a novelist who was celebrated in her day. The poet, Anthony Hecht, had called that coupling "tormented and tormenting." At the time that Jackie became involved with Lowell, he was married to his second wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, the literary critic. *The New York Times* characterized that marriage as "restless and emotionally harrowing."

Lowell lived on the West side of Manhattan. In a note to him, written when she was living on Fifth Avenue, Jackie wrote that she was pleased to "have a friend across Central Park." That reference became the title of his next poem.

Both Lowell and Jackie began to be seen in Manhattan at the Café des Artistes, and she was embarrassed when a *paparazzo* from *Women's Wear Daily* snapped their picture, and the two of them appeared on the cover of the December 1, 1965 edition of that publication. They were also caught on camera leaving the theater on the opening night of *Hogan's Goat*, a play by William Alfred.

She reacted in horror when word reached her that Lowell was telling his friends that he planned to divorce Hardwick and marry Jackie. Those rumors reached the gossip columns.

Jackie was far more attracted to Lowell's mind and his talent, but he kept pressing for a sexual relationship with her. It appears that she gave in on occasion, but perhaps her heart wasn't in it. She wanted to maintain his friendship, but she had no intention of becoming his third wife.

His obsession with her seemed to grow stronger. She'd also heard that he was ingesting a lot of lithium and was a manic-depressive. He'd had a history of going in and out of mental hospitals. It was rumored that his obsession with Jackie triggered another of his manic-depressive spins.

When she heard he was recuperating in McLean Hospital in Boston, she wrote him a loving note. Not calling attention to his condition, she said, "It is wise to go away for a time on a vacation. All of us need that from time to time." She avoided mentioning that his vacation happened to be unfolding within a mental hospital.

"Jackie obviously did not consider Lowell husband material," Clair claimed. "But she adored his poetry, and she encouraged a friendship between Lowell and Bobby. Before he ran for President, Jackie was secretly trying to educate Bobby, expand his horizons, so to speak, the same way she had tried to make Jack more cultured. Jack was my roommate at Harvard, and he was more interested in pulchritude than in Plutarch."

Lowell asked Bobby to read Juvenal and Cato, and he also gave him a biography of Alexander the Great.

In February of 1966, Jackie's former lover, Rudolf Nureyev, invited her to an intimate party at the Russian Tea Room, prompting her to invite Lowell as her escort. In the aftermath of that event, Jackie dropped him from her list

of acceptable escorts.

During dinner, one of the guests mentioned that Sidney Kaye, owner of the Russian Tea Room, was Jewish.

One of Nureyev's guests reported, "That seemed to set off a tirade in Lowell. He started raging that, 'If I had wanted Jewish food, I would have gone to a deli.' He went on and on, sounding more like Goebbels all the time."

"After his ranting, Jackie stood up and abruptly excused herself. She raced toward the front, where she hailed a taxi. To my knowledge, she never saw this anti-Semitic poet ever again."

Jackie was very disappointed to learn that Lowell, who bitterly opposed the war in Vietnam, was supporting Senator Eugene McCarthy, instead of Bobby, for the Democratic nomination for President in 1968.

However, when Bobby was assassinated in Los Angeles, Lowell wrote a poem about the slain leader and sent it to Jackie. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., later said, "It was the most beautiful poem ever written about Bobby."

Mike Nichols & Richard de Combray

Was There Carnal Knowledge of Jackie?

When Berlin-born Mikhail Igorevich Peschkowsky, otherwise known as Mike Nichols, was directing Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, released in 1966, he shut down production to return to New York for a date with Jackie.

Upon his return, Taylor snidely remarked, "He looks like the cat who swallowed the canary."

Jackie, who opposed film censorship, learned from Nichols that he was defying Hollywood standards in this film adaptation of a controversial Broadway play by Edward Albee. Reportedly, he'd told her that his film would contain "thirteen god damns, three bastards, seven buggers, four screws, four sons-of-bitches or SOBs, and twelve variations of Christ's name taken in vain, as in Jesus H. Christ. There would also be references to scrotums and one reference to 'a right ball.'"

Director **Mike Nichols** and **Jackie Kennedy** formed a mutual admiration society, perhaps a lot more.

Upon the film's release, critic Stanley Hoffman wrote that when Burton delivered his famous line about "hump the hostess," old-fashioned Hollywood censorship came to an end.

Another of Nichol's controversial films was his 1971 *Carnal Knowledge*. Starring Jack Nicholson and Ann-Margret, it made frequent casual and blunt depictions of sexual intercourse. Aside from his films, what most impressed Jackie about Nichols was that he was a third cousin twice removed of Albert Einstein.

Jackie had long felt that Nichols was a major talent, and that his 1968 *The Graduate*, starring Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft, was one of her favorite movies. She had seen it twice.

"He certainly deserved his Oscar as a director," she'd told Andy Warhol. Three years younger than Jackie, Nichols was introduced to her at a party her sister, Lee Radziwill, gave "to brighten up Jackie's life."

Reportedly, Nichols found her mesmerizing. She entered the party in a stunning white silk Yves Saint Laurent gown with a white mink jacket. Her escort for the night was the very rich and very famous politician, businessman, and railroad heir, Averell Harriman. She would later tell Radziwill, "I find Mike enchanting."

The guests lined up to greet her. They included men who had chased after her—and some of those who had caught her—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., Adlai Stevenson, and Bobby Kennedy. She was also greeted by Sammy

Davis, Jr., who sloppily wet kissed her on the lips. Later, she turned to her friend, Bunny Mellon, "After exchanging body fluids with Sammy, does that mean I'll have what he has?"

At the party, she had a reunion with Pierre Salinger, who had been JFK's press secretary. The highlight of the evening was when Maurice Chevalier sang just to her.

Nichols could not help but notice that Bobby, without Ethel, hovered over Jackie as if she were his personal possession.

Jackie gave Nichols her phone number, and he called her the following morning and asked her out on a date. At the time, he was also dating feminist Gloria Steinem.

Presumably, Nichols was between marriages. Beginning with his marriage to Patricia Scott in 1957, he would wed four times, the last and most successful beginning in 1988 with ABC World News anchor Diane Sawyer.

When Jackie got to know Nichols, she found they had many common interests other than their love of film and theater. Both of them liked to go horseback riding. In Connecticut, Nichols was a noted horse breeder on a farm he owned. He imported top quality Arabian horses from Poland, later selling the animals at record-setting prices.

In 1976, Nichols collaborated with other breeders through their shared involvement with an auction at Bridgewater, Connecticut. The sale generated nearly a million dollars and was attended by Jackie herself, along with Candice Bergen and Warren Beatty, whom Jackie once defined as "my dream man."

During the next few weeks, Jackie was spotted dining with Nichols at Sardi's, followed by dancing at Arthur's, the then-most fashionable night club in Manhattan, owned by Sybil Burton in the wake of her divorce from Richard Burton. He had succumbed to the charms of Elizabeth Taylor when they'd filmed *Cleopatra* together in Rome.

A former lover of Burton, actress Susan Strasberg, daughter of Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio, was there to watch Nichols enter with Jackie. She later reported, "They looked very much in love, holding hands and seemingly charmed by each other."

On another night, Nichols and Jackie were seen dining at La Grenouille, the fashionable French restaurant in Manhattan, with actor Alan Arkin and his wife.

With Nichols as her escort, Jackie also paid a surprise visit to Coney Island with her children. He purchased Nathan's famous hot dogs for the brood. Jackie showed up in Coney Island wearing a Royal blue miniskirt whose hem was positioned five provocative inches above her knee.

Sometimes, Nichols accompanied Jackie on shopping trips. One afternoon at Bergdorf Goodman's, a crowd, mostly women, formed a circle around Jackie. "Taking you somewhere is like dating the Statue of Liberty," Nichols told her.

"My God, you're a national monument!"

"That I am," she said. "But isn't it fun?"

Jackie claimed, "The only person who admired **Billy Baldwin's** taste as a decorator was Billy himself."

Nichols also appreciated Jackie's sharp wit. They took the elevator to an upper floor. When they got off, he asked her, "Did you see Billy Baldwin?"

"I did, indeed," she said. "I almost stepped on him."

[Baldwin, of course was the dean of American interior decorators, and had been hired, on occasion, by Jackie as well as by Nichols himself. Other clients included Cole Porter, Paul Mellon, and Diana Vreeland.

He and Jackie had once discussed the possibility of publishing a book on decorating. He told her that in the 1930s, all the leading decorators were women—Marian Hall, Rose Cumming, Elsie de Wolfe, and Diane Tate. "Their tastes were based on 18th-century concepts," he told her. "Today, most of the major decorators happen to be men, and you're looking at the best of them."

Jackie continued her friendship with Nichols even when they dated other partners. He was around when Maurice Tempelsman became her main escort. At one time, Nichols introduced Jackie to the rather dashing Richard de Combray. When she was an editor at Doubleday, she worked with Combray on his novel, *Goodbye Europe*, published in 1983.

Author **Richard de Combray**, a bisexual, violated one of Jackie's basic rules: You don't kiss and tell.

At one point at a dinner, Combray invited both Nichols and Tempelsman, who blended cordially. A surprise guest that evening was Claudette Colbert, who had flown in from her home in Barbados.

Jackie had introduced herself previously to Colbert one afternoon when both of them had lunched at Mortimer's, a tony East Side hangout. Spotting Colbert as the aging actress was leaving the restaurant, Jackie had jumped up and asked the restaurant's owner, Glenn Bernbaum, "Wasn't that Claudette Colbert?"

Claudette Colbert— Jackie had to chase her down the street.

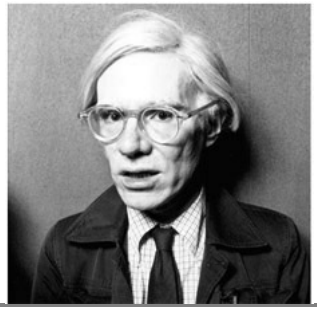
He assured her that it was.

Jackie rushed out onto the sidewalk, "Miss Colbert," she said. "I'm Jacqueline Onassis, and I have long admired your work."

Bernbaum claimed that Colbert appeared honored to have been so greeted by Jackie.

Once the celebrity-obsessed Jackie confided to Nichols that she had once stalked "the ever so mysterious Greta Garbo on the sidewalks of Manhattan. "I followed her for about ten blocks before she eluded me. When I became First Lady, I invited her to the White House, and she accepted my invitation."

The much-married Nichols was not always available as an escort for Jackie. Sometimes, when he was directing a picture or otherwise engaged, she'd call another escort. For some reason, in February of 1978, she attended the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue in honor of the posthumous publication of the James Jones novel, *Whistle*.



When **Andy Warhol** escorted Jackie to the Brooklyn Museum for an exhibition of Egyptian art, the first question she asked was, "What's Elizabeth Taylor really like?"

Jackie showed up on the arm of Walter Cronkite and greeted a distinguished array of guests—Lauren Bacall, Woody Allen, Theodore White, super agent Swifty Lazar, Art Buchwald, and such novelists as William Styron and Irwin Shaw.

Andy Warhol greeted Jackie. He'd been talking to Lee Radziwill and her lover, Peter Tufo. To his astonishment, he noticed that Radziwill quickly exited the party with Tufo, heading for the elevator and never once coming face to face with or greeting her sister.

The other person who avoided Jackie was her rival for men, Shirley MacLaine, who made an ostentatious show of immediately (and loudly) heading for the buffet table. In a voice that Jackie could clearly hear, she said, "God, I'm starved!"

Lee Radziwill avoiding her sister, Jackie, at a Manhattan party.

Combray once talked to Nichols about the fallout from dating Jackie. "We had lunch one afternoon alone. A *paparazzo* snapped our picture as we were leaving this restaurant, and we ended up on the front-page of the tabloids. The next day, the reporters were calling me, asking me when Jackie and I were getting hitched. I told them we were working on a book."

"Everything got distorted," he said. "I came to realize, as surely you must have, that you can't merely have lunch alone with the most famous woman on the planet without attracting a hell of a lot of attention. With all this publicity, my relationship with Jackie was damaged, through no fault of my own. She didn't welcome all this publicity about us."

Perhaps Combray was not being completely honest about his relationship with Jackie. She didn't blame him for reckless press speculation.

Apparently, they did become romantically involved one weekend, and he bragged about it to some of his close friends, Word got back to her. She had a pattern of dropping any beau who boasted about seducing her.

Gore Vidal later said, "I understood men who bedded Jackie and wanted to present it as a feather in their cap. I would be like a gay man bedding Tom Cruise, Paul Newman, Robert Redford, or one of those heartthrobs. Of course, as you're hanging out in a gay bar, you'd want to brag about your conquests, perfectly understandable."

Combray was a bisexual. His December 13, 2013 obituary in *The New York Times* asserted that he was survived by Miles Morgan, his life partner of 59 years, and also by a former wife, Natalie Hough de Combray.

Nichols remained Jackie's friend throughout her life, even appearing at her funeral to read a passage from the

Bible right before opera diva Jessye Norman sang “Ave Maria.”

Frank Richardson

The War of the Roses

A year after Jackie’s death, she came very close to being named “the other woman” in a sensational 1995 divorce played out in the tabloids and in court. The notorious divorce between Frank and Nancy Richardson was, years later, nicknamed “The War of the Roses.”

The battle in court was said to have inspired the 1989 movie, *The War of the Roses*, starring Michael Douglas in a plot about a warring couple who could not agree on a property settlement.

Journalist Alex Novak later wrote that at one point, Nancy alleged that her husband might have had an affair with Jackie. Whereas her actual name was not mentioned in court, lawyers used an oft-repeated, veiled reference to “a towering figure.” The one woman named was Federal Court Judge Kimba Wood.

To bolster her charges of infidelity, Nancy had found the secret diaries of her husband.

In his diary, Richardson wrote about his feelings for the mystery woman, presumably Jackie. “I was intoxicated by her body.”

Nancy claimed that her estranged husband’s diary contained “puerile musings about where he and his lover went, how they felt when they touched, and how they made love.”

In his diary, **Frank Richardson** described a mystery woman whose body he found “intoxicating.”

Only the timing of Jackie’s death saved her from being named as “the other woman” in a bitter divorce dispute.

If a sexual tryst between Richardson and Jackie actually occurred, it would have been at his 53-acre Long Island estate opening onto Oyster Bay Cove. Here, he maintained a 50-room mansion with a swimming pool and tennis courts. According to a servant whose information was paid for by a tabloid reporter, Jackie made at least three visits to Richardson’s fully staffed stable, one of the best in the region. She went horseback riding, her favorite sport.

In court, Richardson denied having had an affair with Judge Wood and also disputed his affair with “that other woman,” (aka Jackie). At the time, Richardson’s net worth was estimated at around $160 million. In the final divorce settlement, the court awarded Nancy $80 million. In the wake of that, Richardson ran off with a *Playboy* bunny.

At one point, Jackie was said to have been interested in Napier House, a residence owned by Nancy, who had put it on the market for $1.3 million. The house at Sag Harbor, on Long Island, had once been owned by the U.S.’s 21st President, Chester A. Arthur, who occupied the White House from 1881 to 1885. The building later became a funeral parlor.

Mike Douglas and **Kathleen Turner** in *The War of the Roses.*

Jackie was fascinated by this obscure president and later claimed that his life and legacy had inspired her to upgrade the furnishing and décor of the White House.

Arthur once told the press, "I may be president of the United States, but my private life is nobody's god damn business."

The widower president was the first to employ a valet, who looked after his 100 suits. "Arthur was the first president to bring men's fashion to the office," Jackie said.

In addition to being America's best dressed president, he rode around in a lavish carriage with gold lace curtains.

Like Jackie, he had detested the White House décor and its dilapidated furnishings. He set out to renovate the building. To raise money for his project, he began to empty the White House of its furnishings. On the front lawn, he staged a yard sale, attracting hundreds of prospective buyers. He even auctioned off a pair of old trousers once owned by Abraham Lincoln. He also personally auctioned off a hat worn by John Quincy Adams.

When he was challenged on this sale by critics, who claimed that these relics should be donated to museums, he responded in anger: "To hell with that! I need money for new furniture. Hell, if the British hadn't burned them, I would have auctioned off Dolley Madison's bloomers, even with skid marks."

Felix Rohatyn

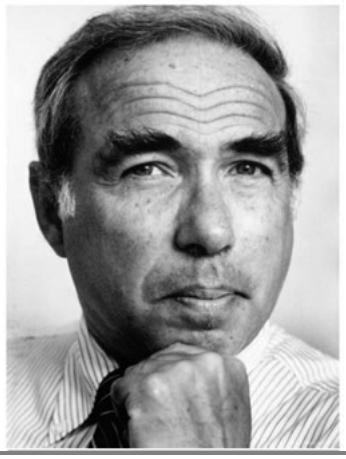
Jackie's "Felix the Cat"

Journalist Richard Wilner wrote: "In December of 1975, Felix Rohatyn was King of New York. Presidents and potentates took his calls. Cabbies, believing the 47-year-old bank titan had saved the financial life of New York, refused to accept his money, driving him around Manhattan for free."

Only a year older than Jackie, Vienna-born Rohatyn was an investment banker famed for preventing New York from going bankrupt. At the time he became the city's financial adviser, NYC was $11 billion in debt.

Rohatyn, was a partner associated with the prestigious international banking firm, Lazard Frères. *[Another partner was André Meyer.]* Rohatyn was also a long-term financial adviser to the Democratic Party, and in time *[from 1997 to 2000]* served as U.S. ambassador to France during the Clinton administration.

Rohatyn, with Meyer, sometimes doubledated, Meyer escorting Jackie and Rohatyn escorting his steady girlfriend, Hélène Gaillet de Barcza, a renowned photographer. This arrangement often began with Sunday dinners at Meyer's apartment within the Hotel Carlyle in Manhattan.



"Felix the Cat" Rohatyn was not only a financial genius, but a ladykiller. Once again, Jackie found herself competing with Shirley MacLaine for the affections of a man.

Gaillet, in her capacity as the eight-year mistress of Rohatyn, shared a penthouse with him at the Hotel Alrae in Manhattan. *[Originally built in 1927 on a quiet stretch of East 64th Street, the Alrae, after extensive renovations, evolved into the very posh Plaza Athenée Hotel in 1987.]*

At a low point in their relationship, she flew to Paris for an exhibition of her photographs. Upon her return, she found that Rohatyn had moved all his possessions from their penthouse.

Jackie and Rohatyn began serious dating in 1976. As he became involved with Jackie, he had to dump Gaillet. She did not mourn in silence, telling the press, "Ms. Onassis uses men and discards them the way she does one of her summer dresses. I cannot believe how she betrayed me. I viewed her as a friend."

"When she is ready to move on to another man, she calls and leaves a message with their secretary. 'Tell Mister Whoever not to call Mrs. Onassis again.' Even though she is middle aged, she is still attractive. Being one of the most famous women in the world certainly adds to her allure."

Gaillet told William D. Cohan, author of *The Last Tycoons*, "I wasn't in love with Felix. He was not in love with me. It was not even a great affair. It was just something that was happening. But in a sense, I enjoyed having an affair with him, because we always had dinners, at which time the most interesting part was the conversation."

After their breakup, Gaillet discovered that Rohatyn was a real Romeo, perhaps dating both Shirley MacLaine (Jackie's longtime rival), and Barbara Walters, on the side. Not only that, but he'd taken a mistress, Elizabeth Vagliano, whom he would eventually marry in 1979 when his divorce from his first wife, Jeannette Streit, was finalized.

Rohatyn allegedly was never faithful to any one woman. One report had his partner, André Meyer, arriving at Rohatyn's office at Lazard Frères and discovering that the door was locked. He yelled out in a voice loud enough for the entire office to hear: "Felix, why don't you go to a hotel room like the rest of our partners?"

Office rumor had it that Rohatyn was locked away for a daytime tryst with Shirley MacLaine at the time. But that was never proven.

Gaillet and Rohatyn had flown to Skorpios, Onassis' private island in Greece, to offer comfort to Onassis following the death of his son, Alexander, in a plane crash. She remembered Onassis driving to meet them at the island's landing strip, positioned on a high plateau. "He took us on a tour of his island, and we went to the beach with him, even did some gardening, anything to distract him from the loss of his son. He was in deep mourning. Five days later, Jackie flew in with Sir John Russell, the British ambassador to Spain. All of us, including Jackie, tried desperately to bring some solace to poor Ari."

During Rohatyn's dating of Jackie, finances were often discussed, especially her own. But she was also concerned with her mother, Janet. When Hugh Auchincloss had died, he was going broke. He'd been forced to sell Merrywood, his palatial estate in Virginia, and he even had to put Hammersmith Farm, outside Newport, on the market, selling it to a group of investors.

In the wake of her 1976 divorce from Auchincloss, in 1979, Janet had married banker Bingham Morris, separating from him two years later, although they never divorced.

Jackie felt her mother's financial position was precarious. Rohatyn suggested that Jackie set up a $1 million trust fund for her, which she did.

In 1976, Rohatyn accompanied Jackie to the Democratic Nominating Convention at Madison Square Garden.

She was there to show her support for Sargent Shriver, who wanted to be the Vice Presidential nominee. But the candidate, Jimmy Carter, supported Walter Mondale as his running mate instead. Jackie told friends, “I will not campaign for Carter. I simply can’t abide this peanut farmer.”

During the convention, in the VIP box above the main floor, she sat between Ted Kennedy and Rohatyn. She was overheard making fun of Carter, “You know, he looks like Howdy Doody.”

She also mocked Rosalynn Carter. America’s upcoming First Lady would be called “the Steel Magnolia” and compared unfavorably to Jackie.

After hearing her voice, Jackie turned to Rohatyn, batting her eyelashes and assuming a Scarlett O’Hara accent, “*Fiddle-de-dee*, Lady Bird is just gonna love this Georgia peach with her corn syrup-and-pancake voice.”

When Jackie stopped dating Rohatyn, they still stayed in touch. She knew he wanted to become Secretary of the Treasury, a dream that was subsequently thwarted by twelve years of Republicans in the White House.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, he did not fully understand what was coming, backing Ross Perot over Bill Clinton for President, and thereby demolishing his chances of becoming an appointee in the new Clinton Administration. *[In compensation, and partly because of his financial support and his status as a life-long Democrat, he was eventually appointed U.S. Ambassador to France (1997-2000) during Clinton’s second administration.]*

Jackie told her associates, including Ted Kennedy and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Felix knows how to handle finances, and he certainly can date A-list women, but when it comes to politics, he is tone deaf.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.

Jackie and the President’s Son

Their parents, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph P. Kennedy, became enemies, but their respective sons, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., and John F. Kennedy, bonded and became lifelong friends.

The young men had much in common, as each had been a Naval officer during World War II. Both men had at one time been a congressman, FDR Jr. representing the 20th congressional district of New York from 1949 to 1955. He got to know JFK so well, he often went out on double dates with him.

FDR Jr. was married at the time to Ethel du Pont of the famous family of industrialists. JFK was dating a young model in New York, Grace Kelly, who at the time had some vague plan about becoming a movie actress.

Born in 1914, FDR Jr., was the fifth child of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Although not associated with the scandals that frequently engulfed his older brothers, James and Elliott, FDR, Jr. was in frequent trouble with the police, usually for traffic violations such as driving while intoxicated.

Kelly would migrate to Hollywood, and the Du Pont heiress and FDR Jr., would soon divorce. He later introduced JFK to his second wife, Suzanne Perrin.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. is pictured with his illustrious mother, **Eleanor Roosevelt,** who always beat out Jackie in influential polls gauging the popularity of First Ladies.

JFK campaigned for FDR Jr., in 1954 when he ran for governor of New York, although he lost to a Republican, Jacob Javits. It was at this time that JFK introduced Roosevelt to his new bride, Jackie Bouvier Kennedy.

She got to know FDR Jr. much better when he campaigned for her husband in the 1960 West Virginia primary, where he was seeking the Democratic nomination for President, competing against Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota. Often, when JFK was overscheduled, he asked Roosevelt and Jackie to make an appearance for him. When he became President, JFK designated Roosevelt as Under-Secretary of Commerce and chairman of the President's Appalachian Regional Commission.

During her years in the White House, Jackie and Roosevelt became close friends, seeing each other with or without JFK. The President later told his best friend, Lem Billings, "I think Jackie has a crush on Franklin. At times, when she gets angry with me for cheating on her, I think she would have preferred that he had become president, following in his father's footsteps, so she could have been his First Lady instead of mine."

In 1963, and in need of a vacation, Jackie decided to accept an invitation extended by Aristotle Onassis for a tour of the Greek islands aboard his luxury yacht, *Christina*, named after his daughter. The invitation was extended through her sister, Lee Radziwill, who was having an affair with Onassis, the shipping tycoon, at the time.

JFK only reluctantly agreed to let Jackie go. Although it was clearly understood that Lee would be aboard, he also insisted that Jackie invite FDR Jr. and his wife, Suzanne.

"How cheeky," Jackie said, using a British expression. "Jack thinks I need both my sister and Franklin, even his wife, as chaperon. He's the one who should have a chaperon."

She flew into Athens with the Roosevelts. Although Onassis had given them the use of *Christina*, he agreed, for a time, at least, to remain in the background, knowing that he was a controversial figure for the First Lady to be seen with.

Both the Roosevelts and Jackie were impressed with the luxury of the *Christina*, a former Canadian frigate that had been converted into Onassis' personal seagoing statement. It employed 60 servants and two chefs, as well as a masseuse and two hairdressers on call 24 hours a day.

When Jackie came aboard, she found that Onassis had decorated the vessel with pink and white gladioli and red and yellow roses.

She wandered at leisure throughout the yacht. Its bar stools were upholstered with skin harvested from the scrotums of whales. Its (working) fireplaces had mantels crafted from lapis lazuli, and its bathroom fixtures were plated with gold. Onassis assigned her the stateroom which Sir Winston Churchill and Greta Garbo had occupied during (separate) and previous cruises.

As devised by the *Christina*'s captain, Costas Anastassiadis, an itinerary was presented to Jackie. First stop, the island of Lesbos, the former abode of Sappho. That announcement was followed with the usual lesbian jokes.

The captain later sailed his VIP guests to the island of Crete, where all of them went aboard for sightseeing.

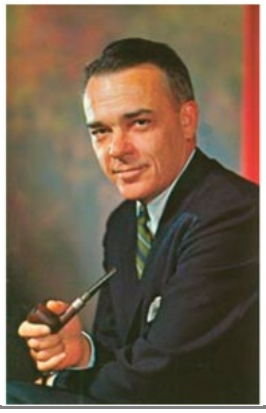
When the *Christina* docked in Turkey at Izmir *[aka Smyrna, Onassis' birth place]*, she sent word to ask the Greek tycoon to join their party. He accepted her invitation to appear aboard his own yacht, but kept a low profile, avoiding any opportunity that might allow paparazzi to snap his picture with "the President's Lady."

Onassis catered to Jackie's every wish, hosting lavish dinner parties on shore at every port, including Ithaca, where they anchored. She often danced with either Roosevelt or with Onassis on deck under a starry night.

Suzanne noted that Jackie flirted with both her husband and her host. But she didn't think that Jackie was having an affair with Onassis because at the time, he was involved with Lee Radziwill, when not chasing after Maria Callas.

Roosevelt and Onassis often stayed up late at night, drinking after Jackie and Suzanne had gone to bed. One night, Onassis shocked Roosevelt by asserting, "Every Greek man worth his salt has a wife, a mistress, and a beautiful young boy with a tender ass on the side—it is our custom."

A *paparazzo* hired a boat and sailed close to the *Christina*, snapping a picture of Jackie sunbathing in a bikini on deck. When JFK was told that the photo had appeared on the front page of practically every newspaper in the world, he was furious. He fired off a telegram that ordered Jackie to return to Washington.



Oliver Bolton, Republican Congressman from Ohio's 11th District, in office from 1963-1965

Jackie ignored the protests, even when they were delivered from the floor of Congress. Representative Oliver Bolton, Republican Congressmen from the eastern suburbs of Cleveland *[Ohio]*, attacked the First Lady for "her demonstration of indiscretion accepting the lavish hospitality of a notorious shipping tycoon who had defrauded the American public and been investigated by the FBI."

"If Mrs. Kennedy wants to go gallivanting all over Eu rope, why not see America first?" Bolton asked. "She's never visited the great attractions of the United States. She should see them first instead of publicizing the glories of the Greek islands."

When the yacht docked in Istanbul, Onassis presented Jackie with a ruby-and-diamond necklace worth about $75,000. Lee Radziwill got what she later described to Truman Capote as "three dinky little bracelets that Caroline wouldn't even accept as gifts at her own birthday party."

Johnny Meyer, who had been the pimp for Howard Hughes, and who later agreed to work for Onassis, revealed that Jackie and Roosevelt went off together on a sightseeing tour of their own to visit some ruins outside Istanbul. "Ari asked me to tag along as their bodyguard," Meyer claimed. "He recommended that they stop off at one of his favorite inns, where the chef had been ordered to prepare a Greek feast for them of his favorite dishes."

After drinking the wine and eating a good meal, Jackie complained of the heat. She said she'd had too much to drink.

"I arranged for them to have a siesta upstairs in two of the best rooms at the inn," Meyer claimed. "At around five o'clock, I came for them to drive them back to Istanbul. I discovered that Roosevelt's room was empty. I didn't want to call attention to it, but it was obvious when I came for Jackie that the son of a famous president was in the room with her."

"On the way back to Istanbul, I saw them holding hands. I knew he'd made love to her that afternoon."

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"The next months passed quickly, and then came Jack's flight to Texas, accompanied by Jackie," Roosevelt said. "To me, his term seemed just like it had begun, and then with some gunshots, it was all over. I joined many others to offer Jackie all the loving support I could."

He called on Jackie every day, although he felt he was making Bobby jealous. "After Jack was killed, Bobby seemed to take possession of her."

One night, FDR Jr. invited Jackie to a small dinner party at his home. Since it was late, he drove her back to her residence in Georgetown.

Even though it was late at night, some thirty curious people were gathered outside her home, hoping to see her coming or going.

Seeing the crowd, she burst into tears. "I can't stand these people any more," she told Roosevelt. "They're like locusts swarming around me, devouring me. I'm going mad. I can't go anywhere without being stalked."

Roosevelt stormed out of his car and chased the people away, threatening to call the police and have them arrested. Then he disappeared inside the house with Jackie at around one o'clock in the morning.

A Jackie "stalker" later reported that Roosevelt left her house at nine o'clock the following morning. It is not known what excuse he used to tell his wife, who must have been jealous of Jackie, as Ethel was of her because of Jackie's close ties to Bobby.

In Manhattan during October of 1964, Roosevelt recalled escorting Jackie to Richard Burton's suite at the Plaza Hotel. Burton had been there talking to Bobby Kennedy, who had become his good friend.

Later, Roosevelt confided to Senator George Smathers *[a Democrat from Florida]* details about what took place there, claiming that Burton had already consumed too many Irish whiskies before they arrived.

"After about an hour, he became very indiscreet," Roosevelt told his friends. "He even urged Bobby to divorce Ethel and marry Jackie, and make an honest woman out of her. He went on and on. Jackie wanted him to shut up, so she begged him to recite something from Shakespeare. That did the trick."

When Gore Vidal later heard about this intimate cocktail party at The Plaza, he snidely remarked, "Jackie had something in common with Bobby, Burton, and Roosevelt. On occasion, she'd seduced all three of them, especially Bobby."

Eleanor Roosevelt

Her Death and Jackie's Role at Her Memorial Service

An early-morning call came in from FDR Jr. to Jackie at the White House. His voice was grim. "Mother has passed on. It would mean so much to all of us if you and the President could come to her funeral."

The date was November 7, 1962. Eleanor Roosevelt, the greatest First Lady in the history of the Republic, had died.

Jackie burst into tears. Recovering, she promised Roosevelt that she and the President would journey to Hyde Park for the funeral.

In the past, the Kennedys had had their differences with the Roosevelts. FDR had ended up "detesting" Joseph P. Kennedy after he'd failed as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's on the eve of World War II. As late as 1960, even after JFK won the Democratic nomination, Eleanor had stubbornly backed his competitor, Adlai Stevenson, until the cause was lost.

But Eleanor was a Democrat to her aging toenails, and she disliked Richard Nixon. Consequently, the Democratic Party could always count on its battle-hardened diva, even as she neared the end of her life.

Their relationship was complicated and strained: **Eleanor Roosevelt** with **JFK**

When JFK was inaugurated as President, Mrs. Roosevelt, the beloved duenna of the Democrats, attended with other First Ladies, going back as far as Edith Wilson. Bess Truman and Mamie Eisenhower were there, as were Lady Bird Johnson, Patricia Nixon, and Betty Ford.

Jackie learned that Eleanor had specifically requested a "small, simple service in a plain pine coffin covered with a blanket of pine boughs." She wanted to keep her funeral private.

Even though he was juggling some of the darkest moments of the Cuban Missile Crisis, with ample evidence that America was in imminent danger of a nuclear attack, JFK attended the service, along with Jackie. Former President Harry S Truman showed up, as did Dwight D. Eisenhower, along with a future President, Lyndon B. Johnson.

The service was held at FDR's St. James' Church in Hyde Park, a hundred miles north of New York City. FDR Jr. welcomed Jackie and warmly embraced her. He invited her to lunch at his home next door to his mother's Val-

Kill Cottage.

After the service, Jackie sat on a sofa smoking a cigarette and wearing a dark mink hat. She watched JFK talking with Eisenhower and Truman.

Bess called Harry to come at once to attend to some perceived problem. On the way out, Harry informed Jackie that Eleanor Roosevelt was actually "the First Lady of the World." Jackie viewed that as a put-down, since she'd heard that Truman had called her "the White House mannequin" a dismissive reference to her stylish wardrobe.

Friends close to Jackie said that attending Eleanor's funeral gave Jackie many ideas for a state funeral in case JFK ever died in office, perhaps the victim of an assassin's bullet.

Before 1962, only five presidents had been given state funerals. Ted Sorensen advised Jackie that she should leave some instructions for her own funeral if she should die during her tenure in the White House.

He told her that American First Ladies were rarely commemorated. Mary Todd Lincoln was the rare First Lady whose death had been officially sanctioned with flags flying at half mast.

"From my reading of history, I noted that most First Ladies were dispatched with little more than prayers and flowers in small towns across America," Sorensen said. "Eleanor's funeral was the first time that three presidents had ever attended such an event."

Eisenhower had almost canceled at the last minute. [In 1952, there had been talk of nominating Eleanor to run against Ike for President.]

As transport to the funeral, JFK and Jackie had flown aboard the new Air Force One, making its maiden voyage. The following year, she'd also be on that plane as it flew JFK's corpse back from Dallas.

After hugging and kissing FDR Jr. goodbye, JFK and Jackie departed from Hyde Park. On their way out, their limousine passed a protester holding up a sign—WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE GONE, ELEANOR. *The Hyde Park police were in the process of arresting him*.

Back in Washington, Jackie wrote to her mother, Janet Auchincloss: "After attending Eleanor's funeral, I am convinced that, God forbid, if Jack ever died in office, the American public will need some official display of our mourning. It should not be a quiet, private funeral, but a major event to rally the nation in its hour of grief—a kind of group therapy to heal our wounds. The only shame will be for those of his enemies who do not join the jeremiad."

Adlai Stevenson

"Jackie Is the Temptress of Her Age"

"Jack so obviously demanded from a woman a relationship between a man and a woman where a man would be the leader and a woman be his wife and look up to him as a man. With Adlai, you could have another relationship where—you know, he'd sort of be sweet and you could talk. I always thought women who were scared of sex loved Adlai."

—Jacqueline Kennedy in *Historic Taped Conversations (1964)*

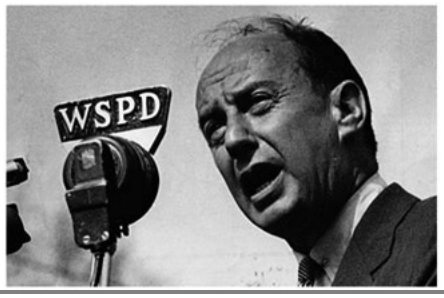
In the early evening of the night before Jackie boarded that morning flight to Texas with JFK, she received an urgent call from Adlai Stevenson. The President had selected him as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Since she was busy, she told a White House staff member, "Tell Adlai I'll get back to him in the morning before I leave."

The messenger returned. "The ambassador says it's urgent that he speak to you, a matter of life or death."

After a preliminary greeting, Stevenson got right to the point. "You must convince our President not to go to Dallas. The *Dallas Morning News* is running an editorial that will stir up hatred against the President. I was recently in Dallas. I was pelted with eggs and spat upon by hate mongers."

"Oh, Adlai," she said. "I'm sure everything will be all right. There will be tight security."

"But as the President has often told us, 'If someone wants to trade his life for mine, he can do it.'"



Adlai Stevenson never gave up in his desire to become President, even after he lost to Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956.

Like Martin Luther King, Jr., Stevenson had a dream. He fancied that if he could persuade Jackie to marry him, he might sail into the White House based on her popularity as a "second-time" First Lady.

"I appreciate your concern," she said, "but I trust my husband. He wouldn't let me fly with him if he felt we'd be in danger."

"Very well," he said. "I'll pray that both of you return to Washington safely. But I must warn you a final time: You're flying into hostile rattlesnake country."

"Good night, Adlai, and thank you for your concern."

Her rejection of his warning angered Stevenson. The following night, he expressed his concern to Katharine Graham, publisher of *The Washington Post*. At that dinner, he also called Jackie "a royal tease. The temptress of her age."

After her return to Washington from Dallas, Jackie would often tell friends and associates about that late night panic call from Stevenson. "If only I'd listened to him."

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Until the assassination, Jackie always maintained a superficial relationship with Adlai. Occasionally, they talked, as when he called her after attending the birthday gala for JFK at Madison Square Garden in May of 1962. Stevenson saw Marilyn Monroe singing "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" while wearing what he called "only skin and beads."

He phoned Jackie the next day to report on the evening. He described the party he'd attended after the gala. It had been hosted by Arthur Krim, president of United Artists. "I never got to dance with Miss Monroe," he said to Jackie. "Bobby Kennedy put up strong defenses around her. He was dodging round her like a moth around the flame. The President stayed on the other side of the room, surrounded by an array of admirers."

Although Jackie on several occasions denied her political involvements in policy issues during her husband's administration, JFK often used her charm as a political buffer "to soothe ruffled feathers" in his words.

Such was the case during the Cuban Missile Crisis when he ordered Jackie to share a private dinner with Stevenson. He had aroused Stevenson's fury when his aides leaked word that Stevenson endorsed a policy of capitulation to the Soviets.

Jackie apparently succeeded brilliantly in her assignment, and won over Stevenson with her charm assault. She later reported, "We talked art and literature—not politics, and he seemed to enjoy being in my company."

At the 1956 Democratic Nominating Convention, JFK had wanted Stevenson to designate him as his vice presidential running mate. At the convention, Jackie was seated with both Bobby and Teddy Kennedy, as well as with Jean Kennedy Smith, Sargent Shriver, and Ted Sorensen.

All of JFK's backers were terribly disappointed when Stevenson decided to let the delegates select his running mate for him. The convention voted for Estes Kefauver, the coonskin-cap wearing senator from Tennessee.

As surprising as it sounds, Stevenson wanted to be nominated once again as the Democratic candidate for president in 1960, despite having previously lost (twice) to Dwight D. Eisenhower. The thinking of his backers, including Eleanor Roosevelt, was that Eisenhower had been too popular to beat. Richard Nixon, however, seemed a vulnerable candidate who did not benefit from Ike's wide and popular appeal. At the convention, Stevenson's candidacy went down in defeat.

[The Democrats were opposed to giving Stevenson a chance for a third run for President. Other than JFK, the candidate to beat was Lyndon B. Johnson.]

Following JFK's assassination in 1963, Johnson, the new president, grew increasingly alarmed by his growing unpopularity resulting from the Vietnam War. He called his trusted aides to decide which other candidate might

oppose him if he ran for re-election in 1968. Eugene McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy were each interpreted as formidable challengers. The name Adlai Stevenson also came up.

"Can you believe it?" Johnson asked his cronies. "This faggot *[a reference to Stevenson]* has come up with this crazy scheme that he should run once again for president. He has told his closest aides that if he can get the widow Kennedy to marry him, he'll have yet another chance to run for President in 1968, this time on her skirttails."

As commented upon by Johnson, Stevenson had begun to woo Jackie right after the assassination.

Stevenson had launched his pursuit of Jackie even before her move to New York. In 1964, at her Georgetown residence, he wrote her, "Please be merciful and indulge an old man and let me know when you are in New York."

When she eventually moved to New York, Stevenson sent another note to welcome her. "I hope you can find some peace here—I haven't! And I will give you none—until you set aside an evening for me—alone!"

He began to invite her on trips, beginning with a day trip to Washington in a special plane that would return her back to New York later that evening. He even invited her to Spain for the *Fería* in Seville. She did not accept. He asked her, "How can you see the world save in the tender care of a safe, old chaperon like me?"

Paul Mathias, the New York correspondent for *Paris-Match*, summed up how Adlai Stevenson fitted into Jackie's life after the assassination. "She not only perfected the art of the tease, she invented it. She was Miss Narcissist, perpetually searching mirrors for every wrinkle or strand of prematurely gray hair. She didn't worry about growing old, she worried about looking old."

"Within eighteen months after the assassination, she had at least two dozen of the world's most brilliant and important men dangling like marionettes, dancing at her fingertips. Most of them were very married, very old, or very queer."

Most in-the-know Washingtonians included Stevenson in the latter category.

Stevenson wasn't the only political bigwig arriving at Jackie's new Fifth Avenue apartment. Other *politico* guests included the President himself, Lyndon Johnson, and Senator (later Vice President) Hubert Humphrey. Even Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and King Hassan II of Morocco came by to pay their respects. Rudolf Nureyev also was a frequent visitor.

After their first dinner together in New York, Jackie sent Stevenson a watercolor she'd painted of the Sphinx, one with her face emblazoned on the monument itself. She wrote, "A Sphinx is rather what I feel like when I go out with you—as it all seems so responsible—and it is really the most marvelous 'cover.'"

That watercolor was followed by an invitation from Stevenson for Jackie and Lee Radziwill to have lunch with him at the United Nations. The luncheon was followed with another note from Jackie: "We had the most exhilarating time. Lee, that fickle creature, came there adoring the Greek ambassador but left in love with Dr. Ralph Bunche!"

Johnson had always held Stevenson in contempt. For reasons of his own, he seemed upset by Stevenson dating Jackie. He called her one morning and chatted casually. He didn't seem to want to say that Stevenson was gay, but he hoped to send a signal. "Jackie, I hate to tell you this, but I have it on good authority that Stevenson squats to piss."

He'd made the call after seeing a picture in the morning paper of Stevenson escorting Jackie to the ballet in Manhattan.

Stevenson's son, Adlai Jr., seemed impressed with Jackie. "She needed someone like my father to go to the theater and other cultural events to escape the Kennedy tribe. He didn't play touch football. She was a wonderful, sensitive woman who needed to escape. My father was cultivated, a man of the world, gentle, sophisticated."

Stevenson seemed to believe that the way to win Jackie's heart involved courting her children. When Caroline enrolled at the School of the Convent of the Sacred Heart in New York City, Stevenson escorted both Jackie and her daughter there. On some occasions, he picked up both John Jr. and Caroline and took them to an ice cream parlor, followed that evening with a private dinner with Jackie.

For about six weeks, he became a kind of surrogate father. Once, he took Caroline and John Jr., on a ferryboat ride to show them the Statue of Liberty. He even escorted them one summer to Coney Island, where they were seen enjoying the rides and eating Nathan's famous hot dogs.

Often, in the evening, he would escort Jackie to the theater.

"I'm alarmed by Adlai's growing romantic interest in me," Jackie told friends. As author C. David Heymann revealed, "The more he saw of her, the more attracted he became. When she sensed that he had developed a romantic attachment, she retreated, sending him a series of playful but off-putting notes."

The end of the relationship came when Stevenson, at Jackie's Fifth Avenue apartment, proposed marriage to her. Stressing what a wonderful father he would be to Caroline and John Jr., he finally accepted the fact that she had no sexual interest in him at all. Not giving up, he proposed that they could have a *mariage blanc*, a strictly platonic union, not a sexual one. He tried to win her over by claiming, "The two of us can continue to carry out Jack's work

that he wasn't allowed to finish."

What Jackie knew at the time, but Stevenson didn't, was that Bobby was considering challenging Johnson for the Democratic nomination for President at the 1968 convention. Of course, Jackie would throw her considerable support behind Bobby.

It was all over between Stevenson and Jackie.

Pierre Trudeau

Jackie and the Young and Swinging Prime Minister

Ten years older than Jackie, Pierre Trudeau began his career as a lawyer and activist in Québec province. Later, he joined the Liberal Party of Canada, becoming in time Minister of Justice. "Reason before passion," was his personal motto.

In April of 1968, the year Jackie married Aristotle Onassis, Trudeau was elected Prime Minister. T h e press defined him as "Canada's swinging young bachelor," inviting comparisons to the lifestyle of John F. Kennedy's womanizing.

Pierre Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, was hailed as that country's answer to JFK.

In January of 1970, Trudeau shocked Canada by showing up at the celebration of Manitoba's Centennial with Barbra Streisand. Tall, handsome, and unmarried, he gave off a youthful aura even though he was fifty years old. He'd met Streisand a year earlier at the premiere of *Funny Girl* in London. Although often in different cities, they continued their romance. He made a series of weekend flights to New York to date the singing star.

The romance heated up, especially when Streisand flew to Ottawa to complete the shooting of her latest film, *The Owl and the Pussycat* (1970). Speculation was rampant that she was about to become the First Lady of Canada. In a TV interview, Trudeau was asked about his relationship with the star. "None of your business," he snapped.

Streisand was reported to be contemplating how she could maintain a career in Hollywood and function as First Lady of Canada at the same time. In 1977, years after the end of her affair with Trudeau, she gave an interview to *Playboy*. "I'd have to learn how to speak French, and I could only do movies in Canada. I would campaign for Pierre and get involved in all his causes—abortion rights or whatever."

Perhaps unknown to Streisand, Trudeau was secretly dating two other women when she wasn't around. One was the 21-year-old Margaret Sinclair. The other was Jackie, who, though married to Onassis, was more or less living separately from him at the time.

Teddy Kennedy was a friend of Trudeau. Once in New York, he asked Jackie to have a private dinner for Trudeau, who had expressed a strong desire to meet her. No record exists of what went on that night, other than what is obvious: Jackie and Trudeau became instant friends.

Pierre Trudeau is seen here on a date with the Brooklyn diva, **Barbra Streisand**. What she might not have known was that he was also offering Jackie a chance at becoming First Lady of Canada.

Unlike Streisand, Jackie could speak French to him. A series of private dates occurred with Jackie. It was all very secretive. On two different occasions, they spent weekends in Virginia going horseback riding. “I’m seriously considering divorcing Ari and marrying Pierre,” Jackie told Truman Capote and other friends. “I have to admit that the idea of becoming another First Lady intrigues me. First Lady of the United States, First Lady of Canada. That leaves out only Mexico. If I can pull that off, I would have First Ladied myself across the entire North American continent. I’d certainly be the first woman to have achieved that.”

Both Barbra and Jackie lost out when **Trudeau** wed a very young **Margaret Sinclair**. Later, Teddy Kennedy reinforced his family’s link to the Trudeaus by launching an affair with Canada’s First Lady.

At the time, Jackie viewed Streisand as her major competition. She resented the star for outrageously flirting with JFK on May 17, 1963 at the White House. Her first words to the President had been, “You’re a doll!”

“How long have you been singing?” JFK had asked her.

“About as long as you’ve been President,” she quipped.

From reports reaching Jackie, if her husband had invited Streisand to sleep over with him in the Lincoln Bedroom, she would have accepted.

“I like Pierre’s lovemaking and I like his politics,” she told Patricia Kennedy Lawford, Ted Sorensen, and Senator George Smathers during a yachting trip off the coast of Cape Cod. “Streisand is a Jew and Pierre is Catholic. With Pierre and me, there would be no religious issues.”

Although by now Onassis had returned to his mistress, Maria Callas, in Paris, Jackie did not immediately accept Trudeau’s proposal of marriage.

“Pierre has an old-fashioned gallantry,” Jackie told Patricia and her other friends, who later gossiped about the affair. “He knows how to please a woman, especially in the boudoir. He’s also very intelligent and, like Jack, well informed on world affairs. His personality is warm and charming. He believes in moonlit walks in rose-scented gardens. And like me, he has a taste for French cuisine. What do I admire about him the most? He has this amazing informality. During some of the hottest days last summer in Canada, he addressed Parliament in a pair of sandals. He also wears bikini underwear with the imprint of a tiger across his crotch.”

While waiting for Jackie and Streisand to make up their minds, Trudeau, in an impulsive move, on March 4, 1971, married Margaret Sinclair at St. Stephen’s Catholic Church in North Vancouver.

UP IN THE AIR: **Margot Kidder** as Lois Lane flies high with **Christopher Reeve** in *Superman II*. When she returned to earth, Pierre Trudeau became her lover.

Within three months, he knew he'd made the wrong decision. They were incompatible, and his busy schedule left little time for her. He also learned that she was suffering from bipolar depression.

Yet he would not divorce her until 1980. Although he no longer secretly dated Streisand, he was rumored to have slipped around about six or seven times during the 1970s for rendezvous with Jackie.

As Christopher Andersen wrote in his book, *Barbra: The Way She Is*, "Canada's nonconformist First Lady would quickly prove to be something of a loose cannon. At one point, she decided to break away from her domineering husband and the pressures of her being First Lady by joining the Rolling Stones on tour. As a result, the prime minister found himself in the awkward position of having to defend his young wife's erratic behavior on the floor of Parliament. Even so, the union produced three sons."

To complicate matters, Teddy Kennedy confessed to Jackie that he had become romantically involved with Margaret, Trudeau's wife.

William Hofer, who spent ten years on Teddy's staff, later penned a memoir, *The Senator*. In it he wrote about his boss's affair with Canada's First Lady.

"One Friday, when Joan Kennedy had been away for the week, George Dalton asked me to drive to the National Airport in Washington to meet Margaret Trudeau. I waited for her at the gate, recognized her instantly, and introduced myself. During the drive to McLean, Virginia, I realized she had planned to spend the entire weekend with the Senator, and I felt decidedly uncomfortable. Whatever understanding the Senator and his wife had about their marriage was not my business, but there were children around."

Although they stopped dating, Jackie continued on occasion to speak to Trudeau on the phone. In 1984, he told her he had become involved with the Canadian actress, Margot Kidder, who is best known for her role as Lois Lane in the 1981 film, *Superman II*.

Reportedly, Jackie later regretted not having married Trudeau.

Months before her own death, Trudeau sent Jackie a copy of his memoirs, which later became a best-seller. "You'll be happy to learn," he wrote, "that I did not put you in it. If I had, it would have been my most glorious chapter. But sometimes, a man must keep his most precious secrets secret. The forbidden romance is always made more enticing than the one played out in public."

José Luís de Vilallonga

Jackie and the Don Juan of 20th Century Spain

Jackie had such a brief fling with the Spanish Grandee, José Luís de Vilallonga, Marquess of Castelbell, that her romance escaped the attention of her other biographers.

Renowned for his indolent air and lanky elegance, he sailed the world on the finest yachts, rubbing shoulders with Aristotle Onassis in Athens, going to the racetrack in Paris with the Rothschilds, or swimming laps in the swimming pool of the Kennedys at their Palm Beach compound. Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., introduced Vilallonga to JFK and to Jackie.

José Luís de Vilallonga as he appeared in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, cast as the Brazilian lover of the character played by **Audrey Hepburn**, Holly Golightly. Vilallonga had a taste for exceptionally beautiful women, numbering not only Audrey, but Jackie among his conquests.

As Vilallonga later told Truman Capote, "The moment I laid eyes on Jackie, I knew I had to have her."

Tall and handsome, he was already a familiar face to Jackie because he'd co-starred in one of her favorite movies, Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, which had starred Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly. Vilallonga interpreted the character of José de Silva Pereira, the dashing millionaire from Brazil who wants to marry Holly.

When JFK had to leave Palm Beach and fly back to Washington, Jackie stayed on for another week. She spent a lot of time in the company of Vilallonga, including rendezvous during two separate dinners within his rented villa.

When he was introduced to her, he had immediately attracted her attention by saying, "Like Helen of Troy, your name will live down through the ages. In your time, you will surely topple empires the way Cleopatra did."

As Jackie later told Capote, "No man had ever said that to me before. Surely, he was exaggerating."

"No, my dear," Capote responded. "He speaks only the truth."

Nine years older than Jackie, Vilallonga seemed to have had enough experiences to fill a century or two. She was utterly fascinated hearing about this colorful background. He was not modest in discussions about his past.

To toughen up his sixteen-year-old son, his father, Salvador de Vilallonga y de Cárcer, forced him to join the National Execution Platoon, fatally shooting captured Revolutionary soldiers opposed to the Fascist dictator, Francisco Franco.

"I shot at least one young man a day," he confided to Jackie. "On arguably my finest day, I executed eight young men in the prime of their lives. All these murders made me very confused."

It is not known why Jackie would be attracted to such a man, although both Capote and Audrey Hepburn claimed, "José could literally charm the pants off you."

Perhaps Jackie could forgive Vilallonga because he was only a teenager under the stern control of his autocratic father. Later, he was placed on Franco's enemy list, especially after the publication of his novel, an anti-Franco indictment entitled *The Ramblas End in the Sea* (*Las Ramblas terminan en el mar; 1954)*. He was barred from re-entering Spain and was sentenced *in absentia* on a charge of sedition. He told Jackie that the combined total of all his various sentences would define a jail term spanning more than three centuries.

Jackie requested something from him. She wanted to be left out of his string of autobiographies that eventually totaled four. In these volumes, he wrote about his numerous affairs. In Lisbon, before she emigrated to America, Magda Gabor, sister of Zsa Zsa and Eva, had maintained a torrid romance with him.

Villalonga didn't write about all his affairs, claiming it would take ten volumes of documentation and description. "When I lived in Argentina after the war, I didn't claim I was regularly seducing Evita Perón, based on fear that I might be wiped out."

Vilallonga's first marriage (1945-1972) evolved into an international scandal. His wife was the Honorable Essylt-Priscilla Scott-Ellis, the wealthy daughter of Thomas Scott-Ellis, 8th Baron Howard de Walden, one of the richest peers in England. Vilallonga's father had opposed the marriage, claiming that when his daughter-in-law, this former debutante nicknamed "Pip," had joined Franco's forces during the Spanish Civil War, she'd seduced half of the entire National Army of Spain.

After 27 years of marriage, and after Vilallonga had spent his wife's inheritance and sold off her valuable art collection to finance his lavish spending sprees, he filed for divorce.

Forced to find a job, and from a location in Paris, he edited the Spanish version of *Playboy* and also wrote a racy

column entitled “Letters from Paris” for the soft-porn scandal weekly, *Interviú*.

After Franco died, Vilallonga returned to Spain, befriending King Juan Carlos and later writing a biography of the monarch.

In a drunken interview given to *Paris-Match* in Paris during the late 1970s, Vilallonga boasted that during the filming of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s,* “Audrey couldn’t get enough of me. Truman Capote told me I had the most magnificent penis he’d ever seen, and he’d seen a lot of them. Mrs. Kennedy told me that she didn’t know how thrilling sex could be until I seduced her one moonlit night in Palm Beach so long ago.”

His boasting was viewed as so outrageous that his comments were not published.

Upon his death at the age of 98 in 2007, Jackie was long gone. His obituary in *The London Telegraph* defined him as “a playboy, a wastrel, a fortune hunter, and a bit-part actor.”

Vilallonga wrote his own epitaph: *HERE LIES THE DON JUAN OF THE 20TH CENTURY. AT LEAST HIS LOVERS KNOW WHERE HE’S SLEEPING TONIGHT*.

Andrei Voznesensky

Jackie’s “Pervert” Russian Poet

When the great Russian poet, Andrei Voznesensky, arrived in the United States for the first time in 1963, he told a reporter, “There are four people I want to meet in America—Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, Arthur Miller, and Allen Ginsberg.

When his host, Stephen Miller, asked him privately why those four Americans interested him, he replied secretly: “The women to satisfy my Russian cock, the men to fuel my ever-expanding mind.”

During his tour of America, the poet functioned as a sort of “unofficial Kremlin cultural envoy,” according to *The New York Times*.

The famous Russian poet, **Andrei Voznesensky**, as he looked in his later, post-Jackie period.

Voznesensky helped lift Russian literature out of its state of fear and virtual “serfdom” under Josef Stalin. Nonetheless, the poet frequently got into trouble with Soviet authorities.

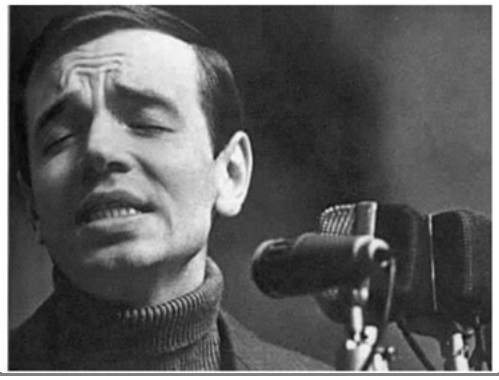
Raymond Anderson, writing in *The New York Times*, said his “poetry epitomized the setbacks, gains, and hopes of the post-Stalin decades in Russia. His hundreds of subtle, ironic, and innovative verses reflecting alternating periods of calm and stress as the Communist Party’s rule stabilized, weakened, and then, in 1991, quickly disintegrated.”

I am Goya
of the bare field, by the enemy’s
beak gouged
till the craters of my eyes gape
I am grief
I am the tongue
of war, the embers of cities
on the snows of the year 1941

I am hunger
I am the gullet
of a woman hanged whose body
like a bell
tolled over a blank square
I am Goya

Andrei Voznensensky

Anderson also wrote: “Creating poetry at a troubling time in Russian history, Voznesensky, like Boris Pasternak, became a persistent foe of literary censorship, and he urged the Soviet leadership to end all controls over fiction. But he endeavored to avoid a public collision with the authorities that might have forced him into exile or even doomed him to prison camp.”



The younger and impassioned **Voznesensky** as he looked when he—how shall we say this diplomatically—helped cultivate Jackie’s taste for Russian caviar.

Before flying to America, Nikita Khrushchev had put Voznesensky on the best-seller list by denouncing him. Born in Moscow in 1933, the son of a professor of engineering, Voznesensky was invited to this event, hosted by the ruling Communist Party, in December of 1962. The Soviet Dictator addressed the gathering, making scathing remarks about Voznesensky. “Just look at this new Boris Pasternak! You want to get a foreign passport tomorrow? You want it? And then go away, go the dogs. Go, there! Let starving wild dogs feed on your wasted flesh! I brand you before the world as a pervert.”

The poet later said, “Because of this attack, I became more popular than the Beatles.”

In Washington, one of Jackie’s sometimes lovers, the American poet, Robert Lowell, introduced her to Voznesensky, telling her that “He is one of the greatest living poets in any language.” It was Lowell who had also introduced Jackie to some of his works, including “The Triangular Pear,” “I Am Goya,” and “First Frost.” W.H. Auden had translated many of the Russian’s poems into English.

Jackie later told Lowell and others that, “I adore his mind and his poetry. I am particularly enthralled by the eccentricity of his metaphors.”

After meeting him, she invited him to dinner at the White House. She entertained him there within Kennedy family’s private quarters. The president was out of Washington at the time.

Voznesensky was also invited for a “sleepover” in the Lincoln Bedroom. It was Lowell himself, who could get rather miffed at Jackie from time to time, who spread the rumor that Jackie and Voznesensky had had a fling. “What would Abe have thought?” Lowell asked his friends.

That year, Voznesensky went on a tour of the United States, performing to sold-out crowds, reading his poetry in stadiums, concert halls, and university auditoriums.

When Bobby Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles in 1968, Voznesensky hastily wrote a poem about his death and sent it to Jackie. But he first had it published in a Moscow newspaper. That reduced the possibility that he might be accused of evading censorship or having an unauthorized contact with a foreigner.

The link between Jackie and the poet might have fallen under the radar screen had it not been for Gore Vidal. In 1987, along with Gregory Peck, Graham Greene, and Norman Mailer, he attended a peace conference in Moscow, where he gave a speech on the origins of the Cold War.

At a reception, he talked to Pierre Trudeau, Yoko Ono, and the economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, who

introduced Vidal to Voznesensky.

In his memoirs, Vidal wrote: “This great charmer, Russia’s best poet, knew that I knew that (Top Secret) he had fucked Mme Onassis. So every time he could get me to one side, he would ask, wistfully, for news of *her*. Which I gave as best I could.”

Later that night, Voznesensky introduced Vidal to Mikhail Gorbachev, who described his recent meeting with President Ronald Reagan. “Your President wanted to know whether, if we are invaded from Mars, would Russia and the United States stand together as allies against the aliens from Outer Space?”

John Carl Warnecke

Lighting an Eternal Flame Under Jackie

Architect John Carl Warnecke is best known today for designing the John F. Kennedy Eternal Flame Memorial Gravesite at Arlington National Cemetery.

His link with the assassinated President dates back to 1941, when he attended Stanford University with a young JFK, who was briefly auditing courses there. Their friendship continued when they attended Harvard, Warnecke studying under Walter Gropius.

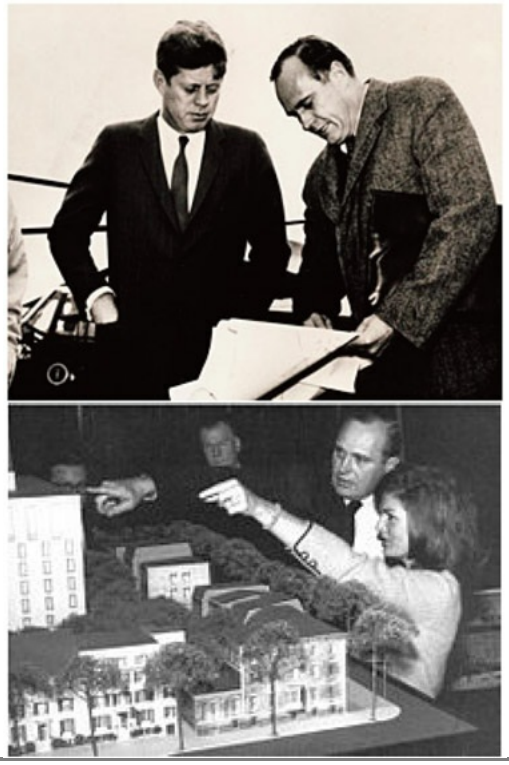
The two future lovers of Jackie were a study in contrast. While in California, JFK was thin and sickly, recovering from an illness. Warnecke stood six feet three inches and weighed 215 pounds. He was called “dynamite” when he played football for Stanford at the Rose Bowl. JFK must have looked on in envy.

Arguably, the noted architect, **John Carl Warnecke**, became the most serious candidate for Jackie’s hand in marriage. He fell in love with her, or so he said, when he first danced with her at the British Embassy in Washington during her tenure as First Lady.

By the time of the Kennedy administration, Warnecke’s reputation as a world class architect had grown immensely. He had designed notable monuments and buildings in both the Modernist and Bauhaus styles, and was an early proponent of contextual architecture.

When he became President, JFK called upon Warnecke to save the historic buildings surrounding Washington, D.C.’s Lafayette Square, which were in danger of being demolished.

That appointment brought him into contact with Jackie. In February of 1962, Jackie lobbied the General Services Administration to stop the demolition at Lafayette Square. Warnecke later asserted, “I fell madly in love with Jackie when I danced with her at the British Embassy. In October of 1962, with Jackie’s endorsement, his plan for a revitalized Lafayette Square was approved.



John Carl Warnecke *(left figure in top photo)* discussed his architectural plans for Lafayette Square in Washington with **the President**.

He also won the approval of **Jackie** *(lower photo)* with his vast concept for saving the square from demolition. Unknown to JFK at the time, Warnecke had other "designs" for Jackie.

In March of 1963, in an ominous foreboding of what was to come later that year, JFK and Warnecke visited the President's future grave site at Arlington.

Jackie and Warnecke began to see each other frequently. Since he was working with her on plans for Lafayette Square, no one in the press hinted at any romance occurring between them. "She was full of spirit and a delight to be with," he later said. "She was also as inquisitive as hell, and she showed great interest in my architectural designs."

"The first time I showed her my designs for the square, she was thrilled, or so she said," he claimed. "Ironically, she was wearing the same pink Chanel dress suit that she would wear to Dallas on the day of John's assassination. Over a period of months, we saw a lot of each other, more than I could ever have dreamed. One thing led to another. I was free as a bird, having divorced my wife, Grace Cushing, two years earlier."

Guarded by the Secret Service, Jackie once paid a visit to Warnecke at his elegant townhouse on Russian Hill overlooking San Francisco Bay. She also went horseback riding with him one weekend on his 300-acre estate on the Russian River, forty miles north of San Francisco. She was also seen making frequent visits to his townhouse in Georgetown in Washington, D.C.

Robin Duke, the wife of JFK's chief of protocol, later said, "It was obvious that Jackie was very taken with Warnecke. He was an imposing figure of a man and extraordinarily seductive to women. He was also worth millions, or so we thought at the time."

Warnecke later credited Jackie with having saved Lafayette Square from demolition. After that project was wrapped, he became more or less the unofficial architect for the Kennedy family, rejuvenating Teddy's home at Hyannis Port and making vast improvements to Bobby's estate, Hickory Hill, in Virginia.

Tabloid speculation about **John** (the architect) and **Jackie**

Jackie began to invite him to private parties at the White House. “All of us were aware of Jack’s womanizing and his neglect of Jackie,” Warnecke said. “That worked to my advantage. I always knew when he was going to be out of town. At those times, I visited Jackie frequently. I still don’t know to this day if she were in love with me, or was just getting even with Jack for running off with some other dame and leaving her alone at the White House.”

After the President was assassinated in November of 1963, Jackie chose Warnecke to design the President’s tomb at Arlington. She told him that she wanted an eternal flame at the gravesite. Both he and Jackie agreed that the monument should be simple. Work proceeded under tight secrecy.

Warnecke set about this project, consulting architects, sculptors, painters, landscape architects, stonemasons, calligraphers, and liturgical experts, even meeting with the sculptor Isamu Noguchi.

Finally, in a memo to Jackie, he wrote: “This particular hillside, this flame, this man, and this point in history must be synthesized in one statement that has a distinctive character of its own. We must avoid elements that in later decades might become superficial and detract from the deeds of the man.”

On the rainy morning of March 15, 1967, JFK’s gravesite was officially opened with little fanfare. The 20-minute ceremony was attended by Lyndon B. Johnson and Jackie.

At this time, according to reports, Jackie was so romantically involved with Warnecke that she was contemplating marriage.

To author Edward Klein, Warnecke recalled the first time he made love to Jackie, at Hyannis Port when Caroline and John Jr. were away. “It was like an explosion. I remember saying to myself, ‘What am I doing here? What’s happening?’ A lot has been written about Jackie being cold. The image is all wrong. There is nothing inhibited or cold about her. All those aspects that made Jackie so delightful—her sense of fun and joy—were also part of her lovemaking.”

Jackie and Warnecke had a secret love nest for their trysts, a romantic cottage on Bunny Mellon’s property on Cape Cod, a twenty-minute drive from Hyannis Port.

One weekend, Jackie took Warnecke to visit her mother at Hammersmith Farm outside Newport. “I admired Janet. She was still very attractive, a woman with real sparkle and spirit. I don’t think she ever abused Jackie—that was just gossip. She led me upstairs to show me the bed where President Kennedy stayed when he came to visit. ‘I want you to get used to sleeping in this bed during your stay with us. It will come in handy when you marry my daughter.’ Janet definitely was urging Jackie to accept my proposal of marriage.”

After his visit, Janet told her friends, “John is in love with my daughter, and I think it’s time for her to contemplate marriage again. All in all, Jack is gone. Unlike Jack, John would be a faithful husband to my daughter.”

Early in 1964, Jackie was said to have abandoned her widow’s mourning when she threw a party at Manhattan’s Sign of the Dove restaurant for John Kenneth Galbraith.

Manhattan society showed up, some of her friends winging in from Palm Beach. Gianni Agnelli flew in from Turin, and figures from the *demimonde* appeared, including Andy Warhol escorting his doomed superstar, Edie Sedgwick.

Jackie had hired “Killer Joe” Piro and his Rock ’n Roll Crazies, and she danced the frug and the jerk with Warnecke. She introduced him to guests as “my *very* special friend, John Carl Warnecke.”

During the summer of 1966, Jackie spent time with Warnecke in Hawaii, dividing her time with her former brother-in-law, Peter Lawford. Both Jackie and Lawford had brought along their children.

But before the end of the year, Jackie's relationship with Warnecke came to an abrupt end.

One night he called her from San Francisco. Up to then, she was under the impression that he was a multi-millionaire. On that night, he gave her the bad news, reporting that he was overdrawn at the bank to the tune of a million dollars. She didn't know that anyone could be overdrawn at any bank for a million dollars.

"While I've been with you, all those months working on Lafayette Square, Jack's grave site, the time in Hawaii, I have not been attending to business."

She feared what was coming. He asked her for two million dollars as a means of getting him over his financial predicament. All her life, she had been reared to accept money from men, not to lend men money. She became cold and distant on the phone, rejecting his request.

In 1994, Warnecke, the brilliant third-generation California architect, read that Jackie was dying of cancer in Manhattan. He sent her a Valentine card. Its message was simple: "I still love you."

This rare photo of **The First Lady** in a bathing suit was taken in 1962 during the peak of the Reign of Camelot. Gianni Agnelli was courting Jackie, even though both of them were married. JFK, for appearance's sake, was demanding that Jackie return at once to the White House.

She had other plans, extending her vacation.

Chapter Twenty-One

Jackie Vs. "Rubber Hosa" and The World's Richest Woman

Wife-Swapping Among the Rich, the Powerful, and the Well-Endowed: Jack and Jackie and Rubi and Odile

Left photo above: The first First Lady that the tobacco heiress, **Doris Duke**, ever met was Eleanor Roosevelt who, for some reason, invited her to a West Virginia homestead to visit 500 poor refugee miners. In a full-length mink coat, adorned with diamonds, Duke met the underfed and struggling class. Young children asked for her autograph, thinking she was a movie star.

As First Ladies go, the beautifully dressed **Jackie Kennedy** was more to Duke's liking. One night in Newport, Duke confessed to Jackie, "I must be the last woman in Newport your husband hasn't seduced." She could say that about JFK, but not about Aristotle Onassis.

Duke had gotten to Ari long before Jackie.

Right photo above: **Doris Duke** and her controversial but studly husband, **Porfirio Rubirosa** were photographed nightclubbing together at Manhattan's El Morocco. Their marriage lasted only a year, but even after their divorce, Duke often sent a plane to fetch him, "whenever I needed it really bad."

What Duke might never have known is that Jackie had a brief interlude with him in Palm Beach.

The patriarch Joseph ("Papa Joe") was the first within the Kennedy clan to meet and befriend Porfirio Rubirosa, the Dominican diplomat, polo player, and henchman of the notoriously bloodthirsty dictator, Rafael Trujillo.

Joseph had already become friends with the Cassini brothers, both Igor, who wrote a Hearst gossip column under the pen name of "Cholly Knickerbocker," and his older brother, Oleg, who would in time become Jackie's official fashion designer when she was First Lady.

Here, **Doris Duke** is seen as she appeared on her wedding day in Paris in 1947. Moments before the ceremony, she had her lawyers coerce Rubi into signing a prenuptial agreement.

Angered at having to do that, he smoked a cigarette throughout the marriage ceremony.

Igor had married Charlene Stafford Wrightsman, the younger daughter of Charles B. Wrightsman, the oil baron and don of New York and Palm Beach society. The Wrightsman estate adjoined the Kennedy compound.

In time, both Oleg and Igor became regular golf partners of Joseph, who introduced them to his sporting son, JFK.

Rubi, as he was nicknamed, became a family friend of both the Kennedys and the Cassini brothers. The playboy became especially close to Oleg.

Perhaps too close, according to gossip bruited around Palm Beach society. Igor privately confirmed rumors that his older brother, Oleg, occasionally gave in to his bisexual impulses and fellated Rubi, who was most generous in dropping his jockstrap for his beloved friend.

Unique in celebrity autobiography, Oleg described Rubirosa's penis in graphic detail in his book, *In My Own Fashion*, published in 1987.

"Porfirio was an apotheosis, the ultimate playboy, a strange combination—one of the few Don Juans I've ever met who was a man's man *and* a ladies' man. Rubi was an athlete—he played polo and boxed—but he also had the gift of knowing how to talk to women. He was of medium height, well muscled but trim, with rugged good looks… and, of course, he had the most remarkable piece of equipment; he was known for it. A common joke when dining out in those days was to refer to a sixteen-inch pepper mill as 'The Rubirosa.' His nickname was *Toujours Prêt [always ready]*."

Porfirio Rubirosa: The Priapic Dominican Playboy

"Rubi's Monster looks like Yul Brynner in a black turtleneck sweater."

—Jerome Zerbe, society photographer

Oleg seemed to have intimate knowledge of Rubi's equipment. He wrote: "There was another, rather exceptional secret about Rubi that directly involved his reputation as a lover and as a man. He suffered from a rare sexual malaise: priapism. He was in an almost constant state of arousal, but unable to be satisfied. He achieved orgasm very rarely, and then only after hours of struggle. He knew that thing of his was a potential meal ticket, and he actually trained to keep it in peak condition. He did exercises. He would drink each day a potion called *pago-pago*, which he said came from the bark of a certain tree in the Dominican Republic; he believed it guaranteed his performance. He claimed to be able to think himself from semitumescence to full sail."

Rubirosa had a goal that involved marrying the two richest women in the world. After his divorce from Doris Duke, the world's richest woman, he married the Woolworth heiress, **Barbara Hutton**, the world's second-richest.

Their marriage hardly survived the wedding night, but the divorce settlement was mammoth.

Igor claimed that his brother first became familiar with Rubi's penis one night when Rubi placed a bet with Oleg. The playboy said he could balance a chair with a telephone book on his full erection. Oleg claimed that was impossible. According to Igor, Rubi won the bet that night, and consequently, Oleg practiced the art of deep throating.

In one of the most famous celebrity shots of 1953, **Zsa Zsa Gabor** holds up a wedding picture of Barbara Hutton at the time of her marriage to Porfirio Rubirosa.

"He attacked me and gave me a black eye when I turned down his proposal," she told the assembled reporters. "He's not used to being rejected by women. He admitted to me that he's marrying Hutton for her money. He needs a rich purse to pay off his gambling debts. The marriage will last as long as an ice cream cone dropped on the streets of Las Vegas during a heat wave."

Jackie, who married JFK the same year, followed the scandal with avid interest.

Rubi's fourth wife, Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress, seemed to echo those sentiments. "Rubi is the ultimate sorcerer, capable of transforming the most ordinary evening into something of magic. He is priapic, indefatigable, grotesquely proportioned."

Rubi's third wife, tobacco heiress Doris Duke, defined it as "the most magnificent penis I've ever seen," and she'd seen a lot of them.

When JFK married Jackie in 1953, he introduced her to Rubi as part of their first visit to Palm Beach as a married couple.

"I found Rubi charming and sophisticated," Jackie later told her millionaire friend, Bunny Mellon. "Be careful he doesn't go after you. He's known for seducing women, especially if they're rich. He has an aura of mystery about him, but also one of danger. I think he could charm any woman except a lesbian."

Jackie, however, didn't tell Mellon what actually happened when she was seated next to Rubi at a dinner hosted by Joseph at the Kennedy compound.

Rubi was known for taking a very direct approach with women. Like JFK himself, it didn't matter if the woman were married, even if she were married to a friend.

Midway through the dinner, between courses, he reached under the table for her delicate hand. Very gently, but firmly, he placed it directly on his semi-erect penis.

She later told Igor Cassini, "I didn't know that men's appendages came in that size. I maintained my self-control. I hope I didn't register shock on my face. When the right moment came, I withdrew my hand."

Rubirosa's fifth and final marriage was to the French actress, **Odile Rodin**. Despite its turbulence, it was the playboy's most successful, culminating a lifetime of seductions that had ranged from Evita Perón to Jackie herself.

Society had already gossiped about JFK's affair with Rubi's wife.

As far as it is known, Jackie made only one other comment about Rubi's legendary anatomy. "Seeing is believing," she told Truman Capote.

"Been there, done that," he responded.

In her diary, she wrote: "Rubi, as he is called, is not a tall man, yet he appears a towering figure. He is not traditionally handsome, but has a kind of Latino beauty—call it rugged good looks. *Confidential* magazine calls him the 'Ding Dong Daddy.' He has a high forehead, is well muscled, with thick lips, high cheekbones, and curly black hair. He seems to evoke a macho camaraderie. Perhaps the Spanish word *tiguerismo* would best describe him. His wardrobe rivals the Duke of Windsor's. I know what should be engraved on his tombstone: *HERE LIES THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE MALE PUTO."*

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When Rubi met Odile Bérard, she was only nineteen, the daughter of a well-known physician in Lyon, France. She had launched herself as an actress under the name "Odile Rodin."

Although she did not find him particularly handsome, he was mesmerized by her, attracted to her fresh look and her blondish hair, blue eyes, and freckles.

He wanted her to become his fifth wife, and after a whirlwind courtship, she agreed. She traveled with Rubi to Havana, "the wildest city on earth," during its decadent heyday under Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. During their visit, there were rumblings in the hills that the guerilla fighter, Fidel Castro, was organizing a revolution.

Patricia Kennedy and Peter Lawford celebrate their marriage on April 24, 1954, in New York. It would become one of the most unsuccessful marriages in Hollywood. Peter pimped for JFK, finding plenty of stars or starlets left over for himself. Patricia, too, was adulterous.

Rubi had been appointed as Ambassador to Cuba by the Dominican dictator, Rafael Trujillo, his mentor, protector, and employer.

It was in Havana, in 1958, that JFK, although married to Jackie, was indulging in a tour of that city's notorious bordellos, accompanied by his friend, Senator George Smathers, a Democrat from Florida.

Rubi openly bragged to JFK and others that Odile had been the first woman to cure him of his priapism. "I'm now having orgasms like a sixteen-year-old boy jerking off."

Peter Lawford *(left)* was photographed with **JFK** sailing off the coast of Hyannis Port during the first year of his presidency.

When he saw this photo, JFK told Peter, "God damn it, it looks like I'm listening to your advice…from you of all people."

Later, JFK told Teddy Kennedy, Smathers, and Chuck Spalding what Rubi had claimed. "This gal sure must have some sexual technique," JFK said. "Wait until Frank Sinatra hears about her."

When Rubi married Odile in 1956, JFK was very impressed, showering attention on her. Jackie did not like her, and warned her husband to stay away.

"I'm sure Rubi wouldn't mind," he said, as if to provoke Jackie. "With me, he has always believed in share and share alike."

Lem Billings, JFK's closest friend, said, "I've never seen Jackie lose her composure with another woman—except when she's around Odile. She was incredibly jealous of her, fearing she was younger and prettier. Jack really set Jackie off. When Odile was around, he had eyes only for Odile. Jackie and I always suffered together. Neither of us were getting enough from Jack."

"Every time I turned around, Odile and Rubi were popping up," Jackie told Billings. "They were thrilled when Jack won the White House in 1960. I guess Rubi figured he could come and go at the headquarters of power around the world."

During the reign of Camelot, **Frank Sinatra** and Peter Lawford vied for the role of *numero uno* White House pimp. It was a tie.

Jackie in the boudoir loomed in each of their futures.

On New Year's Eve, right before the JFK's inauguration during January of 1961, a major A-list party was staged in Palm Beach.

JFK attended the gala with Jackie, and Rubi showed up with Odile. The two couples were considered the most glamorous in Palm Beach.

However, the next morning, Jackie was enraged when she picked up the Palm Beach newspapers. She'd been pushed to the side by the press, who preferred to run a photo of the newly elected president "Twisting" with the young and beautiful Odile. There was no equivalent shot of Jackie dancing with Rubi.

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On September 24, 1961, Frank Sinatra, along with Patricia Lawford, flew to Hyannis Port aboard Kennedy's plane. With them were Rubi, Odile, and Teddy Kennedy. Disembarking from the Caroline at New Bedford, Frank emerged from the plane with a champagne glass. He ordered cabbies to drive the party to the Kennedy compound, fifty-three miles away.

When they got there, the presidential flag indicated that JFK was already in residence. Jackie had chosen not to come. At Joe Kennedy's house, Peter Lawford was already waiting, and Rose had ordered that the dinner table be set for twenty-six guests.

The following day the party cruised aboard the *Honey Fitz*. Sinatra entertained the party with anecdotes about his recent audience with Pope John XXIII.

"All your friends in Chicago are Italian, too," Peter quipped. His flippant remark was met with an icy stare from Frank.

Jackie was none too happy that Odile had been invited on the yachting trip. Friends had gossiped to her that Odile was having an affair with JFK.

At that point, the White House was trying to distance itself from Frank. Some spin story had to be put out to the press. Supposedly, Frank was in Hyannis Port to work out an agreement with Joe Kennedy about a souvenir recording of the inaugural gala.

When news of that cruise reached the world, President Kennedy was attacked for "hanging out with such unsavory characters as Frank Sinatra, who never met a Mafia boss he didn't like, and Porfirio Rubirosa, the one-time son-in-law of the notorious dictator Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic." One paper even called Rubi "a sleazy international gigolo," referring to his marriages to Doris Duke and Barbara Hutton. Others suspected that he might, acting on orders from Trujillo, have been involved in a strategic murder or two.

Tlna Livanos Onassis Niarchos Blandford

Long before Jackie appeared in his life, Aristotle Onassis, then 40, had married 17-year-old Tina Livanos, daughter of the wealthy shipowner, Stavros Livanos.

Maria Callas, Ari's later mistress, claimed, "It was motivated by business reasons with shadows of child molestation." The wedding took place in 1946 at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Trias in Manhattan.

Ari's marriage to the slim, blonde, beautiful, and unstable Tina would be riddled with adulteries, but it would produce two children, Alexander and Christina.

The cruise off the coast of Cape Cod lasted only four hours. When it ended, Teddy invited Frank, Peter, and Odile, among others, to go on a tour of the local pubs. Odile said that she was tired and wanted to remain aboard the yacht to catch up on her sleep. JFK also decided to stay behind on the yacht, claiming that he had a lot of papers to read. Rubi said he didn't feel well, and Patricia claimed she'd gotten too much sun on the cruise, and both of them excused themselves from the pub crawl, and disappeared for points unknown on shore.

The next day, Frank asked Rubi how he'd spent the day. In whispered tones, the playboy claimed, "I had a pleasant day fucking Ambassador Kennedy's daughter."

When JFK heard that his sister had been seduced by Rubi, he bluntly asked her, "Is it as big as they say?" His sister refused to answer, but her husband, Peter Lawford, claimed he already knew Rubi's exact measurements.

A member of the staff called Jackie and told her that JFK had had an affair with Odile. Within a day, Jackie, too, arrived on the scene.

During the course of that assemblage, when Rubi and JFK were having a drink on the veranda at Hyannis Port, Jackie was in an upstairs bedroom with the window open, She could clearly hear their voices as they discussed the women they had shared in common. Marilyn Monroe was the first on the list, followed by Joan Crawford, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Susan Hayward, and Jayne Mansfield.

As Jackie later told Igor Cassini, "Jack tactfully left out his seduction of Rubi's wife, Odile, and Rubi tactfully forgot to mention his seduction of Jack's sister, Patricia. Rubi, however, did admit to seducing Athina ("Tina") Onassis, wife of Aristotle Onassis." *[At the time of her death in 1974, Tina was officially designated, thanks to her birth as the unhappy daughter of Greek shipping magnate Stavros Livanos, followed by an astonishing set of very wealthy but spectacularly unhappy marriages, as Athina Livanos Onassis Blandford (or Spencer-Churchill) Niarchos.]*

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"Eventually, payback time came for Jackie in Palm Beach," Igor said, enigmatically.

Joe Acquaotta was a driver working the night shift for the Esplanade Limousine Service in Palm Beach. One night, his dispatcher received a call that a passenger needed retrieving in front of the Biltmore Hotel.

Upon his arrival there, Acquaotta noticed a man and woman in the shadows. They were holding hands. When Acquaotto drove up, the man reached for the woman and kissed her passionately. It was almost four o'clock in the

morning. She seemed reluctant to break away, but after she managed to loosen herself from his grip, he called her back for a final lingering farewell kiss.

"When she got into the back of my taxi, I saw that it was Mrs. Kennedy," Acquaotta said. "The Kennedys often used our limousine service, and I recognized her at once."

"I said, 'Good morning, Mrs. Kennedy.' At first she didn't answer. Then she snapped back, 'I'm not Mrs. Kennedy.'"

"That was such a ridiculous lie," Acquaotta said. "She was the most photographed face in America. I didn't take her to the Kennedy compound as I usually did. Instead, I delivered her to the oceanfront home of Colonel C. Michael Paul. As I later learned in the papers, that's where she and the President were staying, instead of in the Kennedy compound. I read that JFK had gone to Miami for the weekend and may have gone on a boating trip to the Florida Keys without her, with his good friend and fellow womanizer, Senator George Smathers."

"When I pulled up at the Paul home, she gave me a ten dollar bill for a six-dollar ride. I said 'Good night, Mrs. Kennedy.' She just glared at me and rushed inside the gate."

Later, Acquaotta figured out who the man in the shadows was. It was published in the Palm Beach papers that Rubirosa was occupying a suite at the Biltmore."

In spite of the two romantic couples—Jack and Jackie and Rubi and Odile—more or less switching partners, they were welcomed at the White House until the end of the Kennedy era.

In fact, Odile and Rubi were among the last guests JFK and Jackie entertained together before flying to Dallas in November of 1963.

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On January 5, 1965, Oleg, in Paris, called Jackie to describe a recent tragedy. Rubi, at the age of 56, had died early that morning when his Ferrari 250 GT had crashed into a chestnut tree after an all-night celebration at Jimmy's nightclub, in honor of winning the *Coupe de France* Polo Cup.

She wanted to know the details. Oleg revealed that he had been with Rubi only an hour before the fatal crash. "He was deeply troubled. He'd just had a bitter fight with Odile. She'd gone out with some other man. All of us at the club were celebrating and drinking champagne from the Championship Cup."

"I looked into Rubi's face. His eyes were dead. The celebration had gone from him—and I knew it involved more than Odile."

"He'd pleaded with me to go away somewhere else, but I begged off, because I had an early morning appointment."

"He poured out his troubles to me—they involved more than Odile: He was in a horrible financial situation and feared he'd have to sell his house."

"It's not the same," Rubi said. "Odile has become impossible."

"He begged me to come home with him and drink until the dawn, but I just couldn't," Oleg said. "Then he confessed what no man likes to confess to another:"

"Standing before you is the world's greatest lover," Rubi said. "But I can't get a god damn erection any more."

"We embraced," Oleg said.

"Please, Oleg, *mon vieux*, come and stay with me."

"I kissed him goodbye, then quickly departed," Oleg said. "Two hours later, I received a call at my suite at the George V. Within an hour of leaving Jimmy's, Rubi, driving at high speed, killed himself. He could hold his liquor. I think he deliberately crashed his car. He knew that the sexual revolution was coming, and he wasn't going to be part of it. From the look in his eyes that early morning at the club, I knew that he knew that the concept of an old-fashioned playboy in a tailored tuxedo holding an exquisitely gowned beauty like Zsa Zsa Gabor in his arms was as dated as Clark Gable."

Jackie didn't say anything for a long time. Then she spoke softly. "It's a terrible thing to live long enough to face the day you go out of style. I desperately hope it doesn't happen to us. Good morning, darling Oleg. Bless Rubi wherever he is right now…on a journey perhaps." Then she put down the phone."

How Elvis Presley Got Involved

Ever since the tobacco heiress, Doris Duke, had become the third wife of Porfirio Rubirosa, Jackie had been fascinated by the exploits of "the richest girl in the world." Her mother, Janet Auchincloss, had once said, "In some

ways, Doris had been a role model for Jackie. She envied Doris being born to all that wealth, and wished she'd had a father who, unlike Black Jack Bouvier, might have left her a vast fortune.

Jackie and Doris had more in common than sharing Rubi's magnificent penis. Black Jack Bouvier had taken Duke's virginity when she was only sixteen.

In later life, Jackie and Duke became friends. The tobacco heiress was a friend of Aristotle Onassis, with whom she'd also had an affair.

Jackie had made several visits to Duke's estates in Somerville, New Jersey, and in Newport, Rhode Island.

Doris Duke developed a fixation on **Elvis Presley** after seeing him shirtless in a movie, *Flaming Star* (1960). She was said to have seen all of his movies, some more than once.

To Truman Capote, she collectively summarized all the plots of his films: "A Southern boy beats up a guy and then sings to him."

When they came together, she was a ripe 55, Elvis a mere 32.

Jackie always claimed that if she had been born rich, she never would have to be beholden to some man, notably Jack Kennedy or Aristotle Onassis.

Jackie did agree to lend her name and support to the Doris Duke Newport Restoration Foundation, aimed at preserving and restoring colonial structures and homes in the area.

"Apparently, Jackie and Duke avoided two subjects—Rubi and Black Jack," said Truman Capote.

As Duke's biographer, Stephanie Mansfield, wrote: "Jackie was drawn to the super-rich Doris the way she was drawn to Bunny Mellon and Jayne Wrightsman. Jackie and Doris were friendly, if not close friends. Doris had reportedly loaned her the use of a plane to fly between Washington and Newport on occasion, and Doris's cousin, Angier Biddle Duke, served as the Kennedy's Chief of Protocol at the White House."

One night, Duke invited Jackie, along with Lady Bird Johnson and "all the Rockefellers," for a lavish dinner at her Somerville (New Jersey) estate. She called Jackie and told her that she wanted her to come, but didn't want the Secret Service. When Jackie responded that she couldn't come without the Secret Service, Doris relented and allowed them onto her property.

Duke told Truman Capote that her party in honor of Jackie, Lady Bird, and the Rockefellers was so boring that she'd asked them to leave as soon as dinner was over. Capote relayed Doris's words and point of view to Jackie with a certain relish and glee.

Jackie once again admitted to friends that the only reason she kept Capote in her life was as a means of keeping her abreast of the latest gossip. He was also a font of information about Duke.

From Duke's estate in Hawaii, Capote provided Jackie with even more tantalizing gossip.

Truman reported that in Hawaii, Duke had entertained both Elvis Presley and himself at a private dinner with the full realization that they represented an "odd couple" of mismatched guests. Unknown to the world, Doris, 55, had developed a romantic fixation on Elvis, 32. They both belonged to the Self-Realization Fellowship *[an organization dedicated to enhancing awareness about the possibility of attaining a direct personal experience of God]* in Los Angeles. Each of them maintained a loose allegiance to the same fashionable guru *[the Paramahansa Yoganandi]*, and both of them adored black soul music.

What Truman didn't tell Jackie was that he had discussed her with Elvis. "She's my closest friend, and she has a secret crush on you," Capote told Elvis. "I can arrange for you to have a rendezvous with Jackie if you want to fuck her."

To Jackie, Capote presented a very different scenario, claiming that Elvis had told him that he was the one with the crush on Jackie. "If you'd like to meet him, I can set up a rendezvous for the two of you."

"The idea, of course, is absurd, although I have a certain interest in him," Jackie said. "Elvis is, after all, an American original. I found him very sexy in the 50s, although he doesn't sing my kind of music."

There were rumors that Capote actually did arrange for Elvis to meet Jackie—at least that's what he claimed. He'd managed to pull off a meeting between Jackie and Marilyn Monroe, so why not Elvis?

Even President Richard Nixon could not turn down Elvis' request to visit him in the Oval Office. The singer had that kind of awesome popularity at the time.

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In June of 1973, Onassis invited Duke, Jackie, and John Jr. to sail in the Caribbean, stopping first at a resort long associated with the Rockefellers *[Caneel Bay, on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands]* before cruising on to Haiti.

Doris was with Leon Amar, her swarthy young Moroccan decorator, twenty-seven years her junior. Jackie was surprised that she'd taken Amar as a lover. She had worked with him on the restoration of the White House.

Amar later claimed that "Doris was green with jealousy of Jackie, though they remained friends on the surface. She sometimes tried to dress like Jackie, although the former First Lady was younger and far more beautiful. One time, they showed up wearing the same clothes—black tops, identical tan slacks, and voodoo medallions from Haiti along with Hermès scarves on their head and Gucci loafers."

Also on board was Ibrahim ("Bobby") Farrah, a young Lebanese dancer who was giving Duke private lessons. She urged Farrah to instruct Jackie in Middle Eastern dance.

Farrah later said, "Doris was fascinated by Jackie and wanted to know what made her tick. I don't think she ever found out. Jackie was very mysterious. She'd had all these incredible experiences but told very little about herself. Ari liked Doris because both of them considered themselves connoisseurs of art, but I felt Jackie knew more about art than the two of them."

Both Farrah and Amar observed close at hand that the marriage of Jackie and Onassis was becoming unglued. At one point, Onassis left the *Christina*, taking a flight from Port-au-Prince to Paris. A rumor spread that he was flying for a rendezvous with his mistress, the opera diva, Maria Callas.

After Onassis returned and at dinner aboard the *Christina*, he asked Jackie in front of his fellow guests if she'd agree to obtain a Haitian divorce.

"If you'll divorce me in Port-au-Prince, it'll kill those rumors that you married me for my money," Onassis told her. "A week after the divorce, I'll remarry you. That will show the bastards who spread tall tales about you being a gold-digger."

Jackie said nothing, but rose from her chair and returned to her cabin.

During the day, the guests noticed how John Jr., amused himself. The *Christina* was well stocked, and rickety old boats filled with Haitians often surrounded the yacht begging for money or food. John Jr. would toss them cartons of cigarettes or bottles of wine. On a few occasions, he threw some of Onassis' clothes and shoes overboard.

Of course, Jackie returned to New York without divorcing Onassis. She didn't believe him when he promised he'd remarry her. "I wasn't falling for that line," she told Bunny Mellon and others. "I took a vow 'till death do us part,' and I'm living up to that."

Chapter Twenty-Two

Capote Vs. "Jackie Oh! and La Principessa"

The Tormented Saga of Capote's Lost Friendship With America's Most Famous Sisters

The two fashion plates of Camelot, **Jackie** *(left)* and her sister, **Lee Radziwill**, popularized "the Jackie look," walking the streets in their well-tailored suits made with the best of fabrics and, as always, those white gloves.

The older sister had to ignore or at least forgive Lee for sleeping with both of her husbands.

Author **Truman Capote** became a sometimes confidant of Jackie's and intimate friends with Lee. But, as each sister painfully learned, gossipy Capote was not anyone to keep secrets, at least not for long. Either in his writings or on television, he ended up exposing both sisters with rather vicious caricatures.

Truman Capote, the controversial novelist, first met Jackie at a party in New York City during her brief stint in the late 1940s (prior to her marriage to JFK) working for *Vogue*. The writer and the student found each other amusing. Capote later claimed that at the time of their inaugural meeting, Jackie was considering the pursuit of three possible careers: As a fashion editor or perhaps a photographer's model; the pursuit of Hollywood stardom; and finally, or marriage to a rich and famous man. "Obviously, she went for the third choice," Capote said.

When he'd first met Jackie, she complimented him on his novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. "That won me over to her side," he said. "In those days, I divided people into two groups—those who had read my novel and those who had not."

Two bathing beauties of 1935 **Jackie** *(left)* and her younger sister, **Lee**, each showing hints of the beauty they'd each later be famous for.

Capote's friendship with Jackie survived her marriage to John Kennedy.

At first, it would seem that the Congressman from Massachusetts and the author from Alabama would have little in common: Capote feared that the more macho Kennedy might be put off by his gayness. Not at all. JFK and Capote struck a common ground: Both were interested in gossip, the more salacious, the better.

Jackie and JFK were avid movie fans, and Capote always had plenty to tell about the private lives of the stars. They could ask him a question such as, "Is Cary Grant really gay?" Capote would paint a detailed picture, including naming Grant's male lovers—and not just Randolph Scott.

When JFK became president, Jackie invited Capote on several occasions to the White House. Even when she couldn't see Capote, she often called him.

To her surprise, so did the President. He told Jackie, "Sometimes, when I want to forget the Cuban Missile Crisis, I call Cary Grant just to hear the sound of his voice. Or I might call Judy Garland and ask her to sing 'Over the Rainbow' for me. Or else, I'll call Truman just to hear the latest and most outrageous stories such as Fred Astaire getting caught in a sex act with a ten-year-old boy."

The President would often test the efficiency of White House telephone operators who bragged that they could get anybody in the world on the phone. JFK tested them one boring afternoon.

"Get me Truman Capote."

Within fifteen minutes, the operators had traced him to Palm Beach, where he was the guest of Gloria Guinness, who had an unlisted phone number.

In New York, during February of 1964, about three months after the assassination of her husband in Dallas, Jackie maintained a busy calendar but often managed to fit in Truman.

> *"For Lee Radziwill, 'The Divine Jackie' is a Tough Act to Follow"*
>
> —Truman Capote

One weekend in Manhattan, she checked into the Carlyle, the deluxe hotel where JFK had staged so many of his sexual trysts, including one with Lana Turner.

Jackie's schedule for that Saturday read: "Breakfast with Irwin Shaw; lunch with Truman Capote, dinner with Pamela Harriman, and evening with Bobby Kennedy. Scheduled visit with Bobby to see the ailing Herbert Hoover at the Waldorf Astoria."

Bennett Cerf, Capote's publisher at Random House, claimed that Jackie often visited Capote when he lived in an apartment at the United Nations Plaza. Bobby Kennedy also maintained an apartment in the same building.

By that time, Capote knew Jackie so well, he provided her with a set of keys to his apartment. One afternoon, when he came home, he found her beside the large window in his living room working on a sketch. "It was the second anniversary of her husband's death, and she was still in deep mourning."

"We stayed up and talked until five o'clock that morning, when she left with the Secret Service. In the meantime, we killed off a few bottles of champagne."

"I helped her on with her coat, a Balenciaga. But I noticed she carried a Chanel handbag. I chastised her for that because Coco, that reformed Nazi, had attacked Jackie as 'the worst dresser on any continent.' What a stupid, ridiculous statement."

When Gore Vidal heard about Jackie's visit to Capote's apartment, he sarcastically remarked: "I'm sure Jackie first visited Bobby Kennedy to get fucked, then drifted upstairs to see Capote for some *après sex* girl talk."

Stephen Smith, the New York businessman who married Jean Kennedy, once said, "Jackie was very fond of gay men and liked being with them. In many ways, she found them more devoted to her than straight men or other women, who were likely to be jealous."

"1968, the year Jackie had expected Bobby Kennedy to be elected president, was the last complete year of my friendship with Jackie," Capote said. "I often went with her on shopping sprees. She was a world class shopper. Once, she spent $150,000 in one store, charging everything to Ari *[Aristotle Onassis]*"

"She would barge into a store with me and order anything she fancied without asking the price. We went to a Valentino show in Paris, and she practically bought the entire collection."

"At the United Nations Plaza, I gave a party for her," he said. "Lee came, but my dog in the bedroom chewed up her sable coat. Lee exploded but Jackie soothed her. 'Go tomorrow morning and buy another one and charge it to Ari,' Jackie said. 'He'd love to pay for it.'"

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Capote's friendship with both Lee and Jackie began to fizzle in 1965 after his *La Côte Basque* was published in *Esquire* magazine. In it, Capote's character of Lady Coolbirth evaluates the patrons at Henri Soulé's renowned restaurant, La Côte Basque, on East 55th Street in Manhattan.

Truman later admitted "that Lady Coolbirth is me! Her conversation is precisely the kind I might have had."

In *La Côte Basque*, Lady Coolbirth (aka Capote himself) observes Lee dining at table with her sister. "If I were a man, I'd fall for Lee myself," Lady Coolbirth claims. "She's marvelously made, like a Tanagra figurine."

Jackie was described as "very photogenic, but the effect is a little unrefined, exaggerated."

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Princess Lee Radziwill first met Truman Capote at a chic dinner party in New York in the late 1950s. These two celebrities had grown up in different worlds, but "a spark was ignited between us," Truman later recalled. "Lee reminded me of Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's.*"

His fanciful stories amused her as they were told with the wit and charm that he'd put on paper in his published works. From the beginning, she recognized his tendency to exaggerate, which she defined as a "*folie d'imagination*."

Lee recognized that Truman's ticket into the world of the rich and famous was "because he had a talent to amuse."

Michael Tree, a Britisher whose wit was once compared to that of Oscar Wilde, said, "Capote is the rich man's Pekingese."

Lee put it differently: "Truman knew that everyone expected so much of him. He had to entertain them, though at times it became exhausting for him."

From that dinner on, a friendship slowly developed, beginning as a social diversion that would in time turn into a serious friendship. Each of them became the other's confidant, sharing potentially "dangerous" secrets about their private lives. In the months and years to come, they would travel together to exotic locales.

Stas Radziwill *(left)* with **Oleg Cassini** in 1963, discussing their favorite subject: the indiscretions of his wife Lee and Jackie Kennedy.

Initially, Jackie resented her sister's burgeoning friendship with Capote, as she regarded him as one of her special confidants. Jackie didn't want Capote carrying tales between the two sisters and reporting to the world at large the indiscreet remarks one sister might make about the other.

Lee was married to a Polish prince, Stanislas Radziwill, a naturalized British subject, which meant he had renounced all claims, past and future, to his title. Lee, however, insisted on being addressed as "Princess" anyway.

Apparently, Stas, as he was known, let her wander around the world on her own and seemed to overlook her infidelities, which Truman learned a lot about.

He soon began to consider himself one of Jackie's intimate friends, but, as she told her intimates, "Whereas I always know to keep him at arm's length, Lee seems to be taking him to her bosom."

On February 9, 1962, Truman wrote Cecil Beaton. "Had lunch with Princess Lee Radziwill. My God, how jealous she is of Jackie. I never knew. Understand her marriage is all but *finito*."

During the summer of 1966, Truman flew to Lisbon and was driven south to the little port and tourist resort of Setúbal, where Lee was vacationing with Stas and her children.

The French actress, Leslie Caron, was also vacationing there. "Lee and Truman were like two birds of a feather flocking together," Caron recalled. "Although very different, they seemed to share the same vision about many

things. Truman liked to tell naughty stories that were fascinating in a bizarre kind of way."

On another occasion, Truman and Lee sailed together along the Dalmation coast of Yugoslavia aboard the luxurious yacht of the Fiat heir, Gianni Agnelli.

They also flew to Morocco, where they were driven through the northern outskirts of the Sahara to the deluxe Hotel Gazelle d'Or in Taroudant, where both of them relished the rose water baths.

It was in Morocco that Truman suggested a career change for Lee. He began to tell people, "I'm in love with Lee Radziwill."

As Cecil Beaton explained, "I'm sure he did not mean that in a sexual way. But he was awed by Lee's fame, her connections, her wit, and style. Instead of saying, 'I'm in love with her,' he should have said, "I'm charmed by her.' That would be more accurate."

"We had so many differences I didn't think he could go on imagining that he was in love with me," Lee said. "We had cozy times that were brotherly and sisterly. The whole point of our relationship was that Truman had this grand passion for me. I knew he loved and adored me, as I did him."

Truman pushed me into acting," she said. "I did not have a burning desire for it."

The suggestion that she become an actress occurred while they were sitting under a palm tree in the Sahara as part of their trip to Morocco. "You could completely divorce yourself from Jackie and her image if you became an actress—perhaps a movie star. Jackie herself once told me she'd dreamed at one time of becoming a movie star instead of a political wife."

He even named what he thought would be the perfect vehicle for Lee to launch her stage career, Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story*, the brilliant but talky tale of a society girl who yearns for a down-to-earth romance and is torn between her ex-husband and a fast-talking reporter who falls in love with her. Both of them had seen the 1940 George Cukor film that starred Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, and James Stewart. They'd also seen its lackluster 1956 remake, a Hollywood musical *(High Society)* starring Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby. It had been Grace's last acting role before she married a real prince, unlike Lee's second marriage to "Prince" Stanislas Radziwill.

The leading female character within *The Philadelphia Story's* original theatrical version, Tracy Lord, a high-spirited *divorcée*, eventually returns to her ex-husband after her fleeting romance with a newspaperman.

Perhaps motivated by the desire to keep her co-dependent on him and his vision, Truman had carefully planned the structure and phases of his persuasive efforts, having included within his luggage a copy of the Barry play. Staying up late that night to read it, Lee, the next morning, did not think it was the right vehicle for her. "I feel absolutely *nothing* in common with the character of Tracy Lord. She has none of the feelings I understand, of sadness, of despair, or of knowing loss."

Capote, however, could be very convincing, and he still had enough clout to get her cast in the lead in a revival of the play scheduled to open in Chicago for a month-long run beginning on June 20, 1967.

Truman was able to get Lee cast in the lead because the Kennedys—after JFK's assassination in Dallas and before RFK's downfall in Los Angeles—were still perceived as America's Royal Family.

When Truman pitched the idea of casting Lee to the producers in Chicago, they recognized that she had no experience, but felt she'd be able to pull off the role because her personal history and well-heeled background seemed to have paralleled—as a form of type casting—the fictional life of Tracy Lord herself.

"Let's face it," one of the producers said. "It's a play about an attractive, spoiled, ultra-privileged, Eastern Seaboard post-debutante. Of course, we'd have preferred Jackie herself for bigger box office."

Once she flew back to London, Lee became totally committed to the role, taking it most seriously, even hiring an acting coach. At one point, she rented an empty London theater as a means of getting the feeling of actually appearing on stage during rehearsals.

She also took three trips to Paris to meet with designer Yves Saint Laurent, who was creating a spectacular stage wardrobe for her, in a production deliberately accessorized (some said over-accessorized) with many costume changes. Lee seemed to sense that most of the women in the audience would be coming to gape at her gowns more than at any drama unfolding on stage.

The backers of the play in Chicago wanted to advertise her name as "Princess Lee Radziwill," but she adamantly refused, ordering them instead to bill her as "Lee Bouvier."

To his closest friend, Cecil Beaton, Capote tried to explain why he was thrusting Lee so forcefully onto the stage. "Hopefully to make a name for herself."

"When they were growing up, Lee was the pretty one, getting all the compliments. Jackie was viewed as that bookworm in the corner. But then the spotlight shifted. Jackie became one of the most beloved women in the world thanks to her marriage to JFK. Forevermore, Lee was destined to live in Jackie's long shadow, and she resented it. Lee once lamented to me, 'I've done nothing and Jackie is virtually the Queen of America.'"

Then, to Beaton, Truman made a ridiculous confession: “Ours is the story of Pygmalion. I will make her a work of art, shaping her destiny, molding it, perfecting it, the way a sculptor applies the chisel to a marble statue. She’s an extraordinary girl who will create an identity of her own, and eventually surpass her older sister, who may—just may—spend the rest of her life in widow’s weeds attending memorials to John F. Kennedy.”

Many disappointing months later, Truman was the first to admit that his forecast to Beaton had been spectacularly wrong.

Before her marriage, Jackie had briefly entertained an ambition about becoming an actress herself, and consequently, she could hardly criticize Lee about her decision to appear on stage in *The Philadelphia Story*. Knowing that Truman was behind Lee’s move, Jackie chastised him instead: “If Lee falls on her face—and she is likely to—I will be ridiculed in the press more than she is. I think you’re luring her into a potential trap.”

But to Lee, Jackie sounded a different note, as she listened to her younger sister tell her that “Noël Coward is giving me tips as an actress. In addition to Truman, Rudi *[A reference to their mutual friend, Rudolf Nureyev]* is also advising me. George Masters is flying in from Hollywood to do my makeup, Kenneth from New York to style my hair, gowns by Yves Saint Laurent.”

In Chicago, the director, Sidney Breese, jokingly asked Truman, “When you introduce me to the Princess, am I supposed to curtsy?”

Robert Thomson, who had been cast in the play as Tracy Lord’s father, said, “At first, I didn’t recognize the figure of that little man sitting in shadows in the back row of the Ivanhoe. He had on a fedora, pulled down to conceal his face. Someone told me that was Truman Capote overseeing our rehearsals.”

John Ericson had a great body and didn’t mind showing it off to magazine photographers. On more than one occasion, he even flashed “the full Monty.”

After starring opposite Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly, he was assigned Lee Radziwill as a leading lady. He was not impressed.

“That guy knew acting talent, I’m sure, but he seemed blind where Lee was concerned,” Thomson claimed. “After he made himself known to the cast, he sat closer to the stage. He would applaud virtually every time Lee let out a fart—I’m speaking symbolically here. In that squeaky little voice, he’d proclaim, ‘Oh, Lee, that was wonderful, I mean really, really wonderful. You’re perfect, oh so right. *Yesss*, *yessss*, and *yessss* again. You’re such a dear. You’re going to wow them.’”

German-born John Ericson, who was seven years older than Lee, was cast as her handsome leading man. She’d seen him play a pianist in love with Elizabeth Taylor in the soap opera, *Rhapsody*, in 1954. She’d also gone to see Grace Kelly in *Green Fire*, also in 1954, in which Ericson played her no-good brother.

Ericson was not impressed with Lee. “The play was just put on to take advantage of her famous name. I’ve never worked with anyone as unprofessional as she was. At one point, I became so exasperated with her I told her, ‘You’ve got a lot to learn about acting.’ Brother, did that piss her off, but it was true. I shouldn’t say this, but I found the Princess a real airhead. Behind her back, the rest of the cast, all professionals, were saying, ‘Come and see the freak show staged by Truman Capote in perhaps some gay mischief scheme.”

Jackie turned down Truman’s invitation to fly to the opening night at the Ivanhoe Theater in Chicago. As

Truman cattily remarked, “Jackie has decided, conveniently so, to be out of the country.”

When opening night came, Jackie was with her son, John Jr., and Caroline in Waterford, Ireland, on a private holiday. They were the guests of Murray and Charlotte McDonnell and their eight children at their Regency mansion. However, Jackie sent Lee a cable with good wishes on her opening night, and she arranged for a small Battersea enamel gift box, originally made in the 1700s, to be delivered as a gift to Lee’s dressing room.

Right before opening night, George Masters, Hollywood’s leading makeup artist, flew in to “put a face on the Princess.” He got off to a bad start, mocking the gown she was wearing from Yves Saint Laurent. It was in shocking pink, purple, and chartreuse. “Even the gaudy Supremes wouldn’t wear this drag,” he told her.

Later he told the director, Breese, “Capote didn’t ask himself a basic question: ‘Can the Princess act?’”

Aristotle Onassis had booked the best suite in Chicago for his mistress, Lee Radziwill, but **Zsa Zsa Gabor** arrived in town and demanded it for herself.

To the rescue came Truman Capote, who “song and danced” himself into the Hungarian diva’s graces, giving her his bed instead.

To complicate matters, Zsa Zsa Gabor arrived at the Ambassador East Hotel, where Lee and Truman were staying in separate suites. She was going to appear in a play after Lee had closed in hers. Zsa Zsa requested the best suite in the house, only to be told that it had been booked by Artistotle Onassis for Lee.

In the lobby, Zsa Zsa threw a fit, demanding that the manager evacuate Lee to make room for her. Truman was called and he rushed down to the lobby to confront Zsa Zsa.

“Let Lee have her moment in the sun,” he told Zsa Zsa. “You’re already established as one of the world’s greatest actresses, but she wants this chance to escape from Jackie’s shadow. I’ll move out of my suite and make room for you. It’s as good as Lee’s suite.”

Zsa Zsa seemed flattered and agreed. He escorted her back to his suite. She later recalled, “Before he packed his clothing, he insisted on doing a number of dances for me, to the music coming from his phonograph. At one point, he danced, singing he was ‘going to wash that man right out of my hair’ from *South Pacific*. I knew the song well. Once, George Sanders was going to star in that play, and he sang it endlessly around the house.”

In a call to Jackie, Capote delighted in tantalizing her with this anecdote about Zsa Zsa, since he knew that Jackie resented Zsa Zsa for having once seduced JFK.

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Before opening night, Lee was a nervous wreck. Throughout the ordeal, Truman had nursed her through nights of nervousness, fatigue, and insomnia. She later praised “his friendship, his loyalty, and his caring when I needed bolstering.”

Reporters from all over the world were flying in for what Lee claimed “Was to see me face a massacre.”

The big draw, of course, was Jackie, since word had leaked that she would make a surprise appearance. Every journalist wanted to learn about Jackie’s reaction to her sister’s debut on the stage.

Truman said, “We never expected all this attention, all the press scrutiny, all the famous names such as Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn booking seats.” Even though he said that, surely he wasn’t that naïve. At the time, Lee Radziwill was one of the most talked-about women in the world, with the power to fill up a small neighborhood theater on Chicago’s seedy North Side.

On opening night, Lee waited, “a mass of nerves,” for Masters to show up to do her makeup. The stage hands

claimed that he showed up drunk and fell down backstage, spilling the contents of his makeup kit. “Hell, there goes the face of Princess Radziwill.”

When she ascertained his condition, she asked an assistant to do her face.

The critics were more or less unanimous in their evaluation that A STAR IS NOT BORN.

Critic Chauncey Howell, who had flown in from New York, wrote: “Miss Radziwill delivered her first lines in an unmistakable Miss Porter’s lockjaw. She looked gorgeous but seemed ill at ease. The acting was amateurish, stock company level. Her performance stayed at consistently wooden levels. Even though she can’t act, she is gosawful beautiful.”

Instead of doing a tomahawk job on Lee, two reviewers were kind, as if searching for something nice to say. One critic even acknowledged her for knowing her lines. The critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times* claimed that Lee “laid an egg—but a golden one.”

Erika Slezak, one of the supporting actors, said, “Lee’s famous friends were flying to Chicago. But the regular audience was coming for only one reason. They hoped to see a carbon copy of Jackie on stage. They were sorely disappointed.”

Everyone wondered, “Will Jackie show up in the audience?”

“I once asked Lee about Jackie,” Slezak claimed. “The hairs on Lee’s arms stood up.”

Truman did not give up so easily. During any free time available to him in Chicago, he worked on the script for a teleplay of John van Druten’s romantic comedy, *The Voice of the Turtle*. It had been made into a movie with Ronald Reagan playing a lonely soldier who falls in love with Eleanor Parker.

Lee got her own revenge on Chicago. When she confronted a reporter in New York, she said, “What did it matter? Chicago is merely a small, out-of-theway town.”

Lee’s Acting Staggers Onward

“Truman, You’re Subjecting My Sister to Ridicule”

—Jackie Kennedy

“Jackie Is Such a Cow”

—Truman to Columnist Liz Smith

By the end of the run of *The Philadelphia Story*, Truman had completed a rough draft of his teleplay, *Voice of the Turtle*. He delivered it to TV producer David Susskind, who telephoned him two days later with the intention of rejecting it. But in a conversation that managed to both reject one teleplay and hold out the promise of another, Susskind discussed how intrigued he was with the idea of “casting Jackie’s sister in a play. But instead of *Turtle* as the appropriate vehicle, I’d like to see her star in a remake of Gene Tierney’s *Laura*. I’m sure you’ve seen it. With Lee, we could get top actors to play the Clifton Webb and Dana Andrews roles.”

When Gore Vidal saw this picture, he wrote: **"Hell's Angels: Lee Radziwill and Truman Capote**, having just received instructions from the Lord of the Flies, gleefully surface to do his work."

After a call to Lee, who voiced her approval of the idea, Capote, in haste, wrote a new version, suitable for television, of the classic film, *Laura*, the 1944 *film noir* that had originally been directed by Otto Preminger.

Laura had been one of Jackie's favorite films, even though Tierney had once been the mistress of JFK. She'd wanted him to marry her, but he turned her down. Reportedly, Jacked looked more kindly on Tierney than on other movie stars with whom JFK had been intimate.

"Gene is so tragic," Jackie had told Lem Billings. "Her child born handicapped. I honestly would prefer losing a child, as I did Patrick *[1963]* to having one that was handicapped."

Susskind had reservations about Lee, telling Truman, "She's not a good actress, but maybe in the small box of TV, she'll glimmer and gloss."

Robert Stack in 1960. During rehearsals, he amused Lee with tales of the days back in 1940 when he and a JFK went on "celebrity poontang" hunts in Hollywood.

Truman submitted a two-hour "movie of the week" adaptation of *Laura*, for which he was paid $50,000. Rehearsals began in London during the autumn of 1968.

On a $600,000 budget, Susskind was able to hire some of the most famous stars of the 1960s, including George Sanders, Farley Granger, Arlene Francis, and Robert Stack. Later, Susskind told Truman, "I made a mistake hiring these veterans. They were so good, they showed up Lee's inadequacies."

As it turned out, none of the performers, except for Lee, liked the script. Rewrites were ordered, but Truman refused to do them.

George Sanders observed Lee's attempts at acting. "I'm used to bad actresses, darling," he told the producer. "After all, I was married to Zsa Zsa Gabor."

Lee began to falter. She was considered so bad that Susskind considered replacing her.

Lee alienated Granger after a necking scene with Stack. Not knowing that her mike was on, she said, "Farley kisses well, but you are so much better."

Stack was heard to respond, "That's because I'm not gay."

As Granger remembered it, "We tried to make a Princess look like an actress, and we failed. From the beginning, we knew it was a vanity project, compliments of one Truman Capote."

Granger hung out every night with "my drinking buddy," Arlene Francis. Out of courtesy, he invited Lee to dinner one evening. "She spent the evening lambasting Truman for not showing up for rehearsals. Later that night, we tried in vain to reach him by phone. No answer. I think he'd planted a spy on the set, and he knew that a disaster was imminent."

Arlene Francis recalled, "I was delighted that Radziwill couldn't act. Susskind enlarged my role to fill up the slack."

The director finished taping *Laura* on October 26, 1967, with a TV premiere set for January 24. In December, Susskind threw a preview party, inviting Jackie, who didn't show. Many famous guests, including the likes of Ingrid Bergman and Johnny Carson, did attend. Bergman and Carson left after only fifteen minutes.

"As my guests saw the film, I watched Truman's face," Susskind said. "His droopy, sad look said it all. He realized that promoting *Laura* for the Princess was a big mistake—initially, his mistake, and then my mistake for listening to him."

ONE OF THOSE HORRIBLE ON-STAGE MOMENTS:

Farley Granger, who's trying to make his attraction to **Lee Radziwill** look convincing, embracing Lee, who's trying to make her acting look convincing

Steven M. L. Aronson, the publisher and author, said, "Truman thought *Laura* would soar and take off—a private jet. Such a fiasco that vehicle turned out to be—like an unmechanized wheelchair tethered to the ground."

For the TV premiere, Lee and Stas invited Jackie and her children, Caroline and John Jr., to their apartment in New York. Jackie was most gracious and rather reserved, though complimentary, at the end. John and Caroline were surprised to see their aunt "making love to Robert Stack and Farley Granger on the screen."

Lee Radziwill taking a cigarette break with her producer, **David Susskind**. He had friendly connections with the Kennedys and did not want to fire his star outright. Instead, he instructed the director to make rehearsals so brutal for her that she'd quit.

Valiantly, she handled the assaults and carried on.

Late that night, Jackie called Truman and accused him of subjecting Lee to ridicule. "People are mocking her and making horrible fun—and it's all your fault, some weird game you were playing!"

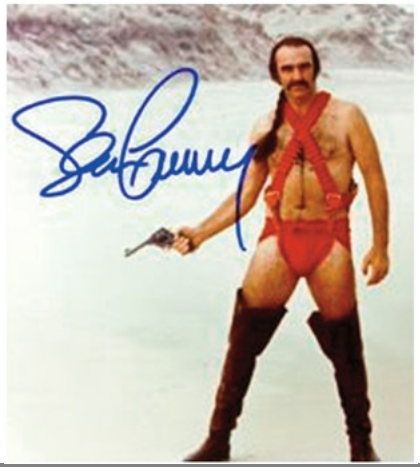
Before he could respond, she slammed down the phone.

The TV reviews were more hostile than those generated by the Chicago critics. John Gould, writing in *The New York Times*, said, "Laura was reduced to a stunning clotheshorse upon whom no discernible thespian demands were made."

Time found that Lee was "only slightly more animated than the portrait of *Laura* that hung over the mantle."

One critic wrote, "She was not *Laura*, she was Lee Radziwill. Another reviewer called the movie, "an exercise in theatrical frustration, and yet another denounced *Laura* as "Truman Capote's folly."

Gore Vidal snidely suggested that Truman would have been better off luring retired First Ladies, Eleanor Roosevelt and Bess Truman, into films. "Eleanor would have been marvelous in those Ethel Barrymore roles, and Bess would have made a divine Ma Kettle, replacing Marjorie Main."



If Lee had been cast in *Shalako*, one wonders what Jackie-Oh would have thought, considering the dress code the directors imposed on **Sean Connery**.

All of this bad press infuriated Jackie, because every article included a reference to the younger, "failed," sister of the more famous and successful Jackie Kennedy.

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Months later, Lee was reportedly furious to read that her performance in *Laura* had destroyed her acting career. "Not at all," she said. Euan Lloyd, a British producer, considered her for a role in *Shalako*, a western set in 1880 New Mexico, although actually scheduled for shooting in a similar landscape environment in Spain. The film was to star Sean Connery. When Lee bowed out, her role went to Brigitte Bardot.

A role in George Kelly's *The Torch Bearers*, with Cornelia Otis Skinner and Maureen Stapleton at the Phoenix Dinner Theater was offered, but Lee turned it down. Roman Polanski also offered her a small role in *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), but Lee rejected that, too.

Lee was embarrassed that Jackie had read her bad reviews, and called her sister every time she received another film offer. Much to Jackie's reported relief, Lee didn't appear in any of the roles she was offered.

When Liz Smith heard that Capote had agreed to write the screenplay for *Laura*, only if Lee had been cast, the columnist called it "old fashioned Hollywood-writer blackmail at its best."

She sought out Capote for an interview, on the pretense of asking about Lee. Of course, what Smith really wanted was "the dirt" on Jackie.

"Truman didn't really give me much dirt on Jackie, other than saying that compared to Lee, Jackie was just a cow," Smith was quoted as saying. "He had nothing but praise for Lee, however.

"She is fragile, ethereal, lovely, smart, beautiful, and witty," he said.

Later, his raves degenerated into blistering attacks.

When Capote appeared on Susskind's TV talk show, he spoke of Lee and her performance in *Laura*. "Lee got much tougher scrutiny than she would have otherwise because she was the whipping post for the underside of the public's feelings toward Jackie. We've got to admit that we had not foreseen the extent to which no matter what Lee did, the press was going to come down on her like hell because they really wanted to say nasty things about Jackie and never could at that time because Jackie was still the widow lady, a little saint. Frankly, I told Lee, 'the dogs bark, but the caravan moves on.'"

"How Could Jackie Betray Me Like This? I Was Going to Marry Aristotle Onassis."

—Lee Radziwill

Over the years, Capote had learned some of Lee's most personal secrets, and in a prolonged series of small, gossipy betrayals, he entertained his beautiful "swans" with stories of her love affairs and her humiliations. He literally dined out claiming she'd had an affair with her sister's husband when JFK was president. Truman told the story in such detail it sounded as if he had actually been a spy within her bedroom.

He also claimed that Lee had "set her hat" for Aristotle Onassis, and was hoping that he'd marry her. "You see, Lee has this thing for oil tankers," he told Babe Paley.

Lee had sailed the Aegean Sea with Onassis, and they were reported to have had an affair.

Capote always liked to appear to be "in" on all the darkest secrets, and he was one of the first to report that Jackie was also having an affair with Onassis. At the time, no one in his social circle seemed to believe that. "Truman, I love your stories," Babe Paley told him, "but this one needs work."

Lee Radziwill is seen nightclubbing with **Aristotle Onassis**.

As Ari's biographer, Peter Evans, wrote: "At twenty-nine, a high-toned Eastern Seaboard postdebutante (Farmington, three terms at Sarah Lawrence), Lee was a lightning rod for men like Ari. He admitted the way she was at home with wealth, the way she took luxury in her stride. She had been born with a taste for money; there is no higher kind of chic."

One night, according to Capote, Lee called him in hysterics. "How could Jackie do this to me?" she reportedly asked. "How could she betray me like this?"

He had more news to tell his gossipy swans. He claimed, "Lee thought she had Ari nailed down, and that a marriage proposal was imminent. But when Jackie signaled she might marry Ari, he dropped Lee. After all, the former First Lady of America, the most famous woman on earth, had a lot more prestige than either Lee or Maria Callas. I told Lee she had to get over it and move on to other game—perhaps a hounddog not so rich, but perhaps a man better looking."

Capote said to Cecil Beaton, "I told Lee that she should remain in her marriage to Stas because he was very tolerant about her infidelities, including her grand passion for Nureyev. Lee told me, 'In pursuit of my adventures, Stas must understand that I need my freedom.' Well, she got it."

As the years went by, Lee and Truman saw less of each other. She stood by helplessly as he sank deeper and deeper into drugs and liquor. She was also shocked by the "rough trade" he brought to her house in London when she invited him to dinner.

At one point, he showed up with a bartender, Rick Brown, whom he'd picked up at Club 45, a rough sailors' dive on West 45th Street in Manhattan. As one biographer described Capote's latest conquest, "Rick was a West Virginia hillbilly who had grown up in a backwoods near where the Hatfields and McCoys had feuded and fought."

Rick later told an interviewer, "Lee Radziwill was a rude bitch. When Truman brought me to her house, she delicately shook my hand, then turned her back on me and never spoke to me again for the rest of the evening."

Lee's biographer, Diana DuBois, speculated on why Capote's friendship with Lee drifted off. "He just wore out her patience. The Truman Capote of the mid-1970s was not the Truman Capote she'd befriended a decade ago. He was so heavily into a cycle of pills and booze by now, and then detoxing in and out of hospitals, that his personal stock plummeted with a lot of his friends. What made matters much worse were his ruinous sexual escapades, usually with disreputable males his socialite friends did not want to have around."

"He was sick, and there was nothing one could do about it," Lee was quoted as saying.

"Babe Paley, once a loyal Capote friend, encountered Jackie at a party in New York. "Truman is on a self-destructive path."

"I haven't seen him lately," Jackie said, not wanting to press the issue.

But Paley continued. "He had a great gift as a writer, but he was squandering his talent. I think he gave up writing completely, in spite of what he claimed. At least Tennessee Williams keeps writing those dreadful plays in his drugged state. As for the third member of their 'gay triangle,' Gore Vidal is practically a book factory, writing all those horrible historical novels, although his essays are a provocative delight even when you disagree with some of the ridiculous political positions he takes."

Stanislas Radziwill died in 1976, and a lot of world attention focused on Lee at the time. The editors of *Vogue* asked Capote to write a "valentine" to her.

Consequently, in his article for *Vogue,* he proclaimed, "I can't think of a woman more feminine than Lee Radziwill—not even Audrey Hepburn and a great seductress like Gloria Guinness."

Actually, at this point his relationship with Lee had traveled south, but he put up a great pretense that they were

still the intimate friends they used to be. By writing this flattering "valentine," as published in *Vogue*, he was, in a sense, making a peace offering.

Lee Radziwill Gets Pulled Into a Libel Suit Between Vidal and Capote

In 1979, Gore Vidal filed a libel suit against Truman Capote for an interview that was published in *Playgirl*.

People magazine wrote, "Not since Oscar Wilde dropped his famous slander suit against the Marquess of Queensberry has a literary lawsuit caused so much excitement. Two best-selling authors, Gore Vidal and Truman Capote, are deadly enemies, a pair of razor-tongued saloon fighters aboil with malice."

Ever since 1961, the tale had been told a thousand times. The allegation was that in 1961, a drunken Vidal was kicked out of a White House party by Bobby Kennedy, with whom he'd had an altercation. That night had led to Vidal's break with Camelot. Unlike what had been falsely reported (and amplified to the world at large by Capote), Gore was not ejected, bodily, out onto Pennsylvania Avenue ("like a drunken cowpoke from a western saloon," as was bruited around afterward by Capote), but he was, after an altercation with Bobby, escorted home by a White House security detail and never invited back.

Because of her love and devotion to Bobby, Jackie sided with her brother-in-law against Vidal. The way she described it, "Gore had squatted down beside my armchair. He'd been drinking heavily. When he went to rise to his feet, he placed his hand on my shoulder."

"Bobby saw that and resented Gore using me as a prop to get up. He told Gore, 'Don't you ever do that again.' The two men had words as I retreated."

"I really blamed myself for the incident because of the heavy drinking. The very next day, as hostess for the White House, I ordered Anne Lincoln, the housekeeper, to have the butlers serve only one alcoholic drink to our guests. She asked about Lyndon Johnson, who was known for ordering eight bourbons before dinner. I told Miss Lincoln that Lyndon could drink in his own quarters and that the one-drink minimum would apply to him as well."

In another "executive order," Jackie instructed Lincoln to inform the White House butlers to refill ("freshen") any guest's unfinished drinks rather than replacing it with entirely new one. "Of course, if they have lipstick traces on the glasses, discard them. But if they don't, recycle the drinks even if you give our guests hepatitis."

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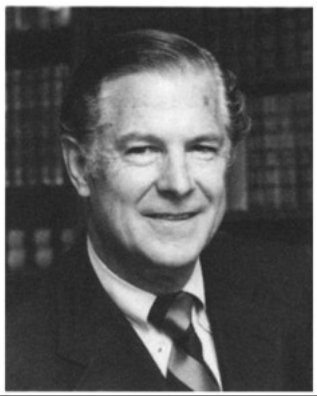
To bolster his defense in the libel case, Capote wanted to drag Lee Radziwill into the fray, as he cited her as the original source of the story.

Capote had not been invited to the White House, but Lee did attend. It appeared that in a gossipy call she placed to Capote the following morning, she gave him her version of the scandal because she knew how much he detested Vidal. Since he'd heard the story directly from Lee, Capote wanted her to declare herself as an official eyewitness to Vidal's expulsion from the White House, stating to witnesses what she had previously relayed, privately, to him.

To Capote's rage, Lee denied that she had been the source of the story, and made it clear that she didn't want to become involved. When Jackie heard of the lawsuit, and Lee's possible involvement, she pronounced that "this whole mess is just too damn ridiculous." She saw it as a "frivolous squabble" between two authors she'd once befriended, but from whom she had since then distanced herself. "Both Gore and Truman have become too hot for me to handle."



When **Newton Cope** met Lee Radziwill at a dinner party in San Francisco, he asserted that it was "love at first sight."

He got the romance rolling by inviting her to redecorate The Huntington, a charming hotel on Nob Hill left to him by his late wife, the real estate heiress, Dorothy (Dolly) MacMasters.

Lee's lawyers warned that if she admitted to being the source of Capote's version of the story, that Vidal might instruct his lawyers to amend their complaint, naming her as a co-defendant. If Vidal, subsequently, won the case, Lee would be liable for untold damages, whatever the court decided, plus legal fees. The case had already cost Capote $80,000, money he could ill afford.

In 1979, desperately wanting her help, Capote called Lee repeatedly. His desperate calls were not returned.

Behind the scenes, Jackie took a strong stand: "You'll have to forget your previous friendship with Truman. You can't afford to get involved. Because you're my sister, and he was my former friend, I'd suffer at lot of bad publicity as well."

Capote then called columnist Liz Smith and asked her to intervene. Somewhat reluctantly, Smith phoned Lee, a woman she had met but didn't know too well. Lee was dismissive of Truman. Reportedly, Lee told Smith, "All this notoriety is too much for me. I am tired of Truman riding on my coattails. Liz, what difference does the suit make? Truman and Vidal are just a couple of fags."

When Jackie heard this, she said, "Perhaps Lee could have said that more diplomatically…"

When Smith relayed to Capote what Lee had said, he went ballistic. "Riding on her coattails!" he said mockingly. "Who in the fuck is she kidding? She rode on *my* coattails. I even talked David Susskind into casting her in *Laura*. And you know how that turned out. Gene Tierney, Lee was not."

"If the lovely, divine, and sensitive Princess Radziwill has such a low opinion of homosexuals, then why did she have me for a *confidant* for the last twenty years?" he asked.

To her frequent escort at the time, Newton Cope, a middle-aged widower who had married the late heiress, Dolly MacMasters, Lee said, "Now I'm in hot water. The little worm *[a reference to Truman]* is threatening to sue me."

Cope responded, "What can you expect from a has-been writer who is all washed up and fighting for any kind of publicity on the way down?"

Lee Radziwill "erotically" dances with her beau, **Peter Tufo**. The prominent Manhattan attorney found Lee "beautiful, intelligent, artistic, creative, and radiant. Did I also add wonderful?"

In time, his opinion changed.

Forced to respond, Lee gave Gore's lawyers a sworn statement: "I do not recall ever discussing with Truman Capote the incident of that evening, which I understand is the subject of a lawsuit." When he heard that Lee had been in touch with Vidal's lawyers, Capote said, "She's a treacherous lady, and that's the truth of it. She's treacherous to absolutely everyone."

He told his remaining friends, "I feel betrayed by her. How could she do this to me, after all I've done for her,

even trying to make her an actress? Now she's taking Gore's side and giving a deposition. She was the source of my story."

After Lee's dialogue with Liz Smith, during which Lee had labeled Capote a fag, he swore revenge, "as only a Southern fag knows how to do it by twisting a dagger inside a human heart. When I finish with this bitch, she'll be shitting razor blades."

One night at Studio 54, he told his friend, Andy Warhol, "You should just hear some of the things she says about you. She views you as the ultimate social climber."

Lee Radziwill defined **Peter Beard**, her new beau, as "half Tarzan, half Byron." He was an author, a photographer, a heartthrob, a party boy, and a wildlife conservationist.

After reading *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen (aka Karen Blixen), he headed for the Dark Continent, landing in Kenya.

"I don't really care," Warhol said. "I've always been aware of what kind of woman she is. I'd call her a talent climber."

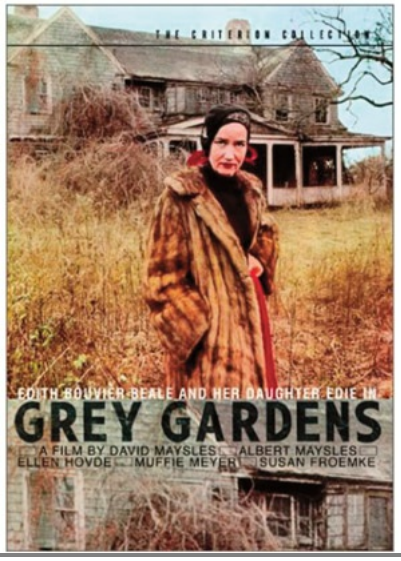
"I'll tell you one thing. If she is boozing now, can you imagine what she'll be belting down when I'm through attacking her?" Capote asked.

Warhol urged him to back off. "Lee is already weak and vulnerable. You don't want to push her over the edge."

A chance to expose Lee occurred when Capote was invited, on June 5, 1979, to appear on the Stanley Siegel television talk show.

Sally Quinn of *The Washington Post* met Capote at his apartment and escorted him to the television studio in a chauffeured limousine. She could tell how drugged he was.

In the back seat of the limo, he told her, "A cassette of this show is going to be one of the great comic classics of all time."



More Bouvier embarrassments foisted on Lee and Jackie

"Before I'm finished with them, Lee and her beloved sister, Jackie, will need to have an ambulance waiting to take them to Payne Whitney, where they'll need to check in for a very long stay. Before I go off the air, the average subway rider in the New York system will know what a little cunt Lee Radziwill is."

In the waiting room at the studio, Capote told Quinn, "She called me a fag. Well, this fag happens to be alive and well in New York City."

Jackie had been alerted to Capote's appearance, and she tuned in, dreading what she was likely to see and hear.

Siegel announced Capote as one of his guests in advance of his entrance onto the set. Audiences were shocked when Capote, drunk and drugged, staggered out into view. After seating himself, he announced, "I'll tell you something about fags, especially Southern fags. We is mean. A Southern fag is meaner than the meanest rattler you ever met. I know that Lee Radziwill wouldn't want me to be tellin' you none of this. But you know us Southern fags —we just can't keep our mouths shut."

Then he launched into an attack on Lee's affairs with various men, some of them conducted during her marriage to Stanislas. "The Principesa tried to seduce William Buckley, Jr. When he didn't respond to her advances, she accused him of being queer."

For a while, Peter Tufo was her beau," he claimed. "She told me that Peter has a face like a ferret and is publicity crazy, riding on her coattails. In this case, I didn't think he was good enough for her.

[Actually, Peter Tofu was a politically connected and prominent lawyer who became the U.S. ambassador to Hungary.]

"La Principesa also went after Peter Beard," Truman claimed. "She told me herself that he was no great catch except perhaps in some provincial town. He eventually dumped her for a chick with less mileage on her."

[Peter Beard was a well-known photographer, artist, diarist, and writer. His photos of Africa and its wildlife had made him a celebrity. He was also a photographer of supermodels and rock stars like Mick Jagger and David Bowie. His friends included Jackie Kennedy, Bianca Jagger, and Andy Warhol.

Jackie was furious that Capote was gossiping about Beard on TV. When she was on the Greek island of Skorpios, Beard had been a frequent visitor. He'd also been a kind of playmate and babysitter for Caroline and John Jr. He taught Caroline how to use a camera, and he climbed Mt. Kenya with John. The Kennedys also visited Beard at his plantation in Kenya.

When Beard was in Greece, Onassis bet Beard that he could not hold his breath under water for more than four minutes. The photographer managed to do that, and the Greek tycoon paid him $10,000. He used part of that money to finance his documentary, Grey Gardens, *a film that exposed the lives and financial straits of Jackie's poor and very eccentric relatives, Edith and Edie Beale.]*

The audience didn't really know a lot about Lee's lovers. They were more intrigued to learn that Lee was "insanely jealous of her sister, Jackie," according to Capote.

Acutely aware of Capote's condition, Siegel asked him if he wanted to continue with the show, or whether he preferred to leave the studio. Capote answered that he wanted to keep talking.

Siegel then asked him if he thought he could "lick" his habits.

"The obvious answer is that eventually I'll kill myself." Capote said.

Back in his apartment at the United Nations Plaza, Capote continued his revelations, with Quinn taking notes.

He spoke more about Newton Cope, who was a particularly prominent figure at the time in San Francisco—in fact, he was called "The Nabob of Nob Hill," because of his vast real estate holdings.

"At the last minute, Lee called off her wedding," Capote claimed. "She didn't like the pre-nup agreement he wanted her to sign. Although the wedding fizzled, the couple still went on their honeymoon to the Caribbean."

Jackie later asserted, "This was not very discreet, to say the least."

Capote reveled to Quinn details of Lee's affair with Roy Jenkins, a rising Labour Party politician in Britain, who, among other posts, had served as Harold Wilson's Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1967 to 1970.

"Jackie urged Lee to go after Jenkins because she believed he was going to become Prime Minister. Lee told me that Jackie said, 'Just think, you'll become the First Lady of the United Kingdom.'"

"I didn't like most of Lee's beaux, but at least Jenkins was a man I respected," Capote said. "When in power, he urged the abolishment of censorship in the British theater and the decriminalization of homosexuality."

"But when Jenkins failed in his bid to become prime minister, Lee dropped him like a hot potato—forgive the cliché," Capote said.

In California, Vidal watched the Siegel show. When it was over, he said, "This is pathology, real nut-house stuff."

In its immediate aftermath, Capote generated a headline: "DRUNK AND DOPED, CAPOTE VISITS TV TALK

SHOW," shouted the *New York Post*.

The Post also published a savage cartoon, depicting him with droopy eyes enveloped by piles of discarded liquor bottles and used hypodermic needles, along with a book entitled *Breakfast at the Bowery*. John Cashman, in *Newsday*, wrote, "A talented man of considerable literary stature was making a fool of himself in front of 250,000 viewers."

To recover from his embarrassment, Capote spent that night at Studio 54 with owner Steve Rubell and Liza Minnelli, who was not in great shape herself. In the next few days, Capote announced to friends, "I'm going to kill myself as soon as I work up the courage. I'll hire someone to kill me *In Cold Blood."*

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By October of 1983, Capote sent word to Vidal's lawyers that he had no money to pay him even if Vidal won the judgment. He agreed to settle the case by writing Vidal a letter of apology and an admission that he had lied.

Privately, Capote was quoted as saying, "I'm always sad about Gore—very sad that he has to breathe every day."

Vidal retorted, "Truman has made lying an art form—a minor art form."

To the very end, Capote continued to maintain that "Princess Radziwill betrayed me. She was very hurtful to me, and I loved her. Love is blind. I have been in love before with people who were just ghastly. Lee was my number one confidant until I went through that long period when I was in and out of hospitals. I wasn't talking to anybody. Of all my friends, she never wrote me once to say she hoped I was getting well and wished me luck. There has never been any reason for her unbelievable behavior."

After Capote's death, Lee seemed to become more mellow in her opinion of her long-ago friend. She said, "I miss Truman—yes, I do. I had wonderful times with him, really good times. There is nobody like him—nobody who even reminds me of him at all."

Jackie never spoke of Capote ever again.

Media Marketing and the Origins of a *Provocateur*

In 1948, looking like Tadzio, the devilish adolescent from *Death in Venice*, the young author, **Truman Capote**, scandalized the world when he posed for the back cover of his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*.

Photographed by Harold Halma, who emphasized Capote's self-image as a male Lolito and an *enfant terrible*, the budding writer was depicted as a seductive, sloe-eyed youth, lying supine on a sofa, facing the camera with an emphasis on his petulant mouth, baby bangs, and seductive, come-hither gaze.

One reviewer advised American housewives to keep their husbands away from this tantalizing boy. Another warned, "Something evil and awful this way comes."

Chapter Twenty-Three

"A Fairyland Inhabited by Vampires"

With Horror, Jackie Follows the Widely Televised Feud Between Gore Vidal and William Buckley

Buckley Slams Vidal as a Sexual Deviant; Vidal Labels Buckley "A Closeted Old Queen"

Behind the Scenes, Jackie Gets Involved

Left photo: In 1968, during the Democratic Presidential nominating convention in riot-plagued Chicago, ABC hired right-wing commentator **William F. Buckley, Jr.** *(left)* to face off with **Gore Vidal** *(right, with only the back of his head showing)*, for a nationally televised debate. The moderator was ABC-TV's **Howard Smith** *(right photo)*.

In front of millions of TV viewers, "Mr. Cool" (a reference to Buckley) lost it and threatened Vidal with physical violence, calling him a "queer" in response to charges of Nazism.

Despite her role as the uncrowned Queen of Democratic Party politics in America, and her status as the widow of its assassinated torch-bearer, Jackie refused to attend the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. But her absence resulted from years of soul-searching dialogues with her late husband. As early as 1960, she and JFK, when he was running for president, often talked about where their lives would be in 1968.

According to their plan, he would be retiring from the White House, assuming he'd be re-elected in 1964. They discussed what they might do during retirement, where they might live. Jackie suggesting they might travel

frequently. She recommended that they might maintain apartments in New York, London, and Paris, while keeping residences in Palm Beach and Hyannis Port.

At a party, **William Buckley, Jr.**, confronted Jackie, describing his plan to write a book exploding Camelot as a myth of her own making. He wanted to entitle it *The Dark Side of Camelot*. Ironically, in 1997, three years after Jackie's death, investigative reporter Seymour M. Hersh wrote just such a book, with that title.

"I have met some despicable excuses for a man in my life," Jackie told Gore Vidal. "The Buckley thing is at the top of my hate list."

Her plans changed drastically when 1968 actually came, and Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles after winning the California primary.

Originally, and until she changed her mind, Jackie had agreed to be "showcased," with fanfare and klieg lights, at the Democratic Convention, which she hoped would lead to a nomination of Robert Kennedy (Bobby) as the party's candidate in the upcoming challenge from the Republican right. That challenge would be in the form of Richard Nixon, whom—although she masked her contempt—she had grown to despise.

Jackie had no enthusiasm for Lyndon B. Johnson's choice—Hubert Humphrey—as head of the Democratic ticket and its candidate for president.

He'd run against her husband in the West Virginia and Wisconsin primaries in 1960, and she had developed an intense dislike for him and his "down-home" approach to campaigning. "The man has no class," she told friends. She cited a "cornpone" picture of the Humphreys holding hands with their "dull-looking children" in front of an extremely modest shingle-sided cabin.

As the convention opened, Jackie had so little interest that she didn't plan to follow the proceedings. But she changed her mind when she read that ABC-TV had hired both Gore Vidal and William Buckley, Jr., to cover the convention in Dallas. She later admitted, "I watched the proceedings like a cobra about to strike."

"I'll Sock You in Your Goddamn Face"

On Nationwide TV, A "Porno-writing Queer" Dukes It Out With a "Crypto-Nazi"

Because of Bobby Kennedy's feud with Vidal, her friendship with him had been put into storage. But she despised Buckley—"I loathe him," were her exact words.

Buckley sued **Vidal** *(photo above)* for his response to an attack Buckley had written about him in *Esquire*. “Finally, the right-wing creep backed down and dropped the suit,” Gore said. “But I had to pay my lawyers for his crazed madness. One never forgives that. Hopefully, the fanatical Buckleys of America will be stopped one day before they destroy the country.”

Her disdain for this right-wing commentator was not entirely political, but personal.

At least some of it derived from their encounter, in 1965, at a party in Manhattan, to which she was escorted by Ted Sorensen. There, he confronted her to tell her, provocatively, that he was contemplating writing a book entitled *The Dark Side of Camelot*.

Buckley was very frank with her, informing her that the book would revolve around the theme that her husband had been one of the worst presidents in U.S. history.

“I want to write about how Kennedy used his old man’s bootleg millions and his Mafia links to gain power,” Buckley told an astonished Jackie. “I’ll write about his charm—your charm, too—but reveal how both of you used it like a weapon.”

“I will charge that Kennedy followed only his own moral code, which is actually immoral. He virtually did what he wanted. He was completely reckless, a womanizer from hell. You know that better than anyone. I also want to reveal how he lied to the American people about his health. I plan to suggest that Kennedy’s very recklessness had gotten out of control, and that he was on the dawn of being publicly disgraced, which would have cost him the presidency in 1964.”

“I plan to suggest that he, with your help, masked personal weaknesses which cast a dark shadow over the House of Camelot.”

“He seduced the public and used you as a kind of star magnet to avert attention from his private life.”

“I am sorry to do this to you, Mrs. Kennedy, but I am far more interested in history getting it right than in offending one lady, who I understand has had her own detours down the primrose path.”

Having listened to him with jaw-dropping astonishment, Jackie withdrew. In a quiet rage, she said, “Please, Mr. Buckley, try not to appear in the same city with me. Your stench is overpowering, worse than the poison gas used on Allied soldiers in the trench warfare of World War I.” Then she turned and walked away, leaving the party.

Sorensen later reported to former White House aides and Kennedy loyalists, “Never in my life had I ever heard Jackie take such a forceful stand against anyone. But it was understandable. Here was this obnoxious right-winger notonly insulting her to her face at a party, but threatening to explode the so-called Myth of Camelot, which she’d worked so hard to create. He was threatening to reveal all the dark secrets of the Kennedy administration, which she had strived to keep from the public. I had never seen her so enraged.”

Vidal, a spokesman from the American left, and Buckley, the darling of the far right, had long been ideological enemies. Buckley even suggested that Vidal was not really an American. “He lives as an expatriate far from these shores, and once applied for citizenship in Switzerland, which would have required a revocation of his American passport.”

Executives at ABC decided that they would make “good television” their priority during their coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, an event that ultimately nominated Hubert Humphrey as the Democratic candidate for U.S. president, a man who had previously functioned as Lyndon Johnson’s vice president.

[During the 1968 presidential elections, Humphrey would eventually lose to Richard Nixon.]

In utter astonishment, Jackie watched the convention and the TV commentaries it catalyzed, including the joint appearance of Vidal with Buckley. She was motivated not just with Buckley’s vow to tarnish her late husband’s

reputation, but Vidal's increasingly cynical viewpoint about the Kennedy "Dynasty" as well. He'd become rather hostile about issues associated with Camelot, and had written devastating critiques of Bobby too.

In spite of that, Jackie was willing to root for him. As she told Sorensen, "In spite of some past difficulties I've had with Gore, he's still on our side. At this convention, he's become the holder of the flame against this horrible man, Buckley. I have never wanted to slap someone's face as much as I wanted to slap his at that party. How dare he talk to me that way? I hope Gore makes mince pie out of this man who opposed everything Jack ever did."

She was watching a televised broadcast of the Convention on the evening of Wednesday, August 28 at 9:30 EST, and would never forget what she saw.

ABC anchorman Howard K. Smith, who was stuck in the middle as a moderator, would never forget it either, even though his anchor desk was in another room, separate from the two commentators.

Gore and Buckley were not strangers to each other, having debated twice before—first in September of 1962 and again in July of 1964, with TV host David Susskind functioning as moderator in both of those instances.

What was happening outside the convention hall was more intriguing than the speeches being made inside. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, later denounced as "a Gestapo leader," had mobilized a massive police force to control violent protests against the Vietnam War. Most of that war had unfolded during Lyndon Johnson's administration, but it had been launched—although on a much smaller scale—by JFK, or so his critics claimed.

On the streets of Chicago, the battle between the police and the mostly young protesters, as described by one reporter, "involved gross police brutality as Mayor Daley's cops beat the shit out of the yippies and hippies assembled to witness the Democratic Party's coronation of miserable old Humphrey."

TV cameras focused on young, presumably American-born men waving the Viet Cong's flag.

That night, some ten million Americans, along with Jackie, had tuned in to ABC to watch the Vidal/Buckley debates, sandwiched into the barely controlled chaos unfolding both inside and outside the Convention Hall.

Vidal defended the protesters. He even claimed that the waving of the Viet Cong flag fell under the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of Free Speech.

The Chicago riots of August of 1968 may have cost the Democratic Party the presidential elections. Using their batons like clubs, the Chicago police, under **Mayor Richard Daley** *(upper photo)*, were violently beating Vietnam protesters, their actions projected on hourly newscasts into the horrified consciousness of viewers everywhere

For Buckley, the revolt of the left-wingers represented heinous anarchy. Vidal interpreted it differently, alleging that "The police state and

the American empire were murdering free speech." Both men were, in the words of one writer, becoming "angry, defensive, and aggressive," their moods within the Chicago TV studio reflecting opposing sides in the pitched battles outside on the streets.

As early as 1962, Buckley had been referring to Vidal, in public, as "a pinko queer." He threatened that if Vidal wanted to sue him, "I shall fight by the laws of the Marquess of Queensberry."

In contrast, Buckley, "was hissing like a cobra," *[Vidal's words]* during the attacks he was spewing on the young people rioting in Grant Park. He accused them of "begging the Viet Cong to kill American marines."

Before that infamous television broadcast, Jackie had watched Vidal and Buckley engage in mutual bickering. One Chicago newsman defined it as "hysterical combat."

As their altercation intensified, Buckley defined the protesters as "pro-Nazi."

In immediate response, Vidal charged, "As far as I am concerned, the only sort of pro-crypto Nazi I can think of is yourself."

Buckley exploded in anger. A notorious homophobe, he shot back. "Now listen, you queer! Stop calling me a crypto-Nazi or I'll sock you in your goddamn face and you'll stay plastered!"

TV audiences across the country were stunned. So was Jackie.

She had been watching the debates with her friends Ben and Toni Bradlee. Of all members of the Washington press corps, Bradlee at *The Washington Post* had been the closest to her husband. However, in 1975, after he published his book, *Conversations with Kennedy*, Jackie dropped him from her list of friends.

"Jackie jumped up and glared at the TV set as if she could not believe what had transpired," Bradlee later said.

Howard Smith, the debate's anchorman later said, "Mr. Cool *[a reference to Buckley]* lost it that night. The ice cube turned into a ball of fire. Perhaps this was the first time in his life that Buckley threatened physical violence against those who didn't agree with his position."

Bemused and jovial, **Ben Bradlee** *(above)* and his wife, Toni, had long been friends to both Jack and Jackie. Often, they went out as a foursome.

Ben's friendship with Jackie continued during the post-assassination era—that is, until 1975, when, in Jackie's eyes, he committed an unpardonable sin. He wrote a book about his conversations with JFK.

"I would expect physical violence from Norman Mailer, not from Buckley," Vidal later said. "I must have really crawled under his skin. Perhaps I labeled him correctly after all. He's a representative of the lunatic right, where Goebbels would have felt at home."

"Actually, he was the first to use the word 'Nazi,'" Vidal later said. "My repeating it was a slip of the tongue. I had meant to say 'fascist' instead."

Buckley later said he should not have used the word "queer." But he couldn't resist a dig, "Gore Vidal, however, is the Evangelist for bisexuality."

Ben Bradlee later reported that watching the Vidal/Buckley broadcast had "ravaged" her *[Jackie's]* mind. She ordered a strong drink from her maid—and later, a lot more. She feared the fallout from that broadcast had only begun—and she was right!"

"Buckley is a Homophobe, Anti-Black, Anti-Semitic Warmonger"

—Gore Vidal

As the new year of 1969 dawned, Vidal seemed willing to put the notorious Chicago TV incident behind him.

Buckley, however, was not. Still fuming, he called Harold Hayes, a high-placed editor at *Esquire*, for permission to submit an article attacking Vidal. He wanted it to appear in the magazine's August issue. But he had one condition: "Will I be allowed to charge Vidal with homosexuality?"

Hayes thought Esquire's lawyers might agree to that. "Permission granted, unless I call you and tell you otherwise."

That afternoon, in his role as a provocative editor with a scandal to publicize, Hayes reached Vidal at his home in Ravello along the Amalfi coast in Italy. He told him about Buckley's plans and offered him space in *Esquire* for a rebuttal, with the understanding that he'd be able to evaluate and/or attack Buckley in an articles that would run in the magazine's September issue."

Vidal agreed, but protested. "Why are you giving space to this dimwit? He's mad. He exists in the mind of the public only because of his attacks on me."

More and more of Jackie's former friends and confidants were, in her words, "betraying me." She was horrified when someone brought her the March, 1963, issue of *Esquire* in which Vidal attacked **Bobby Kennedy** as unfit to ever become President.

Hayes personally liked Buckley but hated his politics: Hayes didn't particularly like Vidal, but endorsed many of his political views. The editor saw the obvious: Mutually aggressive articles by Vidal and Buckley, each attacking the other, would be good for circulation.

After Vidal's attack on Bobby Kennedy, circulation had soared. The cover of *Esquire*'s issue that contained it featured a replica of Bobby sitting in President Kennedy's White House rocking chair. The headline read—WHEN BOBBY TAKES OVER.

Jackie interpreted Vidal's article as a "revenge piece," compiled in retaliation for Bobby kicking Gore out of the White House in 1961. In it, Vidal had labeled the Attorney General as a McCarthy clone—"a graceless, illiberal, and puritanical politician, unqualified by temperament or judgment to be President."

Bobby and Jackie were furious at Vidal.

When she heard of Buckley's upcoming attack on Vidal in the same issue, Sorensen said that Jackie was almost forced to take Vidal's side and forget about his attack on Bobby. She told Sorensen, "Gore is just the advance soldier in the field that Buckley wants to slay. As you know, his ultimate aim is to ridicule and mock Jack's accomplishments in the White House."

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According to the lawyers at *Esquire*, the first draft of Buckley's article on Vidal was libelous. Even if it were cut and rigorously edited, publishing it would still represent a bit of a risk for the magazine, they said.

Fred Kaplan, Vidal's biographer, wrote: "Buckley's article seemed not only inaccurate, in fact, but whiningly self-serving and viciously homophobic. It was a theocracy of sorts, a justification not of God but of Buckley, an egomaniacal self-projection so vast that it seemed Satanic, the devil in the guise of an infinite self-righteous rectitude."

As stated by Buckley, Vidal was a "money-grabbing pornographer—Myra Breckinridge is pure pornography—whose immorality was purposeful, self-conscious, and serving—and that is a sin. He is also a sexual deviant, and that is an illness. Unlike most sick people, Vidal does not want to be cured."

Before publication, Hayes sent Vidal a copy of Buckley's article, tacitly seeking his permission to publish it. He feared Vidal might sue.

As evidence of their sense of editorial "fair play," *Esquire* planned to provide Vidal with a chance to respond to Buckley's attacks within its subsequent issue. By now, however, Buckley was demanding that only his attack on Vidal be run, and that *Esquire* refrain from publishing Vidal's rejoinder.

When *Esquire*'s August issue appeared on newsstands nationwide, it managed to enrage not only Vidal, but also millions of homosexuals and their sympathizers, Jackie among them.

In his article, Buckley labeled Vidal as an apologist for homosexuality. "The man in his essays proclaims the normalcy of his affliction—that is, homosexuality—and in his art, the desirability of it. Vidal is not the man who bears his sorrow quietly. The addict is to be pitied, and even respected, not the pusher."

In his own defense, Vidal composed and submitted his response, as requested by Hayes, for *Esquire's* September issue. He cited damaging evidence that Buckley was not only a "homophobe, but anti-black, anti-Semitic, and a warmonger."

He also came up with some damaging evidence, claiming that in 1944, Buckley, along with "unnamed siblings," vandalized a Protestant church in their hometown of Sharron, Connecticut, after its pastor's wife sold a house to a Jewish family.

Surprisingly, the actress/entertainer, Jayne Meadows, who was privy to some of the more sordid details associated with the Buckley family, provided "a lot of juice to Gore," although she requested that her name not be cited.

[Jayne Meadows (born 1920) was the wife and business partner of talk show host/comedian Steve Allen, and the sister of Audrey Meadows, famous for her character of Alice Kramden in The Honeymooners.*]*

Actress **Jayne Meadows**, of all people, came to the aid of Gore Vidal by supplying "incriminating evidence" against the Buckleys.

Some of Vidal's material had to be excised by *Esquire*, particularly the charges that Buckley was a closeted homosexual himself. Vidal did accuse him of having "faggot logic," even suggesting that "where there is smoke, there is a fire."

He claimed that many TV viewers had cited Buckley's "effeminate manners and speech, behavior that made him sound queenlike."

Jackie, too, had heard rumors about Buckley, particularly when she dated one of his classmates from Yale. Her beau at the time told her that Buckley had been known on campus as a homosexual.

Maneuvering behind the scenes, Jackie asked Onassis to intervene. Onassis' lawyer, Roy Cohn, a homosexual himself, was one of J. Edgar Hoover's closest friends. She knew that Hoover, who had files on everyone, would obviously have investigated Buckley.

Onassis agreed to ask Cohn to find out "the dirt" in Buckley's file, and the ever-diligent Cohn did just that, reporting his findings the following week.

In February of 1964, *Town and Country* published a cover story on **Aristotle Onassis**. There was a certain irony in the headline: WHAT ONASSIS WANTS ONASSIS GETS. At the time, the editors didn't know that Ari wanted Jackie.

The most damaging evidence about Buckley's homosexuality came from a former classmate *[name withheld]* at Yale. At the time the file was made available to Jackie, the Yale man was a successful stockbroker in New York with a wife and three children.

He had told the FBI that to stay on the football team, he had to maintain a certain grade average, and that whereas he had been a poor student, Buckley was considered a scholar and an intellectual.

"I needed help, and I couldn't afford to pay for extra tutoring," the former Yale man said. "I caught Buckley checking me out in the shower room. He seemed fascinated by my cock. I figured out what to do. In exchange for his private tutoring, I would let him perform fellatio on me—nothing else. When I presented the offer to him, he willingly agreed. Our special relationship went on for the rest of the semester. I graduated from Yale, and Buckley took care of me, because I was perpetually horny."

In February of 1968, *Esquire* devoted a cover issue to the notorious homosexual lawyer, **Roy Cohn**, who often handled legal matters for Aristotle Onassis.

In a murky payback, Jackie asked Ari to pay Cohn for blackmail evidence that Cohn's closest friend, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, had accumulated on William Buckley, Jr.

Secretly, Jackie had the file copied. A member of Onassis' staff had it delivered anonymously to Gore's residence to use in any way he saw fit.

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Buckley did not remain idle while Vidal was digging up a homosexual scandal from his past. He, too, had a detective agency investigating his adversary.

It was learned that Vidal, throughout his life, had often had sex with underage hustlers. Buckley had eyewitness accounts from some of the teenage boys Vidal had picked up on Santa Monica Boulevard who claimed that at the time of their encounters with him, they were under sixteen, maybe in one instance a well-developed thirteen.

Like Michael Jackson in a TV special, Vidal admitted in his memoirs, *Palimpsest*, that he was "attracted to adolescent males—like most men."

The agency discovered that Vidal had taken several "Golden Cock Tours" to Thailand as they were labeled.

These tours were often booked by pedophiles, the majority of the participants coming from German cities, especially Berlin. But the detectives had no way of gathering information about Vidal from Bangkok.

Vidal repeatedly denied that he was a member of NAMBLA, the North American Man/Boy Love Association. He did, or so it was once reported, endorse NAMBLA's goal of legalizing "intergenerational sex." Privately, Vidal, a sexual sophisticate, said, "Sometimes, it takes a nubile twelve-year-old boy to get a rise out of an 84-year-old man."

Vidal did make an appearance at a NAMBLA fund-raising in 1978, although he claimed it was to take a stand against Salem-like witch hunts aimed at persecuting gay people. Viewed harshly, his presence was later criticized. He was falsely charged with favoring the rape of young boys, which he had never endorsed.

From afar, Jackie observed how Buckley vs. Vidal lawsuits, threats of exposure, and counter-suits were mushrooming everywhere. Her ultimate conclusion, as told to Sorensen, was that Vidal and Buckley "found so much homosexual scandal about each other that they had to declare a Mexican stand-off before seriously damaging each of their reputations."

"I knew enough, though, to keep my son John away from both of them," Jackie said.

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After Vidal delivered the draft of his article to *Esquire*, Buckley, in advance of its publication, announced his lawsuit.

Pre-emptively, and not without touches of paranoia and personal vanity, Buckley sent the following telegrams to twenty American magazine publishers:

"Last August, I was defamed on network television by Mr. Gore Vidal. Mr. Vidal has not retracted his libel or apologized to me. On the contrary, he has sought to give renewed currency to that libel and to launch others, to which end he submitted a manuscript to Esquire which Esquire declined to publish because it was defamatory and untrue. Mr. Vidal's activities have left me with no other recourse than a lawsuit, and accordingly, I have filed suit against Mr. Vidal for $500,000 in damage."

By sending these telegrams, Buckley hoped to prevent *Esquire* from publishing Vidal's rejoinder in their September issue.

This began a legal waltz between Vidal and Buckley—with the horrified involvement of *Esquire*— that would drag on for three years. Jackie had closely watched developments before and after the publication of both articles. Aware of the legal heat generated by the affair, Hayes demanded that only facts that could be reasonably proved be allowed in his magazine, or else free speech about political stances which seemed libel-proof. Even after their cuts and edits, both articles still seemed explosive.

Endless meetings with lawyers and precautions preceded publication, but finally each of the two articles was printed. Buckley as promised sued in the United States District Court, although at this point, he'd upped his claim for damages to $1 million.

Buckley told the press, "I have been defamed. Vidal has accused me of being a Nazi, a homosexual, a war lover, and an anti-Semite."

Buckley's attorney requested the court for a summary judgment, at which time the judge dismissed Vidal's countersuit, virtually labeling it as a "nuisance suit."

Buckley's suit never made it to court. *Esquire* admitted no culpability, but it did agree to pay Buckley's legal fees up to $115,000. However, Vidal was left dangling to pay his own lawyers, with no comparable offer of reimbursement from *Esquire*.

In the immediate aftermath, Buckley summoned a press conference in which he lied, falsely claiming that he had won the case against both *Esquire* and Vidal. He said *Esquire* had "disavowed Vidal's charges against me and in its November issue would publish a retraction."

No such agreement had been reached, and no such retraction ever appeared.

"Let Vidal pay his own unreimbursed legal expenses, which will teach him to observe the laws of libel," Buckley crowed.

Throughout the rest of his life, Buckley would maintain the fiction, at parties and to his friends, that the court had interpreted Vidal's article as defamatory and that *Esquire* "had to pay up" for having published it.

Privately, Vidal said, "The closeted old queen is just deluding herself until the end. She lives in a fairyland peopled by the lunatic fringe and at night, dances with vampires in KKK drag."

It is not known, but Onassis, through Cohn, might have blackmailed Buckley into abandoning his plans for a book that would have exposed Jackie, JFK, and the myth of Camelot. Jackie personally did not want to "leave my fingerprints on any of this maneuvering. Let Cohn do his job. Let's face it: Ari pays him enough!"

"Let Us Speak Ill of the Dead"

—Gore Vidal

The feud and charges of libel continued into the 21st Century. Buckley died in 2008, Vidal outliving him, dying in 2012.

However, in 2003, *Esquire* republished Vidal's attack on Buckley, in a book entitled *Esquire's Big Book of Great Writing*. Apparently, the editor of the anthology was not familiar with the long-ago lawsuit, much to the horror of *Esquire's* administration.

Buckley once again filed suit for libel, and *Esquire* agreed to settle for $55,000 in attorney fees and $10,000 in personal damages to Buckley.

When documents associated with the Vidal/Buckley debate became available on the internet, viewers weighed in with strong opinions. "Sarah Heart-burn" claiming, "I will make my hands bleed applauding for Vidal." She attacked Buckley's suggestion that "HIV-sufferers be tattooed—on the ass.' How the holy fuck can the man be touted in the press as an erudite, wise, political spokesman?"

Upon hearing of Buckley's death, Vidal said, "Although one is not supposed to speak ill of the dead, Buckley was often drunk and out of control. He was always a spontaneous liar on any subject that his dizzy brain might extrude."

He concluded that Buckley was a "most hysterical right-wing queen, much admired by the fascist press in America that merely published Buckley's own delusional evaluation of himself."

In 2008, in the wake of Buckley's death, Deborah Solomon of *The New York Times* asked Vidal, "How did you feel when you heard that Buckley had died?"

"I thought hell is bound to be a livelier place with him in it," he said. "Buckley joins forever those whom he served in life, applauding their prejudices and fanning their hatred."

As for Jackie, she went to her grave in 1994 detesting Buckley. Whenever he appeared on TV, she switched channels.

In October of 1972, **Jackie** threw a surprise party at Manhattan's El Morocco, celebrating the fourth anniversary of her marriage to Aristotle Onassis—not that that marriage had anything to celebrate. Her guest list included Doris Duke, Rose Kennedy, Oleg Cassini, and such New Frontiersmen warriors of yesterday as Pierre Salinger.

Surprise of surprise, she invited William Buckley, Jr. He was shocked, knowing how much she despised him, but he attended anyway. He wished he hadn't.

Years before, he had infuriated her at a party, when he had cheerfully informed her that he was about the expose the myth of Camelot in a book. She waited for almost a decade before confronting him privately at her El Morocco party to inform him of the incriminating data that the Kennedys had amassed on him. "Back off!" she threatened him, "or we'll destroy you."

He got the message.

Chapter Twenty-Four

John-John & The Material Girl

Plugging Madonna

The Kennedys Confront "Rudi in the Nudi" Jackie and Lee Vie for the Reincarnation of Nijinski

At first, Jackie was hesitant to introduce **Bobby Kennedy** *(left)* to her new friend, **Rudolf Nureyev** *(right)*. But once the two met, she was shocked at how intimately the ballet dancer and the Attorney General bonded.

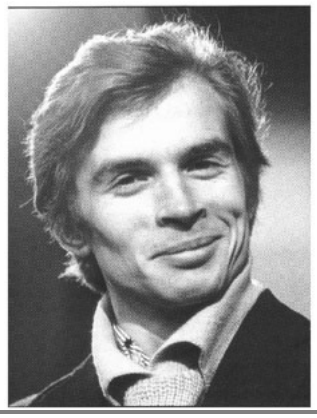
RFK's biographer, C. David Heymann, put it this way: "The sexual revolution of the 1960s had little to teach the Kennedy men, who had been enjoying the benefits of free love for decades. But in the try-anything spirit of the time, Bobby may have indulged in an experiment that, even for his lusty family, broke new ground."

Heymann was referring to the secret affair between Bobby and Rudi.

Bundled up not for Siberia, but for the English countryside, **Jackie Kennedy** and **Rudolf Nureyev** were the house guests of Lee Radziwill at her country home.

The Russian ballet dancer, Rudolf Nureyev, captivated not only the hearts of balletomanes around the world, but lured Jackie Kennedy, her sister, Lee Radziwill, and even Bobby Kennedy and John F. Kennedy Jr. into his web of intrigue.

"When it came to seducing, it was hard to say no to Rudi," said ballerina Margot Fonteyn, who became his frequent partner. "He usually got what he wanted, man or woman. Even otherwise straight men, or at least some of them, couldn't resist that bundle of Tatar charm. Rudi never kept his affairs with the Kennedys a secret, and often relayed boastful tales about his conquests."



Rudolf Nureyev appears above with a smirk.

He had a right to be conceited. He changed the expectations of the ballet world forever. As a dancer who was showcased on every continent except Antarctica, he captivated the media..

The love of his life was Erik Bruhn, the Danish-born *danseur noble*. "A totally reciprocal deep passion existed between the two men," claimed Rudi's biographer, Julie Kavanaugh. Rudi was never faithful to Bruhn, however.

One night at Maxim's in Paris, he told Bruhn: "I was just in New York. I fuck Jackie Kennedy. Now I take you back to hotel and fuck you—all night!"

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Rudolf Nureyev was the greatest male ballet dancer of his generation. Along with Nijinski, he was one of the most spectacular ballet dancers of all time.

Nureyev *(left)* and the Danish ballet dancer, **Erik Bruhn,** were involved in an enduring love affair in spite of their complicated schedules and occasional jealousies. From the moment Rudolf first met Bruhn, he said, "I had to possess him. I had to move inside his body and take over his soul. I had to work it so that he would become obsessed with me. And he did."

He had a stunning Slavic physical beauty, an extraordinarily athletic and sexual persona, a prodigious endowment that he liked to exhibit, and oodles of Russian charm.

As a stellar member of the *glitterati*, he attracted the attention of international café society—specifically Lee

Radziwill, Jackie Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, and John F. Kennedy Jr. In time, he would seduce all four of them.

In 1961, during the darkest days of the Cold War, Rudi was touring Western Europe with the Kirov Ballet Troupe. At Paris's Le Bourget airport, he had been scheduled to board a flight for London. But shortly before takeoff, KGB officials ordered him to board the next plane to Moscow because his mother was dying.

"I don't care what the magazines say. I am the sexiest man alive. Just ask Lee Radziwill. Just ask Jackie Kennedy. And if you still don't believe me, ask Bobby and John-John. Nobody in the world can resist me. Everyone who has ever gone to bed with me has fallen madly in love with me." —Rudolf Nureyev

Sensing a trap, the 23-year-old dancer fled into the arms of two French policemen. "Save me! I want to stay."

Later he told friends that he was carrying a pair of scissors with him. "Had anything gone wrong," he said, "I was prepared to plunge the scissors into my heart."

Rudi knew that if he returned to Moscow, he'd never dance again. The KGB had accumulated an extensive file on him, detailing his homosexual encounters.

He was "born wild" in 1938 on a train chugging beside Lake Baikaal in Siberia. In 1945, at the age of seven, he fell in love with the world of dance when he saw his first ballet. He would dance for the rest of his life.

His father nicknamed him "Ballerina." He despised his son and the world of ballet and frequently beat Rudi.

In spite of his father, Rudi stubbornly insisted on taking ballet lessons. He was an amazing pupil and by 1958, he'd evolved into a sensation within the Soviet dance world. His performances, so the critics claimed, were "erotically charged."

Two weeks after his defection, Rudi was performing at the Thêátre des Champs-Elysées in Paris, to shouts of "traitor" coming from Russians or their sympathizers.

After **Nureyev's** famous leap to freedom, with the KGB in hot pursuit, he was seen dancing with **Margot Fonteyn**, the most celebrated ballerina of the second half of the 20th Century. Late in her career, thanks partly to the dramatic flair of her younger partner, Fonteyn began what she defined as her career's "wonderful Indian summer."

Thanks to their shared execution of *Giselle*, a scene from which is depicted above, they became known as "the Dream Duo" to ballet fans worldwide.

A telephone call from the English ballet diva, Margot Fonteyn, changed his life. She was the aging *prima ballerina* of Britain's Royal Ballet. At a charity event, the offstage and onstage liaison of the 42-year-old ballerina and the young Russian exile began.

Prince and Princess Stanislas Radziwill saw Rudi perform in London's Covent Garden and were mesmerized by him. While he was trying to find some permanent residence, the Polish aristocrat, married at the time to Jackie's sister, Lee, invited the ballet dancer to stay with them at what was called "the two prettiest houses in England," their townhouse in London and their country home.

In either house, Lee led a privileged life. Her friend, the French actress/dancer Leslie Caron, claimed that Lee was "over-protected, a child-wife evocative of Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*."

At first, Rudi was suspicious of the Prince and Princess. He told Fonteyn that he thought he was being set up for

a “three-way.”

Rudolf Nureyev, the dancer who flew through the air with the greatest of ease. His *grands jetées* were better and higher than those of any other ballet dancer in memory.

Here, he demonstrates that power during a performance of *Don Quixote* with **Lucette Aldous** and the Australian Ballet.

“We also have those arrangements in Moscow,” he said. As it turned out, Rudi’s sexual suspicion was only half founded. Lee was powerfully attracted to him. He would be their guest for seven months, as “Rudi-mania” swept across London. Arguably, Rudi became the first pop icon of the 1960s.

Fonteyn and Rudi were the hottest cultural ticket in the West, creating a sensation in the United States when they performed there in 1960s. His first American review defined Rudi as “a cheetah behind bars.”

Truman Capote said, “Everybody, man or woman, wanted to fuck with Rudi, and most of them did, even the Kennedys. Whether he was dancing *Swan Lake* or *Romeo and Juliet*, all eyes were glued to Rudi’s ample crotch. I sampled it myself. All nine and a half inches of thick Slavic meat.”

Lee called Rudi “my eternal flame,” and photographers liked to capture them in intimate situations as they danced together. She was caught on film clinging suggestively to him.

Friends reported that Lee was deeply in love with Rudi and “continued her campaign to make him straight.” But as Capote warned her, “It was a hopeless undertaking. Once you’ve enjoyed the taste of cock, you can’t keep them down on the farm.”

Prince and Princess Stanislaw (“Stas”) Albrecht Radziwill enjoy balmy weather at the very posh Half Moon Resort in Montego Bay, Jamaica, during a holiday there in March of 1961.

Her brother-in-law, JFK, had only recently become President of the United States. Lee was beginning to enjoy worldwide attention as the sister of the more illustrious Jackie Kennedy.

A free-lance journalist, Diana DuBois, claimed: “Lee was put off by Rudi’s homosexuality. That was always a bone of contention. He would tell her that he wanted a ‘big cock,’ and she would react with disgust.”

In the early days, Lee was so taken with this ballet dancer that she purchased for him a Russian double-headed eagle of solid gold studded with diamonds and rubies.

Lee allegedly admitted to Capote (at least he claimed so) that she did have sex with Rudi one time. “It was the most athletic experience I’ve ever known in bed,” Capote quoted her as telling him.

Lee visited Rudi on the French Riviera where he'd rented a villa, "Arcadie," in La Turbie, high in the hills above Monte Carlo. In the guest bedroom, she came across pictures of men engaged in sex.

She came to realize that her sexual pursuit of the young dancer was a losing proposition. Yet their friendship survived, and would endure over the course of almost three decades. It began on a note of intense animal passion and developed into an enduring friendship.

When Rudi arrived in America and was introduced to Jackie, Lee found herself competing against her own sister for Rudi's affection. It would not be the first time the two sisters pursued the same man.

Although she was smart, talented, and charming in her own right, Lee often suffered unfavorable comparisons with her more formidable sibling. The press constantly compared them: Which of the sisters was better-looking? Which could more easily attract men? Which was the better-dressed?

With his special charm, Rudi was adept at "dividing myself into two parts"— shopping on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue with Jackie one week, dancing intimately with Lee in Monte Carlo the next. In time, he drew much closer to Lee. Jackie told some friends, "I envy Lee with Rudi. Perhaps I'm a little jealous. Of course, I would never dare admit that."

Lee was still in love with Rudi, and maybe the problem was that he was much more in love with Jackie than he was with Lee. He thought Jackie had the more alluring personality.

Capote claimed that Jackie fell in love with Rudi on the day she invited him and his dance partner, Margot Fonteyn, to the White House for tea.

Unlike her husband, "Rudi," as Jackie came to call him, admired her passion for the arts and even her choice of antiques. Sitting in the president's old North Carolina porch rocker in the Cabinet Room, he ordered his favorite drink, port with ginger ale, from a White House waiter.

Lee had warned Jackie that Rudi was "ninety-nine and a half percent homosexual," but Jackie wasn't so sure. Rudi was flirting outrageously with her, and she was a notorious flirt herself.

When the room emptied, he impulsively rose from the rocker, grabbed her, and passionately kissed her. "Unlike your beautiful husband, I do not have a bad back," he said. "A strong Russian back made for leaping through the air."

From that point on, according to Capote, Jackie was mesmerized.

After George Balanchine arranged for Rudi and Fonteyn to perform at a state dinner at the White House, journalist May Craig attacked Jackie in print, citing her "fawning devotion to the famous. She won't meet with student reporters, but she'll invite Greta Garbo to dinner."

Rudi complained to Jackie about some of his voracious female fans, including Marlene Dietrich, who called him, "The Boy."

At one time, she had four autographed pictures of Rudi wearing revealing tights in her bedroom. At first, he didn't know who she was, having seen none of her films. He told Jackie, "I thought she was an old show girl."

One night, Dietrich, after having dined with Rudi at Sean Connery's party at the Caprice in London, asked Rudi to drive her home. He whispered to James Bond, "If I'm not back in half an hour, come looking for me. I fear she's thinking about chaining me to her bed and making me her sex slave."

"Mother wants me to become President of the United States, but I'd rather be an actor," **John F. Kennedy, Jr.**, told Nureyev, who encouraged him.

Here, JFK's son is seen on March 14, 1980, during his first year at Brown University, playing Bonario, a soldier in *Volpone*, the 1606 play by Ben Jonson.

Over dinner one night with Jackie, Rudi told her, "I hate being pursued by aggressive women."

"Does that include me?" she asked.

"You Americans have a great response for that," he said. "Present company excepted. Then he sighed. "Instead of roses from Dietrich, I'd rather receive them from Baryshnikov. The first time I saw him in a pair of white tights, I wanted to devour him."

"I would love to get roses from Baryshnikov," she said. "Please don't try to convert him and destroy my hopes."

After her husband's death, Rudi, on many a night, "warmed the sheets" *[his words]* of the former First Lady's bed.

Capote claimed that Jackie "stole" Rudi from her sister, Lee, with whom the dancer was temporarily feuding. "She destroyed my baby," he charged to Jackie. "Had it cut in little pieces from her body. But with you, I will make nine beautiful children—five boys, four girls."

"I'm not a breeding factory," she warned him. "Better call Ethel for that."

"But I've already told my friends about the babies we're going to make."

"Don't you dare!" she shouted at him. "Stop this talk about our private relationship! It'll be fodder for the tabloids. Those friends of yours are malicious gossips!"

"But every part of your life has been in print already, although that is not good for the soul," he said.

Rudi not only admired Jackie for her beauty, but for her financial advice. "The first real money Rudi made was under Jackie's influence," said one of his associates. "She's the one who got him to buy gold just before gold shot up to the sky."

Jackie was hesitant to introduce Rudi to either her son or to Bobby Kennedy. At times Rudi could be flamboyantly homosexual. She feared Bobby might be put off by his exhibitionism. Even so, she arranged a dinner between Bobby and Rudi. "I've never seen two men bond in such a way," she told Lee when their relationship resumed. "Bobby seemed fascinated by Rudi." Jackie later admitted that she had no idea at first that Bobby and Rudi were seeing each other outside her home.

She became aware of that when the phone by her bedside rang one night. She was in bed with Rudi at the time. She picked up the phone. "Bobby," she said, her face lighting up.

A sudden look of distress crossed her brow. She muffled the phone. "He wants to speak to you. I must warn you, he's dangerously jealous of any man who gets near me. He must have had you trailed here."

Rudi eagerly took the phone from her. "Bobby, Bobby, you are the greatest American of them all. Fonteyn has taught me a new word for us—*peccadillo*."

As she made her way to the bathroom, she heard Rudi giggling into the phone like a young teenage girl with her first crush on the star football captain.

One of the first persons to spread rumors of Bobby's bisexuality was the notorious gay attorney, Roy Cohn. Both he and Bobby in the early 1950s had worked for Senator Joseph McCarthy during his notorious witch hunt, trying to round up suspected communists in government and in the movie business. Ironically, Cohn represented Aristotle Onassis later in life.

Cohn sent his boss some incriminating data about Bobby—Onassis' rival for Jackie's affection. In Cohn's dossier, he charged that RFK was a bisexual, indulging in homosexual relations with Nureyev. Enclosed were three photographs snapped at around three or four o'clock in the morning, showing Bobby leaving Nureyev's apartment after an assignation.

Cohn also told Onassis that Bobby had so many enemies that he suspected he would be shot if he ever ran for President of the United States, as he intended doing in 1968.

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Two weeks later, over cocktails with Capote, Jackie said, "I think Rudi systematically plans to seduce every member of my family, even my son when he grows up. Or before he grows up. He's already talking about teaching John ballet at an early age."

Bolstered and supported by Peter Lawford, Rudi urged John F. Kennedy, Jr. to become a Hollywood movie star. "You already look like one," Rudi told JFK's impressionable young son. "Why not be one?"

One night, Rudi persuaded JFK Jr. to wear a pair of his purple ballet tights. When he saw how JFK looked, Rudi said, "The way you wear those tights, you'd be a sensation, if you could only dance."

"Watch out for that Cossack," Capote warned Jackie. "Rudi has enough charm to seduce Richard Nixon. Forgive me for prying—how unlike me—but I must ask. Is it true what they say about Rudi in bed?"

"Afraid so," she said. "On stage, his movements are the most graceful of any man on earth. But in bed I have a nickname for him: Mr. Jack Rabbit."

There were many sightings of Bobby and Rudi together at New York City night spots, especially at Arthur's. At the time, the celebrity-haunted joint wasthe most exclusive disco in New York. It was operated by Sybil Burton, the Welsh actress who'd lost her husband, Richard Burton, to Elizabeth Taylor, that "Serpent of the Nile."

Janet Villeha, a *prima ballerina* with the New York City Ballet in the 1960s, spotted "an arrival" at the club one night. "I saw Bobby come in with both Jackie and Rudi. Later on, as I went to make a phone call, I saw Bobby and Rudi in a telephone booth. They were kissing passionately."

All of his lovers knew that Rudi was a devotee of "deep throat" kissing. As one of his boys put it, "He went for your tonsils."

In his famous memoir, *Palimpsest*, Gore Vidal wrote of a revelation Rudi made to him:

"Between Bobby's primitive religion and his family's ardent struggle ever upward from the Irish bog, he was more than usually skewed, not least by his own homosexual impulses, which, Nureyev once told me, were very much in the air. 'We did share young soldier once. American soldier. Boy not lie . . . maybe.' Rudi gave his famous grin, very much aware, firsthand, of the swirls of gossip that envelop the conspicuous. Yet anyone who has eleven children must be trying to prove-disprove? Something other than the ability to surpass his father as incontinent breeder."

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No one encouraged JFK Jr. to pursue a theatrical career more than Rudi. "John-John" shared his dreams with the Russian ballet dancer, who was falling in love with him.

A bit of a mama's boy, JFK Jr. told Rudi that Jackie was "dead set" against his going into the theater.

"Have some balls," Rudi said. "I know you've got a pair on you. We can't always do what mommy says."

Celebrity psychic John Cohan wrote a tell-all book in 2008, revealing relatively unknown secrets of the stars. No revelation was more shocking than the romantic link between John F. Kennedy, Jr. and Rudolf Nureyev.

As a psychic, Cohan warned JFK Jr. about his possible early death by advising him to avoid racecars, airplanes, and scuba diving.

John patted him on the back. "I'll start calling you my brother, an older brother, who worries a bit too much about me."

Once, when Cohan suffered from a sore shoulder, JFK Jr. offered to massage it. To JFK Jr., Cohan said, "I'm glad I'm straight, because this kind of feely stuff from an attractive, sexy man could certainly tempt the best of

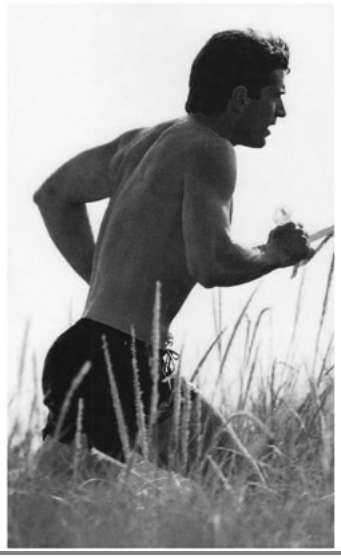
them."

JFK Jr. replied with a knowing smile. "I take the Fifth."

One night at New York's infamous Studio 54, Cohan encountered John F. Kennedy, Jr. in the company of family friend, Rudi, and New York's "hottest" male prostitute who advertised his services for $1,000 a night.

"This was a threesome I saw with my own eyes," Cohan wrote. "I think John wanted a new experience. He had confessed to me that he became bored with people and things quickly."

"He always talked about an acting career, which his mother adamantly refused to permit," Cohan said. "I used to caution him on many occasions—no race cars, no airplanes, and no scuba diving. I didn't feel good about these adrenaline rushes he got."



Perhaps no picture ever taken of America's prince, **John F. Kennedy, Jr.**, better demonstrates his athletic vigor than this shot taken in September of 1996 at Hyannis Port, two years after the death of his mother. In it, John Jr. is enjoying the dying days of summer in the Northeast.

At the club, Cohan also warned Rudi, "Leave John-John alone, because this scene isn't his first preference."

"I love the challenge of seducing a straight man," Rudi told Cohan.

"That night he did just that," Cohan said.

The male prostitute later tried to sell an *exposé* article about the experiences he'd shared with Rudi and John Jr. But there were no takers—the allegation at the time was too controversial.

In his unpublished *exposé*, the male hustler claimed, "John fucked me, really hard, but when I tried to return the favor, he told me that that part of him was 'off limits.' Rudi went down on John, too. John-John played it strictly 'rough trade,'...but what an evening."

JFK Jr.'s straight life, frat boy style, was best chronicled by his former roommate Robert T. Littell in 2005 in his memoir, *The Men We Became*. JFK Jr. and Littell first met as freshmen during orientation week at Brown University.

"Going out with John at night was like having a key to the city," Littell asserted. "Doormen bowed and velvet ropes fell when he stepped out of a cab. Sometimes, I felt as though I was with Moses at the parting of the Red Sea."

Littell claimed that their shared apartment was the venue for some strange sexual adventures. One night, one of their friends returned with a female flight attendant and took her to the spare bedroom. Later, Littell and JFK Jr. peeked in on their friend. The door was open a crack.

Inside, they saw their lusty friend rubbing the sheepskin collar of President Kennedy's official commander-in-chief leather jacket across the woman's bare breasts.

Her seducer was getting her excited by informing her that it was "The First Coat" actually worn many times by the assassinated president.

Other than Erik Bruhn, Rudi's most enduring relationship was with ballet dancer Robert Tracy. Meeting in 1979, and except for a separation of eight months, Rudi and Tracy were together until Rudi's death from AIDS at the age of 53 on January 6, 1993.

"When I met Rudi, he said I reminded him of Mars, the young god of vigor and war," Tracy said. "We were

never faithful to each other, our sexual link lasting two and a half years. Rudi always told me you have to get the sex thing out of the way before a true friendship can begin."

"There were always guys around who were younger, with better bodies than mine," Tracy claimed, "but our relationship endured. Let there be no doubt about it. I caught Rudi in his years of physical decline—he called it 'the downside of ecstasy.'"

Rudi and Tracy shared a ranch house in Virginia, where a whole room was devoted to an organ so that Rudi could play Bach. Tracy remembered that Jackie was a frequent visitor. "She loved to go horseback riding at our ranch. Rudi always served her caviar. That was the life in those days—helicopters flying in, private jets to London, Paris, or Rome."

"Jackie also visited at our apartment in the Dakota building, opposite Central Park in New York," Tracy said. "We lived in the apartment above Lauren Bacall. Since Jackie knew we were discreet, she arrived with her beau of the moment."

"I think Jackie was a true balletomane," Tracy said. "There were rumors about her and John Kriza. She often asked us many, many questions about Mikhail Baryshnikov. I think she had a crush on him."

When his doctors informed Rudi of his HIV-positive status, he reacted defiantly, indulging in "phallocentric" rhetoric. "I am Tatar. AIDS is not going to fuck me, I'm going to fuck AIDS."

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Although Rudi could have seduced some of the most famous men and women on the planet, and did on occasion, he much preferred anonymous encounters in public toilets, New York bathhouses, and other gay cruising venues.

In his dressing room, he often received celebrities in the nude. One night Arnold Schwarzenegger came backstage to congratulate him. Rudi sucked on the muscleman's index finger. "I want to know how you taste," he allegedly said. "I've seen pictures of you nude. I want you to put your cock in my mouth."

"You're the sixth person today who has requested that," Arnold reportedly said, retrieving his finger before it was devoured.

Monique Van Vooren, who wrote about Rudi in her 1981 book, *Night Sanctuary*, claimed he "was tortured, and tormented by his sexuality. He was ashamed of being homosexual. And I think he wanted to be degraded." In Diane Solway's *Nureyev: His Life* (1998), she wrote that he preferred "rough-trade, pickups, sailors, lorry drivers, and the like."

One night at one of Rudi's openings (the exact performance unknown), Jackie was in the audience and the stage manager urgently summoned her to come backstage to Rudi's dressing room.

There she found him completely nude. He told her that he was tired of his fans shouting, "*We want Rudi in the Nudi!*," and that he was going to dance his next performance completely naked.

Using the force of her personality, she urged him to put on some purple tights. After holding the curtain fifteen minutes, Rudi agreed to go on, but his tights were so thin they were almost see-through. Jackie later told friends, "His fans got to see him almost naked, but he was covered enough so that the policemen weren't called."

She later became miffed at Rudi. In her working capacity as an editor at Doubleday, she went to him in 1986 and asked him to write his memoirs.

He turned her down. "Jackie darling," he said, "you know I can't write story of life. Story of life must tell what happened . . . I mean, really happened, not pack of lies. It should not be a cover-up, no truth in it. My not writing book will protect you and Bobby. Even your son."

Jackie's face flashed anger. "And what about my son? What did you do to John?"

"Nothing, not so excited. I encouraged him to be an actor. That's all. Nothing else. I swear it!"

Her upset with Rudi didn't last long. He charmed his way back into her good graces.

She was greatly concerned in 1987 when Rudi announced he was returning to Russia to see his ailing mother. She asked Ted Kennedy as a Senator to write to the Soviet ambassador in Washington, requesting protection for Rudi.

Before leaving New York, Rudi telephoned Jackie: "If I'm not back in Paris in three days, sound the alarm."

"God speed," she wished for him.

For twelve years Rudi carried the AIDS virus. His final artistic statement involved the choreography of a production of *La Bayadère*, which opened in February of 1992 at the Palais Garnier in Paris. During the ten-minute ovation that followed, he needed help to walk across the stage. He is quoted as saying, "The main thing is dancing. Before it withers away from my body, I will keep dancing till the last moment, the last drop."

Rudi died on January 6, 1993 at the age of 54. He was buried at a Russian cemetery in Sainte-Geneviève-des-

Bois near Paris, a pilgrimage site even today for his still loyal fans.

Jackie did not make a pilgrimage to Rudi's tomb, but Lee did and wrote about it. She recalled attending his funeral with "all the attendants in black descending the imperial staircase of the Paris Opera *[Palais Garnier]* to surround the coffin. She compared his tomb to "that of a Turkish *kilim*, heavily draped, with thick gold tassels that rest on a black marble plinth."

"He introduced me to so much of what to this day gives me pleasure," Lee continued. "The music of Scriabin, the writings of Lermontov. His tomb is a memorable and theatrical vision befitting an exceptional dancer, an incredible person, and my closest friend."

What befits a legend most?
A State Funeral at the Palais Garnier in Paris.
Nureyev's death sent France into a period of national mourning.

Rudolf Nureyev, pre-defection, in rehearsal at the Kirov.

As flashbulbs snapped, **Nureyev** (“The Tatar Nomad”) was forever traveling across the continents of the world.

“I am am a Tatar, not Russian,” he said. “Traveling is in my blood. I was, in fact, born aboard a moving train in Siberia.”

Chapter Twenty-Five

Jackie, Grace, & The Bullfighter

Jackie Tangles With the Princess of Monaco

On May 4, 1961, when President John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline entertained Prince Rainier and Princess Grace at a White House luncheon, the two combatants pictured above (**Grace**, of course, is the one in the silly hat), were later forced to have a cup of tea together when **JFK** excused himself to talk to Prince Rainier. Jackie at this point had heard about Grace's affair with her husband.

When they were seated, according to a White House staff member, Jackie provocatively asked, "Of the Seven Graces, which one are you?"

"I try to have the qualities of all of them," Grace shot back.

Continuing her provocation, Jackie asked, "Jack and I heard that when Prince Rainier was shopping for a bride, he first considered Marilyn Monroe. At least that was the plan that Aristotle Onassis said he proposed to your prince."

"Yes, I know," Grace shot back. "He found the idea disgusting. We're not promoting Monaco as a destination for Las Vegas style whorehouses."

Jackie wanted the last word, "Oh, I forgot to tell you how much I adore your hat. Did Oleg Cassini design it for you?"

One afternoon, Grace Kelly told Cary Grant, her co-star in *To Catch a Thief,* "I fell in love with Jack Kennedy when I was a model in New York. I never got over it. He's the man I should have married."

In *Mogambo (1953)*, shot in Africa, **Clark Gable** was cast as the crusty hero, Vic Marswell, the same role he'd played in *Red Dust* (1932), with Jean Harlow. **Ava Gardner** *(left)* played the whorish Honey Bear, and **Grace Kelly** *(right)* the part of the more demure Linda Nordley.
Gable had long before seduced Ava when they'd filmed *The Hucksters* in 1947. Now, he found Grace willing to succumb to his aging charms too.

Their fathers, Joe Kennedy and Jack Kelly, were two rich Irishmen who decided that their children should meet. Soon, JFK was seen escorting Grace in and out of the Barbizon Hotel for Women in Manhattan. Their affair was in full bloom.

When the subject of a possible marriage came up, Joe nixed it for his son. His father had learned from Jack Kelly that Grace planned to be a Hollywood star.

"Have you ever heard of a President of the United States bringing an actress to the White House as his First Lady?" Joe asked.

All of her Hollywood beaux, including William Holden and Frank Sinatra, were but memories when **Grace Kelly** married **Prince Rainier** of Monaco in 1956.

[At that time, Ronald Reagan hadn't married the former B-actress, Nancy Davis.]

Although marriage was out of the question, JFK and Grace got together at certain intervals.

Until Grace married Prince Rainier of Monaco in April of 1956, Jackie had been only vaguely aware that the future princess and her husband had had an affair be fore her string of seductions from Marlon Brando, Ray Milland, Gary Cooper, Bing Crosby, William Holden, Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, James Stewart, Clark Gable, David Niven, Spencer Tracy, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Oleg Cassini, Prince Aly Khan, *et al*.

Gore Vidal was present when JFK was looking at photos and news reports of Grace's wedding in Monaco to Prince Rainier. "I think Jackie's real distaste for Grace began on that afternoon. After looking at pictures of her Royal Highness, Jack announced, right in front of Jackie, 'I could have married her myself.'"

Denouncing him, Jackie ran from the room in tears.

"Their marriage seemed to go on hold after that, at least temporarily," Vidal said. "For sexual favors, Jack turned elsewhere."

Even though aide David Powers had tried to cover it up, Jackie learned that her husband, right before Grace's marriage to Rainier, had spent the night in Washington's Mayflower Hotel with the future princess.

At Hyannis Port, Jackie had confronted him with what she'd learned. Right in front of some members of the Kennedy clan, she told him that she was leaving him.

"Then get the fuck out of here!" he shouted at her. "I should never have married you in the first place. I really

wanted to marry Grace Kelly. What a First Lady she would have made, not some Bouvier trash like you."

It took three weeks and constant apologies for Jackie to forgive him for that. She left Hyannis Port that night and headed for New York. Somehow, with the passage of time, she managed to turn her hatred of Jack for what he'd said into anger at Grace.

Jackie's loathing of Princess Grace spilled over into the White House after Jack was elected president in 1960. JFK asked Jackie to organize an official White House visit for Prince and Princess Rainier during the royal couple's visit to Washington.

Biographer Wendy Leigh quoted Letitia ("Tish") Baldrige, Jackie's social secretary, about what happened next. "Grace had a relationship with the President before his marriage to Jackie, and Jackie knew about it. That, in my opinion, is why Jackie changed the White House meal in their honor from a four-hour black-tie dinner dance to a small luncheon. A bit of jealousy perhaps. Jackie never said anything, but you could tell. She didn't really want to talk about the arrangements and was very offhand about how they were made. A luncheon meant that Princess Grace wouldn't look as gorgeous as she usually did at night."

The Look of Love: Grace Kelly was still enamored with **Jack Kennedy**, her former lover, when this picture was snapped the afternoon of their lunch at the White House. Even though he rarely saw Grace after he became president, JFK was always eager for gossip about her. Truman Capote had told him that Grace had had an abortion right before her marriage to Rainier.

Tish later revealed that Grace "looked dowdy—exactly like an Esther Williams Aquacade in a flowered rubber bathing cap." The President sat on one side of the oval-shaped table with Grace, whereas Jackie occupied the other side with Prince Rainier. Nervous about facing Jack again, and with a jealous Jackie hawk-eyeing her every move, she'd quickly downed two double Bloody Marys before arriving by limousine at the White House. "She was bombed," Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., another guest, claimed.

Roosevelt Jr. had already been privy to many of Jack's secret affairs before his marriage to Jackie, and had once gone out on a double date with Jack and Grace before she abandoned New York for Hollywood.

Tish remembered that Grace "behaved like a schoolgirl around Jack," perhaps recalling that if she'd made the right moves she'd now be First Lady of the ruling country of the Free World and not the princess of a small strip of land on the French Riviera. "She batted her eyelashes at Jack throughout the luncheon," Tish claimed.

She later told Roosevelt Jr. that Jack's rise in politics had been almost unbelievable, recalling that she'd warned him about how hard it would be for a Catholic to be elected. "But he was always such a handsome Irish boy, so full of life, so filled with charm, a real fighter just like his father."

Vidal had warned Jackie, "Don't let Grace be alone for one minute with Jack. In Hollywood, she always laid her leading men—she was notorious for that."

Grace and Jackie were often compared in the press, and both women were considered valuable assets to their husbands. President Kennedy claimed he was the man who accompanied Jackie to Paris, and Prince Rainier called Grace "the best ambassador I have."

Actually it was Grace who had charmed Charles de Gaulle years before Jackie won his heart. Jackie enchanted the French in 1961, Grace having done so in a French/Monegasque state visit two years before, in 1959.

In the days following the 1963 assassination of her former lover in Dallas, Grace came in for an attack when a photograph of her cheerfully holding an air rifle was published around the world. John Cummings, writing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, accused Grace "of being selfish and imbued with a heartless *insouciance* at the time of JFK's assassination. While her native land was in deep mourning for the slain President, Princess Grace was on an outing

in a Monaco park. A photograph shows her in a shooting gallery on that tragic weekend."

Always sensitive to criticism, and very thin-skinned, Grace shot back, claiming that the photograph was actually taken hours before the tragedy in Dallas.

She was right about that, of course, since Monaco is hours ahead of Dallas. The photo of Grace with the rifle was taken at least nine hours before JFK was assassinated.

As recompense for her trouble and embarrassment at the carnival shooting gallery, Princess Grace made off with a Kewpie doll.

Actually Prince Rainier and Princess Grace were preparing to attend the President's funeral. However, the day they were scheduled to depart, a confidential message came in. A French diplomat had heard Jackie quoted as saying, "I don't want that whoring bitch to show up at Jack's funeral." The Rainiers immediately cancelled their flight.

In spite of that rejection, Princess Grace, because of her love for Jack, flew to Washington about two weeks after the assassination, on December 3, 1963. She was spotted standing by the President's grave with tears streaming down her cheeks. Before leaving France, she'd purchased very special, unique toys for John Jr. and Caroline, each object meticulously crafted by French artisans.

When she telephoned the White House for permission to visit with Jackie, who was still in residence, the former First Lady refused to see her.

In contrast, Her Royal Highness found Bobby only too willing to entertain her. Like his brother, Bobby had also seduced Grace. It was the continuation of an affair that lasted on and off until the end of his life, but only during very rare occurrences when they could secretly come together. At one point, Grace was fantasizing that she might have a chance to become America's First Lady—"but only after Bobby was elected in 1968."

"Our joint divorces would screw his political future, and he'd be a one-time President unless we were so charismatic that the American public forgave us for deserting our spouses," Grace said. "By the time Bobby sought a second term, the public might adore us, even more than they did Jack and Jackie—strange things like that happen." She confided this to David Niven, her intimate friend and former lover.

Before Jackie married Ari in 1968, he'd told her that had she married him in 1966, "You and I would be the Prince and Princess of Monaco." He revealed that he'd owned fifty-two percent interest in Monte Carlo's Société des Bains de Mer, which controlled the casino, the Hotel de Paris, the Yacht Club, and about thirty-four percent of the principality itself. In a move to usurp Onassis' power and to thwart any takeover attempts, Prince Rainier had issued 600,000 shares of new non-transferable shares in the name of the principality.

Dressed for the part, **Jackie**, an expert horsewoman, awed the people of Seville at the April *Feria*, especially when she downed a glass of sherry from nearby Jerez de la Frontera.

"To visit Seville and not ride horseback is equal to not coming at all," she said. Then she mounted a white stallion and made a leisurely *paseo* of the gaily decorated fair grounds, to the delight of 259 paparazzi.

That effectively reduced Ari's ownership to less than a third. "Beaten and defeated by the prissy Grimaldi faggot, I was forced to sell out, and I departed from Monaco."

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One of the most highly publicized trips that Jackie ever took was when the Duke and Duchess of Alba, along with Angier Biddle Duke, America's new ambassador to Spain, invited Jackie to Spain in 1966. After a night in

Madrid, she flew to Seville where the Duke and Duchess installed her in the Palacio de Las Dueñas.

Also present was Princess Grace of Monaco. The stage was set for a catfight.

In the early 1960s, the most written-about women in the world included Jackie and Grace, who shared honors with Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot, Elizabeth Taylor, Princess Margaret, and, of course, Queen Elizabeth II.

From the very beginning of *Feria de Abril*, the Spring Fair in Seville, held in April of 1966, the press viewed the reunion of Princess Grace and Jackie as a "duel." Their clothing was the first to be communally scrutinized.

When **El Cordobés**, Spain's leading matador, spotted Jackie in the stands, he was mesmerized by her, dedicating his bullfight to her, and ignoring Grace Kelly.

He also told her that if the scars on his body were laid end to end, "they would stretch three times around my waist."

Jackie, who had a reputation for being flirtatious, was overheard telling him, "I prefer to do my own inspection instead of taking your word for it."

Grace opened the festivities clad in a ruffled, pink lace, Andalusian dress presented to her by local flamenco dancers. In contrast, the president's widow was dark and svelte in a black-and-white Andalusian riding costume.

Jackie "completely stole Princess Grace's thunder," wrote a journalist "when America's former First Lady agreed to ride a horse in the *Feria*."

Looking spectacular, Jackie had dressed for the occasion in the traditional *traje corio*, a black trimmed red jacket, a black flat-brimmed hat, and flowing chaps. On the back of a white stallion, she looked spectacular.

Perhaps Grace never got to read a review in a Seville paper of Jackie's appearance. "America's former First Lady revealed to all the world that she should not only have been made a princess like Prince Rainier's wife, but Jacqueline should be anointed Queen of the World." Grace's name wasn't even mentioned, except for the reference to her as "wife."

As part of the festivities, Princess Grace and Jackie encountered each other at Seville's splendid bullring. At that time, the celebrated, handsome, and well-built *El Cordobés* (actually Manuel Benítez Pérez) was the leading matador of Spain.

The paparazzi stumbled over each other to photograph him in his "suit of lights," paying particular attention to the bulging crotch in his matador suit. There was even speculation that he padded himself, although his "dressers" throughout Spain claimed his endowment was real.

Bypassing Grace—actually, ignoring her completely—*El Cordobés* passed his matador hat to Jackie, who placed a Kennedy half-dollar into it before returning it. He then dedicated "the first bull" to Jackie.

Adding insult to injury, two other famous matadors were fighting bulls that day, Paco Camino and *El Viti*. Both of these bullfighters also bypassed Grace and extended their hats to Jackie for a Kennedy half-dollar. Each of them also dedicated their first bull to Jackie.

In front of Jackie, *El Cordobés* performed his most dangerous stunt, as she watched in horror. He broke his *banderillas* down to the size of a pencil, then stood with his back to the bull as it rampaged toward him. A moment before impact, he deftly moved his right leg out of the way of the bull's path. As the bull swerved, he thrust in the *banderillas* at a crippling point just behind its left horn. The audience went wild.

The crossdressing, transgendered son of Ernest Hemingway, Gregory, was so impressed with the "package," on ample display, above, of bullfighter **El Cordobés**, that he made a special journey to Spain to see him dressed in his suit of lights. Here, the bullfighter displays his trophies, including a bull's severed ear and tail, to Jackie, who was sitting ringside in Seville.

Social critic, Cleveland Amory, had long been a critic of Jackie's. As a spokesperson for the Humane Society of America, he had criticized her in print for being a devotee of fox-hunting. He was horrified when he saw pictures of her at the bullfight. He wrote: "It is a sad and singularly ironic footnote to our modern age of violence that Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, of all people, who has seen the barbarism of the present era at such tragic firsthand, should now see fit to condone and even compliment one of the last relics of the barbarism of the past era."

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A "scoop artist" for a Madrid newspaper was in Seville just to record juicy tidbits about Jackie. When the results of his investigation appeared, it caused a sensation. He claimed that *El Cordobés* was seen entering the palace of the Duke and Duchess of Alba where Jackie awaited him. Ostensibly it was for drinks and dinner.

The reporter said he waited outside the palace until three o'clock that morning when *El Cordobés* was seen leaving the palace and getting into a limousine. In print, he claimed, "It is all but certain that *El Cordobés* and the widow of President John F. Kennedy had an affair that night. In seducing her matador, Mrs. Kennedy was blazing a trail originally taken by the movie star, Ava Gardner, who had a particular fascination for Spanish bullfighters, especially Luís Miguel Dominguin. What is it with this fascination celebrated American women have for Spanish bullfighters? I think it has something to do with the bull."

Jackie allegedly found Manuel Benítez Pérez, commonly known as *El Cordobés* (The Cordoban), fascinating, though he was barely literate.

She met him during his heyday in the 1960s when he was the most famous matador of Spain, renowned for his unorthodox, acrobatic, and theatrical style in the ring.

She felt his story would not only make a great book, but an intriguing movie.

In Spain, he became a symbol of hope for poor boys around the country. He had risen fast within the celebrity circuit of Spain, driving a Rolls-Royce, flying his own airplane, and dating stunning women. Orphaned during the wrenching agonies of Spain's Civil War, young Manuel stole chickens to bring home for his mother to put into the pot, and worked as a ditchdigger, a pickpocket, a bricklayer, and a field worker as a means of earning a few pesetas.

Reportedly, *El Cordobés* showed Jackie his wounds as "badges of courage." Only two years before meeting her, he had experienced a near-fatal goring at the Plaza de Toros in Madrid on the horns of an enraged, half blind bull named "Impulsivo."

Because of his ability to draw so many fans, the press dubbed him "The Beatle of the Bullring." Receiving $50,000 per fight, he was one of the highest paid entertainers in the world.

When he met Jackie, he was known for having seduced some of the most celebrated women in the world. As Gregory Hemingway, son of *Ernesto*, said, "If these women weren't attracted to his bullfighting skills, they were to that package he encased in his tight-fitting suit of lights."

El Cordobés was heavily criticized for partying with Francisco Franco, Spain's brutal dictator. Franco liked to

go hunting with him.

Jackie commented on the young man's theatricality in the ring. "He was a great showman, exhibiting a kind of razzle-dazzle. He would crouch, then leap away from the onrushing horns in just the nick of time. Talk about Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*. Or else he'd rest his head against the bull's hindquarters one moment and mock-box the beast the next moment. Of course, he flashed a smile suited for toothpaste commercials. At one point, I screamed when he flicked his red *muleta*. The beast was charging at him, and he wasn't moving until the last second."

Not all of *El Cordobés'* observers were as kind to him as Jackie. He had dozens of critics, especially classicists. They found "his passes crude and his swordsmanship fit only for the slaughterhouse." Vicente Zabala, one of Spain's leading taurine authorities, claimed, "*El Cordobés* has always been bad for bullfighting—he made underage, inadequate bulls the norm; his style corrupted other fighters, and he encouraged an ignorant public."

To Jackie, El Cordobés said, "I fight for the masses. Those smart guys who think they know so much write great stuff on how to fight bulls. But there's just one trouble: The bulls can't read."

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[Jackie was prophetic in seeing a book emerging from the life experiences of El Cordobés. In 1968, journalists Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre released a biography entitled Or I'll Dress You in Mourning.*" The bullfighter's story also became the basis for a musical*, Matador, *by Michael Leander and Edward Seago, which opened in London's West End in 1991*.

Jackie, a faithful reader of Kirkus Reviews, *read a description of the biography of El Cordobés before buying a copy*.

"In the small Andalusian town of Palma del Rio, ruled by an autocratic landowner, Don Felix Moreno, a ragged boy, saw a stereotyped film on bullfighting that changed his life. He fought Moreno's bulls by moonlight until he killed his seed bull and was exiled."

"There followed years of struggle. Finally, his manager, Rafael Sánchez, known as 'El Pipo,' pawned his family's jewels to bring the young El Cordobés into the bullfight arena of Palma. Before heading into the ring, El Cordobés told his sister, Angelita 'I'll either buy you a house or dress you in mourning.'" The latter promise became the title of the biography.

As part of his training, instead of bulls, El Pipo provided cows on which El Cordobés would practice his maneuvers, helping the young matador fashion his gimmicks for presentation in the ring. El Pipo also bribed journalists to overlook the young man's stylish flaws, and the fact that at least at the beginning of his career, he used weak and rather timid bulls for his bouts in the ring. Rival matadors were not fooled, of course, but his ever-growing public was.

Based on the time he spent in Seville with Jackie, El Cordobés later claimed that he was going to transform Jackie into a motion picture star. As Jackie biographer Freda Kramer wrote: "El Cordobés told everyone that Jackie was going to appear in a picture he was making. He swore on it." The claim merited some space in newspapers. It was even said that Jackie was going to donate her salary to charity.

This was not the only time the press speculated that Jackie was going to star in a movie. For a time, her dear friend, director Mike Nichols, was said to have cast her in a romantic comedy opposite Rock Hudson.

When asked about that rumor, Jackie said, "I'm leaving the acting in the family to my sister Lee."

Her sister's acting had been a disaster. In 1967, Lee would appear in Chicago in the stage production of The Philadelphia Story, *and a year later, in a nationally televised remake of* Laura, *adapted by Truman Capote and produced by David Susskind. both performances were demolished by critics*.

Their hapless host, the **Duke of Medinaceli** *(center)*, was caught between two battling divas—**Jackie** *(left)* and **Princess Grace** *(right)*—

at a gala party in Seville.

After the exchange of limp handshakes, Jackie and Grace ignored each other throughout the remainder of the evening. In the meantime, El Cordobés was spreading word to the press that he and Jackie would star in a movie together.

Dressed for the part, Jackie, an expert horsewoman, awed the people of Seville at the April *Feria*, especially when she downed a glass of sherry from nearby Jerez de la Frontera.

"To visit Seville and not ride horseback is equal to not coming at all," she said.

Then she mounted a white stallion and made a leisurely *paseo* of the gaily decorated fair grounds, to the delight of 259 paparazzi.

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The highlight of the *Feria* was the International Red Cross Ball, a charity debutante party for 2,500 guests hosted by the Duke of Medinaceli.

As usual, Princess Grace expected to be the belle of the ball. She went all out and appeared wrapped in white mink. Her hair was upswept and she was wearing a prince's ransom in diamonds. But she was virtually ignored as the guests rushed to get a glimpse of Jackie when she entered the courtyard bare shouldered and wearing a blue gown designed by Oleg Cassini. Jackie had fashionably arrived an hour late.

Grace was also jealous that the designer, Cassini, her former lover who'd once passionately wanted to marry her, was now showering his attention on the creation of chic *couture* for Jackie.

After battling through the hordes of reporters and photographers, Jackie finally made it to the table of their host, the Duke de Medinaceli. Grace extended a limp handshake to Jackie, then turned her head to avoid her throughout the rest of the evening.

With the poor Duke sandwiched in between them, he tried to make conversation to no avail. The next morning the *New York Herald Tribune* captioned a picture of them, headlining, "Cool Conversation," and noting that Grace and Jackie had little to say to each other. In response, Grace wrote a letter to the newspaper, claiming "I have great respect and admiration for Mrs. Kennedy."

Prince Rainier seemed dazzled by Jackie, but Princess Grace remained frosty, and Jackie turned an Arctic shoulder to Her Serene Highness. Jackie had long ago learned the details of Grace's romantic involvement with Jack as well as her seduction of Bobby, who was Jackie's lover at the time. "Jackie had reasons to detest Grace," Truman Capote later said, "especially when eagle-eyed Grace detected a gleam in the eyes of her prince."

In a huff, the Princess departed for an hour to the powder room. During her absence, Prince Rainier was seen in a secluded area of a patio smoking a cigarette with Jackie, away from the prying eyes of the paparazzi.

At the time of this flirtation between Jackie and Prince Rainier, international rumors were swirling that she was all but engaged to Antonio Garrigues, a widower with eight children. At the age of 62, he'd been appointed Spain's Ambassador to the Vatican. He and Jackie were later spotted together in Rome.

Unknown except to many of her friends, Jackie was a great mimic. After leaving Seville, she headed for some R&R at the swank Marbella Club on Spain's Costa del Sol. Once there, she delivered a devastating satire of Grace as she'd appeared in *Rear Window* (1954) opposite James Stewart, another of Grace's sexual conquests.

"It should have been taped," said Antonio Cordova, a member of the chic clique who had gathered at the Marbella Club. "Jackie appeared with long white gloves and imitated Grace's speech pattern to perfection. Slowly those gloves were removed, and Jackie did the world's most amusing rendition of Grace Kelly imitating Rita Hayworth in her 'Put the Blame on Mame' number. What an evening!"

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After the *Feria* in Seville, Jackie and Grace virtually ended whatever meager relationship they had, but Grace continued to place calls to Bobby in Washington.

Whatever the nature of Grace's relationship with Bobby, the bond became so strong between them that, in an unprecedented move, Grace volunteered to return to America and campaign for him in his quest for the presidency in 1968. In volunteering, she defied the wishes of her husband, who did not want her to get involved.

RFK called Grace and thanked her, eagerly looking forward to her appearance in America. No doubt, he wanted to continue their affair. Even though he'd already opted to end a high-profile romance with Jackie as a condition of running for the presidency, "he suddenly had become as sexually insatiable as Jack had been," Langdon Marvin claimed. A former aide to JFK, Marvin had provided numerous women available for affairs with the President. "Almost no one refused," he recalled.

Suddenly, from the heat of the campaign trail, Marvin found himself procuring a "gaggle of women for Bobby—airline hostesses, starlets, secretaries, whomever. Bobby was sexually insatiable. He had a penchant for nymphettes."

Marvin admitted that one time at the Carlyle Hotel, he sent Bobby a trio of girls "no more than fifteen. They were attending a private high school in New York. Bobby later thanked me, claiming 'That was the best present I ever got from anybody,' admitting that he'd also enjoyed watching the schoolgirls engage in lesbian sex."

Bobby went out in a blaze of glory, moving ahead toward the presidency and adored by millions, with beautiful women making themselves available to him for the asking—and sometimes he didn't even have to ask.

But then, on June 6, 1968, an assassin's bullet hit its mark, and the party was over.

Apparently, Bobby's assassination affected Grace far more than Jack's. She went into a period of deep mourning.

Jackie shunned any overture for future meetings with Princess Grace. In 1974, less than a year before Ari's death in March of 1975, Jackie was invited to participate in Ari's last extended cruise through the Eastern Mediterranean, with its conclusion scheduled for Monaco.

Jackie had recently had a fight with Ari, ostensibly because he refused to buy her a luxurious villa in Acapulco. Christina, his daughter, agreed to accompany her father instead.

Jackie had told her husband, "You're a fucking ingrate—I don't want your money."

"So be it, my dear," he told her, "Then you won't be disappointed." The next day he drew up a new will.

When the *Christina* arrived in Monte Carlo, Ari called Jackie in Paris and asked her to fly to Nice where a limousine would be waiting for her. He wanted her to host a dinner for Prince Rainier and Princess Grace. She refused, which turned out to be a wise choice.

The dinner aboard the yacht evolved into a disaster, as Ari attacked the prince, who had forced him to sell his shares in the Société des Bains de Mer.

After that dinner, Ari flew to Paris where Paul Mathias, a French journalist, saw Jackie and him dancing the night away in a Left Bank *boîte*. Jackie was demonstrating her new skill with castanets, which she'd learned from a flamenco dancer in Seville. She even lured a dying Onassis onto the dance floor where he loped about like a wounded antelope.

The last romantic link between the Kennedy family and the House of Grimaldi came when Ted Kennedy, Jr. started to date Princess Stephanie. Before that, Stephanie was rumored to have had an affair with John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Edward (Ted) M. Kennedy Jr. was born in 1961 when his uncle was still president. The twelve-year-old earned international press when he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in his right leg, a form of bone cancer. The leg was surgically amputated.

After the death of Princess Grace in 1982, *Ici Paris*, a popular French tabloid, suggested that Prince Rainier was considering marrying Jackie Onassis. Later, this rumor was dismissed, one reporter claiming that whatever attention Jackie was lavishing on Rainier was merely part of her attempt to persuade His Serene Highness to write his autobiography for Doubleday.

But there was far more to it than that. Jackie and the Prince were spotted together at certain discreet restaurants in Paris, and once cozily sharing drinks in a remote corner of a bar at Paris' Ritz Hotel.

Aides to Rainier said he did seriously consider proposing to America's former First Lady after Grace died. "Marrying Jackie would be an even bigger coup for Monaco than marrying Grace," Rainier told his close friend, actor David Niven. "Princess Jacqueline could bring worldwide publicity to Monaco—new investments and first-class tourism. It would be a sensation far greater than marrying a mere movie star."

It is not known if the Prince actually proposed to Jackie.

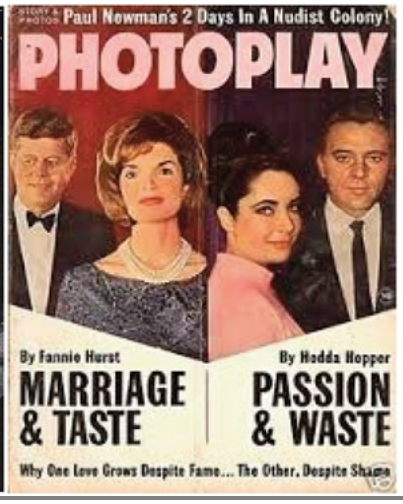
Ted Sorensen, former JFK aide, said, "After marrying Jack Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis, Prince Rainier was about the only eligible male left in that class for her to marry. In passing, I once mentioned this prospect to Jackie. She hesitated and said nothing at first. Then she claimed, 'I would have to give such an offer serious consideration.'"

Chapter Twenty-Six

Jackie vs. Elizabeth Taylor

Rival American Divas Battle for Love, Glory, and Men

The Queen of Ancient Egypt Slugs It Out With the Queen of the Potomac



When her husband was running for president of the United States, **Jackie Kennedy** had not only to face the competition of blonde bombshell Marilyn Monroe, she also learned that her philandering husband was engaged in a torrid affair with **Elizabeth Taylor.** Revelations about the affair came to light after the death of Dame Elizabeth in 2011. Details were leaked to the press from her private diaries which may, in time, be edited and published.

But long before the world found out about the ET/JFK affair, Jackie knew about it. Her informant in such matters was Peter Lawford himself, who often functioned as a "double agent," feeding Jack information about Jackie and vice versa.
Reportedly, Elizabeth was mesmerized by JFK, whom she was supporting in his presidential bid. During his 1960 campaign, she had several private evenings within his bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Her marriage to Eddie Fisher (her fourth husband) didn't stop her from sleeping with America's future president.

Being married to Jackie never prevented JFK, of course, from having affairs on the side. Except for Marilyn Monroe, none of his paramours was quite as famous as Elizabeth.
Naturally, the tabloids played them off against each other, trumpeting their respective embarassments and defeats.

During her marriage *[1957-1958]* to Mike Todd, Elizabeth Taylor found herself at the center of a media circus. From 1957 until the end of the 60s, she'd be the most written-about woman in the world, challenged only by Jackie Kennedy after she became First Lady. Images of Elizabeth or Jackie vied for shelf space and sales from magazine racks throughout America.

Although constantly linked together, contrasted, and compared in the press, Jackie and Elizabeth only met one time in their lives. Yet, in spite of that, they were intimately linked at times with the same four men—John and Bobbie Kennedy, Richard Burton, and Aristotle Onassis. Elizabeth didn't endear herself to Jackie when she

indiscreetly relayed to friends, “I got Jack long before Jackie sunk her claws into him.”

Elizabeth Taylor, “The Queen of the Nile,” *(subject of both photos, above)* emoted with Marc Antony (**Richard Burton**) both on and off the screen. For almost a quarter of a century, Jackie avidly followed their fiery romance.

For a while, however, Jackie’s marriage to Aristotle Onassis generated more headlines.

Jackie became the first First Lady that the press treated like a movie star instead of as the wife of a political figure. For the first time, a former occupant of the White House appeared on the covers of *Modern Screen*, *Photoplay*, *Screen Stories*, and *Movie Life* even more frequently than on the covers of “mainstream news” publications such as *Time*, *Life*, and *Look*.

Between 1963 and 1973, *Photoplay* featured Jackie more than virtually any other celebrity on its covers. Her picture almost guaranteed a bump in circulation. Many newspaper editorials denounced this “trashing” of Jackie. As one writer asserted, “She’s treated just like Liz Taylor or Marilyn Monroe.”

Every month Jackie found herself written about in articles which appeared adjacent to features about such flamboyant personalities as Liberace. Many of the stars she was featured next to were merely fast-fading figures in the public eye. In one case, a story appeared under the head—JACKIE: MY SUMMER LOVE. It ran next to another story: DAVID McCULLUM’S 60 SWINGING SECRETS.

What Did JFK and Richard Burton Have in Common? Each Managed to Seduce “La Liz” (The Vatican’s “Erotic Vagrant”) and Jackie (the “Demure, Fashion-Crazed Enigma”)

As Wayne Koestenbaum wrote in *Jackie Under My Skin:* “Jackie’s adjacency to fly-by-nights proves that stardom has no absolute ground, and that even Jackie was subject to laws of fade-out and fall. She might last no longer than Dolores Hart. That Jackie lingered, in the twilight of *Photoplay*, does not mean she acquired substance or wholeness. Rather, she lasted as ephemera; she lasted as someone we could not pin down or understand. The passion for Jackie ceased to be shallow. She persisted, season after season, in magazines, without any songs or films or TV shows to back her up. Jackie’s longevity was a consequence of how little could be proved about her.”

Tabloid saga:
the Battling Brunettes.

Tabloid saga: the Battling Brunettes.

Magazine after magazine featured Elizabeth and Jackie in the same issue under such headlines as: *JACKIE WILL MARRY! LIZ WILL DIVORCE! JINX PLAGUES JACKIE & LIZ! JACKIE & LIZ: SOUL SISTERS IN TRAGEDY.*

In November of 1963, shortly before JFK's assassination, both Jackie and Elizabeth appeared on the cover of one issue of *Photoplay* that also featured a story about Paul Newman's two-day visit to a nudist colony. It was Photoplay that ran a photo of Jackie with the President on their cover alongside Elizabeth and Burton. Jackie's marriage stood for "Taste." Elizabeth's marriage (according to Hedda Hopper, incidentally) stood for "Passion and Waste."

After her marriage to Onassis, Jackie, too, joined Elizabeth in the trash can of journalism. The headlines trumpeted her "shame:" *GOLD-DIGGING JACKIE, JACKIE GREEDY SHOPPER IN PARIS; JACKIE BUYS SEE-THROUGH BLOUSE FOR HER HUSBAND.*

Headlines associated with Liz were even worse: *LIZ AND BURTON ATTACKED FOR THROWING NUDE BEACH PARTY.*

Even when Elizabeth made *Cleopatra* in Rome with Burton playing Marc Antony, one reviewer accused her of "looking like a plump, audacious version of Jackie Kennedy." At least Jackie didn't have to endure being called an "erotic vagrant" by the Vatican.

The Vatican was not only enraged by the adulterous affair of Burton and Elizabeth, but she had also adopted a nine-month-old girl in Bavaria. Originally named Petra Heisis, she was renamed Maria Taylor after her adoption.

She had been born with a crippling hip defect, and Elizabeth felt compelled to provide her with all the expensive medical treatments she needed. Even so, Pope John XXIII denounced the star as an unfit mother.

Whereas the Cuban Missile Crisis *[October 14–28, 1962]* brought the United States to the brink of nuclear disaster, the illicit love affair between Burton and Elizabeth seemingly generated more headlines. "Liz & Dick," as they were called, were accused of (or credited with) sparking the sexual revolution that blossomed during the decades (the 1960s and 70s) of "free love."

Elizabeth had her own private reaction to this massive press coverage. She told Roddy McDowall, "The most

famous man on the planet, John F. Kennedy, is fucking the second-most famous woman on earth, Marilyn Monroe, and not a word gets into the press. But let me screw around with some Welsh actor and the media goes apeshit."

Jackie-Oh! Vs. La Liz: How Did It All Begin?

In 1948, Elizabeth starred with the handsome actor, Robert Stack, in *A Date With Judy* for MGM. Stack was considerably older than Elizabeth, but their parents were good friends, so he was evaluated as a suitable escort for Elizabeth.

They'd dated for only a short while before he informed her that "my best pal," John F. Kennedy, newly elected to Congress from Massachusetts, would be at his house at around noon on Saturday. "You might like to meet him. He's charming," Stack said to Elizabeth.

Stack had first met JFK in 1939 when a mutual friend, Alfred de la Vega, had introduced them in Hollywood.

She told Stack she'd already met JFK in 1937 in England when she was "just a little girl," and he was the 20-year-old son of Joseph P. Kennedy, the U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James's.

In the early 1940s, **Robert Stack** *(left)* and **John F. Kennedy** were two of the most desirable males "chasing tail" in Hollywood.

According to Judy Garland, "Both men and women, including Howard Hughes, pursued them. The women, who included myself, won out."

Elizabeth had already heard about JFK's first introduction to Hollywood. Stack and the young Jack had shared a secret "bachelor pad" hideaway at the end of a cul-de-sac on Whitley Terrace, high in the Hollywood Hills. "We learned about the birds, the bees, the barracuda, and other forms of Hollywood wildlife there," Stack told her.

What he didn't tell Elizabeth was that JFK had called him before his arrival on the West Coast. He'd said, "I want to fuck every woman in Hollywood. I want to specialize in celebrity poontang—like Dad did."

In the studio's makeup department, very early one Friday morning before a day's shooting at MGM, Elizabeth sat next to June Allyson. She learned that Allyson and JFK had had an affair, and that Allyson was already scheduled for a rendezvous with the young congressman during his upcoming visit. Allyson even suggested, "Perhaps you, Robert, Jack, and me can go out on a double date."

Elizabeth did not tell her about her own upcoming plans to meet Jack.

"That guy can literally charm the pants off a girl," Allyson said. "He calls his penis 'the implement.' He wants a girl at both the front and back doors. But he's a sort of '*Slam, Bam, Thank You, Ma'am*' type of lover. When the dirty deed is done, he wants to rush off to his next conquest."

The following night, when Elizabeth arrived at Stack's house, he directed Elizabeth to his pool, where JFK was waiting. Looking rail-thin, he wore only a pair of white shorts and was resting on a *chaise longue* in the sun. He did not get up to greet her, but put out his hand, capturing hers and holding it for a long time. "Hi, Elizabeth, you are living proof that little girls grow up in delightful ways. You've changed. For the better, I'd say."

"You have, too," she responded.

"In what way," he asked.

"Better looking. More manly. I guess it was the war and the years. I hear you're a big time naval hero."

"Fuck!" he said. "I don't care what you've heard. I won the war single-hand-edly. Don't let anyone tell you differently." The twinkle in his eyes revealed that he was satirizing his own exploits.

“And now, you’re a Congressman!” she said.

“If Dad has anything to say about it, I’ll be sitting in the White House at least by 1964.”

“I hope you’ll issue me a presidential pardon,” she said.

“Not likely,” he smiled. “I’ll summon you to the White House for a command performance.”

At that point, Stack came out onto the patio, calling them to lunch.

As they ate, JFK told Elizabeth and Stack that he’d flown to the West Coast to escape “the post-election blues” and because he couldn’t attend any more chicken à la king dinners.

“And you’re out here to get your jollies!” Stack interjected.

“There’s nothing wrong with that!” JFK said. “Right, Elizabeth?”

“There’s nothing wrong if you get them with me!” She shocked even herself at how forward she had become.

JFK laughed. “A promise I’ll make you keep.”

Even though they indulged in mostly small talk, there was sexual tension in the air. She would later confess to Roddy McDowall that she was waiting for one of them, especially JFK, to make the first move.

After lunch, JFK got up and pulled off his white shorts in front of them. He was completely casual about his nudity, as his future wife, Jackie Kennedy, would eventually claim.

“Let’s all go for a nude swim,” he proposed, jumping into the pool.

In front of her, Stack pulled off his shorts and jumped into the water to swim after JFK. As Elizabeth would later relay to Dick Hanley, “I knew it was show time, and I didn’t want to disappoint. I pulled off my dress, bra, and panties, and swam in after them.”

At that point, the screen goes black. Elizabeth refused to relay all of the juicy details to Dick, even though he wanted a blow-by-blow description. “I can live vicariously, can’t I?”

All she’d confess to was a three-way. “It was my first such experience, but I don’t think it will be my last. Bob is the better lover, but Jack has more charm. All I’ll tell you is that he’s mainly concerned with getting himself off—and not the girl who’s lying under him. Bob has better staying power. Jack went first. But he shot off rather quickly. Would you believe that Bob and I were still going at it, and Jack was up beside the bed making a phone call? Then Bob and I finished the dirty deed.”

“Are you going to pursue Jack?” Dick asked, “or was that it?”

“No, I’ll keep after him,” she said. “Not so much because of his love-making, but because of his charm. He has this amazing ability to look at you while you’re talking and make you feel that you’re saying something so vital that the fate of the whole world depends on it.”

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JACKIE: “I hate Elizabeth Taylor.”

ELIZABETH: “Jackie Kennedy is a gold-digging bitch.”

When her husband was running for President, and even when he occupied the Oval Office, Jackie Kennedy had to face competition not only from Marilyn Monroe and so many others, but from Elizabeth Taylor, too.

Revelations about the Taylor/JFK affair came to light after the death of Dame Elizabeth in 2011. Details were leaked to the press from her private diaries which may, in time, be edited and published.

It appears that Robert Kennedy himself arranged several liaisons between Elizabeth and the President in 1961, as well as enjoying her considerable charms himself.

But long before the affair with JFK came to light, Jackie knew about it. Her informant was Peter Lawford, who often functioned as a “double agent,” feeding Jack information about Jackie, and supplying Jackie with secret data about her husband.

Reportedly, Elizabeth was mesmerized by both the Kennedy brothers. *[Apparently, Teddy never got around to her.]*

During JFK’s 1960 campaign for president, she had visited him on occasion in a bungalow at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. She also had perhaps three sexual trysts with him in Beverly Hills during the summer of 1961, when she’d had her first fling with Bobby.

Except for Marilyn Monroe, none of the affairs JFK had were with women as famous as Elizabeth.

“Kennedy did more than fundraising when he came to California,” Eddie Fisher later said. “Kennedy was widely known for fucking Elizabeth look-alikes like Judith Campbell Exner. I guess on occasion he wanted the real thing—not merely the mock. I had Judy myself. She made herself up to look as much like Elizabeth as she could.”

“Elizabeth swore to me that her relationship with Jack never went beyond friendship,” Fisher said. “But I never believed her. I’m sure she never believed me when I told her that I was ‘just friends’ with some of the women I was

bedding. When Jackie heard of the affair, she said some really vicious things about Elizabeth, so I was told. And you should have heard what my potty-mouthed wife said about Jackie. It was a real catfight waged on two different coasts."

Both Burton and Roddy McDowall, his co-star in *Camelot* and his sometimes lover, were emphatically aware of their presence on the night then-Senator from Massachusetts John F. Kennedy and his beautiful and elegant wife, Jackie, came to see *Camelot*. Backstage, the Kennedys greeted Burton and congratulated him, although he later heard that the future president found the music boring. Jackie, however, found the legend of Camelot fascinating. The world would realize the degree to which she was intrigued after the assassination of her husband in Dallas in 1963.

Julie Andrews as Guinivere with **Richard Burton** as King Arthur as they appeared on Broadway in the musical, *Camelot.*

It became Jackie's favorite musical and led to her creation of the myth of Camelot as a metaphor for the Kennedy administration in the White House.

After the performance, whereas Senator Kennedy planned an immediate return to Washington, Jackie planned to remain in New York for two days of shopping.

"I asked her if I could call on her at the Carlyle and discuss the legend of Camelot with her," Burton later confided to Roddy. "To my amazement, she agreed."

The following night, Roddy was eager to learn all the details of Burton's visit to the suite of the future First Lady. "Over drinks, we spent an hour talk ing about *Camelot*," Burton said. "We had more than one drink. She's a fabulous dame, really fabulous. If I had a dame like Jackie full time, I swear I'd never have to cheat on her."

"I know, I know," said an impatient Roddy. "The question is, did you score?"

"A bull's eye," Burton bragged. "She's prim and proper, but once you get her panties off, she's a tigress."

Was Burton merely bragging to his gay friend and fellow actor, or was he telling the truth? No one knows for sure, although some authors of Taylor/Burton biographies maintain that he did have a brief fling with Jackie, which was one of the reasons the image of Camelot was so imbedded in her brain.

Burton also told Peter O'Toole and Peter Lawford about his affair with Jackie. Burton had already bedded a long line of famous women, and he really didn't have to invent affairs he never had.

Since Jackie was known even during the 1950s for an occasional extramarital affair *[unlike her husband, who was virtually having a daily extramarital affair]*, it is entirely possible that Burton seduced her.

As Elizabeth herself maintained, "The sound of his voice could probably give a woman an orgasm."

What was important was that Elizabeth came to believe that Burton had seduced Jackie, or in Elizabeth's words, "I bet she seduced him. She's just getting back at me for having had a fling with Jack Kennedy. That bitch!"

Roddy later admitted to his close friends that Elizabeth tried "to pry the truth from me. She told me I had never lied to her before, and she didn't want me to start telling her lies now. I told her, 'I can't talk about it...I just can't.'"

"Thank you," she said. "You've told me just what I wanted to know. Richard fucked Jackie Kennedy!"

Burton confessed to others that Elizabeth did not consider herself particularly attractive. "She has a wonderful bosom, though. But she has the shape of a Welsh village girl. Her legs are really quite stumpy, far too short. Elizabeth feels her feet and arms are too large. But she considers Jackie Kennedy beautiful."

During the filming of *Cleopatra* in Rome, Burton received his friend, Dick Hanley *[Elizabeth's secretary]* in his dressing room one hot afternoon. He was sitting nude in front of his vanity mirror, and had been drinking heavily. At one point, he talked about women he'd seduced.

"The woman who brings out the best in a man—and who is good in bed— is very rare. In my entire life, I've enjoyed only four such women—Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, and an almost toothless middle aged hag in Jamaica."

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Gore Vidal later wrote that one night in Paris, Maria Callas told him that Burton, while aboard Ari's yacht, had once confessed to Onassis that he'd seduced Jackie.

According to Callas, "Ari also had a sexual confession to make."

"Remember that night you made up some excuse to leave ship and head for Athens?" Onassis asked Burton. "I think that Elizabeth knew you were actually visiting the brothels there. Well, that's the only night in my life I lured Elizabeth into my stateroom. So, pal, are we even now?"

During the 1960-61 run of the play, *Camelot*, on Broadway, Robert F. Kennedy became a fan of both the musical and, even more, of the character (King Arthur) portrayed by Richard Burton. Over a period of two months, he attended the musical three times. After each performance, he joined Burton in his dressing room, inviting him for a late night dinner and drinks.

Gossip among the rich and famous aboard the *Christina*.

From left to right, **Elizabeth Taylor, Aristotle Onassis, Merope Onassis Konialidis** (Ari's half-sister), and **Richard Burton.**

These two unlikely candidates for friendship formed a close bond. Among other interests, they discovered their mutual love of poetry.

Although Jackie is credited with creating the myth of Camelot as a metaphor for the Kennedy years in the White House, the concept may have originated with Bobby. After seeing the play for the first time, Bobby later told Jackie, "I came backstage to greet Burton, and I was ushered into his dressing room. I found him sitting in front of his vanity mirror removing his makeup. He was wearing only a jock strap."

In the bowels of the Majestic Theater in Manhattan, RFK told Burton how much he'd liked the cadenced, dignified lyrics of Alan Jay Lerner.

Each evening from December to December, Before you drift to sleep upon your cot Think back on all the tales that you remember Of Camelot.

Ask every person if he's heard the story And say it loud and clear if he has not That once there was a fleeting wisp of glory Called Camelot.

Burton was very flattered by Bobby's assessment of the pleasure he'd given the Kennedys through his depiction of the noble King Arthur in *Camelot*. JFK and Jackie had already expressed their appreciation of the musical.

After JFK saw the play, after his return to Washington, he frequently called Burton. "I like the sound of your voice, especially when you're quoting Shakespeare," Both men had hectic schedules, but made phone contact whenever they could.

On November 22, 1962, Burton was in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, shooting Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana*. Word reached them that JFK had been assassinated in Dallas.

Dick Hanley, Elizabeth's secretary, said that "Richard cried on Elizabeth's shoulder and was morbidly destroyed for two weeks. He had difficulty emotingon camera."

Burton sat down and wrote Jackie a long letter, expressing his grief. Because she was overwhelmed with relocation problems, and had received an avalanche of mail, it was two months before she could reply. She invited him to come and see her when he flew East, but warned him to call in advance so they would be able to meet somewhere privately without the paparazzi and nosy reporters.

Apparently, they did have a rendezvous somewhere in Virginia at the secluded private home of a friend of RFK's. In secrecy, these two famous figures managed to slip in a romantic weekend together.

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Although Burton was sexually attracted to Jackie, and she to him, the real friendship that emerged from all this was between Burton and RFK. When the actor appeared on Broadway in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, RFK made a special trip to New York to see him. He later told the press that Burton's *Hamlet* was far superior to any he'd ever seen, including the performances of Laurence Olivier.

After the performance, RFK retired with Burton to his hotel suite for a late night supper. As Burton told Michael Wilding, "Bobby and I got pissed, really pissed, and we ended up reciting Shakespeare to each other. At some point, we decided to strip down jaybird naked—not for sex, but as a form of bonding. 'That's what asshole buddies do,' I told Bobby, and he agreed."

"We've become really close, but I fear he'll one day be the recipient of an assassin's bullet." Burton said to Wilding, "He told me that every day, he gets death threats, but he still plans to run for president in '68. I fear for him."

Burton's fear, of course, came true. "Because he was much closer to Bobby than he had been to JFK, Burton was far more devastated by the news of his death. As Bobby lay dying in an L.A. hospital after the shooting, he told Dick Hanley, "I hope he doesn't survive the night. If he does, he will be a complete vegetable, and Bobby would have hated that. He was so bright, so alive."

Once again, Burton sent a deeply moving personal letter to Jackie, promising to meet with her "after the dust has settled over the cities of the plain."

"Jackie was in love with Bobby, and he was in love with her," Burton told Hanley. "I was in love with Bobby, too, although in a very different way from Jackie," Burton claimed. "He put up such a brave macho front to the world, but he lived in fear and insecurities. Somehow, he found comfort with me. Although he had many enemies, he dared show me that he had the sensitive soul of a poet."

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In a very different way, and under different circumstances, Elizabeth, too, bonded with Robert Kennedy.

On July 9, 1961, Elizabeth, in plunging *décollétage*, sat next to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy at a fund-raising dinner for the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. Behind them sat Rat Packers Joey Bishop, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and Peter Lawford. A view of RFK was snapped by photographers gazing down at Elizabeth's amply displayed breasts.

When the attorney general finally diverted his gaze, as the focal point of the fundraising dinner, Elizabeth delivered a short, poignant speech written by Joseph Mankiewicz:

"Dying, as I remember, is many things. But most of all, it is wanting to live. Throughout many critical hours in the operating theater, it was as if every nerve, every muscle, as if my whole physical being were being strained to the last ounce of my strength, to the last gasp of breath. I remember I had focused desperately on the hospital light hanging directly above me. It had become the vision of life itself. Slowly, it faded and dimmed like a well-done theatrical effect to blackness.

I died.

It was like being in a long dark tunnel with no light at the end. I kept looking for the light. I heard voices urging me to come back into life, to live. The experience was both painful and beautiful, like child birth itself."

Elizabeth donated $100,000 to the charity, and her fellow guests, including RFK, contributed a massive total of $7 million that night. After the dinner, Bobby invited her for a drive with him along the coast. She suggested that they stop at her cottage in Malibu for a midnight swim. No one knows where her husband at the time, Eddie Fisher, was that night.

As she was to tell Dick Hanley. "It was one of the most memorable nights of my life."

She also recorded the events of that night in her diary, and would allow both Dick and Roddy Mc-Dowall to read it. She had described her experience in such graphic detail that Roddy was a bit shocked. He said, "Elizabeth, my

dear, you should have been a pornographer."

At a fund-raiser, **Bobby Kennedy** showed an inordinate interest in **Elizabeth Taylor**'s breasts.

He often followed his older brother in seducing some of the same women—Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, and Elizabeth herself.

As the actress's two memoirs revealed, no one could write more boringly about her own life that Elizabeth. In each of her autobiographical memoirs, she gave almost no details of some of the most infamous events of her life.

In her diary's description of her encounter with Robert Kennedy, she may have been more explicit because Peter Lawford had told her that Marilyn Monroe had recorded "steamy passages" in her red diary about her sexual encounters with both President Kennedy and his brother, Robert. "Elizabeth obviously did not want to be bested by Monroe," Roddy said.

"I can write with passion, too," she told Roddy. "After all, I read *Forever Amber*." She was referring to the pulpy best selling romance written by Kathleen Winsor, who at one time was married to bandleader Artie Shaw after his divorce from Ava Gardner.

"Bobby and I spent about two hours on the beach in the moonlight," Elizabeth told her gay friends. "Our bathing suits became too restraining. Bobby finally got to enjoy those breasts he'd been staring at all night."

"You've got it bad, girl," Roddy said.

"When it was over, he kissed me several times and told me I was a goddess," she relayed, as reported by Roddy and Dick. "Other men have told me that, but coming from Bobby, I really could delude myself into believing it. That night, with Bobby on the beach, I was a goddess. But when I drove home, I found Eddie there and we got into a big brawl. The goddess, I fear, became a harridan."

Later, in her diary, she wrote: "It is a shame that when a man and a woman want to be together, they often have to leave each other while they pay homage to people in their lives they'd rather not deal with. Men and women should be free. Even though I've been married four times, it was four times too many. I will never marry again—and that's a promise I've made to myself that I will never break."

In the months leading up to his assassination, RFK, at least according to Dick Hanley, seduced Elizabeth on three different occasions. On one of these occasions, he left the bed of Jackie Kennedy in New York in 1966, flew to Los Angeles, and woke up in Elizabeth's bed in Beverly Hills the following morning."

As she told Dick, "I have known more perfect bodies, but Bobby's physique thrilled me. He was long and lean, no bulging beefcake. But he moved with such grace…undeniable masculinity. A strong chest, a thin waist, and a cock that was not the biggest I'd ever seen, but one that was gorgeous and knew all the right strokes."

It seemed inevitable that Jackie would hear of Elizabeth's rendezvous with RFK. Jackie often became furious when she heard of Bobby's affairs with other women, such as actress Lee Remick.

A member of Ari's staff informed Jackie that when Elizabeth was considering ending her marriage to Burton, Ari had proposed to her. Elizabeth had rejected his proposal, and within a week had reconciled with Burton.

In spite of her rejection of his proposal, Ari continued his role in her life as a friend. He invited Elizabeth to the 1967 Annual Ball at the Palazzo Ca'Rezzonico in Venice. The paparazzi snapped them together, Elizabeth wearing an elaborate gown and a Kabuki headdress.

Onassis maintained his friendship with Elizabeth, but did not pursue her when he received word from Johnny Meyer, who was more or less his pimp, having previously occupied that dubious post during his employment by Howard Hughes. Meyer managed to be both blunt and mysterious. "Don't ask me how I found this out, but I've learned that Mrs. Kennedy might be available to marry you."

"I will go after her like a hungry lion after a zebra," Onassis vowed.

When Elizabeth heard about the upcoming marriage of Jackie and Onassis, she told a reporter for *Modern Screen*, "It will be the strangest marriage of the century. Mrs. Kennedy is now reduced to taking my rejects."

Her comment was never printed.

Later, Jackie turned down an invitation to sail on another cruise aboard the *Christina* before her marriage. Word reached her that Elizabeth, who went on the voyage, flirted with Onassis every night over dinner.

When Jackie confronted the shipping magnate about it, she told him, "It's either the Taylor bitch or me. Your friendship with this international tramp has to end—NOW!"

Movie Mirror picked up on this feud, crafting headlines that yelled: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED THE NIGHT LIZ TRIED TO CUT JACKIE OUT!

Kiki Feroudi Moutsatsos, who was Ari's private secretary, in a memoir, recalled the cruise that Ari took without Jackie, but with Elizabeth and Burton. Greta Garbo was on board. In the bar, Ari told her that the bar stools were upholstered with the skin of a whale's penis.

Moutsatsos claimed that one night at dinner, she dropped her napkin and ducked down to retrieve it. She saw that the leg of her boss was entwined with Garbo's.

On yet another cruise, Moutsatsos recalled Elizabeth Taylor and Burton sailing with Maria Callas, Ari's longtime mistress. "Miss Taylor was small and delicate and her purple eyes were ravishing and exquisite, almost as if they were a precious gift she graciously and temporarily bestowed on her viewer. Miss Callas' elegant face was dark and piercing. She seemed to view Miss Taylor as a potential rival, even though Burton was aboard. He had had far too much to drink that night; otherwise, the cruise was idyllic."

After his marriage to Jackie, Elizabeth praised Jackie for "making a wise choice" in marrying Ari.

During the first year of their marriage, Jackie and Ari knocked Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor off their throne as the world's most famous and most publicized couple.

One night aboard his yacht, Ari told Jackie that he numbered, among his closest friends, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Greta Garbo, Eva Perón, and Sir Winston Churchill. For his worst enemies, he cited Richard Nixon, Bobby Kennedy, J. Edgar Hoover, and the entire CIA.

In his diaries, which were published in 2012, Burton made several references to Jackie, but did not admit to an affair. As was rumored at the time, some of the more explosive or embarrassing entries in his diary were not included in the final (published) manuscript.

In October of 1968, Burton wrote, "Ari is 69, claims 62, and she is 39. The youngish 'Queen of the USA' and the aging Greek bandit. He is pretty vulgar and one suspects him of orgies and other dubious things, whereas the Kennedy woman seems, though I've never met her, to be a lady."

Of course, he'd met her in public view on more than one occasion. When Jackie had been First Lady, she'd invited both Burton and his then-wife, Sybil, to the White House to celebrate his success on Broadway in *Camelot*. But as Burton himself once said, "Name me one bloke living, now or long underground, who ever wrote a truthful diary. Some secrets were not meant to be shared."

Nevertheless, that same month, Burton gave his very candid assessment of Jackie. "She has several lovers, and her husband knows it. He has a mistress and she knows it. The Onassises have disappeared completely from the front pages, and for the most part from the papers altogether. I told Elizabeth that they didn't have our stamina."

[Despite Burton's assessment, Jackie Kennedy, wed to Aristotle Onassis, had not disappeared from the newspapers. She had evolved into a media event to be rivaled only by the Second Coming.]

Also, in October of that year, Burton compared Jackie's cache of jewelry to that of Elizabeth's. "I read in the papers that Ari has given Jackie half a million pounds worth of rubies surrounded by diamonds. Now Missey already has, as a result of former battles against Yours Truly, one of the greatest diamonds in the world, and probably the most breathtaking collections of emeralds surrounded by diamonds. Now the Battle of the Rubies is on. I wonder who will win?"

On November 6, 1968, Burton met with Maria Callas. In his diary, he made this notation: "She has massive legs and what seems a slender body from the waist up. She has bags under her eyes, and wears dark glasses most of the time. Perhaps she cries a lot. She is obviously lonely after Ari's marriage to Jackie. If I had a choice between Maria and Jackie, I'm afraid I'd elect Jackie. She sounds more fun, and in snaps, anyway, looks prettier."

On August 9, 1969, while staying at London's Dorchester Hotel, Burton was in a flippant mood, anticipating a possible success for his latest film, *Staircase*, in which he and Rex Harrison appeared as two flamboyant homosexuals.

Wishfully, in his diary, Burton mused that "when the millions pour in, I can probably employ J. Paul Getty as a butler and Onassis as a Greek chef. Elizabeth, topless and mini-skirted, will serve me food and call me 'sir.' That will be the day. Jackie Onassis can be the tweeny and get her orders from Elizabeth. Noël Coward will be brought in every night to be witty and to sing songs. We'll get a defecting Russian pianist, one of the great ones, to play every

night. In chains, of course. We'll pour white confetti on his hair and tell him it's Siberia."

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Secretly, Jackie had wanted to own the notorious Krupp diamond, the world's most perfect specimen of a diamond. Elizabeth Taylor was the proud owner. In 1968, Burton had purchased the 33.19 carat bauble for only $307,000, in spite of its associations with the Krupps, a German family based in the industrial Ruhr valley whose munitions factories had been associated during World War II with the forced labor of Jews. "How ironic," Elizabeth said. "A nice Jewish girl like me owning the Krupp diamond."

She referred to it as "the ice cube," and at parties, she liked to play ball with it, throwing it at other guests, male or female, and asking them to catch it. She freely invited both men and women to "try it on for size."

When Jackie heard these stories, she said, "I'm appalled at the behavior of this vulgar woman! Such ostentation!"

Jackie wanted to outdo Elizabeth and become the owner of the even larger (69.42 carat) Annenberg diamond, evaluated at the time as the most valuable stone available for resale *[i.e., not belonging to a museum, such as the Hope Diamond at the Smithsonian]* in the world. When it went on sale in 1969, Jackie was hoping that Ari would buy it for her as a token of his love. Privately, she stationed a spy at the Parke-Bernet Galleries on Madison Avenue in Manhattan when it went on sale. She seemed to believe that Ari owed her such a staggering gift for having married him the year before.

Rather brazenly, Elizabeth had told Burton, "I want that pear-shaped rock." He had a dealer place his bids, warning him not to exceed a bid of $1 million. Unknown to Burton, Ari had entered the bidding, but retreated when the price soared to $780,000. Finally, Robert Kenmore, the owner of Cartier's, placed the auction's highest bid—$1,050,000.

Elizabeth was furious, launching into a violent assault on Burton, who finally relented. He arranged to buy the stone from Kenmore for $1.2 million. Once it was in her possession, Elizabeth said, "I don't like it, but I'm keeping it so Jackie won't get it."

"She tells people she doesn't like it," Jackie said, "How outrageous. Well, I like it. It should have been mine."

"The diamond should be on the finger of the most beautiful woman in the world," Burton later said. "I would have had a fit if went to Jackie Kennedy or Sophia Loren, or, even worse, 'Mrs. Huntington Misfit' of Dallas, Texas."

In 1978, Jackie learned that Elizabeth—realizing a tidy profit—had sold the diamond to Henry Lambert, a New York dealer, for $5 million.

[In 2009, at an auction at Christie's in Manhattan, an unidentified buyer paid $7.7 million for the stone.]

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As part of one of their most frenzied and widely publicized projects, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor flew to Budapest, where he was scheduled to star in what he called "my turkey," a reference to the 1972 release of *Bluebeard*. Although he had Elizabeth waiting not so patiently in their hotel suite, he was spending time with actress Nathalie Delon.

Elizabeth had planted a spy on the set to report back to her.

Fed up with her husband's womanizing, she accepted an invitation to fly to Rome on May 5, 1972 for dinner with Onassis. He'd sent his private jet to fetch her. Without telling Burton where she was going, she flew out of Budapest, heading southwest to Rome.

Before vacating her hotel, she instructed her staff, "If Richard wants to know where I am, tell the bastard he can read about it in the newspapers."

For her first night in Rome, scene of her *Cleopatra (1963)* debacle of nearly a decade before, Elizabeth accompanied Ari to the very chic Hostaria dell'Orso, whose premises dated from 1300. During the course of its existence, it had been patronized by St. Francis of Assisi, Dante, Goethe, and Rabelais.

In the 1920s, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., had dined there.

Ari and Elizabeth would add their names to the distinguished roster of guests. Regrettably, the *paparazzi* learned of their presence. Outside the restaurant, a mob gathered.

Inside the restaurant, a persistent fan kept annoying Elizabeth, asking for her autograph. Finally, very angered, Ari tossed a glass of champagne in the face of the male fan.

A reporter was dining that evening in the restaurant, and he made sure that the next morning's headlines carried news of the incident.

Burton telephoned Elizabeth the next morning and promised to drop Delon if she'd come back to him. Lured by the sound of his voice, she relented, and flew back to Budapest.

As soon as news of this reached Jackie in New York, she called Ari in Rome. "I thought some harridan, a fishwife perhaps, was on the phone," Ari later told his friends.

She shouted at him, "I'm ashamed of you, making a spectacle of yourself with this harlot. When you fly back to New York, let me know. I can time it so that I'm on a plane to Paris. Perhaps we'll wave to each other somewhere over the Atlantic."

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The only face-to-face meeting between Jackie and Elizabeth occurred on June 20, 1976, when both of them attended a performance by the legendary British ballerina Margot Fonteyn at Manhattan's Uris Theater. Backstage, Elizabeth and Jackie awkwardly encountered one another on the way to Fonteyn's dressing room. Each woman smiled politely at the other. What did the two fabled divas say to each other? Someone who stood behind them revealed, "They said absolutely nothing—not a word."

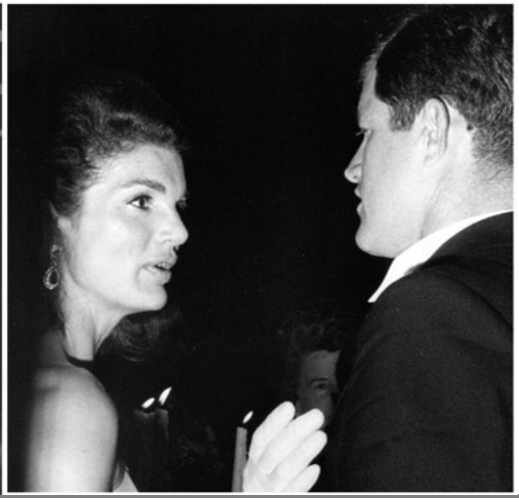
After that, coverage of the two divas in the tabloids became less shrill and less frequent. In the November, 1976 issue of Photoplay, reportage on the exploits of Elizabeth vs. Jackie had been reduced to the last words on the cover, without even a picture, and even that ran beneath the larger headline: *THE SALLY STRUTHERS NOBODY KNOWS.*

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Teddy Kennedy, Lion of the Senate

Coveting His Brother's Wife

Discovered: Teddy's Declarations of his Enduring Love for Jackie



In these cozy *tête-à-têtes*, **Jackie** and **Teddy Kennedy** share intimate moments. Then and in years to come, they would share many of them, although their love affair largely escaped press attention. But not always.

On Teddy's wedding day, JFK had told him, "Just because you're getting married doesn't mean you have to be faithful." Teddy heeded his brother's advice.

He stood by Jackie though one crisis after another, becoming the one man in her life she could depend on.

When he had a car accident on the island of Chappaquiddick, drowning Mary Jo Kopechne, Jackie was his most steadfast supporter. Kennedy loyalists, including "the Boiler Room Girls" (his secretarial pool) spread rumors about the drowned young woman. One of the secretaries claimed, "She was nothing but a whore. She'd go to bed with any man who had Kennedy written on his zipper."

The most observant of Kennedy-watchers claimed that Teddy Kennedy, the younger brother of JFK and Bobby, fell in love with Jackie Bouvier when JFK first brought her to Hyannis Port in the early 1950s.

Teddy became enchanted with Jackie when he was still an undergraduate at Harvard. She agreed to help him write a paper on art history, a subject he didn't know much about and about which she knew a lot.

Teddy liked to play football, and he was better built for it than his older brothers. He is seen here in 1955, when Harvard played its traditional rival, Yale. Teddy caught a touchdown pass from his tight end slot, chalking up Harvard's only score in the game's 21-7 loss to Yale.

After she finished virtually writing the paper for him, he gave her a big, passionate kiss on the mouth. Observers noted that throughout the 1950s, Jackie usually received not perfunctory pecks on the cheek from either Bobby or Teddy, but "real wet kisses," in the words of Kennedy friend Chuck Spalding. "Once I went boating with all three brothers and Jackie, three years after her marriage to JFK. He was sleeping down below. She came on deck and greeted both brothers with a big kiss. They were in their bathing suits. I couldn't help but notice she got a rise out of both of them."

"I never discussed such a subject with the man himself," Spalding said. "He was the biggest womanizer of them all, followed by his little brother, Teddy. Bobby had his share of affairs, too. When he was Attorney General, he made use of that bedroom he maintained at the Justice Department, upstairs, above his office, He always found plenty of nooky."

Teddy compulsively recorded both his good deeds and his bad ones in his private diaries. Some of what these diaries contained was first revealed in 1961. In August of that year, before he became a Senator, during the first year of his brother's presidency, Teddy had flown to South America on a fact-finding trip.

At the end of the trip, during his homebound flight aboard a flight operated by Pan American World Airways, he inadvertently left his diary on board after exiting from the plane. Airline officials turned the diary over to the F.B.I., where it was delivered directly to J. Edgar Hoover. In his diary, Teddy had recorded testimonials about his passion for Jackie and his intention to seduce her one day.

"I Will Love Her Forever"

—Teddy, About Jackie

Some of the most salacious comments in Teddy's diary were leaked, and became cocktail party chatter throughout Washington and Georgetown.

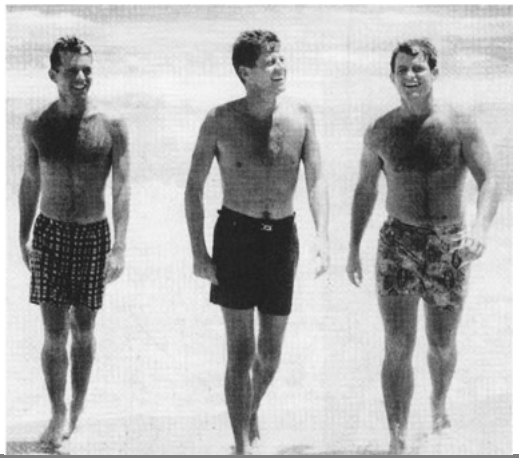
A magazine once voted this the “sexiest picture ever taken of **Teddy Kennedy**.” Jackie kept it on a table beside her bed except when Bobby came to call. There was always a picture of JFK in her living room on public display.

Hoover made a copy of the diary, and returned the original to Teddy. The contents were never made public, but Hoover told his lover and chief assistant, Clyde Tolson, among others, about some of the salacious comments it contained.

The hottest revelations included Teddy’s descriptions of his longtime love for Jackie. He described his desire—thwarted only by his loyalty to JFK—to consummate their relationship. He admitted, however, that when she had worked on his term paper, that Jackie had allowed him to kiss her. He also claimed that she once told him that he had become the “most beautiful of the Kennedys.”

“I think she is physically attracted to me,” he wrote. “I sure know that I have it big for her. My day will come. I must be patient.”

Before his death, Hoover may have destroyed his copy of Teddy’s diary.



Three fraternal bathing beauties lined up on the beach *(left to right)*: **Bobby Kennedy**, the bantam weight; **JFK**, the middleweight; and **Teddy**, the heavyweight.

Rose once evaluated her sons, defining Bobby as the best looking. “I believe all of them will grow up to be heterosexuals. If anything, from their father, they’ve inherited too great an interest in women. I wish each of my boys would be faithful to his wife. But my dreams rarely come true.”

Perhaps the F.B.I. chief was prompted to destroy it based on his loyalty to Joseph P. Kennedy. When the elderly Kennedy had heard that Hoover might be considering a run for the presidency, he’d written him, informing him that whether he opted to appear on either the Republican or the Democratic ticket, that he’d become his largest political contributor. Apparently, according to his aides, Hoover was very flattered with such an endorsement. Joseph had also written, “If you decide to run, I will be not only your heaviest contributor, but your hardest campaign worker.”

On his deathbed, Teddy left specific instructions that his diaries not be made public until 2034.

The existence of these very private diaries was revealed in the summer of 2010, when the FBI released previously sealed files.

In 2010, after Teddy's death and after much legal wrangling about releasing them, his F.B.I. files were made public. They included a total of 2,352 pages covering, for the most part, the period from 1961 to 1985. The files contained information about the many death threats Teddy had received during the course of his controversial career. Most of the crazies had threatened to merely shoot Teddy, although one man said he was going to kill him with a crossbow.

One tantalizing detail contained within the F.B.I. files revealed that when Frank Sinatra had been more or less shunned by the Kennedys because of his mob associations, he plotted revenge. As stated in the F.B.I. file, "Sinatra wanted to attack the character of Edward and Bobby Kennedy and that of his former brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, by putting them in compromising positions with women." Presumably, during these "set-ups," they would be secretly photographed and subsequently blackmailed.

"During the heyday of Camelot, Teddy joined his brothers at nude sex parties around the White House pool, or in some instances, at Jack Nicholson's home in Los Angeles," said David Powers, a member of JFK's "Irish Mafia" at the White House.

"But Teddy was devoted to Jackie until the day he died…and beyond," Powers said. "He was always there for her, and she was always there for him—a plane accident, the drowning of Mary Jo Kopechne, his aborted dream of becoming president. She was his confidante and lover."

When JFK died, Teddy stood by Jackie, although at the time, most of her world gravitated around Bobby. "He was my rock," she later recalled. "But I'll never forget Teddy's loyalty and concern as well. I knew I had lost one Kennedy brother, but I also knew that I would always have the love of Bobby and Teddy as well."

For business advice after JFK's death, she turned more to Teddy than to Bobby, because she felt Bobby did not have a good sense for business.

JFK had left an estate of $15 million, but most of it was in trust for Caroline and John Jr. He had not updated his will since 1954. Jackie complained to Teddy, "Jack did not adequately provide for me."

She had purchased her Fifth Avenue apartment from funds derived from the sale of their home in Georgetown.

JFK wanted her to receive only $150,000 a year, with the understanding that if she remarried, that annual stipend would be automatically diverted to Caroline and John Jr. Recognizing that she'd need more, Teddy was instrumental in getting Bobby to promise to supplement that income with an additional allowance of $50,000 every year.

Teddy later complained to Rose Kennedy and others, "I love Jackie dearly, but she doesn't know how to live on a budget. She'd spend $100,000 on a flower pot that belonged to Catherine the Great, or else be willing to pay $60,000 on this 18th-century Russian decanter."

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Jackie may not have realized how much Teddy meant to her until his life almost ended on June 19, 1964. Fighting for the passage of the Civil Rights Act in Congress, he exited from the Senate Chamber to fly to Springfield, Massachusetts, where the Democrats were holding their State Nominating Convention. As a candidate for re-election as Senator, he was running unopposed and had been scheduled to speak there.

At 8:45PM, a twin-engine Aero Commander 680 became airborne, flying out of Washington's National Airport in the direction of Springfield, carrying Teddy, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana and his wife, Marvella, and Teddy's legislative aide, Edward Moss.

Another Edward (Edward Zimny) piloted the plane, which encountered thunderstorms all the way to western Massachusetts.

Seeking shelter from the violent storm, Zimny wanted to land, but impatiently, Teddy demanded that he continue. "I'm already late, god damn it," he shouted.

Bayh later claimed that moments after Teddy said that, the plane just seemed to fall to the ground.

Teddy had unfastened his safety belt at the time and was standing in a half-crouched position under the low ceiling. The plane crashed into an apple orchard three miles from the Barnes Municipal Airport *[aka the Westfield-Barnes Regional Airport]*, near Springfield. Edward Moss and Edward Zimny were each killed instantly.

When Teddy regained consciousness, he found himself in the Cooley-Dickenson Hospital in Northampton, Massachusetts. Bobby was at his bedside. Teddy's doctor did not expect that he would live through the night. The outlook was dismal: Three vertebrae in his lower spine were fractured (one of them crushed), two ribs were broken, and one of his lungs had been punctured.

Bayh was hailed as a hero. He'd crawled back into the burning plane to pull the injured Teddy from the wreckage.

According to Nancy Tuckerman, when Jackie heard the news, she almost fainted. She dropped all her engagements and flew at once to Northampton.

When he saw her, tears welled in his eyes as he looked up into hers. “Jackie, oh, Jackie,” he said in the presence of a nurse. “I fear I’ll never walk again.”

She met with doctors and then flew in two specialists from Boston, who assured her that with the proper care, Teddy would recover satisfactorily.

As if she were his loyal wife, Jackie stayed by his side, administering to his needs and comforting him.

In January of 1965, Jackie claimed, “It was one of the proudest moments of my life when both Teddy and Bobby were sworn in together as U.S. Senators.

[Teddy reclaimed his seat that year as Senator from Massachusetts. In the meantime, Bobby had established residence in New York and had beaten Republican challengers to become one of New York State’s Senators, fighting down charges that he was “a carpetbagger from Massachusetts.”]

In July of 1965, Jackie celebrated her 36th birthday at the house within the Hyannis Port compound which she’d inherited from JFK. Both Bobby and Teddy flew to her side to honor her.

When Jackie came to stay in her house within the Kennedy compound, **Bobby Kennedy** was “the midnight kissing bandit.”

Seemingly without the knowledge of other members of the Kennedy clan, except for Teddy, Bobby slipped into the widow’s home to spend nights with Jackie, usually not leaving until four in the morning.

Near the end of her visit to Hyannis Port, when Bobby was occupied with business. Jackie wanted to be driven to the end of the Cape, having a late lunch in Provincetown. Teddy agreed to spend the day with her. The Secret Service observed what happened during their excursion.

Jackie and Teddy never made it to P-Town. They did get as far as Bunny Mellon’s home on Cape Cod, where reportedly they spent eight hours together before driving back to Hyannis Port to face an angry Bobby.

Gore Vidal, then a confidant of Jackie’s, later claimed, “To my knowledge, this was the first time Jackie got physical with Teddy. She was in love with Bobby, if she were ever in love with anyone, but she also believed in the revenge fuck—for example, Jackie and William Holden. She’d heard rumors of Bobby’s other affairs, and she was jealous. Also, Teddy, before he got old, fat, and jowly, was a real good-looking guy back then. He was seductive to Jackie, and I think she went for the former football player big time.”

David Powers witnessed the beginning of Teddy’s romantic interest in Jackie that developed and became more passionate shortly after JFK’s death, and then continued until up to and after her marriage to Aristotle Onassis.

“Let’s face it,” Powers once told his cronies, “Teddy has always had the hots for Jackie ever since he first laid eyes on her. In fact, he told me that the reason he married Joan was that she had some of Jackie’s qualities. I think he was always determined to get her, but he knew he’d have to wait for the opportune moment—and that would be a hell of a long wait. If Jackie went for both Jack and Bobby, why not Teddy? It’s known to happen in families. One brother, two brothers, a trio of brothers. Women have been known for ‘brother love’ since time began. I knew a case in Boston where a woman lost her husband and then turned around and married his brother—you figure.”

One night in Boston, Teddy told Powers, “I’ve always been in love with Jackie, right from the beginning. She’s always been special to me. When Jack died, I knew she was seeing Bobby, too, but that didn’t stop me. Bobby couldn’t always be with her.”

Teddy revealed that he continued his affair with Jackie long after she and Bobby had ended their sexual liaisons, based on fear that a public revelation would damage his hopes for the Presidency.

The staff at Hyannis Port were among the first to spread rumors about Jackie and Teddy, based on their many late night sightings of Teddy leaving her home at Hyannis Port, often at three or four in the morning.

Powers said that he once, in 1966, went sailing with Teddy and Jackie and that he went below to the galley for a cold beer.

"I guess Teddy and Jackie didn't hear me. I saw something I wish to this day that I had never seen. All three of us were beyond embarrassed. But we got over it."

"I think that Jackie was feeling very vulnerable. She was still in love with Bobby, but she'd heard—whether it was true or not— that he was involved in a torrid affair with Candice Bergen. I mean, she was genuinely attracted to Teddy, but I also suspect that there was an element of payback to Bobby for his cheating heart."

The Beltway crowd, always the first to know, was familiar with Jackie's affair with Bobby in the wake of the President's death. But news of her sexual liaison with the family's youngest brother resonated like a bombshell.

Some biographers have dismissed Teddy's affair with Jackie as "another one of those newspaper romances." But his diaries revealed otherwise, and close personal friends claimed that it was "an affair of the heart."

Although in the beginning, Teddy slipped under the radar screen of the press, the tabloids picked up on the rumors buzzing about Bobby and Jackie. Ted Sorensen said, "The public had a difficult enough time accepting the fact that Bobby and Jackie might be lovers. That Teddy also came in for Jackie's loving care was just too much at the time. But as the years went by, and as she called on him more and more to be the so-called 'man in her life,' the rumors gained traction."

In the late 1960s and 70s, Jackie and Teddy shared many intimate moments together in Washington, Hyannis Port, New York, on a Greek island, or in Palm Beach. Away from the prying eyes of the paparazzi and inquiring reporters, they indulged their long-simmering passion.

Journalist Leon Wagener may have been the first to break the story of a romance between Jackie and Teddy. The reporter wrote, "When Ted finally made love to Jackie, he fulfilled the dream he'd had to possess his brother's beautiful wife. Obviously, he knew it was a grievous sin and an insult to his late brother, but he couldn't control himself."

Wagener quoted a family insider who asserted "Ted in his diaries wrote about his romance with Jackie in great detail. He didn't want his family, especially Rose, to learn of his dalliances with her."

Powers said, "The Kennedy family eventually became aware that Teddy, not just Bobby, was more than a brother-in-law to Jackie, but it was a subject that dare not speak its name. No one wanted to talk about it. The revelations about Bobby and Jackie were already too much for this overburdened family. The thing between Jackie and Teddy was just too much to handle. Another disgrace."

In 1958, with JFK as his best man, Teddy had married Joan Bennett, who had the same name as the celebrated screen beauty. She was a cloistered debutante from a Catholic college, participating as the bride in what was described as "the Wedding of the Year."

Joan Bennett, a beautiful, cloistered debutante from a Catholic college, married Teddy Kennedy.

Although her marriage began like something from a storybook, it turned—for her at least—into a private hell.

Joan told Jackie, "The only reason Ted married me was that he couldn't get me any other way. Believe it or not, I went to my honeymoon bed a virgin."

"How quaint!" Jackie said.

Months later, Joan told Jackie, "I had no idea of what I was getting into by becoming a Kennedy."

Jackie went to great care not to let Joan know about her illicit affair with her husband.

Jackie and Joan had bonded on many issues, especially those associated with the Kennedy family, and the clan had dubbed them the two "outlaw-in-laws." Joan considered Jackie "the most sophisticated woman in the world," and often turned to her for help in solving her marriage problems.

Joan had repeatedly been shocked whenever she was confronted with evidence of Teddy's infidelity, but Jackie, on the other hand, had hardened into a veteran of the serial adulteries of JFK and his brothers. "Kennedy men are like that," Jackie told Joan. "They'll go after anything in skirts. But it doesn't mean anything. Jack always came home to me."

Jackie was disturbed that Joan did not seem to have her resilience and strength, and saddened when she drifted into alcoholism.

It appeared that Ethel, perhaps innocent at the beginning, later came to realize that her husband was carrying on with Jackie. Once at Hickory Hill, Teddy arrived for dinner and came up behind Ethel, grabbing her and embracing her tightly. "Cut it out," she scolded him. "We'll have no more of this Bobby-Jackie stuff."

Chuck Spalding also noted that at one party at Hickory Hill, a band was hired for the night, "Ethel and Bobby were inside the house, Jackie and Teddy were high on daiquiris. With the band playing, she was seen dancing close to Teddy, pressing her crotch against his."

Jackie was aware of Teddy's womanizing and drug and alcohol abuse. Richard E. Burke, who worked on Teddy's staff for ten years, noted that in his autobiography, *The Senator*. One night, in search of something Teddy needed, he opened a drawer in his office. There, Burke found a box of poppers and an old wooden cigar box. In that box, he discovered a plastic via filled with cocaine, as well as a "bullet" *[in this case, an aluminum cocaine dispenser]*.

Burke observed, first-hand, the senator's womanizing. "Teddy owned the proverbial little black book of names and phone numbers, and it was crammed with his entries: Amber, Annie, Bonnie, Carla, Cindy, Claudia, Debbie, Felicia, Florence, Greta, Hillary *[no, not that one]*, Janice, Ellen, Kathy, Laura, Libby, Margaret, Mary Ann, Maureen, Nancy, Nicole, Norma, Patti, Peggy, and Stephanie, to name a *few*. The women were a scattered assortment of types, mostly blonde, some quite smart, others simply bimbos who liked the high times and fast life."

Teddy Kennedy made a lot of mistakes. One was living an adulterous life, and the other involved recording details about his passion for other women, notably Jackie, in a diary.

His private, innermost musings were later discovered in the seat pocket of a commercial airline and leaked to the media.

The photo, above, shows Teddy's wife, **Joan**, furious and pregnant, after her return from the funeral of Mary Jo Kopechne after she drowned in Teddy's car at Chappaquidick.
According to Joan, "It was the beginning of the end for Ted and me."

Jackie later told Bunny Mellon, Tuckerman, and others, that her greatest moment experienced with herself, Bobby, and Teddy as a trio came in May of 1965. Queen Elizabeth invited her to the ceremonial inauguration of a monument to JFK at Runnymede, the site in southern England where in 1215, King John *[the dissolute, half-crazed youngest son of Henry II and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine]* had signed the Magna Carta. The British government had designated a small plot of land in an English field, a monument in perpetuity to JFK, that would forever belong to the United States.

President Johnson made an airplane available to Jackie, and she asked both Teddy and Bobby to fly with her, along with Dean Rusk, the U.S. Secretary of State. She also took Caroline and John Jr. along on the flight.

Queen Elizabeth herself attended, noting that Jackie shed tears as she heard various speakers laud her husband's deeds and character.

When she returned to America, she wrote to Johnson, thanking him for the use of the airplane. "It was such an emotional and difficult day for me—so many thoughts of all my loss surged in me again."

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When Bobby decided to run for the presidency in 1968, he knew he would not be able to conceal his affair with Jackie. Both of them knew that they had to bring closure to their romance.

After Bobby's exit as a romantic figure in her life, Jackie turned more and more to Teddy, even though she was also secretly dating Aristotle Onassis.

Just before Bobby's announcement of his candidacy for President, Jackie met with her friend, Truman Capote. He later gossiped about what she revealed.

"I'm in love with two men at the same time, both Bobby and Teddy," she allegedly confessed. "They appeal to me in very different ways. With Bobby, it's a sex thing. We're equals. But with Teddy, it's an incestuous mother/son relationship. Sometimes I hold his head on my breast and cuddle it like a Madonna with her child."

When Teddy and Jackie heard the news of that dreadful event in the kitchens of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, they turned to each other as never before. At first, neither could believe that Bobby, only a few minutes after winning the California Primary, and like JFK before him, had been assassinated. Jackie told Chuck Spalding, "When Jack died, Bobby was my rock. When Bobby died, Teddy was my rock. I don't know what I would have done without him. He helped me get through the darkest nights."

"After Bobby's death, Teddy and Jackie made a bond sealed not with blood, but with something even more personal…sex," Vidal claimed. "I call it the Devil's Pact. It involved the ongoing promotion of the Legend of Camelot, not the reality of the Kennedy administration. As he proved, based on his reputation as Warhorse (or Lion) of the Senate, Teddy was a far more dedicated liberal than either of his older brothers had ever been. JFK never went too far to the left of public opinion, but Teddy, aided by Jackie, plotted to make himself the Senate's symbol for a new kind of Kennedy liberalism."

Jackie celebrated her 39th birthday on July 28, 1968, at Hyannis Port. Teddy was by her side. Later, they watched *The Thomas Crown Affair*, starring Steve McQueen.

Before midnight, she shocked Teddy by announcing that she planned to marry Aristotle Onassis. "You are the last surviving brother and the head of the family. I am included in that family, and you need to fly with me to Skorpios to look out for my interest in the formulation of a prenuptial agreement."

After Bobby's death, Jackie asked Teddy if he would become Caroline's godfather. "She would like it very much if you, her Uncle Teddy, would take over."

Neither Teddy nor Bobby had wanted Jackie to marry Onassis. But when Teddy saw that she was determined to go through with it, he agreed to fly with her to Greece and organize financial matters with her new groom. He didn't welcome the task "but for you, Jackie, I'll do it. Someone has to see that your interests are protected."

Of the many powerful men she knew, Jackie wanted Teddy to negotiate the details of a pre-nuptial agreement with Onassis. During the most intense of the negotiations, Jackie flew to Athens on a shopping expedition, leaving her husband-to-be alone with her brother-in-law and lover.

During their subsequent negotiations, Onassis likened Teddy's role "to a priestly hustler peddling indulgences."

Onassis, known as "the world's toughest negotiator," assured him that he would replace Jackie's annuity and also ensure that she was protected. He invited Teddy to inspect his kennel of well-trained German shepherd police dogs, always on site to patrol Skorpios.

Teddy was able to persuade him to agree to give Jackie only $1.5 million up front. Back in New York, Teddy turned to financial wizard André Meyer, who at first demanded $20 million up front for Jackie, but finally settled for $3 million.

When Jackie returned from her shopping trip to Athens to reconvene her role in the premarital negotiations, Onassis invited her and Teddy to a celebration aboard the *Christina*. Knowing Teddy's fondness for beautiful young women, he arranged for eight of them to be flown in from Athens.

As a means of concealing his affair with Jackie, Teddy deliberately made a play for one of the blonde bimbos. For whatever reason, Onassis had invited Nico Mastorakis, a professional journalist and photographer, aboard as one of his guests.

When Mastorakis snapped a photo of Teddy, soaked in ouzo and holding a blonde in his arms, the senator

became furious. He grabbed the camera from Mastorakis and tossed it overboard. “If you report any of this,” Teddy shouted at him, “I’ll have your ass.”

Teddy Kennedy *(top left photo)* was blamed for the drowning death, on July 18, 1969, of **Mary Jo Kopechne** *(top right)*. He had been a top contender for the Presidential bid of 1972 until he abandoned the scene of the accident and didn’t report it until many hours later.

Teddy later recalled, “I have no memory of how I escaped from the car *(depicted in lower photo)*. I repeatedly swam down, underwater, to see if the passenger was still inside. I was unsuccessful in that attempt.”

The next day Jackie and Teddy told Onassis they had to discuss private Kennedy business, and he turned over the *Christina* and its crew to them to sail to an uninhabited offshore island. He assigned two of his security guards to accompany them. Suspicious of their motivations, Onassis ordered one of his guards to discreetly spy on them.

Once they arrived at the island, Teddy asked one of the guards to direct them to its most secluded cove. The guard found a beauty spot for them with warm water and white sands. Teddy instructed the guard to stand at a lookout point and signal if anyone was coming, and he also asked the guard to turn his eyes away to allow them some privacy.

Of course, the guard didn’t do as instructed and spied relentlessly on his two charges. He later reported to Onassis that he’d seen them nude and lying together on a blanket, kissing each other passionately. And whereas the Greek tycoon had long ago learned about Jackie’s affair with Bobby, it was the first time that Onassis learned that Teddy was also sexually involved with his sister-in-law

Although Onassis decided not to confront Jackie with this indiscretion, he vowed to get “revenge” on Teddy. He did not specify what that revenge would be.

Somehow, Teddy learned that Onassis had uncovered details of his affair with Jackie. “Onassis is powerful and he’s ruthless,” Teddy told Powers. “He could easily put out a contract on me. He’s killed others, maybe Bobby himself.”

The Massachusetts senator had long been suspicious that Onassis had been behind the assassination of his beloved brother, Bobby. Reportedly, his diaries revealed that Teddy lived in “constant terror” that Onassis might have him murdered. “I’d wake up in a cold sweat, fearing a killer was in the house.”

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Astronauts were setting foot on the surface of the moon at 11:15PM on that fateful evening of July 18, 1969. Viewers around the world were absorbed with the implications of that event until something occurred that evening that knocked stories about the moon landing off the front pages.

Kennedy associates Joe Gargan and Paul Markham had arranged a weekend party for the “Boiler Room Girls”

on Chappaquiddick, a tiny islet off the coast of Martha's Vineyard. These secretaries had previously worked as aides to Robert F. Kennedy, who had been assassinated about 13 months previous to the night in question.

Based on events that transpired on that long ago July evening, one of the secretaries, a blonde, blue-eyed beauty from Pennsylvania, Mary Jo Kopechne, would have her picture plastered during the week that followed on the front page of virtually every newspaper in the world.

Early in 1968, Bobby Kennedy had been forced to abandon his love affair with Jackie to make a run for the U.S. presidency, and at that point he had more or less "surrendered" Jackie to Aristotle Onassis. But he still needed a sexual tryst here and there, as he flew from city to city across the vast American continent.

Bobby's eyes fell on a campaign worker, Mary Jo Kopechne, who was pert and pretty. She'd taught school in Alabama before migrating to Washington in 1963, where she got a job as a secretary to the hard-partying Senator George Smathers of Florida, one of Jack Kennedy's best friends.

At a staff party in Washington, Smathers introduced Mary Jo to both Bobby and Teddy Kennedy. It was rumored—never proven—that Bobby flipped a coin with Teddy to determine who got to her first. "You know the rules, Teddy," Bobby is alleged to have said. "One of your older brothers always gets there first, if Dad hasn't already beaten us to her."

Mary Jo and Bobby launched an affair that was still going on at the time of his assassination in 1968. After Bobby's death, Mary Jo mourned him for a while, but not for long. Soon she was secretly dating another married Kennedy brother, Teddy.

Smathers later asserted that "The call from Mary Jo that I had been anticipating finally came in. She told me she was pregnant with Teddy's child. If word of her condition ever leaked out, the Republicans would take over the White House."

Eventually, Teddy's most trusted advisors learned that on the night of Mary Jo's last automobile ride, he had planned to discuss the delicate subject involving her having an abortion. For Teddy it was the only way, although apparently she did not believe in abortions and actually wanted to have Teddy's baby.

At the party, he announced to the guests that he was driving Mary Jo to the departure point for the ferry departing for Edgartown, the last boat scheduled to leave that evening.

What happened next is still disputed today. Mary Jo got into Teddy's "scraped up knockaround," as he called it, a 1967 Oldsmobile 88. She would never be seen alive again.

At 12:40AM on that fatal night, Christopher Look, Martha's Vineyard's part-time deputy sheriff, spotted a parked car near Dike Road. This was more than an hour after the Senator asserted that the accident had occurred. Teddy stated that he had returned to the cottage, site of the party, on foot.

When Look saw the couple, a man and a woman, parked in the car, he approached the vehicle, assuming that the driver might be lost. But before he reached the Oldsmobile, the vehicle suddenly accelerated, heading for Dike Road and toward the bridge. The deputy sheriff opted not to follow the car, but noticed the license plate, noting only that it began with the letter L. Teddy's license plate was L78207.

Traveling at about twenty miles an hour, Teddy's car headed toward Dike Bridge, a wood-timbered span angled obliquely to the road. It was unlit, with no guardrail. Even though he applied the brakes, to his horror, he drove over the side of the bridge, plunging into tide-swept Poucha Pond. After crashing into the murky waters, the vehicle came to rest upside down.

Battling great odds, he managed to free himself from the car and swim to the surface. He later claimed that he tried to swim down and free Mary Jo, but failed—"maybe seven or eight times."

Teddy walked to the departure point for the Edgartown ferry, which had long ago shut down for the night. Amazingly, in his weakened condition, he swam across the 500-foot channel, although he later claimed he almost drowned.

Back in his room, he took off his clothes and collapsed, but still made no calls. He later said, "I had not given up hope all night long that, by some miracle, Mary Jo would have escaped from the car."

After a sleepless night, he began to call friends for advice. Surprisingly, his first call was to Jackie in New York City. They were engaged in an affair at the time, even though she was married to Onassis.

Jackie, according to unconfirmed reports, advised Teddy to call the police at once and to assert that when he left the scene of the accident, he was in a state of shock and did not realize a passenger was left inside the submerged car. "Plead temporary amnesia," she advised, but he did not heed her warning.

Before he finally turned himself over to the police later that morning, he phoned at least two dozen Kennedy advisors. Long before the crime was officially reported to local authorities, the cover-up had begun. Only when Teddy learned that the police had discovered Mary Jo's body did he cross back and head for the station in Edgartown.

He showed up in person at police headquarters to report the accident. It was widely assumed at the time that he

had been drunk and needed time to sober up. If it had been proven that he was driving while drunk, the charges would have been far more serious.

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A week later, on July 25, Teddy pleaded guilty to a charge of leaving the scene of an accident and causing injury. Judge James Boyle sentenced him to two months in jail but suspended the sentence because of the Senator's "unblemished record." Teddy strenuously denied press speculation that he and Mary Jo had "any romantic relationship whatsoever."

No autopsy was ordered which, of course, would have produced the devastating news that Mary Jo had been pregnant. Dr. Donald Mills, the medical examiner, signed the death certificate, claiming that the cause of death was accidental drowning.

In theory, at least, the District Attorney's office in Massachusetts did investigate the fatal accident, but their data was never made public. A year later when there was a call for retrieval of the file on the accident, the entire dossier had mysteriously disappeared. It has never been recovered.

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In spite of the scandal, Teddy was so popular with the voters of Massachusetts that when he ran for his Senate seat again in 1970, he won.

He sat out the presidential race of 1972, refusing to run as George Mc-Govern's vice presidential running mate. Four years later, because of renewed interest by the media in Chappaquiddick, he also chose not to run for President in 1976.

In 1980, in his pursuit of an impossible dream, Teddy foolishly sought the Democratic nomination for president against Jimmy Carter. He would lose the nomination and Carter himself, as the Democratic Party candidate, of course, then lost the election to Ronald Reagan.

Jackie called Ted and bluntly told him, "Even if you had won the presidency, you'd be the fourth Kennedy brother to be killed. Let's face it: you get dozens of death threats every week, and all you need is for one of them to be valid."

In his biography, *The Deeds of My Fathers*, author Paul David Pope wrote about how his grandfather and father founded the *National Enquirer* and then expanded it into the best-selling tabloid in America. Maxine Cheshire, a gossip columnist for the *Washington Post*, had stumbled across the facts associated with Mary Jo's pregnancy. In 1980, on the eve of the election, she was willing to sell her information, just as Teddy was challenging Jimmy Carter.

"Once people read it, there'd be no way that Ted Kennedy could ever run for president, maybe not even for dog catcher in Massachusetts," Pope wrote.

Pope said, "the story named names, none of them lacking attribution, and included no anonymous quotes. There were dates, times, places, and supporting documents."

Peggy Dattilo, an *Enquirer* reporter, interpreted the details associated with the assertions that Mary Jo had been pregnant by Teddy as "airtight—good, solid reporting." She told her editors that when the story hit, it would "be huge, bigger than anything since Watergate." In all likelihood, she believed, Teddy would have to resign from the Senate.

But against everyone's expectations, the paper's founder, Generoso Pope Sr., never ran the story. He bought the story simply as a means to kill it, in effect suppressing this scandalous revelation by trading it in a murky back-room deal for an innocuous vanilla-flavored feature article dictated directly by Ted Kennedy himself.

For Pope and his *Enquirer*, for reasons never fully understood, the benefits involved a personal behind-the-scenes interview about how Teddy had become a father figure to his late brother's children. Pope ran the story under the headline: *THE HEARTACHES & HAPPINESS OF RAISING 16 KENNEDY CHILDREN*.

A fair trade? Nearly all newspeople today think not.

"What people cared about was Jackie Kennedy and her two teenagers, Caroline and John Jr.," Pope maintained. "They cared about them a whole lot. JFK's three direct survivors were the Holy Grail of the tabloid world."

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During the worst scandal of his life, the drowning of Mary Jo, Teddy spent many long evenings being consoled and comforted by Jackie.

He returned the favor in 1975 when Onassis died in Paris. Once again, Jackie called on him to serve as her

negotiator, facing an iron-willed adversary, Christina Onassis.

He even flew with her to Paris, arriving the day after Onassis' death. Teddy accompanied Jackie to the small chapel in the hospital where his body was on display in an open bier. On his chest was a Greek Orthodox icon.

Later, an embarrassing incident occurred. As Jackie was leaving the chapel, the paparazzi snapped a picture of her. "Her wide grin stretched from Montana to Texas," said journalist James Brady, visiting Paris at the time.

Later that day, Valentino *[aka Valentino Clemente Ludovico Garavani, best known simply as Valentino, the Italian fashion designer]* visited Jackie in her hotel suite after she'd phoned him in Italy, asking him to fly to her side at once. She demanded a new black dress specifically designed and crafted for Onassis' funeral. "I've got to look right," she told him.

A maid walked in on Jackie as she was being fitted by Valentino.

The maid later reported that when she went to clean up the bedroom and bathroom, she found a nude Teddy shaving in front of the mirror.

Valentino later recalled, "First, I was amazed that Jackie, no stranger to funerals, didn't already have an array of black dresses. Also, it appeared rather shallow of her, even frivolous, that she was more concerned with her image at the funeral than her dead husband. She didn't look like a widow in mourning."

Jackie, Christina ("weeping all the way"), and Teddy flew together from Paris to Greece, the plane leaving from Orly Airport outside Paris.

In Athens, the paparazzi awaited them. Jackie had demanded that Teddy accompany her to the funeral. Privately, aides heard her instructing Teddy, "I want you to bleed that bitch for millions." She was, of course, referring to Christina.

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The romance of Jackie and Teddy didn't entirely escape the radar screen. Word spread in the London tabloids about a possible romance between them when in January of 1985 they each attended the funeral of Lord Harlech, less formally known as David Ormsby-Gore, in North Wales.

During the course of their involvement in that event, Teddy was seen on several occasions entering Jackie's quarters after eleven at night and not departing until dawn.

After Teddy's failed presidential bid in 1980, he and his soon-to-be ex-wife, Joan, entered a bitter two-year struggle over a financial settlement.

In the 1980s and early 90s, Jackie and Teddy saw less and less of each other, although they talked frequently over the phone. They occasionally got together for a romantic tryst and came together for any type of emergency. She often talked with him about the future of her children.

Teddy and Jackie had long talks about John Jr. running for President of the United States. By this time, the Senator had decided that he would never consider running again for president.

Jackie shared with him her reservations that "some lunatic will try to shoot my son, wanting to be as famous as Lee Harvey Oswald."

"She knew the sacrifices that her son would have to make, but I think Jackie was willing to back him," Teddy said. "By the time John ran, Jackie would by then be the *grande dame* of the Democratic Party. I'm sure she'd campaign for him."

Teddy showed Jackie a letter he'd received from Senator George Smathers of Florida:

[John would make a marvelous candidate. Imagine having another John F. Kennedy in the White House. Even if he's only a 'junior,' he's far and away the best looking of all the Kennedy kids—he has more Jackie's look than Jack's—and he has all the other attributes that can take him a long, long way—even to the White House.

Seen here with long hair, **John F. Kennedy, Jr**., was photographed on June 7, 1979, at his graduation from Phillips Academy. His girlfriend at the time was Jeanne Christian.

Already, Teddy Kennedy and Jackie were plotting his future, and a role for him as President of the United States.

He is not a political animal like some of his cousins, but if he ever got into the game of politics, he'd be damn successful.

John Jr. would probably come as close to making it to the White House as anyone I've seen of the Kennedys. The question is, how badly does he want it? There are lots of sacrifices ahead. Is he willing to make them?"

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When Jackie was diagnosed with cancer and was dying in 1994, she talked to Teddy every day and saw him when she could. In her final hours, he was one of her last visitors, offering her what comfort he could and telling her that he loved her.

His devotion was very evident when he delivered, in front of the assembled mourners, a loving eulogy to her memory.

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In August of 2009, Edward (Teddy) Kennedy, the long-standing senator from Massachusetts, affectionately known as "the Lion of the Senate" for his defense of the middle class and working poor, died at the age of 77 of brain cancer

He was deeply mourned by his devotees. But despite their adulation, he was an object of scorn from his conservative enemies, who objected to, among other things, his scandalous past.

Brothers who survived JFK's assassination: **Bobby** *(left)***, the Grieving Widow,** and **Teddy Kennedy**

Edward M. Kennedy (1932-2009)
RIP, Lion of the Senate

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Jackie Marries Onassis

("A Grizzled Satrap")

And Enrages Half of America

Jackie O and Daddy O Mesmerize the World A Bizarre Marriage Pact / Jackie's Bottomless Closets

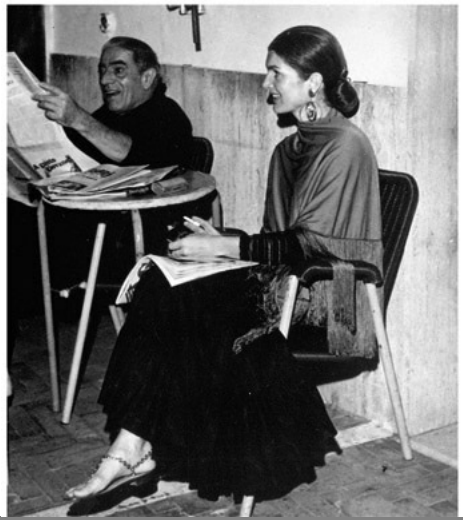
In 1968, it was the marriage that shocked the world. **Jacqueline Kennedy**, the beloved widow of the slain U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, at the age of 39, married the Greek shipping tycoon, **Aristotle Onassis**. At the age of 62, he was old enough to be her father.

Not only was he assailed as an "international pirate," but he was a non-Catholic, which shocked the devout Rose Kennedy. The marriage would become the high point of his life; for her, it would lead at long last to her financial independence.

In one of the lighter moments of their married life, **Jackie** helps a shirtless **Ari Onassis** decorate his bandana-covered head with flowers. Before their marriage turned to ashes, they had many peaceful moments aboard his luxury yacht, the *Christina*. She even sketched portraits of him. He gave her diamonds, and she purchased modish neckties for him in Paris.

In London, she bought him a cigar cutter for his long Cuban cigars.

Jackie was not the first of the Bouvier sisters to be seduced by Aristotle Onassis, the fabulously wealthy Greek shipping tycoon. His longtime mistress, the opera diva Maria Callas, often entertained Prince and Princess Stanislas Radziwill. Jackie's sister *[Lee Bouvier Canfield Radziwill]* had married the Polish aristocrat after her ill-fated marriage to Michael Canfield. Her marriage to Stanislas was heading for rocky shores when they accepted an invitation from Ari and Maria to sail with them aboard his luxurious yacht, the *Christina*, named after the Greek's daughter.



There were quiet moments together, far from the madding frenzy.

Reportedly, somewhere during the friendship of this quartet of international jet-setters, Lee and Ari became secret lovers. Their affair was conducted almost in front of Maria and Prince Stanislas, but for months, neither of the cuckolded lovers knew what Ari and Lee were up to.

When Lee made a play for Ari, he had reasons other than her charm and beauty to become involved with her.

"I thought I was buying a prize cow when I married Jackie. How could I know the cow would cost me $50 million?"

—Aristotle Onassis

"I don't dislike Mrs. Kennedy, you know. I hate her!"

—Christina Onassis

"As Jackie became the world's greediest woman, this need for financial independence dominated her life. She would never feel secure or be happy until she could control her own fate. Her only means would be unlimited wealth. Jackie knew she could not depend on anyone else. So many people had let her down early in life. She was a prisoner of her own need to possess great wealth. It would not be easy. But Jackie was prepared to do whatever it took to achieve her dream. Unlimited wealth was her goal. It was essential to her very being, and no one would keep her from her destiny."

—January Jones in *Oh, No…Jackie O!*

"Everybody knows three things about Aristotle Onassis. "I'm fucking Maria Callas. I'm fucking Jackie Kennedy. And I'm fucking rich!"

—Onassis to his aide, Johnny Meyer

After all, her brother-in-law was President of the United States, and Ari had suffered through many unresolved problems and legal issues with his shipping interests there.

In the golden days before the arrival of "The Widow," the tempestuous opera diva, **Maria Callas**, and **Ari Onassis** *(seen together in the upper photo)* were fodder for tabloid gossip for more than a decade. Here, they share a tense moment, contemplating their future.

Below, **Maria** entertains **Sir Winston Churchill** aboard the *Christina*. The former British prime minister was one of Ari's best friends and spent nearly all of his holidays aboard the opulent yacht.

When Dwight D. Eisenhower was president of the U.S. in the 1950s, Ari had been hit with criminal charges, claiming he had conspired to defraud the U.S. government through his use of surplus American ships on which he failed to pay taxes. Instead of going to court, he settled for $7 million.

Maria followed Ari around the world, usually aboard his yacht. For a decade or so, they conducted an flamboyant international and tempestuous relationship. Maria referred to themselves as "the two most famous Greeks on earth."

Her first suicide attempt came not over Ari's eventual marriage to Jackie, but when she learned that her lover was having an affair with Lee. Maria had discovered an empty Cartier box with a love note to Lee.

Maria's close companion, Mary Carter, claimed, "When Maria found out in 1963 that Onassis was having an affair with Princess Radziwill, she was so upset she overdosed. It was Onassis who discovered her on the floor of her apartment in Paris. He walked her around, fed her black coffee, and, of course, called a doctor. Onassis saved her life."

The world first learned of Ari's romance with Lee when Drew Pearson in his *Washington Post* column wrote, "Does the ambitious Greek tycoon hope to become the brother-in-law of the American President?"

Once freed of their respective spouses, Maria always begged Ari to marry her, but he kept postponing it. He told confidants, "Marriage is not on my mind. The reason I won't marry Maria is because I can't stand the thought of sitting through an entire opera and staying awake."

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Collapsing in pain on August 7, 1963, Jackie had been rushed to a hospital. A four-pound son was born six weeks early. Patrick Bouvier Kennedy experienced difficulty breathing. After struggling for life for forty hours, he lost the battle on August 9.

When Lee told Ari that her sister had been depressed after little Patrick's death, he invited her for an R&R cruise aboard the *Christina*. He turned over the yacht to her "without my presence."

Unknown to Lee, Ari had always been far more entranced by the image of Jackie than he was by her younger sister.

Worried about the cruise adversely affecting his 1964 presidential election campaign, JFK told her, "Christ, Jackie, Onassis is an international pirate." But he finally relented and let her go on the cruise.

The President was relieved to learn that Ari was turning over his yacht to Jackie and her friends, but she went behind his back and insisted on Ari's presence during the cruise aboard the *Christina*.

Knowing how well publicized the cruise would be, Jack wanted to shape the guest list. Lee Radziwill and her husband were totally acceptable, even though Prince Stanislas often referred to Ari as "a moral leper." JFK also asked Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr. and his wife, Suzanne, to go on the cruise as chaperones. The son of FDR didn't really want to go, but he acquiesced to his President's request.

Maria wanted to go on the cruise, but Ari told her no. Later, she said, "Aristo kicked me out. He told me he couldn't have his concubine on board with the First Lady of America."

Sometime during the cruise, even with Lee aboard, Jackie began her affair with Ari. The source for that was FDR Jr., who saw Ari leaving Jackie's onboard suite at three o'clock one morning. When he returned to Washington, he reported the news to both Senator George Smathers and to then Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Hoping to discredit a President he loathed, LBJ, who liked gossip, spread the news.

No doubt, the Secret Service agent who had been assigned to Jackie during the cruise also transmitted the news to JFK. The President was devastated, even though during Jackie's absence he was conducting perhaps at least five or six illicit sexual trysts a week, usually from within the White House.

JFK called Jackie aboard the *Christina*, demanding that she leave the cruise and return to Washington at once. She refused and slammed down the phone on him.

She had another motivation for defying her husband: During the course of the cruise, she was confronted with the most damaging rumor she'd ever faced in her marriage. Somehow, Ari had heard the accusation that JFK had slept with Jackie's sister, Lee, once back in 1957, when Jackie was in the hospital giving birth to Caroline.

Author January Jones printed this accusation as fact in her biography, *Jackie, Ari & Jack: The Tragic Love Triangle*. She wrote: "Another reason for Jackie's erratic moods was the fact that her husband, Jack, had slept with her sister, Lee, while she was in the hospital having Caroline. This was revealed by her step-sibling, Nini Gore Auchincloss. Now who wouldn't be depressed? Can you blame her? As you can see, none of this could ever be revealed without doing irrevocable damage to the Kennedy image."

That Jack slept with Lee is one of the most notorious scandals of the Kennedy era. Another source of the rumor was the gossipy Truman Capote, a confidant of both Jackie and Lee. Although he was often loose with his facts, he never let that stop him from telling a good yarn.

Jackie apparently believed the many stories and rumors. Capote later claimed that Jackie slept with Ari aboard that cruise, shortly before the president's death, "as an act of revenge."

This romantic triangle may be too murky ever to be straightened out, but the alleged Lee/JFK liaison remains one of the most painful rumors Jackie had to confront. Later, thanks to the Internet, the rumor spread around the world.

During the cruise, Ari took Jackie to his dream island of Skorpios, which he had purchased six months previously for $100,000. It was shaped like a scorpion. "Lovely, lovely," Jackie said, little knowing that it would one day become her home. He falsely told her that he was going to build a copy, with 180 rooms, of the Cretan Palace of Knossos on one of the island's hilltops. He never did. It went the way of so many of his promises of yesterday.

At the end of the cruise, Ari presented Jackie with a stunning diamond-and-ruby necklace worth about $50,000 in 1963 dollars.

It is believed that Lee wrote to the President, informing him of this lavish gift to his wife. She may also have claimed that Ari had been showering Jackie with gifts throughout the cruise. "All I got from our Greek tycoon was three little bracelets that even Caroline wouldn't wear," Lee claimed.

Publicly, FDR Jr. denied that there was anything romantic between Ari and Jackie during the cruise. JFK's personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, later challenged that statement. "I felt they did have an affair. I think so, yes. Jackie loved money. Onassis had money."

That debate about a possible JFK/Lee affair continues to this day. What is known is that the cruise marked the end of Ari's affair with Lee. "He fell in love with Jackie on that cruise," said Ari's aide, Johnny Meyer.

Christina was one of the first to learn of her father's new attachment to Jackie, referring to it as "my father's unfortunate obsession."

Jackie, in the words of one of the Secret Service agents, returned to the White House “with stars in her eyes—Greek stars.”

After the cruise, the White House staff noted a stronger and more independent woman. Jackie had successfully beguiled one of the richest and most powerful men in the world, and she was married to the leader of the Free World.

Back in Washington, Jackie was willing to acquiesce to her husband’s latest demands. He wanted her to help him counter the negative publicity of her Onassis cruise. Spurred on by a sense of guilt, she was eventually persuaded to accompany him on a political trip.

“Where are we going?” she asked. “What God-forsaken place in the American wastelands?”

A young **Ari Onassis**, hot, ambitious, ruthless, and handsome

“Dallas,” he answered.

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Aristotle Onassis spun an orbit of dizzying riches, twisted intrigue, and questionable mores. Yet with all the revelations about him, during his lifetime, much of the world never learned some of his darker secrets. His true story revealed a deeply complicated man who was much more complex in his desires and obsessions than the public ever realized.

As Ari once confessed to Richard Burton in the presence of others, “I’ve been known to walk on the wild side. And I just know that you have, too. We are larger-than-life figures with passions no single woman can satisfy, not even a series of women. For the ultimate satisfaction, and I may be speaking just for myself, I have to go outside the boundaries of usual morality. I visit clubs, particularly in Paris, where unspeakable acts are performed and strange trysts are arranged. I know what it is to be raped—that is, being on the receiving end—and I know what it is to rape others. Sex is one thing and can quickly become routine. But when you’re raping a virgin ass and causing great pain, you feel like the ruler of the universe.”

When Johnny Meyer worked for the aviator and mogul, Howard Hughes, he was defined as Hughes’s “public relations consultant”—read that “pimp”—catering to Hughes’ bisexual proclivities, arranging dates for him with the likes of Errol Flynn.

Later, when Meyer was employed by Ari Onassis, he was referred to as “an *aide-de-camp*,” an elegant name for a cover-up man. And just as he had done for Hughes, he also arranged sexual trysts for Ari.

Meyer wasn’t at all surprised when Ari requested for him to arrange rendezvous, often aboard his yacht, with some of the most beautiful boys in Europe.

“He had a thing for Swedish or Danish boys,” Meyer later confessed. “He was real rough on them. At some point they were left bleeding. I think Ari didn’t consider it really good sex unless he drew blood from somewhere on the boy.”

“It’s sick, I know, but I got well paid. And I never lost one night’s sleep over the morality—or lack thereof—of my clients.”

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So just who was this mysterious tycoon of bizarre sexual tastes?

Named after the two most famous philosophers of ancient Greece, Aristotle Socrates Onassis (1906-1975), the second husband of Jacqueline Kennedy, was broke at twenty-one and a millionaire at twenty-three. In later life, his ever-present sunglasses evoked memories of Al Capone, the Chicago gangster. Critics claimed that Ari's business practices also evoked Capone's.

By the age of eleven, when growing up as a member of the prosperous Greek minority in Smyrna (a Turkish city known today as Izmir), Ari showed a lusty interest in women, but was forbidden to date. His sexual introduction came in the basement of the Onassis home in Smyrna's suburb of Karatass with the family laundress, who was only about twelve years old herself. His stepmother, Helen, came home unexpectedly and caught her stepson seducing the young girl on a pile of dirty laundry. It was *coitus interruptus*.

Socrates, his father, found out about it. He was rather proud that his son had discovered sex at such an early age, but he advised him, "Never do it with some peasant girl. Sleep up."

Throughout his life, Ari would follow that advice. As his future mistress, opera diva Maria Callas, recalled, "Aristo was obsessed with famous women. He was obsessed with me because I was famous."

As he traveled the globe in later life, he seduced everybody from silent screen vamp Gloria Swanson to tobacco heiress Doris Duke.

Like other Greeks living in Smyrna at the turn of the 20th century, the Onassis family had survived under Turkish rule, their lives controlled by the Ottoman sultan.

In 1919, at the conclusion of World War I, Greek troops, backed up by Allied war ships, occupied Smyrna. But after three politically inconclusive years, during the summer of 1922, the Turks mounted a massive and particularly brutal invasion as a means of reconquering Smyrna. Seeking revenge on the Greeks, the Turkish soldiers slaughtered Greeks by the hundreds. Greeks were hung from lampposts and trees. The smell of burning flesh filled the air.

When the subsequent Turkish occupation of their city, Ari's father, Socrates Onassis, was arrested and tossed into a Turkish prison. His wife, Helen, along with his three daughters, fled to an evacuation center, waiting transport to Greece.

Only sixteen years old at the time, Ari remained in Smyrna with his fiercely courageous grandmother. A Turkish general, accompanied by a very handsome lieutenant, requisitioned the Onassis house, kicking out the old grandmother, who went to live with relatives.

But the general and his lieutenant ordered Ari to stay, especially when they learned that he spoke perfect Turkish. He was a reasonably attractive boy back then, not the 62-year-old who married Jackie and was frequently ridiculed as "the toad." The general and the lieutenant needed a servant boy, someone to cook for them and bathe them at night after heating the water. Before the dawn of the next morning, Ari had been introduced to sodomy.

One would have to see a picture of young Ari to understand why two Turkish officers were interested in his sexual favors. In 1922, George Sevdayan was selling newspapers on the street when he first met Ari, who was hawking cigarettes. "I saw a very handsome young boy peddling those newspapers. Though not very tall, he had particularly penetrating eyes. In spite of his shabby clothes, he was totally different from the other poor kids in the streets. He already had an outstanding personality, and I knew he was going far and didn't give a fuck how he got there, just so long as it was on the way to the top."

In the 1960s, British journalist Peter Evans was summoned to Paris for an interview with Ari about the possibility of writing his autobiography. During their discourse, Ari talked about his homosexual relationship with the Turkish lieutenant, apparently not mentioning the general. But he claimed that he cooperated as a means of securing his father's freedom, since he was in a Turkish prison at the time.

Ari never quite recovered from the trauma of the Turkish rape of his native city of Smyrna in 1922. Three of his uncles were executed. His aunt, Maria, and her husband, Chrysostomos Konialidis, and their daughter perished when the Turks set fire to a church in Thyatire in which hundreds of Christians had sought refuge.

When Ari was allowed to visit his father, Socrates, in prison, he found him sharing a cage with twenty other prisoners. Unshaven and unwashed, he was suffering from dysentery and wracked with nightmares.

Ari told Socrates, "I will do anything—and I mean anything—to obtain your release." After saying that, he returned to their former home where a Turkish general and a lieutenant were waiting for him.

He was smart enough not to resist the sexual advances of the older Turkish officers, who brought food home for him to cook. In time he managed to find bootleg liquor for them. According to reports, Ari became very fond of the general and especially that young lieutenant. Even when they didn't want to have sex with him, he nonetheless made himself available.

His first heartbreak came when he heard that his benefactors had been reassigned and were leaving Smyrna.

Abandoned by his newly acquired friends, Ari made a clever move. He distracted some Turkish border guards and fled to the safety of the U.S. Marine compound. He was a very persuasive teenager and within a day was allowed to board an American destroyer steaming for Lesbos, relative safety, and freedom.

The first chapter of Ari's life had ended. Fame and fortune, and far more adventures than his young mind could have conjured up at the time, awaited him.

After reuniting with his relatives, he decided that Greece could not contain his ambitions. He felt that the New World offered far greater opportunities, and in 1923, he sailed to Argentina, landing in Buenos Aires.

As a newly impoverished young man fleeing from the Turkish/Greek/Armenian conflicts of the early 20th century, Ari became a dishwasher, a laundry man, a night clerk, and a telephone operator. It was in the latter job that he began to make money by eavesdropping on business deals being transacted, many of them illegal. He made notes, studied the financial pages, and thanks partly to his eavesdropping, stayed several steps ahead of his rivals. Suddenly, he was making $1,000 on a linseed oil deal. He speculated on animal hides and furs and made a whopping $10,000. He was on his way. In time, he managed to seduce Evita Perón, who made him an omelet after their night of lovemaking.

Evita with **Juan Perón** in 1951. Here, too sick to stand, she relies on him to support her as crowds adore her.

"The rest of my story," as Ari so often recalled, "is history."

Or, as his enemies put it, he was a "poor boy who became a rich boy, smuggler, thief, liar, lover, family man, international playboy, and the most glamorous tycoon of the 20th century, wallowing in fabulous wealth and fabled extravagance." He combined famous mistresses and kept boys with infamous, often corrupt deals and unholy alliances.

Throughout his life, Ari, according to friends and enemies, always seemed to have a handsome boy or young man stashed somewhere—Athens, Monaco, New York, Paris.

The best reporting on this subject was done by Christopher Andersen, a *New York Times* bestselling author, known for works which include *Jack and Jackie* and *Jackie After Jack*.

When Ari sailed with famous friends (they included Sir Winston Churchill) aboard his luxurious yacht, the *Christina*, he often amused them with stories of ancient Greece and spoke openly about homosexuality. One night he told Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., that "every Greek man worth his salt has a wife, a mistress, and a beautiful young boy on the side. It is our custom."

He had read everything he could about Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), the King of Macedonia who overthrew the Persian Empire and went on to conquer the known world. He could talk endlessly about Alexander's love for his boyhood friend, Hephaestion. Both boys had been tutored by Aristotle, Ari's namesake.

Ari regaled his guests with stories of Alexander's great love for his companion, Hephaestion. When the youth died in 326 BC, Alexander had the attending doctor arrested and crucified. As an homage to their male-male love affair—the most famous in the ancient world—he also ordered the tails and manes of "all the king's horses" be clipped. He also erected a memorial to his lover—the Lion of Hamadan, which stands in northern Iran to this day, awarding Hephaestion the status of a minor deity.

Ari had the walls of his bathroom on his private island of Skorpios decorated with Grecian homoerotic art printed on specially commissioned wall paper he had made in Athens.

Aboard his yacht, Ari would explain that homosexuality, like hunting, was thought to foster masculine, especially martial, bravery.

"Alexander sacked cities, tortured his captors, killed his rivals, and even sold hordes of people into slavery," Ari claimed. "But he was really a great guy, and that's why I named my son after him."

Jackie Kennedy Onassis pictured herself a world class decorator of taste and style. She found the Grecian homo-erotic art that her new husband used to decorate certain walls of his yacht, the *Christina*, "a bit much."

For years, Ari had kept two boys, one in an apartment near his residence on the Avenue Foch in Paris and another in Athens. His bodyguards claimed that when he first met these boys they were either twelve or thirteen years old.

He also kept two Italian boys in Rome. In Andersen's biography, he quotes Frank Monte, Ari's bodyguard, as saying, "One lived in Ari's apartment, and the other was always on call when Ari wanted him. One was dark, the other was blonde haired but deeply tan. They were handsome in their early twenties. Ari would play around with them, making lewd jokes in front of me and other bodyguards. He mistreated them, even beat them for pleasure."

"Onassis would talk quite openly about his two regular boys and other occasional boys," according to Monte. "He'd say, 'There's nothing wrong with it, I just like to do it with boys.' He'd often take one or the other to his bedroom and after a while there would be the sounds of punches and screams. Then we'd get a call from Ari to fetch the poor kid and throw him out. Sometimes a boy would be yelling, '*No, no, I love you!*'"

As if the homosexual link wasn't shocking enough for some of his friends, over the years there have been revelations from his staff that Ari was also cross-dresser, a trait he shared with J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I.

"When he didn't have important guests—or when Jackie wasn't aboard the *Christina*—he often liked to dress up in women's clothing late in the evening," claimed party planner Stratis Kopoulos, who once catered all-male parties for Ari aboard the *Christina*. "When Mrs. Kennedy was aboard, he never wore women's clothing. But he used to with Maria Callas. She was much more tolerant and understanding of such things. In fact, I think he dressed in her gowns. It was bizarre. But during my employment with Onassis, before he fired me for some silly reason, I saw plenty. I could write a book, but he'd probably have me murdered."

His penchant for wearing women's gowns dates back to the 1930s.

Ari liked to dress up in the gowns of his mistresses, including those of Ingebord Dedichen, a socialite whose toes he liked to lick. He'd met this woman—a tall, blonde Norwegian—in the summer of 1934. "He found my feet as smooth as a baby's bottom," Ingebord claimed.

She also noted that he enjoyed anal humor, which she did not. One night he complained that he was suffering from piles and wanted her to investigate before he was scheduled to visit a doctor the following morning. He asked her to check that part of his anatomy. When she did, she was rewarded with a fart in the face.

This tawdry incident was revealed in an incendiary biography, *Aristotle Onassis*, compiled by the London Sunday Times team.

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It is a little known fact, and one that the Kennedy clan in later years didn't want publicized. But Bobby and Ethel announced that their first choice for their firstborn's godfather was none other than the infamous Red-baiting Senator, Joseph McCarthy.

Bobby was involved with McCarthy's eradication of Communists during one of the most extraordinary episodes of political theater in the history of the American Republic. That involved the dispute between the U.S. Army and McCarthy over the draft status of G. David Schine, the boyfriend of Roy Cohn. J. Edgar Hoover watched the hearings in fascination.

In New York in the 1960s and 1970s, Ari befriended Cohn, the lawyer who became notorious in the 1950s as the chief honcho for McCarthy during the nationwide witch hunt for "pinko commies."

Much of the early animosity between Bobby and Ari stemmed from Cohn's friendship with Onassis, whom Bobby resented. Long before Ari became intimately involved with Jackie, Bobby had intensely disliked the Greek shipping tycoon.

The tension between Cohn and Bobby grew so viperish that Bobby left the Subcommittee in July of 1953 after

only five months of service.

Meanwhile, F.B.I. director J. Edgar Hoover also began to cool on McCarthy, fearing that the Senator was overplaying his hand.

Joseph Kennedy, Sr. stayed in touch with the FBI director and, at one point in the 1950s, urged him to resign from the F.B.I. to become his own personal director of security, but Hoover was determined to stay on at the F.B.I.

Washington did not tolerate Roy Cohn in silence. Here, *TIME* showcases **Cohn** *(left)* and **David Schine** on the cover of an edition from 1954.

Both Bobby and Hoover learned that Cohn was supplying beautiful young hustlers to Ari every time he visited New York.

“Ari worshipped physical beauty in men, the Grecian ideal,” Cohn told his best pal, New York literary agent Jay Garon and others one night at a gay bar in Manhattan called Country Cousin. “Ari wanted only the best and was willing to pay for it.”

“He often preferred blonde boys, but occasionally made special requests,” Cohn confided to Garon, who himself had been Hollywood director George Cukor’s kept boy when he was young.

“One time he requested a hustler who looked like Sal Mineo, and I came up with a dead ringer,” Cohn said. “Ari paid very well, at least five-hundred dollars back in the days he could have gotten the boy for fifty bucks. He did like to manhandle guys, though. In the old days, he paddled their butts until they were scarlet red, then sodomized them. In later life, he mauled them viciously, and word got out to the hustler community. It got so bad that at one point only masochists would do his bidding.”

Top photo: Red-baiting **Senator Joseph McCarthy** *(left)* of Wisconsin and his chief legal honcho, the horrendous **Roy Cohn,** hunted so-

called communists in the government, and destroyed careers throughout Hollywood.

In the lower photo, **Cohn**, a notorious homosexual, looked like a cadaver as he entered the final throes of AIDS.

A young French-Canadian, who danced professionally at a male strip joint, The Gaiety Theater in midtown Manhattan under the name of "Spike Jones," recalled a weekend he spent with Ari in the late 1960s at an estate in Greenwich, Connecticut, which Cohn had rented.

"I was taken there in a Rolls Royce painted money green. The chauffeur's uniform matched the color of the car. Once there, I was ushered into Cohn's private bedroom. The room was dimly lit but I knew at once it was Onassis waiting for me. He was lying completely nude on the bed. He had a large, thick, uncut prick, and I feared he'd cause me some damage."

"The room itself was a bit bizarre," Jones claimed. "A big oak four-poster bed, like something from *Gone With the Wind*, dominated the room, with a mirror overhead so the client could see the action. The walls contained dozens of toy soldiers and a lot of stuffed animals, including Teddy Bears in all colors. There were a lot of statues of oversize devils, showing very large cocks painted pink with scarlet red tips. When I went into the bathroom, it was covered in tiles depicting pink and chartreuse frogs fucking. It was really weird."

"I knew that Onassis would want to screw me," Jones said. "And he did. He turned me over on my stomach. He wasn't interested in the front part of my anatomy. Before penetration, he paddled my ass until it blistered ... I mean really hard. Then with no preparation, he entered me forcefully, and I screamed. That turned him on. He piled on top of me and pounded me without mercy. He was an older man, and it took him a long time to get off. All the while he was fucking me, he bit into my neck like a vampire. I was bleeding. I think he actually got off drinking my blood. I was told later that he was a Satanist, just like Sammy Davis, Jr., who was also one of my clients one dark night. But that's another story."

"Onassis gave me a thousand dollars that night and told me to keep my mouth shut," Jones claimed. "I usually had to take on ten clients for that kind of money. I couldn't believe that Jacqueline Kennedy was married to that sicko. I bet he didn't pull that shit on her. For the money he paid, I was willing to take him on again, but he never requested me after that one night. He did use other guys from our agency but they were sent to the townhouse where Cohn lived in Manhattan. Cohn was definitely the pimp for Onassis."

"Two weeks later, Cohn called me back to the same estate," Jones said. "My neck had healed somewhat. He thanked me for taking care of his friend Onassis, but warned me he could pay only one hundred dollars. He wanted me to penetrate him but when I took a look, I just couldn't. His entire anus was covered with venereal warts. My hard-on became a softie, and Cohn kicked me out of the house."

In the late 1950s, Ari became a frequent visitor at Le Carrousel in Paris, a club that featured a stage with female impersonators. Partly because of regular injections of female hormones, many of the young men were "incredibly beautiful, feminine, and sexy," as critics claimed.

A "Doctor Burou" performed sex-change surgery on many of them. After the genital surgery, some of them returned to Le Carrousel. In the words of Ari, "they were more beautiful than ever."

The club owner once told the underground press that Ari and "some other very wealthy men" often sponsored the sex-change surgeries so that these "newly liberated bodies could be turned into women."

According to the mistress of ceremonies, "Onassis paid for more surgeries and took more girls as his mistress than any other patron."

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It was November of 1963. Ari hadn't seen Jackie in months.

Sailing aboard the *Christina*, Aristotle Onassis heard a bulletin on his radio. It was out of Dallas. John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, had been assassinated.

Without alerting anyone, even his closest aides and especially Maria Callas, Ari launched into what he'd later call "my change of plans. My new strategy."

Ari joined Maria in Paris and spent his days watching the coverage of the President's death on television. Noting how brave and courageous Jackie was, Ari told Maria: "There's something Greek about Jackie." The diva was not impressed. "She's just putting on a grand show for the media."

Maria Callas, the greatest opera diva of the 20th century, and Aristotle Onassis, the promethean tycoon who revolutionized the international shipping industry, had begun a tumultuous courtship in 1959 that scandalized and fascinated the world.

"Maria Callas was the greatest artist we in Greece have produced since the age of Pericles," said Manuel Kulukundis, a spokesman for the Greek shipping industry.

Both Ari and Maria were Greeks, although the soprano was raised above a drugstore in Brooklyn. In later life, she sang only when she wanted to—one night she walked out on a performance for the president of Italy.

Callas changed opera forever, and her recordings became legendary.

All her life she fought "The Battle of the Bulge." After seeing sylphlike Audrey Hepburn in *Roman Holiday* in 1953, she went on a rigid diet—no liquor, no pasta, no bread, only one lean meal a day. Transforming herself, she took off nearly 70 pounds. In 1965, she showcased her new look in landmark performances of *Tosca* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Jackie, in mink and diamonds, attended one of her performances and came backstage to congratulate Maria. In a white satin Dior gown, Jackie looked stunning, "Madame Callas, this was one of the most thrilling nights I have ever had at the opera," Jackie said. "You were magnificent."

The prima donna replied, "You are magnificent."

Never again would the two divas have anything good to say about each other.

The world's couturiers, especially Dior and Givenchy, made Callas a symbol of Parisian and Milanese high chic. But in spite of all that, she faced an adversary more glamorous than she could ever be.

"How can I compete against this international prostitute and gold-digger?" she asked.

She was obviously referring to Jackie, who in just three years would become Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

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Callas, of course, was one of the first to realize that Ari had become serious about an attachment of some sort to Jackie. It took the rest of the world longer to catch on.

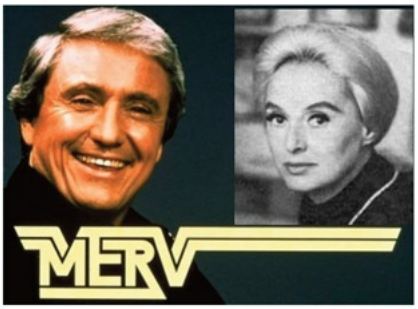
Even when members of the press learned that Ari had been seen with Jackie, they did not immediately connect a romance between "The Beauty and the Beast." Over the years, Ari had been seen with some of the most famous and beautiful women in the world, paying homage to the likes of Greta Garbo and Elizabeth Taylor.

Maria learned that Ari had been secretly seeing Jackie at her Fifth Avenue duplex apartment in New York throughout 1966 and into 1967. Even as late as January of 1968, Maria and most of the American public did not know how serious the relationship between Jackie and Ari had become. Jackie, it was learned later, had been entertained by Ari on the island of Skorpios and at his plush apartment on the Avenue Foch in Paris.

As Bobby started to run for the presidency in 1968, Ari and Jackie popped up everywhere. They were seen in New York at the exclusive "21" or at El Morocco, even at Ari's two favorite Greek restaurants in New York, Mykonos and Dionysus. Both of them were photographed entering Maxim's in Paris.

Jackie began to confide in him, complaining bitterly that she was "emotionally shackled" by the Kennedys, who held tight purse strings.

In August of 1968, Doris Lilly, a columnist for The *New York Post*, went on *The Merv Griffin Show* and proclaimed that Jackie Kennedy was preparing to marry Aristotle Onassis. The shocked audience vigorously booed her for such an outlandish suggestion. As she left the studio, a hostile crowd had gathered to denounce her, and one member jabbed a pointed metal nail file into her face, dangerously close to her eye. She made her way to a taxi, and en route, she was spat upon. But despite the horrified reaction of the American public, as represented by the audience that day at *The Merv Griffin Show*, the gossip columnist was right.



When columnist **Doris Lilly** *(right)* appeared on **The Merv Griffin Show** and announced that Jackie Kennedy was going to marry Aristotle Onassis, she was booed because of her "outrageous" claim.

After the show, as she was leaving the studio, an angry mob attacked her.

When Callas heard what Lilly had said, she claimed, "My God. Ari has gotten Jackie pregnant. What an ugly little bastard that one will be!"

Lilly, a former lover of Ronald Reagan, was highly critical of Jackie. She said, “She’s a hypocrite and, in truth, is a darker, more complicated person than the saintly widow the public saw. She assiduously protects her own privacy, but is herself an incorrigible snoop and gossip. When she moved into her Fifth Avenue apartment, she put a telescope in her living room and used it to try to spy on her neighbors. She is also a narcissist. During her White House days, the walls of her bedroom were lined with magazine covers of herself.”

After the assassination of Bobby Kennedy on June 5, 1968, the relationship between Jackie and Ari became intense. “If they’re killing Kennedys my kids are Number One targets,” she said. “I want to get out of the country.”

“Marry me and I will protect you and your children,” he promised. “I have the means to do so.”

He later admitted to Johnny Meyer, his chief aide, “It was an impulsive thing to do. I was shocked when she said ‘yes.’”

Before flying to Greece, Ari had to pay a farewell visit to Callas, in Paris, to face her and break the news. He was blunt. “I’m going to marry Jackie. I still love you, but I need Jackie in my life. It will not be a marriage of love. I need Bobby to win the presidency and look favorably upon my use of U.S. docks. Jackie needs me to buy privacy that she can’t find in America. She fears she’ll be murdered in the States or that her children will be kidnapped. She needs the armed security guards I can provide. Those Secret Service agents assigned to her are a pack of faggots.”

“I could never influence you to do anything,” Maria responded. “Go, then, to your woman who sounds like Marilyn Monroe playing Ophelia.”

At the door, he told her, “You know I will always love you.”

“My pain is too deep to speak anymore,” she told him. “Please leave. You will not be the first man to marry a woman you do not love, and Jackie will not be the first woman to marry a man she does not love.”

On the day of Onassis’ wedding to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Maria went into seclusion in her apartment in Paris. To protect herself from the paparazzi, she ordered her heavy draperies to be drawn.

in 1969, the Marxist film director, Pier Paolo Pasolini, invited **Maria Callas** *(above)* to interpret the (non-singing) role of the vengeful protagonist in his avant-garde film, *Medea*.

Drawing, chillingly, on her training as an operatic diva and as a deeply betrayed Greek, she didn’t have to sing a note.

When she finally faced the press in Paris, Maria said, “Mrs. Kennedy did well to give a grandfather to her children. Onassis is as beautiful as Croesus.” *[It was a reference, of course, to the ancient King of Lydia (ruled 560 BC-546 BC), famed for his wealth. According to legend and myth, he was hideously ugly, but so powerful that his subjects who did not bow and call him the handsomest man in the world were beheaded.]*

At least in public, Maria seemed to interpret the announcement of Ari’s marriage with a stoic but painful calm. But Lee Radziwill became hysterical during a call to Truman Capote. He later reported, “She was screaming and crying and carrying on.”

“How could Jackie do this to me?” Lee sobbed into the phone to Capote. “How could this happen?”

Capote later said, “Lee really thought she had Onassis nailed down. She wasn’t in love with him, but she loved all those tankers.”

There was a great irony in Jackie’s marrying Ari. Years previously, Jackie had rather prudishly warned her that Lee would damage JFK’s presidency if she married the Greek tycoon. “Obviously Jackie could give advice, but not take her own advice,” Capote said.

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On October 20, 1968, it seemed that the eyes of the world were focused on the private island of Skorpios, where Jackie married Ari. Some three dozen photographers invaded the island, ignoring signals and warnings from the *Christina*. As one reporter said, "They hit the beach amid the whirr of movie cameras and the rapid-fire clicks of Nikons and Leicas."

A journalist from London wrote: "Jackie looked drawn and concerned. She wore a long-sleeved, two-piece ivory chiffon lace dress with a pleated skirt. Her hair was secured with an ivory ribbon. The groom looked slightly off key in a blue suit."

Jackie's wedding dress was by Valentino.

On the day of their wedding, the press gave them new names—"*Daddy O*" and "*Jackie O*." Ari also presented Jackie with gifts priced at more than $1 million. Reporters dubbed it "the $20 million dollar honeymoon." Within the year he'd present her with another $4 million in jewelry, practically using a shopping cart at Tiffany's and at Van Cleef & Arpels.

She wore her $1.2 million wedding ring topped with a huge, heart-shaped ruby surrounded by diamonds.

Less than two dozen guests gathered on Skorpios in the chapel of the Little Mother of God.

The Vatican announced that Jackie would be living with Ari in "mortal sin," because of his previous marriage, in 1946, to Tina Livanos, the then-17 year-old daughter of another shipping magnate, Stavros Livanos. Tina had sued for divorce in 1960, charging adultery. Jackie was barred from receiving sacraments from the Catholic church, but was not excommunicated.

Guests at the wedding included not only Jackie's children, but Janet Auchincloss and the Kennedy sisters, Patricia and Jean Smith. Rose Kennedy refused to attend.

Ancient rites from the Greek Orthodox Church were included in the ceremony. Father Archimandrite Polykarpos Athanassiou took Ari's hand as he clasped Jackie's, and made three counterclockwise processions around the altar as part of the symbolic "Dance of Isaiah."

At the end of the ceremony, the newly married couple was showered with rice, flowers, and sugared almonds. A golf cart hauled them from the chapel to the pier, where the *Christina* waited to spirit them away on their honeymoon voyage.

Ari also showered Caroline and John Jr. with expensive gifts, but Caroline reminded her little brother of Homer's ancient warning from the *Iliad*, "Beware of Greeks bringing gifts."

A *Washington Post* reporter at the wedding claimed that Alexander and Christina "looked like they were attending a wake."

"My father may need a wife, but I sure as hell don't need a god damn self-enchanted stepmother," Alexander told Christina. "It's a perfect match. Father loves celebrities and Jackie loves gold."

World opinion right after the marriage was almost unanimous, summed up by one comment: "As far as husbands go, Mrs. Kennedy went from a Greek God to a god damn Greek."

In Rome, the magazine *L'Espresso*, wrote that Jackie's marriage to "this grizzled satrap, with his liver-colored skin, thick hair, fleshy nose, and wide horsey grin, who buys an island and then has it removed from all the maps to prevent the landing of castaways; and, on the other hand, an ethereal-looking beauty of 39, renowned for her sophistication and her interest in the fine arts, and a former First Lady at that."

The marriage found two supporters, Elizabeth Taylor, who had been frequently entertained by Onassis, and Jackie's distant relative, Gore Vidal. "He is charming, kind, and considerate," said Taylor. "Jackie made an excellent choice."

Vidal noted that the match was "highly suitable. They have something in common. Both are heavy smokers."

Rose Kennedy said, "Jackie is one of the world's most expensive women to maintain, and Onassis has one of the world's greatest fortunes."

In Paris, when Coco Chanel heard about the upcoming marriage, she said, "Everyone knew she was not cut out for dignity. You mustn't ask a woman with a touch of vulgarity to spend the rest of her life over a corpse."

Chanel's was just one of thousands, even millions of opinions heard around the world. Comedian Joan Rivers mocked the marriage. "Come on, tell the truth. Would you sleep with Onassis? Do you believe she does? Well, she has to do something—you can't stay at Bergdorf's shopping all day."

Headlines around the world denounced Jackie for marrying Ari. One tabloid in London claimed "JACKIE WEDS BLANK CHECK." *Bild-Zeitung* in Germany headlined their overview with "JACK KENNEDY DIES TODAY FOR A SECOND TIME." Even the staid *New York Times* claimed "AMERICA HAS LOST A SAINT."

In her defense, Richard Cardinal Cushing came forward, asking, "Why can't she marry whomever she wants to marry?"

In the weeks to follow, Cushing's defense of Jackie brought him an avalanche of hate mail, "some of which is in the language of the gutter." He decided to retire as archbishop on August 24, 1970, two years before the date he'd

previously announced. “I could no longer stand being the victim of such hatred and such violent attacks for expressing an honest and true opinion.”

Dorothy Schiff was the long-time publisher of the *New York Post*. During the course of 1968, she sometimes dined with Jackie.

In her autobiography, *Men, Money, and Magic*, she wrote: “Jackie wanted to marry Onassis more than Onassis wanted to marry Jackie.” Johnny Meyer, Ari’s chief aide, later confirmed that that was true.

When Jackie did marry Ari, the Greek mogul boasted of his sexual prowess to Pierre Salinger, who had been JFK’s press secretary,

“Five times a night,” Ari claimed. “She surpasses any woman I’ve ever known. She really goes for my Greek pole.”

Salinger later asserted, “Onassis could get very graphic in describing his physical relations with Jackie. Poor Jack must be turning over in his grave.”

Much of the world tried to imagine in horrified detail what it was like for Jackie to sleep with Onassis. Ruth Francisco, in her fictional *The Secret Memoirs of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, did it one better—she crafted a loose interpretation of how she imagined the wedding night:

“He sits back and shows me his fat clublike penis, wagging it at me, an old man with a young man’s penis, a fat, blood sausage penis. A drop of semen sparkles at the tip. Grinning, he dips his finger in the semen and rubs it on my lips—it tastes of fish and burnt leather. My body itches with disgust. Something squirmy with razor talons scratches to get out of my groin. I want to be punished by this ugly old toad, who puffs and grinds against me, his belly flapping against my body. The black-winged thing ejaculates with my orgasm, grunting, lurching pumping like an old farm machine, then, herky-jerky, wheezing, squealing like a pig. He collapses on me, crushing me with his potato-sack weight.”

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Until his marriage to Jackie, Ari had never faced such publicity. “The worst thing that can happen to a man is to become a celebrity,” he said. “It’s as if there were a law that you have to walk naked in public—no matter how well built you are, they make you look ridiculous.”

Like Marilyn Monroe, Jackie was always late for every appointment. Once, at her Fifth Avenue apartment, she staged a dinner party at 6PM that included Frank Sinatra, Peter Duchin, Leonard Bernstein, Bill and Babe Paley, and Mayor and Mrs. John Lindsay. Ari had to entertain them until Jackie made her appearance at 8:30PM. She made no excuses.

Only three months after their wedding, Ari developed an interest in a young Greek singer, known only as “Marinella.” Reportedly, she was the same age as his daughter, Christina. He seemed to like women with large bosoms, a kind of sexual pleasure and body aesthetic he did not get from Jackie,

Consequently, Jackie was left alone on Skorpios, with only fifty servants to keep her company.

But she wasn’t alone for long.

Seen leaving the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan, **Aristotle Onassis** relates to his stepson, **John F. Kennedy, Jr.**

Initially, he won the boy’s heart by giving him hundred dollar bills and purchasing expensive gifts for him.

Although Caroline remained sullen and reserved around her new step-father, John Jr., accepted him as less a paternal figure and as more of a kindly grandfather or else a rich, generous uncle.

She began dating a handsome Greek architect, Alex Hadzimichailis. She was often seen coming and going from his apartment in Athens, or else they were spotted together on the beaches of Skorpios.

She was interested in Greek ruins. Ari, on the other hand, believed that if you'd seen one ruin, you'd seen them all.

Alex served as a kind of tour guide, among other things, as the two of them explored other Greek islands. They showed up for the "Spring of Fertility" ceremony on the island of Kefkada; at an ancient fort on Corfu; and at the Chapel of the Virgin on Rhodes, where an icon is believed by locals to have miraculous powers. At one seaside café, a reporter observed Jackie and Alex enjoying a freshly caught lobster lunch. Alex cracked the claws of the lobster with his strong white teeth. She was heard to exclaim, "What a man!"

Many reporters became aware of this new beau in her life. *France-Dimanche* claimed as fact that Jackie planned to divorce Ari and marry Alex.

Freda Kramer wrote about a day in the life of Jackie O: "From a flash of cooling water or chilled martinis in a parched desert, to rubies big as pigeon eggs and diamonds dropping in hands as casually as clusters from a box of Crackerjacks, Jackie received the attentions and gifts due a fairytale Princess."

Jackie in 1967, during her courtship with Onassis.

When Ari was off island, Jackie liked him to remember her by sending little gifts presented in a charming little basket on her breakfast tray. Her gifts of choice were either gold or diamonds. The exclusive Zolotas Jewelry Store in Athens said that in less than a year, they sent her three dozen gold bracelets.

When Apollo landed on the moon, it was also the occasion of Jackie's birthday. He gave her a pair of gold earrings shaped like the moon and set with dangling diamonds as big as ping-pong balls.

Jackie soon took over directing the staff aboard the yacht. She demanded that eight varieties of caviar be on hand at all times, and she wanted in any season the most exotic fruits from around the world flown in on Olympic Airlines.

She was constantly airborne aboard Ari's Olympic Airlines and she received at least eight bomb threats a year. Fortunately, all of these turned out to be crank calls.

As time went by, the couple grew farther and farther apart. In one year alone, they went eight months without ever seeing each other. They also had different friends, moving in widely varied social circles. As Ari said in an

interview, “Jackie is a little bird that needs its freedom, and her security, and she gets them both from me. Our agreement is to spend a total of four months a year together.” One Christmas, Jackie spent in London with Lee Radziwill; Onassis celebrating in Paris with Maria Callas.

Throughout her marriage to Ari, Jackie suffered a series of nervous breakdowns, some more serious than others. Many of her friends wondered if she were cracking up.

An unidentified member of the yacht crew aboard the *Christina* reported to a newspaper in Athens that Jackie one night attempted suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills. She was discovered by a Greek seaman who called a doctor in time to save her life. For his heroic move, Ari gave the seaman a $10,000 reward.

Other rumors surfaced, including one that claimed that in Greece, Jackie dipped into the occult and was seeing some mysterious guru in Athens. It was reported that she was hearing the voice of John F. Kennedy late at night.

One tabloid at the time ran the headline—JACKIE MAKES CONTACT WITH KENNEDY’S SPIRIT.

Each day began with Jackie spending a lot of time looking in the mirror, searching for some new wrinkle.

As she grew older, there were the rumors of face-lifts. On one occasion, she was said to have arranged for a celebrated plastic surgeon to give her a facelife in her apartment in super secrecy, with nurses and operating room equipment brought in. She was also said to have flown to Rio de Janeiro to have cosmetic surgery performed by the famous Dr. Ivo Pitanguy. The brilliant Brazilian surgeon had previously performed face-lifts for such clients as the Duchess of Windsor.

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During the first year of her marriage, Jackie spent $1.25 million on clothing, though she hardly wore many of the items she purchased. If she liked a blouse, she’d order it in all colors available. Most of her money was spent on Manhattan’s Madison Avenue, causing *Women’s Wear Daily* to label her as “the retailer’s best friend.”

“What does she do with all those clothes?” Ari asked. “All I ever see her in is a pair of blue jeans.”

Jackie became a world class shopper, often spending $100,000 within ten minutes in a store. She never asked the price. “Charge it to Olympic Airlines,” became her refrain.

Sometimes at Parisian fashion shows, featuring the latest designs of Molyneux, Lanvin, and Valentino, she’d buy the entire collection. Of course, she didn’t have occasion to wear so many clothes, so she often sold them to resale fashion houses, pocketing the difference to add to her spending money.

Her secretary would deliver the expensive (unused) garments to Encore Consignment on Manhattan’s Madison Avenue, Jackie’s favorite resale house. She’d often arrive with a stock of garments from such designers as Halsted, Yves Saint Laurent, and Christian Dior. The only item the buyer at Encore ever turned down was Jackie’s red maternity dress.

Like Imelda Marcos of the Philippines, Jackie had a shoe fetish—Gucci’s for walking shoes, Veneziano’s for loafers, and Rome’s Casimir’s for low-heeled pumps.

In each of her individual closets, scattered at various sites across the globe, she had a different pair of shoes to wear for every day of the year.

In addition to her Fifth Avenue apartment, she had closets to fill on Skorpios, in Athens, and on the Avenue Foch in Paris, as well as a luxurious suite at Claridge’s, the most expensive hotel in London. There were other locations in Hyannis Port and New Jersey, as well as in Montevideo *[Uruguay]*, where Ari maintained a full-time staff of forty servants at his villa there, even though he and Jackie rarely visited. Not only that, but Ari had purchased the former Barclay Estate in Newport, immediately adjacent to the Auchincloss family’s Hammersmith Farm. She also kept a full wardrobe aboard Ari’s yacht, the *Christina*.

She also maintained a deluxe apartment in Monte Carlo, where she tried to avoid her dreaded nemesis, Princess Grace.

In October of 1971, **Jackie and Ari,** while vacationing in the Mediterranean, docked on the island of Capri. Jackie wanted to go shopping.

As *Women's Wear Daily* asserted, "Jackie continues to fill her bottomless closets. She is making Daddy O's bills bigger than ever with her latest shopping spree. She is buying in carload lots."

One day in March, she went into a Saint Laurent ready-to-wear boutique on Madison Avenue and "bought the place out."

London's *Sunday Times* claimed, "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Jackie's passion for collecting—clothes, objects, ambiences, and people—was a substitute for some deeper emotional need. Most chroniclers of Jackie's life and times have either sedulously ignored her profligacy or else treated it as a tic of personality. It was, however, central to her character and her class."

Jackie seems to rush ahead, as if fleeing from **Ari** and **John Jr.** in front of Manhattan's Plaza Hotel.

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Although the Greek tycoon had once compared Jackie to a diamond—"cool and sharp at the edges, fiery and hot beneath the surface," his opinion of her had long ago changed to "coldhearted and shallow."

One night in 1971, Jackie and Ari drank and dined at New York's El Morocco. She told him she had no room for him at her 1040 Fifth Avenue apartment. "The decorators have everything torn up," she falsely claimed. "You'll have to check into a hotel."

At the chic Manhattan nightclub, El Morocco, despite of her status as a seasoned forty-something, **Jackie** evokes a Vassar schoolgirl.

Ari evokes some aging "sugar daddy."

Ari actually maintained a permanent suite at New York's Pierre Hotel. He rightly suspected that Jackie was privately having intercourse with Teddy Kennedy. His plan involved entrapping the lovers by wiring her phone. That way he could sue her for divorce, charging adultery.

But Jackie's Secret Service agents kept too close a watch on her Fifth Avenue apartment for him to have men successfully bug her phones.

In fewer than five months after marrying Jackie, Ari was calling Callas, wanting her to take him back, including letting him sleep in her bed again. He said he no longer had sex with Jackie.

His marriage, as he reported, had been a disaster. Jackie had spent nearly $8 million to redecorate the *Christina*. "She spends her $30,000 monthly allowance in ten days," Ari claimed. "She runs up astronomical bills. She charges every piece of designer clothing in Paris and New York. And she makes sure she is somewhere else whenever I fly

into town."

Eventually, Ari was drawn back to the bed of the women he really loved. His affair with Maria began anew within her apartment at 36 Avenue Georges Mandel in Paris. As the weeks went by, she was seen with Ari at nightclubs and within high-profile restaurants such as Maxim's.

When Jackie saw a picture of Ari and Callas at Maxim's, she booked a flight to Paris. On her first night in their apartment on Avenue Foch, she demanded that he take her to Maxim's. Once there, within the restaurant's *Belle Époque* surroundings, she asked to be seated at the same table where he and Callas had recently dined. She even ordered the same menu that Ari and the opera diva had consumed.

The next morning, when Callas learned that Ari had accompanied Jackie to Maxim's, the diva flew into a titanic rage, accusing Ari of cheating on her with his own wife.

That afternoon, with its red dome light flashing, Callas, in an ambulance, was rushed to the American Hospital in Neuilly-sur-Seine, just outside Paris.

A bulletin was released by the hospital that evening: The news first came over RTL Radio. "Maria Callas has been admitted to the hospital following a suicide attempt. She is known to have swallowed a quantity of barbiturates, but her condition is not thought to be serious."

The press gathered outside the hospital noted that Ari did not rush to the side of his mistress. After having her stomach pumped, Callas was released within ten hours.

Even though Maria had agreed to become "the other woman," her renewed relationship with Ari was just as turbulent as before. There were good weeks and then violent explosions between these two lovers.

Involved with two of the most famous *[and temperamental]* women on the planet, Ari began to wind down, losing his stamina. As the months went by, he was frequently dizzy and he tired easily.

In New York, Ari began to meet frequently with the notorious lawyer, Roy Cohn. *[Anecdotes abounded about the ferocity of Cohn as a litigating antagonist. It was said that whenever a husband learned that Cohn was representing his wife in their divorce case, he became instantly fearful for his assets.]*

After only a few months of marriage, Onassis told Cohn that he had come to believe that Jackie "is playing me for a sucker. Her spending is out of control. She's never where I want her to be. The marriage has gotten down to a monthly presentation of outrageous bills…She is a beautiful woman, but 'millions beautiful' she isn't."

He instructed Cohn to entrap Jackie. "We've got to fix it so she doesn't take me to court demanding a queen's ransom."

"I'm your man, sweetheart," Cohn responded.

When asked about divorce, during one of the few times she actually answered a question from the press, Jackie said, "I will stick to Mr. Onassis until the bitter end."

After he met with Cohn, Ari flew to Paris, where he spent three days with Maria. He told her that he'd hired a private detective to trail Jackie. He was aware that she'd indulged in a number of affairs since marrying him. "She's been far more discreet than I have," he told the diva. "I'll be commencing divorce proceedings."

But by early 1975, all divorce proceedings came to an abrupt halt. Ari had far more pressing problems, as his empire was beginning to crumble. He failed in his attempt to dump his oil tankers as a means of consolidating his holdings. He also had to put his beloved Skorpios on the market.

Faced with dwindling revenues, he was also forced to sell Olympic Airlines. At one point, he grounded all of the carrier's planes and froze the salaries of his employees. The Greek government put into place its own management team and announced that henceforth, it would be running the airline itself.

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A sick and dying Onassis arrived at Orly Airport in Paris for his final visit. En route to France, his mind had been consumed, after years of "incompatibility," with his divorce from Jackie and with the painful loss of Olympic Airlines to the Greek government.

In a final display of his macho persona, he insisted on walking off the airplane unaided. After clearing Customs, he hobbled weakly to a waiting limousine, which hauled him to his apartment at 88 Avenue Foch.

Once there and in bed, he called Maria at her apartment, telling her that "The Widow," as he called Jackie, was in Paris. He promised Callas that he'd arrange to slip her into the American Hospital where he planned to check in the following morning. He admitted that both Christina and Jackie were opposed to her visiting him in the hospital.

Before going to sleep that night, he told his aide, Johnny Meyer, "You know, I'll soon be joining Alexander."

In the hospital, Ari had his gall bladder removed. Every forty-eight hours, doctors replaced his blood. He faded in and out of consciousness.

His daughter checked out of the Avenue Foch apartment and into the Plaza Athenée Hotel so as not to have to

share lodgings with Jackie, whom she loathed even more than she had on the day she had married her father.

Miraculously his condition improved, and Jackie returned to New York.

But back in Paris, Ari took a turn for the worse and entered a rapid decline. The Onassis staff could not reach Jackie. Maria was called secretly by a member of the Onassis staff, who told her she could come to the hospital for a final goodbye.

Wearing a blonde wig, Maria arrived at the back entrance of the hospital and was directed to the service elevator, which still contained a cart of smelly waste products. She crossed her heart before entering Ari's darkened bedroom. He was under an oxygen tent and appeared unconscious, barely alive.

At one point he opened an eye and seemed to recognize her. "It's Maria, your canary," she called out to him. "I will love you forever." Those were her farewell words to her longtime lover.

After that, she flew at once to Palm Beach to hide out and avoid "the attack of the paparazzi."

Christina was in the hospital room with her father one hour before he died. Although he was unconscious at the time, she bent over his body and, in a soft voice, whispered to him, "God is punishing you for your sins."

On March 15, 1975, Ari, under a morphine-induced sleep, with tubes attached to every part of his body, departed from the world. It had rained all day and night in Paris.

Jackie was in bed in New York and asleep when a call came in for her, telling her that her husband was dead. On hearing the news, she called the airlines and began packing at once to go to the funeral.

For her arrival in Paris the day after Ari died, Jackie was greeted with a sea of reporters and *paparazzi*.

In a black Valentino dress and a black leather coat, she read a statement:

"Aristotle Onassis rescued me at a moment when my life was engulfed in shadows. He meant a lot to me. He brought me into a world where one could find both happiness and love. We lived through many beautiful experiences together which cannot be forgotten, and for which I will be eternally grateful."

When Christina heard that, she told her aunts, "It's all bullshit! Jackie is at the funeral with her lover boy, Teddy, trying to bleed every cent from the estate. I've got to pay the whore off."

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Maria was still awake in her rented Palm Beach villa. She'd been unable to sleep that night. A bulletin came over the radio that Aristotle Onassis had died in Paris. On hearing that news, she went into seclusion, although reporters and the paparazzi began to converge around her villa, hoping for a statement.

Maria opted not to attend Ari's funeral, figuring that her appearance would make the solemn ceremony "a battle to the death for *paparazzi* hoping to catch Mrs. Kennedy and me in a catfight, or Christina pulling the hair of Mrs. Kennedy."

"Let Christina and Jackie fight it out over Aristo's estate," Maria said. When the Onassis will was read, his attorney called her in Paris. "I am so sorry," he said, "Mr. Onassis left you nothing. If you wish, I can return the letters you wrote him."

After the death of Ari, and after the loss of her once golden voice, Maria told friends in Paris, "I have now entered the Norma Desmond period of my life." She was referring, of course, to the tragic heroine of the movie, *Sunset Blvd*., which had starred Gloria Swanson, a former mistress of Joseph Kennedy.

Maria Callas died of a broken heart on September 16, 1977. She'd told a friend, "Life is no longer worth living after Aristo is gone."

Thousands of letters from fans around the world poured in. One ardent admirer in Milan wrote: "Maria Callas will live forever." An opera fan in New York sent a card, "Maria Callas, *prima donna assoluta* forever."

Author Nicholas Cage wrote the most romantic epitaph to Maria and Ari:

"In the end, happiness evaded Onassis and Callas. But it is not impossible to imagine that after Maria's remains were consigned to the sea, the tides of the Aegean carried those ashes in a southerly direction, around Cape Sounion, below the cliff crowned by the temple to Poseidon, through the Corinth Canal, where the yacht *Christina* passed so often to the Gulf of Corinth and into the Ionian Sea. In a world where the winds and tides brought Odysseus home to Ithaca after ten years of wandering, it's not hard to envision the last relics of Maria Callas finally coming to rest on the green shores of Skorpios, still flowering with the oleander and jasmine that she and Aristo brought there from the Caribbean."

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On the occasion of Onassis' funeral. On March 15, 1975, Jackie called upon Teddy Kennedy once again to fly to Skorpios to negotiate her share of the estate, this time with Ari's daughter, Christina.

Having flown in from Paris, Teddy showed a lack of sensitivity from the moment he sat in the limousine with Jackie and Christina en route to the church service.

After the limousine pulled away from the curbside, Teddy immediately turned to Christina, telling her, "Now it's time to take care of Jackie."

Christina burst into tears and escaped from the limousine, joining her bereaved aunts in the limousine behind. She later spoke of that moment to friends and business associates. Some of her comments reached the press and were published in biographies.

She said, "I was in a limousine with a pair of hungry vultures waiting to feed off the corpse of my dead father. Ted Kennedy was absolutely ruthless trying to protect his mistress. But it was her smile that drove me from the vehicle. Have you ever seen a carnivorous hyena come to feed as a scavenger? That was Jackie Kennedy. I never called her Jackie Onassis, because she was not a real wife to my father."

Almost deranged out of her mind, Christina had arrived on Skorpios to bury her father. She didn't want "The Professional Widow," as she called Jackie, to attend. "The golddigger has arrived for more gold," Christina told her aunts.

Christina, along with her father's sisters, Artemis and Mirope, bitterly resented Jackie's presence at the funeral. "She looks like she's going to a movie premiere, not a funeral," Artemis later said. The village priest, Apostolos Zavitsianos, said, "I was shocked by the widow's ear-to-ear grin as I was delivering the service. In all my years, I'd never seen that smile on the face of a widow."

On the way to the burial, Jackie tried to take her place behind the funeral cortege. Ari was to be buried next to the grave of his son, Alexander. But Christina and the sisters elbowed Jackie out of the way, forcing her to the rear of the procession.

A reporter from the Athens *Acropolis* crafted the blaring headline, "ONLY CHRISTINA CRIED—JACKIE WAS COLD."

Throughout Greece, people denounced Jackie's behavior at the funeral, angrily criticizing her light-hearted attitude.

It made matters worse when the front pages the next day ran a picture of Jackie, laughing as she had her hair styled at one of the most exclusive hair-dressers in Paris.

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Onassis left an estate of $1 billion, the major share going to Christina. After his funeral, Jackie and Christina engaged in an 18-month legal battle over Jackie's share.

Jackie's attorneys threatened to have a court invalidate Ari's will. Greek law required that a precondition of a will's validity demanded that it had to be composed "in a single sitting in a single location." Ari's final will had been composed during a flight with Jackie from Acapulco to New York. During its composition, in a fit of anger, Ari had interrupted the process for lunch in a Florida coffee shop while his plane was being refueled.

Christina Onassis *(depicted above)* was considered an ugly duckling by her slim and stylish mother, who warned her that she would never attract a husband.

"How wrong she was," said Christina. "When you're one of the richest women on the planet, the line forms on the right."

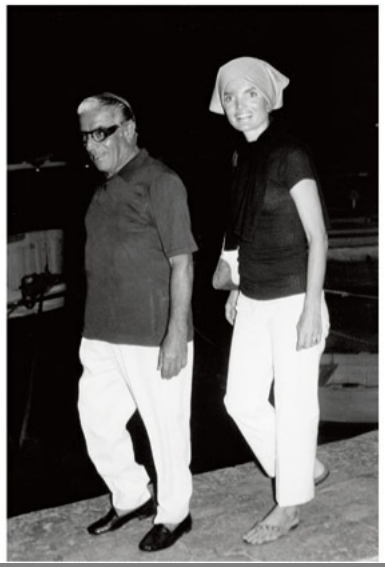
Technically, therefore, the will had not been prepared in one sitting, but at various times in various countries. Jackie's main attorney, Simon Rifkind, argued that if the will were invalidated, Jackie, as Ari's wife and according to the estate laws of Greece, would receive 12.5 percent of Ari's estimated billion-dollar estate. In U.S. dollars, that

would total $125 million.

Abandoning a protracted battle in the courts, Jackie agreed to accept Christina's offer of a flat sum of $20 million. Jackie would agree to abandon all future claims to the estate, including her share of the yacht *Christina*, and her one-quarter share of the island of Skorpios. Rufkind successfully negotiated for another $6 million, which would cover estate taxes. Jackie insisted that all of her personal letters to Ari be returned. Both she and Christina agreed not to publicly discuss the terms of the final settlement.

It is estimated that during the time Jackie was married to Ari, her allowances, jewelry, clothes, and living expenses, including travel, came to some $42 million. That averaged about $7 million annually for every year they were married.

Jackie later regretted the amount of the settlement, telling Teddy and others, "I came away with peanuts. Ari's will was not properly drawn up and, according to Greek law, as his widow I should have received $125 million of his billion dollar estate."



It's hard to imagine that the toady looking **Aristotle Onassis** and **Jackie**, who's having a bad hair day, were two of the world's most written about people.

Here, they look like a nondescript, middle-aged couple on their way to the supermarket.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

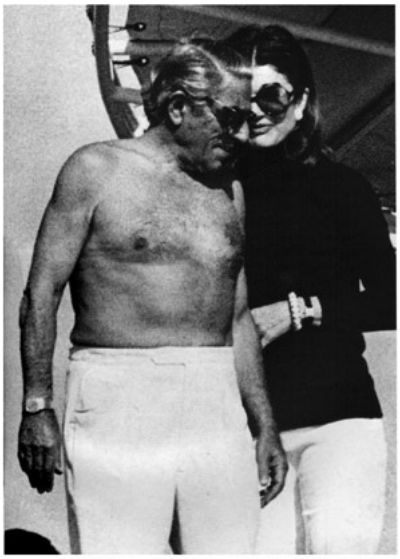
Jackie's Nude Photos

"The Billion Dollar Bush"

Playboy and Penthouse Reject the Jackie Nudes, But Hustler and Screw Each Score Publishing Bonanzas

Thanks to Larry Flynt's **Hustler magazine**, nude pictures of Jackie, taken illegally on the Greek island of Skorpios, became the most celebrated nude photographs of all time, rivaled only by those of Marilyn Monroe. MM and Jackie had something in common. They were both familiar with what John F. Kennedy called "my implement."

Admittedly, Jackie's rail-thin body didn't stack up favorably when compared to the voluptuousness of the blonde film goddess. But that didn't prevent the magazine from selling out of multiple printings.



Even though aging, **Aristotle Onassis** was never ashamed to show off his body, even indulging in exhibitionism on occasion. Here, he is depicted aboard his luxury yacht, the *Christina*, sailing the Mediterranean with Jackie.

On his private island of Skorpios, he came up with a diabolical scheme to "take Jackie down a peg or two." He told his chief aide, Johnny Meyer, "She's always running up massive bills suing photographers. I want to set her up with something she can really sue about."

After her marriage to Aristotle Onassis in 1968, Jackie went to live for a few months every year on Skorpios, his private Greek island. She told Rose Kennedy and others that it was a safe haven not only for herself, but for John Jr. and Caroline. But she was soon to discover that even on this remote hideaway, she could not escape the *paparazzi*, a coven of voracious photographers who plagued her in whatever city she visited, especially New York.

Long after the assassination of JFK, **Jackie** *(left)* is seen with her former mother-in-law, **Rose Kennedy**. The Kennedy matriarch was very upset when nude pictures of Jackie surfaced.

The aging duenna was no stranger to nudity herself. Once, when author Truman Capote was staying as a guest of a neighbor in a house adjacent to the Kennedy compound in Palm Beach, Rose asked to use the pool, because her own was under repair.

According to Capote, "Here I was with four gay men, enjoying a libation or two, and we look up and there is Rose Kennedy, jaybird naked, walking across the lawn toward the pool."

She never thought of herself as a nudist. But she did go in for nude swimming in the sea, or else lay nude, from

time to time, on a beach. She was also fond of receiving nude massages in the garden.

On several occasions, photographers, using long-range telescopic lenses, managed to snap embarrassing pictures of the former First Lady. Kiki Feroudi Moutsatsos, Ari's personal secretary, later admitted in her book, *The Onassis Women* that she often arranged for the payment of large sums of money to purchase these candid shots, along with their negatives, which she then destroyed.

Kiki warned Jackie about this invasion of her privacy and told her to cover up whenever she left the villa. "Mrs. Onassis just shrugged at the suggestion," Kiki recalled. "She told me 'I have my life to live. If I think about photographers all the time, I will not be able to get out of bed in the morning."

Penthouse's Publisher, Bob Guccione, Asks:
"What Do Marilyn and Jackie Share in Common, besides JFK?"

Answer:
Both Appeared as Nude Centerfolds!

In New York, paparazzo Ron Galella had been Jackie's stalker. To her horror, she discovered she had an equivalent stalker stationed in Greece. Even on Skorpios, Nikos Koulouris was a threat to her privacy. If anything, he was even more aggressive in pursuing embarrassing shots of her than Galella himself.

Koulouris had used stealth techniques to capture Jackie off guard. From his boat anchored offshore, he would swim to the shoreline of Skorpios at night and hide in a clump of bushes until Jackie, in the late morning, came down to the beach. He'd then jump out from behind the bushes and photograph her before fleeing back to his own boat.

Sometimes, he'd rent a speedboat and steer it directly to the shoreline where he'd photograph her with telephoto lenses before speeding away into the day.

He would often yell insults at her, calling her a slut or an international whore, hoping to get a violent (and subsequently photographed) reaction. "I was always searching for what the Americans call 'the money shot,'" he once told a reporter in Athens.

Once, when Jackie was returning with her son to Skorpios aboard a boat from Athens, her own craft was in the process of landing on Skorpios when a boat piloted by a friend of Koulouris almost crashed into the vessel owned by Onassis. The paparazzi had thrown stones at John Jr., who had picked up the stones and tossed them back at the smaller craft carrying Koulouris. Jackie later urged Onassis "to do something about this menace. He's making my life miserable and well as the lives of my children."

One sunny afternoon, Jackie, Ari, and Kiki were having a meal together on the terrace of a restaurant overlooking the port at Nydri, on Levkas, the island adjacent to Skorpios. Suddenly, in the middle of their lunch, Koulouris leaped down from a tree and began to snap pictures of the guests at the table, with a special focus on Jackie.

Ari went into a rage, tossing a chair at the *paparazzo*. "Stupid man! Leave us alone! You're crazy! Get the hell out of here!"

When Koulouris refused to obey the command and continued the assault with his camera, Ari impulsively lifted Jackie's skirt. "Is that what you want to photograph?" he shouted. "Well, shoot away, then get the fuck out of here."

Kiki later claimed that Jackie looked embarrassed and humiliated at what Ari had done to her.

The next day, Koulouris came to Kiki's office in Athens, showing her the candid shot he'd taken of Jackie, which revealed her panties. He demanded—and received—$3,000 for the photograph and its negative.

"I also paid a lot of money to buy back pictures of Mrs. Onassis swimming in the nude with her sister, Lee Radziwill," Kiki said. "Koulouris also took nudes of Mr. Onassis."

[Onassis was really an exhibitionist himself, and often emerged from his quarters in the nude, walking toward the sea.

At the Crazy Horse Saloon, a strip club in Paris, a reporter once asked him the secret of his success with women. He invited the reporter to the men's room, where he dropped his trousers and pulled down his underwear. He then hoisted baseball-sized testicles and an ample uncut penis that measured a very thick five inches flaccid. "As you can plainly see, I've got balls."

On yet another occasion, Onassis directed the crew of his yacht, Christina, to the Italian island of Sardinia, where all the chic people gathered in August. He noticed paparazzi taking photographs of his passengers. He

ordered his captain to have two of his men row him ashore to a nearby beach. Once on the beach, he dropped his bathing trunks and shouted to the photographer."Now it's my turn!"

The paparazzi *snapped away, capturing the shipping tycoon's "full monty." The French language tabloid,* France-Dimanche*, ran the pictures of the aging tycoon's crotch.]*

Koulouris also tried to take pictures of celebrities who came to visit Mr. and Mrs. Onassis. He wanted to get candid shots of them—Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli, the Forbes family, the Rothschilds, even Prince Rainier and Princess Grace. Rose Kennedy also visited, as did Ted Kennedy.

Richard Burton showed up on Skorpios one weekend, leaving Elizabeth in Athens. Apparently, Jackie did not want to receive her.

Kiki revealed that Ari did not want to entertain Rudolf Nureyev on the island. In lieu of that, he pre-arranged his (complimentary) fare on Olympic Airlines and had booked him into an elegant hotel suite in Athens, where Jackie traveled for a reunion with the dancer.

Rudi, however, did show up for a weekend on Skorpios when Ari had flown away from the island to Paris. Rudi was even more uninhibited about nudity than Jackie was. Proud of his sexual equipment, he'd even posed for nude photographs in New York.

On Skorpios, he and Jackie went swimming in the nude and were secretly photographed. *Paparazzi* blackmailers later demanded $50,000 for these photographs and their negatives, for which Jackie paid $50,000 out of her pocket, not wanting Ari to see them.

She'd actually gone swimming, nude, with Burton, but no pictures ever surfaced of the two of them. Kiki must have known that nude pictures of Burton and Jackie would have been tabloid fodder around the world.

At one point, Koulouris arrived in Kiki's office bearing sexually explicit photographs of Alexander, Aristotle Onassis' son, and Fiona *[née Campbell Walter]* Thyssen, a woman sixteen years his senior, and with whom Alexander was involved in an affair. At age forty, this New Zealand-born fashion model had previously been married to one of the richest men in Europe Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen Bornemisza. *[In 1986, when his massive art collection grew too large for the villa in Switzerland that housed it, he agreed to display it in Spain in an annex of the Prado. Before that location was chosen, he'd been "wooed" by Margaret Thatcher, Prince Charles, the Getty Museum in L.A., and investors associated with Disney World in Orlando. Rumor had it at the time that his fifth and final wife, Carmen ("Tita") Cervera, a former Miss Spain, was the deciding factor in his final choice.]*

The photographs of Alexander with Fiona, for which the paparazzo demanded $10,000, had been snapped when the romantic couple visited Porto-Heli, an island near Piraeus.

When Jackie was shown these photographs, she found the pictures beautiful, even though she detested Fiona. She was particularly impressed with the nudes of Alexander. "Like father, like son," she said. "Lucky Fiona."

In January of 1972, when Ari and Jackie could take it no more, they sued Koulouris in an Athens court. He was convicted on four counts of invasion of privacy and sentenced to six months in prison.

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Jackie's luck eventually ran out. To her amazement, she learned that ten *paparazzi* dressed in diving outfits, using underwater cameras and telephoto lenses, invaded the waters around Skorpios. They were able to shoot full-frontal nude pictures of Jackie, as well as views of her still-shapely *derrière*. She was forty-one at the time, but still in good shape.

These pictures were not offered by blackmailers to Kiki. Someone had already paid these photographers to execute this stunt, and Jackie didn't know who it was. She suspected that a shipping tycoon in Athens, one of her husband's rivals, had financed the operation.

To her dismay, she received a call from Rome a few days later. The magazine *Playmen* was preparing a nine-page feature article revealing her nudity for all the world to see. She called lawyers in Rome, but it was too late. The magazine was already on newsstands and was being avidly purchased and collected by voyeurs, both male and female.

Even though privately outraged, she put up a brave front in public, telling the press, "This invasion of my privacy really doesn't touch my life. All I'm concerned with is my devotion to my children and to my husband. I'm not a nudist," she asserted. "I sometimes take off my pants to put on a bathing suit. That's how I was caught."

In New York, she got tired of friends such as John Kenneth Galbraith teasing her, "I didn't recognize you with your clothes on."

The only comfort Jackie had was in the knowledge that her nude pictures had been published in Italy, but not in America. But that situation was about to change.

Al Goldstein of Screw Magazine Fantasizes About "Muff-Diving with Jackie Onassis"

Like her paparazzo nemesis, Ron Galella, Jackie came to loathe two publishers—Larry Flynt of *Hustler* magazine and Al Goldstein of *Screw*.

For a woman who cherished her dignity, Goldstein and Flynt violated her ultimate privacy by running full frontal nudes of Jackie.

"If it had been a different world, I could have gotten through life without even knowing who those two sleazeballs were," she told Onassis and others. "But it's a far from perfect world ever since the camera was invented."

In 1968, the cigar-chomping, bearded, Brooklyn-born Al Goldstein launched *Screw* magazine, which was circulated mainly in New York City on Manhattan's Lower East Side and in Greenwich Village. The magazine's first issue featured a pretty brunette in the briefest of bikinis fondling a giant kosher salami.

Goldstein's initial investment of $175 made him a multi-millionaire. At its peak, he sold 140,000 copies of *Screw* every week, until he published the nude pictures of Jackie. Then, his presses ran around the clock, printing 550,000 copies, maybe a lot more.

He paid only $10,000 to *Playmen*, the Italian magazine that had initially published the nudes of Jackie.

From the days of the first issue of *Screw*, the scabrous publisher was an aggressive advocate of hard-core porn. He stated his premise at the beginning. "We will never ink out a pubic hair or chalk out an organ."

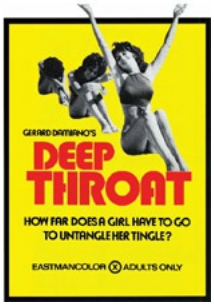
Al Goldstein *(above, right)* and his ***Screw*** blazed paths across the sexual freedom of the 1960s. Through it all, he survived constant arrests, four ex-wives who graphically described his seven inches, Mafia hit contracts, thousands of death threats, and what could have been a crippling lawsuit from a former First Lady for having published photographs of her wearing only her birthday suit.

Journalist Andy Newman wrote: "Goldstein's most notorious creation was Al Goldstein himself, a cartoonishly vituperative amalgam of borscht belt comic, free-range social critic, and sex-obsessed loser who seemed to embody a moment in New York city's cultural history: The sleaze and decay of Times Square in the 1960s and 70s."

The 1973 issue No. 206, of *Screw* screamed in Second Coming headlines—JACKIE O NAKED! Inside was the nude spread of Jackie under the head—JACKIE KENNEDY'S BILLION DOLLAR BUSH. Later, Goldstein issued a nude calendar of Jackie. "Why should a celebrity like Marilyn Monroe monopolize the nude calendar business?" Goldstein asked. "Of course, MM had bigger tits."

Jackie may not have deliberately contributed to the sexual revolution of the early 70s, but she did discreetly sneak in—like many other prominent personalities of that era—for a screening of the landmark film, *Deep Throat*, the highest grossing adult entertainment film of all time.

It transformed its star, "the sword-swallower," **Linda Lovelace** *(shown above with her co-star*, **Harry Reems**), into an overnight celebrity.



In spite of attacks, the *Screw* edition found its devotees, reportedly numbering actor Jack Nicholson among them. In an interview, he admitted that, "I jerked off to *Screw*. However, around that same time, he was not enthralled when Goldstein advocated attendance at the showing of Linda Lovelace's censorship-busting porn film, *Deep Throat*. Jackie was known to have slipped in for a screening of this hard-corn porn that social commentators have defined as a film that profoundly changed the sexual morality of the nation.

[After sitting through Deep Throat, Nicholson said, "After you've had your orgasm, your next impulse is not to bend down and look over and watch someone's scrotum pounding against someone's shaved beaver."]

Perverts from Jackie's Past

(Thank God for the Secret Service)

Al Goldstein, publisher of *Screw*, was part of the press corps assigned to follow **Jackie** *(left)* and her sister, **Lee Radziwill** *(right)* on their state visit to India and Pakistan during her stint as First Lady.

In his autobiography, ***I, Goldstein,*** he confessed, graphically and erotically, to wanting to inhale the air emanating from her rear.

In March of 1962, during the golden years of the Kennedy Presidency, Goldstein had accompanied Jackie and her sister, Lee Radziwill, on a goodwill visit to India and Pakistan as a member of the press corps.

He later claimed, "No woman seemed so revered, protected, innocent, saintly, pure. I was sweaty and hot, but she remained immaculate. She never had diarrhea, she only drank water flown in from the United States. I wanted to patriotically quaff her bush at the Khyber Pass, but these feelings remained deep down and far removed from my professional demeanor."

To alleviate his sexual frustration, and the libidos of the visiting journalists, the Pakistani government supplied hookers to whichever member of the press corps wanted one.

Goldstein later complained, "My favorite thing is eating pussy, and these Islamic bitches didn't go in for that form of sexual expression at all, even when they were hookers."

He later referred to the publication of the Jackie nudes as "the high point of my publishing career."

Goldstein's sexual obsession with Jackie didn't end with the publication of her nudes. For decades to come, he admitted that he continued his fantasies about her. When she entered the field of publishing herself, he asserted, "I wish she'd come to work for *Screw* in our editorial offices. I would have her attend our meetings and take dictation. When she farted, I'd levitate in rapturous ecstasy, the aroma wafting into my nostrils."

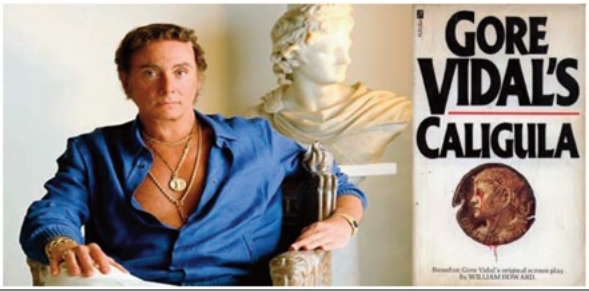
In Hustler, Jackie Appears in All Her Glory

The Jackie nudes that Al Goldstein published in *Screw* were a bit fuzzy. From a publisher in Italy, Hugh Hefner at *Playboy* was offered higher-resolution, more technically adroit photos of Jackie snapped on the island of Skorpios. Hefner seemed like an ideal candidate to publish these illicit photographs. He had launched *Playboy* in November of 1953. The first issue of his magazine featured nudes of the blonde goddess Marilyn Monroe, the hottest star in Hollywood at the time.

Hugh Hefner of *Playboy* launched his skin magazine in 1953 with a nude centerfold of Marilyn Monroe, who at the time was just emerging into her stardom. Years later, he rejected the idea of distributing nude pictures of the former First Lady.

Hefner had backed JFK for president and had interpreted him as a new type of male politician—bold, irreverent, hip, and successful. Based on respect for the slain president's memory—and perhaps to some degree because of fear of reprisals—he said no to the Italian paparazzi hawking the Jackie nudes.

To everyone's surprise, Hefner rejected the proposal of publishing nudes of Jackie in all her glory.



Like Hugh Hefner of Playboy, the cinematically ambitious **Bob Guccione** of *Penthouse* also rejected the Jackie nudes for publication in his controversial magazine.

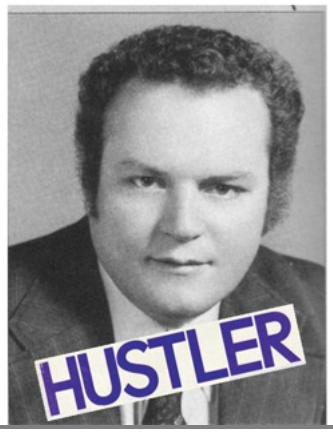
He had no such discretion, however, when he adapted Gore Vidal's script for *Caligula* into the first major motion picture to feature prominent international stars such as Peter O'Toole, John Gielgud, and Helen Mirren, in a pornographic movie studded with ultra-debauched, XXX-rated scenes.

He may have rejected them because he'd been an early supporter of JFK back when he was a Senator from Massachusetts. As Hefner's biographer, Steven Watts, put it, "The *Playboy* publisher in the 1950s was attracted to the young Senator's sympathy for civil rights, a special cause for Hefner. He saw him as a progressive figure, eager to overturn the stodgy traditionalism of the Eisenhower era. He perceived JFK as a 'Mr. Smith Goes to Washington' politician. Kennedy's vigorous masculine aura also appealed to Hefner. He found the young Senator as being a handsome swinger. He had personal charm and sex appeal that was appealing. Hefner said the joke at the time was that Kennedy, as president, would do for sex for Eisenhower had done for golf."

"JFK was one of us," Hefner proclaimed.

After Hefner rejected publishing the Jackie nudes within *Playboy*, they were offered to Bob Guccione at *Penthouse*. Guccione was known for pushing skin magazines to new frontiers. The Brooklyn-born native, the priest of porn, never revealed why he refused to publish the Jackie photos, because he must have realized their sales potential.

Over the years, he'd run many unauthorized pictures of celebrities, including Madonna and Vanessa Williams, causing the latter to lose her Miss America Crown in 1984.



Born in the hills of Kentucky, in the poorest county in America, **Larry Flynt** became a teenage runaway, a bootlegger, a scam artist, the owner of string of go-go clubs, an evangelical Christian, and an atheist.

Eventually, thanks to the founding of *Hustler*, he became a millionaire pornographer and publisher, plus a prodigious sexual athlete until shot down, in his prime, by an assailant's bullet. It left him paralyzed from his waist down.

His greatest commercial triumph involved publishing nude pictures of Jackie.

Among men's magazines, *Penthouse* (under Guccione's direction) was the first to show female public hair, then full frontal nudity, and then the exposed vulva and anus.

Years later, when Guccione hired Gore Vidal to work on a script for the notorious film, *Caligula*, starring John Gielgud, Peter O'Toole, and Malcolm McDowell. Vidal asked him why he had opted not to buy and distribute the Jackie nudes.

"I respected the First Lady too much to turn her into another *Penthouse* pet," he told Vidal. "I was never that heartless."

Flynt, the publisher of *Hustler*, was far more daring (or ruthless) than either Guccione or Hefner. He viewed himself as a "pornographer, pundit, and social outcast." His magazine was attacked as "tasteless, crude, scatological, and gynecologically explicit," and Flynt himself was called "a 20th Century, blue collar Rabelais who mocked religious hypocrisy with an acid tongue and a biting wit."

He seemed the perfect choice of a publisher to reveal Jackie's nude anatomy to consumers throughout America. "I snapped up the pictures in a second," he claimed.

By the winter of 1975, *Hustler* magazine was selling out, grossing half a million dollars per issue. But his biggest, most profitable, and most notorious edition was on the way.

When Flynt learned that both Hefner and Guccione had turned down the Jackie nudes, he was able to negotiate the price down to $18,000. He selected five of the best photos taken in 1971.

After *Hustler* hit the streets, it had to keep reprinting 24 hours a day. Before the presses came to a halt, a million copies had been sold.

Men were not the sole customers. Actually, 60 percent of the sales were made to women, often grandmotherly types, who wanted "to get a look at Jackie."

Politicians, including Ohio governor James Rhodes, were seen purchasing the "Jackie edition" of *Hustler*. Rhodes, at least, could claim a scholarly interest, as he'd written books on First Ladies Mary Todd Lincoln and Rachel Jackson.

"Jackie's nude pictures made me a millionaire," Flynt later claimed. "Poor Jackie didn't even get the standard model's fee for showing her bush and tits to the world."

Tabloids and magazines around the world, from Toronto to Tokyo, from Rio de Janeiro to Moscow, ran the photos. It's estimated that a nude Jackie was featured in at least 201 publications.

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Jackie was sorely tempted to launch a vast flotilla of lawsuits around the world, suing every newspaper and magazine which ran nudes of her, beginning with *Playmen* in Italy and moving on, for starters, to Flynt and Goldstein.

It was Onassis who talked her out of it. "You don't want to get into a pissing contest with a lot of skunks. You'll disgrace yourself all the more, and this scandal will rage on for a decade."

It was with a certain glee that Jackie heard, in reference to the embarassment he had caused her, that Goldstein eventually admitted, "Much of public sentiment turned against me. I was considered more contemptible than bed lice."

When Rose Kennedy saw the pictures, she was enraged. She immediately called Jackie, blaming her for her indiscretion for appearing nude in the garden of her island home. "What an example to set for your children," Rose charged. "You said you married Ari because he had apowerful security team to protect you. What kind of security was that?" Then she slammed down the phone.

Janet Auchincloss was equally enraged. "It's dreadful to think that photographer slime has to go underwater to spy on you. And Ari was supposed to provide protection and privacy for you!"

What these mothers didn't know was that it was Onassis himself who had set up the event, "Hoping to take Jackie down a peg or two."

At some point, Onassis confessed to his notorious gay lawyer, Roy Cohn, that he was the culprit who had discreetly hired the *paparazzi* to take the nude pictures of Jackie. "I got tired of hearing her complain all the time about Ron Galella. I felt that once those pictures were published, her complaints about Galella and others would look like minor shit."

"I organized the whole thing with these frogmen paparazzi," Onassis confessed. "The way I looked at it, if Jackie had nude photographs of herself circulating throughout the world, she could never complain again about any picture being taken of her with her clothes on. Of course, she wanted me to file various lawsuits, but I refused to give her the money. She denounced me as a cheap bastard."

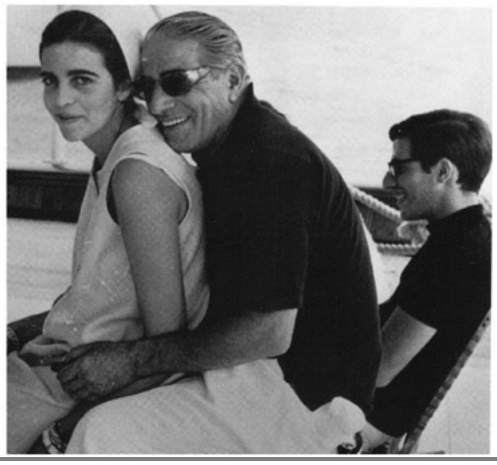
The Price of Fame: Fit, athletic, and a hardy swimmer, **Jackie** kept her figure with frequent exercise that included swimming whenever possible. This is a scene equivalent to what many tourists and paparazzi might have seen from passing boats. What the world's most famous woman never expected was that telescopic photos would be taken when she wasn't dressed.

Chapter Thirty

Alexander and Christina

Onassis' Children Vs. "Our Evil, Gold-Digging Stepmother"

Greek Drama-Rape, Early Deaths, and a Hired Assassin
Ari's Doomed Children



Aristotle Onassis and his offspring, **Christina and Alexander**, had a few happy moments together when they posed for this picture. Although he would later be horrified at his daughter's choice of men, Ari called his daughter *"Chryso mou,"* meaning "my golden one." But to him, his real golden boy was his son, Alexander, whom he wanted to take over his empire.

Both his son and daughter blamed Maria Callas for breaking up Ari's marriage to their mother, Tina.

With Jackie Kennedy, Ari's new bride, only a few feet away, **Alexander** and **Christina** discuss their father's marriage to the widow of the slain American president. Her reputation as the most famous woman in the world did not impress either of them. Sarcastically, Alexander said, "Father has made the perfect match. He loves big names, and Jackie has one of the most recognizable names on the planet. She loves money, and Ari has hordes of it. They should be very happy."

Christina's point of view was consistent and expressed to anyone who'd listen: "She's a gold-digging witch who will drive him to an early grave."

*"**Alone at 24, Christina became the sole heir** to the Onassis fortune and one of the richest young women in the world. She had a reported tax-free income of $1 million a week, but she was beset with problems. She suffered from a chronic weight problem and violent mood swings, and was unwise in her choice of men. All four of her marriages failed. Death came early for the Queen of Skorpios."*

—William Wright

As Bobby Kennedy pursued the presidency, and after having broken off his romantic entanglements from Jackie, he became increasingly worried that her dating Onassis would seriously harm his candidacy. He and Ethel contemptuously referred to Ari as "the Greek."

In calls to Jackie, Bobby pleaded with her not to marry Onassis. "It will cost me five states," he reportedly told her.

After RFK announced his run for the White House, Ari spoke rather candidly to reporters in Paris. "Mrs. Kennedy is being held up as a model of propriety, constancy, and of so many other of those boring American female virtues. She's now utterly devoid of mystery. She needs a small scandal to bring her alive. A peccadillo, an indiscretion. Something should happen to her to win our fresh compassion. The world lives to pity fallen grandeur."

Ari had hired Johnny Meyer as his chief aide. He'd come to Ari's attention when he'd had a similar position with America's most famed bisexual billionaire, the aviator and film producer, Howard Hughes. Before introducing Jackie to Meyer, Ari told her, "Regardless of how black the deed, Johnny is the man to turn to in your hour of need."

Christina and **Aristotle Onassis** were photographed arriving in Paris. Both of them knew he was dying, having trouble with his eyes as a result of *myasthenia gravis*.

Later, in their residence on the Avenue Foch, when she realized that his eyelids were too weak to stay open, she cut strips of adhesive tape to prevent them from closing.

What he failed to tell her was that he had already assigned Meyer the job of spying on her before the marriage took place.

Ari discussed at length a major problem with Jackie. How would his son, Alexander, and his daughter, Christina, get along with Jackie's two young children, Caroline and John, Jr.?

Both of them were soon to find out.

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"Gold can't buy happiness for the Queen of Skorpios."

—Christina Onassis

James Auchincloss, the son of Jackie's mother, Janet Auchincloss, remembered the day Aristotle Onassis brought Christina to Newport to visit Jackie at Hammersmith Farm.

"Ari was charming, and Christina was the opposite," Jamie recalled. "She was Daddy's spoiled brat, and she detested everything American. It was obvious that she held Jackie in contempt. I was her tour guide around Newport, and it was a disaster. She was clearly bored."

In vivid contrast, Ari ingratiated himself with both Caroline and John Jr. He secretly slipped five one-hundred dollar bills to the young boy.

Christina shared her impression of Jackie with Alexander. "Mrs. Kennedy has this permanent smile plastered on her face in a sort of silly grin. I looked deeply into her eyes. There was an adding machine there, counting up the millions she expects to get from our father."

Jackie also shared her own impressions of Christina, especially her physical appearance, with Janet. "She's fat and hairy, definitely in need of electrolysis. I suggested to her that she go on a diet. I was astonished to learn that she drinks thirty bottles of Coca-Cola every day."

When Ari returned to Greece, he told Meyer, "Frankly, if Zeus would grant my wish, I'd be able to marry Queen Elizabeth. I date from the A-list, baby. But since Her Majesty is not available, I think I'll settle for Jackie."

Later, both Christina and Alexander were horrified when they learned of their father's plan to marry Jackie. Christina had read that Gore Vidal had called Jackie an "American Geisha," who would do almost anything in exchange for gold. From then on, Christina referred to Jackie as "The Geisha," or as "The Widow," echoing Ethel Kennedy's derisive remark about Jackie.

When Ari's children realized that they could not prevent the wedding, Christina threw a fit, running around the villa on Skorpios, screaming, ranting, and breaking objects, including three ancient Greek vases.

Unlike Christina, Alexander bolted from Skorpios, racing his sports car up and down the streets of Athens, almost killing two pedestrians.

After the wedding, Jackie faced Christina. "I hate you," Christina told her.

Later, Jackie said, "Christina is a spoiled monster with fat legs and chunky ankles, who dresses like a Greek peasant."

Ari told his daughter, "Jackie has no illusions about the Camelot myth she helped perpetuate."

Christina's response was, "I don't like the bitch. Don't trust her. She'll bring you only grief."

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[Born on December 11, 1950, Christina Onassis was the daughter of Aristotle Onassis and Athina Livanos, known as "Tina." Christina was born in New York City and, as such, automatically became an American citizen at birth.

When she was 3 ½ years old, Ari took her aboard his $6 million yacht, named after her, telling her, "This is your new home."

She grew up in a privileged childhood, with murals in her nursery by the then-most-famous illustrator of children's books in the world, Ludwig Bemels-mans. She was thrilled to watch her father empty, raise, and convert the yacht's swimming pool into a ballroom floor. Even though he personally cooked Greek food for her, she preferred American cheeseburgers.

Aboard the yacht, she was fussed over by the likes of Greta Garbo and Sir Winston Churchill. When not sailing, she lived in elegance in Paris, London, and New York, or else at the Château de la Croë on France's Côte d'Azur.]

Although he initially dismissed the complaints of his children, Ari, within three months of his marriage to Jackie, told Johnny Meyer, "The kids were right. I should never have married 'The Widow.' I was on an ego trip."

"Jackie Kennedy made the same mistake that Maria Callas did," claimed Professor Ioannides Georgakis, a close friend of Ari. "For the most part, she ignored Alexander and Christina. Unlike a Greek, she didn't view the family as a horizontal entity, but a vertical one, as an American would view it. She didn't realize that as a stepmother, she was expected to develop deep and close relations with the boy and girl. She didn't attempt to. That, and not the millions she spent, was her greatest error. The children hadn't liked Callas, and they didn't like Jackie. The diva was wrapped up in herself and her opera career. Jackie was devoted to shopping and accumulating worldly goods."

In the beginning, Jackie actually did try to formulate a relationship with her new daughter-in-law. She hosted dinner parties for her in her apartment in New York, and took her shopping for better clothes along Fifth Avenue. But it soon became obvious that they were just not compatible. Jackie told friends that Christina was "spoiled, indulgent, and pampered."

Right from the start, Jackie had urged Christina to improve her physical appearance and to lose some weight. Finally, after three weeks, Christina told her, "Why don't you go fuck yourself? It's not my aim to look like some

damn vapid model who stepped out of the pages of *Vogue.*"

Christina turned to Ari's sisters to air her complaints about her new stepmother.

"My proud father is forced to live in the shadow of President Kennedy," she said. "It's not fair to him. She belittles him. On Skorpios, he likes to walk around without his shirt. She's always urging him to cover himself up. 'You look disgusting,' she'll say to him in front of guests. 'Like some hairy ape.'"

After only a month on the island, Jackie no longer took her meals with the Onassis family. "She told us that she was appalled by our table manners." Christina said. "She claims we slurp our soup and put our elbows on the table. She criticizes us for how fast we eat our food."

When he'd married Jackie, Ari had hoped that she could be a role model for his daughter. But it didn't take long for him to realize that was not going to happen. Weight-prone Christina resented Jackie's slender figure. "I always feel like a cow beside her," Christina told her father.

In contrast, she liked Jackie's children, especially John Jr. Years later, she would form a romantic attachment to him.

Jackie also criticized Christina's romantic impulses, accusing her of going from one playboy to another. "Don't you know they are just after your money?" Jackie asked Christina.

Twice divorced, California realtor **Joseph Bolker** was almost thirty years older than Christina at the time of their marriage.

Ari bitterly opposed the union, fearing that the Jewish heritage of his son-in-law would damage his oil-tanker business with the Saudis.

"You mean, the reason you married my father?" Christina shot back before storming out of the room.

Christina became infatuated with Mick Flick, the tall, handsome Daimler-Benz heir who was also adored by other women. After only a month, he dropped her, finally telling her that he preferred tall blondes with shapely legs. At one point, she dyed her hair blonde, but the radical change in her appearance didn't work. Flick dumped her anyway.

When Jackie heard that, she said, "I warned you that no man will stay with you unless you lose weight."

On Skorpios, Ari was hosting a party for Jackie's forty-second birthday when news reached him that Christina, in a three-minute civil ceremony in Las Vegas, had married Joseph Bolker, a twice divorced California realtor nearly three decades older than herself.

Ari was not prepared for the news. Only two weeks before, Christina had referred to Bolker as "a dinky millionaire in real estate."

Ari had pinned his hopes on his daughter marrying Peter Goulandris, scion of a Greek shipping family, and her friend since childhood. He had planned to give Christina a coming-of-age present of twenty-one ships, but after learning about her impulsive marriage, he canceled his bequest and threatened to cut off her $75 million trust fund.

During his first phone conversation with Christina, and overheard by Jackie, he told his daughter, "I cannot forgive you."

"On hearing the news of Christina's marriage, Ari went apeshit," Meyer claimed. "I've seen him fly off the handle many times, but nothing like that night. He was rampant, mad enough to chew nails. Ari was also afraid that having Bolker for a son-in-law would damage his business relations with the Saudis. After all, Bolker was Jewish."

Distraught, Christina flew to London, where Jackie heard she'd overdosed on sleeping pills, but was recovering in a local hospital.

Christina later reconciled with her father, and in May of 1972, she divorced Bolker. He told the press, "Listen,

when a billion dollars leans on you, you can feel it."

More tragedy awaited the doomed heiress. Her brother, Alexander, died in 1973 in a plane crash; her mother, Tina Livanos Niarchos, died in 1974 of a drug overdose in Paris; and her father died, as described later, in 1975.

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In the wake of Ari's own death, the fight between Jackie and Christina reached epic proportions. Jackie didn't want to confront Christina herself, preferring to stay above the fray. She summoned her ever-faithful Teddy Kennedy to Skorpios to defend her interests—and he did.

It was said that the only two people **Christina** ever loved were her father, Aristotle Onassis, and her daughter, **Athina Roussel**, depicted above. She spent as many of her waking hours as she could with her. It was as if she wanted to lavish onto her all the affection denied her by her own parents when she was growing up.

After her estate fight with Jackie, Christina's life would take many disastrous turns before its tragic conclusion.

The deaths of her closest relatives had made Christina one of the world's richest women, perhaps the richest. Her brother's trust fund had reverted to her, as had her mother's estate. She had also inherited the bulk of Ari's estate, which at the time hovered at around $800 million.

She would take three more husbands, including Alexander Andreadis, the Greek shipping and banking heir, whom she married shortly after Ari's death. They divorced within fourteen months.

In 1978, she married a Russian shipping agent, Sergei Kauzov, another disaster, divorcing him in 1978.

Finally, she married a French businessman, Thierry Roussel, with whom she produced a daughter, Athina Onassis Roussel, born in 1985, the only surviving descendant of Ari. They divorced after Christina discovered that Roussel had had a child with his longtime mistress, the Swedish model Marianne Landhage, during the course of his marriage to Christina.

On November 19, 1988, a bulletin was announced from Buenos Aires, asserting that Christina Onassis, after multiple episodes of drug and alcohol abuse, had suffered a pulmonary edema and was DOA at a local hospital. Her remains would be laid to rest on the island of Skorpios beside the bodies of her father and brother.

The press hounded Jackie for a statement. None was forthcoming. Finally, a spokesperson for Jackie said, "Mrs. Onassis will not be attending the funeral."

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In the wake of Christina's death, three-year-old Athina became one of the richest people on the planet, with a fortune estimated at anywhere from $600 million to $2 billion.

In December of 2005, at the age of twenty, Athina married the Brazilian Olympic showjumper Álvaro de Miranda Neto, nicknamed "Doda," a two-time Olympic medalist.

Twelve years her senior, Doda was exceedingly handsome, standing six feet two with dark hair and a muscular body. From the beginning, Athina was mesmerized by his beauty and charm, but her father, Roussel, objected to the marriage, claiming that the athlete was marrying her for her money.

The battle lines were drawn between the young Brazilian husband and the French father, each fighting for control of his wife's (or his daughter's) vast millions. The inevitable court battle followed, and in the end, Athina and Doda prevailed for control of her empire. Roussel, however, was said to have recieved a settlement of $100

million.

Athina said, “My mother had to buy off Jackie Kennedy; I had to buy off my father.”

Today, the globe-trotting Athina and Doda live in São Paulo, in luxurious surroundings. The so-called “richest girl in the world” also own homes throughout Europe, a stable of expensive horses, investments worldwide, and conflicting feelings about her Greek heritage. During the course of her adult life, she sold her grandfather’s island of Skorpios to a Russian billionaire, after expressing an aversion to anything Greek. In her words, “I must have been an expensive little girl. My father charged $150 million for my care and feeding between the ages of three and ten.”

Alexander Onassis: In Praise of Older Women

“I had Callas, and I had Jackie,” Alexander Boasts to Johnny Meyer

Born on April 30, 1948 at the Harkness Pavilion, a clinic in New York City, Alexander Onassis automatically became an American citizen at the moment of his birth. His father, like all Greek fathers, welcomed a male heir. His mother, Athina Livanos, nicknamed “Tina, was the daughter of the Greek shipping mag-nate Stavros Livanos. She had married Aristotle in 1946, divorcing him in 1960, charging him with adultery.

A neglected child, Alexander grew up in Paris and paid little attention to his education. After a “dirty weekend” in St-Tropez, he flunked his exams at his *lycée [a French secondary school that prepares students for a university]*.

Since bad grades and truancy characterized his early school years, Ari told Johnny Meyer, “What’s bred in the bone comes out in the flesh. I refuse to piddle away any more good money on the kid’s education.”

Consequently, Alexander dropped out of school with only the most elementary education. Actually, he suspected that his father didn’t want him to become better educated than he was.

Beginning in 1954, Ari lived only sporadically in his Paris apartment on the *[very posh]* Avenue Foch. His main residence seemed to be his yacht, the *Christina*.

Alexander Onassis and Christina agreed on one thing: “The Widow” (a reference to Jackie Kennedy) was a horrible marriage candidate for their father.

Otherwise, **Alexander** was jealous of his sister, referring to her as “a spoiled brat who gets everything she wants.”

Ari spent $200,000 annually on his daughter, lavishing her with clothes, travel, and jewelry. But to teach his son the value of money, he monitored his expenses and gave him only $12,000 a year, as an employee of Olympic Airlines.

Ari never seemed to be around to give his son much supervision, and he grew up living mostly with his Livanos grandparents at the fabled Château de la Croë.

[The classically inspired building, built in 1867 by Charles Garnier, designer of Paris’ iconic Opera house, stood on the peninsula of Cap d’Antibes on France’s Côte d’Azur. After King Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England, he took a lease on this building to live with his divorced (American) wife, who had, because of her marriage to him, become the Duchess of Windsor. It was here that Winston and Clementine Churchill celebrated

their fortieth wedding anniversary in 1948.]

Alexander became very independent-minded. He had a terrible temper. Once, when angered, he broke all the windows on the ground floor of the château, costing Ari many thousands of dollars.

At the age of fourteen, Alexander began to live the life of an adult. By the time he'd turned sixteen, he had his own deluxe apartment in Paris.

As Ari would later tell Jackie, "I wanted the boy, when he was fourteen, to lose his virginity, so I took him to this bordello in Athens. Not one staffed with women, but with beautiful young boys from all over Europe, each with a round butt."

His father told him, "A rich, handsome boy like you can have any girl he wants. But, first, I want you to have sex by subduing a male. Exerting your power and manhood over another male will show that you're dominant. Women will be only too eager to do your bidding, but men are objects to conquer and subjugate."

When Alexander began dating women, Ari bragged about his son's conquests, telling Meyer and others, "The boy has inherited my penis."

His teenage years were spent seducing married women who were part of international society. Most of these women were old enough to be his mother. He never wanted to date women his own age.

Weekends in summer were spent at St-Tropez, where he bragged to his friends that he'd "bagged" Brigitte Bardot. This appears to be a young man's fantasy, although British journalist Peter Evans reported that he did seduce Odile Rodin, the wife of the Dominican playboy, Porfirio Rubirosa.

When he first started driving, Alexander became a speed demon in his Maserati. Pedestrians had to flee for their lives. Sometimes he was stopped by the police. Alexander would ask them, "Do you know who I am?" When he showed the police his driving license, he had the equivalent of fifty U.S. dollars in French francs attached to the license. "I never got a ticket," he later bragged.

Not content with driving a car, he eventually obtained a pilot license at the age of eighteen, when he was once allowed to take the controls of a Boeing 707. Ari opposed his flying, fearing he might have an accident. He constantly reminded Alexander, "You are my only son and heir."

Occasionally, Alexander dined in Paris with his father's mistress, the opera diva, Maria Callas. He sneeringly referred to her as "the Singer."

Ari sent his son to work at his office in Monte Carlo, paying him a shoestring salary of $12,000 a year, plus expenses. He spent little time in the office, but raced cars dangerously along the winding *Corniches* of the Côte d'Azur, once having a serious accident.

"He seemed to have a death wish," his companions concluded.

When not being reckless on the highway, he spent his nights in various boudoirs, mainly when the husbands of his various mistresses were away.

Haute mode: **Fiona Campbell** as a high-fashion model in 1954.

Marrying a Baron was not what it was cracked up to be.

Although two world class seductions lay in his future, Ari's life changed at the age of sixteen when he got the nerve to telephone Baroness Fiona Campbell-Walter Thyssen-Bornemisza, the divorced wife of Heinrich Thyssen, one of the world's richest men.

Alexander had first spotted Fiona when he was twelve and on a holiday at the chic Swiss resort of St. Moritz. She had emerged from a Rolls-Royce during a snowstorm, wearing a full-length black leather coat, her long auburn hair cascading from a black chinchilla hood. "Her face was like a piece of porcelain," Alexander recalled. "She was not only a stunning beauty, but the most fascinating woman I'd ever seen."

She was accompanied, on a leash, with a sleek black panther.

Born in New Zealand, Fiona Campbell was the daughter of a rear admiral in the British Royal Navy. As she grew up, she became one of the top high-fashion models of London. By Baron Heinrich, she'd had two children.

On making his first date with Fiona, the teenager said, "I'll come and pick you up in my Ferrari."

She replied, "Listen, my dear boy, you'll have to do more than that to impress me. I had ten houses, two yachts and a jet plane when you were in diapers. You'll have to impress me as a human being."

Apparently, on their first date, he did more than that. He became her lover.

According to Fiona's friends, she viewed her seduction of the young boy as a one-night stand—"a guilty pleasure," so to speak. In contrast, he seemed to view their coupling as a lifetime commitment.

Fiona was thirty-five, although she looked much younger. When Onassis learned of his son's new mistress, he became enraged. So did his mother, Tina. "I want you to marry a virgin, not a gold-digging international whore," Ari screamed at his son.

Ari later made Alexander a promise: "I will give you anything you want in the world except Fiona."

But Alexander was defiant in refusing to give up his mistress.

Fiona later recalled, "It took me a long time to stop fighting and accept that Alexander and I had become indispensable to each other, and should just try to survive together."

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Alexander always had a difficult relationship with Maria Callas, erroneously blaming her for the breakup of his father's marriage to Tina. Alexander was only ten when he first met the diva aboard the *Christina*, which had been named after his sister. She was only eight years old when Callas came aboard.

The children avoided the star and refused to dine with her. Fortunately, the yacht was large enough for them to stay out of each other's way. By the end of the voyage, when Callas departed, Alexander made it clear to Ari, "I will never accept her as my new stepmother."

Callas remembered Christmas of 1960 aboard the *Christina* as one of the worst of her life. By that time, Alexander was twelve years old. This time, Callas made a valiant attempt to ingratiate herself to both of Ari's children, even bringing them expensive presents. Both Alexander and Christina not only didn't open them, but tossed them overboard to Greek fishermen.

After lunch Callas always took a beauty nap, and Ari left instructions for the staff and his children to be quiet. Ari had purchased a motorboat for his son, and as Callas tried to sleep, he kept encircling the yacht, revving the engine of his boat, shouting, and screaming.

Not only that, but he came into her stateroom later that day, stuck his fingers down his throat, and vomited on her carpet.

When she returned to Paris, Callas told her confidant, the film director Franco Zeffirelli, "The boy is obnoxious, an evil little demon. I wanted to wring his neck, Ari needs to beat the shit out of him."

***

Eight years later, it was obvious to Alexander that Ari would never marry Callas. He had bigger game in mind—Jackie Kennedy, the most famous widow in the world. If anything, he hated Jackie even more than Callas.

For all the years he spent being "crushed under my father's thumb, I got my revenge," **Alexander** *(depicted above against a backdrop of his deathtrap, the Piaggio)* confided to his father's aide, Johnny Meyer.

"I seduced his mistress, Maria Callas, and raped his second wife, 'The Widow Kennedy.' Without sounding conceited, I think both of them truly enjoyed having a young man's dick doing what an old man's dick used to do in the far and distant past."

He objected violently to the upcoming marriage of Ari "to this gold-digging American geisha." He was still fuming over all the many attempts Ari had made over the years to break up his love affair with Fiona.

In Paris one night, Alexander plotted a diabolical revenge. Although he had continued to dislike Callas, he did admit to Johnny Meyer, "That doesn't mean I wouldn't fuck her. I hate her with so much passion it's almost sexual."

Impulsively, he telephoned her. It was growing late, but he told her that he had to see her. "It's an emergency. We must talk."

Intrigued, Callas invited him over.

"I was lucky," he later told Meyer. "I caught her when she, too, wanted revenge on Ari for planning to marry Jackie. Before midnight, I was in the saddle, riding high. That divine voice of hers was screaming passion. My only disappointment came at the time of my orgasm—and hers, too, I presume—when she shouted, '*ARISTO! ARISTO! ARISTO*!'"

Two weeks later, when Callas met Franco Zeffirelli for dinner, she said, "I should not have given in to him, but he overwhelmed me. In my fantasy, it was a young Aristo seducing me. I never had the pleasure of getting to know his body when it was young and vigorous, the way Alexander's is today. That pleasure, of course, was always denied me, though, I often speculated about what it would have been like. It was everything I'd ever dreamed about and more. Their penises are remarkably similar, although Alexander's is still young and vigorous, and Ari's has grown old and withered. The difference is that Alexander is insatiable. He doesn't want to end our night together until dawn breaks."

***

In spite of his hostility to Jackie, Alexander doted on John Jr. His affection was returned. John was at that impressionable age of burgeoning sexuality when young boys are often sexually confused. Meyer felt that Jackie's son was developing a crush on Alexander, who treated him like an emerging young man and not as a child, almost like Ari had handled his son.

When Alexander agreed to fly Jackie, Caroline, and John Jr. from Skorpios to Athens on a shopping trip, he allowed the boy to sit up front with him at the control panel of his Piaggio P136, an Italian-made twin-engine amphibian flying boat, with an all-metal hull, pusher propellers, a gull wing, and retractable landing gear. En route to Athens, he gave John his first flying lesson.

Johnny Meyer, depicted immediately above, looked like a gangster from "between the wars." He was the ultimate fixer, troubleshooter, and a 24-hour pimp available at any time of the day or night, either for his first employer, Howard Hughes, or for his second one, Aristotle Onassis.

"I know where the bodies are buried," he claimed. "I know secrets on Ari that would get him roasted in the electric chair."

In subsequent trips, Alexander and John flew to various Greek islands for sunbathing and adventure.

Alexander told Meyer, "I was fourteen when I was introduced to one of the ultimate pleasures of life. I'm going to see that John-John—he hates that name—grows up early to be a man like I did. I think Jackie wants to keep him retarded as a boy."

Jackie objected to Alexander taking her son off alone with no set itinerary, but Ari encouraged it. Unlike Caroline, John and his new stepfather got along fabulously. He told Jackie that Alexander and John were developing a "big-brother/little brother relationship."

In the spring of 1969, when Alexander wanted to marry Fiona, Jackie, in his eyes, committed an unpardonable sin. At the urging of Ari, Jackie met privately with Fiona and convinced her not to marry Alexander. When he heard about this, he was furious and sought revenge.

Alexander, like his father, believed that if someone caused him harm, he wanted to inflict even more damage on the enemy.

One hot afternoon on Skorpios, Meyer was in his bungalow when Jackie and Alexander were the only family members on the island. Jackie's children were away, as were Christina and Ari.

From his front window, Meyer spied on Jackie sunbathing in the nude in what she thought was the privacy of her garden. Even though nude pictures had already been snapped of her on Skorpios by concealed paparazzi, she still had not abandoned her habit of nude sunbaths.

He didn't have a clear view, but he heard Alexander's voice as he approached Jackie, who apparently tried to conceal her nudity.

From what he gathered, Meyer assumed that Jackie's stepson had approached her "with all his Greek jewels dangling."

There was a struggle, and he heard Jackie protesting. But her furor soon died down. It appeared from Meyer's perspective that she was either getting raped or else being willingly seduced by Alexander.

Later that night, Meyer invited Alexander to his bungalow for a drink. After assuring the young man that he would report none of what had happened to Ari, Meyer asked for more details. Before that afternoon, Meyer had always suspected that "the boy had the hots for Jackie. She was the kind of older woman he was always attracted to. I think he has a mother complex when it comes to women. Perhaps his real dream is to seduce his mother, Tina."

"The bitch didn't put up much of a fight," Alexander bragged. She got a taste of a young, hard, Onassis Greek dick, not a flabby one attached to an old man. I think I gave her multiple orgasms. If I know her, she'll probably be back tonight knocking on my door and begging for more."

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For months, Alexander had begged his father to purchase a four-blade, French-made Puma helicopter to replace his aging amphibian, the Piaggio P136, which his son described, with deadly accuracy, as "a death trap."

Finally, Ari gave in and ordered a new Puma for Alexander.

[Although it was clearly understood that Alexander was a licensed pilot in his own right, his complicated roster

of homes and hangouts demanded a "backup pilot" who'd navigate the Piaggio and presumably, the Puma, to and from a hangar on Skorpios whenever Alexander wasn't available.]

But first, the Piaggio needed a new pilot, since Donald McCusker had been grounded because of an eye operation. Consequently, Alexander hired another Donald *[Donald McGregor]*, who had flown in from Ohio as a replacement for McCusker. Although he had never flown a Piaggio, he was an experienced amphibian pilot.

At 3:15PM, on the afternoon of January 22, 1973, McCusker sat in the pilot's seat with Alexander on his right and McGregor sitting behind them in the rear seat. To introduce the newly arrived American to the aircraft, Alexander has ordered some water landings and takeoffs between the island of Poros and Aegina.

Arriving at the airport in Athens, Alexander announced that he'd forgotten to bring the preflight checklist, which was quite elaborate—fifteen "before starting engines" checks, a dozen "before takeoff" checks, and seven "after-takeoff" checks. But instead of going back to retrieve it, Alexander insisted that he could remember all of them.

Six minutes after boarding, McCusker received clearance for takeoff from a runway that became available after an Air France Boeing 727 had lifted off for a flight to Paris.

After just four seconds, the right wing of the Piaggio dropped sharply and stayed down, which caused the aircraft to lose its balance. The right wing's pontoon struck the ground, then the wing itself. The plane cartwheeled nearly 500 feet along the tarmac before coming to a thunderous crash.

Both of the pilots were seriously injured, but Alexander's head was smashed. The only way the emergency rescue team at the airport could identify him was by means of a blood-soaked handkerchief in his breast pocket. It bore the initials "A.O."

The twenty-four-year-old heir to a vast fortune was gravely injured. Suffering from major internal injuries, including a "squashed' brain, he was rushed to the Red Cross Hospital in the center of Athens. There, doctors placed him on life support.

A grief-stricken **Christina** *(left photo)* walks with her heart-broken father, **Aristotle Onassis**, to the funeral of her brother and his son.

Shielded under an umbrella and carrying flowers, the ex-Baroness **Fiona Campbell-Walter Thyssen-Bornemisza** *(right)*, arrived at Alexander's funeral escorted by two unknown young men.

She later said, "The brain defends itself to a degree. You drink a lot of wine and take sleeping tablets, but it's the little things that break you in the end."

The word went out to Ari and Jackie, who were in New York at the time. Tina, with her latest husband, Ari's bitter rival, Stavros Niarchos, was vacationing in St. Moritz. Fiona was in London. Christina was in Brazil, where she heard the news over an international radio bulletin.

All these concerned associates made emergency plans to wing their way to Athens as soon as humanly possible.

Before frantically embarking on his flight from New York, Ari had arranged for an English neurosurgeon, Alan Richardson, to be flown from London to Athens aboard a British Airways Trident that normally holds about 150 passengers. On that flight, Richardson was the sole passenger.

At the hospital, after an examination, Richardson confirmed the report of the surgeons in Athens. Alexander was suffering "irrecoverable brain damage."

Rushed to the hospital, with screaming police sirens clearing the way, Ari faced he awesome fact: Alexander was neurologically dead. He agreed not to “pull the plug” until Christina had flown in from Rio de Janeiro.

Dr. Richardson had given Ari the bad news. Alexander had suffered a contusion and edema of his brain matter. The right frontal fossa had been severely fractured. Not only that, but the right temporal lobe had been reduced to pulp. “Mr. Onassis, there is no hope for your son,” Richardson said. “He’s in God’s hand tonight. We can’t save him.”

When Fiona arrived at the hospital, Ari let her spend fifteen minutes alone with her young longtime lover. She saw that his head was completely bandaged except for his eyes, which were closed, and his nose. She later said, “At times like that, you remember the strangest little things. Plastic surgeons had worked on his nose to make it not so sharp, and he was proud of his new look. His brain was smashed, I was told, but I thanked God his nose was intact. Later, I was told by Ari himself that there was no hope. My beloved Alexander would not make it through the night.”

Instead of shunning her after their last tense meeting, Jackie came up to her. “I thought she was going to extend sympathy. I was shocked. She said nothing about Alexander’s dying. My worst suspicion about her was confirmed.”

Jackie had heard that Alexander had recently dined with his father in Paris at Fouquet’s on the Champs-Elysées,” Fiona said. “They had talked about Ari’s divorcing her.”

“Was there talk of a settlement?” Jackie asked. “I need to know the amount agreed upon.”

“Mrs. Onassis,” Fiona said, “they did talk about a settlement, and Alexander confided in me what it was. But I’m not getting involved. You must talk to Ari yourself, or else have your lawyers do it for you.”

With that refusal, Jackie turned her back on Fiona and walked away to stare blankly out of a hospital window.

The screams of Christina pierced the hospital corridors as two nurses escorted her into her older brother’s “death chamber,” as she called it.

She threw herself on his bed and cried and screamed until a doctor was summoned to sedate her. Nurses carried her away to another room.

After she was gone, Ari kissed his son’s bandaged face. With tears streaming down, he turned to the chief surgeon, “Please remove life support. Let us not torture my poor son any more.”

When Fiona was informed of Alexander’s death, she screamed in anguish and fainted.

Although both Fiona and Christina had been reduced to hysterics, Ari seemed stoic as he escorted Jackie out of the hospital. Her eyes hidden behind large sunglasses, observers could not detect her composure. She seemed rigid and stone-faced.

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In the immediate aftermath of his son’s death, Ari became outraged, as if his fury had been slowly bubbling before bursting out. He was convinced that the plane had been sabotaged, and he announced that he was offering a $5 million reward for the arrest, trial, and conviction of the saboteurs. He blamed everyone from the Greek military junta to the CIA. He even blamed members of the rival shipping families, especially the houses of Livanos and Niarchos.

Not only that, but he asked the Greek police to pursue a manslaughter case against McCusker, the “official” and unfortunate pilot, when he recovered.

Nothing came of that.

Finally, he blamed God, with the belief that He was seeking retribution for his arrogance and pride in marrying Jackie, a woman he didn’t really love.

Before departing from Athens, Ari asked Meyer to investigate the possibility of having Alexander frozen with the Life Extension Society in Washington, He considered having his son’s body kept in a cryonic state until medical science advanced to the point that surgeons could bring Alexander back to life and restore his brain capacity.

Ari’s close friend, Yanni Georgakis *[one of the few academics that Ari respected, and with whom he had discussed theological issues]* in the meantime, had flown to Athens to convince him to abandon the frozen body idea. “As Alexander’s father, you have no right to interfere with the journey of his soul to Heaven.”

Ari finally agreed that his son’s body would be buried on Skorpios.

He also hired Jacques Harvey, a Parisian investigative reporter, who studied the case for weeks before concluding that Alexander’s death had, indeed, been the result of an accident, not a conspiracy, and not sabotage. “God is responsible,” Harvey told Ari.

Before Alexander’s burial on Skorpios, Jackie and John Jr. had a fierce argument when she refused to allow him to attend. “He was like a brother to me,” John protested. “I loved him, and I want to pay my respects. I should be allowed.” He called Alexander “My co-pilot in the sky.”

“That is all well and good,” Jackie said. “But you’re not going.”

“I am going, and you can’t stop me!” he said, defiantly.

“In that case, I’ll call security,” she said. “You won’t go!”

“I hate you, you bitch!” John shouted at her. He had never condemned her that harshly before.

Stunned by his words, she looked at him in disbelief.

She later told Ari and Meyer, “John is growing up. He’s becoming a man. I know you planned for Alexander to take over all your business interests one day. I think from this day forth, you should start training John to take over your enterprises one day. He is your son, too.”

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Ari’s fun-loving personality, according to friends and staff, underwent a significant change when he faced what he called “the greatest tragedy of my life.”

Although he had been critical and demanding of his son, he also loved him “more than life itself.”

Friends and servants reported that Ari never recovered from the loss of his son. He didn’t want to see anybody, even though Jackie tried to console him.

“When Alexander died,” claimed author Nicholas Cage, “Onassis’ *raison d’être* may have died with him.”

Usually a man of charm and wit, Ari grew testy and even cruel to his staff. He cut off most of his friends and would not take their calls. His close friend, Peter Duchin, the bandleader, claimed that Ari “became morose, snapping, nitpicking, critical—just extremely difficult to even be in the same room with. All the spark he had was gone. Jackie got the worst of it.”

Finally, tired of his denunciations, Jackie fought back. He punched her in the face, blacking her eye, which she concealed the next day by wearing large dark sunglasses, even at night. He would hit her again on several occasions. When questioned about this, he said, “All Greek husbands, I tell you, all Greek men, without exception, beat their wives. It’s good for them.”

In his bitterness and in his suffering over the loss of his son, the sadistic side of Ari surfaced as never before. Jackie found him insufferable and tried to keep an ocean between herself and her husband. If anybody suffered, according to Ari’s bodyguards, it was his kept boys.

“He seemed to take out all his frustrations on them,” claimed former bodyguard Tony Harvey. “He beat them with violence. One kid I had to take to a hospital in Athens. Legal action was threatened, and Onassis paid him off handsomely, at least enough to set the boy up for life.”

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Before Alexander’s body had turned cold, Johnny Meyer was on a flight from Athens to Nice. He had been told to search thoroughly Alexander’s apartment in Monte Carlo and remove “the family jewels.” That was Ari’s code for any incriminating evidence that his son might have accumulated.

Before Meyer boarded that plane to southern France, Ari had instructed him, “Don’t leave anything behind that my enemies could use against me. I don’t want the slightest scrap of evidence linking me with the assassination of Bobby Kennedy.”

When he’d learned that Bobby might stand in the way of his marriage to Jackie, Ari had become enraged.

One of Ari’s best friends, Yanni Georgakis, a loyal confidant, could also maintain a certain objectivity about the tycoon. He once was overheard claiming, “Ari is a charming psychopath with no moral imperatives at all. When he pursues a goal, he doesn’t let anything stand in his way, and will stop at nothing.”

Meyer had been sailing with Ari in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean when news reached him that Bobby had died in the wake of his shooting at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, following his successful win of the California Primary. Kennedy was finally dead. It was Jackie herself who had ordered that the slain Presidential candidate be taken off life support.

Of the many conspiracy theories whirling around the assassination of **Robert F. Kennedy** in Los Angeles in 1968, the most tantalizing concerned what role, if any, Aristotle Onassis played in the gunning down of his nemesis. Very few men ever knew the full story. One of them was Johnny Meyer, who was mysteriously killed.

Ari had told Meyer, "Sooner or later some hit man was going to shoot the little bastard. At least Jackie is free of the Kennedys. The last link has been broken."

Ari was forgetting the influence of Teddy Kennedy over Jackie.

During her last sail aboard the *Christina*, Jackie had told Meyer, "I've warned Bobby to drop out of the campaign. I told him that he would be killed. I said *would* be killed, not *could* be killed."

[It had been election day, June 4, 1968, in California. At 12:41AM, Bobby Kennedy had concluded his victory speech after winning that state's primary.

He exited the convention area of the Ambassador Hotel through the kitchen, where a small crowd of supporters had gathered, mingling with employees of the hotel.

Suddenly, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan—a 24-year-old Palestinian immigrant, a Christian Arab born in Jerusalem, with strong anti-Zionist beliefs—bolted forward from behind a tray stacker beside an ice machine. He began firing wildly from a .22 caliber Iver-Johnson Cadet revolver.

Bobby was shot three times before some of his supporters wrestled Sirhan to the ground. Amazingly, he broke free and grabbed the revolver again. But when he tried to fire again, he discovered he'd used up all the bullets.

Three of the shots had hit Bobby, one fired at a range of about an inch, entering behind his right ear and dispersing fragments throughout his brain. Two other bullets entered at the rear of his right armpit, one of them lodging in the back of his neck, and the other exiting from his chest.

Ethel was rushed to his side, and he seemed to recognize her. Minutes later, medical attendants arrived to cart him to the hospital on a stretcher. His last words before he lost consciously were, "Don't lift me!"

All efforts at surgery at Good Samaritan hospital were in vain. Robert F. Kennedy was pronounced dead at 1:44AM.

The announcement was sent out around the world. Radio and TV stations throughout America, Europe, South America, the Middle East, China, Japan, and Australia, interrupted their broadcasting to bring the news of the assassination of another Kennedy brother.

Earlier at the White House, President Lyndon B. Johnson (then at the end of his second term and himself no longer a candidate) was preparing a major attack on Bobby's candidacy, favoring his own choice for Democratic contender, Hubert Humphrey. When news about the shooting reached him, Johnson kept demanding, "Is he dead? Is he dead yet?"

When it was confirmed that RFK was indeed dead, Johnson got into an argument with his aides. He didn't want Bobby buried at Arlington, claiming, "He is not entitled to a grave there."

Finally, his aides convinced him that it would be political suicide for him if he resisted an Arlington burial for the former New York Senator and Attorney General.

In jail today, serving a life sentence at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego County, California, Sirhan claims that he does not know why he shot Kennedy—"or even if I did."

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At the Nice airport, Meyer rented a car and drove it eastward to Monaco. He had the keys to Alexander's apartment and entered it for a thorough search. With a hired safecracker, he broke into Alexander's vault and removed all the documents, packing them into a leather suitcase. He not only made off with "the family jewels," as

Ari had called them, but he found several bugs, evidence of wiretapping. Fiona had previously warned her young lover that aides to Stavros Niarchos, Ari's longtime competitor, might well be eavesdropping on their private conversations.

Alexander had once told Meyer that he believed that his father was behind the plot to kill Bobby.

Ari claimed that Alexander was accumulating incriminating evidence to link him with the assassination.

His father suspected that he was going to use the evidence he was gathering to blackmail Ari and free himself from "financial bondage."

"The boy wants his independence, but I keep him on a tight purse string," Ari said. "I hold money over the boy's head like a deadly club."

Before leaving the Côte d'Azur, Meyer destroyed all evidence linking Ari to financing the assassination of Bobby. In reviewing the data, Ari was linked to an anti-American Palestinian named Mohmojud Hamshari, who, according to published reports, had long wanted to "kill a high-profile American on U.S. soil."

Hamshari had flown to Los Angeles, where the young fanatic, Sirhan Sirhan, was recruited, since he already possessed a strong desire to assassinate Bobby.

These charges were aired in 2004 when Peter Evans published his book, *Nemesis*, which caused massive speculation. A respected journalist, Evans had been a foreign correspondent for the *London Daily Express*.

He spent years investigating "the love triangle" of Jackie, Bobby, and Ari. The two men were deadly enemies, bitter competitors spinning around the favors of one woman, Jacqueline Kennedy

After unearthing the Greek tycoon's plethora of shady dealings during his tenure as Attorney General, Bobby had barred Onassis from trading with the United States, enraging Onassis and provoking his undying hatred.

In his book, Evans boldly stated that "Aristotle Onassis was at the heart of the plot to kill Bobby Kennedy."

The revelations were stunning and controversial. Both *Newsday* and *The London Financial Times* praised Evans' exhaustive research and revelations.

His book was also filled with unattractive revelations about Jackie herself, defining her rather aptly as "an acquisitive iconic bride."

In the wake of its publication, condemnations came in from all quarters, including from Kennedy biographer C. David Heymann, who labeled Evans' revelations as "unconfirmed and seemingly ludicrous."

Bobby's death provoked nowhere near the 2,000 books that were generated by JFK's assassination in 1963. One of the books that addressed it included *Who Killed Bobby?* by Shane O'Sullivan. Unlike Evans, he mentioned Ari only in a passing reference.

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Long after Ari died in 1975, Meyer returned to America and lived in Florida. He realized that with both of his former employers—Howard Hughes and Aristotle Onassis—dead, he might make some serious money by selling, with the help of a ghost writer, some of this most explosive revelations to the tabloids. He made some calls, suggesting $100,000 should be paid for his documentation on Ari's financing of Bobby's assassination. Such a massive scandal, Meyer reasoned, would generate headlines around the world.

But before he began serious negotiations with the media, he was killed mysteriously in an accident. After leaving a party, he was said to have parked his car on an incline and got out to relieve himself, a common enough occurrence in the world. But instead of urinating by the side of his car, he was said to have stood in front of the car. Somehow, the brake was released and the car rolled over him, crushing him. Death was instant.

The speculation was that someone, perhaps a person riding beside him, or hiding in the back seat, had stepped on the gas, with or without assaulting him before setting the car in motion. No evidence was ever found to bring a murder charge against an alleged assailant.

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What Jackie knew, if anything, about Ari's link to the murder of Bobby is not known. Not even a rumor has surfaced. No one close to her ever came forth to claim she ever discussed a conspiracy.

Shortly after Ari died, a letter from her to her then-new husband was discovered. In it, she wrote, "When death ends one dear relationship, as it did for me in 1963, it often creates another sweeter still."

It might be assumed that she was referring to her marriage to Ari, but she wasn't. In the subsequent line, she wrote: "There was a time when Bobby meant more to me than life itself."

Chapter Thirty-One

John-John & The Material Girl

Plugging Madonna

Blonde Ambition Encounters the Handsome Hunk

The romance of **Madonna** with **John F. Kennedy, Jr**. was as unlikely a mating as the sexual link between President John F. Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe.

Madonna and John came from such different worlds. He was born the son of the President-elect of the United States, becoming the most famous baby in the world. He followed in his father's footsteps, seducing some of the most exciting women anywhere, notably Madonna and Princess Di. As a seducer, he was called "His father's son in more ways than one."

Madonna in the 1980s became the planet's top female pop star, a self-made icon who rose from obscurity to shock the world.

The son of the late president was just one in a long string of conquests that reportedly included Warren Beatty (her *Dick Tracy* co-star), Mick Jagger, Jack Nicholson, and Prince, plus lots of Latin men and light-skinned black males.

A former friend claimed, "It's no joke, size counts to her. She's not interested in somebody who's not above average." The men she seduced, from all reports, met her measurement standards.

Madonna's role model, a virtual icon for her, was Marilyn Monroe. Marilyn had had an affair with John F. Kennedy, Sr. It seemed almost logical that Madonna should follow in her footsteps. The president wasn't around to seduce any more, but his son, John F. Kennedy, Jr., was around—and in her words, "hot."

Pictured above *(left)* **Marilyn Monroe** performed her most celebrated dance number, singing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" in the film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), in which she co-starred with another busty star, Jane Russell.

Above *(right)*, **Madonna** imitates Monroe, wearing an equivalent gown in the same shocking pink. Madonna always wanted to be a comedienne in the movies like MM.

In her video, Madonna, in the words of Christopher Andersen, was "Gowned and coiffed like Monroe, dripping with diamond bracelets. She prances over a platoon of panting tuxedo-clad suits while she sings her unrepentant paean to greed."

"I will be a symbol of something," Madonna predicted. "Like Marilyn Monroe stands for something. It's not always something you can put a name on, but she became an adjective."

The unlikely pair met when JFK Jr. launched his glossy political lifestyle magazine, *George*, named after the nation's first president.

As a novel idea, he contacted Madonna, asking if she would write an essay for the inaugural issue, to be entitled, "If I Were President."

She sent him the draft of an essay which more or less outlined her case of why she did not want to become President of the United States. As if to back up her point, she enclosed a picture of herself (for publication) in a sexy blue bikini straddling a diving board.

"I like the idea of being an inspiration to the downtrodden, of educating the masses. I like the idea of fighting for equal rights for women and gays and all minorities. I like the idea of embracing other countries and other cultures and promoting world peace. Fighting the good fight, as it were. But I think I'd rather do it as an artist. Because artists are allowed to make mistakes and artists are allowed to have unconventional ideas and artists are allowed to be overweight and dress badly and have an opinion. Artists are allowed to have a past. In short, artists are allowed to be human. And presidents are not. So the question is: How can someone be a good leader if he or she isn't allowed to be human? I'd rather eat glass."

When she did meet with JFK Jr., she told him what she'd do as president: "Send Rush Limbaugh, Bob Dole, and Jesse Helms to a hard-labor camp; welcome Roman Polanski back into the country; deport Howard Stern; and invite the entire armed forces of America to come out of the closet."

When the magazine was first published, it had the largest circulation of any political magazine in the nation because of the celebrity status of JFK Jr. But it soon began to lose money in both advertising and circulation.

JFK Jr. went backstage to greet Madonna after her "Who's That Girl?" performance in Madison Square Garden. Don Johnson, then at the peak of his *Miami Vice* fame on TV, was also there with flowers, but Madonna rejected him before walking away with the prize hunk of the night, JFK Jr. himself.

The JFK Jr./Madonna sightings began in New York during the weeks leading up to Christmas of 1987. "Could it really be true?" the public asked, "that Madonna was actually dating the son of Marilyn Monroe's former lover, his father, President John F. Kennedy?"

The symbolism that MM, the blonde bombshell of the 50s had been replaced by another bombshell in the 80s, Madonna, wasn't lost on the tabloids.

JFK Jr.'s biographer, Wendy Leigh, claimed, "In her own mind, Madonna wasn't just Marilyn emulated but Marilyn reincarnated, sent here to fulfill her psychic destiny. At every step, Madonna continued her consumption of the Marilyn mystique, but she craved something more. John F. Kennedy, Jr. was just the dish to finish off the meal —the ultimate Monroesque experience."

At a newsstand, John purchased the latest edition of *Vanity Fair* with a provocatively posed Madonna on the cover. Inside she had posed for two nude pictures as part of an "Homage to Norma Jean" pinup layout.

JFK Jr. and Madonna were seen working out together at a private gym, Plus One, in Manhattan's Soho district, after which they were also spotted jogging together in Central Park. Here was America's Prince Charming, its most eligible bachelor, dating the world's "most glamorous and exciting woman."

Madonna, a woman who doesn't shock easily, was surprised when she saw the latest issue of *George*. It featured Drew Barrymore on the cover, and she was dressed as Marilyn in a replica of the gown MM had arranged to have sewn on her before singing "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" to a startled President Kennedy at Madison Square Garden in 1962.

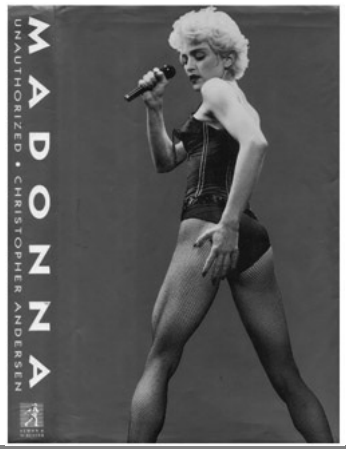
"I just couldn't believe that John would pay homage to such a woman," said Ted Sorensen, "especially considering all the pain MM had caused Jackie."

Ever since the 1940s, Jackie had read *Life* magazine. One issue shocked her, the one featuring Madonna imitating the physicality of Marilyn Monroe. Sorensen said, "It was like Marilyn coming back from the grave to haunt Jackie. Marilyn stole her husband. Now Madonna was trying to take her son away."

During her son's affair with Madonna, Jackie could be seen purchasing the tabloids in the lobby of Doubleday's offices on Fifth Avenue where she was employed as an editor. John didn't keep her abreast of developments, so she had to read about her son in the papers.

"Madonna realized that adding John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s scalp to her sexual belt would be another publicity coup," said author Leigh.

In his biography of Madonna, Andrew Morton wrote: "Although JFK Jr. and Madonna were lovers for a brief period, the affair was not a success. John Junior was intimidated by Madonna's reputation as he was by his mother (he was a mother's boy). For all her outward aggression, explained one of her former lovers, Madonna is a woman who expects her man to take control, more of a kitten than a tigress in the bedroom. Rather ruefully, she explained to friends after the end of her affair with Kennedy that he was just too nervous for them to click sexually. The chemistry certainly wasn't there. 'Some guys can handle the fame, others can't,' said a former lover. "He couldn't.'"



Christopher Andersen's book, *Madonna: Unauthorized* had a certain shock value in 1992 when it more or less predicted that Madonna "was almost bound to die an untimely death."

Actually, he had associated that idea with the wrong party in the Madonna/JFK Jr. love affair. It was the son of the former president who would die an untimely death several years later in an airplane crash.

The book maintains that Madonna had read every Monroe biography ever written and felt she "was the undisputed heiress to the Monroe *Persona*." She confided that she "felt fated to consummate a sexual relationship with JFK's only son." When Jackie heard of her son's new main squeeze, she asked friends, "What designs does this volatile creature have on my son?"

Madonna's boudoir escapades were described differently by Stephen Spignesi in his slim volume *J.F.K. Jr.*: "As anyone who has seen Madonna's photo book, *Sex*, can attest, the Material Girl is a sexual virtuoso. If sex were a high school, she'd be in the advanced class. She apparently is familiar with S and M, lesbianism, interracial sex, and multiple partners; and she is also an uninhibited exhibitionist who reportedly prefers sex partners as wild and experienced as herself."

Madonna has been quoted as saying, "I don't like to give blow-jobs, but I do like getting head—for a day and a half."

Even though JFK Jr. may not have been the greatest lay of Madonna's life, their intimacy continued for a few weeks. He gave her the keys to his apartment. One afternoon when he came in from the office, he found her lying on his couch clad in nothing but sheets of transparent plastic wrap. "Dinner's ready, John," she allegedly called out to

him.

Stories began to run in the tabloids that as part of his lovemaking John would apply creamy peanut butter to her legs and would then lick it off like a puppy. Madonna denied such rumors. “What the fuck! Do you know how many calories there are in peanut butter? Yes, to low fat whipped cream. No, to that fucking peanut butter story.”

She told a friend, “I’m dating someone respectable, not some rent boy picked up on a street corner. For all we know, John might even become President of the United States one day.”

Even if mad-dog passion wasn’t there, Madonna knew a hunk when she bedded one. She became particularly intrigued by a color photograph of John without his shirt. “His body is chiseled, raw-boned, lean, and muscular,” she told a gay pal. “He is extraordinarily handsome, and when he’s on top of you and looks down at you with those bedroom eyes, you melt.”

If Madonna began to collect male beauty photographs of him, he returned the compliment by plastering provocative posters of her on the walls of his bachelor apartment.

Even his clothing style changed. Madonna lured him into a more punk look, and he was photographed in leather jackets and ripped jeans. He even grew a goatee resting under his mop of spiked hair. According to Andrew Morton, Thomas Lift, a friend from college, claimed that John told him, “It’s like she put a spell over me. I’m obsessed with her.”

Sex, Madonna’s coffee table book, became notorious, as it featured strong adult content and softcore pornographic photos depicting simulations of sexual acts which included sadomasochism and analingus. Featured in the book were Isabella Rossellini, Vanilla Ice, Naomi Campbell, and gay porn star Joey Stefano.

Jackie was horrified.

According to reports, Madonna wanted to hurry up and divorce Sean Penn so she could marry John and “become part of the Kennedy clan. I want to have a little boy with John. He, too, I predict will grow up to be a president some time in the 21st century.”

Author J. Randy Taraborrelli quotes a friend of Madonna who claimed, “I heard from good sources that Madonna did what she could to interest John in having a baby, but he didn’t take the bait and wanted to wear protection.”

In his biography of Madonna, Morton quoted a good friend of John’s, Steven Styles, who had gone to Brown University with John.

According to Styles:

“He telephoned me one day and sounded uncharacteristically depressed. He eventually confessed that he had fallen in love with a married woman who was a very celebrated personality. Conflicted, he said he didn’t know what to do. He was torn by his desire for this woman and his need to conform to societal pressure that he find the so-called ‘right girl,’ someone whom his mother and the other Kennedys would approve. And he said, ‘Believe me when I tell you that this is not the right girl.’ I asked him who she was. When he told me, you could have knocked me over with a feather. It was Madonna.”

At one point after their lovemaking, Madonna told John that he should let a gay man make love to him. “That way you’ll understand more what a woman feels from a man.”

“Been there, done that,” John reportedly said.

During her affair with John, Madonna was still married to Penn, an estranged husband prone to jealousy.

Penn had an arsenal of rifles and handguns in the basement of his Malibu villa. He would go down there on occasion to practice his marksmanship. At one point he put up a poster of John and fired with bullets from his .357 magnum. He got John right between the eyes.

John attended a party that was a tribute to Robert De Niro sponsored by New York's Museum of the Moving Image. Penn showed up with Liza Minnelli, Jeremy Irons, and Matt Dillon.

After about fifteen minutes John walked up to Penn and extended his hand.

The handshake was not intercepted. "I know who you are," Penn said in a voice cold as an Arctic night. "You owe me a god damn apology." Fearing a scene, John turned and walked away.

The next morning a funeral wreath of white roses with a black-and-gold ribbon was sent to John. The inscription read, "My Deepest Sympathy," and a personal card read, "Johnny, I heard about last night. M."

Of course, all of Madonna's plans to snare John could be dashed if she did not win favor with "The Queen of America," the formidable Jackie herself. Madonna realized early in her dating with John that he was very much influenced by his mother. "Jackie ultimately was the decider," Madonna said.

Madonna not only wanted to screw around with John, but meet his mother. To her, Jackie Onassis was a far greater American icon than Marilyn. "Her style, her grace, her beauty, there's no one like Jackie O," Madonna told a friend.

It took a lot of persuading on John's part to get Jackie to agree to entertain Madonna at her elegant Fifth Avenue apartment.

Reportedly, the meeting was stilted. Jackie was stiff and formal with Madonna and made it clear that she did not welcome intimacy. It was doubly clear that the former First Lady also didn't want her son dating a "notorious" figure like Madonna. As if to remind Jackie that she was a married woman at the time, Madonna provocatively signed her name in Jackie's guest book as "Mrs. Sean Penn."

After Madonna left the apartment, Jackie angrily called John from her office at Doubleday the next morning. "What in hell's name are you doing dating such a tramp?" she demanded to know. "You know she's just using the Kennedy name for publicity. She's just a social climber. At least you don't have to worry about her being after your money. She can buy and sell you any day."

Steven Styles, John's friend from Brown, claimed that John told him, "My mother wants the best for me. But sometimes, that means I have to keep secrets from her. Otherwise, I'd never be able to date. Let's face facts: No woman will ever be good enough for her. Unless she's royalty....but even then."

Madonna was a Roman Catholic, at least technically, but she was hardly as devout as Jackie. In fact, Jackie's priest called her when he heard that John was dating Madonna. "She's a heretic and should be excommunicated from the church," the priest said. "She uses crucifixes and other of our sacred images in her music videos. To mock us. She's immoral and sacrilegious. Nothing good will come out of John's involvement with a woman like that."

At Jackie's powerful urging, John eventually withdrew from Madonna. Both of them moved on to other partners. But they parted with that famous line, "Let's be friends."

When Cher heard of the JFK Jr./Madonna affair, she summed up her feelings on the subject: "Madonna could afford to be a little more magnanimous and a little less of a cunt."

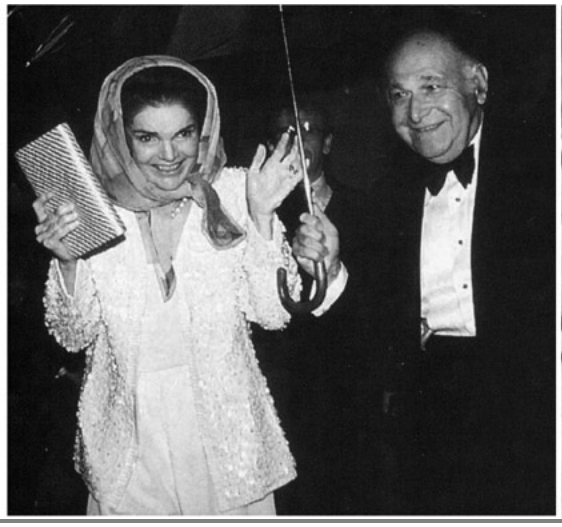
Chapter Thirty-Two

Farewell, Jackie

The Final Curtain of a Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams

"I Refuse to Believe I'm Going to Die"

Maurice Tempelsman, The Diamond Merchant and Father Figure



Diamond merchant **Maurice Tempelsman** was an unlikely beau for **Jackie** in her declining years, but he won her over with his financial savvy and his loving support of her. "Other husbands and lovers have betrayed me," she told Ted Sorensen. "But Maurice will always be there for me." Caroline and John Jr. were at first suspicious of him, but he won them over, too, by showing his love and devotion to their mother.

Maurice recalled that one of his most painful experiences involved the compilation of Jackie's final will and testament, a long, complex document that left most of her estate to her son and daughter. After Jackie's funeral, John Jr. told Maurice that he'd like to have his mother's apartment for himself to live in during the renovation of his loft in Tri-Be-Ca. The older man moved into the Sherry Netherland.

Later, with Caroline, John sold Jackie's apartment at 1040 Fifth Avenue to oil tycoon David Koch for $9.5 million, and John and Caroline, over Maurice's protests, auctioned off their mother's possessions at Sotheby's.

Deep into midlife *ennui*, Jackie, in July of 1975, resumed a life of second widowhood in Manhattan, focusing on her teenage children. She seemed bored, agreeing with Norman Mailer's assessment of her as "A Prisoner of Celebrity."

She needed a purpose in life, and didn't think she'd find it as the wife of yet another powerful man. In August, she'd traveled to the ruins of the ancient amphitheater at Epidaurus *[on Greece's Peloponnese peninsula, south of*

Athens], where she was met with hostile Greek women, yelling insults at her for abandonment of her late husband, Aristotle Onassis, during the final hours of his life.

Michael Jackson had always been fascinated by other celebrities. For years, he defined Diana Ross as a role model. As an adolescent, during the period he lived with her, he tried on her gowns when she was away. At Neverland, he sometimes insisted that his staff address him as "Miss Ross."

After meeting **Jackie Kennedy**, however, he dumped Diana as a role model and replaced her with the former First Lady.

Despite multiple screwups and setbacks, Jackie worked long and hard, during her latterday career as an editor at Doubleday, to get him to produce an candid and authorized version of his memoirs.

She was less than enchanted with the results. Nevertheless, *Moonwalk* emerged as the most commercially successful book she ever helped produce during her publishing gig.

After her return to America, several career opportunities were presented to her. It seemed that dozens of people or corporations wanted to link their name with hers. Along with those offers came weekly, sometimes daily, proposals of marriage, including several from lesbians.

Some members of the Democratic Party in New York wanted her to run for the U.S. Senate, representing the Empire State as her former brother-in-law, Robert Kennedy, had done. Mayor Edward Koch wanted to make her the city's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs at a salary of $62,000 a year.

At least ten fashion houses in the United States, London, and Paris wanted her to be their spokesperson, hoping she'd also create a signature collection, "The Jackie Look." Her most enticing offer was to become the U.S. Ambassador to France. Gracefully, she rejected all proposals.

By summer's end, she decided she wanted to do something in publishing. She had lunch with Thomas Guinzburg, the president and publisher of Viking Press *[an American publishing company owned by the Penguin Group, which acquired the company in 1975]*. It eventually led to her being hired as a consulting editor at a salary of $200 a week. Her last paying editorial job had earned her $42.50 a week when she was an inquiring camera girl for the *Washington Times-Herald*.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, "The Prisoner of Celebrity" Moonwalks with Michael Jackson

On the first Monday morning she was to report to work, she arose early and boiled an egg in her luxurious apartment overlooking Central Park, and then took a taxi to Viking's offices in Manhattan at Madison Avenue at 58th Street. Screams of JACKIE! JACKIE! echoed through the canyons of Manhattan that early morning when she arrived.

Whenever possible, she tried to avoid appearing in "the river of sludge," *[her name for tabloid journalism]* and the paparazzi, especially in anything associated with her nemesis, Ron Gallela.

One editor, Helen Marrkel, likened her arrival at Viking to a Hollywood premiere.

Viking, noted for its top drawer editors, was a prestigious house that had released works by John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, Dorothy Parker, D.H. Lawrence, Thomas Pynchon, Sherwood Anderson, Arthur Miller, and James Joyce.

Although the office staff showed only good manners to her when she was nearby, they gossiped about her,

relentlessly, behind her back. Many seasoned editors who had spent long, hard years rising within their career ranks, resented how, with no real experience, she'd breezed into her post. One editor claimed, "Mrs. Onassis' presence was resented as an insult to other editors."

Some of these editors seemed to take delight at board meetings in rejecting her proposals for new books. One such incident occurred when Jackie pushed Viking to publish the memoirs of Lord Snowden *[aka Antony Armstrong-Jones]*, former husband of England's Princess Margaret. After Jackie invited him to lunch with the Viking elite, she later claimed that "the editors were rude to him. They didn't find the idea of his memoirs high brow enough for them."

More to Jackie's liking was fashion maven **Diana Vreeland,** "The Empress of Fashion."

For her work as one of the guiding lights behind *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, Vreeland was hailed by Jackie as "totally imaginative, totally futuristic, and totally *in toto."*

Jackie viewed her new position as a chance to nurture writers and to champion pet projects. She did not easily make friends, and was often seen eating lunch alone, enjoying a juicy burger in Manhattan's stylishly crowded, two-fisted bar and grill, P.J. Clarkes.

She did not play the regal princess, but became a hard-working, though inexperienced, editor, doing her own photocopying, and making her own coffee and phone calls.

There was a problem, however: The Viking switchboard was flooded with crank calls, and the building that contained it received an occasional bomb threat from a Kennedy hater. Reporters disguised themselves as messenger boys and tried to slip in to get at her for a story.

The first book on which she worked was *Remembering the Ladies: Women in America (1750-1815)*. This tome included the tantalizing information that women in colonial America ingested the root of a certain plant as a means of inducing abortions.

Guinzburg later praised her social networking skills in luring a number of big-name writers into the Viking orbit.

Her next book, *In the Russian Style*, was devoted to the lavish aesthetic of 18th and 19th Century Imperial Russia. Although favorably reviewed in most quarters, it also had its critics, one of them labeling it "glitter and gold with little substance."

Other achievements included collaborating with Diana Vreeland *[priestess of high fashion and long-term duenna at Vogue magazine]* on a coffee table book, *Inventing Paris Clothes (1909-1939)*. She also encouraged a Chicago ecclesiastic, Eugene Kennedy, to write an award-winning biography, *Himself: The Life and Times of Richard J. Daley*.

Jackie's most contentious relationship was with Barbara Chase-Riboud, an African-American sculptor and poet, who signed to write *Sally Hemings*, a biography of the slave mistress of Thomas Jefferson.

Before the science of DNA proved that Chase-Riboud's conclusions were correct, the 1979 publication of her novel was denounced by some Jeffersonian scholars who seemed to want to protect the reputation of America's third president.

The poet-sculptor had met Jackie during her marriage to Onassis, and had admired her self-deprecating humor, her style, and charm. The original novel ran 800 pages, and Viking wanted it cut.

There were also problems of historical inaccuracies. Chase-Riboud was hostile to making changes, even though some of them were relatively minor. A fight ensued. Guinzburg later pronounced her as "one of the most difficult authors in our experience." There were charges of racism. Jackie left Viking just as the book was in production.

Chase-Riboud charged that "Viking embarked on a series of perversities" but finally an agreement was reached, changes were made, the book was finally published and distributed, becoming one of the most talked about of the year.

Jackie might have stayed at Viking were it not for an unfortunate incident. In 1977, against her wishes, Viking published a novel, *Shall We Tell the President?*, by bestselling author Jeffrey Archer. It centered on a plot to assassinate a fictional president inspired by the life and persona of Teddy Kennedy.

Its publication had nothing to do with Jackie—in fact, she never read it—but she suffered a backlash. John Leonard, writing in *The New York Times*, reviewed the novel, calling it trash. "Anybody associated with its publication should be ashamed of herself."

That "herself" was an obvious but unfair reference to Jackie.

Under pressure from the Kennedy clan, and horrified at the bad publicity she was getting, Jackie resigned from Viking.

She issued a public statement: "I tried to separate my lives as a Viking employee and a Kennedy relative. But this fall, when it was suggested that I had something to do with acquiring this book and that I was not distressed, I felt I had to resign."

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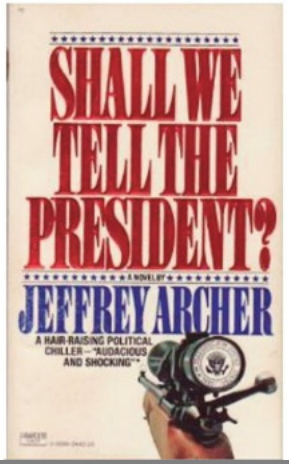
Nancy Tuckerman, Jackie's former secretary at the White House, was working at the time for Doubleday *[since 2009, an imprint that's part of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group]*, and she suggested that Jackie should join that publishing house, one of the most prestigious in the world. After meeting with executives, Jackie signed on as an associate editor in 1978, at an annual salary of $50,000.



Against her objections, Viking published this book by **Jeffrey Archer,** the former British MP who had served two years in prison for a perjury conviction. It was a fictional account of an attempt to assassinate an American president clearly inspired by Teddy Kennedy.

Jackie was attacked for her insensitivity at not preventing its publication, forcing her to resign. Publishing insiders have since referred to this title as "the book that ended Jackie Onassis' career at Viking."

One of the senior editors, who did not want to be named, claimed that Jackie was hired mainly to bring in books by other celebrities and as Doubleday's "secret weapon," generating massive publicity for the firm and attracting high-profile authors.

There was another reason, too: The publisher wished that one day, Jackie would write her own tell-all autobiography which, it was predicted would become one of the bestsellers of the 20th Century.

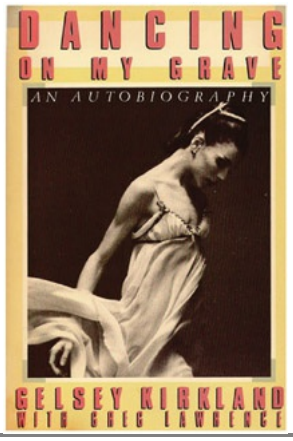
In an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, she said, "I'm drawn to books that are out of the regular experience—other cultures, ancient histories. One of the things I like about publishing is that you don't promote the editor—you promote the book and the author."

Once they got used to her, the editors at Doubleday treated her better than those at Viking. She showed up with her lunch from home, often only a yogurt and a piece of fruit. She attended office parties and even an office picnic. Of course, she was hounded by the press. And unlike the other editors, she had to shred her memos to keep them from appearing in the tabloids.

In spite of her millions, her fame, and her power, "she often looked more like a frightened little chicken than a

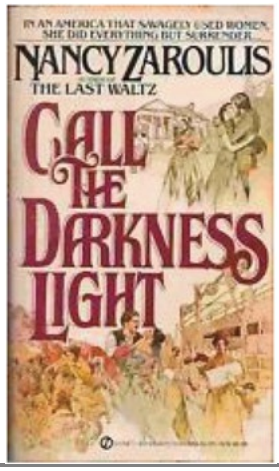
former First Lady who ruled the world, so to speak," claimed an editor.

The same editor revealed that Jackie was "not without her petty jealousy. I was on the elevator with her one morning when Sophia Loren got on. We were going to publish an Italian cookbook by the star. Loren had been one of JFK's former lovers, or so it was rumored. All attention focused on Loren, not on Jackie. The former First Lady stormed off the elevator. She always complained about being gawked at. But when she wasn't, she got mad."



Jackie defined **Gelsey Kirkland** as the greatest ballerina of her generation, but didn't fully anticipate how controversial her memoirs, ***Dancing on My Grave,*** would be. The dancer wrote candidly about her health issues, her addictions, and her tempestuous offstage romance with Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Jackie collaborated with **Diane Vreeland** on two books, including ***In the Russian Style***, which was associated with exhibitions that the fashion editor had organized at the Costume Institute. "Knowing you has taught me more than you could ever know," Jackie wrote.



Jackie's promotion and work on ***Call the Darkness Light*** caused the author, **Nancy Zaroulis**, to earn a million dollars.

A reporter asked Zaroulis if it would be a challenge to spin Jackie's life into a novel. She replied, "It would take a genius to turn Jackie's

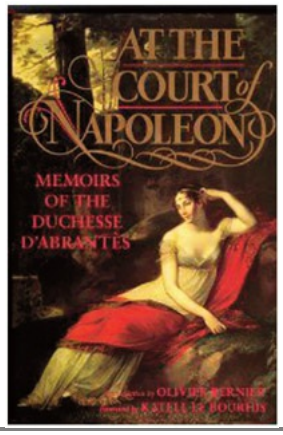
life story into a novel that anyone could believe was true."

The first novel she acquired, *Call the Darkness Light*, by Nancy Zaroulis, became a bestseller when it was published in August of 1979. Jackie talked to Gloria Steinem of *Ms*. magazine about the novel.

"The manuscript seemed to weigh about twenty pounds, and I thought it was going to be just too depressing. It's the story of a girl working in the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 19th century. Once I started to read it, I couldn't put it down."

When news reached Jackie about the assassination attempts on the lives of Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II, she was deeply disturbed. She was even more horrified at the murder of John Lennon. Working with Jonathon Cott and Christine Doudna, long-time associates of *Rolling Stone* magazine, Jackie released *The Ballad of John and Yoko*, a compilation of *Rolling Stone's* coverage of the Beatles over the years. The tribute was published in 1982.

Cott later said, "She had an incredible sense of literary style and structure. She was intelligent and passionate about the material. She was an ideal reader and an ideal editor."



Jackie worked closely with the French-American historian **Olivier Bernier** in his edited publication of the memoirs of the Duchess d'Abrantès, who became France's first gossip columnist, writing about the peccadilloes and scandals ***At the Court of Napoléon.***

Some of her favorite books were by Olivier Bernier, a brilliant Franco-American historian and scholar. His books included *The Secrets of Marie Antoinette* (1985); and *At the Court of Napoléon* (1989).

Carly Simon, Jackie's close friend, was lured into writing successful upmarket children's books, beginning with *Amy the Dancing Bear* (1989).

Dance literature was enriched when Jackie enticed Martha Graham, the doyenne of modern dance, to write *Blood Memory*, published in 1993, one of Jackie's last books as an editor. Francis Mason also wrote *I Remember Balanchine* about George Balanchine, the great Russian *émigré* choreographer.

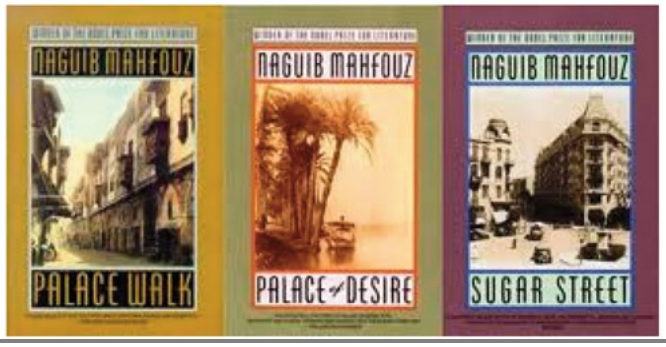
Jackie's greatest dance memoir, however, was Gelsey Kirkland's bestselling *Dancing on My Grave* (1986), written with her husband, Greg Lawrence. Jackie considered Kirkland the greatest ballerina of her generation, and urged her to write a tell-all, even delving into what was called her "self-destructive spiral," once cited as "sliding down the razor blade of life," all about eating disorders, cocaine snorts, bulimia, anorexia, and prescription drug abuse.

Kirkland later said, "When Jackie offered me a chance to write my autobiography, she helped rescue not only my life, but my career as a ballerina. She was both friend and editor. When we had conflicts, including a drastic trimming down of my book with my husband, Greg, I remembered she was my friend and supporter and that super topped her role as editor."

The book occupied a prolonged perch on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Reviews were mixed, ranging from "hot stuff" in the words of one writer to smears and attacks on both the dancer and her editor.

Writing in *Vanity Fair*, James Wolcott was critical of Kirkland's nightmarish cycle of drug addiction and seizures. He wrote: "Is this the place to note that the book's editor is Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis? I guess not."

One of Jackie's great publishing coups at Doubleday was Naguib Mahfouz's celebrated *The Cairo Trilogy—Palace Walks* (1990), *Palace of Desire* (1991), and *Sugar Street* (1992).



Jackie first read the works of the Egyptian Nobel Prize winner, **Naguib Mahfouz**, in French. A devotee of Mediterranean culture herself, she lobbied Doubleday to acquire and publish his classic **Cairo Trilogy**.

Although she never met Mahfouz, she mailed him "love letters," claiming "I'm your big fan." Deaf and diabetic at the time, he was quite old when he gracefully responded to her praise.

[Born to a lower middle-class strictly Islamic family in Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006), was one of the first contemporary writers of Arabic literature to explore themes associated with existentialism. In 1988, he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. His most famous work, The Cairo Trilogy, depicts three generations of different families in Cairo from the debut of World War I until after the 1952 military coup that overthrew the Egyptian government's British-backed puppet, King Farouk. Before the Nobel Prize he was largely unknown to western readers.]

Jackie also persuaded Joseph Campbell *[an acclaimed authority on comparative mythology and comparative religion]* and Bill Moyers to adapt their televised mini-series into a book, *The Power of Myth* (1988).

In 1993, near the end of Jackie's life, she was rumored to have offered $2 million to Camilla Parker-Bowles to write a tell-all about her long affair with Prince Charles. That came in the wake of the release of secretly taped phone conversations in which the Prince of Wales told his mistress that he wanted to return to life "as a tampon and live forever in your knickers."

Of course, that offer was never accepted. Camilla was holding out for bigger game, a proposal of marriage from His Royal Highness.

Editors and authors at Doubleday, as well as half the world, were shocked when Nancy Tuckerman announced in February of 1964 that Jackie had developed cancer.

Up until the very end of her life, she was in negotiation with various authors about possible books. An example was John Loring, the design director at Tiffany's. With the cooperation and sanction of Tiffany's, he had already published six books with her. *The Tiffany Wedding*, the style manual he released for brides-to-be, with Jackie as editor, is still in use today throughout America.

"With her gone, I couldn't continue to work with another editor at Doubleday," he said. Many other authors working with her also took their manuscripts to other houses.

Shortly before her death, Jackie sent a number of memos to "my authors."

It read: "I can beat this! All will be well!"

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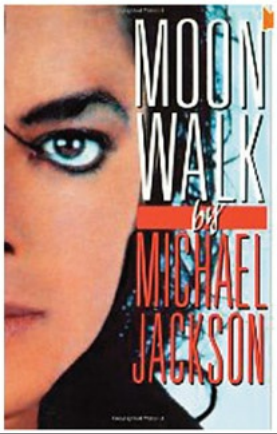
As an editor, Jackie was alert to the irony of her greatest publishing coup being the so-called memoirs of Michael Jackson. "Of all the wonderful books I edited, it was *Moonwalk* that the masses wanted to read, not, say, Jakob Walter's *Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier* (1991)."

Jackie and Michael Jackson were an unlikely combination to form any sort of relationship, much less a friendship, but such strange occurrences happen in the world of celebrities.

One night at the Rainbow Grill, Jackson was introduced to Jackie, who would play an important role in his future. "All memories of his goddess, Diana Ross, were forgotten when he encountered Jackie O," said the gossipy Truman Capote to Lee Radziwill. "He developed a fixation on her. All he could talk about was her voice, which sounded a bit like Michael's own whispers. Her clothing. Her hair styling. Her manner. Her polite manners. Her sophistication. Until that meeting, I think Michael had wanted to transform himself into Miss Diana. But after meeting Jackie, I think then and there that he raised the bar on his transgendered dreams. Instead of a black diva like Ross, he apparently decided that he wanted to transform himself into a white woman like Jackie. After all, she was the most famous and most admired woman in the world at the time. Who wouldn't want to walk, act, talk, and look

like Jackie? Even *moi*. Michael truly believed the American Dream—in his case, that you could be born a poor black ghetto boy and grow up to become a rich white woman."



Jackie had never heard of **Michael Jackson** until her son, John Jr., told her about his growing fame.

During her awful experience convincing Michael to compose his memoirs, and supervising their contents, Jackie urged Michael to tell his story more candidly, and in more intimate detail, but her pleas went unheeded. Jackie complained frequently about the book's lack of depth, and about his lack of cooperation to Doubleday.

The editors there concluded that she didn't like him, and that she regarded him as some kind of freak.

Michael's interest in Jackie was first piqued weeks before he actually met her. Bob Weiner, a reporter for the *New York Daily News*, invited Michael to his apartment for an interview and a home-cooked meal. While Weiner was in his kitchen preparing a chicken and rice dish, Michael amused himself by "grazing" through the wealth of books and photographs that were scattered across the apartment.

At one point, Weiner heard Michael let out a yelp. Rushing in from the kitchen, he spotted Michael staring at a celebrity nude calendar. One of the snapshots was of a nude Jackie. "I can't believe what I'm seeing!" Michael said. "Why would a woman like Mrs. Kennedy pose nude for the *paparazzi*?"

Weiner patiently explained that the picture had been taken on Skorpios with a hidden, long-range camera. Jackie had no idea that she was being photographed and that her privacy had been invaded.

Weiner later expressed surprise that he had "encountered an eighteen-year-old millionaire with his innocence intact."

After their first meeting, Michael virtually "stalked" Jackie, if the not-always-reliable Capote can be believed. "He showered her with invitations. If she had agreed, Michael would have taken her out every night. I don't know what she saw in this inexperienced black boy from somewhere in the Middle West, but Jackie told me that she was intrigued with Michael and his sheer audacity."

She was aware that she'd become his new role model.

"As of yet, I have no opinion of Michael," Jackie told Capote. "I am just formulating one. I can't figure him out. It seems he's stalled on the bridge between boyhood and manhood. He also seems strangely asexual. I honestly believe that even though Michael is an adult, he hasn't completely figured out for himself yet if he wants to be gay or straight. I, naturally, have my own ideas about where he's going, which road he'll take. I think his future sex life—that is, if he has a future sex life—is going to be very difficult for him. Fraught with hazards."

If Jackie did say that, and Capote maintained to Lee that she did, it was a perceptive observation.

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At his family's compound in Encino, California, Jackson was leaving for the afternoon. He was accompanied by an unknown blonde-haired boy of great beauty, a Tadzio, perhaps no more than twelve. Michael was going on a shopping expedition to buy the child as many toys as he wanted.

La Toya ran after him. She had an urgent message. "The First Lady of the World is on the phone, and she wants to speak to you," La Toya said.

"You mean, Nancy? I've already been to the White House, accepted that award."

"More famous than Nancy," La Toya said.

"That could be only one person," Michael replied.

Racing back into the house, he nervously picked up the receiver. In a whispery voice, he said, “Hi, this is Michael.”

On the other end of the phone, an even more famous whispery voice greeted him. “Michael, you dear. It’s been far too long. As they say in the Garment District, have I got a deal for you. This is Jackie Onassis!”

When Michael accepted the call from Jackie, she was working for Doubleday in New York and was at the time the most celebrated editor in publishing. Her boss had given her a budget of $300,000 to offer Michael for his memoirs, even though—in his mid-twenties—he was still a bit young to be penning an autobiography. One editor at Doubleday told Jackie, “If Michael agrees to this, we should call his memoirs *An Unfinished Life*.”

After exchanging pleasantries about their few previous meetings, she got down to business and pitched the offer of a memoir.

“But my life has only begun,” he protested.

“There’s such a great interest in you—millions of fans around the world—that we at Doubleday wanted to hear your story as you saw your life. The early years. The struggles. The incredible success. What it’s done to you.”

“If memoirs are such a great idea, then why haven’t you written one?” he asked provocatively.

“Doubleday has a standing offer with me of $5 million for my autobiography, but I have too many secrets. A memoir from me couldn’t be honest, and therefore I’ll never write one.”

“I know you must have many secrets—not only your own but the intimate details of so many other famous lives. But what secrets do I have? I’m still a virgin. Never been kissed. At least not on the mouth.”

“That’s a unique story in itself,” she said with a slight sense of mischief. “Imagine a man living for a quarter of a century and still a virgin. You and my late husband, Jack, had a lot in common.”

“Now you’re pulling my leg,” he said. “I’m told that when you let your hairdown, you have a wicked sense of humor.”

“If you only knew,” she said. “One time at the White House, I was doing this really horrendous impersonation of Lady Bird Johnson. Guess what? In flies Lady Bird herself.”

“I’m also told you like gossip.”

“I don’t deny that.”

“Then I think you’d be very disappointed in any memoir I wrote,” he said. “I have no gossip to share.”

“Perhaps I would be disappointed,” she admitted candidly. “But I don’t really expect you to tell everything. But because you’re the biggest star in the world, we at Doubleday want your story.”

“I don’t know ...”

She’d later recall that he seemed so hesitant, yet wavering. “Let me fly to the Coast and pitch this idea to you in person. As you know from having met me, I’m very persuasive.”

“That you are.” He hesitated again, leading her to conclude that he was one of the least articulate men she’d ever encountered.

“I’m not going to debase myself in any book,” he warned. “The tabloids already do that for me. Do you know a good libel lawyer?”

“I never sue for libel,” she said. “Let the jackals write what they wish. Just tell your story from your heart. Just be Peter Pan. That’s all you have to do.”

“I’d like that!” He agreed to a meeting in Los Angeles.

“I’m packing my bags,” she promised.

After putting down the phone, he was eager to tell family and friends of this remarkable offer he’d just had from Jackie. “I remember every word of the dialogue,” he claimed.

Privately he confessed that he had little or no interest in writing a memoir. “As for that $300,000 advance, that’s peanuts in the music business,” he said. “We count in the millions.” He confided to his family that if he agreed to do the memoir, he would have a chance to solidify his friendship with Jackie. “Imagine me, Michael Jackson, born in a bungalow in Gary, Indiana, and growing up one day to be friends with Jackie Kennedy Onassis. She gave me her private phone number in New York. Imagine that!”

Jackie, along with her assistant, Shaye Areheart, flew to Los Angeles in the autumn of 1983 to convince Michael to write his autobiography. Their initial meeting had been pre-arranged as a luncheon at Chasen’s, a posh Los Angeles restaurant. Jackie and Areheart arrived on time and were kept busy as well-wishers came to their table. In a city known for famous movie stars, Jackie outdazzled all of them—all except Michael. Their meeting had been scheduled at one o’clock. By two-thirty, Michael still hadn’t shown up, and Jackie and Are-heart went ahead and ordered lunch.

Jackie Onassis, hailed as the world’s most desirable woman, wasn’t used to being stood up. Initially embarrassed, she decided to forgive Michael. “He’s very shy,” she told her colleagues. Privately she was enraged.

The woman who’d charmed Charles de Gaulle and Nikita Khrushchev didn’t give up that easily. She called

Michael the following morning, using her most seductive voice. At first, he seemed intimidated and didn't want to take her call. Finally, he relented. He came to the phone and pleaded for her to forgive him for his rudeness. "The idea of writing an actual book devoted to my personal life paralyzed me," he said. "I changed costumes three times that morning and was ready to go. Then at the last minute I got cold feet."

Before the end of their conversation, he invited her to tea that afternoon at Hayvenhurst. When a chicly dressed Jackie arrived at Encino, she found only two staff members. Michael had ordered the rest of the household to leave, including photographer Steve Howell, who wanted to capture the historic union of this famous pair on film. "He kicked us out. We didn't get to see her. All of us were horribly disappointed and mad at Michael for his insensitivity."

He was awed by Jackie, considering her the epitome of grace, style, and charm. Once he'd held Diana Ross in such awe, but seemingly had graduated from that, moving on to bigger game. "And what bigger game could there have been than Jackie Onassis?" Howell asked. "My God, she was the most famous person on Earth meeting the second most famous person on Earth."

"It was a lovefest," said a staff member who was allowed to remain behind to serve tea. "Jackie and Michael were practically cooing at each other. I couldn't tell where Jackie's whispery voice ended and Michael's whispery voice began."

As Jackie would later reveal, "I didn't end up interviewing Michael. He ended up interviewing me."

"How do you live with the dread that every time you walk out your door, fans or the paparazzi are waiting to take your picture?" he asked her.

"I consider the alternative," she said. "Life as a recluse. A Georgetown widow peering out through the draperies at throngs gathered on the street in front of my house. That wasn't an option for me, so I moved to New York. Of course, I can't take the rush of people at times. Perhaps that's why I married Ari. He could almost guarantee my privacy when he wasn't invading it himself."

"How do you handle being a celebrity?" he asked.

"I don't know anything else," she said. "It comes easy for me. I couldn't imagine being unknown. Almost from the beginning of my life, I was on stage or being exhibited somewhere. Of course, not the kind of notoriety that came later. Actually, I've often pondered your question myself. Maybe I would miss the fame. At first anonymity sounds wonderful, at least the freedom it would give you. Imagine going shopping on Fifth Avenue without the gawkers and the paparazzi. I've asked a few movie stars what it was like to have known world adulation, then neglect. Gloria Swanson once told me, 'It's like the parade has passed me by.' She said she missed the adoring fans and the hysteria they once generated for her."

At the end of the afternoon, Michael still hadn't agreed to write his memoirs. Instead, he proposed *The Michael Jackson Scrapbook*. "You know, a picture of my boa constrictor, Muscles. My first report card. The first song the Jackson 5 ever recorded. Stuff like that."

"I once compiled a book devoted to memorabilia of an early trip to Europe with Lee," she said, referring to Lee Radziwill, and obviously turned off by the idea of a Jackson scrapbook.

The next day, Michael invited Jackie on a tour of Disneyland, with him as her personal guide. "He knew all the hidden corners, the names of all the animals, the thrill of every attraction," she said. "I found it boring, but he was mesmerized. I think he has the heart of an eight-year-old."

After that day at Disneyland, Jackie seemed fascinated by the topic of Michael's sexual orientation. For such a worldly woman, this was out of character. Among others, she discussed it with J.C. Suares, who would become the book designer for *Moonwalk*. According to Suares, "She repeatedly asked me if I thought Michael liked girls."

She even discussed it with Peter Lawford, thinking that as a Hollywood insider he might know something. "I have never known Jackie to be so intrigued with someone's sexual orientation," Lawford later said. "She was one of the most sophisticated women in the world. Both she and Lee included many homosexuals, especially those in the arts, among their best friends. Truman Capote, Rudolf Nureyev. Jackie even had a distant kinship with gay author Gore Vidal."

She confided to Lawford, who was to die the following year, that, "When I first met Michael in New York in the late 70s, I just assumed he was gay, but hadn't admitted that to himself yet. After seeing him so many years later on his home turf in Encino, I think he's figured out he's gay. But his gayness, I suspect, has a strange twist to it."

"What do you mean exactly?" Lawford asked her.

"I mean, it's not gay like two handsome men who look like Paul Newman and Rock Hudson getting together. I have great intuition about these matters. Michael is gay, but his gayness is different. There's something fishy going on here. Something he's hiding from the world, something that will never be revealed in *Moonwalk*. The book will hardly be a candid confession, but a glossy, glitzy thing. Michael's mythology of himself. But in spite of what I've said, I predict it'll be a bestseller."

The staff at Doubleday was eager to hear Jackie's impressions of Michael even before she eventually landed the deal to publish a memoir, not a scrapbook.

"He seems to have no perspective on his life" she claimed. "That's understandable. He's only twenty-five. Of course, I've met men his age who ruled kingdoms. I think he's more interested in projecting an image of himself than he is in telling any truth. Maybe his truth would completely destroy his image."

It took Michael two weeks to make up his mind to accept Jackie's offer. "Of course, I'll need a ghostwriter," he told her.

"I can arrange that," she promised. She confessed that she'd been less successful in pursuing other celebrities. "I even went to your rival, *[the artist formerly known as]* Prince, and tried to get him to write a memoir. He turned me down. There have been other rejections. Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo, Ted Turner, Brigitte Bardot, Barbra Streisand, Barbara Walters, Rudolf Nureyev."

"I've heard of some of these people, but some of those celebs are too obscure," he said. "Their biographies won't sell."

She concealed her astonishment.

Later, she amused friends with her description of Hayvenhurst. "It's La La Land," she claimed, "with a damn chimpanzee running amuck. Jack would have hated it, and Ari would have called in moving vans to cart off every tasteless stick. I haven't seen such *kitsch* since I saw photographs of Mrs. Khrushchev's home. Animals in cages. Tacky awards and trophies. Jackson family pictures. Furniture that only a demented queen could have purchased. It wasn't even *nouveau riche*, not even 'Jewish Renaissance,' but artifacts from the Land of Oz. Let me put it this way: Michael decorates like he selects his wardrobe."

In the months ahead, Jackie, from her publishing base in New York City, listened to Michael's endless demands and insecurities about the project. She also read one disappointing chapter after another. Finally, in despair, she told her staff, "Dealing with the mercurial Mr. Jackson is like being in a train wreck—worse, an airplane crash."

Celebrities Who Escaped

Throughout the many chapters of her life, Jackie rigorously objected to the authorization of her memoirs for publication.

Ironically, however, her editorial duties included persuading other celebrities to publish their frank and candid biographies through Doubleday. With the exception of Michael Jackson, who didn't really reveal much, most of them, including all the persons noted below, resisted her formidable persuasive powers.

Rudolf Nureyev, Brigitte Bardot, Camilla Parker-Bowles, Bette Davis, Elizabeth Taylor

Greta Garbo, Princess Diana, Barbra Streisand, Barbara Walters

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As Michael Jackson's editor, Jackie was disappointed in the editorial content of *Moonwalk*. But she was eventually delighted that it sold half a million copies in 14 countries.

She had urged Michael to include many incidents he'd related to her, including the disastrous filming of *The Wiz* with Diana Ross.

She wanted to capture some of the dynamic tension that had existed between Michael and Ross in his bio, but he said, "I don't want to hurt her feelings. It's always difficult when a new star rises to replace an old star—take Betty Grable getting replaced by Marilyn Monroe."

Jackie was frankly bored with the details of Michael's life, even though she'd commissioned his so-called autobiography.

She spent much of her time with him seeking juicy details about Elizabeth Taylor. Her interest in Taylor began at the time of her affair with Richard Burton. The Taylor/Burton scandal during JFK's administration competed with the public's hunger for news about Nikita Khrushchev and the Cuban missile crisis.

Michael did share some gossipy tidbits with Jackie. "Elizabeth complains to me about her stumpy legs and double chin," he said. "She considers you one of the three most beautiful women in America, right up there with Ava Gardner and Lena Horne. Elizabeth told me that you are exquisite, your dignity enhancing your beauty."

"She also told me that she and Burton consoled Maria Callas when Onassis tossed her under the bus to marry you."

In her role as the book's editor, the usually articulate Jackie penned the forward to *Moonwalk*. It was one of her less than elegant public statements:

"What can one say about Michael Jackson? To many people, Michael Jackson seems an elusive personality, but to those who work with him he is not. This talented artist is a sensitive man, warm, funny, and full of insight. Michael's book, *Moonwalk*, provides a startling glimpse of the artist at work and the artist in reflection."

She later told members of her staff at Doubleday, "I didn't believe a word I wrote."

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By the 1980s and beyond, "Jackie O" was no more. If the press had any nickname at all for her, it was "Granny O."

She was often spotted strolling in Manhattan's Central Park with her grandkids.

She had become the dowager First Lady, the last Queen of America. No one had been crowned since she left the throne.

Had she lived into her eighties, she would have become America's sensational *grande dame*, its "Queen Mum," but with a lot more style and a little less gin and tonic than Queen Elizabeth's mother.

After roaming the world, Jackie had made Manhattan her permanent home, her image as a New Yorker as iconic as that of Woody Allen or Brooke Astor.

In her lifetime, she'd gone from "Saint Jackie" to "the Scarlet Woman" and back again to a more pristine image, known as a loving mother and a hardworking editor of books.

Reggie Nadelson, writing in *The Independent*, claimed, "In the end, she liberated herself from the Kennedys and became the last real Kennedy—glamorous, desirable, mythic."

Surprisingly, in a more liberated age, virtually no one criticized Jackie for taking a married man as her lover.

He was Maurice Tempelsman, one of the world's leading diamond merchants.

She had met him in the 1950s. During her reign over Camelot, he and his wife, Lily Bucholz, had been heavy contributors to the Democratic Party, and frequent visitors to the White House.

Born in 1929, the same year as Jackie, Maurice was a Belgian-American entrepreneur known for his diamond trading in American business circles, in Russia, and throughout Africa.

He came into the world as the son of a Yiddish-speaking Orthodox Jewish family in Antwerp, Belgium. The young man and his family fled from Belgium in 1940 after the Nazi takeover, emigrating to the United States. At the age of sixteen, Maurice was working with his diamond broker father.

During his marriage to Lily, he had three children.

His lawyer, former presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, had helped him form relationships with the powerful Oppenheimer diamond mining family and also with various heads of African states. He was also one of a select few who were allowed to purchase diamonds directly from the famous DeBeers diamond cartel.

He played a key role in the diamond industries of such countries as Gabon, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and Sierra Leone.

His first date with Jackie was on August 20, 1975, the year Onassis died. Lily had refused to grant him a divorce. He escorted Jackie to the Broadway musical, *Chicago*, and later, they were seen dining at the chic *La Côte Basque*.

As New York society noted, Maurice was as unprepossessing as Jackie was captivating. He was balding, pudgy, urbane, and a diamond tycoon worth some $300 million. As such, he was called "the poor man's Aristotle Onassis."

In the beginning, he was not seen as a beau because of his unattractive appearance. He was viewed as her financial adviser, which he was. He did take the $20 million she'd acquired in the aftermath of the death of Onassis, based on the settlement worked out with Christina and her lawyers, and over a period of time, expanded it into $200 million, a tenfold increase.

After a life of triumph and tragedy, she wanted understanding, emotional support, stability, and serenity, and apparently, she found all of those qualities in Maurice.

As Gabrielle Rotello wrote in *Newsday:* "The odd couple were unsanctified by religion, unnotarized by the law, and the press and public hardly knew what to call him. Adviser? Friend? Escort? Or what to call them. Companions? Partners?"

As *People* magazine so blatantly and accurately maintained, Maurice was Jackie's last love. What he didn't have in looks, he made up for in financial savvy.

"After having me, Jack and Bobby Kennedy, Peter Lawford, William Holden, Gianni Agnelli, and even that thing, Marlon Brando, Jackie is settling for this?"

In the statement above, Frank Sinatra was talking about Jackie' final romantic involvement, this time with a married man, Maurice.

She said, "I truly hope my notoriety doesn't force him out of my life." It didn't. This Orthodox Jew was with her to the end, tending to her needs on her final day.

Sinatra finally declared that he understood the relationship. "I just heard that Tempelsman has turned Jackie's $20 million into $200 million."

By 1982, he'd moved into her Fifth Avenue apartment, conversing with her in French and presiding over her dinner parties that usually consisted of twelve guests, everybody from Candice Bergen to Henry Kissinger. Maurice would jump to his feet, rushing to the kitchen to supervise the making of French sauces.

Back at table, he could converse on a wide range of subjects—art, politics, the theater, and music.

A friend, Yvonne Clerque, who traveled with Jackie and Maurice to Provence, in France, claimed, "She was radiant in his presence. They were truly affectionate with each other, truly in love."

But inevitably, such peace was not meant to last.

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In January of 1994, Jackie had been suffering from swollen lymph nodes. She was referred to Dr. Carolyn Agresti at the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. There, she underwent a CAT scan and biopsies. The results confirmed that she had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a form of cancer.

"I can't believe it," she said. "I've always taken such good care of myself." She seemed to have overlooked that she'd been chain-smoking throughout most of her adult life.

During the weeks ahead, as she began chemotherapy, her face lost its once radiant glow. When brushing her hair one morning, "large, frightening clumps fell out." The first time that happened, she screamed.

"Each day I seem to grow weaker," she told Nancy Tuckerman.

When she next visited the Cornell Medical Center, cancer specialist Dr. Anne Moore delivered what amounted to a death blow.

"Your most recent MRI shows that the cancer has spread to the membranes that cover your brain and your spinal cord. In other words, the cancer has metastasized."

"I can't believe this is happening," Jackie said. "Not to me."

In the April days that followed, she often could not get out of bed. She began to experience splitting migraine headaches, stabbing back pain, and a weakening of her muscles.

In the way she'd planned JFK's funeral, she began to orchestrate her own. She told John Jr., "I want my death to be nothing less than a small masterpiece."

During her final visit to Cornell, she was delivered a final piece of devastating news: "I am so sorry, Mrs. Onassis, but your cancer has spread to your liver," Dr. Moore said.

At her side, Caroline cried out, "Oh, my God, no!" Then she burst into uncontrollable sobbing.

For the last time, Jackie left the hospital. She had signed a living will, expressing her desire not to be hooked up to a life support machine. As she returned to her apartment, she realized that she'd entered her tomb. But nonetheless, she wanted to die at home.

She took her last walk through Central Park on Sunday, May 15, 1994, on the arm of Maurice. Wearing a brown wig and a large scarf, she held on tightly. She looked at the winding paths, the mowed grass, and the trees that she'd known since she was a toddler, trying to implant their images on her fading mind.

Only three days before she'd called Teddy. "I don't think I can take it anymore," she told him. "The pain is

unbearable."

In the remaining hours of her life, John Jr. read her two poems by Colette and kissed her goodbye for a final time.

Teddy flew to New York to be at her deathbed. He spent thirty minutes alone with her in her bedroom with the door shut. He never discussed those final minutes with her.

At 10:15PM on May 19, 1994, Jackie's heart stopped beating in the presence of John Jr., Maurice, and Caroline.

That following morning, John appeared outside her apartment building to address the assembled crowd of reporters, photographers, tourists, and onlookers. "My mother died surrounded by her friends and her family and her books," he said. "And the people and the things that she loved. She did it in her own way and on her own terms, and we felt lucky for that. Now she's in God's hands."

She was just two and a half months shy of her 65th birthday.

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On May 23, as the world watched, her funeral was conducted at the Saint Ignatius Loyola Church, at 53 East 83rd Street in Manhattan, the same church where she'd been baptized in 1929 and later confirmed as a teenager.

At the service, Maurice rose to read lines written by the Greek poet, Constantine Cavafy.

[Cavafy's poem, "Ithika," replicated in the pages that follow and reminiscent of her deep exposure to Greece through her marriage to Onassis, had always been one of her favorites.

The very cosmopolitan Cavafy (1863-1933) was born in Alexandria of a family that emigrated, based on the civil unrest and bloodshed of their times, between Egypt, the U.K., and Turkey. A modernist who excelled at ancient references interspersed with nihilism and a frequent references to homoerotica, he is considered the most important Greek poet of the 20th century. Some of the archives associated with his life and work are supported by the Onassis Foundation.]

"And now the journey is over,
Too short, alas, too short.
It was filled with adventure and wisdom,
Laughter and love
Gallantry and grace,
So farewell, farewell."

After kissing Lady Bird Johnson and Hillary Clinton on the cheeks, Teddy Kennedy delivered the eulogy:

"No one else looked like her, spoke like her, wrote like her, or was so original in the way she did things. No one we knew ever had a better sense of self. During those four endless days in 1963, she held us together as a family and as a country. In large part because of her, we could grieve and then go on. She lifted us up, and in the doubt and darkness, she gave her fellow citizens back their pride as Americans. She was then thirty-four years old. Jackie was too young to be a widow in 1963, and too young to be a widow now."

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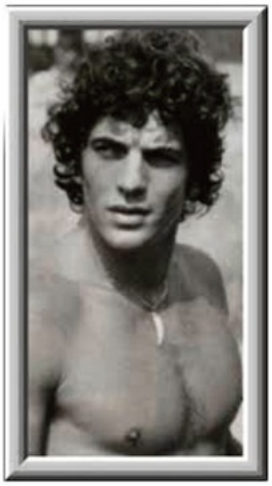
Back in her apartment, John opened a letter that she'd asked him not to read until after her burial.



"My dear, beloved son,

You are going to take your place in history. I want to be looking down on you as you assume a future position of power, like your father. He attempted to make the world a better place. Bobby was going to carry on in his footsteps. Now the burden will be on you.

In my heart, I know you will succeed beyond your greatest dreams. It is with eternal love and pride in you that I send you on your way, which I know will be the road to glory.

When your battles are over, and the burden passes from you, I know one thing that is good and true. you will be the greatest Kennedy of them all.
Your mother, Jacqueline."

Author Norman Mailer, who had been both her friend and foe, delivered his assessment:

"Jackie Kennedy Onassis was not merely a celebrity, but a legend; not a legend, but a myth—no, more than a myth: She is now a historic archetype, virtually a demiurge."

Tributes

"Her presence was evident in the warmth of every room and the charm of every hall [of the White House]. Clearly, her beautification efforts will be one of her enduring legacies."

—Ronald Reagan

"She was very kind to me when my husband was shot and when we didn't know whether he was going to live or not...She wrote me a very sweet, sensitive note and called me...she couldn't have been nice to me at that time when I really needed it."

—Nancy Reagan

"She showed us how one could approach tragedy with courage."

—Jimmy Carter

"Jimmy and I were touched by the delightful and gracious atmosphere that Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis created in the White House. The charm of each room has been permanently enhanced as a result of her contributions."

—Rosalynn Carter

"Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was a model of courage and dignity for all Americans and all the world. Even in the face of impossible tragedy, she carried the grief of her family and our entire nation with a calm power that somehow reassured all of us who mourned. More than any other woman of her time, she captivated our nation and the world with her intelligence, elegance, and grace."

—Bill Clinton

I"f she taught us anything, it was to know the meaning of responsibility—to one's family and to one's community.

Her great gift of grace and style and dignity and heroism is an example that will live through the ages."

—Hillary Clinton

"It leaves an empty place in the world as I have known it. We shared a unique time and I always thought of her as my friend."

—Lady Bird Johnson

"Jackie Onassis brought great dignity and grace to the White House and was indeed a charming and wonderful First lady."

—George W. Bush

ITHIKA

by Constantine Cavafy

When you set sail for Ithaca,
wish for the road to be long,
full of adventures, full of knowledge.
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
an angry Poseidon—do not fear.
You will never find such on your path,
if your thoughts remain lofty, and your spirit
and body are touched by a fine emotion.
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
a savage Poseidon you will not encounter,
if you do not carry them within your spirit,
if your spirit does not place them before you.
Wish for the road to be long.
Many the summer mornings to be when
with what pleasure, what joy
you will enter ports seen for the first time.
Stop at Phoenician markets,
and purchase the fine goods,
nacre and coral, amber and ebony,
and exquisite perfumes of all sorts,
the most delicate fragrances you can find.
To many Egyptian cities you must go,
to learn and learn from the cultivated.
Always keep Ithaca in your mind.
To arrive there is your final destination.
But do not hurry the voyage at all.
It is better for it to last many years,
and when old to rest in the island,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to offer you wealth.
Ithaca has given you the beautiful journey.
Without her you would not have set out on the road.
Nothing more does she have to give you.
And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.
Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
you must already have understood what Ithacas mean.

With admiration, affection, and respect Rest in Peace

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis 1929-1994

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS

ITS AUTHORS

DARWIN PORTER

As an intense and precocious nine-year-old, **Darwin Porter** began meeting movie stars, TV personalities, politicians, and singers through his vivacious and attractive mother, Hazel, a somewhat eccentric Southern girl who had lost her husband in World War II. Migrating from the depression-ravaged valleys of western North Carolina to Miami Beach during its most ebullient heyday, Hazel became a stylist, wardrobe mistress, and personal assistant to the vaudeville comedienne Sophie Tucker, the bawdy and irrepressible "Last of the Red Hot Mamas."

Virtually every show-biz celebrity who visited Miami Beach paid a call on "Miss Sophie," and Darwin as a pre-teen loosely and indulgently supervised by his mother, was regularly dazzled by the likes of Judy Garland, Dinah Shore, Veronica Lake, Linda Darnell, Martha Raye, and Ronald Reagan, who arrived to pay his respects to Miss Sophie with a young blonde starlet on the rise—Marilyn Monroe.

Hazel's work for Sophie Tucker did not preclude an active dating life: Her *beaux* included Richard Widmark, Victor Mature, Frank Sinatra (who "tipped" teenaged Darwin the then-astronomical sum of ten dollars for getting out of the way), and that alltime "second lead," Wendell Corey, when he wasn't emoting with Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford.

As a late teenager, Darwin edited *The Miami Hurricane* at the University of Miami, where he interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt, Tab Hunter, Lucille Ball, and Adlai Stevenson. He also worked for Florida's then-Senator George Smathers, one of John F. Kennedy's best friends, establishing an ongoing pattern of picking up "Jack and Jackie" lore while still a student.

After graduation, as a journalist, he was commissioned with the opening of a bureau of *The Miami Herald* in Key West (Florida), where he took frequent morning walks with retired U.S. president Harry S Truman during his vacations in what had functioned as his "Winter White House." He also got to know, sometimes very well, various celebrities "slumming" their way through off-the-record holidays in the orbit of then-resident Tennessee Williams. Celebrities hanging out in the permissive arts environment of Key West during those days included Tallulah Bankhead, Cary Grant, Tony Curtis, the stepfather of Richard Burton, a gaggle of show-biz and publishing moguls, and the once-notorious stripper, Bettie Page.

For about a decade in New York, Darwin worked in television journalism and advertising with his long-time partner, the journalist, art director, and distinguished arts-industry socialite Stanley Mills Haggart. Jointly, they produced TV commercials starring such high-powered stars as Joan Crawford (then feverishly promoting Pepsi-Cola), Ronald Reagan (General Electric), and Debbie Reynolds (selling Singer Sewing Machines), along with such other entertainers as Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Arlene Dahl, and countless other show-biz personalities hawking commercial products.

During his youth, Stanley had flourished as an insider in early Hollywood as a "leg man" and source of information for Hedda Hopper, the fabled gossip columnist. When Stanley wasn't dishing newsy revelations with Hedda, he had worked as a Powers model; a romantic lead opposite Silent-era film star Mae Murray; the intimate companion of superstar Randolph Scott before Scott became emotionally involved with Cary Grant; and a man-about-town who archived gossip from everybody who mattered back when the movie colony was small, accessible, and confident that details about their tribal rites would absolutely never be reported in the press. Over the years, Stanley's vast cornucopia of inside Hollywood information was passed on to Darwin, who amplified it with copious interviews and research of his own.

After Stanley's death in 1980, Darwin inherited a treasure trove of memoirs, notes, and interviews detailing

Stanley's early adventures in Hollywood, including in-depth recitations of scandals that even Hopper during her heyday was afraid to publish. Most legal and journalistic standards back then interpreted those oral histories as "unprintable." Times, of course, changed.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Darwin joined forces with the then-fledgling Arthur Frommer organization, playing a key role in researching and writing more than 50 titles and defining the style and values that later emerged as the world's leading travel accessories, ***The Frommer Guides,*** with particular emphasis on Europe, California, New England, and the Caribbean. Between the creation and updating of hundreds of editions of detailed travel guides to England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Germany, California, and Switzerland, he continued to interview and discuss the triumphs, feuds, and frustrations of celebrities, many by then reclusive, whom he either sought out or encountered randomly as part of his extensive travels. Ava Gardner and Lana Turner were particularly insightful.

One day when Darwin lived in Tangier, he walked into an opium den to discover Marlene Dietrich sitting alone in a corner.

Darwin has also ghost written books for celebrities (who shall go nameless!) as well as a series of novels. His first, *Butterflies in Heat*, became a cult classic and was adapted into a film, *Tropic of Desire*, starring Eartha Kitt, among others. Other books included *Razzle-Dazzle*, about an errant female movie star of questionable morals; and an erotic thriller, *Blood Moon*, hailed as "pure novelistic Viagra, an American interpretation of Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde."*

Darwin's novel, *Marika*, published by Arbor House, evoked Marlene Dietrich for many readers.

His controversial novel, *Venus*, was suggested by the life of the fabled eroticist and diarist, Anaïs Nin. His novel, *Midnight in Savannah*, was a brutal saga of corruption, greed, and sexual tension exploring the eccentricities of Georgia's most notorious city.

His novel, *Rhinestone Country*, catalyzed a guessing game. Which male star was the inspiration for its lovable rogue, Pete Riddle? Mississippi Pearl praised it as "like a scalding gulp of rotgut whiskey on a snowy night in a bowjacks honky-tonk."

Darwin also transformed into literary format the details which he and Stanley Haggart had compiled about the relatively underpublicized scandals of the Silent Screen, releasing them in 2001 as *Hollywood's Silent Closet*, "an uncensored, underground history of Pre-Code Hollywood, loaded with facts and rumors from generations past."

Since then, Darwin has penned more than eighteen uncensored Hollywood biographies, many of them award-winners, on subjects who have included Marlon Brando; Merv Griffin; Katharine Hepburn; Howard Hughes; Humphrey Bogart; Michael Jackson; Paul Newman; Steve McQueen; Marilyn Monroe; Elizabeth Taylor; Frank Sinatra; John F. Kennedy; Vivien Leigh; Laurence Olivier; the well known porn star, Linda Lovelace; all three of the fabulous Gabor sisters, plus Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, and Truman Capote.

As a departure from his usual repertoire, Darwin also wrote the controversial *J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson: Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women*, a book about celebrity, voyeurism, political and sexual repression, and blackmail within the highest circles of the U.S. government.

He has also co-authored, in league with Danforth Prince, four *Hollywood Babylon* anthologies, plus four separate volumes of film critiques, reviews, and commentary.

His biographies, over the years, have won more than 30 First Prize or runner-up awards at literary festivals in cities which include Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Hollywood, San Francisco, and Paris.

Darwin can be heard at regular intervals as a radio commentator (and occasionally on television), "dishing" celebrities, pop culture, politics, and scandal.

A resident of New York City, Darwin is currently at work on his latest biography: *Love Triangle—Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis*.

DANFORTH PRINCE

The publisher and co-author of *Pink Triangle,* **Danforth Prince** is one of the "Young Turks" of the post-millennium publishing industry. He's president and founder of Blood Moon Productions, a firm devoted to researching, salvaging, compiling, and marketing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry.

One of Prince's famous predecessors, the late Lyle Stuart (self-described as "the last publisher in America with guts") once defined Prince as "one of my natural successors." In 1956, that then-novice maverick launched himself with $8,000 he'd won in a libel judgment against gossip columnist Walter Winchell. It was Stuart who published Linda Lovelace's two authentic memoirs—*Ordeal* and *Out of Bondage*.

"I like to see someone following in my footsteps in the 21st Century," Stuart told Prince. "You publish scandalous biographies. I did, too. My books on J. Edgar Hoover, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and Barbara Hutton stirred up the natives. You do, too."

Prince launched his career in journalism in the 1970s at the Paris Bureau of *The New York Times*. In the early '80s, he resigned to join Darwin Porter in researching, developing and publishing various titles within *The Frommer Guides*, jointly reviewing the travel scenes of more than 50 nations for Simon & Schuster. Authoritative and comprehensive, they were perceived as best-selling "travel bibles" for millions of readers, with recommendations and travel advice about the major nations of Western Europe, the Caribbean, Bermuda, The Bahamas, Georgia and the Carolinas, and California.

Prince, along with Porter, is also the co-author of several award-winning celebrity biographies, each configured as a title within Blood Moon's Babylon series. These have included *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!; Hollywood Babylon Strikes Again; The Kennedys: All the Gossip Unfit to Print;* and *Frank Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer*.

Prince, with Porter, has co-authored four books on film criticism, along iwth such provocative biographies as *Elizabeth Taylor: There is Nothing Like a Dame*. He and Porter also co-authored *Pink Triangle: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Members of their Entourages.*

Prince, a graduate of Hamilton College and a native of Easton and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is the president and founder (in 1996) of the Georgia Literary Association, and of the Porter and Prince Corporation, founded in 1983, which has produced dozens of titles for both Prentice Hall and John Wiley & Sons. In 2011, he was named "Publisher of the Year" by a consortium of literary critics and marketers spearheaded by the J.M. Northern Media Group.

According to Prince, "Blood Moon provides the luxurious illusion that a reader is a perpetual guest at some gossippy dinner party populated with brilliant but occasionally self-delusional figures from bygone eras of The American Experience. Blood Moon's success at salvaging, documenting, and articulating the (till now) orally transmitted histories of the Entertainment Industry, in ways that have never been seen before, is one of the most distinctive aspects of our back-list."

Publishing in collaboration with the National Book Network (www.NBN-Books.com), he has electronically documented some of the controversies associated with his stewardship of Blood Moon in more than 50 videotaped documentaries, book trailers, public speeches, and TV or radio interviews. Any of these can be watched, without charge, by performing a search for "Danforth Prince" on **youtube.com**, checking him out on **Facebook** (either "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions"), on **twitter** (#BloodyandLunar) or by clicking on **BloodMoonProductions.com**.

During the rare moments when he isn't writing, editing, neurosing about, or promoting Blood Moon, he works out at a New York City gym, rescues stray animals, talks to strangers, and regularly attends Episcopal Mass every Sunday.

BLOOD
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BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS

Entertainment About How America Interprets Its Celebrities

Blood Moon Productions is a feisty and independent New York based publishing enterprise dedicated to researching, salvaging, and indexing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry. As described by *The Huffington Post*, "Blood Moon, in case you don't know, is a small publishing house on Staten Island that cranks out Hollywood gossip books, about two or three a year, usually of five-, six-, or 700-page length, chocked with stories and pictures about people who used to consume the imaginations of the American public, back when we actually had a public imagination. That is, when people were really interested in each other, rather than in Apple 'devices.' In other words, back when we had vices, not devices."

Reorganized with its present name in 2004, Blood Moon originated in 1997 as the Georgia Literary Association, a vehicle for the promotion of obscure writers from America's Deep South. For several decades, Blood Moon and its key players (Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince) spearheaded the research, writing, and editorial functions of dozens of titles, and hundreds of editions, of THE FROMMER GUIDES, the most respected name in travel publishing.

Blood Moon maintains a back list of at least 30 critically acclaimed biographies, film guides, and novels. Its titles are distributed by the National Book Network (www.NBNBooks.com), and through secondary wholesalers and online retailers everywhere.

Since 2004, Blood Moon has been awarded dozens of nationally recognized literary prizes. They've included both silver and bronze medals from the IPPY (Independent Publishers Association) Awards; four nominations and two Honorable Mentions for BOOK OF THE YEAR from Foreword Reviews; nominations from The Ben Franklin Awards; and Awards and Honorable Mentions from the New England, the Los Angeles, the Paris, the Hollywood, the New York, and the San Francisco Book Festivals. Two of its titles have been Grand Prize Winners for Best Summer Reading, as defined by The Beach Book Awards, and in 2013, its triple-play overview of the Gabor sisters was designated as Biography of the Year by the Hollywood Book Festival.

For more about us, including access to a growing number of videotaped book trailers, TV and radio interviews, and public addresses, each accessible via **YouTube.com,** search for key words "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions."

Or click on **WWW.BLOODMOONPRODUCTIONS.COM;** visit our page on Facebook; subscribe to us on Twitter (#BloodyandLunar); or refer to the pages which immediately follow.

Thanks for your interest, best wishes, and happy reading. Literacy matters! Read a book!

Danforth Prince, President
Blood Moon Productions, Ltd.

PINK TRIANGLE

The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Famous Members of their Entourages

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

Softcover, 700 pages, with photos ISBN 978-1-936003-37-2
Also available for e-readers

The *enfants terribles* of America at mid-20th century challenged the sexual censors of their day while indulging in "bitchfests" for love, glory, and boyfriends.

This book exposes their literary slugfests and offers an intimate look at their relationships with the *glitterati*—MM, Brando, the Oliviers, the Paleys, U.S. Presidents, a gaggle of other movie stars, millionaires, and dozens of others.

This is for anyone who's interested in the formerly concealed scandals of Hollywood and Broadway, and the values and pretentions of both the literary world and the entertainment industry.

***

"A banquet... If *PINK TRIANGLE* had not been written for us, we would have had to research and type it all up for ourselves…Pink Triangle is nearly seven hundred pages of the most entertaining histrionics ever sliced, spiced, heated, and serviced up to the reading public. Everything that Blood Moon has done before pales in comparison.

"Given the fact that the subjects of the book themselves were nearly delusional on the subject of themselves (to say nothing of each other) it is hard to find fault. Add to this the intertwined jungle that was the relationship among Williams, Capote, and Vidal, of the times they vied for things they loved most—especially attention—and the times they enthralled each other and the world, [*Pink Triangle* is] the perfect antidote to the Polar Vortex."

—Vinton McCabe in the NY JOURNAL OF BOOKS

"Blood Moon prides itself on mixing tabloid journalism, going to the source of gossip itself—okay, hearsay, or the quickly deteriorating minds of aging witnesses—with genuine moments of hard-work research (and there always is some of that in Blood Moon Productions' books) to come up with their titles.

"Full disclosure: I have been a friend and follower of Blood Moon Productions' tomes for years, and always marveled at the amount of information in their books—it's staggering. The index alone to *Pink Triangle* runs to 21 pages—and the scale of names in it runs like a *Who's Who* of American social, cultural and political life through much of the 20th century...The only remedy is for you to run out this February, in time for Valentine's Day, and buy *Pink Triangle*."

—Perry Brass in THE HUFFINGTON POST

"We Brits are not spared the Porter/Prince silken lash either. PINK TRIANGLE's research is, quite frankly, breathtaking. PINK TRIANGLE will fascinate you for many weeks to come. Once you have made the initial titillating dip, the day will seem dull without it."

—Jeffery Tayor in THE SUNDAY EXPRESS (UK)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Darwin Porter, himself an unrepentant *enfant terrible*, moved through the entourages of this Pink Triangle with impunity for several decades of their heyday. Early in 2014, he wrote a book about it.

"Every literate person in America has strong ideas about The Pink Triangle. This *exposé* of its members' feuds, vanities, and idiosyncracies will be required reading if you're interested in the literary climate of 'The American Century.'"

—Danforth Prince

THOSE GLAMOROUS GABORS

Bombshells from Budapest

Darwin Porter

Zsa Zsa, Eva, and Magda Gabor transferred their glittery dreams and gold-digging ambitions from the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Hollywood. There, more effectively than any army, these Bombshells from Budapest broke hearts, amassed fortunes, lovers, and A-list husbands, and amused millions of *voyeurs* through the medium of television, movies, and the social registers. In this astonishing "triple-play" biography, designated "Best Biography of the Year" by the Hollywood Book Festival, Blood Moon lifts the "mink-and-diamond" curtain on this amazing trio of blood-related sisters, whose complicated intrigues have never been fully explored before.

From *the New York Review of Books*: "You will never be Ga-bored…this book gives new meaning to the term compelling.

"Be warned, *Those Glamorous Gabors* is both an epic and a pip. Not since *Gone with the Wind* have so many characters on the printed page been forced to run for their lives for one reason or another. And Scarlett making a dress out of the curtains is nothing compared to what a Gabor will do when she needs to scrap together an outfit for a movie premiere or late-night outing.

"For those not up to speed, Jolie Tilleman came from a family of jewelers and therefore came by her love for the shiny stones honestly, perhaps genetically. She married Vilmos Gabor somewhere around World War 1 (exact dates, especially birth dates, are always somewhat vague in order to establish plausible deniability later on) and they were soon blessed with three daughters: **Magda**, the oldest, whose hair, sadly, was naturally brown, although it would turn quite red in America; **Zsa Zsa** (born 'Sari') a natural blond who at a very young age exhibited the desire for fame with none of the talents usually associated with achievement, excepting beauty and a natural wit; and **Eva**, the youngest and blondest of the girls, who after seeing Grace Moore perform at the National Theater, decided that she wanted to be an actress and that she would one day move to Hollywood to become a star.

"Given that the Gabor family at that time lived in Budapest, Hungary, at the period of time between the World Wars, that Hollywood dream seemed a distant one indeed. The story—the riches to rags to riches to rags to riches again myth of survival against all odds as the four women, because of their Jewish heritage, flee Europe with only the minks on their backs and what jewels they could smuggle along with them in their *decolletage*, only to have to battle afresh for their places in the vicious Hollywood pecking order—gives new meaning to the term 'compelling.' The reader, as if he were witnessing a particularly gore-drenched traffic accident, is incapable of looking away."

—New York Review of Books

About the Author:
Darwin Porter spent more than a half-century collecting anecdotes and interviews with virtually everyone ever associated with the Gabors, including a gaggle of Hungarian and Viennese eyewitnesses who remembered the Gabors before their American debuts. **Jolie Gabor**, the trio's mother, was a frequent guest within Porter's home in New York City, and for a period of three years, the Austrian-born cabaret singer, **Greta Keller** (Jolie Gabor's best friend and each of the three sisters' godmother) was a semi-permanent resident there. Jolie and Greta, "two shrewd and hard-nosed battleaxes from the mine fields of Old Europa," are included among the many sources which contributed to the hundreds of never-before-published revelations which permeate this astonishing triple biography.

Softcover, 730 pages, with hundreds of photos, ISBN 978-1-936003-35-8
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INSIDE LINDA LOVELACE'S DEEP THROAT

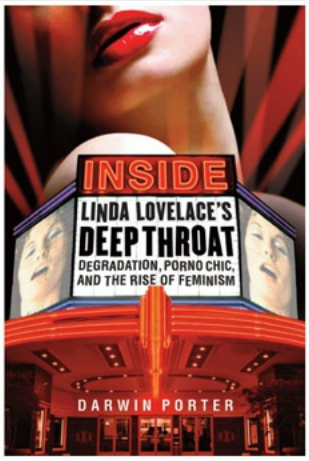
DEGRADATION, PORNO CHIC, AND THE RISE OF FEMINISM

DARWIN PORTER

"THIS BOOK IS A WINNER!" An insider's view of the unlikely heroine who changed the world's perceptions about pornography, censorship, and sexual behavior patterns forever

The Beach Book Festival's Grand Prize Winner: "Best Summer Reading of 2013"
Runner-Up to "Best Biography of 2013" *The Los Angeles Book Festival*
Winner of a Sybarite Award from HedoOnline.com

"This book drew me in..How could it not?" Coco Papy, *Bookslut.*



A Bronx-born brunette, the notorious Linda Lovelace was the starry-eyed Catholic daughter in the 1950s of a police officer who nicknamed her "Miss Holy Holy." Twenty years later, she became the most notorious actress of the 20th century.

She'd fallen in love with a tough ex-Marine, Chuck Traynor, and eventually married him, only to learn that she had become his meal ticket. He forced her at gunpoint into a role as a player within hardcore porn, including a 1971 bestiality film entitled *Dogarama.*

Her next film, shot for $20,000, was released in 1972 as *Deep Throat.* It became the largest grossing XXX-rated flick of all time, earning an estimated $750 million and still being screened all over the world. The fee she was paid was $1,200, which her husband confiscated. The sexy 70s went wild for the film. Porno chic was born, with Linda as its centerpiece.

Traynor, a sadist, pimped his wife to celebrities, charging them $2,000 per session, It became a status symbol to commission an "individualized" film clip of Linda performing her specialty. Clients included Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Milton Berle, Desi Arnaz, Marlon Brando, William Holden, Peter Lawford, and Burt Lancaster. The Mafia had found its most lucrative business—pornography—since Prohibition.

After a decade of being assaulted, beaten, and humiliated, Linda, in 1980, underwent a "Born Again" transformation. She launched her own feminist anti-pornography movement, attracting such activists as Gloria Steinem, and scores of other sex industry professionals who refuted their earlier careers.

Critics claimed that Linda's *Deep Throat* changed America's sexual attitudes more than anything since the first Kinsey report in 1948, that she super-charged the feminist movement, and that to some degree, she re-defined the nation's views on obscenity.

The tragic saga of Linda Lovelace changed beliefs about entertainment, morality, and feminism in America. This book tells you what the movie doesn't.

***Darwin Porter**, author of some twenty critically acclaimed celebrity exposés of behind-the-scenes intrigue in the entertainment industry, was deeply involved in the Linda Lovelace saga as it unfolded in the 70s, interviewing many of the players, and raising money for the legal defense of the film's co-star, Harry Reems. In this book, emphasizing her role as a celebrity interacting with other celebrities, he brings inside information and a never-before-published revelation to almost every page.*

INSIDE LINDA LOVELACE'S DEEP THROAT
The Most Comprehensive Biography Ever Written of an Adult Entertainment Star and Her Relationship with the Underbelly of Hollywood
Softcover, 640 pages, 6"x9", with hundreds of photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-33-4

WINNER OF FOUR DISTINGUISHED LITERARY AWARDS, THIS IS THE BEST BIOGRAPHY OF VIVIEN LEIGH & LAURENCE OLIVIER EVER PUBLISHED

Scarlett O'Hara, Desperately in Love with Heathcliff, Together on the Road to Hell

Here, for the first time, is a biography that raises the curtain on the secret lives of **Lord Laurence Olivier**, often cited as the finest actor in the history of England, and **Vivien Leigh,** who immortalized herself with her Oscar-winning portrayals of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind,* and as Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

Dashing and "impossibly handsome," Laurence Olivier was pursued by the most dazzling luminaries, male and female, of the movie and theater worlds.

Lord Olivier's beautiful and brilliant but emotionally disturbed wife (Viv to her lovers) led a tumultuous off-the-record life whose paramours ranged from the A-list celebrities to men she selected randomly off the street. But none of the brilliant roles depicted by Lord and Lady Olivier, on stage or on screen, ever matched the power and drama of personal dramas which wavered between Wagnerian opera and Greek tragedy. ***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*** is the definitive and most revelatory portrait ever published of the most talented and tormented actor and actress of the 20th century.

Darwin Porter is the principal author of this seminal work.

Roy Moseley, this book's co-author, was an intimate friend of both Lord and Lady Olivier, maintaining a decades-long association with the famous couple, nurturing them through triumphs, emotional breakdowns, and streams of suppressed scandal. A resident of California who spent most of his life in England, Moseley has authored or co-authored biographies of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Rex Harrison, Cary Grant, Merle Oberon, Roger Moore, and Bette Davis.

*"***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara** *can be a dazzling read, the prose unmannered and instantly digestible. The authors' ability to pile scandal atop scandal, seduction after seduction, can be impossible to resist."*

—THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DAMN YOU, SCARLETT O'HARA

THE PRIVATE LIFES OF LAURENCE OLIVIER AND VIVIEN LEIGH

Darwin Porter and Roy Moseley

ISBN 978-1-936003-15-0 Hardcover, 708 pages, with about a hundred photos and hundreds of insights into the London Theatre, the role of the Oliviers in the politics of World War II, and the passion, fury, and frustration of their lives together as actors in Hollywood.

Also available for E-Readers

PAUL NEWMAN

The Man Behind the Baby Blues, His Secret Life Exposed

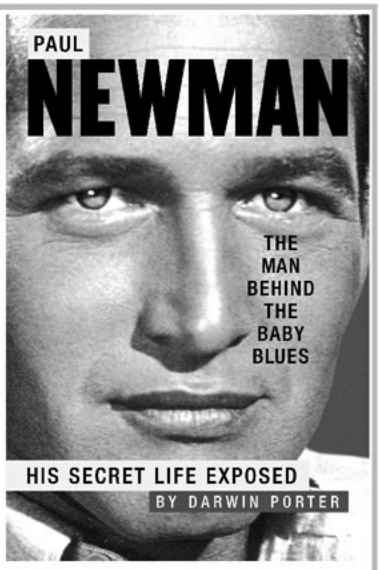
Darwin Porter

Drawn from firsthand interviews with insiders who knew Paul Newman intimately, and compiled over a period of nearly a half-century, this is the world's most honest and most revelatory biography about Hollywood's pre-eminent male sex symbol.

If you're a fan of Newman *(and who do you know who isn't)* you really should look at this book. It's a respectful but candid cornucopia of once-concealed information about the sexual and emotional adventures of an affable, impossibly good-looking workaday actor, a former sailor from Shaker Heights, Ohio, who parlayed his ambisexual charm and extraordinatily good looks into one of the most successful careers in Hollywood.

Whereas the situations it exposes were widely known within Hollywood's inner circles, they've never before been revealed to the general public.

But now, the full story has been published, as recorded by celebrity chronicler Darwin Porter—the giddy heights and agonizing crashes of a great American star, with revelations and insights never before published in any other biography.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: "There are guilty pleasures. Then there is the master of guilty pleasures, Darwin Porter. There is nothing like reading him for passing the hours. He is the Nietzsche of Naughtiness, the Goethe of Gossip, the Proust of Pop Culture. Porter knows all the nasty buzz anyone has ever heard whispered in dark bars, dim alleys, and confessional booths. And lovingly, precisely, and in as straightforward a manner as an oncoming train, his prose whacks you between the eyes with the greatest gossip since Kenneth Anger. Some would say better than Anger."

—Alan W. Petrucelli, *The Entertainment Report*
Stage and Screen Examiner, Examiner.com

Paul Newman, The Man Behind the Baby Blues
His Secret Life Exposed

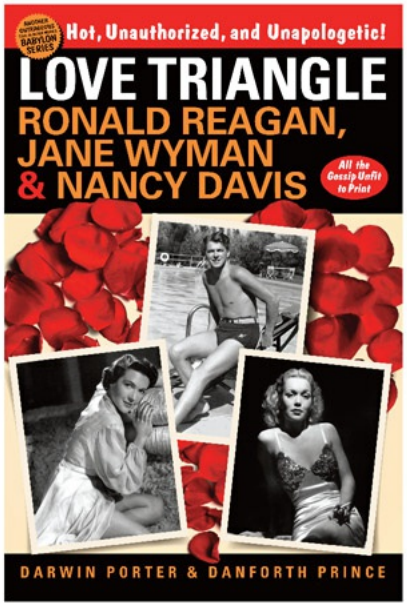
Recipient of an Honorable Mention from the New England Book Festival, this is the most compelling and unvarnished biography of Paul Newman ever written.

Hardcover, 520 pages, with dozens of photos. **ISBN 978-0-9786465-1-6.** Also available for E-readers

LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN, JANE WYMAN, & NANCY DAVIS

All the Gossip Unfit to Print / Available in November 2014



Most of the world remembers Ronald Reagan and Nancy (Davis) Reagan as geriatric figures in the White House in the 1980s. And it remembers Jane Wyman as the fierce empress, Angela Channing, in the decade's hit TV series, *Falcon Crest*.

But long before that, two young wannabee stars, Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman, had arrived in Hollywood as untested hopefuls. Separately, they stormed Warner Brothers, looking for movie stardom and love—and finding both beyond their wildest dreams. They were followed, in time, by Nancy Davis, who began her career posing for cheesecake in a failed attempt by the studio to turn her into a sex symbol.

In their memoirs, Ronald and Nancy (Jane didn't write one) paid scant attention to their "wild and wonderful years" in Hollywood. To provide that missing link in their lives, Blood Moon's ***Love Triangle*** explores in depth the trio's passions, furies, betrayals, loves won and lost, and the conflicts and rivalries they generated.

A liberal New Deal Democrat, Reagan quickly became a handsome leading man in "B" pictures and a "babe magnet." Reagan himself admitted he developed *"Leading Lady-itis"* even for stars he didn't appear with. He launched a bevy of affairs with such glamorous icons as Lana Turner, Betty Grable and Susan Hayward, even a "too young" Elizabeth Taylor.

He eventually married Jane, but he was not faithful to her, enjoying back alley affairs with the likes of "The Oomph Girl," Ann Sheridan. Jane, too, had her affairs on the side, notably with Lew Ayres (Ginger Rogers' ex) while filming her Oscar-winning *Johnny Belinda*.

After dumping Reagan, Jane launched a series of affairs herself, battling Joan Crawford (for Hollywood's most studly and newsworthy attorney, Greg Bautzer); and Marilyn Monroe (for bandleader Fred Karger, marrying him, divorcing him, marrying him again, and finally divorcing him for good.)

Reagan's oldest son, Michael (adopted), later said, "If Nancy knew that one day she would be First Lady, she would have cleaned up her act." He was referring to her notorious days as a starlet in the late 1940s and early 50s, when the grapevine had it: "her phone number was passed around a lot." The list of her intimate involvements is long, including Clark Gable, whom she wanted to marry; Spencer Tracy; Yul Brynner; Frank Sinatra; Marlon Brando; Milton Berle; Peter Lawford; Robert Walker; and others.

Love Triangle, a proud and presidential addition to **Blood Moon's Babylon series**, digs deep into what these three young movie stars were up to decades before two of them took over the Free World.

LOVE TRIANGLE: Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis
All the Gossip Unfit to Print. Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince
A hot, scandalous paperback available in November, 2014. Biography/Entertainment 6" x 9" 500 pages with hundreds of photos ISBN 978-1-936003-41-9

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Tomorrow Never Comes

Honoring the 60th Anniversary of Dean's Violent and Early Death

All the Gossip Unfit to Print About Hollywood's Most Enduring Icon of Male Rage

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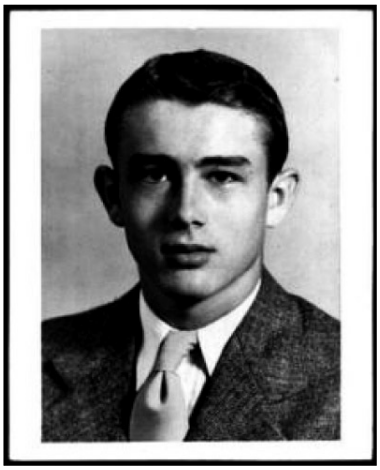

TOMORROW NEVER COMES

James Dean became a legend, worldwide. This book tells how he did it.

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COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF JAMES DEAN
(FEBRUARY 8, 1931-SEPTEMBER 30, 1955)

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A MYTH-SHATTERING TALE ABOUT AMERICA'S OBSESSION WITH CELEBRITIES.

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JAMES DEAN

Tomorrow Never Comes

Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

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A Word About Phraseologies

Since we at Blood Moon weren't privy to long-ago conversations as they were unfolding, we have relied on the memories of our sources for the conversational tone and phraseologies of what we've recorded within the pages of this book.

This writing technique, as it applies to modern biography, has been defined as "conversational storytelling" by *The New York Times,* which labeled it as an acceptable literary device for "engaging reading."

Blood Moon is not alone in replicating, "as remembered" dialogues from dead sources. Truman Capote and Norman Mailer were pioneers of direct quotes, and today, they appear in countless other memoirs, ranging from those of Eddie Fisher to those of the long-time mistress (Verita Thompson) of Humphrey Bogart.

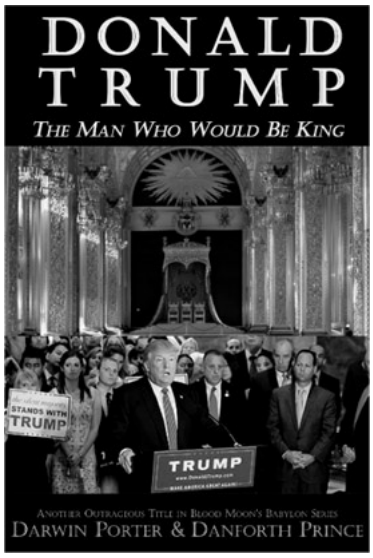
Some people have expressed displeasure in the fact that direct quotes and "as remembered" dialogue have become a standard—some would say "mandatory"—fixture in pop culture biographies today.

If that is the case with anyone who's reading this now, they should perhaps turn to other, more traditional and self-consciously "scholastic" works instead.

Best wishes to all of you, with thanks for your interest in our work.

Danforth Prince
President and Founder
Blood Moon Productions

ALSO FROM BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS—NEW AND COMING NEXT!



In time for the elections, from biographers who crafted earlier exposés of The Reagans, The Clintons, The Kennedys, and many of the most prominent stars of Golden-Age Hollywood, this is about a campaign that's unprecedented in the history of The Republic. Breathlessly irreverent, it presents the saga of Trump, Inc. as an "only in America" story within a culture that's as noteworthy (and bizarre) as its protagonist.

DONALD TRUMP

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

Softcover, 500 pages, with photos, available everywhere in September, 2016.
Another proud and presidential addition to Blood Moon's award-winning Babylon Series.

ISBN 978-1-936003-51-8

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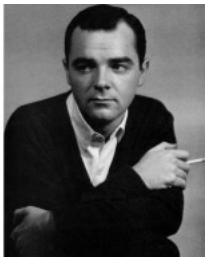

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Geraldine Page interprets James Dean and André Gide. Hatred backstage, as Louis Jourdan and Jimmy exchange venom. Both its playwright and its enraged director agree: "Working with this monster boy was my worst experience ever with an actor."

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A tangled web of Hollywood affairs. Everybody sleeping with everybody else's lovers. Vic Damone, Marisa Pavan, Marlon Brando, Natalie Wood, and John Derek. Changing partners with Ursula Andress.

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EPILOGUE: DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON

Drive Fast, Die Young

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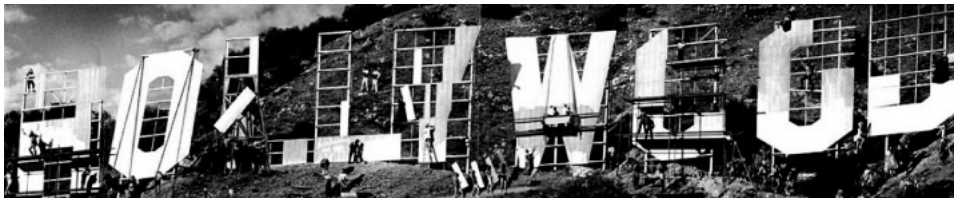
Chapter One

A HOOSIER FARMBOY

WANDERS ALONG HOLLYWOOD'S BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS



The "Live Fast, Die Young" Rebel Asserts, "Live as if You'll Die Today"

THE SYMBOL OF MISUNDERSTOOD YOUTH, A LITTLE BOY LOST AND IN SEARCH OF HIMSELF, REMAINS FOREVER YOUNG

"A young man must be courageous in the bedroom. Try anything—life's too short to worry about what's perverted."

—James Dean

"How big is your cock, dah-ling?"

—Tallulah Bankhead to James Dean

James Dean was twenty years old, a UCLA dropout, and without any real cash. The year was 1951, and the July 4th holiday was about to bring business in Hollywood to a halt

Los Angeles: The corner of Sunset Blvd. at Vine in the 1950s.

The dingy low-rent apartment he occupied at 1216 North Edgemont had peeling paint and "hot and cold running cockroaches" (Jimmy's words).

His friend, Ted Avery, also a struggling actor, supported himself working as an usher at CBS. He let Jimmy sleep on his sofa while his wife was away. The arrangement was temporary, and Jimmy needed to find another place to sleep and hang out…and soon.

That morning, Avery and Jimmy shared some cups of coffee, the only edible thing they could find in their otherwise empty kitchen cabinets.

The previous evening, Jimmy had consumed the last edible object remaining in their larder, dried oatmeal from Quakers. After boiling it on the stove, he mixed it with the remains of a sticky-looking jar of marmalade, the only thing left in their refrigerator.

Money (the lack thereof) was a problem, and Avery suggested that Jimmy should get a job as a means of keeping their meager household afloat. The acting gigs each had managed to attract seemed like memories from the distant past.

Avery, an expert at rope tricks, had taught Jimmy some of his tricks and techniques, suggesting that they might help him get cast in some B westerns. Jimmy practiced and quickly learned the techniques, which he later used after his casting in *Giant.* Sometimes, at the Santa Monica Pier, the two friends would put on a show—donations appreciated. Dressed in borrowed cowboy outfits, reminiscent of a young Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, they twirled lariats like Will Rogers, Jr.

Avery had heard of a job that had become available at Ted's Auto Park, an outdoor parking facility adjacent to the CBS television studios, near the intersection of Gower and Sunset Boulevards.

Although the job paid only a dollar an hour, plus tips, Jimmy learned that some guys could make as much as $200 a week on the side, hustling tricks—at least the better looking and better endowed young men. He also was told that a lot of producers, directors, and radio and TV stars, even big screen actors and actresses, parked their cars at Ted's.

"Sometimes an attendant gets an acting job—if you get my drift—through somebody he meets in a parking lot," Avery claimed.

Jimmy pounded the unforgiving streets of Los Angeles in the 1950s with dreams of replacing Marlon Brando.

"I'm drifting," Jimmy said. "Count me in. When those queers get a look at me in my tight jeans and T-shirt, they'll cream in their pants."

An hour later, after telling Avery goodbye on the pavement in front of Ted's Auto Park, Jimmy headed for its office, which was housed in a plank-sided shed that evoked a boxcar on a railroad. Apparently, the establishment's founder and namesake (Ted) had long ago departed. Instead, Jimmy faced Bill Homburg, a beefy, burly bear of a man who spoke English with a distinctive German accent. Seven years ago, he had fought in World War II. Jimmy didn't need to ask which side he'd been on.

Using his male flash and as much charm as he could muster, Jimmy tried to entice Homburg into giving him a job. He even told the boss what a great driver he was, which was a far stretch. "My lifelong dream is to park cars for the big shots."

“That means you want to be an actor,” Homburg said.

“You nailed it. I plan to take Hollywood by storm. Move over, Marlon!”

“You’ll fit in well here,” Homburg predicted. “All my guys want to be actors. I hope you’re not averse to the casting couch.”

“Nope,” Jimmy answered.

“You look like queer bait to me,” Homburg said. “I only hire guys who look like queer bait. So I guess I’ll hire you. You’ve got to show up at seven every morning, and don’t be late, fucker. The pay is a dollar an hour, plus tips, which can be anything. It depends on how much…”

“How well I park cars,” Jimmy interjected.

“That, too.”

After the interview ended, with the promise of a new job beginning in the morning, Jimmy continued his walk along Sunset Boulevard, that boulevard of broken dreams, with renewed confidence. Nonetheless, his growling stomach told him that tomorrow was a long way off.

Making a fast decision, he headed for Santa Monica Boulevard, which he’d been told was the best place for a good-looking kid who needed to make cash really quick.

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Since it was still early in the day, the “buyers and sellers” along Santa Monica Boulevard were not yet out in full force. That happened in the late afternoon before businessmen headed home to their wives and kids. After dark, denizens of the Los Angeles night emerged.

A UCLA dropout with acting ambitions, here’s James Dean from his college days.

Jimmy knew that although he didn’t have the best body on the street, his expressive face had always been a winning feature. When asked about his appeal, he said, “I’m a babe for the younger set.” At that time, not many young men referred to themselves as a “babe.”

Although he was thin, he had an obviously developed musculature. He seemed to evoke a self-awareness that few actors of his day had, except for Brando and Montgomery Clift. He didn’t want to be classified with the pretty boys of the 1950s, especially Tab Hunter, Robert Wagner, or the ultimate narcissist, Tony Curtis.

His hair color was compared to that of an almond, brownish but with blonde highlights from the California sun. Supple, Cupid-like lips were surrounded by the delicate skin of an angular face. His sleepy, “bedroom eyes” hinted at the potential for adventure.

Many young men who had never thought of themselves as homosexual found themselves drawn to Jimmy. Exuding a femininity that existed harmoniously with his masculinity, he suggested androgyny. At times shy and awkward, he looked out at the world through horn-rimmed glasses. He was a brooder, rarely indulging in small

talk.

Sometimes, he cocked his head to one side and—with a Chesterfield dangling from his lips—stood slightly hunched over with his eyes squinted. Often, his hands were stuffed into his front pockets. He was invariably dressed in blue jeans with a white T-shirt, setting the style for young men in the 1950s.

George Beaume, a casual acquaintance at the time, sensed a poetry in Jimmy. "He had this mysterious gaze and could look at his fellow actors without really seeing them. He existed in his own space, his own world. You'd see the sudden tensing of his face, which reeled from one emotion to another like a sinking ship. You'd sometimes hear him laugh, although his voice had a demonic ring. In contrast to his shyness, he could also become preening proud, the cock of the walk. It all depended on what was happening to him that night. If hurt by someone or brutally put down, he'd look like a lost little boy tearing at your heartstrings. I truly didn't know what to make of him. But I sensed there was something *there."*

As he loitered on the sidewalk beside Santa Monica Boulevard, a short man in his late thirties or forties, dressed in a suit, walked by and gave Jimmy a casual but interested glance before moving on. He'd strolled only about twelve feet before he turned around and came back.

"Aren't you Jerry Burns from Cleveland, Ohio?" he asked Jimmy.

"Cut the shit, man," he answered. "It'll cost you twenty."

"I don't usually pay that much, but okay, I guess." He signaled an oncoming taxi.

As Jimmy piled into the back seat with him, the man, who had introduced himself as Frank, gave an address in West Hollywood.

They were driven to an upmarket apartment house with a doorman. As Jimmy and Frank walked past the doorman, Frank told him, "That new television set of mine is acting up. I've brought a repairman. Unless television gets better, it'll never replace radio."

"Yeah," the doorman said with a knowing smile.

The elevator stopped on the eighth floor, and Jimmy was directed into an ocean-view apartment with plush carpeting.

"How about a drink?" Frank asked.

"Too early in the day for me, man," Jimmy said. "I haven't got all day. Let's get on with it."

"How romantic!" Frank said sarcastically.

"I'm not selling romance," Jimmy said. "I go for girls. Can I have the twenty upfront?"

The man showed Jimmy the bedroom, where he removed a bill from his wallet. "Get undressed." He had become a commander.

Seductively, Jimmy removed his T-shirt before taking off his boots. Then his jeans came down. He wore no underwear. He tossed his jeans onto the floor and, fully naked, lay down on the bed, closing his eyes.

Frank seemed to devour him as it became obvious that Jimmy was conjuring up images that had nothing to do with the man who serviced him.

The act itself took no more than four minutes. After that, Jimmy jumped out of bed, asking if he could use the shower.

There, under the streaming water, he lathered his chest and crotch. Suddenly, Frank pulled back the curtain. "I want to watch you shower," he said.

"It'll cost you another five," Jimmy said.

"Okay," the man said.

Under Frank's penetrating gaze, Jimmy didn't want to prolong the shower. After he'd finished, he stepped out and was handed a large bath towel.

Within five minutes, he was at the door, holding out his hand for that extra five-dollar bill.

"Thanks for coming," Frank said. "That's known as a *double entendre."*

"Whatever," Jimmy said, heading toward the elevator and the street.

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At last, and with money in his pocket, Jimmy strolled along Santa Monica Boulevard to Barney's Beanery, where he ordered two cheeseburgers and a bowl of chili, all for $1.65. He devoured the food under a misspelled sign, "FAGOTS STAY OUT."

The dive was famous, and he'd wanted to go there for a long time. Since it was founded in 1927, it had

attracted such stars as Clara Bow ("*The It Girl"),* Jean Harlow *("The Platinum Blonde"),* and such matinee idols as Clark Gable and John Barrymore.

The big names no longer came here. Surrounding Jimmy were mostly out-of-work actors attracted to the place by its 50¢ hamburgers.

Stuffed, Jimmy pondered what to do for the rest of the day. Should he give some of his just- earned dough to Avery or should he spend it on himself, perhaps paying a photographer to create some portraits as enticement for prospective casting directors. He quickly decided that Avery's fiscal needs—including his rent money—would have to wait.

From a phone booth, he placed a call to Beverly Wills, the daughter of the highly successful *comedienne,* Joan Davis. Beverly was starring as Fluffy Adams, a second banana in the CBS radio comedy, *Junior Miss.* She had plenty of money of her own; whenever she went out with Jimmy, she always picked up the tab. In Jimmy's words, "Guys who look like me shouldn't have to pay."

She was one of the so-called "Hollywood brats," pampered teenagers who had movie stars for parents.

Beverly Wills...dating Jimmy and picking up the tabs.

Hardly a beauty, Beverly was not exactly ugly. She made up for any deficiency by her bright, bubbly personality and her sense of fun and humor. She lived in a mansion in Bel Air, next door to the director, Alfred Hitchcock.

Jimmy was indecisive about pursuing a romance with Beverly, figuring at times that he should be spending his nights in the bed of a bigtime director or producer who might advance his acting career. And whereas Davis would do nothing for him, Beverly, in contrast, had tried to get work for him through Hank Garson, the director of *Junior Miss.* She had asked him to cast Jimmy in a small part, and, after acquiescing, he had agreed to meet him backstage the following day.

"This sullen young man showed up, and I felt he looked a bit like Frank Sinatra," Garson said. "I asked him to stand in front of a microphone and read some lines for me so I could check out his voice—after all, this was radio. But his reaction shocked me: He told me, 'Go fuck yourself! I don't do readings!'Then he stormed out. What a prick!"

Jimmy didn't fare well with other directors either, most of whom considered his five feet eight inches "too short."

To one director, Jimmy angrily asked, "How in Hell can you measure acting in inches?" Then he suggestively grabbed his own crotch with a line that effectively ended his audition: "I'll show you some inches, faggot."

Several other directors told him, "You're not pretty enough, and you don't have a good enough build. If you looked like Tab Hunter or Tony Curtis, we might hire you. But you don't."

Jimmy hooks up with the kind-hearted daughter of a famous actress, Joan Davis, depicted above with Jim Backus in a publicity shot for what became her best-known role, the TV sitcom conceived to compete with *I Love Lucy, I Married Joan.*

To each of these casting directors, Jimmy uttered the same reaction: "Fuck you, asshole!"

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Seventeen-year-old Beverly invited Jimmy over right away. He was happy to learn that her mother wasn't at home. Davis didn't like Jimmy—in fact, she detested him. And he didn't like her style of acting —"If that's what it's called." She'd been successful as a B-movie actress and later as a leading star in radio comedy. Jimmy had seen only one of her movies, *If You Knew Susie* (1948), in which she had co-starred with her lover at the time, Eddie Cantor.

Joan Davis in the 1948 film that made her famous.

Davis was currently preparing the launch of a TV sitcom, *I Married Joan,* in which she would play the manic wife of a mild-mannered community judge, Jim Backus. CBS wanted a show similar to its big hit, *I Love Lucy,* which had premiered in 1951, starring Lucille Ball and her womanizing, real-life husband, Desi Arnaz.

Two weeks earlier, Jimmy had met Backus for a dinner at the Davis manse. *[Ironically, Backus would later be cast as Jimmy's apron-stringed father in Rebel Without a Cause.]* Jimmy had been introduced to Beverly when he was rooming with William Bast, who later became an author and writer-producer for film and television. At the time, Bast had been dating Beverly, slipping into her bedroom, right down the hall from her mother's, for lackluster attempts at intercourse.

Beverly's mini-memoir of her encounters with James Dean appeared alongside this feature on Kim Novak in March of 1957.

Within a few weeks, Jimmy had lured Beverly away from his roommate.

At first, she had not been impressed with Jimmy, as she'd relate in a posthumous article for *Modern Screen,* published in March of 1957 and ludicrously entitled "I Almost Married James Dean. Who Am I?"

> *"I thought he was pretty much of a creep until we got to this picnic and then all of a sudden, he came to life. We began to talk about acting and Jimmy lit up. He told me how interested he was in the Stanislavsky method, where you not only act people, but things, too.*
>
> *'Look,' said Jimmy. 'I'm a pine tree in a storm.' He held his arms out and waved wildly. To feel more free, he impatiently tossed off his cheap, tight, blue jacket. He looked bigger as soon as he did, because you could see his broad shoulders and powerful build. Then he got wilder and pretended he was a monkey. He climbed a big tree and swung from a high branch. Dropping from the branch, he landed on his hands like a little boy, chuckling uproariously at every little thing. Once in the spotlight, he ate it up and had us all in stitches all afternoon. The 'creep' had turned into the hit of the party."*

Jimmy arrived by taxi (a rare luxury for him at the time) at Joan Davis' Bel Air mansion, with its pool, bar, and tennis court. He was glad that except for the cook preparing an elaborate dinner for a special guest that evening, Beverly was alone in the house.

She immediately led him to her bedroom for a session of heavy necking. He stopped short of intercourse because he wasn't in the mood.

Two hours later, Davis arrived and somewhat frantically set about getting things in order for her dinner party. She found Jimmy sitting in an armchair in her living room with his left leg dangling over an armrest. He was munching on an apple and listening to music on the radio.

She showed her disappointment at how sloppily he was dressed, telling him that he'd better leave because within the hour, Tallulah Bankhead would be arriving for drinks and dinner.

Beverly interjected, "But I've invited Jimmy to stay for dinner!"

Very grand, very formidable, very funny, and very debauched: Tallulah Bankhead, as depicted in Jean Cocteau's 1947 Broadway production of *The Eagle Has Two Heads.* It flopped.

The Big Show

Davis looked acutely disappointed before heading into the kitchen to see how dinner was coming along. Jimmy had already bonded with the cook, an obese woman from Alabama. Her name was Odessa, and as time went by, she frequently prepared Jimmy's favorite dish, pot roast, whenever he stayed for dinner. Knowing that he had very little money, Odessa would leave foodstuff for a week in Jimmy's car parked in the driveway outside.

Although Bankhead's arrival created excitement throughout the Davis household, to Jimmy, she was only a name, vaguely connected to Broadway. He'd never seen her in anything.

Currently, she was starring in a radio variety show, *The Big Show* (1950-52), a ninety minutes program that was broadcast every Sunday night. As mistress of ceremonies, Bankhead entertained big-name stars, including Marlene Dietrich and Ethel Merman. Davis was a regular on her show. Sometimes, Bankhead would sing, her signature songs including "Bye Bye Blackbird," and "Give My Regards to Broadway."

Immensely powerful in show-biz promotions after World War II, Bankhead was MC of one of Radioland's most popular shows. Jimmy reacted to her instinctively.

Here, she's participating in a staged reading with Laurence Olivier ("Heathcliff") and Vivien ("Scarlett O'Hara") Leigh.

The moment Bankhead barged through the door, she took center stage. Jimmy had never met a woman like her. After Davis introduced her to Jimmy, she immediately asked: "How big is your cock, *Dah-ling*?"

Then she plopped down on the sofa, demanding "a bourbon and branch water. Go easy on the branch water."

Throughout the dinner, Jimmy was mesmerized by the bigtime star. She was a formidable presence, still showing some of her faded beauty of the 20s and 30s. Davis seemed upset that she was showing more attention to Jimmy than she did to her.

Tallulah summoned Odessa from the kitchen and ordered her to sit down at the table with her. Both women shared tales of their native Alabama.

Tallulah kept ordering bourbon. "I drink today, *Dah-lings*, as the world knows. But when I arrived in New York, Daddy warned me to stay away from men and booze. But he didn't warn me about cocaine and women."

"Incidentally, *Dah-ling*, don't believe that shit about cocaine being habit-forming. It's not. I've been snorting it for years."

At times, she talked about sex. "I've tried many varieties. The conventional position I found claustrophobic. All the other positions give me a stiff neck or lockjaw."

Three hours later, in bidding Jimmy good night, she wetly kissed him on the lips. "I haven't had so much fun, *Dah-ling*, since the night I went down on Hattie McDaniel."

Later that night, Jimmy described Bankhead to his roommate, Avery. "Tallulah is a *prima donna* bitch with a succulent, scarlet-painted mouth. It was a kind of living thing, with a mind of its own. They gave me a hard-on. All evening long, I wanted to get up from the table and stick my erect cock between them. That would have silenced her."

Bankhead and Jimmy were destined to meet months later in Manhattan, although they would never work together.

Jimmy Meets His Substitute Father/Mentor With Incest on His Mind

The next morning at seven o'clock, Jimmy showed up at Ted's Auto Park, adjacent to CBS's Studios. If parking cars provided a means of meeting power brokers in Hollywood, he'd park cars. "I'm sure I'll be discovered. With my good looks and talent, I'm bound to be noticed."

"Modest, aren't you?" Avery said.

"I've got nothing to be modest about," Jimmy said. "If you don't believe in yourself, no one else will,"

"That makes sense," Avery said.

When he reported to work on his third morning, a Saturday, Jimmy was frustrated that no one had really given him a second look so far. But his luck was about to change.

A shiny new Buick, painted emerald green and ivory, pulled into the parking lot. Out stepped a tall, curly haired man, who appeared in his mid-thirties. He was immaculately dressed in a midnight blue suit and red tie with the most expensive pair of leather shoes Jimmy had ever seen on a man. "Probably, unborn lamb," Jimmy later recalled.

Rogers Brackett, in a CBS publicity shot...radar eyes for a pretty face.

With his canny awareness, Jimmy knew he was being checked out from crotch to face and back to crotch.

As he later recalled, "I was sorta pissed off. He was checking me out like a slab of meat. I'd come to Hollywood to be a great actor—not just like Brando, but like Montgomery Clift, John Garfield, only better. I resented having to sleep my way up the ladder. Perhaps I could have been fired, but I said something I shouldn't have."

"I hope you're satisfied that I'm good enough to eat."

"Don't be a smart ass," said the owner of the Buick. "I was checking you out because I'm always searching for a star of tomorrow."

"Yeah, right," Jimmy said. "Every parking attendant on the lot has heard that line."

"In my case, I mean it," the man said. "You've got something. I don't know what."

"I know what I've got," Jimmy said. "A cock you want to suck."

"Maybe that's so. But I bet you've got talent, too. The truly gifted artist is always arrogant, as Joan Crawford said to John Garfield in *Humoresque."*

*"*What are you? A casting agent? A talent scout?"

"I'm a producer. I might cast you in one of my shows. That is, if you truly have talent, other than being an arrogant little prick."

"Listen, mister, I'm the best god damn actor in Hollywood if given a chance. And my prick's not so little."

"My name's Rogers Brackett. What's yours?"

"James Dean, and don't you forget it," he answered. "You can call me Mr. Dean."

"I'll catch you later," Brackett said. "You think you're too big for your breeches, but I can cut you down to size."

"We'll see about that," Jimmy said, walking away, taking the parking ticket to Homburg's office. "Who is that guy?" he asked his boss." Anybody important or just a wise guy?"

"He's Rogers Brackett. He produces the weekly radio show, *Alias Jane Doe.* It stars Lurene Tuttle."

"So he's a real producer after all," Jimmy said.

"Why do you want to know?" Homburg asked. "Did the fucker come on to you?"

"Not at all," Jimmy lied. "He's definitely straight."

"Like hell he his," Homburg claimed. "He's a chicken hawk. Sucked off half the young guys on my lot."

A few hours later, Brackett returned, signaling Jimmy to retrieve his Buick.

After giving him a final lookover, Brackett got behind the wheel of his car, where he handed Jimmy a five-dollar bill, the biggest tip he'd ever received. A lot of men gave him only a quarter.

Attached to the bill was a paper clip with his calling card, listing his phone number and address.

"I'll expect you at eight tomorrow night," Bracket said. "I'll have Chasen's cater a dinner for us. That's the best restaurant in Los Angeles."

"What makes you think I'll show up?" Jimmy asked.

"I've seen that gleam in your eye," Brackett said. "You know I'm the man who'll make you a star."

"You'll make me all right."

"Our meeting today may be historic, an event like Professor Higgins encountering Eliza Doolittle."

"I don't know who in the fuck they are, but I'll take your word for it."

"Don't be late," Brackett said. "I don't want to sound too melodramatic, but it may be your date with destiny."

"If you say so, guy."

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Jimmy had a hunch he could get a job out of Rogers Brackett. He showed up at his apartment on time, in his battered old Chevy that had a full tank of gas. With the money he'd made the following afternoon, he had more than enough to fill up his gas tank, since he'd need it to drive into the Hollywood Hills, above Sunset Strip.

Before his departure, Jimmy had asked questions about Brackett, learning that he was known "as the Oscar Wilde of Hollywood." He was a true child of Tinseltown, seemingly known to half the people in the industry.

He'd been born in Culver City, virtually on the doorstep of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. He father was Robert Brackett, an early partner of Louis Selznick. Rogers himself had worked for Louis' son, David O. Selznick. Jimmy also found out that Brackett was employed by the powerful advertising agent, Foote, Cone, & Belding.

Parking his car, Jimmy stepped out into the fashionable Sunset Plaza Drive. After he rang the bell, Bracket opened the door wearing a red silk robe.

His living room was outfitted in a color scheme of chartreuse and royal purple, a daring combination pioneered by Brackett's close friend, Stanley Mills Haggart, an interior designer.

After pouring him a drink, Brackett led him out onto his panoramic terrace, with its view over Los Angeles. The city lay before him like a gigantic carpet of lights.

"I've got a dream," Jimmy said.

"And what might that be?" Brackett asked. "I want to conquer this fucking town and make it mine."

"A noble ambition, my dear," Brackett said. "Perhaps I'll help you." He put his arm around Jimmy's slim waist. The doorbell rang. "That's dinner from Chasen's. I ordered three of Elizabeth Taylor's favorite dishes. I call her the Princess. Perhaps I'll introduce her to you someday."

"Hell, man, Elizabeth Taylor and I will one day star together in a big budget movie."

After dinner, Jimmy thanked his host for treating him "to the best meal I've ever had."

Over drinks on the terrace, Brackett told him he'd like to take him to two parties that upcoming weekend—one of them a pool party on Saturday at agent Henry Willson's house.

"You've got to meet him. He's a power broker who can make a young man's career: Guy Madison, Rory Calhoun, Rock Hudson, John Derek, Robert Wagner."

"I'd like to go," Jimmy said. "But I've never heard of this Willson."

"You will," Brackett said.

"Then on Sunday, I'd like to invite you to this gathering at the home of George Cukor, the director. Surely, you've heard of him"

"Vaguely," Jimmy said.

"Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, and a lot of other big names, will be there. I'll introduce you around."

"Meeting all these big shots is one thing, getting a job is quite another."

"Depending on how the evening goes, I can get you a job on my CBS radio program, *Alias Jane Doe.* I'm in charge of casting for my ad agency. The show stars Lurene Tuttle. She plays a reporter who disguises herself to get the scoop, then publishes her revelations under the byline of Jane Doe. Madison Musser is the love interest."

[Brackett delivered on his promise, casting Dean in four episodes. They aired in 1951, on July 28, August 11, September 15 and 22, for which he was paid $56.99 per show.]

"Unless you're bullshitting me, it sounds like you're okay."

By eleven o'clock, it was getting late, and Jimmy had to be on the parking lot the next morning at seven o'clock.

Brackett rose from his seat and took Jimmy's hand. "How about retiring to my bedroom?"

"Okay, but what's the deal?" Jimmy asked. "Do I fuck you, or do you fuck me? Or else a sixty-nine?"

"A combination of all three," Brackett said, leading the way.

Jimmy Meets the Pretty Boys of Henry Willson's Adonis Factory

In 1950s Hollywood, when the "Adonis Factory" of Pretty Boys flourished, Henry Willson was a starmaker. In time, he created first names to hawk—Troy, Rock, Cal, Rod, Dial, Clint, or Touch, among others. He represented such clients as Robert Wagner, Guy Madison, Rory Calhoun, and Tab Hunter, though he was mainly known for having discovered Rock Hudson.

Willson's Saturday afternoon pool parties had become notorious. The mistress of these parties was Truie Delight, a devoted follower of the black evangelist Father Devine. She seemed to ignore all the homosexual couplings going on around her, concentrating instead on the food and drink. She prepared simple barbecues of foot-long hot dogs, hamburgers with all the fixings, and corn on the cob served with creamy butter melting in the hot California sun. There were many jokes about her tasty potato salad. The gays claimed it was creamy because Truie had scooped up and added all the semen collected from the pool house during the previous week's party and added it as a secret ingredient.

Truie also made the drinks, serving them to aging movie and TV executives along with a bevy of gorgeous guys, each of them wearing the briefest of bikinis to show off their assets. Willson didn't allow total nudity, however. That was reserved for the rooms upstairs and for the privacy of the poolhouse.

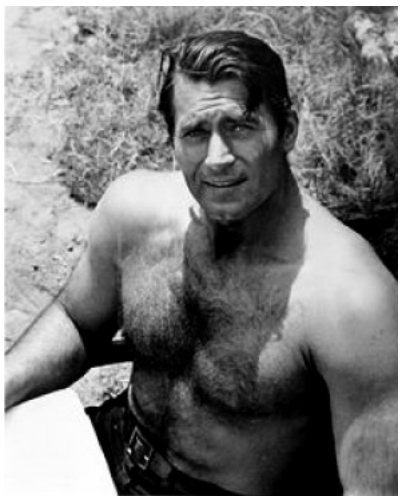
Brackett drove Jimmy, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, to Willson's residence on Stone Canyon Drive. After they were ushered inside, Jimmy felt he was within a sea of male beauty, interspersed with about a dozen older men still dressed in suits.

The biggest and beefiest attraction that afternoon was Clint Walker, a giant of a man who stood 6'6". He'd been a security guard and a nightclub bouncer before Willson discovered him and aggressively promoted him to casting directors as a western hero. As his agent described Walker, "His muscles stretched from Hollywood & Vine to Times Square, but his dick is even longer."

"I look like a pre-teen compared to him," Jimmy whispered to Brackett.

Clint's competition was muscleman Steve Reeves, a devotee of the "Pecs Before Talent" school. His titles from bodybuilding competitions included "Mr. Pacific," "Mr. America," "Mr. World," and ultimately, "Mr. Universe." Willson wanted to help him break into movies, and before the end of the decade, Reeves would be featured as the focal point of Hercules movies, sometimes known as "spaghetti sword-and-sandals pictures." Although presumably

straight, he was willing to sell up-close-and-personal access to his muscles to male clients.



At one of Henry Willson's parties, Jimmy met heartthrob and muscle man, "I'm big all over," Clint Walker.

Finally, Brackett took Jimmy over to introduce him to Willson, who was licking some of Truie's barbecue sauce off his fingers. To Jimmy, he was grotesquely ugly, with wide hips resting on short legs, and a hawkish nose with a bulbous lower lip often curled into a pout. Like the popular Broadway columnist, Dorothy Kilgallen, Willson had no chin. Frank Sinatra called Kilgallen "the chinless wonder," and Willson "son of chinless wonder."

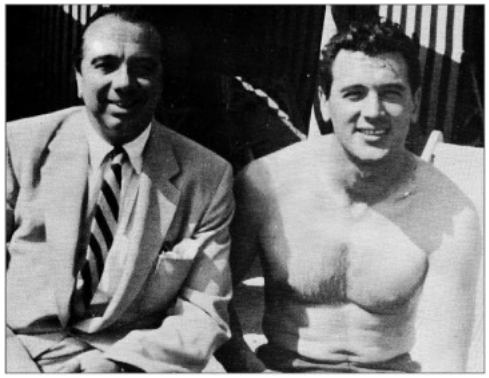
Steve Reeves appears in his most famous role, *Hercules (1957).* "I'm straight, but my muscles are for sale."

Willson had for a time evoked the epicene appearance of director Vincente Minnelli, once married to Judy Garland. In time, however, as he put on weight, he came to resemble the famous silhouette of Alfred Hitchcock. Jimmy had seen the director on occasion walking up his driveway, as Hitchcock lived next door to Jimmy's on-again, off-again girlfriend, Beverly Wills.

Jimmy impatiently endured the gay banter between Willson and Brackett, which turned him off.

"I tell my straight actors, if there are any left in Hollywood, that sucking a cock is not much different from sucking on a woman's nipple. Sucking cock is a hell of a lot more sanitary than a guy burying his face in a woman's smelly snatch. I also tell them not to have sex in their dressing room before appearing on camera. It shows up on the screen."

Finally, he turned to Jimmy and didn't disguise his bluntness. "Do you like to fuck or get fucked?"



Leading Hollywood talent agent Henry Willson with his major client and "discovery," Rock Hudson.

"Jimmy does everything wanted and needed," Brackett interjected.

Looking Jimmy up and down like a male slave on an auction block, Willson said, "Before the sun sets a few times over the Pacific, I'll find that out for myself."

Jimmy wandered off, but an hour later, Willson cornered him. "Rogers wants me to represent you, make you a star, as I've done to so many others. He says you've got a lot of talent. But I need to determine that for myself."

"And how do you plan to do that, Mr. Willson?"

"Come over Tuesday night for a private audition. Around eight o'clock. I don't use a casting couch, contrary to popular belief. I audition an actor in my king-sized bed. Don't panic. I know I'm no beauty. I won't even take my clothes off, but you will. Jaybird naked in the center of my bed."

"Again, don't panic. I don't expect you to do anything to me. I'm the best cocksucker in town. If you wish, I'll take you only from the neck down."

"I'm looking forward to it," Jimmy said. "Just thinking about it is giving me a boner."

"That's my boy," Willson said, patting Jimmy's cheek. "Now I've got to talk to Rock…excuse me."

Jimmy had no intention of ever showing up at Willson's house again.

About ten female guests were at the party, but they left before six o'clock. Brackett told Jimmy the "gang bangs" occurred after dark.

En route to the bathroom, Rock Hudson stopped and introduced himself to Jimmy. He was attired in a white bikini that displayed his considerable endowment. "I think every guy here today is after me. You got a crush on me too?"

Jimmy was offended, but Brackett had warned him to be polite to Hudson. Willson was predicting that he would soon be the biggest male star in Hollywood.

"From what I've seen here today, you're the hottest thing since God created Adam," Jimmy said.

"Let's get together," Hudson said. "I'll have Henry hook us up."

"It's a deal," Jimmy said. He later told Brackett, "Hudson is one stuck-up asshole."

"Yes, but what a delectable rosebud it is," Brackett replied.

After meeting Hudson, Jimmy was anxious to leave the party. He motioned to Brackett, who signaled that he needed to finish his discussion with some producer.

Suddenly, as the evening shadows fell, a charming, handsome, charismatic young man stood before Jimmy. There was something about his presence that was magnetic. He stared with a certain longing into Jimmy's blue eyes.

"I thought it would never happen," the man said. "I've met my soul mate. They call me 'The Black Star,' even though I'm lilywhite. Who are you?"

"Polaris."

"I knew it. I seek out his North Star every night," the man said.

"You've found him."

"I know you're here with someone else tonight, and I am too. I promised Rock I'd go home with him. But I'd rather be going home with you."

"Ditto."

"By the way, I'm John Carlyle. You can call me Johnny."

"Johnny, how about letting James Dean here eat your flesh like a cannibal?"

"Blood raw or well done?"

Carlyle reached into the pocket of his slacks and removed a piece of paper, which he stuffed into the right side picket of Jimmy's jeans, probing deeper, and lingering a bit longer, than was necessary.

"How is Willson promoting you?" Jimmy asked.

"As the next Montgomery Clift. And you?"

"As the untouchable—except for you."

***

[When Jimmy didn't show up the following Tuesday night, Willson developed an antagonism for him that lasted for years after Jimmy's death in a car crash.

John Carlyle..."the next Montgomery Clift."

In the future, whenever Jimmy's name was mentioned, Willson weighed in with his opinion. "That Dean bullshit wouldn't have lasted. He was too arrogant, too narcissistic. If you ask me, he was Hollywood trash."

"I advise all my actors not to emulate his acting style. By 1957, he'd be pounding the pavement looking for a job. All doors would be closed to him. By then, he would have been universally despised.]

Ask Jimmy:

IN LIEU OF A CASTING COUCH, DIRECTOR GEORGE CUKOR PREFERS A KING SIZED BED

Arriving at Cukor's palatial "castle" on Cordell Drive in West Hollywood, Jimmy—with Brackett at the wheel—was impressed. The director lived in a large white house with a high wall enclosing an orange grove. To one side of the house was an Olympic swimming pool.

Beside the pool, Cukor was hosting a lavish Sunday buffet for some twenty guests, none of whom Jimmy recognized. Brackett had told him that Cukor was friends with such big name stars as Greta Garbo and Cary Grant.

However, within minutes, two of the world's most recognizable faces came onto the patio. Katharine Hepburn appeared on the arm of Spencer Tracy, who seemed to be recovering from a hangover. She was rather boyish, dressed in a pair of white slacks. She wore no makeup to cover her bad skin. When Jimmy was introduced, she said, "Welcome to Hollywood, dear boy. You'll have a hard time hanging onto your virginity in this town."

Tracy gave a knowing smirk. "Perhaps he's already lost it."

Brackett fitted in perfectly with this chic crowd, but Jimmy felt out of place and wandered off by himself into the large terraced garden with its Italian statues, many of them male nudes. The ivy-covered walls gave a sense of privacy, one reporter referring to the setting as “a bachelor’s pleasure dome.”

Platonic Lovers and “Switch-Hitters”: Spencer Tracy with Katharine Hepburn in *Without Love* (1945).

When he grew bored, he went into the main house, finding it empty. The furnishings were a strange combination of antiques not well blended with post-war modern. He knew little about art, but Cukor had identified the artists, whose names were engraved on gold-plated plaques on the lower edge of each of the painting’s frames. They included Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Salvador Dalí.

Eventually, he wandered down a portrait gallery to the bathroom. *En route*, he saw replicas of the smiling faces of Claudette Colbert, Olivia de Havilland, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Garbo, Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, and Rex Harrison.

At the end of the hall, he came upon a bronze portrait bust of Tallulah Bankhead, whom he’d recently met. Cukor had helmed her in *Tarnished Lady* (1931).

Director George Cukor, as he looked around the time he met James Dean

He had apparently seen Jimmy enter his house, and he decided to come in after him, as he was always nervous having strange young men wandering among his treasures. There had been thefts in the past from hustlers.

As Jimmy emerged from the toilet, he encountered Cukor in the portrait gallery. “You’re the Dean boy, right? A friend of Rogers?”

“You’ve nailed me.”

Cukor followed Jimmy into the main living room, where he looked around proudly at his treasures. “This is my showcase,” he told Jimmy. “It’s perfect for me. Billy Haines was my decorator, but I’ve added my personal touches as well.

“Never heard of him, but then, I’m not much up on decorators.”

"Billy was Old Hollywood, the Silents. A big star until Louis B. Mayer kicked him off the lot because he wouldn't give up his lover, Jimmy Shields."

"At least he found a new profession," Jimmy said. "I hear many of those biggies in the Silents ended up on bad days. Alcoholics, whatever."

"Or whatever…." Cukor said.

"I know Rogers has to report early in the morning to CBS. Why don't you come by at ten tomorrow for breakfast?"

"I'd like that," Jimmy said. "For all I know, you might cast me as the lead in your next picture. I'm the greatest."

"That remains to be seen. But there is a part in my next picture, *The Actress,* that calls for a young actor to play the love interest of Jean Simmons. Spence is the star."

"I'll do it," Jimmy said. "See you tomorrow morning at ten. Perhaps you'll find out how talented I really am."

"That is my desire."

***

The next morning, Jimmy arrived at Cukor's with a sore ass. Rogers had wanted to fuck him, and he didn't really like it. But he figured he'd better get used to being invaded.

His old Chevy pulled up in the driveway. After he rang the doorbell, a Japanese houseboy directed him out to the pool patio where Cukor was already serving breakfast to another young man. As Jimmy approached, he was startled to see that it was John Carlyle, "The Black Star" himself, in a bathing suit.

Although Carlyle had given him his phone number at Henry Willson's party the week before, Jimmy had not had time to call.

At first, Cukor seemed shocked that Jimmy knew Carlyle. "I don't know why I'm surprised," he sighed. "All you pretty boys seem to know each other as David *knew* Bathsheba. If I had been a pretty boy, I could have climbed the Hollywood ladder so much quicker. After all, pretty boys make up their own rules as they go along."

The chatter over breakfast was filled with Hollywood gossip, which Jimmy devoured along with a big breakfast. Cukor bragged about the success of *Born Yesterday,* which he'd directed. It had won a Best Actress Oscar for Judy Holliday, beating out Gloria Swanson for *Sunset Blvd.*, and Bette Davis for *All About Eve.* "I'm currently directing Spencer and Katharine in *Pat and Mike*," he said.

Carlyle's eyes lit up when he told Jimmy that Cukor was going to remake *A Star Is Born,* with Judy Garland in a comeback role. "George here has virtually guaranteed me a part in it."

Jimmy was jealous, but figured he should not mention that Cukor might cast him in *The Actress,* Tracy's next film.

After breakfast, Cukor suggested his two good-looking guests strip for a skinny dip in his pool. "Don't bother with bathing trunks. All of us are men."

Both Carlyle and Jimmy realized that this was Cukor's not-so-subtle attempt to appraise their bodies, especially their genitals. Each actor was also eager to see the other entirely nude.

With their clothes off, Cukor obviously liked what he saw. So did Carlyle and Jimmy appreciate the sight of each other's nudity, which they would explore more fully at some future moment.

Like a protective hen, Cukor seemed to hover over his pool, hawkeyeing their frolicking in the water. Finally, when he'd had enough of that, he yelled "CUT," as if he were directing one of his pictures.

He gave each of them a large white bath towel to wrap around their nude bodies before directing them to his bedroom. Despite the size of his sprawling house, only one of its rooms was configured as a bedroom, as Cukor—with the exception of the hustlers who shared his bed—never wanted to house overnight guests,

From within its precincts, Cukor ordered both of the young actors to lie down. Cukor pulled off his shirt but retained his trousers. Moving above them on the bed, he fondled their balls until they were fully erect.

As he went down on them, Jimmy and Carlyle began to kiss each other rather passionately. Cukor was thorough in his work, going from one young man to the other until he brought both of them to a spectacular climax. Jimmy didn't say anything, but Carlyle pronounced it "the most exquisite orgasm I've ever experienced."

"Nothing like surrendering yourself to a man who knows how to handle you guys," Cukor said. Then he ordered both of them to the shower before entering it himself. When they emerged, after having soaped each other's bodies, two one-hundred dollar bills—one for each of them—was waiting for them on Cukor's bed.

The director was in his living room pacing up and down, looking at the clock. He told Jimmy that he wanted to

discuss something privately with Carlyle, and he asked Jimmy to walk down the hill to the cottage that lay on his grounds. Inside, he said, he'd find Spencer Tracy, and that he should help him get dressed for a two o'clock meeting with Ruth Gordon, who had written the screenplay for *The Actress.* "He'll be late if you don't."

"You mean…I mean…you want me to wake up Tracy and get him dressed?" Jimmy asked, astonished.

"Exactly," Cukor said. "Spencer will love it. His door is always unlocked. Just walk right in and do whatever you have to do."

"See you guys later," Jimmy said, heading with trepidation out into the garden and down the hill.

***

Spencer Tracy was like a movie god to Jimmy, who always claimed that, "He made acting look so easy, when it's not."

Rumored to be cantankerous, demanding, and difficult, Tracy intimated Jimmy. The idea of waking him up from a drunken stupor and helping him get dressed was beyond his comfort level. Yet he didn't want to defy Cukor's command.

He'd heard all the legendary gossip about Tracy and Hepburn—that he was an incorrigible drinker involved in a platonic relationship with Hepburn, and that Hepburn was a lesbian, at least with young women with perfect skin.

Outside the cottage, Jimmy hesitated before testing the doorknob. He found it unlocked, as Cukor had predicted. Stepping inside the living room, he called out, "Mr. Tracy," but his voice wasn't very loud.

The door to Tracy's bedroom had been left open. He peered inside to discover the actor sprawled nude on top of the bedcovers. He had obviously plopped down there the previous evening when he was drunk. Permeating the room was the distinctive smell of urine.

"Mr. Tracy," Jimmy said again, his voice growing louder. Finally, Tracy stirred, slowly, rising up from his pillow and confronting Jimmy through blurry eyes. "Hell, didn't I pay you for last night?"

Jimmy assumed that Tracy had mistaken him for a hustler from the night before. He explained that he'd been sent by Cukor to get him ready for his two-o'clock meeting with Ruth Gordon to discuss the script for his upcoming movie, *The Actress.*

Tracy got out of bed and hobbled to the bathroom. Fifteen minutes later, he was in the kitchen making coffee. Jimmy had read that Hepburn claimed that Tracy made the best coffee in the world. After tasting it, Jimmy agreed, although he wasn't one to judge, having sampled a steady diet of some of the worst coffee in some of the sleaziest diners in Los Angeles.

Over coffee, and a bit prematurely, Jimmy told Tracy that Cukor might offer him the role of Jean Simmons' boyfriend in their upcoming movie. This seemed to pique the aging actor's interest.

Within twenty minutes, a fully dressed Tracy was walking up the hill to Cukor's manse. "Kid, I like you. I hope you get the part. I've got the script in the cottage. If you'll call me some night this week, we'll go over it, and I'll rehearse you." He handed Jimmy a card. "My private number's on the back."

Jimmy knew this was a come-on, but he agreed to call him.

When they reached Cukor's door, Tracy shook Jimmy's hand. He noticed that John Carlyle's car was already gone.

"Okay, kid, I'll look forward to your call." Before going inside, he looked back at Jimmy, who at first thought he'd misunderstood his final remark.

"I just hope your mother in the hospital didn't tell some god damn doctor to cut off your foreskin."

***

When Jimmy arrived for work the next morning at Ted's Auto Park, Bill Homburg called him into his ramshackle office. "Why didn't you show up for work yesterday morning?"

"I was sick," Jimmy lied.

"Couldn't you have called in? We were short-staffed. You're fired! Here's your back pay in cash."

Jimmy counted the bills for his dollar-an-hour job. "There's not much cash here. I think you're cheating me."

"You didn't earn much. Also, I learned you dented George Burn's fender. The cheapskate wants us to pay."

"Won't you give me another chance?"

"Get the hell out of here."

Once again, out on the street, Jimmy was in a quandary. What to do? The money from Cukor would pay his living expenses for a while, but not for long.

He decided it was time to make up with William Bast, his former roommate, who was working next door at CBS as an usher.

James Dean & William Bast

Together on a Roller-Coaster Through Tinseltown—Passions, Betrayals, Reckless Compulsions, Early Struggles

The same age as Jimmy, but less good-looking, William Bast was a struggling young actor who also wanted to write. Over time, he had evolved into Jimmy's best friend, but their relationship was destined to be turbulent, and sometimes violent.

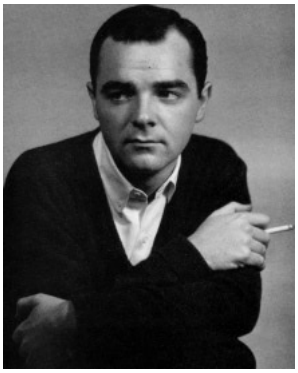
For a time in 1951, they had shared an apartment together, a studio on the top floor of a modest apartment complex built around a courtyard on Tenth Street in Santa Monica.

It was a charming little aerie decorated in what Bast defined as the "Santa Fe-cum Mexican style with hand-painted Aztec design motifs."

The rent was seventy dollars a month, and they were hoping to make the payment, plus food costs, based on whatever Jimmy could make at odd jobs. Bast worked for twenty dollars a week.

Bast had met Jimmy when they studied drama together at UCLA. At the time, Jimmy was unhappy housed within the Sigma Nu fraternity house. Likewise, Bast had been sleeping on a bunk bed within one of the university's dormitories.

He had not been impressed with Jimmy's performance in a student production of *Macbeth*. It has opened at Royce Hall on November 29, 1950. After watching the performance, Bast told his friends, "This guy performed the role of Malcolm with the most dreadful Indiana accent, a terrible farm boy twang. He couldn't pronounce Shakespeare, couldn't get his tongue around it."



William Bast...was he a friend or foe to Jimmy? Bast could never decide.

"I thought he was a Hoosier shit-kicker not too long ago slopping the hogs. His knobby knees stuck out beneath his kilt, and he had bad posture."

When Jimmy was introduced to Bast, he told him, "Getting cast in Macbeth has been the biggest thrill of my life."

Although he may have been secretly attracted to Jimmy, Bast did his best to conceal it. He later told two of their friends, "I think he's a very stupid boy for his age. And there's something weird about him. I can't figure out what it is."

When Bill Bast first hooked up with Jimmy, his greatest acting challenge, till then, had been his involvement in a 1950 college production of *Macbeth*. In it, Jimmy is depicted above, right.

Eventually, the two struggling actors found common ground in their love of the theater. Once, at the Santa Monica Pier, when both men had each had a few beers, they stood side by side at an open urinal. Years later, Bast recalled, "I found myself staring at his dick, and I wanted it. But somehow, I was too afraid to make an overture. After all, it was 1950. We both were keeping up a macho front and talking about girls."

One day, Jimmy approached Bast and told him that he'd been kicked out of his lodgings within the Sigma Nu fraternity house. At a beerfest, one of the brothers had called him a faggot because he was a theater arts major. Enraged, Jimmy had attacked him, hitting him with a large glass ashtray. Even though the blow had practically knocked him out, Jimmy had continued to pound his head, even after he'd fallen on the floor. After pulling Jimmy off the man, two fraternity brothers kicked him out of the building. He returned the next morning and packed his lone suitcase.

Jimmy suggested that he and Bast should pool their resources and rent an apartment together.

Eventually, they moved into a small penthouse. It contained a tiny bedroom with just enough space for a double bed. Bast had assured the landlady that one of them would sleep on the sofa. That was not the case—they each wanted the comfort of a bed.

Bast would later confess that sometimes in the middle of the night, he would feel Jimmy's erection pressing against his body, but that nothing sexual transpired between them during the early stages of their apartment share. That would come later.

Dazed and confused, Bast experienced mixed emotions. As he expressed later, "I was jealous of Jimmy, but strangely attracted to him as well. He often paraded around the apartment in the nude, and, on looking back, I was turned on but didn't want to admit it."

After two weeks of living with Jimmy, Bast concluded that he was a manic-depressive. Sometimes, he'd go for two or three days before speaking, just sulking and keeping to himself. Then he'd emerge from this self-isolation and become the life of the party.

Actually, Bast interpreted some things about Jimmy as rather pompous. "The only greatness for a man is immortality," Jimmy told him.

His major at UCLA was Theater Arts, but he began to miss classes, and eventually dropped out completely.

According to Bast, "At times, this little Indiana farmboy had such inner strength, such self-assurance, such dedication, and, most of all, a streak of independence. He told me he wouldn't 'kiss ass to get a job,' but I suspected he was doing just that—or rather getting his ass either kissed or fucked by all those gay directors and producers, even stars."

"In spite of this brave façade, he would break down and become a little boy lost—afraid, insecure, battered, and bruised by a world he found increasingly hostile. As Bette Davis once told me, 'Hollywood is not for the weak of heart. It's the land of the tarantula.'"

In his battered old Chevy, a gift from his estranged father, Winton Dean, Jimmy drove from studio to studio to appear at "cattle calls" with dozens of other aspiring actors. He couldn't afford to buy trade papers, but he read them at newsstands, writing down the addresses and details in a little red notebook he carried. He desperately wanted to make a screen test, but received no offers.

After a casting call, he'd return, deeply disappointed, to their apartment. When days would pass without any casting calls to attend, he'd sink into despair. During those periods, he often spent the night wandering around Santa Monica or going into Hollywood. On most of those occasions, he'd return to the penthouse at dawn, sleeping throughout most of the day.

Actor Gregory Bottoms remembered him at the time. "He wasn't well groomed, often dirty and unshaven, wearing soiled clothes. He looked like he didn't have a friend in the world, really beaten by life. But he'd save and put on his one good pair of slacks and a freshly ironed white shirt when he'd go on those casting calls. When there were no casting calls, he let himself go. He looked like a bum."

According to Beverly, "Jimmy could go through a whole alphabet of emotions. In a single night, when he couldn't get an acting job, which was often the case, he was bitter about everything and everybody. I hated to see him so blue and depressed. He made me depressed. He told me he hoped to die early so he wouldn't have to face the even more horrible bitterness of growing old. Yet when he was happy, he was the most lovable and fun person to be around, always cutting up and playing games to amuse people. Once, when he'd eaten some bad Mexican food, and had a lot of gas, he upset the guests at my mother's house by letting farts, telling people he was imitating a skunk. The guy was outrageous."

Jimmy's favorite time with Beverly involved driving north with her along the coastal road. He liked the breezes from the Pacific flowing into the car.

At secluded spots, he would sometimes take her down to a moonlit beach for seductions. He would later brag to male friends, mostly acquaintances, about "what a ladykiller I am. I gave my girlfriend a knifing penetration last night with her legs wrapped around my back. I filled her with my thundering ramrod. Our loins crashed together to the sound of ocean waves."

An actor friend, Steve Alexander, was skeptical. "Did you read that in one of those illegal porn novels? Shall I go on with your description? 'Your balls swung freely against her creamy thighs, as your cock continued to hammer on relentlessly, vibrating for a small eternity.' You see, I can make up stuff like that, too!"

"Fuck you, shithead!" Jimmy said before storming off.

On the nights he stayed home, Bast claimed that Jimmy demonstrated a certain artistic flair, creating whimsical mobiles for their sparsely furnished apartment. He also experimented with drawings and clay sculpture, and he asked Bast to pose nude for him. His roommate agreed. Bast later suspected that in sculpting his body, Jimmy spent a long time staring at his penis.

At the time, Bast was dating Beverly Wills. He had become involved with her through his work as an usher at CBS during her gig there in a radio comedy series, *Junior Miss.*

Bill and Jimmy often double-dated, Jimmy escorting a spunky brunette from Texas, Jeanetta Lewis. He'd met her through her stint as the wardrobe mistress for a production of *Macbeth* at UCLA. She had developed a crush on Jimmy during the short run of that student production.

Since the two men didn't have any money for dating, they often spent the evenings at the Bel Air mansion of Beverly's mother, Joan Davis. "Jimmy seemed to be eating all the time," Beverly said.

The quartet enjoyed the pool parties, barbecues, and dinners lavishly provided by Davis, who at the time was at the peak of her financial success as an actress.

For entertainment, these "theatrical amigos," as they called themselves, performed together in scenes from plays.

Jimmy shocked the young women with excerpts from a copy of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer,* which had been smuggled in from Paris. *[Censors had banned it in the United States at the time.]* "Jimmy seemed to have selected only the most pornographic passages, and Beverly was shocked," Bast said.

Meanwhile, Jimmy continued sketching. Spanish matadors were a favorite subject of his pen-and-ink drawings. He was fascinated by what he called their tight "toreador pants."

"His drawings were rather crude," Bast said, "but I wish I had saved them. They'd be worth a fortune today. He always drew the bullfighters with enormous endowments hanging halfway down to their knees. He told me that he'd read that Ernest Hemingway advised bullfighters to stuff their crotches if they didn't have natural endowments."

He was fascinated by the subject of death, especially sudden death, as when a matador could be struck down

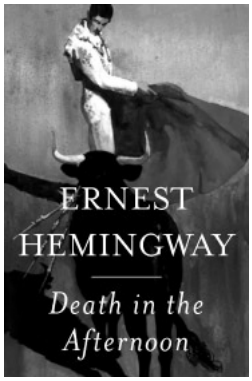
in his prime. He'd read Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon.* "He was intrigued by death in general," Bast said. "One of his most macabre drawings depicted skeletons dancing in a graveyard."

"One night, Jimmy displayed his latest artistic creation to Bast, Beverly, and Jeanetta. It was a sculpted clay candleholder that evoked a vagina. According to Bast, "It was 'living art,' as Jimmy called it. He lit a candle for us and slowly let the hot wax drip into the *faux* vagina. The girls were horrified, and I found it revolting."

A highlight of their double-dating occurred when Davis threw a birthday party for some of the elite of the "Hollywood brats," the pampered children of movie stars and/or young actors and starlets with solid connections. Jimmy was photographed with a young Debbie Reynolds, whom he would see a lot more of when he began to date actress Pier Angeli, one of Reynolds' best friends.

The talented starlet had just completed her involvement in *Three Little Words* (1950), an MGM musical starring Red Skelton and Fred Astaire.

As part of the entertainment for her daughter's party guests, Davis had hired a national archery champion for a bow-and-arrow exhibition. At one point, Jimmy came up to him and, in a reckless, highly dangerous decision, asked the archer to shoot an apple off his head in a style corresponding to the legend of William Tell. On learning of the request, Davis intervened and put a stop to it, then asked Jimmy to leave the party.



Ernest Hemingway's ode to the art of bull-fighting reinforced several of Jimmy's lifelong obsessions.

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The rent on their apartment was coming due, and neither Bast nor Jimmy had enough money to pay it. Awakening Jimmy one morning, Bast virtually demanded that he to accompany him to CBS Studios, where he could get him a job as an usher, even though it paid only twenty dollars a week. Sometimes, one of the big stars would give an usher a five-dollar bill for running some special errand.

Bast told Jimmy that he'd get to meet some really major entertainers, citing Jo Stafford, the Andrew Sisters, Bing Crosby, Steve Allen, Eve Arden, Lucille Ball, Dinah Shore, Jack Benny, George Burns, and Gracie Allen. Stars such as those showed up regularly at CBS for its Lux Radio Theater, replicating for radio the roles they had previously crafted on the screen. CBS also produced big musicals, hiring such singers as Rosemary Clooney or Mario Lanza.

At CBS, Bast introduced Jimmy to his boss, a flamboyant creature named Sylvester Divan III. Behind his back, his ushers referred to him mockingly as "Miss Divine." He reminded Jimmy of the actor, Franklin Pangborn, a player who built a career on roles calling for a character who was fussy, effete, effeminate, and—by implication—gay.

After appraising Jimmy from head to foot, Divan hired him. Then he accompanied him to a dressing room with racks of blue uniforms with elaborate gold braid. Appraising his body size, he selected a pair of trousers saying, "I'm sure this will fit." Then, with a raised eyebrow, he continued, "I never failed to guess a man's size."

The *double entendre* was not lost on Jimmy.

"Looks like a monkey suit to me," Jimmy said.

"Try it on—don't argue, dearie."

"Right here, right now?" Jimmy asked.

"And why not?"

“I’m not wearing any underwear,” Jimmy said.

“Don’t worry about that,” Divan told him. “Yours wouldn’t be the first cock I’ve seen.”

“I bet,” Jimmy answered, sarcastically.

“Don’t get smart with me, young man,” Divan said, “if you want this job.”

Fussy, fussy, Franklin Pangborn...a lookalike for Jimmy's lecherous boss, “Miss Devine.”

Provocatively, like a stripper, Jimmy slipped off his shoes and took off his pants, slowly exposing his penis. Then, within full view of Divan’s leering gaze, he stepped into the uniform. “It sort of fits. Maybe a little tight in the crotch, wouldn’t you say?”

“Cocky fellow, aren’t you?” Divan said.

“And why not?” Jimmy said. “As you’ve seen, I’ve got a cock. So why can’t I be cocky?”

We’ll discuss that later,” Divan said, “Come on, I’ll show you the ropes. You pretty boys always have it made. You can get whatever you want just by dangling those wares you have between your legs.”

***

Two nights later, outfitted in his monkey suit, Jimmy was treated to one of the most memorable nights of his life.

In both photos above, clients line up for radio shows hosted within either the CBS Television Studios (top photo), or at its nearby annex, the Lux Radio Theater.

Jimmy, till he walked out, worked as an usher.

One of the biggest shows at CBS was the Bing Crosby show. Its namesake had invited Judy Garland to come onstage and sing, knowing that she was in a depressed state, having recently been fired by Louis B. Mayer from the musical, *Annie Get Your Gun,* in which she'd been replaced by Betty Hutton. The story had generated embarrassing and unwelcome headlines in newspapers across the country.

Even though, jimmy was technically supposed to be on duty, Bast had procured him an otherwise unoccupied seat on the front row of the balcony, where he'd be partially obscured behind a curtain in case Divan began looking for him.

Bast had been assigned to escort Garland to her dressing room. She was accompanied by her ugly husband, a rather gruff Sid Luft.

This was her first public appearance since she'd been axed by her longtime studio, MGM.

Crosby came out and opened the program in his usual casual style, singing two of his favorite numbers. But it soon became obvious that the audience—a full house with standing room only—was waiting for Garland. As Bast had told Jimmy, "All the world rushes to see a train wreck."

After Crosby announced her appearance, there was a long, awkward moment. No Garland.

Then suddenly, she appeared. Members of the audience went wild, delivering a standing ovation. She was dressed entirely in black, as if in mourning, which in a kind of way she was. To Jimmy, she resembled a pale, pathetic little creature, looking gaunt and tiny

After her entrance and her recognition of the audience's applause, she ventured toward Crosby for a "kiss-kiss," looking as if on the verge of collapse. He extended a steady hand. The loud cheers seemed to revive her, injecting her with a new kind of energy.

"Somehow, Judy seemed to come alive," Jimmy later told Bast.

As she began to sing, Jimmy was moved by the power of her voice. She belted out "Rock a-bye My Baby to a Dixie Melody," and in doing so, overpowered the audience with emotion.

The night was hers. Many songs later, at the end of her performance, the audience went a bit insane, standing and cheering wildly as Garland exited from the stage for the continuation of her life's troubled journey.

“We loved her, and she loved us,” Jimmy later told Bast.

As ironic as it seemed, in just two short weeks, Jimmy would be in a bedroom with Garland and another man—not Sid Luft.

***

With Beverly paying for the gasoline, Jimmy, in his Chevy, liked to race up the coastal highway at ferocious speeds. She was always urging him to drive more slowly and less dangerously, but he told her he needed the speed to feel alive.

Those who knew him called him “the Road Terror of Malibu.”

“When he was behind the wheel, there came a transformation in his face,” she recalled. “He had this demonic look about him. I came to feel he wanted to kill himself and take me along with him. A kind of Romeo and Juliet thing.”

No longer an *ingénue*, Judy Garland, as she looked around the time Jimmy applauded her wildly during an (unauthorized) break from his job as an usher at CBS.

One night, when he was moving faster than a hundred miles an hour, they heard the wail of a police siren. Jimmy didn’t slow down until she screamed at him.

He gradually brought the car to a standstill as the police closed in on him. “I’ll need all my male charm to get out of this.”

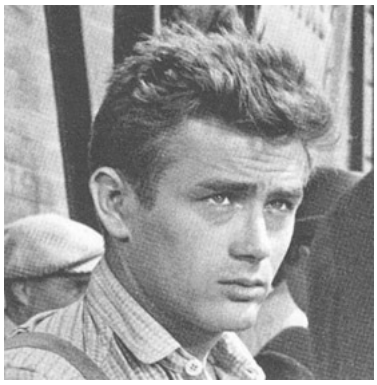
Before a cop appeared at his window, he turned to her. “You’re lucky. This pig copper saved your life. Tonight was the night I planned to take you, me, and this car to a watery grave.”

Chapter Two

HOW, ONE BY ONE, THE EMERGING HUSTLER,

JAMES DEAN,

SHACKED UP WITH THE A-LIST LEGENDS OF HOLLYWOOD



Spencer Tracy, Clifton Webb, Joan Crawford, George Cukor, Walt Disney, Judy Garland

"You know, I've had my cock sucked by some of the big names of Hollywood"

—James Dean

"I think the main reason for living in this world is discovery and diversity in sexual conquests. Why tie one hand behind your back?"

—James Dean

James Dean was given a ticket for speeding, which required an appearance before a judge and which called for a ten-dollar fine. He ignored the ticket as well as three more warnings. The fine was increased to twenty-five dollars. He received a notice from the courthouse in Van Nuys that unless he paid the fine, his driving license would be revoked. There was even a threat of a possible jail sentence.

He told William Bast, his roommate, that he feared going to jail. "A good looker like me would get his lilywhite ass pounded nightly from every black stud in there."

His hearing before the judge was set for ten o'clock one morning. Before he was called, he sat and listened to the trial of a Mexican fruit picker charged with being a Peeping Tom looking in windows where the shades or Venetian blinds weren't drawn. The laborer was sentenced to one year in prison.

After Jimmy's appearance before the judge, he said, "I faced a judge who must have looked like Torquemada at the Spanish Inquisition. I'd read about him. I knew His Honor would be a tough sell."

Facing the judge, Jimmy later claimed that he delivered an Academy Award-winning performance. He went into

his Little Boy Lost act, even though the judge sternly lectured him on both speeding and ignoring warnings about the ticket.

Jimmy threw himself upon the mercy of the court, claiming that he needed the money for food. He said he would be homeless within the week, and that every day, he'd searched for a job. "I was wrong, and I admit it. It'll never happen again. I'm desperate."

The judge decided to go easy on the struggling actor. "He seemed to melt," Jimmy recalled.

The fine was reduced to five dollars, and the judge warned that he didn't want to see Jimmy in his courtroom again.

Leaving the courthouse, Jimmy had a smirk on his face. He told Bast, "I put one over on that judge."

Later, however, when he showed up for work at CBS, his charm didn't work with Sylvester Divan III. Called into Divan's office, Jimmy learned there were casting couch requirements even for acquisition of a low-paying job as an usher. Divan revealed that he required his favorite ushers to visit him one night a week at his apartment. The usher who had that duty on Thursday night had been fired, and Divan wanted Jimmy to replace him for appearances at weekly intervals at Divan's apartment in West Hollywood.

Divan was crudely blunt as was his style (or lack thereof). "I want you to use my succulent lips and mouth like some pussy. If you can keep it in and go for a second round, then you get an extra five a week."

Jimmy was revolted by the mere presence of his soon-to-be ex-boss. "Your mouth makes me want to throw up," he said. "You're nothing but faggot slime."

Divan's made-up face looked shocked before flashing anger. "All the other boys do what I want."

"I'm not one of your other boys, and I'll never be that."

"Then get the hell out of this building. You're fired! And leave the uniform!"

"You're welcome to this fucking monkey suit!"

After changing back into his street clothes, Jimmy walked past the sneering fussbudget and was back on the street again.

He knew there were other ways to hustle a buck.

Jimmy Dances for Pepsi-Cola

And Meets a Future Lover

At UCLA, Jimmy had made friends with James Bellah, the son of the novelist James Warner Bellah. His new friend was an expert in fencing, wanting to become "the next Errol Flynn." Jimmy was intrigued about learning the art of swordfighting, and Bellah agreed to give him lessons "in case dueling comes back."

One afternoon, after a fencing lesson, Bellah told him about a Pepsi-Cola commercial being cast. Its director wanted to hire a group of teenagers for twenty-five dollars a day plus a box lunch. Filming was to take place on December 13, 1950 at Griffith Park in Los Angeles.

An image captured from James Dean's first television appearance. It was a commercial for Pepsi. He's depicted above on the far right, just before the clip moves on to show him interacting happily, catalyzed by Pepsi, hip but wholesome, with the other actors.

Jimmy wanted the job and went with Bellah to meet Ben Alcock, who was directing the commercial for Pepsi. Ironically, and unknown to Jimmy at the time, Alcock was a close friend of Rogers Brackett.

In wardrobe, Jimmy was given a blazer and white flannel slacks to wear. He was to stand with clean-cut consumers clustered in a group beside a jukebox, collectively singing "Go get a Pepsi for that Pepsi bounce!"

Flashing a smile, Jimmy clapped his hands and snapped his fingers, a signal for the teens to start dancing.

Nick Adams as The Rebel (of a different sort)

He was introduced to Beverly Long, an attractive blonde, who recalled, "All of us were drinking Pepsi. At one point, we were going round and round on this carousel, having a blast. Then an announcer is heard urging teens "to buy Pepsi because it's the best. Buy Pepsi by the carton!"

Jimmy had lunch with this pretty blonde, telling her that he planned to go to New York to become a serious actor. That was the beginning of a harmless flirtation.

[A far more significant relationship began that day when Jimmy met Nick Adams, a bisexual actor who had also been cast in the commercial. Nick came on rather strong to Jimmy, but he was reluctant to get too deeply involved. That would come later and more intensely.

Nick invited Jimmy out that night, but was turned down. Before leaving the set, Nick urged Jimmy to call him, and made sure that Jimmy had all the details he needed to stay in touch.

In a surprising future development, both Beverly and Nick would eventually be cast with Jimmy in Rebel Without a Cause.*]*

Roddy McDowall

MAKES LOVE TO "JOHN THE APOSTLE"

Jerry Fairbanks was the producer of the above-noted Pepsi commercial. He was impressed with Jimmy and told Alcock, "The kid is clearly the star. He has something."

As months went by, more and more professionals in the industry kept saying that Jimmy "had something," although without being able to define it.

Fairbanks had also been designated as the executive producer of an upcoming inspirational/religious film, *Hill Number One,* and he invited Jimmy to audition for a role. Jimmy was more than willing. and Fairbanks asked him the next day if he'd show up to meet the film's director, Arthur Pierson.

He didn't want to, but Jimmy read for Pierson and for one of its consultants and contributors, Father Patrick Peyton. Collectively, they agreed to cast him in the minor role of John the Apostle, incarnated as a character in the film, supposedly for transmission of spiritual inspiration and instruction.

*[*Hill Number One*, set in a U.S. Army camp during the Korean War, is the story of a chaplain who arrives to find the soldiers demoralized. He tells them that the hill they are storming used to be known as Calvary. The storyline*

then switches to flashback, relaying the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Jimmy—wearing a djellaba that looked like it had been borrowed from a high school drama production—played John the Apostle. The other actors, also in robes inspired by the Bible, resembled burly, bearded linebackers. When Jimmy donned his headdress, he evoked a desert sheik.]

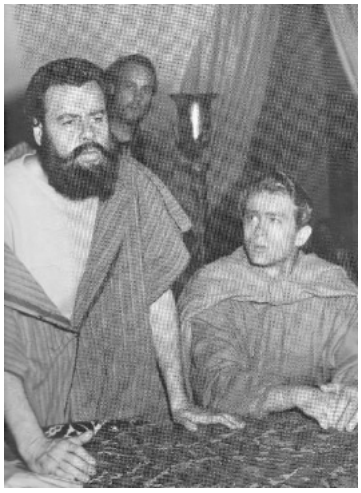
Some fifty actors had been signed for this religious epic, including many name stars such as Joan Leslie, Gene Lockhart, Leif Erickson, Regis Toomey, and Roddy McDowall.

The teleplay was to be broadcast on the Family Theater on March 25, 1951, where it would reach an audience of forty-two million viewers, the largest number of people ever to watch a James Dean film at one time.

That night, Jimmy told Bast, "I find my lines sickening. They're so fucking phony. I have to say such crap as 'Rejoice! He has risen as He promised!'"

As director, Pierson had little time for him, but Jimmy sought him out when he learned that he had helmed Marilyn Monroe in one of her first films, *Dangerous Years* (1948) for Fox. Cast opposite the star, William Halop, Marilyn had played a waitress, Evie, in a little down called Gopher Hole. She worked in this jukebox joint, a gathering place for rowdy teenagers.

When Jimmy asked about Marilyn, Pierson admitted that he was surprised at how fast her star had risen, claiming that Fox had fired her after the end of filming.



Jimmy, looking biblical, or *faux*-biblical, alongside David Young, in Hollywood, in the late 1940s.

"She was heartbroken," Pierson said. "She told me she didn't want to make films to earn big money. I remember her exact words: 'I want to become a famous movie star so that everyone will love me. That way, I'll be surrounded by love and affection, something I've never had before.'"

"One day, I'll meet her," Jimmy predicted. "I'll give her more love than she can handle."

***

Jimmy enjoyed meeting Ruth Hussey, whose bright, sophisticated delivery saved many a film. He'd seen her in *The Philadelphia Story* with Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, and James Stewart.

He brought Hussey a cup of coffee. "Oh, darling," she said, "thank you." She spoke about the vagaries of being a film star. "Save some money on the way up, because you'll need it during your descent. I guess I was always destined to play second stringers. I'm fading from films now—hence, appearing in this turkey. Guess what's coming up for me? I've been asked to play Jerry Lewis' mother in *That's My Boy.* Yes, the never-great Ruth Hussey is reduced to that indignity for a paycheck."

Roddy McDowall, former child star, as he appeared, all grown up and connected to every underground scene in Hollywood, in the late 1940s.

As fellow cast members, Jimmy and McDowall were attracted to each other. As he'd later admit to Bast, "Roddy and I sucked each other's cocks. He's got me beat. Really well hung. He's very likable, but a bit of the nervous type."

The former child star had been known to perform auto-fellatio at private gay parties. "The two of us one night went to this mansion in Beverly Hills, where we put on an exhibition for guests," Jimmy confided to Bast.

***

When *Hill Number One* was shown on TV, Jimmy's first fan club was formed at the Immaculate Heart School in Los Angeles. It would be the first of many fan clubs established during his lifetime and beyond the grave.

Bast accompanied Jimmy to one of its meetings, which consisted mostly of impressionable girls ages fourteen to sixteen.

"Jimmy was thrilled at this adulation," Bast said. "An honest-to-God fan club. I was his chaperone at this lovefest. He was as nervous as hell."

"When we arrived at this hall in the Los Feliz district, Jimmy got out of the car and turned to me. 'Let's go in and face the jailbait.'"

There were about twenty girls waiting inside, each with an autograph book. Jimmy signed all of them and gave each of the girls a beaming smile. "He looked dreamily into their eyes, making them swoon, as he checked out their budding breasts," Bast said.

Jimmy Stars in an Exhibition

AT A PARTY HOSTED BY CECIL BEATON FOR BRITISH GAYS

Although largely devoid of details, the story of Jimmy's occasional performances at private sexual exhibitions has been documented in books before, including a mention in one edition of *The Hollywood Babylon* series.

As he confessed to his roommate, William Bast, Jimmy performed in a sexual exhibition with Roddy McDowall, whom he'd met while filming *Hill Number One.* After their brief fling, Roddy suggested that "for a lark," they perform before some members of the cream of the crop of British expatriates, living in or else visiting Hollywood.

Cecil Beaton, the famous designer, photographer, and author, was staying in a mansion in Beverly Hills. He was throwing a party only for those "born and bred in Britain."

It took some persuasion, but apparently, Roddy finally convinced Jimmy to perform a sex act with him in front of Beaton's mostly celebrated guests. Cary Grant was rumored to have attended the exhibition.

Beaton was an intimate friend of some of the most distinguished people on earth, including Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Winston Churchill, Laurence Olivier, and André Gide. He was known for his affair with Greta Garbo, and

he also photographed members of the Royal family, including Queen Elizabeth.

Roddy and Jimmy arrived early at Beaton's rented manse. He was one of the most talkative men Jimmy had ever met. "Welcome to this *nouveau riche* home," Beaton said. "It's the ultimate statement in Hollywood vulgarity—that's why I love it so. When in Hollywood, why not wallow in vulgarity?"

Cecil Beaton, depicted with his trusted Rolleiflex camera, above, was the most arts-connected and avant-garde photographer in Europe. When he came to Hollywood on a "getting to know you" visit, he rented a house and threw some parties. Jimmy was part of the entertainment.

As the three men talked over drinks, whereas the British-born Roddy chatted amicably with Beaton, Jimmy had little to say.

"I have seduced women but I infinitely prefer men," Beaton said. "I've gone from Gary Cooper to Marlene Dietrich. Women have their place. I love to dance with them, including the Duchess of Windsor. At intimate parties, I've also danced and kissed the duke."

"I like to talk to women about plays, gowns, fashion," Beaton continued. "I'm particularly interested in their lovers—take Porfirio Rubirosa, for example. He has one of those enormous octaroon cocks."

"My time in Hollywood is made more endurable because I have my own octoroon cock upstairs," Beaton claimed. "He used to be a boxer. He's not the first black boxer who's made love to me. He is built to the point of monstrosity. God should put a limit on penile measurements. The penis can be just too gross in some instances.'

Before his guests arrived, Beaton took Jimmy and Roddy into a studio, where he asked them to strip so he could photograph each of them in the nude—"Only for my private collection, darlings, no one else will see them."

Details of that night became known only because author Christopher Isherwood attended, and later revealed what happened to such friends as Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, and ultimately, Truman Capote, who virtually broadcast it to everyone on his grapevine.

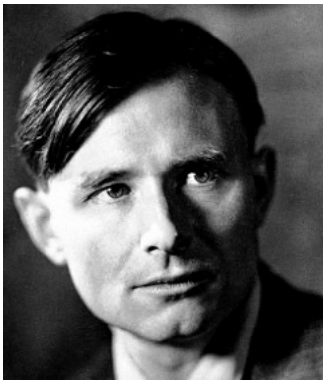
According to Isherwood, about thirty guests were shown into the master bedroom where Jimmy and Roddy were lying nude under a spotlight on a king-size bed. Otherwise, the room was in darkness.

The bodies of both Roddy and Jimmy were met with sighs of approval. Slowly, the two young men began to make love to each other. A wild sixty-nine was followed by Jimmy sodomizing Roddy.

After the voyeurs filed out, Jimmy and Roddy put back on their clothing and went downstairs to have drinks with their flirtatious voyeurs, some of whom tried to line up dates with them.

When Jimmy discussed the exhibition with Bast, his roommate wanted more details, but didn't get them.

All that Jimmy told him was this: "I wanted the fucking limeys to see what an all-American boy, born and bred in the cornbelt of Indiana, looked like. I'm suntanned all over, as you know. That really turned them on. Those Brits don't get enough sunshine in their country. All of them have lilywhite bodies. When they get to Hollywood, they really go for suntanned boys."



Grand and gay literary chic... Christopher Isherwood attended a Los Angeles “exhibition” for British expatriates

He did add one final comment: “Roddy and I should have been paid.”

How Two-Timing Jimmy Ended, Violently,

Two Separate Romances with Young Women

When Bast was working nights at CBS, he sometimes asked Jimmy—who at the time was unemployed—to retrieve Beverly Wills and, as a chauffeur, to transport her to script sessions or to parties.

Over a period of the next ten days, she began an affair with Jimmy. For a while, Bast didn’t have a clue. To keep up appearances, Jimmy and Beverly continued to double date with Bast and Jeanetta Lewis.

Beverly later recalled this secretive time in their lives. “After getting fired at CBS, he tried to get an acting gig and continued to show up at cattle calls, hoping for a job. Nothing was happening. However, he often had money, but he never told me how he got it. Later, rumors surfaced that he was hustling. I didn’t want to think about that.”

“Often, he was horribly depressed, almost suicidal. He told me, ‘The world just doesn’t understand me—it never will.’”

One night, Beverly met with Bast and opted to tell him the truth. “You’re not going to like this,” she said, “but Jimmy and I have fallen in love. Please forgive me. But these things happen. Neither of us would do anything to hurt you.”

He responded in anger. “You mean he has time to fit you into his busy schedule?”

“Don’t be hurtful,” she cautioned. “We’re serious. There’s talk of marriage.”

“I don’t think Jimmy and I can go on living together in the penthouse,” he said. “There’d be two of you making love in our double bed while I listen to the sounds from the sofa, nearby.”

Later, he confessed that he didn’t really care that Beverly had abandoned him for Jimmy. What he didn’t tell her was that he’d met Paul Winston (called “Craig” in his memoirs), and that he was falling in love with him. He described Winston as a “Nordic knockout, a blonde, blue-eyed and *muy simpatico* Marine, twenty-four years old. He had a gentle smile, an intimate voice, and a compelling air of sensitivity about him.” Hailing from Minnesota, he was stationed at the Camp Pendleton Marine Base, in nearby San Diego County.

Unknown to Bast, Jimmy was continuing to date Jeanetta Lewis, although seeing her less frequently, of course. Sometimes, he’d just arrive at her apartment, even as late as two o’clock in the morning, after he dropped off Beverly at her mother’s mansion.

One night, Bast was wandering along the Pacific Palisades when he decided to drop in on Jeanetta. He wanted to discuss the new situation between Jimmy and Beverly. Perhaps she could console him over the loss of his two friends.

When he told her what was going on, she exploded. “That two-timer! What a jerk! That asshole has been stringing me along.”

He was surprised to learn that Jimmy was still dating her and often slept over at her apartment.

The couple talked until dawn, as Jeanetta urged Bast to move out of the penthouse. “Jimmy is bad for the both

of us."

By mid-morning, she drove him to Mar Vista, about two miles from the Pacific. There, Bast answered an ad and decided to rent a small studio at 12623 Green Avenue. The rent was reasonable, and he decided he didn't need a roommate.

He called his landlady to notify her that he would no longer be responsible for the rent. It was up to Jimmy to pay it by himself.

Jeanetta joined him on the drive back to the penthouse to lend moral support as he was packing his clothing. Apparently, the landlady had already informed Jimmy of this new development in his living arrangement.

Bast later remembered, "Jimmy was waiting for me downstairs. I'd never seen him so furious. He denounced me as 'a dirty little snake.' I tried to calm him down, but he lunged for my throat and started to choke me."

Seeing what was happening, Jeanetta ran toward the two men and tried to break up the fight. She screamed at Jimmy, "You'll kill him!"

Momentarily, Jimmy got control of himself, but within a minute, he'd turned on Jeanetta. "So Billy Boy is fucking you now?"

"What do you care, you little creep?" she said. "You're a god damn liar. A fucking jerk."

With his anger still bubbling, he balled up his fist and slammed it into her face. Blood spurted from her nose.

Regaining his breath, Bast feared a neighbor would spot them and call the police. Using all his diplomatic skills, he managed to usher them both back into the penthouse so Jeanetta could stop her bleeding.

Once inside, she rushed to the bathroom. The sounds that emerged made both men realize that she was vomiting.

Suddenly, Jimmy was apologetic. "I was an animal," he admitted. "Don't leave me."

"It's over," Bast said. "I'm packing my things and heading out. I don't want to see you again."

Jimmy left the apartment and went and stood by Jeanetta's car parked by the sidewalk. He stood there an hour, waiting to them to come down. With her freshly washed face, she walked by him without speaking.

In contrast, Bast shook his hand. "It's been great, kid. We've had our moments."

Jimmy didn't say anything, but looked forlorn through teary eyes.

Bast later admitted, "It was time for me to leave and get on with my life. I knew that temporarily, at least, Beverly would pay the rent for Jimmy if he didn't make it hustling. Some nights, he didn't return home alone, and I knew he was pursuing 'a source of revenue,' to put it in its most polite terms."

"Another reason for me to leave was that I was starting to fall in love with him myself until my Marine came along. The god had sent him directly from Valhalla."

Rogers Brackett had flown to New York for a three-week visit, but had phoned Jimmy, even holding out the suggestion that he might want him to move in with him. Jimmy knew he couldn't see Beverly every night and return to a home with Brackett, too, so a decision would have to be made.

In the meantime, he needed money, and he was determined to contact some of his new connections, such imposing figures a George Cukor and Spencer Tracy. He also wanted to call John Carlyle, just for fun.

The time had come for a showdown with Beverly. That summer, she had moved north to Paradise Cove to stay with her father and his new girlfriend. One night, she threw a beach party for her coven of "Hollywood brats." Jimmy was invited and told to bring his appetite, because there would be a pig barbecue on her father's oceanfront terrace. She informed him that she'd even hired a four-piece band from Laguna Beach.

As Beverly remembered it, "Jimmy arrived with a chip on his shoulder. It was like he was spoiling for a fight." Two hours later, after Jimmy refused to dance with her, a "Beach Boy Adonis" (her words) asked her to dance.

"I guess we were dancing too close," she said. "He was in a bikini and was rubbing up against me. I was trying to make Jimmy jealous. At any rate, he came up to the young man and grabbed hold of one of his breasts, pinching it as tight as he could.

"Get away from her, you faggot. I'll black both of your eyes."

"I tried to keep the boy from striking Jimmy," she said. "He stormed off the terrace and headed down the beach. When I caught up with him, he called me a whore and slapped my face. I fell over in the sand. I knew it was over for us. That's why I later wrote that piece about why I didn't marry Jimmy Dean."

A Drunken Spencer Tracy Seduces Jimmy,

Jimmy called Spencer Tracy, who remembered him and chastised him a bit for not calling sooner. The aging actor agreed to meet him at one o'clock the following afternoon at George Cukor's house.

After Jimmy drove there, the Japanese houseboy directed him to the pool area, where Tracy was lounging in the sun.

"Hi, kid," he called to him. "Come on over."

Jimmy later admitted that he was rather tongue-tied but Tracy put him at ease with his friendly banter. Occasionally, he drank from a flask. "George rarely stocks wine or booze. The cheap bastard. I have to bring my own whenever I visit."

Although Jimmy hoped that he might talk about Katharine Hepburn, with whom he was famously linked, a slightly drunk Tracy began discussing his wife, the former actress Louise Treadwell. He said he'd been to visit her that morning to spend time with his daughter, Susie, and his son, John. It was with a sense of despair that he told Jimmy that John had been born deaf. "Imagine living in a world where you could never hear the birds sing."

Jimmy had long ago learned that all gay men didn't dress up like drag queens. He'd been around Hollywood long enough to know that several very macho figures of the silver screen, including Gary Cooper, had had a gay past.

To him, Tracy was the most macho man on the screen, with a quiet masculinity that contrasted with the swagger of John Wayne.

By 3:30PM, when Cukor still had not appeared on the terrace, Tracy suggested that he and Jimmy walk down the hill to Tracy's cottage "for a little privacy." Jimmy, of course, knew what he had in mind.

Spencer Tracy, an anguished Catholic, appropriately cast as Father Flanagan, an influential priest specializing in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, in *Boys Town* (1938).

As Jimmy would later recall to Rogers Brackett, he had never known a man who held his liquor as well as Tracy. His preferred beverage was scotch.

Since Jimmy was hungry, he asked if he could go into the kitchen and whip up something for a late lunch. "Help yourself. She usually leaves some foodstuff for me." Jimmy assumed "she" meant Hepburn.

Tracy was right. The refrigerator was well-stocked, and included a roasted chicken. He took it out and sliced off some of the breast, which he later mixed up with some salad greens. He brought two heaping plates into the living room, where, to his surprise, Tracy devoured his share. "I haven't eaten anything all day," he said. "Sometimes, I can make it through an entire day relying only on liquid nourishment."

By 8PM, Jimmy became anxious to get on with the action, since he had made other plans for the evening.

Jimmy knew what Tracy wanted, but the actor seemed reluctant, almost shy, to introduce the subject of sex. "Let's go into the bedroom, Mr. Tracy," he said.

Tracy looked surprised, but rose from his armchair, and then plopped down onto the bed. Jimmy seemed to want to get the sex act over with and be on his way. In full view of Tracy, he stripped off his clothes and climbed onto the bed beside him.

Suddenly, Tracy began to weep uncontrollably. "I don't like who I am," he sobbed. "I hate my life. That's why I drink so much. To escape."

"I held him tightly, like a baby," Jimmy later recalled to Brackett. "This strong character on the screen was like a

helpless little boy. Since I knew what he wanted, I took his hand and placed it between my legs."

"His hand moved over to my groin, and then he began nibbling at my foreskin—that bit of skin fascinated him. Although he finally got around to taking the whole cock, it was clear to me, for some strange reason, that he was a devotee of foreskin."

After the sex act, both men fell asleep. Tracy took Jimmy in his arms. As he drifted off, he whispered, "Don't leave me. Don't ever leave me!"

In the early morning hours, Tracy woke up and stumbled out of bed. Only a small lamp on the nightstand illuminated the room. He couldn't seem to find his way to the bathroom, so finally, he gave up, pissing in the corner of the bedroom. Then he returned to the bed.

Jimmy couldn't go back to sleep, so he decided to leave. Very quietly, he got up and retrieved his clothing. In the living room, Tracy's wallet was on the coffee table. It contained two one-hundred dollar bills and a few one- and ten-dollar bills. Jimmy took the two hundreds, leaving the remainder of the money for the actor, in case he needed it for his eventual migrations to the bank or perhaps to the studio.

He never expected to see Tracy again. Nor did he want to. Only that morning, he'd read in *Variety* that Cukor had cast Anthony Perkins as Jean Simmons' boyfriend in *The Actress,* leaving him to conclude that he wouldn't be working on that picture with Tracy as its major star.

Tracy was a sad, forlorn person, cursed with a depression that seemed to reside within him. It mirrored Jimmy's own bouts of morbidity. He and Tracy did not belong together.

Jimmy made his way up the hill to Cukor's home, entering the open door that led to the kitchen. The Japanese houseboy was preparing breakfast for his boss.

`The director was nowhere to be seen. Spotting Jimmy, the boy said, "Good morning, Mr. Dean fellow. Mr. Cukor asked me to give you a letter." Then he handed him a letter that had been resting on the kitchen table. "Thanks," Jimmy said. "I'll read it later. Tell him I'm sorry he decided to cast Perkins instead of me."

En route to his penthouse, Jimmy still hadn't read the letter. He was still thinking about Tracy, and something he'd said.

Tracy had asked him, "Do you know what happens to old actors in Hollywood? What will happen to me one day? Me, as well as Jimmy Stewart, Clark Gable, Bogie. Our only public appearances will be at funerals."

Was Walt Disney a Homosexual?

"OH WALT, SAY IT ISN'T SO!"

—MICKEY MOUSE

Back at his penthouse, Jimmy read the note from Cukor, who apologized for having cast Anthony Perkins instead of himself in *The Actress.*

"I want to make amends," wrote Cukor. "If you'll come over tonight, I'll introduce you to one of the biggest names in Hollywood. I've already alerted him to the fact that you'd be ideal as the hero of one of his big-budget movies. More than anyone, this gentleman can make you a star."

Portrait of a Diva: Katharine Hepburn

Arriving at eight o'clock that evening in blue jeans and a white T-shirt, Jimmy was ushered into Cukor's living room as the director was bidding farewell to a very tense Katharine Hepburn.

"Just because I have to fight for my independence as a woman, you're against me—just like a man. Even Spence is on your side."

"My dearest darling Kate," Cukor said. "We'll shoot the scene tomorrow as I've set it up. You can't overrule your director. Instead of objecting to everything I want, you should listen, for a change. It'll do you good."

"You should be nice to me," she said. "After all, I'm a star."

"You're more than that," Cukor said. "You're a spoiled, rotten bitch."

Hepburn stormed out of the living room, brushing past Jimmy without a word.

"Forgive that outburst," Cukor said, apologetically. "Come on in and sit down beside me. I'll have my boy get you a drink."

"She was really, really mad," Jimmy said. "I'd be afraid of her."

"I'm about the only one who'll stand up to her. When John Huston made *The African Queen* with her, he told me he feared that the movie-going public wouldn't be able to tell Kate's scaly skin from that of a crocodile."

Jimmy was shocked at such a harsh appraisal, but said nothing.

"Is your producer friend here?" Jimmy asked, anxious to change the subject.

"Don't be impatient," Cukor said. "He'll be here soon. He's a very busy man."

At 9PM, in walked Walt Disney, the creator of Mickey Mouse, Dumbo, Cinderella, Donald Duck, and Snow White. Although he knew very little about him, Jimmy recognized him at once. In the 1950s, very few members of the American public knew anything about the producer. Some biographers would later designate him as "Hollywood's Prince of Darkness."

An anxiety-ridden, chain-smoking alcoholic and lifelong anti-Semite, Disney was also a special informant for the FBI in Hollywood, routing out communists and "subversive Jews" during the Joseph McCarthy era.

According to dozens of sources, he was also a homosexual. After his death, he would be outed by several underground newspapers.

Throughout his life, Disney was plagued with what one biographer called "his sexual inadequacies." That might explain, if these rumors are true, what caused him to turn to virile young men to provide him with sexual pleasure, which he could not provide, except in rare instances, to women.

Anti-semitic guardian of show-biz' Family Values: Walt Disney

Based on Disney's fast appraisal of his body, Jimmy just assumed that the producer approved of him. "I think Jimmy here looks like a clean-cut, All-American boy," Disney said to Cukor, right in front of Jimmy.

He quickly responded, "Looks can be deceiving, Mr. Disney."

"A boy with spunk," Disney said. "I like that."

During the first hour of their conversation, Jimmy realized that Disney and Cukor had a jocular but very competitive relationship. At one point, Cukor turned to Jimmy and said, "Ask Walt to tell you about his honeymoon with Lillian. She found out that he liked to look into garbage cans and watch maggots devour rotting meat. "

"At least I wasn't fired from *Gone With the Wind* because Clark Gable didn't want a cocksucker directing him."

"Too late," Cukor said. "I sucked Gable's little cock back in 1929."

"Did Walt tell you that Leni Riefenstahl wasn't Hitler's favorite filmmaker? Walt was! *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was Der Führer's *favorite movie."*

*"*No person in Hollywood can be blamed for the fan base he attracts," Disney said, defensively.

Before the two men took Jimmy upstairs, Disney seemed to want a final assurance from Cukor that Jimmy would be very discreet.

"Please understand," Disney said, lighting up another cigarette. "If word got out that I patronized hustlers, my empire might crumble. Mothers might not let their kids see my movies."

Jimmy was insulted. "Mr. Disney, I'm not a hustler. I'm an actor, and a god damn good one at that."

"I'm sure you are, dear boy," Disney said to him.

"Before their departure upstairs, Disney seemed to blame Cukor for hooking him up to the hustler scene to which he'd become addicted.

As Cukor later told Jimmy, "Blaming me is like a drug addict blaming the dealer who got him hooked."

Perhaps to make him jealous and to torment him a bit, Jimmy later revealed to Brackett some of the most intimate details of his brief life as a hustler. He was particularly adept at bragging how he had become linked to the rich and famous without any assistance from Brackett's connections.

He didn't exactly give a "blow-by-blow" encounter of the night he spent with Cukor and Disney, but he did claim that both men kept most of their clothes on. He had "every inch of my body devoured by ravenous mouths. I've never been so drained in my life."

When Brackett quizzed him about Disney possibly featuring him in one of his upcoming movies, Jimmy had to admit the truth: After those moments of passion, Cukor never returned any of his phone calls. Likewise, Disney never contacted him, and there is no record that Jimmy was ever considered for a role in one of Disney's family-oriented films.

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William Kern, a journalist who wrote under the pseudonym "Bill Dakota," was the editor of *The Hollywood Star*, a gossip tabloid that was a hot seller during the 1970s. Dakota seemed to have the inside scoop on anything transpiring within gay Hollywood.

His most notorious edition (Volume 1, no. 4) appeared in 1976. It carried the red-letter, front-page headline: WALT DISNEY WAS HOMOSEXUAL—EDITOR REVEALS FACTS!

When that paper hit the newsstands along Hollywood Boulevard, it outsold *Playboy* and every other publication. It is reasonable to say that the first major outing of Walt was the talk of the town at every dinner party and in every bar that night.

The editor even went to a notary public and signed a sworn statement, replicated on that edition's front page, that the events he revealed about Walt were true. The article revealed that he had been paid to have sex with Walt. Dakota's experience with the creator of Mickey Mouse was given further credence by other men who testified to having had the same experience.

Even though the term "outed" had not been coined at that time, Walt Disney, creator of Mickey Mouse, was officially "outed," becoming one of the first of many stars—both male and female—who would be outed in the years to come. In the immediate aftermath of Walt's death, the underground press in Hollywood—much of which was produced on old-fashioned mimeograph machines without a lot of design savvy—went into overdrive. Hustlers came forth and described the details of their paid encounters with Walt.

Although the various sources derived from widely varied backgrounds, a pattern emerged. According to several of these allegations, Walt rarely, if ever, requested that the young man remove his clothes. "I was subjected to a quick blow-job, paid a hundred-dollar bill, and shown to the door as quickly as possible," said hustler Ralph Ferguson. "For me, it was easy money. Walt was known in the hustler world as a good mark."

Over the years, insights into the marriage of Walt and his wife, Lillian, have remained largely a closely guarded secret. What she knew of her husband's nocturnal activities, if anything, is not known. Obviously she might have been suspicious. Walt often didn't come home at night. He used the excuse that he was working late at the studio and was sleeping over.

He was rumored to have maintained different apartments in the Greater Los Angeles area, which he rented under assumed names. It was alleged that he entertained paid hustlers there. One of the many "male madams" of Hollywood supplied him with a discreet group of young men, often out-of-work actors.

PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR

Clifton Webb

Jimmy placed a call to John Carlyle, that actor he'd had sex with at George Cukor's home. He wanted to spend a night alone with Carlyle, but instead, he got a surprise invitation. Carlyle suggested that both of them meet that evening at Clifton Webb's house for an eight o'clock dinner. The actor lived in a pink stucco house on Rexford Drive in Beverly Hills.

Jimmy accepted the invitation with a sense of adventure, based on a vague idea of what was in store for him.

A black manservant showed Jimmy into the house, directing him down the foyer to the living room, where Webb and Carlyle were already having drinks. Carlyle rose and hugged Jimmy, but Webb remained seated, extending his hand and holding Jimmy's paw an extra-long time. "You're everything John said you'd be," Webb said, appraising him.

He was impressed with the décor and taste of the house, which, Webb asserted, had once been owned by director Victor Fleming.

Webb had launched his Broadway career as a singer-hoofer. He'd achieved screen fame portraying the dandified Waldo Lydecker in Gene Tierney's *Laura* (1944), for which he was later nominated as a Best Supporting Actor.

In the words of critic Barry Monush: “Webb was everybody’s favorite prissy snob—dapper, dryly critical of others, and oh-so-pleased with himself. He was usually raising a nose, looking down with superiority at some other, less confident character, and tossing off a witty *bon mot* or insult with the sting of a wasp.”

Clifton Webb with Barbara Stanwyck in *Titanic* (1953)...Both of them were competing for Robert Wagner.

Jimmy was surprised by the sudden appearance of an elegantly dressed woman who looked to be in her 80s. Webb said, “This is my beloved mother, Maybelle.”

Jimmy found that her mannerisms, fluttering eyelids, and tantalizing lisp evoked an earlier part of the century. He also noticed that she wore far too much rouge, and that her dress appeared to have been fashionable in 1930.

Over dinner, she did most of the talking, treating her son with an imperial *hauteur*, ordering what he could and could not eat. Apparently, in her heyday, she’d been a feisty, high-kicking dancer.

She did not seem embarrassed by her son’s “auntie-like effeminacy” (Jimmy’s words). At one point, she told the table, “Many mothers with homosexual sons kick them out of the house. I would never do that. To me, the greatest loss a mother can suffer is when her son leaves the house to marry another woman.”

“Maybelle, darling, you know I will never do that.”

The purpose of the evening became all too clear after Webb escorted Maybelle up the stairs to bed. Carlyle whispered to him, “Clifton wants us to go to his bedroom and put on a show. He sometimes gives blow jobs, but mostly he’s a *voyeur.* Also, a director. He insists on directing the sex act.”

“I’m short of cash,” Jimmy said.

“He’ll give us $150 each, which is good because I need money for gas and rent, not to mention food.”

“Okay, we’ll put on a show for the creep, and we’ll have some fun ourselves.”

Later, when Jimmy described the night to Brackett, he left out most of the details, except to say, “John and I got so carried away that at one point, we forgot that Webb was in the room.”

Over the next few weeks, Webb called Jimmy back on three different occasions without Carlyle. “He never took off his clothes, but the guy has a suction pump for a mouth,” Jimmy told Brackett.

Apparently, Webb’s experience with Jimmy was frequently repeated with other young men for sale. Scotty Bowers, in *Full Service,* his *exposé* of underground Hollywood, wrote that he often supplied tricks for the veteran actor.

Bowers recalled that Webb’s mother, Maybelle, fully understood what was happening whenever Webb headed for the bedroom with his *beau du jour.* “The mother would start behaving like a brooding, clucking hen and say, ‘Now, now, boys, don’t misbehave.’”

Scotty Bowers, one of Hollywood's most "connected" hustlers and pimps.

Webb, with his man of the moment, usually spent fifteen or twenty minutes alone with him, and would then reappear. According to Bowers, "Maybelle liked me. She often scurried over to me and whispered in my ear, "Oh, Scotty, thank heavens for you, darling. You make my Clifton so happy, you know."

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Webb became a mentor and great supporter of Jimmy's film career. He even began to supply columnists with items about him. He spoke to Dorothy Kilgallen, an entertainment columnist in New York. She printed one of Jimmy's first news items:

> *"Clifton Webb is playing star-builder. His* protégé *is James Dean, who just snapped up one of the leading roles in John Steinbeck's* East of Eden*. Young Dean might be described roughly as having the Marlon Brando style of dungarees and a T-shirt instead of a blue serge suit."*

In Hollywood, Webb found Hedda Hopper a much more difficult sell. The gossip maven had already met Jimmy. A public relations man from Warners had arranged for them to meet in the commissary for an interview, claiming that Jimmy was a genius on film.

"To believe the press agents, every boy in a dirty shirttail and blue jeans is a genius, emerging from Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio in New York," Hopper claimed. "Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the gangling lad is like a dream brought on by eating *Port Salut* cheese too late at night. If you wait long enough, it goes away."

Jimmy showed up for the interview looking like a dirty garage mechanic. He ordered three cheeseburgers medium rare and only muttered something instead of answering Hopper's questions.

The walls of the commissary, where Hedda had rendezvoused with Jimmy, were decorated with publicity pictures of Warner Brothers' stars. He looked up into the smiling face of Ronald Reagan.

Rising suddenly from his chair, he spat upon the picture, then removed a handkerchief from his back pocket to wipe away the spittle.

Then he sat down again and began to devour his second cheeseburger. Hopper rose from the table and walked out of the commissary, composing what she was going to write in the next day's column about this uncouth actor who had insulted her.

Hedda Hopper...forgiving Jimmy's previous sins.

When *East of Eden* was filmed, her friend, Clifton Webb, called her, praising Jimmy's performance, and urging her to see the film.

"I've already met Mr. Dean," she responded, "and wild horses couldn't drag me to a picture he made."

Webb finally convinced her to call director Elia Kazan with a request to set up a private screening for her. Reluctantly, she attended the screening, and later reported that she was spellbound.

"I couldn't remember ever having seen a young man with such power, so many facets of expression, so much sheer invention as an actor," she wrote. "I phoned Jack Warner and asked him if I could interview Dean at my home."

Two days later, Jimmy arrived at her door, wearing a charcoal suit, a black shirt and tie, along with heavy riding boots. This time, he was polite and cordial to the columnist, winning her over with his manly charm.

From then on, and throughout the remainder of his short career, Hedda Hopper became one of his most avid supporters. In print, she pronounced him one of the brightest stars in Hollywood. All his past sins were forgiven.

"Jimmy later told William Bast," I don't care for Hopper at all. She's not my kind of dame. But I decided it's better for her to write good shit about me in her column than attack me."

Webb continued to support and praise Jimmy's acting. Writing in *New York Magazine,* actor William Redfield said, "The rumors were rife that James Dean was Clifton Webb's *protégé.* That always struck me as odd, because Jimmy, in his manner, did not appear to be a homosexual. But of course, that often happens. And I don't think he was exclusively gay. What exactly went on between Webb and Dean I don't know, although I imagine it took a sexual form."

"They Say I'm a Practicing Homosexual,

BUT I SAY I'M PERFECT."

—Cole Porter

On their first real date together—that is, one without a voyeur or a "john" hiring them—John Carlyle took Jimmy to a car dealership to show off his new purchase, an Oldsmobile in midnight blue. He'd bought it on an easy installment plan. Within the dealership, he went on to suggest that Jimmy should consider replacing his beat-up old Chevy, which had developed some loud muffler problems.

Although Jimmy pretended to be impressed with the Olds, it's almost certain that if and when he opted for a replacement, it would be something faster and sportier.

Once the papers were signed, Carlyle was free to drive away. That's when he told Jimmy that he could not drive and wanted to be taught.

Impulsively, he invited Jimmy to Lake Arrowhead, where a cabin had been made available to them. Once there, they'd have time for driving lessons, and for other activities too.

Jimmy rose to the challenge of orchestrating some driving lessons, but warned Carlyle, "You'll never be a race car driver. Your favorite part of a car is the god damn brake."

[Later, back in Los Angeles, Clifton Webb asked Jimmy how the driving lessons were progressing. Carlyle, with Jimmy as his instructor, was practicing on the secluded offshoot streets of Brentwood and Bel-Air.

Facetiously, Jimmy told Webb that Carlyle had run over only two children. "Fortunately, they were very little and didn't damage the tires."]

After Jimmy and Carlyle's arrival at Lake Arrowhead, they bought some provisions for the cabin's cramped kitchen. Then they went for a swim and settled into their cabin for "Love in the Afternoon."

Carlyle would later write a memoir, from which the editors, right before publication, cut fifty pages based on the advice of the publisher's lawyers. In the expurgated section of that memoir, he claimed that he and Jimmy were most compatible in bed. "Both of us gave as much as we got. We were neither a top or a bottom, but versatile in all acts. Actually sixty-nine was our favorite figure in arithmetic. Both of us were ready for anything in the hay, except it left us so drained, we didn't have much energy left for lake sports."

For dinner on their first night, Carlyle had accepted an invitation to the elegant vacation home of the heir, J. Watson Webb, Jr. *[No relation to Clifton Webb],* whose stone-and-timber home overlooked the north shore of the lake. His art-collecting family had left him a fortune, but, as he admitted, "Just for fun, darlings, I once worked as a film editor at Fox."

He told Jimmy and Carlyle that he was involved in pre-production of a new film at Fox entitled *Don't Bother to Knock,* starring Marilyn Monroe, Richard Widmark, and Anne Bancroft.

As a Hollywood gossipmonger, he rivaled both Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, spewing out revelations that neither of these peddlers in print could publish.

J. Watson Webb...privy to gossip too dangerous to print.

"Did you know that Fred Astaire once seduced a nine-year-old boy?" he asked his guests. "That Cary Grant was arrested in the men's room of a department store going down on a young man who worked in the men's clothing department?"

He also provided information that Jimmy didn't really want to hear. "Did you know that Tyrone Power and Monty Woolley actually eat shit sandwiches?"

"The other month, the world's favorite matador, Luís Miguel Dominguin, came for a visit," Webb said. "My guests wanted to see the scars on his body caused by bulls in the ring. Luís was very accommodating. He pulled off his clothes and let my guests examine his scars. All those hands on that magnificent body of his produced an erection. The inevitable happened."

"Watson was a very dear friend, but he could be mischievous," Carlyle said. "He fed Jimmy and me this delectable beef dinner. Only after it was over, he told us it was horsemeat. Jimmy went outside to vomit."

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Back in the Los Angeles area, a very different party invitation arrived. Clifton Webb called with an invitation to a Sunday afternoon pool party at the pink palazzo home of composer Cole Porter. Clifton and Porter had been friends since they'd worked together on the ill-fated Broadway show, *See America First* in 1916.

At the last minute, Webb fell ill, but called Porter, who claimed he'd be delighted to "entertain your two young friends, especially if they are as handsome as you say, without you."

Carlyle felt secure enough behind the wheel to drive to Brentwood, although Jimmy noticed that the right fender of his Olds had been dented. Blaming Jimmy, Carlyle claimed. "You didn't teach me to park right."

In the foyer of the "pussy pink" (Carlyle's term) manse, Porter's black butler/manservant showed them inside. In addition to working for Porter, he maintained other pursuits which included occasional gigs as a jazz musician in Hollywood. Carlyle had informed Jimmy that Porter "has a fondness for black meat. On occasion in New York, he visits this male bordello in Harlem."

Emerging from the powder room in the mansion's ground-floor hallway was none other than Joan Crawford, whom Carlyle had already met at a previous party. She was as formidable off screen as on. After kissing her on both cheeks, Carlyle introduced her to Jimmy.

"I'm in awe, Miss Crawford," he said. "You gave such a great performance in *Mildred Pierce,* although I had a hard time believing you were ever a waitress."

Cole Porter..."It Was Just One of Those Things."

"What Jimmy meant is that an elegant lady like you belongs only in satin gowns and ermine," Carlyle said.

"I have an earthy side, too," Crawford said. "Why don't you two good-looking guys drop over tomorrow night at eight? We'll go swimming in my pool. Don't bring your bathing trunks. You won't need them."

When she saw hesitation on Jimmy's face, she said, "Don't worry about it. It doesn't matter to me. Only the other night, I had a wonderful time with Rock Hudson. We 'went to heaven' in my poolhouse. I told him, 'just imagine I'm Clark Gable. After that, we managed very well."

[Crawford had silly euphemisms she used—usually to describe sex acts or body parts—throughout the course of her life. They included references to intercourse as "going to heaven," and to her breasts as "ninny pies."]

She reached into her purse and handed her card Carlyle. On its back, she had handwritten her private phone number. "Got to go, kids. Tonight, the real thing, Clark Gable, is coming over."

After she'd gone, Jimmy told Carlyle, "Stars out here don't waste much time getting to the point, do they?"

"They're too busy and, with such heavy demands on their time, they don't bother with a lot of small talk."

At the pool, a fully dressed but immobilized Cole Porter looked like some rich potentate overlooking his array of good-looking muscle men.

Later, in his memoirs, Carlyle wrote, "He was propped up on a raised dias by the pool. Each muscleman guest appeared more striking than the one beside him. After two rounds of daiquiris, Mr. Porter's butler lowered the dias to carry his crippled master to an outdoor table, where an elegant lunch was served to the slightly woozy collection of Adonises."

After the long lunch, Porter's butler carried the composer into his elegantly furnished and thick-carpeted living room. The other guests filed in, the bathers with large bath towels wrapped around their otherwise nude bodies. The hired entertainment of the afternoon was about to begin.

Word had spread that "Mr. Universe" (Steve Reeves) had been hired—through his agent, Henry Willson—to stage an exhibition. At the time, Willson, was trying to get Reeves a movie role in some epic, Hercules-inspired movie. In the meantime, the title holder was hustling rich gay men for sex or else staging private shows.

A publicity photo of Steve Reeves...Available for sexual exhibitions.

Jimmy had already met Reeves at Willson's party, the event to which he'd been escorted by Rogers Brackett early in their relationship.

Reeves appeared before the appreciative audience wearing a robe. He soon removed it to reveal a posing strap that was almost transparent. For about half an hour, he demonstrated various muscleman poses and some of the

exercise techniques that kept his body in a rigorously maintained state of perfection.

Then, Porter called out for him to remove his posing strap. Seemingly expecting that to happen, and accompanied by loud clapping, the muscleman took it off, then walked around the room, allowing his fans to feel his body, especially what was dangling between his legs. Jimmy would later define it as a "shameless exhibition," but Carlyle reminded him, "Steve has got something to show off."

After he made the rounds of the room, Reeves displayed a full erection, thanks at least to some extent to all those hands manipulating his body. Then, from a position in the middle of the room, he masturbated for his audience. When he was finished, the most aggressive of his fans moved in "to clean up with their tongues" (Carlyle's words).

Carlyle later wrote: "to avoid the competition I was certain to lose over who would stay over for dinner, I chose not to linger."

Jimmy felt the same way. "I'm not in the same league as these musclemen. No one is going to crown me Mr. Universe."

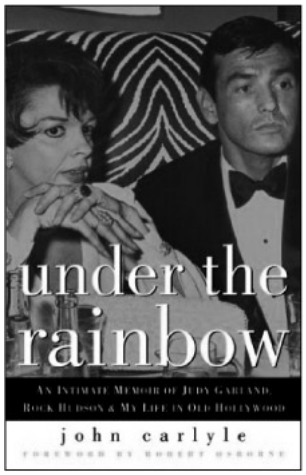
On his way out the door, Carlyle assured Jimmy, "But you have other charms."

"I hope you're eager to enjoy them later tonight," Jimmy said. "All of that has made me horny."

In 2006, Carlyle would publish a memoir, *Under the Rainbow: An Intimate Memoir of Judy Garland, Rock Hudson, & My Life in Old Hollywood,* with a foreword by Robert Osborne of Turner Movie Classics.

Although its publisher *[Da Capo press published it in 2007]* promoted it as a book detailing his many love affairs, including those with Marlon Brando, Rock Hudson, and Jimmy, the sections on his involvement with Brando and Jimmy were removed as part of a last-minute decision.

However, many people at the publishing house read his description of making love to Jimmy.



Carlyle's agent, Henry Willson, had seen the first draft of his client's tell-all memoir and had had a copy made. He later leaked some of the passages of the sections that were later cut to the underground *exposé* press and to gay friends. One passage that was expurgated included his description of making love to Jimmy:

"He could lie for hours in my arms as I kissed him, bit gently into his neck, and sort of nibbled on all parts of him. He liked that a lot. He had a very smooth, un- muscled body and liked to be devoured. His curved buttocks were his chief asset, and he had silken pubic hair that he like me to pull on with my teeth. As I explored his body, his flesh prickled with tender excitement."

"After I did all that, he would suddenly yell out, 'Take me! Make me yours! When it was over, he just wanted to lie in my arms and fall asleep."

"My fear was that he was falling in love with me, and I didn't want that. At the time, I was one of the pretty boys of Hollywood. My phone was ringing off the wall."

"Jimmy wanted us to be together and live like a couple. I wasn't ready for that. Guess what? I was dating him, but was also slipping around and fucking Rock Hudson and Marlon Brando."

"And did I tell you that Jimmy and I seduced Judy Garland one night, all three of us in the same bed? Judy in time became my sometimes lover and greatest companion, the star of my memoirs. It all began with a party one night at the home of Clifton Webb."

AFTER HER AFFAIRS WITH BARBARA STANWYCK AND CLARK GABLE,

Joan Crawford Maneuvers Jimmy Into a Three-Way

In the 1950s, Joan Crawford, facing a long drawn-out career decline as she aged, began to date younger men. She had three dates with Rock Hudson and also had a brief fling with Hudson's lover, the handsome, well-built actor, George Nader. At the time, Nader and Hudson were having a fling of their own, which later evolved into a lifelong friendship. Crawford always told her *confidantes*, "Rock's big attraction is the fat baby's arm between his legs."

On the night that followed the party at Clifton Webb's house, Crawford welcomed Carlyle and Jimmy into her immaculate home in Brentwood, where all the white living room upholsteries were covered in plastic. That afternoon, it had rained slightly, and she asked the young men to remove their shoes in case they were tracking in mud. As she directed them toward her patio, Jimmy whispered to Carlyle. "I think Crawford has a foot fetish."

The sky that night was clear and lit with a full moon that illuminated the swimming pool. Spotlights encircled her terrace. Although her invitation had not specifically included dinner, there were platters of cold food resting on her bar. Both men ate heartily, especially Jimmy.

Although at times she took a great interest in other people and sometimes helped them financially, she appeared self-enchanted on the night she entertained Carlyle and Jimmy.

She did take the time, however, to learn what she had suspected: That both of them wanted to be movie stars. Jimmy asserted that more important than status as a star was his burning desire to be an actor, even if it meant abandoning Hollywood for New York.

"Acting on the stage would terrify me," she said. "I'm strictly a movie queen. Even in the dim light, her steely eyes focused on each of them, as if sizing them up. "You're both good lookers and in Hollywood, that sure helps—I should know. Of course, I've seen many a gorgeous man or woman come and go—mostly go. They arrive daily at the train station, with their broad shoulders and Greek god profiles. But they need more than that to get ahead. They've got to have a keen intelligence beneath their shock of unruly hair."

She looked both of them up and down once again. "I have this instinct: I can tell just by meeting a wannabe actor if he has what it takes to make it."

"And what's your verdict of us?" Jimmy asked. "Do we have it or not?"

"Forgive my bluntness, but one of you does, the other doesn't. I'll not tell you which is which. Only one of you will rise to the top. The other will end up pumping gas in San José or else serving beer to the musclemen of Venice Beach. There's also the chance that one of you might end up a rich man's toy."

"Do you believe that the casting couch works for a young man like it does for a beautiful girl?" Carlyle asked.

"The casting couch might lead to a role in the beginning, but it won't make you a star. I was accused of lying on the casting couch back in the 20s. To that I always said: 'The casting couch is better than the cold, hard floor.'"

"Facing up to your disappointments can also make you a star," she claimed. "I'll tell you the secret of my success on the screen. I've used my personal disappointments—and they've been horrendous—to bring life to the characters I play in the movies."

Before she'd finished her fifth vodka, she seemed to wander down memory lane. She told them terrible stories about her abuse at MGM, but also spun some amusing tales.

Portrait of Joan...Always lusting for the new boy in town.

She discussed her brief affair with movie cowboy icon Don ("Red") Barry. "He was very short except in one department. At first he overwhelmed me with gifts, including a diamond necklace worthy of Marie Antoinette and a white mink coat more suited to Lana Turner. Our romance ended soon. The day after I said goodbye, I got a visit from a jeweler and a furrier who arrived pounding on my door. It seems that Red had never paid for these trinkets, and they wanted them back."

She asked Jimmy which actor on the screen he most admired. Although Jimmy's admiration for Marlon Brando might have been the answer most of his latter-day fans might have expected, in this single instance, in a departure from his norm, he said, 'John Garfield.'"

"I got to know John when we starred together in *Humoresque,"* Crawford declared. "When I was introduced to him, I extended my hand. Instead of shaking it, he pinched my breast instead. That was the beginning of a brief fling."

"Do you think that the press treats you fairly?" Carlyle asked.

"Of course they do, my dear," she said sarcastically. "That's why they depict me as having this iron will—a gutsy bitch, an aggressive broad, and a man-eating dame. Perhaps the press confuses me with my screen image."

"To keep up that image, I'm always searching for the right script. A *Mildred Pierce* script is rare. I almost lost that one. Michael Curtiz, that Hungarian shit, wanted Bette Davis. When she said no, he asked Barbara Stanwyck who also turned him down. In the end, he had to settle for Oscar-winning Joan Crawford."

Once again she concentrated on Jimmy and Carlyle, asking if either of them had ever been married or been seriously committed to someone. Both of them denied any such previous involvement.

"I don't recommend marriage," she said. "I was a failure at it. My last husband was an actor, Phil Terry, all six feet one, a former football player weighing 175 pounds. He was certainly good-looking but he spent most of our marriage fucking Robert Taylor instead of me."

"That didn't surprise me," she said. "Most actors in Hollywood are at least bisexual if not homosexual. When I was dating Jeff Chandler, I found that he was also dating Rock Hudson. I indulged Jeff in his cross-dressing fantasy. Sometimes, he wanted to go out with me dressed in full drag. Of course, we had to go to obscure joints. He'd wear a gown, a big red wig, a diamond necklace, and those so-called Joan Crawford fuck-me high heels. I felt like I was making love to myself."

"Gays dominate the industry, and I've always adored working with them and, on occasion, loving them. Lesbianism isn't bad either—at least you don't get pregnant. When I meet a man, I have this uncanny ability to determine his bedmanship, even before auditioning him. I can forgive a gay man for turning me down. A straight man, never! I hold grudges."

Finally, after three more vodkas, she rose on wobbly feet. "Gentlemen, I have an early call, so let's adjourn to my bedroom upstairs and get on with the war games, meaning men *vs.* woman."

Days later, Jimmy would provide a blow-by-blow description to Rogers Brackett. But when Clifton Webb grilled him, he supplied only the most meager of details. In reference to that night, Webb later told gossipy Cole Porter, "I think that whereas John Carlyle actually screwed Crawford, she gave James Dean a blow-job."

Jimmy did provide one tantalizing detail directly to Webb. "I won't be visiting Miss Crawford again. I can't abide bad breath."

Repeating His Penchant for Seducing Boys in Hollywood

Alfredo de la Vega

(A Close Friend of Nancy Reagan)

Entertains James Dean

One night at one of Clifton Webb's parties, Jimmy was introduced to the actor's friend, Alfredo De La Vega. He was an elegant Mexican aristocrat, the son of a wealthy family who had fled to points north of the Mexican border during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Eventually, they settled in Los Angeles, where they began to purchase real

estate with the gold they'd hauled away with them.

In their new world, they acquired prestige and influence. Soon, they became known for their elegant dinners and parties. On any given night, they entertained the Gary Coopers, the Clark Gables, and/or such famous compatriots as Dolores Del Rio.

They also contributed to political campaigns and developed influence with Republicans, including Ronald Reagan and Nelson Rockefeller.

In time, Alfredo became an escort of First Lady Nancy Reagan during her early years in the White House. He was also seen dining with her and her good friend, Betsy Bloomingdale.

In Alfredo's younger days, when he first met Jimmy, he had a reputation as a serial seducer of the pretty young men of Hollywood. His list of sexual conquests, some arranged through agent Henry Willson, included Guy Madison, Rory Calhoun, George Nader, Rock Hudson, Steve Reeves, John Derek and, later, Troy Donahue.

After his introduction to Jimmy, the real estate mogul invited him two nights hence to his lavish apartment in a building he owned. Alfredo said he would have his limousine pick him up at seven o'clock and deliver him there.

Jimmy later reported the details of the evening to William Bast. "Sitting in that apartment, I thought I'd hit pay dirt. This was the kind of life I deserved instead of some tired old farm in Indiana. His living room was filled with nude statues of young men, including a replica of Michelangelo's *David."*

*"*Wherever I looked, his wealth was on display—the oriental carpets, the antiques, the crystal, the paintings, the Salvador Dalís and Picassos. Dinner was prepared by a Japanese chef. Kobe beef, the best I've ever been served. The finest wines. I drank too much."

"At the end of this magnificent dinner fed to a starving boy, Alfredo told me it was time we got better acquainted. He claimed he couldn't really develop a friendship with a young man until he'd tasted his essence."

"It brings me closer to a beautiful boy such as yourself when I taste everything, and I mean, everything. Every young male beauty has a different taste and smell. There is no part of a man on whom I don't lavish my adoration. Every inch of him, including those hidden inches that are waiting to burst forth in all their glory."

"Consider me as dessert," Jimmy said, as he followed Alfred to his bedroom. There, he was instructed to strip and to climb onto the bed.

"He lived up to his stated desire," Jimmy told Bast. "There wasn't a part of me he didn't taste from my big toes to my earlobes. And oh yes, plenty of 'essence' too."

What had really impressed Jimmy was the array of five custom-made sports cars in rainbow colors parked in Alfred's garage. The Mexican proudly showed them off to Jimmy and even let him get behind the wheel of one of them for a drive up the coast.

"I figured that if I became his boy, he'd give me the privilege of driving any of those cars any time I wanted," Jimmy told Bast. "I also suspected he'd give me a big weekly allowance. I was thinking of asking for five hundred dollars every Saturday."

"Like Joan Crawford predicted, either Carlyle or I might end up as some rich man's toy. That way, I could pursue an acting gig if I wanted to or else spend my days riding around in those cars."

Jimmy stayed the night and left after breakfast at ten the following morning. Before leaving, there had been no offer, so he asked Alfredo if he could call him again.

"My dear boy," he answered. "Every hour away from you will be unbearable until I hear that wonderful, seductive voice of yours."

At that point, Jimmy thought he was exaggerating. He waited an entire day before phoning him, only to be told by the butler that De La Vega had flown to Acapulco with Merle Oberon with no plans to return.

"By then, it was obvious to me that Alfredo did not plan to adopt me," Jimmy told Bast.

He later talked about Alfredo to Webb, knowing what good friends they were. "I should have warned you," Webb said. "Once Alfredo has had a young man, he wants to move on to his next seduction. I nicknamed him 'The Mexican Conquistador.' He might have invented the slogan, 'So many men, so little time.'"

[Jimmy died years before the night of September 26, 1987, when Alfredo was shot four times in his upper chest at his West Hollywood apartment at 1285 N. Crescent Heights Boulevard. Only the night before, he'd attended a birthday party for Nancy Reagan.

Homicide found no forced entry, and detectives believed that some hustler might have assassinated him, since he was known for bringing strings of young men to his residence.

His close friend was the strikingly handsome actor John Gavin, who was also of partial Mexican descent. (The rest of his gene pool was Irish.) Gavin told the press, "Alfredo was like an uncle to me, and I'm terribly saddened to hear of his brutal death. He had many friends and he loved life and the social whirl. He was in great demand in

Hollywood. He will be mourned by so many."

ANOTHER THREE-WAY. THIS TIME IT'S

Over the Rainbow...with Judy Garland

John Carlyle lost the opportunity to describe yet another major development in his life with Jimmy when its details were removed from the final version of his memoir, *Under the Rainbow.* It centered around the time they were invited to one of Clifton Webb's formal parties. "We were the most shabbily dressed bums there, but coasted by on our good looks and male charm," Jimmy recalled.

In an article in *Ladies' Home Journal,* Judy Garland, the guest of honor, remembered the evening and wrote about her encounter there with Marilyn Monroe, a rising starlet at the time.

"Marilyn followed me from room to room. 'I don't want to get too far from you,' she told me. 'I'm scared. I told her, 'We're all scared. I'm scared, too.' That beautiful girl was frightened of loneliness, the same thing I've been afraid of all my life."

Fortunately, Frank Sinatra arrived at Webb's party, and he managed to lure Monroe away from Garland for the night. The highlight of the party was when Garland sang a medley of her favorite songs, including *Over the Rainbow.* Listening intently to this impromptu concert were about seventy-five guests, two of whom included Jimmy and Carlyle.

The singer was accompanied on piano by Roger Eden, an associate producer for Arthur Freed. During the course of the evening, she sang songs by Cole Porter, Gershwin, and Warren.

During her concert, Webb's black poodle "adopted me and wouldn't leave my side," Jimmy later said. "Watching Judy sing was one of the highlights of my life."

When it ended, after all the congratulations had been expressed, Garland for a moment was left alone. That's when Carlyle led Jimmy over to introduce themselves. After some pleasantries, Carlyle announced, "George Cukor has promised me a role in your upcoming *A Star Is Born."*

*"*Oh, we'll be working together," Garland exclaimed. "I'm delighted to hear that, darling!"

"Unfortunately for me, my scene is with James Mason, not with you."

"In that case, we'll get together for a cuddle off screen," she said.

"I'm looking forward to *that*," Carlyle responded, flirtatiously.

It soon became clear to the two men that Garland had arrived at the party alone, without a husband or lover to escort her.

"Could we take you home, Miss Garland?" Jimmy asked. "A pretty little thing like you should not be out at night wandering the streets alone."

Later, in Garland's living room, the intimate trio talked, laughed, and joked until around two o'clock in the morning, consuming a full package of cigarettes. Carlyle put his cigarette and hers into his mouth at the same time, and then lit them both, a scene he'd stolen from Paul Henreid and Bette Davis in *Now, Voyager.*

By three o'clock the following morning, Carlyle and Jimmy had piled onto her upstairs bed for a sexual romp. Jimmy would later try to relay a blow-by-blow description to Rogers Brackett, although he claimed, "I don't really remember who did what to whom. Judy gave us some pills, after popping a few herself."

Jimmy did remember one of Garland's lines in bed: "I've had it with mass adoration. What I need is one-on-one love."

"In our case," Jimmy said, "Call it two-on-one love."

At around eleven o'clock the following morning, the two men were huddled together in bed, sleeping off their drunk of the night before. Unexpectedly, a large glass ashtray hit both them in the head. "It was a rude awakening," Jimmy said.

Standing nude at the bottom of the bed, an angry, hung-over Garland confronted them with: "Do you fuckers really love me, or are you just pretending because I'm Judy Garland?"

"We love you, Judy," Jimmy said. Rubbing his forehead, Carlyle chimed in. "I love you, too, Judy, now that you didn't kill me with that god damn ashtray."

"You guys had better not be bullshitting me," she said. "I've got to warn you: I have one *helluva* temper."

Then, impulsively, Garland ran screaming from the bedroom, heading down the hallway. Perhaps fearing she

would harm herself, a nude Carlyle ran down the stairs after her, ending up on the floor of the living room, where she had fallen down on the carpet.

By the time a fully clothed Jimmy made it to the living room, Garland and Carlyle were lying together in a tangled mess, giggling and rolling over together.

At that point, Jimmy decided it was time he got out of that household. He headed toward the front door and walked for miles, pondering the events of the previous night.

Months later, Cukor came through with his promise and cast Carlyle in a role in *A Star Is Born.* At the age of twenty-three, he was assigned the role of an assistant director in a "movie-within-a-movie."

Carlyle's character was supposed to be directing James Mason, Garland's husband, "Norman Maine" in the movie, but—as dictated by the script—the fading star was drunk and unable to pull off a swashbuckling scene in a pirate adventure inspired by roles associated with Errol Flynn.

Jimmy went alone to see a sneak preview of *A Star Is Born* in a movie house in Huntington Park. He was one of the few people who ever got to see Carlyles's brief appearance. In its final release, Carlyle's scene was cut from the movie, much to his disappointment.

When Jimmy later encountered Carlyle, the somewhat embittered actor told him, "A star was not born, a star was cut."

Although Carlyle and Jimmy, as lovers, drifted apart, Jimmy was able to arrange a small role for his friend in his upcoming movie, *A Rebel Without a Cause.*

During its filming, Jimmy stood on the sidelines watching chain-smoking Nicholas Ray direct Carlyle and other young actors in a scene from *Rebel.* The scene took three nights to shoot, and it was bitter cold on the night of filming.

Carlyle's girlfriend in the scene was Kathryn Grant, who would soon go on to marry Bing Crosby.

"I remembered placing my trembling hands around a Dixie cup of coffee to keep them warm," Carlyle said. "I was shaking so bad I couldn't get a car in gear during one scene. Dennis Hopper crouched down under the gears, out of camera range, and helped me lurch forward."

"When I later bolted from the driver's scene, I had one line to deliver. I was not only frozen, but mortified. I flubbed my line with Kathryn. Ray fired me that night. He told me that if some director ever needed an actor to play a wooden Indian, he should cast me."

Although humiliated, he took his firing in stride. "After all," he told Jimmy, "I came to Hollywood to become a movie star, not an actor."

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Years later, Carlyle would meet Garland again and begin a roller-coaster friendship that included sex. He later called it the highlight of his heterosexual life. She proposed marriage to him, but he held her off, while still maintaining the friendship. She'd married a gay husband before, so it was familiar turf to her.

One night, she told him, "You're not going to rid of me."

But he did.

***

Once again in pursuit of his vagabond lifestyle, Jimmy was awakened by the ringing of his phone. It was Rogers Brackett, the TV director had returned to Los Angeles after completing a project for his ad agency in New York.

"I've missed you, Hamlet," Brackett told him. "In New York I could think of no one else."

"Glad you're back," Jimmy said. "Welcome."

"I want to see you tonight. It's very urgent."

"That means you've got a job for me," Jimmy said.

"That, too, but I've also got a personal offer to make to you. I want you to move in with me."

"You mean, let you have exclusive property right to my dick?" Jimmy asked.

"Something like that…"

Chapter Three

A TV PRODUCER AT CBS "ADOPTS" A KID FROM THE STREET,

JAMES DEAN,

SHOWING HIM OFF AS A TROPHY TO THE HOLLYWOOD ELITE

Jimmy's Tryst in Jack Benny's Dressing Room and a Flurry of Subsequent of Affairs

SCHTUPPING WITH HEDY LAMARR AND BARBARA PAYTON

It was a rainy Thursday night when Jimmy packed his meager belongings into his old Chevy and drove to the luxurious apartment of Rogers Brackett on Sunset Plaza Drive. His car almost stalled as he headed along the inclined road that meandered uphill to the Hollywood Hills from the nightclub-studded Sunset Strip. Actually, as he was to learn that night, the apartment was a sublet from William Goetz. *[Goetz was a film producer and studio executive and one of the founders of what was eventually renamed 20th Century Fox. Brackett later informed Jimmy that Goetz was married to Edith Mayer, daughter of MGM's Louis B. Mayer. Jimmy met Goetz casually one afternoon when he came by to check on his property. Since Jimmy didn't know who he was, he let one of his remarks ("you should be in pictures") go by unchallenged.]*

A skilled chef, Brackett had prepared a lavish dinner for Jimmy as a gesture of welcome into his new living quarters. Jimmy had told his friends that he'd occupy a separate bedroom, but the small garden apartment had only one bedroom, and it contained a double bed.

Jimmy wanted his freedom, but even before he opted to move in, he had known what to expect. The question that had not been asked was how often he'd have to put out.

Brackett, who later worked for Grey Advertising in Manhattan, told Jimmy that he loathed the commercially oriented job he had. "I do it for a paycheck, and for no other reason. My true love is the ballet, the theater,

concerts. I'm the cultural type."

The dinner he'd prepared was spectacular and, as Brackett later admitted, the sex was sensational. "It was a two-way, reciprocal street."

The next morning over breakfast, in reference to his new, glamorous address, Jimmy said, "I like living here. It makes me feel superior to be looking down on the city and its dreary residents. It's like living on some magic carpet high in the sky."

As part of their living arrangement, Brackett was quick to produce acting jobs for Jimmy. He got him a gig in *Alias Jane Doe,* the radio show, and another in *Stars Over Hollywood* for CBS Radio, a production that had been staged and promoted by Brackett's employer, the advertising agency, Foote, Cone, and Belding. *Stars Over Hollywood* had been broadcast most Saturday mornings since 1941, featuring such second-tier stars as Ann Rutherford, who had played Vivien Leigh's younger sister, Careen O'Hara, in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). Alan Hale, Sr., a beefy, hearty actor with a bushy mustache, was also a regular.

One afternoon, Jimmy was introduced to Basil Rathbone. He found the actor suave, imperious, and grandly self-satisfied, evoking some aspects of Clifton Webb. To Jimmy, Rathbone was the definitive screen version of Sherlock Holmes. That night over dinner, Jimmy confessed to Brackett. "Did you know that Rathbone is secretly gay? He made a pass at me."

"And what did you do?"

"I told him to catch me later."

Brackett began to expand Jimmy's cultural horizons, introducing him to some of his favorite writers, including André Gide, Jean Cocteau, and Shakespeare. One night the two of them sat through a performance of *Hamlet* together.

Brackett had never seen Jimmy so mesmerized by a literary work. When it was over, Jimmy asserted, "I feel it is my destiny to play Hamlet on the stage."

Wes D. Gehring, a professor of film history, wrote that themes associated with *Hamlet* were replicated in Jimmy's screen persona in *East of Eden,* "playing the most uncertain of characters attempting to resolve situations that have fathers at their centers. In fact, one might also interpret the morose, brooding Hamlet as a possible catalyst for Dean's decisions as they related to his interpretation of his *angst*-ridden character."

On the social circuit, Brackett escorted Jimmy to many of Hollywood's social venues and introduced him to his friends. Alec Wilder, the composer, later said, "Rogers took this Indiana farm boy, used to slopping the hogs, and introduced him to a world of culture and sophistication. Jimmy would always remain that farm boy in his heart, but with a more cutting edge as time went by."

Some of Brackett's friends were completely turned off by Jimmy. One of them was Leonard Spiegelgass, an aggressive homosexual who was a Hollywood player and the powerful story editor at Metro. "The boy was not housebroken. I'd installed this expensive new beige carpet, and he tracked in mud. He was a chain smoker, and he dropped ashes on my carpet. At one point, he jumped up and announced, 'I've got to take a piss. Where's the fucking john?' He unzipped and had his dick half way out before he left the living room. I considered him toxic, but Rogers thought him the hottest thing since he'd once sucked off Lex Barker, Lana Turner's Tarzan. I had planned to seduce the kid, but he was such a turn-off, I kicked him out into the rainy night."

Ironically, Spiegelgass's sister, Beulah Roth, befriended Jimmy. She'd been a speechwriter for Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson, and was married to the photographer, Sanford H. Roth, who later also became a close friend of Jimmy's.

One Sunday afternoon during their time together in Hollywood, Brackett escorted Jimmy to the rented Malibu cottage of Miles White, who, for a period of twenty-five years, had been the top costume designer of Broadway musicals. He had designed the wardrobes for Rodgers and Hammerstein's first two Broadway hits, *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel.* He had also designed clinging and/or glittering on-stage garments for Carol Channing, Tallulah Bankhead, Bette Davis, and Lena Horne.

White later remembered Jimmy's visits. Like Brackett, he referred to him as "Hamlet."

Miles White, the leading costume designer on Broadway, was not impressed by Jimmy's hustler approach. "He wanted me to help get him cast in either *Oklahoma!* or *Carousel."*

"I was on the West Coast designing costumes for the Civic Opera House and also for the circus, Barnum & Bailey. During each of his visits, Hamlet sat in the corner, nursing a Bud and not saying a damn thing. I found him very hostile."

One weekend, when Brackett had business in San Francisco, he didn't invite Jimmy to go along. To White's surprise, Jimmy showed up that Sunday alone. He was drunk.

"Rogers must have told him that movie versions of *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!* were in the works," White said. "Jimmy was particularly interested in playing the (leading) role of Curly in *Oklahoma!,* with a dubbed voice, of course, for the singing parts. He also thought he'd be ideal in the role of the irresponsible carnival barker in *Carousel.* He wanted me to recommend him."

"I listened to his pitch—suddenly he'd found a voice—but he didn't impress me then or now. Other actors, notably Gordon MacCrae, were far better suited for the role, and Gordon could sing."

At one point, when Jimmy thought he was not going over with me, he stood up in my living room and unzipped his jeans. I couldn't believe it. He pulled out his dick. 'If you get me just one of those roles, you get this.' Then he shook his dick at me. I ordered him out of the house. I never told Rogers about that Sunday afternoon."

***

One of the most important show biz moguls that Brackett introduced to Jimmy was Ralph Levy, a pioneer in early TV comedy shows.

Levy had tried to launch himself into show business way back in 1946, when he answered a "cattle call" audition for the role of a chorus boy in *Annie Get Your Gun.* From that early failure, he rose, over a period of only eight years, to a position as director of Mary Martin in a Rodgers & Hammerstein musical on Broadway.

Later, Levy migrated from the theater to the emerging medium of television, producing *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show* and the highly successful *Jack Benny Show.* In time, he'd produce *The Bob Newhart Show,* and direct such stars as Red Skelton, Lucille Ball, Ed Wynn, and Edgar Bergen. He also directed A-list film stars, including Marlon Brando, Shirley Jones, David Niven, and Doris Day. Later, his career included key involvements in *The Beverly Hillbillies, Petticoat Junction, Green Acres,* and *Hawaii-Five-O.*

Jack Benny in *(upper photo)* a comedy schtick celebrating his “39th” birthday and *(in lower photo)* in drag.

When he could, Levy hired Jimmy as an extra on *The Alan Young Show,* an entertainment venue that had begun as a situation comedy on the radio, and eventually evolved, by 1951, into a major-league TV variety show, eventually winning some Emmy awards. Jimmy approached its MC, Alan Young, directly and asked if he could use his influence to snag a speaking role. Young told Jimmy, "I'll get back to you, kid." Of course, he never did.

Levy always had frequently stated that Jack Benny—who appeared frequently on his show—was a marvelous man—and that he was privy to many aspects of Benny's secret life. As Levy's friend, Brackett later said, "To put it bluntly, Levy pimped for Benny. Even though Benny *schtick* included a sort of gag gay comedy act, American TV viewers usually assumed he was straight. After all, he'd been married to Mary Livingston since 1927. Yet throughout his career in show biz, Benny maintained a secret preference for delivering blow-jobs to good-looking guys."

Brackett went on to assert, "Although he played a miser on TV, in private life, Benny was very generous, giving these guys a hundred-dollar bill, big money back then. As I found out later, Levy delivered Jimmy one afternoon to Benny's dressing room for a quickie. I later forced Jimmy—if he wanted to go on living with me and paying his bills, to reveal the truth."

In the TV comedies that Levy helped administer, he really couldn't use an actor like Jimmy. However, he did make several phone calls to help him get jobs in the theater after Jimmy moved to New York City.

Death in the Afternoon

(JIMMY DREAMS OF BECOMING A MATADOR)

Jimmy had become hooked on the art and mystique of bullfighting during his childhood in Indiana. James DeWeerd, a local preacher who fell in love with the young boy, sparked his interest in the sport by showing him home movies he'd taken in Mexico of bullfighters in the ring.

Budd Boetticher next to a poster displaying his passion, bullfighting. He gave Jimmy a "magic talisman," the blood-soaked matador's cape once owned by...

Jimmy's future director, Nicholas Ray, later tried to explain the young actor's fascination with bullfighting: "There was the ritual, the matador's inescapable endurance test, the challenge of proving himself, and there was the physical grace of the bullfight itself, almost like a ballet. All of this intrigued Jimmy to the point that it almost became an obsession."

When Brackett became aware of Jimmy's interest in bullfighting, he invited him for at least three weekend

visits to Mexicali.

En route to points south of the (U.S.) border, Brackett complained about Jimmy's driving loudly protesting that he was going too fast. A speed demon, Jimmy ignored his lover's pleas to slow down.

the celebrated American matador, Sidney Franklin, depicted in 1937 with Ernest Hemingway. Franklin is demonstrating a bullfighter's maneuver with a cape that's very similar to the one Jimmy received as a gift and talisman of good luck from Budd Boetticher.

In Mexicali, both Brackett and Jimmy became swept up in festive moods, attending the bullfights and drinking too much tequila.

By chance, Brackett ran into an old friend, Budd Boetticher, a film director known mainly for his low-budget westerns, many of them starring Randolph Scott, the former lover of Cary Grant. A bullfight *aficionado*, he had worked as the technical director of the wildly popular bullfighting film, *Blood and Sand* (1941), starring Tyrone Power as a matador.

Boetticher was in Mexicali working for John Wayne Productions, shooting *The Bullfighter and the Lady,* which featured such B-rated actors as Robert Stack and Gilbert Roland, a fading Latin lover of yesterday.

Boetticher was said to be gay, and he was mesmerized by Jimmy, arousing Brackett's jealousy. Jimmy and the director managed to sneak away for some time together. Boetticher invited him to his hotel suite where he gave Jimmy a most precious gift, the blood-soaked cape of Sidney Franklin. As a matador, Franklin had the unique distinction of being born a Jew in Brooklyn. Ernest Hemingway helped fan Franklin's legend through praise for his "intelligent valor," facing death in the afternoon.

From within his hotel suite, Boetticher asked Jimmy to try on a flamboyantly pink "suit of light" designed in the tight-fitting style worn by matadors. Jimmy could hardly pull himself into the very tight garments.

Boetticher assured Jimmy that although no bullfighter could compete with the size of the genitals of the bulls they appeared with, matadors wore their pants that way as "proof of their manhood." Hemingway had advised bullfighters who were not particularly well-endowed to stuff their crotches.

It was later assumed—but never verified by Brackett—that the director performed fellatio on Jimmy after he undressed in his hotel suite.

After one of their trips to Mexicali, *en route* back to Los Angeles, Brackett and Jimmy engaged in a lovers' quarrel. At one point near Laguna, Jimmy braked the car and jumped out, racing toward the beach. As Brackett recalled, "I was furious at him, so I drove off, even though I knew he'd left his wallet in the back seat. Two days later, he managed to make it back to Hollywood looking worse for wear. I didn't ask what he'd been up to. We survived our first big quarrel and resumed our life together."

During their next trip to Mexicali, Jimmy and Brackett were accompanied by actor David Wayne and his wife, the former Jane Gordon.

According to Wayne, "All that Jimmy talked about was bullfighting, even though Rogers told me he wanted to be an actor. I finally got him talking about acting when I told him that I was one of fifty applicants who had been granted membership in the newly formed Actors Studio in Manhattan. He told me he'd go to New York one day to try to get into the Actors Studio himself.

Death of a Toreador (1864), by Edouard Manet, interpreted by some (including Jimmy) as a celebration of the heroism of sudden, unexpected death.

Wayne also said that Jimmy seemed to forgot about bullfighting when he learned that he would soon be appearing in a movie, *As Young As You Feel* (1951) with Marilyn Monroe.

[In a short time, Wayne would go on to star with Monroe in three more films, more than any other actor. They included We're Not Married *(1952);* O'Henry's Full House *(1952)*; *and* How to Marry a Millionaire *(1953).]*

In Mexicali, sitting above the bullfighting arena between Wayne and Brackett, Jimmy was mesmerized by his view of the matador, Carlos Arruza, performing brilliantly in the ring.

Jimmy later purchased a copy of his favorite painting, Manet's *Dead Bullfighter, [a.k.a. The Dead Toréador, painted around 1864]* referring to it as "The Dance of Death."

Throughout the rest of his life, Jimmy carried around Sidney Franklin's blood-soaked cape wherever he went. It became something of a security blanket for him. In a series of apartments, he tacked the cape onto a wall, often as the room's only decoration.

Sometimes, he even wore it, draping it casually over his left shoulder. In New York, in one of his more daring escapades, he treated oncoming cars as if they were the bull in a ring. Once or twice, he was lectured by a police officer, although never arrested, despite its obvious dangers as a pastime.

The Truth About That Nude Picture Showing Jimmy, With a Full Erection, in a Tree

During Jimmy's time with Brackett, he posed for one of the most controversial sets of nude photos in the history of Hollywood movie stars. One day, he stripped and posed naked after climbing a tree, at one point exhibiting himself with a full-blown erection. For years, Brackett carried a copy of the blurry snapshot in his wallet, showing it to his friends. Some of them reported that eventually, after it was lost, he wept.

Many biographers have disputed that it was Jimmy depicted in these candid shots, published long before the technology of "doctoring" photographs (through computer programs such as Adobe's PhotoShop) became widely available.

Among Jimmy's biographers, the full frontal, fully erect nude of Jimmy was first published in *Boulevard of Broken Dreams,* a biography written by Paul Alexander, a former reporter for *Time* who had also written two books on Sylvia Plath.

Another chronicler of Jimmy's life, John Gilmore, claimed that the young man depicted in the tree was not Jimmy. "The image isn't even close," he was quoted as saying.

X-rated Jimmy

Perhaps he should look again. The image not only resembles Jimmy, it's a dead-on likeness.

Brackett, who was perhaps the most experienced judge of Jimmy's genitals, insisted that the nudes were real, "not only the erection, but the testicles. I spent quite a few months nesting there, so I think I'm qualified to identify them."

John Willis of *Theatre World* also provided authentication. Founded by David Blum in 1945, the magazine, published annually, was widely regarded as the pictorial and statistical "book of record" for virtually everything associated with the American Theater.

Willis took over the editorship of *Theatre World* after Blum. He claimed that the nude photos of Jimmy had been snapped by Earle Forbes, the magazine's staff photographer. "There was a very exhibitionistic quality in Jimmy," Willis said. For a while, Forbes was one of the world's premiere photographer of male nudes. Some of his work was eventually published in a book entitled *Reed Messengill's Uncovered—Rare Vintage Male Nudes.*

Willis also claimed that both Forbes and Blum not only owned a collection of Jimmy's nudes, but also nudes of other young performers, many of them posed before their subjects became famous. Among those cited by Rose included actors Rock Hudson and Warren Beatty, along with singers David Bowie, Elvis Presley, David Cassidy, and Jim Morrison.

The Bad and the Beautiful

Jimmy Dreams of a Screen Debut Dressed Only in His Underwear …and of Stealing Kirk Douglas from Lana Turner

Brackett had many friends in Hollywood, but in many ways, the gay writer, George Bradshaw was his closest companion.

When both Bradshaw and Brackett were on the West Coast together, it became something of a tradition to spend Sunday afternoons with each other, sharing observations and catching up on the latest gossip.

From the beginning, Jimmy was rude, erratic, and rebellious around Bradshaw. Once, when Brackett was in a huddle with Bradshaw in the kitchen, both men heard Jimmy call out: "FIRE!"

Bradshaw rushed into the living room to discover a Queen Anne armchair on fire. Brackett was right behind him with a pitcher of water, which he used to douse the flames. Bradshaw thought he'd set the fire on purpose, despite Jimmy's apologies and assertions that he'd accidentally set fire to the chair with his cigarette.

Of course, Brackett was ready and willing to pay for the damages.

During their drive together from Bradshaw's back to Hollywood, Brackett lectured Jimmy like a stern father. "Do you really have to test my love by performing one outrageous stunt after another? You have my love, god damn it. So quit pulling this shit. The next thing I know, you'll be smashing up my car."

When Bradshaw talked to Brackett the next day, the writer said, "Naturally, you're invited over Sunday for brunch, but do you have to bring Jimmy with you?"

"Please understand that I'm afraid NOT to bring him. I don't trust him wandering around Los Angeles by himself on a Sunday afternoon. Who knows what trouble he'll find?"

"Okay, but I'll have the fire department standing by."

Jimmy's negative attitude about Bradshaw changed completely after he heard that the author was working on a Class A movie script entitled *Tribute to a Bad Man,* whose plot revolved around three betrayals catalyzed by the manipulations of a Hollywood producer. There was a small role in it that called for a sullen but exceedingly handsome young man. Bradshaw told Brackett. "I had your Jimmy in mind when I created this pivotal scene."

[After additional input from Charles Schnee, Bradshaw's original title was later changed to The Bad and the Beautiful*. A campy showcase forever after associated with the life and legend of Lana Turner, it was directed by Vincente Minnelli and released in 1952.*

That week, instead of adhering to their usual Sunday afternoon schedule, Brackett took Jimmy to Bradshaw's home on a Monday night, because Brackett wanted to meet Lana Turner, who had agreed to show up there at around 8PM. He knew many stars in Hollywood, but had never met Lana, who was one of his all-time, most fixated-upon favorites.

That Monday night at Bradshaw's, Brackett and Jimmy were each eagerly awaiting Lana's arrival, who didn't appear until 9:30PM. She had been driven to Bradshaw's house by an anonymous, shadowy-looking male escort who refused to join the gathering, opting instead to remain within her car, parked outside.

She politely accepted "gushing tributes" from both Jimmy and Brackett, as if it were her due. At one point during their conversation, she expressed her dislike of the leading men emerging from Hollywood of the 1950s, notably Marlon Brando and Monty Clift. "Give me Clark Gable or Robert Taylor any time, especially that handsome devil Tyrone Power. Errol Flynn was a darling, and I just adored John Hodiak, not to mention Victor Mature!"

Honey, don't fail to mention your Tarzan, Lex Barker," Bradshaw said. "Talk about sex appeal!"

"There were problems with him I don't care to discuss," she said, stiffly, changing the subject.

Lana had read the first draft of Bradshaw's film script, and she was thrilled with her role of Georgia Lorrison. "I think it might be my greatest part to date. For the daring car scene alone, when I leave the home of my lover who

has betrayed me, I'll probably get an Oscar if I can pull it off. MGM kicked out poor Judy Garland, but I want to hold my own. Incidentally, I saw Judy two days ago. She's a pathetic little thing. Fired from *Annie Get Your Gun.* I think it's all downhill for her from now on, but not for me."

Lana Turner and Kirk Douglas in a scene from *The Bad and the Beautiful* that, based on censorship standards of its day, was "shockingly erotic."

The first draft of the script had Lana discovering that her lover, as played by Kirk, also had a male lover, to be played by James Dean.

"Judy was good for my ego. She told me her greatest desire in life was to be Lana Turner. She said that compared to me, she was a polliwog, a tadpole on its way to becoming a frog."

At one point, Lana seemed to take notice of Jimmy, who was flattered by her attention. "Don't tell me: You want to be an actor?" she asked. "Please, not another Brando clone."

"Hell, no!" he said. "I have my own style and technique. I can act rings around Brando and make an audience actually understand what I'm saying."

"Good for you, dear heart." Within minutes after a final drink, Lana was ready to leave. "I've got a hot date waiting for me in the car. I would have invited him in, but I didn't want you guys to go ape-shit over him and steal him from me for the night."

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The following Sunday afternoon, according to their ritual, Brackett and Jimmy were back at Bradshaw's home. This time, Bradshaw read a scene to them through which Jimmy might make his screen debut. "Can you imagine a guy like me making love on screen to Lana Turner?" Jimmy asked.

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Bradshaw cautioned. He outlined the scene for them, and it was, indeed, a dazzling one. For the first time, and against the Production Code, he wanted to blatantly depict homosexuality on the screen.

In his draft of the script, Georgia Lorrison, as played by Lana, arrives unexpectedly at the home of director Jonathon Shields (to be portrayed by Kirk Douglas). She confronts him in his foyer to demand an explanation and/or apology for his failure to escort her, as had been pre-arranged, to a premiere.

During their confrontation, a shadowy, mostly undressed male figure suddenly appears at the top of the stairs, having just emerged, it's made clear, from Shields' bedroom. It's a handsome young man clad only in a pair of boxer shorts. Without uttering a word, he stares enigmatically, perhaps with a sense of triumph, down at Lana.

"If Jimmy is assigned the part," Bradshaw predicted, "the girls will swoon and the gay men will go crazy."

Although Jimmy was vastly intrigued, Brackett suspected and feared that the scene would never pass the scrutiny of the censors.

"You won't have any spoken dialogue," Bradshaw said. "But your defiant face will show it all. You'll portray the man who stole the (male) lover of Lana Turner, one of the most desirable women on the planet."

Walter Pidgeon

Introduces Jimmy to Sex with His Longtime Companion Together, They Seduce the Young Actor

Before Bradshaw headed back to New York, the cast of *Tribute to a Bad-man (*aka, *The Bad and the Beautiful)* had been approved by producer John Houseman. Vincente Minnelli, Judy Garland's former husband, had cast the major roles. In addition to Lana and Kirk Douglas, other leading actors included Walter Pidgeon, Dick Powell, Barry Sullivan, and Gloria Grahame.

Motivated in part by politics associated with the studio, Bradshaw hosted a cocktail party to which he invited the stars along with the film's producer and director. Lana had an important engagement that night and didn't show up, but the rest of the distinguished guests did.

Brackett had informed Jimmy that Minnelli was gay and that he would probably come on to him. That was more or less what happened, although the director's time was for the most part monopolized by his stars.

During the party, Jimmy got to spend at least twenty minutes with Houseman, who was not gay, but seemed genuinely interested in the young man as an actor. "Let me know how I can reach you. There's a picture coming up that might be ideal for you. And don't think that is some bullshit line. I like women. I really know of a role in an upcoming movie that you might be ideal for, but you'll have to pass a screen test."

Jimmy had been in Hollywood long enough not to be shocked at what transpired at parties there. But later, he was nonetheless surprised when Pidgeon engaged him in a long conversation on the oceanfront terrace.

Pidgeon? Gay? Could it be? It certainly appeared that way to Jimmy. Pidgeon asked if Jimmy could come to the address he provided on the upcoming Friday night at around 9PM. "I want to talk to you about your career."

Jimmy decided to do something impulsive. Pidgeon, even though his career was in decline, was one of the most influential stars in Hollywood. As a kid, he'd seen those Pidgeon and Greer Garson movies, including *Mrs. Miniver* (1942).

Before they parted, Jimmy kissed the veteran actor passionately on the lips. "That's so you won't forget me."

Greer Garson with Walter Pidgeon in the hugely influential *Mrs. Miniver*, one of the greatest tear-jerking propaganda films to emerge from the early days of World War II.

"I'll count the hours until we meet again."

***

Jimmy, as was his way, later confessed details of his sexual encounter with Walter Pidgeon to Brackett. Perhaps he had two reasons: One to make his sponsor/lover jealous, and perhaps also to prove that he could inaugurate contacts with major stars all on his own.

Hedda Hopper once labeled Pidgeon as "the only guaranteed straight man in Hollywood, and I'm not using the expression in the comedic sense."

The Canadian actor's homosexuality was whispered about by the elite of Hollywood and once came to the attention of that homophobe, Louis B. Mayer at MGM.

But public or written exposure of Pidgeon's gay life has been rare. A notable exception occurred when

Hollywood's "star fucker," Scotty Bowers, published his memoirs, *Full Service,* in 2012. The book was reviewed twice in *The New York Times* and received the endorsement of such skeptics as Gore Vidal.

Bowers serviced both male and female stars. He opens his book with a description of his seduction by Pidgeon at the home of his longtime lover, Jacques Potts, a milliner to the stars. Despite the status of Potts and Pidgeon as lovers, Pidgeon was married to Ruth Walker, whom he'd wed in 1931.

The following Friday, after a rendezvous at their designated location, Pidgeon drove Jimmy up Benedict Canyon in Beverly Hills to a spacious, elegantly furnished home. He told Jimmy that the house had been built by Harold Lloyd, the famous comic actor of the silent screen in the 1920s.

Potts was at the door to greet "Pidge," as he called him. He kissed his lover before turning to appraise their conquest. Then he smiled his approval. "Dear boy," he said to Pidge. "You sure know how to pick 'em. This kid is impressive, indeed."

Jimmy resented being treated like a "piece of meat," as he'd later tell Brackett, but decided to go along with the act for the money.

After being offered a drink, Jimmy was invited out onto the terrace that encircled a heart-shaped swimming pool. Since it was a hot night, Pidgeon suggested he might like to take a dip, informing Jimmy that he didn't need to wear a swim suit since Pott's servant wasn't scheduled to arrive until morning.

As Jimmy later confessed, "I sort of got off on the attention and compliments they gave me. When I emerged from the pool, both men had undressed, and they toweled me off."

In the bedroom, each was a skilled oral artist, taking their turns with me while they jerked off. At the climax of the evening, Pidge "topped Potts as I was invited to watch," Jimmy said.

It appears that Jimmy, during the next few weeks, made a total of three more visits to Lloyd's former mansion. The sexual routine was the same except on one occasion, when Jimmy arrived with fellow actor/hustler Nick Adams, with whom he was living at the time, during a period when Brackett had relocated in Chicago.

Although both Potts and "Pidge" found Jimmy the cuter of the two, much attention and praise was heaped on Adams' exceptional endowment. Jimmy later claimed, "I watched both men work Nick over at the same time, and it was some workout. Nick and I each left with a hundred-dollar bill in of our pockets."

***

Regrettably for both Bradshaw and Jimmy, Vincente Minnelli rejected Bradshaw's first screenplay and even changed the title to *The Bad and the Beautiful.* Charles Schnee was called in to drastically revise it, and in 1952, the *film noir* would win five Oscars out of six nominations.

In the rewrite, Jimmy's possible role was rewritten and the gender of the interloper emerging from Douglas' bedroom was changed from male to female. Minnelli cast the emerging starlet, the sultry brunette, Elaine Stewart, into the role.

Even though he never appeared in a film scene with Lana, Jimmy's fascination with the blonde goddess continued.

Years later, when he was in the process of searching for a place to live in West Hollywood, his prospective landlord, David Gould, showed Jimmy the master bedroom of a fully furnished house for rent.

The previous tenant of 1541 Sunset Plaza Drive, had been Lana Turner. "She slept in this very bed—and never alone," Gould claimed to Jimmy.

"I'll sign the lease," Jimmy said. "I'll be sleeping in Lana's bed myself. And never alone!"

***

Jimmy would later dismiss and eventually, abandon "all of Brackett's social whirl of gossipy queens and cocktail party chatter. It was pure hogwash. There were two favorite topics, depending on one's sexual preference. 'How big is his cock?' or 'What size are her tits?' I grew bored by many of Rogers' friends. I was treated like a court jester, ready to perform at any minute, preferably with my pants down. I'm not just some dick to suck or rosebud to plug. I've got talent. I want to make it on my merits as an actor—not as some good-looking Hollywood stud hustling his ass."

Years later, on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause,* he would reflect with director Nicholas Ray about this period of his life. "Behind Roger's back, these jerks would invite me to dinner on their luxurious oceanfront terraces. After

a few drinks, their greedy little hands would be closing in on my dick. I knew that if I kept this up, the year would be 1975, and I would be some aging ex-pretty boy waiting tables or pumping gas. In Hollywood, they drain you to the last drop and then you're discarded as yesterday's toy."

"Now that I'm a star, I've got these jerks—many of them out of work today—by the balls."

Brackett was hip and well-informed about which stars were gay "or used to be gay."

Jimmy was shocked to learn that such macho icons as Gary Cooper and John Wayne, during their early days, were known to lie on the casting couch.

He and Brackett became regulars at The Club, a watering hole which attracted gay men late at night to its darkened precincts on Hollywood Boulevard.

Jimmy invited his university friend from his days at UCLA, James Bellah, to Brackett's apartment. Bellah later recalled, "This ad agency guy flew into the living room on gossamer wings. When he went to the kitchen to get us some ice, I turned to Jimmy and said, 'What the hell? This guy is queer as a three-dollar bill.'"

"So what?" Jimmy responded, defiantly.

One night, Jimmy asked Brackett to go with him to see Marlon Brando perform in the filmed (1951) version of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire.* It would mark the eighth time that Jimmy had seen the movie.

According to Brackett, "Although he would never admit it, Jimmy was mesmerized by the screen acting of Marlon Brando, who would loom so large in his future. The two actors were very much alike, although Jimmy would almost slug you if you ever compared him to Brando. I think he was also strongly attracted sexually to Brando. It was like a schoolgirl crush that grew more serious until he actually stalked Brando at night."

Marlon Brando, as Stanley Kowalski in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, mesmerized James Dean.

Elia Kazan, who directed both actors, said, "Marlon as Apollo is driving the Sun Chariot. But he's looking back to see an even brighter ball of fire on the distant horizon."

"Unlike the lies I've transmitted to many an interviewer, in which I stated that I hooked up with him because I believed in his talent, from the beginning, when I first met him in that parking lot, I wanted to get in the kid's pants. He was just my type, real cocky."

"I didn't admire all that Method acting crap and that Brando posturing, but Jimmy certainly did. One night I found him imitating Brando in front of the mirror."

"A lot of people have referred to our affair as a father-son relationship, that is, if I'd fathered Jimmy when I was only fifteen. If it were father and son, then it was pure incest from the beginning."

As William Bast later claimed, "Jimmy was eager to learn. He sapped the minds of Brackett's friends as a bloodsucker saps the strength of an unsuspecting man."

To his straight friends, Jimmy dismissed his arrangement with Brackett "as a meal ticket."

It was around this time that Jimmy became worried that he'd be drafted into the Army, fighting in a war for South Korea. Harry S Truman had upped the draft quotas in the summer of 1950.

Jimmy had been contacted by his Selective Service Board in Grant County, Indiana. He showed Bracket their letter that night, wondering if he should inform the board that he was a conscientious objector.

Brackett had another idea. A few days later, he took him to a gay psychiatrist (Dean J. Taylor of Canada) whom he'd met at a party.

After a long session with Jimmy, at which Brackett sat in, Taylor, for a fee, agreed to write a letter to the Selective Service Board of Indiana on behalf of Jimmy. In his claim, he stated that "James Dean is a hopeless

psychotic, DO NOT GIVE THIS YOUNG MAN A FIREARM."

Bracket had left the room an hour before the end of Jimmy's interview with Taylor. Jimmy later informed Brackett "I had to prove to the good doctor that I was indeed a homosexual."

"And how did you do that?" Brackett asked.

"That's for you to imagine."

Later, thanks mostly to Taylor's intervention, Jimmy was classified 4-F.

It has been suggested that Jimmy did not need to resort to evasive tactics to avoid being drafted into the Army. After an eye examination, because of his severe nearsightedness, he was pronounced "all but blind." That defect alone seemed enough to have justified his designation as 4-F.

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Scotty Bowers either tricked with or supplied handsome members of his former Marine Crops to a bevy of Hollywood stars, including Charles Laughton (who ate shit sandwiches), Tyrone Power (a fellow Marine), Errol Flynn, Spencer Tracy, George Cukor, Randolph Scott, Cole Porter (who was known to have blown twenty Marines in one night), Rock Hudson, and Noël Coward.

As Bowers related in his memoirs, he even sold himself to such unlikely persons as J. Edgar Hoover and the Duke of Windsor. He also supplied carefully screened young women to Katharine Hepburn and the Duchess of Windsor.

He knew many of the handsome young movie stars of the 1950s, usually servicing them himself before supplying them with a steady stream of "tricks" for sale.

Bowers had only one encounter with Jimmy Dean, and he wasn't impressed at all, as he'd later relay in his memoirs. Sometimes, Bowers found work moonlighting as a bartender at private parties, as he did one night at the home of the Brazilian millionaire, Ozz Francesca, who maintained a strange friendship with Jimmy that was never fully explored. Francesca was gay, sharing his home with his understanding wife and their daughter. For a while, he reigned in Hollywood circles and was known for hosting some of the most lavish, star-studded parties in town.

At one party that Bowers worked, the guests were formally dressed. Jimmy showed up in blue jeans and a white T-shirt. Bowers remembered him "moping around the room, puffing on a cigarette and looking decidedly bored and gloomy."

At Francesca's party, Jimmy, according to Bowers, displayed the same antisocial behavior he presented during visits to the homes of Brackett's friends.

At one point, Jimmy dropped his lit cigarette on Francesca's heirloom Persian carpet and crushed it out with his foot. Bowers rushed to clean it up.

Later, at the bar, Jimmy demanded a glass of champagne. Opening a bottle of Dom Perignon, Bowers poured a glass of bubbly into a tulip-shaped, rose-colored glass.

Jimmy took only one sip of it before making a face as if he'd swallowed slop, and poured the contents of the glass onto the carpet. "Bartender, serve me something else, and it'd better be drinkable this time!"

Bowers later dismissed Jimmy "as a prissy little queen, moody and unpredictable. He had a few romantic flings with women, but from all reports, he was essentially gay."

One of Bower's major sources of information was one of his clients, Monty Clift, who had had a sexual involvement with Jimmy in New York. Bowers found Clift "another temperamental, moody queen with a surprisingly vicious tongue."

Unlike Jimmy, Clift was exclusively gay, but none of the tricks that Bowers sent over pleased him. "The guy's prick was an inch too long, or an inch too short. His hair was not parted properly, or his feet were too small, his toes too long, there was always something wrong. Monty was never satisfied."

Bowers also found Jimmy's friend, Roddy McDowall "excessively fussy and hard to please."

Both Jimmy and Bowers, at different times, also tricked with actor Anthony Perkins, who was engaged in a long-term relationship with Tab Hunter, although he constantly cheated on his lover. Bowers admitted that, "I tricked with him myself on numerous occasions, but Tony, like Monty, was very fussy, always demanding to be fixed up with 'someone different.'"

In his memoirs, Jimmy was the only movie star that Bowers actually despised. He seemed to have gotten on with all the other big names at the time.

He wrote, "It was only a matter of time before Jimmy did himself in. He was his own worst enemy."

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Jimmy and his former roommate, William Bast, had recovered from the feud that had begun when Bast had decided to move out of their shared apartment. They agreed to meet over a bowl of chili at Barney's Beanery. Jimmy won Bast over by flashing his charm school smile and saying, "Let's tongue kiss and make up. I'll suck yours if you'll suck mine."

"Are you sure you're referring to tongues?" Bast asked jokingly. The two men embraced and sat down to eat.

Barney warned them, "There will be no man-hugging in my dive."

Bast later reflected that Jimmy's life with Brackett had changed him a lot. "He had acquired more polish, seemingly overnight, or at least learned the rudimentary rules of social behavior. But as I was soon to find out, he could still revert to his bad boy image."

"The shitkicker from Indiana was on the way to becoming an urban sophisticate," Bast claimed. "I don't want to exaggerate too much. Noël Coward he would never be. But suddenly, he was showing off by talking about French Impressionists, Colette, the Cubists, literature, the brilliance of Stravinsky. My country boy had also joined that hideous array of name-dropping Hollywood. He could drop quite a few: Jack Benny, Walter Pidgeon, Clifton, Webb, Cole Porter, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Lana Turner. I was jealous…I mean, really, really jealous."

En route with Bast to Brackett's apartment, Jimmy farted three times. "It was that second helping of chili," he claimed.

Brackett was "in residence," as he called it, and Bast later recorded his negative impression of the ad agency producer. "Brackett struck me as an arch, foppish villain out of a Dickens novel or a naughty Max Beerbohm dandy. His unusually long neck supported an avian head, on the thin beak of which was perched large, horn-rimmed glasses, giving him a somewhat owlish look. It took little time for Jimmy to fall prey to this chicken hawk. I think that if it has been Dracula himself, with Hollywood connections, Jimmy would have been a voluntary blood donor. I might have considered a Sugar Daddy myself—but never this Wicked Bitch of the East."

Indecent Exposure

How Jimmy Met and "Made It" with Goddess- turned-Prostitute, Barbara Payton

One Saturday when Brackett had an appointment with some client and didn't want to drag Jimmy along, Jimmy and Bast agreed to drive down to Laguna together for a day at the beach. For the first time since Bast had known him, Jimmy had two-hundred dollars in his wallet. Perhaps to show off his new wealth, Jimmy invited Bast to a chic fish restaurant with a swimming pool and rooms to rent upstairs.

The figure of a beautiful blonde caught Jimmy's eye. It was the notorious actress, Barbara Payton, who was wearing the bottom half of a very small polka dot bikini. *[aka,* a "*cache-sexe" ("sex hider" or a very small triangular-shaped garment designed to barely conceal the genitals.)]* Everything else she had was on ample display.

Perhaps to impress Bast with his heterosexual credentials, Jimmy surveyed Payton from top to bottom, claiming, "The hot bitch has more body than a Renaissance Madonna. I'm going to the car to get my sketch pad."

Back with his pad, Jimmy approached Payton, and she seemed flattered to pose for him. From a distance of twenty feet, Bast witnessed their interchange, although Jimmy did not invite him over.

Within the hour, Jimmy disappeared with Payton, heading for a room she'd rented above the restaurant.

The rooms upstairs opened onto balconies that overlooked the pool. At one point, Jimmy appeared "stark raving nude for about a minute on one of the balconies," according to Bast. "A ripple went across the crowd as Jimmy showed off his junk to the voyeurs below."

Barbara Payton before her decline and collapse. “I am not ashamed,” she stated in a memoir.

By five o’clock, Jimmy once again joined Bast beside the pool. He claimed he had to clear out of Payton’s room because she’d gotten her calendar mixed up and had invited both of her lovers, Franchot Tone and Tom Neal, to Laguna at the same time. She’d told Jimmy she didn’t know which one she wanted to get rid of. “Joan Crawford and Bette Davis always called Franchot ‘The Jawbreaker” and Tom is known as ‘Donkey Dong.’ So you see what a difficult choice it is for me to make.”

Jimmy later bragged to Bast that “Blondie is one in a million. An hour or two with her is like a month with any other broad. She’s not only got a great body, but the bitch knows how to use it in bed. She’s electrifying. I’m totally satisfied from my nostrils to my little toe. She has a sexual technique that must have been developed over two-thousand years.”

Later that night, back in Los Angeles, Jimmy asked Brackett, “Just who in hell is this actress floozie, Barbara Payton? Someone told me she’s a movie star.”

Before the night was over, Jimmy ended up knowing more about Payton than he really wanted to handle.

[Payton, “the brassy blonde with a hooker heart” flashed briefly across the movie screens of the early 1950s before she devolved into an alcoholic, drug-addicted prostitute. Marlon Brando, her former lover, once referred to her as “Hollywood’s Number One Trollop.”

Still young and beautiful at the time Jimmy seduced her, Payton had drifted from the cold winds of Minnesota to the warm beds of such A-list players as Howard Hughes and Gregory Peck. She was graced with sky-blue eyes and a fair complexion that revealed her Norwegian ancestry.

Hollywood’s most sexually motivated attorney, Greg Bautzer, once said, “You have never been given a blow-job until you’ve been on the receiving end of Barbara’s skilled mouth and tongue. I’ve been blown by the best of them—Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich—you name ‘em. Barbara takes top prize.”

Hughes once told his pimp, Johnny Meyer, “Payton will do anything in bed—and I mean anything. If you want to piss in her mouth, that’s okay with blondie.”

Payton had been the Queen of the Tabloids between 1950 and 1952. The single most scandalous movie star ever to emerge from the placid 1950s, Payton dumped her husband in the late 40s and headed for Hollywood determined to make it big. “If a blonde with absolutely no talent like Lana Turner can become a movie star, then I know I can too,” she announced to anyone interested.

When her test at RKO didn’t work out, she ended up as a carhop at Stan’s Drive-In at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenue. Hustling tips and peddling chocolate milkshakes and blood-letting hamburgers, she also did another type of hustling on the side.

The riches from her nocturnal activities allowed her to buy an expensive wardrobe. Soon she was seen at all the posh clubs, including the Trocadero, Ciro’s, and El Mocambo. She was hailed as “the Queen of the Night.”

Her love nest on Cheremoya Avenue was paid for in 1949 by none other than the much-married Bob Hope. When the comedian refused to give her an additional $5,000 a week in “spending money,” she threatened to blackmail him in exchange for her silence. Hope settled what was called “a huge sum of money” on her, but she went through all her new loot in just three months, claiming, “I have expensive tastes.”

One of the most notorious love triangles of the 1950s spun around Franchot Tone *(top photo),* along with Barbara Payton and Tom Neal.

As the usually elegant Tone ungraciously described his marriage (1951-1952) to Payton, "I went from Joan Crawford and Bette Davis to a blonde whore."

A.C. Lyles, the movie producer, once claimed that "Payton never had an itch she didn't scratch." Minor actor Mickey Knox recalled that she'd kept him in bed for three days and nights, all in one stretch. "I had to crawl out of that dump on my hands and knees. What a workout! What a pussy!"

She even got involved with James Cagney, who secured her a contract at Warner Brothers for $5,000 a week. He put her in Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye *(1950). The film had hardly been released before she was swallowing Gary Cooper's mighty sword near the sound stages of Dallas while taking in $10,000 a week. Suddenly, she was seen around town with the classy New York actor, Franchot Tone, who had been married to Joan Crawford in the 1930s. Tone was twenty-two years older than Payton, and he lavished expensive gifts on her, including jewelry.*

During her affair with Tone, Payton also fell for rock-jawed Tom Neal, a sort of dime store John Garfield. Almost sadistically, Payton played one man against the other and would eventually marry each of them, thereby creating two of the shortest marriages ever recorded in Hollywood history.

Neal learned about Payton's involvement with Tone, and on the night of September 13, 1951, emerged from the bushes outside Payton's apartment and attacked Tone, smashing his nose and breaking one of his cheekbones. Tone was rushed to the hospital with a brain concussion and remained in a coma for eighteen hours. Morning newspapers headlined this "Love Brawl" across the world.

In time, Payton would descend into the status of a drunk on Skid Row. She moved deeper and deeper into heroin addiction and—among other professions—became a lesbian-for-hire. She ended up a broken down and snaggle-toothed whore working Santa Monica Boulevard, jumping inside the cars of strangers and giving fast blow-jobs for ten dollars while her clients kept the motor running.

In February of 1967, Payton, unconscious, was found in the parking lot of Thrifty's Drug Store in Hollywood. At first, sanitation workers thought that her reclining body was a bag of trash. She'd been living on the streets for the past three months. She was rushed to Los Angeles County General Hospital.

After her release from the hospital, she went to stay with her parents, both of whom were also alcoholics. In May of 1967 her mother found her slumped over a toilet. Her daughter was dead. An autopsy revealed that she'd died of a heart attack and liver failure just six months shy of her 40th birthday.]

Jimmy Studies Method Acting with James Whitmore

"The Poor Man's Spencer Tracy"

Their friendship renewed, Bast enticed Jimmy into taking acting lessons from James Whitmore from premises on the upper floor of the Brentwood Country Mart, a shopping area at 26th Street and San Vicente Boulevard near the boundary between Santa Monica and Los Angeles.

Whitmore was not a Hollywood pretty boy, but a serious actor with a stocky build, a rather gruff personality, and a reputation as a blunt conversationalist.

As regards roles he was considered suitable for, some Hollywood talent agents described him as "the poor man's Spencer Tracy," and "a less expensive Spencer Tracy type."

He preferred acting on stage to working in Hollywood movies, but, as he admitted when he moved to the West Coast, "a paycheck comes in handy."

Before meeting Whitmore, Jimmy had seen him in the 1949 World War II drama, *Battleground,* in which Whitmore had played a battle weary, tobacco-chewing Army sergeant.

James Whitmore, depicted above in *Battleground,* evolved into a noteworthy acting coach, exposing Jimmy to the tenets of "The Method."

[For his role in Battleground, *Whitmore won an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actor. He also starred with Marilyn Monroe in* The Asphalt Jungle *(1950), and with Nancy Davis in* The Next Voice You Hear *(also 1950). He would later play a dumb thug in the movie versions of* Kiss Me Kate *(1953), and Gloria Grahame's grizzled father in* Oklahoma! *(1955).]*

In a classroom with about a dozen dedicated actors, male and female, Jimmy interpreted Whitmore as a stern teacher, suggesting that it took "blood, sweat, and tears" to become a successful actor. "Don't go into acting seeking movie star fame or glory. For every Marilyn Monroe, there are ten thousand other dyed blondes taking the train back to the Middle West, hoping to find a husband who'll let them be a housewife. There's personal gratification in acting, supreme gratification, in fact, but it will cost you plenty to obtain it."

At first, Jimmy did not impress Whitmore at all. The older actor found him "shy and very introverted. He never volunteered to act out any scene before the class, always holding back, giving nothing of himself. But in time, he began to open up a bit, and came to sense that he possessed a great talent, though masked behind all his neurotic behavior."

During the weeks that followed, when Whitmore saw actual demonstrations of Jimmy's acting talent, he urged him to abandon Hollywood and head for New York. There, he could seek work on the stage and in the burgeoning TV industry that was turning out dramas by the day. Before the film sets and production facilities of most television shows had moved to the West Coast, the early TV industry was based in Manhattan. Jimmy later confided to Brackett and others what happened when Whitmore asked Bast and Jimmy to perform an improvised scene in front of the class.

Jimmy's assignment involved the portrayal of a poor college student who had stolen a valuable watch. Bast would portray a jeweler who had been warned by the police to be on the lookout for a young man who might fit Jimmy's description, who would arrive with a (stolen) watch with intention of getting it repaired so that he could then sell it for a lot of money.

The task of the character played by Bast involved detaining Jimmy's character "at any cost" until the police could arrive. In the ensuing struggle over the watch, Bast denounced Jimmy as "a pompous bastard" and accused him of being "a nearsighted little son of a bitch." *[This line in the script echoed what the two men had said one night in a fight over Jimmy's failure to pay half the rent on the penthouse they shared.]*

Suddenly, without meaning to, and in front of the class, Bast and Jimmy got into an onstage wrestling match that turned violent. At one point, Jimmy was on top of Bast, staring into his eyes as he choked him.

Bast later recalled, "Those were the eyes of a killer staring down at me. All of our past conflicts seemed to bubble up in Jimmy. It was no longer an actor's improvisation. This was serious."

It appeared to Whitmore that if he didn't intervene, Jimmy would choke Bast to death.

Later, as Jimmy related to Brackett, "In my worst moment, I couldn't control myself and I almost suffocated Bast. Now I've got to confess something. I'm not proud of this—in fact, I'm ashamed—but that act of violence against him gave me a raging hard-on."

In 1955, Jimmy discussed his workshop experience in Whitmore's classroom with a reporter for *Seventeen* magazine. "I learned a lot from him. One thing he said helped me more than anything. He taught me the difference between acting as a soft job and acting as a difficult art. Another thing, he warned me never to be caught acting."

"Whitmore opened my eyes. There is always someone in one's life—at least there should be—who opens your

eyes so that you can see for the first time. For me, it was definitely Whitmore. He told me to go to New York, and he was right. That's when things started to happen for me. He also changed my life forever by giving me a letter of introduction to *[the famous director]* Elia Kazan.

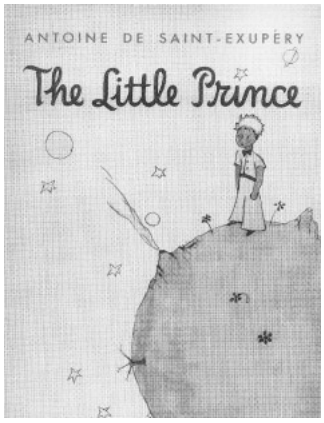
Only weeks before his untimely death, Jimmy once again extolled the importance of Whitmore in his life as an actor, ignoring any mention of the spade work of Rogers Brackett.

Brackett's composer friend, Alec Wilder, knew why. "The kid lived in terror as he became famous that his homosexual life would be exposed. He didn't want the world to know he'd been some plaything to some older, male, TV producer."

***

Whereas he'd been deeply impressed with the dramatic potentialities of *Hamlet,* Jimmy became even more enthralled with the symbolism of *The Little Prince,* a copy of which had been provided to him by Brackett.

The original French-language classic by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry became Jimmy's Bible. He read it and reread it, and soon was quoting lines from it.



A post World War II bestseller, translated from the French. It influenced James Dean more than any other book he ever read.

One of his favorite excerpts from it was: "*Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction."* To anyone willing to listen, Jimmy maintained that the novella contained "some of the most profound observations of the human condition ever written. It shows how life really should be lived."

[Penned as a French-language novella or "adult fable" in 1943 The Little Prince *(aka Le Petit Prince) is the third most translated book in the world, and was voted in France as the best book of the 20th Century. Translated into 250 languages, it has sold more than 150 million copies, with an annual sales rate of two million a year. Styled as an arch and artful children's book, it focuses on its author's wistful conclusions about human existence and love. Emotional "truths" are expressed by a fox to an isolated and highly spiritual alien child (The Little Prince) whom the author/narrator discovers wandering in a desert:*

> *On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.* ("One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eyes.");
>
> *Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que tu as apprivoisé.* ("You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."); *and*
>
> *C'est le temps que tu as perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante.* ("It is the time you have lost for your rose that makes your rose so important.")

Jimmy became obsessed with turning *The Little Prince* into a movie, although Brackett warned that the novella, in part because of its abbreviated symbolism and poetic brevity, would be difficult to adapt into a screenplay. Jimmy wanted to play the aviator who counsels and guides a young boy who wants to learn about life.

To pacify Jimmy, Brackett made some queries at CBS and learned before the end of the same day that film rights to the novella had been purchased by Hedy Lamarr, the sultry brunette screen goddess from Vienna, hailed in some quarters as "the most beautiful woman in the world."

Jimmy had been enthralled by Lamarr's performance as the exotic temptress in *Samson and Delilah* (1949), the steamy and campy Cecil B. DeMille epic co-starring Victor Mature.

Behind Brackett's back, Jimmy was continuing his sessions with the psychiatrist, Dr. Dean Taylor. The Canadian was counseling him without expectation of payment, in return for Jimmy unzipping after an hour of pouring out his troubles.

After one of their sessions, the doctor told him that he had to hurry and get cleaned up and that Jimmy had to leave. "I'm seeing Hedy Lamarr at five o'clock."

Jimmy was stunned by the news. It was the equivalent of one of those weird coincidences that happen within the context of a Charles Dickens novel. As instructed, Jimmy left Taylor's inner office, but remained in the doctor's waiting room, with his secretary, for Lamarr's arrival.

Outfitted in a black suit with mauve accessories, Lamarr made a glamorous entrance fifteen minutes later. She walked past Jimmy as the secretary escorted her into Taylor's inner office.

As Jimmy remained in place for an hour, he flirted with the impressionable young girl behind the desk. He got her to agree to introduce him to Lamarr when she emerged from the psychiatrist's inner office. He told her that he was a great fan of the glamorous star, and that he wanted her autograph. He also agreed to go out on a date with the rather unattractive secretary.

Later, after Taylor uncovered how Jimmy had maneuvered, he said, "I'm not surprised that Hedy found Jimmy enticing. I've never known her to turn down the amorous attention of any handsome young man. She's oversexed."

Among other reasons, Lamarr was consulting a psychiatrist because of conflicts associated with her career. Although *Samson and Delilah* had been a worldwide hit, she had recently made two flops in a row— *A Lady Without a Passport* (1950) and *Copper Canyon* (also 1950*),* in which her best scenes weren't caught on film—i.e., episodes within the shrill and brittle feud she maintained throughout production with her leading man, Ray Milland, who detested her.

Long without an MGM contract, and in the process of visibly aging, Hedy's career options were narrowing. She expressed her rampant fears that she'd end up "on Poverty Row," chained to a dwindling roster of low-budget, badly scripted potboilers, or—even worse—ignored forever.

Two views of Hedy Lamarr: *lower photo*, in *Copper Canyon* (1949), the last film she'd made before meeting Jimmy. Her career was in decline.

It is not known exactly what Jimmy said to Lamarr after she emerged from her session with Taylor. He obviously delivered his pitch about bringing *The Little Prince* to the screen, and perhaps exaggerated the influence and intentions of Brackett, who might, he insinuated, be willing to produce it.

Lamarr seemed to find Jimmy very appealing, as he focused upon her the full power of his manly charm and sex appeal. She agreed to receive him at her residence that evening at eight o'clock.

In the only suit he owned, he arrived on her doorstep exactly at eight. He was ushered into her living room by a butler. Lamarr had carefully and artfully arranged herself on a sofa.

He was stunned by her glitzy appearance. She wore a full-bodied, off-the-shoulder turquoise gown that had been designed by Edith Head for her performance in *Copper Canyon.*

Over drinks and dinner, there were only small references to *The Little Prince.* Lamarr was the most self-enchanted actress in Hollywood, or so Jimmy believed, knowing that competition for that label was stiff.

She expressed numerous complaints: "I'm tired of hearing that people adore me for my beauty. I want to be adored for myself, for the person who inhabits my soul. My beauty has lever led to my finding love."

"I may be the world's most beautiful woman, but I was a disappointment to my parents. They wanted a boy. My father was a very large man, and very ferocious. One time, I wore this red ribbon in my hair, thinking it would please him. It did not. I learned he hated bows. He beat me severely."

Her main concern was that she was moving into "the dangerous years" for a woman in Hollywood. She had been born in 1913 in Vienna, and now was living in America in the '50s. "Many Hollywood actresses commit suicide at this time in their lives. They can't stand the emotional strain of a fading career."

"I can get you involved in bringing *The Little Prince* to the screen," Jimmy promised. "You still have the rights, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," she said. "But I must warn you. I may look like a delicate hothouse flower, but I'm one strong negotiator. You must tell your producer friend that I don't sell my rights cheaply."

Jimmy didn't return to Brackett's apartment until 2AM. He didn't tell Brackett or Bast what had transpired with Lamarr. It was obvious that she had seduced him, as she had many other young men and even women. If legend is to be believed, she had even been seduced by Adolf Hitler, defining him afterward as "under-endowed and with only one testicle."

Months later, when *The New York Journal-American* announced that Lamarr was arriving in New York, Jimmy did tell Alec Wilder that he'd been sexually intimate with the star. "She was a *femme fatale* all right. Very demanding in bed. Very hard to satisfy. I pictured her as the Black Widow spider."

"My God," Wilder said. "I don't know about the Hitler thing, or even the Mussolini claim, but I know of some of the other men who have preceded you into *La Lamarr's* boudoir: Howard Hughes, Charles Boyer, Errol Flynn, Chaplain, Clark Gable, David Niven, and Senator John Kennedy."

To Jimmy, she confessed that the men in her life had ranged from a classic case of impotence—a Texan, no less—to a whip-wielding sadist who enjoyed sex only after he tied her up.

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Although Brackett reported that he was shopping *The Little Prince* to potential movie producers, Jimmy didn't believe him. This led to a brutal fight, during the heat of which Jimmy stormed out of the apartment and disappeared for two days.

"You could have found a producer if you'd wanted to," Jimmy said to Brackett accusatorily after he returned. "You just want to keep me tied to you so I can't become a star myself."

*[*The Little Prince *finally made it to the screen in 1974 as a British movie directed by Stanley Donen, and it did not include an onscreen appearance from Hedy. The role of the aviator, so ferociously coveted by Jimmy, was assigned to Richard Kiley after Richard Burton rejected an offer to play it. The young prince was portrayed by Steven Warner. The musical score by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Lowe was not particularly memorable.*

Meanwhile, Hedy had devoted her time to other pursuits, including another painful bout of plastic surgeries, and endless rewrites of a screenplay coauthored with Christopher Taaj. Entitled Untamed*, it was about a Viennese* femme fatale *who become romantically involved with a brutal Teutonic dictator until he discovers that she is a Jewess. For her description of this European goddess, she surprised a reporter by saying that for inspiration, she had drawn upon the persona of four different American movie stars—Judy Garland, Montgomery Clift, Marilyn Monroe,*

and James Dean.

"I'll sure have to wait and see how you combined those four all-American stars into a European femme fatale*," the newsman had queried.*

"An artist sometimes draws inspiration from the strangest sources," Lamarr responded.]

An Anguished, Alienated Scene Wherein

Jimmy, With His Gay Patron, Visits His Father

Rogers Brackett was anxious to meet Winton Dean, Jimmy's estranged father, so one Sunday afternoon Jimmy drove his "surrogate" father figure, Brackett himself, to the modest Dean home in Reseda, California, north of the campus at UCLA , which Jimmy had briefly attended.

The ostensible goal of the visit involved hauling away mementos from Jimmy's schoolboy days in Indiana. Winton had stored boxes of his son's memorabilia in a leaky woodshed in his backyard.

Later, Brackett recalled that visit to Winton's home, where he lived with his wife, the former Ethel Case. To Brackett, the home evoked his favorite novel about Hollywood, Nathaniel West's *Day of the Locust.* In Jimmy's former bedroom was a small, caged, colony of chinchillas, which the Deans were raising to eventually sell for their fur.

Jimmy and Brackett tried to make small talk with Winton, but both the son and the visitor found him unwilling to communicate. The hostility between father and son was too apparent, and it became clear from the two or three remarks he made that Winton suspected that "something perverted" was going on between Jimmy and his older "roommate."

"As for Ethel, she disappeared into the kitchen and didn't come out even to tell Jimmy goodbye," Brackett said.

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On another occasion, Jimmy drove William Bast to visit his father and stepmother. "Two less responsive creatures I have seldom encountered," Bast recalled. He found Ethel "mousy and shy, Winton reserved and monosyllabic."

Bast later wrote that he felt sorry for Jimmy, "as he twisted himself in knots trying to please his father."

He also suggested that Jimmy performed a virtual tap dance for his father. "We smelled something good that Ethel was cooking in the kitchen, but we were offered only a cup of coffee. Both of us were hungry."

Bast claimed that he found Winton "a dreadful, stupid, uncaring father. He was awful with his son, even when he became successful. Instead of taking pride in Jimmy's sudden fame, Winton was jealous of his achievements."

Jimmy complained to his father about his transportation, explaining how hard it was to move around Los Angeles in search of a job. Two weeks later, Winton delivered a battered 1939 Chevy, which had otherwise been sitting, unused, in his garage, long ago replaced with a newer vehicle.

Gradually, over a period of months, both Bast and Brackett managed to elicit some meager biography from Jimmy about his childhood years in Indiana.

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Jimmy's father, Winton, had been born into a Quaker family which had settled in Indiana in 1815. A tall, very taciturn man, Winton worked as a dental technician at a local veterans' hospital in Marion.

Born into a Methodist family, Mildred Wilson was Jimmy's mother, the daughter of a factory worker. Short and a bit plump, she was rumored to be part Indian, as evidenced by her complexion and black eyes. Quiet and sensitive, given to daydreaming, she played the piano and often escaped to books.

Jimmy was born six months after his parents' marriage, on February 8, 1931. They lived as a family together at the poetic-sounding Seven Gables apartment complex in Marion, Indiana, which is about seventy miles north of Indianapolis.

Mildred was fond of poetry, citing Lord Byron as her favorite. She decided to name her newborn James Byron

in honor of that poet.

The Dean family moved frequently, and Jimmy was a very unhealthy child, suffering from frequent vomiting, rashes on his skin, diarrhea, nosebleeds, and other maladies. Their causes were unknown. However, it was later speculated that Mildred painted every apartment they moved into, using paint that contained dangerous toxins which may have been the reason for Jimmy's chronic bad health.

He was four years old when his family moved to Greater Los Angeles, living in Santa Monica while Winton worked at the local hospital.

As Jimmy grew up, he became a stubborn child. Winton believed in "bare butt" spanking, hoping to force his rebellious son to behave. That didn't work. Years later, a psychiatrist who examined Jimmy in Los Angeles suggested the possibility that his taste for being spanked by his sexual partners in advance of anal penetration had originated with his father's harsh discipline.

When he was old enough, Jimmy entered the public school system. Noticing that her son had an artistic bent, Mildred saved up money for violin and tap-dancing lessons for her young son. When news of that reached his classmates, bullies beat him up after school and called him a sissy.

Jimmy later confessed to Alec Wilder that "My father married my mother only because he knocked her up."

Theirs was not a compatible marriage, and each of the two spouses had very different interests and tastes. Based on her interest in the arts, Winton contemptuously referred to his wife as "my little bohemian." He constantly lectured her that by cuddling Jimmy and encouraging him to learn dance techniques and to play the violin, "You're turning him queer."

Tragedy struck in July of 1940 when Mildred, who had been suffering for months from ovarian cancer, suffered a painful, lingering death. In twisted reasoning, Jimmy interpreted his mother's death as a rejection of him.

His father shipped him back to Indiana, where he went to live with Marcus and Ortense Winslow. (Ortense was Winton's sister.) They emerged as kindly guardians of the troubled youth, and welcomed him to their 178-acre farm outside Fairmount, Indiana. Jimmy was assigned his own bedroom within a large white house dating from the turn of the 20th Century.

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Aboard the train, on his ride back to Indiana, then nine-year-old Jimmy slipped into the baggage car that was carrying the coffin and the body of his mother. Prying open the lid of the coffin containing her body, he clipped a lock of her hair and carried it in his wallet throughout the remainder of his own short life.

Within eighteen months of his mother's death and Jimmy's departure from his father's California home, Winton was drafted into the U.S. Army in the wake of the surprise December of 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Throughout the rest of his life, Jimmy suffered from the loss of his mother. On the set of *Rebel Without a Cause,* he told Natalie Wood, "God played a dirty trick on me, taking my mother from me. That led to my father abandoning me."

He told another co-star, Dennis Hopper, that he used to sneak out of the Winslow household late at night and cry at his mother's gravesite. "I would demand that she answer me and tell me why she left me when she was only twenty-nine years old. Sometimes, I fell sobbing onto her grave. I would cry out, 'I need you! I want you back!'"

During Jimmy's adolescence in Indiana, he decided one summer that he wanted to be a trapeze artist, and began practicing trapeze acrobatics in the family barn in Fairmount. During one of his improvised "rehearsals," he lost his balance and fell, knocking out his two front teeth.

His father was due for a visit in two weeks. During his time in Indiana, he fashioned a removable bridge for his son. Forever after, as a joke, whenever Jimmy wanted to portray a snaggle-toothed hillbilly, he removed the bridge and shocked whomever he happened to be dating at the time.

Later on, even when he became a movie star and could afford expensive dentistry, Jimmy preferred to keep the removable front teeth crafted by his father.

He was graduated from Fairmount High School in May of 1949, where he had excelled in sports. By June of that year, he'd packed up his meager belongings and headed for Los Angeles.

He rode the Greyhound bus, a transit requiring four days and nights. As he later recalled, "I was propositioned by at least five guys, usually when I went to take a leak. But I didn't accept any of their offers."

For a while, he lived with Winton, who, upon his arrival in California, greeted him rather coldly at the door.

Ethel, his stepmother, wasn't at all welcoming. Winton had married Ethel Case in 1945, right after his discharge from the military.

Jimmy and Ethel took an instant dislike to each other.

Even though he tried to get close to Winton, he never could. The years had made his father even more distant than before. When Jimmy confided that he wanted to become an actor, Winton dismissed the dream, defining all actors as "faggots. At least you'll get your cock sucked frequently if you go into the movie racket. That's how handsome young actors break into the business, or so I heard."

During his stay with Winton and Ethel, Jimmy enrolled in the nearby Santa Monica City College, a two-year junior college. But he wasn't happy there, and didn't fit in.

When he transferred to the campus at UCLA, he moved out of Winton's house and found lodging at the Sigma Nu fraternity residence, where he was a pledge. After a few weeks, he was kicked out.

He would never return to Winton's home, and his father never welcomed him back. Jimmy grew increasingly uncomfortable during his infrequent reunions, which usually lasted less than an hour.

When he played his roles in *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause,* he claimed, "I've lived these parts. I know about father-son alienation."

Fixed Bayonets

Jimmy Makes an Inglorious Movie Debut "Doling Out Death to Little Yellow Men"

At a chance meeting at a Hollywood cocktail party, Rogers Brackett spoke to an acquaintance, Isabelle Draesmer, an agent who booked actors into movie roles. Privately, he contemptuously referred to her as "small fry," but she was willing to take on new, untested actors and often found bit parts for them in films.

She had known Brackett casually for several years, and trusted his judgment, based on his far-flung experience within the film colony. He claimed, "James Dean is the hottest undiscovered male star in Hollywood."

"It sounds like you're in love with him," she said with a smirk.

"Perhaps I am."

The following day, a spruced-up Jimmy arrived at Draesmer's modest office at 8272 Sunset Boulevard. She, too, was impressed with him, and by that afternoon, following a lunch, she signed him as a client of her agency.

She said, "He had some hidden talent. Of that, I wasn't sure, what it was, exactly, but it was something. I was aware that his farm boy diction, technique, and posture needed to be vastly improved. Yet I sensed he was a possible new Monty Clift, whom I'd first seen perform on the stage in New York."

She telephoned a photographer friend of hers, Wilson Millar, who agreed to take publicity shots of Jimmy for her to send out to casting directors.

The next day, Jimmy arrived at Millar's studio at 2060 North Highland Avenue, where, as he later claimed to Brackett, "I got the once over of my life. I didn't strip for him, but I felt he has X-ray vision."

"Dean was a handsome boy," Millar later said. "Not your typical Hollywood pretty boy of the '50s. In profile, he looked better. Full frontal, he was just another good-looking kid, of which there were thousands hounding casting offices. Frankly, I thought his eyes were too close together. He was nearsighted and tended to squint."

"I thought he might find a minor role or two as a juvenile. His mouth intrigued me, as he had perfect lips. I asked him what kind of movie star he'd like to be. He surprised me when he claimed he wanted to be turned into a male Marilyn Monroe. Later, I heard he'd used that line on others. To say it again, his sex appeal definitely stemmed for the movement of that succulent mouth."

Draesemer went to work "hustling Rogers' boyfriend," as she phrased it. Within a week, she managed to land him a very small part in *Fixed Bayonets!,* a 1951 war drama directed by Samuel Fuller for 20th Century Fox. Coincidentally, Fuller was a friend of Brackett's.

The movie was set during the first brutal winter of the Korean War (1950-1953), just after that country's invasion by Red China. The grimy tale involved the fate of a lone forty-eight man platoon. The picture starred Richard Basehart and Gene Evans.

Jimmy avoided the actual draft, but ended up as a foot soldier on screen in *Fixed Bayonets!* His helmeted face appeared for about a

minute.

Cast in the uncredited role of "Doggie," a sentry, Jimmy appears only briefly, near the end of the film. His brief role was later whacked a bit, but he still made the final cut. In the original sequence, he runs up to Lieutenant Gibbs (Craig Hill) and squats beside him. "Lieutenant," he says. "I think I hear them coming. Could it be the rear guard, huh?" He then cocked his rifle.

Many sources claim that Jimmy's appearance was completely cut, and it's true that many movies were later edited (i.e., "shortened") for release on television. Jimmy may not have been recognizable, since the film was shot at night, his face was blackened, and he wore a helmet.

After his scenes were filmed and completed, through the interventions of Brackett, who used his link to Fuller, Jimmy lingered on the set for three extra days with the hope that the director might need him in another scene.

When Brackett came on set to visit him, he introduced Jimmy to the film's star, Richard Basehart, who agreed to accompany them to lunch in the studio's commissary. Basehart had been cast as the sensitive Corporal Denno, who had an innate aversion for taking responsibility for the lives of his men. His character says, "I can take an order, but I can't give one."

Previously, Basehart had starred with Valentina Cortese in *The House on Telegraph Hill* (1951) and had married her. He told Jimmy and Brackett that he and his new wife wanted to play the leads in an upcoming production of Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending.*

*"*I'm willing to take off my boxer shorts for Tennessee if he'll give us the roles. Valentina claims I have Grade A government-inspected meat."

Jimmy was surprised at the actor's frankness, and suspected that perhaps he was joking. Later, Jimmy would learn that many actors often spoke that provocatively during unguarded moments.

After lunch, Brackett brought Jimmy over to meet Fuller, who was a cult director, hoping he might have a future role for his *protégé.* After they chatted a bit, Jules Buck, an influential producer, arrived on the scene. He, too, was introduced to both Brackett and Jimmy.

Among other achievements, Buck had been the cameraman for John Huston, shooting film for some of Huston's wartime documentaries, including *The Battle of San Pietro* (1944).

But instead of focusing on Jimmy, Buck told them that he had opted to relocate to Paris. In time, he would launch his own film production enterprise, Keep Films, in England with his "exciting new star," Peter O'Toole. Eventually, Keep Films turned out entertainment that included O'Toole performing in *Becket* (1964), *Lord Jim* (1965), and Woody Allen's *What's New, Pussycat?* (also 1965).

For his movie debut, Jimmy was paid $44. The check was sent to Draesemer, who deducted her ten percent. He later told friends, "I played Doggie, doling out death to little yellow men."

When the movie was released, the cantankerous critic, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times,* wrote: *Fixed Bayonets!* was a tribute to the U.S. Infantry, but it is something less than inspired."

During his first dinner with Draesmer, Jimmy told her he'd had to face two hard choices. "I wanted to do what was best for my career. I could marry Joan Davis' daughter (Beverly Wills), or I could move in with Rogers, our chicken hawk. Joan hated me, and Beverly could do nothing for me. But Rogers is a producer, if only a minor one, but he knows everyone who's ever farted in Tinseltown."

"But with Rogers, it'll be a sing-for-your supper deal," Draesmer said.

"I can keep him at bay if he comes at me with his tongue hanging out," he said. "Besides, there's a second bedroom."

Let's be honest with each other," she said. "I've been to his apartment for a party. There's only one bedroom with a double bed."

"So be it," he answered. "Let's change the subject. That wasn't much of a part in *Fixed Bayonets!.* What juicy part have you got in store for me next?"

His agent later recalled, "No one ever denied that Jimmy was anything but an opportunist. In that regard, he had something in common with a female star, Marilyn Monroe. I predicted those two would eventually make movies together and create box office magic. What a pair! Alas, their candles gave off a magic glow that would not last the night."

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Jimmy's next role was not for the big screen, but for what was called at the time "the little black box": Television.

Draesemer sent him over to meet with Frank Woodruff, the writer, director, and producer of a TV drama for the Bigelow Theater Series. He spent only ten minutes with Jimmy before casting him in an uncredited role for which he would be paid $45 for a day's work.

The drama was entitled *T.K.O. (Technical Knock Out),* scheduled for release in the autumn of 1951.

Its plot focused on a teenage boy, played by Martin Milner, a young actor who would go on to greater fame thanks to his pivotal role in the hit TV series, *Route 66.* In *T.K.O.*, he portrayed a boxer fixated on paying for an expensive operation his father desperately needed.

Hanging out on the set, Jimmy talked with Milner. He had seen him in the 1947 classic, *Life With Father,* a film that starred William Powell and Irene Dunne.

Jimmy didn't appreciate Powell or Dunne's acting style at all, but he was intrigued by one of the film's young co-stars, Elizabeth Taylor. He boasted to Milner, "One day I'm going to fuck that beautiful little wench."

Also cast was Regis Toomey, who, although he was not Jimmy's type of actor, impressed him with a contest he had won. In 1941, when he starred in *You're In the Army Now,* he scored the record for the longest screen kiss in cinematic history, an osculation that lasted three minutes and five seconds. The female object of his affection was Jane Wyman, who had recently divorced Ronald Reagan.

Even though his role in *T.K.O* was minor, Jimmy alerted *The Fairmount News* back in Indiana that he was in the show. His family and friends tuned in. The role was so small that some TV viewers in Fairmount didn't even notice when Jimmy appeared on the small screen.

He never saw the completed film. By the time it aired as a TV show in Los Angeles, Jimmy had already left the city.

Lauren Bacall

Bogie Gets Violent With Jimmy

Months after Jimmy died in 1955 and right before his own death in 1957, Bogie told his closest friend, Spencer Tracy, "Did you know I once made a movie *[it was released in 1952]* with that little prick, James Dean? *Deadline—USA."*

Fresh from his triumph in *The African Queen* (1951)*,* with Katharine Hepburn, Bogie signed for the story of a crusading newspaper editor. *Deadline—U.S.A.* had been written by Richard Brooks, who was also the director, and set for release by 20th Century Fox. Brooks hired Jimmy for a bit part.

Bogie's leading lady in the film—hardly anyone's romantic interest—was Ethel Barrymore, the *grande dame* of the American theater. Bogie had once starred with her brother, Lionel Barrymore, in *Key Largo* (1948).

Jimmy followed his bit part in *Fixed Bayonets!* with an even smaller role in *Deadline—U.S.A.* Others in the cast, each a well-known name, included Kim Hunter, Ed Begley, Martin Gable, Paul Stewart, and Jim Backus, who would later play Jimmy's father in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955).

Jimmy had a nonspeaking role, appearing only briefly in a scene set in a busy press room as one of the newspaper workers. The scene was filmed in the press room of the *New York Daily News. Deadline—U.S.A.* has since been praised as one of the best films about the newspaper industry ever made.

Some sources claim that Jimmy never appeared in *Deadline.* However, when Fox digitalized and re-released the picture, its promoters hired Humphrey Bogart's biographer, Darwin Porter, the co-author of this book, to narrate the behind-the-scenes events of the film as an added bonus included on the CD. Porter specifically points out the footage within the film devoted to pre-fame Jimmy, whose face was immediately recognizable.

Humphrey Bogart with Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not,* the film that made them famous as a screen team. Their subsequent marriage would not be as idyllic as their onscreen romance.

Jimmy was never formally introduced to Bogie on the set, and he was awe struck by the veteran actor, secretly admiring his talent and envying his great fame. He closely observed Bogie from a distance. Jimmy's custom of hanging out on a movie set after the completion of his brief footage had by now become a tradition.

He was there the afternoon that Bogie lashed out at Brooks. Bogie had just learned than upon orders from Darryl F. Zanuck, Brooks had first offered his role as a crusading newspaper editor to Richard Widmark, who had rejected it. Then, Brooks offered the part to Gregory Peck, who had also rejected it.

"Here I am, a fucking Oscar winner, and I'm given sloppy seconds," Bogie shouted before storming off the set.

After his departure, Jimmy overheard Brooks talking to Ed Begley and Martin Gabel.

According to Brooks, as transmitted through Begley, "*Deadline* probably marks the beginning of the end for Bogie. He looks like shit. He's not the same man we loved. He's arrogant and grumpy, and he shows up without knowing his lines. He's very sarcastic to other actors, all except to Miss Barrymore, whom he treats with the respect she deserves."

It wasn't until months later that Jimmy was actually introduced to Bogie. Their first "official" encounter was both explosive and disastrous.

On the set of *East of Eden,* Merv Griffin arrived at around noon for a reunion with Jimmy, whom he had always been attracted to ever since they'd lived in adjoining apartments at the seedy Commodore Arms Hotel in Los Angeles. After Jimmy's patron, Rogers Brackett, was transferred to Chicago, Jimmy moved in with Nick Adams, a fellow actor dreaming of stardom but down on his luck. Brackett left Jimmy no money, and Nick was out of work, so Nick suggested that both of them turn to hustling.

As a gay young man himself, although with more money than either Jimmy or Nick, Griffin was "a buyer in the meat market," as Jimmy rather crudely described it. "Flash a twenty-dollar bill at either Nick or me, and we get a hardon."

Griffin, on the set of *East of Eden,* was hoping for some repeat action, but he quickly found that Jimmy was no longer in a position where he needed to hustle. Playing the lead in *East of Eden,* Jimmy, by then, had already—after a long struggle—achieved stardom.

Merv Griffin in 1945 as a sports announcer and radio personality

Griffin sat with Jimmy for about fifteen minutes, gossiping and smoking during the lunch break.

Looking up, Griffith spotted two figures approaching them. One was Bogart, the other Solly Biano, head of casting at Warner Brothers. Under his breath, Griffith whispered, "I hope Solly does more for your movie career than he did for mine."

Ignoring Griffin, Solly introduced Bogie to Warners' rising young star, although Jimmy avoided making eye contact with Bogie. Solly had thought that Bogie and Jimmy might hit if off because both of them were graduates of the "I Don't Give a Fuck" school of acting.

During part of his time on the set that morning, Bogie had stood on the sidelines, concealing himself and watching Jimmy perform in a scene.

"I hear you're the hot new rebel of Hollywood," Bogie said. "I remember when they said the same thing about me. Welcome to the Rebel Club."

Jimmy took the extended hand of the screen legend, still refusing to make eye contact.

Bogie complimented him on his technique, but Jimmy continued to stare at his feet, still not speaking.

"They tell me you're great, kid," Bogie said to him.

"Yeah," Jimmy said. "So they say, whoever the fuck *they* are. As if I give a god damn rooster's asshole what people think of me."

That was too much for Bogie. He grabbed Jimmy by the lapels of his jacket and yanked him around. "Look me in the eye, you little cocksucker! When I talk to you, show me some respect. You're just another stupid punk with skid marks on your underwear. Another Brando clone. Just what Hollywood doesn't need. In two fucking years from now, you'll be gone and forgotten." He shoved Jimmy back, nearly knocking him down.

Looking perplexed, Griffin stood with Solly as Bogie stormed off the set.

Jimmy watched him go, with contempt on his face, even though he had always admired Bogie. Perhaps it had all been an act on his part to conceal his idol worship. "I never saw *Casablanca,* and I never intend to." Actually, he'd seen the film three times, and it had always been his favorite.

"I hear that Mr. Bogart plays a queer who ends up with Claude Rains in the final reel, not Ingrid Bergman."

Then Jimmy turned and walked away. Griffin would never see him again. But Jimmy would suffer through two more unfortunate encounters with Bogie.

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[When stardom came, Jimmy no longer patronized his former hangout, Googies and instead, became a client of the chic Villa Capri, where the stars dined. One evening, he arrived at the restaurant accompanied by Lili Kardell, a nineteen-year-old Swedish actress.

Sitting two tables away were Bogie and Frank Sinatra with three male companions. To razz Jimmy, Sinatra called the waiter over and ordered him to deliver milk and crackers to "Baby Jimmy."

Bogie quickly scribbled a note: "Dear Punk, next time try combing your hair with an actual comb, not a dishrag!"

Jimmy would have a final run-in with Bogie, one even more violent than first introduction.]

Making Movies with Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis

JIMMY'S OFFSCREEN SHENANIGANS WITH JOHN BROMFIELD

Sailor Beware (1952) was a loosely equivalent remake of the hugely popular 1942 movie musical, *The Fleet's In,* that had starred Dorothy Lamour and William Holden.

In spite of a weak script and stale jokes, *Sailor Beware* did better box office than Gary Cooper's *High Noon* and MGM's *Singin' in the Rain,* which later was hailed as the best musical ever made. *Sailor Beware* was built around the onscreen antics of Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin, then the number two box office attraction in America.

Once again, Jimmy was disappointed with his small role, but it was a larger part than he had been given in *Fixed Bayonets!.* Playing a "corner man" for Lewis' boxing opponent, Jimmy was featured in several minutes of screen time, mostly in the background, but only one line of dialogue.

On his first visit to the set of *Sailor Beware,* the cast and crew attended a studio breakfast paid for by the producer, Hal B. Wallis. Jimmy was perhaps the only member of the cast who found Lewis and Martin funny that morning. The comedic duo ran around the film set pouring pancake syrup over everybody's head, including Jimmy's. Production was delayed for two hours that morning while everybody showered.

During the shoot, Lewis paid no attention to Jimmy, although he later claimed, "I discovered the boy," after Jimmy became a famous star.

Although Jimmy was needed on the set for three days of shooting, he convinced the film's director, Hal Walker, to let him hang out afterwards, asserting, "I want to see how movies are made."

"OK, kid," Walker said, "but don't get in the damn way or I'll kick you out on your ass."

An unfunny, exhibitionistic, neo-slapsticking, caper

A footnote in Hollywood history, Walker, who hailed from Iowa, is known mainly for helming some early Dean Martin/Jerry Lewis films. He's even better known for directing Bing Crosby and Bob Hope in their famous road pictures during their (cinematic) travels to Bali, Morocco, and Zanzibar.

Jimmy was on the set when Betty Hutton appeared on Walker's arm. She had signed for a cameo role as Martin's girlfriend, a character named "Hetty Button." She'd had a supporting role in the wartime version of the film, *The Fleet's In.*

She had recently scored big triumphs, first in *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950), in which she'd replaced Judy Garland and consequently faced a hostile cast and crew; and in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). Yet her career was heading for a nosedive, and, to Jimmy, she seemed to be coming unglued. Walker introduced him to Hutton, who seemed to clutch him. When the director was called away, she continued to cling to Jimmy, whispering to him, "I'm afraid." He noticed that she was trembling. "Hold onto me. Don't let me go. God help me!"

Tragi-Funny Lady: Betty Hutton

This embarrassing moment for Jimmy continued for about four minutes before Walker returned for her. She immediately transferred her emotional dependence to Walker, not even looking back at Jimmy.

Two views of the French sex kitten, Corinne Calvet.

Lower photo: With her errant husband, pinup hottie, John Bromfield.

That night he told Rogers Brackett, "If that's what big stardom does for you, count me out!"

Two days later, Jimmy got to witness the star of the picture, the Parisian actress, Corinne Calvet. In postwar France, she had become the country's number one pinup girl, although she had originally studied criminal law at the Sorbonne. Her mother was a distinguished scientist, who played a part in the development of Pyrex glass.

As a regular patron of Paris' famously artsy Left Bank café, *Les Deux Magots,* Calvet held her own in animated conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean Cocteau.

American audiences came to know her when she played opposite sexy Burt Lancaster in *Rope of Sand* (1949). Privately, she cut a seductive path through Hollywood's forests of studly men, seducing the likes of Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, Jimmy Stewart, and John Barrymore, Jr., among others.

All of this was accomplished despite her marriage at the time to John Bromfield, considered by his admirers as the sexiest man in Tinseltown. This hunk of beefcake was known to bestow his favors on both men and women.

Jimmy stood with Bromfield as both of them watched Calvet emote in a scene from *Sailor Beware with Dean Martin. Jimmy and Bromfield seemed to size each other up, and, as events would later prove, they liked what they saw. Their flirtation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Wallis on the set. From a concealed position behind the camera, he'd been watching Calvet and Martin during the filming of their love scene.*

He stepped forward and yelled, "Corinne, I told you I don't allow my actresses to wear falsies."

Her French temper flared. "I'm not wearing them," she shouted back at him.

"Go to your dressing room at once and remove those god damn fake tits!"

"Are you calling me a liar?" she asked. She walked toward him and, in front of Jimmy and her husband, who stood nearby, she took Wallis' hand and placed it inside her brassiere. Does that convince you they are for real?"

Then, without saying a word, Wallis stormed off the set. As he was leaving, Martin yelled "Bravo!"

Bromfield whispered to Jimmy, "Let's get the fuck out of here. I've seen enough for one day. I'm sure when the scene is over, Martin will take my wife to his dressing room to fuck her."

Outside the sound stage, Bromfield directed Jimmy to two motorcycles, which he had borrowed. He asked Jimmy to ride with him into the Hollywood Hills. "We'll stop for lunch somewhere."

Over sandwiches, Jimmy learned that he'd been a tuna fisherman and that he'd been discovered by that notorious Hollywood agent, Henry Willson, whom Jimmy had already met. "He examined all my body parts," Bromfield candidly admitted. "I was also introduced to his second prize, Rory Calhoun. Rory and I are just coming down from a white heat affair. Rory's a *love 'em and leave 'em* kind of guy. He seduces as many women as he does men."

Jimmy never discussed any of the details of his brief fling with Bromfield. However, he did tell William Bast, "That Corinne Calvet is one god damn lucky French gal."

The following day, Jimmy faced the cameras himself, playing one of two managers of an amateur Navy boxer, who must face Lewis in the ring. In one scene, Jimmy massages his boxer as he listens to Lewis boast that he's won one hundred and one previous bouts in the ring. Of course, this is all comedic bluff. Jimmy delivers his one line to his own boxer: "That guy's a professional."

He conspires with the other manager to bring in the sailor's older professional brother to face Lewis in the ring. Entirely by accident, Lewis knocks out the pro and wins the bout.

Although he had nothing more to say, Jimmy can be seen in the background climbing in and out of the boxing ring as the action unfolds. He is dressed in a white T-shirt and slacks, with a towel wrapped around his neck.

Jimmy Submits to a "Physical" from Vince Edwards

(TV's Future Dr. Ben Casey)

Jimmy never saw Bromfield again, but on his final day on the set, he met another actor, equally handsome and well built. He was billing himself as Vincent Edwards, later as Vince Edwards. Eventually, he became a household name thanks to the role he played of Dr. Ben Casey in a popular TV series (1961-1966).

The whacky, campy 50s. Two views of heartthrob John Bromfield.

top photo: in *Revenge of the Creature* (1955); *lower photo:* Beefcake fiesta with Tab Hunter

Both actors were bisexual. The Brooklyn-born Edwards was three years older than Jimmy. A top-rate swimmer, he had been part of the U.S. Ohio State University swim team that won the U.S. National Championships.

When Jimmy met him, he was about to sign with Paramount Pictures for his major film debut in *Mister Universe* (1951). According to Bast, to whom Jimmy revealed his fling with Edwards, Jimmy was both attracted to Edwards and jealous of him at the same time. Edwards appeared to be heading for film success much faster than Jimmy.

He was not particularly modest, telling Jimmy, "I studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, but I think I can make it big in the movies based on my looks alone."

Unlike Jimmy, Edwards had been assigned a private dressing room. After meeting Jimmy, he invited him there during a luncheon break.

Once inside, Jimmy had to take a leak, heading to Edwards' cramped little bathroom. Over the toilet hung a full frontal nude of the actor, revealing his well-muscled body and endowment.

Back in the dressing room, Jimmy became more flirtatious with Edwards. As he was undressing, Jimmy moved in. "I've already gotten a sneak preview of what I'm going to get."

"Oh that!" Edwards said. "I was photographed for an arts style class. The male nude, you know."

"Mighty impressive physique," Jimmy said, weaving himself into Edwards' arms.

[Two days later, when Jimmy returned to the set where he was not needed, he spotted Edwards and approached him, whispering, "Thanks for showing a guy a good time. You're one hot dude."

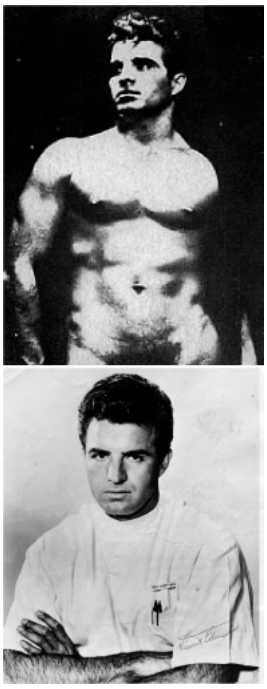
"Fuck off, faggot! Edwards said. "Get out of my face or I'll slug you."

Later, Jimmy learned that he'd approached the wrong Edwards. Vince had a twin, Anthony Edwards.]

Sailor Beware was the fifth cinematic teaming of Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin. Jimmy overheard Lewis bragging about their conquests of women. "All the broads are crazy for Deano," Lewis said. "Even Marilyn Monroe. Actually, I've fucked more women than Deano, but most of them want to burp me."

Ironically, later, both Martin and Jimmy would pursue the same actress, Pier Angeli.

Brackett claimed, "From Jimmy, Angeli heard talk of love. But Lana Turner set me straight on Martin. He was romantic at night, all wine and candlelight. But come the dawn, all a gal got was a pat on the ass and a promise 'to see you around, kid.'"



Two views of Vince Edwards, a.k.a., Dr. Ben Casey. "I'm a grower, not a show-er."

Sailor Beware marked the first time that Jimmy's name appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter* under "castings." Jimmy later told Bast, "My acting, if that is what it was called, mostly involved standing around looking at Lewis go through a lot of crazy antics. At one point, he pretended to be punch drunk and cauliflower brained."

Where Jimmy's future was concerned, the most important contact he made on the set was with another struggling young actor, Dick Clayton. He admitted he didn't have much talent as an actor, and decided he was going to become a theatrical agent instead.

"You interested in signing on as my first client?" he asked Jimmy.

Clayton was told by Jimmy that he planned to go to New York to seek stage work. "In that case, I want to set you up with an agent, Jane Deacy. She's not the biggest but she's one of the best agents."

Jimmy wrote down all the details. "I'll call her for you and recommend you as a client," Clayton promised.

"Great!" Jimmy said. "Soon, I won't have any more need for Isabelle Draesemer."

Ironically, in just a few short months, Clayton was working as an talent agent for the Famous Artists Corporation, and in that capacity, signed Jimmy on as a client for the duration of 1954 and 1955.

Clayton later was quoted as saying, "Jimmy seemed very vulnerable when I met him, very impressionable, with this little boy lost puppy dog look. We were friendly, but something in his attitude made me pull back. I figured he wasn't the type of boy you hugged."

Draesemer's later claim to fame involved her "discovery" of James Dean, thus guaranteeing her a footnote in Hollywood history.

Like James Whitmore, she, too, encouraged Jimmy to move to New York, even though it meant losing him as a client. She also coached Buddy Ebsen and Hugh O'Brien to stardom.

After swearing all her life that she'd never marry an actor, she wed the Bpicture cowboy star, Tex Terry, and retired to Indiana, Jimmy's home state.

With her husband, she opened Tex's Longhorn Tavern in the state's famous Parke County, known for its collection of covered bridges. Until her death, she was always willing to talk about Jimmy to out-of-state tourists, relaying her version of that famous teenage boy from Indiana who wandered into her office so long ago.

Rock Hudson vs. James Dean

How a Hollywood Feud Originated as a Hot Trick

Jimmy's last Hollywood film before his relocation to New York City via Chicago was *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* When he signed for a bit part within it, it was entitled *Oh Money, Money.* It was the best of a lackluster group of Hollywood films in which he would briefly appear before he hit the bigtime.

The 88-minute color film, released in the summer of 1952, was the first in which Jimmy uttered a complicated line of dialogue from a position in the foreground of the frame.

Helmed by Danish-born director Douglas Sirk, *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* starred Piper Laurie in the lead, with Rock Hudson and Charles Coburn getting second billing. Also featured was child actress Gigi Perreau, whose chief rival was Natalie Wood, Jimmy's future co-star.

In her memoirs, *Learning to Live Out Loud,* Laurie claimed that she was rather embarrassed to be billed over Coburn, an Oscar-winning actor. She also alleged that "He had this tic about pinching women's bottoms, and if you were female and under one hundred and five, you had to give him wide berth."

She also said that at the time she was unaware of "the young boy who sat at the end of the counter in a drugstore scene." Years later, her uncle called from New York after watching the movie in its TV release. "Did you know you were in a movie with James Dean?"

That was her first awareness of that. By that time, Jimmy was well on his way to becoming Hollywood legend.

As for Rock Hudson, Laurie admitted that she was unaware of his gender preference when they starred together. "There was no chemistry between us. He never made a pass at me. I just assumed I wasn't his type."

In contrast, Jimmy was well aware of Hudson's sexual preference, having flirted with him at a party at the home of Hudson's gay (and predatory) agent, Henry Willson. Hudson recognized Jimmy and invited him for lunch. He was filled with gossip, telling Jimmy that he'd heard that Laurie had had an affair with Ronald Reagan.

Jimmy would be appearing in a television drama with Reagan within a few months.

Over sandwiches, Hudson seemed bitter at Universal for awarding star billing to Laurie and for arranging for

studio publicists to promote her career more aggressively than his. “They claim that she bathes in milk every day and that she dines on flower petals as a means of protecting her luminous skin. What bullshit!”

Like Jimmy, Laurie in time, would tire of making bad films in Hollywood and would retreat to New York to study acting and to seek work on the stage and in television.

After lunch, Hudson invited Jimmy to his dressing room, since he wasn’t needed on the set. The invitation from the tall, handsome actor was blunt: “I like to fuck and get fucked. How about it, Kid?”

“You’re on, Big Boy,” Jimmy said. He’d later give a blow-by-blow description of his sexual encounter to William Bast.

Usually, men came on to Jimmy during his early appearances in Hollywood. An exception was Lynn Bari, a co-star in the film. She was seventeen years his senior and found Jimmy very attractive. At this stage in her declining career, she’d been reduced to portraying matronly characters rather than the *femmes fatales* she’d been known for in the late ‘30s and ‘40s.

During World War II, the sultry, statuesque brunette, once known as “the Scarlett O’Hara of Virginia,” was the nation’s second most popular pinup girl, ranking just under Betty Grable. Bari had played man-killers in some 150 films for Fox.

After hanging around the set for days, Jimmy was called for his scene. He had tried unsuccessfully to get Sirk to notice him, but he had seemed more intent on promoting Hudson, who had been cast as Laurie’s soda-jerk boyfriend.

Sirk told Coburn that he found it amusing that Hudson towered over Laurie. “Rock looks great in his raccoon coat.”

Two years later, Sirk would cast Hudson in a remake of Lloyd Douglas’ novel, *Magnificent Obsession,* in a role that interacted, romantically, with the Oscar-winning Jane Wyman, the former Mrs. Ronald Reagan. Like Laurie, Jane was unaware of Hudson’s sexual preference and made the mistake of falling in love with him.

Before facing the camera, Jimmy heard Sirk’s direction: “Act superior and offhand.”

The director approved Jimmy’s red bow tie, his 1920s-era college sweater, his straw boater, and his white trousers.

In an extended interlude, Jimmy comes into the drugstore where Coburn is working as a soda jerk. Jimmy says, “Hey, gramps, I’ll have a choc malt, heavy on the choc, plenty of milk, four spoons of malt, two scoops of vanilla ice cream, one mixed with the rest and one floating.”

Coburn snaps back, “Would you like to come in on Wednesday for a fitting?”

Sirk shot the scenes three times until he got it right. At the end, he ignored Jimmy, but complimented Coburn as “the perfect Frank Capra curmudgeon.”

Later, Coburn invited Jimmy for coffee. The young actor learned that the older actor had been born in Macon, Georgia, in 1877. He confessed to Jimmy that, “I have the hots for Nancy Davis.” At that time, she had not yet married Reagan.

Coburn also told Jimmy that he had been cast in the 1953 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.* “I’m faced with a hard choice,” he said. “Do I chase after busty Jane Russell or go for that bleached blonde thing, Marilyn Monroe?”

With his work finished, Jimmy tallied up his total receipts for his brief appearances in three separate films. They came to $300.

His romance with Hudson lasted on and off for about ten days. Roddy McDowall, who came to know Jimmy quite well in New York, claimed, “Rock and Jimmy started out as lovers, but in time, they became bitter enemies. There was a lot of jealousy on Jimmy’s part. He would have given anything to be Rock Hudson.”

Years later, Hudson was asked if he’d met Jimmy during the making of *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?*. “Yeah, I ran into the kid. He had a very small role with slicked back, wavy hair, very neatly combed. That’s all I remember.”

Actor Nick Adams had a different memory. Late one afternoon, Adams had arrived at Hudson’s home at five o’clock. He’d been hired as a staff member attending the bar—shirtless, of course—at a seven o’clock gay male cocktail party. He was ushered into the living room, where it was understood that he’d be setting up the bar.

“To my surprise, both Rock and Jimmy were sitting on his thick carpet, jaybird naked. They were spreading some kind of foul-smelling lotion into their crotches. It seems that each guy had a bad case of the crabs.”

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Rogers Brackett and his sophisticated mother, Tess, were very close. She was fully aware of her son’s

homosexuality, and never chastised him for it. During his Hollywood months with Jimmy, Brackett took him over to his mother's home in Culver City at least once a week for dinner.

One night, Brackett informed Jimmy that he was packing up and moving out of Hollywood. His employers had temporarily transferred him to Chicago for some short-term assignments, with the understanding that after that, he be permanently relocated to Manhattan.

He promised to send for Jimmy in Chicago after he settled in. His announcement led to a bitter fight, with Jimmy accusing his patron, "You'll never send for me. You'll meet some other good-looking guy in a parking lot—and that will be that."

As a parting gift, Jimmy asked Brackett for $2,000 to tide him over until he could find more work in films. Brackett refused, claiming he need all his cash on hand to get reestablished—first in Chicago, then in New York.

"I may be a producer for CBS, but the job doesn't pay that much."

On his final day in Los Angeles, when Brackett had to report to CBS to close down his office, Tess arrived at his apartment to assist her son in packing up his possessions, since he would not be returning to the rented apartment.

Later that afternoon, she heard Jimmy sobbing in the bathroom. The door was half open.

She knocked on it, calling out to him, "What's the matter? Can I help?"

"I'm afraid!" he shouted at her. "Afraid of being left alone. All my life, I've been abandoned. And now this!"

Chapter Four

TWO REBELS, JIMMY & NICK ADAMS, BECOME HOLLYWOOD HUSTLERS, SNARING, AMONG OTHERS, MERV GRIFFIN

Jimmy Poses for Photographers—Nude

ON A RETURN VISIT TO INDIANA, JIMMY RESUMES HIS AFFAIR WITH THE PRIEST WHO MOLESTED HIM

In New York, "The Little Prince" Tackles Tallulah Bankhead, TV Drama, Peggy Lee, and a Sexy Brunette (Dizzy Sheridan)

After failing at a movie career in Hollywood during the 1950s, an Irish-American from California, Merv Griffin (1925-2007), evolved into TV's most powerful and richest mogul, eventually winning 17 Emmy Awards for *The Merv Griffin Show,* a durable daytime staple that attracted 20 million viewers daily.

Two views of Merv Griffin in Knoxville, Tennessee, promoting his 1953 movie, *So This Is Love,* co-starring Kathryn Grayson. In the lower photo, he signs autographs for his adoring fan club members.

Behind the scenes, Griffin became known for his Midas touch, developing two of Hollywood's most popular game shows, *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*.

He had first entered the entertainment scene as a boy singer with Freddy Martin's band in the 40s.

He had long been known in the industry as a closeted gay. He married only once—it was unsuccessful—but he did produce an exceptional son from his ill-fated union.

Most of Jimmy's fans never knew about his involvement with Griffin. The struggling actors met as neighbors in Los Angeles within the seedy Commodore Garden Apartments, when their respective careers were going nowhere. In the beginning, their trysts were sexual, for which Griffin, who had more money than Jimmy, paid his fellow actor fifty dollars per session.

At the time, Jimmy was sharing his modest studio at the Commodore Garden with another struggling actor, Nick Adams. Nick had wanted to get intimate immediately, but Jimmy had held him off until his financial situation worsened. Hard up, he accepted Nick's invitation to move in with him.

One night, Nick and Jimmy met Griffin under unusual circumstances. Griffin had stumbled across Errol Flynn, who had passed out in the courtyard of Commodore Gardens. No longer the swashbuckling matinée idol he'd been in the 30s and '40s, this once perfect specimen of manhood had become dissipated after a reckless life of debauched adventures. Motivated by financial troubles, he'd checked into the Commodore. Recognizing him at once, Griffin attempted to carry him back to his apartment. At that moment, after a night of hustling along Santa Monica Boulevard, Nick and Jimmy approached.

After helping the hustlers tuck the fading star into bed, Griffin observed the two young men more closely, finding one of them particularly handsome and appealing. He extended his hand. "Hi, I'm Merv Griffin."

Nick Adams met James Dean in 1950, when they appeared together in a Pepsi-Cola commercial for TV. He is seen above as Johnny Yuma in his hit TV series, *The Rebel.*

"This here is James Dean, and I'm Nick Adams," the taller of the two said. "We've seen you around."

"Sorry we didn't say 'hi' before," Jimmy said. He looked at the body passed out on the bed. "If I didn't know better, I'd say that was Errol Flynn—or what's left of him."

Jimmy and Nick seemed impatient to leave, but Griffin invited them for a drink at sundown in the courtyard the next day.

Although they arrived late, both actors showed up for that drink the next day with Griffin. He was amazed at their candor. All of them shared their various dramas in trying to find acting gigs in L.A.

"Let's be truthful with the man," Jimmy said. "We want to be actors. But right now, we might list our profession as hustlers."

"I see," Griffin said. "Are you referring to pool hall hustling, or do you mean love for sale?"

"More like dick for sale," Jimmy said.

Years later, on his way to becoming a famous Hollywood player, Griffin described his encounters with the young actor to several of his gay friends, notably Roddy McDowall, who also knew Jimmy.

Griffith summed him up: "A slouching stance, youthful rebellion in faded jeans, a cigarette in the corner of a kissable mouth, alienation, even outright hostile at times, and the most angelic face I've ever seen on a young man."

This Dean guy is going to be a big star," Griffin predicted. "I have this feeling about him. But he's got a lot of weird habits. He'll smoke a cigarette so far down that it'll burn his lips. Yes, actually burn them with intent. He gets off on being burnt. He confessed that to me as a hustler, and for a fee, he'll let a john crush a lit cigarette onto his butt. But he won't allow his chest or back to be burnt in case he has to strip off his shirt for the camera—that is, if he ever gets a role."

"The first time I was with him, even before I had sex with him, he pulled down his jeans and showed me cigarette burns on his beautiful ass. Strange boy. But I adore the kid."

That night, Griffin was invited into Nick and Jimmy's apartment. Jimmy wore a white Mexican shirt and new jeans, the gift of an admirer who had taken him to a clothing store. As Griffin recalled, "The whole studio smelled like the inside of a dirty laundry bag. Yet there was a sexual tension in the air."

To Griffin's surprise, he spotted a hangman's noose hanging from a hook on the ceiling "That's waiting for me if I decide to commit suicide," Jimmy told him.

Griffin didn't know if he were joking or if he really meant it.

As Jimmy put on a pot of coffee, Nick stripped down for a shower. Dangling his penis in front of Griffin, he said, "Now you know why I'm called 'Mighty Meat' along the Strip."

After he'd showered, Nick emerged with a towel around his waist. "Being a struggling actor is like having to eat a shit sandwich every day," he said. "It's kiss ass…" Then he paused: "Sometimes literally. You wait for the next job, not knowing if you're going to get it or not. Trying for a gig and having to compete with a hundred other starving actors. Congratulating your best friend when he got the job instead of you." He glanced furtively at Jimmy and continued. "Waiting outside that producer's door. Even worse sometimes, getting invited inside and having to

submit to a blow job from some disgusting piece of flesh. And then losing the job to the guy he planned to cast all along. Trying to get a gig is half the job of being an actor. Take it from me."

As the evening progressed, Griffin was amazed that Nick was "tooting his own horn," sometimes at the expense of Jimmy. There was definite competition between the two actors. It was as if Nick sensed that Jimmy had far better looks and more talent than he did.

A future biographer, Albert Goldman, summed up Nick Adams: "He was forever selling himself, a property which, to hear him tell it, was nothing less than sensational. In fact, he had very little going for him in terms of looks, talent, or professional experience. He was just another poor kid from the sticks who had grown up dreaming of the silver screen."

Right in front of Jimmy, Nick claimed that his friend would cater to kinkier offers from johns along Santa Monica Boulevard than he would. "I turn down a lot of sick queens, but Jimmy here will go for anything. One night, this weirdo wanted to eat my shit. I told him to 'fuck off,' but Jimmy went off with the creep in his car."

"Why not?" Jimmy asked with a devilish bad boy look. "I hadn't taken a crap all day."

Years later, Griffin confessed to McDowall and to other gay friends, "Before I finished with them, I had to borrow five-hundred dollars to pay the freight, but it was worth every penny. Nick had the bigger endowment, but Jimmy was better at love-making. It was the best sex I've ever had, even if I did have to pay for it."

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Later, to Griffin's surprise, he ran into Jimmy on the 20th Century Fox lot, where he was working as an uncredited extra.

Jimmy bonded with Griffin like a long-lost buddy, reminiscing about their encounters at the Commodore Garden Apartments. At five o'clock that afternoon, both of them headed for a drink at the tavern across the street. After his second vodka, Jimmy confessed to Griffin that he'd abandoned hustling and that he planned a move to New York in pursuit of TV and stage work.

No mention was made of Nick Adams.

Since work as an extra paid so little, and because acting gigs were so infrequent, Jimmy confessed that he'd devised a new way to make money: "I pose for nude photographs, sometimes with an erection. I've had a lot of copies made, and I sell them for twenty-five dollars each. It beats hustling, and no one even touches me, except perhaps the photographer. Not bad, huh?"

"Sounds like a great way for an out-of-work actor to make some extra cash, unless those nudes come back to haunt you after you make it big as a movie star."

"Like I give a god damn about that," Jimmy said. "I've set up a session with this photographer in Los Angeles. I've got a posing session at nine tonight. Wanna come with me?"

"I'd love to," Griffith said. "There's more that a bit of the *voyeur* in me."

"The pictures this session are for a private collector."

Later that evening, outside the photographer's studio, Jimmy removed his denim shirt and blue jeans. He wore no underwear. He handed his apparel to Griffin for safekeeping. "I like to arrive at the doorstep 'dressed' for action." Then he chuckled at his own comment.

At the door, the shocked photographer hustled the two men inside. "I've got two Eisenhower Republican old maids living upstairs. They might see you and have a heart attack. I don't want those old biddies to know what goes on in here."

During the shoot, Griffin assisted the photographer, fetching a glass of water or holding the spotlight. But mostly he stared with fascination at the subject.

As a nude model, Jimmy had no inhibitions. At one point, he grabbed a prop from a previous shoot, a black lace mantilla abandoned by a female model's posing. He plucked a red rose from a vase, grasping its stem with his teeth.

"This may be too girlish a pose for your client." The photographer warned, but he snapped the picture anyway.

At the end of the session, Jimmy put back on his clothes, and then rejected the photographer's invitation for a three-way with Griffin.

Back on the street again, Griffin asked, "What's next?"

"I want to go back to your place and fuck you," Jimmy said.

"A man after my own heart."

The pictures that Jimmy posed for that night are now in private hands, and considered a valued collector's item.

Competing for the Singing Cowboy Role in Oklahoma!

Jimmy Beats Paul Newman, But Then They Both Lose to Gordon MacCrae

Until its final casting was defined and publicized, Jimmy clung to the hope of starring as Curly McLain in the film version of *Oklahoma!* (1955). When he heard that Fred Zinnemann had been named as its director, he got in touch with him and requested an audition.

"I've got to be frank with you," he told Jimmy. "I'm considering Paul Newman for the role, even though he can't sing. I can always dub a soundtrack afterwards."

"I can't sing a whole lot, but I sure as hell can act the role of Curly better than any other god damn actor in Hollywood," Jimmy said.

He was very persuasive and enticed Zinnemann into testing him out. The director had seen pictures of Jimmy and thought that from a physical standpoint, he'd be ideal for the role.

When Jimmy arrived at the director's snobby hotel, he was almost ejected from the lobby. The staff behind the desk later claimed, "He showed up looking like a cowboy wino."

He wasn't allowed to pass through the lobby, but was directed to the rear service entrance, where he rode the freight elevator up to Zinnemann's suite.

Zinnemann was impressed with Jimmy's rendition of the "Poor Jud is Dead" number alongside the veteran actor Rod Steiger, who had also been cast.

Later, Griffin called Jimmy about getting together for a drink. *[Unknown to Jimmy, Griffith had also been lobbying for the role of Curly, even though Zinnemann was insisting on a Paul Newman type.]*

Griffin, a talented singer in his own right, concealed from Jimmy how much he had wanted the role. When he had met with Zinnemann, the director had rejected Griffin for the role, but suggested that he could arrange for him to be in a movie called *The Alligator People* instead. "Would you allow makeup to transform you into an alligator?"

Griffin had rejected the offer and headed for the door.

The role Jimmy wanted but wasn't destined to get. *Center figures*: Gordon MacRae as Curly, Shirley Jones as his bride.

Over a drink with Griffin, Jimmy boasted that Zinnemann had told him that his tryout was one of the best auditions the director had ever witnessed.

"And your singing?" Griffin asked. "You can sing?"

"I'm not sure yet, but if I can pull off the role of Curly, I might become a singing star in other musicals."

Eventually, Zinnemann opted against Jimmy, instead offering the role to Frank Sinatra, who rejected it. The director finally settled on Gordon MacCrae, an actor and an accomplished singer.

As a result, the public never had to sit through Jimmy belting out a rendition of "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning."

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As early autumn fell across Los Angeles in October of 1951, Jimmy prepared to leave the city. He told William Bast, “My dreams of becoming a movie star have been bashed.” He revealed that he was going to Chicago to join Rogers Brackett, who had been temporarily stationed there by his ad agency. “After that, I’m heading for stardom on Broadway, but I don’t have a lot of money.”

Bast learned that although Brackett had arranged and paid for his train ticket to New York, with a stopover in Chicago, he had given him only a hundred dollars in spending money. “He likes to keep me on a tight leash. I certainly don’t have one cent left from my work as a movie extra.”

Bast met with Jimmy for a farewell bowl of chili at Barney’s Beanery. His former roommate found Jimmy in a depressed mood. “You can knock your fucking brains out in Tinseltown. If you’re lucky, you’ll occasionally get $44 a day working as an extra in some shit movie. There’s got to be more of a future for me than that.”

“With Brackett, you’ll be singing for your supper again,” Bast warned.

“A gig’s a gig,” Jimmy responded.

“I’m not performing for Rogers anymore,” Jimmy claimed, although Bast did not find that statement convincing. “If I can’t make it in show business on talent alone, then I don’t want to be in it at all.”

Bast had been made aware of the inner conflicts Jimmy had faced about selling his body. In a memoir, he speculated, “Surely, being kept had to produce some kind of internal conflict in this Quaker-bred Indiana farm boy.”

Bast recalled a shocking scene he’d secretly witnessed which seemed to demonstrate Jimmy’s inner conflicts about renting his charms to any passerby on the street.

He had awakened one night at around 2AM, when he still shared the penthouse with Jimmy. Quite by chance, he looked out the window down onto the street scene below. There, he spotted Jimmy sitting on a bus bench, lit by a street lamp. To Bast, Jimmy was obviously cruising, waiting for a john to pull up in his car and offer him money in return for sexual favors.

Bast stayed glued to the window. Within a few minutes, a Cadillac stopped. The male driver called out to Jimmy, who rose from the bench and headed toward the car. Bast expected him to get in and ride away.

Instead, as he approached its open window, Jimmy pulled out a flick knife and seemed to threaten the driver, who stepped on the gas and sped away.

After that, Jimmy returned to their penthouse. Bast quickly retreated to the bedroom and pretended to be asleep. He didn’t want him to know that he’d witnessed the scene below.

Back at Barney’s Beanery, Jimmy looked around the room at the many out-of-work actors who had managed to scrape together enough money for a bowl of Barney’s dubious chili.

Suddenly, Jimmy’s face lit up. “I’ve got this great idea. I’ll go to New York and find us a place to live. Why don’t you follow me? We’ll be two struggling actors trying to make it in the cultural capital of the world, where our talents are sure to be appreciated.”

“That might not be a bad idea,” Bast said. “Let’s keep in touch after you get there. When you have an address, send it to me. I’ll respond at once.”

After more talk and more plans, the two men retreated to the sidewalk, where they warmly embraced for a farewell. “I hope that faggot-hating Barney isn’t watching,” Jimmy said. Then he kissed Bast on both cheeks and headed out into the fading afternoon, toward his new life.

Later that evening, after Bast had returned to his modest studio, he could hear the shouts of the spectators across the street, roaring from the American Legion Stadium, where a violent wrestling match was being staged between a white giant and a black giant.

Missing Jimmy, he fell asleep listening to the roar of the crowd. “Break his neck! Tear the fucker apart!”

Unhappy, and In Chicago

Jimmy Enjoys a Brief Fling With a Married Starlet Who Challenged the Hollywood Production Code

It was in Chicago that Brackett made his debut into the field of television. His decision was partially based on references in *The Hollywood Reporter* about the challenges confronting radio from the emerging media of “the

little black box."

One of his first duties involved supervision of a show for kiddies entitled *Meadow Gold Ranch.* He told Jimmy, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Television is the medium of the future, and you should seek work in TV dramas being filmed in Manhattan."

"But I want to become a movie star," Jimmy protested.

"Why not a TV star?"

After his arrival in the Windy City, Jimmy entered the lobby of The Ambassador East, one of the most expensive hotels in Chicago. Dressed in jeans, he had draped Sidney Franklin's blood-soaked matador's cape over one of his shoulders. After registering himself into Brackett's room, his battered suitcase was carried onto the elevator by a smartly uniformed bellhop, who Jimmy claimed "looked like a dead ringer for John Derek."

Whereas with Bast, he had maintained the pretense that his relationship with Brackett was no longer sexual, Brackett told a different story. "I don't think Jimmy was in the door for more than ten minutes before I had his clothes off. The pickings for me in Chicago had been lean, and I was hungry. Sex in the morning, sex when I came in from the office, and sex after retiring to bed. The kid told me I exhausted him."

Jimmy seemed lost in the vast sprawl of Chicago and stayed mostly within the hotel room, not wanting to wander alone on his own.

During his fourth evening in town, a guest arrived at their hotel room. It was David Swift, a respected director, screenwriter, animator, and producer. He would later recall his introduction to Jimmy: "I knocked several times before this young man slowly opened the door and peered out. I think Rogers was in the shower. The kid had on this tattered old matador's cape and seemed to be rehearsing an imaginary bullfight. Instead of telling me who he was, he shouted '*TORO! TORO!*' I thought he might be insane."

Suddenly, having wrapped a robe around himself, Brackett was in the room, pushing Jimmy aside. "It was then that I learned that this crazy guy was James Dean, and that he was this actor wannabe," Swift said.

He had arrived to accompany his friend, Brackett, and Dean to the Chicago production of the controversial play, *The Moon Is Blue*. It starred Swift's young and attractive new wife, actress Maggie McNamara. In a previous production that starred Barbara Bel Geddes, it had been a hit on Broadway, where it had been attacked for its "light and gay treatment of seduction, illicit sex, chastity, and virginity."

Jimmy found the play candid and exciting and enjoyed its frank discussions about sex. He was charmed by McNamara's performance and told her so backstage after the performance.

Maggie McNamara, as she appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine in April, 1950.

Over thick Chicago steaks, as Swift renewed his friendship with Brackett, McNamara and Jimmy got to know each other. Swift informed everyone that he was developing a TV sitcom, *Mister Peppers,* scheduled for transmission on NBC during the summer of 1952. Its star was Wally Cox.

[As a gossipy footnote, Swift claimed that Cox was the lover of Marlon Brando. That information fascinated Jimmy. It was perhaps the first time he'd heard that Brando was bisexual.]

...and years later, as she starred in an episode of *The Twilight Zone* ("RingaDing Girl").

McNamara, a New Yorker, had been a teen fashion model and had appeared on the April, 1950 cover of *Life* magazine. She said that producer David O. Selznick had seen the magazine cover and had offered her a movie contract. "I turned it down. I'm not ready for movies yet."

Whereas Swift had not been particularly impressed with Jimmy, he later admitted, "For Maggie and Jimmy, it was instant love. My wife just adored him and practically wanted to adopt him and make him part of our household."

During the days ahead, while Brackett and Swift were otherwise occupied, McNamara and Jimmy set out to explore Chicago together during the daylight hours. According to Swift, "I know I should have been jealous, but Rogers assured me that Jimmy was one hundred percent homosexual. I later learned that was not true."

Jimmy told Bast that on three different afternoons, he returned with McNamara to the suite she otherwise occupied with Swift. "We made love, and I was really into her."

Bast speculated that "Jimmy was eager to establish his heterosexual credentials after all the gay sex he'd had. He also told me that they didn't spend as much time exploring the glories of Chicago. Instead, they talked for hours, plotting their future careers. The two lovebirds really seemed into each other. I don't think Swift and Brackett had a clue."

"Whether it was true or not," Bast continued, "Jimmy also told me that when the time came for him to say goodbye to McNamara, her final words to him were, 'I should have married you instead of David. You and I are kindred souls."

[Eventually director Otto Preminger would cast McNamara as the female lead, alongside William Holden and David Niven, in the 1953 film version of The Moon Is Blue*. The movie challenged the censorship provisions of the Production Code of its day and was consequently banned in several states, including Maryland, Ohio, and Kansas. Preminger appealed the ban all the way to the Supreme Court and won his case. The ban was overturned, and* The Moon Is Blue *became credited as instrumental in weakening the influence of censorship in the film industry.*

For her role in it, McNamara was nominated for an Oscar as Best Actress of the Year. She later appeared in the romantic drama, Three Coins in the Fountain (1954), *and also played the lead opposite Richard Burton in* a *biopic* Prince of Players *(1955) about the mid-19th-century Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth.*

Her career, however, was in serious decline by the mid-1950s, offers for acting jobs only sporadic. Preminger claimed that "Maggie suffered greatly after becoming a star. Something went wrong with her marriage to David Swift. She had a nervous breakdown."

Her last appearance was with the silent screen great, Lillian Gish, on The Alfred Hitchcock Hour *in 1964. After that, she faded from public view and worked as a typist until her death on February 18, 1978.*

She was found dead on the sofa of her New York apartment, having overdosed on sleeping pills.]

Childhood Memories Come Flooding Back

JIMMY RETURNS TO FAIRMOUNT

Before establishing a life for himself in New York, Jimmy told Brackett that he wanted to return to Fairmount, Indiana, to visit his family, especially his aunt and uncle, Ortense and Marcus Winslow, who had reared him as a little boy after his mother died.

Brackett, who remained behind, bought him a round-trip ticket from Central Chicago to the train depot at Marion (Indiana), where it was understood that the Winslows would meet his incoming train.

As he rode the rails, many memories of his boyhood in the 1940s came racing back.

At this point in his life, Jimmy had not yet made any of his legendary films, nor had he yet taken Hollywood by storm. But in a short time, he would become the most famous alumnus of Fairmount. Unlike Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley, he had not been born into poverty. As a teenager on a Midwestern farm, he had led a comfortable middle-class life.

His Aunt Ortense remembered him as "a pretty boy, fair-skinned, rosy-cheeked, with ruby red lips. His mother always dressed him real cute until he finally adopted his own style: Blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and boots."

His first train ride to Fairmount had transpired in 1940, as part of his 2,000-mile "funeral cortège" from Los Angeles aboard "The Challenger." His grandmother, Emma Dean, had accompanied him, along with the embalmed corpse of his dead mother, Mildred. It had traveled within a sealed coffin, within a car otherwise devoted to luggage.

Years had passed since his post-graduation departure from the Winslow homestead. Whereas the family's ownership of its 14-room farmhouse had survived the Great Depression, many of their neighbors had lost their homes through foreclosures by greedy banks.

The Winslows had always been warm-hearted guardians.

In this small Hoosier town of 2,700, Jimmy as a boy raced along maple-shaded Main Street, a thoroughfare lined with staid, matronly, white-painted Victorian homes with moss-green shutters. He remembered the scene as reminiscent of a Norman Rockwell cover for *The Saturday Evening Post.*

Route 9 connected Fairmount with Marion, ten miles to the north, where Jimmy had lived, temporarily, with his parents.

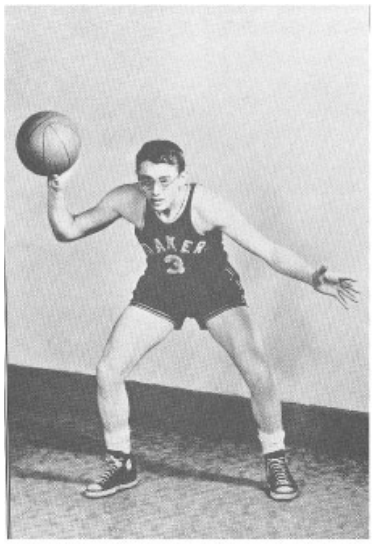
Now, with Brackett far away in Chicago, Jimmy settled once again for a reunion with the Winslows and the circumstances of his childhood.

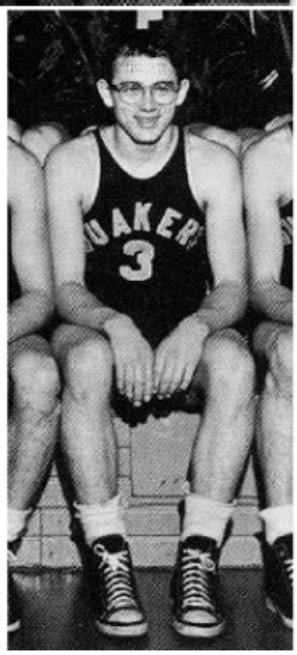
Within a reasonable time after his arrival, Jimmy left the house and headed for the Rexall Drugstore, where he ordered a chocolate malt. Ironically, something akin to that had been choreographed opposite Charles Coburn during his one big scene in the movie, *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?*

As a farm boy during his childhood, Jimmy had been taught to perform daily chores—feeding the chickens their grain, sweeping out the barn, collecting freshly laid eggs, milking cows, and helping with the spring planting. Marcus had even purchased a pony for him to ride through the fields. In summer, he fished for carp in a nearby creek.

At the local public schools, he was bright and intelligent, but often didn't listen in class and rebelled against doing homework. He earned mostly Cs and Ds on his report card.

When he had turned fifteen, his uncle got him a summer job in a nearby factory that canned tomatoes. "I earned ten cents an hour and felt like a character in a John Steinbeck novel," Jimmy later said.





Jimmy Dean: High school basketball team member, despite his myopia.

Later, his uncle bought him a motorcycle, a model from Czechoslovakia. Once he was safely away from the sightlines of anyone watching from his uncle's farm, he stepped on the gas, navigating around "Suicide Curve" at full throttle. Many accidents, including two deaths, had been suffered within recent memory by motorists who did not maneuver their way around the curve.

Jimmy's fascination with motorcycles would continue throughout the rest of his life. One of his female classmates complained, "We learned to get out of Dean's way when we heard him roaring in on that damned motorcycle. Sometimes, he seemed to be trying to run over us. He was very reckless. His accidental death was often predicted."

Before he graduated from high school, Jimmy reached his full height of 5'8", weighing 140 pounds.

In spite of his small stature, he excelled at sports, particularly basketball. His coach claimed that "The boy often had to jump three feet in the air, but he got the ball in the hoop. His playmates nicknamed him, 'Jumping Jim.' In fact, he became our champion player, in spite of the fact that he also had to wear glasses because he was nearsighted."

"He broke his glasses faster than I could buy him a new pair," said Marcus.

Jimmy also took up pole vaulting and excelled at that sport, too, although he quickly tired of it.

His mother, Mildred, had been the first to notice his artistic flair. In Fairmount, he had often wandered down by the creek or in the meadows, sketching landscapes and still lifes. When not preoccupied with that, he hurled himself into track and field pursuits.

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No one would have more influence on Jimmy than the local Methodist pastor, Dr. James DeWeerd, who was viewed locally as a hero. Evoking Billy Graham, he combined dramatic rhetoric delivered with the flair of an actor.

Shortly before his fifteenth birthday, Jimmy developed a strong crush on the reverend, who seemed responsive to the needs of this cute adolescent. In his early thirties, the Wesleyan minister was known for his charisma and histrionics in the pulpit.

Jimmy's child-molesting priest, James DeWeerd

DeWeerd had traveled widely in Europe and had once studied in England at Cambridge University. During World War II, he'd served as an army chaplain. After a serious injury, he was awarded a Purple Heart for rescuing some fellow soldiers from a fire set by the Nazi *Luftwaffe*.

Jimmy was fascinated by DeWeerd's war wounds. Shortly after they met, the pastor removed his shirt and let Jimmy inspect his scars.

He could almost put his fist into the scarred hole in DeWeerd's stomach. As he later confessed to Bracket. "I got sexually excited trying to put my fist into that hole."

Not everyone in Fairmount succumbed to DeWeerd's spell. Some of the older boys called him "Dr. Weird" or "Miss Priss." At the time, homosexuality was almost never mentioned. Instead, the pastor was defined as "eccentric" rather than queer, a widely adopted synonym for homosexual back then.

DeWeerd was known to round up a carful of the high school's top athletes and drive them to the neighboring hamlet of Anderson. There, he would watch them strip down and swim naked in the YMCA's swimming pool. He often invited the better-endowed and/or more receptive ones to his elegantly furnished home, where he lived with his mother, Leila DeWeerd, an aging schoolteacher.

At the time, homosexuality was interpreted as "worse than communism." One basketball player was alert to DeWeerd's sexual preference. Years later, he told a reporter that "the good pastor was always in the locker room checking out our stuff as we wandered down the corridor, bare-ass, to the shower room. Some of the guys knew of his interest and soaped themselves up a bit in the shower, so that they could produce a partial hard-on for this preacher man."

"He gave many of us blow-jobs back then," the athlete claimed. "That was a good thing for some of us because gals didn't put out much until marriage."

Jimmy would later describe the Reverend DeWeerd to William Bast, remembering him as a handsome man and rather stocky. "He had a jovial and was very kind, very loving, and his blue eyes forgave me, regardless of what I had done." He also recalled the pastor's rather full and sensuous lips.

"He put those lips to work on me, exploring every inch of my body," he confessed to Bast. "Every crevice. I lost my virginity to him."

The doctor did more than just seduce young Jimmy. He imbued him with a philosophy of life, telling him, "The more things you know how to do, and the more you experience, the better off you'll be—and that pertains to sexuality as well."

DeWeerd was the most cultured man in Fairmount. He introduced Jimmy to yoga, the bongo drums, Shakespeare, and Tchaikovsky. He also introduced him to car racing and bullfighting.

An *aficionado*, DeWeerd showed Jimmy movies of the bullfights he'd filmed in Mexico City, Seville, and Toledo, Spain. He also had a private collection of nude pictures of well-endowed bullfighters, something that probably affected Jimmy's life-long fascination with bullfighting.

DeWeerd also taught Jimmy how to drive. One of their shared highlights involved an excursion to the "Indy 500" races in Indianapolis. There, DeWeerd introduced him to the ace driver "Cannon Ball" Baker. According to Marcus, "When he got back home, the boy discussed nothing but car racing for days at a time."

Jimmy was at the DeWeerd house for dinner three or four nights a week, the Winslows putting up no objection to the frequency of those visits. After the pastor's mother retired for the evening, Jimmy and DeWeerd would read to each other or listen to classical music.

In September of 1956, DeWeerd granted an interview to *The Chicago Tribune.* "Jimmy was usually happiest stretched out on my library floor, reading Shakespeare and other books. He loved good music playing softly in the background., Tchaikovsky was his favorite."

What DeWeerd didn't tell the newspaper was that after his mother was safely asleep, he invited Jimmy to his downstairs bedroom and watched as he stripped down. He always said, "I want you naked for this workout."

As Jimmy later confessed, "He paid lip service to me. There wasn't a protrusion or hole that he missed."

Sometimes, after they'd made love, Jimmy would lie in DeWeerd's bed and indulge in what he called "spiritual talks."

The pastor said, "All of us are lonely and searching. But, because Jimmy was so sensitive, he was lonelier and he searched harder. He wanted the final answers, and I think I taught him to believe in a person's immortality. He had no fear of death because he believed, as I do, that death is merely a control of mind over matter."

"On the darker side, Jimmy was a moocher. He tried to get as much from you as possible, and if he didn't consider you worth anything to him, he immediately dropped you."

The editor of *The Fairmount News,* Al Terhune, later wrote: "Jimmy was a parasitic type of person. He hung around DeWeerd a lot, picked up his mannerisms, and absorbed all he could."

DeWeerd may not have been Jimmy's only homosexual contact as a teenager in the process of discovering himself. Two years after Jimmy died, a fellow schoolmate from Fairmount spoke to a reporter who was researching the screen legend's boyhood. Married and the father of two, the former athlete did not wish to be named. But he recalled seeing Jimmy behind the wheel of an emerald green- and cream-colored Chrysler New Yorker.

At one point, the schoolboy was introduced to the owner of the car, Jimmy's new friend, a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force.

Jimmy was said to have met him at a street fair in Marion. The schoolmate remembered the military man as good looking and well built, with a blonde crewcut. "He sure didn't look queer to me. He was very masculine. He was frequently seen with jimmy, who was always behind the wheel driving the guy's car around Fairmount. He

visited Jimmy on many an occasion, but usually they drove off together to Marion, or so I was told. That town had a hotbed motel on the outskirts."

Jimmy later told Brackett and composer Alec Wilder that "some Air Force guy introduced me to sodomy. DeWeerd preferred lip service."

He also told Bast, "Penetration at first hurts like hell until you get to lie back and enjoy it—even demand it."

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It appears at some point that Jimmy began to worry that he was a homosexual. He had shown little interest in girls before. "He wasn't popular with the girls," said Sheila Wilson. "He later looked great in the movies, but back then, we were drawn to Tab Hunter and later, to Robert Wagner. They were real cute. Jimmy wore heavy glasses and he was too short for me. When he peered at me, I felt like a mouse with a hoot owl in pursuit. Before he had major dental work done, he had unfortunate gaps between his upper front teeth, a big turn-off for me."

His most serious crush on a woman was rumored to have been with Elizabeth McPherson, who was eleven years his senior. She was a reasonably attractive art teacher who also taught physical education.

He called her "Bette," spelling it in a way inspired by the name of screen actress Bette Davis. "One night, he took her to dine at DeWeerd's house, and they sat at an elegantly decorated table laden with fine china, silver, and candles. She later claimed that "the pastor fluttered around like a butterfly. When he entered the kitchen, Jimmy, a clever mimic, made fun of his movements and whispered to me that he was 'DeQueer.'"

McPherson lived in Marion and drove to Fairmount High School every day. Since she passed the Winslow farmhouse, she made it a point to pick up Jimmy as part of her morning routine and drop him off at school. Ortense didn't like Jimmy being seen with this older woman, but apparently expressed no objection. McPherson's husband was disabled, requiring the use of crutches to move around in the debilitating aftermath of polio.

Sometimes, Jimmy shared his sketches with McPherson. She always remembered one in particular. "He was a victim being crushed by eyeballs, no doubt a representation of the probing eyes in Fairmount who disapproved of him."

McPherson had once been designated as the local high school's chaperone for a group of graduating seniors on a field trip to Washington, D.C., where there were rumors that she sponsored a beerfest where all the teenagers, male and female, got drunk. She later denied that.

Apparently, according to Jimmy, they became intimate during the trip. After his first night with her, he asked her to marry him. She turned him down for two reasons: She could not divorce her disabled husband, and there was a wide difference in their ages.

As Jimmy later told Brackett, "I was still a teenager, but I came to realize that I was capable of performing sex with both men and women. I didn't feel I had to make a choice, but could go back and forth between the sexes. Of course, because of the way men are built, they can provide that extra pleasure."

Although she later saw Jimmy in Los Angeles after her dismissal from the high school in Fairmount, "It was more of a fun thing. I got together with his beatnik friends, and he hung out with two or three friends of mine. We had beer parties on the beach, and weekend drives to Lake Arrowhead. I think he brought up marriage once or twice, but we drifted apart, although I continued to write him letters, even on the set of *Giant."*

"I did a sentimental thing," she recalled. "During that bus ride back to Indiana from Washington, I clipped off a lock of his hair while he was sleeping. I always carried it around with me."

A lock of hair was found in her handbag after she died in a car crash in 1990.

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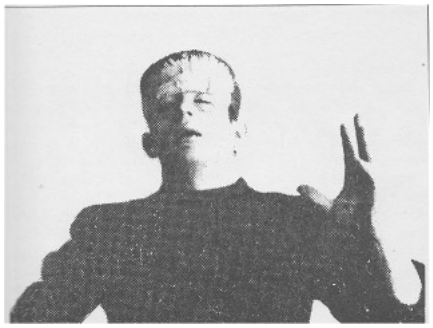
In a journal kept during his final months in Fairmount, Jimmy wrote: "Athletics may be the heartbeat of every American boy, but I think my life will be dedicated to art and drama."

Jimmy's speech and drama teacher, Adeline Brookshire (also known for a while as Adeline Nall), also had an enormous impact on Jimmy's future career as an actor. In his sophomore year, he enrolled in her speech class.

Teacher Adeline Nall..."Jimmy could work me around his little finger."

Jimmy found her diminutive, articulate, and energetic, and he later credited her with exposing him to the beauty of the English language. She was the first to interest him in acting, casting him in key roles in school plays.

"Jimmy was both difficult and a gift," she recalled years later to a reporter. "He could be moody and unpredictable. He liked to keep people off guard, and he was often rude to attract attention. One day, in the middle of class, he offered me a cigarette. I almost popped him one for that."



High school drama student James Dean as Frankenstein in *Goon With the Wind*

"If he didn't win some competition, he would pant and rant for days at a time. I recognized a natural talent in the boy. He had it. He knew he did, and I knew it, too."

"But he could not take criticism, which is bad for an actor. All actors face a lot of criticism, both from the press and from the public. He didn't like to take direction from anyone. That was also bad for an actor who had to work under a director. There was another quality he had. He knew how to play people. He could work me around his little finger."

An Unlikely Movie Star...Jimmy at Fairmount High School, watching from the bleachers.

In his sophomore year, Adeline revived that old chestnut, *The Monkey's Paw.* Since 1902, it had been performed in high schools and colleges, a play with a moral that there's nothing you might wish for that doesn't carry bad luck with it. In this play, appealing to those with a penchant for the macabre, Jimmy was cast as Herbert White, a boy who was killed because of his mother's foolish wish.

The following year (1947), Jimmy appeared as John Mugford—a mad old man who had visions—in the weirdly named *Mooncalf Mugford.* Adeline later recalled that she had to restrain Jimmy in one scene in which he practically throttled a girl cast as his wife.

That autumn, also in 1947, he appeared in the (autobiographical) play by Cornelia Otis Skinner, *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay,* set in Paris of the 1920s. In it, Jimmy interpreted the role of the playwright's father, the influential dramatic actor, Otis Skinner (1858-1942).

There's a famous photograph out there of Jimmy disguised as a Frankenstein monster in a Halloween production of *Goon with the Wind.* Jimmy was proud that, for his character as a monster, he had designed and applied his own makeup.

That play was followed by *You Can't Take It With You,* the famous Broadway hit written by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. *[Opening on Broadway in 1936, it ran for 838 performances. In 1938 it was released as a film starring Lionel Barrymore, Jean Arthur, and James Stewart.]*

In his high school's local production, Jimmy was cast as Boris Kalenkhov, a former ballet master. As a reviewer noted, he was seen "booming about, exuberant, pirouetting."

Jimmy's final performance in high school play, presented in April of 1949, was *The Madman's Manuscript*. It had been adapted from *The Pickwick Papers,* written by the then-25-year-old Charles Dickens. It was the purported memoirs of a raving lunatic, with Jimmy portraying the madman, in a *grand guignol* style. His most dramatic line was, "the blood hissing and tingling through my veins till the cold dew of fear stood in large drops under my skin, and my knees knocked together with fright!"

Presented before the National Forensic League *[an organization whose name was later changed to The National Speech and Debate Association]*, he won first prize at the state level and placed sixth at the national level. He was very upset he'd lost at the national level, and blamed it on Adeline.

After his high school graduation with the class of '49, Jimmy ranked 20th in a class of some fifty students. DeWeerd delivered the commencement address.

Jimmy told his friends and fellow seniors that he was heading for California for a reunion with his father, and that after that, he would enroll in some college on the West Coast.

His fellow seniors threw him a farewell party, at which they sang "California, Here I Come," followed by "Back Home Again in Indiana."

Early the next morning, with Jimmy aboard, a Greyhound bus pulled out of Fairmount. It would cross the plains of America until it reached Los Angeles. It was June of 1949. The war had ended—victoriously for the U.S. and its allies—only four years before, and young men by the thousands had flooded out of the military and into California seeking fame and fortune. Jimmy was included among those hopeful hordes.

His Indiana years had come to an end.

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In July of 1955, Jimmy spoke flippantly about Adeline, his former teacher: “One of my teachers was a frustrated actor,” he told a reporter from *Photoplay.* “Of course, this chick only provided the incident. A neurotic person has the necessity to express himself, and my neuroticism manifests itself in the dramatic.”

As for Adeline, in the aftermath of Jimmy’s death, she went on to become the most celebrated high school teacher of a movie star in recent memory. She made a string of media appearances, and was featured in documentaries which included *The First American Teenager* (1976). She has also toured the country, lecturing and meeting fans of her former pupil and sharing stories of his first acting roles in high school dramas.

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During his return visit to Fairmount, with his benefactor, Rogers Brackett, still conveniently far away in Chicago, Jimmy shared a reunion with Adeline Nall, his former drama coach.

As part of that venue, he addressed Fairmount High School’s small student body, talking about the Pepsi Cola commercial that had launched his career, as well as the films he’d been in, including *Fixed Bayonets!* and *Sailor Beware.* He also named and described the famous people he’d met, including Lana Turner and Joan Crawford.

He followed his short speech about breaking into the movies with the impersonation of a matador in a bullfighting ring. Donning Sidney Franklin’s blood-soaked cape, he delivered a performance that included the participation of a volunteer (a graduating senior) from the audience, who acted out the role of the bull. The show included some flashy pre-choreographed moves with Franklin’s cape which delighted the young audience.

After his speech, Jimmy played basketball with the school athletics team before heading for the showers.

After a family dinner with his aunt (Ortense Winslow) and uncle (Marcus Winslow), he headed for a reunion with the Reverend DeWeerd, which evolved into a night of sex.

The following day, at Adeline’s request, he directed the school’s drama students in a play, *Men Are Like Streetcars,* repeating, sometimes verbatim, the acting tips taught to him in Los Angeles by James Whitmore.

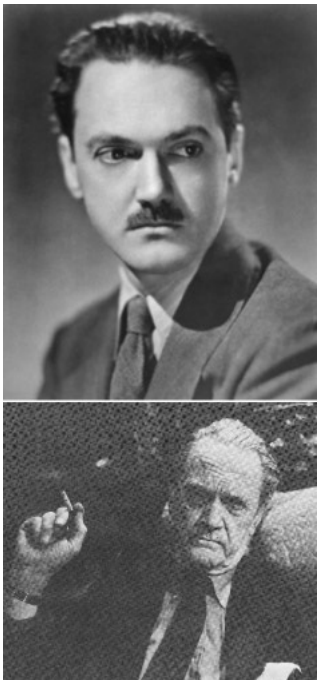
A senior drama student, Jill Corn, interpreted the role of a girl who had to be spanked. Jimmy didn’t like the way a young actor was spanking her, so he showed the class how it “was done.” He spanked Jill so hard he made her cry, and Adeline had to pull him off her.

Although Jimmy’s visit to Fairmount was short, a notification about his departure appeared in *The Fairmount News:* “James Dean and the Rev. James DeWeerd left Saturday morning (October 20) for Chicago, where they will transact business for a few days. Mr. Dean spent five days with his Fairmount relatives, Marcus and Ortense Winslow.”

Jimmy stayed four nights in Chicago in a B&B where he slept in a double bed with DeWeerd. He didn’t call Brackett at the Ambassador East until DeWeerd was out of town. Before the pastor left, he gave Jimmy two one-hundred dollar bills to help defray his upcoming expenses in New York.

Once back with Brackett in Chicago, Jimmy remained only four days with him before he grew restless and bored. Reacting to this, Brackett gave him a hundred dollars and a ticket to Manhattan aboard the *Twentieth Century Limited.*

Brackett also telephoned his composer friend, Alec Wilder, telling him to “look after Jimmy—and I don’t mean in that way!”



Stern, but urbane and kindly. Two views of composer Alec Wilder.

Wilder was a closeted homosexual, who liked young men as much as Brackett, but rarely did anything about it.

Before leaving Chicago, Jimmy, in the arms of Brackett, told him, "I feel I'll meet my destiny in New York."

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In Chicago, Brackett escorted Jimmy to the La Salle Street Station, where he caught the 5PM train to New York, scheduled to arrive there sixteen hours later. Wilder had agreed to "take your boy under my wing and look out for him until you move here yourself."

He had been a longtime resident of the Algonquin Hotel on West 44th Street. This had been the gathering place of the celebrated Algonquin Round Table that attracted writers, critics, and actors including Tallulah Bankhead, Edna Ferber (Jimmy would star in the adaptation of her novel, *Giant),* Harpo Marx, Robert Benchley, George S. Kaufman, Dorothy Parker, Harold Ross (editor of *The New Yorker),* and the acerbic critic and journalist, Alexander Woollcott.

Wilder was working on a musical composition when the call from Jimmy came in from Grand Central Station. "Hi," he said. "The Little Prince has arrived in Manhattan!"

Fortunately, Wilder was a well-read man, and he understood the literary reference. "Take a taxi to the Algonquin. You're welcome to live with me here until you settle in."

Jimmy didn't really know who Wilder was, but he had agreed to live with this stranger based on Brackett's recommendation.

Born in Rochester, New York, Wilder—as a composer—was mostly self-taught. Some of America's favorite singers, including Tony Bennett, had recorded his songs. His "While We're Young," had been recorded by Peggy Lee; "Where Do You Go?" had been recorded by Frank Sinatra; and "I'll be Around" had been recorded by the Mills Brothers. Other popular songs written by Wilder eventually included "Blackberry Winter" and "It's Peaceful in the Country."

Over dinner in The Algonquin's restaurant, Jimmy was blunt in questioning Wilder. "How did you meet Rogers? Were you guys lovers?"

"Friends, never lovers," Wilder answered. "He's a chicken hawk. I was born in 1907. One afternoon, as I was walking through the lobby here, I heard this bellowing laugh. It rang out true and honest. I felt I just had to introduce myself to this man who seemed so full of life."

"I soon discovered that Rogers had been born in Culver City (California) and that he knew half the people who had ever walked across Hollywood Boulevard. He also knew the darkest secrets of the stars—the exact size of Charlie Chaplin's dick; that Barbara Stanwyck was a dyke who had had affairs with Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich; that Cary Grant had fallen in love with his wife's son *[a reference to Barbara Hutton and Lance Reventlow];* and that the favorite erotic snack for Charles Laughton, Tyrone Power, and Monty Woolley usually included some variation of human feces."

Beginning with Wilder, his first-ever contact in New York City, Jimmy started to fabricate heroic stories about his past.

According to Wilder, "I was this stranger, and he revealed to me just what a wild young man he was. One story he told me was about how he rushed into a burning building in Chicago and saved two children from being burned alive. I decided he wasn't very bright. He wasn't really mentally developed for a twenty-one year old. Many of the people I introduced him to swallowed his tales hook, line, and sinker. I never did."

After his first day and night with Jimmy, Wilder wrote Brackett saying, "I'm happy to oblige your request, and I'll look after the boy. He's certainly not the shy type. He parades nude around my suite. I will tell you what you already know: This is a very neurotic boy, a really mixed-up kid. He tries to con everybody. There isn't an ounce of maturity in him. I suspect there never will be. He's also reckless, running out in front of moving traffic with this god damn matador cape, treating cars like they're oncoming bulls in the ring. Rogers, you can't be serious about this kid."

Wilder continued: "The spilled blood of the matador seems to hold endless fascination for him. One night, I found him sticking safety pins into himself. He told me he wanted to increase his tolerance for pain."

During the previous two days, Jimmy continuing an ongoing rant about bullfighting, making the claim to Wilder that in Mexico, "I actually danced with the most ferocious bulls in the arena.

He claimed that he was going to use the rhythmic movements of the matador as part of his stage work," Wilder said. "He then gave me what he called 'the look.' That was when he put his head down with his eyes looking up. He then stared at me like I was the bull about to die. I thought he was crazy."

When Jimmy wasn't with Wilder, he went to the movie theaters, alone, near Times Square. Once again, he sat through *A Streetcar Named Desire,* focusing on the performance of, among others, Marlon Brando. More than once, he entered one of the theaters at 1PM and left around nine hours later. For food and drink, he purchased three cokes and two bags of popcorn, which collectively comprised both his lunch and dinner.

In addition to Tennessee William's A *Streetcar Named Desire,* Jimmy became fascinated with another movie that would impact his acting style. It was the 1951 release of *A Place in the Sun,* directed by George Stevens and starring Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, and Shelley Winters. All three actors would eventually play a role in Jimmy's life during the months to come.

Movies and players that deeply influenced Manhattan newbie, James Dean: Montgomery Clift & Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun*

A Place in the Sun was a cinematic adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's novel, published in 1925, *An American Tragedy.*

Jimmy was mesmerized by Clift's brilliant performance alongside the luminous beauty of Taylor. He was also impressed with Winters' portrayal of a plain, ordinary-looking girl who gets pregnant and is subsequently drowned so that Clift can clear his road to marriage with the rich, beautiful, and socially connected girl played by Taylor. Ultimately, however, his murder of the girl played by Winters leads to his execution in the electric chair.

The day after watching the movie, Jimmy visited a library and checked out a copy of the original novel by Theodore Dreiser, reading it cover to cover in three days.

His deep regret was that he had not been awarded the role of the doomed lover played by Clift. He poured out his frustrations to Wilder. “I think you could have done it,” Wilder said. “After all, the role calls for a man who is both masculine and sensitive, in need of a lot of mothering.”

“The part would have fitted me like a second skin,” he responded. “I’m jealous of Clift. *A Place in the Sun* has made him a major star.”

Months later, Jimmy watched in dismay as both Brando and Clift lost their bids for an Academy Award, the Oscar going instead to Humphrey Bogart for his role in *The African Queen.*

At the time, Jimmy didn’t realize that eventually, he would become intimately involved with both Brando and Clift.

Making “Snaketime” with Moondog the Viking

PANHANDLING AND PERFORMING ON THE SIDEWALKS OF MANHATTAN

Alec Wilder wasn‘t the only composer Jimmy met during his early days in New York City.

One day, Jimmy—jobless, hungry, completely broke, and strolling along Bleeker Street—wanted to stop at one of the cafés for a sandwich.

Suddenly, as if in a mirage, he heard the sound of a drumbeat coming from a strange-looking sidewalk musician. He wore a dirty, tattered cloak and a Viking helmet with horns. He had a long, scruffy beard and was obviously blind.

Jimmy introduced himself to Louis Thomas Hardin, learning that his nicknames included “Moondog” and “The Viking of Sixth Avenue.” Moondog’s usual turf stretched along three blocks of Sixth Avenue between 52nd and 55th Streets, where he spent his time selling sheet music and panhandling. Often, he just stood still, silently accepting the dimes and quarters that passers-by dropped into his basket.

Drawn to the outcasts of the world, the more bizarre the more intriguing. Jimmy, with Moondog, soon developed an “odd couple” friendship. Jimmy learned that he’d been born in Kansas and had started playing the drums at the age of five. He’d made his first drum from a cardboard box. When his family moved to Wyoming, he had a tom-tom made from buffalo skin. At the age of sixteen, he’d lost his eyesight in a farm accident that involved an exploding dynamite cap. He later learned some music theory from books printed in Braille.

During World War II, he moved to New York, where, in time, he met jazz performers who included Benny Goodman and Charlie Parker. Even Arturo Toscanini and Leonard Bernstein befriended him.

“Moondog,” depicted above, was a blind musician whose performance art was often accompanied by rhythms from Jimmy as a street musician playing his bongo drums.

He made a living by selling copies of his poetry and (heavily edited) articles about musical philosophy and by performing in street concerts.

In time, Jimmy got to know him better and would soon seek him out. At first, he thought he was homeless, but found out that he occupied an apartment on the Upper West Side. Once, Jimmy visited him there. Moondog told him that his music was usually inspired by the traditions of the Native Americans he'd met in Wyoming, with input from classical music and contemporary jazz. "I mix all that with sounds I hear on the street—the noise of traffic, the sound of a baby crying."

"The chatter of wives at an open market, the melody of ocean waves, the rumbling of trains on the subway, the eerie lament of a foghorn in the harbor. When I put it all together, I call it 'Snaketime.'"

He showed Jimmy instruments he'd created, one of which was the "Trimba," a triangular percussion instrument.

On a few occasions, Moondog allowed Jimmy to participate, for tips, in street concerts. Jimmy would play his bongo drums.

"I remember one cold winter day, we'd been making music out on the street for hours—me on guitar, Jimmy on bongos," Moondog said. "We'd made about two dollars each. I said, 'Let's split and get some food.' I spent my money in a coffee shop, but he decided to go hungry and see a movie instead."

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One afternoon, as Jimmy and Alec Wilder were returning from lunch, they were walking through the lobby of the Algonquin. Coming toward them was the formidable Tallulah Bankhead, one of Broadway's great leading ladies, an actress known for her husky (and much-satirized) voice, her outrageous personality, and her devastating wit. She was also notorious for her private life, having nurtured a string of affairs with some of the leading men and ladies of the screen and stage. Her conquests had included Sir Winston Churchill, Marlon Brando, Johnny Weissmuller *("Me, Tarzan!),* and Hattie McDaniel, who had played Mammy in *Gone With the Wind.*

Unknown to Wilder, Jimmy already knew Bankhead, having met her at the home of Joan Davis when he was dating her daughter, Beverly Wills. Davis had become a regular on Bankhead's talk radio show.

There in the lobby, to Wilder's surprise, Jimmy made a running leap toward Bankhead, jumping up into her arms and wrapping his own arms around her. Wilder was stunned by this, and surprised that his trajectory hadn't knocked her down.

Then he kissed her passionately. "When they became unglued, I didn't ask how they knew each other," Wilder said. "But we did accept her invitation to a small private party later that night in her suite."

At 9PM Jimmy, with Wilder, knocked on the door of Tallulah's suite at the Algonquin. The sounds of a raucous party could be heard. To the surprise of both men, when she opened the door, Bankhead was completely nude. "Come in, *Dah-lings,*" she said. "The party is well underway, although so far, no one's fucked me yet."

Then she looked Jimmy up and down. "Perhaps my luck has changed."

Jimmy was flabbergasted that she'd be the hostess of a party in the nude, but Wilder was well aware of her antics.

When Bankhead darted off, Wilder engaged in a dialogue with Mabel Mercer, the cabaret singer. Jimmy wandered off among the thirty or so guests.

At one point, he encountered Helen Hayes. Although he hadn't seen any or her movies or stage performances, he recognized her face from the newspapers. She was the great *doyenne* of the Broadway stage, a distinguished actress short of stature and big on talent.

In a soft voice, Hayes said to Jimmy, "I told Tallulah that nudity was all right within the privacy of her suite. But I warned her to stay in her room and not run up and down the corridors in an undressed state."

"Good advice," Jimmy said, before moving on.

AT one point, Tallulah sought Jimmy out. Taking him by his arm, she led him across the room, where an actor who looked like John Barrymore stood by himself nursing a drink. "Mr. Dean, this is John Emery, my former husband. I divorced him in Reno in 1941."

After shaking Emery's hand, Bankhead made an impressive move. She unzipped her former husband's pants and pulled out a large, uncut penis. "Look at this whopper, darling." She said. "A two-hander, even though it's still soft. You don't encounter one of these monsters that often."

Smiling politely, Emery replaced his penis and zipped up again. “Oh, Tallulah, you must control yourself.” He didn’t seem all that embarrassed.

Jimmy suspected that that outrageous bit of *schtick* had been repeated many times during the course of their marriage.

The party wound down at around midnight. Before he exited, Wilder asked Jimmy, “Are you coming?”

“I’ll be back soon,” he said. “Tallulah has invited me to her bedroom. I’ll catch you later.”

At around 5AM, Wilder was awakened. Switching on the light, he saw a battered Jimmy. He didn’t have much to say. But later that morning, over breakfast, he was more talkative about what had transpired.

“Ever since I first met Tallulah, I had this fantasy about my sticking my dick into that luscious mouth of hers.” Jimmy confessed. “It has something to do with the way she moves her lips. Well, last night, my fantasy came true, plus a lot of other nightmare I didn’t contemplate. She complained that I almost choked her to death with an explosion of cream. She said it was at least as thick as the cream her old Alabama cow, Deliah, used to give when she was a girl growing up in the South.”

Three nights later, Bankhead called, inviting Jimmy and Wilder to join her at Norma’s Room, a nightclub in Harlem, a cabaret that attracted black entertainers, including Lena Horne, Louis Armstrong, and Nat King Cole.

Before the night was over, Bankhead herself rose to perform on the small stage at Norma’s. She danced the Black Bottom and sang her theme song, “Bye Bye Blackbird,” followed by hilarious impersonations of Ethel Barrymore, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Bette Davis.

As a spontaneous climax to her equally spontaneous act, she turned three cartwheels, demonstrating to the audience that she’d forgotten to wear panties.

After that night in Harlem, Bankhead faded from Jimmy’s life as fast and as impulsively as she’d entered it.

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[In the early 1960s in Key West, Bankhead was escorted to a party at the home of a local designer, Danny Stirrup. Her escort was the novelist James Leo Herlihy, who had just directed her in the touring play, Crazy October.

At one point during the drunken evening, Darwin Porter asked her, *“Is it true that you actually knew James Dean? Or is it only a rumor?”*

“No, Dah-ling, it’s the deadly truth. I got to play with his bongos and other things. He returned the favor. But he had to go and ruin it by telling me, at the end of the evening, that my mouth reminded him of Edith Piaf’s.”

Weeks after Jimmy’s death, Porter was with another novelist, James Kirkwood, during a visit to Bankhead’s apartment in Manhattan. During their visit, she claimed that she was heartbroken when news came over the TV that Jimmy had died in a car crash. “God has taken away one of his most talented and most beautiful children.”

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One night, Wilder invited Jimmy to go with him to hear his dear friend, Peggy Lee, perform at a nightclub. Jimmy was thrilled with the invitation, since Lee was one of his favorite singers.

Seated at a front row table, Wilder was delighted when she chose to sing something he himself had written and composed, “That’s the Way It Goes,” followed by his big hit, “While We’re Young.” Jimmy, as he later described them to Wilder, found the lyrics “laden with longing.”

For years, he’d read about Lee, who had been dubbed “The Queen” by Duke Ellington. She numbered Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra among her friends. Even Albert Einstein adored her. The press often documented her love affairs, including her on-again, off-again liaison with Sinatra.

To Jimmy, she seemed to sing and speak at the same time. He found her oval face beautiful, with a glittering, seductive aspect. She’d once been described as “perky, pretty, and bouncy, but genuinely soulful, world-weary, and resigned.”

Before she joined them at table after the show, Wilder told him, “Peggy lives on the dark, moody side of the boulevard of broken dreams.”

Shortly before midnight, Wilder and Jimmy welcomed her to their table. She and Wilder embraced like old friends, and Jimmy impulsively kissed her on both cheeks. “You are my dream lady,” he said.

He listened as both Wilder and Lee discussed Sinatra. “We have this mutual admiration society,” she said. “That is, when we’re not fighting. Frankie’s got a temper, as you well know.”

“The Primal Male meets the Primal Female,” Wilder said. “Your personalities just had to mesh. That is, until you guys have one of those knock-out, drag-out fights.”

Jazz singer Peggy Lee gave Jimmy “fever.”

“No human being can live with either of us for long,” she said.

When Wilder departed for the men’s room, she turned all her attention to Jimmy. “Could I come by your suite tomorrow night and be your escort to your show?” he asked.

“If it wouldn’t make Alec jealous, I’d be honored,” she said. “Is he in love with you?”

“It didn’t work out,” he said. “I’m staying with him at the Algonquin. Our relationship is totally one-sided.”

“You mean he gives you a blow-job and then calls it a night?” she asked. “I know Alec very well. I even know about his tragedy. Why he’ll never be a lover.”

“You mean…?”

“Exactly,” she said. “He admits he has the world’s smallest penis. He gets his satisfaction getting oral with some young stud like you.”

“A terrible affliction,” he said. “But he has to live with that. Fortunately, I don’t have that problem.”

“You’d better not,” she answered. “Life is too short for me to waste my time on trivia. Tomorrow night is fine. Come by at seven.”

The following night, Wilder was scheduled to attend a private dinner with the distinguished cabaret artist Mabel Mercer, whose loyal following included everyone from Sinatra to a coven of gay devotees. Wilder had written her signature song, “Did You Ever Cross Over to Sneden’s”

Jimmy told him he’d go to the movies, but at seven, he arrived at Lee’s suite at the Sherry Netherland and was shown in by a maid. When Lee appeared, he kissed her on both cheeks. For the first time, he saw her without makeup. To him, she looked like a homespun girl from the plains of North Dakota, where she’d been abused by a wicked stepmother, or so he’d heard.

In anticipation of her act, within her hotel suite, Jimmy watched her as she transformed herself into a glamorous figure, carefully coiffed and made up. She said that earlier, without makeup, on an elevator, a woman had asked her, “Are you Peggy Lee?”

“‘Not yet,’ I told her,” Lee said. “‘Catch me later, darling.’”

Miss Peggy Lee. “Until we meet again,” she told Jimmy.

Satisfied with her makeup, she told Jimmy to “Pour me a cognac, and don’t be stingy, baby. That’s a line I learned from a Greta Garbo movie.”

She informed him that before going onstage, she belted down a few cognacs to lubricate her throat.

He hailed a taxi to take her to the theater. Backstage, he accompanied her to her dressing room where she went through another elaborate check of her makeup and costume. He then accompanied her to the edge of the sightlines of the stage. Along the way, she hugged each of her musicians.

Standing in the wings, ready to go on, she breathed heavily in and out, and that seemed to give her a burst of energy. Then she muttered a soft, intimate prayer.

He heard the announcer: “Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to welcome the lady and the legend, Miss Peggy Lee!”

There was an enthusiastic reception as she walked onto the stage, illuminated by spotlights. She let out what sounded like a small scream and stamped her high heels on the floor as she burst into song.

She opened her act with her big hit from 1942, “Somebody Else is Taking My Place,” followed by her 1943 hit, “Why Don’t You Do Right?” That song had sold more than a million copies and had made her famous.

Later that night, he accompanied her back to her suite.

When William Bast came to live with him in New York, in reference to his sexual interlude with Lee, Jimmy told him, “I was nervous at first. After all, I was told that Frank Sinatra was a tough act to follow.”

“In front of me, she defined her post-performance sexual workout as ‘a coolout.’ She was winding down. Actually, she was quite funny, doing an impression of what chickens do in North Dakota when it rains. ‘They stand in the downpour and drown,’ she told me.”

“Our evening was great, some moments sublime,” Jimmy claimed.

At one point, she admitted that her taste in men hadn’t been very good except for her first husband, Dave Barbour, the guitarist and composer whom she claimed she still loved. “Finally, by one o’clock that morning, we did the dirty deed, and she made me feel like a real man. She’s not devouring like Tallulah Bankhead. Yet she is demanding in a soft way. She aims to get her satisfaction, and with me, she did. In fact, before I left her suite, I proposed marriage to her,” he told Bast.

“She didn’t outright reject me, but was very kind. She said, “Jimmy…oh, Jimmy. You sweet, vulnerable, dear boy. I adore you. But marriage would ruin everything for us. Let’s be really close friends who get together every now and then for a good fuck.”

“Okay!” he said, before passionately kissing her goodbye.

Before he left, she said, “I have this very strong feeling about you. That you’re going to make it big in the movies. I sense a great deal of hidden talent in you. You’re going to become Mr. James Dean, not Mr. Peggy Lee.”

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The singer published her memoirs, *Miss Peggy Lee,* in 1989. She remembered Jimmy, relaying a rather vanilla description of their relationship. *[She was not a “kiss-and-tell” kind of author.]*

During his filming of *East of Eden* for Warners, he visited her several times on the set of *Pete Kelly’s Blues* (released in 1955). She played an alcoholic singer, a role that would lead to an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress.

One afternoon, Jimmy watched her perform in a scene where she had to sing off-key and out of tempo. “That must have been hard for you to pull off,” he said. “You’re always on key.”

She introduced Jimmy to the stars of the film, including Edmond O’Brien, Lee Marvin, and a very flirtatious Janet Leigh. Martin Milner, another star in the film, was already known to Jimmy. In October of 1951, each of them had appeared in two separate teleplays. But whereas Milner had star roles, Jimmy was assigned small, uncredited parts. Milner eventually got together with Jimmy and recalled how they’d first met:

[In midtown Manhattan, at Cromwell’s Pharmacy, hanging out with other actors, Jimmy’s first TV role came from a pickup one afternoon when he was nursing a coke. It wasn’t from a gay producer or director, but from a fellow actor, Martin Milner.

Four years older than Jimmy, Milner still had a boyish quality to him that Jimmy found appealing. Jimmy knew

who he was, having seen him in the 1947 film, Life With Father*, where he'd played John Day, the red-haired son of William Powell, with Irene Dunne cast as his mother.*

The film also starred a very young Elizabeth Taylor. Perhaps as a means of asserting his macho credentials, Jimmy boasted to Milner, "One day, I'm gonna fuck that gal."

"Well, until she comes along, why not fuck me?" Milner asked.

"You sure get to the point, man," Jimmy said.

"I'm from Detroit, but I was raised in California," Milner said, as a sort of justification. "We move in fast when we're horny."

"Your timing is perfect," Jimmy said. "I have the hots, too."

"Let's go back to my hotel," Milner said. Jimmy followed along.

After the sex, the two young actors discovered that they genuinely liked each other, and that they wanted to be friends. They retreated to a movie together and later shared dinner together.

Milner told him that Frank Woodruff, who functioned at the time as both producer and director of the teleplay T.K.O. (Technical Knock-Out*), was going to film a teleplay for the Bigelow Theater. "I think I can get Frank to cast you in a part. It's just a small role, but at least it's work."*

The next day, he introduced Jimmy to Woodruff, who had been cast into one of the teleplay's minor parts. In it, Milner played a teenager who becomes a boxer to raise money for his father's expensive operation.

Jimmy's role was so small, he later told friends, "It's hardly worth mentioning."

He and Milner continued to see each other "for sessions in anatomy." Although they each asserted to the other that he wasn't gay, neither seemed to see anything wrong with two heterosexual actors "having a little gay sex on the side."

Milner liked Jimmy so much, he even got him another small role in a TV series that has virtually disappeared from Jimmy's radar screen. No biography seems to mention it, although his film clip with Milner is sometimes included in latter-day anthologies of Dean's early TV work.

Milner had signed to appear in two episodes of a popular TV series, The Trouble With Father*, starring Stu Erwin as a bumbling dad. Jimmy was hired for a role. He appears with Milner, who played Drezel Potter, the boyfriend of Joyce, a high school student whose father is Erwin. In their respective roles, Milner speaks of his love for Joyce, and Jimmy worries that he'll never find anyone to love him.]*

Martin Milner, later best known for his steady roles as a staple in *Route 66 (1960-64) and Adam-12* (1968-75). Jimmy found him

"boyishly comforting with an adorable innocence."

In her autobiography, Peggy Lee wrote: "Jimmy used to come over to visit me in my trailer while I was filming *Pete Kelly's Blues.* He'd arrive like a friendly cat. We were two shy people in a little room being comfortable with each other. Jimmy was always speeding around in his car, and it worried me. He was to die in a crash in Paso Robles before he completed *Giant,* his last film. He was unusually quiet, an intense person, and he wanted to be friends with me. He was one of those people you could not forget. You could feel things simmering and sizzling inside him, and his silence was very loud."

***

During his first days in Manhattan, Jimmy admitted, "I was overwhelmed by the city. It's a frightening place. I rarely left the area around Times Square."

Eventually, he began to branch out, getting up early one morning and walking all the way to the Battery *[Manhattan's southernmost tip]* where he rode the ferry to Staten Island. Once he rode the subway to Brooklyn, continuing all the way to Coney Island, where he ordered a hot dog.

He had arrived in New York with about five hundred dollars in his pocket. He later said, perhaps in exaggeration, that "I spent at least three-fourths of that watching movies to escape from my isolation, loneliness, and depression."

He knew the time had come for him to move out of Alec Wilder's suite and into cheaper lodgings. As he later claimed, "Alec was falling in love with me, and I could not reciprocate. I no longer paraded nude in front of him. I didn't want to throw temptation at him. The last couple of times he tried to make love to me, I was as limp as a dishrag. It was all so embarrassing."

When he informed Wilder that he planned to move out, the composer recommended the Iroquois Hotel, almost immediately next door, also on East 44th Street. It was clean and decent, but much cheaper. Dating from 1899, the Iroquois was one of the most historic in New York City.

During his first night there, he met the actress Barbara Baxley in the lobby. Born in California, Baxley, a life member of Actors Studio, was one of Tennessee Williams' favorite actresses. She appeared in the Broadway production of his comedy, *Period of Adjustment.*

In Key West during the filming of a movie based on Darwin Porter's bestselling novel, *Butterflies in Heat,* Porter invited both Baxley and another star of the movie, Eartha Kitt, for dinner at a popular local restaurant, The Pier House. Over drinks, both women discussed their emotional and sexual involvements with Jimmy. But whereas Kitt had developed a deep friendship with the actor, Baxley said that she never really got to know him. Ironically, she would eventually be cast as the malevolent nursemaid in *East of Eden.*

"When we first met at the Iroquois, I didn't know who he was, and he sure as hell didn't know who I was either," Baxley said. "We spent a weekend together. He was very frank, telling me he needed to reassert his manhood 'after having to service so many faggots.' Those were his words—not mine."

Barbara Baxley...An affinity for gay men

Baxley found him amazingly candid when speaking about himself. He told her, "I'm serious minded, an intense

little devil, terribly *gauche* and so tense I don't see how people stay in the same room with me. I know I wouldn't tolerate myself, if I had a choice."

He also told her, "I know the best is yet to come for me in my career. But I also know that when stardom arrives, it will be one hell of a disappointment."

Baxley also confessed that she wanted the relationship to last "at least through a season," but I knew I could never hold onto him. He wanted to wander, and there was no way in hell I could change his mind."

"I didn't find out about all the gay stuff until later. I was used to homosexuals, having been surrounded by them all my life. I never criticized a gay person."

Sleepless, Jimmy Wanders the Lonely Streets of the City That Never Sleeps

Installed at last in his new, and private, lodgings, Jimmy seemed to adopt as his own the rhythms of New York —a city that never sleeps. He became an insomniac, roaming the streets after dark, stopping in at late-night cafés and taverns, nursing a drink in one dive after another for many hours at a time. In California, he'd been tanned and healthy-looking, but he soon took on that New York pallor, and even developed bags under his eyes based on the cigarettes, coffee, and liquor he consumed late at night.

Even though he lived only a few doors away, Jimmy could be seen on most days sitting on the bellhops' bench at the Algonquin, watching well-heeled guests come and go.

Sometimes, Wilder joined him there, later recalling that he was brilliant at impressions. "He could imitate everybody from Cary Grant to Jerry Lewis. But his best were Laurence Olivier as Heathcliff and Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara."

As Wilder remembered it, Jimmy constantly bragged about himself.

"I have always lived the life of an artist," he told Wilder. "I studied the violin. I learned to tap dance better than Eleanor Powell. I gave standing room only concerts. In a play, I won first prize in Indiana. Most of all, I like to create art such as sculpture and paintings. If I fail as an actor, and I don't expect to, I'm sure I could become one of the world's greatest matadors."

To the folks back home in Indiana, he wrote: "I've discovered a whole new world in New York. A new way of thinking. This town is the end. It's talent that counts here. You've got to stay with it or get lost. I like it. New York's a fertile, generous city if you can accept the violence and the decadence."

As he grew more confident, he took longer and longer walks, at one time claiming that he strolled the entire north-to-south length (approximately 13 miles) of Manhattan's Broadway. Once, he walked to the Battery and rode the ferryboat over to Staten Island, where he walked along the decaying waterfront, a reminder of the borough's rich maritime heyday in the 19th Century.

Back in the Times Square neighborhood, he looked at all the big names appearing on the marquees of Broadway theaters, wondering if his own name would ever be up in lights like Marlon Brando's was when he starred as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

In Greenwich Village, he adopted the Minetta Tavern *[113 MacDougal Street],* in existence since 1937, his favorite hangout. One night, or so it was reported, Jimmy was seen there in an intimate dialogue with Jack Kerouac. The wannabe actor and the future author of *On the Road* were seen leaving the tavern together.

Later, after Jimmy became famous, the Chelsea Hotel's night manager claimed that Jimmy had spent the night in Kerouac's bedroom.

He wrote to Rogers Brackett, who was still in Chicago, that the money he'd brought to New York soon dwindled to $44.16. "I counted every penny," he wrote. "That's all I've got left. I'm leaving the Iroquois today and checking into the YMCA on West 63rd Street. That's right near Central Park, where I can sit on a park bench and dream about my glorious future on Broadway. Please send $1,200 to Alec at the Algonquin. I'll go by every day to see if you've sent the big bucks."

Brackett did not send any money. Nor did he answer the letter. Jimmy was forced to accept a job washing dishes in a seedy tavern on West 45th Street, patronized by drug addicts, hustlers dressed as midnight cowboys, female hookers past their prime, and pimps peddling "drugs and pussy," as Jimmy put it. "I didn't last long. The manager said that the dishes looked even dirtier after I washed them."

He was frequently seen at Cromwell's Pharmacy at Rockefeller Plaza. In those days, it was known as "The Poor

Man's Sardi's."

"It reminded me of Schwab's on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood," Jimmy said. Management let actors spend hours sitting there, waiting for job offers or making calls to their agents. There was a bank of pay phones for that purpose.

Jerry's Bar on 53rd Street at Sixth Avenue became one of Jimmy's favorite hangouts. He was frequently seen there, often in the company of struggling out-of-work actors, each trying to get by, wondering where their next meal would come from. Jerry Lucci, who owned the tavern, would occasionally feed Jimmy when he had no money —a bowl of soup, a hamburger with French fries. Sometimes, Jimmy stole the packets of catsup placed on every table. Later, back at the YMCA, he'd squeeze the catsup from its foil containers into cupful of hot water, thereby creating an *ersatz* form of tomato soup. Sometimes, he'd wander into a cafeteria, where he could usually make off with some rolls from the baskets of bread and crackers left there for paying customers.

Once, Lucci invited Jimmy into the kitchen and taught him how to make a spaghetti dinner. "It's cheap and it's good!" he told Jimmy.

"For months, Jimmy wore the same jacket and slacks he'd brought with him from Hollywood," Wilder said. "His clothes always looked like they needed a date with a dry cleaner. I didn't want to start lending him money, but I took pity on him and often gave him a few dollars for food. He also ran up a bill at the barbershop in the Iroquois. I paid the tab there because he needed to look well-groomed for auditions."

Bryan Lewis, an out-of-work actor who never seemed to find a job, met Jimmy at Jerry's Bar. "A lot of actors—at least the better-looking ones, hustled, often having sex with middle aged married men who wanted a quickie before heading back home to the wifey and kids. I made extra bucks that way, too."

"At first, I didn't think Jimmy was a hustler. But one day, when he was desperate for money, he showed up in a transparent fishnet shirt that was sort of mauve."

"He wore the tightest jeans ever seen on a human body. He'd bleached the crotch, and his genitals were clearly visible, completely outlined. He might as well have been nude. I saw him walk out with two older queens who always came in looking for fresh meat."

Jimmy did make some friends his own age. A native of the Boston area, Richard Gearin had served as a soldier in Korea. His post-war job was at the Greyhound Bus Station near Times Square on 50th Street. He remembered meeting Jimmy, who was carrying a copy of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.*

"When Jimmy ran out of money and couldn't pay for a room at the YMCA, he crashed at my pad." Gearin lived way up at 110th Street at Amsterdam Avenue.

Gearin also said that Jimmy developed a pastime. He liked to go ice skating at Rockefeller Center. "He was no Sonja Henie, the Norwegian champ, but he became quite an expert. Once, he discussed the possibility that he might become a professional ice skater."

His new friend also went with Jimmy to the opening of two movies in which he'd briefly appeared: *Fixed Bayonets!* at the Rivoli Theatre and *Sailor Beware* at the Mayfair. *[These films opened, respectively, in November of 1951 and in January of 1952.]*

Around 1985, Gearin still retained the fondest memories of Jimmy. For a while, in 1985, he actually lived for a while on the Winslow farm in Fairmount as the guest of Marcus Winslow, Jr. and Mary Lou Winslow, Jimmy's relatives.

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The time had come for Jimmy to move ahead with his career in the theater or on television. After all, that's why he had come to New York. Before leaving Hollywood, he'd been provided with the contact number of James Sheldon, who at the time was working for Young & Rubicam, the Manhattan-based advertising agency.

Back in Hollywood, the director for CBS, Ralph Levy, had told him that Sheldon was well connected and that he might send him out for some tryouts for acting gigs. Subsequently, Levy had called Sheldon with news that Jimmy was on his way to New York, asking if he could do something to help him get launched.

"Ralph was directing and sometimes producing shows for Jack Benny, Gracie Allen, and George Burns, and was a good friend of mine," Sheldon said. "I promised to do what I could, and said I'd give Jimmy a helping hand in Manhattan. Actually, I soon forgot about my promise until one afternoon quite a bit later. Jimmy called my office. I wasn't too interested, but I didn't want to go back on my promise to Ralph, so I invited him to my office the following afternoon. I was yet to become a director, so I didn't know if I'd be able to help him."

"Right on time, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Jimmy walked into my office," Sheldon said. "He was poorly dressed, a little shy, and wore glasses. I didn't immediately see that he was going to set Broadway on fire like Brando did. Reviewers referred to Brando as 'a walking streak of sex.' Jimmy was more like an Indiana farmboy, but there was something there. If he took off the glasses, dressed more provocatively, he might look sexy. He had a pretty face."

"I asked him to do a reading for me from the comedy-drama series *Mama.* He was very good. I smelled a whiff of Brando, and a whole spray of Monty Clift, yet he was different from those guys. There was something unique about him. It wouldn't have hurt if he'd grown a few inches taller back in Indiana."

"I had friends who were producing a TV show, *Mama.* The role of Nels had been played by Dick Van Patten, but he'd gotten an induction notice from the Army. I called over there and got Jimmy an audition."

He confessed that he hated auditions. "It's like having to strip down jaybird naked while an asshole appraises your stuff. But I'm game."

Mama, the TV drama/comedy, had been inspired by the Broadway hit, *I Remember Mama,* a 1944 play written by John Van Druten based on a Norwegian immigrant family in San Francisco during the early 20th Century. Marlon Brando had made his Broadway debut in the key role of Nels, the part now up for grabs within the play's adaptation into a TV series.

Jimmy met with Doris Quinlain, the assistant producer, and she was impressed with his audition. She arranged for another audition with the director, Ralph Nelson, the following afternoon.

Nelson, too, was impressed. He later recalled, "Jimmy was with us for about two weeks. He got along at first. He'd learned that I, too, had been an actor before going off to war."

Depicted above is the original cast of the 1950s TV series *Mama*. Dick Van Patten, seated on the lower left, played Nels. Jimmy almost got the role. Irene Dunne starred in the screen version.

Born to a Swedish American family in Long Island, Nelson had worked with the Lunts, Katherine Cornell, and Leslie Howard. After the war, he returned to Broadway and, in the years to come, he would direct Cliff Robertson in *Charly* in 1968, which brought him a Best Actor Oscar. Nelson also directed such pictures as the comedy, *Father Goose,* with Cary Grant.

"Jimmy turned a bit hostile the day he learned that Brando had made his Broadway debut as Nels," Nelson said. "Perhaps he feared that some critics would remember Brando in the role and how great he'd been. Jimmy sensed that the Nels character on TV had been watered down to a more vanilla version. The part of the obedient son didn't really appeal to Jimmy that much. He would have preferred to play a more rebellious character."

As it happened, Van Patten returned to the role. At his induction, and after a physical examination, he was classified as 4-F. Returning to the studio, he said, "I guess the Army doctor didn't get turned on juggling my balls. I'm back."

Even though he didn't really like the role, Jimmy was terribly disappointed. Yet he was proud to have been cast. He told Sheldon, "Even though I lost the part, I did get cast on talent alone. That's a big difference between New York and Hollywood. In Tinseltown, I would have had to sleep with some jerk on the chance I might just get the role."

Had Jimmy stayed with the part of Nels, he might never have been the movie star James Dean. *Mama* as a TV series ran until 1957, and Van Patten went on to more acclaim when he appeared in an even more popular TV series, *Eight is Enough* (1977-1981).

When Jimmy became famous, cast members of *Mama* remembered him. Rosemary Rice, cast at Katrin, the teenage daughter, recalled, "Dean was just too serious for the role. Dick, in contrast, played Nels with more humor, the way the part was written, He was much better than Dean, who was often dark and moody. I felt uncomfortable around him."

Even though Van Patten reclaimed his role, he and Jimmy became friends. "We hung out together. There were no hard feelings. I took him to poker games that actors played after the Broadway shows shut down for the night. They were held at the old Forrest Hotel on 49th Street. Jimmy never played, but just sat and watched. We'd send him out for beer and cigarettes."

"We'd often meet at the stage door of the Alvin Theater after I finished a performance. Sometimes, we'd go over to Jerry's, where he was quite popular. One night, he shared the secret of his acting technique with me."

"Never learn your lines too well," Jimmy said. "That way you can appear to be searching for what to say next. It's more realistic that way. True to real life."

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Jimmy didn't have just a business relationship with Sheldon. It developed into an intimate friendship. Some biographers have suggested that they were once roommates and that they may have been involved with each other on a sexual level. But Sheldon told reporters over the years that their relationship was close but platonic. They did not live together. At the time that Jimmy met Sheldon, he was married and living with his wife at Gramercy Park South. Jimmy often came over for dinner.

"I was a few years older than Jimmy, and he was still a bit green when I met him," Sheldon said. "I certainly was better connected, and he seemed to take advantage of that. He took more than he gave, but was a good friend nevertheless. Whenever he was broke, he turned on that little boy lost charm, and I gave him a few bucks. In all, he was a very lovable guy."

Sheldon became a TV director, and even helmed Jimmy in two made-for-television movies, *The Bells of Cockaigne* and *Harvest.* Sheldon also would direct several episodes of *McMillan & Wife*, starring Rock Hudson, who by then had only bad memories of Jimmy.

In time, Sheldon became a major TV director. One reporter claimed, "He practically wrote the book on how to direct a TV drama." He would helm some 1,000 TV dramas or comedies, including everything from *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* to *Batman;* from *M*A*S*H** to *The Dukes of Hazard.*

He is often credited with discovering James Dean, though others have cited that honor for themselves.

"Jimmy was a very moody person who had a great smile and charm and loved to work," Sheldon said. "That was his whole life. And he really cared about what he did. And he did it in his own way, which didn't always conform to other people's way of doing things. And that kind of quality was an original quality. It was his. Sometimes, he would sit there. Wouldn't say a thing. And one moment, he'd be smiling and sparkling. And then he'd be aloof. I don't think he was being rude. I think he was wrapped up in what he was doing."

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The most important thing Sheldon did for Jimmy involved introducing him to a theatrical booking agent, Jane Deacy. Ironically, although her name and contact information had already been supplied to Jimmy in Hollywood by Dick Clayton (who would become his future agent), he didn't initiate any contact with her until Sheldon arranged it.

At the time, Deacy worked for the Louis Shurr Agency, where she'd begun her career as a switchboard operator.

Deacy would play a major role in Jimmy's career. The moment he entered her office, she intuitively sensed that she'd encountered an actor of unique talent.

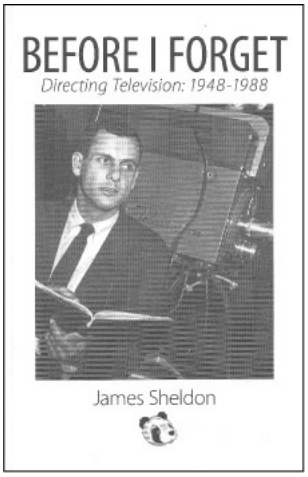
"Jane and Jimmy really hit it off from the first," Sheldon said. "Of course, like all of Jimmy's friendships, it was a love-hate relationship depending on his mood *du jour."*

In time, he was calling her "Mom," and indeed she did mother him. "More than anyone else, Deacy helped

make Jimmy a star," claimed Alec Wilder. "She was more than his agent. Actually, a friend and unofficially, a parent."

When she moved out of the Louis Shurr Agency and established her own agency at 60 East 42nd Street, he went with her. In time, she built an impressive list of other clients, including Marge and Gower Champion, Martin Landau (who became a friend of Jimmy's), Larry Hagman, Pat Hingle, and George C. Scott.

Deacy's first job for Dean was on the Saturday night CBS TV show, *Beat the Clock,* produced by Mark Goodson and Bill Todman and hosted by Bud Collyer. Jimmy's first gig was not on camera; rather, he was hired to teach contestants how to act out, spontaneously, various sight-and-situation gags.



Cover art for James Sheldon's memoir, several pages of which were devoted to his memories of directing James Dean in TV dramas.

He was told to rehearse the contestants for their funny tidbits, and he turned out to be an expert coach. "His sense of the absurd, not to say the silly, was highly developed," said Venable Herndon, a playwright. "He could open himself up to the zaniest nonsense and act it into reality without the slightest embarrassment."

For this coaching, Jimmy was paid five dollars a day. A TV producer at CBS later claimed that "Jimmy got the sack because he was just too good and showed up the contestants. Any stunt you came up with, he could pull off. He performed like a professional and the premise of the show was that contestants needed to be awkward amateurs."

[The producers of Beat The Clock*, Goodson and Todman, would go on to produce some of the longest-running game shows in TV history, including* The Price is Right, Family Feud, To Tell The Truth, I've Got a Secret, *and* What's My Line?]

"Jimmy really needed someone—a mother-like figure—and that was Jane," Sheldon said. "She got behind him and pushed and shoved him into greatness. From the beginning, she knew she had something hot to handle, and she set out to get him work. Boy, did she come through. He did an amazing number of TV shows, some with big names like Ronald Reagan, Anne Jackson, Jessica Tandy, John Forsythe, John Carradine, Rod Steiger, and Betsy Palmer."

Sometimes, Jimmy would disappear for hours at a time, and Deacy could not reach him. When asked where he'd been, he told her he'd been sitting on a park bench in Central Park. "The greenery reminds me of my boyhood growing up in Indiana."

TV Director and "Unstable Homosexual," Robert Stevens

JIMMY HOOKS UP WITH "THE DRACULA OF MANHATTAN"

After Jimmy failed in his attempt to join the TV cast of *I Remember Mama*, his friend, James Sheldon, continued to solicit roles for him in teleplays. One friend he sent him to was Robert Stevens, a producer/director who from

1948 to 1952 helmed 102 episodes of *Suspense Theater* for TV.

Born in New York, Stevens was eleven years older than Jimmy, but the two men, with completely different backgrounds, bonded almost immediately. Each of them seemed to have met a kindred spirit.

When the set and stage designer Stanley Haggart once asked Jimmy about his relationship with Stevens—he'd heard rumors at his TV studio—Jimmy was not forthcoming. He merely called Stevens "My Dracula of the Underground."

In a candid moment years later in Hollywood, Stevens discussed Jimmy with director Alfred Hitchcock and some of his associates. "Both Jimmy and I had a fire raging within us that mere missionary position type sex could not put out the flames."

Stevens immediately cast Jimmy in one of the TV episodes of his long-running series, *Suspense Theater,* appearing opposite actor William Redfield. In 1959, Stevens would recall that casting decision to a reporter. "Dean seemed to me to be very intense and ambitious, and he didn't strike me as being a very good actor. That proves how wrong I was."

Stevens might not have been that impressed with Jimmy as an actor, but he was powerfully attracted to him both as a dark lover between the sheets and as an ideal companion to accompany him on his nightly prowls through underground New York in the wee dark hours of the night.

In spite of drawing mixed reviews from his co-workers, Stevens had a long career spanning four decades as both a film director and producer. Hitchcock hired him for some episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents,* and even Bob Hope used him to helm *Bob Hope Presents Chrysler Theater.* Stevens also worked with Ronald Reagan, the host of *General Electric Theater,* and he also directed the pilot film for Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone.* He also directed dozens of plays for *The United States Steel Hour, Playhouse 90,* and *The Armstrong Circle Theater,* plus various individual episodes of many other TV series.

Partly because of his erratic personality, his work fell off in the 1970s, but before that, he also directed some big screen features, including *Never Love a Stranger* (1958), featuring a relatively unknown Steve McQueen along with John Drew Barrymore. Based on a Harold Robbins novel, *Never Love a Stranger* featured a miscast McQueen in the role of a Jewish lawyer.

Stevens later told his gay friends, "I once visited McQueen and Barrymore when they shared a hotel room. I found both of them buck naked wandering about and stoned. I patted both of their asses and gave each of them a blowjob."

He also directed a young Jane Fonda in *In the Cool of the Day* (1963), which was nothing more than a glorified soap opera set against the lush backdrop of Greece.

Producer Franklin Heller learned of Stevens' link to Jimmy. He had hired Jimmy before, having offered him a starring role in his teleplay, *Death Is My Neighbor.* "Stevens was definitely from *The Twilight Zone,* for which he'd created the pilot. Yet he was exceptionally talented in the days when TV was in its infancy and anything could go wrong, especially during live broadcasts. He brought imagination to the medium and his own kind of brilliance. Management tolerated his erratic behavior in spite of all the rumors circulating about his personal life. He held onto his job mainly because he was so god damn good at it."

John Peyser, another director at CBS, had helmed Jimmy in *Death Is My Neighbor*. He was called to fill in for Stevens when he didn't show up for work. "The guy would often blow his cork," Peyser said. "I'd be called in at the last minute to direct a script I hadn't even read. Rumors were circulating that Dean and Stevens were up to no good. Stevens was known at the studio as an unstable homosexual."

Any good-looking actor in New York at the time soon became aware that starring in a teleplay by Stevens usually involved a workout on his casting couch. By the dozens, actors—even those who were ostensibly straight—surrendered to his demands. The doorman at Stevens' apartment house once reported that on a Saturday afternoon and night, at least nine actors came and went from his apartment, usually spending less than an hour per visit.

Sheldon did not mention Stevens in his memoirs, but did tell a reporter than on a chance encounter in 1987, two years before Stevens' death, he saw him on the street. Stevens, living in retirement, invited him to lunch, during which time he revealed that he and Jimmy had been sexually intimate.

A sophisticated man, Sheldon was aware of Jimmy's penchant for associations with strange bedfellows. "He hooks up with the castigated, those whose lives are on the fringe. Point out someone as a mainstream reject, and Jimmy immediately gravitates to them. He was especially attracted to those who had been badly wounded and had a very negative attitude toward life—a creep, really. Jimmy would go out of his way to get close to such a person. You never knew who he would show up with next."

Hired by Stevens, actor William Redfield appeared with Jimmy in an episode of *Suspense,* and would always remember what a horrendous experience it had been. This New Yorker, born in 1927, was close to Jimmy in age, but what he'd experienced was wider and more varied in its range. As a boy, he had appeared on Broadway in the 1938 production of *Our Town.* Later, he would star in such prestigious Broadway plays as *A Man for All Seasons, Hamlet,* and *Barefoot Boy with Cheek.*

[Redfield's best known film role involved an appearance in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest *(1975), starring Jack Nicholson. It was during its filming that his doctors diagnosed him with leukemia, which caused his early death at the age of 49 on August 17, 1976.]*

Stanley Haggart met Redfield on the opening night of *Midgie Purvis* (1961), a Mary Chase play starring Tallulah Bankhead. She had dedicated the play to Haggart. Over a late-night dinner at Sardi's, Haggart, Tallulah, and Redfield talked about Jimmy. Tallulah and Redfield, of course, had had very different experiences with him.

"In our teleplay for *Suspense,* I was to throw Dean a knock-out punch," Redfield said. "I had done a bit of boxing at the YMCA, but I was no Rocky Graciano. I was going to give him a theatrical punch, however, during rehearsal, I missed his face by at least two inches."

Jimmy looked at him with disappointment. "Come on, Billy boy," he said. "You can do better than that. Hit me like you mean it, mother-fucker!"

"Are you kidding?" Redfield asked. "I'd bloody your nose."

"That's what I want you to do," Jimmy said. "When we go on the air, I want you to leave me a bloody mess." Then he asked a bizarre question. "Would you make lemonade without any lemons? On the show, strike me like you're Jack Dempsey and some whore had cut off your dick in the middle of the night when you were asleep. Didn't the Actors Studio teach you about realism?"

"Against my instincts, I did hit Dean during the telecast," Redfield claimed. "A really powerful punch. Like he requested, he was a bloody mess when he hit the floor. It was not stage blood, but the real thing. At least, the critics praised our realistic acting."

After the broadcast, Redfield went to Jimmy's dressing room, where he found him trying to stop his nosebleed. "I apologized profusely. I saw that his jaw had started to swell. 'I'll never forgive myself,' I told him. He finally stopped bleeding and looked up at me—not with hatred, but with love in his expressive eyes."

"If there's anything I can do for you, name it," Redfield continued. "Anything to make it up to you."

"You *can* do something, as a matter of fact," Jimmy said. "That K.O. from you really turned me on."

"Then he grabbed me and kissed me passionately, feeding me his tongue."

"The boy had fed me his tongue as well," Tallulah chimed in that night at Sardi's. "In fact, he stuck more than his tongue in my mouth, *Dah-ling."*

Jimmy Gets Kinky

AT LATE, LATE SHOWS IN NEW YORK'S SEXUAL UNDERGROUND

Jimmy's nocturnal prowls with Robert Stevens are mired in mystery. The main source of information about them come from two very different sources, one of whom was Bill Gunn, Jimmy's African American friend, a playwright, novelist, actor, and film director, a virtual Renaissance man.

Their descriptive details originated from Mark Ducus, a close friend of Stevens. Ducus tried to peddle salacious details about Jimmy's nocturnal adventures to Robert Harrison, publisher of *Confidential Magazine,* but Stevens threatened to retaliate with a multi-million dollar lawsuit for libel. Likewise, also under threats of a lawsuit, Stevens discouraged many other Dean biographers from writing about his relationship with Jimmy.

On several occasions, Ducus accompanied Jimmy and Stevens during their explorations of New York's sexual underground. Ducas told Jimmy that he and Stevens "used to be lovers, but now we're just sisters on the prowl for male flesh."

"Most of the places we visited would have been shut down by the cops if they knew of their existence," Ducus claimed. "Maybe they'd been bribed. When Dean ventured into these scenes from the sexual fringe, he seemed fascinated by how New York's denizens of the deep lived out their fantasies."

"Homosexuality in the early 1950s was known as 'the love that dared not speak its name,'" Ducas said. "The world that Stevens presented to Dean had nothing to do with love, and everything to do with sex. At the time,

millions of New Yorkers were unaware of this bizarre twilight world, at least some of it happening within buildings in their immediate neighborhoods."

"One secret club back in the 50s was the Bull Pit, and it operated in Queens in what looked like a ballroom, perhaps from the Gay 1890s, so to speak," Ducus claimed. "It was still gay, but with a different meaning. Entrance cost $25—if the bouncer approved of you. Maybe a lot more if the entertainment was special that night."

"The owners hired as many as twenty well-built hustlers, each of whom performed really dirty strip acts. When they'd finished, they assembled and lay down in the center of the room. They were on their backs and spread-eagled, positioned into what the promoters called "a wheel of lust."

"The patrons were then invited to perform fellatio, or whatever, on the men, moving from one hustler—each with an erection—to the next every time a bell went off. Sometimes, when someone was fellating an especially delectable man, he had to be urged to move on to the next recipient."

"That went on for a bit, but erections are only temporary," Ducus said. "At the sound of a drumbeat, a patron was supposed to stay down on whichever hustler he had reached up until that point until he climaxed. When that *came,* so to speak, the show was over."

"It was all such fun," Ducus said. "Jimmy seemed to enjoy it very much—in fact, Stevens urged that he configure himself as one of the performers some night, forming part of the wheel. He didn't say no, but told us he'd have to give it serious thought. I didn't go out with the guys every night, so I never learned whether he got involved or not."

The trio of nightcrawlers often patronized an illegal bar in an old warehouse in the West Twenties, right off Manhattan's West Side Highway. Its cover charge was $40 a night. For that, the patrons would be allowed to drink all the beer they wanted.

In the backroom were seven claw-footed bathtubs, in which naked men—some of them drunk, some of them drugged—had passively positioned themselves.

Tanked up on beer, patrons of the bar were invited to urinate on the men in the tubs, in many instances aiming their streams of urine directly into the recipients' faces. "Victims" within the tubs rotated frequently throughout the course of the night, some of them, soaked with piss, returned to unleash warm streams of urine on whomever had replaced them within the tubs. As the evening wore on, the stench of urine was perceived by many as desirable, and in some cases, erotic.

"Jimmy was a real 'golden shower queen' and loved all the action," Ducus said. "In one night, he must have gone to the backroom a half-dozen times to relieve himself of all that beer. Later, I heard that in Hollywood he got involved with some pissing scandals on the sets of *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Giant."*

Both Stevens and Jimmy, according to Ducas, were especially turned on by bondage, "real S&M stuff." Sometimes accompanied by Ducas, but usually as a pair, Stevens and Jimmy visited a large, old-fashioned apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

"I went with them only once, but I heard that the owner featured a variety of different exhibitions. The night I was there, he'd hired five Mandingo types. We were told that all of them had performed previously as 'Superman' in porn shows in Havana, venues for the most part attended by voyeuristic American tourists. Each of the performers had a monstrous dick."

"A lilywhite boy, no more that fourteen, was brought out. He'd been blindfolded. He was tied up and positioned on his stomach, his legs spread-eagled, and his rosebud was exposed to a full view of the audience, poor little thing. Then the Cubanos went to work on him. The kid screamed and pleaded with them to stop, but he

was brutally sodomized by one after the other. His screams eventually died down to a long-suffering whimper. He was finally carried off from center stage, a bloody mess in need of stiches. I don't know what eventually happed to the kid. He probably ended up dead in some seedy alley."

The most bizarre of the stories that circulated about the nocturnal trawls of Stevens and Jimmy through Manhattan's sexual underground might have been apocryphal, but Ducas swore that the story was true. Later in life, Bill Gunn, Jimmy's closest African-American friend, claimed that Jimmy had relayed a similar story to him as well.

It is possible that it was Stevens who (formally) introduced Jimmy to the phenomenon of necrophilia—that is, an obsession, sometimes erotic, with corpses. As Jimmy told Gunn, "Back at Fairmount High, teachers didn't go into the subject all that much."

[Of course, necrophilia has existed for centuries, with covert references to it in the underground gothic or vampire literature of England's Victorians. More recently, its adherents have encountered like-minded cohorts in large cities like L.A., London, and New York.

It has happened that a necrophiliac will make a deal with a seedy funeral parlor, whose staff might alert them when a young man or woman, perhaps dead in an accident at the peak of their beauty, is brought in for embalming or cremation. Covens of necrophiliacs have, in some cases, convened for some kind of communal encounter with the corpse. In less extreme cases, aficionados assemble for ghoulish sessions that are simulated without the actual presence of a corpse.

Allegedly, Stevens informed Jimmy that he was a necrophiliac voyeur.]

According to Ducus, Stevens once arranged for Jimmy to pose as a recently deceased fetish object for an assemblage of necrophiliacs. In preparation for his role, after submitting to a heavy application of body make-up, applied with the intent of producing a deathly pallor, he climbed into a coffin in a darkened room and closed his eyes, pretending to be dead.

One by one, the necrophiliacs fellated the "corpse."

"Dean was a crazy loon, and he would do anything," Ducas said. "He accepted the role on a dare from Stevens. Everything happened in silence. Dean never opened his eyes during the ceremony. I found the whole thing disgusting. Later, Jimmy told me it was one of the most exciting sexual thrills of his life. Sometimes, I suspected his elevator didn't go to the top floor.:"

"Later, Stevens and I got into a fight over this cute but very fucked-up Puerto Rican kid, and we never spoke again," Ducas said. "I'm sure that he and Dean drifted away from each other after Jimmy returned to Hollywood for other dreams and other adventures. I heard he took up car racing."]

[Before the end of his life, Stevens had retired to Westport, Connecticut. The police rushed him to the hospital after they discovered him—robbed, bludgeoned, and bloodied by some unknown assailant—within his home. He died shortly thereafter, on August 7, 1989, at the age of 68, of cardiac arrest.

Stevens was known to solicit strange men, some of them hitchhikers from beside the highways, and bring them back to his residence. There was speculation that he had encountered a psychotic hustler. No arrest was ever made.]

A Fascination for Coffins

In Indiana, James Dean Rehearses Himself for His Early Death

Jimmy would once again retreat to the interior of a coffin, but under completely different circumstances. This time, his ghoulish act would be photographed and displayed around the world.

The story began in Hollywood with his chance encounter with photographer Dennis Stock during the weeks preceding the release of his first major film, *East of Eden.*

Every Sunday afternoon, Nicholas Ray held a *soirée* within his suite at the Château Marmont on the Sunset Strip. Ray was considering casting Jimmy, whom he'd invited as one of his guests, in his upcoming movie, *Rebel Without a Cause.*

To the party, he had also invited Stock, whom he knew on a casual basis.

Ray had met Stock when he was on assignment to photograph Humphrey Bogart. Stock had joined Magnum, the famous photographer's cooperative. At the age of twenty-seven, he was the organization's youngest member.

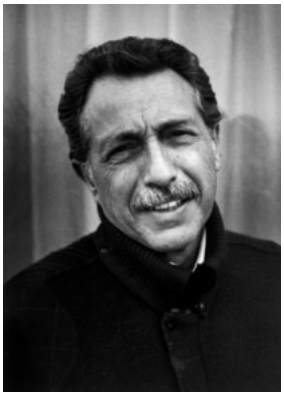
At the party, at around three o'clock that afternoon, Ray led Stock over to introduce him to Jimmy.

"Nick guided me to a corner of the room where a young man reclined," Stock recalled. "His moody mood was similar to mine that day, as I wasn't comfortable at parties. After Nick introduced us, he left Jimmy Dean and I alone together to talk."

"There was nothing terribly imposing about this bespectacled young man at first," Stock said. "His responses were monosyllabic. But as we chatted, and drank wine, his tongue loosened a bit. He told me that he'd made a feature film, *East of Eden,* based on a John Steinbeck novel. I had not heard of him or the novelist. He insisted that I see the movie, which was going to be shown as a sneak preview in Santa Monica. I agreed. And so it all began."

"I saw the film, and I was stunned," Stock said. "So was the audience, who applauded the vitality of Dean's performance. It was mesmerizing. From that night on, I decided that a star was born, and I wanted to get in on witnessing the birth. Within days, I had an assignment for *Life* magazine to do a photo essay on just who this much-talked-about young actor really was. A possible cover shot was suggested."

"My assignment from *Life* involved photographing Dean's environment, the setting that reflected both his background and his personality, the setting that had produced this unique character. Of course, I knew at some point that meant going to Indiana farm country. But first, New York."



Photographer Dennis Stock in the mid-1980s

The following morning at Googie's, Stock and Jimmy reconvened for breakfast, and the photo shoot—one that would lead them together first to New York City and then to Indiana, was plotted.

Outside Googie's, Jimmy asked Stock if he wanted to get on his back.

"Do you mean, 'as a means of fucking me?'"

"That would be okay, too, but my invitation was to ride behind my back on my motorcycle as we explore the Hollywood Hills," Jimmy said.

As Stock later recalled, "For me, it was the 'white knuckle' ride of a lifetime through Laurel Canyon and beyond, zooming along winding roads. Piloting his motorcycle, Dean was a crazed motorcyclist." Having survived that ride, Stock snapped took some portraits of Jimmy within some of his usual Hollywood hangouts before they flew to Manhattan together in January of 1955.

"Dean seemed to come alive in New York," Stock said. "He told me he was a Manhattan baby, and that it was his kind of town, without the phoniness of Tinseltown."

During the first morning they spent together in New York City, Jimmy invited him to his favorite barber shop in the Times Square neighborhood. He needed a trim and a shave of his three-day beard with a freshly stropped razor.

Stock followed Jimmy as he made his rounds of the city. He invited Stock into his *pied à terre,* which had two porthole windows evocative of a cabin on an oceangoing yacht. Sidney Franklin's matador cape hung nearby. In reference to the pairs of bulls' horns affixed to the walls, Jimmy told Stock that they belonged to bulls that he had killed in a Mexican bullfighting ring.

"The sink was full of dirty dishes and an overflowing garbage bin. There was an impressive collection of literature on his shelf, with works by everyone from Shakespeare to Kafka. Scattered around the room was an array of empty beer cans. The man lived like a stray animal—in fact, he *was* a stray animal."

"Perhaps I wasn't reading his signals right, but Jimmy seemed to be flirting with me. I felt sex was on his agenda if I didn't make my exit from this fifth floor walkup on West 68th Street."

For lunch, Jimmy escorted Stock to one of his regular watering holes, Cromwell's Drugstore, where everyone seemed to know him. That afternoon, Stock followed him to one of Katherine Dunham's dance classes, where Jimmy introduced him to one of his closest friends, Eartha Kitt.

Dinner that night was at Jerry's Tavern, another hangout where half the patrons seemed to know Jimmy and wished him "Happy box office!" for his upcoming movie.

That night, Jimmy took him to Geraldine Page's dressing room, within the Broadway theater where she was getting ready to go on in *The Rainmaker,* a hit play that was later made into a movie with Katharine Hepburn. That play was written by N. Richard Nash, author of *See the Jaguar,* in which Jimmy would later perform in a crucial role.

The following day, Stock photographed Jimmy sitting among his peers at the Actors Studio listening to a lecture from Lee Strasberg. Later that day, he visited Jimmy at a rental studio on Times Square, where Cyril Jackson gave him lessons on the bongo.

During their stay in New York, Jimmy frequently failed to show up at appointments he'd made with Stock. "He was a little bastard, but I could relate to him. We were developing a friendship. In some ways, I felt he expressed different parts of my own character."

Even before they flew out of New York, Jimmy told Stock, "You are becoming my Boswell," a reference, of course, to Samuel Johnson's faithful personal historian, archivist, and companion.

The most iconic photograph that Stock ever snapped of Jimmy was taken one cold, rainy February day near Times Square. In fact, it became one of the most famous post-war photos in America, widely reproduced on T-shirts, coffee mugs, and postcards. In it, Jimmy is attired in an overcoat he'd bought at an Army surplus store. A soggy cigarette dangles from his mouth. His shoulders are hunched, his hands buried in the pockets of his coat.

After their time in New York, Stock and Jimmy flew together to Indiana, where his uncle, Marcus Winslow, met them at the airport and drove them to his farmstead. There, Jimmy was greeted by his aunt, Ortense Winslow, who treated him like a loving mother.

"Jimmy was a cute little boy," Ortense told Stock. "He wasn't afraid of anybody or anything. He was a pretty boy. I've heard people say he was too pretty to be a boy. He was fair skinned, with rosy cheeks and lips, and his mother dressed him real cute."

"His aunt and uncle were warm, generous people, and they seemed to shower love upon Jimmy," His nephew, Marcus Winslow, Jr., clearly adored Jimmy, treating him like an older brother."

As Jimmy navigated his way with Stock through Fairmount, he was treated like a local celebrity, even though *East of Eden* hadn't yet been released. He was often stopped and asked for his autograph.

"I roamed the town and the surrounding farmland with Jimmy, and I came to know him. We formed a friendship, but it would be a fleeting one. At times, I think Jimmy had seduction on his mind, but it never came to that. The closest it came was when he invited me into the bathroom we shared. He was in the tub, bathing, and he asked me to soap his genitals because he said that if he did so, it would turn him on too much. I politely refused."

At one point, Jimmy was photographed next to the tombstone of Cal Dean, his great-grandfather. He pointed out that the name Cal was also the name of the character he played in *East of Eden.*

Jimmy's nephew, "Little Markie," was only seven years old at the time, and Stock took pictures of him with his uncle as they fixed Markie's bicycle and as Jimmy pushed him around the snow-covered yard in his soapbox derby racer.

In the Winslow's barnyard, Jimmy posed with a 700-pound sow.

At one point, he entertained the barnyard animals with a performance on his bongos. "They need entertainment, too," he told Stock.

On another day, Jimmy appeared to be acting out lines from the title role of *Hamlet, "*exposing the Herefords and Poland China hogs to some of Shakespeare's most elegant soliloquies," Stock said.

That night at a school dance, an attractive young girl came up to Stock and told him that Jimmy used to date her. He failed to get her name.

"You know when you see a bird in a cage, how you want to open the cage door and say, 'fly, bird!' Well, that is the way I always felt when I was with Jimmy."

That night, back in Stock's bedroom, Jimmy got philosophical. "There really isn't an opportunity for greatness in this world. We are impaled in a crock of conditioning. A fish that in water has no choice. Genius would have it that

we swim instead. We are fish, and we drown."

Stock didn't want to admit it, but he really didn't know what Jimmy was talking about.

The afternoon before they flew back to New York, Jimmy took Stock for a stroll along Main Street, leading him into Hunt's General Store, where he knew the owners. He then directed him to a room in the back where the Hunts displayed and sold coffins.

Jimmy headed toward one of them and climbed inside, asking Stock to snap pictures of him.

At first, Stock refused, considering it tasteless, but he acquiesced after Jimmy told him that the great *tragedienne* of the early 20th Century stage, Sarah Bernhardt, had posed for a picture from inside a coffin. "If Sarah can pull that stunt, so can I." After that, Stock shot him in various poses inside the coffin.

At one point, Jimmy closed its lid. He emerged, giggling, and said, "The trouble with the lid being closed it that it squashes my nose."

"He sat up for one picture and looked so very gloomy," Stock said. "It was the saddest picture I ever shot, and it made me even sadder seven months later when Jimmy, in a coffin, was shipped back to Fairmount for burial."

"When I developed the picture later, I realized that Jimmy was not pulling a prank of indulging in black humor. He was expressing the loneliness of a little boy lost. All his showmanship had gone out of the picture. Exposed was a young man who really didn't understand what he was doing and why he was doing it."

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During their transit back to the Winslow farm, as an explanation for what had happened in the coffin, Jimmy told Stock, "I was mocking Death, telling the bitch I wasn't afraid of her. I wanted to get into that coffin to tell the world that James Dean is not afraid to die. I'm laughing in the bloody face of Death. I'm taunting the cunt."

The next day, aboard a plane heading to New York, Jimmy turned to Stock. "I have a funny feeling I'll never go home again. I'm saying goodbye to my past."

Stock's photo essay on James Dean was published in the March 7, 1955 issue of *Life* magazine. Later, his photos were released again within a book entitled *James Dean Revisited.*

Although the friendship between Stock and Jimmy was fleeting, producers deemed it significant enough to make a 2015 movie of the relationship. Entitled *Life,* it was directed by Anton Cordijin, starring Dane DeHaan as Jimmy, Robert Pattison (otherwise known for his Vampire roles) played Stock, giving a murmurous impersonation.

The New York Times described Pattison's performance as "perversely listed. He has been compared to Dean but in *Life,* he dials down his glow to nearly nothing to become a wan."

DeHaan delivered an unconvincing impersonation, which would make first-time viewers wondering what merited all the fuss about James Dean. The most convincing portrayal came from Ben Kingsley, cast as Jack Warner.

Jimmy to Dizzy Sheridan:

"Shall We Invite Queen Elizabeth to Our Wedding?"

One afternoon at a "cattle call" for CBS, Jimmy met a pretty young 22-year-old wannabe actress, Jane Wright. Based on the audition, neither of them got any job offers. When it was over, he walked with her to the Rehearsal Club, at West 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Adapted from the architectural interconnection of two brownstones, it functioned as a residence for women. Living there were actresses, singers, and dancers staying for room and board at modest prices. Jimmy was invited in for a meal after telling Wright that he hadn't eaten in two days.

He never saw her again, as she checked out two days later to return to her home in Greensboro, North Carolina. She told Jimmy that she'd been turned down at least fifty times for show-biz jobs and that she had run out of money.

He felt comfortable in the public rooms of this women's residence, where young men sometimes waited for their dates. No men were allowed upstairs. Sometimes, one of the performers would give him half of her sandwich or perhaps a coke. He would sit there for hours.

One day, he was caught in a rainstorm and entered the lobby dripping wet. He sat down and put his wet boots on top of a coffee table. Had the supervisor been around she probably would have evicted him from the building. He sat there wearing a wet and undersized camel's hair coat that a young woman had given him. She'd worn it in college.

At that time of day (late afternoon,) the lobby was empty except for an attractive, rather tall woman who sat across from him. She struck him as a sensuous brunette, and he found her most appealing.

They talked casually. He learned that her name was Elizabeth Sheridan, but that most people used her nickname, "Dizzy." She told him she was a dancer, and the namesake within "The Sheridan Trio" which included her two partners: Fabio Diaz, who evoked a Mexican bandit, and Tony Marcello, son of an Italian butcher. Muscular, and perhaps with a nod to his father's profession, he was usually described as "beefy."

Dizzy would wait until 2000 to publish a memoir of her affair with Jimmy, entitling it *Dizzy and Jimmy.* In it, she recalled their first meeting early in 1952. "He was wet, and he was blonde. And his glasses were all wet. And he was a bit shorter than I was. He looked small and blonde and wet. And lovely. I just remember that he was terribly intense. And we intensely spoke about intense things."

The theme of their dialogue included the struggle of an artist trying to break into the performing arts in New York City. As they continued talking, it turned out that they each shared an interest in bullfighting. He hadn't expected that from her.

To eke out a living, she worked as an usher at the Paris Cinema on 58th Street at Fifth Avenue, near the deluxe Plaza Hotel. In time, he would visit her there. She slipped him in and fed him free popcorn and candy bars.

In the lobby of her residence, he told her that he needed to walk somewhere, but that the rain didn't seem to be letting up any time soon. "If you'll let me borrow your umbrella, I'll return it tomorrow afternoon." Somehow, she believed him, and went upstairs to fetch it.

At the exit, he smiled shyly at her and looked into her eyes. "You are the most interesting girl," he said, before opening the umbrella and heading off into the storm.

She didn't really expect to see him again, but nevertheless, she sat for three subsequent hours in the lobby of her building, waiting for him to return. The next day, just as she was about retire to her room, he entered the lobby with her umbrella.

He invited her over to Jerry's telling her it was his favorite hangout. Since both of them were on a tight budget, they agreed to share a hamburger. He ordered a beer and she asked for a Champale. "Can I have a taste of your drink?" he asked. She agreed, and then excused herself. When she returned, she noticed two white objects floating on the bottom of her glass. "What's that?"

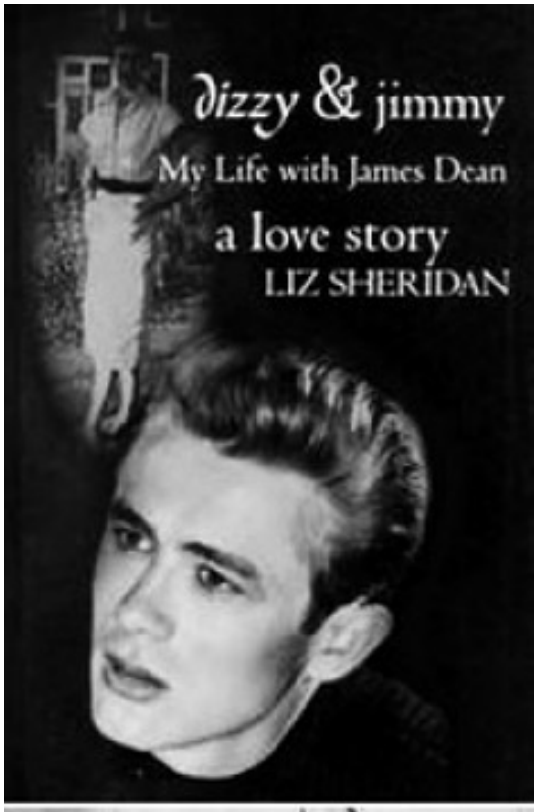
"Do you mind fishing out my two front teeth?" he asked.

He had dropped his removable caps into her glass. Actually, she found him rather cute "with his toothless idiot grin."

"My father works with teeth. You found a sample of his work floating in your Champale. My mother, dead now, was an Indian squaw."

They soon began to date, and he learned that her father, Frank Sheridan, now divorced from her mother, a singer, was a distinguished classical pianist.

That Saturday night, she invited him to a big nightclub in Harlem, where The Sheridan Trio was appearing as one of the acts. Flanked by two partners, Dizzy performed the Apache dance, "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue."



Dizzy Sheridan...a show-biz future as Jerry Seinfeld’s mother.

Jimmy later admitted, “I fell in love with Dizzy watching her get thrown around the stage by those guys. Of course, love is such a fleeting emotion. After the show, I took her to Jerry’s, where she fell in love with me because of my clever napkin doodles.”

That night, she remembered their first kiss, comparing it to two puppies cleaning each other.

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After some time had passed, the loving couple were ready to mate, and each seemed willing to embark on a sexual encounter with the other. Neither, alas, had any place to go for privacy. An opportunity arose when Mrs. Sheridan, her mother, invited them for Sunday dinner at her home in Larchmont. Their house opened onto a view of Long Island Sound.

Between them, they’d saved about a hundred dollars. Dizzy suggested that on the day before they were expected at her mother’s house for dinner, they travel together by train to Larchmont, and on that Saturday night, they register at a local hotel together as newlyweds. Consequently, defining themselves as “Mr. and Mrs. James Dean,” they checked into the Bevan Inn, adjacent to the Horseshoe Harbor Yacht Club.

Locked away together for the first time, Dizzy said in her memoirs that they made love, both of them “exploding too quickly” while still clad in their underwear.

After a joint bubblebath, they indulged in another round. She later defined his entering her as “thrilling. I rose up and then cried out. He was moving deep within me, touching places I had never known before, secret even from myself.”

Playfully, the next morning over breakfast, they smeared jam on each other’s faces, then licked it off.

Arriving a few hours later for Sunday dinner at her mother’s house, Jimmy was treated to his favorite dish, pot roast. He told Mrs. Sheridan that it was even better than the pot roast his aunt, Ortense Winslow, made for him every Sunday back in Indiana. Mrs. Sheridan was charmed by his politeness and good manners.

Back in New York, Jimmy saw Dizzy almost every day; if not, they talked on the phone four or five times a day. “Ours was a very private relationship. During the time we were together, we saw very few people. It was the way both of us wanted it.”

She claimed that there was talk of marriage. They even went so far as to compose a guest list for their possible upcoming marriage. The guest of honor would be Queen Elizabeth. The others would include Noël Coward, Albert Einstein, Katharine Hepburn, and Spencer Tracy. Of course, Dizzy was completely unaware that Jimmy had already “tricked” with Tracy in Hollywood.

Ultimately, he resisted marriage. “I won’t marry unless I can take care of a gal in a way she should be cared for, and I’m in no position to do that. Hell, I can’t even look after myself.”

According to Dizzy, “Most of the time he was quiet, sensitive, and intelligent. Sometimes, he would, after a long silence, look up at me and grin. That smile could warm a girl’s heart.”

“What nice girls didn’t do, I did,” Dizzy said. “We developed an intimate sexual relationship. For more than a year, we lived in a sheltered dream created out of our hopes for the future and our passion for each other.”

On February 8, 1952, Jimmy turned twenty-one, and celebrated, with Dizzy, his official transition into adulthood.

Alec Wilder later revealed that Jimmy didn’t like turning twenty-one, evaluating the event with, “I should have made it by now. I would have if the fucking directors and producers weren’t so stupid. They’re nothing but jerks.”

“Jimmy came to see me only when he was depressed,” Wilder said. “That was most of the time when he didn’t get an acting job. He grew increasingly bitter after his birthday.”

“One night he called me at two o’clock in the morning, telling me he was about to die. He said he wanted to bid me a final farewell. I told him to come over right away so we could talk. But he wouldn’t do that. He wouldn’t even tell me where he was staying. When I insisted, he hung up. An hour later, he called to tell me he was all right.”

“I merely dreamed I was dying,” he told Wilder. “I’m not really dying.”

When he put down the phone, Wilder later wrote in his journal. “There is one thing I have noticed about Mr. James Dean, boy actor. He can run through an entire gamut of emotions in just twenty-four hours, or even less.”

When Dizzy and Jimmy saved up enough money, they decided to rent a studio at the Hargrave Hotel. It had two large windows overlooking Columbus Avenue at 71st Street. Jimmy compared it to the size of a broom closet, containing a double bed and an old-fashioned bathtub with “lion’s claws” for feet.

Dizzy recalled that both of them stood nude in front of a full-length mirror, admiring the contours of their bodies. “We retired to the bed, where we stroked each other’s bodies. By the time he entered me, we were ready to explode together.”

She recalled candlelit dinners where they often shared a bowl of shredded wheat while he dreamed of eating a big, juicy steak. They sometimes strolled through Central Park, holding hands and avoiding the muggers. “Mostly, we sat and talked for hours about our lives and what we wanted to do with them. He just hung on to me, knowing I was lonely at the time, too. We became inseparable.”

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Although he’d been fired from his job at CBS’s *Beat the Clock,* Jimmy returned to the studio to play a key role in the CBS Television Workshop Series, a segment entitled *Into the Valley*. Directed by Curt Conway, it was a jungle warfare drama. Jimmy was cast as one of the “dogfaces,” the role similar to his brief part in Hollywood when he appeared in the movie *Fixed Bayonets!.*

The scenario for *Into the Valley* was based on an account of the brutal battle between the Japanese and American soldiers on Guadalcanal, as written by the novelist and war correspondent, John Hersey.

Jimmy became intrigued after reading Hersey’s story and wanted to learn more about his work. He went to the New York Public Library, where in one sitting, he read a sort of masterpiece by him, a story about survivors from the ruins of Hiroshima, which had been destroyed by an atomic bomb in 1945. These characters included everyone from a widowed seamstress to “a man of God.”

He was even more fascinated by Hersey’s novel, *A Bell for Adano,* the tale of the Allied occupation of a Sicilian village during the closing months of World War II. Later, it won a Pulitzer Prize for Hersey and was adapted into a movie starring Gene Tierney and John Hodiak.

Jimmy was cast as a “dogface” in a teleplay based on a drama inspired by the writing of the Pulitzer Prize-winning American writer and journalist, John Hersey *(above).* His account of the aftermath of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima was judged as the finest piece of American journalism of the 20th Century by a 36-member panel associated with New York University’s Journalism Department.

Jimmy’s next assignment—also for CBS—was a part within *The Web,* a series whose episodes focused on ordinary people caught up in extraordinary situations rife with danger and intrigues.

“Dean was a young man seeking to solve the murder of his brother,” said Franklin Heller, its producer. “We needed a strange, eccentric character, and Dean sure fitted that bill.” Heller cast two major stars, E.G. Marshall and Anne Jackson, into the lead roles. At the time, she was married to another distinguished actor, Eli Wallach.

Heller would go on to direct *What’s My Line?,* the longest-running TV quiz show in that medium’s history. “Before I could do that, I had to survive James Dean,” he recalled. “He was the most difficult actor I ever worked with, rude and hostile. I wanted to fire him, but Marshall and Anne insisted I keep him on.”

“Dean was an absolute horror until we went on the air, and then he performed with perfection,” Heller said. “But he was very moody during rehearsals, always wanting to know what his god damn motivation was. I found

him a pain in the ass. Finally, I told him his fucking motivation was to earn a paycheck."

Most actors merely walked through rehearsals, saving their real stuff to strut before the camera," Heller said. "Dean wanted all his rehearsals to be blood, sweat, and gore. In one scene, an actor was supposed to strike him. Dean ordered the actor to hit him hard. He did. Dean ended up bloody on the floor, but he took it like a man and didn't complain at all. We suspected he might be a masochist and that he got a sexual thrill by having the stud beat him up."

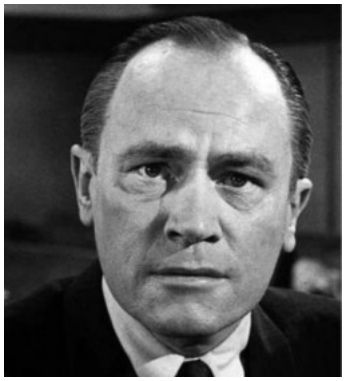
Jackson claimed she liked Jimmy, even though he monopolized Heller so much he didn't have time to direct any other members of the cast. "I thought that with the right training and direction, he might become another Brando. Incidentally, in case you weren't around in 1952 to see the drama, I was revealed as the person who murdered Jimmy's brother."

Jimmy had several long talks with Marshall, who, along with Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift, as well as Julie Harris and Kim Stanley, made up the original coven who founded Actors Studio. Jimmy had great respect for Marshall, who had starred on Broadway in such plays as *The Skin of Our Teeth* and *The Iceman Cometh.*

One of the most distinguished of American actresses, Anne Jackson, born in 1926, was still working in 2016 in cameo roles. She married actor Eli Wallach in 1948 and was still married to him upon his death in 2014. SHe was one of the first of the big stars in New York to see the potential of James Dean, predicting a great future for him.

Jackson would later appear with Jimmy in the Off-Broadway play, *The Scarecrow.* Even though Heller had feuded with Jimmy, he later hired him again for the 1953 TV drama, *Death Is My Neighbor.*

Some producers at NBC saw Jimmy perform and were impressed. In those days, one studio was always trying to steal the best actors from their rivals. Jimmy was called over to NBC where he was offered a role in the production of *Martin Kane, Private Eye.*



After the first two days, the directed wanted to fire James Dean from the teleplay in which he was performing with its star, E.G. Marshall. But the veteran actor took up for him and demanded that he stay.

Marshall recognized talent when he saw it. As a founding member of the Actors Studio, he knew Marlon Brando and Monty Clift. He told

Jimmy, “Maybe not today, but at least by tomorrow, you’re going to be every bit as good as those two...maybe even better!”

Agent Archer King said the director at NBC, “found Jimmy impossible to work with, and unlike Heller, simply wasn’t patient enough to continue nurturing Jimmy. After three days, he was fired.”

His agent, Jane Deacy, reassured Jimmy. “You’re every bit as good as you think you are. But it’s going to take a long time and a lot of patience on your part to convince others of that.”

“Time is something I don’t have,” he told her.

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Still at CBS, Jimmy complained that his next role was too small, defining it as one of those “if you blink you’ll miss me” parts. For Westinghouse Studio One, he signed on to appear as a bellhop in the drama *Ten Thousand Horses Singing.* It aired on March 3, 1952.

Directed by John Paul Nickell, the teleplay starred John Forsythe, Catherine McLeod, and Vaughn Taylor. Worthington Manor, who both wrote and produced the episode, eventually evolved into one of the most prolific and creative voices of the Golden Age of television in the 1950s. Jimmy spoke to him only briefly. The producer told him, “My aim is to develop a national audience for TV drama without lowering artistic standards.”

“I guess I was in the minority in that I just didn’t see what James Dean had,” said actor John Forsythe, depicted above in 1958. “I was in the first class of students when Actors Studio was founded, and I thought I recognized talent when I saw it, but in his case, I guess I was wrong.”

Forsythe went on to star in a trio of TV series, spanning four decades: *Bachelor Father*, *Charlie’s Angels,* and *Dynasty,* the latter running for most of the 1980s.

“Good luck, sir,” Jimmy said. “I’m with you.”

Nickell helmed Jimmy in his scene. A Kentuckian, he would go on to direct such hit series as *Ben Casey, Bonanza, Lassie,* and *The Virginian.* Years later, he didn’t remember directing Jimmy in this little drama.

In it, as a bellhop, Jimmy rides the elevator to the tenth floor, carrying the baggage for a quarreling couple. At their destination, a woman (McLeod) is abused by her companion (Taylor). Forsythe comes to her rescue. Taylor takes off his glasses and punches Forsythe in the jaw. Jimmy is seen reacting to the violence. During the course of the scene, he uttered only one line, “Ten, please,” delivered when he first stepped onto the elevator.

Born in 1910, Taylor would star with Jimmy in two other teleplays, *Harvest* and *The Bells of Cockaigne.* Later, Taylor would appear with Elvis Presley in *Jailhouse Rock* (1957); Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), and in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960).

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Later that March in 1952, Jimmy was assigned his first starring role. It was within the 30-minute drama *The Foggy, Foggy Dew,* produced for CBS's Lux Video Theater. An actor and director, Richard Goode, cast Jimmy in the role of a happy teenager, an unusual part for him.

In the plot, he is seen leading a well-adjusted life with his foster parents, played by Richard Bishop and Muriel Kirkland. The young boy thinks those are his real parents.

One day, he meets his biological father, James Barton, who is a drifter roaming the countryside with his guitar. When he learns that Jimmy is happy with his foster parents, he decides not to reveal his true identity.

At the time, Barton was also appearing on Broadway in *Paint Your Wagon.* One day, he gave Jimmy some complimentary tickets to his show.

The title, *Foggy, Foggy Dew,* derived from an 1815 English folk song. In the 1940s, Burl Ives popularized it in America, but was arrested in Utah by a local sheriff who interpreted it as too bawdy to be performed in public, in Utah, at the time.

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One Friday afternoon, Alec Wilder invited Jimmy and Dizzy Sheridan to the Algonquin for tea. He recalled that "she was a fine young woman."

Later, he told Jimmy, "She seems to have a good influence on you. You seem calm around her, less neurotic. She'll keep you from wandering down too many dark alleys."

Two days later, on a Sunday afternoon, Wilder phoned Jimmy and invited him to drop by his suite late that afternoon at 6PM. "I have a surprise for you."

At the appointed time, Jimmy arrived and knocked on the door. It was not Wilder who answered, but Rogers Brackett.

"Guess who has moved to New York?" he asked Jimmy, pulling him inside the apartment and pressing his mouth down on his.

Chapter Five

SEE THE JAGUAR

THE PLAY'S A DUD, BUT JIMMY OPENS ON BROADWAY TO RAVE REVIEWS

James Dean Blazes a Celebrity-Studded, Pants-Dropping Trail Through Manhattan in a Saga Starring Grace Kelly

HIS FEUD WITH THE ACTORS STUDIO

AFTER AUDITIONING AS "THE MATADOR," LEE STRASBERG "GORES HIM IN THE GUT."

After Rogers Brackett wrapped up his advertising work in Chicago, he rode the *Twentieth Century Limited* to New York and his new Life. From afar, stating his intentions to Alec Wilder, he planned to "reclaim Jimmy."

The composer told Brackett that "Jimmy thinks he's in love with this dancer, Dizzy Sheridan. There's some vague talk of marriage. If anything will break them up, it's their mutual poverty."

Since dancing gigs for The Sheridan Trio were few and infrequent, Dizzy had been forced to accept a low-paying, part time job as a photo researcher.

After his reunion with Brackett in Wilder's suite at the Algonquin, Jimmy's "moment of truth," to use Jimmy's bullfight terminology, had arrived. He had to confess to Dizzy the details of his relationship to his mysterious mentor, Brackett.

In lieu of full disclosure, he opted to present her with a limited, highly edited version, with the excuse that "when I was down and out in Hollywood, Brackett got me film and radio work." He did not let her know that he'd lived more or less openly with Brackett as his male lover.

"He's now arrived in New York to find an apartment and establish himself," Jimmy said. "I have to tell you the truth. Rogers is a little bit queer. He even came on to me, and you, of all people, know what a *toro* I am in bed. He wanted to suck my cock. I was broke and really desperate, so I gave in to him. Many out-of-work actors have to do

that, as you know, 'cause you're in show business yourself. It's all about the casting couch. In Hollywood, or so it seems to me, about as many guys as gals are forced to lie on that couch."

"When it was over, I felt really, really bad, like a male whore. I had done something distasteful, completely repugnant to my true nature. And I still haven't come to terms with myself for doing it."

"As you know, both of us will soon be on the street unless we can raise more money. Brackett has volunteered to help me find work in New York. That guy knows fucking everybody in the industry."

"But what will you have to do for him?" she asked.

"I gave into him just that one time," he said. "I can hold him off."

"I'm not so sure about that."

"And of course, I'll need to spend time with the queer."

"Some time?" she asked. "Exactly what does that mean?"

She later wrote of her shock at hearing about his involvement with Brackett. "I felt physically ill. After all, we'd promised to be together forever. My stomach was churning. I was a wreck." She finally told him, "I want to meet this Brackett creep. Perhaps when he sees that we're a loving couple in a committed relationship, he'll back off."

"That can be set up," he said. "I want him to know that, too, so he'll stop pursuing me."

Later that morning he left the apartment without telling her where he was going. He didn't come back until well after midnight when he staggered in drunk, collapsing onto the bed.

Another blow, this one to both of them, occurred at around 10AM the following morning. The building manager pounded on their door. Groggy, Jimmy buried his head under the pillow as Dizzy answered the knock. Bluntly, the manager informed her that because of their mounting and unpaid back rent, the owner of the building had ordered them out no later than the following morning.

After she left, Dizzy turned her anger onto Jimmy, accusing him of spending the previous day with Brackett. "I think he's a queer. *So are you!"* She screamed the words at him at peak lung capacity.

"I thought you'd understand," he said. "I thought you were different. But you're just another stupid cunt!"

"How dare you call me a cunt, you little prick," she yelled at him.

He rushed about the apartment, ripping Sidney Franklin's matador cape from the wall and stuffing his meager clothing into a battered suitcase.

As he stormed out, heading down the steps, she yelled down at him, "*Olé!,* you bastard!"

After searching throughout most of the day, hoping to find a cheap place to live, Dizzy, through a contact, located a little basement apartment in Hell's Kitchen between the Hudson Piers and 9th Avenue. The rent was only eight dollars a week. She took it.

Having no way of getting in touch with Jimmy, she went to Jerry's Tavern that night, hoping he'd show up. She found him there looking desolate. He apologized for his outburst that morning, and she did the same. They reconciled, and he followed her back to her tiny (new) rental, which looked so small he labeled it "the bird's nest."

The following evening, he agreed to escort her to Brackett's new apartment, explaining that, "This old queer can help me a lot if he'll just stop hitting on me."

She later wrote that she interpreted Brackett as "a sexual predator, a well-connected old queen who took advantage of a star-struck impressionable kid."

Upon entering Brackett's building, Jimmy paused in the lobby, assuring her, "You're worth a hundred Bracketts."

Introduced to the producer, she found him "a vision in beige—beige hair, beige clothing, beige shoes, beige carpeting, and beige furnishings." A flickering fireplace provided a welcome touch of flame.

As she sat with Jimmy on Brackett's beige sofa, he possessively held her hand as if to signal to Brackett, "I'm not queer. I'm in love with a female."

An hour progressed awkwardly, punctuated with a bit of name dropping and an unspoken one-upmanship as to who was more familiar with Jimmy's taste in food, drink, and interests.

Brackett had heard of Dizzy's father, the classical pianist, who was, coincidentally, acquainted with Alec Wilder.

She didn't like Brackett, and he didn't like her, although both of them tried to conceal their resentment of each other. She finally made an excuse to leave, hoping that Jimmy would go with her. In the hallway, he promised that he'd catch up with her later at Jerry's. He claimed he had some urgent matter to discuss with his producer friend. "It's work related," he assured her. "No funny business."

As Brackett later revealed, the business that then ensued wasn't funny at all. After Dizzy departed, he demanded that Jimmy take him to bed—"and fuck me real hard, like you really mean it. It'll be your atonement for

bringing that possessive little creature here."

The next day, he didn't return to her cramped little apartment, but went instead to live with Brackett in his elegant apartment on 38th Street, just off Fifth Avenue near the site where a young Jacqueline Kennedy, married at the time to a senator from Massachusetts, shopped when she was in New York, Lord & Taylor.

During their first week together, Brackett tried to reassert his dominance over Jimmy. "I plan to keep you drained of all your honey so you won't have anything left for that silly bitch."

In the days ahead, Jimmy saw Dizzy whenever he could. Their relationship continued, but certainly not with the same intensity it had in the beginning. For a time, she left Manhattan for a gig in New Jersey.

On most evenings, he was seen out on the town with Brackett "and his queer friends," as Jimmy called them. Mostly, they were gay men who worked in advertising or in television. Jimmy went with Brackett to concerts, the ballet, Broadway opening nights, and to such restaurants as "21" or Sardi's, where they often sat at tables with celebrated stars such as Bette Davis or Joan Fontaine. Late one afternoon, as Wilder was moving through the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel, he spotted Jimmy and Brackett talking with a drunken novelist, William Faulkner.

On evenings when he was free, and Dizzy was in town, Jimmy often ate a plate of food with her at Jerry's, which was still a favorite hangout. They seemed to hold out some vision of their future together, although those hopes grew less intense and less realistic as time went by.

Other romantic involvements, both male and female, would loom in Jimmy's future, especially after he became involved in the Actors Studio.

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April of 1952 had been a month without work for Jimmy, but after Brackett's return to New York, and because of his intervention, small roles emerged for him in a trio of teleplays scheduled to be aired in May or, in one instance, on June 2. The first was a teleplay about young Abraham Lincoln; the second was an episode set at the end of the Civil War featuring then-President Lincoln.

Instead of working at CBS, Jimmy found himself at NBC, playing the role of young Lincoln's friend, "Denny," in a telecast entitled *Prologue to Glory,* a presentation of Kraft Television Theater.

The play from which it had been adapted had been written by E.F. Conkle and had opened on Broadway in 1938. In the TV version sponsored by Kraft, Conkle was also the producer and director.

The teleplay focused on Lincoln's romance with Ann Rutledge and his grief over her untimely death. Cast as Lincoln was Thomas Coley, who had previously starred on Broadway in such plays as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Harvey.* Pat Breslin, a New Yorker and the daughter of a judge, played Rutledge.

Up until then, the young actresses Jimmy met tended to aspire to stardom in Hollywood films. Breslin, however, was part of a new breed of actress that emerged in the 1950s. Her ambition involved starring in dramas and comedies configured specifically for television. She'd later achieve success with Jackie Cooper, appearing as his girlfriend (later, his wife) in the NBC sitcom, *The People's Choice* (1955-1958). She would also co-star with Nick Adams, Jimmy's former Hollywood lover, in TV's *The Rebel.*

After finishing *Prologue to Glory,* Jimmy returned to CBS to appear in another teleplay, *Abraham Lincoln,* as produced for *Westinghouse Studio One.* Its director, John Paul Nickell, cast him as a tragic young soldier, William Scott. *[In a previous teleplay, Nickell had hired him as a bellhop in* Ten Thousand Horses Singing.*]*

Following a script written by the British playwright, John Drinkwater, *Abraham Lincoln* had first been performed in London in 1918 and later in New York. It followed the life of Lincoln beginning with his presidential nomination in May of 1860 and ending with his assassination in 1865. Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theater was not depicted in the telecast. "I want the viewer to imagine it," Nickell said

The role of the soldier, a Vermont farm boy who had lived and worked with his mother before being drafted into the Union Army, was Jimmy's most memorable and sympathetic to date. In the drama, he has been court-martialed and sentenced to be executed by a firing squad at daybreak. The action takes place on the eve of the battle that ended the Civil War.

The President learns of the youth's impending death, and orders that the soldier be brought before him. He also learns that the young man had just completed a 23-mile march and had volunteered for double guard duty as a favor to a sick friend and fellow soldier. Based on his portrayal of the wide-eyed and frightened soldier facing death in the morning, Jimmy wins the empathy of the President, who drafts a letter, pardoning him from the firing squad and ordering him to return to his regiment. In gratitude, Jimmy salutes Lincoln for sparing his life.

Lincoln was portrayed by Robert Pastene, who later said, “Young James Dean was perfect for the role. He looked like one of the soldiers in a photograph by Matthew Brady, who captured on his early camera all those marvelous pictures of soldiers during the Civil War.”

Born in 1918 in Massachusetts, Pastene was a successful character actor, who predicted “great things for Jimmy’s future as an actor. He had an exceptional talent, and I liked it off camera when he called me Abe. I found him most endearing.”

Judith Evelyn, cast as Mary Lincoln, originally arrived in New York from South Dakota with the intention of working on Broadway. She is remembered today, if at all, as the lonely alcoholic spied on by James Stewart from across the courtyard in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954). Jimmy would later have a reunion with her when she played Nancy Lynnton in *Giant.*

In a conversation with her, he learned that she and her boyfriend, the Canadian radio producer Andrews Allan, had miraculously survived the sinking of the British transatlantic liner, the *SS Athenia,* at the outbreak of World War II.

[Built in Glasgow in 1923, the SS Athenia *was a British steam turbine passenger liner that was torpedoed by a Nazi submarine in September of 1939 off the Atlantic coast of Canada. It was the first U.K. ship to be sunk by Germany during World War II, killing 128 civilian passengers (28 of them U.S. citizens) and crew members.*

The act was immediately condemned as a war crime, yet did not immediately provoke the entry of the U.S. into the then mostly European conflict. At the time, Nazi authorities denied that one of their vessels had sunk the ship, delaying admission of any connection to the act until January of 1946.]

Jimmy’s final teleplay that spring season, introduced by Sarah Churchill, was *The Forgotten Children,* an episode within the Hallmark Hall of Fame series.

It starred the very talented Cloris Leachman portraying Martha Berry (1866-1942), the American philanthropist who advocated teaching reading and writing to impoverished children in the remote hill regions of the Deep South.

In an unusual departure from his norm, Jimmy had been cast as a Southern dandy in frilly formalwear, sitting on the white-pillared porch of the Berry mansion in 1887. His role was that of “Bradford,” an insensitive Southern aristocrat who does not think women, specifically Martha, should enter the workplace.

When Martha assures him that she is an emancipated woman, Jimmy sneers, “The only emancipated woman I ever knew lived in a side street of Memphis.” The character he’s portraying is then chastised for his reference to a prostitute in the presence of genteel southern ladies.

Later, Jimmy (as Bradford) again shows how insensitive he is in a confrontation with a trespassing hillbilly girl whom he calls “a little savage” and “trash.”

Iowa-born Leachman was one of the most talented actresses Jimmy had ever met. He was surprised she had gotten her start through a beauty pageant in Chicago. “You’re one good-looking woman,” he told her, “but you don’t look like the kind of gal who enters beauty contests.”

“All of us have to start somewhere,” she assured him. She would go on to win eight Emmys and a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her memorable role in *The Last Picture Show* (1971).

The director and producer of *The Forgotten Children,* William Corrigan of North Dakota, became one of the leading directors of television’s Golden Age. Among his many achievements, he would helm a total of 91 episodes for *The Armstrong Circle Theater*, and would also make adaptations for television of such big screen staples as *The Strawberry Blonde* and *The Miracle on 34th Street.*

Over lunch he talked to Jimmy about his future, advising him against a return to Hollywood with the hopes of becoming a movie star.

“Television drama is the coming thing,” he claimed, “especially for a lot of young actors in their twenties. The big studios like Fox and MGM won’t let their stars under contract perform on television, Also, top talent on Broadway has utter disdain for television. Yet TV will provide a means to learn and to make a name for young actors like you in their twenties.”

[After Jimmy’s death, Corrigan said, “If he had taken my advice, and obviously, if he had lived, I would have cast him as the star in many of the teleplays I directed. Alas, it wasn’t meant to be.”]

Jimmy’s Sexual Liaison with Sarah Churchill,

THE REBELLIOUS DAUGHTER OF SIR WINSTON

As Jimmy confided to Alec Wilder, “I’ve had this incredible luck of hooking up, however temporarily, with some famous people—first Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Walt Disney, and Cole Porter on the West Coast; and Tallulah Bankhead and Peggy Lee in New York City. But about the last person on the planet I expected to ever become intimate with was Sarah Churchill.”

Their introduction came through Brackett, who, as an employee of Foote, Cone, & Belding, was the advertising agent linked to promoting the hit TV series, *The Hallmark Hall of Fame.*

Through a connection, he arranged a (minor) job for Jimmy on the show. Only his hand was shown on camera, appearing at the end of the teleplay, writing the credits on a blackboard. Sarah had been hired as the series’ well-spoken, upper-crust hostess—in effect, the figurehead and very posh symbol of the entire *Hallmark* series.

Brackett had known Sarah ever since she signed on for an appearance with his summer stock company in Marblehead, Massachusetts. When Jimmy met her, she was living in a luxurious penthouse on Manhattan’s Central Park South. She became so close to Brackett that she entrusted him with the keys to her apartment, with the request that he look after it whenever she was out of town.

Two views of Sarah Churchill. *Lower photo,* with her celebrated father, Sir Winston. She was the “black sheep” of the Churchill family.

After every Saturday night show, she invited its cast and crew to her apartment for what she defined as a “post-broadcast *soirée.”* There, the liquor flowed, often into Sarah herself.

From the beginning, Jimmy launched a flirtatious relationship with her, jokingly referring to her as “the daughter of a bulldog.” Although she’d been born in London in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I, she looked much younger and was quite attractive, with her Titian red hair and her emerald green eyes.

“I’m the lamb who strayed from the fold,” she confessed to Jimmy at one of her parties. “At seventeen, I broke free from the flock and set out to discover the world, finding it one cruel place. I had dreams of becoming a film star. Still do. But that isn’t easy, even with a famous name like mine.”

She enthralled him with tales of her fabled life, including details about the time she accompanied her father to the 1943 Teheran Conference, where she was introduced to Franklin D. Roosevelt and Josef Stalin. “The bloody Stalin came on to me,” she claimed. “I think it would have been a feather in his cap to have seduced the daughter of Sir Winston.”

She also told him that “After all the good men left Britain to fight in World War II, thank God the Yanks arrived in time to take care of the sexual desires of the deserted sweethearts, wives, and recently bereaved widows.”

She was married to Anthony Beauchamp, but admitted, “I never know where he is. Despite my status as a married woman, I’m pretty much a free agent. My father does not approve of my marriage and is very cold, even

hostile, to my husband."

One Saturday afternoon, when Sarah had not arrived on time for the filming of her hostess duties for the Hallmark series, Brackett placed some frantic calls, without success, to her penthouse. Finally, in desperation, he gave Jimmy the keys to her penthouse and instructed him to go immediately to see what was wrong and, if possible, to fetch her. "She drinks, as you well know, a lot."

At the door to her penthouse, Jimmy rang her bell at least ten times before using her key to let himself in. He found Sarah sprawled nude and drunk on her bed. He later told his friends at Jerry's, "I was such a devil. Such an opportunist."

In a call to Brackett, he claimed that he found Sarah "drunk and threatening suicide. I'd better stay with her. Who knows what might happen. Tonight, you can get someone else to write the damn credits on that blackboard."

Brackett agreed, promising he'd be right over as soon as the show went off the air.

If Jimmy is to be believed, he seduced Sarah after that phone conversation with Brackett. Bragging about it later to his friends at Jerry's, and later to William Bast, he was said to have stripped down before piling on top of the drunken aristocrat. "In midfuck, she woke up and and we checked each other out, eyeball to eyeball. She seemed pleased, and told me, 'Go to it, kid.'"

Three hours later, Brackett rushed into Sarah's penthouse. He found Sarah fully clothed and sitting on her sofa with Jimmy, having yet another drink.

When she left the room for a moment, Jimmy falsely claimed, "I talked her out of her suicide threat. She's okay now."

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[In November of 1955, Jimmy was scheduled to return to the set of the Hallmark Hall of Fame *TV series. This time for an appearance not as a disembodied hand writing anonymously on a blackboard, but as the star of a TV adaptation of* The Corn is Green, *that play by the gay Welsh playwright, Emlyn Williams.*

As a teenager, Jimmy had seen the film adaptation (1945), starring Bette Davis, of the play, which had first been produced in 1940. In this autobiographical tale, a 50-year-old spinster, Miss Moffat, inspires her young male student to greatness.

Two months before filming was scheduled to begin, Jimmy was dead.]

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Rogers Brackett's other best friend in New York was the designer and art director, Stanley Mills Haggart. For many of Brackett's TV advertisements or shows, Haggart provided the art direction. Arguably, he had more Hollywood connections than Brackett, having arrived in 1917 in what was then a fledgling "frontier town" with his (formidable) mother.

Over the years, he developed friendships with some of the luminaries of the silent screen, including a very young Greta Garbo, Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford, Joan Crawford, William Haines, Ginger Rogers, and Lucille Ball. He became emotionally and sexually involved with the emerging star, Randolph Scott, and later, lived with Scott and Cary Grant, running their household while they were away at work at the studios. Through Grant, he met Katharine Hepburn and Tallulah Bankhead. He was also a close friend of several American playwrights, including Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge. He was also the former lover of Harry Hay, founder of the Mattachine Society. Years later, the diarist, Anaïs Nin, introduced Haggart to Gore Vidal, with whom he enjoyed a long friendship.

Stanley Haggart (seated) in the 1930s, with his celebrated companion, British director Peter Glenville, relaxing in the garden of the house they shared in Saffron Walden, U.K.

Haggart became friendly with the *Who's Who* of Hollywood when he hooked up with William Hopper, son of the popular Hollywood columnist, Hedda Hopper. For many months, he became her "leg man," prowling through the nightspots of Hollywood with her gay son, William, gathering information that Hedda might either use or bury, depending on studio politics and censorship standards of the time.

Although Hedda adopted many anti-homosexual platforms, and endorsed or reinforced them in her columns, Haggart maintained that in private, she was relatively tolerant. She was obviously aware of her son's sexual proclivities, but never confronted him with it.

Stanley Haggart, privy to most of the secrets of *le tout* Hollywood and Broadway, including many associated with Rogers Brackett and James Dean.

She was always warm and welcoming to Haggart, although telling him, "I'm glad to know a lot of the secrets you guys pick up at night but, as you well know, I can't print much of the crap. But I still want to know. *Hedda always wants to know*. I think I can use some of this information to my advantage when I face a recalcitrant star who won't cooperate with me. I can always threaten them. If they don't give me the personal data I want, I can destroy them by publishing their secrets."

As his Manhattan residence, Haggart had rented all four of the apartments (the entire allotment on that floor) on the top floor of a midtown apartment building. Although he was legally obligated to retain the floor's communal hallway and the original entryways to each of the individual apartments, he interconnected their interiors by knocking down some of the interior walls, eventually reconfiguring the top floor's layout into a huge, mostly interconnected spaces. Its inner doors could be opened or close, and its individual interior spaces flexibly configured for the housing of friends who frequently flew in from Hollywood. The result was an articulate, warm,

artistically stimulating, and comfortable environment interspersed with both private and communal spaces. Its appeal became widely appreciated within Haggart's vast circle of friends and business acquaintances.

A *raconteur,* Haggart often invited between ten and twelve guests for dinner. They enjoyed the cuisine produced by a huge black cook from Harlem who set a lavish table. Her cuisine nourished luminaries from Hollywood as well as the theatrical elite of New York, including figures from the dance world such as Martha Graham.

Based on Brackett's bringing him to his home for dinner, Haggart later recalled his first impressions of Jimmy.

"At first, he was shy and awkward around me," Haggart said. "I think he didn't want me to assume that he was just another of Rogers' toy boys. Peering at the world through his horn-rimmed glasses, he seemed to find the place baffling, especially New York. He didn't care much for small talk, but I saw him closely observing me. I feared at first that he was thinking, 'How can I use this man?'"

"In those days, I fancied myself a handwriting analyst, and Rogers insisted I give a reading on Jimmy's. I asked him to write out some lines (he selected something from *Hamlet*), and I interpreted his handwriting. But I didn't give him an honest verdict. I thought he was suicidal, but it wasn't a conscious thing with him. Of course, I could be wrong, as I so often was."

"It became obvious from his handwriting that he must have suffered a lot in childhood. As an adult, that affected his judgment of people, if indeed he could be called an adult. He'd turned his insecurities inward, and it had taken hold of his personality."

"Actually, I thought he didn't like me, but at the door, he hugged and kissed me goodbye, like Rogers always did. He whispered to me, 'I want to see you.' I thought it was a sexual come-on, but I was wrong."

Late the next afternoon, when Haggart returned to his home from a day's work, it was raining heavily. "To my surprise, Jimmy was standing in the doorway, waiting for me. He was soaking wet. I, of course, invited him upstairs. Once I got him there, I offered him a bathrobe and suggested that he remove his clothes so that I could dry them. He rejected the robe, but stripped off his clothes, all except for his underwear, and handed them to me.

Emerging from the kitchen, I offered him freshly brewed coffee and a pastrami sandwich. He drank the coffee and devoured the sandwich and asked for some ice cream. He still hadn't put on his clothes, and I thought he was trying to entice me. I had assumed he was a hustler."

"But it wasn't that," Haggart continued. "He told me that he'd particularly loved my rear apartment. It enjoyed direct access to a rooftop terrace I'd 'decorated' with potted plants and shrubs. He called it 'a retreat from the world.' He said he sometimes needed a place for privacy with someone else, perhaps a stranger. At times, he found that being with Rogers was overwhelming, and he wanted to ask me a huge favor. He wondered if he could use that back apartment any time he wanted as a means to escape from the world."

"I told him he could. I didn't think I was being disrespectful of my friendship with Rogers. As Jimmy and I were talking, I knew that Rogers was entertaining an extraordinarily handsome young actor he'd cast in a commercial. So he was cheating on Jimmy, anyway."

"At any rate, I never assumed that those two had promised fidelity to each other. I not only agreed to let him use the apartment, but I told him that it could become his secret love nest if he so desired."

"He jumped up and kissed me, and told me he wanted to repay me for my generosity. He took my hand and placed it on his crotch. 'It's yours if you want it,' he said. But I withdrew my hand. 'That's not necessary,' I told him. 'Believe it or not, there are people in the world who can be generous without you having to put out to show your gratitude.'"

"My aunt, Ortense Winslow, in Fairmount, Indiana, told me there would be people like you in the world, but I never believed her."

"At the door, he hugged and kissed me passionately, promising we'd meet again real soon."

"That might just have been something to say," Haggart said, 'but in his case he meant 'real soon.'"

"Let's be friends for always," he said. "I like you."

"Until death do us part," Haggart responded.

He later recalled, "That was a strange thing for me to say. I meant it in a sort of flippant, irreverent way. The rest of Jimmy's life passed so quickly, both in New York and when he visited my home in Hollywood. I felt I was just getting to know and understand him, and then he was gone in a flash. It was like someone riding on an airplane, sitting back and having a drink, and the next minute that plane is plunging to earth in flames."

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During the days to come, Jimmy sometimes made use of Haggart's rear apartment at least once, and sometimes three times a week. Often he didn't introduce his guests to his host.

One night, Jimmy dropped by and, after a meal, asked Haggart to accompany him to the Astor Bar for a drink. This was the first time Haggart saw Jimmy actively cruising in a public setting.

Gay bars (and gay activity in general) were illegal in those days, but the Astor Bar on Times Square was the discreet pickup joint for homosexuals, often middle-aged, often married, out to snare a young man who was usually broke and often an unemployed actor. Within inner circles, *habitués* of the Astor Bar were sometimes defined as "The "Closet Brigade." It was also a dangerous hunting ground, because the person a gay man picked up might be a vice cop, which led to arrest, imprisonment and/or heavy fines, public exposure, and its subsequent humiliation and/or job loss.

As Haggart closely observed, Jimmy seemed to be viewed as fresh meat by the largely middle-aged clientele, and he received several propositions. One man was quite attractive, perhaps thirty-five in age, and well dressed in what was known as the Brooks Brothers style. Haggart noticed that he wore a gold wedding band.

When Jimmy went to the Astor's oval-shaped bar for another round of drinks, it became obvious to Haggart that he was being propositioned by the man.

When he returned to Haggart's table, Jimmy asked if he could bring the man back to his apartment, and Haggart agreed. Jimmy told him that the man was an advertising executive connected to *The Kate Smith Show,* which aired on NBC.

Jimmy's pickup of the man occurred in the late spring of 1952.

[Fast forward to January of 1953. Jimmy came by and asked Haggart to make a big bowl of popcorn. He then turned on the television. As they sat eating popcorn and watching The Hound of Heaven, *an episode of* The Kate Smith Show, *it became clear that Jimmy had been cast as an angel.]*

He didn't always use Haggart's apartment just for sexual liaisons. Often, he would arrive unannounced for access to the lavish meals cooked every night by Haggart's cook from Harlem. He'd tell Haggart that he was tired of hanging out with Brackett's coterie of "queer friends."

"I get tired of them ogling me or following me to the toilet at a restaurant," Jimmy said.

On most of the nights he appeared, Jimmy rarely got caught up in the conversations whirling around among Haggart and his guests. Often, after eating, he would sit in a remote corner of the living room, not saying a word, but looking sullen, even hostile. Sometimes, he'd just stand up, leave the table, and exit from the apartment, not even thanking his host for dinner.

Haggart indulged Jimmy's rude behavior, although many guests expressed dismay at why Haggart tolerated him.

One night was different from the others. Haggart had invited a friend over for dinner, Lemuel Ayers, who was also of friend of Brackett's. Both Haggart and Ayers were members of the same labor union, United Scenic Artists.

"He was a scenic designer but a much bigger deal than me," Haggart admitted. "He'd had a brilliant career on Broadway, having designed or contributed to the 'look' of productions that included *Oklahoma!; High Button Shoes; Kiss Me, Kate;* and *Cyrano de Bergerac."*

Jimmy didn't seem much interested in Ayers until it was revealed that he'd invested in an option on a play entitled *See the Jaguar,* which contained a key role for a young male actor. Ayers said he was considering offering the part to Anthony Perkins, the son of the famous actor, Osgood Perkins.

"Tony's name was already familiar to Jimmy, and not in a good way. He still suffered from memories associated with how, back in Hollywood, George Cukor had dangled in front of him a role in the Spencer Tracy movie, *The Actress,* before eventually awarding it to Perkins.

Although Jimmy at that point did not reveal to Ayers that he, too, was an actor, Haggart watched as he began to "turn his charm and powers of articulation onto Lem," as Haggart nicknamed his friend.

Although he was married with children to Shirley Ayers, a wealthy woman, Lem was a well-known homosexual. He lived with Shirley in a lavish apartment in Manhattan, but they were better known for their estate at Stony Point in Rockland County, north of the city. Here, they regally entertained the theatrical elite within a mansard-roofed mansion, that had been built in 1849 on a dozen heavily wooded acres a mile or so from the Hudson River.

Alec Wilder, Brackett, and Haggart were frequent visitors there, along with an artistic elite of artists, producers, and show-biz personalities.

[One member of their entourage was novelist John Steinbeck, who, coincidentally, would create the story of Jimmy's first feature film, East of Eden*. Other guests on occasion included theatrical producers David Merrick and Lucille Lortel, actor Mel Ferrer, and an array of actresses who included Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, and Agnes*

Moorehead. Orson Welles visited on two separate occasions.]

"Jimmy was never hostile around Lem," Haggart said. "Shirley wasn't there that night, and it was just as well, although she was aware of her husband's adventures. Before the night was over, Jimmy was practically crawling over Lem. It was on one of those occasions that an embarrassed host should tell his guests, 'get a room,' but I didn't have to do that, because before midnight, Jimmy made an offer inviting Lem onto the garden terrace for a view of the city."

"I didn't see Lem until two days later, when he had nothing but praise for Jimmy, practically wanting to adopt him."

"However, I did encounter Jimmy the next morning in my kitchen. He was wandering about naked with a semi-erection, which he called a 'piss hard-on,' trying to make a pot of coffee. I agreed to cook breakfast for him. He wanted bacon and eggs. My cook wasn't scheduled to arrive until noon, which was just as well, considering how Jimmy was dressed. 'Dressed,' of course, is not the right word."

During the weeks to come, Jimmy and Ayers made frequent use of Haggart's love nest. Once, when Haggart peered out onto his garden terrace, he found both of them enjoying the summer sun in the nude.

At one point, Jimmy told Haggart that he'd been invited to go yachting that August with Ayers and his wife, Shirley. "We'll be cruising around Cape Cod."

Haggart asked him about the status of *See the Jaguar* and whether Ayers had decided to cast him as the young male lead in lieu of giving the role to Perkins.

"Not yet," Jimmy answered. "But it's just a matter of time."

Brackett seemed unaware of the sexual and emotional link that had developed between Jimmy and Ayers. In fact, based on their perceived status as "a couple," Brackett and Jimmy received two separate invitations to the Ayers family's country house in Stony Point. Sometimes, both of them were included in evenings at The Algonquin, along with Alec Wilder, Haggart, and David Swift with his wife, Maggie McNamara. Sarah Churchill sometimes joined the coven. Behind her back, Jimmy referred to his former conquest as a "dipso." *[A dipsomaniac is someone with an uncontrollable craving for alcoholic liquors.]*

This confusion, or lack of communication, about the status of the relationship between Jimmy and Brackett was a precursor of the changes that were about to take place. Both Haggart and Wilder shared front-row seats to watch as they unfolded.

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The changes became obvious late one Saturday afternoon when Jimmy arrived alone at Haggart's apartment, wanting to talk privately. He looked agitated and troubled.

"He seemed filled with indecision," Haggart said. "He admitted quite frankly that at this point in his career, he did not want to sleep with older men as a means of getting ahead in the theater, and that he wanted to have sex with men or women his own age."

"More than a sleeping arrangement, I want to forge ahead on my own talent, not having someone offering me roles because of my performance on a casting couch."

Unknown to Haggart, Jimmy had expressed the same sentiments to others, too.

"Besides, except for you and Lem, none of Rogers' friends like me," Jimmy said.

"I've seen you around Rogers' friends," Haggart said. "You become surly and withdrawn."

"That's because I don't like to be fawned over by a pack of queers," Jimmy protested.

"If you're going to stay in show business, you'd better get used to being surrounded by 'a pack of queers' as you call them. Half the guys you meet will be gay. And they won't like you calling them queer. Let's face it: Being a star involves getting people to like you—those who will cast you in roles and, of utmost importance, the public. That's the price of stardom. Get used to it or get out."

"I hate being used by Rogers like some Saturday night whore," he said. "He makes me feel cheap. I'm more than some floozie."

"I can't advise you about what to do," Haggart said. "And in addition, I'm a friend of Rogers. He gets jobs for me, he sometimes hires me as an art director, and I have to maintain some loyalty to him. So if you're expecting me to urge you to leave the comfortable life he's providing for you, I won't do it. My point is that if you feel compromised because you're living a comfortable life, then go live on the hard, cold streets. "

"What you're telling me is that I have to make up my own mind and suffer the consequences," Jimmy said.

"Suffer, perhaps, or else triumph on your own. I think you have the talent for it. But it'll be a rough ride."

"What if, after staging a dramatic walkout from Rogers, I fail to become a big star?" Jimmy said.

"Do what I did," Haggart said. "In the 1930s, I had dreams of becoming a leading man in Hollywood, a romantic leading man, that is. But it didn't happen for me. So I came to New York, reinvented myself as an art director, and here I am, leading the good life."

"I can't imagine myself being anything but an actor."

"Then you must go out there and succeed at any price," Haggart advised.

When Jimmy left the apartment, Haggart didn't know whether he'd move out of Brackett's apartment or not.

He would soon find out.

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Unexpectedly, Jimmy received a call a few days later from William Bast, his former roommate from Santa Monica. Bast told him he'd just arrived in New York and that he'd checked into the YMCA, where Jimmy had once stayed during leaner times. Bast had been graduated from UCLA in late May.

Over a "get re-acquainted" breakfast, Jimmy told Bast that he was back living with Brackett, who was procuring small roles for him in teleplays.

Jimmy was not forthcoming with a lot of additional information, but Bast assumed that he also had another involvement. He spoke of a dancer named Dizzy Sheridan. "She'll be joining us for breakfast."

Almost as soon as he'd said that, she appeared. Bast later remembered her as being a "long. lithe, supple beauty with pixie humor. She was warm and friendly, and very broke. She wasn't pretty in the conventional sense, but she was right there where you could touch her and know that she was real."

Over breakfast, Bast spoke of his dilemma in finding a place to live. "I don't want to spend every night running from the homos at the Y."

Dizzy suggested that he and Jimmy pool their resources and look for a place together. She was not aware that Jimmy and Bast had once shared a lodging in Santa Monica as part of a union that had ended violently.

After breakfast, all three of them strolled along the sidewalk, spotting the Royalton across the street. "I know someone there," Jimmy said.

Dizzy had to leave them. After her departure, Jimmy, with Bast, walked across the street and into the lobby of the Royalton. After riding the elevator to one of the upper floors, they arrived at the door to one of the apartments and rang its bell.

After a while, Jimmy rang again. Finally, the door was opened a crack. Recognizing who had rung, Roddy McDowall opened the door more fully, standing there sleepily, wearing only a pair of briefs. "Oh, it's you, Jimmy. Come in. Who's your friend?"

"William Bast, a writer from Hollywood."

When McDowall disappeared into the bathroom, Bast turned to Jimmy. It was obvious to him that Jimmy was having a fling with this former child star. Bast remembered him from playing opposite an 11-year-old Elizabeth Taylor in *Lassie Come Home* (1943).

Bast later recalled, "Count on Jimmy. Although Brackett's boy, he was slipping off banging Dizzy Sheridan, Roddy McDowall, and God knows who else."

Fully dressed, McDowall emerged from the bathroom and listened to their plight about finding a place to live. He suggested that they check at the desk in the Royalton's lobby.

Half an hour later, at the door, McDowall kissed Jimmy on the lips. "See you at five this afternoon," he said before turning to shake Bast's hand.

At the desk, Jimmy and Bast learned that the only accommodation available in their price range was the size of a broom closet.

Jimmy remembered his stay at the Iroquois and asked Bast to walk over with him. There, their luck improved. For ninety dollars a month, they rented a room with twin beds and a bath. It was more expensive than what they'd paid in Santa Monica, but this was Manhattan.

As the day drifted into night, Bast came to know a different Jimmy. "Whatever the price he'd paid, he owed Brackett an enormous debt for opening up his narrow world to greater resources of knowledge, experience, and awareness, as well as valuable social contacts. Sadly for Brackett, he failed to recognize his *protégé's* almost pathological abhorrence of indebtedness, and that Jimmy could not merely bite, but eventually devour the hand

that fed him."

"Jimmy was stronger than he'd been in Hollywood, more independent. He had greater confidence in himself. After all, he was now hanging out with Sarah Churchill. He had an aura of contained excitement about him."

Bast did not know if he'd phoned Bracket or not, but he spent the night with Jimmy in their drab new lodgings at the Iroquois. Bast later wrote: "It felt good to be reunited with my teammate. Or was 'teammate' the right word for it? Maybe it was something more. Our new relationship had not been defined. Surely anything was possible."

The next morning, Jimmy escorted Bast to Brackett's apartment after he'd departed for a day's work at his ad agency. Hurriedly, Jimmy packed his belongings, including some new clothes Brackett had recently purchased for him. He also took Sidney Franklin's blood-soaked matador cape, which he would use to decorate the bare wall of his new lodging. He left a note for Brackett to read when he returned from work.

In a taxi, Jimmy turned to Bast. "I'll never live with him again."

From their new lodgings, Jimmy set out to show Bast the world he'd discovered. Sometimes, Dizzy joined them; at other times, she was busy.

Jimmy never specifically informed Bast whether he'd called Brackett for a concluding dialogue, but Bast suspected that such a talk took place. Even though he'd moved out without notice, he obviously didn't want to lose a valuable contact like the producer.

Within two weeks, Bast had found a job at the New York headquarters of CBS, based at least to some extent on his successful stint as an usher at a CBS theater in Los Angeles. At the company's New York location, he started out in the mail room with the assurance, "You can work your way from here to the top."

Announcing "Christine White," an Ambitious Newcomer

But Is It Love?

Even though Jimmy was still romantically involved with Dizzy Sheridan, another pretty young woman was about to enter his life. Their meeting began unexpectedly.

Late one morning, he visited the office of his agent, Jane Deacy, hoping to "goose her into stirring up some more gigs for me. Summer was coming, and reruns were dominating the TV set."

In her reception area, he encountered a thin, blonde-haired, and rather pretty young girl in a red polka dot dress typing away. He assumed that she was Deacy's new secretary.

He approached her and stood looking down at her, perhaps surveying her bosom, or perhaps checking out what she was typing. "Get lost!" were her first words to him. "I'm busy."

Although he moved away, retreating to sit on a couch, he continued staring at her. Every now and then, she looked up from her typing. "You're spoiling my concentration. If you don't stop staring, I'll charge admission."

He picked up the latest copy of *Photoplay* and pretended to read it, but he kept staring at her until it was time for a 12:30PM luncheon break. So far, Deacy had been tied up with other actors trying to cement deals.

Picking up her purse, the young woman walked past Jimmy. Perhaps she felt guilty for treating him so rudely. She glanced back at him. "What's your name?"

"James Dean…but you can call me Jimmy."

I'm Christine White. My friends call me Chris. But you can call me Miss White."

"I could be your friend if you'd go with me for a cup of coffee. We could split a hamburger. I'm low on bread."

"So am I," she said. "But OK. Let's walk over to the Blue Ribbon Café."

Over a shared burger, her wall of indifference began to crumble. She genuinely liked Jimmy, although she thought he was much too short for an actor—and those horn-rimmed glasses had to go. Under questioning, he gave a highly edited version of his life.

She was more forthcoming. Born in Washington State, she had come to New York to try to break into the theater. She'd developed a desire to be an actress since appearing in college plays at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She later graduated from Catholic University, where she majored in speech and drama. Along with three other underfinanced and wannabe actresses, she was living in a studio apartment on Madison Avenue at 92nd Street.

She told him that she wasn't a secretary, but a new client of Deacy's, and that instead of typing anything associated with her new agent, she'd been typing a scene she'd written for presentation at Actors Studio as part of

an audition.

"I've been wanting to get into the Actors Studio ever since I came to New York," he told her. "I have a letter of recommendation from James Whitmore to Elia Kazan. I figured they did all right for Monty Clift and Marlon Brando, so why not me?"

"Why not?" she asked. "My scene takes place on a beach with another actor playing a bum who's at least twelve years older than me. Perhaps you'll do."

"I'll help you with your script. We'll work together, rehearsing and polishing it. How about it?"

Christine White

"I've been looking for an actor," she said. "Perhaps you're it."

"I'm not only it, I'm more than it. I'll become Laurence Olivier to your Vivien Leigh."

"Let's go for it," she said. "You can call me Chris."

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Three nights later, Jimmy escorted White to Haggart's apartment. "We're working on this skit together to rehearse for an audition at Actors Studio. Do you mind if we use the little apartment in back?"

Haggart was most gracious, but first he introduced them to his dinner guests. They included the actress Kim Stanley and her lover, Brooks Clift, an advertising executive who was the brother of Monty Clift.

Both White and Jimmy were delighted to meet and talk with Kim because they knew she had been a student of the Actors Studio, and famously trained by both Elia Kazan and Lee Strasberg.

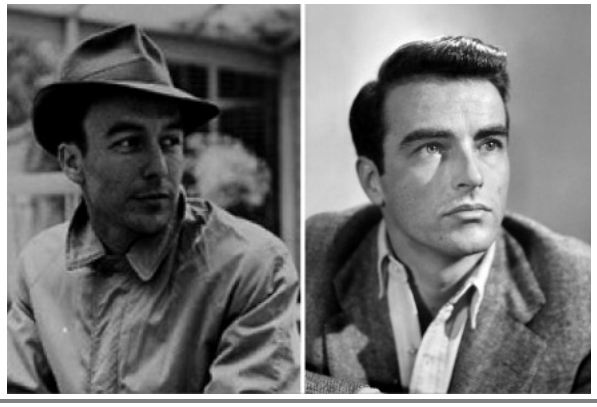
Kim had made her Broadway debut in 1949 and was considered by some at the time as the most promising young actress on Broadway. Haggart invited Jimmy and White to join their dinner party, and it was at around midnight that his quartet of guests broke up.

Kim Stanley...in love with Monty Clift's older brother, Brooks Clift.

Brooks and Kim left for her apartment, and Jimmy and Chris retreated to Haggart's rear studio. Before bidding good night to Haggart, Jimmy said, "Chris and I are virgins. This will be the first time we've ever done it. We're just

going to let nature take its course, and see what happens. It's all learned as you go."

Haggart was amazed that Jimmy could say that with a straight face, but—in front of White—he remained discreetly silent, and otherwise wished them luck.



Brooks Clift *(left)* shown with his more famous, and more screwed-up brother, Monty.

Over the course of the next few weeks, Chris and Jimmy came and went from Haggart's rear apartment. Their host was aware that Jimmy had reconciled to some degree with Brackett, and that their friendship was now being conducted on radically different terms from what it had been in the past. Jimmy, who confided to Haggart that he planned to seduce his roommate, William Bast, was still carrying on his affair with Dizzy.

"I'm working up to it, like giving him gentle little kisses on the mouth and indulging in teenage talk like 'Have you ever tasted semen?'"

When White was alone with Haggart, she told him, "Jimmy is still a very young boy. Rather impish, but with a certain kind of charm. Wouldn't you agree?"

"My sentiments completely," Haggart assured her.

She then made an odd comparison. "Jimmy and I are like two mudlarks splashing around on the street."

Throughout most of the summer, Jimmy spent whatever time he could with White, writing and rewriting her script and rehearsing it endlessly. Haggart witnessed the first tryout, and he made several helpful suggestions which they incorporated. In the script, White, a very nervous girl, meets a beach bum. The setting is Cape Hatteras in North Carolina. A hurricane is looming.

Roots was the title of the skit. It had been inspired by a dialogue between Jimmy and White, after she asked him, "What have you done for most of your life?"

He answered: "Ripping off the layers to find my roots."

After they rehearsed their audition skit in front of Haggart, Jimmy told him, "Chris and I are partners in crime. We are soulmates."

Late one night before closing, the manager of Jerry's Tavern allowed Jimmy and Chris to perform their skit in front of his diners, who applauded loudly. They also rehearsed in Central Park, often in front of otherwise idle curiosity seekers.

An interlude in their respective commitments fell upon them in August. Taking advantage of it, Jimmy accepted an invitation to sail with Lemuel and Shirley Ayers aboard their yacht around Cape Cod.

[Years later, White wrote about her first meeting with Jimmy for International Press Bulletin. *For some reason, she chose to express herself in the third person: "He walked slowly back to the doorway. She looked at his hunched shoulders, the pockets with hands in them. If he were an actor, she might have talked to him, but ambition was too precious a power to waste on a funny-looking guy with glasses who couldn't possibly be an actor. She watched him hesitate in the doorway, then careen around the frame and disappear into the waiting room."*

Christine White *(left)* about a decade after her first introduction to James Dean, in an episode of *The Twilight Zone* entitled *Nightmare at 20,000 Feet* (1963).

In the 1960s in Hollywood, years after Jimmy's death, Haggart by chance encountered White. She was appearing in roles on television in shows that included Bonanza, Perry Mason, The Rifleman*, and* The Untouchables*. Her most famous TV role had been* Nightmare at 20,000 Feet, aired in 1963 *for the TV series,* The Twilight Zone*.*

She spoke with sadness about Jimmy. "In that summer of 1952, we believed the world was ours, and that everything was possible. He seemed like such an all-American boy to me. At first, I didn't see this moody, promiscuous, even dangerously suicidal young man. At least not at first. I thought about marrying him and settling down and having joint stage careers. How foolish dreams can be."

Haggart never saw her again.]

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For their annual yachting vacation aboard *The Typhoon,* Lemuel and Shirley Ayers invited Jimmy to accompany them as their cabin boy, although he'd had absolutely no prior experience sailing.

The trip began near their estate on the Hudson River. They sailed down the river, then continued on into the open sea to Martha's Vineyard. From there, they embarked on a casual ten-day exploration of the coast of Cape Cod. During the first two days of their trip, the weather was so rough that Lemuel said, "Only a member of the Kennedy clan could sail through waters like this."

When he returned to New York, Jimmy gave Bast a highly edited version of that sea adventure.

"You mean. Lemuel took his wife along when both of us knew that one of the purposes of the trip involved seducing *you?"*

"I made a few visits to Lem's stateroom for a blow-job while Shirley was on deck. "She's a very understanding wife and has a really masculine voice."

"It was a wild trip on the seas," Jimmy recalled. "At one point at this party where Lem's friends came aboard in Provincetown, Lem stripped me completely naked and had me appear as Neptune on a throne he'd made. After all, he's a scenic designer. I went over big with his gay pals that night, and I got a lot of sleepover offers. Fortunately, Shirley was away that night visiting these two dyke friends of hers."

While aboard, Jimmy heard Lem discussing his play, *See the Jaguar,* scheduled for an opening that autumn. He had already signed Arthur Kennedy as the lead, with Michael Gordon directing it and Alec Wilder composing the music. To Jimmy's great delight, it included an important role for a teenage boy.

By the fourth day of the cruise, Jimmy was actively campaigning for inclusion in the cast, but without directly asking for that key role.

"At least Lem is assured of access to your dick—at least until he's signed someone else to the part," Bast commented, sarcastically.

Before the end of the cruise, the only assurance Jimmy had received from Lem was his promise that he'd arrange for a reading in front of Gordon, *See the Jaguar's* director. "If you're good at the reading, the part is yours."

Jimmy eagerly read the play, learning that the character of Wally Wilkins is seventeen-year-old boy who has been locked up since childhood by his paranoid mother, who wants to shield him "from the terror of the world."

To lure potential "angels" who might invest in the production of the play, Lem staged a series of theatrical sales

presentations. The first of them was a run-through that unfolded within the luxurious Fifth Avenue apartment of Shirley's wealthy aunt. There, actor James O'Rear read the part of the teenage boy, even though he was in his thirties at the time and wrong for the role. Accompanied by Brackett, Jimmy attended, although he was severely disappointed that Lem had not asked him to deliver the reading.

Boris Karloff, best known to movie audiences as Frankenstein, attended the reading. Later, within earshot of Jimmy, the aging actor lavished praise on O'Rear's talent to Lemuel. That made Jimmy jealous to the point of overt anger.

By the end of summer, Lem still had not raised enough money to mount the play, so he staged a more lavish presentation at the Warwick Hotel. Once again, O'Rear was summoned to portray the teenaged boy.

Later, Jimmy complained to Brackett that, "The guy is reading my part. After all, I paid my god damn dues on that fucking wind-tossed yachting trip."

In September of 1952, Lem's fundraiser at the Warwick drew the attention of writers at the *New York Herald-Tribune,* who noted: "Producer Lemuel Ayers doesn't seem to be worried about being able to raise the rest of the cash needed for *See the Jaguar.* Mr. Ayers, the noted scenic designer, has gone ahead and arranged for tryouts in both Boston and Hartford."

Jimmy called Lem at his Manhattan apartment, learning that Shirley was out. He asked if could come by.

Two hours later, as he sat on the Ayers' sofa, Lem's fingers moved toward his zipper, as they had so many times before.

"Before I let you suck it, what about my audition?"

"I'll arrange it," Lem vowed.

"You'd better mean that," Jimmy said. "OK, go ahead, have your fun, but swallow every drop so I won't have to shower."

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At long last, the day had come for Chris White and Jimmy to audition for admission to the prestigious Actors Studio, home turf of Brando, Monty Clift, Julie Harris, and so many others. A lot depended on his getting accepted. After all, his stated reason for coming to New York involved learning Method acting as promulgated by the Actors Studio.

Both White and Jimmy faced stiff opposition. Some 150 other young men and women were also auditioning for admission, and fewer than a dozen, maybe less, would be accepted.

The father of the Method was the Russian director and co-founder of the Moscow Art Theater, Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938). As taught by Lee Strasberg, aping the master, the actor "learns to use his senses, his mind, and especially his feelings as effectively as he employs his voice and body to project his character."

The day was cold and windy as Jimmy and White headed out. He was not adequately dressed for the bitter weather. They took the elevator to the tenth floor of 1697 Broadway, near 54th Street. Getting off, he was freezing, and he went and sat on the hall radiator. "My balls are frozen. I'm defrosting them."

When he was warmer, he shocked White by telling her, "I can't go through with it. I'm too nervous."

"Listen to me, you little prick," she said, confronting him. "This was my audition all along. You horned in. Now you're trying to fuck it up for me." She reached into her handbag and took out two cans of Budweiser that had been intended as props for their upcoming presentation. "Here, drink this," she said. "Maybe you won't be so nervous."

He gulped it down.

Within a few minutes, the secretary came out and called for Dean, a name near the top of the list of candidates whose auditions had been scheduled for that day.

White was stunned when he bolted from the room, heading for the stairwell, not the elevator. She quickly recovered and asked the secretary to put their names under "W" for White, which meant that they'd be called near the end.

Within half an hour, Jimmy reappeared with two cans of unopened Budweiser. "I just couldn't do the audition pretending to drink beer from an empty can," he explained to her. "Also, running up and down ten flights of stairs has made me less nervous."

When their names were recalled, Jimmy removed his glasses and raced out onto the stage. Since he was so nearsighted, he missed his mark by almost ten feet, hitting the hard floor with a bang. It was supposed to

represent sand on a beach before the debut of a hurricane.

Nervously, White followed his dramatic entrance. He could hardly make her out, so he squinted at her. He flipped open the can of beer and said, "Hi," which was not in the script.

Their scene about loneliness and alienation began. They'd rehearsed it many times, but he threw her off by inserting impromptu phrases. Although she masked her feelings, she was furious.

The scene's ending called for him to invite her into his ramshackle beach shack, but she runs away. The skit was suddenly over.

From the front row, there was a long silence. Elia Kazan asked, "Who wrote this skit?"

Nervously, White stepped forward. "I'm the culprit."

"It was okay," Kazan responded.

"Rather sensitive," Cheryl Crawford chimed in. *[Producer Cheryl Crawford was one of the founding members of the Actors Studio. She had produced such plays as* Porgy and Bess *in 1941, as well as Tennessee Williams'* The Rose Tattoo *(1951). Later, she expressed a dim view of Jimmy. "As a human being, he was just too sick."]*

Finally, Lee Strasberg spoke. "I found the scene quite natural. That's why I let you guys run three minutes' overtime."

Days would go by before they were notified that they had both been accepted into the Actors Studio. Of the dozens who had applied, fewer than ten had been accepted.

To celebrate, Jimmy asked White out to a dinner at Jerry's Tavern. "Maybe he'll let us dine for free, since he's been rooting for us."

On the way there, and quite by coincidence, Jimmy and White ran into Dizzy, who was returning from her summer dance gig along the Jersey Shore. Embarrassed to be caught with an attractive young woman, Jimmy explained to Dizzy that White had been his partner in his successful audition before the admissions committee at the Actors Studio.

Dizzy seemed satisfied with that explanation and set up a time to meet him the following evening after she'd settled back into her Manhattan routine.

The two female rivals for Jimmy's love would never meet again.

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As the autumn winds blew into New York, and the multi-colored leaves began to fall in Central Park, it was time for Jimmy to find a place to hole in for the winter. Dizzy and Jimmy decided once again to set up residence together, this time in a large but bleak apartment at 13 West 89th Street, just off Central Park West. There was a big difference from their previous arrangement. This time, they would have two roommates, William Bast and a woman identified only as "Tina." Both Jimmy and Bast had attended UCLA with Tina.

The only decoration on the walls was Jimmy's battered and ragged matador cape. The furnishings consisted mainly of bare mattresses with no linens.

Dizzy and Jimmy shared the sole bedroom with twin beds, and Tina and Bast agreed to sleep on day beds in the living room. The kitchen had virtually no utensils. Jimmy suggested they could eat with their hands—that is, if there were something to eat in the bare cupboards. Bast remembered their first night in the apartment. They each shared a bowl of boiled vermicelli, the only food left. "We picked off the bugs floating on top."

Two weeks later, Jimmy arrived at the apartment with a large box, which his three roommates assumed contained foodstuff. When he opened it in front of them, it turned out to be an expensive set of luxurious pillows and bedsheets from Bloomingdales.

The objects were a gift from Rogers Brackett, with whom Jimmy still maintained an uneasy truce, not having submitted to the producer's never-ending requests to move back into his apartment with the luxuries associated with it.

In an act of showy ostentation, Jimmy spread the chocolate-colored sheets over his bare mattress, arranged the pillows, stripped down to his briefs, and crawled inside after wishing his roommates a good night.

Angered and envious, all three of them moved toward his bed, overturning his mattress and sending him sprawling onto the cold floor.

"There was little privacy," Bast said. "I got a preview of the breasts and vaginas of Tina and Dizzy, and each girl learned how we were hung. Of course, Dizzy and I had seen Jimmy in the nude many times before. Tina hadn't. She grew accustomed to his parading around the apartment with his balls dangling."

Bast also remembered the maze of bras, panties, and stockings hanging out to dry in the bathroom; the complaints about toilet seats being left up; the bathtub rings; and the snoring from both Jimmy and himself. There were also conflicts about dishes. “We had a few dishes by then being left unwashed in the sink. There were fights over which radio programs to listen. We were not a compatible quartet.”

As each day went by, Jimmy grew more irritable and difficult to live with, as he faced increasing anxiety about why he had not been called for an audition of *See the Jaguar.*

A surprise invitation came in for Jimmy to visit his aunt and uncle, Ortense and Marcus Winslow, in Fairmount, Indiana. He was told that his father, Winton, would return to Indiana for a short visit. If Jimmy could make the trip, the dentist technician would arrive with two new front teeth for his son.

Jimmy invited Dizzy and Bast to join him on the trip. They immediately complained that they did not have the plane fare. “That’s no problem,” Jimmy said. “We’ll hitchhike. It’s only 800 miles.” He told them that he’d seen that 1934 movie, *It Happened One Night,* starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. Colbert had shown Gable how to hitchhike by lifting her skirt and revealing one leg. “What I’ll do is unbutton my shirt and reveal my chest. If not that, I’ll pull up my pants’ leg and show off one of my shapely gams.”

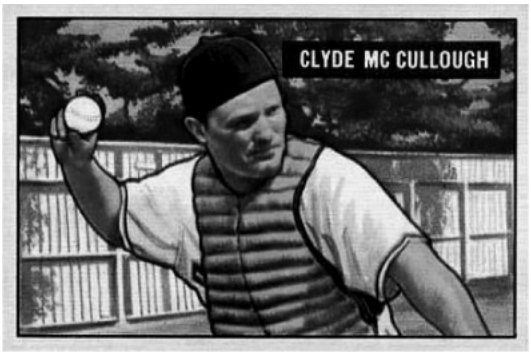
“Then you’ll be queer bait,” Dizzy said. “But we’ll go with you since you’ve promised comfortable beds and all the food we can eat. I also want to go horseback riding.”

It was an unseasonably cold morning on October 9, 1952, as this trio rode a bus from midtown Manhattan to the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel. Rejecting Jimmy’s suggested technique, they each stuck out their thumbs and, within an hour, they’d procured a ride to the (far western) end of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

They still had to cross the width of Ohio. Bast said they were picked up by a “weasel-like man, real creepy, and an obvious sexual pervert. Everything he said to us was sexually suggestive. Finally, it all came out when Jimmy and I went to take a leak with him in a gas station. He said he liked to lick the balls of young men and eat pussy. He wanted the four of us to check into a sleazy motel for the night. We didn’t get back into his car, heading instead for the open highway with our thumbs out.”

Luck was on their side. A Nash Rambler slowed down and offered them a ride, the motorist claiming that he’d be driving throughout the night *en route* to Dubuque, Iowa, for an exhibition baseball game. It turned out that he was Clyde McCullough, at the time a famous player for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

When they stopped for dinner, he invited them to join him, but they told him they were on a limited budget. “Forget it,” he said. “I’m loaded. Order anything you want.”



COLLECTIBLES: Clyde McCullough, depicted on a baseball card as he appeared in 1951, around the time he picked up Jimmy and his entourage as they were hitchhiking to Indiana.

Jimmy ordered “the biggest steak you’ve got.” After devouring it, he asked the waitress, “Can I have seconds?”

“As long as you’re paying, or your friend here, you can have the whole cow,” the brassy waitress snapped.

The sports figure drove them to a point where Marcus could motor up from Fairmount and haul them back to his farm. All three of them thanked McCullough profusely for his hospitality.

[It was twenty years later, while watching Giant*, that McCullough turned to friends and said, “God Almighty! I once picked up a hitchhiker who turned out to be a big-time cow eater in this little dive. My passenger was James Dean, and I’m not making this up.”]*

At the Winslow Farm, Jimmy introduced his aunt and uncle, whom he referred to as “Mom” and “Dad” to his best friends, Bast and Dizzy. Bast recalled, “They were wonderful to us. We’ve never eaten so much—fried chicken,

thick steaks, cream gravy and mashed potatoes, cornbread with rich butter, and endless ears of corn on the cob and green beans cooked in bacon fat."

In the barn, Jimmy rescued his motorcycle, a CZ, from mothballs and went roaring through the countryside with Dizzy hanging onto his back for dear life.

After a reunion with his former drama coach, Adeline Nall, the teacher asked Jimmy to address her drama class about insights into the New York theater and how to break into it. Bast was asked to talk about writing for films, and Dizzy performed some of her best modern dance movements. "All three of us were very green in our so-called professions, but the students were impressed," Bast said. "Of course, Jimmy gave a very limited impression of how to break into show business. He left out that he had been on many a casting couch."

In front of Nall's class, he demonstrated an actor's changing faces by saying, "My name is James Dean" in several different ways, beginning with a melancholy sadness and ending tearfully. Along the way he said the line with aggression, with reluctance, with manic energy, and also hysterically, as if he were shouting, "FIRE!"

On the third day, Winton Dean arrived with Jimmy's new front teeth. Painfully, both Bast and Dizzy observed Jimmy's attempt to embrace his cold, distant father.

"At least we got to see what Jimmy would look like in twenty-five years," Bast said. "Winton was very reserved and self-conscious around his son. He didn't laugh or smile once during his short visit. Watching father and son left me with nothing but a deep sadness. At least Jimmy made off with two new front teeth. He knew that Jimmy didn't have money and would have to hitchhike back to New York. He could have lent him at least a hundred dollars, but he chose not to."

Fortunately for Jimmy during that return visit to Fairmount, his child-molesting pastor, James DeWeerd, was in Chicago, so some potential embarrassments were avoided.

Shortly after Winton's return to California, a call came in for Jimmy from his agent, Jane Deacy, in New York. Lemuel Ayres wanted him right away to audition for *See the Jaguar.* He had raised enough money to bring the play to Broadway for an opening on December 2 at the Cort Theatre.

Before leaving Indiana, Jimmy paid a visit to his mother's grave. In front of Bast, he broke down and cried. "The pain of desertion is still there," he said.

Marcus drove the trio from his farm to the main highway for the beginning of their long hitchhike east.

Their most memorable ride *en route* to the outskirts of New York was with a drunken Texan driving a big cream-colored Cadillac. He came to a screeching halt and called out to them, "Y'all jump in!" As he drove along, he kept a bottle of whiskey between his legs, every now and then taking a gulp.

He seemed rather rich and invited all of them to dine with him at a steak house. Everyone ordered a T-bone, but the Texan claimed, "These tough pieces of leather must have come from Kansas. You guys will have to come down to my ranch in Texas to get the steak of a lifetime."

At a gas station, when Dizzy was in the toilet, the Texan told Jimmy and Bast, "I drive up once or twice a year to New York. You see, I'm into black poontang, and there's this place in Harlem I should give you guys the address to. In my home state, it's frowned upon for a white man to like black pussy."

En route to New York, he stopped the car, opened the door, and "vomited the Rio Grande" (Bast's words). He explained to his passengers that he had an ulcer but liked to drink and eat a lot. "I enjoy the taste, but then I have to throw it all up. My ulcers can't handle it."

After that, he seemed too drunk to drive, so Jimmy took the wheel. When they'd reached one of the outer boroughs of New York, he stopped at a subway station, where they got out and caught a train into Manhattan. Bast and Jimmy moved the Texan to the back seat, left the keys with him, but locked his car doors so he could sleep off his drunk before heading to Harlem.

Arriving exhausted with Bast and Dizzy in Midtown, Jimmy learned that his audition reading of *See the Jaguar* had been scheduled for ten o'clock the following morning. He desperately wanted the role and was filled with anxiety. Yet at other times, he was very optimistic because of his intimate connection with Lem Ayers.

Jimmy told Dizzy, "I want to be a big Broadway star."

She later wrote, "I hope Jimmy has a big career as an actor, but I also wanted him to want nothing more in his life than me."

James Dean, Tom Tryon, and Jack Cassidy

Sometimes, In Show-Biz, Three's Not a Crowd

Dizzy Sheridan's wish to have Jimmy want her did not come true, although her hope for his big career was on the horizon. If she wanted to keep Jimmy in her life, she would have to learn to share him with others, both men and women.

Less than a week after returning to New York, he was pursuing Chris White again. Not only that, but her new boyfriend as well.

Hot, talented, artistically versatile, and movie-star handsome: Tom Tryon.

Perhaps with a touch of malice, Rogers Brackett showed Jimmy an item in Walter Winchell's gossip column. It claimed that the handsome young actor, Tom Tryon, had been seen dating starlet Chris White. "Rumors are that the nuptials are to be in Hartford, Tryon's hometown."

Consumed with jealousy, Jimmy demanded, "Who is this Tyrone Power?" deliberately misstating his name.

He later told Bast, "I feel a sense of betrayal. But I'm not going to confront her. I have another, much better, scheme."

Tryon, who was five years older than Jimmy, had served for three years in the U.S. Navy beginning in 1943. Upon his return from the war in the Pacific, he entered and later graduated from Yale.

Back in New York, he had studied acting under the tutelage of the acting coach Sanford Meisner, who at the time was as well-known as Lee Strasberg.

Currently, Tryon was one of the players in the long-running Broadway musical *Wish You Were Here*, starring alongside Jack Cassidy, Patricia Marand, and Sheila Bond. [Studded with musical numbers, many of which went on to successful lives as hit singles, it had opened in June of 1952 on Broadway at the Imperial Theatre, running for almost eighteen months and 600 performances.]

Jimmy was aware that Brackett knew the director of the play, and he asked him if he would obtain seats to see a Saturday night show.

Brackett was willing and seemed delighted that Jimmy wanted to go on a very public date with him again, since he'd been slipping around and seeing him privately instead of dining out or going to the theater with him, as he had done months before.

After the show, Brackett and Jimmy went backstage to greet the director and to congratulate the stars. Jimmy left Brackett as he was talking to Cassidy and the director. He wandered over to introduce himself to Tryon.

Years later, Tryon, at his home in Key West, told Darwin Porter, co-author of this biography, what then transpired between Jimmy and himself:

"I didn't know who Dean was at the time. He had yet to open on Broadway in *See the Jaguar*. He really turned on the male charm. I had never been so lavishly congratulated on my acting in my life. He also told me I was a

goodlooking guy. He must have learned that I was gay, because he claimed that the moment I walked onstage, he got an immediate erection."

"I considered him very sexy and handsome, too, though a little bit short for me. Mostly, I go for guys who are tall in the saddle. He was doing more than talk to me. He was standing so close, we could have had sex."

"He told me that he wanted to let me in on a secret, but swore me to keep it to myself. He said that he was about to be cast as the second male lead in a play called *See the Jaguar* produced by Lemuel Ayers. I'd heard of him. Dean revealed that Ayers was in the process of deciding whether he wanted to cast Arthur Kennedy as the primary lead. Dean went on to say that Ayers was not satisfied with Kennedy, and that he was discreetly searching for another actor to play the male lead instead."

"Dean suggested that secretly, he could arrange an invitation for me to the Ayers estate up on the Hudson, and that after Ayers met me, he'd be sure to favor me as *See the Jaguar*'s leading actor. He also claimed that even though Ayers was married, he was as gay as a feather boa."

"My dream," Tryon continued, "involved appearing as a star in a Broadway play. Stupid schemer that I was, I fell for Dean's line. Later, of course, I realized what a bullshitter he was, and the real reason he came on to me."

"No doubt he was turned on. I was at the peak of my male beauty back then. But, as I was to learn later, he had vengeance on his mind. Specifically, he wanted to punish his girlfriend, Chris White."

"The main reason that had motivated my decision to go out with Chris involved press and public perceptions. I was an actor on the rise, with hopes of becoming a movie star, and I wanted to dispel rumors that I was gay. There was nothing very serious between Chris and me."

"Arriving at the Ayers estate on Sunday, I found Lemuel and Shirley marvelous hosts. I think he had the hots for me, but I belonged to Dean that weekend. Frankly the sex was great. Jimmy and I performed every known act, and a few he invented. I discovered a streak of masochism in him. At times, he wanted me to hurt him, and I obliged, but I'm not much into that. Otherwise, he did everything I wanted him to do—and then some."

"By Monday night, when we returned to New York, I was fairly certain that Lem would consider me as the lead actor in his upcoming play. As for Dean, he was talking seriously about the two of us living together. I mean as a sort of unofficial husband and husband, with me as the top."

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A few days after their return to Manhattan, Jimmy received a call from Tryon. "You want some more of this hot young actor?" Jimmy asked him.

"I can't get enough," Tryon said. "But I'm calling with a slightly different invitation. Jack Cassidy wants to have us up to his suite for a late night supper tonight after the show."

"He's gay, right?" Jimmy asked.

"Let's call him bisexual. After all, he's married to the actress Evelyn Ward."

"I'm game for anything," Jimmy said. "I'll meet you at the theater's rear entrance after the performance. I'll be your Stage Door Johnny."

After sitting through another performance of *Let's Do It Again*, Jimmy was waiting outside when Cassidy and Tryon emerged that night from the theater. As a trio, they headed out into the street, looking for a taxi. Along the way, Cassidy encountered a bevy of young women or late teenaged girls clamoring for his autograph.

[Jack Cassidy, five years older than Jimmy, was the handsome star of the musical, Wish You Were Here, in which Tryon had a secondary role. Jimmy knew very little about him, other than that he was a singer and actor.

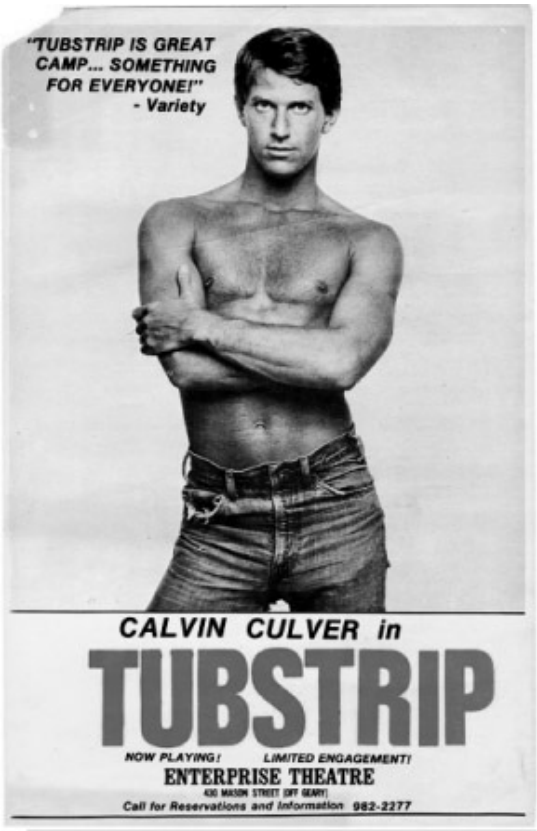
A lot of his success derived from his talent as a musical performer on Broadway. His persona was often that of a vain, shallow, urbane, super-confident egotist with a dramatic flair.

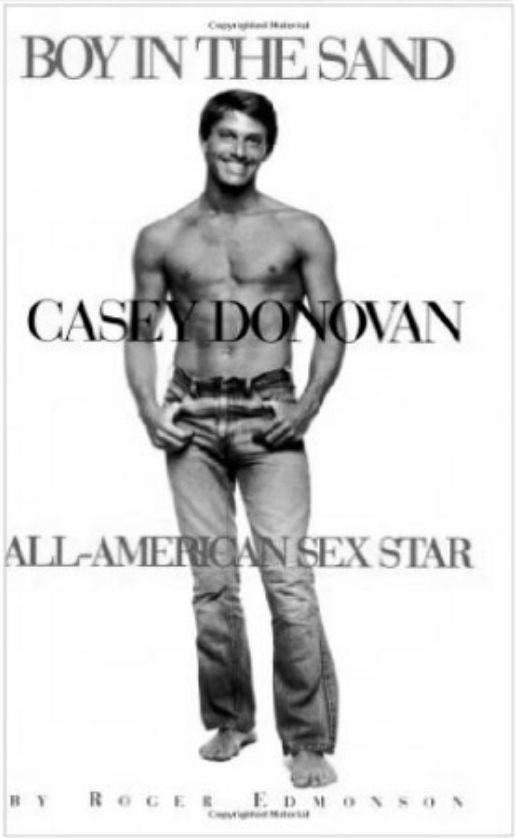
His son, David Cassidy, born in 1950, later became a teen idol and pop star, *best known for his key role in the 1970s musical TV sitcom* The Partridge Family.

After divorcing Ward in 1956, Jack married actress and singer Shirley Jones, with whom he had three more sons, including Shaun Cassidy. In his 1994 autobiography, C'Mon, Get Happy, *David claimed that his father was bisexual, as did Jones. He suffered from bipolar disorder, and could be seen watering his lawn in the nude.*

Partial Portrait of a Dysfunctional Family: Jack Cassidy *(left)*; his second wife, Shirley Jones *(center)*; and Jack's son by his first wife, pop singer and teen idol, David Cassidy.

Jack Cassidy died in 1976, alone in his apartment when he fell asleep drunk and ignited his Naugahyde couch. His body was identified by his dental records and a signet ring.]





Midway through his career as a porn star, Cal Culver *(aka. Casey Donovan)* wanted to break into screen acting. In pursuit of that goal,

he made overtures for a role in a possible film production of Patricia Nell Warren's *The Front Runner;* and Darwin Porter's *Butterfies in Heat,* later filmed in Key West as *The Last Resort.*

Despite Culver's considerable talent as an actor, film producers refused to hire him, based on his notoriety in porn. He billed himself as "The New James Dean," and for a while, he thought he'd be awarded the lead role in a film, *The James Dean Story*, but the deal fell through.

Over dinner in his suite that night in 1952, Cassidy amused Jimmy and Tryon with stories of his life.

Jimmy found Cassidy dashing and debonair, admiring his devil-may-care attitude. He was refined, suave, and charming, but Jimmy sensed a dark streak in him.

Privately that night, surrounded by likeminded companions, he indulged in gay chatter.

Jimmy learned that he and Cassidy had shared something in common: Both of them had been seduced as part of casting auditions by Cole Porter.

Cassidy had continued his sexually charged visits to Porter's bedroom. "I made him work for it," he said. "I'd strip naked and sit in a corner with my big cock dangling over the side of the chair. Cole, that old sod, had to get out of his wheelchair and crawl across the carpet for access to what I have."

Jimmy found the story insensitive and sadistic, but strangely erotic. "I'll have to try that someday. All I need is a cripple."

"When I was a teenager," Cassidy continued, "I cultivated my voice and my speech patterns by seeing about ten movies a week, preferring double features," Cassidy said. "John Barrymore was my idol. I modeled a lot of my style after him."

[By 1976, Cassidy had perfected his Barrymore persona *to such an extent that he was hired to portray "The Great Profile", Barrymore himself, in the feature film* W.C. Fields and Me*.]*

Two nights later, Jimmy dropped in for a visit with Stanley Haggart, this time without a companion. Running low on cash, he wanted to see if Haggart could get him cast in one of his television commercials. He didn't want to go back to Brackett and ask him.

Haggart knew Cassidy. After learning that Jimmy had spent the night in his hotel suite, along with Tom Tryon—who would later become a friend of Haggart's in Key West—he asked about him.

"We had a three-way," Jimmy admitted. "I don't want to go into a blow-by-blow account of what happened. But Tom screwed me as Cassidy and I blew one another."

"Then, after the sex was over, Cassidy got drunk with us and broke down and cried. He told us that his mother had borne him late in her life, and that she had never loved him. 'She rejected me,' Cassidy said, 'and hired a woman two doors away who had just had a child to nurse me. I can never remember my mother ever having kissed me.' In response to that, I said 'The same could be said for my father.'"

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Tryon's dream of appearing as the male lead in *See the Jaguar* never materialized. The actor learned later that Ayers had never deviated from his desire that Arthur Kennedy be designated as the play's male lead, even though Jimmy had dangled it in front of Tryon as a trophy that was up for grabs.

Years later, according to Tryon, "Basically, the role had been assigned to Kennedy even before I got involved with jimmy. It was never really available at all. After that night with Jimmy and Cassidy, I never saw the boy again. If there's one thing I hate, it's a liar."

[Although bigtime stardom eluded him, Tryon went on to greater things. His greatest role came in 1963, when Otto Preminger cast him as an ambitious Catholic priest in The Cardinal, *for which he received a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama. "Preminger practically killed me. Never before and never again would I suffer such abuse."*

"I almost got to work with Marilyn Monroe on her last unfinished picture, Something's Got to Give, *directed by George Cukor. But when Marilyn was fired, I was, too."*

By the late 1960s, Tryon was disillusioned with acting, and he went on to become a famous writer, specializing in horror and mystery books. His best known work was The Other *(1971), about a boy whose evil twin brother may or may not be responsible for a series of deaths in a small rural community in the 1930s.*

When Darwin Porter became Tryon's friend in Key West, Tryon had taken as his live-in lover Cal Culver (also

billed as Casey Donovan), the leading gay male porn star in America.]

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Awakening early for his first audition for the role of Wally Wilkins in *See the Jaguar,* Jimmy borrowed William Bast's only clean white shirt and his charcoal-gray slacks that had just come back from the cleaners. After endless preening, he asked Bast and Dizzy, "How do I look?"

After winning their approval, he headed toward the Royalton Hotel, where his sometimes lover, Roddy McDowall lived. N. Richard Nash, the author of *Meet the Jaguar*, was conducting the reading in McDowall's room, for reasons known only to him.

Jimmy knew very little about Nash. Born in Philadelphia, he'd been a ten-dollar per match boxer before going on to study English literature and philosophy in college. He had written for Broadway before, having authored works that included the Shakespearian-themed comedy, *The Second Best Bed,* produced in 1946, and the highly acclaimed drama, *The Young and the Fair* (1948). His greatest success would come later, when he wrote the original Broadway version of *The Rainmaker* (1954), which was adapted into a movie two years later starring Burt Lancaster and Katharine Hepburn.

Nash recalled Jimmy's reading. "He wasn't really trying to sell himself to me, and I respected that quality in him. As he began to read for the role of Wally, I sensed he had something that other actors didn't. We'd auditioned at least a hundred of them before Jimmy read for me. At the end of his reading, I told him, 'If it were up to me, I'd give you the role this morning. But you'll have to read tomorrow afternoon before our director, Michael Gordon. You have that special quality the role of Wally calls for."

"You mean, I can play retarded?" Jimmy asked, jokingly.

Before it opened, Nash had billed *See the Jaguar* as "an allegorical Western without the horses." Set in the "backwash of civilization," the rural South, it was loaded with symbolism, much of it difficult to understand. One early reader of the play had dismissed it, accusing Nash of having "earthy characters break from their role to spout philosophical pronouncements."

[In the play, Wally Wilkins is a seventeen-year-old boy, who has been locked up since he was a child in an ice house by his neurotic mother, ostensibly to protect him from the cruelty of the world. Shortly before her death, she releases him. As an innocent naïf, he discovers the cruelty and horror of the world, encountering both brutality and beauty.

A kindly schoolteacher, Arthur Kennedy, aided by his pregnant partner, takes him in and shelters him to the degree he can. Kennedy's partner was portrayed by Constance Ford, who had been awarded the role after Maureen Stapleton turned it down.

After his release from his prison, Wally had set out with a rifle, and at one point, he kills a mountain jaguar about to attack him. That angers the local sheriff (played by Cameron Prud'Homme), who, previously, had built a cage with the intention of exhibiting the animal as a sideshow at his gas station. He'd even painted a sign—SEE THE JAGUAR—with the intention of displaying it, along with a menagerie of other abused and caged wild animals, as a tourist attraction.

When the sheriff's hopes about capturing the jaguar alive are thwarted, he captures Wally and displays him in the cage in lieu of the jaguar. The teacher (as played by Kennedy) later frees him, an act of defiance that so enrages the sheriff that he shoots him as "retribution" for his kindness.]

During his second audition, this time in front of the director, Michael Gordon, a very different-looking Jimmy showed up for his reading.

Born a Jew in Baltimore, and later a member of the left-wing Group Theatre, Gordon was, at the time of Jimmy's audition for *See the Jaguar,* under scrutiny from Congressional witch-hunting committees, as spearheaded by the dreaded Joseph McCarthy. Gordon was a friend of director Elia Kazan and John Garfield, one of the few Hollywood actors that Jimmy admired.

Shortly before he met Jimmy, Gordon had directed the 1950 production of *Cyrano de Bergerac,* which had won a Best Actor Oscar for José Ferrer.

[Amazingly, after Gordon survived the blacklist, film producer Ross Hunter hired him to direct a comedy for a 1959 release. It was Pillow Talk, *starring Rock Hudson and Doris Day. It became one of the biggest-grossing box offices successes of that year.]*

"I couldn't believe it," Nash said. "The day before, Jimmy had been so neat and well-dressed. But when he

showed up to meet Gordon, he looked like he was recovering from a two-night drunk. He was disheveled, his hair uncombed, and one of the lenses in his spectacles had been cracked. His reading was very bad. Gordon met with me and rejected Jimmy, even those he was close to Ayers, the producer."

"Finally, I persuaded Gordon to give Jimmy a final chance the following day. I went to Jimmy and angrily asked him, 'What in hell happened to you?'"

Jimmy told the playwright that he'd had a sleepless night owing to a personal problem. He hadn't repaired his glasses, since he had no money.

Nash agreed to lend him ten dollars. But when he showed up the following afternoon, although he was neatly dressed, he wore no glasses. "You don't need glasses anymore?" Nash asked.

"I went to buy a new pair with your ten dollars, but I saw this vicious-looking knife in a store window. So I went inside and bought it. I'm carrying it now."

Then he claimed that two friends had rehearsed with him throughout most of the night, and that he knew all the lines by heart, so he wouldn't have to read from the script.

The difference in the quality of his third reading from that of the reading he had flubbed was amazing. Even Gordon admitted that Jimmy read the lines this time with deep understanding and perception. When it was over, Gordon told him, "the part is yours."

Rehearsals were scheduled to begin on October 20th, 1952. Back at his apartment, he told Bast, "I've got it! I'll dazzle Broadway! I'll be a star at the age of twenty-one."

Bast later confessed that he was jealous of Jimmy, since he, too, had wanted to be a bigtime actor until deciding that he had a better chance at writing scripts than performing in them.

Alec Wilder had been commissioned to compose *See the Jaguar's* musical score, and he met with Jimmy to teach him the lyrics of his big musical number, "Green Briar, Blue Fire."

"The kid was tone deaf. Imagine Jimmy auditioning for the role of Curly in *Oklahoma!* We rehearsed and rehearsed. He finally got it half right. But Frank Sinatra need not fear any competition."

Wilder also wasn't impressed when he saw Jimmy coming under the spell of Arthur Kennedy. *[Arthur Kennedy had originally billed himself as "John Kennedy," changing it after perceiving too many comparisons to the then-on-the-rise politician with the same name.]*

A competent but average-looking actor, Kennedy's career had been built on a widely diverse cluster of roles, some of them trivial and forgettable, that had included villainous portrayals in both Westerns and police dramas. Like Jimmy, he studied at Actors Studio.

His big film break had occurred when James Cagney discovered him and cast him as his younger brother in City for Conquest *(1940). What especially impressed Jimmy was that he'd been in the original casts of some of Arthur Miller's great Broadway dramas, most visibly as Biff Lomon in* Death of a Salesman *(1949). He'd gone on to play Chris Keller in Miller's* All My Sons *(1947), and there was talk that Miller wanted him as a key player in his upcoming drama,* The Crucible *(1953).*

The New York Film Critics had designated him as Best Actor for his role in Bright Victory *(1951), in which he played a soldier facing an uncertain future after being blinded. That year, he was also nominated for a Best Actor Oscar, but lost to Humphrey Bogart's performance in* The African Queen*.]*

"I stood by and watched Jimmy hero-worship Kennedy and all that Method crap," Wilder said. "Kennedy brainwashed Jimmy into believing that no one in the production was of any consequence except the actor. That simply is not true. What about the director and the playwright, not to mention the composer? I've always felt that this attitude instilled in Jimmy accounted to a great extent for his shocking behavior when he hit the big time in Hollywood."

Arthur Kennedy, cast as a school teacher in *See the Jaguar,* talks with his pregnant partner (Constance Ford) about seventeen-year-old Willy Wilkins (James Dean), who has been locked up by his paranoid mother since childhood.

Kennedy had a very different impression of Jimmy. "I liked the kid a lot. He was uniquely talented. He didn't suffer all the posturing, mannerisms, and mumbling of Brando. He delivered his lines pure and clear, and had one of the most sensitive faces of any young man in the theater. But I must add a *caveat.* He was the most peculiar actor I've ever worked with, and he tried to murder the director."

For the most part, Jimmy took Gordon's direction without protests. However, there was major disagreement over the interpretation of one scene that Jimmy was to perform with Kennedy. "Gordon insisted that Jimmy play the scene one way, but he protested that such an act would ruin his own interpretation of the role," Kennedy said. "Things got out of hand. Finally, in disgust, Gordon called Jimmy 'a little punk.' That set Jimmy on fire."

"He pulled out this knife he'd recently bought and lunged toward Gordon. I did something either dumb or smart. I positioned myself between them, thereby preventing Jimmy's execution on the electric chair for murder. That was the smart thing I did. The stupid thing I did was that I might have had the knife plunged into my gut."

Cast as Kennedy's pregnant girlfriend, Bronx-born Constance Ford had little personal contact with Jimmy in *See the Jaguar*. Later, they'd co-star together in a teleplay with Ronald (then an actor) Reagan.

She was friendly with Kennedy, however, having previously appeared with him in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman.* Later, she became known for her portrayal of Ada Hobson on the long-running daytime soap opera, *Another World.*

[As a fashion model during World War II, Ford's image had been closely associated with a massive ad campaign by Elizabeth Arden hawking lipstick in a shade of scarlet marketed as "Victory Red." All of the big-name female stars of World War II—Betty Grable, Lana Turner, and Veronica Lake—wore it. Even Tallulah Bankhead added to public perceptions of its desirability with public statements that included: "I wouldn't walk out the door without a coat of it on, Dah-lings."]

Jimmy shared a dressing room with Philip Pine, an actor who played "Hilltop," a character with an obsessive lust for Kennedy's pregnant girlfriend, as played by Ford. "Jimmy plastered the wall with bullfight posters," Pine recalled. "I think he wanted to be a matador more than an actor."

Eleven years older than Jimmy, the California-born Pine would develop a career that spanned seven decades in television and film. He was also a writer, director, and producer. He often appeared in TV Westerns, portraying legends who included Kit Carson.

He would forever remember Jimmy: "He was a real pain in the ass, a sentiment echoed by many other actors, including Rock Hudson, although Hudson may have meant that literally."

"His lack of discipline created tension. Once, he thought the director was treating me like an adult and him like a kid. He believes only in himself and to hell with everybody else."

In a sensitive scene with Arthur Kennedy *(left)*, a barefoot James Dean, looking years younger than his actual age, gives a brilliant performance as a bewildered lad who, after years of being locked away, is coming upon both the beauty and brutality of the real world.

"In spite of my resentment, we became friends and often would go out drinking together and chat for hours—real personal stuff—about our hopes and dreams."

"He didn't have a good pair of shoes, so I arranged through Actors Equity to get him a new pair. We would rehearse a scene, and without any warning, he would play it completely different from the way we'd rehearsed. Even though he pissed me off, I had a soft spot for him. He was undisciplined. He didn't have an understanding that a theater company needs to work together like a harmonious family. But I knew he was deeply insecure. Without saying a word—his face said it all—he seemed to be crying out, 'Love me. Why won't someone love me?'"

"Jimmy and I both knew hurt," Pine said. "We grew up without fathers. We bonded over that. I wanted to let him know that an actor can use pain and hurt he'd suffered to enhance a performance."

Released at last from his confinement, and on his own, coping with new realizations about the world and its inhabitants, the character interpreted by James Dean in *See the Jaguar* fights back.

"I knew Jimmy before he became a legend. I even replaced him in a role on Broadway. Yes, there was some envy and jealousy on my part, not uncommon among actors. God damn it, why didn't Elia Kazan discover *me* instead of Jimmy?"

Tryouts had originally been slated for Boston, but blue nose city fathers, who were still censoring the art and

entertainment industries back then *[BANNED IN BOSTON! eventually became an activist slogan in the battle for weakening the grip of censorship in America.]* read the script and rejected it as "indecent." In reaction, Lemuel Ayers selected Hartford and Philadelphia as the sites for trial runs instead.

During its first performance in Hartford, because of technical difficulties, the curtain rose half an hour late. Jimmy upstaged Pine. He was supposed to be submissive when he is dragged offstage by Pine, but instead, he put up a fight and fiercely resisted. Furious, Pine managed to subdue him and somehow managed to drag him into the wings.

Each of the local papers criticized Nash's play, but gave special accolades to Jimmy. *The Hartford Courant* described his performance as "tender and touching."

The trial run then moved on to Philadelphia, where it opened on November 8 at the Forrest Theatre. Pine recalled that Nash was up every night, hysterically rewriting the script, desperate to plug the "loopholes in my play."

As in Hartford, the Philadelphia papers, despite his rewrites, were not kind to Nash. Once again, however, Jimmy was hailed for his stage debut. *The Philadelphia Bulletin* praised his "excellent character portrait" of the innocent kid, and his acting was also lauded by *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* its review suggesting that the theater had a new star shining.

Lem Ayers was a friend of Tennessee Williams, and he invited the playwright to Philadelphia to see his bound-for-Broadway discovery.

Later, Ayers threw a party for the cast and crew at Philadelphia's Variety Club. A slightly drunken Tennessee arrived. The actor and the playwright would later develop a relationship, but, as Jimmy later reported, "On that night in Philly, Tennessee only flirted with me. Outrageously so."

"Not since I first saw Brando as Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* have I had such a thrilling night at the theater. I found your acting and male beauty startling," Tennessee claimed.

Jimmy knew he was exaggerating, but he appreciated the flattery.

Tennessee gave him a card with his name and New York City address on it. He also threw out a tantalizing tidbit. "We have a mutual friend, David Swift. He's invited both of us to his Christmas party."

"I'm looking forward to it," Jimmy said.

"As soon as I get to New York, I'll start working on a play that includes you as its star."

"I'm sure you will," Jimmy said. "You wouldn't be trying to hoodwink a farm boy from Indiana, would you?"

"Me? Never!" Tennessee answered "Unlike a character I'm creating, Big Daddy, I have never believed in mendacity."

"Until Christmas," Jimmy said, kissing Tennessee on the lips.

"I hope you're my present under the tree."

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See the Jaguar opened in December at the Cort Theater. Lemuel Ayers invited several friends, including Mildred Dunnock, the distinguished actress who was part of the Actors Studio. "I want you to get a look at James Dean," he told her. "My new discovery. I think he'll be sensational."

[Dunnock, in the autumn of 1954, would be co-starring with Jimmy in a teleplay for CBS.]

Later, after sitting through *See the Jaguar*, she delivered her own review: "Poor Dean. He was trying to breathe reality into a heavy plot that was far too loaded with portentious symbolic references. It was an uphill struggle for him, but he tried valiantly to cope with the impossible lines. Nash should have been kicked in the pants. Dean could tell his lines weren't real. They rang a false note. Something an *enfant sauvage* wouldn't say. Even so, he brought some *faux* Method magic to this clunker."

Nash, of course, had a very different view from that expressed by Dunnock: "Jimmy was the only one in the cast who truly caught the spirit of what I was trying to convey. He had from the beginning."

After its opening on Broadway, the cast convened at Sardi's to await the reviews in the morning papers. Jimmy invited Bast and Dizzy to the dinner party, assigning them to a table in a far corner. He didn't spend much time with them.

To the jealous Bast, "Jimmy's feet were never on the ground. Like Peter Pan, he flew from table to table, accepting congratulations from his adoring public. I truly felt he was on the road to stardom, even before the newspaper reviews arrived. There was adulation in the restaurant. Broadway had a new prince, or at least that was

what Jimmy thought. Personally, I had my doubts. I thought the play stunk."

At long last, the morning papers arrived, and Jimmy devoured the reviews. His acting received raves, but Nash's playwrighting skills were attacked as "murky and at times, silly," One described the play as pretentious, claiming that it "was a contrivance of *jejune* symbolism."

Richard Watts, Jr., in *The New York Post,* claimed, "James Dean achieves the feat of making the childish young fugitive believable and not embarrassing." Although praising Jimmy, the critic went on to define the play itself as "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

In *The New York Herald Tribune,* Walter Kerr wrote: "James Dean adds to an extraordinary performance in an almost impossible role." One of the most sensitive comments was made by George Freedley in *The Morning Telegraph:* "James Dean acted the mentally retarded boy with sweetness and *naïveté* that made his torture singularly poignant."

Actress Margaret Baker, who played Jimmy's deranged mother, was also at Sardi's that night. As regards the opening night of *See the Jaguar,* she pronounced it, "the nicest funeral I have ever attended."

After those bad reviews, except for Jimmy's performance, *See the Jaguar* played to dwindling audiences. Lemuel closed it after four more performances.

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After Sardi's, Jimmy invited Dizzy to the Royalton Hotel, where Lem had, as an opening night gift, offered him a single night's lodging in a suite, complete with room service. Jimmy ordered dinner for the two of them, choosing a juicy big steak for himself.

Midway through the meal, the manager telephoned, suggesting that "the young lady will have to leave after her dinner. It is hotel policy. We have a house detective."

When their meal had ended, he accompanied her out onto the sidewalk and hailed her a taxi. Then he kissed her goodbye.

She later claimed, "I knew our love affair was over."

[Billing herself years later as "Elizabeth Sheridan," she would go on greater glory, her face becoming known in thousands of homes across America when she played Jerry Seinfeld's mother in the hit TV sitcom, Seinfeld, *whose much-awarded 180 episodes were originally released between 1989 and 1998.]*

The next morning, Jimmy returned to his shared apartment uptown to find Dizzy gone, but Bast was there. He packed his meager belongings and announced that he was moving out. He made a point of noting that he was going back to the Iroquois, where both of them had lived. "But this time, I'm renting only a single room. Like Greta Garbo, I want to be alone."

Later, when Dizzy was apprised of the news, she wrote: "I knew that our romance no longer burned with the intensity we once felt. Our love had already moved into the comfortable stage, its brilliant colors gently diminishing like a rainbow too long in the sky."

With Jimmy gone, Tina, Bast, and Dizzy could no longer afford their apartment, and each of them moved out to go their separate ways.

From the Iroquois, Jimmy called his agent, Jane Deacy, who was lining up teleplays for him. "Being an actor is the loneliest thing in the world," he said. "You're all alone with your imagination, and that's all you have."

During the week that followed, he visited the apartment of Stanley Haggart, this time, alone. He told his older friend that he had been going through affairs with both men and women at an unprecedented rate. "I run a bed-and-breakfast," he claimed. "In my bed at night, breakfast the next morning, and then *adieu.* In the last week, I've had at least ten conquests, six women and four men. All were my own age, often much younger. No more god damn aging producers and directors for me… *unless."*

He didn't complete his sentence.

When Haggart asked why he felt compelled to take on so many different sexual partners, Jimmy answered, "I'm a tumbling tumbleweed. My favorite song—in spite of the fact that that shithead, Roy Rogers, sings it—is 'Don't Fence Me In.'"

He also revealed that Deacy was getting lots of job offers for him. "MGM wants me to fly to Hollywood for a screen test. She turned them down. She wants me to become more seasoned, and she's lining up more TV dramas for me. Frankly, I'm impatient to become a movie star, but before that, I want to study with the Actors Studio," he said.

Frank Corsaro, as depicted in an National Endowment for the Arts interview documenting his contributions to the New York City Opera; to operatic stagecrafting; and to the interconnectedness of an opera's music with a sense of dramatic technique.

Although many new lovers loomed on his horizon, Jimmy rarely, if ever, lived with anyone again. "I want my lovers to pass through my life like ships in the night. Pardon the fucking *cliché*."

***

To his aunt and uncle in Fairmount, Jimmy wrote about how proud he was to be a part of the Actors Studio —"and it's free. Very few get in. It's the best thing that can happen to an actor. I'm one of the youngest to belong. If I can keep up and nothing interferes with my progress, one of these days I might be able to contribute something to the world."

On his first day at the studio, Jimmy met Frank Corsaro, who was to have an important impact on his life.

[A native New Yorker, born in the Bronx, Corsaro eventually became known as one of the country's foremost stage directors of opera and television. One of his best-received and most famous productions was the original Broadway version of Tennessee Williams' The Night of the Iguana (1961), starring Miss Bette Davis. In 1988, after a hugely successful career with the New York City Opera, and New York's Metropolitan Opera, he was designated as Artistic Director of the Actors Studio.]

When Jimmy first became friends with Corsaro, he was known for his cultural background, his wit, and his keen intelligence. Jimmy found him intellectually stimulating, and Corsaro expanded his knowledge, introducing him to literature (especially the novels of Aldous Huxley) and the music of Arnold Schönberg and Johann Sebastian Bach.

According to Bast, "Jimmy fell completely under Corsaro's influence. He was a slight little man, a bundle of nervous energy that kept him plugged into some electric current both night and day."

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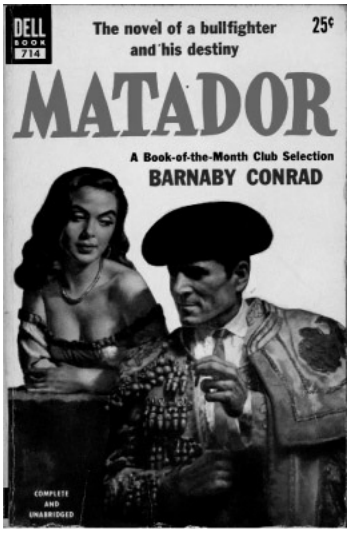
Before auditioning for Lee Strasberg, Jimmy learned what he could from his peers about the director and acting teacher. He'd been born in Ukraine during the final days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Grand Dragon and Grand Master of Method Acting: Lee Strasberg in 1978.

Along with director Harold Clurman, he'd cofounded the Group Theater in 1931, America's first true theatrical collective. When Jimmy met Strasberg, he had just become the director of Actors Studio.

Although others may lay claim to the title, Strasberg was recognized as the father of Method acting in America. In time, he'd train such illustrious actors as Anne Bancroft, Dustin Hoffman, Monty Clift, Jane Fonda, Paul Newman, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, and Julie Harris.

Strasberg told Jimmy that each new member had to perform a theatrical piece to an audience comprised of his or her fellow students. After reviewing and rejecting many scripts, Jimmy settled on a piece adapted from *Matador,* a novel by Barnaby Conrad, that had sold three million copies.



Unlike Jimmy, Conrad had actually faced a bull in a ring, and as a result, he had been badly injured, afflicted with a wound so damaging that he was rejected for admission into the U.S. Navy in 1943.

Jimmy envied the life Conrad had led, hanging out in Seville, Madrid, and Barcelona with such bullfighters as Manolete, Carlos Arruza, and Juan Belmonte. *Matador,* Conrad's second novel, had been a gift to him from his pastor lover back in Fairmount, James DeWeerd.

The scene inspired by Conrad was actually very dramatic, that of an aging matador who accepts a challenge from a young bullfighter to enter the ring for a final time, knowing that it might well lead to his "death in the afternoon." Without saying a word of dialogue, Jimmy wanted to act out the bullfighter's emotion before he comes face to face with death itself.

For props, he used Sidney Franklin's blood-soaked cape, a candle, and a statue of the Virgin Mary.

Halfway through his solo performance, he seemed to realize that the skit wasn't working. He cut it short and, in an attempt to gracefully conclude his time on stage, with his back to the audience, he performed a set of *muleta* passes.

Geraldine Page, also a student at Actors Studio, was in the audience that day. Within months, she would be co-starring on Broadway with Jimmy in *The Immoralist.*

"I didn't hear all of Lee's attack on the *Matador,* because I had to leave for an appointment," Page claimed. "But other members of the studio told me it was not only a devastating critique, but that Jimmy was devastated by it. Lee had done the same thing for me when I performed my own introductory skit at Actors Studio. He asked me, 'Who are you trying to impersonate, Joan Fontaine?'"

After a performance, Strasberg always asked an actor, "Just what are you trying to accomplish?"

At that time, Jimmy lacked the understanding of exactly what he wanted to do as an actor, and he couldn't come up with an answer. He wanted to become the first post-modern actor, but wasn't exactly sure what that meant.

Strasberg continued. "In the *Matador* skit, you were acting, not being. You must learn the difference if you ever want to succeed in the theater. There is a mammoth difference between the actor who thinks that acting is an imitation of life, and the actor who feels that acting is living." From there, Strasberg went on to caustically rebuke Jimmy's performance.

Strasberg was accurate in his attack on Jimmy's motivation and his characterization, even though he had performed many of the matador's movements to perfection.

As Strasberg lashed out at Jimmy's acting, he sat slumped down in his seat, scowling in a sort of poutish mess. An original member of the studio, David Stewart, phrased it vividly: "Dean sat there like his skin was being ripped off."

From the start, Jimmy showed that he lacked an actor's ability to take criticism.

David Garfield in *A Player's Place* explained it: "Dean's *Matador* provoked a long and penetrating critique from Strasberg. Dean listened impassively, but the color drained from his face. When Strasberg had concluded his remarks, the young actor slung his matador's cape over his shoulder and silently walked out of the room."

It would take many weeks and much urging before he returned.

The next day, he bitterly complained to Bast, "I can't let Strasberg attack me. He doesn't understand what I'm trying to do. I don't understand it myself. I need more experience. I don't know what's inside me yet. If I let him dissect me like a rabbit in some laboratory, it might destroy the creativity bubbling up in me. Strasberg doesn't have the right to tear away at my very soul. He's trying to sterilize me. If you attack a guy enough, you destroy his guts. What's an actor without guts?"

Bast claimed, "Jimmy simply didn't have the stomach to survive the soulsearing, psychologically destructive criticism Strasberg seemed to take pleasure in dishing out."

To his friends, Jimmy was very critical of Strasberg, calling him "a mess of hot air. He also has a personal vindictiveness against me."

John Stix, who chaired the studio's board of directors, claimed, "Jimmy's self-indulgence was not tolerated by Strasberg. Nor did he allow him to use it as a defense against criticism. He disliked everybody there except for Geraldine Page and Kim Stanley, who allowed him his indulgences. By the time Jimmy arrived, Clift and Brando were already stars."

Months later, when Page actually co-starred on stage with Jimmy, she claimed, "He learned a lot more about acting from Monty Clift and Brando than he did from Strasberg."

"It wasn't my criticism that kept Dean away," Strasberg later claimed. "He was sensitive about letting other people get too close unless they were very special. Marlon Brando and Paul Newman were special. So was Marilyn Monroe and even my daughter, Susan. He seemed to shy away from people, even those who wanted to be his friend. He was afraid they would get to know him and judge him. He didn't want to be judged, yet every actor has to face the critics."

Elia Kazan shared similar memories. "I didn't see Dean very much at the Actors Studio. He went there only a few times. I remember him sitting out in front, a surly mess. He didn't want to participate in anything, seemingly there only as a venue for judging his fellow actors."

After Jimmy's death, Strasberg told a reporter, "I sensed a doomed quality in the boy. There was something destructive about him. Frankly, he didn't learn anything at my studio, because he never wanted to give of himself. Acting is nothing but giving."

During one of his rare interviews, Jimmy spoke to Erskine Johnson, the well-known Hollywood columnist. "The most important lesson I took away from the Actors Studio was how an actor should take care of himself. How an actor need to protect himself from the glitz of Hollywood and from the hazards of the stage and this new medium of television."

"There are tricks to every trade, as there are in acting, and I learned some of them. Some of these tricks can help you survive bad scripts and bad directors, even bad actors with whom you have to work. However, so far, I haven't had the need to unleash my bag of tricks."

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Tennessee Williams had accurately described the forthcoming invitation from their mutual friends, David Swift and Maggie McNamara. However, it was not for a Christmas Party but for a New Year's Eve celebration.

Assuming that Rogers Brackett and Jimmy were still an interconnected couple, the Swifts extended an invitation to both of them. Jimmy was seeing Brackett only infrequently, yet agreed to escort him to the party anyway, knowing that Tennessee would be there. He kept telling friends, including Stanley Haggart and William Bast, "Look at what Tennessee did for Marlon Brando. Imagine what he could do for me, an actor with real talent."

Arriving at the door to the Swift apartment, Brackett and Jimmy were greeted by McNamara, who kissed both

of them on the cheeks. She gave no indication that she'd ever been intimate with Jimmy in Chicago.

As he'd later relate to Bast, "The guest list was short but choice. I was the only one there who had not won any theatrical awards or produced any hit shows.

"Tennessee was already drunk, and he introduced me to his chief rival, playwright William Inge, who practically creamed in his pants when he shook my hand. I didn't think I was going to get my paw back. I heard that in the 1940s, these two guys used to be lovers."

At the party, McNamara introduced Brackett and Jimmy to Grace Kelly and her lover, Gene Lyons, a television actor from Pittsburgh. To Jimmy, Grace evoked a goddess—blonde, prim, proper, and ladylike—but he sensed a strong undercurrent of sexuality within her. "She put the 'grace' in graceful," he later said. "She was both serene and serenely beautiful. Probably born a rich girl, she acted like one. I dig her…I mean, I *really* dig her. Up to now, when stacked up against Grace, the girls I've screwed were Saturday night whores in comparison to this stunning young beauty."

Grace Kelly, in an MGM publicity photo that managed to hint at her upcoming status as Her Serene Highness, Princess of Monaco.

Like Jimmy, Grace had appeared in commercials and teleplays. Her biggest break had come when she'd been cast opposite Gary Cooper in the Western, *High Noon* (1952).

[Gary Cooper, in an irreverent and disrespectful reference to Grace Kelly, once said, "She looks like a cold dish with a man until you get her pants off, and then she explodes."]

Both New York and Hollywood were buzzing with rumors that during the making of *High Noon,* she and Cooper had become lovers, in spite of the difference in their ages. *[He was born in 1901, Grace in 1929.]*

The future prospects of Gene Lyons (above), her date the evening Jimmy met her, were not as glamorous.

In time, of course, Cooper became just one of many big-name stars headed for her bed: Marlon Brando, Cary Grant, Clark Gable, Bing Crosby, William Holden, Ray Milland, Frank Sinatra, and James Stewart, as well as designer Oleg Cassini and the Shah of Iran (Mohammed Reza Pahlavi) thrown in for extra seasoning.

One of her lovers, actor Don Richardson, expressed his disappointment in her when she ran off with Jean-

Pierre Aumont, the handsome French actor. “She fucked everybody she came into contact with who was able to advance her career. She screwed agents, producers, directors, bigtime stars, whomever.”

At the party, in response to Brackett and Jimmy’s applause for her performance in *High Noon,* she expressed disappointment with her part: “It was Gary’s picture. You look into his face and you know everything he’s thinking. You look into my face and you see nothing but a blank stare. I thought I was going to be a big movie star. I’m not so sure. Frankly, now that I’m back in New York, I think I should take acting lessons.”

Lyons, her escort, seemed to suffer through the party from his seated position on a sofa, sometimes holding her hand. The red-haired Irishman was tall and good-looking, but it was obvious he’d had too much to drink.

Grace told them that she was taking him home to Philadelphia to meet her father, Jack Kelly. “I want him to see if Gene is marriage material.”

“If he has me investigated, he’ll learn that I’m already married,” Lyons said, “but seeking an annulment.”

“Everybody in the theater claims that Gene looks like Marlon Brando, but I think he’s so much more handsome than Brando,” Kelly said. “Don’t you think so, James?”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Jimmy answered, diplomatically, though perceiving that Gene wasn’t all that handsome, or all that charming, either.

“The reason I asked you is that you seem to know what the standard of male beauty is, to judge by your looks,” she said. “The question is, do you take advantage of your good looks, using that as a weapon on those who fall under your spell?”

He couldn’t believe she was flirting with him. He removed his glasses, so she could get a better look at his face.

Jimmy talked briefly with Lyons when Grace went to powder her nose. He was surprised to learn that he was a lifetime member of the Actors Studio. Quite by coincidence, Jimmy would soon be starring in a teleplay opposite him. In most cases, most of their off-screen talk would center around Grace.

“I cannot write any sort of story unless there is at least one character in it for whom I have physical desire,” Tennessee Williams (depicted above) told James Dean.

At some point, Swift broke away from his other guests and chatted with Brackett and Jimmy. He had achieved great success in July of 1952 when NBC went on the air with his TV sitcom, *Mister Peepers,* starring Wally Cox as a junior high school science teacher.

“It’s been a long journey,” Swift claimed. “I dropped out of school when I was seventeen and rode the rails to Hollywood. I began as an office boy for Walt Disney, but by 1938, I was his assistant animator. He told people I was like the son he never had.”

“I bet,” Jimmy said sarcastically.

Swift was visibly taken aback by Jimmy’s sarcasm.

“Do you know something I don’t?” he asked, rather sharply. Both Swift and Brackett stared at Jimmy, waiting for some revelation.

Feeling trapped, Jimmy extricated himself with: “Sorry—It was a stupid thing to say. I don’t know Disney myself. I think one night I shook his hand at a party at George Cukor’s house. I’m not the type of actor for a Walt Disney movie—unless maybe if a Minnie Mouse role comes up.”

Maureen Stapleton, one of Tennessee’s favorite actresses, arrived at the party with her husband, Max Allentuck, the general manager to producer Kermit Bloomgarden.

Jimmy knew of her long association with the Actors Studio and was impressed with her talent, especially her

star involvement in Tennessee's Broadway version of *The Rose Tattoo,* which would earn her a Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a play.

Like others at the party, she was an alcoholic. "Marilyn Monroe gets the ditzy blonde roles, although I suspect the girl has real talent. As for me, when I come out on the stage, people take one look at me and say, 'Jesus, that broad better know how to act—or else, what in hell is she doing up there?'"

As an actor, Maureen Stapleton gave Jimmy some advice: "Sometimes the acceptance of a lesser role, or even a rotten part, regardless of how humiliating, is the result of needing a paycheck."

During the course of the evening, Tennessee, also drunk, kept making passes at Jimmy, which he planned to intercept within a different setting at some future date.

Inge also seemed sexually attracted to Jimmy, but shy and introverted, living deep in the closet. He implied to Jimmy that he'd like to get together to discuss starring him in one of his upcoming plays. Jimmy hoped it would be the previously announced Broadway opening of *Picnic. [Inge's much-awarded, much-celebrated* Picnic*, opened on Broadway in 1953 and ran for almost 500 performances. Its original version featured Ralph Meeker as the male lead, with Paul Newman in a secondary role.]*

Jimmy was understandably impressed with Inge as a playwright. Brackett had taken him to see *Come Back, Little Sheba* on Broadway, which had won a Tony for its star, Shirley Booth.

Like most of the other guests, Inge, too, was a heavy drinker.

Jimmy would later tell Stanley Haggart, "In spite of what I told you, I know that at some point, I'll have to shack up with both Bill Inge and Tennessee—call it 'singing for my supper.' They're the hottest playwrights in town, and I know they want to get into my drawers. So I've changed my mind about sleeping with old queers. Girls are always changing their minds. So why not guys?"

On New Year's Day, Jimmy telephoned Bast to report on the party. "Both Tennessee and Bill Inge are hot for me as an actor. Each of them wants to star me in a play. Which ones, I don't know yet.

"What do they know of you as an actor?" Bast asked, skeptically.

"Tennessee saw me in the Philadelphia preview of *See the Jaguar."*

"Aren't you jumping to conclusions?" Bast asked. "Why not face up to the truth? Those two queens just want you to fuck them! They're using that casting shit as bait."

"You're god damn jealous!" Jimmy shouted, enraged, into the phone. "I'll think I'll go for a week without speaking to you. After that, we'll see about our so-called friendship."

Then he slammed down the phone.

***

Two weeks after meeting Grace Kelly, she called Jimmy at the Iroquois, having been provided with his phone number by David Swift. "So sorry to bother you, dear, but I have a problem. You were so charming at the New

Year's Eve party given by David and Maggie. I just knew you'd help a damsel in distress. David thought you would."

"For you, I would climb the highest mountain, swim to the bottom of the deepest ocean," he said.

"That's a bit dramatic, but I love it," she said. "Sarah Churchill is throwing this elegant dinner at her penthouse. David told me you were a good friend of hers. Normally, I would invite Gene (Lyons), but he's a bit incapacitated."

Jimmy knew that meant he was too drunk to escort her. Without her having to ask, he immediately chimed in, "I'd love to be your escort."

"Oh, that would be delightful," she said. "The answer to a girl's dream."

After negotiating his way through the details with her, he put down the phone, later telling Bast about the invitation. "I am thrilled. Tennessee and Bill Inge have the hots for me, and now the ice queen herself. *High Noon* Grace Kelly wants to see what I'm hauling around in my jockey shorts."

"It sounds to me like she merely wants you to escort her to Lady Sarah's bash. What are you going to do? You don't have a tux."

"Leave it to Jimmy," he said, speaking in the third person. "I'll turn on the James Dean charm and have that tux by five o'clock this afternoon."

An hour later, he was inside Swift's apartment. "You started this thing about me being in the escort business. I need some fancy duds."

"I have three tuxedos," Swift said. "If you can't fit into one of mine, I'll rent you one from a place nearby."

At exactly five o'clock, Jimmy called Bast "I have the tux. I've tried it on. I look like a million dollars."

"I knew you in Hollywood when you had only one pair of jeans."

"Jimmy is coming up in the world," he said.

"I hear Gary Cooper (they call him 'the Montana Mule') is a tough act to follow," Bast said.

"Whatever I lack, I'll make up for with youth, beauty, and stamina. I hear Grace is going to become the Queen of Hollywood. Guess who'll be her Prince Consort?"'

***

Inside her penthouse, as hostess at her dinner party, Lady Sarah welcomed Grace and Jimmy warmly. "Come in, dear hearts," she said, "and let the butler get you a drink. I've had a few libations already."

To Jimmy, that was obvious.

As he would later tell Stanley Haggart, "I was the only nobody there."

Sarah introduced him around. First, he met the French star, Louis Jourdan, who had been recently voted the most handsome man in the world. Shortly thereafter (in 1956), he'd be making a movie with Grace (*The Swan),* in which he'd be cast as a tutor in love with a princess-to-be, a bit of real life casting. Ironically, Jimmy, too, would soon be co-starring with Jourdan in the Broadway play, *The Immoralist*.

To Jimmy's surprise, Jourdan's escort for the evening was a most unlikely choice—Danny Kaye, the red-haired, highly excitable comedian who always seemed to be cavorting hilariously on screen.

Later, the tipsy Sarah whispered into Jimmy's ear: "Louis and Danny are lovers—that is, when Danny isn't having to fuck Larry Olivier."

Looking as elegant and serene as Grace herself, another (slightly older) blonde goddess, Joan Fontaine, arrived at the party with an obviously gay escort. Jimmy had previously met her at Sardi's.

Cecil Beaton arrived with Roddy McDowall, but whereas Roddy hugged and kissed Jimmy like an old friend, Beaton pretended to be meeting him for the first time. Memories of staging that sexual exhibition for Beaton and his British friends came rushing through Jimmy's brain. He was tempted to say to him in front of the other guests, "Cecil, I haven't seen you since you last sucked my dick," but discretion won out.

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. was another guest. He was the most elegantly dressed of all the male guests. His date was the formidable Marlene Dietrich, his old flame from the 1930s. After Sarah introduced her to Jimmy, she eyed him skeptically.

Months later, columnist Hedda Hopper asked Jimmy if he'd like to meet Dietrich. He didn't tell her he already had. "I don't know if I would," he said. "She's such a figment of my imagination. I go *whoop* in the stomach when you ask me if I'd like to meet her. Too much *woman.* You look at her and you think, 'I'd like to have that.'" *[Jimmy's quote about Dietrich appeared in Hopper's book,* The Whole Truth and Nothing But.]

After his death, Dietrich shared her opinion of Jimmy to Hopper. "He was small, ugly, hunchbacked with a potbelly, and bow-legged. If he'd lived, he'd have a larger potbelly, wear a wig, and have died of AIDS."

Fairbanks was more charming than Dietrich, announcing to anyone within earshot, "I saw Bette Davis the other night," he said. "She recalled our first meeting at a party. I was married to Joan Crawford at the time. We chatted politely until I suddenly thrust my hand into her bra. I felt her tits—rather large. I recommended that she use ice on her nipples like my wife did. Bette later said she found my behavior appalling. Imagine saying such a thing about a gentleman like me."

"Sarah told me that Noël Coward will be arriving soon," Fairbanks said to Jimmy. "Watch out for that one. He had such a crush on me back in the 1930s. Did you know that he wrote that hit song about me, 'Mad About the Boy?'"

Fairbanks had no sooner uttered that revelation than in walked Noël Coward himself, with Judy Garland on his arm.

Garland hugged and kissed Jimmy like a long-lost lover. "Darling," she said, in reference to their drunken three-way long ago back in Los Angeles. "You took French leave. You didn't even stick around for breakfast with John *[Carlyle]* and me."

"Catch me next time."

"I didn't realize you knew this divine boy, Judy," Coward said.

"He was my lover," she said. "As you well know, I can't rely on the unreliable dicks of the jerks I've married."

Throughout the remainder of the evening, Coward and Sarah—although giving the impression that they were the best of friends—shared some long sequences of rather cutting banter.

"Noël, darling," Sarah said. "Opinions about you vary so. Lord Louis Mountbatten once told me that no one could prick the bloom of pomposity quite like you. On the other hand, Rex Harrison claims that in so many ways, you're a terrible cunt."

"I admit to both charges," Coward responded.

At one point, Coward joined Jimmy on the sofa during a moment when Grace was away. Then he very bluntly asked him, "Are you gay, dear boy?"

"I can take it or leave it," Jimmy said.

"I can take it, but not with a woman," Coward said. "All that open plumbing revolts me. I imagine doing it with a woman is like feeling the skin of a rattlesnake. Perhaps you and I will get together during my time in New York. As Mae West might say, 'Come up and see me sometime.' The sooner the better. How about tomorrow night in my suite at the Waldorf Astoria? I'll leave clearance for you at the desk."

"I'll count the hours," Jimmy promised.

Based on Coward's influence in the theater and his "celebrity quotient," Jimmy had every intention of keeping that date. But the following morning, something came up.

After the party at Lady Sarah's, Jimmy had escorted Grace back to the Plaza. She had kissed him good night in the lobby, but had not invited him upstairs.

She telephoned him at eleven the next morning. It seemed that Gene Lyons had still not recovered, and that he had accused her of cheating on him. In the aftermath of the fight that ensued, they had canceled their plans for a rendezvous that night.

Into her end of the phone, Grace said to Jimmy, "I had planned this lovely dinner for him in my suite," she said. "And I hate to dine alone. I even purchased a lovely new gown from Oleg Cassini, and I'm dying to show it off. Would you be a doll and fill in for Gene one more time? At eight o'clock tonight?"

"Would I ever!"

Bubbling over with excitement, Jimmy phoned Stanley Haggart. "Can you believe it? Two dazzling invitations at the same time tonight—one to Noël Coward's suite, another to Grace Kelly's. What to do? I'm not really suited to Coward's comedies or musicals. I'd do better as Grace's co-star in her future movies. She's going to be big. She told me she's returning to Hollywood. MGM wants to cast her in a jungle movie with Clark Gable and Ava Gardner."

"Well, it looks like Coward's loss will be Grace's good fortune," Haggart responded.

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The question remains unanswered. Did Jimmy seduce Grace Kelly that night in her suite at the Plaza? Or, phrased another way, did she seduce him?

When Haggart was asked about this, he said, "Frankly, I don't know. He never described to me how the evening went."

“A guy has to keep some secrets,” Jimmy had said.

“And I was too polite to ask,” Haggart said. “But based on their reputation—and I mean, both of their reputations—I can be almost 90% certain that they did the dirty deed. And why not?”

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As preposterous as it sounded at the time, Jimmy’s dream of co-starring with Grace Kelly almost came to be. After she left New York for Hollywood, she did not disappear from his life completely. They would meet again when George Stevens wanted to cast them together as co-stars in *Giant* with Rock Hudson.

In the meantime, his agent, Jane Deacy, called, saying, “My phone’s been ringing off the wall. NBC, CBS, and ABC each want you to star in teleplays. You’re hot, kid. You’re going bigtime.”

Chapter Six

JIMMY'S AFFAIR WITH
STEVE McQUEEN

Competition Onscreen and After Dark

HOW MCQUEEN'S IDOL WORSHIP OF JIMMY WAS LATER TRANSFERRED TO PAUL NEWMAN

In the early 1950s, three young actors in New York—James Dean, Paul Newman, and Steve McQueen—frequently arrived for the same casting calls. Mostly, the auditions involved teleplays, but in some cases they were for an aggressively sought-after role on Broadway.

Jimmy's agent, Jane Deacy, was quoted as saying: "That trio of good-looking men came to be viewed by directors as the same "type." If Jimmy were right for a role, it was also deemed suitable for either Newman or McQueen. Later, film directors in Hollywood more or less had the same view, too. Jimmy was set to star in *Somebody Up There Likes Me,* in which McQueen would play a small role. After Jimmy died, Newman was cast as the lead. McQueen also thought he'd be a more ideal choice to have played Jimmy's role in his three big feature films, especially *Giant."*

Deacy's remarks were later confirmed by Shelley Winters. "Steve told me he'd have been better than Dean in *East of Eden, Rebel Without a Cause,* and in *Giant,* too.

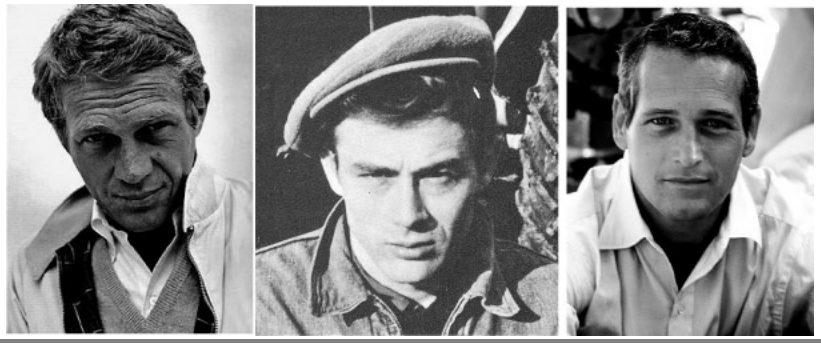
She quoted McQueen as saying, "The role of Jett Rink in *Giant* had my name written all over it. The scene where Dean got drenched from the oil gushing out of the well seemed ripped from a page of my own life. When I was a kid in Corpus Christi, I was hired as a roughneck, a job that used to be called a roustabout. I worked at drilling sites and, on many an occasion, I was bathed in oil."

"At night, I hung out in seedy taverns with wildcatters. That trade is full of men with empty pockets and big

dreams."

"If I'd been in *Giant,* I would have fucked Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and Sal Mineo."

Author David Dalton collectively referred to Newman, McQueen, and Dean as "a cluster of types. A new kind of hero was coming into being, and it was inevitable that a lot of people shared the same idea. In the beginning of their careers, their *personas* were just drawing boundaries, and they were sensitive about being compared to each other."



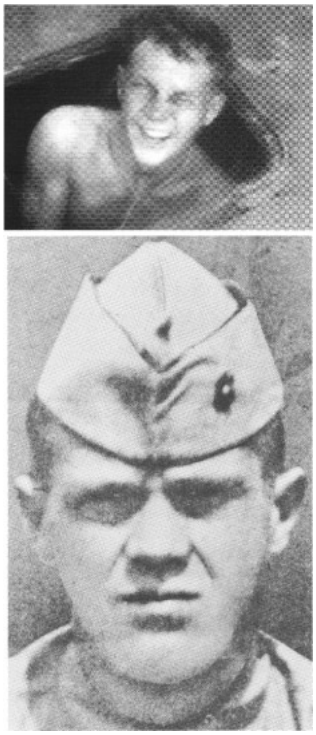
MANFLESH AND GRIST FOR THE HOLLYWOOD MILLS

Three ferociously competitive young actors emerged during the 1950s, each auditioning for the same types of roles. Each of them studied, and in some cases, mimicked the others' styles. *Above*, *left to right*: Steve McQueen, James Dean, and Paul Newman.

In the beginning, Jimmy bonded with his fellow actors, even becoming intimate with them. A bisexual streak prevailed among all three men. Specifics about the bonding between Jimmy and McQueen has never been fully explored, because many of the details are missing. But in the wake of Jimmy's death, some eyewitness accounts surfaced, although still remaining sketchy.

In *The Mutant King,* a biography of James Dean, Dalton wrote that McQueen one night at a Hollywood party encountered Martin Landau, a good friend of Jimmy's. McQueen told Landau, "We've met before." He reminded him that he had first seen him when he'd driven his car into a garage on West 69th Street in Manhattan. A few minutes later, Jimmy roared in on his motorcycle. "Work had to be done on both vehicles, and I was the mechanic on duty," McQueen said.

What eventually evolved from that happenstance meeting in the garage was provided by Rogers Brackett, who was supporting Jimmy at the time and living with him in his apartment. "Perhaps to make me jealous, Jimmy confessed to me how he'd initially met McQueen and how he hooked up with him later. At the time, I had never heard of him. That day at the garage, after Landau went away, Jimmy slipped McQueen a slip of paper that said 'CALL ME.' The number he gave him happened to be my number, because Jimmy was living with me at the time."



Young Steve, as a Marine (both photos above). Like Jimmy, it took some conscious effort for him to develop and evolve his style as an actor.

As was so often the case with Jimmy, he provided an entirely different account of what happened that afternoon in the garage to author Michael Munn. At the time, McQueen had not been able to snag an acting gig, so he took a job as a mechanic instead. “I figured my acting career was over,” he told Munn. “No offers. But then one day in comes James Dean, and I serviced his car.” *[Actually, it was a motorcycle.]* “I felt humiliated because I knew I should have been making money acting, and now I was servicing Dean’s fucking car.”

Brackett claimed that Jimmy’s seduction of McQueen first took place in his apartment during a time when he was away in Chicago shooting a commercial. “Those guys used my bed. Jimmy later told me all about it. He claimed that McQueen was not a great lay and just lay there with him doing all the work. And from the things I heard among show-biz pros, McQueen was and continued to be willing to drop his shorts for career advances. So was Jimmy, for that matter.”

Jimmy presented yet a different version of his sexual link to McQueen to Stanley Haggart. “I know why girls and some men grow crazy over Steve as a lover. He has great technique: He tongues you all over and gets you so worked up you’re hot as a firecracker. Then he comes on like gangbusters. We’re equally matched in sexual equipment. We could be brothers. That is, if brothers commit incest.”

“I always thought that Jimmy was more gay than straight,” Brackett said. “But from what I later heard, McQueen was more the ladies’ man. That didn’t mean he hadn’t done a lot of hustling like Jimmy himself. He had had some affairs with men on the side. It was later revealed that he’d played in some porn movies in Cuba. Let’s write him up as bisexual. When stars like Monty Clift or Brando rang up McQueen, he always seemed ready, willing, and able to show up at their doorstep.”

“Jimmy, indeed, had an affair with McQueen,” Brackett claimed, “But at the same time, he was carrying on with other actors and had a girl or two on the side. And he took care of me. Boy, did he have stamina. He was one busy boy.”

Paul Darlow, a friend of Jimmy’s, told author Christopher Sandford about an encounter he’d witnessed between Jimmy and McQueen at Jerry’s Tavern. Darlow was sitting with them.

Jimmy suddenly ordered McQueen, “Do my hair.”

“McQueen rose from the table and obliged,” Darlow said. “He patiently back-combed Dean’s soon-to-be famous hair, making it thick and shiny as a mink’s. McQueen was breathing and lightly chuckling down the back of

Jimmy's neck."

By this point in his career, Jimmy had started to carry around a hairbrush. His agent and a few directors had complained about his unruly hair. Darlow later speculated, "Perhaps Jimmy was getting made up for his next casting call, with the understanding that he'd be competing with well-groomed actors."

After he'd applied the finishing touches to Jimmy's hair, McQueen asked him, "Would you do mine?"

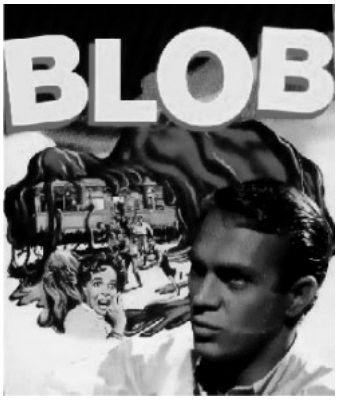
"Drop dead," said Jimmy.

"Come on, JD, don't you dig my fur?"

"No," Jimmy said. "It always looks so Dago to me."

Despite the putdowns, Jimmy was still seen coming and going from McQueen's shabby little apartment on the fifth floor of a tenement building on East 10th Street, where the rent was twenty-five dollars a month. Its bathtub was in the kitchen, directly adjacent to his gas-burning stove. When the bathtub wasn't being used, McQueen covered it with a lid and used its surface as a countertop.

The veteran actress, Uta Hagen, once invited McQueen and Jimmy to a student performance at the HB Studio. It was understood that when it was over, members of the audience would deliver their critiques. Karl Malden was also invited. Jimmy had met him at the Actors Studio and had also seen his performance in the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) with Brando and Vivien Leigh.



"Critics accused me of imitating the acting style of James Dean in that stinker, *The Blob,"* McQueen said. "Maybe I did. But from now on, I'm going to be Steve McQueen, an original."

"I arrived late and sat in the back row," Malden later said. "McQueen and Dean were about twelve feet away. They weren't watching the play—Ibsen, I believe—but were into each other. They engaged in what we used to call a necking session. Dean giggled, but McQueen was more the silent type. A lot of actors back then, if you could imagine such a thing, called those two 'swishes,' but in my view, both young men were too macho for that label. I didn't condemn their sexual behavior, but there was a time and place for everything. They had been invited to watch the play and to take it seriously. Their commando act could wait for later."

"At the end of the play, I stood up and advised those two lovebirds to get a room."

The bonding between Jimmy and McQueen flourished, but only for a while. According to claims from other actors, "McQueen came to idolize Jimmy. In his auditions, he began to sound like Dean." Those words came from James Sheldon, one of Jimmy's mentors.

McQueen told Sheldon, "Jimmy is the greatest actor in New York, much better than Clift and Brando. If he's influenced me, so what? I don't want to sound like a mushmouth like Brando."

Five years after Jimmy's death, in reference to McQueen's performance in *The Blob* (1958), critics claimed that in it, "He stole the *persona* of James Dean, adapting it for his own acting style. *James Dean is not dead!* He lives on in Steve McQueen."

Biographer Penina Spiegel explained why McQueen was called "The Shadow" by certain actors who knew both Jimmy and him. "He seemed to stalk Dean," she wrote. "They shared a certain sulky arrogance, a self-absorbed moodiness, and an intense sexual appeal. Yet while Dean went on to collect film roles, McQueen was still struggling, still going nowhere."

Not just Spiegel, but others, noted how McQueen followed Jimmy around "like a puppy dog trailing its master."

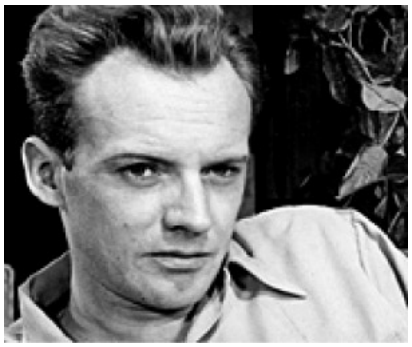
Ironically, the same charge was being made about Jimmy stalking Brando.

McQueen tried to emulate Jimmy in almost any action or bit of stage business he made. At the Blue Ribbon Café, he would order what Jimmy ordered. McQueen used to drink his coffee with cream, but when he saw Jimmy drinking his black, he gave up on the cream.

"Steve would even imitate Dean's reading of a newspaper, how he held the paper, how he turned the pages," Spiegel wrote.

Mildred Sacher, at the Blue Ribbon Café, frequently saw McQueen and Jimmy sharing a table. She came there daily to catch up on the latest gossip and to learn of any auditions for Broadway plays. "I remember James Dean and the guy who later became Steve McQueen. He was calling himself 'Steven' in those days. They came in together almost every afternoon. They never paid attention to anybody else, just talked to each other. McQueen seemed to hang on Dean's every pronouncement as if it were God's word. It was clear to me that McQueen idolized Dean, perhaps wanted to be him. All the girls back then—mostly out-of-work actresses—thought Dean and McQueen were gorgeous, at least in a slightly offbeat way. I never flirted with them. I assumed they were satisfied with each other and didn't need a woman interfering."

Many men who lived in Greenwich Village *[i.e., the West Village]* in the early 1950s recalled McQueen and Jimmy riding shirtless on their motorcycles through the district. "They wove dangerously in and out of traffic," claimed Samuel Miller, a florist, who lived in an apartment building near McQueen when he moved there from the East Village.



Arthur Kennedy had the rare privilege of working with both James Dean and Steve McQueen on the stage and on the screen. He starred with Jimmy on the stage in *See the Jaguar* and with McQueen in the Paramount movie, *Nevada Smith* (1966), based on a character in the Harold Robbins novel, *The Carpetbaggers.*

"They were always speeding. I don't know how fast they were going, but enough so to be a menace. If you heard them coming, you got out of their way. They seemed to be daring Fate, tempting Her to cause an accident."

"They sure liked to take their chances. They also showed off their bodies, often in shorty-short shorts. They weren't exactly Steve Reeves, but they were sexy nonetheless. Such scrumptious testosterone. A guy can dream, can't he?"

Arthur Kennedy, who had co-starred with Jimmy in *See the Jaguar,* recalled McQueen attending all five performances of the short-lived play, and coming backstage to rave about Jimmy's acting. "He didn't mention my acting," Kennedy said. "I didn't learn until later that they had a reputation for seducing girls, especially McQueen. When I saw them, they had eyes only for each other."

"I went out with them on two different occasions for some serious boozing," Kennedy said. "They were real hotheads. If someone looked at one of them, especially the wrong way, they were ready for a fist fight. In Dean's case, perhaps a knife fight. He still carried around that lethal weapon with which he'd threatened Michael Gordon, the director of *See the Jaguar.* I felt that Dean would one day completely lose it and stab someone."

McQueen was aware of the anger bubbling inside Jimmy, as well as his own anger management problem. "Jimmy seemed all too eager to stab someone, but he can thank Jupiter, or whatever god he worships, that he never did. Prison rapists would have had a field day with him."

"When I was much younger, I would go to war if someone looked at me the wrong way," McQueen said. "Hell, one afternoon, I stole a knife from a butcher's shop and went home to kill my mother and shithead stepfather who had been sexually molesting me. Fortunately, they weren't at home, and I got a grip on myself."

“In spite of his violent streak, Dean had a sensitive side,” Kennedy claimed. “But I found McQueen hostile on most occasions. To me, he remained the eternal juvenile delinquent. I’d heard awful stories about him—reform school, rolling drunks, breaking into houses. I thought he was a very unsavory character and could only harm Dean. I once advised Dean to drop McQueen. ‘Nothing good will come out of your relationship with him,’ I said.”

Jimmy was defiant at the suggestion. “I don’t drop an acolyte until I’m finished with him. When I accomplish what I want with him, then he’s toast.”

Dennis Hopper: “As an actor, I was confused. Should I be a new James Dean, or a new Steve McQueen?”

Kennedy asked, “What could you possibly want with McQueen other than the obvious? He’s rough around the edges. He must have barely made it through the eighth grade.”

“Don’t put him down,” Jimmy said. “He’s got some good points. He’s like a wild stallion. He needs to be broken in. I’m the cowpoke in the saddle who can do that.”

“At the time, I didn’t know what made McQueen tick, but I got to know Dean rather well,” Kennedy said. “For a brief time, I was like an older brother he admired and looked up to, especially as an actor. There was talk that we were lovers. That’s ridiculous, of course. I wasn’t screwing him, but he did discuss his homosexuality with me. He lived in fear of exposure and what it might do to his career if he became a movie star. Broadway was a more tolerant place than Hollywood.”

“He also told me he was frustrated in his relationship with McQueen, because McQueen wouldn’t let him fuck him,” Kennedy claimed.

“He’s driving me up the wall, but he won’t give in to me,” Jimmy told Kennedy. “I’m going to get him high one night, tie him up, and rape him.”

“Dean never explained what ‘broken in’ meant, but I got his drift ,” Kennedy said.

“Amazingly, I got to know McQueen years later, when we both starred in the movie *Nevada Smith*,” Kennedy recalled. “He was the biggest star in the world then. At the peak of his career. I had totally misjudged this juvenile delinquent. It’s incredible how far you can climb in America if you get the breaks. I ended up with the greatest respect for him as an actor. Of course, he had the morals of an alleycat, but that was part of his macho charm.”

Journalist John Parker noted, “In between selling ballpoint pens, McQueen was slowly emerging into the spotlight. He and Dean led parallel lives—penniless and often at low ebb.”

Dennis Hopper, on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause*, claimed that Jimmy was having an image problem. He quoted him as saying: “You know, I’ve got to make it as James Dean. In this hand, I’m holding Marlon Brando, saying, ‘Fuck you!’. And in this hand, I’m holding Monty Clift, saying, ‘Please forgive me’. And so it goes. ‘Fuck you. Please forgive me.’ Somewhere in the middle, you’ll find James Dean.”

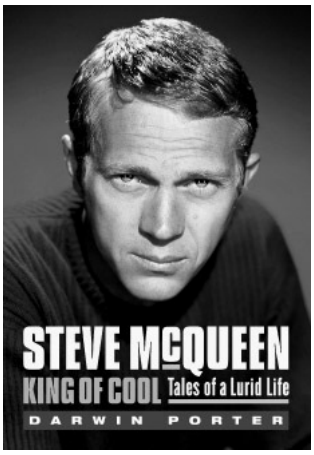
“After *The Blob* (1958) was released, many people in Hollywood told me to stop acting like Dean,” McQueen said. “They assured me I had my own unique talent and that I should let Dean die in the Porsche graveyard. That I should go on and be myself. And so, I followed that advice. Fuck Dean’s sensitivity on screen.”

During the making of *Never So Few* (1959), co-starring Frank Sinatra and Peter Lawford, McQueen told Lawford, “I intend to become the screen’s most idolized tough guy. I’m abandoning Dean’s sensitivity on camera. After all, considering my background, the tough guy image is for me. I’ve tried many things—porn star, hustler, gigolo escort, merchant seaman, lumberjack, roughneck in the Texas oil fields, and a kick-ass Marine. Who better to star in TV’s *Wanted—Dead or Alive,* than me? If Dean could rise from his grave, he’d be imitating me today.”

Author Christopher Sandford wrote that “the nagging threat of homosexuality” hung over McQueen’s head. He

was legendarily touchy on the subject. However, he took Bill Claxton, the photographer, on a tour of his former haunts in Manha an, including some of the places where he'd hung out with Jimmy. "He would show me where he'd lived, places he'd worked as a hustler," Claxton claimed. "He had some pretty wild stories."

Sandford noted that, "A persistent rumor that McQueen dabbled in cross-dressing was a vile slur, but expressed a view that some people had of him. Those were McQueen's omnisexual days, when he soul-kissed James Dean and hustled around New York," Sandford said.



According to its author, Darwin Porter, as quoted in *London's Express*: "Steve McQueen has become an iconic hero, forever cool, but it's ironic because he was never really cool; he was a Molotov cocktail that could explode at any time. His fans never knew the real Steve McQueen."

McQueen himself later admitted, "I lived on the brew and cocaine, along with acid, pot, and fuck-flings. Yes, I attended bisexual orgies, one of them taped by the FBI at the Gramercy Park Hotel in Manhattan. Dean was invited, but didn't attend. I bet that ugly old queer, J. Edgar Hoover, got an eyeful watching the tapes of me in action. I bet his fat butt was twitching and his cocksucking mouth was slobbering when he saw me in all my glory."

The most definitive portrait of McQueen's private life appears in Blood Moon's own biography— *Steve McQueen—Tales of a Lurid Life,* by Darwin Porter.

Addressing McQueen's allure, author Penna Speigel wrote: "He was catnip for women. Women who from others would require courtship—dinners, roses, compliments—fell instantly into his bed like ripe fruit dropping from a vine. He had a wonderful vitality, a soaring, wild energy, combined with his striking blue eyes. Hard-muscled body, and his little boy vulnerability, this was a powerful appeal to women. Some of them were as surprised to find themselves in Steve's bed as Lady Chatterley was to be in her gamekeeper's."

Rod Steiger, who had met McQueen at the Actors Studio and who had costarred with Jimmy in a teleplay, weighed in with his opinion. "I knew Brando. I knew Paul Newman. I knew James Dean. I understand why they made women—or men in some cases—turn hot under the collar. To me, McQueen looked like a grease monkey. From working on those cars and motorcycles all day, he seemed covered in grease, with dirty fingernails."

"He was also illiterate. He couldn't converse on any topic except cars. Dean knew a little about a lot of things. Brando could converse on such subjects as civil rights for blacks. How Indians had been defamed in the movies, left-wing politics, turncoat commie-outing Elia Kazan, and James Dean, one of his favorite topics."

"McQueen was a narcissist," Steiger continued, "although I don't think he knew what it meant. He shared that quality with Brando and Dean. But when McQueen told a gal, 'Come here, baby,' the bitch came running."

Jimmy left McQueen, among others, behind when he went to Hollywood to star in *East of Eden.* But he still called McQueen on infrequent occasions. "I haven't forgotten you, kid," he said. "Why don't you come out to the coast? I'm sure I can find a job for you out here somewhere."

As tempting as that offer was, McQueen turned him down, preferring to remain dejected and broke in Manhattan. He felt he had a better chance there, either in finding roles in teleplays or perhaps on Broadway.

Not wanting to make his plight appear too dire, McQueen bragged about his conquests with women, including his on-again, off-again affair with Shelley Winters. "I've picked up with her just where you left off." He also bragged to Jimmy that he was sleeping with many wannabe actresses, claiming, "I find the pickings great at coffeehouses

on Bleeker Street."

Not to be outdone, Jimmy boasted, "Since arriving in Hollywood, I've been getting so many propositions from both men and women that I'm going to have to hire a social secretary. Some of the biggest names in Hollywood are after me. But that was true even before I became famous. You either have it or you ain't got it, the way I figure it."

Late one night in New York in 1954, McQueen picked up his phone after its fifth ring. "Hi," came a voice over the wire. "I'm in town and ready to fuck."

"Who in hell is this?" McQueen asked sleepily."

"It's Jimmy," came the voice. "The toast of Hollywood. Your rebel without a cause. I'm calling you because you're the only guy in New York who knows how to use your pecker."

"Well, I'll be a rat's ass," McQueen said. "The bigtime movie idol himself. Get that much-used ass of yours over here."

According to reports, Jimmy and McQueen were up all night, rising at around two o'clock the next afternoon for a very late breakfast at their once-regular turf, the Blue Ribbon Café.

Jimmy tantalized McQueen with his adventures in Hollywood. He seemed amused by his growing reputation and the scandalous stories already being spread about him. "The word is I'd fuck a snake—and have—to get ahead. Whoever said that was right on the mark."

Jimmy told McQueen about the wild affair he'd had with a very young Sal Mineo, who had portrayed Plato in *Rebel Without a Cause*. "Sal plays the first gay teenager in movies. Nicholas Ray filmed a scene in which we kiss, but I'm sure that will end up on the cutting room floor."

"Some people in the press are writing that my personality is androgynous," Jimmy told him.

"I don't know what that means," McQueen said.

"Neither do I."

During the course of their day together, McQueen began to realize how Jimmy had changed after two movies in Hollywood. He filled him in on stories of his visits to The Club in Hollywood, an S&M bar and hangout for the leather set. He claimed he'd discovered the pleasure of having guys stub out their cigarettes on his ass, and even showed McQueen some of the burns.

"Don't try to pull any of that shit with me," McQueen warned.

"I won't," Jimmy said. "You're not the type to enjoy the pleasure of pain, only the infliction of pain on others."

"You got that right!" McQueen answered.

Before mid-afternoon, Jimmy revealed his secret career moves. "Offers are pouring in even from fuckers who haven't seen my films. I may be offered a part in Edna Ferber's *Giant*, which is set in Texas. There's talk that I'll star opposite William Holden. "

"I'm also after another role," Jimmy said. "Robert Wise is talking to me about playing Rocky Graziano in a movie called *Somebody Up There Likes M*e (eventually released in 1956). That's my lead-in for us to go to the gym today. I want to practice my boxing."

"That's not for me," McQueen said. "I tried boxing. I'm no good at it."

Jimmy could be very persuasive, and soon McQueen found himself in a Brooklyn gym boxing with the actor.

Unknown to either of them that day, there would in the near future appear two additional contenders for the role of Rocky Graziano in that film, such formidable talents as Marlon Brando and the ultimately successful actor who got the role, Paul Newman.

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After that, Jimmy disappeared to do whatever he was doing in the precious few months that remained for him on this Earth. To his surprise, McQueen, still in New York, received another call from a Hollywood star, Rock Hudson himself, who reminded McQueen that they had met while he was bartending at Monty Clift's party.

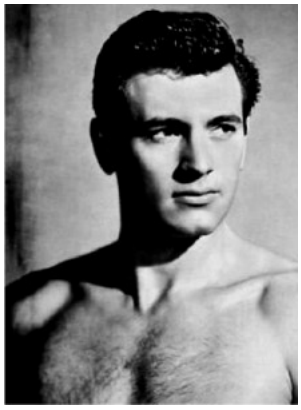
"I know who you are," McQueen told him, "and I don't need to be reminded of where I met you. How can a guy forget meeting Rock Hudson?"

"I'll take that as flattery," Hudson answered. He invited McQueen for dinner that night at his hotel, holding out a tantalizing proposal. "I think I've found the ideal role for your movie debut."

That night, in his hotel suite over a steak dinner ordered from room service, Hudson was gracious and charming and filled with anecdotes about Hollywood. He also had a sense of self-deprecation delivered with good humor. "A

friend working with John Wayne told me the Duke, referring to me, said, 'What a waste of a face on a queer. You know what I could have done with that face?'"

"I have this great friend, Mark Miller," Hudson said. "Before coming to New York, he warned me, 'Just because it wiggles, you don't have to fuck it.'"



Rock Hudson to Steve Mc-Queen: "I don't want to co-star with James Dean in *Giant.* I want you to play Jett Rink."

Eventually, Hudson got down to business. He told McQueen that all of Hollywood was talking about the casting of *Giant* (released in 1956), based on the Edna Ferber novel and set in Texas. "William Holden wants it. Alan Ladd wants it. Gary Cooper wants it. Clark Gable wants it. But right before flying to New York, George Stevens, its director, called me to say that the role of Jordan Benedict belongs to me. Those other golden oldies can sit around their dens looking at old movie stills of themselves. The Hollywood of the late 50s will belong to guys like us. Incidentally, I'll be appearing opposite Elizabeth Taylor. I know you know her. I saw her talking to you when you were tending bar at Monty's party."

"Miss Taylor doesn't have a clue as to who Steve McQueen is," he answered. "But she'll get the idea one night when I'm fucking her."

Hudson appeared only mildly startled by that statement. "Here's how you fit in. Stevens is considering Jimmy for the role of Jett Rink, but I don't want him anywhere near that movie. The bastard will upstage me. I'm trying to persuade Stevens to cast you instead."

"Hey, pal, that sounds great, but I don't know if I'm up to such a big break," McQueen said.

"Do you think I was up for my big breaks when they happened?" Hudson asked. "I was thrown into a part and ran with it. There I was appearing opposite Oscar winner Jane Wyman, and I didn't have the experience. Sometimes Hollywood throws you into the bigtime whether you're ready for it or not."

"Let's go for it," McQueen said. "I'm a fast learner."

"It's not definite, and Stevens is a hard man to convince, but I wanted your permission before I begin my big push of you," Hudson said. "There's no way I want to work with Dean."

Years later it was revealed that McQueen was just one of many young actors that Hudson promoted for the role of Jett Rink. The speculation was that he feared that Jimmy, based on the favorable reviews of his previous films, would steal the movie from him.

Ever the opportunist, Hudson also used the role of Je Rink as an alluring tool for seduction, even though he made it clear that he had only the power to recommend a candidate, and that he wasn't responsible for the final casting decisions.

A room service waiter reported that he found both men in bed together and presumably nude when he delivered their breakfast the subsequent morning in New York.

Before leaving New York, Hudson promised that he'd hang out with McQueen when he made it to the coast, regardless of the outcome of the casting of *Giant.*

"I have this gut instinct that we're going to work together one day, and that each of us, in our own separate ways, is going to become the biggest box office attraction in the country."

In *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway performed what some critics called "The sexiest kiss in the history of cinema."

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When Jimmy left New York to fly back to Los Angeles, both he and McQueen were filled with rosy visions of their future. When they kissed and embraced, it was for the last time.

The next news McQueen heard about Jimmy came a few months later via television. His friend was dead in a car crash in California.

"I'll probably die in a machine, just like Jimmy," McQueen told the actor, George Peppard. "I can see it now. Some lonely stretch of highway along some back road somewhere. Death will be instant. I'm sure my head will be severed like Jimmy's. But what a way to go. Floor-boarding it and rushing head-on to meet death. If cars weren't meant to go fast, they wouldn't have been made to do so. Man craves speed. The only time I feel really alive is when I'm speeding and defying death. I understand Jimmy's need."

Steve McQueen told a reporter that he and James Dean shared the same philosophy of life. "I live for myself and I answer to nobody. The last thing I want to do is to fall in love with some broad."

McQueen rather callously told Hudson and others one drunken night, "I'm glad Dean is dead. That eliminates my main competition."

When Jimmy passed on from this world in 1955, McQueen transferred his idolatry of the late star to another emerging star, Paul Newman. He also redirected the jealousy he'd felt about Jimmy onto Newman, who was getting starring roles before he did.

Comparisons between the two stars became a part of the national consciousness, and widely publicized. In a discussion by feminist icon Erica Jong about the difficulties of achieving the "ultimate orgasm," she wrote in *Esquire:* "Who has the bluest eyes, Newman or McQueen? It is difficult to say, but McQueen's twinkle more. He

makes me think of all those leathery-necked cowboys at remote truck stops in Nevada. Does he wear pointy boots? And does he take them off when he screws?"

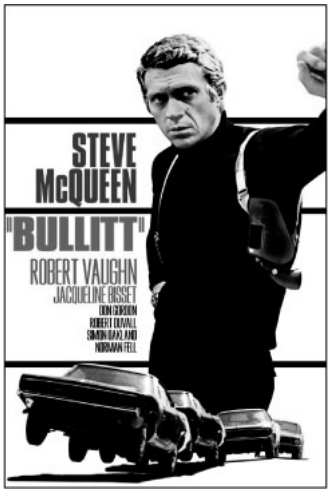
In the wake of Jimmy's death, a writer cited McQueen as "The Next James Dean," and a reporter for *Movie World* wrote: "Steve McQueen is the logical successor to James Dean. The clique that worships Dean has a new Messiah in McQueen. Luckily, he is living longer than Dean did, so the cult will have a long, long time to thrive."

When McQueen read that, he said, "Fuck it! I want to be the next Bogie."

Despite the forecast of *Movie World's* columnist, Steve did not have that much longer to live. He died of a heart attack at the age of fifty in 1980.

But before that, he evolved into a top-tier movie star, luring audiences to the box office throughout the 1960s and 70s with such hits as *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Cincinnati Kid* (1963), *The Sand Pebbles* (1966; it led to Steve's nomination as Best Actor that year); *Bullit* (1968); *The Magnificent Seven* (1970), *Papillon* (1973), and *The Towering Inferno* (1974), within which he competed with Paul Newman for top billing.

McQueen, Faye Dunaway, & Paul Newman in *The Towering Inferno* (1974)



Chapter Seven

JIMMY'S JAILBAIT. HIS AFFAIR & CORRESPONDENCE WITH
BARBARA GLENN

A Jewish Sweet Sixteen Wannabe Actress from Queens

HE TAKES HER VIRGINITY, SLAPS HER AROUND, ACCEPTS MONEY FROM HER, SENDS HER PSYCHOTIC LOVE LETTERS, AND TALKS OF MARRIAGE

Reckless Motorcycle Rides Through the Canyons of Manhattan

The setting was Cromwell's Pharmacy, within the NBC Building in Manhattan, as 1952 was drawing to a close. A just-turned sixteen-year-old wannabe actress, Barbara Glenn, who descended from a Jewish family in Queens, was sitting at a table sipping soda with her actor friends, Martin Landau, Rusty Slocum, and Carol Sinclair.

Barbara Glenn with James Dean at the beach. He later described her as “my neurotic little shit.”

At this time in his life, James Dean made almost daily visits to this actors’ hangout, with its bank of pay phones where hopefuls were always phoning their agents to see if any acting gigs had come through.

“Who’s that attractive man?” Glenn asked, as she stared at Jimmy, who stood about twelve feet away. He had already signaled a greeting to his friend Landau.

“I know him,” Landau said. “I’ll bring him over and introduce you to him.” Then he walked over to alert Jimmy that he had an admirer.

From a distance, Jimmy appraised her. “Looks like jailbait to me.” Nonetheless, he came over and greeted her, although he didn’t have much to say.

At least she learned that he was set to open that night on Broadway in *See the Jaguar,* a play starring Arthur Kennedy.

Glenn later shared her impressions of that afternoon. “Martin told me that Jimmy thought I was ‘magnificently gorgeous.’ Jimmy seemed rather shy, and didn’t talk much, but I found him appealing, but not devastatingly so. He was different from the people I knew, not that I knew many. He was so very young. Actually, I thought he was my age until I learned otherwise. I felt he might be boyfriend material. He was good looking enough, but I sensed something beneath his surface. There was an aura of danger about him, but not enough to scare me off. I wished him luck on his opening night and agreed to meet him at Cromwell’s the following afternoon to hear about it.”

At table with Glenn, Slocum, a late teenager wannabe actor, observed her flirtation with Jimmy. “I didn’t think much would come of it, just another of Jimmy’s passing fancies. He’d hook up with some girl in the afternoon. When you’d see him later that night at Jerry’s, that girl would be someone else. The afternoon brunette had been replaced by the night’s blonde or redhead.”

“Jimmy had this technique when talking to you of making you feel you were uttering words of wisdom and you were the most fabulous person he’d ever met,” Slocum said. “I saw him pull that stunt on the very young and impressionable Barbara Glenn. All of us at the time were just the little girlfriends or little boyfriends of Jimmy’s. We came and we went, like the hamburgers served at Cromwell’s.”

The next day, Jimmy met Glenn at Cromwell’s for a soda, telling her that *See the Jaguar* had won raves for his performance, but that the play itself had been critically denounced. “I’ll probably be back knocking on the doors of casting agents in a few days.”

She remembered he brought her a short story to read, “A Tree of Night” by Truman Capote. It was the tale of a college girl traveling on a crowded train. On board, she encounters two grotesques, a zombie-like man and a mysterious woman with an oversized head. He told her it was an allegory about a sane person who can succumb to the terror hidden within one’s darkest soul.

Then he leaned over the table and told her, “You remind me of my mother, Mildred. She deserted me long ago. I mean, she up and died on me. She wasn’t even thirty.”

As Glenn later recalled, “No sixteen-year-old girl wants to hear a prospective boyfriend tell her she reminds him of his mother, but our relationship survived that disaster.”

“I felt sorry for him. His mother died even before America entered World War II, but he still hadn’t recovered from her loss. He also told me that his father, Winton, had also abandoned him when he was just a boy. When he discussed his parents, he reminded me of a nine-year-old, a little boy lost.”

“Soon, we were dating,” she recalled. The two of them could be seen speeding through the canyons of

Manhattan on his motorcycle, with Glenn holding onto Jimmy for dear life. “He was a terrible cyclist, weaving dangerously in and out of traffic.”

“When I survived yet another ride on that motorcycle, we used to sit and talk quietly on a bench in Central Park,” she said. “I had to walk on eggshells when chatting with him. The slightest remark could make him furious.”

“I was always fearful of his motorcycle riding,” Glenn claimed. “I consider his machine an instrument of death. I remember half of my time with Jimmy involved waiting for him to show up, because he was always late, and I was always wondering if he was going to make it. I always had the feeling that somehow, some way, some day, he was not going to show up. He did crash his motorcycle on one occasion. Fortunately, he wasn’t badly hurt. But what about the next crash, or even the crash after that?”

“I can never get along without my little cycle,” he claimed. “I guess I’ll never sell it. It’s like a brother to me. Of course, there is danger. I’m reminded that an actor with only half a face is no actor at all.”

Their motorcycle rides often came to a stop in front of Figaro’s, their hangout in Greenwich Village at the corner of MacDougal and Bleeker Streets.

When he introduced her one night to Arthur Kennedy, backstage at one of *See the Jaguar*’s few performances, he warned the older actor, “Barbara’s neuroticism is the equal of my own, and that’s saying a lot. But her eighteen-inch waist and thirty-six inch bust go a long way.”

As one of Glenn’s girlfriends later reported, “Every sixteen-year-old girl supposedly has to lose her virginity. Although I wasn’t there, I just assumed that Barbara eventually lost hers to this Jimmy Dean, who apparently liked to deflower virgins.”

William Bast wanted to know who this new woman—or girl—was in Jimmy’s life. During a telephone call, he described her as, “She’s good looking, as busty as Marilyn Monroe, tall, very, very young, rather thin, as hyperactive and combustible as I am. We have lots of fights, tons of makeup sessions. We both have the temperament of Mount Vesuvius.”

During the spring of 1953, the two of them often engaged in epic battles, but would eventually come together and be seen on his motorcycle again.

“Sometimes, I would scream at him and pound his chest,” she said. “People who knew us compared us to a fighting cat and dog.”

At times, he was worried that he might accidentally get her pregnant. “I hate using a rubber,” he told his friend, Stanley Haggart. “It dulls the sensation for me. I like skin meeting skin, like rubber hitting the road in a car.”

With summer approaching, Barbara managed to get a gig at the Cragsmoor Playhouse in the Catskills. When Jimmy heard the news, he exploded in anger.

Friends of her were giving her a farewell party, to which she invited him. “He showed up in a real foul mood, ignoring everybody, even me,” Glenn said. “It was a horrible night. He finally stormed out the door without even a goodbye.”

Devastated, she left her own party to find him, figuring he might have gone over to Jerry’s Tavern, where he often spent his evenings. He wasn’t there. She sat alone at a table, not managing to hold back her tears. About an hour later, he showed up.

“He didn’t apologize for his outrageous behavior,” she said. “That was not his style. He just held my hand and looked deeply into my teary eyes. Without saying a word, we made up and later spent the night together.”

He wrote to her in the Catskills, complaining that except for some teleplays that spring, “the pickings are slim here. Television has gone into the summer doldrums. Jane Deacy has lined up only two or three teleplays for me, each of which pays starvation wages.”

He told her he was going to perform two dramatic readings, one of which was from *Metamorphosis,* a stage play adapted from the novel by Franz Kafka. “It was really Kafka’s nightmare,” he wrote. “I play a man who wakes up one morning to discover that overnight, he’s been transformed into this hideous giant insect. My reading is set for August at the Village Theatre. Definitely off-Broadway.”

The second reading was of Jonathan Bates’ play, *The Fell Swoop,* presented on June 23 at the Palm Gardens in the New Dramatists’ headquarters on West 52nd Street.

During the summer of 1953, Jimmy lived in Bates’ apartment during periods when he was out of town. Rather cherubic looking, Bates was Irish and worked as a purser for Trans World Airlines. He had three dogs, and, in exchange for free lodging, Jimmy agreed to feed and walk his animals whenever Bates was away tending to business abroad.

“Jimmy was an animal lover,” Glenn said. “But he complained about having to walk them, and he also said that

the dogs kept him up at night."

Glenn often visited him in Bates' apartment, which was above the Brown Derby Restaurant at 40 West 52nd Street. "I remember its cabaret sign flashing all night, lighting up the living room with its neon glow."

Jimmy told Glenn that he'd lost a few pounds. "Meals are few and far between unless I bum a few."

"That drew a response from her, and she sent him a check for a hundred dollars, with a note: "For seventy-five cents, you can get a huge plate of spaghetti and meatballs on Thompson Street in The Village.

During her months with him, Glenn would often supply Jimmy with enough cash to tide him over between work assignments in teleplays.

For some reason, he eventually wrote to Glenn in the Catskills, describing the nighttime scene in Manhattan, a venue with which she was already familiar.

"In the pensiveness of night, the cheap, monotonous, shrill, symbolic sensual beat of suggestive drums tattoos orgyistic images on my brain. The smell of gin and 90% beer, entwine with the sometimes suspenseful, slow, sometimes labored static, sometimes motionless, sometimes painfully rigid, till finally, the long-waited for jerks and convulsions that fill the now thick chewing gum haze with a mist of sweat, fling the patrons into a fit of suppressed joy. The fated 7 days a week bestial virgin bows with the poise of a drunken pavlova. Rivulets of stale perspiration glide from and between her once well-formed anatomy to the anxious, welcoming front-row celebrities who lap it up with infamous glee. The Aura of Horror. I live above it and below it…It is my Divine Comedy. The Dante of 52nd Street. There is no peace in our world. I love you. I would like to write about nice things, or fiction, but we shouldn't avoid reality should we? The things I have just written are the truth. They are very hard to write about. I am lonely. Forgive me. I am lonely. Love, Jim."

In a letter he wrote to her in August, shortly before her return to New York, he said:

"I am very lonely for you. I am alone. Thoughts are sweet, then wicked, then perverse, then penitent, then sweet. The moon is not blue. It hangs there in the sky no more. Forgive me for such a sloppy letter. I'm a little drunk. I drink a bit lately. You see, I don't know what's going on. Remarkable lot, human beings. In an antiphonal azure swing, souls drone their unfinished melody. When did we live and when did we not? In my drunken stupor, I said a gem. Great actors are often time pretentious livers. The pretentious actor, a great liver. God Damnit! I miss you!"

When Glenn returned to New York, she resumed her relationship with him. She didn't ask him if he'd dated other girls while she was away. But he did say, "You must have met a lot of handsome guys this summer, chasing you up and down those Catskill mountains."

"He was physically as gorgeous as ever," she said. "Still, with that lost boy quality. He obviously hadn't found himself since I left him. When I did ask him a direct question, he mumbled an answer. I came to suspect he was leading a double or triple life, one with me, and two or three with other lovers. He seemed to have a lot of needs to satisfy, and I suspected I couldn't fulfill all of them. Yet he talked of marriage, but didn't give me a direct proposal, much less an engagement ring, not that he could afford one."

As 1953 progressed through autumn and winter, he would disappear from her life for two or three days at a time without calling. Once, he was gone for two weeks and returned without apologies or explanations.

His friend, Stanley Haggart, was aware of at least two affairs he was having, one with the actor John Kerr, and another with Betsy Palmer. He'd appeared in teleplays with each of them.

"There were a few others along the way," Haggart recalled. "I vaguely remember a woman named Arlene Sachs. Jimmy told me some wild stories. All this was going on before he left for Hollywood to work with Elia Kazan. I don't think Barbara Glenn knew half of what Jimmy was up to. Perhaps I'm wrong."

His love affair with his old motorcycle ended when he saved up enough money to purchase a better one. Even though it was deep in winter, he told Glenn that he planned to ride his motorcycle back to Fairmount.

"Please, if you're going to die, why not stay in New York?" she asked him.

"No," he said. "I'm heading home to Indiana, all eight hundred miles, and on my new motorcycle. I've got to try it. It's great…don't worry."

"It's your life," she said, almost wanting to give up on him and stop worrying about his safety.

"Soon, he was presumably in Indiana," she said, "or else dead on the highway somewhere. I didn't hear from him for a couple of weeks. When he came back to Manhattan, he told me horrendous stories of snow and ice that would make Greenland look like a tropic zone."

"There were times I practically froze to death," he claimed, "but I drove all the way there and all the way back without one accident, except that time on an icy road when I crashed into a snowbank. But I emerged without a scratch, except I hurt my balls. But they're in working order once again."

At long last, Jane Deacy got him another role on Broadway, this time for an appearance as a blackmailing homosexual Arab boy, tangling with French actor Louis Jourdan and co-starring Geraldine Page, in the stage adaptation of André Gide's autobiographical novel, *The Immoralist.*

After weeks of traumatic rehearsals and endless conflicts with his fellow actors *[for more on this, refer to chapter 14 of this biography]*, tryouts were in Philadelphia. From there, he wrote to her from his lodgings in the St. James Hotel, illustrating his letter with whimsical illustrations and doodles.

"I hate the god damn brown makeup I'm forced to wear. The play is full of shit. Stereophonic staging and 3-D actors. I's so bad it will probably be a monstrous success since the theater-going public on Broadway is stupid, filled with bored housewives and insurance salesmen guaranteed to sleep through most of the play after a hard day's work."

"I bought a new magenta-colored gown for the opening night of *The Immoralist,* and thought I looked dazzling," Glenn recalled. "I thought it was going to be a glorious night for Jimmy. His aunt, Ortense, and his uncle, Marcus Winslow, flew in from Indiana. I was not introduced to them, and I got the idea that Jimmy had told them I was going to be his bride."

"I met Jimmy backstage in his dressing room, and he invited me to Sardi's, where the cast would be headed after the show. But instead of dressing up, he put on a smelly T-shirt and a pair of ripped blue jeans."

Of course, once at Sardi's the doorman turned him away, and he had to go back to his apartment and put on a suit.

"When he did arrive, the tension was awful," she said. "He immediately insulted Louis Jourdan, and also the director, Daniel Mann. He told them he didn't want to be in their stupid play 'written by that French faggot, André Gide.' I couldn't take his bitching any more, and I left quickly. He followed me onto the street, and we had this big blow-up fight there on the sidewalk."

"Orson Welles was coming in the door with Janet Leigh, of all people. They stopped and witnessed our domestic violence. At one point, Jimmy slapped me, and I ran screaming down the street. We didn't speak for days, but once again, we made up. I knew, though, that our relationship was doomed."

***

When Jimmy went to Hollywood to film *East of Eden,* he wrote letters to Glenn in New York, telling her how miserable he was*. [One of them is replicated, with its errors in spelling and grammar, immediately below.]*

"I don't know why people reject me. I don't want to write this letter. It would be better to remain silent. Wow! Am I fucked up.

Got here on a Thursday went to the desert on Sat, week later to San Francisco. I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM. Rented a car for two weeks. It cost me $138.00. I WANT TO DIE. I have told the girls here to kiss my ass and what sterile, spineless, stupid prostitutes they were. I HAVEN'T BEEN TO BED WITH NO BODY. And won't until after the picture and I am home safe in N.Y.C. (snuggly little town that it is) sounds unbelievable, but it's the truth I swear. So hold everything stop breathing. Stop the town all of N.Y.C ., untill (should have trumpets here) James Dean returns.

I got no motorcycle I got no girl HONEY, shit writing in capitals doesn't seem to help either. Haven't found a place to live yet HONEY. Kazan sent me out here to get a tan. Haven't seen the sun yet (fog and smog). Wanted me healthy looking. I look like a prune. Don't run away from home at too early an age or you'll have to take vitamens the rest of your life. Write me please. I'm sad most of the time. Awful lonely too. (I hope you're dying) BECAUSE I AM.

Love,
Jim (Brando Clift) Dean

While he was in Hollywood, she wrote him with news that she'd gotten a job posing for a swimsuit photo layout. He wrote back, "Boy, that's selling out cheap."

Years later, she remembered her feelings at the time: "He accused me of selling out cheap. A boy who had allegedly posed for nude pictures, perhaps even porno."

Before the filming of *East of Eden* began, director Elia Kazan summoned all the principal actors, including Raymond Massey and Julie Harris, to rehearsals. Jimmy wrote to Glenn in New York with a description of how they were progressing. His reference to "Lennie" in his letter was about Jimmy's good friend, Leonard Rosenman, who had been commissioned to compose music for the film.

"Have been very dejected and extremely moody last two weeks. Have been telling everybody to fuck off and that's no good. I could never make them believe I was working on my part. Poor Julie Harris doesn't know what to do. Everyone turns into an idiot out here. I have only one friend, one guy that I can talk to and be understood. I hope Lennie comes out here. I need someone from New York. Cause I'm mean and I'm really kind and gentle. Things get mixed up all the time. I see a person I would like to be very close to (everybody), then I think it would just be the same as before and they don't give a shit for me. Then I say something nasty or nothing at all and walk away. The poor person doesn't know what happened. He doesn't realize that I have decided I don't like him. What's wrong with people. Idiots. (I won't fail please.)"

In May of 1954, from Hollywood, he wrote this to Glenn:

"*Pleased to hear from you. That's putting it mildly. Gadge* [Elia Kazan] *and Tenn* [Tennessee Williams] *are nice but I wouldn't trust the sons-a-bitches far's I could throw them. They can take advantage of you like nobody else.*

"HONEY!!! I'm still a Calif, virgin, remarkable no. I'm saving it—H-bomb Dean.

"A new addition has been added to the Dean family. I got a red '53 MG (milled head, etc. hot engine). My sex pours itself into fat curves, broadslides, and broodings, drags, etc. You have plenty of competition. My motorcycle, my MG, and my girl. I have been sleeping with my MG. We make it together, honey."

In yet another letter to Glenn, he wrote:

"I haven't written because I've fallen in love. It had to happen sooner or later. Enclosed is not a very good picture of him. That's Cisco the Kid, the new member of the family. He gives me confidence. He makes my hands strong. May use him in a movie." [Jimmy was referring to his latest acquisition, a thoroughbred palomino horse.]

It was during his filming of *East of Eden* that Glenn wrote Jimmy a "Dear John" letter, informing him that she'd met someone new, the love of her life, and that she had agreed to marry him.

Jimmy accepted the news good-naturedly Actually, it wasn't that painful to him, because he was dating Pier Angeli, the Italian actress.

After mailing her "Dear John" letter, Glenn's affair with her new love came to an abrupt end when she discovered that her husband-to-be was simultaneously engaged to another young actress. She broke up with him, but a few weeks later, fell madly in love once again—this time with the man she would eventually marry.

When he returned to New York, she confronted Jimmy with news about the changes in her life, telling him she could no longer be his girlfriend. "This time I mean it," she told him. "This man really loves me and doesn't have a cheating heart like some men I've known."

Jimmy realized that that reference included him.

To her surprise, he asked to meet her husband-to-be. She reluctantly agreed, fearing he would make a scene. However, their dinner went pleasantly enough, although the two rivals in love had little to say to each other.

Jimmy later told William Bast, "When he got up to go to the men's room—men don't call it powdering their noses, do they?—I followed him. There were three urinals. I stood beside him and looked down. His piss was white, not yellow. If she didn't already know it, I should have warned Barbara that she wouldn't be getting 'Long John.'"

After dinner, Jimmy insisted on seeing her alone for a final farewell and, to the surprise and dismay of her new lover, she returned with Jimmy, alone, to his apartment on West 68th Street.

There, he shocked her by pleading with her to marry him, not her intended *fiancé.*

She noticed a small suitcase on his bed. It was filled with cash. "This looks like a lot of money," she said.

"Now that you have money yourself, are you trying to pay me back? From the looks of things, I never lent you all this much."

"You can't leave me, Barbara, *please!.*" He was pleading, beseeching her. "If you leave me, I'll kill myself. My death will be on your hands. Do you want that?"

"Of course I don't, and you're not going to kill yourself," she said. "You and I wouldn't last in a marriage for more than two weeks, and in your heart, you know that I'm getting married to the man you met tonight. And that's final. I'm leaving. Goodbye forever, Jimmy. Don't ever call or write to me again."

As she headed out the door to the stairwell, he ran after her, carrying the suitcase of money. Impulsively, he threw some of the cash after her, the bills cascading down upon her.

She did not look back. All she remembered was his calling out to her. But instead of "Barbara," it was "STELLA! STELLA! STELLA!" He had lapsed into a re-enactment of the famous scene where Brando screams with primal anguish for his wife in *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

***

After hearing about Jimmy's death in 1955, Glenn told a reporter: "He was a terribly destructive person. Our relationship was destructive. I knew he would destroy himself in the end, and that's why his death did not come as a surprise. It was as if my reaction to it happened so long ago."

Chapter Eight

JIMMY EMERGES AS A STAR IN THE EARLY DAYS OF

TELEVISION

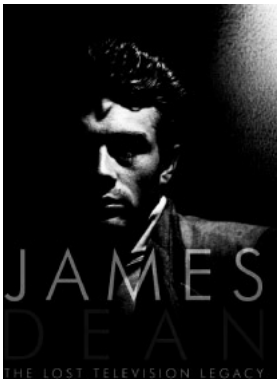
Projected across America Through "Little Black Boxes," He Emotes Onscreen with Blanche DuBois, Scarlett O'Hara's Mother, & Sweet Sixteen-er, Natalie Wood

HE MAKES LOVE TO THE ACTOR PLAYING JESSE JAMES, THEN PLAYS A PUNK WHO THREATENS TO ASSASSINATE RONALD REAGAN

Splendor, Not In the Grass, But on the Casting Couch of Playwright Bill Inge

JIMMY SIZES UP HIS RIVALS: BEN ("JOCKO") GAZZARA AND JOHN ("*TEA & SYMPATHY*") KERR

James Dean's debut appearance on television was in a Pepsi Cola commercial. From there, he went on to a somewhat amazing career starring in teleplays during the early 1950s' Golden Age of television. The general public today know him for only three movies, *East of Eden, Rebel Without a Cause,* and *Giant*. But his diehard fans are aware of his many star turns on television, sometimes as part of live tele-dramas.



James Dean, The Lost Television Legacy

Often, he appeared in a single episode of a prolonged series whose names—once household words—included *Kraft Television Theater, Robert Montgomery Presents, Danger,* and *General Electric Theater.* Many of these episodes have disappeared forever; others believed to have been lost have been recovered during the 21st Century, based to some degree on the legend of James Dean as it gains new aficionados.

On the 60th anniversary of his death in 1955, many of Dean's teleplays were digitalized and rediscovered, including several premieres which were broadcast on Turner Movie Classics. Fans can also buy a boxed set: *James Dean: The Lost Television Legacy,* featuring nineteen full episodes, each meticulously remastered.

Most of these teleplays were filmed in his "black box" banner year of 1953, just before he migrated to Hollywood for a starring role in *East of Eden.* Two of his best-known television roles include his appearance in the *You Are There* series in which, as "the coward," Bob Ford, he shoots Jesse James. Later, in an episode of *General Electric Theater*, Jimmy points a revolver at the head of Ronald Reagan, cast as a doctor, threatening to shoot him if he doesn't remove a bullet from his (wounded) pal.

Many of his co-stars in these teleplays have faded into the dusty archives of early television, but Jimmy also appeared with some names that endure, including Dorothy Gish, the legendary star of the silent screen. Other first-rate actors included John Carradine, Cloris Leachman, Rod Steiger, Walter Hampden, Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn, James Kerr, Ed Begley, Betsy Palmer, Natalie Wood, Mary Astor, and Paul Lukas. In real life, he would seduce three of these co-stars, one male and two females.

During the course of his brief glory days in television, he would appear in a wide range of roles. Characters he'd portray on the "small screen" included a wrongly accused victim being sent to the electric chair; an ex-convict struggling to start a new life; the restless son of a farming couple; a lovestruck stable boy with dreams of glory; a "hepcat killer, and a young French aristocrat accused of stealing his stepfather's money.

The chapter that follows describes many of the television roles he portrayed, along with his interactions (successful, unsuccessful, and sometimes abysmal) with directors, producers, other actors, and his romantic peers.

The Hound of Heaven

AT THE GATES OF HELL

Early in 1953, Jimmy was cast in *The Hound of Heaven,* an episode on *The Kate Smith Hour* that was aired on NBC on January 15.

During rehearsals, he met the star of the show, John Carradine, who was known mostly for his Western and horror films, despite his status as a famous Shakespearean actor and a former member of the stock companies of both Cecil B. DeMille and John Ford. He told Jimmy that he'd tested for the title roles in both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein,* "but Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff beat my ass."

James Dean as a goofy hillbilly angel in *The Hound of Heaven.*

Jimmy had seen only one of his films, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) starring Henry Fonda, in which Carradine had played the doomed preacher, Casey. His deep, resonant voice had earned him the nickname "The Voice." During the course of his career, Carradine claimed that he had appeared in some 450 movies, the earliest ones uncredited. During rehearsals of *The Hound of Heaven*, Carradine walked around the set reciting Shakespeare soliloquies.

He confided in Jimmy that his dream had involved being the partriarch of an extended Carradine family. He'd married Ardanelle Cosner, who gave him two sons (Bruce and David), but she'd thwarted his plan for having more children by self-inflicting "coat hanger abortions" without his knowledge.

He asked Jimmy if he'd like to settle down and have "a brood of little Jimmy Deans."

"Like hell I would," Jimmy responded, sarcastically. "Anything but that. I want to be the one and only James Dean."

The script for *The Hound of Heaven* had been written by Earl Hammer, Jr., who later became known for the hit TV series, *The Waltons,* and for *Falcon Crest.* He created the famous line, "Good night, John Boy."

In Hammer's plot for *The Hound of Heaven,* Carradine was cast as Hyder Simpson, a roughneck Appalachian man whose faithful companion is a dog named Rip. He and his hound die and go to what Hyder thinks is the gate to Heaven. The gatekeeper there informs him that he can enter, but no dogs are allowed.

Suddenly, "Angel" (Jimmy) appears, warning him that he is not at the pearly gates of Heaven, but at the gates to Hell, where fire and brimstone await him. Whereas the man was willing to walk into a horrible fate, Rip was too smart for that and knew, instinctively, that they were facing not salvation, but doom.

The Case of the Watchful Dog

Moonshine & Souped-Up Hotrods

Jimmy's next teleplay was with minor actors (they included Graham Denton and Dorothy Elder) in *The Case of the Watchful Dog,* broadcast on NBC on January 29. Director Daniel Petrie cast Jimmy in the role of a gun-toting juvenile delinquent, the son of a moonshiner, who drives a souped-up hotrod that hauls illegal booze to an undercover distribution center.

The drama was part of a TV series, *Treasury Men in Action,* whose episodes focused on real crime dramas inspired by the case files of the U.S. Customs and Treasury Departments. Federal agents in the series battle tax evaders, moonshiners, gun-runners, smugglers, and counterfeiters.

Jimmy starred as Randy Meeker, who breaks with his father, Clay, after he shoots Randy's beloved hound because his barking might draw revenue agents to his illicit still. As it happens, the revenue agents are able to trace the location of the still through the license plate on Jimmy's hotrod. After it aired, the show was soon forgotten.

Although Jimmy would become known as "the terror of directors," he worked smoothly with Petrie, who would later make such signature films as *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961). He would also direct Laurence Olivier in *The Betsy* (1978) and would go on to win many Emmy and Directors Guild awards.

Jimmy Kills the Character Known as Jesse James on Screen

But Off Screen, Makes Love to the Actor Who Portrayed Him

Very different scenarios played out—both on the TV screen and behind the camera—in Jimmy's next teleplay. At CBS, he was cast in *The Killing of Jesse James* as part of the *You Are There* series, an anthology of major historical events hosted by Walter Cronkite. Although the series had originated on radio, it made a smooth transition to television. The show that immediately preceded Jimmy's debut in the series had been a re-enactment of the Hindenburg disaster in New Jersey—a fiery inferno of a hydrogen-filled blimp that was played out before the world.

Its director was Sidney Lumet, a native of Philadelphia, who would segue from helming TV programmers to being nominated for Best Director by the Academy Awards for such feature films as *Twelve Angry Men* (1957); *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975); and *Network* (1976).

In time, Lumet would direct Ralph Richardson, Richard Burton, Katharine Hepburn, James Mason, Henry Fonda, Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft, and Albert Finney, among many others. He won praise from all of these stars, including from Jimmy himself, who called him, "an actor's dream."

"If I had any problem with him," Jimmy said, "it was his praise of the acting of Marlon Brando. Although he was straight, he seemed to have the hots for Stanley Kowalski."

[In 1959, Lumet would direct Brando with Anna Magnani in Tennessee Williams' The Fugitive Kind.]

"Lumet was electric, bubbling over with energy, a hard-boiled straight shooter," Jimmy said. "He taught me a lot."

At the time Jimmy met Lumet, he was married to the actress Rita Gam, a close friend of Grace Kelly's. He would later marry the heiress Gloria Vanderbilt and, after that, Gail Jones, the daughter of singer Lena Horne.

He told Jimmy that he had selected Cronkite as the anchor man "because the premise of many of our shows is so silly, and so outrageous, that we need somebody who is very believable, very homespun, very American."

Into the role of Jesse James, Lumet cast the handsome and rising young actor, John Kerr, with Jimmy playing his assassin, Bob Ford. Until Kerr arrived on the set, Jimmy was eager to learn as much as he could from Lumet, perhaps hoping he would cast him in future productions, either on TV or on the big screen.

In the teleplay by Leslie Slate, Jimmy and Kerr each appear near the end. The beginning of the script focuses on events leading up to the fatal shooting of Jesse James. The notorious outlaw enters a saloon for a drink, during which time, he stands on a chair to straighten a picture. Ford, as played by Jimmy, shoots him in the back, opting to collect a reward of $10,000, although the governor later gives him only $500.

[Brad Pitt and Casey Affleck would deliver a far more detailed version of the shooting in a 2007 movie, The Assassination of Jessie James by the Coward Robert Ford*.]*

It was a memorable day for Jimmy when Kerr walked into his life. A New Yorker born to a British father, he was a graduate of Harvard and had worked in summer stock in New England. While taking a class in Serbo-Croatian language and literature at Harvard, he had met a fellow student, Priscilla Smith, and had married her in 1952. The union would last for twenty years and produce three children before they divorced.

Jimmy was fascinated by Kerr. "I figured that by then, the honeymoon was over and John Boy might want some other kind of action," Jimmy confided to Lumet. The director had a front-row seat to watch Jimmy's seduction of Kerr, a tale he'd later relate to other actors such as Marlon Brando, Rod Steiger, Anthony Perkins, and Anne Bancroft.

John Kerr...Jimmy opens the door to his closet. *Lower photo:* Kerr with France Nuyen in *South Pacific* (1958).

"I think Jimmy realized that Kerr was a closeted bisexual before the actor admitted it to himself," Lumet later said. "From the day they met, Jimmy had his radar out. He moved in on Kerr. When he talked to him—and he chatted a lot—he stood only inches from him, their lips almost touching. It was as if Jimmy were breathing down Kerr's neck. When he wanted to, Jimmy's voice sounded like soft music to the ear."

"How far was Kerr willing to go when confronted with this charming young *conquistador*?" Lumet was asked.

"All the way, I was certain. Once, Kerr had limbered up with some exercises. He sat down in a chair and was sweating. Jimmy came over with a tissue to mop his brow. When Kerr looked up at Jimmy, his throat seemed to tighten with tangled emotions. Jimmy looked into his watery eyes with a face of angelic purity and innocence that was actually a mask of the devil in disguise out to snare this tender boy."

John Kerr (playing a sexually ambivalent student) with Deborah Kerr (the empathetic wife of the director of his prep school) in *Tea and Sympathy* (1956).

Jimmy could have been mouthing Deborah Kerr's famous line when she appeared in the film version of *Tea and Sympathy,* in which she starred with Kerr *[to whom she was not related, despite the similarity of their family names]*. "Years from now, when you talk of this, please be kind."

"I think the prelude to the actual seduction began with a ham sandwich on rye," Lumet said. "Both boys were having lunch on the set. At one point, Jimmy reached over and just took Kerr's sandwich from him, had a big bite of

it, then handed it back. It was a very symbolic gesture, as Jimmy obviously wanted to take a bite out of Kerr. After work, the two wandered off together, and I was certain about what those two boys would be doing within an hour or so."

"But by the next morning, a new scenario played out before my eyes," Lumet said. "Jimmy was no longer catering to Kerr. Instead, Kerr was catering to Jimmy, who seemed in complete control of the relationship. He even brought Jimmy a cup of coffee at around ten o'clock and then later, went out and got him a package of cigarettes when he ran out. He also brought Jimmy his lunch that day. Something inside Kerr had been liberated, perhaps his darkest secret, which he had concealed since he was a boy."

"Jimmy had this amazing power to bind another human being, male or female, to him," Lumet said. "Kerr became his willing victim. Sexual drive, creative drive. Perhaps it's a wild thing to speculate, but I felt than in time, Jimmy's liberation of Kerr made him a better actor, especially in *Tea and Sympathy.* Kerr fell in love with Jimmy, but I don't think Jimmy ever loved anyone but himself."

"I remembered the last afternoon, when I saw them walking off together," Lumet said. "Both of them looked so handsome, so full of life, so in love. They were perfectly matched. But I knew storm clouds were on the way. After all, Kerr was married. He was also in love with a man. How was he going to solve that dilemma? It would take Hamlet himself to ponder it."

"I learned that both of them would be co-starring in another teleplay at the end of the summer," Lumet said. "I was certain their romance would last the summer. Of course, Frank Sinatra sang about how romances go with the summer winds."

No Room

SAFECRACKER JIMMY IS SAVED FROM A LIFE OF CRIME

Jimmy's next teleplay was not memorable at all. Weeks after finishing it, he had almost forgotten it. CBS cast him in *No Room,* an episode within its popular *Danger* series that focused on tales of suspense, murder mysteries, and psychological dramas.

The script had been written by Mary Stern, who created a role for Jimmy of a would-be safecracker, who is saved from committing a burglary that might have landed him in prison. He wasn't impressed with his part, but the producers of *Danger* were, and as the series progressed, they'd hire him to perform in three more episodes.

If he had a regret at all, it involved the fact that this particular episode would not be broadcast in Fairmount, Indiana, thereby ensuring that his relatives, Ortense and Marcus Winslow, would not get to see it.

During the shoot, he related to the female co-star, Irene Vernon, since she was a fellow Hoosier born in Mishawaka, Indiana. Her movie career in Hollywood had gone nowhere, and she was trying to establish herself as a television actress. About a decade later, her most memorable role became that of Louise Tate on the hit TV series, *Bewitched* (1964-1972).

Born and reared in Brooklyn, one of Jimmy's colleagues, Martin Kingsley, had worked in radio, TV, and on the stage. A Hungarian, he once brought a container of goulash to Jimmy for his lunch "so you can taste the real thing. It was from Mama Gabor's own kitchen." He was referring to Jolie Gabor, the mother of three famous and glamorous daughters, Zsa Zsa, Eva, and Magda.

"There was a saying at the time that Brando changed the way actors acted," Kingsley later said. "That may be so, but James Dean changed the way actors lived. No one like him had come before, and no one like him has emerged since."

The Case of the Sawed-Off Shotgun

DEFYING JOSEPH MCCARTHY'S COMMUNIST BLACKLIST

In April of 1953, Jimmy returned to NBC to film another episode for the hit series, *Treasury Men in Action,* based on a true story from the files of the U.S. Customs and Treasury Departments. Ironically, he'd be working with a blacklisted director, Donald Pressman, and he'd make a friend, Ben Gazzara, who would later emerge as a rival for procurement of the same roles.

Jimmy's rival: young Ben Gazzara

Jimmy was cast in the teleplay as a hoodlum, Arbie Feris, a name he hated. "It sounds like a fag," he told its writer, Albert Aley. Arbie, recently released from reform school, is plotting a career as a gangster.

Gazzara was cast as "the good boy" trying to persuade Jimmy to be a "clean-cutter," and urging him to attend meetings of the local Boys' Club to learn about decent living and honor.

A native of Tiblisi, Georgia, then part of the Soviet Union, Pressman had arrived in the United States with his family when he was nine years old. His parents were musicians formerly associated with the Russian Grand Opera Company.

Pressman's left-wing politics fascinated Jimmy. Pressman told him that he'd joined the communist Party in the 1930s, based on its alleged support of integration, civil rights, and socialized medicine. During World War II, he served as a solider in the U.S. Army, during which time he'd won two Purple Hearts.

After the war, he'd studied acting in Manhattan with Sanford Meisner, and later became an acting coach himself, teaching such students as Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, and Eli Wallach.

Pressman became one of the first major directors associated with the emerging medium of television. At Studio One in Hollywood, he'd directed Grace Kelly in Molnar's *The Swan* for television. She would later appear in the same role on the big screen, opposite Louis Jourdan, Jimmy's upcoming co-star in the Broadway play, *The Immoralist.*

Right after helming Gazzara and Jimmy, based on his having been blacklisted, Pressman would be banned from television. He would return later to direct such "unknowns" as Al Pacino.

Based on the script of *Sawed-Off Shotgun,* Jimmy, cast as Arbie, steals a gun from a bootlegger, Blackie Bowman (Joseph Downing). In a failed robbery attempt at a filling station, he leaves the gun behind, giving Federal agents the clue they needed to track him down. Blackie plans to kill Jimmy, but he's arrested and sent to prison. Arbie gets off with probation.

Jimmy enjoyed working with Downing, a New Yorker who had appeared in major Hollywood gangster movies that included *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), a James Cagney film, and *Johnny Eager* (1941), starring Robert Taylor and Lana Turner.

"I never got around to fucking Lana," Jimmy claimed, "but I met her in Hollywood."

"I didn't screw her either," Downing said. "But Taylor sure did, although I heard he preferred men."

At the time Jimmy started hanging out with Gazzara, he was working as an elevator operator in *The New York Times* building.

Jimmy was intrigued with Gazzara, rightly assuming he might emerge as future competition for acting roles. The Italian American had grown up in the Kips Bay neighborhood of Manhattan. "I was a street kid," he told Jimmy. "My love of acting saved me from a life of crime."

Jimmy never really became Gazzara's friend, but he tricked him into thinking he was. He would later tell Shelley Winters, "What was really going on in our relationship—strictly non-sexual—was my sizing up tomorrow's

competition. The word is out that Gazzara is 'the next Marlon Brando.'"

"To hell with that," Winters said. "This year alone, I've met at least a dozen actors who have been called 'the next Marlon Brando.' I'm tired of hearing that. I know Marlon. He's fucked me. You had better develop your own style, your own technique. There's only one Stanley Kowalski. When Tennessee wrote *A Streetcar Named Desire,* he pictured Stanley as having a big dick. Marlon doesn't. But on stage, he acted like he had a big dick, and for an actor, it's illusion that counts."

End as a Man

JIMMY VS. BEN GAZZARA (AKA "JOCKO")

Within a month of working in a teleplay with Ben Gazzara, Jimmy would end up on the stage with him in May at an Actors Studio production that was staged at the Theater de Lys on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village.

End as a Man, with its homosexual undertones, was a play based on Calder Willingham's shocking novel about the brutality of life in a Southern military academy. The lead role of "Jocko de Paris" would be brilliantly portrayed by Gazarra. Its director was Jack Garfein, who would marry Carroll Baker, later to co-star with Jimmy in *Giant.*

In its search for "angels" (financial backers), three in-house performances were staged during May and June of 1953.

Ben Gazzara playing a sadistic military cadet (Jocko) in a homoerotic scene from Calder Willingham's *End as a Man (aka The Strange One)*

In addition to Gazzara, three actors in the play would go on to become famous: Pat Hingle, Anthony Franciosa, and Albert Salmi.

Jimmy had wanted to play Jocko, but Garfein thought that Gazzara would be better-suited for the role. In the play, Jimmy's part "practically amounted to shit" *[his words]*. He appeared in the third act as a cadet officer at a court trial, wearing a dress military uniform with gold braid and a red sash. "I was just window dressing," he said. "Gazzara ate up the scenery with his sadistic Jocko. I was just this prissy little cadet wearing a butt plug."

Born in what used to be Czechoslovakia in 1930, Garfein was a survivor of Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp, a horrifying venue liberated by the Allied armies in 1945.

"I loved Jimmy," Garfein later recalled, "and we were close for a while. But he didn't always have the best manners. One night in Hollywood, I was dining with him when Hedda Hopper walked in. He just got up and left our table and spent about an hour talking to this bitchy columnist, even though I knew he despised her. I just sat alone at our table nursing a drink and waiting for the wandering boy to return."

Willingham, originally linked to his birthplace in Atlanta, watched with trepidation as his play evolved upon the stage. He had spoken to Jimmy, expressing his insights and various interpretations of its lines, and describing his drama as an indictment of the macho culture of a military academy, which he deplored. With its hints of homosexuality, his writing would lead to a conflict with the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, which

unsuccessfully brought obscenity charges against the publisher, Vanguard Press, which had printed *End As a Man.*

After seeing the Actors Studio production of his play, Willingham hosted a party for the players at his apartment on West 28th Street. "Dean had an almost nothing role to play," the novelist recalled, "but at my party he—not Gazzara—was the star. Dean dominated the gathering. He told jokes. He did this hilarious impression of Marlon Brando. He even performed a dance he'd learned from Eartha Kitt. He leaped across the living room like Anna Pavlova. He slobbered. He farted. He goosed the girls and pinched Tony Franciosa's butt and asked him if he'd like to get fucked. He bit Pat Hingle's tit and grabbed Salmi's crotch. After releasing Salmi's balls, he announced, 'Now I know why Paul Newman likes this guy so much.'"

"He not only was the life of the party, but at the end of the evening, he made off with a potential angel, Claire Heller," Willingham said. "She was the daughter of a rich San Francisco banker. Or is banker and rich redundant?"

The cast saw Heller and Jimmy wander off into the night together, and every actor hoped she'd back the show, or else get her father to put up the money.

Since Jimmy's regular girlfriend at the time, Barbara Glenn, was away in the Catskills, he started seeing Heller on a regular basis. "They became an item that summer," according to Terry Parks, a waiter at Jerry's tavern. "Jimmy was either with John Kerr or with Heller when he came in."

When *End as a Man* went to Broadway, Pat Hingle was one of the stars at the Vanderbilt Theater. Later, on Broadway, he would star in the role of Gooper in the original Broadway production of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), which would cast Gazzara as Brick, the repressed homosexual married in the play to Barbara Bel Geddes, "Maggie the Cat."

Hingle said, "If Jimmy had been available, you know he would have convinced Tennessee to give him the role that went to Gazzara and later to Paul Newman in the movie with Elizabeth Taylor. She probably would have lobbied for Jimmy, too."

Carroll Baker remembered seeing Heller and Jimmy together on occasion during that summer, although they did not go out much. "From what I was told, they were happy to spend quiet evenings listening to classical music, often baroque. Claire told me that Jimmy liked the attention he got from girls, but pretended that it annoyed him. At parties, he preferred to sit in the corner with his bongo drums instead of mingling."

"Most of their affair seemed to have been conducted within her apartment at 45 Tudor City Place. He confided in her, and she was careful not to betray his trust. His attitude toward her was somewhat cavalier and at times almost rude. Claire, on the other hand, was refined, gentle, and understanding. More than anyone else, she understood the troubled rebel within him."

When they were seeing each other, as struggling actors, Gazzara had praise for Jimmy. "He was short but with presence." He later wrote, "He had movie star good looks, blonde hair, and blue eyes. What a combination! You didn't have to be an expert cameraman to know that Jimmy would photo graph well."

When *End as a Man* finally made it to Broadway, Jimmy was not available to appear in his minor role. He had just landed a key role in William Inge's teleplay, *Glory in the Flower,* and had to bow out.

In February of 1954, when the stars of the Broadway production of *End as a Man* went on strike for more money, Jimmy met secretly with Garfein. Perceiving that Garfein and his team might opt to break the strike by firing the existing cast and hiring an all-new one, he offered to take over Gazzara's role of Jocko. Jimmy was unhappy with his role of the Arab boy in *The Immoralist* and wanted to move on. The strike, however, was quickly settled, so his offer was never accepted.

Still imagining Jimmy as a friend, Gazzara soon learned of Jimmy's "behind-my-back betrayal."

His alleged betrayal of Gazzara escalated. Later, after Hollywood's major-league producer Sam Spiegel expressed interest in adapting the Broadway version of *End As a Man* into a film, Jimmy phoned him, saying, "I'd be far better in the role of Jocko than Gazzara."

Gazzara later said, "Garfein, also the film's director, stood behind me even though Jimmy at the time was a hot commodity. By the time *End as a Man* was filmed—retitled *The Strange One* (1957)—Jimmy was no longer around."

Gazzara later lobbied for the role of Rocky Graziano in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956), which had originally been intended for Jimmy. But he lost the role to Paul Newman. "Fuck Newman!" Gazzara responded in anger. "Too bad he wasn't in that Porsche with Dean."

Gazzara's dislike of Newman increased after he was awarded the film role of Brick in the film version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), a role that Gazzara had developed and performed so long and so successfully on Broadway.

"Did you know that Newman and Dean were faggots?" Gazzara sometimes asked anyone willing to listen. He

harbored a grudge against each of them throughout the rest of his life.

Despite his negative views, Lee Strasberg perhaps maintained a sympathetic place in his heart for Jimmy. In 1955, in the immediate aftermath of Jimmy's death, Gazzara encountered Strasberg at the Actors Studio, finding him crying.

Later, Gazzara reflected on his own failed friendship with Jimmy. "It was sad that his ambition and pride got in the way of our friendship. When I heard the news of his death, I could think only of the days we'd spent struggling to get any kind of job. James Dean had his fantastic moment in the sun."

The Evil Within

JIMMY AND THE MAD SCIENTIST

Only twice did Jimmy perform in teleplays for ABC. The first came when director Don Medford cast him in the hit TV series, *Tales of Tomorrow*, an anthology of science fiction dramas and tales of the supernatural.

Jimmy as an absent-minded, pencil-chewing lab assistant in *The Evil Within.*

Written by Manya Starr, *The Evil Within* starred Rod Steiger and Margaret Phillips. Ironically, Steiger had made his film debut in *Teresa* (1951), co-starring Pier Angeli, who would later become "the love of my life" *[Jimmy's words]*.

He had become friends with Steiger when—hoping for the lead role of Curly in *Oklahoma!*—he had auditioned with him. Whereas Steiger wound up in the cast, Jimmy did not.

When he was cast with Jimmy in the teleplay *The Evil Within,* Steiger was on the dawn of stardom. It came the following year (1954), when he was nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *On the Waterfront. [That same film would bring an Academy Award for Best Actor that year to Marlon Brando.]*

In *The Evil Within,* Steiger played an eccentric research scientist, who produces a serum that releases the evil that innately lies within the heart of a person. When the refrigerator in his laboratory breaks down, he brings his serum home and puts It in his own refrigerator, alongside his foodstuff.

His wife (Phillips) accidentally spills the serum onto her apple pie, and the evil side of her personality emerges. Inevitably, ferocious conflicts soon emerge with her husband, as played by Steiger.

Portraying Ralph, a laboratory assistant, Jimmy appears on screen for the first time wearing his glasses. He

doesn't have much to do in the role, except push back his spectacles or suck on his pencil.

At the wrap, Jimmy told Medford, "That Steiger can play any role, except maybe that of a female burlesque dancer."

He didn't live long enough to see how right his appraisal was. Versatile and volatile, Steiger was the centerpiece of a career that eventually encompassed portrayals of gangsters, police chiefs, a disturbed priest, a perhaps psychotic Army sergeant, a Mexican *bandito,* an embittered Jewish Holocaust survivor working as a pawnbroker, a ruthless Russian politician; and impersonations of Al Capone, Mussolini, and Napoléon.

Something for an Empty Briefcase

"A Sexually Ambiguous Jimmy"

Director Don Medford once again cast Jimmy as the lead in a teleplay, this one for a *Campbell Soundstage Production. Something for an Empty Briefcase* was aired on July 17, 1953.

Campbell's Soundstage Productions Presents...

Jimmy signed to play the young and foolish Joe Adams, a 22-year-old who has been released from prison on a charge of petty larceny. He asked Medford, "in a nutshell, what is this play about?"

"A dancer tries to save a two-bit crook from a life of crime," the director said. "She falls for a young punk, who is full of rage and passion."

"That's me, all right," Jimmy said, "but I don't like the title. Why not *Rage and Passion?"*

James Dean, playing an ex-con, with Susan Douglas, who falls in love with him after his failed attempt to mug her, in *Something for an Empty Briefcase*.

*"*Forget it!" Medford said.

He called all his actors to a rehearsal. They included Don Hanmer, Robert Middleton, and a Viennese, Susan

Douglas, whose original name was "Zuzka." Together, they read through the script by S. Lee Pegostin.

"Even on the first read-through, Dean was brilliant," Medford said. "I kept him behind after letting everyone else go. I told him, 'I want you to think what stimulated such a great performance from you so you'll be able to do it again when it really counts.' For him, every moment was for the first time. He didn't retain anything from one rehearsal to the next. I tried, but failed to improve his retention."

Interpreting the role of the ex-con, Jimmy carries an empty briefcase, which seems to him to be a symbol of the white collar job he'd like to find. He desperately needs money, but has only $1.37 to his name.

An old pal, Mickey (Hanmer) wants him to pull the proverbial "one last job" for the mob boss, Mr. Sloane (Middleton).

Joe (Jimmy) decides to rob Noli (Douglas), who has arrived in New York to study dancing, but after their first encounter, they develop a relationship "all gooey and romantic." At times, Jimmy speaks in his normal voice, but on occasion, he reverts to a Brando-esque mumble.

One reviewer noted that Jimmy portrayed his character as "sexually ambiguous in a black pullover and tight-fitting trousers, looking as if he would have a better chance of becoming a chorus boy."

Ohio-born Middleton, known for his booming voice, large size, and beetle-brow, was virtually type cast as the mob boss. Middleton told Jimmy, "If a director wants a mountain bully, a corrupt mob boss, or the leader of a lynch mob, he sends for cigar-chomping me."

After his appearance with Jimmy, Middleton would star opposite Humphrey Bogart in *The Desperate Hours* (1955), one of Bogie's last films. He would also co-star with Gary Cooper in *Friendly Persuasion* (1956), and with Elvis Presley in *Love Me Tender* (also 1956).

Variety found the plot "something that belonged to the Dead End Kids' school of literature. James Dean's mugger and repetitive hand gesturing were on the ludicrous side, if their intent was to show the sensitivity and groping of the suddenly awakened thief."

Jimmy was devastated by the negative appraisal of his acting techniques.

Sentence of Death

Betsy Palmer's "Asexual Lover"

As the summer of 1953 moved inexorably toward autumn, Jimmy was given a key role in *Sentence of Death,* an episode on CBS's *Westinghouse Studio One* summer theater series, to be aired on August 17. The director, Matt Harlib, cast Betsy Palmer and Gene Lyons as the other leads. Jimmy had met Lyons during that actor's torrid affair with Grace Kelly.

Lyons was in mourning over the loss of Grace. He told Jimmy that he'd fallen in love with her when they had co-starred together in a teleplay, *The Rich Boy,* based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

"My real life mirrored what the narrator of the teleplay said," he told Jimmy. "'From the beginning, they were in love with each other,' the narrator had said in its opening scene. "Just like Grace and me."

"In the play, our love turns sour, just as it did with Grace and me," Lyons said. "As the rich boy, I had a drinking

problem. Talk about type casting. At the end of the play, the boy and girl go their separate ways, as Grace and I did. Fiction repeats itself in real life."

At least during the teleplay, Lyons managed to control his drinking to get through the shoot. In Hollywood, Grace was beginning the most promiscuous period of her life, often in relations with big name movie stars.

The cinematic pairing of these two Hoosiers, James Dean and Betsy Palmer, in the 1953 television drama *Sentence of Death,* was noted in newspapers and entertainment columnists throughout Indiana.

"I didn't think Gene would ever recover from the loss of his blonde goddess," Jimmy said.

"I met her father," Lyons told Jimmy. "He's rich and thought I was shanty Irish. It's true that I was born into poverty in Pittsburgh. Somewhere along the way, my goal and Grace's goal changed. When we first met, both of us wanted to make it on the stage. But now, she's gone Hollywood. Her aim is to become a movie star, bigger than Elizabeth Taylor. Not only did the father not like me, but neither did Grace's mother, warning her never to marry an actor."

Actress Lee Grant had been Lyons' former lover. She voiced her opinion of what had gone wrong between Grace and Lyons: "He loves Old Bushmills. He was a really great, attractive Irishman, very complex and poetic. He loved saloons and his foot on the bar. He was wonderful company, and had an enormous talent. But it was the Irish whiskey that ruined his affair. He had a very quick slide down after Grace left him for the green, green pastures of Hollywood."

Jimmy told his co-star, Betsy Palmer, "I would like to have appeared in that teleplay with Grace. It could have been called *Fire and Ice.* By the end, I as Fire would have melted Ice."

"Stop it" Palmer said. "You're making me jealous. As a blonde, I can't compete with Grace Kelly, much less with Marilyn Monroe. And I want you for myself."

"If you mean that, you're on," he said. As they rehearsed *A Sentence of Death,* Jimmy began to date Palmer. His regular girlfriend, Barbara Glenn, was out of town.

Matt Harlib was a New Yorker, who had originally joined CBS as the first director of Arthur Godfrey's live radio show before switching to helming teleplays. He'd been told that Jimmy was a difficult actor to direct. "Bring him on," Harlib told the teleplay's producer, John Haggott.

Adrian Spies had written a script about a young man, Joe Palica, wrongly accused of murder, and then tried and sentenced to death. Harlib had nothing but praise for Jimmy's performance as the doomed young man headed for the electric chair. "Dean could combine both grief and fear on his face. He would utter a sob, take a quick intake of air to express his desperation, and stifle back tears. His fate was reflected in his eyes."

Palmer was cast as Ellen Morrison, the mink-clad "Dizzy Darling of the Tabloids," and noted for her promiscuity. As an outrageous flirt, she stumbles into a mom-and-pop drugstore to make a phone call and order a turkey sandwich. There, she witnesses the owner of the store (Fred Scollay) being shot. Mrs. Sawyer (Virginia Vincent) also witnesses the slaying of her husband, and Morrison gets a good look at the killer.

In a police lineup, the widow singles out Jimmy as the killer, but Palmer's character does not agree, claiming that the murderer was tall and dark.

Later, after Jimmy is sentenced to death, Palmer is sitting in a bar when she spots the real killer. Lyons was cast as the sympathetic policeman, Paul Cochran, who believes Palmer and works to free Jimmy from the electric chair. Eventually, the killer is apprehended. He turns out to be the lover of the widow, who wanted her husband killed. In

the aftermath, the innocent man is set free.

During and after the teleplay's filming, Jimmy began spending his nights in Palmer's apartment, where he got to know her. A fellow Hoosier, she was five years older, the daughter of a chemist who had emigrated from Czechoslovakia. She had gotten her first acting job in New York in 1951 and had become a lifetime member of Actors Studio.

By 1958, she'd become a household name when she replaced Faye Emerson as a panelist on the quiz show, *I've Got a Secret,* remaining as a player with the show until its finale in 1967.

"In my little kitchen, I cooked budget meals for James," she said. "I used his real name, as I didn't like nicknames. We didn't have much money, so we had a lot of meatless pasta that summer. Our dating consisted mostly of strolling the streets and occasionally taking in a movie. We had sex but often, we didn't. On most nights, we sat and talked or else listened to music, perhaps both. I began to think James was asexual."

"Walking down the street with him was an adventure in itself," she said. "Suddenly, he might defy death by jumping in front of a car, causing the driver to panic and slam on the brakes."

"He told me he had once been a bullfighter in Mexico and that he was used to defying death," she said. "I was horrified at such reckless behavior. Even if he weren't killed, he might have been crippled for life."

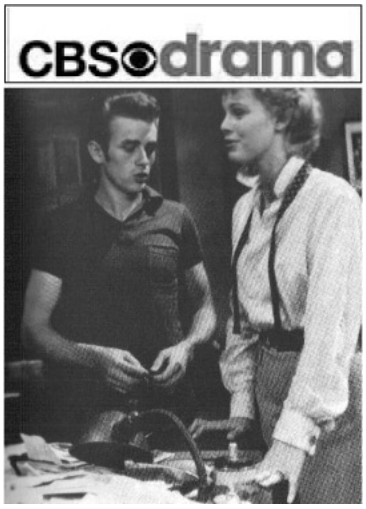
"To me, James was the little boy lost," she said. "The lamb who strayed from the flock. He didn't really know where he was going, but wanted to get there fast. He was like a comet shooting across the sky. I wanted to tell him to slow down, because at the pace he was going, he would drop before he reached the finish line."

Death Is My Neighbor

THE PSYCHO JANITOR AND THE BEAUTIFUL COVER GIRL

For an August 25 telecast, Jimmy once again returned to *The Hangar* TV series on CBS, this time to star in a script by Frank Gregory, *Death is My Neighbor.* Director John Preyser reunited with his girlfriend, Betsy Palmer.

The star of the drama was one of America's most distinguished actors, Walter Hampden. Born in Brooklyn in 1879, he was especially well-noted for his portrayals of famous Shakespearean characters such as Richard III, Shylock, or Macbeth. He was even more famously associated with his starring role as Cyrano de Bergerac.



Jimmy paired once again, this time as a psychotic janitor, with his friend, Betsy Palmer, a fashion model, in the CBS telecast of *Death is My Neighbor.*

Jimmy had seen him in only one movie, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939), in which he'd been cast as the good Archbishop of Paris, with hideously grotesque Charles Laughton as the deformed Quasimodo.

When Jimmy met Hampden, he was preparing to fly to Hollywood for the filming of *Sabrina* (1954), with

Humphrey Bogart, William Holden, and Audrey Hepburn.

Had Jimmy gone to Hollywood to star in *The Silver Chalice* (1954), he would have worked with Hampden in his role as Joseph of Arimathea. When he turned down that role in the film, it went to Paul Newman.

Producer Franklin Heller recalled how, at the first read-through, Jimmy had thrown the script on the floor, denouncing it as "a piece of shit."

"I threatened to fire him," Heller said, "and would have had not Hampden intervened and pleaded with me to keep the little punk on."

"I've seen this young man on television before, and he's very talented," Hampden had said. "As a matter of fact, I think he's going to be a big star. Let him play the part, I beg you. I'll work with him."

Heller complied with Hampden's request.

"I'd been told that Jimmy treated his directors like real assholes," Peyser said. "But I hadn't met an actor I couldn't handle, and that includes Rod Steiger. I took Jimmy on. He challenged me time and time again, but I showed him I was boss. The result was terrific."

Peyser said that Hampden was getting old, and he would either flub his lines, or forget them completely. "I asked Jimmy to be kind and to help him out. He heard my appeal and quit mumbling and spoke lines clearly enough for Hampden to hear them."

In Hampden's big scene, he summoned all his juices, including tears coming down his cheeks—and this was only a rehearsal," Peyser said. "But the old guy impressed Dean because he was giving so much. After that, Dean was most courteous to Hampden, bringing him coffee, even finding a chair for him to sit on and rest between takes."

"At the end of the shoot, Hampden even invited Dean and his girlfriend, Betsy, to the Players Club, of which he had been president for twenty-seven years."

"When I saw the final show, I was impressed with Dean's work in this routine meller *[melodrama],"* Peyser said. "Dean was magnetic."

"A lot of viewers thought Dean was inspired by Brando's performance as Stanley Kowalski," Peyser said. "To some extent, that was true. But Dean made the role his own."

"To be a fine actor," Peyser had told Jimmy, "you must remember two things: Concentration and unlimited imagination. With those, there is no limit as to what you can do."

Palmer weighed in with her opinion. "I think Jimmy has intense concentration, but that's because he's nearsighted."

In *Death Is My Neighbor,* Jimmy was cast as "JB," a psychotic young janitor who is replacing an aging caretaker (Hampden), who is about to be fired.

A glamorous model and cover girl, Netta (as portrayed by Jimmy's on-again, off-again girlfriend Betsy Palmer) moves in, attracting Jimmy's lustful eye. She rejects his advances. Thwarted and vengeful, he plots her murder, with the intention of blaming it on Hampden.

In jeans and bare-armed, in a form-fitting polo shirt, Jimmy made one sexy janitor. In one scene, he dances "crotch-to-crotch" with Palmer. He later told Peyser, "Betsy gave me a hard-on."

"Save it until you get back to her apartment," Peyser said. "It's television, for god's sake."

Eventually, the police learn of JB's plot. They arrest him and he's entrapped into a confession before he is sent blubbering off to prison.

A player in television during its infancy, Peyser would go on to become one of the medium's greatest directors, helming such series as *The Untouchables, Bonanza, Perry Mason,* and *Hawaii-5-0.*

"Although James could pull himself together, he was basically a slob," Palmer claimed. "I don't mean he was dirty, but he often wore dirty clothes. He would take a bath before going on camera, however. Mostly, his hair was unkempt, his scalp flaked with dandruff. "

"He cut his own hair," she said, "calling it 'The Jim Trim.' Young actors would spend their last dollar going to the barber, ever ready for a casting call. James preferred to be his own hairdresser. That meant short on the sides, a full head of top hair combed back. Of course, it was mandatory to wear his jacket, a white T-shirt, jeans, and lots of attitude."

On movie dates, Palmer noted that Jimmy had a unique way of giving a review. Such was the case when they went to see *Lone Star,* starring Clark Gable and Ava Gardner. Later, at Jerry's Tavern, Jimmy gave his review of Gable's performance. "He's a real hot shoe. When you ride, you wear a steel shoe that goes over the bottom of your boot. When you round a corner, you put that foot out on the ground. When you can really ride, you're called a hot shoe. Gable rides like crazy."

"I was too polite to ask him what in hell he was talking about," Palmer said.

"By the autumn after our last teleplay, we sort of drifted apart," Palmer said. "A man entered my life, Dr. Vincent Merendino, and I fell in love with him and got married. We had a daughter. Once or twice, I tried to get in touch with James, but could never contact him. I never saw him again, but had relatively fond memories of our brief summer romance."

Jimmy vs. John ("I Don't Want to Be Gay") Kerr

Their Casting Together in "True Crime: Rex Newman"

Once again, those two lovers, John Kerr and James Dean, were cast together in *Rex Newman,* an episode that aired on September 11, 1953 within NBC's *The Big Story* TV series. Once a week, it dramatized true crime adventures that had been solved by dogged newspaper reporters. In this case the real-life drama described in the teleplay had been exposed by *The Globe and the News,* published in Joplin, Missouri.

Jimmy was more convincing that Kerr in *Rex Newman.* It was hard to believe that Kerr, with his clean-cut all-American look, was a cold-blooded killer.

In this episode, Jimmy and Kerry were exposed as part of a bungled robbery and murder, with Wendy Drew playing Jimmy's love interest. It was written by Alvin Boretz and directed by Stuart Rosenberg, with narration by Bob Sloane. Although Jimmy tangled with Rosenberg on at least three occasions, the director ended up with great respect for his talent.

"If Jimmy had lived and continued to mature as an actor, I would have cast in in a future film I directed," Rosenberg claimed.

A still shot from NBC-TV's *Rex Newman,* starring doomed lovers, James Dean and Wendy Drew.

No doubt, he was referring to the 1967 release of *Cool Hand Luke,* which starred Paul Newman in the tale of an incorrigible Southern bad boy who is arrested for a dumb crime and sent to a brutal prison work camp where he defies authority from his sadistic redneck jailers. "Paul did a great job, and the public for the most part agreed, but Jimmy might have brought even greater depth to it, enough to at least be nominated for an Oscar," Rosenberg said.

After he'd completed its filming, Jimmy in the months ahead hardly remembered what was going on before the cameras. To him, the drama he and Kerr engaged in was more daunting.

"Perhaps sensing what a rival Kerr would be in the future, Jimmy tried to dominate the boy," said his friend, Stanley Haggart. "Those two lovers used my rear garden apartment frequently during the summer of 1953. As their

affair played out. I sensed that Kerr liked the gay sex, but didn't want to be inducted into a world of homosexuals. After all, he had recently married. I think he saw himself as a family man with children. At least that is what I surmised when I read his handwriting, of which I'm supposed to be an expert. Actually, I'm not."

Jimmy later revealed to Haggart what happened during the weekend in September when Kerr's sexual involvement with Jimmy came to an abrupt end.

Haggart had arranged for them to make use of a small cottage owned by a friend of his, William Hunt, who often used it for gay beach parties. The summer crowds had already departed when Kerr and Jimmy arrived for their weekend on Long Island at Montauk Point.

As Jimmy remembered it, "It rained Friday night, all day Saturday and into Sunday morning."

Jimmy had hoped that the weekend would provide him with more time to get to know Kerr better. So far, most of their encounters had been brief, with little time to talk after the sex act was completed. The disruption began when Kerr was performing fellatio on Jimmy, as he had done several times before. But that time on Long Island was different, as Jimmy would later relay to Haggart.

Up to that point, Kerr would let Jimmy climax in his mouth, and would then spit out his semen. Jimmy had protested Kerr's refusal to swallow "my love offering. I want my seed in your belly as a token of your love for me."

"But I don't like the sticky god damn stuff in my mouth, much less in my stomach," Kerr always complained. "I don't like the taste of it."

Out in that summer cottage, after he exploded in a climax, Jimmy took charge. He kept his penis in Kerr's mouth, virtually choking him until he swallowed.

"God damn you!" Kerr said when Jimmy finally withdrew from his mouth. "You forced me to swallow."

"If you loved me, you'd take it like a man," Jimmy said.

Kerr disappeared into the bathroom, where Jimmy heard him trying to vomit. He reappeared after a shower, and retreated into the bedroom. Then he emerged fully dressed with his suitcase packed.

"You going somewhere?" Jimmy asked.

"This is our last time together," Kerr said.

"But the fun's only begun," Jimmy protested.

"For me, it's over," Kerr answered. "I admit that most actors, including myself, are a little bit homosexual, some a whole lot. I welcomed the experience with you, my 'induction,' so to speak. I think it'll make me a better actor."

"So what's your damn problem?" Jimmy asked.

"I've decided that the homosexual lifestyle is not for me," Kerr said. "I want to return to the straight world, where I fit in better."

"But there's a side of you that's gay," Jimmy said.

[By the time of this encounter, the word "gay," as a synonym for homosexual had already come into general usage.]

"I admit that, and I enjoyed our sex, especially when you let me fuck you. It's so different being with a man from being with a woman. But my times with you make me suffer guilt and question my manhood. I don't like what I'm doing with you. It's not fair to the woman I married."

"Okay, babe, if that's your wish," Jimmy said. "I won't force you. But it's too late to return to the city tonight. I'll drive you back in the morning. There's only one bedroom. It's mine. You can sleep on the sofa."

Jimmy then put on his jacket. "There's a bar about three miles from here where I understand the pickings are real good. I'm sure I'll be returning later tonight with someone. I hope we don't keep you awake."

"Do as you please," Kerr said, heading for the kitchen. "I need a drink."

Three hours later, as Jimmy had predicted, he returned with a young man. They retreated together to the bedroom, as Kerr lay awake, alone on the sofa, listening to the sounds of their love-making.

Jimmy kept his promise to return with Kerr to the city the next morning. Both men were in a bad mood. The trip back to Manhattan was in silence.

Kerr got out of Jimmy's car in front of his apartment building and disappeared inside.

There was no goodbye.

***

During the months to come, Kerr became one of Jimmy's main rivals for choice roles that eluded Jimmy and went to his discarded lover. Originally, Jimmy had tried to get in touch with Mary Chase, author of *Harvey,* a play

that had been adapted into popular movie, released in 1950, starring James Stewart, whose companion was a six-foot invisible rabbit. Her latest play, *Bernardine* (1952), had a role that Jimmy thought would be ideal for him, even though he had only heard about the play and not actually read its script.

At the time, he was seeing a great deal of the lyricist, Marshall Barer, who had been a visitor to Rogers Brackett's Manhattan apartment during the period when Jimmy lived there. Barer would later end up on the list of Dean's "Lovers, Flings, or Just Friends?" in Mart Martin's book, published in 2000, *Did He or Didn't He?*

"I'm going to meet Chase and get her to cast me as the lead in *Bernardine,*" Jimmy told Barer. "I'm sure I can convince her to change the title from *Bernardine* to *Jimmydine."* Regrettably, he was unable to reach her on the phone, since she'd left for a vacation in Colorado.

By the time Chase returned, the producers had assigned the lead in her play to John Kerr. That would mark that actor's debut on Broadway, his appearance winning him a Theater World award.

Around the same time, Jimmy had also wanted to appear on Broadway in Robert Anderson's *Tea and Sympathy,* a 1953 drama about a sensitive student accused of being gay. But it was decided that Jimmy was too strong for the role, which went to Kerr instead.

Kerr's stage performance won him a Tony as Best Supporting Stage Actor of the year. *[Jimmy had been in the running for that award, too, but failed to receive a nomination for his performance as an Arab boy in* The Immoralist.*]*

When *Tea and Sympathy* was adapted into a film in 1956, Kerr played the same character he had interpreted in the play, this time opposite Deborah Kerr (no relation). Of course, Jimmy was already dead by then.

Jimmy's competition with Kerr continued in Hollywood, when Vincente Minnelli wanted him for the 1955 film, *The Cobweb.* That role, too, went to Kerr.

Some executives thought Kerr might play the lead in *Rebel Without a Cause,* but Jimmy was the favorite. For a while, Kerr was considered for the role of Jet Rink's adversary in *Giant,* but that role went to Dennis Hopper.

Ironically, at the time of his death, Jimmy had agreed to star in a theatrical revival of Emlyn Williams' play, *The Corn Is Green,* which had been a successful movie starring Bette Davis in 1945, based on an original Broadway play that had first been presented in 1940. The role went to Kerr instead.

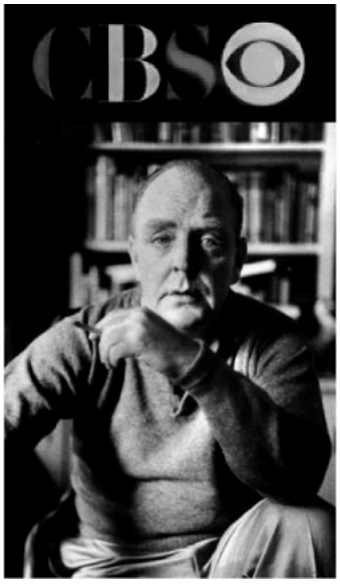
Kerr did appear in the 1958 film adaptation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein production of *South Pacific.* His singing voice was unconvincingly dubbed, and his career waned after that.

In 1970, he passed the California Bar and became a full-time Beverly Hills lawyer, drawing heavily upon his history as a handsome film star to attract business.

Glory in the Flower

Down and Dirty on the Casting Couch with William Inge

Omnibus, sponsored and broadcast through CBS, became the longest running cultural series in the history of commercial television. It ran without advertising breaks and focused on the production of TV entertainment based on material from critically acclaimed writers, among them William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, James Thurber, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and T.S. Eliot. To that august list could be added William Inge, then one of the hottest playwrights in the county.



William Inge, author of *Glory in the Flower.*

Kansas-born, Inge was known as “the playwright of the Middle West,” a region from which Jimmy himself had emerged.

He became noted for his portraits of small-town life in the American heartland, with predicaments centered around solitary protagonists encumbered with strained sexual relationships.

Specifically written for television, *Glory in the Flower* was set in a seedy roadhouse in the Middle West, where rowdy teenagers hung out. Through some connection, Jimmy managed to obtain a copy of the script, with the understanding that television premier was scheduled for October 4, 1953. Most of the cast had already been selected by director Andrew McCullough, and a prestigious one it was, starlighted by Jessica Tandy, who had scored huge recent success as Blanche DuBois in the original Broadway version of Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire,* also starring Marlon Brando.

In *Glory to the Flower,* she was cast as Jackie, a school teacher in her 40s. During her own school days, she had “thrown herself” at Bus Riley, the best-looking guy in her class. Years later, when Bus (Ed Binns) returns to town, he’s not the man he was. He has turned into a lewd, womanizing troublemaker, and her illusions about him are shattered.

Jessica Tandy...shattered illusions.

Tandy’s real-life husband, the Canadian actor, Hume Cronyn, was cast as a philosophical bartender uttering such lines as, “Maybe we make it too tough for today’s teens. Maybe they’re afraid.”

The role of Bronco Evans was still up for grabs, and Jimmy wanted it. He was seeing Tennessee Williams at the

time, and he went to him for advice. Jimmy had already met Inge at a New Years' Party hosted by David Swift and his wife, the actress, Maggie McNamara. Inge had phoned him twice, but Jimmy hadn't returned the call until he heard about the new teleplay.

Actually, he admitted to Stanley Haggart, "I'm really pissed that Inge didn't use his influence to get me a role in his big hit, *Picnic.*"

Produced that same year, Picnic's lead role of a drifter had gone to Ralph Meeker who played a stud who sets women's hearts aflutter. Another role in *Picnic* that Jimmy might have played was that of Meeker's small-town friend. That role was awarded instead to Jimmy's rival, Paul Newman.

Meeting in Tennessee's New York apartment, the playwright assured Jimmy, "You are Inge's type. He goes for corn-fed farm boys from the Middle West, especially if they're as good-looking and well-built as you are. You can get the role if you don't mind taking off those jeans and dropping those jockey shorts, as you've already done on a number of occasions with yours truly, this slightly decadent Southern playwright who waited too late in life to start having sex and is desperately trying to make up for my oversight at this late date."

Tennessee telephoned Inge on Jimmy's behalf, and an appointment was set up for the following evening.

Unlike his usual lateness, Jimmy showed up on time for a drink with this former teacher of drama and English. Inge sensed a nervousness in him, and gave him a vodka and tried to bond with him through a discussion of their Midwestern roots.

"The town Kansas where I grew up, Independence, was a lovely old place with shade trees and large Victorian houses along Main Street. It had a river that ran through. There was an old wives' tale that the Indians had left a curse on the river when they were driven out. Many people were drowned in that river, the revenge of the Indians, or so legend has it."

The alcohol put Jimmy at ease, and he read some of Bronco's scenes for Inge, who was very impressed, feeling that the young actor had captured the spirit of a character who liked to jitterbug to the sound of Bill Hayley and the Comets singing "Crazy Man, Crazy" on the jukebox. Bronco was in trouble with the police, who had caught him with pot.

After his reading, Inge told him, "You have the sex appeal of Bronco, and you also captured his wild, rebellious nature. Forgive me, but I'm considering writing in a scene where Bronco appears shirtless. Do you mind removing your shirt so I can see how you'll look half-naked on stage?"

"Not at all," Jimmy replied. Tennessee had warned him that Inge would be a bit shy about requesting what he really wanted, and that Jimmy would have to be the aggressor.

"Bill will want to give you a blow-job—nothing else," Tennessee said.

Jimmy slowly removed his T-shirt in front of Inge's admiring gaze. But he did more than that. He also unzipped his jeans and took them off, reserving his jockey shorts for a finale. When he finally dropped his underwear onto the carpet, he moved toward Inge, who was on the sofa and "eager to worship at my shrine," as Jimmy described it to Tennessee later at a dinner party at Stanley Haggart's apartment.

As Jimmy boasted, "Inge's mouth was watering. By the time I'd finished with him, or rather, he finished me off, I knew I was Bronco."

He stayed on and talked to Inge until around midnight. Inge held out the possibility that he might write big screen roles that would have a character that Jimmy could play.

Warren Beatty would emerge in the playwright's future, and Inge's crush on Jimmy would eventually be transferred as a virtual obsession onto Beatty, who would star in his 1959 play, *A Loss of Roses,* as well as in film roles— *Splendor in the Grass* (1961) with Natalie Wood*,* and *All Fall Down* (1962) with Eva Marie Saint—that made Beatty a star.

Warren Beatty, later the object of Bill Inge's obsessive affection, with Natalie Wood in Inge's *Splendor in the Grass.*

Inge later revealed that he wished Jimmy had lived to play the male lead in the film version (1956) of *Bus Stop,* starring Marilyn Monroe. The key role of the redneck cowboy went to Don Murray instead.

Before Jimmy left the apartment, the playwright had gotten very drunk. He told Jimmy, "People do not approve of the way I live my life, but they sometimes applaud my work. I'll keep writing for public exposure while keeping my private life very private. But commercial success does not bring happiness. The only thing that can do that is love, which has never come my way."

The next day, Inge lunched with the director of *Glory in the Flower,* Andrew McCullough, and almost demanded that he cast Jimmy in the role of Bronco.

"I knew what was up, and that Jimmy had put out," McCullough claimed. "The old casting couch routine. When I met with Dean, I found he had an awful attitude—very snotty, very arrogant. As he started to read his lines, he put his feet up on a table, pulled out this very dangerous looking knife, and stabbed it into the table. I guess he was trying to send a signal to me not to reject him for the role of Bronco—or else curtains for me."

On the first day of rehearsals, Jimmy met his fellow actors. The one he pursued most aggressively was Jessica Tandy. He had not seen any of her performances as Blanche DuBois on Broadway, but her interpretation of that role had become something of a legend, even though it was later overshadowed by Vivien Leigh's Oscar-winning portrayal of that character on the screen. Brando, of course, had starred as Stanley Kowalski in both the original stage version and in its later screen adaptation.

Jimmy knew little about Tandy before meeting her. The London born-and-bred actress had already appeared on various stages with such luminaries as Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud. She had been married to actor Jack Hawkins, but divorced him and later married Hume Cronyn, who was also in the cast of *Glory in the Flower.* In time, Tandy would go on to appear in some 100 stage productions and some 60 feature films.

What Jimmy really wanted to hear from her was a rundown of her experiences of working with Brando in *Streetcar.*

"Tennessee fell in love with Brando and sacrificed my role of Blanche from its original script," Tandy charged, "and beefed up Brando's part instead of mine—even though Brando said that he always detested the role of the brutish Stanley Kowalski. I came to hate Brando."

That was music to Jimmy's ears.

Tandy told him a story about the brutality of Elia Kazan as a director that he feared she had exaggerated beyond belief. He would remember it vividly when Kazan directed him in *East of Eden.*

"Kazan thought I was too strong to play a delicate moth like Blanche," Tandy said. "He decided to break my spirit, and he did it in the most humiliating way, the worst experience I've ever had in the theater. He had one of the stagehands tie me up. Then he called in other actors like Karl Malden to attack me as a woman. You know—my 'small tits, my pus-laden vagina, and even my cunty smell,' in their hideous words. Of course, I was reduced first to tears, and then to hysteria. Then, for Kazan's *coup de grâce,* he summoned Brando for my utter humiliation. He whipped out his penis and urinated on me."

Jimmy listened to this with stunned disbelief.

"Brando detested me, and the feeling was mutual," Tandy claimed. "In out-of-town tryouts, I never knew how he'd play Kowalski. One night, he acted the role like some campy homosexual queen. One night in the middle of a performance, he stormed off the stage, shouting, 'My God, how can I play opposite this bitch? She thinks she's Ophelia.' In all, I think Brando is a selfish, psychotic bastard. There was no sexual magnetism between us on stage the way there was between Vivien and Brando in the movie."

In their television performance together of *Glory in the Flower,* Jimmy's most memorable scene with Tandy began when he forced his attentions onto her. "Dance with a real cat!" he yells at her. "Hey, this is the atomic age, man!"

Grabbing her, he whirls her away and after a step or two, she trips and goes sprawling onto the floor. Jimmy is horrified, protesting, "It's not my fault. After all, I didn't do it on purpose. You don't have to blame me." Later, he moans at the door to the men's room, "Everybody blames me!"

Jimmy "pissed off" Cronyn, Tandy's husband, who was portraying the bartender. The antagonism began when Jimmy asked him, "What is it like being married to a woman with far more talent than yourself?"

"Those are fighting words," Cronyn said. "Need I remind you, punk, that I was a member of the 1932 Olympic

boxing team?"

"Oh, yeah," Jimmy said. "Listen old man. I was shitting my diapers that year."

"Dean was completely unprofessional in every way," Cronyn said. "At one point, I was supposed to search his pants to remove a bottle of whiskey, since he was too young to drink on my premises. A bottle was supposed to be in his hip pocket. I searched, finding nothing, although I virtually had to feel him up. There was one place I hadn't touched, and that was his crotch. Of course, that's where the bottle of whiskey was resting, bulging out from his pants like some monstrous erection."

Hume Cronyn with Jessica Tandy. Did she really suffer through Marlon Brando's "golden shower?"

Ed Binns, an actor from Philadelphia, had been cast as Bus Riley, the male lead. He would be a star of film, stage, and television, his career spanning four decades. In his most famous production, *Twelve Angry Men* (1957), he'd been directed by Sidney Lumet, who had previously helmed Jimmy in a teleplay. Binns would go on to star in such films as a police detective in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), starring Cary Grant.

At one point in the drama, Bronco tangles with Bus (Binns), who grabs Jimmy by the shirt and threatens him, calling him "a little goon" and slapping Jimmy's face. Then, after Jimmy denounces Bus as phony, Bus knocks him down. From his position sprawled out on the floor, Jimmy cries out, defiantly, *"No one's gonna tell me what to do!"* The bartender then orders that Jimmy be forcibly removed from the tavern.

Cast as a visiting salesman, Frank McHugh didn't know what to make of Jimmy. The veteran actor represented Old Hollywood. "What was this Method acting shit?" he asked. "To me, acting was how to make a living. I came from a theatrical family in Pennsylvania. My folks never heard of acting technique. They just got out there before the headlights and strutted their stuff."

McHugh had gone to Hollywood as a contract player in 1930 at the dawn of the Talkies. He was used mostly for comic relief, and became the best friend of James Cagney, performing in nearly a dozen of his films.

"I worked with the biggies," McHugh told Jimmy. "Bing Crosby, Gene Kelly. Usually, I was a sidekick."

"I told Dean I was heading to Hollywood to appear with Marilyn Monroe in *There's No Business Like Show Business,* and he said 'I plan to fuck her.' I was surprised that he wanted to make it with a woman. Everybody in the cast told me that he was a homosexual."

The reviews of *Glory in the Flower* were bad and particularly devastating to Inge. *Variety* was fairly kind, however, claiming that the play "made for a high class, varied hour-and-half of entertainment, with just an occasional bit of pretentiousness or archness creeping in."

McCullough would survive directing Jimmy and would work with him again in the future. "He had a real talent, even holding his own against the formidable Miss Tandy. When not acting, he was often sullen and contemptuous of the young gals who buzzed around him, finding him sexy. I told him he'd be ideal for the movies since he did not have one single bad angle, unlike many film stars. I'd never worked with an actor who had such magnetism."

In many ways, the role of Bronco Evans in the teleplay was a rehearsal for Jimmy's part of the disaffected anti-hero, Jim Stark, in *Rebel Without a Cause.*

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The telescript for *Glory in the Flower* was later rewritten considerably and turned into a screenplay for a

feature film entitled *Bus Riley's Back in Town* (1965), starring Michael Parks and Ann-Margret. Inge was very unhappy with the final result. He asked that his name be removed, and that future writing credits be attributed to a pseudonym, "Walter Gage."

On June 10, 1973, a bulletin came over television sets that the celebrated playwright, Bill Inge, author of *Come Back, Little Sheba, Picnic,* and *Bus Stop* had committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning. He was sixty years old.

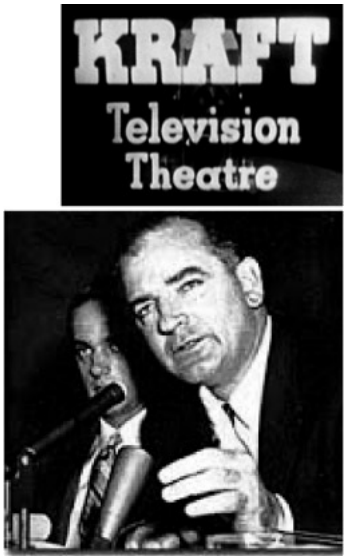
He last plays had attracted little notice or critical attention, and he'd fallen into a deep depression, convinced that he would never be able to write well again.

Years later, Inge's teleplay, *Glory in the Flowe*r, was revived and presented in Toronto, where it did not fare well in the view of critic Kelly Kleiman: "This work should have been left to its obscurity. The characters are familiar—beaten-down salesmen, fighters who were never contenders, small town folks with pipe dreams, fraudulent big shots, disillusioned lovers. The title comes from the same line of Wordsworth that provided the name of *Spendor in the Grass*—perhaps Inge never read another poem."

Keep Our Honor Bright

JIMMY HELPS SATIRIZE THE MCCARTHY HEARINGS

On October 14, 1953, NBC broadcast *Keep Our Honor Bright* for *The Kraft Television Theater*. Critics claimed that it was inspired by the communist witch hunt hearings led by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.



Roy Cohn (*left)*, with Joe McCarthy...on a communist witch hunt.

The comparison of a college student facing expulsion for cheating with the Senate hearings was a bit farfetched. At around the same time, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible,* produced on Broadway in 1953, put the exposé of the Senate hearings into better in focus.

Keep Your Honor Bright was written by George Roy Hill, a TV writer and actor before he became more famous as a director, helming Paul Newman and Robert Redford in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and again in *The Sting* (1973), for which he won a Best Director Oscar. Hill not only wrote *Keep Our Honor Bright,* but appeared in it as a news broadcaster.

The teleplay was both produced and directed by Maury Holland, a regular who often labored in both of those functions on various episodes of *The Kraft Television Theater.* A native of Louisiana, Holland was a former vaudevillian and Broadway actor.

Hill liked Jimmy enough to take him flying in his private plane. He'd obtained his pilot's license at the age of

sixteen. On Jimmy's first time up, Hill decided to play a practical joke on him, steering his plane into a simulated nose-dive, yelling and screaming that they were plunging to their deaths. How Jimmy handled this fake emergency is not known. Did he go into a panic or did he face death with bravery?

During World War II, Hill had been a cargo pilot in the South Pacific and was very skilled. During the filming of the *Butch Cassidy* film, Newman was also subjected to Hill's "nose dive."

"If you showed up late for a shot, he would teach you a lesson," Newman said. "He'd take you up in that not trustworthy plane of his and scare the be-jesus out of you."

In the plot, Jimmy was cast as Jim Cooper, who, as a senior at the university, is caught cheating on his final exams. In retribution, he is summoned before a kangaroo court of fraternity brothers.

In the script, Jimmy readily admits his guilt, claiming, "I don't know why I did it. It just happened. I don't like to beg. I'm begging now. Please don't expel me!"

Despite his pleas, the brothers decide that he has brought them dishonor and that he should be expelled.

Later, he swallows an overdose of sleeping pills, but his suicide attempt fails.

To save his own skin, Jimmy's character is ready to expose forty other students who also cheated on their exams. This was an obvious reference to Hollywood actors and directors—one of whom was Elia Kazan—who had exposed ("ratted on") colleagues who had shown sympathy for claims and beliefs of the communist party.

In the teleplay, Jimmy appeared with a cast of some thirty players, but the only one he remembered was Bradford Dillman. A native of San Francisco, he was about Jimmy's age and equally good looking. Like Jimmy, he had studied at the Actors Studio and would later marry Suzy Parker, one of the most famous models in America at the time.

Jimmy sized up Dillman to Hill: "Tomorrow's competition."

Life Sentence

Jimmy Plays An Ex-Con Confronting His Masturbatory Fantasy

Once again at NBC, Jimmy starred in *Life Sentence,* an episode in the series of *Campbell Soundstage Dramas* that was aired on October 16. It was written by S. Lee Progostin and directed by Garry Simpson.

Jimmy, playing a horny, just-released ex-con, manhandling the object of his suppressed desires, as played by Georgann Johnson.

Jimmy was cast as a convict, Hank Bradon, perhaps psychotic. The object of his fascination was a beautiful blonde, Jean Ryder (Georgann Johnson), who fights with her husband (Nicholas Saunders) and fatally shoots him. She later tries to blame the shooting on a convict from the prison that adjoins her property.

Johnson was a tall, statuesque blonde, born in Iowa, who would go on to appear in such films as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), but is better known as the mother of the title character in *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman,* a TV series that ran from 1993-1998.

Jimmy's character works in the prison garden, where he can spy from afar on Johnson on her front porch. When he finishes his time in prison, he arrives on her doorstep, begging her to go away with him. She threatens to call the police, but he warns her, "If you do, I'll bash your skull in."

He tells her he has had a masturbatory fantasy of her wearing a sunflower yellow bathing suit. "I dreamed of you on a surf board swimming across the white fluffy waves." He grabs for her and she protests, "You're hurting me."

Sexually excited by her, he says, "That's the first time I've touched a woman in five years."

In general, viewers found Jimmy's performance creditable, based on emotions which swung from sentimental to psychotic within minutes.

Critic Robert Tanitch wrote: "It was a pity that the director should have allowed Dean to go right over the top at the end of the threatened rape scene and rip open the top of his shirt in an unnecessary and embarrassing theatrical gesture in which he seemed to be reaching out for a Marlon Brando-like climax and missing it."

The Bells of Cockaigne:

Irish Blarney Enhanced with Jimmy's Televised "Striptease"

Jimmy followed *Life Sentence* with a return to NBC to film *The Bells of Cockaigne*, a teleplay for the series, *Armstrong's Circle Theater*. Aired on November 17, it was written by George Lowther and directed by Jimmy's close friend, James Sheldon. Its star was Gene Lockhart, cast as a janitor, who had worked with Jimmy before during his first major production, the religious drama, *Hill Number One*.

Jimmy (with his anonymous benefactor, Gene Lockhart), in *Bells of Cockaigne*. Impersonating a stevedore laboring on the docks, he remained shirtless throughout most of the teleplay.

A Canadian, Lockhart was strictly a professional who always showed up on time and was letter-perfect in his lines. He'd made his debut in the theater at the age of sixteen, appearing on stage in comedy sketches with Beatrice Lillie. From 1922 onward, he would be cast in some 300 films, including *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), starring Maureen O'Hara.

Sheldon had learned how eccentric Jimmy could be as an actor, showing up late and spontaneously rewriting his lines without warning. Lockhart complained to Sheldon about him: "He's always late, always wrapped up in himself and not accommodating at all to his fellow actors."

Sheldon said, “I think Jimmy is unaware of other people’s worlds. He was doing his thing his way, and it works well for him but it often leaves the other actors without anything to play off.”

Also in the cast was veteran actor Vaughn Taylor, with whom Jimmy would soon work again.

As the stevedore, Joey, Jimmy appears as a heavy duty laborer, and is shirtless throughout most of the teleplay. As he told Sheldon, “I bet I turned on the homos and women, too, by showing off my lilywhite body and suckable tits.”

He is struggling to support his wife and their asthmatic young son, who is in dire need of medical treatments that Jimmy can’t afford. In this production, Jimmy appears rather skinny and looks undernourished as he works with a corps of beefy, muscled stevedores.

To escape from poverty, and to aid his son, Jimmy as Joey joins a gambling ring of other stevedores and blows his entire paycheck.

In the meantime, Lockhart as the janitor tells Taylor that he wants to win a $500 lottery prize, which he plans to spend on a trip back to his native Ireland. His dream comes true, and he wins the lottery.

“When you get something which you’ve been waiting for a long time, you hear the Bells of Cockaigne,” Lockhart remarks.

[Cockaigne is a reference to an imaginary fantasy island where one lives in luxurious comfort, freed of worldly problems.]

When Lockhart as the kindly janitor learns that Jimmy had lost his paycheck to the other stevedores, he pulls off a ruse. He claims that Jimmy had the winning $500 lottery ticket, and he relinquishes his prize money to him as a means of paying for his boy’s medical expenses. Of course, the inevitable happens: Lockhart hears the bells of Cockaigne ringing as the play, dripping with sentimentality, ends.

A reviewer wrote, “The Bells of Cockaigne may have been true, but it plays like a bit of Irish blarney.”

A Long Time Till Dawn

Emulating Death in the Style of James Cagney

Jimmy was in such demand during November of 1953 that he was cast as the star of another teleplay, *A Long Time Till Dawn,* set to be aired on November 11 as an episode on the popular *Kraft Television Theater.*

The drama had been written by Rod Serling, perhaps the most brilliant writer of television’s Golden Age in the 1950s. Serling was not only a screenwriter, but a playwright, producer, and narrator, best known for his science fiction anthology, *The Twilight Zone.* Called “the angry young man of television,” he was at constant war with TV executives and sponsors about such issues as censorship, racism, and war.

James Dean as a remorseful gangster in *A Long Time Till Dawn.*

The teleplay was both produced and directed by Dick Dunlap, one of the most prolific directors in the history of television, helming some 1,000 teleplays before the end of his career.

“He was one of the few queer directors who didn’t try to get into my pants,” Jimmy alleged. “My God, the man was a pro. He got his start at the age of five working in silent pictures.”

In addition to Jimmy, he would go on to direct such stars as Frank Sinatra, Robert Preston, Eva LaGallienne, Eva

Marie Saint, Melvyn Douglas, Lee Remick, Peter Ustinov, Jason Robards, Helen Hayes, José Ferrer, John Gielgud, and Elvis Presley.

"I thought Jimmy might become a star, at least in some B pictures about juvenile delinquents with Mamie Van Doren or Jayne Mansfield. But a legend like Marilyn Monroe? Never!"

Once again, Jimmy was cast as a convict, this time named Joe Harris, who is both a poet and a gangster. Serling described the character as a young man with "violence and big blue eyes, a strange boy, a sensitive kid, but without remorse or conscience. He's got brains, but his logic is like a little boy's."

After serving his sentence, Joe heads for home, where his estranged parents live in a leafy suburb of New Jersey. Joe is in search of his wife, Barbie Harris (Naomi Riordan), who has deserted him.

The teleplay opens with a scene in a delicatessen, where Jimmy reverts to some Method acting techniques, even sucking on the collar of his shirt. The deli owner knowns where Barbie went, but refuses to tell. In a fit of anger, Jimmy attacks the man and beats him up. Without meaning to, he kills the owner of the store and flees to his father's home.

Actor Ted Osborn was cast as the stern, unforgiving father, Fred Harris.

Jimmy's character pleads with his father to forgive him. "I'm not going to make these mistakes anymore," Joe says.

The teleplay evolves into a father-son conflict that would be played out better in Jimmy's upcoming *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Soon, Joe learns that his wife, Barbie, is upstairs. He emotes well in his scene with her, as played by Riordan, a Michigan-born actress wo would star in many TV series, including *Armstrong Circle, Lux Video, and the Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse.* Her most unusual role would not come until 1980, when she starred in *Jane Austen in Manhattan.*

In bed with her, his wife in the teleplay, Jimmy's character confesses to the killing, but claims, "He had no business hitting me. I didn't mean to kill him."

When she urges him to give himself up, he turns on her. "You're just like the rest of them. You're all against me, all of you." At this point, he retrieves a pistol from his suitcase.

The police are on Joe's trail, surrounding his father's home. Fearing that it's the end, Joe reverts to childhood, clutching his baseball to his chest and cuddling up in a fetal position on the bed. He looks as vulnerable as a helpless child.

From the yard below, in dialogue culled directly from the script for one of those 1930s gangster movies from Warner Brothers with George Raft or Edward G. Robinson, one of the cops yells, "Put down your gun and come down or we'll come up after you."

Joe calls down, "You're crazy, all of you, crazy," before appearing at the window with another *clichéd* line, "Come and get me!"

The police then launch a barrage of gunfire aimed at the window, hitting Joe in the chest. In death, he falls to the ground below.

Serling later said, "The kid did my teleplay brilliantly. I can't imagine anyone playing that particular role better. There was an excitement and intensity about him that he transmitted to the TV public out there."

The New York Times wrote, "James Dean's jittery performance demonstrates how annoying the mannerisms of Method acting can be." Another reviewer pointed out that Jimmy's performance "was unduly influenced by the acting of Marlon Brando, including some of his vocal intonations."

Another critic labeled Jimmy's performance as "wonderful, but somewhat spoiled by Serling's script, which makes us dislike the character from the beginning. Joe is vulnerable, but underneath, he's also quick tempered, abusive, and a liar. Yet he truly wants redemption. His monologue about nostalgia is beautiful."

Harvest

JIMMY CO-STARS WITH DOROTHY GISH AND ROBERT MONTGOMERY

Still in November, Jimmy's favorite director, also his mentor, James Sheldon, hired him once again to star in a teleplay, *Harvest,* for NBC's *The Johnson Wax Program.* A Thanksgiving parable scheduled for broadcast on November 23, it was part of *Robert Montgomery Presents* and set amid Quakers living on a farm.

Montgomery had made his film debut in 1929 at the dawn of the Talkies. In time, he would star with such luminaries as Greta Garbo in *Inspiration* (1930); with Norma Shearer in *The Divorcée* (also 1930); and in the psychological chiller, *Night Must Fall* (1937), for which he received an Oscar nomination. A staunch Republican, anticommunist and homophobe, he had been elected president of the Screen Actors Guild in 1935.

George Cukor, who had worked with Montgomery early in his career, attributed his anti-gay distaste as a "cover-up for his own homosexual liaisons as a young man." When Cukor knew Montgomery, he claimed he was sexually involved with a handsome, well-muscled stagehand. "Robert was like J. Edgar Hoover," the director said. "He felt that by attacking gay people, he was throwing suspicion away from himself, and his own checkered past."

Privately, Montgomery referred to Jimmy as "that sawed-off little queer punk from Actors Studio where all the boys there, from Monty Clift to Paul Newman, are homos!"

Sheldon said that "Montgomery made it respectable for bigtime stars to appear on television, which in the beginning was seriously frowned upon by the studios. He introduced many high-class dramas on TV and acted in some of the episodes himself." Notable guest stars in his series included James Cagney, Claudette Colbert, Grace Kelly, Angela Lansbury, Jack Lemmon, Paul Lukas, Roger Moore, Raymond Massey, Burgess Meredith, Dorothy McGuire, and Constance Bennett.

Harvest starred the legendary Dorothy Gish, sister of the more famous actress, Lillian Gish. D.W. Griffith had made both of them household names in the early days of silent pictures. Ed Begley was also in the cast, as was Vaughn Taylor, with whom Jimmy had recently worked in *the Bells of Cockaigne.*

Washed up as a matinee idol, homophobe Robert Montgomery reconfigured his failing career into that of an (egomaniacal) Master of Ceremonies on TV.

Lower photo depicts him as a dashing, predatory rake in *Night Must Fall (1937).*

The story of *Harvest* revived Jimmy's memories of Fairmount, when he had lived with Ortense and Marcus Winslow on their farm. The dialogues, especially the running commentary by Sandra Michael, was a bit preachy, and the soundtrack contained a soulful rendition of a hymn whose lyrics included "Bless the folk who dwell within, Keep them pure and free from sin."

For Jimmy, his greatest thrill involved meeting and talking to Dorothy Gish. Mary Pickford, "America's Sweetheart," had introduced the Gish Sisters to D.W. Griffith, who had cast them in silent films for Biograph. In time, Dorothy would star in more than 100 short films and features, something with her sister, Lillian.

"The greatest compliment my sister ever gave me," Dorothy said to Jimmy, "was to tell me that my performance was almost as good as hers."

She also told him that she had married only once, and that was to James Rennie, a marriage that lasted from 1920 to 1935. "I'll never marry again. The institution is not for me."

Two views of Jimmy living among Quakers on a farm in *Harvest. Top photo* shows Dean with Nancy Sheridan and *(lower photo)* with Dorothy Gish.

"You're preaching to the choir," he said. "Imagine being tied down to just one person."

Ed Begley played Jimmy's father, Carl Zelenka; Gish his mother, Ellen. Jimmy was their son, Paul. Ed wanted Jimmy to follow in his footsteps as a farmer, but Paul has wanderlust in his eyes.

Unlike some actors, Begley worked smoothly with Jimmy. A New Englander, he had dropped out of school in the fifth grade and ran away to work in the circus. During World War I, he joined the Navy. He later became a veteran of Broadway shows and a star on radio. By the late 1940s, he was making feature films in Hollywood and, in time, starred in teleplays. By 1962, he would play a crooked southern politician in Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth,* starring Paul Newman as the hustler, Chance Wayne, and Geraldine Page as a fading movie star. In its Broadway version, the Chance Wayne character had been castrated by the political boss.

"Jimmy Dean wasn't a seasoned actor when I worked with him," Begley said. "But I had high hopes for the boy, even though he was a bit reckless."

In the final part of the drama, Jimmy enlists in the Navy and appears in a sailor suit at a homecoming

Thanksgiving dinner. “He looked real cute as a sailor,” Gish claimed. His appearance brought several hundred fan letters from impressionable girls and from many gay men.”

Taylor’s character of Gramp doesn’t join the family for its Thanksgiving dinner. In the play, he dies before attaining his 100th birthday. He looked the right age on camera, although he was still in his 40s, having been born in 1910. His “son,” Begley, was born in 1901. Taylor could be made up to look decades older, and he was making a career of playing elderly characters.

One reviewer wrote, “Country boy James Dean broods, then broods some more, broods in the kitchen, broods at the mailbox, broods on the front porch, and experiences *angst*, often in silence.”

The Little Woman

JIMMY SUCCESSFULLY INTERACTS WITH A SCENE-STEALING CHILD ACTRESS

Jimmy didn’t make an appearance again in a teleplay until March of 1954 because he had other commitments, such as starring in *The Immoralist* on Broadway.

Once again, Andrew McCullough offered him a lead role in *The Little Woman,* an episode within the popular *Danger* series on CBS. His co-stars included child actress Lydia Reed and Lee Bergere, who played a cop on his beat.

In a script by Joe Scully, Jimmy was cast as a counterfeiter on the lam. He hides out with a poverty-stricken little girl (Reed) who lives in a world of her own, a playhouse in a seedy alleyway. Scully, a major writer for television at the time, said he created the character of Augie, the young delinquent, specifically for Jimmy to play.

McCullough expected trouble from Jimmy, but didn’t find it. “Even though working with a child, he gave one of the most generous performances I’ve ever seen. Not one ounce of ego.”

“I heard that Dean did not cooperate with other actors,” Bergere said. “But I found him right on the mark, and we got along fine.”

During World War II, Bergere had supervised the entertainment for American soldiers stationed in North Africa. Before that, He’d been an understudy on Broadway for Danny Kaye. Later, in the 1980s, he became known for his role of Joseph Anders in the hit TV series, *Dynasty.*

Reed, in the title role, would later become famous when she starred as Hassie McCoy in 145 episodes (aired between 1957 and 1963) of ABC’s sitcom, *The Real McCoy,* with veteran actor Walter Brennan, who usually played a hayseed sidekick in westerns.

Child starlet Lydia Reed, as she appeared on *The Real McCoys* (1957-1963) a few years after her appearance with Jimmy.

In 1956, Reed would be cast in *High Society,* with Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Grace Kelly, a remake of *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), that had starred Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, and James Stewart.

In a review of *The Little Woman,* one critic claimed that “Dean is a brooding, self-involved actor so many times, perhaps too many times, but with Lydia Reed, he shows us that he has a gift for interacting with a child.”

In its review, *Variety* wrote: “Child actress Lydia Reed has built herself a dream world in a slum alley—a habitat with all the props and knickknacks—and her best friends are Lee Bergere and James Dean, who gets himself

involved as a transmission belt for a couple of traveling burglars and safe-breakers, who were intending to steal plates used for counterfeiting. On the run from police, he is provided shelter by the eight-year-old girl. It wasn't much of a yarn, but the thesping is good, particularly that of Reed. A neat first try for McCullough, who is bringing the *Danger* series out of its rut."

Run Like a Thief

With Kurt Kaznar in Hot Pursuit, Jimmy Hangs Out With Scarlett O'Hara's Mother

Involved in other pursuits during the summer of 1954, Jimmy did not appear in another teleplay until that September. Director Jeffrey Hayden cast him as the young *protégé* of gay actor Kurt Kasznar, a waiter in a hotel. Jimmy becomes disillusioned with Kasznar when he learns he is a thief.

With a script by Sam Hall, the NBC presentation was telecast on September 5 as part of the *Philco TV Playhouse* series.

It was one of Jimmy's less prestigious teleplays, although it got fairly good reviews. *Variety* wrote, "This was the first *Playhouse* under the Gordon Duff production, and it offered proof that prior high standards of the program would be preserved. It has good performers and created a good deal of suspense."

Kurt Kasznar, a profligate, unapologetic, amusing but predatory homosexual on the make for Jimmy.

Director Jeffrey Hayden, a New Yorker, had married Eva Marie Saint in 1952, and he would make a career out of helming episodes within TV series. He would later direct a feature film, *The Vintage* (1957), which starred Jimmy's most serious romance, Pier Angeli. Of course, Jimmy wouldn't be around by the time that film was released.

As a hotel worker, Kasznar discovers a diamond necklace, which belongs to the owner (Barbara O'Neil) of the establishment. But instead of returning it to its rightful owner, he gives it to his wife (Gusti Huber). When Jimmy learns what he has done, he brands his mentor a thief.

The Hollywood Reporter claimed, "James Dean as the *protégé* emerged as a rather unclear figure, even though thesping was beyond reproach. He was the man the script by Sam Hall forgot to explain. The void made a difference."

Jimmy was thrilled to meet O'Neil, a fellow Midwesterner from Missouri. In 1939, she had starred in his favorite movie, *Gone With the Wind.* She had been cast as Ellen O'Hara, Scarlett O'Hara's prim and respectable

mother, even though she was only three years older than her on-screen daughter, Vivien Leigh. Lillian Gish had rejected the role.

Barbara O'Neil as Ellen O'Hara *(right)*, with Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara, her rebellious daughter, in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

When Jimmy met O'Neil, he was hoping that it would lead to an introduction to the director, Josh Logan, whom O'Neil had divorced in 1942. He asked her to set up a meeting with Logan, but O'Neil said, "We're not speaking. Our ill-fated union ended long before our divorce. Frankly, my dear, as Rhett Butler might have said, Josh would have preferred a guy like you to a wife like me. I have never remarried, and I like it that way."

Jimmy was intrigued by the Viennese actress, Gusit Huber, who had a bit part in the teleplay. Kasznar, a fellow Viennese, told Jimmy that she'd been a Nazi. Josef Goebbels had lured her into making propaganda films for the Nazis, at least in Kasznar's view. He detested her. In the 1930s, she had refused to work with Jewish actors or directors. "Not that there were many Jews still left in Berlin," Kasznar said. "Those that were were sent to the ovens."

A contrast in types: Kurt Kasznar with James Dean.

However, at the end of World War II, Huber had married a U.S. Army officer and moved to the United States, where she had tried to conceal her National Socialist background.

In 1959, she would be cast as the mother of Anne Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Many Jews objected to her in the role of the mother of this anti-Nazi heroine, but the director, Garson Kanin, stood by his choice. It would be Huber's last movie role.

From the first day, Kasznar turned out to be a problem for Jimmy. "He had his tongue hanging out when I was introduced to him," Jimmy told Stanley Haggart.

The New York Times had called the actor "a big, glib, dapper man who spoke with an accent and was almost always cast as some sort of Continental gentleman." As a soldier, he had fought on the American side during World War II, and was among the first Army photographers to film the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which had been laid to waste by atomic bombs.

In an attempt to impress Jimmy, Kasznar told him that he'd worked with the celebrated director, Max Reinhardt. "He taught me to act, write, built sets, even how to live."

"Kasznar was hot for my tail, and I couldn't shake him," Jimmy told Haggart. "He told me that his friend, Rock Hudson, let him give him blow-jobs. 'Why can't you, Jimmy?' he asked me. 'After all, Rock is a far bigger star than you.' I finally gave in to him. After about three blow-jobs, his curiosity was satisfied, and he let me alone for the duration, having shacked up with one of the cameramen. Kasznar's mouth is a suction pump. He told me he once blew twenty guys in one night in a bathhouse on 28th Street."

Padlock

Mildred Dunnock Finds Jimmy Obnoxious

In November of 1954, Jimmy returned to CBS to appear in another episode of its *Danger* series in which he'd starred before, most recently in *The Little Woman.* This time around, he was in distinguished company, co-starring with Mildred Dunnock and directed by John Frankenheimer. He was already acquainted with Dunnock from his time at the Actors Studio, and she had gone to see him in *See the Jaguar.*

A story of suspense, Jimmy was cast in *Padlock* as a gunman fleeing from the police, a role now familiar to him. He tries to rob an eccentric old lady (Dunnock).

She recalled working with him. "He came into rehearsal like something that might have been shot out of a cannon. He seemed to have energy enough to walk up a steep wall."

Frankenheimer and Jimmy were only a year apart in age. This native of New York City's Outer Borough of Queens became known for his social dramas and his action/suspense movies, including such future features as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and *Seven Days in May* (1964).

He was one of the last remaining directors who insisted on having complete control of his productions, as he would assert in some thirty feature films and more than fifty plays.

He made it clear from the beginning that he was the director, and that Jimmy should execute a scene according to his specifications. Jimmy would become just one in a long list of stars Frankenheimer would direct: Mickey Rooney, Frank Sinatra, Burt Lancaster, Warren Beatty, Kirk Douglas, Ava Gardner, Faye Dunaway, and David Niven.

[As a footnote to history, in June of 1968, Frankenheimer was the driver of the car that then-Senator Robert F. Kennedy used for transportation to his speaking engagement at what turned out to be the scene of his assassination, the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. En route *to the hotel, from behind the wheel, Frankenheimer found the presidential candidate "Jubilant. He was going to beat Eugene McCarthy for the nomination, and he predicted he'd clobber that asshole Nixon. Alas, it was not to be."]*

James Dean as a punk, menacing Mildred Dunnock.

Months before their appearance together in the teleplay, Jimmy had deeply offended Dunnock during his audition for a role in a revival of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida.* Dunnock wanted the starring role that had once featured a *grande dame* of the American theater, Katherine Cornell, who had played alongside Marlon Brando. In the revival Jimmy sought Brando's former role.

As a test of his suitability, Dunnock alongside Eric Bentley, the playwright, critic, and author, agreed to meet with Jimmy.

"He came in like some unkempt street urchin," she claimed. "He wore some ragged clothing that appeared to have been purchased at some secondhand store on the Lower East Side. He was unshaven, and from the smell of him, he needed a long soak in the bathtub. He read for Eric and me. Unlike Brando, Dean was totally wrong for the part. I thought he was better-suited to playing a gas station attendant rather than a poet. His middle name might have been Byron, as he told us, but he was not Byronic."

I'm a Fool (for Jail Bait)

JIMMY MEETS NATALIE ("SWEET SIXTEEN") WOOD

Don Medford had helmed Jimmy in the May (1953) teleplay, *The Evil Within* for the TV series, *Tales of Tomorrow,* in which he had co-starred with Rod Steiger. Medford wanted to work with him again, casting him in a very different role as a nineteen-year-old country boy who had left home to become a "swipe" (stable boy) at a racetrack. *I'm a Fool* was an episode within *The General Electric Theater,* which aired on November 14, 1954, and was introduced by its host, Ronald Reagan.

Arnold Schulman had adapted it from a Sherwood Anderson short story. Anderson had become known for inspiring such other writers as John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway.

A blurred depiction of James Dean in *I'm a Fool.*

As Jimmy's co-stars, Medford had cast Eddie Albert and Natalie Wood, who was sixteen at the time. She played a rich girl who was Jimmy's love interest. She would become his much more famous love interest within a few months, when Nicholas Ray cast her in *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Medford recalled the first day of rehearsals when he was driving to its location in a remote section of East Los Angeles. "Suddenly, from out of nowhere, this motorcycle rider was zigzagging dangerously in and out of traffic and recklessly changing lanes on a whim. He practically hit my car. As he did, I looked into the face of this fool. My god, it was Jimmy Dean."

"At one point, he threw both hands up in the air and gunned the motor, racing ahead in some sort of no-hands balancing act. He could have been killed that morning, and by afternoon, I'd be looking for another actor. When he got to the rehearsal hall in one piece, I gave him a stern lecture. 'Do you want to die on the highway?' I asked him 'Keep driving like that, and you'll soon learn you have no tomorrow.'"

"He just gave me that soon-to-be-famous smile of his and walked away," Medford said. "He'd already filmed *East of Eden* at the time. Although it had not been released, the advance notices for him were terrific. He was already being hailed as the new Brando."

Wood recalled her first impression of him. "He crawled through an open window into the rehearsal hall instead of using the front door. He looked rather ragged with uncombed hair. His pants were held up by two large safety pins. He was very introspective and didn't mingle with us that first day."

She had heard about him. A few days before, along with a girlfriend, she had tried to meet him at his hangout at Googies in Hollywood. But her mother had come for her and put her in the car to haul her home to bed.

"On the second day of rehearsals, I was standing outside, coughing on my first attempt to smoke a cigarette, and up roared Jimmy on his motorcycle. I just assumed he was a junior version of Marlon Brando in *The Wild One.* Jimmy mumbled so you could hardly understand him. He was good looking, but eccentric. During the morning, his mood shifted suddenly, at one point charming, reverting to hostile, all within a period of a minute. It was amazing."

"I didn't think he liked me, but then, he invited me to lunch. I got on the back of his motorcycle for a hysterical and dangerous ride to a local greasy spoon that served god awful food," she said. "Over a bacon-and-cheese sandwich, he seemed to recognize me."

"You were that little girl in *Miracle on 34th Street,* a child actress." He looked into her face for confirmation.

"That was me all right," she said. "Better a child actress than acting like a child."

He laughed and that seemed to bring down the barrier he'd erected around himself. From that luncheon, a friendship blossomed that would turn into a love affair on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause.*

She explained that she was trying to make the transition from child actress to roles that called for a young woman. "Shirley Temple didn't pull it off, but Elizabeth Taylor seems to be managing," Wood said. "Most child

actors, as you probably know, fade into obscurity."

He began to learn about her, finding that she was seven years younger than himself, the daughter of Russian immigrants.

"Even before the release of *East of Eden,* Jimmy had already achieved some sort of mythical status in Hollywood," Wood said. "I had never seen anything like it. Without any movie of his being released, he was viewed as a major Hollywood star, right up there with Brando and Monty Clift."

At the time that Wood worked with him and became his friend, she recalled that he was already recovering from his failed romance with Pier Angeli, who had unexpectedly wed the singer, Vic Damone. "He told me that Pier's mother was a control freak, and that she also detested him. She definitely did not want Pier dating him, much less marrying him."

"I was not Italian, and I was not Catholic," Jimmy said. "Both were no-nos in her god damn book of rules."

Wood said she had to babysit with Jimmy on many a moody night as he poured out his deep despair. "He was like a lovesick fool in awful shape. I think he really loved Pier—that is, if he ever really loved anyone. I always had my doubts about that."

"At any rate, he awakened in me the possibility that I might become a serious actress and not just a movie star," she said. "Up to that point, I thought being a movie star was what I wanted. I viewed acting like something you take for granted—you know, like being a girl."

Ironically, when Wood met Jimmy, she had just completed *The Silver Chalice* (1954)*,* in which she'd been cast as Helena, a teenage slave girl who grows up to become the character played by Virginia Mayo. Paul Newman made his unhappy screen debut in this color film.

Natalie Wood as a child actress in *Miracle on 34th Street.*

Jimmy told Wood that he'd been offered the Newman role, but had turned it down after reading the script.

"Paul hated his role, even complaining about his costume," Wood said. "He said it was a cocktail dress in which he showed off his knobby knees and skinny legs."

"I would have looked terrific in that costume," Jimmy bragged. "My legs have been compared to the male equivalent of Betty Grable's."

Jimmy studied the script of *I'm a Fool.* Before he left home, his character, named only as "The Boy," had been told that "clothes make the man." According to his mother, "Put up a good front and the world is yours."

He sets out to prove that is true within a turn-of-the-20th-Century setting, the era of the horse and buggy. With his new suit and brown derby hat, he aspires to be a "swell," hanging out with an upper class crowd, pretending to be one of them.

Wood, cast as Lucy, is deceived by his deception that summer, and he falls in love with her. He deceives her with (false) information about owning a large Victorian house and a big stable of racehorses. The plot had cast him as a dreamer fabricating his background while smoking a twenty-five cent stogie.

Wood and Jimmy performed the dramatic highlight of the teleplay. It took place at a train depot from which she is departing, and he is bidding her farewell. She promises to write to him, but then he realizes that she doesn't know his real name or address. As the train fades into darkness, he cries out, "I'm not Walter," the fake name he'd given her, along with a false address. Then, as an actor, Jimmy followed the clue that Anderson had written into his original story: He "busted out and cried like a kid."

Wood's biographer, Gavin Lambert, wrote about the poignancy of their goodbye scene. "It was beautifully played by both of them. Dean was already the archetypal troubled outsider of this generation and the constantly

inventive actor, and Natalie displayed an emotional depth that so many shallow teenage roles had denied her. The ache of loss and missed connections seemed personally resonant for both of them, as the youthful romantics at once eager and wary, as if they suspect that the world may never be theirs."

Biographer Donald Spoto wrote that "Jimmy's attack on the role was properly callow, his protestations of self-importance more sad than pompous, his affection for the girl rightly pathetic in its doomed, precipitous misjudgment."

Eddie Albert claimed that most of the cast, except for Wood, had Broadway experience. "Jimmy's Method acting was new to us, but he did it with a sense of humor. I liked him, and was pleased when *Variety* lauded his role as 'moving and excellent.'"

Jimmy was fascinated and horrified at the dilemma that Albert was facing in his career. At the time, he was married to the Mexican actress known as "Margo." She was shunned for her far-left views and for her friends in the American Communist Party. In the early 1950s, her name appeared on Senator Joseph McCarthy's Red Channels list, which purported to unveil camouflaged Communists in the entertainment industry. These names included Lucille Ball, who had once registered as a communist in the 1930s; playwrights Arthur Miller, Lillian Hellman, and Charlie Chaplin.

"All of us are living in fear," Albert told Jimmy. "Some of my friends have lost their jobs. Dalton Trumbo, probably the most brilliant scriptwriter in Hollywood, is having to submit scripts under a pen name. Some great talents have become waiters or garbage collectors."

"Just when my career was really starting to take off, I find that some of the major studios don't want to use me," Albert said. "I was saved from being completely blackballed as a commie because of my World War II time in Tarawal, where I was viewed as a hero. I was the pilot of a Coast Guard landing craft that rescued almost forty Marines and later saved some thirty other guys, all this while under heavy Jap artillery. My war record has kept me off the blacklist, but damage has been caused."

In the same year that Jimmy co-starred with Albert, he was nominated for an Oscar as a Best Supporting Oscar for his role in *Roman Holiday* (1953) with Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn. But it wasn't until his 1960s TV sitcom, *Green Acres,* with Eva Gabor, that Albert became a household word.

Producer Mort Abrahams said he never got to know Jimmy, "because he seemed very standoffish. So I let him be. However, I did introduce him to Ronald Reagan, our host. Reagan came onto the set to watch the final rehearsal so he could introduce it when *I'm a Fool* went on the air."

At that time, Reagan's movie career, more or less, was being assigned to mothballs with a few lackluster films left to him. He'd also married MGM starlet, Nancy Davis, whose MGM career would soon fade into the dustbin of Hollywood history.

Reagan recalled Jimmy as "being an intelligent young actor, with a tendency to brood. He seemed to live only for his work. He was completely dedicated to his craft. He was a shy person, yet could hold a good conversation on many wide-ranging topics."

[After Jimmy's death, I'm a Fool *was re-broadcast, with Reagan again introducing the teleplay, calling it one of the landmarks of Jimmy's short film career.*

"Those of us who worked with Jimmy Dean carry an image of his intense struggle for a goal beyond himself and curiously enough, that's the story of the boy he plays tonight."]

After *I'm a Fool*, Jimmy thought he would never work with Reagan again.

As a surprise to him, he learned that in his next teleplay, he would actually be co-starring with him.

The Dark, Dark Hour

Onscreen, James Dean Threatens to Assassinate Ronald Reagan

Producer Mort Abrahams was not too keen on starring Jimmy again in another episode of *General Electric Theater,* but its director, Don Medford, who had helmed him in *I'm a Fool,* wanted to employ him. Abrahams agreed, especially when Ronald Reagan, the host of the series, said he wanted to appear with the budding young actor. "I think he's going to the top, and you'll be glad you hired him," Reagan told his producer.

With a script by Arthur Steuer as dark as sinister as its title, *The Dark, Dark Hour* was scheduled to be aired on December 12, 1954. "It was hardly a Christmas show," Reagan said.

In fact, it ran into the censors at General Electric. The first version of the script was rejected. “The suits over there thought it portrayed hoodlums in a sympathetic light,” Reagan said. “How wrong they were. What we did was remove some of the controversial dialogue and resubmitted it. This time, it was green-lighted.”

Its actual filming took place at Republic Studios at 4024 Radford Avenue in North Hollywood. Jimmy was cast once again as a “hepcat hoodlum,” in a familiar juvenile delinquent role that by now was almost a James Dean archetype. His partner in crime was Peewee (Jack Simmons). Reagan played a small-town doctor married to an unsympathetic wife, Constance Ford, who had appeared with Jimmy on Broadway in *See the Jaguar.*

Ronald Reagan’s millionaire bosses at General Electric helped shift him from a liberal Democrat to an archly conservative Republican.

Jimmy insisted that Medford cast Simmons as Peewee, whose character had been wounded in a foiled robbery attempt. The hoodlums break into Reagan’s house as he’s asleep upstairs with Ford. As Jimmy aims a gun at Reagan’s head, he demands that the doctor remove a bullet from Peewee.

Reagan replies that he has to call the police, and that he is not qualified to perform the surgery that’s required. Jimmy responds that if he doesn’t remove the bullet, he’ll be killed. Before the teleplay’s end, as could be predicted, the doctor overpowers Jimmy as part of an unconvincing climax.

Although this is a scene from a teleplay, not from real life, the hour was, indeed, dark for the future president’s career as an actor.

Simmons became one of the most mysterious relationships in Jimmy’s life. Perhaps his all time closest friend, Simmons would be with him during the upcoming filming of *Rebel Without a Cause.* Medford was not impressed: “By casting Simmons as Peewee, I think I gave him the wrong impression that he was an actor.”

“Reagan was his usual wooden self,” Medford said, “but Jimmy brought imagination to his role. When the doctor is out of the room, he turns on the radio and pretends to jitterbug with his dying friend. Not only that, but at one point, he taps on the lens of Simmons’ glasses and asks, “Are you home, Peewee?”

Peewee ultimately dies on Reagan’s makeshift operating table.

The future president of the United States was host of *The General Electric Theater* from 1954 to 1962. His

acting gig with Jimmy occurred during his first year hosting the series, a job that paid him $125,000 a year.

Over dinner one night, Reagan told Jimmy that he almost didn't get the job, and that he was almost desperate, as his bank account was sinking toward zero. "I was the ninth choice. Other actors had already turned it down—Edward Arnold, Kirk Douglas, and Walter Pidgeon, as I recall."

Apparently, Jimmy didn't tell Reagan just how well he knew Pidgeon.

"I used Robert Montgomery as a role model, and I know you were on his series," Reagan said. "He was also president of the Screen Actors Guild before me. I was impressed with his own TV anthology series and wanted to follow in his footsteps. Even my former wife *[a reference to Jane Wyman]* is in negotiations to host her own TV series."

"Right from the beginning, *General Electric Theater* came in number three after *I Love Lucy* and *The Ed Sullivan Show.* My job offer came in the nick of time. I'd been reduced to performing as an emcee at a burlesque show in Vegas. At home, Nancy was manning the vacuum cleaner. But things have turned around for us."

"I think Jimmy was experimenting with his part," Reagan said. "At rehearsals, he would always vary his performance. You never know what he was going to do next. By the time the show was televised, he had arrived at the performance he wanted. As his co-star, I lived in amazement at what I was going to have to respond to. He sure kept me on my toes like a ballet dancer. I'll tell you one thing about Jimmy: I liked him, but he wasn't easy to know. I read in Sidney Skolsky's column that he was undisciplined and irresponsible, but that didn't reflect the dedication I saw in this young actor."

"One of my best friends was Robert Taylor," Reagan said. "Bob told me that Monty Clift, Brando, and now James Dean would soon be replacing us, a bunch of guys who broke into the movies in the 1930s as leading men. He cited not only ourselves, but added Ty Power, Errol Flynn, and an aging Clark Gable to the list of endangered species."

"I was struck by how much Jimmy off camera resembled Jimmy on camera," Reagan said. "He worked hard, even struggled, to perfect his role and his craft as an actor, and I admired him for that. He rehearsed with the same enthusiasm he brought to his actual performance. Most of us just glided through a rehearsal, saving our juice for the shoot. Not Jimmy. He didn't hold back his punches, but took every rehearsal like a boxer in the ring, trying to win every round. He seemed to have boundless energy."

According to his contract with General Electric, Reagan had the right to star in at least six episodes per season. He was allowed to make his own choice of roles he felt suitable for. At first, he'd expressed delight at playing the embattled doctor under siege from Jimmy. However, when General Electric executives watched *The Dark, Dark Hour* on their television sets, they hated it.

"Both Abrahams and I were fired, at least temporarily," Reagan said. "I was allowed to come back." In a press conference, Reagan falsely claimed that he was coerced into accepting the script and the role. "That was a damn lie," Medford claimed. "He asked to do it. The script didn't glorify delinquents. Jimmy was clearly a punk threatening to kill an innocent man. Simmons dies. What kind of glorification was that? If anything, the teleplay showed that crime didn't pay, and could even lead to death or imprisonment."

Reviewers didn't like the show. *Variety* claimed, "Reagan's part is negatively enacted, and Constance Ford as his wife is called upon for illogical action as she fails to understand why her husband, though covered by a gun, doesn't immediately attack the delinquents. This role is played by James Dean, but he has been called upon to overact."

Some viewers found *The Dark, Dark Hour* evocative of the soon-to-be-released *The Desperate Hours* (1955), starring Humphrey Bogart and Fredric March. It, too, depicted an escaped convict breaking into a household and terrorizing a family in ways that were remarkably similar.

Stephen Vaughn later wrote how important appearances on *General Electric Theater* were for Reagan as a politician. "He mastered performing before microphones, cameras, and audiences, as well as how to dramatize events. He gained training in propaganda and public relations."

Another biographer, Anne Edwards, claimed that Reagan also developed people skills while working for General Electric and making speeches around the country at various GE plants.

She noted Reagan's appearances before employees. "The women would come running up to him with mash notes and requests for an autograph. Standing aside, the men would look at Reagan skeptically, making derogatory remarks such as 'I bet he's a fag.' Then, Reagan would talk to the girls just so long before going over to the male employees. When he left, ten or fifteen minutes later, these same men would be slapping him on the back and saying, 'That's the way to go, Ronnie.'"

For decades, *The Dark, Dark Hour* languished in some dusty vault, but resurfaced in 2010. Many in the movie

colony were surprised that President of the United States had appeared in a drama with the legendary James Dean, or that the script concerned a threatened assassination and its associations with John Hinckley, Jr.'s, attempt on the life of Reagan. One critic who watched it claimed, "*The Dark, Dark Hour,* starring James Dean and Ronald Reagan, has emerged from some archive of the Eisenhower era. For those of us who weren't around to watch Reagan movies in the late 1930s or 40s, our former president shows he made the right choice when he switched his career from the movies to politics. He was far better suited to the political arena."

The Desperate Hours (1955). The movie version of this Broadway hit was, indeed, successful with Jimmy's nemesis, Humphrey Bogart, in the lead. Many viewers thought Bogart did it better than Jimmy in his interpretion of a teleplay with a roughly equivalent theme.

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In 1962, Darwin Porter *[coauthor if this biography],* as a guest of novelist James Leo Herlihy, visited the movie set where an adaptation of his novel, *All Fall Down,* was being filmed. Its film script was by William Inge, who was suffering through a powerful crush on Warren Beatty, the movie's lead. His co-stars included Angela Lansbury and Eva Marie Saint.

Inge had transferred his sexual attraction for Jimmy onto Beatty. He was also writing another script for Beatty, *Splendor in the Grass,* which would star Natalie Wood, Jimmy's co-star in *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Constance Ford had only a small role in *All Fall Down.* Over lunch, Ford told Herlihy and Porter that Inge had claimed that if Jimmy had lived, he would be starring in both of the Beatty movies. Not only that, Inge would have preferred for Jimmy—if he had lived—to appear opposite Marilyn Monroe in *Bus Stop* instead of Don Murray.

She also claimed that when she had appeared with Jimmy and Reagan in *The Dark, Dark Hour, "*I hated my role as the doctor's wife. I even got hate mail. I think this rather mean-spirited wife's role prepared me to play the heartless mother of Sandra Dee in *A Summer Place* (1959)."

She said that by the time she and Reagan appeared together on television, "We both realized that we were not going to be bigtime movie stars like Spencer Tracy and Bette Davis. Movie roles were drying up. It was TV or oblivion. But both of us, even back then, thought Jimmy was going to become one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. He had something. If only he'd been a little taller. Of course, a midget like Alan Ladd did okay."

"I never knew what Jimmy was going to do," Ford said. "Once he came to rehearsal wearing only a pair of white jockey shorts. Naturally, I checked out his basket, as his dick was clearly outlined. I saw Reagan doing the same. I'm not suggesting that Reagan has a gay streak in him. But I'm told that straight men, in a shower, like to size up other men to see how they measure up."

"Jimmy and I talked a bit, and he told me he got some real wild fan mail," she said. "Even from old ladies who asked him to wear tighter pants in his next drama."

"People were comparing me to Brando before I really knew who in the hell Brando was," Jimmy told Ford. "I am neither disturbed by the comparison or flattered by it. I don't want to be a good actor. I want to be the best actor there is. Hear that, Marlon Brando? Marlon, are you listening?"

"I liked Jimmy and flirted with him, but he didn't make a pass at me," she said. "Reagan had had a reputation at Warners of seducing many of the starlets, or even stars like Lana Turner before she went over to MGM. But he didn't proposition me. Of course, by the time I met him, he had settled down with Miss Nancy, who hovered over him like a guard dog. She came onto the set looking out for her interests. Perhaps she feared Jimmy would seduce her husband, as I'm sure she'd heard all the rumors that Jimmy worked both sides of the fence."

"I got the impression that Jimmy and that Jack Simmons guy, who played Peewee, were lovers. But I had no

direct knowledge. Someone told me that Nancy was following Reagan around to protect him, and Simmons seemed to be watching over Jimmy. Alas, I left the General Electric set with my virginity intact."

The Thief

JIMMY PLAYS AN 18TH CENTURY FRENCH ARISTOCRAT

By January of 1955, Jimmy was already a movie star, but he signed to star in two more teleplays before oblivion. In a rare stint for ABC (he usually worked for NBC or CBS), he took the role of *The Thief* as an episode within *The United States Steel Hour*. It was telecast on January 4, 1955.

Directed by Vincent J. Donehue and produced by John Haggott, *The Thief* was adapted for the TV screen by Arthur Arent. It was the work of the once celebrated French dramatist, Henri Bernstein, and had opened in Paris in 1906, both shocking and delighting the audiences of that day. It would later become a stage hit in both London and New York. Jimmy said "I accepted the role because it was a challenge. I was tired of playing a juvenile delinquent. Why not a nineteen-year-old French aristocrat with me dressed as a stylish fop with an elegant coiffure? A gentle and polite teenager pining over the lost love of my Marie-Louise Voyson (Diana Lynn), who had married an older man. I liked my character's name. Monsieur Fernand Lagarde."

In the teleplay, Lynn was married to Phillipe Voyson (Patric Knowles). Jimmy's parents were Charles and Isabelle Lagarde (Paul Lukas and Mary Astor).

Lagarde *père* hires a house detective to mingle with his other guests, because 12,000 francs have been stolen from the purse in his wife's bedroom. The detective suspects the well-mannered son. He was known to have lost money at the racetrack and was also having an affair with a Parisian actress known for her luxurious tastes. He had only a small allowance.

Jimmy as Fernand admits he's made off with the francs to purchase expensive clothes for his former childhood sweetheart (Lynn).

"How long has this calf-love been going on with this boy?" Knowles asks.

Fernand is banished to Brazil for two years as punishment for being a wayward son.

Jimmy's character is reduced to tears. "I learned to shed a tear on cue," he said. "Maybe not as good as Margaret O'Brien."

Unlike some of Jimmy's other directors, Vincent Donehue survived Jimmy's performance and his direction of the volatile actor. Jimmy told Donehue, "I'm leaving Hollywood and heading back to New York. I don't need Tinseltown. Maybe they don't need me either. But I think they really do. I've got the upper hand. If they want me, the fuckers are going to pay."

Donehue was known mainly for his theater work, with only an occasional TV credit. He had helmed a Broadway play, *A Trip to Bountiful* (1953), starring Lillian Gish, Jo Van Fleet, and Eva Marie Saint. Jimmy was anxious to hear his impression of Van Fleet, with whom he would later co-star in *East of Eden.* "A strange, mysterious woman," Donehue said. "I don't know her at all."

James Dean as a member of the pre-revolutionary French aristocracy in *The Thief*

The same year he directed Jimmy, Donehue was also helming Kim Stanley in *The Traveling Lady* and would, in the year after Jimmy's death, direct Tennessee Williams' *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* (1956) with Maureen Stapleton, whom Jimmy knew.

Donehue recalled his first attempt at directing Jimmy. "We went through his opening scene, and he seemed a bit out of character. I suggested an alternative way of playing Fernand. He looked at me as if I had killed his mother, or at least murdered his father. Then I guess he wanted to shock me and the cast. He went over in front of all of us, took out his cock, and pissed all over the stage floor."

Each of the major stars—Diana Lynn, Mary Astor, Paul Lukas, and Patric Knowles—had very different reactions to Jimmy. Astor was not impressed, and expressed her feelings about him in a memoir, *A Life in Film*: "She wrote: "I found out how hard it was to work with a mumbler when I did *The Thief.* That was before his great success. He was six feet away from me in one scene, and I could barely hear what he was saying. What I could hear seemed to have nothing to do with the script."

"I wasn't up on Astor movies, because I wasn't a fan," Jimmy said. "I'd seen her in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) when I was a kid, but that was because Bogie was the star. I was told that Astor worked in silent pictures and got screwed by John Barrymore. She was involved in some big scandal back in the 1930s when the contents of her diary were exposed. She had written of her steamy affairs with playwright George Kaufman and actors like Clark Gable and Ronald Colman."

"What people didn't know, other than she was a whore, was that she was an alcoholic. By noon she was drunk, but she concealed it well. I'd heard she had tried to commit suicide with sleeping pills. If I had been there, I would have given her an extra bottle to finish the job."

Lukas agreed with Astor about Jimmy's mumbling: "I didn't know what he was going to say, when he was going to say it, and, once said, what was it? I disliked him even more than Mary did. This son of a bitch is absolutely crazy."

A Budapester, Lukas had won an Oscar for his performance in *Watch on the Rhine* (1943). To take home that Oscar, Lukas had beat out Humphrey Bogart for *Casablanca* and Gary Cooper for *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* At the age of sixteen, Lukas had made his film debut in his native city and had begun a career often cast as a villain. He'd worked with Max Reinhardt before emigrating to the United States to appear in films.

Mary Astor called Jimmy "a mumbler," and he retaliated, claiming that she was "an alcoholic whore."

"I was supposed to be impressed with Lukas' credits," Jimmy said. "I guess he was an OK actor, no great excitement that I saw. How he made it as a leading man is a mystery for the ages. He was a Jew, but I was told he could play a Jew-burning Nazi or a Gestapo agent. He shouldn't have taken that Oscar away from Bogie, who was another son of a bitch like Lukas himself. I guess they're all sons of bitches in Hollywood. Not the females. They're all whores."

An actor from the West Riding district of Yorkshire, Patric Knowles had made his film debut in 1933. Some critics compared his good looks to that of matinee idol Errol Flynn, his rumored lover. The two actors appeared in several pictures together, including *The Charge of the Light Brigade* in 1936, where they formed a tight bond.

They went on to make other movies, including *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938). "I was often a straitlaced character stacked against Errol as the adventurer." Knowles later defended Flynn against charges that he had been a Fascist sympathizer and a Nazi spy.

Jimmy bonded with Diana Lynn, finding her "a pert little kitten with an impish quality and a great sense of humor." She had been a child prodigy and a celebrated pianist by the time she was twelve, later becoming a child actress, appearing in pictures such as *The Major and the Minor* (1942) with Ginger Rogers and in Preston Sturges' *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944). She had also starred in the 1949 *My Friend Irma* with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Jimmy shared information with her about how he had inter-related with them on the set of *Sailor Beware!*

Lynn had also co-starred with Ronald Reagan in his much-ridiculed *Bedtime for Bonzo* (1951), in which both of them had babysat with a chimp who stole the picture from them.

"I flirted with Ronnie," she told Jimmy, "but he didn't stray my way, even though I heard he used to cheat on Jane Wyman during their ill-fated marriage. But with me, he was as clean as a hound's tooth."

"Diana had a dream, and that was to become another Grace Kelly," Jimmy said. "Like so many of us, our dreams don't come true."

When *The Thief* was released, one reviewer pointed out, "A comedy of manners rarely survives its original audience and era. That's why *The Thief* seems so dull, in spite of such stellar performers as that of Paul Lukas, Mary Astor, and James Dean."

In his review, Robert Tanitch wrote: "*The Thief* may have been mechanical, romantic rubbish, but Dean acted the role of 'hero and young imp' with total sincerity within the conventions of the genre and, contrary to what Mary Astor said, he was totally articulate."

In *The Independent,* Gilbert Adair claimed, "James Dean attempts to combine the boyish with the Charles Boyer-ish."

The Unlighted Road -JIMMY'S LAST TELEPLAY

Jimmy's career in teleplays came to an inglorious end in May of 1955 when he signed to star in *The Unlighted Road* for CBS's *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars.* It was a thirty-minute thriller in which he was cast as Jeff Latham, a veteran of the Korean War who had been discharged from the U.S. Army.

"I don't know why I signed on to appear in this turkey," he later said. "I didn't know the director (Justus Addiss); I didn't know the producer (William Self), and I didn't know any of my fellow actors."

[The cast included Murvyn Vye, Edgar Stehli, Pat Hardy as the love interest, Voltaire Perkins, and Charles Wagenheim.]

Before flying to the West Coast, he had seen his close friend, Bill Gunn, a young African American actor. Gunn was with Jimmy when he was packing for his trip.

"Jimmy had this foreboding, this fear of flying," Gunn said. "It was like he was anticipating his own death, which would come in September. He told me that planes sometimes 'just fall out of the sky.'"

Before heading to the airport, he went to his closet and gave Dunn his one blue suit. "I have a feeling I won't be needing this anymore."

"But if you're going to be in a plane crash, the undertaker will need to dress you up in this suit," Gunn said.

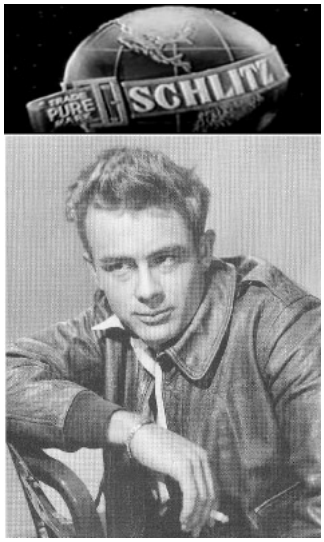
"Not needed. My body will be so far gone that it won't even make a good-looking corpse."

"God damn it, dude," Gunn said. "You're one morbid kid."

The script for the badly titled *The Unlighted Road* was by Walter C. Brown, with Jimmy cast in the star role.

"At least I got to wear a leather jacket and strike my by now familiar pose with a cigarette dangling from the

corner of my mouth."



James Dean played the unwilling, unlikely (and presumably, beer-drinking) hero of *The Unlighted Road*

Drifting from odd job to odd job, Jimmy's character is hired to work in a seedy diner where he meets his love interest, Pat Hardy, cast as Ann Burnett.

In *The Unlighted Road,* Jimmy becomes a pawn in a racketeering scheme, where he discovers that his boss and benefactor is the director of a crime syndicate dealing in stolen goods. One night, having been coerced into transporting contraband alone on an unlit road, he's shot at by what he believes are cops racing after him in hot pursuit. Suddenly, the driver of the car that's chasing him loses control and fatally crashes his car into a tree.

His malevolent boss soon twists this to his advantage. Emphasizing that Jimmy has been associated with a cop killing, he blackmails his hapless victim into continuing a life of crime.

As it turns out, the driver who crashed was not a policeman, but a crook who had lost control of his car because he'd been shot by other gangsters.

Jimmy was paid $2,500 for his appearance in *The Unlighted Road*. "Schlitz didn't have to sell that much brew to pay my salary."

Variety wrote that "Dean provides an interesting, offbeat personality, but underplays so much that his performance loses some of its effectiveness."

Reviewer Robert Tantich claimed, "It was a pretty poor script. There was no suspense and no characterization, only a few good close-ups of Dean's face. Still, such was the demand for anything with him in it that *The Unlighted Road* was shown no less than five times after his death."

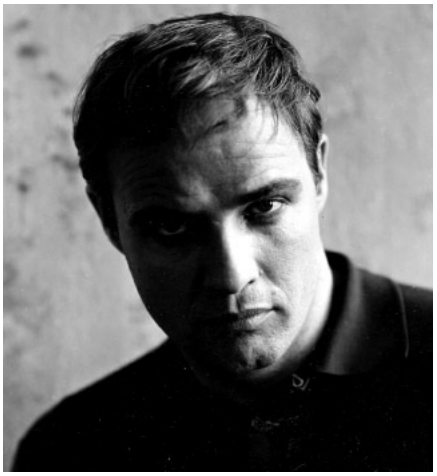
Alas, his role as a television star had come to an end. But within months, three of his films would be released "that will make him a star forever," in the words of columnist Louella Parsons.

There was an unexpected consequence from the completion of *The Unlighted Road.* Jimmy found Pat Hardy "sweet, coy, and rather sexy," and began dating her.

"Chalk that one up to one of the big mistakes of my life," he later claimed.

Chapter Nine

JAMES DEAN VS. MARLON BRANDO



Rivals on Screen, Master & Slave After Midnight

JIMMY THREATENS TO STAB ANYONE WHO CALLS HIM "THE MICKEY MOUSE MARLON BRANDO"

Brando: "He Was Not a Contender"

James Dean's link to the life and legend of Marlon Brando, his rival and inspiration, began long before the two Method actors had even met.

Nicholas Ray had directed Humphrey Bogart in the 1949 *Knock on Any Door*, casting John Derek in the part that both Ray and Bogie had wanted for Brando. Brando rejected any involvement in *Knock on Any Door*, but Ray was not put off by that refusal. "I want to direct Marlon in his screen debut," he told Bogie and others in Hollywood.

Ray was not the first to envision Brando as Jim Stark, the alienated centerpiece of *Rebel Without a Cause*. William Orr, in charge of talent at Warner Brothers, had worked on the original script. In its first draft, Jim Stark is depicted as a psychopath who is driven to commit a senseless murder by horrendous memories from his childhood.

Later, Orr said, “In New York, I was told that the best actor for the role was one named ‘Marlin Brandin,’ or was it ‘Marlo Binden?’ When we looked him up, he was running an elevator at Macy’s. He said his correct name was Marlon Brando and that he was from Nebraska. He didn’t seem interested in the role at all, but I thought that was just an act.”

“Despite his hostility, I lured him to my office,” Orr said. “It took some persuasion, but I finally signed him for the role. We even made a screen test with him, but nothing came of it until Nicholas Ray came to Warners and got involved. He was really hot to direct *Rebel*.”

A few months later, during the closing weeks of the Broadway version of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with the understanding that Brando would soon be searching for another gig, Ray arrived with a vastly revised script for Brando’s consideration. It was *Rebel Without a Cause*.

The script had derived from a non-fiction work, first published in 1944, by Dr. Robert M. Lindner. Ray was still struggling with the script, but thought that there was enough on paper to intrigue Brando with the role of the reckless, rebellious, and misunderstood Jim Stark. Ray was also aware that time was running out for Brando to realistically impersonate such a youthful character. With every month that passed, he was appearing less and less like a rebellious teen.

At a meeting with Ray, Brando became intrigued with the street gang aspects of the script, and agreed to study it. At around the same time, unknown to Irene Mayer Selznick, producer of the stage version of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* Brando had taken to riding every night with “The Eagles,” a tough and rowdy motorcycle gang based in Brooklyn. Perhaps he was rehearsing for his future role in *The Wild One* (1953).

Details about the logistics of how he hooked up at regular intervals with this tightly knit group of hoods were provided by Brando’s friend, Carlo Fiore. He claimed that he had introduced Brando to the gang leader, Tony Medina, who at first was skeptical about allowing Brando inside his clique. Medina changed his mind, however, after Brando bought him one of the flashiest and most expensive motorcycles in New York. As additional “tribute,” Brando also became a steady supplier of young girls for members of the gang.

As preparation for the milieu he wanted to depict on film, Ray was eager to learn all he could about gangs, and Brando asked and won approval from Medina to allow him to ride with The Eagles. Apparently, at no point was Medina informed that Ray was a film director. Later, in Hollywood, Ray would manage to hook himself up with a different gang, this one based in L.A.

One night at a location in New York State, the exact spot not known, Ray witnessed an extraordinary test of daring. During a game of “chicken,” competing members of The Eagles raced their motorcycles toward the edge of a cliff. Both of the young men managed to stop before they, with their bikes, plunged off the edge. Ray was so inspired by this that he later incorporated it into *Rebel*, using cars instead of motorcycles.

Ray later said that Brando, too, had wanted to play chicken that night, but that he had persuaded him not to. “It’s too risky,” Ray said. “If you do, there might be another actor replacing you as Stanley Kowalski on stage tomorrow night.”

Based on chronic problems with its script, *Rebel Without a Cause* simply did not get made in 1949, and it would not become the vehicle for Brando’s screen debut. But when the cameras rolled on the version of *Rebel* that was released, with fanfare, in 1955, it was James Dean who was cast in the star role. By then, Brando was indeed far too old for the part. Ray later admitted, however, that at least some elements that made it into the final script, as interpreted by Jimmy, had been inspired by what he perceived as Brando’s “personal character.”

Fiore later remembered attending a screening of *Rebel Without a Cause* with Brando in 1955. “Bud sat through the entire film with a stone face, not saying a word,” Fiore said. “After the show, we drove to a drive-in hamburger joint, where Bud ordered cheeseburgers with ‘the works.’ At this point he still hadn’t told me what he thought of *Rebel.* Finally, the suspense was killing me. Losing my cool, I asked him, ‘Well, what did you think of Dean? That kid is definitely living in your shadow.’”

“Marlon turned and looked at me like he didn’t even know who James Dean was,” Fiore recalled. “He didn’t say anything at first. Finally, he mumbled, ‘I plan to fuck Natalie Wood. She’s now the first on my list of possible conquests in Hollywood.’”

“You’ve already fucked Dean,” Fiore chided him. “Why not Sal Mineo? I hear he’s gay as a goose.”

“Yeah, that Mineo boy might get lucky too.”

“I hear that big tit Jayne Mansfield was originally tested for the role of Judy before it went to Wood. Have you had her yet? Or is she on your waiting list?”

Tough, hard to influence, and ferociously independent: Marlon Brando.

"Mansfield is too blonde for me," Brando said. "Besides I can have the real Marilyn anytime I want her. Why go for mock turtle soup when you can have the real turtle in the stew pot?"

"Good point," Fiore said.

Nothing else was ever said between them about either James Dean or *Rebel Without a Cause.*

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In 1949, after an extended visit to Paris, Brando flew back to New York, where he ignored literally dozens of offers from Hollywood for starring roles in various films. *[His agent, Jay Kanter, mailed the scripts to him, but learned, "He didn't read any of them."]*

Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, a film that made black leather, motorcycle drag, and hints of S&M hot, hip, and fashionable before anyone else figured it out.

Instead, he decided to make a public appearance at the Actors Studio. There, he was invited to say a few words. After his brilliant performances in both the stage and screen versions of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* for which he'd been nominated for an Oscar, Brando was idolized by most of the actors in Lee Strasberg's acting classes.

By then, Jimmy had reconciled with Strasberg, having forgiven the acting coach for his harsh critique of his interpretation of *The Matador.*

Brando's "few words" turned into a long, drawn-out speech about stage acting versus screen acting.

At the back of the room sat a young man slouched down in his seat, so much so that his ass was hardly touching the bottom of the chair. Throughout Brando's speech, the young man stared at him "so intently I felt my

skin burning," Brando later told Bobby Lewis, one of the founders of Actors Studio, "I don't think I've ever been looked at that way before," Brando said, "and I've been evaluated by the best of them, male and female."

From time to time, Brando would steal a glance at the young man, whom he found broodingly handsome, with a severe intensity combined with an appealing vulnerability. Brando immediately pegged the aspirant actor as a homosexual.

"He looked at me with such a childlike sincerity," Brando later told Lewis, "that I knew it must be love. What else?"

After the session, and after the other students had filed out of the room, Jimmy remained glued to his seat, still slouching, and still staring at Brando. As Brando approached him, he rose to his feet and extended his hand.

"I'm your greatest fan," he said to Brando. "Someday I want to become an actor just like you. Your style, everything."

As he said that, Brando continued holding onto Jimmy's hand, not returning it. "You can hold my hand all night long if you want to."

"Indeed I shall," Brando said. "Or should I have said, 'Indeed, I will.' I always confuse will and shall."

"I'm confused about a lot of things," Jimmy said. "Very confused. But not confused in my admiration for you."

"Since you seem to know who I am, who might you be?" Brando asked.

"James Dean. But you can call me Jimmy. Born in Marion, Indiana on February 8, 1931. Died April 17, 1967."

"You know the date of your death?" Brando asked. "How remarkable."

"I've always had this uncanny ability to predict deaths," Jimmy said.

"Do you know when I'm going to die?" Brando asked.

"You'll die on December 24, 2010," Jimmy said. "A very old man."

"Do you really plan to die so young?" Brando asked.

"I sure do," Jimmy said, snickering. "My motto is: Live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse."

"If that's your intention," Brando said, "I'm sure you'll accomplish that lofty goal."

He stood looking into Jimmy's eyes for a long minute, maybe two minutes, maybe a lot more. As he would later recall the moment to Lewis, Brando said he wasn't certain of the time. Finally, he spoke to Jimmy. "I hope you understand what I'm about to do. I sometimes do this with men. I'm going to take you in my arms and give you a long, deep kiss. It may be the first time in your life you've ever been kissed, really kissed. My kiss will be just the beginning of a lot of other deep kisses that I'm going to give you in the months ahead." As he moved toward the young actor, Brando got so close he could smell Jimmy's breath. "All your dreams and fantasies about me are about to come true!"

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In his autobiography, Brando concealed his romantically tortured involvement with Jimmy, suggesting that he met his young admirer—six years his junior—much later than he actually did. Lewis often saw Brando and Jimmy together during the winter of 1951.

At the time, Jimmy was being partially supported by Rogers Brackett, who wanted, despite Jimmy's resistance, a monogamous relationship. Perhaps to punish him, Jimmy described in intimate detail his various affairs with both men, including Brando, and women.

Alec Wilder and Stanley Haggart were each privy to the sexual involvement of Brando and Jimmy, as were Tennessee Williams and his lover, Frank Merlo. Later, each of those men, with additional information supplied by Lewis, relayed more or less the same accounts of the long-suppressed relationship between Jimmy and Brando.

In his autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, Brando falsely claimed that he had been introduced to Jimmy by Elia Kazan on the set of *East of Eden*. According to the autobiography, Jimmy told Brando that he was "not only mimicking my acting but also what he believed was my lifestyle." In that statement, Brando was accurate. Only the date and place of the introduction were wrong.

Brackett claimed that according to Jimmy's own account, Brando took him back to his apartment and seduced him on the afternoon of their first meeting at Actors Studio. "I got to make love to Brando," Jimmy claimed, "which is something I've been longing to do ever since I first heard about him."

"He was completely in charge of our love-making," Jimmy revealed to Brackett. "He told me what he wanted, and I went along for the ride." Without Jimmy specifically saying so, it was obvious that Brando had sodomized his new young friend.

As in previous relationships, when Brando had walked the streets and attended clubs and cafes with Clifford Odets or Leonard Bernstein, he was soon "spotted everywhere with Jimmy Dean," claimed the actress and acting coach, Stella Adler. "I had many long talks with the two of them."

"They were definitely a couple," Wilder said. "Of course, the words 'sexual fidelity' would be unknown in each of their vocabularies. Jimmy and I used to sit and talk for hours in my room at the Algonquin Hotel. He kept me abreast of the affair. I really believe that Jimmy fell in love with Brando that year. As for Brando, I don't think he ever loved Jimmy. I met Brando only three times, and each time he was with Jimmy. In my opinion, Brando was in love with Brando."

"Jimmy tried to dress exactly like Brando," Wilder said. "With one notable exception. To keep warm in the winter, he wore a black bullfighter's cape slung over his shoulders."

Jimmy frequently visited Stanley Haggart, especially when he was broke. Haggart at the time was the leading art director in New York for television commercials, and Jimmy wanted him to use his influence to get work for him. Brackett, too, helped Jimmy find work. But he would often disappear for weeks at a time, not returning at night to Brackett's apartment. "This would seriously piss off Rogers," in the words of Wilder, his most intimate friend. "When Rogers cut him off from jobs, Jimmy would go over to Stanley's."

"Jimmy never had any money in those days," Haggart said. "Sometimes I would lend him fifty dollars with no expectation of ever seeing the money again. Believe it or not, fifty dollars could actually buy something in those days. Even when Jimmy had less than two dollars in his pocket, Brando wouldn't lend him a cent. Jimmy said he felt that Brando deliberately wanted him lean and mean on the streets, looking for a handout."

Haggart said that Jimmy never phoned in advance before dropping by his apartment in the East Fifties. "He just arrived on the doorsteps. He always wanted me to make tapioca pudding for him. It was sort of a comfort food for him. He never came to see me unless he was depressed or broke. His manners were horrible. He'd put muddy feet up on my new sofa and would flick ashes on my Oriental carpet, never bothering to use an ashtray. He talked frequently about Brando and how frustrated he was in the relationship. I got the impression that Jimmy was engaged in a cat-and-mouse affair with Brando, with Brando being the cat, of course. Brando seemed to be toying with Jimmy for his own amusement. I think Brando was sadistically using Jimmy, who followed him around like a lovesick puppy with his tongue wagging."

"I sensed a terrible loneliness in Jimmy," Brackett said. "Whatever he wanted or needed, I felt I could not really provide, even though he shared my bed on many a winter's night. It was obvious to me that he preferred Brando's arms to mine. Even though he must have known that Jimmy was hopelessly in love with him that winter, Brando insisted on rubbing Jimmy's nose into his other affairs. Sometimes Brando would invite Jimmy over to watch as he fucked some pickup from the street. Jimmy told me that he'd spent many a night at Brando's watching like a *voyeur* as he made love to someone else. Jimmy claimed that Brando often invited him for 'sloppy seconds.' It wasn't a very happy relationship for Jimmy, and I was as jealous as a bitch in heat, because at least momentarily I'd fallen—and fallen big—for Jimmy. When Brando was out on one of his many dates, Jimmy would often stalk him, even following him home. On many a night Jimmy would stand beneath Brando's apartment house, looking up at his bedroom window as the lights went out, wanting to be in that bedroom himself. One very cold morning, Brando came downstairs in his pajamas and invited Jimmy, shivering in the cold, to come upstairs with him. But, I fear, those acts of kindness were the exception—not the rule."

Haggart cited occasional acts of generosity on the part of Brando. "When he found Jimmy half starved, Brando would sometimes invite him to a steak dinner in the Village. But these were very rare occasions. When Jimmy had no money at all, he told me that he would consent to blow-jobs in a men's toilet in Central Park to earn a few bucks. When he got money, he lived on chocolate milkshakes for energy. He claimed he could survive on a daily intake of milkshakes, although he complained of a runny stool because of the lack of solids in his diet. I fed him when he came to me, trying to give him some red meat and a garden salad, followed invariably by my tapioca pudding."

"Jimmy often spoke to me about his dreams of future stardom in Hollywood," Wilder said. "He vowed that he was going to keep imitating Brando in his acting style. Then, when he actually got to Hollywood, he wanted to star in all of the movies Brando turned down. 'I'm a natural for Brando's rejects,' he told me. Even though I urged him to forge his own style as an actor, he never listened."

One night at about two o'clock in the morning, Jimmy arrived at my apartment," Brackett said. "I hadn't seen him in days. He begged me to take him to an all-night diner where he could eat chili and beans like he used to when a boy in Indiana. Reluctantly I got dressed and went to the diner, even though I detest chili. He told me he was giving up his dream of a career as an actor. He said that Brando had told him that he could never make it as an

actor and that he had no talent. Jimmy was sobbing between the beans. He claimed that his relationship had deteriorated and that Brando didn't want to see him again."

Ironically, at the time, Jimmy was hoping to land the role of Nels in the TV series, *I Remember Mama.* The same role, in the stage play, of course, had brought acclaim to Brando.

Back from the diner, Brackett felt that Jimmy was coming unglued. "He went to get his bongo drums. He always kept most of his possessions in my apartment. Back in the living room, he wanted to play the drums for an hour or two. At one point he pulled off all his clothing. I was shocked to see that he had burns on his chest. Jimmy told me that they were from cigarette burns by Brando. I was practically ready to call the police on this brutal son-of-a-bitch until Jimmy told me that he'd asked Brando to do that to him. For the first time in my life, I came to realize what a masochist Jimmy was—or was becoming."

While filming *The Last Resort [the film adaptation of Darwin Porter's bestselling novel,* Butterflies in Heat] in Key West in the 1970s, actress Barbara Baxley said that she had known both Jimmy and Brando during the Fifties.

According to Baxley, "I remember seeing Brando at a party in Greenwich Village. He knew that I was Jimmy's friend. I think these two guys had only known each other for a few weeks. Aware of our friendship, he came up to me. 'You'd better get your boy to a psychiatrist right away,' he told me. 'He's an emergency case. One crazed sicko! If you only knew what he wants me to do to him.'"

Already aware of the S&M implications of the Brando/Dean relationship, Baxley cautioned, "You don't have to participate if you don't want to. You could just walk away."

"That's just what I'm going to do with you right now," Brando said before retreating to the other end of the room.

"Self-destructive or not, Jimmy continued to see Brando even though I begged him not to," Baxley claimed.

Soon, word reached many of Brando's associates in Hollywood that he was having an affair with "The Mickey Mouse Marlon Brando," a description that Jimmy hated among all others. He still carried around a dangerous knife and on occasion, he'd threaten to kill whoever used that Mickey Mouse reference in front of him..

When shooting began in Hollywood of Brando's involvement in *Julius Caesar* (1953), Brando was rooming with his agent, Jay Kanter. When the Mexican actress, Movita Castenada, flew in, Kanter rented a house for Brando and his on-again, off-again "South of the Border" mistress in Laurel Canyon. But Brando was rarely at home, continuing with a wide number of affairs.

[Older than Brando, Castenada, or "Mo" as he called her, would become his second wife in 1960. She'd already had numerous affairs, beginning in 1935, when she had appeared with Clark Gable during his filming of Mutiny on the Bounty*. She later had an affair with Errol Flynn. She had once been married to Jack Doyle, the Irish heavyweight boxer and singer.*

Jimmy met "Mo" only once, when he'd visited Brando on the set of Desirée (1954), that cardboard costume drama which featured Brando as Napoléon. Jimmy talked to her briefly before she excused herself. "I've got to go to Marlon's dressing room. He called me here today so he can 'feck' me during the lunch break."

Movita Castenada: Fiery tempered, and with a gift for seducing A-list movie stars

Before leaving, she said, "You're a cute kid. Young. I like that. Why don't you come over some night for one of my fabulous Mexican dinners?" She gave him her phone number, but he never called her.

Instead, he went to lunch with London-born Jean Simmons, who was starring opposite Brando in Desirée. *He told the lovely star that Castenada had made a pass at him. "I'm not into mothers this year," he said. "Marlon can have his gypsy. I heard this Movita bitch was turning tricks when I was four years old."*

Before he left the set that day, he made a pass at Simmons, who rejected his advances. "I'm sure I'm missing out on something good. Perhaps I'll change my mind. Give me a raincheck."]

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As the director of *Julius Caesar* (1953), Joseph Mankiewicz had assembled an all-star cast. Commenting wryly on the romantic imbroglios associated with his handsome male lead, Mankiewicz said, "Brando had his own star cast coming and going. I'll name them: Greer Garson, Pier Angeli, Rita Moreno, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe on occasion. Even Stewart Granger. Brando even let John Gielgud blow him."

Brando confided to Mankiewicz, "I don't want any of the motley crew I'm dating to pin me down." The director was astonished to hear such a distinguished group of actors and actresses referred to as a motley crew. "If a person wants an affair with me, he or she will have to learn my ground rules. I don't want to sound immodest, but I am, after all, Marlon Brando, a fucking movie star. That means I can have any star or starlet in Hollywood I more or less want. I can't really remember ever getting turned down. In relationships, I do the turning down. I'm the one who walks. No one walks out on me!"

Though stating that, he presented a different point of view to his producer, John Houseman. "Marlon is working his ass off," Mankiewicz claimed. "And it's a very talented and much fucked ass."

During the first week of shooting, Houseman showed up frequently on the set. Although originally, it had been his idea to cast Brando as Marc Antony, he later confided his bitter disappointment with Brando's acting ability to Mankiewicz. "I think our boy is awed by all this talent, especially Gielgud's," Houseman claimed. "He's a stuttering bumpkin only remotely acquainted with the English language."

Not wanting to interfere with Mankiewicz's direction, Gielgud modestly sought and obtained the director's permission to tutor Brando in Shakespearean speech patterns at night.

When Gielgud departed from the set, Mankiewicz turned to Houseman and said, "That British faggot wants to get into Marlon's blue jeans. Or at least see what's under the toga. I think he views these upcoming lessons as his golden opportunity. Gielgud, like that Dean boy, has developed a lovesick crush on Marlon."

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In the year that *Julius Caesar* was released, Stanley Kramer offered Brando the lead in *The Wild One* (1953).

Brando told anybody who was interested that he'd turned down the film script when it was first offered. "I told Kramer I wasn't doing any motorcycle movies that year. 'Get Jimmy Dean,' I told him. 'He also rides a bike.'" As the script was continually weakened by mandates from the censors at the Breen office, Brando grew more and more disillusioned with the movie, becoming increasingly inarticulate, finally resorting to mumbling.

Finally, Kramer prevailed in getting Brando to change his mind. *The Wild One* became the original motorcycle film, a cult movie for young bikers, who imitated Brando's leather jacket and blue jeans.

As a fellow motorcycle rider, Jimmy followed suit, appearing on the street looking like one of Brando's bikers, even like Brando himself except for his size.

One fan later claimed that Brando's "sideburns, overt sexuality, and grooving to the jukebox invented the newly emerging Elvis Presley, whose name at first sounded like that of a Presbyterian deacon."

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Although he loudly and frequently proclaimed that he hated parties, Brando was seen at quite a few of them, especially those in Greenwich Village during the making of *On the Waterfront* (1954). Norman Mailer threw a party and invited Brando, who showed up with Rita Moreno. "If a woman were married, you could almost guarantee it that Marlon would make a pass at her, even with Miss Moreno looking on. My wife was no exception."

One night at a party in Brooklyn, Brando brought as his "date," James Dean.

"How Brando could later proclaim he didn't meet Dean until he was starring in *East of Eden* for Kazan is beyond me," said Jimmy Schauffer, an out-of-work actor at that Brooklyn party. "All of us along Broadway knew that Dean and Brando were carrying on. It was the worst-kept secret. From what I observed that night, Brando was definitely in charge of the relationship. If he wanted something, perhaps a drink, he sent Dean to get it. When Brando was ready to go, he got up and without saying a word Dean tagged along like a puppydog after its master. We'd also heard rumors that there was more than a little S&M in that relationship. Guess who the S was?"

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When Jimmy reached Hollywood, he found Clark Gable was no longer king, having surrendered the throne to Brando.

Soon, the press was linking Jimmy's *persona* to the already established image of Brando. *Photoplay* infuriated Jimmy by running their pictures side by side under the headline *THE BOY WHO'D LIKE TO BE BRANDO.* The columnist Sidney Skolsky adored Marilyn Monroe, but rarely had anything good to say about Jimmy. "The best way to describe him is to say that he is Marlon Brando seven years ago."

In a rare interview with Bob Thomas, the AP reporter, Jimmy claimed, "When a new actor emerges, he's always compared to a more established star. Once, Brando was compared to Monty Clift. Even John Barrymore was compared to the great Edwin Booth. Hell, let them compare me to W.C. Fields. Perhaps if I dressed in drag, I might be taken for Mae West herself."

"That boy sure had a wicked sense of humor," Thomas said. "I printed only part of the quote. Mae didn't like men dressing in drag to impersonate her."

In another column, Thomas wrote, "Dean told me that he was convinced that Brando hated him. Brando, however, indicated to me that this was not the case."

Photographer Ray Schatt in *James Dean: A Portrait,* wrote: "At times, he seems obsessed with Brando. Occasionally, for no apparent reason, he would begin quoting from *A Streetcar Named Desire.* One time, during a discussion of Method acting, he took off his shirt and ripped his undershirt to shreds, yelling, STELLA!' in an imitation of Brando as Stanley Kowalski calling for his wife."

Author Randall Riese claimed, "Granted, the similarities between Marlon Brando and James Dean were obvious. They both had an affinity for mumbling and motorcycles. They both played the recorder and bongo drums. They both belonged to the unruly school of fashion. They both wore scowls on their faces, boots on their feet, and *attitude* in their jeans. They were offered the same type of roles. Brando not only turned down *Rebel Without a Cause* back in 1947, but he also rejected Dean's role in *East of Eden.* Finally, and most significantly, they were both discovered by Elia Kazan."

William Zinser in *The New York Herald Tribune* in March of 1955 wrote: "James Dean inevitably will be compared to Marlon Brando, for Kazan stamped him with the same hesitant manner of speech, the same blind groping for love and security that he gave Brando in *On the Waterfront."*

Christine White, who for a time had had a romantic involvement with Jimmy, later claimed that, "Jimmy was fixated on Marlon for a while. I was going to a party where Jimmy was not invited. He begged me to take him, but I didn't think the host would go for that. When I got home, Jimmy bled me for the most minute details about what Marlon did, what he said, how he walked, what he drank, and how he behaved."

Reporters and, in time, biographers, soon picked up on Jimmy's fascination with Brando. But they never knew, or at least didn't write about, the sexual link between the two lovers and rivals.

Charles Higham, in *Brando, The Unauthorized Biography,* wrote, "Jimmy fell in love with Marlon after viewing *The Wild One* and besieged him with phone calls."

Higham got it wrong, as he sometimes did. Jimmy was in love with Brando, but long before either of them ever heard of *The Wild One.* Not only that, Jimmy didn't have to pester Brando with phone calls: On many occasions, if he wanted to reach out to him, all he had to do was turn his head toward the face resting on the pillow beside him. Of course, Higham, and so many others, were misled by Brando's own statements about Dean in his autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me.*

"Dean was never a friend of mine," Brando wrote. *[Perhaps not, Marlon, but he was your lover.]* "He had an *idée fixe* about me. Whatever I did, he did. He was always trying to get close to me. He used to call me up. I'd listen to him talking on the answering service. Asking for me, leaving messages. But I never spoke up. I never called him back." *[Really, Marlon, really…]*

Bill Gunn, Jimmy's African American friend, tried to put comparisons to Brando in perspective: "The *funk* of Jimmy was important. He bridged the jump we made, clear from the 1950s to the 1970s. Sure, he probably watched Brando and took things from him, but imitating someone is also a way to become yourself through an endorsement of yourself."

Gunn did admit that Brando and Jimmy were alike in one respect. "Both of them liked to play games. I was often the victim of one of Jimmy's practical jokes. Brando also liked to pull a 'fuck-you-stunt,' such as scratching his ass and pulling buggers from his nose at the same time."

“As an actor, I had no desire to imitate Brando,” Jimmy claimed to a hometown reporter in Fairmount, Indiana. “I don’t attempt imitation. Nevertheless, it is very difficult not to be impressed with Brando, not to carry the image of a highly successful actor. But that’s as far as it goes. I feel within myself there are expressions just as valid, and I’ll have a few years to develop my own style.”

Of course, his prediction for his future did not happen.

Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio weighed in with his view: “Brando and Dean are two totally different kinds of personalities. What was common at that time was the characters they played. I don’t care what the authors may have intended, they brought onto the stage what we call the anti-hero, the person who cannot express himself, the person who is not a hero in the ordinary sense of the word.”

Film historian John Francis Kreidl noted, “Jimmy arrived in Hollywood when the film industry was desperately struggling to stave off competition from the little black box. Americans were staying at home and watching television instead of going to the movies around twice a week, as they had before.” At Warner Brothers, the search was on for the box office idols of the latter 1950s, and the studio focused on Jimmy as one of their best hopes for stardom. “Brando was getting a little long in the tooth,” said one studio executive, “no longer convincing as a young rebel.”

Robert Tysl, a Hollywood insider, claimed, “The campaign staged by Warners to brand Dean with Brando’s old image was obvious and undeniable.”

At parties, Jimmy became known for his devastating impressions of Brando. Not to be outdone, Brando at gatherings performed his impression of Jimmy. Hedda Hopper was at one party to witness his act. “If Jimmy had walked in and seen Brando’s impression, he would flee from the camera forever and a day.”

When Jimmy heard what Brando was doing, he retaliated. He topped Brando’s act by doing his impression of Brando as Charlie Chaplin.

Hopper’s rival, columnist Louella Parsons, saw Jimmy’s Chaplin act. “I laughed so hilariously, “she said, “I pissed in my bloomers. I hadn’t had such fun since I attended this fancy gathering where Mae West let a fart so big that it smothered Los Angeles in smog for two days and nights.”

As Jimmy moved deeper into Hollywood, he increasingly resented the constant barrage of comparisons to Brando. When introduced to people, he warned them, “Don’t give me that shit that I remind you of Marlon Brando. There’s one god damn difference between us. I love bullfights, and he views them as cruelty to animals. I love a blood sport—the bloodier the better for my tastes.” He still carried that vicious-looking knife he’d purchased in New York.

Warned in advance, gossips took to comparing Jimmy to Brando, but only behind his back.

Director Elia Kazan frankly admitted, “I do not like James Dean. He is obviously sick in the head. I don’t know what is the matter with him. He got crazier as we moved ahead with our shooting schedule for *East of Eden.* But I’d rather not talk about him. He was not like Brando. Dean was a cripple inside. He was so sick and so twisted. Brando is not sick. He is merely troubled.”

“Brando was clearly Dean’s hero during the filming of our movie,” Kazan said. “Everyone knew that. He dropped his voice to a cathedral hush when he spoke of Brando. I invited Brando to come to our set to meet Dean and to enjoy some hero worship.” Kazan seemed completely ignorant that months earlier, Jimmy and Brando had become lovers, and that Jimmy had long been intimate with what the older actor called “my noble tool.”

During Brando’s visit to the set, neither he nor Jimmy gave any clues that they knew each other as David had known Bathsheba.

Truman Capote insisted that “Marlon confessed everything to me in Tokyo.”

The gossipy author, Truman Capote, had been introduced to Jimmy through their mutual friend, Tennessee Williams. Around the time of Jimmy's death, he also interviewed Brando extensively in Japan when he was making *The Teahouse of the August Moon (1956).*

He told Tennessee and others, "If there's one thing I know, it's dick. Neither Brando nor Dean were in the category of Milton Berle, Forrest Tucker, or John Ireland, not to mention Rock Hudson. But they performed well with what they had. I promised to write great roles for both of them. Tennessee used that promises as a seduction technique. Why not Little Me?"

"I also knew the deep dark secret they were hiding," Capote claimed. "Brando and Dean were lovers. Lovers isn't exactly the right word. From what I saw, there was no love there, only sex."

"Actually, Jimmy and Brando were sexually attracted to each other, but were also rivals—and at times, they positively seemed to hate each other," said William Bast. "It was the sort of relationship that Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara had in *Gone With the Wind.* I watched as they glided through Hollywood pretending they were only casual acquaintances. They fooled a lot of people, mainly movie reporters."

Gary Carey wrote a biography of Marlon Brando, *The Only Contender,* in which he claimed, "James Dean was the most flagrant and successful of the Brando imitators. A surprising number of people who otherwise have good taste prefer Dean to Brando."

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In 1954, Brando and Jimmy's relationship became one of the murkiest and most tangled romantic dramas offscreen in Hollywood, evocative of the steamy and contentious romantic roundelays of Arlene Dahl, Lana Turner, Lex Barker, and Fernando Lamas.

"What an embroglio," Bast said. "The convoluted affairs going on were a tangled whirlpool of churning, conflicting emotions, betrayals, and sexual attraction with both gay and straight sex."

The cast he was referring to included Brando, Jimmy, Pier Angeli, Ursula Andress, Vic Damone, and starlet Pat Hardy, with whom Jimmy had co-starred in his final teleplay, *The Unlighted Road.*

Brando dated both Andress and Angeli, both actresses also becoming involved with Jimmy. In fact, he once proclaimed Angeli as the love of his life.

Pat Hardy was also dating singer Vic Damone, who started dating Angeli when she was also sleeping with both Brando and Jimmy (not at the same time). Eventually, she would drop both actors and marry Damone.

Louella Parsons referred to it as "the love romp. Too bad I can't print all the gory details."

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Shortly after Jimmy's death in 1955, Brando was offered two separate gigs; a film role in which he would impersonate Jimmy; and an offer to narrate a documentary about Jimmy's life and career. Ultimately, he rejected both possibilities. But during the time he was debating how to play it, he confided in Truman Capote, saying, "This glorifying of Dean is all wrong…he wasn't a hero. He was just a little lost boy trying to find himself. If a documentary ever got made, it should teach the truth about Dean so that his fans will stop worshipping him. I would cooperate in a film that told the truth, but neither of the scripts did that. They were a fantasy version of Dean. I see clearly what was happening. A cult was forming around the *faux* memory of this kid. He was not some mythical hero, just another pathetic figure wandering the sewers of Hollywood. At times, Dean was a madman with severe psychological problems. We should not glorify his insanity but expose it. In my view, Mr. James Dean should be placed in a back garage of long-abandoned vehicles."

Guess who? A notorious example of Photo-shopping that went through the internet to blogsites and commentators around the world. Many viewers thought it was authentic.

Later, as the years went by, Brando named some other male stars of the time “who should join Jimmy Dean in the forgotten and dusty vaults of yesteryear: Robert Wagner, Tab Hunter, Jeffrey Hunter, Troy Donahue, Audie Murphy, George Hamilton, Peter Lawford, Sal Mineo, Ryan O’Neal, Robert Stack, Robert Hutton, Michael Wilding, and Gig Young, to name only a few. You might catch one of these jerks of yesterday on the late, late show if you’re very, very drunk.”

Chapter Ten

JIMMY TAKES MANHATTAN

Enraged, He Denounces Everyone at the Actors Studio as a "Daisy Chain Faggot"

JIMMY GETS DOWN WITH EARTHA KITT, TRUMAN CAPOTE, A MALE MUSICIAN IN HARLEM, "THE ONLY VIRGIN LEFT IN NYC," AND MANY, MANY OTHERS

Stopping Traffic, He Poses Nude as Adonis on a Manhattan Sidewalk

Tennessee Williams claimed, "Long before *[the noted stage and opera director]* Frank Corsaro had to deal with the emotional demands of Bette Davis during the stage version of my play, *The Night of the Iguana* (1961), he was broken in by James Dean. Jimmy was a dynamo of human angst, and for a while, Corsaro was his mentor. Jimmy always created chaos on the dusty trail he left behind. In fact, if I ever write a play about him, I'll call it *Blossoms in the Dust*. But maybe that's too close to the title of an old Greer Garson movie…"

In June of 1953, Corsaro would cast Jimmy in *The Scarecrow.* Before that, he prevailed on Jimmy to return for more lessons at the Actors Studio, despite his unhappy memories associated with Lee Strasberg's savage attack on him, with the entire class watching, based on his interpretation of *The Matador.*

For months, Corsaro had been closely connected to Jimmy, pouring cultural enlightenment into his animated dialogues with him. Often, they spent quiet evenings together reading from the masterpieces of world literature, talking, and playing recordings of classical music. "He liked me because I was Italian," Corsaro said. "He told me I was very smart and a great director. We read poems together, listening to Italian opera. Those nights with me heightened his awareness. He was not well educated except for talking about *The Little Prince.* I think he'd read it

fifty times. Sometimes, when reading a passage from it to me, he would burst into tears."

Jimmy's friend, John (aka Jonathan) Gilmore claimed that Jimmy intensely disliked not only Strasberg but the entire board of directors at the Actors Studio. Jimmy denounced Strasberg as an ugly man who kept no mirrors in his apartment so he would not have to confront his own image. He also made the claim that his fellow actors "either fuck or suck off" the Actors Studio's board members. "They don't like me, and I don't like them. Every time I hear Strasberg speak, nothing but shit comes out of his mouth. He's full of stodgy platitudes, and he farts out smelly opinions about acting."

"Strasberg's ideas are nothing more than ill-informed personal opinions," Jimmy said. "To quote Nietzche: 'It isn't that they are true, but only they're held up as being true.' Mostly, they are just so much hot air."

Yet according to Gilmore, "Despite those negative opinions, on other occasions he would express high praise for Strasberg."

John Stix, the head of the Board of Directors at Actors Studio, heard that Jimmy was going around New York claiming that his fellow board members "were nothing but a bunch of daisy-chain faggots."

According to Stix, "Jimmy's self-indulgence was not tolerated by Lee, even after his return to the studio. In class exercises, he did not allow Jimmy's defenses to protect him against criticism that all actors face. Jimmy disliked everyone there, except Kim Stanley and Geraldine Page, who babied him. They allowed more margins for his self-indulgences than anyone else did."

Eventually, after days spent summoning his courage and building up his walls of defense, Jimmy returned to the Actors Studio. At first, from a seat in the back row, he watched the proceedings, looking sullen. Gradually, he emerged from his cocoon.

In dialogues with Page and Kim Stanley, Strasberg said, "The Method, as you know, teaches an actor to utilize every emotion from his own life in creating a character on stage. Dean becomes confused about who he really is and the character he is playing. He approaches acting on a more personal level that the Method suggests. He tries to become in private the character he is portraying on stage."

Yet Page and Stanley recognized what Jimmy was trying to do, even if Strasberg didn't. "Lee was still hung up on the Method's emphasis on an actor relying on motivation and sense memory," Stanley said. "That had one major drawback. It did not recognize the concept that an actor can build a performance, create a strong character by perfecting individual moments. Jimmy became a master at doing that."

In her biography, *Lee Strasberg, The Imperfect Genius,* columnist Cindy Adams wrote: "Lee was drawn to anyone with a tic, perhaps because neurotics seem to have heightened sensitiveness. He loved gifted freaks, highly gifted freaks. He loved that negative-positive level of genius in the crazily, desperately talented Kim Stanley, Geraldine Page, and Jimmy Dean."

Actually, Strasberg wasn't as indifferent to Jimmy's acting as some studio members thought. "Dean has a basic honesty in every performance," Strasberg claimed. "Everything he does is commitment. When he pulls a hat down, it isn't just a mannerism. It is a gesture of defiance that comes from deep within."

At one point, Strasberg suggested that Dean appear in a bedroom scene with Carroll Baker, another emerging actress. "Dean seemed bursting out of himself with this animal vitality," Strasberg said. "Perhaps he was just horny. He demanded in his under-the-sheets scene with Baker that he actually penetrate her for greater sexual realism."

"I want to work her up to an actual climax, so the actors sitting out there cannot only see our movements up and down, but hear the sounds of our breathing and cries of joy."

"I turned him down," Strasberg said, "and I never consulted Baker with such an outrageous idea. You can carry Method acting just so far. I told Jimmy that in a Broadway play, which had two matinées a week, on Wednesday and Saturday, he'd have less sexual drive in the evening performance, where tickets cost more. You'd be experiencing your greater sexual thrill for the matinée crowd, and that doesn't seem fair for the higher-paying audience."

"Of course, I was tongue-in-cheek."

Jimmy would tell *The New York Times,* "Strasberg is an incredible man, a walking encyclopedia of fantastic insight." That was his public utterance. Privately he told friends such as William Bast and others, "Strasberg is a Jew cunt."

Once, during one of Marlon Brando's rare appearances at the studio, he shared a cup of coffee with Jimmy in a cafeteria nearby. He told Jimmy, "Strasberg tries to commercialize on his connection to me to promote the Actors Studio. He does the same thing with Marilyn Monroe. If you make it in Hollywood, he'll pull the same stunt with your name. I can just see the entrance a few years from now. Big blowups of MARLON BRANDO, MARILYN

MONROE, and JAMES DEAN."

"Frankly, I loathe the man," Brando said. "Always have. My times at the studio have been very limited. Mostly while Strasberg was ranting about acting, I was casing the joint, checking out the goodies, deciding which lucky boy or gal I was going to fuck later that day."

"Of course, if Monty Clift ever walked in, I'd be out of Dodge in a minute," Brando said. "I can't stand Princess Tiny Meat. I'm sure that before it's all said and done, you in your memoirs will devote two chapters to me and perhaps a thin one to Clift."

Elia Kazan said, "Dean was scarcely at the Actors Studio. He came in only a few times. I remember him sitting in the front row, a surly mess. He never participated in anything."

Surely, Kazan knew that his remarks were not true. In both 1953 and 1954, preceding his Hollywood stardom, Jimmy appeared in several stage productions that were staffed, directed, and sponsored by the Actors Studio. Jack Garfein had already cast him in Calder Willingham's *End as a Man,* starring Ben Gazzara.

In May of 1953, Jimmy had also interpreted the small role of Konstantin Treplev in Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*. As Konstantin, Jimmy was cast as a playwright who tries to commit suicide, succeeding on the second attempt. Based on his work in *The Seagull,* Jimmy said he learned far more from working with actor Joseph Anthony than he did in any acting class.

Born in 1912, Anthony had already starred on Broadway in *The Country Girl,* which was later made into a movie with Oscar-winning Grace Kelly, along with William Holden and Bing Crosby.

In time, Anthony would become one of the more prolific directors in the history of the American Theater, eventually being nominated for Tony Awards for his steerage of *The Most Happy Fella* (1957); Gore Vidal's *The Best Man* (1960); and *110 in the Shade* (1964).

Although *The Seagull* had been written in 1895, Jimmy said, "It still has meaning for modern audiences." The program stated that Constantin Stanislavski had directed the play in 1898 for the Moscow Art Theatre where it was hailed "as one of the greatest events in the history of the Russian theater and one of the greatest new developments in the history of world drama.'"

"Okay," Jimmy said, after reading that. "That's putting it on a little thick, but it's still a god damn piece of good work." He later told Corsaro that Strasberg had seen one of his performances, advising him "to play things closer to yourself."

"I got that advice from the master himself," Jimmy said. "God has spoken. Perhaps you'll tell me what in the fuck 'closer to myself' means?"

Corsaro was quoted as saying, "I think Strasberg misread Jimmy. He was a new and innovative talent sending out his own message. When the phone rang with Jimmy's message, Strasberg didn't pick up the receiver. I think, however, that in time, he came to understand Jimmy's unique talent better."

Jimmy Slits His Wrists

Rescue Comes in the Form of a Blonde Bombshell from Brooklyn

Broke, desolate, and insecure, Jimmy entered the Actors Studio—a high-ceilinged space at 432 West 44th Street, near Tenth Avenue. Originally conceived as a Greek Orthodox Church, it had been adapted into a theater with rehearsal space for acting exercises. Through its doors paraded what columnist Cindy Adams called "the chinchilla and caviar set," including Rock Hudson, Eva Gabor, Grace Kelly, or Leslie Caron. It became a theatrical Elizabeth Arden's."

Shelley Winters...Bitch Goddess

Jimmy had agreed to participate in another acting exercise in front of the class, something he had not done since his *The Matador* skit.

In the front row sat Lee Strasberg with a devoted supporter of the Actors Studio, Shelley Winters, that blonde bombshell from Brooklyn. At this point in her career, she was an established star, usually based in Los Angeles. She welcomed Jimmy back to the studio.

In the first of her two memoirs, Winters had published a picture of Jimmy with a caption that identified him as a man "who often played with knives both on and off the screen."

She recalled their first meeting in which he'd come into the studio wearing a big old overcoat, obviously purchased secondhand, typical of the type homeless men wore on the streets of the Bowery.

On stage for his performance, he removed the overcoat, revealing that he wore only a T-shirt and jeans. For his skit, he removed a switchblade knife from his pocket. As Winters noted, "Something reflected in his face revealed that he was reliving some horrible experience he'd had. He was acting out the role of a young man who had lost it all and wanted to get off the planet. He'd come to the end of his rainbow and found, not a pot of gold, but a stew of despair. His face seemed to signal that he did not have the strength to go on living."

He took his knife and held the blade up to his left wrist. Slowly, he began to make an incision as blood appeared. In horror, Winters realized that this was not pretend, but the real thing. She looked at Strasberg, who appeared dispassionate. When Jimmy then began to make an incision into his other wrist, Winters screamed and jumped up, fearing he was going to cut deeper.

"My God!" she later claimed. "He was actually committing suicide in front of the entire class. I could not believe it. I ran to the stage to stop him."

Confronting him, she struggled and forced him to drop the knife. Then she ripped off her scarf and applied it to his one of his wounded wrists. Finally, Strasberg got involved, handing her his large handkerchief, which she used to bind up the other wrist.

In the dressing room to which they'd retreated, Winters saw that the wounds were only superficial, and that there was no apparent urgent need to take him to a hospital.

At that point, Strasberg entered and scolded her. "Dean was portraying a boy who is unstable. He was obviously working through something as an actor. You may have stopped him from discovering the one thing within him that would have helped him in a future performance."

"Get the fuck out of here!" she screamed at him.

Sharing the seat with him in front of a dressing table, Winters noticed that Jimmy had bled onto her sable, for which he apologized. "He was weeping, and I found myself crying, too," she said. "He put an arm around me and kissed me consolingly."

He tried to explain why he'd attempted suicide on stage. "I want to fight this feeling I have of alienation because I feel nobody is for real. Perhaps it was a cry for help, for someone to come forward to save me." He looked into her eyes. "You were that someone."

"I invited him for some coffee," she said. "He put back on that awful overcoat and followed me. At table in a

cafeteria, he appeared to be starving. He ordered three eggs with fried potatoes, toast, whatever."

"He seemed to have attached himself to me," she said. "I remembered the ancient Chinese proverb that if you save someone's life you are responsible for them."

She claimed that after breakfast, she could not shake him. He followed her out onto the street, where a limousine she'd rented for the day was waiting for her. In a few short hours, the chauffeur would take her to La Guardia for a flight to Los Angeles. "Even though I didn't invite Jimmy, he crawled into the back seat with me."

"When we got to the Plaza Hotel, he followed me upstairs on the elevator to my suite. I still had almost three hours before I left for the airport. One thing led to another. I felt he desperately wanted someone to love him. So it was more about loving him and holding him than it was about sex. Of course, there was that, too."

"Regrettably, he had to do most of the work, since I was in a back brace because of a recent car accident. Jimmy did not get the benefit of my usual gymnastic stunts."

At three o'clock that afternoon, he followed her downstairs, carrying his old airline bag with him. As she got into her limousine, he pleaded with her to take him along. "I said okay because his existence seemed so pointless and haphazard. No matter how much I quizzed him on the way to the airport, I never got a straight answer. He was obviously a very beautiful and gifted actor. In some way, he reminded me of Peter Pan, but without the joy, as if he had sprung directly from Never Never Land and would soon disappear back to it. He seemed to cling to me in some emotional way."

"I was so mixed up myself, I couldn't have done anything about helping him if I could. At the airport, I gave him twenty dollars and kissed him goodbye, telling him to get a room at the Y," she said. "I was afraid he wanted to get on the plane with me. I told the chauffeur to drive him back to Manhattan. As I left him, I saw tears forming in his eyes. When I looked back at him, it was one of the saddest, most forlorn faces I'd ever seen before."

[It almost came to be that Winters and Jimmy would work together. Briefly, George Stevens, who had directed her in A Place in the Sun*, considered her for the minor role of Vashti Snythe in* Giant*, but decided to hire Jane Withers instead.]*

I Was the Mirror Image of a God Damn Scarecrow"

—James Dean

The friendship between Frank Corsaro and Jimmy continued to deepen, although it had its ups and downs. At times, they would have an argument and not speak to each other for two or three weeks, but they always came back together again. After a spat, they'd meet at Jerry's Tavern for a spaghetti dinner, usually followed by an evening spent in the director's apartment listening to classical music.

Both of them seemed to believe in their respective destinies. Corsaro was firmly convinced that he was slated to become one of the major theater and opera directors in America, and that Jimmy would achieve stardom on both the stage and screen.

"At least Jimmy would sometimes believe in his future," Corsaro said. "At other times, he would plunge into deep despair, fearing he had only months to live."

"I've got to cram as much living as I can into the time I have left," Jimmy said.

According to Corsaro, "Jimmy had a lot of morbid thoughts which he expressed to me, even the possibility of committing suicide. I finally got him to go to a psychiatrist. He went for only three sessions. He told me, 'You sent me to a jerk.' He emerged from the sessions no saner than before. He was still taking out that switchblade and stabbing it into a wooden table or else my sofa."

In the spring of 1953, producers Terese Hayden and Liska March hired Corsaro to direct *The Scarecrow* at the Theater de Lys on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. *[It eventually opened on June 16.]*

Sometimes called *The Glass of Truth,* the play was based on *Feathertop,* a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Mercy MacKaye had adapted it as a play that was first performed at Harvard University in 1909.

Corsaro secured the services of three major stars: Patricia Neal, Eli Wallach, and his wife, Anne Jackson. Jimmy was hoping for one of the major roles and was very disappointed that he didn't get it.

Corsaro told Jimmy that he lacked the experience for one of the bigger roles and thereby had been assigned a non-speaking part, that of the mirror image of the scarecrow.

Jimmy's rival, Bradford Dillman, made his stage debut in it, cast as "Richard Talbot."

Angered, Jimmy threatened to drop out of the production entirely. *["You wouldn't give me a speaking role, yet you cast Dillman in my role. What experience has he had?"]* Corsaro asked to be forgiven and even promised to offer him a major role on Broadway in one of the plays he planned to direct. He would keep that promise.

Barbara Glenn, Jimmy's girlfriend at the time (one of many), was out of town. He wrote to her. "I accepted this thankless role because I think I can learn something from Frank. I'm getting a little stipend. With the money I'm going to buy me a new pair of shoes. I've worn out the leather on my old ones walking the streets of New York. I will also buy me a pair of pants. The one I'm wearing is so threadbare that my ass is almost showing. You know how dangerous it is for a good-looking guy like me to walk the streets of queer New York with his rosebud on display."

When producer Hayden sat through the first rehearsal, she complimented Jimmy to Corsaro. "The boy's physical grace will look beautiful as Lord Ravensbane's mirror image."

When Jimmy was introduced to Neal, she said she relished the challenge of playing an old woman—"and a witch at that."

In her autobiography, the actress remembered Jimmy. "There was a pleasant looking young man who excelled in a small dancing role. I was sure that James Dean had a great future ahead of him."

Her biographer, Stephen Michael Shearer, gave the best description of the play's convoluted plot. "It is the story of a female blacksmith Goody Rickby (Neal), who seeks revenge for having been spurned by Justice Gilead Merton (Milton Selzer). She makes a pact with Dick Dickon (Wallach), known as 'The Evil One,' and casts a spell that brings to life a Scarecrow to win the hand of Merton's daughter (Jackson)."

As a human, Lord Ravensbane (Douglas Watson), the scarecrow falls in love with the young girl and breaks his pact with Dickon. This dramatic acts brings about his death, but not before he has experienced, ever so briefly, the joy of life and love."

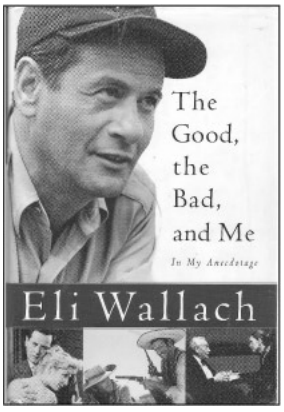
During his short time at the Actors Studio, Jimmy had developed great respect for the talents of the husband-and-wife acting team of Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson. He got to know them better during their work together on *The Scarecrow.* He had a dream that one day he, too, like Wallach, would marry a talented actress, and that together, they would perform on stage and screen. "If not Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, perhaps *Me and My Gal* could at least be Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn."

Wallace urged him to concentrate on becoming a stage actor. "Of course, if you need a paycheck, you might make a movie now and then. But the stage is the only real venue for an actor."

Years later, Wallace commented on the advice he had given Jimmy. "As a Method actor back then, I was almost evangelical in my promotion of it, as if reborn. I set out like a crusader trying to entice young actors into the fold, thinking they would bring fresh blood to the stage. I wanted to convert young Dean."

"I told Dean that stage acting is the most alive thing an actor can do. The stage is a much higher level than film, a more satisfying medium. Movies, by comparison, are like calendar art next to a great painting."

Wallace recognized that Jimmy was struggling to survive as an actor, and he shared with him memories of how "Anne and I started out. We found this dingy little basement apartment in Greenwich Village for $35 a month. The bathroom was outside. We cooked on a two-burner stove I got from a secondhand shop for ten bucks."



Jackson joined Jimmy and her husband, recalling days of working with him in the theater. Jimmy envied them their various appearances in Tennessee Williams' plays, including *This Property Is Condemned.* Rogers Brackett had

taken Jimmy to see Wallach's Tony-winning performance in Tennessee's *The Rose Tattoo,* opposite Maureen Stapleton.

Sometimes, Jackson joined Wallach and Jimmy, sharing her own memories of the theater. She recalled the time she'd visited backstage when Wallach was appearing with Katherine Cornell in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.*

"Charlton Heston was cast as Proculeius, a Roman general in Caesar's army," Wallach said. "He wore this gray uniform with a short skirt. He asked me if I didn't think he had beautiful legs to show off, suggesting that horny women or gay men would buy tickets to the show to gape at his legs. He also told me that he'd started out as a nude model, claiming that when he dropped the robe to pose in the nude, there were sighs of desire heard from both the men and women in the class."

"I told Chuck, 'If you're going to make it in the theater, there is no need to be modest about your physical assets,'" Wallach said.

Patricia Neal Introduces Jimmy to His Mentor

(One of the Few Members of Hollywood's Old Guard Who Genuinely Liked Him)

GARY COOPER, THE MONTANA MULE

Ever since Marcus Dean, Jimmy's uncle, had taken him to see Gary Cooper in *Sergeant York (*1941), the image of the ultimate all-American hero, nicknamed "Coop," had been implanted on his brain. To Jimmy, the lanky, handsome star was lean, laconic, and masculine, an image of inspiration to a small boy growing up in the farmlands of Indiana.

To Jimmy, there was something real about the actor. "He had no bag of tricks," Jimmy said, "and none of the florid gestures of some other actors of his era."

As Jimmy rehearsed for his teleplays, he would remember Coop's speech patterns and his uncanny use of hesitancy, and his naturalness.

Without his uncle, Jimmy returned to the movie theater the next day to see for a second time Cooper portraying Alvin York, a backwoods turkey shooter who became America's most-decorated hero of World War I.

From that moment on, Jimmy never missed a Gary Cooper movie. He was especially enthralled with Cooper's superb portrayal of baseball star Lou Gehrig in *The Pride of the Yankees* (1942), or as the Ernest Hemingway character in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), in which he created a beautifully believable relationship with Ingrid Bergman.

When Jimmy met Patricia Neal in New York, he didn't tell her that he hadn't really understood the architect Cooper had portrayed opposite her in *The Fountainhead* (1949). But Cooper redeemed himself in Jimmy eyes when he was cast as the subtle and sympathetic sheriff, Will Cain, who must confront a coven of killer gunmen in *High Noon* (1952). Of course, Grace Kelly would be waiting for him at the end of the picture. "Grace Kelly—now that's something Coop and I have in common," Jimmy boasted to his friends.

Jimmy was aware, as were many a movie fan, that Cooper and Neal had begun a tormented affair when they'd co-starred together in *The Fountainhead,* even though he was married at the time to Veronica Balfe, whom he had nicknamed "Rocky." Neal was twenty-six at the time, and he was forty-six.

When Jimmy had lived with Rogers Brackett, and the producer had learned of Jimmy's fascination with Cooper, he brought Jimmy up on all the gossip. "What a cocksman that guy was, and bisexual at that," Brackett said.

Patricia Neal with Gary Cooper. Although they were acting together in a scene from *The Fountainhead*, their love was real, albeit thwarted.

Over lunch in Manhattan, Neal told Jimmy that she had accepted a marriage proposal from Roald Dahl, the British writer. With tears in her eyes, she also tossed a "bombshell" at him, revealing that Cooper had scheduled a brief visit to New York for their final goodbye before they parted forever. "He'll have very little time here, and he wants you to join us for dinner."

"I'm dying to meet him, but it sounds like you guys need some space all your own."

"We'll have that after he meets you," she said. "And you should know that there's a motive to his madness. He's heard that Elia Kazan might cast you as the lead in *East of Eden,* and Coop thinks that the role of your mean and bitter father would be a choice role for him."

In anticipation of his dinner with Cooper and Neal, Jimmy got a haircut and wore his only suit. He wanted to look his best, but later confessed, "I was nervous as hell, but Coop put me at ease almost immediately. He'd made dozens of movies and won two Oscars—in fact, he was Hollywood royalty, a survivor of the Golden Age—yet he treated me like an equal worthy of respect."

Neal made no mention of what happened that night in her memoirs. But she described to Anne Bancroft *[a close friend of Darwin Porter and Stanley Haggart]* and others what happened that night: "I think Cooper was testing his chemistry with Jimmy. Coop and Jimmy could not have been more different as actors, yet they bonded. For reasons known only to him, Jimmy told Coop that he was inspired more by him than he was by either Monty Clift or Marlon Brando."

"You've always been my screen idol," Jimmy said. "Not those other fuckers."

As stated by Neal, "Right before my eyes, Jimmy and Coop seemed to develop a romance. Of course, you know I don't mean that in any sexual sense. These two men were from different generations and had divergent lives. But each seemed to sense that one lost soul was meeting and finding a sympathetic comrade in the other."

"Unlike Jimmy, Coop had actually read John Steinbeck's *East of Eden,* and both of them became animated about methodologies for the creating of a dynamic father-son confrontation on the screen."

"We've got to show love beyond the outward hostility," Cooper said to Jimmy. "We can do that."

"And I can show my love for you, too," Jimmy said. "You've meant so much to me. So tall, so handsome, so forthright."

"For a man of few words on the screen, Coop delivered quite a mouthful that night," Jimmy told Eli Wallach.

After a few hours, Jimmy politely excused himself, with the understanding that Coop and Neal needed time alone during their final night together.

Standing up, and towering over Jimmy, Coop extended his hand. Impulsively, Jimmy wrapped his arms around him and held him tightly for one long moment. Cooper responded with manly affection, even running his fingers through Jimmy's hair.

"For one brief moment, I saw a loving father holding his young son in his arms," Neal said. "It was a beautiful sight I'll never forget."

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[Despite the onscreen suitability of Gary Cooper playing father to the character played by James Dean in East of Eden*, Elia Kazan had very different ideas.*

The austere, inflexible role of Adam, Jimmy's father, was awarded to Raymond Massey, a talented actor who was very different from Cooper.

"I'm so sorry Coop lost the role," Neal said. "He and Jimmy were heartbroken. Jimmy called me and was sobbing on the phone. He really wanted those moments onscreen with his idol."

Cooper called him at the end of the picture's filming to arrange a get-together in Hollywood. As such, he was one of the few golden age stars to welcome the newcomer, unlike Clark Gable and Cary Grant, who had each expressed contempt for him.

Even Jimmy Stewart turned against James Dean, ostensibly because they each competed for two of the same roles, despite the quarter-century difference in their ages. (Stewart was forty-seven, and Dean was twenty-three. They vied for the role of Jett Rink in Giant, *and for the part of aviator Charles Lindbergh in* The Spirit of St. Louis. *In the aftermath of Jimmy's rejection of the latter of those two roles, it was awarded to Stewart, who thus became the pilot who flew across the treacherous Atlantic to Paris.]*

When Jimmy and Cooper learned that they shared a passion for horseback riding, they sometimes went riding together on Saturdays.

"I got Kazan to arrange a screening of *East of Eden* for Coop and me," Jimmy said. "Later, over drinks, I asked Coop what he thought of my performance, and he told me I had all the elements of a really big star. As for Massey playing my father, he thought he was a shit."

"Massey played the role in the first dimension," Cooper said. "He should have shown more than contempt for his son. He should have conveyed a deep love, at least in a far and distant chamber of his heart. I would have reached down to show I really cared for Cal in spite of my neurotic behavior."

Jimmy later told Kazan, "That's not a bad appraisal coming from an actor who's supposed to be inarticulate."

He later related that one Saturday after a very long and tiring horseback ride, Cooper invited him for a steambath at his country club.

"We were bare-assed—now I know why Coop is called 'the Montana Mule.'" Jimmy told William Bast. "It was long, thick, floppy—and still soft. Those were some lucky guys and gals who got to make love with him."

"Unfortunately," Jimmy continued, "I cannot include my name on Coop's list of conquests. I would have been more than willing. If he'd played my father on the screen, it would have been a case of incest."

Jimmy's continuing fascination with Cooper was demonstrated during the filming of *Giant* in Texas. He admired the Stetson worn by actress Mercedes McCambridge. She told him that Cooper had given it to her after he'd worn it in three of his pictures.

"I thought it might be something like that," Jimmy said. "Your hat is the most authentic in the movie."

She later claimed that Jimmy made at least three unsuccessful attempts to steal it from her. "I was onto the little devil. I guarded that hat like it was the crown jewels."

When he heard the news of Jimmy's death, shortly after the filming of *Giant,* Cooper said, "I'm depressed, a bit morbid. What a loss. The roles he could have played."

Jimmy, of course, was not alive to see the last stand of America's hero. Cooper was at home battling cancer when James Stewart accepted an honorary Oscar on his behalf at the Academy Awards in April of 1961. Stewart chocked up, signaling to the world that one of its greatest stars was dying.

For Cooper, it was no longer *High Noon.* Midnight was fast approaching.

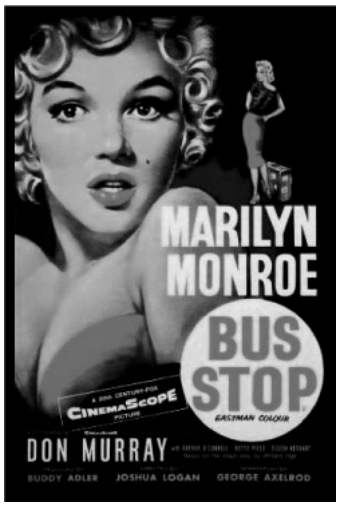
Gary Cooper died on May 13, 1961, about a month after being designated as recipient of that Oscar.

The first telegrams of condolence to his family came from President John F. Kennedy and Queen Elizabeth II of England.

Jimmy Misses a Bus Stop

WITH MARILYN MONROE

Albert Salmi, with his rugged good looks, brawny physique, and very masculine aura was a member of the cast of *The Scarecrow* who intrigued and physically attracted Jimmy. Like Jimmy, he was a Method actor and a member of Actors Studio.



The son of Finnish immigrants, he had been reared in Brooklyn. Four years older than Jimmy, he had joined the U.S. Army to fight during World War II.

During a rehearsal for *The Scarecrow,* Salmi's relationship with Jimmy deepened when he extended an invitation to join him in the East Village. He wanted Jimmy to experience both an old-fashioned Turkish bathhouse and its Finnish counterpart, with the intention of demonstrating that the dry heat of a Finnish sauna was superior and more invigorating.

After testing each of them, the two young actors went to Stanley Haggart's apartment, to which Jimmy still had his private key. The next morning Haggart met both men, each attired in his underwear, and served them a Kansas-style farmhouse breakfast. Since it was a Sunday, they wanted to spend the rest of the day sunbathing on his rooftop terrace.

That evening over drinks in Haggart's living room, Jimmy asked Haggart—since he was considered an interpretive expert—to examine a sample of Salmi's handwriting.

Haggart later admitted to Alec Wilder and others that, "I didn't give an honest reading. Salmi appeared tame enough on the surface, but there was a dark streak, a touch of madness I intuited through the reading of his handwriting. He was capable of great violence, and the lines on his hand implied a horrible upcoming death. Jimmy seemed attracted to this reckless streak in Salmi, but I didn't tell either of them any of that."

"During the summer of 1953, the two of them made frequent use of my apartment, often sunbathing in the nude on my terrace. I jokingly told Jimmy that Salmi's real name should be 'salami.'"

"Jimmy sometimes complained to me that Salmi was a selfish brute in bed," Haggart said.

"When he's finished, he turns over and goes to sleep, leaving me panting and unsatisfied." Jimmy claimed.

Since both men were actors fully suited for portraying the same characters, they sometimes competed—alongside Paul Newman—for the same roles. Newman, along with a lot of other actors, too, especially desired the role of the rowdy cowpoke chasing after a stripper in William Inge's play, *Bus Stop.*

At first, Jimmy went after the role, planning to pursue Inge and to offer his body once again as a means of procuring the role. But then he read an item that Inge revealed to a journalist, perhaps as a means of concealing his sexual attraction to Jimmy.

"I don't want James Dean in one of my plays," Inge said. "His moods are unpredictable. He scares the pants right off me. What if in the middle of the play, this temperamental actor decides to tear up the script and write his own lines?"

Jimmy was deeply insulted and announced that he would not accept the role of Bo Decker even it was offered to him.

Ironically, the part eventually went to Salmi, appearing on Broadway at the same time opposite Jimmy's friend, Kim Stanley. She telephoned Jimmy and told him how disappointed she was that they wouldn't be working together.

Bus Stop opened to rave reviews at the Music Box Theater on May 23, 1953. Even Elvis Presley went to see it, seeking the movie role of the cowboy, but Col. Tom Parker, his manager, nixed the idea.

June, 1955 edition of *Theatre Arts* magazine, promoting Albert Salmi with Kim Stanley as a washed-up stripper in the Broadway production of *Bus Stop*

After that, Salmi was then offered the film role of *Bus Stop's* gauche and horny cowboy opposite Marilyn Monroe, but Salmi turned it down, proclaiming that he didn't like movie making. Eventually, the role of Bo in *Bus Stop's* film version went to Don Murray, who got rave reviews.

As for Salmi, during his road tour of the theatrical version of *Bus Stop,* he met and eventually married the former child actress Peggy Ann Garner, and ended his involvement with Jimmy. In 1963, the couple divorced. The following year, Salmi married Roberta Pollock Taper. The couple had two daughters.

Eventually, Salmi moved to Washington State, where he lived in semi-retirement. He separated from his wife in 1990, but continued to harass and threaten her. Finally, on April 23 of that year, Salmi, suffering from a severe clinical depression, fatally shot his estranged wife. A few hours later, he put a fatal bullet to his own head.

Jimmy, of course, never lived to learn of Salmi's committing such violence.

"For God's Sake, You're Not Frank Sinatra—

AND DON'T GO TO HOLLYWOOD TRYING TO BECOME ANOTHER TAB HUNTER"

—ELI WALLACH TO JAMES DEAN

Jimmy would appear for a final time with Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson when he performed a dramatic reading at the Cherry Lane Theater in Greenwich Village on February 12, 1954. The New School of Social Research arranged for Howard Sackler to showcase Sophocles' tragedy, *Trachiniae,* a modern version with a provocative, free-wheeling translation by the crazed poet, Ezra Pound, who translated its title as *Women of Trachnis.*

Pound came up with his version of this classical Greek tragedy while a prisoner incarcerated at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Here, he was held for twelve years, placed in Howard's Hall in a cell known as "Hell's Hole," with no window. He lived behind a thick steel door with nine peepholes through which psychiatrists could secretly observe him.

Jimmy knew nothing about Pound and went to the library to research his life. Born in the Idaho Territory in 1885, he graduated with a prestigious education from Hamilton College *[in Clinton, New York]* in 1905. Later, after spending years of what authorities defined as "collaboration with an enemy," he was defined as a traitor working against the interests of the United States.

In 1924, he'd moved to Italy, where he embraced Mussolini's fascism. From there, during World War II, he made radio broadcasts that attacked the Jews and Franklin D. Roosevelt. As a vicious anti-Semite, he supported the

extermination policies of Adolf Hitler.

In 1945, he was arrested by Allied soldiers and sent as a prisoner to Washington, D.C., where he was incarcerated for years in a psychiatric asylum, producing poetry hailed by some academics as that of a troubled genius.

Jimmy found Pound's personal history fascinating, and was eager to work with Jackson and Wallach (whom he continued to admire) again. He also appeared with a distinguished New York actor, Joseph Sullivan, who had the fourth starring role. He was already well-known on Broadway, having starred in such productions as *The Country Girl,* a successful play that was later adapted into a movie starring Grace Kelly, who took the Oscar away from Judy Garland for her role in *A Star Is Born* (1954).

In the staging of this obscure ancient Greek play, Jimmy was cast as Hyllus, son of Herakles (Wallach) and Daianeira (Jackson). Onstage, he denounces his mother for murdering his father. *["Damn you, I wish you were dead."]* Devastated by her son's attack, she commits suicide. "Heavy stuff," was Jimmy's critique.

Wallach remembered that Jimmy was nervous during rehearsals, not about the Greek tragedy, but about a possible screen test for Elia Kazan who was casting *East of Eden* at around the same time.

Jimmy told Wallach that he didn't think he could go through with the test. "I hate being tested like a slave on the auction block. Frankly, I don't feel up to the role. What if I make an ass of myself and word gets out? I could be finished for future parts."

"You'll be great," Wallach assured him. "I used to vomit butterflies before going on. An actor who isn't nervous doesn't give a fuck."

"I've had a screen test before," he said. "I went out for the role of Curly in *Oklahoma!"*

"For god's sake, boy," Wallach said. "Frank Sinatra was also offered the role, and so was Gordon MacCrae, but you're nothing like them. Be yourself."

"If you go to Hollywood, don't be another Tab Hunter," Wallach said. "One Tab is enough."

For Jimmy, the most lasting benefit of his appearance in *Women of Trachnis* involved his introduction by Howard Sackler to the musician, Leonard Rosenblum, who was composing the music for the play. Rosenblum, who later scored *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause,* would eventually become one of Jimmy's closest friends.

Rosenblum, who was gay, was immediately attracted to Jimmy. Sackler had warned him, "Dean's a tough kid. Sleeps on nails." Ironically, it was that very image that attracted Rosemblum, who liked to be dominated by a master.

Jimmy moved in with Rosenblum, and the two men became lovers. "He'll do anything I demand," Jimmy said. "One night I didn't want to get up and go to the toilet. I was too stoned. So I ordered the fucker to have a drink. He swallowed every drop, just as I commanded."

Jimmy eventually showed up at Jerry's Tavern for dinner with his new lover and S&M partner, shocking Jerry with his black leather jacket and boots. "My god," Jerry said. "He looked like a member of the Nazi SS."

When some of Jerry's Jewish guests complained, the owner told them that Jimmy was appearing in a World War II drama. When he asked Jimmy about it, he answered, "My new friend likes me to dress up like this. As a Jew, he imagines being assaulted, beaten, and raped by the Gestapo."

"You're bad, kid, but I really love you," Jerry said. "Try the lasagna. It's on the house tonight."

Sackler was very impressed with Jimmy's acting and promised to cast him in future plays he planned to direct. Regrettably, Jimmy would not be around to star in those roles.

Sackler would go on to direct plays across America, Europe, and South America. His best known work would become *The Great White Hope,* which opened as a play in 1967, and which was adapted into a film in 1970. Both the stage and film version (for which it generated Oscar nominations), starred James Earl Jones and Jane Alexander.

[Sackler died on October 12, 1982, in his studio on the island of Ibiza, one of the Balearic Islands off the Mediterranean coast of Spain. The cause of his death was never determined. His friends claimed that he was murdered.]

Jimmy, of course, ignored Eli Wallach's advice and moved to Hollywood, where he starred in *East of Eden.* But as soon as he could, he rushed back to New York and his Broadway friends, especially Frank Corsaro. This time, since offers were pouring in, he wasn't looking for work. He wanted to walk the streets of Manhattan again and visit his familiar haunts.

The first person he phoned after his return was Corsaro, who was organizing the production of a Broadway play entitled *A Hatful of Rain.* Honoring an earlier promise, he wanted Jimmy to star in either of two lead male roles.

During their reunion, Corsaro read aloud the play, authored by Michael V. Gazzo, to Jimmy.

A Hatful of Rain broke ground in that it was a candid and sympathetic portrayal of drug addiction. Corsaro defined it as "an unflinching portrait of a young, lower middle-class man struggling to break his drug habit."

"In other words, you want me to play a junkie?" Jimmy asked. "It's certainly got some pungent dialogue as this family struggles with its addict son."

Corsaro told Jimmy that he'd be ideal in the role of Johnny Pope, a veteran of the Korean War who, while recuperating from battle injuries in an Army hospital, became addicted to morphine. The script had another strong role too; that of Polo Pope, Johnny's brother who courageously lends strong support to his junkie sibling. Yet despite his status as Jimmy's mentor, Corsaro could not persuade his *protégé* to accept either role.

When the play eventually opened in November of 1955, about two months after Jimmy's death, on Broadway, Jimmy—had he lived—would probably have been jealous of the rave reviews his rival, Ben Gazzara, received for his performance alongside Shelley Winters and Tony Franciosa. Behind the scenes those latter two had "shacked up" (Winter's words) and later, in 1957, embarked on a tempestuous marriage.

Also in 1957, the script for *A Hatful of Rain* was adapted into a film. The role developed onstage by Gazzara went to Don Murray, and the Winters role was assigned to Eva Marie Saint. Franciosa repeated his stage role on the screen.

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In the summer of 1954, Corsaro organized a production of August Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata [aka Spöksonaten]* at the Actors Studio. "I promised to give Jimmy the role of Arkenholz, the student with second sight," Corsaro said. "When he told me 'to go fuck myself,' I got so mad at him, I abandoned producing it altogether. He would have been terrific in the role. He and I had a silly argument about a rental I'd arranged for him in the studio of Jonathan Bates when he was out of town. We didn't speak until that autumn, when we made up once again."

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[In the aftermath of Jimmy's tragic death in 1955, at least three key of his Actors Studio contacts weighed in with their opinions about his talents, and his accomplishments or lack thereof.

As expressed by Corsaro, "If Jimmy had lived, I was certain that he would have returned to the stage. He needed the sound of applause, something a movie star doesn't get. He needed a live audience, which he had the power to win over. How do you think his memory has survived after all these years if he lacked the ability to communicate to an audience.?"

Shelley Winters told Corsaro, "Marlon Brando and Jimmy certainly contributed to the itch-and-scratch school of acting. They were the chief graduates of the 'Dirty Fingernails School.' Also, the 'Torn Shirt School,' even the 'Smelly Armpits Academy.' They made wrinkled fatigues and dirty jeans their haute couture*. They also pioneered the inaudible school of acting, specializing in the slovenly and the rude. But let's ask ourselves the question: 'Why did we love them so?'"*

Months later, Corsaro shared his memories of Jimmy's return from the West Coast after his filming of East of Eden*. "He was drinking a lot of brandy when not swirling it around in a snifter. He was really on edge. He claimed that he'd 'managed' Kazan, although I doubted that. I don't think he was handling all his publicity very well. In fact, I think he was starting to believe his press."*

"He was a highly charged sexual son of a bitch," Corsaro said to Lee Strasberg. "A younger version of Brando, whom someone had labeled 'the brute with a girl's eyes.' Jimmy played the field with a delicate macho aura but with a feminine streak, too. He seemed to be uttering a contradiction—'Save me! Save me! But don't get near me.'"

"He lived in a complex, shadowy world. Emotionally, he remained the hustler he'd been in his early days in Hollywood and in New York, too, when he first hit town. A lot of his trouble stemmed from his androgyny. He wanted to celebrate it at the same time he wanted to eradicate it. His cruelty often arose from the inner turmoil raging within him."

In October of 1956, about a year after Jimmy's death, Strasberg addressed his class at the Actors Studio. "I have just seen James Dean in Giant*," he announced, "and I must say…" At that point, he choked up and began to cry. According to Strasberg, "When I got back home, the tears rained down. I cried from the pleasure and joy of watching his performance. I also cried for the waste, that awful waste of a great talent who never lived to show us just what he could do."*

Yet in the years to come, Strasberg would express views that were more negative about Jimmy. "Dean did not go far enough in his work, even in the latter stages, which is all we have to judge. He did not use enough of himself, which he kept buried in some secret dark hole. While he continued to forge ahead in getting work as an actor, he failed to make any progress that I was aware of. It seemed that he'd adopted this persona, and that he was going to stick with it."

In 1955, Jimmy launched a brief affair with Lee's daughter, the actress, Susan Strasberg. She once told Darwin Porter, "I didn't know if Jimmy were attracted to me as a woman, or else whether he was getting revenge on my father."]

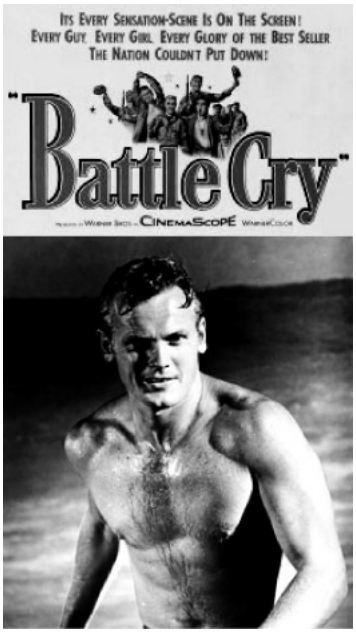
James Dean vs. Tab Hunter

VYING FOR THE SAME ROLES, AND DATING THE SAME WOMEN

BUT DID THEY, OR DIDN'T THEY?

Leon Uris (1924-2003), a novelist best known for his bestselling historical fiction, had written a popular novel based on World War II, *Battle Cry*, and had also penned the screenplay for its adaptation into a film that was released in 1955. Raoul Walsh had been designated as its director. At the time, Walsh was one of the biggest directors in Hollywood, having helmed such actors as Humphrey Bogart and Errol Flynn.

Battle Cry was the story of the U.S. Marines, following them from boot camp in San Diego into combat at Guadalcanal in the Pacific, tracing their disparate cultural backgrounds as they build and manifest, through tragedy and sweat, an *esprit de corps.*



Tab Hunter...American Adonis

One of the best roles was that of PFC Danny Forrester, a sensitive young Marine who has a girlfriend but also indulges, during training, in an affair with an older woman.

William Orr, the son-in-law of Jack Warner, had tested some one hundred actors, including Paul Newman, but hadn't found anyone that suited his taste. John Kerr, Jimmy's former lover, had made one of the best tests, but Orr was also considering Robert Wagner for the role.

Elia Kazan called Orr and told him, "There is this hot young actor in New York who would make a great Danny. I think he's going to be a big star. His name is James Dean. Here's your chance to use him before his price soars."

The film was going to be shot in CinemaScope, which didn't interest Jimmy. Nor did the movie itself. But when he learned that his former acting coach, the rugged James Whitmore, had signed as one of its stars, he was lured into making a screen test.

Except for the role of Danny, the major parts had already been cast with actors who included Van Heflin in the key role of "High Pockets." He'd be backed up by Aldo Ray, Anne Francis, Dorothy Malone, Mona Freeman, and Jimmy's future nemesis, Raymond Massey.

"Most actors were watering at the mouth to play Danny," Orr said. "But not Dean. I figured he was just playing hard to get to make himself more desirable as an actor."

As his girlfriend in the test, Orr had selected an attractive young actress, Ruda Michelle (also known as Ruda Podemski). She was familiar with Jimmy, having spotted him from time to time back at Cromwell's Pharmacy, which she had often visited, carrying a sandwich in a paper bag, since she could afford only coffee.

When, in preparation for the screen test, she was formally introduced to Jimmy, he invited her to his small apartment in Manhattan. When she arrived there, she was startled to find him draped in a bullfighter's cape. He told her that it had belonged to the great matador, Sidney Franklin from Brooklyn. "That didn't sound like any bullfighter's name to me," Michelle said.

She later claimed that he didn't really want to rehearse their scene for the next day's test. Instead, he asked her to sit with him on his battered old sofa, telling her he wanted her to hear a recording of David Diamond's 1944 work for stringed orchestra, "Rounds." *[Modernist, melodic, and avant-garde, it's arguably the most popular work that Diamond ever composed.]*

"Sit close to me and don't be afraid," he told her. "I don't bite. Just listen to the sound of the music."

The evening passed, and unlike what she had expected, he made no attempt to seduce her.

Both of them arrived separately the next day for their screen test. Orr remembered it vividly: "Danny was supposed to be a cleancut, all American boy, but Dean came in with a three-day beard dressed in an old Army surplus jacket, a pair of dirty blue jeans, and wearing some shit-kicking boots, more appropriate for the wilds of rattlesnake country in West Texas."

Orr didn't expect the test to be successful, but he later claimed, "I was electrified by it."

As soon as he'd seen the results, he wrote to Jack Warner: "You will see from this test that even though James Dean is of dubious appearance, and there is a trace of the Brando school of acting, he is unique, certainly not a conventional actor. He brings more vitality to the role than a hundred actors I've tested. He enjoys a fine reputation in New York as a most talented young man, perhaps a bit difficult to handle, but Walsh can get out his whip and, with that patch over his eye, beat some obedience into this unruly boy. Makeup, of course, can take care of his appearance."

Orr was very disappointed when his father-in-law, Jack Warner, rejected the idea of involving Jimmy in the film. "I couldn't believe it," Orr said. "Dean was fantastic in his test, but Jack decided to go for a name actor. At the time, Tab Hunter had a bit of a box office following, especially among teenage girls, even though he was gay as a goose. Warners lost out on a big opportunity in not casting Dean."

***

After they lost their respective roles in *Battle Cry,* Jimmy would have a final encounter with Ruda Michelle.

One afternoon in Hollywood, she spotted him coming toward her. He was wearing blue jeans and a T-shirt. He was accompanied by two beautiful teenage girls, each clad in a bathing suit, positioned on either side of him. Approaching her, he said, "Ruda, what are you doing here?"

"Hanging out looking for a job when not beaching it," she said.

He reached for her arm. "Come with me," he said, before telling those clinging girls to get lost.

She quickly wrapped her beach towel around her nearly nude body and wandered off with him. He seated her beside him in a yellow convertible and drove over to Warners. There, a secretary allowed them into William Orr's office.

Barging in, Jimmy said, "Bill, you darling man, I've found the perfect actress to play Judy in *Rebel Without a Cause*. You'd better give the part to her or else I might walk."

"Needless to say, I didn't get the role, which went to Natalie Wood," Michelle said. "And, before I forget, Jimmy changed his mind, forgave Orr, and indeed starred in the picture, as everybody in the world knows."

***

In Hollywood, Jimmy visited the set of *Battle Cry,* ostensibly for a reunion with James Whitmore, his former acting teacher. Whitmore welcomed him, though he told some of the cast that he suspected that Jimmy was really showing up just to see how Tab Hunter was doing in the role of Danny.

"There was a definite jealousy," Whitmore said. "All actors have it. I was so jealous of Spencer Tracy, I detested him."

In his memoir, *The Making of a Movie Star,* Hunter wrote, "Jimmy visited my dressing room several times during the making of *Battle Cry.* We'd also hang out on the steps outside talking between shots."

Tab Hunter, weary from the rigors of war, in *Battle Cry.*

"I have no proof," Whitmore said, "but both the cast and crew gossiped about Jimmy and Tab. Tab was definitely gay, and Jimmy was bi, to say the least, so we assumed that when Jimmy disappeared into Tab's dressing room, it wasn't just to apply his makeup."

Motivated by dreams of becoming a Hollywood star, Jimmy took note of his competition, the so-called "Pretty Boy Pack." Led by Rock Hudson, Tony Curtis and Robert Wagner were "hot on my ass," as Jimmy so colorfully phrased it.

In the second tier of this cabal of young male actors was Tab himself, trailed by John Kerr, John Ericson, Steve Forrest, Jeffrey Hunter, and the doomed Robert Francis, who appeared in only four Hollywood films, all with military themes, before he died at the age of 25 in the crash of an airplane he was piloting.

Both Jimmy and Tab arrived in Hollywood just as the studios were getting rid of their contract players. During these tectonic shifts in the landscapes of Hollywood, even such stalwart Golden Age survivors as Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable were sent out to pasture. Natalie Wood, Tab, and Jimmy were the last actors to be placed under contract to Warners.

James Dean *(left)* with Tab Hunter, each a heartthrob of the 1950s, were rivals on the screen and with other lovers, too. But the question that's never been answered is, "Did they or didn't they do it?"

Jimmy rejected a seven-year contract, and agreed to only a three-picture deal. As he told Tab, "I want to be a free agent, kiddo."

In contrast, Tab preferred the security of a long-term contract.

During one of Jimmy's visits to the set, a studio publicity photographer spotted the two of them chatting, and snapped pictures of the handsome young men together. "We were the polar opposites of America's youth culture captured together," Tab wrote.

Although Tab was called to the set, the photographer wanted to get more pictures of them together. In response, "Jimmy flipped the bird at him," Tab said. "I knew that my friend, Dick Clayton, Jimmy's agent, had his hands full with him because he was unconventional and unpredictable. But he believed in Jimmy and thought he was well worth the trouble."

Clayton recalled going with Tab to deliver a contract to Jimmy on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause.* "It was being shot that night in the spooky mansion that had been the abode of Norma Desmond *[as portrayed by Gloria Swanson]* in *Sunset Blvd.* Jimmy and I hung out waiting for the crew to go through another setup."

In the months to come, Tab and Jimmy often dated the same rising starlets, including Natalie Wood, Terry Moore, and Lori Nelson. As a gay man, Tab did it for the sake of publicity, using the beautiful starlets as "arm candy." Hollywood insiders joked, "NATALIE WOULD BUT TAB WOULDN'T."

Both men doubled up on Tony Perkins, Jimmy having only a fling with him, Tab a fully blossomed romance that was whispered about all over Hollywood and later acknowledged by Tab in his memoirs.

Rumors were also rampant about the alleged affair of Tab and Jimmy, but so far as it is known, Tab never admitted to that.

Jimmy, however, did boast to a number of friends that, upon his arrival in Hollywood, "one of my goals is to fuck that pretty blonde to show him who's boss."

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Battle Cry, which was released in 1955 to a disappointing box office, wasn't the only role that both Tab and Jimmy would compete for. That same year, a baseball-themed Broadway musical opened called *Damn Yankees,* the plot involving a Faustian bargain. *[The hero, Joe Hardy has offered to sell his soul to the devil if his team, the Washington Senators, can beat the New York Yankees.]* Stephen Douglass starred in the lead role of Joe Hardy. Warners acquired the film rights to the stage play, and briefly considered Jimmy for the romantic lead of the baseball hero, Joe Hardy.

Tab Hunter, Gwen Verdon, in *Damn Yankees.* Jimmy was considered for Tab's role.

At the last minute, however, they opted for Tab Hunter instead, backed up by Gwen Verdon, Satan's (reluctant) temptress, who demonstrates her seductive charms with "Whatever Lola Wants." After the characters team up to thwart the devil's schemes, everything ends happily in the end.

Tab had just granted an interview to *Liberty* magazine in which he revealed, "I rebel against playing the teen-aged baby-faced 'boy next door' in my films. I'm twenty-six, and I'd rather play a murderer. So, guess what? I land my biggest 'boy next door' character to date, the role of naïve baseball hero, Joe Hardy."

In the movie roles he was assigned, Tab didn't always emerge the winner. Warners considered casting him, along with Debbie Reynolds, as the star of *Rebel Without a Cause,* a choice that would have "tamed" that picture

considerably. Prompted by Jack Warner, *Rebel's* director Nicholas Ray evaluated the potential of those other actors: "Debbie and Tab are too anemic."

[Of course, the leads eventually went to Jimmy and Natalie Wood, but before Jimmy was cast as Jim Stark, both Robert Wagner and John Kerr were considered for the role.]

On the night Jimmy died, Dick Clayton, his agent, phoned Tab with the news: "Oh, my God!" Clayton shouted into the phone. "Jimmy's dead. He died in a car crash."

Tab later wrote, "Dick could hardly speak. He was devastated. Within days, he would suffer a bout of psychosomatic blindness caused by the trauma over Jimmy's death. His sight would return, but, frankly, I don't think he ever completely recovered from the shock, or the loss."

In the late 1950s, Clayton and Tab built a small house together in Palm Desert, California, near Palm Springs. Although they went on to other lovers, they remained friends for life. Clayton died of congestive heart failure in 2008 in Los Angeles at the age of ninety-three.

Jimmy Gets Musical

WITH THE AVANT-GARDE COMPOSER, DAVID DIAMOND

"Jimmy had this thing for composers," Alec Wilder said. "Not for me, necessarily, but for other composers who were friends of mine. He must have been in love with David Diamond's music, certainly not that ugly mug of his."

"I knew David from our younger days in Rochester, New York. He'd won three Guggenheim Fellowships and became one of the pre-eminent composers of our generation. *Rounds,* released as a composition for strings in 1944, was his most popular piece, but he also wrote nearly a dozen symphonies."

"He was very gay and didn't give a damn who knew it," Wilder continued. "He later blamed homophobia and anti-Semitism for stalling his career. In time, he was shoved aside to some extent, eventually relegated to the forgotten generation of great American symphonists."

Composer David Diamond in the 1950s.

"A lot of Diamond's problems may have stemmed from what people called his difficult personality," Wilder said. "*The New York Times* quoted him as saying, 'I was a highly emotional young man, very honest in my behavior. I would say things in public that would cause a scene between me and, for instance, a conductor.'"

Diamond met Jimmy the night Wilder invited him to a Broadway rendition of *See the Jaguar.* Wilder had composed the music for the play.

In his diary, Diamond wrote, "Alec lured me to see what he called 'this wonderful boy you'll just love.' How true that was. This handsome young actor had to be seen to be believed. The play was a mess, like Brando in *Truckline Café.* But what this charming boy did really worked. He looked about fifteen and had a lot of Brando's mannerisms but with a wholly different sensibility. At curtain call, I had fallen madly in love with him. I had to have him."

In Diamond's diary appeared this entry from February 22, 1953: "My friend, Alec Wilder, introduced me to this charming young man. I think he has been studying at the Actors Studio with Elia Kazan. Very handsome, short, muscular. Has a provocative way of looking at you, then suddenly smiling. Said he loved my *Rounds;* that he plays it

on his recorder. Works in TV. Now what was his name? Can't remember. His eyes are magnetic so he wears glasses, perhaps to hide the allure of his eyes."

Imagine Diamond's surprise three days later, when he discovered that he lived next door to this nameless youth at the Hotel Iroquois.

On their first date, Diamond took Jimmy to see Charlie Chaplin in his dramatic comedy, *Limelight (1952).* "I couldn't believe it: Chaplin made Jimmy weep. I realized he was a very sensitive boy."

At the time, Diamond was teaching at the Juilliard School of Music, to which he escorted Jimmy and introduced him to his students. Jimmy told them he was the world's most expert bongo drum player.

On another occasion, Diamond introduced him to his friend and fellow composer, Leonard Bernstein. "Lennie, who had already seduced Brando, grabbed Jimmy, embraced him, and stuck his tongue down his throat. Later, I told Jimmy that he shouldn't get a swelled head. 'Lennie does that to every handsome young boy he meets.'"

"That afternoon, I introduced Jimmy to this emerging playwright I knew, Edward Albee, in the lobby of the Algonquin. Jimmy also met Albee's companion, Bill Flanagan."

In his diary, Diamond wrote: "Jimmy feels more lonely than anything else. He seems to think I am famous and wants to get to know me, perhaps thinking I will advance his career in some way. I can't interpret his seductive signals. He hopes to get a break in the theater, so I guess he has to use every well-connected person he can. I'd bet a million on him if I had it. Only Marlon Brando has made me feel this way about an actor. Tonight, Jimmy has invited me to his room, ostensibly to listen to music. But I suspect he is going to offer his body to me."

For the first two hours, Jimmy lay on his bed as Diamond sat in a chair while they listened to the composer's music. Finally, Diamond told him that if he removed all his clothing, he could enjoy the music better.

"He looked at me with that seductive smile, then took off every piece of his clothing and lay down again for me to enjoy every inch of him. After a few minutes, he looked over at me and said, 'Take what you want.'"

"I approached him like a hungry puppy who had not been fed in three days."

Diamond later *[inaccurately]* stated to an interviewer that his relationship with Jimmy was platonic, "a sort of father-son thing. Jimmy is just not my type."

But he presented a different version to Wilder: "His pubic hair is a natural blonde, not like that of Marilyn Monroe. But I suspect you already know that, having lived for a while with him at the Algonquin. He likes for me to come over in the afternoon and help him with his bath, giving him a massage later. He lets me use my mouth during the massage."

"You are one lucky son of a bitch," Wilder said.

As Diamond described to Wilder: "Jimmy's breath is like a whiff from the gods, his tongue having the taste of nectar. Even his semen tastes sweet, as if it had a tablespoon of sugar in it. With his body spread out before me, it was a feast. He is Adonis reincarnate."

Alice Denham, the Playboy Centerfold

Who Slept With the Literati and With James Dean

During the autumn of 1952, a strikingly beautiful, aspirant writer and model—Alice Denham—entered Jimmy's life. Unlike most of the "star-fuckers" who pursued movie actors, Denham's preference was for leading members of the literati. She had previously been involved in dalliances with both Norman Mailer and Philip Roth.

In time, she would sustain an affair with Hugh Hefner, who would eventually designate her as *Playboy's Playmate of the Month.*

"NY in the 50s was like Paris in the 30s," said Alice Denham, who configured herself as a kiss-and-tell "groupie" to the literary hotties of the Beat Generation

The issue that featured her as its nude centerfold also included one of her short stories.

In 2006, she'd write a juicy tell-all entitled *Sleeping With the Bad Boys,* detailing her affairs in and out of the beds of the literary elite of the 1950s.

[Publishers Weekly *reviewed* Sleeping With the Bad Bays *like this: "Denham, an essayist, television writer and the only woman whose fiction and breasts have appeared in the same issue of Playboy, offers up a fast-paced memoir that chronicles how a pretty girl from suburban Washington ended up on a bar stool at the storied Lion's Head. Run-ins with notorious figures—Norman Mailer, Philip Roth, Marlon Brando, Hugh Hefner—pepper nearly every page, though readers interested in the hot dirt promised by the flap copy will be disappointed, as the "bad boys" here come off as little more than horny juveniles, and Denham skimps on the steam when she sacks with, say, James Dean. Most of the narrative is consumed with her slow-out-of-the-gate literary career that limps along; as her peers became icons, Denham modeled until the gigs dried up, and then wrote freelance. Though Denham reveals little that isn't widely known (Roth is a perv, Mailer is a freak), the sheer number of names dropped and follies recounted make for a fast and fun read."]*

Denham's friends included Christine White, with whom Jimmy had auditioned months before for the Actors Studio. In her memoirs, Denham surmised that they had had an affair, but what Denham didn't tell Jimmy was that White harbored "this powerful crush on Marlon Brando, his rival."

Jimmy eventually escorted Denham to a Broadway theater for a performance of *The Immoralist,* even after he'd dropped out of the show. *[Jimmy's disastrous involvement in that production is more fully explored in a later chapter of this book.]*

Denham remembered that after the show, she climbed the steps to his studio on the top floor of a brownstone on West 68th Street. After a discussion about bullfighting and Carson McCullers' novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter,* the two of them tumbled between his yellowing sheets.

Claiming that he was a tit man and that he liked to nuzzle, she later wrote:

"Jimmy had smooth, baby-smelling rosy white skin with very little hair except for a blondish brown patch around his privates. He was lightly muscled, and he smelled of vanilla. We fingered and tugged. Then went to the core of the plot, the confrontation that twisted with escalating tension to the gory, grinding climax. Me first. He was skilled. Satisfied, we folded together. Jimmy was tender and considerate…We were lusty; we fit. His dimensions were neither disappointing nor thrilling. He was average, perhaps the only thing about him that was."

They arranged a final meeting in New York after his completion of *Rebel Without a Cause.* He was planning to rush to Texas for the filming of *Giant*.

"He bounced up the steps to my apartment. He seemed due for an appointment and told me he had 'No time now. Gotta run.' He kissed me lightly on the lips and rushed back down the stairs."

"So long, star," she called after him.

That was the last time she ever saw him.

Eartha Kitt

After Lessons with "Dance Empress" Katherine Dunham, Jimmy Tangoes with "The Most Exciting Woman in the World"

Orson Welles defined singer Eartha Kitt as "the most exciting woman in the world." From the cotton fields of South Carolina, she rose to become an international "voice artist, cabaret entertainer, dancer, and political activist. Around the time she developed "a special relationship with James Dean," she became famous for her recording of "C'est si bon," released in 1953, which became a worldwide hit.

In 1979, Kitt spent several months in Key West filming *The Last Resort,* based on Darwin Porter's radically outrageous novel, *Butterflies in Heat,* wherein she played a character inspired by a transsexual prostitute. One morning, when she wasn't needed on the set, she accepted an invitation to cruise aboard a private yacht along the Florida Keys with friends who included the co-author of this biography. During the hours spent at sea, she discussed her friendship with the doomed James Dean, often contradicting what she'd previously told the press.

"In its way, it was a love affair, filled with detours and complications," she claimed.

"Our love for each other just happened. I became his *confidante* and I taught him about stage presence. We were like soul brother and sister. I'm from the South, so a little incest was thrown into the brew."

"Jamie, that's what I called him, and I had a spiritual contact—rare in any relationship—whereby we could be with each other, just walking along the streets of New York, or in Central Park, without words being spoken between us for hours. But we knew what the other was thinking. Sometimes we could just look at each other and laugh at something we were sharing in our mental conversation."

In 1950, before Jimmy met her, Orson Welles had cast Kitt in her first starring role as Helen of Troy in *Dr. Faustus.* She achieved stardom after her Broadway exposure in *New Faces of 1952.*

Two views of Eartha Kitt, Jimmy's "soulmate." *Lower photo* as Catwoman, the feline opponent of Batman.

During her difficult childhood in South Carolina, because of her *café au lait* skin, Kitt had been mocked as "Yaller Gal." She was of mixed blood, her mother being Cherokee and African, her father rumored to be a German.

She had fled to New York in 1943. Within two years, she was in the Broadway production of *Carib Song.* By the

time Jimmy met her in the early 1950s, she had had six top hits, including “I Want to Be Evil.”

When she learned that Jimmy wanted to take dance classes, she introduced him to her friend and mentor, Katherine Dunham, hailed at the time as “The Matriarch and Queen Mother of Black Dance.”

In her memoir, *I’m Still Here,* published in 1989, Kitt wrote: “There was never any desire for sex between Nat King Cole or James Dean and myself.” She later admitted, “At least half of that statement was true. Both Jimmy and I had a strong sex drive.” In her memoir, she also denied an affair with Welles, even though he claimed that he’d seduced her.

When queried about these contradictions, Kitt said, “Who says a gal has to tell the truth about her affairs?”

Kitt issued a warning to Jimmy about Dunham: “She’s the queen of her beehive. She is a tolerant person unless you try to take one of her men away from her. If you do that, watch out. She’s a grand lady. At some of her backers’ auditions, Doris Duke might show up, along with the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts. If you violate one of her rules, she’ll fine you five dollars. Of course, you don’t know what rule you violated, but you still have to pay the fine for some alleged wrong. I think she changes the rules daily.”

Jimmy found Dunham intimidating. Born in Chicago in 1909, she was the daughter of a father descended from slaves from the Ivory Coast and Madagascar, and a French Canadian/Native American mother, who died when she was three. In Haiti, she had investigated Vodun rituals and later became a “Mabo,” or a sort of high priestess of that (occult) religion.

In time, as a world-renowned expert on dance anthropology and African “ethnochoreography,” she would teach stage movements to Gregory Peck, José Ferrer, Jennifer Jones, Shelley Winters, Sidney Poitier, Shirley MacLaine and her brother, Warren Beatty, and to the billionaire tobacco heiress, Doris Duke. Marlon Brando had been one of her star pupils. “Sometimes, he didn’t dance, but played the bongo drums for my other dancers,” Denham told Jimmy.

Dance anthropologist, “ethnochoreographer,” and modern dance visionary, Katherine Dunham barefoot and onstage.

“I play the bongo drums myself,” Jimmy replied.

Dunham was rich in experience and even richer in ego. After her Broadway debut in the 1930s, she’d become celebrated. In one revue, she had adorned herself with a birdcage on her head and a cigar in her mouth. One of her most famous roles was in the Broadway production of *Cabin in the Sky,* directed by George Balanchine and starring Ethel Waters with Dunham in the role of a temptress.

Jimmy was eager to learn about her connection to Brando.

“At first, I didn’t think Marlon wanted to learn dance,” Dunham said. “I thought he was drawn to my classes because they were filled with budding Lena Hornes in skimpy outfits that revealed everything. In time, he got around to fucking nearly every gal in my troupe, along with a few of the better hung boys. But mostly, he preferred my red hot mammas.”

“In no time at all, Marlon learned the cakewalk and bebop dances, each of whose roots are from Africa,” Dunham said. “He told me he didn’t want to be a white boy dancer, but a black dancer, moving to the rhythms of drumbeats.”

“That’s what I want for myself, too,” Jimmy said.

"You're lucky to be working with me," Dunham told him in the presence of Kitt. "In Chicago, the press calls me the hottest thing to hit town since Mrs. O'Leary's cow kicked over that bucket that started the Chicago fire."

"Marlon had no inhibitions," she said. "He was not one for false modesty. I teach my dancers they have to show off their bodies—a dancer can't come onstage clad in an overcoat. I once dressed him in a Tarzan loincloth with instructions not to wear a jockstrap. Jockstraps are not known in African dances. He came out with his buttocks exposed except for a string. When he danced, his loincloth flew up and showed us everything he had."

After two weeks of classes, Dunham told Jimmy, "You don't have enough nigger blood to be a real African dancer. By the way, I can say nigger but you can't. If you do, I'll cut off those little white balls of yours."

Later, she told Kitt, "Dean's a nice kid, but definitely not from deepest Africa. He is no Brando. Unlike Marlon, Dean didn't take a shine to me. He seems afraid to mess with a high-stepping black bitch like me. Frankly, I think I'm too much woman for him. He wouldn't know how to handle me. It takes a Mandingo for me."

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As the days and weeks went by, Jimmy's friendship with Kitt deepened. "She became my tigress with a growl."

He told his newest friend, John Gilmore, that Kitt had mystical powers. "She's like a witch doctor. She has magic in her soul. She knows the answers to the mysteries of the ages."

"Jimmy and I were practically a debating society," she said. "He'd make some ridiculous statement just to hear me attack it. One time, he told me that he and I were descended from space invaders who arrived on earth thousands of years ago, fleeing from a soon-to-be extinct planet."

"You and I are different from most people because we are descended from those invaders," he told her. "One day, a team of archeologists will find their space capsule somewhere in the Sahara."

Sometimes, he'd arrive at her place and spend hours with her, just listening to recorded music. "At times, he was off in space, perhaps in that former planet from which he claimed we'd descended. When I knew he was coming over, I always went to Harlem and bought a lot of barbecued ribs from Louis Armstrong's favorite joint. Jimmy devoured them. Perhaps he did have some black blood in him after all, in spite of what Dunham claims."

Kitt was one of the few women with whom Jimmy felt free enough to discuss his sexuality, admitting to numerous affairs with men.

She lent a sympathetic ear. "Both of us are from a class of rejected people. Neither of us fits into society. If society really knew us, they'd reject us even more than they already do. We're oppressed, which leads to depression. Nothing in the world is more painful than rejection, and I've known my share of it—and I know you have, too. I'm straight, but I understand the gay impulse in men. Frankly, I think every man is a little bit gay, and that every woman has a lesbian streak."

She convinced him he was in metamorphosis. Ironically, at the time, he was performing a reading of Franz Kafka's drama *Metamorphosis.* "I won't be able to go home again to Indiana because I am no longer the farmboy who left it. That James Dean is dead."

"Been there, done that," she answered. "I'm not the little yaller gal who was raped by the white owner of the plantation where my mama and I worked in South Carolina. And of course, you're no longer a farmboy. You're an artist." She giggled and laughed with that growling purr of hers. "And sometimes you're the devil himself."

Eventually, Jimmy's liaison with Kitt would be played out against the backdrop of Hollywood.

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Truman Capote once revealed to Stanley Haggart that he and their mutual friend, Tennessee Williams, had once seen Jimmy emoting on stage in a performance of Calder Willinghams' *End as a Man.*

And Tennessee had directly revealed to Haggart that he had once traveled to Philadelphia with the specific intention of seeing Jimmy in a tryout performance of *See the Jaguar.*

Addressing Haggart directly, Capote asked, *"*Do you think he could be had?"

Haggart answered, "Probably…Jimmy was a kept boy in Hollywood, sustained and paid for by my friend, Rogers Brackett. He was also a hustler, although he doesn't seem to be doing that anymore. Rather, he seems to be giving it away these days, and often at my apartment."

"Well, I'm going after him," Capote answered. "And, as you know, whatever Lola wants, Lola gets."

"You've got one advantage," Haggart said. "He loves your novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms,* and he gives out

copies of your short stories to people to read. He told Tennessee that you select words with the precision of a brain surgeon."

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Two nights later, Capote returned to Haggart's apartment for a drink and to gossip. "I've met with Dean at this dump called Jerry's Tavern. He doesn't believe in dressing up. But I worked my magic on him. By the way, do you mind if I use that garden apartment tomorrow night? Right now, I have a lover staying with me, and I don't want him to think I have a cheating heart."

"Not you, Truman, never…" Haggart said. "But of course, you can. The back apartment is yours."

"I interpreted Dean as a rather sensitive boy," Capote said. "Far more than Brando, but not as much as Monty. He's full of anguish for reasons not known to me. One day he'll probably be a character in one of my novels. I felt the same way about Dean that I did when I first met Monty. I sensed a blossoming artist in both men. Like Monty, Dean has all his sensibilities, but also all his flaws."

During the next month, Capote and Jimmy made use of Haggart's garden apartment. Since Jimmy had his own key, he came and went without getting involved with Haggart's frequent guests in the other rooms.

"They were Back Street Lovers," Haggart claimed.

Sometimes, Jimmy would visit without Capote," Haggart said. "*The Little Prince* remained his favorite movie, but Truman's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* ran a close second."

That novel, reviewed at the time as both notorious and shocking, had been published by Random House in 1948. Capote, then the country's most flagrant *enfant terrible,* had posed for a notorious portrait—photographed by Harold Halma—on the jacket's back cover. Halma captured him lying seductively on a sofa, emphasizing his petulant mouth, his baby bangs, his come-hither gaze, and his suggested availability as "bait" for molestation by older admirers.

The novel was the story of a precocious thirteen-year-old boy, Joel Knox, who is sent to live in a small hamlet in an Alabama backwater. Harper Lee later used Capote as the role model for Dill in her megaseller, *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

Months later, Capote carried around reviews of the novel, which he collectively called "the good, the bad, the ugly, and the raves." A reviewer at *Time* magazine claimed that the novel "made my flesh crawl." *Library Journal* advised librarians not to stock it. *The Nation* viewed it as "an apology for homosexuality. *The Chicago Tribune,* however, found it "as dazzling a phenomenon that has burst onto the literary scene in the last few years."

Soem critics viewed Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* as a masterpiece. One attacker blasted it as "A fairy version of *Huckleberry Finn*."

Capote told Haggart, Jimmy, and others of his friends that he wrote the novel "to exorcise my demons."

When Capote wasn't around, Jimmy told Haggart that he identified with the character of Joel. "In some ways, it mirrors my own sense of abandonment and my search for my father. I found aspects of myself in Joel, who seems to be going from an uncertain boyhood into a young man with a strong sense of himself and an acceptance of who he is, even his dark side. I think the book is about making peace with your own identity. At times, I want to stand up to the world and shout, 'Hello, suckers, I'm James Dean. Take me or leave me. I don't give a fuck."

One night over dinner with Haggart and Jimmy, Capote expressed how deeply he hated his mother. To toughen him up, she had enrolled him at St. John's Military Academy.

"From Day One, I knew I'd never be a functioning member of the U.S. military," Capote confided. "But my life among future soldiers had its advantages. I shared a dormitory with twenty other guys. Here is where I learned about dicks, finding out that they come in all shapes and sizes, cut and uncut. Men at the academy were at their sexual peak, and the only relief they had, other than whacking off, was for me to crawl between their sheets at night. I had a gay old time. It wasn't exactly what mother had in mind."

One morning after Capote left for an appointment at Random House, Jimmy, still in his briefs, had one of Haggart's home-cooked, farm-style breakfasts. "Don't get the idea that I'm sexually turned on by Capote," he said. "About five inches of pink meat is not my fantasy. I'm having sex with him because: *One*, I admire his writing, and *Two*, he's working on a novel that could be adapted into a screenplay with a leading role in it for me."

"Its main character is a café society hooker, Holly Golightly. She gets involved with this writer—played by me—who lives upstairs and who hasn't had anything published in five years. He's a kept boy, supported by this rich older woman."

"It sounds like it has possibilities," Haggart said.

"And do I ever know how to play a kept boy, thanks to your friend, Rogers," Jimmy said. "When I'm fucking Capote, I have to ask him to shut his trap. That babylike voice of his is such a turnoff. It sounds artificial to me, like some fourth grader whose voice never changed. It reminds me of a little boy trapped in a man's body."

"Don't be deceived by Truman's physicality," Haggart said. "He's stronger than he looks. When filming *Beat the Devil,* in Italy with Humphrey Bogart, he beat Bogie fair and square in an arm wrestling contest, and then, according to the terms of their agreement, Bogie had to submit to a blow-job because he'd lost. As for that 'unfinished novel,' don't assume that he's actually writing it. He often lies about such things."

"But he's told me events associated with every page of the novel," Jimmy said. "What I mean is, it's already written, at least in the fucker's head. But he doesn't have a title for it yet."

"That probably won't be a problem for him," Haggart said. "Tennessee and Truman are masters at churning out bizarre titles."

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One night at a raucous and irreverent party in Key West, a drunken Capote showed up at the home of the designer, Danny Stirrup. "I've sucked off bigtime movie stars," he said later in the evening. "Errol Flynn, John Garfield…and did I name Rory Calhoun? I've also screwed around with Denham Fouts, the most famous male whore in the world, the favorite of the King of Greece. But despite all that, my greatest thrill (there was meat there for the poor) came from an air-conditioner repairman I met in Palm Springs."

"And ironically, my two major sexual disappointments were Gore Vidal and James Dean."

"It's too bad I don't like to go to bed with women," Capote replied. "I could have had any woman on the planet. Dietrich. Garbo. But I can't understand why anyone would want to go to bed with a woman. Boring. Just like Dean and Vidal."

Haggart, who was at the party, later said that he knew why Capote had turned on Jimmy. "Our friend just got tired of all the promises Capote kept making. He began to fear he wasn't going to carry through on a single one of them and was just stringing him along. He rejected further sexual advances from Truman. Jimmy had been handsome, charming, a great lover to Truman. Almost overnight, he went from that to the dullest lay of all time."

Capote had one final encounter with Jimmy at a party in Hollywood. He had just seen a screening of *East of Eden* when he approached Jimmy, who seemingly had been trying to avoid him. "I saw your picture, my dear," he said with a sneer of contempt, as if he'd just swallowed a bad oyster. "I fear you've been cast into the Brando mold. Of course, with just one picture under your belt, it's a little too early to rush to judgment. We'll have to see what you do in the future. You have a small but limited appeal that emerges now and then from all that Brando

overlay. Don't you ever worry that he might sue you for impersonation? It's wrong to steal another actor's voice, his mannerisms, and his style. Perhaps in your next picture, you'll try to act like James Dean and not like Brando."

Truman Capote...Ostentatiously vicious (including during his interchanges with Jimmy) and, in the end, tragic.

Jimmy glared at him. "Fuck off, faggot!" he said before moving quickly to the other side of the room, where he was surrounded by admirers.

Capote never forgave Jimmy for his blunt sexual rejection of him. Even after Jimmy's death, he continued with his critiques. After seeing the knife fight in *Rebel Without a Cause,* he told *The New Yorker,* "Jimmy is the symbol of hot-headed youth, with a switchblade approach to life's little problems."

Years later, he even uttered a critique of Jimmy's short run in *The Immoralist.* "I knew Dean only because he knew Tennessee, and he was always hanging out with him and other friends of mine. So I inevitably kept running into him. He was hoping that Tennessee would write a powerful role for him, like he did for Brando. Alas, that would never happen. He certainly wasn't any good in the Gide play. To put it mildly, I never thought much of him as an actor. I don't think he had star quality."

Tennessee later commented on the Jimmy vs. Capote feud: "Jimmy once said to me, 'I want to ask you something. You, of all people, might know. Just who in hell invented Truman Capote?'"

Jimmy Discovers Arlene Sachs

"The Only Virgin Left in Manhattan"

Into Jimmy's life marched Arlene Sachs, a woman of some mystery who billed herself under different names depending on the era and venue she was publicizing. Her monikers included Tasha Martel, Arlene Martel, Arline Greta Sax, Arline Sax, and Arlene Sax.

An attractive Jewish girl from the Bronx, she would in time have affairs with everyone from Jimmy to Cary Grant.

At the age of seventeen, she was enrolled in Manhattan's High School of the performing arts, dreaming of stardom as an actress.

She'd seen Jimmy in the Kraft Television Theater's presentation of *A Long Time Till Dawn,* and was captivated by his image.

Somehow, she managed to get his phone number and used it to call him one evening. She explained that although she was a teenager, "I have a woman's desires." She also told him, "I'm very beautiful, and I want to be your girlfriend."

Arlene Sachs...betrayed by Jimmy's cheating heart.

Intrigued by her audacity, he agreed to meet her the following day for coffee at the rooftop café of the Museum of Modern Art.

That very night, if reports are to be believed, he took her virginity at his studio. He admitted later that he didn't believe she was a virgin—"They don't exist in Manhattan"—until he saw blood on his sheets.

"I found the sex painful, and not at all enjoyable, so I wondered why people were so obsessed with it," she said. "But Jimmy was patient with me. I remembered he gave me my first orgasm, and then I began to feel what sex was all about. He broke me in. I started to enjoy it. He was very patient and considerate as a lover."

"Dining out for us often meant saving up for movie tickets and a bag of popcorn to share," she said. "Perhaps a hot dog to divide, if we were loaded. We sat in the balcony of Times Square theaters where, if the seat in front was empty, Jimmy would throw his legs across the back of it."

"I remember one night, he fell asleep watching Robert Mitchum and Jane Russell in *His Kind of Woman.* I had a hard time waking him up at the end of the picture. Then it was off to Jerry's."

"Once I got over the initial penetration, and on subsequent nights, Jimmy glided in smoothly," she wrote in an unpublished memoir. "I began to look forward to our rolls in the hay. I'm an Aries born in April, and he is an Aquarius born in February, so, as sexual partners, we were most compatible."

She later claimed that their subsequent dates were "boy-girl stuff," including strolls through Central Park, followed by long nights at his studio, where he played the bongo drums for her. "Or else, he put on classical music or read passages from *The Little Prince* to me, neither one of which I adored."

"I wanted him for myself, but that was not to be," she said. "One night I saw him at Jerry's talking to this very pretty girl," she said. "I followed him to his apartment. I stayed there looking up at his window. The lights went out after midnight. She had not left when I went home at three in the morning. I had to get up at seven to go to work. Not only that, but I heard from this guy I met on a casting call that Jimmy was also known for seducing other actors. So I learned painfully that he would never belong to me exclusively. Often, he would call me at three o'clock in the morning, since he suffered from insomnia and needed someone to pour out his feelings to. I was it. He'd talk for three or four hours."

Sachs had found a job as a hatcheck girl at Birdland, a venue for be-bop and jazz. She'd saved enough to rent an apartment for $35 a month.

One night, she invited Jimmy over for a home-cooked dinner. He asked if he could bring a friend, and she reluctantly said yes.

"He arrived with Barbara Glenn, who also wanted to be an actress," Sachs said. "He told me he was working with her on a scene for an audition."

"I left them to rehearse their scene when I went out to shop for diner," Sachs said. "When I got back with my pork chops and salad greens, I could almost smell the sex in the room. I knew he'd used our bed to fuck this girl. I stumbled into the kitchen with the groceries. My heart was broken. I wanted to vomit in the sink. Somehow, I managed to pull together a dinner, but I viewed his bringing Glenn here as an act of cruelty. I knew I could never trust him."

"In looking back, I believed he brought Glenn over to signal to me that our affair was over," Sachs said. "This was his way of telling me that he had moved on. Believe it or not, our friendship survived our affair. We became friends, not lovers."

He learned that she'd soon found another boyfriend, an actor named Don Miele, who was in his thirties. He was considered very temperamental and known as a rebel like Jimmy.

"One night, when I was entertaining Don, Jimmy phoned and wanted to come over," Sachs said. "I was afraid both men would get into a fight and said no. As it happened, Jimmy came by anyway.":

Like Jimmy, Miele was a member of the Actors Studio, and also like Jimmy, he rebelled. In Miele's case, the focus of his rage was Elia Kazan, who, from his niche at the Actors Studio, had delivered a verbal assault on Miele's acting.

To Sachs' surprise, the two actors bonded. Miele said that after Kazan had viciously attacked his acting, "I told him, 'You're nothing but a bunch of whores.'"

Kazan had responded, "You're a genius. Stick around."

To that, Miele had replied, "I may be a genius, but you're a second rate director." Then he had stormed out.

As the evening in Sachs' apartment progressed, and a third bottle of wine was consumed, Miele turned to Jimmy and said, "I hear you're a hot shot on Broadway, but that you had to give head to get there."

Sachs was amazed that Jimmy did not take offense. "If anything, they sat there on the sofa, laughing and talking like two lovers. I was afraid that Jimmy was going to steal my boyfriend."

The following night, Jimmy called to thank her and asked her for Miele's phone number. She pretended that she'd lost it.

"Are you really a homosexual?" she asked him.

"I'm a man," he answered, "but if the gay guys don't let up on me soon, I will begin to doubt that very seriously. They won't leave me alone. They bring me gifts. They offer me roles on television and in the theater."

One night, shortly after Sach's 18th birthday, she called Jimmy over for a party. She had invited about a dozen wannabe actors in for liquor, which they'd brought themselves. It was a mixed crowd of men and women. "I told Jimmy we were having an orgy, and I wanted to know if he would like to come over."

"I'll come over," he said, emphasizing the word "come."

She decided to play a gag on him, and her guests agreed. The girls took off their tops, the men pulled off their shirts, and some of them stripped down to their underwear before they collectively crawled beneath a pair of blankets.

The room was lit by candlelight, and Sachs left her door slightly ajar. Within twenty minutes, Jimmy entered and witnessed what he thought was an orgy in process.

"I couldn't believe it," Sachs said later. "Jimmy unzipped his jeans, took out his penis, and started to masturbate. I jumped up and turned on the lights and told Jimmy that it was all a joke. He didn't look the least bit surprised. Even with the lights on, he continued to jerk off and exploded onto the blanket, hitting one or two girls in the face. They screamed. I guess he had the last laugh that night."

Sometimes, even when they were dating, Jimmy could call this mysterious actor and make a date with him. One night he let her listen in. She heard a familiar voice tell Jimmy, "I want to cock you." He was basically begging Jimmy to come over.

"Who in hell was that?" Sachs asked after Jimmy put down the phone.

"That was Van Johnson, 'America's Sweetheart,' the idol of thousands of teenage girls."

[When he went to Hollywood, Jimmy would get far better acquainted with Johnson through their mutual friend, actor Kennan Wynn.]

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In time, Sachs would become a member of the Actors Studio. There, she developed "intense relationships" with Sidney Lumet and Anthony Quinn.

She later claimed, "Tony was my first taste of a Mexican dick. He once was quoted as saying, 'A man's masculinity is never in his penis.' I would disagree with that, and so would Tony's many girlfriends: Ingrid Bergman, Rita Hayworth, Carole Lombard, Maureen O'Hara, Mae West, Shelley Winters, and even George Cukor."

"I went to bed with Tony only three times, and then it was over," Sachs said. "He told me that he had to move on because he wanted to impregnate every woman in the world."

Sachs never became a star, but she got a lot of work, appearing on Perry Mason dramas and even in an episode of *Star Trek*. She also played the evil witch on *Bewitched* and interpreted key roles in both *Hogan's Heroes* and *I Dream of Jeannie.*

At a Star Trek convention, she made an indiscreet comment, telling a fan, "I've known many men and three husbands. There's no argument that my two most famous lovers were James Dean and Cary Grant, two deeply

troubled men. I shouldn't be saying this, but I had the feeling that, even though in bed with me, both of them would rather be getting screwed by some man."

During her courtship with Jimmy, Sachs escorted him to the studio of her friend, Ray Schatt, a photographer, with the suggestion that the budding actor might be a hot prospect for him to photograph.

Although Schatt specialized in photos of newsworthy personalities in the performing arts, at first, he was not impressed with Jimmy. Sachs told Schatt that Jimmy was appearing on Broadway in *The Immoralist* and that he "does this fantastic dance with scissors, which you really should shoot."

Schatt recalled, "I was baffled by this boy. He looked like some young man on the lam that she'd picked up wandering homeless in the Bowery. However, he suddenly sprang to life and did this incredible dance for us. It was an amazing feat. He had a radiance about him, a kind of glow. I'm not making this up. How can I put it? Jimmy danced into my heart that afternoon."

"He was a squinty little schlump of a person," Schatt later recalled. "I thought he was sort of ugly until he performed that dance around the room. He transitioned himself from a bum into an Adonis."

Beginning that afternoon, Jimmy and Schatt became close friends. Schatt eventually taught him some of the hands-on aspects of photography.

After Dennis Stock, Schatt became the second most-famous photographer to turn his camera on Jimmy, eventually churning out many iconic shots of the actor.

Even before his introduction to Jimmy, Schatt was a well-known photographer of theatrical personalities. His previous subjects had included Tennessee Williams, Geraldine Page, Rod Steiger, Patricia Neal, Elia Kazan, director Arthur Penn, Ben Gazzara, Paul Newman, Billie Holiday, Steve McQueen, and Marilyn Monroe.

But his photographs of Jimmy became his crowning achievement. Schatt was eventually designated as the official photographer of the Actors Studio.

He began snapping photos of Jimmy in February of 1954. Right from the beginning, he suspected that Jimmy was an exhibitionist. He would later find out just how much of an exhibitionist he was. "He told me that he worked out at a gym three or four times a week."

"I'm quite an attraction when I head for the showers," Jimmy said. "I figured the boys want a show, so I produce an erection. After all, they couldn't gauge the size of my dick if I kept it soft."

"Jimmy was a Method actor, and I soon recognized that theatrical instinct in him when I began to photograph him. I would direct and provoke scenes that became inspirational. But I knew my pictures must still be honest and interesting beyond the performance he was giving."

After their first meeting, Jimmy asked Schatt if he would follow him around and document his activities. "He also wanted to photograph *me*," Schatt confessed, "so I became his teacher."

"I immediately found out that his concentration was not to be counted on, which meant that our classes were somewhat unpredictable and by necessity changeable in form. However, when he was interested in participating, his energy was powerful. He had that greatest of intellectual qualities—curiosity about everything."

"Jimmy was always 'on,'" Schatt claimed. "I dubbed him Mr. Theater."

Soon, Jimmy was seen coming and going frequently from Schatt's studio.

"*James Dean Is an Exhibitionist*"

Claimed Ray Schatt, His "Torn Sweater" Photographer

Schatt's "Torn Sweater" photographic session with Jimmy remains one of the most celebrated and best set of photos of him ever snapped.

On December 29, 1954, Jimmy showed up at Schatt's studio wearing a yellow turtleneck sweater. He asked the photographer if he reminded him of Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence.

"A first, I thought that meant he wanted me to photograph him buck-ass naked," Schatt said. "But that wasn't the case. I shot him in this turtleneck. Only after I developed the pictures did I realize there was a tear in one of the sweater's shoulders. I hadn't spotted it before."

Life magazine rejected the pictures. In their editorial office, Frank D. Campion wanted "Shots that are more manly, not some actor impersonating Audrey Hepburn."

Despite the delay in their release, Schatt's "Torn Sweater" photos became among the most popular of all

photographs of James Dean. In 1982, Delilah Books published *James Dean: A Portrait,* which included them. “He was still in that searching and scratching period of his life,” Schatt said.

His photographs had great influence on how the world came to view James Dean.

“I came to love Jimmy as a friend,” Schatt said. “But he was a crazy mother-fucker. Once, he took a chair from my studio and carried it downstairs. When I looked out my studio window, the lunatic was sitting on it, right in the middle of the avenue, almost daring cars to dodge him. That is, until he saw a cop coming, and then he hurried inside, leaving my chair.”

“I wanted to spark up dull old New York today,” Jimmy said. “Don’t you sometimes get bored out of your mind and yearn for some action? I thought I might bring some life to the street, sitting out there casually smoking a cigarette, letting the cars brake to avoid killing me. I know I might have caused a death, maybe my own.”

According to Schatt, “He also carried around a revolver, which he said had been a gift from Lynn Bari, a B-actress who was often cast as a gun moll in a lot of 1940s movies.”

Jimmy told Schatt that he’d met Bari when he played a bit part in Hollywood on the film, *Has Anybody Seen My Gal?* He said he had only one bullet in the gun, which he planned to use to commit suicide should life prove too difficult for him.

“I don’t think Jimmy was ever himself,” Schatt said. “He was always impersonating someone. “One day, I had a party at my studio and invited such guests as his friend, Bill Gunn. At one point, after a few glasses of wine, Jimmy took out his two front teeth and passed them around. ‘Wanna buy thum gold, man?’ he asked my guests. ‘I teed thum thoup.’ *[translation: “Do you want to buy some gold? I need some soup.”]* Then he launched into a bongo drum concert so loud no one could hear themselves talk. His desire to be noticed was almost pathological.”

“He wanted to go just to restaurants patronized by people in the theater who were more likely to recognize him,” Schatt claimed, “If nobody recognized him, he got pissed off.”

“I know this sounds like a contradiction, but Jimmy was a loner who sought attention,” Schatt said. “We used to eat at Louie’s, this joint in the Village. But the lights were dim, and nobody recognized Jimmy, so he stopped going there.”

“Even when we went to places where other actors gathered, he told me he still felt uncomfortable, because he was working and they were not,” Schatt said.

“Jimmy wasn’t afraid to strip down,” Schatt said. “One day, I opened my door. He was standing there stark naked. Later, I heard that when he was making *East of Eden,* he came out of his dressing room without a stitch on and paraded around in front of cast and crew. The only other actor I’d heard who did that was Errol Flynn.”

“There were also rumors that Jimmy would stand nude in the open doorway of his apartment while he was being sodomized,” Schatt also revealed. “But that sounds just too far-fetched.”

“Jimmy would do the damndest things,” Schatt said. “One day he pulled off all his clothes in my studio and paraded out the door onto the sidewalk. I looked down from my window, and there he was, standing naked right on the sidewalk as cars slowed down to take a look and passers-by stopped to stare. He wasn’t totally nude. He had on this porkpie hat that he wore for several weeks. I rushed down to the street with a blanket and wrapped it around him and brought him back upstairs. The next day, he walked the streets in a fruity Carmen Miranda headdress he’d picked up from somewhere.”

“One day, Jimmy stripped down and wanted me to take some pictures,” Schatt said. “He stretched out like one of those paintings that hung over the bar in a Gary Cooper Western movie—you know, of some nude woman. In this case, Jimmy placed his hand over his crotch and was giggling like a virgin as he pursed his lips and fluttered his eyes.”

“I was often asked if he were gay or bisexual,” Schatt said. “Well, maybe. His nuttiness and constant attempts at breaking the humdrum could have led him into anything.”

Jimmy’s agent, Jane Deacy, arranged for Howard Thompson of *The New York Times* to interview him. Jimmy didn’t want the interview conducted within his private living quarters. “I don’t want some god damn reporter knowing where and how I live.”

He told the newsman that he’d gotten kicked out of UCLA because he’d “busted the faces of two fuckers who deserved it. I wasn’t happy there. My father wanted me to study law. Can you imagine me as a lawyer?”

“To me, New York is a vital, thriving, throbbing city marching to its own drumbeat,” he said. “The problem is that a cat like me can get lost in its maze. People are human beings in New York. In Hollywood, they are desensitized whores.”

Thompson didn’t print part of the interview.

***

The Schatt/Dean friendship eventually ended unhappily. When Jimmy finally attained the beginnings of some financial success, Schatt asked if he'd lend him the money for a new camera, which he badly need. Jimmy refused. "Who do you think I am, man? A god damn bank?"

Equally infuriating, he granted access to a rival photographer, and denied it to Schatt, who had befriended him for so long and taken so many pictures of him for free.

"I think he just used people," Schatt said. "He sucked up to them, got what he wanted, and then went on his way."

Months later, Schatt encountered Jimmy in Hollywood. "He no longer looked like something Michelangelo would want to sculpt. He had bags under his eyes from his insomnia. He could have passed for a consumptive romantic poet, a dying male version of Camille. The constant smoking had dimmed the luster of his skin. Four packages of Camels a day will do that to anybody. More than that, his soul seemed to be creeping out of his body, and all this inner misery was reflected on his face."

In later years, an embittered Schatt, during interviews he granted, demonstrated his increased disillusion about Jimmy, and expressed a certain contempt for the cult based on his former friend. "Every actor I photographed wanted to look like Jimmy Dean. The reputation spread that I had 'discovered' the boy, which was not true. For a time, I couldn't get rid of Steve McQueen who hung out at my studio. He had an obsession about Dean. He had me take a frontal nude of him. Frankly, I told him one day that he'd never make it as an actor. Was I wrong?"

"After seeing Jimmy in *The Immoralist,* I also told him what a lousy actor he was. My exact words were, 'You'll never amount to anything in the theater or the movies.' If truth be known, I still think Dean and McQueen were rotten actors."

Jimmy Kneels

IN HOMAGE TO A BLACK MUSICIAN

The most outrageous story ever told about James Dean topped any revelation made by Roy Schatt. Although it may be apocryphal, mention of it has been made in several books, and there are those who swore that it was true.

One night, back in the days when lots of upscale white people went late at night to Harlem for entertainment, Jimmy joined a party that included composers Leonard Rosenblum and Alec Wilder, along with Stanley Haggart and his artist friend, Woodrow ("Woody") Parrish-Martin.

[Almost forgotten today, the very gossipy Parrish-Martin was known in media and arts circles at the time for his then-iconoclastic views on set design and decorating. He enjoyed a minor degree of celebrity for his promotion of, among others, the then-novel Haitian school of painting and an avant-garde use of colors such as chartreuse and purple in his decorating schemes.]

An *avant-garde* arts arbiter of the 50s, with tales to tell: Woody Parrish-Martin.

"I met Jimmy a few times when he used Stanley's garden apartment," Parrish-Martin said. "I was told he was outrageous, but that night in Harlem, I saw evidence of it firsthand. Before we rode uptown together, Jimmy got into the taxi with his bongo drums. We had a hell of a time that night and stayed till the club closed at around two or three o'clock."

"At the club in Harlem, Jimmy joined the black musicians who let him play those blasted drums. There was a piano player there—a mulatto—who was strikingly handsome, with a Robert Taylor mustache. Jimmy had been fascinated by him all evening. I thought he'd invite him home with him."

"We sat in front-row seats…all of us loved the jazz that the band was playing. As the night wore on, there were only about ten customers left in the club—everybody was drunk, including Jimmy. He approached this musician and bluntly asked, "Will you let me suck your cock?'"

"The piano player didn't look shocked at all," Parrish-Martin said. "I think a lot of white men, including Cole Porter and Monty Woolley, had gone down on him many times before. He simply unzipped his pants, pulled out his penis, masturbated it hard, and offered it to Jimmy. Then the kid got down on his knees and serviced him. It took him about ten minutes to reach climax, and we all sat there taking in the show. Management should have charged for the exhibition. It was well worth it."

"That night, I saw firsthand how good Jimmy was a deep throat artist. He'd been practicing on somebody, maybe Rock Hudson."

"After I moved out of Stanley's apartment, I never saw Dean again."

John Gilmore

"At Last, I've Found a Boy Prettier Than I Am"

—James Dean

Beating the pavements of Manhattan, looking for a gig, Jimmy encountered Ray Curry, another actor he'd met when he was an extra in Hollywood. Jimmy knew of a drugstore on West 47th Street that served fresh orange juice and "big muffins with all the butter patties you wanted." He invited Curry to go with him there.

At the counter, Jimmy noticed this young man sitting a few feet away. "Hot damn!" he said to Curry. "At last, I've seen a boy prettier than I am."

"Hey, I know this guy," Curry said. "He's Jonathan Gilmore *[an actor/author later billed as John Gilmore]*. "I'll introduce you."

Gilmore later recalled his memory of first seeing Jimmy in March of 1953, comparing him to a small scarecrow: "Dean lurched into the place and tripped over the doorsill, struggling to keep his balance. A shock of hair stood out like straw. His hands were jammed into the pockets of baggy gabardine trousers. A checked jacket hung on his frame like a sack with leather patches on the cuffs. He had the aura of a burlesque performer in vaudeville. He was hunched down into himself—almost shrinking and squinting through tortoise-framed glasses."

Later, Curry said, "It was a case of two soulmates coming together. These guys shared two passions: Bullfighting and motorcycle racing. Jonathan was actually reading a book on bullfighting when I introduced him to Jimmy."

A relationship with Gilmore was developed that afternoon that Gilmore would later write about in a trio of memoirs, including *Laid Bare, The Real James Dean* (1971); *The Hollywood Death Trap* (1997); and *Live Fast—Die Young: Remembering the Short Life of James Dean* (also 1997).

Many Dean biographers overlooked Gilmore's role in Jimmy's life, but he was a key figure. Even some of Jimmy's best friends were unaware of the bond between the two young actors.

Born in the charity ward of the Los Angeles General Hospital, Gilmore was four years younger than Jimmy. He became a child actor, even appearing in a movie with cowboy star Gene Autry and interpreting other bit parts at Republic Studios. John Hodiak and Ida Lupino, in time, became his mentors. Hodiak introduced him to Marilyn Monroe, about whom Gilmore would write a book, *Inside Marilyn Monroe* (2007).

At first, Gilmore and Jimmy were friends, not lovers. Sometimes, if Gilmore had ten dollars, he might lend Jimmy two. Both of them shared tips about the latest casting calls for Broadway plays. They would often meet at

their favorite street corner, eating together at a drugstore counter where the food was cheap, greasy, and filling. In the beginning, they saw each other two or three times a week, often viewing films at rundown movie houses on Times Square.

It wasn't long before the subject of sex arose.

"Jimmy seemed obsessed with Marlon Brando and had this picture of him with a penis in his mouth." Gilmore said. *[That photo, replicated underground, was widely circulated at the time among the gay colonies of New York and Los Angeles.]* "In reference to Brando, Jimmy said, 'I learned that he often rolls over for guys and takes it up the ass.'"

At one point, Jimmy told Gilmore that he'd been seduced by some of the biggest stars in Hollywood. "As another pretty boy, you must have had your share of stars, too," he said.

John Gilmore...kinky nights with James Dean

Gilmore revealed that once, at a party in Hollywood at the Garden of Allah, he was only fifteen years old. "A drunken Tyrone Power came up to me and told me that I was one of the most beautiful boys he'd ever seen. He kissed me and wanted to kiss me again, trying to stick his tongue down in my mouth."

One night early in their relationship, Gilmore and Jimmy got smashed at Jerry's Tavern and later ended up in his apartment. Jimmy asked him if he'd ever gone to bed with a producer or director when he'd worked in pictures in Hollywood.

"A couple of times," Gilmore said, "but I didn't like it."

According to Gilmore, Jimmy then asked him if he'd ever tasted "jizz."

Gilmore answered that he had, but that he had spit it out.

In a memoir, Gilmore wrote, "Jimmy put his hand behind my neck and pulled my face toward his, putting his lips on mine. I was the first time I've ever been really kissed by another guy."

"Can you be fucked?" Jimmy asked.

"Jesus, I don't think so."

Nibbling on his neck, Jimmy then tried to sodomize Gilmore. "At first, I tried to go down on him, but his cock was too big, and I choked. We tried to fuck, but it didn't work out exactly, as he wanted it to."

At some point, Jimmy had to withdraw without reaching climax. The session ended with Gilmore "Jacking Jimmy off with skin lotion."

In 1980, the gossip tabloid, *The Hollywood Star,* ran an article by Gilmore entitled "I Had Sex With James Dean." In it, Gilmore reported details he omitted from his books.

"Jimmy liked to be cuddled in bed. He liked to be held and he liked to be kissed."

On some occasions, Jimmy asked Gilmore if he'd dress up as a girl and let himself be escorted to parties as Jimmy's date.

Gilmore later wrote, "In time, I eventually felt as if I were Jimmy's mother, brother, and lover. We were bad guys playing bad boys while opening up the bisexual sides of our personalities…One sex scene between the two of us played out in black leather to the music of Edith Piaf. The sex was a game. Jimmy was obsessed with riding the black ship in hell, and for a time I was on board with him."

Jimmy seemed to view Gilmore as an unthreatening wastepaper basket. According to Gilmore, "Into it, he

dumped his chaotic, erotic, and crazy ideas. We enjoyed poetry and bullfighting, bongo drums, girls (often the same ones). We had the same crummy friends, and we shared the same sleepless nights."

It wasn't just bullfighting they shared in common. Both of them had a mutual friend in singer Eartha Kitt. Jimmy told Gilmore that the singer was his "*café au lait* girlfriend."

They also knew a notorious Hollywood homosexual, Alfred de la Vega. "He sucked my cock," Jimmy said. "Did he do yours, too?"

"He wanted to," Gilmore answered.

In a memoir, Gilmore even described Jimmy and himself going to bed as a trio with an actress, Sharon Kingsley. "I pushed my cock into her, and she groaned and laughed a little, making a muffled sound because Jimmy's cock was in her mouth."

On another night, Jimmy wanted sex with Gilmore while wearing a black leather jacket. He gave Gilmore a pair of black lace panties "that I got off some chick," and begged his friend to put them on.

"Jimmy told me just to lie there and show him my stomach."

"I want to see if I get a hard-on by pretending you're this French whore."

"I was barelegged. But he wanted me to wear both a leather jacket and black panties. He kissed my legs and jacked off."

"We were sporadic friends," Gilmore claimed. "Our relationship was jumpy and spotty, but we'd connect like electric wires and it made sparks. He was drawn as if by magnet to what struck him as perverse. He saw me as a kind of teenage Rimbaud who didn't like anybody. He liked that about me."

[After Jimmy's death, Gilmore moved to Paris, where he stayed at the Beat Hotel, a 42-room flophouse at 9 Rue Gît-le-Cœur, in Paris's bohemian 6th arrondissement, notable as a residence for members of the Beat Poetry movement. There, he *became friends with author and junkie William S. Burroughs, actress Brigitte Bardot, and the novelist Françoise Sagan.*

Today, Gilmore is an author and a journalist, known for his iconoclastic Hollywood memoirs, true crime literature, and hard-boiled fiction. He wrote a shattering memoir of Elizabeth Short (aka the Black Dahlia) and her famous dismemberment, which ushered in a cult following for him. He also wrote The Garbage People *(1971) about Charles Manson and his psychotic family. Gilmore had known the butchered Sharon Tate. But of all his Hollywood stories, James Dean remained his favorite subject of memoir.]*

Jimmy Had a Question for Ronald Reagan About the Casting Couch—

"Back in 1947, Did You Have to Put Out for John Van Druten Before He Got you the Part in That Stupid Movie You Made with Eleanor Parker?"

"Because we were so young and pretty, John Gilmore and I sometimes competed for the same roles," Jimmy told his friend, Stanley Haggart.

Such was the case when the British playwright, John Van Druten, was involved in the casting for a Broadway play he had written, *I Am a Camera.*

[Van Druten's play had been inspired by Christopher Isherwood's Good- bye to Berlin*, which was part of his* The Berlin Stories *collection. Isherwood had based his tales on his decadent and brutalizing experiences in the German capital during the early 1930s, when the Nazis were fighting to seize power.]*

The lead role of a young writer was based on Isherwood himself, who was gay. The play produced the character of Sally Bowles, the iconic "Come to the Cabaret" entertainer.

"I never told Jimmy about the part," Gilmore said. "I knew he might make inroads to Van Druten and go to be with him in order to get the role. I was up for it without yet having to go to bed with Van Druten, and was going to keep it that way."

Isherwood was in New York to meet with Van Druten and his lover, Walter Starcke, who was co-producer of the play based on his novel. Around the same time, Jimmy had dined with Tennessee Williams, a friend of both Jimmy and Isherwood. He told the playwright how he'd met Isherwood in Hollywood at Cecil Beaton's house. "Roddy McDowall and I did a sexual exhibition for some British expats," Jimmy confessed.

"I should have been invited," Tennessee said. "I could have worn my royal purple robes and impersonated the Queen of England."

Tennessee called Isherwood and set up a meeting with Jimmy the following night. In their cozy get-together, Isherwood remembered having been introduced to Jimmy before and complimented him on his performance in the sexual exhibition back at that private party in Hollywood.

"Don't embarrass me," Jimmy said. "It was a stupid thing to do. I'm older and wiser now. I've gone legit."

"My dear boy, I have done far more ridiculous things than that," Isherwood said.

It was arranged that Jimmy, the following evening, would pay a call at the apartment occupied by Starcke and Van Druten. Starcke had been the longtime lover of Van Druten ever since 1945, when he'd sent him a nude picture of himself.

Before going there, Jimmy was briefed on aspects of Van Druten's illustrious theatrical background. He was celebrated for plays filled with witty and urbane observations about contemporary life and society. *[After Van Druten moved to America from the U.K. and became a U.S. citizen, many of his plays were adapted into famous films such as* Old Acquaintance *(1943), with Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins, and* The Voice of the Turtle *(1947), with Ronald Reagan and Eleanor Parker. Jimmy would later ask, "Before getting his part, did Reagan have to lie on Van Druten's casting couch like I did?"]*

That evening, confronting Jimmy, Starcke said, "Tennessee tells me it's not your first time at the rodeo. You know the rules by now, I'm sure."

"I know the rules, and I also know how to break them," Jimmy said.

"I hope you're obeying them tonight," Starcke said. "The male lead in *I Am a Camera* could make you the biggest star on Broadway. Let's adjourn to the bedroom. John gets lots of solicitations from young actors, and he insists I sample the merchandise before passing a guy on to him. Think of this as an audition. You're not the first stud to find himself in this position. Catherine the Great of Russia ordered her ladies-in-waiting to evaluate a stallion firsthand before recommending him to Her Majesty. John likes to follow Catherine's example."

"I see," was all that Jimmy said.

Later, after "interviews" with both Starcke and later, with Van Druten, Jimmy called Tennessee. "I have a sore ass," he complained. "That Starcke has a big dick. Van Druten came back to the apartment later, and gave me quite a workout, too. But with him, I got to be the top, which was easier for me."

Tennessee cautioned that Jimmy—despite the Starcke/Van Druten promises—still might not get the role. "Starcke and Van Druten, especially Starcke, are known for their broken promises. They've used and abused many an actor before throwing him out onto the street."

Tennessee was right about Van Druten and Starcke. Jimmy did not get the role. Neither did Gilmore. Another actor, William Prince, was cast. He had starred on stage with Katharine Hepburn in Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* In 1947, he'd been one of the founding members of Actors Studio.

Jimmy once met Prince, reporting later, "I was underwhelmed."

Had Jimmy gotten the role of Christopher Isherwood, he would have appeared on stage with Julie Harris before being cast opposite her in *East of Eden.* Harris was later assigned the film role in *I Am a Camera,* but the male role went to Laurence Harvey, who co-starred alongside Shelley Winters, playing a German woman who backs out of marrying a Jew.

In 1966, *I Am a Camera* was adapted into a Broadway musical, directed by Hal Prince, with music by John Kander, starring Jill Haworth, Bert Convy, and Lotte Lenya, Jack Gilford, and Joel Grey.

But the actress who made the character of Sally Bowles a household name was Liza Minnelli in the brilliant 1972 film musical retitled *Cabaret.* Directed by Bob Fosse, it starred Joel Grey and Michael York. Had he lived, Jimmy might have sought the York role and portrayed young Isherwood.

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In 1959, Walter Starcke was living in Key West. His long-time companion, Van Druten had died two years before. In Key West, Starcke became friends with Darwin Porter, who at the time was the bureau chief in Key West for *The Miami Herald.*

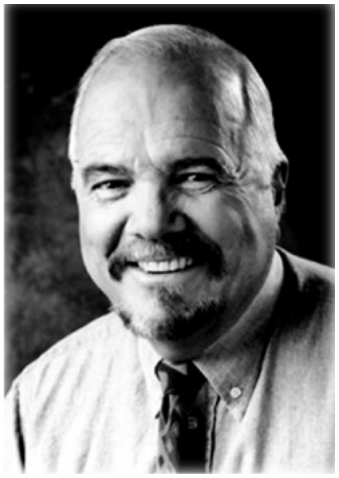
One of Broadway's most influential playwrights, notorious for pressuring young actors into sexually compromising positions, John Van Druten, depicted above, and his long-time companion and pimp...

At one point, Starcke asked Porter to help him write his memoirs. In pursuit of that goal, he articulated and dictated a long repertoire of "Broadway Babylon" anecdotes.

In anticipation of their compilation, Porter, as co-author, claimed, "Starcke's lurid *exposés* will reveal decadent, manipulative, and very lavender aspects of the Great White Way. Broadway's image as 'The Great White Way' wasn't a navigable highway. It was more akin to a fetid swamp.'"

One of Starcke's claims involved his "discovery" of Paul Newman. "He walked into my office in New York selling encyclopedias. I have this instinct about who's going to be a star and who isn't going to make it. I thought Newman was a living doll. I called the biggest agent in town and told him, 'You've got to meet this guy right now. What blue

eyes! I haven't checked out his other body parts yet, but before sending him over, I will.'"



Broadway impresario and new age guru, Walter Starcke.

Starcke eventually decided that his memoirs (previously dictated to Darwin Porter) were too seamy to ever publish.

"Of course, Newman knew that my help came with a price," Starcke said. "No one ever accused him of being *naïve*. I didn't invent the casting couch, but I made good use of it."

"Steve McQueen was another actor who ended up on my casting couch," Starcke claimed. "Although I had predicted stardom for Newman, I didn't think McQueen was star material at all. Most of the actors I seduced eventually faded into oblivion. A few made it—Ralph Meeker, Marlon Brando, Monty Clift, and Tony Perkins. But the huge majority ending up selling vacuum cleaners or waiting tables."

"As for Dean, he was a little shit," Starcke claimed. "Just a hustler. But who am I to cast stones? That's how I got my start, too."

Starcke later decided that the publication of his memoirs would be unwise and perhaps even dangerous. By that time, he had evolved into a spiritual leader, a guru *["You are what you create and you create who you are."]* who had authored a series of self-help books based on the mystical procedures and philosophies he had gleaned from one of his mentors, Joel Goldsmith, whose papers and writings he had inherited after Goldsmith's death.

Up until his death in 2011, Starcke spent the latter decades of his life developing New Age cult following, often from among twenty-somethings. It was then that he demanded that Porter destroy those extensive notes he'd written during the planning stages for his "Babylon-style" Broadway memoir.

"Do you understand me?" Starcke had said to Porter. "The indiscretions of my Broadway days would doom the development of my philosophies about spiritual development and heightened awareness of the human soul."

"Don't worry," Porter promised him at the time. "I'll assign all my notes to hell's fire."

Starcke didn't seem to realize that Porter had no intention of destroying the most scandalous material ever committed to paper about indiscretions and excesses associated with Broadway and its denizens after dark.

Chapter Eleven

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

AMERICA'S MOST REVERED PLAYWRIGHT WANTS A SON & INVITES JAMES DEAN TO BE THE FATHER

Auditioning Replacements for "The Horse," Tennessee Williams "Interviews" James Dean as His Possible New Lover

TENNESSEE'S LOST MANUSCRIPT

THE YOUNG MAN (JIMMY DEAN) WHO TOOK A BITE OUT OF THE MOON

> "I've had sex with all four of America's most famous rebel actors: Marlon Brando, Monty Clift, Paul Newman, and James Dean."
>
> —*Tennessee Williams*

At several occasions, at parties and at private gatherings, Tennessee Williams and James Dean had circled each other before they eventually rendezvoused, early in 1954 with Elia Kazan and Eli Wallach, at a catered dinner within Tennessee's Manhattan apartment. The playwright's lover, Frank Merlo, away visiting relatives in his native Sicily, was conspicuously absent.

Tennessee had high praise for Jimmy's performance in *See the Jaguar*.

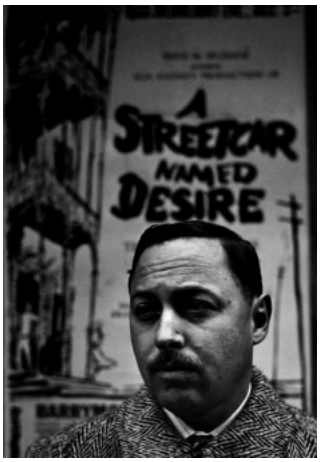
Afterward, although Jimmy and Tennessee each discussed their bonding with a number of friends, the extent of their relationship has remained unreported.

At that dinner, as witnessed by the other guests, Tennessee claimed, "I have always had a soft spot in my heart and a hard-on for most young actors. It seems that all of them play the waiting game, most often in vain, longing for that big part that might make them an overnight sensation. Marlon, as you know, found it in my creation of Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar."*

*"*I've watched many an actor grow old without his dream ever coming true. But if my intuition hasn't betrayed

me, I think this young man here, this Jimmy Dean, will be one of the chosen few upon whom the stars will shine ever so brightly."

Then he reached over and took Jimmy's hand in his. "Mr. Dean, you will find your role—in fact, I may be the one to write it for you, a part you were born to play, like it was your destiny. And I'm sure that when I do, Gadge here will direct it with his usual genius."



Spectacularly famous and sought-after at the time he met Jimmy, Tennessee Williams was fully aware that his endorsement of an actor for a role in one of his cutting-edge plays usually led to fame and glory. Marlon Brando, playing a key role in *A Street-car Named Desire* had been one of his early *protégés*.

"I may be a little too drunk tonight to write such a play," Tennessee continued, "but I know I will summon my strength and create a memorable character."

Then he turned his attention to Wallach, who appeared jealous that he might be pushed aside after all the fine performances he'd delivered of *The Rose Tattoo [as a play, it had opened in 1951]*, and that Jimmy, and not himself, might emerge as Tennessee's new discovery.

"At this time in history, the Broadway stage is more liberal than the film industry in Hollywood," Tennessee said. "But there will come a day, I predict, when homosexuality will be depicted openly on both the stage and in films. Of course, movies have included prissy homosexuals like Edward Everett Horton and that fussbudget, Franklin Pangborn, but that's not what I'm talking about; I'd like to depict a football hero as a homosexual."

Kazan seemed to agree with his point of view. He said he'd read Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.* "Kinsey found that thirty-seven percent of males have had at least some homosexual encounters and experiences in their lifetimes. That should send a message to the shit psychiatrists who still define homosexuality as a mental illness."

"I'd be willing to depict a homosexual in a play," Wallach said, "that is, if the role is good enough."

[During this dialogue, Jimmy was fascinated. Later, during his filming of Rebel Without a Cause*, he was counseled for a brief period by Dr. Judd Marmor, the psychiatrist best known for his role in persuading the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its* Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.]*

True to Tennessee's prediction, Jimmy, cast as Jim Stark, would eventually appear in romantically compelling scenes with Sal Mineo, who interpreted his teenaged character as an obvious homosexual with an overpowering crush on Jimmy.

"If I write a role for a homosexual, I will do so with some subtlety," Tennessee said. "In other words, he won't be shown taking it up the ass. I prefer characters with certain sexual ambiguity. I believe that all characters, gay or straight, should end their performances with an aura of mystery about their futures. If you're a member of the audience who demands a road map about what will eventually happen to a character, then I'm not your playwright."

Once again, he turned to Jimmy and took his hand. "As a possible character both on and off the stage, I find you fascinating. You are nothing if not sexually ambiguous. There is an androgyny about you; you're completely

unlike that brutal male Brando played in *Streetcar.* I'd even say that although his character was never seen by any audience, you might have played Blanche DuBois' doomed, and gay, husband."

Tennessee later revealed to his most enduring *confidante,* Maria Britneva *[later, Lady St. Just,* aka *Maria St. Just]* the ground rules he relayed to Jimmy that night after Wallach and Kazan left his dinner party:

He informed him that ever since he'd started having sex, he preferred to be sodomized. "But in December of 1953, I was horribly afflicted with thrombosed hemorrhoids as large as a hen's egg. I had to undergo the most painful operation of my life in New Orleans. I think that before he worked on me, that quack doctor performed medical experiments on Jews during the war. Ever since then, the thought of rectal penetration frightens me. I have therefore decided that the human mouth on a penis can be equally gratifying."

Later, Jimmy discussed details of his evening with Tennessee with Stanley Haggart, who was also a friend of the playwright: "He's insatiable," Jimmy lamented. "Just insatiable. He wants to repeat everything again and again and again. If I see too much of him, I won't have any honey left for anybody else."

As the days and weeks went by, Jimmy—fearing that Tennessee was "auditioning" him for a role as his full-time lover—kept Haggart posted on the status of their "romance."

Long time companions and collaborators Frank Merlo *(left)* with Tennessee Williams, together at their home on Duncan Street in Key West.

According to Haggart, "Jimmy, as was his nature, was out to get what he could get. He'd done that ever since he'd become an actor, and the pattern continued from Hollywood to New York and back to Hollywood again. And from what Tennessee told me, he was 'crazy about the boy.'"

Tennessee had nicknamed his Sicilian lover, Frank Merlo, "The Horse." From the beginning, their relationship was volatile. In the summer of 1952, Merlo left him. "Tennessee and I went our separate ways," Merlo told Darwin Porter.

Tennessee lamented his loss to Jimmy. "The Horse left me at one of the most desperate times of my life. I'd had two great successes, but the critics had turned on me, and I was insecure. I felt as alone as a man feels at the moment of death."

"I immediately asked myself if I could find someone else. Or could I live alone, without love, drifting from bed to bed? I was falling apart—and by the way, I had plenty of company. Almost everyone close to me was also falling apart, stricken with fatal diseases, or whatever. In the case of Maria, she had an abortion. There were other horror stories, too. I refer to that time as 'The Summer of the Long Knives.'"

Jimmy was made aware when Merlo eventually returned from Sicily for a reunion with his lover. But after that, he sometimes spent weeks at a time at their cottage in Key West, leaving Tennessee alone in New York. "When he came back, he displayed the charm of a porcupine—grouchy, sullen, irritable," Tennessee complained to Jimmy. "If I ever write a play about him, I'll entitle it, *Something Unspoken from the Distant Heart."*

During that period, Maria St. Just attended most of Tennessee's social gatherings. Although she and Jimmy deeply resented the other, they maintained a superficial politeness.

Before Jimmy's first dinner with Maria, Tennessee had issued a warning to him: "She has a savagely mordant sense of humor. Watch that it's not turned on you. She seems to say all the things that a discreet woman would not even think. And that tongue of hers: It'll either be turned on you viciously, or it will be lapping at your

rosebud."

"She has a powerful sex drive, and has never been known to turn down a sexual advance. In fact, I sometimes have to curb her, like those ladies who lunch do to their poodles during their walks along Fifth Avenue. I have no doubt that if Maria had remained in Leningrad, she would by now have become a reincarnation of Catherine the Great."

Since it seemed that both of them had become the objects of Tennessee's current obsession, Jimmy set out to learn more about Maria.

[Maria Britneva was born in the Soviet Union in 1921, the daughter of one of the former Court physicians to the Tsar. Her father had fled from St. Petersburg during the 1917 revolution and was later murdered in one of the Soviet purges. With her mother, Maria emigrated to London, where she became a ballet dancer, living on whatever her mother could earn translating the plays of Chekhov for John Gielgud's acting troupe.

*It was through Gielgud that she met Tennessee Williams, with whom she probably fell in love, later sublimating it into a devoted "*amitié amoureuse*," ferociously shielding him from sycophants and managing his chaotic domestic affairs. After moving to New York, she had studied at the Actors Studio, during which time, Tennessee had allowed her to interpret the role of Blanche DuBois in an Off-Broadway production of his play,* A Streetcar Named Desire.

On July 25, 1956, she married Peter Grenfell, Lord St. Just, the wealthy son of Edward Grenfell, the British banking partner of J.P. Morgan.

Tennessee designated her in his will as the literary executor of his estate. It was rumored that he regretted that decision, and that as time went by, he was on the verge of eliminating her from his will completely, but he died before he filed the paperwork. By most accounts, Maria evolved into a tyrannically restrictive executrix, refusing requests from directors to produce many of Tennessee's more obscure plays, and systematically denying scholars' access to his private papers. Some scholars, however, have credited her ferocious territoriality as the means whereby Tennessee's literary reputation was salvaged from the dissipation of his drug excesses in the years before his death.]

Ferociously protective: Maria St. Just with Tennessee Williams

To his friends, Tennessee described Maria as "My Five O'Clock Angel. She's always waiting for me at that time of day when I could always count on her being on the other end of the phone as I described my emptiness after a day laboring on my typewriter. She is my friend, but also my court jester, *confidante,* cheerleader, dogsbody, and ultimately, the keeper of the flame."

Truman Capote had another view of her. He told Jimmy, "Tell her that if she sees me to stay clear, or else I will slap her tits and kick her down the stairs. You should see the crap she's written about me. *Quel bitch!* You tell her from me that she's a dreadful liar!"

Maria and Jimmy maintained an uneasy alliance, continuing to conceal their respective hostilities. She'd later express her view of him, merging it somehow into an anecdote about Montgomery Clift:

"Montgomery Clift was a friend of Tennessee. I visited him on a number of occasions when he was living with the torch singer, Libby Holman. There

was something curiously intangible and inconclusive about Monty. But at least he wasn't as cracking a bore as James Dean, whom I met on a number of occasions with Tennessee. Dean simply sat there glumly, thinking no doubt about himself."

Jimmy later told Stanley Haggart, "I must be a god damn good actor because I've successfully managed to conceal my distaste for Maria. At least some of that is based on the weird idea Tennessee proposed for us the other night."

Tennessee had said: "I've been thinking for months about an element that's missing from my life—a son of my own. I don't think I'm capable of penetrating a woman to have an actual son the way nature intended, and I don't plan to adopt one. But I'm opposed to artificial insemination."

"How in hell, then, do you plan to have a son?" Jimmy asked.

"That's where *you* come in," Tennessee said. "I want you to seduce Maria in the missionary position—nothing kinky, just a straight fuck like the ones Richard Nixon gave Patricia, only twice in his life to produce two daughters."

"Of course, I could get 'The Horse' (Merlo) to fuck her, but I don't want a son with Sicilian blood. Actually, I want my son to have a Russian soul like Maria's, but to be imbued with all-American boy beauty like yourself. Hence, you're the perfect specimen."

"All right," Jimmy said, concealing his reluctance. "You name the time and place. I'm sure I'll score a home run my first time at bat."

"I, too, am certain of that," Tennessee said. "I noticed that your semen is extra thick and creamy, not watery like some guys emit. I think your sperm must be crawling with little baby-making gametes."

Later, Jimmy told Haggart, "Tennessee never mentioned that subject again. Nor did I. Having to do the dirty deed with that Russian bitch would have been one of the truly formidable challenges of my life, even though you know I love to fuck."

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Whenever Frank Merlo, Tennessee's lover, was out of town *[in most cases because of trips he made to their shared home in Key West]* Tennessee's parties and social gatherings in Manhattan included James Dean.

At one of these events, Tennessee invited Jimmy to dinner with two of his favorite actresses, Geraldine Page and Maureen Stapleton, both from the Actors Studio.

Stapleton had already scored an enormous hit on Broadway appearing in *The Rose Tattoo* opposite Eli Wallach. Likewise, Page had appeared Off-Broadway in a successful revival of Tennessee's *Summer and Smoke.*

Before both actresses arrived at his apartment, Tennessee gave some coaching to each of them: "My secret for dealing with Jimmy involves talking to him as if you're addressing a wounded animal or a sick child."

Stapleton was the first to arrive. During the first moments of their reunion, Tennessee called her "Maw," and she called him "Paw."

"What is this Maw and Paw shit?" Jimmy asked.

"We named each other that in 1947, based on *The Egg and I,* the movie where Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride played Ma and Pa Kettle," Stapleton said.

"How you guys identify with those hayseeds defies human imagination," Jimmy said.

When Page arrived a few minutes later, Tennessee complimented her on "the witchery" she'd brought to her role in *Summer and Smoke.*

Maureen Stapleton and Eli Wallach exploring the entrapments of love and ego in Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo.*

"I'm so glad you approve," Page said. "I must confess that José Quintero told me that you didn't want me in the role. You knew, of course, that I can't guarantee box office. I hope it was my lack of box office clout and not a critique of my acting."

"At first, I thought your role demanded more power and technique than you possessed," Tennessee said. "But how wrong I was."

Later, when he went to answer a phone call from Tallulah Bankhead, Page spoke about what Elia Kazan had told her about Tennessee at the Actors Studio.

"He warned Tenn never to talk to an actor, and to never even consider being a director of one of his own plays. Gadge believed that Tenn's innate shyness and vagueness about everything would only confuse the actor."

Then she made a statement that completely astonished Jimmy. "Don't let anybody know I think this, but I believe that Tenn doesn't even read his plays after writing them. He doesn't know anything about them. You want to shake him and knock him on the head and say, 'Open up and let me talk to you.'"

At some point during the evening, the talk turned to two of Jimmy's rivals, Marlon Brando and Monty Clift, both of whom were well-known to Stapleton and Page.

"I've tried to place Jimmy here in the pantheon of gods that include Monty and Marlon," Stapleton said. "Of the two rebels, Monty is the aristocrat, Marlon the proletarian."

"But how do I fit in?" Jimmy asked.

"You, my dear, are the surly younger brother of the other two," Stapleton answered.

"If you get the right parts, you'll be the first modern teenager of the 1950s," Page accurately predicted, her prophecy coming true after his casting in *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause.* "The standards set by Mickey Rooney playing Andy Hardy are old-fashioned and corny," she said. "America in the 50s is far too sophisticated for that."

"I'm considering writing a play based on all our rebel males," Tennessee said. "Before I met Paul Newman, I thought Marlon Brando was the most beautiful male in the world. Before that, I used to cite Monty Clift, who has a beautiful face but a scrawny, hairy body."

"In other words, first I gave the crown to Monty, but then took it off his head and placed it on Marlon's. Then I passed it to Newman. But now, I must remove it from Newman's head and reposition it directly onto the glorious brow of one Jimmy Dean."

"I have a title for your play," Jimmy chimed in, impishly: "*The Fickle Heart."*

Geraldine Page as a sexually and emotionally repressed *belle,* emoting with a hedonist in Tennessee's *Summer and Smoke.*

"Not bad," Tennessee said. "When I created Stanley Kowalski, I was intrigued with the beefy brutish type. But for Jimmy, I plan to write not about some muscle-bound lug, but about a very different young man, one who is lean, mean, and astonishingly beautiful. I want this new young boy to inspire sexual fantasies in women and in certain men of a distinct sexual preference."

"I hope I'll be worthy of the role," Jimmy said.

"All of us know you will," said Stapleton, who was drunk at this point.

"I conceived of Stanley Kowalski as a dandy, but not in the traditional sense of the word," Tennessee said. "He was a dandy in extreme masculine attire, using his magnificent body to intimidate others, both men and women. He could also bewilder with his moody silences. I wanted to portray Stanley with a latent fire burning inside him, but one ready to burst into flames at any minutes. One capable of rape. He demonstrated this every time he stood on the stage, stripped to the waist, with muscles rippling."

"Jimmy does not have the quality of the brute," Tennessee continued. "Nor would I want to create another Stanley Kowalski. Jimmy's part calls for more of the sexy sensitive."

"In my view, Monty, Marlon, and Jimmy are a modern sexual trinity. Rebel males who never integrated into society. They are the new, 1950s versions of Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, and John Garfield. Incidentally, after it was offered to him, Garfield rejected the role of Kowalski, claiming that it was 'too slight.'"

"What a fool," Jimmy said.

"As an actor, you are so very different from Newman," Tennessee said. "It takes a long time for him to work up to a character. He starts slowly, after hitting his mark, he becomes marvelous. On the other hand, you come on like dynamite the moment your image makes its entrance."

As Stapleton and Page were leaving, a drunken Tennessee kissed them goodbye at the door. "You know something? When I die, *The New York Times* will include a tantalizing detail in my obit. 'Tennessee Williams was the playwright who seduced each of the four most famous rebel males of the postwar stage and screen: Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, and James Dean."

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SURVIVING IN SHOW-BIZ

Handsome Playmates of a Decadent, Major-League Playwright

Left to right: Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Paul Newman, James Dean

Tennessee was having lunch with the prominent Broadway director, Josh Logan, when James Dean was being discussed: "I realized that many people claim that Jimmy imitates Brando," Tennessee said. "But actually, I think both of them are imitating the mannerisms of Gadge *[Kazan]."*

Her husband, Paul, introduced his literarily brilliant, bohemian, and lesbian wife, Jane Bowles, to Cherifa (Amina Bakalia), a country woman working at the grain market in Tangier. Cherifa became Jane's publicly acknowledged live-in partner.

Jane, one of the most spectacularly eccentric (and later, unstable) writers in America, expressed something akin to adoration for James Dean.

In response, Logan said, "I hear that Gadge and Jimmy had a sort of father-son relationship during the making of *East of Eden.* If I had directed the boy, I would have visited his dressing room every morning and again at four o'clock every afternoon. On each occasion, I'd extract his honey. What sort of relationship do you have with the boy?"

"Like Gadge, it's a sort of father-and-son thing," Tennessee said. "But in this case, it's incestuous."

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One night, to Jimmy, Tennessee poured out his frustration with Merlo.

"I have a spy in Key West, Danny Stirrup. He calls me every day and lets me know what 'The Horse' did the previous night. Frankie lays out all night in the taverns, returning to my house with two or three cars filled with Key West sailors. My house there has become a bordello and honky-tonk. 'The Horse' probably fucks with most of the sailor trade. He's also developed friendships with some local guys and gals, non-military. They're the dregs of life, each washed up on the shores of Key West after being run out of every town on the Eastern Seaboard. With apologies to Gertrude Stein, I call this motley crew 'the 'Afterbirth of the Lost Generation' crowd."

To his credit, Tennessee did at least try to get roles for Jimmy outside the orbit of his own plays.

In 1953, he introduced him to Jane Bowles, the American expatriate writer and playwright, during one of her visits to New York. Diagnosed in her later years as mentally unstable, she was the wife of composer Paul Bowles. Tennessee had defined her to Jimmy as the finest writer in the English language.

"Before you meet her, know that she has a unique sensibility," he said. "She's a charming woman, with a big, fat Moroccan Fatima lover back in Tangier. Jane is full of affection, so don't be alarmed if she expresses panic. At first, I thought her act was just theatrical, but now I know it is quite genuine. Jane and I both agree that our guardians will one day pack us off to the asylum."

After spending a few hours with them, Bowles and Jimmy became "like kindred spirits," in Tennessee's views. She ended the evening by telling him that there was a key role in her upcoming play, *In the Summer House,* and that she was going to recommend him to its producer Oliver Smith, himself a famous designer and director.

Subsequently Smith agreed to an audition, and Tennessee accompanied Jimmy to the theater. "Jimmy tried his best, really putting forth an effort, but Oliver told us that he was wrong for the role," Tennessee said. "Jimmy never could stand rejection very well, and he was bitterly disappointed."

On their way out of the theater, Jimmy grabbed Tennessee's arm and looked defiantly into his face. "Someday, when Oliver Smith isn't even a footnote in theatrical history, the whole god damn, mother-fucking world will know who James Dean is."

"I Don't Trust These Sons of Bitches"

—James Dean, in reference to Elia Kazan and Tennessee Williams

In December of 1954, *East of Eden* was screened before a special audience that included such cultural luminaries as Josh Logan, Tennessee Williams, and Christopher Isherwood and his lover, Don Bachardy. Collectively, these men met later for drinks and dinner. Each was enthusiastic in his belief that a new star had risen in the Hollywood firmament.

"I was impressed with how he used his whole body, not just his face, to express emotion," Isherwood said. "At times, he looked like he was writhing in pain, and expressed that with his entire body. I mean, he appeared sort of twisted, rather spastic. In some scenes, he walked like a man crippled, not necessarily by his bones, but by life itself."

A few days later, Tennessee met with Elia Kazan, who had directed *East of Eden*. Kazan told him, "There was a scene where Jimmy had to show great anxiety. He was worried that he might not be able to pull it off. As a means of preparing for it, he told me he'd gone all day without taking a piss. When the cameras were turned on him, he was very uptight, perfect for the moment, even though he was about to piss his pants. He did the scene in just one take and then rushed to the toilet."

When Jimmy was with Tennessee, he expressed nothing but praise and support, but behind his back, he sometimes voiced a different set of opinions. During the filming of *East of Eden*, he wrote to his sometimes girlfriend, Barbara Glenn, with this:

> *"Gadge and Tennessee are very nice gentlemen, at least on the surface. But I wouldn't trust the sons of bitches as far as I could throw them. They can take advantage of an innocent, poor farm boy like me. God knows what unspeakable acts they'll force me to commit in order to enhance my screen career."*

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In Key West, Maria St. Just telephoned Darwin Porter and asked him to escort her to the local showing of *East of Eden.*

Before the movie had run for only forty-five minutes, she dramatically arose from her seat and loudly demanded: "Take me out of this damn place. I have never seen such a boring performance in my life. Dean is an impossible actor."

According to Porter, "Maria was almost psychotically jealous of anyone who got close to Tennessee, especially James Dean. She told unflattering stories about him and swore that he was a poseur, with absolutely no talent. She also detested Frankie Merlo, referring to him as a Sicilian peasant, common, uneducated, and ill bred. And she had a particular venom for Tennessee's lady friends, especially Anna Magnani. Frankie and Dean weren't the only objects of her contempt: She frequently threw poison darts at Vivien Leigh, Maureen Stapleton, and Tallulah Bankhead."

"Although she professed great love for Tennessee, she could also be scathingly critical of him. She especially disliked what she called the homosexual element in some of his plays."

Also according to Porter, "I agreed with Tennessee's assessment of her: Most women hated her, especially Tallulah, and few men knew what to think of her. Gore Vidal told us that he was afraid of her. 'She's such a forceful personality that at times, she just seems to envelop Tennessee,' Vidal said."

"That beak nose of hers was always turned up at people she considered inferior," Porter said. "She claimed that Dean still stunk of the barnyard and of the hogs he slopped."

Maria St. Just came in a small package and stood about 4 foot 9", but she was formidable, her face crowned by dark chestnut hair. Her eyes were not exactly brown. They were changeable, at time appearing a shade of gray like that of a foggy morning in November."

"She claimed that she had been Tennessee's inspiration for Maggie the Cat in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*," Porter said.

"She was constantly whining about money. She never had enough. She gave Tennessee emotional support, and he in turn had to give her financial aid. Behind her back, he always complained to friends about the money he was having to shell out."

Was the Character of Brick,

THE CLOSETED, DEEPLY TORMENTED ANTI-HERO OF TENNESSEE'S *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF,*

Inspired by James Dean?

In 1961, at a dinner party in Key West, Tennessee told his guests that he had used some of the character of James Dean in his literary construction of Brick, the closeted homosexual and former football hero in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* Present at the party that night were Margaret Foresman, managing editor of *The Key West Citizen,* author James Kirkwood *[one of the creative forces behind the Broadway success of* A Chorus Line*]*, and set designers Stanley Haggart and Danny Stirrup.

"In 1954, Jimmy was terrified and in agony over the possibility that, based on his increasing fame, his homosexual past might be exposed in the tabloids," Tennessee said. "He seemed deeply conflicted about that, with an anxiety I wove into Brick's character in my play."

"Jimmy kept asking me if I thought he were gay or not. I told him he didn't need to define things so harshly, and that with a certain finesse, he'd be able to lead a life in both worlds, as so many other movie stars did. 'Millions of men around the world are bisexual,' I assured him. But he didn't seem to want to accept that as a possibility."

[Revised countless times, the script of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof *established that Maggie the Cat had been jealous of her husband's inseparable friendship with Skipper, his "bromance" football buddy. Skipper had attempted to make love with Maggie as a means of proving his own heterosexuality and to establish that there were no romantic undercurrents associated with his friendship with Brick. Even before the opening act, it is established that Skipper was unable to consummate the sex act with Maggie, and that in the aftermath, he confessed to Brick his failed attempt at an adventure with his wife, and his undying love for Brick himself. Reacting to the news, Brick had rejected Skipper, who subsequently kills himself, thereby compelling the tormented and very conflicted Brick to descend into alcoholism and to desert Maggie's bed altogether.]*

Tennessee claimed that at length with Jimmy, he both discussed and analyzed the character of Brick, holding out to Jimmy the promise that he would eventually star in that role on Broadway when the play opened in the spring of 1955.

He said that the theme of the play had originated as a short story called *Three Against Grenada,* which was eventually retitled *Three Players of a Summer Game* and published in *The New Yorker.* It was the story of a young man who disappears behind a comforting veil of alcohol, eventually establishing his psychic residency at the bottom of a shot glass. As Tennessee put it, "Brick is like a man trying to finish a race with a sprained ankle."

Scenes from two different, world-famous productions of Tennessee Williams' blockbusting *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.*

Upper photo: Ben Gazzara and Barbara Bel Geddes on Broadway in 1955, and *(lower photo)* Paul Newman with Elizabeth Taylor in the heavily censored Hollywood version of 1958.

Was the sexually frustrated female character of Maggie the Cat inspired by Tennessee's hellacious friend, Maria St. Just?

And was the repressed homosexual male inspired by James Dean?

Tennessee himself always said "yes."

"Kazan extensively refashioned my play," Tennessee said, "and rejected Jimmy for the role, even though he'd directed him so brilliantly in *East of Eden.* He still viewed Jimmy as an adolescent, and he wanted a more masculine figure to portray Brick, the former football star—hence the rugged Ben Gazzara."

"Three years later *[in 1958],* Brick's role in the film version went to Paul Newman, of course, and I was furious that the censors removed so many of the homosexual elements in my play. I accused all of them of sabotaging my work. Maybe Jimmy might have been perfect for the part. I don't know. I'm still blind with fury at the way *Cat* reached the screen."

Anna Magnani ("La Lupa")

Extends a Boudoir Invitation to Jimmy

Tennessee and Jimmy were last seen in public in 1955 at the Crescendo Nightclub in Los Angeles. Tennessee escorted Anna Magnani, and Jimmy arrived with his latest girlfriend, Lilli Kardell, a nineteen-year-old Swedish actress who was under contract to Universal.

[Jimmy told Tennessee that he was intimidated by the idea of meeting Magnani. "She's an earth mother," Tennessee assured Jimmy. "Italians refer to her as La Lupa, the living she-wolf symbol of ancient Rome. She's volcanic, with a fiery temper, but she's also passionate and loving. I want her to star in the movie version of *The Rose Tattoo* opposite Burt Lancaster."

"Tallulah Bankhead, whom you know, and Anna Magnani are two of the most formidable women I've ever met," Tennessee confessed. "In most ways, they're completely different, except for one thing in common. They resent having to interrupt an animated conversation to answer a call of nature. Each of them will invite you into their bathroom while they go about their business. During their heaving and farting, you're asked to sit on the edge of their bathtubs as they continue their rapid dialogues."]

At the club, Tennessee escorted Kardell across the room to introduce her to a cluster of the Hollywood elite, leaving Magnani to interact with Jimmy.

Over drinks, she turned to him. "I hate fancy places like this. I don't know why Tennessee brought me here. He should have taken me to a place where the common people eat. I only relate to the people of the street."

"I'm with you, Miss Magnani," Jimmy replied.

"I hear you were raised on a farm, so you are one of the people of the earth, not some glamorous Hollywood boy who spends his entire day putting makeup on his face and gazing at his image in the mirror. If you've seen any of my movies, you know I appear on the screen without artifice, as a natural woman."

upper photo: Anna Magnani, "The She-Wolf of Rome"

lower photo: the 5-euro coin issued by the Italian government in her honor in 2008

"Just meeting you for this brief moment, I realize why you are called the greatest actress in the world."

"You could show your appreciation for me in another way," Magnani said.

"Your wish, my command."

"After we get out of this dreadful place, I want you to return with me to my hotel and make love to me," she said. "I'll release you at dawn."

It is not known if Jimmy accepted that invitation. There is reason to believe that he did.

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During his filming of *Rebel Without a Cause,* Jimmy described Magnani to Natalie Wood, another actress who would appear in Tennessee Williams' dramas.

"Magnani's hair is the color of a raven," Jimmy said. "She has deep, dark shadows around her expressive eyes that speak of her tragic past. She's a little short and rather plump, but when she talks, she emerges as a Roman goddess who rose out of the earth. When amusing stories are told, Tennessee has this cackle last heard in a henhouse. Magnani has a loud laugh that comes from deep within her soul. It is overwhelming, but only if the tale being related reeks of gallows humor."

"My Orgy With Ganymede is Over"

—Tennessee Williams, in a Postmortem Reference to James Dean

There is some evidence that Tennessee, near the end of Jimmy's short life, became disenchanted with him, perhaps the result of Maria's constant negativity.

In front of guests in Key West, she loudly voiced her negative appraisal of James Dean:

"He is a compelling figure, and is so skillful in getting other people to come to his aid. His reckless behavior inspires others to try to save him from himself, but he really has no concern for anybody other than himself. He lives in a world of self-enchantment. His indifference to others is almost perverse. At times, he seems to have impulses of shocking cruelty. Tennessee, my dear, he will only hurt you in the end."

In 1955, a few days after Jimmy's tragic early death, Tennessee phoned Maria:

"My orgy with Ganymede is over. The greedy gods have carried his golden body to Olympus, where he has become the cupbearer for John Barrymore. Even in heaven, Barrymore has continued to drink heavily, inspiring the wrath of God who is powerless to wean him from the bottle and is therefore forced to keep him supplied with vintage Scotch. The kiss from Jimmy's lips still lingers on my own lips. The sensation is no longer of warm tenderness, but the cold hard mouth of the Grim Reaper, who will soon be bestowing the kiss of death on me."

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Years after Jimmy's death, Tennessee claimed that he had written a play about Jimmy's life entitled *The Young Man Who Took a Bite Out of the Moon.* The only person who claimed to have read it, albeit as a rough draft, was Margaret Foresman. Managing Editor of the *Key West Citizen,* she had been a close friend of Tennessee's for many years, especially during the 1960s when "he seemed to live on drugs," as she recalled.

"It was clearly about James Dean," she said. "It was the story of a male hustler of great beauty who rose to sudden fame after drifting from one producer's bed to another director's bed. But he cannot handle fame and mass adulation."

A drugged Tennessee asked Foresman if she'd compose some descriptive "casting notes" for the character, with the understanding that they would be included with the drafts he was organizing for his literary agent, who would presumably send them on key players on Broadway.

She made a photocopy of the "thumbnail" she composed, based on her reading of the play:

"Indiana Hawke is a beautiful but conflicted young man. He is slowly being smothered by the bitch goddess, fame. He struggles for life, but is enveloped by a paranoia fed by past betrayals. Consumed by guilt, he uses others, especially producers and directors, but in the end, he fears that he is the one who has been used.

He is remorseful for the cruelty he has shown to those few strangers who showed him kindness, and he fears that the razzle-dazzle of his youthful glow is quickly fading. Unlike Dorian Gray, there is no portrait in a closet depicting his evil in lieu of having it embedded in his face. Instead, to his horror, he realizes that the evil is clearly etched into his looks.

He realized that he is misunderstood because he has tricked the world using gimmicks he's learned as an actor, and he's terrified that he has lost his talent and that his gimmickry has become obvious. The world which had once shone so brightly is now growing dark. He imagines that he is being pulled, without resources, out to sea, into the turbulent waters of a winter from which there will be no return."

Tennessee Discovers Christopher Jones

His Vision of "The New James Dean"

More than a decade after Jimmy's death, Shelley Winters invited Tennessee to escort her to a screening of a film in which she appeared, *Wild in the Streets* (1968).

[Reviewed at the time as "ridiculous and ludicrous," Wild in the Streets *survives as a cult classic of the counterculture 1960s. Nominated for an Academy Award (for best film editing), it presented an absurdist view of the culture wars of its era, especially issues associated with Vietnam.]*

Based on his screening of that film, Tennessee, from afar, fell madly in love with its star, Christopher Jones.

"He is one of the sexiest boys I've ever seen on the screen," Tennessee told Winters. "And those tight pants! He left little for my imagination. I predict Jones will be the next James Dean. There's a resemblance between Jimmy Dean and Christopher Jones: Each is a blonde, blue-eyed Adonis with farm boy sexuality."

"If the film rights are ever purchased for my play about Jimmy, this Jones Adonis would be the perfect vehicle for depicting him on the screen."

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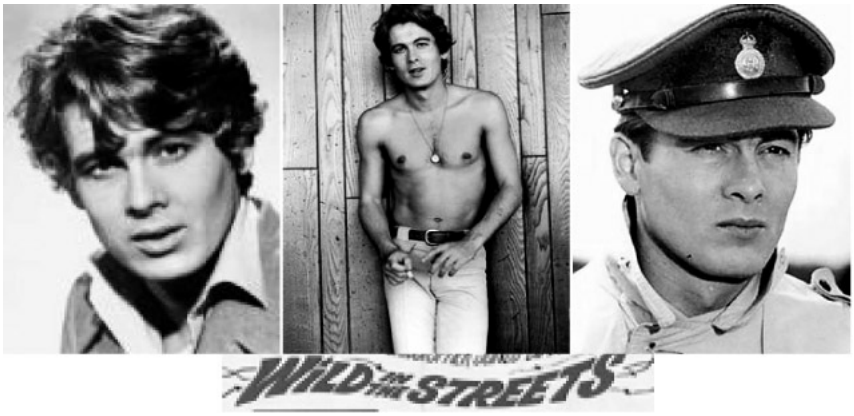
In the aftermath of Tennessee's death in 1983, none of the pages of his play about James Dean, nor any of its outlines or notes, were ever discovered among his possessions. Margaret Foresman told Tennessee's friends and acolytes, as well as the executrix to his estate, Maria St. Just, that he had taken them with him on a trip he made, alone, to Mexico, while the manuscript was still in progress.

"He was drunk a lot, and consuming large amounts of heavy drugs, and his behavior had become reckless," Foresman said. "He probably abandoned the manuscript in one of those seedy hotels, like the one he depicted in

Camino Real."

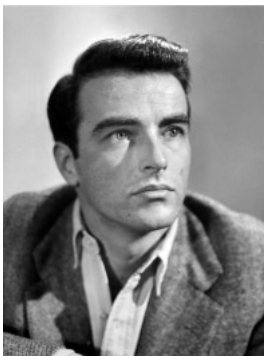


Three views of Christopher Jones. Although by temperament, they're very different men and very different actors, Tennessee Williams insisted, based on his only partially successful pur-suit, insisted that they looked almost the same.

Chapter Twelve

JAMES DEAN'S AFFAIR WITH
MONTY CLIFT

The Doomed Actor With the "Green Diamond" Eyes



REBEL ACTORS NEUROTICALLY FEUDING ON THEIR RESPECTIVE ROADS TO SELF-DESTRUCTION

On Stage, Jimmy Physically Attacks Libby Holman, The Millionaire Torch Singer & Murderess

"I don't understand it. I love men in bed, but I really love women."

—Montgomery Clift

"The guy acts like he has a Mix-Master up his ass, and doesn't want anyone to know it."

—Marlon Brando, in reference to Montgomery Clift

Author John Parker wrote, "It was at the Actors Studio during the winter of 1951-52 that Clift spotted Jimmy for the first time. Lee Strasberg told Clift, "This kid is an echo of you."

Clift said "I don't want to meet him. I find it unnerving to watch anyone whose work even in the remotest sense resembles my own."

During the development of his own style, it was evident to many members of the studio that Jimmy was mimicking both Clift and Brando. Jimmy wasn't exactly hiding the influence of these two older actors. He had started signing his name as "James Brando-Clift Dean."

He was a very determined man with one overriding goal: He wanted to be introduced to Clift, whom he had yet to encounter. But there was a problem: Clift did not want to meet Jimmy.

Dennis Hopper, Jimmy's future friend and co-star in *Rebel Without a Cause,* said, "Jimmy used to call Monty Clift when he was in New York and say, 'I'm a great actor, and you're my idol. I need to see you because I need to communicate.'"

Sometimes, Clift would pick up the phone and listen to Jimmy's voice, but say nothing. Eventually, the calls became so frequent that he had to change his number.

When Clift encountered Elia Kazan, the director told him, "Why don't you guys get together? Maybe both of you have something to gain from the other. He's a punk, but he has a *helluva* talent. He likes racing cars, waitresses, and waiters. He says you're his idol."

"I despise being idolized," Clift said. "I can't even walk down the streets of New York anymore without fans chasing after me. I no longer have my privacy. I don't need some puppy dog like James Dean following after me with his tongue hanging out."

As unflattering as it was, Kazan, as was his way, bluntly reported what Clift had said to Jimmy. "Better give up on your phone calls. You're beginning to really annoy him."

"That's too bad," Jimmy said. "But I know he'll change his mind after he meets me. I'll bet you he falls for me. We're the same breed. All the best actors come from the Midwest, me from Indiana, Clift and Brando from Nebraska. We grew up in the wide open spaces, not in the shadowy canyons of New York."

"That's true for you guys, but Mae West grew up in Brooklyn, and she has bigger balls that all three of you put together."

Three days later, when Kazan encountered Jimmy again, he told him that Brando had turned down the role of Cal Trask in *East of Eden.* "I had wanted to cast Brando as the evil brother, Clift as the good brother, Aron. Now I'm thinking that maybe you and Clift could play brothers. It's not an offer, so don't get too excited."

This gave new urgency to Jimmy's need for that long-hoped-for rendezvous with Clift.

Their meeting was arranged through a mutual friend and former lover of both men, the British actor, Roddy McDowall.

Clift had objected when McDowall pressured him to meet Jimmy. "Why should I? I don't need some punk kid in my life. What for?"

"C'mon, Monty," McDowall said. "The kid worships you. That should mean something to you."

"All right…Bring him over, but only if you must."

"If you don't like the kid, you can give him a quick blow-job, then kick him out on his ass. He's very cute. Of course, he doesn't have your male beauty. What man on the planet does?"

Two days later, Jimmy nervously accompanied McDowall to visit Clift.

Afterward, Clift told McDowall, "I expected some punk kid with attitude, but he seemed very humbled in my presence, very respectful."

"Did you go to bed with him after I left you guys?"

"You know I did," Clift said. "He's very good looking. He seemed to hold me in awe. I think he'd have done anything I wanted. Usually, my escort service sends me a guy whose dick is either an inch too short, or two inches too big. Dean was just the right fit. But first, we talked."

Jimmy would remember his first conversation with Clift, and reported it to others, omitting, of course, the sex act.

Clift complained to him about how the Actors Studio had used his name and image to promote itself, based on his success in such hit movies as *The Search [Best Actor Oscar nomination, 1948]; Red River [also 1948], co-starring John Wayne; The Heiress [1949]; and A Place in the Sun [another Best Actor Oscar nomination, 1951]* and, more recently, *From Here to Eternity [yet another Best Actor nomination, 1953].*

"Lee Strasberg is a charlatan," Clift had claimed during his conversation with Jimmy. "I never really trained at the Actors Studio. I had the same talent when I arrived as when I left. I never learned anything from Strasberg, and may have taught the fucker a thing or two. Now, I just drop in on special occasions. I'm at the point where I'm learning about the downside of fame."

"Like, for instance?" Jimmy asked.

"Once you're famous, each of your flaws and all of your weaknesses are exaggerated."

"Just what is a weakness of yours, if you forgive my asking."

"Self-destruction," Monty answered. "Same as you."

"But how do you know that about me? You've just met me!"

"It's etched on your face! It takes a doomed cat to know another one."

***

Later, in a follow-up visit, Clift told Jimmy that during the original planning stages of *East of Eden,* Elia Kazan had wanted Brando to interpret the film's meatiest role, that of Cal Trask; and that he'd envisioned Clift as Aron, Cal's rigid and sanctimonious brother.

"But I really wanted to play Cal, so I rejected the role Kazan had planned for me as Aron." Clift then continued, to Jimmy, "But you'd be great as Cal. Campaign for it."

"But you've rejected a lot of other hot roles recently. I heard that you even rejected the role of Joe Gillis in *Sunset Blvd*., opposite Gloria Swanson," Jimmy said.

"William Holden took it, and, as you know, that was a huge break for his career."

"Why did you do that?"

"I didn't think I could be convincing making love to a woman twice my age," Clift said.

"But you're involved with Libby Holman, and she's at least sixteen years older than you, if a day," Jimmy answered.

[Clift's strongest emotional attachments were to women, notably Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Myrna Loy, and Russian-born Mira Rostova, his long-time acting coach.]

Irrational anger suddenly flashed across Clift's face. "Why don't you shut your fucking trap about who else I'm involved with? Don't get the idea that my life centers around you. Get out!"

Less than a week later, Clift called Jimmy and apologized. "I'm touchy about certain subjects," he said. "Come on over tonight, and we'll have a make-up session."

***

The more time Jimmy spent with Clift, the more he began to imitate his mannerisms. Many future film critics, such as Lawrence Frascella, noted that, "Dean took the fragility and naturalism of Montgomery Clift and the rebelliousness and emotionally unbridled sexuality of Marlon Brando and created his own enlarged space for male behavior on the screen."

Sometimes, the comparisons were negative, as when Parker Tyler wrote: "James Dean is nothing but a homosexual parody of Marlon Brando.":

"I'd rather the comparison have been to Monty, not Brando," Jimmy said.

Clift, as he told Jimmy, resented being grouped with both Jimmy and Brando as rebels. "I'm tired of all this rebel shit talk," he said. "I am neither a young rebel nor an old rebel, but more like an actor who tries to do his job with a maximum of conviction and sincerity."

One Sunday afternoon, Kazan had lunch with Clift and Jimmy. "I admire actors like you guys and Brando—men who don't insist on projecting a traditional masculine image. Lots of guys, and a lot of actors, have to constantly reaffirm their muscles, their fearlessness, their affluence, the strength of their erections. All three of you guys can appear vulnerable, almost like an open wound."

On the following Sunday afternoon, when Jimmy dropped in on Clift, he found film scripts scattered around his living room. "I can work and be unhappy, or I can stop working altogether and be unhappy," he told Jimmy. "For the time being, unless a great part comes up, I've chosen the latter,"

As Jimmy picked up and examined some of the scripts, he was amazed at the prominence and prestige of projects that Clift had interpreted as unsuitable, inappropriate or wrong for him. They included the role of Brick for the Broadway opening of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. He had also rejected the lead role in Elia Kazan's film, *On the Waterfront* (1954).

Clift also turned down *Friendly Persuasion,* William Wyler's gentle look at life among the Quakers. *[That choice role eventually went to Gary Cooper.]*

King Vidor had also offered Clift one of the lead roles in *War and Peace,* Tolstoy's sprawling Russian novel which was released as a film adaptation in 1956 with Henry Fonda, Audrey Hepburn, and Mel Ferrer.

Clift said, "All of these scripts are shit. There's nothing exceptional."

"I'd sure be glad to accept some of your sloppy seconds," Jimmy said.

"Paul Newman said the same thing," Clift said. "And you and Newman aren't even in the pecking order. Here's how it works: After I turn down a script, it immediately goes to Brando."

Jimmy engaged in repeated dialogues with Clift about his performance as the doomed young social climber in *A*

Place in the Sun (1951) opposite Elizabeth Taylor. Complimenting Clift, he said, "No one ever depicted a troubled young man as great as you."

Clift confessed that for months, he had carried around a copy of a glowing review of that film, as written by critic Andrew Sarris. "It's the kind of review I dream about someone writing about me one day," Jimmy said.

He was referring to Sarris' observation that Elizabeth Taylor and Clift had been the focal points of the most beautiful couple in the history of cinema. "It was a sensuous experience to watch them respond to each other," Sarris wrote. "Those gigantic close-ups of them kissing was unnerving, sybaritic, like gorging on chocolate sundaes."

Later, one of Clift's biographers, Patricia Bosworth, wrote: "Then, of course, there was Monty's cruising swagger, which Brando and Dean picked up on. Few audiences in the 1950s were aware of the meaning of that androgynous swagger—it was very subtle and Monty did it for a few seconds in the film—but it was almost as if he were telling millions of women who swooned over him—'You think you're beautiful. Well, I'm beautiful, too, more beautiful than you. So who needs you?'"

Kazan, Tennessee Williams, and dozens of others, noted the weirdness and inappropriate behavior of both Jimmy and Clift. According to Kazan, "When it came to weirdness, Dean was an amateur; Monty, who was perhaps certifiably insane, had him beat. Brando might have been crazy, too but he at least hid his eccentricities better. Whenever he risked revealing too much through words, he evaded suspicions with acts that included mooning you."

Clift and Taylor, as they appeared together in *A Place in the Sun*, a blockbusting adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy.* They were breathlessly heralded as "the two most beautiful people in America."

Author Graham McCann wrote:

> *"Clift could behave as a child, trying to embarrass his parents. He would get drunk at parties and pass out on the floor, eat exclusively off other peoples' plates at dinner, drive his car at reckless speeds, and wander through movie executives' offices shouting expletives at no one in particular. It was a directionless rebellion, irrational and intensely repugnant. Sometimes, he would invite his friends to his room, and they would arrive to find him hanging from the window ledge by his fingertips thirteen floors above street level. It was a bewildering mixture of self-inflicted masochism, spoiled child attention-seeking, self-centeredness, and outrageous experimentation."*

As time went by, whereas nearly every critic noted Jimmy's debt to Brando, many also acknowledged the debt he owned to Clift, particularly in how Jimmy found meaning and motion in the space between words, and then filled in nuances of emotion through small, sometimes minute gestures.

One night, Stanley Haggart invited both of the Clift brothers (Monty and Brooks), along with Jimmy, to a private dinner at his luxurious apartment. At the time, Brooks was at the center of a burgeoning career as an advertising executive who frequently employed Haggart as a set designer for the television ads produced by his ad agency.

After the other guests were assembled, it became obvious that Clift had failed to show up. As the evening progressed, over dinner, and after a few drinks, Brooks spoke candidly about his brother.

"My brother is a bisexual," Brooks maintained, "not a homosexual. He's already gotten two girls, each of whom I've met, pregnant. He was never exclusively one thing or the other. He swings back and forth. Both of us were raised in Europe, where homosexuality is more easily accepted, and he never felt ashamed about it until much later, after his adult years in the U.S."

"Monty dislikes effeminacy, and he used to ask with amazement why some straight men are so effete and why some gay men are so masculine."

Clift's physical attribute that most impressed Jimmy were his eyes, which Elizabeth Taylor likened to green diamonds. "When you look at me, you seem to have X-ray vision," Jimmy told him.

After Brooks left the party that night, Jimmy confessed to Haggart, "I'm not with Monty because of the sex. Actually, he's a lousy lay. He likes it rough. His kisses turn into bites that hurt and sometimes draw blood."

Haggart remembered several follow-up conversations with Jimmy about Clift, whom Haggart knew mainly through business links to his brother, Brooks.

"I find Monty more troubled than I am," Jimmy confessed. "But we're troubled in very different ways, and I'm not sure which ways. When we're together, we're nothing but a lot of confusion and contradictions."

"Monty lived his early life as a homosexual," Haggart said. "As a bisexual, he's a late bloomer. He has been known to go to female strip clubs, and he's had affairs with women. He lives in desperate fear that his homosexual meanderings will be exposed, something he believes would destroy his film career."

"He objects to having to hide his true identity and pretend to be something he's not," Haggart said. "Actually, he's an honest person with a high standard of ethics. He feels he's living a lie, and that disturbs him greatly."

"Well, maybe the same thing can be said for me, too," Jimmy said.

***

When Jimmy learned that Ruth and Augustus Goetz had written their screenplay for *The Heiress* with Clift in mind as the actor who would portray the weak-willed *arriviste*, he engaged the actor in some animated dialogues about how he'd interpreted the role.

*[*The Heiress *(1949) had been inspired by a novel,* Washington Square*, written by Henry James in 1881. At the time Jimmy was pumping Clift for information about it, the Ruth and Augustus Goetz were adapting André Gide's French-language novel,* The Immoralist*, into an English-language stage play, a role which had already been assigned to Jimmy.*

Jimmy had gone to see the film version of The Heiress *three times. In it, Clift played a gold-digger romancing a plain girl, as depicted by Olivia de Havilland, despite the strident objections of her father (Ralph Richardson). More than any other film, Clift's involvement in* The Heiress *elevated him into a bona-fide movie star.]*

"What is stardom like?" Jimmy asked.

"For one thing, I was presented to the Queen of England at a command performance," Clift said. "I stood between James Stewart and Tyrone Power. Power propositioned me. Stewart did not. I felt like a fool, but I received calls from both Marlene Dietrich and Noël Coward. Marlene propositioned me. So did Coward. I turned both of them down. Being famous is like belonging to a very exclusive club. Just ask Elizabeth Taylor. She once told me she couldn't remember a time when she wasn't famous."

As Jimmy moved deeper into Clift's world, Kazan issued a warning, urging him—even though he had initially encouraged it—to break off his relationship.

According to Kazan, "I ran into Dean after he'd spent a drugged out weekend with Clift. There were bags under his bloodshot eyes, and he looked like shit. He'd been smoking a lot of marijuana, and he'd consumed a lot of the pep pills he was getting from Clift. I felt that Dean was just one step from becoming a heavy abuser of drugs, and I knew that would destroy his career before it had even begun. I warned him that Clift might bring him down with him during his free fall, which seemed inevitable."

***

Through the intervention of Roddy McDowall, Jimmy was invited to Treetops, the lavish country estate of Libby Holman. It lay midway between Greenwich and Stamford, Connecticut. Its grounds were legendary for the one million daffodils whose cultivation had been organized by Holman. They greeted the arrival of spring with a riot of yellows.

Olivia de Havilland and Montgomery Clift in *The Heiress,* adapted from a novella (*Washington Square)* by Henry James. The vehicle which propelled Montgomery Clift to stardom, it was one of Jimmy's favorite movies,

McDowall was the only member of Clift's entourage that Holman liked. She referred to him as "Roduary," and he had nicknamed her "Lipsy." She was particularly amused by McDowall's humor, referring to it as "witty bitcheries."

It was only because of McDowall's urging that Holman relented and allowed Jimmy to join the house party she had organized at her estate.

After her first introduction to Jimmy, she told him, "I have a venomous distaste for fakery, snobbery, egocentricity, fawning, pomp, social climbing, cleverness, and fashion. If you possess any of those qualities, you can leave at once. If you have none of those qualities, then a bedroom awaits you upstairs."

"I'm moving in," Jimmy answered.

When Alec Wilder heard that Jimmy wanted to visit Treetops, he called Libby and urged her to include him among her guests. He was one of her closest friends, and he'd promised he'd arrive "as a chaperone."

To round out the party, she also invited her sometimes lover, Tallulah Bankhead, but the star called with regrets. She encountered Wilder in the lobby of the Algonquin Hotel:

"When Libby isn't licking my pussy, she's always chasing after some young homosexual like Monty. Now perhaps Jimmy Dean. I predict she'll get him to fuck her before Sunday night. Libby and I go way, way back, and, as you know, Monty and I appeared on Broadway during the war in *The Skin of Our Teeth*. I've already bumped pussies with all three of them—Libby, Monty, and Jimmy. None of them is better than they should be. They're each rotten to the core."

Wilder characterized the mating of Holman with Clift as "a match made in hell." He was called "the dark Adonis," and she was a rather unattractive singer sixteen years older, with a face prematurely wrinkled because of excessive exposure to the sun.

Although Holman had insisted that she'd be able to cure Clift of his homosexuality, she continued to discreetly pursue lesbian affairs. Her biographer, Jon Bradshaw, described their coupling as "an extraordinary alliance: A young homosexual who claimed that he loved women, and a middle-aged millionairess with a latent penchant for women."

Wilder had been in the audience of a Broadway theater in 1929 when Libby got her first big break as a performer in a revue, *The Little Show,* which co-starred Clifton Webb and Fred Allen. Spectators were thrilled during her delivery of a simmering blues number, "Moanin' Low" by Ralph Rainger. After drawing a dozen curtain calls on opening night, she adopted it as her signature song. Wilder always remembered her appearance that night in a low-cut dress in a dark shade of *cerise*: "I think Libby virtually invented the strapless gown," he said about her, years later.

The day after her Broadway debut, columnist Walter Winchell proclaimed, "Broadway has a new star, a kid with misery chanting in her tropical voice."

"She's a freak," Wilder said: "So dramatic, such daring… She's got balls." On the night of her opening, he had wandered backstage to meet her, and from that night onward, they shared a "to-the-death" friendship.

Holman's life had followed a scandal-soaked variation of the rags-to-riches legend, thanks to her widely publicized affairs with various young men and women, including the modernist writer, Jane Bowles.

Lesbian adventuress Libby Holman was Montgomery Clift's companion.

Her most famous longtime liaison was with DuPont heiress Louisa d'Andelot Carpenter. She also maintained a hot relationship with the doomed but legendary Hollywood star, Jeanne Eagels.

In time, Holman was pursued by Zachary Smith Reynolds, the closeted gay heir to the R.J. Reynolds tobacco company. Despite the seven-year difference in their ages, the couple married in 1931, over the ferocious objections of his mother.

Reynolds was fatally shot at the couple's home in North Carolina under mysterious circumstances in 1932. A coroner's enquiry ruled that it was murder, and Holman was indicted. Motivated by their aversion to an enduring scandal, the powerful Reynolds family suppressed the case and eventually, Holman was freed, leaving North Carolina with $7 million, a staggeringly huge fortune during the depths of the Depression.

Libby's murdered husband and prey, tobacco heir Zachary Smith Reynolds.

Libby immediately fled to Manhattan, where she became the *risqué* and *avant-garde* darling of café society.

Her friendly house party at Treetops, as described by Wilder, "developed cancer. Monty, formerly the estate's 'Golden Boy,' became jealous of Jimmy for moving in on his turf. Apparently, he spotted Jimmy leaving Libby's bedroom, partially undressed, at 3AM."

According to Wilder, "Monty, on occasion, had fucked Libby, but he didn't make a habit of it. She was rather oversexed and had to face weeks of dry spells with Monty. Libby was also jealous of Jimmy because she knew that he was sleeping with Monty. Frankly, Monty wanted to be relieved of having to service Libby. He had hoped that their romance would *segué* from a sexual relationship to a deep friendship, like the one he had established with Elizabeth Taylor."

A few weeks after her house party at Treetops, Holman accompanied Clift to the Actors Studio, where Jimmy

was scheduled to perform in a skit with Kim Stanley. At the last minute, Stanley had called in sick, and Holman had agreed to learn the lines and perform the skit in the role of Jimmy's mother.

A fellow studio member, Billy La Massena, reported what happened that afternoon: "I saw Jimmy do a scene from *Caligula* that was hair-raisingly wonderful at first. I remember that he had on G.I. clothes. Libby Holman played his mother. In one scene he had to haul off and appear to kick her in the face. She was lying on the floor. The scene was so daring and real. Jimmy kicked her in the stomach real hard, and she screamed in pain. We thought he was seriously injuring her."

"Clift rushed onto the stage and shoved Jimmy backward. He fell on the floor. Then Clift rescued Holman. 'Are you a fucking lunatic?' Clift shouted at Jimmy. 'Get away from her and away from me. I don't want to see your fucking face again.'"

Holman told Wilder, "Dean is hysterically jealous of me. He knows Monty loves me more than he loves him, if he loves him at all. He wanted revenge on me. He used that god damn skit to act out his hostilities toward me. I didn't know how much he hated me until that afternoon. He's a dangerous little psycho, and Monty shouldn't let him get near any of us ever again."

Jimmy also expressed resentment, based on his belief that he was being used as a pawn associated with unresolved issues between Holman and Clift.

"After that, Jimmy's friendship with Monty flickered out like a firecracker on July 4th," Wilder said. "It was a violent parting. Two souls had come together seeking love and comfort and finding neither. After that, they pursued their separate paths to self-destruction. Monty, of course, took a hell of a lot longer to get there than Jimmy."

***

At the end of the summer of 1955, Holman and Clift were living together in her Manhattan brownstone as aftermath to their three-month tour together through Europe. One morning, he slept late, recovering from a hangover.

Abruptly, she shook him awake to tell him, "Jimmy Dean is dead! His car crashed in California. He was recklessly speeding in his silver Porsche."

Clift later confided to Bill Gunn, one of Jimmy's closest friends, "The instant I heard the news, I vomited. I don't know why."

***

Clift's own life was forever altered. On July 23, 1966, Elizabeth Taylor pressured him to attend a party at her hilltop house in Los Angeles during the course of her marriage to Michael Wilding. Clift's driver had been given the night off, so reluctantly, Clift agreed to maneuver his way, alone, up the steep hill to join Elizabeth with close friends who included Kevin McCarthy and Rock Hudson.

At the party, Clift drank bottles of rosé wine and took some "downers" before driving home, alone, in his car. Kevin McCarthy, driving his own car, left the party at the same time.

Clift soon lost control of his vehicle. His car went off the edge of an embankment, crashing into concrete pillars. The steering wheel shattered his face. Elizabeth Taylor remembered, when she recovered from the shock, repositioning one of his eyeballs back into the socket of his pulverized face.

He never really recovered. Plastic surgeons could never restore his former beauty.

Throughout the remainder of his life, he struggled through sinkholes of depression, drug addiction, alcoholism, and ongoing guilt about his homosexuality, a context which he never managed to accept with grace.

Kazan later recalled the shock he experienced upon seeing Clift after his recovery and its (unsuccessful) restorative surgeries. "His head had been knocked out of shape, and he didn't look like Monty Clift any more. He was no longer handsome, and there was a strained look about him—even, it seemed, in his effort to stand erect."

Robert LaGuardia, author of a respected biography, released in 1977, of the doomed actor, claimed that if Montgomery Clift had died after the release of *From Here to Eternity* (1953), at the age of thirty-two, he would have become an even greater cult figure than Dean.

As it was, a great deal of the world had forgotten about Clift before July 13, 1966, when he died.

Right before that, Elizabeth Taylor had persuaded Warner Brothers to hire him for a key role in the film

adaptation of Carson McCullers' novel, *Reflections in a Golden Eye.* It had been arranged that he would interpret the role of a closeted, deeply tormented, army major. The part went to Brando.

It was later learned that his long time African American companion, Lorenzo James, had come into his bedroom to tell him that on *The Late Show*, *The Misfits* (1961) was being shown. That was the last movie that his co-stars Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable ever made.

"Do you want to see it?" Lorenzo asked.

"Absolutely not!"

Those were Montgomery Clift's last known words.

Chapter Thirteen

IT COULDN'T BE LOVE: JAMES DEAN VS.

PAUL NEWMAN

Competing for the Same Roles, Sharing the Same Lovers

PIER ANGELI, SAL MINEO

> *"So help me God, every time I went to read for a part in New York, that son-of-a-bitch, James Dean, would be there. Every place I went, he went."*
>
> —Paul Newman to William Bast (1952)
>
> *"James Dean is dead. You can be the next James Dean!"*
>
> —Warners' executive to Paul Newman (1955)
>
> *"I think Dean would have surpassed Marlon Brando and me. He really could have gone for the classics."*
>
> —Paul Newman (1972)

As regards his appeal for casting in films, after the success of Marlon Brando, James Dean saw himself emerging with Paul Newman and Steve McQueen as part of a cluster of similar "types."

As stated by Jimmy, "We were new kinds of heroes, the existential cow-boy. My favorite philosopher, Elbert Hubbard, wrote, 'Geniuses always come in groups because groups produce the friction that generates light.'"

In September of 1952, Paul Newman shared many of the same dreams as Jimmy. Each of them had wanted entrance to the Actors Studio, and each was fantasizing about stardom on the stage and screen.

Later that autumn, with his wife, Jacqueline Witte, stashed away on Staten Island with their young son, Scott, Newman was enjoying a brief flirtation with a young actress, Sally Beckham.

Beckham's good looks made up for her lack of talent as an actress. Alongside Trevor Long, she had worked on a

skit for presentation to the membership of Actors Studio, hoping that each of them would be accepted for membership. Three days before the audition, Long came down with the flu.

In desperation, Beckham asked Newman to play a scene with her from *Battle of Angels*, an early play by Tennessee Williams. He readily agreed, hoping to enter the august precincts of that school, too.

When he got there, Newman turned around to stare into the face of a broodingly handsome young man with an appealing vulnerability. On closer look, he seemed dangerous. Perhaps psychotic.

"Hi, I'm James Dean," he said. "Loved your performance. But you need to find your fire. If you'd get up there on stage with me, we could play a love scene in front of all these fuckers. You and me, emoting together, would set this whole studio on fire."

"I usually play love scenes with girls," Newman said defensively.

"Spice up your life with some variety," Jimmy said.

"Hey, pal, slow down," Newman said. "I'm just a country boy from Ohio. Back where I come from, we like to work up to things. First, a few harmless dates. Get to know each other a bit."

"Life's too short for that shit." Then he lit a cigarette and offered one to Newman. "A smoke? Shall I light for you?"

"No, I light my own."

"Stubborn little fucker, aren't you?" Jimmy said. "I love a challenge. I want to be the guy who breaks you in."

"Let's cool it a bit," Newman said. "The temperature's rising."

"Yeah, and that's an impressive hard-on rising in your pants. Somebody, and I know who, wants to fuck James Dean." Possessively, he linked his arm with Newman's. "Let's hit the sidewalk and give the queens a treat. The two prettiest boys in New York parading down the avenue. We'll have them salivating, but we'll have eyes only for each other. C'mon, Blue Eyes, let's get the hell out of here."

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It wasn't until 6AM the following morning that Newman finally boarded the Staten Island Ferry for transit from Manhattan back to his apartment. He'd been out all night with Jimmy and hadn't called home. Whatever reception he got from Jackie is lost to history.

Portrait of Paul Newman with his "almost forgotten" first wife, Jackie Witte, "stashed"—as gossips had it—"way the hell out on Staten Island."

What isn't lost are some insights into the tortured relationship that Newman launched with Jimmy during the few years that remained until his death.

Jimmy, perhaps sadistically way, insisted in sharing details about his sexual trysts with his sometimes lover and

patron, Rogers Brackett. It is only because Brackett in later life revealed the details of Jimmy's private life to many of his friends that we know about the Jimmy's links to Newman.

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Newman was probably surprised when Jimmy took him to an address on West 38th Street near Fifth Avenue, Brackett's elegantly furnished retreat in a relatively posh neighborhood. Perhaps Newman imagined that the young actor would be living in a seedy hotel room. "I'm a kept boy," Jimmy explained. "It's not something I'm proud of, but it's what I'm doing for now. Hanging out with an older man is a learning experience in case I ever have to play a male whore on screen."

"I can play many roles, but I'd never accept the part of a male whore," Newman said with conviction. *[Apparently, he'd changed his mind by the time of his casting as hustler chance Wayen in Sweet Bird of Youth by Tennessee Williams.]*

According to Brackett, "It's safe to assume that Jimmy was like no other lover Newman had known before or would know again. When the Indiana farm boy with the angelic face in the faded jeans met the pretty boy with the intense blue eyes from Shaker Heights, a volcano erupted…at least for a while. Jimmy could never sustain such intensity for longer periods. Many of his relationships continued, but his love-making became more casual after his burning passions subsided."

"If Jimmy is to be believed," Brackett continued, "Newman fell madly in love with him, but from what I've heard, he's a level-headed guy who eventually came to his senses, but not before he embarked on that perilous journey as Jimmy's lover. I certainly sympathize with Newman. Following Jimmy around like a lovesick puppy is a descent into hell. I should know!"

From the very beginning of his relationship with Newman, Jimmy wanted to be in charge. He gave Newman a copy of *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Jimmy claimed he'd read it eighteen times—"and it changed my life."

Newman reacted differently. During one of his crossings from Manhattan to Staten Island on the ferry, Newman read its first chapter. Finding it silly and ridiculous, he tossed it into the sea.

During late afternoons of the period when their love affair was still torrid, Newman and Jimmy would meet at the Blue Ribbon Cafe, an actors' hangout in the Broadway district. Newman had usually finished his day's casting rounds, and Jimmy had often spent part of the day involved with some minor role in a television production.

One afternoon at the Blue Ribbon, Newman found Jimmy sitting in the corner, nursing a coffee and wearing a red baseball cap. On the table rested another red baseball cap. "Put it on," he ordered.

Newman tried on the cap, finding that it fitted. "From now on," Jimmy told him, "I want us to walk around in matching red baseball caps. It'll be a bond between us. Let people think what they will."

Newman not only wore the baseball cap that day, but was soon seen on the streets of New York walking with Jimmy, wearing his matching cap. Even after Jimmy's untimely death, Newman was spotted on the West Coast wearing that red baseball cap. And then one day he no longer wore it.

When Brackett returned to New York from one of his many trips to Chicago, Jimmy sadistically pointed out to him the stains of semen he'd exchanged with Newman on Brackett's bed. Jimmy seemed to take delight in describing in minute detail the sex he'd enjoyed while his sponsor was away. "I fucked him; he fucked me, and I taught him to swallow my spit just like you do," Jimmy claimed.

Brackett was always hurt and jealous, but at that point in their relationship, he was willing to hang on. "It was the price I paid for keeping Jimmy in my life."

"I am liberating that boy from Ohio," Jimmy told Brackett about Newman.

Jimmy and Newman shared endless long walks and deep, intense talks in the coffee houses of Greenwich Village, where they dared to dream impossible dreams. At one point, Jimmy suggested that Newman desert his family.

According to Jimmy's plan, both of them could set out hitchhiking from New York to Los Angeles. "I want to leave without a cent in our pockets," Jimmy claimed. "We'd be on the cutting edge. Live off the land, or as Tennessee Williams says, 'depend on the kindness of strangers.' Remember one thing: A pretty boy never has to go hungry."

"Are you suggesting we hustle?" Newman asked.

"Why not? Everybody in life, from the President of the United States to some housewife preparing dinner for

her husband, is a hustler."

Apparently, Newman went through periods of enormous guilt about his neglect of his growing family. At some point it was rumored that Jackie found out about his relationship with Jimmy and demanded that he give it up.

Presumably, Newman agreed to her demands and promised to drop Jimmy, but he never did. If anything, he became more secretive than ever.

Their relationship continued even, or especially, after their migrations to Hollywood, even though they arrived there through very different means.

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"Homosexual panic," as labeled by Newman's biographer, Lawrence J. Quirk, set in almost immediately after his first instance of "dirty sex" with Jimmy. But in spite of his misgivings, Newman would return again and again to Jimmy's side.

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Brooks Clift, the relatively stable older brother of Monty Clift, met Newman after he'd been seeing Jimmy for two months.

According to Brooks, "When I first met Newman, he was struggling for his own identity, both as a man and as an actor. He had begun picking up some of my brother's mannerisms, many of which flowed into his acting style. Newman had tried being Brando, and later, he tried being Monty. I later learned he'd also taken up with James Dean. I think he wanted to draw upon their talent. It must have been difficult for him."

"When he went to Hollywood, Newman was at first pigeonholed as 'the second Brando,'" Brooks said. "Then, after a few pictures, he was referred to as the new Monty Clift. Then, he began competing with James Dean for parts. And aside from their professional rivalry, there was also this private thing going on between them. I suspect that Monty, Brando, and Dean hauled our squeaky clean Ohio Newman boy down a murky road unlike any he'd ever traveled before."

Brooks had said to Newman, "You and Jimmy are lining yourself up to become the heirs apparent to Monty and Brando. Good luck."

"Hell, man, I haven't completely decided that I even want to be a movie star," Newman responded.

"Cut the shit!" Brooks told him. "Every loser at the Actors Studio expresses a disdain for Hollywood. But just offer one of the fuckers a movie contract, and I bet you those Method farts will start salivating."

***

One afternoon, Jimmy invited Newman for a walk through Central Park. "I once had this diamondback rattler as a pet. When he grew too big, I released him behind that bush over there. Let's go over and see if he's still there."

"I don't cotton to diamondbacks," Newman said. Nevertheless, he followed Jimmy into the bushes.

There, concealed from passersby behind a screen of shrubbery, Jimmy grabbed Newman and pulled him close. "Kiss me," he commanded. Newman obliged, although he wasn't comfortable with this display of homoerotic love in a public park. Jimmy was an exhibitionist, Newman was not.

"I'd prefer this in some other place," Newman said. "Like in private."

"But I need it now," Jimmy protested.

Back on the park's main trail, Newman bought Jimmy a hot dog for lunch. After eating it, he impulsively turned to Newman, tugging at his arm. "Let's leave together this afternoon," he urged. "Drop everything. Leave everybody behind. I want to hitchhike with you back to Indiana."

"The last time you wanted to hitchhike, it was to Hollywood," Newman said.

"Fuck, Hollywood!" Jimmy claimed. "I'll never go there. I've changed my mind. I want out of the theater. Not that I was ever really in it. I want you with me. I know this old farm we can buy real cheap in Indiana. We'll make our living from the land. We'll be our own men. We won't have to listen to any more assholes telling us how to act."

"No way!" Newman said. "I'm not ready for that. I want to face the perils of a life in the theater. Sure, I'll make

mistakes and be ridiculed, but I want to stay in the ring, keep on fighting."

"It's your choice," Jimmy said with despair. "Maybe I should follow your example. Stay here and become such a big success that Lee Strasberg one day will lick the dingleberries off my crack."

Later that afternoon Jimmy invited Newman to join him for his dance lessons with Eartha Kitt, who was giving twice-a-week lessons to Jimmy, whom she called "Jamie."

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Ushering Newman and Jimmy into her studio, Eartha hugged and kissed Jimmy before planting a kiss on Newman's lips. Then she stood back and, with her cat-like eyes, surveyed the full figures of both men. "The two most beautiful white boys in New York, and Eartha's got 'em." When she spoke, her words had a purring intonation.

Eartha Kitt, as a front-page feature in a 1950s Norwegian-language women's magazine.

Embracing Jimmy again, she turned to Newman, "This is my soul brother. I'm his soul sister."

"She's my voodoo priestess," Jimmy said. "She even knows when I need to take a piss before I do."

In preparation for his dance rehearsal with Eartha, as Newman sat on the sofa, Jimmy stripped down to his underwear. As she moved with panther-like grace, Jimmy tried to stay with her, but he was awkward, not following the rhythm of the steps.

After their lesson, Jimmy and Eartha played a pair of conga timbo drums, treating Newman to a concert. He concluded that Jimmy was better as a drummer than he was as a dancer.

"Great concert, guys," Newman said when they'd finished.

Eartha rose to her feet, reaching for Jimmy's hand. Then she walked over to Newman and stared down at him. He rose to his feet. "At the end of our bongo music, Jamie and I like to adjourn to the bedroom."

"I got it," Newman said. "I'm out of here. Thanks for the entertainment."

"You don't get it," Jimmy said, reaching for his arm to detain him. "Eartha and I aren't opposed to a little company."

"You aren't against a little poontang, are you?" she asked.

"It'd be a new thing for me," Newman said. "And I'm ready to give it a try."

"Come along then," she said, taking his hand.

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In the late 1970s, when Eartha was in Key West starring as Lola La Mour in a movie, *The Last Resort*, based on a novel (*Butterflies in Heat*) by Darwin Porter, she spent several long weekends with him. Porter was particularly interested in the juicy details she'd omitted from her various autobiographies. Although she talked of many things,

some of her most tender memories were devoted to Newman and Jimmy.

"I had both of them that afternoon, and I came to the conclusion that white boys are SO delicious," she recalled. "I spread the word. The creators of *Hair* stole that line from me and used it as the title to one of their songs. I seduced Newman and Jamie on other occasions, too, but always separately, never again as a three-way. That afternoon in my studio in New York ranks as one of the most celestial experiences of my life. They transported me to heaven. I never knew that lovemaking could be that wonderful. Not bad for a yalla gal born in the cotton fields of South Carolina."

***

If both Newman and Joanne Woodward hadn't been cast in the Broadway production of *Picnic* (1953), their long-enduring love affair might never have blossomed. Years later, Woodward told an interviewer that, "Paul and I tried to run away from each other for five years."

Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward in the CBS Playhouse 90 Teleplay, *The Eighty Yard Run* (1958).

The outspoken Rod Steiger called that remark "pure bullshit! They were like two drivers in hot rods playing chicken as they rushed toward each other for a head-on crash. They came together in a fiery explosion of emotions. Once Joanne had decided that she wanted Newman more than any other man, she set out to get him. That he had a wife stashed away somewhere didn't really seem to matter. But it mattered to Newman."

"I knew him well at the time," Steiger claimed. "The man had a conscience and a strong feeling of responsibility about his kids. Of course, that didn't stop him from having affairs with everybody else. From James Dean to Eartha Kitt, Newman tumbled head-on into an extremely complicated life. He was the Golden Boy of Broadway. Hell, he was so fucking beautiful. Everybody wanted him, and he was willing to share himself with both men and women, not just Joanne and Jackie, but Dean, too. Newman was so pretty I would have fucked him if he'd asked me to, and I'm about the straightest actor in the business. Marlon confided to me that he'd pounded Newman's ass on many an occasion. At one point Newman was more in love with James Dean than he was with either Joanne or Jackie."

"One day the Bitch Goddess of them all, Hollywood Herself, knocked on his dressing room door," Steiger said. "She'd come to claim Newman—a tasty morsel waiting to be devoured—as one of her victims. Few could resist her allure, not even old Rod Steiger himself."

Rod Steiger...witness to secret passions.

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Knocking on Newman's door was Stephen Brill, an agent from Warner Brothers. He made an offer a cash-strapped actor could hardly refuse: a five-year contract at one thousand dollars a week.

Although tantalized by the money and fame of becoming a movie star, Newman cringed when he heard what was in store for him. "We at Warners think you can be groomed as a follow-up to Marlon Brando."

Later, that was changed to "the second James Dean."

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During his casting of *On the Waterfront* (1954), Elia Kazan had considered both Newman and Joanne Woodward as the leading players.

Now, a year later, although he remained secretive about the casting of *East of Eden*, he once again considered that pairing. But seemingly every other day, he thought Jimmy and Julie Harris would bring more sensitivity to the roles.

Kazan was also considering Richard Davalos, a New York actor of Greek-American ancestry, for the lesser role of the brother Aron, with the understanding that either Jimmy or Newman would interpret the more prominent role of Cal Trask.

In a bizarre move, Kazan decided to bring both Jimmy and Newman together for a joint screen test. He wanted to analyze whatever chemistry existed between the two actors if he cast them as brothers.

When Newman received instructions to haul himself off to a sound stage in Brooklyn for his screen test, he thought that once again Monty Clift was looking after him, letting him have a chance at the bigger star's "rejects."

Eager for the role of Cal, Newman was alarmed when he encountered Jimmy in the studio testing for the same picture. Newman was even more alarmed when he learned that his screen test would be configured jointly and in tandem with Jimmy's.

For the occasion Newman appeared neatly dressed in a white shirt with a spotted bowtie. To give himself more of a rogue-like appearance, he placed a cigarette behind his left ear.

Wearing a casual blue sports shirt, Jimmy appeared more relaxed, with his glasses tucked into his shirt pocket.

Kazan didn't show up for the test, but delegated it to a young, inexperienced director. Part of its original sound track and film clips from that test remain today.

In the background you can hear the off-camera director calling to the actors, "Hey, you two queens, look this way!"

"I don't want to look at him," Newman says. "He's a sourpuss."

"I don't like him either," Jimmy answers.

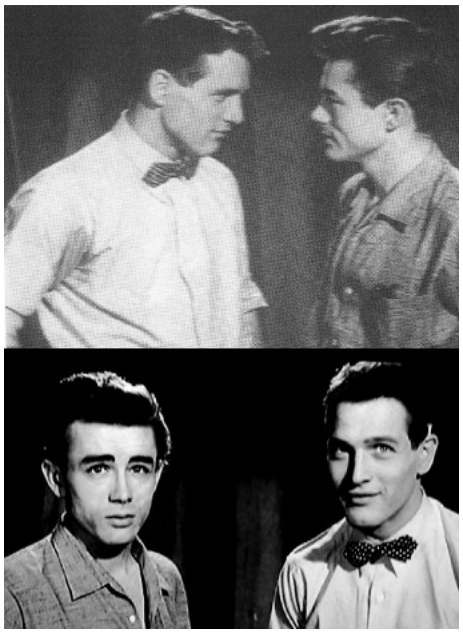
The director then calls for the men to look directly into the camera. They each follow his instructions. Then the director calls out for them to look at each other. At this point, staring at each other face to face, they each break into laughter.

Jimmy moved toward Newman and said, "Kiss me!"

“Not here,” Newman shot back. Impulsively, he pinched Jimmy’s ass instead.

Then as the camera rolled, the director called out to Newman. “Do you think Jimmy will appeal to bobbysoxers?”

Newman appraised Jimmy from head to toe. “I don’t know. Is he going to be a sex symbol? I don’t usually go out with boys. With his looks, sure, I think they’ll flip for him.”



Rivals by day, lovers by night, Paul Newman and James Dean test for roles in *East of Eden.* In the lower photo, James Dean appears on the left.

The test had been completely unscripted. Writing about it years later, Jimmy’s biographer, David Dalton said:

“What determined the winner was the face: Both Jimmy and Newman were nascent icons, with features that were to become as easily recognizable as Christ, Mao, or Mickey Mouse. But in this test, Jimmy’s entire countenance rippled with expression while the signals in Newman’s eyes and mouth were almost vaudevillian numbers restricted to isolated parts of his face. Newman’s expressions were typecast into smile, frown, and cool stare, but Jimmy’s face resisted and relaxed in alternating currents.”

After it was over, Jimmy seemed to realize that the role of Cal was his. “Maybe we’ll be cast as brothers,” he told Newman. “It’s a lesser part, but Aron is a strong role.”

As Jimmy and Newman headed back to Manhattan from Brooklyn that day, Jimmy turned to him and smiled. “The day is not completely lost. Let’s go to this brownstone where I’m living on West 68th Street. You can fuck me for the rest of the day. That’s gotta mean something.”

En route to his brownstone, Jimmy told Newman, “I ran into Marlon the other day. He asked about you. I told him that on some days I’m in love with him. On other days I’m in love with you. But I claimed you and I never made it. Marlon told me that he’d never made it with you either. Both of us knew we were lying.”

Two days later Kazan called Newman with the bad news. “I’ve decided to go with Jimmy for the part of Cal. He came out better in the screen test.”

“But what, then, about me playing Aron?” Newman asked, barely concealing his disappointment.

“I’ve given the part to Richard Davalos,” Kazan said. “He’s ten years younger than you.”

“Are you saying I’m too old for Aron?” Newman asked. “Then give me Adam, the father’s role. But, I’m warning you, you’ll have to age me. I’m not that old.”

“You’re out of luck there too,” Kazan said. “I gave that part to Raymond Massey.”

“Okay,” Newman said sarcastically, “then I’ll play Aron’s girlfriend in drag.”

“Julie Harris has the part,” Kazan said. “Your girlfriend, Woodward, would have been terrific in it, but Harris will be great. By the way, I saw her yesterday at the Actors Studio. She said she adores you.”

“She’s not my type,” Newman said, putting down the phone.

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Newman was up for another movie role in 1954 during the casting of *Battle Cry*, based on the Leon Uris novel about marines bonding in an *esprit de corps* during World War II. A key role was still available—that of a young soldier named Danny Forrester.

Bill Orr, the son-in-law of Jack Warner, conducted a joint screen test with both Newman and Joanne Woodward.

“They arrived with a preconceived idea of what they wanted to do in the scene,” Orr said. “First they rolled around on a mattress and on the floor, and then they jumped up and engaged in a boxing match. Then they rolled around on a blanket. It had to be the worst screen test in the history of motion pictures. I suggested to Jack that he give the role of Danny to James Dean. Dean could pull this one off. Newman came off as a jerk.”

On hearing this, Newman said, “Losing out to Jimmy I understand. But the world must never know that I lost the role to Tab Hunter. How could I ever live that down at the Actors Studio? Another God damn humiliation from Hollywood. Too fucking bad. My baby blues in CinemaScope would have lit up the screen.”

Based on her screen test, Woodward also lost the role of the love-hungry Navy wife, the part going to Dorothy Malone.

After the bitter disappointment of losing out on three consecutive movie roles, Newman decided “to become another hired hand at Warner Brothers.” He signed a contract, even though Geraldine Page warned him, “Hollywood will destroy you.”

In advance of his departure, during goodbyes to Eartha Kitt, Newman told her, “Something tells me I’ve got to be free as a bird in Hollywood. It’s not that I’m completely ducking my responsibilities. I told Jackie I’ll send her a generous portion of my earnings. After all, I’m going to be making one thousand big ones a week.”

During his farewells to Rod Steiger, Newman told him, “I’m not sure I’m the type of guy who wants to come home to face an angry wife every night, especially one who wants to know what I was doing the night before. I like to come home when roosters are crowing. Do you know how many propositions I get in the course of one day, mostly from women, but a ton from men too? Some of them I can’t resist. Maybe I’m more like Marlon Brando than I thought. He told me he believes in sharing ‘my noble tool’ with the world.”

Steiger later speculated that it was far more difficult for Newman to say goodbye to Joanne than it was to Jackie. “I don’t know what really happened on their final night together,” Steiger said. “But I bet the sheets caught on fire.”

“On the way to Hollywood, I had anxieties about my age,” Newman later told Geraldine Page. “Hell, Marlon made *The Men* (1950) before he was twenty-five, and Jimmy Dean, who’s in his early 20s, is on the dawn of a huge film career. I’m pushing thirty. I know how youth-obsessed America is, and here I am, ‘Daddy Newman,’ trying to become the next hot stud.”

“Brando inspires me,” Newman said to Page. “Also Jimmy, to an extent. I want to be as wild as those rebels, Hollywood’s new bad boy. For the first time, I want to shake Shaker Heights out of my bloodstream. A man like me would be a sucker not to live to the fullest, wife or no wife. Jackie insisted on marriage. She pushed me into it before I was ready.”

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Arriving in Hollywood for the first time, Newman checked into a seedy hotel near the Warners lot. “It was filled with hustlers, hookers, and drug dealers,” he later recalled. “I didn’t get much sleep. There were knocks on my door all night with offers.”

Newman with Angeli in *The Silver Chalice*...shining offscreen as well.

On his first day at the studio, he was told he had to take a screen test before winning the role of a slave, Basil, in *The Silver Chalice*, a toga epic that Warners hoped would make as much money as did *Quo Vadis?* with Robert Taylor or *The Robe* with Richard Burton.

His test with Virginia Mayo, a former Samuel Goldwyn leading lady, and the star of the picture, was a disaster. Although Newman photographed beautifully, his acting was wooden.

When his screen test was shown to cigar-chomping executives at Warners, he was ordered to report to the studio's Hairdressing Department. "Mr. Kenneth," in charge of operations, already had his instructions in the form of a memo. "Make his hair blonder—not exactly Marilyn Monroe, but a cross between Alan Ladd and Tab Hunter."

[Kenneth Battelle (1927-2013) remained a leading celebrity hairdresser until his death. Tending to the public images, through their coiffures, of Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Brooke Astor, and Happy Rockefeller, he garnered high profile fame for creating Jacqueline Kennedy's bouffant in 1961.]

Mr. Kenneth was a gossip, and he informed Newman, who was embarrassed when he heard it, that Jimmy had been Warner Brothers' first choice to play the young Greek sculptor, Basil. "Jimmy said he told Jack Warner that *The Silver Chalice* was a piece of shit and turned it down. That was certainly a wise choice. He's supposed to be terrific in *East of Eden*."

Studio chieftains asked Virginia Mayo to work seven days a week with Newman to prepare him for another attempt at a screen test.

"Paul was off on that rocky road to becoming a movie star," Mayo said, "and I warned him about some of the pitfalls. Frankly, I misjudged him. I thought he'd end up on that long list of pretty boys who emerged in the 50s never to be heard of again. Working with him during his first picture gave me no clue that he'd become such a big star—and a legendary one at that."

"This is religioso shit," Newman wrote to Woodward back in New York. "I was horrified, traumatized appearing before the camera in a cocktail dress to show off my skinny legs."

This dull, confused, and muddled film was shot against cheesy sets with the actors clad in bargain-basement wardrobes. Its plot, as conceived by Thomas B. Costain, had first been the framework of a bestselling novel. But Newman felt that Lester Samuels, writing the screenplay, had been inept.

Newman as an early Christian studmuffin, mauled by virtually every female in "this dud turkey of a script," *The Silver Chalice*. Above, his *inamorata* is the otherwise engaging Virginia Mayo.

["How can I recite such laughable dialogue?" he asked Virginia. He quoted a typical line to her: "Helena, is it really you? What a Joy!"]

Mayo was outfitted with vampiric eyebrows as Helena, Newman's *inamorata.*

Pier Angeli, as Deborra, was his other love interest. Also dyed blonde, Natalie Wood, with whom Newman would become involved in the future, played Helena as a child.

Nothing Newman did seemed to please Victor Saville. The director later said that, "Newman was just one of those troublemakers, anarchists, and eccentrics being shipped over like cattle from New York."

"Saville was a difficult bastard to put up with," Newman said.

"I introduced Newman to his co-star, Pier Angeli, at ten o'clock one morning on the Warners lot," Saville said. "By three o'clock that afternoon, I think he was hopelessly in love. As for Pier, I think she was still in love with Kirk Douglas, or perhaps Marlon Brando."

Frail, tiny, and undeniably lovely, this Italian actress—called "The Little Garbo"—had appeared in a pair of films in her native Italy before gaining prominence as a war bride in *Teresa* in 1951. The tabloids created a ballyhoo of a big romance between Pier and Kirk Douglas during their time together in 1952 shooting *The Story of Three Loves* with an all-star cast.

Unlike the hardened, career-driven "bitches" he'd met on Broadway and at the Actors Studio, Newman was enchanted by Pier's infectious laugh. He called her "virginal" and referred to her "refreshing innocence."

Actually she was anything but virginal. The Italian director, Vittorio De Sica, had introduced Pier—then known as Anna Maria Pierangeli—to Brando, hoping to cast them as a duo in his upcoming movie. Pier had confided to Mayo that she'd fallen in love with Brando, and that he'd "deflowered" her on a grassy knoll near Rome's Colosseum. "Then he went back to America and dumped me," Pier said.

Cast as Deborra, the Christian girl Newman marries in *The Silver Chalice*, Pier "looked radiant in Madonna blue with a gold circlet in her hair," in the words of her biographer Jane Allen. Forgetting about his wife or even Joanne, Newman fell hard for Pier, at least according to Mayo.

Although the singer, Vic Damone, was still a presence in Pier's life, she began to date Newman secretly. She even invited him to her family's home for an Italian Sunday dinner.

Newman at first enchanted Pier's ferociously protective mother, Enrica Pierangeli. But the day turned sour when Enrica learned that Newman "is not a Catholic. Not only that, but he has the Jew's blood in his veins." That night Enrica forbade her daughter ever to see him again, except on the set of *The Silver Chalice*.

After that, Newman was never seen in public with Pier outside the movie lot. Mayo noted that Pier spent long hours in Newman's dressing room, and "I could only assume they were having sex. Brando had already 'broken in' this angelic-looking little creature."

"I don't think there was any great love affair going on between them," Mayo claimed. "I know that seems to contradict what I said earlier about Newman falling hopelessly in love with Pier. Perhaps he did, but I think that the spell she cast over him lasted for only a few days. Newman was a very sensible young man, and he soon returned to reality."

"For the rest of the shoot, their romance was relatively harmless in spite of the sex," Mayo said. "She always seemed to have the giggles around him, and he was always playing tricks on her. Of course, there was the

inevitable touching. They couldn't seem to keep their hands off each other. But I think even these two little lovesick puppies knew that theirs was an affair only of the moment. Nothing serious would come of it."

To further complicate matters, Jimmy, who was shooting *East of Eden* on a neighboring set on the Warners lot, strolled over to see Newman work. He introduced Jimmy to Pier. "We met the other day," Jimmy said.

"A romantic Romeo and Juliet legend was born that day between James Dean and Pier Angeli," Mayo said. "From what I observed, Pier and Jimmy were smitten with each other for a few weeks. The press and all those Dean biographers made far too much of this romance. If James Dean was in love with anybody on the set of *The Silver Chalice*, it was with Paul Newman."

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If Newman ever resented Jimmy taking Pier from him, he apparently never revealed this to anyone. "What could he say anyway?" Mayo asked. "He was a married man with two kids back in the East somewhere."

Actually, during the shooting of *East of Eden*, Jimmy saw a lot more of Newman than he did of Pier. Whereas Enrica found Newman objectionable, she came to loathe Jimmy, who was rude and even downright hostile to her. "My daughter forced that horrible young man upon us until I put my foot down and ordered him out of our house forever," Enrica said. "But he was head over heels in love with my Anna Maria, although I began to hear stories about a wild homosexual streak in him."

Many biographers have suggested that the romance between Jimmy and Pier was platonic. Elia Kazan, the director of *East of Eden*, disagreed. "My bungalow was next to theirs. I could actually hear them making love through the thin walls. Jimmy was very vocal. Not a sound could be heard from Pier. The sex would usually end in a big argument. After one of these blow-ups, Jimmy always got drunk. I don't know how I ever finished the picture with him."

For his dates with Newman, Jimmy preferred some hamburger joint near a beach. He might be photographed in a tuxedo with Pier, but when he was with Newman he wore casual tight-fitting jeans, a T-shirt, and a black leather jacket, evocative of Brando's appearance in *The Wild One*.

A Sunday afternoon in Hollywood might find Newman and Jimmy riding horses in Griffin Park. At one point, Jimmy purchased matching gold friendship rings, and offered one to Newman. According to Rogers Brackett, Newman wore the ring for only a few days, before putting it away somewhere.

"When Hollywood wasn't gossiping about Pier and Jimmy, they were even more secretively gossiping about the strange friendship between Jimmy and Newman," Elia Kazan said. "I'm sure word got back to Joanne in New York. Even more devastating, I was told that word had also gotten back to Newman's wife, Jackie, and that she'd threatened to leave him and take his children if he didn't end his friendship with Jimmy."

"Newman refused to end the friendship, and the marriage puttered on," Kazan said. "But the bells were tolling, signaling the end of that marriage. Even so, it took a long time to die. I think the marriage ended long before the divorce finally came."

While he was making *The Silver Chalice*, Newman received a letter from Jackie. She told him that she was leaving the New York area and taking his son and daughter back to Wisconsin to live with her parents. His reaction to that move has never been revealed. "He had James Dean," Kazan said. "What did he need with a wife and kids? Newman was enjoying every moment of his bachelorhood, and wilder days were on the way when he moved over to the Château Marmont."

Sometimes Pier would defy her mother and ask Jimmy to take her to his favorite restaurant, the Villa Capri, a Los Angeles rendezvous for celebrities such as Frank Sinatra. Photographers and autograph seekers staked the place out.

When Newman wasn't needed on the set of *The Silver Chalice*, he strolled over to visit Jimmy on the *East of Eden* set. Increasingly, Jimmy was feuding with both Kazan and the co-star of the picture, the aging character actor Raymond Massey, who played his father.

Newman feared that Jimmy was becoming more and more anti-social. One afternoon when Kazan was showing some VIPs from New York around the set, Jimmy pulled out his penis and relieved his bladder right on the floor in front of an audience. "He didn't even bother to turn his back on us," Newman later said.

After urinating, Jimmy stormed off to his dressing room. When the VIPs had departed in shock from the set, Kazan walked over to Newman and put his arm around him.

"I made a big mistake in not casting you for the lead in this picture," Kazan said. "As a result, you're filming that

shit next door. I don't know if I'm going to survive this film with Jimmy. And I thought Brando was difficult to work with. Jimmy is highly neurotic. Is psychotic the word? Yesterday it got so bad I kicked his ass. He won't speak his lines clearly. He questions my direction. He may not even be an actor at all. I turn the camera on him and what I get is this obviously sick young man coming apart right on film. He is so stupid, so very stupid. His face is that of a poet, so very beautiful. It registers his pain and desolation. Maybe the Academy will take that for great acting and award him an Oscar."

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If there were any jealousy over the mutual involvement with Pier Angeli, it didn't manifest itself. In the weeks that followed Jimmy's breakup with Pier, the two men grew even closer, the most intimate they would ever become during the short history of their friendship.

With his $1,000-a-week paycheck, Newman could afford a motorcycle to match the one Jimmy rode up and down the southern coast of California.

Laguna Beach was their favorite spot for overnighting. One of Jimmy's favorite waterfront joints was called "The Point," and the two of them could be seen there every weekend. Sometimes late at night Newman, at Jimmy's urging, would strip naked and jump with him into the surf, where the waves crashed around them. After a midnight swim, Jimmy would make love to Newman on the moonlit sands.

Perhaps in a sadistic mode, Jimmy liked to give Brackett a detailed account of his sexual adventures, either one-on-one encounters or else his participation in orgies. He knew this would hurt him, as he was very jealous.

"Jimmy always felt he'd prostituted himself in front of me, and that I'd taken advantage of him when he was a struggling actor," Brackett said. "He felt he had to pay me back for that. I thought that once he became a movie star and was financially independent, I'd seen the last of him. But he always came back. The reason is simple: Perhaps without Jimmy really realizing it, I'd become the father figure he never had."

Jimmy invited Newman to spend many "wild, wild" weekends with him in Tijuana. One of his favorite cafes had a Western name, The Last Chance Saloon. A battered neon sign outlining the figure of a cowboy in chartreuse flickered invitingly over the door.

Instead of songs of Old Mexico, the café played country and western music. A long wooden bar ran the entire length of the saloon. On a small stage behind the bar, three nude women, each quite busty and overweight, performed lascivious dances.

As the lead dancer gyrated her massive hips, Jimmy told Newman, "Look at her squeezing those jugs like maracas." At the end of the number, the patrons, mostly men from California, shouted "*OIA!*" Pesos were thrown at the nude performers.

The act was followed by the appearance of two brown-skinned twins who looked no more than fourteen years old. They didn't dance but mostly rubbed their bodies together, rotating their pelvises, eventually leaning backwards as they rubbed their young vaginas together.

When the pesos landed on the floor, each girl turned the coins' edges, blocking them in some way from rolling along the floorboards. Straddling the money, they seemed to suck the coins into their bodies.

"We want those two," Jimmy instructed the manager. Then he turned to Newman. "We're gonna rent a room upstairs for an hour or two."

"Don't you think they're a bit young?"

"Nothing is too young for this cowpoke."

On another tequila-soaked weekend, Newman attended an orgy with Dean, at least according to the accounts told to Brackett. Smoke from marijuana competed with incense in a candlelit upstairs room painted a garish purple.

There must have been eighteen people at the orgy, almost equally divided between men and women. Four of the visitors were German tourists. "It was a night of gliding hands, shifting bodies," Jimmy relayed to Brackett. "If there was an empty orifice, something was plunged into it. Paul and I were the star attractions. Everybody had us that night."

"What a hot, pornographic movie that would have made," Brackett said, masking his pain.

En route back to Los Angeles, the actors stopped at a café for beer. "We don't have to go down to Tijuana for an orgy. You can always find one going on at the Château Marmont in Hollywood. I'll help you move there this week-end."

Years later, in summing up his own experiences with Jimmy, Newman left out the graphic details. “Brando was originally offered the lead in *Rebel Without a Cause*,” he said, “but Jimmy was the true rebel. Brando could be outrageous in his behavior, but Dean was beyond outrageous. He was in orbit. As he entered the final months of his life, his amusements and diversions became more and more bizarre. Ordinary sexual diversions no longer held his attention. He began to move toward a dangerous new sexual frontier for his excitement. It was as if he knew he was going to die, and he wanted to squeeze decades of life into his final precious months.”

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After time in New York, Newman flew back to Los Angeles. There, he had a rendezvous with Jimmy on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause*, finding him more reckless and irresponsible than ever.

Appearing on the set to see him work, Newman encountered Natalie Wood, whom he hadn’t seen since they’d appeared together in the ill-fated *The Silver Chalice*. Back then, he’d found the teenager had a “marvelous sense of mystery.”

On the set of *Rebel*, she appeared far more sophisticated than her years. “I have ambitions to don a frilly gown by Don Loper and a silver blue mink and embrace Cary Grant in my arms before the camera,” she said. “I desperately feel I’m ready to play sexy parts. Instead I wound up playing the younger version of Virginia Mayo in *Chalice*. In *Rebel,* I’m a teenager.”

“And indeed you are,” he told her, “but growing up very fast in front of my eyes.” She seemed flirtatious with him. Later, he learned from Jimmy that he was not only seducing Natalie, but so was the film’s director, Nicholas Ray.

On the way to see Jimmy, Newman met Ray who introduced him to Sal Mineo, the former delinquent youth from the Bronx who in 1951 had costarred with Yul Brynner on Broadway in *The King and I*.

In a phone call to Newman, Jimmy told him that “Sal is a very sexy young man, very pretty, and mature for his age.”

Years later in an apartment in Chelsea, in New York City, Mineo said, “at the time I met Newman, I was crazy in love with Jimmy, very sexually confused. I hardly paid attention to Newman that day, although I couldn’t help but notice what a beautiful man he was. I heard he was married but dating Joanne Woodward. I naïvely assumed that Newman was hopelessly straight. How wrong I was. Frankly, I didn’t think I would ever run into him again. But, wow, what an important role he’d play in my future.”

According to Eartha Kitt, once Newman made it to Jimmy’s dressing room, “those two guys picked up right where they left off. I’d bet my right nipple that Jamie had Newman’s pants off in less than ten minutes. He told me that his passion for Newman was still as strong as before.”

“But Jamie also told me that he was being pulled in a million different directions sexually,” Eartha claimed. “He had his regular affairs at the time, especially with a young actor named Jack Simmons, for whom Jamie had gotten a small part in *Rebel*.”

“Even so, he was still out on many a night searching for something new and different,” Eartha said. “While shooting *Rebel*, his behavior became even more bizarre. On one occasion, he met this very sexy hustler who had only one arm. They were seen driving away in Jamie’s new Porsche Speedster.”

Somehow, when he wasn’t sleeping with Wood, Mineo, Ray, or Simmons, Jimmy managed to fit Newman into his schedule.

Jimmy was also dating starlets, on orders of the studio. “There’s a homosexual panic going on out here,” he told Eartha and Newman. “Homosexual stars are being exposed. Rock Hudson is definitely not careful. He’s getting too blatant. Word is reaching Jack Warner about my private life. Warner is insisting that I be seen out with girlfriends. Not just seen, but photographed.”

“I can cum just so many times a day,” Jimmy said. “Half of Hollywood wants my juice. They’re sucking me dry out here. These blow-job artists make it hard for me to save up enough sperm for fucking.”

“But you manage, don’t you?” Newman said, smiling.

Jimmy flashed his own wicked grin. “You know me too well, man.”

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It was ironic that in the weeks right before his death, Jimmy was rehearsing during the day with Newman and

making love to him at night. At long last their dream of co-starring together had come true. Both of them had been cast in *The Battler*, a teleplay based on an Ernest Hemingway story.

Producer Fred Coe, who rose out of the depths of Alligator, Mississippi, to become a prolific television, theater, and film producer, came up with the idea of casting them in the same teleplay. Coe was one of the major players in the Golden Age of television, having begun his career in 1945 when virtually no one had a TV set. He often relied on literary classics as a starting point for his teleplays.

Coe had been impressed with the dramatic potential of Ernest Hemingway's autobiographical "Nick Adams" stories, and his best friend, A.E. Hotchner, had agreed to write the teleplay for one of those stories, *The Battler*. In another touch of irony, Hotchner became Newman's best friend long after "Papa" had committed suicide.

The Battler was set to be aired on October 18, 1955 as part of NBC's Playwright '56 series. Coe hired Arthur Penn as the director. He'd been a member of Joshua Logan's stage company and had attended the Los Angeles branch of Actors Studio. In time, Penn would direct eight different actors in Oscar-nominated performances, including Anne Bancroft, Warren Beatty, and Faye Dunaway.

Newman looked forward to working with Penn, although he soon realized that the director was not a sycophantic admirer of Lee Strasberg. "That guy ruined an entire generation of actors with that sense memory crap of his," Penn told Newman.

With his horn-rimmed glasses and a cigar perpetually in hand, Penn showed great sensitivity in working with Jimmy and Newman. "He knew how to handle an actor," Newman said. "He was not just a director, but a philosopher and an artist. He knew how to let whatever limited talent I had breathe and develop at its own pace. He wasn't a dictator like Otto Preminger with whom I'd regrettably work in the future."

Newman was set to play Hemingway's Nick Adams as a young man. The character was Hemingway's literary alter ego. Jimmy was miscast as an aging boxer with a damaged eye and that inevitable cauliflower ear.

One night around three o'clock in the morning, Jimmy woke Newman up. "What's the matter?" Newman asked, groggy with sleep.

"I just had a golden dream," Jimmy said, jumping out of the bed and dancing around the room. "It was great! I dreamed that you and I are about to become the two hottest shits ever to hit Tinseltown. James Dean and Paul Newman. We're going to win more Oscars, make bigger pictures, than all the farts who came before us. Years from now when everyone's forgotten Bogie as the fag in *Casablanca*, the world will be talking about James Dean and Paul Newman."

"Come back to bed," Newman said.

***

Marlon Brando did not seek out the press and did not like to talk to reporters. But when he did, his remarks were invariably controversial. He was particularly incensed when some critic, after seeing *East of Eden* called Jimmy "not just another Elia Kazan actor, but one with far more depth and sensitivity than Brando himself."

Speaking on record, Brando said, "Dean has a certain talent. However, in *East of Eden*, he seems to be wearing my last year's wardrobe and using my last year's talent."

Jimmy's ego was weak and vulnerable, and his sense of self-esteem was always shaky and so fragile he could collapse emotionally at only the slightest provocation.

Such was the case when Brando's remarks were relayed to him. Working with Jimmy in rehearsals for the Hemingway teleplay, *The Battler*, Newman claimed that "Jimmy practically had a nervous breakdown. He couldn't concentrate in rehearsals. At one point, he was shaking like a leaf in the wind. Marlon was a very bad boy. He must have known how devastating his remarks about Jimmy's talent would be. Maybe Marlon was trying to get back at some dumb critic and didn't consider how much Jimmy worshipped him."

"Marlon wanted both Jimmy and me to be our own men, our own style of actor," Newman said. "Maybe this was the way he had of cutting the umbilical cord with Jimmy. After all, Jimmy had been pursuing Marlon for years. Thank God Marlon didn't spill his bile over my body. I was too weak and vulnerable back then. An attack from Marlon on my own acting abilities would have shattered me."

"I must say Marlon always treated me with a certain respect, something he didn't always show Jimmy or another one of his rivals, Monty Clift," Newman claimed. "Even though they called me 'the second Brando,' and this must have pissed him off, he never made me the butt of his practical jokes. I also never became the victim of his sadism."

Meeting with Jimmy at Googies in Hollywood, Eartha Kitt and Newman had never seen him so bitter about Hollywood, "*Giant* is my last picture," he proclaimed. "I've decided this incestuous cesspool called Hollywood is not for me. Marilyn Monroe is the perfect personification of Hollywood. All false glamour. There is no reality to her. A man can go crazy here."

"Fuck Hollywood!" Jimmy said in a voice loud enough to be overheard at the next tables. "Fuck Jack Warner and his studio. So he made movies with Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Big fucking deal. Who are they anyway? Davis was all about overacting and exaggerated mannerisms and Crawford is nothing but a self-created illusion. My greatest thrill in life would be to tie Warner down in a desert and crap over his face. Then I'd leave him to die in the desert, food for ravenous wolves."

"The best thing that could happen to Southern California is for an earthquake to come along and topple the whole fucking place into the Pacific Ocean like the lost continent of Atlantis," he said. "The whole town is filled with nothing but cocksuckers. I've stuffed my pecker into the mouths of some of the biggest producers and directors in Hollywood before those fuckers went home to give their wives and kids a big sloppy wet kiss. Those losers probably still had my semen in their rotten mouths."

"Rock Hudson couldn't get enough of my ass," he claimed, "when we started filming *Giant*. "He fucked me so much I thought his dick was going to fall off. Then he turned on me. Hudson is nothing but a piece of shit. There's nothing real about him. Like Marilyn, he's the perfect example of a Hollywood product. If Hollywood did not exist, Hudson would have been a truck driver getting blow-jobs at seedy truck stops."

That night Jimmy invited Newman to go with him for a midnight ride in the Hollywood Hills in his souped-up Porsche. He had another date and turned him down, but Eartha volunteered to go.

The next day she called Newman. "I wish I hadn't accepted Jamie's invitation. It was the nightmare ride of my life. I felt that he was committing suicide and trying to take me with him."

After she'd escaped from that death trap, she stood on the sidewalk, warning Jimmy. "This Porsche is going to be your coffin. I just feel it."

That was the last time she ever spoke to him or saw him again.

On September 30, 1955, Eartha called Newman. She'd just heard over the radio that Jimmy had died in a car crash. "That Porsche did indeed prove to be his coffin," she said sadly. "I'll never forgive Jamie for cheating me out of his presence in my life. No one else in the world understands me." She put down the phone.

Almost immediately another call came in. Still in shock, Newman picked up the phone. At first he thought it might be Eartha calling back, as she'd ended the call rather abruptly.

It was someone from Warner Brothers. Years later he tried to recall that phone call, but couldn't remember the name of the person calling. He thought it might have been Jack Warner himself, but he wasn't sure. "I was out of my mind at the time."

"Jimmy's gone but you're here, kid," the voice said. "Some actor has to fill his shoes. You probably didn't know this, but Jimmy was about to sign to do nine pictures in a row with us. All of those movies could star you. You'd be perfect. Here's the chance of a lifetime. It's a sad fact that Jimmy is dead, but we the living have to go on. Fuck all that talk about you being 'the second Brando.' If you're smart and play all the angles, and if you lick enough asses, you could be the next James Dean."

Newman put down the phone.

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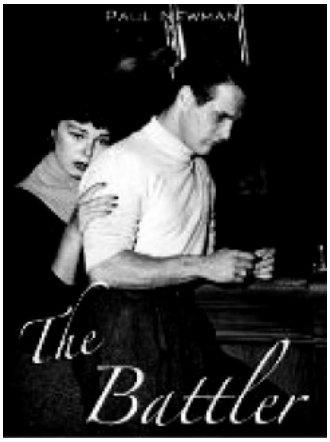
Based on the flood of public emotion which followed in the wake of Jimmy's death, Newman assumed that plans for the teleplay, *The Battler*, would be scrapped. But Fred Coe wanted it to be aired on schedule within three weeks of Jimmy's fatal crash. And he wanted Newman to take over Jimmy's role as the star of the teleplay.

Coe called Newman. "I have no one else who can learn the part at this late hour. It would be easy to get another actor to play the secondary role you were originally assigned, but at this point, only you can be the star. Let's face it: You know Jimmy's part better than he did."

Newman didn't want to change roles. "I can't do it emotionally," he told a mourning Eartha Kitt, who was suffering greatly at the loss of her soulmate. "If I accepted the lead, I'd be advancing my career at Jimmy's expense. Both of us loved him dearly. I can't—I won't—fill his shoes. Coe and Penn will have to get someone else."

Yet somehow, Eartha managed to convince Newman that filling in for their departed friend would be a way to honor his memory. "That heavy makeup that the role calls for will help everyone forget your reputation as a pretty

boy." she said. "You'll have to survive purely on your acting skills, 'cause their makeup artists will make you look like a battered pug."



Newman, as a prize-fighter, performing as a last-minute shoe-in for a role originally envisioned for James Dean.

A.E. Hotchner, the teleplay's author, felt he had to apologize to Hemingway for pushing Newman into the lead role at the last minute. In a letter to Hemingway, he wrote, "We were forced to fill the part by risking young Newman in the lead." Papa Hemingway's reaction to Newman's performance that night in October is unknown.

"Suddenly, I agreed to play this punch drunk wreck of a man at fifty-five, a lean and hungry former champ," Newman said. "Since I was at the height of my so-called male beauty, it took the makeup boys hours to disfigure me."

In 1962 Newman would again portray *The Battler* when 20th Century Fox cast him in a big screen adaptation of that play, retitling it *Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man*.

Newman, in a remake of *The Battler*, released in 1962 as *Ernest Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man.* The critics hated it.

After the telecast, Coe took Newman out for a drink to congratulate him on his fine performance. A drunk in the bar had just seen Newman's TV portrayal of a boxer and challenged him to a fight. At first Newman tried to shrug him off, but the drunk was persistent. A brawl erupted, and Newman ended up with a black eye.

Two other industry insiders were watching the TV debut of Newman's telecast. One was the director, Robert Wise, the other a producer, Charles Schnee. These two men had recently received an agreement from Jimmy to star as Rocky Graziano in his life story, *Somebody Up There Likes Me*. Both Wise and Schnee were devastated by the death of their potential star. But after watching Newman in *The Battler*, both the director and producer decided that Newman would be ideal in the role of Graziano.

Wise called Newman and arranged a meeting. Newman showed up with his black eye. "You didn't have to get makeup to give you a boxer's black eye," Schnee said.

"By the way," Wise said, "that's the best black eye I've ever seen the makeup department create."

“That’s no black eye makeup,” Newman said. “That’s the real thing. I got into a bar fight.”

“With that shiner, you’ve almost got the role,” Wise said. “We know you can act. All we want you to do at this point is strip down and try these on.” He held up a pair of scarlet boxing trunks with large gold bands on the sides. “We want to see how you’re built,” Wise said.

Hesitant to strip down to his underwear, Newman eyed Wise skeptically. “You’re not gay, are you? I don’t have to put out to get this part, do I?”

“I’m a pussy man myself,” Wise said. “So is Schnee here.”

Newman stripped down, and both Wise and Schnee found his physique well defined.

“You could be beefier, so go to the gym and puff yourself up every day,” Wise said. “You’ve got the part, though.”

“It’ll make you a star,” Schnee promised.

“We’ve also got great news for you,” Wise said. “We’ve cast Pier Angeli as the girl. I heard you used to bang her before Jimmy took her away.”

“Something like that,” Newman muttered. He had reservations about Pier entering his life again.

He called Eartha and told her the news. “I think people are going to stop calling me the second Brando. Now they’ll be calling me the second Jimmy. When will I ever become Paul Newman?”

“Don’t worry, sweetcakes,” Eartha said. “You’ll need to worry only when some younger stud is billed as the second Paul Newman.”

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Newman once again came together with Pier Angeli, but their love affair, launched on the set of *The Silver Chalice*, had grown cold. She was distant, yet very kind and respectful of him. “We both loved James Dean, and we both lost him,” she said to him privately. “Now I have Vic Damone and you have Joanne Woodward.” He couldn’t help but notice that she’d failed to mention his wife Jackie.

Both of them found it ironic that he was Jewish playing an Italian-American in the movie, and she, a bona fide Italian, was playing his Jewish girlfriend.

When he first encountered her, Pier was suffering from a broken ankle but mending quickly. She’d fallen down the stairs at her house. Until she recovered, he carried her in his arms to lunch and back. It was somewhere along the way that she seemed to fall in love with him again.

Their passion was rekindled when Wise flew them to New York to film scenes together on the East Side. “I’d never seen New York this cold before,” Wise said. “In only a day or two, Newman was warming Pier’s bed. Her plaster cast had been removed.”

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Mineo revealed to the Hollywood biographer, Lawrence J. Quirk, that during the making of *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956), he transferred the romantic attraction he’d developed for Jimmy onto Newman.

“I fell head over heels for the lug,” he admitted years later. “Paul was not only manly, but kind and understanding. We used to talk about Jimmy a lot. Paul felt that Jimmy’s death was a real loss, and we both missed him in different ways.”

During his time appearing onstage in the radical play about prison life, *Fortune and Men’s Eyes,* Sal Mineo confessed, “Both Paul and I knew what it was like to have Jimmy Dean make love to us. I can still feel his kisses on my body.”

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Long after Newman established his own film credits, and was no longer cites as “the next James Dean,” so many other actors of the 1950s and beyond tried to take the title, each of them unsuccessfully. The list included Nick Adams, Edd Byrnes, Dennis Hopper, Dewey Martin, Rod McKuen, Sal Mineo, Don Murray, Tony Perkins, Philip Pine, Cliff Robertson, Dean Stockwell, and Elvis Presley.

Biographer Randall Riese wrote: “If Donald Turnupseed hadn’t turned left on September 30, 1955, James Dean

would have grown older and become Paul Newman—with a bit more edge and perhaps more passion. Likewise, if Dean had lived, Newman might not have become the Newman we know today. He might not have had the opportunity."

Chapter Fourteen

THE IMMORALIST

James Dean Opens on Broadway as an Arab "He-Slut" With a Hundred Bitchy Tricks, Including Blackmail

HATRED BACKSTAGE, AS LOUIS JOURDAN & JIMMY EXCHANGE VENOM

> *"Working with this monster boy was my worst experience ever with an actor."*
>
> —Playwright Ruth Goetz, co-author of *The Immoralist*

"The Role Calls for a Feygele"

—Billy Rose

Billy Rose, the famous impresario and theatrical showman, was set to bring André Gides's *The Immoralist* to Broadway. It was daring and *avant-garde* for its era, relaying the tale of a long-suffering wife married to a homosexual who gets embroiled in a blackmail scheme after a sexual liaison with a scheming Arab boy.

The controversial French intellectual, ex-con, and commentator on sexuality and colonialism, André Gide.

Rose met with his director, Herman Shumlin. They had already agreed that Geraldine Page, Jimmy's friend, would play the lead role of the anguished wife of the closeted husband. The Arab boy was yet to be cast.

"For the husband, we'll need one of the famous *feygele*—you know, faggots such as Brando, Monty Clift, or perhaps Tyrone Power. Perhaps a bisexual like Richard Burton."

About the last person one might ever have expected Gide or his work to ever be linked to was the flamboyant Broadway impresario, Billy Rose, depicted above

...But as industry veterans have often said, "THAT'S SHOW BIZ!"

"But where in the fuck are we going to get some kid to play the little Arab queer, that blackmailing, insolent, thieving, pervert who rents his ass to soldiers at the local barracks?"

"The kid has to be good looking," Shumlin said. "Enough for the soldier to want to fuck him. He could be slightly effeminate, but not too much so, since he is also athletic. Perhaps a swimmer's build. I've seen this one kid perform before. He's the only boy I know who can pull it off."

"Who is this God's gift to the stage?" Rose asked.

"His body is lilywhite but it can be darkened with makeup," Shumlin answered. "We don't want him too dark. We don't want to get into any interracial protests here. But from what I hear, the kid can take it up the ass and he's a Method actor, so he can use his personal experience to add authenticity to the role."

"Okay, okay," Rose said, impatiently. "Just who is this little queer?"

"His name is James Dean," Shumlin said.

"Never heard of the little fart."

"You will," Shumlin predicted.

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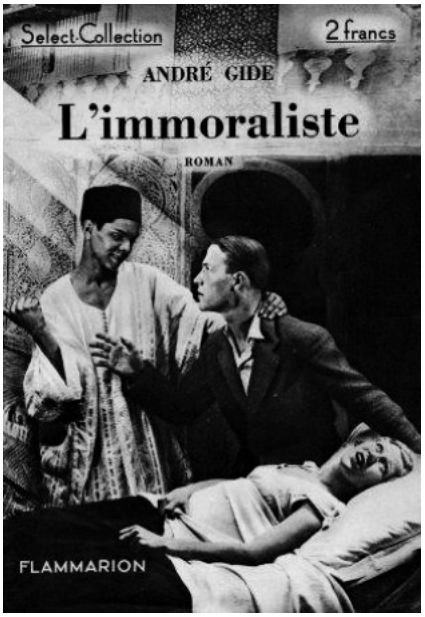
Playwrights Ruth and Augustus Goetz had scored a hit when they adapted Henry James' novella, *Washington*

Sqare into a play, *The Heiress*, which opened on Broadway in 1947. *[It was later adapted into a film, a box office hit, with triumphant acting by Olivia de Havilland and Montgomery Clift]*



A few years later, the playwrights decided to tackle a dramatization of André Gide's controversial novel, *The Immoralist.* The great and defiantly homosexual *avant-garde* French writer had based his work in part on his own unconsummated marriage to Madeleine Rondeaux.

Set in French colonial Algeria at the turn of the 20th Century, the story is that of complex marital problems a young archeologist faces in the wake of his marriage to the most respectable woman in the Norman village where they lived. She cannot understand his coldness to her until he explains that he is a homosexual, with past scandals that return from time to time to haunt him. That revelation leads to his wife's descent into alcohol abuse, insanity, and death.

Homosexuality was a daring subject to dramatize, or even discuss, during the homophobic Eisenhower era. Many unsophisticated critics would refer to it in odious terms, one of them defining it as "the abominable crime," another labeling it as "an affliction.

Nonetheless, plays with homosexual themes had already begun creeping into mainstream Broadway venues. The New York-born theatrical showman Billy Rose had been impressed with the box office success of Robert Anderson's *Tea and Sympathy* (1953), whose theme involved a schoolboy falsely accused of homosexuality and the (supposedly successful) efforts of an older woman to alleviate his anxieties. Its male *ingenu* protagonist had been brilliantly portrayed by John Kerr, Jimmy's former lover. Perhaps with that in mind, Rose decided to apply his skills, as a producer, to a Broadway release of *The Immoralist.*

[Billy Rose was deep into a flamboyantly successful career. Once married (1929-1938) to Fanny Brice, he was also a lyricist credited with such famous songs as "Me and My Shadow" (1927), and "It's Only a Paper Moon" (1933). Controversy had surrounded his staging of other plays he'd produced, including Clifford Odets' Clash by Night (1941), adapted eleven years later into a movie with Barbara Stanwyck and Marilyn Monroe; and Carmen Jones (1943), featuring George Bizet's opera score orchestrated for Broadway with performances by an all black cast.]

Actors who were considered for *The Immoralist's* lead character, Michael *[Michel in the original novel]*, included Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, and Tyrone Power. After each of them rejected it, it was assigned to Louis Jourdan.

Born in Marseille, he had made his American film debut in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Paradine Case* (1947) opposite Gregory Peck. Jourdan had also scored a hit in Max Ophüls *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948), appearing opposite Joan Fontaine.

The *Immoralist's* role of the morally upright, long-suffering wife was assigned to Geraldine Page, Jimmy's friend from the Actors Studio, who had previously scored a huge hit as Alma, the lonely spinster, in Tennessee Williams'

Summer and Smoke (1948).

As director, Rose selected Herman Shumlin, one of the most respected names on Broadway. He was already known for his direction of plays which included *Watch on the Rhine* (1941), and Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* (1939).

Rose fully understood that the role of the thieving teenaged pervert, Bachir, would be hard to cast. A blackmailing schemer, he rents out his body for sodomy to the (French) soldiers at the local barracks. He's also on the lookout for rich tourists he can ensnare in his web. Immediately, he recognizes Michael as a closeted homosexual and sets out to seduce him.

Jimmy's theatrical agent, Jane Deacy, had read the script and thought he would be ideal in the role. She arranged for him to show up at a reading before the play's director (Shumlin) and its co-author (Ruth Goetz).

Ruth recalled her first encounter with Jimmy. "He appeared in a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots, a bright green vest, and jeans—he looked like a little Irishman, hardly ideal for playing an Arab boy. Then he read, and he was instinctively right, charming, but with a nasty, suggestive sexual undercurrent."

Shumlin agreed. "Dean was absolutely perfect for the role, once we applied some brown makeup and darkened his blonde hair. He perfectly combined the quality of pretend sweetness with a sinister kind of evil under his skin."

For $300 a week, he was offered the role with a run-of-the-play contract.

Rehearsals were at the old Ziegfeld Theater in Manhattan, where Jimmy reunited with Page.

Paul Hubner, one of the cast members, said, "We thought they were lovers. They were always hugging and kissing."

Jimmy denied it: "She's like a mother to me, very supportive. Would you fuck your mother? Wouldn't that make you a mother-fucker?"

Louis Jourdan with Leslie Caron in *Gigi (*1958).

Page seemed delighted with her role. "As an actress, it is a dream part for me. I get drunk. I go mad. And I die!"

"Louis and Jimmy hated each other on sight," Page said. "They had met before at Sarah Churchill's party, where Jourdan had appeared with his sometimes lover, Danny Kaye. Louis was a classically trained actor, and he detested Jimmy's Method approach. His style of acting was not really the Method, but it was Jimmy's way, which Louis—to his utmost frustration—could never really decipher."

During rehearsals, Page was the only player who understood Jimmy's way of approaching a role. "He had to work himself into the character, during which time he was slowly committing the script to memory. He would mutter and mumble, filling in the blank spaces with words not in the script."

After he saw this photo of himself, French actor Louis Jourdan said, “I was voted the handsomest man in the world, but I should also have been voted the sexiest.”

Furious, Jourdan complained to Shumlin about this: “The jerk is uttering obscenities. He whimpers, he cries, he curses.”

According to Page, “Jimmy is like a cat that jumps a great distance without the need to know how far he was to jump. I assured Louis that Jimmy would be perfect on opening night.”

“Working with Dean, this monster boy, was the worst experience I ever had with an actor,” Ruth Goetz said. “He was slovenly, always late, unspeakably detestable.”

Alert to the eccentricities of artistic talent, Shumlin granted Jimmy free rein, letting him improvise wildly until he worked himself into the character. After a few days, he evolved into a sort of father figure for Jimmy. During a break in rehearsals, Jimmy was sometimes spotted resting his head on the director’s shoulder.

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Cast and crew eventually headed to Philadelphia for a week of tryouts at the Forrest Theater.

“I don’t know from fairies,” Rose told Ruth. “But I hear Jimmy’s one, and the play is about fairies. So I’ll sit through it and tell you what I think.”

Consequently, Rose rode the train from New York to Philadelphia, and watched one of *The Immoralist’s* dress rehearsals. Then, after conferring with Ruth and Augustus Goetz, he decided to fire Shumlin.

Although he was both respected and talented, and had directed many Alist stars, Shumlin had seemed reticent, even embarrassed, by the homosexual overtones of the play. In Rose’s view, Shumlin was “skirting the issues associated with love that dare not speak its name.”

Shumlin was dismissed immediately. As his replacement, Rose appointed Daniel Mann, another well-known director.

In front of Mann, before commuting back to New York, Rose articulated his opinion of Jimmy: “The kid has all these adolescent notions about being a man. He carries a switchblade and rides a motorcycle. A big fucking man, that one! I think he’s mentally disturbed.”

It can be argued that Daniel Mann (*aka*, Daniel Chugerman, *depicted above)* suffered more than any other director because of James Dean.

In his words: “I directed Shirley Booth, Burt Lancaster, Marlon Brando, and Elizabeth Taylor, but James Dean was my biggest headache. When Billy Rose, phoned me from New York about casting him, I told him, “That Dean’s acting is like a fox trying to fuck a football. He’s all around it, but he can’t get into it.”

Bill Gunn, an African-American actor and playwright, had been cast as Jimmy’s understudy. “I predicted fireworks would result from Mann’s attempts to direct Jimmy, and, indeed, some Fourth of July blasts went off.”

Soon after Mann’s takeover of the play’s direction, the other cast members, mainly Jourdan, expressed harsh appraisals of Jimmy and his work habits. Only Page took up for him.

During their first encounter, Mann told Jimmy, “I’m not going to sugar-tit you.”

“Too bad, Jimmy replied, defiantly. “Most men claim my tits are sweeter than any honey a bee ever made.”

“Forget everything you’ve ever learned from the Jewish Pope *[a reference to Lee Strasberg and the Actors Studio]* and listen to me,” Mann demanded.

Then, much to Jimmy’s annoyance, Mann set about revising the script, cutting out many of Bachir’s lines.

“I think the bastard wants to write me out of the play,” he complained to Page.

From then on, Jimmy launched a war against Mann, at least when he wasn’t battling with Jourdan.

Ruth said, “The battle raged through and included the final rehearsals. At times, Dean seemed to be performing in a play that he’d written himself, something that had nothing to do with my script.”

According to Page, “One day, Jimmy stormed out of the theater, and we didn’t think he was going to return. Finally, after a few hours, he showed up to discover Bill Gunn rehearsing Bachir’s part with the other actors. This sobered Jimmy, and he was back in the role.”

Mann wanted to fire him altogether until he discovered that from the beginning, he’d had a run-of-the-play contract, which meant that he would have to be paid whether he worked as a participating actor or not.

Rose told Mann, “If the little prick doesn’t cut the shit, he walks, contract or no contract. Let him sue me.”

Jimmy’s big scene was the so-called “scissors dance,” where moved sinuously, suggestively, even frenziedly, while brandishing a pair of scissors.

According to Gunn, “For the first time, I think Jimmy really listened to Mann’s direction.”

Mann had advised, “For this dance, imagine you’re bouncing up and down on a very big cock. From what I hear, that is something you really know how to do.”

Geraldine Page *(above, left)* claimed that Jimmy looked “the least like an Arab boy of anyone you could imagine. That face, that blonde hair. But he made us feel he was an Arab—not by his looks, but by his acting.”

As Gunn later said, “Jimmy was no Yvonne de Carlo, but his dance would become the highlight of the show.”

Jimmy discussed his scissors dance with Page. “It was the strings I was snipping away, the strings that bound the Frenchman’s character to the staid middle class morality of his early days in Normandy. The more I snipped and cut away with the scissors, the more I removed Michael from his hopeless respectability.”

For the play’s out-of-town opening in Philadelphia, Jimmy, as Bachir, appeared onstage with brown makeup and a seductive leer. From there, he attempted to entrap Michael with his sensual charm and that homoerotic scissors dance.

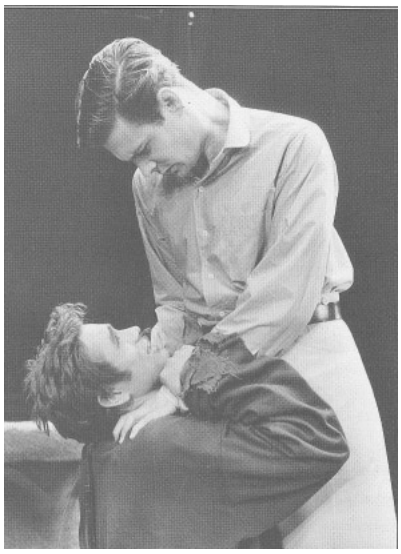
Ruth was amazed by the brilliance of Jimmy’s performance that night. “Backstage, he’d been a terror, the most unprofessional actor ever. But that night, he was a pro, playing the role perfectly and winning the approval of most of the Philadelphia critics.”

“Louis Jourdan truly detested Jimmy, based partly on his behavior during rehearsals, but I adored him,” said Geraldine Page, pictured above with Jourdan in a publicity photo for *The Immoralist.* “But it was hard to forgive him for walking out on the play after only two weeks, especially after getting such rave reviews. When he left, the play seemed to lose its power.”

Jimmy’s good behavior didn’t last long. At a Wednesday matinee, to demonstrate his loathing for Jourdan, Jimmy upstaged him. During the French actor’s execution of one of his key scenes, Jimmy reached into his pocket and took out an imaginary lollipop. Then he went through “pretend” motions of putting it in his mouth and vigorously sucking it.

When the curtain went down, Mann was furious. He chased Jimmy out through the stage door and into the street. He yelled, “If I get my hands on you, I’ll kill you, you bastard punk.”

The next day, Jimmy’s friend, Martin Landau, called from New York. “How’s it going, working with Jourdan?”



Louis Jourdan, onstage, with James Dean his bitter enemy, in *The Immoralist.* "We have a juvenile delinquent on our hands," he told the director.

"He's great," Jimmy said in a mocking voice. Last night, he wasn't his usual wooden self. He even managed to raise both of his hands at the same time."

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Cast and crew rode the train from Philadelphia back to New York to prepare for the play's opening night on Broadway at the Royale Theatre on February 8, 1954. Its big-time debut, coincidentally, occurred on Jimmy's 23rd birthday.

On opening night, fifteen minutes before the curtain, Jimmy, outfitted in full Arab makeup and drag, took off on his Triumph motorcycle from an alley beside the theater.

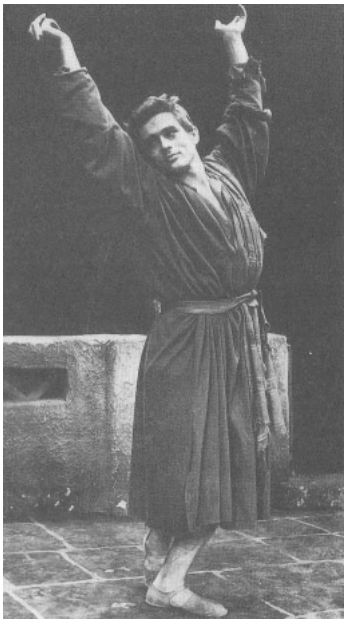
Mann went into a frenzied panic, as did the rest of the cast and crew. Jimmy's understudy, Bill Gunn, was ordered to prep himself as a replacement.

"I had never seen such tension backstage," Page said. "Finally, at the last minute, Jimmy returned. I had been very patient with him, but this act to deliberately alarm everybody pissed me off, too."

Jimmy's destination, impetuously, even maniacally, pursued fifteen minutes before curtain time, had involved a meeting, bizarrely scheduled, with James McCarthy, a friend from his U.C.L.A. days. He told him, "I don't want to be a good actor. I want to be the best actor there is. I told you I'd take the big town someday. My moment arrives tonight."

Based on Jimmy's brilliant performance, after the descent of the opening night's final curtain Mann and Rose opted to forgive Jimmy's horrible behavior. "Jimmy wooed audiences, and Louis *[Jourdan]* didn't do badly either," Page said.

But although rumor and fact are hard to decipher at this point, Jimmy nonetheless released a shocker, virtually during the curtain's final descent. Still clad in his caftan, and with the understanding that he never wore underwear beneath his caftan, he curtsied like a girl.



James Dean performing the "Scissors Dance" onstage in *The Immoralist.*

His frequent mentor and supporter, James Sheldon, thought Jimmy was miscast. "The dirty, evil, seductive part he had down pat. But he was just too Indiana farmboy to be really convincing."

Later, some members of the audience got a glimpse of just a flash of genitals as he curtsied; others maintained that only his upper thighs were visible. Confronted with this unexpectedly, it gave both Rose and Mann something else to be furious about, but when they realized what a hit Jimmy had been, they managed to control their tempers.

That very night, Jimmy would infuriate them even more when he officially and legally notified them of his plan to abandon his involvement in their play within fourteen days.

"It was his final 'fuck-you' to me and to everyone else in the play," Rose said. "I confronted him and we really went at it. I threatened him that if he did that, he'd never work another day on Broadway, and he didn't. 'You're a hit…Why throw it away?' I asked him."

Jimmy glared at Rose with fury. Then he spat on the floor. "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

Later, Rose commented, "Where have I heard that line before?"

After that evening's final curtain, Rod Steiger, a friend of Page at the time, was one of the first members of that night's audience to arrive backstage. "Jimmy is playing Bachir like a Manhattan faggot. He's not an Arab boy, but a hustler working Third Avenue."

Other immediate, informal appraisals were less caustic; in fact, most of them were raves.

Within a few hours, key members of the cast gathered at Sardi's to await that night's late-edition newspaper reviews. Nearly all of them, despite its homosexual context, reviewed the play and its performers favorably. Jimmy, however, came out by far as the best.

William Watkins of *The New York World-Telegraph* wrote: "It is James Dean as the Arab houseboy who clearly and originally underlines the sleazy impertinence and the amoral opportunities which the husband must combat."

Walter Kerr in *The New York Herald Tribune* noted, "James Dean makes a colorfully insinuating scapegrace."

Brooks Atkinson in *The New York Times* referred to Jimmy's "insidious charm," and Richard Watts, Jr., of *The New York Post* found Jimmy "realistically unpleasant as the slimy one."

In the *Morning Telegraph* George Freedley wrote: "James Dean gives the best masculine performance in the role of the Arab boy, a part which could easily have become extremely offensive with less good acting and direction."

Henry Hewes in the *Saturday Review* made a prophecy: "At the play's final curtain, one is left with the impression that Michael is a homosexual living ahead of his time, and that at some later date in the history of civilization, it will be possible for the abnormal to live undisguised and unapologetic within our society."

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Jimmy's infuriating decision to abandon *The Immoralist* was catalyzed by Elia Kazan, who had dangled a pivotal role in his upcoming film *East of Eden*. The part that Kazan, and perhaps Destiny itself, had envisioned for Jimmy was that of Cal Trask, the rebellious and misunderstood younger brother, around whom the film revolved.

At the time, *East of Eden's* screenplay was being adapted from John Steinbeck's novel by Paul Osborne, author of *Portrait of Jennie*, a successful 1948 movie that had co-starred Joseph Cotten and Jennifer Jones.

Osborne had attended an out-of-town preview of *The Immoralist* and subsequently pleaded with Kazan that Jimmy would be perfect as Cal. Kazan, already familiar, through the Actors Studio, with Jimmy's reputation and potential, went to see *The Immoralist* too.

Ultimately, Kazan agreed with Osborne's assessment. "As I got to know Dean, I came to realize he was a shit, absolutely rotten to the core. He was a real cocker and an asshole. But he was the most perfect actor I knew for the part of Cal. All that Dean had to do was to play himself."

On February 23, 1954, Jimmy delivered his final performance on Broadway, never to return. Mann transferred his part to Philip Pine, who had previously worked with Jimmy in *See the Jaguar.* Pine remained with the play until it closed on May 1 of that same year.

"After I got the part, my daughter, Macyle, wouldn't speak to me for many days," Pine said. "She was a great fan of Jimmy's, and was mad at me for taking his role, even though I explained that Jimmy had quit and hadn't been fired."

Pine later expressed regret that *The Immoralist* didn't make him a movie star. "Jimmy and I had the same aspirations when we knew each other," he said. "In the end, that fickle goddess, Fame, decided to shine on him and not on me."

Before Jimmy flew away to Hollywood for *East of Eden,* he telephoned John Gilmore. "I'm going to L.A. for a job, but I can't tell you what it is. I'm sworn to secrecy. But I can tell you this: "I'm going to shake the shit out of Tinseltown."

In Hollywood, long after memories of the Broadway opening of *The Imoralist* had faded, Beulah Roth encountered Rock Hudson and Louis Jourdan at a party. At the time, the two actors were engaged in a short-term affair.

She and her husband, Sanford Roth, the renowned photographer, had become close friends of Jimmy's during his short lifetime. "We more or less adopted him in the summer of 1955," she said.

"I asked the men what it was like working with Jimmy," she said. "Rock gave me 'that look,' and Jourdan told me with a Gallic chill, 'Never mention that boy's name in my presence ever again.'"

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In the wake of her stage appearance in *The Immoralist,* Page would go on to enjoy a splendid film career. She was nominated seven times for a Best Actress Oscar before carrying one off for her role as Carrie Watts in *The Trip to Bountiful* (1985).

Having survived Jimmy, Daniel Mann went on to direct Burt Lancaster and Anna Magnani in *The Rose Tattoo* (1955); Susan Hayward in *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (1955); Marlon Brando in *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956); and Elizabeth Taylor in *BUtterfield 8* (1960).

As for Jimmy, based on his brief appearance in *The Immoralist* he would be awarded a Tony as best newcomer of the year, and he would also win the Daniel Blum Award as Best Newcomer.

But as is the rule for actors, his involvement in the play did generate its share of bitchy, snarky comments: An out-of-town critic from Los Angeles, David Bettmann, wrote: "From what I hear of Mr. James Dean, I understand the character of the homosexual Arab boy is too close to his own personality to justify the term 'acting.'"

Struggling to get ahead as an actor, James Dean read whatever teleplay came along, if it contained a possible role in it for him. “I was an apprentice, and I took almost any crap.”

Months before he went to Hollywood to feud with such film directors as Elia Kazan and George Stevens, Jimmy’s rude and sometimes juvenile behavior alienated many directors in TV and on Broadway. This was best exemplified by his endless conflicts with Daniel Mann during rehearsals for *The Immoralist.*

Chapter Fifteen

EAST OF EDEN

Playing The Son of a Whore, A Star Is Born

JIMMY IRRITATES ELIA KAZAN AND INFURIATES RAYMOND MASSEY

His Oscar Nomination Positions Him in Direct Confrontation with Hollywood's Old Guard

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the East of Eden."

—Genesis 4:16

"I could tell that Jimmy could be easily castrated, so I had to juggle his balls with great delicacy."

—Elia Kazan, Director of *East of Eden*

East of Eden has claimed an important niche in the history of cinema. Critic Marceau Devillers wrote: "Before Dean, the adolescent was portrayed as a psychological cypher—inferior, stupid, weak, or ignorant: the ultimate 'foil' to the older generation. With the advent of *East of Eden*, the adolescent became a person in his own right. *East of Eden* was a turning point in the history of the movies. Dean made the adolescent, with his complexities, his uneasiness, traits worthy of a hero."

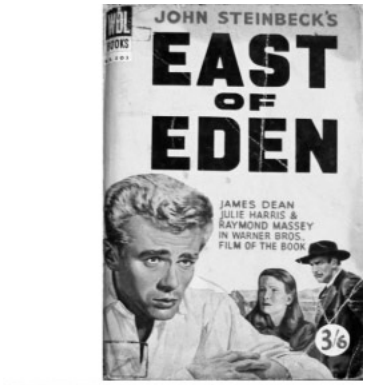
It also transformed a young James Dean, with only one picture under his belt, into a superstar.

Screenwriter Paul Osborn had seen Jimmy in *The Immoralist,* and had been mesmerized by his performance. At

the time, he was working on a screenplay, *East of Eden,* based on the novel by John Steinbeck. His most ambitious saga since *Grapes of Wrath,* it had been originally published in 1952 to rather lackluster sales.

East of Eden was the three-generation saga of the Trask and Hamilton families, archetypal settlers in California's Salinas Valley, following their evolution from the mid-19th century until the outbreak of World War I.

Because of the monumental size of Steinbook's original, Osborn could only base his screenplay on its final section, which *The New York Times* did not consider the best part. The screenplay condensed the saga into the story of one "bad" brother, Cal Trask, conflicting with his "good" brother, Aron. Both would vie for the love of a coquettish Abra, as played in the film by Julie Harris.



John Steinbeck...wants a quarter of the profits from the film version of the book he wrote.

The hottest director in Hollywood at the time was Elia Kazan, who had scored a huge success with *On the Waterfront.* Based on that success, and on the fact that its male lead, Marlon Brando, had won an Oscar for his performance in it, Jack Warner had designated Kazan as both producer and director of *East of Eden.* It would be shot in CinemaScope and WarnerColor, with a musical score composed by Jimmy's intimate friend, Leonard Rosenman.

Osborn urged Kazan to attend a performance of *The Immoralist,* knowing that he was already familiar with Jimmy from their days together at the Actors Studio.

Consequently, Kazan, too, was mesmerized watching Jimmy as the blackmailing homosexual Arab opposite Louis Jourdan and Geraldine Page.

The next day, he called Jane Deacy, Jimmy's agent, and asked that the actor come and visit him. She already knew that the role of Cal was up for grabs, and in reference to that, had placed a call to Kazan four days before, which he had not bothered to return.

"When Dean came in for an interview, he was a heap of twisted legs and denim rags, looking resentful for no particular reason," Kazan remembered. "I made him wait outside for half an hour, thinking that might drop that belligerent pose. When he walked in, I knew immediately that he was right for the role of Cal. He was guarded, sullen, suspicious, and he seemed to have a great deal of concealed emotion. He looked and spoke like a character in *East of Eden,* even though I learned later he had not read the novel."

"I also knew that making a picture with this guy would be a great challenge for me. I would have to cajole and comfort him. Need I say, pamper the baby and change his diapers. I would have to inspire him, challenge him, and, if the scene called for it, even provoke him to violence. And I'd have to indulge him. From what I'd heard, I might even have to let him suck my cock if it meant getting the picture made. My belief is that a director has to do any and everything to make a good film."

"After my interview, if it could be called that—Dean did not believe in communication—he invited me for a hair-raising, definitely hellraising, motorcycle ride through the canyons of Manhattan. That we survived that journey is miraculous. But obviously, I lived to tell about it."

"The next day, I took him to Steinbeck's apartment to see what he thought of him," Kazan said.

[The popular novelist had sold the movie rights to East of Eden *in 1952 for $125,000, a goodly price for a literary property at mid-century. He had also contracted for twenty-five percent of the profits.]*

Steinbeck reserved his opinion of Jimmy until he could deliver it discreetly and privately. He telephoned the director the next day to tell him, "He's a god damn snotty kid, but, by God, he *is* Cal. Good luck working with a shithead like that neurotic boy. Whereas before, I thought Clift and Brando would have been the ideal casting, I no longer believe that after meeting this Dean character."

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Kazan invited Jimmy to fly with him to Los Angeles for a screen test, although he was virtually certain he'd get the role. A few hours before the scheduled departure of their flight, a long black limousine, with Kazan inside, pulled up in front of Jimmy's brownstone. Disheveled, Jimmy raced down the steps carrying two grocery bags filled with clothing and tied with string.

It was his first ride on an airplane, and Kazan noted with amusement that he spent most of the flight with his nose pressed against the glass of the window adjacent to his seat.

After their arrival in California, Jimmy asked Kazan if they could stop at a hospital where his father worked as a dental technician in a lab.

Kazan remained in the back of the limousine, and Winton Dean emerged ten minutes later. "I sensed the tension between those two," Kazan said. "I think Jimmy's father hated him. He did not seem impressed, either with the limo or with Dean's chance of starring in a major motion picture. He told me that he had wanted Jimmy to study law at U.C.L.A. They stood side by side without anything to say to each other. I ordered Jimmy into the car and we moved on."

"But at least I realized how deeply Dean could identify with the errant son, Cal, who was alienated from his father," Kazan said. "It would be a slice from his own life."

Because Kazan had already demonstrated his knack for Oscar-winning success, Jack Warner at Warner Brothers had more or less given him free rein in casting. Kazan had already alerted Warner that the role called for a nineteen-year-old-version of Brando or Monty Clift. He had also warned the studio boss that Jimmy was idiosyncratic and somewhat eccentric.

Warner's spies soon reported to him that Jimmy was extremely temperamental and hard to control. Kazan received a telegram from Warner. "I hope this Dean fellow isn't too odd. It's getting to the point now where if we make a picture with someone who is odd, the whole machine is thrown out of order, not to mention the expense to the studio as pictures fall behind schedules. You know it takes only one odd spark to make the motor miss. I am fed up with people who are too odd. But I'll take your word that you can control this little talented upstart."

Kazan dreaded introducing Jimmy to Warner. "He was used to such male stars as Errol Flynn, James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, and Gary Cooper," Kazan said. "Now I show up at his doorstep with this fidgety kid from New York. Warner was pleasant enough, but skeptical of my judgment. As Jimmy waited for me outside, Warner kept me in his office."

"Is it true that this kid is a cocksucker?" he demanded to know.

"It's just a rumor," Kazan replied. He went on to assure him that the role called for a young man who could combine masculine virility with feminine softness and insecurity.

Over lunch in Warners' commissary, Kazan ordered Jimmy to drink a pint of cream every day to put on some weight and "for God's sake, get a suntan. You're as pale as the Queen of England, and I want you to look like a healthy farmboy who works in the fields."

That afternoon, Jimmy's first reunion was with his former roommate, William Bast. Barging into his apartment, he gave Bast a deep and passionate kiss. "Come on, guy," he said. "Let's hit the road. I've rented a car. I've been cast in *East of Eden,* and Gadge *[Kazan]* wants me suntanned. Nut brown, please."

Bast seemed overjoyed for Jimmy and somehow managed to conceal his jealousy.

Within the hour, the two men were heading east to the Anza-Borrego Desert, an hour's drive from Palm Springs.

Bast had never seen Jimmy this enthusiastic. “When I was out here before, I took a lot of crap, kissed a lot of asses. No more! I danced to the fiddle of these Caligula wannabes, but not this time around. The bastards need me, they want me, and I’m gonna make them lick the dust off my boots.”

At a small, rustic resort, they rented a modest cabin for a week. It contained two double beds and a private shower.

That night, over dinner, Jimmy told Bast, “I’m gonna fuck those Tinseltown bastards like they’ve never been fucked before.”

Bast later concluded that he “knew that Jimmy had the tenacity of a Gila monster, but even a Gila monster has to roll over on his back to allow the poison in his jaws to flow.”

“Hollywood hasn’t changed,” he told Bast. “It is still the same hostile, predatory place it always was, with a lot of hungry mouths looking for a pretty boy with a big cock.”

That first night in their cabin, after the lights were off, Jimmy whispered to Bast, “Are you still awake?”

Bast later wrote, “*El momento de verdad* had arrived.”

He answered Jimmy’s siren call in the dark, crawling naked into his separate bed. He later told friends, “Then the inevitable happened. We made love all night. It was amazing it hadn’t happened before. I mean, at our penthouse in Hollywood, we’d shared a double bed, and on many occasions, I’d felt Jimmy’s erection pressing up against me. But this time, in his bed at that desert resort, that erection would do a lot more than ‘press.’”

Jimmy’s pursuit of a suntan, as demanded by Jack Warner and Kazan, evolved into a sort of honeymoon for the actor and actor turned writer. “I knew it wouldn’t last,” Bast said. “And as our lazy days went by, I feared a return to the real world, knowing I was bound to lose Jimmy to a dozen temptations, maybe more.”

During their final day in the desert, Jimmy told Bast, “I am the sun.”

“And so he was for me,” Bast wrote in a memoir.

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Back in Hollywood, Jimmy invited Bast to meet his agent, Dick Clayton. Jane Deacy did not have a West Coast Office, so she had designated Clayton, from the Famous Artists Corporation, to represent his and their movie interests.

Jimmy had known Clayton since the days they had appeared together in bit parts in *Sailor Beware!*

Clayton helped hammer out the details of Jimmy’s movie contract with Warners. Finalized on April 7, 1954, it stipulated Jimmy’s receipt of $1,000 a week during the shooting of *East of Eden.* To tide him over until the beginning of filming, the studio advanced him $700.

[In October of 1954, Warners renewed the contract with a six-month option. The contract was renewed again and expanded on April 2, 1955, into a long-term commitment. It called for him to earn $3,000 a week by his ninth film. However, from New York, Jane Deacy negotiated a better deal that would have granted him $100,000 for every film. “He was the hottest property we had,” Jack Warner said. “We had big plans for him. I mean big plans.”]

As an agent, Clayton would later represent such high-profile clients as Jane Fonda, Farrah Fawcett, Harrison Ford, Nick Nolte, and Angie Dickinson. For twenty-two years, he functioned as the personal manager of Burt Reynolds. In time, he would build and occupy a home with Jimmy’s rival, Tab Hunter.

After signing the contract with Warner Brothers, as funneled through Clayton, Jimmy invited Bast as a visitor onto the studio lot. He introduced Bast to Kazan, with the boast that, “Gadge, you’re shaking the hand of the best writer in Hollywood.”

En route to the commissary for a meal together, Bast and Jimmy encountered Paul Newman, who was preparing himself for his leading role (one that Jimmy had previously rejected) in *The Silver Chalice*.

Newman told Bast, “Jimmy got the role of Cal that I wanted so bad I could taste it.”

Despite their rivalry, Newman and Jimmy maintained an easy going relationship, almost like lovers, in the view of Bast, who suspected that some passion had flared between them back in New York. “They were just too god damn good looking for something not to have happened during the time they hung out together.”

Over food, Newman attacked the script of *The Silver Chalice,* and their conversation remained pleasant until Newman said, “There isn’t a single bastard in this lousy business who made it by himself. No matter who they are, someone was there to open the door for them.”

Jimmy almost exploded in rage. Obviously, Newman had touched a nerve. “No one ever did anything for me. I did it myself. I don’t owe nothing to nobody. Not a god damn cent,” he said, slamming his fist against the tabletop.

Newman gracefully changed the subject. As he was leaving, he told Jimmy, “We’ll meet at seven like we agreed.”

That more or less confirmed Bast’s suspicions that they were secret lovers.

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Other “blasts from the past” (Jimmy’s words), also reappeared in his life after his return to L.A. for *East of Eden.* One of them was Nick Adams, Jimmy’s hustler buddy and sometimes lover.

Having heard that Jimmy was in L.A. and starring in a major-league movie, Adams arranged a reunion with him, through Bast. Access to Jimmy was getting more competitive, thanks to renewed competition from Bast and now, from Paul Newman.

“How can any guy compete with that fucking Paul Newman?” Adams asked.

Nevertheless, Jimmy agreed to see him from time to time, eventually promising him a role in his upcoming film.

Adams later said: “For most of the time, Jimmy was straight with himself. He’d never known the good life, and he wanted to know what it was like. He made his own way in life, and on his own terms. Whatever didn’t fit into his new life, he dropped. I hoped it wasn’t going to include me.”

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Dick Davalos was cast in *East of Eden* as Jimmy’s “good” brother, Aron.

Before he was awarded the part, he, with Jimmy, submitted to a series of screen tests, in which Jimmy was paired alongside Joanne Woodward, even though Kazan, by this point, had more or less determined that Julie Harris would be the female lead.

“I remember rehearsing at his apartment the night before the screen test, and really assimilating our characters and developing our brotherly relationship as best we could,” Davalos said. “I remember we were extremely tired the next day when we went to the studio.”

Kazan later said to Harris, “I wonder if Davalos and Dean are tired from rehearsing all night, or from something else.”

“Boys will be boys,” Harris said, “especially if you have two handsome young men spending the night together. They do have strong urges at that age, you know.”

“I remember it well,” Kazan said.

On the Warner’s lot, Jimmy survived both the screen tests and the wardrobe fittings, and even got a review from the boss himself, Jack Warner. Warner told the cinematographer assigned to *East of Eden*, Tim McCord, “Kazan brought this sad-eyed pretty boy with almond eyes and brown hair into my office. A rotten dresser. He’s small—too short, really—slight, and looks as vulnerable as a lost puppy dog. God help us.”

Warner had made a wise choice in his selection of McCord, whose almost monochrome cinematography captured the charm of an old-fashioned photo album from 1917, the year in which the story is set.

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In the final lineup, top billing would go to Julie Harris in the lead role of Abra. In the beginning of the film, she is Aron’s girlfriend, but later falls for Cal.

Raymond Massey was cast as the judgmental, puritanical, Bible-quoting father, Adam Trask, a lettuce farmer who clearly favors Aron. Jo Van Fleet plays Kate, who was once married to Adam but abandoned him and her two sons. She is now the deeply embittered owner of a bordello in a neighboring town.

The cast was augmented with Burl Ives as the sheriff; Albert Dekker as Will; and Barbara Baxley as a sadistic nurse. Months earlier, Jimmy had had a brief fling with Baxley when they each resided at the Iroquois Hotel in Manhattan.

James Dean with Julie Harris, his brother's fiancé in *East of Eden*. Is their embrace an allegory for a biblical sin? *("Thou shalt not covet thy brother's wife")*

On the set of *East of Eden,* she tried to renew their affair, but was brutally rejected by him. "Why do I need you now?" he responded. "Since I arrived in Hollywood, my phone's been ringing off the wall."

One by one, Jimmy met the cast. He already knew Harris from the Actors Studio in New York, and he had already prepared for and been evaluated in screen tests with Davalos.

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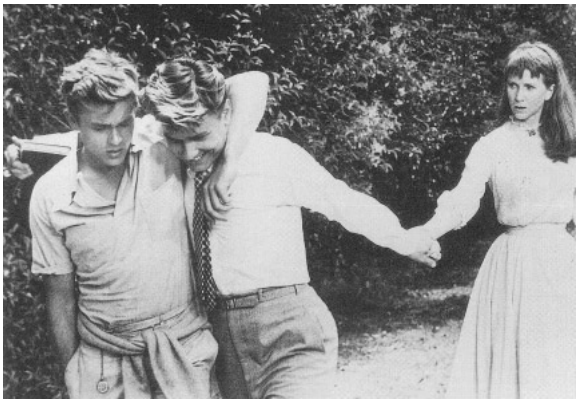
Growing up in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Harris had been enrolled for a year at the Yale School of Drama. In 1954, she'd won a Tony for her interpretation of Sally Bowles in the original Broadway version of *I Am a Camera,* in which Jimmy had unsuccessfully competed for the role inspired by Christopher Isherwood. In time, Harris would receive ten Tony nominations.

She had made her screen debut in 1952, repeating her Broadway success as the lonely teenaged girl, Frankie, in the film adaptation of Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding,* for which she was nominated for an Oscar as Best Actress.



A complicated triangle that gets increasingly complicated as the movie progresses: Dean *(left)*, Davalos *(center)* and Harris *(right)*

Jimmy maintained fond memories of her. "Her voice was like the gentle rainfall on a summer night. Her eyes reflected the depths of her tender heart."

Harris later stated that "Jimmy and I were almost killed before filming began. One night he knocked on my door right after I'd arrived in Hollywood. He invited me to 'go for a spin' in the Hollywood Hills. He had just bought a new scarlet red MG."

"We rode into the night at top speed. At one point, he had trouble lighting a cigarette, and he almost ran off the road and down an embankment, which would have meant sudden death since it was so steep. I didn't dare lecture him. That would have made him go much faster. I let him do whatever his heart desired. He was the kind of man who did whatever he wanted to."

When he finally returned her to the pavement in front of her apartment, she gracefully turned down his invitation for a sleepover. "He was Tom Sawyer to me, a very wicked but adorable Tom Sawyer. He manipulated people, and he knew exactly what he was doing. He was mercurial, unpredictable, and very beguiling."

"I did not suffer the misfortune of falling in love with Jimmy," Harris said. "It would have been a destructive relationship. Instead of seducing me, he went for Pier Angeli, who was starring in *The Silver Chalice* opposite that divine Paul Newman."

"Hollywood was nothing but a rumor factory. There was talk on the set that Paul and Pier were involved, and even that Paul and Jimmy were an item. I got left out of all these complicated sleeping arrangements."

"I remember Jimmy showing me this locket. In it, he had a lock of Pier's hair and a scrap from the dress she'd worn when he met her. It was all so romantic."

"But he was always upsetting Pier," Harris continued. "She was so prim and proper, so perfectly made up, and so well dressed. She invited friends of hers for lunch in the commissary so that they could meet Jimmy. He showed up without his shirt, his body smeared with a mechanic's grease. He wore a dirty pair of blue jeans with a big hole in the rear revealing bare skin and the fact that he wore no underwear. She burst into tears and went a week without speaking to him."

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Richard ("Dick") Davalos, born in the Bronx a year before Jimmy and just as good looking, was of Finnish and Spanish descent. His career never lived up to its early promise. *[Coincidentally, he did play opposite Paul Newman as the convict, "Blind Dick," in* Cool Hand Luke *(1967), a role that might have gone to Jimmy had he lived.]*

Unlike Jimmy's flamboyantly non-conformist character, Cal, Davalos, as Aron, had to be sober, diligent, God-fearing, hard-working, humorless, and the obvious favorite of his moralistic father.

As part of a plan to improve their ability as actors to portray brothers, Kazan decided to house Davalos and Jimmy together as roommates in a one-room studio apartment across the street from the entrance to the Warner lot in Burbank.

Although there has never been any direct confirmation, word soon spread that Davalos and Jimmy were lovers.

According to Davalos, "As roommates, Jimmy and I became 'Cal & Aron' off screen. I was Mr. Goody Two-Shoes. Consistent with the character of Cal, Jimmy usually left our place in a mess, and I was always tidying up, *à la* Aron. Jimmy was very heavy into Cal."

"He asked me what my previous experience had been," Davalos said. "I told him I'd been an usher at the Trans-

Lux Theater in Manhattan. But I let him know I'd beaten Newman out for the role."

"I beat Newman out for more than one role," Jimmy bragged.

On screen, Jimmy's scenes with Davalos carried a suggestion of latent homosexuality. One scene was so provocative that Jack Warner ordered that it be cut because of its hint of brotherly incest. Davalos was shown presumably nude in bed while Jimmy, wearing pants but shirtless, played a horn nearby. "The censors will never go for that," Warner said.

Many brothers have shared the same bedroom, but this sequence in *East of Eden* was ordered cut by Jack Warner even before it faced censorship. The studio mogul told Kazan, "They're half nude and look like they've been fucking all night."

After two weeks, Davalos told Kazan that he'd grown tired of Jimmy's constant mood swings and sloppiness, and moved out into better lodgings. After that, the rumor mill went into overdrive once again when the story spread that one night Jimmy "tried to rape the actor playing his brother."

"Working with Jimmy was a mind-blower," Davalos recalled years later. "We were so into those roles, me and Jimmy. Without going into too much detail, let me put it this way: It took me two years to get over working with him."

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A Canadian actor from Toronto, veteran star Raymond Massey, born in 1896, was known for his stage-trained voice. He'd made his first stage appearance in London in 1922, and his first movie role, in *High Treason,* in 1927. His greatest Broadway triumph had been in Robert E. Sherwood's play, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois.* Later, he repeated his performance in the film adaptation, for which he was nominated for an Oscar as Best Actor. He would go on to portray Lincoln again and again, and became so associated with the dead president that a fellow actor once quipped that Massey wouldn't ever be satisfied with his impersonation of Lincoln until someone assassinated him.

Filial Anguish: James Dean, playing the less favored son, interacting with his screen father, Raymond Massey, who genuinely detested him.

Right from the beginning, Jimmy and Massey detested each other with a hatred that might even have surpassed the on-Broadway loathing between Jimmy and Louis Jourdan.

"Ray couldn't stand the sight of the kid, dreading every day he had to do a scene with him," Kazan claimed. "He never knew what Jimmy was going to say or do. He knew only one thing to expect: Whatever Jimmy did would not be in the script."

"Our boy was fully aware of how much he was scorned by Ray," Kazan said. "He was sullen and surly around Ray, not disguising his contempt for the older actor. This was an antagonism I didn't try to heal. I almost encouraged it. It would make their portrayals of alienated father and son more effective."

During an especially bitter exchange, Jimmy yelled at Massey, "Gary Cooper wanted to play my father, but an old fart like you got the job, much to my regret."

According to Massey, "Dean approached everything with a chip on his shoulder. The Method had encouraged this truculent spirit. He never knew his lines before he walked onto the set, rarely had command of them when the camera rolled, and even if he had, he was inaudible. He went away alone after a scene was rehearsed. He would disappear and leave the rest of us to cool off in our chairs while he communed with himself somewhere out of sight."

In his memoir, *A Hundred Different Lives,* Massey wrote, "Simple technicalities, such as moving on cue and finding his mark, were beneath Dean's consideration."

Troublemaker: Set in the rough-and-tumble boom years of early 20th-Century California, Jimmy, as Cal, is caught between the Sheriff, as played by Burl Ives *(left), and his morally obsessed father, Raymond Massey (right).*

[Coincidentally, Massey went on to become one of the leading contenders for the role of Uncle Bawley in Giant, *which meant he would have had to work with Jimmy again. Eventually, however, the part went to Chill Wills.]*

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Jo Van Fleet was a very talented, California-born theater and movie actress. Jimmy met her after she'd won a Tony for her portrayal of the abusive daughter-in-law in the 1953 Broadway adaptation of Horton Foote's teleplay *The Trip to Bountiful. [Its plot revolved around an elderly woman, played in 1953 by Lillian Gish, who lives with a daughter-in-law (Jo Van Fleet) who loathes her, and a weak-willed son who is afraid to defend her.]*

In *East of Eden*, Jimmy learned that his mother, played by Jo Van Fleet *(depicted above), is the owner of a profitable bordello in a neighboring town. He desperately wants to connect with her, but until he virtually forces her to recognize him, she shuns him.*

The role of Jimmy's prostitute mother in *East of Eden* was Van Fleet's first film role. *[After finishing it, she'd go on to star in* The Rose Tattoo *and* I'll Cry Tomorrow, both released in 1955.*]*

"I had always been told that Dean was a homosexual," Van Fleet said. "But I didn't get that impression. Word reached us that he strayed over to the set of *A Star is Born* to service Judy Garland. Pier Angeli also showed up almost every day, panting at the mouth."

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Burl Ives, also known as a singer and banjo player, was cast in *Eden* as Sam, the town's tough, wise, and burly sheriff. Ives would later appear, brilliantly, as Big Daddy in the film version of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), with Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman. In *Eden,* as a law enforcement agent, Ives is relatively benign. Consoling Jimmy, he gives him information and advice about his mother, who deserted him and his brother so long ago.

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Cast as a secondary character named Will, Albert Dekker was a veteran actor from Brooklyn. He had previously appeared on Broadway as Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and on the screen in such hits as the mad scientist in the 1940 horror film, *Dr. Cyclops.* Off screen, he'd entered politics, winning a seat in the California State Assembly, where he served from 1944 to 1946.

[Dekker, like Jimmy himself, was destined for a violent death. On May 5, 1968, under suspicious circumstances, Dekker was found dead, perhaps murdered, in his Hollywood home. Naked, his body was discovered in a bathtub. A noose had been tightened around his neck and attached, tautly, to a shower curtain rod. He had been blindfolded, his wrists were handcuffed, and a ball gag had been inserted into his mouth. Two hypodermic needles dangled from one arm, and his body had been covered with vulgarities that included the word FUCK scrawled upon his skin with red lipstick. Money and valuable equipment were missing, but there was no sign of forced entry.

Despite skepticism and widespread protests, the coroner ruled out the possibility of murder, claiming that Dekker's death had been the accidental aftereffect of autoerotic asphyxiation.]

Albert Dekker...He'd face a noose in his future.

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Lois Smith who, like Jimmy, had studied at the Actors Studio, had snagged a small role as one of the "bar slaves" in Jo Van Fleet's bordello. Her character throws herself at Jimmy when he invades the forbidden premises. She was not the right weight before filming began, and lost many pounds, fast, by eating nothing but raw carrots, lettuce, an occasional slice of bread, and lots of black coffee.

Kazan had discovered her in New York based on her appearance in the Broadway comedy, *Time Out for Ginger* (1952). After the release of *East of Eden,* she was designated by *The Film Daily* as one of the industry's top juvenile actresses.

For a while, she stood a good chance of winning the *ingénue* role of Lux Benedict II in Jimmy's later film, *Giant* (released in 1956, after Jimmy's death), but the part eventually went to Carroll Baker. Smith did appear years later in *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) with Jack Nicholson.

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On the set, Jimmy was frequently late for work, a result of his frequent late-night partying along the Sunset Strip. According to Kazan, "He didn't accept the fact that movie stars, when they're working, have to get up early. He started showing up looking like he needed a two-by-four to prop up the bags under his eyes—hardly the image of a California farmboy working the fields. I demanded that he give up the nightlife, get to bed early, and look the god damn part."

During the course of filming, Kazan had ordered him not to ride his motorcycle. "Try to understand," Kazan told him. "If you're determined to kill yourself as a daredevil on the road, don't do it during the filming of *Eden.* Be as reckless as you want, but only after the film is wrapped."

As a means of chaperoning and "handling" him, Kazan ordered that Jimmy live in the bungalow he'd been assigned, an area positioned directly adjacent to his own bungalow on the Warners' lot. Jimmy's was luxuriously configured as a two-room suite, with its own kitchen and bathroom. It had once been occupied by Bette Davis when she reigned as the Queen of Warner Brothers. It had also been occupied by Errol Flynn, who, when he wasn't needed on the set, sometimes entertained three young girls there at the same time.

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On May 15, 1954, Kazan ordered cast and crew, including Jimmy, to transfer to Mendocino, about 150 miles north of San Francisco, for the filming of some outdoor scenes. For a while, Jimmy lodged at the Little River Inn, but complained that the noise from early-morning trucks kept him awake. Consequently, during the remainder of his time there, he opted to sleep in a railroad car on the film set.

With a population of only 800 people, Mendocino warmly welcomed the film's cast and crew. Some of the local women prepared lavish meals for them. In gratitude for their hospitality, when the film was complete, Kazan

arranged a special screening of *East of Eden* for them. Businesses shut down for the day.

One of the scenes filmed in Mendocino featured Jo Van Fleet, as Kate, at the local bank depositing the previous night's earnings from her whorehouse. The bank teller suggests that she sure did run a profitable enterprise to be saving so much money. In response, stone-faced, Kate emits a glacial chill.

After two days in Mendocino, both Davalos and Jimmy came down with severe cases of poison ivy. Kazan had to delay production until their skins healed.

On June 4, the cast and creed moved south to central California's town of Salinas. *[The home town of John Steinbeck, and known as "the salad bowl of the world," Salinas was and is the focal point for the production of huge amounts of lettuce, grapes, and vegetables. It was there that the famous scene associated with the failed attempt to freeze and transport lettuce was shot. One of the most memorable moments involved Jimmy dancing through his newly sprouted bean crop. It was not in the script, but Kazan gave him free reign. That creative freedom resulted in a clip that symbolized the epitome of enterprising youth, as represented by Cal.]*

Meanwhile, back in Burbank, set designers Malcolm Bert and James Base had been laboring to re-create the town of Salinas as it looked in 1917. For the carnival scene, a full-scale amusement park was erected, complete with an operable Ferris wheel.

In one of the most famous scenes in the movie, Harris and Jimmy take a ride on that wheel.

Kazan instructed Rosenman to craft the kind of musical score for the scene that might have prefaced "the birth of angels."

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Pier Angeli visited Jimmy frequently on the set of *East of Eden.* From his dressing room immediately next door, separated from Jimmy's with only a thin wall, Kazan could hear them "boffing—that is, when they weren't arguing, which was most of the time. I hate to admit it, but I was glad when she ran off with Vic Damone. Now I had Jimmy where I wanted him on camera—alone and miserable."

"I noticed that with Angeli out of the picture, Rosenman was making long, extended visits to Jimmy's dressing room. I won't describe what I heard between those two queers."

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After being invited onto the set by Kazan, Marlon Brando, on July 13, paid a visit to the set of *East of Eden.* His arrival came as a surprise and shock to Jimmy.

Most of the cast and crew weren't aware that Brando and Jimmy had become intimately acquainted in New York, and both actors promoted the myth that their paths had never crossed before.

Arriving late in the morning, Brando stayed around for the night shoot, eventually heading home at around 4AM.

A famous photo was snapped to document Brando's visit. Kazan appears dour, but Brando smiles into the camera, as Julie Harris stares adoringly at him. In the frame's far right stands a bewildered-looking Jimmy.

Because he'd received reports that Jimmy delivered onscreen performances that imitated his style, Brando wanted to see Jimmy at work.

"I'm directing him and he'll probably, based on my guidance, be a big hit," said Kazan. "The boy does have something. Call it star quality for lack of a better description. My deepest regret is that I'm not directing you in the movie. Come on, fucker, it's the story of your life. You could play it brilliantly. You've lived it. The story of a young man abandoned by his mother—read that Dodie—and starved for the love of a rigid, puritanical bastard of a father—read that Marlon, Sr."

When Kazan called a break for lunch, Jimmy invited Brando into his dressing room. There, Brando warned him that by appearing in *East of Eden,* "You're courting fame, and nothing is more destructive than being famous. I can't walk down the street any more but what I'm followed. I can't go see a movie any more but that a line of girls follow me into the theater. The other day, I went into a deli to order a hot pastrami on rye and a cream soda, and at least five faggots were suddenly behind me, yelling, 'Marlon, can we have your autograph?' You know what I did? I pulled down my jeans and mooned them. I told them, 'Autograph this, boys!" Write 'Marlon' on one cheek, and 'Brando' on the other."

Tennessee Williams, at the time, America's most desirable and sought-after playwright. After Marlon Brando tired of his promises and erratic charm, he turned his attention toward Jimmy.

Jimmy responded by telling Brando about a recent visit he'd received from Tennessee Williams, who was in town and working on the outline for a new play, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. "He tried to persuade Kazan to direct the play on Broadway," Jimmy said. "But after he laid his eyes on me, he didn't have much time for Kazan. Tennessee told me he originally wanted you for the lead. It's the story of a repressed homosexual. Think you can handle it?"

"There's nothing repressed about me," Brando said.

"Perhaps," Jimmy said enigmatically. "Anyway, I invited Williams into my dressing room. I know he went down on you when you boys were on Cape Cod together. He was already a bit drunk when got here. But I took down my jeans and let him blow me. After that, he offered me the lead role in the Broadway production. I hear Kazan thinks *Cat* is going to be a major success. Bigger than *Streetcar*. Out with Brando. In with James Dean. The new boy on the block."

If Jimmy were trying to either provoke or anger Brando with that, he didn't succeed. Brando had already informed Tennessee that he planned to never venture onto a Broadway stage again, especially within the context of one of his plays. "We did it fine the first time, but once was enough for one life."

Brando is alleged to have told his best friend, Carlo Fiori, "I took Dean to his dressing room between takes and screwed him royally with my noble tool, just to show him who's boss, and still number one."

Kazan refuted what at the time was a widely prevalent concept that Jimmy, as an actor, was very similar to Brando. "Unlike Dean," he said, "Brando was a multi-talented person, a sort of stream of experience that could be tapped, then directed to flow as openly as if the actor were stripping himself psychologically and playing out, naked and vulnerable, before the world, the many facets of his personality."

"Dean, in contrast, had very little pliability. His vulnerability was hidden behind a facial hurt, one that he played again and again. There was a muted aggression that could give way at any moment to destructiveness."

According to Jimmy, "I don't think people should be subservient to movie idols, and I do not idolize Marlon Brando. *Brando!* If I imitate him subconsciously, I don't know about it, and if I do it consciously, I'd be a fool to admit it. I'd like to be a star in my own sense. I mean to be a very consummate actor, to have more difficult roles and to fill them to my satisfaction. But not to star on the basis of gold plating. A real star carries his own illumination and inward brightness."

***

Kazan interpreted Jimmy's performance as brilliant, a stunning presence, in the opening scene of *East of Eden.* He sat on a wooden sidewalk in the *faux,* studio-built town of Salinas, watching as his mother (Jo Van Fleet) walks by, without recognizing or acknowledging him, on her way to the bank.

Veiled, and draped in black, Jo Van Fleet was cast in *East of Eden* as an aging whore. In this scene near the beginning of the film, she walks past her son, as played by James Dean, whom she deserted years ago. She's also walking into an Oscar win.

In London's *Sunday Express,* Milton Shulman wrote, "Dean has the slouching grace of a tired cat and eyes that stare with the compelling magnetism of a deep and empty cave."

On the screen, he appears petulant, with jerky movements, his eyes frightened slits in the glare of the California sun. He's dressed in a babyknit sweater and a pair of white slacks, and looks five years younger than his actual age of twenty-three.

Later in the film, he hurls a rock at his alienated mother's whorehouse before he's chased away by her bouncer.

Kazan claimed that "Jimmy arrived on the set every day very easily hurt. He was sensitive and bewildered. I worked with him to build up is confidence and then pointed him in the right direction and watched the kid go for the gold. One time, I had to get him loaded on Chianti to get the result I wanted on the screen."

"As filming progressed, he became increasingly difficult, not getting along with the cast, except for Harris." Kazan said. "At times, he was just impossible. He had this damn camera, and he could spend hours taking pictures of himself in the mirror."

As the shooting progressed, Jimmy began to show up later and later, and sometimes, even if he had reported on time, he would just disappear and no one could find him.

On one occasion, after a search, two of Kazan's grips found him in Judy Garland's dressing room on another part of Warners' lot, the one devoted to filming *A Star is Born* (1954). Coincidentally, the title of her film was the same as the label that the press had begun attributing to Jimmy.

He'd seduced Garland once before, along with his friend and lover, John Carlyle, who had been given a small role in *A Star is Born.* The handsome young actor would, years later and despite his gender preference as a gay man, would become Garland's companion and her sometimes lover.

Carlyle would later write a memoir about his involvement with the singer.

Escorted back to the set, Jimmy faced an angry director. "What was I to do?" Jimmy asked Kazan. "Judy wanted a little loving. You don't turn down *the* Judy Garland! No way!"

"He had a violent streak in him," Kazan said. "He seemed threatening, as if any minute he could turn into a serial killer. He was a little nuts, maybe a lot nuts. He was actually the Cal he projected in *Eden."*

In one scene with Massey, Kazan was not getting the reaction he wanted from the expression on Massey's face. He came up with a plan, telling Jimmy to pick up a Bible and to start reading from it, but to throw in a lot of words to shock and offend Massey.

After Kazan quietly ordered the camera to focus on Massey, Jimmy picked up a Bible from a nearby table. "The Lord is my shepherd," Jimmy read, improvising. "I shall not suck cock, put anything up your ass, fuck you, shit, or piss on you, fucker," he said.

Massey exploded and stormed off the set. Kazan chased after him. "I will not play opposite this freak," Massey shouted at him. "Talk to my lawyers. I quit."

"Jimmy had gotten Ray mad, and I got the shot I wanted," Kazan said. "I explained to Massey that I had ordered Jimmy to do that. Finally, I persuaded him to come back to work."

Some sections of *East of Eden* were filmed in sequences that strayed from, or ignored, or weren't included in the original script. Examples included Jimmy's dance in the bean field, and his fetal-like posturing atop a rail car after his return from an anguished search for his brothel-keeping mother. Both of those were pure improvisations on Jimmy's part.

His most celebrated improvisation was when Cal's father rejects his gift of $5,000 (money earned from that bean crop). Osborn's script called for Jim to react by running away. Instead, he instinctively turned to Massey, and, in tears, embraced him. This scene, and Massey's shocked and embarrassed reaction, were retained within the final cut.

Kazan summed it up: "Dean will appeal to women who will want to mother him, and to faggots who will want to fuck him. I think he comes across as a mixture of autistic child and baby-faced psychotic."

After he'd seen the final cut, Kazan said, "I've never seen anything like it. Jimmy was that good, and that included Brando, whom I directed in *Streetcar,* and in *On the Waterfront*, as you well know."

At the end of filming, Kazan threw a wrap party. At its peak, after three intense months of shooting, Harris kept looking for Jimmy to say goodbye, but she could not find him. When the party was over, she went to his bungalow to see if he were there.

Inside, she found him crying: "What's the matter?" she asked. "You were wonderful in the picture."

"It's over," he sobbed. "All over."

She held him in her arms, forever remembering him as "a lost, lonely little boy."

***

Before the film's release, Hollywood was already treating Jimmy like a movie star. Word had gotten out. He told a reporter, "I guess I'm the flavor of the month."

"Someday, I'd like to follow in the footsteps of my great idol, Elia Kazan," Jimmy said. "You know, Kazan was an actor at Warner Brothers a number of years ago. Then he began to direct Broadway productions and went on to direct exceptional motion pictures."

Two weeks after filming shut down, Kazan credited Harris—through patience and empathy—for being more helpful than he had been as a director. "Without her, Dean would not have made it to the end."

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Ted McCord later said, "With all this public buzz, Warners' publicity department latched onto Jimmy and began pumping out releases to the press."

One press agent told him, "You're already a movie star. One night you went to bed as a struggling, unknown actor. The next morning you woke up a golden prince. So now, you'll have to start acting and living like a prince.'"

"That's bullshit!" Jimmy responded. "I came out here to act, not to be a prince, not some social fop—and not a gilded dandelion."

"Maybe publicity is important," Jimmy said. "But I just can't make it, can't get with it. I've been told by a lot of guys that it works. The newspapers give you a big build-up. Something happens, they tear you down. Who needs it? What counts for the artist is performance—not publicity. Guys who don't know me already…they've already typed me as an odd ball."

"I probably should have a press agent. But I don't care what people write about me. I'll talk to the ones I like. The others can print whatever they please."

Columnist Mike Connolly asked Jimmy if he had lost anything during his process of becoming famous.

"I fought it for a long time. But after a while, I think I started learning what so many actors have already learned —something about that certain communicative power we have that so few people are privileged to have. We find that we can reach not only people with whom we work on the soundstages here in Hollywood, but people all over the world. And then we start thinking, 'I'm famous, all right, and I guess this is what I wanted, so now how do I face it?' And then the responsibilities come. And you have to fight against becoming egotistical."

William Bast had a front row seat as he watched Jimmy, now only his part-time lover, rise within the constellation of Hollywood. "It was a gradual disintegration, a splintering of an already multi-faceted personality into a fragmented jigsaw puzzle."

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In January of 1955, Kazan arranged for the release of previews of *East of Eden* in Los Angeles. "The instant Jimmy appeared on the screen, hundreds of girls began to scream. They'd been waiting for him, it seemed. The response from the balcony reminded me of Niagara Falls spilling over. Their reaction spread to the audiences at other previews, and generated even more hysteria."

Movie reviews of *East of Eden* were suddenly being broadcast nationwide on the radio. "Jimmy Dean appears with innocence and emotional candor, having a look of evil at times, creating a screen image of fiery intensity."

After the preview, Jimmy summed up his public appeal as a movie star: "I guess Warner Brothers has discovered uranium."

During an interview with Harold Thompson of *The New York Times,* Jimmy said that he still had not read the Steinbeck novel. "The way I work, I'd much rather justify myself with the adaptation rather than the original source. I felt I wouldn't have any trouble—not too much, anyway—with this characterization once we started, because I think I understood Cal. I knew, too, that if I had any problems about the boy's background, I could straighten it out with Kazan."

The world premiere of *East of Eden* was scheduled for March 9, 1955 at the Astor Theater in Manhattan. It was configured as a benefit for the Actors Studio, eventually netting $34,000, and it was envisioned as a splashy, star-studded affair with Jimmy as the center of attention.

But he shocked and enraged his agent, Jane Deacy, by refusing to attend. "I can't handle the scene," was his excuse.

He also told his former girlfriend, Christine White, that he had no reason to go. "I know I was good. I don't need a lot of people embarrassing me by telling me how good I was."

At the premiere, Marilyn Monroe agreed to serve as an usher, thereby generating lots of publicity for herself. However, she upset the backers of the benefit by refusing to sing "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" at the post-screening party. Up until the last minute, she had promised that she would.

Other ushers at the premiere included Marlene Dietrich and Eva Marie Saint.

After the screening, key members of the cast, including Julie Harris and Kazan, gathered at Sardi's to await the reviews.

Time magazine referred to Jimmy as a product of the "tilted pelvis school of naturalistic acting. The picture is brilliant entertainment and more than that, it announces a new star, James Dean, whose prospects look as bright as any young actor's since Marlon Brando. He has the presence of a young lion and the same sense of danger about him."

The *Hollywood Reporter* wrote: "Dean is that rare thing, a young actor who is a great actor. The troubled eloquence with which he puts over the problems of misunderstood youth may lead to his being accepted by young audiences as a sort of symbol of their generation. He is no carbon copy of Marlon Brando. He is a completely individual screen personality."

Daily Variety weighed in on the Brando vs. Dean similarities: "Dean plays the lead character as though he was straight out of the Marlon Brando mold. Just how flexible his talent is will have to be judged on future roles, although he has a basic appeal that manages to get through to the viewers despite carboning another's acting style."

Penelope Gillatt, in *The Observer,* wrote, "If ever an errant generation threw up an expression of itself, it was James Dean. Like Cain, he has the look of a fugitive and a vagabond on earth."

John McCarten of the *New Yorker,* found that "Jimmy looked like a miniature Gregory Peck," and the *Library Journal* hailed his performance as "one of the best of the year in a movie that is also one of the best of the year."

Even the fabled French director, François Truffaut, weighed in: "*East of Eden* is the first film to give us a Baudelarian hero, fascinated by vice and contrast, loving the family and hating the family at one and the same time. James Dean is a freshly plucked *'fleur du mal.'"*

With a hint of venom, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* raised objections: "*[James Dean is]* a mass of histrionic gingerbread. He scuffs his feet, he whirls, he pouts, he sputters, he leans against walls, he rolls his eyes, he swallows his words, he ambles slack-kneed—all like Marlon Brando used to do. Never have we seen a performer so clearly following another's style. Mr. Kazan should be spanked for allowing Dean to do such a sophomoric thing. *East of Eden* is a great, green iceberg, mammoth and imposing, but very cold."

In response to Crowther's critique, Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker* observed, "*The Times*' critic can always be

counted on to miss the point."

Kazan said, "One reviewer seemed to catch on that Jimmy was full of piss, if not vinegar. He wrote that Jimmy looked like Baby Snooks reciting while waiting to go to the bathroom."

When William Bast saw the film, he said: "There was so much of Jimmy in that movie, so much of the young man I had known for so long and had grown to love as a friend, so much of the lost, tormented, searching, gentle, enthusiastic little boy, so much of the bitter, self-abusive, testing, vengeful monster."

Jimmy's stunning performance foreshadowed his iconic role as Jim Stark in his subsequent film, *Rebel Without a Cause*. Both Cal Trask and Jim Stark are angst-ridden, misunderstood outcasts, desperately craving approval from a deeply flawed father figures.

At the 1956 Academy Awards ceremony, less than a year after Jimmy's death, he received a posthumous nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role for his performance in *East of Eden*. This was the first posthumous nomination for a male actor in the Academy's history.

[*Jeanne Eagels had been the first actress to be nominated posthumously for her role in* The Letter (1929)*. The year it was released, she died of a drug overdose at the age of thirty-nine.)*

Jimmy had competed for the prize with some of the biggest names in Hollywood. His rivals that year included Frank Sinatra for *The Man With the Golden Arm;* Spencer Tracy for *Bad Day at Black Rock;* and James Cagney for *Love Me or Leave Me.* The award went to Ernest Borgnine for his performance in *Marty.*

Of the other actors in *Eden,* only Jo Van Fleet carried an Oscar home as Best Supporting Actress. Kazan was nominated as Best Director, but lost to Delbert Mann for *Marty.* Paul Osborn also received a nomination for Best Screenplay.

With the release of *East of Eden,* James Dean was on the dawn of international fame. In time, newer generations, many from the 21st Century, would focus their celebrity attentions onto only two movie stars from the 1950s, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, virtually obliterating recognition of a forgotten galaxy of others. Both of them would end their young lives tragically and early.

Bast later speculated about what Jimmy would have said about all this posthumous attention:

"Hot damn! I'm a fucking legend!"

Chapter Sixteen

JAMES DEAN'S AFFAIR WITH MARILYN MONROE

How a Farm Boy from Indiana Seduced the Sex Queen of Hollywood

TOGETHER, THEY CLIMB THE SHOW-BIZ LADDER, BUT FIND SOMETHING MISSING: A LONG & HAPPY LIFE

From the Twisted Wreckage of their Ashes, Icons Emerge to Enchant the World

When the filming of *East of Eden* was finished, its female lead, Julie Harris, described the bond between Marilyn Monroe and Jimmy Dean: "Jimmy was charismatic and had a sexual attraction that was combined with a certain innocence," she said. "The same could be said of Marilyn Monroe. I think that combination was part of each of their appeals. They were curiously untouched by their sexuality and retained that certain innocence. It was inevitable that Jimmy and Marilyn would come together, however fleeting. I didn't mean that as a *double entendre."*

The two future icons noticed each other at the premiere of Marlon Brando's *On the Waterfront* (1954). Shelley Winters, Marilyn's former roommate, escorted Marilyn to the premiere, and Jimmy arrived because of his association with Nicholas Ray, the director who wanted to cast him as the lead in his upcoming film, *Rebel Without a Cause.*

At that time, Winters said, “Jimmy was a nobody. I’d taken him to bed, and that was probably his claim to fame. But Marilyn was the newly crowned Queen of Hollywood. What did she need with a little runt like Jimmy Dean?

“Jimmy could not just come up to a big star like Marilyn and introduce himself, “Winters said. “But he made this insane attempt to attract her attention. I think his antics that night turned her off. After all, she could have anybody in Hollywood she wanted, man or woman. Marilyn batted for both teams. She didn’t need this juvenile delinquent.”

In her second memoir, *Shelley II: The Middle of My Century,* she wrote about Jimmy trying to attract Marilyn’s attention after the premiere. As Shelley was driving her car, with Marilyn as a passenger, “Jimmy came roaring down the mountain on his motorcycle and started the deadly game of circling us. I was so angry at the kid. I was ready to run over him in my car. I kept honking at him, and he kept putting his brakes on right in front of me. He was laughing and enjoying the game. When we got to the Château Marmont, I quickly drove to the underground garage. Jimmy followed. Marilyn was rigid with fear, and I was ready to punch his lights out.”

Winters and Marilyn had been invited to Ray’s post-screening party at the hotel where he maintained a suite. Jimmy, too, was on the guest list.

As author Randall Riese described that evening: “Marilyn Monroe was everything Jimmy didn’t like in a woman. She was an American blonde, obsessed with her own looks, and she was a movie star personified. In his view, she was decidedly not an actress of depth or conviction. As for James Dean, he was everything she didn’t like in a man. He was a pretty boy and a punk, and she didn’t have use for either. He was younger, and she preferred older. He was, despite his earnest aspirations, hardly an intellectual giant. He was considered to be an imitation of Brando—why did she need an imitation when she could (and *did*) have the real thing?”

At the party, according to Winters, neither Marilyn nor Jimmy made any attempt to meet each other. “They were like two boxers, each in their own corner of the boxing ring, sizing each other up,” Winters said. “They treated each other like resentful siblings. This attitude continued throughout the night.”

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Marilyn’s attitude toward Jimmy changed completely after she attended an advance screening of *East of Eden.* And eventually, for its premiere in Manhattan on March 9, 1955, she even agreed to volunteer as a celebrity usher at a special benefit premiere for the Actors Studio.

One day in Manhattan, they met at the Actors Studio. As she was heading inside, she ran into Marlon Brando, her sometimes lover, who was walking along with Jimmy. As she’d later relate to Winters, “My first impulse was to regret that I was not made up as Marilyn Monroe. I looked more like Norma Jeane. I had covered my matted hair with a scarf.”

Jimmy was wearing his usual outfit of blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and jacket. Her gaze traveled from his crotch to his scuffed brown penny loafers before she met him eye to eye.

“Marilyn, meet this asshole who thinks he’s a better actor than I am,” Brando said. “I forget the kid’s name.”

“Hi, Marilyn,” Jimmy said. “Wanna fuck? I’m James Dean.”

Coming from anybody else, she might have been insulted. But the way Jimmy extended the invitation with a challenging grin made her giggle.

“How did you know what I want to do more than anything else on earth?” she asked. Then she looked skeptically at Brando. “I need to get it from somebody. I haven’t been seeing much of this guy’s noble tool, as he affectionately calls it.”

“Neither have I,” Jimmy said provocatively.

“Sorry, guys,” Brando said, “I guess I find too many other holes to plug. Speaking of that, I’m late for an appointment. I won’t tell you *voyeurs* with whom. Marilyn, do you mind if I dump Jimmy boy here on you?” He kissed both of them on the lips and left hurriedly, disappearing into the crowds on the street.

“‘C’mon, doll,” Jimmy said, taking her arm. “Forget this fucking Actors Studio. I’m taking you over to the Blue Ribbon Café. It’s where all the out-of-work actors hang out.”

“I’m out of work too,” she said.

On the way there, he confided in her. “I hate that asshole Lee Strasberg. He humiliated me one afternoon, and I’ve never forgiven him. I don’t know why I don’t boycott the place.”

“What happened?” she asked.

"I was performing in front of the class," he said. "I came onstage in this bullfighter's black cape with a red lining. I'd adapted a scene from Barnaby Conrad's novel, *Matador*. When it was over, there was silence, as the jealous actors waited for the master's words. Guess what he told me? 'You failed to create a sense of being in an authentic place. You're not doing the work. You're acting, not being.'"

"Don't worry about it," she said. "*East of Eden* proved what a great actor you are. I can't wait to see your next pictures."

Seated at a table in the café, they attracted almost no attention from the other patrons. Only a handful of other tables were occupied.

"Where are you crashing?" he asked her.

"At the Waldorf Towers," she said. "Isn't that posh?"

"I guess so," he said, "as long as somebody else is picking up the bill. What's his name?" Rosenberg? Cohen? Katz?"

"Milton. Milton Greene," she said. "Jimmy, I didn't know you were so anti- Semitic."

"I'm not really," he said. "I guess their money is as good as anybody else's. Hey, I've got an idea. It's getting late. Why don't you invite me to your pad for an audition? I'm good. Really good."

"Audition?" she said, looking at him skeptically. "To tell you the truth, after seeing *Eden*, I want to star in a picture with you. I guess we might as well start practicing whatever chemistry we can generate together."

"You're on. You won't regret it. Fifty years from now, you'll be writing about me in your memoirs."

"But I've got a better idea than the Waldorf," she said. "Lee Strasberg, the man you hate, has given me the use of his cottage on Fire Island any time I want it. It's a bit chilly out there this time of year, but there's a fireplace and some electric heaters. We'll have the place to ourselves. Who wants to go to Fire Island at this time of year but crazy nuts like us? I've got a car. Why don't you forget whatever you planned for tonight and run away to our cottage by the sea?"

"I think that comes under the category of an invitation a guy can't refuse."

"If you don't mind my asking, what were you planning to do otherwise?"

"I was going to go to Tennessee Williams' apartment. He claims he's writing a play about a repressed homosexual and his hot-to-trot wife named Maggie the Cat. He thinks the part would be ideal for me. I think my audition will consist of an expert blow-job."

"Sounds like fun," she said. "But you'll delay that for a couple of days?"

"Yes!" he said. "And I'd much rather be getting blow-jobs from Marilyn Monroe than from Tennessee Williams."

"Those are about the most romantic words I've ever heard spoken to me."

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Marilyn and Jimmy didn't arrive at the Strasberg cottage on Fire Island until the early evening. They rushed around trying to make the place livable, and he set ablaze the driftwood in the fireplace.

She rested a small suitcase on the floor of the living room. He had chosen not to bring a change of clothes. Before it got too late, she asked him if he'd walk along the beach with her. After searching in the closet, she found a parka for him.

The moonlight on the water's surface made it look like glass. Each of them stood silently, taking in the vast expanse of dark water.

Although it was cold, they sat down on the beach, huddling together. Neither of them said anything for a long time. She was the first to speak. "When I was a little girl, I would sit for hours just staring out at the sea. I felt that somewhere, someday, a sea captain, a beautiful, loving man, would want me. He'd take me away on a long voyage to a far and distant land."

Suddenly, they both became aware of the penetrating chill. She stood up and reached for him. Hand in hand, they walked back to the cottage, which, thanks to the driftwood fire, had become warmer.

She'd brought champagne with them in the car. It had already been chilled because of the cold weather. They sat on large cushions watching the flames. He had his arm around her. "I hardly know you, but I feel I've met my soulmate," she said.

"Me too, babe," he said. "From now on, it's just you and me."

"And all the storms at sea," she said. "You know there will be many of those."

For their dinner, she made ham sandwiches, and was eager to retreat under the blankets with him. She'd later confide, "Now I know why he's so desirable as a lover and why so many people, men and women, want him."

Exhausted, they clung to each other until each of them fell asleep.

They awoke to the chill of a late morning. He put on his jeans and a jacket, and she wore jeans, too, with a heavy sweater. When she said she wanted to cook his breakfast, he went outside to gather more firewood.

After breakfast, he looked into her eyes. "Let's call this our honeymoon cottage. When we get married, maybe we should book this cottage for a whole month, just the two of us."

"Jimmy, you're proposing!" she said. "Proposal accepted, but let's wait until autumn before we get hitched."

"That's okay with me, but I demand conjugal rights now."

The day was just beginning.

She would later refer to their two nights together on Fire Island as the most idyllic of her life. When she returned to the city, Winters called, eager for news. "I heard you ran away with Jimmy Dean. I want to know everything, a blow-by-blow description. Don't leave out the slightest detail, regardless of how revolting. Did he make you crush out a cigarette on his overused butt?"

"Shelley, please," she said. "He's not like that, and there was nothing kinky. He was very loving, very romantic. I've agreed to marry him one day."

"Please come to your senses, gal," Winters said. "You don't know what you're getting yourself into. Jimmy is a sicko."

"Maybe he was on his best behavior."

"What drugs are you taking?" Winters asked.

Brando called at around lunchtime and was equally discouraging. He, too, wanted a full report of what had happened. When she told him, he said, "Jimmy is my stalker and wants to be my clone. If you're not careful, when you guys return to Hollywood, you might find him parked in front of your place, smoking cigarette after cigarette until all hours, waiting for you to return home. You won't be able to get rid of him. He developed a fixation on me. In a way, it's kind of creepy."

"Oh, Marlon, you and Shelley are taking all this too seriously. Our romance will probably disappear like a summer cloud. But then again…Who knows?"

During the days and months that remained for them, Jimmy and Marilyn would sustain a love affair conducted more or less on the phone. But the time they'd spent together would forever be etched in her memory, even if "forever" wasn't far away for her….and even less so for him.

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Early in 1955, Marilyn told Winters, "I'm miserable in Los Angeles, and I'm flying back to New York. I'm not working now, and there's more going on in New York."

She arrived in Manhattan in time to attend the benefit opening of *East of Eden*. As part of the razzmatazz associated with its release, its producers had arranged for superstars to function as ushers and "usherettes." When Marilyn learned that Marlene Dietrich and Eva Marie Saint had each volunteered to show ticket holders to their seats, she agreed to serve as an usherette, too.

The press was already hailing the event as the splashiest movie premiere of the year. As she told Walter Winchell, "A working girl needs to keep her name in the papers when she's off the screen."

Even though the studio and the film's other cast members were depending on Jimmy to show up, he called Marilyn three days before the event saying, "I know I promised, but I can't make the scene. I can't handle it. I'm flying to Los Angeles tonight."

"But it's your movie…and it's a benefit for a good cause," she pleaded with him.

"Fuck good causes," he shot back. "Don't you know by now that I'm a rebel without a cause?"

She begged him to change his mind, but after talking with him some more, she realized that he couldn't face the public.

She followed through, however, with her own commitment. Members of the audience that night were shocked to see Marilyn Monroe, one of the best-known stars in Hollywood, checking their tickets and guiding them to their seats.

At the end of the screening, Dietrich approached Monroe and kissed her on the lips, "Why not a repeat visit to my apartment tonight, you lovely child? Love is so much better the second time around."

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In late spring of 1955, when the weather was warmer, Jimmy returned to New York. Once again, Marilyn invited him for a holiday at Lee Strasberg's retreat on Fire Island. He eagerly accepted.

Weatherwise, it remained windy and rainy throughout most of their stay, but they didn't seem to mind. "The sun is bad for my skin anyway," she claimed. Since it was during the week, and the weather was foul, the community was at low ebb.

She would again recall the experience to Winters, claiming, "Both of us tried to be completely honest with each other."

At one point, she asked him his real name. "I made up Marilyn Monroe. What about you?"

"My name is James Byron Dean."

"Wasn't that the name of a poet I've never read?"

"He was one of the romantic poets, I think," he said.

"Forgive me, but I think it would have been better if you'd billed yourself as James Byron. That would look better on a marquee. Dean reminds me of some stern schoolmaster with a ruler in his hand."

"It's too late now," he said. "In some ways, I preferred being anonymous. In New York I used to go to an all-night café and just sit there until dawn, talking to strangers. I learned that there are a lot of people in the world who—like us—regard life as pretty god damn frightening."

"Sometimes I'm so frightened I'm afraid to get up and face the day," she said.

"With all of our hang-ups, it's good that both of us drifted into acting. Acting is the most logical way for people's neuroses to manifest themselves."

Sometimes he kidded her about her image—and his, too. "I'm playing that 'little boy lost' for all it's worth, and I stole it from your 'little girl lost' act."

"Do you think behind that innocent victim image I'm a cold-hearted, calculating bitch?"

"I think both of us are bitches, using and manipulating people," he said. "Sex is our weapon. Now gimme a kiss and let's change the subject."

She was eager to hear stories about how it had been working with director Elia Kazan, her on-again, off-again lover. Responding, Jimmy said, "He flew with me to California to shoot *Eden*. It was my first time on a plane. I was frightened. He was amused when he saw my luggage: Two grocery bags tied with string."

"Elia is always promising to star me in one of his movies, but so far, nothing."

"It's nothing all right…nothing to look forward to, at least. Being directed by him is like getting zapped with electric shock treatments. Thank God for Julie Harris. Without her, I don't think I could have survived the picture."

They each complained about their low salaries. Jimmy had received only $1,000 a week for his work in *East of Eden,* and Marilyn had been paid only $1,250 a week, a total of $15,000, for her appearance in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.* In vivid contrast, Marilyn's co-star, Jane Russell, who was not a Fox player, got $150,000.

Marilyn Monroe and James Dean were in total agreement about one thing: Both of them felt they were working for "slave wages."

Marilyn and Jimmy were on a shared voyage of discovery with each other. They both suffered from insomnia. During their first night on Fire Island, they sat up talking until dawn.

Finally, they went to bed. When they awakened, at around noon, she tried to fix his breakfast. "I didn't expect you to be a great cook," he said, "but whether you are or not, I've survived in New York on a hot dog a day, if I could afford it."

They hadn't make love their first night there, but they did in the following afternoon, as she'd later relate to Winters, who seemed eager to hear every detail.

"He works hard to satisfy a woman," Marilyn said.

This time, her opinion differed from her first appraisal of him as a lover. "You know he's bi, of course. He said that when he's fucking a man, he can maintain an erection until climax. But with women, he sometimes grows limp. He has to disconnect and masturbate himself hard again before entering again. I understand this, and was most sympathetic. Later, I asked him what he thought about when he jerked off. He told me, 'Sal Mineo, Natalie Wood, Pier Angeli, Nick Adams, and Eartha Kitt.'"

"That's not very flattering with the Love Goddess of the World lying underneath him," Winters said.

"I didn't get offended," Marilyn said, "considering all the men I've dreamed about while getting plugged by some slob. I even fantasize about Rudolf Valentino."

"He was another fag, too," Winters responded.

Marilyn revealed that once again, Jimmy and she had discussed "getting hitched." He told her, "Let's admit the truth: both of us need babysitters. Maybe if we got married, we could become each other's babysitters."

"It wouldn't work," she said. "We're both too destructive. Without meaning to, we'd end up destroying each other."

"Maybe you're right," he said. "In that case, let's just be fuck buddies."

As Marilyn told Winters, "Jimmy knows that I'm completely accepting of his personality. He even suggested that during our makeout sessions, he'd like to bring in a male friend. He said that 'While I'm fucking you, he could plug me. It'll make it more exciting for both of us.'"

"That sounds like fun," she told him. "I suspect that one of those guys you'd like to bring in is Marlon Brando?"

"Well, he's someone who knows how to have a good time."

She told Winters that Jimmy was almost as uninhibited as she was. "He has no false modesty. When he has to piss, he goes, regardless of where he's at. Half the time we walk around nude with each other. Once, he even helped me peroxide my pussy hairs."

"As two living sex symbols, Jimmy and I even discussed our body parts with each other," she told Winters. "He said he wished his penis was two inches longer and just a bit thicker."

"I guess all men wish that," she'd said to him. "As for me, I'm thinking of surgery to tighten my vagina and to enlarge my breasts. I'm planning to talk to two doctors in Los Angeles who specialize in such surgeries. I want a vagina as tight as an asshole. Men like to fuck assholes because of the tight fit, especially those who aren't well endowed. Peter Lawford told me that. I also want a forty inch bust like Kathryn Grayson over at MGM."

"I find it's more satisfying for me to fuck famous men that unknown ones," she said. "Because if they're nobodies, I find they can't handle the world's most seductive woman. Perhaps I intimidate them…But anyway, my fame makes their little weenies recede into their bodies. It's awful. I'm the greatest castrator in the Western World."

Jimmy told her that "If I become a big deal, Strasberg will probably try to exploit me the way he does Brando. Brando told me that he was trained by Stella Adler, and he was furious when Strasberg started taking credit for 'discovering' him. I'm sure that if you get more deeply involved in the Actors Studio, Strasberg will try to capitalize off your fame, too."

"I can just see the Actors Studio's entrance hall," she said. "There will probably be large blow-ups of me, flanked by you boys on both sides of me."

Jimmy was onto something that Barbara Leaming described in her biography of Marilyn: "Strasberg planned to take credit for his *protégée's* achievements. He wanted to be something more than Marilyn's instructor. When she was ready—and there was no telling when that might occur—he hoped to direct her as well. In short, he saw Marilyn as a vehicle to the success that had long and stubbornly eluded him. Marilyn would make it possible for Strasberg to direct the great productions of his dreams."

Strasberg wanted Marilyn—by now a well-established movie star—to perform before an audience of her peers at the Actors Studio. Her friend, Maureen Stapleton, had suggested a scene from Noël Coward's *Fallen Angels.* But Marilyn didn't like Coward as a writer, preferring instead a scene from Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie.* Greta Garbo

had already immortalized that play's female lead onscreen in the movie adaptation of 1930.

"We ended up doing a scene from *Anna Christie,"* Stapleton said. "That wispy voice of hers seemed to carry all right, for all her worry about it. Afterward, we went out to a bar on Tenth Avenue, and celebrated having cheated death one more time."

To Winters, Marilyn claimed that Jimmy "was a lot of fun, and sometimes we played games designed to reveal our darkest secrets. In one game, we both had to name four very unlikely people we'd slept with. He named Barbara Hutton, Howard Hughes, Tallulah Bankhead, and J. Edgar Hoover."

"And who did you name, my dear?" Winters asked.

"You can guess one of them: Charlie Chaplin. But did you also know about Fidel Castro, Jimmy Hoffa, and Albert Einstein?"

"Oh, Marilyn, I never know when you're telling the truth or fantasizing," Winters said. "But knowing you as well as I do, I have to leave open the possibility that you're telling the truth. I know Charlie fucked you, because I was also fucking his son, Sydney. But the other three? It's hard for me to believe."

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One day at the Actors Studio, Winters told Jimmy, "Marilyn told me you were a better lover than Brando. A more considerate one. I must say, I agree with her. She claims she likes a man who is kind and takes into account a woman's needs. She prefers that to brute sex."

"I don't like to be compared to Brando, both as an actor and certainly not as a lover," Jimmy snapped at her.

"Your cocks are different, but sometimes, you *do* look like him," Winters said.

Jimmy learned that Brando's own involvement with Marilyn was "stop and go," heating up and then cooling off, but never completely disappearing.

Despite what he revealed to a handful of close friends, Brando had little to say to interviewers about Marilyn and even less to reveal about Jimmy. In one interview, however, he admitted: "Marilyn was a sensitive, misunderstood person," he said, "and much more perceptive than was generally assumed. She had been beaten down, but had a strong intelligence—a keen intuition for the feelings of others, the most refined type of intelligence."

Marilyn herself made few public comments about Brando, but told Jimmy that she found him "very sweet and tender, not at all Stanley Kowalski, although he can on occasion be a brute."

To both Brando and Marilyn, Jimmy voiced his fear of getting permanently stuck with a youth image. "Something like that is dangerous for an actor. Youth, after all, is a passing thing. If you get stereotyped, there's nowhere to go but down. Take Shirley Temple, for example. The public didn't want to see her in grown-up roles. I don't want to be thirty-five, wearing extra-heavy makeup and still playing a troubled youth."

"Marilyn Is Too Old to Play a Baby Doll."

—Elia Kazan

After he'd directed Jimmy in *East of Eden,* Elia Kazan by chance encountered him one afternoon in Hollywood, and invited him for a drink. As they talked, he provocatively said, "I hear you've been chasing after my *puta."*

*"*Exactly who is your *puta?"* Jimmy asked.

*"*Marilyn, on that rare occasion when she isn't screwing such august figures as Senator John Kennedy—or Frank Sinatra, Natasha Lytess *[her drama coach],* Brando, Sammy Davis, Jr., or George Jessel. Do you have all day? I can keep going till the last dog dies."

"With Marilyn and me, It's just a casual thing," Jimmy said.

"Who's a better fuck? Kazan asked, continuing his provocation. "Brando, Newman, or Marilyn?"

"Each has his or her own specialty," Jimmy said.

"You know, Joe Schenck, that old potentate at 20th Century Fox, was also her lover," Kazan said. "I can figure out the kind of love-making that went on between Marilyn and Joe. He told me he can't cut the mustard any more, but I guess his tongue can still devour a taste treat. He did give her some good advice, telling her, 'Don't be a scalp

on some man's belt. Don't be a cuspidor. Don't be a damn garbage dump.'"

"I think she's both a baby and a woman," Jimmy said. "I don't know whether to bounce her on my knee or make love to her. Both of us aren't well educated, but she grabs bits and pieces of knowledge, yet has no real idea how to fit these tidbits of information into anything coherent. She's also an actress both on and off camera. When I do something that displeases her, she almost, but not quite, sheds a tear. She also makes her lips tremble. Then, after she's pulled that stunt, you give in to her."

"She does crazy little things," he continued. "One night at her place, a huge bouquet of flowers arrived from some admirer. She didn't have a vase for them, so she rested them in the water in her toilet bowl. When I had to take a wicked piss, I really watered them. The smell of urine and roses…absolutely intoxicating."

"For me, Marilyn is too obsessed with her body," Kazan said. "Johnny Hyde, a short little midget of a guy, was one of her first lovers. He's dead now, but one night, he told her she has a nigger's ass. That devastated her, and she's spent half of her life since then staring at her naked buttocks in the mirror."

"That's strange," Jimmy said. "She told me one night that she has black blood flowing through her veins. Actually, that turned me on. I'm not prejudiced."

"Don't you believe that," Kazan said. "She's no more octoroon than I am. She invents stuff about herself, especially her biography. She's of Norwegian descent, and people in that country are whiter than the Pillsbury dough boy."

"I was surprised she has so little money," Jimmy said. "Fox pays her starvation wages."

"I thought Hyde would leave her something in his will," Kazan said. "His estate came to $650,000. She got not a penny. She told me he left her six bath towels and sheets, but only three pillowcases. That's her reward for being his love goddess."

"About this love goddess shit," Jimmy said. "Marilyn and I are not ideally suited in bed. She has difficulty 'coming' with me. I don't have that problem with a lot of other guys and dolls."

"Don't worry about it," Kazan said. "Don't feel less a man. She has that trouble with nearly all of her lovers. She says she works hard to climax, but most of the time, her plumbing doesn't cooperate. I don't give a fuck. I'm more interested in getting my rocks off. I did find a way to work her up to a climax. I spank that ass of hers real hard. Somehow that unclogs her plumbing."

Then Kazan slammed down his drink. "Hell, let's stop talking this man-to-man crap. All I can say is that Marilyn needs a strong hand, so to speak. And both of you guys need a strong director."

"As for body parts, she has a complaint against me," Kazan said. "Ever since Joe DiMaggio, she's preferred uncut meat, which rule out all Jewish lovers and a lot of other men, too. Yes, Arthur Miller!"

[As regards Marilyn's opinion of Kazan, she once told Jimmy, "Gadge told me that I was great fun, but that I wasn't cut out to be anybody's wife. He had a wife and children back in New York, but he was seen out in public with me in Hollywood. We could always claim, if asked, that we were discussing a future film project. He told me that he had a European concept of fidelity within a marriage. In Europe, he said that most men were expected to have a mistress on the side, providing that they take good care of their wife and kids at home.]

Ordering another round of drinks, Kazan asked, "Do you think one day you'll become one of Marilyn's husbands?" Kazan asked.

Jimmy was very emphatic. "Never! We've talked about it. But it will never happen. Deep down, both of us know we are petulant children, even though at times we can act grown-up. We're desperate souls looking for that home we never found—just a pair of tumbling tumbleweeds."

"I don't know about Marilyn as a wife," Jimmy continued, "but I do know that she has this uncanny ability to bring out the finest qualities in a man. She's convinced me that by the time I reach my thirties, I'll be a great movie actor. She says I might be small in stature, but big in talent. 'You're a little guy,' she told me, 'but a big man under your skin.'"

"I haven't seen Marilyn lately," Kazan said. "What's cooking?"

"I suspect you'll be hearing from her any day now," Jimmy said. "She's heard that you're going to direct Tennessee's *Baby Doll.* She wants to be the doll."

He frowned. "She's too old. Baby Doll can be no more than nineteen, even younger. Besides, although I love her dearly, I don't think I could survive directing Marilyn in a film. I hear that Lee Strasberg arranges for his wife Paula to be a sort of co-director behind the scenes, for which she gets $2,500 a week. After every take, this cunt signals to Marilyn that it was okay—or else she has to reshoot it. I'd stand for that crap for about an hour."

"Another thing," Kazan said. "Marilyn has a time bomb inside her waiting to go off. Ignite her and she'll explode. I'd heard the horror stories. Fucking her is one thing, directing her is quite another. She wants approval

more than anything, but she rarely gets it, except from her fans. She needs constant reassurance of her own worth. Yet she respects men who hold her in contempt because their estimate of her is similar to her own self-loathing."

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During the course of Charles Feldman's affair with Marilyn Monroe, at a party the producer had hosted at his home, he had introduced her to Tennessee Williams. Feldman had played a key role in the production of *The Glass Menagerie.*

Ever on the lookout for her next gig, Marilyn had asked Tennessee, "Do you write plays with characters that I could play? You know, the dumb blonde?"

"I'm afraid not," he answered. "I was once hired by MGM to write what I called a 'celluloid brassiere' for Lana Turner, but I failed miserably. I fear I'd do the same for you. As regards the anguish I suffered trying to create a role for Miss Turner, I felt like an obstetrician delivering a mastodon from a beaver."

"With me it would be different," she cooed. "I once told Frank Sinatra that one day I'd like to star as Blanche DuBois in a revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire.* He mocked me."

"Oh, my dear, Miss DuBois was over the hill, and you look like you've merely begun to climb that hill."

"You just wait and see, Mr. Tennessee," she said. "One day, I'll be a very dramatic actress."

"May your dreams never die," he answered, as Feldman interrupted their chat.

"Jane Wyman is here, and she's asking for you," Feldman told Tennessee.

[Jane Wyman, the former Mrs. Ronald Reagan, was awarded a starring role in the film version of Tennessee's The Glass Menagerie *(1950).]*

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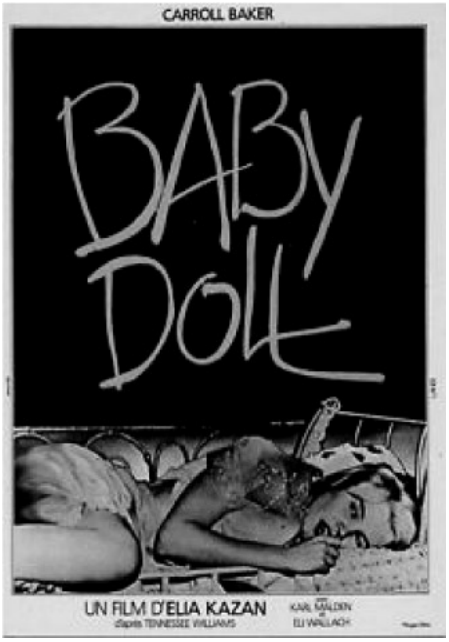
Months later, Marilyn heard of a role in a Tennessee Williams play that she felt was tailor made for her. It was that of the title character in *Baby Doll,* the story of a child bride, bartered and sold by her corrupt father to a lecherous suitor, who spent her days curled up half-dressed in a crib, sucking her thumb, a Lolita-like virgin.

Denied sexual access to her, based on the terms of her contract, her frustrated new husband spies on her through a peephole drilled through the wall.

"If there's one thing I know how to do, it's suck," Marilyn told Feldman.

There was another strong role available: That of a Sicilian-American owner of a cotton gin that is taking business away from her husband's rival gin mill. Marilyn told Feldman that in her opinion, that role should be offered first to Brando, then to James Dean.

Lobbying for the role, Marilyn called Kazan and set up a rendezvous. Afterwards, describing it to Winters, she said, "Our roll in the hay went okay, but I didn't do as well during the post-coital huddle. He didn't think I'd be suitable as Baby Doll."



What Kazan had told her was, “Do you really believe that the public will accept you as a virginal child-bride?”

“I’m an actress. Watch me go.”

“Oh, please! No one will ever believe that Marilyn Monroe was a virgin…ever.”

Furious at that remark, she had stormed out the door.

On the chance that Brando might be assigned the role of the Sicilian, she tried to enroll him in a scheme whereby he’d endorse her for the role of Baby Doll. And when that didn’t work, she began to maneuver toward the source of the screenplay himself, Tennessee Williams, hoping that he might recognize her potential.

“After all,” she told Winters. “We’re not talking about me playing Blanche DuBois. We’re talking about a sexy little baby doll. The whole world knows I’m America’s baby doll.”

Winters had reminded her that Tennessee “has the hots for Jimmy Dean,” so Marilyn decided to include him in her meeting with the playwright. Fortunately, Jimmy was in New York at the time and available, especially when she told him that he might be considered for the choice role of Silva Baccaro, the competing Sicilian who tries to steal the sex kitten from her possessive husband.

In her scheme, Marilyn deliberately misled Jimmy by telling him that Brando wanted the role, but that the word was that Tennessee thought that “the two of us would make a better screen team.”

Before their arrival at Tennessee’s apartment, she described to Jimmy a sexy scene, perhaps as part of their audition process, they could play out under a blanket together. “It gets cold in Mississippi in winter. We’re sitting on the front porch in a double wooden swing with a blanket over us. There’s a lot of movement going on under the blanket. Our faces reveal all from the initial tongue-sucking kiss to the final climax reflected in the total ecstasy in our faces.”

“I could go for that,” he said. “We could make it one of the sexiest scenes ever put into a feature film, and we can do that without ever showing our asses.”

She told him that Feldman had seen what the chief script reader at Warners had already said in his report. “*Baby Doll* has the potential of becoming the dirtiest feature film in the history of Warner Brothers. It is imbued with priapean detail that would have embarrassed Boccaccio.”

“I don’t know what ‘priapean’ means,” he said.

“I didn’t either, but I looked it up in the dictionary. Priapus was the Greek god of procreation, the personification of the erect penis.”

“This film is sounding more and more like it’s got the name of James Dean written all over it.”

Since Kazan had objected, insisting that she was appropriate for the role, Tennessee remained her last hope. Jimmy later told Stanley Haggart, a friend of Tennessee, that he didn’t know at the time that Marilyn had manipulated him. “I’m not blaming her,” he said. “My whole life has been spent manipulating people.”

“After our first drink at Tennessee’s apartment, I could tell that Marilyn was not his conception of his baby doll.

However, he did assure us that we would one day become known as the 'dynamic duo' of the screen."

Tennessee described to them his original concept for *Baby Doll:* "I saw her as an overweight bundle of horror, with fat arms, bulging calves, and thick ankles. But in my rewrite, she's beautiful and sexy, very blonde. It's not a part for Grace Kelly—in terms of breeding, Baby Doll is about as genteel as Paddy's Pig. She is touching but comic, a grotesquely witless creation, about as deep as a kitty-cat's pee."

Before the end of their interview, Tennessee had promised he'd use whatever influence he had to try to get the roles for them. Nonetheless, he felt that each of them might find it more rewarding to pursue the parts of Cherie and Bo in William Inge's upcoming film adaptation of *Bus Stop,* whose roles in the Broadway play had gone to Kim Stanley and Albert Salmi.

"I studied Tennessee carefully," Jimmy told Haggart. "Sometimes, when he had been giving me a blow-job, and if I had gotten overly excited, I had run my fingers through his hair. It was like feeling a nest of small, wet serpents. As he bid Marilyn goodbye, having invited me for a sleepover, he had that fat cat smile of deception, you know the one when the cat tells the mouse he's not going to be eaten. Marilyn believed his promise. I did not. He might be planning to recommend me for the role, but I think he had already agreed with Kazan that Marilyn was too old and not virginal enough for the part of Baby Doll."

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Weeks later, Kazan still had not cast all of the actors he needed for *Baby Doll,* opting to delay his final choice until after he'd seen the early rushes of Jimmy's last film, *Giant.* To his surprise, he became fascinated by the performance of Carroll Baker, whom he knew, but only casually, from their time together at the Actors Studio.

He envisioned her as the perfect choice for the character of Baby Doll. Five years younger than Marilyn, she was twenty-four at the time.

In New York, Kazan arranged for an audition that included Baker alongside Karl Malden. He had already cast him as Baby Doll's lecherous and ferociously jealous husband.

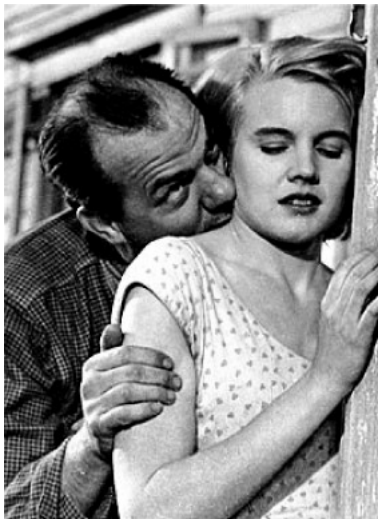
Lee Strasberg, it is believed, tipped Marilyn off about what was about to happen.

She didn't want to make an appearance at the Studio alone, so she called Jimmy. She had already learned that the role he'd wanted, that of the Sicilian cotton gin owner, would probably be going to Eli Wallach.

A few moments before the beginning of her tryout, Baker learned that Marilyn had entered the studio and that she'd be watching from the audience. "I wish my breasts were as big as hers," Baker lamented.

Jimmy preferred to take a seat out front, and not accompany Marilyn onto the stage, where she greeted the other cast members, including Malden.

Marilyn's arrival was deeply unnerving: Baker's husband, Jack Garfein, had loudly predicted that if his wife did not succeed in the tryout, the role of Baby Doll would, based on box office clout and studio politics, almost certainly go to Marilyn as a last resort.



Karl Malden, pursuing carnal knowledge of "Baby Doll," Carroll Baker

Baker remembered the Hollywood blonde goddess arriving, clad in a patterned scarf, a pink Angora sweater, and oversized sunglasses. “Her thin cotton pants might have been grafted onto her flesh. All eyes were on her. She pursed her lips and said. ‘Hello Jack.’ I was so jealous of her I could have killed her. She made the word ‘Jack’ sound positively obscene.”

Baker later described Marilyn’s mannerisms: “She was like a perpetual motion gel. If her hips weren’t gyrating, she was winching with her shoulders, or else making that sucking fish-pucker mouth. Everything about her said, ‘I’m yours.’ I thought I smelled the fruity aroma of sex.”

After having greeted all the key figures on the stage, Marilyn joined Jimmy in the third row of the audience to watch Baker emote with Malden. She sat motionless throughout their sketch, her face betraying no emotion. Jimmy kept glancing at her for a reaction, but got none.

At the end of the sketch, Tennessee, from a seat in the rear, jumped to his feet and came running toward the stage, bypassing Jimmy and Marilyn, as if they weren’t there. “Baby,” he gushed, rushing up to Baker. “You *are* my Baby Doll!”

Marilyn grabbed and then gripped Jimmy’s hand He noticed she was on the verge of tears. “Let’s get the fuck out of here,” she hissed.

Outside on the street, a wind was blowing, and drops of rain were starting to fall. Marilyn got a cinder in her eye and reached into her purse for a handkerchief to help remove it.

After the cinder came out, Jimmy kissed her gently on the lips and took her arm. “Let’s go. It’s you and me, kid, against the wind.”

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Barbara Leaming, a respected Marilyn biographer, wrote: “Had she been directed by Kazan at that stage in her career, she probably would not have become as dependent on Strasberg. What need would there have been for him if it had been Kazan who enabled her to do her first important dramatic role? What need would there have been for Paula Strasberg, her acting coach? Had Marilyn done well in a film written by Tennessee Williams, quite possibly she would have been treated differently by the public, and even by the industry. And who could say what would have happened to Marilyn’s relationship with Arthur Miller had she gone to Mississippi in November of 1955 with Kazan?”

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Marilyn detested the scripts being offered to her, dismissing many of them as “another dumb blonde role.”

One night over pillow talk, Frank Sinatra asked her if she’d co-star with him in a script about show business entitled *Pink Tights.* From the title, she gathered what kind of role it would be. After reading the script, she called Sinatra: “I want to escape the image of just a sex queen, and I’d like a more substantial role. I’m not going to do the picture.”

“Listen, doll, you may think you’re the only blonde in Hollywood, but they’re a dime a dozen out here.” Then he slammed down the phone on her.

Marilyn had attended a performance of Kim Stanley in the Broadway version of William Inge’s *Bus Stop,* and was intrigued by the role of Cherie. For the dumb cowboy role of Bo, she thought first of Marlon Brando, although she’d heard that Elvis Presley also wanted the part. Again, she called Shelley Winters: “Isn’t Marlon from Nebraska?”

“He sure is, babe,” Winters answered.

“I hear Nebraska, or one of those states—maybe Montana—has a lot of cowboys,” she said. “I bet Marlon would jump at the chance to be Bo opposite my Cherie.”

“Any bet on our unpredictable Marlon is a risk,” Winters said. “But why not give him a ring?”

Consequently, Marilyn reached him by phone. After some inaugural pleasantries, she made her pitch, beginning with “I’m getting some 4,000 fan letters a week, and many of them suggest that you and I make a movie together.”

“I’m getting some 6,000 fan letters a week, and I don’t recall any of them suggesting that. What makes you

think our chemistry would work on screen?"

"It might not in just any film," she said, "but Bill Inge's *Bus Stop* would be ideal for the two of us."

"Are you kidding?" he asked. "I've appeared in Shakespeare on the screen. Now you're asking me to play a dumb cowboy chasing after a dumb blonde stripper?"

"It's a great part," she said. "You'd wipe up the screen. I can see an Oscar in your performance, and that's for sure."

"Okay, sugar," he said. "Come over tonight and we'll talk about it. At least I'll get a good fuck out of it."

"Oh, Marlon, how you talk."

Over dinner that night, Brando told her he was getting at least one film offer a day. "That shitbag, Louis B. Mayer, is gone at MGM, and Dore Schary is far more appreciative of me. He just told his brass to let me play Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* if I want to. I think I'm going to settle for playing a Jap in *Teahouse of the August Moon*. That cowboy role in *Bus Stop* wouldn't mean anything for me."

"I convinced Marilyn that her pitch was hopeless," Brando later told his best friend, Carlo Fiore, when he reported on the incident. "But we made our own chemistry together in bed."

Brando bragged to Fiore that "I could take Marilyn from Arthur Miller in a minute if I wanted to. But my trouble is, I can't love anyone. I just can't. I know I should, but I don't trust a woman enough to fall in love with her…or a man, either, for that matter."

He noted that while Marilyn was going around professing "all this love for Miller, she's screwing both Jimmy Dean and me, plus god only knows how many others. She's the Queen of the One-Night Stand."

The following night over spaghetti in a West Village tavern, Brando seemed jealous of Marilyn 's involvement with Jimmy. He spent much of the evening attacking him "for copying everything I do—the motorcycles, the jeans, the V-neck pullovers. As for those roles in *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause,* you know I was offered each of those parts before Jimmy got to fuck them up."

"I'm not so hard on him," Marilyn chimed in. "All of us begin by imitating someone. I used to go to any Lana Turner movie at noon and stay in the movie house until the midnight show. It's just a phase we go through."

"Not me," Brando said. "I'm an original."

"You're an original who's changing every actor's style in America—except for Clifton Webb's," she said. "Miss Priss."

"Dean and I have only one thing in common—and not just our Midwestern origins. Both of us had fathers who claimed that all actors are 'faggots and fairyboys.'"

"Well, aren't they?" Then she giggled provocatively.

"I'm not as hard on Dean as I pretend to be," Brando said. "Actually, he needs to be handled with loving care."

"It's getting late," she said. "Why don't we go back to your apartment, and let you do some loving care on *me?*."

"It's a deal," he said.

Jimmy Misses His Bus Stop

The Horny Cowboy vs. The Washed-Up Stripper

At this point in her career, Marilyn had virtually abandoned her dream of ever making a movie with Brando. He had been disdainful, even contemptuous, of the idea of co-starring with her in *Bus Stop,* a film that was eventually released in 1956.

However, in a call she placed to Inge, he told her he'd heard from Joshua Logan, the upcoming director of its film version, that "Brando must have changed his mind! He told Logan that he'd love to play Bo, and that it would be an unusual departure for him as an actor. Logan seems almost hysterically delighted to direct you and Brando."

"Marlon is such a bullshitter," Marilyn told Inge. "There's no way he's going to play Bo to my Cherie. If you call him back, you'll find he's not going to do the picture."

Having slept with him on many an occasion, Marilyn had come to realize that Brando was a man of many moods. Indeed, within a few days, Brando formally rejected the role of Bo.

For Marilyn, that meant that her second choice, James Dean, had suddenly morphed into her prime target. She called him and asked him over to where she was staying. She'd bought two copies of Inge's play, with the intention

of setting up a private rehearsal.

She was so pleased at their reading that she told him, “You and I would be great together—you as a redneck clodhopper, far better than Brando could manage, even though he was born in Nebraska.”

The next day, with Jimmy, Marilyn visited Inge at his apartment in an attempt to win his endorsement. Inge warned them that although he personally thought they’d be an ideal team, he had no say on who starred in the movie roles. He went on to admit that he had already discussed their candidacy for the roles with Tennessee, and that he had said they’d be wonderful together.

Missing the **Bus (Stop)**

Don Murray (in the "dumb cowboy role" that was almost given to Jimmy) embraces MM playing Cherie, the washed-up, out-of-tempo-with-the-music stripper in the film version of *Bus Stop*.

Inge told them that *Bus Stop* had originated as a one-act play entitled *People in the Wind,* and that he had rewritten and expanded it.

"I'll be frank," Marilyn told him. "When I first heard of it, I thought Cherie was going to be just another dumb blonde role. But I think she's a wonderful character. I see her as a girl who has never known a day of happiness in her whole life. She's been kicked around by men until this white knight arrives on a bus in the form of a rude, immature cowboy who's really dumb. But his love is genuine. And that's what wins Cherie's heart in the end."

"I think I'd be hot as Bo," Jimmy said. "An escape from 'troubled youth' associations."

After Marilyn and Jimmy's interactions with Inge, she formed a more empathetic and lasting relationship with the playwright than Jimmy did.

Ralph F. Voss, Inge's biographer, wrote: "Inge and Monroe enjoyed a rapport that was probably based upon their mutual intelligence and his ability to sense the frustrations of a bright and spectacularly beautiful woman like Monroe and upon her realization that his interest and concern were genuine and not motivated by sexual desire. In years to come, their names were occasionally linked in the media as if they were romantically involved, but their relationship was no more than a friendship."

As for Jimmy, when he'd first contemplated the role of Bo, he had just completed the filming of *Giant,* and didn't want to rush into the portrayal of another western character. "I'm trying to escape the troubled youth image, but I don't want to be stuck in cowboy roles, either."

Eventually, however, he was won over by the character of Bo. "I think I could have had a lot of fun with him. And he's not at all like my Jett Rink character in *Giant."*

Marilyn agreed. And whereas she lived to deliver a memorable performance in *Bus Stop,* Jimmy did not. The role of Bo eventually went to Don Murray.

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During the filming of *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)*,* Jimmy learned that its director, Nicholas Ray, had been having an affair with Marilyn since the end of 1952. Ray had been telling her that he'd always wanted to direct her in a movie, and that he and his associates were making plans for its script, never written. Ray had inaugurated sexual advances toward her after meeting her on the set of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*

Many of their sexual trysts transpired within Ray's suite at the Château Marmont. "I was a little surprised to learn about Marilyn and Nick," Jimmy told Stanley Haggart, who was spending time in Los Angeles producing TV commercials. "It seems that Marilyn and I are fucking the same dude."

Jimmy learned about the Ray/Monroe liaison from *Confidential* magazine, which had published a lurid *exposé* of their affair, claiming that Marilyn had been caught "balling" Ray in the back seat of a limousine.

Ray threatened to sue. He complained about it to Leonard Rosenman, who was composing the music for *Rebel Without a Cause.*

"But this isn't bad publicity for you," Rosenman said. "Thirty million guys in America want to plow Marilyn like you're doing, and at least some of them want to do Jimmy, too."

"I'll sue the sons of bitches," Ray said again. Then he paused. "But now that you've said all that, perhaps not."

For a while, Haggart's friend, Gore Vidal, was living at the Château Marmont near the bungalow rented by Ray. "You cannot imagine Ray's carnal adventures," he told Haggart. "On any given night, he might be seducing Dean, Sal Mineo, Natalie Wood, Jayne Mansfield, Dennis Hopper, or even Judy Holliday when she's not muff diving."

"As for me, I want to meet his son, Tony," Vidal said. "He must be something else. Ray caught him in bed fucking his wife, Gloria Grahame. The kid had just turned thirteen. What a guy!"

One of the genuinely historic hotels of Hollywood

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Early one morning, Jimmy was still in bed in Ray's bungalow. They'd spent the night together. Ray had left early for the studio, but Jimmy wasn't needed until the next day. There came a knock on the door. Hung over, in his underwear, he staggered over to answer the door.

He was surprised to find Marilyn standing there in a fur and an evening gown. She'd obviously come directly from a night of partying at clubs along the Sunset Strip. She carried a bottle of chilled champagne with her. "I planned to drop in on Nick, but you'll do," she said to Jimmy. "I'm in need of a good fuck."

She walked into the room as if it were her second home.

As he'd later relay to Haggart when he went for a swim at his home in Laurel Canyon, "Whenever I finished with that succulent mouth of hers, Marilyn could always put me to sleep with that soothing voice she has. It's such a seductive tool. More than that of any woman I've met. Sound engineers capture its erotic whispers. She makes a man feel he's got big balls."

"She's got her flaws," Jimmy said. "Like me, she's too short, and her stomach is slightly pudgy from too much champagne. She shares her problems with me, her secret desires. I do the same with her. Otherwise, I tell people to fuck off when they ask too many personal questions."

"We had sex in Nick's bed, and he came home early that afternoon and caught us together."

"Did he threaten to fire you from *Rebel?"* Haggart asked.

"Not at all," Jimmy answered. "He pulled off his clothes and joined us in bed."

"Elizabeth Taylor Is a Hairy Ape"

—Marilyn Monroe

During the making of *Giant,* Jimmy saw very little of Marilyn, although they talked on the phone, usually late at night. She had as many troubles as he did.

She was particularly interested in any behind-the-scenes gossip from the set of *Giant*, especially if it concerned Elizabeth Taylor.

"I think Marilyn resents my making a movie with her," Jimmy told George Stevens. "She's very jealous of Elizabeth."

One night, Marilyn said, "I guess I should ask the $100,000 questions. Which one of you, Elizabeth or yourself, got to fuck Rock Hudson first?"

He laughed. "With Rock and me, it's been there, done that, long before *Giant.* But to answer your question, let me put it this way: Rock and I were assigned to live in the same house in Marfa, Texas. I got him first. But it wasn't a match made in heaven. Elizabeth finally got him, too. Sometimes, Rock is forced into delivering what he calls a few duty fucks."

"They're both big stars, as you know," Marilyn said, "and I hear that after *Giant* you're going to be right up there with them. I've been famously quoted as saying, 'I've sucked a lot of cock to get where I am today.' I don't know if I ever said that, but it's true. I'm sure you've been on many a casting couch, but for both of us, we won't have to do that anymore."

"We'll be able to pick and choose who we fuck, and ain't that grand?," he said. "In New York, I used to let guys blow me in the subway toilets for a dollar or two so I could buy a milkshake for some energy."

"On Santa Monica Boulevard, I'd give it away for just a hearty breakfast, which would last me for at least a day and a half before starvation set in," she answered.

George Stevens, who had directed Elizabeth in *A Place in the Sun* (1951), told Jimmy that "Marilyn resents Elizabeth's fame, beauty, and prestige. Their feud began when Elizabeth found out that Marilyn was fucking Nicky Hilton, her first husband. Frankly, I don't know what Marilyn saw in this jerk, except he's got money and a big dick. He was drunk most of the time he was married to Elizabeth. He used to beat her."

In a phone call one night, Marilyn seemed to have grown angry with Jimmy, because she'd read in the press that he had become extremely friendly with Elizabeth during the filming of *Giant.*

"I'm not surprised she went after you," Marilyn said. "Let's face it: She's got a voracious sexual appetite and the morals of a truck driver. Or else an alleycat. Sexually, she's supposed to be every man's dream, but I hear that unless she shaves constantly, she's hairy. One of her former lovers told me she even has hair growing between her breasts. Instead of her being mother's little dividend, she's mother's hairy ape. Did you know that she was born with hair all over her face?"

"Throughout her life, she's had everything handed to her. You and I had nothing. We had to fight every step of the way and make compromises. People have always taken advantage of us. She was virtually handed a career and everything else."

"Two nights later, Marilyn called Jimmy again and launched another barrage of attacks on Elizabeth.

"Did you know her eyebrows had to be reshaped into what is now called the Taylor arch?" Marilyn said. "Louis B. Mayer thought her nose was too thick at the bottom and ordered her to take care of it. How do I know all this? I must confess, I've had very private dealings with the source of this information. The same doctor who operated on her worked on my own nose and also gave me a chin implant."

"Well, dear one, beauty is, after all, an illusion," he answered. "As for me, I was born perfect."

"Yeah, right, except you need a surgeon who knowns how to make you a foot and a half taller."

"I resent that!" he yelled at her.

During the last phone call that he'd ever receive from Elia Kazan, the director said, "I can't believe it. You and Marilyn Monroe. A little Indiana farm boy who's also bedding the great Elizabeth Taylor. She's a story for another day. As far as Marilyn is concerned, to me, she's just a simple, decent-hearted gal that Hollywood keeps fucking over. Legs apart copulation has always been her way of saying thank you to anyone who ever gave her a break. But what in hell, kid, is Monroe doing with you?"

"Both of these ladies think I'm hot shit," Jimmy answered. "So eat your heart out, Gadge, ol' boy!"

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Because of Jimmy's tragic car crash in September of 1955, the cinematic pairing of Jimmy with Marilyn, regrettably, remained a figment of their imaginations and never became a reality.

Ironically, they became closely linked in death as contemporaneous screen icons. Bars in remote outposts, sometimes as far away as Nigeria, still display images of James Dean and Marilyn Monroe.

During her third week of counseling with the psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, she confessed that she planned, one day, to commit suicide. "I want to go out like James Dean, while I'm still young and beautiful. I want everything at my funeral to be white, very Mae Westy. All white satin in my coffin. White flowers. I want to be buried in a white *négligée* that's virtually see-through. Of course, I'll have my makeup man and my hairdresser make me camera ready. I want to leave a lasting memory to those who view my body. I want them to say, 'Marilyn Monroe was more beautiful in death than she was in life. Too bad they couldn't say that about poor Jimmy. I hear his body was mangled beyond recognition."

As Dean's biographer, Donald Spoto, put it: "At the end of the century, it is not outrageous to say that Dean and Monroe—even to those who have a low estimation of them—remain the most royal of deified Americans, if only because of the brilliant marketing strategies of their celebrity."

Jimmy's death mask at Princeton University has been placed beside those of Beethoven, Thackeray, and Keats; and Marilyn's image during the second decade of the 21st Century is bigger now than it was when she died.

Social historian, celebrity novelist, and trenchant wit, Gore Vidal

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During one of the last conversations Stanley Haggart had with Gore Vidal, the subject of Jimmy and Marilyn came up.

During their talk, Vidal said, “You know I’ve had reservations about both Monroe and Dean, as well as Mr. Elvis Presley, each doomed to die before their time. However, I must say that if a record shop, a clothing store, a diner, or a bar, wants to cloak itself in the glamor of 1950s Hollywood, a picture of one of these creatures on the wall will add to the establishment’s youthful allure. Dean, of course, will be in that damn red jacket. That jacket will be manufactured for tomorrow’s youth at least until 2080 when the world will no longer care about that unholy trio of mixed-up psychos.”

French advertising poster for Levi's jeans (“An American Masterpiece”), linking them to James Dean and Marilyn Monroe.

“I don’t think so,” Haggart responded. “Elvis, Marilyn, and Jimmy will survive until the next Ice Age.”

Chapter Seventeen

TALES FROM THE F.B.I.

J. EDGAR HOOVER

& HIS LOVER, CLYDE TOLSON

Hot on Jimmy Dean's "Tail"

JIMMY GETS CAUGHT SHOPLIFTING AND "RED-HANDED," YET MANAGES TO AVOID BLACKLISTING AND THE RED CHANNELS LIST

Unless He Submits to Their Closeted Desires "Clyde & Eddie" Threaten to Ruin His Career

Until James Dean became involved with Marlon Brando and director Elia Kazan in the 1950s, the name of J. Edgar Hoover was of no special interest to the young boy growing up in Indiana. He knew that Hoover was the director of the F.B.I., and he'd seen some movies about that agency, but that was about it. Unlike many young boys of his era, he never had any fantasies of becoming a G-man.

But once he started discussing Hoover with Brando and Kazan, he discovered each of them had personal reasons for loathing "the ugly little toad," as Brando referred to him.

Brando warned him that Hoover could destroy an actor's career and he cited John Garfield as a case in point. Garfield was one of the few screen actors that Jimmy had admired in the 1940s, especially after he'd seen him

opposite Lana Turner in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946).

Jimmy also admired Garfield's reputation off screen, and he'd heard many tales of the women he'd seduced, including Joan Crawford, Hedy Lamarr, and Shelley Winters. Jimmy bragged to Brando and Kazan, "Garfield had nothing on me. I've bedded them, too."

"What about Ida Lupino and Ann Sheridan?" Kazan asked.

"You got me there."

"Garfield has also been known to seduce a man on occasion, if he's drunk enough," Kazan said. "Take Truman Capote, for example, back when he was much younger and a bit pretty."

"Been there, done that, too." Jimmy admitted.

The gossip columnist, Sheilah Graham, had summed up Garfield's love-making technique. "He was a demon lover. He died young and in bed with a woman. How fitting. He made love like a sexy puppy, huffing and puffing in quick gasps. Before intercourse, he preferred women to go on an around-the-world trip of his body."

"I can go along with Garfield on that around-the-world thing," Jimmy said. "But not the sexy puppy image. But women I seduce compare me to another animal: *El Toro."*

"In their own estimation, all men are bulls," Kazan said. "Women usually tell a different story."

According to Kazan, Garfield's wife, Roberta Seidman, whom he'd married in 1935, had been a communist, but Garfield never was. Nonetheless, he was ordered to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee during the Red Scare of the 1950s. During his time being grilled, the actor voiced his support for the First Amendment, which opposed government investigations of people's political beliefs.

Blackballed as a communist sympathizer, he remained a subject of invasive scrutiny even after the conclusion of his testimonies. His services as an actor were no longer in demand.

Before the committee, Garfield had claimed that he didn't know any communists in the film industry. He later hoped to redeem himself in an article he wrote entitled "I was a Sucker for the Left Hook," claiming he'd been duped by communist ideologies. The title of the article, of course, was a reference to movies that had cast him as a prizewinning boxer.

In May of 1952, during the peak of the Red Scare, the rebellious young actor died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-nine.

Jimmy didn't want what had afflicted Garfield to happen to him. He wasn't really afraid that it would, since he was almost completely apolitical. He hardly knew the difference between a Republican and a Democrat, much less a communist. When asked what he thought of President Eisenhower, Jimmy said, "I don't know what he does in the White House, but as a soldier, he sure put a lot of firecrackers up the asses of those god damn Nazi shitheads."

At the time Jimmy was hearing these stories about Hollywood's tormented conflicts with the FBI director, he had no idea that he would ever tangle with Hoover himself.

When he did, his involvement would have absolutely nothing to do with politics, but with sex.

WANTED BY THE FBI: HOOVER'S FILES ON

Marlon Brando & James Dean

GROW THICKER, LONGER, AND MORE INCRIMINATING

Hoover, an avid television watcher, especially crime dramas, had begun the compilation of a file on Jimmy when he first started seeing him in teleplays. His favorite was *The Dark, Dark Hour*, in which Jimmy, cast as a hoodlum, breaks into the home of a doctor (played by Ronald Reagan) and threatens to assassinate him if he doesn't remove a bullet from the body of his comrade, who had been shot during an earlier robbery.

According to reports, Hoover was intrigued by Jimmy.

Since 1946, based on political, not sexual reasons, he'd also amassed a growing and rather incriminating file on the communist/socialist leanings of Marlon Brando. Rumors about the Leftist sentiments of Brando had intensified when the actor had appeared on Broadway in the controversial appeal to radical Zionism written partially as propaganda by Ben Hecht, *A Flag is Born.*

Everyone connected to *A Flag is Born* was eventually evaluated by the F.B.I. as subversive to U.S. interests, not only its star, Paul Muni, but its director, Luther Adler, too.

Brando, self-styled as "the only *goy* in the cast," continued arousing the suspicions within the F.B.I. which, as demanded by Hoover, documented his civil rights clashes as well as his bisexual escapades.

Clyde Tolson *(left)* was J.Edgar's lover and personal assistant, and was called "the Gary Cooper of the F.B.I." Above, he is seen with Hoover, enjoying one of their favorite pastimes: Betting on the horses.

At the close of the play, Brando traveled across the country raising money for Irgun, an anti-British group led by Menachem Begin *[later, Prime Minister of Israel (1977-1983)]* that advocated violence.

"I was a hot-headed terrorist back then," Brando said. "As I matured, I came to understand both sides, even the Arab point of view. I was a bit over the top, proclaiming in speeches that British troops blocking Jewish immigration to Palestine were committing greater atrocities than the Nazis. Blame it on my youth."

"I like Jews, and I fuck many of them for pleasure," Jimmy admitted. "About all I know of Arabs is that I played a homosexual Arab boy in *The Immoralist,* and I was a no good, blackmailing son of a bitch."

Clyde Tolson, J. Edgar Hoover, Guy Hottel, and an unidentified friend.

Even though Elia Kazan had directed Brando in his greatest hit at the time, *A Streetcar Named Desire,* the actor was very critical of his director.

Like Brando, Kazan had been intensely investigated by the F.B.I. Its G-men turned up evidence that he "supported dangerous left-wing causes." He had been called before the House Un-American Activities Committee as a friendly witness, naming names. His collaboration and cooperation shocked Hollywood, soiled his reputation, and cost him the friendship of his liberal friends such as playwright Arthur Miller.

Brando at first didn't want anything more to do with Kazan after that, but the actor and the director obviously repaired their differences in time for Kazan to direct him in his Oscar-winning role in *On the Waterfront.*

[The F.B.I. investigation had determined that Kazan, from 1934 to 1936, had been a member of the Communist

Party in New York. But later, according to the F.B.I. dossier, he had became disillusioned with the party, and turned against communism after the Hitler-Stalin pact. Consequently, his American communist friends turned against him.

As Kazan later told Miller, "I hate the communists and have for many years, and I don't feel right about giving up my career to defend them. That's why I'm naming names."]

Brando summed up Kazan's appearance before HUAC: "Gadge squealed like a ballsy pig on castration day."

F.B.I. agent Guy Hotell, Hoover's indiscreet henchman, "arranger," and pimp.

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What little is known about Jimmy's involvement with Hoover and his lover/assistant, Clyde Tolson, was gleaned from three sources, Guy Hotell, detective Fred Otash, and Stanley Haggart.

An F.B.I. agent himself, Hotell, for some twenty-five years, was the second-most-important man in Hoover's F.B.I., ranking just behind Tolson himself. A former football player at George Washington University, and known as "the stud" of the campus, Hotell often traveled with Tolson and Hoover on their many trips and vacations together, always remaining in the background.

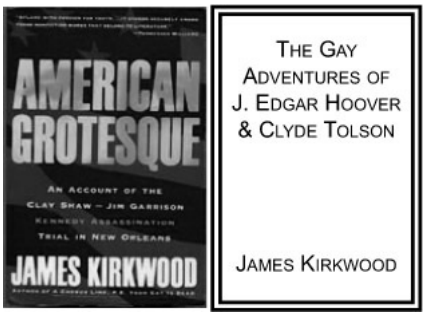
After a few months of working directly for "Clyde and Eddie" *[his nickname for J. Edgar]*, Hotell realized that one of his main duties was "arranging private hookups for these two guys who lived deep in the closet."

Young Guy Hotell *(left)* with J. Edgar Hoover: "Just two guys on holiday together."

"'Pimp' is too nasty a word," Hotell said, "but Eddie and Clyde couldn't very well arrange sexual liaisons for themselves. They were too famous, especially Eddie. I spent a few nights with both of them when I was younger and had a full head of hair. But they later tired of me, and put me to work as an 'arranger.'"

They wanted me to accompany them on their vacations," Hotell claimed. "I tagged along, but unlike Clyde and Eddie, I was a lady killer with an occasional boy thrown in. When they were seducing some young man, I was most often banging some hot gal."

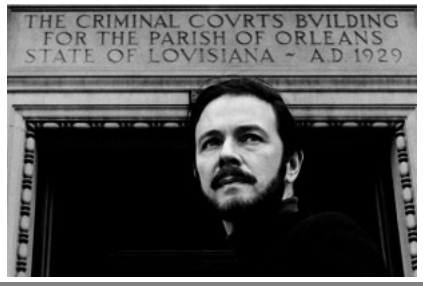
Eventually, Hoover got rid of Hotell when he became alcoholic and made a lot of indiscreet remarks around Washington.



Two inter-related books by James Kirkwood, only one of which (*American Grotesque)* was ever completed and published. Publication of the title depicted above on the right was delayed until 2012, when it reached the editors at Blood Moon Productions. After many amplifications from other sources, it emerged as the book displayed below.

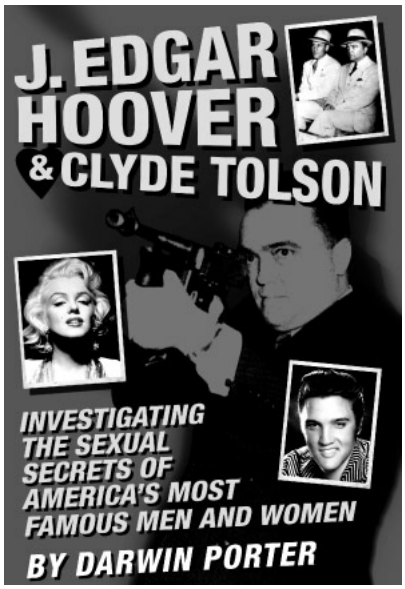
After Hotell was booted, and, much later, when Hoover was conveniently dead, Hotell decided to write a best-selling tell-all about him. Through his prospective publisher, the writer James Kirkwood, Jr., was approached to ghost write the book for him. Kirkwood later won a Pulitzer Prize for his Broadway musical, *A Chorus Line.*

[A political investigation was an unusual detour for Kirkwood, who usually wrote light novels and plays, most often with a comic touch. An exception to this had been American Grotesque*, an account of the Clay Shaw/Jim Garrison affair in New Orleans. Garrison had vengefully charged Shaw, a respected business leader, with conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy, charges which later mushroomed into a horror story that unfairly ruined Shaw's life, bankrupted his businesses, and placed him at the mercy of the judicial system for decades.]*



Playwright and investigative journalist James Kirkwood, researching court records in Louisiana in the mid-60s.

American Grotesque was first published in 1968. Hotell had read it and been impressed by how it presented its information and premises. Consequently, Hotell and Kirkwood worked together on *The Gay Adventures of J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson.*



Regrettably, Kirkwood died of spinal cancer in 1989, and Hotell also died a few months later. The book was never published. However, author Darwin Porter had worked with Kirkwood, mostly on note taking and interviews, and he retained the material, which was later published by Blood Moon Productions as *J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson; Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women.*

During extensive interviews, Hotell revealed that Hoover was fascinated "almost to the point of obsession" with the private lives of movie stars. Of special prominence were Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and James Dean.

"He even had three blow-ups of Dean hanging in his bathroom," Hotell asserted. He also told me that he had a porno clip that Dean had once made during his hungry days walking the streets of New York. I asked to see it, but he refused."

"He had seen most of Dean's teleplays, and Dean became his favorite TV star. He told me he thought Dean was not only cute, but sexy. He'd had him investigated, learning that he'd been a hustler. He suggested that I should arrange a session with Dean during their next trip to the West Coast."

"I don't want it presented that we're blackmailing him, but he needs to know that Clyde and I have stuff on him that is so damaging, it could ruin his movie star career before it even begins."

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Fred Otash now enters the picture. Readers of Marilyn Monroe biographies are familiar with his name. He became Hollywood's most famous detective, especially in regards to aspects associated with her murder in the summer of 1962.

Otash had tangled with Hoover and Tolson long before anybody had ever heard of James Dean. One day at the Santa Anita Racetrack, he was caught doping a horse and was arrested. Hoover was at the track that day and had placed high bets on the mob's favorite horse. But the stricken horse, because of Otash's doping, didn't run.

Otash was discovered and hit with a felony conviction, which was later downgraded to a misdemeanor. He was given a suspended sentence, and the affair was later expunged from his record.

It was speculated that Otash got off lightly because he had incriminating evidence on Hoover. Lewis Rosenstiel, a multi-millionaire "philanthropist," who had links to mob bosses, handled the racetrack bets of Hoover and Tolson.

Susan Rosenstiel, Lew's estranged wife, called it "a sweetheart deal. Hoover liked to gamble. My husband would call up his boys and place the bet. If Hoover won, he collected the money. If he didn't, Lou covered his losses."

During the course of his friendship with Rosenstiel, Hoover discovered that he was a promiscuous homosexual who could "buy the best young men for sale" along the West Coast. He was also known for staging some of the best gay parties anywhere, flamboyant enough to rival those of Hoover's other friend, the Woolworth heir, Jimmy

Donahue, a cousin of the heiress, Barbara Hutton.

Somewhere along the way, Otash learned of Hoover's link to Rosenstiel and the nefarious "back street dealing" between the two co-conspirators. It was said that Otash managed to evade charges in his future, including illegal wire-tapping, based on the incriminating information he had on the F.B.I. director.

Getting Busted: As a Shoplifter in a Food Market,

JIMMY GETS CAUGHT

Private detectives are supposed to keep silent about their revelations, except to their clients. But Otash often bragged of his inside knowledge.

Whenever he met a friend, he'd often begin his conversation by saying, "Did I tell you about the time…?" Then he'd relate a shocking incident from his vast repertoire. He once told columnist James Bacon one of his scandals. Of course, the journalist couldn't print it but privately gossiped about it.

One incident Otash related to Bacon allegedly occurred when he was a security guard at the Hollywood Ranch Market, which was experiencing a great deal of shoplifting. One afternoon, he caught James Dean stealing both a ham and a tinned caviar, "the expensive stuff, although he could afford to pay. It was my job to see that he was arrested. Charges were filed against him, but I learned later from someone in the police department that the case was mysteriously dropped. Someone important had intervened."

"Believe it or not, four months later I caught Dean stealing another ham at the market—no caviar this time," Otash claimed. "Instead of arresting him, I put the ham back on the rack and bought him some orange juice. I told him to cut out this shoplifting shit since he was making good money. But what I really wanted to know was who got him off on the last charge."

Private detective and movie fan, Fred Otash

"He looked at me with that smirky grin he had," Otash said. "'It was the most powerful man in America,'" he claimed. "'But I had to sing for my supper when I was driven in this big black limousine to La Jolla.'"

"As a detective, it didn't take me long to add two and two," Otash said. "I knew that Clyde Tolson and Hoover were staying in La Jolla at that time going to the race track. Suddenly, it made sense. Hoover could get anybody off from anything in those days, and Dean was his type. I'm also certain if you looked at that infamous book of Hoover's celebrity nudes, Dean posing with a big hard-on in that tree would be among his prized possessions. Some Dean biographers have written about the actor's claim to have been seduced by this 'bigwig in Washington.' It must have been Hoover. Eisenhower is definitely not a suspect."

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Otash told Rosenstiel of Jimmy's shoplifting, and he no doubt relayed the information to Hoover. The F.B.I. director, ever ready to seize an opportunity, had Rosenstiel reach Jimmy to tell him that the F.B.I., in exchange for his cooperation, was willing to intervene to quash news of his shoplifting and potentially save his career from scandal and ruin.

Since Hoover already possessed scandalous material Jimmy, the news of his arrest for shoplifting "was another sword to hang over the kid's head," as Hoover told Rosenstiel. "Unless he's a fool, he'll cooperate. If he doesn't, he'll live to regret it."

Three days after his night with Hoover and Tolson, at La Jolla, Jimmy visited Stanley Haggart's home in Laurel Canyon, which had a private cottage and a swimming pool. Jimmy often liked to drop in to use the cottage and swim, nude, with a male companion.

Over drinks that afternoon, as the sun went down, Jimmy told Haggart of his rendezvous with Hoover and Tolson and how he had been driven in a limousine to La Jolla, where the two F.B.I. men were staying.

He revealed to Haggart what happened after he was introduced to Hoover and Tolson: "Within the hour, they made it clear that if I'd spend the weekend with them, and let them play with me, all the shoplifting charges would be dropped, but only if I promised to never shoplift again, and to pay like a normal everyday working slob after that. I agreed to everything, even though both of them were real turn-offs to me, especially that bulldog, Hoover."

"They sure got their money's worth out of me," Jimmy claimed. "I think before the end of that *looooooong* weekend, I must have shot off at least seven times. I didn't get my clothes back until Monday morning. They liked to see me lounging or swimming nude by the pool, and certainly in their bedroom."

"I was told that Hoover was a cross-dresser, but he didn't put on a gown that weekend. Thank god. And, as I said, I didn't wear anything at all. The worst part came when Hoover insisted I pose for some nudes. He told me that he already had a collection of nudes of me, plus a porno clip I'd made once when I was starving."

"Tolson told me, 'It's just our insurance that you'll keep your trap shut.'"

"I did my duty and was driven back to Hollywood," Jimmy said. "These guys kept their word. Any police charges against me were wiped clean. I understand that Hoover can even blackmail a president, much less a country boy like me."

Haggart shared the details of Jimmy's encounter with Hoover and Tolson with three other friends, one of whom was the gossipy Rogers Brackett, who spread the story around. "It was a hot topic of gossip for a while," Haggart said. "But many people were skeptical. Hoover and Jimmy Dean?—it was too incredible. But, given Hoover's track record, and his other involvements, it is entirely possible."

Jimmy's claim was given far greater credence when Scotty Bowers, a well-built, curly-haired blonde from southern Illinois, finally published his scandalous memoirs, some of which detailed time spent having sex with Hoover.

Issued by Grove Press in 2012, Bowers' biography was entitled *Full Service,* and it received the endorsement of Gore Vidal, who wrote that he had "known Scotty for the better part of a century and he doesn't lie."

The New York Times featured it in two different reviews.

In some respects, Bowers' testimonial about his sexual involvement with Hoover paralleled Jimmy's, except that Bowers was treated to a firsthand view of the F.B.I. director's cross-dressing too.

A slightly more detailed version of Bower's encounter with Hoover appeared in his original manuscript before it was slightly reduced in the published version.

"I Had Sex With J. Edgar Five Times that Weekend"

—Scotty Bowers

In 1945, at the end of World War II, Scotty Bowers moved to Los Angeles. Shortly thereafter, he opened Scott's Gas Station at the corner of Fairfax and Hollywood Boulevard. Within eight months, it had become the most popular gas station among gays in Hollywood.

Getting a lube job at Scotty's came to mean something else. He hired as many as a dozen young men to pump gas and to escort certain gentlemen callers into the back rooms. There, the car owners could perform fellatio on these handsome, strapping former servicemen, or else become passive recipients of sodomy. Scotty hired only "tops."

Among the many patrons of the gas station were director George Cukor and the very closeted Spencer Tracy. Robert Taylor often stopped by to get "filled up," and Tyrone Power took some of the young men home with him to "perform the down and dirties," in the words of one gas jockey hustler.

"Most of Scotty's men were gorgeous," or so claimed Vivien Leigh, who visited the gas station accompanied by

her friend Cukor. Most of Scotty's men were bisexuals and could accommodate either gender. Sometimes one of the gas jockeys was hired for private sessions at the homes of a married couple. Stars seeking lesbian encounters could also find Scotty's services fulfilling.

Scotty Bowers, a former Hollywood hustler and pimp, managed to reconfigure himself, late in his life, into a bestselling *raconteur.*

In his investigation, author Paul Young quotes a source who claimed that "Scotty was smarter than some of his competitors. He refused to accept money from his boys or his clients. He'd only accept gifts: gold watches, silver trinkets, stocks, bonds, you name it. Some of his regular clients, who greatly appreciated his services, even went so far as to give him pieces of property."

The subject of many newspaper and magazine articles, Scotty, in his late 80s as of this writing, is a Hollywood legend. When not running his gas station, he moonlighted as a bartender at star-studded Hollywood parties where he met many of his admirers.

Over the years, various stars had need for his services including Katharine Hepburn ("no women with skin blemishes"), Cary Grant, Rock Hudson, Tennessee Williams, even the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. (She was a closeted lesbian, the former king a closeted homosexual.)

Late in life, Scotty wrote his long-overdue memoirs, called *Full Service*, a reference, of course, to the dual "services" provided by his filling station. The subtitle to his book is "Secrets, Sex, and High Society in Hollywood's Golden Age."

Arguably, the most shocking revelation in *Full Service* is the weekend Scotty spent in the company of J. Edgar Hoover. He recalled meeting a rich young doctor from La Jolla at a lavish party off Doheney Drive in Beverly Hills. In the book, the physician is referred to only as "Ted" (with the last name withheld).

Scotty bonded with this doctor, who invited him to take care of food and beverage arrangements at a party at his home in La Jolla two weeks hence.

Right on schedule, Scotty arrived in just fourteen days at an elegant, modern beachfront home where Ted, clad in a bathing suit, welcomed him. Scotty found his kitchen fully stocked with everything from caviar to lobster, so he soon realized that he was the choice hunk of meat on the menu that weekend.

After Scotty had showered and "slipped into something more comfortable," he noticed from his bedroom

window a large black sedan pulling into the driveway, its windows dark tinted. A young chauffeur, around twenty-eight years old, emerged from behind the wheel to open the door for his passenger. Out emerged a stocky man in his mid-60s with thinning black hair. He wore dark glasses.

A few minutes later Scotty was introduced to the distinguished guest as "John." At the time, the face of J. Edgar Hoover was one of the most recognizable in the world. The FBI director and the handsome young driver disappeared for two hours behind the closed door of an upstairs bedroom, which contained a king-sized bed.

When J. Edgar and the driver, who was called "Rick," emerged from upstairs, Scotty noticed that he wore a shoulder holster with a revolver strapped to his well-muscled body. Apparently "Rick" was J. Edgar's bodyguard, perhaps a young agent at the FBI.

In his memoirs, Scotty wrote, "So the rumors were true." According to his account, sex began after an elegant dinner, Ted pairing off with Scotty, and J. Edgar disappearing inside the Blue Room upstairs with the young bodyguard.

"The evening didn't end there," Scotty said. "We swapped around a bit—no group sex, no gangbanging, no foursomes, no orgies. Everyone was one-on-one, with two couples going their separate ways" and having their separate sexual encounters.

He claimed that he had sex with J. Edgar five times that weekend and just as often with Ted. Both Ted and J. Edgar tried out Rick, but Scotty was not asked to sample his charms. In bed, Scotty claimed, J. Edgar was "a very pleasant and gentle man," unlike his public image, but he gave no more tantalizing details. Did they kiss? Was J. Edgar a top or bottom? How was the penis? Cut or uncut? Large? Average? Small?

During the weekend, Ted opened the locked door to a spare bedroom filled with a large wardrobe of women's clothing. Scotty claimed he was asked to serve Saturday night dinner in drag. He also said that J. Edgar appeared that evening in costly gowns, changing his selection of wardrobe two or three times that night.

On Monday morning, Scotty said goodbye to Ted, J. Edgar, and his young driver, as he headed back to Los Angeles. He wrote that Ted remained a client for years "but I never saw Hoover ever again."

Chapter Eighteen

JAMES DEAN AND THE WOOLWORTH HEIRESS

The "Five-and-Dime's Poor Little Rich Girl"
BARBARA HUTTON

LOVERS AND RACECAR DRIVERS JIMMY & BARBARA'S SON,

LANCE REVENTLOW

Together on the Fast Lane to Early Deaths

After a visit to New York, Jimmy returned to Hollywood in January of 1955. On his first night back, he headed for Googie's, his regular hangout. He didn't know who he would meet there: Vampira? Tony Perkins? Paul Newman?

What he did not expect was an encounter with one of the most famous—and richest—women in the world, as well known at the time as Hitler or Ernest Hemingway.

In another part of town, the Woolworth heiress, Barbara Hutton, had dined with her son, Lance Reventlow, and his date at the Brown Derby. After she bid Lance goodbye, her driver drove her back to the Beverly Hills Hotel, where she had rented Bungalow 6. On this particular night, she felt alone and abandoned. She envied the burgeoning romance of her son, despite her realization that the flame would flicker before dawn, when he would be off to his next conquest.

[Descended from robber barons, Barbara Hutton was called both "The Poor Little Rich Girl," because of her troubled life, or "The Million Dollar Baby." Author Truman Capote labeled her "the most incredible phenomenon of the century."

Her former companion, Philip Von Rensselaer, said, "She lived a gold-plated life. Her extravagance was fabled. She spent today's equivalent of $250 million in a decade. Her parties, clothes, jewelry, and furs—all flaunted during

the Depression years—made her the envy of women around the world. Her romances with royalty and celebrities were widely publicized, as she went from tabloid headline to tabloid headline, most often with disastrous results."]

In Bungalow 6, Hutton found that the management of the Beverly Hills Hotel had left complimentary bottles of Pouilly-Fuissé and Château Lafite-Rothschild, along with a basket of lush tropical fruit. But she didn't want to drink alone. She had heard of a nearby hangout, Googie's, which was popular with young actors, a gathering place for what was called "The Hollywood Stars of Tomorrow."

A catch-all rendezvous for jobs, lovers, pharmaceuticals, or trouble, Googie's sat adjacent to its equally famous counterpart, Schwabs, the most famous drugstore in Hollywood.

Both establishments were hangouts for Jimmy, but it was at Googie's that the second-richest woman in the world "discovered" Jimmy one night when she went slumming.

In many ways, she felt she belonged to the past. Seized with an impulse, she called her driver, instructing him to take her there, a location adjacent to the famous Schwabs Drugstore. She wanted to take a look, perhaps to encounter the Errol Flynn or Cary Grant of tomorrow.

She wore a mink coat, a diamond necklace, and a silvery gown she'd purchased from Chanel in Paris. As she entered the crowded, boisterous establishment, she was tempted to leave at once. It was not her kind of place, making her feel that at the age of forty-three, she was old enough to be the mother of every patron in the room.

The notorious life of Barbara Hutton has been the subject of many novels, films, and biographies. She led a lonely life in spite of the fact that she was surrounded by the rich and famous. She was a woman who enjoyed vast wealth and seven husbands (all of them disastrous). She lamented, "I never found lasting love."

The jukebox in the corner was playing a song by Jo Stafford. There was also a cigarette vending machine. The place had the aura of a bistro, with red-and-white checkered tablecloths resting on the too small tables.

She spotted only one empty table and headed there. On the way, she almost tripped on the outstretched legs of a rather sullen but handsome young man. He wore blue jeans and a black turtleneck, with dusty boots blocking access to the only available table. He stared at her through steel-rimmed glasses.

"Sorry," he said, rising to his feet, just as a young man and a woman sat down at that lone table. "Please join me?" he said. "I'm Jimmy Dean."

He eased her into a chair opposite him. "And I'm Barbara Hutton."

“Barbara Hutton!” he exclaimed. “In a place like this? So you’re the lady who gets richer every time a register rings at Woolworth’s.”

“Well, not that directly,” she said, looking up at the waiter who took her order for a glass of white wine.

“You don’t know this,” he said, “but I used to work for you. For a very brief time, I was employed at one of your five-and-dimes in L.A., demonstrating these new can openers. I wasn’t very good at it, and I was fired.”

“My dear boy, had I seen you, I would have immediately promoted you to general manager. Actually you don’t look like a boy who should be forced to work at all. I’m amazed some eagle-eyed collector of pretty young boys hasn’t kidnapped you and put you in a boudoir where you’d be permanently dressed in red silk pajamas, lying on the world’s most expensive linen.”

“I’m flattered.”

“You could be the poster boy for the clean-cut all-American boy,” she said.

“I’m not that clean-cut,” he told her.

“I certainly am not either,” she said. “If you read the newspapers, you know I’ve led a notorious life. Tallulah Bankhead once told me, ‘Babe, you ended up with Lucrezia Borgia’s poisonous heart, and you inherited Cleopatra’s unsatisfied lust. Imagine taking on forty of her palace guards in just one night.”

“That Tallulah,” he said. “I know her.

Von Reventlow, sadist and opportunist, with Barbara.

“Is that *know* as in ‘David knew Bathsheba?’” she asked.

“Something like that,” he said. “But I’m not a kiss-and-tell guy.”

“If you went for Tallulah, does that mean that I, too, have a chance?”

“The odds are in your favor, lady,” he said.

“And what might you be doing now?” she asked.

Rich, chic, decadent, and rancorously envied by virtually everyone during the Depression, Barbara Hutton is depicted above, in costume, at a party with the Duke of Buckingham in drag.

“I’m an actor,” he said. “I studied at U.C.L.A. I’ve already had my first break. I just completed a picture at Warners. I’m not famous now. But when the movie is released, I’ll be a big deal in Hollywood.”

“Who directed it?” she asked.

“Elia Kazan.”

“Oh, the commie Jew,” she said. “I never mess with people like that.”

“I’ve heard of your son, Lance Reventlow,” he said. “He’s about five years younger than me, and he’s very well known in car-racing circles. I share his enthusiasm for the sport.”

“Then you must meet him sometime,” she said. “You’ll be discreet and not tell him where you met his mother.”

“Of course,” he answered. “You can count on that. Frankly, I didn’t think Googie’s was your kind of place,”

“Tonight I’m slumming, which I’ve been known to do on occasions. I have a sense of adventure.”

“I thought a famous lady like you would get all sorts of invitations in Hollywood,” he said.

“I did tonight, but most of them were boring. I looked at them on my coffee table. I had my choice: a guest of Jack Warner, Joan Crawford, George Cukor, Jimmy Stewart, or Merle Oberon.”

“Of the people named, I’ve had two of them,” Jimmy said.

“My, for a little boy in blue jeans, you do make the rounds,” she said. “I’m impressed…and not many things impress me anymore.”

An entire two hours passed before Jimmy and Hutton left Googie’s together. Out on the street, he told her to dismiss her chauffeur and hop onto the rear seat of his motorcycle.

“I’m up for that,” she said. “A first for me.”

“By the way, I hope you have a passkey if we go by a Woolworth’s along the way,” he said. “I need some razors and shaving cream. Maybe some after shave lotion.”

“Tomorrow, if you give me your address, I’ll ship you a year’s supply.”

They headed into the night on a hair-raising ride through the streets of Los Angeles, with her hair billowing in the wind. “If you pass this test, you can pass any test,” he yelled back at her. She held tightly to his body.

After they returned to her hotel, he walked her to her bungalow. She didn’t exactly invite him in, but he entered anyway, sitting down on her sofa and placing his booted feet on her coffee table. There, he spotted the two bottles of wine. “Let’s knock off some of this grape juice. It doesn’t look like the rotgut stuff I’m used to.”

As Hutton’s biographer, C. David Heymann, would write: “With Dean, Barbara felt oddly free, whimsical, aggressive yet feminine. His effect on her was agreeably bewildering.”

As they talked, these two very different young man and middle-aged woman developed an amazing rapport. He seemed genuinely interested in her background, and for a while, she relished opening up and talking about her life, something she almost never did, even with close friends. As she’d later say, “Sometimes you can tell a stranger more than you can a close friend, who is more likely to judge you.”

Heymann wrote; “Dean was blessed with a deep sense of curiosity. He seemed avidly interested in learning about Hutton’s celebrated past, her friends, her poetry, her travels.”

He might also have added, “and her marriages.”

“Dean listened for long periods,” Heymann claimed, “allowing her to develop her thoughts in an unhurried way.”

At one point, Hutton quit talking about herself and asked him why he wanted to risk his life by riding a motorcycle so dangerously.

“I feel exhilarated taking wild chances,” he said. “I’m pursuing what cyclists call the peak moment of intense excitement. Intense for its own sake, a dangerous thing that only men can feel, and can find only with each other.”

“Are you a homosexual?” she asked.

“You can decide that for yourself later tonight when I crawl into bed with you,” he said. “I have this philosophy of life. Real life means experience. That means experiencing everything without restrictions or moral restraints.”

“That reminds me of this man I married in December and am planning to divorce in February,” she said. “Porfirio Rubirosa, the Dominican playboy. During our brief marriage, he spent most of his time in bed with Zsa Zsa Gabor. The first time I saw him naked, I screamed in horror. It was something that belonged on a donkey. I much prefer the more modest penis of another of my previous husbands, Cary Grant. It wasn’t too intimidating, and effective.”

Jimmy Rejects Hutton’s Offer to Become Her Toy Boy

Hutton recorded what happened next in her notebook, a document whose contents were later revealed to the press:

> "*It was late and he was drunk, and I was drunk, so I asked him to stay. He removed his shirt and pants and climbed into bed with me. I snuggled up next to him. He made love and then we made love again: It seemed the right and natural thing to do, although I couldn't help but wonder about his sexuality. He talked so fervently about men and adventure and masculinity. We talked and made love until long after the sun rose. In the morning, he ordered black coffee and scrambled eggs in the dining room.*"

What Hutton left out of her diary was that during breakfast, she made him an offer. With the understanding that she'd soon be divorcing Rubirosa, she wanted him to become a sort of toy boy. "My whole life, I had a dream that was not fulfilled, and that was to belong to someone and to some place," she said. "You could be that someone. I loved the way we could relate to each other. With me, you could set out to explore the world, sampling the best it has to offer. We'd live in palaces, on yachts, and I'd buy you the finest racing cars in the world. We'd attend all the races together. Summers in Deauville. Winters in Palm Beach. A hideaway in Hawaii. You'd meet kings, princes, and princesses, more movie stars than you know already, prime ministers, dictators. Your wardrobe would make Cary Grant green with envy, and you've read what a dresser he is."

"Sorry, Barbara, but as tempting as the offer is, I must turn it down," he said. "I'm the wrong guy for you. I can never belong to anybody, even myself. That's right: At times, I feel a stranger to myself. I've got to live out my destiny. And that is to be a god damn fucking movie star. I know how silly and shallow that is, but that is who I am. You were married to Grant, one of the biggest movie stars in the world, so you must have some idea of what I am talking about. I'm hardly proud of my dream, but I'm heading out to fulfill it anyway. I'm ready to face all the heartbreak, disillusionment, the glitter, the glamour, the phoniness—all for a bit of celluloid."

Concealing her disappointment, and almost holding back tears, Hutton later recorded in her notebook: "I watched as Jimmy climbed onto his motor-cycle and disappeared around the bend. *Forever."*

***

Although Jimmy had rejected Hutton's very generous offer, he became intrigued at the idea of meeting and getting to know her son, Lance Reventlow. He was not only closer to Jimmy in age, but shared his enthusiasm for car racing. Jimmy had seen his picture in the tabloids, and found him "sexy, attractive, and perhaps susceptible to the charm of 'ol Jimmy Dean."

He'd heard plenty of stories about Lance. His home was dubbed "Camp Climax," because of the notorious orgies and daisy chains staged there, both gay and straight. Gossip columnist Louella Parsons had written that "Lance Reventlow invented the swinging jet set."

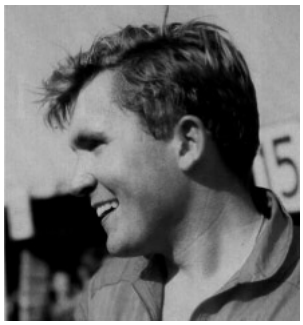
Somehow, Jimmy wanted to get connected with his lifestyle.

A few weeks after seducing his mother, Jimmy met Lance at a rally for racecar drivers, somewhere in the desert between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. The two handsome young men formed an instant attraction and friendship and went off to spend the weekend together at some remote little retreat on cactus-studded grounds.

As Jimmy later confessed to Stanley Haggart at his second home in Laurel Canyon, "What was I do to when meeting Barbara Hutton and Lance Reventlow? What would any red-blooded American boy do in those circumstances? I fucked both of them."

The relationship he formed with Lance would last until the final hour of Jimmy's life—*literally* that final hour. As Haggart recalled, "I'd known Jimmy for some time, both in New York and in Hollywood, but I'd never seen him take such interest in the backgrounds of anyone until he met Hutton and later, her son, Lance."

"They were so different from him, yet he bonded with them. He seemed to have the same curiosity about them that he'd have had if they'd been space aliens from Mars. He might have settled for a few hours of dialogue with Hutton, but, with Lance, he wanted to know everything. Out in the desert, Jimmy learned a lot about Lance's life, including its tragedies."



Lance Reventlow was as much of a racing car enthusiast as James Dean

As Jimmy later told Haggart, "I'm more sexually compatible with Lance than I have ever been with anyone. But that doesn't mean we're setting up housekeeping together. Far from it. We're both too eager to have a lot of other experiences. Maybe when we've satisfied our curiosity elsewhere, we'll ride off into the desert right before the sun sets, and I mean that literally and symbolically. We'll become two old desert rats tearing up the desert in an old vehicle of some sort."

"Cary Grant Was More than My Stepfather.
HE WAS MY LOVER, TOO."

—LANCE REVENTLOW TO JIMMY

Unlike Jimmy, Lance Reventlow was born in 1936 in a London townhouse into a life of spectacular wealth and privilege. Hutton may have been a kind and protective mother, but his father was a sadistic Prussian-Danish count, Court Heinrich Eberhard Erdmann Georg von Haugwitz-Reventlow.

Hutton had previously married (in 1933) a gold-digger, Alexis Mdivani, a self-styled Georgian prince whom she divorced in 1935, and who died that same year in a violent car accident

[In reference to Mdivani's death and the new man in Hutton's life, international headlines blared—THE PRINCE IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE COUNT.]

Her marriage to her aristocrat, Count Reventlow, was marked by violence and deep humiliations. In Paris at the Ritz Hotel, he raped her on the floor of their suite. In her diary, she later wrote, "When he finished with me, he dragged me by the hair into the bathroom. 'You've always had an interest in scatology, Barbara. Now's your big change to experience it.' He forced me to sit on his lap while he excreted into the toilet. Then he locked me in the bathroom overnight."

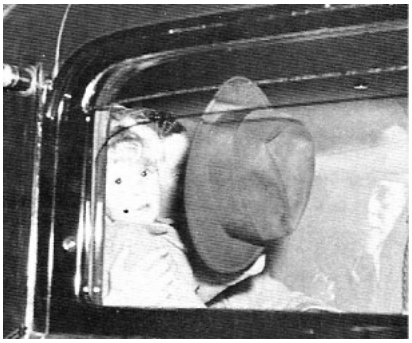
Marriage to the Danish count would not only cost Hutton her U.S. citizenship, but a $4 million bundle. Their divorce was said to have given England "its greatest sensations since King Edward VIII renounced the throne eighteen months ago for the love of Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson." Their divorce decree wasn't finalized until March 6, 1941 since King Christian of Denmark had to sign it.

A supremely privileged childhood: Lance, 15 weeks old, after his christening.

In the wake of the kidnapping of the Charles Lindbergh baby, Hutton hired security guards and a nanny to protect her son wherever he went. Almost monthly, she received ominous letters from deranged people threatening to kidnap Lance and hold him for ransom.

After divorcing her count, Hutton married Cary Grant at Lake Arrowhead, California, on July 8, 1942, during one of the darkest years of World War II. News of the event immediately redefined them, after Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt, as the most famous couple in America. Almost immediately, the press nicknamed the couple "Cash 'n' Cary."

Lance was just six years old at the time his mother took another husband. Instead of resenting his stepfather, as many boys do in such circumstances, it was "love at first sight" between Lance and the handsome actor.



Lance, terrified, in 1939, after being spirited away from a crowd.

Guests at Hutton's mansion were astonished to see Lance running to greet Grant after his return from a hard day at the studio. The boy would plant a kiss on Grant's lips that "seemed to linger forever—much too long," in the opinion of one of Hutton's guests. He immediately wrote the count about this indiscretion, claiming that "I suspect something is going on here."

Hutton with Grant as newlyweds...suffering and anguish lay in their futures.

That opinion was reinforced when Grant would disappear upstairs with Lance for a long, leisurely bath that often stretched out for an hour or so. Hutton would be furious when Grant would not even show up for dinner to join her fellow guests.

By his seventh year, Lance was calling Grant “General,” and demanding that his mother’s seamstress sew the words, “Lance Grant,” into all his clothing. Under Grant’s protective wing, Lance blossomed, telling the General all his secrets.

In the summer of 1944, Lance was sent to New York to live in an apartment with his father. It was a time of dreadful loneliness for the boy, who claimed his father would beat him so severely that he couldn’t walk for a day.

Back in Hollywood, Grant told Elsa Maxwell: “Strange how the little chap has gotten under my skin. When he’s away from us, I can never get him out of my mind.”

Under threat of brutal beatings, the count forced the boy to reveal the most intimate details going on in the Grant/Hutton household. Breaking down in tears, Lance confessed to his father that Grant had “touched me down there.” The count was well aware of Grant’s homosexual lifestyle, whose details had been especially visible during the 1930s when Grant had lived openly with his gay lover, Randolph Scott. The couple had done little to conceal their romantic involvement with each other, even posing together for revealing pictures.

Infuriated, the count decided to take legal action. He was about to embark on what would become one of the most bitter custody battles in the history of café society.

In his dossier, the count charged that Grant had consistently used “foul language” around his son. Even more damaging, the count charged that Lance had told him that the movie star had “fondled my son in an inappropriate way.” Reventlow lawyers eventually persuaded the count not to press that charge of child abuse, which would have made headlines around the world and possibly damaged Grant’s stellar career for all time, as similar charges would have that effect upon Michael Jackson in the 90s. But the count demanded nonetheless that his son be prevented from speaking to Grant.

Fearful of a court ruling that could go against him, the count “kidnapped” his son and expatriated him to Canada. Eventually, lawyers persuaded the count to drop his charges and return Lance to Hutton and Grant, providing the heiress parted with $500,000. Back in Hollywood, Grant confessed to Elsa Maxwell, “Lance is the only thing holding this marriage together.”

In 1945, after Hutton was reunited with her son, she launched divorce proceedings against Grant. After it was finalized, the couple agreed to be friends, and she asked Grant if he would continue his role as Lance’s unofficial guardian. The actor readily agreed.

Lance discovered the world of Grand Prix motor racing at the age of 12, when Hutton, in 1947, married Prince Igor Troubetzkoy, who’d won the Targa Florio (a hysterical, haphazardly organized series of automobile races across the public roads of southern Italy) that year. From that moment on, car racing would dominate Lance’s life until one day he suddenly abandoned it.

At the dawn of the 50s, Lance was growing up and becoming an attractive and sought-after young man. He stood six feet, had light brown hair, and an athletic build. Grant would often get angry at him if he chose to spend his weekends away from him.

As such, Grant would develop a bitter resentment of James Dean.

“Living Well Is the Best Revenge”

—Barbara Hutton

“I am earthbound,” Lance told Jimmy one weekend in Tijuana, where they had gone to watch the bullfights. “Barbara lives among the pink clouds. I will never understand her—the spending binges, her love affairs, many with guys younger than me, her disastrous marriages, her incessant globe-trotting, never finding a place she likes.”

During his private moments with Jimmy, Lance often talked so frequently about his mother that he seemed obsessed with her. “What chance did she have? Her mother committed suicide, and Barbara found the body. She was just seven years old when she became the richest girl in the world.”

“As she grew up, and as those counter assistants toiled at Woolworth outlets ten hours a day, Barbara went shopping for husbands. She longed to be high born, so she set her sights on marrying a man with a title—hence, my father.”

“Lance might think his mother strange, but he has a few weird moments, too,” Jimmy told Stanley Haggart. “One night, he threw a hugely expensive drag party for some gay friends. All of us dressed up like gals. Lance, who dressed like Marie Antoinette, was showing off some necklace that had once belonged to her.”

[Presented to Hutton as a wedding gift on the occasion of her (disastrous) first marriage in 1933, it was a necklace of 53 pearls that had been worn by Queen Marie Antoinette of France. Described in the press as “one of the rarest pieces of jewelry ever sold by Cartier,” it was said to mark the beginning of her obsessive passion for pearls.]

“Barbara drives me up the wall,” Lance said. “I get god damn tired of the fawning parasites around her. She collects a prince her, a sheik there, a military general, some English peers, a few tennis bums, and a lot of broken-down Hollywood rotters. She loves European titles. As for cash, no matter how much people hate her for it, she believes that if you’ve got it, flaunt it.”

“One of her lovers told me that she was incapable of being satisfied. She demanded more and more. And a man can only give so much in a day and one long, hardworking night.”

It is believed that Cary Grant learned about Lance’s affair with Jimmy before Hutton did. He may have been the one who tipped her off, as both of them occasionally talked on the phone, mostly about their concerns for Lance.

When she heard about her son’s affair with Jimmy, Hutton did not fly into the jealous rage that Grant had experienced. She’d been surrounded by homosexuals all her life, and had affairs with a few of them.

She had been far more shocked when she discovered a love letter that Lance had written to Grant. Even in her world of flamboyantly loose morals, she had deemed it inappropriate for her son to be sexually involved with her former husband.

Initially, though, she had raised no objections, telling he friend, the tobacco heiress Doris Duke, “If Lance must be with a man, let it be Cary and not some of those hangers-on and race car bums he associates with.”

As for Lance’s sexual and emotional involvement with Jimmy, the hero of a distant one-night stand with her, she seemed tolerant: “Lance has transferred his crush on Cary onto James Dean. I understand that, and in a way, it’s an improvement. He’s closer to Jimmy’s own age. The relationship doesn’t include anything bordering on incest with his stepfather. Another thing, and I should know: Jimmy Dean is easy to love, and I think Lance will enjoy him.”

By then, Hutton fully understood who James Dean, the movie star, was.

Was It Incestuous?

Ferociously Jealous, Cary Grant Resents Jimmy’s Influence on “My Son”

Cary Grant was adored by millions. For those who knew him, however, his glamorous facade concealed the tortured, closeted homosexual who lived behind that shield. The most revelatory statement about him was made by the actor himself. “There was no such thing as a Cary Grant until I invented him.”

It seemed inevitable that Jimmy would meet Grant, and inevitable that Grant would want to “size up the competition.”

As such, when all of them were involved in separate venues in or near Palm Springs (Grant was recuperating, alone, from Hollywood stress, and Lance and Jimmy were working one of the racecar rallies in the desert nearby), the older star asked Lance "to bring Jimmy by for a private dinner."

It was never firmly established, but Grant might have seen Jimmy, without actually meeting him, before that dinner. With Roddy McDowall, long before he became famous, Jimmy had once been a porn performer at a raucous all-male party at the rented home of Cecil Beaton in Los Angeles. It had been attended mostly by British expatriates, including Noël Coward. Grant was rumored to have been among the spectators that drunken night, watching Jimmy perform.

Like every other insider in Hollywood, Jimmy had already heard plenty of rumors, mostly about Grant's long-enduring affair with Randolph Scott. Consequently Jimmy concluded that Grant must have been at least bisexual, based in part on Grant's marital histories with Virginia Cherrill, Barbara Hutton, and Betsy Drake. Grant was also said to have maintained affairs with Howard Hughes, Gary Cooper, Noël Coward, Doris Duke, Cole Porter, Mae West, and Ginger Rogers. He was quoted as saying, "I think making love is the best form of exercise."

Over drinks, Jimmy and Grant did not get off on a good footing, partly because Grant insisted on delivering his opinions about one of his nemeses, Marlon Brando. He revealed that he had been one of the original "angels" who put up money for the Broadway version of *A Streetcar Named Desire.* "I was among the first on opening night to rush backstage to congratulate Marlon on his brilliant performance as Stanley Kowalski."

Randolph Scott *(left)* with Cary Grant. Both actors had lived together on or off for more than a decade of domestic bliss, interrupted by an occasional co-habitation with a woman.

"I tried to be his friend," Grant said. "Months later, when he was in L.A., I invited him to join me for a weekend at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. I thought we'd get to know each other better. I was more than generous, telling him that it was time for old guys like me to step aside and make way for younger upstarts such as himself and Montgomery Clift."

Jimmy later told Lance that he thought those words, although veiled, had been aimed directly at him, especially when Grant added, "and God knows what other actor jerks are waiting in the wings to take our places."

[From the subsequent gossip that emerged from that weekend at the Fairmont, it appeared that Grant made sexual advances to Brando and was rebuffed. That seemed to have contributed to some residue of bitterness in the older actor.]

Grant continued: "I expect that in the 1950s, movie audiences will want a very different type of talent from what was appealing in the 1930s and wartime 40s—hands-on, down-to-earth men like Spencer Tracy, Jimmy Stewart, Bogie, Edward G. Robinson, and me. You didn't have to be a pretty face back then. Now we have Tab Hunter. Need I go on?"

"Are you including me in that roster?" Jimmy asked.

"Since you brought it up, no, I am not," he said. "You're a different case. But I hope you don't mind a veteran actor giving you some advice. You're too much of a Brando clone, and that's not good for your career. He's better at playing Brando than you are. You really need to forge ahead and create your own identity on the screen. Like I did. I was an original, like Brando himself. I didn't imitate anybody else. In fact, tons of actors now imitate me, and in some cases, publicly ridicule me—Tony Curtis, for example with all those damn impressions of me he does, and that damn 'Judy, Judy, Judy." *[For more than fifty years, Grant impersonators attributed that repetition to Grant, since he was said to have uttered the line in one of his films.]*

"I'm sorry you have that opinion," Jimmy said, rising up from the sofa in Grant's suite. "I've decided I'm not hungry tonight." Then he looked over at Lance. "Come on, let's say good night. I have other plans for us."

"Don't go, Lance," Grant said.

This time, Lance did not obey Grant. He walked out with Jimmy.

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Lance and Grant would later reconcile their differences, but Jimmy would never see Grant again.

The next day, Grant got in touch with Lance and urged him to drop Jimmy. "I don't know what you see in the lout. He's a total shit. A bad influence on you. Please get rid of him. You're too fine a person to hang out with riff-raff like that."

As Lance later said, "I didn't have to give Jimmy up. I was with him until the bitter end. Life gave up on him. Whether we would have remained friends, much less lovers, will never be known now."

Grant's hostility toward Brando and Jimmy once spilled over during an interview with a reporter: "I have no respect for this new breed of actors, especially those who pretend to be Method actors. What does that mean? A pair of dirty jeans, a lot of pot smoking, rampant sex, and a total lack of morals and decency."

"I hold these new idols of the screen in contempt. I detest their style of acting. Actually, it's not acting, it's posturing. That includes Brando and Monty Clift, and certainly that God awful James Dean. Under what haystack in Indiana did Jack Warner find that little devil?"

"My suggestion is to put Clift, Dean, and Brando in the same movie, and let them itch, scratch, mumble, and duke it out. When they've finished killing each other off, bring back Jimmy Stewart, Spencer, and me to start making some real movies instead of the garbage they're turning out now."

Whatever Happened to Lance Reventlow?

Like his friend and lover, James Dean, Lance—who continued his pursuit of race-car driving—would also suffer a fiery, violent, and youthful death.

In 1957, two years after Jimmy's death, he flew to Europe, where he purchased a Maserati, which he crashed soon thereafter. Amazingly, he escaped unharmed from the tangled wreckage.

Back in California, Lance established his own company, turning out Chevrolet-powered race cars, which he marketed as "Scarabs." He told his chief engineer, Phil Remington, "If Jimmy had lived, he'd be working right with me, turning out Scarabs. That is, when he wasn't making a great picture."

[During the lifetime of the company that produced them, four of the racecars were spectacular failures and four were astonishing successes. Reaching their greatest fame and exposure in 1958, each was the brainchild of Lance Reventlow, then in his early 20s and his chief engineer, Phil Remington, both of whom were committed to the concept of an All-American racecar whose technical specifications would surpass those of anything produced in Europe at the time. To that effect, from the premises of an auto shop in West Los Angeles, he combined a 301-cubic-inch "overbored" adaptation of a Chevrolet V-8 that channeled power through a Corvette's four-speed gearbox. All of this, usually emblazoned in trademark colors of blue and white, were mounted onto a light aluminum chassis weighing only 127 pounds and sheathed with an aerodynamic and very expensive aluminum skin. Startup money for this dangerous, experimental, and horrendously expensive endeavor was almost certainly provided by Hutton. His mother had given him a $2 million trust fund, which he'd cashed in.]

With his Scarab, Lance won the 1958 Governor's Cup Race, and later a Grand Prix, using his low, shovel-nosed racer that outran Europe's long dominant Maseratis, Jaguars, and Ferraris. It was the Reventlow Scarab that competed in the 252-mile Nassau Trophy Race.

In 1960, perhaps to establish his heterosexual credentials, he asked the beautiful actress, Jill St. John, to marry him. When she accepted, he planted a spectacular ring—set with 100 diamonds—on her finger.

The marriage lasted for three turbulent years.

St. John was known for her high I.Q., but at her divorce hearing, she testified that Lance called her "stupid and incompetent" and insisted that she participate in dangerous sports.

The following year, he married Cheryl Holdridge, a former Mouseketeer in the Walt Disney's children's TV series, *The Mickey Mouse Club* (1955-1959). He showered her with mink coats and diamonds, but told Grant that she was still "in love with Elvis Presley."

In 1962, Lance visited his mother at her Japanese-style mansion in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Her cousin, Jimmy

Donahue was there. Lance was in a belligerent mood, wanting to confront her with her many failures as a mother. He also found it offensive that she was shacked up with Lloyd Franklin, a man younger than Lance. Looking for his mother, Lance asked Donahue: “where’s that drunken cunt of a mother of mine?”

Gossipy Donahue immediately reported to her what her son had said. That afternoon Barbara instructed her lawyers to cut off Lance “without a cent.” That included his trust fund as well.

With almost no money, he sold his California home and bought a small place in Benedict Canyon. During this troubled time, Grant spent many a night just holding Lance in his arms to comfort him. As Grant later told Cukor, “It wasn’t about sex—it was about love.”

Lance recovered from his mother’s belligerence. He told friends, “Regardless of what happens to me, Cary is always there for me.”

In the last hour of his life, on July 24, 1972, Lance, who maintained a home in Aspen, set out with real estate brokers to examine the topography of a region of Colorado, near Aspen, that seemed ripe for the construction of a ski resort and hotel. He was a passenger, not the pilot, of a Cessna-206. The actual pilot was an inexperienced 27-year-old student pilot who flew into a blind canyon and stalled the aircraft. While trying to turn it around, the small plane plunged to the ground, killing Lance and the other men aboard.

Grant later told friends, “It was the single darkest day of my life.” He experienced something akin to a nervous breakdown, but pulled himself together to fly to Aspen for the memorial service which had been organized by his widow, Cheryl.

The next few months were very hard on Grant, who entered a deep, dark depression that he tried—rather successfully—to conceal. Close friends said he was almost suicidal.

“He was my son,” he told friends. “Don’t even use the word ‘step’ in my presence. I will love that boy until the day I die. If I’ve known any joy in my life, it is the hours, days, and weeks I’ve spent with Lance. Just the two of us. If there is a God, he got jealous of such a bond—and had to take Lance from me. God succeeded in doing what James Dean failed to do.”

The saddest picture Hutton ever saw was the wreckage of that Cessna-206 that had crashed onto that bleak mountainside outside Aspen, taking her only child, who died, estranged from her, at the age of thirty-six.

She later said, “Lance surrendered the greatest gift a young man can, an unfulfilled life. I wish I could have been a better mother to him. I will never smile again.”

For the rest of her life, she obsessed over his death, somehow blaming herself for the accident. “I bear more guilt because of my cruelty to him than the pilot of that plane.”

“After Lance’s death, Barbara walked down a stairway to a dark gulf from which she never came back,” Grant said.

Chapter Nineteen

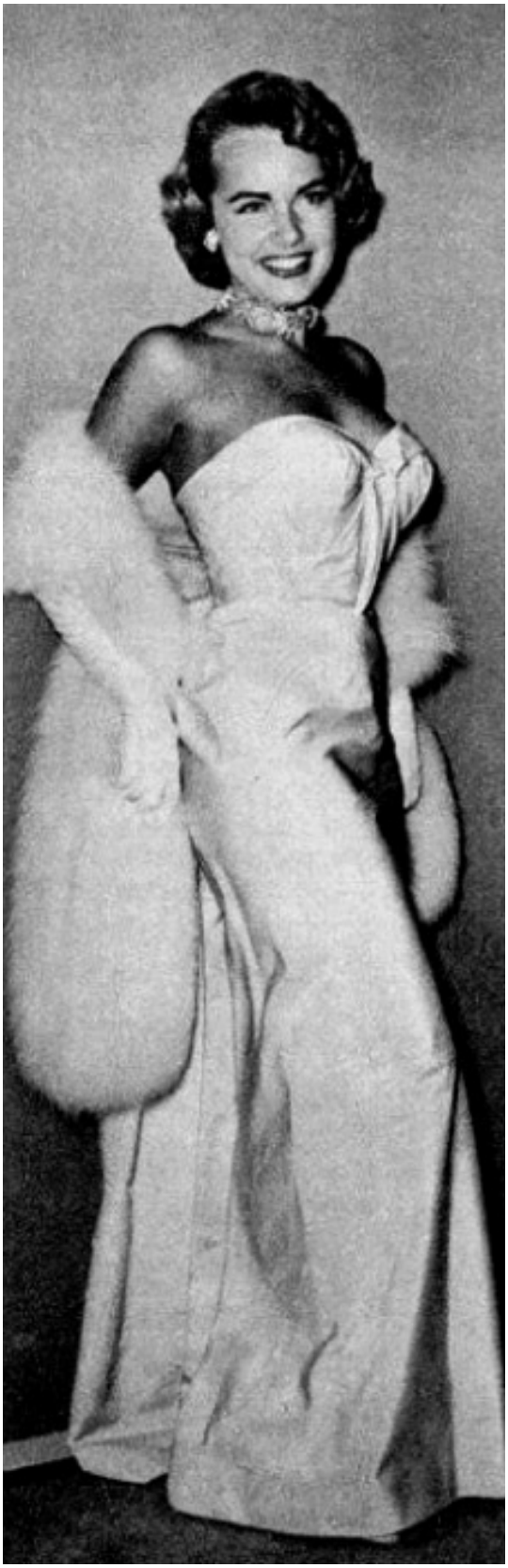
THE BEAUTY AND THE BILLIONAIRE: JAMES DEAN "AVIATES" WITH

HOWARD HUGHES
& TERRY MOORE

Her "Alligator Love Call" Lures Jimmy In and Out of Bed With "The American Emperor"

AMERICA'S RICHEST ECCENTRIC DEMONSTRATES WHAT UNLIMITED MONEY CAN DO IN HOLLYWOOD

As a new Hollywood agent, Dick Clayton was placing his hopes on what he called "my two stars of tomorrow. James Dean and Terry Moore are 'key race horses' in my stable of actors."



Terry Moore... tickling Jimmy's nose.

When Jimmy heard that, with a grin, he asked Clayton, “Am I a stud stallion or a pony?”

“What do *you* think?” Clayton answered.

Those two future stars met for the first time in Clayton’s office early in 1954. At the time, Terry—an actress formed and nurtured by the entertainment industry since childhood—was farther along with her film career than Jimmy.

[The petite, occasionally potty-mouthed Terry had been born in Los Angeles two years before Jimmy. As a child model, she had made her film debut in 1940 in Maryland*, in which she was billed under her real name of Helen Koford. The part called for a child actress who could stand up on a moving, barebacked horse, not fall off, and deliver lines convincingly as Walter Brennan’s granddaughter.*

Later, with a new name, Judy Ford, she played a younger version of Ingrid Bergman in Gaslight *(1944).*

Her really big break had come as “Terry Moore” when she’d co-starred with Glenn Ford in the Columbia comedy, The Return of October *(1948). In that film, her character had to convey the belief that her kindly, recently deceased uncle had been reincarnated as a horse.*

It was this movie that brought her to the attention of the billionaire aviator and movie mogul, Howard Hughes. He would radically change and influence her life for all time.

Her first dramatic success had already happened before she’d met Jimmy. In 1952, she’d been cast as the young boarder whose shapeliness obsesses Burt Lancaster in Come Back Little Sheba, *based on a script by William Inge. The role earned her an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress.*

Ultimately, it wasn’t Terry, but Sheba’s *star, Shirley Booth, who walked off with an Oscar (for Best Actress). Booth’s performance as an ill-bred but good-natured housewife was reviewed as “plump, loveable, and possessed of a distinctively New York accent.”]*

On that bright sunny day in 1954 in Clayton’s office, slovenly dressed Jimmy was asleep on a window seat. Terry walked over to him and slightly tickled his nose with the cord of a Venetian blind.

He jumped up and, then, to her surprise, he tackled her. Clayton’s secretary was shocked to see them rolling over and over together on the floor. At first, she thought Jimmy was raping Terry, until she heard them giggling like schoolchildren.

Finally, he helped her to her feet, introducing himself as James Dean. “I know you,” he said to her. “Elia Kazan directed me in *East of Eden*, and he told me all about you when he directed *Man on a Tightrope* (1953) with you in Germany.”

“I hope he didn’t tell you *all* about me,” Terry said, half-jokingly, “at least not anything about when he tried to seduce me. He crawled in on my right, but within a few minutes, my mother—seemingly emerging from nowhere—crawled in on the other side.”

“Oh no, such a sordid tale!” he said.

She would later remember her first impression of Jimmy in a memoir:

> *“As he hurried toward his destiny, he had to do everything now. Heaven could wait. Only it didn’t. He had a devastating smile and a perky nose. His eyes, which peered out from behind thick glasses, sparkled when he laughed. His head appeared too large for his body and was emphasized by his springy hair that waved in all directions. His clothes were unkempt, as were his scarred motorcycle boots.”*

That night, she invited him to her home for a family dinner, announcing to her mother, “Look what I found under a rock!” Jimmy didn’t evoke any of Terry’s previous pretty boy dates.

She was dating Hughes at the time, but he was away in Las Vegas. Jimmy ate heartily of the home-cooked meal. Then, sliding his chair back, he unfastened and partially unzipped his pants and let out a big belch. “I think that if my father hadn’t been so stunned, he would have thrown him out the window,” she said.

The next night, he accompanied Terry to a movie house screening *Man on a Tightrope.* The other stars included Fredric March, Gloria Grahame, and Adolphe Menjou. It was the story of a seedy traveling circus fleeing from Soviet-occupied Czechoslovakia to freedom in Bavaria. In several scenes, Terry had to ride circus horses and even an elephant. She had fallen off one of them, and—unable to rise from her position, prone on the ground—had to be rushed to a hospital in an ambulance. Prior to her fall, she’d been dizzy, and prone to early-morning nausea.

Two hours after her arrival at the hospital, she gave birth, prematurely, to a baby girl. All she remembered was the sound of a baby crying before she passed out. When she awakened, the baby was dead. The girl had lived for twelve hours, dying of septicemia.

After their first date, Jimmy more or less became Terry’s shadow. He accompanied her to the Goldwyn Studios,

where she did ballet stretches and *barre* work. Since he'd already trained with Katherine Dunham in New York, he joined her in the exercises.

Terry was a Mormon, and Jimmy put on his one blue suit, and even a tie, and escorted her to church. "He had a suit on, but he still wore those stinking old boots," she said.

She later said that Jimmy was sensitive about comparisons to Brando, a label that had haunted him since his days in New York. Before introducing him to her speech coach, Marie Stoddard, he warned her, "I don't want her to give me any shit about how I remind her of Brando. We dress as we please, and we ride motorcycles. Otherwise, the comparison ends there. Besides, my cock is longer than his."

He didn't reveal how he knew Brando's penile measurements.

Terry said to a friend that she saw through his act—"All that brooding, staring into his coffee at Googie's, mumbling if he spoke at all, acting strange, even hostile. Personally, I think all that posturing is premeditated. He's putting on an act to attract attention—that's all it is."

Early in his relationship with Terry, he wrote about her to Barbara Glenn, the girl he'd left waiting behind in New York.

"I like her, but she's a real bimbo. She's involved in this weird relationship with Howard Hughes. I don't get it. I can't imagine what the two of them do together, and I'm too afraid to ask. I'm told he screws both boys and girls. At least that's the poop running along the Hollywood grapevine."

Kazan remembered Terry in his memoirs, calling her "a gutsy little thing. She let it be known that she was the mistress of Howard Hughes, that plutocrat and scientific genius who made such a notable contribution to our war effort by designing the great, six-motored plywood seaplane, The Spruce Goose ."

[Of course, Kazan was being sarcastic. Hughes's monstrous plane was an abject and very expensive failure, later widely ridiculed as his "folly." Cost overruns later led to Hughes' investigation by a Senate subcommittee.]

Kazan also wrote, "Hughes had been paying Terry's household bills, so she'd be available to him whenever he needed her."

When Hughes finally returned from Las Vegas, he took Terry out on his first night back. She told him about Jimmy. "That will serve you right for picking up strays. You might catch something. Who knows? You might not be able to get rid of it."

She had told Jimmy that when she first met Hughes, she found him repulsive, "But he grows on you."

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During the fleeting few weeks they shared on-and-off (mostly off) together, Jimmy made an attempt to unlock the key to Hughes' personality, something that very few others had ever been able to decipher before.

At the time, many Hollywood insiders knew that despite Hughes' reputation as a womanizer, he maintained a discreet gay life, too.

Over the years, he'd been spotted dating such luminaries as Katharine Hepburn, Linda Darnell, Billie Dove, Ginger Rogers, Elizabeth Taylor, Lana Turner, Bette Davis, Marlene Dietrich, Tallulah Bankhead, Fay Wray, Gene Tierney, Carole Lombard, Norma Shearer, Hedy Lamarr, Rita Hayworth, Susan Hayward, Paulette Goddard, and Kathryn Grayson. Jean Harlow, Olivia de Havilland, and Marilyn Monroe were also among his conquests.

Among men, he dated from the A-list: Heartthrob Guy Madison, Randolph Scott, Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, and Cary Grant, who eventually evolved into his closest friend.

Hughes liked to spy on the women he was seeing. When Ava Gardner learned that she was being trailed, she became so incensed that she hit him over the head with a heavy ashtray, knocking him unconscious.

Hughes' many conquests also included Barbara Hutton, who had been married to Cary Grant, Hughes' longtime lover.

When Jimmy found out about that, he said, "Been there, done that."

One night at Terry's house, Jimmy learned to recognize the sound of an "alligator love call." He heard it after Hughes telephoned Terry and talked to her for about an hour. She ended their call with a strange moaning sound.

Jimmy asked her "What in hell was that?"

She told him that she'd been fascinated by alligators and had read a book by an authority on reptiles (Ross Allen) and that "I have the distinction of having the only love call that could equal his. I can stand at the edge of a swamp that otherwise appears empty. I let out my mating call and alligators miraculously appear from nowhere."

[As noted by zoologists, during mating season, male alligators—despite their lack of vocal chords—emit sounds

by inhaling air and then exhaling it in deep, rhythmical roars. These sounds attract females and warn other males to stay away. As documented on clips available on YouTube.com (keywords: alligator mating calls), the reptiles sometimes gather together in clusters for so-called "alligator dances," a feature of which is the soft, sometimes synchronized grunting, or "bellowing," described above.]

Hughes had heard her emulation of the reptilian love call and he had been intrigued. From then on, he tried to imitate the sound of alligator romance, and his attempt to replicate it had become their way of ending their phone calls.

Like Hughes, Jimmy, too, was intrigued and began to practice, even though whenever he sounded it off to his friends, they thought he had lost his mind.

William Bast claimed that it was "all too silly. Do you have dreams of having sex with an alligator? Don't lose your head over a 'gator.'"

Terry would later write a memoir entitled, *The Beauty and the Billionaire,* published in 1984, in which she detailed her relationship with Hughes. A few pages of it were devoted to Jimmy.

In it, she claimed that she began a relationship with the aviator in 1948, and that it lasted until 1956. Her most stunning revelation was her assertion that she married Hughes aboard a yacht cruising off the coast of Mexico in 1949. No evidence or documentation associated with that marriage has ever surfaced, but it is said that the Howard Hughes Estate made an undisclosed settlement on her, perhaps $350,000, in 1983, seven years after Hughes' death.

In her book, she depicted Hughes as a satyr, a sexually obsessive man who could never be faithful to just one person. She also claimed that he was a powerful lover, the best she had ever known.

When Jimmy first met Terry, she had ended her marriage to football hero Glenn Davis, who had previously been engaged to Elizabeth Taylor.

When Hughes had learned of the marriage, he had sent Terry, as a wedding present, a white bag filled with contraceptive diaphragms, for use during her honeymoon. He'd enclosed a note: "If you get pregnant, your nipples will turn brown instead of pretty pink, and you'll have stretch marks. In that case, I can never take you back."

Howard Hughes, the famous (and mentally unbalanced) aviator who flew both ways.

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As Jimmy and Terry's agent, Dick Clayton started to devise schemes to promote his new stars. At the time, "studio-arranged dates" were all the rage for stars under contract. Such unlikely pairings would match up a guy, Tab Hunter, for example, on a "date" with Debbie Reynolds, strictly for the production of photographs which would then be featured in fan magazines.

Columnist Sidney Skolsky was one of the first to write about this type of promotion. "The young Hollywood stars-to-be know that they have to attend every premiere, every party, and nightclub opening. Always on hand are the likes of Tab Hunter, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and Terry Moore. That trio would go to the opening of an envelope."

Nicholas Ray, Jimmy's director in *Rebel Without a Cause,* later said, "Jimmy had contempt for the Hollywood scene. He shied away from social conventions and traditional manners. 'They represent disguise, like wearing a mask,' he once told me. 'I want to present myself as real and naked for all the world to see. No artifice.'"

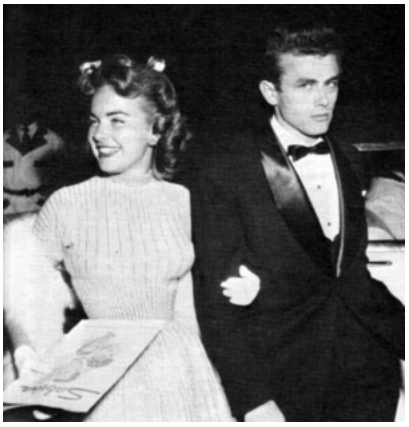
He agreed to escort Terry to the September 22, 1954 premiere of *Sabrina,* starring Audrey Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, and William Holden. One writer referred to Terry as "the reigning *piñata* of the Hollywood press." In a form-fitting sweater, with her breasts very prominent, she attracted the attention of photographers before they were known as *paparazzi.*

Whereas she basked in the glow of their flashbulbs, Jimmy, her escort, scowled and looked miserable in a tux.

The photographers snapping her picture asked, somewhat disdainfully, "Who's the guy with you?"

She claimed that they tried to edge Jimmy out of the frame, but that she held onto him tightly so that his image would be included in the media's coverage of the event. When one of the reporters thrust a microphone at them with a question, she answered for both of them, since Jimmy had nothing to say.

"In Jimmy's eyes, Brando was king, and he was out to steal his thunder," Terry claimed. "He just pretended he didn't want his picture taken. He liked having his picture taken so much he even photographed himself in the mirror. There were more photos taken of him during the early 1950s than any other star in Hollywood, with the exception of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor."



At the premiere of *Sabrina,* Terry Moore, in a form-fitting sweater, basked in the glow of the flashbulbs, but her escort, James Dean, unknown at the time, scowled, looking miserable in a tux.

When pictures of Terry and Jimmy appeared in the morning press, one surprisingly bitchy caption read—THE MUTANT *[a reference to her prominent breasts and plasticity?]* MEETS THE HUMANOID.

Terry later said that her father was embarrassed the next day at his office, where his colleagues demanded, "Who was that creep with Terry at the premiere last night?"

"Within months, that so-called creep would be a Hollywood superstar with photographers shoving his dates aside to get a picture of him," she said.

Jimmy's public appearances with Terry did not escape the attention of the press. Columnist Sheilah Graham, former lover of the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, labeled Terry "the female James Dean."

[Ironically, when Jimmy started dating another starlet, Ursula Andress, Graham defined Andress as "the female Marlon Brando."]

"Why didn't she write about me?" Jimmy wanted to know. "I wouldn't mind being called the male Marilyn Monroe."

"It's because your tits aren't big enough," said Terry.

Word soon reached Hughes that Terry might be serious about Jimmy. Jealously, he ordered two of his spies to trail Jimmy and learn whatever information could be dug up from his past. Wherever he went, and without his knowledge, Jimmy had someone on his trail.

Hughes immediately learned that Jimmy was leading a bisexual life, enjoying women but also frequently involved in homosexual liaisons, too. The mogul was told that Jimmy's conquests had included Marlon Brando and Rock Hudson, and that during his days as a struggling actor, he'd hustled tricks along the edges of Santa Monica

Blvd.

One night, Jimmy was driving back from Glendale with Terry, having attended the opening of *Red Garters,* a 1954 musical western spoof starring Rosemary Clooney. In a battered, junky-looking Chevrolet on its last legs, Hughes, who could have afforded the world's most expensive cars, trailed Jimmy's car for a few blocks until the actor had to stop for a red light. Then, Hughes deliberately rammed into the rear of Jimmy's car, although not seriously enough to do any major damage or bodily injury.

Hughes got out as Jimmy and Terry emerged from their car. Hughes shook Jimmy's hand and thanked him for "looking after Terry when I'm away."

He said that his business associate, Johnny Meyer, would show up in the morning and settle any damages to Jimmy's car—"and any emotional distress." Then he made a scribbled note of Jimmy's address and phone number before instructing Terry to get into his own car and telling her that he would return her safely to her home.

This, according to Meyer, "was Howard's way of introducing himself to Jimmy. I showed up the next day at Dean's place with a thousand-dollar bill. Howard also volunteered to buy Jimmy a new car instead of getting his rear bumper repaired. Dean rejected the offer. I told him, 'Why not? Howard's paying.' Apparently, Dean, unlike all the bimbos Howard hung with, had some integrity. How unusual for a young Hollywood actor. He may have nixed the car, but the little hustler didn't turn down the next temptation when Howard personally called him two days later. It was three o'clock in the morning."

Hughes wanted Jimmy to come to a remote neighborhood of industrial Los Angeles, which would be almost deserted at this hour of the morning. He said he'd send his assistant, Meyer, to drive him to the location where Hughes would be waiting for him in his battered old Chevrolet.

Years after the death of Howard Hughes (and perhaps because of him), life continued for Terry Moore.

In August of 1984, at the age of 55, this veteran survivor of show-biz solidified her reputation as a fun-loving, good-time gal by posing nude in *Playboy.*

According to Meyer, "At first, Jimmy was reluctant, fearing he might be walking into some sort of trap. But his sense of adventure won out. At dawn, Jimmy was on Howard's plane to Acapulco for a boating trip and a holiday in the sun."

"So the kid could be bought after all," Meyer said. "Once a hustler, always a hustler."

As time went by, Jimmy began secretly rendezvousing for trysts with Hughes. As a couple, he and Terry faded from view.

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[Terry would later work alongside Marilyn Monroe, Marlene Dietrich, Eva Marie Saint, and Anita Loose as a celebrity usher at the world premiere of East of Eden *in Manhattan. "Jimmy said he wasn't going to appear, shunning all that publicity," Terry said. "However, he got more write-ups by not showing up than he would have gotten if he'd made an appearance. Everybody was talking about a star not showing up at the world premiere of his debut movie."*

Sunny Shenanigans South of the Border

JIMMY DANCES NUDE FOR HOWARD HUGHES

With the understanding that Hughes would be away with Jimmy in Mexico for an undetermined number of days, Meyers was instructed to "babysit" (and spy on) Hughes' mistresses until Hughes returned. He was also to tell anyone who needed to know that Hughes had been summoned to Washington on urgent business involving TWA.

When Jimmy had protested that he didn't have time to pack anything in advance of their trip, Hughes told him not to worry. "They sell clothes in Mexico. They also sell toothbrushes, even toothpaste."

What happened in Mexico during the halcyon days of Hughes and Jimmy was later revealed by Hughes' playboy and bandleader friend, the Swiss-born former "swing-king" of Germany before he fled to Hollywood. Teddy Stauffer, an early promoter of the then-emerging resort of Acapulco, became more or less their host. Within that resort, he had arranged for them to stay at a luxurious villa known as "The New Discovery" which is exactly what Jimmy was for Hughes.

"I was asleep when Hughes arrived with this boy," Stauffer said. "At that time, Dean was a nobody. I thought he was just some trick. Howard was always with some trick, the gender not mattering so much to him. Later, I was shocked out of my mind when James Dean became such a big deal in Hollywood."

On the morning of their first day in Acapulco, Stauffer came to call on Hughes. "I found Howard fully dressed and talking on the phone by the pool," he said. "This young Dean boy was buck-ass naked, lounging on the other side of the pool, wearing only a pair of sunglasses."

"There were three bedrooms at the villa. Only one of them had been used—the beds in the other guest rooms were still freshly made. So, I knew that the two of them had connected. Dean seemed to have satisfied Howard's taste in young men, because he was fascinated by the boy."

"As for Dean, he seemed rather indifferent. He was unconventional for our aviator friend. As time passed, it became evident to me that Howard obviously liked Dean in bed, but that he wasn't that impressed when the boy delivered some opinion. Several of his utterances made Howard wince. When it came to ideas, no two men could have been more ill-matched. They were completely different personalities."

"There was also a big difference in their ages. I learned that Dean was born in 1931, and I already knew that Howard had come into this world before World War I. Howard was old enough to be Dean's father. It was also evident to me that Dean had no interest in Howard, other than his fame and money. He was just prostituting himself."

That night, Jimmy and Hughes dined with their host. According to Stauffer, "Dean really dug my cook's Mexican specialties, although Howard claimed that all this spicy food made him fart a lot and get the runs."

"One day, Howard took Dean flying above the western coast of Mexico," Stauffer said. "Another time, he rented a luxury yacht, with its crew, for a few days of sailing, landing in various seedy ports along the way. During his entire stay, when he wasn't otherwise naked, Dean wore Mexican clothes that Howard had bought him."

The kid seemed fascinated by bullfights, and Howard took him to some of the *corridas,* but I think Howard was just indulging him. I don't think the boss was that much interested in blood sports, but Jimmy was. He told us that he'd fought bulls in the ring, but both Howard and I thought that he was just bullshitting us."

"Frankly, I think Dean was just going along for a luxury vacation paid for by a man sometimes known as the U.S. Emperor."

"I'll always remember the final night when Howard asked me to join them," Stauffer said. "Dean was trying to polish off a bottle of tequila. At one point, he got really drunk and in front of us, he pulled off all his clothes. I had

learned that he had studied dance with Katherine Dunham in New York. He performed this dance in front of us. I thought he was a lousy dancer, but Howard seemed to enjoy his cock bouncing up and down."

"Before the evening came to an end, Dean told us, 'Dream like you'll live forever, but live like you'll die tomorrow."

"Both Dean and Howard had tragic endings. But that statement about dying, at least in Dean's case, sure was prophetic."

Talking Dirty and Winging Low

With the World's Most Famous Aviator

After their return to California, Jimmy never knew when Hughes would pop in, but it frequently occurred during the early hours of the morning, when he'd arrive on Jimmy's doorstep with the alligator love call.

"He had strange and weird ways," Jimmy told Stanley Haggart. Recalling his training as a former "leg man" for gossip columnist Hedda Hopper, Haggart pumped him for information he could learn about the private life of Hollywood's most perplexing airman, industrialist, and film mogul.

"I've begun to realize what an oddball he really is," Jimmy said. "One day he flew me to the Grand Canyon. I didn't even have time to get my wallet, expecting him to treat me to dinner, since I hadn't had anything to eat that day."

"After we admired the glories of the canyon, I was starving but had no money. Hughes reached into his pocket and found only a single dollar bill, enough to pay for a ham sandwich, which the two of us shared." Then, a smirk came over his face. "Of course, we couldn't afford mustard."

"He had strange ideas about food," Jimmy said. "I never knew what we were going to have for supper. One night, a waiter brought in a huge bucket of freshly made vanilla ice cream and about a quart of chocolate syrup—and that was it."

On another occasion, Hughes invited Jimmy to fly with him to Las Vegas where the younger man expected to be treated to ringside tables at all the best shows. "But that's not what happened," Jimmy said.

Airborne, and halfway to Las Vegas, Hughes suddenly announced that he had to return immediately to Los Angeles, and turned the plane around. A member of his staff had not packed three boxes of the brand of cookies he had ordered.

"You once told me I could buy clothes in Mexico," Jimmy said to him. "I'm sure you can get some pastry chef there to make any kind of cookie you want."

"That won't do," Hughes responded. "I have to have this certain type of cookie."

Jimmy later learned that Hughes had worked with one of his favorite chefs, perfecting a special kind of cookie with just the right amount of sugar and cinnamon. The butter it contained came from a specific breed of cow grazing in the pasturelands of California.

"Back at the airport, the boxes of cookies were retrieved from the back seat of a limousine," Jimmy said. "Once they were on board, we took off again for Vegas. I was looking forward to a good time. Boy, was I disappointed."

Once in Vegas and within Hughes' suite, Jimmy was subjected to eighteen solid hours of watching movies, reels of which had been sent over by Johnny Meyer. It is not known how many of these movies Jimmy slept through. Hughes had ordered him not to drink a lot, because he didn't want him going to the toilet in the middle of a screening.

Meyer had delivered such films as *Hell's Angels* with Jean Harlow; and *The Outlaw* with busty Jane Russell and Jack Buetel cast as Billy the Kid. *[Buetel became Hughes' long-term lover.]* Also shipped were *The Front Page* with Pat O'Brien; *Scarface* with Paul Muni; *Double Dynamite* with Frank Sinatra and Groucho Marx, and *Holiday Affair* with Robert Mitchum and Janet Leigh.

After many hours of film watching, Jimmy and Hughes retired to bed. "I thought that after that, he might want to read movie scripts. Guess what! The fucker read nothing but comic books. *Dick Tracy* was his favorite."

"He told me he never read any of the thousands of letters he received weekly unless they were from special friends. "I saw two of those special letters. One was from Elizabeth Taylor, the other from Cary Grant. Guess what? They were each annoying Hughes with requests for free rides on TWA planes. He told me he always allowed Ava Gardner to travel for free as well."

“There was one thing about Hughes that was a real turn-off,” Jimmy said. “I don’t think he bathed often, yet he was a fanatic about cleanliness. He had boxes of Kleenex around, wiping everything clean. And he’d never touch a doorknob himself—he always got someone else to open it. And in spite of his mania for hygiene, he sometimes smelled like an old goat.”

During the days and nights Jimmy spent with Hughes, he learned how the mogul ran his empire. “I couldn’t believe it! Hughes would sit for four or five hours—I’m not joking—on a toilet set calling people all over America. He had a phone installed in every one of his bathrooms. Sometimes, he’d read on the stool. At other times he watched TV, also installed in every bathroom. I was surprised that he likes to watch soap operas. Until I met him, I thought only bored housewives liked soap operas.”

During some of their dialogues, Hughes shared his plans for the future with Jimmy, including his dream of moving to Florida and opening a large aircraft factory in the West Palm Beach area.

He continually urged Jimmy to transfer his interest in racing cars to airplanes.

Jimmy confessed he had a fear of flying, and that when Elia Kazan had taken him on his first plane ride (from New York to Los Angeles) “it was a real nail biter for me. I almost kissed the ground when we got to California.”

Even though Jimmy resisted, Hughes kept demanding that he had to teach Jimmy how to pilot an airplane. He had selected a Cessna-140 to break Jimmy in as a pilot, promising him that if he’d learn how to fly it properly, he might give it to him as a gift.

“I never really got the hang of it,” Jimmy later told Haggart. “I wish he’d offered me a custom-made racing car instead. I felt nervous up in the clouds. For all I knew, I might have a head-on crash with a god damn flying saucer.”

“On the days when Hughes was busy, he turned me over to this flight instructor of his. I forget his name…Ray something. He was an older guy. Hughes said that when he was much younger, he’d been one of the stunt pilots he’d hired during the dangerous filming of *Hell’s Angels.”*

“Hughes would get impatient with me teaching me how to pilot a plane, but this Ray guy was most helpful. Whenever I made a mistake, he’d say, ‘Let’s try again.’”

“I never read a book on aviation, and I never intend to,” Jimmy said. “But no one, not even Hughes or Ray, could explain to me what makes a plane stay up in the air.”

“Hughes wanted me to try my hand at landing a plane,” Jimmy said. “I was terrified that I’d crash it. He’d gone over the instructions countless times, but all I could remember was him shouting at me, ‘Easy, easy, pull it back.’”

“’Pull what back?’ I wanted to know.”

“Easy does it, just a little bit more,” Hughes yelled at him.

“It wasn’t exactly a smooth landing,” Jimmy said. “I hit the ground with a real bump and for a moment the plane jumped up in the air again, but I finally brought the fucker down. Anyone who thinks landing a plane is a piece of cake is crazy. Anything can go wrong. At least I brought the thing to a stop before we ran off the runway and into a nearby field.”

“I had heard that a Cessna has been known to stall in mid-air, and I was afraid I might touch the wrong instrument, and we’d plunge to earth.”

Hughes had told me that even if the plane caught fire, ‘not to panic.’ How in hell could I not panic? If anyone has the right to panic, it’s when he’s flying a plane and it catches on fire when you’re up in space halfway to the moon.”

“Hughes was a reckless son of a bitch,” Jimmy said. “One afternoon, at some point after I’d been piloting for a while, never being any good at it, he wanted me to perform crazy things that only a stunt pilot with years of experience can pull off. I think the guy had a death wish. There was this thing about putting a plane into a tailspin —the less said about that, the better.”

“Regardless of how rotten a pilot I was, Hughes never lost his cool. My god, even when he’s in danger, that guy is as cool as a cucumber on an August day. Nothing seems to phase him. He’d been in crashes before, or so I heard, and had obviously lived to tell about it.”

“You might call me the white knuckled terror of the air,” he said.

Jimmy told Haggart that his most memorable time in the air was aboard one of Hughes’ relatively large planes. “I didn’t know one plane from another, but this mother fucker was big, and Hughes and I were the only passengers. He had a pilot and even a co-pilot manning the controls.”

“When we took off, we got a snack served by this cute little waitress I’d like to make. I wonder if Hughes had made her. Probably he had.”

“Way up in the clouds, Hughes did the strangest thing. He actually picked me up in his arms. He was a tall guy with long legs, and I’m a shortie. He carried me into a closed compartment near the back and locked the door

behind us."

"My God, it was a bedroom with this quilt made of mink. Needless to say, I landed on that quilt, and he slowly took off my clothes before stripping down himself. Let's put it this way: It was my first airborne fuck. Before that afternoon, I'd never heard of such a thing as an airborne fuck. But it's recommended to anyone who wants it. But only if you can do in on mink, in a private bedroom, high up in the clouds."

The Weird and Wanton Ways of a Demented Billionaire

The American Emperor Shows Jimmy His Harem

As Jimmy became more deeply involved with Hughes, he learned more and more about his sexual habits. Joan Crawford once proclaimed, "Hughes would fuck a tree."

"That wasn't exactly true," Jimmy said. "Oral sex was his favorite thing, both giving and receiving it."

"Howard would have five or six girls a day," said his former girlfriend Paulette Goddard, who was once married to Charlie Chaplin. "But it was kind of chaste because he did it only one way: Lip service."

Hughes told Jimmy that of all the movie star seductions he'd enjoyed in his life, Carole Lombard was the "Queen of Fellatio."

"Clark Gable was one lucky man during the time he got to be with her."

"Hughes claimed that he was a breast man," Jimmy said. "That's why he had cast Jane Russell in *The Outlaw.* He said she had 'the most beautiful pair of knockers he'd ever seen in his life."

He told Jimmy that he preferred "intermammary intercourse"—that is, making love by positioning and then rubbing his penis between a woman's breasts.

As Hughes' biographer Charles Higham wrote: "With men, he also preferred oral sex. He was a thoughtless, dispassionate lover, seeking only control. His sexual partners were not so much lovers as hostages, prisoners, or victims of his will. He had to dominate everything. His boyish, vulnerable charm, handsome, underfed, a lanky look, and an atmosphere of power and money captivated all of his sexual partners, but he left no echoes behind."

Higham also wrote: "Only his deafness, and a certain insecurity in his sexual performance, were blights on his existence. Yet he was impatient, restless, because there were people he couldn't buy. He was tortured by paranoia that was by no means unfounded."

One night in a rare confidential mood during pillow talk, Hughes confessed to Jimmy that he'd lost his virginity at the age of fifteen when his paternal uncle, Rupert Hughes, had seduced him. "He taught me how to perform oral sex, and it's been a favorite pastime of mine ever since, as you well know."

"He also revealed that his alltime sexual fantasy would involve having Elizabeth Taylor and her fellow Britisher, Jean Simmons, in bed with him at the same time. After a session with them, I would then like Stewart Granger to enter the room and strip down, so I could have him too. But the bastard is threatening to kill me if I don't stop pursuing Jean. They're married, you know."

Reviews for Hughes in the boudoir were mixed. Gambler "Jimmy the Greek" said, "In his heyday, Hughes boasted of deflowering two hundred virgins in Hollywood. He must have got them all."

But William Heller, the pioneer Hollywood publicist, claimed, "Two of Hughes' girlfriends told me he wasn't worth a dime as a lover. He was just no good in the sack. They said all he wanted to do was to look and fondle. He liked recently divorced women. For some odd reason, he referred to them as 'wet decks.'"

"I find that sex is so much better, so much more intense, with a new divorcée," he told Jimmy.

Hughes had installed each of his current mistresses in rented lodgings, and one night, he invited Jimmy on a tour through some of them. Collectively, he referred to this bevy of starlets as "my harem." He had within his employ about a half-dozen chauffeurs too. In addition to reporting back to Hughes details about the harem's betrayals or indiscretions, their duties included driving the women around on errands, such as shopping trips, during the course of their days.

"I hire only homosexuals as my drivers," Hughes said. "Once or twice I've been fooled. I recall one chauffeur who told me he was gay, but then he was caught fucking one of my starlets. I fired him instantly. Today, when I hire a chauffeur, I insist that he blow me. You can always tell the difference between a totally straight guy blowing you and a gay one."

Members of his harem were forbidden to go out with other men, although they sometimes managed to slip out

for a date or two without Hughes' knowledge. Eventually, though, he caught them. He told Jimmy that his technique involved arriving unexpectedly at unpredictable times of the day or night.

On the night he included Jimmy on a tour of his harem, Hughes preferred to be his own driver.

"Within a period of about two and a half hours, we visited the homes of three really beautiful and sexy gals," Jimmy later told Haggart. "I was offered a drink at each house. Hughes drank nothing—not even a glass of water. We chatted briefly with a *puta,* and then moved on."

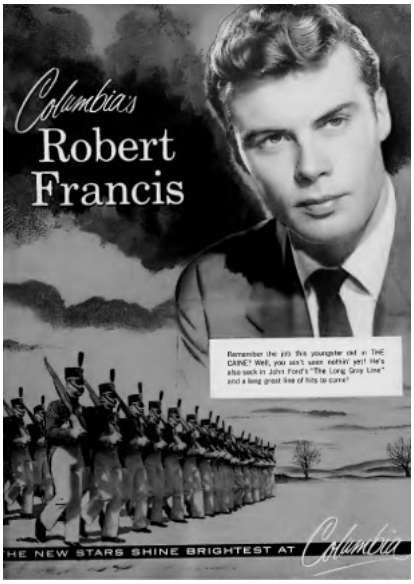
"I figured that at some point, Hughes would want to spend the night and perhaps engage me for a three-way. Nothing like that. After I finished my drink, he rose to his feet, told the starlet good night, and we were off to our next house."

"That left me and the gal unsatisfied, although I thought all of them would be willing to go to bed with me. I told Hughes that if he just wanted to watch, he could see me in action with a woman, but he turned down the idea."

Jimmy learned that Hughes insisted that every member of his harem be inspected by his personal doctor. Before he'd even touch one of them, Hughes checked their fingernails, insisting that they receive frequent manicures. He also controlled the diets of these women, creating menus heavy on carrots and broccoli, vegetables he insisted that they eat for both lunch and dinner.

On yet another night spent touring his harem, Hughes, with Jimmy, arrived at the home of a starlet who was in the process of entertaining a male guest. It was 2AM. Perhaps she had assumed that it was safe to slip a man into her bedroom at that hour.

"I don't remember the name of this girl," Jimmy said, "but she came to the door looking like she'd had a rough night. Like a bird dog, Hughes instantly sensed something and headed straight for her bedroom. I followed him. He yanked back the covers to expose a nude Nicky Hilton. Based on all that newspaper publicity during his marriage to Elizabeth Taylor, I recognized his face at once."



James Dean was not the only actor on whom Howard Hughes lavished money and obsessive attention. Another was Jimmy's competitor, the rising star known as Robert Francis.

Heavily promoted and publicized as a romantic heartthrob until his tragic early death in an airplane crash, Francis was the focal point of the poster depicted above. Its fine print reads like this:

"THE NEW STARS SHINE BRIGHT AT COLUMBIA: Remember the job this youngster did in THE CAINE? Well, you ain't seen nothin' yet! He's also sock in John Ford's *The Long Grey Line* and a long line of hits to come!"

"Hughes was furious," Jimmy said. "He dragged Nicky out of the bed and through the living room, kicking him out the door, even though he was jaybird naked. Even in this agitated state, I was impressed with the hotel heir. He had a horse dick on him."

Later, Jimmy learned that one of the reasons Hughes detested Nicky was based on his affair—during the course of his marriage to Taylor—with Terry Moore.

"I never found out how a naked Nicky got home," Jimmy said. "But with that can of Budweiser between his legs, and those dangling balls, I'm sure he managed to hitch a ride in gay Beverly Hills."

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Both Jimmy and the Aviator were men of changing moods. Hughes flew into Jimmy's life, and one day just flew out. He was later seen giving flying lessons to Robert Francis, the handsome, blonde-haired star who had captured a lifelong corps of fans after his appearance in *The Caine Mutiny* (1954) with Humphrey Bogart.

Rising star Francis was voted one of the most promising actors of 1954. His life would be cut short, violently and tragically, at the age of 25 on July 31, 1955 in the crash of the small airplane he was piloting.

Katy Jurado...from Gary Cooper to James Dean, and hugely famous as a movie star throughout Latin America.

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During the peak of his involvement with Hughes, Jimmy, began to appear in public with some carefully arranged "studio dates." Most of them were harmless, ending with a fast good night and perhaps a kiss on the cheek.

Even if a date led to a seduction, there was rarely any lasting involvement.

One of Jimmy's most unlikely couplings was with the Mexican film star Katy Jurado, who was about seven years older than Jimmy. Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, she managed to launch herself—usually playing steamy *femmes fatales*—beginning in 1943, into both the Mexican and U.S. film industries.

In 1951, Budd Boetticher cast her in her first Hollywood film, *The Bullfighter and the Lady.* Other producers became intrigued by her exotic beauty, and she soon followed in the footsteps of Dolores del Rio and Lupe Velez, two other Mexican actresses who played significant roles in Hollywood.

Jurado became the first Latin American actress nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actress for her work in 1954's *The Broken Lance.* Today, she is best remembered for her role in the Gary Cooper classic, *High Noon* (1952), which she'd filmed around the time when Jimmy dated her two or three times.

Nicholas Ray asked Jimmy if he had gotten lucky.

"Maybe," he answered, enigmatically. "But I'll tell you one thing: The Montana Mule is a tough act to follow," a reference, of course, to his friend, "Coop."

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Around the same time, another of Jimmy's foreign-born liaisons resulting from a "studio date" was with the French *ingénue*, Leslie Caron. She waltzed into and quickly out of his life after her appearance in her best-known film, *An American in Paris* (1951) opposite Gene Kelly. In time, she'd dance onscreen with Fred Astaire, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Rudolf Nureyev.

Her emotional involvement with Jimmy was minor and fleeting, so it came as a surprise when she talked to the press the day after Jimmy died in 1955.

Lori Nelson...Romantically linked by the tabloids to both James Dean and Tab Hunter, who supposedly competed for her attention.

"I will never dance again," she vowed.

It was a vow expressed during her emotion of the moment, not a promise to be kept.

Even though her affair with him amounted to no more than a brief dalliance, she seemed emotionally shattered at news of his death. However, she recovered quickly.

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As a studio date, actress/model and starlet Lori Nelson, who had emerged from Santa Fe, presented a context that was complicated at the time because she had been widely publicized by the Hollywood press as "Tab Hunter's girlfriend." In fact, her romantic involvement with Tab was more serious and long-lived than the brief encounter she had with Jimmy.

Jimmy's agent, Dick Clayton, arranged for Jimmy to escort her to a premiere.

Later she expressed nothing but compliments for him. "Jimmy was thoughtful about little things that count to a girl. You never had to open a car door—he did it for you. And you could count on other attentions which meant a lot."

Lori never explained what those "other attentions" were.

She had made her film debut in the 1952 Western, *Bend of the River,* and later appeared as "Rosie Kettle" in the film comedy, *Ma and Pa Kettle at the Fair.*

Lori admitted to Jimmy that her early life had been dominated by a series of beauty pageants and talent contests, the cumulative effects of which resulted, in 1950, in a seven-year contract with Universal when she was only seventeen. Although Tab was also dating Debbie Reynolds at the time, he and Lori became a hot item in the gossip columns. Reportedly, they were engaged to be married.

In his memoirs, Tab wrote: "More than once, I thought about bringing Lori home and introducing her to my

mother, telling her that this is the girl I'm going to marry."

At the time of these marriage dialogues, Tab was involved in a torrid affair with Ronald Robertson, the well-known (male) figure skater. Tab admitted to Dick Clayton, "I'm confused about my sexual orientation."

Even though she probably knew better, Louella Parsons wrote about Tab's so-called "burning romance" with Lori.

In lieu of her blurb about Hunter's non-romance with Lori, Parsons would have preferred to run a different news item, preferably a "teaser" that might pique the interest of readers with hints about a possible marriage of Jimmy to any of the several starlets he was dating at the time.

In response to Parsons' coy queries about his marital plans, or lack thereof, Jimmy answered, "Lady, I'm not contemplating marriage to anyone…ever. You may not understand this, and I don't want you to print it, but the biggest affair I'm having is with myself. Call it a voyage of self-discovery."

In 2005, Blood Moon Productions issued the world's most comprehensive overview *(center photo)* of the Hollywood involvements of the eccentric billionaire aviator, Howard Hughes.

Chapter Twenty

WERE THEY REALLY STAR-CROSSED, LIKE ROMEO & JULIET?

JAMES DEAN & PIER ANGELI

Changing Partners With Ursula Andress

A TANGLED WEB OF HOLLYWOOD AFFAIRS
EVERYBODY SLEEPING WITH EVERYBODY ELSE'S LOVER

"In Pier Angeli, a nineteen-year-old Italian girl, Hollywood has found an actress who eludes the town's traditional classifications and whose unvarnished beauty and instinctive talent have already caused her to be called 'Little Garbo.'"

—Theodore Strass in *Colliers*, April, 1952

"It was fire & ice. She screwed half of Hollywood."

–James Dean, describing his affair with Pier Angeli

"I'm the father of that bambino—not Vic Damone!"

—James Dean

The much ballyhooed romance of James Dean and Pier Angeli was a summer fling that began in the late spring of 1955 and lasted until the autumn leaves began to fall. Jimmy, of course, would die before the end of that year's September.

James Dean with Pier Angeli...a sullen romance.

His friend, John Gilmore, had been with him when he met Pier on the Warner lot. He was shooting *East of Eden*, and she had a role in *The Sliver Chalice*, being filmed on a nearby stage.

One day, she walked into the Warner commissary with actor Jack Palance, who played the villain in *The Sliver Chalice*, which Jimmy referred to as "that fucking religious thing." After Palance had turned down the lead role in favor of the villain's, it had been assigned to Paul Newman, resulting in what he'd later define as "the most embarrassing flop of my life."

As Gilmore remembered it, Pier's first chat with Jimmy was awkward. He managed to say that he didn't like living in Los Angeles and that he wanted to return to New York as soon as possible. After she left, Jimmy told Gilmore, "She's one stuck-up lady. But she's pretty."

In spite of their lackluster first meeting, Jimmy, within days, was dating her. Warners was pleased with the consequent publicity because it would promote both of these new stars as well as their pictures.

"Perhaps now that I'm dating a respectable girl like Pier, maybe Sheilah Graham will quit busting my balls and give me a decent writeup for a change."

"Jimmy pretended he hated publicity," according to Gilmore, "but the son of a bitch loved it. As for Pier, she was publicity crazy. She devoured herself in print like a fat lady swallowing chocolate drops."

When she wasn't needed on her film set, Pier became a constant visitor to the set of *East of Eden* Director Elia Kazan had a dressing room next to Jimmy's, one with thin walls. From what he heard, he thought it sounded "like Jimmy boy was giving this Italian gal multiple orgasms."

Many other times, however, he heard bitter arguments, mostly about Pier's domineering mother, Enrica Pierangeli, who did not want her daughter involved with "that rebel."

"I have never been interested in a boy as young as Jimmy," Pier told the press. "I have always liked older men, finding them more interesting. They can talk about something other than baseball and the jitterbug."

"He's a wonderful boy. He'll soon be twenty-four, and I'm twenty-one. My mother lets me go out on dates. There's a joke going around Hollywood that if a man dates me, he has to take my mother along as chaperone and also my twin sister, Marisa Pavan."

Enrica's control over her daughter has been exaggerated by many other biographers. Obviously, as later events would show, she was not subject to her mother's total control. After her arrival in Hollywood, she'd had an affair with actor John Barrymore, Jr., and also with Eddie Fisher before Debbie Reynolds snatched him away.

At the time Jimmy began dating Pier, she was just coming down from a broken romance with Kirk Douglas, with whom she had filmed *The Story of Three Loves* (1953). The actor later said, "She had huge, dark eyes, and a refreshing innocence. She was virginal and had a beautiful body and an infectious laugh. I became enamored of her, this child that I could mold into the image I wanted, like Pygmalion."

Their relationship lasted for eighteen months. On night in Paris, Douglas had walked her back to her hotel, the very posh George V. He kissed her on the cheek.

"Will I see you tomorrow?" she asked.

"No, he replied. "*Domani è troppo tardi." [That was the name of her first film,* Tomorrow is Too Late *(1950)*.]

Their romance ended at the entrance to the George V, leaving her heart-broken.

In Hollywood, she told a reporter, "I don't want to grow up. I just want to be young and have fun. I'm greedy for life, romance, and emotion, and that doesn't mean staying home every night and listening to my mother's lectures on morality. With my father dead, I'm the chief breadwinner in the family, and I don't intend to be pushed

around."

Writer Stewart Stern wrote the script for Pier's first American film, *Teresa,* and was working on a screenplay for Jimmy's next film, *Rebel Without a Cause.* He said, "Jimmy's affair with Pier had to do with the child who resided in each of them. They played a game like a Hollywood fantasy."

Pier told Stern, as he later relayed to Nicholas Ray, "One of my greatest problems with Jimmy is that when he has to urinate, he'll do it anywhere regardless of where we are. He rarely bothers to make it all the way to a toilet."

Cal York, a gossip columnist, reported on Jimmy's romance with Pier:

> *"Woo-some Twosome: Some still say it's a publicity romance, but Cal knows a secret! Pier quietly bought Jimmy a gold wrist watch, a gold identification bracelet, and a miniature gold frame with her picture in it. No, they don't exactly go with his Levis and sweat shirt (the new school uniform!) but he was very pleased just the same. So help us, pretty Pier now wears a pearl ring on the second toe of her left foot! Cal tried to ask her if she was engaged—but the words just* wouldn't *come out!"*

Pier told York, "I'm seeing a great deal of 'Jemmy,'" as she called him.

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What Jimmy didn't know, and what might have ended the romance before it had really begun, was that Pier, after Kirk Douglas dumped her, had also launched an affair with Paul Newman, her co-star in *The Sliver Chalice*.

As Deborra, she was Newman's love interest in the film. According to Virginia Mayo, the star of the movie, "Pier looked radiant in Madonna blue with a gold circlet in her hair. Forgetting about his wife, or even his other girlfriend, Joanne Woodward, Paul fell hard for Pier. He told me she was virginal. Paul could be so innocent. She wasn't virginal at all."

She had told Mayo that when she was fifteen, she'd been raped by an American soldier. A year later, she accused Marlon Brando of forcibly "deflowering her."

She had originally been discovered in Italy, by the director and actor, Vittorio De Sica. That led to her casting as his co-star in her first film, *Domani A troppo tardi*. "The moment I saw her, I knew I wanted her as my co-star," De Sica said. "That fragile body…That sensitive face..."

Their director was Leonide Moguy, who also cast her in her second picture, *Domani Aun altro giorno (Tomorrow is another day).*

De Sica wanted to make a film co-starring Marlon Brando and Pier. Brando was in Rome at the time. He brought them together, and Brando invited Pier, then known as Anna Maria Pierangeli, on a date. Details are sparse, but Pier always claimed that Brando raped her after they made a nighttime visit to the Roman Colosseum. He asked to see it from the grassy knoll above. There, he forced himself on her. Despite her resistance, she was no match for his brute force. In tears, she later reported the incident to Da Sica.

Pier Angeli with Paul Newman in a publicity shot for *Somebody Up There Likes Me.*

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Even though she'd made off with Eddie Fisher, Debbie Reynolds had become Pier's best friend and *confidante*. One afternoon, Pier phoned her: "Can you just imagine what is happening to me? I'm doing a balancing act, dating Jimmy Dean and Paul Newman, the two handsomest men in Hollywood."

"Lucky you," Reynolds reportedly said. "And I'm stuck with this Fisher guy, who seems to spend more time with Mike Todd than with me."

Pier invited Newman to her home for Sunday dinner, where he met the formidable Enrica, who quickly ascertained that he was not a Catholic. Even worse, "Jew blood flows in his veins. I forbid you to see him again except for on the movie set."

Two views of Marisa Pavan in Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo. Top photo*: With Ben Cooper, and *lower photo,* a

"mother/daughter" shot with *La Lupa*, Anna Magnani.

Competition and rivalries for both romance and acting roles with her sister, Pier Angeli, was intense.

"Paul's romance with Pier was relatively harmless," Mayo said. "Just two kids having fun. He soon returned to reality. After all, he had a wife and kids back on the East Coast, and was talking about getting a divorce so he could marry Joanne Woodward. Actually, I think he was relieved that Jimmy came onto the scene to take Pier away from him. And, since this is crazy Hollywood, the picture, of course, got more complicated. He was also slipping around and seeing Dean on the side."

The first time Jimmy had lunch alone with Pier, he invited Newman to join them, but he declined.

"I was shocked," Jimmy said. "Pier ordered a raw hamburger and two raw eggs. For her drink of choice, a glass filled with water. No wonder she was so little and petite. I'm short, but I towered over her. I don't think she was more than five feet, if that."

That night, Jimmy was introduced to Pier's twin, Marisa Pavan, who was also an actress. "There was strong sibling rivalry there," he said. "I mean, both of them were beautiful, had the same look, though not identical twins. Ironically, at the time, Marisa was dating Vic Damone, who would, within weeks, marry Pier."

Pavan's breakthrough role came in Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo* (1955), in which she was cast as Anna Magnani's daughter. The role had first been offered to Pier, who was not available.

Pavan later received an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress, but lost to Jo Van Fleet, who had played Jimmy's whorish mother in *East of Eden*.

[In 1956, a year after Jimmy died, Pavan married the French actor, Jean-Pierre Aumont, the former lover of Grace Kelly. (As Jimmy himself admitted from personal experience, "Grace Kelly is a tough act to follow.") Pavan was still married to Aumont at the time of his death in 2001.]

Pavan was not charmed by Jimmy's *braggadocio*, as she phrased it. "He was rude to our mother. He'd just walk into our home without saying anything and put on our record player, playing the music really loud. When I pointed out the weakness of his film, *East of Eden* he took grave offense. He couldn't stand criticism, and he screamed at me, calling me names."

Jean-Pierre Aumont in *The Cross of Lorraine* (1943) an MGM wartime film about the escape of French fighters from a Nazi prison camp.

As the days went by, the press wrote more and more about Jimmy's romance with Pier, which was still flourishing, even though both her sister and mother detested him.

"Jimmy is different," Pier told a reporter. "He loves music. He loves it from the heart the way I do. We have much to talk about. "It's wonderful to know such an understanding man."

Most of Jimmy's discarded gay lovers viewed the romance cynically. John Kerr told friends, "I'm sure their relationship is platonic, knowing Jimmy as I once did. He's dating Pier just to cover up his homosexuality."

Reporters continued to besiege Jimmy with questions about his possible engagement. He shrugged off such queries. "Who knows? Nothing complicated, just a nice girl for a change. I mean, you know, I can talk to her. She understands. Nothing messy. Just an easy kind of friendly thing. I respect her. She's untouchable. We're members

of totally different castes. She's the kind of girl you put on the shelf and look at. Anyway, her old lady doesn't like me. Can't say I blame her."

Slowly, Jimmy began to introduce Pier to his friends, including Gene Owen. She had taught acting when he was enrolled in Santa Monica College. "One Sunday, Jimmy and Pier arrived at our house as my husband and I were packing to go to Europe. Pier urged us to include Italy in our itinerary. As soon as possible, she wanted to show Italy to Jimmy. She seemed to be deeply in love with him and he with her. I thought it was a solid romance."

Pier often spoke to him about her homeland and the deprivations her family had known in Rome after moving there from her native Sardinia. In Italy, she'd been known as Anna Maria Pierangeli.

De Sica introduced her to producer Fred Zinnemann, who had cast her in her first American film, *Teresa* (1951), with John Ericson and Rod Steiger, Jimmy's friend.

The screenwriter was Steward Stern, who would soon become a friend of Jimmy's on the set of *Rebel Without a Cause* He was a tall, dark, and sensitive man, a young cousin of Arthur M. Loew, Sr., president of Loew's International, the parent company of MGM.

In time, Stern also introduced the cinema heir, Arthur Loew, Jr., to both Marisa and Pier. "My relative was a real swinger, and I didn't want him to corrupt either of these girls."

As Sheilah Graham would later say, but couldn't put in her column, "Only in Hollywood, kids. After young Arthur had this widely publicized affair with Elizabeth Taylor, he took up with Pier Angeli. When Pier was out of the country, Marisa Pavan started to date him. He then got involved with the singer Eartha Kitt, but his family objected to the interracial aspects of that liaison. Guess what became unbelievable? After Arthur dumped Eartha, he shacked up with Jimmy Dean. As I said, 'Only in Hollywood, kids.'"

Meeting his friend, William Bast, Jimmy was asked, "Just what is going on here between you and Pier? I hear so many conflicting stories."

"You read too many gossip columns," Jimmy said. "Nothing is going on, absolutely nothing. What have you become? A stringer for Hedda Hopper? OK, if you must know, Pier and I are just fooling around. Nothing serious."

He did say, "She has the face of a Madonna in a Florentine fresco, not that I've ever seen a Florentine fresco except in a book. She dresses like an Italian princess. Her eagle-eyed mother detests me. She thinks I'm scruffy, a non-Catholic, and too crude for her immaculate daughter."

Jimmy might have accused Bast of reading too many gossip columns, but he read a few of them himself. "I learned more about Pier in the gossip columns that I did from her. As a protective mother, Enrica failed completely. Pier's been linked to too many men. Only the other day, I read she'd had this thing, perhaps a one-night stand, with Prince Mahmud Pahlavi, the brother of the Shah of Iran."

Helena Sorell, Pier's close friend, had been skeptical of the Angeli/Dean coupling since its debut. "Pier would flirt outrageously with any man in sight, even the waiter. If all the attention was not on Jimmy, he would pout worse than a small child."

One day on the Warner lot, Pier encountered Humphrey Bogart, who'd heard that she was dating Jimmy. "Why don't you suggest to your boyfriend that he take a bath once in a blue moon?" He then walked on.

During the filming of *East of Eden* Jimmy told his co-star, Richard Davalos, "For better or worse, I intend to spend the rest of my life with Pier. We're going to buy a mansion in Beverly Hills and fill it with ten *bambini*. We'll have our honeymoon in Rome, where Pier claims she can arrange a visit with the pope. She wants me to become a Catholic."

On one occasion, he took Pier to meet his father, Winton, and his step-mother. For about an hour, the quartet sat together in the Dean living room, mostly in awkward and painful silence, although Winton asked his son how his front teeth were holding up.

When the deadly stillness of that hot summer afternoon in California became overbearing, Jimmy reached for Pier's hand. After a quick goodbye, he headed out the door, never to return.

A few weeks before her own death, Pier delivered a statement to the *National Enquirer* about that summer's involvement with Jimmy:

> *"We used to go to the California coast and stay there secretly in a cottage on a beach far away from all the prying eyes. We'd spend much of our time on the beach, sitting there or fooling around just like college kids. We would talk about ourselves and our problems, about the movies and acting, about life and life after death... We had a complete understanding of each other...Sometimes, we would just drive along and stop at a hamburger stand for a meal or go to a drive-in movie. It was all so innocent and so emphatic."*

Nicholas Ray, director of *Rebel Without a Cause,* was fully aware of Jimmy's involvement with Pier. He said, "He is intensely determined not to love or be loved. He was fascinated, absorbed at times, with anything new—be it

beautiful, bizarre, perverted or not so perverted, whatever. If a woman thought she was the only one in his life, she soon found out differently. He also had many men and women fall in love with him, including one of the most notorious homosexuals in Hollywood."

Ray refused to name the culprit, but actress Betsy Palmer, who once had a brief fling with Jimmy, thought she knew the answer.

"It was Liberace. I was with Jimmy one night when a call came in from Liberace in Las Vegas. He offered to give Jimmy $1,000 plus a round-trip, first-class ticket if he'd fly to join him in Las Vegas. He told Jimmy he'd already seduced Rock Hudson, and that he wanted him to be next. Later, Jimmy told me that Liberace wanted to go to bed with him even more than he wanted to go to bed with Brando, and that he then claimed, 'I'll get that one, too.'"

It is assumed that Jimmy never accepted Liberace's offer. Perhaps he would have back during his hustling days.

In a memoir, John Gilmore quoted one of Jimmy's observations about Pier. "She'd corner me with her dumb preoccupations because we'd just fucked. I thought I'd chase her away with what she said was my 'volcano of need,' but I'll tell you this—Miss Pizza's the one you can call a volcano—but there's no hot lava shooting out of her."

At the time that he was supposed to be having this torrid love affair with Pier, Jimmy showed up in Palm Desert at the vacation home shared by Tab Hunter and Jimmy's agent, Dick Clayton.

"Jimmy arrived in his new Porsche Spyder," Gilmore said. "He had this blonde pinup with him, some foreign starlet. He told everybody he didn't plan to spend the night."

"We don't have anything to talk about," Jimmy said, in reference to the starlet, "but she gives a great blowjob. My cock can go all the way into her empty head."

Some of the gossips who had promoted the so-called passionate romance of "Romeo and Juliet" began to have their doubts. It was even suggested that the "lovebirds" had an open relationship.

Pier was spotted showing up, alone, at the opening of singer Tony Martin at Ciro's, in Los Angeles. Before the evening was over, she was sitting and holding hands with another singer, Dean Martin, who, for some reason, had also arrived alone.

At seven o'clock the following morning, a doorman at Martin's hotel spotted Pier leaving his suite.

When she arrived back at her home, Enrica accepted her explanation that she'd been overly tired and had fallen asleep in her dressing room.

The following Saturday night, she went out with Jimmy, who did not return her until 4AM. Enrica was waiting with fury at the door, where she denounced Jimmy. "No decent Italian boyfriend would bring home a young girl at this hour."

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do," Jimmy told her. "Welcome to Hollywood. Here, we're lucky to bring a girl home before the sun comes up."

He later told Elia Kazan, "Nothing tastes better than forbidden fruit. Didn't Eve offer Adam some kind of fruit? An apple, I heard? But more likely it was a pomegranate, the ripest fruit growing in the Garden of Eden. It's juicier than an apple."

That afternoon, Enrica demanded and was granted an audience with Jack Warner. Not only had Jimmy brought her daughter home right before dawn, but during their long date, she had discovered a diaphragm in her daughter's bedroom.

"Pier is going to be a big star, and I don't want her life ruined by this Dean fellow. I want you to demand that he never see Pier again."

The following morning, Jimmy was summoned into Warner's office. "I want you to stop fucking that Italian broad or else I'll fire you from *East of Eden* I even heard you're thinking of marrying her."

"Don't worry your pretty head about that," Jimmy told the studio mogul. "Signora Pierangeli wouldn't let me marry her precious daughter even if I were the pope."

For the next four days, Pier did not see Jimmy. During that interim, she was spotted at the Captain's Table, a Hollywood restaurant, dining with Donald O'Connor, who had recently made *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) with Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds.

Columnist Mike Connolly spotted the odd couple, and wrote, "O'Connor was very quiet and very attentive to Angeli at a table in the darkest corner of the restaurant."

Hedda Hopper also spotted them yet another of their outings: "I have rarely seen a cuter couple than Donald O'Connor and Pier Angeli," she wrote in her column.

As it turned out, Jimmy was not alone during his exile from Pier. He was seen dating this curvy redhead, an extra from the set of *The Silver Chalice.* She had been "servicing" Paul Newman, who, wanting to get rid of her, had

passed her on to Jimmy.

"Jane Doe *[not her real name, of course, but she didn't want her identity revealed]* said, "How many gals can say that they've been fucked by both Paul Newman and James Dean? Perhaps a few—Marilyn Monroe, for instance."

"Having had shack-ups with Scott Brady and Fernando Lamas," she continued, "I've known better-endowed men. But Newman and Dean were more than adequate for the job. But on that same set, I met my future husband, a cameraman. He's got them all beat, and we have three sons to prove it. I named them Paul, James, and Scott."

When Jimmy reunited with Pier, he said, "It was more exciting than ever because we had to slip around and see each other in offbeat joints. It became a joke with us, a sort of game, exciting because everybody thought we'd stopped seeing each other."

Pier was more serious, claiming, "He wanted me to love him unconditionally. But he wasn't able to love someone in return, that is, with any deep feeling for the other person. He wanted to be the beloved. He was a troubled boy who wanted to be loved very badly. I loved him as I had never loved anyone else in my life. I could not give him the enormous amount that he needed. It emptied me. There was no other way to be with Jimmy, except to love him and be emptied myself."

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When *East of Eden* was wrapped in August of 1954, Jimmy told Pier goodbye and flew to New York where his agent, Jane Deacy, had arranged for him to star in *The Unlighted Road.* He had pleaded with Pier to accompany him, but she refused. Their relationship was beginning to fall apart.

Jimmy's composer friend, Leonard Rosenman, said, "Jimmy would get drunk on a couple of glasses of wine, and when he got loaded, he became very nasty, really mean. He underwent a complete personality change. I loved the guy, and I put up with it on many a night. But he had a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality. I mean, he'd get out of control. Often, he became vicious. Sometimes, he became violent and had a reputation for beating up his girlfriends. Perhaps he did this to Pier once too often. I think she had reached the point where she could take it no more."

"I don't mean to take up for Jimmy, but Pier was at fault, too," Rosenman said. "She wasn't some sweet hothouse flower, She had a very gloomy, dark side to her, and Jimmy told me about this. She also suffered great mental anguish and had a streak of cruelty.":

"Perhaps Jimmy did love her, but she'd go and flaunt affairs with other men, throwing them in his face. Many men, not just Jimmy, beat up their girlfriends or wives. I'm not forgiving Jimmy or any other men. These two volatile human beings would in the end kill themselves, Pier by descending into heavy drug abuse which led to her suicide."

During a reunion with Deacy, Jimmy told her that he was considering marrying Pier.

She urged him not to. "Do you want to be forever known as Mr. Pier Angeli? Surely, you don't want that."

He became cross with her. "Are you saying that you think her career will overpower my own? Thanks a lot."

"I hear she's always trying to control you," Deacy said. "Dick Clayton keeps me informed. And do you really want Enrica Pierangeli for a mother-in-law? Dick also told me that Pier wants you to become a Catholic. She's even got you wearing dark suits, white shirts, and a tie!"

Deacy had arranged for Jimmy to star in *The Unlighted Road* for the *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars.* Although he didn't know it at the time, this half-hour thriller, aired on May 6, 1955, would be his last television film.

His co-star was a pretty starlet, Pat Hardy, with whom he launched an affair. In another irony, she had been having an affair with Vic Damone.

One reporter picked up on this. "James Dean, the boy who was cooing it up with Pier Angeli before she switched to Vic Damone, has been seeing Pat Hardy, the girl who was mighty cozy with Vic until Pier came along. Sort of a change-partners deal."

There was another irony that the journalist didn't know about at the time. When she wasn't dating Jimmy or Damone, Hardy was also conducting an off-the-record affair with Marlon Brando.

Before he'd been drafted into the Army, Damone had sustained an affair with Elizabeth Taylor. In her column, Hedda Hopper had written: "Fickle Elizabeth Taylor has fallen in love again, this time with a handsome young crooner, Vic Damone, who is giving Frank Sinatra's fading career a push toward oblivion." *[Sinatra, ofcourse, was furious.]*

"Vic was adorable," Elizabeth later said. "A dear man, but he was drafted, and I'm not the kind of woman who waits around."

[Born in Brooklyn in 1928, Vito Rocco Farinola, known for his melodic lyricism and impeccable enunciations, was three years older than Jimmy. As Vic Damone, he became a household word in America, singing such hits as "My Heart Cries for You," and "On the Street Where You Live," from My Fair Lady.

He became a serious rival of Sinatra, who very generously said, "Damone has the best set of pipes in the business."]

On the very day Jimmy flew to New York, Pier had a reunion with Damone at Warners. They'd had a brief romance before.

Ironically, she'd not yet run into him in Hollywood, even though her twin sister, Marisa Pavan, had been recently dating Damone too.

Pier and Damone had met in 1952 when she was in Munich filming *The Devil Makes Three.* At the time, he was stationed nearby with the U.S. Army, and he'd called Pier, asking her to appear as one of the players in a show he was producing for the servicemen at the base.

She agreed to make an appearance. Three days later, on stage, he was singing "September Song" to her, which led to their "heavy dating" for two months.

As she later admitted, "We danced a lot, had long talks, and enjoyed a lot of fun together. I had this electric sensation when I was around him. He was so cute, so very cute. But eventually, we went our separate ways. I had meant to call him until I heard Marisa may have been hot for him."

After having a drink with Damone, and reminiscing about their time together in Germany, Pier met him again at a Hollywood party that same evening. The next thing he knew, he was dining at the Pierangeli's family table presided over by Enrica.

When Marisa was confronted with Damone, her former date, being welcomed into her family circle as an escort for her sister, she had yet another reason to be jealous of her twin.

Enrica doted on Damone, finding him, "so handsome, so talented—I love his voice—so Italian, so respectable, and so Catholic."

She later told Pier, "and so heterosexual. Not a pervert like some of your other dates."

Before proposing marriage to Pier, Damone had not only very recently dated Marisa, but also Pier's major rival on the screen, the singing sensation Anna Maria Alberghetti. Anna was also dating Eddie Fisher when Pier wasn't out with him.

Damone was also seen out with Mona Freeman; Frank Sinatra's daughter, Nancy (Frank didn't like that); Maureen O'Hara (when she wasn't making a pirate film); Judy Spreckles; Sheela Fenton; and Joan Tyler.

Then, amid a flurry of tabloid speculation about Damone and his entanglements with Pier, Marisa, Anna Maria Alberghetti, and others of the women listed above, reports appeared that Damone was about to fly to New York with either Pat Hardy or Joan Tyler (claims differed), where they would announce their engagement. "Joan (Tyler) and I have kissed and made up," Damone told *Variety.*

Then, within the week, Damone's engagement to Pier was announced.

Vic Damone...Stealing Frank Sinatra's fans and James Dean's girlfriend.

Two days later, in New York, Jimmy read about Pier's engagement to Damone in Dorothy Kilgallen's newspaper column. He made no attempt to call her or to confront her.

Later, after Jimmy's return to Los Angeles, he phoned Pier, who agreed to meet with him. He later told

Rosenman what happened: “She claimed Enrica was forcing her to marry Damone,” Jimmy said. “But Damone wasn’t the reason I beat the shit out of her that night. I found out that while I was in New York, she’d been fucking with Brando. I know Brando likes exotic foreign women, but I knew that he was fucking Pier only because I told him I was in love with her. Sometimes a gal can look so goddamn *'angeli'*—pardon the pun—and be nothing but a tramp.”

“When Damone strips her down to fuck her, he’ll discover she’s black and blue. She’ll probably tell him that a mad dog attacked her. Actually, I’m not a mad dog, but one cool cat. But if you get me riled up, watch out! I go from cool cat to Tigerman.”

Enrica also reported that Jimmy—pumped up on liquor, pot, and amphetamines—sometimes struck Pier in anger. Even his friends used the words “erratic”, “intense”, and “impulsive” to describe him.

“I’m a serious-minded and intense little devil,” Jimmy admitted. “I don’t see how people can stay in the same room with me. I know I couldn’t tolerate myself in the same room.”

That confession was made to Elia Kazan.

Jimmy also told Rosenman, “I was shocked when I read about her engagement to Damone. I didn’t see it coming. I figured that her family and friends got to her and changed her mind about me. Maybe she liked his singing better than mine.”

Before the wedding, at the Villa Capri, Jimmy and Damone confronted one another. Jimmy was dining there with his new friend, Lew Bracker.

Recognizing Jimmy at a nearby table, the singer got up and made his way over to where Jimmy was sitting, extending his hand.

Jimmy refused it, just staring at him. “You may be marrying Pier,” he said, “but she isn’t yours. Never was, never will be.”

Damone took a swing at Jimmy, but a waiter restrained him. Jimmy and Bracker got up and quickly left the restaurant.

Jimmy would meet Damone once again, months after the wedding, again at the Villa Capri.

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When Jimmy escorted Terry Moore to the premiere of *Sabrina,* it led to press speculation about a break-up with Pier. Louella Parsons rushed into print, calling Jimmy’s romance with Pier “as cold as an ice cube in Greenland.”

Reporter Kendis Rochlen called Pier, asking if she and Jimmy had had a tiff.

“I was just too tired to go to the premiere,” she claimed. “They’re always such big productions, and I’d rather see the picture a few days later, when I can relax and eat popcorn. I’ve been terribly busy with dancing lessons and costume fittings for *Green Mansions.”*

[Pier never appeared in Green Mansions. MGM decided to shelve it until 1958, when Mel Ferrer directed Tony Perkins, with Audrey Hepburn cast into the role originally slated for Pier.]

Jimmy’s last public outing with Pier was on September 29, 1954 at the world premiere of Judy Garland’s “comeback picture,” *A Star is Born*. Photographers were in a frenzy snapping their picture. Jimmy looked discontented, as if he wanted to escape the gala.

[It can be assumed that he didn't tell Pier that he'd previously been sexually intimate with Garland.]

One reporter spotted Jimmy and Pier talking in a corner of the lobby with Clark Gable and Marlene Dietrich, who were apparently waiting for their respective companions to emerge from the toilets. Eavesdropping, the reporter heard Gable tell Dietrich, “Why, with my track record, haven’t I gotten around to you yet?”

Pushed aside in the crowd, the reporter didn’t hear Dietrich’s response.

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At St. Timothy’s Catholic Church, on November 24, 1954, Pier and Vic Damone were married.

[Ironically, this would be the same church where seventeen years later, Pier would be buried after committing suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills.]

Some six-hundred star-studded guests showed up for the ceremony, including her best friend, Debbie Reynolds. Other celebrities included Ann Blyth, Jack Benny (who had once seduced Jimmy), Cyd Charisse, Danny

Thomas, and tap-dancing Ann Miller. Since Pier's father was dead, E.J. Mannix, president of MGM, gave the bride away.

A legend still persists that Jimmy, wearing a black leather jacket, was spotted across the street, astride his Harley-Davidson, as confetti rained down on the newlyweds as they emerged from the church. As photographers snapped away, the roar of the motorcycle engine could be heard by members of the wedding party.

As one reporter wrote, "Jimmy, looking like Marlon Brando in *The Wild One,* roared down the street and out of Pier's life forever."

Parts of that statement might not have been true.

Jimmy later told William Bast, "That wasn't me. As a bizarre joke, I hired someone to impersonate me, knowing that at that distance, no one could make out my face behind those goggles. Shame on you, Willie, for thinking I'd be so dumb, actually showing up myself. Surely you don't think I'm that dumb."

"Well, the rest of the world was taken in," Bast responded.

There was at least one eyewitness who claimed that Jimmy and Pier continued to see each other after the wedding. Joe Hyams, in his book, *Mislaid in Hollywood,* spotted Pier speeding past after leaving Jimmy's house when he was on the way there to interview him.

After Jimmy let him in, he found the actor looking distraught. "It's already done," he admitted in a choked voice. "Pier's going to have a baby. My kid. She was already pregnant with my baby when she stood on the altar exchanging wedding vows with Damone."

"I just sat there, not knowing what to say," Hyams said. "Jimmy started to cry. I held him in my arms. I hadn't held a man in my arms since the war."

"Marriage, Italian Style," as interpreted by Hollywood. Pier Angeli at her wedding to Vic Damone

Stanley Haggart continued to see Jimmy at his Laurel Canyon home. "He would often drop in. Sometimes, he'd be with a man, at other times, a woman. He never brought Pier by. He and some guy would go for a nude swim in the pool and later stay overnight in my little guest cottage."

"One night was different from the others," Haggart said.

Jimmy told him, "Pier's having a baby. It's my kid. I went out and bought some baby clothes. Since I don't know its gender, I bought some blue duds for the boy, pink for the girl. If it's a girl, I want her named Mildred after my mother."

Jimmy, in a different mood, told John Gilmore, his friend, "I'm just putting on some broken heart act. Hell, Pier's screwed half the men in Hollywood. I should have figured she'd end up marrying some joker like Damone. Actually, he's sorta cute. I might fuck him myself one night if I'm horny enough."

"Fuck them both?" Jimmy said. "Who needs them? You find people who nobody need, and in a flash, they find each other."

When Jimmy encountered columnist Kendis Rochlen, he said, "Who gives a shit? I know how you can cure her from her new groom. Lock her up in a room with five-and-dime pictures of Damone plastered on all the walls. She'll break down the door and flee in horror."

Obviously Rochlen couldn't print his Damone's reaction, if she bothered to ask him for one.

Cal York wrote, “Jimmy makes no secret of the fact that he still hankers for angelic Miss Pizza, as he calls Pier.”

“You might say I’m not exactly delighted that she married Vic,” Jimmy said. “I’ve been dating Pat Hardy, and I’d say she seems a little hurt. My current girlfriend thought Damone was going to marry her. They were practically engaged.”

In 1958, having realized that both Damone and Jimmy had moved on to other women, Hardy married actor Richard Egan. He is remembered today for appearing on screen with Elvis Presley in that singer’s debut film, *Love Me Tender* (1956).

Jimmy told another reporter, “I’ve got this new girl in my life. It’s a fast new Porsche Spyder Speedstar convertible.”

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On April 15, 1955, Jim and Lew Bracker were dining together once again at Villa Capri when Damone entered the restaurant. Their previous encounter had turned violent.

But this time, Damone seemed jubilant and conciliatory. Within minutes, he showed up at Jimmy’s table with a bottle of champagne and three glasses. “I’m a father. I was hoping you’d drink a toast to my son.”

Perry Damone, named after Perry Como, had entered the world on July 21, only eight months after Pier’s marriage. Delivered by Caesarian section, he weighted eight pounds, thirteen ounces.

[Perry Damone, also known as Perry Farinola, died of lymphoma in 2014 after a successful career as a top-ranking radio broadcaster for the Phoenix, Arizona-based radio station 99.9 KEZ.]

With a smirk on his face, Jimmy said, “That’s one kid I can definitely drink to.”

After the toast, Damone moved on, never to see Jimmy again.

Bracker said, “I did not then, nor did I ever, ask Jimmy what he was intimating by his toast. But I drew my own conclusions.”

According to Joe Hyams, Damone, two days later, had lunch with a former girlfriend and allegedly told her, “Pier’s a mother all right. But it’s not certain that I’m the father.”

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As many Hollywood insiders had predicted, Pier’s marriage to Damone did not work out. They divorced in 1958. What followed was a series of bitter custody battles over their son, Perry, that would not be settled until 1965, when Pier got part-time custody.

She would marry musician Armando Trovajoli on February 14, 1962, that union lasting four years.

After his divorce, Damone would marry four more times, one of them an interracial union with singer Diahann Carroll.

An aging Damone entered into his final marriage in 1998 to fashion designer Rena Rowan. Although his first wife, Pier, had died penniless, Damone’s current wife, in poor health after suffering a stroke in 2011, has an estate currently valued at $50 million.

Pier spent the final years of her life mostly wandering in Europe looking for work. Slowly, she descended into a twilight of drugs and alcohol. Another of Jimmy‘s girlfriends, Susan Strasberg, met with her in Rome, finding her “still beautiful, even with heavy makeup, although it didn’t cover the strain of her features.”

Arriving back in Hollywood, she had no money left. She moved in with her longtime friend, Helena Sorell, at 355 South McCarty Drive in Los Angeles.

She’d just been featured in *Addio Alexandra (1969)* an X-rated, English-language comedy filmed in Italy and released in the U.S. as *Love Me, Love My Wife*.

Desperate for some sort of comeback, she went to see her former lover, Marlon Brando, asking him to use his influence to get her cast as one of the wives of a Mafia don in his upcoming film, *The Godfather (1972).* He dismissed her, telling her he had no control over casting.

Pier was most candid in her final interview, telling the *National Enquirer:*

> *“Jimmy was the only man I've ever loved as deeply as a woman can love a man. I never loved either of my husbands the way I loved Jimmy. I tried to love my husbands, but it never lasted. I would wake up at night and find I had been dreaming about Jimmy. I would lie awake in the same bed with my husband, and I would think of my love for Jimmy and wish it were Jimmy and not my husband in bed next to me. I had to separate from my husband because I didn't think I could be in love with one man—even if he were dead—and live with another.”*

Her former movie career but a memory, Pier died on September 10, 1971. Helena Sorrel found her dead in her apartment, where she'd consumed an overdose of phenobarbital. Pier Angeli was thirty-nine years old.

Jimmy's Affair With Ursula Andress

The "Bernese Oberland Beauty" Who Later Became Famous as The Love Object of James Bond, "007"

After his star-crossed affair with Pier Angeli, Jimmy began dating Ursula Andress, a Swiss-born actress newly arrived in Hollywood and hailed as "the female Marlon Brando." She was struggling to learn English, with some vague hope of making it as a Hollywood star. She had beauty and the physical assets, but lacked talent and never seemed to work hard to master the King's English.

Ursula became friendly with Dick Clayton, Jimmy's agent, who later said to Jimmy, "Ursula is going to be the screen's next Marlene Dietrich. Marlene's getting a bit long in the tooth."

An Ursula-with-Jimmy date was arranged.

She remembered it later: "He came by my house an hour late. He came in room like wild animal and smell of everything I don't like. He stalk through my house, then sit down like an animal. He just sat there and said nothing. When we did start to talk, we got into an argument about music. I knew then I had become an American. No European woman would argue with a man."

He took her to a jazz club on the Sunset Strip, where he sat with her for only about fifteen minutes. "He get up from table and play bongo drums with the band. I sat there an hour, got up, and went home. He came by an hour later. Ask me if I want to see motorcycle. We sit on sidewalk in front of this motorcycle and talk and talk and talk until 5AM. Then he get up and go home. No kiss."

Soon, she was seen riding around Hollywood on the back of his motorcycle. She was also spotted in fast-moving cars driven by him—in fact, she was with him on the day he purchased his silver Porsche that would cost him his life.

"I didn't know it at the time, but Jimmy was buying his coffin."

Ursula Andress in *Dr. No* (1962)...Venus emerging from the ocean.

"I once ask Jimmy why he drives so fast," she said. "He told me, 'I've got to, since I'm not going to be around much longer.'"

"What does that mean?" she asked. "'You plan to commit suicide?' He said nothing."

"I go out with him, but we fight like cat and dog—no, two monsters," she said. "But we make up and have fun."

“Ursula has a mind of her own,” Jimmy told Clayton. “She doesn’t depend on a man to form an opinion.”

When Jimmy met Ursula, she was only nineteen years old and had been imported from Europe after executives at Paramount had become impressed with her beauty and presence during previews of the Italian film *The Loves of Casanova (1955),* originally released in Italy as *Le avventure di Giacomo Casanova.*

Instead of calling her “the female Marlon Brando,” another reporter dubbed her “the female James Dean.”

“She looked more like Brando than me,” Jimmy said to Clayton. “Especially with that short, cropped hairdo and her pouting lips.”

In contrast, composer Leonard Rosenman was struck by how much Ursula resembled Jimmy. “I came to believe that Jimmy’s relationship with her was essentially narcissistic for both of them.”

Jimmy later told Clayton, “Ursula is a real free spirt, she survives on almost no sleep. After a night out with her, I need matchsticks to prop my eyes open.”

One night, having arrived to pick her up for a date, he immediately sensed her anxiety. “Oh, Jimmy, Jimmy,” she said. “I make big mistake. I’m rushing to get ready. I made date with another man. He’s waiting for me outside in this old, horrible car.”

Jimmy looked outside her window, noticing a car parked under a street-light. He recognized that “piece of junk” right away. “Could your date be Howard Hughes?” he asked.

“Jimmy, how did you know?”

“Never mind,” he answered. He had no intention of telling Ursula that he and Hughes, and not that long ago, had been lovers.

She suggested to Jimmy that he join them for a night out on the town. For some perverse reason of his own, he happily agreed that it would be a fine idea.

Out on the sidewalk, she introduced Jimmy to Hughes, who did not acknowledge that he already knew him. “Pile into the front seat,” he told Ursula.

She sat in the middle, with Jimmy on her right, while a stone-faced Hughes headed toward Malibu, where it had been prearranged that he’d take her to dinner.

Stopping at a traffic light on Santa Monica Boulevard, near a gas station, Hughes told Jimmy that he didn’t have any cigarettes, and asked him if he’d go to the gas station and purchase a package for him from a vending machine.

Obediently, Jimmy got out of the car and walked toward the station. Midway there, he looked back. The traffic light had turned green. Hughes stepped on the gas and disappeared, with Ursula, into the night.

“That was the last I ever saw of the elusive Mr. Hughes, Jimmy told Clayton. I guess he has Robert Francis to play with instead.”

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Ursula and Jimmy spent time within his rental home, for which he paid $250 a month. He’d rented it from Nikko Romannhos, the *maître d'* at the Villa Capri.

In Sherman Oaks, the A-frame cottage resembled a modernized replica of a Bavarian hunting lodge. Downstairs was a seven-foot stone fireplace. Above it, configured as a kind of balcony, was a sleeping alcove. To reach it, Ursula and Jimmy had to climb a wooden ladder and pass through a trap door.

Sometimes, he took her to Villa Capri, where she always ordered a steak. He complained that she was driving him into bankruptcy. “Can’t you settle for spaghetti and meatballs?”

The next week, he flew to Texas for the filming of scenes from his third and final picture, *Giant.* She suspected that while there, he’d be making love to both Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor.

When the picture wrapped, he returned to Hollywood and to Ursula. But the relationship wasn’t the same as it had been before.

“I tried to love him,” she later said, “but it didn’t work out. I was not ready for marriage to him, as he was too unstable. While he was away, I fell in love with this American Adonis, John Derek, the most beautiful male animal in Hollywood. Everybody, both men and women, was after him, but he was mine. I had to tell Jimmy the truth.”

Lew Bracker, his friend, recalled, “Jimmy didn’t miss too much of a beat when Ursula switched to John Derek. He wasn’t even out of sorts and certainly not heartbroken. I think Jimmy knew that a split would happen sooner or later. As I look back, Jimmy never mentioned Ursula to me ever again. It was a seamless change.”

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The next actress Jimmy introduced to Bracket was starlet Lori Nelson, who was also dating Tab Hunter. “Lori was very girlish, Bracker said. “she was sweet and vanilla—not what Jimmy was interested in. She was all over Jimmy, oohing and cooing and telling him about her doll collection, her cutesy bedroom with dolls all over the bed and all over the room. This kind of conversation made Jimmy cringe.”

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Jimmy would see Ursula for a final time right before his tragic death. He stopped by in his Porsche and asked her to go to Salinas with him for a car race.

She turned him down. “You arrive at bad moment. John Derek is due any minute. Better go. He might get jealous.”

Despite all that, she noticed that Jimmy was waiting around, as if he wanted to encounter Derek. When he pulled up in his car, he acknowledged Jimmy and shook his hand. He was all smiles. The two men seemed to bond.

Jimmy invited Derek for a spin in his Porsche. To Ursula’s amazement, Derek accepted. Jimmy wanted to show his rival his ersatz “hunting lodge.”

Jimmy had hoped to meet Derek ever since director Nicholas Ray told him that he had campaigned for the role of Jim Starck in the upcoming *Rebel Without a Cause.* Ray had, in fact, discovered Derek and had cast him with Humphrey Bogart in *Knock on Any Door* (1949). In that film, Derek played a killer, Nick Romano, appropriately nicknamed “Pretty Boy.”

John Derek as a fighting priest in *The Leather Saint* (1956). Paul Douglas was in that film and is on the left.

En route to his pad, Jimmy learned that even though Derek was dating Ursula, he was married at the time to Pati Behs, a Russian-born *prima* ballerina. Derek told Jimmy that his wife had uncovered the affair and was threatening to bring legal action against Ursula. Since she had arrived in the U.S. with a work visa, a lawyer had informed Behs that her litigation, if filed, might lead to Ursula’s deportation on a morals charge.

A Jimmy’s “hunting lodge,” the actors had a few beers and talked about Ray and Hollywood.

Derek confessed that he’d gotten his start in Hollywood first as a male hustler and then by “lying on the casting couch of Henry Willson. I’m sure you’ve heard of him.”

“I’ve met the creep,” Jimmy said, “Wanted to get in my pants.”

“He wanted more that getting in my pants,” Derek said. “He took them off time and time again, getting his go damn pound of flesh before giving me some breaks. My real name was Derek Harris, but the fucker wanted to rename me Dare Harris.”

Four or five years after Jimmy’s death, Otto Preminger cast Derek and Jimmy’s gay friend, Sal Mineo, together in *Exodus* (1960). Derek told Mineo what happened at that hunting lodge during the final hours of Jimmy’s life. “I’m not sure why, but I did this impulsive thing,” Derek confessed. “After a few beers, I needed to go to the john. After I took a piss, I stripped off all my clothes. With a semi-erection, I walked back into Jimmy’s living room naked.”

“From the look on his face, I knew he wanted me. He got down on his knees and paid homage, giving me this terrific blow-job. He didn’t seem to want to get off after I exploded.”

“I knew he was a better actor than I would ever be,” Derek candidly admitted to Mineo. “By the time he was

old and gray, he would probably have won eight Oscars. But for those minutes in that hunting lodge, I was king, and he was my sex slave. It was a great ego trip for me. Although I'd spend the rest of my life chasing after beautiful women, the sex was really good."

"As far as I know," Derek told Mineo, "I was the last person on earth Jimmy had sex with. He died very soon after I met him. I was very sorry, so very sorry, even though we were rivals. I hoped that I had given him some pleasure. I called our time together *A Kiss Before Dying.* I stole that title from another picture I desperately wanted to star in. But the part I wanted went to Robert Wagner."

Contacted by the *Hollywood Reporter* in the aftermath of Jimmy's death, Ursula said, "If I had not broken off with him, he would not have committed suicide in that car. I tried to understand him, but I just couldn't make it work. I'm so sorry about how things turned out. Without meaning to, I think I led him to his suicide. That car crash was no accident."

[Derek would later marry Ursula, divorce, her, and wed Linda Evans, divorce her, and finally settle down with Bo Derek.

After Derek, Ursula had an eight-year affair with the French actor, Jean-Paul Belmondo, an actor sometimes defined as "The James Dean of France." That was followed by a longtime liaison with actor Harry Hamlin, with whom she had a son.

Along the way, Ursula attracted other men, including Warren Beatty, Ryan O'Neal, and Fabio Testi.

Jimmy never got to see Ursula become a household name. Dr. No, *the first of the James Bond thrillers, contained what became an iconic clip of her emerging from the sea, clad in her soon-to-be famous white bikini. Cast in the role of Honeychile Ryder, she brought a smoldering presence to the film, becoming an almost overnight legend.*

Even though she was paid only ten thousand dollars for her contribution to the film, her performance helped launch the Bond movies as a Hollywood staple. She later sold the bikini at an auction for $61,500.]

"My Two Beautiful Lovers, Marilyn & Jimmy,

WERE RIGHT—LEAVE THE STAGE WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD."

—Marlon Brando

Marlon Brando remained a fixture in Jimmy's life right up until the end. In one of the astonishing secrets of Hollywood, at least some of their rivalry and/or bonding—at least for a while—revolved around the women they were dating, Pier Angeli and Ursula Andress.

FLASHBACK: In 1951, when Pier arrived seeking stardom in Hollywood, fresh and optimistic after her film successes in Italy, she retained traumatizing memories of Brando's brutal "date rape" of her in 1950 on that grassy knoll overlooking the Roman Colosseum.

In 1953, MBM executives were considering joining Brando and Pier together as a screen duo in two separate projects—first, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and later, *Romeo and Juliet.*

[Neither film was made, although Brando would eventually appear, without Pier, in Julius Caesar *(1953).]*

But while they were still being considered, Brando called Pier with the news. At first, based on her memories, she refused to speak to him until she learned that starring roles in at least one and possibly two screen projects were being dangled before them.

Reluctantly, she agreed to meet with him as he pleaded with her "to forgive me for my past transgressions." He blamed her for his assault on her, claiming that it was "because you looked so god damn beautiful."

Brando later described Pier as "a mixture of child, waif, and minx," despite her ill-fated romance with Kirk Douglas.

After that, Brando showed up at the Pierangeli house for dinner, and even asked Enrica's permission to date her daughter. The mother agreed, providing that her twin sister, Marisa, accompany them.

The next morning, Brando arrived at the Pierangeli household driving a large truck. Loaded with bales of hay, he had borrowed it from another film set. He'd come up with a gimmicky idea for a hayride and picnic beside an obscure lake he'd located on an old map of California.

Along for the ride was Rita Moreno, whom he was dating, dancer/choreographer Jerome Robbins, and Phil Rhodes, Brando's makeup man. Pier and Marisa joined in the picnic, riding in the back with the bales of hay.

As it turned out, Brando never found the lake. He later learned that it had dried up. Instead, he located an idyllic spot in the country, and the show business crowd enjoyed their picnic there, except for the ants, which decided to join in the fun.

Within the next few weeks, Brando became a fixture around the Pierangeli household until Enrica finally trusted him with the responsibility of escorting her precious Pier out on a date without a chaperone.

Enrica was clearly charmed by Brando, who was constantly praising her home-cooked pasta. "He is the son I never had," she said. "He's so full of love and compassion." Apparently, she never learned that he had raped Pier in Rome.

With Pier seated beside him, Brando drove around Hollywood in the bullet-riddled car that had belonged to Bugsy Siegel. Brando was considering playing the gangster in a biopic based on his life.

To the degree that Enrica approved of Brando, she passionately disapproved of Jimmy.

On the set of Pier's movie, *The Sliver Chalice,* its star, Virginia Mayo, said, "I had several talks with Pier between takes. She viewed it as a feather in her cap to be dating the two bad boys of Hollywood, Jimmy and Marlon. In spite of their dubious sexuality, those guys were in great demand from both men and women. When they weren't fooling around with Ursula Andress or Pier, they were probably making it with each other."

Actor Sam Gillman, who lived in Brando's home for several months, later revealed a shocking incident that took place in the "love triangle" flourishing among Brando, Jimmy, and Pier.

"I was never quite sure what his motive was, but Marlon set up an incident one night to broaden Pier's awareness of what some men do," Gilman said. "If anything, that night shoved her into the arms of Vic Damone."

In a perverse move, Brando made dates with both Jimmy and Pier on the same night. Jimmy had been invited two hours before Pier's arrival. Brando called Pier and told her he'd hurt his leg and that, because he'd been immobilized, he wouldn't be able to answer his door. He asked her to enter through his garden and to walk through the French doors opening directly into his living room.

Jimmy showed up for his date with Brando, not knowing that Pier was expected later. When she arrived at eight o'clock, she navigated her way through his garden and then, as instructed, directly into his living room. There she confronted an orgiastic scene that must have sent shock waves through her.

"On the living room sofa, a nude Marlon and Dean were having a hot sixtynine," Gilman said. "I was in another room that night, but I heard Pier scream. She raced out, through the garden and back to her car. Welcome to Hollywood, gal."

As he expected, Brando read press reports of Pier's eventual break with Jimmy. "They wrote such bullshit about the end of the romance of those two. Take that story about Jimmy waiting across the street on his motorcycle during Pier's wedding ceremony. What a piece of crap! While Pier was marrying that Sinatra clone, Jimmy was probably somewhere else taking it up the ass. I should know."

Gilmore summed it up: "Pier wanted Marlon's noble tool, Dean's pecker, and Damone's Italian sausage."

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As if his conquest of Jimmy's territory with Pier weren't enough, Brando set out to date Ursula Andress too. "I think Marlon wanted to show Jimmy who *the man really* really was," said Gilman.

At the time, Ursula was sharing an apartment with Josanne Berenger, whom Brando had declared as "my one true love." In spite of that ardent declaration, he began dating Ursula after she moved into her own vine-covered cottage overlooking Sunset Boulevard.

Still living with him at the time, Gilman said that Ursula was a true *femme fatale* "If Josanne wanted to hold onto Marlon, she should not have introduced him to Ursula. No woman with a boyfriend should ever introduce him to this Swiss bombshell. What a hottie!"

"One night, when Marlon had too much to drink," Gilman continued, "he confessed to me his ambition: that involved marrying either Ursula or Pier. He'd take one for a wife, the other for his mistress."

He also confessed something else to Gilman: "I know that Dean really goes for Ursula and Pier, and that is precisely why I'm interested in them, too. I want to show him up. If I told either of them to get rid of Jimmy tomorrow, she would. I like playing the game of love—it's a lot of fun. Rita Moreno's in love with me, too, plus countless others."

"I don't know if Jimmy ever found out, but Marlon wanted a sworn statement from both of these gals that he was a better lover than Dean," Gilman said. "He told me that although Jimmy might handle Pier, he wasn't man

enough to handle Ursula. Frankly—and don't tell him I said this—I think Marlon isn't man enough for Ursula, either."

When Kazan heard of these entangled and interconnected romantic liaisons, he expressed an opinion of his own, telling Tennessee Williams, "I think Dean is in love with Marlon, and that he's dating these gals just to show how macho he was. Frankly, at one point, Marlon was ready to dump Dean until he heard that he was dating Pier and later Ursula. That aroused Marlon's sense of competition. Perhaps he wants to pay Dean back for all that press he's generating as the next Marlon Brando."

"For some reasons, those two very competitive men seem to want to date the same women," Tennessee said. "I heard that both of them are also dating Katy Jurado when she's not otherwise occupied with Gary Cooper. Marlon told me that Jimmy doesn't just want to imitate him, 'he wants to be me.'"

Even when Marlon was out on a date—most often with a woman—Dean sometimes stalked his prey," Gilmore claimed. "On his motorcycle, Dean would follow Marlon and his date in their car. If they went, say, to a Mexican restaurant—Dean would go there and sit alone at another table, drinking Tequila sunrises while he studied them. I was living with Marlon at the time, and overheard Dean's calls to him at three or four o'clock in the morning."

"Marlon told me that one groggy night, he was parked at a lookout on Mulholland Drive, making out with Natalie Wood. Suddenly, Dean appeared at the car window, staring in at them. When Natalie screamed, he ran away. Marlon said, 'I wasn't as spooked as Natalie was. Knowing Dean, I realize it was harmless—he's got a crush on me and he wants to see what I'm up to. I understand that. Lovers all over the world do that. So I can't blame Jimmy. Once he got a taste of my noble tool, he wants to own it. But it belongs to me. Only I will decide where to put it.'"

One night when Jimmy came to visit Brando, he kept him entertained by what Gilmore called a series of puckish tricks. "Like a Houdini, he disappeared into the bathroom and locked the door from the inside. Then he escaped through the lone window, yet managed to re-lock it, from the outside, after his escape. Marlon rushed to the front door to answer the bell. Dean was standing THERE, on the stoop. Marlon could never figure out how he pulled off that stunt."

Sometimes, Dean would put both a cigarette and a lit match in his mouth and put his lips together. He'd then open his mouth and the cigarette would be lit. and the match would still be burning. "It was amazing," Gilman said. "It drove Marlon wild."

"Dean and Marlon shared one bad boy trait in common," Gilman said. "When either of them had to take a piss, they found the nearest wall and urinated to their heart's content, regardless of who was looking on. When a wall wasn't available, they used a fire hydrant or a tree, like a dog."

Brando had another close friend, Carlo Fiore, who was sometimes present during his interactions with Jimmy. Once, he overheard the younger actor's praise for Brando's performance in *The Men* (1950).

"You were terrific," Jimmy said. "I didn't know what acting was until I saw you in that picture. You conveyed much with minimalism. Suddenly, I knew how to do it. Through you, I learned to show anguish. Unlike Bette Davis, who's in constant motion, you taught me the power of stillness. The use of outward serenity to convey internal turmoil was in complete opposition to most screen acting until you came along. Even the tiny flicker in your face conveys something, an emotional byproduct, an unrealized dream, an unfulfilled passion. It wasn't until I saw you in *The Men* that I decided to become a serious actor. It was the greatest moment of revelation of my entire life."

Both Fiore and Gilman agreed that all these pronouncements from Jimmy "was a form of ass-kissing."

"I think there was also a lot of ass-kissing, or whatever, of another sort going on with him in Marlon's bedroom," Gilman said.

One night, Jimmy took Brando for a spin in a new Alfa Romeo. Brando returned home two hours later, his face white, telling Gilman, "I think he has a death wish. He drives like he wants to die and take me with him. If I ever get into a car with him again, I'm going to take the wheel. Behind the wheel of a car, Jimmy boy is absolutely fearless."

Brando then confused Gilman with yet another pronouncement about Jimmy: "He wants to be loved, but he doesn't." Gilman was left to ponder that for himself.

"Don't fall in love with me," Jimmy warned Brando one night in front of Gilman. "When emotional demands are made on me, I collapse."

"Don't worry your pretty head about that," Brando said. "At least, you've revealed to me how to get rid of you in case that's my desire in the future."

When Jimmy left that night, Brando told Gilman, "There's a toughness to Dean that's only pretend. Actually, he needs to be nursed like a baby. Sometimes, when he's in need of a mother, I let him suckle at my breasts."

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Director Robert Wise, for a time, thought Brando, an amateur boxer, would be ideal in the story of middleweight champ, Rocky Graziano in *Somebody Up There Likes Me.* Brando considered the offer, but later rejected it. Wise, with revisions, then offered the role to Jimmy, despite his observation that he didn't have the hardened physique of a boxer.

Jimmy seemed thrilled with the offer, and subsequently, Brando agreed to train and work out with him in the ring.

"Frankly, I thought Marlon threw some killer punches at the kid when he wanted to punish him," Gilman said. "There was this undercurrent of hostility between these two guys. It was definitely a love-hate relationship."

After Jimmy's death, Paul Newman was shoehorned into the role of Graziano for a 1956 release. In a touch of Hollywood irony, the picture starred four of the late Jimmy Dean's lovers: Paul Newman, Pier Angeli, Steve McQueen, and Sal Mineo.

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After Jimmy's filming of *East of Eden* he paid a surprise visit to the gallery of a sculptor in West Hollywood, Kenneth Kendall to admire a sculpted head whose look had been inspired by Brando. Kendall later revealed that Jimmy was so impressed with the sculpture of Brando that "he almost devoured it, fondling it, loving it. He was totally fascinated."

While at the gallery, Jimmy asked to see Kendall's photos of Brando. "He went through my files one by one. At the end, he was very hesitant, but managed to blurt out a request."

"Would you sculpt me like you did Brando?" he asked.

Jimmy had not made a good first impression on Kendall. He'd shown up at the gallery looking slovenly—"a real turn-off to me."

However, the sculptor changed his mind when he saw Jimmy's performance in *East of Eden* He called Jimmy and asked him to pose for him, and Jimmy seemed delighted.

Kendall's sculpture of Jimmy was later placed in Griffith Park in Los Angeles. By that time, however, its subject was dead.

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Sam Gilman claimed that Brando's affair with Jimmy continued until the young actor's death. So did their rivalry.

Midway into the shoot of *Giant*, director George Stevens generated a genuine hysteria in Jimmy when he informed him that he had originally offered the role of Jett Rink to Brando.

"First, it was Marlon who turned me down," Stevens said. "Then I offered it to Montgomery Clift. He turned me down too."

"Guess I'm left with sloppy seconds," Jimmy said. Before storming off the set in anger, he told Stevens, "Or should I say sloppy thirds?"

"Hudson and Dean were thick as thieves for a few weeks there," Gilman said. "Marlon found their affair amusing, warning me that their romance wouldn't last. 'Rock is too square for our boy pervert,' Brando said."

"During his final months with Brando, Dean was out of control," Gilman said. "He arrived at Marlon's house at about three o'clock one morning. I let him in. He was threatening to kill himself if he didn't see Marlon. I woke up a sleepy Marlon who wandered downstairs naked. He conferred privately with Dean. Somehow Dean managed to persuade Marlon to drive away with him in the middle of the night. I hope Marlon was driving."

"I noticed that Dean would get drunk after only two glasses of vino. And he was one mean fucking drunk. Marlon would just sip a coke observing Dean like a boa constrictor sizing up a chicken to deep throat. Marlon needed to keep his sanity in order to control Dean later in the night. Under the influence of alcohol, Dean was a shit. He tried to physically assault Marlon on more than one occasion. Marlon never fought back. He was the stronger of the two, and he could have restrained or even destroyed Dean."

"I shouldn't mention this, and God will get me for it, but Marlon and Dean engaged in some very sick games

together, especially near the end of Dean's short life," Gilman claimed. "Very S&M stuff. Marlon on occasion did engage in violence with some of his girlfriends, as has been widely reported. To my knowledge, he never got violent with any of his male lovers except with Dean. They played their dirty games with each other. It was like the two rivals brought out only the darkest side in each other. Many a night I heard Dean sobbing yet begging for more."

"Dean had a whole string of seduction mates, Gilman said. "To Marlon, I called them his little girlfriends and his little fairyboys. I can't speak for his whole life, but during the time he was dating Marlon, he also had a whole harem, both male and female, each one of whom seemed willing to do his bidding. He was banging some bitch one night, and the very next night getting fucked by some biker. I hear he liked only bikers who dressed like Marlon did in *The Wild One*."

Jimmy's last night with Brando was a disaster," claimed Ronnie White, who hosted an all-male party in Malibu, which both Jimmy and Brando attended.

"Jimmy apparently had been drinking heavily all afternoon, and he came to the party stoned," White said. "Brando came in a little later. He was sober and ordered only a cranberry cocktail. Jimmy switched from liquor to pot. Then he and Brando got into a tiff, a sort of catfight."

In front of the other guests, Brando suddenly attacked Jimmy, accusing him of going out with women just to mask his homosexuality. "You and Tab Hunter just date for all this manufactured Hollywood publicity crap. You shamelessly court it. As for me, and unlike you guys, I have nothing to cover up. I am what I am, and I'm proud of it."

"Jimmy seemed on the verge of tears at this sudden attack from Brando," White said. "He ran out of the house and tried to hop onto his motorcycle, but Brando bolted from my living room and ran outside and stopped him, using force."

"I really believe that Jimmy that night would have committed suicide on that cycle. He was too far gone."

"Then Brando drove Jimmy home in his car," White said. "The next afternoon, a very hung-over Jimmy came to my house and retrieved his motorcycle. But he didn't come in and thank me for the party. I guess he wanted to forget it. The next thing I heard, he was dead."

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In the wake of Jimmy's death, when the crowds died down, Brando, with Gilman, drove to the site of the young actor's fatal car crash.

Getting down on his knees, Brando surveyed the ground so recently soaked with blood.

Standing only a few feet away, Gilman heard Brando say, "Jimmy, I loved you more than I told you."

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Years later, Brando told Gilman, "Jimmy went out in a blaze of glory. Marilyn Monroe disappeared from the scene just as her youthful beauty entered its final hours and those wrinkles inevitably appeared around her eyes. The trick in Hollywood is to die when you're young and still beautiful. I'll probably live to be 102. I'll look like an old bullfrog, wrinkled and fat, Stanley Kowalski in that sweaty T-shirt only a distant memory."

"But Jimmy will be eternally young: Cal Trask, Jim Stark, Jett Rink. Take my word for it, Sam. It's the lucky ones who fade from the scene while they've still got it."

"The Hollywood Hills are filled with former movie stars, both male and female, afraid to look in the mirror at the grotesques they've become. Marilyn got it right in that god damn song of hers. 'We all lose our charms in the end.' That is, those of us who stick around."

Chapter Twenty-One

JIMMY COMPETES WITH HIS "SOULMATE" (EARTHA KITT) FOR THE LOVE OF PLAYBOY, PRODUCER, & THEATER MOGUL

ARTHUR LOEW, JR.

How Vampira,
the Weirdest Television Personality of Her Era,
Lured (and Later, Cursed) Jimmy with Black Magic

Sammy Davis, Jr.

PULLS JIMMY TOWARD SATANISM & THE OCCULT

Jimmy's Affair With Van Johnson
America's (Male) Box Office Sweetheart of the 1940s

HOW PAUL NEWMAN
IN THE WAKE OF JIMMY'S DEATH, FILLED HIS SHOES,
BOTH ON THE SCREEN AND AS A BEDMATE FOR HIS FORMER LOVERS

"I'm hot shit," James Dean bragged on the phone to his friend, William Bast, who was still struggling to find his niche as a writer. "I guess I can now have any role I want in this town."

"Enjoy your moment," Bast said, trying to conceal his jealousy. "Hollywood is known for crowning princes, occasionally even kings. It's also known for dethroning them, sometimes after very short reigns. Then an actor's

got to live with his fall from glory for the rest of his miserable days."

"What a downer you are," Jimmy charged, flashing anger. "Don't ruin my moment. Why don't you admit it? You're a failed actor. You'd love to be in my position." Then he slammed down the phone.

It would be several days before he spoke to Bast again.

But as he'd soon discover, Hollywood wasn't ready to give him any role he wanted.

Producer John Houseman had met him at a party, finding him an ideal choice to play the role of a mentally disturbed youth in an upcoming film, *The Cobweb.* It had been written by John Paxton, who had penned the script for Marlon Brando's *The Wild One* based on a novel by William Gibson.

At a lunch, Houseman handed Jimmy the rough draft of *The Cobweb's* script. Jimmy would later refer to it as "Grand Hotel in the Loony Bin." The plot dealt with a series of melodramatic events in a high-class mental institution. The role being discussed was that of Steven Holte, a troubled young designer with mental problems. Jimmy found the character "sweetly deranged. It's practically type casting," he said in a phone call to Houseman the next day.

Houseman arranged for Jimmy to drive, the following night, to the home of Vincente Minnelli, who was set to direct it. "I hope Judy Garland's former husband is not going to turn this into a musical."

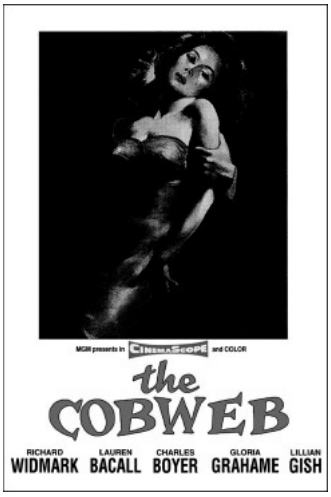
"Have no fear," Houseman assured him. "He's equally good at dramas. He should know a lot about mental institutions, having been married to Judy."

Over drinks in Minnelli's living room, Jimmy told him that he had come very close to working with him before on *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952), the film he'd directed with Lana Turner and Kirk Douglas. "George Bradshaw wanted to do something really daring. Instead of Lana catching Kirk with another woman, she goes to his house and discovers me in my panties coming out of Kirk's bedroom. It would have been ground-breaking."

"I'm aware of that and actually wanted to film it," Minnelli responded, but, of course, MGM nixed the idea as too daring. The Production Code just wouldn't have allowed it."

Minnelli had already nicknamed *The Cobweb* "our mental film," and told Jimmy that he was hoping for an all-star cast. "You'll get that chance to work with Lana after all. I've offered her a role along with Robert Taylor and Grace Kelly. Not bad. Three of the biggest stars in Hollywood…and you. The movie has a perverse fascination for me. I'm familiar with the psychiatric setting after all those years with Judy, including time at Menninger."

[The Menninger Clinic, a respected drug and alcohol rehabilitation center that at the time was located in Topeka, Kansas (and now located in Texas), had, for a while enrolled Judy Garland in one of its programs.]



Jimmy also said that he was looking forward to working with Susan Strasberg, daughter of Lee, who had been cast in the film as one of the mental institution's patients.

He was also impressed with the rest of the cast. "Fay Wray from *King Kong.* My God. And Adele Jergens. Ronald Reagan proposed marriage to her after Jane Wyman dumped him. Lillian Gish is also in *Cobweb*. What a dear. Do you know that she 'invented' the close-up?'"

It was well known in Hollywood circles that Minnelli was gay, and, as Jimmy later admitted, "I was waiting for the inevitable invitation to his casting couch."

The next day, he phoned Bast to make up with him, and to tell him what had happened at Minnelli's home.

“Did he seduce you?” Bast asked.

“No, but his mouth was watering. I’m too big a star to lie on any more casting couches. I did wear a pair or tight jeans and no underwear to tempt him. His eyes kept darting to my crotch. I should have given the poor guy a break, but I held out. After all, I’d fucked Judy.”

When Houseman phoned Jimmy the next day, he told him, “I talked to Vincente. He thinks you’re perfect for the role. It’s yours.”

Jimmy phoned Bast again. “I got the part. And I got it without having some old guy suck my dick.”

But Minnelli’s dream cast didn’t work out. Instead, he cast Richard Widmark, Lauren Bacall, and Gloria Grahame. Taylor and Turner had drifted on to make other pictures, and Kelly claimed she was exhausted after making four films virtually in a back-to-back row.

Jimmy was delighted to learn that Leonard Rosenman, one of his best friends, had signed to do the musical score.

He was also looking forward to meeting Gloria Grahame, who had been married to director Nicholas Ray until he caught her in bed with his thirteen-year-old son, Tony. And he was especially interested in a face-to-face with Lauren Bacall.

Humphrey Bogart and Bacall lived together in Benedict Canyon a few miles north of the Beverly Hills Hotel, in a ranch-style house that had been originally built for Hedy Lamarr.

Lauren Bacall with Humphrey Bogart...a May to October affair.

Bacall called Jimmy and invited him over for a drink. She was aware that he’d played a brief role in *Deadline, U.S.A,* with her husband. But she didn’t know that Bogie and Jimmy had had had several vicious encounters.

Jimmy brought along a recording of some of Rosenman’s music to play for her, with the understanding that his friend had already been commissioned to compose a musical score for *The Cobweb.*

Bacall would later tell Patricia Neal, who had worked with Jimmy before, “I found him charming and attractive. Unlike some of these punks in Hollywood today, he seems to appreciate an older woman. Actually, I’m only eight years older than he is.”

“Many find Jimmy difficult, but I thought he was delightful,” Neal said. “Coop *[Gary Cooper]* just adored him.”

Neal also learned what happened later that night. “As we were listening to the music, Jimmy asked me to dance,” Bacall said. “He held me very close, pressing his body against mine.”

“All of a sudden, Bogie arrived home early and caught us dancing,” Bacall said. “He’d been to the clinic. As you know, his health is failing. It was perfectly harmless. Maybe we kissed. I don’t remember. Bogie went ballistic. He grabbed Jimmy by his neck and literally tossed him out the door on his ass.”

Jimmy fared better with another member of the cast, Oscar Levant, who had signed to play the mother-fixated Mr. Capp. In the original novel, he was a homosexual. “Minnelli wants to leave the gay stuff in, but I’m sure MGM will object. Instead, he’s having it rewritten. However, he’s bringing all my neuroses and complexes into the plot, so I will, more or less, be playing myself.”

Levant was an eccentric pianist known for his sharp tongue. His streams of barbed witticisms appealed to Jimmy’s sense of humor. A friend of Levant’s, Joan Collins, said, “Oscar and Dean were total opposites, but they got along fabulously, each relishing the other’s unusualness.”

Jimmy was drawn to Levant’s music, but he also was impressed with him as an actor. He’d appeared in

Humoresque (1946), with John Garfield and Joan Crawford and in such films as *An American in Paris* (1951) with Gene Kelly.

In his 1968 memoir, *The Importance of Being Oscar,* Levant wrote of another visit by Jimmy to his home.

> *"Jimmy Dean once spent a night until five in the morning talking to me about himself and his world. At that time, he was working on his biggest picture,* Giant. *Arthur Loew, Jr. brought him to our house, along with Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Wilding, Joan Collins, and the producer of* Giant, *Henry Ginsberg. Arthur knew that one of my daughters was an ardent Jimmy Dean fan. It was a strange thing, but seeing my daughter's room filled with dozens of pictures of him in various poses did not seem to please Dean. On the contrary, it depressed him. He said he felt crushed under the weight of such adulation. He turned out to be a fascinating and intelligent young man who talked fluently about artists in music. And he was surprisingly knowledgeable about such recondite composers as Schönberg and Bartók."*

Two weeks later, Jimmy was disappointed when Warners refused to release him from his contract to film *The Cobweb*. He also was enraged to learn that John Kerr, his former lover and now his rival, had been assigned the role he'd wanted to play. To add to his fury, Kerr was being billed as "the new James Dean."

[After Jimmy's death, Bogie, nearing the final months of his own life, told the press: "The kid died at the right time. If he had lived, he'd never have been able to live up to his publicity.']

"It's Not the Whore Who Pays"

—James Dean to Rogers Brackett, a few months after their affair ended

In one of those embarrassing coincidences that occur too often in life, Jimmy, on a chance encounter on Third Avenue in New York, ran into Rogers Brackett, his former mentor and lover. Before Jimmy's rise to fame, Brackett had introduced him to important people in the industry and procured roles for him in teleplays.

But now, Brackett was no longer the powerful TV advertising executive he'd been during his heyday. He'd fallen on bad days and had taken to drinking. His bosses on Madison Avenue, who had been trying to peddle their products to typical American families, had been turned off by his numerous homosexual indiscretions.

Jimmy had also heard stories about how Brackett was going around taking credit "as the man who discovered James Dean," and he resented that. Now that he was a movie star, and fully aware that there were aspects of his past that it would be wise to conceal, he did not want to acknowledge the role that Brackett had played in his past.

Brackett explained his financial predicament to Jimmy, and then, with a twinge of desperation, asked to borrow $10,000 from him, a sum he promised to pay back with interest.

"I didn't know it was the whore who paid," Jimmy said. "I thought it was the other way around."

"I no longer need a mother hen cackling over me," Jimmy said. "Now, struggling young actors turn to me, asking me to get them work. I've learned that to get where I want, I've had to fly over some badlands. That explains my involvement with you. I've flown over those badlands and landed in green pastures."

At the time, Brackett was living in Stanley Haggart's garden apartment, the setting of many of Jimmy's former sexual trysts. Haggart was grateful for the artwork commissions that Brackett had directed his way during his tenure as a powerful TV producer.

When the composer, Alec Wilder, still Brackett's best friend, heard about Jimmy's treatment of him, he scolded him. "Rogers should sue you for overdue payment of all the money he's extended to you," Wilder said.

"He got his pound of flesh from me," Jimmy countered.

Wilder later wrote, "I read Jimmy the riot act when he came by the Algonquin. His treatment of Rogers was dreadful. Nowhere in any of Jimmy's publicity was Rogers' name even mentioned, and he had done so much for Jimmy."

"I told him that what he had done was morally wrong, and that he owed Rogers an apology. Jimmy replied that he couldn't do it, so I drafted the letter for Jimmy, and then demanded that he rewrite it in his own handwriting."

The following evening, I invited both Rogers and Jimmy to come by the hotel," Wilder said. "The three of us had a very pleasant, giddy time. But the damage had been done. As far as I know, they never saw each other again."

Brackett related to Haggart how painful and embarrassing his final goodbye to Jimmy had been, and how he'd tried to put a good face on it. "Frankly, I was humiliated and heartbroken."

"I wanted so much more from Jimmy," Brackett told Haggart. "I wanted him to love me."

"You must have gotten some enjoyment out of it, because you kept going back for more," Haggart said. "Everybody wants more out of a relationship, but, as you know, we so rarely get that. As for me, I take what I can

get—and move on. You have to do that, too."

After Brackett had moved out and away from Haggart, Jimmy came by to visit. Unlike Wilder, Haggart didn't denounce Jimmy for his cavalier attitude to Brackett.

"Rogers was silly to think you could love him back," Haggart said. "He's been around Hollywood and New York long enough not to be so naïve."

"When Rogers used to seduce me, I closed my eyes and imagined it was someone else," Jimmy confessed. "I know Rogers is going around spreading this shit about his having discovered me in that damn parking lot. Should the jockey take credit for the speed of the race horse? I think not!"

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Jimmy's "Affair of the Heart" with Toni Lee

One of Jimmy's most bizarre friendships was with entertainer Toni Lee, who later wrote a book, *A Kind of Loving* (1970), about her involvement with him.

A popular vocalist, she had appeared on the TV shows of Mike Douglas, Johnny Carson, and Steve Allen, and was a familiar fixture in nightclubs, attracting jazz fans and pop lovers across the country.

Whenever the beautiful brunette swung into a song, no one in the audience seemed to know that she had had the misfortune of losing a leg in a motorcycle smash-up when she was nineteen.

For her public appearances, she wore a prosthetic leg and long, floor-length dresses.

Toni later wrote of her friendship with Jimmy, describing "the ominous, almost occult portents of their first meeting, and the quick, warm relationship that grew between them."

Jimmy and Lee had fallen into the habit of ending their respective late night venues with breakfast at Googie's. Each had noticed the other, but had not yet spoken.

One evening, both of them entered Googie's, each alone but virtually at the same moment, for a late night supper. Four actors were sitting at a nearby table, loudly unaware that Lee had come in. They were discussing possible dates to escort to the premiere of Judy Garland's *A Star Is Born.*

One of the actors said, “Too bad we have to show up with a girl. Will the day ever come when we can be escorted by our boyfriends?”

“Why not take Toni Lee?” one of the actors suggested.

Both Lee and Jimmy overheard the answer. “For a premiere this important, do you think I’d want to show up with a one-legged woman?”

Humiliated, Lee quickly exited from the restaurant.

She later revealed in her memoirs that about two hours before dawn, she’d heard her doorbell ring. When she stumbled to the door, she found it was a man she recognized from Googie’s. Although they’d never spoken, she’d seen him many times before, and somehow, he’d gotten her address.

“Hi, I’m James Dean,” he said. “You know, from Googie’s?”

She was wearing a robe, and he said, “I want you to take off your clothes.”

“What?” she asked, thinking that she might have misunderstood him.

“Your clothes,” he said. “Take them off!”

To her own utter amazement, she claimed that she obeyed his request and stripped. “I didn’t have that fake leg attached,” she said. “Jimmy kneeled down in front of me and ran his fingers over the scars on my stump. He went over the scars one by one, very delicately with his fingers. At the end of his inspection, he gently rained down little kisses on my stump.”

“Don’t listen to those jerks at Googie’s,” he said. “You are beautiful. Forget those morons. Now, get dressed.”

She told him that for a few months after the accident, she’d kept her deformed, scarred, unusable, and withered leg, “But it looked so hideous, I went to a surgeon and had him cut it off.”

After their unusual introduction, she said that in the weeks to come, she grew used to Jimmy ringing her doorbell at three or four o’clock in the morning. According to her, it was a friendship, not an affair.

“We’d have long talks, which always ended with his reassurance that I was beautiful. Later, I’d prepare raisin toast and hot chocolate for his breakfast.”

“Over and over, he kept telling me I was beautiful until I came to believe it,” she said.

“You’ve got a good mind,” he said. “Use it! Develop your insight so you can look behind their words and see why people say them. Learning to appreciate people—that’s hard, but important. But first, learn to appreciate yourself. Because you’re very special, very special indeed. So don’t be smothered under all the ugliness of Hollywood.”

One night at Googie’s, Jimmy and Lee shared a chance encounter with his friend, William Bast, who also wrote about it in his own memoir. Bast didn’t know that Lee was a well-known entertainer in her own right. At the time, she was a blonde in her late twenties, as he remembered it.

“The talk was of motorcycles,” Bast said, “I asked her if she were a cyclist like Jimmy.”

“I was, but I had to give it up,” she said. “I lost a leg. With that, she swung out into the aisle to show me that her leg had been amputated at the knee. Only then did I notice the crutches tucked discreetly beside her, against the wall.”

After their brief three-way conversation, she disappeared into the night with Jimmy, accepting his offer of a ride home on his cycle.

The next time Bast saw Lee at Googie’s, she was alone. “We talked about Jimmy.”

“He’s the greatest guy in this whole god damn town,” she told Bast. “He’s got real guts. Most of the creeps in Hollywood are afraid to even look at my leg. Not Jimmy. He wanted to know all about it.”

Bast asked her about her sex life.

“Not many guys get their kicks fucking a one-legged woman,” she said.

Actually, Lee was living at the time with six handsome young men, each an actor, in an apartment. She prided herself for being able to hobble around on one leg carrying hot chocolate without spilling it. Her six cohorts often rubbed her stump, and she claimed that the rubbing was her greatest joy in life.

Lee also related a dramatic incident that took place one night with Jimmy. She met him at Googie’s when he was with photographer Dennis Stock and his date. It was agreed that all of them would go to this Hollywood party. They would go first to Stock’s place, with the understanding that Jimmy would park his motorcycle there, and that he’d then be driven to the party by Lee, who would drive her own car, following behind Stock in his.

On the way to his house, Stock suddenly slammed on his brakes when a kid ran out in front of his car. Reactively, Lee slammed on her brakes, too. On his motorcycle behind her, Jimmy pressed hard on his brakes, but not fast enough. He was hurled off his bike and, literally under her car.

“I got out of my car, screaming,” Lee said. “I feared I’d killed him.”

Jimmy crawled up off the tarmac, groaning in pain, but smiling to signal that he wasn't bodily harmed.

"I begged him that night to sell that damn bike," she said. "Time and time again, I begged him, telling him he was going to kill himself on it. "

One night, he showed up, telling her he'd sold his cycle. "My new transportation is this shiny new Porsche," he said.

"In it, you'll be much safer," she assured him.

Jimmy often dropped by," she said, "because two of his friends, Nick Adams and Dennis Hopper, lived next door. Nick and I didn't get along. Sometimes, we'd go out to Googie's, even Villa Capri. But often, we stayed in my apartment. He'd read from passages in *Lord Chesterfields's Letters to His Son,* which seemed to be his favorite literature after *The Little Prince."*

Jimmy turned me in the right direction in my life, as a friend, not a lover, although we had a kind of loving."

The last time she saw him, in September of 1955, he was heading to the car races in Salinas, and he invited her to go along. He was traveling with his mechanic, but he said he also had a station wagon. You'll be comfortable in it, and we can tow the Porsche behind us."

She told him she couldn't go because she had a gig coming up, but "I'll see you when you get back from Salinas," she promised him.

"Of course, as the world knows," she said, "Jimmy never came back."

Satanic Rites

WITH SAMMY DAVIS, JR.

One night, Sammy Davis, Jr. was dining at Villa Capri, Jimmy's favorite restaurant, with Dean Martin and Peter Lawford. The leader of the "Rat Pack," Frank Sinatra, wasn't there that night, which was just as well. He didn't like Jimmy, whose career was soaring at a time when Sinatra's was bottoming out.

Sammy went over to introduce himself to Jimmy and invite him to a party. He also ordered the *maître-d'* to deliver a bottle of champagne to Jimmy and his date.

After that night, Jimmy and Sammy started seeing each other, mostly at parties.

Unlike many young men of his generation, Jimmy had no prejudice against African-Americans. He'd studied dance with Katherine Dunham in New York, and Eartha Kitt was one of his best friends, along with writer Bill Gunn and Cyril Jackson, who taught him how to play the bongo drums.

Jimmy told composer Alec Wilder, "I have a lot to learn from black culture—the music, the dance. Those cats known how to have a good time. They know how to forget their cares and woes, at least for a few hours."

John Gilmore, Jimmy's friend, remembered one Sunday afternoon visiting Sammy when he was living at his grandmother's house, as hard as that is to believe.

Jimmy invited Sammy for a spin on his motorcycle through the surrounding hills, careening around corners at record-breaking speed. Back in front of his grandmother's house, Sammy climbed off. "Wow!" he said. "Wow, man, what a fucking gas!"

Retro chic: Jimmy's favorite restaurant, The Villa Capri, in the 1950s.

His grandmother invited them to stay for lunch, the featured staple of which would be a ham-based stew bubbling on the stove. Sammy served a bottle of wine Dean Martin had given him.

They ended up that night at a club, "with the hottest chicks in town."

As Gilmore recalled, "Jimmy was beating the bongos—stoned out of his mind. Sammy danced and shook the maracas at the hi-fi speakers, while other people seemed to arrive out of nowhere, thickening the group like chunks of starch in his grandmother's stew."

By midnight, Sammy was throwing his arms around Jimmy, proclaiming, "This is the *cat* I love! The *one* I love!"

Then Sammy and Jimmy kissed each other passionately.

Still stoned the next day, Jimmy wanted to return to Sammy's, but when he called "grandma," he learned that Sammy had gone to Palm Springs.

He came up with another idea. Back home, Jimmy wanted to dress up as a chick, with a big blonde wig and red high heels, and with makeup like a Parisian whore.

He wanted Gilmore to be his "stud date" at the Tropical Village, the gay bar at Santa Monica.

***

One night, once again at the Villa Capri, Jimmy dined with Sammy and Eartha Kitt. During that dinner, she told an amusing story of how she'd met Sammy when she was appearing on Broadway in *New Faces of 1952.*

"He was standing near the stage manager's door, and I took him for an errand boy, and demanded that he bring me a cup of coffee. Sammy went to get the coffee. When he got back to my dressing room and handed it to me, he told me that someday he'd be a bigger star than I would ever be."

Both entertainers laughed at the memory of that (embarrassing) incident.

Later on, Sammy got serious, telling them that at parties, he often stood in the corner, looking at Tony Curtis or Robert Wagner across a crowded room. "Female fans nearly dropped dead at the sight of them."

His left eye was gone *[he had lost it in a car accident in 1954]* and a deep, dark socket was left in its place. Its eyelid was lower than the eyelid of the remaining eye.

"Sammy always looked like he's been in a terrible fight, perhaps with a knife," Eartha said.

"He's a beautiful man to me," Jimmy claimed, not really meaning it.

"As a boy growing up, the fear of rejection always crawled beneath my black hide," Sammy said. "I had an overbite, really crooked teeth. Before I became a celebrity, it was almost impossible to get a girl without paying for some poontang. Now, I'm sought out by gals, often blonde bimbos, but they're usually there just to meet Frankie or Deano—or else to help me spend my money."

Eartha and Jimmy were quick to assure Sammy that they loved him for himself.

Sammy Davis, Jr. onstage...He attended Satanist orgies with James Dean and "did our thing" in view of other devil worshippers.

"Yeah, but you two don't put out," he answered. "I wish you would. I'd take both of you on at the same time."

"You can't complain too much," Jimmy said. "Marilyn Monroe, Kim Novak, and Ava Gardner, from what I've

heard. Not bad, not bad at all."

One night when Sammy and Jimmy were out by themselves, he'd asked him why one fingernail was painted red. "That's a signal to other Satanists. I'm a Satanist, you know. We use the red nail as a signal to each other," Sammy said. "Actually, I'm on the edge of that cult. I'm not into all that shit about devil worship. I'm in it for the sexual kicks, and there's plenty of that."

Jimmy wanted to attend a Satanist orgy, and the following week, Sammy escorted him to a gathering of devil worshippers, where sexual acts among the participants were always part of the ritual. Details are sketchy, but rumors still persist that Jimmy, in front of others, fellated Sammy at the orgy. He'd performed a similar stunt at a late-night jazz club in Harlem, so the rumors were met with some belief.

As Sammy later told Lawford, "It was the right night. There was a full moon. Jimmy was stoned out of his mind. There were no limits about what he could or could not do. He did. I admired him for that. What a little devil!"

"Our friendship was just starting to blossom," Sammy said after Jimmy's death. He regretted that he hadn't approached Jimmy sooner at parties.

"I didn't take too much notice of him when I spotted him a few times in 1954," he said. "He was always in the corner somewhere looking depressed and sulky. If someone approached him, he would look up and say, 'I want to act.' And then he would slump back into his own world."

"Hollywood hardly touched him as a person. It was to our eternal shame as a community that we passed him off as a bit of a slob. He was difficult to talk to, but we should have tried harder."

He also said, "I finally broke through his barrier, and was well on my way to having a new best friend…but then I lost him."

Sammy once wrote, "James Dean was more than a phenomenon or even a legend. He was far more than a cinematic genius who could act his balls off."

He was simply the greatest screen experience of all time. The fact that he was cut off in his prime is unfortunate, but irrelevant. The three films he left us will stand as their own monument. He remains indestructible. In only three films, he ruined the careers of hundreds of other aspiring actors who tried to follow him."

In a subsequent memoir, published after the death of Marilyn Monroe, Sammy drew a parallel between the two icons: "Unlike Jimmy Dean, who never realized his real potential, Marilyn became prematurely spent as an actress because she was never allowed the artistic freedom she craved. After *Some Like It Hot,* she went into decline. She even began to lose her international clout at the box office. Jimmy, on the other hand, faced possibly a series of some of the greatest motion pictures ever to be made."

Sammy would also respond to one of the most vicious posthumous attacks on Jimmy ever made. It occurred in October of 1956 and was the opinion of show business biographer Maurice Zolotow, wrote it. His article was headlined "Jimmy Dean Should Be Nobody's Idol—The Late Actor Was Sadistic, Uncouth, Arrogant, Cruel, & a Filthy Slob."

"He was surly, ill-tempered, brutal, without any element of kindness, sensitivity, consideration for other, or romantic passion. He was physically dirty. He hated to bathe, have his hair cut, shave, or put on clean clothes. He smelled so rankly that actresses working with him in close contact found him unbearable."

Zolotov also asked, "What's so great and beautiful about stepping on the gas, blowing your horn, and speeding down a public highway like a maniac?"

Sammy shot back, "I don't give a fuck how some of these assholes criticize Dean. He did his number and he did it better than anybody else in the world."

Lance Reventlow

How the Insecure, Much-Abused Son of Barbara Hutton, one of the Richest Women in the World, Raced with Jimmy to the Finish Line

For the most part, Jimmy and Lance Reventlow, son of the heiress, Barbara Hutton, went their separate ways, but they got together whenever they could to resume their affair.

They not only made love, but attended car races and fussed over their vehicles, discussing the merits of one

racecar over another. Mostly, they were concerned with how fast a car could go.

When they weren't together, Jimmy and Lance sometimes talked on the phone during the early morning hours. One of their conversations lasted for four hours.

Lance told him, "I never know what continent my mother is on."

Bruce Kessler, Jimmy learned, was Lance's closest friend. His father, Jack Kessler, had founded Rose Marie Swimwear. "His wife, Nina, was like a surrogate mother to me."

Jimmy also found out that Lance's friends were radically different from Hutton's. He preferred the company of Ronnie Burns, son of George Burns and Gracie Allen, or that of Julie Payne, daughter of actor John Payne. Lance also liked to hang out with Gary Crosby, the abused son of Bing, or Chick Daigh, a race car driver.

"Lance was never true to one person," Jimmy recalled, although he was dating Jill St. John and planning to marry her. "He gave her a diamond engagement ring that stretched from knuckle to knuckle," Jimmy said.

"Like Jimmy, Lance, too, had dropped out of college, after attending only one semester at Pomona College. "I'm interested in car racing," He said. "Why do I need an education?"

Barbara Hutton holds her fifteen-week old son, Lance in her arms as her father *(left)* looks on and her husband, Count Reventlow *(right)*, seems to approve.

A photographer caught this troubled family leaving their London townhouse for the boy's baptism in the Chapel of Marlborough.

Lance told Jimmy that when he reached twenty-one, based on the complicated lineage of his abusive Danish father and American-born mother, he was offered the choice of citizenship, either American, Danish, or British. "I thought it over for twenty seconds and decided to go the Yankee Doodle Dandy route."

Jimmy often came and went from Lance's house, which was a modest one on North Knoll Drive in Benedict Canyon. "He was having financial problems because his mother had cut him off at one point."

There, Jimmy met Dudley Walker, Cary Grant's former valet, who organized and managed Lance's bills when he was solvent. "I never had any sense of money," Lance told Jimmy, "Other than how to spend it. That, I know."

Jimmy was fascinated by Lance's fleet of cars, nine in all. His friend offered him the use of any of them "at any time."

"I have a Mercedes for running errands," Lance told Jimmy. "A Jaguar for a hot date, and a Rolls-Royce for special events."

"For car racing, I prefer a Porsche like you have, or a Maserati, perhaps a Cooper-Climax. And just for the hell of it, I keep an old, beat-up Chevy like Howard Hughes drives around in."

Lance was the by-product of a marriage for which his mother, Barbara Hutton, had renounced her citizenship to become the wife of a Danish count. It was a bitter marriage, leading to endless custody fights over Lance.

A terrified Lance is seen in this photograph from October of 1939, when a bodyguard, Bobby Sweeney, shielded his own face – not that of the three-year old – as reporters stared into the limousine.

Lance was later removed from the car and put aboard the *Conte di Savoia* to sail across the Atlantic.

Once, Jimmy invited Lance for a drive in the first Porsche he'd purchased. "He was like a kid who'd been given the greatest of all Christmas gifts, even though he had to pay for it," Lance said. "He was excited by it, and wanted me to admire it, too. Sometimes, with me in the passenger seat, he would take me on a reckless drive through the Hollywood Hills. He treated those curvy roads like a race track. Finally, I told him I didn't like being in the passenger seat, preferring to be behind the wheel where I belonged. 'You can sit in the damn passenger seat and be my bitch,' I told him."

"For Jimmy, the Porsche was a symbol that demonstrated that he'd arrived as a star, but it was more than that: It was a token of his newfound freedom, and his defiance of the system."

Jimmy and Lance frequently attended major car races together, after which they'd slip away to some retreat as a means of continuing what Jimmy defined as "our male bonding."

He rarely discussed Lance, even with his closest friends, other than to say, "He's a very special guy, very special."

On scooters far too small for them, Bruce Kessler *(left)* goes for a ride with his best friend, Lance Reventlow,

Lance was the first person Jimmy invited for a spin in "The Little Bastard," the nickname he'd given his newly purchased Silver Porsche Spyder.

At one point, he even let Lance take the wheel "to get the feel of it," as they headed east to Little River, California, three miles north of Mendocino.

When they got there, they checked into the Little River Inn, an establishment, built in 1853, which had housed Jimmy and the cast of *East of Eden* during its filming less than a year before. *[Jimmy stayed in room #8 within what is now a California State landmark.]*

On May 1, 1955, they drove to Minter Field in Bakersfield, where Jimmy placed third behind Marion Playan in an MG Speck and John Kunstle driving a Panhard Devin.

Lance Reventlow, *depicted above,* and James Dean were destined to die in fiery crashes—Jimmy in a racecar and Reventlow in a small airplane.

That same month, on Memorial Day, they participated in the Santa Barbara Road Races, Jimmy entering the small car, "Under 1,500 cc Production Event," moving up to fourth place before he blew a piston on his four-cylinder Porsche.

Now, in anticipation of Jimmy's last race with Lance, both of them were heading in separate vehicles for Salinas, where Jimmy planned to debut his newest Porsche 550 Spyder. But whereas Lance made it to Salinas, Jimmy never did.

As for Lance, after his safe and relatively uneventful arrival in Salinas, where he heard about Jimmy's death, he said, "My god, I just had this awful feeling. The next crash has my name on it."

[Except for its timing, Lance's premonition of his own death was more or less accurate. But it wasn't until 1972 that he died in a fiery crash in a small airplane.]

JIMMY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH

Van Johnson

AMERICA'S FAVORITE (GAY) BOY NEXT DOOR

During the final year of Jimmy's life, he entered into an unlikely friendship with character actor Keenan Wynn, son of the famous vaudeville comedian, Ed Wynn. That bonding would ultimately lead to him to Van Johnson, Wynn's best friend and lover.

Jimmy's friendship with Wynn began on Thanksgiving Day, 1954, when a mutual friend brought him to the Wynn home for a festive dinner. Jimmy had just completed *East of Eden.*

Wynn and his wife, the former Shirley Hudson, greeted Jimmy like a member of the family. Wynn had previously been married to the former stage actress, Eve ("Evie") Lynn Abbott. Following their divorce in 1947, Wynn turned Evie over to Johnson as part of an arranged, studio-sanctioned marriage to camouflage the popular actor's homosexuality.

Over dinner, Jimmy learned that Wynn shared his fascination with motorcycles. Within days, the veteran actor was teaching him how to navigate open terrain and hills on a cycle.

Keenan Wynn...a three-way with Van Johnson and James Dean.

Gradually, Wynn became one of Jimmy's closest friends, and he set out to learn what he could about him. A New Yorker, Wynn had grown up in a theatrical family that had settled in Hollywood in 1934. In time, he'd appear in hundreds of films and on TV. When Jimmy met him, he was a contract player for MGM, and had recently filmed *Battle Circus* (1953).

Jimmy admired Wynn's versatility as an actor, as he could play almost any part except romantic leading men. His *forte* was affable sidekicks, shifty schemers, sad sacks, villains, con men, and simpletons. He'd gotten his start in Hollywood performing stunt work for Joan Crawford in *Chained* (1934).

"People thought they were watching Crawford perform those dangerous maneuvers, but it really was *moi* in drag," he told Jimmy.

Within a week, Jimmy was introduced to Johnson, a tall, freckle-faced, strawberry blonde actor who'd been a major box office attraction in the 1940s.

When MGM's major male stars, such as Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Robert Montgomery, and James Stewart were shipped off to war, Johnson had shot to stardom as "The Boy Next Door," often appearing in films with June Allyson as the male half of a screen team billed as "America's Sweethearts."

During the wartime absence of Clark Gable and Robert Taylor (both of whom had entered the armed services) Johnson was featured in frothy romantic comedies with MGM's A-list movie queens, especially Lana Turner and Esther Williams.

Jimmy didn't like those kinds of pictures, although he'd admired Johnson in the military courtroom drama, *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), in which he'd played an unsympathetic character opposite Humphrey Bogart.

As a kid, Jimmy had seen Johnson in his first hit, *A Guy Named Joe* (1943), co-starring Spencer Tracy and Irene Dunne.

"Spence had the hots for me," Johnson confessed to Jimmy. "He even demanded that production on the picture be delayed until I recovered from a horrible car accident."

"Tracy went for me, too," Jimmy said.

"I'm not at all surprised," Johnson said. "I could go for you, too."

For many months, Jimmy had known that Johnson had wanted to seduce him. When she was dating Jimmy, actress Betsy Palmer, while eavesdropping, had overheard Johnson telling Jimmy during a phone conversation, "I want to cock you."

"I hope you don't fall for all that 'boy next door' crap from MGM's publicists," Johnson said. "If those bobbysoxers in the 40s ever learned that I was a cocksucker, my career would end overnight."

Van Johnson...the actor known as the male half, alongside June Allyson, of the couple billed during the 1940s as "America's Sweethearts."

Johnson's marriage was fraught with difficulties, and he ended up referring to his wife as, "The Dragon Lady."

Ed Wynn, Keenan's father, once said, "I can't keep things straight—pardon the pun. Evie loves Keenan, Keenan loves Evie, Van loves Keenan, Keenan loves Van."

Evie eventually divorced Johnson, and she later discussed her marriages, respectively, to Wynn and to Johnson: "MGM had to protect its big star from all those rumors about his sexual preference. Unfortunately, I was selected as 'It,' the one Johnson should marry. Louis B. Mayer, who had the morals of a cockroach, said that if I didn't marry Van, he wouldn't renew Keenan's contract."

There was some urgency for a quick marriage. Screenwriter/playwright Arthur Laurents, in his autobiography, claimed that "Van had been caught one time too many 'performing' in a men's urinal."

Jimmy would later tell Eartha Kitt, "Van is a perfect illustration of the fantasy world that Hollywood projects. Golden boys are actually cocksuckers, *femme fatales* are muff-divers, and America's hero, John Wayne, has a small dick."

He also discussed his involvement with Wynn and Johnson to William Bast. He claimed that he had sat in the Johnson living room for three hours, before their host finally extended an invitation for Keenan and him to retire with him to the bedroom.

"What happened?" Bast asked.

"To cut to the chase, and I don't want to give a blow-by-blow description, we did a lot of fondling of genitals and exchanging of spit. Van then sucked me off while Keenan fucked him. Then Keenan serviced Van, as I lay back on the pillow, smoking a cigarette."

"At around three in the morning, I was half awake, and one of them—I don't know which—was messing around with my ass. I didn't bother to find out if it was Van or Keenan. What did it matter at that point?"

[In a touch of Hollywood irony, Betsy Palmer, who by then was fully aware of Van Johnson's sexual interest in Jimmy, ended up working with him when he was on his last legs in 2003. They appeared together for three performances of A.R. Guerney's Love Letters *at a theater in Wesley Hills, in Rockland County, New York.]*

How "Hollywood Royal," Arthur Loew, Jr.

FELL INTO BED WITH JAMES DEAN

The "usually heterosexual" Arthur Loew, Jr. was a surprise choice as Jimmy's last male lover. Born in 1925, he was seven years older than Jimmy.

His maternal grandfather, Adolph Zukor, had founded Paramount Pictures, and his paternal grandfather, Marcus Loew, had launched both Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and the Loew's theater chain. His father, Arthur Loew, Sr., had once been president of MGM.

Loew Junior was a minor film producer, turning out such B-list pictures as *Teresa* (1950), with Jimmy's future girlfriend, Pier Angeli; *Penelope* (1966) with Natalie Wood, Jimmy's co-star in *Rebel Without a Cause;* and later, after Jimmy's death, *The Rack* (1956), starring Paul Newman.

During Arthur's production of *Teresa,* he began dating one of its stars, Pier Angeli, but within weeks, he'd switched his romantic interest to her twin sister, Marisa Pavan.

One afternoon, Arthur arrived at the Pierangeli household in Brentwood to retrieve Marisa for a date. On lawn chairs in the distance, he spotted Pier and a young man, each of them holding a script.

"Who is that guy?" Arthur asked Marisa.

Arthur Loew, Jr.

"Don't disturb them," she answered. "Pier is rehearsing with this actor, James Dean."

"Who in hell is James Dean?" he asked.

"He's this fabulous actor from New York."

"Never heard of him," Arthur said.

"You will," she predicted.

Arthur may not have heard of Jimmy, but Jimmy had never heard of him, either.

Unlike his illustrious and hardworking ancestors, and despite brief work stints as a drama critic and sports reporter, Arthur was a playboy who only dabbled in the occasional production of films. He was better known for a widely publicized romance with Elizabeth Taylor. Later, he dated Joan Collins, but she broke it off, having defined their relationship as "too platonic."

Arthur had just ended an affair (which had included an engagement) to Jimmy's closest female friend, Eartha Kitt.

Amazingly, despite their friendship, Eartha had never described the depth of her relationship with Arthur. In fact, she had barely, if ever—at least to Jimmy—mentioned him at all.

Their love affair had ended horribly: The Loew family had ferociously objected to their heir's association with a woman of color, and relentlessly pressured him to end it, which he did. At the time of Jimmy's association with Arthur, Eartha was far away, on singing engagements in Manhattan.

That day, in the Pierangeli's living room, Arthur asked Marisa, "Who is this shit out in the yard? So he can't be disturbed while rehearsing? Who in hell does he think he is? Laurence Olivier?"

Within two months, Keenan Wynn, one of Arthur's closest friends, arrived with Jimmy at Arthur's house on Miller Drive. Jimmy's apartment at 1741 Sunset Plaza Drive, was nearby.

When Keenan introduced him to Arthur, he remembered the sight of him rehearsing with Pier. Also sitting in the room was Rod Steiger, Jimmy's actor friend from New York, who had already assured Arthur that Jimmy was one of the best actors performing in teleplays in Manhattan.

"Arthur was prepared to dislike Jimmy," Steiger said. "But when they started to talk, it was love at first sight. I had already warned Arthur that Jimmy had to be handled with kid gloves or else he might explode into a temper fit."

"Both Arthur and Jimmy had a wicked sense of humor, and they really got off on each other," Steiger said. "Keenan and I found ourselves sitting and talking with each other, as those two lovebirds played the mating game. They did everything that night except fuck, and, for all I know, they did that, too, after I left."

Steiger had departed an hour earlier. As the evening wound down, Wynn turned to Jimmy. "It's time for us to hit the road, kid, and ride our machines down those winding roads."

He later told Van Johnson and others, "Jimmy did something wild and impulsive. At the door, after I said good

night to Arthur, Jimmy locked him in a tight embrace and gave him a kiss. Not a peck on the cheek. I hadn't seen a kiss like that since Toomey kissed Wyman."

[Wynn was recalling Regis Toomey and Jane Wyman in a 1941 movie, You're in the Army Now. *Their kiss was the longest up to that point in cinematic history, lasting three minutes and five seconds, or four percent of the film's duration.]*

"The last words I heard was Arthur telling Jimmy, 'I'll see you tomorrow night at seven,'" Wynn recalled.

After that, Jimmy practically moved into Arthur's household. Originally, the maid had prepared the guest room for him, but later discovered that the bed had never been slept in. Only the sheets on Arthur's bed had been used.

Even before Arthur met Jimmy, he virtually threw open his doors every night at five o'clock for "sundowners," as part an ongoing house party that attracted *tout* Hollywood.

On any given night, you might hear Judy Garland accompanied on the piano by Oscar Levant. Perhaps a drunken Errol Flynn would show up, a few hours later trying to bang out a melody on the piano with his erect penis.

Marilyn Monroe dropped by on occasion, as did Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball, as well as Kirk Douglas, Eddie Fisher, James Mason, and Danny Kaye. Guests were likely to include Paulette Goddard, Jane Powell, June Allyson, Ginger Rogers, Ethel Merman, and Debbie Reynolds.

Jimmy soon learned that Arthur was having a sometimes affair with Susan Strasberg, the daughter of Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio. It was at Arthur's house one night that he met Susan, with whom, he too, would launch a brief fling before he made *Giant.*

Jimmy was impressed with Arthur's light-hearted, charming style, and his outgoing personality. As he noted one night, "He could even keep Milton Berle in stiches."

He was surprised to learn that Stewart Stern, who at the time was writing the filmscript for *Rebel Without a Cause,* was Arthur's cousin. "Unlike his cousin, Arthur, Stern was bookish and always very serious," Jimmy said.

Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman were also among Arthur's friends, as were Farley Granger and Shelley Winters. Beginning in the late 1940s, much of young Hollywood had started to gather at Arthur's house to watch "Uncle Miltie" (Milton Berle) on *The Texaco Star Theater.* At the time, Arthur possessed one of the few television sets in Los Angeles.

One night at Arthur's house, Jimmy met Janet Leigh, who told him "After Elizabeth (Taylor) finished with Arthur, she turned him over to me. That was before Tony Curtis."

"One night, Arthur introduced me to his friend, Sammy Davis, Jr," Leigh continued. "Sammy told me I hadn't lived until I'd had a black dick buried deep inside me."

"That Sammy!" Jimmy said, not wanting to reveal anything.

Often, after a date with Pier, Jimmy would arrive at Arthur's house to spend the night. Sometimes, they preferred to dine at home; at other times, they went out for dinner. Since Jimmy wasn't properly dressed for such clubs as Mocambo's, where Arthur had more-or-less permanent and direct access to his favorite table, the two men went together to offbeat places, the type with sawdust and beer spilled on the floor.

Two months later, Jimmy ran into Steiger, who asked him, "How are things going between you and Arthur?"

"Great, man, just great."

"Until he met you, I always thought he was straight," Steiger said.

"All men are straight until they meet the formidable James Dean."

One night, Jimmy invited Arthur and his cousin, Stewart Stern, to a preview of *East of Eden.* Neither man had seen Jimmy perform in anything, not even any of his teleplays.

Jimmy himself had not seen the complete cut until he attended this sneak preview.

In his biography of James Dean, Venable Herndon described what happened after Arthur became aware of his friend's success and talent as a film star:

> *"It was an overwhelming experience," Arthur said. "So beautiful, so fantastic. It must have been like the first night someone went to see John Barrymore perform in* Hamlet. *It was such an awakening, an eye opener. Here was this guy I'd been palling around with for quite a while, yet I had no idea who he really was."*

After the screening, the three of them [Arthur, Steiger, and Jimmy] went to a bar in the Valley. As Arthur later told Steiger, "Jimmy was still my best buddy, but I no longer related to him just as a bedmate to keep my feet warm at night, but as a star. *A Star is Born*, starring James Dean instead of Judy."

"He pulled no star act with me, however," Arthur said. "He was still the crazy, lovable, yet infuriating guy he

always was one night when Walter Pidgeon came by. I was driving him *[Pidgeon]* to dinner. I exited through the gate at the end of my driveway and headed out onto the street. Suddenly, blinding lights almost caused me to have an accident. I fully expected a head-on collision."

Later, he learned that both Jimmy and Keenan Wynn had trained their motorcycle lights onto him and were roaring at high speeds directly into the front of his oncoming car. Before they collided, both men swerved their bikes to the left and right, respectively, of Arthur's vehicle, each of them yelling at the top of their lungs.

"Later, when Jimmy dropped by, I really lit into him," Arthur said. "Fun is fun, but all of us could have been killed. I blamed the stunt on Keenan, who should have known better."

"Jimmy was this terrific personality," Arthur said. "A real cuckoo. It was very informal at my place, a house party atmosphere. Lots of people unless we wanted to be alone. No stiff cocktail party atmosphere, as is so often seen in Hollywood."

Jimmy later told Bast about the wildest, most intimate party presumably his host ever gave. Guests included Artie Shaw (the musician, who at one time or another married both Ava Gardner and Lana Turner), Errol Flynn, and Robert Mitchum.

Robert Mitchum...do you want catsup with this raw hamburger?

"Mitchum and I got stoned. Mitchum went into the kitchen and pulled off all his clothes and covered his chest with catsup. 'I'm a raw hamburger,'" he told us."

Then, according to Jimmy, who relayed it to Bast, Flynn immediately took advantage and got down on his knees, and begin fellating Mitchum. Shaw provided the musical accompaniment to the act.

While all this was going on, Jimmy went upstairs and emerged in a gown and high heels borrowed from the wardrobe of Arthur's mother.

"Then I did my best Mae West impersonation," Jimmy told Bast.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang and rang, followed by a loud pounding on the door. "It's the police," a strong, masculine voice yelled out. A fully dressed Arthur answered the door.

As Jimmy recalled, "The world's best-looking and most macho policeman stood there. He looked like a Viking god. Think Sterling Hayden in a movie from the early '40s."

But instead of a raid, the policeman told Arthur he'd been summoned to investigate a burglary, reportedly still in progress, in the neighborhood.

"Fuck the robbery," a drunken Arthur told the cop. "You can arrest Mitchum for pot and indecent exposure, Jimmy for speeding, and Flynn for stashing away a thirteen-year-old girl in one of my bedrooms upstairs. As for Artie Shaw here, make it bigamy. He married Ava Gardner before divorcing Lana Turner."

"The cop seemed like a real regular guy, so Arthur invited him to join the party," Jimmy said. "The robbery in progress was forgotten. After a few drinks, the cop told us he'd really come to Hollywood to be a male stripper at private parties. And that he'd like to try out his act on us."

“Piece by piece, his clothing came off, beginning with that gun. He really put on an act for us. Finally, when he showed it hard, Errol reached for it, and using it as a rudder, guided him into one of the downstairs bedrooms. Neither of them was seen again until a few hours later.”

“Then the cop stood at the door, in uniform, fully dressed,” Jimmy said.

“Thanks for the party, guys,” he said. “Real Hollywood stuff, the type I was told went on here, but hadn’t hooked up with until tonight.”

Jimmy Steals Arthur Loew from Eartha Kitt

Arthur Loew, Jr. had not only been previously involved in romances with Pier Angeli and her sister, Marisa Pavan, but he’d also had a torrid affair with Eartha Kitt. The black singer was still Jimmy’s best woman friend and “soulmate.”

“Jamie was always full of surprises,” Eartha told the co-author of this book, Darwin Porter, one night in Key West when she was filming the film adaptation, *The Last Resort,* of his novel, *Butterflies in Heat.*

“I’d been cut off from Arthur, and I was hoping for a reconciliation. I called at two o’clock in the morning on a private line that fed directly into his bedroom. Then, I got the shock of my life. Jamie was in bed with the man I still loved.”

In her memoirs, she wrote, “I still felt that the love Arthur and I had for each other was stronger than any outside influence. I still believed he’d stand up to the Loew family, who opposed any possibility of an interracial marriage between us.”

In desperation early one morning, she’d put through a call to him, hoping he had changed his mind about her. “Perhaps I wanted him to say, ‘I love you too much to let anything come between us.’”

“When Jamie came onto the phone, I felt like I was about to have a heart attack,” Eartha said years later in Key West. “I knew him so well. I could tell by his voice that it wasn’t a case of two men bunking together. I knew they were lovers. Jamie was loving the one man on earth I most desired. At first, my reaction was, how could he do this to me? I wanted to kill him. But I told my heart to settle down. After all, I’d rather Jamie be making love to Arthur than for him to be in bed with some blonde floozie like Jayne Mansfield.”

Eartha Kitt with Arthur Loew, Jr.
A photographer captured the tension building between them over pressure from his powerful family about their interracial coupling.

“Knowing I had caught him red-handed, Jamie told me that Arthur was in the tub taking a long hot bath.”

He said, “The whole Loew family has moved in. Everyone is unhappy and very cold, and no one says much of anything to each other.”

“Arthur has been very quiet,” he went on. “He stays in his room most of the time, drinking throughout most of the day. The only person he lets into his bedroom is me. I offer what comfort I can. The operators at MGM warned me to not let any calls from you get through to him. His mother is here. This afternoon, she told me that her son would marry you only over her dead body.”

“That article about you and Arthur in *Confidential* really blew the lid off,” Jimmy told her, speaking in a very soft voice. “His mother told him that if he married you, it would mean the death of his grandfather. He’s in his

seventies and has suffered two recent stokes. He's confined to his suite at the Waldorf Astoria in New York. The pressure is really on Arthur."

"The one man I want to be the father of my child is being emotionally blackmailed," Eartha responded. "I wish he'd defend his position like a man who's not afraid to reach out for his happiness."

"Take care of him, Jamie," she said, trying to conceal the jealousy in her voice. "I still love him, you know. And I love you, too."

"I will, and I know you must be heartsick and filled with anger and frustration. Please don't turn on me. The friendship that Arthur and I developed just happened. It was just one of those things."

"It's always just one of those things," she said. "Sounds like a refrain from a song by Cole Porter." Then she hung up.

The next morning, Mrs. Arthur Loew, Sr. confronted Jimmy when he was in the study listening to music. "Please understand this," she said to him. "I know about you and my son, and I want it kept very quiet, very discreet. My family has a reputation to maintain. Forgive me for saying this, but I'd much rather that Arthur be secretly involved with a faggot than publicly married to a nigger woman."

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Back in Hollywood, Eartha checked into a suite at the Sunset Towers. Later, with two escorts, both of them black and both of them jazz performers, they went to Ciro's for dinner.

She later wrote that as she was ordering food, "the hair on the back of my neck began to send messages. I knew that *he* was there. I could feel *him.* He was coming closer. Or was I going mad?"

It was Arthur. He looked down at her, telling her he was hosting a late night party, and asked her and her friends if they'd like to drop in.

She didn't commit herself, but later, with her escorts, she drove to his house.

"It was Jamie who opened the door," she said. "We fell into each other's arms, but something was different. 'What have they done to you? I feel your spirit is gone.'"

He laughed. "Ah, Kitt, you're on one of your voodoo trips again."

Soon after her arrival, she retreated from the guests in the living room, heading to her favorite part of the house, Arthur's study. He followed her and joined her on the sofa. Without saying a word, he took her hand.

In about ten minutes, Judy Garland entered the study, followed by Jimmy. She stood, confrontationally, in front of Arthur. "You bastard! You are so much in love with this girl you can't see straight, and you're too fucking weak to do anything about it. Arthur, when in the fuck are you going to grow up and be your own fucking man?"

Then, she stormed out of the room. Arthur jumped up and followed her. Jimmy noticed that the two of them became engaged in an animated conversation outside the door. He sat down on the sofa with Eartha and took her hand.

Two hours later, it was time to go. Jimmy walked Eartha to the door, where her escorts awaited her. Arthur was there, kissing Garland good night.

He turned to Eartha. "Sunset Towers, right? I'll call you tomorrow." Although he had kissed Garland goodbye, he had only shaken Eartha's hand.

The next day, that call from him never came in.

Two days later, Jimmy called her and invited her to Arthur's home on Miller Drive. He was at the door to let her in. Arthur was nowhere to be seen. He asked her to go with him in his Porsche to retrieve some records, including some of her own recordings, from his own residence.

When they got back, Arthur still had not appeared. "Give him time, Kitt," he said. "He's got to get rid of a lot of shit that he's been trying to get over for years. You know, family stuff. He's trying, but you've got to give him time."

"With this encouragement, Jamie and I parted," she later wrote in her memoirs.

She left the next day for Las Vegas, where she was performing in a show.

The following Sunday, she was in Las Vegas, in her dressing room. A chorus girl came in and announced, "I just heard over the radio that James Dean is dead in a car crash."

Eartha later wrote about her reaction. "I mourn you, Jamie, not so much for your death, but for cheating me out of your presence in my life. How dare you cheat me of that? You took the only friend I had, my one true friend. Jamie, you cheated me. I won't let you leave me. I will hold your spirit with me. You won't leave me, Jamie. *Ever!"*

She later admitted, "I fell to pieces. Jamie was long gone. So was Arthur. *Forever.*

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In 1956, Arthur Loew, Jr. established the James Dean Memorial Fund at the Actors Studio in honor of his former friend.

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In 1959, Eartha was dining with her friend, Jack Dunaway, in Hollywood. "Oh, did you hear?" he asked her. "Arthur Loew just married Tyrone Power's widow. She was three months pregnant. It was the right thing to do."

He was referring to actress Deborah Ann Minardos, who Arthur married and then divorced within the same year.]

Vampira

GLAMOUR GHOUL OF TV REVEALS SECRETS FROM THE MORGUE

"Nicolas Ray, the director, told me that James Dean was 'intensely determined not to be loved—or to love.' Jimmy himself told me that the only success is immortality. In that he succeeded brilliantly. In spite of his small oeuvre of only three pictures, the world remembers him and not dozens of guys who made more than fifty movies."

—Vampira

If you were alive and living in Los Angeles in 1954, you knew who Vampira was. Resembling a more sexually alluring version of Morticia Addams, she appeared on the then-new medium of television like an exotic voodoo priestess.

Born Maila Elizabeth Syrjäniemi in Finland in 1922 (some sources say 1921), she emigrated to the United States and adopted the last name of her famous uncle, Olympic runner Paavo Nurmi, emerging as Maila Nurmi.

Although she failed as an actress, in 1944 she'd been cast on Broadway with Mae West in a play Mae had written, *Catherine Was Great.* It was produced, incidentally, by Elizabeth Taylor's future husband, Mike Todd. West, fearing that the younger girl was upstaging her, booted her out of the play.

Migrating to Hollywood, Maila supported herself by posing for pinup photographs in men's magazines such as *Gala*.

After several more failed attempts at acting, she hit it lucky. Attending a masquerade ball, she dressed as a female vampire, complete with ghoulish white makeup, evoking a Charles Addams cartoon. She won first place in costume design.

A TV producer at station KABC spotted her and offered her the role of television hostess for a series of horror films they were going to run. She gladly agreed and officially changed her stage name to "Vampira."

An exotic & campy cult celebrity from the early days of television: Maila Elizabeth Syrjäniemi, *aka* Maila Nurmi, *aka* VAMPIRA.

During her brief reign, Vampira ruled the night, terrorizing audiences with her just-risen-from-the-coffin appearances, many of them configured as introductions to blood-sucking horror movies.

Her series ran for 16 episodes in 1954, with frequent reruns throughout the rest of the decade. For each of them, Vampira made a spectacular entrance amid dusty spider webs and dry ice fog. As the camera zoomed in on her vampire-deadly face, she'd let out a piercing scream before introducing the movie of the night. Usually, she reclined seductively on a skull-encrusted Victorian sofa.

Like a Zombie-mate of Bela Lugosi, she accessorized herself with all the trappings of Fright Night. Her drag included long, heavily painted fingernails in midnight black, with a mane of ravencolored hair, and a big-busted, slim-waisted, black-as-night outfit set off with fishnet hosiery.

Vampira...Mae West viewed her as too much competition.

Her eyes were heavily mascara-ed which contrasted with her blood-red lipstick. In character as a vampire-inspired sex kitten driven by a powerful thirst for fresh blood, she introduced such films as *Devil Bat's Daughter* and *Revenge of the Zombies*.

[In 1989, she lost a $10 million lawsuit in which she had charged that Cassandra Peterson's late-night hostess "Elvira" had pirated her character.]

She was an overnight sensation and developed a campy cult following thanks partly to a ghastly appearance that made her look like she'd just emerged from a haunted coffin.

When she wasn't emoting in front of a TV camera, Vampira became a kind of "Mother Confessor" to the Bad Boys of Hollywood, notably and most famously James Dean, her on-again, off-again lover. She also hovered over Paul Newman and Tony Perkins, and was privy to their off-the-record romance with each other.

In that punitive era, these secretly bisexual men found it difficult to talk—with the noteworthy exception of Vampira—to a woman and make her privy to their affairs. Vampira, or so it is said, gave birth to the term "fag hag."

Googie's, that zippy, populuxe-style coffee house where stars gathered on Sunset Strip, was a major venue during the last summer of Jimmy's life. A new woman was about to enter the scene.

Vampira arrived nightly at Googies, emerging from a long black hearse, which she'd purchased from a funeral home. She called it "The Black Death."

Nurmi recalled meeting Jimmy. "One night, he walked into Googie's, and I was devastated by his male beauty and those blue eyes. He was a bit short, and I'd been seduced by men with more buffed bodies, but the kid had something, and I wanted a part of it. I thought he was a knock-out."

"I was coming down from an affair with Brando, who had just kicked me out on my ass after only three nights, and I was shopping for some fresh new meat to devour. However, I suspected that one of the pretty boys at Googie's would get him before I had my chance. How right I was. His name was Tony Perkins."

Nurmi would later claim that during that fateful summer, Jimmy, his close friend, Jack Simmons, and herself became almost a part of a "love triangle. We were almost never separate."

That, of course, was a gross exaggeration, although for a while, they did form an intense relationship, mainly because of their shared interest in the occult.

"Sometimes, I went home to my husband…what's his name…I forget."

Nurmi only pretended she didn't know the name of her husband. Dean Reisner was a former child actor in silent films, and he later became a screen writer, penning the script of *Dirty Harry.* Newman turned it down, the career-making role going to Clint Eastwood.

"Jack, Jimmy, and I would stay together at Schwabs Drugstore until it closed, later moving next door to Googie's," she said. "After midnight, we'd wander off to some experience, perhaps unmentionable."

"When I first met Jimmy, I was the star, and he was completely unknown. Fans of Vampira would push him aside to get to me. He'd be lost in a sea of what he called 'asses and elbows.'"

He referred to Vampira as "the Witch."

"But during our relationship, our positions changed. Fans pushed me aside to get to him."

Jimmy held court almost nightly at Googie's, sometimes lingering till long after the sun came up. Vampira was always there among his devoted listeners.

Almost nightly at some point he would speak about the implacability of his upcoming death. "Live fast, die young," was his motto.

Both Jimmy and Vampira shared the same ghoulish humor. For a publicity photo, Vampira once wandered through a local cemetery, announcing to the press that "I'm attending my own funeral."

Vampira cultivated a devoted following of campy gay men in the 50s, and many of them often performed free favors for her just for the privilege of being in her company. One man arranged her hair; another designed outfits for her, and one, Freddie Brandell, drove her around Hollywood, without charge, in his car, a luxurious Cadillac, a gift from his rich father.

At the peak of her fame, Vampira had at least eight gay boys on call. Each of them was introduced to Jimmy, and each developed a crush on the sexily handsome and increasingly famous young actor.

Dean referred to the boys as "flamers," and rejected each of their invitations for sex.

Freddie, who himself would die in a car crash in 1966, developed the most overwhelming crush of them all on Jimmy. He told Vampira, "I'm gonna have him if it's the last thing I do on this earth. I'm mad about the boy."

Jimmy would abuse Freddie, send him on stupid errands, or even give him his dirty underwear to wash. Vampira protested the abuse. "Girly boy loves it," Jimmy told her. "He'd even eat my shit if I asked him to."

In some respects, Vampira agreed with that.

She claimed that she was surprised by how intensely Newman bonded with Tony Perkins and Jimmy Dean. "Tony and Jimmy were wild boys," she claimed. "They should have been put away somewhere. They were such tormented souls. In contrast, Paul seemed only mildly disturbed, but he drank a lot. It was a difficult time for him. He couldn't make up his mind if he wanted to be straight or gay. I think Paul was basically straight, and had a great love for women. But back in those days, a good-looking gay guy could get him into bed."

"I dated Tony, but he always took me home early, usually at nine o'clock, and I had to settle for a kiss on the cheek. With Jimmy, I saw some action."

"One night I took Jimmy to meet my friends at the Maleficarum Coven, the oldest coven of witches in Los Angeles."

Jimmy was only momentarily intrigued with these witches, later telling author Joe Hyams, "It's all a bunch of cow pies, but weird and kind of fascinating."

Once, Vampira and Jimmy attended a ghoulish Hollywood party of witches and warlocks. She came dressed in her Vampira drag, and he came as Boris Karloff impersonating Frankenstein.

"Even after Jimmy became a star and could afford to treat us once in a while, he would pay only his part of the check—nothing else," Nurmi said. "He was a real miser."

"The first time Jimmy invited me back to his apartment, I was shocked to see a noose hanging from the ceiling," Vampira said.

"He told me he kept it there in case he wanted to commit suicide in the middle of the night. Of course, who was I to be surprised? At the time, I was driving around in a funeral hearse. I also noted that he kept a lot of books

on black magic scattered around the room. One night he threw a party. What a motley crew of friends he had. A lot of bongo players and dope smokers, and a lot of 'actors' who had never acted in anything. Dope, dope, and more dope—that's all that crowd was interested in. Jimmy could have had any beautiful woman in Hollywood, but he was sleeping with guys."

"He was also going through his amputee period, dating this ugly woman who had only one leg. Jimmy told me that she was the leader of a gang of beatnik thieves who made their living robbing the homes of rich movie stars. That night, Jimmy stripped down to his underwear and rubbed her stump. To judge from the rising bulge in his underwear, that turned him on big time."

[This unidentified woman, of course, was not Toni Lee, the well-known entertainer. It was another amputee with whom Jimmy became involved.]

In her way, Vampira loved Jimmy, but was aware of his dark side, "which was darker than the black nail polish and black gown I wore to introduce those horror movies," she said. "I agreed with Elia Kazan, who claimed that Dean 'was a punk but a helluva talent.' He also said that 'Dean liked cars, waitresses—and waiters.' Sometimes, though, he dated high on the hog."

"Jimmy even managed to seduce Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, and Merv Griffin. Even Howard Hughes found out what his underwear was hiding, but had to pay for it."

"He often took me out and around as his date," Vampira said. "One night we showed up at a party in Malibu. Jimmy encountered a former lover, who denounced him in front of everybody, claiming he dated women only for publicity. 'Nobody in his right mind thinks you're straight,' the queen shouted at him."

By now, Jimmy was used to having that accusation hurled at him.

Sometimes, Nurmi, with Simmons, would ride together in "The Black Death," while Jimmy would precede them on his motorcycle. "He was reckless," she said, "riding with his hands held above his head and gyrating his hips like in an old Carmen Miranda movie. I thought he might be killed instantly, since another vehicle was likely to run into him. I just knew he was going to kill himself one day, sooner than later."

In addition to Simmons, Newman and Perkins were also fixtures in Jimmy's life. "Tony was carrying on with Jimmy, even though he was involved in a torrid romance with Tab Hunter, I think," Vampira said.

Jimmy revealed his affair with Tony to William Bast. "He's tall and skinny, but he's got a decent sized cock. He's so god damn shy. When he tries to talk and relate to people, he practically gets lockjaw. When he does speak up, he glances nervously around the room. He doesn't speak words, he spits them out. Late at night, though, he opens his trap and I can't get him to shut up. I'll wake up and find he's still talking. What a contradiction."

"His favorite form of sex involves dressing me in black and having me slip in through his bedroom window as 'The Kissing Bandit' before I rape him, violently, biting his lip as I do until I draw blood."

Television director James Sheldon, one of Jimmy's closest friends from his days in New York, once asked Tony why he didn't date starlets for publicity purposes.

"If a pill existed that would make me like women, I'd grind it into the ground with my foot," he said.

In the spring of 1955, director William Wyler wanted Jimmy to play a supporting role in *Friendly Persuasion,* Jessamyn West's affectionate book about conscience-torn Quakers during the Civil War. Jimmy was excited to work with Gary Cooper, but since *East of Eden* had made him a star, he was advised by Dick Clayton not to accept this or any other supporting roles.

"I'm so glad he didn't," Tony said. "I got the part. It made me a star, too. I got an Oscar nomination."

According to Nurmi, "Jimmy and I often ended our night at Googie's just as Paul and Tony were beginning their day. We'd be wasted and Paul and Tony would come in all bright eyed and bushy tailed. Tony would order a dozen prunes and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice, but Paul wanted the works, bacon and eggs. On some mornings, he even ordered a greasy cheeseburger for breakfast."

Tony Perkins...inviting rape.

"Even though I knew the boys were bed-hopping like rabbits in those days, they seemed devoted to each other," she said. "Tony would tell us goodbye and then hitch a ride down Sunset Strip. He always got picked up right away. No sooner did that sexy young stud stick out his thumb than we could hear the screech of brakes from some gay male eager to pick him up and give him a ride to the studio . . . or whatever."

Nurmi remembered one evening when Jimmy, Tony, and Paul all went with her to Googie's. "Paul and Jimmy climbed up on a soapbox that night. Jimmy said he was not going to become some performing monkey for the studio machine. Paul also claimed that he was not going to be turned into some paper doll created by a studio. 'Surface glamour doesn't interest me at all,' Paul said. 'These Hollywood stars can have all the false glamour they want. The estates in Beverly Hills. The swimming pools. Their fancy cars. Of course, the easy sex isn't bad.'"

Jimmy agreed with him.

"Tony shocked Jimmy and Paul when he took a different view," Nurmi claimed. "'I'm going to climb the ladder of success out here,' Tony vowed. 'Go to the right parties, meet all the VIPs. I want to be a movie star and enjoy all the trappings. You guys can ride your motorcycles into the desert and hang out with rattlesnakes. Not me. I want to drink champagne with the big boys.' At that point, Jimmy took his glass of freshly squeezed orange juice and slowly drizzled it over Tony's head."

"Tony never fell for Jimmy," she said. "If he was in love with anyone, it might be Tab. I'm sure he enjoyed sex with Jimmy, but as we found out later, Tony wanted to be James Dean, or at least 'the next James Dean.' He perhaps figured that by seducing him, some of Jimmy's talent would be passed on through semen."

"On separate occasions, Tony managed to entice Paul and Jimmy to walk barefoot with him from the Château Marmont along the entire length of Sunset Strip to Doheny," Nurmi claimed.

"Those guys were before their time. In the 60s, thousands of hippies were walking barefoot along the Strip. Perhaps those boys launched a future fad."

"The boys had their secrets," Nurmi said. "Tony was a tormented soul who really wanted to go straight, but he was screwing around with guys all the time. It was hopeless. Paul was the straightest of the bunch. But in those days, he had a wild streak of adventure in him and could be had. I knew Jimmy had already had him. They were rivals, though."

"Whereas Paul tried to suppress his dark side, Jimmy wanted to explore his, and that included lots of gay sex. Paul and Jimmy also took out their adventurous side through car racing, flirting with death."

"All the boys back then were going through a period of sexual experimentation. Hollywood pretty boys were fucking each other, occasionally screwing gals, and going to orgies. What a glorious time that was—the Eisenhower 50s."

Jimmy later denied it, but Nurmi on at least three occasions managed to lure him into her bed, draped in black sheets. "Frankly, I don't think Jimmy's prick was up for it at the time we bonded. I fear I didn't turn him on with my witch act."

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Freddie Brandell had not given up on his scheme to seduce Jimmy. One night, a ghoulish opportunity arose that

this schemer soon set into motion.

He remembered the pictures, published in *Life,* that Dennis Stock had taken of Jimmy. Some of them depicted him posed in a coffin—a display model in a general store back in Fairmount, Indiana.

Vampira's career as a TV ghoul had suffered from some recent bumps and grinds. When her show was canceled, although none of them accepted, she approached some of its competitors in the hopes that they'd pick it up.

As it happened, her friend and "gopher," Freddie, who was hoping for a career as a studio publicist despite the fact that it was going nowhere, convinced Vampira that her sagging career could be saved through a publicity scheme he had devised.

"We'll have Dean lying in a coffin, pretending to be dead, and you'll hover over him, looking like the most glamorous vampire who ever invaded a cemetery."

At first Jimmy was reluctant, but one night, after a liberal consumption of drink and drugs, he agreed to it. Freddie drove them and a photographer to a funeral home owned by the uncle of one of his friends. There were no dead bodies there on the night of this ghoulish party's arrival.

Before Jimmy agreed to crawl into the casket and lie down, pretending to be dead, Freddie offered him a final drink. The young actor made a big mistake in downing the drink in one gulp.

Inside the coffin, Jimmy jokingly sat up, in emulation of a corpse rising from the dead, but finally drifted off into a coma on the satin upholstery inside the casket. Vampira just assumed he had fallen asleep.

She had another appointment, and asked Freddie if he'd hang around and drive Jimmy home. Planting a kiss on Jimmy's lips, she left the funeral parlor accompanied by the photographer.

The next afternoon Freddie, told Vampira what he'd done the night before. Before Dean got inside that casket, Freddie had slipped him a vodka-based Mickey Finn. Not knowing the drink was drugged, he drank all of it, fast.

"After you and that guy left, I went and opened the back door and let in four of our friends," Freddie confessed. "Jimmy was knocked out, and we were sure that he'd remain that way for a long time. We lifted him from the coffin and placed him on a mortuary slab where we stripped off every piece of his clothing."

As Vampira listened in horror, Freddie told her more. "As you know, Jimmy has denied us any sex for a hell of a long time, even though all the guys have been panting for him. Unconscious on that marble slab, he could deny us nothing. We did everything we could think of, sexually speaking, before the rooster crowed. We left him lying on that slab to be discovered by the mortician in the morning. I hope he realized that Jimmy was still alive and didn't embalm him."

Vampira let out one of her famous screams and slapped Freddie's face. "You little fool! Don't you know each of you guys could get ten years or more for a stunt like that? Get out! I never want to see you or any of your so-called friends again. All of you are sick. Sick!"

She immediately called the photographer and told him to destroy all the negatives. She didn't want a picture with her in it to be used in evidence in case a trial was later held and the boys' rape of Jimmy exposed in open court.

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After several months, Jimmy tired of Nurmi and had nothing good to say about her to gossipy Hedda Hopper, who published his comments.

"I don't go out with witches, and I dig dating cartoons even less," Jimmy claimed. "I have never taken her out, and I should like to clear that up. I resent her exploiting our acquaintance for publicity."

"I have a fairly adequate knowledge of the occult," he said. "I have studied *The Golden Bough* and the writings of the Marquis de Sade. I was interested to find out if this girl was obsessed by satanic forces. She knew absolutely nothing. I found her a novice with no true interest in the occult, except her Vampira makeup."

Biographer David Dalton wrote: "Vampira cut off all her hair in a last attempt to get Jimmy Dean's attention, but he would not respond to her trick-or-treat threats. Finally, she actually cast a spell on him! '*Oh, Ye Powers of Mwuetsi Moon Men, Come to My aid!"*

Dalton continued: "She drew Oola-Oola signed with thrice-charmed ashes. Snakes and lizards! She was using black magic against Dean! She administered the dreaded rites of the eight-by-ten glossy, cutting out his eyes and ears from the photographs with a little gold dagger, incanted fiendish curses (*"by the Fates of Ghastly Guchkakunda!")*, made a black-and-white voodoo doll to represent his body and performed the macabre

ceremonies in her room, which was said to resemble some witch doctor's shack back in Haiti."

In one of Hollywood's tragic ironies, a few weeks later, on September 30, 1955, Dean suffered a broken neck, and subsequent death, during a car accident while recklessly driving his Porsche near Salinas, California. His ruined body was placed in a coffin at the Kuehl Funeral Home on Spring Street in Paso Robles, California, for shipment to Indiana. This coffin would be the final one.

Shorly after Jimmy's death, Nurmi posed for a postcard photo depicting herself sitting beside an open grave. The inscription read: "Come and join me!"

Published less than a week after Jimmy died, and interpreted as a nuanced but clearly implied reference to his violent and unexpected death, her campaign catalyzed a backlash of protests. In Vampira's words, "Letters from Jimmy's fans poured in by the tons."

Later, Liberace hired Vampira to appear in Las Vegas as a minor part of his nightclub act. She told him, "You're the only person in show business who has been nice to me since Jimmy died. I liked Jimmy so very much. It was the little things. I gave him a Tokyo-made ear picker, so he'd quit using those damn toothpicks to clean his ears."

In Vegas, Liberace told her that he'd tried to offer Jimmy money, as a means of enticing him to visit him in Nevada, but he never would fly out to see me."

Three years after Dean's tragic death at the age of twenty-four, Vampira met with director Elia Kazan to discuss the actor's growing legend. "I don't like it," Kazan said. "His fans are glorifying a Dean that never existed. They see him as a little waif brutalized by Hollywood. He was a sicko with talent. He hated everybody, mostly himself. I'd call him a half-baked pudding of hatred. If you actually tasted that pudding, it was poison."

In the immediate aftermath of Jimmy's death, Vampira, the ghoulish neurotic of the night, shamelessly tried to twist it into a tasteless publicity stunt for herself. In this replica of a postcard she distributed, she poses in front of an open grave, with the implication that she's inviting him to join her during her "walks with the living dead."

The tasteless prank backfired, provoking massive outrage from Jimmy's fans.

In 1959, Vampira made one last attempt at stardom when director Ed Wood, who made the most ridiculous movies ever filmed, cast her alongside Bela Lugosi ("Count Dracula") in the *schlocky*, not-even-funny-enough-to-be-camp *Plan 9 from Outer Space.* Critics have, since then, defined it as "the worst film of all time." It was the last film Lugosi ever made—an inglorious end to a fabulous and otherwise legendary career.

In 1994, when the historic reality of Vampira had evolved into a cultish and very campy icon brought back to the screen, she was too old to play herself in *Ed Wood*, Tim Burton's tribute to the F-movie director. It starred Johnny Depp. Vampira was portrayed by the Goth-inspired Lisa Marie Smith, a model and actress from New Jersey who billed herself simply as "Lisa Marie." *[No, not the one associated with Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.]*

In 2006, two years before her death, Vampira's life story, or at least a heavily edited version of it, would be relayed in a documentary by Kevin Sean Michaels entitled *Vampira: The Movie*.

She never benefited financially from her fame. In later life—almost destitute—she sold handmade jewelry. At her lowest point, she lived in a garage and became a cleaning woman in a restaurant.

Unlike her friend, James Dean, who died young, Vampira would not meet the Grim Reaper until January 10, 2008, in Los Angeles. She'd lived a turbulent, unhappy life before finally—at the age of 85—releasing her last breath.

In her later years, she proclaimed, “The world doesn’t have much use for a broken-down old fag hag. Where are all my golden boys of the 50s? Of course, they were sleeping with each other and rarely gave me a tumble, but I loved them all the same.”

His Late, Late Show: Jimmy Hangs Out on Sunset Strip With “*Unsavory Aliens of the Night*”

During the last summer of his life, James Dean moved into an apartment on Sunset Plaza Drive, overlooking Sunset Strip. Rogers Brackett had brought him to this street when he was the producer’s kept boy. He could now thumb his nose at Brackett and pay his own rent. “Now, Brackett runs from his landlord, who’s demanding back rent.”

Googie’s remained Jimmy’s favorite hangout. When Bast spotted him there with the gay actor, Tony Perkins, Jimmy stopped to acknowledge him and introduce a former lover (Bast) to a new lover (Perkins).

“Tony and I have been hanging out with a lot of spooks,” Jimmy said. “I’ll give you a ring some night.”

Bast stood watching as Tony and Jimmy wandered off together into the night.

The “spooks” Jimmy referred to were no doubt members of what the press called “The Night Watch.” After midnight, these young men and women, on the fringe of show business, convened at Googie’s. Bast described them as “the lonely, the alienated, and the disenfranchised, trying to meet other kindred souls.”

Newspapers made outrageous claims against the coven, labeling them “Satanists who practice the black arts, including eating both excrement and human flesh.”

The Warners publicity department was horrified that Jimmy’s name would be dragged into this group, which was becoming increasingly notorious and was under scrutiny by the police.

“Jimmy was not the man I had known and loved,” Bast claimed. “He was dealing with the darker side of his personality and, for a time at least, found comfort with these unsavory aliens of the night. When I dared ask him about that during another encounter, he told me he had an answer.

“I like bad people,” he said. “I guess because I’m so god damn curious about what makes them bad.”

As Jimmy moved into the final weeks of his life, he saw less and less of Bast, who was writing teleplays. Their long ago sexual contact in the California desert never blossomed into a love affair. Jimmy had turned elsewhere.

Finally, that day in late September that Bast had long anticipated had arrived. Jimmy was killed in a car crash on the road to Salinas.

Bast later wrote, “I’d spent much of the time of the past five years, between the time we met and the time he died, in his thrall. I couldn’t have guessed then that I would spend the next five decades in his shadow.”

Throughout the rest of his life, Bast, in spite of his own accomplishments as a writer, would be famous for having known James Dean. Fueling that fame would be his authorship of two books and a TV movie focusing on details associated with the life of his former friend.

As the years passed, Bast’s statements about Jimmy grew increasingly ambivalent and bitter. Friends sometimes interpreted his unflattering comments about Jimmy as “traitorous.”

He told the press, “In real life, Jimmy was not an extraordinary person. If anything, he was rather bothersome.” On *Entertainment Tonight,* Bast defined Jimmy as “cocky and arrogant.”

Sir John Gielgud..."Were you and Jimmy lovers?"

Yet it was his very association with Jimmy that made Bast famous in certain circles. “Dean was very, very shrewd in the way he used people. He knew what he was doing. To get where he got, he kissed a lot of asses, and he hated himself for that.”

For the rest of his life, whenever Bast was introduced to people, they more or less asked the same question.

On the Left Bank of Paris at an all-male party in the 1950s, Bast met John Gielgud.

“Ah, yes, William Bast,” Gielgud said. “The young man who knew James Dean. Tell me, my dear, were you lovers? I had Brando, but never Dean.”

In his final known comment about Jimmy, Bast told his remaining friends, “When one dines with the devil, it’s best to use a very long spoon. Of course, I loved him. There is no denying that. Not a day goes by but what I don’t wonder what it would have been like, had I moved in with him again, this time as his lover. Could I have trusted him with my love, my devotion, my life? I doubted it then, and I doubt it still, but the biggest question persists. Would I really have risked it, for better or worse, at least to find out if it would have worked?

JIMMY’S NEWEST BEST PAL & CONFIDANT EXPOSES HIM TO *Life in the Straight World*

During the final year of his life, Jimmy bonded with Lee Bracker, a well-dressed insurance agent.

In the Warner Commissary, Leonard Rosenman, one of Jimmy’s closest friends, brought the two men together. Bracker was married, the father of two girls, Alison and Lesley.

Two young men of the mid-century came together, and within a week or so, they were “best pals and confidants.”

Their friendship did not begin all at once. It evolved gradually, beginning one night when Jimmy arrived, unannounced at the Rosenman home. He discovered that the couple were out, and that Bracker had volunteered to babysit for them.

Jimmy decided to stick around, and they talked for hours, discovering their mutual interests.

Before the night was over, Jimmy had intrigued Bracker with Porsches and car racing.

A friendship was formed that would last until Jimmy’s death. Bracker and Jimmy would soon be meeting at night, arriving in separate vehicles at the top of Mulholland Drive “to go for a spin,” in whichever of the several cars jimmy was driving at the time, since there wouldn’t be many cars on the road at that hour.

Bracker was straight, and he made it clear in a personal memoir, published in 2013, that his relationship with Jimmy had nothing to do with sex. He was of the opinion that Jimmy’s homosexual life ended when he arrived in Hollywood to film *East of Eden.*

Jimmy was an expert at keeping various facets of his life separated, especially when he was with his straight friends.

Lew Bracker with James Dean...call it a “bromance.”

It was Bracker who accompanied Jimmy when he went to purchase his infamous Porsche Spyder 550, little knowing that it would become his friend’s coffin. Coincidentally, Bracker, the week before Jimmy’s death, in his capacity as an insurance salesman, drew up an insurance policy on his life.

[James Dean died without leaving a will. Even though he'd made only one payment on his insurance policy, the company owed Jimmy's heir $100,000. It is not known who Jimmy would have selected as an heir to his estate.

In the absence of any specific instructions designating a beneficiary, Winton Dean, Jimmy's father, received the policy's the entire benefit. It was ironic that he'd given Jimmy so little money—almost none—and he ended up profiting from his son's death.]

Two days before, Jimmy had confronted Bracker, telling him, "you and I have got to get married."

"To each other?" Bracker asked in astonishment.

"We both have to get married to women and have families. That's what we both want. That's what we both need."

"He never talked to me like a man worried about cutting life short," Bracker later wrote.

Slowly, Bracker came to know his new friend, who was becoming more famous every day. "Jimmy would be bothered when someone would say he was mean and disrespectful. Actually, he wasn't. They took silence to mean he cared little or nothing for them. They didn't have the insight, or didn't care to exercise that insight, in knowing that he was a shy boy that just didn't know how to approach them. Instead of making an attempt to approach him, they just wrote him off."

Some of Jimmy's closest friends, who knew about his relationship with Bracker, felt he was in love with his new friend, who shared so many of his mutual interests.

"Stanley Haggart had that view: "I never met Bracker, but the way Jimmy talked about him made me aware of just how strong his feelings were for this man. But Jimmy was no fool. He was completely aware that Bracker didn't go that route, and I doubt if he ever made a pass at him. He didn't want to ruin what he saw as an important new figure in his life. Of course, Jimmy wouldn't be the first gay man who fell in love with a straight man."

From all reports, Bracker and Jimmy enjoyed many a "crazy, fun-filled day" in the bittersweet and halcyon summer of 1955, as Jimmy's life edged toward a cliff.

Bracker recalled hanging out with Jimmy beside a swimming pool one hot afternoon, inventing a parody of a "swords-and-sandals" movie with a Biblical theme. "We had Mary having an affair with Joseph and getting her pregnant," Bracker said. "They decided to hit the road because no one believed that cockamamie story about an Immaculate Conception. During their journey to Bethlehem, Joseph tried to tune out Mary's kvetching."

In their contrived scheme for a screenplay, Joseph suddenly flashes on a moneymaking scheme: "From this *mensch,* we can make a living. Look what Moses did with the burning bush tale and that slab of stone with ten scratches on it. I'm broke and can't afford a room. I'll find a barn; you'll have my boy, and I'll round up a few goat and pigs. And I'll get three guys from Central Casting with costumes borrowed from Hope and Crosby's *Road to Morocco* movie. We'll be in business."

Before his fateful trip to Salinas, Jimmy stopped by Bracker's house and pleaded with him to accompany him to the car races. Bracker refused, preferring to stay home for what he called "My most pleasurable pastime, a USC football game."

The last time Bracker saw Jimmy was when Jimmy, rebuffed, called back to him during his exit, "Okay, it's your funeral."

In his memoir, Bracker related how dazed he'd become when he received news about Jimmy's sudden death. As the years went by, he summed up his involvement with Jimmy by writing, "His physical presence in my life has ended, but our friendship continues."

JIMMY ON THE FAST TRACK WITH A
Hot Brunette from Sweden

In January of 1955, as Jimmy experienced a California winter, his romantic life with women consisted mostly of a series of "chicks picked up at Googie's," as he confessed to William Bast. On the mornings after his adventures, he usually didn't bother to remember the name of his conquest of the previous evening.

As he complained to Bast, "Sex with these mannequins isn't turning me on. These gals really aren't interested in me. The want to brag about fucking James Dean, the new movie star."

Just when he was about to give up on women, Lilli Kardell came into his life. When Jimmy started dating her, virtually no one in Hollywood had heard of her.

Lilli Kardell...Jimmy's last female flame.

She was beautiful and Swedish. She had come to Hollywood to become the next Greta Garbo or Ingrid Bergman, both of whom had also been from Sweden.

She had been discovered by a Stockholm-based agent working for RKO films. As a secretary, she'd been employed because she had a good command of English, which she'd been taught in school.

Soon, at the age of eighteen, she was "shipped" to Hollywood. Her diary recorded that she met Jimmy on February 19, 1955, early in the year he died.

Ironically, Kardell was introduced to him by Arthur Loew, Jr., his male lover. The Swede and the farm boy from Indiana would soon become engaged in an affair that would endure through his last summer.

Author Joe Hyams described Kardell as, "The quintessential starlet, a pretty brunette with almond-shaped eyes and a big bosom. She was good-natured, forgiving, and generous with her favors. She was also dedicated to the craft of acting. Before seeing Jimmy at night, she took singing, dancing, and diction lessons during the day."

Soon, Jack Simmons, Jimmy's closest and most faithful male companion, met Kardell. "Lilli was quite bovine," he said. "Jimmy and I called her 'The Cat Lady.'"

[As the Cat Lady, she must have been more "feline" than "bovine."]

Author Donald Spoto claimed, "Kardell could have passed for a reverse image of Jimmy himself. They wore their hair similarly, they wore matching bathing suits, and they favored black leisure outfits. As with Pier Angeli, he favored exotic foreign ladies to escort out in public, following the example of Marlon Brando."

At their first public outing, Jimmy and Kardell were accompanied by Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani.

While the women were at table, Tennessee had a brief chat with Jimmy at the bar. Later, to Darwin Porter, in Key West, Tennessee recalled that evening: "I asked Jimmy if he were in love with this young Swede. Had she made off with his fickle and most unreliable heart?"

"Tenn," he answered. "You know me well enough to know by now that I'm a deceitful lover, not to be trusted out of one's sight. I'm sure you once fell in love with me, and I'm equally certain I broke your heart. That's what I do. When biographers record my life story years from now, I'm sure at least one of them will entitle their bio, *James Dean, The Heartbreaker."*

"I've never really loved anybody in my life," Jimmy confessed to the playwright. "I tried to have an affair with myself, but that didn't work out. As for Lilli, I'm just hanging out for the sex, and sometimes, even that bores me. I hate to confess this, but my greatest sex has been with myself. I failed in an affair with myself, but the sex is great."

"I know what you mean," Tennessee said. "Masturbation is, after all, one of life's pleasures when one's sexual partners prove unreliable."

Jimmy held up his right hand. "This is my most reliable sex partner. This hand never fails me. I'm sure she'll be there servicing me when I'm old and gray."

"*If* you ever become old and gray," Tennessee said. "Time herself, that relentless bitch who destroys all of us, both mentally and physically, will never claim you. You'll outrun her, I'm sure."

"Does that mean you're predicting an early death for me?" he asked.

"You know in your heart that's how your story will end."

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For his first trip out of town with Kardell, Jimmy drove her to Palm Springs for a car race at a track alongside the foreboding concrete runway of the Palm Springs Airport, the arrival point for many visiting celebrities from Hollywood. To Kardell, Jimmy cut a dashing figure, dressed in black racing coveralls with a black-and-white checkered cap. Before the beginning of the race, he told her, "I know I'm going to win. I can feel it in my bones."

She reminded him to be careful. "Bones can be broken!"

It was late March, but the noonday sun already made the desert resort feel like August.

About twenty cars were competing, driven by such ace drivers as Ken Miles and Cy Yedor, along a grueling 2.3 mile track. The starting positions were drawn by lot, and Jimmy was "seriously pissed off" at his car's subsequent placement in the fourth row at the rear. "I've been assigned to the fucking boondocks," he complained.

The moment the flag went down, he jammed his foot on the accelerator and took off, zooming past cars who had been assigned better starting positions. He cut wide around them on the outside, almost scraping the left door of a driver from San Diego. "The fucker almost killed me," that driver complained in a formal protest he later filed against Jimmy.

As the first quarter-mile was reached, Jimmy had moved up to fifth position. Never letting his foot leave the accelerator, he was leading the pack at the end of the hazardous first lap. His Porsche could go no faster than one-hundred miles an hour. His aim was to beat Yedor and Miles in their MG Specials.

To his disappointment, Jimmy ended the race in third position. However, judges, on a technicality, disqualified Miles, so Jimmy was moved up to second place. That meant he would carry off the Silver Trophy. "I should have won the gold," he complained to Kardell.

"On the track, I learn about both people and myself," he told her.

"Speed fascinated Jimmy," Kardell said. "He loved it so much, it would ultimately lead to his death. It was not just some passing fancy, but an all-consuming passion."

After the race, Kardell and Jimmy got into a tiff, perhaps because she was seen having a drink with the dashingly handsome Robert Evans, who would later, from 1967 to '73, be in charge of production at Paramount.

"What are you doing with him?" Jimmy later asked her, angrily. "I hear he got his start selling jockstraps in New York."

[Evans would later marry actress Ali McGraw, who would eventually divorce him—with disastrous consequences for her movie career—to marry Steve McQueen.]

In her diary, Kardell wrote: "Jimmy and I were angry at one another. Idiotic evening. Finished with myself drunk, and sleeping in a rented car."

The two made up the following day, and he took her to the Shadow Mountain Resort and Golf Club in nearby Palm Desert to celebrate his victory. There had been two races.

In one of them, he came in first, beating out several veteran drivers.

Miles, an English driver, told the press, "Dean is a reckless daredevil, even if he doesn't give a fuck for his own life, he should not try to kill the other drivers. Car racing is not a bullfight, his other favorite sport. The bloody little punk just doesn't get that."

[Miles would later die in an accident during a car race in Riverside, California.]

In her diary, Kardell recorded details about the second night of their weekend together. "Terrible atmosphere between us. He behaved in a ridiculous fashion and ignored me completely and flirted with other girls. Finally, we reconciled, and he drove me back to Los Angeles. He slept a little, and we made love. Everything is well between us now. I hope."

Jimmy spent the following night in the bed of Arthur Loew, Jr., on Miller Drive, where he'd been given the keys to come and go as he wished.

Kardell later described what it was like being "Jimmy's girl."

"He would all of a sudden just leave and go away and find some buddy of his and start talking about cars. He would be gone for half an hour or more. He was very moody. He could one minute be very deep in thought about something, and then snap out of it, and in the next minute, he'd be on the floor dancing and making some joke, and it was just no use getting mad at him for that kind of thing, because that just didn't do any good. You just had to understand—that was the way he was."

In April, while Jimmy was filming *Rebel Without a Cause,* he came down with the flu. Both Maila Nurmi (Vampira) and Kardell took turns bringing him hot soup and making hot tea for him.

When he recovered, he did not date Kardell exclusively. Not only was he involved sexually with certain members of the cast from *Rebel,* he was also seen on occasion with April Channing, a Broadway showgirl, and with Dana Wynter, who had arrived in Hollywood from her native London, hoping to make it in American pictures. Lucy Marlow, who had had a small role in Judy Garland's *A Star Is Born,* was also seen on his arm, as was Julie Robinson, a dancer with Katherine Dunham's troupe. Jimmy publicly referred to Robinson as "my mambo instructor."

In August of 1955, perhaps against Jimmy's wishes, Kardell talked to a reporter from *Modern Screen.* "Jimmy is an ice man. Some of the things he does, it is because he is youthful. It takes time to handle fame. But he really is very kind. They tell me he doesn't smile enough. Not true. He smiles much. He has a good sense of humor."

As that summer of 1955 came to its inevitable end, Kardell perhaps realized how hopeless any long-term commitment from Jimmy would be. She began dating other men, especially after Jimmy left for Texas to shoot *Giant.*

On September 30, 1955, she wrote in her diary: "Jimmy Dean, my only love, died on his way to Salinas for the races. Auto crash. Please take care of him, God, and let him be happier now than before. I can only hope that I will find Jimmy in some other person. My thoughts will always be with you, Jimmy. Goodbye forever. I love you, and will never forget you and the memories we shared."

Troy Donahue...No replacement for James Dean.

[Kardell never found Jimmy in another person. In 1958, she married an insurance executive, but the relationship ended disastrously. Alleging cruelty, she divorced him after less than a year.

Her next engagement was to an actor as different from Jimmy as a mongoose is from a snake. She began an affair with Troy Donahue, that handsome blonde pin-up who became a cardboard fixture in films during the late 1950s and early 60s before his Hollywood fame flickered and died. Ironically, he once made a film called Live Fast, Die Young, *which is the most-used epitaph applied to Jimmy.*

It was rumored that Donahue's motivation for hooking up with Kardell was entirely based on the fact that she'd once been "Jimmy's girl."

Donahue and Kardell never married. One night, she was rushed to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, suffering from a severe beating. When she recovered, she sued Donahue for $60,000 for assault and battery. The case was settled out of court.]

Actors Eager to Fill the Shoes of

JAMES DEAN

In the wake of the death of James Dean, studios both in the United States and Europe would market some emerging actor as "The New James Dean."

Of all the inheritors of the throne, Christopher Jones, who for a while was married to Susan Strasberg, came

the closest to physically resembling Jimmy, based on his blonde hair and slender yet strapping physicality. He reigned briefly in the 1960s as the reincarnation of Jimmy.

For a while, the extraordinarily handsome Maxwell Caulfield, who once appeared frontally nude in a play in New York, was also promoted as another James Dean. Caulfield's well-muscled physique elicited more praise than his acting in any film he made. He was truly a rebel without a good movie role.

In West Germany, the bisexual Horst Buchholz was hailed as the next James Dean. He was known for his brooding intensity, his tousled hair, and his sexy appeal. He wasn't really Jimmy, although he did wrap his car around a tree one day. Unlike Jimmy, he survived.

Maxwell Caulfield...Perhaps the body of a Greek god was not enough.

For a period in the 60s, Alain Delon was sometimes marketed as "The James Dean of France." He rose to stardom in *Purple Noon* (1960), a Franco-Italian production based on Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley.*

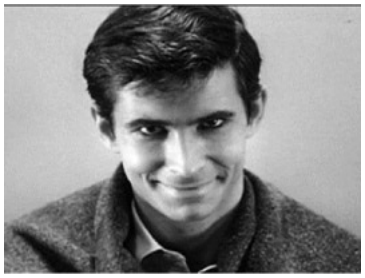
In the immediate aftermath of Jimmy's death in 1955, the executives at Paramount decided that Tony Perkins, Jimmy's sometimes lover, should be defined as their reincarnation of James Dean. Alert to the public hysteria that followed in the wake of Jimmy's death, the studio wanted someone to pick up his mantle. Tony seemed their best candidate.

Along with many others, Paul Newman was taken aback by the false claims that Tony Perkins was making about the closeness of his relationship with Jimmy. He even asserted to reporters from fan magazines that he and Jimmy had roomed together in his apartment on Sunset Plaza Drive, which was not true.

Alain Delon...The French had their own James Dean.

Jack Simmons, who had actually been Jimmy's roommate, was very resentful. "No one can replace Jimmy Dean," he said. "Certainly not Tony Perkins. Jimmy was all internal and driven, while Perkins is sort of mechanical, physically plotted, and contrived. There is no comparison to Jimmy, except in Perkins' own head."

Photoplay magazine disagreed: “We need an actor to fill the shoes of James Dean. Tony Perkins is an ideal candidate to fill those shoes. He does offbeat things like Dean and makes good copy.”



Tony Perkins, as he appeared in *Psycho.*

Ultimately, it wasn’t Perkins, but Newman who moved in to take over roles that had been slated and conceived for Jimmy. The first of the lot was a boxing picture, *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956)*,* the cinematic saga of Rocky Graziano.

Newman complained to Rod Steiger, “Whereas Perkins is courting it, I’m having this new James Dean image thrust upon me. I’m the unwilling actor taking over his roles both in the movies and on TV. When will the newspapers stop making these stupid comparisons between Jimmy and me?”

“When the next Paul Newman comes along,” the veteran actor told him, cynically.

In *Somebody Up There Likes Me,* Newman found himself co-starring with two of Jimmy’s former lovers, each of them of different genders—Sal Mineo and Pier Angeli. Newman himself had already been sexually intimate with Pier during their work together in *The Silver Chalice.*

When they came together on the set, she said to him, “We both loved Jimmy, and now we’ve lost him. Fortunately, I have Vic Damone, and you have Joanne Woodward.”

Both of them found it ironic that in *The Silver Chalice,* Newman was a Jew playing an Italian-American, and she, a *bona fide* Italian, was playing his Jewish girlfriend.

When Newman had first encountered her, she was suffering from a broken ankle, the result of a fall in the stairwell of her home. Until she recovered, he sometimes carried her between her dressing room and lunch in the studio commissary.

After he’d done that two days in a row, he lingered for a few hours after their return to her dressing room, since neither of them was due that afternoon on the set.

When an assistant came to summon Pier to the set, he found Newman in his jockey shorts with Pier, together in the shower.

“The first day Newman met Sal Mineo on the set, the young man was still mourning the loss of his friend. Mineo had been cast in *Somebody* as Graziano’s friend, Romolo*.*

Fourteen years older than the Bronx-born Sicilian-American, Newman congratulated him on his Oscar nomination for *Rebel Without a Cause.* “I thought you and Dean were terrific,” he said. “I’m sorry he’s gone.”

“Not as sorry as I am,” Mineo said, appearing on the verge of tears. “I noticed you work out every day. I’d like to join you”

Getting sudsy with Sal Mineo.

Aware of Mineo's gender preference, Newman warned him, "Okay, but working out is all we're going to do. I don't intend to replace Dean in your life."

At the gym, the two men worked out for more than 90 minutes before Mineo joined Newman in the shower. "You can look, but don't touch!"

"I promise."

As Mineo later confessed, "I didn't keep my promise. As Paul was showering, before he knew what was happening, he found me on my knees. He told me to leave him alone, but I didn't. Finally, he said, 'Go for it, kid. I'm too far gone to stop you.'"

Chapter Twenty-Two

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

"YOU'RE TEARING ME APART!" JIMMY SCREAMS, IGNITING THE ANGST OF TEENAGERS EVERYWHERE

Live Fast, Die Young and Violently

THE JINXED CURSE OF *REBEL:* NICK ADAMS, SAL MINEO, & NATALIE WOOD

"Who's Sleeping with Jimmy Tonight?"

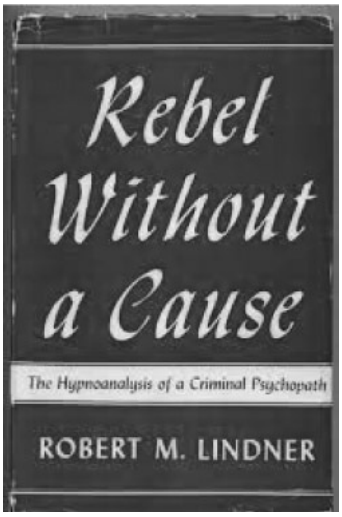
Long before he met Jimmy, director Nicholas Ray had filmed *They Live by Night (1949)*, co-starring Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell, a *film noir* story of teenage lovers fleeing from the law.

Rebel's 1949 predecessor–noir, with a focus on juvenile delinquents, with direction by Nick Ray and starring bobbysox heartthrob Farley Granger.

Since then, he had wanted to create another "youth-in-angst" saga. Originally entitled The *Blind Run*, it was later renamed *Rebel Without a Cause*.

In the late 1940s, he'd screen tested Marlon Brando for the role, but never got a green light to film a script inspired by a case study researched and written by Dr. Robert Lindner, *Rebel Without A Cause: The Hypnoanalysis Of A Criminal Psychopath.* It had been researched during his stint as a staff psychiatrist at the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisberg, Pennsylvania. Warners had acquired the film rights to Lindner's book back in 1943, but the property just languished on the shelf until it was reactivated in 1954, an era when juvenile delinquency was making headlines across the country.

Ray had just filmed what became one of the most notorious westerns of all time, *Johnny Guitar* (1954), co-starring Joan Crawford and Mercedes McCambridge. "I fucked Crawford and got to suck off Scott Brady, who is very well hung," Ray later told Jimmy Dean shortly after they met. "I got to see Sterling Hayden, a Viking god, in the nude, and what a whopper, but he made it clear to me he was off limits."



Nicholas Ray's film project had impressively scholastic origins: written by the resident psychiatriast at a Federal penitentiary, it was subtitled, *The Hypnoanalysis of a Criminal Psychpath.*

When James Dean was cast into the male lead, his enemies and detractors made note of the original title.

Ray went through two distinguished writers, Leon Uris and Irving Shulman, rejecting each of their scripts.

Ray finally hired Stewart Stern, the cousin of Jimmy's lover, Arthur Loew, Jr. He'd written the script for Pier Angeli's debut film, *Teresa* (1951). In Stern's version of the script, seventeen-year-old Jim Stark is the new kid on the block, arriving at Dawson High, where he is immediately menaced by a tough gang.

"We get going with a bang," Ray said. "Stark gets into trouble with the cops, the girl next door snubs him, and a young homosexual develops a crush on him."

It was a screening in New York of *East of Eden* that had convinced Ray that Jimmy would make the ideal Jim Stark. He immediately got in touch with Jimmy's New York agent, Jane Deacy, and a meeting was scheduled.

The two men bonded almost from the first. Although Jimmy had already turned twenty-four, Ray thought he looked young enough to pass for a teenager.

"Jim Stark and Jimmy shared one thing in common," Ray said. "Both of them wanted to belong, yet feared belonging. Dean understood the character, and Stark's conflict of violent eagerness and mistrust, the intensity of his desires, his fear, all of which could make him at times arrogant and egocentric. I felt Dean could capture the character behind all this and depict Stark's desperate vulnerability."

Ray spent two weeks in New York with Jimmy, concluding that he encapsulated many of Jim Stark's characteristics, as laid out in the script. "He was both the boy and the man, the gay and the straight, the tender and the violent."

Ray told Elia Kazan, "I lived for a while with Jimmy in that little apartment of his, cluttered with books and other junk, including a matador's cape on the wall. We went to a lot of movies. We got drunk a lot. Jimmy let me fuck him…a lot. He was better than my former wife, that whore, Gloria Grahame."

"Actually, I needed Dean to help me flesh in Stark's character and bring him to life on the screen. The script had not been fully developed. I wanted Dean to probe his own experiences in life and apply them when needed."

As Ray told Kazan, who had helmed Jimmy in *East of Eden, "*You know I walk on both sides of the sidewalk. I not only screwed Jimmy in New York, and I plan to take director's privilege and keep plugging him as long as we're making *Rebel.* I'm looking forward to it."

"I'd rather fuck Marilyn Monroe, which I do," Kazan said.

After returning to Los Angeles, Jimmy hit some of the rougher streets, hanging out with alienated young men and often with their "gang molls," as he called their girlfriends. "They wore leather jackets and roamed the streets at night, looking for a faggot to beat up. Not all of them were poor. Some were from rich families. Boy, those guys scared me. One night, I got gang raped by three guys. But I'm not going to go into that." *[He made this revelation to Ray, who had already flown back to Hollywood.]*

Jimmy signed on to the film shortly before Christmas of 1954. At the time, he had serious reservations about it, interpreting it as a Grade B movie typical of the type being cranked out by producer Roger Corman.

Originally, Stern had told Jimmy that he envisioned *Rebel "*as a modern version of *Peter Pan,* three troubled kids inventing a world of their own. I want to say something about the nature of loneliness."

"I set for myself a big goal," Stern said. "Within a period of only twenty-four hours, I wanted to tell the story of a young generation coming into maturity."

Stern later said, "It was obvious to me that Jimmy did not want to play the role I wrote. He wanted to play himself."

Before shooting began, Ray asked Jimmy about his draft status. "I was rejected for bad eyes, flat feet, and butt plugging."

For his work on the film, Jimmy would receive only $12,500.

[That compared with 20th Century Fox giving Marilyn Monroe $15,000 for her co-starring role in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes *(1953).*

[The James Dean Foundation takes in $6 million annually, including licensing agreements for such products as jogging suits, T-shirts, pillowcases, and sunglasses. In Japan, a customer can buy a life-size mannequin of Dean to take to bed for whatever pleasure one desires.]

***

Author Gore Vidal was living at the Château Marmont with his longtime companion, Howard Austen. His friend, Paul Newman, had turned him onto the place. Grace Kelly occupied one of its bungalows, as did Nicholas Ray. One Sunday, Vidal met Ray by the pool, where he introduced himself, thinking that perhaps he might buy one of the

film scripts he was writing at the time.

Nicholas Ray in 1961. Gore Vidal described him as "a silver haired, chain-smoking *auteur* cursed with a romantic nature and a taste for vice."

Within thirty minutes, Vidal and Ray argued, Vidal maintaining that the scriptwriter was more vital to the film than its director. Ray responded with, "If it's all in the script, why film it?"

Despite their disagreement, Ray invited Vidal to a party that he was hosting later in his bungalow. He told Vidal that he was casting a film called *The Blind Run* about juvenile delinquents and starring James Dean.

"I've seen Dean before," Vidal said. "At the Actors Studio. He's always hanging around sucking up to Tennessee Williams, hoping he'll write another great part like he did for Brando."

Vidal attended the party with every intention of "putting the make on Dean." But it didn't work out that way. "I found him arrogant and insulting to me. What a prick he was. We hated each other on sight."

Vidal later described his negative impression of Dean to Ray: "The first thing he said to me was, 'I never heard of you.' He knew damn well who I was. I should have told him, 'I never heard of you, either, punk.'"

"Since you and Dean didn't hit it off, I'll introduce you to Dennis Hopper," Ray said. "He's just getting started as an actor. And he's available—that is, if you're not a size queen."

Searching for Judy

Its Outcome Was Decided on Ray's Casting Couch

After Jimmy's casting as the male lead was finalized, Ray set about hiring the rest of the ensemble. The film's other most important role was that of Judy.

As a juvenile delinquent, she comes from a cold home and perhaps is in love with her father, who can't stand for her to kiss him. Her character yearns for a utopian family that includes Jim and herself as central figures.

Jimmy's friend, Lew Bracker, left the impression in a memoir that starlet Lori Nelson had not made a favorable impression on Jimmy when they dated briefly. Actually, Jimmy may have been more impressed with her than Bracker thought. He recommended that Ray consider Lori for the role of Judy. His recommendation was backed up by an onslaught of letters from the Lori Nelson Fan Club, pleading with Ray to cast their favorite star as Judy.

For a very brief period, Ray considered Margaret O'Brien, the former child actress of the 1940s, for the role. As a child, she had enthralled audiences of the World War II era, eventually replacing the fast- maturing (and increasingly syrupy) Shirley Temple as America's favorite pre-adolescent.

Margaret O'Brien as Tootie...adorable, but not right for the portrayal of a teenage trollop.

After MGM let her go after she turned twelve, she complained to the press, "The public can't accept me with a bosom."

Jimmy had seen her in only one film. When she was seven, she had played Judy Garland's sister, Tootie, in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944).

When Ray auditioned Margaret, he asked her what she thought of her parents. "I love them," she answered. That was not the response he wanted. "Judy is alienated from her parents," Ray said.

Jimmy told him, "I can't emote with Little Tootie. Instead of Margaret, why not Shirley Temple?" he asked sarcastically. "Seriously, perhaps you'll consider Carroll Baker."

Unconvincing as Juvenile Delinquents: Debbie Reynolds with Carleton Carpenter singing and dancing "Aba-Dabba Honeymoon"

Margaret O'Brien was out the door.

Jimmy pursued Baker, whom he knew from the Actors Studio. When she was contemplating a role in *Giant,* he approached her. "I'm going to do another film before *Giant.* The script is crap, but the characters are good. I think you'd be perfect in the female lead of Judy. The director, Nick Ray, is a good guy. I'll take you to him, I bet his tongue is hanging out at the prospect of getting you. I've already pitched you for the lead."

Baker, however, was also rejected by Ray.

Ray told Jimmy that MGM "is trying to push Debbie Reynolds onto me. I guess they don't have anything for her to do. If it's a musical, she'd have been perfect."

"I've met her," Jimmy said. "She's the least likely juvenile delinquent in Hollywood. Maybe you could recycle 'Abba-Daba Honeymoon.'"

[Relentlessly cheerful, and written and first recorded in 1914, "Aba-Daba Honeymoon" became a nationwide hit in 1950 when it was reprised in Two Weeks with Love *(1950) as a song-and-soft shoe dance by Debbie Reynolds, Carleton Carpenter, and a banjo-strumming ensemble of Edwardian-era singers and dancers.]*

Jayne Mansfield

Jimmy Vs. the "Relentlessly Pink" Working Man's Marilyn Monroe

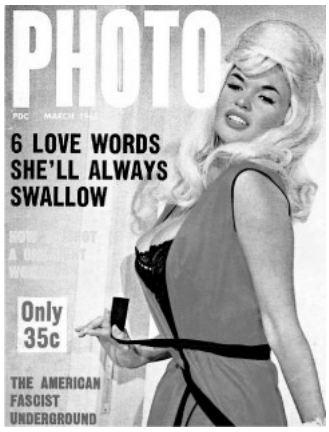
The next candidate for the role of Judy was Jayne Mansfield, whose widely publicized superstructure famously measured 40”-24”-36”.

Jimmy said, “As Judy, she would be ‘busting’ out all over.”

The studio was pushing Jayne onto Ray, who defined the idea of casting her as “the most outlandish suggestion of the decade.”

Actually, Mansfield as Judy was not as outlandish as, in retrospect, it appears. *Rebel* had originally been conceived as a cheap and fast-produced black-and-white juvenile delinquent film of the genre so popular in the 1950s. Some of those featured Jayne’s major rival at the time, Mamie Van Doren, whose quickie genre flicks later included *Untamed Youth* (1957)

As the script for *Rebel* had originally been conceived, the film would have opened with sixteen-year-old Judy being arrested for solicitation. That episode was later “tamed,” rewritten to depict being disciplined at the police station for breaking curfew.



Jayne Mansfield as a cover girl in March, 1965, and...

Actually, Ray was secretly dating Mansfield at the time, and over pillow talk, she was urging him to cast her as Judy. She agreed to a screen test, but the director later confessed, “I didn’t put any film in the camera. I knew at the time I was never going to use her.”

Ray was also engaged at the time in “carnal adventures” with Shelley Winters, who recalled that his bungalow at the studio was “surrounded by night-blooming jasmine.” Also seen coming and going from that bungalow were two other blondes, Marilyn Monroe and Judy Holliday.

Jayne Mansfield as Queen Deianira in *Amori di Erole* (*The Loves of Hercules),* released in 1960. Four months pregnant at the time of this photo, she insisted that Hercules be played by her husband, muscleman Mickey Hargitay.

Outside Italy, where it was filmed, it was released as *Hercules vs. the Hydra* as a late-night TV teleplay.

When Jimmy learned that Ray was dropping Jayne, both as a girlfriend and as a candidate for the role of Judy, he said, “Wait one night before telling her. Give me her number. I want to call her and tell her that I’d like to test the chemistry between Jim Stark and Judy.”

“Okay, buster,” Ray responded. “But you’ll owe me one. You’ll get Jayne’s ass, and I’ll get yours.”

Dubbed “The Working Man’s Marilyn Monroe,” Jayne seemed only too eager to welcome Jimmy into her home. She’d cleared the house of family members and servants so that she could entertain him in private.

He later reported to Ray, “As you know from banging Jayne, she’s more of a cinematic sight gag than an actress, but she sure is bosomy and breathy. She *cooed* and *aaahed* her way through the night, especially when I plugged her. She greeted me at the door in an ivory-colored see-through *négligée*. She didn’t walk toward me, she sashayed.”

“I couldn’t wait to sink my teeth into those pink nipples of hers. She served me dinner. All her décor is pink and heart-shaped. Cupids everywhere. She even dyes the mashed potatoes pink. Naturally, the drink was pink champagne.”

“I detest the color pink,” she told him. “But it’s important for my image. Men want women pink, helpless, and to do a lot of deep breathing. When I was first told about how sex worked, I laughed and then I cried. I just couldn’t see the point of it. Fortunately, I’ve changed.”

“After our romp in her pink bed with its pink sheets, she told me that she just knew that she could play ‘that trollop Judy,’ even though I’m a good girl.”

“If you get the part, we’ll have to change the title,” he said. “Make it *Rebel With a Cause.”*

*“*And what might that be?” she asked.

“To bang Suzi every night.” *[She had already told him that she’d nicknamed her vagina Suzi.]*

After that encounter, Jimmy never saw Mansfield again and, needless to say, she didn’t get the role of Judy.

“I’m Going to Marry James Dean”

—Natalie Wood

Ray might have gone for Carroll Baker had not a sixteen-year-old brunette, a ferociously competitive former child actress, entered the fray.

Her name was Natalie Wood.

She had worked with Jimmy before in the teleplay, *I’m a Fool,* based on a plot by Sherwood Anderson, and more fully described in Chapter Eight of this biography. *I’m a Fool* was eventually broadcast in November of 1954 through television’s General Electric Theater, hosted by Ronald Reagan.

Natalie Wood is seen emoting with James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause.* When she read the script, she said, “I am Judy. The story mirrors themes from my own rebellious teen years.”

After her first viewing of *East of Eden,* Natalie exited from Hollywood’s Egyptian Theater exclaiming to her girlfriend, “I’m going to marry that Jimmy Dean!”

"I felt an instant link to Judy," Natalie said. "I just had to take the role to express something inside of me. Up until *Rebel,* I had been a child actress, or else playing an *ingénue.* Judy was real, a gutsy character. The prospect of bringing her to the screen with Jimmy thrilled me."

As she admitted, she stalked Ray, trying to get the role. "Nick still saw me as a child actress in pigtails," she lamented. "I knew I had to convince him I was grown up. Actually, I was only sixteen, but I had the desires of a woman."

"Then one night, I was involved in a car accident with Dennis Hopper, who would also get cast in *Rebel.* Ever since Nick Adams, who was also cast in the picture, took my virginity, I'd been carrying on with both of them. Dennis and I had this car accident, and I was rushed to the hospital, injured."

"I ordered the nurse to call Ray at once and get his ass over here," she said. "I wanted him to see me in my condition. He looked me over. I was a wild juvenile delinquent out speeding in a car with my lover. 'Now do I get the part?' I demanded of him. He thought about it a minute, and then said, 'You are our Judy.'"

"Ray not only gave me the part," she told Jimmy. "He's also fucking me. Is there a man who doesn't desire a sixteen-year-old girl?"

She revealed, "Nick took me to a tiny candlelit restaurant where the tablecloths were pink. We drank pink champagne. Jayne Mansfield had nothing on him when it comes to pink. Incidentally, pink is my favorite color."

"He then took me back to his suite at the Château Marmont, where he seduced me. He told me, 'I want to make love to you.' That was so romantic. Most of you young guys tell a gal, 'I want to screw you. How about it?'"

"Nick might be an old man, but some guys are still sexy after forty," she said. "And he sure knows how to deliver the goods. "He's a thirty-minute man in the saddle. Poor Dennis seems to shoot off just as he's putting it in."

Later, she would tell her friends that she and Jimmy shared some of the same men: Arthur Loew, Jr., Nick Adams, Dennis Hopper, Steve McQueen, and Lance Reventlow. She included Tab Hunter in that list as well, although in his case, despite rumors, it's unclear whether he was actually involved with Jimmy.

Jack Simmons

"The Hawk" Glides Into Jimmy's Life

Jack Simmons had come to Hollywood to become a movie star, or at least a screen actor. John Gilmore remembered his hook nose. "Everybody called him 'The Hawk.' He had a reputation as one of the most notorious faggots of Hollywood."

The first time Gilmore met Simmons, he was dancing with Rock Hudson at a gay bar in Santa Monica, the Tropical Village, and wearing a tight-fitting pink bikini. Gilmore wrote that Simmons was "a reject, a pitiful fringe-nut in Hollywood's substratum, who captured Jimmy's interest with his unwavering, doglike devotion." Jack would later claim that Jimmy was the only love of his life."

Author Donald Spoto wrote: "For years, the Dean-Simmons friendship was the subject of considerable pornographic imagination. Both men died without uttering a word about the specifics of their relationship, and, as the old maxim runs, no one held the lamp. Most people in the social circle saw the devotion as one-sided. It was a case of the adoring Jack, the acolyte to a diffident Jimmy, who made him a kind of hip valet."

Jack Simmons *(left),* told friends that he was going to pursue James Dean, get him, and then spend the rest of his life doing whatever he wanted him to do.

Based on events that later unfolded, only the first two parts of Jack's plan ever came to be.

Faye Nuell Mayo, Natalie's stand-in on *Rebel,* claimed, "Simmons adored Jimmy, but how seriously Jimmy took him was really unclear to everybody."

Simmons was the best friend of Maila Nurmi (Vampira), and it had been through her that he had met Jimmy.

Biographer Paul Alexander wrote: "When Jimmy returned to Hollywood, he and Jack Simmons became romantically involved. More than likely, it was Jack who made himself available to Jimmy, for he had seen pictures of Jimmy in the newspapers and had gone to see *East of Eden."*

Jack told friends that he was going to pursue Jimmy, get him, then spend the rest of his life doing whatever Jimmy wanted him to do. Based on events that later unfolded, only the first two parts of Jack's plan came true.

Jimmy told William Bast that when they first met, he considered Simmons "a pest. He wants to have sex with me, but I keep turning him down. I'm not remotely attracted to the kid sexually. He keeps telling everybody that sooner or later, he's going to kiss me."

Simmons did not take Jimmy's rejection as his final word. He remained undaunted in his pursuit.

Vampira learned and later talked about the intimate details of their relationship: "When Jimmy found out that Jack imposed no limits on what he would do sexually, Jimmy reappraised him. They had a lot of sex. Jack told me about it. But it wasn't the usual kind of sex."

"With Jack, Jimmy began to live out his darker fantasies. He was very abusive to Jack and put him through all sorts of hideous, disgusting scenes, things no human should do to another. And Jack took it."

"I don't want to go into the graphics, but surely, you can use your imagination. Bondage was the more vanilla stuff Jack went through."

Jimmy used his influence to get Simmons cast in a teleplay, *The Dark, Dark Hour,* which also starred Ronald Reagan.

Jimmy got Ray to agree to a screen test that would include Simmons and himself as a means of evaluating his suitability as Plato. It was a disaster.

The venue was the stage set for *A Streetcar Named Desire,* which had not yet been dismantled. The stairway to the Kowalski apartment in New Orleans was still there. Jimmy couldn't resist running up those steps, bellowing like Brando did in both the stage and movie versions, *"STELLA-A-A-A-A-A!"*

"I couldn't believe what happened next," Ray said. "Suddenly, Simmons followed Jimmy up the steps, and the two men disappeared behind a screen. We heard them giggling, followed by two golden streams of urine raining down from one of the flat's windows. It turned out these jokers were having a pissing contest to see which stream could reach the greatest height. Jimmy said he won the contest, but how would I know?"

He later told Ray, "Jack was nervous, and I figured pissing might relax him before the test."

"The boy just couldn't act," Ray said. "But he was a real pisser."

Ray rejected Simmons for the role of Plato. According to Stewart Stern, "In my script, I wanted to present Jim

Stark and Plato in gay overtones. But Simmons was a bit much. It would have made Plato's relationship with Jim Stark too obvious, just too much."

After Simmons was rejected as Plato, Jimmy managed to get him cast as Moose, one of the gang members.

During the filming of *Rebel,* Simmons lived with Jimmy at his apartment on Sunset Plaza Drive.

Simmons was absolutely devoted to and committed to Jimmy, but he finally dropped him altogether.

Columnist Sidney Skolsky wrote: "Wherever Jimmy goes, Simmons was sure to follow. If Jimmy wants coffee, he gets it. A sandwich, Simmons gets it. He also runs interference for Jimmy, keeping people away if Jimmy doesn't want to see them."

Decades later, Simmons would break down and sob at the mention of Jimmy's name. He claimed that he had not only lost his "one true love," but his soul as well.

Sal Mineo

Makes Pornographic Love to Jimmy in Full View of Nick Ray as a Demonstration of their Onscreen Chemistry

For weeks, Sal Mineo, in avid pursuit of the role of Plato, had pursued Ray.

Mineo was the veteran of two Broadway shows, including *The King and I* (during the course of which Yul Brynner had molested him backstage) and Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo.* Despite his status as a fifteen-year-old, he was nonetheless fully immersed in homosexuality. "I matured early in the Bronx, especially one part of me."

Three views of Sal Mineo, America’s first (onscreen) gay teenager.

At the time, he was already a film industry veteran, having appeared in two movies, *Six Bridges to Cross,* and *The Private War of Major Benson,* both released in 1955.

Ray kept rejecting him as Plato, claiming, "I don't see any possible chemistry between you and Dean."

But finally, he relented, inviting both Jimmy and Mineo to his lodgings at the Château Marmont.

Mineo arrived wearing pegged pants, a skinny tie, and a jacket. Jimmy showed up in jeans and a Tshirt. "They were from different planets," Ray said.

Mineo later revealed what happened that late Sunday afternoon.

"At first, Jimmy and I were awkward, and I gave a bad first reading of the script. Perhaps Ray was right: We had no sexual chemistry. But I was determined to play Plato, and begged for a chance to do it over. Ray tried to get us to relax with each other. Instead of reading the script, we were told to improvise."

"Suddenly, Jimmy and I were talking to each other, and he was fascinated to learn I'd been a street kid from the Bronx. We relaxed—and how! He even started to wrestle me, which ended up in a long, passionate kiss. We stripped down to our underwear and continued to wrestle some more until both of us got erections. Off came our panties."

"Right in front of Ray, I came on to Jimmy like gangbusters. Ray was all eyes. Jimmy and I really went at it. When I looked over at our director, he'd whipped it out and was jerking off. I got the role of Plato, and I later got Ray. But by then, I was already in love with Jimmy."

Something happened during the making of *Rebel,* Mineo said. "It was as close as you could get to a spiritual experience. Jimmy was the focus of all of it. Everything that happened was a result of his presence."

During the first week of his involvement with *Rebel,* Jimmy told Mineo that he couldn't sleep and that he was overcome with a nervous anxiety. He went to three sessions with a psychiatrist. "This headshrinker told me to love my father. What a stupid assignment! I could have told him that fifteen years ago. The fucker should have tried to love my father himself."

"Whatever's inside me makes me what I am. Cut me open and take it out, and let in the light, and it might kill my acting talent. Tennessee Williams calls it 'creative malady.' Sometimes, it's the wackos who create the greatest art. Make them normal, and they may lose that neurosis that drives them to create in the first place."

Natalie's double on *Rebel,* Faye Nuell Mayo, also became aware of Jimmy's anxiety, and she thought she knew what might help to relieve his tension. She invited him to attend a class where Kenpō karate was taught.

He attended only one class and didn't like it. He told her, "Instead of a karate chop, I prefer to stick to my own kind of fighting. A finger with a sharp nail in the eyeball, and a castrating kick in the balls."

Casting Issues:

A Henpecked Husband, A Domineering Tarantula of a Mother, A Cardboard 1950 Sitcom Mom, & an Incestuous Father

After players for *Rebel's* three leading characters had been cast, Ray set about hiring actors for the secondary roles, including Jim Backus and Marsha Hunt.

[Marsha Hunt, hailing from Chicago, was known as "Hollywood's most unfortunate also-rans." Attractive, and with alluring eyes, she spend most of her career under contract for MGM, making B-list pictures, or as a supporting player in such movies as Pride and Prejudice *(1940) playing one of Greer Garson's sisters.*

Regrettably, during the early 1950s, she came under fire from Senator Joseph McCarthy, who claimed she was a communist. When Ray cast her in 1955, she had not worked in three years because of her inclusion on the Red Channels list.

When she arrived on the set of Rebel*, she announced to Jimmy, "Here's what's left of Marsha Hunt after all those witch hunters in Washington finished with me."*

A McCarthy-Era Tragedy: One of the candidates favored by Ray for the role of Jimmy's mother was Marsha Hunt, whose involvement on Broadway in *The Devil's Disciple* earned her a place on the cover of the March 6, 1950 of LIFE magazine.

Despite her competency in more than 50 film roles in the late 30s and 40s, her blacklisting by the film industry for her political views cost her the role of James Dean's mother in *Rebel Without a Cause*, and virtually every other film role for which she applied throughout the rest of her working years.

Ray, also a champion of left-wing positions, wanted her for the role of Jim Stark's henpecking mother until a phone call came in from Jack Warner, asking him to get rid of her and to cast Ann Doran instead.]

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Doran, once marketed as "The Yellow Rose of Amarillo, Texas," was cast as Jimmy's domineering mother. As a hard-core shrew and a major league emotional blackmailer, her character reminds Jim Stark that, "I almost died giving birth to you."

[In time, Doran, a genuine Hollywood workhorse, would appear in some five-hundred motion pictures.]

In an unlikely friendship, Jimmy bonded with her, although she claimed that he almost killed her after they'd first met. He had invited her for a ride on his motorcycle.

At the police station, Mrs. Stark, as portrayed by Ann Doran, grips her son in a suffocating embrace.

Jim Backus, cast as Jim Stark's father, warned her, "Jimmy Dean is opinionated, and he'll tell you how to act."

"Just let him try it!" she responded.

Backus was right. After his first rehearsal with Doran, Jimmy attempted to tell her how to play it.

"Listen, junior," she said, icily. "I've been around a long time, and you're new. Don't tell me how to do it. Let me make my own mistakes."

Despite their early confrontation, the two actors bonded, and soon he was referring to her as "Mom."

Prior to his casting as Jimmy's henpecked screen father, Jim Backus, beginning in 1949, had been known mainly as the voice of the cartoon character, "Mr. Magoo." Later, he was indelibly association with his characterization of a wealthy, out-of-his-depth eccentric, Thurston Howell III, on the widely syndicated TV sitcom, *Gilligan's Island* (1964-1967)

He was astonished to see Jimmy directing the picture. "Never in the history of motion pictures had an inexperienced 24-year-old become, in essence, a co-director, especially with one as established as Nicholas Ray. He gave Jimmy full reign."

Cast against type, character actor Jim Backus appeared with James Dean in one of the most iconic scenes of *Rebel Without a Cause.*

As the cameras rolled, Jimmy shocked Backus by accelerating their confrontation, unannounced and unrehearsed, into a fistfight, as Ann Doran (Jimmy's film mother), looks on.

Judy's parents were to be played by William Hopper and Rochelle Hudson. Hopper had appeared in more than 80 feature films during the 1930s and 1940s, although he'd obtained his greatest fame as Paul Drake to Raymond Burr's *Perry Mason* in a TV series (1957-1966). Although married, Hopper pursed a closeted homosexual lifestyle. Stanley Haggart, Jimmy's friend, had known Hopper back in the 1930s.

"Bill appeared in more than ten films with Ronald Reagan," Haggart said. "He had a big crush on Reagan, but apparently, he never scored, even though they shared a bedroom together on location. He got to see Reagan in the nude—and that's about it."

Blinkered, naive, uncomprehending 1950s-era domestic hell: William Hopper and Rochelle Hudson, portraying Judy's parents.

"Alas," Hopper said. "Ronnie was saving it for Lana Turner or Susan Hayward."

In *Rebel,* Rochelle Hudson was hired to portray Natalie Wood's mother. A star in the 1930s, she'd begun making pictures when she was sixteen as an attractive *ingénue.* She'd already appeared in such films as *She Done Him Wrong* (1933) with Mae West and Cary Grant, and she had starred as Claudette Colbert's daughter in *Imitation of Life* (1934). Jimmy knew nothing of her movie career, but wanted to hear about her espionage work for Naval intelligence when she was stationed in Central America during World War II.

For Hudson, a woman who'd starred in major movies, her role in *Rebel* wasn't much. One reviewer noted, "She is nothing but a cardboard cutout of a 1950s sitcom mom."

As juvenile delinquents, Ray rounded up a cast that included Corey Allen, Beverly Long, Frank Mazzola, Steffi Sidney, Jack Simmons, and Dennis Hopper.

For a while, Steffi Sidney held out the hope that she might be cast as Judy. However, Ray decided instead to give her the lesser role of Millie, one of the "gang molls." Steffi was the daughter of the famous Hollywood columnist Sidney Skolsky, who had written extensively about Jimmy. His "office" was Schwab's Drugstore, where Jimmy often hung out.

According to Steffi, "My character always carried a hairbrush with her, and I was a very insecure girl who desperately wanted to belong to the gang."

Some of the other cast members resented her, charging nepotism, claiming that Steffi got the part only because of her influential father. The same charge was leveled against William Hopper, son of Hedda Hopper, who was cast as Natalie's angry father.

Steffi was disappointed with *Rebel's* final cut. "My scenes were eliminated. I was left with one line and a sneeze."

She said that the first time she saw Jimmy, which was during a wardrobe test, "He came up to me, and he just swaggered, and then he hit me real hard. I thought, 'Why in hell did he do that to me?' The next time he wandered over, I said, 'What, you're not going to hit me again?' He said, 'No, no, my name is Jimmy Dean.'"

More than a Bromance:

Dennis Hopper

Of all the gang members, only Dennis Hopper was being groomed for stardom at Warners. "I tried to get to know Jimmy. I started by saying 'hello.' No answer. He wouldn't talk to people on the set. He would go into his dressing room. He would be into himself, into his thing. He'd lock himself away."

"Finally, about halfway through filming, during a break in the nighttime filming of 'the chickie run' scene, I grabbed him and threw him into the car. I said, 'Look, I want to be an actor, too, and I wanna know what you're doing, what your secret is."

Dennis wrote those words in *James Dean: The First American Teenager.* After that night, the ice was broken, and they became intimate friends.

Peter Winkler, who wrote a biography of Dennis Hopper *(depicted above)*, said, "It is difficult to overstate the importance of James Dean's influence and the impact it had on Hopper's life. He once spoke of Dean as if recalling the love of his life."

Cast as "Goon," Dennis was four years younger than Jimmy and looked even younger. Like Jimmy, he had grown up in the Middle West, in his case, Kansas. He told Jimmy, "When I was a kid, I used to get off sniffing gasoline from my grandfather's truck."

"There will never be another man like Dean," Dennis said after his friend died. "In a strange way, I had a closer friendship with him than most men have with each other. It wasn't the kind of friendship where you say, 'Let's go out and tear up the town.' Sometimes, we'd just have a quiet dinner together and share our darkest secrets. Also, Jimmy and I were into peyote and grass before anybody else caught on."

"I was with him almost every day for the last eight months of his life," Hopper claimed. "I was haunted by his death, which had been the greatest emotional shock of my life. When he died, I felt cheated. I had my dreams tied up with him. His death blew my mind."

When pressed about whether his relationship with Jimmy turned sexual, he said, "What in the fuck do you think? How much do I have to spell it out? Do you want a blow-by-blow description?"

Movie historian David Thomson wrote, "Dennis Hopper was an ardent young man fatally unlucky to cross the path of James Dean—in *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Giant.* He believed he was the heir to something. He knew he wanted to act, and he believed that rebellion was some proof of his artistic integrity. Much of Hollywood found Hopper a pain in the ass, strident, staring, and monotonous."

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Corey Allen was cast as the gang's leader, "Buzz," who tangles with Jimmy in an ego-driven conflict that ends in a knife fight.

He claimed, "I was twenty, inexperienced, and I had a very high kind of voice. I felt unmasculine. I was awed to be working with Jimmy after seeing him in *East of Eden.* When I met him, we got off on a bad start. I came up to him where he was sitting, surrounded by a bunch of kids fawning over him. I told him I was going to be his adversary in *Rebel.* Without looking up, he said, 'Yeah, hi.' And then he turned back to chatting with those adoring kids."

Three years younger than Jimmy, Allen bore an amazing resemblance to a young Marlon Brando. "On the second day, when Jimmy talked to me and looked at me, I felt that instead of indifference, he was really turned on by me. He felt I looked like either Brando's son or else his younger brother. He brought that up time and time again."

James Dean with Corey Allen: “Gay directors were known for ‘auditioning’ young actors on the casting couch. But in the case of Jimmy, he auditioned me.”

Ray warned Allen not to get carried away and to try to imitate Jimmy’s style.

To that, Allen responded, “Jimmy was like a kind of black hole, with magnetism so great that nothing can go in the other direction.”

Ray recruited a real, “from the streets” gang leader, Frank Mazzola, to play “Crunch,” a member of the gang in *Rebel.* As a child, he had worked on the Bogie film, *Casablanca.* At Hollywood High, he’d led the Athenians, the most infamous gang in the city.

“Our major activity was strolling the streets at night, trying to pick a fight with some punk,” he said. “We were real tough guys, football players, boxers. One time, I punched this guy and threw him out of a second-story window. He survived, with a few broken bones.”

“I played the right-hand man to Buzz, the leader of the pack, but I should have been the Big Cheese.”

Mazzola got to know Jimmy and even took him shopping to show him how a contemporary teenager dressed. “Jimmy was allowed to attend secret meetings of the Athenians. Sometimes he’d spar with me, but mostly we just hung out. He was a good basketball player.”

Beverly Long had been in the Pepsi Cola commercial that’s acknowledged today as Jimmy’s first appearance on TV, and was said to have dated him for a while.

Long was cast as Helen, a tough, pony-tailed blonde bimbo.

“You never knew what Jimmy’s attitude would be,” she said. “In the morning, he might speak to you, then again, he might not. He could look right through you like you didn’t exist.”

“I was easy prey for his off-color jokes. One time, in one scene, while he was repairing a slit tire that Buzz had slashed, Dean handed me the tire iron. ‘Ever felt a thing so hard in your life?’ he asked me. He could twist and turn anything into an off-color joke.”

Dennis said, “Jimmy captured the moment of youth, that moment where we’re desperately trying to find ourselves.”

Mineo went a step farther: “Jimmy started the youth movement.”

“*Me Tarzan, You Jimmy*”

—Johnny Weissmuller

Two weeks before actual shooting began on *Rebel,* Jimmy mysteriously disappeared. There were rumors that he’d been kidnapped by a gang of gay bikers, and that they were repeatedly sodomizing him at some remote desert outpost.

Jack Warner phoned Jimmy’s West Coast agent, Dick Clayton, threatening him. “If that bastard kid doesn’t show up in the next forty-eight hours, I’m firing him from the picture and replacing him with Robert Wagner, if he’s available. If he’s not, then maybe John Kerr.”

Thinking he might not return, Ray considered recasting Dennis Hopper as Jim Stark.

“It would have been my first big break,” Dennis reflected, years later. “Alas, it was not meant to be. Thank god that *Easy Rider* later came along.”

Jimmy's mystery trip out of Hollywood may have had something to do with a casual chat he'd had with Stewart Stern, who was still revising the script. He wanted to signal to the world that Plato was gay, but not in any obvious way that would incite censors to cut it.

He came up with the idea of Plato opening his locker at school. Inside their own lockers, the other boys often attached publicity photographs of their favorite pinup queens.

"I wanted Plato to post a really handsome picture of his favorite hunk of beef. That will show viewers what turns him on."

Jimmy said that during his teenage years in Indiana, he had decorated the walls of his bedroom with pictures of screen Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller.

"Why don't you call him?" Stern asked.

"Maybe he wouldn't even talk to me," Jimmy replied.

"Wise up, kid," Stern said. "You're now a god damn movie star. One of the privileges of being a hot-shot star is that you can get to meet almost anyone you want. As I said, ring him up. I bet he'd meet with you any time you wanted."

"Maybe I'll just do that," Jimmy said. "See if the real thing lives up to my schoolboy crush."

Jimmy's friend, Stanley Haggart, who had sometimes granted him access to one of his apartments in New York, and also to his guest cottage in Laurel Canyon for his sexual trysts, knew what Jimmy was up to.

According to Haggart, "Just out of the blue, Jimmy, in New York, phoned and asked if he could come by with a friend. I told him that would be fine. When he showed up with this mysterious friend, I was shocked. It was the film industry's most famous Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller. If Jimmy was known for anything, it was for his 'odd couple' matings."

"He later explained that as a kid, he had long fantasized about Tarzan in his loincloth."

"I understand that," Haggart said. "I collected pictures of John Gilbert." He welcomed both of them, and even fed them a late night supper with champagne.

Jimmy claimed that he'd met his screen idol at his favorite restaurant, the Villa Capri. The owner had given the Austria-born former athlete permission to let out his ear-splitting jungle yell any time he came in for dinner. Weissmuller would thump his chest and bellow that maniacal yell.

"I tried to imitate that yell as a kid," Jimmy said. "But it never came out right."

As it turned out, Weissmuller was an amusing guest, not at all as inarticulate as Tarzan.

"Jimmy and I discovered we have something in common," he said. "We've both fucked Joan Crawford and Tallulah Bankhead. Tallulah once told me, '*Dahling!* You are the kind of man a woman like me must shanghai and keep under lock and key until both of us are entirely spent. Prepare for a leave of at least ten days.'"

Weissmuller went on to relay other amusing stories based on his early days in Hollywood, some of them were spent traveling on promotional tours for the *Tarzan* series.

"In Texas, during World War II, I was at a bond rally. I was auctioned off, presumably to deliver the Tarzan yell in private. The highest bidder was willing to pay $50,000. Some sources say only $5,000. But it was $50,000 big ones. A rich Texas oilman was the highest bidder."

Weissmuller with Frances Gifford in *Tarzan Triumphs* (RKO-1943).

"He invited me for dinner in his hotel suite, and I went," Weissmuller said. "When I got there, a lobster and

Texas steak dinner, with lots of champagne, was sent up."

"After dinner, my host told me, 'I don't give a damn about that Tarzan yell. I'm not going to pay that kind of money for some yell. I brought you up here to find out what's under that loincloth. Incidentally, you'll soon find out that I'm the best cocksucker in Texas.'"

"In case Johnny doesn't show it tonight," a drunken Jimmy said, "It's ten inches, but the final inch is pure foreskin."

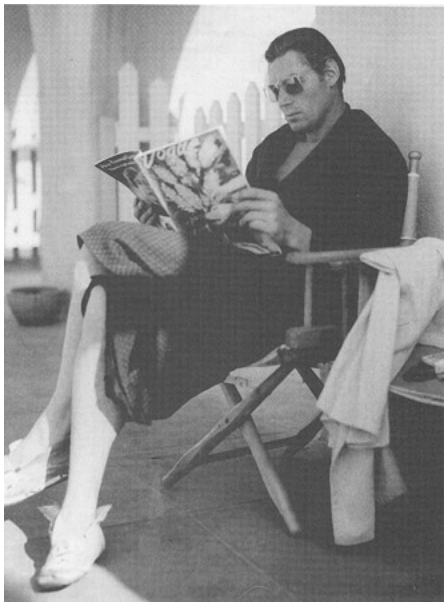
"When I first arrived on the MGM lot," Weissmuller said, "I was sent for a costume fitting. This fucking sissy handed me a feathery-looking G-string and asked me if I knew how to climb a tree. He tried to fit this damn G-string on me. No way. I demanded a heavy duty jock strap."

"Johnny wasn't what I was expecting," Haggart said, later. "He was the last actor in Hollywood I thought Jimmy would hang out with. Most of Johnny's references were far more sophisticated that that *'Me Tarzan*, you Jane' crap."

"As an art director on TV, I often had to fit stars into their outfits when the budget didn't allow for a wardrobe master (or mistress). Johnny spotted some old fashion magazines in my living room. Before he left, that night, he asked me if he could take some of my old editions of *Vogue.* I agreed, of course."

"He surprised me by telling me that *Vogue* was one of his favorite magazines. He also thanked me for my lavish dinner, telling me with meals like that, he was going to have to come up with new devices to cover his expanding waistline."

"Johnny wasn't the Tarzan that both Jimmy and I had once fantasized about from back in the late 1930s and '40s," Haggart said. "After all, he was born in 1904 and was older than I was. Even so, he was still the hot stud that no one in a gay bar would turn down."



Vogue magazine had a most unlikely reader, the super macho Austrian athlete and screen Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller, depicted above, reading the magazine.

[Johnny Weissmuller lived until 1984. His last screen appearance was in Won Ton Ton, the Dog Who Saved Hollywood *(1976).]*

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In Los Angeles, Stewart Stern picked up his phone at about two o'clock in the morning. Jimmy was on the other end of the line, calling from New York, where he'd stashed himself away, without permission, from *Rebel,* its director, and its scheduling.

Stern warned him that if he didn't fly back to Los Angeles at once, Warner was going to replace him with another actor. "You'll be suspended. Without pay. Your career will be ruined."

"I want to come back, but I'm frightened," Jimmy said. He sounded drugged. "I don't think I can play Jim Stark—and I don't trust Nicholas Ray as a director.

Stern entreated him to return. "Jimmy, we're ready to begin shooting. I've tried to fashion all my rewrites around Jim Stark, based on you. You can do it. You haven't seen the final script. It's Jimmy Dean! God damn it, you can play yourself, can't you?"

Two days later, at around midnight, Jimmy showed up on Ray's doorstep at the Château Marmont. "He just walked in," the director said, "and had absolutely no excuse for his running away. He wanted to spend the weekend in bed with me, making love until I forgave him. The kid got his wish."

Jimmy Rages

Through Some of the Most Iconic Film Sequences In the History of Cinema

At last, after almost a decade of delays, *Rebel Without a Cause* was set to go before the cameras. All sorts of problems had already been resolved, including censorship by Warners, casting problems, even Jimmy's mysterious disappearance.

Ray wanted a very dramatic opening, and both he and Jimmy worked together to create something unusual, even stunning, to launch their movie.

As the title and opening credits of *Rebel Without a Cause* are flashed across the screen, a drunken Jim Stark lies on the sidewalk intoxicated, whimsically playing with a toy monkey. The scene might not have worked, but Jimmy made it memorable. The toy monkey was his idea.

Within a week of shooting in black and white, Jack Warner halted the production after reading the acclaim that Jimmy's performance had generated for *East of Eden.* "We've got a star on our hands," he told Ray. "There's big box office here. We're going to shoot the damn picture in color."

Consequently, costume designer Moss Mabry scrambled to redesign Jimmy's wardrobe, replacing Jim Stark's original black leather jacket with a red nylon windbreaker. It became one of the most enduring costumes in film history, rivaled—among male stars, at least—by Charlie Chaplin's bowler and Humphrey Bogart's trenchcoat.

[Mabry dressed not only Jimmy and the other stars of Rebel, *but would go on to design Elizabeth Taylor's outfits in* Giant*, for which he received an Oscar nomination in 1956.]*

During the filming of *Rebel,* Jimmy's reputation from *East of Eden* grew rapidly, as did his fan base. Letters poured in from across America, including bags of mail from gay men. Many other handsome, well-built male stars, including Rock Hudson, also received gay fan letters, but none with the volume of what was sent to Jimmy.

As regards Jimmy's friends, journalist George Scullin noted some changes: "He collected a group of sycophants who performed what gaucheries they could think of—party crashing, drunken binges, drug excesses, and offending for the sake of offending. What a pack of bastards!"

Early in *Rebel,* three troubled teenagers, as portrayed by Jimmy, Natalie, and Sal Mineo meet, at random and for unrelated transgressions at the local police station.

[In that scene, a drunken Jim Stark slams his fist into the side of a desk with a force greater than what the script had called for. When the scene was over, Jimmy was rushed to the hospital, since Ray feared he'd broken some bones. As it turned out, he was only badly bruised. "Too much Method acting," Ray told him.]

Plato (Mineo), a mentally disturbed youth, had been hauled into the station for killing a litter of puppies for reasons he cannot explain. Judy was there for having violated some unexplained curfew.

Later, all three encounter each other again on the first day of school. As the camera focuses on Plato, an object of derision and ridicule by his peers, Mineo opens his locker to reveal a handsome publicity photo of his movie idol, Alan Ladd. Based on this cinematic clue, whereas gays across America immediately recognized Plato as one of their own, straight audiences of that day hardly took notice of the signal being (discreetly) projected.

In Manhattan, years later, Jay Garon, a notoriously well-known literary and film rights agent, proposed that Mineo write a memoir, for which Mineo would receive an advance of $40,000. Garon designated his client, Darwin Porter, co-author of this book, as its ghost writer.

According to Mineo, as relayed to Porter, "Late one night, after *Rebel* was released, I got a call from Alan Ladd."

Mineo said. “He sounded drunk.

“Thanks, kid,” he said, “for using my picture as your dreamboat in that locker scene in *Rebel.* I need all the publicity I can get.”

“They wanted me to use Burt Lancaster, but I went for you,” Mineo said. “My all-time favorite.”

“As a reward, I’d like any fantasy you might have to come true tonight. I’m home alone if you care to drop in.”

“Did you accept the invitation?” Porter asked.

Alan Ladd...Plato’s “dreamboat.”

“What do you think?” Mineo replied. “I’ll tell you this much. Alan was not short all over.”

[Since the early 1940s, Hollywood insiders knew that Alan Ladd led a secret bisexual lifestyle.]

Mineo’s autobiography collapsed when he refused to out himself as a homosexual. Without that revelation, no publisher wanted a “vanilla view” of his life.

“I just couldn’t break all those female hearts, who sent me all those adoring letters in the 1950s,” Mineo said. “The money would sure have been nice, though.”

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“The repressive censorship of films, originating in the 1930s, was on life support when *Rebel Without a Cause* was made,” Ray said. “But it would have been an even more powerful film if the original script had been used.”

He was referring to the underlying homosexual context of the dynamic between Plato and Jim Stark. “Homosexuality was still the love that dared no speak its name on the screen. And Judy was supposed to be a teenaged trollop. But we gave in to the demands of the censor, much to my regret.”

“Jimmy wanted to do other, more daring scenes that were not in the script. In one episode, he wanted to be shown lying in bed on his belly, with his naked ass showing. Of course, in a few years to come, such a scene would be considered typical, but not in 1955. European films had already broken through most of these taboos, but Hollywood was slow to catch on.”

“I watched Jimmy and Sal fall in love right on camera,” Ray recalled. “Jimmy even issued a director’s cue to Sal, telling him, ‘Pretend you want to run your fingers through my hair, but you’re too shy. Make believe you want to throw yourself in my arms and kiss me passionately. I want Nick to film us kissing and see what the blue noses say about that. They’re all mother fuckers anyway. Art should not be censored. Neither should love. It’s all right for films to depict men brutally killing each other. But to love a man? That’s out!”

So spoke James Dean.

Rebel, in addition to same-sex attraction, contained very oblique references to yet another theme of forbidden love too—incest.

Stern's script called for William Hopper and Natalie's characters to suggest an undercurrent of incest. An early version had called for her to sit on his lap, as she'd done for years in her capacity as his adolescent daughter. Without getting embarrassingly graphic, Stern had hoped to portray Hopper becoming sexually aroused, with the understanding that when he ultimately rejected her, it would be as a punishment for his own sexual feelings toward her.

In a pivotal scene that made the final cut, when Judy repeatedly tries to kiss her father, Hopper, with barely concealed fury, rebuffs her, saying "You're getting too old for that kind of stuff, kiddo." In reaction, she kisses him anyway, receiving a vicious slap in response. As her mother passively (and naïvely) observes this dynamic, Judy, sobbing, storms out of the house.

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Based on the rave reviews being generated for *East of Eden,* Jimmy felt entitled to direct the other actors. Consequently, he instructed Dennis Hopper, "Don't act like you're smoking a cigarette. Smoke it! When you know there's something more that should go into a character, and you're not sure what it is, you just have to go after it! Walk on a tightrope!"

Jim Backus, in his own words, was Jimmy's "henpecked father in an apron, mentally flabby and shillyshally."

"He was a self-deprecating weakling of a man whose wife had long ago cut off his balls," he claimed.

"I wish my character had been rewritten. I felt that, like my Mr. Magoo, Mr. Stark was also a cartoon character, not three-dimensional at all. I struggled to do the best I could, but the fault was with the script."

"Actually, I never knew it would become such a legendary picture," Backus said. "We started out to make a sort of *Ozzie and Harriet* sitcom with venom until Dean suddenly became an overnight sensation on our hands."

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Rebel's soon-to-be-famous knife fight (Jim Stark vs. Buzz) was shot at the Griffith Planetarium, high in the hills above the Hollywood Bowl. With Jimmy and Corey Allen, Ray attempted to film the scene eight times, but none of them looked realistic. Finally, the two young actors got it right, although at one point, Allen's switchblade slashed the skin of Jimmy's throat. Although it was a surface wound, the cut drew blood.

Genuinely alarmed, and in his capacity as the film's director, Ray yelled "cut" and frantically summoned the on-site nurse.

Bleeding from the throat, Jimmy denounced Ray for halting the action. "Just when we were getting real, you fucked it up, you bastard!"

When Method acting gets out of hand: the knife fight in *Rebel.*

The cast had rarely, if ever, heard an actor address his director like that.

The nurse bandaged Jimmy, and he didn't need to go to the hospital. After that, Ray instructed Rod Amate, a young stuntman, to double for Jimmy during the scene's final moments, with the understanding that his face

would not be visible.

Amate would also double for Jimmy in his souped-up ’46 Ford for the “chickie run” scene.

Days before the knife fight scene, Jimmy and Allen had each been carefully coached and rehearsed by “Mushy” Callahan, a former welterweight boxing champion, and a former street fighter.

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Rebel’s most hair-raising scene involved the infamous “chickie run.” As a means of flaunting their nerves of steel (or their “yellow bellies,” depending on the outcome) Buzz confronts and challenges Jim Stark to a deadly and motorized game of “chicken.” Each of them agrees to race (stolen) cars to the edge of a cliff. The “coward” will be defined as the one who loses his nerve and jumps out first.

Allen was one of the longest-lived members of *Rebel’s* cast, surviving many of film’s other actors by decades, until his death in 2010. It took him years to be able to discuss the events that transpired between Jimmy and himself.

“He was practically directing the picture himself,” Allen said in his last interview. “Late one afternoon, he asked me if I’d ride off with him for the weekend. I didn’t want to, so I turned him down. He almost begged me to change my mind, and I finally gave in to him. I didn’t want to antagonize him. He invited me to this rental home he had, which looked like a hunting lodge.”

“I’d heard stories that he was gay, so I suspected what was coming. I was straight, and I felt that all I had to do was let him blow me. But after some weed and a few drinks, he made his request very explicit: ‘I want you to ride me like you’re Brando’s son,’ Jimmy said. ‘Really fuck the hell out of me.’ Believe it or not, I actually enjoyed it. Very tight. Great sex, I stayed all weekend, and he did things to me like no gal ever did. I don’t want to get specific, but there are some things a whore might do, but in most cases, not a girlfriend.”

“Before the end of the weekend, he told me what he really wanted from me as an actor during the final moments of the chickie run. He wanted me to convey that under different circumstances, instead of enemies, we might have been lovers. I understood that, and I tried my best to convey that on the night we shot the scene.”

“The character I played turned to him and said, ‘You know something? I like you.’”

“Why do we do this?” Jim Stark asks.

Allen, as Buzz, answers, “We gotta do something, don’t we?”

“It was a tender moment between the two men, one of whom will careen in his car off the cliff, crashing to a fiery death onto the rocky beach below. “I get my jacket caught, and can’t escape from my car in time. Those were my final words to Jim Stark. My character has only moments to live.”

When Jimmy jumps from his car before it plunges over the cliff, he was supposed to land on a mattress, with the understanding that as a prop and safety device, it would not be shown on camera. He ordered the prop man to take it away. “Okay, kid,” the man said. “It’s okay with me if you want to bust your nuts. But it’s the same mattress Errol Flynn used to land on out of camera range in one of his swashbuckling movies. It came from Warner’s prop department.”

“I said to move the god damn thing!” Jimmy ordered.

Allen later said, “That scene became iconic. It was a classic, the underlying question of each generation. ‘Here we are. What do we do?’”

After Buzz disappeared over the cliff and burst into flames on the beach, Judy (almost unbelievably and perhaps opportunistically) shifts the focus of her love away from the deceased gang leader and onto Jim Stark.

Another classic scene occurred after the death of Buzz, when Jimmy returns home to confront his parents, as played by Doran and Backus. He wants to go to the police and tell them the whole story.

Years after Jimmy’s death Doran, with a sense of admiration for his raw, intuitive talent as an actor, noted how Jimmy prepared for one of his scenes: “He’d drop to the floor in a fetal position for the longest time, chin and knees together, but still on his feet. He’d get as close to the floor as he could without lying on it. Finally came this weak little whistle from him, and he stood up, ready to do the scene, which he’d do in a single take.”

A big scene between Backus and Jimmy, with his mother looking on, occurs at the foot of a staircase. “A boy—a kid—was killed tonight!” Jim cries. He wants to report the incident to the police, but Mrs. Stark aggressively opposes that. “A foolish decision like that could wreck your whole life!”

In response, Jimmy pleads with his father: “Dad, stand up for me!”

At that point, Jimmy broke from the script and devised the action on his own. Backus wasn’t prepared for what

happened next: Jimmy leaped at him like a wild animal released from its cage. He grabbed the beefy actor by his lapels and dragged him down the stairs and across the living room. The violence continued at a whirlwind pace as he threw Backus onto a chair, which fell over backward. Jimmy than wrapped his hands around Backus' throat in a choke hold.

"He choked me until I thought I was a goner," Backus said.

Doran, as Mrs. Stark, screamed, "You're killing him! Do you want to kill your own father?"

The screenplay's author, Stern, said, "I didn't mean for the scene to be that violent. In my script, I expressed my own feelings about my own father. I wanted him wiped out, but I also wanted him saved."

As one critic wrote, "In that dramatic scene, James Dean channels a young generation's frustration and emotional claustrophobia."

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Near the end of the film, a decaying mansion became the setting for the most evocative scene in the movie. It involved Jim Stark, Judy, and Plato in a kind of love triangle, with Jimmy as the object of the others' affections. It laid the groundwork for the film's tragic ending.

The "love triangle" in *Rebel* was filmed within the decaying mansion, just before its demolition, which had been the setting for many of the scenes within *Sunset Blvd.*

In the photo above, Gloria Swanson, playing the demented movie star, Norma Desmond, delivers her most memorable closeup.

It was Stern who came up with the idea of renting it. Located at the intersection of Wilshire and Crenshaw Boulevards, and owned by J. Paul Getty, one of the era's richest oilmen, it was slated for demolition. Its cinematic fame had derived from its setting as the home of the demented movie queen, Norma Desmond, as portrayed by Gloria Swanson, in *Sunset Blvd.* (1950).

Desperately, Stern and Ray tried to contact the oil magnate so that they could film there. They finally reached him, and he agreed, charging them only $250 a day. "I bet that's what he pays for a lobster cocktail," Ray said.

Dating from the flapper age of the mid-1920s, the mansion, with its Mediterranean-style porticoes, pool, balustrades, and gardens, had been built by William O. Jenkins, the sugar magnate. Its swimming pool was especially famous, thanks to the fact that in *Sunset Blvd.,* William Holden's body had fallen into it after the abandoned egomaniac (Norma) fatally shot him.

It had been dubbed "The Phantom House," because for many years, no one had lived there.

After Getty granted his approval for the building's use as Ray's film set, the director said, "I'm ready to film our Walpurgis Night."

[In Germanic folklore, Walpurgisnacht*, the night of April 30th (May Day's eve), is when witches congregate on the Brocken mountain in north-central Germany, and conduct sexual revels with their gods in anticipation of the arrival of Spring.]*

Walpurgisnacht

"ALL THOSE KIDS IN *REBEL* WERE SLEEPING WITH EACH OTHER.
GENDER DIDN'T MATTER—AND NICK RAY WAS SEXUALLY INVOLVED WITH MOST OF THEM"

—Ann Doran

Celebrity psychic John Cohan was a friend and confidant of Hollywood stars for decades, including such luminaries as Elizabeth Taylor. In 2008, he shared some of those celebrity secrets in a memoir, *Catch a Falling Star.*

Cohan was privy to many of the behind-the-scenes dramas associated with the lives of Jimmy's two co-stars, Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo. Cohan also became close to Nick Adams.

Adams would later reveal that he had "an insatiable lust" for Jimmy and, later, for Elvis Presley, who befriended him after Jimmy died.

Natalie said that when she came together again with Jimmy in 1955, after having made a teleplay with him the year before, "I was older and more grown up, and I knew a lot more about sex than I did when we first met."

"I liked talking to him more than to anybody else I knew. My whole life seemed to change completely when he walked in. I was in incredible awe of him. I also thought he was the sexiest boy I'd ever met. Of course, I said the same thing about this guy named Robert Wagner."

One afternoon, Jimmy told Natalie that in the real world, each of them lived a variation of the alienation that was represented by the characters they were playing, Jim Stark and Judy.

Columnist Hedda Hopper wrote: During the making of *Rebel Without a Cause,* Natalie Wood fell hard for James Dean."

Even though he stole scenes from her, Natalie claimed that, "Working with Jimmy is pulsating, as he generates a theatrical electricity. Anyone playing with him can't help but feel his tempo and drive. Even if he doesn't have a line to speak, I feel he's talking to me. I can tell by the way he looks, the movement of his hands, the slight motion of his facial muscles. I've never felt so excited with an actor as I do with him."

"It's great working with her," Jimmy said. "Gone are the pigtails. No more bobbysox. She has pep, real vitality, and all the attributes of a powerful performer. I'm sure that in her future, she'll play such roles as a whore."

In reference to what happened over the course of the next few weeks, author Gore Vidal—who, like Ray, was living at the Château Marmont at the time—made several very clear assertions in his memoir, *Palimpsest.* "Nick Ray was openly having an affair with the adolescent Sal Mineo while the sallow James Dean skulked in and out, unrecognizable behind thick glasses that distorted myopic eyes. Ray would soon be embroiled in a different affair with a sixteen-year-old girl, Natalie Wood herself. He was forty-three at the time."

Beverly Long said, "Dennis Hopper was terribly in love with Natalie, too, and he was heartbroken when he found out that she was also sleeping with Ray and Jimmy."

Natalie told Cohan that it was Nick Adams who took her virginity at the suggestion of her mother.

She approached Adams when he came over one evening to pick up Natalie. Her mother told him, "I want you to teach Natalie the ways of the world. I'm afraid that if you don't, she might be broken in by that queer guy, Jimmy Dean. That fellow is really weird. You're not. I trust you with my daughter."

Natalie showed Cohan her deformed wrist. "I have to wear bracelets to cover it on camera." She shared her fears and anxieties with him. "After I moved on from child roles, I didn't know who in hell I was or what they wanted from me. I'm talking about agents, producers, directors, and other actors."

In *Rebel,* Jimmy gave Natalie her first screen kiss. "We did a lot of practicing off screen so we'd be camera ready," she said, giggling.

"I played my first love scene with Jimmy," Natalie said. "He seemed like a great nonconformist, a great rebel, but really, he was only eccentric."

She also said that Jack Simmons was always trying to find out if Jimmy were having sex with her.

She was still curious to know if Simmons was also having sex with Jimmy. He told her, "I won't say no, and I won't say yes. I love and worship Jimmy."

During filming, Natalie developed this powerful crush on Jimmy, and was always ready to accept his invitation to his dressing room any time he wanted to seduce her.

"He was so inspiring," she said to Cohan. "Always patient and kind. He didn't act like a movie star at all."

"After our lovemaking, he gave me advice as an actress, very good suggestions. He was very critical of his own

work, and never satisfied with a performance he'd just given. He worried about how every scene would turn out. He also had the ability to make his co-stars look great, too."

She also told Cohan that during the making of *Rebel,* she was resentful that she and Mineo had to be supervised by a welfare worker because both of them were underage, and as such, their working hours, based on California State law, were limited. They were also given lessons by a tutor. "I was trying to play a grown-up, and I was embarrassed to be treated like a child. So was Sal."

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Sal Mineo was also a friend and client of Cohan, who said, "During the filming of *Rebel Without a Cause,* the young Bronx-born actor had a hot and heavy affair with Jimmy. In one scene, Ray had the two young men kissing, but, in the uptight 1950s, when homosexuality could not even be mentioned on the screen, that segment was cut by the censors. 'The world wasn't ready to see two young men kissing,' Mineo said."

Mineo told Cohan, "Natalie was real competition for me. I was madly in love with Jimmy and so was she. Before she was cast in *Rebel,* she told me that she must have seen *East of Eden* fifty times. Even if she were exaggerating, she'd seen it a hell of a lot."

[Ray confronted Natalie years after Jimmy died. "You're telling the magazines and even friends that you and Jimmy did not have sex. Is that true?"

"Come on, Nick," she said. "I can tell the innocents that, but not you. You know I've spent many nights with Jimmy. What did you think we did? Hold hands? Frankly, I much prefer Robert Wagner's cock to Jimmy's, but we did go at it more times than I can remember. Sometimes, Jimmy liked to hurt his partner, and be hurt, and I don't go in for that."]

"Both Natalie and I adored Jimmy," Mineo claimed. "If he didn't give me a warm embrace when we met on the set in the morning, I was a wreck for the day. Actually, I wanted to kiss him any time I was around him, but there were always people about. I waited for him to call me into the privacy of his dressing room. That guy was some swell kisser, among other attributes."

Jimmy's friend, John Gilmore, paid a visit to the set. Between takes, the two actors amused themselves by naming the producers and directors who had put the make on them.

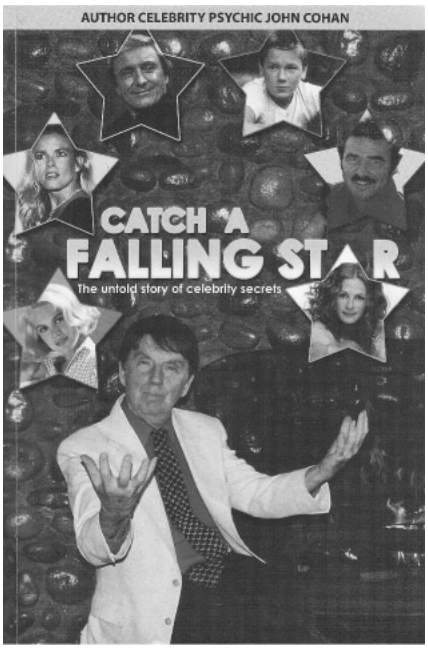
During Gilmore's visit to the set, he became aware that Jimmy was having an affair with Mineo. "I knew something was going on. We headed for lunch in the commissary, and Mineo was walking ahead of us. Jimmy stepped up and pinched the right cheek of his ass. Mineo jumped. He was startled. But when he realized it was Jimmy, his big brown eyes lit up. His face flushed red, and he giggled, beaming in awe at his top."

Another friend of Jimmy's, William Bast, learned graphic details about Jimmy's affair with Mineo. "Sal may be just a kid, but he's got nine inches of Italian sausage that no butcher has ever tampered with," Jimmy claimed.

"The nights Jimmy could spare for me were the most delightful of my life," Mineo confessed. "I had never been penetrated before he did the job. Up to then, only oral sex. It hurt at first, but he made me take it, and I came to love it. He told me I had to endure the initial pain to prove my love for him. I did, and soon that pain turned into the greatest sexual thrill of my life."

Mineo also told Cohan that before filming began on the flirtatious scene in the mansion with Jimmy and Natalie, Ray had coached him on how to play the scene. "Both Natalie and I were instructed to look at Jimmy like we were in love with him. That wasn't hard to do. Both of us were already in love with Jimmy, especially yours truly. We played the scene like he was 'Lucky Pierre,' and we couldn't wait to discover his erotic zones."

Mineo talked to Cohan about what it was like working with Jimmy. "Rehearsing with him kept us on our toes. Without warning, he'd throw in different lines and improvise scenes. Frankly, I didn't know at first what all the fuss about Jimmy was about, until I went to the first screening. He was great. He was sitting just behind me in the theater, and at least half a dozen times, I turned to look back at him. He was giving that grin of his and almost blushing, looking down at the floor between his legs."



John Cohan, survivor of decades in the entertainment industry, is a psychic and confidant to celebrities, as depicted on the cover of his 2008 memoir.

Mineo confessed that off screen, as lovers, Jimmy experimented with S&M, and that, on occasion, urged lovers to crush out their cigarette butts on his ass. He wanted to keep his chest and back free from burn marks in the event that he had to strip before the camera. “Jimmy wanted some kinky stuff, but I told him to get it elsewhere,” Mineo said. “I wasn’t into doing stuff like that. I just liked regular gay sex.”

In the wake of Jimmy’s fatal crash, a coroner examined his body, inch by inch, making a note of the “constellation of kerotoid scars” he discovered.

Mineo described a bizarre and heretofore unreported event that happened to Jimmy and himself during the making of *Rebel:* Before the beginning of filming, Jimmy had hung out with a street gang from the south side of Los Angeles, hoping to absorb enough atmosphere to convincingly portray Jim Stark.

At one point, Mineo and Jimmy were abducted and taken to an abandoned warehouse in South Los Angeles. One biker accused Jimmy of not only giving him crabs, but a venereal disease too.

“We were saved by a miracle,” Mineo said. “Jimmy was allowed to call this doctor friend who agreed to cure the biker of both afflictions. Of course, getting rid of crabs was a lot easier than VD.”

Jimmy also made a $5,000 payment to the bikers. Mineo believed that, “If he hadn’t done that, I expect that both of us might have gotten a switchblade embedded in our guts.”

[Nightly in that part of L.A., bikers and members of their gangs were routinely murdered, especially during their turf wars.]

As related by Mineo to Cohan, one night, Jimmy invited him to his rented home, the one that evoked a hunting lodge, and came up with a surprising idea. According to Mineo, “He wanted me to save a sample of my sperm, frozen in a capsule for the later impregnation of the right woman. The plan was, that when Jimmy found the right carrier, he would pay for her to have my baby, which he would later adopt. Back in the 50s, this was a radical idea.”

“Jimmy also told me that he’d had his own sperm stored away for future use,” Porter said. He wouldn’t tell me where the sperm was stored, but it was at some clinic.”

[Shortly before Mineo was murdered in 1976, he told Cohan that “I’m the father of a child somewhere, but I don’t know where he is today.”]

Jimmy’s on-again, off-again affair with Mineo would continue after both of them were cast in *Giant*. “Instead of Natalie and Nick Adams, I had to compete with Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, at least in the beginning. Elizabeth continued to adore Jimmy until the end of his short life, but by the end of filming, Rock hated him and turned to me for sexual relief.”

“Mineo denied that he and Jimmy were lovers, at least at first,” Ray said. “Why not? It would have ruined his

career. But his comments were hogwash. I'd seen them make love in my suite. They were great at it."

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As the years went by, Mineo became more open about his sexuality. During one of his last interviews, he told *The New York Times,* "I was in incredible awe of James Dean. I was fascinated by him. I think it was sexual to some extent, but I had no understanding of affection between men. I really gave him hero worship, and I recognized later what it was, but the feeling then was that I couldn't wait just to get near him. It was only years later that I understood I was incredibly in love with him."

Mineo recalled his death scene toward the end of *Rebel,* when he is shot by a policeman after he ran out of the Planetarium with a gun. It was not loaded. Jim Stark had removed the bullets.

"I wanted to do the scene over and over because he was grieving over losing me, and I was thrilled to be loved like that by someone. If you watch the scene, you realize he seemed genuinely moved, and I felt loved. After that, he was very protective of me. For the rest of the time, he didn't want me out of his sight. He was always there for me. Alas, it didn't last."

As Mineo related to Cohan, "Both Natalie and I had the hots for Jimmy, both on and off the screen. But, according to the Production Code, for my sin, I had to get bumped off in the end. In those days, if a 'queer' was depicted in a novel, or whatever, he has to die at the end. I was fatally shot by the cops. Faggots aren't supposed to go on living, much less loving."

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Dennis Hopper, on the set of *Giant,* bragged to Jimmy about the conquests he had made, even at a young age. "I don't think there's a starlet walking that I can't screw," he boasted. "Actually, I prefer to give head to a beautiful woman rather than fuck her."

In time, Dennis would have A-list conquests such as Ursula Andress, Jimmy's former girlfriend, and Joan Collins. But when Jimmy met him, he was involved in an affair with Natalie.

He later confided to Jimmy, "A day after I met Natalie—Ray introduced us—the little bitch phoned and asked if I'd go out with her. She told me I was very good looking, and that she wanted me to fuck her. I found out that Nick Adams had broken her in. Back in Kansas, women weren't this aggressive. The following night, we drove up to Mulholland Drive and made love. I think she wanted to get into her character of Judy, who in the first script, was sexually promiscuous."

"I got into terrible problems with Ray," Dennis said, "because we were both fucking Natalie. Her parents were starting to figure that out. Nick snitched on me to them. I was furious at the bastard."

Perhaps to get back at Dennis for his pursuit of Natalie, Ray decided to set him up with his neighbor at the Château Marmont, author Gore Vidal. As a means of engineering the hookup, Ray lied to Dennis, telling him that Vidal was writing the script for a major motion picture that might contain an Oscarwinning lead role for him.

"Hopper went for it," Vidal later told Tennessee Williams and others.

"He arrived all innocent and wide-eyed, dewey eyed, really," Vidal said. "For dinner, he drove me to his favorite pizza joint in his new red Austin convertible he purchased with money he'd made in the movies."

"When I got him home, he objected to getting fucked, but he endured it anyway," Vidal said. "I told him to think of God, country, and the lead role in the hottest new movie property coming up. He endured it, but then wanted me to blow him. I told him I'd owe him one."

"There was no movie contract," Vidal said. "The kid had to learn that you don't trust people like Gore Vidal or Nicholas Ray."

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Despite his sexual involvements with a number of men—namely Simmons, Ray, Dennis Hopper, and Mineo—Jimmy continued his dating of women. Once, he invited the Swedish starlet, Lilli Kardell, to the set of *Rebel* to watch a scene being shot.

Natalie seemed jealous of her, especially when Kardell informed her that Jimmy had escorted her to the

bullfights in Tijuana the previous weekend. “Later, in our hotel, he stripped naked at the foot of the bed and told me to pretend that I was the bull. Then he got an erection and jumped on top of me, plunging his sword deep into the gut of the ‘bull.’”

***

Beverly Long, cast as Helen, one of *Rebel’s* “gang molls,” noted how “Nick Adams was always sucking up to Jimmy, desperately trying to be his best friend. They had been roomies.”

Adams had serious competition from Jack Simmons. He was ready to hop into Jimmy’s bed, or Natalie’s bed, whoever summoned him. Sometimes, it was Ray himself.

“I had the feeling that Jimmy knew that Adams was sucking up to him,” Long said.

At the time of filming, Adams was rooming with Dennis Hopper. Jimmy with a certain derision referred to them as “Big Dick and Little Dick.” *[The chronically indiscreet shock jock, radio star Howard Stern, once asserted, on the air, that “Dennis Hopper’s got one the size of an elevator button.”]*

One day at lunch, Adams was dining with Jimmy in the commissary. Jimmy looked up and saw that a publicity picture of himself had been on the wall where an equivalent likeness of Dennis Morgan had once hung.

“Morgan out, Dean in,” he told Adams. “I can’t stand publicity.” He jumped up, grabbed the photo from the wall, and smashed its protective glass by hurling it to the floor. Then he stormed out of the dining room.

Ironically, George Stevens, who later directed Jimmy in *Giant,* summoned Adams to a recording studio after Jimmy’s death. When Jimmy played Jett Rink, an old man in a drunken banquet scene, his voice had not recorded properly. Nick Adams was the best imitator.

“I stuffed my cheeks with chewing gum to produce Jimmy’s exact sound,” Adams later explained.

Natalie claimed that “Nick Adams wanted to be my lover, Jimmy’s lover, and Ray’s lover, but what he really wanted was to become Jimmy’s replacement, adored by millions. Alas, dreams often are only to be dreamed.”

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One night in his apartment, Jimmy told Jack Simmons, “I really like Natalie, and I want to be friends with her, perhaps star in another movie with her. But I’m growing bored with her schoolgirl crush on me—in fact, I find it intolerable. I have this plan. It’s inspired by something really shitty that Marlon Brando did to Pier Angeli to break off their affair.”

Independently, and as confirmation of that, Natalie also discussed some of the shocking provocations that ended her romantic fantasies about Jimmy.

As they moved deeper into their relationship, he began to taunt and tease her. One day, when she was studying her lines from a script, he walked over to her, whipped out his penis, and urinated on her pages.

At first, she was forgiving, dismissing it with, “He’s just a Method actor trying to work himself up to play Jim Stark before the camera. That act was something that Stark, an alienated outsider, might do.”

His provocations of her continued: Almost daily, Jimmy began to chastise Natalie for being “too Hollywood,” accusing her of coveting the trappings of stardom and longing to become as famous as Marilyn Monroe.

As part of this ongoing campaign, Jimmy invited Natalie to visit his rented home—the one that resembled a Bavarian hunting lodge. “I’ll be upstairs on the balcony—just call up to me and come in. The door will be unlocked.”

That night, however, he wasn’t waiting for her on his balcony, but downstairs on the ground floor, entertaining Mineo. Shortly before her scheduled arrival, Jimmy stripped off his clothes and ordered Mineo to do the same. They were kissing and fondling each other when Natalie’s car drove up. Mineo was ready to reach for his clothes, but Jimmy held him down and forcibly penetrated him, imprisoning him.

From the driveway, Natalie called up to the (otherwise empty) balcony and, as instructed, opened the front door without knocking. She screamed in horror at the sight of her (naked) lover sodomizing Mineo. In tears, she fled from the scene.

Love knows many faces in *Rebel Without a Cause.* Alienated from their own families, and although tragedy was about to strike, Sal Mineo *(left)*, Jimmy, and Natalie Wood created an ersatz family all on their own.

The next day on the set, Jimmy approached her. “Stop your dreaming about me. I’ll never marry you.”

Holding back her tears, she ran toward her dressing room.

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In years to come, usually during conversations with a girlfriend, Natalie would become very graphic during discussions of the various merits (or lack thereof) of her lovers and their respective endowments.

“Nick (Adams) had the biggest, Dennis (Hopper) had the smallest, and Jimmy was somewhere in between. Nick Ray was far more than average. When it came to kissing, Jimmy sure beat Elvis Presley. Nicky Hilton was a beer can. I don’t know why Elizabeth (Taylor) divorced him. Steve McQueen was a dud in bed, but he told friends I was lousy in bed, too. Frankly, he just didn’t inspire me. When it comes to giving out a prize the length of Oscar, the Academy should present a statuette to John Ireland. What a man! Oh, and Frank Sinatra should at least get a Supporting Player award.”

Natalie had this X-rated conversation with gossipy Shelley Winters, who had also seduced both Jimmy Dean and John Ireland.

***

Jimmy dreaded the end of shooting of *Rebel Without a Cause.* After his involvement in its filming ended, he lingered on the set for a conversation with Ray, telling him, “Never has an acting job taken so much out of me. I put everything I had into that film.”

“Jimmy and I were alone,” Ray said. “We wandered about and didn’t want to admit it, but it was all over. Finally, I said to him, “Let’s go. We’ve got nothing more to do here.”

“We kissed each other passionately. Then he climbed onto his motorcycle, and I got behind the wheel of my car. We rode toward Hollywood Boulevard. He spread himself like a flying angel on the cycle, with his feet up on the back mudguard, his arms outstretched. With that reckless maneuver, he sped off with a roar.”

Jimmy never lived to read his reviews.

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Doran later said that about a week after the film was wrapped, she heard someone calling up to her bedroom window at three o’clock one morning: “Mom! Mom!”

She looked down to see that her porch light was dimly illuminating Jimmy standing in her front yard.

“It’s your son, Jimmy!” he called up to her after she raised the window.

“He was drunk,” she said. She let him in and poured some black coffee into him “as he spoke of his fears and talked about his dreadful loneliness.”

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The last time Steffi Sidney saw Jimmy was when he came into the Villa Capri, right before his death.

Frank Sinatra had thrown a party there. A few months before, he had mocked Jimmy, but now he'd apparently accepted him as a member of the Hollywood elite. Jimmy staggered in, obviously drunk.

He stopped first at the table of his friend, Sammy Davis, Jr., before heading to the men's toilet, trailing behind Sinatra.

When he emerged, his fly was open. "You could see his dick, as he wore no underwear," Davis said. "He complained to me: 'I stood at the urinal beside Sinatra. And now I'm jealous. His dick is bigger than mine.'"

"Then he made his way over to Sidney's table, and put his arm around her. His hair had been shaved back from his forehead so he'd resemble a more accurate rendition of the aged character he'd portray at the end of *Giant."*

*"*You know, Steff," he said. "We've never had our picture taken together. Let's go for it." He summoned the on-site photographer, who snapped several pictures of them, shooting Jimmy, for the most part, from the waist up.

He placed one arm around her, holding a cigarette in one hand, and rubbing his belly with the other.

[The ironies associated with that photo was that eight-by-ten glossies of Jimmy with Steffi arrived at her house on the morning of September 30, 1955. Jimmy would be dead in the afternoon of that same day.]

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It was on that September 30, 1955, in New York that Natalie Wood was dining with Sal Mineo, Nick Adams, and Dick Davalos, who had portrayed Jimmy's tormented older brother in *East of Eden.* All of them talked about Jimmy, and how he flirted so dangerously with death. To a person, they agreed that he would probably die one day in a car crash.

Before the end of their dinner, news reached them that Jimmy had died in a car crash on a lonely road in California on his way to Salinas.

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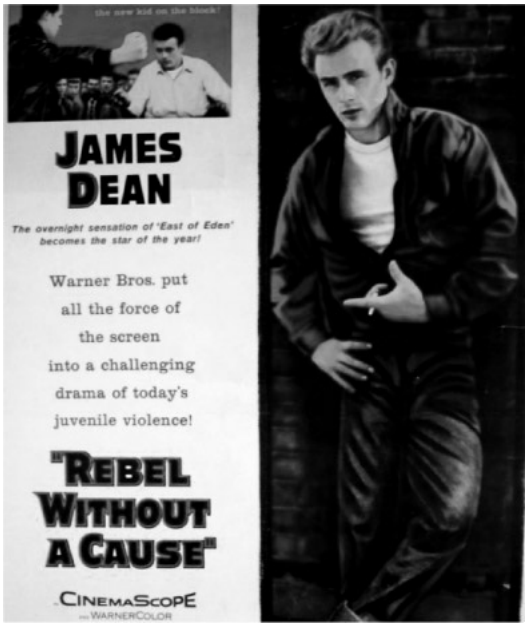
Rebel Without a Cause was released on October 3, 1955. Jimmy had died just a few days before, on September 30. For the most part, Jimmy's performance elicited rave reviews.

Author Lawrence Frascella wrote: "Ray and Company offers up a romantic, charismatic, sexually charged archetype—a heroic ideal of what being a teenager might mean in *Rebel Without a Cause.* The film took teenagers as seriously as they took themselves."

Writing for *Esquire,* Joy Williamson said: "*Rebel's* appeal is obvious. We were watching the intense, doomed performance of a dead youth, a myth, the myth of those who would wish to see themselves dead without dying. Dean was dead, pre-dead, dead upon our discovery of him. His vivid presence projected a fathomless absence. It was thrilling."



Film historian Jeanine Basinger wrote: "*Rebel* hits home because the teens in it understood their situation at a level the adults could not even imagine. The film is true emotionally, setting up the world of teenagers as a separate universe. It treated their pain seriously, respecting it, instead of turning it into the subject of a cute little comedy about growing up."

Arthur Knight in *Saturday Review* said: "The late James Dean reveals completely the talent seen in his *East of Eden* performance. Gone are the Brando mannerisms, gone the obvious Kazan touch. He stands as a remarkable talent, and he was cut down, it would seem, by the very passions he exposed so tellingly in this strange and forceful picture."

William K. Zinsser, in *The New York Herald Tribune,* said: "The movie is written and acted so ineptly, directed so sluggishly, that all names but one will be omitted. The exception is James Dean, the gifted young actor. His rare talent and appealing personality shine through, even in this turgid melodrama."

Wanda Hale, of *The New York Daily News,* interpreted the picture like this: "As an honest, purposeful drama of juvenile hardness and violence, it doesn't measure up. Nonetheless, Dean gives a fine, sensitive performance of the unhappy teenager, tormented by the knowledge of his emotional instability."

Variety asserted, "As a farewell performance, James Dean leaves behind, with this film, genuine artistic regret, for here was a talent which might have touched the heights."

Milton Schulman, in London's *Sunday Express,* wrote: "Again, one is impressed by the effects of powerful emotions so harnessed and controlled that if it were not carefully rationed, it would explode."

Bosley Crowther, in *The New York Times,* delivered his usual attack on Jimmy's performances, leveling the familiar charge that he imitated Marlon Brando in his characterization of Jim Stark. "This imitation grows monotonous at some point," he lamented.

Alan Brien, in London's *Evening Standard,* wrote, "James Dean, alas, is dead. But his ghost on the screen in what was only his second film will remain among the immortals of cinema."

Dilys Powell, in London's *Sunday Times,* claimed, "There has been no player of his or any other generation to rival James Dean's interpretation of the desperation of youth."

The novelist, William Faulkner, weighed in, too: "*Rebel Without a Cause* will remain a masterpiece, because it is the only American cinema's Greek tragedy."

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When the Academy Awards announced its Oscar nominations, it came as a surprise that Mineo was nominated as Best Supporting Actor and Natalie was nominated as Best Supporting Actress. Both of them lost to Jack Lemmon in *Mister Rogers* and to Jo Van Fleet in *East of Eden.*

Jimmy was not nominated, presumably because he'd already been nominated for *East of Eden.*

James Dean's Effect on Elvis Presley

AND HOW IT LED TO THE MURDER OF NICK ADAMS

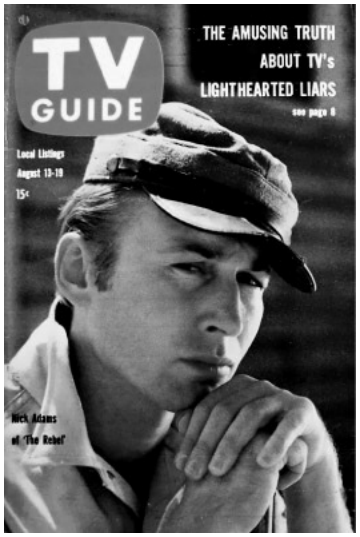
Elvis Presley was fascinated with James Dean and would endlessly watch *Rebel Without a Cause.* So when he got to Hollywood, he sought out and befriended Nick Adams, who had been Jimmy's friend.

After only a few weeks, Nick became best friend to Elvis, launching a troubled relationship that witnesses claimed turned sexual. Nick himself loudly proclaimed that he'd had affairs both with Jimmy and later with Elvis.

Their bromance began when Elvis accepted an offer to be Nick's "date" for a preview of the film *The Last Wagon* (1956).

Nick was known as a "star-fucker." His closest friends said he'd go to bed with any star – male or female – who might advance his career. Rock Hudson. Director John Ford. Natalie Wood. James Dean. Elvis Presley. It didn't matter to Nick as long as the fuckee was a star or even better, a director.

In the words of Albert Goldman, Nick was "forever selling himself: a property which, to hear him tell it, was nothing less than sensational—'the greatest little actor to hit this town in years.' In fact, he had very little going for him in terms of looks or talent or professional experience. He was just another poor kid from the sticks who had grown up dreaming of the silver screen."



Nick Adams' greatest success came when he was cast in a TV series about a Confederate soldier, Johnny Yuma, nicknamed *The Rebel.* Even though it became wildly popular, it was pulled after two seasons, based on studio politics.

The handsome, blonde-haired actor became the fourth member of the doomed young crew of *Rebel Without a Cause* who would die young and violently.

In death, he joined the actual stars: James Dean (died September 30, 1955), Sal Mineo (February 12, 1976), and Natalie Wood (November 29, 1981).

Born on July 10, 1931, in the gritty coal-mining town of Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, actor Nick (whose name at the time of his birth was Nicholas Aloysius Adamshock) was the son of Ukrainian immigrants.

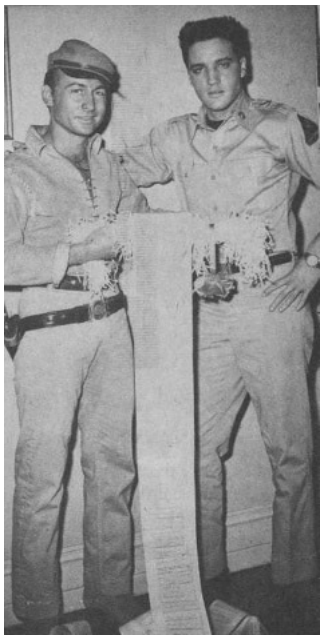
A close bond between Elvis and Nick Adams was established on the first night they met. Nick told Natalie Wood, "Elvis is going to replace Jimmy in my life."

Right from the beginning, Nick offered his services to Elvis: Friendship, a guide to "Inside Hollywood," a bosom companion, a homosexual lover. "Whatever it is you want, I've got it … and plenty of it," Nick told Elvis. "If you want to meet movie stars, I know them. Want to fuck Natalie Wood? I can set it up." And so he did.

When Elvis arrived in Hollywood in 1956 to make *Love Me Tender*, the mega-star fell in love with his co-star, Debra Paget. She gave him his blue suede shoes and told him to keep on walking.

Elvis asked Nick to show him Hollywood, and Nick readily agreed. When Elvis and Nick met, "the chemistry exploded" between them and an instant friendship developed.

Within a week, as Nick later told another lover, Sal Mineo, Nick and Elvis were sleeping together. Elvis preferred oral sex and mutual masturbation. Penetration, apparently, was never an option between them.



By the time Elvis Presley *(right)* got to Hollywood, James Dean was dead. The singer had wanted to bond with Jimmy and become his most intimate friend. He even wanted to play him on the screen. In lieu of Jimmy, Elvis "settled" for Nick Adams, based on the assumption that Nick—for a while, at least—had been Jimmy's best friend.

In those days Elvis could drive his white Cadillac all over Los Angeles with Nick beside him. There was never any fear of molestation from fans. Fan magazines of that era were quick to pick up on this new friendship. However, they misinterpreted its real purpose and accused Nick of riding on Elvis' coattails to promote his own career. (Previously, the same accusations had been leveled about Nick when he developed his friendship with Jimmy.)

Nick took Elvis to the same places he'd frequented with Jimmy, including the old Villa Capri when it was on McCadden Place. They were seen dining frequently at Googie's Restaurant on Sunset Boulevard. Elvis wanted to know what foods Jimmy had liked, and he asked for the same dishes.

When Elvis had to return to Graceland, he left Nick an airplane ticket. To avoid suspicion, Nick flew to Tennessee two days later, telling friends that he was going to New York to seek work on the stage.

Sometimes at Graceland, Elvis would have a lover's quarrel with Nick, and Nick would be forced to sleep in a room with Vester Presley, Elvis's uncle.

A tabloid ran a story that Nick and Elvis shared the same bed at Graceland. When that news broke, Elvis—ever sensitive to charges of homosexuality—ordered that a cot be brought into his bedroom. He told friends that Nick slept on the cot and not in the same bed with him, which—according to the hired help—was not true. A maid later told the press that the covers on that cot were never turned down the mornings after Nick slept over with Elvis.

Late at night, Elvis and Nick would be seen together on the streets of Memphis, riding their twin Harley Davidson motorcycles.

Elvis's girlfriend, June Juanico, claimed that when she dated Elvis all he ever did was talk about Nick Adams.

To legitimatize their relationship, Elvis hired Nick to accompany him on cross-country tours. Nick came out first to warm up the audience by doing his impressions of the famous actors he'd learned to mimic as a kid, notably Cagney and Bogart. Elvis warned Nick not to allow them to get trapped alone together by a photographer. Elvis always insisted that he be photographed with some pretty young girl in the picture, most often a fan. On several

occasions that pretty little girl was Natalie herself.

Years after Jimmy's death, Nick Adams was still a working actor in Hollywood. He's depicted in the upper photo as he appeared in *Hell is for Heroes* (1962).

In the hotel suites they co-inhabited during their tours, Elvis also insisted that Nick walk around in a pair of tight-fitting white jockey shorts, arranged so that his pubic hairs would peep out. He confessed to Nick that this was his ultimate turn-on.

"Elvis was into oral sex and enjoyed getting a blow-job more than intercourse," Dennis Miller, a former friend and companion, confirmed. Nick later claimed that while Elvis was watching a sci-fi flick, *Queen of Outer Space [a campy 1958 bomb co-starring Zsa Zsa Gabor]* he was "getting head" from Nick.

Nick later revealed some of Elvis's sexual secrets, claiming that the star was uncircumcised. Nick went on to assert that Elvis had told him that during sexual intercourse with a woman, or even masturbating, his tight foreskin would often tear, causing him to bleed.

Elvis constantly bragged to Nick about his conquests with women. But he claimed that he could not have sex with a woman who had borne a child. "Fucking a woman who's given birth is like plowing your dick into a tub of fat," Elvis said. "She's too loose to provide any enjoyment for a man."

In the months following Jimmy's death, Nick learned that Robert Altman was going to film *The James Dean Story*. Elvis was excited and intrigued, eventually lobbying to portray his hero on film. "This would be my greatest achievement," Elvis told Nick.

Elvis was bitterly disappointed when he learned that Altman had decided to configure the film as a documentary with still photographs, film clips, and narration by everyone from Natalie Wood to Clark Gable (of all people).

Nonetheless, Elvis persisted, insisting that he wanted to be the narrator, for which he agreed to appear free. Altman wanted Marlon Brando for the job, but he turned down the job, which eventually went to Martin Gabel instead. *[The most sardonic moment in the documentary, released in 1957, occurred when the filmmakers inserted a commercial of Jimmy, with Gig Young, wherein he urged viewers to drive safely. As a promotional device, Warner Brothers hired Nick to travel to Marion, Indiana (James Dean's birthplace) for the premier of the Altman film. On site, Nick visited Jimmy's aunt and uncle, Marcus and Ortense Winslow.]*

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At Graceland, Elvis became obsessed that "I look like a faggot on film." Night after night he sat with Nick watching his own movies. He asked Nick to warn him if he were "making any limp-wrist moves like one of those god-damn effeminate swishes." To his male friends, Elvis, in spite of his own nocturnal adventures, often attacked "swishes" or "faggots," never wanting to be identified with them in any way.

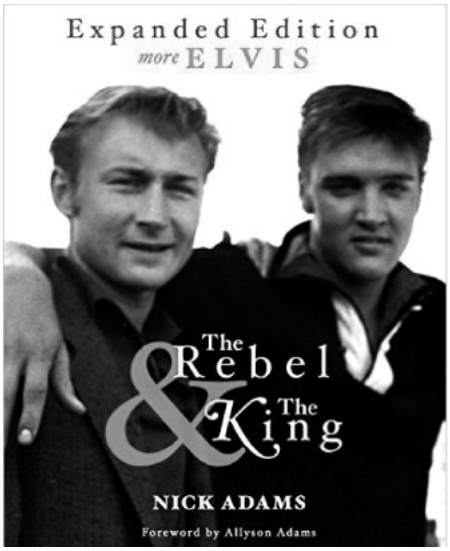
When Nick pointed out some scenes where Elvis raised his wrist limply, Elvis would go into a rage and denounce Nick. At one time Elvis got so angry that he ordered Nick from Graceland and tore up his return ticket home. But the next day he forgave his friend and welcomed him back.

Elvis's manager, Colonel Tom Parker, handled the Elvis/Nick affair calmly. "At least he's not impregnating another gal and leaving me to abort another brat."

Col. Parker appreciated Nick's support of Elvis after the death of his mother, Gladys Presley, on August 14, 1958. "Nicky Admas [sic] came out to be with Elvis last Week wich [sic] was so very kind of him to be there with his friend."

During his period of mourning, Elvis locked himself in his darkened bedroom with Nick for three days and nights, refusing to eat or to see anyone else. Nick later claimed that Elvis talked for days about Gladys. Nick recorded all that he'd learned in journals which he'd been keeping ever since he arrived in Hollywood.

At one point he revealed Elvis's darkest secret to both Natalie and to Rock Hudson, suggesting that he feared "Elvis's relationship with Gladys was incestuous."



In 2012, Nick Adam's daughter, Allyson Adams, published a posthumous overview of her father' relationship with Elvis. Some readers interpreted it as a "whitewash."

Susan King of *The Los Angeles Times* wrote, *"The Rebel and the King* chronicles Adams' and Presley's adventures...with a youthful exuberance and innocence."

Afraid that news of Elvis's homosexuality would leak out, the Colonel spread stories about what a stud Elvis was, even linking him to the stripper Tempest Storm, whom previously Elvis had seduced.

Elvis told his stepmother, Dee Presley, that he'd slept with more than 1,000 women before marrying Priscilla. Over the years he claimed to have had sex with everyone from the British sexpot Diana Dors to the American sexpot, Jayne Mansfield, even Cybill Shepherd, Nancy Sinatra, Connie Stevens, Tuesday Weld, Mary Ann Mobley, and Ann-Margret, among countless others.

With all his commissions, ancillary deals, and trinket sales, Col. Parker was actually making more money—an outrageous 50% split—than Elvis himself.

In the words of biographer David Bret, Col. Parker had a "Svengali-like grip over Elvis because he continually threatened to reveal that Elvis had romanced Nick Adams."

Every time Elvis would get fed up with the colonel's larceny and try to fire him, Parker would threaten to blackmail him. Only after Elvis's death did revelations about his bisexuality appear in print, notably in Dee Presley's memoir, *The Intimate Life and Death of Elvis Presley.*

Nick's luck turned when a producer, Andrew J. Fenady, created a character for Nick to play in a TV series. It was Johnny Yuma, a young ex-Confederate soldier who helps restore law and order as he roamed the West after the Civil War. The series became known as *The Rebel,* and premiered on October 4, 1959.

It didn't occur overnight, but eventually, Nick Adams became a household word throughout America. No more did columnists refer to him as "The Leech," and even today, many viewers from the Age of Sputnik can remember the catchy jingle that opened each episode of the series. But in spite of its success, ABC canceled the series after two seasons. Nick was bitterly disappointed. He'd spent all his money.

Somewhere along the way, Nick's straight side asserted itself. On May 10, 1959 he married Carol Nugent, a former child actress. They would have two children—Allyson Lee, born February 23, 1960, and a son, Jeb Stuart, born April 10, 1961.

Ultimately Nick had a devastating effect on Elvis. He was the man who introduced Elvis to drugs, supplying him with his first bennies.

On the verge of bankruptcy, Nick flew to Graceland for a meeting with Elvis. Their passion for each other had long ago cooled.

Nick arrived drunk for his showdown with Elvis. Alone in Elvis's bedroom, Nick demanded that the star give him a check for $100,000 for all the services rendered over the years.

Elvis was drugged. He accused Nick of being "The Leech," applying the exact same words used by tabloid

columnists during the late 50s and 60s. Elvis refused to give him any money, even his return fare to Los Angeles.

At that point, Nick made a fatal mistake. He threatened Elvis, claiming that he was going to write a tell-all memoir. Throughout the course of his star-fucking career, he'd kept extensive journals, even describing the pornographic details of sexual bouts with both male and female stars. Nick used to tell friends, "I take the advice of Mae West. Keep a diary while you're young, because it will keep you when you get old."

The exact details of Nick's final confrontation with Elvis aren't known, but when Elvis steadfastly refused to "give you one buck, you bastard," Nick delivered his final, perhaps fatal, threat. He warned Elvis that he was not only going to write about their affair, but tell all the secrets he'd learned about Elvis and Gladys during the three days and nights he'd spent with Elvis in the wake of his mother's death.

Col. Parker "threw a fit" when he heard that Nick was writing about his affair with Elvis. "He's joining those tabloid vultures," the colonel told his confidants. "This is only speculation, but I'm not sure that boy has much longer to live."

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Nick Adams found peace at last on February 6, 1968. His dead body was discovered by his lawyer, Ervin Roeder, at his house in Coldwater Canyon. It was propped in a sitting position against the bedroom wall. An autopsy revealed that he had overdosed on a cocktail of the anti-anxiety medications Paraldehyde and Promazine. A coroner's report determined that the death was "accidental, suicidal and undetermined." But persistent reports of foul play continue to this day. There was no suicide note.

Roeder called the police at once. When they arrived fifteen minutes later, Nick's body was removed on a stretcher and placed in an ambulance. As this was being done, the house was searched. There were no signs of a robbery, and the police even noted some loose cash and two valuable rings on a nearby nightstand.

When Roeder searched through Nick's desk, he reported that the manuscript of the *exposé* which Nick had been working on was nowhere to be found. Even more significant were Nick's journals, which were also missing. He'd kept them for years. Nick's tape recordings were also missing, even his typewriter, a cherished gift from James Dean.

An autopsy performed that night by the L.A. County Coroner revealed that Nick's body contained a massive dose of the sedative paraldehyde. The drug had acted in lethal concert with the tranquilizer Promazine. But no paraldehyde container was found in the house. A chemical cousin of formaldehyde, paraldehyde had been prescribed by Nick's brother, a doctor, Andrew Adams.

Dr. Thomas Noguchi, "coroner to the stars," finally concluded on March 3, 1968, that, "The mode of death is certified as accidental suicide and undetermined." What was not said was that at first Nick's death had been ruled a homicide.

The case would become fodder for a legend. The tabloids went wild, speculating that Nick's so-called suicide was actually murder.

One of his closest friends was the Oscarwinning actor Broderick Crawford. "Nick was very outspoken to me in the weeks before his death," Crawford said. "He told me about the memoir he was writing about Elvis and James Dean. I warned him that if Col. Parker found out about it, 'You're dead meat, kid.' But no one could tell Nick anything. Until my dying grave, I'll believe that Parker ordered Nick killed."

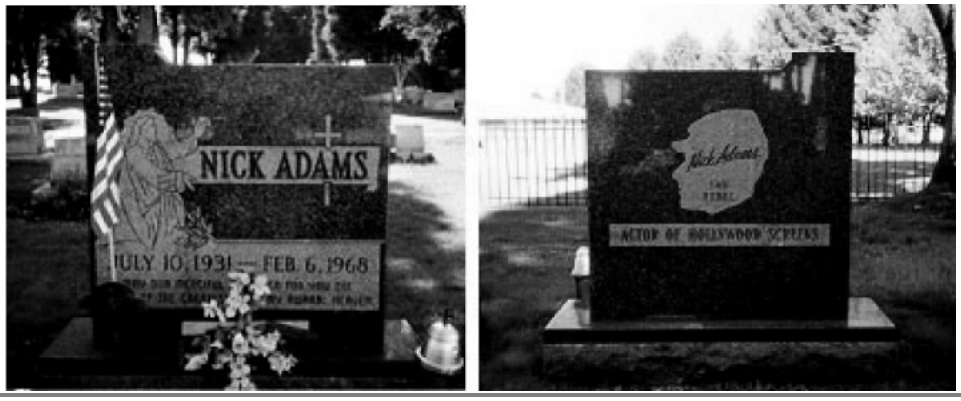
Adams' house on El Roble Lane in Los Angeles, where police found him dead. The unsavory circumstances of his death were never clearly explained.

A fellow actor, Forrest Tucker, agreed with him. "In the weeks before his death, Nick told me that he feared bodily harm from Parker. He also told me that he kept two guns in the house just in case of a break-in. When the police searched the house, no weapons of any kind were found. Whoever broke in to steal the incriminating journals and manuscript even took his Johnny Reb cap. Nick always told me he wanted to be buried in that cap one day. I just hope that hip gyrator, Elvis, had nothing to do with this."

"Absolutely, it wasn't suicide," Robert Conrad, Nick's closest friend, was quoted as saying. "We were so close that if he'd intended that, I'd have known about it. Murder? I don't know. It could be foul play."

Jeb Adams, Nick's son, claimed in 1992 that he was "99.99% sure" that his dad had been murdered.

His revelations about James Dean and Elvis Presley have, as of this date, never been published. The whereabouts of his manuscript are not known. Perhaps it was destroyed.



Only a few graying fans, mostly homosexual men, still visit the grave site of Nick Adams. He was buried near his birthplace in Berwick, Pennsylvania. The restless son of immigrant parents from the Ukraine, he always maintained a burning ambition to become a movie star, "The New James Dean."

After a brief success, his career began to slip into oblivion. Faced with mounting bills, he played the dangerous card of blackmail. That move probably cost him his life.

Chapter Twenty-Three

How a Short, Nearsighted Farmboy from Indiana Became a

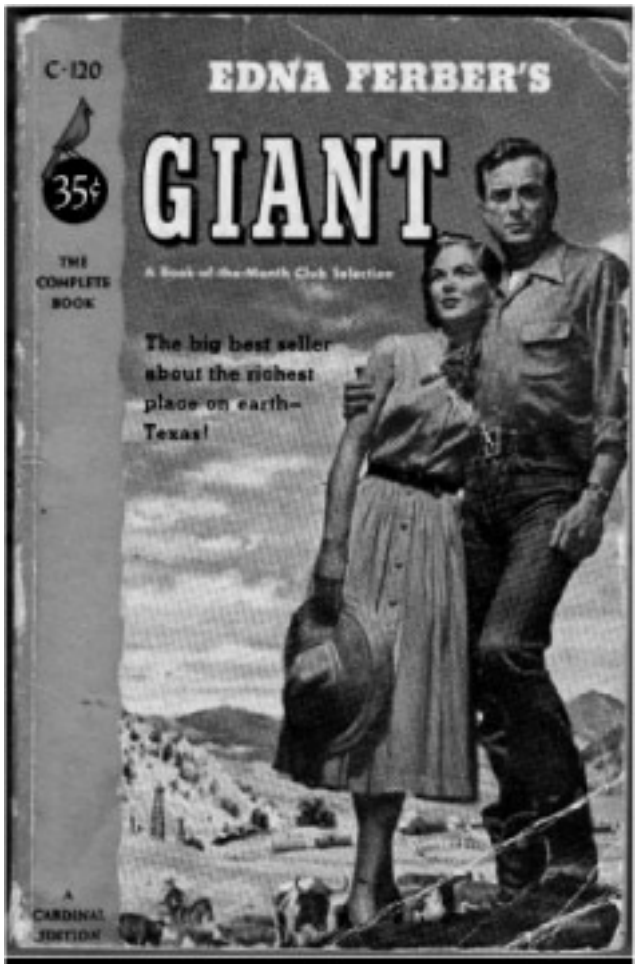
GIANT

Along with Hollywood Superstars Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson

A Lesbian Author, a Gay Leading Man, a Sultry, Bed-Hopping Beauty, and a Bisexual Rebel Bring a Sprawling Saga of Texas to the Screen

Jimmy Discovers the Rattlesnake-Eating Cowboys of Texas, Where Men Boast That They've All Got Something Big

Hollywood was abuzz with the news that director George Stevens was going to make the all-star spectacular film epic of the year, the screen adaptation of Edna Ferber's best-selling 1952 novel, *Giant*, set in the Lone Star State.



In July of 2002, when the US Postal Service issued an 83¢ stamp honoring the literary legacy of Edna Ferber, collectors realized that,

based on a printing plate error, some were missing the blue, black, and ocher-colored ink that would otherwise have been included in their print runs.

The value of those judged as “aberrant” immediately shot up to around $500 each, and the recognition quotient of Edna Ferber skyrocketed.

The novel had enthralled thousands of Americans, but not many Texans. As John Barkham in *The New York Times* wrote: “Miss Ferber makes it very clear that she doesn’t like the Texas she writes about, and it’s a cinch that when Texans read about what she has written about them, they won’t like Miss Ferber either.”

In reference to a saga that sprawled across three generations of sweeping historical changes, critic Robert Tanitch wrote: “The Lone Star State was turned into a symbol, a *giant* symbol, for all that was the least estimable in America: It’s moneygrabbing materialism, its thick-skinned self-interest, its profligacy and vulgarity, its low-browism, its snobbery and racism, its narrow-mindedness, its self-satisfied isolationism, and its spiritual impoverishment.”

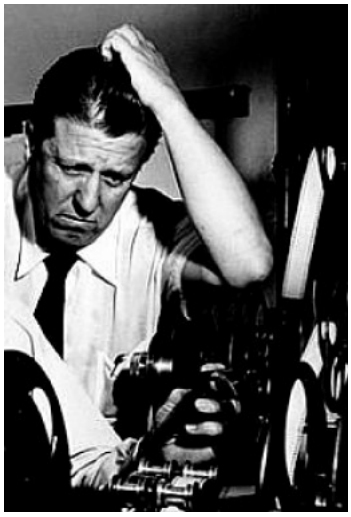
Set for release in 1956, Warner Brothers had budgeted it at five and a half million dollars, a staggering sum of money in the Eisenhower era.

Now at the peak of his acclaim, California-born George Stevens was a deeply respected kind of Renaissance figure with a career that had included stints as a director, producer, screenwriter, and cinematographer. As the head of the U.S. Army Signal Corps in World War II, he’d taken newsreels of the Allied landings on the bloody beaches of Normandy. Later, he filmed the liberation by U.S. troops of the notorious concentration camp of Dachau.

He’d already won the Best Director Oscar for his 1951 *A Place in the Sun,* and was Oscar-nominated for his 1953 Western, *Shane.*

The trio of leads that Stevens would focus on first included Bick Benedict, patriarch of what becomes an oil dynasty and his wife, Leslie Benedict; and his employee, an upstart ranchhand-turned-wildcatter, Jett Rink. *Giant* also contained many lesser roles for which established stars would compete.

Bick is a strapping, tall, and handsome Texan, the owner of the sprawling Reata Ranch that’s almost the size of the state of New Hampshire. The cattle baron is proud and a bit of a chauvinist in that he treats women like second-class citizens, perhaps granting Mexicans third-class status.



George Stevens, perplexed, possibly based on an issue associated with James Dean.

The film opens when he’s in Maryland with the intention of purchasing a champion black stallion. There, he falls for the beautiful and somewhat calculating Leslie on her father’s horse farm. Unlike most of the women he had known, she’s intelligent and a bit of a liberated woman, rather strong willed and high-spirited. Ignoring certain warning signs, he is spellbound by her beauty, marries her, and hauls her back to his sterile, arid, and searingly overheated ranch.

She's appalled at some of the conditions she finds there, including the Jim Crow class distinction between rich and poor and the horrible treatment of Mexicans.

A lesser role, but one far more colorful was that of a poor local rancher, Jett Rink, who works for the Benedict family. Edna Ferber described him as "a character threatening sexual danger. He was a brute, a savage, dirty, belligerent, irresponsible, sadistic, a sullen, loutish kind of boy, who bore a grudge against the world."

"He was all right when he behaves himself," she wrote. "But when he drinks, he goes kind of crazy. He's a kind of genius, Jett is. He'll probably end up a billionaire—or in the electric chair. Put him in a car and he goes crazy."

It was almost as if she were describing James Dean.

When Jimmy heard through his lover, Arthur Loew, Jr., that the role of Jett Rink "might suit you as tight as a rubber on your dick," he rushed out and bought the paperback edition of *Giant,* which he read cover to cover in three days. He later told Loew, "That's me, boy. I'm Jett Rink. If I grab that role, I can escape being typecast as a sinister adolescent."

Loew promised to approach Stevens and to pitch him for the role of Jett. To Jimmy's dismay, he learned that the director had already sent the script to Marlon Brando. Once again, these two Method actors would each be in consideration for the same role. Brando sent the script back, rejecting the part as "too small."

Stevens also considered Charlton Heston, Cornel Wilde, Anthony Quinn, Jack Palance, and Gordon McCrae for the role of Jett.

Right before reaching his final decision, Stevens came up with the idea of putting Richard Burton into the role as a "hell-raising wildcatter" in love with Bick Benedict's wife, Leslie.

Had Richard Burton accepted the role of Jett Rink in *Giant,* his affair with Elizabeth Taylor might have begun years before he co-starred with her, (*as depicted above)* as Marc Antony in *Cleopatra.*

As it turned out, Burton was not available. "It would have been a challenge to me as an actor," he said. "Having a Welshman speak with a Texas drawl."

[Later, after Burton learned that Elizabeth Taylor had been cast as Leslie, he ran into Stevens one night at Chasens in Los Angeles. In the men's room, he whispered, "I'm sorry I wasn't free to play Jett Rink. It would have given me a chance to introduce Elizabeth Taylor to my Welsh dick.]

After losing Burton for the role, Stevens offered it to Alan Ladd, who, unknown to the director at the time, was despondent to the point of suicide, and drinking heavily. He dreaded facing the camera, and was undergoing a lot of personal hell, including fear of a blackmail attempt from one of his hustler lovers, who was threatening to tell all to *Confidential* unless he surrendered $10,000 in cash.

"Lightning didn't strike twice," said Alan Ladd. He was referring to my "idiotic decision" to reject the role of Jett Rink in *Giant.* Ladd had scored a big hit when George Stevens cast him in the Western, *Shane (see above).*

Stevens had gotten along smoothly with Ladd during the filming of their 1953 blockbuster, *Shane*. With that in mind, he sent him the first draft of the script for *Giant.*

Ladd read the script that night and eagerly telephoned Stevens the next morning. "I'm your Bick Benedict!"

Stevens was aghast. He hadn't told Ladd that he wanted him for the lesser role of Jett.

"There's no way in hell I could make a midget like Ladd play a tall, strapping Texan," Stevens told his aides. "Stand him on crates to make him taller?"

Stevens got back to Ladd with, "No, no, Alan, I want you to play Jett Rink!"

"I'm not going to play that shit," Ladd said. "A flamboyantly corrupt Texas oil millionaire who begins life as a dirty little punk? Not for me, buddy."

He hung up on Stevens, but two years later, he told a reporter, "Turning down the role that went to James Dean was one of the biggest mistakes of my career."

What Ladd had rejected, James Stewart went for in a very big way, even though Jett Rink would be a radical departure from the good guys he usually played on screen. Perhaps that change of pace was the reason he wanted to star as *Giant's* corrupt ranch hand.

Nothing illustrated "New Hollywood" vs. "Old Hollywood" better than the rivalry for roles between James Dean and James Stewart. Stevens called it "The Battle of the Two Jimmy's."

Stewart was pushing fifty (actually forty-seven years old) when he campaigned for the role of Jett Rink. From the beginning, Stevens didn't want him. "If he were twenty years younger, he could have handled it with that drawl of his, his beanpole physique, and his shy, gulping manner," Stevens said. "Being in a Western was no problem. He'd come to personify the American West as much as John Wayne. I could make a younger actor old with makeup, but there was no way I could make Stewart a young man—even with all the makeup in the world."

"It was one of my greatest embarrassments to have to call Stewart and turn him down for the role," Stevens said. "After all, he was one of the greatest of all screen actors. I didn't feel so bad for him, however. After all, he'd just had a hit opposite Grace Kelly in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954)."

"I finally decided the role should go to Dean," Sevens said. "The guy had been hounding me for days to get that juicy part. I called him to tell him to transform himself into a Texas ranger. 'The role is yours,' I promised him."

Stevens believed that Jimmy would be ideal in the opening scenes, when Jett Rink was a young rancher. But since he has to age into a drunken, battered 45-year-old for the film's final scenes, the director worried that he might not pull them off, even with heavy makeup and graying hair.

Actually, he'd been aware of Jimmy's acting ever since he'd watched his teleplay, *A Long Time Till Dawn.* He told a reporter, "It was the first time that I ever watched anxiously during the credits so I could find out who this brilliant, sensitive actor was."

After Stevens had *East of Eden* screened for him, he congratulated Elia Kazan. "I found the kid's performance mesmerizing," Stevens said. "I was sorry I lost your boy, Brando. I'd wanted him to play Jett Rink. But getting Dean might be even better."

"Working with Jimmy will be an experience you'll carry with you to your grave," Kazan said. "I'll say no more."

“Don’t Fall In Love With Me”

—Grace Kelly to James Dean

After Jimmy agreed to play Jett, Stevens turned his attention to casting the two other leads, Bick and Leslie Benedict.

Producer Henry Ginsberg , in a phone call to Stevens, recommended Marlene Dietrich for the role.

“Are you out of your mind?” Stevens responded. “As far as it is known, Marlene was born in 1901, or maybe even in the 1890s. She’d be perfect if we adapted Leslie as a grandmother, and if we rewrote the character as a German. The answer is ‘no.’ She’s too old, and too Teutonic.”

Jennifer Jones, with the understanding that she’d have to age from a young bride to an older woman during the course of the film, was the first to personally lobby Stevens for the juicy female lead.

More than a decade before, Jones had won an Oscar for the somewhat sappy religious tear-jerker, *The Song of Bernadette* (1943). She promised Stevens that if he’d give her the role of Leslie Benedict, she would win another Oscar—“and put your big movie on the map.”

He thought she was “too syrupy” for the role, his mind set on Audrey Hepburn. Flying to New York in July of 1954, he visited the petite actress, who was appearing at the time on Broadway in *Ondine.*

Almost from the beginning, Hepburn and Stevens disagreed over the interpretation of the role. She wasn’t really interested, anyway, telling Stevens, “I hear Texans eat rattlesnake for breakfast.”

What Might Have Been: Actresses considered for the role of Leslie Benedict included TOO GLAM! Marlene Dietrich (depicted in 1951 in *No Highway in the Sky*; TOO PIOUS AFTER *SONG OF BERNADETTE!* Jennifer Jones, as she appeared with Gregory Peck in *Duel in the Sun* (1946); and the very cosmopolitan but NOT PARTICULARLY CONVINCING AS A RANCH HAND, Audrey Hepburn.

Within a week, Hepburn was no longer in the running.

Grace Kelly in her very-fashionable, much-reviewed-by-fashion-writers black dress, as she appeared in *Rear Window.*

His telephone kept ringing throughout the rest of the year. He decided that Eva Marie Saint would be perfect for the role, only to learn that she was pregnant with a baby due in April.

Stevens then began to focus on Grace Kelly, who had just made such hits as *Dial M For Murder* (1954) with Ray Milland, and *Rear Window* (also 1954) with James Stewart. Her interpretation of the female lead in *The Country Girl* (1955) with William Holden and Bing Crosby would later be awarded with an Oscar.

Jimmy's lover, Arthur Loew, Jr., through his direct pipeline to the executives at MGM, learned that Grace had wanted the role of Leslie so badly that she was willing to go on suspension, refusing to show up for the filming of *Jeremy Rodock* with the aging Spencer Tracy.

As all of this was happening, Jimmy was spending many of his nights in Nicholas Ray's suite at the Château Marmont, a venue that was by now so familiar to him that management seemed to think he was a permanent resident.

By coincidence, he learned that Grace was living within a bungalow at the same hotel. He hadn't seen her since their previous encounter in New York.

Ray noted a smirk on Jimmy's face. "Don't tell me you've bedded her, you little devil!"

"Something like that," Jimmy said. "My dream might be coming true. Starring in a movie with Grace Kelly."

The next morning found Jimmy, in a bathing suit, beside the hotel's swimming pool, from a position with an unobstructed view of the door to Grace's bungalow.

When she emerged from her quarters, she was putting on a pair of white gloves as she headed toward the lobby. "Hi Gracie!" Jimmy called out to her as he emerged from the pool. *["I imagined I was a male version of Esther Williams, trying to look as sexy as possible," he later told Ray.]*

She kissed him on the lips as he wrapped himself in a giant bath towel.

"Well," he said. "What have we here? The most beautiful girl in New York is now the most gorgeous gal in Hollywood."

"I'm glad you think so," she said. "Now I hope the world will agree with you."

"They will, I predict," he said.

"I'm terribly rushed right now," she said. "and I'm running late. Perhaps we'll get together sometime."

Fearing that he was losing her forever, he said, "I just heard from Arthur Loew. MGM is considering lending you out for *Giant.* And Stevens has more or less given me the third lead of Jett Rink."

Grace stopped in her tracks, focusing on him with renewed interest.

"Is that so? Then by all means, we must get together. Are you free to drop by my bungalow at four tomorrow afternoon?"

"I'll be there with my Stetson and some Texas cowboy boots," he promised.

She gave him another gentle kiss on the lips. "I will hold my breath until you're on my doorstep."

Over pillow talk, late the following afternoon, she shared her anxieties with him. "I'm afraid to go on a location shoot in the Texas desert. I'm a city girl."

"Don't worry," he assured her. "You'll have me to protect you."

"I'll consider that, but only on one condition," she said.

"What might that be, princess?" he asked, ironically referring to her as "princess" long before she actually became one.

"That you don't fall in love with me. Too many men fall in love with me."

Over the next ten days, Jimmy paid four visits to Grace's bungalow. Once, he invited her to lunch in the Hollywood Hills, at a restaurant with a scenic view. Although she seemed serenely cool with his driving, back at the bungalow, she admitted, "That's the last time for that. I was terrified every time you came to a curve in the road. This psychic, Frank Andrews, once told me that I'd be killed one day in a car crash."

Jimmy admitted to Ray, "I've had to deny you and everybody else sex because I've been saving it for Grace."

But one afternoon, Jimmy learned that he was paying his last visit to Grace's bungalow. She told him that she was not going to play Leslie in *Giant.* "MGM is not going to lend me out. Another thing, I learned that George Stevens really doesn't want me in the role. He prefers Elizabeth Taylor."

She went on to tell him something else. "I want you to understand," she said. "My dance card is very full. You're sweet, cuddly, and adorable. I'll always have the fondest memories of you. Got to run now." Then she gave him a gentle farewell kiss on the lips.

That night, Jimmy told Ray what had happened. He didn't seem surprised. "I was a bit taken aback that Grace took up with you in the first place. She's known to prefer older men. Established stars. You're just small fry."

"But unlike some of those grandfathers, I can always produce a reliable erection."

The next afternoon, Jimmy, at the pool, was joined by his least favorite author, Gore Vidal. "I heard Grace has given you the brush-off."

"You might call it that," Jimmy said.

"Well, she'll be doing another picture, and she's sure to have an affair with her leading man. Just think of it: Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, William Holden, Bing Crosby, James Stewart. She refused to make a movie with Spencer Tracy, but I hear he's fucking her anyway. Now she's going to star in a movie with Cary Grant. Oh, did I leave out Clark Gable from *Mogambo?"*

As Jimmy was exiting from the pool area later that afternoon, he spotted Grace heading for her bungalow. When the face of the man who was accompanying her came into view, he recognized that it was the much married actor, David Niven.

[More than six months after Jimmy's death, Grace abdicated her throne as Queen of Hollywood to become a mere Princess of Monaco, based on her (relentlessly publicized) marriage to Prince Rainier.

She would eventually die in a car crash at the age of fifty-two in September of 1982.]

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During several tense weeks, Elizabeth knew that the role she coveted, that of Leslie in *Giant*, was almost beyond her reach. George Stevens, who had directed her so brilliantly in *A Place in the Sun*, "seemed to want every other actress in Hollywood, but considered me chopped liver, I guess," Elizabeth told her husband, Michael Wilding. "But I want that part, and I'm going for it. Imagine a script that calls for me to transform myself from a beautiful young bride to a grandmother. Oscar, you've got Elizabeth Taylor's name written on your ass!"

When it became clear that Grace Kelly would not be available, Elizabeth jumped with joy and headed for Benny Thau's office to beg him to have MGM lend her services to Warner Brothers.

There was still one problem: MGM didn't want to lend her. "I had to go on a sitdown strike…well, almost," she said to a reporter. "Dare I say blackmail in certain quarters? No, don't print that…it wasn't exactly blackmail."

Then, she engaged in a big brawl with Thau. "I think he wanted me to play Lassie's mother—or some such shit—in a sequel."

She finally won out, "but my bruises were black. I got no extra money. MGM took it all for the loan-out."

When at last they become convinced that Elizabeth was the right actress for the part, the executives at Warner Brothers offered $250,000 for her services, even though her contract called for her to make only $100,000 a year from MGM at the time. MGM pocketed the difference.

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Once she signed for the role of Leslie, Elizabeth insisted that "the only actor to play Jett Rink is Monty Clift."

Knowing what a good actor he was, Stevens went along with her proposal until Warner's insurance underwriters advised Jack Warner that "Clift is just too god damn risky. We won't insure him."

Stevens, even at this early stage in the compilation of *Giant,* was already hearing rumbling suspicions that Jimmy might carry some baggage with him. As expressed so colorfully by biographer David Brett: "Jimmy was already being hailed as a lost cause, a cock-hungry schizophrenic, a pre-'Brat Pack' *prima donna*, whose only truly happy, but not entirely sane moments occurred when he was creating merry hell."

Stevens was forced to delay the filming of *Giant* to accommodate his three big stars. Elizabeth was pregnant; Hudson needed to finish shooting *All That Heaven Allows* with Jane Wyman; and Jimmy still had scenes to shoot for *Rebel Without a Cause.*

How Hollywood's Fading Matinee Idols Schemed for the Role of Texas Patriarch

Bick Benedict

And How It Was Eventually Awarded to the Macho and Charming

Rock Hudson

During his selection of candidates for the male lead, the character of Bick Benedict, Stevens was bombarded with phone calls from William Holden, Gary Cooper, and Clark Gable. At least a dozen other Hollywood males also made their voices heard.

Lying on different massage boards at their gym, John Wayne told Forrest Tucker, "I'm gonna play Bick Benedict."

"Like hell you are," Tucker responded, lying nude on his board. "The role calls for a big dick." Then he ripped the towel off Wayne. "As you can plainly see, my Moby Dick is six times the size of yours."

Sterling Hayden said: "Forrest Tucker is too drunk to play the part. I'm the right size to play Benedict . . . in all departments."

William Holden, as the doomed writer, Joe Gillis, in the 1950 movie that made him a star, *Sunset Blvd.,* starring Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond.

Robert Mitchum said: "I've practically got the role of Bick Benedict sewn up! Stevens has always had a hard-on for me. I can just see billboards across America: *ROBERT MITCHUM AND ELIZABETH TAYLOR STARRING IN GIANT WITH JAMES DEAN."*

Mitchum had also been considered for the role of Jett Rink

"With a chest like I used to have, I didn't mind going topless in a movie," said Robert Mitchum, pictured here in the 1962 *Cape Fear.* "I was considered for both Jett Rink *and* Bick Benedict."

Late one afternoon, a call came in from Ross Hunter, the producer of *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), starring Rock Hudson and Jane Wyman. "I want you to consider Rock for this part. He's going to become the biggest macho male star since Gable."

Universal, however, didn't want to lend Hudson, rushing him instead into another soapy tearjerker with Wyman, *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). But when it became clear that Hudson could fulfill his obligations to both films, he persuaded Warners to let him star in *Giant.* "I had to let a lot of guys at Universal suck my cock to get the role of Bick," he later told Elizabeth.

Before deciding on Hudson, Stevens had more or less made up his mind that the role of Bick Benedict should go to William Holden. Hudson later recalled that on the day the announcement was made that he would be the male star of *Giant*, he entered the studio sauna nude, only to discover an equally nude Holden sitting on a slab of marble.

Hudson would describe the incident's irony to Elizabeth: "Here I was, the new star of Hollywood, confronting an aging star with my better body, a bigger dick, and a more awesome presence. I felt embarrassed for Holden."

Some Hollywood historians have suggested that the casting of *Giant,* more than that of any other picture, represented "a changing of the guard in Hollywood," based on the fact that box office champions of yesterday *[James Stewart, Clark Gable, Robert Mitchum, John Wayne, Sterling Hayden, Gary Cooper, and William Holden]* were rejected in favor of new, postwar stars such as James Dean and Rock Hudson.

Mean-Spirited Jimmy and Confidential Magazine

How the Male Lead in Giant Was Dangled Before Paul Newman

Newly arrived in Hollywood for the filming of *The Rack [a war drama based on a play by Rod Serling and released in 1956],* Paul Newman invited Jimmy for an afternoon swim at the Château Marmont. Newman was anxious to learn about how filming was progressing on *Rebel Without a Cause.*

Jimmy told him that Warner Brothers was cracking down on the script, especially as regards the implied homosexual attraction between his character that of Plato. "Sal and I are playing a trick on them. I told him to look at me with moonglow eyes. It'll be obvious to audiences that he's in love with me."

He also claimed that he had been lobbying to get Mineo cast in the role of a Mexican soldier in *Giant.* "If I'm going to be shipped off to a remote outpost in Texas, I'll need a fuckmate with me. I can't take a chance of finding someone on the hoof there."

"Don't you think Sal is a bit young for you?" Newman asked.

"I take the position of the Emperor Caligula," Jimmy answered. "As long as they're out of the womb."

Later, Jimmy asked him to go with him to a car race, but Newman turned him down, pleading another engagement.

"When I'm racing, it's a more powerful thrill than any drug," Jimmy claimed. "I feel like I'm not of this earth. I feel like a real man. I answer to no one. I'm in control of my universe."

Newman, too, seemed intrigued by car racing, promising, "Sooner than later, I bet we'll be racing together,

maybe even competing for the gold."

Although the two men didn't notice her, Susan Strasberg, daughter of Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio, was checking into the Château Marmont with her mother, Paula.

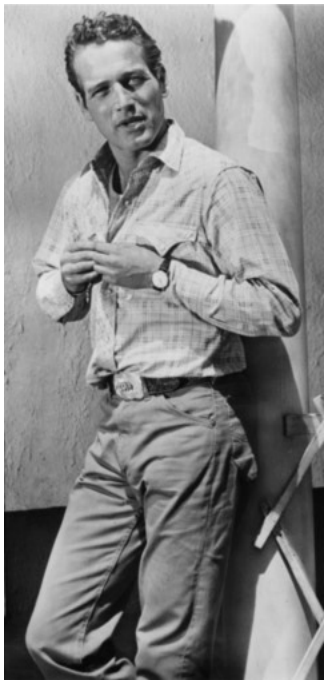
She later recalled seeing the two actors in their bathing suits. "They both had slender bodies, not beefed up, but perfect in every way, like Michelangelo's *David.* They had thick hair, Paul's being wavier. Paul had this habit of touching his finger to his nose when talk got a little rough. I saw him do that a lot at the Actors Studio. Lying on a pad side by side, they were the epitome of male beauty. I understood why men turn gay. Each of them could have posed for a Renaissance painter, perhaps Leonardo da Vinci, not just Michelangelo."

The next weekend, Newman did agree to drive down the Pacific coast for a weekend at a roadside motel outside Laguna Beach. After a night of heavy drinking, they went back to their motel and fell into bed together, too tired to make love. As Jimmy would later tell Nicholas Ray, "We were too exhausted and too intoxicated that night, but came the rosy glow of dawn, we made up for it."

Ex-con and bisexual, Rory Calhoun, depicted above, was sacrified and savaged by *Confidential* magazine and a conspiracy of Hollywood agents and casting directors.

Over lunch that day, Jimmy promised Newman that, "I'm going to do everything in my power to get you cast as Bick Benedict in *Giant.* We didn't get to work together in *East of Eden,* but the two of us will be dynamite on the screen together. Both of us can take turns fucking Elizabeth Taylor."

"I don't understand," Newman said. "I've heard that George Stevens has already cast Rock Hudson."



As a western star, Paul Newman survived his rejection for the role of Bick Benedict in *Giant*, moving on to play the male lead in *Hud*, depicted above.

"Don't let that worry you," Jimmy said. "The shit's about to hit the fan. I've heard that *Confidential* has been on Rock's tail for some time. They're going to expose him as a homo. Rock is certain to be fired from *Giant* before shooting begins. It's all over for him. The part will make your career after that *Silver Chalice* shit."

[At the last minute, Henry Willson, Hudson's agent, made a deal to expose (and sacrifice) another of his stars, Rory Calhoun, in lieu of his bigger, more profitable client, Rock Hudson. Consequently, it was revealed that Calhoun had spent time in prison years before becoming a Hollywood star.

Hudson stayed in the cast of Giant, and *Newman went on to star in the boxing saga,* Somebody Up There Likes Me *(1956), cast as Rocky Graziano. The role had been earmarked for Jimmy, but his fatal car crash abruptly ended that dream.]*

Susan Strasberg Aborts Jimmy's Kid

The sixteen-year-old actress, Susan Strasberg, had long admired James Dean. In her memoirs, *Bittersweet,* published in 1980, she wrote: "He fascinated me. He epitomized an iconoclastic approach to life, opposed to the more measured, intellectual cadences I was accustomed to."

She also said that during her stay at the Château Marmont, "Nick Ray, Jimmy, my mother, Paula, and I used to go out for dinner. Jimmy borrowed one of Nick's jackets, which made him look like a little boy dressed in his father's clothes."

Soon, Jimmy and Susan were dating without their chaperones. *The Hollywood Reporter* took notice. "James Dean courts Susan Strasberg in jeans, a dirty pair at that, a leather jacket, and scruffy cowboy boots. Susan is as happy as if he had dressed in a tuxedo."

The couple were seen at dives on Sunset Strip.

She was in Hollywood because Vincente Minnelli had cast her in *The Cobweb* (1955), which Jimmy was to have starred in. His role went to John Kerr, his rival and former lover. The other stars included Charles Boyer, Richard Widmark, Lillian Gish, Lauren Bacall, Gloria Grahame, and Oscar Levant, who had become Jimmy's friend.

Jimmy was anxious to learn how the shoot was going.

Susan claimed, "I'm cast as a hypersensitive, paranoid teenager. Call it type casting."

One morning, Susan introduced Jimmy to the former silent screen great, Lillian Gish. He told her that he'd once appeared in a teleplay with her sister, Dorothy.

"Of course you did, my dear," Gish responded. "I was offered the role, but turned it down. When it was shown on television, I had another engagement."

Two days later, Susan claimed that she had one big scene in *The Cobweb.* "I was a nervous wreck. I went out to take a breath of fresh air. As I was standing there, gasping for breath, Jimmy roared up on his motorcycle."

"I came to take you for a ride," he said. "Hop on!"

"I can't leave. I'm due back on the set in a little while."

"It won't take that long," he said. "It'll relax you."

"I really want to," she said, "but I don't know."

"Then shit, do it!" he commanded. "C'mon!"

She later recalled, "I wasn't used to hearing the word shit used around my family."

Soon, she was on the cycle behind him, holding on for life. "The wind whipped my hair over my face, stinging me. I leaned closer, my face buried in his leather jacket."

The next morning, Jimmy awakened early and paraded out from Ray's suite in his briefs, jumping into the pool, perhaps hoping it would wake him up.

He became aware that there was another swimmer in the water. When her head surfaced, he realized he was staring into the face of Greta Garbo. He'd heard from Ray that she was in residence at the Château Marmont, occupying one of the penthouses.

"Morning," he called to her. "I'm Jimmy Dean."

"And I'm Harriet Brown," she said, rather coldly, swimming away.

"That was the extent of my conversation with Miss Garbo," he later told Ray.

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For reasons rather obvious, Susan left out the behind-the-scenes details of her brief fling with James Dean.

Years later, in New York in the 1970s, Darwin Porter escorted her to a number of gala events, often followed by dinner at Joe Allen's, where she preferred to go.

Gradually, she confided in him why she couldn't write about her brief affair with Jimmy. She relayed how he took her to his rental property that looked like a hunting lodge, in the Hollywood Hills. "He took my virginity. I didn't like it. Messy stuff, but he told me that the next time would be easier, smoother, and better."

"He was right. I almost fell in love with him before he disappeared from my life. As the weeks went by, and he was away making *Giant,* I became pregnant. My mother denounced me and threatened to have Jimmy killed. She told me that my father must not find out. Vincente Minnelli knew this doctor. I had an abortion. Lee never found out."

Many biographers have assumed it was lyricist Richard Adler who took Susan's virginity. "I misled them. I told them that Richard was my first love affair. There's a difference between a love affair and losing your virginity. After Jimmy, there were so many other men—Cary Grant, Richard Burton, Warren Beatty, even Marcello Mastroianni."

Ten years after her seduction by Jimmy, Susan married actor Christopher Jones. Six months later, she gave birth to his child, Jennifer Robin. Ironically, Jones had long ago been labeled as "The New James Dean."

In *Bittersweet,* she quoted Jones' opinion of Jimmy.

"He was a great actor. A fucking saint. That's why he had to die so young."

"Chris was more obsessed with Jimmy than I was. In his private little study, he had at least six pictures of Jimmy on the wall. He looked more like Jimmy than all the other imposters wanting to carry Jimmy's banner after his death. Chris wore his rebel badge with pride, and, like Jimmy, was a war with society. He started out with such promise. But there was this damn thing called drugs."

"As the years have gone by, I've had two regrets. First, I didn't have Jimmy's kid. I was also up for the Luz Benedict II in *Giant.* For a while, I thought I had it wrapped up. I was looking forward to going on location with Jimmy. The last time I saw him, he dropped by our bungalow. One of my saddest moments was when he told me the role I had coveted had gone to Carroll Baker."

Ramon Novarro Vs. Jett Rink

"Ben Hur Wants My Honey"

—James Dean

Ramon Novarro, the Mexican-American actor once promoted by MGM as the greatest Latin Lover of the Silent Screen, attempted to come out of retirement to play a minor role in *Giant,* that of an itinerant rancher, "Old Polo." He had thrilled audiences in the 1920s, reaching the peak of his fame in *Ben Hur* (released in 1925).

At a luncheon in the Warners commissary, director George Stevens introduced Novarro to Jimmy. The long-faded matinee idol "wanted desperately to meet this Jimmy boy."

After a quick drink, Stevens departed, leaving the two actors, one from yesterday, one of them contemporary, to talk privately.

Mexican-American silent film star Ramon Novarro. "I was a bathing suit beauty," he said.

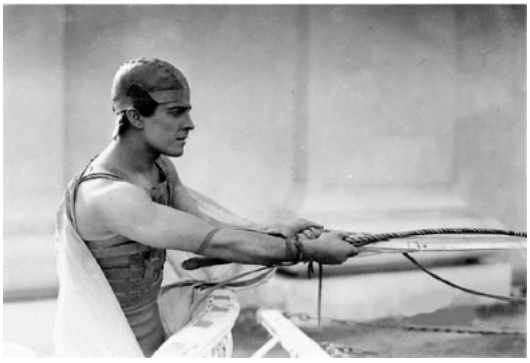
Judging from his references, Novarro had heard that Jimmy was gay, and he wanted to share some advice about how a studio was likely to handle, if necessary, the possibility of a gay actor's exposure.

During Novarro's heyday, Louis B. Mayer, the MGM mogul, had wanted him to enter into what was known as a "lavender marriage" as a vehicle that might squash rumors that he was gay. "He tried to force me into a loveless marriage, but I refused, even when he told me he'd line me up with a lesbian star at MGM. He did not name her. I think it might have been Nazimova."

"I stubbornly refused. I've heard that such a marriage is now being forced upon Rock Hudson."

The lunch went quickly, but Jimmy was not turned on by Novarro's adoration, especially when he told him, "I like to enjoy young men, such as yourself, who reward me with their honey." Then he invited Jimmy to visit him at his residence that evening at eight o'clock.

Jimmy agreed, writing down Novarro's contact information.



Ramon Novarro as Ben-Hur in 1925. Both he and James Dean had only one thing in common: Each of them would meet violent deaths.

Escorting the aging actor to his car, Jimmy gave him a passionate kiss on the lips, telling him, "I can't wait. I won't wear underwear."

Apparently, Novarro was waiting at his home at eight o'clock and beyond. Surely by midnight, he'd realized that Jimmy had been putting him on, with no intention of ever showing up.

Jimmy later told Stevens about Novarro's come-on.

"You shouldn't play games with an old queen," Stevens chastised him. "He was a big star worthy of respect. Didn't you see Norma Desmond in *Sunset Blvd.?* One day you, too, may be a fading star being humiliated by young men. However, in your case, maybe not. You might not live that long."

To add insult to his injury, Stevens had to call Novarro later that afternoon to inform him that he'd decided to give the role of Old Polo to character actor Alexander Scourby.

[On October 30, 1968, Novarro picked up two brothers, Tom and Paul Ferguson, thinking they were hustlers with whom he could have sex for pay. However, they had another motive in mind. Someone had told them that the fading star kept a huge stash of money at his home.

As the evening progressed, Novarro wanted them to come into his bedroom one by one to extract their "honey." Paul had another plan: He and his brother tortured Novarro for several hours, trying to get him to reveal where the loot was hidden, but there was no stash of money in the house. The brothers had been misinformed.

After the two perpetrators left the building, Novarro died of asphyxiation, choking on a mixture of his own vomit and blood.

The Ferguson brothers were later caught and sentenced to long prison terms, but released on probation in the mid-1970s. They were later sent back to prison on unrelated crimes.

After his final release, Tom committed suicide in 2005 by cutting his throat in a Motel 6.]

Angela Lansbury & Joan Collins

CONSIDERED, BUT REJECTED. WERE THEY "TOO BRITISH?"

Susan Strasberg and Ramon Novarro were not the only actors rejected for lesser roles in *Giant.* Two of the most talented actresses in the entertainment industry were also turned down.

Stevens had long been fascinated by the acting skills of British star Angela Lansbury, who had fled the London Blitz to come to America in 1940. He first saw her in *Gaslight* (1944), in which, at the age of eighteen, she had played a cockney maid, adding spunk to this film with Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. She won an Oscar as Best Supporting Actress in her American debut. Amazingly, she was also nominated the following year for Best Supporting Actress. She was cast as Sibyl Vane, the music hall singer in the adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945).

For a while, Stevens thought she might play Rock Hudson's butch sister, Luz Benedict. He finally decided, however, that in spite of her talent, she would not be convincing "as a Texas broad." Instead, he opted for Mercedes McCambridge, figuring that she was more "dyke-like," citing her performance opposite Joan Crawford in *Johnny Guitar* (1954).

After that, still intrigued with her potential, he considered her for the lesser role of Vashti Snythe, a plump, uncouth heiress, but eventually assigned it to Jane Withers instead.

After her second rejection, with a touch of bitterness, Lansbury was quoted as saying, "I thought in America it was three strikes and you're out, not two strikes."

For a brief time, Stevens considered casting one of the most talented Puerto Ricans, Rita Moreno, in the role of Juana, a Mexican girl who marries Dennis Hopper, son of Bick and Leslie Benedict. But at the last minute, he opted for the beautiful Mexican actress, Elsa Cárdenas, instead.

Angela Lansbury...Not butch enough.

[Actually, the role was too small for a performer of Moreno's talent. She would go on to win all four major American entertainment awards, including an Oscar, a Grammy, a Tony, and an Emmy.]

Joan Collins, the sultry British brunette, was also under consideration by Stevens for a role in *Giant,* mainly as a backup possibility in the event something happened to Elizabeth Taylor that prevented her from performing her duties.

When Elizabeth came through, the offer was never pitched to Collins. Ironically, she later became the bewigged, bejeweled, bitch goddess of the hit TV series, *Dynasty* (1981-89)*,* which—along with its competitor, *Dallas* (1978-91)—were said to have been inspired by *Giant.*

Joan Collins was considered as an alternative choice to star in two of Elizabeth Taylor's most famous movies: *Giant* and *Cleopatra.*

Collins met Jimmy at a small dinner party in the San Fernando Valley. He later said, “I was with Ursula Andress that night, but I found Joan a hot little number. I staked her out for a big seduction in my immediate future.”

He never revealed if he fulfilled his sexual fantasy with Collins.

Collins remembered him in one of her memoirs: “He was intense, moody, and had incredible charisma. He was short, myopic, not good looking in life, really. You know who he was like? A young, better-looking Woody Allen. He had the same qualities of shyness, uncertainty, and insecurity.”

“I was particularly energized by his eyes, which were a deep, piercing blue and could change instantly from a look of sullen brooding to an expression of extreme mischievousness. He was quite short for a film actor and had longish, blonde, wavy hair.”

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At long last, Stevens rounded up what he called his “Texas posse,” with supporting roles going to Mercedes McCambridge, Carroll Baker, Jane Withers, Chill Wills, Nick Adams, Dennis Hopper, Rodney Taylor, Earl Holliman, and Sal Mineo. Mineo told his gay friends, “With Hudson and Dean in the cast, I expect to get my ass pounded a lot.”

Warner Brothers summoned a press conference to introduce the stars of its upcoming Texas saga to reporters.

Jimmy was the last to arrive, appearing in a threadbare red flannel shirt, tattered boots, dirty blue jeans, a Stetson, and a large silver buckle on a cowhide belt that he claimed had once belonged to Roy Rogers. A cigarette drooped from the corner of his mouth, and he wore very dark sunglasses which he refused to take off for reporters. He claimed, “I had a hell of a fucking night, and I’ve got bags under my eyes.”

When Jimmy was introduced to Elizabeth Taylor, he was rude to her. He had a good reason to dislike her. She was still demanding that Stevens replace him with Montgomery Clift in the role of Jett Rink.

Leonard Rosenman, the composer of the musical scores for both *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause,* and who had been Jimmy’s sometimes lover back in New York, had not been able to get him on the phone in Hollywood. He decided to show up at the press conference, hoping to get a chance for a conversation. He wanted Jimmy to recommend him to George Stevens as a composer for *Giant.*

“I was shocked,” he later said. “Jimmy practically didn’t even acknowledge me. We’d never had an argument. But it was like he didn’t even know me, and I had been one of his best friends.”

“He told me he could not recommend me as a candidate for the composition of music for *Giant.* Dimitri Tijomkin got the job. I sensed that Jimmy had really changed, not gone Hollywood exactly. But he had become a big star—at least he was acting like one.”

“He claimed he hated Hollywood and detested the press conference, but the fucker actually got off on all the attention.”

“It’s like this,” Rosenman said. “In the land of the blind, even a one-eyed king stands out. In Hollywood, Dean could stand out as a New York intellectual, a regular Arthur Miller. After all, what was his competition? Bimbo starlets and directors and producers who used to be gas jockeys filling up your tank, or else attendants in wash rooms handing out towels.”

Hollywood’s Hottest New Star

Jimmy Suddenly Receives Dozens of Offers for Movie Roles

During the last month of his life, Jimmy was the most sought-after actor in Hollywood. Virtually every major studio wanted to cast him in some film, but in almost every case, Jack Warner was unwilling to lend out his most prestigious star. Some examples of the many offers swirling around him are elucidated below:

***

Both Marlon Brando and Jimmy were seen together one night at the Villa Capri, sharing a table and talking about the 1954 release of *The Egyptian.* Brando had turned down the role before it was sent to Jimmy, who also rejected it. The role was that of Sinuhe, a physician in the ancient Egyptian court, who sustains an affair with one of the Pharoah's mistresses.

In this intimate scene from *Giant,* Jett Rink (Dean) is secretly in love with Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor), who is married to his boss, Bick Benedict. He conveys his longing for her with his eyes.

Director Michael Curtiz cast Edmund Purdom instead. In the final version, he appeared opposite Jean Simmons, Victor Mature, Gene Tierney, and Peter Ustinov.

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Producer Lew Kerner wanted Jimmy to play the title role of *Studs Lonigan*. Its script would be based on the trilogy of Studs Lonigan novels by James T. Farrell, which today are ranked by Modern Library as one of the one hundred best English language novels of the 20th Century.

At the time of the Great Depression, Farrell set out to expose the evils of capitalism. Studs deteriorates from a tough, adventurous teenager to an embittered, physically shattered alcoholic.

During Jimmy's short lifetime, the project never got off the ground, but in 1960, it was adapted into a minor movie featuring a young Jack Nicholson in one of his first film roles. In 1979, it was adapted once again into a TV series starring Harry Hamlin.

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Billy Wilder wanted Jimmy to play the aviator Charles Lindbergh in *The Spirit of St. Louis,* set for release in 1957. The script was to depict the thirty-three hour transatlantic flight of the young aviator in his monoplane crossing the Atlantic. Setting a world's record, he landed at Le Bourget in Paris on May 21, 1927, when it seemed that most of Paris turned out to give him a tumultuous welcome.

Even though he was the right age to play Lindbergh, and vaguely resembled him, Jimmy rejected the role.

At the time, although he was forty-seven years old, and Lindbergh at the time of his crossing was twenty-five, James Stewart was also vigorously campaigning for the role. He went on a diet, dyed his hair, and worked out every day, trying to beef up his beanpole physique.

In this still from *The Spirit of St. Louis*, a "too old for the part" James Stewart impersonates the twenty-something Charles Lindbergh in a

role originally rejected by James Dean.

Jimmy had objected to the script because he wanted more spice in it. He wished to insert a scene showing Lindbergh picking up a waitress in a diner to seduce her before taking off from New Jersey. “It might have been his last chance for a good fuck,” Jimmy told Wilder.

He also wanted some scenes of a younger Lindbergh in flashbacks, before any footage depicting his transatlantic success, as well as an overview of his reaction to the kidnapping of his child in 1932.

“The audience has to understand the character,” Jimmy lectured Wilder, “or else I’ll be reduced to looking out at the clouds until I get to Paris.”

He later said, “I just couldn’t see myself sitting up there for thirty-three hours in that airplane, pissing in a jar.”

[If circumstances had been different, Stewart and Jimmy might have worked together on the same film, East of Eden. *For a while, Elia Kazan considered casting the veteran actor in the role of Jimmy’s stern, puritanical father. But the role went to the more suitably cast Raymond Massey. Jimmy told Kazan, “Stewart is too lovable a character to play the mean father role.]*

Wilder briefly considered casting Jimmy’s rival, John Kerr, in the role before finally giving in to Stewart. Upon its release, *The Spirit of St. Louis*—made for $6 million—was massively promoted as the saga of a hero who became the first person in history who was in New Jersey one day and in Paris the next. In spite of the hype, the movie failed at the box office, although some critics cited Stewart’s “boyishness.”

***

Jimmy was shopping around for a heroic sports hero to show his versatility. He had agreed to star as Rocky Graziano in the boxing film, *Somebody Up There Likes Me,* but died before the picture was made. In the aftermath, the role went to Paul Newman.

***

Jimmy also gave serious consideration to starring in *Fear Strikes Out,* the story of the mentally disturbed baseball player, Jim Piersall, who cracked under the pressure of a domineering father. Piersall was the baseball center fielder who played seventeen seasons in the Major League from 1950 to 1967.

Tony Perkins, as an emotionally unbalanced baseball player, a role rejected by James Dean, in *Fear Strikes Out.*

The movie would deal with the baseball great’s bipolar disorder, not a subject guaranteed to lure 1950s audiences to their local movie houses. In 1957, the role went to Tony Perkins, Jimmy’s rival and sometimes lover, still being billed as “The New James Dean.”

***

After *Giant*, Jimmy didn't want to be cast in another Western, although he was vastly intrigued at the thought of playing Billy the Kid, which had been brought to the screen many times, even by Robert Taylor. Instead of some idolized figure from the Old West, Jimmy wanted to play him as a baby-faced, cold-blooded killer.

At the Château Marmont, Gore Vidal told him that he was working on a very different script. All of his reading about Billy the Kid had convinced him that the bandit was a homosexual.

Paul Newman in a role offered to but rejected by James Dean, *The Left Handed Gun.*

Once again, Jimmy's death would prevent him from taking a role he truly wanted to play. And once again, the role went to Paul Newman. Word buzzed around Hollywood that Newman was going to "play Gore Vidal's fag cowboy."

Newman seemingly went through very few struggles about playing a subtly gay role. He once said, "Ever since I was a kid, I've never been able to understand attacks on the gay community."

Even Vidal's title, *The Left Handed Gun,* was a code for being gay. *[The historical figure of Billy the Kid, born Henry McCarty, also known as William H. Bonney (1859 – 1881), was actually right-handed.]*

Jack Warner objected to Vidal's script. "When movie-goers hear that Newman is going gay, they'll stay away from the theaters in droves."

Leslie A Stevens III was called in to revise Vidal's script, turning *Billy the Kid* from a repressed homosexual into more of a surrogate father-son drama with a Freudian subtext.

Newman later referred to the revised version, released in 1958, as "*The Left Handed Jockstrap."*

Arthur Penn, a young Turk from TV land, directed the picture. He later claimed that "Paul Method-acted his way through the entire film. At one point, he curls up in a ball on the floor, a scene and acting style that was pure James Dean."

Newman confided to Fred Coe, the producer, "I feel Dean could have done a better job than me. That thought is driving me crazy, leading to an extra three beers every night."

Edna Ferber Doesn't Like Texas

And They Don't Like Her

Born in 1885 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Edna Ferber was a best-selling novelist and playwright, author of such celebrated works as *So Big* (1924); *Show Boat* (1926), *Cimarron* (1929), and *Giant* (1952). The daughter of a Hungarian-born Jewish storekeeper, she was a lesbian who never married.

Edna Ferber with James Dean, unconvincingly made up to resemble an aging Jett Rink. Note his new hairline.

Ivan Moffat and Fred Guiol were assigned the difficult task of reducing her 447-page novel into a 178-page script, which they completed in April of 1955.

Before tackling it, they read various comments from critics about her novel. John Barkham in *The New York Times* noted, "Miss Ferber makes it very clear she doesn't like the Texas she writes about, and it's a cinch that when Texans read about what she has written about them, they won't like her either."

Marghanita Laski in the *Spectator* claimed that "Edna Ferber can always be relied on for a good story interwoven with fascinating information and sound moral judgments on the shortcomings as well as the virtues of her country and its history."

Moffat was a British screenwriter and the grandson of the famous Edwardian actor and theatrical producer, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917). *[A brilliant actor long associated with London's Haymarket Theatre, and an influential visionary in the entertainment industry of his day, he arranged some of the first filmed versions of segments of Shakespearean plays.]*

As such, Moffat was an odd choice as author of a screenplay about Texas. He'd met George Stevens in World War II during his filming of the activities of the U.S. Army in Europe. After the war, Moffat followed Stevens to Hollywood, assisting him at Paramount.

There, he became known for his high-profile affairs, notably with Elizabeth Taylor and later with Lady Caroline Blackwood. His gay friend, author Christopher Isherwood, said, "He's so pretty and bright-eyed, it's no wonder he's in bed with some woman every night."

Another odd choice to adapt Ferber to the screen was Guiol, who had worked at the Hal Roach Studios for several years and was known for directing many of the Laurel and Hardy movies. Although a sort of "odd couple" writing team, Moffat and Guiol would be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay of 1955.

Although many films had already been adapted from novels by Edna Ferber, the first time she actually visited a movie set was in Marfa, Texas.

She arrived there in time to see Elizabeth emoting in front of the camera. She later interpreted that day's depiction of Leslie as "simpering." When the completed film was finally released, she did not approve of her, but kept quiet, because her contract called for her to share in the profits.

During Ferber's second day on the set, she met Jimmy. In a memoir, *A Kind of Magic,* she wrote: "He was an original. Impish, compelling, magnetic, utterly winning one moment, obnoxious the next. Definitely gifted, frequently maddening."

She sized him up, telling him, "Your profile is startlingly like that of John Barrymore, but then, I know your motorcycle racing or one thing or another will fix that."

Before she flew out of Texas, Jimmy took a picture of her. Days before he died, he was working on a sculpture of her back at his studio in Hollywood.

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Just an hour after completing his post-recording of *Rebel Without a Cause,* Jimmy, in early June of 1955, was aboard a train headed to Marfa in the high desert of the Trans-Pecos of West Texas. Founded in the early 1880s as a waterstop, the bleak little outpost was located between the Davis mountain range and Big Bend National Park.

The Benedict Mansion, a studio prop, under construction on the Evans Ranch in Marfa.

What he found when he got there was a drought-stricken town where daytime temperatures sometimes rose to 120° F. It was a three-hour drive from El Paso, and some sixty miles north of the Mexican border.

The cast and crew of *Giant* had swelled the population of Marfa to 3,000. Many locals rented their homes to them and camped out in tents during the filming.

On Main Street stood one hotel and two movie houses, each showing Mexican films. Technicians had produced the façade of a three-story Victorian mansion, the abode of the Benedicts. It had been built in Burbank and shipped east to Texas. Since Marfa lies in a part of West Texas without oil wells, Warners had to erect derricks that gushed *ersatz* crude.

George Stevens set about creating harmony in the town by employing some 200 locals, thereby easing tensions between the town and its invaders. The local newspaper, *The Big Sentinel,* had denounced Ferber's novel, defining it as "superficial and derogatory to Texans."

For the big barbecue scene, Stevens invited a lot of Texas millionaires to participate, winning their support, since they wanted to see themselves in the film, not realizing that it was mocking and satirizing them.

One of the cast members, crusty Chill Wills, knew Marfa well, having made a film there in 1950 called *High Lonesome,* in which he co-starred with John Drew Barrymore.

During the course of *Giant's* 198 minutes, it moves through the rise and failing fortunes of Texans, with side detours into moral dissipation, racism, miscegenation, the oppression of women, oil well conflicts, and the changing social scenario of Texas itself. The movie's subplot involves the war between the longtime Texas aristocracy and the *nouveau riche* wildcatters whose oil wells have "come in big."

For Elizabeth, after suffering through all those "rubbish" movies at MGM, *Giant* became a milestone in her life. Other than being saddled with a husband she didn't want, her biggest problem involved having to postpone her flourishing romance with Kevin McClory, a production assistant to Mike Todd, who would become her next husband.

"I'll Never Work With the Cocky Little Bastard Ever Again"

—Director George Stevens, in reference to James Dean

Ever since he'd seen *A Place in the Sun* (1951), with Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor, Jimmy had nothing but praise for Stevens, its director. Before heading for Texas, he told the press: "George Stevens is the greatest director of them all, even better than Elia Kazan. He was born to make movies. Hollywood can, on occasion, make a great movie. I have a feeling that *Giant* will be up there with the best of them."

[Alas, after the first week of working with Stevens, he would have a radically different opinion.]

"Stevens is so real, so unassuming," Jimmy went on. "You'll be talking to him, thinking he missed your point and then—bang!—he has it."

For the first two weeks of shooting, the location was in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Bick (Rock Hudson) meets and falls in love with his future bride, Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor). Jimmy stayed behind in Texas, working with Bob Hinkle, his dialogue coach. Hinkle was also teaching him rope tricks.

In just two weeks, Jimmy seemed to have mastered the Texas drawl and its "lock-hipped swagger of a wrangler." On weekends, he and Hinkle headed for the enveloping desert to shoot jack rabbits and coyotes.

Pat Hinkle taught Jimmy how to walk and talk, Texan style.

Nicknamed "Texas Bob," Hinkle had grown up in Brownsville, Texas, at the state's southernmost tip. "We were so poor, we could afford only a tumbleweed for a pet," Hinkle claimed. Early stints in show business had included gigs as a rodeo rider and a diction coach. During the course of the shooting, he trained not only Jimmy, but Rock Hudson in the subtleties of portraying a "Texan."

For some fifty years, Hinkle remained active in show business as a diction coach, a director, a friend of movie stars, and occasionally, a film producer. In 1963, Paul Newman asked him "to do for me what you did for Dean in *Giant."* At the time, Newman was preparing for his award-winning role in *Hud,* co-starring with Patricia Neal and Melvyn Douglas.

After his return from filming the Maryland (as shot in Virginia) segments of *Giant,* Stevens learned that Jimmy had slipped away and had competed in a racecar rally in Bakersfield, California. In that race, Jack Drummond, a thirty-year-old ace driver, had been killed.

Horrified at the implications of that, Stevens demanded that Jimmy "Give up car racing until this picture is wrapped. Then you can kill your fool self."

"I don't have a death wish," Jimmy protested. "I'm not risking my life, since I have too much to live for. There are too many things I want to do in this one life."

Before *Giant*, Stevens had worked with some of the biggest names in Hollywood, including Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy in *Woman of the Year* (1942); with Cary Grant and Jean Arthur in *Talk of the Town* (also 1942); and Alan Ladd and Jean Arthur in *Shane* (1953).

Stevens was well acquainted with Elizabeth, having directed her in 1951's *A Place in the Sun,* but he'd never helmed Hudson or Jimmy. He found Hudson relatively compliant, "always on the mark, always knowing his dialogue, and carrying out my instructions perfectly."

In contrast, he found his working relationship with Jimmy much more difficult, defining it as a "rapport of challenge."

Stevens was a perfectionist, demanding that a small scene be reshot sometimes as many as fifty times. Several times, Jimmy shouted back at him, "I got the god damn thing right on the first take."

[Weeks later, when Stevens was editing the final version, he realized that he'd shot 25,000 feet of film, and used only 7,500 feet of it, ultimately producing a movie with a running time of 198 minutes.

In a memo to Jack Warner, Stevens complained about Jimmy, citing his "tardiness, his unmanageableness, his soaring resistance to reasonable demands, differing from what I have in mind, and his depleting the morale of the entire company. My impression is that is a George Stevens Production, not a James Dean Production."

In protest, Jimmy said, “I can’t get my ideas of Jett Rink over to Stevens. I know Jett better than Stevens does. He just won’t listen to me. He’s trying to keep me from making a truly great picture instead of a mediocre Western.”

“The cocky little bastard accuses me of interfering with his work,” Stevens claimed. “I accuse him of jeopardizing my movie. I’m the son of a bitch running this show, not some snot-nosed cocksucker from Indiana who takes it up the ass.”

Eartha Kitt remembered desperate phone calls from Marfa during the wee hours of the morning. “Jamie sounded like he was going out of his mind. He felt that Stevens was sacrificing his character and devoting all his attention to Rock Hudson or to Elizabeth Taylor, who had star billing over him.”

“He told me that *Giant* was too big in an artificial way,” Stevens said. “He wanted his interpretation as an old man to be quite different from what it was turning out to be.”

It would have been interesting to view an aging Jett Rink the way Jimmy wanted to play him. As it turned out, his interpretation of Jett Rink as a drunken senior citizen was his weakest characterization, eliciting the harshest criticism.

During another call, Jimmy complained to Eartha about Hudson. “How can I create a character working with someone so plastic? I feel nothing from him. I also have no support from Elizabeth in her later incarnation as she’s maturing. They are not maturing with me. They are the same from beginning to end; only their hair has been grayed. You can’t be an old person by aging your face with makeup and by putting some gray stripes in your hair. You have to imagine old. You have to become old.”

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After the first two weeks of filming, Stevens said, “Dean never understands that Jett Rink is only part of the film, not the central figure. In his first two movies, he was the primary focus. But I have two other stars: Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor.”

When Stevens attacked Jimmy’s performance in front of cast and crew, the actor became very sullen, addressing the director as “Fatso.” He also began to show up late, once going an entire day without making an appearance and holding up production which, of course, ran up costs for Warners.

Reflecting later on the turmoil he suffered from Jimmy, Stevens said, “All in all, it was a headache to work with him. He was always pulling and hauling, and he had developed this cultivated, designed irresponsibility. It’s tough on you, he seemed to imply, but I’ve got to do it my way. From the director’s point of view, this is not the most delightful sort of fellow to work with. Anyway, he delivered his performance, and he cracked himself up, and I can’t say I’m happy about all that’s happening about that. There are some people involved in it who don’t show up well.”

[When Stevens saw the final cut of Giant, *he said, “I made the right decision in casting Dean, the little bastard, as Jett Rink. But he’ll never appear in another picture that I’ll direct.]*

“Rock Hudson Is Giving Me a Sore Ass”

—James Dean

Because of the severe housing shortage in Marfa, only a few members of the cast were granted the privilege of living alone, privately and without roommates, in a house of their own. The best of the rented homes went to Elizabeth Taylor. Her husband, Michael Wilding, remained, for the most part, in California with their children.

Jimmy was assigned lodgings in a rented house that he shared with Rock Hudson and Chill Wills. Wills had his own bedroom, and Hudson and Jimmy would sleep in a small room with twin beds. The building’s only bathroom was shared by all three of them.

When Jimmy arrived there, he introduced himself to Wills, who invited him for a beer in the kitchen. He wasn’t familiar with the career of this actor and set out to learn what he could.

The folksy, shaggy-haired actor had gotten his start singing in medicine and minstrel shows before abandoning them and heading to Hollywood.

Soon, he was appearing as a sidekick cowboy in Westerns or else as a backwoods rustic equivalent to the role

he'd been assigned in *The Yearling* (1946) with Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman. That same year, he appeared as a roughshod but good-natured "diamond in the rough" with Judy Garland in *The Harvey Girls.*

Chill Wills in 1953. He was the roommate of Rock Hudson and James Dean in shared quarters in Marfa, Texas. "I heard a lot...a hell of a lot." Later, he took Jimmy and Dennis Hopper "on a jaybird naked cruise off the coast of Catalina."

[He would go on to become the voice of Francis, the Talking Mule*, in that series of pictures starring Donald O'Connor. Our favorite?* Francis Joins the WACs (1954).*]*

In his raspy, homespun voice, Wills enthralled Jimmy with tales of growing up in Texas, the effect of which deepened his understanding of the character he was playing.

As they talked, Jimmy felt he was getting close to understanding the mentality of a dyed-in-the-wool Texan. Wills had been born in Seagoville (now a suburb of Dallas) in the hot summer of 1903. His views had never changed from those learned growing up. As Jimmy later said, "I liked him for some strange reason, but he was to the right of Joseph Goebbels, hating what he called 'niggers, Mexicans, Hollywood Jews, and Indians.'"

[In spite of their deeply divided views of the world, some sort of bond was formed. "He is about the most amusing old redneck I've ever met," Jimmy later said.

In fact, back in Hollywood, Wills invited Jimmy and Dennis Hopper for a weekend of charter fishing off the coast of Catalina Island. "During our sail, those two boys, out at sea, walked around jaybird naked. By the time it came for them to retreat to their bunks at night, I was too drunk to care what they were up to. I retreated to my own cabin to sleep it off.]

Wills would later describe to Forrest Tucker and John Wayne, among others, what it was like living in small quarters with James Dean and Rock Hudson. "The walls were paper thin. For the first week or so, those two pretty boys were as happy as a pig in shit. Those creaky bedsprings got a lot of workout."

[In 1987, Elizabeth Taylor told Star *magazine that, "In the beginning, I thought Rock and Jimmy were two lovebirds. When I was with the both of them, I felt like an uncomfortable third party. But that was to change very soon.]*

"Jimmy and Rock were two such very different kind of men and polar opposites as actors," she said." It seemed inevitable that their fucking would soon turn to feuding. It was a short honeymoon before war was declared. Jimmy moved out."

On the day he left, he told Wills, "Hudson is trying to queer me and make me his bitch. My ass is sore. He's too big."

Jimmy may have resented the enormous buildup that Warners was giving Hudson. One press release trumpeted, "The prize acting plum of the year, one which has often been reported in the grasp of a number of Hollywood's top male stars, goes to a dark horse who has never once been mentioned in the spirited competition. Hudson will be co-starring with the beautiful Elizabeth Taylor, with newcomer James Dean in a small supporting role."

Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson as man and wife in Texas. For a brief time, they were also off-screen lovers. Later in life, a drunken Elizabeth once said, “Occasionally, Rock delivered a mercy fuck to a woman.”

Jimmy almost detested Stevens on sight, but Hudson seemed to adore him. Or, as Jimmy said, “He follows Stevens around like a lovesick puppy.”

During their filming of *Giant,* Rock appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, headlined as “Hollywood’s Most Handsome Bachelor.”

Life speculated about why the twenty-nine-year-old had never gotten married, telling its readers that it was about time he explained to his fans why.

The very urbane, very handsome, very charming Rock Hudson

At times, Jimmy found Rock very troubled. Somehow, a blackmailer had obtained sexually explicit photographs of him and was demanding a lot of money, more than Hudson had.

Jimmy and Hudson had completely different approaches to acting. Jimmy was from the Marlon Brando/ Monty Clift/ Rod Steiger/ Eli Wallach school of (Method) acting, and Hudson was from the “erotic hunk of beefcake academy” whose members also included Tab Hunter, John Derek, and Guy Madison.

When Jimmy was forced to act out a scene with Hudson, he referred to his colleague as “a lump of dead wood.” In retaliation, Hudson called Jimmy “that little scruff.”

When Hudson got to know Elizabeth more intimately, he confessed to her, “I want sex, real man-on-man sex, but I don’t go in for this kinky stuff. Dean wants to get into that claw-footed, old timey bathtub we have, and then

he begs me to piss on him. He also likes me to burn his ass with my cigarette butt—shit like that. I'm not into all this sicko crap."

Hudson would later tell Elizabeth, "Dean is the kind of guy who could make mad, passionate love with you one minute. Then, after he shoots off, he starts complaining about your acting. It's amazing."

The former child star, Jane Withers, was cast as a *nouveau riche* oil heiress, Vashti Snythe, in *Giant,* a role that several other aging actresses also wanted. On screen, Jimmy eyes her skeptically, but off-screen, she became his "mother confessor."

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Instead of spending time with Hudson, Jimmy bonded with Jane Withers. She had beat out more established stars to get the role in *Giant* of Vashti Snythe. Withers had worked as a child actress since the age of three. Less than a decade later, at the age of eleven and twelve, she emerged as one of Hollywood's top box office stars of 1937 and 1938.

At the time that Jimmy met her, she was divorcing a rich Texas oilman, William P. Moss, Jr., with whom she had produced three children.

[Oddly enough, her greatest fame would come in the 1960s and early 70s, based on her TV commercials for Comet as "Josephine the Plumber."]

During the Marfa shoot, Withers turned her rented lodgings into a kind of USO-inspired social center. Inviting cast and crew to hang out there at night. She played records, organized games, and served refreshments, but didn't allow liquor or poker.

She recalled that Jimmy would sit in his parked car across the street from her house. "He'd wait until my eleven o'clock curfew, when I kicked everybody out. Then he'd come in alone and talk to me until two or three o'clock in the morning. That certainly interfered with my sleep when I had a 4AM call on the set."

"I think that in some way, I helped Jimmy get over his negative attitude toward life," she said. "He became my Number Three son. We sometimes read the Bible together."

[Long after Jimmy died, Withers appeared in a DVD documentary about his life, revealing that she owned this favorite pink shirt he wore off screen nearly all the time. He didn't want it washed, fearing that it would lose its vibrancy. "It was pretty rank, so he let me wash it for him. I did this often. In fact, before he left for Salinas on that fateful day of September 30, 1955, he came by house and dropped off the pink shirt for me to wash. He told me he'd drop by and pick it up when he returned from Salinas. That pink shirt is still hanging in my closet."]

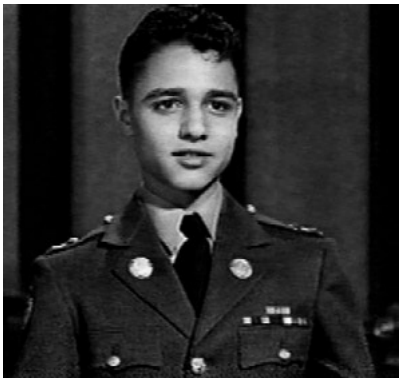
Sal Mineo

Adios! to *Rebel Without a Cause* and Jimmy, *Hola!* to *Giant* and to The Rock

Jimmy had campaigned for Stevens to cast his sometimes lover, Sal Mineo, in the small role of Angel Obregon II, the son of poor Mexican immigrants. Jimmy said, "Sal has the look of the angels." The director agreed and gave Mineo the small but key role. *[Mineo had no scenes with Jimmy onscreen.]* They'd been lovers on the set of *Rebel*

Without a Cause, and the Italian-American actor retained powerful emotions. He had bought a rebuilt Mercury like the car his idol had driven in *Rebel.* He had also taken to wearing a red jacket similar to the one Jimmy had worn in it.

"My father made coffins, hand-finishing them for the Bronx Casket Company, where he was a hand-finisher and later, a foreman," Mineo said years later, in Manhattan, to Darwin Porter. "Near the end of *Giant,* I join the Army and leave Texas, only to be sent back in a coffin. Since my dad made coffins, I tried to get Stevens to use one of his since it was my coffin in the film, but he turned down my offer."



Sal Mineo was cast as a U.S. soldier in Giant. returning from war in a coffin. Like James Dean, in real life, he would meet a violent end. At 9:30PM February 12, 1976, a paramedic noted in his report that Sal Mineo's murder had been committed in an alley at the rear of his Manhattan apartment. He had died from a single stab wound to the middle of his chest, apparently part of a garden-variety mugging unrelated to his status as a movie celebrity.

"I did not have to go to Texas because my scenes were shot at Warners in Burbank. But I went there anyway, to see what was happening and with the intention of shacking up with either Jimmy or Rock—or maybe both, if I got lucky."

"When I got there, I found out that Jimmy had moved out of the house with Rock, and that big, muscular son of a bitch was looking for another boy ass. I volunteered and he got mine."

"I didn't think I had a chance, because the rumor was that he preferred tall, blonde-haired and muscular guys who looked liked Steve Reeves. Here I was, a 5'8", raven-haired 120-pound, olive-skinned WOP from the Bronx."

"But he really came on to me and invited me to spend the night with him in a bed recently vacated by Jimmy. What a pounding I got that night! He nearly split me open, and I loved it. I got to spend two of the most glorious weeks of my life in bed with Rock until he discovered this cowboy in Marfa. Into that little bedroom went the cowboy. Out went Sal Mineo."

"Jimmy broke off his friendship with me when he heard I'd slept with Rock. We later made up. I'd planned to get involved with him again, since we'd been cast together in the boxing movie, *Somebody Up There Likes Me.* Of course, that was not to happen. Into my life walked Paul Newman instead."

"The last time I saw Jimmy, I almost didn't recognize him," Mineo said. "It was on the Warners lot. I was coming out of the commissary as he was going in. This old man with gray hair, a mustache, and hunched shoulders passed me by. Well, almost passed me by. He stopped and groped my salami. I was about to punch him out when I saw through the makeup. It was Jimmy. He grabbed me and embraced me. He promised to call me real soon."

"It was a day in late September. That phone call never came in. The next thing I heard, he was dead."

Biff Beaufort, a Hot Local Cowboy, Is Reconfigured as "Sage Durango"

Based on Jimmy's Advice, He Rides Into the Sunset Toward Henry Willson's Dream Factory

After Hudson, Jimmy was soon shacking up with a tall, blonde-haired, handsome cowboy he'd presumably met through Pat Hinkle.

Biff Beaufort had drifted down from Wyoming, where he'd gotten into some trouble with the law. Jimmy was immediately attracted to the 6'4" rodeo rider.

It was reported that he borrowed some of Beaufort's characteristics for his portrayal of Jett Rink.

Hollywood Dreams

May They Rest in Peace:

Whatever Happened to Biff Beaufort, *aka*

SAGE DURANGO?

Whenever they could get away, they drove off to a battered-looking shack about ten miles from Marfa. Otherwise, they lived together in the town's only hotel.

Jimmy spoke little about his relationship with Beaufort, except to tell about one of the most romantic nights he'd ever spent in his life.

It was a clear night when two horses took Jimmy and the cowboy to a scenic outlook on the outskirts of town. Perhaps that was the night Beaufort shared his dream with Jimmy, and that involved becoming a Hollywood star. "I'm bigger and better looking than Rock Hudson," he bragged.

Actually, he wanted Jimmy to promise to take him back to Hollywood after the filming of *Giant.* Jimmy didn't really want to do that, as he had other plans.

He had an idea. One night, he asked Beaufort to put on a pair of tight-fitting briefs. He told him to get them wet in the bathtub, thereby making them semi-transparent. Then Jimmy photographed him, "bulging out" of those briefs.

He sent the photograph to Henry Willson in Hollywood. At the time, Willson was "dating," (of all people) Margaret Truman, the daughter of the former U.S. president Harry S Truman.

Five days later, Willson responded, sending Beaufort a one-way train ticket to Los Angeles and a money order for five hundred dollars. Willson wrote, "I've already changed his name: Instead of Biff Beaufort, why not Sage Durango?"

The re-christened cowboy spent his last night in Texas in Jimmy's arms before riding a train to Los Angeles.

With only weeks to live, Jimmy never heard of him after that.

Oil Baron, Glenn McCarthy

JIMMY FLIES TO HOUSTON WITH THE KING OF TEXAS

"I've flown to this hellhole of Marfa just to size you up," said the big, burly Texan who stood before Jimmy, looking him up and down. "That asshole, George Stevens, must have been on something when he cast a little runt like you to play me on the screen. Hell, I'm bigger than the State of Texas itself. You look like the kind of pretty boy a whore might ask, 'Are you in yet?'"

"Thanks for the buildup. I'm James Dean. Just who in hell are you?

"I'm Glenn McCarthy, the King of Texas. In case you didn't know, that pussy-eater, Edna Ferber, based Jett Rink on me."

Jimmy did some sizing up too. Indiana didn't produce men like McCarthy. His eyes were hidden behind the darkest sunglasses Jimmy had ever seen. He wore a gleaming leather jacket with a leopard-patterned ascot. On his pinkie rested a diamond ring which Jimmy thought might have been the Hope Diamond.

[McCarthy's nickname was "Diamond Glenn.]

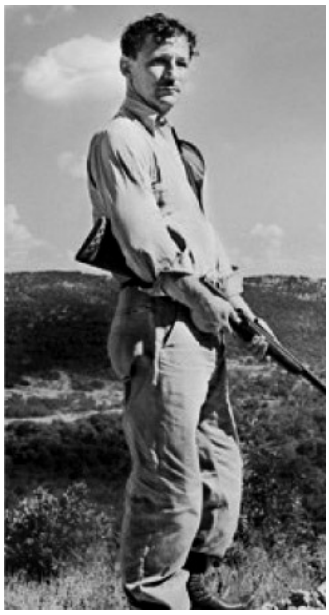
"Listen, Buddy, you don't have to be big in person to look big on the screen," Jimmy answered.

"Guess you're right, kid," McCarthy said. "After all, everything's blown up thirty feet or so, isn't it?"

In the late 1940s, much of America knew who McCarthy was, as he ranked up there with that coven of billionaire Texas oilmen such as H.L. Hunt, Clint Murchison, and Hugh Roy Cullen.

As a wildcatter, McCarthy drilled himself a fortune of "black gold," built the massive and legendary Shamrock Hotel in Houston, and then, in time, faded into obscurity, a relatively forgotten figure.

He was called "Texas Crude, a stereotype of the raw, hard-living, bourbon-swilling, damn-thetorpedoes, Texas oil millionaire," as one reporter defined him.



Oil baron Glenn McCarthy on his 15,000-acre ranch near Uvalde, Texas, about 80 miles west of San Antonio.

Author Bryon Burrough wrote that McCarthy rubbed shoulders with the likes of Howard Hughes, another Texan billionaire, and such movie stars as Errol Flynn and John Wayne, "drinking and brawling his way from Buffalo Bayou to Sunset Boulevard." At the peak of his fame in the late 1940s, he was depicted on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Jimmy was almost stunned by the larger-than-life creature who stood before him, now, in Marfa. Then, welcoming the chance to study the character he was depicting on film, he accepted McCarthy's invitation to fly with him to Houston for a weekend at the Shamrock Hotel. *[Ironically, although McCarthy had built and widely*

publicized it, at this stage in his fortunes, he was no longer in full control of its management.]

Before the end of their time together, Jimmy had learned plenty about McCarthy, perhaps more than he needed to know. McCarthy enthralled him with stories of his wildcat days, when he was known as the hottest oil finder, and biggest risk taker, in Texas.

James Dean in a detail from a scene in *Giant.*

"I owned 15,000 acres of West Texas prairie outside Uvalde," McCarthy boasted. "Hell, Rock Hudson as Bick Benedict could also be playing me, but he's not wild enough like you are, kid. I've heard stories about you. I hope it's just a rumor that you suck cock."

"But if you are," he continued, "you've come to the state where the men have the biggest dicks in America. At a urinal, I stood next to Lyndon Johnson. He called his 'Jumbo.' We sized each other up. I had him beat, but not by much."

Arriving at the Shamrock, Jimmy was ushered into the gray-granite, eighteen-story hotel. He stood in awe at the sight of the cavernous lobby covered with Honduran mahogany. "It's called the Lone Star State's answer to the Taj Mahal," McCarthy said.

"I felt like a king riding the elevator up to the top floor of this colossus where I was installed in the guest bedroom of McCarthy's suite."

Two hours later, the two men descended together to the lavish bar, where McCarthy treated him to what he called "Kentucky bourbon a century old."

"No one makes bourbon like Kentuckians," he said. "It's got that special flavor. I hear they piss into the mash for that zippy tang."

Over drinks, McCarthy amused Jimmy with stories of the spectacular opening of the Shamrock in March of 1949, when dignitaries flew in from all over Europe and North America. He said he rented the entire fourteen cars of the Santa Fe Railway, renaming it "The Shamrock Special" as it hauled movie stars to Houston from Los Angeles for the hotel's lavishly publicized gala opening.

It was disastrous. "I invited two-thousand people and about another five-thousand showed up, storming all over the place and disrupting everything. It became a raging stampede, Texas-style."

The press described it as "a gaudy, diamond-strewn, chaotic metaphor for the New Texas of the vulgar *nouveau riche."*

*"*I personally checked in my first guest, Frank Sinatra," McCarthy said. "Later that night, I arranged for him to fuck Miss Texas."

To beef up the entertainment, he also staged the premiere of a movie. Because nothing recent was available at the time, he decided to finance his own, arranging for a scriptwriter to turn out a sad story of a young girl who wants to raise two baby lambs. "I cast Natalie Wood in the part when she was still a child star, long before you got to mess with her in *Rebel Without a Cause.* Walter Brennan was her co-star."

[It was a low-budget affair for RKO, one that extolled the virtues of Heartland values and 4-H clubs. The love interest was provided by Robert Paige and Marguerite Chapman, a glamorous brunette. It wasn't shot in Texas, but near the Feather River outside Sacramento.]

"Natalie had a special plate at her dining table every night for her pet Chihuahua. Her left wrist got broken when we shot this dramatic scene of her crossing a collapsing bridge in a thunderstorm, a stunt that went wrong. Her mother didn't get a doctor for her. I hear that even today, her left wrist is misshapen. But you'd know more about that than I do. If you go for young poontang like I do, I'm sure you've banged her. Which reminds me—I've invited two sixteen-year-olds to join us. I married a sixteen-year-old, and I've been addicted to sixteen-year-old pussy ever since."

McCarthy also claimed that he started the tradition of Texas oilmen marrying movie stars. "I invited Joan Crawford to christen my *Flying Shamrock* with a bottle of the world's most expensive champagne. I bought a P38 fighter plane and spent another $50,000 upgrading it. Later that day, I fucked Crawford high in the clouds. My Errol Flynn mustache tickled her twat when I went down on her."

"She wanted to marry me," he said. "But I turned her down. We got a lot of publicity in the papers."

[He went on to cite a long list of other oil tycoons from Texas who had "married Hollywood." Oil magnate Bill Moss had married Jane Withers. After their divorce, Moss wed Ann Miller. Howard Lee married Hedy Lamarr. After Lee dumped her, he married Gene Tierney. Dallas oilman Buddy Ferguson married Greer Garson.]

Later, back in Marfa, Jimmy omitted details about what happened that night in Houston with the underaged prostitutes whose services McCarthy had arranged. He did, however, tell Stevens, "Glenn McCarthy sure knows how to show a guy a good time. I'll never be the same again. Finally, I had to tell him to quit sending up any more *putas.* Enough is enough."

Mercedes McCambridge

"The Meanest, Most Macho Woman in Texas"

Jimmy bonded with yet another member of the cast, Mercedes McCambridge. Nicholas Ray had shown Jimmy a film he'd directed, the campy *Johnny Guitar* (1954) with Mercedes and Joan Crawford.

In reference to her autobiography, Mercedes McCambridge wrote, "I wanted to call the book *Life Is a Bitch,* but my publisher wouldn't let me. Jimmy, however, liked what I wanted to entitle my memories."

McCambridge, cast as Bick's butchy sister, harboring a deep-seated hatred for Bick's wife (Taylor), had won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her debut performance in *All the King's Men* (1949) opposite Broderick

Crawford.

"My character in *Giant* liked Jett Rink," she said. "We bonded both on and off the screen. It's true, he was a little bastard, but an amusing one. My role was small, but I was nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting actress once again. I didn't last long in the picture, as I was mangled to death by a mean horse."

There were two bars in Marfa, and she and Jimmy often hung out in both of them every night for a while. She told him stories about growing up in Joliet, Illinois and her work in radio before arriving on Broadway for a role in *A Place of Her Own.* A critic said, "She attracted attention with her tight-lipped performance with her cold, demanding eyes."

She discussed working with Broderick Crawford in *All the King's Men.* "Believe it or not, that tough, burly, macho bastard was gay as a goose. He would really have gone for you."

Pretending to be Texans, and although most of the crew didn't like them, Mercedes McCambridge and James Dean became friends on the set of *Giant.* Midway through the filming, she fell off a horse and suffered lacerations to her face.

She also told him that Joan Crawford was "a mean, tipsy, powerful rotten egg lady. She put the make on me. When I didn't want to lick her pussy, she turned on me."

Night after night, Mercedes drank too much, and Jimmy would have to drag her back to the hotel. "Mercedes would down bourbon after bourbon until she passed out. Quite a gal. I liked her. She told it like it was, and spared no one."

She said, "Jimmy wanted to be patted like a little dog. He was the runt of a litter of thoroughbreds, and you could feel the loneliness beating its way out of him."

In her memoir, *The Quality of Mercy,* she wrote: "While he was playing Jett Rink, he was inseparable from Jett Rink. He did not become Jett Rink, but Jett Rink was his constant companion."

[September 30, 1955, occurred near the end of Mercedes's stay at a remote resort in the California desert. Its accommodations had plumbing, but no access to radios or newspapers. As she was driving back to Los Angeles, she stopped at a gas station in the little town of Cholame, where she spotted what used to be a shiny silver Porsche, now a mass of wreckage.

She inquired about it from the gas station attendant.

"Oh, didn't you know?"he asked. "James Dean was driving it. He was killed. It's been all over the news!"

She gasped. "I didn't know."]

ROCK HUDSON AND JIMMY DEAN

In and Out of Elizabeth Taylor's Bed

JIMMY EXPOSES HIMSELF TO 250 RUBBER NECKERS

Elizabeth recalled, “In Texas, Rock and I hit it off right away. The heat, humidity, and dust in Marfa were so thoroughly oppressive we had to bolster our spirits any way we could. So we stayed out drinking all night and luckily were young enough and resilient enough to go straight to the set in the morning with fresh complexions and with no bags under our eyes. During our toots, we concocted the best drink I’ve ever tasted—a chocolate martini made with vodka, Hershey’s syrup, and Kahlua. How we survived, I’ll never know.”

“Rock and Elizabeth were like kids again,” claimed Stevens. “They indulged in a kind of baby talk, and they liked to play pranks on each other, tossing water at each other from our rapidly dwindling supply.”

She told her assistant, Dick Hanley, “Rock has become my second best friend—no one will replace Monty as Number One.”

In Texas, Hudson and Elizabeth discovered nachos, devouring them along with a massive consumption of alcohol. “Then they staged belch-and-fart contests,” Dennis Hooper said.

During the filming of *Giant*, Rock Hudson provided emotional support for Elizabeth Taylor. She was distraught, as her marriage to Michael Wilding was crumbling. According to Hudson, “She is very extreme in her likes and dislikes. If she likes, she loves. If she doesn’t like, she loathes. She liked me.”

On the set of *Giant*, Elizabeth had to battle her weight problem. All those chocolate martinis she consumed with Hudson were obviously fattening. But Stevens complained that she compounded the problem with her midnight snacks, which consisted of homemade vanilla ice cream drenched in fudge and peanut butter, preceded by a series of mayonnaise sandwiches, “which I just adore.”

For about ten nights, Hudson seduced Elizabeth. Actually, she was the aggressor. She’d later tell Roddy McDowall something he already knew: “Rock is really endowed, and I mean *really*. As a lover, he’s very efficient and eager to get on with it. For me, it’s over before it begins. We’ve decided to be great friends, not lovers. No woman will ever succeed in igniting his enthusiasm in bed, and of that, I’m certain.”

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In the beginning, Jimmy was leary of Elizabeth, mainly because she’d lobbied to have Monty Clift designated as Jett Rink. Yet he was attracted to her. One hot afternoon between set-ups, he confided to Chill Wills one of his sexual fantasies. “In World War II, I heard women wore a shade of lipstick called Victory Red. My greatest turn-on would be to have three women, their mouths painted with that lipstick, each give me a blow-job—Elizabeth Taylor, Tallulah Bankhead, and Edith Piaf.”

Elizabeth Taylor as Leslie Benedict calls on Jett Rink (Jimmy) for tea. The sexual tension between them inflamed the hot Texas afternoon.

[Wills agreed on Elizabeth, but didn't know who Bankhead and Piaf were.]

James Dean had difficulty filming this "crucifixion" scene with Elizabeth. To ease his tension, "I took the most famous piss in the history of cinema, with all of Marfa looking on."

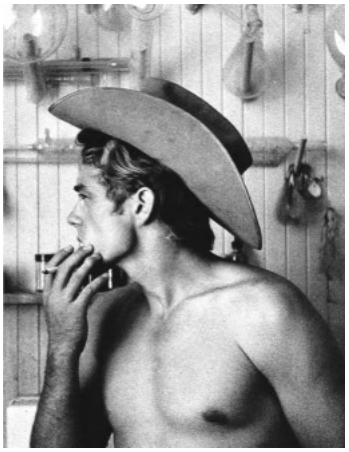
Elizabeth confided to Hanley, "Jimmy and I, in Texas, were at first rather suspicious of each other. We circled each other like two animals of prey. I was just another Hollywood star to him, all bosom and no brains. To me, he was a would-be intellectual New York Method actor. We were not prepared to dig each other at all."

Stevens later referred to the June 3rd filming of Jimmy's first scenes with Elizabeth as "a day that will live in infamy in the annals of cinema history." They were filmed on an open set at the Worth Evans Ranch, which Stevens had temporarily rented. It was the site of the famous scene where Jimmy was depicted with a rifle hoisted over his shoulders—he called it "my crucifixion pose."

Time and time again, he flubbed his lines. Watching the proceedings, Dennis Hopper said, "That was one nervous queen. He was fucking up big time with another Queen (i.e., Elizabeth) of Hollywood."

In front of at least 250 onlookers, Jimmy ruined take after take by freezing up. A total of sixteen shots failed. Suddenly, he broke from the set and walked over to a wire fence in front of the assembled population of Marfa, some of whom included children who had skipped school to attend this first ceremonial film shoot. As everyone looked on, he unzipped his jeans and hauled out his penis. Hopper claimed it looked about four inches soft. Shock waves were heard from the crowd as he took what he called "a horse piss."

He later told Hedda Hopper, “I knew that if I could piss in front of some two thousand *(sic)* people, I could do anything. I’m a Method actor.” Then he returned to the set and did the scene perfectly in one take. When it was over, he turned to Elizabeth: “I’m cool, man. It’s cool.”



When Jimmy saw this picture of himself as a Texan cowboy, he proclaimed, “This is the sexiest photo I’ve ever posed for. I could go for me myself.”

Eventually, they developed a friendship. “One night, he arrived at my house. He seemed engulfed in loneliness. We talked for hours. He loved our Siamese cats, and I gave him one of them. I knew he wanted something that belonged to him, something of his own, so I gave him a kitten. He cried when he accepted my gift.”

Jimmy seemed to dote on Marcus, the Siamese cat, but later gave the animal away. When asked why, he said, “I lead such a strange and unpredictable life that some night, I might never come home again. Then what would happen to Marcus?”

“After a while, we found we were just two human beings, and we became intimate friends,” Elizabeth said. “There was sex in the beginning, but none of that kinky shit that Rock talked about.”

“But, as in the case with Rock, Jimmy and I decided that we could hold each other to protect each other from the cold winds, but as friends, not as lovers.”

Perhaps as an emulation of Rock’s relationship with Elizabeth, Jimmy engaged in playful games with her. “Two kids on the playground,” Stevens called their intimacy.

However, during their moments of manic giddiness, he had a tendency to go too far. One day, he grabbed Elizabeth, picked her up off her feet, and turned her upside down so that her skirt fell over her head, exposing her “unmentionable” regions to photographers.

As she later told Stevens, “Fortunately, unlike Marilyn Monroe on most occasions, I wore my panties that day, or else my twat would be hanging on every bathroom wall in every man’s toilet in America.”

To Elizabeth, Jimmy always remained a mystery, but she came to love him. “Sometimes, Jimmy and I would sit up until three in the morning, talking, and he would tell me about his past life, his conflicts, and some of his loves and tragedies. And the next day it was almost as if he didn’t want to recognize me, or to remember that he had revealed so much of himself the night before. And so he would pass me and ignore me, or just give me a cursory nod of the head. And then it took him a day or two to become my friend again. I found all that hard to understand.”

As regards his military record, or lack thereof, he told Elizabeth, “I would have been shot down by some yellow boy in Korea, but I escaped the draft.”

Shortly before his death, he was said to have confided his most painful secrets to Elizabeth, sordid details of his life he shared with no other. One of these was revealed after Elizabeth’s death in 2011 by writer Kevin Sessums in *The Daily Beast*. Elizabeth had granted Sessums an interview in 1997.

“I’m going to tell you something, but it’s off the record until I die,” she told Sessums. “When Jimmy was eleven, he began to be molested by his minister. I think that haunted him the rest of his life. In fact, I know it did.”

[His biographers have long suspected there was a sexual relationship with the Rev. James DeWeerd, a Wesleyan pastor in Fairmount, Indiana, who had a penchant for young boys. For more on this, refer to Chapter Four of this

biography.]

When Hudson learned that Elizabeth was having an affair with Jimmy, he jokingly asked her, "Did he piss on you, or did you piss on him?"

"Let's just call it a tinkle-winkle," she said, perhaps jokingly.

***

Stevens had a closeup view of the shifting alliances and shifting romances of his major stars throughout the production of his film. Some of them later revealed some enticing details:

"George always had to have a patsy to pick on throughout every one of his films," Elizabeth claimed. "On *Giant,* it was both Jimmy and me. Actually, Rock and I speculated that George secretly had the hots for Jimmy. Whenever he thought Jimmy wasn't looking, he was always eying him like a lovesick schoolgirl. One scalding hot afternoon, when Jimmy didn't show up for work, George told Rock and me, 'I should punish the little bastard and make him suck my dick.'"

"George and I staged some epic battles under that hot sun," Elizabeth said. "Our biggest fight was when he wanted me to wear those thick brogue shoes and a long 'grandma-in-the-wilderness' skirt, plus a man's battered old cowboy hat. I attacked him for trying to force this ludicrous getup on me. I told him, 'What are you trying to do? Make me look like a lesbian in drag? I'm Elizabeth Taylor, in case you forgot it.'"

At first, Jimmy and Carroll Baker sat together whispering conspiratorially. "Our main diversion was making fun of Rock and Elizabeth," Baker later said. "We were cruel and cutting."

Carroll Baker, cast as Luz Benedict, daughter of the characters played by Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor in the multi-generational saga, *Giant.*

Baker was popular both as a sex symbol and also as a dramatic actress. She and Jimmy were the same age. She had beautiful features, striking blonde hair (not dyed), and a slight Southern drawl, despite her birth in Pennsylvania. A year later, *Baby Doll* (1956) earned her some screen notoriety, thanks to Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan.

Unaware of Jimmy's past, Baker, at first, didn't believe that he was a homosexual. She thought that the rumors about him being gay had begun on the set of *Giant* when he began to hang out with a "posse" of Texas cowboys. Unknown to the cast, these cowboys were gay, as were many men in the Old West. They rode together, slept together in bunks, bathed together, gave each other massages, including paying special attention to their buttocks, which were sore from riding too long in the saddle. And they made love at night.

An aging, lecherous Jett Rink (Jimmy) courts Luz Benedict (Carroll Baker), the daughter of his bitter rival.

Author Randall Riese wrote; "During the shoot of the bar scene in which Jett Rink proposes marriage to Luz, Jimmy slid one of his hands under the table and allegedly assaulted Carroll between her legs in a schoolboy fit of one-upmanship."

After the release of her 1956 picture, *Baby Doll,* Carroll was absurdly billed as "The Female James Dean."

"Jimmy desperately wanted to be a part of that *camaraderie,"* McCambridge said. "He talked openly about it to me. He'd heard that I was a lesbian, so I guess he felt his secrets would be safe with me."

Baker admitted that Jimmy worked hard to pick up the speech patterns of Jett Rink. "He listened to the cowboys' speech patterns and watched their mannerisms. He not only learned to ride and wore those slant-heeled cowboy boots," she said, 'but he walked with the bowlegged gait of a man born in the saddle."

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During their first two weeks in Marfa, whereas Elizabeth and Hudson spent nearly every evening together, Jimmy was frequently seen bonding with Baker, whom he'd known from the Actors Studio in New York.

In one scene in *Giant,* Dennis Hopper, depicted above, has a push-shove altercation with Jett Rink (Jimmy). Gossip columnists later reported that Hopper was sent to a local hospital for treatment of injuries sustained during that onscreen fight with Jimmy.

Hudson constantly complained to Elizabeth about Stevens. "He gives Dean all the close-ups, and I'm left out in the cold."

Elizabeth and Hudson feared that Jimmy was stealing the picture. Both actors set out to woo Baker into their cabal. In that, they succeeded, and subsequently, Jimmy stopped speaking to her, feeling betrayed.

"Dean got the ultimate revenge," Baker said. "He succeeded in stealing Elizabeth from Rock and me. The dirty rat wanted Elizabeth for himself, and I went into a state of mourning. Elizabeth went off every evening with Jimmy, ignoring Rock and me. The tables had turned."

During the final three weeks of the shoot, Elizabeth temporarily deserted both Hudson and Baker. *[Her friendship with Hudson would be recharged after Jimmy's untimely death.]*

The film's cast and crew were shown the daily rushes in a battered old movie theater that had closed down with the coming of television. Most of the participants preferred to sit on the theater's ground floor, but Elizabeth

and Jimmy usually retreated to the balcony where they were alone. She brought popcorn from her house to share with him.

"They were like two lovebirds," Chill Wills said. "I never could figure out these switch-hitters. One night, Jimmy is taking it up the ass, and on another night, he's pounding pussy. You figure."

Throughout the filming of *Giant*, Elizabeth was plagued with various illnesses, some of which required hospitalization. The first of her health emergencies began in July of 1955, when she developed a severe sore throat and could not deliver her lines. That was almost immediately followed by a bladder infection and thrombophlebitis, a blood clot in a vein of her left leg. She blamed its flare-up on Stevens for "making me wear those tight breeches."

Dr. John Davis examined her and asserted that she suffered from "a congenital anomaly of the spine." To alleviate the pain in her lower back caused by a dysfunctional sciatic nerve, she took heavy doses of Novocaine.

One scene in *Giant* called for Elizabeth "to do a lot of jumping and twisting on a bed." Her always-sensitive back exploded in pain again, as she suffered a ruptured intervertebral disc. She was shot with Novocaine and Hydrocortisone and also given Demerol and Meticorten. "I was a god damn walking pharmacy," she claimed.

Stevens didn't believe in any of her illnesses, calling them "psychosomatic." On August 12, she returned to the set on crutches.

"Elizabeth Plans to Divorce You and Marry Me"

—James Dean to Michael Wilding

On the set of *Giant* in Texas, a studio underling rushed Elizabeth the latest edition of *Confidential* magazine, which ran the headline: *WHEN LIZ TAYLOR'S AWAY, MIKE WILL PLA*Y. It detailed the night Michael Wilding picked up two female strippers at a club in Hollywood and brought them back to the home he shared with Elizabeth in Beverly Hills. In the scandal's aftermath, Elizabeth told Stevens, "Whether it's true or not, a woman can't let an indiscretion break up a marriage."

Of course, considering the dramas of her own affairs, she was in no position to chastise Wilding.

Flying to Texas with their two sons to check up on Elizabeth, Wilding was greeted with a blaring headline *—MICHAEL WORRIED ABOUT LIZ AND ROCK.*

When Wilding with their children arrived in Marfa, he went to find Elizabeth, perhaps to remind her she was a wife and mother. Not finding her, he was told that she was last seen driving off with a young man.

"Where in hell do you drive to in this one-horse town?" he asked.

Instead of Elizabeth and Hudson, Wilding encountered Jimmy. "I have to be very frank with you," Jimmy told Wilding. "I've fallen in love with your wife. She's going to divorce you—and marry me. But, remember, you had your chance. Now it's my turn."

Wilding was so amazed by and skeptical of this that he told Stewart Granger back in Hollywood, “I could only conclude that Jimmy was poking me in the ribs. He could not have been serious. Elizabeth will no more marry James Dean than I’ll marry the Queen Mother!”

On his first night in Marfa, Wilding was allowed to stay at Elizabeth’s rented home, but she didn’t return that night.

Nick Adams, Jimmy’s longtime lover, had arrived in Marfa, and Stevens spread the rumor that Jimmy had fixed Elizabeth up with Adams. “He’s living proof that big things come in small packages,” Jimmy told Elizabeth.

Knowing that Wilding would be alone that evening for dinner, Jimmy brought over some West Texas chili and cold beer.

Over the chili, Wilding pointedly asked Jimmy, “Your plans to marry Elizabeth shocked me. I was told you were strictly homo.”

“Depending on how much rain falls on any given night, I can go either way—male or female,” he answered. “What does it really matter, come to think of it? Sometimes I reward people who do favors for me with sex. I recently flew to Key West to fuck Tennessee Williams. I virtually made him sign a blood oath that he would lobby to get me to play the male lead in all the future adaptations of his plays.”

“Smart career move, dear boy,” Wilding told him.

At the end of their chili supper, Jimmy said, “Elizabeth is likely to be engaged for the rest of the evening. In that case, would you like to go back to my place and fuck me instead?”

“A tempting offer, but I’m the babysitter tonight,” Wilding said. “Give me a rain check.”

Wilding claimed that he was still in love with Elizabeth, “but I found the daily tremors of living with such a volcanic creature more and more difficult. After my failure to make it as a star in Hollywood, I felt like James Mason in that role of a has-been in *A Star Is Born*.”

Elizabeth and Wilding quarreled throughout his stay in Marfa, and he soon flew from El Paso back to Los Angeles, taking their two sons with him.

“By then, I knew the marriage was all but over,” he said. “All that remained was bringing down the final curtain.”

***

After he returned from Marfa to Los Angeles, *The Hollywood Reporter* interviewed Rock Hudson, who said: “I didn’t like James particularly. Chill Wills and I lived together in a rented house for a while. Dean was hard to be around. He hated George Stevens, didn’t think he was a good director, and he was always angry and full of contempt. He never smiled. He was sulky, and he had no manners. He was rough to do a scene with for reasons that only an actor can appreciate. While doing a scene, in the giving and taking, he was just a taker. He would suck everything out and never give back.”

Back in Hollywood, Elizabeth continued her friendship with Jimmy, and also "recharged the batteries in my love for Rock, who was going through a troubling time and needed me."

As influenced by his agent, Henry Willson, Hudson agreed to marry Phyllis Gates, his lesbian secretary. Willson had helped to arrange the marriage based on the fear of exposure of Hudson's homosexuality in *Confidential* magazine.

"Michael and I visited Jimmy at least three times at his little house in San Fernando Valley, and he came to see us," Elizabeth said. "He seemed engulfed in loneliness The first time he invited us for dinner, he heated up two cans of beans—and that was that. We sat and talked and listened to his music."

On another night, Jimmy invited Elizabeth for a ride in the pride of his life, a new Porsche Spyder nicknamed "Little Bastard."

He took her for a spin through Beverly Hills and rode up and down Sunset Boulevard. He turned left onto Hollywood Boulevard, passing Grauman's Chinese Theater. When they passed the theater with its cement casts of the hands and feet of the stars, he told her he was considering having a cast of his erect cock made in the cement instead.

The next day, he dropped in at her home to tell her goodbye, claiming that he was driving his Porsche, accompanied with a friend, to the road race at Salinas. The date was September 30, 1955.

"Whatever you do, Jimmy, be safe—just be safe," she cautioned him.

***

The night before his farewell to Elizabeth, he'd received a similar warning from another big star. Quite by chance, he encountered the British actor, Alec Guinness, whose work he admired, at the Villa Capri. He had seen Guinness in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949), in which he'd played eight different roles, and also in *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), for which he'd received an Oscar nomination for Best Actor.

Before inviting Guinness to dinner, Jimmy was eager to show off his new Porsche.

Guinness remembered that night in his memoirs: "The sports car looked sinister to me, although it had a large bunch of red carnations resting on its bonnet. I heard myself in a voice I could hardly recognize as my own, 'Please, never get in it! It looks like a death trap."

***

At Warner Brothers in Burbank, Stevens invited some of his stars, including Elizabeth, Hudson, and Baker, to watch the rushes for *Giant.* At one point, there was an urgent ringing of the telephone. Stevens got up to answer it. Then the cast heard him say, "*No! My god! When? Are you sure?*"

As Baker remembered it, "The picture froze. The lights shot up. We turned and looked at George. The phone dangled in his hand. He was white and motionless. Death was present in that room. 'There's been a car crash,' he said. 'Jimmy Dean has been killed.'"

Within the hour, Elizabeth heard all the painful details.

After Jimmy's death, she went into hysterics and had to be hospitalized for five days.

Communal Grieving and Mass Hysteria: The Cinematic Premiere of Giant

Scenes Torn from the Pages of The Day of the Locust

In Los Angeles, Elizabeth, along with Rock Hudson and George Stevens, pressed their hands and footprints into the freshly poured cement in the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater.

The premiere of *Giant* was announced for this same theater on October 7. Before arriving, Mike Todd and Elizabeth had drinks with Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher.

[At this time, Elizabeth was divorcing Michael Wilding and had fallen in love with producer Todd, whom she

would marry in February of 1957. Todd was the best friend of Fisher. The two couples often spent evenings together.]

Todd escorted Elizabeth to the Los Angeles premiere. Rock Hudson arrived with his new wife, Phyllis Gates. They were followed by Clark Gable escorting Joan Crawford, and Tab Hunter with Natalie Wood on his arm.

Late in October, a few weeks later, Todd and Elizabeth flew to Manhattan for the respective New York premieres of both *Giant* and *Around the World in 80 Days*.

By then, a weird cult had formed around the image of the late James Dean. Thousands of his fanatical fans believed that he had not died, but that he was going to make an appearance at the New York premiere of a movie that had helped to make him famous.

Shortly before the screening, Stevens hosted a reception for the film's cast. The director warned everyone that there might be a problem associated with security at the premiere. The New York Police Department had assigned extra men to the premises, and wooden barriers had been erected to restrain the throngs. Fears involved the possibility of a riot because of the hysteria engulfing the fans, mostly those who had come to worship the deceased actor.

Hudson was among the first to arrive. The identity of his date for the evening—Tallulah Bankhead—came as a surprise. She had gone to bed with him the night before. Hudson called such seductions of older female stars "mercy fucks."

Before the beginning of filming, it was clearly understood that James Dean had third billing in *Giant*, the leads defined as Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson. But by the time *Giant* opened across the nation, Jimmy's posthumous fame had grown to such an extent that marquees, such as this one in Chicago, gave him star billing.

She told a reporter from NBC, "I'm here tonight, darling, because of this divine young man, Rock Hudson, who is a giant in every conceivable way."

In advance of the premiere at New York City's Roxy Theater, Todd had presented Elizabeth with a pair of ten-thousand-dollar diamond earrings. The crowd outside the theater grew and grew until it stretched for several blocks. As Elizabeth and Todd emerged from their long black limousine, a roar went up as fans pushed against the police barricades.

Carroll Baker and her husband, director Jack Garfein—a Holocaust survivor for whom she had converted to Judaism—walked directly behind Elizabeth and Todd. As Baker remembered it, "The fanatic Dean cult were nearest the red-carpet aisle leading into the entrance. Those closest to us were thrashing against the barriers, letting out menacing, eerie cries; they had red, distorted, lunatic-like faces. The sight of them filled me with revulsion a

moment before the premonition of danger gripped me."

In front of them, Todd, too, was aware of the danger, and he was shoving photographers and reporters aside to make a pathway to safety for Elizabeth. It was as if he was trying to create a tunnel for her to escape.

Baker then described the pandemonium that followed. "There was an explosion of human bodies across the barricades and a stampede of howling maniacs trampling each other and rushing the actors."

Photographers were knocked down along with their cameras. Some of the fans even knocked over police officers, whose caps often went flying through the air. Jane Withers was nearly trampled to death.

The fans tore at Elizabeth, grabbing her hair and trying to rip off pieces of her gown. Todd yelled at them, "Stand back."

A screech went up. "My earring!" shouted Elizabeth. "I've lost one of my earrings!"

"Forget the god damn earrings." Todd shouted at her. "I'll buy you another pair."

The manager of the Roxy appeared, and ushered Elizabeth and Todd into his office, where he offered them a brandy to steady their nerves. Bankhead had retreated to the women's room, and Hudson joined Elizabeth. His shirt was in shreds, and his jacket had disappeared, along with his wallet.

Giant became the highest grossing film in the history of Warners until the 1978 release of *Superman.*

Bouquets and Brickbats for the Surly Ranch Hand Who Becomes a Corrupt Oil

Giant

Most of the reviews generated after the premieres were raves. Posthumously, Jimmy was singled out for special praise. And, as with all movies, there were occasional attacks.

Isabel Quigly in the *Spectator* claimed, "James Dean more than fulfills his early promise. Small and cocky, writhing, with self-consciousness, with guile, with the pangs of poverty, ignorance, social ineptitude, the quintessence of everything youthful, impossible, impressionable, frustrated, and gauche—and yet a 'personality,' someone that matters beyond his pathetic presence—his performance in the first half (later, he is asked to grow old, and cannot manage it), would make *Giant* worth seeing, even if it were five hours long."

Lindsay Anderson in *New Statesman and Nation* delivered this: "The acting is moderately adequate by Rock Hudson, good by Elizabeth Taylor, and virtuoso by James Dean, whose Jett Rink is a willful and brilliant variation on the character he made his own, and died for—the baffled, violent adolescent, rejected by the world he rejects. The middle-aged Jett Rink he could not manage: a matured, hopelessly corrupt character was beyond him."

Fred Majdalany in the *London Daily Mail* wrote: "He was one of the very few genuine personalities to come up since the war."

Time magazine stated: "He created the finest piece of atmospheric acting seen on the screen since Marlon Brando and Rod Steiger did their 'brother' scene in *On the Waterfront."*

Walter O'Hearn in the *Montreal Star* said: "James Dean may well have been the most promising young actor of this generation."

Edwin Schallert, in the *Los Angeles Times,* found Jimmy "in the championship class."

In *The Houston Post,* George Christian claimed: "James Dean's talent glows like an oilfield flare."

Variety believed: "The film only proves what a promising talent has been lost. Dean delivers an outstanding portrayal. It's a sock performance."

Hollis Alpert in the *Saturday Review* wrote: "It's Dean, Dean, Dean. This young man has caused a mass hysteria at least equal to that caused by Valentino."

"James Dean's depiction of the amoral, reckless, animal-like young ranch had will not only excite his admirers into frenzy, it will make the most sedate onlooker understand why a James Dean cult ever came into existence." So wrote Herbert Kupferberg of *The New York Herald Tribune.*

Perhaps to honor Jimmy in his death, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* actually penned a favorable review: "The late James Dean makes the malignant role of the surly ranch hand who become an oil baron the most tangy and corrosive in the film. He plays the curious villain with a stylized spookiness—a sly sort of offbeat languor and slur of language—that concentrates spite."

Paula Rotha, in *Films and Filming*, cast a dour note: "I found Dean so mannered and exhibitionistic as to be repellent in a way not, perhaps, intended by the role. It is a calculated, erratic, and unsubtle performance lacking

the depth of his promising work in *East of Eden* under Kazan."

In the *Sunday Express,* Milton Shulman came down hard on Jimmy: "As a middle-aged, power-crazed megalomaniac, his limitations are seriously revealed. Looking like a small-time watch salesman, inarticulateness maddeningly reduces the character to an unintelligible throttle of grunts that arouses neither sympathy nor repugnance. It is a pity that he died before he had learned to correct the mistakes he made in *Giant."*

Paul Dehn in the *News Chronicle* said: "Mr. Dean, with his realistic gulps, hesitations, and strangled tardiloquence, is ill-suited to the sort of 'literary' dialogue which calls for articulate declamation rather than a manneristic mumble."

Courtland Phipps in *Films in Review,* attacked "the loutish and malicious petulance which present-day teenagers profess to admire. Dean made the young Jett Rink such a boor not even a wife more neurotic than one Miss Taylor was portraying could have thought him attractive."

Giant

"A CENTURY OF STORMY PASSIONS, DEEP HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, AND LOVE, ALWAYS LOVE, POWERFUL, UNQUESTIONING, CONSTANT."

— Giant*, as described in Warners' promotional material*

Almost no critic attacked the camera work of William C. Mellor, one of the leading cinematographers of his era, who took the great open spaces of Texas, its skyline, its panoramic vistas and cactus-studded deserts, with oil derricks "masturbating" what's under the earth, bringing them to eruption.

Mellor had previously won an Oscar for his camerawork on Stevens' *A Place in the Sun* (1951). Future awards would include an Oscar for his work on *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), and an Oscar nomination for his work on Mark Robson's *Peyton Place* in 1957.

He died suddenly in 1963 while filming Stevens' *The Greatest Story Ever Told.*

At the time of the Academy Awards in the spring of 1956, *Giant* was a strong contender for an impressive string of other awards as well. It was nominated for Best Picture; Stevens for Best Director; both Jimmy and Hudson for Best Actor; and Mercedes McCambridge for Best Supporting Actress. Only the director, George Stevens, won.

Ironically, the award for Best Picture that year went to Michael Todd for *Around the World in 80 Days*. He would become Elizabeth's third husband.

Many critics claimed that Dean would have won if he'd been nominated as Best Supporting Actor, which he really was. He and Hudson split each other's votes.

As it turned out, Anthony Quinn won that year as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *Lust for Life,* and the Best Actor Oscar went to Yul Brynner for *The King and I.* Also nominated for Best Actor, along with Jimmy and Hudson, were Kirk Douglas for *Lust for Life* and Sir Laurence Olivier for *Richard III.*

Bick Benedict was big enough to stand up and take what he wanted—and biggest one day when he crawled...
Leslie Lynnton—whether you loved her in the open, or hid it inside you—you hungered...
Jett Rink was made to get to the top—so he could have the fun of falling all the way down...
GIANT
GEORGE STEVENS' PRODUCTION
FROM THE NOVEL BY EDNA FERBER
ELIZABETH TAYLOR
ROCK HUDSON
JAMES DEAN
PRESENTED BY WARNER BROS. IN WARNERCOLOR
CARROLL BAKER JANE WITHERS · CHILL WILLS · MERCEDES McCAMBRIDGE · SAL MINEO
SCREEN PLAY BY FRED GUIOL AND IVAN MOFFAT · PRODUCED BY GEORGE STEVENS AND HENRY GINSBERG · DIRECTED BY GEORGE STEVENS
GIANT 256-497

Pictured above is the last major scene James Dean ever filmed. Portraying the oil millionaire, Jett Rink, at a banquet in his honor attended by the elite of Texas, he gets drunk and hostile, embarassing himself, and emptying the room.

He finally collapses onto the banquet's head table, an inglorious end to Jett Rink and perhaps, symbolically, to James Dean, too.

Epilogue

DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON

During the last months of the life of James Dean, and in spite of a budding career about to explode into bloom, friends of the actor reported that he had a death wish. “He was obsessed with death,” claimed Maila Nurmi (TV’s Vampira). “He once told me he wanted to die because that was the only way he’d ever know any peace.”

“All the signs were there,” reported William Bast. “Even the noose he always kept hanging in any bedroom he occupied.”

His favorite literary passage was from Ernest Hemingway’s saga about bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon:* “The only place where you could see life and death—that is, violent death now that the wars were over—was in the bullring.”

Composer Leonard Rosenman said, “Jimmy saw death as a challenge.”

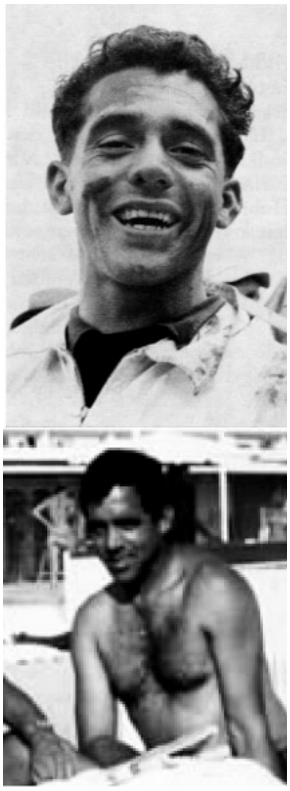
Elizabeth Taylor revealed that Jimmy had told her “I will never live to reach thirty.”

Nearly every friend who rode in a car with him reported that even for casual errands, he drove at frenetic, death-defying speeds.

Repeatedly warned about the dangers of this, he responded, “What better way to die than in a car crash? It’s fast and it’s clean, and you go out in a blaze of glory.”

***

On September 19, 1955, Jimmy was walking along Hollywood Boulevard, when he ran into Rolf Wütherich, a 28-year-old German mechanic whom he’d met at the Bakersfield Races on May 1, a month after Rolf had arrived in the United States.



Rolf Wütherrich in 1954 at the Le Mans races *(top photo)* and *(lower photo)* in 1966, "more or less" recovered from his injuries more than a decade before

This former glider pilot and paratrooper for the *Luftwaffe* was one of the world's leading experts on racecars, especially if it were a Porsche.

In 1949, emerging from the ruins of a country devastated by World War II, he'd joined the Porsche factory in Germany as part of their racing department. He was eventually transferred to California as a field engineer for Johnny von Neumann's Competition Motors racecar distributorship in Hollywood.

In early September, the outlet had received five new "state-of-the-art" Porsche 550 Spyders, with the understanding that these high-maintenance, limited edition vehicles were to be offered for sale only to "privateer racers."

The two racing aficionados talked cars over cups of coffee at a café on Hollywood Boulevard. Before they parted, Rolf had convinced Jimmy to trade in his old Porsche for one of the new Spyders, "which can go a hell of a lot faster than the Model T you're driving, perhaps reaching 140mph."

Two days later, on September 21, the Spyder was Jimmy's, but only after Van Neumann had gotten him to agree to let Rolf accompany him to any race as his mechanic. Jimmy accepted the deal and Rolf agreed to go with him to the Salinas Road Races scheduled for October 1-2.

On Friday morning, September 30, his last day on earth, Jimmy arrived at Competition Motors, where Rolf convinced him that both of them should—personally and together—drive the Porsche to Salinas, a 300-mile journey, for "break-in miles" before the races. Originally, Jimmy's plan involved towing it on a trailer hitched to a 1955 Ford Country Squire station wagon, into which he'd invited several of his friends, all of whom turned him down.

"You need 'seat time,' behind the wheel to get the feel of this baby," Rolf told him.

That day, before leaving Hollywood for the last time, Jimmy and Rolf had coffee and donuts at the Hollywood Ranch Market on Vine Street, across from Competition Motors.

It was 1:15PM PST when the two men departed, Rolf later claiming that "Jimmy's nerves were frayed."

By 2PM, Jimmy was photographed at a Mobil station at the corner of Ventura and Beverly Glen Boulevards in Sherman Oaks. He left there at 2:15PM, heading north along CA Rt. 99 and then over "The Grapevine" Highway in

the direction of Bakersfield.

As later reported by Rolf, these two racing enthusiasts discussed their upcoming dream competing at racing events in Europe, particularly at venues in the South of France.

Following them in the station wagon, with the trailer, were Bill Hickman a movie stunt man, and Sanford Roth, Jimmy's close friend, a professional photographer who planned a photo shoot of him at the race for *Colliers* magazine.

Years later, Rolf recalled that fateful afternoon: "Jimmy was brimming over with happiness. We had such great plans. He was so affectionate with me, I got the feeling that the might be falling in love with me. Far more than being an actor, he wanted to be the world's championship car racer. Somehow, I became a part of his fantasy, a part of his dreams."

"Alas, the Devil must have been listening to our plans and wanted to destroy our future happiness," Rolf claimed.

[After their crash later that day, Rolf would spend a month at a Los Angeles hospital recovering from a double fractured jaw and major femur and hip injuries. For the next six months, he endured separate surgeries at three-week intervals, and became emotionally scarred in ways that became increasingly obvious throughout the rest of his life.

For their "date with destiny," Rolf Wütherrich and James Dean set out in newly purchased Porsche Spyder. Their lives would be changed forever. Jimmy's would be ended, and Rolf would be physically and emotionally scarred for the years that remained for him before his own tragic and violent death.

Later, in Europe, despite his physical pain and violent outbursts, he became a navigator for the Porsche factories at the Monte Carlo Rallye. For eighteen years after that, he worked for Porsche in Germany, drifting into alcoholism and sometimes threatening suicide. He ended up in a psychiatric ward.

In July of 1981, he was intoxicated and driving through Kupferzell, in what was then known as the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (i.e., West Germany). There, perhaps in a suicide attempt, he lost control of his vehicle and crashed into a wall, dying instantly.

Like Jimmy, more than a quarter-century before, he had to be extricated from the wreckage. He was fifty-three years old.]

***

Once upon the open road to Salinas, and with no cars around them, Jimmy began to speed, referring to his new Porsche as "a torpedo on wheels." He was wearing sunglasses and had tossed his *Rebel Without a Cause* red jacket into the back. Rolf later reported that he actually said, "It's a wonderful world after all. I'm doing what I always wanted to do."

Suddenly, he heard the sounds of a police siren. At 3:30PM O.V. Hunter, a California Highway Patrolman, pulled Jimmy over at Mettler Station on Wheeler Ridge, just south of Bakersfield. He issued a ticket, asserting that Jimmy was doing 65mph in a 55mph zone.

Soon, amid a landscape of arid, scrub-covered desert, Jimmy and Rolf were on what was known as "The Racer's Road" to Salinas. As they neared Blackwell's Corner, Jimmy slowed down when he spotted the gray Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Coupe belonging to Lance Reventlow, son of the Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton.

The two men had agreed to stay together that night at a private home Lance had arranged for them in Salinas. Lance was accompanied at the time with a fellow racecar driver, Bruce Kessler.

Over sandwiches and coffee, Lance and Jimmy discussed their upcoming plans to escape to his private lodge in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Kessler had wandered off with Rolf to inspect their respective cars.

Jimmy estimated how long it would take to reach Paso Robles, where they were to have dinner together in a steak restaurant before retiring for the night.

At 5:12PM, Jimmy and Lance were seen locked in a tight embrace before climbing into their cars. At 5:15PM, Jimmy drove with Rolf out of Blackwell's Corner, heading west on CA Route 45. Paso Robles lay sixty miles in the distance.

Rolf reported that Jimmy drove recklessly, accelerating his Porsche and dangerously passing other cars as he made his way to the Polonio Pass and the "Antelope Grade," heading for the Y-shaped intersection of Routes 41 and 46. Its location was a mile east of the small town of Cholame.

[In 1955, what is now identified as Route 46 was known as Route 466. At the time, Route 41 and 466 were two-lane roads (i.e., with traffic moving on single lanes in each direction) with narrow shoulders.]

Before taking off, Rolf had warned Jimmy that the low-slung, aluminumskinned, pale gray Porsche might be hard to see in certain lights. At 5:43 PM, the sun was setting, but Jimmy hadn't yet turned on his lights.

Anxious to get to Paso Robles and his rendezvous with Lance, Jimmy stepped on the gas, testing his Porsche to see if it indeed could reach a maximum speed of 140mph. The speedometer registered 85mph. At a junction coming up, he slowed down to 65mph.

Also heading for the "Y" intersection was Donald Turnupseed, a twenty-three year old Cal Poly (California Polytechnic State University) student who had never heard of James Dean. He was driving to the little town of Tulare to spend the weekend with his parents, and was motoring recklessly as if he were late for some rendezvous.

Only two minutes before their gut-wrenching crash, he was heading east, blowing his horn as he passed two other cars. They included a 1948 Mercury Sedan driven by Earle Requa, and a 1952 Dodge pickup with Tom Frederick behind the wheel.

Also speeding toward the junction were Jimmy and Rolf. Jimmy zoomed west, passing a car driven by John R. White of Los Angeles, who was traveling with his wife and son. "Look at the god damn maniac go," White said.

On route 46, at the "Y" junction, Turnupseed slowed down to make a left turn onto Route 41 and then moved suddenly into the intersection. His car's radio, at high volume, was blasting out Doris Day's rendition of "Sentimental Journey."

Donald Turnupseed's Ford, from which, amazingly, he emerged unscathed—at least physically.

In the distance, Jimmy spotted a two-toned black-and-white 1950 Ford Sedan. Neither vehicles slowed down. Jimmy's last words to Rolf were, "He's gotta see us. He's gotta stop!"

Without signaling, Turnupseed turned into Jimmy's right-of-way. Jimmy's position was just thirty yards away from the intersection.

Behind Turnupseed, also approaching the "Y", was the Hord family, with father, wife, and son sitting in the front seat, three abreast. Ken Hord, the son, called out, "Jesus Christ, Dad, look at that son of a bitch coming our way!" Later, in an analysis of the events, he said, "To avoid a crash, my father just yanked our car to the right and went off the road into a barbed wire fence."

Panicking, with seconds before the inevitable, Jimmy slammed on his brakes as Rolf screamed, "We're going to die!"

Then, Jimmy made a desperate, split-second decision to "power steer" his Porsche into a side-stepping racecar maneuver that drivers use on the track during attempts to steer around another car. Unfortunately, the clock had run out. It was too late, and the maneuver failed.

Tom Frederick, a twenty-eight-year-old beekeeper, said, "In my pickup, I was right on Turnupseed's tail.

I was next to him, passing him on the right, when the Porsche hit the Ford with a sound that could probably be heard a mile or two away. It was like a bomb. A part of the Porsche went sailing over my pickup."

Earle Requa's Mercury was also headed toward the intersection. His wife, Edith, screamed "Look out!" as a car flew through the air. Requa brought his car to an abrupt stop near Turnupseed's bashed-in Ford. Its driver was sitting behind the wheel, bloodied and dazed, but still alive. The driver's-side door had been flung open.

The lightweight and aerodynamic Porsche had been hurled more than fifty feet through the air, hitting the earth but "leaping up" again three times before ramming into a telephone pole.

Rolf was thrown fifteen yards from the scene of the accident, landing with a sickening thud on the tarmac of the highway.

When an ambulance arrived, two attendants found Jimmy's mangled body within the wreckage, trapped behind the splintered steering column. His remains were pulled from the metal that entrapped it. Limp and covered with blood, he had fractured bones and a broken neck. His forehead was caved in, as was his chest.

He had died upon impact.

Weeks later, in a hospital, Rolf gradually emerged from his leaden haze. He remembered not only Jimmy's last

words, but his last sounds as well.

"I heard a soft cry that came from deep within his throat. It was the cry of a little boy wanting his mother…or a man facing his God."

***

The local radio station, KPRL, was the first to broadcast the news. Within thirty minutes, the events surrounding Jimmy's death were flashed around the world, radio and television stations interrupting their broadcasts with bulletins. Newspapers going to bed remade their frontpages.

James Dean, aged twenty-four years, seven months, and twenty-two days, passed into history.

A legend was born.

IN MEMORY OF JAMES DEAN

THE FAIRMOUNT NEWS

Volume LXXX — Fairmount, Grant County, Indiana — SPECIAL EDITION

James Dean Killed As Result Of California Car Accident

FAIRMOUNT IS STUNNED TO LEARN OF TRAGEDY WHICH CLAIMED NATIVE SON; HEAD-ON COLLISION NEAR INTERSECTION CAUSES FATALITY FRIDAY

...a Student at U.C.L.A.

James Dean

Last Rites Will Be Held Here Saturday

Dr. James A. DeWeerd, Rev. Ken Harvey To Conduct

DEATH OF JAMES DEAN, FAIRMOUNT HIGH ALUMNI CASTS A PALL OF SADNESS OVER STUDENT BODY

THE FAIRMOUNT NEWS

Volume LXXX — Fairmount, Grant County, Indiana — Thursday, October 13, 1955 — Number 56

Fairmount Buries James Dean's Body

TREMENDOUS GATHERING PAYS LAST TRIBUTE TO YOUNG ACTOR WHO DIED IN CALIFORNIA TRAGEDY; REV. KEN HARVEY, DR. JAMES DEWEERD IN CHARGE

PARKER GIVES REPORT FROM ACCOUNTS BOARD ABOUT TRUSTEE MOVING

War Mothers Schedule Masquerade Party

Acknowledgments

The data in this biography of James Dean was compiled over a period of half a century. Sometimes, years would pass with nothing added to the dossier. In other cases, bountiful harvests of information would appear, suddenly and unexpectedly.

In particular, seven sources were so enormously helpful that they were singled out on this book's dedication page. They included Stanley Haggart, Rogers Brackett, Alec Wilder, Nicholas Ray, William Bast, Eartha Kitt, and Geraldine Page.

And in addition to those seven, there were hundreds of others.

***

Over the years, virtually anyone who ever knew or worked with James Dean had an opinion about him, and usually didn't mind sharing it. Understandably, some of them didn't want to be named.

Our task, as developers of this project, involved tracking down all these comments, including those gathered from secondary sources. All of these are acknowledged as they were cited.

Much of the insider information about Dean's days in television came from Stanley Haggart, who was a TV producer and art director in the 1950s. He knew many of the producers, directors, and actors who worked with Dean, and many of them had tales to tell. Before his death in 1980, Haggart, in collaboration with Darwin Porter, recorded most of the fruits of his labors into a manuscript tentatively entitled *James Dean: What Becomes a Legend the Most?* Although it was never completed, many of the revelations appearing in this book about Dean's convoluted life during his TV years derived from that original source.

Whereas some of the sources cited within these acknowledgments are well-known personalities (Rock Hudson, for example), others with memories and opinions about him flickered for a moment in the public eye and then faded from the scene. Those sources, of course, were the hardest to track down.

But regardless of their "celebrity quotient," everyone whose memories were included in this book articulated some distinctly personal reactions to James Dean: good, horrible, or indifferent. Some sources delivered only a paragraph; others could talk about him for hours. Some of them waited until the beginning of the 21st Century, when they had little to lose, before relaying what really happened.

We extend our apologies to those who were left off this list. Our gratitude remains, however, even if it's not expressed.

WITH RESPECT AND APPRECIATION TO THE FOLLOWING SOURCES, WHETHER THEY'RE LIVING OR DEAD

Many Thanks

Nick Adams, Stella Adler, Eddie Albert, Ben Alcock, Corey Allen, Ursula Andress, Pier Angeli, Ted Avery, Lemuel Ayers, Jim Backus, Carroll Baker, Margaret Baker, Tallulah Bankhead, Marshall Barer, Lynn Bari, James Barton, Kenneth Battelle, Barbara Baxley, Ed Begley, James Bellah, Lee Bergere, Richard Bishop, Humphrey Bogart, George Bradshaw, Freddie Brandell, Pat Breslin, "Mushy" Callahan, Truman Capote, John Carlyle, John Carradine, John Cohan, Bill Claxton, Dick Clayton, Monty Clift, Brooks Clift, Fred Coe, Joan Collins, Mike Connolly, William Corrigan, Frank Corsaro, Cheryl Crawford, Hume Cronyn, George Cukor, Ray Curry, Paul Darlow, Sammy Davis, Jr., Vittorio De Sica, Jean Deacy, Alice Denham, John Derek, James DeWeerd, David Diamond, Marlene Dietrich, Vincent J. Donehue, Ann Doran, Kirk Douglas, Isabelle Draesmer, Mark Ducus, Dick Dunlap, Mildred Dunnock, Jerry Fairbanks, Edna Ferber, Carlo Fiore, Constance Ford, Margaret Foresman, Jack Garfein, Ben Gazzara, John Gilmore, Sam

Gilmore, Dorothy Gish, Barbara Glenn, Ruth Goetz, Michael Gordon, Sheilah Graham, Lee Grant, Merv Griffin, Bill Gunn, Walter Hampden, Louis Thomas Hardin, Pat Hardy, Matt Harlib, Julie Harris, Terese Hayden, William Heller, Franklin Heller, George Roy Hill, Hedda Hopper, Dennis Hopper, William Hopper, Rock Hudson, Marsha Hunt, Barbara Hutton (her diaries), William Inge, Christopher Isherwood, Anne Jackson, Erskine Johnson, Louis Jourdan, Lilli Kardell, Kurt Kasznar, Elia Kazan, Arthur Kennedy, Dorothy Kilgallen, Archer King, Martin Kingsley, Toni Lee (aka Toni Lee Scott), Peggy Lee, Oscar Levant, Ralph Levy, Ralph Levy, Bobby Lewis, Arthur Loew, Jr., Beverly Long, Sidney Lumet, Gene Lyons, Moss Mabry, Karl Malden, Daniel Mann, E. G. Marshall, Billy Massena, Virginia Mayo, Frank Mazzola, Andrew McCullough, Clyde McCullough, Roddy McDowall, Maggie McNamara, Don Medford, Johnny Meyer, Ruda Michelle, Wilson Millar, Samuel Miller, Martin Milner, Terry Moore, Adeline Nall, Richard Nash, Patricia Neal, Lori Nelson, Ralph Nelson, John Paul Nickell, Maila Nurmi (Vampira), Barbara O'Neil, William Orr, Fred Otash, Gene Owen, Betsy Palmer, Terry Parks, Robert Pastene, Marisa Pavan, John Peyser, Arthur Pierson, Philip Pine, Donald Pressman, Nicholas Ray, William Redfield, Lance Reventlow, Kendis Rochen, Stuart Rosenberg, Leonard Rosenblum, Beulah Roth, Arlene Sachs, Howard Sackler, Ray Schatt, Jimmy Schauffer, Rod Serling, James Sheldon, Elizabeth Sheridan, Herman Shumlin, Steffi Sidney, Jack Simmons, Sidney Skolsky, Rusty Slocum, Helena Sorell, Maria St. Just, Kim Stanley, Maureen Stapleton, Teddy Stauffer, Rod Steiger, Stewart Stern, George Stevens, Robert Stevens, John Stix, Dennis Stock, Lee Strasberg, Susan Strasberg, David Swift, Jessica Tandy, Vaughn Taylor, Dean J. Taylor, Tom Tryon, Forrest Tucker, Gore Vidal, Eli Wallach, Clifton Webb, Ronnie White, Miles White, James Whitmore, Tennessee Williams, Calder Willingham, Chill Wills, Beverly Wills, John Wills, Henry Willson, Robert Wise, Jane Withers, Natalie Wood, Cal York, and Maurice Zolotow.

DARWIN PORTER

As an intense and precocious nine-year-old, **Darwin Porter** began meeting movie stars, TV personalities, politicians, and singers through his vivacious and attractive mother, Hazel, an eccentric but charismatic Southern girl who had lost her husband in World War II. Migrating from the Depression-ravaged valleys of western North Carolina to Miami Beach during its most ebullient heyday, Hazel became a stylist, wardrobe mistress, and personal assistant to the vaudeville *comedienne* Sophie Tucker, the bawdy and irrepressible "Last of the Red Hot Mamas."

Virtually every show-biz celebrity who visited Miami Beach paid a call on "Miss Sophie," and Darwin as a pre-teen loosely and indulgently supervised by his mother, was regularly dazzled by the likes of Judy Garland, Dinah Shore, Veronica Lake, Linda Darnell, Martha Raye, and Ronald Reagan, who arrived to pay his respects to Miss Sophie with a young blonde starlet on the rise—Marilyn Monroe.

After graduation from the University of Miami, Darwin was commissioned with the opening of a bureau of *The Miami Herald* in Key West (Florida), where he took frequent morning walks with retired U.S. president Harry S Truman during his vacations in what had functioned as his "Winter White House." He also got to know, sometimes very well, various celebrities "slumming" their way through off-the-record holidays in the orbit of then-resident Tennessee Williams. Celebrities hanging out in the jaded and very permissive arts environment of Key West during those days included Tallulah Bankhead, Cary Grant, Tony Curtis, the stepfather of Richard Burton, a gaggle of show-biz and publishing moguls, and the once-notorious stripper, Bettie Page.

For about a decade in New York, Darwin worked in television journalism and advertising with his long-time partner, the journalist, art director, and distinguished arts-industry socialite Stanley Mills Haggart. Haggart was a close friend of James Dean, who often used his apartment in Manhattan or his guest cottage and swimming pool in Laurel Canyon in Hollywood.

Stanley (as an art director) and Darwin (as a writer and assistant), worked as freelance agents within the then-emerging medium of television. Jointly, they helped produce TV commercials that included testimonials from Joan Crawford (then feverishly promoting Pepsi-Cola); Ronald Reagan (General Electric); and Debbie Reynolds (Singer sewing machines). Other personalities appearing within their televised pitches included Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, and Arlene Dahl, each of them hawking a commercial product.

Many of the Haggart/Porter commissions derived from TV producer Rogers Brackett, who "discovered" James Dean, fell desperately in love with him, mentored him, paid his bills, and introduced him to casting directors throughout the entertainment industry. Testimonies from Brackett appear frequently within the context of this book.

Stanley and Darwin were also close friends with Brooks Clift, the relatively stable older brother of Montgomery Clift. A well-positioned executive at Grey Advertising, an entity responsible for the production of TV commercials during the medium's early heyday, Brooks also contributed many stories and points of view about James Dean that made their way into this book.

Additional anecdotes derived from Haggart and Porter's friendship with the composer, Alec Wilder, who had housed James Dean during his early days in Manhattan, who introduced him to some of the insiders within the then-emerging medium of television.

During his youth, Stanley had flourished as an insider in early Hollywood as a "leg man" and source of information for Hedda Hopper, the fabled gossip columnist. On his nightly "investigative" rounds, Stanley was most often accompanied by Hedda's son, William Hopper, a close friend of Ronald Reagan's. Hopper, later cast as Natalie Wood's dysfunctional father in *Rebel Without a Cause,* continued his long-standing tradition of gossipy conversations with Stanley, who transmitted many of his tales onward to Darwin.

When Stanley wasn't dishing newsy revelations to Hedda, he had worked as a Powers model, and been cast as a romantic lead opposite Silent-era film star Mae Murray. He had also been intimate, live-in companion of superstar Randolph Scott before Scott became emotionally involved with Cary Grant; and a man-about-town who archived gossip from everybody who mattered back when the movie colony was small, accessible, and confident that details about their tribal rites would absolutely never be reported in the press. Over the years, Stanley's vast cornucopia of inside Hollywood information was passed on to Darwin, who amplified it with copious interviews and research of his own.

After Stanley's death in 1980, Darwin inherited a treasure trove of memoirs, notes, and interviews detailing Stanley's early adventures in Hollywood, including in-depth recitations of scandals that even Hopper during her heyday was afraid to publish. Most legal and journalistic standards back then interpreted those oral histories as "unprintable." Times, of course, changed.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Darwin joined forces with the then-fledgling Arthur Frommer organization, playing a key role in researching and writing more than 50 titles and defining the style and values that later emerged as the world's leading travel accessories, ***The Frommer Guides,*** with particular emphasis on Europe, California, New England, and the Caribbean. Between the creation and updating of hundreds of editions of detailed travel guides to England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, the Caribbean, and California, he continued to interview and discuss the triumphs, feuds, and frustrations of celebrities, many by then reclusive, whom he either sought out or encountered randomly as part of his extensive travels. Ava Gardner, Lana Turner, and Broderick Crawford were particularly insightful.

One day when Darwin was living in Tangier as part of an assignment associated with *Frommer's Morocco*, he walked into an opium den to discover Marlene Dietrich sitting alone in a corner. Even Miss Dietrich had an opinion about James Dean.

Darwin has also ghost written books for celebrities (who shall go nameless!) as well as a series of novels. His first, *Butterflies in Heat,* became a cult classic and was adapted into a film, *Tropic of Desire,* starring Eartha Kitt, who had been James Dean's *confidante* and "soul sister." During its filming in Key West, Eartha transmitted many of the tales generated by her friendship with Dean on to Darwin.

Since then, Darwin has penned more than thirty uncensored, unvarnished, and unauthorized Hollywood biographies, many of them award-winners, on subjects who have included Bill and Hillary Clinton, Peter O'Toole, Marlon Brando; Merv Griffin; Katharine Hepburn; Howard Hughes; Humphrey Bogart; Michael Jackson; Paul Newman; Steve McQueen; Marilyn Monroe; Elizabeth Taylor; Frank Sinatra; John F. Kennedy; Vivien Leigh; Laurence Olivier; the notorious porn star Linda Lovelace; Anne Bancroft; Sophie Tucker; Veronica Lake; Lucille Lortel; Greta Keller; Tamara Geva; all three of the fabulous Gabor sisters; plus Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Jane Wyman, and Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

As a departure from his usual repertoire, Darwin also wrote the controversial *J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson: Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women,* a book about celebrity, voyeurism, political and sexual repression, and blackmail within the highest circles of the U.S. government.

He has also co-authored, in league with Danforth Prince, four *Hollywood Babylon* anthologies, plus four separate volumes of film critiques, reviews, and commentary.

His biographies, over the years, have won at least a dozen First Prize or runner-up awards at literary festivals in cities which include Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Hollywood, San Francisco, and Paris.

Darwin can be heard at regular intervals as a radio and television commentator, "dishing" celebrities, pop culture, politics, and scandal.

A resident of New York City, Darwin is currently at work on *Donald Trump, The Man Who Would Be King.* He is also a Hollywood columnist.

DANFORTH PRINCE

The co-author of this book**, Danforth Prince** is president and founder of Blood Moon Productions, a firm devoted to salvaging, compiling, and marketing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry.

Prince launched his career in journalism in the 1970s at the Paris Bureau of *The New York Times.* In the early '80s, he joined Darwin Porter in developing first editions of many of the titles within *The Frommer Guides*. Together, they reviewed and articulated the travel scenes of more than 50 nations, most of them within Europe and The Caribbean. Authoritative and comprehensive, they were perceived, before the collapse of the travel industry in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008, as best-selling "travel bibles" for millions of readers.

Prince, in collaboration with Porter, is also the co-author of several awardwinning celebrity biographies, each configured as a title within Blood Moon's Babylon series. These have included *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!; Hollywood Babylon Strikes Again; The Kennedys: All the Gossip Unfit to Print; Frank Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer, Elizabeth Taylor: There is Nothing Like a Dame; Pink Triangle: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Members of their Entourages*; and *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams.* More recent efforts include *Peter O'Toole—Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel;* and *Bill & Hillary—So This Is That Thing Called Love.*

Prince is also the co-author, of four books on film criticism, three of which won honors at regional bookfests in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Prince, a graduate of Hamilton College and a native of Easton and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is the president and founder of the Georgia Literary Association (1996), and of the Porter and Prince Corporation (1983) which has produced dozens of titles for Simon & Schuster, Prentice Hall, and John Wiley & Sons. In 2011, he was named "Publisher of the Year" by a consortium of literary critics and marketers spearheaded by the J.M. Northern Media Group.

Publishing in collaboration with the National Book Network *(www.NBNBooks.com)*, he has electronically documented some of the controversies associated with his stewardship of Blood Moon in at least 50 documentaries, book trailers, public speeches, and TV or radio interviews. Most of these are available on **YouTube.com** and **Facebook** *(keywords: "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions")*; on **Twitter** *(#BloodyandLunar);* or by clicking on **BloodMoonProductions.com**.

WHAT IS BLOOD MOON PRODUCTIONS?

"Blood Moon, in case you don't know, is a small publishing house on Staten Island that cranks out Hollywood gossip books, about two or three a year, usually of five-, six-, or 700- page length, chocked with stories and pictures about people who used to consume the imaginations of the American public, back when we actually had a public imagination. That is, when people were really interested in each other, rather than in Apple 'devices.' In other words, back when we had vices, not devices."

— The Huffington Post

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A reasonably priced "AirBNB.com" Bed and Breakfast Inn specializing in literary nostaligia, pop culture, and the book trades. Elegant, historic, & comfortable, it's a historically important building in the landmark neighborhood of Saint George, Staten Island, a ten-minute walk from the departure point of the ferryboat to Manhattan.

As stated by its resident manager, Danforth Prince, "Magnolia House results from my 30-year role as co-author of many titles, and many editions, of

The Frommer Guides, each of which included evaluations of the bed and breakfast inns of Europe. Whereas I'm still writing travel articles and celebrity *exposés* from the upper floors of this building, its 'showcase rooms' now operate as a client-indulgent B&B loaded with mementos from the early days of the Frommer Guides, 'the Golden Age of Travel,' and souvenirs from Blood Moon's associations with Broadway, Hollywood, and the Entertainment Industry."

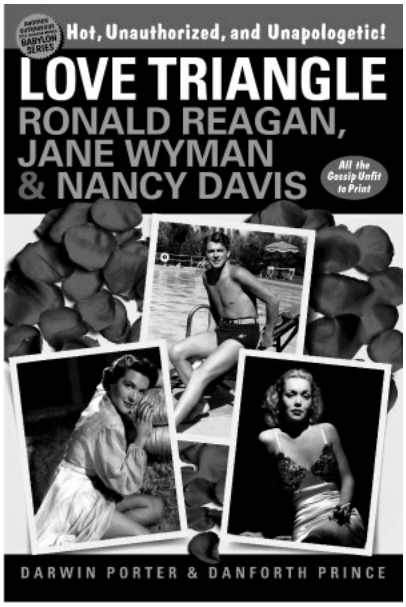
"Edgy media associations have always been part of the Magnolia House experience," Prince continued. "Previous guests have included **Tennessee Williams** *("Magnolia House reminds me of Blanche DuBois' lost plantation, Bellereve!")*; golden age film personality **Joan Blondell** (a close friend of celebrity biographer and co-owner, **Darwin Porter**); **Lucille Lortel** (the philanthropic but very temperamental Queen of Off-Broadway); the very outspoken **Jolie Gabor** (mother of the three "Bombshells from Budapest" otherwise known as **Zsa Zsa, Eva, and Magda**); and a host of other stars, *starlettes*, and *demi-mondains* of all descriptions and persuasions."

For photographs, testimonials from previous guests, and information about availabilities and reservations, click on **www.MagnoliaHouseSaintGeorge.com**. Otherwise, contact DanforthPrince@gmail.com.

LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN, JANE WYMAN, & NANCY DAVIS

Unique in the history of publishing, this scandalous triple biography focuses on the Hollywood indiscretions of former U.S. president Ronald Reagan and his two wives. A proud and Presidential addition to Blood Moon's Babylon series, it digs deep into what these three young and attractive movie stars were doing decades before two of them took over the Free World.



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As reviewed by Diane Donovan, Senior Reviewer at the California Bookwatch section of the Midwest Book Review: ***"Love Triangle: Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman & Nancy Davis may find its way onto many a Republican Reagan fan's reading shelf; but those who expect another Reagan celebration will be surprised: this is lurid Hollywood exposé writing at its best, and outlines the truths surrounding one of the most provocative industry scandals in the world.***

"There are already so many biographies of the Reagans on the market that one might expect similar mile-markers from this: be prepared for shock and awe; because Love Triangle doesn't take your ordinary approach to biography and describes a love triangle that eventually bumped a major Hollywood movie star from the possibility of being First Lady and replaced her with a lesser-known Grade B actress (Nancy Davis).

"From politics and betrayal to romance, infidelity, and sordid affairs, Love Triangle is a steamy, eye-opening story that blows the lid off of the Reagan illusion to raise eyebrows on both sides of the big screen.

"Black and white photos liberally pepper an account of the careers of all three and the lasting shock of their stormy relationships in a delightful pursuit especially recommended for any who relish Hollywood gossip."

***

In 2015, LOVE TRIANGLE, Blood Moon Productions' overview of the early dramas associated with Ronald Reagan's scandal-soaked career in Hollywood, was designated by the Awards Committee of the **HOLLYWOOD BOOK FESTIVAL** as Runner-Up to Best Biography of the Year.

LOVE TRIANGLE: Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

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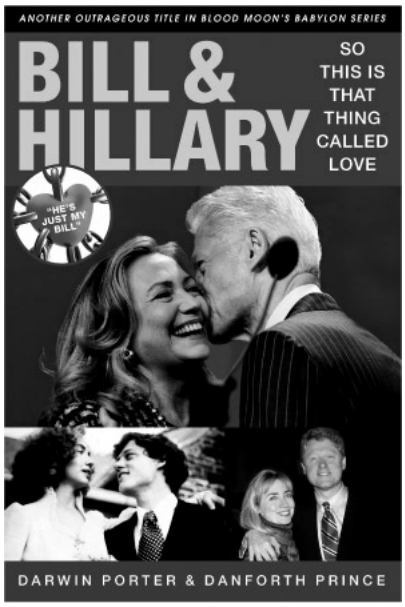
Bill & Hillary

So This Is That Thing Called Love

As defined by Diane Donovan, Senior Reviewer at the *Midwest Book Review* and *California Bookwatch*:



"This is both a biographical coverage of the Clintons and a political exposé; a detailed, weighty exploration that traces the couple's social and political evolution, from how each entered the political arena to their White House years under Bill Clinton's presidency.

"Containing gossip, scandal, and biographical sketches, it delves deeply into the news and politics of its times, presenting enough historical background to fully explore the underlying controversies affecting the Clinton family and their choices.

"Sidebars of information and black and white photos liberally peppered throughout the account offer visual reinforcement to the exploration, lending it the feel and tone of both a gossip column and political piece - something that probes not just Clinton interactions but the D.C. political milieu as a whole.

"The result may appear weighty, sporting over five hundred pages, but is an absorbing, top recommendation for readers of both biographical and political pieces who will thoroughly enjoy this spirited, lively, and thought-provoking analysis, which arrives in perfect time for Hillary's presidential run."

***

Shortly after its release in December of 2015, this book received a literary award (Runner-up to Best Biography of the Year) from the New England Book Festival. As stated by a spokesperson for the Awards, "The New England Book Festival is an annual competition honoring excellence in books, with particular focus on projects that deserve closer attention from the academic community. Congratulations to Blood Moon and its authors, especially Darwin Porter, for his highly entertaining analysis of Clinton's double-barreled presidential regime, and the sometimes hysterical over-reaction of their enemies."

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—Vinton McCabe in the NY JOURNAL OF BOOKS

"Full disclosure: I have been a friend and follower of Blood Moon Productions' tomes for years, and always marveled at the amount of information in their books—it's staggering. The index alone to Pink Triangle runs to 21 pages—and the scale of names in it runs like a Who's Who of American social, cultural and political life through much of the 20th century."

—Perry Brass in THE HUFFINGTON POST

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—Jeffery Tayor in THE SUNDAY EXPRESS (UK)

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Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

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THOSE GLAMOROUS GABORS

Bombshells from Budapest, by Darwin Porter

Zsa Zsa! We Love You!

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"You will never be Ga-bored…this book gives new meaning to the term compelling. Be warned, *Those Glamorous Gabors* is both an epic and a pip. Not since *Gone With the Wind* have so many characters on the printed page been forced to run for their lives for one reason or another. And Scarlett making a dress out of the curtains is nothing compared to what a Gabor will do when she needs to scrap together an outfit for a movie premiere or late-night outing.

"For those not up to speed, Jolie Tilleman came from a family of jewelers and therefore came by her love for the shiny stones honestly, perhaps genetically. She married Vilmos Gabor somewhere around World War 1 (exact dates, especially birth dates, are always somewhat vague in order to establish plausible deniability later on) and they were soon blessed with three daughters: **Magda**, the oldest, whose hair, sadly, was naturally brown, although it would turn quite red in America; **Zsa Zsa** (born 'Sari') a natural blond who at a very young age exhibited the desire for fame with none of the talents usually associated with achievement, excepting beauty and a natural wit; and **Eva**, the youngest and blondest of the girls, who after seeing Grace Moore perform at the National Theater, decided that she wanted to be an actress and that she would one day move to Hollywood to become a star.

"Given that the Gabor family at that time lived in Budapest, Hungary, at the period of me between the World Wars, that Hollywood dream seemed a distant one indeed. The story—the riches to rags to riches to rags to riches again myth of survival against all odds as the four women, because of their Jewish heritage, flee Europe with only the minks on their backs and what jewels they could smuggle along with them in their *decolletage*, only to have to battle afresh for their places in the vicious Hollywood pecking order—gives new meaning to the term 'compelling.' The reader, as if he were witnessing a particularly gore-drenched traffic accident, is incapable of looking away."

—New York Review of Books

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James Dean, Tomorrow Never Comes

Bill and Hillary, *So This Is That Thing Called Love*

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Love Triangle, *Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis*

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, *A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams*

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NOVELS
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Midnight in Savannah

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TRAVEL GUIDES

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Andalusia, Andorra, Anguilla, Aruba, Atlanta, Austria, the Azores, The Bahamas, Barbados, the Bavarian Alps, Berlin, Bermuda, Bonaire and Curaçao, Boston, the British Virgin Islands, Budapest, Bulgaria, California, the Canary Islands, the Caribbean and its "Ports of Call," the Cayman Islands, Ceuta, the Channel Islands (UK), Charleston (SC), Corsica, Costa del Sol (Spain), Denmark, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Edinburgh, England, Estonia, Europe, "Europe by Rail," the Faroe Islands, Finland, Florence, France, Frankfurt, the French Riviera, Geneva, Georgia (USA), Germany, Gibraltar, Glasgow, Granada (Spain), Great Britain, Greenland, Grenada (West Indies), Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Jamaica, Key West & the Florida Keys, Las Vegas, Liechtenstein, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Maine, Malta, Martinique & Guadeloupe, Massachusetts, Melilla, Morocco, Munich, New England, New Orleans, North Carolina, Norway, Paris, Poland, Portugal, Provence, Puerto Rico, Romania, Rome, Salzburg, San Diego, San Francisco, San Marino, Sardinia, Savannah, Scandinavia, Scotland, Seville, the Shetland Islands, Sicily, St. Martin & Sint Maartin, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, South Carolina, Spain, St. Kitts & Nevis, Sweden, Switzerland, the Turks & Caicos, the U.S.A., the U.S. Virgin Islands, Venice, Vienna and the Danube, Wales, and Zurich.

BIOGRAPHIES

From Diaghilev to Balanchine, *The Saga of Ballerina Tamara Geva*

Lucille Lortel, *The Queen of Off-Broadway*

Greta Keller, *Germany's Other Lili Marlene*

Sophie Tucker, *The Last of the Red Hot Mamas*

Anne Bancroft, *Where Have You Gone, Mrs. Robinson? (co-authored with Stanley Mills Haggart)*

Veronica Lake, *The Peek-a-Boo Girl*

Running Wild in Babylon, *Confessions of a Hollywood Press Agent*

HISTORIES

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Chester A. Arthur, *Gilded Age Coxcomb in the White House*

Discover Old America, *What's Left of It*

CUISINE

Food For Love, *Hussar Recipes from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with collaboration from the cabaret chanteuse, Greta Keller*

AND COMING SOON, FROM BLOOD MOON

Rock Hudson, *Erotic Fire*
Carrie Fisher & Debbie Reynolds: *Princess Leia & Unsinkable Tammy in Hell*
Rita Hayworth, *Love Goddess of the World*
Hefner, Guccione, and Flynt: *Empires of Skin*

This Book is Dedicated to

Virginia Grey

(1917-2004)

Superstar Lana Turner (left) with her friend and confidante, actress Virginia Grey, source of some of the information contained within this biography.

WITH RESPECT AND ADMIRATION, REST IN PEACE, and THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES.

What is Blood Moon Productions?

“Blood Moon, in case you don't know, is a small publishing house on Staten Island that cranks out Hollywood gossip books, about two or three a year, usually of five-, six-, or 700-page length, chocked with stories and pictures about people who used to consume the imaginations of the American public, back when we actually had a public imagination. That is, when people were really interested in each other, rather than in Apple ‘devices.’ In other words, back when we had vices, not devices.”

—The Huffington Post

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Lana learns the secret behind the new mystery man in her life, a studly enigma calling himself "John Steele. Mickey Cohen's henchman, Johnny Stompanato, becomes Lana's latest lover, a disastrous affair. She flies to England for the filming of *Another Time, Another Place*, and falls into the arms of Sean Connery. Stompanato threatens to kill the future James Bond. Stompanato is stabbed to death in Lana's home. The debate still goes on: Did Lana really murder the gangster and let her daughter, Cheryl, take the fall? Years later, Lana admits that she was the one who stabbed her hustler lover.

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Lana teams with producer Ross Hunter to remake Claudette Colbert's *Imitation of Life*. At last, her money problems are over: She's fixed for life. Lana launches war with Otto Preminger. She and Anthony Quinn become murderers, but only on screen. She pursues but does not overtake the *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Lana's on-screen affair in *By Love Possessed*, a story of alleged rape, suicide, and embezzlement. In a clinch with Bob Hope in *Bachelor in Paradise*, she asks Dean Martin *Who's Got the Action?* Her final confrontation with Marilyn Monroe. *Love Has Many Faces*, and they're named Cliff Robertson, Hugh O'Brian, and a bullfighter. *Madame X* returns to the screen once again, this time with Lana.

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Lana Falls in love with Fred May, who "looks like Tyrone Power." She settles into a comfortable life with him, but a handsome bartender lures her into his love shack. Divorce follows. Lana falls for Robert P. Eaton, "The Stud of Malibu," and enters into an ill-fated marriage "with his cheating heart." Divorce follows, Lana's feud with best-selling author Harold Robbins. She stars in his ill-fated TV series, *The Survivors*, which does not survive. Lana goes to the altar one final time with Ronald Dante, nightclub hypnotist. But where did all the diamonds go? Divorce follows.

Epilogue

Recording the Voices (Authors' Bios)

BLOOD MOON Productions, Ltd.

Acknowledgments

Tracing the incredible story of the blonde cult goddess, Lana Turner (1921-1995), was a daunting task whose compilation extended over decades.

The research of her remarkable life was finally completed in 2015, in honor of the 20th anniversary of her death.

The research actually began in 1937 when Lana stormed Hollywood as a starlet for Warner Brothers. She had hooked up with another rising star, Ronald Reagan.

Soon after that, she met Stanley Mills Haggart (1910-1980), who worked part-time as a “leg man” for Hedda Hopper. As such, he prowled the clubs of Greater Los Angeles at night, picking up indiscreet stories and gossip about the stars, would-be stars, and wannabes whose stars flickered out early.

Hedda didn’t print much of the data Stanley collected—”It’s too scandalous”—but she wanted to know everything that was going on after dark, especially who was sleeping with whom.

On his nightly rounds, Stanley was joined by William Hopper, Hedda’s only son.

Each of them, had they wanted, could have written a detailed account of Lana’s life, with special emphasis on her heyday years from the late 1930s till the end of the 1950s. I will always be grateful to both men for supplying such rich and detailed notes about early Lana, wartime Lana, and post-war Lana.

Other than those two night owls, no one was more helpful than the beautiful and charming actress, Virginia Grey, the longtime lover of Clark Gable. She met Lana on the set of *Rich Man, Poor Girl* in 1938. They became close friends and confidantes, with Virginia serving as a sounding board for Lana’s consternation about her many love affairs—some of them satisfying, others disastrous.

In the late 1950s, I began my life-long fascination with the blonde film icon, gathering my own material. Boxes and boxes of data later, I finally got to meet the still-beautiful Love Goddess.That happened in the 1970s, when I was working in Los Angeles, a city I documented in a travel guide for Simon & Schuster.

Sometimes Lana liked to talk about her illustrious, even scandalous, past, including “the good stuff” (her words) that she chose not to record in her official memoirs.

But, of course, I didn’t rely on just her revelations alone. Over the years, with every chance I got, I spoke about Lana to producers, directors, makeup men, hairdressers, fashion designers, talent agents such as Henry Willson, and especially the actors and actresses who worked with Lana on each of her pictures.

She certainly made lasting impressions. Everyone who had come into contact with her, including her many lovers, had an opinion about her. Many times, they were loving and understanding about what had driven Lana and her passions to do what she did. In other instances, the images that were remembered were not favorable.

To list all the people over the years who contributed to this biography would fill twenty-five pages of print. But to all of them, living and dead, I express my gratitude for helping me complete the mysterious puzzle that was Lana Turner.

Often, when I could not contact people directly, I relied on the hundreds of interviews these people gave to newspapers and magazines. Sometimes, I got only a paragraph, but it was revelatory.

On one point, her friends and foes agreed: Lana Turner truly deserved an unvarnished memoir that would present her attributes, including her flaws; a bio that would eulogize her beauty, praise her too often underrated talent, and show her as a living and imperfect woman whose major flaw involved searching for love in all the wrong places.

Darwin Porter
February, 2017
New York City

A Word About Phraseologies:

Since we at Blood Moon weren't privy to long-ago conversations as they were unfolding, we have relied on the memories of our sources for the conversational tone and phraseologies of what we've recorded within the pages of this book.

This writing technique, as it applies to modern biography, has been defined as "conversational storytelling" by *The New York Times*, which labeled it as an acceptable literary device for "engaging reading."

Blood Moon is not alone in replicating, "as remembered" dialogues from dead sources. Truman Capote and Norman Mailer were pioneers of direct quotes, and today, they appear in countless other memoirs, ranging from those of Eddie Fisher to those of the long-time mistress (Verita Thompson) of Humphrey Bogart.

Some people have expressed displeasure in the fact that direct quotes and "as remembered" dialogue have become a standard—some would say "mandatory"—fixture in pop culture biographies today.

If that is the case with anyone who's reading this now, they should perhaps turn to other, more traditional and self-consciously "scholastic" works instead.

Best wishes to all of you, with thanks for your interest in our work.

Danforth Prince
President and Founder
Blood Moon Productions

Prologue

In the little mining town of Wallace, Idaho, it had rained all night before the dawn of February 8, 1921. That date would have faded into oblivion, were it not for the birth of a beautiful baby girl—Julia Jean Turner. She would be called "Judy" until she went to work in Hollywood.

From this modest beginning, the newly dubbed Lana Turner became America's "Sweater Girl," a pinup of World War II, and ultimately, the movie star goddess of the Silver Screen, a *femme fatale* linked to scandal and sex.

No role she ever played, from *The Postman Always Rings Twice* to *The Bad and the Beautiful* and *Peyton Place*, ever matched the soap opera of her real life.

In satins and white fox furs, she carved a trail through the boudoirs of Hollywood, collecting diamond rings from seven husbands, including Lex Barker, the screen version of Tarzan.

She seduced two future U.S. Presidents (Ronald Reagan and John F. Kennedy), and a host of Hollywood hunks, often her leading men: Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper, James Stewart, Spencer Tracy, John Garfield, Richard Burton, Victor Mature, Fernando Lamas, Sean Connery, and Frank Sinatra. Her great love was Tyrone Power, "Hollywood's handsomest matinee idol."

She was labeled Hollywood's party girl, and her boss, Louis B. Mayer, excoriated her as amoral. "If she saw a stagehand with tight pants and a muscular build, she'd invite him to her dressing room."

Her most notorious episode included the fatal stabbing of her gangster lover, Johnny Stompanato. Cheryl Crane, her teenage daughter, took the blame, but Hollywood insiders suspected it was Lana herself who was the murderess.

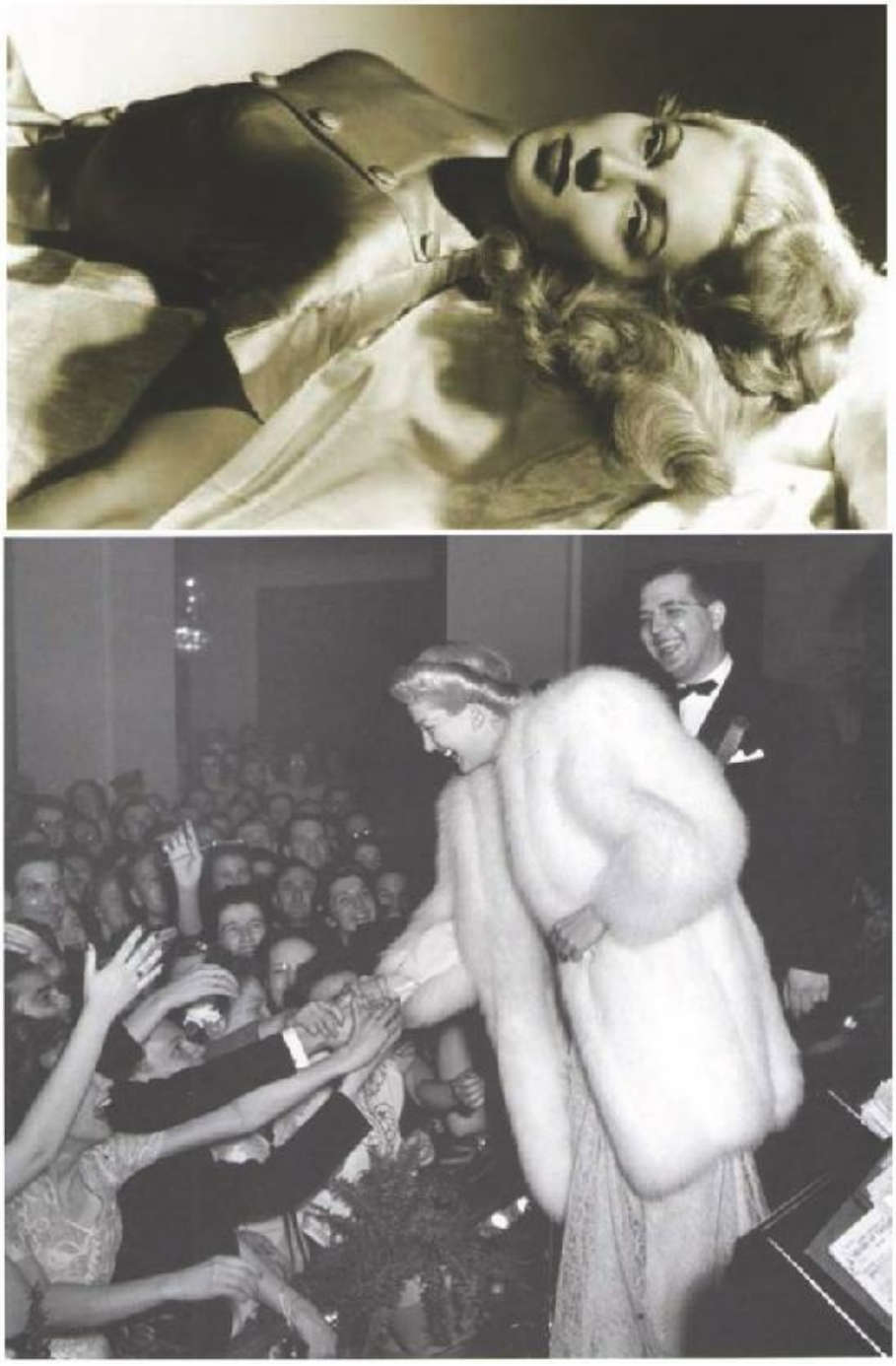
She not only enchanted men, but was the object of adoration from other beautiful women, notably such bisexuals as Ava Gardner. Evita Perón, the dictator of Argentina, was obsessed with Lana, as was Eva Braun, the mistress of Adolf Hitler.

Robert Taylor said, "Lana Turner virtually invented the Hollywood blonde bombshell, and was the inspiration for Marilyn Monroe."

How did Lana view her own incredible life?

"I did what other women only fantasized about doing, but lacked the courage. I actually lived out my wildest dreams. Yes, even those!"

She expressed her sentiment about Tinseltown as she was dying in the 1990s: "Once upon a time, there really was a Hollywood. It was called the Dream Factory. It's gone today, but let it be known that for one moment long ago, I was its dream girl."



Glamorous Lana, clad in ermine at at the peak of her beauty and popularity during the deprivations of post-Depression America, greeting her adoring fans in 1941.

Chapter One

Hollywood's Future Blonde Venus

"Getta Load of That Kid! Whatta Pair of Tits!"

According to a long-enduring legend, Lana Turner was discovered sipping a soda at Schwab's Drugstore. The soda-sipping part was true, but the drugstore wasn't Schwab's.

The legend was reinforced when she was depicted in a grisly thriller as an innocent sixteen-year-old, enjoying her last moments alive before she dies in a "sex murder."

"I've never known what it is I was supposed to have had. Something, obviously, otherwise I wouldn't have had so many fans. I wouldn't have survived so long on the screen. All I do know is that sex appeal is not make-believe. It is not the way you look or the way you walk or the way you smile. It's the way you are!"

—Lana Turner

As suggested by her porcelain skin, young Lana was of Irish, English, and Scottish descent on her mother's side; Dutch on her father's side. Born in 1896 in Montgomery, Alabama, into a family with eleven other brothers and sisters, John Virgil Turner spoke with a very thick Southern accent. Once, he'd entered an *Amos 'n' Andy* sound-alike contest. *[At the time, they were the two most famous African-American entertainers of their day, starring in a popular radio show.]*

At the age of twenty-four, Virgil had returned from World War I, where he had served as an infantry platoon sergeant.

Who could have predicted that this little eight-year-old, raggle-taggle schoolgirl, walking the streets of San Francisco, would in a few short years morph into "The Love Goddess of Hollywood?"

Ruggedly handsome, he had a muscular build, blonde hair, and sparkling blue eyes. He also possessed slim hips and broad shoulders.

"From the picture or two I have of my father, I looked like him and also had his temperament," Lana recalled years later. "He had a sense of humor and a devil-may-care attitude."

Back home in Alabama, he tried his luck as an insurance salesman, but sold no policies, so he told his family goodbye and headed west, perhaps to Dallas.

However, he ended up in the little town of Picher, Oklahoma. It was a Saturday night, and he was directed to Picher's Roof Garden Restaurant, which hired a dance band once a week. Tonight was the night, and he was looking for a good time. He liked, in this order, sex, gambling, and dancing. He was a skilled dancer and had a good singing voice. It was rumored that he had once appeared in vaudeville in Birmingham, Alabama, before he went off to war.

It was to this very restaurant that Mildred Frances Cowan was headed with her father, a mining engineer. Born in Lamar, Arkansas, in 1904, she had accompanied her father to Picher on a mining inspection tour. Her mother had died during childbirth, owing to complications from the Rh blood factor, a problem that would also plague Lana for most of her life.

Mildred Turner and her only daughter, then known as Julia Jean, posed for their first photograph in 1924.

Mildred had just turned sixteen, and Virgil found her the prettiest girl in the room. He went over and asked her to dance. Her stern father, Henry Cowan, didn't want his young daughter taking up with this older man, whom he didn't trust.

He would later warn her to stay away from Virgil, but she was a strong-willed teenager. After he'd held her close on the dance floor, she had just "folded into his arms."

She'd later tell her daughter, "For both of us, it was love at first sight."

In Picher, despite her father's objections, she slipped away and saw Virgil while her father toured the mines. Within five days, he'd asked her to run away with him and get married. She knew very little about him, but she wanted to be his bride.

[Picher, Oklahoma, now a ghost town, is among a small number of communities, worldwide, to be evacuated and declared uninhabitable because of environmental and health damage caused by the mines the town once serviced.

Humble origins: Picher, Oklahoma, circa 1917, a few years before 16-year-old Mildred would elope with Virgil to eventually produce Lana Turner. Thriving as a mining center, Picher was later evaluated by the EPA as an environmental disaster and eventually abandoned, forcibly, as a region prone to birth defects and cancer.

Once a thriving community in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, Picher—in addition to its role as the venue for the romance that eventually sired Lana Turner—was once a major center for the mining of lead and zinc. Generations of unrestricted subsurface excavations dangerously undermined most of the township's buildings and left enormous mounds of toxic debris piled in fields and vacant lots.]

With Virgil, years before anyone ever knew about the toxic after effects of its mines there, Mildred fled north from Picher in a pickup truck. He'd met someone in Wallace, Idaho, who had offered him a job running a little dry cleaning store there, and he'd accepted.

Mildred recalled in horror her wedding night. She was a virgin. He caused her great pain because of the size of his endowment, and she had bled a lot. She had locked herself in the bathroom at the motor court where they were staying. When she emerged that morning, he was waiting for her, and he raped her again. "He would never take 'no' for an answer," she told Lana. "He could never get enough—sometimes four times a day. I thought all husbands demanded that. Boy, did I find out differently. I came to dread sex and avoided it whenever I could."

"As time went by, I was relieved when he started sneaking off with other women."

Before reaching Wallace, the couple ran out of money. Mildred said that her new husband had the tightest pair of pants she'd ever seen on any man. "At least two sizes too small. They practically showed everything he had."

En route to Idaho, they stopped off at a little town where he took her to a honky tonk with live music and hamburgers. She recalled that when Virgil had three beers and had to go to the men's room, two men from the bar rose from their seats and followed him. Then she saw him disappearing into the back alley with the two men. He seemed gone for a long time. Eventually, he returned about forty minutes later with $15 in his pocket, which paid for the motor court and gas.

"I was very innocent in those days," Mildred said. "I'd heard of men paying whores for sex, women whores. But I didn't find out until months later that homosexuals would pay certain virile men for sex, too. Whenever Virgil had to get money for us, he knew what to do."

Depicted above In a rare photograph, Lana's father, handsome, studly, blonde-haired Virgil Turner, used his "best asset" to make money for his family during lean times.

Shortly after their arrival in Wallace, the dry-cleaning establishment that had embraced Virgil into its fold went out of business. Not too many locals needed any of their clothes dry-cleaned.

Out of a job and with a family to support, Virgil went to work in the local mine.

Straddling the rugged terrain of Idaho's northern panhandle, Wallace had been nicknamed "The Silver Capital of the World." It was the largest and busiest of the half-dozen towns within the Coeur D'Alene silver-mining district, which produced more silver than any other mining district in America.

[The townspeople there still cite Lana Turner (1921-1995) as its most famous former resident.]

Lana remembered Virgil coming home all grimy from working in the mines. After a bath, he often put a record

on their old phonograph and danced with Mildred. A young Lana tried to join in. Her father's favorite song was "You're the Cream in My Coffee." Sometimes, he would win at poker, and Lana remembered that he always kept his money in his left sock. "That was his bank. But as soon as he got some dough, he wanted to spend it."

"Money is to be spent, not hoarded," he'd always say.

It was in Wallace that Lana made her first public appearance. She was only four years old. An attractive woman, Mildred had been asked to model some furs at a local fashion show.

Lana went backstage and watched from the wings as her mother modeled. Wanting to imitate her, she picked up one of the fur garments (in this case, something made from fox), wrapped it around her body, and tottered out onto the stage. The women in the audience burst into wild applause. "From that day forth," she later half-jokingly recalled, "I knew I was going to be a star."

***

In Wallace, Virgil ran up $500 in gambling debts without the money to pay for them. Most of his debts were owed to a native of Boulder, Colorado, a 40-year-old, 300-pound bully named Sam Waters. The gambling kingpin of Wallace, he was known for his violence, his main goal involved separating miners from their paychecks. If a gambler didn't pay up within a certain deadline, he'd often find himself badly beaten up in a back alley with a broken bone or two.

Mother and daughter (Mildred and Lana) would in the 1940s become "fashion plates" in Hollywood, but not when this picture was taken in 1924.

Adding to Virgil's problems was the fact that he had also been arrested for bootlegging liquor down from Canada. Within three days, he was scheduled for a confrontation with a judge who was likely to put him in jail.

Using the popular expression of the day, he told Mildred, "It's time to get out of Dodge," meaning that the time had come to flee. A month before, he'd purchased, secondhand, a battered old Star.

[The Star, aka the Star Car, was a brand of low-priced automobile assembled between 1922 and 1928 by the Durant Motors Company as a usually less expensive competitor of the Ford Model T.]

Lana and her parents fled from Virgil's gambling debts in Wallace to wide open new terrains in the undeciphered West in a car like this—a Star Car, manufactured by the Durant Motor Company as an alternative to Henry Ford's Model T.

Discreetly, and in the middle of the night, he packed up the family's meager belongings and headed west toward the promises of San Francisco. The year was 1927.

Their trip over mountainous terrain was rough, and the scorching hot weather was mitigated only with torrential downpours. At one point, the road ahead had been washed away, forcing them, for a period of ten boring days, to camp beside the highway, sustaining themselves with hot dogs cooked over an open fire. Back on the road again, Virgil gave in to Lana's demand to sit on his lap as he drove so that she could handle the steering wheel.

At around three o'clock one hot afternoon, with Lana sitting on his lap and behind the wheel, and with Mildred asleep in the back seat, he dozed off. For about ten miles, the seven-year-old (presumably with no control of the accelerator or brakes) steered the Star herself until Virgil was suddenly awakened by a bump in the road.

Later in life, Lana told boyfriends that she had been driving a car since the age of seven.

As part of some mysterious trip, Virgil had previously visited San Francisco, and he told Lana about the glories of that city by the Bay. She was enthralled when he spoke of the Golden Gate Bridge, thinking it was real gold. At the approach to the city, she was bitterly disappointed to learn that the bridge was not made of actual gold.

The heart of San Francisco also turned out to be a disappointment, too, because they could find no place to live within their meager budget.

He drove the Star to a little suburb, Daly City, where they rented a dreary room in a rundown motor court for $3 a night. Accessible from the hallways were cubicles with toilets and segregated showers for men and women. It turned out that the roadside dive was used mostly by married men who took hookers there for "hot bed" sessions before driving back into the city.

There was a hotplate in the room, where Mildred cooked skimpy meals for her family for a week.

Finally, Virgil got a job as a stevedore working on the docks of the Pacific Steamship Company. With his first paycheck, he filled two paper bags with groceries and brought them home, along with a $2 red-and-white polka dot dress for "my little girl." Lana was thrilled with it and also glad to eat a pork chop for supper. "There's a time limit on how long a growing girl can hold out on soda crackers and milk," she recalled, years later.

With his next paycheck, Virgil rented a little apartment in Stockton with what Mildred called "hot and cold running rats." After one trip down into the building's cellar, she never went there again.

In the meantime, he installed a still and invited Lana (that is, Judy) down into the cellar to show off his strange contraption: a large copper vat with rubber tubes.

He told her it was a still from which he would make moonshine to sell in Mason canning jars, swearing her to secrecy.

He was always running short of money because of his addiction to gambling. Whenever he was in trouble, he put on those too-tight pants and headed to San Francisco to pick up extra cash.

One afternoon, Lana was playing with three girls who lived in the modest homes nearby. Each was bragging about how successful their fathers were. Not wanting to be outshone, Lana said, "My daddy has all your daddies beat. He has a still and makes and sells his own liquor."

Apparently, one of the girls told her parents that night, and the next morning, two policemen arrived on the doorstep to destroy the still and pour out the moonshine. Virgil was locked up for three nights and had to pay a $100 fine.

He didn't always go into San Francisco to earn money. Sometimes, a strange man, perhaps two or three men, would arrive in a car and drive off with him for five or six hours. He told Mildred he was trying to make a business deal with some men from San Francisco.

After three months, Lana arrived home from school one afternoon to learn that Virgil had deserted them. He'd

gone to live with a 73-year-old insurance executive on Nob Hill. Virgil promised to send them money every week. On most weeks, he kept his promise, sometimes giving them as much as fifty dollars. On other weeks, he seemed to forget about them.

To supplement the family's income, Mildred went to work in a beauty parlor in San Francisco, where she washed hair and swept the floor, occasionally bringing coffee or tea to the patrons from a little café across the street.

She also learned to style women's hair. Through some connection, she was offered a better paying job in Sacramento. She took Lana out of school and enrolled her in a Catholic school run by Dominican sisters in Sacramento, even though Lana wasn't Catholic, and had been baptized a Methodist.

The sisters were kind to her and, after the first month, urged her to grow up to become a nun and "the bride of Jesus."

She seemed swayed by the idea until she learned that the nuns had to cut off all their hair. She thought she had beautiful hair and would never do that.

That hair proved to be a problem. She became aware that "little bugs" had infested her head and went home crying to her mother. Mildred examined her head and discovered that she had picked up lice in school. She rushed to the drugstore and purchased a bottle of Black Mange Cure. Returning home, she lathered Lana's head. For three days, she kept a towel wrapped around her head (perhaps a precursor of the turbans in which she'd be famously photographed later), repeating the treatments until all the lice were gone, and she was sanitary once again.

Mildred worked mostly for tips, and some weeks there was almost nothing left to buy food after she'd paid the rent. Lana remembered she and her mother survived for one week on three bottles of milk and a box of soda crackers.

One day, Mildred was abruptly fired and told Lana that she'd been dismissed after being accused of stealing money from the cash register. She denied having taken the money, but had an unexpected $75 in her purse, money she used to put Lana and herself on a bus heading back to San Francisco.

Once there, Mildred moved in with two other beauticians who immediately objected to living in the cramped apartment with a growing little girl.

One of the women knew a family in Modesto, where Lana could stay, and Mildred drove her there. She met the Hislops, who had a daughter, Beverly, who was two years older than Lana. She was to room with the older girl in her bedroom.

Every Sunday, she attended Catholic services with the Hislops. Eventually, she was christened. Her original name had been Julia Jean, and she chose to be christened "Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner," borrowing two of the names from her mother.

For two years, she lived with the Hislops, which she later characterized "as the most miserable years of my life."

"Beverly was very mean to me, and Mrs. Hislop treated me like a scullery maid. I had to do most of the work around the house. I did the wash on Saturday, the ironing on Sunday. I did all the housekeeping. One time, while doing the wash, I got my hand caught in the wringer of this old Maytag and my fingers were nearly crushed."

"I was just a cheap Cinderella with no hope of a pumpkin," she said.

Mildred visited her once or twice a month, and sometimes brought her a new dress or some underwear. Virgil almost never showed up. When he did, he often had candy for her. He never spoke of his new life, but he appeared well dressed, so she assumed that he had a very good job. She was surprised by his choice of clothing, as he tried to dress like a much younger man. He'd dyed his golden blonde hair platinum, telling her, "It makes me look younger."

One afternoon, he asked her what he could bring her on his next visit. "I want a bike, Daddy. *Pretty please!"*

"Okay, I'll get you one," he promised. "A nice shiny red one."

That was the last time she ever saw him.

Her mother arrived at the Hislops unexpectedly and told the family she had to take her daughter back into San Francisco. The date was December 15, 1930, in the midst of the Depression.

As Lana remembered: "At first, I thought she was going to tell me she was pregnant, because I had learned that she was dating a lot of different men."

In the city, Mildred told her the bad news. Virgil had been murdered the previous evening. It turned out that he'd had a winning streak in a poker game in the basement of *The San Francisco Chronicle*. As he left the game, he'd told the other players that he was going to buy a bicycle "for my little girl" with his winnings. The next morning, his badly beaten body was found at the corner of Minnesota and Mariposa Streets. He'd been bludgeoned with a blackjack. His shoes were found near his body, but his left foot was bare—his sock had been removed. Both Mildred and Lana knew that he kept his money in his left sock.

Lana screamed when she realized the importance of that news. "I killed him!" she shouted at her mother. "If I hadn't asked for that bike, he'd be alive today."

That same day, Mildred escorted Lana to a funeral home, where she lifted her up to stare into the coffin holding her dead father. She remembered his face as looking like a wax dummy. Mildred asked if she wanted to kiss her dead father, but the thought of kissing a corpse horrified her. She begged to be taken away.

The next afternoon, mother and daughter attended Virgil's funeral at Presidia, where five uniformed soldiers fired their rifles into the air in a final salute paying homage to Virgil's heroic war efforts in 1918.

Mildred later summed up her feelings at the time to both Lana and her friends: "My life has been wayward," she said, "moving from place to place like a vagabond. I was always searching for something, but never found it. Whatever joy I felt with Virgil was just temporary. It would soon disappear as disappointment and disillusionment set in. Because of the rough life I've endured, I think I should be forgiven for any mistakes in my future, including my failure as a mother."

After the funeral, Mildred drove Lana back to the Hislops in Modesta, a place that Lana loathed. But she'd be forced to live there for nearly another year. One day, what Lana later called "my months as a slave" came to an end. It was a Sunday, and Lana, while ironing, burned Mrs. Hislop's favorite dress. When the woman found out, she'd exploded into a rage and beat Lana so severely, she had to go to the hospital.

Mildred heard about this and rushed to the bed of her daughter, who shared the room with two other patients. She inspected her daughter's black-and-blue body, and the doctor told her that Lana had also been hit on the head, suffering a concussion.

Upon her release, Lana thought that she was going to be allowed to live with Mildred again. But her mother said no. Lana suspected that Mildred was living with some boyfriend who didn't want her to move in.

Instead, through some connection, she found lodgings for Lana with a large Sicilian family in Lodi, outside San Francisco

Unlike the Hislops, the Sicilians became almost foster parents to Lana. The house was small but big enough to sleep mama, papa, and three of their sons and two daughters, one of whom was Lana's age. Her name was Pier, and she shared a bedroom with the newcomer. In exchange for housing and feeding her daughter, Mildred gave the family $20 a week.

Once again, she was enrolled in a Catholic school, which she attended five days a week with Pier. She enjoyed the family meals—pasta every night—and learned to drink wine, which was always weakened with water. "Italians don't believe in making children wait until they're eighteen before tasting *vino,*" Lana recalled.

She also remembered that if she had any complaints at all, it was from papa, insisting she sit on his lap for long periods of time. "He was just a little too friendly, if you get my drift," Lana later said.

On Sunday nights, the family gathered around the piano for sing-alongs, mostly Sicilian favorites. Lana learned some of the songs so she could join in. The family liked her voice so much, they urged her to audition for *The Major Bowes Amateur Hour*, a popular radio show broadcast from San Francisco at the time.

"I performed a number 'The Basin Street Blues,' but I was no Lena Horne," she recalled. "I not only lost, but some of the real singers made fun of me. I decided then and there that stardom was out of the question for me. I was not a performer. I might begin to dream of becoming a dress designer, not only designing and making my own clothes, but for other stylish women as well."

Finally, Mildred came for her daughter and moved her out of the Sicilian family house and in with Chila Meadows, with whom they shared an apartment in San Francisco's Richmond district. A kindly woman, Chila had a son, George, and a daughter, Hazel.

"They became the brother and sister to me that I never had," Lana recalled.

She was enrolled into Presidio Junior High School, and it was here that Lana captured her first male heart. A tall, slim, blonde-haired boy, William Gerst, developed a passionate crush on her, falling madly in love, or in "puppy love" with her.

For Valentine's Day, she was the only girl in her class who received a heart-shaped red box filled with creamy chocolates. For years, Lana kept that empty red box as a remembrance of her first love.

Her greatest thrill at the time was not boys, but the handsome young men on the movie screen. She and her mother tried to see every romantic feature playing at the local Bijou. Mildred admired Kay Francis, especially her fabulous wardrobe. She even styled her hair like Francis did.

But for Lana, it was always a Clark Gable or Robert Taylor movie which thrilled her. She saw Gable in *Manhattan Melodrama*, *Forsaking All Others, The Call of the Wild*, and *Mutiny on the Bounty*. She tried never to miss a Robert Taylor movie, including *Society Doctor, Small Town Girl*, and *Magnificent Obsession*.

"I saved the nickels that mother gave me for lunch until they added up to a quarter. Then I would rush off to the movies to see those beautiful men on the screen."

"When I saw Tyrone Power in *Lloyd's of London*, I could not believe that any man could be that gorgeous. The first time he appeared on the screen, I swooned. Never in my wildest dreams did I realize that in a few short years, I

would not only be making love to both Robert and Clark on and off the screen, but in time, I would meet Tyrone, the love of my life."

When Lana entered Washington High School, she became a cheerleader. "She wore a white skirt and sweater with our school colors of red and gray," said Willie Edmonds. "All the boys were crazy about her, when she jumped up and down and showed off her gams. She was really hot, but the word was that she didn't put out, unlike some of the other girls. I guess she was saving it for some guy."

On the home front, Mildred was finding it harder and harder to make a living during the Depression. She was a widow with a single child to support. She missed many days of work at the beauty parlor because she was prone to respiratory ailments. She came down with what is known as "the San Joaquin Valley Fungus," a lung ailment, which meant she coughed a lot. A lot of the patrons didn't want her to work on their hair because they told her boss that they feared she was infected with something contagious.

In a doctor's office, she was told that the frequent fogs of San Francisco were bad for her lungs. He advised her to move to a drier climate, like Los Angeles.

"Mother had a friend in Los Angeles, Gladys Heath," Lana recalled. "Shephoned Gladys, whom she called 'Gladdy.' She had a spare room and could accommodate us in her apartment."

"Come on down," Gladdy said.

The next day, Mildred packed all their possessions and agreed to split the gas bill with a fellow beautician, Stella Tiffin, who was driving to Los Angeles to attend to her ailing mother.

There wasn't much room in the car for all their possessions, so Mildred tied their suitcases to the top of the car with a rope. Lana remembered that Stella was a chatterbox with a fondness for stepping on the brake all the time. She was a nervous driver with a tendency to panic whenever another car approached. One afternoon, as they neared the town of Paso Robles, the rain began to pour down heavily. Approaching a truck, Stella slammed on the brakes. The road was slippery, and, as she braked, she lost control of the car. It skidded off the highway and into a large drainage ditch, where it flipped over.

Stella escaped with minor injuries, but Mildred suffered two cracked ribs and had to go to the emergency room of the nearby hospital. Lana ended up with a bump on her forehead, the size of a large egg, and a severe cut on her right arm from a shard of shattered window glass.

That night, they found lodgings in a rundown motor court. "It reminded me of the place where Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable landed in *It Happened One Night,"* Lana said.

The car was pulled from the ditch and, although it was caked with mud, it was still in running order.

All bandaged, Mildred sat in the front seat, Lana in the back, as Stella headed south to Los Angeles once again. "Her car shook, rattled, and rolled all the way there," Lana later said. "We looked like one motley crew."

Stella wanted to be rid of Lana and Mildred and dumped them at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Sunset Boulevard. Mildred put through a call to Gladdy, who drove over to pick them up. "We must have looked like the saddest mother-and-daughter refugees in L.A.," Lana said.

Gladdy had a little Andalusian-style house on Glencoe Way. Mildred and Gladdy occupied the two bedrooms, and Lana was assigned a cot in the utility room, where the ironing was done.

The next week, Mildred found work at the Lois Williams Beauty Salon, which was only an eight-block walk from their little house. The beauticians made it known to their patrons that they'd be capable of crafting, on demand, replicas of the hair-dos of their favorite movie stars—Jean Harlow, Kay Francis, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, whomever.

School had already begun when Lana enrolled at Hollywood High School.

Within a month, her life would change for all time.

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In September of 1936, Lana Turner (then known as Judy) headed for Hollywood High School, near the corner of West Sunset Boulevard and North Highland Avenue. Founded in 1903, it had begun as a two-room schoolhouse. In time, it became the most famous high school in America because of all the movie stars who were enrolled there, none more legendary than Lana Turner and Judy Garland.

Lana never pretended to be a good student, and simply could not comprehend mathematics at all. Her mother urged her to take a class in typing, thinking that she might find a job as a secretary. "I'd rather be a dress designer," Lana countered.

One day in late October, Lana decided to skip out on the typing class since at the last session, she'd broken a fingernail. She headed across the street to the Top High Malt Café, where she had a nickel to spend on a Coca-Cola.

She had become well aware of her looks. A classmate, Nanette Fabray, remembered her. "I had never seen a

more beautiful girl, and Hollywood High was filled with beauties, most of whom, or so it seemed, wanted to become a movie star. When Judy strolled down the hall, the other girls just stopped and stared at her, mostly with envy. The boys often whistled. I know this sounds like a contradiction, but her face was innocent yet reflected a know-it-all look. Even her teachers predicted stardom for her."

There was a problem: Lana couldn't act. She tried out for a school play, but was rejected. The drama teacher gave her lines to read, and she was asked to play a scene that was charged with emotion. But during her performance, "her face was carved in stone," according to the teacher. "She read her lines like reciting a recipe in a cookbook."

There was another problem, too. She couldn't sing or dance, except a few steps Virgil had taught her.

In vivid contrast, her classrooms were filled with talented boys and girls, often the children of movie stars. Fabray herself had performed in vaudeville as a child and would later enjoy a big career as an actress, singer, and dancer in the musical theater of the 1940s and 50s.

At Top Hat, Lana sipped her coke, acutely aware that some middle-aged man at the end of the counter was staring at her. "I felt he was undressing me with his eyes. I wore this white sweater, and he kept looking down at my breasts."

At the time, she was worthy of attention. Her measurements were 35-24 ½-34 ½. At the age of fifteen, she stood 5'3", with perfectly formed breasts. Large blue-gray eyes were set in a beautiful face crowned by silky auburn hair. She had a peach-colored complexion that was free of any imperfection, and her skin was so porcelain smooth she could have advertised a skin-care product.

[Indeed, by the early 1940s, she would appear in ads in magazines across the country, promoting the glories of Lux Toilet Soap. The ads cited her as having "the world's most beautiful complexion."]

The soda jerk at the Top Hat came over to Lana. "That gentleman over there would like to meet you. It's not a come-on. He comes in here every day for lunch and works down the street as a newsman. Can he introduce himself?"

She looked at him squarely for the first time, finding that he wore a dark business suit, had a pencil-thin mustache, and his head was crowned with brilliantined black hair graying at the temples.

She signaled to him that it would be all right if he approached her.

"Hello, young lady," he said to her. "I'm Billy Wilkerson, the publisher of *The Hollywood Reporter*. Forgive me for using what usually is a pick-up line, but I think you should be in pictures."

"I don't know about that," she answered. "I've been told I can't act."

"I should clarify my remark. I said you should be in pictures. You could be a movie star. With your looks, you wouldn't have to act." Then he handed her his business card.

"I'd have to talk it over with my mother," she said. "She makes the big decisions for me."

"I want your mother to call me, and both of you to visit me at my office down the street. I think I can hook you up with the right people."

"Well, maybe," she said, sounding both thrilled but strangely hesitant.

"Goodbye," he said. "I hope to hear from your mother in the morning. By the way, what is your name?"

"Judy Turner."

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[That drugstore encounter on that October afternoon became one of the most enduring legends in the history of Hollywood. But the facts got distorted over the years.

The first article about Lana's discovery was more or less accurate, appearing in the December 23, 1940 edition of Life *magazine. It correctly identified the venue as the Top Hat Café.*

However, by the mid-40s, when Lana was reigning as the Queen of MGM, the venue of her inaugural meeting with Wilkerson had morphed into Schwab's Pharmacy at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Laurel, two miles from Hollywood High.

Many of the girls at Hollywood High were jealous of the future Lana Turner—not only for her looks, but because all the boys were in pursuit of her. Nearly every reasonably attractive girl in school wanted to be a movie star, if not Carole Lombard, then perhaps Barbara Stanwyck.

Opened by the Schwab brothers in 1932, the drugstore in time became the hangout of young actors, male and female, dreaming of stardom. Its most famous client was the popular columnist Sidney Skolsky, who used Schwab's as his unofficial office, conducting his interviews there and even picking up his mail there.

In his memoir, Don't Get Me Wrong—I Love Hollywood, *he wrote that almost daily, he encountered some young wannabee actress who asked him which stool was it that Lana Turner sat on when she was discovered by a talent agent.*

"I'd direct her to this one stool where the poor girl would sit there in vain all day waiting to become the next Lana."]

Back home that evening, Lana showed Mildred and Gladdy the business card that Billy Wilkerson had given her. Her mother dismissed it as some come-on by an aging Hollywood wolf lusting after a young girl, but Gladdy wasn't so sure. She had heard of Wilkerson, who was quite famous in Hollywood because of his newspaper and nightclubs.

Billy Wilkerson, founder of *The Hollywood Reporter* and "discoverer" of young Lana Turner, in 1939.

Finally, Lana persuaded Mildred to accompany her to the office of *The Hollywood Reporter* after a call was put through to Wilkerson.

He turned out to be legitimate and was a friend of the Hollywood elite, including Louis B. Mayer and Nicholas Schenck, with whom he often played poker. He was also a nightclub impresario, having founded the Café Trocadero in 1934. In a few short years, Lana herself would be a regular at his other celebrated clubs, including Ciro's in 1940 and LaRue of Hollywood in 1943.

[William R. Wilkerson would also become a controversial figure in Hollywood history—and not just for having discovered Lana Turner. In 1946, the year after World War II ended, he began to publish a series of columns in The Hollywood Reporter *called "Billy's List," in which he printed the names of alleged Communist sympathizers.*

In time, and with a lot of help from the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover, "Billy's List" became the infamous Hollywood Blacklist, which destroyed the careers of directors, producers, and screenwriters such as Dalton Trumbo.]

Wilkerson was frank that he himself could not advance Lana's career, but he could introduce her to a man who might. He agreed to set up an appointment with his friend, Zeppo Marx, who ran a successful theatrical agency, which in time specialized in handling the careers of married couples, including Clark Gable and Carole Lombard and Robert Taylor and Barbara Stanwyck.

[Born in 1901, Zeppo (aka Herbert) Marx was the youngest of the five Marx Brothers. From 1929 to 1933, he appeared with his brothers in their films. They included Duck Soup *and* Monkey Business. *Eventually, he distanced himself from their filmmaking agendas to become a theatrical agent and an engineer, the latter pursuit of which made him a multi-millionaire. In the late 1930s, he invented a type of fastener, a "Marman ring," a heavy-duty band clamp that allows the butt ends of tubes or pipes to be interconnected and subsequently "fast-disconnected" whenever necessary. An adaptation of his invention was used to hold "Fat Man," an atomic bomb inside the B-29 bomber that flew over and subsequently demolished Hiroshima.]*

An appointment was arranged with Zeppo, who asked Lana, in front of her mother, "Raise your dress. I wanna see your legs."

Lana looked over at her mother, who nodded her approval. "I'm not putting the make on you. This is standard in the business. You've got a beautiful face, but you can't become a show girl with ugly legs."

She raised the hem of her dress and Zeppo approved. "You've got the body of a nineteen- or twenty-year-old." He was very frank, telling her that he had time only for his A-list clients.

He'd assign her to his assistant, Henry Willson. "He's great at developing hotyoung males, his specialty. But occasionally, he devotes some time to a gal. I'll call him and set up a time. And don't worry, Mildred, your daughter's virginity will be safe with Henry Willson."

Zeppo's parting remark to Lana was "From now on, kid, you're eighteen years old. Got that? Eighteen. Not a day younger."

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Talent agent Henry Willson always boasted, "Regardless of what you read, I was the fucker who really discovered Lana Turner and made her a star."

A day after meeting Zeppo Marx, Mildred, accompanied by Lana, found herself sitting across from the cluttered desk of Willson, an ugly man with a fatty figure who—although he occasionally took on a female client—specialized mainly in booking actors with perfect physiques.

Years later, he recalled, "Only twice in my life did I ask an aspirant actor or actress to read a page or two of dialogue for me. Both of them gave a disastrous reading. I mean, really awful. They had no talent at all. Minus zero. But they had something else, and that was this intangible thing called sex appeal. That young man and young woman who read for me were renamed Rock Hudson and Lana Turner."

When Willson met Lana, she was still known as Judy Turner. "Her mother, Mildred, brought this underage girl in to see me. Zeppo had sensed something about her and turned her over to me, the future starmaker. Mildred had dressed her like a jailbait hooker—a cheap fur stole—rather ratty, paste jewelry, hair piled on top of her head, and enough makeup to cover eight chorus cuties. I cut our meeting short and asked her to come back the next morning with no makeup and dressed like a schoolgirl at Hollywood High."

Over coffee with Lana the next morning, Willson confirmed that Billy Wilkerson had not put the make on her, as he had so often with his other "discoveries."

"I don't know how you escaped. When he's not losing money gambling, he sleeps with every gal not named Mrs. Billy Wilkerson."

Henry Willson, depicted here with an effigy of Uncle Sam, used the infamous Hollywood casting couch, but

with a male-dominated twist. In the case of this talent agent, only handsome, well-built men were sent to the sofa for a workout.

He liked Lana's schoolgirl look and the fact that she combined innocence with sex appeal. "Men go home to fuck their wives out of duty, but what the bastards really want is to bed a gal who looks like you."

In the next two months, Will-son and Judy, as she was still being called, would see a lot of each other. He took her from MGM to Paramount, from Columbia to RKO, but to no avail. Some casting directors had a certain appeal, and some commented on her beauty, but he heard the line repeated endlessly: "Henry, you of all people, know that Hollywood is flooded with beautiful girls, or, in your case, pretty boys."

One director at 20th Century Fox had a role for her but on one condition: "She's got to let me fuck her—or else it's no way, José!"

Willson, as a go-between, asked Lana if she'd be willing to cooperate, but she rejected the offer.

It's not going to happen," Willson told the director. "But if you're horny, I'm good for a quickie."

"*Get the fuck out of here, faggot!*" the director responded.

Gradually, Lana began to find out who Willson really was, not so much from him, but from gossipy members of the entertainment industry.

A native New Yorker, born in 1911, he drifted to Hollywood, where his first major job was that of a talent scout for producer David O. Selznick. "Most of my job involved getting beautiful gals for his casting couch," Willson recalled.

While doing that, Willson as a talent agent maintained a casting couch of his own. Only well-built men need apply. It was said that in time, he practically invented the word "beefcake," as opposed to the girly, then-more-widely accepted term, "cheesecake."

"I was a connoisseur of male flesh," he admitted. "Talent didn't matter so much if these guys looked great without their shirts."

In time, he would become known as "The Man Who Created Rock Hudson." He also gave his discoveries catchy names that went over well in the 1950s, including "Tab" and "Rock." In his stable were such well-built, good-looking guys as Guy Madison, Rory Calhoun, Tab Hunter, Robert Wagner, John Derek, Troy Donahue, Clint Walker, John Saxon, and so many others. None of them, however, attained the top box office appeal of Hudson.

"Willson's hands-on lechery gave new meaning to the proverbial casting couch," Selznick said. "His couch was even more active than that of Harry Cohn over at Columbia. It was rare, but Willson did help launch the careers of a few women, including Lana Turner, Natalie Wood, and Rhonda Fleming, that Queen of Technicolor."

"Most fans thought Lana was an overnight sensation," Willson said. "That was far from the truth. She was turned down again and again. She needed money when she wasn't making the rounds of the studios with me. She went to school and worked at this lingerie shop on Hollywood Boulevard for $12.50 a week."

Lana had told Willson that she knew how to dance, although he never put her through the test. He arranged for RKO to test her for a possible role in *The New Faces of 1937*, at first known as *Young People*. She arrived at the studio with a familiar face, Mickey Rooney, who, it was understood, would accompany her on the piano. Perhaps he'd taught her some dance steps, as he was an expert dancer.

But the casting director abruptly canceled, without explanation, her audition, and she left the studio frustrated and disappointed.

When the film was released, Lana went to see it. "I would have been out-classed," she admitted. "There were dozens of talented young dancers in that film. Hell, the lead number, 'New Faces,' was danced by none other than Ann Miller. Who could compete with her? Perhaps Eleanor Powell—and that was about it."

***

True to his promise, Willson managed to get her a job in a movie produced by his associate, David O. Selznick. It was *A Star Is Born*. Released in 1937 it starred Janet Gaynor and Fredric March, two leading stars of the 1930s. Each of them would eventually be nominated for a Best Actor and Best Actress Oscar for their respective performances.

Its plot focused on an aspiring Hollywood actress whose star is about to ascend. She marries an egocentric actor whose Hollywood stardom (and life in general) is fading and falling apart. Its plot was said to have been (discreetly) based on Barbara Stanwyck's disastrous marriage to the closeted Frank Fay.

[Seventeen years later, in 1954, A Star Is Born *was remade into what is arguably Judy Garland's most dramatically successful movie. Much of Hollywood asserted that she should have won the Oscar for Best Actress in*

1954 after it was awarded instead to Grace Kelly for her role in The Country Girl.

In 1976, Barbra Streisand made a stab at the by-now-overworked theme of A Star Is Born, *an remake that was relatively unsuccessful.]*

Ironically, although Lana was already being hailed for her beautiful face, only the back of her head, wearing a silly cap, appeared in the 1937 version of the film's final cut. She appeared in a crowd scene at the Santa Ana racetrack. In that scene, the characters portrayed by Fredric March and Lionel Stander had a fight, attracting a crowd, a member of which was the (anonymous) character played by Lana.

Lana, as she looked in her first role in a movie. She was hired as an extra in the 1937 *A Star Is Born*, starring Janet Gaynor and Fredric March. "Everybody told me how beautiful I was, but the bastards only showed my back."

Also making her debut in a very small role was blonde-haired Carole Landis, who would in time become Lana's rival for screen roles and World War II pinup popularity. "She was also the girl who chased after some of my boyfriends," Lana said, referring to Tony Martin, Victor Mature, and Ronald Reagan.

The two aspirant actresses, Lana and Landis, had hamburgers for lunch in the commissary. Lana was surprised at how candid Landis, a native of Wisconsin, was. She admitted to having been a call girl in San Francisco, and claimed that she planned to sleep her way to the top through "performances" on one casting couch after another. She named some of her latest conquests—Charlie Chaplin, Hal Roach, Jr., and Darryl F. Zanuck.

Lana differed, telling Landis, and so many others, "I plan to get ahead on my looks—not by sleeping with studio bosses."

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Girls at Hollywood High tended to shun Lana, perhaps out of jealousy. There was one exception: Born in British Columbia, Alexis Smith had migrated south to grow up in Los Angeles. Unlike Lana, she had been trained as a dancer, and made her debut as a ballerina at the Hollywood Bowl when she was only thirteen.

She soon deserted The Dance and dreamed instead of becoming a movie star. She wasn't discovered by a Warner Brothers talent agent until 1940, when she was in college.

Her first featured film role was *Dive Bomber* (1941), in which she'd starred opposite Errol Flynn. In time, she'd make other movies with Flynn and also appeared opposite such leading men as Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, Charles Boyer, Ronald Reagan, Bing Crosby, and Burt Lancaster.

One Saturday, Alexis invited Lana to a matinee to see *Sylvia Scarlett* (1935), starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant. Alexis insisted that they sit in a remote section of the balcony, an area of the theater that was virtually empty at 2PM.

Twenty minutes into the movie, Lana felt Alexis' hand on her knee. At first, she dismissed it as just a friendly gesture. But soon, that hand began a northward trek. At the time, a shocked Lana knew very little about lesbianism. She rose abruptly from the seat, and, in tears, made her way toward the exit. She wasn't really certain about what

women did to satisfy each other sexually.

Her budding friendship with Alexis ended abruptly in the movie palace that afternoon, although the two actresses would meet socially on other occasions. No mention was ever made of that long-ago encounter at a matinée.

While still in high school, Lana received her first lesbian advance from another young actress, the bisexual Alexis Smith, who was dreaming of becoming a ballet dancer. She and Lana were the same age. Here, she appears in *The Constant Nymph* (1943).

However, Alexis did make a comment about Lana to an editor at a movie magazine: “She had a glorious look about her in high school, a really beautiful girl, a face made for the Silver Screen. She could have had anybody she wanted. And from what I’ve heard, she has.”

That last line was censored, and never appeared in the magazine’s “final cut.”

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What teenaged Lana wanted was a boyfriend, and one afternoon she found him. He was in the hallway of Hollywood High, putting his books and a duffel bag into his locker. She recognized him at once: He was a movie star.

Jackie Cooper, child star and Young Rascal, in *School’s Out* (1930)

Jackie Cooper, a year younger than she was, had been a child star, and had been the youngest performer at that time to be nominated for an Academy Award as Best Actor for his role in the 1931 movie, *Skippy*.

He had appeared in his first film in 1929 at the dawn of the Talkies, and had starred in the *Our Gang* comedies produced by Hal Roach, Sr.

Cooper had also been in movies with crusty old Wallace Beery, including *The Champ* (1931). Lana later learned that the two actors, a perfect match on the screen, detested each other.

When Lana encountered Cooper, it seemed an instant attraction. Before her English class began, he’d asked her out on a date, and she accepted, giving him her phone number.

She had met him at a critical point in his life. Facing a dilemma encountered by most child actors, even the most successful, he was having trouble getting cast into parts that portrayed adolescents on the brink of manhood.

Since he was not yet old enough to drive, he asked his mother to hire a chauffeur to drive them around throughout the course of their evening together. He made an impressive entrance at Gladdy's home and was introduced to Mildred, who complimented him on his screen performances.

Jackie Cooper (center), a decade and a carload of sexual experience later, in 1940, with budding (and competing) *ingénues* who included, left to right, Judy Garland, Bonita Granville, his girlfriend (Lana Turner), and Robert Stack, Lana's future lover.

He and Lana were driven to a movie palace, where they sat in orchestra seats, unlike her experience with Alexis Smith, who had sought out a remote balcony perch.

They'd come in late for the movie, but when the lights went on, many fans in the theater asked Cooper for his autograph, an experience that Lana herself in a few short years would experience, and would continue to experience throughout the rest of her life.

Later, they were driven to a hamburger joint serving greasy food. As she nibbled on French fries, she discussed dreams for her future. Mostly, however, he wanted to talk about himself. She was soon to find out that talking about one's self was the favorite conversational pursuit of most Hollywood actors.

Cooper was a young man who kissed and told. He boasted of his experience as a lover, having been seduced by Kathryn, a twenty-year-old chorus girl who lived across the street from him in Ocean Beach. At the time, he was only thirteen.

His friend, Bill Smith, who once caught Cooper in bed with an older vaudeville actress, said, "Coop was one smart little son of a bitch. He could always get the broads."

Lana was fascinated by Judy Garland, and had read that she and Cooper had dated. She was eager for details, and he seemed flattered that she was viewing him as a young man of the world. He told her he'd met Judy, who was nine months older than him, when they appeared on a radio show hosted by Wallace Beery.

"Our romance began with a walk on the beach one night," he said. "A kiss, another kiss, and the inevitable happened."

In many ways, Lana envied Garland who, as a young girl, seemed to be having experiences usually associated with women far older than she was.

"Judy is very fickle," Cooper said. "After three months, she dumped me for another actor, Billy Halop."

On their third date, the young actor asked their driver to divert his rear-view mirror. He made a play for Lana, trying to feel her up. But she wasn't yet ready to relinquish her virginity. She later admitted, however, that she gave in for some "heavy petting."

He unbuttoned his trousers to present her with an erect penis. She'd never seen a man with an erection before.

Some wag later joked, "After Jackie Cooper, Lana Turner never saw a man without an erection."

Like Garland, Lana dated Cooper for only about three months before she took up with another actor about her same age. And although Cooper's glory days as an actor seemed to be receding, her new boyfriend was on the dawn of a spectacular career, and about to become the biggest box office attraction in Hollywood.

He was Mickey Rooney.

Subsequently, she broke off her romance with Cooper, with the promise, “Let’s be friends.”

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Christmas of 1937 was rapidly approaching, and Lana was busy. She wasn’t emoting before the camera, but selling lingerie at a fast pace in the shop where she worked on Hollywood Boulevard.

Except for that day’s work on *A Star is Born* (1937), no other job had surfaced, although a photographer had approached her about posing for some nudes. She turned him down, although the blonde who would later “replace” her, Marilyn Monroe, would eventually say “yes” to an equivalent request.

One day, during one of those chance encounters that often happens in Hollywood, Solly Baiano, a former tennis champion representing California in competitions, came into the dress shop to purchase lingerie for his girlfriend.

At the time, he was working for Henry Willson, and he recognized Lana from the 8” x 10” glossies that Willson kept of his mostly shirtless male clients.

He introduced himself to Lana, and was struck by her beauty. “If only she would take off fifteen pounds.”

Baiano, in his capacity as a talent scout, often “hustled the flesh” of unknown newcomers to casting directors at various studios. For the most part, the orders transmitted by the studio bosses, through him, were usually the same. “Walk for me, turn around, lift your skirt.”

With Willson, Lana had made many calls on various studios. So far, every casting director had told Willson, “Don’t call us, we’ll get back to you.” Of course, they never did.

Seeing Lana in the flesh gave Baiano an idea. His best friend was Barron Polan, an assistant to director Mervyn LeRoy. He’d heard that LeRoy had been unsuccessful in casting “the right girl” to open his latest drama, *Murder in the Deep South*. He thought Lana might be just what LeRoy was seeking.

That evening, he phoned Polan, who agreed to set up an appointment with the director at Warner Brothers the next day. Lana agreed to call in sick for work at the lingerie shop that day, even though it was the Christmas rush, and the store was mobbed.

In the meantime, Lana spent her night learning, “Who in the hell is Mervyn LeRoy? Never heard of him.”

She may not have heard of LeRoy, but ninety percent of Hollywood had. Although he would go on to greater glory as a director, Mervyn LeRoy was known at Warner Brothers for making mostly taut, punchy, and socially critical films such as *Little Caesar* (1930), starring Edward G. Robinson and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) starring Paul Muni. His latest film was based on Ward Greene’s novel, *Death in the Deep South*, a social melodrama about prejudice and corruption at the trial and subsequent lynching of an innocent man.

One of the most astute and talented directors at Warners, LeRoy had helped launch the careers of a young Ginger Rogers (with whom he had an affair) and Loretta Young.

LeRoy wanted Gable for the role of Massara in *Little Caesar* (1930), but Jack Warner laughed at the screen test. “Look at the ears on that jerk. You wasted $500 on testing him. Give the role to Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.”

LeRoy had launched his career as an actor himself, but later switched to producing and directing. In time, he would make 75 movies over a period of four decades, boasting, “I never repeated myself, and I never made a flop.”

Director Mervyn LeRoy always took the credit for putting that schoolgirl sweater onto the newly emerging Lana Turner.

She would become known as America's "Sweater Girl," increasing sales of that garment across the nation. "I wanted her to have a 'flesh impact,'" as he called it. "As inexperienced as she was, she pulled it off like a pro."

Among his greatest future successes were "*Madame Curie* (1943); *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1944); and the religious epic *Quo Vadis?* (1951). He also produced *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), starring Judy Garland.

Before he met Lana, LeRoy estimated that he had interviewed at least thirty young women, finding none of them suitable for the role of Mary Clay. "I wanted a girl who was very sexy, but very clean and wholesome. None of the girls I saw were right for the part until Judy Turner walked in. I knew from the first minute that she was right. Fortunately, she was wearing a high school sweater. The role called for the girl to be a knock-out in a sweater. Judy (later, Lana) sure had the right equipment."

"I was shuffling through papers on my desk when she walked in. At first, I didn't look up, expecting another disappointment. When I did look up, I saw this girl with dark hair standing in the doorway, her nervous hands shaking. She had on a blue cotton dress. Her hair was impossible looking, as if she'd never run a comb through it. She wasn't wearing any makeup, and she was so shy, she could hardly look me in the face. Yet there was something about her I knew was right. She had tremendous appeal. An audience would respond to that."

When LeRoy stood up from behind her desk, she found him almost as short as she was. Out of the corner of his mouth extended a large stogie. "You're quite pretty. Tell me what experience you've had?"

"Not a thing," she said. "No acting class. No elocution lessons."

"I see," he answered. "Wait outside, if you don't mind."

She sat in his outer office for at least a half-hour while he conferred with Baiano, whom he had summoned

Then LeRoy emerged from his inner office, walking toward Lana and reaching for her hand. "The role is yours. It's a small part: Off camera, you get raped and murdered at the beginning of the flick. The part pays fifty bucks. Are you ready to sign a contract?"

"I'll have to ask my mother," she answered.

That night, Mildred agreed and on February 12, 1937, Lana signed her first movie contract, the debut of many more to come. It wasn't a contract with Warner Brothers, but a personal contract with LeRoy.

It called for her to begin at the starting salary of $50 a week, twice what Mildred earned at the beauty parlor.

LeRoy met with her two days later in his office. "I don't like the name Judy Turner. It's not special."

"My full name is Julia Jean," she answered.

"That's even worse. Turner's okay, very American. But we need a first name, something glamorous."

They went down through the alphabet from Anne to Betty and on to Irene and Joan before halting at the Ls. "Perhaps Leonore. Loretta has already been taken. Lurlene, no. Lulu is too much."

Suddenly, Lana, or so she recalled later, asked "What about Lana? Pronounced *Lah-nuh."*

LeRoy thought for a minute. "Sounds sexy to me. Lana Turner it is!"

Years later, the actress recalled, "At the time, I didn't know that Lana in Spanish meant wool."

LeRoy later disputed her claim, saying that he named her Lana after one of his old girlfriends.

The next day, she appeared in the wardrobe department for a fitting of her one outfit, a skirt, a blue sweater, high-heeled pumps, and a saucy beret.

Contrary to legend, she did wear a brassiere beneath her sweater. Lined with silk, and with no uplift, it allowed her breasts to bounce freely up and down.

Over the years, it was assumed that her walk along a street was her only scene in the movie. But actually, there was another scene at a soda fountain, where she orders a malt. She tells the soda jerk, "Drop an egg in it as fresh as you are."

She later recalled, "That may explain the legend of my being discovered drinking a malt at Schwab's."

In addition to that, an opening scene in a classroom shows her seductively asking her flustered male teacher (Edward Norris) to help her with a school assignment.

After exiting from the drugstore, she is seen walking down the sidewalk, a scene that would become one of the most iconic in movie history until Marilyn Monroe did "that walk" in the 1950 film, *Niagara*.

"Lana's debut didn't require great screen acting," LeRoy said. "All she had to do was walk, and, boy, did she know how to do that. I had the music scored to match the up-and-down movements of tits and ass."

In a long, 75-foot tracking shot, the camera followed her, not just her breasts bouncing, but her "rotating buttocks" too. Throughout the scene, she held her shoulders back and her head high.

Lana had about eighteen lines of dialogue, but never was the word "rape" uttered, since it was forbidden by the censors of that era. In fact, her rape and murder are suggested—but never depicted—on the screen.

By the end of the shoot, Lana was informed by LeRoy that he'd changed the title of the picture to *They Won't*

Forget.

Lana had no scenes with the other actors in the movie. However, after the shoot was finished, she hung around the set for the next few days, wanting to see how movies were made. The star of the film was the venerable actor Claude Rains, who had been born in London and had vast stage experience. She had seen him in *The Invisible Man* (1933). He had been cast as an ambitious and immoral Southern lawyer in *They Won't Forget*.

The only other actor of note was Otto Kruger, who played the lawyer for the accused. His character of Gleason is skilled enough to save his client from the electric chair, but not from a lynching.

Once a leading matinee idol on the stage, Kruger had made such films as *Chained* (1934), with Joan Crawford and Clark Gable.

Another newcomer like Lana, Gloria Dickson (as Sybil Hale) was widely heralded in movie magazines before the picture was released. She was written up as "New Star of the Year," but when *They Won't Forget* was shown, Lana got all the media attention.

Edward Morris played the doomed teacher, Robert Hale, who is falsely accused of the murder. He'd married Ann Sheridan that year and brought her to the set. Sheridan complained to Lana about how much she detested being billed as "The Oomph Girl."

Soon, Lana would be labeled "The Sweater Girl."

In a few short months, both Sheridan and Lana would be considered for the role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*.

Lana and Sheridan would have another bizarre link because of a so-called scientific survey by Dr. Joseph Catton, a Stanford University psychiatrist. Based on his survey, he rated the three sexiest actresses in Hollywood, giving Marlene Dietrich 90%, Lana 86%, and Ann 85%.

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LeRoy didn't let Lana and Mildred see the rushes, but they attended a preview at the Warner Brothers Hollywood Theater. The moment Lana did "the walk" on screen, a man in the back yelled out, "Get a load of that kid! Whatta pair of tits!"

His remark was met with hoots and whistles.

Lana later said, "Mother and I scrooched down in our seats, covering our faces. This Thing with the bouncing bosom came on the screen. Not only that, but her ass was undulating. I was beyond embarrassment."

In tears, Lana fled from the theater and hailed a taxi with Mildred. They rode to Gladdy's home in silence. "I was so self-conscious, I tried not to bounce in the back seat of the taxi."

The next morning, she phoned her agent, Henry Willson. "Oh, Henry," she cried out. "I almost died watching myself. Men were screaming obscenities about my breasts. I hope I don't look like that girl up there on the screen.

"Fortunately, you do!" Willson said.

Billy Wilkerson of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote the film's first review. "Short on playing time is the role of the murdered schoolgirl played by Lana Turner. It is worthy of more than passing note. This young lady has vivid beauty, personality, and charm."

The *National Board of Review* named *They Won't Forget* one of the best dramas of the year in its depiction of prejudice and corruption. *Life* magazine put it on its list of American film classics. Writing in *The New York Herald Tribune*, Howard Barnes pronounced it "a vivid work of art."

Frank S. Nugent in *The New York Times* labeled the movie "a brilliant sociological drama and a trenchant film editorial against intolerance and hatred."

In 1987, the same story was dramatized in a four-hour TV miniseries called *The Murder of Mary Phagan*, written by Larry McMurtry and starring Jack Lemmon and Kevin Spacey.

As soon as the film was released, Warners was swamped with fan mail. "Tell us more about that girl in the sweater." Within the month, Lana had become America's "Sweater Girl."

She hated the label. "It took years of hard work to get rid of it," she said.

Henry Willson went with a handsome young actor to see *They Won't Forget*.

When he left the movie palace, he told his lover, "Tonight there's another star that has risen in the firmament. She's Lana Turner."

Few movie fans at the time of *ingénue* Lana's propulsion into fame as the shy and relatively awkward "Sweater Girl" could have imagined the cinematic heights she'd eventually climb.

When Lana began “The Walk,” in a tight skirt and dangerously high heels, she could have no idea that she was walking into screen immortality, shooting one of the most famous scenes in Hollywood history as the innocent Mary Clay.

With her breasts bouncing up and down, “She was a flower waiting to be deflowered,” in the words of one critic. Another wrote, “A girl as tempting as Lana Turner would definitely bring out the rapist beast in men that lurks deep within their dark desires.”

Chapter Two

So Many Men, So Little Time

Lana Dates a Future President

When Lana Turner and Ronald Reagan were both struggling contract players at Warner Brothers, they posed for publicity pictures, which led to their dating. The picture above, with the young stars in riding outfits, was taken at a ranch.

"He taught me how to ride a horse before getting in the saddle himself. Did I say that diplomatically?"

He told his close friend, Dick Powell, "Lana was one of my greatest conquests, a flamboyant feather in my cap."

Later, she denied having an affair with him, perhaps because of her burgeoning friendship with MGM starlet Nancy Davis. "She guarded him like Fort Knox," Lana claimed.

After signing her first contract—partly for fun and partly as a career-building device—Lana set out to become the "Queen of the Night." She was seen dancing at all the hot spots of Los Angeles: Ciro's, the Trocadero, Palladium, Mocambo, the Clover Club, and invariably, Cocoanut Grove. She was attired in form-fitting designer gowns borrowed from wardrobe at Warner Brothers.

Thus began a series of dizzying romantic encounters with some of Tinseltown's handsomest actors. She was later said to have invented the tagline, "So many men, so little time."

Depending on the night and their schedule, she was spotted with, among others, handsome, blonde, and beefy Wayne Morris ("my first big crush"), or Ronald Reagan ("he showered before and after our encounters").

She also dated western star Don ("Red") Barry ("only two inches taller than me but he made up for those inches elsewhere"), and George Montgomery ("before Dinah Shore snared him").

Some young studs had a more lasting impact: Victor Mature ("my biggest thrill), attorney Greg Bautzer ("he

took my virginity"), or singer Tony Martin ("he always hit the high note—never failed").

Along the way she also found time to allow herself to be wooed by some of the biggest marquee names on the Silver Screen—Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, James Stewart, and Mickey Rooney ("he knocked me up").

Between pictures, Warners didn't know quite what to do with its still-undefined starlet. Early publicity photographs reveal that she was searching for a screen identity. She was depicted in a sweater with those protruding breasts from *They Won't Forget*, or else in a clinging satin gown that might have been alluring on Marlene Dietrich.

At other times, "Hayseed Lana" appeared in a barnyard with a straw sticking out of her succulent mouth. She could be photographed with a come hither gaze or else in a lace collar looking like a refugee from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

Some photos show her smouldering and sophisticated. Others made her look like a wild and crazy girl with the wind blowing through her hair. As late as 1930, Lana, as a red-haired beauty with scarlet lips, looked like the girl next door—that is, if you lived next door to the winner of the *Miss California* beauty pageant.

During her nightly prowls, whenever she made an entrance into a chic club, she was always a show-stopper. Since she was still young enough to look beautiful, she could party all night and still emerge from makeup the next morning at 5AM looking fresh, young, and glamorous.

After *They Won't Forget* (1937) until as late as 1941, she had no more particularly memorable movie roles. But she was learning her trade, building up a name in Hollywood, and studying how to be a movie star.

Frances Wyndham, in *The London Times*, summed up her status at this time: "Wearing sweater and skirt, insolently hunched over an ice cream soda, Lana Turner exuded a homespun glamour in the late 1930s that was particularly American. Both frail and tough, she appealed to the masculine protective instinct at the same time she promised danger."

At the age of sixteen, she truly discovered men, diversions which would become her life-long passion. Her legend was birthing.

Years later, she recalled, "I dated them young, perhaps too young, and even older, maybe too much older."

"She was both warm and beautiful," said Mickey Rooney. "I should know."

Billy Wilkerson of *The Hollywood Reporter* continued to grind out publicity, as did the fan magazines and the newspaper gossip columnists.

"Lana's phone number was passed around a lot in the late 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and even beyond," said gossip maven Louella Parsons. "How did she find time to work in all those husbands?"

"I know one Sunday, she had a luncheon date that turned into love in the afternoon beside his pool. That morphed into a supper club date and dancing with another man ending in a sneak-away midnight romp in a bachelor pad, with a third lover. And she still made that make-up call at 5AM."

That was the voice of Louella's rival, Hedda Hopper, speaking off the record.

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For some bizarre reason known only to himself, her agent, Henry Willson, hooked Lana up with George Raft for a date. Raft had been born in 1895 in New York's Hell's Kitchen, that poverty and crime-infested stretch of "Midtown West" in Manhattan. *[Hell's Kitchen, which has since then been gentrified, is traditionally considered to stretch north-south between 34th and 59th Streets, and east-west between Eighth Avenue and the Hudson River.]*

In time, he became a "taxi dancer" at Churchill's Tea Room, along with his roommate, Rudolph Valentino. They danced with older women and often accepted invitations for sex-for-pay later at their apartments. Marlene Dietrich once said, "When I sang, 'Just a Gigolo,' I thought of George."

Movie actor and part-time gangster, George Raft devoted his other waking hous to seductions. “Screwing was his only game,” said Mack Grey, his closest friend. “He could devote a whole day to doing just that.” But Lana never got to sample “Black Snake.”

In the 1930s at Warner Brothers, Raft had evolved into a movie gangster icon, along with Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, and Humphrey Bogart. He was also known as a “ladies’ man,” with a string of seductions that included not only Dietrich, but Mae West, Lucille Ball, Norma Shearer, and hundreds of hookers and showgirls.”

A frequent movie goer, Lana had seen only two of his films, *Night After Night* (1932) with Mae West (“She stole the picture from me”), and *Scarface* (also 1932) with Paul Muni. [*In Scarface, Raft had played coin-tossing Rinaldo, bumped off by a vicious killer, Tony Camonte (Paul Muni).]*

Lana didn’t know what to expect when Raft showed up on her doorstep. He was the best dressed man she’d ever seen, with a tight-fitting tailored black suit, black shirt, and white tie. She’d never seen a man dressed in a black shirt before. He’d slicked back his hair with Vaseline, and he wore a pearl gray Fedora pulled down over one eye, which he did not remove. His pointy shoes were so shiny she could almost see her reflection in them. He was sleek, solemn faced, and imbued with a sexual menace.

He arrived in a black Packard with a driver to take her to the Cocoanut Grove. “Don’t worry,” he said. “It’s bulletproof.”

“Of all the men I ever danced with, and we’re talking dozens upon dozens, Raft had the best movement. He’d been a professional dancer in New York, known for his erotic movements such as rubbing parts of his body as he performed.”

“He was a smooth talker and had a real big ego,” she recalled.

On their third date, he invited her to his lavishly decorated home. Although she fully realized that he wanted to seduce her, she had reached that point in her young life where the most she allowed was for men to indulge in “heavy petting.”

For Raft, that meant fondling her breasts while he masturbated “Black Snake.”

His nearly nine-inch penis had been nicknamed “Black Snake” by Mae West, since it was many shades darker than the rest of his body’s skin tone.

Lana later talked to Betty Grable about their joint involvements with Raft. She delivered a frank appraisal. “I think he’s a latent homosexual. He and Valentino were lovers when they lived together. He never touched me except to beat me up.”

Willson was at the Trocadero to witness Lana’s final date with Raft—the one that gossips claimed ended their romance. Lana was table hopping, going around introducing herself to established stars, producers, and directors, and pointedly not including Raft in any of her hob-nobbing.

He sat alone looking depressed. He never drank liquor. “When I came up to him, it was obvious he’d soured on

Lana," Willson said.

"She's still wearing the god damn chastity belt," he said. "I even gave her a fur coat, and she still is holding off. I wanted to teach her the facts of life, but some other guys will have to do that. I've moved on to Ann Sheridan and Betty Grable."

Within days, Raft was back to hosting his nude pool parties. On his patio, clad in a silk robe, overlooking the pool and its terrace, he seemed to be deciding which woman, or women, would "get lucky" that night.

Months after he stopped dating Lana, she agreed to star with him in the radio dramatization of his 1941 film, *They Drive by Night*. The film had starred truck-driving brothers, Raft and Humphrey Bogart, with the women's roles played by Ida Lupino and Ann Sheridan. Since they were not available for the radio broadcast, Lucille Ball and Lana assumed their roles.

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Additional roles, albeit small, weren't long in coming, yet Lana was disappointed when she read the script that outlined the small part she'd been offered in what evolved into her second movie, *The Great Garrick* (1937), a Warner Brothers film. Its director was James Whale, and its stars included Olivia de Havilland and the English actor, Brian Aherne.

Set in the 18th Century, the plot was a fictionalized episode in the life of David Garrick (1717-1779), acclaimed as one of the greatest of all English actors.

In the drama, he travels to France to appear at *La Comédie française* during the most dissipated days of the *ancien régime*. In a farewell speech at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane in London, he announces that he is going to Paris to teach Frenchmen how to act.

Apprised of his arrogance, the French actors decide to play a dirty trick on him They take over an inn in the French countryside where Garrick is scheduled to spend the night *en route* to Paris. Maliciously, the French actors assume the role of landlord and servants, and try to scare Garrick out of his wits.

The exception to that is the lovely, demure Olivia, cast as Germaine Dupont, a countess who falls in love with the dashing English actor.

As for Lana, she was cast as a scullery maid. "It was type casting," she said. "After all, I was a virtual scullery maid when I lived with that horrid family in Modesto."

Her fellow chambermaids included Linda Perry, whose film career was to go virtually nowhere, and Marie Wilson, who would go on to stardom as a radio, TV, and film actress, scoring great success in *My Friend Irma* (1949), and its spin-offs.

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Lana was directed by James Whale, who had "frightened the daylights out of me when I went to see his classic horror film, *Frankenstein* (1932). He was very dear and kind to me. I was mildly surprised that he was quite open about his homosexuality."

"My role in *The Great Garrick* called for me to squeal, giggle, and curtsy in several scenes, all in Restoration

costume," Lana said. "I tried to provide a certain lustiness, but I fear I didn't succeed."

Throughout her life, Lana easily related to the many homosexuals who paraded through her films. She had none of the usual prejudice of the day, and gay men became her most enduring fans.

One day, Whale invited her to lunch, predicting big stardom for her. "I don't know what it is, but you have something that's just bursting into bloom. I predict you'll become the *femme fatale* of the 1940s."

He was fascinating to talk to, telling her at one point that he had been captured in Flanders in August of 1917 and had become a prisoner of war. "I staged amateur theatricals for my fellow English soldiers in camp. It was the only amusement they had. Some of them showed their gratitude to me by slipping into my bunk late at night."

Sixteen-year-old Lana Turner, cast as a bawdy Restoration wench, flirts with studly Craig Reynolds. But was he really sexier than Errol Flynn?

Whale's fellow Englishman, Brian Aherne, the star of the film, was elegant with a certain charm and style. He gave Lana little attention, having preferred the romantic company of such illustrious women as Marlene Dietrich and tobacco heiress Doris Duke.

The actor in *The Great Garrick* who caught Lana's roving eye was handsome Craig Reynolds, a rising star of the 1930s. At the time, he had a small fan club and was getting letters from young girls who found him sexier than Errol Flynn.

"I slipped around and dated him three or four times—that is, when Jane Wyman didn't have her claws in him. Like a fool, I was still holding onto my virginity. I later regretted not surrendering it to Craig."

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Despite countless offers, some of which were most persuasive, from some of the handsomest men in Hollywood, Lana was still "sweet sixteen" and had never lost her cherry. *[That fruity reference derived from the appraisal of her casual friend, Ann Sheridan.]*

Lana expressed an almost daily confessional of details associated with her heavy dating schedule to two of her best friends, both of them actresses. One was Ann Rutherford, who would soon be cast as Scarlett O'Hara's sister in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). The other was Bonita Granville, the sharp-nosed, brazen child star, two years younger than Lana, who had just scored a big hit in the 1936 *These Three*. She played a monstrous brat who, by spreading vicious gossip, ruins the lives of Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea, and Merle Oberon.

"Lana was just itching to get deflowered, but holding back," Granville said.

"Lana faced a dilemma," Rutherford said. "She wondered if it would hurt or feel good."

"It must feel good or else gals wouldn't chase after guys so much," Lana told her friends.

One night at the Café Vendome, in Los Angeles, in early February of 1939, her life was about to change. She was on the dance floor twirling around with actor Alan Curtis when attorney Greg Bautzer cut in.

She'd read about him in the gossip columns, as he was called "Hollywood's Bachelor Number One."

He was also known as "The Don Juan of the Hollywood Boudoir." In time, he'd seduce some of the most

glamorous movie queens of the 20th Century, not only Lana, but Joan Crawford, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Jane Wyman, singer Peggy Lee, Ginger Rogers, Dorothy Lamour, Merle Oberon, and Ingrid Bergman. His reputation as a "swordsman" had already been well-established by the time he danced into Lana's life.

As an attorney, he was known for his high-profile clients, none more notable than Howard Hughes, the billionaire aviator and film mogul.

As Bautzer would later inform Lana, "Most of my job with Hughes involves writing checks to his harem of kept women."

The first time Bautzer and Lana were mentioned as an item in gossip columns was on February 13, 1938, in the "Beau Peep Whispers" section of the *Los Angeles Times*. As a couple, they were spotted by *tout* Hollywood at the Riviera Club in the Pacific Palisades. The writeup stated that Bautzer—"that man about town with the roving eye"—had been seen with a "new Titian-haired beauty decorating his arm." The reference was to teenaged Lana on the arm of a man a decade older than she was.

"He was tall and husky, with soulful dark eyes, a tanned complexion, and a flashing smile that showed a lot of white teeth," she wrote. "He was so smooth, so self-assured, that all the other boys I knew seemed like children."

He phoned Lana the following night, and the two of them began to see one another at a rate estimated by Lana at around three evenings a week. On nights when he wasn't seeing her, he falsely told her that he was involved with business clients. On the party and nightclub circuit, "Lana & Greg" became an item, often closing down Ciro's or the Mocambo.

As she accurately stated, "Greg was far too sophisticated to wrestle me in the front seat of a car or steal a kiss at the front door. On the dance floor, he rubbed himself against me until he produced an erection. I knew he was going to seduce me, but when?"

"There was no way, with my heavy dating schedule, that I was to remain a virgin until I got married," Lana said. "I decided the man to do the honors was Greg Bautzer, an experienced lover to judge by his conquests of the most beautiful women in Hollywood. I was seventeen when I lost it. Greg was my first love, my first heartbreak."

He was taking his time, not rushing her into bed. That came one rainy Saturday night when he pulled up at his house and invited her inside, telling her that his mother was away playing cards with her women friends.

"That later turned out not to be true, as we heard her going down the stairs to the kitchen," Lana said.

She would remember the experience for the rest of her life. Greg Bautzer became the first of dozens of men who would seduce her in her future.

"He was loving and patient with me, even though I was awkward," she wrote. "I had no idea how to move or what to do. The act itself hurt like hell, and I must confess I didn't enjoy it. I didn't even know what an orgasm was. But I loved being close to Greg and holding him, and the feeling that now, at least, I was giving myself to him."

The next day over lunch, she confided to Rutherford and Granville, "Last night Greg Bautzer made a woman out of me. And I'm still sore."

In gossipy Hollywood, Lana soon learned that those other four nights a week, when he wasn't with her, he was not entertaining business clients. He was out with other beauties, especially Joan Crawford, with whom he seemed to be having the most serious engagement.

Lana was furious and cried one night, but woke up determined to take a different course of action. She

complained to Granville, “I’m very, very jealous, but I’m going to get back at him. Now that Greg has broken me in, I’m going to let other guys get what they want. Serves him right!”

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Lana was thrilled when she heard the news that Samuel Goldwyn had borrowed her for his next big epic, *The Ad ventures of Marco Polo* (1938), starring Gary Cooper. She looked upon him as the handsomest and sexiest actor in films, even more so than Clark Gable and Robert Taylor.

The picture, *The Adventures of Marco Polo*, bombed at the box office, but Lana was enthralled to meet her screen idol, Gary Cooper, cast as the handsome explorer popular with the ladies of Venice’s back canals. When Lana met him, the horse-hung “Montana Mule” had already seduced *tout* Hollywood, from Mae West to Cary Grant. He told Lana, “Grow up real soon and come back around.”

She had to go to the library to look up who Marco Polo (1254-1324) was. He was, of course, the great Venetian explorer who traveled to China to establish trade with the Far East. While there, he met Kublai Khan and was introduced to his fabulous court.

The script by Robert Sherman was rather tongue-in-cheek and by today’s standards, even a bit campy. Originally, Goldwyn had selected John Cromwell to direct, but within five days, after some bitter disputes about presentation and content, he was replaced.

Archie Mayo, who had worked in silent films since 1917, was brought in at the last minute to take over.

One of the most elaborate and costly films Goldwyn ever made, *Marco Polo* had a strong supporting cast. The villain, Ahmed, was played by Basil Rathbone, the devious, crooked adviser to Kublai Khan (George Barbier).

Lana had a small role, cast as the maid to Nazama (Binnie Barnes). “Another maid part,” she lamented. A Londoner, Barnes had been working in films since 1923, her most memorable role that of Katherine Howard, the monarch’s fifth wife, in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933).

“She was rather rude to me, insisting, for example, that I bring her fresh coffee,” Lana said. “That was not part of the script.”

In the film, Lana is also pawed over by a Chinese warlord, the improbably cast Alan Hale, Sr. “I was supposed to be this Oriental sex object,” she said. “Nothing more, nothing less. Alan helped me in the role.”

In an attempt to add a sweeping kind of grandeur to the clunky script, Goldwyn had signed a cast of 5,000 extras, and Lana felt lost among the hordes. On her first day on the set, she was introduced to him.

He shocked Lana when he informed her that he had instructed the makeup department to pluck her natural eyebrows and to apply fake ones, glued on each morning and yanked off at the end of every day of filming.

Each morning, any new growth of her eyebrows was stripped away, a rather painful process. She also had to wear a Chinese-inspired black wig that had to be glued around her face with spirit gum. Regrettably, after weeks of punishment, her real eyebrows never grew back, and throughout the remaining years of her life, she had to pencil them in.

"Samuel Goldwyn in *The Adventures of Marco Polo* miscast me as an Oriental siren," Lana said. "Instead of vamping Gary Cooper, I ended up with an unappetizing Chinese war lord (Alan Hale). Not only that, but makeup plucked my eyebrows to make me look Chinese. They never grew back."

As dictated by the script, Marco Polo falls madly in love with the Princess Kukachiun, who is betrothed to the King of Persia. Goldwyn had cast Sigrid Gurie as the Princess, and was giving her a massive publicity buildup as "Norway's Answer to Greta Garbo," and as "The Siren of the Fjords."

Lana never got to meet her screen idol, Gary Cooper, who played Marco Polo in the film until the end of the shoot. She introduced herself to him while he was having lunch in the commissary, and was surprised that this entire meal consisted of Sauerkraut. "It keeps you regular," he told her. He was leaving that afternoon for a vacation in Idaho.

"Mr. Cooper," she said. "I'm your greatest fan. I think you are the most beautiful man in pictures. No one can top you. I even dream about you."

"I think you're a right pretty girl," he said. "But jailbait. Just how old are you?"

"I'm about seventeen," she answered.

"I'll make a deal with you," he said. "Call me on your eighteenth birthday, and I'll give you the thrill of your life."

"That's a promise I'm going to hold you to," she said. "You are more of a dreamboat offscreen than on, and you're pretty special on screen, too. What a man!"

"Grow up soon and get back to me, girl," he told her. "I can't wait."

The Adventures of Marco Polo bombed at the box office. A critic for *The New York Sun* wrote: "In spite of the elaborate settings and the presence of Gary Cooper, it never quite lives up to its promise."

John Mosher of *The New Yorker* called the film "a big disappointment, the dialogue having the swing of a bad libretto."

The movie lost $700,000 at the box office, a monstrous sum in 1938.

When the film was re-released in 1945, Lana was at the peak of her career. The Goldwyn picture was advertised as "starring Gary Cooper with Lana Turner."

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Lana Turner's days at Warner Brothers were numbered, as were Mervyn LeRoy's. Under personal contract to the director, Lana was said to view him as a father figure, although she denied that. "He was more of a mentor," she said. "I turned to him for guidance in my career. He taught me how to act, even how to dress."

In his first appraisal of her outfits, he had compared her to a hooker, especially in her choice of imitation jewelry, a component of which included a large glass ring with rhinestones. "Don't wear all that flashy fake jewelry that only Barbara Hutton could afford if it were real. You're going to be a genuine movie star, the real thing, not some imitation. When you're making the big bucks, you can afford genuine stones."

“I took his advice,” she said. “When I became Queen of MGM, I bought my own diamonds, or else had my beaus—or husbands, as the case may be—buy diamonds for me, which is preferable, of course.”

During her brief stint at Warners, she met the studio mogul, Jack Warner, only once. He was used to working with such icons as Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, and George Raft. Abrupt, staccato, and ruthless, the film tycoon was not impressed with Lana, and predicted no future for her in movies.

In league with his brothers, Jack had been working in film production since 1910, and he had a cocky attitude when he came to judging future stars. “Gals like the Turner dame are a dime a dozen in Hollywood,” he told LeRoy.

When LeRoy informed Warner that he was going to shift over to better working conditions at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner responded, “Since Turner is under contract to you, take her along—and good riddance. All she’s got is a pair of bouncing boobs—no talent whatsoever.”

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On the night Greg Bautzer was bedding some other movie star, Lana dated a number of beaus. She referred to them as “mere flings while I wait for the right man to give my heart to.”

Don Barry, who was about her same height, came into her life. He would soon be widely known as “Red” Barry after appearing in the highly successful 1940 film, *Adventures of Red Ryder*. A Texan from Houston, Barry had red hair to match his nickname.

“Mildred liked him because in some ways, he reminded her of Virgil,” Lana said. “She encouraged me to date him.”

Their first major public outing was at the 1937 premiere of *The Life of Émile Zola* at Graumann’s Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard. Wearing a satin gown and a fur borrowed from wardrobe, Lana made a stunning appearance. Broadcasting from the lobby, George Jessel hailed her as “the beautiful Lana Turner, a rising young Hollywood star.”

During Barry’s dating of Lana, “he got lucky just one night,” she told Ann Rutherford. But during their brief romance, he gave her two bottles of expensive French perfume and a jeweled vanity case. Two weeks after she broke up with him, she got the bills for those two items.

Joan Crawford also dated Barry, and had a similar experience with him, although he presented her with more expensive presents—a white mink coat and a diamond necklace. Later, the merchants came to reclaim the items because Barry had not paid for them.

“Try me on for size,” Don Barry said when introduced to Lana. He was the shortest man she ever dated, vying for him with Joan Crawford. “He wasn’t my type, but a lot of fun...for a while. Actually, he preferred orgies.”

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Another cowboy star, Tim Holt, briefly flitted in and out of Lana's life during this period of intense (some said "promiscuous") dating. Although he'd been born in Beverly Hills, he seemed completely at home on the range. The son of actor Jack Holt, Tim had dreamed of becoming a star of movie westerns ever since he was a boy.

At the time Lana met Tim, he was under contract to producer Walter Wanger. Against type, Orson Welles later cast Holt in his 1942 *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

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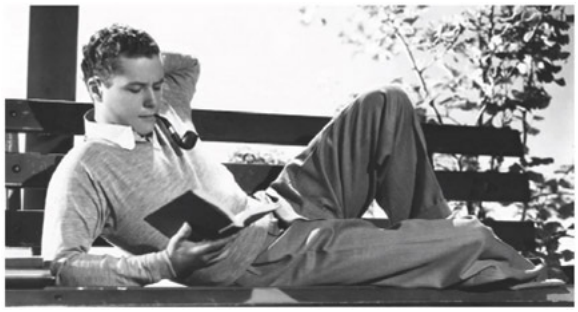
Many suitors, some of whom were on the Hollywood A-list, pursued Lana, but not all of them were successful. A case in point was William Powell, born in 1892, the star with the sensually drooping eyelids. Dapper, suave, and ever so self-assured, he had a pencil mustache and slicked-back hair like George Raft. A true gentleman, he evoked a member of a turn-of-the-century barbershop quartet.



Lana had a brief fling with the cowboy star Tim Holt, pictured above. "Holt came and went from my life like a tumbling tumbleweed," she said. "After he made love to me, he'd walk up and down the hall stark naked, practicing drawing his six-shooter. No, not that one!"

A major star at MGM, he would in time make fourteen *Thin Man* movies with Myrna Loy, based on the Nick and Nora Charles characters created by Dashiell Hamett. They were sophisticated sleuths always ready with a smart ass line as well as a bucket of ice for their dry martinis.

When Lana met Powell, he'd already been nominated for two Best Actor Oscars, one for *The Thin Man* (1934) and another for *My Man Godfrey* (1936), in which he had co-starred with his former wife, Carole Lombard.

Lana was introduced to him at the home of Mervyn LeRoy.

Well past his prime, he was in a rather shaky condition. In 1935, he had co-starred with Jean Harlow in *Reckless* and had fallen in love with her. They had planned to be married. But at the age of 26, the platinum blonde goddess had died from uremia at the peak of her career.

He became morbidly depressed after learning of her death. To compound his misfortune, he'd undergone surgery, an experimental radium treatment for cancer which had greatly slowed him down.

He met Lana on the first night he'd ventured into the world again. He seemed enchanted with her, and she was awed by what a great star he was. Ironically, within a few short months, with her hair dyed blonde, she would be billed as "the new Jean Harlow."

Powell called her for a date the following morning, and she accepted. He did most of the talking, even sharing his concept of what formed the perfect union between a man and a woman. "The man should be older, and the couple should be diametrically opposite each other."

"Are you talking about any couple we know?" she asked, provocatively.

Powell was a charming suitor with impeccable manners. But the following day, she told her girlfriends, "Bill lacks sex appeal, at least for me."

He sensed that, and on a subsequent date, he touted his other qualities, promising to guide her in her career and to help her fine-tune her acting.

He urged her to drop Henry Willson as her agent and to sign instead with Myron Selznick, the brother of producer David O. Selznick. "Myron is the best agent in the business and can do wonders for your career."

"The Thin Man," suave and dapper William Powell was well suited to any Art Deco café society of the 1920s or 1930s. "But I refused to become a replacement for Jean Harlow in his life," Lana said.

On their third date, he took her to the home of his closest friends, Ronald Colman and Richard Barthelmess. As a trio, the men seemed to have bonded into something of a cultural clique, and she, a high school drop-out, often didn't understand what they were talking about.

On their fifth date, he tried to seduce her, but, as she later told her girlfriends, "It didn't work out. I had these painful menstrual cramps."

As their dating proceeded, he was getting serious, calling her two or three times a day. She was drifting away. Although she admired his mind, sex was too important to her, and that's why she turned once again to younger, more virile men.

As a gift, he sent her a lovely glass cabinet about five feet tall with mirrored shelves. In a note, he told her that the shelves were suitable only for holding the most expensive French perfumes.

She composed her thank-you note to him as a "kiss-off."

"My dearest Bill, what a beautiful gift and how very thoughtful. But I fear those shelves will hold perfume purchased for me by other suitors. I'm so sorry. But I wish you all the best and thank you for the good times. Love, Lana."

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As Lana admitted in her highly unreliable memoirs, Greg Bautzer finally taught her what the female orgasm was. Her first with him would become one of thousands she'd experience in her romantic liaisons to come. "I did feel passion for him, and eventually, I did achieve orgasm," she wrote. "But what I really wanted was to have Greg hold me, keep me safe in his arms."

After Lana and Bautzer returned from a romantic holiday in Palm Springs, they learned that Bautzer's mother had died.

Her death transpired on February 13, 1938. Blanche Bautzer Smith was fifty-four at the hour of her unexpected death. Lana attended the funeral of her lover's mother at the Little Church of the Flowers at the Glendale Forest Lawn Mortuary.

In tears, Bautzer, twenty-seven years old at the time, told her, "No other woman will ever replace what my mother meant to me. No one!"

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When he recovered a bit from his mother's death, Bautzer started dating and seducing her again. A favorite nightclub of theirs was La Conga, where both of them, after some lessons from a teacher, became the best rumba dancers among the patrons.

To publicize both himself and Lana, Bautzer fed items to Hedda Hopper about his dating of Lana, which she published in her column in the *Los Angeles Times*. Bautzer ignored her rival, Louella Parsons.

Of course, in exchange all this free publicity, Hopper expected a series of expensive gifts above and beyond the fresh flowers that arrived at her doorstep from the attorney every morning.

At one point in their relationship, Bautzer and Lana made a pact. Should either of them tire of each other, one or the other were to send a box of red roses to the other's home as a signal that their affair was over.

Bautzer had to fly to Chicago for two weeks to defend a client in a lawsuit. Before rushing to catch his plane, he called his florist and asked him to send Lana a dozen of the most beautiful white roses he had in stock. When the box arrived, Bautzer was airborne. She opened the box and burst into hysterical tears when she saw a dozen red roses.

During his time in Chicago, Bautzer was very busy. When he did try to phone her, he could not get through.

Two weeks went by, during which she regretted his loss. Then one afternoon, he phoned after his return to his home.

When Lana came to the phone, Bautzer spoke to her in his most seductive voice, "My darling, I've missed you so. Dreamed of you every night."

"You mean, we're on again?" she asked.

"We were never off," he protested.

"Your damn florist sent me a box of red roses. I've been devastated ever since."

"That fucker! I'll fire him! I ordered WHITE roses as a token of my love."

That night, as Lana later confessed to Ann Rutherford, "Greg gave me the greatest sex of my life. Three orgasms before the rooster crowed."

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"Every time I get involved with an actor at Warner Brothers, I find that Jane Wyman got to the guy before me," complained Lana over lunch one day with actor Alan Hale, who had co-starred with her in *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Such was the case with Wayne Morris, on whom she had had a really big crush.

Ever since she saw Wayne play this boxer in *Kid Galahad* (1937), she had wanted to date him. That was the film that made him a leading man. He played a former bellhop turned boxer in a Warner Brothers picture that also starred Edward G. Robinson, Bette Davis, and Humphrey Bogart.

The first time she was ever alone with Morris was when she maneuvered to get him to invite her to lunch in the commissary. Naturally, they talked about movies, especially those at Warner Brothers.

"Before I got into the business I wasn't much into films," he said. "I liked going to movie palaces, however—not so much to see what was showing. The upper balcony was a good place where me and a girl could make out."

He had high hopes for his career, telling her he'd heard from director Michael Curtiz that Jack Warner had thoughts of grooming him to become the next Errol Flynn. "That hellraiser might go too far, and I'll be ready to step into parts slated for him."

"Flynn is just getting started," she said. "Isn't it a bit early to be grooming the next Errol Flynn?"

"That's how it goes in this town."

"Don't tell me that the next Lana Turner is being groomed while I'm still at the starting gate."

Speaking with a slow drawl, Morris, unlike most stars, had actually been born in Los Angeles. Growing up to become a handsome, tall, muscular blonde, he had played football at Los Angeles Junior College before getting a job as a forest ranger.

He studied acting at the Pasadena Playhouse where a Warners talent scout had spotted him, That led to a contract in 1937. It wasn't a very good contract. In *Kid Galahad*, he was paid only $66 a week, as opposed to Robinson who got $50,000 for the picture.

"When we made the movie, Davis kept inviting me into her dressing room, and I kept rejecting her come-on. I asked Bogie how to get this hot-to-trot mama off my back. I told him 'I'm not into mothers this year.'"

"Wayne Morris was blonde and I hadn't become one yet," Lana said. "When I started dating this handsome stud, Jane Wyman vied for him. She praised his 'football player physique and virility,' but I was more awed by 'jumbo.'"

[At the time, Morris said this, he was 23 years old, Davis only 29.]

"Bogie suggested I throw her a mercy fuck, but I still refused, earning her undying animosity. I like 'em young. Sweet sixteen like you, Lana baby."

"Davis wanted me so bad, she even went to Michael Curtiz, the director, and urged him to have the screen writers insert a passionate love scene between us. But Curtiz, thank god, refused."

During the course of Lana's brief fling with him, Morris invited her to spend the weekend with him at a rented villa in Palm Springs. "I didn't know what I was getting into," she confessed to LeRoy. "I was carried away with the magic of Palm Springs. It conjured up images for me of those silent screen stars like Valentino and Theda Bara, who came here for 'off-the-record' weekends. I liked the desert atmosphere of palm trees and sipping cocktails around a swimming pool."

But, as she admitted, it didn't work out that way. Once they settled in, Morris stripped off all his clothes. "He was justifiably proud of this dangling thing he called 'Jumbo,' and really showed it off."

He didn't bother to get dressed, even when his guests arrived. She was expecting he might know some movie stars, but his friends were on the fringe of the industry—grips, technicians, cameramen.

Within the hour, all the guests, male and female, had their clothes off, frolicking in the pool. Lana refused to strip down and retreated to one of the villa's bedrooms.

Three hours later, Morris joined her. "His idea of seducing a woman is to jump on her and pound for dear life, asserting his masculinity. His technique is to overpower with brute strength."

"Needless to say, my big crush on him ended that weekend," she said.

Wayne was a genuine exhibitionist.

He told Lana that, "In Hollywood, it pays to advertise your assets, like you did with those bouncing boobs in *They Won't Forget."*

"Word about me spread to producers and directors," Morris continued, "especially the homos. I'll get roles through stints on the casting couch. A lot of actors—not just female starlets—put out from a prone position on that casting couch. Ask your agent, Henry Willson. He knows all about that, and so does his brigade of young, handsome studs."

"Doesn't that make you feel like a whore?" she asked.

"I don't think about that," he said. "When I first hit town, a director told me that in Hollywood, a pretty boy doesn't have to go hungry. I followed his advice."

***

Although at first he'd resisted, Jack Warner no longer opposed his publicity department's policy of posing Ronald Reagan with the most beautiful women on the Warners lot for cheesecake photographs. At that time in Reagan's film career, Warner felt that it enhanced the sex appeal of the clean-cut Midwesterner, and he ordered that the focus on Reagan as beefcake vs. cheesecake continue..

It was around this time that Warner began promoting the sexual allure of the future President, defining him as "a better swordsman on the Warners lot than Errol Flynn."

He specifically ordered Reagan to regularly escort Warners starlets to movie premieres, events where they'd be widely photographed. When Susan Hayward, who was enamored with him at the time, heard that he'd be escorting other women on studio-arranged "dates," she warned him: "Make sure you escort them and nothing else."

Ironically, she, too, was ordered to participate in photo ops with rising young male stars, so she came to realize it was strictly business.

Soon, the publicity department instructed Reagan to configure himself as Lana Turner's date at the next Warners gala—in this case, the world premiere of *Jezebel* (1938), a Deep South plantation saga co-starring Bette Davis and Henry Fonda.

Wearing a dinner jacket borrowed from the studio's wardrobe department, Reagan, with his hair slicked back, took a taxi to retrieve the starlet Lana at her home. The date was March 7, 1938.

In pursuit of his date (Lana) for *Jezebel's* premiere, Reagan arrived at a modest little apartment on Highland Avenue, above Hollywood Boulevard. It was a neighborhood filled with low-rent apartments, catering mostly to transients who had flocked to Hollywood to break into the movie business.

When he knocked on Lana's door, it was opened by Mervyn LeRoy.

Reagan congratulated LeRoy on his casting of Turner in *They Won't Forget*.

"Lana signed a contract just four days after she turned sixteen," LeRoy claimed.

For some reason, perhaps because he was overstocked at the time with beautiful young women, Reagan had been somewhat reluctant to date Lana. He asked a publicist at Warners, "Do I have to go to the premiere of *Jezebel*?"

"No, but you'll be hanging out a lot longer at Warners if you do," the publicist had responded.

From the bedroom of her apartment, Lana emerged looking dazzling in a white gown borrowed from the wardrobe department. Reagan looked stunned when introduced. He finally said, "You're the most beautiful gal I've ever seen."

"You're not bad yourself, buster," she replied.

In his early days at Warner Brothers, Ronald Reagan was always willing to pose for what is now known as "beef-cake photos," as opposed to cheese-cake.

His lean, thin chest would not be considered developed by the "gym rat" standards of today, but he was flattered when a female reporter gushed, "the beautiful long legs of Ronald Reagan make him the male equivalent of the celebrated legs of Betty Grable."

After she kissed LeRoy goodbye, she headed out the door with Reagan.

Years later, in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel, Lana recalled her first date with Reagan to author Darwin Porter. “He said I was the most beautiful girl he’d ever seen, but he was not the best looking man I’d ever seen. I mean, he was handsome but not a beauty contest winner. I found him very appealing, with the most wonderful manners, and he knew how to treat a lady. He made me feel grown up even though I was only a teenager.”

He complimented her on *They Won’t Forget*.

“Oh, please,” she said. “Don’t bring that up. I’m still embarrassed. My mother, Mildred Turner, told me I move with coltish grace, sinuously, undulating. But all I saw on that screen was those jiggling jugs of mine.”

Reagan had hailed a taxi to take her to the theater, because he felt that his own car was too battered to show up at a premiere with such a glamorous star.

“I hear that *Jezebel* is an unashamed rip-off of *Gone With the Wind*, even though Selznick’s movie hasn’t yet been released,” he said.

“Like everyone else, I read *Gone With the Wind*, but I know I could never play Scarlett,” she said to him. “It isn’t right for me.”

Before arriving at the premiere, she turned to Reagan and gripped his hand. “I’m afraid! All eyes will be on us. Deep down, I’m still a frightened little girl. But when that car door opens, I’ll try to camouflage my insecurities by throwing my head up high in the air and walking along the red carpet like I own Tinseltown.”

At the theater, a pedestrian walkway had been built above the roaring traffic of the boulevard in front. A reporter for *The New York Times* later wrote that “Lana Turner on the arm of Ronald Reagan made a dazzling appearance crossing the bridge of stars, even though they aren’t stars yet. Klieg lights brightened the night sky over Hollywood, as hundreds of fans showed up.”

After the premiere, where the night and most of its credits belonged to Bette Davis, Reagan invited Lana to dinner. He was happily surprised that she enjoyed the same type of food that he did: Hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, barbecued ribs, and spaghetti with meatballs.

When their food was served, she removed a bottle of chili peppers from her purse. She sprinkled it over the ribs, telling him that she was convinced that it removed toxins from one’s body.

What happened after dinner has grown hazy in Hollywood lore, with various versions repeated, most of them inaccurate.

On the golf course the following Sunday, Reagan confided to Dick Powell that, “Lana is just as oversexed as I am. I spent the night with her after seeing *Jezebel*, and I hope it’ll be the beginning of many more nights to come. I’ve got to slip around, though, because I don’t want Susan Hayward to find out.”

Edmund Morris, Reagan’s official biographer, noted, “Dutch was not yet a one-girl guy. He was soon seen squiring dishy Lana Turner around town, joking that he ‘wasn’t acting’ in her company.”

His pursuit of Lana was made easier when Warners publicity department asked them to pose for pictures together for distribution nationwide.

“Lana and I did whatever the studio wanted us to do,” Reagan later said. “Put on our clothes, take off our clothes. Susan would kill me if she ever heard me say this, but Lana looks hotter in a bathing suit than she does.”

Late one morning, Reagan, in his battered car, drove Lana to the Warners ranch outside Los Angeles, where they would be photographed together in riding costumes. An expert horseman, he taught her how to ride.

That night, back at her apartment, she cooked a meal for him, filet mignon coated with cracked peppercorns, lots of salt, and mustard. He was no longer surprised when she sprinkled hot sauce over it. “Too much sauce gives me the runs,” he said. “You must have a cast-iron stomach.” He also noted that she was “the world’s slowest eater, chomping down on a piece of steak for at least fifteen minutes before swallowing it.”

News of the Reagan/Turner affair eventually reached Wayne Morris at Warners. One afternoon, he confronted Reagan in the commissary. “What is this shit about you moving in on Lana? Before you, I was taking advantage of the big crush she had on me.”

“Isn’t Priscilla Lane enough for you?” Reagan said.

“Isn’t Susan Hayward enough for you?” Morris asked.

“Touché,” Reagan answered.

In her memoirs, *Lana—The Lady, The Legend, The Truth*, she was discreet. She did recall posing for pictures with Reagan, defining him as “a nice young man,” but provided no other insights.

In his memoirs, Reagan didn’t even mention her.

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A friendly young reporter from Des Moines visited Reagan at Warners. He had seen pictures of him posing with Lana, and he asked what it was like for a local boy to find himself dating glamour queens.

"Miss Turner is an actress of natural beauty that gets worked over by the studio makeup department that creates a make-believe character for her. She is very down to earth, kind and considerate. Young girls across America, so I'm told, are trying to imitate her. Of course, Hollywood publicists like to rewrite her story. If a girl gets a high school diploma, it suddenly appears in print that she's got a doctorate. If she spends all Saturday afternoon in the beauty parlor, that isn't talked about. Magazines and newspapers print that she spends all her spare time helping homeless refugees from Europe."

Reagan would have more or less agreed with Patrick Agan's conclusion in *The Decline and Fall of the Love Goddesses*. "To millions, the Love Goddesses were surrogate mistresses, ladies of incredible beauty who afford at least a visual satisfaction that men were able to indulge in even in the company of their wives. The Love Goddesses were an inspiration, Everests of glamour for both men and women."

In the 1980s, after Reagan had been elected to the Oval Office, author Darwin Porter met with Lana in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel. "Now that Ronnie is President, the press is always asking me about my former relationship with him," she said. "Somebody wrote that I didn't even remember dating him—that is pure crap! Of course, I remembered him. I've even been asked to describe what kind of lover he is. I'll never tell, but I'll give you a hint. He's a man who likes to take his time, unlike another future President of the United States I used to know."

"I liked Ronnie right from the beginning, and we became friends. Later, I got to know Nancy Davis when she was a starlet at MGM. After she married Ronnie, I visited their home on many occasions."

"I recall one very formal party I attended with Ronnie in the mid-50s," she said. "I was still trying to hold onto my beauty, but for the first time, I realized that he'd lost his looks. His face had aged a lot. That Midwestern farm boy appeal of his had faded with my romance with Artie Shaw. He still had that beautiful head of hair, perhaps dyed, but he had begun to look the way he did when he was governor of California."

"I liked Nancy, but detested Jane Wyman," Lana continued. "I first met her when we were both starlets at Warners. Later, for the 1982-83 season, I appeared with her on TV in *Falcon Crest*. After an initial introduction and a chat, she didn't even speak to me. She always resented my beauty. Not only that, but she learned that I had dated Reagan before she did. She was one icy cold bitch."

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Lana's biggest disappointment was the loss of a role in the 1939 MGM comedy-drama, *Idiot's Delight*, starring Clark Gable and Norma Shearer, the reigning King and Queen at Metro. The film was released the same year that Gable portrayed Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

Even though she was no great dancer, Lana was to play one of the girls traveling with Harry Van's *Les Blondes Troupe of Dancers*. Gable was cast as Harry Van, and he even dances himself in one of the scenes.

Three days before she was to report for filming, Lana collapsed at her home, complaining of excruciating pain. Mildred immediately called an ambulance, which rushed her to the nearest hospital. After extensive examinations, doctors determined that she needed surgery for the removal of scar tissue from her ovaries and colon. The scars had resulted from a botched appendectomy she had endured when she was fourteen.

A rumor was spread that Carole Lombard had been the force behind getting Lana fired from *Idiot's Delight* because she'd come on seductively to Gable.

She was surprised when a studio delivery boy arrived with a note from Gable himself. "Too bad, kid. A bad break. But chin up. I've got this gut feeling that one day, sooner than later, you are going to be my leading lady."

The King of Hollywood turned out to be a prophet.

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Olivia de Havilland introduced Lana to Errol Flynn right before lunch in the Warner commissary. A romantic adventurer both on and off the screen, he was known in Hollywood as a "swordsman," the ultimate sexual athlete and the seducer of countless women. He was a handsome, devilish, demi-god, a survivor of bar room brawls, exotic drugs, sex orgies, and scandal.

He invited her to his dressing room after rather gallantly kissing her hand. Once inside, he kissed more than her hand.

"Suddenly, I had two feet of tongue down my throat, and something like steel pressing hard against me," she later confided to Carole Landis.

"Been there, done that,"

Flynn had urgently wanted to continue, but there was a knock on the door. It was Michael Curtiz, who demanded an emergency conference with Flynn. He broke away from Lana, but only after she'd accepted an invitation to go swimming that Saturday afternoon in his pool.

Right before she left, he took her arm. "Just how old are you?" he asked.

"Fifteen."

Actually, she was sixteen, but she'd been told that Flynn liked to seduce fifteen-year-old girls.

She would recall that afternoon, not only to Ann Rutherford and Bonita Granville, but to other girlfriends of the future, including Ava Gardner.

"I had changed into this peach-colored, one-piece bathing suit," she said. "My feet were dangling in the water. But I didn't want to go in and get my hair all messed up. I thought he'd gone to change into his suit, but when he came onto the patio, he was completely nude. I didn't at that time have much basis of comparison, but his manhood looked impressive to me."

"Before I knew it, he pushed me in the water and was kissing me and feeling north, south, east, and west. He could really arouse passion, even in the water. Before long, we were out of the pool, and I was getting seduced by the world's expert. Before the night ended, he'd made love to me three times. Hell with Greg Bautzer!"

On their second date, he invited her to go to Mexico for a long weekend. He spoke of the bullfights, the endless rounds of tequila in the cantinas, the fishing, the boating, the swimming, the love-making. She turned him down, but agreed to go away with him the following weekend, sailing to the island of Catalina when she heard that other men and women would be on board.

On her next visit to his dressing room, on the set of *Four's a Crowd*, he offered her some bourbon for lunch, but she said no. "You're just like Ronald Reagan," he said. "He was in here yesterday. He accepted some bourbon from me, but dumped it in my cuspidor when I went to take a piss."

He gently touched her arm. "At the feel of a girl's arm, I get all fired up, old girl. I know I have to go as far as she'll let me. Please let me. I don't want to have to force you, since I'm so much bigger than you are."

"That you are," she said. "I might as well say yes, because you'd overpower me if I didn't."

Errol Flynn and Lana Turner never got to make a movie together, although all their friends said that as a pair, they would "sizzle" on the screen. However, in 1942, CBS hired them for the radio dramatization of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* for the Screen Guild Players.

"How right you are, old girl!" he answered.

"And you can dispense with the old girl thing," she chastised him.

As she later told Landis, "As you know, Errol is a demon in bed. I'd never had oral sex performed on me until he came along. He also told me that he hated being a phallic symbol for the world. Most men I've dated want to feel my breasts. Not Errol. He's different. He told me he's a leg man. He said, 'How can you make love to a breast?'"

"Hell with that!" Landis said. "Men can make lots of love to a woman's breasts. Do a lot of things."

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The sail to Catalina aboard Errol Flynn's luxurious yacht, *Sirocco*, marked Lana's introduction at a tender age into the world of Hollywood decadence.

For the cruise, he'd gathered together several members of his private club, the *Olympiads*, a society of heavy drinkers who included his co-star and sometimes lover, Patric Knowles, along with actor William Lundigan (another sometimes lover), Bruce Cabot, and Alan Hale, who had appeared with Lana in *The Adventures of Marco Polo*.

The group was anti-Semitic, and had turned down a membership bid from Edward G. Robinson. On rare occasions, Errol's close friend, John Barrymore, was a member of the Olympiads; also Alan Mowbray and W.C. Fields.

Errol Flynn, looking macho and virile in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and, below, in *The Perfect Specimen* (1937). "He was a devil-may-care ladykiller both on and off the screen," Lana claimed.

Other founding members included Grant Mitchell and the author, Gene Fowler, who would later write *Good Night, Sweet Prince*, the biography of Barrymore.

Aboard the *Sirocco*, there were six other young aspirant actresses in addition to Lana. Each of the female guests shared a large communal cabin filled with bunk beds, with the understanding that they'd be housed there until they were summoned to the various cabins of the male passengers.

There was a seemingly endless supply of cocaine and booze. In her dialogues with the other young women, Lana surmised that each of them knew what was expected of them. As captain, Errol had first choice, but for this trip, he seduced only Lana among the girls, and only Knowles and Lundigan among the men.

On one moonlit night, Flynn opened up to Lana about his adventures as a young man, referring to the months he lived in New Guineau, where he'd cut an imposing figure in a pith helmet and walking cane. "I had so many adventures. Of course, there were poisoned arrows to deal with, along with malaria, leeches, and cannibals.

Inevitably, my buddies and I got gonorrhea. Those bordellos were wretched hellholes."

He also spoke about the years he'd spent in England, where he became interested in acting. "It was tough going. I arrived with two shillings in my pocket. I was on the stage in Northampton, where the boots are made. In *Jack and the Beanstalk*, I played the wicked prince."

"One thing led to another, and a talent scout from Warners discovered me. I sailed to New York in November of 1934 aboard the *SS Paris."*

"In New York, I asked this Warners' publicity agent to take me to Harlem. I wanted to see Harlem more than any other place. In this seedy dance club, I met this exotic beauty, a real African princess—or so I thought. I quickly slipped away with her to a darkened part of the balcony, looking forward to some really hot action. But within minutes, I discovered that 'she' was a 'he,' but I was too far gone then to protest. Surely, she had the most talented throat in all of Harlem."

After the cruise, back in Hollywood, Lana supplied very few details about what actually happened during that long weekend in Catalina. "It was total debauchery, with nothing off limits, not my scene at all. I was too well bred as a young lady for some of the stuff going on. People, I learned, go crazy snorting cocaine."

"At times, when he was sober, I realized that Errol was not only attractive and charming but well read. He was far more intelligent than the rest of the crew and could even talk about Shakespeare, stuff like that. He had read everything Rudyard Kipling had ever written."

"Unlike nearly all actors I would meet in the future, he was not ambition-crazed. He believed that a man should live for the moment and let tomorrow take care of itself."

"His drinking, or so I feared, would lead to his self-destruction, but he brushed aside my concerns. I told him he should lay of the booze at least until sunset."

He answered, "Look at it this way. By starting to drink early in the morning, I'll have a head up over the other blokes. For me, I will be ready for party time all day long and into the night. I don't want to be a sucker who goes to his grave without ever having lived."

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The call came in right before midnight on a Tuesday. It was from Mervyn LeRoy with big news.

"I've just returned from the home of Louis B. Mayer. He made me an offer I can't refuse. Six thousand dollars a week. A salary like that is almost unheard of."

"Wow!" she said. "That sounds great. Can I go with you?"

"As my discovery, you're part of the deal. Mayer knows about you and, unlike Jack Warner, he thinks you have potential star power."

"That's terrific," she said. "MGM has my favorite male stars, Clark Gable and Robert Taylor."

"I got a salary increase for you. A hundred big ones a week."

"That's a lot of money."

"There may be problems," he said. "Mayer will want you to give him a blow-job, and your first picture will be with that runt, Mickey Rooney, and you'll have to fight that midget off."

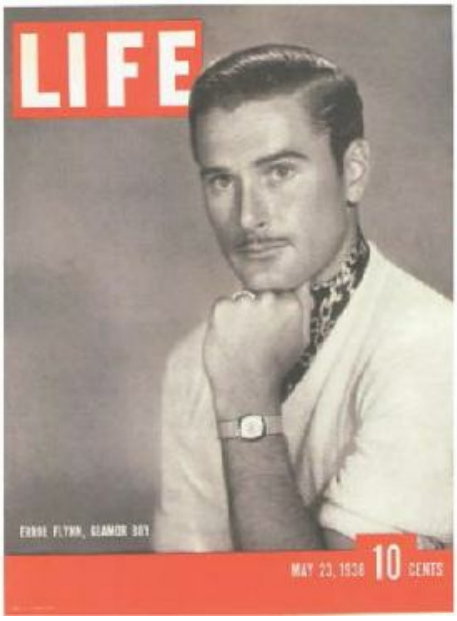
"Don't worry," she said. "After Greg Bautzer and Errol Flynn, I sure know how to handle men."

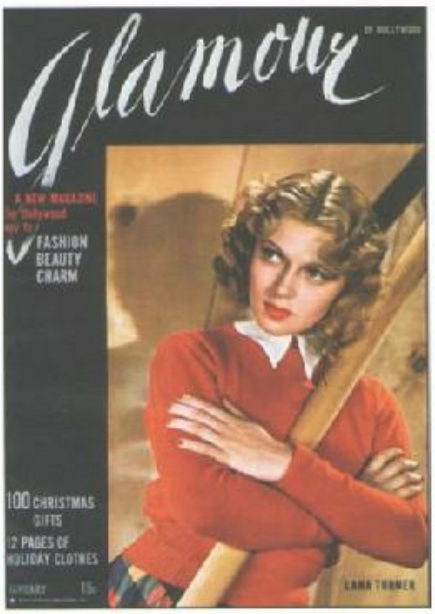
Starlet Lana Turner arrived on the lot of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, little knowing that within months, she would reign as its queen.

Chapter Three

Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara

Mickey Rooney (aka Andy Hardy) Knocks Up Lana Turner





It seemed inevitable that the actor hailed as "Hollywood's most glamorous male star" and Lana Turner, heralded as its "most glamorous female star" would come together (no pun intended).

Later in his short life (1909-1959), Errol Flynn claimed he'd seduced from 12,000 to 14,000 "people." He racked up that number by having sex with four or five at once, often in his dressing room while filming.

Lana never made siuch a claim for herself, perhaps settling for 150 conquests.

Hardened to some degree after her inaugural stint at Warner Brothers, Lana Turner arrived, upbeat and enthusiastic, at the gates of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the "Tiffany of Movie Studios." It was home to such superstars as Clark Gable, Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, Spencer Tracy, John and Lionel Barrymore, Hedy Lamarr, and that nightingale, Jeanette MacDonald. In time, it would develop, nurture, and promote such future stars as Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland, Ava Gardner, and Esther Williams.

It would be at MGM that Lana set out on the road to worldwide fame and glory. It would be from a base within MGM that she'd become a benchmark for Hollywood glamor during the war years when American GIs made her one of their most desired pin-up girls.

Although in years to come, snobby film critics would deride her acting, her presence on the screen was electrifying.

As she emerged as a rising star at MGM, young women across America were already padding their bras in imitation of her "Sweater Girl" look from *They Won't Forget.*

Twelve days after turning seventeen on February 20, 1938, she signed with MGM. On her first day at the studio, Mervyn LeRoy told her that her debut picture would be *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, in which she would co-star with two future legends, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, the two most talented young performers in Hollywood.

Enabled by her new $100-a-week paycheck, Lana and Mildred moved into a rented house on Kirkwood Drive, high up Laurel Canyon. Built on the side of a mountain the house was reached after a climb of seventeen steps. Each of the women had a bedroom of her own, and there was also a separate bedroom for guests, and a working, marble-framed fireplace in the living room.

Lana wanted all the furnishings and walls to be in white. Sprawled before the fireplace was a white bearskin rug still attached to the animal's skull, still with its ferocious teeth, the furry face of the bear trapped in its death agony.

With her new riches, she put a down payment on a fire-engine red roadster. "The car attracts attention from guys," she said. "Then they take in who's behind the wheel. I'll even give a good-looking guy a lift from time to time, so to speak."

As her time became increasingly monopolized by MGM, Lana dropped out of Hollywood High and enrolled in the studio's Little Red Schoolhouse, where she would eventually earn her high school diploma. Under the supervision of a state-approved teacher, Mary MacDonald, she often did her homework right on the set of whatever movie was being filmed at the time.

In the classroom, she sat next to Mickey Rooney, the star of her next movie. As he wrote, "I assumed full gazing rights. The teacher often caught me in fervent contemplation of Lana's bosom and other parts, enough so that I was often called out."

"Lana's body said it all," Rooney continued, "and I got the message loud and clear. Her auburn hair, her deep green eyes, her long lashes, the tip of her nose, her pouty lips, her graceful throat, the curve of her shoulders, her tiny waist, and, yes, the nicest knockers I'd ever seen."

Her fellow pupils included Jackie Cooper, whom she'd previously dated, and Ann Rutherford, one of her best friends and confidantes, especially when it came to gossiping about boys.

Of all the students, London-born Freddie Bartholomew was the most polite and sensitive, the ultimate *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, the title of his hit movie. Three years younger than Lana, he shocked her when he asked her out on a date. He assured her that he would not seduce her, and that he had something else in mind.

When Lana first met the young British actor, Freddie Bartholomew, she found him "polite and sensitive, almost like a character in a Charles Dickens novel." That is, until she got to know him. "I learned his favorite form of sex was toe-sucking. He said that while George Cukor directed him in *David Copperfield* (1935), "I made him suck my toes for about an hour before I'd let him suck anything else."

In the photo above, Bartholomew appears as the 12-year-old juvenile lead in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1936).

"I want to suck your toes, give tender loving care to them from the big toe to the little toe. I can suck toes for hours."

Ever so politely, she turned him down.

She was always asking MacDonald if she could be excused to go to the bathroom. "The teachers must have thought I had weak kidneys. Exactly what I was doing was having a quick smoke outside the courtyard. From my teenage years and on, I was almost a chain smoker."

During her first week as an MGM starlet, she met the studio's greatest star, Greta Garbo, at an afternoon tea hosted at the home of Mervyn LeRoy. She was astonished to find the great Garbo sitting alone in a corner of the

living room.

"I was too intimidated to go over and speak to her, but I kept staring at her," Lana said. "I was wearing a white sweater that showed off my tits, and my bosom was repeatedly noticed by Miss Garbo. I felt she was undressing me with her eyes. In spite of her affair with John Gilbert, MGM buzzed with rumors that she was a lesbian. With that penetrating Garbo gaze, I believed she was."

Back at the schoolhouse, she finally decided to accept Rooney's barrage of invitations for a hot date. "He wasn't really my type. But since he was becoming the biggest box office attraction at MGM, and was the star of my next picture, I finally gave in to him, even though I prefer men at least six feet tall. I just hoped he wasn't small all over."

In his memoirs, Rooney wrote, "I soon found out that Lana was as oversexed as I was, warm, passionate, soft, and moist in interesting places."

He claimed that together, in the front seats of his convertible, parked high on Mulholland Drive, he could make her breathless.

Thus began a series of seductions that would have dire consequences.

As Lana was soon to find out, the real Mickey Rooney was very different from his on-screen portrayals of the relatively innocent All-American Andy Hardy. As authors Richard Lertzman and William Birnes described the star in their biography, *The Life and Times of Mickey Rooney*, he could be abrasive and vulgar.

"He would brag to anyone within earshot about his masculine prowess and the girls with whom he'd had sexual relations. He was on a tear, and the people he boasted to were shocked by the crude way he spoke. His close friends, however, were amused by his frankness and brand of *braggadocio* too soon a man in the body of a child, now boozing, chasing women with fervor, and cursing like a stagehand in burlesque, as his hormones and lack of impulse took over."

It didn't take long before both Lana and Rooney became Party Girl #1 and Party Boy #1 in Hollywood, where the competition was stiff.

During her first weeks at MGM, Lana began affairs with Rooney, and with many other men, too.

She also evolved into the leader of a separate clique of young, soon-to-be stars. Chief among them was Robert Stack, with whom she would begin an on-again, off-again affair that stretched over many a year. Jackie Cooper, whom she'd once dated, was part of her circle of friends, as were three beautiful starlets: Gene Tierney, Ann Rutherford, and Linda Darnell.

Pint-sized Mickey Rooney stumbles into *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (1938) when he was cast opposite two rising stars, Lana Turner and Judy Garland. More than 200 starlets were interviewed for the role of the erratic, feather-brained vamp of Carvel High.

Lana won out. On screen, Rooney didn't seduce her. Off-screen was a different matter. "To my regret, I found out that Mickey didn't practice safe sex."

Their favorite restaurant was the Beverly Hills Tropics. After Lana appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, management even named a lethal drink after her. It was called "Lana Untamed."

Choreographer Jack Cole, who knew Lana during her early days at MGM, gave a blunt assessment. "She really liked men a lot. She just liked to fuck a lot."

With an exception here and there, she preferred good-looking men with exceptional endowments. "I liked the boys, and they liked me. The gal who denies that men are exciting is either a lady with no corpuscles or a statue," she said. "It's the physical that attracts at first. If you get to know a man's heart and soul, call it icing on the cake."

All this gossip and press attention about both Lana, Rooney, and their wild escapades were bound to come to the attention of MGM mogul, Louis B. Mayer. One afternoon, when they weren't needed on the set, he ordered both of his young stars into his office.

Mayer had recently learned that in addition to Lana and countless other conquests, Rooney, age sixteen, was having an affair with Norma Shearer, the 36-year-old former Queen of MGM, and the widow of Irving Thalberg, Mayer's former right-hand man.

"You're Andy Hardy!" Mayer shouted at Rooney. "You're the United States! You're the Stars and Stripes! Behave yourself! You're a symbol!"

"As for you, Lana, you seem interested in only one thing," He stood up from his desk and grabbed his crotch. "That's what you seem to want from any man you meet. You're getting a bad reputation. At the rate you're going, you'll soon be pregnant. If both of you continue as you're doing, your days at MGM may be numbered."

Mayer desperately wanted Rooney's Andy Hardy pictures to represent a wholesome (fantasy-based) interpretation of the American family, "even though I've got three young whores in the lead roles." He was, of course, referring to Lana, Rooney, and Judy Garland.

"I want Judge Hardy, the patriarch of the family, to be a paragon of wisdom and fatherly virtue," said Mayer. "I want Andy to be not too serious, but filled with energy, a wholesome boy who is charming and engaging and always willing to turn to Judge Stone for advice when he gets into a jam. Andy Hardy movies should stand for God, Motherhood, Respect for one's father, and apple pie."

The young stars were directed in the series by George B. Seitz, a Boston-bred playwright, screenwriter, and film actor born in 1888. He'd helmed his first movie, *Perils of Pauline*, back in 1914. At this point in his career, he was deeply familiar with Rooney's antics.

During the filming of the Andy Hardy movie, Lana's private life became the subject of gossip, even in the press. Louella Parsons "scolded" her in her column. "If Lana Turner will behave herself and not go completely berserk, she is headed to a top spot in motion pictures."

When Lana met him, she was surprised by his odd style of dress. He wore a blue suit with yellow accessories that included his tie, shirt, and gloves. His head was crowned with a wide-brimmed Panama hat, and he also wore purple socks and yellow shoes with chartreuse shoelaces.

"I know this is supposed to be wholesome fare," Lana said to him. "But how sexy am I to be?"

"Just be yourself. You couldn't look anything but sexy."

At home, Mildred joined in attempts to get Lana to cut back on her heavy partying, but to no avail. All that Lana had to do was to curtly inform her mother that she was now the breadwinner of the family for the pressure to stop.

Feeling that he needed reinforcement, Mayer also summoned Mildred to his office. "Your daughter comes on like a romantic teenager and then turns into a feverish, passionate tiger who can't get enough. She's only seventeen, and reporters are calling her the Queen of the Night. This is hardly the clean, all-American image that we promote at MGM in our pictures. We abide by the rules that society dictates. If some jailbait like Lana gets knocked up, she might be shown the door. Do you understand me?"

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Cast as Cynthia Parker, the small town flirt in *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, Lana plays the *ingénue* who tempts and tangles with Andy. She wants to kiss him, but he already has a girlfriend, Polly Benedict, as portrayed by Ann Rutherford.

Andy's attempt to resist Cecilia causes him to question his own masculinity. He turns to his father, Judge Hardy (Lewis Stone). "D'ya think there's anything wrong with a guy that don't want a girl to kiss him all the time?" Andy asks.

A very young Judy Garland plays Betsy Booth, the helpful (and romantically available) girl next door. Befriending Andy, she sympathizes with his problems. At the prom, as the film's musical climax, she's persuaded to sing three jazzy numbers, winning the hearts, once again, of Judy fans on and off the screen.

Rooney later claimed that Judy was terribly jealous of Lana's beauty.

Lana felt at ease in the role of "that red-headed vampire. "I was a juvenile *femme fatale*. I'd rather kiss than *kibbutz."*

One writer observed that during the course of the film [Love Finds Andy Hardy *was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant"]* "Garland sang, Rooney mugged, and Stone pontificated, while Lana was whining, pouting, dimpling, and winking."

By now, Lana was skilled at evaluating camera angles, making her almost as adept as Joan Crawford. "I taught her what I knew about acting, and she was a fast learner," Rooney said to Busby Berkeley. "Privately, I taught her how to make love to a man's balls." She'd never done that before. And, as the Mexicans say, I've got a big pair of *cojones* in spite of my small size."

The kissing scenes between Rooney and Lana, as innocuous as they might be, encountered some minor trouble from movie censors. Rooney denounced "These blue noses. Lana and I were like a couple of aging virgins. The scenes were left in the final cut and appear harmless today."

At the end of the film, Lana suggested a title change. "Call it *Andy Hardy With a Hard-On."*

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Lana's long friendship with Judy Garland, which over the years would wax and wane both hot and cold, began on the set of *Love Finds Andy Hardy*.

The friendship had hardly begun when both of them embarked on the pursuit of Artie Shaw, each of the young starlets wanting to marry the dashing bandleader.

When Garland and Lana first bonded, Judy said, "You and I have something in common. From what I hear, each of us lost our virginity at age fifteen. Word gets around."

The same could be said of Rooney. "We were just teenagers, but Lana, Judy and I were doing what comes naturally."

Gossip was also spread that Garland and Rooney were having an affair. "At least that's what the gossip

columns of that day reported. They keep saying that about Mickey and me," Garland said. "They must have me mixed up with Lana. The gossip upsets me, it really does, because there's not a bit of truth in it. Mickey and I are swell friends, and he's full of fun. I enjoy working with him and playing with him. Outside the studio, we rarely see each other. We're pals—that's all!"

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One day, Lana abruptly ended her affair with Rooney. "It's been great," she told him. "You're a lot of fun. But it's time to move on."

He later revealed, "At the time, I thought she'd outgrown me and wanted other guys like Greg Bautzer. But months later, at a fund raiser, I ran into her, and she told me the truth."

"Do you know you put me in a family way?" she asked, referring in modest terms to her pregnancy.

"I was stunned," Rooney said. "She never told me at the time. Had she done so, I might have insisted she have our kid. Of course, aborting the child made sense. It protected our careers and, besides, we were just children ourselves."

He later learned that Eddie Mannix, known as "The Fixer" at MGM, had arranged for Lana's abortion through the studio doctor, Edward Jones. Previously, Mannix had warned Mayer that Rooney was "a loaded gun ready to go off."

"Eddie worked in publicity for the studio," Mervyn LeRoy said. "Most of his job involved suppressing scandal. He even covered up crimes such as murder. He kept the secrets of the stars, even protecting our beloved but pregnant Lana."

Howard Strickling, one of the directors of MGM's Publicity Department, said, "Our job was to publicize our new stars. But both Lana and Mickey were their own self-generating publicity machine. As time went by, our main job with them was to keep their names out of the gossip columns."

In 1991, when Rooney published his autobiography, *Life Is Too Short*, he revealed for the first time that Lana had aborted their child many decades before. She was furious, and at one point called her lawyer to suggest a lawsuit for libel. He wisely advised her not to sue.

When Rooney heard of her denial, he said, "Of course, she denied it. Why not? I would expect no less of her. But I stand by my story."

"All I can say is that if it didn't happen, it was the most beautiful, the most realistic, dream I ever had. MGM gals in those days were taught to deny any scandals."

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One night, Errol Flynn phoned Lana, finding her at home for a change and not out night-clubbing. He told her he'd been cast in the most exciting role of his career, and that his new film included "the greatest role for a young woman I've ever read."

"I can just see us on the marquee, "Errol Flynn as Rhett Butler and Lana Turner as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind."*

The characters were the creation of the genteel Southern novelist Margaret Mitchell, who had written *Gone With the Wind*. Published in 1936, and set in Georgia during the American Civil War and its Reconstruction Era, it became a million copy bestseller.

Confronted with that kind of temptation, Lana quickly acquiesced. After climbing into her red roadster, she drove to Flynn's home on a mountainside to read two or three scenes with him that he'd selected from the novel.

Of the many photographs snapped of Errol Flynn, dressed or undressed, this snapshot was his favorite. He had only one complaint: “It doesn’t show my most celebrated asset.

Lana found out what that was when they had “rehearsals” together for the rape scene depicted in *Gone With the Wind*

During the first hour, Flynn carried through with his promise, reading scenes with her from the book. He told her that not only would Rhett Butler be his greatest role, but that if she got cast as Scarlett, it might be the apex of her career, with perhaps a Best Actress Oscar looming in her future. “The role could immortalize you and make you one of the biggest stars in Hollywood.”

It was long past midnight when he launched into a pivotal scene in which Rhett Butler takes Scarlett in his arms and carries her to the bedroom, perhaps to rape her if she refuses his advances. Whereas, based on the censorship standards of that era, the actual seduction scene could not be filmed, Scarlett would be depicted the next morning waking up fully relaxed and with a satisfied smile.

“Let’s go for it,” she said, perhaps surprising him with her directness.

Consequently, he hauled her off to a large bed, suitable for an orgy with six or seven participants, the scene of at least a thousand prior conquests.

As Lana later described to Linda Darnell, Flynn, living up to his reputation, turned out to be a talented, virile lover. He’d seduced her before, beside his swimming pool and on Catalina. The difference this time was that he rubbed cocaine on the tip of his penis.

According to Lana, as filtered later through Darnell, “If I had any complaint at all, it was that Errol, in the heat of passion, likes to exchange a lot of saliva.”

Evoking the heroine in Mitchell’s novel, Lana woke up the next morning, alone in Flynn’s bed, with a smile on her face. He had truly satisfied her.

Donning one of his terrycloth bathrobes, she wandered down to his pool where she found him swimming nude. Dropping the robe, she dived in with him. “We made love underwater,” she later informed Joan Blondell.

Nearly two years would pass before Lana learned that while Errol was making love to her, their interchanges were observed by his two “fuck buddies,” David Niven and Bruce Cabot. In his bedroom, he had installed a two-way mirror, and they were silently positioned within the darkened space on the other side.

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The next day, Lana began to read Margaret Mitchell’s saga. “As I read and read, I had a hard time seeing myself as a drapery-wearing, Yankee soldier killer, and ‘fiddle-dee-dee’ type of bitchy Southern heroine.”

She was even more put off when she read *Time* magazine's assessment of what kind of actress was needed to play Scarlett. "She has to be tempestuous, intense, scheming, and case hardened, with diamond dust in her voice, bug eyes lit with cold blue glitter, and as wide a dramatic range as any cinema-actress in the business."

"That might be Bette Davis, but not me," Lana said.

That afternoon, Lana read in Louella Parsons' column that Jack Warner wanted Davis and Errol Flynn for the roles. "That devil tricked me," she told Blondell, who had made *The Perfect Specimen* (1937) with Flynn. "He knew I wasn't even being considered."

"But if he'd called you over without that temptation of a role, you would have gone anyway, right?"

"I hate to admit it, but it's true," Lana said. "Day or night, rain or shine, when Errol calls, Lana will come running."

In the weeks ahead, she followed news associated with *Gone With the Wind*. Jack Warner had allowed his option to lapse, and subsequently, producer David O. Selznick had picked up the film rights from Mitchell for only $50,000.

Gable was hauling in 2,400 fan letters a week, and most of his women fans demanded that Selznick cast him as Rhett Butler. Louis B. Mayer, Selznick's father-in-law, at least for the moment, had rejected any immediate and direct involvement with *Gone With the Wind*. "I don't think the public will flock to see a picture about the Civil War." But with the book's massive sales, he changed his mind.

Warner seemed upset that he'd let his option lapse. In an attempt to at least benefit in some way from the growing buzz about the film, he offered Selznick a package of two of his biggest stars, Davis and Flynn. As pre-released buzz increased, Mayer reminded Selznick that the public was demanding Gable for the role. "I'll give you Gable if you'll give me distribution rights."

Selznick already had a deal with United Artists to distribute his films, so, after rejecting Mayer's distribution proposal, he contacted Samuel Goldwyn and asked him if he could spare Gary Cooper for the role of Rhett Butler.

Although every actor or actress under the age of 40 in Hollywood seemed desperate for the lead roles, Cooper wasn't impressed. He didn't want to play Rhett Butler. Subsequently, he sent a memo to Selznick. "I think *Gone With the Wind* will be the biggest flop in the history of Hollywood. I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling flat on his face—and not Gary Cooper."

As the world knows, Gable as Rhett Butler and Lana as Scarlett O'Hara never got to co-star in *Gone With the Wind*.

This photo, taken on the set of their 1941 movie, *Honky Tonk*, showed what they might have looked like as Rhett and Scarlett.

Eventually, Selznick got Gable to sign on the dotted line, only to learn that his lover, Carole Lombard, had her heart set on playing Scarlett.

The producer decided to launch the greatest talent search in the history of Hollywood for the perfect newcomer who could play Mitchell's heroine.

The nationwide search to play Scarlett led to some 1,400 wannabee actresses, most of them Southern, to be interviewed. He found none of them suitable, but enjoyed the national publicity his stunt provided.

After searching for young women across the country to play Scarlett, he turned to established actresses. He was receiving dozens of letters demanding that he award the role to Tallulah Bankhead, a true Southern belle from Alabama.

George Cukor, named as the director of the picture, was a friend of Tallulah's. He made three tests of her as Scarlett, the first two in black and white, the latter in Technicolor. "In color, Tallulah looked a fright," he said.

The choices narrowed. Among the finalists was Paulette Goddard. Selznick considered her ideal in many ways, but he didn't want any scandal connected to his multi-million dollar picture. Goddard was living with Charlie Chaplin at the time and claiming to be his wife. Selznick demanded that she produce a marriage license, and she failed to do so. Consequently, he did not award her with the part.

Almost as an afterthought, Lana was ordered by MGM to make a screen test, with the understanding that it would be directed by Cukor, who had been named director of *Gone With the Wind*. He would later be fired.

Lana had already portrayed a Southern girl in her debut movie, *They Won't Forget*, but that hardly meant that she would be suitable for the role of Scarlett. Nevertheless, she bravely moved forward with the test.

She met Melvyn Douglas, who had agreed to a screen test in which he'd portray Ashley Wilkes, a part he coveted. With Lana, he wanted to show Cukor that he would be the ideal Ashley, knowing that the British actor, Leslie Howard, was also under consideration, although he didn't seem to want the role.

In this rare photograph, Lana is seen trying to perform as Scarlett O'Hara opposite veteran actor Melvyn Douglas. George Cukor tested her for the role, with Douglas hoping to co-star as Ashley Wilkes.

"The test was dismal," Cukor said. "Lana was no Scarlett, and she knew it."

"Lana had none of the fire and intensity of Scarlett," Cukor said, after directing Douglas and her. "This cute blonde from Idaho had a horribly fake Southern accent, and there was absolutely no chemistry between Douglas and her."

Selznick viewed Lana's test and agreed with Cukor. As later stated in one of his many memos: "Miss Turner has absolutely no conception of who Scarlett O'Hara is."

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"Lana, dear," came the screen-familiar voice of Joan Crawford. "I'm extending a sudden invitation for a *tête-á-tête* for you and me at my home in Brentwood. Would you drive over to see me? I have something very important to discuss with you. It's very personal."

Lana agreed and after transforming her face with makeup and slipping on her most expensive and stylish day dress, she got into her roadster and drove to Crawford's immaculate house, a building as well-groomed as its occupant.

Like herself, Crawford preferred an all-white living room. "Please take off your shoes, darling," she told Lana. "The carpet is snow white, and shoes are just too dirty."

Then she fussed over Lana, making sure she was totally comfortable before bringing her a cup of tea and just one small cookie on a pink napkin embroidered with the initials "JC."

“Now let’s get down to business,” Crawford said after they’d sipped their tea. “You know I’m just a tiny bit older than you.”

[At the time, Crawford was thirty-three, Lana still a teenager.]

“I’ve been around long enough to learn a few lessons you might not have, so I can advise,” Crawford said. “After all, when it comes to men, this is not my first time at the rodeo.”

“What kind of lessons?” Lana asked.

“Well, dear, when you’re young, you see things in a certain way, perhaps not as they are in the real world. The young often live in a fantasy world. As you get older, you realize how relationships—and life itself—can get god damn complicated.”

“Miss Crawford, exactly what is it you want me to know?” Lana asked.

“Greg Bautzer doesn’t love you,” Crawford said bluntly. “He hasn’t for a longtime, if he ever did. I can’t let you go on believing that he does. What Greg and I have is real. It’s me he truly loves. He just hasn’t figured out how to get rid of you. So why don’t you be a good little girl and let him know that it’s over between the two of you? Make it easy on yourself.”

One of the reigning goddesses of MGM, Joan Crawford summoned Lana to her house to tell her that Greg Bautzer was off limits.

Lana had long been dazzled by Crawford’s iconic beauty and her onscreen toughness. She answered the summons, but didn’t respond to Crawford’s lesbian advance.

“Get rid of me?” Lana asked in astonishment, as she was highly insulted. “That sounds like something you do with trash headed for the garbage can. Or maybe it’s some disease you cure yourself from.”

“I know your heart must be breaking, but I felt it was my duty to tell you,” Crawford said. “You must be realistic to save yourself from more heartbreak. Dear heart, I know how painful I must be for you to hear these words from me. But they are true.”

Flashing anger, Lana said, “You’re a liar. I don’t believe a word out of your mouth.”

“I would not lie to you, darling girl. I’m trying to get you to face the truth so you won’t be devastated suddenly when he drops you. I know you have a date with him tonight. He’s probably about to tell you the bad news unless you get a jump on him and cancel your date tonight...and every other night.”

Lana rose to her feet. “I’m getting out of here.”

Crawford, too, rose to her feet. On the screen, she always looked much taller.

“I could comfort you in your grief. I suggest you come upstairs. I have this beautiful new designer gift Adrian did for me. However, I think it would look stunning on you. I’ll give it to you. Why not come to my bedroom and try it on?”

“I’m not sure…” Lana seemed hesitant.

Before she could finish her sentence, Crawford embraced her tightly, planting a deep kiss on her lips while fondling a breast with one hand. Pulling back from her, Lana slapped her face really hard. Then she rushed out of the living room and into the vestibule, rescuing her shoes before heading out of the house and into the safety of her roadster.

She had to escape.

The next few hours were painful. She couldn't get Bautzer on the phone. He had agreed to come by her house at 8PM. Almost on the dot, he arrived. She immediately confronted him with what Crawford had told her.

"That old bitch!" he said, reaching to take her in his arms. "It's you I want." Then he kissed her deeply, as she folded into his protective arms.

That night, after drinking the bottle of champagne he'd brought, he made love to her in front of her marble fireplace. Fortunately, Mildred was gone for the night.

Before 3AM, when he made love to her for the third time, he asked, "Do I seem like a man who's about to dump you?"

"Gary Cooper was everything that John Wayne, my future co-star, pretended to be but wasn't," Lana claimed. "He was all male...and how! I couldn't believe he'd turned down the role of Rhett Butler."

His reputation had preceded him. His director, Stuart Heisler, once said, "Coop was probably the greatest cocks-man who ever lived."

That made Lana wonder, "How did he know that?"

When he left the next morning at 7AM, he'd convinced her that he was madly in love with her, and was considering marriage. He didn't exactly ask for her hand in marriage, but he put a diamond ring on her finger anyway.

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Lana had dreamed a lot about Gary Cooper ever since working on his movie, *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. When she came of legal age, she placed a call to him on the set of his latest movie, *The Cowboy and the Lady*.

She was drawn to his lanky, hollow-cheeked male beauty, his unflappable strength, and a certain stumbling sincerity and wholesome gallantry.

"Hi," she said when he came on the phone. "I'm Lana Turner. You said to call you when I'm no longer jailbait. I'm old enough now. You can make love to me without facing life imprisonment."

"Sounds good to me," he said.

"I hope you don't think I'm forward with all my dates like this."

"That's not something I need to worry about," he answered. "You're one very attractive gal, but I've got to be discreet."

She knew why. In 1933, he'd married the socialite-actress Veronica Balfe, whose friends called her "Rocky."

And discreet he was, taking her to a rustic beachfront dive in Laguna Beach, where they were seated at a table in an alcove in the kitchen, with table service provided by his friend, Bugsy Barbato, the restaurant's owner and chef. *[Cooper avoided the tables in the dining room, as he did not want to be recognized by his fans.]*

Lana later discussed her romance with Cooper with Ruth Hussey, when both actresses appeared in *Rich Man, Poor Girl* (1938).

"He has eyes the blue of the sky," Lana said. "When he looks at a gal, she thinks she's the only woman in the

universe. And he has another endearing quality, too. He takes your hands and presses them against his cheeks. Isn't that the most adorable thing you've ever heard of?"

Later that night in Laguna, he drove her to a remote villa set high in the hills, but with a view of the ocean. He never told her who owned the house.

Both of them sat outside on a terrace, enjoying the stars and moonlight. "Awalk through the forest when leaves are turning," he said. "The rain, the wind, a sunrise. Those things are real. What's not real is Tinseltown. Hollywood is nothing if not superficial. All of us movie stars are applesauce. We deceive the public, and we get paid very well for it. Since I get paid extra special, I deceive the public extra good."

She admitted to Hussey that she was a bit intimidated before going to bed with him. After all, he'd been seduced by world-class sirens like Tallulah Bankhead, Clara Bow, Claudette Colbert, Carole Lombard, Marlene Dietrich, and Mae West.

"We'd had a few drinks by the time we moved on to the bedroom," Lana confessed to Hussey. "He took off my blouse and brassiere. He borrowed a tube of lipstick from my purse and painted a face around my breast, making my nipple a nose. Then he made love to that breast. I later learned he'd picked up that trick from Lupe Velez, the Mexican Spitfire."

"Gary was more man than boy," Lana told Hussey. "What a guy! Now I know why he's called the Montana Mule."

Rumors about his sexual prowess had preceded him.

Clara Bow had claimed "he's hung like a horse and can go all night." Ava Gardner would later express the same sentiment. Carole Lombard told friends, "After hitting town, Coop learned he could do two things well: Ride a horse and fuck."

Lana later learned that men were attracted to him as frequently as women. He'd sustained an enduring affair with Anderson Lawler, the tobacco heir, and also with Cary Grant, Randolph Scott, and Howard Hughes. When Edmund Goulding had directed Cooper in *Paramount on Parade* in 1930, the director was said to have "worshipped" him twice a day.

During his fling with Lana, Gary proposed getaways where the two of them might escape from Hollywood. He wanted to take her to Sun Valley, Idaho, perhaps inviting his friends, Barbara Stanwyck and Robert Taylor. But on only one occasion did he introduce her to one of his friends or associates.

That was the night they dined with Charlie Chaplin, a sincere devotee of Cooper's "natural" style of acting.

Chaplin had acquired the film rights to a story about a young millionaire who goes on a cruise to China, where, in a dance hall, he falls in love with a lovely White Russian. The Little Tramp wanted the movie to showcase his girlfriend (or wife), Paulette Goddard, with whom Lana would soon be co-starring in a film. "It's a comedy with social implications," Chaplin told them.

After deciphering the plot, Lana told Chaplin, "If Paulette doesn't do it, I'm always available. I'd be great playing a White Russian."

The movie was never made. After reading the script, Cooper turned it down.

Far away from the nightclub scene, Lana came to enjoy the precious few nights she spent alone with Cooper. Except for that time they dined with Chaplin, their dates invariably included just the two of them.

"One night, I asked Mildred to vacate the building and go out with the girls. In her place, I invited Gary for a home-cooked meal," Lana told Hussey.

"I'm not the world's best cook, but I tried. He arrived with these very ripe avocados, from which he made the world's best guacamole. Lupe Velez had taught him how. I cooked veal chops, mashed potatoes, and a salad, which was fine with him. For dessert, we retired to bed."

"He wore these expertly crafted Indian boots, which he asked me to remove." Lana said. "When I'd taken them off and removed his socks, I was confronted with the longest, most awful feet I'd ever seen on a man. He wanted me to massage his feet, which led to a request for toe-sucking. I had never done that before, and I just know I'll never do it again. But for Gary, anything."

"Everybody has some annoying little habit," she said. "For Gary, it's his love of licorice. I detest it. It makes your teeth black."

There was no goodbye, no final farewell. "We had a fabulous dinner, great love-making, and I fell asleep in his arms. In the morning, when I woke up, he was gone. He never phoned for another date. I guess he went home to Rocky."

In 1943, she heard rumors that Cooper was involved in a torrid love affair with Bergman on the set of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

"It was tolling for Ingrid—not me," Lana said. "In later years, I would encounter Gary at various functions. He was always gracious, always the gentleman, never a mention made of our previous affair."

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Henry Willson, Lana's agent, received an angry, early-morning call from her. She demanded that he use all his influence to get her a meatier role than that "extra bit I did in *The Chaser* (1938) with Dennis O'Keefe. I want to be a movie star—not a god damn $10-a-day extra!"

He promised he would "empty oceans and topple mountains" to get her a better part. Through it had not resulted from his intervention as her agent, he learned that MGM had cast her as one of the four leads in *Rich Man, Poor Girl*, where she received fourth billing to Robert Young, Lew Ayres, and Ruth Hussey. Of course, when Willson called her with the news, he took all the credit for getting her the role. Shooting was to begin at once, as the 72-minute film had been scheduled for distribution in August of 1938.

During her heavy period of "studio dating," a photographer captured Lana with MGM contract player Alan Curtis.

Hedda Hopper was in the room that night and said "I can't decide which one is the more gorgeous."

In the meantime, Willson asked her to go out on a series of widely publicized dates with whatever star he was specifically promoting at the time—namely, Jon Hall and Alan Curtis. "They're both gorgeous guys, with great bodies, and, most important, each is well hung. I know that's a requirement for you, Lana. We both have the same expectations in men."

"And how do you know how well-hung they are?" she asked provocatively.

"Never mind how I know," he answered. "Henry knows."

Both of the young actors, Lana was soon to discover, lived up to Willson's advance billing.

The popular New York columnist, Walter Winchell, often flew to Hollywood for interviews with the stars he later wrote about. He later recalled a time in the late 1930s. When he'd attended a glittering star-studded night at the Trocadero, he had spotted Lana enter the club on the arm of Alan Curtis.

Although he didn't print it, he told the manager that, "The Curtis kid is one good-looking hunk of male flesh, and Lana is a picture that could be used for masturbatory fantasies."

During their dates together, Curtis and Lana seemed ideal for each other, except for one problem: In 1937, he'd married actress Priscilla Lane, a marriage that would end in a divorce court in 1940.

Lane, a native of Indiana, seven years older than Lana, was known for her role as Princess Aura in the original *Flash Gordon* serial (1936). Curtis married her after she became Miss Miami Beach. She was later to lose a leg when she served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II.

Born in Chicago, Curtis was twelve years older than Lana, but didn't look it. Willson had orchestrated a change in his name to Alan Curtis, since his real name, Harry Ueberroth, wouldn't look good on a marquee.

Lana learned that he'd worked as a model before becoming an actor. "In Chicago, I posed for figure studies," he told her. "Word got around. Soon the class was filled only with young men concentrating on only one part of my anatomy."

He admitted that to get launched in Hollywood, he'd had to participate at the rate of about two dalliances a week on Willson's notorious casting couch.

"He's so repulsive physically," Lana asked. "How can you manage?"

"I just close my eyes and imagine it's Alice Faye doing the dirty deed down below."

When she'd first met him, he was interpreting a secondary role in a Technicolor picture, *Hollywood Cavalcade* (1939), starring the blonde-haired Faye and Don Ameche.

As Lana later told Willson, "As you, of all people know, Alan is a dreamboat, and the sex is just great. But I think he's more interested in free publicity than in dating me."

In spite of that assessment, Lana developed a friendship with Curtis that lasted for years.

She was pleased to learn that his big break would come in 1941, when director Raoul Walsh gave him the third lead in a *film noir* heist movie, *High Sierra*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Ida Lupino. Curtis played "Babe Kozak," a hardened criminal who arrives at a fortified mountain hideaway with a dance hall girl (Lupino).

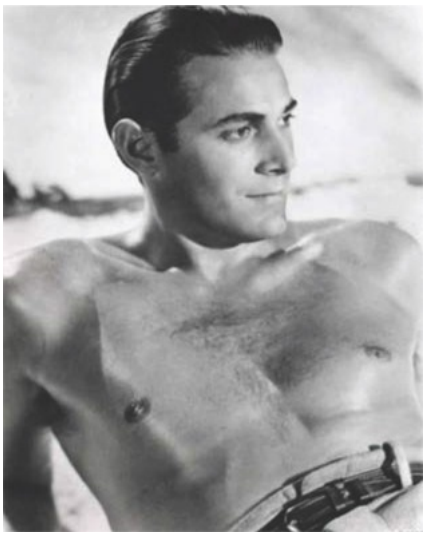
In 1941, Lana was surprised when she read that Curtis had married Ilona Massey, the Hungarian film, stage, and radio performer hailed as "The New Dietrich." One night three months later, he came over to Lana's and wanted to spend the night. He'd been kicked out of the house by this temperamental singing star. They divorced the following year.

When Lana encountered him again, he'd replaced John Garfield in *Flesh and Fantasy* 1943), playing a ruthless killer opposite Gloria Jean.

It represented the biggest break so far in his career. An A-list picture starring Edward G. Robinson, Charles Boyer, and Barbara Stanwyck, it consisted of four free-standing segments that combined into an "anthology," inspired by Oscar Wilde's short story, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, originally published in 1891. Curtis appeared in the first of the four segments, interpreting the role of an escaped killer. Regrettably (for him), that segment was yanked from the "anthology" and never released.

In an attempt to salvage some of its footage, the studio expanded it into a full-length *film noir* entitled *Destiny* (1944). In it, a fugitive (Curtis) finds refuge with a blind girl (played by Gloria Jean) in a secluded farmhouse.

On rare occasions, Lana would sometimes go out with Curtis—who by then had become type-cast in hard-bitten roles—when they weren't involved with other lovers or spouses.



Lana's fling with Jon Hall was brief. To her dismay, she learned that he was an exhibitionist. "I knew he went around his house naked. But I didn't realize he gave public performances." She'd learned that Hall liked to strip down at parties, the guests forming a ring around him to watch him masturbate.

"I can't understand," Lana said. "He's got me and he prefers self-satisfaction."

"He needs the admiration of a room full of people," Henry Willson said.

Curtis died in 1953 after a botched, but supposedly routine, kidney operation in New York City. "How sad for poor Alan," she said. His career didn't pan out the way he wanted. Or his life, either, for that matter. The Hollywood Hills are filled with stars, male and female, who never achieved their dream. I live in fear every day of becoming a has-been. I'm determined that it won't happen to me."

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The movie star, Jon Hall, born Charles Locher in Fresno, California, had been reared in Tahiti by his Swiss-born father, Felix Locher. Jon was a nephew of writer James Norman Hall, the author of the novel, *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

In 1934, he'd married the singer, Frances Langford, but neither of them was faithful.

Although the virile but rather bland star had appeared on the screen under two names, Charles Locher and, later, Lloyd Crane, he achieved fame as Jon Hall when he starred in *Hurricane* with Dorothy Lamour, both of them wearing sarongs. Willson had taken Lana to see it.

"Jon has quite a following," she said to Willson. "You should know. The men seemed to go after him more than the women."

"It's because they, like you, want to know what's inside the sarong."

"Does Jon, like Curtis, lie with you on your couch?"

"It's mandatory," he answered.

She abruptly stopped dating him. He went on to make movies with bombshell Maria Montez, the "Cobra Woman" from the Dominican Republic.

Lana was an avid reader of gossip columns, especially those by Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, and she always followed news about her lovers long after they'd separated.

It saddened her when she read that so many of them ended their life much too young and tragically. Hall, a star of silly adventure movies, was actually an inventor and highly skilled aviator.

But shortly before Christmas in 1979, after his doctor told him he had incurable bladder cancer, he went home, took out his gun, and committed suicide.

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Reporting for work at MGM, Lana appeared on the set of *Rich Man, Poor Girl*, her next picture.

The first person she met was the German Jewish director, Reinhold Schünzel, who called over Lew Ayres, the co-star of the picture, to introduce them.

She would always remember the occasion and the romance that followed. He held her hand tenderly and kissed her on both cheeks. Their first encounter ended abruptly when Ayres was called to the phone.

After he'd left, she turned to Schünzel. "Mark my words, that good-looking devil is the guy I'm going to marry."

"Perhaps," the director answered. "After all, this is Hollywood, where marriage is but an afterthought. There is one problem. You'll have to get rid of his wife. Ginger Rogers is bigtime competition. She dances better than you, but, then again, you're more gorgeous."

Chapter Four

Stardom at Last
For that "Ball of Fire," Lana Turner

Her Ongoing Affair with Lew Ayres, Ginger Rogers' Husband

Romping in the swimming pool, and later in bed, "bathing beauties" Robert Stack and Lana Turner had a lot of fun.

"In her heart, Lana is a total romantic," he said. "Even when she claims she does, she doesn't really want to settle down and raise a brood of kids. She thinks marriage should be like a romantic scene in a movie, a constant flurry of fun and courtship, not the day-to-day reality of a man and wife."

"Even though she denies it, sex is of paramount importance to her. I don't want to call her a nympho, but she confided to me, 'I don't get enough sex. I don't know why Mother Nature designed men to give up after only one of two explosions. She played a trick on men, and women are the ultimate losers."

Rich Man, Poor Girl (1938) was based on a 1925 Broadway play, *White Collars*, a satire on socialism. In 1929, it was turned into a Pre-Code comedy by MGM, *The Idle Rich*, starring Conrad Nagel and Bessie Love. The film was the first directorial effort of William C. de Mille, a former screenwriter of silent movies and the older brother of Cecil B. DeMille, who slightly altered the spelling of their last name.

The 1938 remake was directed by Reinhold Schünzel, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who had been one of the better-known film stars in Berlin after World War I. In spite of his Jewish heritage, Josef Goebbels and Adolf Hitler had allowed him to work in films after they came to power.

But because of their constant interference in his scripts, Schünzel decided to escape from Germany anyway. Years later, he told Lana, "Hitler had the worst possible dramatic taste."

In Hollywood, Schünzel continued to both direct and act. His most memorable film appearance was in the 1946 Alfred Hitchcock film, *Notorious*, co-starring Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman.

On the second day of the shoot, Clark Gable, a star Lana idolized, showed up for a working luncheon with Schünzel. Lana just happened to be standing next to the director when Gable approached.

"I was horrified," she said. "For my role in the movie, wardrobe had given me the worst dress in the history of fashion. In a three-button suit, Gable had never looked handsomer, with a lock of hair falling over his forehead, very sexy. A photographer snapped a picture of the three of us. I was caught gazing up at him with star-dust in my eyes, but he doesn't seem to know I exist. All the pretty gals were after him. In my wildest dreams, I never knew I'd be co-starring with him in the months ahead."

On the set of *Rich Man, Poor Girl*, Lana met her screen idol, Clark Gable, for the first time. He had come to call on his friend, the film's director, Reinhold Schünzel.

"Unfortunately, I was drably dressed for my role in the picture," Lana said. "I looked like some waitress behind a soda fountain."

In a nutshell, *Rich Man, Poor Girl* was the story of a wealthy businessman (Robert Young) who falls in love with his secretary Joan Thayer (Ruth Hussey), who comes from a poor and eccentric family. Joan does not immediately accept his proposal because of the difference in their backgrounds. As a means of testing their compatibility, she proposes that he come to live for a while with her family. At their home, he meets her radical cousin Henry (Lew Ayres) and her starry-eyed sister Helen (Lana herself), plus the rest of the crazy clan.

At first, Lana had been told she'd be working with Franchot Tone. She planned to chase after him, since he'd been married to Joan Crawford, and she wanted to get even with Crawford, based on her flare-up over Lana's dating of Greg Bautzer. But it was soon announced that Tone was out, and the lead role went instead to Robert Young.

"As a leading man, Young did absolutely nothing for me," Lana told Rita Johnson, one of the stars of the movie. "He's one of those solid family men types who marries one gal and stays married to her until the cows come home."

[Lana was right about that. Young married Betty Henderson in 1933, the union lasting until her death in 1994.]

As Hussey's "jitterbug sister," Lana had one scene where she got to do the rumba, and another where she shows off her body in a scanty petticoat. She utters such lines as, "Love is wonderful but it can't survive seven people *[competing]* for one bathtub."

As part of their buildup to the release of the film, MGM billed Lana as "The Kissing Bug of Andy Hardy." Around the same time, *Variety* would deliver faint praise, defining her as a "promising youngster."

The first actor Lana dated was a Texan, Don Castle, who at the time was interpreting one of the film's minor roles. She didn't agree, but the press often mentioned his resemblance to Clark Gable. Many of her outings with Castle were configured, with aggressive input from the studio, as double dates with her girlfriend, Bonita Granville and her beau of the moment.

[In less than a decade, Castle would become the TV producer for Jack Wrather's Lassie *series. Wrather was married to Granville at the time.*

"Like so many of my early boyfriends, Don was to have a short life," Lana lamented. "He was a great guy, but died in 1966 at the age of 48. After a traffic accident, he was given a medication overdose."

The plot of *Rich Man, Poor Girl* called for Lana's character to dream of living the plush life married to some rich man, and she tangles with her onscreen cousin, Ayres' socialist character, who loudly defends the glories of the

working class. In the film, she defines the Thayer home as “a dump,” long before Bette Davis delivered her famous and equivalent line in *Beyond the Forest* (1949).

“I play the jackass cousin with his lunatic left philosophy,” Ayres told Lana.

She bonded with her other female co-stars, Hussey, Rita Johnson and Virginia Grey. Collectively, they often lunched together during the filming. She and Grey would remain friends for decades, in spite of their shared competition for certain roles and one man (Clark Gable) in particular.

Johnson defined her origins as derived from a working class background in New England. As a teenager, she had served hot dogs from her mother’s roadside diner to drivers along the Boston/Worcester turnpike.

One day, she told Lana that MGM had tested her suitability for stepping into the Jean Harlow role in *Saratoga* (1937) after the unexpected death of its platinum blonde star.

“After I made a screen test with Clark Gable, I was rejected. The director told me that my mouth was too big.”

Gable said, ‘Tough break, kid. They once told me my ears were too big for the movies.”

Hussey, a native of Rhode Island, told Lana, “I don’t have your beauty, but I’m always quick with a wisecrack. I guess that means that my destiny will be that of a second stringer for the rest of my life.”

Lana’s glamorous cohort, confidante, and friend, Virginia Grey, retained a friendship with Lana for decades after their appearance together as budding starlettes on the make in *Rich Man, Poor Girl*.

That was to some degree true, but fortunately for Hussey, in 1940, she earned a “Best Supporting Actress” Oscar nomination, based on her performance as the cynical photographer lusting for James Stewart in *The Philadelphia Story*, co-starring Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn.

Grey had spent her childhood in Hollywood and always bragged that, “My claim to fame was that Gloria Swanson was my first babysitter, changing my diapers.” She had been born the youngest daughter of director Ray Grey, a friend of Swanson’s.

Grey had made her film debut at the age of ten, playing Little Eva in the silent version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1927)*.

Ironically, when Lana had to drop out of Gable’s *Idiot’s Delight* (1939), Grey was assigned to take over her role of one of his dancing chorus girls. Later, she confessed that Gable had seduced her during the filming of the movie. Thus began and on-again, off-again affair that would survive well into the 1940s.

MGM signed Grey to a contract in 1936 which laid out the terms of the role she’d play as the love interest in Bruce Cabot’s “B” movie, *Bad Guy (1937)*. Cabot, a close friend of Errol Flynn, had an affair with Grey. She was the one who warned Lana that Flynn had installed a two-way mirror in his bedroom so his “fuck buddies” could oversee his conquests, or he theirs. Lana was furious when she heard she’d sexually “performed” for unseen voyeurs

who had included, thanks to their concealment behind the two-way mirror, both Cabot and David Niven.

"Lana talked to me a lot about her boyfriends," Hussey said, "and talked a lot about her affair with Lew Ayres. I'm named Hussey, but Lana—although I just adored her—was the real hussy."

Many of Lana's fans cite *Rich Man, Poor Girl* as the movie in which she showed off her natural beauty before it was garnished and accessorized with the studio's barrage of makeup and glamor.

As one reviewer noted, "Without a doubt, the person who made the biggest splash in this film is Lana Turner in her nascent phase. She's sweet, still a brunette, and full of the dewy youth and kittenish sexuality she exuded in the early phase of her career."

Another critic wrote, "Lana Turner makes every single one of today's screen beauties fade into mediocrity by comparison."

In *Rich Man, Poor Girl*, Lana interacts with Lew Ayres. This was one of her most playful roles before she became super glamorous.

"He was a wonderful lover, taking me on picnics and drives up the coast. In some ways, it was like a schoolgirl romance. He was idealistic, a conscientious objector, devouring books on religion and philosophy. I listened politely, waiting until he got around to fucking me."

Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* wrote: "*Rich Man, Poor Girl* is a genial and heart-warming little comedy which crackles and pops so pleasantly that you can hardly hear its joint creaks."

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According to Ruth Hussey, "Lana fell in love with Lew Ayres during the making of *Rich Man, Poor Girl*. Virginia Grey and Rita Johnson, along with yours truly, were witnesses to this ongoing affair. Who wouldn't adore Lew? He was a delight. Even his wife, Ginger Rogers, thought so…at least until she divorced him *[in 1940]* two years later."

When Lana worked with Ayres, he was best known for his interpretation of the German soldier in Paul Bäumer's film classic, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), based on the haunting German-language novel of World War I by Erich Maria Remarque.

“I think I was mature for my age,” Lana told Grey. “I mean, I had the hots for boys when I was a child. After seeing Lew on the screen as a German soldier, I really daydreamed about him. Even though he was fighting for the Germans, all my sympathy was for him. I left the movie house in a daze. Someday, of my days to come, I just knew I would meet this handsome guy. I just knew he’d fall for me when that day came.”

She had also seen him in an earlier film. As a child, her mother, Mildred, had taken her to see his performance opposite Greta Garbo in the silent film, *The Kiss* (1929). “Both Mildred and I swooned over him,” Lana said. “Call it a little girl’s first crush.”

[Most movie audiences of the late 1930s and early 40s would remember Ayres for his starring role in nine Dr. Kildare *films, including one that he filmed with Lana. Another famous role had been his interpretation of Ned in* Holiday *(1938), in which he’d starred with Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant.]*

On the set, she learned from the director that, though still married to Rogers, he was not actually living with her. Consequently, she felt more comfortable making herself available to him for a date.

“Lana was definitely hot to trot,” Hussey observed. “Even on days when she wasn’t needed on the set, she showed up. She brought Lew coffee and invited herself to his dressing room one afternoon, in theory, at least, for some acting tips. Yeah, right!”

On their first date, he drove up the Pacific coast in his Packard to an out-of-the-way beachfront dive not usually frequented by other movie stars or photographers.

“My heart was beating like a tom-tom the night he came to pick me up,” she told Grey. “I’d spent all afternoon making myself glamorous, only to find out that he preferred the natural look in a girl.”

“After dinner, we took off our shoes and went for a hand-in-hand walk along the moonlit beach. It couldn’t have been more romantic. He could make a girl forget that Greg Bautzer—that two-timing bastard—ever existed. The sound of the waves. My bare feet in the sands.”

He told her he couldn’t take her out dancing “because I’m lousy at dancing. Fortunately, Ginger gets enough dancing on the screen with Fred Astaire.”

“And then it happened,” Lana confessed. “He stopped, gently pulled me into his arms, and gave me the kiss of a lifetime. Wow! He was great.”

Apparently, Lana did not exaggerate. In Ginger Rogers memoirs, *My Story*, Rogers later described her first kiss from Ayres: “I’ve never been rocked by a kiss before. He planted a super kiss on my lips. At that very instant, the ground under our feet moved again, as if by command.”

As Lana related to Grey, “Lew delivers the most gentlemanly fuck a gal can ever have—no rough stuff, but passionate, thorough. Fortunately, he brought a rubber along. I guess he knew I’d give in, since I’d been throwing myself at him. I find him *yummy-yummy*, good enough to eat!”

On subsequent dates, Lana discreetly inquired about Rogers, since she loved gossip. “Lew hates Hollywood gossip, I soon learned. He prefers to put his arm around me in his living room. We listen to classical music. He prefers the three B’s—Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms. He played the piano for me, even the banjo and guitar. In 1927, he’d appeared with Henry Halstead’s Orchestra. I mean, he’s really good, and he studies arranging and composing.”

After her third date with Ayres, Lana appeared on the set and called Grey aside to tell her the news. Later, according to Grey, “She was bubbling over with excitement and could hardly contain herself. In an almost breathless voice, she told me that Lew was going to divorce Ginger Rogers and marry her.”

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As the weeks passed, Lana dated Greg Bautzer less and less, and the frequency of his “sleepovers” dwindled to once a week, if that. Sometimes, he’d bring her home before 11PM—no more closing down of night clubs—and he’d give her a kiss on her doorstep before bidding her good night and driving off into the night, presumably for a late-night rendezvous with someone else.

At first, she suspected that Joan Crawford had commandeered most of his nights, but she was soon to learn differently.

“Our romance is cooling,” Lana told Grey. “He’s obviously getting it somewhere else.”

Nonetheless, even on days he didn’t see her, he faithfully sent a bouquet of white roses. They still maintained an agreement that the arrival at her door of a box of red roses would signal the end of their love affair.

On the nights he did take her out, she still preferred La Conga, where they were generally acknowledged as the best rumba dancers on the floor. There was an occasional weekend at the desert resort of Palm Springs. They were seen at the Racquet Club, and once, they were photographed at the Assistance League Benefit at the Roller Bowl.

It was one night in the desert, at the edge of a swimming pool, that she confided in him that her real desire was

not to be a movie star, but a married woman with children. He couldn't believe that. He'd dated dozens of actresses, and invariably, each of them had wanted to become movie stars.

"You truly mean you'd like to be a dreary little housewife, changing shitty diapers, cooking dinner for a hubbie when, or if, he comes home for dinner?"

"I want what most girls want," she said. "Is that so strange?"

Somehow, he managed to change the subject.

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When Lana wasn't spending the night with Ayres, she—on that rare occasion—found Bautzer in her bed. But, as she told her girlfriends, "Greg is the biggest escape artist in Hollywood when it comes to marriage."

One morning, she read in a gossip column that Crawford and Bautzer had concluded a public fight at Mocambo's, and that she had stormed out of the club, roaring off into the night in a taxi, alone.

This did not surprise Lana at all, since she, along with Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, were familiar with the ongoing feuds and reconciliations of the infamous couple.

However, even after his breakup with Crawford, he continued his pattern of infrequent rendezvous with Lana. "What's he up to now?" she asked anyone who might know. Then one morning, she read in the newspaper that Bautzer was dating the French actress, Simone Simon.

That afternoon, a box of red roses arrived from him. She knew that was the end of their affair.

Simon was a name that was vaguely familiar to her. She had read two or three items about her in *Variety*—and that was it. She'd never seen one of her American movies. In the fading afternoon, she called Billy Wilkerson at *The Hollywood Reporter*, the publisher who had discovered her. "Just who in hell is this Simone Simon?"

He invited her over to read his file on her in the newspaper's morgue.

After scanning the file, she soon learned details about her competitor. To her delight, she found out that the actress was twelve years older than she was—in fact, she was slightly older than Bautzer himself.

Simon had been born in Marseille, the daughter of Henri Louis Firmin Champmoynat, a French-Jewish engineer and airplane pilot. During World War II, he had been captured by the Nazis and later died in a concentration camp.

Simon had lived in Madagascar, Budapest, Turin, and Berlin before settling into Paris with an ambition to become a fashion designer like Chanel. Spotted by a talent agent, she was offered a film contract, making her debut in 1931 in *The Unknown Singer*.

She had become one of the best-known actresses in France before Darryl F. Zanuck of 20th Century Fox brought her to Hollywood in August of 1935.

At Fox, she was known for her temper tantrums, which would ultimately lead to her dismissal. Zanuck might have put up with her had her American films made any money, but they had flopped. During the 1937 remake of the silent film classic, *Seventh Heaven* (1927), she was cast in the Janet Gaynor role. The movie bombed, even though its star was James Stewart.

Friends, Nymphs, and Frenemies: Virginia Grey and Ann Rutherford, two of Lana's friends, confidantes, and sometimes competitors, in a press and publicity postcard of their heydays. Along with Lana, they were cast in what they each remembered years later as a major break, secondary roles in a movie with lots of good-looking young women, *Dramatic School*.

Lana learned that Bautzer's affair with Simon was over when she returned to Paris to resume her film career there, even though war clouds loomed over Europe.

Two weeks later, a box of white roses arrived on Lana's doorstep with a note from Bautzer. "Lana, I love you passionately. I want to come over right now and make love to you all day, but I will have to force myself to wait until I come by for you at eight. Cancel any date you've made. You belong to me…and me only."

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Since bringing Lana to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, she had not heard from Mervyn LeRoy for several weeks until he phoned her. He had decided to cast her in *Dramatic School* (1938), a romantic drama about a troupe of young aspiring actresses hoping to become the next Duse or Bernhardt. The film was to be directed by Robert B. Sinclair, with an all-star cast headed by Luise Rainer, Paulette Goddard, and Alan Marshal.

Dramatic School was to have marked the American film debut of the British actress, Greer Garson, but she hurt her back and had to be replaced by Rainer.

Lana in *Dramatic School:* As she recalled (with a touch of envy) about that film's female lead, "Paulette (Goddard) had her heart set on playing Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind."*

"I didn't dare tell her that at the time, I, too, was being tested for the role. She claimed that even though it hadn't yet been announced, David O. Selznick had, more or less, already given her the part."

Although Lana did not voice her complaints to LeRoy, she was disappointed with her small role in this low budget version of the movie, *Stage Door* (1937), set in a theatrical boardinghouse and starring Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers.

In spite of her meager role as "Mado," Lana was given fourth billing. "I was such a bitch in the film," she later said. "Audiences must have hated me, especially when I deliberately spilled a glass of champagne on Rainer's beautiful gown designed by Adrian. Stacked up against the others, I was just a kid, a teenager really, although I looked older."

Professor Jeanine Basinger, an author and film historian, summed up Lana's role: "At this stage, she is all dimples, curly hair, and a high school charm, more of a cheerleader than Cleopatra. The idea of her as a serious dramatic student is a bit far-fetched. She is exceptionally pretty, but not yet glamorous—the kind of girl every boy in school might want to take to the senior prom, provided it wouldn't worry his mother too much."

Lana boasted, "I got the Argentine singer, Dick Haymes, before that other goddess, Rita Hayworth. He could melt you knees with a smile and cause your heart to flutter with a touch."

The supporting roles had been cast with a remarkable troupe of talented actors, and Lana set out to meet all of them, since she was eager to learn about how to make movies.

LeRoy introduced her to the Viennese actress, Luise Rainer, who had become famous for winning back-to-back Oscars—the first for *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936), the second for *The Good Earth* (1937).

Lana joined others in referring to Rainer as "the Viennese teardrop," because of her long phone scene in *The Great Ziegfeld* when she hears the news that the man she loves is going to marry another woman.

When Lana met her, Rainer looked at Lana with a certain kind of disdain and did not extend her hand. Behind Lana's back, Rainer referred to her as "LeRoy's little piece of fluff."

"In many ways, Lana wanted to be me," claimed Paulette Goddard. "She also envied the chest of jewelry—lots and lots of it—I had accumlated over the years and the millions of dollars."

When Lana last encountered Goddard, Lana was (disastrously) married to Ronald Dante, a nightclub hypnotist.

At the time, in glaring contrast, Goddard was married to the wealthy, charismatic and dashingly handsome novelist, Erich Maria Remarque.

Lana's somewhat bitter final words to Goddard were, "Some girls have all the luck."

Lana was delighted to be cast with two of her favorite friends, Ann Rutherford and Virginia Grey. During the shooting of *Dramatic School*, her friendship with Grey strengthened.

As the days went by, it became obvious to LeRoy and others that for Lana's interpretation of her role, she was inspired by Ginger Rogers in films such as Warner musicals *42nd Street* and *Gold Diggers of 1933*.

Goddard cattily remarked to Sinclair, "Since Lana is also stealing Ginger's husband (a reference to Lew Ayres), why not her screen persona, too?"

Lana found the Los Angeles native, John Shelton, "very handsome in a bland sort of way. He wanted to join the ranks of Tyrone Power, Robert Taylor, and Clark Gable, but lacked the charisma of super-stardom," she said.

"I liked John, and the sex wasn't as vanilla as I thought it might be," Lana confided to Grey. "He has passion that rises to the surface."

On the set, the most sparks were generated between Lana and Dick Haymes, the singer from Buenos Aires. She would get to know him far more intimately when she became involved with such singers and musicians as bandleader Tommy Dorsey and Frank Sinatra. Haymes had married Edith Harper, but their marriage was being annulled. "I'm free as a bird," he told Lana. "We don't have to sneak around."

As Lana confided to Grey, "Dick is good in bed, very satisfying. He whispers dirty stuff in your ear as he makes love to you. I find him irresistible."

Lana and Paulette Goddard *[eventually the wife, or mistress of Charlie Chaplin]*, one of her co-stars in *Dramatic School*, maintained a superficial friendship for many decades. They would occasionally encounter each other at parties or at special events such as Oscar night. When they would come together, they would air kiss and exchange compliments, which always included an assessment of each other's looks, "You look absolutely stunning, darling."

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In 1937, Paramount had released *Internes Can't Take Money* starring Joel McCrae in the role of Dr. Kildare. The movie was a financial success at the box office. Later, MGM picked up the option for a series of low-budget melodramas, the *Dr. Kildare* series, each of which highlighted the struggles and travails of a heroic, highly principled doctor.

Bad girl Lana, playing a shameless adventuress, taking advantage of Lew Ayres as the very eligible Dr. Kildare. Only eighteen, she plans to seduce him.

MGM cast Lew Ayres as Dr. Kildare in many of them, the first of which was *Young Dr. Kildare* (1938). Ayres would go on to churn out nine more of them until his pacifist stance during World War II made him unpopular. The studio eventually replaced him with actor Philip Dorn.

A Londoner, Harold S. Bucquet, would direct many of the *Dr. Kildare* movies. For the second such movie with Ayres *[Calling Dr. Kildare]*, he cast Lana in the "sexy role"*;* Lionel Barrymore as the wise old Dr. Gillespie, his mentor; and Laraine Day as the second female lead, a nurse, Mary Lamont.

Lana had continued her affair with Ayres, but they had to be discreet, since he was still married to Ginger Rogers. Lana, enamored with him at the time, was delighted to be working with him again.

On the set, during the first day of shooting, she told Bucquet, "I can't imagine that little Miss Lana Turner of Wallace, Idaho, would one day be working with one of the great Barrymores." Although she didn't specifically mention how delighted she also was to be working with Ayres, Bucquet and the rest of his staff eventually became aware of their affair, based on her frequent visits to his dressing room.

Lana became extremely nervous whenever she filmed scenes with Barrymore, a longtime and widely acclaimed star. Despite her lack of experience, she managed to pull them off.

Her scene with Barrymore called for her to shed tears, and to come apart before his eyes. She knows she's been a bad girl, but vows to reform and make a fresh start, "if I'm going to amount to something."

On camera, Barrymore assures her, "Well, you're young," holding out a hopeful promise for her future.

According to the script, Dr. Kildare and his mentor, Dr. Gillespie, have had one too many arguments, and his mentor dismisses him from his duties at Blair General Hospital. Gillespie, however, remains interested in his younger *protégé*, and as a means of keeping tabs on him, he assigns Nurse Lamont (Day) as a secret spy. Soon, she reports that the young doctor is emotionally entangled with this sexy blonde, Rosalie (Lana), and that the younger doctor (because of his involvement with Rosalie) is also implicated in the cover-up of a murder.

Barrymore gives Ayres some fatherly advice of the type Jude Lewis Stone provided for Andy Hardy. "Rosalie (Lana) is a bad little girl, and you should have known that. Books could be written about her."

Lana viewed her seduction of Phillip Terry, Joan Crawford's wartime husband, as a triumph over her nemesis.

Crawford and Lana often competed for the same men.

Crawford referred to sex with the studly actor as “going to heaven.”

Lana countered, “Phillip and I only made it to the clouds in the sky.”

Playing the sultry *femme fatale*, Lana had just turned eighteen when shooting began.

One reviewer defined her as “a baby doll.” As Rosalie, she was asked to deliver such lines as “I’m city people. I like great big shiny limousines and orchids in a vase. I love the cold wind whipping around a skyscraper—and a sable coat to keep it out.”

As Bucquet quipped, “That girl could probably raise a hard-on from cantankerous old Lionel.” Years later, Lana could hardly remember Barrymore except to claim that, “Every time I encountered him, he was in his cups” (i.e., drunk).

One day on the set, she was introduced to an actor about eleven years older than herself, Phillip Terry. Born to German Americans in San Francisco, he was known as a Hollywood Romeo, a legend he’d been developing since his bit part in *Mannequin* (1938), starring Joan Crawford. During the shooting of that movie, he’d made frequent visits to her dressing room. He would later become her wartime husband.

In this publicity still for *Young Dr. Kildare*, Laraine Day (left) looks on in a disapproving rage at the growing bond between bad Lana and the impressionable, morally upright Dr. Kildare (Lew Ayres).

This is not just acting on Day’s part: She thoroughly loathed Lana, who detested her as well.

Together, they would adopt their first child, Christina, a decision that Crawford would later bitterly regret. Fortunately, Crawford died before the publication of her daughter’s notorious memoir, *Mommie Dearest*, a vengeful rant that was later adapted into a film starring Faye Dunaway impersonating Crawford.

Terry had built up an impressive set of muscles, in part because of his background as a football player and roustabout in the oil fields of Texas and Oklahoma.

For a while, he had studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London.

Lana began to date him during the making of *Dr. Kildare*. As she told Ann Rutherford, “Terry must have put a smile on Crawford’s face. He might have been a roustabout in the oil fields, but he has culture, too, and seems well read. He pronounces certain words with a British accent, no doubt from his studies in London.”

As a sex object, he was eagerly pursued by both men and women, but it would be years later that Lana would learn that he was bisexual. It turned out that both Terry and Lana were dating the same man at the same time, the matinee idol, Robert Taylor, another bisexual married to a bisexual, Barbara Stanwyck.

Socialite Elsa Maxwell wrote, “Joan Crawford weeps openly when the violinist at L’Aiglon plays her favorite classical piece. Lana Turner likes torch songs; Rita Hayworth prefers gypsy music, and Hedy Lamarr likes waltzes.”

What she didn’t print but knew: “All of these ladies desired Phillip Terry, as do Robert Taylor, Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, and Cary Grant.”

MGM aggressively promoted *Calling Dr. Kildare*, suggesting that viewers “watch these exciting new beauties —Laraine Day and Lana Turner.” But it was probably Lana who aroused the most intense sexual interest among

men in the audience. The film was the first of seven in which Day would appear as a player in the *Dr. Kildare* series. As nurse Mary Lamont—in distinct contrast to Lana, who was interpreted as a "siren"—she was frequently cited for her wholesomeness.

In the publicity department's build-up, they distorted her background, claiming that "Lana Turner was educated in San Francisco and was a model and designer before her discovery by Mervyn LeRoy."

Bucquet said that Laraine didn't like Lana, and that Lana didn't like Laraine. "When those two came together, an Arctic wind blew in. I think Lana also resented Laraine getting billing over her, because she considered her own role flashier and more important."

"At first, Lana feared Laraine, but by the time they made *Keep Your Powder Dry* (1945), it was Lana who was the Queen of MGM, Laraine a second-stringer.

Day eventually gained a distinct new fame of her own when, in 1947, she married Leo Durocher, the manager of the New York Giants baseball team.

After working with her, Lana later wrote: "Many people found her a cold and rigid woman."

Reviews for Lana were good, *Variety* claiming that she was "a fine type as the gal who nearly leads Dr. Kildare astray."

Eventually, in reference to *Calling Dr. Kildare*, Billy Wilkerson of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "Lana Turner was a bit uncertain in early scenes, but she warms to her work and registers with excellent effect in later chapters." Even *Family Circle* wrote, "Lana goes glamorous on us, and she needn't take a back seat to any of the other glamor girls."

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At long last stardom—or at least a minor version of it—came for Lana as a result of her casting as the female lead in *These Glamour Girls* (1939) by its director, S. Sylvan Simon and its producer Sam Zimbalist. She would appear in it with her sometimes lover, Lew Ayres.

Simon had wanted to work with her before, and now was his chance to direct her. During the second week of the shoot, he told the press, "I venture to predict that in another year, Lana Turner will be one of the biggest stars on the screen."

And how right he was.

Once again, she was teamed with Ann Rutherford, with whom she continued to confide details of her romances. After surveying the attractive men in the cast, Lana told Rutherford, who that year was appearing as Scarlett O'Hara's sister, "I could go for Tom Brown, Richard Carlson, or Peter Lind Hayes, at least when Lew isn't around. As for Don Castle, I've already made two films with him—and know him quite well, if you get my drift." She was referring to her involvements the year before in *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (1938) and *Rich Man, Poor Girl* (also 1938).

When Lana showed up for work, she found that even though she'd been designated as the film's female lead, she had nonetheless been assigned to a communal dressing room. She quickly surmised that in marked contrast, the film's other (male) stars had each been assigned private dressing rooms.

The next morning, as part of a campaign to change all that, she showed up with a maid and a small dog on a leash, announcing "I am a star!"

Word quickly spread around the studio. That afternoon, she called Louis B. Mayer, demanding her own dressing room. He did not protest. When she arrived the next morning, she was, indeed, shown to a room that had been hastily designated as hers, the first of many others to come.

It was not as luxurious as she'd wanted, but at least she'd have some degree of privacy and a spot to "audition" in quarters that she controlled.

"The dressing room was one thing," she claimed. "But I didn't know I was a real star until the commissary named a salad after me. It was the 'Lanallure' Salad, and I ordered it every day for lunch."

The writer, Anita Loos *[not to be confused with Anita Louise, an actress who also appeared in These Glamour Girls]*, compared Lana's role of the dime-a-dance girl, Jane Thomas, to that of a young Clara Bow, the silent screen vamp. The writer found that Lana had some of the quintessential flapper quality of Bow, who was known for her cupid bow lips, her bobbed hair, and devil-may-care *joie de vivre*.

About a decade before, Bow had been publicized as "The It Girl," and MGM heralded Lana for bringing "It" back to the screen.

Originally, it had been Jane Hall who devised the plot, formatted as a story for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, of social snobbishness at an East Coast college.

One drunken evening, a rich college boy, Philip S. Griswold (as played by Lew Ayres), meets a taxi dancer

(Lana) and invites her as his weekend date for a heavily scheduled round of loosely chaperoned fraternity parties.

[Taxi Dancing was a social phenomenon that reached its peak during the 1930s. Taxi dancers were (in theory at least) young women who were paid to dance with male patrons, who would typically buy dance tickets for ten cents each, and then maneuver their partners of the moment around the floor with varying degrees of lechery, sometimes as a prelude to prostitution.]

The character played by Lana accepts his invitation, even though when she arrives on campus, he's forgotten all about her.

Ayres was obviously too old to play a college boy, and although Lana—who was still a redhead at the time—was the right age to be a college girl, she was too young to have been realistically cast as a taxi dancer in a seedy dive. Makeup made her appear older than her years.

In the film, when Ayres wants to get rid of her, knowing she would not fit in and realizing that the other upper-class girls would probably snub her, she refuses to leave the campus. And predictably, when the young women learn that her profession was that of a low-end taxi dancer, they alternately mock and snub her.

Nonetheless, her character remains steadfast at the Kingsford Prep School (where the unwritten norm is "champagne for breakfast, two-timing for lunch) for the duration of the weekend. Amid these steamy inequities, love affairs go awry, but somehow, Lana's ill-conceived coupling gets rectified before the end of the final reel.

Lana's character eventually gets some pithy advice from her taxi driver, who tells her, "There's only one way to get a college boy to look up to you—climb a ladder."

On the dance floor, Lana looks stunning in a black satin gown as she pretends to emulate the dance skills of Ginger Rogers. Within minutes, young college men flock around her, adoringly, as snobby, brittle debs look on with jealousy and dismay.

One of the most dramatic visual episodes in the film occurs in a funhouse with distorted mirror images. Did Orson Welles steal that idea for his film, *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948), starring Rita Hayworth?

In the end, Lana, as the vindicated taxi dancer, triumphs over the other less attractive debs and walks off into the sunset with Ayres, the most sought-after young man on campus.

Off screen, he and Lana argued when he told her that as a pacifist, he would not participate in military service.

She objected, saying that if American men or women didn't fight if attacked, "the Japs and Nazis might invade the United States, capture us, and turn us into slaves. We'd no longer be free."

"You're just a teenager," he said, dismissing her concerns. "There are larger issues."

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MGM had been billing itself as "having more stars than there are in heaven," and many of its budding starlets and starlettes, both male and female, were showcased in *These Glamour Girls*.

Lana met an aspiring young actor, Robert Walker, and she dated him, but only briefly. He would appear with her in her next film, *Dancing Co-Ed*, during the filming of which they became better acquainted. Their friendship, which sometimes involved sex, stretched over many years, even during his subsequent affairs with her future best friend, Ava Gardner, and the MGM starlet Nancy Davis (who later changed her name to Nancy Reagan).

When he first met Lana, Walker wasn't looking for love outside the marriage bed. He had recently married another aspiring actress, Phylis Isley, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on January 2, 1939.

[In a few years, Phylis would become world famous as the actress Jennifer Jones.]

The other desirable male in the cast included Richard Carlson. The son of a lawyer, this former school teacher had just moved to California and had been cast in a secondary role in the David O. Selznick comedy, *The Young in Heart* (1938). "He was handsome enough, and quite charming, but he'd married Mona Carlson that year and she had him pretty much bound and gagged." Lana said.

In one sequence of *These Glamour Girls*, Lana, the out-of-place taxi dancer, twirls around the floor with Peter Lind Hayes in a "clear-the-floor" sequence.

A bevy of beautiful young women was cast in the film as the snobby debs. They included Lana's friend, Ann Rutherford, playing the bubble-brained Mary Rose Wilston.

Mary Beth Hughes was cast as the dizzy blueblood, Ann Van Richton. The Illinois beauty was significant in Lana's life in that one afternoon, she introduced her to her agent, Johnny Hyde. He would soon become Lana's agent, too. Hyde, of course, later became famous for the pivotal role he played in the career and tragic life of Marilyn Monroe.

The Hollywood-born actress, Jane Bryan, was cast as a poor socialite whose family had lost its money. She was hoping to marry a rich man.

While filming *These Glamour Girls*, Lana posed for a publicity picture, part of MGM's campaign to segué its *ingenue* into a full fledged vamp.

Boxoffice wrote "Young blades especially may be expected to do nipups over a ball of fire named Lana Turner."

One day, Ronald Reagan, with whom Lana had "flamed briefly," appeared on the set. At first, Lana thought that he had come to see her, but instead, he smiled and shook her hand before inviting Bryan for lunch in the commissary.

The New York Times wrote, "We like everything about *These Glamorous Girls*, and we like Lana Turner. The film is the best social commentary of the year."

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In her coffee table book, *Lana Turner: The Memories, the Myths, the Movies*, Lana's daughter, Cheryl Crane, accurately stated that Peter Lawford and Robert Stack were her mother's "dancing partners who might be called fill-ins between more serious relationships."

An exceedingly handsome man, Stack had been born into a rich family in Los Angeles two years before Lana. He would meet her when she was seventeen. He joined her crowd, whose other members loosely included Linda Darnell, Bonita Granville, Ann Rutherford, Jackie Cooper, and "that adorable nut," Mickey Rooney. Frequently, Stack functioned as Lana's date whenever her crowd went on a fun trip, perhaps to a beach picnic at Malibu.

Stack had grown up in Europe and been reared by his mother, Mary Elizabeth, who had long been a member of the Hollywood elite. *[She had attended Rudolph Valentino's wedding party.]* Stack's father, James Langford Stack, was a wealthy advertising executive who created the slogan, "The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous."

His parents separated when their son was a year old.

When Lana first met Stack, he was an athlete, a polo player and "the world's best skeet shooter," winning two global records.

Back in Hollywood after his long adolescent sojourn in Europe, he decided to give acting a try. Through a connection, he was cast as the co-star of Deanna Durbin, that teenaged box office sensation who became the favorite singer of, among many others, both Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin. In *First Love* (1939)—a cinematic reprise of the Cinderella myth—Stack gave Durbin her first (and widely ballyhooed) onscreen kiss.

At the time, Jack Warner said, in reference to Stack, "I could make this kid a star, but he doesn't need me—he's not hungry enough."

Briefly, at least, Lana thought she might be falling in love with Stack, but she soon realized how hopeless that would be. He was enjoying his "swinging bachelor" days, which would last until 1956, when he married Rosemarie Bowe and settled down.

Lana was known for retaining friendships with former dates and colleagues. Here, in 1944, years after their inaugural contacts, Robert Stack, to some degree as part of their morale-building efforts during wartime, teaches Lana how to salute.

He admitted to Lana that he'd lost his virginity when he was sixteen to "a petite redhead with big smiles and boobs to match."

While dating Lana on and off, he managed to have affairs with such leading ladies as Diana Barrymore, Yvonne De Carlo, Judy Garland, Betty Grable, and even, in time, a too-young Elizabeth Taylor.

In 1940, his roommate was none other than a young John F. Kennedy, the son of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, during one of JFK's visits to Hollywood. When he was introduced to Stack, libidinous JFK and Stack moved together into a cramped apartment, where they enjoyed a steady stream of starlets and even on occasion big name actresses.

Stack said, "Most of the great male stars in Hollywood passed through my life, including Clark Gable. Gable was a man's man, but liked a lot of different women on the side. But he was nothing compared to Jack."

"Jack was the only man in Tinseltown better looking than me, and all the hot *tamales* on the West Coast took notice. He really needed a date book. I've known him to have sex in the afternoon, sex at cocktail time, sex after dinner, and even a sleepover after midnight—each with a different woman."

Lana wanted to meet him, but, although he kept promising an introduction, that didn't happen until JFK returned from the battlefields of World War II in 1946.

Years later, Stack recalled one of his outings with Lana. In this case, it involved their joint involvement at the Ernest Belcher School of Dance in Los Angeles, where they were each pursuing a course in tap dancing, as mandated by the studio.

Stack's original memoirs, entitled *Straight Shooting* and issued in 1980, included extensive sections on his interchanges with Lana. In advance of its publication, he gave her the privilege of reading it before publication. She phoned and politely requested that he remove the pages that addressed their long-ago romantic involvement. After her edits, he was left with only a paragraph or so, in which was revealed that during the heat of their early affair, he gave her his first skeet trophy as a "love bauble."

Privately, however, Stack admitted that he never fell in love with Lana, although he did, for a while, idolize both Betty Grable and Carole Lombard, Gable's wife at the time. "Betty made sex look like an American hobby everybody should enjoy, and about as illicit as apple pie."

On dates with Stack, or at parties at his home, Lana met the cream of Hollywood royalty, some of whom she would know intimately, including Howard Hughes, Errol Flynn, and Robert Taylor. In passing, she was also introduced to Edward G. Robinson, Nelson Eddy, Will Rogers, Ernst Lubitsch, and Joe Pasternak.

After knowing Stack for several months, he invited her to a screening of his latest movie, *The Mortal Storm* (1940), co-starring Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart. In it, he played a young man who joins the Nazi Party. After the screening, she praised his performance, although admitting, "You are such an All-American boy. You'd be

the last man I'd ever cast as a Nazi."

She later recalled, "Robert never used rose-colored glasses when he looked at Hollywood."

He told her, "Seldom does Hollywood shake off its self-satisfied superiority and remember its beginnings as a nondescript village of Nickelodeon salesmen. The surest road to distaste in Tinseltown is to know, or to be brash enough to remember, the humblest origins of our great leaders."

Stack provided more insight about Lana to friends (Gable, Judy Garland, and others) than he revealed in his memoirs.

"There are two Lana Turners," Stack said. "One Is a sex kitten with a pouty mouth, a kind of Baby Doll to cuddle. Another is a panther-like woman with an appetite that is almost insatiable. I'll fuck her but I'll never marry her. In fact, I don't plan to marry for a long, long time. Right now, my phone rings off the wall. Even June Allyson called one night. No sooner had I come back to Hollywood than Joan Crawford was on the phone. She always wants to be the first to seduce the newest stud in town."

Ann Rutherford was one of Lana's most enduring friends and confidantes. Here she is, as she appeared as Scarlett O'Hara's sister in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

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Lana had been in films for just two years when her favorite director (at the time), S. Sylvan Simon, phoned her. He'd received Louis B. Mayer's permission to give her top billing for her next picture, *Dancing Co-Ed*.

She was pleased that she'd be working with her close friend, Ann Rutherford, again. And indeed, it was Rutherford ("Scarlett O'Hara's sister") who evolved into the best source for what really happened during the shooting of *Dancing Co-Ed*.

The film was conceived as part of a series of college-themed "programmers" in vogue at the time. Sometimes, at a different studio, a variation of this theme would focus on Betty Grable as the featured coed. Ironically, neither Grable nor Lana had ever been enrolled in any college or university.

Lana was informed that her leading man and love interest would be Richard Carlson, with whom she'd just finished her last movie, *These Glamour Girls. Dancing Co-Ed's* third lead, she was told, would be the bandleader, Artie Shaw, who had sustained a smash hit with "Begin the Beguine," earning him the title of the "King of Swing," toppling Benny Goodman from his throne. On the fourth day of the shoot, Lana met the bandleader himself.

Richard Lamparski, in his memoir, *Hollywood Diary*, recorded how that footnote in Hollywood history transpired:

"*Lana Turner entered and walked toward the bandstand. Shaw was facing his music makers and couldn't see her, but within seconds, he was aware that someone of great interest was approaching behind him from the eyes of the musicians he was leading 'The Sweater Girl' on this day was wearing tight white shorts and two*

bandanas tied into a halter.

"The leader came down from the podium, and there was a brief exchange that concluded when Lana stood on her tip toes, tilted her head upward, and closed her eyes. Shaw bent down slightly and kissed her. As he did so, he ran his left hand appreciatively, slowly, over her ass. Then she turned and walked away and sashayed across the vast floor and out. The only sounds were of her sandals flapping. With the thump of the quilted door, Lana Turner and her ass were gone."

After her exit, the boys in the band responded with a series of hoots, hollers, and wolf whistles.

Conditions changed by the third day on the set. Rutherford and Lana skipped lunch in the commissary and had sandwiches and cokes delivered to them on the set. They were sitting on a bench in back of the bandstand, where they could hear Shaw gossiping with Simon and two members of his band.

The talk was about "hot chicks."

"Even though I detest Hollywood, I feel like a sultan in his harem here," Shaw said. "The pussies out here come at you like gangbusters. To use another image, I feel like a kid who's been given free run of a candy store."

"So far, the most beautiful girl I've found is Betty Grable," Shaw claimed. "She's got the most incredible body, especially those legs of hers. She wraps them around a man and doesn't let him go until he's satisfied her. There's not much going on upstairs. She's a total Hollywood creation. If movies did not exist, she'd be a waitress in some hamburger joint working for dime tips and getting offered five dollars for a quickie later that night."

The arrogance of youth and beauty:

Then-*ingenue* Lana Turner, from the late 1930s, on the verge of becoming a major-league *femme fatale*, seductress, and vamp.

"She told me she soured on Jackie Coogan and got tired of him coming in at three in the morning and pissing in her bed," Shaw said. "She also sold all their wedding gifts for ready cash."

"What about Lana Turner?" Simon asked.

"From what little I've seen in talking to her, she's more empty-headed than Betty," Shaw said. "A bubblehead, but good for a quick fuck—nothing else. Nice ass, though. I think the first time I plow her, it'll be through the back door."

Enraged, Lana dropped her sandwich and stood up, taking Rutherford's hand. "Let's get the hell out of here," she whispered. "What an arrogant prick that Shaw is! I'd never let that conceited bastard touch me if he were the last man on earth."

Chapter Five

Lana's Marriage to a Clarinet Player Warbles Off Key

America's "Blonde Spitfire" Proves Too Hot to Handle

Call it "Scenes from a Marriage": The four-month marital union of Artie Shaw with Lana Turner was not a match made in heaven. Instead, it's best described as a union crafted somewhere in the darker regions of hell. From the beginning, she realized she'd made a horrible mistake in marrying him, but for a while, she was determined to stick it out.

A great deal of their conflict arose from his frequent charge that she was uneducated. He assumed the role of Pygmalion to her Galatea, loading her down with books to improve her mind. She never read any of them.

"We began a sort of love-hate relationship," she said to listeners who included both her mother Mildred and Johnny Hyde.

A Metro-Goldwyn release, *Dancing Co-Ed*, Lana's first starring film, was shot during the hot summer of 1939 as the world was about to go to war. It was a historic year in Hollywood, when studios were turning out some of their greatest and most enduring films. Contenders that year included not just *Gone With the Wind*, but Judy Garland's *The Wizard of Oz*, Laurence Olivier's *Wuthering Heights*, John Wayne's *Stagecoach*, Greta Garbo's *Ninotschka*, James Stewart's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Bette Davis' *Dark Victory*, and Robert Donat's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*.

At the time she joined the cast of *Dancing Co-Eds*, Lana was in the "white heat' weeks of her torrid affair with attorney Greg Bautzer. She had forgiven him for having dumped her for Simone Simon, whom he defined as "my brief fling with a French Fifi."

The film's director, S. Sylvan Simon, had assembled a cast of longtime pros in the business, along with a series of rising stars. Richard Carlson had the romantic lead, with bandleader Artie Shaw billed in third position. Two of the film's uncredited players, Veronica Lake and Robert Walker, were each on the verge of stardom, and Lee Bowman, a credited player with a small part, would shoot to stardom during the war years.

It was only after shooting began that Lana learned she had been the second choice for the role of Patty Marlow. Her role in the *Dancing Co-Ed* had originally been offered to Eleanor Powell, who was not available.

Lana was aware that she'd have to rehearse and rehearse to succeed at the intricate dance steps demanded by the choreographer. It became immediately obvious, however, that she'd never be able to replicate the exhausting spins and rapid-fire clicking of heels that Powell had adopted as her trademark.

In the movie, Lana plays a professional dancer who enrolls in a Midwestern college as a pretense for garnering publicity for her involvement in a (rigged) college dance contest, part of a stunt dreamed up by a press agent, as portrayed by Roscoe Karns. Viewers were apprised that the movie's dance contest wasn't a fair fight. It had been determined in advance that the character portrayed by Lana would walk off with the venue's first prize, and, consequently, get billed as the award-winning dance partner of Freddy Toman (as portrayed by Bowman).

The then A-list actor, Richard Carlson, was cast as the college's newspaper editor, "Pug" Braddock, who uncovers the scam. Things get complicated for him after he falls in love with the character played by Lana.

Motivated by their embarrassing introduction, Lana tried to avoid Artie Shaw throughout the remainder of the shoot. She'd overheard the vulgar remarks that the bandleader had made about her.

"I remember that she sat at the opposite end of the sound stage from me," Shaw recalled. "At our first meeting, I'd been able to kiss her. No more. She looked gorgeous, but she didn't talk very much. I tried to break through to her by telling her that I was going to fuck up her music. I just was kidding, but she looked horrified, since this was her first chance in the number one spot in billing."

She poured out her distaste for Shaw to Simon. "I heard he calls me the blonde savage, even though I'm a redhead. He thinks he's so smart, and he says I'm untutored. God, I hate that son of a bitch. He's all ego. I noticed he hogs the camera, and I hear he spends more time with his hairdresser and makeup man than Marlene Dietrich does. Frankly I don't think he's at all good looking. Hollywood is full of much handsomer guys."

Before the end of filming, Shaw emerged as thoroughly disliked not just by Lana, but by most of the rest of the cast and crew, too. She agreed with her co-workers that the bandleader was "an intellectual snob."

Shaw clearly demonstrated that appearing in a silly college drama was beneath him. He complained all the time

and had arguments with Simon and his fellow performers. The crew came to detest him to the degree that they plotted to drop an arc light on his head. “He could have been killed,” Simon said. “Thank God it was just a threat.”

Artie Shaw with Lana Turner: “Call it ‘Young Man with a Horn,’” he said. “She got my horn...time and time again. Once I’d broken her in, she couldn’t get it enough.”

Shaw later told *The Hollywood Reporter*, *“Dancing Co-Ed* reeks of pig heaven. Everybody was against me, including its so-called star, Lana Turner. I don’t care. I was supposed to play myself. Simon had promised me he’d let me write my own lines. But he double-crossed me and went back on his word. The screenwriter, Albert Mannheimer, gave me stupid lines like ‘Hi-ho, lads and lassies!’ That was pure Rudy Vallee crap.”

During Lana’s second meeting with Robert Walker, who had been assigned an un-credited role as a student in *Dancing Co-Ed*, she interpreted him as a sensitive, troubled man. Dysfunctionally married at the time to the actress who would later change her name to Jennifer Jones, he seemed severely tormented. During one of their rare encounters, Lana noticed that he was drinking from a flask, later realizing that at the time he was beginning his long descent into acute alcoholism.

Lana became acutely aware of Veronica Lake during World War II, when Lake developed an enthusiastic fan base of her own, and competed with Lana and Betty Grable as the most-desired "Pinup Girl of World War II."

One reason Lana might not have remembered Lake was that she was being billed at the time as Constance Keane.

Years later, when Lana was asked "Whatever Became of Veronica Lake," she answered, "I heard she was working as a barmaid in a Manhattan cocktail lounge."

"I got married thinking that it would fulfill this desperate need I have to be loved," Walker had told her, "but that hasn't happened. I don't feel fulfilled. As a child, I wanted to escape from life, finding it too painful. I love my wife, maybe too much, but I find her self-enchanted."

The petite actress with the "peek-a-boo" hair style, Veronica Lake, also made a (very brief) appearance in *Dancing Co-Ed*. Years later, in Miami, she told this book's author, Darwin Porter, "I was introduced to Lana Turner, but I don't think the stuck-up bitch even remembered meeting me. When I met her, she didn't even pay attention, and snubbed me. But I've always been an intuitive person, and I knew that she represented tomorrow's competition."

Reviews of *Dancing Co-Ed* were generally favorable, *The New York Times* declaring, "Miss Turner wears abbreviated dancing togs with what seems almost like originality."

Billy Wilkerson, in *The Hollywood Reporter*, called her, "A new MGM star, one destined to reach as far in selling tickets as any this great company has ever produced. *Dancing Co-Ed* definitely *makes* Lana Turner. This little lady has been launched."

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Director S. Sylvan Simon must have contracted a case of Lana Turner fever. He cast the budding star as the lead of his third picture, *Two Girls on Broadway* (1940), billing her ahead of two more experienced show business veterans, Joan Blondell and George Murphy.

Although she was delighted with her billing, she had hoped for fresh and original material. To her chagrin, she learned that the script, based on an original story by Edmund Goulding, had been recycled. MGM had released its first talkie, *Broadway Melody of 1929*, starring Bessie Love. In spite of its flaws, it had won an Oscar as Best Picture of the Year.

In the film, Blondell and Lana played two stage-struck sisters, Molly and Pat Mahoney, newly arrived on Broadway from the hinterlands Both of them fall in love with a song-and-dance man, Eddie Kerns (Murphy).

When two sisters, Lana Turner (left) and Joan Blondell, each fall in love with the same man, hoofer George Murphy, something's got to give.

With two blondes and only one man, something's got to give. Sacrificing her personal dreams in favor of those of her sister, Lana decides to accept a marriage proposal from a dissipated playboy, as portrayed by Kent Taylor, despite the fact that he's been married four times previously, and even though she doesn't love him.

In *Two Girls on Broadway*, Lana's true love, Eddie, as played by Murphy, rushes frantically to City Hall, objecting loudly to her marriage ceremony to the dissipated playboy she doesn't love, as portrayed by Kent Taylor.

At the conclusion of the film, the character played by Blondell ends up as the sacrificing sister. She relinquishes Murphy to Lana after they emerge on Broadway as a successful dance team. Blondell, known as the wisecracking but vulnerable blonde with the heart of gold, is subsequently degraded to status as a cigarette girl in the nightclub where her sister (Lana) reigns as a dance star and a woman in love.

Lana had seen several of Blondell's films, especially *The Public Enemy* (1931), a movie she'd made at Warner Brothers long before she ever met Lana.

Hailing from New York, Blondell usually played brassy, sassy, wisecracking blondes. In 1927, she'd made her Broadway debut in *The Trial of Mary Dugan*.

She and Lana became quite close during the filming, and Lana turned to her like an older sister. Blondell was too generous of heart to be jealous of Lana. During their filming of *Two Girls on Broadway*, Blondell was married to crooner Dick Powell.

MGM's publicity department hyped *Two Girls on Broadway* as "The Girl They're All Talking About…Lovely Lana Turner, America's Blonde Spitfire, in Her Hottest, Most Daring Film."

Despite whatever other distractions emerged from her private life, on set of*Two Girls on Broadway*, at least, Lana was a genuine professional, devoting tireless hours to her dance routines. At first, she'd been intimidated for having been teamed with such a seasoned hoofer like Murphy, but when the cameras were rolling, at least, they danced together in harmony.

In his memoirs, *Say…Didn't You Use to Be George Murphy?*, the star wrote, "Everyone at Metro was talking about this fascinating new blonde who danced so beautifully with me. You could hardly get on the set, so many

people had come to see the lovely newcomer in the flesh. And that's how Lana Turner got her big boost to stardom."

During its filming, Lana became popular with both cast and crew. They threw a party for her to celebrate her nineteenth birthday. A dedication read, "To the Sweater Girl from the gang who made the yarn."

Once again, the ever-faithful *Hollywood Reporter* came through for her, writing that "Lana Turner's latest film seems to be a fairly entertaining bit of fluff. It proves that she is the gal Fred Astaire should be dancing with if MGM wants to duplicate the Astaire-Rogers sizzle."

George Murphy's dance routine with Luscious Lana in *Two Girls on Broadway*: "George Murphy may not have been dynamite as an actor, but that guy could sure dance," Lana said.

One critic wrote, "George Murphy had his dedication and inoffensiveness to pull him through, not being any great threat to those more talented in the dramatic, comedic, and dancing departments."

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Although Lana's relationship with Artie Shaw had started with a kiss on the set of *Dancing Co-Ed*, it soon degenerated into a wall of hostility because, as he admitted himself, "I'm a difficult man to work with."

But on Monday, February 12, 1939, the pair took a detour that surprised Hollywood and, on Shaw's part, broke the hearts of an impressionable Judy Garland and a more hardened Betty Grable.

Comedian Phil Silvers had signed a contract with MGM, a studio that liked his frantic, jabbering *schtick*, thinking his idiotic behavior might work if he played the role of best pal to a leading man in certain lightweight films.

Silvers phoned one of "my best pals" (Shaw himself), and invited him to MGM one afternoon. Silvers remembered that Shaw, based on their first meeting on the set of *Dancing Co-Ed*, had loudly and repeatedly referred to Lana as being "hot as a firecracker," so he decided to bring them together again. He later explained, "Artie was in a black funk, and needed cheering up. I thought Miss Turner might turn the trick."

Silvers and Shaw arrived at the same time on the set of *Two Girls on Broadway*, the picture Lana had been shooting at the time with George Murphy and Joan Blondell. They watched as she performed a dance routine with Murphy.

Surprisingly, when Lana spotted Shaw on the set, she went over to him and welcomed him, seemingly having

forgotten—or else forgiven—him for the previous vulgar comments he had made about her. As Silvers later asserted, “Lana took to Artie like a bee to honey.”

“I’m sure Lana never looked lovelier—or sexier—than she did that afternoon,” Silvers said. “She was a real knockout in a green satin gown that looked like it had been sewn onto her curvy body. It outlined everything, even her nipples. What a sight! Even I felt a stirring down below.”

As Shaw remembered the historic moment: “Lana had been hostile to me ever since she heard me putting her down to some of the boys. But when I saw her again, she was open and friendly, a sweet, charming, sexy baby doll. I invited her to dinner and she told me, ‘Give me a raincheck.’”

During their conversation, which ended when the director called Lana back to the set, she seductively told Shaw, “I’m not free tonight. But who knows? Give me a call some long, lonely night. We’ll see.” Then she kissed him lightly on the cheek and departed.

A notorious womanizer, Shaw managed to get Lana’s phone number before he left. As they were leaving MGM, he told Silvers, “I’m determined to fuck that little hottie.”

The following week, he called on two more occasions, and each time, Lana turned him down. She didn’t tell him, but for each of the venues proposed by Shaw, she’d already arranged a date with Bautzer. She was, in fact, wearing an engagement ring he’d given her, although all of her friends had warned her, “Greg is not the marrying kind.”

Bautzer was invited to all the most prestigious parties in Hollywood. On one of their dates, he introduced Lana to Noël Coward, who at the time was visiting from London. “Lana, my dear, you’re ‘The Sweater Girl,’ right? I see that Greg has already discovered you. You’re lucky. I would have snared him for myself, but the dear chap simply has too many teeth.”

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Lana arrived early at her home one afternoon to dress up and make herself look particularly glamorous for her date with Bautzer.

Since her birthday and Mildred’s were four days apart, he had invited both of them for a celebratory dinner. However, he called at 6:30PM, claiming he had a stomach ache. “I had some bad oysters at lunch.”

Horribly disappointed, she decided to stay in for the evening, despite Mildred’s urging to go out to dinner with her as a mother-daughter twosome. Lana, however, prevailed, based to some degree on her status as the family’s breadwinner, Ultimately, despite her mother’s objections, she stayed home.

[Months later, Lana learned that on the night that Bautzer had broken their date, he was actually entertaining the English actress, Wendy Barrie, with whom he enjoyed a romantic evening at his home.

Bautzer was treading on dangerous ground, since Barrie was the girlfriend of the gangster and mobster, Bugsy Siegel.

After Lana learned about Greg’s affair with Barrie, she hooked up with the gangster and, perhaps as payback, inaugurated a brief affair with him herself.

“I always believe in the revenge fuck,” she told several of her girlfriends, including Ann Rutherford and Rita Johnson.]

Shaw had planned an evening with band singer Helen Forrest, with whom he’d been having an on-again, off-again affair. But Helen had gotten a last-minute singing gig and had to cancel. Scrambling to recoup what was left of his evening, Shaw remembered Lana’s allure on the set of *Two Girls on Broadway*.

Spontaneously, at 7PM, he telephoned Lana. Thinking it was Bautzer phoning to apologize, she answered the ring herself. Impulsively, perhaps with the intention of stabbing back at Bautzer, she accepted Shaw’s last-minute dinner invitation.

Later that evening, after retrieving her at her home, Shaw drove her to Victor Hugo’s, a chic restaurant in Beverly Hills, where she was surprised to learn that Phil Silvers would be joining them at table. She later said, “I didn’t know why Artie had invited that comic. Didn’t Phil know that three’s a crowd?”

As Silvers wandered off, she danced with Shaw. He pressed his hard body close to hers as they moved in rhythm to the music of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians.

As Silvers was “chasing after some dame” across the room, Lana and Shaw ditched him and went for a ride along Mulholland Drive.

At a secluded spot, they sat and talked. “No fast moves,” she recalled. “No feeling me up.”

In her memoirs, Lana does not mention Silvers having dined with them that night. She asserted, instead, that she and Shaw drove along Sunset Boulevard, heading toward the ocean.

Years later, Shaw’s account differed from Lana’s. He recalled driving up into the Hollywood Hills, where they

found a secluded spot that looked out over the lights of Los Angeles.

He discussed his dreams for the future. They included his hope that his jazz would be taken more seriously, and his plans to compose music and write books. He even quoted from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, two philosophers whose work at the time was unknown to her. Shaw also revealed that there was much he disliked about being a celebrity, especially all those jitterbugging girls who pestered him for autographs and tried to rip off his clothing as souvenirs.

Both of them, or so they claimed, shared the same dream: to live in a rose-covered cottage surrounded by picket fences. He said that he wanted a faithful wife who would bear and nurture his children.

"That's what I want, too," she said. "I want to be married and to have babies. I just love children. I don't like acting. It means getting up at some horrendous hour every morning and driving to the studio to sit through long makeup sessions. Then it's on to the set to be directed by some ego or perhaps called into Mayer's office for a lecture on who I can love…or not. I'd give up my career to become a wife and mother."

Even though she claimed not to have been physically attracted to Shaw, and certainly not in love with him in the way she was with Bautzer, she seemed to have been colluding with him in some shared romantic dream. Later, she'd be dismissive of the events of that night, asserting that her intentions involved "just a desire to get even with Greg."

After their intimate conversation in the parked car on Mulholland Drive, Shaw tossed out a dare: "Let me charter a plane tonight and fly us to Vegas to get married. Will you go with me and become my bride?"

She didn't hesitate before impulsively answering, "I'm your girl. Consider me airborne from this moment on."

It was a spur-of-the-moment decision she'd later regret.

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Although in any stereotypical Lana Turner movie, this would be the point at which the protagonists would kiss, Lana claimed that there, on Mulholland Drive, that didn't happen. Instead, Shaw took her hand and held it for a while before starting the motor and driving her to his nearby home.

At his house, Shaw made a late night call to Paul Mantz, Hollywood's most famous pilot after aviator Howard Hughes. Mantz was known as "the Honeymoon Pilot," since he often flew couples to Las Vegas, many of whom, like Lana and Shaw, were in the emotional throes of impulsive wedding ceremonies.

Mantz was very discreet, having been involved, as he had been multiple times, in the transportation of lovers to secluded rendezvous and off-the-record trysts.

Airborne and looking down over the flickering lights of Los Angeles from a high-altitude perspective, Shaw was said to have kissed Lana shyly, evoking the gentle kiss he'd delivered on the day they first met on the set of *Dancing Co-Ed*.

In Vegas at 4AM, Shaw persuaded Justice of the Peace, George E. Marshall, to hustle himself out of bed to perform the ceremony. He wore red-and-white polka dot pajamas and a tattered robe, and his wife, Bertha, still in pin curlers, was a witness.

Lana later wrote, "The first time I ever kissed Artie was when we were pronounced man and wife." *[Actually, she'd kissed him the first day she'd met him, and again (several times) during the plane ride to Vegas from Los Angeles.]*

When asked by the Justice of the Peace for a wedding ring, Shaw removed a blue star sapphire set in platinum from his own finger. Of course, it didn't fit. He'd later buy her a gold wedding band to replace it.

Before Mantz transported the newlyweds back to Burbank, they celebrated their honeymoon dinner at an all-night hamburger shack—"no onions, please."

Just before they boarded the plane, Lana sent a cryptic telegram to Mildred. "GOT MARRIED IN LAS VEGAS. CALL YOU LATER. LOVE, LANA."

When it arrived, Mildred assumed that Lana had finally married Bautzer. She was at first delighted with the idea of this up-and-coming lawyer as a son-in-law. Then, uncertain and searching for details, she phoned Bautzer and was shocked to find him at home. Actually, as it turned out, he was in bed at the time with Wendy Barrie.

When he learned about Lana's marriage, he told Mildred, "I think I know who the lucky guy is. I'll get back to you."

Within the hour, he phoned a nervous and impatient Mildred. "She married Artie Shaw."

"I don't believe it," she answered. "She hates that son-of-a-bitch. She told me so herself." Then, with a shaky voice, she said, "I've lost her."

"So have I," he said.

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When Mr. and Mrs. Artie Shaw flew back to Los Angeles, he drove her to his home on Summit Ridge. Instantly, he flew into a rage after seeing that his house was surrounded by photographers, reporters, fans, and the idle curious. Somehow, probably through Bautzer, word of his *blitzkrieg* marriage to Lana had reached the press, and his house was under siege.

He cursed the reporters, surprising Lana with his venom. She'd never seen such temper in him before. He used vulgar, foul language, even threatening to kill a photographer. Enraged, he grabbed her arm and shoved her inside the house.

Then he slammed around the house, locking all the windows and bolting the doors. Fifteen minutes later, she heard the sound of breaking glass coming from the back door. After that, genuinely frightened, she phoned the Head of Publicity at MGM, Howard Strickling, who promised to send three of his staff members to deal with the swarm of reporters and photographers.

Eventually, although most of the crowd dispersed, others vowed to remain on-site till dawn. Shaw phoned his friend, Edgar Selwyn, the producer of *Dancing Co-Ed*, who offered them his guest bedroom for the night. Escaping hastily through the crowd assembled in front of his house, Shaw hustled Lana into his car and fled. By now, Lana wanted a bath and a change of clothing, since she'd been wearing the same navy blue dress for twenty-four hours.

When they reached their destination, Selwyn kissed her good night and then departed, and Shaw ushered her into the bedroom.

That night, in bed with him for the first time, she realized "I've married a stranger. I really didn't know this man at all." She suggested to him that since both of them were totally exhausted and needed sleep, any possible love-making could be postponed.

Defiantly, however, he pulled off his clothes and for the first time, his erection was exposed to her. He wanted her and was determined to have her.

She later wrote about the seduction, calling him "clumsy and fumbling. It was horrible, meaningless. When we finally got into position…well, it was just horrible, over in a minute. He just went limp. As for me, I experienced nothing but a question—what am I doing under this man? There had been no kissing and no cuddling, either before or afterward. He turned over and fell immediately asleep."

The morning after her so-called "honeymoon night," when she heard her new husband in the shower, she put through a call to her mother, Mildred, telling her, "I showed Greg Bautzer that he can't break a date with me."

About an hour later, after Shaw left the house, she drove over to see Mildred. Mother and daughter had moved into a large, Spanish-style home on Beverly Glen Boulevard. Mildred's first words to her were, "Why did you do it?"

"I'm very happy, mother," she answered, which was not true.

That day, she packed only a small percentage of her wardrobe and returned for a rendezvous with her new husband, dressing provocatively to greet him when he returned home.

"You look camera ready, too much makeup, and you're overdressed," he told her. Then he ordered her to change into a skirt and a blouse and shoes with flat heels. "And for god's sake, remove that god damn lipstick."

She would later ask her new agent, Johnny Hyde, "Why did he marry one of the most glamorous women in the world if he wanted a drab, dreary, and dowdy housewife?"

She didn't even know how old Shaw was until the next day when she read it in the newspapers. She figured he was somewhere between twenty-five and thirty-five. It turned out that he was twenty-eight.

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Her quickie marriage made frontpage news around the country. Gossips surmised, "There's a baby in the oven."

Bautzer pretended to be heartbroken when he spoke to the press. "My God, I'm shocked. She was wearing my engagement ring. I can't put into words how much I care for my baby."

George Murphy described what happened when he reported to work that day to dance with Lana on the set of *Two Girls on Broadway*. "All hell had broken loose," he said. "No one knew where Lana was. She just didn't show up for work. All of us were really surprised when we heard she'd eloped. Things happened quickly in Hollywood in those days."

In her column, Louella Parsons wrote, "Both Artie Shaw and Lana Turner are trusting and lovable, and they use their hearts instead of their heads. Lana, of course, has never been in any scandal, but she always acts hastily and is guided by her own ideas rather than by any advice the studio gives her."

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Betty Grable was in Manhattan when she read about Shaw's elopement with Lana. Later that day, she confronted the press. She issued only a brief statement. "This love of Artie's must have come on very suddenly."

When Betty Grable posed for the most famous pinup picture of World War II, the photographer asked her to pose for a rear view since she was secretly pregnant at the time.

Before that, she and her husband, actor Jackie Coogan, often went nightclubbing with Artie Shaw. He claimed that, "Betty kept rubbing her knee against mine under the table at restaurants and clubs."

One night, a drunken Coogan came home and urinated all over Grable as she slept. In a rage, and in tears, she fled into the night and arrived at Artie Shaw's home. Their affair began, Grable hoping that it would lead to marriage.

That was before Lana impulsively decided that Shaw was "husband material."

Inside, she was grieving, as she confessed to her fellow cast members when she showed up for work on Broadway. At the time, she was playing the second female lead in *DuBarry Was a Lady*, starring Ethel Merman and Bert Lahr.

Three days before he'd eloped with Lana, Shaw had written—not phoned—Grable in Manhattan, asking her to marry him. For some reason, she chose not to call him, but sent him a "snail mail" letter instead: "Darling, this is what I've been waiting for. I've just handed in my notice to the show. Let's get married tomorrow. Fly to New York!"

Disappointed and enraged, Grable phoned Phil Silvers in Hollywood. "Married to that little blonde slut, is he?" she shouted, referring to Shaw's marriage to Lana. "Just who in hell does he think he is?"

"Betty, I'm so sorry," Silvers said. "I took your letter out of his mailbox and put it on his desk. He's probably not even read it yet."

"Go fuck yourself!" she yelled, slamming down the receiver.

What Grable didn't tell Silvers, and what she had not confided to Shaw, was that she was pregnant with his baby.

That night, before going onstage, she asked Merman, "You know everything on Broadway. Surely you must

know who's the best abortion doctor in town."

"Leave it to me, child," Merman said. "I'll phone my friend, J. Edgar Hoover. He can set you up with the best abortion doctor in the country—and not some quack."

While making *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy Garland fell in love with Artie Shaw. When he collapsed on stage at the Palomar on February 10, 1939, he was rushed to the hospital. He was suffering from a rare blood disease, granulocytosis, comparable to leukemia. He fell into a coma.

His first memory when he woke up was of Judy hovering over him. "That absolutely marvelous little face, with freckles, the brown eyes, the reddish hair, looking at me with consummate tenderness—myth-like, dreamlike, not real."

"You're going to be all right, Artie," she assured him.

"I couldn't help it that she'd fallen in love with me."

[Betty Grable and Lana Turner were destined to be rivals. And because they didn't work for the same studios, they didn't have to compete with each other for roles. They did vie, however, more or less ferociously, for the title of "Pinup Girl of World War II."

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Betty Grable wasn't the only star in Hollywood whose heart had been broken (or was eventually broken) by Shaw. Judy Garland's mother, Ethel Gumm Gilmore, woke up her daughter to show her the morning's headline—ARTIE SHAW ELOPES WITH LANA TURNER.

Judy screamed before bursting into tears. "But Artie's in love with ME! He was with me only two nights before. He told me then that he loved me—and only me! The son of a bitch has betrayed me!"

Two days later, when an enraged Ethel finally succeeded in getting Shaw on the phone, the bandleader denied that he'd ever had sex with a teenaged Garland. Because of Garland's age, he had a good reason to deny that their relationship had turned sexual.

But to her friends, including Mickey Rooney, Garland admitted that she and Shaw were having sex. "First, me, then Lana. I think our clarinet player likes teenage gals," she said.

Shaw and Garland indulged in long talks together. She remembered that one day he had told her, "You're little Francis Gumm of Grand Rapids, and I'm little Arthur Arshawsky from Manhattan's Lower East Side. Just look at where we are now!"

One afternoon, in her despair, Garland indiscreetly phoned columnist Hedda Hopper. "After Artie left me, I felt

at times I couldn't make it through another day. I'd have my driver circle around MGM because I felt I didn't have the stamina to go inside and perform, much less dancing down that Yellow Brick Road in ruby-red slippers. I'm a wreck, and I fear I'm taking too many prescription drugs."

Fortunately, one of Shaw's best friends, the musician, David Rose, came along just in time to heal Garland's broken heart. She soon fell in love with him, and married him. "It all began one day when he brought me a piece of chocolate cake baked by his mother," she said, years later.

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Three days after their hasty wedding in Las Vegas, from their now-shared home in Los Angeles, Shaw demanded that Lana accompany him on the 20th Century Limited for a honeymoon in New York City, where he had to meet and make deals with some of his fellow musicians.

Acquiescing to this sudden demand, and fearful of its implications at the studio, Lana phoned a furious Louis B. Mayer, who was already angered at her elopement and the ways in which it had delayed production on *Two Girls on Broadway*. He demanded that she report to work at once—or else face suspension. But after pleading with him, he relented. "Three days…that's it. Or else." Then the studio boss slammed down the phone.

Arriving at Grand Central in Manhattan, the couple was mobbed by fans, photographers, and reporters. Shaw fought to clear a pathway for them, herding her into a taxi and ordering the driver to take them to the exclusive Sherry-Netherland Hotel, where he'd booked a suite for them on the 21st floor.

Dinner that night was at Reubens, where they sat at table with the popular gossip columnist Leonard Lyons and his wife, Sylvia. As Lana and Shaw left the restaurant, more fans awaited them, both his and hers, beseeching them for their autographs. As flashbulbs popped, he cleared a way for her and pushed her into a taxi. "Hell, we'll be here all night," he was heard shouting at her.

The next day, he told her that he had some business with a recording studio, but gave her no further details, not even an idea of when he'd be coming back.

She already knew that he was estranged from his mother, Sarah Arshawsky. Anxious to meet her, Lana searched for her telephone number in his address book and, without his permission or approval, called her.

A woman with a thick Jewish accent picked up the phone and seemed delighted to be speaking to her new daughter-in-law. She told Lana, "I've seen two of your movies. You're a beautiful girl. So young."

Sarah seemed very disappointed that her son hadn't phoned her himself, but she was glad to receive Lana. Dressing herself chicly and applying perhaps too much makeup, Lana got into a chauffeur-driven limousine and headed for her mother-in-law's modest apartment.

Inside, Sarah welcomed Lana warmly and served her tea. Then, she wanted to know if she could invite some of her women friends over "to get a look at how beautiful you are." Lana declined.

Since she knew so very little about the man she'd impulsively married, she pumped Sarah for information. Her son had been born in the Bronx, but grew up in New Haven. Coming from a Russian Jewish background, he faced anti-Semitism. His (deceased) father Harry Arshawsky, had been a dressmaker and photographer.

Shaw's relationship with his mother had been stressful and difficult almost from birth. She told Lana that one day, she'd threatened to jump out the window to her death. "You know what my boy did? He ran down the stairs and stood on the sidewalk to watch me jump."

As if that weren't shocking enough, it was followed by yet another revelation: Lana was the third Mrs. Shaw. In 1932, he'd married a very young girl, Jane Cairns, but her family had had the marriage annulled because of her age. Then, from 1934 to 1937, he'd been married to Margaret Allen.

While married to her, and while at the woodpile, he had almost chopped off his left forefinger. A nurse, she had been able to sew it back together.

"Artie told me he feared he might not play the clarinet ever again," Sarah said.

Overwhelmed with all this new and in some ways unwelcome information, Lana had heard enough. As she prepared to leave, Sarah begged her "to bring Artie to dinner."

Lana kissed the woman on her cheeks and left, never to see her again.

Years later, looking back at her first marriage, and with the added perspective of six subsequent (and also ill-fated) unions, Lana said, "That was not the way I planned my life. I wanted to have one husband and seven babies. It worked out just the opposite."

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Before leaving New York, Shaw introduced her to many of his musician friends, some of whom were

performing on the nights they met. Together, Shaw and Lana hung out at lots of late-night jazz clubs. Following her divorce from Shaw, Lana would continue the pattern she'd previously established of late-night club-going. Her daughter, Cheryl Crane, called the post-Artie Shaw period as "Lana's Boys in the Band" era.

"Mother was a bit infatuated with all of the incredible musicians whose talent thrilled her," Cheryl said. "She loved being in on their late-night jam sessions, and they loved having her present. There were a number of big band names whom she dated…all young and talented. Whatever was in town and not on the road might become number one in her date book."

She met, and would later date, Tommy Dorsey, one of the most famous band-leaders of the Big Band era. She also met Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. In her immediate future would appear such figures as Desi Arnaz, Tony Martin, and Frank Sinatra, each of whom would be a future lover.

"While I was married to Artie, I had to put these boys on hold, at least for the moment," she told Joan Blondell when she returned to complete *Two Girls on Broadway*. "Every one of them flirted with me, I mean a little more than flirted, and I liked them all. But I had to bide my time."

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Back at MGM, Lana met with her mentor, Mervyn LeRoy, who advised her that she needed a new agent. "That Henry Willson spends all his time seducing his male clients, and doesn't pay enough attention to you and your career. I'd recommend that you sign with Johnny Hyde, a VP at the William Morris Agency."

She followed his advice and arranged a meeting with Hyde, whom she found grotesquely ugly but possibly effective as an agent, since he represented some of the biggest names in the business. She later told LeRoy, "I call him The Dwarf, and he seemed to have the hots for me."

Born in Russia in 1895, he'd moved with his parents to America when he was only five.

He took her to dinner at Ciro's. Later, in her description of the evening to LeRoy, she said, "He drooled over me, but made good points about my career."

"You've served your time in 'B' pictures," he told her. "Now it's time to move up to the classy ones, as soon as you get your present crapper out of the way."

No doubt, he was referring to the 1940 melodrama, *We Who Are Young*, that she was shooting at the time.

Young Marilyn Monroe with her adoring agent, Johnny Hyde.

First, he had been Lana's agent.

"To capture the throne as Queen of MGM, you've got to appear with really big male stars," Hyde told her.

“I’m dreaming of Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Errol Flynn, and Tyrone Power,” she said.

“Forget Ty and Errol,” he answered. “Those faggots belong to either Fox or Jack Warner. Stick to MGM stars.”

From the beginning, Hyde earned her respect, renegotiating her contract with MGM, increasing her pay to $250 a week, with yearly escalations.

“That was a huge sum in those days,” she later wrote. I could buy clothes I’d always dreamed of wearing. I also bought a new Chrysler *coupé*.”

Two months after she signed with Hyde, he called with good news. “In your next two pictures, you’re going to appear with two of the biggest male stars at Metro.”

“You mean, Clark Gable and Robert Taylor?” she asked.

“No, later for those guys. Right now, I’m talking about James Stewart and Spencer Tracy. Not bad, huh? You’ll owe me.”

After screening two pictures she’d recently made, he took her to Ciro’s to show her off. She’d dressed in up-to-the-minute designer clothes.

“On film, you come off as a beautiful mannequin,” he told her. “To be a star, you’ve got to have more expression on your face. I want you to watch some silent films. Those stars, like a young Garbo in the late 1920s or Chaplin, had great expressions on their faces, and they also acted with their bodies, too. To be a big star, you’ve got to do that. Being beautiful is one thing, being an actress is another. Your face has got to express what you’re feeling inside.”

“I will do that because I want to succeed,” she said. “Before I married Artie, I thought I wanted to be a wife and mother. But when I see how awful marriage can be, I think I prefer stardom to being a *hausfrau.”*

Lana with John Shelton in *We Who Are Young*. Off screen, Shelton struck out.

During the next few weeks, she learned that she was slated to co-star in two big MGM pictures, *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941), with James Stewart, Judy Garland, and Hedy Lamarr; and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (also 1941) with the seasoned actor, Spencer Tracy, and with the new discovery from Sweden, In-grid Bergman.

Also in the coming weeks, Hyde would come to her rescue on a personal level when she faced crisis after crisis, beginning with a divorce and subsequently, an abortion.

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When Tommy Dorsey dropped in to visit Shaw during one of his trips to Hollywood, Shaw complained to him, "Lana doesn't know Nietzsche from Schopenhauer."

"Neither do I," Dorsey answered. "But Lana has other assets. Oh, what a lucky guy you are. You're complaining?"

Her new agent often functioned as the recipient of her complaints about her marriage to Shaw. "I never mastered the art of cooking, house cleaning, and washing dishes. But that's the kind of wife he wants, even though he can afford a maid, since he makes a big salary."

He demanded that she be home every evening before 6PM, which was the hour he usually returned from work. When she was held up, he accused her of sleeping around—"Maybe with a studio grip."

"I don't know what his IQ was, but he was very smart," Lana said. "One night, I asked how such and intelligent man would marry a dumb gal like me. He had an answer for that:"

"You've got great knockers. My intellect isn't linked to my pelvis."

"My husband likes to dominate, and he's always putting me down, especially in front of his friends," she said.

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Mildred called every morning, beseeching her daughter to leave Shaw and suggesting that Greg Bautzer might know how to get the marriage annulled. "He doesn't love you. He loves the idea of screwing Lana Turner—that's all your marriage is about, nothing else. I predict it'll be over in ten minutes, if that."

Mildred and her son-in-law barely concealed their contempt for each other. Privately, he referred to her as "a hard-assed man-eater."

He decided to cure her of her annoying habit of dropping in at any time of the day or evening, always unannounced, and usually at an inappropriate time. One morning, he decided to do something about that.

After Lana had left for the studio at 5AM, he sat in their kitchen, wearing only a silk robe, reading his newspaper and drinking a cup of coffee. Then he heard Mildred's car pull into the driveway. "I'd recognize that bad muffler anywhere."

He walked to the door. Before opening it, he pulled off his robe and fluffed himself as a means of inducing an erection. Then he threw open the door. "Sorry," he said to his mother-in-law. "I was expecting Judy Garland."

Mildred let out a scream and raced back to her car.

In spite of the horror stories Lana spread about their marriage, there were moments of tenderness. He told her that she had been the inspiration for one of his signature compositions, "Summit Ridge Drive," a reference to their hilltop home.

Occasionally, as a couple, she and Shaw entertained friends and acquaintances at home, usually visiting with musicians or with boys in his band, all of whom seemed to dote on Lana. Other women visitors were rare, with the noteworthy exception of Judy Garland.

Partly because she had become romantically involved with one of his best friends, David Rose, Garland had forgiven Shaw for running off and marrying Lana. Their relationship was a bit stiff for a while, but Garland seemed to possess a warm and forgiving heart.

One night, when Garland and Lana were chatting in the kitchen, the singer told Lana, "I'm glad you took Artie off my hands. If I'd married him, it would rank as one of my bigger mistakes—and I've made a few. I see how he treats you—that's not for me."

One Sunday night, Garland had been most affectionate, kissing and hugging both Shaw and Lana. When she left, Shaw turned to Lana. "I know Judy very well. You may not know this, but she's a bisexual, and she probably wants to have a three-way with us."

"I don't believe you—not Judy!" Lana said. "You're making this up. What a terrible thing to say about a sweet girl like Judy!"

During a talk with Hyde the next day, he suggested that her husband was the one who wanted a three-way. Since he was hip to the latest Hollywood gossip, she asked if he'd heard that Garland was bisexual.

"Everybody knows that, including Louis B. Mayer," Hyde answered. "Howard Strickling, keeper of the secrets, wants that to stay under wraps. Imagine if the public ever found out that Dorothy from Kansas was a lesbian."

Another night, when Garland was a guest, Shaw told Lana to go to their bedroom and fetch his slippers. At the top of the stairs, slippers in hand, Lana heard Garland and Shaw talking about her.

"Why don't you come around more?" he asked. "I miss you a lot."

"I miss you, too," she said. "Lana's nice, but, you know, talking to her is like talking to a beautiful vase filled with red roses."

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During the miserable course of her marriage to Shaw, Lana continued to report for work at MGM. There, on one or another of its soundstages, she would make her last B movie before evolving into a major movie star.

For reasons known only to himself, Harold S. Bucquet, who had directed Lana in *Calling Dr. Kildare*, cast "America's Number One Dreamgirl" as a drab housewife in a soapy melodramatic programmer, *We Who Are Young* (1940). It was the story of a struggling young couple trying to make enough money to feed themselves, pay the rent, and negotiate with debt collectors and loan sharks about repossession of their furnishings.

Amazingly, this minor soap opera had been written by Dalton Trumbo, one of Hollywood's finest (and most politically persecuted) writers. One of the story readers at MGM had sent a memo: "Much of the world is now at war, and the United States may be sucked into it soon. Along comes Trumbo with a tired old Depression era story that might have been written by a Hollywood hack back in 1933. REJECT!"

Obviously, no one heeded the reader's suggestion. Lana was cast as the struggling housewife, Margy Brooks. Her natural beauty was still evident and was indeed highlighted by the photographer, Karl Freund, one of the best in the business. It would be her last movie for some time in which she would appear as a brunette.

Gene Lockhart was cast as C. B. Bemais, their insensitive boss, who morphs into their benefactor. In the final reel, Lana's husband, William (John Shelton), has to steal a car to rush his wife to the hospital, where she gives birth to twins. As Lana later said, "It was my first mother role."

On the first day of the shoot, Lana was reintroduced to the handsome but rather bland Shelton, who had been given a co-starring role. During the making of *Dramatic School*, the two of them had had a brief fling, and he seemed to want to reignite the flame. But for Lana, it had flickered out.

She invited Shaw to a sneak preview of the movie in Pasadena. He didn't like it, although he admired the way she was dressed as an unglamorous housewife. "This is the way I prefer you."

Shaw vehemently objected to one scene in particular—the sexiest in the movie—in which she was fetchingly depicted in a satin *négligée*.

He recalled, "That scene had a tremendous impact on the audience, especially horny college boys who wolf-whistled at the screen. I didn't like my wife showing herself off like that, driving the guys wild. I didn't want to be married to some striptease artist."

As for *We Are Too Young*, MGM ditched its former ad campaign and promoted Lana in the scene wearing the satin nightgown. The ad read: "*MODERN YOUTH IN SEARCH OF ALL THE ANSWERS—LANA TURNER, THE BLAZING BLONDE IN HER MOST DARING ROLE*!"

Reviewers were kind for the most part, at least to Lana, although critics agreed with the sarcastic assessment of the original MGM script reader. Based on its premises, at least, the film belonged somewhere in the Depression-soaked mid-1930s.

Time magazine wrote, "Lana Turner turns into a dramatic actress of some talent, hiding her much-publicized charms behind a simple gingham house dress."

The New York Daily News claimed, "Lana Turner, who has not been much more than a glorified sweater model on the screen up to now, is turning out to be a surprise at the Criterion Theatre. MGM decided to de-glamourize their young star and prove that she could get along without that sweater. They assigned her to a role that required natural acting ability. *Lo and behold!* She turns in a fine performance."

Her reputation as "The Sweater Girl" still lingered, as sales of the garment across the country rose by 22%, even attracting the ire of the Breen Office (formerly known as the Hayes Office). In a memo to producers and directors, the censors issued a warning that declared that it would be forbidden "for an actress to be shown on the screen wearing a sweater in which breasts were clearly outlined."

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Shaw's close friend, comedian Phil Silvers, came to dinner one night to discuss an appearance of the three of them at Earl Carroll's, a nightclub on Sunset Boulevard, which was gaining in popularity. He'd devised a routine where Shaw played the clarinet, Silvers did his jabbering comedy routine, and Lana danced one of her numbers from *Two Girls on Broadway*. The act played to a packed house.

Lana was not charmed by Silvers' second visit to their apartment, when he brought with him a stash of marijuana for an evening of "reefer magic." At the time, marijuana was not unfamiliar to her, as many musicians, including members of Shaw's band, made use of it regularly. As she declared in her memoirs, she had never smoked it before, and refused to do so that night.

She later told Hyde, "I've never seen Artie enjoy himself so much. The whole room was going up in a cloud of smoke. I left the boys to enjoy themselves and went to bed early. The next morning, I found they had opened practically everycan of food in the pantry in an attempt to make a stew. Most of the food seemed to have made it to the floor."

Desi Arnaz later boasted, "Long before there was Lucille Ball in my life, there was Lana!"

It was a very different night when Gene Krupa and Desi Arnaz showed up, as she found both young men charming, seductive, and handsome. Shaw told her that Krupa, born in Chicago, was the best drummer in America, and a high-energy entertainer known for his flamboyant show-manship. He'd made his first recording in 1927.

Born in Cuba, Arnaz had fled to Miami following the 1933 revolution in his country. He'd been cast in his first Broadway musical, *Too Many Girls* (1940), and later figured he might try Hollywood. RKO had bought the film rights and planned to configure him as its star.

“Gentleman Gene” Krupa comes to Lana’s rescue after another domestic brawl with Shaw.

Lana was assigned the job of cooking dinner, and, since she’d worked at the studio all day, she thought spaghetti might be the safest bet. But when she served it, Shaw took only one bite before he yelled at her, “What crap!” Then he tossed the pasta platter out into the dining room and onto the floor. Then he announced to Krupa and Arnaz that he’d take them out to dinner—“Maybe line up some broads for you horndogs, too.”

Humiliated, Lana attempted to clean it up, but Krupa intervened, volunteering to deal with the mess. After Shaw had retreated upstairs to change his clothes, he put his arm around her and gently but seductively kissed her as Arnaz looked on.

Timed as it was in the immediate aftermath of her husband’s brutal rejection, Lana was thrilled at Krupa’s kiss. “Artie can be a bit much at times,” he whispered in her ear. “Some night you’re going to need me, and I’ll come running at your call.”

As Krupa scooped the mess up from off the floor, she retreated from the diningroom back into the kitchen. Arnaz followed her.

“You’re the most beautiful gal in the world,” he told her. “I can’t take my eyes off you.”

Then he flashed a smile at her. As she turned to face him, he took her possessively into his arms. “Within minutes, I felt a foot of Cuban tongue,” she’d later tell Hyde. “It was the wettest and most delicious I’d ever tasted. He was rubbing up against me with such passion, I think he almost shot off. He was totally uninhibited. What a lover I thought he’d make. He took my hand and pressed it against his crotch. “I can really take care of a woman, and I want that woman to be you. Unlike my friend, Artie, I’ll treat you nice.”

At that point, she heard Shaw coming down the steps from their bedroom above. Within full view of his increasingly estranged wife, he then invited Krupa and Arnaz out to a restaurant for a continuation of their aborted dinner, but pointedly did not include her.

The next day she told Hyde, “My days with Artie are numbered. But I’ve entered both Desi Arnaz and Gene Krupa into my datebook for sometime in the future. I can’t wait!”

Lana Turner in her early days at MGM wasn’t always photographed in ermine, diamonds, and satin gowns. She posed for this postcard dressed in high boots and wearing a leopard-skin bathing suit

Chapter Six

Lana's Rise to Super-Stardom

The World's Most Beautiful Blonde Competes With the World's Most Gorgeous Brunette

In *Ziegfeld Girl*, Lana was never more gorgeous, enveloped in pink tulle with sequins, spangles, and silvery stars.

"I gave the film my heart and soul. I played an elevator operator from Flatbush in Brooklyn, who was discovered by Ziegfeld himself. Joan Crawford was originally to take my role, but she was far too old, I mean, really ancient."

As the 1940s began, Lana Turner—shortly before she hit major stardom during World War II—had already become one of America's leading sex symbols. Hundreds of letters from fans arrived weekly at MGM, mostly from men. Some of them included semi-nude or nude pictures of themselves.

"The whole world seems to be lusting for me," she told a jealous Judy Garland. "Even though I'm married, the Hollywood wolves won't give up the chase."

"Lana Turner is now a full-fledged star," reported Hedda Hopper. "Talk about *oomph!* She oozes it."

If Lana had her wish, she'd go nightclubbing every night. When he wasn't doing a gig, Artie Shaw wanted to stay home and read. She said, "We lived in this hilltop cottage that fitted into my romantic fantasy, except for one thing: It didn't have what it really needed, and that was a man and woman in love."

Occasionally, Shaw would take her out for a night on the town, usually criticizing her for dressing too provocatively. His oft-repeated remark was, "I don't want you to look like some cheap whore."

Once, he invited her to Ciro's. Within the hour, Greg Bautzer entered with Dorothy Lamour on his arm. "The

Sarong Girl" was herself becoming a Hollywood sex symbol.

"I see Bautzer's swinging high, swinging low in a hurricane with the jungle princess," Shaw told her. He was referring to three movies that had each featured the former Miss New Orleans: *Jungle Princess* (1936), *Swing High* (1937), and *Hurricane* (also 1937).

Hollywood was a small town in those days, and Ciro's had become the hottest spot for celebrities, so it was not much of a coincidence that Lana would patronize the same club as Bautzer and his new romance.

Lamour later commented on her affair with Bautzer: "I made him forget all about Lana Turner," she said.

She might have been jealous of Lamour, but Lamour was also jealous of Lana.

"Before Lana shot to fame as 'The Sweater Girl,' in *They Won't Forget*, my director, Henry Hathaway, came up with the idea of putting me in a sweater without a bra," Lamour said. "He took pictures of me which were published in the press. When Lana put on a similar sweater, she created a *Hurricane* of publicity. Forgive me for pushing one of my movies. But, lest the world forget, I was the first to don that damn sweater."

"As for Greg, he was a real Beau Brummel and an incorrigible flirt," she continued.

Years later, Lamour said she encountered Lana at a Hollywood party. "I admitted to her that I'd fallen in love with Greg. But I came to realize that whereas he was not a one-woman man, I was a one-man woman. I finally had to tell him that I couldn't go on seeing him"

"Well, dear," Lana told her, "you are right, of course. I came to the same conclusion. However, I also decided that a girl needs a good lawyer to get her out of a jam from time to time. As for me, I'm not a one-man woman…'the more the merrier,' I've often stated. Hollywood is the best hunting ground in the world. I think per square mile, it has the best-looking guys on the planet, most of them dreaming they'll become the next Errol Flynn or Tyrone Power."

According to Lamour, "Lana and I were both after Bautzer, and, later, she was brazen enough to go for my handsome husband, William Ross Howard III, a captain in the U.S. Army. One night at a party, I saw her giving Bill the eye. All the girls wanted him. When I spoke to her, she admitted it. 'Dottie,' she told me. 'If you and I weren't such great pals, I could really go for that stud you've bagged.' I thought nothing of it until later that night when Bill *[i.e., William Ross Howard III]* and I were undressing. Lana had slipped her phone number into the pocket of his coat."

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On another occasion, Shaw escorted Lana to a club where his friend, Billie Holiday, was singing. "Lady Day," as she was nicknamed, was a jazz musician and singer-songwriter known for her "shading, phrasing, dark tones, light tones, and bending notes," as Frank Sinatra phrased it.

In 1937, she'd had a brief stint as a big band vocalist with Count Basie and his band, traveling from town to town, often in harsh living conditions because of segregation. A recurring theme in her music involved women unlucky in love.

"Dear little Lana: What Billie Holiday and I did before I married you is no one's business but our own," Artie Shaw said.

After a few months, Count Basie fired her. Hearing of this, Shaw tracked her down to an address in Harlem, where she was staying in her mother's modest apartment.

"Her mother fried chicken for us as part of an early breakfast, and before the morning ended, Lady Day had packed her bags and was taking off with me in my car," Shaw said.

Shaw, his newest vocalist, and his band created a sensation at the jam-packed Madison Square Garden in Manhattan when they were configured as part of the evening's entertainment at the Harvest Moon Ball.

Trouble arose, however, during later gigs in the segregated South. Holiday was one of the first black singers to be featured against the background of an all-white band. Sometimes, racial tensions arose, with angry shouts from the audience. Holiday "exploded" (her words) when a redneck loud-mouth in Louisville, Kentucky, called her a "nigger wench."

After touring for several months with Shaw and his orchestra, Holiday could take it no more. They were booked into the Lincoln Hotel in St. Louis. "The white guests complained when I took the elevator with them, and after that, the manager asked me to use the freight elevator. I wasn't allowed in the bar or in the dining room. That was the last straw. I finally had to tell Artie, 'I'm getting the hell out of here.'"

Lana, in vivid contrast, defined Holiday as a mesmerizing performer, and shared her husband's belief that she was one of the most original and stylish singers in the country.

After her performance, Holiday joined Shaw and Lana at table, and they talked until around 3AM when the club closed its doors.

At that early morning hour, Holiday kissed Lana on both cheeks, and delivered to Shaw a deep, passionate goodbye kiss.

As they drove together back to their hilltop home, Lana asked Shaw about Holiday. "You guys seemed very friendly, very intimate. She's most attractive. It causes a wife to wonder. Just how close were you two during those lonely nights on the road? I couldn't help but notice that lingering kiss."

In her memoirs, Holiday would later write, "There aren't many people who fought harder than Artie against the vicious people in the music business or the crummy state of second-class citizens which eats at the guts of so many black musicians. He didn't win, but he didn't lose, either."

Years later, in the late 1940s, after Lana had become a big star, she met for a drink at the Beverly Hills Hotel with Shaw. During their dialogues, he spoke of Holiday, saying he'd gone to see her in her "comeback concert" at Manhattan's Carnegie Hall in March of 1948. That was after she'd served a nine-month sentence at the Federal

Reformatory for Women in Alderson, West Virginia. She'd been charged and convicted for possession of heroin.

"I went backstage to visit Billie after her concert," Shaw said. "The guys she'd hung out with had turned her into an addict and all the shit that goes with that. I was stunned when I saw her up close. She was no longer the twenty-three-year-old Harlem beauty I knew. Her rough living showed in her face, and she was hanging out with some gigolo who was just using her. Seeing her in that condition was no damn fun. After some talk, we said goodbye. I kissed her and made off into the night—and that was that."

"After that, I heard that she was shacking up with Tallulah Bankhead," he said.

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As June of 1940 neared its end, Lana—visibly nervous and constantly smoking—would sometimes break into sobs. Living with Shaw was growing worse by the day, and the frequency and intensity of his temper fits had increased. She'd heard rumors that he was seeing other women on the side. Some nights, he didn't return home until two or three in the morning.

When she demanded information, he'd tell her that he'd been rehearsing with the boys in the band.

One night was worse than any that had preceded it. After a brutal fight, during the course of which he'd denounced her as "a whore" and "a slut," she became hysterical. He could not control her, and when she continued to scream, he summoned his doctor to their home on Summit Drive. After a cursory exam, the doctor injected her with some form of sedative.

When she awakened the next morning at a hospital in Beverly Hills, a nurse was in the room with her. "Are you feeling better, Mrs. Johnson?"

Shaw had registered her as "Mildred Johnson." She asked that a phone be installed in her room. When it was in place, she called Mildred with the address where she had been hospitalized.

About an hour later, her mother arrived. Without informing Shaw, Mildred checked her out of the clinic.

Back at her mother's home, her nerves more or less restored, Lana gave Mildred a key to the house she'd been sharing with Shaw on Summit Drive and asked her to retrieve her possessions, especially her clothing and jewelry.

To her surprise, her mother urged her to give the marriage one more try. "Breaking up is a bad idea after such a short marriage. The publicity might hurt you. You might be depicted as a silly movie star who doesn't take marriage seriously. I forgave Virgil and took him back many times after each of our many blowups."

Eventually Mildred's point of view prevailed, and Lana returned to Shaw's house on Summit Drive.

He didn't return home till well past midnight, with the scent of marijuana emanating from his breath and clothes. Instantly belligerent, he wanted sex, but she wasn't willing. Eventually, he forced himself on her.

WHO'S THE MOVIE STAR? Despite her miserable marriage and signs of an impending breakdown, Lana "made nice" in this MGM-staged publicity photoshoot.

It portrayed her as a domesticated housewife who was subservient to the crushing emotional insecurities of her demanding husband.

As she later confided to Greg Bautzer, “He was brutal. He hurt me, and then he raped me. When I resisted, he slapped my face really hard. Finally, he got off me. I ran into the bathroom and locked the door. Fortunately, he fell asleep and did not try to break down the door.”

“That morning, without sleep, I preceded him into the kitchen and prepared his breakfast. When he came downstairs, he was very hostile, hardly spoke to me.”

As he prepared himself for work, he turned to her and said, “What kind of wife are you? I looked in the closet at the shoes I own. All of them need polish. Take them to the shoeshine man down the hill. When I get home tonight, I want to see my reflection in each of them.” Then he stormed out, slamming the front door.

Immediately, she phoned Bautzer. “I want you to start divorce proceedings at once. I don’t want to spend another night with this bastard.”

“Pack your bags,” he told her. “I’ll be there within the hour, baby. You never should have married the shit. Greg to the rescue.”

When Bautzer arrived, he held her in his arms, kissing her passionately. “My baby’s come back to me.”

Then he drove her to Mildred’s, where he escorted her upstairs and put her to bed. Mildred agreed to nourish and take care of her.

At 8PM, as promised, Bautzer returned and spent the night with her, presenting her with white roses, a signal that their romance had resumed.

She didn’t hear from Shaw until about a week later, when he called her unexpectedly. She felt that he was phoning to protest her petition for a divorce, but what he wanted was a favor. He needed her to pose with him for press and publicity photos of his debut on the *Burns and Allen Show*. “I want you to pretend that we’re a loving couple.”

She reluctantly agreed. Two hours later, she arrived at the Burns & Allen studio wearing a black dress inspired by Coco Chanel.

He kissed her lightly on the cheek before they began the business of posing for photographers together. After a few shots, a reporter from *Variety* called out to her, “Give Artie a big kiss, Lana!”

Impulsively, she shot back, “To hell with that. I’ve left him!”

The word was out. The morning papers carried the story, “LANA TURNER TO DIVORCE ARTIE SHAW.”

Later, as an explanation, she told the press, “I’m divorcing Artie because I’ve become tired of being spoon-fed Nietzsche.”

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Lana couldn't sleep at night, and to an increasing degree was edgy, unhappy, and nervous. She phoned Louis B. Mayer at MGM and asked if she could meet with him. In his office, the following day, she pleaded with him to give her a few weeks' off to recuperate from the after-effects of her break-up with Shaw.

He agreed to send her on a cruise to Hawaii and told her why: "You're about to appear in *Ziegfeld Girl*, a picture in which you've got to look your most beautiful. Your looks will be compared to those of Hedy Lamarr, and there are those who consider her the most beautiful woman in the world. You don't want to look like a hag beside her."

Visible within the ranks of MGM during that era was Betty Asher, an MGM handler and troubleshooter, usually responsible for keeping the studio's bad girls—especially Lana and Judy Garland—out of trouble.

Lana's cruise ship was scheduled to depart for Hawaii in four days. Unaware that Lana had moved out of Shaw's home on Summit Drive, and with the intention of discussing details of her upcoming trip, Asher drove there when she couldn't get anyone on the phone. She assumed that Lana was there, but that she wasn't answering the phone.

It wasn't until Lana returned from Hawaii that she learned the events that had unfolded that afternoon after Asher rang the doorbell of Shaw's house.

According to Shaw, "I answered the door, and there stood Betty Asher, looking awfully good to me. The next thing I knew, I was in bed with her. She stayed for three days and nights before sailing away across the Pacific with Lana. We spent most of that time in bed. I got enough sex to last a month."

[As their time as shipmates passed, Lana learned more about her traveling companion. It turned out that Asher was a bisexual, having previously sustained an affair with another bisexual, a teenaged Judy Garland.]

Alone and unhappy, and recuperating from the after-effects of her marriage to Shaw, during the days immediately preceding the departure of her cruise ship, Lana impulsively phoned Desi Arnaz and invited him to join her on the cruise. Arnaz had two weeks before he was to report to work at RKO on *Too Many Girls* (1940). He seemed eager to join her.

In her memoirs, Lana "whitewashed" her link to Arnaz, writing that she met a group of college boys on board and "danced my way through the rest of the voyage, having the time of my life."

Only part of that statement was true, the part about having the time of her life. Her partying, however, didn't occur in the company of "college boys," but with Arnaz, in his cabin, night after night, during the ship's eastbound transit to Honolulu. During the day, they spent time together, lounging on deck, followed by dancing at night. On a few occasions, Arnaz agreed to sing for the passengers.

He discussed his childhood in Cuba. He claimed that when he was only fifteen, his papa had ushered him into La Casa Marino, a famous brothel in Santiago, Cuba.

He also revealed details of his visits to the bordello run by Polly Adler, Manhattan's most famous madam. "I didn't leave her joint until I'd sampled all the women," he confessed to Lana.

With Lana, at least, Arnaz's reputation as a sexual athlete had preceded him. She had heard plenty of stories about him from the boys in the band who played with Shaw.

His friend, actor Cesar Romero, claimed, "Desi just loved sex and couldn't get enough."

[Rumors had it that when a girl wasn't readily available, Arnaz took advantage of Romero's legendary skill at fellatio.]

One of Shaw's band members said, "Desi doesn't know the difference betweensex and love. To put it bluntly, love to him is a good fuck. He can get that anywhere he goes."

A fellow actor, Roger Carmel, said, "Desi is a lech. Anything in a skirt from thirteen to thirty, he'll go after."

After the ship docked in Hawaii, Arnaz phoned RKO and was instructed to return to Los Angeles in two days for the filming of *Too Many Girls*. After kissing Lana goodbye, he boarded a morning flight, with the promise that he'd rendezvous with her the moment she returned to California.

Later that afternoon, Lana told Asher that she'd missed her period. An appointment was immediately scheduled with a local gynecologist/obstetrician. A pregnancy test revealed that she was pregnant.

That evening, when she phoned Shaw at his home, an unknown woman picked up the receiver. When Shaw was summoned to the phone, Lana told him, "I've got wonderful news, darling."

His reaction to the sound of her voice was brusque. "Why in hell are you calling me?"

"I found out today. I'm pregnant, and I'm coming back to you. I know I can make our marriage work. "

His answer infuriated her: "Who's the father?" Gene Krupa? Tommy Dorsey? Buddy Rich? Or did Arnaz knock you up during that stupid cruise to Honolulu? I heard all about it."

"The baby is yours, you bastard!" she shouted into the trans-Pacific phone line.

“Like hell it is. Maybe the kid belongs to some grip at MGM. Maybe even Louis B. Mayer!”

In her memoirs, she described how she then exploded. Before slamming down the phone, she called him a “no-good, rotten son of a bitch! You are the dirtiest, the lowest—I can’t even call you a man. You’re a creep. I hate you!”

The moment she returned to Hollywood, she met with Johnny Hyde, delivering nothing but praise for Arnaz as a seducer. “He doesn’t just make love to a woman, he kisses and laves her body, driving her wild with excitement. Never before has any man attacked me like that. I can’t wait until my divorce comes through, so I can marry Desi.”

“Did he propose?” Hyde asked.

“Not exactly…but he will any day now.”

She convinced herself that if Bautzer would speed up her divorce from Shaw, and if Arnaz would propose to her, there was still hope for a scandal-free birth of her child. As for the public at large, she and Arnaz, she told herself, could always claim that the birth of their baby had been premature.

As events evolved, she’d be cruelly disappointed.

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After Arnaz reported to RKO for filming, he’d been introduced to Lucille Ball, who had just completed a fight scene with red-haired Maureen O’Hara during her filming of *Dance, Girl, Dance* (1940). Both O’Hara and Ball had been cast in that film as burlesque dancers.

Arnaz later wrote in a memoir, “Ball looked like a two-dollar whore who had been badly beaten by a pimp, with hair all over her face and a black eye.” Her dress had been ripped.

Based on her appearance, Arnaz was skeptical, he revealed later, about her ability to portray the *ingenue* in *Too Many Girls*.

But when he met her again, three hours later, he thought she looked young and beautiful. “She caused a stirring down below.”

“Hi, Daisy,” she said to him.

“No, honey,” he answered. “Daisy is a flower. The first name is D-E-S-I, the last name Arnaz. You’d better learn to pronounce it, ‘cause you’re gonna become Mrs. Desi Arnaz.”

The rest is Hollywood history, especially television history.

As Lana told Hyde during her recitation of her pregnancy-related woes, “Desi said he prefers well-stacked blondes, yet I’ve heard that he’s suddenly engaged to a redhead with no tits, and he isn’t returning my calls.”

“There’s only one way out for you,” Hyde told Lana: “Mayer doesn’t like his stars to have babies without a daddy. That’s strictly taboo. I hate to tell you this, kid, but you already know exactly what you must do.”

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A decision about ending her pregnancy would have to be made soon. One of Lana’s options involved salvaging her marriage to Shaw. Mildred suggested that for Lana, but she adamantly refused. “I want a divorce. That’s my final word.”

Lana spent the next few days *incognito* and in disguise, wandering into undiscovered neighborhoods of Los Angeles where she’d never set foot before. She drove into the Hollywood Hills, and walked the lonely stretches of Malibu beaches. She wanted her baby, but to an increasing degree, she accepted the fact that giving birth without a husband would probably destroy her career.

Mildred kept urging her to return to Shaw, but she could never reach him on the phone. Lana became convinced that even if she begged him, he wouldn’t take her back.

At the Trocadero, Lana (left) has a roving eye, as Mildred looks on. Her mother was flattered when people mistook her for Lana's sister.

Finally, she woke up one morning and decided to make an appointment with an abortionist. Without telling Mildred, she drove to a seedy-looking private town-house in downtown Los Angeles. As she entered, she smelled something like burnt cabbage.

She confessed in her memoirs that she expected knives "scraping away at my insides," but that didn't happen. The doctor, whom she defined later as a quack, injected some kind of fluid into her cervix.

"The fetus will be aborted later," he told her. "You'll pass it like urine."

Still without telling Mildred what had happened, she returned to the home she shared with her and retired to her bedroom.

As her mother was preparing a light supper for her, the pain began. "At first, the cramps were minor. Then they came like a giant hand gripping my insides," she claimed.

By the time Mildred ascertained the problem, Lana was doubling over in pain. "It came over me like an ocean wave, then receded again, coming back with more pain than before. One cramp after another. I curled up into a ball of pain."

Mildred got the abortionist on the phone, but all he could recommend was lots of black coffee and walks —"plenty of walking. It will pass if you walk."

Lana tried walking, but collapsed, almost immediately, onto the floor, crying out as sharp pains convulsed her body.

She later asserted that she'd spent the most horrific night of her life, each hour saturated with impossible suffering. She sobbed and screamed and tried to walk as the doctor had instructed. By morning, she phoned the doctor. "My baby is still inside me. I can't stand it anymore. I'm dying."

Since she was unable to travel, the doctor eventually came to her home, where he confronted her angry mother, who told him, "You've threatened the life of my daughter—I should have you arrested. You're a bastard!"

He pulled off Lana's robe and without an anesthetic, he at last "scraped me out," she later wrote. Mildred remained by her side, reacting to every painful move. At one point, she placed her hand over her daughter's mouth to muffle her agonized screams.

The white towels her mother had brought from the linen closet became soaked with blood. "I felt like he was removing my guts. When I could take it no more, I passed out."

When she regained consciousness three hours later, the doctor was gone, his lingering aura a nightmare. As a departing insult, he had presented a bill for five-hundred dollars "for services rendered."

"Your baby was not meant to be," Mildred said. "Someday, with the right man as your husband, you'll have kids."

"I never want to go through the agony of childbirth," Lana answered. "That will never happen. I'll see to that."

Mildred brought her some freshly made chicken broth and coaxed her into drinking it. "You've got to get your strength back. Mayer wants you to begin filming *Ziegfeld Girl* next week and he expects you to look your loveliest."

"For the first time, I'll be facing the camera with my teenaged years behind me. I'll be a twenty-year-old woman."

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MGM's plan at the time involved configuring *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941) as a sequel to *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936), a blockbuster that had brought a Best Actress Oscar to Luise Rainer, with whom Lana had worked during the filming of *Dramatic School*.

William Powell had been cast in the original 1936 version as Florenz Ziegfeld, the flamboyant show-business impresario. Myrna Loy, Frank Morgan, and Virginia Bruce, who had been married to John Gilbert, rounded out the original cast.

The Great Ziegfeld had won an Oscar as Best Picture in the year of its release. Robert Z. Leonard, who had helmed the original 1936 version, was hired by producer Pandro S. Berman for the sequel two years later. *[The sequel would not include an actor attempting to impersonate Ziegfeld.]*

Before filming began, Lana studied long and hard with MGM drama coach, Lillian Burns. "This is my big chance, and I'm not going to fuck it up," Lana vowed.

Although she had never been drunk before, she was cast as a showgirl, Sheila Regan, who during the course of the film becomes an alcoholic. "I was known at the time as the Queen of Nightclubs, but I was no boozer. I went to the clubs to dance with handsome men, not to soak up liquor."

To prepare her for the role, Burns had Lana watch Bette Davis' performance of an alcoholic in *Dangerous* (1935). "I sat through it eight times," Lana said.

By the time she showed up on the set for filming, Lana told Leonard, "I think I know Sheila's every thought, how she walks, how she moves. I know everything about her, even how she feels at any given time."

As the weeks went by, the director appeared to agree with Lana. After seeing the rushes, he ordered scriptwriters Marguerite Roberts and Sonya Levien to expand Sheila's role. In one scene, the writers added a bemused, bittersweet comment that became Lana's all-time favorite line: "All the things I like are illegal, immoral, or fattening."

The original script of *Ziegfeld Girl* had been created by William Anthony McGuire. Although Flo Ziegfeld's showgirls were showcased as the most important visual element of the film, and although his legend itself was celebrated as one of the pre-suppositions of the script, the showman himself never appeared.

In 1938s proposed sequel, three leading male roles were cast with Walter Pidgeon, George Murphy (with whom Lana had worked before), and Frank Morgan. In 1940, these roles were awarded to James Stewart, Tony Martin, and Charles Winninger. However, before Stewart signed on, Leonard had asked Glenn Ford to play Sheila's truck driver boyfriend, Gilbert Young, who later becomes a bootlegger and goes to prison. His bootlegging had derived from his passion for Sheila, and his intention of buying her the expensive baubles she demanded.

When Lana was signed, Glenn Ford was still part of the cast. He called her and arranged a date, telling Leonard, "Ever since I saw those tits bouncing in *They Won't Forget*, I've been wanting to fuck that broad. What knockers!"

Lana, too, had been attracted to this handsome Québec-born actor ever since she'd seen him on the screen in *The Lady in Question* (1940), in which he'd co-starred with Rita Hayworth.

Over the years, many of the top female stars in Hollywood would desire and win his affections: Margaret Sullavan, Bette Davis (in spite of her denial), Joan Crawford, Barbara Stanwyck, and even Marilyn Monroe.

As Lana later told Johnny Hyde, "On three different dates, I got to know every inch of this gorgeous man. He liked to insert his thing in every orifice and between my breasts. He whispered sweet nothings in my ears. He's great at pillow talk. If I have any criticism of him at all, it's that he seems to be a character on the screen, not quite real. But his love-making makes up for that deficiency."

[Even after he didn't get the role in Ziegfeld Girl's 1938 reprise, *Ford phoned Lana again during his filming of* Texas *(1941)*, with the equally handsome William Holden, who became his best pal.

"Talk about two gorgeous guys new to Hollywood," Lana told Hyde. "Glenn talked to Bill Holden about me. Those guys wanted me to join them for a three-way in Palm Springs." Then with a pout, she added, "But I refuse to tell you if I accepted their tantalizing offer."

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Flo Ziegfeld had been the most flamboyant showman in the American theater. Night after night, he glorified "The American Girl" (or the American concept of beauty) in glittering, glamorous settings, with an armada of female pulchritude attired in stunning, artfully outrageous, extravagant costumes. His *Ziegfeld Follies*, a lavish annual revue, attracted vast audiences during their heyday *[roughly speaking, from 1907 To 1931]*. In his glory years, he seduced as many of his actresses as he could get around to.

William Anthony McGuire had written the original Oscar-nominated *The Great Ziegfeld*, (1936) and he was called back to write a new script, but he died before shooting began in September of 1940.

Censors from the Breen Office cracked down on many of the lines from the 1940 script. In what they considered a generous concession, however, they allowed the character played by Dan Dailey to refer to Sheila as a "tramp."

As filming advanced, Lana, Garland, and Lamarr became very competitive. At one point, Garland complained to Leonard. "When Lana bounces by, the electricians whistle; when Hedy sweeps in, the grips stare lasciviously. But when I go by, it's 'Hi, Judy!'"

One day, Joe Pasternak, the film producer, perhaps during the period when he was debating whether he should officially migrate over to MGM, visited the set. On site, he closely observed the interactions of Garland, Lamarr, and Lana. "Judy didn't realize how much talent she had or that she had more to offer than Hedy or Lana, or even Joan Crawford. Judy never believed that she had the strength, I mean feminine strength. She felt she was a failure in her private life. Talk about failures! In their private lives, Lana, Hedy, and Joan were each disastrous, despite their triumphs on the screen."

Mickey Rooney arrived to visit Garland on the set. Although Lana did not exit from her dressing room to see him that day, he talked animatedly to Garland, his frequent co-star.

"If I looked like Lana," Garland said with more than a touch of envy, "I could have any man I wanted. Mostly I have to dream about them: Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, even Robert Taylor—I mean *especially* Robert Taylor. Lana represents the epitome of female beauty. As for me, men call me pretty and give me a pat on the chin."

On the set, although Garland and Lana pretended to be friends, Garland could hardly mask her jealousy. Lana had already snatched Artie Shaw from her arms, and now she was making a play for Tony Martin, even though Garland also had a crush on the singer, in spite of David Rose being in her life.

Garland's biographer, Gerald Clarke, wrote, "If Lana Turner could club-hop every night, why couldn't Judy? She was tired of being regarded as the kind of girl a boy might safely take home to the family. What she wanted was to be a seductress, a temptress who could look into a man's eyes and cause him to reel with lust and longing, abandoning everything for just one delirious night with her. She wanted to smile at Artie Shaw, as Turner had done, and cause him to tootle to her tune and her tune alone. She wanted, in short, to be Lana Turner."

At last, Lana was working with producer Pandro S. Berman, who, during his reign at RKO, had produced the Fred Astaire/Ginger Rogers musicals and was a prime fixture in the rise of Katharine Hepburn at the studio. He'd also just released such classics as *Gunga Din* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in 1939. She later referred to Berman as "a darkly handsome dynamo, gruff and irascible."

Ziegfeld Girls are, left to right: Lana Turner, Judy Garland, and Hedy Lamarr. The film traces the triumphs and tragedies of these three showgirls: Lana as Sheila Regan, Garland as Susan Gallagher, and Lamarr as Sandra Koller. The trio was billed as “the three B’s,” a blonde, a “bronzetta,” and a brunette.

Berman felt he really had to succeed in producing *Ziegfeld Girl* as a means of proving to Mayer that he could make spectacular films for Metro, the same way he had for RKO. He told Lana, “Pull this one off, baby, and you’ll have a breakthrough film. If you do, it will mean only starring roles for you in your future.”

[Berman came close to casting Lana in another film, Madame Bo-vary *(1949)*, based on the Flaubert classic. He met with director Vincente Minnelli, and they agreed that Lana might be perfect for the role.

However, the Breen Office objected, sending a memo: “The classic French novel is about adultery, and Lana Turner in her private life carries sexual implications of an adulterous life. You will stay within the Production Code if you cast another actress of more dignified appeal, perhaps Greer Garson or Jennifer Jones.”

Jones got the role.

For creation of the film’s lavish gowns, Berman hired the well-known costume designer, Adrian, knowing that he’d devise some of the most spectacular outfits ever seen on a movie screen.

Adrian opted to dress Lamarr in “high camp” costumes long before that term was invented. In her most famous scene, she appears in show-stopping headgear so heavy she could hardly walk, despite instructions from the director to appear, at least, to “float down the steps.”

Lana’s final scene in *Ziegfeld Girl* depicts a boozy Sheila descending a grand staircase with all the majesty she can muster.

Midway down the stairs, she hesitates for a moment with her fragile hand on the banister. At the newel post, she collapses and takes a fatal downward plunge to her death.

Preview audiences, however, didn’t like her dying. In the re-edited version, it’s left up to the audience to

determine her fate.

Lamarr later lamented to Lana, “I couldn’t see where I was going because of the blinding lights. To keep me from falling over with that elaborate head-dress, a board was fastened to my back and my bosom was taped from behind. I felt like some religious penitent in the 10th Century walking in a torture procession.”

As choreographer for the spectacular musical numbers, Berman hired the well-seasoned Busby Berkeley.

Lana met Berkeley just at the time that his outsized musical numbers, which had enthralled Depression-era audiences, were becoming *passé*. She culled a lot of smart performance tips from him, especially about how to present herself regally as a showgirl. According to Lana, “Garland detested him, but I found him very sympathetic and deeply troubled.”

Lana’s former high school boyfriend, Jackie Cooper, was assigned the role of her younger brother, although they were the same age. Their young romance was not discussed, and he was going steady with her girlfriend, Bonita Granville.

At the beginning of the film, Sheila (Lana) was working as an elevator girl. She is plucked “out of the elevator shaft” to become a glamorous showgirl, and the movie traces her rise and fall through lavish production numbers in which she struts like a peacock.

She was assigned many dramatic moments, including one in which she’s beaten up by a former boxer. In another, she accidentally plunges from the stage into the footlights in full view of the (horrified) opening night audience. There’s even a sickbed scene during which it becomes clear that her illness is a result of chronic alcoholism.

After Sheila is fired from the *Follies*, she goes from bad to worse. To survive and to pay her liquor bill, she’s forced to sell her jewelry, after which she’s reduced to populating the seediest and filthiest of speakeasies.

In her interpretation of a showgirl (Susan Gallagher), Garland gets to belt out four numbers, including her most memorable song from the film, “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows.” She also gets to perform a spunky tropical number, “Minnie from Trinidad.”

Many critics lamented the fact that *Ziegfeld Girl* had been shot in black and white. An oft-repeated line in reviews was that the movie “screamed out for Technicolor.” *Time* magazine asserted that the film was a “glorification of Lana Turner.”

“The part of Sheila is Lana Turner’s big chance—and she takes it,” wrote the critic for *Kinematograph Weekly*. “All the hopes, disillusionment, and the follies of youth are crystallized in her vital, memorable, glamorous, and appealing performance.” *The New York Times* reviewer claimed, “It is the perilously lovely Lana Turner who gets this department’s bouquet for a surprisingly solid good performance as the little girl from Flatbush.”

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In her role in the film as showgirl Sandra Kolter, Hedy Lamarr was married to Franz Kolter (as played by Philip Dorn), a struggling violinist. She is snapped up by the *Follies* and becomes the breadwinner of the family.

Their marriage becomes complicated when she’s attracted to the show’s handsome headliner, Tony Martin, cast as Frank Merton. His marvelous voice rings out, with the approval of thousands of fans, much to the chagrin and jealousy of Hedy’s unemployed husband.

Martin’s show-stopping musical hit, which became an American classic, is “You Stepped Out of a Dream.”

Lamarr would become a formidable rival of Lana’s both on and off the screen. One reporter wrote, “The so-called friendship between Hedy Lamarr and Lana Turner is cordial on the surface, but hostility lurks under the skin.”

Lana had been fascinated by the background of the Austrian beauty ever since she burst into fame after her appearance in the notorious German film, *Ecstasy* (1933), in which she runs nude through a forest.

In her distant past, Hedy Kiesler (her original name) had been married to Fritz Mandl, the Austrian munitions magnate, a friend of both Mussolini and Hitler. Although a closeted Jew, he supplied munitions to the Nazis.

Rumors circulated that Mandl had pimped his gorgeous wife to both dictators. Unknown to Hitler, Lamarr was also Jewish, the daughter of a wealthy Viennesebanker.

Fame in America came for Lamarr when she co-starred with Charles Boyer in *Algiers* (1939). Sleek, slim, and chic, with her jet-black hair parted in the middle, her stunning face framed by picture hats, snoods, and turbans, she photographed beautifully.

The friendship between Lana and Lamarr might have been different if Lana had not rebuffed her sexual advances. Lamarr was bisexual, as she admitted candidly in her latter-day memoirs, *Ecstasy and Me*.

Lana told her, “I’m not that kind of girl.”

In New York City in the 1970s, Lamarr and author Darwin Porter had each hired the same literary agent, Jay Garon, and occasionally ran into each other at parties. Once, she discussed Lana, though in veiled terms. “I told her that my bosom was not as large as hers, but I also reminded her that Venus de Milo had small breasts. Lana was very hostile to me, calling me distant and reserved, although those terms might also be applied to her. I tried to be friends with her, but she was always chasing after some man. On the set of *Ziegfeld Girl*, they included both Tony Martin and James Stewart.”

In the 1940s, Lana and Lamarr would often co-star together with the same male stars: Robert Young, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Robert Taylor, Bob Hope, and Ray Milland. “On the set of *Ziegfeld Girl*, I was having an affair with James Stewart,” Lamarr said. “He and I had just made *Come Live With Me* (1941). Lana lured him away before she fell for Tony Martin.”

“I think Lana got really mad at me,” Hedy continued, “when I practically pulled that handsome devil, Errol Flynn, from her arms. I also kept luring George Montgomery and Clark Gable from her. Then, Howard Hughes told me that I was much better at oral sex than she was. That was his favorite sexual expression.”

“I also seduced John Garfield when we made *Tortilla Flat* in 1942. That was three years before Lana got him when they co-starred together in *The Postman Always Rings Twice.”*

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Even though he’d been given star billing in *Ziegfeld Girl*, James Stewart was disappointed with his minor role. “Lana Turner should have had star billing instead of being in fourth position. My role as her bootlegging boyfriend should have assigned me to fourth place, following Judy Garland and Hedy Lamarr. Any number of actors could have played my part.”

“However, on reflection, it did have the greatest fringe benefits of any movie being shot at MGM,” he told Cary Grant, Henry Fonda, and others.

No doubt, he was referring to his seduction of both Hedy and Lana during the filming of *Ziegfeld Girl.”* The director, Robert Z. Leonard, said, “I know for a fact that he spent three hours in Hedy’s dressing room one afternoon when I didn’t need them on camera. Not only that, but I saw him driving away from the studio an hour or so later with Lana. They returned the next morning in the same car. There was little doubt he’d spent the night with her, and that satisfied grin on his face proved my case.”

It may have seemed unlikely to his fans, but this lanky actor, who stood six feet three and weighed only 140 pounds of mumbling, stammering flesh, was one of the great Lotharios of Hollywood, perhaps even topping the record of Errol Flynn over at Warner Brothers.

Hailing from the town of Indiana, Pennsylvania, and before he settled down and married *divorcée* Gloria McLean, Stewart had blazed a trail of seductions through Hollywood.

Lana onscreen (top photo) and off-screen (lower photo) with James Stewart. Rumors of an affair between James Stewart and Lana swept Hollywood when they co-starred in *Ziegfeld Girl*. There was even speculation that the couple might get married after her divorce from Artie Shaw was finalized.

His affair with Lamarr had begun after their completion of the 1941 picture, *Come Live With Me*.

Hedda Hopper didn't publish the fact in her column, but privately told friends that over a period of time, Stewart had kept a diary of his conquests. Before he finally got married, the diary contained entries on 263 (the exact number) of glamor girls he'd seduced, including many of the extras and bit players in his movies.

"Those were the years," Stewart recalled in later life. "Jean, Rita, Marlene, Grace, Loretta, Hedy, Lana, to name a few. My bachelor years, let me tell you, were wonderful, just wonderful. Boy, did I have a good time polluting myself." *[That was his word for having a sexual climax.]*

In addition to her offscreen role as his lover, Lana found she could confide in Stewart. At times, she treated him like an older brother instead of a lover. She spoke of the pain of aborting Artie Shaw's child, and he shared his own experience of having "a kid of my own," also aborted. *[While making Destry Rides Again (1939), with Marlene Dietrich, she became pregnant, and their child was later aborted.]*

While filming *Ziegfeld Girl*, Stewart was also simultaneously making another film, *Pot o' Gold*, forcing him to run from one set to the other. One day, when he arrived to film a scene in *Ziegfeld Girl*, director Leonard told him that Lana's character of Sheila had been killed.

In his stammering way, he asked Leonard, “Bring me up to date on the script, would you? Did I kill her?”

Lana telephoned Louella Parsons to deny the story of her romance with Stewart. “I admire Jimmy very much as an actor,” she said. “He’s always marvelous in every scene he’s called upon to play. What a fine actor. But, romantically speaking, he is just not the type of man that I go for—at least not in *that* way.”

She had a reason for calling Parsons to deny any involvement with Stewart. Actually, when she made that call, “Hedy was taking care of Jimmy’s needs. I had moved on.”

She had fallen in love with the fifth lead in the picture: Tony Martin.

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Lana’s involvement with Tony Martin began one afternoon when Milton Weiss, from the MGM Publicity Department, approached him and asked if he’d accompany one of two MGM beauties to a world premiere. “Your options include either Hedy Lamarr or Lana Turner,” Weiss said. “The one you pick is entirely up to you, kid.”

“That’s like asking a cat if he’d like a white mouse or brown,” Martin later wrote in a memoir. “They’re both tasty. It’s just a question of which flavor he prefers. I could have the most beautiful brunette in the world or the most beautiful blonde in the world. What the hell…I’ll take Lana.”

Later that day, he discussed his choice with Lillian Burns, MGM’s drama coach. “I hear you’re taking out the blonde bombshell. Watch yourself! Don’t get hung up on her.”

“I can take care of myself,” he vowed.

“Of course you can,” she answered. “That’s what Napoléon said before he marched off to Waterloo.”

As flashbulbs popped that Saturday night, Lana and Martin made a glamorous appearance at the premiere. After the screening, and after a visit to Ciro’s nightclub, he spent the night on her satin sheets. “By Sunday morning, when I woke up with her, I forgot my depression about how another blonde, Alice Faye, had recently divorced me.”

He wrote, “If you have a bruised ego, like I did following my divorce, let Lana Turner tend to you. She’s the best little ego-builder I’ve ever seen. She had a way of looking at you, her eyes never wandering from yours. You could drown yourself in her blue eyes. She swept me off my feet, and I mean that, literally.”

Lana had been attracted to Martin ever since she and Mildred had seen him in the 1936 movie, *Follow the Fleet*, starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, in which he’d been cast as a sailor. Lana had also purchased some of his recordings, marketed through Decca records.

A bachelor again, Martin had become a member of what a loosely organized group of single, promiscuous men collectively known as “The Stud Farm” in Hollywood of the early 1940s. “The Studs” randomly included, among others, Henry Fonda; the playboy prince Aly Khan (who later married Rita Hayworth); the gigolo, Pat DiCicco (who was once famously married to heiress Gloria Vanderbilt); Cubby Broccoli (later, the producer of some of the James Bond films); or roommates Bruce Cabot and Errol Flynn. The notorious playboy of the Dominican Republic, Porfirio Rubirosa, was a sometimes member, too.

“Members of The Stud Farm got pursued by girls as much as we pursued them,” Martin said. “We weren’t hard to get. All of us were gay blades.”

Before he started going steady with Lana, there was an encounter at the men’s urinal in Los Angeles’ CBS Building with Artie Shaw, who was still in the process of divorcing Lana.

Shaw later revealed what happened that afternoon. “Tony and I were doing a show at the same radio network at the time Lana and I had decided to split.”

“I was already at the urinal taking a piss when Martin came into the room,” Shaw said. “There was a row of eight empty urinals, but he decided to stand next to me when he whipped it out.”

“Hi, Artie,” Martin said. It quickly became obvious that the two men were checking out each other’s equipment. “I say, would you mind if I started to data Lana since you guys have broken up? Out of respect, I wanted to ask your permission.”

“I didn’t like him asking me like that at the urinals with our two Jewish cocks hanging out. But then I figured that at least Lana with either of us wouldn‘t have to cope with foreskin.”

"It was more than just sex with Lana," Tony Martin later said. "Many women I'd met when I was a member of the Stud Farm were good at that. She was a total woman. She was warm and tender and thoughtful and unselfish."

"When you were Lana's guy, you were king. She never looked at another man. She was always there ready to love you. While you were with her, it was as if she'd been put on earth for one purpose—to serve you and to love you."

"Sure, do anything you god damn like," Shaw told him. "It doesn't make any difference to me."

Lana was seen on two occasions lunching with Martin and her best friend, actress Virginia Grey, on the set of *The Big Store* (1941), a Marx Brothers comedy in which they were cast together as sweethearts. Later that afternoon, Lana heard Martin sing "Tenement Symphony" with a children's choir.

During the white heat of their affair, Lana and Martin flew together to San Francisco, where he'd been scheduled to sing at the World's Fair. It was here that he introduced the Jerome Kern song, "All the Things You Are," which became a standard.

Judy Garland with her new husband, David Rose, joined Lana and Martin for dinner that night. Lana suspected that Garland still had a crush on Martin based on the way she gazed lovingly at him, annoying Rose.

After his first night in a San Francisco hotel suite with Lana, Martin ran into Victor Mature, the muscular actor, in the lobby. He had met him casually before. "Hi, Vic," he said. "I didn't know you were in town."

"I decided to check out the World's Fair," Mature said.

No mention was made of Lana. Martin had heard rumors that she might be involved with this handsome hunk, who was new to Hollywood, but he had opted not to believe them. "Lana looked at me with those dewy blue eyes, and they were so worshipful, that I knew I had to be the only man in her life, past, present, or future. I had even proposed marriage to her as soon as her divorce from Artie came through."

That day, from outside the hotel, Martin made several attempts to telephone Lana at their suite, but no one answered the phone. When he returned there at six o'clock, she still was not there and had left no note.

At around 8PM, she came in. He asked her where she'd been all day.

"A little sightseeing, a little shopping," she said, although she carried no packages with her.

At the end of their holiday, when Lana and Martin flew together back to Los Angeles, he decided to drive directly to her home to spend a long weekend. As they pulled into her driveway, he spotted Mature leaving her home with two over-stuffed suitcases. Lana and Martin got out of his car, and Mature gave her a quick kiss on the lips. "Hi, everybody," he said. It was an awkward moment.

She quickly retreated inside her house, leaving Mature and Martin to face off in the driveway. Mature quickly placed his suitcases into the trunk of his car and then pivoted to face Martin. "Well, old buddy—this is goodbye."

"How's it going?" Martin asked.

"Just fine," Then, before getting behind the wheel of his car, Mature said, "Look, Tony, all I can say is that I want to wish you kids a lot of luck. With a war coming on, we'll need it. Both of us will probably end up in the service. I'll see you guys around."

Then he drove off.

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In her memoirs, Lana wrote, “After my breakup with Artie Shaw, I did go out a lot and with many different escorts. Victor Mature, I saw once, I think.”

In another memoir, Lana’s daughter, Cheryl Crane, stated things more accurately. “Both mother and Victor Mature did a lot of dating in 1941.”

In truth, the Kentucky-born actor, son of an immigrant Austro-Italian knife sharpener, had once moved in with Lana for a few weeks. At the time, he was already well-known in Hollywood for his dark good looks, his muscles, and his mega-watt smile.

Before meeting Lana, Mature had been cast as a fur-clad caveman in *One Million B.C*. (1940). His co-star in that film was Lana’s rival, Carole Landis, with whom he’d sustained an affair.

In her column, Hedda Hopper had described Mature as “a sort of miniature Johnny Weissmuller.”

“Hedda pissed me off by writing that,” he said. “There’s nothing miniature about me.”

In 1941, he co-starred once again with Landis, and with Betty Grable too, in the crime drama, *I Wake Up Screaming*. “I seduced both of these blondes,” he later boasted. “In the 1940s, I did quite a few blondes: June Haver, Veronica Lake, Betty Hutton, and Alice Faye, Tony Martin’s ex. I can’t help that I’ve got a powerful set of muscles, but I want to prove I’m something more. I’m tired of being nothing but a striptease act.”

In time, he would cut a romantic trail across the Hollywood landscape, marrying five different times, and seducing an occasional brunette such as Elizabeth Taylor and Gene Tierney. He even dated actress Wendy Barrie, the girlfriend of gangster Bugsy Siegel, when she was not otherwise engaged by the gangster himself or by Greg Bautzer.

Artie Shaw remembered the night he escorted his estranged wife, Lana, before their divorce to a Hollywood party where she ran into Mature.

“She had this technique,” he said. “When a stud entered the room, and he interested her, she would straighten her back, thrusting out her breasts like a pouter pigeon, and head straight to her target. I often knew who her conquest for the night would be before she did. When Mature entered the room, she glided toward him. An hour or so later, she was gliding out the door with him.”

Mature became famous in Hollywood for his endowment. So far as it is known, only one actress, the very promiscuous and very outspoken Liz Renay, described his penis in any detail. “Victor was very thick and measured six and a half inches soft, rising to 10½” when aroused. And that’s what I did to this magnificent hunk of beefcake. I aroused him time and time again. He hit the spot. What a man!”

“He told me he was a mean kid when growing up,” Renay said. “On the first day of school, he bit his teacher. He hit Hollywood with a stash of candy, which he sold to pay his weekly rent of $8 for a burnt-out garage in someone’s backyard.”

What Renay and Lana didn’t know was that during his first lean months in Hollywood, he hustled homosexuals along Hollywood Boulevard, charging them ten dollars for sex.

At one point in their relationship, Mature flew to Washington with Lana to attend one of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wartime charity balls to raise money to fight polio.

She’d received a special invitation to visit the White House a bit in advance of the other guests there, along with some other stars (not Mature), she was ushered into the room where FDR delivered his fireside chats.

A limousine had transported Lana to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. For the occasion, she wore a silky white lace dress over a flesh-colored petticoat, her ensemble cloaked with a white fox fur.

When it was time to meet the president, who was seated behind his desk, she admitted, “I was trembling with fear.” He reached out for her hand, and she claimed, “I saw recognition in his eyes.”

“You are none other than Lana Turner!” Roosevelt said.

“’Yes, Mr. President,’ I said. He looked me over, and I think he saw everything I had, at least when I opened by coat to show him how I was dressed. He gave me a long, wistful look, perhaps remembering an earlier day, before he came down with polio.”

“My, you are one beautiful young lady,” he told her.

“Thank you, Mr. President.”

“I predict you’ll be the belle of the ball tonight, dancing around the floor.”

“I don’t know—the competition is rough.”

Then he flashed his celebrated grin at her. “Oh, that I could be the one whirling you around.”

She later admitted, “I was choking back tears, and was made painfully aware of his semi-paralyzed condition.”

She wished him a happy birthday and gave him a light kiss on his forehead. “Here I was in the presence of the most powerful man in the world, far more powerful than either Hitler or Churchill.”

After exiting from the White House, outside its gates, she was mobbed by screaming fans, who tore at her white fox coat. She begged the mob not to tear it as it was being ripped from her shoulders.

According to Victor Mature, “When I hit Hollywood in the early 1940s, I was in such demand that my datebook was constantly filled. Lana Turner was among my first conquests.” She claimed, ‘Vic was my greatest thrill.’”

When White House security guards retrieved her coat, it was, indeed, ripped. “I hadn’t even paid for it yet,” she said.

That night, at the ball, she had danced not only with Mature, but with a number of top government administrators, including members of the Army brass.

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Mature was “too big” a prize not to attract other Hollywood beauties. In *My Gal Sal* (1942), he was cast with both Rita Hayworth and Landis, who, along with Betty Grable, were Lana’s chief rivals for the title of Pinup Girl of World War II.

“For a while, I was kept busy satisfying both Rita and Carole, with not a lot of time off. But eventually, I settled for Rita.”

“Call it a wartime romance,” Hayworth said. “My shacking up with Vic really pissed off Lana Turner.”

In July of 1942, Mature attempted to enlist in the U.S. Navy, but was rejected because of his color blindness. He then enlisted in the Coast Guard.

During his stint in the Coast Guard, while lying nude and uncovered on a cot, with his cock dangling over the side of the bed, a picture was snapped of him and widely distributed through the underground. Among homosexual men, and based to some extent on that photo, Mature became the Pinup Boy of World War II.

When author Gore Vidal saw the picture, he wrote: “If the Nazis had seen that picture of Victor Mature, they would have surrendered much sooner.”

When Mature was away at war, Hayworth had promised to wait for him. But she didn’t. Along came Orson Welles.

When Mature returned home on leave, she told him, as justification for her shift in loyalties, “Wartime promises are rarely kept. They’re made on the impulse of the moment.”

Lana had reason to be jealous of Hayworth. When they’d co-starred together in *Music in My Heart* (1940), Hayworth had sustained an affair with Tony Martin. She’d also seduced Lana’s former lover, James Stewart, and she’d snared Lana’s all-time crush, Tyrone Power, when they had co-starred in *Blood and Sand* in 1941.

Despite Lana and Mature’s breakup as lovers, they continued as friends. In 1943, Lana released *Slightly Dangerous*, co-starring Robert Young. When it turned out that he was not available for the radio version, Mature filled in for him.

Lana also attended the premiere of Mature’s most famous movie, Cecil B. De-Mille’s *Samson and Delilah* in

1949. The seductress was portrayed by Hedy Lamarr. DeMille described the role of Samson as “a combination of Tarzan, Robin Hood, and Superman.”

Groucho Marx had another point of view. “I never like a movie where the hero’s tits are bigger than those of the heroine.”

Lana heard that Mature had imported a concrete imprint of his buttocks in a location just outside the entrance to his dressing room when he became annoyed that Grauman’s Chinese Theater had not invited him to leave an imprint of his hands and feet in the cement in front of their movie palace.

In 1954, when Lana was cast with Clark Gable and Mature in *Betrayed*, she celebrated a “working reunion” with two of her lovers from the early 1950s.

In 1960, facing a career in decline, Mature announced his retirement after filming *The Tartars* in Italy.

“Making movies wasn’t fun anymore,” he told the press. “I thought what the hell, since I was okay financially. I said goodbye to Hollywood. Let those jerks call me what they would—a ‘Technicolor Tarzan,’ a ‘Lush Lothario,’ an ‘Overripe Romeo.’ Fuck it all! I made money and I had a blast, and I screwed as many dames as I wanted to, from Lana Turner to Rita Hayworth. Not bad, wouldn’t you say?”

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In 1940, Mildred knocked on Lana’s door as she was applying her makeup for another glamorous night on the town. “Joan Crawford is on the phone.”

At first. Lana was tempted not to take the call. Since she was no longer sleeping with Greg Bautzer, she wondered what new boyfriend of Crawford’s she’d been moving in on.

“Darling,” came Crawford’s voice over the phone. “I just heard that MGM is considering a remake of my 1928 silent, *Our Dancing Daughters*, with you in the lead.”

“This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Lana said.

John Carroll, the Clark Gable wannabe, ultimately struck out with Lana after a two-night fling, yet succeeded with another famous blonde, Marilyn Monroe, in 1947.

He and his wife, Lucille Ryman, head of new talent at MGM, took in this “stray waif and sex kitten.”

Carroll seduced her, the first of many times, when he found her walking around nude in his house while Ryman was away at MGM. After he’d finished, she wanted to know, “Was I as good as Lana Turner?”

Ryman later revealed, “At the time John and I took Marilyn in, she had been prostituting herself on Hollywood Boulevard in exchange for meals. Say what you want about the notorious Lana Turner—she never stooped that low.”

“Dear heart, you’re not good enough as an actress to lie to me. Of course, you know all about it. But I wanted you to know that if you try to replicate my role as ‘Dangerous Diana’ Medford, you might be laughed off the screen.”

“I never saw your movie,” Lana said, “and I know nothing about it. I was just a little girl when it was released. Mother didn’t let me go to filthy pictures.”

“In that film, I had to tear loose with one Charleston after another,” Crawford said. “The part requires

tremendous skill as a dancer. Of course, I can pull it off, but from what I hear, you have to rehearse and rehearse to perform the simplest steps. *Our Dancing Daughters* made me a big star. Perhaps you can find some other vehicle better suited to your limited talents."

"Miss Crawford, I really must go," Lana said. "Thank you for your career advice. The next time I need such advice, I'll phone you. Heaven knows, you've been in the industry long enough to know everything about it." Then she slammed down the phone.

MGM eventually shelved plans to remake *Our Dancing Daughters*.

***

During his tenure as Lana's agent, Johnny Hyde continually worked to get her the right movie roles.

Such was the case with the projected film, *Little Working Girls*. Based on a story by Bradford Roper, it was slated to be filmed with Lana and a handsome actor named John Carroll.

Born in New Orleans, Carroll was a mustachioed actor who had been making films since 1936, none of them memorable.

Lana had seen only one of them, *Susan and God* (1940), and that was because Joan Crawford had been its star. She'd played a flighty society lady who becomes entranced by a new movement in religious thought.

Carroll had been awarded fourth billing after Fredric March and Ruth Hussey. To her surprise, Lana had spotted Rita Hayworth interpreting a small part in that film. "Tomorrow's competition," she told Mildred.

When Carroll learned that MGM had cast Lana in *Little Working Girls*, he phoned her and arranged a date. Having recently divorced his first wife, he was a bachelor-at-large.

As her escort, Lana found him courtly and attentive. He was one of several actors billed at the time as "the next Clark Gable."

As Lana described to her friend, Virginia Grey, "Since I can't get the real Gable, why not settle for merely the mock?"

Their first night out was spent together at Ciro's. The next day was Saturday, and he invited her to join him at the home of his friend, actor Ben Lyon, at his beach house in Santa Monica.

It was at the beach house that Saturday afternoon that Lana's "two-day affair," (her term) with Carroll began. He confessed to her, "I'm famished for blonde goddesses, and in Hollywood, you're the blonde goddess of them all —forget Betty Grable and Carole Landis."

The following week, when Carroll phoned to invite Lana for another weekend at Lyon's beach house, she refused to take the call, informing Mildred, "Tell Johnny boy I'm not in. I've got other plans."

Since their previous weekend together, Hyde had called to inform her that MGM had shelved plans to film *Little Working Girl*. Lana had responded, "Leave all those shopgirl roles to Crawford. Get me something glamorous with Clark Gable or Robert Taylor."

***

With the arrival of the 1940s and America's entry into World War II after the December 7, 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor, Lana was on the dawn of her greatest stardom.

America's G.I.s, fighting on battlefields in both the Pacific and in Europe, named her, "The Girl We'd Like to be Stranded on a Desert Island With." She was also called "The Most Gorgeous, Spectacular, and Pulse-Stirring Thing on High Heels."

As America went to war, the 18th Bomb Squadron of the U.S. Air Force painted her image on the nose of one of its B-17s. In her honor, the flying fortress was nicknamed "Tempest Turner."

Her look, her taste, her fashion accessories, and her style were subsequently imitated by young women across America, many of them working in defense plants.

She was not a mad egotist like Hedy Lamarr, who she considered more beautiful than she was.

She told the press, "Jobs are landed in Hollywood through brains, ability, beauty, talent, hard work, or through a combination of features that stack up to a photogenic accident. I was one of the photogenic accidents."

Mervin LeRoy, the director who had discovered her, relinquished his personal contract with her to Louis B. Mayer at MGM. Thus, the way was paved for her to become the undisputed Queen of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. She would sit on that throne for eighteen years.

***

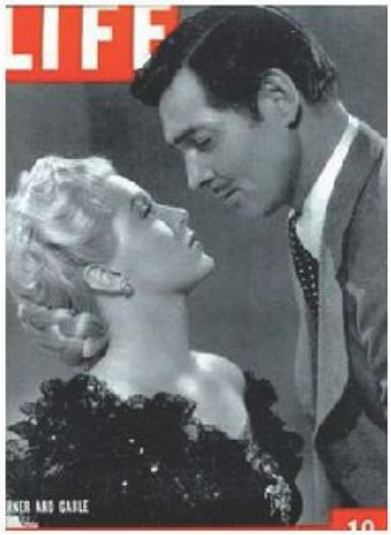
Following her divorce from Artie Shaw, and before her second marriage to Stephen Crane, Lana was plunged into the most promiscuous and randomly romantic period of her life.

SMITTEN, this serviceman is, as were thousands of his counterparts, with the spontaneous charm of lovely Lana, at a Navy party in 1940.

Chapter Seven

Lana Romances
Dr. Jekyll, Rhett Butler, Bugsy Siegel, & a Galaxy of Other Celebrities

The Luscious Blonde Makes Music with The Boys in the Band



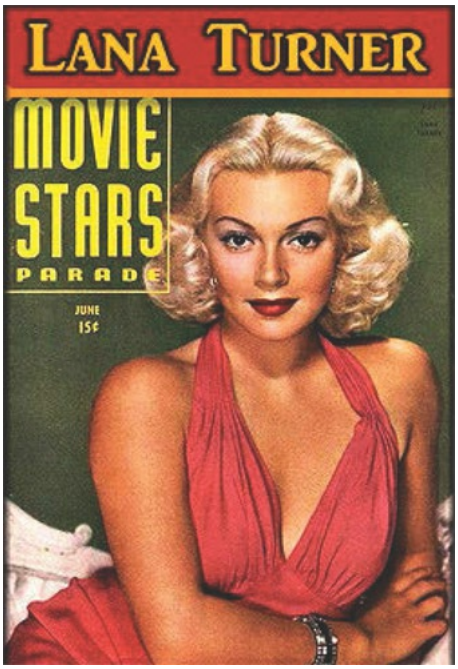
Years later, Lana recalled the first time she walked onto the set of the 1941 film, *Honky Tonk*, her first really big starring role. In it, she'd appear with Clark Gable, The King of Hollywood.

"I was intimidated, knowing that I would be the latest in a stream of his leading ladies who had already included Greta Garbo, Jean Harlow, Mary Astor, Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Myrna Loy, Vivien Leigh, Hedy Lamarr, Loretta Young, Norma Shearer, Helen Hayes, Claudette Colbert, Rosalind Russell, and Jeanette MacDonald."

Salesman, lumberjack, truck driver, telephone repairman, and newspaper reporter, Gable, a native of Cadiz, Ohio, became a bigtime movie idol in spite of his large ears. Jack Warner looked at one of his early screen tests and said, "Those ears will doom his career as a leading man." In another test, his physique was defined as "not impressive enough to play Tarzan."

Gable, of course, was one of the major seducers of Hollywood, estimated to have "conquered" some of MGM's biggest stars plus hundreds of starlets or women in other professions, such as carhops.

Before Lana Turner started wildly dating almost a new man every night, Artie Shaw came back into her life. He was pleased that during their divorce, she had not asked for alimony.



At the peak of her fame in the early 1940s, Lana reigned supreme as the cover girl of movie magazines. In one month alone, her glamorous picure appeared on the covers of eighteen magazines.

It was Christmas Eve, 1940. After an exhausting road trip, he had returned to the home they had shared on Summit Hill in Brentwood. He turned the key in the front door, entered his living room and turned on the lights. To his amazement, a Christmas tree positioned in the center of the room was suddenly illuminated. Presents had been positioned around the base of the tree.

Then, as if in a dream, a seductive Lana emerged from behind the sofa, wearing a sexy black lace *négligée*. "Merry Christmas, darling," she said, even though he was Jewish.

"What a surprise," he said. "I'm worn out, but you've inspired me to new life."

She'd ordered a champagne dinner, which arrived at ten o'clock. That was followed by a night of lovemaking.

He awakened at 11AM on Christmas morning, completely exhausted, but satisfied. "What a hot damn homecoming that was!"

Over a late breakfast, she proposed a remarriage. "Let's get back together. I've missed you."

"I've missed my blonde goddess. Let's think about it."

Remarrying was not a decision that either of them wanted to rush. In the coming months, they saw each other only sporadically. There was no more talk about it. Eventually, plans to remarry were abandoned, buried as each of them were by heavy dating schedules, especially Lana. "Artie and I became friends," she said. "Even the rolls in the hay stopped."

"There was a time I actually did consider remarrying her," Shaw said. "But there was something preventing that. I couldn't stand the thought of her one hundred pairs of shoes crowding me out of my closets."

There was another, even more serious reason. Before her 21st birthday, Lana went on a nymphomaniacal rampage, dating almost every handsome hunk who caught her eye.

She shared the most intimate details of her adventures with Virginia Grey, who became intrigued with the graphic descriptions. In distinct contrast, Shaw himself never really wanted to hear about them.

"Yet she filled me in whether I liked it or not," he said. "Perhaps she was showing off, letting me know she could get on very well without me. She'd phone and say, 'Guess who I did last night?' She would then transmit the most intimate details of her latest conquest, even his penile measurements. She must have kept a ruler under her pillow. Virginia was much more intrigued by all these physical descriptions than I was. Frankly, I'm not turned on by men and could care less about their love-making techniques or their pillow talk."

"Without meaning to, I may have aided her conquests in an indirect way," Shaw continued. "In those days, I went to a lot of movies. When we talked about them, I often mentioned an actor who I thought was going to get hot in films."

"Some of these guys were just making their debut in films. Others had been kicking around Hollywood for a while in the 1930s, but were suddenly becoming box office draws now that the former male stars had been shipped off to the Pacific or wherever. Guys like Sterling Hayden come to mind. Perhaps 'come' is the wrong word. Within a week or so after talking about an actor, I'd get a call from Lana."

"We did it," she'd say.

"'Did it!' was the way she described intercourse. Then I'd hear a play-by-play description of her conquest. Many times, she never had these guys after their one-night stand. She was too busy in most cases for repeats. Of course, some of her lovers were already married. A few also had boyfriends—that's pretty common in Hollywood."

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Lana's radically renegotiated MGM contract called for an increase in her salary to $1,500 a week. "I was on my way to being a big star. At that time, my salary was a heady sum for a twenty-year-old."

In her next three pictures, she would be co-starring with the three biggest box office attractions at MGM. Those stars, in descending order of the profits they generated at the box office, included Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, and Robert Taylor.

To millions of her male admirers, she was acclaimed as "The Most Desirable Woman in the World." Her star power not only extended to her roles at MGM, but to her private life, too. "Unless the guy was a homosexual, I could have virtually any man I wanted in Hollywood."

"Even if he's married?" asked Grey.

"Especially if he's married," Lana boasted.

During the opening months of America's involvement in World War II, Lana's fame grew monthly to the point where she eventually evolved into the unofficial "Sweetheart of the Navy." And although marines and soldiers in the Army dug her, too, she remained a special favorite with sailors throughout the duration of the war and for years after it ended.

Life magazine published a poll of sailors aboard the *S.S. Idaho*, and Lana emerged the clear favorite. Minor votes were cast for runners-up Betty Grable, Carole Landis, Rita Hayworth, and Dorothy Lamour. Hedy Lamarr also garnered numerous votes, although the men seemed to prefer actresses with larger busts.

Based on her new status as "The Queen of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer," Lana, along with Mildred, moved into a movie star mansion in Beverly Hills. For the first time in her life, she hired a staff of servants, including a housekeeper and a cook. As Shaw claimed, "Lana was spending every cent of her weekly paycheck."

***

At the beginning of the 1940s, Lana entered a romantic period of her life that daughter Cheryl Crane later called "The Boys in the Band." She'd met dozens of musicians through her link to Artie Shaw.

Her favorite—"and the best looking and the best lover" (her words)—was Gene Krupa. The ninth son of Polish parents, Krupa had been born in Chicago and was thirteen years older than Lana. Although a hell-raising, drug-taking musician, composer, and bandleader, he was originally reared for the priesthood.

He'd been playing drums since the 1920s. By December of 1934, he was a member of Benny Goodman's band. During his time there, he became famous across the country. "No one could beat the drums like Gene," Lana said.

During the time she dated him, he invited her to the set of *Ball of Fire* (1941), starring Barbara Stanwyck, the wife of Robert Taylor. Stanwyck didn't seem to want to have anything to do with her—"and I hadn't even met her husband," Lana protested.

Stanwyck's co-star was Gary Cooper. "I really don't think he even remembered having an affair with me," Lana said. "Imagine forgetting that you went to bed with Lana Turner! Of course, I was a bit young in those days."

Lana had a fling with sweat-soaked Gene Krupa in the 1940s. She had nothing but praise for his "boudoir antics. He pounded a woman like his tom-tom, even when he was high on what he called weed."

When Lana met Krupa, he was working with Glenn Miller's swing band. Howard Hawks had cast Krupa in *Ball of Fire*. He performed an extended version of "Drum Boogie," a number that Stanwyck, cast as a burlesque dancer, pretended to sing, her voice dubbed by "the songbird," Martha Tilton.

While Krupa was beating his drums on camera, Lana wandered off with actor Dana Andrews, who had the fourth lead in *Ball of Fire*. After studying acting at the Pasadena Playhouse, he was just breaking into films, having earned his living as a gas station attendant. When she met him, he had just appeared in *Tobacco Road*, based on that controversial Erskine Caldwell novel. In *Ball of Fire*, he played the villain be-mused by Cooper's timidity.

Andrews looked very masculine, solid, and reliable, giving off a virility that seemed in some ways uninspired. Nevertheless, after the sometimes overly energetic Krupa, she was drawn to Andrews' masculinity.

At one point during their dialogues, he asked for her phone number, and she gave it to him. "It can't be tonight," she said. "I'm involved with Gene."

"I can see that," he said. "But that's subject to change."

She soon discovered that Krupa was heavily addicted to drugs and always seemed stoned on marijuana, even though it didn't seem to harm his musical performances.

During her brief marriage to Shaw, she came to believe that all musicians smoked pot. "Artie wasn't an addict, but no day went by when he didn't have a smoke or two. When Artie and the boys in his band got together, everyone was always going up in smoke."

Their romance ended long before Krupa was arrested in 1943 for possession of marijuana. His habits contributed to the breakup of his own band, and he later rejoined Benny Goodman's Music Makers.

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It was through Krupa that Lana met a future lover, Benny Goodman. Another son of Chicago, Goodman was a clarinet player like Artie Shaw, and both musicians vied for the title of "The King of Swing."

Goodman was the ninth of a dozen siblings born to Russian Jewish immigrants. He was a boy—not even a teenager—when he made his professional debut during the early 1920s in Chicago, a city addicted to jazz at the time.

"I will always say this about Benny Goodman," Lana said. "He knew how to use his mouth in bed with a woman, perhaps from years of holding that mouthpiece between his front teeth and his lower lip."

One night on a date with Goodman, Lana was introduced to trumpeter Harry James, who had "a thing for blondes," and even married one, Betty Grable. "He made a pass at me, but I didn't receive it," Lana said.

"I loved dancing to Benny's music," she said, "especially the bebop and the cool jazz that America was listening to as it went to war. I think he was a greater clarinet player than Artie, but don't tell my former husband I have that view."

"He was a smooth lover in bed," she told Grey. She never admitted to Shaw that she was having an affair with his chief rival.

Lana asked Grey a question: "Bennymight be a smooth lover, but does a woman really want a guy that smooth in bed?"

Years later, in an interview, Lana claimed that both Goodman and Shaw were instrumental in removing racial segregation among black and white musicians. "When a drunk once approached Benny and me at the Trocadero, and asked him, 'Why do you play with niggers,' Benny stood up, threatening him."

"I'll knock you out if you say that word around me again," Goodman said to the racist drunk.

"Although I admired Benny in so many ways, especially his talent, I had to move on," Lana said. "To be really frank, my game back then was called 'playing the field.'"

***

Of all the boys in the band that Lana dated, Tommy Dorsey didn't quite meet her demand for good looks in a man. He was charming and reasonably attractive to her, at least enough so that she dated him for a while. "Perhaps it was his smooth-toned trombone playing that won me over," she recalled.

Tommy Dorsey was always saying goodbye to Lana, as he headed out for another gig or else for a rest at his 21-acre estate in Bernardsville, New Jersey.

One photographer snapped a picture of one of their goodbyes at the railroad station. She is glamorously dressed as he looks lovingly at her. But that very night, after their farewell, she fell into the arms of Buddy Rich. As she told Grey, “Why waste time?”

Her daughter, Cheryl Crane, later wrote, “One of mother’s prized possessions was a trombone from Tommy Dorsey that read: “Lana, Happy New Year, The Boys in the Band.”

The son of a bandleader from Pennsylvania, Dorsey was a master musician—jazz trombonist, composer, conductor, and one of the leading bandleaders of the wartime Big Band era. He was known as the “Sentimental Gentleman of Swing.” And he was the younger brother of another bandleader, Jimmy Dorsey. Tommy recorded one of Lana’s all-time favorite songs, “I’ll Never Smile Again,” with vocals by Frank Sinatra.

Throughout his career, Tommy Dorsey worked with some of the biggest names in music: Glenn Miller, Dick Haymes (Lana’s former lover), Nelson Riddle, Paul White-man, the Pied Pipers, Buddy Rich (another of Lana’s lovers), and such female vocalists as Jo Stafford and Connie Haines.

Sinatra achieved his greatest success as a singer in Dorsey’s Band, making eighty records from 1940 to 1942. The singer claimed that he learned breath control watching “Tommy play the trombone.”

Lana was instrumental in getting Dorseyto hire her ex-husband (Artie Shaw) in 1942 when he broke up his own band. Dorsey employed Shaw and his string section.

When Lana dated him, he was already married, but away from his wife, “Totts” Kraft, for weeks at a time. He was only 17 when he took the 16-year-old as his bride.

Lana was quick to point out that she was not the cause of Dorsey’s divorce in 1943 from his wife, but it was his affair with singer Edythe Wright.

***

Born in Brooklyn of Jewish-American parents, both of whom were vaudevillians, Buddy Rich grew up in the world of music. At the age of one, he surprised his father by keeping a steady beat with spoons. At the age of 18 months, he was playing drums on stage in his parents’ vaudeville act.

In time, he became known as the greatest drummer in the world, celebrated for his virtuoso technique, power, and speed. He performed with Tommy Dorsey and Harry James, even with Count Basie, eventually conducting his own band.

“For a while, I adored Buddy,” Lana told Grey. “When I dated him, I was making *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I soon learned that Buddy could have played both roles. That guy sure had one short fuse. He could be charming one minute, then Mr. Hyde the next.”

“One night at this club, he accused me of making goo-goo eyes at Sinatra.” Lana said. “When Frank joined our table for a while, he and Buddy talked like old friends. Then Frank said something that pissed off Buddy, and he

struck him. Frank didn't hit him back, but two days later, two goons—no doubt Frank's chums—beat up Buddy in an alley."

At one time, both Rich and Sinatra were members of Tommy Dorsey's band. They frequently got into brawls even back then, but somehow managed to make up and be friends once again.

"Buddy Rich was a very satisfying and most competent lover, but I had to be careful around him," Lana said. "I never knew when I was going to piss him off and get struck by him. He frightened me, even though I was attracted to him."

"Finally, after a fight one night, I knew I had to end it with Buddy," Lana said. "I told him, 'I love your music and our love-making, but my face is my fortune. I fear that you might cause me real damage. So I'm out of here. Save your pounding for the drums!'"

***

As the venue for his first date with her, Dana Andrews invited Lana to a cast party for the actors in the romance film *Ball of Fire* (1941). The party was hosted at Café Formosa. A favorite gathering place for actors, it stood across from the entrance to Goldwyn Studios.

Lana liked being escorted by Dana Andrews, whom she felt was a strong, macho figure. Indeed, he would in time be cited as "*film noir*'s masculine ideal of steely impassivity."

She was a bit put off, however, by his excessive drinking, which made him stand out even in a heavy-drinking crowd.

Its host was mobster Benjamin ("Bugsy") Siegel, a Jewish-American gangster from Brooklyn, one of the founders of Murder, Inc.

Lana had heard of the joint, but had never visited it.

Set for a December, 1941, release, *Ball of Fire* had cast Gary Cooper as Bertram Potts, a professor who falls in love with Sugarpuss O'Shea (Barbara Stanwyck), a burlesque dancer.

Andrews had been cast as the gangster, Joe Lilac, who is involved with Sugarpuss.

The actor told Lana that he was modeling his character after Siegel himself, who was known for his thousand dollar suits, his smooth talking, and his good looks.

In addition to his involvement with the British actress Wendy Barrie, Siegel took for his mistress Virginia ("Sugar") Hill. Born in a backwater of Alabama, Hill was a bosomy, auburn-haired, green-eyed beauty. She had persuaded director Howard Hawks to give her a role in *Ball of Fire*. Perhaps coincidentally, Stanwyck's character in the movie was named "Sugarpuss."

Gene Krupa, who was also in the cast, could not escort Lana anywhere that night since he was scheduled for a gig out of town.

At the party, Andrews introduced Lana to the film's director, Hawks, who told her he'd like to direct her in a movie.

However, when she ran into Stanwyck, the actress turned her back on Lana, who would soon be co-starring with her husband, Robert Taylor, in *Johnny Eager*.

The highlight of the evening occurred when Andrews introduced her to the charismatic Siegel, whom she found "extraordinarily handsome." Although he was accompanied with his girlfriend Sugar, she was called away by Hawks to meet the people at his table while Andrews was otherwise occupied at the bar.

Alone together, Lana flirted shamelessly with Siegel. Perhaps she did it for vengeance against Greg Bautzer. *[As part of a complicated romantic rondelay, Bautzer had once canceled a date with Lana for a tryst with Wendy Barrie, and perhaps in some perverse way, she was getting back at Bautzer for tossing her over, if only for a night.]*

When Andrews returned from the bar, Siegel invited them, as a couple, to one of his lavish Hollywood parties scheduled for the upcoming Saturday.

After their exit from the party at Formosa, Lana took the wheel of his car, driving Andrews to her home, where she suggested that he spend the night. "You've had too much to drink," she told him, "and I think you'll be safer in my bed."

She later discussed her night with Andrews with Virginia Grey. "Dana certainly has the equipment to satisfy a woman, but he drinks too much. I'm convinced he wasn't half as good as he would have been if he'd been reasonably sober."

After a late breakfast, Andrews assured her that he'd retrieve her at 8PM on the designated night to escort her to Siegel's party. But when he showed up at Lana's doorstep, he was already intoxicated.

Surmising that there was no way she could sober him up, she devised a scheme, offering him a series of three more drinks, even though before he drank them, he looked as if he were close to passing out on her sofa.

He eventually did that (pass out) before 9PM, at which time she put a blanket over him and left him to sleep it off. Then she drove to Siegel's party alone.

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Arriving alone that Saturday night at Siegel's party, Lana was ushered into the lavishly furnished Holmby Hills home of Bugsy Siegel. Over the decades, she would attend countless Hollywood parties, many of them spectacular, but Siegel's big bash would stand out in her mind "It was the first real A-list party I ever attended," she said.

Lana had never seen a man as expensively dressed as Bugsy Siegel, beginning with the best-tailored suit she'd ever seen a man wear. With it, he wore a red silk shirt in an era when men tended only to wear white shirts. From his alligator shoes to his red silk tie, he looked like he'd stepped out of some gentlemen's style magazine.

Seeing her from across a crowded room, the gangster rushed to her side and greeted her warmly, kissing her on both cheeks. She found him likable and ingratiating, even though she knew he was a murderer.

The guest list stunned her, particularly when she chatted with her boss, Louis B. Mayer. He warned her, "You should be home getting your beauty sleep."

She also ran into Jack Warner, one of her former bosses. "I was wrong about you, girl," he said. "I thought you didn't have what it takes to make it. But you've got it, baby."

She spoke with Clark Gable, with whom she briefly discussed their upcoming picture, *Honky Talk*, until he was rescued by his wife, Carole Lombard.

Frank Sinatra approached and gave her a passionate kiss on the lips before introducing her to his friend, Cary Grant, who had recently married, after breaking Randolph Scott's heart, the Woolworth heiress, Barbara Hutton.

Before the night was over, as she was standing alone on his moonlit terrace, Siegel approached her from behind. Within a few minutes, he'd arranged a date with her for the following Monday night.

"I can't wait, baby," he whispered in her ear.

At 8PM on that scheduled night, a bulletproof limousine pulled up in her driveway, conducted by "the handsomest chauffeur in the history of the world," as she recalled. "I never saw or heard of him again. Perhaps he couldn't act, but he would have lit up the screen."

For her night with Siegel, "Everything was champagne-colored—my hair, my shoes, my gown, even my undergarments."

As if he'd known in advance what she'd be wearing, he'd arranged a catered champagne supper. "Even the sofa was made of champagne-colored fabric, so I blended in."

Throughout dinner, Siegel never seemed to take his eyes off Lana. He was a fascinating host, relaying tales of his life without mentioning the criminal elements.

"Jean Harlow went wild over me. Of all the blondes in Hollywood, I think you're the only one who has what it takes to replace her."

"Tell me that and I'll follow you anywhere."

"Even to my bedroom?" he asked.

"Perhaps if you give me just a little more champagne," she responded, coquettishly.

Then he retrieved five gold lockets and opened them for her, describing their contents as pubic hair "harvested" from the nether regions of Jean Harlow.

"I didn't collect them personally," he said. "Another mobster did when Harlow had some emergency surgery. They were plucked off without her permission, and I paid $500 each for five of these."

In his bedroom, as he was undressing, Lana wasn't surprised when he removed his trousers to reveal monogrammed, red silk underwear. As she'd later relay to Virginia Grey, "Bugsy looked even better with his

clothes off. He was one of those men that wives dream about when their dull husbands are screwing them."

[Another mobster, Abe Zwillman, had already spread the word that, "Bugsy is God's gift to women." When Lana heard that, she chimed in, "I second the motion. Before me, and before Harlow, Bugsy had brought joy to the likes of everybody from Sophie Tucker to Mae West."]

During a chat with Grey, she said, "The only surprise about this he-man is that before he goes to sleep, he puts on a chin strap to keep his perfect profile intact, and blue shades over his eyes. Otherwise, he sleeps in the nude, as befits God's gift to women. And the next morning, he told me that even if I become a big star, making a lot of money, he'd never ask me for a loan."

"Why would you need a loan from me?" she had asked him. "It looks like you've got more money than God Herself."

"It's a sideline for me. Mayer and Warner pay me off so I won't cause problems at their studios and disrupt production. I also borrow money from stars like Cooper, Gable, and Grant. Although they know that I'll never pay them back, they come through for me. During my first year in Hollywood, I pocketed $400,000 in loans from stars."

"Thanks for excluding me," she said. "But I'll make a deal with you. I'll give you five pubic hairs and I won't even charge you $500."

"It's a deal," he said.

Before she left that morning, she heard him on the phone with his lawyer, Jerry Giesler.

When he came back into the breakfast room, he said, "This Giesler is a great guy. He's the best lawyer in Hollywood. If you ever commit murder, call Giesler. He'll get you off."

Director Victor Fleming had directed Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* before tackling Lana in this horror movie.

She didn't think a lot about that remark at the time, but years from that date, she'd place an emergency call to Giesler during the pre-dawn hours of a blood-soaked Hollywood morning. Her call originated from within what the press would loudly define as "the murder house."

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Lana's second film for 1941 was a prestige production, Hollywood's third reprise of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It was, of course, based on the 1886 novella by Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

In 1920, John Barrymore had been cast in the silent version of this classic, turning it into one of the most famous of the silent horror films. His co-star was Nita Naldi, a well-known actress and vamp during her heyday.

Barrymore was able to replicate the monstrous Mr. Hyde wearing almost no makeup, relying on his uncanny ability to contort his face.

This was in radical contrast to the 1931 Talkie with the same name. It had starred Fredric March as the doctor/monster. His Mr. Hyde was a hairy simian with canine fangs. The role brought March an Oscar as Best Actor the year of its release.

Since the second version was crafted during the Pre-Code era of relatively loose censorship, it allowed Miriam Hopkins, cast as Ivy Peterson, the tarty barmaid, to be more sexually provocative than either of the other two.

Like Barrymore, Spencer Tracy, co-starring with Lana in the classic theme's third (1941) incarnation, did not rely on heavy makeup, but used facial contortions to establish his character.

The familiar story, known to most school children at the time, reveals that Dr. Jekyll is motivated by the battle raging in his soul between good and evil. His experiments, which involve ingestion of a serum, transforms the kindly Dr. Jekyll into the cruel, evil, and violent Mr. Hyde.

Victor Fleming was assigned to helm the 1941 remake of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with Tracy and Lana.

[The son of a truck salesman from Wisconsin, Tracy had made his film debut in Up the River *(1938). He'd gone on to win two Best Actor Oscars (for Captains Courageous (1937) and again for his portrayal of Father Flanagan in Boys Town (1938).]*

He was at first reluctant to accept the role of Dr. Jekyll until his best friend and sometimes lover, Katharine Hepburn, persuaded him to do it.

Hepburn's advice was motivated by reasons of her own. After reading the script, she became intrigued with each of the two roles it contained for women. One was that of Jekyll's prim, ladylike *fiancée*, Beatrix Emery.

The other role that appealed to her was that of a slutty barmaid, Ivy Peterson. It was Hepburn's idea that she would star in both roles, interpreting "the good girl" who (in a transformation similar to that of Dr. Jekyll himself) mutates into "the bad girl" through makeup and talent. Both Mayer and Fleming vigorously rejected the idea.

On screen, Lana played Dr. Jekyll's virginal *fiancée*, Beatrix, who was "Victorian sweet, but spirited."

Off screen, Tracy added Lana to his long lists of A-list movie star conquests that ranged from Joan Crawford to Nancy Davis (aka Nancy Reagan).

For a while the mogul and his director considered casting the virginal *fiancée* role with either Ruth Hussey or Maureen O'Hara. Finally, in an agreement with David O. Selznick, it was decided that Ingrid Bergman—the beautiful and soft-spoken Swedish actress—would be ideal as Dr. Jekyll's elegant *fiancée*.

But when Bergman read the script, she decided that she wanted to play the slutty barmaid who is terrorized by Mr. Hyde.

"I'm tired of playing good girls," she said. "I want a role with some meat on it." Secretly, without Selznick's knowledge, Bergman made a screen test whose results Fleming had interpreted as powerful.

By that time, however, Lana had been offered the role of the amoral barmaid. But after she read the script, she protested to Mayer at a meeting where she told him that she was too young and inexperienced to portray the battle-hardened Ivy, survivor of many a seduction. "That role is so deep, I don't know if I could trust the director enough to let me try to reach those emotions."

Consequently, she convinced him that she'd be better cast as Beatrix, a polite well-mannered Victorian girl. As such, Mayer acquiesced to Bergman's wish to interpret the role of the prostitute.

When Lana first met Bergman, the Swede thanked her for surrendering the role of the bad girl barmaid, Ivy Peterson, for the demure role of Beatrix. "I want to show the bastards in Hollywood that I can play a sexy whore," Bergman said. Lana responded, "In Adrian's billowy, 19th-century gowns, I'm sure I'll look virginal. Me, Lana Turner! Isn't that a hoot?"

Whereas Lana had not bonded very well with her female co-stars in previous films, such as *Ziegfeld Girl*, where her rivals had included Hedy Lamarr, on the set of the Jekyll & Hyde movie, she and Ingrid bonded and shared long talks with each other.

Bergman, who was married at the time to the Swedish doctor, Petter Lindstrom, shared with Lana her theory about how to be authentic and convincing on screen with her leading man.

Lindstrom later revealed that his wife had asserted, "I can't work well as an actress unless I'm in love with either the leading man or the director."

"Your romance," Bergman suggested to Lana, "will not necessarily continue after the picture is finished, except in some rare cases."

Lana took Bergman's advice to heart, and followed the Swede's example in her future pictures, as many of her leading men could later testify.

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Since the debut of his career in Hollywood, Fleming had been known mainly as a man's director, and Lana was intimidated by the idea of being helmed by him.

When she had first met him, he'd said, "So I didn't get to direct you as Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, as I got stuck instead with Vivien Leigh."

"I'm sure you're teasing me, Mr. Fleming," Lana responded.

As filming progressed, Fleming suffered through several blow-ups with her, at one point referring to her as a "no-talent, bosomy bitch."

One scene called for her to shed tears, but none would emerge from her dry eyes. Exasperated, Fleming grabbed her by her arm and sharply twisted it behind her back. In the aftermath, he got his tears streaming down her face.

Within the first week of filming, she saw firsthand that Ingrid practiced what she preached, as it applied to falling in love with either her leading man or director. In this case, it involved them both.

"Ingrid was juggling both Tracy and Fleming," Lana said, "keeping both of them satisfied, or so it seemed to me."

Although Ingrid frequently appeared onscreen during the course of her career as innocent, serene, and pure, her future director, Alfred Hitchcock, once said, un-gallantly, "Ingrid would do it with a doorknob."

Indeed, as the years passed, Bergman continued to practice her theory about the benefits associated with seductions of her leading man of the moment. Her love affairs seemed to dovetail neatly with her filmmaking schedule, beginning with Leslie Howard and moving on to Spencer Tracy, Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, Yul Brynner, Joseph Cotten, Bing Crosby, Anthony Quinn, and Omar Sharif.

Spencer Tracy posed for this publicity shot with Ingrid Bergman (left) and Lana. The tarty bar-maid, Ingrid, and Lana, his fiancée, had switched roles before filming began because Ingrid had wanted to play "against type," in an attempt to broaden her range of acting skills.

Offscreen, Tracy seduced first Bergman, then Lana. At some point, Bergman left Tracy altogether in her pursuit of the film's director, Victor Fleming.

Despite his ongoing cohabitations with Katharine Hepburn, Tracy stayed married to the former actress, Louise Treadwell. Hepburn showed up only once on the set of *Jekyll & Hyde*, where she was polite but not especially friendly, to both Bergman and Lana.

"Hepburn obviously didn't demand fidelity from him," Lana speculated. "Judy Garland told me that Tracy had seduced her when she was an underaged teenager."

Near the end of filming, after Fleming apparently fell in love with Bergman, she paid less attention to Tracy.

"But I filled in for her," Lana confessed. On at least five different occasions, she was spotted exiting from Tracy's suite at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel at 5AM, presumably on her way to an early-morning appointment with makeup at the studio. Insofar as these writers know, she never revealed any of the details of her intimacies with Tracy, but she did tell Fleming, "Spence makes the best cup of morning coffee I've ever had."

On the final day of filming, Fleming threw a cast party which Lana attended. She asked Bergman what would be next for her.

"I'm doing this cheap little melodrama at Warners, *Casablanca* (1942), with Bogart. I don't want to do it, but it'll be shot rather quickly. I'm just biding my time until I get to co-star with Gary Cooper in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls"* (1943).

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde became one of MGM's biggest grossing films of the year it was released (1941). But although Tracy usually got rave reviews for his movies, reactions to his dual role in this one were mixed. Some critics asserted, "Tracy is hamming it up too much."

Lana didn't expect rave reviews for herself. "I was mostly an adornment in the film, beautifully made up and gowned, sitting in opera boxes or at dinner tables."

One critic noted, "Lana Turner has too much carnality to be effective as a symbol for Victorian purity."

Life magazine claimed: "Pictorially, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is well worth a look at such moments when the purity of Lana Turner, who plays Jekyll's *fiancée*, is symbolized by white flowers, and Ingrid Bergman lies in a mud puddle to indicate the baser nature of Hyde."

The review that Lana disliked the most was when a critic called her "colorless and wooden in her nice-girl role."

Reviews of Ingrid as a slutty tart were so effusive that they aroused Lana's jealousy. But the envy she experienced in 1941 was different from the rage she suffered years later, when it became clear that two of her beaux, Greg Bautzer and Howard Hughes, were each in pursuit of Ingrid.

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For years, Robert Stack remained Lana's on-again, off-again lover. As he said later in life, "Occasionally, for old time's sake, we made it but what emerged in our last years was enduring friendship. We started out as kids and eventually grew old in Tinseltown, where age most often is a liability, especially for women."

"In the late 1940s, I had a roving eye," he said. "I seduced one Hollywood beauty after another, often with my

friend, John F. Kennedy, when he was in town. Sometimes as a favor to Lana, I served as her 'beard,' covering up some affair she was having with a good-looking guy, especially during her marriages. My guest room was always available to her and her *beau du jour.*"

One Sunday afternoon, Stack hosted a pool party and invited some of his friends, especially the girl of his dreams, Carole Lombard (Clark Gable was out of town). The guest list also included Ronald Reagan and his wife, Jane Wyman, as well as Andy Devine, Ann Rutherford (Lana's friend), Bruce Cabot, and Dan Dailey. Stack's guest list was short on women that day until Lana arrived with her best girlfriend, Virginia Grey, who, years later, remembered that hot, long-ago afternoon before Hollywood went to war.

According to Grey, "It was the afternoon that Lana met George Montgomery." *[Fox had recently changed the actor's name. Throughout the 1930s, he'd been billed as George Letz.]*

"Lana and I first spotted Montgomery poised on a diving board as he was about to make the plunge into Stack's swimming pool. He was wearing a male bikini briefer than any I'd ever seen before," Grey said. "How can I put this delicately? It was white and did little to conceal his ample merchandise. We watched him swim three laps before he came up. He emerged like Neptune from the waters. That white bikini, when wet, became almost transparent. That's how he introduced himself to us. I think Lana stared at his crotch before looking into that gorgeous, masculine face. The man was a dreamboat. Even Jane Wyman was giving him the eye, much to the annoyance of Ronald Reagan. Lana told me that she and Reagan had gotten it on back in the late 1930s, when both of them were contract players at Warners."

One of the then-novel photographic innovations pioneered in *Dr. Jekyll*, a nightmare sequence with Bergman (left) and Lana.

"For George Montgomery and Lana," Grey continued, "it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

Born on a remote ranch in northern Montana, Montgomery was five years older than Lana. Rugged, soft-spoken, and incredibly good-looking, he was the youngest of fifteen children born to immigrants from the Ukraine.

Ironically, during his early 20s, he had studied interior design while earning his living as a boxer, showing off his splendid physique. Stack told Lana, "George is the only guy I've ever heard of who was an interior decorator as well as a boxer, a stunt man, a cattle puncher, and a college athlete."

Tired of ranch duties in Montana, Montgomery hitched westbound rides that eventually landed him in Hollywood. Within a few days, he was working as a stunt man at MGM on a film starring Greta Garbo, *Anna Karenina* (1935). He continued as a stunt man in many westerns, including in Gene Autry's *The Singing Vagabond* (1935). Autry used him in several other western films after that, too.

Standing 6'3", with a muscular, 210-pound body, he attracted attention from many Hollywood beauties and cut a streak through their boudoirs while fending off dozens of homosexual advances. When he made *The Cisco Kid and the Ladies* in 1938, he also had to fend off the sexual advances of its star, Cesar Romero.

In the early 1940s, when many leading stars (including Henry Fonda and Tyrone Power) went off to war, Fox decided to transform the former George Letz into the leading man henceforth known as George Montgomery. He was cast in *Cadet Girl* (1940), starring Carole Landis, Lana's rival. During the shoot, he spent a lot of time in her dressing room.

Other Hollywood beauties were waiting in line to "audition" him, as news of his sexual prowess had by then surged through the Hollywood grapevine. He received the inevitable call from Joan Crawford, who wanted to be the first of the really big stars to seduce "Fox's answer to Clark Gable."

At Fox, Montgomery co-starred with some of the leading actresses of Hollywood, and sometimes became their

lover. These included Ginger Rogers, with whom he co-starred in *Roxie Hart* (1942), Gene Tierney in *China Girl* (also 1942), and Maureen O'Hara in *10 Gentlemen from West Point* (in 1940, his peak year). Betty Grable, the biggest female star in Hollywood at the time, nailed him for *Coney Island* (1943), in more ways than one.

Beside Stack's pool, Montgomery wrapped a bath towel around his midriff and spent the rest of the afternoon talking to Lana. As the sun was setting, after Grey had exited with Bruce Cabot *[perhaps for a communal rendezvous with Errol Flynn]*, Lana invited Montgomery to her home.

> Lana said, "God didn't create all men equally. He created regular men, and then he conceived his masterpiece, George Montgomery. When he strips down, his socks are among the first to go. Then those shorts come down. It's not only big but beautiful. I thought two sessions would be enough to satisfy him, but I woke up at 6AM when he piled on top of me for a divine encore. I can't wait for a repeat."

The next morning, Stack and Grey were among the first persons Lana phoned. "I've met the man I'm going to marry," she said, repeating the same line to each of them. "Should I propose to him, or should I wait for him to pop the question?"

"The wonderful and most enduring thing about George, aside from the obvious, is that he doesn't seem to realize just how good-looking he is, unlike every other male star in Hollywood who spends half the day looking at publicity pictures of themselves or else staring at their image in the mirror. George has a magnificent physique, although he told me he doesn't go near a barbell."

"I think he wants to design furniture or be an architect more than he wants to star in films."

"He told me on those long, cold nights in northern Montana, he would stick by the warm stove in the kitchen whittling on a stick of firewood. He said his dream was to build his own ranch house and make all the furniture for it himself."

"During the days to come, George was often a breakfast guest," Lana said. "I had to buy hominy grits and learn how to make them the way he liked. He taught me to play tennis. You should see him on the court in his white tennis shorts. Betty Grable's legs—at least her left one—were voted the loveliest in the world. I disagree. George's legs are the most beautiful in the world, especially that stunning third one."

Years later, on reflection, Lana said, "George and I might have made it, had not every other beautiful hussy in Hollywood chased after him. I would have married him had not the so-called 'world's most beautiful woman' spotted him shirtless and then *that singer* came along to take him from me. But more about those ravenous bitches clawing his flesh some other day."

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Montgomery, as well as Robert Stack, would each enter and exit, time and again, from Lana's life throughout the 40s and 50s. Thankfully, for the sake of her career, neither Hedda Hopper nor Louella Parsons ever "uncovered" the ongoing nature of their secret trysts.

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Honky Tonk (1941) was the first of the Gable/Turner pictures, followed by *Somewhere I'll Find You* (1942), *Homecoming* (1948), *and* Betrayed *(1954)*.

Jack Conway was one of Gable's most trusted directors. The Minnesota native was both a director and film producer as well as an actor. Beginning with D.W. Griffith's silent film stock company, he had more recently helmed Gable in *Boom Town* (1940), which had co-starred Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, and Hedy Lamarr.

Both Gable and Conway were great friends and heavy drinkers, spending a lot of time together. Lana feared that as the female lead (i.e, her role) might be sacrificed to show off more of Gable. "An actress has to think of such things," she told co-star Claire Trevor.

Lana worked smoothly with Conway. "He was not a creative genius, but very competent. He stayed within the budget and brought the picture in on time. When I wanted more lavish costumes, he said no, citing budget considerations."

For *Honky Tonk*, Conway assembled a talented cast for the minor roles. The roster was led by Frank Morgan, who had recently interpreted the title role in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Other stars included Claire Trevor, Marjorie Main, Albert Dekker, Henry O'Neill, Chill Wills, and Vera Ann Borg.

Gable was cast in the film as an engaging con artist, "Candy" Johnson, who arrives in Yellow Creek, Nevada, during the Gold Rush. On the westbound train, he meets Elizabeth Cotton (Lana), who takes a dislike to him…or is she secretly attracted by his roguish, masculine charm?

Waiting to greet her at the railway station is her drunkard father, "Judge" Cotton (Morgan), who, unknown to her, is also a crook.

In the film, at Yellow Creek's town saloon, Gable hooks up with an old friend. "Gold Dust" Nelson (as portrayed by Trevor) who plays a hooker with a heart of gold.

Trevor, a blonde from Brooklyn, was cast as Lana's rival for Gable's affections. "If they want to cast a hard-boiled blonde, they call *me*," Trevor told Lana. "If they want a soft-spoken, beautiful blonde, they call Lana Turner."

In *Honky Tonk*, melodramatic complications become rife, as Gable tangles with Lana and gets involved in all sorts of intrigues that include gunfights, murder, and pregnancies. Love eventually wins out.

In 1938, in the aftermath of Jean Harlow's death and in the rush for her replacement, Louis B. Mayer had asked Gable to read out loud, with Lana, lines from the script of *Red Dust*, the movie he'd made with Harlow in 1932.

At the time, Gable was filming *Too Hot to Handle* (1938) with his co-star, Myrna Loy. Mayer had the idea that the seventeen-year-old Lana could be groomed to replace Harlow on the screen.

Lana was very nervous when she appeared for the reading with Gable. "I know I was very bad. I flubbed two or three lines. Clark was very kind to me, but I disappointed him."

When director George Cukor had suggested Lana as a possible Scarlett O'Hara, Gable had been disdainful. "Oh, yeah, the blonde Turner dame. She's too cute for Scarlett. As for Tallulah Bankhead, Selznick must have been out of his fucking mind. Your best bet for Scarlett is Carole Lombard."

Scenes from *Honky Tonk*, each actor, both Lana and Gable, pumping up his or her allure.

Months later, when Conway told Gable that he was going to co-star him with Lana in *Honky Tonk*, he asked, “Can’t you find someone better? She’s got the looks but she can’t act.”

“I found out that Clark had never seen one of my movies, not even *Ziegfeld Girl,”* Lana said.

“In our first scene together, I was determined to impress Clark—and apparently I did,” Lana said. “After I finished and returned to my dressing room, a box of yellow roses arrived from him. Through some source, he found out that I preferred yellow roses to red. The box included a note from him that read, ‘I’m the world’s worst talent scout.’ Later, he poked his head through my dressing room door and said, ‘Baby, you sure have learned a thing or two!’”

Lana later spoke of her admiration for Gable during the shooting of *Honky Tonk*. “He was very kind and considerate to me. When I fluffed a line, he’d say, ‘That’s all right, baby. Now don’t you worry about it.’ Whenever

I did that, he'd blow a couple of lines himself, so I wouldn't feel inept. He also played practical jokes on me because he said I was a good sport. He would tease me and joke with me to put me at ease."

Lana had never been sexier on the screen. In some scenes, she paraded in front of the camera in black corsets, with diamonds in her hair, and black lace stockings. Almost evoking the rape scene of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, on their wedding night, Gable as Candy breaks down her bedroom door. He's determined to have her.

"From the moment we rehearsed our first scene together, there was a wonderful rapport between Clark and me," Lana said during an interview. "The sexual chemistry was definitely there. We were very close without intimacy. I had a great love for him, but there was no affair."

But as she later told her co-star, Claire Trevor, "What else could I have said? Of course, you don't believe the shit I throw to the press. Clark fucked me every chance he got during the making of *Honky Tonk*. He said I had feline sex appeal, and he labeled me his sex kitten. If I were a sex kitten, he was one hell of a tomcat."

Despite her coy and coquettish statements to the press during the shooting of *Honky Tonk*, journalists were speculating wildly about their possible affair.

"Imagine the combustion at MGM when two powerful sex symbols come together on the screen, or off the screen," wrote one reporter.

Conway asserted, "Lana and Clark were instantly attracted to each other. To put it bluntly, they had the hots for each other. She had youth and beauty, and he had this powerful image of masculinity. Call it sexual chemistry. Love is not the right word. He loved Carole Lombard but that didn't stop him from cheating on her."

"The electricity between our two screen lovers was so hot that it sizzled," Conway continued. "It was definitely a physical attraction. On camera, they weren't just acting…It reminded me of John Gilbert and Greta Garbo in *Flesh and the Devil* (1926)."

Robert Stack was friends with both Gable and Lana. Once, after he asked why she found Gable so attractive, she answered, "I always had this fantasy of being violated by a lumberjack...in Gable's case, a former lumberjack."

Conway later claimed, "Clark and Lana went at it every chance they got. When I asked him about it, he told me, 'We are merely rehearsing our upcoming love scenes to make them more authentic, particularly where I tear down her bedroom door. I know that rape can't be depicted on the screen, but we wanted to capture the spirit of it.'"

"Oh, Clark," Conway muttered skeptically…"Oh, Clark."

"During filming," Lana said, "I learned that Lombard had gone ballistic when she heard that I'd been assigned as Gable's co-star. She even appealed to Louis B. Mayer to fire me before shooting began. I understood that she and Clark had many fights over me, and that she threatened him that if she found out that he was screwing me, she'd come onto the set and kick ass."

"Lana Turner is supposed to play this sweet little Bostonian virgin," Lombard told Conway. "But I hear the blonde bitch fucks anything in pants."

After meeting with Lombard, Mayer called Conway. "Except for the lezzies," Mayer said, "Gable has fucked nearly every leading lady at MGM. Make sure he stays out of the hot pants of Turner. I don't want any scandal or any trouble from Lombard. She's threatened me that if Gable gets involved with Lana, she'll mess him up so bad that he'll stay home sick for a week or two, running up production costs."

In the middle of one of her love scenes with Gable, Lana looked up at the vindictive, disapproving face of Lombard, who had been hawk-eyeing them. When the scene was ruined and the cameras stopped, Lombard had addressed her harshly: "Don't mind me, Lana," she said. "Pappy's not very good in the clinch."

"I became so flustered, I had to flee to my dressing trailer. I stayed there trying to pull myself together. Within the hour, Conway came to get me. He told me that Lombard had been kicked off the set and that shooting could begin again."

On several other widely witnessed occasions, Lombard had ridiculed her husband's prowess as a lover. "If Clark had one inch less, he'd be the Queen of Hollywood."

When Lana heard about these remarks, she informed Virginia Grey and others, "Even Clark admits he's a lousy lay. But that's missing the point. Studs are a dime a dozen in Hollywood, but there's only one Clark Gable. When you're getting screwed by him, you're not just getting Clark, but Rhett Butler, with all the fantasies that unleashes in a girl. I'm crazy about him. He makes me go to pieces. He's like a dream come true. We really click. Lombard's too old for him anyway. He wants a gal who's young and vital. Like me. When he first seduced me, he told me he preferred blondes to brunettes. 'Most brunettes look dirty to me,' he said."

As Gable's biographer, Warren G. Harris, stated, "Lana bragged to friends that she was going to break up the marriage of Gable to Carole Lombard."

That statement was not as heartless as it seemed. Lana was emphatically aware that one of her best friends, Robert Stack, had occasionally seduced Lombard during periods when Gable was off on some other fling.

"She's not the doting, faithful wife she makes herself out to be," Lana claimed.

Before the release of *Honky Tonk*, billboards across the country read: "Clark Gable kisses Lana Turner in *Honky Tonk*—and it's screen history."

Honky Tonk became MGM's biggest grossing film for 1941, the year America entered World War II.

Life magazine splashed Gable and Lana across one of its front covers and wrote: "The colorful Wild West is the setting for a series of sizzling bedroom scenes in which, in a variety of dress and undress, Clark Gable and Lana Turner make love. For Turner, now graduated from sweaters to nightgowns, it means the topmost rung in her meteoric four-year climb to success. For cinema fans, it means the birth of a hot new screen team."

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On Gable's arm, Lombard attended the premiere of *Honky Tonk*. As reporters noted, she was "touchy-feely" throughout the event, as if wanting to demonstrate that she possessed him. Once journalist referred to her behavior as "overly doting in public."

No reviewer seemed to think that *Honky Tonk* was a great film, but nearly all of them praised the on-screen charisma of its co-stars, Lana and Gable. *Newsweek*asserted, "Miss Turner never falters in her presentation of Miss Cotton."

Photoplay found that the movie "rambles and rambles but in its circling, it does manage to gather up Lana Turner and Clark Gable and give them a twirl in the usual sexy old merry-go-round."

Variety wrote that "Miss Turner, who is graced by tremendous sex appeal, proves that she also can act as well as turn the boy on. Gable and Turner click together in a lively, lusty Western that makes you wish you had been there."

In her memoirs, Lana devoted less than a page to co-starring with Gable in *Honky Tonk*. That caused columnist Sheilah Graham, the former lover of F. Scott Fitzgerald, to remark: "I wish movie queens would tell the truth or shut up. Reading Lana's memoirs, I got the impression that she was a candidate for the convent."

Lana's statements about her affairs, both during interviews and as published in her memoirs, have generally been discredited. In 1982, while on a tour touting one of her books, she constantly denied having had an affair with Gable. In a TV interview, she claimed, "I had a reputation for being a sexpot, but I never was one. In fact, I never had much feeling about sex at all."

This spectacularly disingenuous comment was greeted with "mocking laughter that echoed from the Hollywood Hills down to Laguna and north to Santa Barbara," said catty Shelley Winters.

Jimmy Fiddler, the Hollywood columnist, said, "It's amazing to see stars like Lana Turner interviewed on television. Take the very suggestion that one of them might have had sex with one of their leading men. The likes of Lana Turner or June Allyson suggest that no handsome hunk ever crawled between their sheets. Although hundreds of eyewitnesses have testified to Lana's affairs, she remains virginal between marriages, at least in a memoir."

As late as the early 1960s, Lana would agree with Marilyn Monroe's assessment of Gable during the filming of what emerged as his last movie, *The Misfits* (1961): "When Clark kissed me," Monroe said, "all I wanted was for it to go on and on and on. I got goose bumps. I'd have followed him anywhere, done anything. It was a miracle just to be in his arms."

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During the filming of *Honky Tonk*, Lana joined a luncheon in the MGM commissary. Included in the venue were her friend, Virginia Grey, and one of the movie's co-stars, Chill Wills. Also present was another MGM star, the studio's Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller, impressively attired in a double-breasted suit. An ethnic German, he had been born in 1904 in what is now part of Romania.

Although one day, Lana would marry a screen version of Tarzan, Lex Barker, she had never seen one of Weissmuller's jungle adventures. She had heard that he was the world's fastest swimmer, the holder of five gold Olympic medals. Still looking in topnotch form, he had been married to the notorious Mexican actress, Lupe Velez, and was currently wed to Beryl Scott, the San Francisco socialite who had been born in Canada. Gossip columnists speculated that the marriage was coming apart.

As Lana would later tell Grey, "Johnny is not only an athlete and the King of the Jungle, but, except for Gable and Robert Taylor, one of the handsomest men at MGM"

The lunch meeting had a purpose, as Weissmuller, Grey, and Wills had signed to star together in the *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942), the last of the Tarzan franchises at MGM.

As Lana later stated: "I was expecting some muscle-bound lug, but discovered a romantic, kind, and considerate gentleman. He was imbued with chivalry and treated me like I was the Queen of Sheba."

There was speculation about how his fans would react to a movie where he appeared in a suit. Grey told him, “Men go to see you battle lions in the jungle, but women attend your movies to enjoy your magnificent body, hoping that loincloth will blow upward in the breeze.”

He laughed at that, claiming, “That’s happened a few times already. One shows me in all my manly glory after I forgot to wear a jockstrap that morning. On my first day at MGM, I was given a G-string and asked if I knew how to climb a tree,” he said.

Lana described to Virginia Grey her weekend with Johnny Weissmuller in Palm Springs:

> “He was everything I’d dreamed about in a man. Now I know why wardrobe designs that loincloth to hang low. I’ve never seen such an elongated foreskin on a man. But once his ‘charger’ bursts forth, it’s one of the greatest thrills a woman can know, a pounding, like the beat of a Tom-Tom. He’s a fabulous lover. At his climax, he lets out the Tarzan Yell.”

Lana kept abreast of Hollywood gossip, and was aware that Joan Crawford, among dozens of other stars, had already seduced Weissmuller. The ever-indiscreet Tallulah Bankhead had widely boasted about her conquest. “*Dah-ling*,” she told him. “You’re the kind of man a woman like me must shanghai and keep under lock and key until both of us are entirely spent. Prepare for a leave of ten days.”

Weissmuller, a gifted athlete, was known for seducing “lots and lots” of chorus girls, starlets, and barmaids.

“What do you find most annoying about playing Tarzan?” Lana asked.

“Every homosexual at MGM seems to want to take turns making me up as Tarzan and fitting me for my skimpy wardrobe. No one is satisfied until I’ve been fitted with at least a dozen jockstraps before they settle on the right one. I’m also tired of how every greeting I get tends to be the same: ‘*Hiyah, Johnny, I didn’t recognize you with your clothes on!*’”

That afternoon, Weissmuller also said that he had met Elmo Lincoln, the screen’s first Tarzan, the day before. “He’s reduced to playing a minor role, a circus roustabout, in this latest version of Tarzan.”

“I was there when they met,” Wills said. “Lincoln was not as impressed with Johnny as we are. He called him a sissy.”

Wills said, in reference to his own role in *Tarzan’s New York Adventure*, “I play the good guy, but I get murdered.”

Grey said that she had been cast in their upcoming film as a torch singer, Connie Beach. “My big scene is when I do this number, ‘I Must Have You or No One.’”

In reference to the action/adventure aspect of his upcoming film, Weissmuller said, “I have to perform a number of stunts. In one scene—it’s faked, of course—I climb a skyscraper. In another, I’m shown jumping 200 feet off the Brooklyn Bridge. I told those jokers that they’d have to use a dummy for that scene. The funniest scene will be when I take my first shower with indoor plumbing. I keep my suit on, surprising Maureen O’Sullivan, who plays Jane.”

After Wills and Grey departed, Lana remained at table in the commissary with Weissmuller. “This is a bit sad for me. Mayer is cutting off the series, and I’m moving over to RKO. Maureen told me that this will be the last time she’ll ever play Jane.”

Lana reached for his hand. “What about me as your new Jane?” Then she paused. “At least off screen.”

“I thought you’d never ask,” he said. “A friend of mine *[Weissmuller never named him specifically]* has this villa in Palm Springs with an Olympic-sized pool. I’m driving there tonight. I need to do a lot of laps to get into shape for the camera. I have to be back at MGM early Monday morning. Come with me. But I have to warn you: I swim in the nude.”

“I have a feeling I’m in for a big treat.”

On Friday, after twilight, Weissmuller headed east with Lana through the desert to Palm Springs. The following Monday, when Grey met up with Lana at the studio, she was eager for a play-by-play description of how their weekend together had been spent.

“If we’d filmed it, it would be known as *Tarzan’s Palm Springs Adventure.”*

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Lana would later refer to “the most bizarre fan letter I’d ever received.” It had arrived at MGM in 1942.

The letter had been postmarked in London, but, as was later revealed, it had been written in Germany and somehow passed to someone who had mailed it from a London post office.

It was from a mysterious woman, Eva Braun, who had written its original version in German. It was accompanied by an English-language translation.

Lana did not know who Eva Braun was, only learning after the war that she had been the mistress of Adolf Hitler and then, for a period of less than 40 hours, his wife before their joint suicide in April, 1945 in an underground bunker in Berlin.

World War II had already ended by the time someone briefed Lana on the saga and symbolism of Eva Braun. Born in 1912 into a bourgeois German family and convent-educated, she had worked in Munich as a model and photographer’s assistant for Heinrich Hoffmann, who would become the official photographer for the Nazi Party.

It was at Hoffman’s studio that seventeen-year-old Eva met Hitler in October of 1929. He was a rising power in the National Socialist movement and 23 years her senior. Hitler enchanted the nubile, not particularly brainy Eva, and she became his mistress.

When Hoffman saw that Hitler was fascinated by his assistant, he warned the leader, “Eva is a feather brain, interested only in clothes, sports, and the cinema.”

Of course, at the time, it was beyond her wildest dreams to imagine Hitler as the dictator of Nazi Germany and a threat to the very foundation of Western Civilization.

Although concealed from both the German and international press, Eva became the *Führer’s* official hostess at Berchtesgaden and an “up front and personal” eyewitness to some of the major events of the 20th Century. “There are frequent showing of movies at the Berghof,” Eva wrote. “We are avid movie fans.”

In her letter addressed to Lana via MGM, Eva had revealed that the great dream of her life was to visit Hollywood “and become the next Lana Turner.” She had seen every movie that Lana had made. Even during the war years, many of them were smuggled into Berlin, perhaps by Goebbels himself, and many had been screened for the entertainment of Hitler’s entourage. Eva had been particularly “enthralled” with *Ziegfeld Girl*.

[Originally, Eva had wanted to star in German films and, with that agenda in mind, appealed to Josef Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda. Hitler, when he learned of her intention, would not allow it.]

In her fan letter to Lana, Eva had enclosed a picture of herself snapped during a picnic at Obersalzberg. Her pose evoked a cheesecake-inspired stance evocative of Betty Grable. The implication was that she was wearing a bathing suit, but her torso was coyly concealed behind a flower-patterned parasol.

To Eva Braun, Hitler's mistress, Lana was an inspiration. Actually, she wanted to become "the Lana Turner of Nazi Germany," but the Führer had other plans for her.

According to Lana, in her letter, Eva stated that it would be "inevitable" that the Nazis, with their powerful, well-equipped armies, would one day subdue America. "There will be many persons slated for death, including the execution of the Roosevelts." Eva's letter continued with the prediction that "traitors" like Marlene Dietrich would also be killed, along with "all the Jews who had fled to Hollywood from Europe."

Eva went on to promise Lana that when the Nazi conquest of America was finished, "I will appeal to Wolf *[her nickname for Hitler]* to spare your life because of how much your films have meant to me."

Apparently, Eva had already screened a copy of *Honky Tonk* which had been smuggledinto Germany, and she'd found Lana's scenes with Clark Gable "sizzling."

"Regrettably," Eva had continued, "Wolf has horrendous plans for Gable. When he is captured, he will be stripped naked and exhibited in a cage that will tour throughout Germany."

[Ironically, with the understanding that the cage and its contents would be hauled across the Soviet Union, this was Stalin's plan for Hitler, if he'd been captured alive.]

Assuming that the bizarre letter had derived from some crank, Lana, after reading it, had destroyed it, recalling its contents after the war, when she realized who Eva Braun had been.

Years later, she said, "I wish I had saved that letter from Eva Braun. Had I known who she was, I certainly would have. I bet it would be worth a lot of money today."

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In 1941, Lana was slated for roles in movies than were never actually filmed and/or completed. Some of them never emerged from their talking stages; others had evolved into fully developed shooting scripts, but later abandoned for various reasons.

In 1941, Louis B. Mayer met with Lana and told her that the studio was preparing a script specifically gauged and crafted for her. Its working title was *The Flying Blonde*. It called for her to play a female pilot who grapples with romantic adventures with a handsome pilot.

Paramount had already signed Stirling *[an actor later billed as Sterling]* Hayden as the male lead. They were billing him at the time as "The Most Beautiful Man in the Movies."

"I think we could sex up this film by co-starring you in it as 'The World's Most Beautiful Blonde,'" Mayer said. "On screen together, you'd be dynamite. Paramount owes me a favor, and they'd actually make money by lending Hayden to us, since he's contracted over there with a low salary. Before shooting begins, I want you to go out with him. Perhaps dinner together at Ciro's, where we can get our photographer to snap pictures for the papers."

"Mr. Mayer, this is a project that really excites me," Lana said. "I want to meet this gorgeous dreamboat. I suspect that Joan Crawford, as usual, has already phoned him."

"I've been in the business long enough to know that all actresses are hussies," Mayer responded. "For most of them, anything in pants will do."

“Not really, Mr. Mayer,” she answered. “We do have one requirement. It’s how the man fills out those pants.”

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Based on Mayer’s directive, Hayden phoned Lana for a date. When she suggested the names of some nightclubs they might visit as a background for getting their names in the paper, he rejected the idea. She was struck by his fierce independence and his disdain for Hollywood.

Edward Griffith, an executive at Paramount, although admitting that Sterling Hayden was “wooden” in his screen test, saw something of value in him.

Even before his first picture, Paramount publicists set out to hype him as “The Most Beautiful Man in the World,” and as “The Blonde Viking God.”

Then, after trysts with some of the leading ladies of gossipy Hollywood, word spread about his “stupendous package.”

“I’m not some pretty boy who poses for pictures in a nightclub,” he said. “I’m a sailor. How about sailing over to Catalina for the weekend?”

By then, she’d seen some of the publicity pictures of him released by Paramount. He did indeed look like a Viking god. She accepted his invitation and packed all-white sailing clothes. That afternoon, she talked with his agent, who told her, “Sterling was born in the wrong century. He should have been a sea captain in the 19th Century.”

Born in 1916 into a working-class family in Montclair, New Jersey, Hayden as a boy haunted public libraries. There, he would sit for hours devouring such seafaring stories as Jack London’s *Call of the Wild* or Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Inspired by these adventures, he left home at age seventeen and was hired as a “ship’s boy.” That led to problems. The pretty boy attracted rough sailors who’d been at sea too long without a woman, and Hayden sometimes had to fight off their sexual adventures.

His adventures on the oceans of the world were more improbable than any screenplay he would ever star in. At the age of 20, he become first mate aboard the *Yankee* during its around-the-world voyage. In 1938, when he was 22, he’d advanced to the role of skipper aboard a 90-foot square-rigged sailboat, the *Florence B. Robinson*, during its transit from Gloucester, Massachusetts, to Tahiti.

Many of Hayden’s admirers suggested that he should monetize his towering physique and movie-star good looks and migrate directly to big-money acting contracts in Tinseltown. There, unable to find work, he posed nude for gay photographers. Nude pictures of Sterling Hayden are highly valued today as collector’s items. As one devotee said, “His god damn whopper hangs down all the way to Tijuana.”

Their weekend odyssey to Catalina was remembered by Lana as “one of the most memorable of my life.” After her return to Hollywood and lunch with Virginia Grey, she had nothing but praise for Hayden.

“He’s 6’5”, and if you add those two numbers together, you’ll get an idea of how long it stretches,” Lana said. “And oh, boy, is he great with a woman, treating her like a lady even as he devours her. I’m leaving next weekend

unscheduled, waiting for him to call."

That weekend came and went, and Hayden didn't phone. The gossip columns later revealed what happened to him.

Even before Lana heard that the script for *The Flying Blonde* had been rejected and shelved, he'd already learned other news from Paramount. He was told that he'd been hired as the star of his first movie, *Virginia* (1941), and introduced to its co-star, Madeleine Carroll, the classically cool blonde from England.

She had already risen to fame as the heroine of two imported English thrillers, both directed by Alfred Hitchcock: *The 39 Steps* (1932), and *Secret Agent* (1936).

After the actress rejected Hitchcock's sexual advances, he never hired her again, referring to her as an iceberg.

Hayden, however, managed to heat her up.

When Lana heard that Hayden had been "coupling" with Carroll, she said, "Isn't he old enough to be his mother?"

[Carroll, born in 1906, was ten years older than Hayden.]

As Lana lamented to Grey, "I thought Sterling and I had something cooking before Carroll got him. But with a war on, life is moving too swiftly."

"Carroll came along to lure him from me. As for me, Robert Taylor arrived on the set of *Johnny Eager*. After Clark Gable, he was the second leading matinée idol at MGM that I wanted to work with…and perhaps pursue other diversions. Of course, he *is* married to Barbara Stanwyck, but I wouldn't examine that marriage too closely."

As it turned out, Lana would never work with Hayden, releasing him instead to such leading ladies as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. But they did meet again in 1952, when she was divorcing Bob Topping, and he'd been asked to replace Lex Barker *[Lana's future husband]* as the screen Tarzan. He rejected the role.

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The next time Lana was called into Mayer's office, he made a very different offer. "There's a war on, and as you know, Hitler wants to gas Jews like me. I want my leading stars, when they're not working—to join in the war efforts—war bond drives, volunteer work at the Hollywood Canteen, broadcasts on the Armed Forces Radio. I know you like to kiss men, and I'm sure men like to kiss you. Some of the stars are selling their kisses to raise money to buy war bonds. I want you to join them.

"It's a date!" she answered. "I can just see the headlines: LANA TURNER GOES TO WAR!"

Chapter Eight

Wartime Lana
Servicing the Men in Uniform Who Won World War II

In their hit picture, *Johnny Eager*, Lana Falls for Robert Taylor On and Off the Screen.

During its promotion of *Johnny Eager*, MGM billed its co-stars as "HOTTER THAN T-N-T." In years to come, movie buffs like Norman Lear, creator of TV's *All in the Family*, would define its love scenes as "the sexiest ever performed on celluloid."

Years later, Taylor shared with a reporter his impressions of working with Lana: "She wasn't very career minded. She preferred men and jewelry over everything else. She should call her memoirs *Hearts and Diamonds Take All*, since that would reflect her main interest. Her face was delicate and oh so beautiful. I've never known such succulent lips on a woman."

"Personally, I was never one to go that much for blondes—give me Elizabeth Taylor any day," he said. "But Lana was the exception. I couldn't take my eyes off her. There were times during our love scenes in *Johnny Eager* that I thought I'd…*how shall I put this?*…erupt. She had a voice like a breathless little girl. She couldn't say 'good morning' without giving me a hard-on. There was a downside, though. She wasn't as busty as I had been led to believe, since she had that reputation for being 'The Sweater Girl.'"

When she wasn't on any of the MGM sound stages or sets, looking blonde and gorgeous in front of cameras, Lana pursued aggressive romantic pastimes which she usually conducted at night. And it was those romances—launched during the intensely emotional context of the wartime 40s—which massively contributed to the Lana Turner legend.

It was an era marked by almost manic-depressive waves of hope, fear, and tenuousness, when millions of individual Americans endured some of the greatest upheavals in their personal and national history.

Lana's staggering numbers of romantic and sexual conquests involved male movie stars who, within months, would either join the military; or future movie stars whose careers wouldn't flourish until after their return from the battlefields. She also dallied with dozens of good-looking "civilians" (that is, non-movie stars) who, if they managed to survive the war, returned to towns like Lawrence, Kansas; Homestead, Pennsylvania; or Elkin, North Carolina, to spend the rest of their lives coasting on and boasting about one major claim: "I fucked Lana Turner."

In these emotional and high-strung war years—before, during, and after her marriage to Stephen Crane—Lana allowed herself to be conquered by a string of virile young men, who with some justification were described by columnist Sheilah Graham as "the handsomest, sexiest, and hottest that America would ever turn out."

At parties, with a glorious sense of cattiness, Graham remarked, "Lana is to be forgiven if she missed a few hundred men before they were shipped off to battle, yet she managed to seduce her fair share, giving many of them a farewell fuck before sending them off with a glorious memory of an American bombshell."

Journalist Adela Rogers St. Johns observed: "The real Lana Turner is the same Lana Turner you see on the screen. She always wanted to be a movie star, and now she's the Queen of MGM. Her personal life and her life as a movie star are one and the same. The same Lana Turner who gets up at 5AM to put on her makeup is the same Lana who, later in the day or night, crawls under the sheets with Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, or Robert Taylor."

The last sentence was struck from her copy by a blue-nosed editor.

To Hedda Hopper, Lana pointed out the downside of fame. "The more famous an actress, the less she's allowed to eat, unless she wants to play mothers in baggy clothes. Instead of exercise in a studio gym, you can burn off more calories between the sheets. Don't print that. If you do, I'll deny it."

To Louella Parsons, Lana confessed her goal to become the most famous movie star on the planet, and "The Playgirl of the 20th Century."

To her dear friend, columnist Sidney Skolsky, she shared a secret at Schwab's Drugstore. "You may not know this, since you're not a homosexual, but every man's dick is different. I've never known one dick that is the same as another man's. There are certain similarities among some men, for sure, but nothing identical unless they're twins, I guess. I noticed the difference between a Jewish man and a Gentile. Take Artie Shaw or Johnny Weissmuller. It's all a matter of a bit of skin at the end of the prick."

Skolsky later told friends, "There's a good reason that men in blue voted Lana as the most desirable woman on earth during World War II. Each of them had sampled the wares and knew what in the hell they were talking about."

The Yellow Rose of Dallas" (Texas), Linda Darnell was two years younger than Lana.

Aggressively promoted by her stage-struck mother, the former Pearl Brown, Linda had been a child model, dreaming of movie stardom for herself. Her mother became committed to the belief that Linda was the only child she had produced with potential as an actress. Subsequently, while pushing and prodding Linda and her stage training, she virtually ignored the rearing of her other children.

When Linda was in her teens, a talent scout spotted her, which in time led to a contract with 20th Century Fox.

"One thing about Lana," Parsons told her confidantes, "is that she never lets a marriage get in the way of her pursuit of outside male flesh. Having just one husband at a time has never been enough to satisfy her. No one man is adequate for the task. Lana is a hot firecracker. Ask Clark Gable. Ask Mickey Rooney. Ask Greg Bautzer."

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Lana didn't devote all her time to making movies and men. She also developed dialogues and friendships with a number of girlfriends over the years, although Virginia Grey remained her most trusted confidante. "At least *some* women like me and weren't too jealous," Lana said. "Two of my best girlfriends in the early 1940s were Linda Darnell and Susan Hayward."

Darnell's sultry beauty appealed to Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox, who for almost a year and a half summoned her to his office, locking the door behind her, at 1PM every day.

A hard life had toughened Darnell, and Lana admired her fighting spirit when she met her at a party. "I've got more balls than most men do!" she told Lana. "If it's anything I hate, it's a weak man."

Over the years, Darnell would sustain an unusual array of lovers, including Lana's former beau, Donald ("Red") Barry; Milton Berle; and even a chicken farmer, Rudolph Sieber, the estranged husband of Marlene Dietrich.

Darnell would not marry until 1944, when she wed J. Peverrel Marley, a studio cameraman. In the meantime, she dated a lot, even attracting the amorous attentions of the then high-flying aviator, Howard Hughes. "That was no distinction," Lana said. "He's been after all of us whenever he isn't chasing after Jack Beutel."

[Beutel was the handsome stud he'd cast as Billy the Kid in The Outlaw (1943) opposite Jane Russell.]

Lana concealed it rather well, but she was jealous of Linda who, almost from the beginning of her career, had been cast in pictures that co-starred Tyrone Power. "He was one man I dreamed about," Lana said.

Darnell had originally been a strong contender as the female co-star with Power in *Johnny Apollo* (1940), but the role was ultimately assigned to Dorothy Lamour. However, that same year, Darnell was given the female lead opposite Power in *Day-Time Wife*, a light romantic comedy. That led to an affair with Power, which, between giggles, she'd reported to Lana. As a promotional quote associated with the release of that film, *Life* magazine pronounced Darnell "The most physically perfect girl in Hollywood."

Lana bit her lip and only smiled when Darnell told her, months later, that she had also been slated to co-star with Power in three more films: *Brigham Young* (1940), *The Mark of Zorro* (also 1940), and *Blood and Sand* (1941). In the latter picture, in which Power made a striking figure clad in a bullfighter's "suit of light," she had to compete onscreen with Rita Hayworth.

"Ty looked so dashing, so sexy, so romantic," Lana said after she went to a screening of *Blood and Sand*. She never missed one of Power's films.

Word spread that even though Power had married the French actress, Annabella, neither had remained faithful to the other. Louella Parsons, in private, claimed theirs was an arranged marriage designed to throw off an unsuspecting public to the fact that Power was bisexual. He might indeed, be known, underground, for sexual liaisons with Darnell, Hayworth, and Judy Garland, but he also had a reputation for sharing his bed with Hughes, Robert Taylor, and Errol Flynn, each—like himself—a bisexual.

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One night, another contract player at Fox came into Lana's orbit, a man who was attractive and beguiling enough to allow Lana to forget about Power—at least temporarily.

She liked to host parties back then, and to one of them, she invited Darnell, instructing her to "bring any man you want."

She opted to invite John Payne, with whom she was appearing in the 1940 *Star Dust*, directed by Walter Lang.

"When Linda dated Payne, he was still married to the actress Anne Shirley, but that marriage was in its final stages. *[Their divorce would become final in 1943.]*

Two nights after she met him, Payne phoned Lana for a date, and she eagerly accepted. Because he was still married, he suggested a discreet dinner at some remote, out-of-the-way place.

John Payne, Fox contract player, posed for this "crotch shot," which made him a pinup boy of World War II for horny women and gays.

"Tyrone Power may be the prettiest boy in Hollywood, but John Payne is the handsomest masculine male," Lana said. "My friend, Linda Darnell, has all the luck. both men have had affairs with her."

That night marked the beginning of a long and enduring friendship during the course of which, each would endure multiple triumphs and tragedies.

Payne had already studied drama and journalism at Columbia University in New York City, "where I lost my magnolia Virginia accent," he said.

To support himself with his muscled and well-developed physique, he became a professional wrestler, billed as "The Savage of the Steppes." Later, he morphed into "Tiger Jack Payne," a quasi-celebrity boxer.

"Many of the gals in New York came to see me in a pair of boxing trunks," he confided to Lana.

One night it was not just women who were impressed with Payne in his boxer trunks, but a homosexual talent agent for Samuel Goldwyn. After he "auditioned" Payne, he advanced enough money to allow Payne to take the train to Hollywood. There, he was given a screen test and later a contract from producer Samuel Goldwyn.

Among other jobs, he had been a radio singer in New York, and his smoother, harmonious tenor voice was spliced into such early movies as *Tin Pan Alley* (1940), co-starring Alice Faye (Tony Martin's former wife). Payne also appeared in movies with two other blondes, each sexually voracious, Betty Grable and that ice-skating tramp from Norway, Sonja Henie, whom he described as "a nympho. She needed it seven times a day."

As Lana reported to Virginia Grey, "John has a captivating voice, a strapping physique, movie star looks, and an eye-catching cleft in his chin. He stands six feet four, but it's those other inches that he has which can thrill a woman, along with his broad chest and slender waist."

In addition to his marriage and his ongoing affairs, Lana also learned that he'd been seducing Jane Wyman ever since they had appeared together in *Kid Nightingale* (1939).

"Jane told me my legs are more muscular and my chest better developed than Ronald Reagan's."

"That's true," Lana replied, "and I speak from firsthand experience."

According to Lana, years later, "I would have married John, but he never asked me. Along came the war, but we continued to see each other for years to come."

On October 13, 1942, Payne joined the military as a student aviator. For a while, he was stationed in Arizona. In 1944, still in the military, he returned to L.A., to a post at Ferry Command at Long Beach, California.

Lana saw him on rare occasions, from 1944 on, even though at the time, he was married to the actress Gloria DeHaven.

As Lana later told Darnell, "What's a gal supposed to do? The best men are either in the Army or they join the Navy, the Air Force or the Marines. Uncle Sam gets the gravy, and we get the leftover mashed potatoes."

"Dear Heart, you'll manage to find the few gold nuggets left behind," Darnell said. "Perhaps they'll be classified 4-F for no other reason than color blindness or flat feet, but you'll find 'em."

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Whenever Hedda Hopper or Louella Parsons phoned a star for an interview, he or she usually came to their homes as part of the venue.

One afternoon, Hopper summoned Lana, and seemed eager for information about her experience with Clark Gable in *Honky Tonk* and her upcoming movie, *Johnny Eager* with Robert Taylor. She wanted a column that focused on Lana's interactions with MGM's leading men.

During that interview, Lana strenuously denied an affair with Gable. "After all, he's married to Lombard. Likewise, nothing will happen with Mr. Taylor and myself on the set of *Johnny Eager*. As you, of all people know, he's married to Barbara Stanwyck."

Hopper listened impatiently, not believing a word Lana was telling her, but promising to give her "a vanilla writeup," instead of blasting readers with a scandal-soaked *exposé*.

As Lana later told her mother, Mildred, "When a woman like Hedda has 32 million readers, we hasten to her door when she calls."

After the interview, Hopper asked Lana to stick around, since she was hosting a small cast party for a film in which she had recently appeared, and she wanted Lana to attend.

[Before she became a gossip columnist, Hedda had acted in films. In the early 40s, her long-term friend, the director Cecil B. DeMille, assigned her a small role in the movie version of the novel, Reap the Wild Wind *(1942).*

In it, Paulette Goddard was cast as a fiery Southern belle, with Ray Milland and John Wayne fighting over her. The cast also included Robert Preston, Raymond Massey, Charles Bickford, Louise Beavers, and a fiery redhead from Brooklyn who had recently changed her name to Susan Hayward.]

That afternoon, the only person at the party that Lana knew was Goddard. Also among the celebrants were two of her future co-stars, Ray Milland and John Wayne. Lana spent time with each of them, and also with Hayward, with whom she formed an unlikely friendship, instead of a fierce rivalry.

After Hopper's cast party, Lana and Hayward began to see each other on occasion, their favorite topic being men. The granite-hard Brooklyn-born actress gave Lana her opinion. "Men…I'd like to fry 'em all in deep fat."

Her toughness reminded Lana of Barbara Stanwyck.

As stated by Hayward's first agent, Ben Medford, "Susan was a terrible actress, just terrible. Nobody liked her since she was a real bitch. But I saw hidden talent there, and in time, I would be proved right."

Instead of playing Scarlett at MGM, Hayward ended up with a contract from Warner Brothers, where she was cast in campy, melodramatic Grade B flicks, a good example of which is *Girls on Probation* (1938).

A sexy, gutsy redhead, Susan Hayward, then known as Edythe Marrener, the daughter of a Coney Island carnival barker, had been born into poverty. As a girl, she'd hawked copies of the *Brooklyn Eagle* on street corners before graduating to employment in a stenographers' pool.

In time, she became a photographer's model and landed on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*. It was seen by director George Cukor during his casting of *Gone With the Wind* (1939). He brought her photo to the attention of David O. Selznick, who agreed to test her for the role of Scarlett O'Hara.

During its filming, she met a handsome young actor, the heroic male lead, from Tampico, Illinois, Ronald Reagan. She fell in love with him, and they began a passionate affair.

That same year, he made *Brother Rat*, on the set of which he met another promising young actress on the rise, Jane Wyman. She, too, fell for him.

The race for Reagan was on, and when both actresses went on a promotional tour that had been organized with (and nominally chaperoned by) Louella Parsons, they even fought over him. Eventually, Wyman got him, marrying him in 1940. Begrudgingly, Hayward moved on to other conquests.

Just a few weeks before Lana was introduced to Howard Hughes, Hayward told of her own experience with the aviator. His pimp, Johnny Meyer, brought Hughes and Hayward together for some vague conversation about making a film about Billy the Kid. *[It eventually became* The Outlaw (1943).*]*

"Howard was obviously looking for an actress with boobs, and I had those. And I was proud of them," Hayward told Lana, who was also celebrated for her breasts.

Lana learned that Hayward had told Hughes that "redheads make better actresses than blondes because their emotions are much closer to the surface and better reflected in their faces."

A lot of Hayward's self-promotion didn't work. As she related, bitterly, to Lana, "Then he met Jane Russell, a girl whose boobs were bigger than mine, and I lost the part."

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During a trip to New York in 1941, Lana became the victim of the most vicious rumor ever spread about her. It was so repulsive to her fans that no reporter dared publish it, although some hinted at it.

Biographers Joe Morella and Edward Z. Epstein vaguely aired Lana's link to the Red Rooster nightclub in Harlem, yet released no details about what "Broadway insiders" were gossiping about.

News of her alleged indiscretion traveled along the grapevine from Harlem to Hollywood, where gossips found the tale a salacious delight, especially Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, who could not print it.

Finally, in the 1950s, a tabloid magazine alluded to it, again without releasing details of exactly what the scandal involved. Cryptically, the magazine published this enigmatic blurb:

"Lana in the early 1940s visited Gotham. She would don slacks and dark glasses and scurry off on a nightly

jaunt to the Red Rooster, a wild little joint in Harlem. She was known to take several trips to the club to hear the music of Billy Daniels, its owner."

What is known is that when Louis B. Mayer heard that Lana, his profit-generating white goddess, was frequenting a notorious, fast-emerging nightclub in Harlem, he sent Johnny Meyer, a member of his security team, to escort her. *[Meyer later became a pimp for Howard Hughes.]*

Mayer had been Lana's escort on the night the rumor had originated. Allegedly, a drunken Lana asked Meyer to stand guard at the entrance to the men's toilet. She was said to have requested that he send the biggest and handsomest "bucks," one by one, each of them black, into the toilet.

Before the night ended, and again, only according to an unsourced rumor, she was said to have fellated nine African-American men before she was seen stumbling out of the club.

Meyer later claimed that the rumor was true.

The rumor was given greater credence when an African American waitress, Fannie Pennington, who at the time was working at the Red Rooster, verified it. Later, she became a well-known activist, organizer, and fundraiser in the Civil Rights Movement, and a coordinator in Harlem for Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., then the most famous black congressman in America.

Pennington would eventually interact with such illustrious figures as Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. In 2015, she was designated as one of the NAACP's "History Makers."

She claimed that the fellatio story about Lana and the black men was true, and that she saw the young studs coming and going from the men's room where Lana waited inside for them. The rumor would have been long ago discounted were it not for the reliable credential of Pennington.

Billy Daniels, the club's owner, was there on the night of the alleged incident, but he always refused to comment on the accusation. In fact, he became a friend of Lana's, and the two of them would become embroiled in a scandal that was reported in *Confidential* magazine during Lana's marriage (1948-1952) to Bob Topping.

Lana become enraptured by Daniel's voice on radio in 1941, when she had heard him sing, "Diane." His all-time greatest hit, "That Old Black Magic," would not be recorded until 1948.

After the fellatio rumor became widespread, Lana radically curtailed her visits to the Red Rooster.

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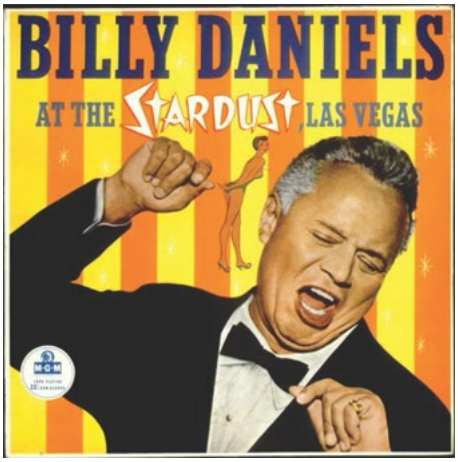
As reported above, MGM had appointed Johnny Meyer as Lana's escort (some said "chaperone," others said "security guard") during some of her visits to the Red Rooster. But weeks later, he was hired by Howard Hughes as his pimp.



The son of a postmaster in Jacksonville, Florida, Billy Daniels was the product of a mixed heritage, part Portuguese, part Choctaw Indian, part African-American, and a direct descendant of that trail-blazing frontiersman, Daniel Boone.

Daniels had sung at various clubs before he was discovered by big band leader Erskine Hawkins, who made him his band's leading vocalist. After long tours across the country, Daniels became a radio singer in Manhattan. His performances at a club in Manhattan on 52nd Street attracted the attention of such stars as Billie

Holiday, Frank Sinatra, and Benny Goodman.

Meyer's duties included setting up dates for Hughes with whomever he fancied in Hollywood. That included, in addition to Lana Turner, Veronica Lake, Rita Hayworth, and Ava Gardner.

In her memoir, Lana devoted scant attention to Hughes, presenting their relationship as relatively benign and harmless. Actually, it was far more complicated, not only her sexual liaisons with him, but his trysts with some of her girlfriends (notably, Susan Hayward, Ava Gardner, and Linda Darnell).

Meyer arranged for the introduction of Lana to Hughes when both of them happened to be passing through Chicago. Through Meyer, a dinner was arranged for them in Hughes' hotel suite, with the understanding that she'd spend time with him there the evening before the departure of her train to New York the next morning.

As she confessed, "I found him likable enough, but not especially stimulating. He was also hard of hearing." Their encounter included a bizarre incident that she didn't write about.

Two hours after dinner, following pleasant but unremarkable conversation, he invited her into his bedroom. She assumed it was for the same reason pursued by dozens of other men. But Hughes was different. She was shocked to see a scaled-to-life rubber copy of herself lying nude on the bed. "It looked so real, I thought I was seeing double," she later told Robert Stack, another occasional stud within Hughes' roster of male lovers. "That thing had my breasts, and a reasonable replica of my vagina."

She stood back in stunned disbelief as Hughes, face to face with the life-sized rubber doll, pulled down his trousers and produced an erection. "I want to show you what I do to this dummy of you, since I haven't had the real thing."

She watched for only about a minute as he mounted the rubber copy of herself. Then she fled from his suite.

After her return to Hollywood, she related what had happened in Chicago to Stack.

"It seems harmless enough," he said. "Don't be afraid of him. He's not violent, and he has many troubles. But he's a powerful figure in this town, and you'd be wrong to turn him down if he calls you for another date. He told me that one night, he plans to buy a big movie studio in Hollywood. If things don't work out for you at MGM, you may want to reign as the queen of whatever studio he's eyeing. I know he's considering RKO."

Howard Hughes dancing with Lana, avoiding the camera. This is the only known picture of them ever taken.

"Then perhaps I'll reconsider," she answered, primly.

"I'm having this pool party Saturday afternoon," he said. "I'll invite both of you. You're to arrive separately, of course."

Three days before the pool party, she set out to learn whatever she could. To her, Hughes was just another big and very rich name. She met with Hollywood columnist James Bacon, who knew Hughes quite well. He seemed to delight in sharing Hughes stories with her, revealing that he preferred divorced women such as Lana herself, referring to them as “wet decks.”

“Howard once told me that he’d lost his virginity to his uncle, Rupert Hughes, when he was only fifteen years old.”

In his capacity as a journalist, Bacon kept a dossier on Hughes’ lovers, dating from his early days as a movie producer. The list he had compiled was long and amplified with dates and circumstances of their sexual assignations and implications. (“I’d call Howard Hollywood’s greatest swordsman,” Bacon had gloated.) Names on his list included Carole Lombard, Bette Davis, Billie Dove, Olivia de Havilland, Paulette Goddard, Jean Harlow, Katharine Hepburn, Fay Wray, and Ginger Rogers. According to Bacon, he had also “dated” actors from the A-list, some of whom had included Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Tyrone Power, Robert Taylor, and Randolph Scott.

Stack later devised a plan that would render Lana more alluring to Hughes. With a sense of ironic self-deprecation, he said, “Imagine *me* telling the love goddess of Hollywood how to be more alluring.”

During the planning stages of this scenario, Stack informed her that “Howard is a man for boobs,” and with that in mind, they devised a plan.

Alluringly clad in a bathing suit, Lana positioned herself near Stack’s swimming pool for what seemed like a long time before Hughes finally arrived in a battered old Chevrolet. He was shabbily dressed, as usual, and would not appear in bathing trunks, probably because he was embarrassed by his skinny frame. He sat beside the pool sipping lemonade, closely observing both Lana and Stack, each of whom, clad in swimwear, looked movie-star and camera-ready.

It was time to put her plan into action. After executing a running dive from the diving board into the pool, the straps holding the upper half of her bathing suit “malfunctioned,” and came (deliberately) undone, exposing her breasts. Then she swam around a bit, later admitting, “It was hard to swim and keep my breasts covered at the same time.

When Lana emerged from the water, Stack (who had gallantly retrieved the top of her bathing suit from the waters of his pool) was waiting with the soggy garment and a large pink towel.

Her pre-choreographed striptease seemed to do the trick. Hughes invited her to get dressed and to have dinner with him.

The next morning, she phoned Stack to thank him for the party and to tell her friend—and sometimes lover—what she later recorded in her memoirs, “Hughes confessed a preference for oral sex, but I wasn’t interested.”

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On other occasions, Lana asserted that she did not indulge in fellatio. However, many of her lovers—former and future—suggested otherwise.

[Some insiders suggested that her denial of fellatio was a demure attempt to squelch rumors about her “performances” within the men’s toilet at the Red Rooster in Harlem.]

Lana and Hughes began to date, but she downplayed her involvement with him. In her memoirs, she wrote, “I saw him from time to time, and occasionally, he’d come to the house just to sit and talk with my mother. She liked him and sympathized with his partial deafness.”

Having already dated such fancy dressers as Greg Bautzer, Lana had neverbeen escorted anywhere by a man as sloppily dressed as Hughes. During their shared outings to Trocadero, he’d arrive unshaved and wearing clothes he’d lived in for most of the previous week. He’d have a stubble of beard, and he wore shoes but no socks. His shirt, which he hadn’t removed in a while, usually had buttons missing and traces of body odor. He always wore a battered gray hat that looked like he’d purchased it in 1933. Before sexual intimacies, she’d insist that he shower.

Howard Hughes: There was always a problem with his shabby dress code.

She told Stack that Hughes revealed to her that he was the regular client of a Hollywood bordello populated with prostitutes who, in their dress, makeup, and clothing, evoked specific movie stars. Sometimes, Hughes maintained, the women had submitted to plastic surgery as a means of reinforcing their similarities to "the real thing."

"If men can't get the real thing, they settle for the mock," he said. "You should be flattered: The most requested 'working gal' there is a Lana Turner lookalike," he told her. "Next in line, based on the number of requests, is Betty Grable, followed by Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner. There aren't that many requests for Hedy Lamarr, perhaps because the rumor still persists that she slept with the *Führer."*

Once, when Hughes arrived, as planned, to escort Lana to dinner, he entered her living room but refused to sit down. Then he revealed to Lana and to Mildred that he'd ripped his pants.

Her mother told him to remove his trousers and that she would sew them up.

"I can't," he answered. "I never wear underwear."

Consequently, after Mildred's coaxing, he retreated to the bathroom, removed his pants, and returned to the living room with a towel wrapped around his midriff.

Mildred sewed up his pants.

Then, with the intention of procuring him some underwear, Lana went to one of her wardrobes and retrieved an old pair of Artie Shaw's shorts, which she gave to Hughes. "You shouldn't go around with dirty pants next to your body," she lectured him.

Although Mildred professed to like Hughes, and urged Lana to marry him ("Think of those millions!"), behind his back, she called him "a strange bird."

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One night, inspired by her belief that there would be good roles in postwar films for women pilots, Lana asked Hughes to teach her how to fly an airplane.

Consequently, Hughes escorted her to an abandoned airfield outside Los Angeles, the same place where he had taught Katharine Hepburn basic lessons in flying. Taking time out from work he should have been completing on his experimental plane, the XF-11, he gave Lana lessons.

On another occasion, he picked her up in another equally old, equally battered Ford and drove her out beyond Culver City to an airfield, where one of his planes was waiting. As she later relayed to Stack, "Within the hour, we were flying to Las Vegas."

“Lana doesn’t need a bed on which to make love,” Hughes confided to Stack. “The floor of my Sikos, while we were on autopilot at 12,000 feet, was bad enough. Call it an airborne fuck, apparently her first.”

On another occasion, Hughes flew Lana to New York, where he’d booked suites for them at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel. It was later revealed that J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI instructed his G-Men to bug Hughes’ suite.

Their stay lasted for twelve days and nights. She remembered the occasion with fondness. “On the streets, the women were wearing their wartime finery, and most of the men looked gorgeous in their military uniforms parading up and down Fifth Avenue. Howard invited me to go into any store and buy anything I wanted. Although I loved diamonds, I felt it would be too brazen to take him into Tiffany’s.”

Years later, she told a reporter, “Those who walk the streets of New York today would never realize how glamorous it looked back them. There was an excitement in the air we no longer have.”

After their stay in New York, whereas she returned immediately to Hollywood, he flew to Louisville for the Kentucky Derby. He was soon back in New York, where he filed a $5 million lawsuit against the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America for interference in trade. They’d censored his movie, *The Outlaw*, starring Jane Russell. In Lana’s words, *The Outlaw* “introduced the breasts of Jane Russell.”

The press was filled with speculation that Lana and Hughes were going to get married. It was even reported that she had ordered that her new towels be embroidered with the initials of “H.H.”

Publicly, she denied any marital plans with Hughes. Likewise, Hughes told Johnny Meyer, “I’m not going to marry her. As for those towels, she can always marry Huntington Hartford.”

[Ironically, by the end of the war, Lana would be dating the A&P heir.]

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After Hughes’ return to California, she waited and waited for him to call. But for eight months, he disappeared, and only a few trusted aides knew where he was. The whereabouts of this eccentric, mysterious, at times frightening, and always unpredictable man remained unsolved. In time, he would return and play a major role in Lana’s life.

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Once again, Lana’s mentor, Mervyn LeRoy, was assigned to direct her in another picture, in this case, the crime drama, *Johnny Eager*. Developed and conceived as an MGM release for 1942, it was wrapped six weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), playing in movie houses just as America had gone to war.

Like *Honky Tonk*, which had teamed her with Clark Gable, Lana once again was featured with one of her alltime “dreamboats,” the dashingly handsome Robert Taylor, who was billed at the time as “The Heartthrob of America.”

“From the first day I introduced Bob to Lana, love was in the air,” LeRoy said.

One of the claims in the title of Lana’s memoir contained the words, “The Truth.” Yet within its pages, she (inaccurately) denied having had an affair with Taylor during the shooting of *Johnny Eager*. She wrote, “Bob had the kind of looks I could fall for, and we were attracted to each other from the beginning. I’ll admit I flirted with him, but for me, it was no more than that, since he was married to Barbara Stanwyck.”

She also claimed, “Certainly our mutual attraction didn’t harm our love scenes. I wasn’t in love with Bob, not really. Oh, we’d exchanged romantic passionate kisses, but we’d never been to bed together. Our eyes had, but not our bodies.”

A son of Oklahoma, Heflin was one of the most talented actors Lana would ever work with. After *Johnny Eager*, she would co-star with him in two more movies, *Green Dolphin Street* and *The Three Musketeers*.

"Van is a reasonably attractive man," Lana told LeRoy, "but he's definitely not my type."

That assertion was accurate during the first few days of the shoot, but as LeRoy later said, "By the fourth day, those two gorgeous creatures were really going at it. You could almost hear the sounds of love-making coming from her dressing room. I hated to interrupt them to call them back to the set."

In the film, Lana portrays the adopted daughter of Edward Arnold, who was cast as John Benson Farrell, the crusading prosecutor who's responsible for having sent Johnny to prison. Lana's father is now the District Attorney, who at first is not aware of Johnny's dog-racing scams.

As an actor, Lana worked smoothly with Arnold, who was a formidable character actor who had grown up in New York, the son of German immigrants. He'd made his first stage appearance at the age of 12. By 1935, he was cast in the pivotal title role of *Diamond Jim* (1935), a part he would reprise in 1940 when he starred in *Lillian Russell*.

He told Lana, "I gave up losing weight and went after character roles. The bigger I get, the better parts I receive."

The best acting in the picture was executed by Van Heflin, who was cast as the drunken attorney, Jeff Hartnett, the only real friend Johnny Eager has. For his brilliant portrayal, he won the Oscar that year as Best Supporting Actor.

Heflin had made his film debut in 1936 in *A Woman Rebels*, with Katharine Hepburn. He'd later appear on Broadway with her in stage version of *The Philadelphia Story*, but he lost out on the role when it was adapted into a movie. His career would be interrupted by the war, when he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps as a combat cameraman assigned to the Ninth Air Force in Europe.

During their first week of shooting, LeRoy congratulated Lana on how she'd grown as an actress. "If you want to survive in this wicked business, you have to learn the ropes fast," she said. "I had to hold my own against Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, and now Robert Taylor. A girl has to learn the tricks of the trade."

Robert Sterling was cast as Jimmy Courtney, Lana's high society boyfriend. In a few weeks, Lana would find herself working with him again on her next picture, *Somewhere I'll Find You* with Clark Gable.

As the film unfolds, when Johnny Eager's childhood friend, Lew Rankin (as interpreted by Barry Nelson), gets fed up being a second stringer in the gang, and defies Johnny in an attempt to replace him, the gangster has him murdered without the slightest regret.

One of the most dramatic moments in the film occurs when Johnny frames the character played by Lana for murder. He orders Julio (Paul Stewart), one of his underlings, to burst into their quarters and pretend to try to kill him. During the fake struggle, Julio drops his gun, only to have Lisbeth (Lana) retrieve it and shoot him in an attempt to save Johnny's life. She is hustled out of the room before she can determine that the gun she used had been filled with blanks.

Lana's affair with Robert Taylor, both on and off the screen, was doomed. At the film's conclusion, Johnny is shot dead in the street by a policeman, proving once again, that crime doesn't pay.

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Both Lana and her closest friend, Virginia Grey, compared notes on the love-making techniques of Robert Taylor, as he had already been sexually intimate with each of them. His affair with Grey transpired before he met Lana. Robert Stack, another of Taylor's lovers, was also kept abreast of Lana's new affair.

"A lot of women dream about finding a patient, totally giving lover like Bob, but they rarely find him," Lana confided.

Stack told her, "Bob is probably the handsomest man alive, and the least actorish actor, without any feeling of being the matinee idol that he is. What he looks like is not what he is. He's just a guy who looks like a god with a widow's peak."

Actually, his hair had originally "squared" in a straight line across his forehead, but Mayer had ordered makeup artists and hair stylists to give him his famous widow's peak.

Among his early seductions was a bit player on the set of his 1936 film, *Small Town Girl*, starring Janet Gaynor. In addition to seducing Gaynor, Taylor took the virginity of Thelma ("Pat") Ryan long before Richard Nixon married her and, as Pat Nixon, she became First Lady of the United States.

Taylor had also seduced Greta Garbo, with whom he'd appeared in the 1936 classic, *Camille*. Both Ava Gardner and Elizabeth Taylor lay in his future.

A bisexual, Taylor was known among Hollywood insiders for his sexual conquests of John Gilbert, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, and Howard Hughes.

"I had to have Lana Turner if only for one night," Taylor told LeRoy. "A man would risk being sent up for rape for just one night with her."

When Louis B. Mayer heard this, he dispensed his MGM press agent, George Nichols, to tell Taylor "to keep it soft and in your pants."

Nichols later recalled, "Lana went from the bed of Clark Gable to the bed of Robert Taylor. I used to kid Clark and Bob for seducing some of the same women—Joan Crawford and Norma Shearer come to mind. Sometimes, Clark gave women's telephone numbers to Bob when he wanted to dump some broad."

One day, unannounced and without warning, Taylor's wife, Barbara Stanwyck, appeared on the set of *Johnny Eager*. Seeing her, Lana fled to her dressing room, an act that evoked the scene she was shooting with Clark Gable in *Honky Tonk* when his angry wife, Carole Lombard, suddenly appeared during one of his love scenes with Lana.

This time, Lana refused to come out of her dressing room until LeRoy assured her that Mayer had ordered that Stanwyck be escorted away from from the lot.

Lana's role in *Johnny Eager* evolved into one of the most glamorous of her career. She was cast as a society beauty, Lisbeth Bard, who falls in love with the gangster, Johnny Eager, as portrayed by Taylor. Whereas he

pretends to be a cab driver, reporting to a parole officer, he's really running a murderous gang.

One evening at midnight during the shooting of *Johnny Eager*, when Taylor had still not returned home, Stanwyck placed an angry call to Lana. He had left her home less than a half-hour before. As Lana described to LeRoy the next day, "That Stanwyck woman can curse like a truck driver. She called me everything bad that you can call a woman, from bitch to slut."

Many Hollywood biographers have suggested that the Taylor/Stanwyck union was a "a lavender marriage" with its participants committed to a relationship devoid of sexual intimacies. Stanwyck was known for having affairs with Marlene Dietrich and her dearest friend, Joan Crawford, each of whom was also a bisexual.

It was rumored that Stanwyck harangued her husband so much about his secret status as a homosexual that he had become impotent, but only with her.

Before that, he had told Gable, "Ah, that wife of mine…She always wants to run the fuck."

By mid-production of *Johnny Eager*, Taylor seemed to have fallen in love with Lana, enough so that he went home one night and informed Stanwyck that he was divorcing her to marry Lana. The next day, he told a (horrified) Lana what he had done.

For four days, Stanwyck disappeared. It was later learned that after a suicide attempt *[she slit her wrists]* she'd checked into Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. She'd registered at the hospital under the pseudonym of "Sarah Bruce." For days, Taylor didn't know where his wife was or what had happened to her.

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Johnny Eager did well at the box office, and the reviews were fair, with lavish praise going to Heflin for his performance. Most critics cited Lana and Taylor for their star power and their on-screen chemistry.

Johnny Eager had a "sock" ending, with Taylor planting a solid right on Lana's chin, as if knocking some sense into her and paving the way for her to return to her society boyfriend.

Photoplay wrote, "Frankly, we like Lana Turner better in 'slitchy' roles, but, even so, her performance here is proof that she can act."

One critic got carried away: "I'm not sure what this story about a cold-blooded gangster was about. All I know was that fans just wait for Taylor and Turner to make love on screen. His sheer male beauty and her luminous face are something to see. The love scenes lack subtlety, but who wants subtlety?"

The New York Times wrote that *Johnny Eager* was "a tight tale of underworld horror that drives hard, even in the clinches, and though not a serious drama, the movie moves at a turbulent tempo. Taylor and Turner strike sparks in their distraught love affair."

Critic Emanuel Lewis complained that the plot failed to make any sense and that Heflin "stole every scene he was in."

Variety reported that, "Johnny Eager is an underworld meller *[melodrama]* with a few new twists to the usual trappings. But by and large, it's the familiar tale of a slick gangster vs. an innocent rich girl."

Sometime in February of 1943, Taylor dropped in for a "drink" at Lana's house that lasted for five hours. He had recently joined the U.S. Naval Air Corps under his original Nebraska name of Spangler Arlington Brugh.

In the Navy, he had become a flight instructor, but by the time he was discharged late in 1945, he was a full lieutenant.

During his first week back, he lunched with Lana in the MGM commissary, lamenting that in his absence, "all the good men's roles had gone to Van Johnson, Peter Lawford, and Frank Sinatra."

She assured him, "You'll come back bigger than ever."

***

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, "that date that will live in infamy," Lana threw a party, inviting former lovers who included Tommy Dorsey and Buddy Rich, as well as a future lover, Frank Sinatra. She also invited two of her girlfriends, Susan Hayward and Linda Darnell.

When Barbara Stanwyck saw this publicity photo of herself, she said, "That's what I'd like to do to Lana Turner for fucking Robert Taylor during the filming of *Johnny Eager."*

The party lasted well past midnight, at which point her mother, Mildred, arrived home from a trip to San Francisco.

She immediately chastised Lana and her guests for "partying at a time like this. Haven't you turned on the radio all day? You fools don't even know that the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor? Turn on the damn radio!"

Lana and her guests gathered around the radio to listen to the latest news from Honolulu and Washington. America was at war. In one way or another, each of them, including Lana, knew that the war would forever alter their lives.

In the weeks ahead, she would say goodbye to many former lovers headed off to war, including Robert Stack, Robert Taylor, Wayne Morris, Victor Mature, Glenn Ford, and Spencer Tracy.

When not making a picture, Lana volunteered for railroad tours, visiting town after town for rallies to sell war bonds.

Every American in the 1940s knew what a war bond was, less so today. *[In essence, a war bond was a debt security issued by the government to finance military operations and other expenditures.]*

During the tour, one of Lana's first stops was Wallace, Idaho, her birthplace. The whole town turned out to greet their hometown girl who had gone to Hollywood and become world famous. The mayor gave her the key to the city, and she was escorted on a tour of familiar sites, including the house where she had lived with Virgil and Mildred.

In October of 1942, Lana became a regular volunteer at the Hollywood Canteen at 1451 Cahuenga Boulevard, a club that would entertain servicemen until it closed on Thanksgiving Day in 1945, following the Japanese surrender that September.

The canteen had been founded by Bette Davis and Lana's future co-star, John Garfield, along with Jules Stein,

President of the Music Corporation of America. During the war, Lana, during most of her visits to New York, also paid visits to the Stage Door Canteen, a venue with R&R for servicemen in mind, and the regular lair of such Broadway stars as Tallulah Bankhead.

The Hollywood Canteen offered music, free food, and a chance to dance with a bevy of on-site movie stars, some of whom might on any given evening have included Lana, Bette Davis, Betty Grable, Marlene Dietrich, and Rita Hayworth.

Not just movie stars, but industry grips, musicians, singers, comedians, writers, and other entertainment venues signed up as volunteers. Entertainers ranging from Dinah Shore to Bob Hope performed for the servicemen, including those in Allied armies in Europe and Canada.

On any given night, a serviceman might be dancing in the arms of Lucille Ball or Ava Gardner, perhaps Carole Landis, while being served food by Errol Flynn and listening to songs by Peggy Lee.

One night, Davis caught Dietrich and Lana in the kitchen together washing dishes. She shouted, "Get that Kraut and Turner out front dancing with the men. We can always get Ethel Barrymore and Cecil B. DeMille to wash the dishes."

On a few occasions, Lana was behind the grill, preparing her specialty—juicy porterhouse steaks smothered in onions. In cooler weather, Lana showed up in her most dazzling gowns and a mink coat. She told Davis, "The men expect me to look like Lana Turner, not Elsa Lanchester, the *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)."

Davis skeptically noted that Lana was free with her kisses, "especially if a guy were good-looking. The rules were that our volunteer women were not supposed to fuck the enlisted men. But Dietrich and Turner never followed the rules. Nor did Hedy Lamarr, for that matter."

Lana often encountered Ronald Reagan, who talked about the politics of the war. At the time, both of them were solidly behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

A special surprise awaited the millionth serviceman who checked in at the door of the Canteen. A Texan, he was kissed by the singing star, Deanna Durbin, Marlene Dietrich, and by Lana herself. The soldier reported, "Eddie Cantor was there, and gave me a big wet one right on the lips. I loved the kisses from the gals, but could have done without the liver lips of Cantor."

When the Canteen had been operating for some time, Artie Shaw showed up, and Lana went home with him. She told him that the men she'd met at the Canteen fell into two different categories. "A certain type of man has a brave heart, filled with courage as he goes off to war, to land on some god-forsaken island in the South Pacific where the Japs are waiting to shoot him."

"Or else a young man is afraid to die, not ready to give up his life. After spending a night with me, he wants me to hold him in my arms the next morning like a loving mother. Over an old-fashioned American breakfast prepared by Mildred, we both reassure him of a safe return. He wants to believe us."

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During the war, Lana also performed in shows for the Armed Forces Network. Even before America entered the war, Lana, on September 22, 1941, had appeared on the NBN show, *Salute of Champions*, a special tribute to men serving in the armed forces.

The cast brought her together for the first time with Rita Hayworth, who during the war would vie with her as the pinup girl most favored by GIs. Betty Grable remained the Number One favorite.

After posing for photographs, the two screen goddesses had little to say to each other. Yet on many a night in the 1940s, "Lana & Rita," as they were called, showed that they had the same taste in men.

Lana had seduced Hayworth's future husband, singer Dick Haymes, before she did. In addition, both Lana and Rita were each "deflowered" by many of the same beaux: Tony Martin, Peter Lawford, Robert Mitchum, Tyrone Power, James Stewart, and inevitably, Howard Hughes.

Lana did not like to be compared to Hayworth, and was outraged at the remarks bandleader Fred Karger made. "When I first spotted Rita in 1939, I had never seen such a beautiful woman. She had tremendous magnetism about her, walking into a room, an aura really. Lana Turner was gloriously beautiful, too, but didn't have Rita's magic."

Karger would later become the mentor and lover of Marilyn Monroe. He would in time marry Jane Wyman, the ex-Mrs. Ronald Reagan, who would divorce him, then remarry him, then re-divorce him after realizing that their romance was a lost cause.

At another rally before the war, in November of 1941, Lana arrived in New York for an appearance at Madison Square Garden, where Eleanor Roosevelt was the featured speaker, alongside an array of stars ranging from Groucho Marx to Danny Kaye. Lana found the First Lady "a warm-hearted, charming old soul."

Lana ended 1941 by appearing again on NBC Radio on the *Chase & Sanborn Program* starring Edgar Bergen

and his talking dummy, Charlie McCarthy. Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were also slated to attend, but at the last minute, Costello caught the flu. Mickey Rooney, Lana's former beau, filled in for him.

She was still in New York for the New Year's Dancing Party broadcast coast to coast, with Lana pitching the virtues of the USO.

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During the months ahead, Lana continued her rivalry with Hedy Lamarr, often for men or perhaps for the same roles. She resented her co-starring with Robert Taylor and Clark Gable. Mostly, she resented how Lamarr defined herself as "The Queen of MGM," a title that Lana felt she owned.

Movie stars such as Lana, Hedy Lamarr, and Carole Lombard were instrumental in promoting war bond sales. In one day, Lana raised $5 million for the government, even giving away a kiss for $50,000. Lamarr topped her, garnering $7 million in war bond sales, also in one day.

The rosters of men who roared through each of their lives during the war, were similar: Errol Flynn, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Howard Hughes, John Garfield, and then Navy lieutenant John F. Kennedy, appeared on both lists.

Lana had always considered Lamarr an empty-headed beauty. She was later shocked to learn that she also had a brain.

Along with George Antheil, the composer and pianist, Lamarr had invented a secret communication system that was adapted into a radio-controlled torpedo guidance network.

As detailed by Lamarr's biographer, Ruth Barton, "The procedure involves sending a series of signals from a transmitter to a receiver in a manner that cannot be intercepted, thus allowing for a torpedo to be dropped remotely. It was crucial that the message cannot be jammed by a third party."

In June of 1941, Lamarr and Antheil formally registered their invention with the U.S. Patent Office. Today, it's credited as an essential part of everything from military weapons to cellphones. Encountering Lana after news of her invention became widely publicized, Lamarr told Lana, "Just because a woman is beautiful does not mean she is stupid."

***

Lana remained friends with Artie Shaw throughout most of the duration of the war. In fact, she spent her final night with him before the bandleader enlisted in the Navy, following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was assigned to Staten Island in New York, where he was trained aboard a minesweeper.

He wrote her every month, telling her he had been transferred to Newport, Rhode Island, where he had been promoted to the post of Chief Petty Officer. "Not only that," he wrote," but I've been given a band to lead, consisting of the world's most untalented musicians."

Using the power of his famous name, he persuaded the military brass in Washington to allow him to recruit

extremely talented musicians who had been drafted into the Navy.

Lana, with Rita Hayworth, raising morale. Their joint appearances always seemed to spark debates about the relative merits of blondes vs. redheads.

By the summer of 1943, he informed Lana that he was the leader of a "real band," and would be sailing from Pearl Harbor aboard the battleship, USS *North Carolina*, touring the Pacific theater to perform for servicemen. He visited such outposts as New Caledonia and the Solomons. Venues for the band ranged from on-board concerts to makeshift stages hastily erected in jungles.

When Shaw arrived on battle-torn Guadalcanal, there remained some pockets of Japanese resistance. "My tent was so full of bullet holes, it looked like Swiss cheese," he said in a letter to Lana.

He also described how he began the musical lineup of his concerts with "Begin the Beguine," and that the boys had almost cried with glee to hear American music, "since they were homesick in this cesspool of horror."

Shaw learned via short-wave radio that his fourth wife, Betty Kern, the daughter of songwriter Jerome Kern, had given birth to a seven-pound boy. But they would soon divorce.

He wrote to Lana that Tokyo Rose, the infamous Japanese propaganda broadcaster, often played recordings of his hits, asserting that the music was being broadcast live from the ballroom of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco.

"Hear this, Yankee soldiers," she would announce to U.S. servicemen who had gathered around their radios, swatting away bugs in the sweltering jungle heat. "After the show, the boys in the band are making out with your girlfriends, even though they promised to wait for your return."

As the war progressed and as Shaw's USO tours through the Pacific continued, he suffered from (and was diagnosed with) exhaustion, and was subsequently shipped back to a Naval Hospital at Oak Knoll, California.

When Lana arrived to visit him, she saw that he'd lost a lot of weight and was looking weak and pale, enough to keep him in the hospital for three months. He'd picked up some "bug" in the South Pacific, he'd told her.

In 1944, he was discharged from the Navy, and there was some talk that he and Lana might remarry. But then into his life came Lana's new best girlfriend, Ava Gardner, who, in 1945, married him herself, with disastrous consequences.

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In October of 1942, the month it opened, Lana made her first conquest at the Hollywood Canteen. Her friend, Linda Darnell, had arrived with her at the Canteen that night.

"Robert Moseley was the best-looking guy I've ever seen in a sailor's uniform," Lana recalled. He told her that he'd become an apprentice seaman, having been assigned to the U.S. Naval Reserve Station in Los Angeles.

As she danced with him, she said, "Where are you from, sailor boy?"

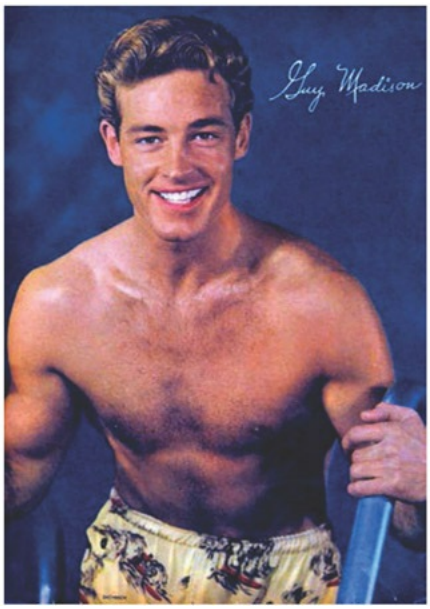
She almost laughed at his answer: Pumpkin Center, California. Before the night ended, she also learned that he was a few months younger than she was.

From a faraway corner of the room, she pointed Moseley out to Darnell. "Don't you think he's a living doll? What a divine physique. I've already learned that he grew up on a ten-acre ranch, and that he was an athlete in high school."

When she danced with him again, he told her, "I attended this junior college at Bakersfield, and the guys in the locker room called me the male version of Lana Turner."

"I guess I should be flattered," she said. "Or else you should be flattered. I think you should be in pictures, and

I know just the right agent for you. I'm no longer his client, but we're still good friends. His name is Henry Willson."



Lana met the handsome Guy Madison at the Hollywood Canteen, suggesting that, based on his looks, he should be in pictures.

She warned him that with Henry Will-son as his agent, he might have to spend some nights on the casting couch.

"I'm no actor."

"Darling, I'm no actress," she said. "To be a movie star, you really don't need to know how to act. You could light up the screen with your looks."

Although it was against the rules of the Canteen, she invited him to her home that night. As she later told Darnell, "I was thrilled with his love-making."

The next afternoon, she asked him to escort her to Willson's Saturday afternoon pool party. Her homosexual agent was enthralled by Moseley, telling her, "I'll have to change his name." Then he rattled off about ten proposals for new names. Of them all, she preferred "Guy Madison."

Alone, over drinks with the just-renamed Guy Madison, she explained to him, "Henry has this thing for men in uniform."

"You mean, he's *that* way?" he asked.

"Exactly," she answered. "You've got that right. Actually, I think it's only fair that handsome young men have to lie on the casting couch in Hollywood just like women have. How do you feel about that?"

"If this Willson guy can get me into the movies, I guess it's okay," he said.

Henry operates an Adonis factory," she said. "When you get out of the service, I bet he can get you a contract with David O. Selznick."

"You mean the guy who produced *Gone With the Wind?"*

"One and the same," she said.

"Hot damn!" Being a star sounds a lot better than shoveling cowshit out of a barn on the family ranch."

Before they left the pool party, Willson called Lana aside. "Thanks for introducing me to the newly christened Guy Madison. He looks like a real-life version of one of Tom of Finland's wet dreams."

She didn't know who he was referring to.

[Tom of Finland was the pen name of the Finnish artist, Touko Laaksonen (1920-1991), who developed an international reputation for his erotic drawings of super-masculine males with monstrous endowments. Many of his homosexual fans referred to him as "the King of Beefcake."]

Willson wanted Madison to remain behind, but Lana said, "He's taking me to the Mocambo tonight. Ganymede

is mine."

"Ganymede? Since when did you start using such a classical reference?

"I learned it from Artie Shaw," she said.

At the Mocambo, Madison was awed, telling Lana, "The decorations here make me feel like I'm inside a coffin."

"You're a hit," she said. "When we walked in, more eyes were trained on you than on me." Before the night was over, she'd introduced him to both Veronica Lake and Dorothy Lamour.

"You're more beautiful than those hussies," he told her.

Even during Lana's second marriage to Stephen Crane, Madison became a reliable date whenever he visited the Canteen. When she personally rendezvoused with him, it was usually upstairs within one of Willson's bedrooms. Also, during the course of his first year in the service, Willson also got to "audition" the young sailor several times.

For three years he served in the Navy, eventually moving on to the Transition Training Squadron of the Pacific Fleet in San Diego. At one point, he injured his back and was transferred to the U.S. Naval Special Hospital at Banning, California, from which he was eventually discharged.

Stardom, through Henry Willson, awaited him. As Lana recalled to Alexis Smith, who had met Madison at the Canteen, "Guy is the kind of young man who can satisfy both men and women in equal measure."

In time, his fan clubs would dub him, "The World's Most Desirable Male."

Television's future Wild Bill Hickock was on his way to stardom.

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Scheduled for a 1942 release, *Keeper of the Flame* was a story about the pitfalls of hero worship. As its stars, Louis B. Mayer and director George Cukor cast Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn.

One of the supporting actors was Forrest Tucker, a ruggedly handsome farm-boy who had arrived in Hollywood financed by a wealthy male "mentor," in whose home he lived for several months.

Tucker was said to "ooze masculinity," and his wavy blonde hair, his photogenic good looks, and his height of 6'4" soon attracted attention. At the age of 14, Tucker had entered show business, singing at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. He later worked at the Old Gaiety Burlesque Theater in Washington, D.C., where the big teenage boy created a "sensation:" among the burlesque dancers and the male drag queens.

In Hollywood, Tucker came to the attention of a talent scout at MGM, Wesley Ruggles, who ordered a screen test for him. "He's a hunk all right. I thing he could be MGM's answer to John Wayne." Ruggles would soon direct Lana's next big picture with Clark Gable.

Tucker came to Tracy's attention when he appeared with his friend, Gary Cooper, in *The Westerner* (1940). Tucker has stood out in a fight scene. Within weeks, the bisexual Tracy became Tucker's new "mentor"

During the filming of *Keeper of the Flame*, Tracy invited Lana to lunch in the MGM commissary. They had become friends since making *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* together, and would co-star with each other in the future.

Spencer Tracy introduced Lana to the studly Forrest Tucker. "We were going to dinner," Lana told Susan

Hayward. “But he never left my house all weekend. He calls that monster thing of his ‘The Chief.’ It’s his pride and joy, and does he ever know how to use it!”

In the weeks ahead, news of “The Chief” swept through Hollywood. George Cukor jokingly said that an impression of it should be pressed into wet concrete along Hollywood’s Walk of Fame.

She later confided to Susan Hayward that not since Sterling Hayden had she met such a “walking streak of sex. I went for Forrest in a big way, although I hope he has something left after Cukor and Spence finished with him for the day.”

Fortunately, Hepburn wasn’t at lunch that day. She’d had a fight with Cukor and had stormed off. Tracy told Lana about her blow-up:

Hepburn had been feuding with the movie’s scenarist, Donald Ogden Stewart, demanding that his script follow more closely I.A. R. Wylie’s novel. In that book, Steven O’Malley (the character played by Tracy), was depicted as an “impotent eunuch.”

In front of the cast, Tracy had ridiculed Hepburn’s suggestion. “You want me to play the role with no balls! No way!”

Hepburn was also angry that Cukor was devoting more time to getting Tucker’s scenes right than he was to her character. She noted that Tucker disappeared with the director for almost two hours every afternoon, bolting his door behind him.

During lunch, when Tracy was called to the phone, Tucker asked Lana for a date, and she accepted.

As Lana discovered, Tucker was not another John Wayne, but a man of sensitivity and feeling. He spoke of going to “the school of hard knocks.” His father had died of mustard gas during World War I, and his mother worked as a burlesque dancer. During the worst years of the Depression, he’d ridden the rails with other hobos looking for work, or at least food.

Lana had never seen Tucker on film, not even the movie he’d made with Gary Cooper. One afternoon, he arranged a screening for her at MGM of his 1941 release, *Honolulu*, in which he’d co-starred with the Mexican spitfire, Lupe Velez. She had once been married to the screen Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller, Lana’s former flame.

After Tucker seduced her, the outspoken Velez had spread the word that “Before Tuck, I thought either Gary Cooper or Johnny were my greatest thrills.”

Three years later, Velez would commit suicide.

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Lana and Lupe Velez were not alone in spreading the “big news” about Tucker’s self-styled “Chief.”

James Bacon, the Hollywood columnist, even wrote about Tucker’s endowment after he joined the Lakeside Country Club. Members there included Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Weissmuller, W.C. Fields, Mickey Rooney, and Humphrey Bogart.

Bacon wrote, “Tuck’s heavy endowment would become the chief tourist attraction at the club. As he lay passed out drunk in the locker room, a stream of members with guests would slowly and quietly file in. The towel would be lifted for an unveiling, and there would be many gasps.”

While Lana was dating Tucker, an even greater legend grew up around him. The comedian Phil Harris told Lana and countless others that one afternoon he was playing golf with Tucker at the club. “On the 7th hole, Tuck teed off, his ball hitting the green only a foot from the hole. I came within four feet of the same hole. Since he was so close to winning, he asked me if he could declare victory.”

“Hell, man!” he told Harris. “Even the Chief can hit that hole.”

“I bet you can’t,” Harris responded, reaching into his pocket and removing five $20 bills.

“You’re on,” Tucker said. He unbuttoned his pants and fell to a position on his hands, his knees above the turf, and “The Chief” scored a perfect bull’s eye. Word of that feat soon spread across Tinseltown.

In spite of his budding stardom, Tucker was drafted. He told Lana goodbye two days before he left for boot camp. He’d joined the U.S. Army, where in time he’d earn a commission as a second lieutenant.

After the war, she saw him periodically and only at parties. After he’d made *The Yearling* (1946) with Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman, he shot *Never Say Goodbye* with Errol Flynn that same year.

At a party in Flynn’s home, Tucker asked Lana if she’d retreat to Flynn’s bedroom with him.

“Not me,” she said. “He’s got a two-way mirror for voyeurs.”

“I don’t mind staging an exhibition,” Tucker said.

“Give me a raincheck, Tuck,” she said. “Some things are best kept private.”

After that, she was pleased for him for his big breakthrough role in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) with John Wayne. She was mostly delighted with his role as Beauregard Burnside, the first husband of Rosalind Russell in *Auntie Mame*, the biggest-grossing film of 1958.

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All the gossip columnists, even those at *The New York Times*, wrote of the upcoming marriage of Hedy Lamarr and George Montgomery, although no specific date had been set for the ceremony. A *Times* writer reported, "For an ex-cow puncher, Montgomery isn't doing badly at all. He recently sealed his intentions of becoming Hedy Lamarr's next husband. What it all adds up to, in short, is that Mr. Montgomery has arrived."

Lana wondered about his commitment to Lamarr. She had learned that he was slipping around and dating a beautiful MGM starlet, Kay Williams.

[As Kay Williams Spreckels, then best-known as a socialite, she would become the fifth and final wife of Clark Gable.]

As Lana told Virginia Grey, "I still have a special place in my heart for George Montgomery. He's not the kind of man a gal gets over easily. All the papers, as you know, are filled with news of his engagement to Hedy Lamarr."

"His nickname for her is Penny," Lana said, "but I wouldn't call her that. My nickname for her rhymes with witch."

One afternoon, Lana encountered Lamarr at MGM. To judge from her talk, the Austrian star was unaware that Montgomery had ever dated Lana.

[At the time, Lamarr and Lana were still pretending a surface friendship.]

"I am so happy with George I'm dizzy," Lamarr confided. "It is unbelievable that one girl could be so much in love. I have never been in love like this before. Last night, George gave me a $100 bottle of *Shalimar."*

"That's what I call true love," Lana said, disguising the sarcasm in her voice.

"He also gave me a clay Popeye he'd won throwing baseballs at a fun arcade," Lamarr said.

"That's even better than a diamond ring," Lana said.

"Don't be catty, dear," Lamarr cautioned her.

Three months later, Montgomery called Lana. "Penny *[his nickname for Lamarr]* and I are through. We broke off our engagement last night. You may not want to take me back, but I was wrong to leave you like I did."

It was 1943 and he'd just joined the U.S. Army Air Force after he'd played the lead in *Bomber's Moon*.

"Of course, I'll see you," she said.

He picked her up that night and drove her to a small Italian restaurant out in San Fernando Valley, far removed from the glitter of Tinseltown. They ate pasta and drank two bottles of wine by candlelight. He drove her back home, and she invited him in to spend the night with her before reporting for duty.

During the war, that penchant for "sending a soldier to war with a smile on his face" became a familiar routine for Lana.

Her rival, Carole Landis, remarked, "Lana Turner could always be counted on to give the boys a farewell fuck."

When Lana heard that remark, she responded, "Unlike Landis, I don't charge. Once a hooker, always a hooker."

She never heard from Montgomery again, but read in the *Hollywood Reporter* that he'd been assigned to the Army Signal Corps and stationed in Alaska.

During his visits to Los Angeles, he didn't call her, but had not taken up with Lamarr again either.

It came as a shock to her to read that in December of 1943, he'd married the singer, Dinah Shore. According to the report, she had staked him out as her husband the first day she'd met him.

But whereas Lamarr remembered Montgomery in her memoirs, Lana did not.

"George is one of the men whom I almost married," Lamarr wrote. "Everybody thought I was going to marry him, and perhaps I should have. He was so versatile and handsome. When he went off to war, he was even more attractive in uniform than in any of his Hollywood roles. Once we had made some vows, but we both had a faculty for seeing through sham and hypocrisy. We couldn't fool each other, and we both realized deep inside that we weren't sure enough about each other."

Jorge Guinle, a wealthy Brazilian playboy, didn't look like the typical Hollywood stud, but he seduced some of the most famous stars in Hollywood, including Lana and Marilyn Monroe.

In his heyday, he ranked up there with Aristotle Onassis, Howard Hughes, Prince Aly Khan, and Porfirio Rubirosa ("Rubber Hosa").

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At a party at Errol Flynn's home on Mulholland Drive, Lana was introduced to Jorge Guinle, the movie star's house guest. He was the scion of Brazil's richest family, called "The Rockefellers of Rio de Janeiro." In fact, when Franklin D. Roosevelt once visited, the president of Brazil asked the Guinle family to house him, since their residence was the most spectacular in the country.

When Guinle visited New York, he was a guest of Nelson Rockefeller. During the war, Nelson had used his influence to get Guinle a "soft job" in Hollywood, reviewing scripts to ensure that the countries of South America weren't wrongly depicted. In the middle of a war, the United States needed its good neighbors to the south.

Years later, Guinle would recall the first time he saw Lana enter Flynn's living room. "She was all in white, furs, diamonds, high heels, and a white gown with plunging *décolletage*. She was a dream walking."

Lana recalled that she was surprised at how short Guinle was, but was impressed with his penetrating blue eyes and his suave South American charm. He immediately won her over, and their brief fling would begin one weekend in Palm Springs.

She was not alone. His other conquests included Veronica Lake, Hedy Lamarr, and Jane Russell, Howard Hughes' big-busted discovery and the star of *The Outlaw*.

During their courtship, both Lana and Guinle shared a fascination for jazz. He had, in his capacity as a very wealthy investor, already financed some of the recordings of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

When he wasn't pursuing the most glamorous women of Hollywood, Guinle went nightclubbing with an array of male friends who included Orson Welles, Ronald Reagan, and Lana's mentor, Mervyn LeRoy.

During a visit to New York, Guinle introduced Lana to another friend of his, Huntington Hartford, the A&P heir. Lana would begin dating him in 1945.

At one point when she was dating Guinle, Lana learned that he was also spending some of his evenings with her girlfriend, Susan Hayward.

In 1946, when Lana attended a party hosted by Hartford, she shared a reunion with Guinle. He described his experience on the night Paris was liberated. "I attended a party thrown by Elsa Maxwell," he said. "Cole Porter played *La Marseillaise*, and I kissed and hugged Greta Garbo, Frank Sinatra, Charles Boyer, Maurice Chevalier, and Marlene Dietrich."

With the arrival of the 1950s, Guinle engineered new conquests, including Jayne Mansfield and Marilyn Monroe.

Guinle lived to be 88 years old. Before his death in 2004, he told the press, "Thanks to Viagra, I've continued with my love making. I'm still floating and not sinking."

Along with his youth, through bad investments, his wealth had long ago disappeared. "The secret of living well

is to die without a cent in your pocket."

"The days of all my old friends like Prince Aly Khan have gone. At times, I feel that glamor itself has disappeared from the world. On cold, windy nights when I'm alone, I relive my illustrious past. I seduced Lana Turner during the war and Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s. Not bad for a little short guy from Brazil."

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After dumping George Montgomery, Hedy Lamarr wasted no time in linking herself to Jean-Pierre Aumont. He was a French Jew and had been forced to flee from his native France after its Nazi takeover.

Aumont was a fast worker. As he later wrote in his memoir, *Sun and Shadow*, his affair with Lamarr began at a party at her wooden house, a building whose architecture reminded her of equivalent buildings in her native Austria. "She appeared, dressed in red, her black hair flowing. She was a vision of sensuality, with her nose upturned just enough to keep her from being too beautiful. During dinner, she pressed one of her knees, the lovelier of the two, against mine. The following week, we were engaged."

Later, as he would explain to Lana, the engagement ended when he was driving her home from a concert. "I braked a little too quickly. Hedy became hysterical, claiming that I had purposely tried to throw her against the windshield because I was jealous of her beauty."

The next day, their engagement was canceled.

As was her custom, Joan Crawford had been the first to discover and seduce Aumont. In his own words, "During World War II, a young Frenchman who wasn't bad looking, who owned a dinner jacket, and could babble a few words in English was received with wide open arms. Such was the case with Miss Crawford and myself."

"Everything about her seemed immense: Her eyes, her mouth, her shoulders, her greeting."

"The first night she invited me to her home, she didn't let me go for three days. My agent, Charlie Feldman, finally figured out where I was and came to rescue me."

Lana once proclaimed the glories of the French actor, Jean-Pierre Aumont.

"He was France's great gift to the love-starved women of Hollywood-—perhaps in gratitude for their help in World War II. From Hedy Lamarr to Gene Tierney, he was much appreciated, especially by myself."

It was at a house party at Crawford's that Aumont made his next conquest. She was Gene Tierney. "I was trying to flirt with her until Charles Boyer took me aside."

"Watch your step," Boyer cautioned. "She's a married woman. It's simply not done here."

"What a strange country," Aumont said.

In the days ahead, he did not follow Boyer's advice.

Although Tierney was married to Oleg Cassini, the fashion designer, at the time, he was often away for design and fashion commissions in New York. Neither Tierney nor Cassini was faithful to the other, and Tierney's affairs were wide-ranging. In addition to a dalliance with JFK, they included intimacies with Howard Hughes, Mickey Rooney, George Sanders, Victor Mature, Tyrone Power, and Darryl F. Zanuck.

Before arriving to deflower Hollywood actresses, Aumont had seduced Vivien Leigh in London. Grace Kelly was another goddess who lay in his future.

"Gene Tierney had skin made of gold," Aumont claimed, "with green-blue eyes. Her hair came down to her shoulders, and it curled at the ends. Her shoulders were broad, but not so much as Crawford's, and she spoke a bit with the Connecticut accent of Miss Katharine Hepburn, but far more seductive, of course."

"When I did get to talk to her, we spoke in French, since she'd learned how to speak it in Switzerland.

"How very nice to meet someone who is civilized," she said to him.

Within days, their on-again, off-again love affair, had begun, especially when her husband, Oleg Cassini, was away in New York.

Lana's affair with Aumont had begun on March 29, 1943, when they had co-starred in the dramatization of *Crossroads* for CBS's Lux Radio Theatre. After the broadcast, he'd invited her to dinner, which she followed up with an invitation to her home.

Little is known of their brief fling, except for one detail, which she shared with Mervyn LeRoy:

"Before Jean-Pierre gets excited, he needs his ass spanked. Apparently, he had developed this sexual fetish when he was enrolled in a boarding school in France. Every morning, he told me, his one-armed professor would order the boys to pull down their pants while he gave their bare butts a good spanking. Whether they did it or not, he spanked them for having masturbated the night before. From this punishment, Aumont seemed to have developed his fetish. After the spanking, he delivers the goods, and he's really fantastic. It's easy to understand why women are attracted to him."

Despite Aumont's affair with Lana, he would marry Maria Montez that year. A native of the Dominican Republic, she had gravitated to Hollywood, where she became "The Queen of Technicolor" after making a series of pictures that included *Arabian Nights* (1942), *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (1944), and *Cobra Woman* (also 1944).

Montez was in the Dominican Republic when Aumont was invited to Cole Porter's much-anticipated annual Hollywood party, so subsequently, he attended without her. "I felt like I was on top of the world," he said. "Everybody, including Lana, was congratulating me on my film, *Assignment in Brittany* (1943), in which I posed as a Nazi leader conspiring with the French Underground. The role had originally been slated for Robert Taylor."

"That night, Lana made me feel like I had invented the electric light bulb," Aumont said. "I was the center of attraction, and Porter seated me between Gene (Tierney) and Lana."

"Everything was perfect that night…too perfect. The caviar followed the *foie gras*. Violins were playing Viennese waltzes. I was surrounded by beauties, riches. But my stomach was tied in knots."

"Here I was, enjoying the good life while my countrymen in France were starving to death or being killed by the Nazis," Aumont said. "I suddenly got up and headed to the terrace without excusing myself."

Fearing he might be suddenly ill, Lana followed him into the garden trying to comfort him. "I just can't go on living in this fake world," he told her. "My heart is in France, and my country is bleeding."

He later told friends, "Lana was very tender to me, very loving, not some fake glamor queen. Apparently, she'd had much experience in sending men off to war."

Leaving the party, he drove her through the Hollywood Hills, where he found a secluded parking space at a belvedere. Both of them would remember that night's breezes and the lights over Los Angeles.

Holding on to her, he pleaded, "I don't want to be alone tonight."

After a night with her, he told her the next morning that he'd made up his mind. He was going to send a telegram to Captain de Manziarly, the head of *France Libre*, and volunteer his services. *[*France Libre *and* Forces françaises libres *were names for the government-in-exile spearheaded by Charles de Gaulle during World War II. Designated as an official ally of the UK and Britain after the collapse of France, it continued to fight against the Nazi governments of France's Vichy régime and Germany throughout the remainder of the war. France Libre began operating from a base in London in June 1940 and organized and liaised, from their base in London, the French Resistance in Nazi-occupied France.]*

The day after that, Aumont visited Louis B. Mayer at MGM, informing him of his decision to fight with the forces of *France Libre*. "I'll be spending some time in England," Aumont said. "When I return, I'll speak English better."

"Whatever you do, don't lose your accent," Mayer warned him. "It's your major asset. I'd rather you come

back without a leg than without your accent."

For his final visit to MGM, he went to Lana's dressing room and remained inside for two hours.

In New York, at the moment of his departure for the battlefields of Europe, it wasn't Lana, but Maria Montez who bid him *adieu*.

In North Africa, he joined the Free French forces fighting with the Allies to drive the Nazis out. In battle, he was wounded twice. For his bravery, he was made a member of the *Légion d'Honneur* and received *La Croix de Guerre. [The National Order of the Legion of Honor* (L'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur) *is the highest French order for military and civil merits, established in 1802 by Napoléon Bonaparte.]*

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Even though it was against the policy of the Hollywood Canteen, Lana sustained a number of affairs with enlisted men before they were shipped to the Pacific. One of them was on the dawn of major stardom, and another, somewhat lesser-known, would become a leading man in pictures.

Their names were Alan Ladd and Scott Brady.

Born in Arizona in 1913, Ladd had grown up in the Depression era, as he and his mother had struggled to survive in a kind of *Grapes of Wrath* scenario. His father had died of a heart attack when he was four years old.

Mother and son moved to California, where Ladd attended school, excelling in athletics in spite of his short stature. *[He would eventually reach a height of five feet, four inches. Some of his future leading ladies, including Shelley Winters, would have to stand in a shallow ditch for their love scenes with him.]*

His schoolmates mocked him, nicknaming him "Tiny." He perpetuated that name when, as a hard-working teen entrepreneur he opened Tiny's Patio, a hamburger joint and malt shop across from his school.

Along the way, he met Marjorie ("Midge") Harrold when she was a seventeen-year-old senior in high school. They would marry in 1936 and give birth to Alan Ladd, Jr., who one day would become President of 20th Century Fox.

Ladd's early days in Hollywood evoked scenes from that haunting novel of Tinseltown, *The Day of the Locust*. In 1932, he signed with Universal, which cast him in bit parts. The title of his 1933 film, *Island of Lost Souls*, could have described his personality.

He later described to Lana how Universal let him go within a few months. "I was told I was too short and too blonde. I was booted out the same day they dismissed another actor, Tyrone Power. He was told he was not masculine enough to be a leading man."

After that, Ladd got hired by Warner Brothers as a grip, getting an occasional bit part in films. In the 1939 *Citizen Kane*, he makes a brief, shadowy appearance playing a reporter at the end of the movie during its famous "Rosebud" scene.

His life changed when he met actress Sue Carol, who had become his theatrical agent. When she first spotted the handsome, blue-eyed actor, she said, "He looked like a Greek god and was unforgettable." She aggressively took over management of his career and married him in the after math of his divorce.

Lana met Alan Ladd at the Hollywood Canteen before his career took off.

"I usually go in for men tall in the saddle, but sometimes short men need love, too. Alan and I had just a brief fling, but June Allyson went ape-shit over him, even though both of them were married."

Carol was determined to make him a star, which finally came with the 1942 release of *This Gun for Hire*, in which he played a hired killer opposite Veronica Lake with her peek-a-boo hairdo. Although fourth-billed, he became the overnight sensation of the picture, enough so that Paramount would reteam him in other pictures with Lake. *[In private, the duo detested each other.]*

The year of his first big success, 1942, was the year that Lana met him at the Hollywood Canteen. Fortunately for Lana, Carol had gone to New York for business meetings and would be away for a week.

After dancing with him at the Canteen, Lana invited him home with her. He shared his dream of becoming a bigtime movie star. "I have the face of an aging choirboy and the build of an undernourished featherweight. If you can figure out my recent success on the screen, you're a better person than I am."

As Lana would later relay to Susan Hayward, "Alan was filled with self-doubt, even after we did it. He asked me a question no man had ever asked: 'Did I do it right?' he wanted to know."

"I assured him that he did and was so convincing that he wanted to do it again."

During *après sex*, he shared memories of his past. The most traumatic occurred when his beloved mother committed suicide by swallowing large amounts of an over-the-counter insecticide then being marketed as "ant paste".

He said they'd had a hard time putting food on the table. "It was always weak soup and cheap cuts of mutton. Today, I can't stand the smell of lamb."

Eventually, Ladd slipped away and paid a final call on Lana during February of 1943 before he left for service in the U.S. Army Air Force. Originally, he'd been classified 4-F because of a chronic stomach ailment. But he was eventually assigned to the Army's Motion Picture Unit, and even starred in a U.S. military propaganda film, *Letter From a Friend*.

For a while, Ladd was stationed at the Walla Walla Air Base, serving in their film unit, where he attained the position of Corporal.

He was given permission to attend the March, 1943 Academy Award presentations, where he shared a reunion with Lana. By December of that year, he would be voted the 15th Most Popular Star in the United States. *The New York Times* wrote, "Alan Ladd has built up a following unmatched in the film industry since Valentino skyrocketed to fame."

After the war, Lana and Ladd remained good friends. She was often entertained at his home, with Carol present as hostess. It is not known if his wife ever uncovered their long-ago affair.

Lana was amazed at the success of Ladd in films that included his memorable *Shane* (1953) with Jean Arthur.

For a while, he and Marilyn Monroe were voted the most popular stars in the movies.

Lana saw a lot more of the Ladds when all of them were living in Europe, taking advantage of the 18-month tax break the Internal Revenue Service granted to stars who lived and made pictures abroad.

She recalled going to parties hosted by director Tay Garnett. “These parties were for homesick exiles,” Lana said. “One night, Clark Gable showed up with Ava Gardner and Robert Taylor. Ava rolled up her sleeves and cooked Carolina fried chicken for the gang.”

In a talk between Gable and Ladd, Ladd revealed that he had been an extra in a Gable picture, *They Met in Bombay*, which was originally to have starred Lana as the female lead.

“Clark and Alan represented the vagaries of Hollywood,” Lana said. “When he made that Bombay picture, Clark was the King of Hollywood. Now, years later, Alan was the leader in the popularity polls and at the box office.”

In the years that followed, Lana saw less and less of Ladd as he sank deeper and deeper into depression and alcoholism. He also suffered from a gunshot wound that had been self-afflicted, although reported in the press as “accidental.”

In his last picture, *The Carpetbaggers* (1964), he portrayed, with irony, a broken down former movie star.

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[Death came to Lana’s friend, Alan Ladd, on January 29, 1964. An autopsy revealed that his blood was saturated with a lethal combination of sedatives and alcohol.

The funeral was scheduled for February 1. Fans and friends showed up within the solid stone walls of the Church of the Recessional in Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

Her face partially concealed by large sunglasses, Lana appeared dressed in black, five minutes after the service began. Not wanting to be recognized or acknowledged, she left before the end of the service.

The next day, she phoned June Allyson, who had been one of the great loves of Ladd’s life, even though he had been married to Carol throughout most of the duration of their affair.

“I was shocked at Alan’s death,” Lana said. “At the funeral, so many memories came rushing back of life in the ‘40s and ‘50s. For the first time in my life, I felt old. From now on, what’s left for all of us?]

“My fame in the boudoir spread like wildfire when I landed in Hollywood to stay,” boasted Scott Brady. “The first big star I seduced was Lana Turner. I met her at the Hollywood Canteen.”

“When I returned from the service, my leading ladies went for me—take Joan Crawford in *Johnny Guitar* (1954) and Anne Bancroft in *The Restless Breed* (1957).”

“Hollywood gays also went for me big time, especially Rock Hudson at the Finlandia Baths. Before he became a bigshot movie star, Rock and I made two movies together—*Undertow* (1949) and *I Was a Shoplifter* (1950). All I would do is let him service me. Scott Brady is no fag!”

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Another up-and-coming star who Lana seduced after rendezvous at the Hollywood Canteen was the handsome and strapping Brooklyn-born Scott Brady. That was his screen name.

Two years younger than Lana, he had been born Gerald Kenneth Tierney. His father had been the Chief of New York's Acqueduct Police Force.

Brady's motivation for changing his name derived from the fact that his older brother, Lawrence Tierney, migrated to Hollywood before he did, and had already been indelibly associated with the name "Tierney."

Brady's one-night stand with Lana might have faded from her memory had he not become a movie star after his service in the military.

Before stardom, he'd been a prize fighter, a lumberjack, and a cab driver. When Lana met him at the Hollywood Canteen, he had already studied acting at the Beverly Hills Drama School.

Lana had spent a night with Brady before he became a naval aviation mechanic overseas, serving aboard the USS*Norton Sound*. After the war, he returned to Hollywood, where he appealed to his brother (Lawrence Tierney) to help him break into pictures.

By then, Tierney had evolved, through a series of well-publicized scandals, into one of Hollywood's most flagrant bad boys. During the course of his career he would be arrested twenty times for drunkenness or assault. As one columnist phrased it, Tierney was a "rowdy screen actor who has been decisioned, knocked out, and fouled by John Barleycorn."

Brady also became reckless, cutting a path of seduction and scandal across Hollywood, although not of the sort to get himself arrested.

Lana became aware of the rumors flying through Hollywood about these naughty brothers. One afternoon, during her filming of *Mr. Imperium* (1951) at MGM, Tierney managed to reach her on the phone. He sounded drunk. "My brother, Scott, still talks about that night he spent with you. I'm told that if a gal goes for one brother, she might also have the hots for his other brother, too."

"You've been misinformed, Mr. Tierney," she said.

"Perhaps not. Why not get together with Scott and me? Just ask Joan Crawford for a recommendation. The two of us can really show a gal a good time."

"The invitation sounds enchanting, but count me out. Why not give Marilyn Monroe a ring instead?" Then she slammed down the phone.

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Director Wesley Ruggles was the first to call Lana with the good news. "Mayer thinks reteaming you again with Clark Gable is as good as money in the bank."

"And what have you guys come up with for us?" she asked.

"It's a movie called *Red Light."*

"Are you kidding? That suggests a 'Red Light 'district. Will I play a prostitute?"

"No way. You'll play a newspaper gal."

"That sounds somewhat better."

After a long chat with her new director, Lana put down her white phone in her all-white bedroom with a sense of elation. She was thrilled that she'd be making another movie with "The King."

If only she knew of the tragedy looming.

Chapter Nine

How Many Affairs?
Can a Married Woman Have?

Hot Sex but Cold Love

During its planning stages, Louis B. Mayer called *Somewhere I'll Find You*, starring Clark Gable and Lana Turner, as "money in the bank." Released after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, it was a big hit at the box office, as America faced its darkest year of the war, with much of its Pacific fleet destroyed. Production was almost suspended when Gable's wife, Carole Lombard,died in an airplane crash, and her husband, the film's male lead, virtually collapsed in grief.

After the film was wrapped, Gable delivered Lana a kiss on the cheek. "Someday, we may meet again...perhaps." As she remembered later, "He had this sense of his own impending doom."

In mourning for his dead wife, and perhaps in the throes of a major midlife crisis, Gable left Hollywood, enlisting in the Air Force, where he progressed through the ranks and was appointed First Lieutenant. By 1943, he was serving in England with the 351st Bomb Group. There, he was promoted to the rank of Captain. He flew combat missions and was eventually awarded an Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross. At the time of his discharge from active duty in June of 1944, he'd achieved the rank of Major.

One newspaper reporter nailed it: "Clark Gable is to Lana Turner as flint is to steel."

He was speaking of the recasting of the romantic team who had electrified *Honky Tonk*, Gable and Turner. He was also referring to what was then being discussed as their upcoming release, *Red Light*, a film that was later reconfigured, retitled, and released in 1942 as *Somewhere I'll Find You*.

Louis B. Mayer assigned Wesley Ruggles to direct it, knowing what a veteran he was. Ruggles had broken into silent films in 1915, when he was an actor working on occasion with Charlie Chaplin. Before Talkies, he made 50 forgettable films, most of which are lost to history. His best work was *The Age of Innocence (1924)*, based on the Edith Wharton novel. His first acclaim came when he directed *Cimarron* (1931). The Edna Ferber novel was the first Western to win an Oscar.

Ruggles had directed Gable before in the light comedy, *No Man of Her Own* (1932), co-starring his future wife, Carole Lombard. A year later, he helmed Mae West and Cary Grant in *I'm No Angel* (1933).

In *Somewhere I'll Find You*, both Lana (as Paula Lane) and Gable (as Jonny Davis) were cast as war correspondents. The plot was based on a magazine series that had run in *Cosmopolitan*. Marguerite Roberts had written the film scenario, which was filled with sexual innuendo.

The movie would be Gable's last before he enlisted in the Army Air Force during World War II. His absence from the screen lasted for three years.

Cast as Jonny's brother, Robert Sterling was Kirk Davis, who is in love with the character played by Lana. Jealous rivalries arise when Jonny begins pursuing Paula too.

Somewhere I'll Find You was one of the first pictures to use the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as part of a movie plot.

When Lana, as a war correspondent, is sent to the Pacific theater, she disappears, and both Sterling and Gable go in search of her. She's located in the Philippines on the eve of its Japanese invasion, rescuing children from the battlefield and taking them to safety. The action ends up in war-torn Bataan.

The script called for Gable to get the girl in the final reel, and as a plot device, Sterling's character dies in action. The film closes as Lana and Gable are pounding away at their respective typewriters, filing correspondence from the battlefield, ending their dispatches with, "MORE TO COME."

Successful at the box office, the film was released during the darkest days for America in World War II, when the outcome of the war was uncertain.

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Before facing the cameras again, Lana had continued with her excessive nightclubbing and wartime dating, becoming a regular at the Hollywood Canteen. Her pattern of seductions led to inevitable disagreements with Mildred. They occupied the same house, but Mildred had been assigned (or banished) to her own wing, and Lana barred her from her part of the house at night.

Almost on a daily basis, Mildred confronted her errant daughter, and their quarreling grew bitter. “You seem to bring home a different man every night,” Mildred scolded. “You’ll soon be known as the Whore of Babylon.”

She also objected to Lana’s heavy drinking. “Well, lemonade, mother dear, does not quench my thirst.” The tension between mother and daughter grew so tangible that Lana eventually rented an apartment for her mother and moved her out.

After script conferences, Gable began to meet secretly with Lana, arousing the suspicions of his sharp-tongued wife, Carole Lombard, who suspected they had resumed the affair they’d indulged in during their time co-starring together in *Honky Tonk*.

During one of their arguments, Gable was said to have informed Lombard, “If my affairs outside the house mean nothing to *me*, why should they bother *you*?”

Robert Taylor, Lana’s most recent lover and one of Gable’s best friends, said, “She is a very special lady. I knew Clark was nuts about her, but I knew he’d never divorce Carole to marry Lana. Clark just couldn’t help himself. He was a serial seducer.”

The story of two brothers falling in love with the same woman had long been a theme in drama. In *Somewhere I’ll Find You*, Robert Sterling (left) and Clark Gable appear as foreign corespondents, Kirk (Sterling) and Jonny. This publicity still reveals who’s going to get Lana in the final reel.

Ruggles agreed with Taylor. “I think Clark was falling in love with Lana. She was young and pretty, and he felt he was getting old. For a while, Lana seemed to give him a sense of renewal of his youth. He told me, ‘My old virility has returned.’”

Filming on *Somewhere I’ll Find You* began in mid-January of 1942. Reporting to work on the first day, Lana met each member of the cast and graciously welcomed them to the picture. Gable did not show up that morning.

The leading hairdresser at MGM at the time was a Londoner, Sydney Guilaroff. During his long career, he would dress the hair of stars in some 2,000 movies. Joan Crawford had insisted on him for almost every picture she’d been in.

For *Somewhere I’ll Find You*, Guilaroff and Lana decided to “crown” her with a shorter hairstyle, a perky, more manageable cut which became known as “The Victory Bob.” MGM announced that Lana’s new hairstyle was better (and less hazardous) for women working in munitions plants, soon, “The Victory Bob” swept through America, and the style was even adopted by women working in factories in war-mangled Britain.

[Their decision to shorten Lana’s hair had been influenced by the government’s request during the early months of the war that Veronica Lake get rid of her peek-a-boo hairdo. In imitation of her hair style, many women working in the war plants were getting their long hair caught, sometimes with disastrous results, in machinery.]

In the movie, Kirk (that is, Robert Sterling) becomes part of a detachment under the command of Lt. Wade Hall (as played by Van Johnson). Their duty is to repel a Japanese amphibious landing. Johnson, a red-haired, freckle-faced, and somewhat naïve Rhode Islander, was new to films, and he and Lana bonded from the beginning of filming.

Johnson would later emerge as one of the biggest stars at MGM in the late 1940s. Eventually, he would co-star with Lana in *Week-End at the Waldorf* (1945).

Somewhere I’ll Find You was a milestone in Johnson’s life. It was there that he met and fell in love with character actor Keenan Wynn, who also, as his Hollywood debut, made an uncredited appearance in it.

In sophisticated ways that evoked such actresses as Joan Crawford and Carole Lombard, Lana was one of the

most indulgent actresses in Hollywood regarding homosexuals. Lana and Johnson became confidants, exchanging gossipy tidbits about their respective male lovers.

He told her, “The moment I walked through the gates of MGM, I felt I’d arrived at my new home. I’m terrified having to do a scene with Clark Gable. As a star-struck teenager, I used to write him fan letters…well, they were really love letters. I’m terrified to have to play a scene with him, since I still have this big crush on Rhett Butler. I saw *Gone With the Wind (1939)* four times.”

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Shortly after the U.S. entry into World War II, Henry Morgenthau, the Secretary of the Treasury, assigned Howard Dietz, the Hollywood publicist, the task of promoting the sale of war bonds. To this end, it was understood that he’d enroll movie stars and other entertainers as a promotional tool.

With that in mind, in advance of a major bond rally in Indiana, Dietz had invited Carole Lombard to appear. At the time, she was the most celebrated Hoosier in the world.

He advised her to travel by train, thereby avoiding the risk of an overcrowded plane, most of which had been overbooked by the military anyway.

Lombard pleaded with Gable to go with her, but Louis B. Mayer, preoccupied with the production of *Somewhere I’ll Find You*, refused to grant him leave.

Soon after their wedding, newlyweds Clark Gable and Carole Lombard continued their bonding as part of Hollywood’s most publicized romances.

On the day of her scheduled departure, Gable and Lombard had one of their most violent confrontations. She’d accused him of resuming his affair with “that blonde whore,” an unkind reference to Lana.

“So what?” he’d shouted at her. “Maybe I want some young pussy for a change.” Then he’d stormed out the door, never to see her again.

He’d be gone all day, meeting with military brass who wanted him in the U.S. Air Force, promoted immediately to officer status. Gable rejected their offer. “Thanks, but no thanks. I want to be a regular enlisted man, an average Joe, without any officer stripes.”

Later that day, in lieu of returning to the home he shared with Lombard for the night, he remained at Lana’s throughout the evening and night, departing from her house early the next morning and heading directly with her for MGM.

Sterling recalled what Gable had done that day. He’d gone to the special effects department at MGM with an

order that shocked the staff.

At around 6PM, he knocked on Sterling's dressing room door. "Come on, Junior," he said. "I want you to help me get this dummy into my car."

Sterling was flabbergasted to see a rubber dummy that resembled Gable except for its erect twelve-inch penis. *[When she'd been drunk at parties, Lombard had continually told her friends, "I love Pa, except for his less than average prick."]*

Sterling later informed his friends, "The dummy was amusingly vulgar. I helped him put this sex toy into his car, and he drove off. We were careful not to endanger the erect penis and those grapefruit-sized balls. When Carole returned, she would be in for a big surprise. Clark told me, 'I just wish I had what that god damn dummy has. But with what god gave me, I've fucked every hot broad at MGM from Jean Harlow to Loretta Young."

After great difficulty, because of the war, Lombard finally reached Gable via telephone. "Ma & Pa," as they called each other, made up. Once again, Gable denied that he was having an affair with Lana, lying to Lombard by maintaining that it was Sterling whom Lana had fallen in love with, and that they were having a torrid affair.

In Indiana, the war bond rally was a great success, and Lombard was proud to learn that she had sold $2 million worth of bonds. Her mother, Elizabeth Peters, was with her at the time.

Carole told her mother that she wanted to rush back to Hollywood as a means of ending her husband's affair with Lana. Even though he'd denied it, Lombard had continued to surmise *[with uncanny accuracy]* that Gable was spending every night in Lana's arms.

Ignoring previous advice, Lombard decided to fly back to Los Angeles, taking her mother and MGM's publicist, Otto Winkler, back with her.

The doomed flight left Indiana, heading west for a refueling stop in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was here that military personnel asked Lombard and her two guests to relinquish their seats aboard the plane to make room for servicemen. *[This was common practice during the war.]*

Lombard, however, manically applied a high-octane acceleration of her star power. She insisted that she'd just "scored a killing in Indiana, $2 million in war bonds. I think we've earned our seats." Eventually, she won, and, with her entourage, she remained aboard the plane.

Flying out of New Mexico, Transcontinental & Western Airlines DC-3, designated as Flight 3, set itself on a course to Las Vegas.

Flight 3 landed at Las Vegas for another refueling before flying out *en route* to Burbank. On board were Carole Lombard, her mother, Winkler, and 19 other passengers.

It took off at 7:07PM, Pacific Time, on its last flight.

Lovely, foul-mouthed Carole Lombard. The blonde star was known in Hollywood as "The Queen of Screwball."

After a successful war bond tour, she lost her life in an airplane crash, becoming the first movie star victim of World War II.

Twenty minutes later, the plane crashed into the arid, rocky side of Potosi Mountain, one of the six high points

surrounding Las Vegas, about 30 miles west of the city. Its wreckage was scattered, and the bodies of the victims were buried in waist-high snow. Lombard's body, it was later discovered, had been decapitated and then ignited in flames after the plane hit the steep incline of the mountain. Everyone aboard was killed.

The ten-month-old plane had been piloted by Wayne Williams, at the time, one of TWA's most experienced pilots.

In his book, *Fireball*, Robert Matzen, a former contractor for NASA, convincingly argues that the plane crashed because of a combination of factors. "A slightly erroneous flight plan, a blackout of a warning beacon because of wartime restrictions, and the pilot's vision being obscured by cockpit lights at a critical juncture during a black night."

Matzen writes, "Clark only learned how important fidelity was in his relationship with Lombard when it was too late. She kept trying to get through to him, including in that final flight. Then she did get through to him and proved how important this marriage was to both of them by dying in an effort to rush home to save it."

From his base in Burbank, Howard Strickling, head of publicity at MGM, had assembled fifty photographers and reporters at Burbank for the arrival of Lombard's plane. Expected arrival time was 8:45PM. But in Nevada, miners working a remote hillsite west of Las Vegas reported a bright orange flash near the summer of Mount Potosi. The plane had flown seven miles off course and on a trajectory that was 750 feet below the summit of the mountain.

Strickling was the first to hear the news. He chose not to call Gable, but notified Louis B. Mayer and his publicity assistant, Eddie Mannix, instead.

He finally phoned Gable, but didn't tell him what he already knew: That Lombard and everyone aboard had died. Aboard a hastily summoned charter flight, Strickling, with Mannix and Gable, flew to Las Vegas.

Mannix's telegram was flashed, sometimes as a newspaper headline, around the country: "NO SURVIVORS. ALL KILLED INSTANTLY."

Buster Collier, a close friend of Gable's, later reported how "The King" received the news of Lombard's death: "He put on the greatest act of his life, trying to keep everyone else from crumbling. He saw this old-time cowboy trying to eat a steak with no teeth. He gave him a hundred-dollar bill, 'Get some teeth, cowpoke,' he ordered the stunned man."

Returning to Los Angeles by train, Gable accompanied Lombard's body back to her final resting place, along with the corpses of his mother-in-law and Winkler.

Lombard has always been cited for her ability to charm, way beyond her glamour. Shown here, with Gable, chewing water-melon, she proves she's just a Hoosier farm girl.

Sympathy notes from around the world, everyone from Franklin D. Roosevelt to the King of England, flooded into MGM. Gable was inconsolable.

Immediately, word spread that Lana had been the incentive for Lombard's rush back to Burbank aboard what had evolved into a fatal flight.

According to Ruggles, "Lana came to me in tears. She feared rumors would harm her career. She didn't know what to do."

"I knew that Robert Stack had been screwing Lombard," Ruggles continued. "So I advised Lana to throw off

the bloodhounds by being seen constantly with Stack. I told her, 'Go everywhere with him. Spend the night with him. Don't hide your affair! Make it public!"

From Stack, Lana learned that Lombard, in an attempt at revenge against her philandering husband, had also sustained an affair with Stack. She'd even arranged a role for him in her latest film, *To Be or Not To Be* (1942), co-starring Jack Benny.

As Manzen wrote in *Fireball*, "By no coincidence, the presence of Stack—handsome as the devil—served as a constant reminder to Clark about how it felt to watch your spouse in close quarters with a younger and very attractive co-star for days on end."

Lombard and her mother, Elizabeth Peters, were buried at 4PM on January 21, 1942 in Forest Lawn's Hilltop Church of the Recessional. Gable, wearing very dark sunglasses, conversed with no one and left after the service, disappearing into the back of a limousine that quickly hauled him away.

After the funeral, Gable spent almost every night at the home of his longtime lover, Joan Crawford. She later described his condition to friends such as Barbara Stanwyck and William Haines. "He would come over and break down and cry. I'd never seen him cry before. He would drink almost a quart of booze before dinner, and then eat only enough to keep himself alive."

Crawford admitted that after two weeks of this, he turned to her for sex. "I tried to lure him away from the bedroom, because he'd be drunk and it offered little satisfaction for me. On at least three occasions, he called me Carole. It was an awful experience, but because I had always loved him, I endured this ghoulish form of sex."

"After every night he spent at my house, Clark would send me a dozen long-stemmed roses the next day," she said. "For about four months after Carole died, Clark would stop in at my house every day, if only for a quick drink. He wasn't the gay romantic I'd known in the 1930s when we made films together. He was no longer the easy-going Clark. He'd turned into a moody alcoholic who needed my love, support, and friendship more than he needed any hanky-panky. Unlike Miss Turner, I was there for him. She was there for half the men in Hollywood, especially those in uniform."

Shortly before her death, Lombard had signed to star in *They All Kissed the Bride* for Columbia Pictures, on a loan-out from MGM. In the aftermath of that plane crash, Crawford stepped in and agreed to star in the picture, donating all of her $125,000 salary to the American Red Cross.

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After only three days of shooting, production on *Somewhere I'll Find You* ground to a slow pace, as only scenes without Gable could be shot. When Lana and their director, Ruggles, visited Gable at his home, they found him too drunk to appear on camera. He had to have more time to mourn the loss of Lombard before facing the cameras again.

Mayer tried to keep Gable from enlisting in the Air Force. He even went so far as to announce an upcoming film in which he'd star, *Shadow of the Wing*. To lure him, he claimed that Victor Fleming, who had directed Gable as Rhett Butler, would sign on as his director once again. But Gable turned the mogul down.

Word reached Lana that *Somewhere I'll Find You* might even be shut down because Gable was such an emotional wreck he might not be able to perform. Since so little footage had been shot, MGM could suffer the loss without too many financial difficulties. It was also suggested that Walter Pidgeon might replace Gable as the romantic lead.

But then, as a point of honor and as a dedicated professional, Gable announced that he would continue filming and finish the movie.

Before he reported back to the studio, Mayer summoned Lana into his office. "When he comes back, it will be very trying for Clark. Be patient with him if he flubs every line or two. If he wants to work right through lunch, go for it. If he wants to have dinner with you at his ranch, accept his invitation and do what you can to comfort him." Then he stared at her. "WITHIN REASON!"

When Gable reported to work, Lana found that he looked pale and—other than an aggravated weariness—showed almost no emotion. "It was like a part of Clark had died with Lombard," Lana said. "In many ways, he was a stranger to me. Some of the workers were afraid to go near him. I tried to offer what sympathy I could, but he didn't want to hear it. He was filled with this inner tension I felt would burst out at any minute."

"Before Lombard's death, he had this wonderful boyishness to him. But before filming of *Somewhere I'll Find You* ended, I knew that the boy in Clark had died along with his wife."

"Clark was inconsolable throughout the rest of the shoot," Lana said. "I feared he would not be able to complete the picture. He told me that it was all he could do to get out of bed and put one foot in front of the other. He was filled with rage and suffered from guilt. He was tortured over having argued with Lombard about me the last

time he saw her."

Even during the peak of her bad-girl rivalry with Lombard, Lana still managed to steal magazine publicity from her and every other actress in La-La Land.

"He became an aimless wanderer," she said. "I heard he drove up the West Coast toward Canada all by himself," she said. "He even bought a motorcycle and rode it at night, tearing up into the canyons."

Gable did invite Lana out for dinner one night. She later told Ruggles, "There was no talk of Lombard. We spoke about the picture, the war, his upcoming enlistment. There were long periods of silence."

"He showed me his gun collection. I always respected him, since he was the consummate professional and deserved to be called 'The King.' I just knew he'd pull himself together. I left early and was taken home in a studio limousine. I found Robert (Stack) asleep on my sofa."

At one point, Gable asked Lana if she would fill in for a live performance, broadcast over the radio that Lombard had committed herself to: a radio adaptation of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, a movie, released in 1941, that Lombard had made with Robert Montgomery. Lana accepted, with delight. Errol Flynn would be her radio co-star.

After the broadcast, she invited Flynn to spend the night with her. "But not at *your* house," she told him. "Not with Bruce Cabot or David Niven watching us."

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When Lana heard that Gable was back in Hollywood, she thought he might call her, but he didn't. Their reunion lay in the future, when they'd once again co-star in the aptly named *Homecoming* (1948).]

Gable later claimed, "I did not read the reviews of *Somewhere I'll Find You."*

But Lana did, interpreting her second picture with "The King" as a career milestone.

Photoplay praised the performances of both Gable and Sterling, adding, "Lana Turner, the beautiful corner of the triangle, looks too beautiful and continues to amaze with her seasoned performance."

Newsweek wrote, "Miss Turner stamps her part with passionate intensity and that unsmiling conviction which set her love scenes and dramatic high levels apart from those of any other screen actress."

Writing in the *New Yorker*, critic John Mosher claimed, "The sensuous tug and talk between Gable and Miss Turner is powerfully dramatic, and is counterbalanced with serious things, including life-and-death matters."

After hailing Gable's performance, the critic for *Time* wrote: "Lana Turner is superbly toothsome for Gable's masterful routines. She can tilt her chin that, in any posture, suggests that she is looking up from a pillow."

Variety hailed Lana as "the modern Jean Harlow of celluloid—a sexy, torchy, clinging blonde who shatters the inhibitions of the staidest male."

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After *Somewhere I'll Find You* was completed, Lana learned that MGM had no immediate plans for her next picture.

She went on another bond tour, riding the train to San Francisco, then continuing northward for war bond rallies in Portland, Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma.

Returning to Brentwood, she was clearly bored and restless. Many of her beaux had already been snared by Uncle Sam and shipped off to war. For a while, she quit visiting the Hollywood Canteen altogether.

Late one afternoon, Johnny Meyer called. She immediately recognized his voice and braced herself for a solicitation of another date with Howard Hughes. But that wasn't the case. Instead, he invited her for dinner at Mocambo's with three of his business associates.

At table with them a few nights later, their talk bored her. All of them seemed to work for Hughes, who was having trouble with wartime Washington about airplane production. She couldn't have cared less.

But as the band started up for the next dance, a handsome young man appeared at Meyer's table. He ignored Meyer and the other male guests and instead, he focused intensely on her. "Hi, I'm Steve Crane, and my greatest dream in life would be to dance with the forever gorgeous Miss Lana Turner."

"You're on, buster," she said, rising to her feet. She was swept onto the dance floor, where they encountered Marilyn Maxwell with Frank Sinatra. Crane held her close, pressing his body intimately into hers. "I think he wanted me to get a feel of him, and I did," she later told Linda Darnell. "He was terrific, and did he ever smell nice."

She never returned to Meyer's table, but took a seat at the bar, where Crane stood close by her side. She learned that his full name was Joseph Stephen Crane III. *[Lana spelled it "Stephan" in her memoirs.]*

He was vague about who he really was, but appeared to be some tobacco heir from Indiana, who had arrived in Hollywood to try his luck. To judge by his tailor-made suit, he appeared to be well off, although he had some vague dream of becoming an actor.

After slipping out of Mocambo's together, he drove her home, where she sat talking with him until 3AM. Since it was Saturday morning, and she hadn't been needed at the studio in weeks, she didn't mind the late hour. He made no move to leave. Finally, she stood up, announcing that both of them had better get some sleep.

"One night across a crowded room, I met a handsome stranger (Stephen Crane)," Lana said. "But why did I fall in love with him and marry him, depriving Joan Crawford of his studly duties?"

As she later told Darnell, "He kissed me passionately and slowly, ever so skillfully, and guided me into the bedroom. He even helped me out of my clothes before removing every stitch of his own. He was charming and ever so skilled as a lovemaker. So adorable and gifted by nature in all the right places. I could tell from his seduction that I was not his first woman."

[In Hollywood, Crane had just had an affair with the French actress, Simone Simon. There was a certain irony here. During the most heated weeks of her romance with attorney Greg Bautzer, he had put Lana on freeze while he,

too, had run away with Simon.]

For the next three weeks, Crane began to date Lana intensely, although he'd sometimes disappear for several hours, not telling her where he'd been other than that he had some business to attend to.

It was only months later that Bautzer told her that when Crane had met her, he was having an affair with Joan Crawford—that is, when Crawford wasn't occupied with Bautzer himself, or else with Phillip Terry, an actor whom RKO billed as "a combination of Clark Gable and Cary Grant."

[Crawford had married Terry in July of 1942.]

Through his link to Bugsy Siegel, Louis B. Mayer had become aware, almost from the beginning, of Lana's emotional involvement with Crane. Consequently, Mayer called her into his office at MGM and warned her to drop him, hinting that Crane had underworld connections.

According to Lana, "I didn't listen to Mayer because I was already falling in love with Stephen. At the time I met him, he was just coming down from an affair with that Norwegian ice skater. What is her name now? Oh, yes, Sonja Henie. I don't go to her silly movies."

On July 17, 1942, Crane arrived with a dozen roses and an engagement ring. "I want to marry you. Elope with me to Las Vegas. We can't get a conventional flight because everything is booked by the Army. So I've chartered a plane."

[Two weeks later, Lana got the round-trip bill for the private airplane he had chartered.]

I'll need a maid of honor," she said.

"That means you'll accept?" Then he grinned, grabbed her, and kissed her passionately.

Within the next thirty minutes, she was on the phone to Linda Darnell. "Drop everything! I want you to fly to Las Vegas at eight tonight with Stephen and me. We're eloping. The press doesn't know."

That appealed to the romantic in Darnell, who telephoned her boyfriend, Alan Gordon, a Hollywood publicist. Even though he had never met him before, he agreed to fly with them, even to serve as Crane's best man,

En route to Las Vegas, Lana sat in the airplane's front row seats with Darnell, pinning pink orchids on themselves. Crane and Gordon chatted amicably in the seats behind them. Lana whispered to Darnell, "I'm the happiest I've ever been in my life."

A tale that morphed into a legend was generated by the elopement. Lana was said to have been married by the same justice of the peace who had presided over her marriage to Artie Shaw. She was alleged to have told him, "Judge, this time tie the knot a little tighter."

She later denied that story as "a press agent's invention. It was a different justice of the peace."

After a late dinner in Las Vegas, the party of four flew back to Los Angeles. After their plane landed, Crane drove them to Brentwood in his Lincoln coupé. The moment they walked into her home on McCullough Drive, they were greeted by guests who included Judy Garland and David Rose, Ann Rutherford, Bonita Granville, Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Maxwell, Susan Hayward, and Robert Sterling. Mildred had arranged a champagne brunch for the newlyweds.

"Stephen possessed charm by the bundle," Lana told Susan Hayward. "He's so debonair. He says he's from a small town in Indiana, but he has such poise and grace that he's almost like an American version of Jean-Pierre Aumont, Hollywood's favorite Frenchman."

After the first three nights in a row that Crane spent in Lana's bed, she heard from Darnell, who asked her, "How's it going, you old married lady?"

"I'm heels-over-chin, pinwheels-on-fire-in-love," she answered.

"What a quaint way of phrasing it," Darnell said.

When Lana first spoke to the press after her elopement, she said, "I'm lonely unless I have someone to love. Along came Mr. Crane."

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The first weeks of summer, 1942 were among the most idyllic of Lana's life. As she told her girlfriends, "I'm blissfully happy. Stephen is a great lover. But there may be problems in the future. We've agreed to share household expenses, but so far, I haven't received any contribution from him. He doesn't have a regular job, but seems to have plenty of money to spend. Maybe it's from his tobacco inheritance."

Finally, six weeks into the marriage, she came face to face with the source of Crane's finances: There was an unexpected knock on her door. When Lana answered it herself, she encountered Virginia ("Sugar") Hill, the girlfriend of the notorious gangster, Bugsy Siegel.

Lana herself had had an affair with the Mafia Don, and she feared that Hill had arrived to confront her, based on this indiscretion.

Hill did not introduce herself, but Lana knew who she was, having seen her pictures in the paper. “Is Mr. Crane at home?” she asked in a voice frigid as ice. “I haven’t heard from him in days, and I’m getting worried.”

“No, he isn’t,” Lana answered. “But I’m Mrs. Crane. May I help you?”

“Can I come in? I’m not used to conducting my private business on doorsteps.” Then, without waiting for an invitation, she barged into Lana’s living room. There, she refused an offer of tea and didn’t want to sit down. “I’ll get right to the point. Your husband is my boyfriend…that is, whenever Bugsy isn’t around.”

“That can’t be,” a shocked Lana protested. “He’s married to me!”

“Listen, sweet cheeks, who in the fuck do you think pays his bills? I finance the gigolo with money I get from Bugsy. I even paid for his plastic surgery.”

“He’s had plastic surgery? I wasn’t aware of that.”

“He’s had his nose repaired, and been given a new chin, although that stuff is still in the experimental stage. In twenty years, when plastic surgery has been perfected, maybe you and me will be having it done to erase time.”

Finally, Hill sat down for a girl-on-girl talk. Lana learned that Crane had arrived with his brother in Hollywood in 1933 to become an actor, but so far, no job had ever emerged. “Let’s face it. He’s charming but no Clark Gable. He even admitted to me that he’s a lousy actor.”

Six years older than Lana, Hill, in Alabama, never owned a pair of shoes until she was seventeen. After running away with a stranger, she’d arrived in Chicago, where her beauty soon got her initiated into her new and very profitable life as agun moll.

From the back roads of Alabama to the lavish boudoir of the trigger-happy gangster, Bugsy Siegel, Virginia (“Sugar”) Hill arrived on Lana’s doorstep to tell her that Stephen Crane was her “kept boy.”

One newspaper reporter in Chicago described the bosomy would-be actress: “She is more than just another set of curves. She has considerable flair for hole-in-the-corner diplomacy, enough to allay the suspicions of trigger-happy killers. She remains close-lipped about gangland slayings.”

Years later, in Hollywood, after Crane met Siegel, the gangster had liked him a lot, even trusting him to escort Hill out on the town in both New York and in Chicago. “Be her escort, and nothing else, or I will personally cut off your balls,” he had warned him.

With Siegel’s money, Hill was known to spend anywhere from $3,000 to $7,000 a night at such clubs as the Mocambo or the Trocadero, ordering lots of champagne for her gangs of hangers-on.

In her living room that afternoon, Lana learned more about her husband during a brief chat with Hill than she’d ever heard from the man himself.

Overwhelmed with emotion and with information, Lana soon became eager to bring the confrontation to an end. “If you don’t mind, I prefer to keep your visit a secret. Stephen will be back tonight. If he wants to phone you, that’s entirely up to him. Now, may I show you to the door? It isn’t necessary to call on me again.” An ominous feeling came over Lana after Hill left. She sensed that more trouble, perhaps lots of it, would be coming from this stranger she’d married. In contrast, Sugar Hill seemed like only a minor annoyance.

Darnell later speculated, “By the time of her confrontation with Hill, Lana had been around Hollywood long

enough to learn how we play the game out here. Instead of facing Crane that night and behaving like a jealous wife, she must have done some calculation. Crane's screwing around gave her a license to make off with the next available guy who crossed her radar screen. She told me he could go off and have his fun, never telling her where he was. But she, at least, wasn't going to wait for him in the kitchen baking an apple pie for the bastard's return."

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Lana's only major film release during that dreadful wartime year of 1943, when America's young men were dying by the thousands, was a fluffy little comedy for MGM

At first, it was *Lawless*, before its name was replaced with *Careless Cinderella*. Then, before it finally opened in 1943 in theaters across the country, it was retitled*Slightly Dangerous*.

The director who cast her was Wesley Ruggles, who had just helmed Clark Gable and her in *Somewhere I'll Find You*. He came by her home to discuss the script. Her first question was, "Who's my leading man? I hope he's someone as handsome as John Payne or George Montgomery." Her face did not conceal her disappointment when he told her it was Robert Young.

"Don't expect any hot love scenes like those I had with Bob Taylor and Clark. Young just doesn't inspire me."

"I admit that the movie is just a comic piece of fluff," he said. "But it could be a milestone in your career. For the first time, you'll have star billing—no more playing second fiddle to Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, or Robert Taylor. You'll carry the film on your own box office power. Lana Turner billed over Robert Young."

Young didn't have the male beauty of some of Lana's former co-stars, but she was impressed with his output of films and with such leading ladies as Katharine Hepburn, Margaret Sullavan, Joan Crawford, Luise Rainer, Hedy Lamarr, Greer Garson—even Helen Twelvetrees.

Between 1931 and 1952, although Young would appear in some 100 films, he became a more widely recognized name after his debut on TV in *Father Knows Best*. Lana had several talks with him, finding him different from his screen *persona*. He was bitter about the way in which he had, throughout the course of his screen career, been cast.

"When producers can't get Gable or Taylor, or some other big star, they cast reliable ol' Bob, especially if the part has been rejected by the biggies."

Her lack of sexual chemistry with Young dated back to the 1938 release of *Rich Man, Poor Girl*, in which she had played a small role. Of the two leading men in that film, she had opted to pursue handsome Lew Ayres, husband at the time of Ginger Rogers

“I was never interested in Mr. Young. Nor did he ever show the slightest interest in me.”

In *Slightly Dangerous*, Lana was given the lead role of Peggy Evans, who first appears as a brunette when she’s a “soda jerk” at the luncheonette of a department store in the small town of Hotchkiss Falls, in the Hudson Valley of New York State. There, she tangles with Bob Stuart, her boss, as played by Young. She’s frankly bored with her job and longs for a more glamorous life. She boasts that she can make a banana split with her eyes blindfolded. Someone dares her, and she takes up the challenge and, with panache, succeeds.

The “Lana, blindfolded” scene involved many technical challenges. It was directed by Buster Keaton, a friend of Ruggles.

Keaton, of course, had been one of the most inventive comics of the silent screen before falling into the depths of alcoholism. She later claimed that the blindfold scene was the hardest in the film to shoot. “The bright lights kept melting the ice cream before I got it right. Buster was very patient with me.”

The customers treat Lana’s “blindfold act” as a charming conceit, and business increases as Lana perfectly executes her tasks, even with the handicap.

But Young, as the store’s newly appointed general manager, is not amused. He calls her into his office and fires her, prompting her to run away from him and out of the store. It’s instantly assumed by the other store employees that he had made sexual advances to her.

He, too, then loses his job, after Lana (as Peggy) writes what appears to be a suicide note and disappears.

Young, incentivized by wanting to bring her back to their small, gossipy town as a means of salvaging his reputation, will eventually track her down.

In Manhattan, Lana spends all her savings, $150, on a new wardrobe and a blonde dye job. As she is passing a newspaper office, an overhead maintenance man drops a bucket of red paint on her head.

Feigning amnesia, but in total control of her thoughts, she convinces the publisher of the local newspaper that she’s the long-lost daughter of Cornelius Van Burden, an industrial mogul played by Walter Brennan. He’s a veteran of many of John Wayne movie, and he becomes convinced that she is his long-lost daughter, Carol.

Young learns of Lana’s whereabouts and follows her to Manhattan. Since it’s a movie, the pair fall in love, and at this point, Brennan is so fond of Peggy that he doesn’t care if she’s his daughter or not.

Lana was “discovered” as a customer at a soda fountain.

Shown here in *Slightly Dangerous* with Robert Young, she reverses herself by actually playing a “soda jerk.”

Lana liked crusty, irascible Brennan, who usually played eccentric old-timers and had been nominated for Best Supporting Actor roles in 1936, 1938, and 1940.

Ruggles told the press, “Lana is the best replacement for the ‘It Girl,’ the label worn by Clara Bow in silent films.” He had directed the flapper in *The Plastic Age* (1925).

For his supporting cast, Ruggles assembled a team of what were arguably the most talented character actors in the movies that year (1943).

These included Dame Mae Whitty, Eugene Palette, Alan Mowbray, Florence Bates, Millard Mitchell, Ray Collins, Ward Bond, and Kay Medford.

Since the picture had been made during the deprivations and rationings of World War II, Louis B. Mayer ordered his photographer, Eric Carpenter, to “take some of the hottest cheesecake pictures of Lana ever shot. I want

her pictures to compete with Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth. Let our boys abroad know what they're fighting for!"

Lana was most cooperative, putting on her sexiest pout, moistening her lips, and sticking out her breasts. She wore revealing outfits that included a black sequined gown that became one of the most famous fashion statements of the war years.

Carpenter's pinup shots of her became some of the most popular of World War II. American troops carried them inside their uniforms during some of their bloodiest assaults against the Nazis and the Japanese.

When *Slightly Dangerous* opened in theaters, author Anita Loos wrote, "Lana Turner is the vamp of today as Theda Bara was of yesterday. She doesn't look like a vamp, however. She is far more deadly because she lets her audience relax."

In the *New York Daily Mirror*, Lee Mortimer pronounced *Slightly Dangerous* as "thin on plot but saved by Ruggles' directorial pacing and the talented supporting players' ability to overcome any plot handicaps. When they falter, Lana Turner's chassis does the rest."

Family Circle evaluated *Slightly Dangerous* like this: "This new builder-upper for its No. 1 glamor gal should do just that for both MGM and Lana, if slightly less for audiences in general. The picture affords cash customers an opportunity to view Lana in repose and in hysterics, in love and out, dark-haired and blonde, dressed and not dressed. Despite certain distractions, it must be conceded that the girl has the beginnings of the making of a trouper."

Viewed through the sexually sophisticated lens of today, *Slightly Dangerous* had at least one ironically humorous and memorable line: Young tells Lana, "I couldn't hate you, darling, not even if you turned out to be a female impersonator, and I bet my bottom dollar you're not."

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In two other films released in 1943, Lana made only brief cameo appearances.

In *The Youngest Profession*, she joined other A-list stars also making cameos, including Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, Robert Taylor, and William Powell.

The star of the picture was the young actress, Virginia Weidler. Born in 1927, and only sixteen the year the film was released, she'd been cast as a star-crazed autograph hunter.

Other cast members in *The Youngest Profession* included Edward Arnold (one of the most talented of the lot), plus John Carroll and Jean Porter.

On the first day Lana showed up to work, Carroll made a final attempt to rekindle something by visiting her dressing room. She turned him down.

Lana made yet another cameo appearance in *Du Barry Was a Lady* (1943), starring Red Skelton, Lucille Ball, and Gene Kelly, along with Tommy Dorsey and his band.

In addition to Dorsey, singer Dick Haymes was another of Lana's former lovers cast in the movie, but because of her own brief involvement in that film, she did not encounter him. "If you blinked, you missed me," she said. "I think I was on the screen for only fifteen seconds, *but I looked lovely."*

[For her cameo appearance, she wore a form-fitting white lace gown. It marked the first time she was presented in Technicolor.

As a footnote in Hollywood history, Ava Gardner, Lana's future best friend, appears uncredited in that film as a character designated as "Perfume Girl."]

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Lana and Crane's marriage started to unravel after only five weeks of marriage. She sometimes ran into him on the threshold of her house at 5AM as he was returning home from a night of revelry, just as she was rushing off to work at MGM.

One afternoon, as Lana recalled, "The news hit me like a ton of bricks. I know that's a *cliché*, but a good one to describe how I felt."

It was a windy day in the Los Angeles area on that fateful day in November when Crane entered the dressing room of her Brentwood home. "I don't know where to begin," he said. "Our marriage was a big mistake…a big one."

"Is this your way of telling me you want a divorce?" she asked. "Who's your new girl?"

"It's not that. I was married before to a girl back in Indiana, a little brunette by the name of Carol Kurtz. We got a divorce, but I've just received a call from her. She's read about our marriage. Trouble is, there's a technicality. I'm a bigamist. The one-year waiting period for our interlocutory divorce has two months to go."

During her brief cameo appearance in *Du Barry Was a Lady*, Luscious Lana made her Technicolor debut with Red Skelton, who would do about anything for a laugh.

She later revealed that she almost fainted. As she started to keel over, he caught her in his arms, but she revived and broke away, pounding on his chest.

"How could you do this to me? I can just see the headlines: "LANA TURNER MARRIES BIGAMIST."

Eventually, after a lot of rending of garments, Lana agreed to a tense meeting at Kurtz's apartment. It did not go well. At one point, Lana accused both Crane and Kurtz of collaborating in a blackmail scheme. Before the end of the afternoon, she agreed to give Kurtz a check for $5,000 if she'd keep quiet.

In defiance, however, the next day, Kurtz betrayed Lana and sold her story to the press. Despite her payment of $5,000, Lana was now confronted, publicly, with the embarrassing revelations.

Lana, looking luscious, in a publicity shot for *The Youngest Profession*.

Undoubtedly, one has heard of the oldest profession. But what is the youngest profession? According to the Lillian Day novel, it was the collecting of movie star autographs.

It was reported in the press that, "During her marriage to Stephen Crane, Lana Turner has been living in sin, so the saying goes. According to California law, the marriage does not exist, since Crane was already married. Lawyers may disagree, but some legal sources claim that in such a circumstance, there is no need to annul a marriage that never existed in the first place."

Completely confused about what to do, Lana phoned Greg Bautzer and set up a meeting. The attorney advised her to kick Crane out of her home, change all the locks, and seek an immediate annulment.

Louis B. Mayer was furious, threatening to fire her for violating some of the morals clauses in her contract.

Around this time, she'd begun feeling nauseated most mornings, so she decided to visit her doctor. He confirmed her worst suspicion: She was pregnant. In her just-defined role as a co-bigamist in a now-illicit marriage, it meant that her hoped-for child would be born illegitimate.

On December 8, 1942, Lana announced that she was pregnant, telling Louella Parsons, "Both Stephen and I want a son."

Crane, as the father, spoke to the press. "I deeply regret the unhappiness brought about by these circumstances. It was all a misunderstanding on my part. There was no attempt to deceive. Miss Turner is an innocent suffering through a legal tangle, of which she had no prior knowledge."

On February 4, 1943, a red-eyed Lana, her eyes concealed by large, very dark sunglasses, appeared before Judge Roy B. Rhodes, who listened to her heartfelt predicament. After ten minutes of her testimony, he granted her an annulment and custody of "my unborn son," as she referred to her unborn baby.

Outside the courthouse, reporters mobbed her. Each of them asked the same question: "Do you plan to remarry Stephen Crane?"

In every instance, she refused to answer. Two security men hired for the day pushed a path through the crowd so that she could get inside a waiting limousine.

The news that blasted across America indulged in mostly speculative reporting, asserting that she'd remarry Crane, "if only to legitimatize her child."

When she reported to MGM, Mayer sent word for her to come to his office for another of his lectures. "I demand that you remarry the whore-mongering bastard. Since you locked him out of your house, I hear he's been fucking everybody from Virginia Hill to Susan Hayward and Joan Crawford, maybe with Ann Sheridan thrown in as a sideline."

Crane phoned her every day, urging her to remarry him so that he could become the father of their unborn child. "Remember, it is not just your child, but mine, too."

Despite his pleas, she continued to resist him.

Five days after her annulment, Lana collapsed onto the floor of her living room. Mildred, who'd been in the kitchen at the time, rushed in to discover her, and immediately phoned for an ambulance. On the way to the hospital, Lana drifted in and out of consciousness.

After an examination, doctors discovered that her white blood cell count "is so high you might die." They diagnosed her condition as "anemia in the extreme."

She was warned to have an immediate abortion as a means of preserving her own life. When she protested, her doctor said, "It is almost 99 percent certain that if you persist in giving birth, the baby will be a stillborn, and you may not survive childbirth."

Despite that, and despite the hysterical urgings of Mildred to abort the child, she refused to follow his advice.

Four nights later, after she'd delivered yet another rejection of remarriage, she was awakened at 2AM by the sound of a loud crash outside her bedroom window.

Before leaving his apartment, Crane had swallowed a bottle of barbiturates and then positioned himself behind the wheel of his Lincoln *coupé*. He'd perilously maneuvered the car to Brentwood, going along the cliff-fronting road almost directly uphill from Lana's house.

Suddenly, attempting suicide, he turned the wheel and steered it off the un-fenced road. His Lincoln lunged forward, careening down the slope, stopping abruptly in the heavy underbrush that functioned like a big net to entrap his car. Hurled forward on impact, he was badly bruised, but without any broken bones.

In another incident, an emergency call came in from a nearby hospital, informing Lana that Crane had overdosed on sleeping pills as part of yet another attempted suicide. She rushed to his side, where she found him under supervision, guarded by nurses on a suicide watch.

Crane was finally allowed to return to Brentwood where, as Lana told Darnell, "He arrived with flowers and bushels of that old Crane magic. Even so, I refused to remarry him, although I did let him go to bed with me."

"I just don't feel I could go through another marriage ceremony. I didn't tell him the real reason: I had stopped loving him. The sex thing was still OK. It was hot sex but cold love."

A month after Crane was released from the hospital, he received his draft notice. Finally, for the sake of her unborn child not having a father, she agreed to drive to the seedy border town of Tijuana to marry him once again on March 15, 1943.

"I stood before this little man whose office sign read, 'Legal matters adjusted,'" Lana recalled. "Once again, I became Stephen's wife. He rounded up this Mexican on the street for a few pesos. He agreed to be our witness."

As a wedding gift, he brought home a two-month old lion cub as a house pet. She was stunned. "I've got a baby on the way. We can't have such a creature here. He'll grow up to look like the MGM lion."

She called security at MGM, and two men arrived that afternoon to take the lion cub away. She said, "I don't

know what happened to it."

Crane reported to Fort MacArthur for a physical examination from an Army doctor. That night back in Brentwood, he complained to Lana about it. "The doctor was an obvious homosexual. He examined most of the guys and passed them on. Not so with me. He spent a lot of time juggling my balls and touched my dick several times. He was practically giving me an erection."

Because of an old knee energy, and perhaps a back ailment, Crane was accepted into the Army as a noncombatant: That meant he would not have to be shipped overseas. Since Fort MacArthur lay close to Los Angeles, he could drive home most evenings.

During his gig at Fort MacArthur, Crane, almost every night, brought home Army captains and lieutenants to show off Lana to them. "It really increased my standing at the base," he claimed.

He refused to wear the regular uniform, claiming that the rough material caused skin rashes. To deal with his needs, Lana ordered her dressmaker to design three new, custom-tailored uniforms for him in gabardine. "Stephen Crane was the best-dressed man in the U.S. Army," Lana said.

Because of a knee injury, Crane was never sent abroad and was discharged after only six months of service. Louis B. Mayer may have used his influence to get him relieved of his duties.

With medical bills mounting, and with Crane draining her resources, Lana was almost broke. She needed work, and eagerly accepted the first job offer. It paid $5,000, and involved her participation in a radio broadcast for the Philip Morris Playhouse for CBS on October 1, 1943.

It was a televised re-dramatization of the 1942 movie, *The Talk of the Town*, a film that had originally starred Cary Grant and Ronald Colman. Lana was to reprise the Jean Arthur role.

In advance of her performance, Crane and Lana headed by train for New York City. But he wanted to stop first at his hometown of Crawfordsville, Indiana. What he really wanted to do, other than to share a reunion with his mother and grandmother, was "to show off my blonde bombshell of a wife to my fellow Hoosiers."

After she arrived in Crawfordsville, at its railway station, Lana hired a local driver as their chauffeur. She fully expected to be taken to his ancestral home and to visit the tobacco factory to which he was an heir. Or so he had said.

She was terribly disappointed when the highlight of their stop turned out to be a dingy little cigar store attached to a rundown pool hall filled with shady characters. Then, the ancestral home turned out to be a modest, two-story frame house that looked like it hadn't been painted since its original construction in 1903. Mother and grandmother were pleasant and friendly, looking like local factory workers in faded patterned dresses made from feedsacks.

Back in his hometown, Crane—who was known as "Joe" by the locals, based on his first name, "Joseph"—began a routine of bringing locals back to their "ancestral home," to meet his beautiful movie star wife.

In desperation, she finally retreated upstairs to the bedroom that his mother had set aside for them.

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During the seventh month of her pregnancy, she imminently feared either a miscarriage or a premature birth. She had painful contractions and was rushed once again to a hospital. She later wrote about spending an agonizing twelve hours on an examination table with a needle inserted into her spine. With fluid dripping into her, the pains eventually went away. Had they continued, her baby would have been born prematurely and stillborn, her doctor told her.

On July 24, 1943, Mildred and Lana went for a walk outside her home when suddenly her water broke. Clutching Lana, Mildred immediately returned to the house. Crane was at home at the time, and he hustled Lana into his car and, breaking speed limits, drove her to Hollywood Hospital.

She'd later tell Darnell that the next eighteen hours, as waves of pain kept shooting through her body, were the most horrific of her life. "I've never been stabbed, but it must be like I felt, getting stabbed and stabbed again without letup."

The doctor gave her a spinal anesthetic and waited for the baby to come out. Although she experienced great pain, she was still awake as it emerged. "It's a girl!" Lana heard the nurse say.

She later said, "The first thing I thought of was that Stephen and I had wanted a boy."

Cheryl Crane "was the most anemic baby I've ever seen," the doctor recalled. Amazingly, and true only in rare cases, the blood of the baby and the blood of its mother were not compatible.

Since the Hollywood Hospital was not adequately equipped to handle a case of erythroblastosis, the newborn was transferred to the Los Angeles Children's Hospital three blocks away.

Lana's Rh-negative blood was producing antibodies to destroy Cheryl's Rh-positive blood cells. As Lana later wrote, "I was killing my daughter even as I was struggling to give her life."

Blood transfusions were urgently needed, as it would be necessary to pump out every drop of Cheryl's blood and then replace and reinforce them with transfusions. Riddled with needles, the baby survived the ordeal. She had entered the world weighing seven pounds, four ounces.

Lana herself had to remain in the hospital for nine more days. Before leaving, she was allowed to hold her endangered infant—so fragile and delicate—in her arms. Cheryl's life remained in jeopardy. For two months, Cheryl hovered between life and death before she was appraised as healthy enough to join her mother in Brentwood.

For child care, Lana relied on the loving care of Mildred, whom Cheryl would later call "Gran," and the expert wisdom of Margaret MacDonald, an older but still vital Scottish woman.

After the birth of her baby, on the nights Crane was away, Lana began to date other men at private residences or in secluded, out-of-the-way places.

Meanwhile, Crane was stationed at nearby Fort MacArthur. She was already aware that on many nights, when he might have returned to Brentwood to join her, he did not. That alone, to some degree, seemed to justify her intimacies with other men.

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As a Civil Rights activist, Lena Horne, a star of stage, music, and film, had already blazed a trail for other African American performers, having broken down racial barriers from the 1940s and 50s. Eventually, she rose to the top of her profession, as part of a life filled with triumphs and tragedies.

Lana had heard of a hole-in-the-wall *boîte* "The Little Troc," which had become the "in" place in Hollywood during the early 1940s. John Barrymore was a frequent visitor, arriving drunk. Marlene Dietrich for a while adopted the place as her nighttime rendezvous, sometimes appearing with her lover, Claudette Colbert.

Lena Horne: "Think of me as a sepia version of Hedy Lamarr."

When Lana read that Horne was performing there, she asked Stephen Crane to escort her there one night. As an example of those quirky coincidences that were frequently swirling around her, she spotted her former husband, Artie Shaw, in the audience waiting for Horne's act to begin.

When he saw her, Shaw jumped to his feet, kissed Lana and shook Crane's hand, inviting them to sit at his table to watch the show.

Almost immediately, she sensed that her first husband was having an affair with the singer.

After the show, Shaw introduced Horne to Lana. Surprisingly, the two women didn't seem jealous of each other—in fact, they began a friendship that would last for years and in time become the subject of some nasty rumors.

"Hello, darling," Horne said, kissing Lana on the cheek.

Lana already knew that MGM had signed Horne to a contract. "I look exactly like every other gal at MGM, except I'm bronze," Horne said, in an ironic observation of her skin tone.

"I read in Elsa Maxwell's column that you're a honeypot for the bees, and it seems that Artie here agrees." Lana said.

"It's nothing serious," Horne said. "I've separated from my husband, Louis Jordan Jones, and Artie is a change of pace from Paul Robeson, Joe Louis, and Duke Ellington."

At the age of sixteen, Horne, from her base in Brooklyn, had joined the chorus of Harlem's Cotton Club. She'd made her film debut at MGM in *Panama Hattie* (1942), in which she'd performed her most memorable song, "Stormy Weather."

Later, when Crane and Shaw disappeared together into the alley to smoke marijuana, Horne said, “Girl, let’s talk.”

She then preceded to relay some insight into her affair with Shaw: “What I like most about him is that he understands the obstacles I face as a black entertainer. As you know, he took Billie Holiday out on the road, so he knows what I’m up against.”

“The one thing about Artie is that he seems without prejudice,” Lana said.

“I fell for him when I heard his recording of ‘Star Dust,’” Horne said. “It was in June of 1941 at the Café Society in New York.”

“It appears that many women find my former husband irresistible,” Lana said. “Judy Garland among them. He’s also literary, hanging out with Hemingway and his ilk.”

Shaw later told Crane and others, “I’m trying to convince Lena that she is the most beautiful creature in the world, even more beautiful than Greer Garson, and, if I dare say so, more beautiful than Lana herself.”

“Don’t get THAT carried away,” Crane cautioned.

[Decades later, at the age of 94, a curmudgeonly Shaw talked with a reporter about his long-ago affair with Horne. “She was quite pretty and a lot of the guys were after her, both white and black, Frank Sinatra among them. I liked her looks, so I went after her. After all, some men can like both vanilla and chocolate. Her singing was okay, not great. At least she could carry a tune.”

“We did more than date. We fucked a lot. Our affair lasted for several months, and she was always pestering me to marry her. I warned her that such a marriage would destroy both of our careers.”

“Lena was always protesting the white man’s treatment of blacks,” Shaw said. “She screwed a few black guys, but I think she really went for the white men. If that sounds too racist, don’t print it.”]

One night when Crane had to (or chose to) overnight at Fort MacArthur, Lana arrived at the club with Virginia Grey. Horne introduced the actresses to her estranged husband, Louis Jordan Jones.

Horne later said, “Louis seemed enchanted by Lana, like she was the gal of his wildest dreams. I don’t know what happened at the club that night. I know he left after the show with both Lana and Virginia.”

It might have come as a shock to Lana’s fans, but in James Gavin’s definitive biography of Horn, entitled *Stormy Weather*, he reveals that Jones was a womanizer. Some of his movie star lovers included two blondes, both Sonja Henie, Crane’s former girlfriend, and Lana herself.

Jones was considered a highly desirable “catch” on the night he disappeared with Lana after Grey had retreated to her home. He was twenty-eight years old, working as a press and publicity agent for the Cleveland Indians. He was quite handsome, a light-skinned mulatto with straightened hair parted and slicked back. He frequently appeared in well-tailored, double-breasted suits and had a reputation as a playboy.

“At the time I took up with him,” Lana said to Grey, “I wasn’t really getting back at Lena for screwing my former husband. I was actually getting back at Stephen, because I learned that he was still dropping in at Joan Crawford’s house at least once a week.”

Lana later told Grey at one point she discussed Jones with Horne.

“I found sex with him very dirty!” Horne said. “He’s a god damn animal in bed.”

“Lena, darling, you must realize that what you view as dirty, another woman might find thrilling. Just because a man likes to do everything in bed—and I mean *everything*—doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s dirty.”

“That’s why they print menus, Lana, darling,” Horne replied.

Months later, when Lana encountered Horne, the singer told her the news. “Artie has dropped me and taken up with Jerome Kern’s daughter. But don’t feel sorry for me. I’m shacked up with Orson Welles. How about you, darling?”

“How much time do you have?” Lana said. “I’ll tell you, but it’ll take all night.”

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During her last and final war bond tour, Lana made a secretive, off-the-record stopover in New Orleans. She’d been invited to visit the city by two former lovers, Victor Mature and Errol Flynn, who had booked a suite there, and —as a team—invited her there as their date.

Before the war, both men had seduced her, separately, and she had enjoyed their company and their love-making.

After her “before-the-war” affair with Mature, she had lost touch with him. She was aware, however, that during their filming together of *My Gal Sal*, released in 1942, he’d begun a torrid affair with its co-star, Rita Hayworth.

Mature had originally wanted to enlist in the Navy, but was rejected because of his colorblindness, even though

he insisted, “I can see red, white, and blue.”

Finally, he ended up in the Coast Guard, patrolling the war-torn North Atlantic aboard the ship he’d been assigned, *Storis*.

By 1944, he’d been granted shore leave to star in the film version of the film version of the morale-boosting musical revue, *Tars & Stripes*, which—in addition to providing entertainment to sailors—had also been conceived as a recruitment campaign for the Coast Guard. As a film, it had opened in Miami in April of 1944, traveling through the States, playing at movie houses and old vaudeville theaters. During his time in New Orleans, Mature visited defense plants and shipyards.

Flynn, who was involved at the time with a war bond tour, was making some of the similar rounds when he ran into Mature. These two bisexuals had been sometimes lovers before the war, and Flynn invited Mature to share his hotel suite in New Orleans. The two handsome hunks didn’t emerge from the suite for twenty-four hours.

The following day, they encountered a war-based lack of transportation, as most of the buses and what had been taxis had been commandeered into the war effort.

Fortuitously, immediately across the street from their hotel, they spotted a used car lot, where a battered taxicab was available for $600. Agreeing to split the cost between them, they bought it.

Just for fun, Flynn also acquired the uniform of a taxi driver, complete with hat. Then he and Mature drove through the wartime streets of New Orleans, picking up horny, sweaty servicemen and inviting them back to their hotel suite for an orgy.

At the end of a war bond tour, Lana stopped off in New Orleans to share the beds of both Victor Mature and Errol Flynn (above).

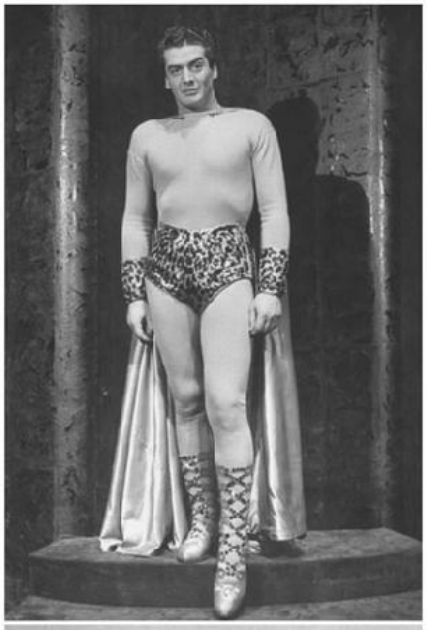
“Why not?” she asked. “They’re the two hottest men in California...or elsewhere.”

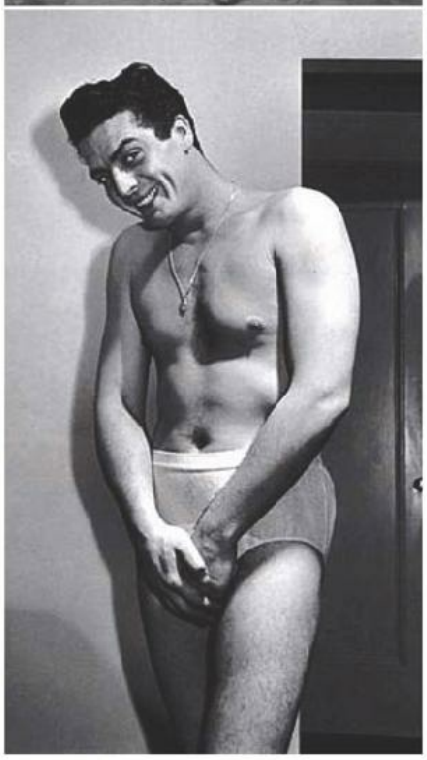
Once in New Orleans, Lana was delighted to be reunited with Flynn and Mature, considering both of them among the most skilled of her lovers. Soon, she was riding around with them in their taxi, enjoying the sights, the jazz, and the cuisine of New Orleans, especially its gumbo dishes.

The Hollywood threesome, in the words of one restaurant owner, “consisted of the two handsomest men and the most beautiful woman ever to set foot in our fair town.”

It was wartime, and shortages were prevalent, but restaurateurs always made exception for Lana, Mature, and Flynn, slipping them special treats.

During the short time Lana occupied a suite with Mature and Flynn, champagne was on hand every night. It was a time not just to make love, but to talk about all the changes the war would rapidly bring to Hollywood and on the type of films it would produce.





"Victor Mature almost invented the word 'beefcake,'" Lana said. "I'm not sure if I invented the word 'cheesecake,' but I'll take credit."

When the men stripped down, Lana, one of the great judges of the male physique, noted that Mature was in his body beautiful shape, whereas Flynn, because of his dissipation, had developed a slight paunch.

In the three days she spent with the two actors, Lana was brought up to date on what they'd been doing.

She also discussed her crumbling marriage to Stephen Crane and the difficulties she'd had during childbirth. "I don't think I'm cut out to be a wife and mother," she confessed. "Here I am carrying on with two of Hollywood's leading horndogs."

“And enjoying every minute of it,” Flynn said. “Admit that it’s true, ol’ girl!”

“What red-blooded female would turn down an invitation for love in the morning, love in the afternoon, and love at night? You guys are sex machines!”

Flynn had just emerged from one of the worst ordeals of his life. Two under-aged girls, Betty Hansen and Peggy Satterlee, had hauled him into court on a charge of statutory rape. The tabloids had gone wild in tarnishing his reputation, creating a new term for the American vernacular: “In like Flynn.”

Lana had been impressed with Flynn’s defense by attorney Jerry Giesler, who had impugned the accuser’s character and morals, a tactic that eventually led to the star’s acquittal. Eventually, Lana would desperately need Geisler’s services for herself.

Flynn’s marriage to actress Lili Damita had ended in divorce in 1942. The following year, he’d married eighteen-year-old Nora Eddington, a worker at a cider stand.

Flynn had filmed *Northern Pursuit* (1943), directed by Raoul Walsh. He told her of the many fights he’d had with his director. In the movie, he’d been cast as a Canadian Mountie with “links” to the Fatherland in Germany.”

When Flynn was at the bar having a drink, Mature brought her up to speed on the gossip. Flynn’s co-star, Helmut Dantine, a dashing young Austrian actor, had fled to California after the Nazi takeover of his country. As a Jew, he had escaped just in time.

When making *Edge of Darkness* in 1943, Flynn had made sexual advances to him. The handsome blonde actor had declined, claiming that he was “saving myself for Tyrone Power.”

But with Power away at war, Flynn, according to Mature, finally succeeded in seducing Dantine during the making of *Northern Pursuit*. “If Flynn doesn’t succeed the first time,” Mature claimed, “he tries again and again until he gets his man. Of course, Flynn had Ty Power years ago. As for women, they stand in line for Robin Hood.”

When Lana returned to California, she told Virginia Grey, “Millions of women dream of going to bed with Errol Flynn or Victor Mature. Imagine me, little Miss Lana Turner, going to bed with both of them at the same time! I don’t want to make the gods jealous. They might punish me for having such luck.”

The strikingly handsome Guy Madison had appeared in sailor whites, chatting with Robert Walker and Jennifer Jones, during a three-minute segment of *Since You Went Away* (1944).

When the David O. Selznick film was released, his appearance created a sensation. Selznick’s office was flooded with fan mail from bobbysoxers across America.

“I loved my time in New Orleans with those guys,” Lana said. “If I have one regret, it’s that Errol got Ty Power, that living doll, before I do.”

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During the shooting of David O. Selznick’s *Since You Went Away* (1944), Lana visited the set. That film was slated to become one of the most popular of the “Home-front Movies” of World War II.

Ostensibly, she was there to see her friend, actor Robert Walker, who had had bit parts in two of her previous

films, *Dancing Co-Ed* and *These Glamour Girls*.

Directed by John Cromwell, *Since You Went Away* starred Claudette Colbert, Jennifer Jones, Shirley Temple, Joseph Cotten, Monty Woolley, and Hattie McDaniel.

Lana's former agent, Henry Willson, invited Lana to go with him to the studio. He had persuaded Selznick to cast Robert Moseley (later known as Guy Madison) into a brief role as a sailor.

Willson also introduced Lana to "Dare Harris," his latest discovery. Later, as John Derek, he, like Madison, would become a matinee idol and the future husband of such beauties as Ursula Andress, Linda Evans, and Bo Derek.

Willson maintained, and Lana agreed, that Harris and Madison "would become celebrated as the most striking of the pretty boys of the 1940s…and beyond." This time, his prophecy came true.

The future John Derek seemed very impressed with Lana, telling her, "You're like a goddess to me. My favorite movie star. I have your picture hanging on my bedroom wall. The first thing I see in the morning, and the last thing I see at night."

Lana realized that Willson was already "dating" (some said "molesting") each of these handsome actors, but she wanted to continue her affair with Madison and to get to know Derek better. She was worried about Derek's age since, "He looks seventeen," she told Willson.

"He's only four years younger than you, my dear. He looks gorgeous with his clothes on and heavenly bare-assed."

"You should know," she said. "I always trust your judgment in these matters."

Originally, Willson had renamed Madison "Guy Dunhill," but later reconsidered his choice. Across from Selznick's studio was the Dolly Madison Bakery, named after the former First Lady. *[Serving in that capacity from 1809-1817, she actually spelled her name "Dolley."]*

Since *[Guy]* Madison was getting off work that day at 4PM, Lana invited him to drop in at her home, the interior of which he already knew well, with the understanding that later that evening, he'd be her escort at a party Willson was hosting.

He arrived with a passionate kiss. "Let's get re-acquainted. I haven't seen you in weeks."

Later that night, he took her to Willson's mostly male party. At around midnight, Madison told her he wouldn't be able to escort her home because Willson was demanding a "sleepover."

The next day, Willson phoned Lana: "YOU BITCH!" he said. "Guy told me you drained him dry before I got a chance at him. Thankfully, Frank *[Frank McCowan, later renamed "Rory Calhoun,"]* was in working order, so my night wasn't a complete waste. Frank is going to be a big star. I'll have to change his name, of course. He'll need some publicity, so I want him to date you and take you to all the places where photographers are waiting. Alan Ladd…how shall I put this?...has already discovered this handsome hunk of male flesh."

Willson eventually flew Madison to the New York premiere of *Since You Went Away*. He later told Lana, "He was a sensation. The bobbysoxers went after him like he was Frank Sinatra. Crowds followed us everywhere."

"I tipped off the press that we'd be arriving on Broadway by limousine to see Judy Holliday in *Born Yesterday* (1950). Screaming fans were waiting *en masse* for Guy. Before exiting from the limo, my hand, concealed with a blanket, made a grab for Guy's crotch. 'You're a star, baby, you're a star!' I told him."

Lana later said, "Henry took all the credit for making Guy a star, but I was the one who really discovered that incredible beauty at the Hollywood Canteen. If God had made me a boy instead of a girl, I would want to look like Guy."

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During one of her visits to the set of *Since You Went Away*, Lana renewed her friendship with Robert Walker.

The director of the picture, Tay Garnett, joined them for lunch. He would later helm her in what is arguably her most famous picture, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946).

That afternoon, as she was preparing to leave, she encountered David O. Selznick, who had, years before, rejected her screen test during try-outs for the role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). "Too bad, kid," he had said at the time. "You're just not the Southern belle type, growing magnolias out of your butt. But you'd be great as a *femme fatale* blonde in a film noir."

Thanks for your advice, Mr. Selznick," she said, passing on. Her revenge would eventually be exacted from Selznick, but not until years in her future.

Before exiting from the film set that day, she had invited Walker for a drink. A few days later, he'd been seated in her living room for less than thirty minutes when he confided to her what had been going on in his life:

His marriage to Jennifer Jones had come unglued. Selznick was pursuing her, and Walker suspected that the

film mogul and his wife were already deep into an affair.

As Robert Wagner's marriage to Jennifer Jones was crumbling, he formed a bond with Lana, a relationship that would last until his untimely death.

Both of them found sympathy and comfort in their shared anxieties over the failure of their respective marriages. Unlike many of Walker's friends, Lana accepted his love affair with Peter Lawford and didn't judge him.

"Thank god for Peter Lawford," Walker said. "He's become my best friend. In fact, he told me the other night, he'd like to meet you. You're his favorite actress."

She would later report to Willson the mental anguish that Walker was enduring.

Walker had told her, "Everyone has problems, but I can't live with mine. God knows I can't compete with Selznick. He's one of the biggest producers in Hollywood, and Jennifer is very ambitious. She talks about him all the time. Considers him a genius. Is always bragging about the great things he's going to do for her career. For her, the sun rises and sets on David O. Selznick."

"What can I do? He has this obsession for my wife. He's a powerful man. He could cut me to pieces in a minute. I'd be finished in this town. Actually, I hate Hollywood. I've never felt comfortable here."

"What you can do," Lana advised, "is to fall in love with someone else. You're a good-looking boy. Many women could go for you."

"Is that an offer?" he asked, provocatively.

"Perhaps it's a proposal for an affair, but nothing really serious," she answered. "I'm getting rid of my second husband, and I don't want to be tied down anytime soon. After my last pregnancy, I'm also determined not to go through that kind of hell ever again."

Walker spend the night in Lana's bed. She would never rank him among the greatest of her lovers, but she agreed with Garnett when she later worked with him. The director told her, "Bob is a talented, sensitive guy who has a little boy lost quality about him that some find appealing—at least those who aren't attracted to the John Wayne type."

In the weeks and months ahead, Walker and Lana did not see much of each other, but they often talked on the phone. He shared frustrations from the set of *Since You Went Away*. One of them involved the fact that Selznick insisted that he shoot his love scenes with Jones over and over again, even though they were estranged, and on some days, belligerent with each other.

Lana felt that Walker was sinking deeper and deeper into alcoholism and mental illness, and she feared that he might be contemplating suicide.

Their lovemaking had ceased almost as soon as it had begun, yet she still maintained a friendship with him. Later, she learned that he was seducing Judy Garland on the set of a film in which both of them were co-starring, *The Clock* (1945).

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Johnny Meyer phoned one night to extend to Lana an invitation from Howard Hughes, who had disappeared for almost a year. No one seemed to know where he was or where he'd been. Apparently, he had "resurfaced" in Idaho and wanted her to fly there for a few days of R&R.

Smokin' Joe Petrali, the "King of Dirt," was a demon on his motorcycle and a demon in bed. Just ask Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, and Joan Crawford.

She was tempted by his offer for her to return to the state of her birth, and she accepted. She was under a severe strain from her unraveling marriage, and wanted to escape from Hollywood.

After her big hits with Robert Taylor and Clark Gable, she had wanted to star in bigger and better films, but the scripts for the remainder of the war years seemed lack-luster to her.

At 7AM the next morning, Meyer arrived at her house, finding her ready with suitcases fully packed with resort clothes. He drove her to the Burbank airport, where he introduced her to Hughes' favorite pilot, Joe Petrali, known to his friends as "Smokin' Joe." He did not have a pretty face, but was ruggedly masculine. Errol Flynn had defined his appearance as a "dime-store version of Humphrey Bogart."

Lana had never heard of him, but she would later learn that he was a legend among motorcycle racers. Between 1925 and 1937, he'd consistently been a champion, eventually establishing the world's motorcycle speed record, clocking one of them at a speed of 136.183MPH at Daytona Beach, Florida. You name the motorcycle venue—board track racing, hill climbs, speed records, dirt track—Petrali had been his era's champ, sometimes nicknamed (affectionately) as "The King of Dirt." Although his birth certificate had been lost in the 1906 earthquake, his contemporaries usually concluded that he was a year older than Hughes.

After Petrali's retirement from motorcycle racing, he became an airplane engineer. In 1947, he became a footnote in aviation history when he rode aboard Hughes' first and only takeoff of the legendary "Spruce Goose," with the entire world looking on.

[The H-4 Hercules, developed at staggering expense by Howard Hughes, was a prototype for a transatlantic "flying boat," conceived for military use during World War II. It was not completed in time to be used for heavy transport during the war.]

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A few minutes after her arrival in Sun Valley, in an airplane piloted by Joe Petrali, Lana and her luggage were hauled by limousine to an elegant chalet, either rented or owned by Hughes. She expected that he would be there to greet her, but found that he had not yet arrived.

When she asked about it, Petrali told her, "I never ask questions about where Howard is or where he goes. Frankly, he seems to be showing more and more signs of paranoia. But how do I know—I'm not a psychologist."

She later told her girlfriends that Petrali, for such a rough, macho guy, was actually a spiffy dresser, and spent great amounts of time getting dressed. "As much as I do," she claimed.

For dinner at a local restaurant, at a table positioned near a blazing fireplace, he appeared in spit-shined dress shoes, an immaculate black and white sweater, and a hand-tailored shirt emblazoned with his initials, a gift from Hughes.

As she later claimed, “I think there was a lot more going on between Howard and Joe than I was aware of. In other words, I think he was more than Howard’s pilot. After all, let’s face it: The Aviator flies both ways.”

Although she enjoyed the companionship of Petrali, who was devoted to outdoor activities, she was tempted to leave by the third day, as Hughes had still not arrived.

Then, one night, Petrali, who occupied the suite of rooms next to hers, entered her quarters fresh from his shower, clad only in a bath towel wrapped around his waist.

“Like the Walls of Jericho, that towel fell to the ground,” she recalled. ‘What can I say? Seeing is believing. I have known better-looking men, but never a powerhouse like Joe. He braced his hands on his thighs and stood before me for inspection. Without touching himself, his most prized possessions began to rise and rise, then rise some more.”

“My stay in Sun Valley stretched out for more than a week. God made men and was pleased with his creation. He then decided to create his masterpiece. The end result was Smokin’ Joe.”

Years later, a rather drunken Lana, sitting with Merv Griffin in the bar of the Beverly Hills Hotel, spoke of Petrali when he was quizzing her about Hughes.

“After a while, I passed Smokin’ Joe on to Ava Gardner, who was dating Howard at the time. She got to see a lot of Joe…I mean, *all* of him. When Ava moved on to her next dozen men, Joan Crawford heard about him and went after him. Usually, Joan beats me and Ava to the prize, but this time, she got sloppy seconds, or, in his case, fourth or fifths. Ava and I beat her to him, and I’m sure Howard beat all of us to Joe. After Crawford, or so I heard, Joe made the rounds of Hollywood beauties. I never knew if he were married or not. Why would I care about a thing like that?”

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Director Henry Levin was an eyewitness to the sexual chemistry between Stephen Crane and Nina Foch.

“I think part of Nina’s reason for seduction is that she wanted to see what ‘ladykiller’ Steve Crane was like in bed. An added inducement was that he was Lana Turner’s husband. I think Nina wanted to be Lana Turner.”

Almost as a parting gift before divorcing Crane, Lana used her connections to the movie industry to get film work for her husband. He kept pressing her to do something to get his career as an actor launched, even though he admitted that he had little talent. “As you, of all people know, I’m God’s gift to women. I think I can project some of that male magic onto the screen.”

Finally, a minor contract from Columbia came through. Lana told Ann Rutherford, “I almost had to promise to sleep with Harry Cohn to get Stephen work at Columbia.”

Crane's first movie for the studio was the 1944 *Cry of the Werewolf*, alongside the Dutch-born Nina Foch cast as the lead. Sometimes released as *Daughter of the Werewolf*, the film cast Foch in the unlikely role of a Gypsy cursed by lycanthropy. She didn't look like a female Werewolf. When photographed from a certain angle, she resembled Marlene Dietrich.

Crane was cast as a scientist who discovered that his father has been killed by a werewolf.

Arriving from the Netherlands, Foch epitomized the cool, aloof, blonde sophisticate. She would not marry until 1954. At the time she met Crane, she had launched her film career in Hollywood with horror films such as *The Return of the Vampire* (1943).

Foch told Levin, "Lana is very cruel to Steve, marrying him, divorcing him, threatening not to remarry him—even after she got pregnant. She practically drove him to suicide after it was discovered that he was a bigamist. And as it was widely known, she sleeps with other beaux. He is a wonderful lover and smells so clean. Even on a hot day, it's like he just emerged from the shower. Frankly, I will marry Steve if his divorce comes through and he proposes."

The Crane/Foch romance lasted only until the end of the filming of *Werewolf*. As a Hollywood Romeo, "Steve went on to bigger game, namely Joan Crawford and Rita Hayworth," Levin said.

For his next film, a 1945 mystery, *The Crime Doctor's Courage*, Crane was reduced to seventh billing. Its star was Warner Baxter, an old-time actor born in Ohio in 1891. He was usually cast as a scowling leading man with a pencil-thin mustache. In 1926, he been assigned the title role in Hollywood's first attempt to bring the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, *The Great Gatsby*, to the screen. That movie is now lost to history.

Baxter also played the hard-as-nails director in the *42nd Street* (1933), in which he delivers that immortal line to dancer Ruby Keeler, "You're going out there as a youngster, but you've got to come back a star!"

Crane met Baxter as he was recovering from a nervous breakdown. He'd fallen on bad days as he'd aged, and was now reduced to roles in B pictures at Columbia. He'd go on to make nine *Crime Doctor* films.

Director George Sherman was not impressed with Crane's acting, and, although Baxter liked him, Crane wasn't offered a role in any of the other films within the series.

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The most support for Crane's movie career derived from Mildred, not from Lana herself.

In her memoirs, Crane's daughter, Cheryl, wrote, "My grandmother had grown fretfully supportive of her son-in-law. She found his courtly manners irresistible, and she believed that he still offered some hope for stability in her daughter's madcap life. Gran was appalled that before mother's second marriage had been dissolved, she was always out at night with other men."

Some of those men over the course of the next few years were famous: Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum, Robert Hutton, John Derek, Guy Madison, Victor Mature, Errol Flynn, John Hodiak, James Craig, Peter Lawford, Robert Walker, Turhan Bey, Rory Calhoun, and Tyrone Power.

Lana referred to some of the "regular guys" (i.e., non-movie stars) she dated, most often through encounters at the Hollywood Canteen, as "the nameless ones, the guys who went home after the war and settled down, often with their high school sweetheart. They sold insurance or else joined the baby boomer construction industry as plumbers or carpenters."

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Eventually, Crane got cast in a small part at Columbia, in a film starring Rita Hayworth, *Tonight and Every Night*, released in 1944.

Victor Saville cast the musical which was set in wartime London, and loosely modeled on the Windmill Theatre in Soho (UK), which became legendary for not missing a single performance during the Nazi blitzkrieg of London.

Hayworth looked glamorous in Technicolor, playing an American showgirl who falls in love with an RAF pilot (Lee Bowman). Crane had a few lines as Leslie Wiggins, Bowman's best buddy in the RAF.

On the first day of work, Crane's manly charms met approval from lusty Shelley Winters, a future movie star. She had just filmed a bit part in Hayworth's *Cover Girl*, and had been cast in another minor role in *Tonight* as "Bubbles," a ditzy show-girl.

When Winters published her 1980 autobiography, *Shelley*, Crane was still alive. Perhaps she didn't want to embarrass him, since he was still married to Lana when Shelley seduced him. However, after his death in 1985, she became more outspoken.

"The first night Steve took me out, we went to Ciro's and then later dropped into his apartment," Winters claimed. "I knew we were going to make love, and I also knew that Lana was going to divorce him. So I figured, 'Why not?'"

"I was pretty experienced at this time," Winters continued. "I'd lost my virginity when I was fifteen. I'd used Southern Comfort and potato chips to seduce him."

"Over the course of many years, Lana and I would share many of the same guys: William Holden, Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, Sean Connery, John Garfield, Howard Hughes, Sterling Hayden, Anthony Quinn—you name 'em. I don't know if she ever fucked Marlon Brando. We both got plowed by Frank Sinatra—that was before he got pissed off at me and denounced me as a 'bowlegged bitch of a Brooklyn Blonde.'"

"Steve Crane was a real gentleman, very courtly and proficient in bed," Winters claimed. "His equipment was similar to that of Lancaster. Our affair wasn't really that. Call it a fling. It didn't last long."

"He soon discovered this shy little girl, very pretty. She used to hang around a lot at Columbia, watching us but not saying much. When she did speak, it was barely a whisper. She always wore halter dresses one size too small and carried around a big book like a dictionary or encyclopedia." Winters wrote that in her first memoir.

"It wasn't long before Steve discovered 'Norma Jean something or other.' He stopped dating me and took up with her. I ran into them one night at Schwab's Drugstore, where Lana was allegedly discovered."

[In time, Norma Jean renamed herself Marilyn Monroe. She not only had a brief fling with Crane, among others, but became Winters' roommate.]

Eventually, the star of the picture, Rita Hayworth, discovered Crane's seductive skills. Suddenly, they became "an item."

"I don't know the exact moment Rita took notice of Steve," said director Saville. "But she sure did. It was the talk of the set. I suspected it might be Rita's way of getting back at Lana, her main rival as pinup girl, during the war."

"Rita had eloped with Orson Welles in 1943, but he was never around and still playing the field," Saville claimed. "Rita's affair with Victor Mature was over. She and Lana both went for him. Steve was just the tonic for Rita at that troubled time in her life."

"After such dragon ladies as Joan Crawford and Sonja Henie, I found Rita a very nice lady," Crane told Saville. "She was very kind, very loving. She should never have married Orson Welles…He led to disaster for her."

"Rita's figure wasn't as great as Lana's, though she had the world's most beautiful breasts," Crane said. "Her

arms and hands were lovely, but her legs were a bit on the thin side. She had the cutest little belly, which her cameraman was ordered to conceal."

"One day, she came to me," Crane said. "She'd just been in the office of Harry Cohn *[the notoriously abusive president of Columbia pictures]*, and he'd called her 'a tub of shit.' I brought her comfort. She needed love that night. Welles was away, and Cohn had made her feel worthless. I restored her to her throne as a love goddess."

"My romance with Rita didn't last long," Crane admitted. "She was pregnant at the time *[with her daughter, Rebecca]*. On looking back, I think that Rita, unlike Lana, didn't really want to be a movie star."

"In her heart, she was just a simple dancing gypsy girl, who could have settled down with an average Joe and had children. I don't know if Lana ever found out about my affair with Rita—perhaps she did. It was never mentioned."

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In August of 1944, Lana divorced Crane for the second time. "I was disillusioned during my second marriage to Stephen," Lana told Linda Darnell, who had been her maid of honor during her first marriage ceremony to Crane. "He was always accusing me of keeping late hours, drinking too much, and whoring around."

Before a judge, Lana presented her case in seven minutes. She claimed that Crane made her irritable all the time, and created nervous anxiety in her. She accused him of causing her to have frequent colds, and she blamed him for a drastic weight loss. "I've been forced to turn down important pictures because of the turmoil in my life," she claimed in open court.

"My health has been seriously damaged because of him, and I've actually contemplated suicide," she maintained.

The judge granted her divorce and awarded her custody of their daughter.

Lana gave her version of the breakup to Louella Parsons. "Stephen and I sat down for a heart-to-heart talk. We were no longer quarreling. We knew it was time to go our separate ways. I willingly gave my permission for him to visit Cheryl at any time."

[That wasn't exactly accurate: Crane had actually sued Lana for custody of his daughter, but lost in court.]

Lana and Crane remained friends even after their divorce, and many of their subsequent reunions concerned Cheryl. Insiders such as Darnell said that on rare occasions, they continued to have sex together.

As biographer Joe Morella wrote: "Lana's reputation was growing, not only as an offscreen sex symbol, but also as a young woman who could more than hold her own with the hard-drinking Hollywood crowd and match their expletive-peppered vocabulary word for word. Magazine stories carried such headlines as LANA TURNER'S SENSATIONAL LOVES."

Darnell said, "Rumors were rampant about Lana's all-night revelries at clubs along Central Avenue, which was known as 'The Harlem of Hollywood.' Parties there were pretty wild, or so I heard. I never went there myself."

Lana told her girlfriends, many of them envious, "Millions of men consider me the most desirable woman in the world. But my greatest moments, my greatest love affairs, my greatest thrills, lay in my future."

Perhaps to erase memories of her troubled life with Crane, Lana sold her house and moved into a rental property. "I want a fresh start."

In the meantime, Crane became one of the most sought-after bachelors in Hollywood, even taking Lana out on occasion.

The manager at Ciro's reported that on three nights in a row, Crane showed up with Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, and Rita Hayworth. "It was amazing. What did this Hoosier boy have?"

The Intangible, Snake-Oil Charm of Lana's Third Husband, Hollywood's Lothario, Stephen Crane

Whatever Special Combination of Male Charm and Pizzazz Did He Have That We Don't Know About?

Stephen Crane, on three nights in a row, dated Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, and his former wife, Lana. As a trio, they were known as the most desirable women inhabiting the planet. What special gift, one wonders, did he have?

Chapter Ten

How to Be a Hot Pants Movie Star

"I Can Fall in Love for Only One Night"

The manly endowments of John Hodiak had been widely discussed after his co-star, Tallulah Bankhead, seduced him during the filming of Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* (1944). He'd started out being billed as "the next Clark Gable," but didn't get far with that moniker. He'd been classified as 4-F by the Army.

Lana, too, succumbed to the sex appeal of Hodiak on the set of *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, where he was somewhat wooden as an actor.

"He might have been wooden on the screen," Lana told Virginia Grey, "but he's wonderful in bed, and he has a formidable weapon indeed. Tallulah was right."

During World War II, customers could walk into a drugstore and discover the glamorous face of Lana Turner on at least six or seven movie magazines on any given month. Commercial products, such as Woodbury Soap, courted her endorsement, whether she used the product or not. She was one of the most publicized blondes—along with Veronica Lake, Betty Grable, Carole Landis, and Betty Hutton—who adorned the screen during the war years, adding glamor to an otherwise dreary world.

James Robert Parrish, a Hollywood biographer, wrote: "With her voracious sexual appetite, Lana Turner dated incessantly. "I find men terribly exciting," she once said. "Any girl who says she doesn't is an anemic old maid, a streetwalker, or a saint."

"If it were for a quick bedroom tussle, she wanted well-endowed beefcake," Parrish claimed.

Turner shared her philosophy of a man and a woman. "A successful man is one who makes more than a wife can spend. A successful woman is one who can find such a man."

An edition of *Current Biography* wrote: “It is said that Lana Turner has dated 150 members of the opposite sex, and she has been reported to have become engaged to marry five different men at the same time, and was actually on the verge of going to the altar with a dozen.”

Even so, she also got publicity about being a mother, with stories appearing under the headline of LANA’S LITTLE DIVIDEND.

The *Hollywood Reporter* wrote, “Whenever Lana is seen with her daughter, she seems very fond of the little one. But she isn’t particularly maternal by nature, by instinct (lots of women aren’t) or by circumstance. It takes a remarkable character to be a hot pants movie star and an adequate mother. Lana’s sex life was always sinning. She had all those troubles, plus her career, plus her own not-very-sound character to cope with.”

Lana reached the peak of her beauty in the mid-1940s. Even so, she considered Hedy Lamarr more beautiful than she was. “Blondes are more fun. They’re bubbly with personality and are pretty like Betty Grable and me, but brunettes are the really sultry beauties of the screen.”

She never went out of the house unless she was “camera ready.” She didn’t know what photographer was sneaking around to take her picture in what she referred to as “one of my off moments.”

She announced to advertisers, “I will sell only beauty products—not spark plugs like Rita Hayworth.”

Most of the men she dated were actors, or musicians, especially during her early days as a film star. Often, her dates lasted only for one night, perhaps dancing at Ciro’s. Sometimes, she continued an affair for three weeks to a month. On occasion, she took up with former lovers, getting together for “a reunion in my boudoir.”

“For the most part, I like men tall, dark, and handsome. I think I invented that phrase which became a *cliché.”*

“I was impulsive when it came to men,” she said. “I could fall in love for just one night. But then morning came and the man in bed with me didn’t look so hot.”

She concluded by saying, “My definition of love is believing in your dreams.”

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The war years of 1941 and 1942 had been spectacular for Lana, playing opposite Robert Taylor and Clark Gable in *Honky Tonk*, *Johnny Eager*, and *Somewhere I’ll Find You*. They were followed by her 1943 release of *Slightly Dangerous*, which was like some warmed-over script in the late 1930s before America went to war.

Lana was not pleased, however, with her film output in 1943 and 1944. Her marriage to Stephen Crane, the bigamy charge, and a pregnancy that almost killed her and her child, had interrupted her career at the time when she was about to take the crown as Queen of MGM.

Now, after an eighteen-month absence from the screen, she was hoping that her newest film, set for a 1944 release, *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, would be big at the box office.

A pre-fame Tennessee Williams sits in a cubbyhole at MGM, trying to create “a celluloid brassiere for Lana Turner.”

She desperately wanted the script to be good, since she would be billed as the star, her name appearing before the title. Never before had she involved herself to this degree in the early creation of a script.

Her director, Robert Z. Leonard, who had helmed her in *Ziegfeld Girl*, had been assigned to bring Judith Kelly’s best-selling novel to the screen. In it, Lana was required to transition from a frivolous society girl to a wartime bride and mother.

She was disappointed to learn that MGM had signed an unknown writer, Tennessee Williams, to craft the adaptation. She had wanted an established, thoroughly seasoned Hollywood pro.

Williams had landed in Hollywood in 1939. The only job he could get was as a feather plucker on a squab ranch outside the city limits of Los Angeles.

As stated years later to his reporter friend from *The Miami Herald*, Darwin Porter: “My time of dread was when a group of young men, most of them boys, came over three times a week to commit mayhem in a place known as ‘The Killing Shed.’ Here, they would murder the squabs by slitting their throats with sharp knives. The poor birds would frantically twitch as these killers would hold them by their legs over a bucket to bleed them. My share of the squabs was delivered to me, along with my mostly Mexican co-workers. I had to pick the feathers off these dead birds. I was meagerly paid by the number of squabs I plucked.”

Tennessee was rescued from this bloody horror by his literary agent, Audrey Wood, who informed him one afternoon that she’d gotten him a job as a scriptwriter at MGM for a salary of $250 a week, the most money he’d ever received.

His first assignment involved adapting a romantic novel, *The Sun Is My Undoing*, for the screen. However, when he reported to work that Monday, he was informed that Pandro S. Berman, its producer, had reassigned him to adapt a different novel, *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, into a sort of “comeback” film for Lana Turner.

Here comes the bride, portrayed by an actress eventually associated with seven real-life husbands—not a particularly good role model for a virginally white wedding.

According to Tennessee, “I think that was one of the funniest and most embarrassing things that ever happened to me. That I should be expected to produce a suitable vehicle for this actress. I feel like an obstetrician required to successfully deliver a mastodon from a beaver. I’ve been assigned to create a celluloid brassiere for Lana Turner.”

Tennessee never understood the individualized allure of Lana, nor did he appreciate the spellbinding image she could bring to the screen, attracting millions of fans, not all of whom were men. “She couldn’t act her way out of her form-fitting cashmeres,” he said, referencing her nickname of “The Sweater Girl,” a moniker which she was hoping to live down at this point in her career.

Leonard sent him word that if the leading male role he was crafting were strong enough, it might also be used as a starring vehicle for Clark Gable’s return—after his service in the U.S. Army Air Force—to the screen.

A memo Williams read revealed that the character he was trying to create required twenty separate scenes, each infused with drama, plot advancement, and characterizations. It was clearly understood that during the course of these twenty scenes, she’d be glamorously clad in a different piece of *couture*—one of them a dazzling wedding dress, and each of them unique—created by “Irene.”

“MGM doesn’t want a movie script,” Williams complained. “They’re putting on a fashion show starring Lana Turner as the model.”

For the third lead, he was instructed to write a dramatic, non-dancing role for Gene Kelly, who wanted to try his luck performing in a drama. Running like a thread through all his communications with Berman and the studio chiefs was enormous pressure to get *Marriage is a Private Affair* before the cameras.

Surpassed only by Betty Grable over at Paramount, Lana continued to be the second most popular pinup girl of World War II. MGM’s mail department was deluged with fan letters, asking when Lana would return to the screen. Even though its script was still uncertain, Mayer had already announced that *Marriage* would be shown “in all the theaters of war around the world.”

Williams was also asked to write a short and cheerful prologue for Lana, with the understanding that it would be inserted early in the film as a morale booster for the troops. In reference to the prologue he agonized over, he quipped to his gay friends, “I’ll suggest that both Lana and I will each be available to service the troops. But whereas Lana gets to seduce them with spotlights and makeup and razzmatazz, I’ll promise to service them with my oral talents after dark, in the fog, on the piers of San Francisco, before they’re shipped off to war.”

For days, Tennessee sweated and bled over her script, complaining loudly, “It’s not my kind of story.” He grew so frustrated that he once said, “I can almost hope that Lana Turner will die in childbirth.”

[The star was pregnant at the time.]

Late one morning, the lesbian film director, Jane Loring, showed up unannounced at Tennessee’s small office at MGM. She told him that she was assisting producer Pandro S. Berman, and that she’d come to check on the script. “Pandro wants me to help you invent some sexy situations that will pass the blue-nosed censors.”

“The dyke bitch, Katharine Hepburn, held me in utter contempt,” Lana said. “I made two movies with Spencer Tracy, and she accused me of making a play for him. That was true only when he was Mr. Hyde.

Let’s face it: He wasn’t getting anything from Miss Hepburn.”

Loring wore white flannel pants, a beret, and large aviator glasses—very mannish attire. “She did not conceal the fact that she was a lesbian,” Williams said. “I’d heard rumors that she was the lover of Katharine Hepburn. My suspicion was confirmed when I had lunch in the commissary with them.”

[Hepburn had arrived thirty minutes late and was introduced to Tennessee, who later recalled, “Back then, she regarded me as a little minnow in a fast-flowing stream. The women ignored me and talked about how difficult it was for them to work in a male-dominated industry called Hollywood.”

When Lana’s name came up, Hepburn flashed anger. “That god damn bottle of bleach practically threw herself at Spencer (Tracy) when they made that movie.”

She was referring to the 1941 release of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The irony of Hepburn’s snub of Tennessee Williams was that in years to come, he would create two of her most memorable roles—that of Violet Venable in Suddenly Last Summer, *and that of Amanda in the televised version of* The Glass Menagerie.*]*

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One afternoon, the love goddess herself, Lana, showed up at William’s office at MGM. According to Tennessee, “She poured out her marriage woes to me, talking about her difficult times with Stephen Crane. She even suggested that I work some of her troubles into the script, particularly an episode inspired by when she discovered he was a bigamist. She also suggested that I have the soldier in the script try to commit suicide by driving his car over a cliff after she refused to marry him.”

“It happened in real life with Stephen,” Lana told Tennessee, “and it would be a very dramatic scene.”

That day, Tennessee shared his own opinion about marriage with her: “I think no woman divorces a man who’s great in bed. If he delivers in bed, a woman, so I am told, can endure a lot.”

“That’s not the problem with Stephen,” she said. “He’s very good in bed. Just ask Joan Crawford or Rita Hayworth. Frankly, I’d like to date Frank Sinatra and marry him, but his Nancy seems like such a clinging vine.”

She also revealed that she was almost flat broke. “Bills are piling up.”

Before leaving his office, she asked if she could read some of the script he’d labored over. When he revealed that he had only five minor pages of screenplay to give her, she seemed disappointed.

The next day she called him, complaining, “I was dumbfounded by a lot of the dialogue. I’m playing a spoiled society girl, not a poetess. Can’t you make her speak like the character I’m playing?”

He later claimed in his memoirs that he had avoided “any language that was at all eclectic or multisyllabic. But the dialogue was beyond the young lady’s comprehension.”

Years later, when he wrote the play *Small Craft Warnings*, he arranged for the character of Quentin, an elderly writer, to comment about his experience in Hollywood: “They found me too literate on my first assignment, creating a vehicle for the producer’s doxy, a grammar school dropout.”

[Synonyms for doxy include bimbo, floozy, hoochie, hussy, minx, slut, tramp, wench, and whore. Tennessee, through the character of Quentin, was referring to the producer of Marriage Is a Private Affair, *Pandro Berman, and its star, Lana Turner.]*

Late one Monday morning, Berman phoned Lana, telling her that Williamshad been removed from his job as a scriptwriter, and that two experienced writers, Leonore Coffee and David Hertz, had been hired to replace him.

He also informed her that Gene Kelly had dropped out of the picture, and that “Your handsome leading men will be John Hodiak and James Craig. Both of them are Louis B. Mayer’s best hope to replace Clark Gable, who may never regain his pre-war acclaim. It’s been a while since he’s played Rhett Butler.”

[Rounding out the supporting cast were Hugh Marlowe, Frances Gifford, Keenan Wynn, Natalie Schafer, and Tom Drake.]

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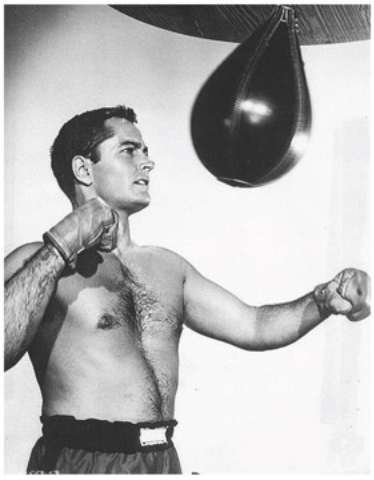
Just before the filming of *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, as Lana was looking for a way to escape from her divorce-related traumas, she eagerly accepted the invitation of Frank Sinatra to occupy his vacation home in Palm Springs while he was in New York.

[During his rounds of Manhattan, Sinatra was frequently seen with the blonde actress, Marilyn Maxwell.]

First, Lana phoned one of her girl friends, either Linda Darnell or Susan Hayward (perhaps both), asking them to accompany her. “We’ll find something on the hoof when we get there,” Lana promised.

Both actresses, however, had other commitments.

Finally, she called Henry Willson, knowing that from his stable of boys, he could provide a handsome, well-endowed escort for her.



After a weekend with John Derek in Palm Springs, Lana reported back to Willson: “If a contest were held tomorrow, Derek would win as having the most beautiful penis in Hollywood, and, as you know, other than you, I’m the best judge of that.”

He suggested that a suitable escort might be Derek Harris (later billed as John Derek). “He’s been ranting and raving about you ever since I introduced you.”

“He might be ideal,” she said “I thought he was ever so handsome.”

“He’s a winner, baby,” Willson said, “and usually hot to trot.”

The next morning, Derek, clad in a T-shirt and a pair of tight-fitting shorts, was behind the wheel of her Lincoln Continental driving them into the desert toward Palm Springs. *En route*, he confided to Lana that Willson was having a hard time getting him launched.

[Derek had just finished an uncredited role in Since You Went Away, *which film critic Bosley Crowther had appraised as overcomplicated: "Selznick's first screen production in four years features a script with an excess of exhausting emotional detail," one of which might have involved Derek's brief on-screen emotional involvement with the character portrayed by Shirley Temple.]*

"I've seen the rushes of *Since You Went Away."* Derek told her. "I play Shirley Temple's boyfriend. If you blink, you'll miss me."

He went on to tell her that he'd been assigned another small role in David O. Selznick's upcoming new film, *I'll Be Seeing You*. Ginger Rogers, temporarily on parole for the holidays, falls in love with a disturbed soldier (Joseph Cotten).

According to Derek, "Once again, I've been cast with Shirley Temple. That brat is growing up, and Selznick doesn't seem to know what to do with Miss Lollipop. With all these scene-stealers, who will notice me?"

"Sounds like more of Selznick's famous *schmaltz* to me," Lana said. "But I'll notice you, no matter how small the part. You're very distinctive."

"You're a gal after my own heart."

She glanced flirtatiously at him. "Actually, I invited you down for something else."

He smiled at her. "You'll get that…and a lot more."

"I can hardly wait," she claimed.

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On the morning of her return to Los Angeles from her weekend in Palm Springs with Derek, Lana phoned Willson, as he had demanded a full report, and said, "Thank God you haven't ruined him for women. In fact, he seems to worship beautiful women. He treated me like a goddess."

"We got there right after lunch, and I retired to my bedroom for a while. He said he wanted to swim in Frank's pool. When I woke up, I put on my suit and went to join him. What I saw amazed me. He was standing stark naked beside the pool, with his hands on his hips. He was absolutely gorgeous...and nude."

"I agree with you," Willson told her. "Been there, done it."

"I know you have," she said. "You're a dirty old man, but I adore you. At Christmastime, I want you to strip Derek naked, tie a ribbon around it, and place it under my tree."

"Okay."

Word about Lana and Derek spread among the young beauties at MGM. Elizabeth Taylor heard about it and invited Lana for lunch in the commissary. "I developed a crush on Derek in school, even though he was six years older than me—and not in the same class," Taylor said.

In a later memoir, entitled *Elizabeth Taylor*, she wrote about Derek: "There was this most beautiful boy—to me, then, like a god. One day, we were going down the corridor, and he tripped me, then picked me up. 'Hi there, beautiful,' he said. Oh, you can't imagine. I was in such ecstasy. I went to the girl's room and just sat there dreaming about him."

She confessed to Lana that her closest friend, Roddy McDowall, the British actor, taught her to satisfy a man without getting pregnant. "I was told to pretend that it was a lollipop. I was one of those devotees of childhood sexuality."

Lana's dates with Derek were cut short by Selznick, who ordered him, for publicity purposes, to start escorting Shirley Temple to various events, including premieres and parties.

Another disincentive to Lana's interest in him came when McDowall, who was also her gay friend, told her that Derek worked as a male prostitute on the side. "He needs the money and charges ten dollars a session. Spencer Tracy is his best customer, although Derek adores beautiful women like you."

"I guess a guy has to make a living," she said. "But there's something about him that troubles me. I suspect he has a dark side I know nothing about. He's also a bullshitter. Would you believe that he told me that he's the bastard son of Greta Garbo? He tells everybody that, although his mother is that very minor actress, Dolores Johnson."

"Derek wants to paint me in the nude," she said, "but I turned him down. 'Why put me on canvas when you can see the real thing in the flesh?' I asked him."

There were rumors in the press that Temple was going to marry Derek, but she went for John Agar instead, much to her later regret.

In 1988, Lana read *Child Star*, Shirley's memoirs, and didn't like what she'd written about Derek. Shirley referred to him as "a self-important young man who had pleasant features, perhaps a little too sensitive for my taste. With a shock of dark hair cascading artfully over his forehead and his suit shoulders padded to disguise a delicate frame, he made a highly photogenic companion."

"To hell with her," Lana said. "I've been over every inch of Derek's body. He doesn't need to pad anything."

In *Child Star*, Shirley also made a shocking revelation, claiming that Derek would often use a dangerously sharp knife to furiously stab the air, aiming the weapon at some invisible enemy. Summing up, she wrote, "Not every girl gets to neck with a knife-wielding bastard."

"My god," Lana said. "Little Miss Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm makes him out to be psychotic. I don't believe a word of it."

After their weekend together in Palm Springs, Lana met Derek again at a party at the home of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Both men had just completed their 1949 film, *Knock on Any Door*, in which Derek played a juvenile delinquent being defended on a murder charge by an idealistic lawyer, as played by Bogart.

That same year, Derek had also been cast in the Oscar-winning *All the King's Men*, playing the adopted football-playing son of Broderick Crawford. Derek's character ends up in a wheelchair in the aftermath of trying to please his image-conscious father.

Both Bogie and Lana predicted great things for Derek in the 1950s, but lived to see him make a string of lackluster movies. Ultimately, he became famous not as an actor, but for marrying beautiful women and becoming a Svengali-like mentor to Bo Derek. He directed some of the films she eventually starred in, which were reviewed as some of the worst movies ever made.

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Lana was invited to the premiere of David O. Selznick's *Since You Went Away*. Much to the delight of photographers (they weren't known as *paparazzi* yet), she showed up on the arm of the young British actor, Peter Lawford. The verdict was that the handsome star and the beautiful blonde goddess looked "absolutely ravishing together."

Although Peter was attired in a well-tailored tuxedo, Lana was the standout. With her long blonde tresses, she made a spectacular entrance at the Carthay Circle Theatre, at the time one of the most spectacular movie palaces in L.A.

She wore an unusual ensemble that night: A wide-skirted black strapless gown of sheer net sprinkled with sequins. The long black gloves were mandatory, as well as the diamond jewelry and mink wrap. Even her shoes were unusual: A pair of lace satin slippers. After the premiere, the glamorous couple were photographed at the Clover Club with Lawford nibbling at her ear.

At the premiere, she was greeted by Ingrid Bergman, who had befriended her on the set of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Bergman was escorted by Gregory Peck, her upcoming star in *Spellbound* (1945).

She had heard rumors that the established star and the upcoming star were lovers, even though each was married. Peck was dashingly handsome and kissed Lana on both cheeks.

"Lucky Ingrid," Lana said to Lawford when the pair was out of hearing distance.

"Lucky me to be out with you," he answered.

She greeted Jennifer Jones again, and the two were polite but not particularly friendly. Lana didn't know if Jones had heard rumors about Robert Walker and her.

Jones had already achieved stardom in *The Song of Bernadette* (1944), for which she'd won a Best Actress Oscar. She had separated from Walker in the autumn of 1943, and began living with Selznick, whose wife, Irene Mayer Selznick, daughter of Louis B. Mayer, eventually divorced him in 1945. Jones divorced Walker that same year, too.

When Lana made *The Bad and the Beautiful*, her character of Georgia Harrison was said to have been based on Jennifer Jones.

Mortified by the gossip, Jones cattily responded, “The last actress I would want to depict me on the screen is the notorious Lana Turner.”

On occasion, at future gatherings, Lana and Jones came face to face, although they were never friends.

They were two very different types of actresses, but on rare occasions, they were each considered for the same roles. When Jones turned down the female lead in *Cass Timberlane* (1947), co-starring Spencer Tracy, the role went to Lana.

[Ironically, when Lana campaigned for the title role in the film adaptation of Flaubert’s Madame Bo-vary *(1949), the role was assigned to Jones.]*

Both Selznick and Jones raged against both Lana and Kirk Douglas when they co-starred together in *The Bad and the Beautiful*. All of Hollywood was buzzing about who the film had been based on. Louella Parsons nailed it in print: Lana’s role of Georgia Harrison was based on the real-life story of Jennifer Jones, and Kirk Douglas’ character of Jonathan Shields was inspired by a real-life episode in the life of David O. Selznick.

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Peter Lawford and Lana saw each other during an eight-month period in 1944. Since she was in a deteriorating, highly publicized marriage to Stephen Crane, each of their rendezvous was kept for the most part under wraps.

Lana had met the handsome British actor at a party at the home of his friend and sometimes lover, Keenan Wynn. Secretly, when no one was looking, he made a date for the following evening. In the words of one writer, he was “part suave, part smarmy, with thick brows and lounge lizard looks.”

In 1954, Lawford would achieve worldwide fame when he married Patricia Kennedy, the younger sister of Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy. During his troubled later years, he became known more for his celebrity than for his acting.

Before, during, and after his marriage, Lawford racked up a series of “gender neutral” seductions to rival those of almost any other actor in Hollywood.

In addition to Lana Turner, Lawford’s sexual intimates included June Allyson and Van Johnson (both of whom were celebrated at the time as “America’s Sweethearts”). Lucille Ball joined Anne Baxter on the list, as did director George Cukor *[“Peter was a lousy lay.”]*, Noël Coward, the African-American singer/actress Dorothy Dandridge, Judy Holliday, Tom Drake, Rhonda Fleming, socialite Sharman Douglas, Ava Gardner, Judy Garland, Rita Hayworth, Janet Leigh, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Robert Walker, Nancy Davis (later known as Nancy Reagan), Clifton Webb, Jane Wyman, and Lee Remick. He also seduced unknowns, including college cuties and hookers, male and female, who viewed him as a reliable $50 “oral trick” who required little more than their permission for him to service them orally.

Lana also succumbed to his allure, at least for a while.

He’d been having sex since the age of ten, when he was fellated by his English governess. Like Howard Hughes, he was known for his predilection for oral sex. Sal Mineo in the 1950s would refer to him “as the best cocksucker in Hollywood.”

In London, in 1930, Lawford made his film debut at the age of seven, when he was assigned a role in *Poor Old Bill*. In 1938, he co-starred with Roddy McDowall and Freddie Bartholomew in *Lord Jeff*, and then later lived in Florida.

Back in Hollywood, he landed small roles in two big hits, *Mrs. Miniver* and *Random Harvest*, each released in 1942, and each starring Greer Garson.

In the years ahead, he became one of MGM’s bobby sox idols, appearing in films that included *Easter Parade* (1948) and *Little Women* (also 1948.)

In time, Lawford would be included in Frank Sinatra’s Rat Pack and become a confidant of Marilyn Monroe, even being controversially linked to her death in 1962.

When his mother, Lady May Crawford, found out that he was dating Lana, she objected almost violently, calling Lana a slut. *[Lady May’s memoirs were aptly entitled* Mother Bitch.*]* As time went by, the more her son saw of Lana, the more loudly Lady May objected, publicly referring to the blonde goddess as “all boobs and no brains.”

Vindictively, his mother made an appointment with Louis B. Mayer, revealing to him that she suspected that her son was a homosexual, and accusing him of being intimately involved with both Van Johnson and Keenan Wynn. She went on to ask Mayer if he could arrange for some form of “treatment” to cure her son of homosexuality.

When Lawford heard about this, he exploded in humiliation and fury. His relationship with his mother would never recover.

In the aftermath, Lawford asked Lana to meet with Mayer and to reveal the details of her affair with him as a means of convincing him that he was not a homosexual. Temporarily, the mogul might have been persuaded, as, apparently, he'd never heard of bisexuality.

Despite Lana's gallant defense, Lawford was dragged out of the closet when he was arrested for fellating a teenage boy in the men's room at Will Rogers State Park.

"The Fixers" at MGM, Eddie Mannix and Howard Strickling, were called in to suppress the story and to see that it wasn't published in the papers. In time, thanks to the intervention of MGM, the record of Lawford's arrest was discreetly removed from police files in Los Angeles.

James Spada, Lawford's biographer, wrote: "Peter Lawford at twenty-one was one of the most attractive and charming young men to be found in Hollywood since Errol Flynn became a star in 1935. His success with women would soon be almost as legendary as Flynn's. Few could resist his boyishly open face, dazzling smile, and tight physique or his charming English accent, impeccable manners, and quick wit."

During a heated confrontation, Mayer met with Lawford, demanding that he submit to a radical new treatment. He claimed that several of his other male stars at MGM had already taken the treatment, receiving injections of extract from monkey glands…"And they never sucked another cock again."

Lawford never submitted to the treatments, and continued his status as the fourth member of a *ménage à quatre* consisting of Van Johnson, Keenan Wynn, and Robert Walker, all of them friends of Lana. They rode motorcycles, went on trips to the desert together, and were highly visible fixtures at all-night beach parties at Malibu.

On many a night, Lawford drove Lana to the same moonlit beach at Malibu, or else he'd take her dancing at the Mocambo, which became their favorite hangout. The evening would end at her house, not at his. "My tarantula mother would eat Lana alive for getting her hands on her darling boy."

Lawford told his friends, "For such a big, glamorous movie star, Lana has simple tastes except for her love of diamonds. On some afternoons, when it wasn't too hot, we'd play tennis, or else go riding along bridle paths in the Hollywood Hills. She told me that Ronald Reagan had taught her how to ride a horse."

One night, he explained to her why he never had to enter military service. At 14, he had severely injured his right arm when it went through a glass door. That injury and the irreversible nerve damage it had caused forever compromised the use of his hand and lower arm. As the years went by, he concealed that, at least from the camera.

That injury was a boon for his career, since heartthrobs like James Stewart and Clark Gable were already off to war. In lieu of those bigger but faraway stars, Lawford was able to nab some romantic leads at MGM.

As Lana's daughter, Cheryl, wrote, "Lawford seemed to be more enamored of my mother than she was of him." At the time, more or less liberated from her husband, Lana wanted to play the field. She did not want to tie herself to another man, especially to one as immature and impetuous as Lawford. Once, he proposed marriage to

her. Ever so politely, she rejected his offer.

Henry Willson, as a voyeur, wanted a "blow by blow" description of Lana's affair with Lawford. He may have been among the first to learn that Lana was tiring of oral sex. She confessed to him that one night she exploded in fury, shouting at him, "God damn it, Peter. I want you to fuck me. If you want a blow job, call one of your beach boys."

As Lana's eight-month involvement with Lawford was coming to an end, so was World War II, though it had a few more horrific months to go.

"I like Peter and at times, he's very entertaining," Lana told Willson. "But he's still a boy, and I want a man. Besides, I always wonder, when he's in bed with me, whether he really wants to be in bed with Van Johnson."

Lawford wasn't always fun-loving, as she soon discovered. He had a dark side. "I have these frightening depressions," he confessed. "I have great days, then the dark days descend like the Bubonic plague. Why? I have everything. Good looks, Money, Fame. And my pick of any gender."

Keenan Wynn had such a crush on Lawford that he became jealous of Lana. One night, when Lawford's car was parked in her driveway, he came by at around 3AM and let the air out of all four of the tires on Lawford's car.

One Saturday, when Lawford came by her house to pick her up for a date, Mildred was there to announce to him, "Lana is gone," before refusing to provide any further details about her whereabouts.

Only the day before, he had told Frank Sinatra, "Lana and I are really hitting it off. I am her man, and she is my woman."

Sinatra eyed Lawford skeptically. "Since when did a British fag like you become a man?" Then he grabbed his ample crotch. "Let's face it, pal, this is what you really want."

"Frank, I love you dearly, but those put-downs, even if you're joking, are hard to take."

During the frantic week that followed, Lawford could find no trace of Lana. No one at MGM knew where she was, since she wasn't shooting a film at the time. Up till then, she and Lawford had been in daily contact, if not in person, then via phone.

One night at around midnight, Lana phoned Lawford at his home. She was calling from Boston. He had angry words with her, but she remained calm. "I thought you'd been kidnapped. What in hell are you doing in Boston?"

"It's over between us," she said. "But I want you to know that it's been fun. I did care for you...at least a bit."

"It's over? What in hell are you talking about? Only a few days ago, you made passionate love to me!"

"I've fallen for someone else."

"Who is it now?" he asked contemptuously. "Some busboy with a big dick?"

"Gene Krupa." Then she abruptly put down the phone.

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Two weeks later, when Lana returned to Hollywood, she did not call him. Instead, he read in Louella Parsons' column that she was dating the Turkish actor, Turhan Bey. Jealous and infuriated, Lawford, throughout the remainder of his life, referred to that actor as "Turban Bey."

The publicist, Milton Ebbins, who was Lawford's greatest mentor, said, "Peter's breakup with Lana changed the way he treated women. After that, he seemed to just drop them the moment he was finished with them. Take Judy Holliday, for example. He could be cruel, heartless. It was Lana who taught him that."

***

Bored and riddled with anxiety, Lana was anxious to return to work at MGM. She was smoking too much, drinking too much. Late one morning, she received a call from Mervyn LeRoy. She was delighted to hear from her former mentor.

"Lana, my dear, it's been too long," he said. "I've come up with a fabulous new idea for casting you. After watching the final version of my latest picture, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1944), I realized that I'd directed three of your friends in it: Spencer Tracy, Van Johnson, and Robert Walker. Those guys are doing just fine, but I made a discovery. *I think I've found a star of tomorrow!* His name is Robert Mitchum, and he's been kicking around Hollywood a bit, going nowhere until now. I think you two would make a dynamic screen team. I can just see the marquee now: LANA TURNER AND ROBERT MITCHUM STARRING IN…well, whatever."

"I like the billing. When do I meet God's gift?"

"First, I'd like you to come over to MGM tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock. I'll arrange a screening of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1944) so that you can see what I'm talking about."

The next afternoon, she arrived on time and sat through the screening with LeRoy. It was a dramatization of the

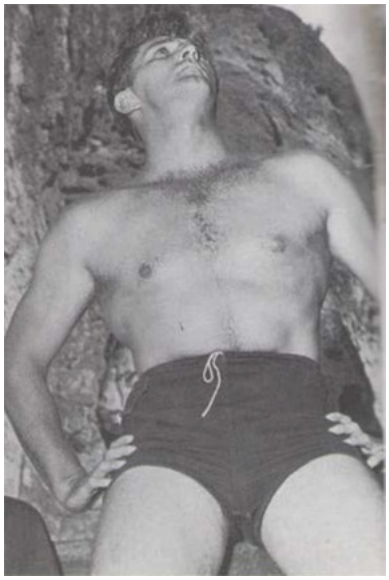
April, 1942 American bombing of the Japanese capital.

She, too, was impressed by this "dynamic hunk of man," as she called Mitchum.

"Before I signed him, I put him through thirty screen tests," LeRoy said. "I told him that he was the best actor I'd ever seen…or the worst."

The director set up a luncheon meeting with Lana and Mitchum the following day. LeRoy had intended to join them, but he was called away at the last minute to report to the office of Louis B. Mayer.

That left Lana to eat alone with Mitchum, whom she found "amazingly appealing," as she'd later report to LeRoy.



[In 1940, Robert Mitchum married Dorothy Spence, to whom he'd been attracted since he met her when she was thirteen. She was pretty, slender, brunette, sweet and soft-spoken.

Over the years, she must have been the most understanding wife in Hollywood, overlooking or forgiving her husband's affairs not only with Lana, but with Rita Hay-worth, Ava Gardner, Lucille Ball, Anne Bancroft, Jane Russell, Jean Simmons, Sarah Miles, Jane Greer, Gloria Grahame, Carroll Baker, Shirley MacLaine, and, lest we forget, Marilyn Monroe, with whom he co-starred in *The River of No Return* (1954).

Of all these women, only Marilyn gave him a bad review. "He's a lousy kisser and should watch that bad breath."

"Bob—he told me I could call him that—is utterly fascinating," she said. "Too bad he's married."

"When did that ever stop you?" LeRoy quipped.

"I hope you aren't turned off by my looks," Mitchum told Lana over lunch. "Some guy wrote that I look like a shark with a broken nose."

Despite his barrel chest and cleft chin, he was not traditionally handsome, but she found him sexy nonetheless. His hooded eyes became known as "bedroom eyes," and he possessed an insolent gaze and fearless veneer, a look that seemed to say, "Baby, I don't give a damn."

He spoke to Lana about his publicity build-up: "I don't give a fuck what they write about me. Booze, brawls, and broads—I represent the three Bs of life."

In time, she'd learn about his background. Of all the actors she knew, his was the most colorful. He'd been a gang member growing up in Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan. He was partially descended from Blackfoot Indians and, as a youth, had led a gypsy-like existence. As a homeless roustabout during the Depression, he'd ridden the rails with the other hobos, migrating from town to town.

A series of thefts landed him in a chain gang in Georgia, from which he eventually escaped. One random job after another awaited him—boxer ("That's where I got this broken nose"), beach bum, ("I rolled drunks"), ditch digger, dishwasher, fruit picker, stevedore, a ghost writer for Carroll Righter (Lana's astrologer), stagehand, poet, an extra in *Hopalong Cassidy* Westerns, and a machine operator for Lockheed Aircraft.

The afternoon he met Lana, he was on his way to becoming filmdom's first hipster anti-hero. "I was one wild boy of the road," he confessed. What he didn't tell her was that when he'd arrived broke and hungry in Hollywood, he'd hustled homosexuals, including Clifton Webb, who for a time was his best customer.

Lana would later tell LeRoy, "Bob has this sense of self-mockery. He told me that he started out as a sex fiend, but couldn't pass the physical."

Later, Howard Hughes, their mutual friend, told Lana, "There's not a dame around who won't drop her britches for Bob. To make it worse, he doesn't give a damn if they do or not."

"For me, it's hard to articulate Bob's sex appeal," Lana said to LeRoy. "It's there, just there, very immediate. You feel it the moment he looks at you."

As the afternoon wore on, she invited him to go home with her. "Even back then, he was a hard drinker," she claimed. "But no matter how much he drank, he was still in control, still coherent." For dinner, she ordered a lavish meal from Chasen's, which was delivered to her doorstep.

He told her amusing stories of his life, some of which had unfolded during his work with her friends on the set of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*. Some of the scenes had been shot at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida.

"I got cruised in the communal shower and had to take a shit in group latrines. We stood in the mess line for rotten food."

Mitchum's biographer, Lee Server, wrote that the actor "got a reputation for dropping his pants in front of officers and other dignified types."

The fake (Hollywood) soldiers and the *bona-fide* enlisted men invariably clashed. The crew from California was referred to as "Hollywood fags."

"A drunken sailor one night was beating the shit out of Robert Walker, and I stepped in," Mitchum said. "I grabbed the son of a bitch and beat him so badly he had to be rushed to the hospital. After that, the guys let us alone."

"Mitchum spent the night with Lana. "He got on top and plowed and plowed," she confessed to Virginia Grey. "What a man! I was definitely not his first time at the rodeo."

When she met again with LeRoy, she told him that she thought Mitchum would be ideal as her screen lover. "Or off screen as the case may be."

When she was offered the lead female role in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Lana lobbied for her director, Tay Garnett, to cast Mitchum as the male lead, but he rejected her idea. Instead, he preferred "bad boy" John Garfield for the part.

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On the set of *Marriage is a Private Affair* (1944), director Robert Z. Leonard grandly welcomed Lana. She was eager to meet her two leading men, James Craig and John Hodiak, neither of whom was there that day. She'd read in the papers that Hodiak was being positioned as "the successor to Clark Gable." The Pittsburgh-born actor, of Ukrainian and Polish descent, was touted as the "one man who best could fill the shoes of 'The King.'"

His rival contender, also at MGM, was James Craig, a son of Tennessee, who had lost his Southern accent. Of all the Gable wannabees, he most resembled Gable, mustache and all.

Louis B. Mayer had signed him to a seven-year contract, based to some degree on MGM's understandable fear that Gable, after his discharge from the Air Force, would look far older than Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

Leonard told Lana that the success of this upcoming film rested entirely on her shoulders. She would be on the screen for 116 minutes, and that she'd have sole billing above the title.

She was delighted that her favorite hairdresser, Sydney Guilaroff, had been assigned to her, and that the fashion designer, "Irene," was preparing a vast wardrobe for her. Irene had long ago learned that Lana's left shoulder and hip were higher than her right.

Lana had been cast as Theo Scofield West, a society girl who "spends her winters in Palm Beach, her summers in Reno." Actually, that description directly applied to the society actress, Natalie Schafer, who had been assigned to play Theo's (i.e., Lana's) mother in the film.

Schafer's character, the script revealed, had, by this point in her (screen) daughter's life, already maneuvered her way through what seemed like an endless series of divorces.

Natalie Schafer never revealed her age. However, when she died in 1991, it was learned that she'd been born in 1900. She gave Lana some advice: "Men come and go when a woman is young. But to comfort her in her old age, she needs to have collected diamonds."

She took her own advice. At the time of her death, she was a multi-millionaire, having made a fortune in real estate.

Theo (as played by Lana) has no intention of marrying anyone—at least not at this point in her life—until she meets Lt. Tom Cockrane West, an Air Corps lieutenant.

Without really taking time to get to know him, she accepts his proposal. During the period of adjustment that follows, a baby is born and Theo is embroiled in a matronly domestic life, yearning for a return to her status as a party girl.

Along comes James Craig, cast as Miles Lansing, who is far more attractive and appealing than her husband. Theo had dated him before her marriage, and he seems to be carrying a torch for her.

Lana would work with Natalie Schafer again. The veteran actress would become a household word when she later appeared (brilliantly) as the gadabout society matron, Eunice Wentworth Howell (aka "Lovey") in CBS's hit sitcom, *Gilligan's Island* (1964-1967). She'd been married (1933-1942) to the famous actor, Louis Calhern, but had divorced him.

Schafer would repeat her role as Lana's mother twenty-five years later in a 1969 episode of *The Survivors*, a TV series.

Until the last minute in the casting process, it had not been certain that Lana would star in *Marriage*. The script had been owned by Warners, but Jack Warner feared trouble with the censors. Especially provocative were the conversations it contained about abortion and adultery. He had sold it to Mayer, who originally intended it as a vehicle for Myrna Loy and Robert Taylor, with George Cukor set to direct.

At the beginning of the film, as an introduction, and with the understanding that it would be shown to servicemen worldwide, Lana appears on screen to deliver a morale-boosting pep talk. "Well, here we are, having a world premiere of our picture for the Armed Forces overseas. And if you think this isn't important, you've got another thing coming. But, seriously, you should see all the best pictures, and you should see them first because… well, because you're you. Because you're the first in our hearts, our hopes, and our thoughts. Thanks for coming to the show. I hope you like it. So long and good luck."

Marriage Is a Private Affair had its world premiere on September 23, 1944, at the Teatro Della Palme in the recently recaptured city of Naples, Italy. An Army newspaper wrote: "Miss Lana Turner's fine points are revealed to advantage in a few idyllic sequences which suit the GI appetite. However, one scene in which the newlyweds are shown sound asleep in twin beds in the morning after the wedding drew some strange noises from the audience."

After the film opened in Los Angeles, a critic for *The Los Angeles Times* wrote: "This picture is unimportant except as a vehicle for Miss Turner, but it is effective as such, and it demonstrates her ability to act, to project a soft and appealing femininity, which, of course, comes with that pronounced loveliness which has always been hers."

A critic for *The New York Times* wrote: "Lana Turner is a lovely, appealing little thing, and mankind was fashioned primarily to make her happy and supreme."

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In *Marriage is a Private Affair*, James Craig was cast as Lana's former beau before her (onscreen) marriage to John Hodiak.

Before Lana ever seduced Craig, he'd already been auditioned by some of the *femmes fatales* of Hollywood.

Off screen, his conquests had included Marlene Dietrich during their filming of *Seven Sinners* (1940); Ginger Rogers during *Kitty Foyle* (also 1940); Lucille Ball during *Valley of the Sun* (1942), and Hedy Lamarr during *The Heavenly Body* (1944).

On the set of *Marriage*, Natalie Shafer, cast as Lana's mother, said. "Lana is such a darling, I just adore her. But as if Hodiak wasn't enough, the dear thing also had to bed James Craig... Not that I blame her, mind you…."

Craig had never planned to be an actor. On a chance encounter, he had met Oliver Hinsdell, a talent scout, who was struck by his resemblance to Clark Gable. Craig's career got off to a slow start, as he drifted from one lackluster movie to another, from Paramount to Columbia, and on to Universal before landing at MGM.

In 1942, he was cast in *Northwest Rangers*, a Westernized reworking of *Manhattan Melodrama* in which Gable himself had been cast in 1934.

In *Lady Without a Passport* (1949), Hedy Lamarr, still Lana's rival, faced the same dilemma that Lana had confronted when she'd made *Marriage Is a Private Affair*. Her leading men were the same as Lana's: John Hodiak and James Craig.

She followed in Lana's footsteps, sustaining affairs with both actors. "I was already familiar with the charms of Mr. Craig," she told her director, Joseph H. Lewis.

In Gore Vidal's most controversial novel, *Myra Breckenridge*, there is a glowing passage concerning the sexual allure of actor James Craig.

"I practiced self-abuse thinking of James Craig's voice," Myra proclaims in Vidal's novel. "Those broad shoulders, those powerful thighs thrust between your own. No matter what condition James Craig is in today, decrepit or not, Myra Breckinridge is ready to give him a good time for old times' sake."

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John Hodiak first tried for a job as a radio actor, but was rejected because of his Ukrainian accent. As a caddy, he practiced his diction and studied hard, until finally, he was accepted for a job on radio in Chicago, playing the comic strip character, L'il Abner.

But his major recognition didn't come until *Lifeboat*. Bankhead spread the word—"it's like getting fucked by a beer can, *dah-ling."* News like that spread fast, and soon, Hodiak was pursued in Hollywood by a coven of sexually voracious females.

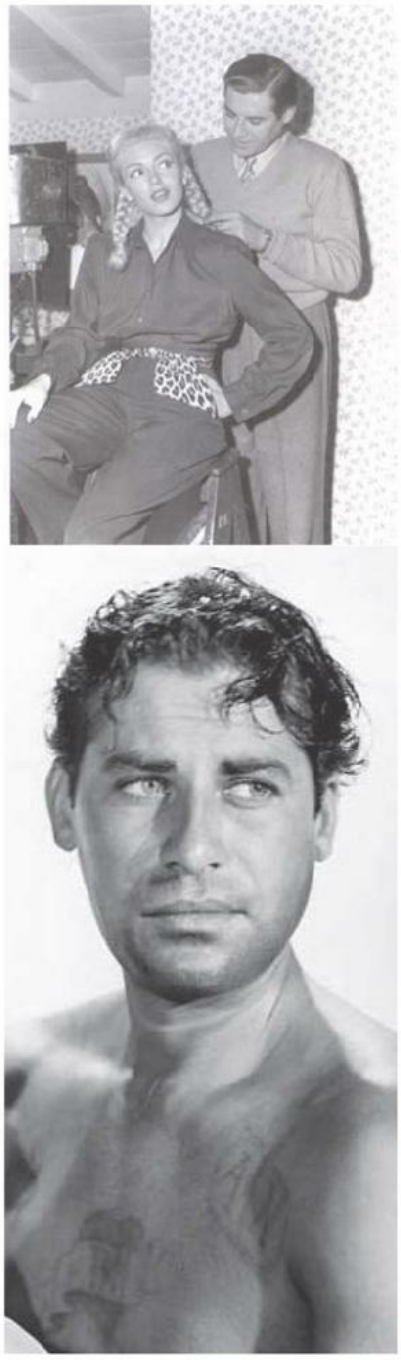
"When I first went to bed with John Hodiak, I imagined his love gift sprinkled with sapphires and diamonds," Lana said. "I couldn't wait for him to recover so we could go another round."

"Who needs Clark Gable when you've got his replacement?" Virginia Grey asked Lana. "Maybe you'll leave Clark for me when he comes marching home from the Air Force."

In the months to come, after they finished their picture, Lana and Hodiak became a "sometimes thing" (her words).

Years later, Hodiak confessed to Lana that it was not only women who sexually pursued him, but an occasional male, including two of her friends. He cited Van Johnson, with whom he had co-starred in *Command Decision* (1948), and Robert Taylor in *Ambush* (1949).

She used her affair with Hodiak to goad Stephen Crane into granting her a second divorce. As her daughter, Cheryl, later wrote, "She told Dad a baldfaced lie—that she was in love with another man. She named Hodiak."



Two views of John Hodiak: (top photo) braiding Lana's hair; (lower photo) shirtless and adrift at sea with Tallulah Bankhead in *Lifeboat*.

Lana may not have been in love with Hodiak, but she certainly was smitten with him. She told him that she had blamed him for the breakup of her marriage.

"What the hell?" Hodiak had said. "Now Crane will come gunning for me."

"He's house broken," she responded. "He never kills my lovers."

Photographs snapped during the filming of *Marriage* reveal Lana with Hodiak during the blossoming of their romance. At one point, he was photographed braiding her hair; in another picture, she sips afternoon tea from his cup.

She used her influence to get him a number of lucrative radio jobs, wherein, from recording studios, they each read their lines into microphones. Their first dramatization together was *Once Upon a Honeymoon*, a Screen Guild Players Presentation that aired on November 20, 1944.

Originally conceived as a romantic comedy/drama that was released as a film in 1942, it had starred Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers. Both of them, however, had rejected proposals to get them involved in the radio-broadcasted reprise.

On April 11, 1946, Lana and Hodiak co-starred in a CBS presentation of the Lux Radio Theatre. The radio play was *Honky Tonk*, the film she had made with Clark Gable before America went to war.

The Screen Guild Players reunited Hodiak and Lana again in their radio rendition of *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, which was broadcast on June 17, 1946.

The Guild hired Lana and John Garfield to do the original radio broadcast of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* on CBS Radio on June 23, 1947. The show was so well-received that the Screen Guild recycled it for another radio adaptation, eventually broadcast through ABC on February 8, 1951. This time, however, Garfield was not available, so Hodiak was substituted, with Lana reprising for radio her original film role.

During the last years of his life, Hodiak slipped around for an occasional private rendezvous with Lana. After he'd made *Marriage* with Lana, he was cast in the 1944 film, *Sunday Dinner for a Soldier*, in which he co-starred with Anne Baxter. The two actors fell in love and were married in 1946.

As the years passed, Lana was saddened by the decline in Hodiak's career. After he was heavily promoted for his roles in a series of lackluster films, movie exhibitors across the country labeled him "box office poison."

On October 19, 1955, Lana was listening to the radio when a bulletin was announced. Hodiak had suffered a fatal heart attack in the bathroom of his home *[a refuge he had originally built for his parents]* in Tarzana, California. He was only forty-one years old.

"In some of his *film noir* roles, John was a brute," Lana recalled. "But not in real life."

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John Hodiak and James Craig weren't the only men Lana dated during the course of her marriage to Stephen Crane. During that period, an especially exotic male also entered her life. Urbane and dapper, Turhan Bey became her lover, too.

With his dark good looks, swept-back hair, and Continental charm, he had been born in Vienna, the son of a Turkish diplomat and a Jewish-Czech mother.

Bey was typecast as a dashing, bare-chested foreigner who often played a Turk or an Arab in period pictures that included *Raiders of the Desert* (1941), *Arabian Nights* (1942), and *Ali Baba & the Forty Thieves* (1944).

At the time Lana met him, he was filming *Dragon Seed* (1944), playing the Chinese husband of Katharine Hepburn, whose performance called for her to appear throughout the film in pseudo-Asian makeup. The film had been based on Pearl S. Buck's saga of a Chinese town torn asunder by the Japanese occupation.

In all these movies, *Screen Guide* magazine found Bey "cultured, suave, and inscrutable—made to order for moviegoers."

Before she ever met him, Lana appeared one day to watch the rushes from *Dragon Seed*. She told the director, Jack Conway, "I fancy this young Turk."

Eventually, she met Bey at the home of Jean-Pierre Aumont. Her French former lover was married at the time to Maria Montez, with whom Bey would eventually co-star in several Technicolor escapades. The press had already nicknamed him, "The Turkish Delight," and his reputation had preceded him by the time Aumont introduced them.

Lana's first words to Bey were, "I think the newspaper gossip columns are all wrong calling you the 'Poor Man's Valentino.' I think you have more going than he did."

He thanked her, as he hated that label himself. The Valentino comparison would be recycled when he starred in *Sudan* (1945). *The New York Times* wrote:"Turhan Bey gives a boyish imitation of Rudolph Valentino as the desert sheik."

Bey recalled, “At the time I met Lana, World War II was winding down. The really big male stars such as Clark Gable and Robert Taylor were away, and some of us younger actors were taking over their roles. It was a good, glorious time in my life. My career was going great, and I had Lana Turner, with Ava Gardner just around the corner.”

One night at a party in Beverly Hills, Lana was dancing with Bey when Stephen Crane entered the room. He approached the couple and pulled them apart. Then he made an attempt to remove from her finger the diamond ring he’d given her, loudly asserting that it was a family heirloom.

She protested, “But I’ve had it reset!”

Ever the gentleman, Bey invited Crane to step outside into the garden to settle the dispute. Once they were there, the two men began to fight as Lana rushed out. In her frustration, she threw the ring into the shrubbery. Two other men from the party pulled Bey and Crane apart, but not before Bey had given Crane a black eye. Bey sustained only minor bruises.

The last that Lana saw of Crane that night was watching him crawl around in the bushes looking for the three-carat diamond ring.

The scandal made the papers, and in the weeks to come, pictures of Lana on dates with Bey were widely distributed in the gossip columns.

Gardner and Lana often shared the same man, including Peter Lawford. Such was the case with Bey. Although he rarely gave interviews after his flight from Hollywood, Bey did talk to a reporter in Vienna about the era when he was sustaining simultaneous affairs with both Gardner and Lana.

“They were very different,” Bey asserted. “Lana was more in control. She never went wild. I can’t say the same for Ava. She was untamed, and would do almost anything if you dared her. Lana never let you forget that she was a goddess. Ava, on the other hand, would kick off her shoes and become the life of the party.”

“Lana and Ava did have something in common. You might take one of them out on a date, but that didn’t mean you’d come home with them. If Lana or Ava saw someone more tempting than me, perhaps a waiter in tight black pants, they would ditch me and run off with that other guy. One night, Ava and I double-dated with David Niven and her friend, Peggy Maley. David and Ava practically seduced each other at table and on the dance floor. At one point, David whispered to me, ‘Dear Boy—be a good chap and take Peggy home for me. Ava and I are heading out.”

[A Hollywood-bred playgirl, Maley was and would be Gardner’s roommate, dreaming of a stardom that never came. She immortalized herself on the screen, however, in The Wild One (1954), *starring Marlon Brando. In that film, she feeds him the line, “What are you rebelling against?”*

He replies, “Whaddaya got?”]

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Katharine Hepburn encountered Lana on the set of *Cass Timberlane* (1948) months later, when she was visiting

her friend, Spencer Tracy, Lana's co-star. She recalled appearing in Chinese makeup with Bey in *Dragon Seed.* "Both of us looked pretty silly." At one point, she asked Lana about what had happened to her romance with Bey.

Lana looked at her squarely and bluntly said: "He gave me the clap." Then she turned and walked away.

In 1953, as Bey's film career was about to end, the rumor mill in Hollywood was working overtime. Gossip had it that he was about to become embroiled in a major scandal that was set to be aired in the exposé magazines. It was never proven, and no charges were ever filed, but gossip had it that he had raped a twelve-year-old girl. The case did not go to court because the mother of the girl preferred to blackmail Bey instead of filing formal charges.

Consequently, Bey fled from Hollywood and returned to his native Vienna, where he became a photographer for both high fashion and for girlie magazines.

He did give one interview in Vienna about his abrupt departure from Hollywood. "I could have stayed and fought the charges, but I chose not to defend myself from those salacious rumors. I was innocent of all charges, but I finally decided it wasn't worth it to stick around."

After staying away for decades, Bey slipped back into Hollywood in 1993. Jobs were scarce, but he nonetheless found a gig for a guest appearance on *Murder, She Wrote*, the hit TV series starring Angela Lansbury. He also nabbed a starring role in a B-movie, *Healer*.

One night, he had a chance encounter with Cheryl Crane, Lana's daughter, at a party hosted by George Sidney. He said, "Your mother was so, so beautiful, and I imagine she still is. Would you ask her if she'd consider going out with me again?"

She conveyed the invitation, but by that time, Lana was in the throes of throat cancer. She said she was flattered by the offer, but that she must turn it down. "It's best to keep old memories locked inside your heart. Yesterday is dead and gone."

Bey remained a bachelor throughout his entire life, dying in Vienna on September 30, 2012, at the age of ninety.

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By this time, although Henry Willson was no longer Lana's agent, he called her from time to time whenever he wanted her to publicize "one of the boys in my stable," or when he was trying to set up a management contract for yet another young actor's career.

Lately, he'd been captivated by John Dall, a young New Yorker who was aboutLana's age. Dall had grown up in Panama, where his father, before committing suicide in 1929, had worked as a civil engineer.

As John Dall was one of "Henry's boys," Lana knew in advance that he was either homosexual or an "indulgent bisexual," so she wasn't expecting much in the way of romance.

"He sort of put on the straight act with me," she later told Willson. "He was practically inventing a background for himself."

After his return to New York, the tall, thin young man with a slightly superior air, had briefly enrolled at Columbia University, but he was eventually drawn into acting, ending up in Los Angeles at the Pasadena Playhouse.

Lana agreed to go out with him because he had received rave reviews for his portrayal of Morgan Evans in *The Corn Is Green* (1945), starring Bette Davis. He would later be nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor. Although Warners had signed him to a contract, they were planning to let him go in 1946, and he needed publicity to rekindle some interest in himself as an actor.

Dall told her that as a teenager, he'd acted on the stage in Panama, but she learned later that he left that country to return to New York at the age of ten. He also told her that he'd been married in 1940, "but it didn't work out." *[Later, it was revealed to her that he'd never been married.]*

After three dates with him, Lana put her foot down, saying, "I've done my bit for Henry," and she moved on to other, more "connected" liaisons.

Believing, nonetheless, that he had the makings of a star, she did, however, run into Dall from time to time in his future. That was particularly true when Alfred Hitchcock cast him as a cool-minded intellectual killer in *Rope* (1948), co-starring James Stewart and Farley Granger.

[John Dall and Granger sustained an affair during the making of the film. Hitchcock later revealed, "I wanted to cast Rope *with two genuine homosexuals."]*

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Ava Gardner, a barefoot North Carolina Tarheel girl, and the auburn-haired blonde, Julia Jean Mildred Frances Turner, of Wallace, Idaho, each took Hollywood by storm. They should have been rivals—and indeed, they were—but through all the turmoil of their lives, they retained a strong female bond. Each of them survived countless men, broken marriages, scandals, and the ups and downs of a movie career at MGM.

Lee Server, in *Love Is Nothing*—his biography of Ava Gardner—wrote:

> *"Lana Turner and Ava had much in common: They had both been teenagers when plucked from nowhere without experience or education. Lana was Metro's hot sex symbol, and so was Ava. They often fell for the same guy. Some of them, like Artie Shaw, Howard Hughes, and Frank Sinatra, had been Lana's first; others, like the racketeer Mickey Cohen's sleek thug, Johnny Stompanato, were Ava's cast-offs. At times, Ava found Lana a bit of a bore, humorless except unintentionally funny, as when, with the manners of an accountant, she reviewed the genital size and ability of her various lovers."*

The parallel courses of their lives were striking: Years before Gardner married Mickey Rooney in 1942, Lana had had an affair with "The Pint-sized Wonder" during the late 1930s and had aborted his child. Gardner stayed with him for only a short time, later asserting, "It was the mistake of my life."

After their divorce, Gardner and Lana became lifelong *confidantes*. Howard Hughes went first for Lana before succumbing to the charms of luscious Gardner. Their highly destructive relationship often turned violent.

Both Lana and Gardner were "Queens of the Night," dancing until dawn at many of L.A.'s late-night clubs. Although the former Mrs. Artie Shaw had warned Gardner not to become the next Mrs. Artie Shaw, Gardner did not take Lana's advice and lived to regret it.

They certainly doubled up on the same men, often dating Turkish actor Turhan Bey at the same time. Likewise, Gardner had an affair with Stephen Crane, Lana's second husband. Only a partial list of their shared lovers included the attorney, Greg Bautzer, Richard Burton, Howard Duff, Clark Gable, Fernando Lamas, Peter Lawford, and the "Three Roberts:" Mitchum, Taylor, and Walker.

Gardner warned Lana not to take the notorious gangster, Johnny Stompanato, as a lover. Lana rejected her advice, later admitting, "Stompanato was the worst mistake of my life."

Frank Sinatra seduced Lana long before he married Gardner.

Years later, on reviewing her life, Gardner admitted, "Lana and I did some acting, but our real dramas occurred off screen," Gardner said. "We should write a joint bio, and entitle it *Tales of Two Lurid Lives*."

Gardner and Turner, as nymphomaniacal, dyed-in-the-wool night owls, prowled Los Angeles after dark, winding their ways in and out of boudoirs, but on a few occasions ending up in sleazy motels, especially if their assignations were with dishwashers or garage mechanics. "Lana and I dazzled the fuckers with our beauty," Gardner said.

Both of them denied that they'd arrived in Hollywood as ambition-crazed starlets determined to make it at any cost. Gardner said, "When I hit town, I came looking for a paycheck. I knew that Hollywood was filled with hundreds of gals willing to peddle their pussies for an acting job. They were straining every nerve to become a star. But, for me at least, it was a joy ride. Lots of fun. Lots of night clubs, and the world's most beautiful men. I was like a girl on the vacation of a lifetime. I had no real acting plans, and no more ambition than a flea."

“Some assholes called Lana and me whores,” Gardner said. “*Honey chile*, we weren’t whores. We never charged. We gave it away.”

Lana and Gardner had more or less the same point of view, especially when itcame to men and glamor. Lana told Gardner, “Life is what happens to you while you’re waiting for the appearance of crow’s feet to fuck up your looks. In time, I would name every god damn wrinkle in my face.”

Like Lana, Gardner was also defined and promoted as “the most irresistible woman in the world,” sultry, tempestuous, and ravishingly beautiful. Columnists proclaimed that “Ava and Lana sizzle both on and off the screen. They serve up a plate of glamor with passion as the main course. Their breasts are world-renowned. Lana virtually invented the tight-fitting sweater. Rooney proclaimed that “Ava’s big brown nipples, when aroused, stood out like some double-long golden California raisins.”

“We were hard-living and hard-drinking broads, Gardner said. “Right from the beginning, we recognized that fact in each other. Life played us wild cards. In spite of all the scandals, the disastrous love affairs, the tragic, costly mistakes, Lana and I lived life to the hilt.”

In a candid admission to Virginia Grey, Lana said, “I was drawn to Ava because she was the most liberated woman I’d ever known. She went through life following her own rules, not those dictated by some man. She chose her own men. She didn’t lie on any casting couch. Ava often pitched sex to a guy before he got around to it. She followed Mae West’s advice: ‘When you hit town, don’t keep it a secret.’”

“Ava projected sex appeal. According to rumor, so did I. Men flocked to us. We rejected most of them, but gave a few hundred the thrill of their lives. We ruled as queens over the heyday of movie making, a time that Hollywood will never see again. We seduced and discarded men like Kleenex.”

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Lana released two films in 1945, the year World War II ended. The war was in its final stages when she reported to work on *Keep Your Powder Dry*, with co-stars Susan Peter and her least favorite actress, Laraine Day. Lana had worked with Day before on the set of *Calling Dr. Kildare*, and neither actress was fond of the other. Lana had always referred to Day as “The Ice Queen.”

In *Keep Your Powder Dry*, director Edward Buzzell said, “Lana and Laraine played antagonists in the movie, and they weren’t acting. It was the real thing.”

Joan Crawford had been slated to play the lead, in which she’d impersonate a WAC *[i.e., a member of the Women’s Army Corps, a subdivision of the U.S. Army created for women during World War II.]*

George Bruce and Mary McCall wrote its original story as a tribute to theWACS and the fighting spirit of American womanhood. *[The theme was in vogue at the time: Paramount had released So Proudly We Hail (1943). MGM had shot Cry Havoc (1943) and Universal made Ladies Courageous (1944).]*

In this movie which hovered between comedy and drama, Lana was cast as Val Parks, a spoiled society girl who must join the WACs to save her inheritance. Natalie Schafer, who had played her mother in *Marriage Is a Private Affair*, was cast this time as her parasitic best friend, Harriet Corwin.

Lana’s fellow WACs included Day as “Napoleon” Rand, and the ill-fated Peters as Annie Darrison, who suffers the loss of her soldier husband in the movie.

In the beginning, Lana’s character of Val didn’t take being a WAC seriously. “Napoleon” (Day), an army brat

since birth, is a thorn in her side, strictly maintaining military discipline. One reviewer appraised Day's performance as "pathologically bossy." Despite the venom they release at each other, the women triumphantly reconcile before the end of the final reel. *[Hey, it's a movie!]*

Peters, acting as peacemaker, interpreted her sympathetic role with great sensitivity, providing a luminous presence on the screen. If a tragic gunshot hadn't ruined her life, she might have become a star.

Before the movie's release, Peters was accidentally shot during a duck-hunting trip with her husband, Richard Quine. After the accident, she was permanently paralyzed from the waist down, spending the remainder of her short life in a wheel-chair.

After a few unsuccessful attempts at a comeback, she lived in seclusion. On October 23, 1952, wracked by almost constant pain, she died at the age of thirty-one, having virtually starved herself to death.

Three WACs in a row: Laraine Day, Lana Turner, and Susan Peters star in a wartime propaganda film.

Cast as a New York playgirl, Lana found her role unusual in that "there was almost no romantic element for me in the script. That forced me to go after Susan Hayward's husband off screen."

On the set of *Keep Your Powder Dry*, Lana worked well with the film's Brooklyn-born director, Edward Buzzell, who had once been married to Ona Munson, the whorehouse madam, Belle Watling, in *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

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In the film, in addition to the role essayed by Schafer, Lana's other martini-soaked "sponger" friend was Jess Barker, cast as a sleazy gigolo. In the year (1944) that Lana met Barker on the set, he'd married Susan Hayward, who was still, at least on the surface, one of Lana's best friends.

If she's a WAC, she's the best-coiffed, most manicured GI in military service. Some soldiers said that this is photo of Lana—a credit to the U.S. Armed Forces—is even sexier than those in which she appears in ribbons and lace.

For some reason, Lana had never broken from Hayward, even after she learned that she was sleeping with her husband, Stephen Crane.

There is no record that Lana ever confronted Hayward for having an illicit affair with her husband.

During the making of the film, it was Barker who pursued Lana. He turned to her for comfort, as he was having lots of difficulty with Susan. Their nights often ended in arguments, leading to violence.

"I felt sorry for him," Lana confessed to Buzzell. "Susan seemed to be castrating him. Of course, she's the big star, and he's a nobody. He was tired of being known as Mr. Susan Hayward. He turned to me for comfort, and perhaps things got a bit out of hand."

It became obvious to the entire cast and crew that Lana was inviting Barker to her dressing room for sex whenever there was a break in filming.

"There sure must have been something hot going on in there," Schafer said. "I feared that word would get back to Hayward, and that she'd storm onto the set for a catfight with Lana. Fortunately, that didn't happen."

"At the end of filming, Barker went back to Hayward, and Lana was off to her next conquests," Schafer said. "That happens a lot while films are being shot. That's Hollywood for you. I don't want to judge Lana too harshly. Barker is a handsome man. If I'd been a few years younger, I would have gone after him myself."

Keep Your Powder Dry opened at the Capital Theatre in Washington, D.C. on March 8, 1945. The highlight of the evening was a personal appearance of Lana, who looked far more glamorous than she had in any of the film's WAC uniforms.

Virginia Wilson in *Modern Screen*, wrote: "When you see Lana in uniform, you'll probably rush right out and join up for yourself."

In the *Los Angeles Times*, critic Philip K. Scheuer wrote: "Even when it turns to the severities of military discipline, MGM managed to pour on the glamor. The film somehow emerges as a high-powered vehicle for the studio's stable of beauties, notably Miss Turner herself, who at first appears as a playgirl specializing in high-balls and high heels."

The film's most scathing review was published in *The New York Times*. "The writers dashed off the script on the doorstep of the studio beauty shop."

After meeting Susan Hayward's handsome husband, Lana told her director, "Jess Barker sure looks delectable. Susan always raves about his performance in bed, which she considers better than anything he does on the screen. Dare I go where angels fear to tread and find out for myself what causes Susan such joy?"

"Don't go there," the director warned her. "You're inviting trouble."

"I think it's fair play," she answered. "I know for a fact that Susan slept with my husband."

"I'll say it again. Don't go there."

Most of Lana's personal reviews concentrated on her beauty, not on her acting.

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Henry Willson, the gay talent agent, phoned Lana once again with another request. He wanted her to take as her escort a young actor he was promoting. He needed both of them to show up at the world premiere of *Spellbound*, the 1945 movie co-starring Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck.

"His name is Rory Calhoun—for two weeks I'd named him Troy Donahue," Willson said. "I can see you making an entrance in all your platinum blonde glory. It'll be a perfect match, Rory with his raven-black hair and dark, feral look. The photographers will go wild."

Willson's prophecy came true.

The son of a professional gambler in Los Angeles, Rory Calhoun (born Francis Timothy McCowan), was the same age as Lana and exceedingly handsome. "He was oozing with masculinity," she later told Willson. "Unlike John Dall, he does women, too, and how! And he can go all night."

In his promotion, Willson didn't mention that Calhoun had spent much of his young life in prison, mostly on convictions for robbing jewelry stores. As Calhoun himself later admitted himself, "I skipped high school and grew up in a federal penitentiary."

Before his "discovery" the rugged young man had been a firefighter, lumber-jack, miner, and cowboy. When he first arrived in Hollywood, he was a male hustler. "I had a weapon that all the homos went for," he accurately boasted.

Calhoun had first been discovered by the bisexual actor, Alan Ladd (Lana's former lover), who doted on Calhoun's perfect physique before turning him over to Willson. Ladd had spotted him while horseback riding in the Hollywood Hills. Willson soon added him to "my stable of boys," and even got David O. Selznick to sign him to a movie contract.

When Lana first met this striking young man, he had recently signed to star in *The Great John L* (1945), based on the life of the turn-of-the-20th-Century heavyweight champion, John L. Sullivan. Its producer was Bing Crosby. *[In an earlier version, Errol Flynn had played the boxer in* Gentleman Jim *(1942).]*

The Great John L gave Calhoun a chance to show off his impressive physique and athletic prowess, which earned him a devoted following among horny teenage girls and ravenous gay men.

At the premere of *Spellbound*, Lana spent at least ten minutes chatting with its co-stars, Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck.

She later told Henry Willson, “When Ingrid finishes with Greg, I’m next in line. I don’t know if I can hold out that long.”

After his first night with Lana, Calhoun gave her an anklet, which she often wore, according to her daughter, Cheryl. Before he dated Lana, Willson had already phoned Louella Parsons, hawking Calhoun “as the next Clark Gable.”

By this time, Willson’s lust for Guy Madison had dimmed, somewhat, and he began revealing to his entourage that he was “mad about the new boy,” as he said, meaning Calhoun. To Lana, Willson confessed that “Rory is the most exciting man I’ve ever met.”

The premiere of *Spellbound* marked Calhoun’s first public appearance.

With Lana, looking her most glamorous, on his arm, the couple was a sensation, their photograph appearing in most of the nation’s newspapers the next morning.

“Henry demands that I spend three nights a week in his company,” Calhoun told Lana, “but I’m free on the other nights of the week.”

The day after Calhoun seduced her, Lana delivered a rave report to Willson. “He’s six feet three and all man,” she said, “and I’m sure you’ve explored every foot.”

“My job has been to transform this thug into a movie idol,” Willson said. “Thanks for helping to get his picture in the paper. I plucked his eyebrows…too hirsute.”

“After those pictures of Rory and me appear, I’m sure Joan Crawford will have him on the phone.”

When he wasn’t dating Lana, Calhoun was often seen on the town with Willson and Guy Madison. There was

talk of a *ménage à trois*. As a trio, they were seen dining at Chasen's and at Romanoff's, and night clubbing at Ciro's and the Trocadero. It was only later that she learned that Madison had fallen in love with Calhoun.

As the years went by, Calhoun didn't confine his charms to Willson or Lana, but shared them with Betty Grable, Yvonne De Carlo, the French actress Corinne Calvet, Susan Hayward, and Marilyn Monroe.

In *That Hagen Girl* (1947), Calhoun competed with Ronald Reagan for a very young Shirley Temple.

In 1948, he married the Mexican actress, Lita Baron. In 1970, when she divorced him, she named seventy-nine women, including Grable and Lana, with whom her husband had committed adultery. When the actor was asked by a reporter if that charge were true, Calhoun said, "Heck, she didn't even include half of them."

Lana stayed in touch with Calhoun, even as both of their careers declined. She spoke to Virginia Grey about him. "Time goes by, and my phone doesn't ring as often as it might. But, sitting home on a rainy night, without a date, I could always give Rory a ring. Even as he got older, it was forever steel hard. Or, as he often boasted, 'In my day, I've re-arranged a few guts.'"

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For another 1945 release, director Robert Z. Leonard cast Lana in *Week-End at the Waldorf*, a radical "refurbishment" of Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel*, a novel, published in 1929, which MGM had first adapted in 1932 with an all-star cast headed by Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, and Joan Crawford.

Lana was disappointed when she was told that she'd have to relinquish first billing, in the 1945 reprise, to Ginger Rogers.

In their version of the film, Crawford and Garbo had had no scenes together. Likewise, Rogers and Lana didn't either, which was just as well. Rogers was "seriously pissed off at Lana" for the affair she'd had with Lew Ayres during the years she'd been married to him.

Envisioned as film that would dovetail neatly (and glamorously) with America's Victory celebrations, *Week-End at the Waldorf* assembled an all-star cast that included Van Johnson, Walter Pidgeon, Edward Arnold, Phyllis Thaxter, Keenan Wynn, Robert Benchley, Leon Ames—even Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra. Irene, when sober, was in charge of Lana's gowns, and Sydney Guilaroff tended to her "Victory Bob" tresses.

The movie focuses on various guests lodged at the famous New York landmark, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Rogers, who handled the role previously made famous by Greta Garbo, was cast as the lonelyscreen star, Irene Malvern, in town for the premiere of her latest movie.

This scene at the desk of the Waldorf-Astoria showed the four major stars of *Week-End at the Waldorf* checking in.

(Left to right), Ginger Rogers, Walter Pidgeon, Lana Turner, and Van Johnson. It was just a publicity still, not actually a scene from the movie.

In contrast, Lana as Bunny Smith, the hotel's stenographer, followed in the footsteps of Crawford, who had originated the role.

Walter Pidgeon played war correspondent Chip Collyer, who is mistaken for a jewel thief.

Van Johnson was cast as Captain James Hollis, a wounded hero who's scheduled, within a few days, for some perilous surgery.

Lavishly produced and brilliantly directed by Leonard, *Week-End at the Waldorf* became the sixth-highest-grossing film of 1945.

Leonard was already adept at handling temperamental stars, having been married to the silent screen diva, Mae Murray. Her most famous movie had been the silent version (1925) of *The Merry Widow*, in which Lana would star in the 1950s re-make. Adding to his "skill set," Leonard had directed Lana before in *Ziegfeld Girl*.

Edward Arnold, who had co-starred with Lana in *Johnny Eager*, was cast as Martin X. Edley, a bull-headed businessman trying to sign the Bey of Aribajan to a shady oil deal.

Many reviewers pointed out that *Week-End* would have been a better movie if Lana and Rogers had reversed their roles.

Week-End at the Waldorf was released in October, 1945, about a month after the Japanese surrender. In the movie, the war was still slogging on.

Variety noted that "there is never a dull moment in this Week-End." *Cue* praised the film as "an elaborately frothy three-corner comedy drama."

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During the filming of *Week-End at the Waldorf*, Lana was introduced to the famous hoteliers, Conrad Hilton and his son, Nicky, who was four years younger than she was.

When Lana checked into the film's namesake hotel, she was assigned to the best suite at the hotel. She found it filled with roses. And before fifteen minutes had passed, three bottles of chilled champagne, each in an icy silver bucket, were delivered to her suite.

When she was introduced to Conrad, the founding father of the chain that borehis name, she found him deeply suntanned and quite handsome for a man born in 1887. As she later said, "He'd held up well, despite his (1942) marriage to Zsa Zsa."

Walter Pidgeon and Ginger Rogers bond with each other before a panoramic view of New York, a city in the throes of celebrating the end of World War II.

The character she played was that of a lonely movie star, he a foreign correspondent.

The founder of Hilton Hotels and author of the bestselling promotional bio, *Be My Guest*, Conrad was a tall, powerful Texan, who started out with nothing. A bellhop in Dallas once lent him money to buy himself a hamburger and a Coke. From such lowly beginnings, he'd created an empire.

He was Lana's first overnight guest in the suite he had provided for her. And he seemed delighted that MGM was making a movie that featured his hotel as the backdrop. He expressed only one disappointment: He had wanted Louis B. Mayer to film the (black & white) movie in Technicolor as a means of better "showing off the glories of my hotel."

Lana interpreted Conrad as "a Gary Cooper type," rather rugged, a real "ride 'em cowboy" type. Was that her reference to him in bed?

That night, Conrad danced with her downstairs. "He held me so close I could hardly breathe. I felt the State of Texas rising, if you get my drift." All of this she confided to her director, Robert Z. Leonard.

Back in her suite, Conrad invited her to fly to Texas with him for the weekend. "Instead of a *Week-End at the Waldorf*, why not in Dallas?" He went on to confide that his favorite sport was shooting rattlesnakes and then having his chef *sauté* the reptiles for supper, serving them with his Lone Star hot sauce.

Lana is seen with Van Johnson, whose character faces surgery so dangerous his life is in peril.

Off screen, she noted that he had resumed his affair with character actor Keenan Wynn, cast in the film as a cub reporter.

"I think I'll skip that and have an omelet," she said. She also turned down his invitation for the holiday in Dallas, but graciously thanked him anyway.

She found him blunt but amusing, and filled with colorful anecdotes from his early days, claiming, "Before I started buying every deluxe hotel in America, I sold coffins. And when I was growing up, Indians were still a problem. I lived in fear that out on the trail, they'd abduct me and turn me into a squaw. They often did that to young white men they captured. At our homestead, I slept with a gun under my pillow. If a redskin broke into our house, I'd send the bastard to that happy hunting ground in the sky."

When Lana met Conrad Hilton, his marriage to Zsa Zsa Gabor was crumbling. According to press reports, Conrad, a devout Catholic, had a lingering guilt about having married "such an international hussy," and even insisted that they sleep in separate bedrooms.

During their courtship, Conrad one night had presented Zsa Zsa with her choice of either of two small gift boxes, each containing a diamond ring, from Tiffany's. Apparently, he had configured the episode as a test that would determine if she were "the diamond-drenched caricature of a fortune-hunting blonde," as depicted in the newspapers.

Clever fox that she was, Zsa Zsa opted for the smaller diamond during her acceptance of his proposal of marriage.

Zsa Zsa had already spread the word in Hollywood that in spite of his age, her husband *"vas a vonderful lover, virile, vell-endowed, and masterful in bed. It's more than ten inches long and ever so thick. Getting banged by him is like having a baby come through your womb."*

The next morning, instead of telling her what a wonderful night he'd had with her in bed, Conrad complained about the failure of his marriage to Zsa Zsa.

"She is the world's most self-centered woman. She expects me to indulge her every whim. She has never forgiven me for putting her on a budget, a very strict budget."

"I don't know what kind of husband Conrad would make," Lana said to Grey. "According to his reputation, he has a girl in every port. In his case, those "ports" include El Paso, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago, and New York."

He shared a late breakfast with her that morning in the lobby of his hotel. Finally, he got around to discussing their intimacies of the previous night. "That time with you was what I had expected when I married Zsa Zsa, who I plan to divorce."

"Will you be looking for another wife any time soon?" she asked.

"Not right away. I don't want to put down Zsa Zsa too much. Being wed to her brought me, in many ways, more laughter and gaiety than I've ever known. But it brought me more headaches and heartaches as well. It was a little like holding a Roman candle—beautiful and exciting, but you were never quite sure when it would go off. And it is surprisingly hard to live up to the Fourth of July every day."

Although he had promised to take her dancing that night at the Stork Club, some emergency suddenly manifested itself in Texas, and he informed her of it with the news that he'd be flying away to the southwest that afternoon. Then he told her that his son, Nicky, would arrive at the hotel later that day. "I'msure the kid would love to escort the ever-gorgeous Lana Turner out for a night on the town. He specializes in movie stars."

Unknown to both Lana and his father, Nicky had spent the previous night in Bel Air (California) in the bed of his stepmother, Zsa Zsa, who had told him—and later everybody else, too—that "He's even better in bed than Connie, and I thought he was the greatest stud. I guess it's his youth. He did, however, inherit his equipment from his father—and does he know how to use it!"

[After Lana's return to Hollywood, Lana told Virginia Grey, "I knew Conrad was still burning to have me. I was flattered by his attention. After all, he was the most famous and one of the richest men in America. If I married him, I could continue my movie career, reign as Queen of MGM, and also become Empress of the Hilton Hotel

chain, with free suites wherever I went."]

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The evening after her intimacies with his father, Nicky Hilton arrived in her suite at the Waldorf with the intention of escorting her to the Stork Club. Even though he had a reputation for violence against women, Lana was impressed with Nicky Hilton's courtly manners and good looks.

Speaking in a soft Texan drawl, with a reputation as a playboy and for seducing movie stars, he was tall and broad-shouldered, wearing a tailor-made suit from London's Savile Row.

In their usual race to see which woman got him first—a game that Lana was playing with Joan Crawford—Crawford had already won, having seduced Nicky during one of her previous visits to Manhattan. She had booked a suite at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan. As he told friends later, "We did it on the living room floor. It would have been a memorable experience, but she had the most awful breath."

Nicky candidly admitted to Lana that he'd fallen in love with her after her appearance with Clark Gable in *Somewhere I'll Find You*. "I fell asleep that night and dreamed that, in real life, I was the one holding you in my arms."

She found Nicky a "clean-cut All-American boy. His wild eyes seemed to undress me, but I couldn't hold that against him, now, could I?"

Although they dined on caviar and the world's most tender steaks at the Stork Club, both of them admitted that they'd have happily settled for a hamburger smothered with onions at some joint.

They didn't agree on everything. He named Ezio Pinza as his favorite singing star. She detested both him and his voice. In her future, she would display her utter disdain for Pinza when, in 1951, she co-starred with him in *Mr. Imperium.*

She knew very little about Nicky's background He had dropped out of Baltimore's Loyola College at the age of nineteen and joined the Navy. After some gay sailors spotted him nude in the shower, he attracted lots of propositions and an occasional lover. As he told Cary Grant, "I'm not really that much into guys. But I like it when they worship me and service me. They do all the work."

He also told Grant, "My father is called 'the man with 100,000 beds. My goal in life is to try each of them with a different partner."

Even though the Hilton heir looked like he'd just graduated from college, he was a man of the world, having launched affairs with members of both sexes since he was fourteen years old. He was at ease with famous people, having spent his teenage years meeting (often seducing) industrial tycoons, presidents, senators, Texan oil men, movie stars, and fading members of the European aristocracy.

Although he almost never worked, he held two important positions—one of them Vice President of the Hilton Corporation; and the other as manager of the swanky Bel Air Hotel, an upscale jewel that he referred to as "my fuck pad."

In time, either before or after Lana, Nicky spread his charms among Jeanne Crain, French actress Denise Darcel, Mamie Van Doren, Joan Collins, Natalie Wood, and such socialites as Kay Spreckles and Hope Hampton. Terry Moore reportedly said, "Making love to him was like fornicating with a horse. And such stamina!"

After a night of passion, Lana admitted to Virginia Grey, "I was ready to take him as my next husband, but Van Johnson warned me that he was a *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* kind of guy. He's a gambler, a woman-beater, an alcoholic, a closeted heroin addict, and a sex maniac."

Nicky never wanted to date Lana exclusively. Each managed to fit the other into their schedules during his visits to the West Coast. They were seen together riding along Bel Aire's bridle paths, or at exclusive Hollywood parties. He escorted her to lavish dinners thrown by his rich and powerful friends. At one party, she met a rising politician, Richard Nixon. She would soon meet another rising politician, John F. Kennedy.

"Daddy Conrad" never dated her again, but was often seen out with her friend from MGM, tap-dancing Ann Miller. In her memoirs, Miller wrote, "Conrad and I were just good friends."

After Lana's "Weekend at the Waldorf" with hotel heir, Nicky Hilton, he later became the first husband of Elizabeth Taylor. The photo above depicts them at their wedding in 1950, a marriage that lasted less than a year.

During the course of his first date with Elizabeth's blonde competitor, in Manhattan, Nicky couldn't stop praising Lana's looks. Adorned with diamonds, she wore an Irene-designed, magenta-colored gown with towering high heels in a style referred to in 1945 as "Joan Crawford fuck-me shoes."

"If that's what she wants to call it," Lana quipped. "Such good friends, they sleep in the same bed in the same suite."

Nicky would ultimately marry another friend of Lana's, Elizabeth Taylor, in a "fantasy wedding" in 1950.

Lana was very cynical about the nuptials: "Perhaps I was a little jealous," Lana said. "After all, Nicky was a great lover and the most eligible bachelor in America. Every woman he took out, he screwed, and each of them, including Elizabeth, was a great beauty. He was wild with women and with the Hilton money."

After eight months of marital horror, Elizabeth admitted to Lana, "The fucker often beats the shit out of me. He's a big gambler, heavy drinker, a monster. We're great in bed, but our troubles begin when I'm on the way to the bidet."

That was a line she might have borrowed from Ava Gardner.

"I'm divorcing him," Elizabeth, meeting with Lana in the makeup department at MGM, told her early one morning. "If you want him back, you can have him."

"Thanks for the offer, dear, but I've moved on. As is obvious to all of us hapless gals, Nicky is just not husband material. Even if he marries again, he'll never be true to one woman."

"You and I should follow in Nicky's footsteps," Elizabeth said. "Why should we be faithful to just one man? That's so old-fashioned. People call me a scarlet woman. I'm not…Color me purple!"

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For a brief time during April of 1946, Lana told friends that Charles P. Jaeger, an executive of the American Broadcasting Company, "is my one and only." A picture taken of them nightclubbing was published in newspapers across the country, and rumors persisted that marriage was imminent.

Back from a trip to New York, Lana phoned Louella Parsons. "Charlie is tall, very handsome, and oh so wonderful," she gushed. "He really knows how to treat a lady. He's just what I've been looking for all my life. Yes, he has proposed to me, but I haven't made up my mind. I'm still thinking it over."

On April 14, passengers spotted Lana and her infant daughter, Cheryl, aboard a TWA Constellation flight leaving Los Angeles heading for New York. Jaeger accompanied her.

At the Stork Club in Manhattan, Lana is seen dining and nightclubbing with ABC executive Charles P. Jaeger.

Hollywood insiders, most of them seeing pictures of Jaeger for the first time, didn't quite consider him the male beauty Lana raved about. He was reasonably attractive and well-groomed, but hardly the matinee idol Lana had described to her friends.

After they arrived in Manhattan, Cheryl was transferred to the care of a nanny, as Lana made the rounds of the chic spots, including the Stork Club. Jaeger, ever so attentive, was at her side.

She had claimed that he proposed to her. But when questioned by reporters, he answered, "We're just friends."

On at least two separate occasions, they were seen theater-going together in New York, attending a performance of *Born Yesterday*, which would, in 1950, be adapted into a movie in which Judy Holliday would beat out frontrunners Gloria Swanson and Bette Davis for the coveted Oscar.

Jaeger also took Lana to a performance of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. At this point in his career, Williams was no longer an unknown, struggling over script details for *Marriage Is a Private Affair*. At this point, he was Broadway's overnight sensation, and the most sought-after playwright in the entertainment industry. In her future, Lana would campaign for two coveted roles in plays he'd write, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

Lana and Jaeger didn't seem on the same page about their upcoming wedding. On yet another occasion, he admitted that marriage might be in the offing, but it might take place "anywhere from a week to five years from now."

However, when Lana was questioned, she said that the marriage was scheduled in less than a month. "I have always wanted to be a June bride."

She made those remarks in New York. When questioned, after her return to Los Angeles, she said, "Mr. Jaeger and I know each other, but we're not even engaged."

Suddenly, Jaeger exited from Lana's life, and Lana, the next week, was seen dating Huntington Hartford, one of the richest men in America and heir to a vast A&P fortune.

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In 1946, photographers caught up with Lana and Huntington Hartford together at a nightclub in Miami. Again, as with Jaeger, there were rumors that marriage was imminent.

[One of them mocked her with rumors of having previously monogrammed her towels with "HH" when she thought that Howard Hughes was going to marry her.]

If Lana had married Huntington Hartford in 1946, she would have a choice of places where she could live. She would also be marrying a man who dated from the A-list. Before her, he'd bedded the two richest women on the planet: tobacco heiress Doris Duke and the Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton.

After Lana, Marilyn Monroe would loom in his future. As he said when he was dating her, "If I went for Miss Turner, the blonde bombshell of the 1940s, why not the blonde bombshell of the 1950s, too?"

Hartford not only dated powerful women, but he forged friendships with powerful men, too. Among them were Errol Flynn, Richard Nixon, Aristotle Onassis, Howard Hughes, Charlie Chaplin, and John Jacob Astor VI. He was also "pals," as he called them, with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Hartford's homes included villas at Cap d'Antibes and in Palm Beach, a flat in London, an apartment in Paris, a 24-acre estate outside Los Angeles, and a roomy duplex on Beekman Place in Manhattan. In time, he would own Paradise Island (formerly Hog Island), across from Nassau in The Bahamas.

He confided to Lana that he planned to spend his millions while he was still alive and could enjoy the rich lifestyle. "I prefer to be a man of leisure—sailing, partying at the best of clubs, and surrounding myself with beauty, not only the world's most beautiful women, but the world's most stunning art treasures."

He had very strong opinions about art, both painting, sculpture, and even writing. He considered Picasso, Tennessee Williams, and William Faulkner "vulgar."

He was also interested in becoming a Broadway producer, and pitched a project to Lana. He wanted her to consider appearing in an adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with her in the title role. He told her that the play would be perfect if Errol Flynn were cast opposite her as "The Master of Thornfield."

Alas, her affair with Hartford ended about as abruptly as her affair with Jaeger. There was no fight, no formal parting of ways. She described her last night with him as "a lot of fun." At breakfast the next morning, she sensed no farewell.

Mildred had wanted her to marry Hartford, telling her daughter that he would bring her the financial security she'd need when her beauty faded. When she didn't see him calling on Lana again, she asked, "What happened?"

"I don't know," she answered. "After our last breakfast, he kissed me passionately at the door, the kind of kiss a soldier gives the girl he's leaving behind before going off to war. He never called again."

She later read that Hartford had been seen out and about with Gene Tierney.

With contempt in her voice, Lana told Mildred "that Tierney woman usually takes my sloppy seconds: Howard Hughes and Victor Mature come to mind."

Unknown to Lana, Tierney would soon appear in *The Razor's Edge* (1946) with Tyrone Power, a man ("Lana's greatest love") who would loom in her future.

After moving on from Tierney and Lana, Hartford spent the rest of his life squandering his vast fortune. He

said, “The golden bird, coming to life, has somehow wriggled out of my hand and flown away.”

At the age of 97, the former tycoon died on Lyford Cay in The Bahamas. He had outlived Lana by thirteen years.

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As if Lana couldn’t find her own men, her best pal, Ava Gardner, often fixed her up with one of her cast-offs. Hollywood’s most beautiful blonde and Hollywood’s most beautiful brunette often shared lovers—and not just Frank Sinatra. Gardner even married Lana’s first husband, Artie Shaw. As Lana told Mildred, “Now Artie won’t be hanging around me all the time.”

Lana had also sampled the charms of Mickey Rooney before Gardner was foolish enough to marry him.

She had just co-starred with Burt Lancaster in *The Killers* (1946), based on the famous short story by Ernest Hemingway.

[Hollywood footnote: in 1964, Ronald Regan would play a brutal crime kingpin in a remake of The Killers. It would be his last motion picture before he found a new profession.]

Gardner had had a torrid affair with Lancaster, but it was time for her to move on. She extolled his male beauty and after-midnight charms to Lana, who said: “Tell me more. I’m more than interested in auditioning him.”

To publicize *The Killers*, Burt Lancaster and Ava Gardner were driven to Malibu, where they strutted for photographers on the beach in their bathing suits. They took turns posing piggyback atop each other.

According to Ava, “Burt was such a marvelous athlete, he seemed able to make himself pounds lighter. That’s how he could ride my back…no pun intended.”

Lancaster was a well-muscled athlete, having been a circus acrobat before his gigs in Hollywood. Filled with robust energy, he was strikingly handsome, with an intense glare. The author, Norman Mailer, said, “His grip could crush, and I never looked into eyes as chilling as his.” Lana used an odd word to describe his smile…“piercing.”

Lancaster had grown up on the tough streets of Manhattan’s East Harlem. His most traumatic experience had come when he was twelve years old. Six neighborhood toughs had overpowered him and repeatedly raped “the pretty boy,” as they called him.

Lancaster might have been pretty, but he was also street fighter. Three months later, he trapped the gang leader in a back alley and slashed his face with a switchblade, but didn’t kill him. He was never arrested.

He was also smart, winning a scholarship to New York University. Before joining the circus, he worked as a singing waiter.

In 1942, as America went to war, he joined he 21st Special Services Division, a military group of talented young soldiers who provided the troops with entertainment as a means of keeping up morale. From 1943 to 1945, he served in General Mark Clark’s Fifth Army in Italy, as the Allies chased the Nazis north.

Tall and muscular, Lancaster was a “babe magnet” before the term was invented. As a teenager, he posed for

nude photos. One of them was later reprinted and widely distributed, eventually published in books and underground newspapers. He became the first movie star male pinup, though not nearly as widely distributed as his female counterparts, Betty Grable and Lana.

"Burt and I were just kids starting out," Gardner told Lana. "We were enjoying ourselves and discovering each other. Of course, I was married to Artie at the time, even though that marriage started to fall apart on our honeymoon."

She warned Lana, "You might be disappointed when Burt strips and exposes his uncut glory. Of course, his body is magnificent, but it appears that Mother Nature wasn't too generous. But that's only a first impression. He's a grower, not a show-er."

She also revealed that producer Mark Hellinger had first tested Lancaster and her in a love scene. "His passion was real. I felt his erection pressing up against me. I knew then I had him, or soon would. Just to make sure that everything was in order, I slipped my hand down there for a good feel. I thought he'd climax right on the spot."

"He's everything a lover should be," she said, "both sensual and passionate. I'll let you in on one of his sexual secrets. He likes his balls jiggled."

On his first date with Lana, Lancaster told her that he had been discovered in an elevator in Manhattan. "This guy got on the elevator with me, and kept looking at me with X-ray vision. It was like he was undressing me. I get off and this guy follows me. I turn around and grab him by the necktie like I'm going to choke him. I said, 'Listen, you pansy, keep that up and I'll beat the shit out of you!' Then I head for this job interview in the next office, and this same guy puts in a call, telling me he's a producer casting a play. And he wants me for an audition. I'd heard that line before. Turns out he was legit. That play eventually led me here to you tonight. Hollywood AND Lana Turner! What more could a man ask for?"

On his first date with Lana, he took her to a boxing match, showing her to a front-row seat. She was dressed all in white and feared her outfit might get splattered with blood.

That night in her boudoir, as she later reported to Gardner, "He was all you said with your advance billing… and a bit more. He also likes to nibble your toes, calling them 'delectable morsels of shrimp.'"

A writer for *Cosmopolitan*, describing Lancaster in *The Killers*, wrote: "It was an extraordinary debut for an unknown. Overnight, Burt Lancaster was a star with a meteoric rise faster than Gable, Garbo, or Lana Turner."

Over the next few years, Lancaster and Lana often encountered each other at parties. During the 1940s and early 50s, both of them had moved on to others, and Lana got married to Bob Topping.

Lancaster's longtime companion, Jackie Bone, told her, "Burt loves to take his leading ladies to bed, and he's had quite a few of them, everyone from Yvonne De Carlo to Shelley Winters.

Lancaster told Lana, "I know what you've heard about me, that I'm difficult to work with and grab all the broads. That's not true. I'm difficult only some of the time, and grab only some of the broads."

Louis B. Mayer had not signed Lancaster, and one night at a party, he asked her how she would describe him. "He's compulsive, dynamic, memorable. His friends call him a vulgar hot-head, yet he loves opera and the ballet."

"Funny that you should say that. I keep hearing that he's a fag."

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Lana had known Virginia Mayo for several years, ever since she and Ava Gardner had agreed to be cheerleaders for a charity baseball game, billed at the time as "Stars vs. Stars."

They had never known each other well, but occasionally, they ran into each other at premieres or at parties, when they "air-kissed" their way past each other.

Lana had just seen Mayo in William Wyler's drama, *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), in which Mayo had played the unsympathetic gold-digger married to a returning war veteran, Dana Andrews, another of Lana's previous "flings." It would become the highest-grossing film in the United States since *Gone With the Wind* (1939).

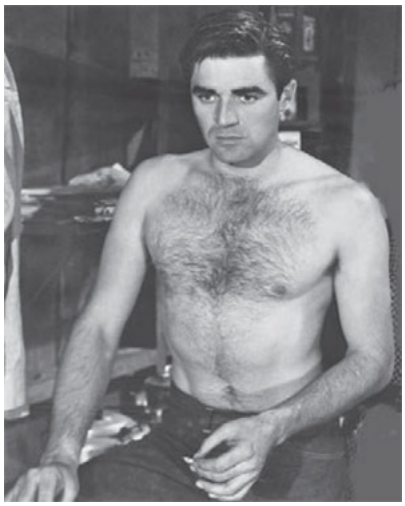
As a fellow blonde goddess, Lana was rather jealous of the victories Mayo had recently scored with the press. One fan magazine said "she looked like a pinup painting come to life," and the Sultan of Morocco declared that her beauty "was tangible proof of the existence of God."

As Mayo related to Lana, she had a problem: During the filming of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, she had become involved with Steve Cochran, who had been cast as her sleazy boyfriend. Their affair continued after the filming ended. However, she'd met a minor B-list actor, Michael O'Shea, whom she would marry in 1947.

After listening for a few minutes, Lana asked, "In other words, you want me to take this Cochran boy off your hands? I've already heard quite a lot about him. He's dynamite."

"That he is," Mayo answered. "In more ways than one. You won't be disappointed. Joan Crawford, or so I've

heard, hasn't gotten around to him yet.



During his first months in Hollywood, Steve Cochran had earned a reputation as a womanizer, and Lana's gossipy girlfriends were touting his male assets. He was "The New Boy of Tinseltown," and was already being referred to as "Mr. King Size" when he wasn't otherwise being labeled "The Schvantz."

[Hollywood footnote: Crawford's affair with Cochran would not begin until they co-starred together in The Damned Don't Cry *(1950).]*

Cochran, the son of a logger, had grown up in Laramie, Wyoming. During his teenage years, he'd had a number of run-ins with the police.

Once in Hollywood, Cochran confessed that his ultimate dream fantasy involved being a Sultan controlling a harem staffed with girls aged 13 to 14.

He arrived the following night at Lana's house, and from her first observation, she realized that casting directors would interpret him as the ultimate "sleazy pretty boy" for *film noir*. She served him dinner, but halfway through the meal, he couldn't wait, and dragged her off into the bedroom.

The next morning, she called Mayo after Cochran had departed. "It was a big thrill all right. I'd hate to have been a virgin broken in by him. He's a walking streak of sex, and he can go all night. But he's far too violent for my taste. My body is bruised. I was afraid he might injure my face. It's a good thing I don't have to confront the camera tomorrow. After all, you and I get by on our looks. Neither of us is Sarah Bernhardt."

"Don't worry about Steve," Mayo answered. "I just heard that Mae West has contacted him and wants to audition him to go on a road trip with her in *Diamond Lil."*

[Cochran, in reference to West, later admitted, "I threw the stuck-up bitch a few mercy fucks. That was almost written into my contract. When was the broad born? No doubt in 1880."]

After Mamie Van Doren filmed *The Beat Generation* with Cochran in 1959, she described him in a memoir. Her experience with this rough guy was similar to what Lana's had been years before: "He was the rough-hewn, sexy, perennial movie tough guy. What I discovered about Steve after we had been dating for a while was that his behavior was frighteningly erratic. He had a violent temper reminiscent of my first husband. In bed, he became increasingly rougher, until one night he very nearly beat me up."

Many of Cochran's conquests claimed that he pumped up his excitement by slapping a woman during intercourse, and spitting into her mouth.

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Eddie Mannix, from MGM's publicity department, phoned Lana with a request. He wanted her to appear, accompanied by Peter Shaw, at the premiere of *The Yearling* (1946). Starring Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman, *The Yearling* was set in the early frontier wilds of Florida.

"Who the hell is Peter Shaw?" Lana asked. "Never heard of him."

"He's a Limey that we're putting under contract. He's even handsomer than Errol Flynn. Lately, he's been

going out with Joan Crawford."

"Leave it to that bitch to get him first," she said.

"Not only Joan, but he's also been seen taking out Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner."

"For the new boy in town, this guy is sure devouring the frosting off the cake."

"From what I hear, Peter is an apt name for him," Mannix told her.

Lana agreed to the date, but phoned Gardner to see if Shaw were worth pursuing after the screening.

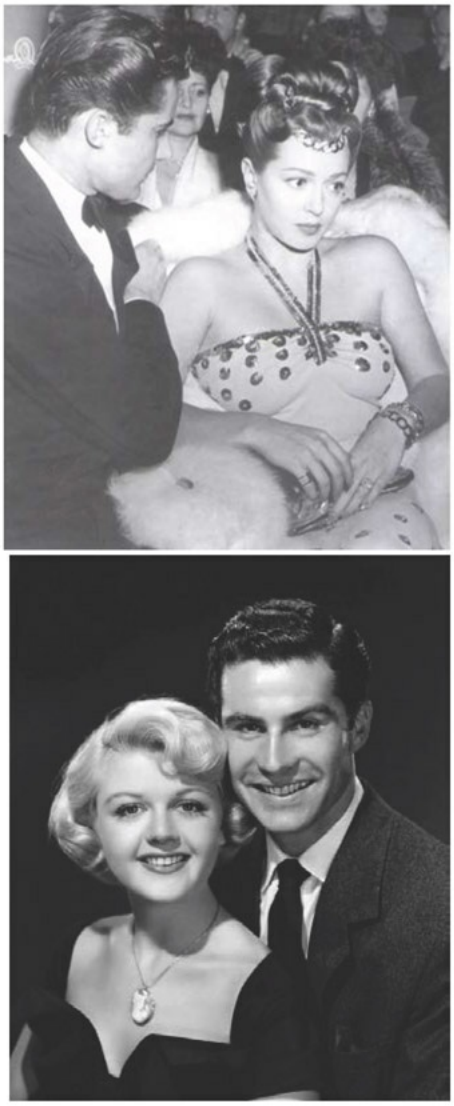
"He's an absolute doll in and out of bed," Gardner claimed. "He's not stuck-up at all. He even told me that as an actor, he can't even act. MGM wants to market him as their new celluloid heartthrob. If he attends the premiere with you, looking absolutely gorgeous, the two of you are sure to hit the morning papers."

Then Lana asked about Crawford. Gardner said that she'd started dating Shaw after her divorce from Phillip Terry had been finalized. "But that's over now. Peter told me that he's too strong a man to be prince consort for the Queen of Hollywood."

"So now, Crawford—The San Antonio Beauty Queen of 1904—is the Queen of Hollywood?" Lana said, with strong contempt in her voice. "Who the fuck crowned her that?" *[Lana was referencing the year and the birthplace of Crawford.]*

At the glittering premiere, Shaw and Lana, dressed all in white, made a spectacular appearance. There were immediate rumors of a romance.

A highlight for Lana occurred later, at a private VIP reception associated with the premiere. There, she got to talk to the star of the film, Gregory Peck. She still wanted to date him, but somehow, had not found it possible, barring a full-frontal assault.



Two views of Peter Shaw: (top photo), with Lana, with whom he did not find happiness, and (lower photo) with Angela Lansbury, with whom he (presumably) did.

During their dialogue, she made overtures about seeing him alone, but he didn't pick up on them. Treating her graciously, he moved on to talk to Wyman and then to Bette Davis.

That left Shaw, and he lived up to Gardner's advance billing as "being the most gorgeous thing walking on two feet." He stood six feet three, with thick dark hair, broad shoulders, and narrow hips. "He did look a bit like Errol Flynn, but without his hangups," Lana said.

That night, and over the course of the two weeks that followed, she got to know this dashing young Brit who had gone to school in London's Westminster section with another actor, Peter Ustinov. When England entered World War II, he'd joined the British army.

Along the way, he'd met a model, Mercia Squires, and after some intense dating, had married her. When he left for Belgium in 1944, she was pregnant. In Hamburg, during the days immediately flanking the end of the war, he worked as an aide to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. News arrived that he was the father of a son named David.

However, when Shaw eventually returned home to Britain, he found that his new wife was living with another soldier. Heartbroken, he wanted to leave England He found a theatrical agent who pitched his good looks and British charm to MGM. In a surprise move, he was awarded a contract and hired at $350 a week.

After Lana's first few nights with Shaw, she reported to Gardner about her latest beau. "The first night he stayed over, I woke up. It was a Saturday. He was not in the bed with me. A few minutes later, there was a rap on my door, and he entered with a breakfast tray. He'd cooked it himself and had even placed a red rose on the tray. My God, in addition to being a heavenly lover, he can cook, too!"

"We'll work out some arrangement," Gardner said. "I need Peter at least two nights a week. The rest of the time, he can freelance."

"Ava, darling Ava. It's more than that. Based on my first morning's glow, I'm thinking of marrying this darling man."

"Tomorrow, you'll feel different," Gardner predicted.

As it turned out, her words were prophetic.

Shaw's film career was slow to launch, as one producer after another told him that he looked "too much like Tyrone Power."

Then, instead of Shaw, the REAL Tyrone Power walked into Lana's life.

The British actress, Angela Lansbury, also had her eagle eye trained on Shaw, and, she too, considered him marriage material. By 1949, they had wed.

When Lansbury learned that her future husband had seduced Lana, she cattily said, "Lana Turner is a good example of what an acting coach can do with completely incompetent material."

Lansbury had wanted the role of Milady De Winter in the upcoming remake of *The Three Musketeers*, but ended up cast in a smaller role as France's Queen Anne instead.

She later said, "Miss Turner got the coveted role. The film gave her a chance to show off her chest."

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Lana had been a big hit throughout World War II, especially with the men who fought that war, but during the postwar year of 1946, with the soldiers returning home and Hollywood's product moving rapidly into new arenas, she worried about her future. Would she become one of those over-the-hill blondes, like Veronica Lake or Carole Landis, whose allure ended with the peace treaty with Japan? Even her chief rival, Betty Grable, didn't expect to retain her wartime fame as the leading pinup beauty.

Would the boys who had returned from the battle fronts adore Lana as much as before? Every day, she studied her nude figure in a full-length mirror, searching for that first wrinkle, those first tiny sags of flesh. Both her hairdressers and makeup artists assured her that she was at the peak of her beauty. Eventually, she believed them.

She was having numerous affairs and continued to do so, based on the slogan she had so often repeated: "So many men, so little time."

Anxious to learn what 1946 held, she arranged "readings" with two separate fortune tellers in Los Angeles. Somewhat generically, both of them predicted "great tragedy" looming in her faraway future.

She couldn't worry about that, as she was living for the here and now.

But if either of the fortune tellers had been genuinely clairvoyant, they would have predicted that, indeed, BIG events lay in her immediate future:

ONE:
She'd have an affair with a young Naval lieutenant who would one day become the most powerful man on earth; and

TWO:
She'd meet the love of her life; and

THREE:
She'd make what many critics consider her finest motion picture, and

FOUR:
She'd enter into a loveless marriage, her third.

Chapter Eleven

The Postman Rings Twice for Lana
And Then Again...and Again...and Again

Tyrone Power Becomes the Love of Lana's Life

"If only one Lana Turner film could be placed in a time capsule to be seen by future generations, then I would select my role as Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. At first, I had protested casting John Garfield in the role. I was wrong. I later learned in a motel room that a man didn't have to look like Robert Taylor or Errol Flynn to be a great lover."

In most accounts, Lana's brief fling in 1946 with the British actor, Rex Harrison, was not detected on the radar screen. However, her daughter Cheryl, in her memoirs, listed him as one of the men that Lana was seeing at the time, along with several other beaux: Greg Bautzer (their affair never really ended); Tony Martin (who on rare occasions made an overnight stopover at Lana's home); Peter Lawford (who slipped back into her good graces on three occasions after she'd dropped him); and Howard Hughes (making an unexpected appearance now and then). Even Huntington Hartford phoned her when he flew to Los Angeles one night.

As she boasted, "These guys can't seem to get Lana out of their blood."

Ever since Harrison had scored big in the U.K. on both the stage and on screen, Hollywood had been trying to lure him to its inner sanctums. Then, as he was weighing various offers, World War II began, and he joined the RAF.

Finally, at war's end, he was lured to Hollywood after being offered a contract at 20th Century Fox. Newspapers were packed with news of his arrival in Tinseltown.

As a "young gent," studying in Liverpool, Harrison had been introduced to sex by a black prostitute from

Kingston, Jamaica.

By 1934, he was seasoned for marriage to fashion model Collette Thomas, the union lasting until 1942. That didn't stop him from adulterous affairs, including one with Vivien Leigh. In 1943, he married the German actress, Lilli Palmer, although he wasn't faithful to her, either.

The Australian actress, Coral Browne, nicknamed him "Sexy Rexy," and the label had stuck.

After her one-night stand with "Sexy Rexy" (Rex Harrison), Lana told her friends that she found him "dangerously attractive, but nothing but trouble for a woman."

One afternoon, Paulette Goddard phoned Lana and invited her to a dinner party. "My seating calls for man, woman, man, woman. I've invited Rex Harrison, and I need him to show up with a date to make my dinner seating come out evenly. Would you allow him to escort you to my dinner? Every guest is strictly A-list."

"I'd be honored," she answered.

"I'm looking forward to seeing you again. He'll pick you up at 7:30. You and I have come a long way since we starred together in *Dramatic School."*

"And how! Can I assume, darling, that you've already enjoyed Rex—if you hadn't, I guess you wouldn't be recommending him."

"Yes, darling," Goddard answered. "You and I on occasion have sampled the same merchandise. Gable comes to mind. So do Gary Cooper. Greg Bautzer. David Niven. Spencer Tracy."

"Don't leave out my former husband, Artie Shaw."

"Oh yes, and him, too. In case you ever have the chance, skip John Wayne. Get him out of the saddle and a gal has got very little to work with."

[Goddard had co-starred with Wayne in Reap the Wild Wind *(1943). Lana would co-star with him in* The Sea Chase *(1955).]*

"I must warn you," Goddard said. "Rex is such a cad, very snobbish, very conceited. But I think you'll find him amusing. His wife is out of town, so he's free to escort you."

The actor might have agreed with her assessment of him. He once told an interviewer, "Off stage, I can be far from charming. I am acid. *ACID!* I have a direct tongue, and I say what I think is the truth. I don't give a damn for the consequences."

He had also expressed his view of marriage. "I would never fit into the life of some woman. She has to fit into mine. The happiest married men I know have a wife to go home to, not to go home with."

Later in life, Alan J. Lerner, who wrote the lyrics of Harrison's biggest hit, *My Fair Lady*, claimed, "It's a melancholy fact, but Rex and I, between the two of us, have supported more women that Playtex."

During their transit to Goddard's home, Harrison did not live up to his awful advance billing. He was the perfect English gentleman, with impeccable manners and a clipped English accent that amused her. Yet during odd moments, he could be wickedly provocative. Noticing that she was very, very blonde and dressed all in white, including her fur, he raised an eyebrow. "Are you blonde all over?"

"That's for you to find out, but only if you get lucky," she shot back.

Goddard's dinner party was a success. Through it, Lana got to meet some of the leading members of the British expatriate colony.

Lana was also introduced to Goddard's third husband, whom she'd married after leaving Charlie Chaplin.

Burgess Meredith was five feet seven inches tall, with ginger-colored hair. She did not find him particularly attractive, but his reputation "as a Casanova and a cocksman" on Broadway and Hollywood had preceded him. He admitted, "God knows I'm not a dashing swain, but a kind of mongrel, the way I chase the foxes."

Those "foxes" included Tallulah Bankhead, Ingrid Bergman, Olivia de Havilland, Marlene Dietrich, Hedy Lamarr, Ginger Rogers, and Norma Shearer.

While Harrison was talking with Goddard and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Meredith asked Lana to walk out onto the terrace for a moonlit preview of their well-manicured garden. In the middle of their talk, he reached for her free hand and placed it on his crotch. "Does that answer the question about why I'm sought after by the ladies?"

"It does so *amply,"* she answered, before turning to go inside. "When you break up with Paulette, which seems in the cards, come up and see me sometime."

En route back to Lana's house, Harrison told her, "I have no idea who I am at any given time. I have six different personalities. When I wake up each morning, I never know which personality will take over."

"Which of the many Mr. Harrisons is driving me home tonight?" she asked.

"A combination of Cary Grant and Laurence Olivier," he said, "without the homosexual overtones. I'm also a bit of Noël Coward and John Gielgud. Again, without the homosexual overtones."

"Are all great English actors homosexual, or at least bi-?" she asked.

"Most of them are, even Richard Burton, who frequently admits it."

"I'm not familiar with this Mr. Burton."

"You soon will be," he predicted. "He's a Welsh actor with a magnificent speaking voice, ideal for stage and screen. I know it sounds far-fetched, but you might one day be co-starring with him."

[Ironically, that is what happened in 1955 when Burton and Lana co-starred together in The Rains of Ranchipur. *Fourteen years after that, Harrison, in the grotesquely campy* Staircase (1969), *would play Burton's gay lover.]*

On her doorstep, Harrison took her in his arms and kissed her passionately, but she refused his request to come in for a nightcap.

Goddard phoned the following morning for an update on what had happened with Harrison after she left the party.

"I found him very suave, very charismatic. A bit aloof, self-enchanted. He is *oh so veddy* English. A real arrogant bastard, but in some way strangely appealing."

"Did Rex carve another notch on his belt?"

"Not at all…although he tried."

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After that "kiss-off" on her doorstep, Lana didn't expect to hear from Harrison again. But he called two days later to invite her to a party at the elegant home of Merle Oberon. The beautiful actress with the porcelain skin had been born in Calcutta, the daughter of a British father and a woman of India.

Lana had always been intrigued by her reputation, especially that she was now making a film at Universal, a somewhat confusing and silly historical fantasy with a then-massive budget of $1.6 million. Entitled *A Night in Paradise* (1946), it was being shot with Lana's former lover, Turhan Bey.

The photographer and designer, Cecil Beaton, claimed, "Merle (Oberon) is almost a nymphomaniac. She makes love because she likes it, or because of the money. She is as promiscuous as a man enjoying a quick one behind the door."

Oberon had just emerged from an affair with James Cagney. It had been sparked during their collaboration in a war bond drive that had toured the country. Her other lovers had included three men whom Lana knew well—Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, and David Niven. She would soon seduce Prince Philip before his marriage to Princess Elizabeth.

At Oberon's party, Lana had an amusing chat with Cecil Beaton, the gossipy photographer and designer. She emerged from it somewhat surprised that Greta Garbo had, for a period, taken him as a lover. "He seemed '100 percent homosexual' to me," she had said.

Lana chatted briefly with Darryl F. Zanuck, who had also been one of Oberon's lovers. To Lana, Zanuck said, "I regret that I let you slip through my fishing net and land in the lap of that asshole, Louis B. Mayer. I could have turned you and Tyrone Power into the hottest screen team since Harlow and Gable."

"I regret that, too, Mr. Zanuck," Lana answered.

"I'm probably the straightest guy who ever set foot in Hollywood. I take a steambath with Power every day. At times, he's so fucking pretty that I've considered raping him myself."

Ava Gardner had forewarned her, "The only thing bigger than Zanuck's cigar is his cock, which he's not too shy to show or put to use. He gets turned on by watching two starlets make love to each other before ravishing one of them."

After Oberon's party, Harrison drove Lana home again, and this time, did the inviting, suggesting that he should come in for a nightcap. As her mother, Mildred, learned the following morning, Harrison evolved into a surprise guest for breakfast.

This time, Lana phoned Goddard to deliver a gossipy report: "In a word, he's proficient. Although I prefer the George Montgomery type, I find Rex wickedly amusing. Last night at the party, he wore a rather forbidding monocle over his right eye and had a long cigarette holder clenched between his teeth. He has the aura of an English aristocrat. A temporary diversion for me—nothing else."

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Intent on playing the field, Lana did not accept Harrison's third invitation for a night in his hotel suite. Robert Stack had introduced her to a young navy lieutenant, the son of one of the richest men in America, an Irish mogul whose fortune was based partially on bootlegging. It was clearly understood that the ex-Navy man would not remain in Hollywood for long, and she wanted to be with him.

It came as little surprise to her that Harrison was soon sustaining an affair with Carole Landis, another blonde and a longtime rival of Lana's, although they kept up some pretend friendship. "Landis and I are acquaintances, not friends," Lana said whenever her name came up.

At the time Harrison began his affair with Landis, she was twenty-nine years old and at the rocky end of her fourth marriage, this time to a businessman, W. Horace Schmidlapp. The former call girl from San Francisco had also had a lesbian affair with author Jacqueline Susann, who would go on to write the mega-bestseller, *Valley of the Dolls.*

At this point in her career, Landis had become known in Hollywood for prostituting herself, making her sexual favors available to studio executives at both Warners and at 20th Century Fox, hoping to get better roles.

Although still married to Lilli Palmer, Harrison continued his affair with Landis until the night of July 4, 1948. By then, she had fallen madly in love with him, but her passion was not reciprocated. He was using her only for sex.

On his last night with her, he told her that he was leaving her. He didn't stop there, perhaps wanting to say something so provocative that she would drop him for good and not pester him with recriminations. "You know," he told her, "Lana Turner and I had this thing when I first came to this boring town called Hollywood. Well, we've resumed our affair, and I've fallen in love with her, even though she's seeing this guy Bob Topping. That doesn't matter to me. I'm leaving you for Lana."

Did Lana inadvertently figure into the suicide of her rival, Carole Landis?

On the night he dumped her, Rex Harrison told his mistress that he was leaving her for Lana Turner. Landis was found dead the next day.

[Actually, Lana was doing more than "seeing" Topping. She went on to marry him in April of 1948.]

Yet long before Lana married him, Landis had had an affair with him. In Walter Winchell's column of October 12, 1944, appeared this item: "The humidity felt over the weekend in New York can be traced to Carole Landis and her latest love, Bob Top-ping, heir to a tin-plate fortune."

Three years later, in December of 1947, Landis rented her house to Topping, with the full understanding that by then, he was deeply involved with Lana. He wanted use of her house for four months while another home was being restored and renovated for Lana and himself in anticipation of their upcoming marriage.]

After the completion of some final business arrangements, Landis arrived back at her home late on the morning of July 5th, 1948. She was morbidly despondent over Harrison walking out on her. Up to that point, he had misled her, telling her that he was on the verge of divorcing his German wife (Lilli Palmer) so that he could marry her.

Landis sat down, took out a sheet of her blue stationery, and wrote a suicide note to her mother. She then swallowed some fifty Seconal tablets, known at the time as "red devils."

[Lupe Velez had committed suicide this way in 1944.]

Harrison arrived at her home later that day and was let in by the maid. He wanted to remove his belongings. The maid had not ventured upstairs that day, but Harrison did, discovering Landis' corpse sprawled out across her

bathroomfloor.

Before calling the police, he phoned Harry Brand at 20th Century Fox, who worked in the studio's publicity department. Nicknamed "The Fixer," he occupied the same position as Eddie Mannix at MGM.

The news of Landis' death could not be suppressed. Her adulterous liaison with Harrison was splashed across every frontpage in America.

The scandal was so damaging that Fox terminated its contract with Harrison, who fled back to England. For many years, he was blacklisted in American films. Lilli Palmer would wait another decade before divorcing him.

As Harrison later told Noël Coward and others, "Carole went to her death thinking I had returned to Lana Turner."

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During Landis' brief career, she was often compared to Lana, and in many cases, she appeared on the same lists together. Such was the case in 1947 when each of them made "The Top Best Undressed List." Cited were Marie ("The Body") Mac-Donald in a bathing suit; Rita Hayworth languorous in a *négligée*, Lana prettiest in a slip; and Landis loveliest in a night gown.

Lana and Landis were linked on their final list when gossip writer Bob Thomas published his annual "Best and Biggest" roster for 1948:

BEST PICTURE: Hamlet

BIGGEST SOCIAL EVENT: The Lana Turner/Bob Topping Wedding;

BIGGEST FEMALE DISCOVERY: Betsy Drake (the wife of Cary Grant); and

BIGGEST SHOCK—the Carole Landis suicide.

***

Robert Stack had met John F. Kennedy in 1940 during his first visit to Hollywood. They became immediate friends. "Jack told me he wanted to fuck every big star in Hollywood," he said. "He called it 'celebrity poontang.'"

Alfredo de la Vega had introduced the two bachelors-at-large. During their first dinner together, Stack had told him about his secret hideaway, which he called "the Flag Room." It was within a small apartment that lay at the end of a cul-desac, Whitley Terrace, between Cahuenga and Highland in the Hollywood Hills. Here stood a jumbled mass of apartments stacked on top of each other like a set of warped building blocks about to tumble over. Many of them opened onto balconies draped with wisteria.

Stack told JFK that within the Flag Room, he learned about "the birds, the bees, the barracudas, and other forms of Hollywood wildlife."

The small, cramped room contained a double bed, which took up almost the entire space. The ceiling was only five feet above the floor, making standing fully upright impossible for both Stack and for JFK too. On the ceiling, Stack pinned flags of various nations. When he took a girl there, he demanded that she identify all the flags or else "pay the piper," which meant "surrender to seduction." JFK thought that that was a fun game. Stack jokingly told Lana, "Jack is the only man in town better-looking than I am. All the hot tamales out here are taking notice."

One night, Stack phoned Lana, as he often did between girlfriends, and asked her to lunch.

Stack later said, "Unlike me, Jack was versatile in his taste in women—blondes, brunettes, redheads, young ones, mature ones, gals with large breasts, gals with lemons for breasts. But regardless of the dame, he wanted one with shapely legs."

He said that within the "humble portals" of the Flag Room, he and Jack seduced a gamut of women ranging from members of chorus lines to Oscar winners. "I can't name names,"

On his first visit to Hollywood, JFK had seduced Betty Grable. But on his second visit in 1946, he wanted Lana Turner, having seen her in three of her movies, beginning with *The Ziegfeld Girl.*

After the war, and for a brief time, JFK and Stack were "the two hottest dates in town." In the words of Judy Garland, "Robert served as Kennedy's guide to the hottest pussies. Lana Turner topped the list."

Stack claimed that JFK inherited his womanizing from his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, who had seduced a bevy of stars, notably Gloria Swanson, but also Constance Bennett and even Marion Davies, the mistress of press baron William Randolph Hearst. His surprise seduction was Greta Garbo.

One night Stack phoned Lana, as he often did between girlfriends, and asked her to lunch with him that following midday. He was entertaining John F. Kennedy, "the son of the ambassador," at his home. He told her than "son John" had been newly elected to Congress from Massachusetts. She had heard many stories about his father, but knew absolutely nothing about the son. "He's very rich, very handsome," Stack said. "He was a military hero in

the Navy."

That previous morning, Lana had learned that June Allyson was eagerly awaiting an invitation from Stack to visit. Gene Tierney was also getting in on the act.

Guess who?

"This guy must be something special," Lana told Allyson.

"He can literally charm the panties off any gal," Allyson claimed.

Stack suggested that Lana arrive at his home at 11AM, so all three of them could get into swim trunks before lunch. She arrived on time, and Stack, in bathing trunks, escorted her out to the pool.

There, she met a handsome, rail-thin young man who wore a pair of white shorts. He was resting on a *chaise longue*, but jumped up as she entered the patio.

"My God, you're even better-looking than you are in the movies," JFK proclaimed.

As they chatted over coffee, she said, "I heard you performed heroically in the Navy."

"Are you kidding?" He flashed a smile. "To hear Bob tell it, I single handedly beat the Japs." The twinkle in his eyes revealed that he was satirizing his own exploits.

After lunch, as they returned to the pool, it was JFK who suggested that all three of them go for a nude swim.

JFK was the first to remove his shorts. As his future wife, Jacqueline, would say, "Jack was not shy about nudity. He seemed to pull off his trunks every chance he got."

Stack quickly dropped his trunks, too, but Lana took her time. "I knew I was putting on a show for the boys."

As she confided to Virginia Grey, "One thing led to another. After frolicking in the pool, we ended up in Bob's bedroom. The boys wanted a three-way, and I didn't disappoint. Bob was familiar terrain for me, but JFK was new and fresh. He didn't stay long in the saddle before he blasted off to the moon. I guess he found me so delectable he couldn't hold back."

When Stack phoned the next day, he said, "Jack thought you were terrific. The word he used was *BOOOOOM*. He wants to see you tonight."

"I was drawn to his quick wit and Irish charm," she told Grey. "He's very handsome, but it's his humor combined with his personal magnetism that I find so appealing."

As she revealed, "I'd known men with better builds. He is very lanky and rather bony. I bet he weighs less than I do. He's not only very thin, but has this yellowish cast to his skin. Maybe he came down with malaria in the Navy."

[Throughout his life and into his presidency, JFK would perpetuate the myth that he had had malaria. Actually, he was suffering from Addison's disease, which destroyed his adrenal glands and immune system, making him relatively defenseless to infections.

She saw him on three separate nights, when he preferred to be alone with her.

When Grey wanted more specifics, Lana was forced to admit that it was his personality that drew her to him. "The sex isn't all that great. He prefers to lie on his back. I suspect he's in some sort of pain. He's very fond of oral sex. But once he's done, things come to an abrupt end, with him heading off to the nearest phone, talking either to Boston or to Washington.

"One thing I found out, Jack's a funny man. He doesn't pinch, but he pats like crazy. I nicknamed him, the 'Pat-a-Cake Man.'"

***

In the years to come, Lana would make herself available to JFK whenever he phoned, perhaps in New York, but more often in California.

Once, when he was President, and when Jacqueline was away in Virginia horseback riding, he arranged for the Secret Service to slip her into the White House. "That night, he seduced me in Abraham Lincoln's bed. At first I was afraid to lie down on it, but he made me feel comfortable. I think it wasn't the first time he'd used Lincoln's bedroom for sex. It was a big, intricately carved rosewood bed. I bet Lincoln turned over in his grave that night."

"Before he left that morning, he told me that legend had it that if I made a wishon Lincoln's bed, it would come true. He wanted to know what I wished, but I never told him."

Actually, as Lana related later to Grey, "I wished that he would divorce Jackie and marry me so that in his second term in office, I'd be First Lady."

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During a phone call to Lana, director Tay Garnett led off with his best opening line. "Lana, dear, I want to cast you in what is sure to be the role of your lifetime, the female lead of Cora Smith in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946). Years from now, your unborn fans will idolize you for your glamorous interpretation of a murderess."

"I'm not sure what a postman has to do with this story," she said. "Do I go for him instead of the milkman?"

"No, silly, this is the part of a seductress who's involved in a loveless marriage. After she falls for a roguish drifter, she plots her spouse's murder."

"Some hardboiled crime writer named James M. Cain wrote it as a novel in 1934, and Louis B. Mayer acquired its movie rights for $25,000. But because of those god damn blue-nosed censors, no one has touched it for more than a decade."

"MGM tried to film it with Jean Harlow, but the Breen office rejected the script, interpreting it as 'thoroughly objectionable.'" But when the same author *[James Cain]* wrote a crime thriller called *Double Indemnity* and adapted it into a film with Barbara Stanwyck, it ushered in a new era of *film noir*. And that's not all that Cain devised: Warners recently adapted his *roman noir* called *Mildred Pierce* into a film with Joan Crawford, and it's set for a release soon."

"In this *Postman* caper, who will play the drifter?" Lana asked.

"John Garfield,"

She did not conceal the disappointment in her voice. "C'mon, Tay, why can't you find some attractive male? Someone who looks like Burt Lancaster or James Craig. And I bet that if you could borrow him, that Robert Mitchum would be ideal. I'd look forward to doing torrid love scenes with any of those hunks. I've already auditioned each of them."

Carey Wilson, the writer-producer of *Postman*, had worked with his screen-writers Niven Busch and Harry Ruskin, and had devised what Garnett thought was a script that could get a pass from the censors.

[Before Postman*, Wilson had written screen plays for* Ben-Hur *(1925), starring Ramon Novarro, and* Mutiny on the Bounty *(1935) with Charles Laughton and Clark Gable. He would eventually write the screenplay for Lana's historical melodrama,* Green Dolphin Street *(1947). He was one of the thirty-six Hollywood pioneers who had founded the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1927, and he had also collaborated with Jean Harlow on her novel*, Today is Tonight*.]*

Although it had been interpreted as too sizzling for a Hollywood film during the 1930s, the plot of *Postman* was acceptable for Broadway, where censorship standards were more lenient. In 1936, a stage adaptation of *Postman* opened in New York. It starred Richard Barthelmess and Mary Philips, who had been married to Humphrey Bogart.

[As a novelist whose works were in vogue for filmmakers, Cain even became popular abroad. In 1939, in one of the last French films made before the Nazi takeover of that country, Le Dernier Tournant *(based on Cain's* The Postman Always Rings Twice*) was released. It starred Fernand Gravet, Michel Simon, and Corinne Luchaire.*

In a brazen move in 1943, in the middle of World War II (supposedly when an armed belligerent didn't care about trespassing a U.S. copyright), the Italian director, Luchino Visconti, ignored Cain's copyright and filmed Ossessione*, starring Massimo Girotti, Clara Calamai, and Elio Marcuzzo. Since the film rights belonged to MGM, the studio prevented prints of the movie from entering the United States. Critic Arthur Knight called the Visconti*

film "a true masterpiece."]

After reading the script for *Postman*, Lana was reluctant to play Cora, claiming, "It will blemish my screen image."

In a meeting with Mayer, he urged her to accept the role. "You need to alter your screen identity. You're no longer 'the Sweater Girl.' With this film, you can be as glamorous as ever, but it will show the world you're also an accomplished actress. I see an Oscar in your future."

She accepted the role after Garnett assured her, "I'll order Irene to dress you sexily in virginal white."

Shooting began in May of 1945, as victory was declared by Allied forces at the surrender of Nazi Germany. Before filming began, Irene had designed a wardrobe for Lana that *Life* magazine would later predict "would become historic." Her hair had been dyed a snowy white.

Garnett said, "The world didn't have 'hot pants' back then, but you couldn't tell that by looking at Lana." Except on two occasions, including at a funeral, Lana wore white throughout the movie.

The revised plot, toned down from the novel, depicts a drifter, Frank Chambers (Garfield), who stops at the Twin Oaks roadside diner for a hamburger. It advertises a chicken dinner for $1.25. In the window, Garfield spots a MAN WANTED sign.

He meets the affable late middle-aged owner of the café, Nick Smith (Cecil Kellaway).

But it is the appearance of Cora Smith (Lana) who fascinates him. Her entrance in the film is viewed as the most stunning of any other actress in the 1940s. She drops a tube of lipstick, which rolls across the floor of the diner. The camera then opens onto her open-toed white high heels and follows upward to encase her perfect figure, beginning with her shapely tanned legs and taking in her white shorts and white halter top to showcase her insolent but stunningly beautiful face that's offset with a white turban.

Lana's entrance ignited a fashion vogue around the country of women wearing shorts and, on occasion, turbans.

As Garfield takes in her image, she says, "You won't find anything cheap around here." She also tells him, "The harder the wind blows, the hotter it gets."

Critic Hollis Alpert labeled her "the quintessential sex object—the woman to be had at *any* cost."

Gone was the kittenish Lana Turner of those late 1930s films. This is Madame Satan herself, with arched eyebrows, half-parted succulent lips, protruding breasts, and a body oozing with sexual tension. Her silvery magnetism would shock post-war movie audiences.

Almost from the first, Garfield becomes obsessed. He accepts the low-paying handyman's job that had been advertised in the window, and assists in the day-today running of the diner.

Soon, he and Cora are locked into an adulterous love affair, which really heats up when she suggests that they could find happiness together if only her husband were out of the way.

As the plot unfolds, Nick is hit over the head with a wine bottle and pushed off a cliff in his car. The lovers are booked on a charge of murder, but a clever lawyer gets them off. Cora discovers that she is pregnant, and marriage is contemplated.

Back from making love on a moonswept beach, she gets into a car to drive back to the diner with Frank. *En route*, they are involved in an accident, which kills her.

The last we see of Cora in the film is at the site of the fatal car crash. Her dead hand reaches up, dropping that tube of lipstick we'd seen during her dramatic entrance at the debut of the movie.

A trial ensues, and Frank is convicted of her murder, which, ironically, had been an accident. He is sentenced to die in the electric chair and stoically accepts his fate, realizing that justice has been carried out, even though he's about to be electrocuted for the wrong murder.

He contemplates what happens when a person is expecting a letter. He feels it is no concern if at first the postman only rings the doorbell once, because he will always ring it a second time.

Lana and Garfield, as the protagonists of *Postman*, were backed up by a well-chosen supporting cast, notably Cecil Kellaway in the third lead. Although the character she played detested the character he played on screen, she said that off-screen, between takes, she "adored him."

Born in South Africa in 1890, he was usually cast as a jovial, stocky, silver-haired character, with a kindly speaking voice. Before meeting him, she had seen several of his films, notably *Wuthering Heights* (1939), with Laurence Olivier, and *The Letter* (1940), starring Bette Davis.

Hume Cronyn, the husband of actress Jessica Tandy, was cast as Arthur Keats, a slyly sleazy and unscrupulous criminal lawyer, with Alan Reed cast as Ezra Kennedy in the role of a "gumshoe."

Leon Ames, who had starred with Lana in *Week-End at the Waldorf*, had a very different role in *Postman*. As Kyle Sackett, he was the local prosecutor who suspects Lana and Garfield of murdering her husband.

Another blonde, Audrey Totter, was no rival for Lana. She was cast as Madge Goland, Garfield's cheap pickup girlfriend, and was one of the best of "the tough-talking, hard-edged broads" of fi*lm noir* in the late 1940s. Her

career faded in the early fifties when that style of dame went out of fashion.

In her memoirs, Lana revealed that Garnett almost didn't finish the film. Trying to shoot the beach scenes in Laguna, the cast and crew encountered day after day of heavy fog. Although their director had been "on the wagon" for three years, the pressure from MGM and the long delays caused him to sink into deep bouts of alcoholism where he often became violent, even threatening, at one point, to beat up Garfield.

An iconic star in an iconic role

“No one could control him,” Lana wrote. “He was a roaring, mean, furniture-smashing drunk. The girlfriend he’d brought with him stayed for a while, then gave up.”

MGM sent nurses to tend to him, and Garfield tried to get him to sober up, but to no avail. He told Lana, “The bastard was so drunk, he didn’t even know who I was.”

Lana herself intervened, begging him (and eventually prevailing) to enter a clinic in Los Angeles for a quick rehab. Garfield and Lana resisted a proposal for MGM to assign another director, because they’d seen the rushes and felt that he’d wangled a “dynamic performance out of us.”

Miraculously, the day Garnett returned to the set from Los Angeles, the fog lifted and shooting resumed. At the end of filming, Lana presented Garnett with a fur-lined jockstrap. “Don’t let anyone say to you that you don’t go first class.”

As 1946 came to an end, Lana was named one of the highest-paid women in America, earning $226,000, a staggering amount at the time.

The Postman Always Rings Twice opened at Manhattan’s Capitol Theater on May 2, 1946, as both a critical success and as a box office hit. Lana had never received such glowing reviews.

The *New York World-Telegram* wrote, “One of the astonishing excellences of this picture is the performance to which Lana Turner has been inspired.”

In the *New York Post*, Archer Winsten wrote: “Before *Postman*, all Lana had to do was look good in front of the camera. If it is possible not to be dazzled by her beauty and pile of taffy hair, you may agree that she is now beginning to roll in the annual actresses’ sweepstakes.”

In this movie still from *Postman*, John Garfield in the back seat is about to knock out happy Cecil Kellaway with a wine bottle. Lana’s face reflects the impending doom of her husband.

Newsweek reported, “Within the limits of movie medium, the film is as explicit as it can be.” *Life* critiqued it as “a catalogue of the seven deadly sins. We recommend that the faint of heart stay away.”

Time weighed in, too: “The hideous story of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* features reptilian bits of legal chicanery, characters as amoral as zoo exhibits, and dialogue paced and keyed like an erotic discussion between a couple of cats.”

Writing in *The New York Times*, critic Bosley Crowther said, “Too much cannot be said for the principals. Mr. Garfield reflects the crude and confused young hobo who stumbled aimlessly into a fatal trap. And Miss Turner is remarkably effective as the cheap and uncertain blonde who has a pathetic ambition ‘to be somebody,’ and a pitiful notion that she can realize it through crime. Cecil Kellaway is just a bit too cozy and clean as Miss Turner’s middle-aged spouse.”

Critic Stephen MacMillan Moser, no great fan of Lana’s, credited her with being a star, but not necessarily an actress. However, he pronounced *Postman* “a stunner—a cruel, desperate, and gritty James Cain vehicle that sorely tested her skills. But she succeeds marvelously, and from the first glimpse of her standing in the doorway in her white pumps, as the camera travels up her tanned legs, she becomes a character so enticingly beautiful and insidiously evil that the audience is riveted.”

Years later, the *Saturday Evening Post* asked Lana who her favorite character had been in all the films she’d ever shot. She chose Cora. “Playing a wicked woman makes the audience more aware of you as an actress. The role gave me something to work with. Cora was not the usual heroine. I thought I understood the odd, twisted reasoning that made her yearn for a small piece of property out in the hills—for what she considered respectability and security—and yet, at the same time, led her to do things which ruined her chance of getting what she wanted.”

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As John Garfield, Lana's highly promiscuous co-star in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, candidly admitted, "I was in Hollywood for a full week before I got laid. I don't know—that may just be a record."

Artie Shaw, Lana's first husband, told a reporter, "He loves being John Garfield because of all the pussy and the perks."

Garfield's list of seductions was long and impressive, ranging from A-list starsto cheap pickups. The more distinguished women he bedded included Hedy Lamarr, Ann Sheridan, Anne Shirley, singer Margaret Whiting, Shelley Winters, Frances Farmer, Ida Lupino, Eleanor Parker, and, surprise, even the legendary French singer, Edith Piaf.

To that list could be added dozens of script girls, extras, starlets, and "all the female students at the American Laboratory Theatre in Manhattan (at least he claimed that)."

Author Truman Capote once said, "He was one of the nicest people I've ever known. My mother saw him just once and tried to get him into bed with her. She did not succeed. But I did."

Tough, edgy, street-smart, and cynical, Garfield grew up in the 1920s on the streets of the Bronx and Manhattan's Lower East Side. Born Julius Garfinkle, he was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants. His father was a clothes-presser and part-time cantor.

"In the streets of New York, I learned all the meanness, all the toughness it's possible for kids to acquire. If I hadn't become a movie star, I would probably have become Public Enemy Number One."

As he matured, he became a gang leader in the Bronx until he contracted scarlet fever, an affliction that left him with permanent heart damage.

Film critic Lou Valentino wrote: "John Garfield and Lana Turner depicted in this beach scene, worked surprisingly well together. Her blonde, angel-faced sexuality contrasted brilliantly with his dark, brooding features, and they created one of the most exciting star combinations of 1946."

Gradually, he drifted into acting, eventually migrating from New York to Hollywood. When the war came, he was rejected for military service because of that heart condition. Along with Bette Davis, he helped found the Hollywood Canteen. Long before she became intimate with him, Lana knew him during the war because of her own involvement with the Canteen. "I left the dirty dishes for the other stars and danced with the servicemen."

She had protested the casting of Garfield in *Postman* because she did not find him attractive as a male animal, and feared they would not have the sexual chemistry that the script demanded. She obviously underestimated his male allure, as the first rushes of *Postman* revealed.

After seeing those rushes, Garnett said, "There was a special chemistry between my two stars. I don't know if

they had anything going on the side, but on film, you were rooting for them, even though they played murderers. John had his share of girls, but he had a bad heart and that might have frightened Lana off. He teased her about sex, which tends to make me believe that nothing happened. They sizzled on the screen, though."

John Garfield should have kept his eyes on the road—and not on Lana. In this pivotal scene, Lana, as Cora, is about to meet her tragic ending.

During those long days and nights at Laguna Beach, waiting for the director to sober up and for the fog to lift, Garfield knocked on Lana's door one night. Lonely and bored, she invited him in. The next morning, he was seen leaving her suite. They spent the following day together, waiting for the cameras to roll, and he spent another night in her suite, and then another and another.

At the time of their affair, Lana and Garfield had to be very discreet. After all, he had been married to Roberta Seidman, a member of the Communist Party, since 1935.

After being seduced by the actor several nights in a row, Lana had to agree with the assessment of columnist Sheilah Graham. "He made love like a sexy puppy, in and out, huffing and puffing in quick gasps."

After the shooting of *Postman*, Lana saw very little of Garfield, as she had by then launched a torrid affair with Tyrone Power. However, she did meet him one night at a party when he was making his next picture, *Humoresque* (1946) with Joan Crawford.

"When I was introduced to Crawford," he told Lana, "she extended her hand to me. Instead of taking it, I reached to pinch her nipple. At first, she looked angry, but that soon faded into a seductive smile. She told me, 'You and I, buster, are going to get along just fine. I just hope you're good in the sack, and that that arrogant act of yours isn't faked."

At the time of Garfield's death on May 21, 1952, he was planning to divorce his wife. He died of a heart attack in the apartment of actress Iris Whitney in New York City. Having sustained great stress because of having been blacklisted for allegedly being a member of the Communist Party, he finally surrendered to the burdens of a troubled life.

Lana was greatly distressed to learn about his death and discussed him with her friends: "John had a penchant for picking up girls, sometimes two at a time, and a reputation as a demon lover. He died young, which was understandable."

"He once told me that an actor doesn't reach maturity until he turns forty. We'll never know what future greatness he had in him. He was only thirty-nine when he died. He never lived long enough to become a screen legend like Bogie."

"I was moved to learn that some 10,000 people gathered in the Riverside Memorial Chapel in Manhattan to pay their final respects to this most talented young man. That was the largest turnout of fans since the death of Valentino. I will always have a special place for him in my heart, remembering the times he and I had making our most memorable movie, the picture in which I ended up smashed to death, and he faced the electric chair."

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During the filming of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Lana began an affair with a tall, handsome actor from New York State, Robert Hutton. She'd met him at the Hollywood Canteen in 1944. *[*"Hollywood Canteen" *was also the title of a movie he made that year.]*

They didn't start to date right away until he escorted her in December of 1945 to the premiere of *Leave Her to Heaven*, the movie that brought Gene Tierney an Oscar nomination.

[At the end of the film, Lana whispered to Hutton, "I could have played that part, and I wish I had."]

Lana thought Robert Hutton bore a strong resemblance to Jimmy Stewart, to whom he was often compared.

He confessed that his wartime career had depended on what was called "Victory Casting," meaning that he and other actors who didn't have to go into military service stayed in Hollywood, taking roles that might have otherwise gone to Stewart, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, or others.

Hutton, the son of a hardware merchant, was famous for being the cousin of Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress who had been married to Cary Grant.

During the period that Lana dated Hutton, Warners was promoting him as its newest heart-throb, since some of their matinee idols were beginning to fade a bit. Columnist Walter Winchell wrote about Lana's dating of Hutton, calling him "her biggest thrill."

That remark brought laughter to her many friends in Hollywood, who asked her, "Is Bob really your biggest thrill?"

Hutton later complained, "I hated that rumor. Every time I went to a urinal to take a leak, I was followed by some queen who wanted to check me out."

When she started dating Hutton, he was divorcing Natalie Thompson and had become a free agent like herself.

One of the highlights of her dating schedule was when he took her to the lavishly decorated home of his mega-wealthy cousin, the Woolworth heiress, Barbara Hutton. *[When she'd married Grant, the press had collectively dubbed them "Cash and Carry," but they had since divorced, although remaining friends.]*

At a party, Lana talked to Grant, who asked her, "Why haven't we made a movie together?"

"It's about time," she agreed.

During Lana's talk with the heiress, Hutton said that she preferred to date European men such as Prince Frederick Hohenzollern. "Except for the one I married, they are more sophisticated, more aware."

Barbara Hutton—rich and wistful. When Lana met her, she was regally seated on a throne-like chair receiving her guests.

In the 1930s, the subject of custody battles among feuding factions within the Hutton clan, she had been dubbed "The Poor Little Rich Girl."

In reference to her later life, author Truman Capote called her "the most incredible phenomenon of the 20th Century."

She was referring to Count Kurt Haughwitz-Reventlow, a Danish nobleman. A story was making the rounds in Hollywood that, following an argument, he had forced her into the bathroom, where he made her sit nude on his lap while he relieved himself.

She also dated movie stars, not just Grant. Her lovers had included two of Lana's former beaux, David Niven and Errol Flynn. She had also been involved with the English actor, Michael Wilding, before he married Elizabeth Taylor.

Lana found Barbara indiscreet during a discussion about her former lovers, as if satirizing herself. "One night, I visited Michael Rennie. He was gone for a while and then emerged from his bathroom wearing a rubber diving suit. He had a bullwhip in one hand, and a jar of Vaseline in the other. I won't go on. I was also involved with the playboy, Fred McEvoy. He kept the preserved body of his dead baby on display at his villa in Mexico City."

She told Lana, "I won't say that my husbands thought only of my money, but it held a certain fascination for them."

What she didn't tell Lana, but what she had learned through gossip, was that her on-again, off-again lover, Howard Hughes, was having an affair with Grant during her marriage to him.

At the last party Lana attended at Barbara's residence, the heiress took her hand and held it tenderly as she said goodbye. "Remember, my dear, money can't buy you happiness."

Lana continued to date Robert Hutton until she went on an extended trip to South America. Upon her return, she learned that he had fallen for Cleatus Caldwell and was soon to marry her.

Like so many men that Lana dated, Hutton's life ended in tragedy. He broke his back in an accident at his home and spent his last days in a nursing care facility, dying on August 7, 1994.

In the 70s, she recalled, "If Robert had any grudge against me, he took it out on me by writing the script for my 1974 film, *Persecution*, one of my worst movies. I can't bear to watch it."

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For months, Howard Hughes had lived up to the label that Errol Flynn had bequeathed him: "The Lone Wolf." But near the end of the war, after a long disappearance, Hughes flew to Los Angeles, landing at the airport at Burbank. A reporter spotted him and leaked word that he was back in town to the newspapers. At least three screen beauties, perhaps a lot more, awaited his phone call. Lana, Rita (Hay-worth) and Ava (Gardner) topped the list.

Having emerged from his self-imposed exile, he re-inaugurated, once again, his pursuit of some of the world's most alluring women. During the autumn of 1945, he was seducing actress Jane Greer and flying to Canada to make love to Yvonne De Carlo. He told his aides, "Yvonne is my hot new flame, but I don't want to confine myself to just one woman."

The months immediately following the end of the war seemed to bring renewed energy to him. He had survived, more or less intact, his wartime airplane production scandals, including the furor over his ill-fated, way-over-budget, plywood-sheathed "Spruce Goose."

He ordered a screening of Lana's latest film, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. After watching it with Meyer, he told him, "Lana is the hottest platinum blonde in Hollywood since I first fucked Jean Harlow. She's compellingly sexy in this film, although I usually prefer bosomy brunettes. I might contact her again."

That is exactly what he did, and in April of 1946, Lana and Hughes checked once again into Manhattan's Sherry-Netherland Hotel, occupying different suites. When she walked into her elegantly furnished lodgings, she found it filled with her favorite flowers: rare white orchids, ivory roses, and gardenias.

It was sometime during her stay with him there that he proposed marriage. After thinking it over for a tantalizing minute, she said "yes." He seemed so delighted by her acceptance that he immediately hauled her off to bed.

But a complication emerged almost immediately. The very next night, Hughes phoned Linda Darnell, who had remained a close friend of Lana's. "You have no idea how much I love you," he told Linda. "I can't wait for us to get married." Darnell enthusiastically supported the plan, promising that she'd immediately divorce her husband, cameraman Peverell J. Marley.

After Darnell transmitted this information to her then-husband, Marley imposed a condition on what soon emerged as a plan to facilitate Hughes and Darnell's marital "reshuffling": Marley wanted the billionaire to pay him an annual salary of $25,000 for the remainder of his life.

Darnell discreetly decided not to inform Lana of Hughes' proposal.

With a mind-numbing duplicity, Hughes simultaneously, and despite his promises to Darnell, continued the plans he had set in motion to wed Lana, defining May 8 in Las Vegas as the venue for their upcoming wedding. He even commissioned a $5,000 wedding dress for Lana from Oleg Cassini, with instructions that it be delivered to her house for a fitting.

Hughes' elaborate "Lana" plan included an agreement that at 9AM on the morning of the wedding, he would retrieve her in a limousine for transport to the airport, where a private plane would be waiting to haul them off to a civil ceremony and honeymoon in Las Vegas.

To her consternation, by 10AM on Lana's big day, neither Hughes, nor his car, nor his driver, had arrived. Worried and fretful, Lana called Johnny Maschio, one of his chief aides. He told her that he had not heard from Hughes since the previous night.

"Find out where in hell he is," she demanded. She then called back every thirty minutes.

Finally, at 4PM, Hughes finally contacted (by phone) Maschio, not revealing his location or his intentions.

"Lana is enraged," Maschio reported to his boss. "What should I tell her?"

"Absolutely nothing," Hughes said before abruptly hanging up his phone.

The next day, a stunning diamond bracelet from Tiffany's arrived. Because of her love of diamonds, Lana decided to forgive him.

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After the humiliating collapse of their marriage plans, Hughes phoned Lana only occasionally, meeting with her even less frequently. She reported to Susan Hayward, who also dated him, that "Howard seems deeply troubled. He's like a man searching, searching, for something, but never finding it."

One night, he dropped by Lana's house, telling her that at long last, he was ready to be the sole test pilot aboard his experimental new aircraft, the XF-11.

She urged him not to do it, and to select one of his trained pilots instead. She later told Hayward, "I had this incredible intuition, I smelled trouble before it happened. I just knew that that damned XF-11 was heading for disaster."

On Sunday morning, July 7, 1946, Hughes—at the controls and alone in the cockpit—set out on his daring test flight. Before boarding the aircraft, he told his aides, "It's the most beautiful plane I ever built."

Subsequently, his plane crashed into a private home in Beverly Hills, which resulted in legal implications that dragged on for years. An emergency ambulance rushed to the rescue, and with its red dome light flashing, sped him to the nearest hospital. Blood ran from his nose, mouth, and ears, and his leather jacket had ignited into flames.

Doctors gave him a fifty-fifty chance of survival.

Lana had switched on the radio that morning. She was shocked when bulletins about Hughes and his unlucky aircraft began dominating the news broadcasts.

In the days that followed, Hughes struggled for life. Recovering from burns and injuries, he was in great pain, his doctor shooting him with morphine to ease his agony.

Days and days went by before his condition began to improve. America was waiting, since at that time, he was a household word.

The hospital was overrun with visitors, a few of whom included former girlfriends Ginger Rogers and Olivia de Havilland, and a horde of people Hugheshardly knew, including James Cagney, David O. Selznick, and Danny Kaye. Johnny Meyer was ordered to turn most of them away.

Linda Darnell, who had apparently recovered from the pre-marital embarrassments she'd suffered, showed up too. Dressed in black, she was refused entry. The next morning, the *Hollywood-Citizen* ran a blaring headline—LINDA DARNELL REFUSED PERMISSION TO SEE HUGHES.

The next day, also dressed in black, Lana appeared. Because of her friendship with Johnny Meyer, she was allowed access, although he warned her, "Make it quick!"

She was horrified by what she saw. As she later confided to Meyer, she offered to marry him, in spite of his broken promise and his disastrously embarrassing no-show on the infuriating morning of their aborted wedding. "But you've got to promise me you'll never fly another plane."

Enigmatic, as always, about his commitments, he thanked her and falsely soothed her with the promise "I'm through with aviation."

The following day, as Hughes continued his recuperation in the hospital, Meyer granted access to Jean Peters, a fresh-faced, green-eyed farm girl from Ohio, another of the actresses whom Hughes had been dating. She was under contract to 20th-Century Fox.

Although he could have dated far more glamorous stars, he'd perceived a particular affinity for her. She had wanted him to marry her, but, as with Lana, he stalled.

[Eventually, by 1954, she abandoned any hope for marriage to him, and married Stanley M. Cramer III, a Texas oil executive, instead.

In 1957, Peters divorced Cramer and, in a secret wedding ceremony in Tonapah, Nevada, married Hughes. Abandoning her film career, she subsequently became a virtual recluse.

As for Lana, her relationship with Hughes was far from over, and would soon veer off the highway with a radical left turn into chaos.]

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Frank Sinatra had met Lana when each was relatively new to Hollywood.

In the months to come, Lana—who was always with one of her many *beaux*— often encountered Sinatra and his wife Nancy at Hollywood parties or premieres. He knew her well enough to visit her on the set of her film, *Keep Your Powder Dry*. Showing up there with Gene Kelly (one of her future co-stars), they each wore sailor uniforms.

In 1944, she appeared on the *Frank Sinatra Show* for CBS, and later that night a photographer snapped their picture together at the Clover Club. Daughter Cheryl remembered "Uncle Frank" calling on her mother at their marvelous home in Bel Air overlooking the local country club.

[According to Hollywood lore and the singer's own boastings, the notoriously promiscuous Sinatra had—based on his screening of The Postman Always Rings Twice*—moved her from "Number 8" to the top of his "list of actresses to seduce."]*

"I've got to have Lana," Sinatra told Tommy Dorsey. "I know you've already had the pleasure."

Swimming star Esther Williams had been assigned the dressing room next to Lana's at MGM. She spotted Sinatra slipping in and out for secret rendezvous. "My dressing room was modest, but Lana had a king-sized bed in hers, complete with pink satin sheets. She also had a lot of mirrors so she could oversee the action. From the sounds of things, he was having one big explosion. Why not? At the time, Lana was hailed as the most desirable woman on the planet."

At the time that Sinatra became involved with Lana, she was one of the most widely publicized sex goddesses of the silver screen. Many of her friends, including Linda Darnell, agreed that, "Lana tries to live up to that title. She told me that a variety of men add spice to a girl's life. No sooner would *Photoplay* herald one of her romances and run a picture of the two of them, she would be dating some other man. Gossip columnists were always out of date where she was concerned. Sinatra went through women, and Lana went through men, as fast as commercials on the radio."

An aide to Louis B. Mayer told him that he had spotted Lana and Sinatra together in the back seat of his car "smooching." Actually, "smooching" was not the right word for it. Mayer was horrified, eager to avoid a scandal based on the fact that Sinatra was still married to his first wife, Nancy.

Esther Williams remembered the afternoon that Nancy Sinatra arrived, unannounced, and loudly knocked on the door to Lana's dressing room, which, as mentioned, was immediately next door to Esther's. Hearing the knock, and with the understanding Lana was away from MGM that day, Williams invited Nancy into her own dressing room instead.

According to Esther, "She looked distraught. Shaking all over. In tears, Nancy told me that Frank had fallen in love with Lana, and that the night before, Frank had told her that he wanted a divorce. I tried to comfort her as much as I could. That night, I attended a party at the home of Sonja Henie. Frank was there with Lana. They had eyes only for each other as they danced crotch-to-crotch. When Lana went to powder her nose, I told him that I'd seen Nancy. He confirmed that he'd asked her for a divorce so that he could marry Lana."

Without informing Lana, Sinatra rented a duplex apartment in Hollywood for them. He filled it with $50,000 worth of new furnishings, and even purchased several sets of pink satin sheets. *[He also maintained a more modest apartment about fifteen blocks away for assignations with other women.]*

When it was sparkling and "prepped" for its role as their love nest, Sinatra drove Lana to the duplex. He later said, "She wasn't impressed. She called it a dump and told me that she wouldn't sleep one night in such a joint. So I took her to the Beverly Hills Hotel where I rented a bungalow, and we spent the rest of the night making love."

Sinatra authorized publicist George Evans to announce that he and Nancy had separated. It came as a shock to his fans. When it was revealed that Lana, as his lover, had played a role in the separation, she was denounced as a home-wrecker.

After news of the breakup appeared in the newspapers, Sinatra and Lana were seen together at a resort in Palm Springs.

Back in Hollywood, when Lana read the horrible press she had generated, shephoned Louella Parsons. "I am not in love with Frank Sinatra. Nor is he in love with me. We're just good friends. I have never broken up a home and I don't intend to."

Lana had known Frank Sinatra since 1940, but didn't have an affair with him until right after she'd filmed *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

When she'd first met him, she told Ava Gardner that she thought, "He's all skin and bones."

But Gardner later revealed his allure: "There may be only ten pounds on the guy, but there are 110 pounds of cock."

Within a span of about two weeks, Sinatra had obviously changed his mind about marrying Lana. He had purchased an expensive diamond bracelet for her, but decided not to give it to her. He told Phil Silvers, "I've had a change of heart. I will not marry Lana. That doesn't mean I'm giving up fucking her. She really gets off being plugged by my whopper."

That diamond bracelet was eventually presented to another blonde actress, Marilyn Maxwell, instead, but not before Nancy had discovered it (and presumably registered its value), after finding it concealed in a drawer at home with his underwear.

Later, at a party hosted by Nancy and Frank at the Sinatra home, Maxwell in-discreetly showed up wearing that bracelet. After the party had been rocking along for two hours, Nancy approached her and demanded that she relinquish the bracelet and give it to her. At first, Maxwell resisted, but, fearing a fight and horrendously embarrassed, she reluctantly surrendered it.

Later, at a New Year's Eve party in Hollywood, Lana was introduced to Nancy. The other guests backed away, warily expecting fireworks, but the two women gossiped and seemed to enjoy each other's company.

In a corner of the party, a very handsome actor, under contract to MGM, was holding forth, surrounded by three starlettes. "Boy, the gal he selects tonight is in for a big disappointment," Lana said. "That's the only thing *big* about him. He must need a pair of tweezers to jerk off."

Nancy laughed. "That's hardly Frank's problem."

To Nancy, Lana expressed her disdain for Hollywood. After defining it as "a boiler factory," she said, "The men here are either fairies or hounds. Women out here like to slit each other's throats. Take Joan Crawford and me, for example."

Weeks later, both Lana and Nancy were in New York at the same time, each of them for, among other reasons, Sinatra's opening at the Waldorf Astoria.

Whereas Nancy attended the 10PM show and then retreated to her suite, Lanashowed up for the midnight show and wildly applauded Sinatra. At the end of his concert, he rushed over to her table. Embracing her, he whispered in her ear. "I've missed you, baby. Can't live without you."

When this photo of Sinatra feeding Lana a popsickle appeared in the newspapers, gossips quipped: "That's not the only popsickle Frankie's feeding Lana."

She told him she'd rented a suite at the nearby Plaza, a few blocks from the Waldorf. Within the hour, he was there, knocking on her door.

A bellhop saw him leaving the Plaza at 7AM the next morning, on his way back to his suite at the Waldorf… and Nancy.

Perhaps caught up in the sexual excitement of a reunion with Lana, Sinatra proposed marriage to her once again. This time, she accepted.

"I'm making wedding plans," Lana told Linda Darnell after her return to Hollywood. "Frank has again promised to marry me, and I've accepted. He's definitely going to leave Nancy this time. There can be no turning back. He said the spark is gone between Nancy and him."

Yet after his own return to Los Angeles, he changed his mind again. Phil Silvers was performing at Slapsie Maxie's Club, and Sinatra showed up. Although Nancy was in the audience that night at a table with friends, Sinatra did not acknowledge her. Silvers invited Sinatra up onto the stage, and he sang a beautiful rendition of "Going Home." At the end of the song, he received wild applause when he walked over to Nancy's table and took her in his arms and kissed her. Reunited, the couple left the club together. The next day, *Variety* announced: *FRANK SINATRA BACK WITH WIFE.*

Lana's maid delivered her the morning paper. When she read the headline, she shouted at her maid and hurled her breakfast tray against a mirror. "How dare that son of a bitch! That fucker!! How could he do this to me?"

Storming out of her bedroom, she ordered her maid to "clean up this god damn mess."

Years later, that maid spoke to a reporter. “I never understood why Miss Turner got so upset about Sinatra. Only the night before, she told me that she’d fallen in love with Tyrone Power.”

After Sinatra’s reconciliation with Nancy, their marriage would struggle along for four more unhappy, turbulent, scandal-soaked years.

Even though he’d returned to hearth, home, and Nancy, Sinatra confessed something to Peter Lawford, with whom he had co-starred in *It Happened in Brooklyn* (1947).

“Because of my involvement with Lana, I now have great expectations from a woman, one that Nancy can’t fulfill. I need variety in love-making, not the sameold missionary position night after night. I fear I’ll never find another Lana Turner…that is, unless I start banging Ava Gardner.”

Sinatra told Dean Martin, “I like brunettes. Ava Gardner proves that. But when a blonde like Marilyn Maxwell, Lana Turner, or Marilyn Monroe comes along, I get as erect as the Empire State Building.”

Although Lana and Sinatra maintained their sexual involvement during many years of his marriage to Nancy, Lana ended their affair when he married Gardner. She said. “I’m not going to have sex with my best friend’s husband.” But Lana’s vows didn’t mean a lot.

In a memoir, Cheryl admitted that Lana and Sinatra were romantically involved on and off for many years. She recalled seeing them dancing together in 1970 at the Candy Store on Rodeo Drive. She also claimed that over the years, Sinatra presented her mother with many gifts, including diamonds.

“Keep Betty Grable, Lamour, and Turner,” Sinatra sang in his first recording of “Nancy,” that reference having been inspired by his daughter, Nancy, and not to his wife.

In her memoirs, Lana denied ever having had an affair with Sinatra. Her book editor later revealed, however, that the original manuscript contained a “blow-by-blow” description of their romance. By the time of its publication, Lana and Sinatra, both now aging, had had a row. In its aftermath, Lana demanded that her romantic passages about the singer be removed. “I don’t want to give him the satisfaction.”

Ava Gardner’s autobiography contained the passage, “Lana had a very serious affair with Frank. We once met in the ladies’ room during a Hollywood party many moons ago. She told me her story, that she was deeply in love with Frank, and so, she thought, he was with her.”

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In Argentina, a small-time actress, call girl, and radio announcer, Eva Duarte (later known, worldwide, as Evita Perón), had forged the most fascinating and frightening political partnership in South America. Hooking up with a military commander, Juan Perón, whom she was romancing at the time, she had worked behind the scenes to win for him, in 1946, the presidency of Argentina. From the power base she helped him establish and reinforce, they would rule together with an iron, anti-colonial fist.

She and Perón were ruthless power grabbers, even working behind the scenes with the Nazis, to secure financing for various development and military projects in Argentina. As history revealed, they picked the wrong side during World War II, and—after the war—were severely ostracized by many of the Allies, especially since their country had become a post-war haven for Nazi refugees in hiding.

From dire poverty, Eva in time became one of the most powerful women in the world, a blonde goddess like Lana, swathed in furs and draped with diamonds. Most of her politidal support derived from her *Los Descamisados [aka* “the shirtless ones”*]*, legions of impoverished blue collar laborers.

What was not widely known at the time was her obsession with the image projected by Lana Turner. Eva’s lover and Lana’s future lover, the Argentine actor, Fernando Lamas, said, “Eva Perón wanted to be Lana Turner. She modeled her wardrobe, her makeup, even her hair styles to emulate Lana. As such, she became one of the most fashionable women in the world and the first to appear in public in Argentina wearing pants.”

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In 1946, as part of a publicity tour and in need of a long vacation, Lana flew to Buenos Aires with her paid companion, Sara Hamilton, paying her expenses and lending her money. Hamilton was a magazine writer who had befriended Lana. According to Lana, “I trusted Sara, but she betrayed me. When she got back home, she fed unflattering gossip about me to the fan magazines, for which she was paid.”

Before flying out of L.A., Lana met with Greg Bautzer, having long ago forgiven him for breaking what she viewed as an engagement. She had a problem she asked him to solve: She wanted Mildred out of her house, complaining that she had become a nuisance. Instead of living in her quarters, she had “expanded her turf” and commandeered Lana’s living room, remaining there, often half the night, for her daughter’s return. Invariably, Lana

came home with a young man, and Mildred was very vocal with her disapproval of her daughter's stream of pickups. She often complained, "Where did I go wrong? I wanted you to grow up to be a good girl, not the whore of Babylon!"

Lana had a solution. She instructed Bautzer to sell her large house and to move her into a smaller one, with just enough room for Cheryl and herself. "I was a twice-divorced woman in my mid-twenties, and I didn't need parental guidance for myself."

The attorney promised Lana that he'd take care of her real estate problems and that he'd move Mildred into a separate apartment.

When she arrived in Buenos Aires, Lana was greeted at the airport by hundreds of fans who turned out to welcome her. An MGM publicist helped her fight her way through the crowds. "Latins love blonde movie stars," she later proclaimed.

Outside the airport's terminal, a near-riot ensued. People were pushing and shoving. "They wanted a piece of me," she said. At one point, a woman grabbed for her pearl necklace, but Lana fought her off.

In the rear of a limousine, she complained to the publicist, "Make sure I get all of my jewelry back." She had made it a special point to accessorize herself in Argentina with her beloved diamonds, along with sapphires and emeralds. Much to her distress, Argentine Customs had confiscated her jewel case with a promise to return it to her.

"Those shitheads went over every piece of my lingerie, paying particular attention to my silk panties."

Lana's jewels were safely returned to her, delivered to her hotel under armed guard two nights later. It was months before she learned that Eva Perón had ordered that the jewels be temporarily confiscated so that her jeweler could copy the designs in advance of preparing absolute duplicates of Lana's adornments.

The next day, Lana spoke to the press about the near-riot at Buenos Aires' airport. Commenting on the hysterical reaction to her arrival, she said, "People will risk a broken arm or leg, even serious injury, to get a closeup look at a big Hollywood star."

As they toured the Argentine capital, their maroon-colored sedan was followed by a car filled with four dark-suited men. Lana later referred to them "as the Argentine version of Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, George Raft, and Paul Muni."

She had a friend in Buenos Aires, Betty Dodaro, who hosted a lavish *haute* society party for her, inviting Eva Perón, who had expressed a desire to meet her.

Eva sat in a far corner of the room in a gold chair, looking like royalty. Dodaro brought Lana over for introductions.

In a memoir, Lana recalled that she was shocked to discover that the dictator had dyed her hair as pale as hers. Even her gown was the same as the one Lana had worn for an MGM publicity still. Eva had on long, ruby-colored gloves, and a strapless gown, the same ensemble Lana had worn to pose for pictures advertising Lux Toilet Soap before the release of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. "I felt I was looking at my twin sister…sort of. Madame Perón did not really have my beauty, in spite of copying my makeup."

Before flying south, Lana had posed for photos. Her presentation had included an elaborate hairdo into which flowers and a diamond necklace had been interwoven. She was shocked to see Eva with that same coiffure.

When Lana went to the powder room, Eva got up and followed her in. She ordered everybody else out and posted a security guard at the door.

"Welcome to Argentina," she said. "You are even lovelier than in your pictures."

As the two women chatted, and as her English-speaking Argentine bodyguard remained posted attentively nearby, Eva asked Lana for some beauty tips.

Eva Perón, a Lana Turner impersonator.

Lana freely shared some of her secrets, suggesting that she remove all makeup before going to bed. “Never sleep with it on.” She also advised that before leaving her house, she should check her image in a full-length mirror to see how she looked from the rear. “Remember, more people will see you leave than see you arrive.”

She also suggested a diet that included hot chili peppers to cleanse her body of toxins. “I don’t need to tell you never to wear anything off the rack. When in doubt about wardrobe, ermine and silk brocade will do. Since we’re both world famous, it’s important never to step out the door unless you’re camera ready.”

The night that Lana talked to Eva, “Madame Perón,” in the words of her biographer, Mary Main, “had reached the most opulently ostentatious period of her career. In appearance, she was the apotheosis of the *demimondaine:* There was a voluptuousness about her that did not come from the prodigal display of ornament alone, but from a lushness of the flesh itself. She displayed a softness and womanliness in her face. To the discriminating, her appearance was vulgar. Beautiful as her clothes were, they might have been chosen for the star of some super-colossal Hollywood production.”

Eva thanked Lana for her beauty tips, and offered to do anything she could to make her sojourn in Argentina pleasant. Before departing from the powder room, she grabbed Lana and kissed her passionately on the lips.

Lana later said, “I was stunned…absolutely stunned. Was Madame Perón a closeted lesbian? Or just an effusive Argentine woman showing her thanks?”

At the end of her trip, Lana was relieved to be flying away from Argentina. There had been political rallies and protests, some of them violent. Perónista guards had appeared with drawn sabers. The night before she left Buenos Aires, a bomb had been thrown into the lobby of her hotel. Shaking and terrified, she and Hamilton had sat up all night. Their itinerary called for her to make an appearance next in Brazil.

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Landing in Rio de Janeiro, Lana and Sara Hamilton were met by the same tumultuous crowds that had greeted them in Argentina. They had arrived in time to join in the annual Carnival festivities. The whole city seemed to be celebrating. As just-arrived VIPs, the two women were invited to lavish parties where the hosts never seemed to spare any expense. Wherever Lana went, she was mobbed by adoring crowds. She danced the night away with what she called “the world’s most beautiful men. All of them propositioned me. Did I respond? That’s for me to know and for you to try to find out…maybe.”

Somewhere in Rio, a spectacular party was hosted in Lana’s honor, and, as she admitted herself, “I never looked more seductive.” She’d made a grand entrance in a black satin halter dress, set off with diamonds and flowers in her hair.

At the end of the party, back at her hotel suite, she hung up that satin dress in her closet. The next morning, her entire wardrobe smelled of ether.

[According to Lana, the party that night was punctuated by the consumption of diethyl ether as a recreational

drug, either through inhalation or through drinking. Brazilians would soak their handkerchiefs, inhaling it through the fabric to induce a head-spinning and hallucinogenic high.]

Night after night of partying and casual seductions "of only the handsomest and most well-built of Brazilian men" left her exhausted. When it became clear that she was coming down with a ferocious cold, her doctor, fearing that she was developing pneumonia, sent her for a ten-day rest at the mountain resort of Quinadita, where she languished until she recovered.

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Saying goodbye to South America, Lana and Hamilton flew from Rio to Miami, where she stayed in a suite at the Roney Plaza on Miami Beach.

While in Florida, she was rumored to have had an affair with John Alden Talbot, a rich socialite who had a lavish villa in Palm Beach and was known to Joseph and Rose Kennedy.

The first time she met Talbot, she told him, "You're so handsome, you should be in pictures." Palm Beach society had dubbed him as one of America's "top ten playboy-bachelors. At the time she dated him, he had recently married, the previous April, Nancy Rheem Talbot.

Then Lana flew from Miami to New York for a stay that lasted for two weeks. She lodged within the same accommodation at the Sherry-Netherland where Howard Hughes had made love to her. This time, another former suitor with the initials "HH" was seen coming and going from her suite at all hours of the day and night. She'd resumed dating Huntington Hartford, the A&P heir. When reporters asked her about him, she (rather grandly) quipped, "If only those A&Ps sold champagne and caviar."

Talbot followed her to New York City, where they were seen dancing cheek-to-cheek at the Stork Club. To complicate matters, his wife apparently found out and allegedly threw a jealous fit, flying to Washington, D.C. to be with her mother.

After Lana's return to California, after learning that the Talbots had agreed to a trial separation, she had a reunion with her daughter after an absence of many weeks.

Immediately after her return, she learned that Bautzer had arranged for her to live in a smaller house on Crown Drive in Brentwood, a move that had been deliberately orchestrated as a means of "evicting" Mildred, who was transferred into a small apartment nearby.

Lana would never live with her mother again.

On December 5, Talbot and Lana, with daughter Cheryl, were seen aboard the 20th Century Limited, as it pulled into Manhattan's Grand Central Station. Headlines announced: LANA AND YALE MAN ARRIVE. One columnist wrote, "Her escort was handsome as a collar ad and just as inarticulate."

"Is he your new flame?" one reporter yelled out at her.

"I wouldn't know," she said before disappearing into a limousine.

Once again in Los Angeles, gossip mongers painted her as a heartless *femme fatale* who had broken up yet another home. To counter the rumors, she wisecracked with reporters who gathered around her on the MGM lot: "I have dinner with a fellow a couple of times. Suddenly, I'm a home wrecker. Great big lecherous Lana, that's me."

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During the second week of August of 1946, Tyrone Power, "the man of my dreams" in Lana's words, also flew to Buenos Aires as part of a Good Will Tour of South America sponsored by 20th Century Fox. Along with a pilot-navigator and a Fox publicist, he was accompanied by César Romero, a fellow actor long billed as "the Latin from Manhattan." Romero's long homosexual attachment to Power was well known by insiders in Hollywood.

In a twin-engine Beechcraft named *Saludos Amigos*, the two stars arrived together at the airport in Buenos Aires to discover that hundreds of Argentines had turned out to welcome them. Something resembling a riot broke out, discord that evoked the tumultuous reception that Lana had received.

Both Eva and Juan Perón, who ruled Argentina, were their hosts at a lavish banquet they gave for the two stars at their palace. Both Power and Romero were awed by the extent of their reception, as no head of state had ever been received as tumultuously.

Eva's obsession with Lana—her clothes, her style, and her looks—was an "open secret" among the extended members of her enormous entourage. What wasn't known, except to her direct confidants, was that she had developed a powerful crush on Power. Whenever she spoke of him, she called him "the most beautiful man on earth."

On his third night in Buenos Aires, she made a secret visit to his suite after he'd booted Romero out of it. After

their assignation, at 4AM, she'd slipped out of the hotel through a rear exit, hurrying into a curtained limousine driven by a member of her security team.

As Power confessed at breakfast to a jealous Romero, "Eva and I made love all night. She couldn't get enough of me. I felt I was being devoured instead of devouring her. I'd heard that she got her start working as a *puta* in a bordello. That's probably where she picked up some of those sexual tricks in the art of how to satisfy a man. Lucky Juan."

As Romero later revealed, years after Power's death, "Eva Perón paid three more visits to our suite for trysts with my handsome roommate. In every instance, she adopted the hairstyle, clothing, and makeup styles of her favorite movie star, prompting Power to exclaim, 'I felt I was fucking Lana Turner.'"

Romero feared that if the dictator Juan ever found out, he might order that Power be killed.

"Frankly, I don't think he cares all that much," Power responded. "I heard some gossip that he has two underaged mistresses on the side, and about two nights a week, he pays a visit to a secret hideaway where keeps a pretty, twelve-year-old boy."

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Lana had known Power since 1940, often encountering him at lavish parties or premieres. But after his return from Argentina, she was invited to a party at the home of Edie and Keenan Wynn. At the time, Power was still married to the French actress who billed herself only as "Annabella." He had married her in 1939, when they co-starred together in *Suez*. Although the couple had, by this point, legally separated, they were still married.

At the Wynn party, Power spent most of the evening talking to Lana and avoiding the other guests. She, too, according to Keenan, "Had eyes only for Ty. And who in her right mind wouldn't? The guy is gorgeous!"

Before Power left the party, he invited Lana to his home the following evening for a drink. She eagerly accepted.

He followed her out to her car. Opening the door for her, he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. She later wrote about that moment, claiming, "I went weak in the knees."

[Columnist Hedda Hopper later disputed Edie Wynn's claim that it had been she who brought Lana and Power together. Hopper printed her own version of their meeting: "Lana Turner was sitting alone in a booth at Romanoff's when Tyrone Power walked into the restaurant. She smiled at him and patted the empty seat beside her. He sat next to her as a sexual combustion set in."]

A matinee idol in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Power was known for his striking good looks, appearing in a series of romantic leads or as a swashbuckler in the style of Errol Flynn. He had played a bullfighter in *Blood and Sand* (1941), when he was sustaining affairs with both of his beautiful co-stars, Rita Hayworth and Linda Darnell.

He was the son of the English-born stage and screen actor, Tyrone Power, Sr. In Hollywood, Darryl F. Zanuck had helped Power, Jr., launch his film career at Fox, casting him in hit after hit, including *In Old Chicago* (1938) with Alice Faye; and *The Rains Came* (1939) with Myrna Loy. Zanuck, however, refused to lend him to MGM for the role of Ashley Wilkes opposite Vivien Leigh in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). Zanuck also turned down Warners, which wanted to cast Power opposite Ronald Reagan in his most prestigious film ever, *Kings Row* (1942).

Almost from the first year of his arrival in Hollywood, insiders at Fox learned of his bisexuality. Howard Hughes wanted to take advantage of it, and invited him to fly to Miami for a lavish vacation. The Ohio-born actor at the time was living up the reputation of the character he'd developed for his latest movie, *Ladies in Love* (1936), and as such, was having affairs with both of his co-stars, Janet Gaynor and Loretta Young. His on-and-off affair with Young would continue after his return to Hollywood when he made three more pictures with her: *Love Is News* (1937); *Safe Metropole* (1937); and *Second Honeymoon* (also 1937).

Throughout his career, Tyrone Power had almost as many lovers as Lana did (well, not quite that many). They ranged from Joan Crawford to Noël Coward, from Betty Grable to Doris Day, from Rita Hayworth to Loretta Young and Sonja Henie.

He once said, “For anyone truly interested in the theater, like me, it’s a tragedy to be born handsome and such a sex object to both women and guys.”

Hughes told gay actor William Haines, “This sun-bronzed god got off the plane in Miami, where I was waiting for him at the airport. He was just too good-looking to be real.”

A fan magazine at the time expressed it differently: “Tyrone Power is actually as good-looking as Robert Taylor is supposed to be.”

According to one of Power’s closest friends, actor Monty Woolley, “Howard and Ty became lovers on Miami Beach, and their affair on and off continued for many years. At the time, the press was comparing him to Robert Taylor and Errol Flynn. He later confessed to me that he had sexual liaisons with both actors, justifying it with: ‘I wanted to size up the competition.’”

As proof of Hughes’ attraction to Power, Johnny Meyer said that his boss often supplied Power with extra cash. For years, even though he was a star at Fox, he drew a relatively meager salary, based on the terms of his original contract.

Woolley claimed that Hughes was not just a lover “but a kind of father figure to Ty.”

As for Power’s true sexual preference, his longtime “trick,” Scotty Hanson, said, “Ty was basically gay, but liked a girl from time to time, marrying three of them, but jilting Lana Turner.”

When Power joined the military in 1943, it was not Annabella who said farewell to him, but Judy Garland, who was in love with him at the time. She was also pregnant, and he advised her to have an abortion because he was a married man. He later told Cesar Romero, “I loved Judy very much, and wanted her to have my baby, but it was impossible.”

Garland was heartbroken when he was ordered to Saipan. *[The second largest island in the South Pacific’s Mariana Islands archipelago, after Guam, it was defined, strategically, as the last defense against the U.S. invasion of the Japanese homeland, and as such, fiercely contested during one of World War II’s longest and costliest battles there in June and July of 1944.]*

Louis B. Mayer told her to get over it. “You’re not in love with Power. Only with his picture on the cover of *Photoplay.”*

When Power was discharged at the end of the war, he returned to Hollywood, where he found Garland married to the first of her gay husbands, Vincente Minnelli.

For Lana, what began as a cocktail in Power’s living room on the first night she was ever alone with him, developed into a sleepover. She left the following morning, but returned again that same night and the night thereafter.

At the time that Henry King was getting ready to helm Power in *Captain from Castile*, the director recalled seeing Lana and Power together on the beach at Malibu.

“It was near sunset, and both of them wore white bathing suits, each of them looking glorious, almost like a mirage in the fading reddish glow. They were holding hands and laughing as they ran along the sands. It was one of

the most memorable sights of love I've ever seen."

She christened her affair with Power as "richer and more mature" than what she'd had with her two previous husbands, or with any of her fleeting romances, most of which she'd called "fly by night" or "ships which pass in the night."

Power's biographer, Fred Lawrence Guiles, wrote, "Lana and Ty were both sensualists. Touch and proximity were as important to them as sex. After their first date, which ended in bed, he became a regular at her home in Brentwood, spending night after night there, although he felt awkward being around her three-year-old daughter, Cheryl."

Actually, Lana praised the warm, fatherly relationship Power had with the little girl. "Real husband material," she told friends. "And I bet he'd make a great daddy for Cheryl."

Mistakenly, she thought she could overwhelm Power with the fruits of the $5,000 she'd spent on clothing, or with the $1,000 worth of expensive hats she'd acquired from the collection of the *haute* milliner, John Frederics, in New York. That kind of money could buy a lot of wardrobe in 1946.

Power would actually have preferred her in a simpler array of outfits.

In many other ways, they were not compatible, except that he had painted all his rooms as white as the wardrobe she wore in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. In almost every room of his house were floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, and whereas he'd read dozens of books, it had been difficult for her to wade through *Gone With the Wind*.

She told Linda Darnell, Power's former lover, "He is the first man who makes me really happy." In spite of that, she often succumbed to bouts of deep depression, worrying about the direction of her career, her affair with Power (who kept stalling his divorce from Annabella), and the understandable fear that her beauty would eventually fade.

In Beverly Hills, she found her own "Dr. Feelgood," who got her addicted to amphetamines. She was so hyped up from his dosages that she could party all night, even when Power wanted to go home. But, as Guiles revealed in his biography, "There were times when she (Lana) was clearly out of control, her laughter too shrill, and her moods irrational." Her chain smoking also increased.

The more she urged Power to divorce Annabella, the more he stalled, making up excuses. They lived apart, but occasionally got together, ostensibly to discuss their career choices and even the terms that a divorce might entail. The more he put off marriage, the more Lana's chances of marrying him diminished.

During the white heat of her affair with him, she was shooting *Green Dolphin Street*, where he became a frequent visitor to the set.

On the MGM lot, in a dressing room adjoining Lana's, Esther Williams said, "From the sound of things, Ty and Lana must be setting fire to those pink satin sheets of hers."

Victor Saville, directing *Green Dolphin Street*, said, "Ty had so much charm it should be outlawed. Did Lana really love him? I don't know. Had she really loved anyone before? Frankly, I think she fell in love with Ty because he was the male version of herself."

Helen Young, an MGM hairdresser and close friend of Lana's, said, "If I had to choose the most important event in Lana Turner's life, I would have to say it was her love affair with Ty Power. He was thirty-three years old when he became involved with her. He still had his good looks and, as always, could charm both men and women. In fact, he once admitted to me that even straight men propositioned him."

When Zanuck informed Power that he'd have to fly to Mexico for location shooting on *Captain from Castile*

(1947), he met with Romero, who would be co-starring with him in the film. Power surprised his companion when he told him, “I’m glad to take a breather and get out of Hollywood for a change. Lana is so in love with me she is smothering me to death, and I need some breathing room. To inhale some fresh air. My god, she seems to want reassurance every minute that I love her!”

“Don’t worry,” Romero assured him. “I’ll take care of all your needs down in Mexico.”

Edie Goetz, the daughter of Louis B. Mayer, once tried to explain Lana’s “suffocating kind of love.”

“She knows no other way to love. She’s a clinger, seemingly wanting proof of her lover’s devotion every minute. That was not Ty’s way. He often wanted to be alone for days at a time. He liked to lock himself in his house and read books, always searching for the right kind of story that might make a great film. He told me that he had never actually proposed marriage to Lana, even though she begged him almost every day to marry her.”

In contrast, Lana told such friends as Linda Darnell, Virginia Grey, and Susan Hayward that, “Ty and I are officially engaged. He’s searching for an engagement ring for me right now, I suppose.”

According Goetz, “Of course, I had to admit that physically—not emotionally—they were perfectly matched. When I first saw them together, they took my breath away with their stunning beauty. Her Jean Harlow platinum hair contrasted with his raven black locks. One evening, they were planning to co-star in a film together, called *Forever*. I told him that my father, Mayer, would never agree to lend Lana to Fox, and I’m sure Zanuck didn’t want my dad to get his hands on Ty.”

On many a night, Power talked with Lana about making a film out of his favorite novella, *Forever*. Written by Mildred Cram in 1934, it was a fragile, 60-page story, whose theme was that love reaches beyond the borders of life and death. The plot involved Colin and Julie, who in this otherworldly story, meet before they are born and finally find each other in this life and in this world.

Originally, Janet Gaynor had purchased its film rights as a vehicle for herself and perhaps Robert Taylor. Later, MGM acquired the rights as a possible project for Norma Shearer with Clark Gable. Ultimately, however, a film adaptation of the novella was never made.

Unknown to Lana, when Judy Garland was in love with Power, he read her the story one night by the fireplace and intrigued her into co-starring with him in this supernatural tale of enduring love. Someone wrote that Garland memorized the novella ”word for word,” but that seems unlikely.

Even though Zanuck would not green-light *Forever*, he and Power still remained best friends. With Lana, Power spent two weekends every month at the Zanuck estate in Palm Springs.

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In mid-November of 1946, Power left for the scenic village of Morelia, near Pátzcuaro, Mexico, for location shooting on *Captain from Castile*. The next day in Hedda Hopper’s column, she wrote, “Beautiful Lana Turner and beautiful Tyrone Power pledged their love and devotion to each other before he flew south.” Privately, Hopper had asked him, “Are you really in love with Lana?”

“It’s the nearest I’ve come to it,” he confided to her. “But don’t print that. It would hurt Lana’s feelings.”

She remained behind, filming *Green Dolphin Street.*

Arriving in a bone-bare Mexican outpost, the prospects looked bleak for Power, who faced a three-month shooting scheduled. His co-star was Jean Peters. But Hughes had warned him to stay away from her, because he had staked her out for himself. He would eventually marry her.

Errol Flynn, Power’s former lover and a frequent visitor to Mexico, had arranged for Power to have a Mexican “guide.” It turned out to be Carlos Francisco, who was eighteen. He’d been born in Juarez to a Mexican mother and an American sailor from San Diego who had spent only one night in the town.

Flynn had discovered Carlos when he was only fourteen years old, and had him delivered to the location shooting. In his note to Power, Flynn defined Carlos as “a party favor. He’s the most beautiful boy in Mexico, and I’m sure you’ll agree.”

Power did agree, and moved Carlos into his modest living quarters, booting out a jealous Romero, who had, by now, gotten used to being ejected.

At MGM, Lana had missed spending Christmas with Power. During the shooting of *Green Dolphin Street*, MGM had warned her not to fly anywhere until the film was wrapped. She was so desperately lonely, however, that she decided to fly to Mexico City anyway during her three-day vacation so that she could “bring in” 1947 with her lover. She had been told that it was urgently necessary for her to report back to work at MGM at 9AM on January 2.

She opted not to alert Power, but planned to show up unexpectedly on the set.

In Mexico City, she learned that Morelia was some 85 miles away. There was no train service, not even a bus to this remote location, which was reached via bumpy roads better suited to a donkey than an automobile. The roads

often washed out, she was told.

She placed an emergency call to Power, and, after about ten attempts, was finally able to reach Henry King, the film's director, who summoned Power to the phone.

"Hi, baby!" he said. "How's the weather in L.A.?"

"How in hell would I know?" she asked. "I'm in Mexico City."

To his shock, he learned that she had flown there to pay a surprise visit to him on the set. He promised to get back to her, claiming that he would try to charter a small plane to bring her to the nearby landing strip at Pátzcuaro.

He came through for her, and she boarded the rickety airplane with great trepidation. In the meantime, Power had time to move a very disappointed Carlos out of his shack.

Lana later said, "I was very upset by the sound of Ty's voice. He didn't seem exactly elated that I was in Mexico. I suspected that he had shacked up with some Mexican spitfire like Lupe Velez in my absence."

"There I was, stranded in Mexico City feeling god damn foolish. I was trying to pull off this big romantic fling with Ty, but I feared that I was like a school girl with a crush on the football captain. I was making a fucking nuisance of myself."

In spite of his initial reservations, Power welcomed her to the set and to his modest abode. She later told Darnell, "We made love all afternoon. It was worth the horrendous trip just to be in his arms once again."

"Romero, however, gave me a chilly reception, as did his co-star, Jean Peters. I heard that she was dating Howard, so I think she was jealous of me." She also noted that a very good-looking Mexican boy kept following Power and her around at a safe distance. She said, "If looks could kill, I'd be dead."

To Mexico, she had brought all the equipment, accessories, and wardrobe to make herself look glamorous on New Years' Eve.

She wore an Oriental dress with a high mandarin collar, her skirt slit up one side to show off her shapely legs. Under the nighttime sky, "I was a vision of seed pearls and rhinestones with a diamond necklace woven into my hair by a fat Mexican woman."

She recalled "It turned out to be the most romantic night of my life. The whole town was celebrating New Year's Eve, as the strains of music wafted across the cobblestoned town square where everybody gathered to hear the ringing of the church bells, signaling the new year."

In front of the church, as the bells were ringing, he kissed her at the stroke of midnight. She later claimed, "It was the single greatest and most passionate kiss of my life. And I've been kissed by some of the greatest smoochers on the planet."

But on the morning of her return, the skies opened up and "each raindrop seemed to contain a pint of water," she said. "The roads were washed out and all planes were grounded."

She did not show up for work at MGM on January 2 at 9AM. Saville, who had already shot the scenes where she wasn't needed, had no alternative but to shut down production. From 9AM to noon, he waited, and finally her call came in, informing him that she was grounded by bad weather, based on her impulsive weekend jaunt to a remote corner of Mexico to be with Power.

Mayer had to be informed of the delay, which he said would cost MGM $100,000 a day. Even if he exaggerated that figure, it would be very costly to the studio.

He asked Saville, "Does the bitch have to fly to Mexico to get fucked? There are plenty of dicks to go around in Hollywood. She should sample this new gu y, this actor, John Ireland. I was told yesterday that he had the biggest dick in town."

Finally, the weather cleared, and Power arranged for her to fly to Mexico City. She gave him a long, lingering kiss before boarding. "I'll be back and the next time, we won't have to rush."

That did not work out. She never returned to the location.

From Mexico City, she flew back to Los Angeles, where she showed up the next morning to find the set completely dark. Her first fear was that Mayer had shut down the picture and would sue her for the cost of the film so far.

Nevertheless, she put on her makeup and costume and walked onto the set. Not a soul was in sight. Suddenly, the lights were switched on, and she heard the sound of Mexican music. Saville emerged leading the cast and crew. Everyone wore a sombrero, and all of them were singing "South of the Border."

In spite of the serious breach of her contract, she was not sued, although her paycheck was docked.

Lana completed *Green Dolphin Street*, and Power eventually finished location shooting for *Captain from Castile* and then returned to Los Angeles for interior shots.

Shortly after his return, he and Lana were seen on the nighttime circuit, popping up at Ciro's or the Mocambo. Once again, Lana brought up the subject of divorce. He put her off, telling her that Annabella was in Paris filming *Éternel Conflit* (*The Eternal Conflict*, 1948), and that nothing could be done until she returned to California.

In Paris, the actress announced to the press, “I have no intention of divorcing Mr. Power.”

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Hughes had been surprised when his aide, Johnny Meyer, reported to him that Lana was having a torrid affair with Tyrone Power, and that they may even have fallen in love. He was no longer as infatuated with them as he’d been when he’d first met them, but he was still intrigued. He ordered Meyer to put both of them under 24-hour surveillance and to report back to him with full details.

“From the beginning, Howard wanted to be in on the affair,” Meyer claimed, years later after Hughes had died. “He wanted to be part of the action, or so I thought. It was almost like, ‘How dare you two fall in love without getting my permission first?’”

Hughes had also put actress Jean Peters under surveillance during the time she co-starred with Power in *Captain from Castile.*

Early in 1947, columnist Florence Muir reported that Lana had packed ten glamorous bathing suits to take with her to Acapulco for a vacation with Power. Muir knew only half the story. The invitation from Hughes had been collectively extended to them both, as a committed couple, in love.

The aviator/movie czar had arranged for “these two lovebirds” (as he called them) to stay in luxurious comfort in a villa within the then new, glamorous, and to some degree, semi-private resort of Acapulco.

Their host would be Teddy Stauffer, a Swiss-born big band leader whose tireless promotion of his luxury retreat (and the resort that contained it) had earned him the nickname “Mr. Acapulco.”

Fleeing from the Nazis in 1940, Stauffer had settled in Mexico. Before that, he’d introduced American-style swing to pre-war Europe. He’d owned a night club and had been a small-time actor, but mostly he was known as an international playboy.

Like Hughes, he was a world-class seducer and had even married two of Hughes’ former girlfriends, Hedy Lamarr and actress Faith Domergue.

In Mexico, Stauffer was on hand to welcome Lana and Power, giving the couple his most luxurious villa, which was filled with flowers and had a refrigerator overflowing with champagne.

The next day, Hughes showed up to take Lana and Power on a sailing expedition aboard a luxurious yacht he’d rented, complete with crew. When the yacht returned at 6PM, its “cargo” included a 210-pound swordfish. “Ty and I caught it together,” Lana told Stauffer.

Years later, Stauffer revealed additional details of Lana’s trip to biographer Charles Higham, but asked him not to print any of the graphic details. “I was in on Howard’s plan right from the beginning. I set the whole thing up for him. He planned to make a grand entrance in the nude in the bedroom that Lana occupied with Power. I told him I thought the couple might be accommodating for a three-way, although I feared that Lana might hesitate. Even though sleeping with every Tom, Dick, and Harry in Hollywood, she sometimes made cooing sounds that she was a lady.”

“Howard had left the lovebirds alone for their first night,” Stauffer said. “But on the second night, he stripped down in front of me and headed bare-assed into their villa. I stayed nearby in case of trouble. He took the lovers by surprise. I heard a lot of loud talk, then everything settled down.”

“The next morning over breakfast,” Stauffer said, “I personally squeezed Howard’s juice from blood-red oranges. He always insisted it be done right in front of him. He reported to me, while Lana and Power were still sleeping, that the previous night had been a success. Howard claimed that he had gone down on both of them while they kissed each other passionately. Later, as Power fucked Lana, he fucked Power, who was ‘Lucky Pierre’ caught in the middle of the sandwich. Howard confessed that, ‘It was the best orgasm I ever had.’”

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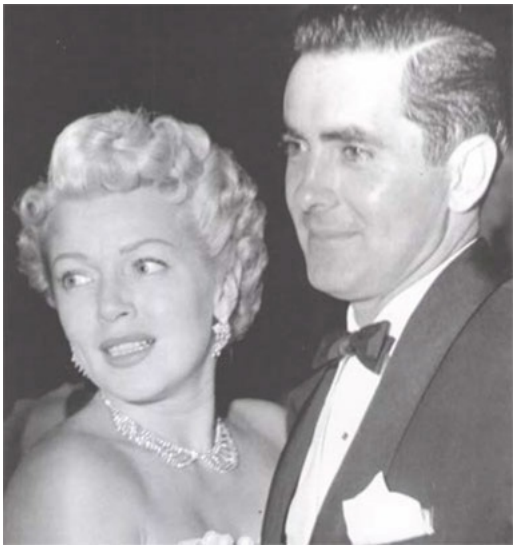
After she had finished shooting *Green Dolphin Street*, Lana had been set to co-star with Spencer Tracy in *Cass Timberlane.*

In the meantime, she sat night after night with Power, who claimed that he wanted to escape from adventure stories and prove to critics that he was a serious actor, especially in the wake of good reviews he’d gotten for *The Razor’s Edge* (1946). He’d discovered a controversial script entitled *Nightmare Alley*, a compelling story about life —morbid but fascinating—as experienced by workers in an itinerant carnival.

In his role, Power becomes entangled with mind-reading Joan Blondell and assorted sideshow weirdos. He ends up as a sleazy, somewhat demented carnival geek eating raw chickens.

Darryl F. Zanuck did not want his leading matinee idol to play such an unromantic role, but Lana backed

Power, earning a tongue lashing from the Fox mogul. Finally, and very reluctantly, approval was granted. Even though *Nightmare Alley* (1947) failed at the box office, Power got some of the best notices of his career, and it eventually became an cult classic.



In the months to come, columnists followed the romance of Lana and Power. Sidney Skolsky reported that "Tyrone Power and Lana Turner continue to be the most romantic couple in town."

Sheilah Graham informed her readers that Lana had gone on a diet and had lost seven pounds. "And, lest I forget, she's still in love with Tyrone Power, in spite of her reputation—or his—of being fickle."

She also reported that Power was still married to Annabella.

After a weekend with Power, Lana, alone in her house on a Monday afternoon, was overcome with nausea and set up a five o'clock appointment with her doctor. After an examination, he informed her that once again, she was pregnant.

That night, when Power came over, she told him the news. "With me as the boy's mother, and you as its father, it'll be the most beautiful little baby ever born."

He wasn't so sure, pointing out that since he was still married, news of the pregnancy might destroy both of their promising careers. He urged her to consider an abortion.

She suggested that she might go away for nine months and disappear like Loretta Young had done when Clark Gable had impregnated her on the set of *The Call of the Wild* (1935).

"What if the boy is the spit image of me?" he asked.

He said that he was going to leave the decision of an abortion up to her. "I'll respect your wishes.

[She objected to his attitude. That was not the reaction she had wanted. In her fantasy, she had expected him to grab her, kiss her, and hold her, showing his delight that she was going to be the mother of his baby. She had also wanted him to promise he'd arrange a quickie divorce from Anabella and marry her at once as a means of making their baby legitimate.]

The night of the following day, she was even more horrified when he told her that he was going to fly aboard a converted DC-E during an upcoming two-month Good Will Tour of Africa. Although she didn't confront him with it directly, she felt he was abandoning her to solve the dilemma of an unwanted baby by herself. She had hoped to announce her engagement to the press before his trip, but he balked. "It would not be discreet," he said.

Nonetheless, she threw a $10,000 *bon voyage* party for him at Ciro's. Its themewas "Cupid & Love," and as a decorative logo on display, the letters "L&T" were entwined with an arrow. She announced that night that she would be joining him in Africa as soon as *Cass Timberlane* was wrapped.

That's not what Power told Romero the following day. "For me, my romance with Lana is on life support."

She drove him to the airport on the morning of his departure. The pilot of his plane was Robert Buck, and, among others, Power was accompanied by his secretary, Bill Gallagher.

The plane was scheduled to leave Los Angeles *en route* to Miami. From there, Power and his entourage would

fly south to Brazil and from there, they'd cross the Atlantic for the west coast of Africa.

Before departure, he and Lana devised a secret code whereby she could inform him of her decision about the abortion. Motivated by the fear that an overseas operator might be listening to their conversations, she instructed Power that if she'd opted to abort the child, she'd say, "I found the house today," and that if she opted not to abort the child (and presumably to raise him or her as her own), she would say, "I haven't found the house today."

At the airport, she give him a long, lingering kiss, saying, "I will miss you, darling, and will count the hours until you are back in my arms."

She had already discussed an abortion with her most trusted *confidante*, Virginia Grey. She warned Lana that having the baby out of wedlock would destroy her career and possibly harm Power's, even though men were judged by a different standard.

Lana said, "I desperately want to have Ty's child. But after pondering it for a week, I decided to go ahead with the abortion."

Unlike a previous abortion, this one was performed without complications on a clean operating table with an anesthetic. She said, "The abortion took the fetus from me, but it did more than that. I took a piece of my heart."

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One night in Africa, Power confessed to Buck, his pilot, that he wanted to "break it off with Lana."

He had already told Cesar Romero, "I find it much harder to break off a love affair with a woman than with a man."

"So you're calling it quits with Lana?" Buck asked.

"I already have. I just haven't told her yet. I want to be free as a bird, going where the wind takes me. Having new adventures, new, exciting conquests."

Chapter Twelve

The Man Who Got Away

Lana Weds a Tin Plate Heir "Whose Figure Is Less Than Greek"

In a costume drama based on the Dumas classic, *The Three Musketeers*, Lana in Technicolor had never looked more dazzling or more beautiful.

"I sank my teeth into my first truly villainous role. Of course, I get beheaded for my evil deeds. But what a lovely head it was. I was playing a murderess and a thief, enough to make Lucretia Borgia look like Mary Poppins. My character was a wily and arch schemer. I'm imprisoned for my treachery. But I feign illness to win the sympathy of my jailers. Then I coldly murder them."

After 1945, despite her ongoing romantic problems with Tyrone Power, Lana forged ahead with her career, pouring cinema magic, scandals, and interviews out onto the fast-evolving postwar scene.

Columnist Dorothy Kilgallen wrote: "Lana Turner is a super-star for many reasons, chiefly because she is the same off-screen as she is on. Some of the great starsare magnetic dazzlers on celluloid and ordinary, practical, polo-coated little things in private life. Not so Lana. No one who adored her in movies would be disappointed to meet her in the flesh. The flesh looks the same. The biography is as colorful as any plot she has ever romped through on the screen. The clothes she wears are just like the clothes you pay to see her in on Saturday night at the Bijou. The physical allure is just as heavy when she looks at a headwaiter as when she looks at a screen hero."

The the costume drama, *Green Dolphin Street*, Lana was cast as Marianne Patourel, who was stronger and more dominant than her sister, Marguerite (Donna Reed).

"Donna had the easy role, and did it well, but I had the major acting challenge--a real gutsy woman who stands by her man through earthquakes and a native Maori uprising."

Lana spoke to the press, commenting on success in Hollywood, defining it as "the most dangerous thing that can happen. There is nothing more devastating."

In 1947, after being off the screen for a full year after the success of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, she released *Green Dolphin Street* and *Cass Timberlane*.

The director of *Green Dolphin Street*, Victor Saville, had lined up a strong supporting cast, headed by Van Heflin, who'd played a drunken lawyer in her film, *Johnny Eager*. Heflin had not been designated as the romantic lead, that role going to Richard Hart. Donna Reed played Lana's sister, backed up by Frank Morgan, Dame May Whitty, Edmund Gwenn, Reginald Owen, and the formidable Gladys Cooper.

Although Lana as a blonde had created a sensation in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, for *Green Dolphin Street* her hair was honey brown. Since her role demanded several different coiffures, her hairdresser, Helen Young, devised thirty-four different hairpieces for her, some of which were never used. Her fabulous costume wardrobe was created by Walter Plunkett, who had dressed the stars of *Gone With the Wind*.

During the filming of *Green Dolphin Street*, Lana related well to Del Armstrong, a genius when it came to makeup. She formed a friendship with him that would last a lifetime.

They had first met when he applied her makeup for *Marriage Is a Private Affair*.

"I could always trust him," she said. He'd see her through suicide attempts, a murder, and all her various love affairs. "If I ever had a man who was a best friend, it was Del. He never betrayed me, like so many others. He was always there for me."

In September of 1943, MGM had offered a $200,000 prize for the writer who developed the best story for adaptation into a film. The honor went to Elizabeth Goudge in 1944. Her romantic novel, *Green Dolphin Street*, had already sold 1.5 million copies.

MGM's filming of this 1840sera drama included staggering costs and major challenges, including the hiring of hundreds of extras; the creation of background settings for New Zealand, China, and the Channel Islands; and the building of full-scale replicas of clipper ships. The biggest challenge was for the special effects technicians, who had to simulate a major earthquake. For their efforts, Warren Newcombe and A. Arnold Gillespie received an Oscar.

Originally, Saville thought the strong role of Marianne Patourel required the arresting presence of Katharine Hepburn. But in the wake of her stunning performance in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Louis B. Mayer wanted to give Lana a chance to shine once again—this time in the Channel Islands seaport of St. Pierre. Donna Reed was cast as Lana's sister, Marguerite. Originally, that role was to have gone to June Allyson.

Richard Hart played a dashing naval captain, William Ozanne, who arrives unexpectedly one day in port. Both of the Patourel sisters fall instantly in love with him, although he prefers Marguerite, perhaps finding Lana's character of Marianne too strong for his tastes.

Later, while serving in the Royal Navy in China, he hooks up with Timothy Haslam (Heflin). Together, they plot their future and decide to travel to New Zealand and launch a lumber business.

One night, a drunken William writes to Marguerite, asking her to come to New Zealand and become his wife. In his stupor, he addresses the letter to Marianne instead.

Imagine his shock and surprise when Lana, instead of Reed, arrives in New Zealand, as instructed. The irony of the plot is that Timothy (i.e., Heflin) has been in love with her since his boyhood days in St. Pierre, but now sees her slipping off for marriage to his best friend.

As the plot unfolds, Lana (as Marianne) becomes a strong and powerful wife, virtually the backbone of her husband through all his triumphs and tragedies. As for poor Donna Reed (aka Marguerite) left back in the Channel Islands, she enters a convent.

A handsome Rhode islander, Richard Hart, who spent much of his acting career on a stage, would appear during the course of his career in four films.

During lunch with Hart and Lana, Donna Reed told them, “No one who watches this film is going to believe that you’d fall in love with me—and not with Lana.”

[In 1951, at the age of 35, like so many actors with whom Lana worked, Hart died young—in his case, of a heart attack.]

Many of the exterior shots were filmed beside the banks of the Klamath River in Oregon. In a bit role, starlet Linda Christian was cast as Lana’s maid, “Hine-Moa.” She would later tell the press that Lana off-screen was very abusive to her.

Lana countered, “I hardly remember the girl and certainly was not abusive to her. I treat all my fellow actors with respect.” At the time, she could not have conceived what a major and disastrous role Christian would play in her future.

As was her style, Lana worked well with the supporting cast, who included Edmund Gwenn, cast as her father, the wealthy Octavius Patourel. The oldtime London-born actor had immortalized himself that year playing Kris Kringle in the Christmas film, *Miracle on 34th Street*, which had garnered him an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

“In his role of Timothy Haslan, Van Heflin is secretly in love with me,” Lana said. “Our hardest scene was that god damn earthquake sequence where he heroically comes to my rescue.”

Reed had just finished making *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) for Frank Capra. James Stewart played the male lead. *[This picture is taken out of mothballs every year and reshown during the Christmas holidays.]*

Generating fair to good reviews, *Green Dolphin Street* eventually emerged as MGM's biggest hit of 1947.

Leo Miski, writing in the *New York Morning Telegraph*, described the movie's elephantine approach and treatment, claiming that it was impressive by its sheer weight more than anything else.

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Edwin Schallert praised the beauty of both Lana and Reed as well as the costumes of Walter Plunkett, but he noted that the film "screamed out for Technicolor."

Cecilia Ager in *PM* said: "No matter what the century Miss Lana Turner is assigned to, she brings her own firm-fleshed contemporary glamor. Wherever she is, she stands out as Lana Turner, unquestionably photogenic, one of Metro's most glittering productions all by herself. In a movie dedicated to ponderous production values, Miss Turner right or wrong is eminently right."

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In 1945, the closing year of World War II, Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) released a novel, *Cass Timberlane*, a saga of husbands and wives and a May-to-December romance. It was a meditation on themes that included love, marriage, trust, heartache, and redemption in a small town in Minnesota. Although Lewis had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930, most critics pounced on *Cass Timberlane*, defining it as "second rate."

Even so, Louis B. Mayer purchased its film rights for $150,000, with the intention of adapting it into an MGM feature for a 1947 release.

Arthur Hornblow, Jr. was designated as the film's producer and George Sidney its director.

Sidney was an odd choice, based on his previous association with the *Our Gang* shorts, the *Crime Does Not Pay* series; and Pete Smith's popular comic specialties. Later, despite a reputation as a third-rate director, Sidney was assigned the job of helming the MGM musical hit, *Anchors Aweigh* (1945), casting Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly as sailors. When Lana met Sidney, he had just directed Judy Garland in *The Harvey Girls* (1946). He would not only helm Lana in *Cass Timberlane*, but later, he'd be her director in the Technicolor extravaganza *The Three Musketeers* (1948).

In the beginning, it was not at all certain that Lana would be assigned the lead in *Cass Timberlane*. Ava Gardner had made a pitch for the role, but was rejected. She later complained "MGM already has a sex symbol *[she was referring to Lana]*, and those guys don't know what to do with another one."

For a brief time, Vivien Leigh and Jennifer Jones were also under consideration. In the end, Sidney, with Mayer's blessings, decided to cast Lana in the role, based on her previous acting in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

She interpreted her acquisition of the role with a certain irony: "Vivien took Scarlett O'Hara from me, not that I really had that role, and Jones made off with *Madame Bovary (1949)*. Now I'm taking something from those two."

Spencer Tracy was cast as the highly respected Judge Cass Timberlane, an ethical man moving deeper into middle age. Up to that point, he'd been viewed as in-corruptible. The most controversial thing he ever did involved taking Virginia ("Jinny") Marshland as his young bride. Lana got the role.

Sinclair Lewis, in his novel, had described her character as "a half-tamed hawk of a girl, twenty-three or -four, not tall, smiling, lively of eye."

Jinny was definitely from the wrong side of the tracks, and she shocked the judge's more conservative friends.

As the male lead, Sidney toyed with the idea of casting Walter Pidgeon. But that didn't work out.

[Actually, Pidgeon did make a surprise cameo appearance in Cass Timber-lane, encountering Lana's character at a party in Manhattan. MGM had a custom of casting some of its major stars in brief, sometimes unexpected cameos. Lana had been pleased with the casting of Pidgeon because the two of them had performed so well together in Week-End at the Waldorf.*]*

Sidney phoned her late one afternoon to announce that Spencer Tracy had accepted the lead role, and that Zachory Scott would be playing the second male lead. *[She had not only worked with Tracy in* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *but had had a brief fling with him then as well.]*

When she lunched with Tracy one day in the MGM commissary, he complained about the choice of directors, not wanting Sidney. "I preferred either my pal, George Cukor, or that other fag, Vincente Minnelli, but was voted down. Maybe Sidney will turn *Cass Timberlane* into another *Our Gang* comedy."

The scriptwriter, Donald Ogden Steward, was known at the time for his golden age comedies and melodramas. He was brought in to devise a film script based on the Lewis novel. His big hit had been *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), starring Katharine Hepburn, Tracy's companion.

In spite of Steward's credentials, Sidney wasn't pleased with his final script. He complained to Lana that although he had strengthened Tracy's role as the judge, he had reduced her character's presence. Subsequently, he brought in scriptwriter Sonya Levien to beef up the role of the young bride.

Lewis was known for exposing the hypocrisies of Main Street America. In the script, Lana's marriage to the judge, as hawkeyed by everyone in town, doesn't run along an even course. As Jinny, Lana encounters disapproval from Tracy's staid friends, usually older couples, with one exception. His best friend is lawyer Bradd Criley, the role that Zachory Scott would play.

Joan Crawford had already spread the gossip among the women stars and starlets at MGM that Scott was a closeted homosexual, despite his recent marriage to Elaine Anderson. *[She would later divorce him to marry John Steinbeck.]*

Scott and his wife were frequently seen in public with Angela Lansbury and her husband, Richard Cromwell. Lana picked up more gossip: Cromwell was Howard Hughes' sometimes lover, and, it was also said, that Scott and Cromwell were engaged in a torrid love affair behind the backs of their wives. Lansbury later publicly admitted that her husband was a homosexual, as she'd learned painfully.

Finally, Lana learned more scandalous information about Scott during her reunion with her friend, Tom Drake,

who'd been cast in *Cass Timberlane* in the small role of Jamie Wargate, and with whom she'd worked on *Week-End at the Waldorf*. He brought her up to date on all the latest gossip about Van Johnson and Peter Lawford. Over more than a few drinks, Drake confided that he had only recently begun an affair with Scott himself.

On the sets of many of her pictures, she had often pursued her leading man, but in this case, she didn't mind that Scott was off-limits. Her current lover, Tyrone Power, was a frequent visitor to the set during filming.

Ever since Zachory Scott had co-starred with Joan Crawford as her sleazy love interest in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), Lana had been intrigued with what she described as Scott's "lizard-like appearance, the perfect villain."

The year she worked with him, he'd been voted the "third most promising star of tomorrow."

In *Cass Timberlane*, Lana's hair was dyed blonde again. Bored with her existence in this small town, Lana is intrigued with the charm of Bradd Criley, who is the town's most handsome, most charismatic playboy. He helps her relieve her boredom, especially when she goes to New York to lighten her spirits after her baby dies during childbirth.

She wants to remain in Manhattan, but her husband, the Judge, refuses. Defiantly, however, Bradd agrees to show her the town.

During filming and on at least two occasions, Tracy visited her dressing room and pressed her for sex, but each time, she refused.

Cameron Mitchell, the son of a Pennsylvania pastor, played a minor role of Eino Roskinen. Lana became very impressed with him as an actor, telling Sidney, "I think you've cast the next John Garfield."

One slow afternoon, Cameron had consumed a few beers during his wait for the next take. When Sidney informed him that there would be another delay, he whispered to Lana, "Wanna fuck?"

She whispered back, "Wanna not?"

In the years ahead, she watched Mitchell star in so many movies that she wondered when he ever slept. Today, audiences see him on the late show playing an incognito millionaire in pursuit of a gold-digging Lauren Bacall, in *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953) with scene-stealer Marilyn Monroe.

Both *Green Dolphin Street* and *Cass Timberlane* were released in October of 1947, and Lana found that she was competing with herself for movie audiences. She need not have worried, as each of them emerged among MGM's high grossers of that year.

Many of the reviews for *Cass Timberlane* were tepid, but that didn't seem to affect movie attendance. Lana herself, in several cases, got better reviews than the movie itself.

Kate Cameron, writing in *The New York Daily News*, said: "There is no doubt about it. Lana Turner screens more beautifully than any other blonde in Hollywood. She literally illumines the screen with a glow that is soft, warm, and altogether feminine. That she is able to hold the spotlight while Tracy is on the screen is a test of her ability as an actress and a charmer."

Many critics felt that Lana and Tracy improved on Sinclair Lewis' original characters, making the judge and his

young wife warmer, more human, and more likable than they'd been in the original novel.

Tracy phoned Lana a few days after their picture was released. "I'm pissed off at you," he said. "I just read a review of *Cass* in *Variety*. The asshole who wrote it claimed that in scene after scene, you stole them from me, and I came across as wooden. What did you do? While I was emoting, did you pull out one of your tits behind my back? I used to be a friend of Sinclair Lewis. I knew him well enough to call him 'Red.' He's seen our movie. Now he refuses to take my calls."

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During the long weeks that Tyrone Power spent in Africa on his Good Will Tour, Lana used her coded message to tell him that she'd aborted his child, a baby she had desperately wanted to keep. The secret codewords they'd developed privately had been necessary, based on their fear that an overseas operator would listen to their conversations and break the news of their aborted "love child" to the press.

During Power's tour, she didn't disguise the contempt in her voice when she told Ava Gardner, "Good Will for whom? Certainly not for our relationship."

During Power's absence from Hollywood, columnist Harrison Carroll wrote, "Lana Turner was seen nightclubbing at Ciro's with her old flame, Peter Lawford."

Later, when Carroll ascertained that Power would not return to Hollywood until November 10, he wrote, "I still wouldn't make any bets that he and Lana will ever make it to the altar."

On October 8, 1947, columnist Sheilah Graham reported that Lana had abruptly canceled her trip to join Power in Africa. When he decided to stop over in Rome during his transit back to New York, there was speculation that she'd fly there to meet him. Graham later revealed that Lana's trip to Italy had been canceled for reasons unknown.

Later, in advance of Power's flight from Europe back to New York, Lana flew to New York to meet him there. Checked into the Waldorf-Astoria, she received a call from Frank Sinatra, who had flown East for a performance in New Jersey. He, too, had checked into the Waldorf, and invited her for a drink "for old time's sake."

The next morning, a room service waiter delivered two breakfasts to Lana's suite. Later, for fifty dollars, the waiter tipped off columnist Walter Winchell. The news of Lana's reunion with her former lover made the international gossip circuit.

During the weeks that Power spent in Rome, the Italian capital was fast becoming "Hollywood on the Tiber," and no doubt, the news of Lana's sleepover with Sinatra reached him.

She made several attempts to contact Power in Rome at the Hotel Excelsior on the Via Veneto, but could not get through, even though she called at random hours of the day and night. Again and again, she was told, "Mr. Power is not available to take calls."

She finally got him on the phone and chastised him for being out of touch. She informed him that she'd wait for him in New York at the Waldorf-Astoria, ready, willing, and able to receive him the moment he arrived at Idlewild Airport.

In Manhattan, perfumed and accessorized, she waited and waited. Still no Power.

Finally, she was informed that he had shuffled his westbound flight to avoid a stopover in New York altogether, and that he'd transited to Kansas City. From there, after refueling, he flew directly to Burbank in California, arriving there on November 25.

From New York, Lana placed an urgent call to his home, and this time, her call was connected right away. "What in hell happened?" she asked, not disguising the anger in her voice.

He explained that he had urgent business on the West Coast and that he had to get back to Los Angeles immediately. He'd been gone too long, he informed her.

"I'm taking the next plane to L.A.," she said. "I'll cable you my flight number and its expected arrival time, and I want you to pick me up at the airport. It's been far too long for me, too."

When her flight landed in Los Angeles, he was not at the airport to meet her. She waited around for an hour for him to show up. Finally, he did.

Driving her home, he was almost silent throughout the ride. She invited him in for a drink. Inside, the tension was obvious.

As she would later tell Ava Gardner and others, "I finally got enough courage to ask him what had gone wrong between us. At last he confessed. He said that during his stay in Rome, he'd met Linda Christian and had had an affair with her. "We've fallen in love," he said. "We may even get married. I'm sorry. You may remember her. She played your maid in *Green Dolphin Street."*

"I remember the bitch all right," Lana screeched at him. "An international whore. I can't believe you'd fall for such trash like that. She's fucked everybody from Errol Flynn on down.

“She’s really a sweet girl,” he protested, “when you get to know her.”

“Like hell I’ll get to know her,” she yelled at him. “I don’t even know you anymore. Get the hell out of my house. And stay out!”

He slammed his drink down on her coffee table and quickly headed out. At the door, he paused. “Let’s be friends. I’ll invite you to my wedding.”

“Get out!” She picked up his cocktail glass and threw it at the door, narrowly missing him.

It was over.

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After Power left, she phoned Virginia Grey, asking her to come over at once. She’d later recall, “Lana was suicidal when I got there, or at least I thought she was. I agreed to stay over with her because I seriously believed she was ready to do herself in. She would hardly eat for three days and nights. All she’d do was drink and smoke. At one point, in a drunken stupor, she fell down the steps. Fortunately, she didn’t injure herself. Just bruises and stuff. I phoned a doctor, who heavily sedated her. I stayed there like a nursemaid for a week. I don’t know where her kid was. I think she’d been shipped off to her grandmother’s, but I’m not sure. I didn’t ask.”

The following week, Lana spent hours working on her looks before appearing in public again. On December 2 came the announcement from MGM publicity that Lana and Power had ended their widely publicized romance. The release claimed, “They met over the weekend and decided to relegate their romance to the vault of sweet memories.”

At MGM, she was confronted by Hedda Hopper who wrote, “Mr. Power has returned to Hollywood from Africa, and is determined to join Ronald Reagan, Clark Gable, and Robert Taylor in the battle against the communists infiltrating Hollywood. These Reds are the scourge of the world.”

“Personally, Mr. Power and I have gone our separate ways,” Lana told the columnist. “At no time did we ever talk about getting married. We were just good friends.”

“As you know, when I saw him very infrequently, he was married to Annabella, a fine lady and actress. I always steer clear of married men in spite of what the press reports.”

“I read that his divorce is coming through and he will no doubt remarry, but not to me. The press invented a romance between us. None existed. I’ll carry my chin higher and get on with making movies. I have no serious romance in my life at the moment.”

In an overview of Lana’s life, it’s clear that Tyrone Power became “the man who got away.”

Years later, Lana said, “No man except possibly Ty took the time to find out that I was a human being. Not just a pretty, shapely little thing. That could have been my fault. I didn’t know myself back then. How could any man understand me?”

***

It was heartbreaking for Lana to read about Tyrone Power, the lover who had abandoned her, and his new girlfriend, Linda Christian, whom she only vaguely remembered from having played her maid in *Green Dolphin Street*.

Wedding Bell Blues: Lana wept uncontrollably when word reached her from Rome that Tyrone Power, the love of her life, had married Linda Christian.

She was learning more and more about her rival every day, and Lana felt humiliated that a star of her stature would be jilted and that the cad who rejected her would then opt for the company and sexual favors of an even more notorious starlette.

When Power first got involved with the then-23-year-old Christian, she was having a fling with Turhan Bey after Lana had dumped him. One night, Lana said. "Christian is taking my sloppy seconds."

When she heard that Power was stopping over in Rome, Christian flew there at once, also checking into the Hotel Excelsior where, on her first night there, she ran into him in the luxurious lobby. What happened after that earned her a place in the saga of Lana Turner.

"Imagine taking a handsome devil like Tyrone Power from the famous, the celebrated, the luscious Lana Turner," Christian said. "My friends said it couldn't be done. Honey, I had him the first night."

The next day, after leaving the Excelsior for an appointment with a hairdresser, she told an unidentified female companion, "I've bagged Ty Power. He told me last night that he was once in love with his wife, and on another occasion, with a bigtime Hollywood movie star. I knew that he meant Annabella and Lana Turner."

The press dubbed Christian "The Anatomical Bomb," because of her international affairs that had begun after Errol Flynn first discovered her in Acapulco and brought her to Hollywood. Soon, she was dating famous racing drivers, bullfighters, financiers, politicians, and playboys.

The daughter of a Dutch engineer and his Mexican-born wife, Christian had learned seven languages, even "haphazard Arabic," because of the nomadic lifestyle of her parents.

Power's biographer, Hector Arce, called her, "Madame Du Barry born two hundred years too late. All her life, she'd been trained in the ways of pleasing a man. She was bright and shrewd, fevered with a desire to be somebody. The chief blind spot in her makeup was her inability to distinguish fame from notoriety."

Lana certainly didn't expect Christian to be faithful to Power. Word reached Lana that her former lover, Johnny Weissmuller, was dropping his loincloth for her when both of them were starring together in *Tarzan and the Mermaids* (1948).

In time, the starlet would become the first James Bond girl when she appearedin the 1954 TV adaptation of Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale*.

At long last, on January 26, 1948, Annabella divorced her husband. He told his friends, "The French bitch cleaned me out. I'm now flat broke and stuck with a monstrous alimony."

Much to Lana's chagrin, the venue for the wedding of her former lover to Linda Christian took place in Rome. The assembly there of more than 10,000 fans degenerated into a riot.

Theirs would become a marriage fragmented by enormous tension, many of them based on his serial adulteries with both genders, and their frequent separations based on their respective work commitments.

During the months to come, Lana derided the marriage to her friends. "I hear that Ty is keeping her barefoot and pregnant all the time. It's been reported that for most of their marriage, she walks around with a big belly. I know Ty. That's a big turn-off for him."

Actually, Christian admitted herself that she had three miscarriages during the course of her marriage to the actor. Yet she eventually gave birth to two girls. In fact, she was pregnant in 1952 when Power first asked her for a divorce.

[He did not divorce her until 1956. Yet three years before that, Christian became genuinely enraged when Power rejected an offer to co-star with Christian in the 1953 block-buster, From Here to Eternity. *"It was my big chance, and Tyrone fucked it up for me," Christian protested*

The roles eventually went to Montgomery Clift and Donna Reed, who won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar for her performance.]

During periods when she wasn't recovering from either her miscarriages or her childbirths, Power and his new wife became notorious in Hollywood for their pool parties, wherein both of them indulged in serial adulteries. The early hours of these parties were devoted to heavy drinking, but by midnight, guests were indulging in orgies or else pairing off and heading for the bedrooms upstairs.

Since, as a bisexual, he seduced either gender, Power doubled his chances of conquest. Once, he was seen ascending the stairs with Rock Hudson. On another occasion, he and a former lover, Howard Hughes, competed for the affection of a handsome young actor, Robert Francis. *[Later, Power used his influence to get Francis cast with him in his 1955 film*, The Long Grey Line.*]*

Christian would marry again, but not until 1962. The scope of her conquests was vast. "I've always been the

pursuer," she once told the press. "Only once did I fail to get the man I went after. Cary Grant. But I learned later that he was a homosexual."

She had affairs with Miguel Aléman, the president of Mexico, and with Prince Aly Khan, despite his marriage at the time to Rita Hayworth. When she met Mexico's most famous painter, Diego Rivera, he said, "You will pose nude for me." It was not a request, but a command.

Lana, for reasons of her own, followed the almost daily reportage of Christian's affairs, including with the playboy, Richard Schlesinger. When Schlesinger was hauled into court for nonpayment of a million dollars' worth of jewelry he'd given Christian, she refused to return the diamonds, rubies, and emeralds.

She proclaimed to all the world that the then-married Marquis Alfonso dePortago, the celebrated Spanish racing driver, was "the love of my life." In 1957, at the Mille Miglia race, she was photographed kissing him. Minutes later, he crashed his Ferrari, dying instantly. The press, in news flashes that went around the world, dubbed it "The Kiss of Death.'

[The Mille Miglia (aka the "Thousand Miles") was an open-road endurance race between Brescia to Rome, round trip. Between 1927 and 1957, with an interruption during World War II, it took place in Italy twenty-four times, captivating the attention of millions of fans.]

Christian also traveled the world with Francisco ("Baby") Pignatari, the Brazilian millionaire, making an occasional film.

During the shooting of *House of Seven Hawks* (1959), she seduced Robert Taylor, another of Lana's former lovers.

Christian went on to play Rod Taylor's gold-digging girlfriend in *The VIPs* (1963) with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. During its filming, she slipped around and seduced Burton. When Taylor heard about it, she ordered that Christian's best scenes be cut from the film.

In 1964, during the filming of a documentary about bullfighting, Christian seduced Luís Dominguez. Even though his affair with Ava Gardner had ended before their encounter, Christian boasted, "I took away a matinee idol and a world-famous bullfighter from two of Hollywood's reigning love goddesses, Lana Turner and Ava Gardner. Not bad for a little Mexican spitfire, wouldn't you say? I must have something they don't. There are things a man likes done to him that Ava and Lana just wouldn't do. I will!"

In the immediate aftermath of her abandonment by Power, Lana thought that her link to Linda Christian was over. To her rage and fury, it resurfaced again in 1955 in a most infuriating way.

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Although Lana never got involved with Power again, she followed his career and private life with avid interest. He was still in his early forties. Based perhaps on his high-drama affairs and his all-night partying in California and abroad, he was beginning to lose his matinee idol good looks. As he moved into middle age, the dissipation was reflected on his face as his smoking and drinking accelerated. He ignored his doctors, who warned him that, like his father, he had a weak heart.

The last movie he attempted was *Solomon and Sheba* (1958), in which, on location near Madrid, dressed in heavy armor in record-breaking hot temperatures, brandishing a heavy sword during a dueling scene with George Sanders, he collapsed and suffered a fatal heart attack.

It was November 15, 1958. He was only 44 years old. Bulletins immediately flashed the news around the world.

News of his death reached Lana during a vacation in Acapulco as the guest of Ted Stauffer at his luxurious resort, the same venue that had sheltered her during her three-way with Power and Howard Hughes. Stauffer called her to the phone to hear about Power's death.

In her memoir, she recorded her reaction: "Tyrone, that beautiful, sensitiveman, so in love with life. I sat disbelieving and numb. I didn't cry, not then, and not later, when the numbness wore off, and I realized that it was true. Tyrone Power was dead. My tears had been shed years before, when that door closed. Now it was truly closed forever. In my life, I loved other men, but Tyrone was special. He was the one who broke my heart."

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At long last, MGM reteamed Lana with Clark Gable in a post-war film, aptly entitled *Homecoming* (1948) in which Louis B. Mayer hoped to replicate the success of their pair of pre-War movies, *Honky Tonk* and *Somewhere I'll Find You*. Mervyn LeRoy, Lana's long-ago mentor, was set to direct her once again. Although he had never directed Gable in a film, he'd also been a mentor to him when he first hit Hollywood.

More than a decade earlier, the director had recognized Gable's potential as a future matinee idol during his screening of *The Last Mile* (1930), wherein Gable interpreted the role of "Killer Mears." Meeting Gable for the first time, LeRoy tried to get him screen tested, with hopes of configuring him as a contract player, but Jack Warner said, "His ears are too big. I think he'd become airborne in a head wind."

The director continued to try to open doors for the actor, and eventually Gable and LeRoy became close friends. Leroy had tried unsuccessfully to get the unknown stage actor cast in a role in *Little Caesar* (1931), and later, he urged his colleague, director Howard Higgin, to assign Gable the fifth lead in *The Painted Desert* (1931), a film that otherwise starred William Boyd and Helen Twelvetrees.

Although LeRoy never directed Gable in a movie until *Homecoming*, he took pride in his discovery. He watched Gable become the King of Hollywood, the leading man to Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Norma Shearer, Barbara Stanwyck, Helen Hayes, Claudette Colbert, and Hedy Lamarr. "I seduced most of them," he confessed, "except for the lezzies." He also starred with Loretta Young and Myrna Loy before landing the role of Rhett Butler in the classic, *Gone With the Wind*.

Until *Homecoming* came along, both Lana and Gable had rejected scripts sent to them, finding none of them suitable for his post-war comeback film. In 1944, Sidney Kingsley had devised a drama, *The Homecoming of Ulysses*, specifically as a vehicle for Gable. In 1934, Kingsley had received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, based on his play, *Men in White*. It had been made into a movie starring Gable and Myrna Loy.

Paul Osborn wrote the final screenplay for *Homecoming*. He had just written the screenplay for the highly successful *The Yearling* (1947), which had co-starred Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman.

In the drama, cast in the role of Col. Ulysses Delby ("Lee") Johnson, Gable plays a New York society doctor who's married to Penny (Anne Baxter). He's so caught up in the social whirl of Manhattan that he can't help an old schoolmate, Dr. Bob Sunday (John Hodiak), tackle a malaria epidemic from decimating a tribal village. Gable's character is eventually "converted" to good causes after his designation as a major in the Army Medical Corps.

En route to Africa, Ulysses meets the very lovely Lt. Jane McCall (Lana; nicknamed in the film as "Snapshot"), who will become his inspiration and assistant. Slowly, amidst a torrent of bickering, the couple fall in love.

During the course of the film, ostensibly during the infamous Battle of the Bulge, "Snapshot" dies from fragments of an exploding bomb. After the war, a chastised man, Gable returns to Penny, despite confessing his love for the dead nurse.

It seems that Ulysses and Penny will patch up their differences and live happily ever after in post-war America.

There was no chance of Lana reviving her long-ago romance with Gable. “He had moved on, and so had I,” she told Virginia Grey.

Unlike Lana, Grey had already resumed her own pre-war romance with Gable.

Stripped of her usual glamor girl wardrobe, Lana, as “Snapshot,” comes across as a kind, good-hearted nurse with quiet, sincere good judgment. No longer was she interpreted by moviegoers as the murdering Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Even without her usual accessories, Lana’s beauty still shined through.

Lana related an embarrassing incident in her memoirs: To keep her mouth fresh, she chewed gum. During one of the takes, she stashed the gum away with her tongue, moving it into the recesses of her cheek. During her heavy kissing scene, the gum came loose and wound up sticking to Gable’s false teeth. No one was amused. “From then on, I used Listerine to keep my mouth fresh,” she said.

Lana concealed her shock about how much Gable had aged. He looked heavier, more jowly, a much older and sadder man. Somehow, for her, at least, the sexual magnetism was no longer there, although they still held onto their easy camaraderie. No longer was she a starlet in the making. Instead, she had morphed into a full-fledged box office attraction in her own right.

Lana and Gable between takes on the set of *Home-coming*.

Ever the realist, Gable was very candid about his physical appearance, confessing that he was using hemorrhoid ointment to shrink the bags under his eyes. His jowls were pulled tight behind his ears with rubber bands.

Lana shared a reunion with John Hodiak, but by now, he was married to Anne Baxter. A few decades later, at her home in Easton, Connecticut, Baxter told author Darwin Porter, "I knew Lana still had the hots for my John (Hodiak), so I watched her like a hawk. I didn't trust the two of them alone for a minute. She knew what John was carrying around in his pants, and I can't blame her for wanting a rematch. But it didn't happen. I saw to that."

Likewise, during the early weeks of making *Homecoming*, Tyrone Power (who had not yet departed on his African Good Will Tour) visited the set.

Lana was emphatically aware that Power had had an affair with Baxter when both of them had co-starred with Gene Tierney in *The Razor's Edge* (1946).

LeRoy described the sexual intrigue on his film set like this: "Anne Baxter was keeping Lana from John Hodiak, and Lana was seeing that Tyrone Power remained off limits to Anne."

In one of the ironies associated with changing partners and bisexuality in Hollywood, Lana learned through LeRoy that Hodiak had stopped "servicing" Cesar Romero, Power's longtime lover.

Leroy selected a strong supporting cast to back up his screen duo. Lana had worked with Gladys Cooper (playing Mrs. Kirby) before, as she had with Cameron Mitchell (playing Sgt. Monkevickz). Once again, Mitchell told her, "I still want to fuck you."

"Sorry," she said. "Ty put a chastity belt on me while he's away."

Lana met and talked with character actor Ray Collins. Although he would appear in some 75 films, he became better known on TV for playing the irascible Lt. Arthur Tragg in the long-running *Perry Mason* series.

One day, his best friend, Orson Welles, came to visit him. Welles had cast Collins in *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Lana later told LeRoy about her introduction to Welles in her dressing room. "After Ray left, I was alone with him. Welles put his hand up my dress and I wasn't wearing panties. He dug in deeper, and I had one hell of a time ejecting him. I don't know how Rita Hayworth puts up with him. He's outrageous."

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In the words of newspaper columnist Lee Mortimer, "*Homecoming* is an exhibitor's dream and a theater patron's paradise."

MGM's publicity department billed its cast as "*The Team That Generates Steam*."

Columnist Adela Rogers St. Johns wrote, "I thought Lana Turner gave one of her greatest performances ever. I was burned because I thought she did not get enough credit. I remember a gal named Clara Bow who every once in a while used to turn a heart-twisting bit like that."

Wanda Hale in the *New York Daily News* wrote: "Clark Gable and Lana Turner take up where they left off before the war. MGM's big money team, their screen romance followed the routine—man and girl meet, they dislike each other on first sight, they fight, they hate each other, and then they fall in love. All of which was, and still is, thrilling to those who rate such a love affair higher than the story. Gable and Turner are Gable and Turner—and that's all their fans want."

New York film critics described *Homecoming* as one of the worst films of 1948.

Gable's reaction? "A bunch of snobbish faggots."

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Lana received an unexpected call from David Niven, with whom she'd had a brief fling. At the suggestion of his close, swashbuckling friend, Errol Flynn, he wanted to ask her if he could escort her to a private party at Flynn's home the following night. "Clark Gable will be there, and several others—maybe thirty in all."

She eagerly accepted the invitation as a distraction from having been recently deserted by Tyrone Power, and was surprised that Gable and Flynn had become such close friends, seeing each other several times a week. After his return from the war-front, Gable seemed to have evolved into a bachelor-at-large with a roving eye.

A savvy cad—David Niven, defying wartime frugality.

Upon his homecoming, he had resumed his affair with Virginia Grey, and almost daily Lana's friend articulated her heartfelt desire that Gable would settle down and propose marriage.

To Lana, that didn't seem likely.

He was seducing Paulette Goddard, but had complained to Lana that "she's too strong-willed for me, and keeps hinting that some diamonds might be in order." He was also dropping in on occasion to see his long-time flame, Joan Crawford, and was also seen escorting Anita Colby to functions. Dolly O'Brien had rejected his proposal of marriage. He told Flynn and others, "Dolly said I didn't satisfy her in bed.:"

The press had also linked Gable to Betty Chisholm, the Jones Sausage heiress, and to Millicent Rogers, the Standard Oil heiress.

Before making *Homecoming* with Lana, he'd filmed *The Hucksters* (1947) in which Ava Gardner had one of the roles. In their girl-to-girl chats, Lana and Gardner often sliced up men, and both of them agreed that Gable was a self-admitted "lousy lay."

On a Friday night, Niven arrived at Lana's house, and, as always, he was the courtly British gentleman. When they appeared on the doorstep of Flynn's home for a party, as planned, both of them were surprised when two young girls, no more than teenagers, opened the front door. "They were incredibly beautiful and absolutely nude," Lana said. She tugged at Niven's arm, suggesting, "This isn't my kind of party."

But he insisted that they go inside and greet Flynn, who had become aware of their arrival and was heading to greet them with one of his warm kisses on each of their lips.

Once inside, Lana entered a room of strangers, except for a few familiar faces. Bruce Cabot and Gable sat on Flynn's sofa, receiving guests like royalty. Most of the party-goers were grips, studio technicians, budding starlets, and cameramen.

When she turned around, she encountered Ann Sheridan who whispered to her, "Watch what you say in the powder room. It's bugged."

Like the exuberant and spontaneous host he was, Flynn worked the room, occasionally stopping beside Lana to give her a kiss. When a seat on his sofa became available, Gable patted it and signaled to Lana to sit down. She noticed that "The King" was visibly shaking, although his weakened condition did not stop him from all-night partying and numerous conquests. He admitted to her that his tremors were caused by the Dexadrine he was taking "to lose all these pounds I've put on from too much boozing."

Suddenly, Shelley Winters rudely squeezed herself into a position on the couch between Gable and herself. Niven jumped to Lana's rescue, inviting her onto the moonlit terrace where he stood with her, looking back into the living room at both Gable and Flynn. "Looks like Yvonne De Carlo has staked out Errol for the night," she said.

"Take a good look at those two once-handsome legends," Niven said. "You'd better look now, because those two are about to fall apart with all this boozing, high living, constant fucking and wenching until dawn. It's a bloody shame!"

"I agree," she said, taking his hand and lightly holding it against her lips. "Let's get the hell out of here. Since it's Friday and I'm not scheduled to be at the studio until Monday morning, why not let me entertain you this

weekend?"

"That's the best offer I've had since Merle Oberon asked me to enter through the rear door."

"Oh, David, you're so vulgar! I love it! Let's head for the door."

She already knew what to expect from Niven, as did every star from Mae West to Hedy Lamarr, from Rita Hayworth to Ginger Rogers. The allure of David Niven was legendary.

It would be Monday morning before Niven told Lana goodbye after breakfast.

Later that day, she phoned Gardner to compare notes on their respective nocturnal activities over the weekend. Each seemed obsessed with the subject of male genitalia. "David Niven and John Hodiak have the two thickest cocks in Hollywood," Lana claimed. "Not the longest, but the thickest. When I first saw them, nude and erect (and separately, of course), I wondered what I could do with such appendages other than to bring them gifts. But somehow, I managed."

"Lately, I've been coming up short-changed in the male department," Gardner said. "However, Porfirio Rubirosa, the playboy from the Dominican Republic, just called me. He's known in restaurants as 'Mr. Peppermill.' I hear he can balance a chair with a telephone book on the tip of his erection."

"My dear, it sounds like you're heading for the hospital to be sewn up!"

"But what fun I'll have in the meantime," Gardner said. "A little advice from a friend. Time for you to get back into circulation, more than just a weekend fling with Niven. Perhaps find Husband Number Three, or should I count four since you married Stephen Crane twice?"

"Great idea!"

The two stars went on to discuss Gable, Gardner maintaining, "I have my stable of stud horses, and he has his harem." She admitted to an affair she was sustaining with Robert Walker, her co-star in *One Touch of Venus* (1948). She had also met with Robert Taylor for a fling before they began filming *The Bribe* (1949).

"Clark Gable, Robert Walker, Robert Taylor," Lana said. "Sounds like you're following in Lana Turner's footsteps. Been there, done all of them! You even married my first husband"

"I've got a new one you haven't done yet," Gardner said. "A sleek thug who works for Mickey Cohen. His name is Johnny Stompanato. He's a boy wonder who compares his thing to the length of the Oscar."

"I've never heard of him," Lana said.

"You will. He's making the rounds of all the beauties of Hollywood."

[Gardner would go on to make two more pictures with Gable, and Lana, after Home-coming, *would star with him in one final movie. During interviews, both of the love goddesses denied having had any sexual liaisons with Gable. "We're just good friends," was their standard refrain.*

Whereas Lana's affair with Gable had too many eyewitnesses for her to convincingly deny it, Gardner squeaked by, sowing confusion, based on her frequent denials of any romantic links to Gable.

Gardner's platform was shattered, however, in 1953, when veteran reporter Ruth Waterbury visited her at her flat in London. She found Gardner cooking a batch of bacon and eggs. From the bedroom, Waterbury heard a familiar voice: "Hey Ava, my bacon and eggs ready yet?"

"To my great surprise," she said, Clark Gable appeared at the door coming from the bedroom. He wore nothing but a mischievous grin."]

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A new man was about to enter Lana's life, even though at first she didn't think he was worth a second look. She eventually came to view him as marriage material—that is, if she wanted financial security and not a hot sex life.

To escape from Hollywood and its memories of Power, she had fled to New York. She kept asking herself: "Was the breakup my fault? Where did I go wrong?"

To complicate matters, she was also under a rigorous audit from the Internal Revenue Service. Her accountants had routinely deducted "movie star items needed for work," including tailored gowns, expensive furs, closetsful of shoes, even her chauffeur-driven limousine. Many other female stars were doing the same, but suddenly, the IRS cracked down, ruling that these were not deductible items, labeling them as personal expenses.

The audit went badly for her, and she found herself owing the IRS thousands upon thousands of dollars in back taxes. She reminded the IRS that she'd made millions for the U.S. Treasury during her war-bond tours, but that didn't matter.

She was forced to meet with the legal department at MGM, where an agreement was reached that a hefty percentage of her weekly paycheck would be deducted and mailed directly to the IRS.

She was fortunate to have been recently granted a pay raise, so that now she was drawing the same salary as

Clark Gable. Nonetheless, her accountants warned her to stop being so extravagant and to live within her means.

During time he had spent working in an aircraft factory in California, Howard Keel was said to have taken the virginity of 13-year-old Norma Jean Baker, who eventually changed her name to Marilyn Monroe. At the time of his seduction of this underaged girl, she was trying to fashion herself after Lana.

When Keel had first dated her, he was twenty-three years old. She had developed a crush on him, claiming, "I like older men." However, he ultimately opted to reject her because of her age, defining her as "jailbait."

In Manhattan, as a vehicle for escaping from the pressure, she threw herself into the city's chic nightlife, going out with a different man every night. Most of the rendezvous were set up through MGM's publicity department, often with wannabe movie stars hoping to become matinee idols of the 1950s to replace Tyrone Power or Clark Gable. She hoped that inviting them back to her suite to make love to her would help her forget Power. Even after their intimacies, none of them did.

There was one exception: Howard Keel, a handsome actor from Illinois "with a great set of pipes." Oscar Hammerstein II had awarded him the lead in the London production of *Oklahoma!*, and he had emerged as the macho baritone par excellence.

Keel met Lana as he was contemplating a divorce from his first wife, actress Rosemary Cooper. Lana was hoping he'd help her get over the loss of Power, and he did—at least for a weekend. *[The venue for their time together was the Plaza, not the Waldorf, as might have been expected, based on the title of Lana's earlier film.]*

On their first date, Keel escorted her to the Stork Club. ("I paid the bill.") and then she invited him to her suite, from which he did not exit until Tuesday morning. Room service catered their meals, including plenty of champagne on ice.

She'd later relate the thrill of it all to Virginia Grey. "He has long legs, especially his 'third leg," a narrow waist, and broad shoulders. He doesn't just seduce a girl, he transports her to paradise."

She wanted him to stay, but he had to fly to Hollywood to begin his film career. Very soon, she learned that he'd been cast as the cocky marksman, Frank Butler, in *Annie Get Your Gun*. He was to play opposite Judy Garland, but she was fired, the role of Annie Oakley going to Betty Hutton.

With Keel gone, Lana continued with her whirlwind nightlife. She shuddered to think of Power making love to Linda Christian, against whom she continued to rage.

During her recent filming of *Cass Timberlane*, her dressing room had been swamped with white orchids and red roses. Every day, a deluxe box of chocolates arrived. The card that accompanied these gifts read Henry J. Topping. He usually signed "Bob" below the printed version of his formal name. "I fed the candy to the crew and felt intoxicated by the roses, enough for a funeral," she said.

Bob Topping's name was vaguely familiar to her, based on her avid pursuit of the era's gossip columns. She knew that he'd had an affair with her former rival, Carole Landis, who had committed suicide over Rex Harrison.

When Topping finally got Lana on the phone, she demanded that he stop sending flowers and candy to her dressing room. She also told him not to call her again.

However, during her installation at the Plaza, Topping's offerings of flowers, candy, and expensive trinkets that included costly bottles of French perfume, began reappearing. He finally got her on the phone through a connection

he made to someone on the hotel's switchboard. As he said, "It's amazing what a fifty-dollar bill can do to an underpaid telephone operator."

After much persuasion and much rejection, she finally agreed to go out with him. In the meantime, she made a few calls to in-the-know friends for some background on her upcoming blind date.

Topping was known as "the tin plate heir." His family's wealth, estimated at $140 million, derived from their grandfather, Daniel G. Reid. Most of the fortune came from tin plate, but he also made millions in steel, tobacco, railroads, and banking.

About six years older than Lana, Bob had been born in New York, one of three brothers. His brother Dan was famous in the city as the part owner of the New York Yankees.

At the age of twenty-one, Bob had married actress Jayne Shadduck, following her divorce from the playwright, Jack Kirkland. Their marriage lasted three years before he divorced her to marry Gloria ("Mimi") Baker, a much-publicized café society woman related to members of the Vanderbilt family.

Bob's most recent marriage had been to actress Arline Judge, whom Lana had met briefly at Hollywood parties. As part of a somewhat unsavory rondelay, Judge had first married Bob's brother Dan, which made her the sister-in-law to her ex-husband and Bob the stepfather to his nephew, Dan Topping, Jr.

Since the 1930s, Judge had appeared in several low-budget B movies, but, in time, she would become more famous for her seven marriages, even though she'd been educated in a convent. Her first husband had been director Wesley Ruggles, who had helmed both Clark Gable and Lana in *Somewhere I'll Find You*.

When Topping, as part of their first date, arrived to retrieve Lana at the Plaza, with the intention of escorting her to an important premiere in a chauffeur-driven limousine, he was in the process of divorcing Judge after only a few months of marriage.

Lana concealed her disappointment. Topping was gracious, well-dressed, and had impeccable manners, but, as she'd admit later, "He was certainly no Tyrone Power in either looks or physique, and he looked like he needed to lose more than a few pounds."

They were on their way to an MGM publicity event. The studio had asked Lana to fill in for Loretta Young, who had been slated to deliver a welcome speech before an invited audience attending the premiere of her latest film, *The Bishop's Wife*. Young had fallen ill. The 1947 release co-starred Cary Grant and David Niven, along with Monty Woolley, the notorious homosexual actor who was one of Power's closest friends.

In the back of his limousine, *en route* to the premiere, she opened her purse to retrieve a cigarette. As she did, he dropped into it a small jewelry box emblazoned with the gold-lettered imprint of Cartier. She opened it to discover a stunning pair of diamond earrings. Hesitant to accept such a lavish gift from a stranger, she pointed out that she was already wearing her own pair of diamond earrings.

"A beautiful woman can't own too many diamonds," Topping responded. "Just ask Zsa Zsa Gabor."

She removed her earrings and replaced them with his gift to her.

At the premiere, after greeting dozens of people she knew from Hollywood, she delivered a brief welcoming speech, receiving loud applause.

About an hour later, midway through the screening of Loretta Young's film, Lana nudged Topping's arm and whispered, "I can't stand this lousy movie. Let's get the hell out of here."

"I agree," he said, as he discreetly escorted her to the nearest exit.

He had his chauffeur drive her to a lavish apartment on Park Avenue, the domain of Mrs. Evander Schley, who was hosting a party. The doyenne of society, Elsa Maxwell, chatted with Lana as she surveyed the roomful of New York's elite, the women dressed in gowns from Christian Dior or Hattie Carnegie and purchased through such outlets as Saks or Bergdorf's.

Maxwell said, "Lana, my dear, you'll have to adjust to Park Avenue because Park Avenue will never lower itself to Hollywood."

She took her over to introduce her to the chicly dressed Duchess of Windsor. Lana later said, "I find the Duchess incredibly polite but also stuffy and cold."

Lana made the rounds, greeting Mrs. Henry Payne Bingham, Mrs. Carol Carstairs, and Mrs. Harrison Williams, among others.

On leaving, she spoke again with the Duchess of Windsor. "You seem like such a beautiful young lady," the Duchess said. "I must get the Duke to take me to one of your movies."

Lana dated Topping for the next five nights in a row, turning down his request to come into her suite for a nightcap. On the sixth night, he was invited inside for more than a nightcap. As she'd later confide to Virginia Grey, "He hardly looks like Mr. America. He could pass for any rich man on the golf course at Palm Beach. As the saying goes, his physique is less than Greek. Average cock, missionary position, and one lousy kisser, but rich men can get away with their physical inadequacies."

For the Christmas holidays, he invited Lana and her daughter to the 600-acre Topping estate, Dunellen Hall, a palatial replica of an English manor house with more than 50 rooms for the Topping family and their guests, plus another 20 rooms in a separate wing for an armada of staff.

[Dunellen Hall, at 521 Round Hill Road in Greenwich, Connecticut, built in 1918 by the founder of the Topping's family fortune, has been described by real estate agents in The New York Times *as "among the most famous of the region's 13 (great) estates, with the 'ultimate' location on 'the most famous street' in the 'best town in Connecticut.'" A previous occupant, cattle heiress Lynda Dick, articulated her belief that misfortune, like that associated with the Hope Diamond, had always befallen whomever owned it.*

The manor house, partially assembled from stones and masonries salvaged from 16th- century manor houses torn down in England, included stables, tennis courts, horses, ducks, sheep, a working farm, a scenic lake, and greenhouses that evoked tropical gardens. In 1968, the house was the setting for a A Lovely Way to Die, *starring Kirk Douglas.*

In 1983, after multiple owners of varying degrees of tragedy, dissipation and misfortune, Dunellen Hall and its furnishings were bought by Harry and Leona ("The Queen of Mean") Helmsley for $11 million. Subsequently, their lavish enlargements and restorations, each defined, for tax reasons, as business expenses, were later challenged (and denied) by the IRS. The Helmsleys' widely publicized trials exposed Leona to nationwide humiliations and time spent in jail. (At the time, even Leona's defense attorney referred to her in public as "a tough bitch.") Leona died at Dunellen Hall in 2007, aged 87, bequeathing a large block of her fortune to her dog.]

That night at dinner, Lana met Bob's brother, Dan Topping, whose previous wives had included Arline Judge and Sonja Henie, the Norwegian skating star and movie queen on ice. Henie and Tyrone Power had once been lovers.

Lana's first date with Bob Topping. Heavy drinking was part of their dynamic as a couple.

Shortly thereafter, Topping invited Lana to ring in the New Year of 1948 at El Morocco in Manhattan.

About an hour after their arrival, she excused herself to go to the powder room. When she returned, she picked up her martini only to notice something flashy at the bottom of the glass.

"Fish it out," Topping told her. She did, and discovered a fifteen-carat marquise diamond engagement ring. "If there are two things I know, it's men and diamonds," she later said. "This was a true Cartier gem, the most beautiful diamond ring I'd ever seen."

"What's this for?" she asked, feigning innocence.

"You know what it's for," he said. "I want you to become my wife."

Before putting the ring on her finger, she warned him, "You know I'm not in love with you, don't you?"

"You will be," he predicted. "Not today, not tomorrow, nor even the next day, but in time, you'll love me night after night for the rest of our lives."

Later that evening, an alarming note was sounded, as she noticed what a heavy drinker he was. Of course, it was New Year's and everyone was drunk. But even at the Topping estate during everyday "non-holiday" gatherings, the family began heavy boozing at five o'clock, the hard and heavy drinking continuing through the evening. She could not keep up, although on occasion, she tried.

The press had begun to take Lana's romance with Topping seriously. However, a New York columnist wrote, "Lana would give up anything, certainly Bob Top-ping, should Tyrone Power come back, kiss her, and make up."

Louella Parson's last column for 1947 reported, "Bob Topping gave Lana a Christmas present of a pair of diamond earrings. Could this soon follow with a diamond ring...and marriage?"

Parsons was a little late with her report. Lana was already wearing that diamond ring in New York.

On January 2, Lana received a telegram from MGM to report to work on her latest picture, *The Three Musketeers*.

"I'll fly back with you," Topping told her.

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During the first week of the New Year, Hollywood gossip columnists carried reports of the upcoming marriage of Lana to Topping. It was revealed that their engagement would be announced at a lavish party at Mocambo, and that invitations to that announcement party would be sent to 400 *invités*, including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Mayer exploded when he read the news, and received his own invitation: "Get Eddie Mannix *[from MGM's publicity department]* on the phone," he shouted at his secretary.

When they established telephone contact, Mayer ordered him to contact Lana at once and demand that she cancel her engagement party. "For God's sake, the guy's married. Lana's name has been linked to too many married men—and that includes Tyrone Power. She has a morality clause in her contract. I want no more of this lurid publicity about her getting engaged to married men."

Reluctantly, and humiliated, she had to notify the hundreds of invited guests that there would be no party.

During her first visit with Virginia Grey since her return home, Lana said, "If you want a blueprint of a woman's life, here's one. Lose a lover, snap right back, catch another one, perhaps not as exciting as before, but what the hell? Even if he's not handsome, you might settle for rich."

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No novel in the history of the movies, worldwide, has been dramatized on screen more frequently than *Les Trois Mousquetaires (The Three Musketeers)*, by Alexandre Dumas, *père*, first published, in French, in 1844.

Amazingly, its first film adaptation, a French production, was released in 1903, more or less at the dawn of the movies.

[It would require a separate book to document the many screen and cartoon treatments the novel has received since then. The 1921 silent adaptation of the novel by a French studio became a blockbuster hit, as did a Hollywood version starring Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., that same year. Swashbuckling Fairbanks was known for his athletic ability: His one-handed handspring grabbing a sword during a duel was later interpreted as one of the great stunts of the silent era.

His son, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., tried to persuade Louis B. Mayer to cast him as D'Artagnan in 1948, but the studio boss at MGM turned him down.

A little-known fact is that in 1933, Mascot Studios filmed a serial set in North Africa, where three musketeers became French Foreign Legionnaires. The serial featured a little known actor by the name of John Wayne, Lana's future co-star.

RKO filmed its own version of The Three Musketeers in 1935, starring Walter Abel. His interpretation of D'Artagnan was denounced "as the dreariest of the many film versions of the Dumas novel."

In 1939, the year of release of some of Hollywood's greatest movie classics, Don Ameche as D'Artagnan teamed with the Ritz Brothers in a comic version of Dumas' characters. Binnie Barnes starred as Milady de Winter, with Gloria Stuart cast as Queen Anne.

In 1942, during World War II, Cantinflas, the famous Mexican comedian, released his own version of the story, turning it into farce.]

By 1948, Mayer had decided to adapt *The Three Musketeers* into a top-notch Technicolor spectacular, the greatest version of the classic ever made.

As funding for the remake, Mayer green-lighted a budget that was considered massive at the time and whichplaced special emphasis on costumes and scenery. Robert Ardrey, best known for his scholastic writings on sociology, was hired to write the screenplay. Mayer wanted Robert Taylor and Ricardo Montalban in the male leads, with Lana Turner cast as Milady de Winter. George Sidney, who had recently helmed Lana in *Green Dolphin Street*, was hired to direct.

When Taylor and Montalban were not available, the director cast Gene Kelly in "an acrobatic version" of D'Artagnan. The other two musketeers were cast with Van Heflin as Athos and Richard Coote as Aramis. Coote

was unknown to Lana at the time.

As for Heflin, ever since they had co-starred together in *Green Dolphin Street*, Lana had never considered him as a "romantic leading man," but she greatly admired him as an actor, and their scenes together went smoothly. In contrast, Gene Kelly had been her friend ever since his arrival in Hollywood.

[When news leaked out about MGM's big film for 1948, it became clear that the independent producer Edward Small had already been working on his own version of The Three Musketeers*, with the intention of starring the dashing Louis Hayward. As part of a sideshow that erupted simultaneously with MGM's plans for an equivalent film of its own, Small soon realized that he couldn't compete with MGM's more lavish version, so, with regrets, he put his screenplay into mothballs.]*

With Mayer's approval, Sidney rounded up a strong supporting cast, notably Angela Lansbury as Queen Anne, with June Allyson in the second female lead as Constance Bonaclieux. Other players include Frank Morgan as King Louis XIII, Vincent Price as Richelieu, Keenan Wynn as Planchet, John Sutton as the Duke of Buckingham, and Ian Keith as Rochefort, chief henchman to Richelieu.

Lana was excited that for the first time, she would appear in a feature film in Technicolor, having been told that color would highlight her beauty as never before. *[The only time she'd been photographed in color up to this point was during a brief camo in* Du Barry Was a Lady *(1943).]*

She had been promised star billing above the title of her newest project, and it had been understood that her name would appear more prominently than those of the four other featured players: Kelly, Heflin, Allyson, and Lansbury.

Yet in spite of that star billing, Lana reported that she was horrified after reading the script. "I was not the star. Gene was. My role as Milady was just a supporting part. I called MGM and refused the role. I was immediately put on suspension."

During the next few weeks, she refused to come to the studio, not answering urgent calls from MGM. Mayer negotiated with Alida Valli to replace Lana in the film. An Italian actress, she had been born a baroness, and was viewed as most capable of playing a French aristocrat. Film critic Frédéric Mitterand had hailed Valli as "the only European actress equal to Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich."

The news reached Lana, who lived in dread that Valli might play the role more convincingly than she could have. "What does a little barefoot girl from the wilds of Idaho known about how a French countess acts?" she asked Kelly.

[When Lana's suspension ended, based on her agreement to participate in the film, Mayer dismissed Valli. That was just as well for Valli's career, since she was soon after cast as the mysterious Czech refugee wanted by the Soviets in Carol Reed's The Third Man *(1949), co-starring Joseph Cotten and Orson Welles. That movie went on to be hailed asone of the greatest film classics ever made.]*

During Lana's suspension, a rival actress, Angela Lansbury, loudly expressed her wish to be re-cast as Milady de Winter, as she was not satisfied with her part as the villainous, older, and stodgier Queen Anne. "I'm too young for the role," she protested. She finally got Mayer to agree to meet with her. She remembered the long walk down the carpeted hallway to his office, where he sat behind a big round white desk.

She appealed to him to switch her role. He listened patiently until he'd heard her pitch. Then he rose to his feet, signaling that the meeting had come to an end: "You'll be wonderful as Queen Anne," he assured her.

Years later, Lansbury retraced her steps along that long walk back from his office and reflected, "I knew that from now on I would not get to the top of the class at MGM. My best roles were behind me. I was right. The studio was changing. Even Mayer himself would be booted out, as would the most stellar names on its big roster of stars, and that included both Lana Turner and Clark Gable. The MGM I knew would be no more."

The Associated Press, on January 14, 1948, leaked the news of Lana's suspension. Mayer threatened to charge her from $300,000 to $400,000 for pre-production costs generated because of her absence.

Topping flew Lana back to Dunellen Hall to ride out her suspension.

Hedda Hopper offered advice: "If you care for your movie career, you'll get your shapely ass out of New York and appear on the set at MGM."

She had lawyers negotiating with MGM, demanding that her role get beefed up. Not only that, but she was asking the studio to give her a year's vacation with pay and $25,000 up front. Although she finally agreed to return to Hollywood to participate in filming with a revised script, with a meatier part for her, all of her other demands were rejected by Mayer.

On the set once again, she praised the camerawork of Robert Planck, who would win an Oscar nomination for his work. She was reunited with costume designer Walter Plunkett, who was considered the best in his field ever since he'd designed the antebellum costumes for *Gone With the Wind*.

Critic Jeanne Basinger described Lana's first appearance in the film, the scene where she emerges from a

darkened horse-drawn carriage into the light: “Lana Turner looks like an apparition beyond life, a mysterious creature. She is unreal, a proper goddess.”

Allyson told Lana that she never wanted to play Lady Constance. “I don’t feel comfortable in a period piece. I think I am only convincing as the girl-next-door in a skirt and blouse, or else as the perfect wife in apron and skirt. I don’t think any fan will believe me as Lady Constance. Mayer has seen the first rushes, and he told me I’ll be fine. ‘Finish the damn picture,’ he said, ‘and stop your bellyaching.’”

Allyson recalled a memorable scene with Lana when Milady was imprisoned, and begs her to bring her a knife so that she can commit suicide. “Lana was daring, playing the scene without makeup, a first for her. She did the scene beautifully, shedding real tears. I was mesmerized. Actually, I didn’t know that Milady wanted that knife to stab my (character’s) heart.”

Over lunch in the commissary, Lana and Allyson discussed their former boyfriends. Both of them were surprised that each had shared a brief fling with Ronald Reagan, Peter Lawford, and John F. Kennedy. But when Lana revealed that she’d had a fling with Alan Ladd, too, Allyson’s face dimmed.

“Oh, no, not him, too!” Allyson said. She went on to confess that Ladd had been the love of her life, even though she was married to Dick Powell during the peak of their affair.

Allyson maintained a sense of humor about herself and her success. Mayer had told everyone, “June Allyson isn’t pretty. She certainly isn’t sexy. She sings fairly well. She doesn’t dance all that well, either. But she’s got something, including a raspy voice like that of Jimmy Durante.”

In *The Three Musketeers*, Lana as Lady de Winter threatens to stab Gene Kelly as D’Artagnan. Within a decade, Lana would become more famously involved in a real-life stabbing.

Kelly enjoyed co-starring in *The Three Musketeers* with Lana, claiming, “It was like being a kid again, playing cowboys and Indians. The action sequences, all that dueling, were like extensions of the dance. Lana complimented me on my agility. While I was shooting the picture, I ran into my good pal, Frank Sinatra. He asked me if I were taking leading man privileges and fucking the hell out of Lana like most of her leading men did. I firmly denied it.”

Meet the merry band, all for one and one for all.

From left to right: Lana Turner, Gene Kelly, Van Heflin, June Allyson, Angela Lansbury, Frank Morgan, and Keenan Wynn.

Kelly relayed this to Vincent Price, adding in a confidential whisper, “After I denied messing around with Lana, Frank kidded me and said, ‘I forgot. You’re the one who likes to take it up the ass.’”

In one scene, the athletic Kelly had to fling Lana across a bed. He used too much force and pitched her all the way over to a point beyond the bed’s far side. She hit the floor with such force that she broke her elbow, delaying production on her scenes for two weeks.

Lana and her other co-star, Van Heflin, never became friends. “I think he viewed me as a vapid blonde actress with noodles forming my brain matter.”

Lana enjoyed meeting and talking with Robert Coote, born in London in 1909. She told him something he didn’t know: Had casting gone differently, she would have appeared with him in *Forever Amber (1947)* instead of her friend, Linda Darnell. The actor would also star with Lana in her upcoming film, *The Merry Widow* (1952).

She liked working with Vincent Price, viewing him as “the master of high camp,” a term she used in later years to describe him. *[At the time, that term did not exist.]* He challenged her with his scene stealing, forcing her to develop new techniques of her own—the flap of a glove, the turn of her head—to distract the viewer.

As one of her facial accessories, Lana demanded that makeup fit her with a beauty mark. They came up with three "moles"—one shaped like a star, the other two a moon and a heart.

She liked all three of them, and appeared on camera at various times and in various scenes with one or another of them positioned on various parts of her face.

"Vincent and Clifton Webb were two of the gayest men in the movies, and they got away with it, although homosexuality was illegal at the time and absolutely forbidden on the screen," Lana said. "I adored Vincent. He could play any role: *film noir*, thriller, horror, drama, mystery, comedy. I told him that I had desperately wanted to play *Laura*, his 1944 movie in which he co-starred with Gene Tierney in a part that should have been mine."

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Bob Topping was almost a daily visitor to the set for lunch with Lana. He was getting a lot of coverage in the press. His wife at the time, Arline Judge, vowed during an interview with the entertainment columnist Earl Wilson, "He won't get a divorce from me for any amount of money." Later, she had obviously changed her mind, telling Sheilah Graham, "When I divorce the bastard, I'll ruin him, take every cent he has."

Topping told Lana that he had decided to divorce Judge after she broke a bottle of champagne over his head, giving him a concussion. "A vintage year at that."

After months of legal wranglings, Topping's divorce from Judge became final on April 23, and he was at last free to marry Lana. Judge had been awarded a lump sum of $500,000, plus her lawyer's fees.

In court, she claimed that on two occasions, Topping had threatened to kill her. "He is insanely jealous," she testified. "Miss Turner better watch out that this lout doesn't do her harm, perhaps damage that pretty face of hers."

She also testified that in the immediate aftermath of her appendix operation, he had flown into a rage and kicked her directly on the site of her incision.

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MGM promoted *The Three Musketeers* with slogans that *included "LANA TURNER! FIRST TIME IN TECHNICOLOR!"*

Bosley Crowther, writing in *The New York Times*, said, "*The Three Musketeers* is a splendiferous production with dazzling costumes, more color, and more of Miss Turner's chest than has ever before seen in a picture like this one."

Cue magazine pronounced her film "The best movie version yet of a Dumas novel to come out of Hollywood."

Cosmopolitan claimed that "This is Leo the Lion's most successful houseparty, with its background of romance and swordplay and Lana's lethal beauty. As the lovely, lethal Milady, she is the only really inspired casting in the

film."

Once again, Lana scored a big box office success.

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By March, Lana was getting such bad press for her marital misbehaviors that she made attempts to soften the attacks by letting reporters interview her on one of the sets at MGM.

One journalist had written, "Stuffing a black wasp-waisted gown that squeezed a good deal of Miss Turner out the top, she declared people can stop making wedding plans for her and Bob Topping because they have no plans themselves. She also denied being involved with John Alden Talbot, the wealthy Palm Beachite, whose wife has named Miss Turner in a temporary maintenance suit."

That was on March 5.

On March 21, she issued a different statement, claiming "Now that *The Three Musketeers* is finished, Bob *[Topping]* and I plan to fly to New York." She went on to announce that she was going to marry the tin plate heir and would in the future divide her time between Hollywood and the East, living in California only when making a movie.

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By mid-April, the national press was carrying stories about Lana's upcoming marriage to Bob Topping, who was described as a "wealthy sportsman."

The press also revealed that the newly married couple would fly to London for the opening of his new midget auto-racing venture.

[*Midget cars (aka Speedcars), typically have four-cylinder engines, roll cages, and a very high power-to-pound ratio, usually with up to 400 horsepower and weights of only 900 pounds. They're intended to be driven only on racetracks for short distances of no more than 25 miles at a time, at very fast and very dangerous speeds.]*

She objected to holding their wedding ceremony on the East Coast at Dunellen Hall.

In lieu of that, Billy Wilkerson, the publisher and night club owner who had discovered Lana at a soda fountain years before, offered his luxurious home in Bel Air. As an extravagant gesture, Topping cleared out at least three florist shops, filling the Wilkerson home with gardenias, daisies, gladioli, and delphiniums.

Lana was said to have spent $30,000 on a new wardrobe, including her wedding gown, which she described as "cocoa lace over nude satin." The designer, Don Loper, described it more formally as "champagne Alençon lace from France over champagne satin."

She wore it while posing for this photo with Bob Topping.

In addition to new suits, hats, coats, dresses, and shoes, she spent $5,000 on lingerie—panties, brassieres, and

see-through nightgowns, including a half-dozen crafted from flowery chiffon—at an exclusive store in Beverly Hills.

She chose Sara Hamilton as her maid of honor (the journalist hadn't betrayed her yet), and Wilkerson was best man for Topping. Lana's daughter, Cheryl Crane, was designated as the flower girl.

On Wilkerson's arm, Lana descended his curving stairway carrying a bouquet that contained four large white orchids. Mendelssohn's wedding march was performed by a string band hired by Topping.

A drunken Errol Flynn turned up with actress Anita Louise. When it came time to kiss the bride, he stuck his tongue down Lana's throat and pinched her left nipple.

A retired pastor, the Rev. Steward P. McLennan, officiated. Later, headlines blared: *MINISTER IN LANA TURNER WEDDING FACES PRESBYTERIAN CHARGES*. According to church law, he was not to officiate at the marriage ceremony of a divorced person until an entire year had passed since that person's divorce had been concluded. In the case of Topping, his divorce from Arline Judge had just been finalized.

The guest list at the reception that followed the Topping/Turner wedding was packed with A-list Hollywood. Greg Bautzer was invited, but Lana disapproved of him showing up with an uninvited guest, Joan Crawford. Louis B. Mayer and Eddie Mannix were there from MGM, and her director, George Sidney, also attended, as did George Jessel and Ben Cole.

Albert ("Cubby") Broccoli showed up. Later, he would become fabulously wealthy by adapting Ian Fleming's James Bond "007" character to the screen.

Unlike Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons had usually run friendly items about Lana. At the reception, Lana noticed Parson's increasing deterioration. She was often drunk and rattled and would bring up perceived oversights in her past. "I will never forgive Clark Gable for not letting me have the scoop on his marriage to Carole Lombard." Often, when she sat on a sofa drinking for a long time, she left a large wet spot "the size of Brazil," according to Hopper, her arch-rival.

At the reception, top chefs from L'Aiglon and LaRue's opened lavish tins of Beluga caviar, served with exotic delicacies from America's fields and streams, such as smoked salmon or roasted pheasant. *Foie gras* and champagne had been imported from France.

Hedda Hopper had remained Lana's least favorite columnist. Imagine her shock when she woke up from her honeymoon night in bed with Bob Topping to encounter the (uninvited) gossip columnist downing sausages, scrambled eggs, and caviar in the next room.

"I'm beating Louella with the scoop," she told Lana. "How was Bob in bed?"

The Beverly Hills police was called out to control the crowds, who broke through the barricades to trample Wilkerson's well-manicured gardens. It wasn't until 3AM that the police rounded up the last of the intruders.

By that time, Lana and her new husband had escaped to the most exclusive bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel for their honeymoon night.

When they woke up the next morning, room service had delivered an elegant breakfast to their enclosed veranda. It was being devoured by Hedda Hopper, who had persuaded the manager to admit her to the public areas of the bungalow in advance of their emergence from the bedroom.

Hedda desperately wanted to be the first reporter to receive an exclusive on the marriage. Lana and Topping cooperated, although she later told her new husband, "The bitch hates my guts."

Hopper's first question was both insulting and provocative, "Are you just marrying Topping here for his money? Or are you on the rebound from Ty Power?"

In her column the next morning, she criticized Lana's "excessive dating and multiple marriages. This time she did it not for the man's looks, but for his money."

The next day, Lana phoned Hopper and set up an appointment to see her at her home. When she got there, Lana protested Hopper's continuing attacks on her over the years, and the scenario degenerated into an angry confrontation. At one point, Lana screamed at her, "Time to tell you the truth, you old bag! I detest you!"

Hopper ordered her out of her house. The next day at MGM, Lana confessed to Eddie Mannix some of the details about what had happened. "I may be the only star in Hollywood with enough courage to tell Hopper off."

Mannix predicted an avalanche of critical columns, pointing out that Hopper had virtually destroyed the career of Ginger Rogers with her constant attacks.

To everyone's amazement, that didn't happen for Lana. All she heard from Hopper was silence. However, that changed when Lana married Lex Barker, who Hopper "adored."

Her post-wedding column set off an avalanche of bad publicity, as reporters picked up the thread of Lana's constantly changing partners or husbands. Pastors denounced her from their pulpits as a "Hollywood Jezebel."

When *Life* magazine published photos of her wedding, Lana flew into a rage. "The god damn photographer shot me at the worst angles. I look like Marjorie Main on a bad hair day, and as fat as W.C. Fields."

A reporter described her heavy coatings of pancake makeup, claiming that she was so nervous that her bouquet of white orchids trembled in her hands. For the next few years, she refused to cooperate with *Life*.

Cheryl later wrote about the *Life* coverage: "Mother looked bovine, Papa Top-ping looked chinless, and I looked intense."

For their honeymoon, Lana and Topping sailed across the Atlantic aboard the SS *Mauretania*, arriving at the Port of Southampton where "the press was waiting to ambush me." She greeted reporters in a sable furpiece and a sharkskin dress. The first question was, "Is that your real hair?" Her press coverage seemed to go downhill after that.

Londoners had not recovered from the war, and vast parts of the city, especially the East End, lay in ruins. Food was rationed. When Lana arrived with four large trunks of clothing, her arrival was written up as "vulgar and in bad taste," and the Toppings were accused of flaunting their riches. Word leaked out that he'd had steaks flown in from Boston and delivered to the kitchen of the Savoy. Most of the U.K.-based journalists writing about Lana at the time were getting by on kidneys and stale mutton.

Not only was Lana enduring a beating from the press in London, but several attacks on her appeared in America, too. "The bastards are threatening to destroy my image," she complained to Topping. Word reached her from Eddie Mannix that the studio brass was "grooming" Ava Gardner to take over roles previously earmarked for her.

Lana was putting on weight, some thirty pounds, and "the boys from Fleet Street" made a point of that in their unflattering coverage of her. "Why don't they go after Rita Hayworth?" she fretted. "She's fatter than me!"

When she and Topping walked up Bond Street in Mayfair, many passers-by hissed at them.

She appeared at the inauguration of Topping's midget racing cars at the London Stadium. She was driven around the arena in an orchid-colored car, waving at fans, but generating a lot of boos. The Lord Mayor of London had agreed to introduce her. Before his address to the crowd, he whispered to her. "Tell me something I can say about you. Frankly, old girl, I've never heard of you."

The U.K. inauguration of Topping's midget cars was a disaster. Many of them broke down on rough surfaces, the drivers' faces pelted with cinders and small rocks. Even worse, their tires developed slits and went flat. As expected, the British press attacked, stridently defining midget car racing as "a lunatic American sport."

That trip to London signaled the end of Topping's venture into midget cars. Lana remembered how, back in their hotel suite, he had to write $400,000 worth of checks, paying off his London debts and his backers in New York.

"All in all, our honeymoon in London has been one big fiasco," she told Top-ping. "Let's escape to the French Riviera."

She was delighted to flee from England, heading for Paris. She vowed, at least temporarily, that she'd never

return to London.

In Paris, in her swanky suite at the George V, her mood improved, although Topping remained depressed because of his business failure.

Three calls came in for her from Prince Aly Khan, but she refused all of them, even though he was an authentic prince and the world's most famous playboy, a catch even more desirable than Porfirio Rubirosa from the Dominican Republic. Finally, on the fourth call, she accepted. He invited her to dinner.

"Please, Mr. Khan, Your Highness," she protested. "I'm a married woman on my honeymoon."

"Surely you can get away for one night. If you refuse, you're missing out on something big. The press calls me the world's greatest lover."

"Please, don't call me again," she said, putting down the phone.

Within a year, he'd marry Rita Hayworth, attracting worldwide attention.

After Paris, they were off to the Côte d'Azur, where Topping had booked suites for them at the Miramar Hotel in Cannes. Mildred and Cheryl were flown in to take over another suite.

Lana's spirits perked up considerably after Eddie Mannix called from MGM to inform her that *Modern Screen* had named her "Hollywood's Number One Box Office Star."

At long last, she felt like she was on a honeymoon, enjoying the beach, dancing under the stars, lavishly dining on an exquisite cuisine, often lobster, and downing the best of French wines and champagnes. She also got to spend time with Cheryl, whom she had been neglecting.

Topping had told her that he wanted to spend at least two months on the Mediterranean, yachting and simply enjoying life. But she was shocked one morning to learn that aboard their cruise he'd invited one of his best friends, Freddy McAvoy, a notorious international playboy. She wanted to conceal from her husband just how well she already knew McAvoy.,

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Born in Australia, Freddie McEvoy (aka "Suicide Freddie") was Errol Flynn's best friend. A sportsman and socialite, he was fodder for the tabloids because of his love for danger, both in his romantic, hell-raising life and in his devotion to daredevil sports.

As a visitor to Flynn's house on Mulholland Drive, Lana had already met the dashing racing driver, who was known for marrying heiresses. In 1940, he'd wed Beatrice Cartwright. Thirty years his senior, she was one of the heirs to the Standard Oil fortune. Although confined to a wheelchair, she had a ravenous sexual appetite and imported some of the world's studliest studs to her home.

McEvoy and Porfirio Rubirosa, the playboy of the Dominican Republic, were each celebrated for their "hideously large endowments."

When Lana met McAvoy, he was spending many evenings with Barbara Hutton, the Woolworth heiress, in the immediate aftermath of her divorce from Cary Grant. Hutton rejected McAvoy's proposal of marriage, but paid him $100,000 to arrange for her to meet Rubirosa, whom she eventually married, after his divorce from Doris Duke, the tobacco heiress.

[Even though she didn't marry McAvoy, Hutton told her friends, "He is the only man I've ever known who could give me an orgasm."]

When Tennessee Williams flew to Mexico during the shooting of the film adaptation of his play, *The Night of the Iguana*, he spent several evenings with Ava Gardner, who—with Richard Burton—was one of the co-stars of the movie. She told the playwright about how, during the roundelays that followed the promiscuities and marital shakedowns of Doris Duke and Barbara Hutton, "Lana got Freddie, and I got Rubi."

Lana's relationship with McAvoy began the first night she met him at Flynn's house. She was already aware that Flynn had previously installed two-way mirrors in each of his bedrooms, and that as such, they carried the risk of exposure, perhaps even to blackmailers. Based on that knowledge, she invited McEvoy to her home for further intimacies. After that, she slipped away with him whenever he visited Hollywood.

Legendary *roués* at the same wedding: Errol Flynn and Freddie McEvoy (right)

She modified Hutton's assessment of McAvoy's sexual prowess, claiming to Ava Gardner, "Freddie is the only man who has given me multiple orgasms."

During the war years, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F.B.I., kept both McEvoy and Errol Flynn under surveillance. When McAvoy appeared at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, he had become acquainted with the Nazi hierarchy, and he was later accused of smuggling weapons to the Nazis.

To save Lana's reputation, McAvoy, when Topping introduced him to Lana, pretended he'd never met her before.

During their yachting vacation, McAvoy was the perfect gentleman and an amusing guest. But when Lana's new husband had to abandon his yachting party and fly to Paris from Nice, Lana did not spend her first night alone. After the other guests had retired for the night, McEvoy discreetly knocked on her cabin's door.

Wearing one of her new see-through nightgowns, she opened it and he slipped in, leaving early the next morning. She not only found McAvoy "great company, always moving and charming, but a man with more staying power than any other man alive. I think he could go around the clock. Truly amazing."

Within a few years, tragedy struck McAvoy, and she was sorry when she read about it. In November of 1951, McAvoy married Claude Stephanie Filatre, a French fashion model. Off the coast of Morocco, they drowned together in a shipwreck.

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Back home in the United States, Lana settled into her life as a retired actress and the wife of Bob Topping. She was no longer a celebrated movie star, or so it seemed, but a "homebody." She tried to fit into Topping's lifestyle at Dunellen Hall, but felt more and more isolated.

At the family manse in Greenwich, there was a constant round of parties, sometimes drawing as many as 150 socialites. Nearly all of the Toppings' friends lived on inherited wealth. Often, all the bedrooms in the house were occupied, with guests sleeping in and around in various combinations, gay or straight.

As Topping told Lana, "Our grandfather made the money…now his offspring are spending it."

She could not help but notice that some of their houseguests would arrive late on Friday afternoon, and would often change partners before the end of the weekend. Bloody Marys were served *en masse* in the late morning, as guests tried to cure their hangovers from the night before. Most of them slept all afternoon, in anticipation of the evening's bacchanals.

Lana complained to her friends in Hollywood, "All these East Coast people do is eat, drink, party, and fuck all night!"

Suddenly, Lana found herself pregnant again, although after Cheryl's birth, doctors had warned her that—because of the Rh factor of her blood, a hereditary trait which had almost killed her first born and her, too—it would be dangerous to have more children.

When her pregnancy reached its sixth month, doctors in New York told her, “Your child might not survive. There are complications.”

On January 14, 1949, reporters emerging from Manhattan’s Doctors Hospital reported that Lana had suffered a miscarriage. Her baby boy had been stillborn.

To help her recover, Topping suggested a Caribbean vacation. She later recalled, “This was the high point of my marriage. After that, our relationship was all downhill.”

Back at the Topping manse, her spirits were enlivened when Dan and Bob Top-ping divided up their late mother’s jewelry between them. Lana was presented with several pieces of heirloom jewelry, including a diamond-encrusted watch and an exquisite pearl necklace.

Bob seemed to be growing restless, missing out on all the changing partners and “switchhitters” that had punctuated his many house parties on Round Hill Drive.

Without explaining what she meant, Lana, during a phone call to Linda Darnell, told her, “Some of Bob’s romantic suggestions are too erotic, too sophisticated for *lil’ ol’ me*.”

What she omitted from her memoirs was a suggestion that her husband made to her one night: The inauguration of a three-way sex romp with his brother, Dan, and herself. He justified it with the assertion that, “We’ve done this before: Dan and I had many three-ways with Arline Judge.”

“That’s different,” Lana protested. “At least both of you at one time or another had been married to her. My answer is a definite NO.”

More and more, she was anxious to return to Hollywood to “get back into the movie business.”

One afternoon, when she suddenly realized that the Topping fortune had its limits, that became less of a dream for her and more of a necessity.

Topping had made a series of bad investments on the stock market, and the cost of running Dunellen Hall, with its extensive grounds and battalions of servants, had become too burdensome. The Toppings would have to sell off their land and perhaps the house itself. Topping even suggested that Lana might start making movies again “to bring in some extra loot.”

Faced with a possibility of a comeback picture, she went on a rigid diet with the intention of losing thirty pounds. The strict cutback in her food intake made her nervous and irritable. Through her self-imposed famine, she plotted her return to the West Coast.

Two weeks later, she packed her trunks, and he did the same, and together, they headed off to California.

He had arranged for them to rent a 24-room Georgian style mansion on Maple-ton Drive in the perilously expensive neighborhood of Holmby Hills. Their next-door neighbors would include Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Bing Crosby, Alan Ladd, and Sonja Henie lived on the same street.

The home required a staff whose salaries were paid by Lana. On the sprawling premises was a swimming pool, plus two tennis courts, a kennel, a greenhouse engineered for tropical plants, and a terraced garden.

As she told Virginia Grey, “I married a millionaire, and suddenly, I find myself the breadwinner, just like I was when I was married to Stephen Crane.”

She was spending more and more time in the library reading scripts. Topping was gone a lot, claiming, “I’m playing golf.” Often he returned home at 2AM, telling her, “I stopped off with the boys for some drinks.” It was the same pattern of deception she had experienced with Crane.

Eddie Mannix phoned from MGM to inform her that according to the latest lists within *Modern Screen*, she was still the nation’s top female star.

Late one afternoon, two policemen arrived at her doorstep, and she invited them into her living room. They looked grim when they told her that although they had recently arrested a man on an unrelated charge, it was learned from him that there was a plan afoot to kidnap Cheryl and hold her for ransom.

Lana was horrified and phoned Greg Bautzer after the cops had left. He swung into action, hiring security guards, disguised as gardeners, to maintain a 24-hour vigil over her house.

When word about it reached Robert Harrison, the publisher of *Confidential*, he ordered his writers to expose Lana's dalliance with Billy Daniels.

Harrison had published lurid stories about Lana before. One of them ran beneath headlines that trumpeted: *WHEN LANA TURNER SHARED A LOVER WITH AVA GARDNER*.

Now, another exposé from *Confidential* hit the newsstands*: THE NIGHT BOB TOPPING CAUGHT LANA TURNER WITH BILLY DANIELS*.

Although her private life had frequently been revealed in excruciating detail to the masses, the story brought a carload of new humiliations to Lana.

Bautzer also rented attack dogs to patrol the grounds. Lana warned her staff not to let Cheryl out of their sight, insisting that most of the time she'd be under the direct care and attention of either Mildred or her nanny. "At all other times, she is to be strictly supervised," Lana ordered.

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It seemed inevitable that Lana would get involved in some sort of scandal after her return to L.A. from her honeymoon in southern Europe.

In spite of dwindling funds, Lana and Top-ping became known there for their lavish parties, on some occasions attracting more than a hundred guests.

Frank Sinatra was a regular, and sometimes, the Bogarts dropped in from next door. Susan Hayward was a guest on occasion, as were Linda Darnell and Ava Gardner. Johnny Ray or Sammy Davis, Jr. would show up and even entertain the guests. Often, a drunken Judy Garland would sing, accompanied by Oscar Levant on the piano.

The African-American singer, Billie Daniels, occasionally dropped in, too. Lana had heard him perform in New York in each of two different clubs along 57th Street.

Daniels had left the Big Band scene to pursue a solo career. One night, when he arrived at one of the Toppings' parties, he had recently recorded his signature song, a big hit entitled "That Old Black Magic" by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer.

On this occasion, Daniels showed up with five other musicians. Topping had gone to bed shortly after midnight, but Daniels and his musicians stayed on site, making music until way into the morning.

At around 3AM that night, Topping woke up and headed downstairs in his pajamas to look for Lana. He stumbled into the living room, where he heard noises. All the lights were out. Topping switched on the lights to discover Daniels fornicating with Lana on one of the sofas.

Topping rushed to engage himself in a fight with Daniels, and kicked him out of the house. Returning to the living room, he socked Lana and gave her a black eye. She screamed at him, "Don't injure my face, you bastard!"

She immediately fled from the house and sought shelter at her mother's apartment, where she remained for ten days. Topping phoned every day, asking her to forgive him. She did not ask him to forgive her for having sex with Daniels.

Finally, Topping arrived at Mildred's with more pieces of jewelry from his late mother's heirloom collection.

After examining the jewelry, she agreed to return with him to their home.

Lana tried to explain her tryst with Daniels to Virginia Grey. “You know that ever since hooking up with Artie Shaw, I’ve had this thing for musicians.”

She talked with several friends: Sinatra, Gardner, and Greg Bautzer. “I want to get revenge on Harrison. Hollywood stars should rise up and go after him, cripple him with lawsuits.”

In his biography of Errol Flynn, David Brett reported that Lana eventually hired a hitman to kill the publisher of *Confidential*. According to the author, a marks-man was to assassinate Harrison when he went on a hunting trip.

Details are unclear, but apparently, three shots were fired, but bounced off a large tree and never hit their mark. The hitman fled, and the publisher escaped with his life.

No other evidence has surfaced to back up that claim, but even though it sounds unlikely, it might, indeed, have happened.

As the columnist Sheilah Graham wrote, “In Hollywood, anything is possible, even the impossible.”

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Joan Crawford continued as a remote fixture in Lana’s life, “hovering over me like some witch on a broomstick.” *[Lana’s words.]* Their primary channel of communication was Greg Bautzer, although soon, there would be a newer connection too.

Bautzer sometimes phoned Lana for “some intimate time” together, and she would slip out of her house to visit him, claiming to Topping that she was consulting him about a contractual issue with MGM.

Yet when he wasn’t with her, Bautzer continued to seduce Hollywood beauties, including Joan Caulfield, and Merle Oberon. A new addition to his harem was the rising young actress, Marilyn Monroe.

Occasionally, Crawford would throw a jealous fit and kick him out of her bed. After one particularly violent fight, she refused to see him for a month. But he kept calling until she relented. To welcome him back, she gave him a gift of matching “his-and-her Cadillacs.”

Bautzer drove his new car for three weeks before crashing it into a lamppost and mailbox. The papers reported that he was not seriously injured. Some unknown blonde in the passenger seat was seen fleeing from the scene of the accident.

Enraged, Crawford left Hollywood for a four-month stay at Manhattan’s Hampshire House. Bautzer kept calling her, trying to get back with her, but she refused.

Crawford, in the meantime, began dating the very handsome British actor, Peter Shaw, who had already sustained an affair with Lana. Eventually, he would desert both Lana and Crawford to marry Angela Lansbury. “This time,” he announced, “Angela is not getting stuck with a homosexual husband,” a reference to her previous husband, actor Richard Cromwell.

Bautzer flew to New York and wooed Crawford back, at least temporarily. She had arrived at the Hampshire House with four densely packed trunks. But after Bautzer took her shopping along Fifth Avenue, especially to Saks, she left New York with eleven trunks.

Back in Hollywood, the Crawford vs. Bautzer truce didn’t last. After he was seen dating Rita Hayworth, Crawford broke off from him yet again.

Sheilah Graham wrote, “Crawford and Bautzer quarrel in Hollywood and make up in New York. They enjoy a lovers’ tryst in the Catskills, but have a big eruption in Malibu.”

Crawford phoned Stephen Crane and invited him to her home. As he later claimed, “She took immediate possession of me.”

One night, Crawford asked Crane to be her escort for a night of drinking and dancing at the Mocambo, still a number one spot in the area, especially for stars. By coincidence, Topping invited Lana that night to the same club.

As she passed by their table, Lana was shocked to see her former husband nuzzling the neck of the grand diva, Joan Crawford. She walked on by without acknowledging them, and didn’t introduce Topping to Crane.

Later, when Lana went to the powder room, Crawford followed her. As Lana was refreshing her makeup at a vanity table, Crawford sat down at the table beside her, “to apply more warpaint.”

“I see that Greg Bautzer, Clark Gable, and Peter Shaw weren’t enough for you,” Lana said. “So, now it’s Stephen.”

“I had no idea, dear, that Stephen still remained your personal property,” Crawford answered. “Before you got him, I considered him marriage material for myself, but ended up with Phillip Terry, who told me that he once fucked you. I figured it this way: If you can fuck my husband Terry, I can fuck your husband Crane.”

“I do concede the point,” Lana answered.

As Crawford was leaving the powder room, she looked back with a smirk at Lana: “I enjoyed attending your

wedding to Topping. Let me know when you divorce him."

Columnist Adela Rogers St. Johns wrote that Crawford once again was back with Bautzer. At the Farmers' Market, she removed a large pair of sunglasses, revealing "a big black shiner, a gift from Bautzer."

"She told me she'd broken up with Stephen Crane," St. Johns said. "Joan liked to be treated rough, and she felt that Crane was too much a gentleman in the sack."

"Crane just doesn't understand something," Crawford said. "He told me he doesn't go in for the rough stuff. He doesn't get it that even a lady likes to be treated like a whore from time to time."

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After her marriage to Bob Topping, Lana paid little attention to the affairs of Stephen Crane, even though he was the father of her daughter. She was usually not at home when he came by to visit Cheryl.

After Columbia dropped him, Crane abandoned his hope of becoming an actor. "I was good looking, but not that good looking. Besides, the established stars had returned home from the war. Newer, younger male stars were also arriving in Hollywood daily. And many of them could act, which I could not."

Crane always managed to snare Hollywood beauties, not only Ava Gardner and Rita Hayworth, but the French sex kitten, Corinne Calvet, and even Olga St. Juan, who was trying to become "the next Mexican spitfire," following in the wake of the suicide of Lupe Velez.

After drinking too much, and wandering around Hollywood for a year, he decided to launch himself into the restaurant business. He'd saved up some money from gambling, but he needed a partner. He found one in Al Mathes, a well-known gambler at the tables in Las Vegas. The ex-boxer suggested they open a restaurant called Lucy's, across from the gated entrance to Paramount Pictures, close to RKO and Universal.

Within weeks of its opening as a steakhouse, Lucy's became a favorite watering hole for movie stars. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall became customers, and Judy Garland dropped in often, as did John Payne, Robert Mitchum, and John Garfield. On occasion, Peter Lawford showed up, even Nicky Hilton with Elizabeth Taylor. Regrettably, Nicky got into a serious altercation with Crane, who seemed to pay too much attention to Elizabeth.

Frank Sinatra refused to patronize the joint, claiming that Crane "is nothing but a cheap gigolo."

Welcoming guests at the door, Crane turned on "my fatal male charm," and quickly made a success of the place.

Along came love. Lila Leeds, a budding starlet, and a Lana Turner lookalike, showed up one night. She'd styled her blonde hair and her dress as imitations of Crane's former wife. Even columnist James Bacon noted the similarities: "She looks like Lana Turner—only cuter."

Coincidentally, Leeds had played a minor role in Lana's *Green Dolphin Street*. She had been cast as a Eurasian who drugs the leading man and rolls him for his money.

Crane took immediate notice of Leeds and began to date her, although the twenty-year-old was known as "Hollywood's budding bad girl." He soon discovered that she was addicted to marijuana, a drug unknown to most Americans at the time.

Like Lana, Leeds, too, had been seduced by Jackie Coogan soon after she hit town. He was married at the time to Betty Grable.

Robert Montgomery had assigned her a small role in *Lady in the Lake* (1947), a picture in which Lana, for a time, had been set to star. Montgomery had told Leeds, "You're going to become the new Lana Turner."

One night at Lucy's, another young starlet was "coming on too strong" with Crane. Leeds struck her, and a fight ensued, dubbed as "the battle of the blondes." The other starlet was Marilyn Monroe.

Lana visited Lucy's one night with Topping. Crane had already presented Leeds with a three-carat engagement ring and a proposal of marriage. "This is Lila Leeds," he said to Lana. "She's going to become the stepmother of Cheryl, so you should get to know her."

When she met Lana, Leeds said, "Stevie here is my hunky lunky."

Lana reached for Topping's arm and headed for their reserved table. "Perhaps some other time," she said.

At table, she turned to Topping: "This Leeds creature is merely the mock. You have the real thing."

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On September 1, 1948, Leeds life was about to change. At Lucy's, she had become friends with Robert Mitchum, both of them having already discovered their fondness for "weed." She invited Mitchum to her home one night to smoke pot and to meet her female roommate. Unknown to the actors, her house had been staked out by drug

agents who were planning a raid on it that night. Mitchum had walked into a trap.

Both Leeds and Mitchum were arrested, as the newspapers revealed with blaring headlines the next morning. Each of them received a jail sentence of sixty days.

Crane, not wanting to get drawn into the scandalous trial, made a deal with a friend to take over the administration of Lucy's. That left him free to fly to away to Paris with his reputation intact.

Ironically, Mitchum's career actually got a boost from the arrest, since he was already known as one of Hollywood's "Bad Boys." But it ruined the budding career of Lila Leeds.

Lana never heard of her again until she saw an item in *Variety*. In Chicago, in 1956, Leeds had been arrested for soliciting.

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Lana's long suspension at MGM was lifted when she agreed to star in a melodrama, *A Life of Her Own*. Back on the lot, she got into an argument with its director, George Cukor, on the first day of filming. "You've chosen the wrong leading man. Under no circumstances can I pretend to be in love with that poker-faced Wendell Corey."

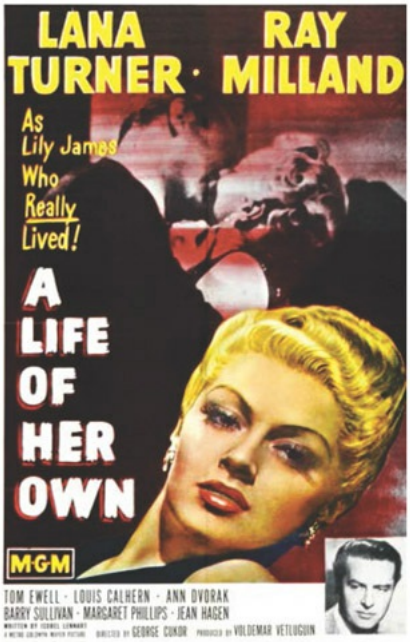
Chapter Thirteen

Another Divorce
Lana Emerges as The Merry Widow

She Becomes The Bad & The Beautiful

To publicize her "comeback" picture, *A Life of Her Own*, Lana posed for this strikingly dramatic photograph. It was taken by Eric Carpenter, who was the chief photographer in MGM's publicity department. It became Lana's favorite photograph of herself, and she kept it prominently displayed in her living room for more than a decade.

Lana's return to the screen was in a black-and-white melodrama, *A Life of Her Own* (1950), for MGM, the story of an aspiring model who flees her small town in Kansas for the bright lights of New York to seek her fame and fortune. She finds that, but also experiences an ill-fated love affair.



Disillusioned with her own marriage to Bob Topping, she was eager to return to the screen, fearing that her fans might desert her if she stayed away much longer.

She and Topping now occupied separate bedrooms, and often, he didn't come home at night. She had heard rumors that he was seeing another woman, an aspiring blonde starlet named Beverly Garland (aka Beverly Campbell). Four years younger than Lana, she had divorced her husband, Robert Campbell, and had not yet re-married.

Ironically, Lana was shocked to learn that Garland had been cast in a minor role, identified as "Girl at a Party," in *A Life of Her Own*. Previously, when Lana encountered Garland on the set at MGM, she had ignored her.

Although the plot for her new movie was loosely inspired on the novella, *The Abiding Vision*, by the famous novelist Rebecca West, Lana's film would be remarkably different in tone and texture.

A Life of Her Own dealt with adultery, a theme which was virtually forbidden in films by those guardians of public morality, the Joseph Breen Office. After reviewing the script, the censors wrote to MGM: "It is completely unacceptable, shocking, and highly offensive with its portrayal of adultery and commercialized prostitution."

A revised and much toned-down revision was then submitted to the Breen censors, who came back within a week, citing the script as having "insufficient moral values." Screenwriter Isobel Lennart was ordered to "show that adultery is wrong and that sinners must be punished." It was recommended that Lana's character of Lily Brannel James commit suicide before the end of the final reel.

George Cukor, the director, detested the suicide ending, and so did Lana, but they filmed it that way anyway. However, at the first preview of the movie in Burbank, the audience objected to it, as expressed on the notes they scribbled on their survey questions before exiting from the theater.

Consequently, Lana was summoned back to MGM to shoot another ending, one in which she was allowed to live, albeit with remorse, regret, and guilt. Approval for filming from the Breen office was finally granted, but most begrudgingly.

In the script, Lana, as Lily, goes to New York and becomes a highly successful fashion model. As a favor to her attorney, Jim Leversoe (Louis Calhern), she entertains Steve Harleigh (Ray Milland), the owner of a copper mine from Montana. The two fall in love, but she soon finds out that he is married. His wife, Nora (Margaret Phillips), is a paraplegic whose disability stems from an automobile accident for which her husband was responsible.

Lily's love for Steve grows stronger as the film progresses, until she summons the courage to confront Nora, asking her to divorce her husband. But when she encounters the disabled woman in a wheelchair, Nora is kind and polite to Lily. Seeing how totally dependent Nora is on her husband, Lily realizes that she cannot continue her affair with Steve. Leaving the apartment, she encounters him exiting from the elevator. She forces herself to inform him that their affair is over.

In the final cut, one of Lily's lines almost echoes the career of Lana herself. "All I want is to be somebody. All I have is myself and how I look." She makes a decision to go on with her life with courage, even though she faces a

life of loneliness.

The new ending was a bit of a stretch for movie-goers. At the peak of her glam our and beauty, the character of Lily, a single woman on the loose in Manhattan, leaves the impression that she won't be lonely for long.

In *A Life of Her Own*, Lana and Ray Milland are supposed to play lovers, but in this publiciy still, it looks as if he wants to choke her to death. When Lana saw it, she said, "It should be the other way around. Before filming the ending, I wanted to choke him."

The scene depicted above does not appear in the final cut.

Even before Lana signed to make *A Life of Her Own*, there was a flurry of casting, both for the director and for the film's leading man. Originally, Vincente Minnelli—the gay director who had married Judy Garland—was assigned to helm the project. But after the many starts and stops, MGM reassigned him to direct Spencer Tracy and Elizabeth Taylor in *Father of the Bride*. George Cukor replaced him.

Cary Grant had been offered the role of the leading man, but rejected it as "too downbeat for me." When MGM sent over George Murphy as a replacement for Grant, Cukor rejected him, saying, "Ronald Reagan's best friend is just too wholesome a guy to play an adulterer cheating on his crippled wife."

Howard Keel was selected next. Cukor, who was fully aware that Lana had previously sustained an affair with him, was physically attracted to the big, macho actor himself. But at the last minute, MGM withdrew him, fearing that the role was too dark for a star the studio was promoting as Frank Butler in *Annie Get Your Gun*.

MGM then offered the role to the British actor, James Mason, who was believable as an adulterer. He was attractive, suave, and had a melodious voice. "I know how to play an adulterer," he told Cukor. "I frequently cheat on my wife."

Despite Mason's acceptance of the role, he dropped out a week before shooting began. "I decided that no one would believe me as a Montana man, the owner of a copper mine. I'm too elegant for that. Get someone else."

Over Cukor's objection, MGM then designated Wendell Corey as the leading man. He had launched his career in 1947 as Burt Lancaster's closeted lover in *Desert Fury* with the lesbian actress, Lizabeth Scott. In spite of his ordinary looks, he went on to star with some of the silver screen's leading ladies, including Joan Crawford ("He's a dud in bed"), Margaret Sullavan ("It was like getting fucked by Henry Fonda, no great compliment"), and Barbara Stanwyck ("I could hardly stand him").

Forced to work with him, Lana admitted to Cukor, "Corey and I will have as much sexual chemistry on the screen as Pa Kettle and me," a reference to character actor Percy Kilbride.

It was not just *A Life of Its Own* that was having difficulties, but MGM itself. In the previous year, the studio had lost $6.5 million, and Dore Schary had been hired by the banking interests to take over production. It was

rumored that Louis B. Mayer was on his way out the door.

Lana was nervous about meeting Schary, because in reference to her, he had told his aides, “I don’t like that kind of popcorn blonde.”

The first time she met Schary, she had loudly protested Corey’s candidacy as her leading man. He listened for only a few moments before ignoring her plea. Unlike Mayer, Schary did not pay much attention to her concerns.

After her meeting with him, Lana grew more concerned about her career, and had a frank talk with Cukor one night when she visited his home. She’d become alarmed when columnists started referring to Marilyn Monroe as “the new Lana Turner” after her casting in *The Asphalt Jungle* and *All About Eve*.

Cukor advised her that she could still have some big box office triumphs in the 1950s “and perhaps beyond, depending on the scripts.” She listened carefully. Although he’d been replaced as director of *Gone With the Wind* (1939), he’d made such screen classics as *Dinner at Eight* (1933) with Jean Harlow; *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) with Katharine Hepburn; and *Gaslight* (1944) with Ingrid Bergman. He also beat out some stiff competition to help Judy Holliday prepare for her role in *Born Yesterday* (1950), a part that Lana had wanted.

From the beginning, Lana did not like her leading man, Wendell Corey. After two days, she told Cukor, “Making love to Corey is like coming on to a stern Presbyterian deacon. I don’t understand why he’s even considered a leading man. Would you, a self-respecting homosexual, go to bed with him?”

Cukor told her he would not.

After a week of shooting, Cukor, Corey, and Lana sat through the rushes. Her opinion of him was confirmed.

Even Corey himself told them, “I’m completely wrong for this role. Before we shoot anymore, I want out.”

The news was flashed to Mayer, who called executives at Paramount, which had lent the actor. A truce was worked out that morning. By 3PM, Mayer had personally phoned the agent of Ray Milland, who was out of work at the moment. “Do you want to be Lana Turner’s leading man in an illicit love story?” the agent asked the actor.

“I’ve had worse jobs,” Milland answered, sarcastically. “I’ll take the god damn thing without even seeing the script.”

Reporters converged around Lana and asked her why Corey had bolted. “I don’t know,” she answered. “If being a movie star doesn’t work out for him, he can always go back to selling washing machines in a department store. His ancestors are very impressive: John Adams and John Quincy Adams.”

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In the late 1940s, when Ray Milland walked onto an MGM set to co-star with Lana in *A Life of Her Own*, he was at the pinnacle of his career, having already won a Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of the alcoholic writer in *The Lost Weekend* (1945).

As the highest-paid actor at Paramount, he would have a long career, co-starring with other big name actresses who included Gene Tierney, Marlene Dietrich, Ginger Rogers, Barbara Stanwyck, Hedy Lamarr, and Loretta Young.

In the future, he would fall in love with one of his co-stars, Grace Kelly, during the filming of *Dial M for Murder* (1954). Their romance would threaten his long-enduring marriage to Muriel Weber, whom he had wed in 1932. He would ask her for a divorce until she reminded him that all the property they shared was in her name.

Back on the set the following Monday, Lana began to meet and work with the film’s strong supporting cast, many of whom she knew.

Cast as her roommate, the fading model Mary Ashlon, Ann Dvorak had reached her peak in the Pre-Code 1930s. Groomed as a dramatic actress sponsored by Howard Hughes, she had previously co-starred with Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Paul Muni, Spencer Tracy, Joan Blondell, and James Cagney.

She told Lana, “Like the character I’m interpreting, it’s about time for me to make a graceful exit from the screen.” In the year that followed the release of *A Life of Her Own*, Dvorak retired from movies.

Helen Rose was assigned to design Lana’s super-glam wardrobe in a style that suited her character’s definition as a Manhattan model. Quite recently, she’d designed the wedding gown of Elizabeth Taylor for her marriage to Nicky Hilton, and she was also designing Taylor’s wardrobe for *Father of the Bride*. She’d soon be creating Lana’s wardrobe for *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

Margaret Phillips delivered a sympathetic, convincing performance as Steve’s pathetic, wheelchair-bound wife. The Welsh-born actress had trained at the Actors Studio, and had rehearsed with such actors as Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift.

In a party sequence, Lana danced with Hermes Pan, Fred Astaire’s choreographic collaborator in those 1930s movie musicals with Ginger Rogers. He’d previously appeared on film with both Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth in dancing sequences.

Barry Sullivan was cast as Lee Gorrance, an advertising executive whose romantic advances are spurned by Lana in the film. She had come close to working with him in *Three Guys Named Mike*, but the role she'd wanted was ultimately assigned to Jane Wyman. They would soon be working together in her next film, *Mr. Imperium*, and eventually, he'd play opposite her in *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

After his performances in *A Life of Her Own* were filmed, he told Lana that he'd been cast in *The Story of a Divorce* (later re-titled *Payment on Demand;* 1951*)* with Bette Davis, and then suggested, "I didn't get much of a love scene with you on screen. How about something off-screen?"

"Give me a raincheck, doll," she answered. "As for Miss Davis, I suggest you wear a jockstrap made of steel. She castrates her leading men."

As Lana's lawyer, Louis Calhern delivered his usual stellar performance. He'd already been nominated for a Best Actor Oscar for his performance as Oliver Wendell Holmes in *The Magnificent Yankee* (1950). "Louis was a dear old thing," Lana said. "He'd made his first film when dinosaurs roamed the earth." She noticed that his health was declining. In 1956, he made his last film, *High Society*, with Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, and Frank Sinatra, a remake of Katharine Hepburn's *The Philadelphia Story*. He died shortly thereafter.

In the beginning, Lana and Ray Milland got along, and he entertained her between takes with stories of his early days in films. He revealed that when he'd made *The Jungle Princess* (1936) with Dorothy Lamour, "I indulged in water sports. We were in this swimming pool together, and the water was very cold. Somehow, it caused me to start to urinate, and soon, the Sarong Girl was enveloped in a sea of yellow piss."

That same year, he'd filmed *Beau Geste*, "with this beast of a man, Brian Don-levy, whom I detested, along with the rest of the crew. During a fencing sequence, I deliberately nicked his unpadded penis with the tip of my sword. He was rushed to the hospital, where it was discovered that I'd halfway circumsized him. Doctors competed the rest of the operation. Donlevy emerged from the hospital with a bandaged penis. He'd become a Jew overnight."

Milland also admitted that he'd suffered a permanent loss of a lot of his hair during the filming of *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942). "My character was supposed to have curly hair. Those shitheads in makeup gave me all these women's permanents and used electric curlers. The result left me with a receding hairline."

"In one of my early films, the makeup men destroyed my eyebrows," she admitted.

As for their love scenes, Lana agreed with the assessment of Marlene Dietrich. During the making of *The Golden Earrings* in 1947, she claimed that "Milland has a hygiene problem. He stank!"

As for whether or not she had sex with Milland, Lana, when asked by Cukor, said, "Forget it. The closest we came to getting physical offscreen was when he showed me this grotesque tattoo on his upper right arm. It was of a skull with a snake curled up on top of it with the tail of the reptile sticking through one of the eyes of the skull."

Before filming *A Life of Her Own*, Lana went on a strict diet to slim down. She showed she was "camera ready" when she posed for this glamorous publicity shot.

What ultimately turned Lana against Milland was his almost constant attack on homosexuals. "He was always making nasty remarks about Cukor, Hermes Pan, Tom Ewell, and others in the cast, calling them faggots and lurid names. Once, he grabbed his crotch in front of me, telling me, 'The bastards will never get a taste of this.'"

She had looked at him with contempt, saying, "I'm sure they'll survive the deprivation."

Eventually and off the set, as a woman who befriended homosexuals, she made a point of avoiding Milland

whenever possible. In his autobiography, *Wide-Eyed in Babylon*, he made no mention of her, despite having described in detail his appearances with Paulette Goddard in that silly period piece, *Kitty* (1945).

As a high fashion model in *A Life of Her Own*, Lana wore her most dazzling headress, studded with fake raindrop diamonds. Dressed like this, she would have looked more at home on the set of *Ziegfeld Girl*.

Lana ultimately came to despise Milland, but she was still sorry to see how far a bigtime movie star could sink, an insight which ignited fears of her own. The last time she saw him onscreen was when he starred in *The Thing With Two Heads* (1972), cast as a bigot whose head was grafted onto a black man's body.

Although she'd eagerly looked forward to working with Cukor as her director, each of them was disappointed when they saw the final cut, agreeing that *A Life of Her Own* would eventually be judged as one of their weaker pictures.

Most critics panned it, *Cue* magazine writing, "All the plush and polish can't turn this gushing goo into a substantial drama."

One of Lana's most consistently negative critics, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times*, wrote: "Two years' absence from the movies obviously didn't improve Lana Turner's talents as an actress, or her studio's regard for what she can do."

Variety reported, "The soap opera plotting has been polished to a certain extent, the playing by the *femme* cast members is topnotch, and the direction aids them, but it is still a true confession type of yarn concerned with a big city romance between a married man and a beautiful model. Script is spotted with feeling and character and also a lot of conversation that doesn't mean much. A decided asset is Turner's performance."

After production costs were deducted, *A Life of Her Own* suffered a loss of about $700,000, making it the only movie of Lana's that never paid off. She told Cukor, "I've got to succeed in my next picture, or they'll throw me out of MGM!"

In recognition of her past stardom, she was asked to put her hand and footprints into wet cement in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. She willingly complied. Fans gathered, many of them calling for her to (obscenely) immortalize those features of her body that had earned her a label as America's Sweater Girl. She demurred, claiming, "We must keep this event in good taste."

Nonetheless, columnists reminded her that Betty Grable had immortalized her leg in cement, Bob Hope his ski nose, and Monty Woolley his beard.

In her assessment of Lana Turner, columnist Adela Rogers St. Johns articulated why Lana Turner's legend lives on. "Lana is an exaggerated, unconventional, slightly mad, utterly enchanting creature unlike anybody else in the world, with plenty of brains and practically no sense at all. She drinks martinis and assorted beverages from 86 to 100 proof, collects elaborate *négligées* and embroidered nighties, loves Clark Gable movies, Palm Springs, sun-bathing, owns 250 pairs of shoes but roams her house barefooted, drives a robin's egg blue Cadillac convertible with red leather cushions, and lives in a $100,000 mansion on three rolling acres above Sunset Boulevard with daughter

Cheryl, husband Topping (whom she calls Poppa), and six TV sets. She is a success story in search of an explanation, a love story in search of a happy ending, and an endless list of contradictory quotes."

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While still a twelve-year-old schoolgirl, Norma Jeane Baker (also known as Marilyn Monroe), had begun to menstruate, and her breasts had developed rapidly.

She was mesmerized when she went to see Lana Turner in her screen debut, *They Won't Forget*. She both envied and was jealous when Lana, in a form-fitting sweater, walked down the street with her breasts the focus of the camera. Norma Jeane wanted to be like her, especially when Lana became known across America as "The Sweater Girl."

Inspired by young Lana, Norma Jeane transformed a red cardigan into a more form-fitting garment. She removed all her underclothing and wore only the sweater, buttoning it in back in ways that made it tighter in front so that it would emphasize the size and shape of her breasts. She described the cardigan as, "my magic sweater. I was a budding Lana Turner."

Wearing that sweater during her first year at Emerson School in Los Angeles, she was avidly pursued by older teenaged boys.

After that, Norma Jeane never missed a Lana Turner movie. Her favorite for glamour alone was *Ziegfeld Girl*, although she was also thrilled by Lana's love scenes with Robert Taylor in *Johnny Eager* and by Clark Gable in *Somewhere I'll Find You*. Often, she'd schedule her arrival at a movie house for the first screening of a Lana Turner movie and remain there until that day's last show, surviving on a coke and a bag of popcorn.

Later, when Norma Jeane began to model, photographers didn't like her curly hair, suggesting that she should style it smoothly like Lana Turner, whose coiffure was then in vogue.

When she was hired to pose for a shampoo ad, the representative for the product suggested that she dye her hair blonde and have it straightened to more closely resemble Lana Turner's.

Norma Jeane, who needed the money from the modeling gig, straightened and dyed her hair accordingly. In the aftermath, she looked more like Lana than ever.

When Marilyn went to work for Columbia in the spring of 1948, Harry Cohn, the studio executive, hired her because he wanted to groom a possible replacement for Rita Hayworth, should she prove unreliable. Makeup men went to work on Marilyn, raising her hairline through electrolysis to emphasize her widow's peak. In the aftermath, she looked more like Lana than Rita Hayworth.

That was the year she gravitated into the orbit of Johnny Hyde, who had been Lana's agent before she dumped him. He took Marilyn under his wing, demanding sex from her daily, with the promise that he was going to turn her into the next Lana Turner.

Keith Andes and Marilyn Monroe were lovers in the 1952 *Clash by Night*. But it was the star of the picture,

Barbara Stanwyck, who actually put Marilyn on the casting couch.

Hyde was able to get Marilyn cast in MGM's *The Asphalt Jungle*, in which she was a success in a minor role. He tried to get Louis B. Mayer to give Marilyn a contract, but he turned him down, informing Hyde, "We're already grooming other blondes to replace Lana. We don't need another one."

In his book, *The Private Diary of My Life With Lana*, Eric Root, her longtime companion later in her life, wrote how Marilyn first approached Lana. She sent her two rare photographs of herself, requesting that Lana autograph them on the back and return them. "Your signature will be immortalized in my heart."

Lana didn't return the pictures, but Marilyn had included her phone number, so Lana phoned her and set up a meeting that following afternoon.

Marilyn dressed as sexily as she possibly could. She'd heard rumors that Lana had a lesbian streak in her and that she was the possible lover of Ava Gardner.

Joan Crawford had already made a pass at Marilyn, and Barbara Stanwyck had seduced her when they'd co-starred together in *Clash by Night*. Marilyn figured that Lana also might be sexually attracted to her.

Arriving at the designated time, Marilyn was graciously received by Lana. There would be no sexual come-ons. Instead, with the understanding that Marilyn desperately wanted to be a movie star, Lana decided to offer some beauty tips.

Lana didn't mean to hurt Marilyn's feelings, but she pointed out that her makeup was all wrong, "unless you've been cast as a streetwalker along Santa Monica Boulevard." Lana also objected to the way Marilyn dressed, interpreting her outfit as vulgar. "You've also got to get rid of those unfortunate bulges."

She promised Marilyn that she'd be allowed to visit her again. According to Root, Lana agreed to teach her "how to walk, how to act, what to say, and what not to say."

During the coming months, although Lana had very little time to coach Marilyn in the art of becoming a movie star, she spoke to her on the phone whenever she could.

As Marilyn's fame grew, *Confidential* began to link Lana, Marilyn, and Ava Gardner as "the unholy trio of Hollywood." Each of the three women were exposed in one scandal after another, either real or invented.

At first, Lana did not realize what a legend Marilyn would become. She'd grouped her with Jayne Mansfield, Mamie Van Doren, and the British bombshell, Diana Dors. "They all copy me," she told Root. "They all have the same toner in their hair like I do, and use the same bleach. But there's only one Lana Turner, and that's *moi."*

In time, however, Lana sensed that Marilyn was different from the rest, although she could not quite understand what made her so. She told Virginia Grey and others: "I don't know what it is, but Marilyn has this certain quality. She's one of the few Hollywood blondes who might become a really big star like me. All the other blondes can only imitate me."

In time, though, Lana became disillusioned with Marilyn: "I gave men a hard-on by wearing a sweater," Lana said. "Marilyn posed for nude pictures that are all over town. She and Mansfield dress so sexily that their tits are spilling over."

Ultimately, Lana grew jealous of Marilyn, especially after she seduced some of her former lovers (Frank Sinatra, Howard Hughes, Peter Lawford, Robert Mitchum, and Rory Calhoun).

After Marilyn's mysterious death in August of 1962, Lana was flabbergasted by the publicity it generated, the books and articles written, even fictionalized films of her imagined life.

She was also amazed at how Marilyn's sexual liaisons with John F. Kennedy became familiar to millions. "I had an affair with Senator Kennedy, and no one knew it at the time," she told June Allyson, who had also had an affair with the future president.

One night over drinks, Lana told Virginia Grey, "I think the secret of becoming a blonde movie legend like Jean Harlow and Marilyn is to die young. Had I succeeded when I tried to commit suicide, I'd be a much bigger legend."

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After filming *A Life of Her Own,* MGM ordered Lana to star in *Mr. Imperium* (1951) with the celebrated opera singer, Ezio Pinza. After reading the script, she reported back that, "It's stupid. I don't want to star in it." She had heard that Greer Garson had already turned it down.

Her attack on the script proved embarrassing to her. It had been written by Don Hartman, who was slated to direct it. He would later become the head honcho at MGM. His co-writer was Edwin H. Knoff, who eventually emerged as its producer.

Because she needed the money, Lana accepted the role. What she didn't tell MGM was that she was three months into her second pregnancy, and she knew she wouldn't be able to work for some time. Her doctor gave her a series of injections which he said would help save the baby, but warned her "these shots are going to hurt like hell." Because she desperately wanted her second child, she agreed to endure them.

Lana and opera star Ezio Pinza seemed filled with love, joy, and delight when they posed for this publicity still.

Privately, she called him, "Old Garlic Breath. He made me sick."

Production began on a hot summer day, June 18, 1950. It was the story of a European prince, Alexis, who falls in love with an American nightclub singer while vacationing in Italy. He learns that his father, the king, has died, and he must now rush back to his country to be crowned as its king. After their burgeoning romance is sabotaged by affairs of state and members of his political entourage, the presumptive king disappears from her life for twelve years.

When he'd first met her, she'd been Frederika Brown, a charming but run-of-the-mill nightclub singer. Now, a dozen years later, she has now blossomed into a major-league movie star, Fredda Barlo. Reunited with her in Palm Springs, the king realizes that he is still madly in love with her. In the meantime, her producer, Paul Hunter (Barry Sullivan), has fallen in love with her, too, and also wants to marry her.

Fredda and Mr. Imperium, now a king on the verge of exiling himself because of his love for her, enjoy a weekend tryst in Palm Springs. The movie ends when, with tenderness and shared expressions of ongoing loyalty, he departs from her life once again, assuring her that he'll return for her one day.

An Italian opera star, Pinza was known for his rich, smooth, and sonorous voice. For nearly a quarter of a century, he had been a star at New York's Metropolitan Opera House.

His biggest Broadway success involved his co-starring role with Mary Martin in the 1949 stage version of Rodgers & Hammerstein *South Pacific*. In it, he introduced his hit song, "Some Enchanted Evening," which helped transform him into a matinee idol and a national celebrity.

Eddie Mannix, from MGM's publicity department, had billed Pinza as "The Great Lover," but he later regretted it. According to Mannix, "I think he came to believe his own publicity."

Pinza told Mannix, "I hear Lana even propositions handsome men from among the film crew, inviting a stud to

her dressing room. I bet she's going to be an easy conquest for me."

After Lana met him, she later complained, "He treated me like a tramp. He seemed to want to sleep with every woman involved in the film, including me. He made all these florid attempts to woo them, along with myself, into his bed."

Based on her scenes with him, she nicknamed him, "The man with the Roquefort teeth. Before coming onto the set, he downed all these cheese pastries and endless cups of espresso."

In her pregnant state, she found the odor so offensive that she often had to run to her dressing room and vomit. Not only that, but at one point he openly groped her. "He was one crude beast," she claimed. "He even tried to rape my pretty stand-in, Alyce May, who had to fight him off."

From the beginning, she complained to Hartman that she and Pinza as screen lovers could not be convincing. "I've got to do love scenes with my grandfather." At the time he made the movie, Pinza, born in Italy in 1892, was already fifty-eight years old. "If Greer Garson had accepted the role, she would have been more convincing," Lana said. "After all, she was born in 1903, which makes her only two years younger than Clark Gable."

Lana had to sing one song in the movie, part of a nightclub act, "My Love and My Mule." MGM hired singer Trudy Erwin to dub her voice.

Pinza was given three songs, "Let Me Look at You," and "Andiamo," both by Harold Arlen and Dorothy Fields. His third was the standard, "You Belong to My Heart," which British exhibitors used as the title of the movie when it was released in that country. *[They objected to the title,* Mr. Imperium.*]*

Reunited with Barry Sullivan, after having finished *A Life of Her Own* with him, he was most cordial, using his most seductive voice. "I tried to get lucky with you on our last picture. What about this time around?"

"You're a very attractive man, but I'm spending all my nights in the arms of Mr. Garlic Breath."

"Yeah, right," he answered. "We'll meet again."

Sullivan was right about that. He would be her co-star in *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

The distinguished English actor, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, was cast as Bernand, the manipulative prime minister of Pinza's mythical kingdom. He told Lana, "I believe that God felt sorry for actors, so he created Hollywood to give them a place in the sun and a swimming pool. The price they had to pay was to surrender their talent."

The only bright spots in the finished product were the appearances of Marjorie Main, as Mrs. Cabot, the owner of a resort hotel, and her meddlesome helper, Gwen, played by Debbie Reynolds. This marked the beginning of the long friendship between Reynolds and Lana.

"Many of the MGM glamour girls I worked with liked their sex rough," Reynolds said. "Elizabeth Taylor liked it rough. So did Lana Turner, who often came to the makeup room with bruises or a black eye. Sometimes, they would have to reshoot things after one of her boyfriends knocked her around."

Reynolds was also aware of the violent fights between Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. "Once, Ava shot Frank. Lucky for him her aim was lousy. She hit him only in the leg."

Reynolds remembered Main as "so much fun," and also as a performer who had trouble with her bladder. In the middle of a take, she'd suddenly bolt for the toilet. "Between Marjorie's pee breaks and Lana's fighting with Pinza, it was a pretty tense set," Reynolds wrote in a memoir.

Without pre-screening it in advance, executives at Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall, had pre-booked *Mr. Imperium* for a long-term run. But when they were finally allowed to screen it, they canceled their commitment. Overall, the film was a flop.

Reacting to the gloom that prevailed in the aftermath of *Mr. Imperium*, Lana feared that she was slipping and that her contract at MGM would not be renewed. Adding to her humiliation, many movie houses that presented it as part of a double feature positioned *Mr. Imperium* in the second slot—a first for a Lana Turner movie, especially one with big production values and Technicolor.

Nonetheless, Lana's contract was renewed only two months after *Mr. Imperium* opened. Even though dozens of other big stars under contract to MGM were fired, MGM, even under Dore Schary, still believed in her box office appeal.

As anticipated, critical reviews of *Mr. Imperium* were terrible. The *New York World Telegram* wrote, "Mr. Pinza had better stay away from Hollywood unless he takes his own writers with him next time."

Photoplay struck an especially sour note: "Despite the grandeur that sweeps from the Mediterranean shores to Palm Springs' gardens, the story itself never jells. Lana Turner, who is seldom given material worthy of her, looks beautiful and does more than her share to tote this bale of nonsense. Pinza is just another middle-aged actor, trying to prove himself as far as this film is concerned. Certainly, his magnificent voice is woefully neglected. The few songs given him are far below his vocal ability."

One critic wrote that "the man who decided that pickles and ice cream made a delightful combination must have cast Lana Turner with Ezio Pinza. He is themusical version of Edward Everett Horton."

The New York Times found that “Lana Turner and her wardrobe were beautiful, but it’s hardly likely that anyone would ever envy her dialogue.” Other critics found that the much older Pinza in his love scenes with Lana came across as “a dirty old man.”

MGM thought so little of the movie that in 1979, it did not renew the copyright. Subsequently, the film entered the public domain.

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For Lana, it was not a question of if she would divorce Bob Topping, but when? She was finding it costly being married to a millionaire, both financially and personally. Because of problems with the Topping estate, he had been reduced to receiving only $1,000 a month, leaving her to pay all the bills. “My god!” she told Benton Cole, her business manager. “Bob will bet $2,000 on a god damn golfing putt!”

She’d had to make the $35,000 down payment on their $100,000 house in Holmby Hills and then stay current with the mortgage payments. At dizzying speed, Topping had already decimated his personal fortune, running up big gambling debts, which perpetually went unpaid despite the fact that his creditors were practically pounding on his door. Some of them contacted Lana with personal death threats.

Frank Sinatra warned her, “When you run up big gambling losses to the boys in Vegas, they get paid one way or the other.”

She became worried for her own safety and for that of Cheryl, fearing once again that she might be kidnapped and held for ransom.

On top of everything else, MGM was deducting a hefty chunk of her paycheck every week for payment of her ongoing back taxes to the IRS.

Every business venture that Topping launched ended in failure, beginning with his midget racing car venture in England. He ended up losing the remainder of his personal fortune in an ill-fated attempt to manufacture fiberglass boats.

One afternoon, right before Christmas, he took her to one of the most expensive and exclusive jewelry stores in Beverly Hills. Optimistically, and for the first time, she began to suspect that one of his investments had paid off. He had her inspect a series of diamond necklaces until she selected one that she particularly liked. It just happened to be the most expensive.

She eagerly waited until Christmas morning when she gathered with Topping and Cheryl to open their presents. As his gift to her daughter, he’d presented her with a black French poodle, which she named “Tinklette.”

Lana opened her carefully wrapped gift, expecting the necklace. Instead, she found only a little gold pin. Trying to mask her disappointment, she turned around as Tinklette ran into the room barking. Around his neck was the diamond necklace she’d admired. “It was a joyful Christmas,” she recalled, in spite of Topping’s morbidly heavy drinking throughout the course of the holidays.

To her chagrin, within the month, a bill arrived from the jewelry store in Beverly Hills. She painfully learned that he had charged the necklace and didn’t have the funds to pay for it.

The more her bills piled up, the more collectors hounded them, and the more Topping drank. When she saw him hitting the bottle at eight o’clock in the morning, she knew he’d become a chronic, wildly over-the-top alcoholic. She became afraid every time he took the wheel of her car.

She admitted to Mildred that she’d married him not for love, but for financial security—and now she had neither. “My dear,” Mildred said. “You have to face facts. You can no longer afford to keep a millionaire.”

Lana knew she had to cut down on expenses, and with that in mind, she began to eliminate all but the most essential servants.

Coupled with her own financial problems, her career at MGM was in jeopardy.

In 1951, Mayer was fired from MGM. Bitterly, he packed up his belongings and—without a goodbye to Lana—left the studio that he’d co-founded.

Dore Schary took over as president. But whereas Mayer had favored splashy, wholesome entertainment, Schary was promulgating dark, post-war “message pictures,” grim movies like *Battleground* (1949) and *The Red Badge of Courage* (also 1949).

The rise to power of Dore Schary also marked MGM’s decline and the rise of its new enemy: Television. Little black boxes were being installed in living rooms across the nation. Americans were staying home watching it, abandoning their once deeply entrenched habit of going to the movies two or three times a week.

Schary was not impressed with MGM’s stable of glamour queens: Lana, Ava Gardner, and swimming star Esther Williams. Williams defined him as “rude, cruel, and even more imperious than Mayer.”

After he assumed power at MGM, Schary told his aides, who passed the word down the line, that he was tired

of MGM's glamour girls of the 1940s, including Ava and Lana, and that he was banking on new talent, such as the emerging *femme fatale*, Elizabeth Taylor.

On Lana's homefront, Topping increasingly disappeared for long periods of time, returning after prolonged absences with no explanation of where he'd been.

She hired a private investigator to trail him, and within days, he reported back to Lana. Topping was seeing not only other women, but attending a series of stag parties where failed starlets, out-of-work Las Vegas showgirls, and unemployed and broke young women had been hired as short-term companions and prostitutes.

Tragedy struck again in October of 1950 when Lana slipped on a polished floor at her home and suffered her second miscarriage. It had resulted from complications associated with her Rh blood factor. She had hoped that a new baby might save her marriage, but now, she saw how hopeless that was.

She rarely confronted Topping about the other women in his life, running up bills in her name, or his long absences from the house.

When she did confront him, he often flew into an alcoholic rage, in some cases in full view of her guests when she was hosting a party. Kathryn Grayson once said something that antagonized him, and he picked up a lamp and threw it at her. It narrowly missed her head and face, crashing loudly into a mirror behind the bar.

On one occasion, Topping disappeared for two weeks with no word about where he was. Eventually, a letter arrived from his attorneys in Manhattan, revealing that he intended to sue for a legal separation. Allegedly, he'd gone on an extended fishing trip to Oregon and might, after that, proceed to Alaska to fish for salmon.

Lana phoned Greg Bautzer, asking him to begin divorce proceedings and to work out a settlement with Topping's lawyers. After much bickering, Lana was allowed to keep the house in Holmby Hills, on which she was making the payments. Very reluctantly, she agreed to return the heirloom jewelry from his mother's estate. She refused, however, to relinquish the marquise diamond ring he'd dropped into her martini glass at Manhattan's "21" when he'd proposed marriage.

On September 11, 1951, MGM announced that Lana and Bob Topping were divorcing. She was quoted as saying, "Bob wants me to give up my film career, but it means too much to me and my fans. I've worked too hard to become a movie star to abandon it at this point. I wish him all the happiness in his new life."

At the time of the announcement, Topping was shacked up in Sun Valley, Idaho, with Mona Moedl, an ice-skating instructor.

What Lana defined at the time as "my fourth and last marriage" survived for 4½ troubled years. Cheryl was nine years old the day he left for good.

He predicted trouble ahead for Lana. "Your daughter is dangerous," he warned her. "You tend to believe her, but she's full of complexes and prone to lie."

[Lana waited until the autumn of 1952 to start divorce proceedings. Before they could begin, she had to spend time in Nevada as a means of establishing residency in that state.

In 1953, after the legalities of their divorce were finalized, Topping married Moedl. He continued to drink heavily, dying fifteen years later at the age of fifty-four.]

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Confronted with yet another failed marriage, and living in fear for her career, Lana admitted she'd wandered down a stairway to a dark gulf, and she wanted to escape from her emotional pain and anguish. Partly because she had adequately provided for both Cheryl and Mildred in her will, she left more and more of the day-to-day supervision of her daughter to her mother.

At this point in her life, she sometimes contemplated suicide. As unbelievable as it sounds, she actually attempted it when both Benton Cole (her business manager) and Mildred were with her in the house.

She went into her bathroom and locked both doors. "There was nothing else left for me to do," she wrote in her memoirs.

Then she opened her medicine cabinet, removed a bottle of sleeping pills, and swallowed every one of them. Fearing that that would be insufficient, she took out a razor and, in one sharp movement, she slashed her left wrist as blood spurted out. Within minutes, she passed out, collapsing onto the marble floor.

Having heard the crash, and fearing that something was wrong, Cole pounded on the bathroom door. When he got no answer, he kicked it in, finding her unconscious in a pool of blood. As he applied a tourniquet, he shouted for Mildred to summon a doctor

Dr. John McDonald, from his home nearby, rushed over and immediately carried Lana to his car and rushed her to the Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital, where doctors saved her life by stopping the bleeding, sewing her up, and pumping out her stomach.

After a suicide attempt and two days in the hospital, Lana, with her wrists bandaged, was released. She immediately faced an armada of reporters and photographers.

To help prepare her for her exit, Mildred had hauled in an all-white wardrobe that included a babushka, slacks, and an ankle-length overcoat.

Pictures of her in this outfit appeared on frontpages of newspapers across the country.

The doctor later described her self-inflicted wound as “a jagged laceration across the lower quarter of her left forearm.” Two tendons had been cut, but only halfway through.

She remembered lying alone in her hospital room, sobbing for hours in shame for what she’d tried to do to herself.

MGM’s Eddie Mannix denied that Lana had ever attempted suicide. Although no one believed him, he announced that she had fainted in the shower and had fallen and cut her arm as it shattered a glass door. This was the same story that had been invented for Barbara Stanwyck a decade earlier.

On her way out of the hospital, Lana denied that she had attempted suicide. “I plan to live to become the oldest woman in America,” she said.

After her divorce from Topping, Lana greeted her new neighbor, Judy Garland, and was introduced to her husband, Sid Luft. “Judy had faced suicide herself,” Lana said. “We promised to keep each other from killing ourselves. I needed some strong feminine support at the time. Both Judy and I had pre-adolescent daughters to deal with. Liza Minnelli in her case. The question was, which daughter would cause her mother the most grief?”

During her recovery, Lana began to throw parties with a ratio of guests that was eighty percent male, twenty percent female, “the latter as unattractive as possible.”

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In the course of Stephen Crane’s self-imposed exile in Europe, his daughter, Cheryl, learned that he had married actress Martine Carol, an elegant blonde goddess and one of the most beautiful women performing in films on the Continent.

By the late 1940s, when she became Cheryl’s new stepmother, she had become the leading actress in French cinema. She would keep that reputation until the mid-1950s, when she was upstaged and more or less replaced by the “sex kitten,” Brigitte Bardot.

During her father’s time away, Cheryl had been virtually out of touch with him, with almost no insights into the gilded life he was leading as a *bon vivant* on the Continent.

As Crane’s memory had receded, one Sunday afternoon, Bob Topping had called out to Cheryl, summoning her to approach him. She was resting by the pool, and he was at the breakfast table on the patio. He immediately got to the point: “Your father is dead. Stephen died in a car accident in Paris.” He held up the Sunday newspaper with a blaring headline—LANA’S EX IN PARIS CRASH. That horrible news was highlighted with a photo of a sports car that had been demolished in an accident.

“I am so very sorry,” Topping told his stepdaughter. “You’ve got to be brave. Stephen would have wanted that. This is not the time for you to fall apart. Please let Lana adjust to this in her own way, and not make it an issue to cause her more grief. From now on, you can call me Daddy, even though you’ve resisted doing that until now.”

Cheryl had not seen her biological father in two years. The only mention Lana had made of him was when she’d told her, “Your father has married a French actress. You are not going to see your new stepmother.”

In her memoirs, Cheryl noted, “There was little time to mourn.”

This incident illustrates a strange gap, or “disconnect” in the life and times of Lana Turner. If Stephen Crane were indeed dead, why didn’t Lana talk about it with her daughter? Apparently, she did not. Neither did her grandmother, Mildred.

Months later, when Mildred was shaking her granddaughter awake from a deep sleep, she said, “I have wonderful news for you, dear. Your father is back in California. I talked to him last night. He’s coming over to see you today.”

Cheryl immediately became hysterical. “That’s a lie! He’s not coming! He’s dead!”

In an attempt to calm her down, Mildred asked, “Where did you hear such an awful thing?”

“Papa told me,” Cheryl answered. “My daddy died in a car crash in Paris. I’ll never see him again.”

“You must have misunderstood,” Mildred said.

Cheryl had not misunderstand, and she never knew why Topping had perpetrated such a lie. Having kept her grief to herself, she had never discussed Stephen’s (presumed) death with either her mother or her grandmother.

That afternoon, another Sunday, Cheryl waited at the bottom of the steps for the arrival of her father. At 2PM sharp, he showed up, loaded down with presents.

He looked as handsome as ever, but had “gray dustings around his temples. He walked with a slight limp from the time he’d wrapped his sports car around a telephone pole. He told her that he’d spent a month on the critical list in a Paris hospital, but that he had pulled through.

She was anxious to hear about his life during his long absence. After tears of joy, hugs and kisses, he took her for a ride in his new limousine. Over a late lunch, he thrilled her with news of the glamorous months he’d spent in Paris, on the French Riviera and in north Africa. He had hung out with Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton, King Farouk of Egypt, Prince Aly Khan (married to Rita Hayworth, with whom he’d had an affair), Prince Rainier of Monaco, and with Aristotle Onassis and his mistress, Maria Callas. She wondered how he could have afforded such a lavish lifestyle.

He admitted that he’d smuggled contraband such as luxury products, into post-war France, which was trying to recover from the nightmare of its long occupation by Nazi armies.

He discussed his new wife, Martine Carol, admitting that she had led a reckless life before meeting him. Her first love had been Geôrges Marchal, who had abandoned her, deserting her to go off with actress Dany Robin. Distraught, Carol had ripped off her clothes and jumped into Paris’ Seine river near the Pont d’Alma. A taxi driver had plunged into the river and rescued her.

Stephen claimed that he had brought stability to her life as a movie star. For a while, they had lived in chic Monte Carlo near the villa of Prince Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth. Without admitting it, Cheryl may have gotten the impression that he had resumed his affair with the lonely Miss Hayworth whenever her errant prince was away in

the arms of some other woman.

His life sounded far more glamourous than Lana's, now that she'd married Bob Topping.

During the subsequent months, Stephen faithfully arrived to retrieve Cheryl, according to a pre-arranged schedule, for afternoon bondings. At no point did Lana ever appear to greet him.

Years later, Cheryl recalled attending a pool party with her father and his friends. In a distant corner sat a beautiful blonde starlet who had recently signed with 20th Century Fox. Cheryl later found out that the starlet had recently changed her name to Marilyn Monroe.

The leading actress in French cinema, Martine Carol, became the next Mrs. Stephen Crane. But which was she? "The next Lana Turner?" or "France's answer to Marilyn Monroe."

Darryl F. Zanuck was at the party. After Cheryl was taken home, he'd seen Stephen return to the party, where he then escorted Monroe out the door. The couple disappeared for three days and nights.

Zanuck said, "Marilyn not only wants to be the new Lana Turner, but she wants to seduce her ex-husbands as well. Her next conquest will probably be Artie Shaw."

Stephen, before and after his divorce from Martine Carol, would continue seducing the glamour queens of Hollywood. He was even rumored to have had an affair with another blonde beauty, Mamie Van Doren, who was often dubbed in the press as "a Marilyn Mon-roe clone."

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After Crane's divorce from Carol in 1953, he launched Luau, a Polynesian-themed restaurant on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. It quickly became a celebrity hot spot, known for its innovative décor and movie star clientele. Guests included an impressive roster of celebrities: Robert Mitchum, Joan Crawford, Loretta Young, Marlene Dietrich, Shelley Winters, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Bing Crosby, Errol Flynn, Gary Cooper, Burt Lancaster, and William Holden.

In time, he would expand his "Kon Tiki Empire" with theme restaurants stretching from Honolulu to Portland, Oregon, and from Chicago to Boston.

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There is a saying in Hollywood that a star is only as commercially valuable as his or her latest picture. In Lana's case, that was not true. Her two previous pictures had each flopped at the box office. But based on her casting as the lead in a big Technicolor musical, *The Merry Widow* (1952), she was hoping for a triumph.

On December 30, 1905, in *beaux-arts*, pre-World-War I Vienna, *Die lustige Witwe (The Merry Widow*) was performed for the first time. The operetta became the most famous creation of Franz Lehár, the Austro-Hungarian composer of light operas. Its theme song, "The Merry Widow Waltz," became an international standard.

In the decades that followed, interrupted by both World War I and II, Lehár's operetta remained a witty, popular, and escapist vehicle on stages worldwide. In 1907, Broadway discovered the operetta, which opened with Donald Brian and Ethel Jackson—two big but now forgotten stars of yesterday—in the romantic leads. It reached

the screen for the first time in a 1912 two-reeler starring Alma Rubens and the doomed actor, Wallace Reid.

> "My God, had I succeeded in commiting suicide, I would have denied myself the pleasure of kissing Fernando Lamas," Lana said.
>
> "He had a wonderful technique, giving only a flicker of his tongue as a tantalizing prelude of more to come. I don't mean that as a pun."

Its greatest exposure came in 1925 when the tyrannical film director, Erich von Stroheim, adapted it into a silent movie co-starring the self-enchanted Mae Murray and John Gilbert, the movie making him a matinee idol of the silent screen. Murray was cast as the dancer Sally O'Hara, with Gilbert playing the romantic Prince Danilo. Unknown to even some of their most ardent fans, Clark Gable and Joan Crawford each appeared in it as uncredited extras. She shot to stardom quicker than he did.

The Merry Widow would be adapted for the screen four more times: In 1934, 1952 (Lana's version), and again in 1962 and 1994.

When Lana starred in the film, she had to wear heavy bracelets, gloves, or a fur piece to cover the scars of her recent suicide attempt.

MGM cast a real singer into its '34 version, Jeanette MacDonald, who starred in it opposite the French actor/comedian Maurice Chevalier, under the direction of Ernst Lubitsch, who made it a bit of a bedroom farce. Ironically, Una Merkel appeared in both this, the '34 version of the film, and again, in the 1952 version with Lana.

During her time filmmaking with Lana, Merkel told her, "In 1934, I played Queen Dolores. Now I'm cast as your handmaiden pouring your bath water. How the mighty have fallen."

The Hungarian-born producer, Joe Pasternak, announced that he was going to reconfigure *The Merry Widow* as "a love story with music." Its stars would be Lana and Ricardo Montalban. In this latest version, scriptwriters Sonya Levien and William Ludwig took great liberties with Lehár's original libretto and score.

MGM wanted a Technicolor blockbuster, and raided Broadway for topnotch talent. Jack Cole, the dancer, choreographer, and theater director, known as "the Father of the Theatrical Jazz Dance," got involved. Such glamour queens as Rita Hayworth, Betty Grable, and Jane Russell had worked with him previously. His most famous gig focused on the staging of Marilyn Monroe's number, "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. In Lana's picture, Cole's naughty can-can at Maxim's, and his magnificent waltz finale, did much to launch the 1952 version of *The Merry Widow* as one of the hit movies of the year, luring viewers into theaters and away from their TV sets.

A key figure in its eventual success was its musical director, Jack Blacton. In 1943, Rodgers and Hammerstein had tapped him to conduct *Oklahoma!"* on Broadway, and he would later conduct Ethel Merman's two greatest hits, *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), and *Call Me Madam* (1950).

The German-born Curtis Bernhardt was designated as the film's director. Before that, he had directed such stars as Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Jane Wyman before tackling Lana. For reasons he kept to himself, he dropped Ricardo Montalban as the male lead and substituted Fernando Lamas instead.

The strikingly handsome Lamas had been an established star in Argentina, where he was the secret lover of that country's beautiful dictator, Evita Perón. In 1951, Hollywood signed him to compete with Montalban as the town's

Latin Lover. Born in 1920, he was younger than Lamas, who first confronted the world in 1915.

Lana's friend and confidante, Helen Rose, designed most of her spectacular costumes. Her *Belle Époque a*ccessories included peacock feathers, hourglass corsets, lavish ball gowns, stunning picture hats, and sexy *négligées*. As Lana told Rose, "Mae Murray may have been merrier, Jeanette MacDonald more melodious, butLana Turner's stunning appearance will be the most illustrious of all. Wow! Just looking at myself in one of your gowns practically turns me into a lesbian."

Vienna's (strapless) *Belle Époque*, replicated in Hollywood by costume designer Helen Rose, as interpreted by lovely Lana.

As backdrops for Lana and Lamas, Bernhardt assembled an all-star supporting cast. Richard Haydn as Baron Popoff was known for playing eccentric characters. Before joining the cast, he had starred as the caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland* (1950).

Thomas Gomez, cast as king of the mythical nation of Marshovia, played a variation of the oily, fleshy character he had developed for earlier films. Gomez became the first Hispanic American actor nominated for an Oscar for his performance in *Ride the Pink Horse* (1947).

The English character actor, John Abbott, was a noted Shakespearean actor who had worked with such formidable British stars as Dame Sybil Thorndike, Vivien Leigh, and Laurence Olivier.

Robert Coote, as the Marquis de Crillon, was already known to Lana, having appeared with her in *The Three Musketeers*.

In the midst of the shooting, Spencer Tracy paid Lana a surprise visit. He congratulated her for signing a new and better contract with MGM. "They're getting rid of most of us old-timers. We're worn-out horses headed for the glue factory. We golden oldies belong to yesterday. But your future lies ahead of you. Your greatest roles are yet to come. Mine belonged to another day."

When he left, she told Helen Rose, "Spence has really aged. I doubt if he'll live out the 1950s."

Despite his failing health, Tracy would go on to live until 1967, when he died after making his last film, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* with his co-star and long-time companion, Katharine Hepburn.

About halfway through the shooting of *The Merry Widow*, MGM announced that both Lana and Lamas would co-star together in an upcoming movie, *Latin Lovers*. Around the same time, another announcement was made: The U.S. Marines had voted Lana the number one star of "Orality"—that is, a woman desiring to be kissed often and thoroughly.

Runner-up was Jane Russell, with Faye Emerson coming in third. In fourth place was Ava Gardner, trailed by the stripper, Lili St. Cyr.

Lana rebounded from her two recent failures with a hit. *The Merry Widow*played from Lima, Peru to Edinburgh, Scotland, from Buenos Aires to Rome. The romantic combination of Lana with Lamas, on screen and

off, was combustible.

Though praised for its production values, *The Merry Widow* received some nasty comments from critics. One of them defined it as “more fizzle than fizz.”

Newsweek praised the performances of both Lana and Lamas, as well as the baroque scenery of Marshovia. “Lana Turner is a well turned and glowing widow.”

Bosley Crowther, of *The New York Times*, wrote, “*The Merry Widow* has never had it so good.”

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When Lana met Lamas, he had been married twice, the first time in 1940 to Perla Mux, an Argentinian film star. After his divorce from her, in 1946, he married Lydia Barache, the daughter of a Uruguayan real estate tycoon. Joining the cast of *The Merry Widow*, Lamas was in the final throes of his second divorce.

He had gotten his start as a movie star in his home country of Argentina, appearing in *On the Last Floor* in 1942. In America, he’d made such films as *Rich, Young, and Pretty* in 1951, and *The Law and the Lady* the same year.

He was not as good an actor as Ricardo Montalban, but he could sing fairly well, and Bern-hardt decided to use his own voice in the final cut of the song “Vilia,” where Lana’s voice had to be dubbed.

“When Lana Turner met Lamas for the first time, the birds burst into song, the bells rang in the church tower, the roses burst into sudden bloom, and the vines produced tender grapes,” said director Curtis Bernhardt. “It was love at first sight. And no wonder. He was a very sexy guy in tight pants that revealed his manly powers.”

Helen Young said, “Lana was ripe for a new romance now that she didn’t kill herself and had dumped Bob Topping. It was about time.”

Many reviewers commented on the tight trousers Lamas wore in the film. A reporter asked him who his tailor was. He didn’t answer, but said, “I believe it pays to advertise. Soon, Ava Gardner will be knocking on my door.”

He was right.

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Lamas was already thirty-six when he met Lana. He boasted, “I’d had a lot of loving under my belt, which I unbuckled a lot to give the gals a thrill, even Miss Perón herself. She told me, ‘If only Juan could make love like you do.’”

[She was referring, of course, to Juan Perón, president (aka Military Dictator) of Argentina.]

Lana sounded like a love-sick schoolgirl during her ravings about Lamas to Virginia Grey. “Fernando is so

gorgeous he should be arrested for causing a gal's heart to flutter dangerously," she gushed. "As you know, I've seduced the best-looking men on MGM's roster of stars, everyone from Clark Gable to Robert Taylor. But Fernando is the best. He has a bronze tan, pearly whites, and always wears a silk scarf around his neck…each day, a different color, perhaps marigold, perhaps pink rose."

Grey responded, "It's called 'gaucho charisma.'"

Esther Williams, who occupied the dressing room next to Lana's, was among the first to witness the budding romance between Lana and Lamas. She saw him walking by in a "skin-tight brown dancer's leotard, which made no secret of his masculine charm," she wrote in her memoirs.

She related how she was even a witness to the first time Lana seduced Lamas. She heard Lana shout, after opening the door to her dressing room, "Fernando Lamas! Get your Argentinean ass in here!"

Williams confessed to putting a glass to the wall to hear what was going on. "The first movement began with gentle strings and sighing woodwinds. The second movement brought in the whole brass section with trumpets and tuba blowing like crazy. The third movement was filled with pounding kettledrums and marimbas which reached a wild and ecstatic crescendo."

Then she heard Lana moan, "Oh, Fernando! *OH FERNANDO!"*

"One of my goals in deserting the film colony of Argentina and coming to Hollywood was to seduce both Ava Gardner (left) and Lana Turner.

"I succeeded both times beyond my wildest dreams."

"When word got out about me, my phone didn't stop ringing all night. But I was always too busy to answer it."

During the filming of *The Merry Widow*, the press was quick to pounce on gossip about the romance of the film's co-stars. Although neither of Cupid's afflicted delivered any extended details about their love affair, Lamas, at least, made some quotable quotes:

"It is a known fact that Latin men prefer blondes. There is a difference between Latin men and American men. Latins give you more of everything: More headaches, more temper, and more tenderness. I am a handsome Latin and a wonderful lover. I got into movies because it was a great way to meet broads."

Lana gave Lamas the key to her home. One afternoon, when he got off from work several hours before Lana was finished at the studio for the day, he came to her house to swim in her pool. Cheryl was already there, playing beside its edge.

Rumors about Lamas' genitalia made the rounds of Hollywood. In 1969, when he married Esther Williams, he said, "I'm hung very high. Somehow, my genitalia have been placed high on my pelvic bone. So it looks like this thing of mine goes on forever. It's really quite normal, but, of course, it's very grand when erect."

Williams also claimed that Lamas never wore underwear. "He had a way of thrusting his hips forward that made it very obvious what was inside those pants," she said. "And what was there was very substantial. It was his way of letting people know that he had a tremendous package."

He came out onto the patio wearing a terrycloth robe. He asked her, "Have you ever seen a nude man before?" She shook her head no, later writing, "All I knew was that men had short hair and wore a fig leaf over their thing."

He dropped his robe and exposed himself, revealing to Lana's daughter what men are made of.

After that visit, he often appeared in the afternoon, each time going skinny dipping. He warned her not to tell her mother about his exposing himself to her.

Lana took Cheryl and retreated to Lake Tahoe in Nevada for six weeks to establish residency in that state so that she could file for divorce from Topping. Lamas was a frequent visitor. However, when word reached her of some of the comments he was making to the press, she exploded in anger.

One remark in particular had infuriated her. Lamas explained to reporters how Latin men make love. "We grab a gal around the neck, grasp her arms until they are black and blue, and then rip off her dress, saving the panties for last."

When Lamas' divorce from Lydia Barachi came through, it was assumed by reporters that he would immediately propose marriage to Lana. He did not, announcing instead, "I have no plans to marry anyone again."

After her own divorce was finalized, Lana, too, announced to the press, "I'll never marry again." However, she told "gal pal," Ava Gardner, "Fernando Lamas is going to be my next husband."

Preparing himself for any gala event invariably became a major ordeal for Lamas. "He spent more time getting dressed than I did," Lana said. "He didn't want any wrinkles or lines showing in his tight pants. He explained that he couldn't wear jockey shorts because a 'panty line' would show where his ass and legs cametogether. Before getting into the car to go somewhere, he'd take off his pants and drive with it all hanging out. At some place along a street with bushes, he and his pants would get out of the car and he'd change behind the screening of the bushes. That way he could arrive at the party without any wrinkles in his pants."

One night, when Lana and Lamas had gone nightclubbing at Mocambo, an angry-looking Lucille Ball approached their table. She was furious at Lamas' comments about Latin lovers. "You're the god damn reason Desi is chasing after every woman in skirts. He's trying to live up to the reputation you've set for Latin men. You're a horrible role model, you son of a bitch." Then she stormed away.

One night, Lana hosted a dinner party, inviting eight of her friends, including Virginia Grey. Before the party, Lamas told her that he would not attend, complaining about one of his recurring migraines.

After the meal, Lana invited her guests into her living room, where she switched on the music. There was much drinking and loud talking.

Suddenly, with a burst of anger, Lamas was seen bounding down the steps from the bedroom upstairs. He was entirely nude, shouting for the guests to leave the house at once. Then he stormed back up the stairs.

With embarrassed apologies, Lana escorted her friends to the door. Then she went upstairs, where she found him lying nude on the bed, glaring at her.

"Do you know, sir, that when you yell and you're jaybird naked, you produce an erection?"

"I'm not angry now, and look what I'm producing for you."

Eager to sample it, she headed toward the bed.

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Lana feared that her career would nosedive if she made another flop. The big Technicolor musical, *The Merry Widow*, had done well at the box office, but as a follow-up, she wanted a non-musical role since, "I view myself as a modern woman who can pull off a contemporary drama minus the lavish costume period pieces where I look like some mannequin."

She thought she'd found it in a proposed script in the Hollywood-on-Hollywood genre like Judy Garland's remake of *A Star Is Born* or like Gloria Swanson as the delusional silent screen has-been in *Sunset Blvd*.

The plot of Lana's newest film dates back to 1949 when it was published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* as a short story, *Of Good and Evil*, by George Bradshaw. It was later expanded and renamed *Memorial to a Bad Man (*later retitled as *A Tribute to a Bad Man)*.

When the project was assigned to producer John Houseman, he wanted to change the venue from Broadway to Hollywood.

Bradshaw had based the lead character (producer Jonathan Shields) on the notorious Jed Harris, "the Terror of the Great White Way."

Houseman didn't want to make another movie about Broadway because of the recent success of *All About Eve*, in which its co-stars, Bette Davis and Anne Baxter, had each been cast as Broadway stars, generating performances that earned Oscar nominations for each of them.

When Lana was signed, with the provision that she would receive top billing, Dore Schary, the new head honcho at MGM, wanted the film's title changed to reflect Lana's character. The revised title was *The Bad and the Beautiful*. At first, House-man objected, but later, he came to like it.

Vincente Minnelli, as director, and Houseman each wanted to bring it to the screen, with Lana cast into the female lead of Georgia Lorrison. But the studio chief, Dore Schary, who had replaced Louis B. Mayer, needed to be convinced. He felt that even at best, the picture would be a "B," and consequently allocated it a modest budget of a million dollars. Contractually, he approved of Lana's services for only four weeks of shooting, because he wanted to cast her as a follow up in another Technicolor musical, *Latin Lovers*, alongside her current lover, Fernando Lamas, typecast.

Lana felt that her role of Georgia might be the equal of her portrayal of Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. "I didn't get the Oscar for that, but here's a second chance for me," she told Minnelli, who at the time was somewhat depressed, coming down from his divorce from Judy Garland.

"Many of my friends wondered why I wanted to make such an anti-Hollywood movie," Minnelli said. "I told them I didn't see the character of Jonathan Shields as an unregenerate heel—first, because we find out that he has a weakness, which makes him human, and second, because he's as tough on himself as he is on everyone else, which makes him honest. That's the complex, wonderful thing about human beings—whether they're in Hollywood or in the automobile business or in neckties."

In a nutshell, the plot of *The Bad and the Beautiful* centered around producer Jonathan Shields and how he used and abused his star, Georgia, his writer, James Lee Bartlow, and his director, Fred Amiel.

Minnelli originally offered the role of Shields to Clark Gable, hoping for another Gable/Turner co-starring package. But the King of Hollywood, whose box office allure was slipping, turned it down. Minnelli then presented it to Spencer Tracy, Lana's former co-star, but he, too, rejected it. But Kirk Douglas, when it was offered to him, accepted immediately. ("I can be ruthless.")

When Lana first heard a layout of the plot, and learned about her character, Georgia Lorrison, she said, "I play a soggy mess, the daughter of a world-famous actor, who is sinking into oblivion, until I am rescued by anunscrupulous producer who propels me into stardom. I make the big mistake of falling in love with him, the story of my life. I believe in Georgia. Besides, she's a better character than those in the other turkeys presented to me."

Minnelli told her that her character was clearly based on the alcoholic Diana Barrymore, daughter of "The Great Profile," John Barrymore.

But the buzz in Hollywood suggested that Georgia might be based on any number of stars, former and present. At one point, Jennifer Jones believed that the role was based on her because the part of Jonathan Shields was clearly identified as inspired by her husband, David O. Selznick. Many scenes taken from his own life were inserted into the script.

The producer of *Gone With the Wind* was not the only inspiration for the character of Shields. The Russian American producer and screenwriter, Val Lewton, was also an inspiration. He was known for making a string of low-budget horror films for RKO Pictures, and also notorious for his cost-cutting techniques, and his abuse of his low-paid actors. His biggest hits had been *Cat People* (1942), *The Curse of the Cat People* (1944), and *The Body Snatcher* (1945), based on a short story by Robert Louis Stevenson.

In *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Shields and his director, Fred Amiel, are depicted making a low budget quickie employing "cat people."

Charles Schnee was assigned, as a scriptwriter, to adapt Bradshaw's short story—hence, he had to remain within the Hollywood (as opposed to the Broadway) genre. He had been a former partner in New York's experimental Mercury Theatre, working with both Houseman and Orson Welles. Although primarily a film producer and production executive, he had nonetheless developed a few screen-writing credits, including *Red River* (1948), a hit Western starring John Wayne and Montgomery Clift.

In the development of her character, Minnelli told Lana that he had ordered Schnee to use some of the characteristics of his ex-wife, Judy Garland.

Dick Powell's role as the writer was said to have been inspired by Paul Elliot Green, an academic turned screen writer whose main credit had been *Cabin in the Cotton* (1932), starring a very young Bette Davis *["I'd kiss ya, but I've just washed my hair."]*

Leo G. Carroll played director Henry Whitfield, modeling his character on Alfred Hitchcock, with whom he'd worked in several pictures, including *Rebecca* (1940) with Joan Fontaine and Laurence Olivier.

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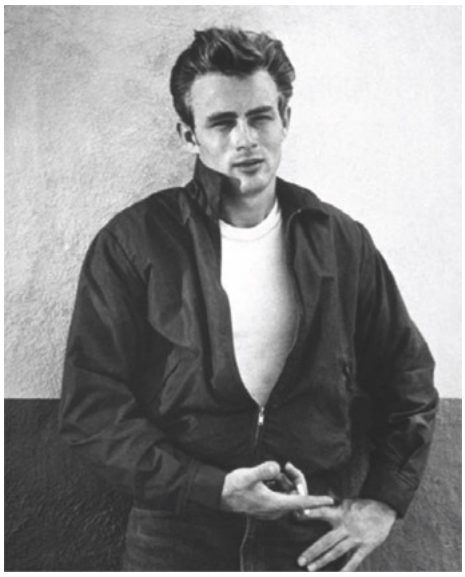
In his capacity as author of the short story that had inspired it, George Bradshaw had wanted to write the screenplay for *The Bad and the Beautiful* too, but Minnelli had turned him down. He was hired, however, to produce a fifty-page scenario of his original story with amplifications. Minnelli hoped to cull from the scenario some additional material to add to the screenplay already in production by Charles Schnee.

Bradshaw was gay, as was his closest friend, the TV producer, Rogers Brackett, who at the time had a live-in lover, the then-unknown James Dean. Brackett had been supporting him, and procuring minor jobs for him in TV. Before that, Dean had been a street hustler.

Although Bradshaw did not like Dean personally, feeling that he was exploiting Brackett, he ultimately relented to his friend's plea, "Please write in a small part for Jimmy."

Bradshaw followed through and created a small but pivotal role for Dean.

It was inserted into one of the key moments in the film: After a triumphant win at the Oscars, Lana's character of Georgia Lorrison arrives, uninvited and unannounced at the mansion of Jonathan Shields. There, to her horror, she encounters his new lover. According to Bradshaw's early vision of the scene, as tailor-made for James Dean, it is not a sultry female brunette who emerges from his bedroom at the top of the stairs, as was depicted in the film's final cut.



Lana had a distaste for the emerging young actors of the 1950s. Many of them were from the Method school of acting. However, there was something about James Dean, perhaps the wicked gleam in his eyes, that caught her attention. "Don't tell me," she said. "Are you a Marlon Brando clone?"

"Hell, no!" he said. "I have my own style and technique. I can act rings around Brando. And I can make an audience actually understand my mumbling. Besides, my dick is bigger than Brando's.

"Good for you, dear boy," she answered. "Modesty, I see is not one of your virtues. To get ahead in Hollywood, you can never be modest about your attributes."

Instead, the culprit was obviously a gay male: James Dean, provocatively dressed only in a snug pair of white boxer shorts.

Bradshaw invited Dean and Brackett to his apartment for a presentation of the then-scenario of the movie, as he had composed it to that point. He justified the homoerotic aspect of Dean's brief insertion into the script as follows: "To pull off Lana's later hysterical breakdown in the moving car, I felt that the script needed something more startling than just a beautiful, seductive tart at the top of the stairs. A producer who's fucking a starlet…that's nothing but a big, boring *cliché*. Come on, guys…it's about time we started defying the Production Code. Let's face it: It's 1951, not 1934."

"Your character doesn't say a word," Bradshaw said to Dean. "Your face has to say it all. You're to appear

triumphant. You've stolen the man she loves from the most desirable woman in the world."

"*I can do it! I can do it!*" Dean shouted.

Brackett warned that although the insertion of a gay context would make a great scene, he feared that the censors wouldn't allow it.

[As it happened, he was right.]

Dean said, "MGM will be swamped with fan mail, asking "Who's that boy?...namely, me."

At 9:30PM that same night, Lana arrived at Bradshaw's apartment, having been driven there by an anonymous, shadowy male figure who all three men later agreed was NOT Fernando Lamas. He remained outside, behind the wheel of her car, throughout the course of her dialogue inside with Bradshaw, Brackett, and Dean..

She explained that she didn't want to bring her unnamed companion inside "because I know you guys will go ape-shit over him and try to take him away from Ava and me. We've got a date at her place later tonight."

Of course, all three men knew that she was referring to Ava Gardner. Lana accepted glowing tributes from both Brackett and Dean, each of them insisting that she was their favorite screen actress.

"You probably say the same thing to Bette Davis and Joan Crawford," she said.

Then she expressed her dislike of the crop of young actors who had emerged during the early 50s, specifically naming Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando. "Give me Clark Gable or Robert Taylor any day, especially that handsome devil, Tyrone Power. Errol Flynn is a darling, or at least he used to be. Dare I mention Victor Mature with his sledgehammer?"

At some point, she seemed to take notice of Dean, appraising him seductively. He would later tell Brackett, "She looked at me like a juicy piece of steak about to be devoured."

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Without Brackett's knowledge, Dean arrived unexpectedly the next afternoon at Bradshaw's apartment with his shirt unbuttoned. After he was invited inside, he made the motivation for his visit clear. "I believe in repaying my debts," he said. "One favor deserves another."

"Rogers is my best friend," Bradshaw replied. "In Hollywood, a town of dishonorable people, I retain a sense of honor. I do not seduce the trick of my best friend. Now scram!"

"Okay, I'm going," Dean replied. At the door, he hesitated. "One more favor. Can't you beef up my scene? Have Georgia Lorrison approach me later on and seduce me? It would be a revenge fuck, Georgia giving it to Shields for betraying her."

"That I know I can't get away with," Bradshaw said. "But I might deliver the real thing to you. I talked to Lana this morning, and she asked about you. Her exact words were, 'Who was that divine young man last night? Does he fuck women, too?'"

Bradshaw then continued: "If you want to meet her, it can be arranged. I won't touch you, but Lana will. She devours young men. Rogers must not know."

"So your honor extends only so far?"

"Of course it does. After all, this is Hollywood."

Bradshaw phoned Dean the next day, saying, "It's all arranged for 4PM sharp this afternoon. I've got her address for you."

After writing down her address, Dean said, "Thanks, pal. I'll owe you one when I bolt from Rogers. That's in the cards, you know."

Arriving on time, unusual for him, Dean was directed to her swimming pool, where Lana, in a one-piece sunflowery yellow bathing suit, was sipping an iced tea.

He never discussed in any detail what happened that afternoon. Lana, still madly in love with Lamas, certainly didn't either.

After midnight, Dean returned to Brackett's apartment, claiming that he'd met some of his old school buddies and that he'd gone drinking with them.

Months later in New York, Dean shared a reunion with his old friends, composer Alec Wilder and TV producer Stanley Mills Haggart.

"I'm keeping a list of the famous men and women I've seduced in Hollywood. I need all this for the memoirs I'm going to write when I'm seventy-four. That list already includes Marilyn Monroe. I met her through my fuck buddy, Marlon Brando. To the roster of notables can be added one Miss Lana Turner."

Although Minnelli liked Bradshaw's having written a "young man at the top of the stairs" into the script of *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Houseman rejected it as "too daring."

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A second attempt by Dean to appear in a movie with Lana also fell through.

Vincente Minnelli and his producer, John Houseman, were teamed together again for production of "a mental film," (Houseman's words). The movie, entitled *The Cobweb* and released in 1955, was set in a mental ward. As originally conceived, the director had cast the three leading roles with an amazing selection of two blondes, Lana and Grace Kelly, emoting with Robert Taylor. Dean was to have been cast into a secondary role. Later, it emerged that his studio refused to lease him.

The final cast of *The Cobweb* starred Richard Widmark, Lauren Bacall, Gloria Grahame, and John Kerr, making his screen debut in the role briefly targeted for Dean.

Even though Dean never got to work with Lana, his fascination with her continued. Months later, when he was searching for a place to live, a local landlord, David Gould, showed him a fully furnished house (at 1541 Sunset Plaza Drive) that had once been occupied by Lana.

Gould directed him to the master bedroom, the first room Dean wanted to see. Gould pointed out an elegant four-poster. "Lana slept in this very bed, but never alone, night after night."

"You've convinced me. I'll sign the lease. Tonight, I'll be sleeping in Lana's bed…and never alone!"

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Right before Lana reported to work on the set of *The Bad and the Beautiful*, rumors reached MGM that both Lana and Ava Gardner were about to become the victims of an *exposé* in the upcoming edition of *Confidential*.

According to the grapevine, Gardner had stopped off for gasoline at a notorious filling station in Los Angeles at the corner of Hollywood Boulevard at Fairfax. After serving in the Marines during World War II, Scotty Bowers, a handsome, strapping ex-Marine, pumped gas at the station. In time, he developed a scheme for the employment of other good-looking, well-built ex-military men who had returned from World War II to a landscape with no jobs.

He began to arrange "dates" among these men and members of L.A.'s burgeoning gay population. Walter Pidgeon, one of Lana's co-stars in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, was one of Scotty's first and best customers.

Scotty and members of his crew also serviced women. Their conquests included Vivien Leigh and occasionally men in drag, one of whom was J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I. Ostensibly, the other gas jockeys at the station were also for rent.

When Gardner pulled into the station, her tank was filled by Greg Tolson, a 6'4" former paratrooper with bulging muscles and tight pants. He immediately attracted Gardner's hawkeye. There wasn't much time for small talk as the pair got down to some fast negotiations. They led to Tolson's arrival at Gardner's house that night at 10PM. Fortunately, her very possessive lover, Frank Sinatra, was out of town that night, performing in front of an audience in Las Vegas.

According to rumor, Tolson left Gardner's house at 10AM the following morning. Right before noon, she placed a call to Lana, with whom she often "traded" men, even a shared husband (Artie Shaw).

She apparently went into lavish praise of Tolson as a lover, telling Lana, "He's the kind of guy who comes into a woman's life only once in twenty-five years. Better take advantage now. The likes of him will not come again."

Intrigued, Lana, looking her most glamourous, arrived that night at Gardner's home, where she was introduced to Tolson.

"Seeing was believing," she reported later to Virginia Grey. "If he were a book, he'd be a bestseller."

Word of Lana's sharing of the gas jockey with Gardner reached Dory Schary's office, along with news about the upcoming *exposé* of the scandal in *Confidential*. He summoned both actresses into his office for a severe reprimand.

"If you don't give a god damn about your reputations, think of MGM and its reputation. Think of the morality clauses in both of your contracts."

After a stern and humiliating lecture about "cleaning up your acts," he dismissed them.

On her way out, Gardner turned back. "Don't worry, *honey chile*," she said. "Even if *Confidential* exposes us, who's gonna believe it?"

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Lana was eager to work with Kirk Douglas, her co-star in the upcoming *The Bad and the Beautiful*. She told Minnelli, "I think we'd make a dynamic duo on the screen, perhaps generate as much body heat as John Garfield and I did in *Postman."* She'd been impressed with the actor ever since she'd seen him star opposite Barbara Stanwyck in *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* (1946).

Born Issur Danielovitch, the Russian Jewish actor, with his powerful build, expressed his relentless spirit through his cold, fierce eyes. He was a sort of virile anti-hero in post-war America, his cleft chin familiar to American audiences through such hits as the grim prizefighter in *Champion* (1949), or "The Gentleman Caller" in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1950).

After the first week of shooting, Hedda Hopper arrived on the scene, interrupting a conversation between Douglas and Lana. "I hear you kids may have a potential hit on your hands."

Then she turned to Douglas. "But I still think you're a son of a bitch."

"I've always been a son of a bitch," he answered. "But what about Lana here? Who is she?"

"Drop of 'son of'…and you've nailed her," Hopper said, before turning her back on the stars of the picture and walking away.

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Long before Lana met Douglas, his reputation had preceded him. Early in his career, he'd auditioned for Mae West as a member of her stage revue. She insisted that actors who wanted to appear with her model for her in skimpy, form-fitting briefs that made their manly assets (or lack thereof) obvious. After giving Douglas a thorough appraisal, she rejected him for her backdrop of musclemen. "Buster, you just don't make the grade," she told him.

Then she turned to the next actor in line. "What's your name, kid? Steve Cochran, I heard. Is that a pistol in those briefs of yours—or are you just glad to see me?"

Evelyn Keyes had already revealed to anyone who wanted to hear that "Kirk is just parlor-sized."

Commenting on his own erection, he once told a reporter, "An erection is a mysterious thing. There's always the fear that each time one goes, that you won't be seeing it again."

Whether a great Romeo or not, Douglas would go one to seduce some of the stellar lights of Tinseltown: Lauren Bacall, Pier Angeli, Rita Hayworth, Marlene Dietrich, Gene Tierney, Patricia Neal, Ann Sothern, and Princess Safia Tarzi of Afghanistan.

Lana also appears on those lists of Douglas' seductions, despite denials from each of them that they never had an affair during the filming of *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

When he met her, he had only recently recovered from a case of pneumonia, the result of overexposure during the filming of his previous film, *The Big Sky* (1952).

During his recovery, he was visited often by Marlene Dietrich. "She would come over and cook soup for me, cuddle me, affectionate sex. But that was less important than the mothering. Marlene is an unusual person. She seemed to love you much more if you were not well. When you became strong and healthy, she loved you less."

Over lunch with her in the MGM commissary, Douglas amused Lana with stories of his life. As a young man, he'd worked as a bellhop at a summer resort owned by a rabidly anti-Semitic woman who was unaware that he was a Jew. All summer long, he had tolerated her racial attacks on the Jews.

Near the end of his tenure at the resort, right before he departed, she summoned him into her suite, and seduced him. As he confessed to Lana, "Right as I was about to climax, I whispered in her ear, 'This is a circumcised Jewish cock inside you. I am a Jew. You are being fucked by a Jew.'"

Rumors became so rampant in Hollywood about their alleged affair that Lana placed a call to Louella Parsons, who had suggested, in print, many times that Lana tended to seduce her leading men. "I never see Kirk after we close down the set for the day. Yet items keep appearing in the press about us having an affair. I'm in love with Fernando Lamas, and no other man means a thing to me."

Douglas also denied any affair with Lana. "Lamas was going with her. He was terribly jealous. Always on the set hanging around, guarding her like a hawk. Nothing happened between Lana and me. I liked her a lot and she did one of her best acting gigs in our film."

Were Lana and Douglas telling the truth? After all, she regularly denied affairs with Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, and many others.

Witnesses on the set, including Minnelli and such observers as co-star Dick Powell, claimed that she did have an affair with Kirk Douglas "What Lana told Parsons was true: *i.e.*, that she never saw Kirk after working hours," Minnelli said. "But what about those long visits to her dressing room with its pink satin sheets, when they weren't needed on the set by me? Esther Williams always seemed to have that empty glass against the wall of Lana's dressing room. She said they did have an affair, but one far more subdued than the rowdy sex with Lamas."

As a ruthless producer, Jonathan Shields (Kirk Douglas) turns an alcoholic, self-destructive extra, Georgia Lorrison (Lana) into a super glamourous movie star.

Her mistake is to fall in love with him.

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Minnelli was known mainly for directing big-ticket musicals such as *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *Gigi*, and *An American in Paris*. On occasion, he liked to tackle drama, too.

Lana had long been aware that her director was gay, perhaps bisexual. When she had co-starred with Gene Kelly in *The Three Musketeers*, she learned that Minnelli was in love with him. From 1945 to 1951, he'd been married to Judy Garland. The union had produced a daughter, Liza Minnelli.

Minnelli's biographer, Emmanuel Levy, wrote, "He was openly gay when he lived in New York. But when he came to Hollywood, he made a decision to repress that part of himself, or to become bisexual."

Before directing Lana, Minnelli had been told, "She can't act."

"I soon discovered that wasn't true," he said. "I found she had great imagination. She could do things I had no idea she could do. She had great depth and color and rose to the part."

Some of the scenes at the beginning of *The Bad and the Beautiful* were among the most difficult. Lana had to play the depressed, alcoholic, chronically hostile daughter of a great actor.

Her role was clearly based on the tragic life of Diana Barrymore, whose dingy apartment walls were covered with pictures of her late father, once known as "The Great Profile." But the voice heard in the background, a recording of her supposed father, was actually that of Louis Calhern.

Early in the filmmaking process, the Breen Office had objected to at least ten scenes in the script, most of them involving sequences of Lana portraying Georgia. They were labeled as "too explicit" by the censors. However, Minnelli decided to defy "these blue noses" and filmed the scenes anyway. His move was a major decision in the long-term goal of reducing the role of these censors. By the end of the 1950s, their power had begun to erode.

Once again, Lana faced one of the most talented rosters of supporting actors with whom she'd ever worked. In his interpretation of a hard-boiled Hollywood producer, Walter Pidgeon had aged considerably since she'd last worked with him in *Week-End at the Waldorf*. She later told her hairdresser, Helen Young, "Walter and I have one thing in common: We both go for the boys."

Originally, Dick Powell had been assigned the role of the director, Fred Amiel. But he didn't like the part, preferring the role of the easy-going, pipe-smoking, tweedy professor, James Lee Bartlow, whose character, the plot reveals, wrote a best-selling novel purchased by Hollywood. The role of the director went to Barry Sullivan.

Lana had never worked with Powell before, but she had co-starred with two of his wives, both Joan Blondell and June Allyson. Lana told Minnelli, "Dick is a nice guy and very talented, but frankly, I never saw him as a leading man, neither in those silly 1930s musicals or even as the hard-boiled detective Philip Marlowe. Critics wrote about his 'gosh-and-golly ebullience,' but I prefer a man who is 'Wow!' or 'Oh Boy!" more suited to my taste."

In *The Bad and the Beautiful*, sultry Gloria Grahame, playing Powell's wife, defined herself as "Los Angeles

born and bred. All the rest of you guys in the cast are carpetbaggers."

Blonde and seductive, with bee-stung lips, Grahame could speak volumes with her arched brow. She immodestly told Lana, "Except for you, I was the sexiest thing in *film noir."*

In the film, she played Rosemary, a social-climbing Southern belle whose life ends in a scandalous tragedy when she runs off with Gaucho *(Gilbert Roland)*, the Latin Lover of the movie. Minnelli instructed Grahame to interpret her role "with cutesy-pooh mannerisms."

Barry Sullivan kept cropping up in Lana's films as her would-be suitor, who struck out notably in *Mr. Imperium* and *A Life of Her Own*. She would co-star with Sullivan once again in *Another Time, Another Place* (1958).

"When will I get lucky?" he asked Lana.

"You've tangled with Bette Davis and Jane Wyman, so why do you need me?" she asked. "Surely Joan Crawford at least lies in your future."

As a movie star, Gilbert Roland, cast as Gaucho, had seen bigger and better days in the movies. He was the original Latin Lover until Ricardo Montalban and Fernando Lamas came along.

He admitted that his performance in *The Bad and the Beautiful* was "self-parody, like the role I played in that Cisco Kid series." He told Lana that he'd wanted to be a bullfighter, but that he'd been lured to Hollywood, where he'd seduced a string of glamourous women who included both Clara Bow and Norma Talmadge. Eventually, he married the screen's cool, serene beauty, Constance Bennett.

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Playing a bit part in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Steve Forrest immediately attracted Lana's attention.

He looked so enticing as a male animal that Lana invited him into her dressing room, where he got to interact with her celebrated body on her pink satin sheets. She was so thrilled with his technique as a seducer, that she "summoned" him back on two more afternoons. It was only later that she learned that he was the younger brother of the more established actor, Dana Andrews, with whom Lana had also had a fling.

On the set of *The Bad and the Beautiful*, Lana—a skilled seducer of handsome young actors—spotted a tall, ruggedly masculine newcomer, Steve Forrest.

He had only a small, insignificant part in the film, playing a role defined by the script as "Leading Man."

In fact, until he appeared in Lana's movie, Forrest had been billed as William Andrews. He didn't want the same last name as his more famous brother.

When Virginia Grey visited her friend on the set, as was her custom, Lana described her latest discovery and his relationship to Dana. "Until Steve screwed me, I thought brothers always had very similar cocks. Not in this case. They're very different."

"Which one gives the most satisfaction?" Grey asked.

"Steve, of course," she answered. "He's marriage material."

[When Lana met Steve Forrest, he was already married to Christine Carilas. He'd wed her in 1948 and was still married to her when he died in 2013 at the age of 87.]

Lana got to appear with Forrest again in 1954 on *Ed Sullivan's Toast of the Town*, broadcast on CBS Television. It was an hour-long tribute to MGM, celebrating the studio's 30th anniversary. As part of the tribute, Forrest joined fellow actors Edmund Purdom, Richard Anderson, and John Ericson as her backup, as she performed the "Madame Cremation:" number introduced by Judy Garland in *Ziegfeld Follies (1946)*.

Lana invited him for a "sleepover," which he willingly accepted after they'd finished their filming. She never hooked up with him again, but she followed his career, as he played Jane Wyman's son in *So Big* (1953).

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The most dramatic sequence in *The Bad and the Beautiful* occurred when Lana, as the rejected Georgia Lorrison, becomes hysterical, while driving her car, in the wake of a revelation about Jonathan Shields and his infidelities.

As she pleads with him for a private party (just the two of them), Elaine Stewart, as the ambitious starlet, appears at the top of his stairwell. Kirk Douglas, as Shields, kicks Lana, as Georgia, out of his house.

Albert Johnson in *Film Quarterly* said it best: "Lana Turner emerges from the mansion in white ermine and drives away. Her sobs soon build to hysteria, and lights of cars send flashes across the windows as she reaches a moment of unbearable frenzy. She releases the steering wheel entirely, and screams in emotional agony. Her foot presses the brake. One hears only her screams, the honking of passing auto-horns, and, suddenly, it's raining."

"The car bumps along uncontrollably for a second, then comes to a standstill. Turner falls over the wheel, still sobbing uncontrollably as the sequence fades. It is superb theater, one of the great moments of human despair shown in cinematic terms and a prime example of the coordination of actress, director, and cameraman which can create a perfect moment of dramatic poetry upon the screen."

What emerged on celluloid became one of the most iconic scenes in motion picture history.

In preparation for its filming, Minnelli had wrapped every other scene in the picture, with the exception of Lana's near-fatal car ride, where she's screaming, thrashing, and sobbing hysterically behind the wheel of a moving car. Minnelli allowed her three weeks off before he was ready to bring her back to the studio for the filming of that scene.

By then, Kirk Douglas had moved on to other projects, shooting *The Story of Three Loves* (1953); and Sullivan had departed for the filming of *Jeopardy* (also 1953) with Barbara Stanwyck.

After sobering and cleaning her up, Shields (Douglas) is determined to make Georgia (Lana) into a major star. Here, he is seen directing "a movie within a movie."

This setting on a theatrical balcony is a testament to the visual compositions of director Vincente Minnelli.

As part of her three-week holiday, Lana invited Fernando Lamas to accompany her to Acapulco, where a rented villa awaited them. During their time there, Lamas spent most of his time walking around the house and its pool area fully nude.

"Fernando gave the three Mexican houseboys, all of whom were gay, a real treat," Lana said.

In his own less-than-modest appraisal, Lamas told her, "If I had gone for boys instead of girls, the line would have formed outside my door."

At the end of her holiday, she returned to MGM, where Minnelli directed her to a car raised up on a contraption that simulated speed and motion. A crew stood by, some of them wearing heavy yellow slickers, with buckets of water, spray nozzles, and oversized sponges.

"Exactly what am I to do?" she asked Minnelli. "Give me some guidance."

"I don't have any," he admitted. "I really don't. You have to get into that car and pretend to drive away, gradually growing hysterical, knowing that Shields has left you for a younger woman. I have faith in you as an actress that you can pull this off."

Once seated behind the wheel of the car, she decided to draw upon her own life experience as a means of validating the scene. "It was my first stab at Method acting. Was I to become the female Marlon Brando or not?"

She later recalled that for inspiration, she drew upon the painful moments from her past when Tyrone Power had deserted her for Linda Christian. "Emotion welled up inside me as I pretended to drive. The water from a mock rainstorm began to hit my windshield. I was blinded through that, and my tears which came gushing were echoed by the gush of water against the windshield."

"Lana pulled it off in one take," Minnelli later asserted.

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MGM didn't mind sounding a bit sleazy in its advertising of *The Bad and the Beautiful*. Included among its headlines was: *NO HOLDS BARRED IN THIS STORY OF A BLONDE WHO WANTED TO GO PLACES… AND A BIG SHOT WHO GOT HER THERE THE HARD WAY!*

In a pivotal scene at the end of the movie, Barry Sullivan (left), Lana, and Dick Powell eavesdrop on a phone conversation that producer Walter Pidgeon is having with Jonathan Shields (Kirk Douglas).

Although the director has betrayed each of them in separate ways, it is sort of obvious that they are going to agree to be sucked into his whirlpool again—and work on his latest film.

After *The Bad and the Beautiful* was released, producer David O. Selznick was seen sneaking into a movie house in Pacific Palisades. He wanted to learn if he should sue Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for libel.

As he sat through the movie, he did indeed recognize himself in the character of Jonathon Shields, including his habit of kicking off his shoes. John Houseman had also suffered working for Selznick, and in some respects, Selznick inter preted it as Houseman's revenge. "For John, it's payback time."

David Thomson, Selznick's biographer, wrote, "He huffed and puffed, not sure whether to be flattered or offended. After thinking it over for several days, he decided not to sue MGM."

One critic defined the movie as "The most exacting detailed study of the dream factory ever presented in the movies from the grand homes of the stars to the funeral of Shields' father, where he pays mourners to show up."

One of her most consistently negative critics, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* wrote: "Lana Turner is an actress playing an actress and neither one is real. A howling act in a wildly racing auto—pure punk—is the top of her speed."

Many other reviewers disagreed, claiming that Lana's car scene was one of the most exciting sequences for a picture in a decade.

Author Jeanine Basinger wrote: "None of the sex symbols who have been touted as actresses—not Rita Hayworth or Ava Gardner or Elizabeth Taylor or Marilyn Monroe—have ever given such a fine performance as Lana did in *The Bad and the Beautiful."*

The *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "The film is *What Makes Sammy Run?* and has the bitter flavor of *Sunset Blvd*. and *All About Eve* and, like the latter, is told in flashbacks by Shields' victims."

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The night before the Academy Award nominees were announced, Lana threw a party to celebrate *The Bad and the Beautiful*. She staunchly believed that it, along with her performance within it, would be nominated for Oscars. "I've waited a long time for this," she told Lamas and others.

But after the nominees were announced, and she was not included among them, she sank into despair. The other nominees included Lana's friend, Susan Hayward for *With a Song in My Heart*, as well as Joan Crawford for *Sudden Fear*, Bette Davis for *The Star*, and Julie Harris for *The Member of the Wedding*. Shirley Booth would ultimately walk off with the Oscar for her role in *Come Back, Little Sheba*.

Kirk Douglas had seen her before the nominations were announced. Whereas he'd been nominated as Best Actor for his performance in *The Bad and the Beautiful*, he lost the award to Gary Cooper for *High Noon*. The other nominees included Marlon Brando for *Viva Zapata!;* Alec Guinness for *The Lavender Hill Mob;* and José Ferrer for his stunning portrayal of Toulouse-Lautrec in *Moulin Rouge*.

The cast and crew of *The Bad and the Beautiful* had high hopes that it would be nominated for Best Picture of the Year, but it wasn't. That year's Best Picture was eventually awarded to Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*, starring Betty Hutton, Cornel Wilde, James Stewart, Dorothy Lamour, and Gloria Grahame. Grahame did

win the Best Supporting Actress Oscar, not for the circus picture, but for the character she portrayed in *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

The picture did, however, win a number of minor Oscars: Robert Surtees for Black and White Cinematography; Helen Rose for Best Black and White Costume Design; Charles Schnee for Best Adapted Screenplay; and Cedric Gibbons, Edward Carfagno, Edwin B. Willis, and Keogh Gleason for Art Direction and Set Decorations.

Lana complained to Minnelli and Houseman, "We might at least have been nominated, but Dore Schary was against us from the beginning. He doesn't think much of me as an actress, and he did absolutely nothing to sell our picture to the Academy, whereas other studios were wildly promoting their selections. It's not fair!"

***

In 1952, the gala event of the year in Hollywood was the big spectacular that Marion Davies, former mistress of press baron William Randolph Hearst, gave in honor of the gay crooner, Johnny Ray. *[Hearst had died in August of 1951. In the wake of his death, Davies had married Horace Brown.]*

During her preparations for the party, Davies had transformed her Beverly Hills mansion into five different nightclubs with an orchestra for each. Guests could choose which mock nightclub they wanted to sit in. They included replicas of New York's Stork Club and the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles.

Esther Williams attended the party with her husband, Ben Gage. They awaited three guests who were to be seated with them. Finally, they arrived: Fernando Lamas with Lana on one arm, and with Ava Gardner on the other. This helped fuel the persistent rumor that their communal friendship had evolved into a three-way. Gardner's husband, Frank Sinatra, was appearing in Las Vegas at the time.

As Williams later revealed in a memoir, "The grouping that night may still hold Hollywood's alltime record for musical chairs and tangled libidos." Gardner had been the former lover of Lamas, and in time, Esther would marry him.

When Lamas excused himself to go to the men's room, he came back with a smirk on his face. "Guess what? Our guest of honor, Mr. Ray, followed me into the men's room."

"I trust you put on a good show for him?" Lana said.

"The biggest and the best."

During the course of the evening, although Lamas didn't exactly ignore Lana—he invited her to dance twice—he paid more attention to Gardner and to Williams. He said, "Too bad there's only one of me and three of you hot tamales."

Perhaps to get even with Lamas for this real or imagined slight, Lana provocatively eyed the entrance into Davies' party of the handsome, virile Lex Barker, Hollywood's most recent incarnation of Tarzan. Barker was immediately surrounded by five beautiful women. Although still married to the raven-haired beauty, Arlene Dahl, he'd come alone to the party.

"No wonder Lex was cast as Tarzan," Lana said. "I bet he has muscle in all the right places."

"It's not a muscle, darling," Gardner said. "If it was a muscle, it would grow bigger by exercise. That means Frankie's would stretch around the block."

Lamas, who heard Lana's off-color remark, looked furious but said nothing.

About half an hour later, Barker approached their table, temporarily deserting his colony of female admirers. Ignoring Lamas, he asked Lana to dance.

What this picture doesn't show is how handsome, muscled, well-endowed Lex Barker, the screen Tarzan, hugged Lana up close. He'd unzipped and invited her to "take a feel."

On the floor, he held her in a tight embrace, a style not unlike that of Lamas during his courtly waltzes with Lana that appeared at the beginning of *The Merry Widow*.

Back then, in his capacity as the film's director, Curtis Bernhardt had intervened. "Lamas, you're supposed to be doing the waltz with Lana, not fucking her. Move apart a bit."

Now, years later, having observed Barker and Lana dancing sensuously together, Lamas began raging to both Williams and Gardner: "Jungle Boy is fucking her right on the dance floor." Then, in anger, he rose from his seat and headed toward the couple. When he reached them, he grabbed Lana by the shoulder and spun her around. He then turned angrily onto Barker. "*WHY DON'T YOU JUST TAKE HER OUT INTO THE BUSHES AND FUCK HER?*" he said. His voice was loud enough to be heard by several of the dancing couples, who stopped dancing and stared at them.

Lana became instantly furious, slapping Lamas as hard as she could.

"You fucking cunt!" he yelled at her, giving the impression that he was about to strike her.

She rushed from the dance floor, nearly tripping, and headed for the exit after grabbing her mink. Lamas was on her trail.

As he descended the steps of the Davies mansion, a starlet, Jane Denier, surveyed the situation and reactively threw her arms around Lamas, telling him what a handsome stud he was. "You don't need Lana Turner," she said. "You look divine and you've got me." Then she tried to kiss him, but he picked her up and tossed her into the swimming pool.

A photographer was on the scene, and he shot the actress emerging—soaking wet, furious, and humiliated—from the pool. The picture appeared in the tabloids the following day.

[Denier would later play Dulcinea in one of the Broadway productions of Man of La Mancha.*]*

With Lamas behind the wheel, the couple's ride home was in silence. Once inside Lana's foyer, he slapped her so hard that her diamond earring shot across the hall. She tried to deliver a kick to his groin with her sequined shoe, but before it landed, he grabbed her right ankle and sent her sprawling across the marble floor.

With his fiery temper unleashed, he kicked her several times in the ribs before bending over her and striking her face twice, bloodying her nose. She raised her hands to protect her face from his blows.

Before he could inflict any more damage, he stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind him—never to return. The next day, someone came by for his clothes and possessions.

The next morning, Lana arrived at MGM badly bruised. Production had already begun on *Latin Lovers*, a movie, eventually released in 1953, that she'd been filming with Lamas as her co-star.

She put through a call to Benjamin Thau, head of MGM's casting, asking him to come to her dressing room. Sensing serious trouble, Thau was there within fifteen minutes, finding Lana a mess of bruises and scratches.

She burst into tears, sharing all the trauma of her bitter fistfight with Lamas. "He said the most vile things to me

that anyone has ever said in my life," she sobbed. "He told me my pussy's been used so much it's like a limp dishrag. He accused me of being a lousy lay and claimed that he had to jack off to achieve orgasm since I couldn't do it for him. Crap like that."

She finally delivered an ultimatum: "I will not do the picture with Lamas. Go back to your original choice: Ricardo Montalban."

Under the circumstances, Thau acquiesced.

In her column the next day, Louella Parsons wrote: "I assume Lana Turner was shocked, as all of us were, at some of the things that Fernando Lamas said to her last night."

Shooting was delayed for ten days. During that interim, Montalban agreed to co-star with Lana. MGM announced that he would be replacing Lamas in the movie.

Lamas' days at MGM were now numbered. It wouldn't be long before Dore Schary "pink-slipped" him.

In October of 1952, Lana spoke to the press about the breakup. "It was just one of those things, like a Cole Porter song. We're still friends, but as far as romance is concerned, that's out. From now on, I'm interested in only one person—and that's Lana Turner."

For Sinatra, before there was Ava (the love of his life, lower photo), there was Lana (upper photo.). He was not the only man "shared" by the two Love Goddesses.

Lamas spoke to the press, too. "I am an ordinary man with the ordinary defects and faults. I am human, thank God. I suffer, I love, I hate. About Lana, I have nothing to say. Because there is nothing. It is over! You read a good

book, a beautiful book. You come to the end. You close it. That's it! The end!"

***

Among a different trio of bigtime movie stars, it was a week that began with violence and ended with violence. In this incident, in addition to Lana, the threesome also included Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. Lana, of course, had seduced Sinatra before Gardner ever discovered his charms.

"Frank can turn deadly on a moment's notice," Lana warned her friend. "Once, when I angered him, he threatened to have one of his gangster friends scar my face."

"I adored Ava, but she was a very strong-willed woman," Lana said. "She didn't take my advice about Artie Shaw, my first husband, and she went on to marry him. That marriage was a fiasco. And she didn't take my advice about Frank and she married him, too. Another fiasco."

When Sinatra was on the East Coast, he'd heard rumors that Gardner had resumed her affair with Howard Hughes despite her many rejections of him. Sometimes, her interchanges with Hughes became violent. On one occasion, she threw a lamp at him, causing a concussion. Even so, he had never completely abandoned his attempts to entangle her in his web.

"In those days, Frank had spies all over Hollywood feeding him information on Ava's private life," said columnist James Bacon. "Count me as one of them. I was always hoping for a scoop—nothing wrong with that."

When Sinatra flew back to Los Angeles, he headed immediately to a confrontation with Gardner, to whom he was married at the time. He thought he'd catch her with Hughes. Instead, he found her with her shoes off, her feet propped up on a coffee table, listening to his records.

He quickly accused her of two-timing him with Hughes. She fought back, claiming that the aviator, who had spies of his own, had provided her with detailed evidence of his philandering with prostitutes in New York. She also admitted that it had been Hughes who had arranged for one of Sinatra's mistresses to send her an embarrassing and incriminating letter the day before she married him.

It was all too much for Sinatra. He'd been drinking heavily all day, and he wanted revenge on Hughes. In one of the worst rages of his life, he wrecked the living room, but didn't physically attack Gardner.

Then he grabbed a bottle of Jack Daniels from the bar and, with a .38 pistol in his jacket, he set out in a drunken rage to shoot Hughes. "I don't want to wound him. I want to kill him."

Immediately after Sinatra stormed out of the house, Gardner phoned Hughes, urging him to fly out of town at once. The billionaire accepted that as good advice.

Sinatra never found Hughes, and finally, at 3AM, he abandoned his search, spending the night in the home of a musician friend.

Three weeks passed before Sinatra attempted a reconciliation with Gardner. In early October of 1952, he finally reached her on the phone. "I'm crazy for you, honey," he said. She agreed to have dinner with him and, for two days and nights, as she related to her sister, Bappie, "We made love in every known position, even inventing a few of our own."

On October 18, they dined together at Chasen's. Under the influence of a bottle of Jack Daniels, he undiplomatically raised the subject of Hughes once again. Their fight raged all that way back to the house at Pacific Palisades where they were staying. Once inside, she didn't speak to him, as he fumed.

She decided to take a bubble bath and was relaxing and easing her tension when all of a sudden, he barged into her bathroom, denouncing her as "nothing but a Tarheel whore."

She ordered him out of the house. "Okay, doll, I'll get out. You can find me in Palm Springs. I'll be there fucking Lana Turner."

"Fuck Minnie Mouse for all I care," she answered, shouting.

The previous week on the MGM lot, he had encountered his old flame, Lana herself. She had maintained her friendships with both members of the battling couple. "What's up, doll?" Sinatra asked her.

"I'm taking a week off in Palm Springs. I'm calling a realtor about a rental."

"Forget it," he told her. "My place is yours. It's available this weekend, since I'm tied up with work here in L.A."

"That's wonderful, dear," she said. "I'll pay you what you think it's worth."

"Come on, Lana," he said. "We're friends from way back. Come to my dressingroom. I'll give you the key."

That weekend, Lana decided that she didn't want to spend time alone in Palm Springs. Based on her recent experience with Greg Tolson and Ava Gardner, she knew that the best place to pick up a well-built young escort was at Scotty Bower's gas station at Hollywood Boulevard at Fairfax.

Desperate for non-judgmental male companionship, she drove her car to the gas station. The first gas jockey

who approached her was good-looking enough, but she was more attracted to another well-built man, who sat on a nearby bench, seemingly waiting for a customer. He sat on that bench with his legs apart, his obvious sex appeal clearly visible—in pants far too tight.

The negotiations that ensued were successful. Within an hour, they were naked together and inside her house, sharing a bubble bath.

The twenty-year-old had been born in Minnesota and had served in the Marines during the war. She later defined him as, "a Guy Madison lookalike with blonde hair and a muscled body. He name was Don Johnson (not the future star of *Miami Vice)*. He had come to Hollywood to break into the movies either as an actor or as a stage hand.

She invited him to spend a week as her guest in Palm Springs, asking him to be her driver. It was just assumed that his additional duties would continue within in her bed.

Feeling uneasy about spending an entire week with a strange man, she also invited her business manager and agent, Benton Cole.

Either real or imagined, *Confidential* magazine, the leading scandal tabloid of its day, kept up with the indiscretions of both Lana and Ava Gardner when they were not otherwise writing about Marilyn Monroe.

The plot began to thicken as characters moved onto the stage to play out one of the most scandalous dramas in the scandal-soaked history of Palm Springs.

Before departing for the desert, Lana ordered her cook to prepare a large pan of fried chicken, with the intention of bringing it with them.

Johnson, Cole and their communal hostess, Lana, arrived early enough in Palm Springs that day to enjoy an afternoon beside Sinatra's pool.

Thinking that she had the house entirely to herself and her guests, Lana looked forward to days of rest and recuperation as her nerves were frayed. She delighted in the beauty of bikini-clad Johnson by the pool. Cole was usually off-premises, taking care of business.

Meanwhile, alone and fuming in Hollywood, Gardner began to stew over Sinatra's threat to shack up with Lana over the weekend. She telephoned her sister, Bappie, announcing, "I'm gonna go to Palm Springs, where I'm gonna catch that bastard in the act."

One account has Bappie driving with her sister to Palm Springs; another report has her staying in Los Angeles and warning her sister not to go.

Regardless, Gardner traveled to Palm Springs to a location near Sinatra's house. Removing her shoes, she scampered over the six-foot chain link fence behind the Sinatra villa, even though she knew it might be infested with

deadly sidewinders (rattlesnakes). The curtains of her husband's house were drawn, but as a jealously obsessed "peeping Tom," she tried to peek inside, hoping to catch Sinatra in a compromising position.

One of the great scandals of Hollywood in the 1950s was what happened that weekend in Frank Sinatra's villa in Palm Springs.

Some of the most lurid gossip in the history of that resort was spun after Frank Sinatra barged in. What he saw erupted into a fight that prompted police intervention. They arrived with dome lights flashing.

It was at this point that Cole exited through the Sinatra villa's back door carrying a container of garbage. He was surprised to see Gardner, his client, lurking there and immediately invited her inside.

Lana was startled to see her, too, explaining Sinatra's invitation. Gardner was introduced to Johnson, and she appraised his body. Out of earshot of the young man, she whispered to Lana, "Buy me some of that, momma!"

"I already have. From the gas station, of course."

"It's gonna be a fun weekend, *honey chile!*" Gardner said.

"No stranger to nudity, Gardner began shedding her clothes. "Let's go skinny dipping like I used to do in North Carolina."

During this nude romp with Johnson and Lana, Gardner waved Cole away. He wisely retreated to his bedroom to read a book and to listen to Sinatra recordings.

What happened after that only became known when Johnson later tried to hawk the details of the notorious weekend to *Confidential* magazine. Editors indeed published an article, but it was more or less "a vanilla account," since the publisher, Robert Harrison, feared a libel suit.

The hustler claimed that by 6PM, he was in bed with both Lana and Ava. "I was shocked that Ava had a lesbian streak in her. But most of the attention was focused on my best asset. They really worked me over. I was one lucky guy. Fortunately, I've always been known for my stamina."

"Later, we got out of bed and headed for Sinatra's bar," Johnson claimed. "All of us had had a little too much to drink, and we were feeling no pain. Cole wasn't part of the action. He stayed more or less by himself. At one point, we got really hungry. That's when Lana revealed that her cook had fried a mess of chicken. We headed to the kitchen. Needless to say, all three of us had almost nothing on. We finished off some chicken and two bottles of wine before heading back to the bedroom."

"About two hours later, Ava, Lana, and I were enjoying a daisy chain when suddenly the door was thrown open," Johnson revealed in his report to Harrison. "I lost my hard-on…and fast. There stood Sinatra in the harsh light he'd flipped on. There was murder in those fierce eyes of his."

"Many stories have been published about that night, but almost no one has got it right," Johnson continued. "I'm left out of most accounts. And Barbara Payton, that blonde actress who became a prostitute, later insisted that she was with Lana and Ava, and that she jumped out the window and ran when Sinatra barged in. Yeah, right!"

[In her memoirs, Gardner revealed that Lana had invited a "boyfriend" to Sinatra's house.]

“Get out of this house, you fucking dykes!” Sinatra shouted at Ava and Lana. “And take this two-bit hustler with you!”

“I’d heard that Sinatra always carried a gun, and I jumped out of bed and ran past the crazy fucker,” Johnson said. “I managed to escape with just a pair of jockey shorts. I was too young to die. Out on the main highway, I flagged down the first car coming. Was I in luck!”

“A Cadillac stopped,” he said. “In the front seat sat two queens of the lisping variety. Instead of looking at my face, they eyed the bulge, and invited me to hop inside. I spent the rest of the weekend with them and emerged Monday with two suits of clothes and five hundred dollars in my pocket, plus a steady gig with them in the future. So my weekend in Palm Springs wasn’t a total disaster. At least Sinatra didn’t shoot me. By the way, I hate all his romantic mood music. I’m a Hank Williams fan.”

With Johnson gone, Sinatra stood over Gardner, threatening to strike her. Trembling but defiant, she blurted out, “You want to fuck Lana Turner? There she is. Go at it!”

“Are you kidding?” he answered. “I wouldn’t fuck this broken-down blonde if she were the last woman on earth.”

In tears, Lana ran from the bedroom into the living room, where Cole waited with a coat to cover her nude body.

At the sound of violence from the bedroom, they fled from the house. Unfortunately, Lana’s baggage remained in the master bedroom, where Sinatra and Gardner were battling.

“Frank’s got a gun,” she warned Cole.

Racing out into the night, they got into her car and drove to a small resort that rented villas by the week. Fortunately, one of them was available, and they made arrangements to stay there, planning to return to Frank’s house to retrieve her clothes later.

Meanwhile, back in Sinatra’s bedroom, “with red face and blazing eyes,” he assaulted Gardner, kicking her in the rear as she darted from the bedroom into an adjoining room where she had stashed her clothing.

“I want you out of this house…and now!” he shouted. “You fucking Tarheel dyke whore!”

In Kitty Kelley’s biography of Sinatra, entitled *His Way*, Gardner was quoted as saying, “I’ll get the hell out of the house, but since this is also my house, I’m gonna take out everything that belongs to me. I started taking down pictures from the wall and Frank exploded. He grabbed everything I said was mine and hurled it outside onto the lawn. He was hysterical.”

As the finale of his farewell to Gardner, he raced upstairs to the bathroom and filled her douche bag with water. Back out on the front lawn, he poured water from it over her. “Have a great time fucking Grace Kelly and Clark Gable in Africa, you slutty bitch.”

[She had signed to film Mogambo *(1953) with those two stars.]*

After checking into her rented villa with Cole, Lana feared for Gardner’s safety and persuaded him to drive back to Sinatra’s house with her. When they pulled up in front, they saw two police cars with dome lights flashing. Spotlights illuminated the villa.

The front door was open, and Sinatra was tossing out Gardner’s possessions as well as Lana’s luggage.

Lana remained inside the car as Cole identified himself and was able to retrieve Lana’s belongings. When Cole returned to the car, Lana asked him to give the policeman the address of the villa where they were staying, inviting Gardner to join them.

To back up Johnson’s revelation about what transpired that night, an F.B.I. report released after Sinatra’s death mentioned an “unnamed young man who claimed that he had had sex in Sinatra’s house with both Ava Gardner and Lana Turner.”

When Sinatra finally retreated into his house, bolting the door, Gardner found herself surrounded by her possessions on the front lawn. She was informed of Lana’s invitation as the policemen gathered up her belongings for transport to the villa where Lana and Cole had moved.

Once there, Hollywood’s blonde beauty offered the sultry brunette a stiff drink—both of them needed one. Then it was off to bed for both of them. Cole slept in a motel nearby.

“Poor Ava,” Lana recorded in her memoirs. “She was badly shaken, and after my own grim experience, I could sympathize with her humiliation. I also felt sorry for Frank. It was a bad time for him. His career had slipped badly…and he was losing Ava.”

The next morning, headlines in the *Los Angeles Times* asserted SINATRA-AVA BOUDOIR ROW BUZZES. The *Los Angeles Daily Mirror* claimed BOUDOIR FIGHT HEADS FRANK AND AVA TO COURTS.

Sinatra tried to reach Gardner, but she’d changed her phone number. He never found out that by now, Fernando Lamas, Lana’s discarded Latin lover, was warming her bed at night.

Desperate to reach Gardner, Sinatra was a nervous wreck, and he often vomited. In desperation, he called Earl

Wilson, his columnist friend, and begged him to print his plea for a reconciliation in the wake of the Palm Springs scandal. Wilson published the item under the headline FRANKIE READY TO SURRENDER, WANTS AVA BACK.

Somehow, that won her over, and a reconciliation was arranged. When Lana heard about their getting back together again, she asked Cole, “How long do you think it will last?”

“Oh, a few days, maybe weeks, perhaps months, I seriously doubt a whole year. Soon Frank will be on the stage in Las Vegas singing to his loyal fans his rendition of “The Birth of the Blues.”

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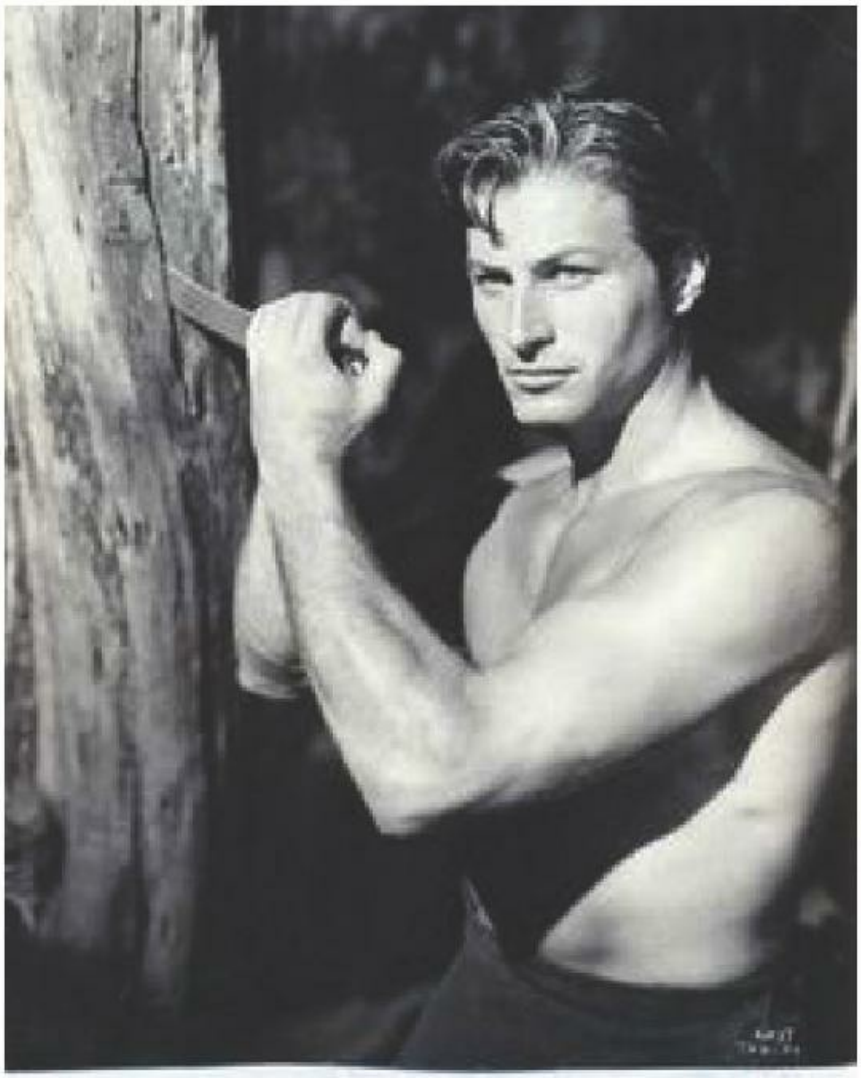
With Fernando Lamas out the door, Lana was primed for a new love affair, almost demanding it as her “divine right.”

She surveyed the field of possible lovers. Her playing field was very large, and she was receiving offers almost daily.

Late one afternoon, her maid called her to the phone. “Miss Turner, it’s the Ape Man. You know…Tarzan, who’s always swinging from a vine. He wants you. I wonder why?”



...and then, in Lana’s life, there was Lex

Lex Barker, also known as Tarzan and/or “The Perfect Specimen,” became the new man in Lana’s life. His most devoted fans consider him “the reincarnation of Adam created by God himself as the ideal male animal.”

As noted in the February 7, 1949 review of *Tarzan’s Magic Fountain*, *The New York Times* wrote: “Johnny Weissmuller finally has swung down from his jungle throne after sixteen years. RKO is launching its new muscle king, Lex Barker. and score one for Mr. Barker. A younger, more streamlined ape-man with a personable grin and a torso guaranteed to make any lion cringe, he seems just what the witch-doctor ordered for this tattered series.”

Chapter Fourteen

Tarzan, The Apeman, Swings into the Life of Lana Turner

The Loincloth Hid His "Biggest, Deepest, & Darkest Secret"

Lana found Lex Barker a male beauty, perhaps the sexiest man she'd ever met in Hollywood, all encased in a magnificent physique, an athletic, 6'4" sculpted frame.

He never achieved his dream of becoming the leading matinee idol of the 1950s, but his magnificent body and striking physique have given him a cult following that exists even as the world moves deeper into the 21st Century. Today, gay men keep alive his memory and continue to collect pinup pictures of him, often decorating the walls of their bathrooms.

His rival in love affairs was Fernando Lamas, hailing from Buenos Aires. Both of these hunks became embroiled in the lives of what was often called "the two most beautiful women in Hollywood: Flame-haired Arlene Dahl and the blonde goddess, Lana Turner. But whereas Dahl married both men, Lana only shacked up with Lamas before walking down the aisle with Tarzan himself.

At the debut of the Eisenhower era in 1953, "Lex & Fernando," although completely different types, were the two most sought after lovers in Hollywood. Women swooned over stories of their "fabulous endowments."

After Fernando Lamas was fired from *Latin Lovers* (1953), and replaced with his main rival, the Mexican actor, Ricardo Montalban, Lana reported to work at MGM.

This sexy dance with Ricardo Montalban in *Latin Lovers* was about as romantic as Lana got with the Mexican actor.

"Would you believe it?" she asked Mervyn LeRoy. "A leading man who's faithful to his wife?"

Her former mentor, Mervyn LeRoy, had been assigned as its director. Joe Pasternak, who had produced *The Merry Widow*, was also producing *Latin Lovers.*

LeRoy greeted her with kisses on both cheeks and a strong embrace. He invited her into his office, where she expected him to discuss her breakup with Lamas, but he didn't mention it. Actually, he had other troubles of his own he wanted to tell her about.

He had brought her with him from Warners to MGM, but he had long grown disillusioned with Metro, mainly because of Dore Schary. LeRoy had worked relatively smoothly with Louis B. Mayer, but not with his replacement.

"Schary and I just don't see eye-to eye on anything," he said. "We've bickered so much that by now, we're hardly speaking. After I finish a couple of films, I'm leaving MGM for good, abandoning my $5,000-a-week salary. Schary wants me to do a remake of *The Student Prince*, but I'm bolting. I can't take his constant nagging anymore."

"I'm shocked," she said. "You've been so successful here. As for myself, I may be called The Queen of MGM, but I fear my crown is a little shaky."

LeRoy rose to his feet. "Come, let's meet your two leading men, Montalban and John Lund, and the supporting players. Most of them are here for a rehearsal."

A romantic musical comedy in Technicolor, *Latin Lovers* was written by Isobel Lennart, who had penned Lana's screenplay, *A Life of Her Own*. In this latest venture, Lana was cast as a rich girl, Nora Taylor, worth $37 million. She arrives in Brazil, where she fears men only want to pursue her for her money.

Her current suitor, Paul Chevron (Lund), wants to marry her, but hardly for her money. He has about $10 million more than she does.

In Brazil, she meets dashing Roberto Santos (Montalban), who sweeps her off her feet. His father, Eduardo, is played by her old friend, Louis Calhern, with whom she'd work again in the future.

During the making of the film, Debbie Reynolds gave a party to which she invited Montalban and Lana. The gathering was actually in honor of the dancing duo, Marge and Gower Champion. In a memoir, Reynolds wrote:

“Lana Turner and Ricardo Montalban did the rumba in the center of the floor as Jennifer Jones sat on the floor observing.”

That sexy party dance was about as romantic as Montalban and Lana ever got, except for on the screen, where she found him a good kisser. If she thought she had encountered another Latin lover, she was mistaken. He was a devout Roman Catholic, and he did not cheat on his wife. He had married Georgiana Belzer in 1944, the half-sister of Loretta Young. Apparently, he was faithful to his wife until her death at the age of 83 in 2007. The actor himself died in 2009.

When Lana met him, Montalban had been thrown off a horse during the filming of *Across the Wide Missouri* (1951), starring Clark Gable. The traumatic injury never healed, the pain increasing as he aged. He ended his life in a wheelchair.

Although Lana and the actor never became lovers, they did develop a friendship that lasted for many years.

She had a chance to work with Jean Hagen again, having appeared previously with her in *A Life of Her Own*. In *Latin Lovers*, she played Anne, Lana’s secretary, who is secretly in love with Paul Chevorn (Lund). Lana congratulated her on her Oscar nomination for her performance in *Singin’ in the Rain* (1952).

Referring to her role, Hagen said, “It takes talent to play a talentless movie star,” referring to her performance in *Singin’ in the Rain* as the silent screen star with the squeaky voice, Lina Lamont.

“The plot of *Latin Lovers* was silly,” Lana said. “But I looked gorgeous as a real clotheshorse, wearing those incredible gowns by Helen Rose.”

Lana was introduced to Eduard Franz, who had been a stage actor for twenty years, finally appearing in his movie debut in the 1948 *The Wake of the Red Witch*, starring John Wayne. Privately, Lana told LeRoy, “Franz is a nice guy, but rather nondescript, a second stringer.”

She also was introduced to the aging character actress, Beulah Bondi, born in 1889. She’d begun her theatrical career as a child. She’d twice been nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar, first in *The Gorgeous Hussy* (1936), where she was seen as the devoted, pipe-smoking wife of Andrew Jackson. Her other nomination came for *Of Human Hearts (1938)*, when she played the compassionate, self-sacrificing mother of James Stewart.

“Beulah is definitely the hair-in-a-bun archetype of motherhood,” Lana told LeRoy.

On the set of *Latin Lovers*, Lana confers with her two leading men, Ricardo Montalban (left) and John Lund.

"They pursued me romantically in the movie, but not off screen. Was I losing my sex appeal? Lex Barker didn't think so."

She merely shook the hand of Rita Moreno, not realizing that this talented young woman would go on to win an Oscar, a Tony, an Emmy, and a Grammy. She assured herself a position in film history when she played the role of Anita in the 1961 film version of *West Side Story.*

Romantically adrift, Lana had no sexual interest in her second leading man, John Lund, the son of a Norwegian immigrant and glassblower from Rochester, New York.

He didn't finish high school and worked at odd jobs: soda jerk, carpenter, time-keeper. Eventually, he made it to Hollywood and won a co-starring role in *To Each His Own* (1946) with Olivia de Havilland.

Although always saddled with a reputation as a second tier leading man, he appeared with such stars as Gene Tierney, Miriam Hopkins, Joan Fontaine, and Grace Kelly. He is remembered today mostly for playing the romantic interest of both Marlene Dietrich and Jean Arthur in *A Foreign Affair* (1948),

Originally, Lana had been slated to appear with Michael Wilding, the English actor married at the time to Elizabeth Taylor. He dropped out at the last minute, protesting that the role was "too stuffy and not real star material." Lund then won the part.

MGM promoted *Latin Lovers* with this ad: "*The Bad and Beautiful* girl is bad and beautiful again in a wonderful new musical. *The New York Times* praised the dancing of Lana and Montalban.

Most critics were fairly kind, although recognizing *Latin Lovers* for what it was—"a wonderful piece of fluff," in the words of one critic. "Gorgeous people, gorgeous gowns, beautiful Technicolor, dreamy surroundings…a parfait!"

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Three days after Fernando Lamas stormed out of Lana's house, following his violent attack on her, Lex Barker phoned her for a dinner date. It was agreed that she'd have dinner with him at Chasens, followed by dancing at the Mocambo.

It was later revealed that Lamas might have had good reason for his harsh reaction to Barker holding Lana so tightly on the dance floor. As Barker told SolLesser—the producer of his last Tarzan picture, *Tarzan and the She-Devil (1953)*—Barker had whispered to Lana while holding her close, "I'm unzipped. Reach inside to find out that I'm bigger than Lamas."

Lana and Barker had met when he was a free agent. His short marriage in 1951 to the raven-haired beauty, Arlene Dahl, had ended in 1952.

Before going out with Barker, Lana met with Eddie Mannix at MGM's publicity department, knowing that he could reveal all the vital data on him.

She had never seen one of his Tarzan movies before, although she'd had a brief fling with Johnny Weissmuller, the most famous of all the screen Tarzans.

Mannix informed Lana that Barker wasn't all muscles, but the well-educated son of a rich Canadian building contractor, and a direct descendant of Rogers Williams, the founder of Rhode Island.

After his graduation from Phillips Exeter Academy, where he had played football, he attended Princeton. But in time, he dropped out to join a theatrical stock company, much to the objection of his stern father.

Of all the movie posters depicting all the many actors who played Tarzan, this 1953 poster was viewed as the winner of the "high camp" prize.

Tarzan and the She-Devil was Barker's final film as Tarzan. When it was finished, he put his loincloth in mothballs and went on to make other movies, many of them in German.

But despite his many subsequent films over the course of a 25-year career, he is best remembered as the tenth actor to portray Tarzan in the movies.

He was disowned by his family for pursuing an acting career, and worked for a time in a steel mill, studying engineering at night. He launched his fledging acting career in bit parts on Broadway, but entered World War II, enlisting in the U.S. Army, where he rose to the rank of Major. In Sicily, he'd been wounded in both the leg and head. He recovered in an Arkansas military hospital.

While still in the Army, in 1942, he'd married Constance Rhodes Thurlow, but divorced her eight years later. She was the daughter of a wealthy metal manufacturer. In 1943, Barker became the father of a daughter, Lynn Thurlow Barker, and in 1947, a son, Alexander ("Zan") Crichlow Barker III.

Barker gravitated to Hollywood. Even though married, he attracted the eye of many a lustful actress and a number of homosexuals lured to his physique.

In *The Farmer's Daughter* (1947), he had appeared as one of Loretta Young's Swedish brothers. He also had a small role in *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (1948) with Cary Grant. It was rumored that Grant invited Barker on several occasions to his dressing room, where he performed fellatio on him. "At least I did it standing up and didn't have to lie on any casting couch," Barker later said, jokingly, to the director, H.C. Potter.

Barker's national fame came late in 1948, when producer Sol Lesser signed him to be the new screen Tarzan in the 1949 release of *Tarzan's Magic Fountain*. Brenda Joyce, cast as Jane, had recently made *Tarzan and the Mermaids* with Johnny Weissmuller. But by 1948, Lesser deemed the Austrian athlete as "too paunchy" to play the screen's Apeman again.

Since Lana had never seen Barker in a Tarzan movie, Mannix arranged screenings for her of his features in the jungle. Lana was tremendously impressed with his physique in action when she sat through *Tarzan and the Slave Girl* (1950), in which Vanessa Brown co-starred as Jane. Lana had signaled her interest in meeting Barker back when Brown had a small role in *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

When Barker had gone on to star in *Tarzan's Peril* (1951), his striking looks attracted the eye of a new Jane, Virginia Huston. During the shooting of that movie, Tarzan did not mind crossing the color line when he seduced the African American actress, Dorothy Dandridge, cast as Queen Melmendi.

Lana's objection to this film was based on how Huston had kissed Barker "a little too passionately" when he rescues her at the end of the film.

Lana also saw *Tarzan's Savage Fury* (1952), with a new Jane, Dorothy Hart, who had made her film debut in the light-hearted musical fantasy, *Down to Earth* (1947), starring Rita Hayworth.

Barker's last appearance on screen as Tarzan was in the 1953 *Tarzan and the She-Devil*. Its villain was Raymond Burr, who specialized in the portrayal of dark, menacing heavies as he would soon again in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), starring James Stewart and Grace Kelly. In that movie, Burr was cast as Vargo, a greedy ivory hunter who wanted to slay elephants and harvest their ivory tusks.

Lyra, the "She-Devil" of the movie, was portrayed by the beautiful, sexy, Monique Van Vooren (not to be confused with Mamie Van Doren). She plays a cold-blooded profiteer willing to slaughter elephants and to enslave men.

In his final Tarzan picture, Barker faced a new Jane, Joyce MacKenzie, the eleventh actress to shoulder the role. During World War II, she had worked as a carpenter's helper in the shipyards of San Francisco.

At the end of the picture, Barker told Lesser that throughout the production, Burr had been making homosexual advances toward him. After a sweaty scene on the set, he retreated to his shower. Burr entered the room and pulled open the shower curtain.

"I just had to see it, even though you won't let me service it," Burr said.

"Get the hell out of here!" Barker snapped.

After the last film, although Lesser told Barker that he could go on for many more years playing the screen Tarzan, Barker wanted out, hoping to become a leading man in a higher caliber of films, playing both adventure and dramatic roles.

His career, as happens so often life, didn't work out exactly as he desired.

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Barker's first dinner date with Lana was a disaster. Over dinner, the talk was elegant, even intelligent, as he appeared well bred. At the same time, he vibrated with sex appeal. In a town loaded with handsome men, his good looks and imposing physique were fast becoming legendary. "Even our waiter went gushy over Lex," Lana later revealed.

The gossip heated up when Arlene Dahl, freshly divorced from Barker, began dating Fernando Lamas, who had freshly broken up with Lana. The duo of intertwined romances was referred to with headlines that included "Change Partners and Dance."

Unlike Lana, Dahl went on to marry Lamas in 1954, a union lasting until 1960. In 1958, she gave birth to his son, Lorenzo Lamas, who became an actor.

During their drive back to her house, she decided to extend the evening by inviting him inside for a night cap, perhaps thinking it might lead to a seduction. He'd had only one glass of wine over dinner.

Settling into her living room, he requested a brandy and appeared delighted that she had stocked a favorite of his, Rémy Martin. Unknown to her, a doctor had prescribed some medication that afternoon with a warning, "Don't drink any alcohol."

She poured brandy for each of them into a pair of pony glasses. To her surprise, as she revealed in her memoirs, he downed his in a single gulp. Not only that, but he requested another glass, which he swallowed just as fast. Then a third, even a fourth, and finally, a fifth. By now, she was filling the glass only half-full, as she feared he might be an alcoholic like Bob Topping, the husband she'd just divorced.

When Barker tried to stand up, he collapsed, fell over, and fainted. She checked to confirm that he was still alive, and prayed that he had not suffered a heart attack. He seemed to be breathing satisfactorily.

Fearing negative publicity, and not knowing what to do, she phoned her former agent, Henry Willson. Even though he no longer represented her, their friendship had endured. Considering his background he must have known what to do with a drunken sailor, marine, lumberjack, movie actor, or studio grip.

When he heard that Barker had passed out on her floor, Willson, as she later told her friends, "arrived almost panting." In her memoir, she didn't identify Will-son directly, referring to him instead as "Bob."

Within half an hour, Willson was at her home, examining the unconscious body on her floor, perhaps a little too intimately for her tastes. He agreed to remove Barker from her premises. She knew that he lived in a little house off Olympic Boulevard. Willson searched his pockets, again probing rather deeply, until he found his set of keys.

It took great effort on Willson's part, but he finally carried the heavy deadweight of the very muscular Tarzan and transferred him into the back seat of his car. Lana drove ahead in her car.

With Barker's limp body, Willson drove to the actor's home. Its entrance was accessible via a steep flight of steps. Willson finally managed to haul the body to the door of what Lana defined as "a little doll's house."

In her memoirs, she described Barker as "inanimate as a chest of drawers, and twice as bulky." Willson finally got the hunk onto his bed and then turned to Lana. "Shall I undress him?"

Her advice: "Let's get the hell out of here."

In fact, however, Willson did the opposite, deciding to stay and "guard" Barker though the night, beginning with stripping him nude after she left.

What he did to the body that night remains unrecorded. Only one tantalizing detail has surfaced.

The following afternoon, Barker met with Lesser, the producer of the Tarzan movies, telling him that his decision to leave the role remained solid.

Over a late lunch, he also revealed that he had passed out at Lana's house the night before. "I was overly medicated. When I woke up the next morning, I found my limp dick buried down Henry Willson's overworked throat."

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After his lunch with Lesser, Barker phoned Lana with profuse apologies for having passed out the night before, explaining that he had been medicated and should not have drunk her brandy. Before his call, he'd sent her two dozen red, long-stemmed roses.

She finally agreed to go out with him again, with the provision that there were "no repeat performances like last night." He didn't mention catching Henry Willson in bed with him when he'd awakened the following morning.

On their second date, another night of dinner and dancing, he was at his most charming, seductive best, and only drank mineral water. She invited him for a sleepover, the details of which became known when she phoned Virginia Grey in the morning to deliver a full report.

"Lex is hung with a 'Capital H,' Lana announced. "On the Hollywood Walk of Fame, his penis should be immortalized in cement. His directors in those Tarzan movies made him wear a heavy-duty jockstrap so it wouldn't flop out. It's said that Victor Mature, for whom I can personally vouch, and John Ireland have the biggest cocks in Hollywood. I'd like Lex to enter the contest. Perhaps you and I can summon the trio to gather together for a measuring contest."

"I think not, my dear," Grey said. "Don't you think you're getting carried away?"

"He's a great lover," she said. "Passionate yet tender. Hits all the hot spots. He is demanding yet fulfilling. Both of our needs were fulfilled in every way."

"Stop! You're getting me hot, and it's been a long time since any man has warmed my bed. As you know, Clark wouldn't marry me and has found another wife." Her reference, of course, was to Clark Gable.

After his sleepover, Barker came by nightly for extended visits. As she confessed in writing, "He began occupying all my free time. I fell in love again, slowly at first, but surely."

In the ensuing weeks, entire forests were felled in Canada for the paper needed to print the news of Lana's latest romance.

Lana and Barker flew to Aspen for a vacation. She later defined it as "the most romantic days of my entire life. At last, I've found the man who can make me forget Ty Power. I might have been closer to Ty as a spiritual soulmate, but when it came to raw sex, Lex is my man. No man has ever equaled Lex in my bed."

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Ava Gardner dropped in at Lana's house, excited to be flying to Africa for the filming of *Mogambo* alongside Clark Gable, her former co-star and lover, and Grace Kelly. Gardner had been cast as "Honey Bear," a vivacious American showgirl trying to forget.

The movie was actually a remake of Gable's 1932 *Red Dust*, in which he had co-starred with Jean Harlow and Mary Astor.

[What Lana didn't tell Gardner was that she had previously been offered the role of Honey Bear, weeks before it was eventually assigned to Gardner. Benny Thau at MGM had offered Lana her choice of two roles: Mogambo *in Africa or* Flame and the Flesh, *to be shot in Italy.]*

Lana's doctor warned her against going to Africa, claiming that if she got sick with an infection, her Rh blood factor might kick in, to her detriment.

That night, Barker arrived with the news that he was going to Italy to make two pictures back-to-back: *Tiger of Malaya* and a costume drama, *The Temple of Kali*. In the latter, he would wear a turban and balloon-like pantaloons. "At least you'd be dressed unlike you were in those Tarzan movies," she said.

Barker made up her mind for her. So that she could be with him, she chose *The Flame and the Flesh* because of its set locale in Rome. She later regretted her decision to turn down *Mocambo.*

On many a night, Barker pitched the idea to Lana that she should co-star with him. "We'd be the hottest team on the screen, especially if we appear in scenes wearing as few clothes as possible."

One script that came to their attention was entitled, *The Great Fall*, a romantic melodrama with a strong woman's role. She loves a former U.S. Army officer back from World War II. Because of the trauma he suffered, he has a hard time adjusting to civilian life.

He is hired by Murder, Inc. Lana liked the script because it evoked memories of playing opposite Robert Taylor, cast as a murdering gangster in one of her first big hits, *Johnny Eager*.

To take advantage of income tax laws, many stars were working abroad, making films in European settings: If a star stayed out of the United States for a total of eighteen months, he or she could avail themselves of that privilege. Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, and Gene Kelly were among the first to take advantage of this loophole. Actresses who included Gene Tierney and others were flying to Europe, and Lana began her "exile" with *Flame and the Flesh*. She would send for Cheryl and Mildred later.

As she began to consider scripts with European settings, she decided she needed a continental address and rented ("at an outrageous cost") an elegant penthouse in the 16th arrondissement of Paris.

It was understood that Mildred and her daughter would come for a visit when Cheryl's school term ended in the spring of 1953.

Barker was very ambitious, and he confided to close friends that he hoped Lana would do wonders for his career. He began to present her with other scripts, each set in Europe, that she might consider as vehicles for co-starring with him.

They were particularly intrigued with concepts then circulating for a film eventually released in 1956, *The Ambassador's Daughter.*

During a phone call to Hedda Hopper, Lana told her she wanted MGM to lend her out for the role "with a possible romantic lead going to Lex."

Its producer Norman Krasna seemed eager for her to take the role, and with the understanding that she'd be living in her new apartment throughout the course of its filming in Paris, she looked forward to making the film.

In the end, to her distress, MGM refused to "lease her out," and Krasna cast Olivia de Havilland instead. Then, in lieu of Barker, he assigned the male lead to John Forsythe, one of Lana's future co-stars.

Both Lana and Barker were deeply disappointed, but continued their search for the right script for their joint film together.

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Flame and the Flesh, eventually released in 1954, would be Lana's first film shot in Europe. It represented the beginning of her "exile" from the United States, a means of benefitting from the Internal Revenue's new tax loophole that many members of the Hollywood movie colony were using. She still owed the IRS thousands of dollars, so any reduction in her tax burden would be welcomed.

After all her heavy dating of Lex Barker, there was a lot of press speculation that "Hollywood's most beautiful couple" were on the verge of finally getting married.

After the failure of her love affair with Tyrone Power, and her four failed marriages (that is, if the double marriage to Stephen Crane is to be counted twice), she was not eager to rush into another union. She had another reason which she shared with only her most trusted confidantes. She feared that Barker might be using her for his

career advancement.

Before flying out of Los Angeles, she spoke to the press. “I have reached that point in my life where I’m filled with skepticism about getting married again. At this moment, there is no possibility of a marriage to Mr. Barker. He’s wonderful, but we’re just friends. I want to concentrate on my future and my career. I’ll be away from Hollywood for almost two years, and I need to adjust to a whole new way of life. Making films abroad will be my panacea.”

In *Flame and the Flesh*, Lana presented a new image to her fans——that of a brunette. She was told to style her hair like Gina Lollabrigida.

There was another reason: Lex Barker told her he preferred brunettes like Hedy Lamarr as opposed to blondes like Marilyn Monroe.

Arriving in Italy, Lana shocked photographers, who didn’t recognize her at first. *Paparazzi* lined up to photograph the blonde goddess of Hollywood, but as a brunette, Lana got off the plane and walked past most of them.

The director, Richard Brooks, asked her to dye her hair. As a brunette, Lana found that she could go shopping, navigating her way through streets in the heart of Rome, without being recognized.

MGM went to work publicizing her new look, even before the picture was shot. Publicity sent out pictures of her (revised) image, and some of them subsequently appeared on magazines which included *Modern Screen*.

Posters were designed with the headline: THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL IS A BAD AND

BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE NOW!

Barker was waiting for her in Rome. “Our first night was so romantic,” she recalled. “He took me on a carriage ride through the heart of Rome at night, past the Colosseum. We rode by the Roman Forum lit at night and even visited St. Peter’s Square.”

After the Pantheon, they went for drinks at Harry’s Bar on the Via Veneto before heading for the Piazza Navona for nightcaps.

Then it was back at their suite at the Excelsior Hotel for a night of “love-making, Tarzan style.” When Mervyn LeRoy called from the U.S. the next day, he told her he was working on the final cut of *Latin Lovers*. She told him, “Lex and I made love until a pinky dawn came over the skyline of the Eternal City.”

“Did you read that line in a guidebook?” he asked.

The next night, Lana and Lex dined at the chic Taverna Flavia, where she was surprised to encounter Frank Sinatra and members of the “Hollywood on the Tiber” crowd. She wasn’t alone in being an American movie star making movies abroad.

Marcello Mastroianni called and invited her to a party, where he introduced her to the film elite of Rome, including director Luchino Visconti, who raved about her beauty.

She also met another director, the very *avant-garde* Federico Fellini, who told her he was envisioning a future film that would call for a blonde movie star, in case she ever wanted to dye her hair blonde again. She told him she’d be thrilled to work with him one day.

Ultimately, Fellini’s “movie with a blonde,” *La Dolce Vita*, was released in 1961 and became his most famous work. The blonde actress he selected was the busty Swedish star, Anita Ekberg. When she sensuously wanders into the splashing waters of the Trevi Fountain, she entered film immortality.

Before Lana read the script of *Flame and the Flesh*, its producer, Joe Pasternak, had arranged a screening for her, with Barker, of a 1937 French version of the same film. Based on a novel by Auguste Bailly, the theme had actually reached the screen in 1925 as a silent movie. The 1937 French-language version had been entitled *Naples au Baiser de Feu*, but the title was changed to *The Kiss of Fire* for its release in the United States.

FLESH, NEAPOLITAN STYLE

In the slums of Naples, a street urchin (a term that translates into the local dialect as a “scugnizzo”) generated laughter from photographers and from members of the cast, thanks to her irreverent (and to some degree successful) imitation of Lana’s sexy walk.

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Lana had read and memorized most of her lines before her first meeting with Brooks.

In *Flame and the Flesh*, she played Madeleine Douvane, a Neapolitan tramp, a pleasure-loving woman of the night who uses and abuses men with her seductive powers.

Near the beginning of the film, her landlady throws her out of her room for failure to pay back rent. Out on the streets, she's befriended by a kind musician, Ciccio (Bonar Collenao), who invites her to live with him. She's introduced to his roommate, Nino (Carlos Thompson), a handsome heartbreaker who is also a singer. He's engaged to a sweet Italian girl, Lisa (Pier Angeli). As could be predicted, Nino is lured away from "nice girl" Lisa and runs off with trampy Madeleine. Their affair seemed doomed from the beginning.

Before the end of the film, Nino finally tells his simmering siren, "Faithfulness is not one of your great virtues," and returns to the safety net of Lisa.

At the fade-out, Lana, in high heels, is seen walking into the foggy night toward an uncertain future.

Over lunch with Richard Brooks, he told her that he wanted their film to recreate one of those earthy, post-war, Neo-Realist Italian films. He even showed Lana an artist's rendering of an early version of a poster for the film. It featured an image of her standing, provocatively, under a lamppost at night.

"A real tramp," she said.

"You've got that right, even though I know it's hard for a real lady like you to play a slut."

Brooks, a talented descendant of Russian Jewish immigrants, would become one of the major players in Hollywood. He was also a screenwriter, and an occasional producer. In his near future, he would helm such classics a *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), and *Elmer Gantry* (1960).

At their first meeting, he was highly critical of the Production Code, which he felt placed too many restrictions on movie-makers. He claimed that it greatly hampered directors such as himself in both subject matter and expression.

During their upcoming work together, she found Brooks difficult and demanding, and he would often explode at her. But she always forgave him, because she knew he was trying to make her look good. Many actresses objected to his harsh style of directing, but she later said, "Brooks is tough as nails, but the finished product is worth the suffering."

Their first week was devoted to rehearsals, as Lana got acquainted with her leading man, Carlos Thompson.

On the set, she also met Pier Angeli. Born in Sardinia, Angeli was frail, tiny, and undeniably lovely, a rather innocent-appearing Italian waif and *gamine*.

But, as Lana relayed to Brooks, "I don't think she's as innocent as she looks."

Angeli was supposed to be sustaining both an affair and an engagement with Kirk Douglas. Prior to that, she had been famously linked, romantically, to James Dean.

"The only thing angelic about her is her last name," Lana said. To Brooks, Lana boasted "I had both Kirk and Jimmy before 'Miss Angelic' arrived on the scene."

During the first day of rehearsals, Lana couldn't help notice that Angeli was flirting quite openly and consistently with Thompson. During Lana's second day on the set, Lana saw Thompson disappearing with Angeli into her dressing room. At rehearsals that followed, she'd be holding Thompson's hand.

"I think Lana was jealous of her," Brooks said. "For me, that was perfect for the role. After all, in the film, Lana steals Carlos from Pier. I'm sure Lana knew that she was a decade older than Pier."

During this period, even though Lana claimed to be madly in love with Lex Barker, they were often in different parts of the Continent.

On the set in Rome, Brooks noticed that she seemed very attracted to Thompson, the third of that era's famous Latin lovers. The first was Ricardo Montalban, with whom Lana had struck out. The second was Fernando Lamas, with whom she'd had a turbulent affair.

Thompson was actually of Swiss and German descent. Before Hollywood discovered him, he had been highly visible in Buenos Aires, based on his leading roles on stage and in Spanish-language films. Like Lana's current lover, Lex Barker, Thompson would eventually migrate, postwar, to Germany and appear in a number of films there.

Lana with Pier Angeli, rivals in love on and off the screen.

She found him tall, dark, handsome, and stalwart, a man who moved and spoke with manly grace. Hollywood had already decided that he was convincing on screen as a European womanizer.

Noël Coward had had an affair with him in London, and spread the rumor along the Hollywood grapevine that the matinee idol was bisexual. Lana learned later that after *Flame and the Flesh*, he'd made *Valley of the Kings* (1954), in which, as it was rumored, both Robert Taylor, a fellow bisexual, and Eleanor Parker had made plays for him.

In the end, Thompson married Lilli Palmer, the German actress and international beauty, after her divorce from Rex Harrison in 1957.

Leaving their respective lovers (Barker and Angeli) behind, Lana and Thompson were flown to Naples for filming of *Flame and the Flesh's* exterior scenes. Each of them lodged at the Hotel Excelsior, directly on the waterfront (via Partenope), with its views over the harbor and faraway Mount Vesuvius.

Their suites had interconnecting doors. After their first night there, Lana phoned his suite and invited him over for breakfast. He gladly accepted Her excuse for wanting to see him was: "If we're going to play lovers in the film, we might as well get to know each other."

A morning newspaper had been delivered to her suite. On the frontpage was a picture of Clark Gable and Angeli strolling hand in hand along the Via Veneto.

"Your girlfriend didn't waste much time," she said. "Clark and I are going to make another picture together in Holland."

"My dating of Pier was just a harmless flirtation. She's free to do what she wants, date whom she wants."

"I guess that goes for you, too," she said.

"Is that an invitation?" he asked provocatively.

"We'll see."

During the next few days, when not filming, they set out together to explore Naples and its environs, even going to see the ruins of Pompeii. He tipped the guards to show them the private erotic frescoes.

At night, they frequented Gran Caffè Gambrinus, Naples' oldest café, dating from 1860. They sought out little *trattorie* along the waterfront, overlooking the Bay of Naples.

One Sunday, they explored the little resort town of Positano, a hillside village along the Amalfi Drive, with its legendary Sirenuse Island featured in Homer's *Odyssey*. In Positano, they learned that this was one of Tennessee Williams' favorite hideaways. Exterior scenes of the film they were making would eventually be shot there.

At the café, he kept looking over his shoulder, and she asked him why. He told her it was an old habit from his days in Buenos Aires, where he had incurred the disfavor of both Juan and Eva Perón. "I really want to be a writer, not an actor. I wrote three novels, the first of which won a prize. The other two were forbidden by both the state and the Perón government. My political views were too outspoken for Eva. It was time to get out of Argentina, after I was released from jail."

In Naples, he'd ordered the hotel to open the connecting doors between their suites. It wasn't until she got to London that Lana gave her usual report on a man's technique in bed. Thompson got an A, or so she claimed to Ava Gardner. "It was the most tender lovemaking of any man I've ever known. He searches a woman's body for her most sensitive nerve endings, which he then proceeds to tantalize. His darting tongue knows how to dance the rumba. He has a beautiful physique. God was kind to him in all the right places."

Lana and Thompson's eventual migration back to Rome signaled the end of their affair, in ways that reflected the plotline of *Flame and the Flesh*. In Rome, whereas she was reunited with Barker, Thompson did not return to Angeli.

In reference to herself and Thompson, "Both of us moved on to other lovers," Lana said.

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Lex Barker remained in Italy, as Lana flew alone to London for interior shooting on *Flame and the Flesh* at the Estree Studios.

During her first week in London, she heard rumors that Barker had been spotted, out in public, with the Swedish bombshell, Anita Ekberg. Ironically, Barker would later be cast as her *fiancé* in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960).

Lana was not alone for very long. Her two friends, Ava Gardner and Clark Gable, had flown back from Africa after stopovers in Rome. They had completed *Mogambo*, a project that Lana had previously rejected.

Gardner was in Rome at the time, aborting Frank Sinatra's baby.

In London, Lana met with many other friends from Hollywood, who were working in Europe to take advantage of the current loopholes in the U.S. Income Tax regulations.

Director Tay Garnett and his wife invited her to dinner. He and Lana had been friends ever since he directed her in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

She met with another director, John Huston, who also had flown in from Africa, where he'd directed *Mogambo*. He had tantalizing tales to tell, claiming that Gable had spent more nights with Grace Kelly than he had with Gardner.

In London, he escorted Lana to party hosted by Gardner, who prepared "Tarheel fried chicken." Its guest list mostly included U.S. expatriates." The hostess claimed she had no taste for English cooking, "especially that steak-and-kidney pie with overboiled Brussels sprouts."

Lana appeared in *Flame and the Flesh* with Carlos Thompson, billed as "the Argentine Heart-throb."

As she confessed to the director, "I've already seduced the first Argentine heartthrob, Fernando Lamas. Now I'm falling for the second export from a country known for its beef."

Gardner had rounded up a party of American exiles that included not only Gable, but Alan Ladd, Errol Flynn, and Robert Taylor. "My God," Lana said to Huston. "What is Ava trying to do? Round up a posse of my old

lovers?"

"Well, I know one you've not done," Huston said. "Bogie told me he never had the privilege."

"Truer words were never spoken," she said.

While registered in London in a suite at the Dorchester, Lana did get some phone calls for dates, notably from Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Richard Burton, and Peter Finch, but she turned them down.

Even without a lot of heavy romancing, "Lana & Ava" appeared in the London tabloids as "two funtime glamour pusses exiled from Hollywood."

The Duke of Manchester invited them to a party. The next day, reporter Harrison Carroll wrote: "These two Hollywood glamour queens caused the biggest talk in London since Margaret Rose's famous can-can. Ava and Lana harmonized 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game,' and then went into their terpsichorean routine that sent more famous names than you can shake a stick at into hysterics."

Lana missed Barker desperately and talked to him on the phone nightly. She was eager to rush back to his arms.

While in London, she reportedly remained chaste, even though Errol Flynn visited her suite one night and didn't leave until the next day.

As she reported to Gardner, "For the first time ever, Errol didn't seduce me. Time seems to have passed our 'in-like-Flynn' boy bye-bye. This is not 1942. He tried to perform, but was so drunk he passed out."

[After leading a life of dissipation, the legendary actor, his days as the dashing Robin Hood on the screen only a distant memory, died of a heart attack on October 14, 1959. In spite of predictions to the contrary, Flynn had, indeed, lived to be fifty.]

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Before the release of *Flame and the Flesh* in the U.S., Pier Angeli flew to New York to promote it. Lana learned that the designer, Oleg Cassini, was spending nights in her hotel suite. That made Lana doubly surprised when just weeks later, Angeli married the singer, Vic Damone.

When *Flame and the Flesh* opened in limited distribution, it did not, in general, receive good reviews. Many critics noted that the bylaws of the American Production Code limited Brooks from crafting the neo-realism Italian film he might have desired, a film in which Lana and Thompson might have been "unleashed" in their lovemaking.

One reviewer in Rome wrote that "Brooks could not ignite the flame in *Flame and the Flesh*. Actually, the role of the Neapolitan tramp just screams for Sophia Loren."

Newsweek stated that *Flame and the Flesh* "was only for unreconstructed and patient Turnerphiles. Helen Deutsch's script is chiefly an opportunity for Miss Turner to ogle the boys. There are many fine views of Vesuvius, but the star herself does most of the smoking."

Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Otis L. Guernsey, Jr. said, "Lana Turner has done the chic thing—she has made a movie in Italy, and she plays a loose woman in it. Director Brooks concentrates on making Miss Turner look sexy in all kinds of settings from cabarets to stuffy bedrooms."

The New York Times labeled the film "a potpourri of passion, *Weltschmertz*, and true confessions, displaying some flesh but no flame. There is more talk than action, more play-acting than emotion. In the movie, Miss Turner is not allergic to men—any man."

Ruth Waterbury of the *Los Angeles Examiner* was the only critic who gushed: "Sex, sacred and profane, *Flame and the Flesh* was filmed with honesty and realism and imbued with compassion and tenderness. It's a tale of a beautiful strumpet, who pinches the fiancé of a sweet girl-next-door. In the end, the girl gets her man back from the clutches of this scarlet woman. The film is a combination of sin and sacrifice against a realistic background of Neapolitan slums, rubbish in the streets, bare bedrooms, and streetwalkers."

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[Years after wrapping Flame and the Flesh, Lana referred to "those two doomed lovers," a reference to Carlos Thompson and Pier Angeli.

In September of 1971, Angeli was found dead in a Beverly Hills home, the victim of a barbiturate overdose. She was only 39.

In October of 1990, in Buenos Aires, Thompson's body was discovered at his apartment. A gun was found beside his body, a bullet in his head. He had committed suicide at the age of 67.]

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Positano, on the Amalfi Coast, had also been used for some exterior shots during the filming of *Flame and the*

Flesh. Lana rented a vacation villa to slip away whenever possible, to be alone with Barker. Each of them could sunbathe in the nude. The former Tarzan told her, "I don't like tan lines."

On at least four different occasions, he proposed marriage, but she kept turning him down. Actually, his divorce from Arlene Dahl had not come through. His two children from his first marriage were staying with their mother, and Cheryl was looked after by Mildred.

One afternoon, Kirk Douglas phoned, inviting Barker and Lana to the Cannes Film Festival for the European premiere of *The Bad and the Beautiful*. Longing for more glamour in her life, she accepted. Barker was also eager for the exposure, hoping to meet Continental film directors and producers there.

On the Côte d'Azur, "the world's most glamorous couple," as the press dubbed them, flew in. The paparazzi went wild in photographing them, and their pictures were splashed across front pages in Europe and America. They were labeled as "Hollywood's Blonde Goddess and Tarzan."

It was hardly a secret that they were living and traveling together as part of a relationship "not sanctified with marriage." Many in the press condemned their "immorality." In her memoirs, she speculated that she might not have married Barker were it not for the moral climate of the 1950s that virtually compelled her to do it.

As the pressure that urged her to marry him mounted, she finally agreed to a wedding. After the French Riviera, they retreated to a villa he had rented fifteen miles from Turin, the capital city of the Piedmont, in northern Italy. Their luxurious villa stood on a hillside overlooking the River Po and its fertile, enveloping valley.

The Villa Primo Sole ("First Daylight") became the setting for the first meeting of Cheryl with her new half sister and brother, Lynn, age 10, and Alexander, 6. In the beginning, Lynne and Cheryl were a bit leary of each other. The children had a hard time adjusting at first to this new family that seemed to have been created artificially overnight.

The wedding day arrived on September 8, 1953, and although Barker and Lana tried to keep it a secret from the press, the *paparazzi* swarmed the city. He had to fight to clear a pathway to get Lana into Turin's 16th Century Town Hall for a civil ceremony.

Their honeymoon night was spent back at the villa with the children down the hall. She wanted at least a two-week honeymoon, but MGM notified her that she was overdue in London for wardrobe fittings for her upcoming picture, *Betrayed. [Eventually released in 1954, it was, at the time, still entitled* The True and the Brave.*]*

Quietly, without alerting MGM as to her whereabouts, she abandoned the Villa Primo Sole for the island of Capri, where a rented villa awaited her and her new husband.

Meanwhile, MGM became frantic as Gable waited impatiently at the Dorchester Hotel in London.

Eventually, it was Ava Gardner who succeeded at reaching her on the phone, alerting her about what was going on: "Dore Schary is frantic. No one knows where you are. Honey chile, you'd better get that beautiful ass of yours to London…and *pronto!* MGM is talking right now about replacing you in the role with me. If not me, then Jennifer Jones."

There had been casting changes during pre-production: Gregory Peck had originally been offered Gable's role. When he was not available, Kirk Douglas was slated. Victor Mature's role was to have gone to Richard Widmark.

Saying goodbye to Barker, and what Lana called "His power weapon of love," she journeyed from Capri to Rome and took the next plane to London.

The next day she showed up at Balmain's for wardrobe fittings. There was a problem. The role called for a blonde. She was still a brunette. Permission came from the director, Gottfried Reinhardt, allowing her to keep her hair dark.

Gottfried was the son of the fabled Austrian theater director, Max Reinhardt. The son had gone to Hollywood, where he became an assistant to director Ernst Lubitsch. He later directed Greta Garbo's last movie, *Two-Faced Woman*, in 1941. During the war, he joined the U.S. Army, and later, he worked on the previous Gable/Turner film, *Homecoming* (1948).

It was fully understood that after inaugural conferences and rehearsals in London, shooting for *Betrayed* would begin in Holland, based on a script by Ronald Millar and George Froeschel. Each of the supporting players had at last been signed, with the noteworthy inclusion of Lana's friend, Louis Calhern, cast as General Ten Eyck.

Betrayed (1954) would be the last of MGM's Turner/Gable vehicles, which up until then had included *Honky Tonk* (1941), *Somewhere I'll Find You* (1942), and *Homecoming* (1948).

After twenty-three years at MGM, it would be Gable's last picture for the studio that had made him "The King of Hollywood."

Betrayed was a cloak-and-dagger story set in Nazi-occupied Holland in 1943, with Lana and Gable back in combat suits and steel helmets. It required fewer love clinches than their other pictures.

She was shocked at Gable's appearance. He had grown paunchier and looked older than his age of fifty-three.

There was not a lot of romance on the screen, and absolutely none off the screen, either. Gable was in poor health, and at times, she saw him shaking. He was more worried about his career and his private life than he was in seducing Lana.

Mature, her former lover from the early 1940s, had found this blonde-haired Dutch secretary, age 22, to spend nights in his bed, and was thus otherwise occupied.

Gable was cast as a Dutch intelligence officer, Pieter Deventer, who manages to escape the Nazis, with the aid of "The Scarf" (Mature), who is leading the Resistance in Holland.

Lana's role of Carla Von Oven was somewhat mysterious. Carla had collaborated with the Nazis and was anxious to live down her reputation. Deventer is ordered to recruit her as a British spy, but he wonders if she can be trusted. He has his doubts, even though falling in love with her.

In contrast, she wonders if "The Scarf" can be relied on, or else is he working for the Nazis? Nearly all of the resistance movement's raids have been ambushed, apparently based on advance tipoffs to the Nazis. Who, within the Dutch Resistance, is the traitor who's collaborating with the Nazis?

Victor Mature, cast as "The Scarf," expresses love for Lana (top photo). But when things go wrong in the espionage game, his violence toward her comes out (see below).

[In case you missed the movie, the collaborator, as it turns out, was indeed "The Scarf," as portrayed by Mature. Before he can be hauled away, he jumps from a window, committing suicide as atonement for his evil deeds.]

When *Betrayed* was released, critical reaction was bad. The film was viewed as the weakest of the Gable/Turner movies. *Newsweek* called it "a clumsy over-slow piece of wartime adventure. Lana Turner and Victor Mature go about their spying and resistance leading to no great conviction. The story seems artificial."

The Hollywood Reporter critiqued Gable and Turner as "a bit sexless this time around in their espionage puzzle. Seeing Gable without sex is a good deal like seeing *Ben-Hur* without the horses."

One critic wrote, "Clark Gable kisses Lana Turner like a husband with a hangover."

Many reviewers found that Mature stole the picture, cutting a dashing figure with a silk scarf around his neck, as he goes about killing Nazi soldiers, dynamiting Holland's bridges, and having a ball as the villainous traitor. One of his lines articulated his sense of cavalier bitterness: "I'm in this strictly for the laughs."

Holding a revolver, Lana, as Carla Van Oven, looks uncertain, lacking the authority that Barbara Stanwyck displayed with a gun in her hand in *film noir.*

Jeanine Basinger encapsulated the utter lack of chemistry between Gable and Turner: “They look at each other with dull eyes, their former secret twinkles and sense of mutual fun depleted. He’s no longer the tomcat on the prowl, and she’s not the cute kid with kittenish qualities. Alas, they don’t even seem to be Clark Gable and Lana Turner. They look like two people who just want to get it over with, put their feet up, and have a cup of coffee.”

Lana expected her usual attack from Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times*, and indeed, with a style that fulfilled the worst of her fears, the acerbic critic wrote: “By the time the picture gets around to figuring out whether the betrayer is Miss Turner or Mr. Mature, it has taken the audience through such a lengthy and tedious amount of detail that it has not only frayed all possible tension, but it has aggravated patience as well. Miss Turner and Mr. Gable have many long-winded talks; Mr. Mature has thumped his chest like Tarzan and bellowed his boasts a score of times. An excess of espionage maneuvering has been laid out on the screen. The beauties of the Netherlands have been looked at until they pall.”

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Before the requisite eighteen months of expatriation had passed, Lana and Barker decided to return to California, the timing of which would prevent them from what was needed to reduce their Federal income taxes.

Then the duo decided to remarry, since their Italian marriage had technically violated clauses in that country’s matrimony laws. *[The requisite delay between Barker’s divorce from Arlene Dahl and his subsequent marriage to Lana had been shorter than that mandated by the Italian courts.]*

Consequently, life resumed at Holmby Hills for their “reconstituted” family, *i.e*., Lana, Lex, Cheryl, and his son and daughter. Although he had signed a contract with Universal, they had no movie role slated for him right away.

One afternoon, he found himself alone in the house with Cheryl. That afternoon would forever be embedded in her memory. He came into her bedroom attired only in a rather formal red Sulka dressing gown which Lana had given him.

At first glance, this could have been a scene of domestic harmony with Cheryl (left), Lana, and Lex Barker. The former Tarzan was Cheryl's new stepfather and Lana's latest husband.

Cheryl would record in her memoirs what happened next: "Tarzan's hair fell forward to hood his face. I could see that his lips were set in a grisly smile. He reached inside my nightie to fondle my breasts. He was stroking my legs. I stifled an urge to scream. Suddenly, I felt a frightening jab. I sprang up, arms thrashing. The nightie was pulled away, my knees yanked wide, and with a bolt of pain, he heaved his 200 pounds into the core of my loins. The pain was more than I have ever known."

She wrote with such conviction that her account rang true. However, many of Barker's loyal fans discounted his violation of her virginity. His former wife, Arlene Dahl, interviewed on national TV, also disputed the claim. "Lex's package was just too big. He would have split open a young girl."

After the rape, Barker threatened her, claiming that if she told anyone, especially Lana, she'd be sent to a prison for young girls, fed a diet of bread and water, and locked away for the rest of her life, never to see Lana or Mildred again.

One week later, Lana was due in New York to promote MGM, and she flew there alone. Barker stayed behind.

Once again, he forced himself onto Cheryl, and the assaults were said to have continued, often, for three years. As she wrote, "I did not even own my insides. My stepfather did."

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In 1955, Lana became pregnant again, and wanted to have Barker's child. But after seven months of pregnancy, the child was stillborn. This was the third time she'd suffered the loss of an unborn baby.

She didn't want to press to know it, but she suffered from endometriosis *[a painful disorder in which tissue—the endometrium—that normally lines the inside of a woman's uterus—migrates and grows in locations outside its confines. The syndrome usually encompasses abnormalities associated with the ovaries, fallopian tubes and the tissue lining the pelvis.]*

Lana's predisposition to the syndrome required her to submit to a hysterectomy late in 1956. After that surgical procedure, she knew, finally, that she would never give birth again.

As high priestess, Samarra presides over human sacrifices.

In one of the most dramatic scenes, a strikingly handsome male Adonis, scantily clad George Robothan, is brought before her. In her capacity as the love goddess, Lana plants a kiss on his forehead before he's plunged to his death into a pit of fire.

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MGM announced plans for a Biblical epic, *The Prodigal* (released in 1955), a saga about a young Hebrew who abandons his *fiancée* and family *[albeit clinging to the battered remnants of his Jewish identity]* for a rowdy set of adventures and carnal pleasures among the pagans. In the city of the infidels (worshippers of Baal and other gods), he is corrupted by Samarra, the high priestess of Astarte, the pagan goddess of love, sex, and reproduction.

After many near-death encounters and "wallowing in sin," Micah the Prodigal Son returns home to his loved ones.

The picture was originally envisioned as a star vehicle for Edmund Purdom, Ava Gardner, and Vittorio Gassman. Although Gassman and Gardner later dropped out, Purdom steadfastly remained to play the Prodigal Son.

[His character was inspired by the saga of betrayal, loyalty, and redemption that's outlined in the New Testament book of Luke, Chapter 15:11-32.]

MGM's studio chief Dore Schary later admitted that he "hustled" Lana into accepting the role because she needed the money. According to Schary, "The truth is that I liked the script by Maurice Zimm, based on a scenario by Joseph Breen, Jr., and Samuel James Larsen, set in old Damascus in 700 BC. Lana had presented me with various scripts sent to her, and she wanted to work with Ava Gardner or Lex Barker as her co-stars. I turned down every one of them, wanting to make this Biblical spectacle to lure the yokels from their god damn TV sets and back into movie houses."

Lana claimed, "Lex was physically the best lover I ever had. Not simply because he was well hung, which, my darling, he was, but because he was incredible at oral sex. I often prefer the oral route to conventional sex because I was always too tight."

"I thought it would draw a big audience," Schary continued. "What I overlooked was that Cecil B. DeMille had exclusive rights to the Bible, or so it seemed. Poor Lana swayed her way through the film, but it was a hopeless task. Onscreen, the script came off as lifeless."

As inspiration for Lana's role as the pagan temptress, the scriptwriters were later accused of borrowing liberally from the silent film, *The Wanderer* (1926), which had co-starred William Collier, Jr. and Greta Nissen.

For her performance, Lana dyed her hair blonde again, which was the way most of her fans preferred her. No film role before or after required her to appear so scantily clad. As Samarra, in her first appearance in CinemaScope and Metrocolor, she displayed ample expanses of flesh.

Theater critic for *The Miami Herald*, George Bourke, wrote: "The role is the most form-fitting Lana Turner has had since she first sashayed before the movie camera in a memorable sweater in *They Won't Forget."*

Though tame, perhaps, by today's standards, Lana's skimpy costumes, designed by Herschel McCoy, created a scandal in the uptight 1950s. She was even denounced on Sundays by priests and pastors from their pulpits, who attacked Hollywood as "a viper pit of degenerates and shameless Jezebels."

McCoy had already designed the costumes for such "sword and sandal" epics as *Quo Vadis?* (1951), starring Robert Taylor. As Lana said when she saw that movie, "I even know what Bob looks like without the armor."

On the set of *The Prodigal*, she got along well with producer Charles Schnee, still grateful for him for having written the script of *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

Before Micah (Purdom) can win her love, he has to squander his inheritance to buy her the world's most valuable pearl. When it is stolen from him and he cannot pay for it, he is thrown into slavery.

In another dramatic scene, he is stripped and flogged in public. In the book, *Lash The Hundred Great Scenes of Men Being Whipped*, the Purdom episode ranks as No. 66.

The director, Kansas-born Richard Thorpe, had a long career at MGM. Hehelmed his first silent film in 1923 and went on from there to direct some 180 movies. He'd dealt with pagan themes before, directing *Last of the Pagans* (1935) starring Ray Mala.

When Lana signed to do the film, Gardner phoned her with a dire warning: "It'll be a flop, honey chile. Don't go there. My advice? Go on being your pagan love goddess off screen—not on."

"But you got to be a goddess," Lana said. "Why not me?"

[She was referring to Gardner's role in One Touch of Venus *(1948). Hollywood's other love goddess, Rita Hayworth, had played Terpsichore in* Down to Earth *(1947).]*

Despite his many successes, he is remembered today more for his failures than for his triumphs, especially for episodes associated with his role as the first director of Judy Garland's *The Wizard of Oz*. In the early stages of the film's development, he had put a blonde wig on her and ordered makeup men to give her a cutsey baby doll look, not the innocent thirteen-year-old Kansas farm girl later portrayed. Thorpe was fired after only two weeks.

Thorpe had worked with Purdom before in *Athena* (1954), starring Jane Powell, and again in *The Student Prince* (also 1954) after Mario Lanza had been fired.

Thorpe sometimes directed Lana's former lover, Robert Taylor, in such movies as *Ivanhoe* (1952), with Elizabeth Taylor, and he'd go on to helm two Elvis Presley movies, *Jailhouse Rock* (1957), and *Fun in Acapulco* (1963).

Lana's leading man, Purdom was English. In London's West End, he had played in Shakespeare plays, most notably, *Romeo and Juliet*. On Broadway, he was part of the company formed by Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. When Lana heard this, she quipped: "I bet both Viv and Larry seduced Purdom."

Lana didn't detest Purdom as much as she had Ezio Pinza in *Mr. Imperium*, although she labeled both of them "Mr. Garlic Breath."

"Purdom had a high opinion of himself. His pomposity was hard to bear. My lines were so stupid I hated to go to work with him in the morning."

"When Purdom stripped down for his flogging scene, I found his body disappointing, but then, I was used to the world's most perfect physique, Lex Barker. In spite of Purdom's unimpressive chest, he was very good looking."

During the making of *The Prodigal*, Lana discovered a secret about his sex life. In a way, she was delighted to hear this bit of gossip. He was having an affair with Mrs. Tyrone Power (aka, Linda Christian), the Mexican actress who had captured Power's heart, leading him to dump Lana.

In a call to Ava Gardner, Lana said, “I’m a walking goddess adorned with baubles, bangles, and beads, really, I mean, an astonishment of beads and jeweled G-strings. I even wear a *brassiere* of faux snakes. Men, while devouring my flesh with their lusty eyes, should bring their overcoats to movie theaters so they can jerk off.”

After learning that, Lana became much friendlier with Purdom, because she wanted to know more details about his affair with Christian. “It’s really not that much of a secret from Power,” he told her. “In fact, she confessed our affair to him.”

“How did he take it?” she asked.

“He took it very calmly and even delivered a bombshell of his own. He said he’d fallen in love with a young girl in New York, and was also having an affair with her. Linda’s affair with me was okay by him, as long as it made her happy.”

[Linda Christian divorced Tyrone Power in 1956, but waited until 1960 to marry Edmund Purdom. Her second marriage lasted only a few months. After divorcing Christian, Purdom waited thirty-seven years before re-marrying.]

Lana’s truce with Purdom didn’t last long. In the movie, she tells him, “I can never belong to one man. I belong to all men.”

After he’d filmed that scene with her, he asked her: “Are you delivering a line from the movie—or one from your own life?”

She turned her back on him and walked away.

The most dramatic scene in her entire career came at the end of *The Prodigal*. When her once-devoted worshippers turn on her, throwing stones and rotten tomatoes at her, she stands on her tower near images of Astarte and Baal. Realizing that she may be stoned to death, she jumps from the tower to a horrendous death in a flaming pit, or cauldron, the site where she had sent so many sacrificial victims before.

Two weeks into the filming of *The Prodigal*, Schary asked to see the rushes. After he’d watched them, he turned to Thorpe. “I think the studio has become mired down in quicksand. I’m going to ask production how much it’ll cost us if I shut down the film.”

That afternoon, he learned that MGM would suffer a considerable hit. Already $200,000 had been spent, lavish sets had been constructed or were under construction, expensive costumes designed, and contracts with stars had been negotiated and finalized.

“Our loss would have been $1.2 million, perhaps a hell of a lot more. I ordered that the picture be completed and speeded up. I told Thorpe to cut costs wherever possible. As it turned out, *The Prodigal* was the biggest and most embarrassing failure, the worst movie I ever supported.”

Edmund Purdom's role in *The Prodigal* somewhat mirrored his leading role in *The Egyptian* (1954). He had been assigned that part in the dreary Biblical epic after Marlon Brando wisely turned it down. Purdom starred in that ponderous, often unintentionally funny, Biblical soaper, tangling with another *femme fatale*, Bella Darvi.

Now he was with Lana, playing the besotted suitor to her *persona* as a lascivious pagan sex queen.

Throughout the troubled shoot, Lana found comfort, reuniting with old friends and meeting new stars. Her longtime friend, Louis Calhern, had the third lead, playng Nahreeb, the sinister high priest of Baal, who conspires to destroy Micah because of the impertinence of his sexual interest in Samarra. Critics would later compare his costume to an "overly decorated Victorian lamp-shade."

Lana had two lunches with her jovial friend, Cecil Kellaway, cast as the Governor. He rushed to greet Lana, and she embraced him. "You seem very much alive. I thought John Garfield and I finished you off in *The Postman Always Rings Twice."*

Other than Lana herself, the scene stealer of the picture was Francis L. Sullivan, cast as Bosra, the wily and unscrupulous moneylender. The English film and stage actor was a heavyset man with a striking double chin and a deep voice. He'd filmed works by every author from Shakespeare to Charles Dickens and George Bernard Shaw, working with such stars as Hedy Lamarr, Ingrid Bergman, Robert Donat, and even Bob Hope. In failing health, he would die the year after *The Prodigal*'s release.

At the beginning of the film, Micah deserts his beautiful Jewish *fiancée*, Ruth, with the intention of traveling to Damascus to pursue the pagan love goddess. Born in Ireland, Audrey Dalton was cast as Ruth, perhaps hoping for bigtime stardom.

The Prodigal garnered some of the worst reviews of Lana's career. Douglas Lemza, a film historian, claimed, "*The Prodigal* is something not even Carol Burnett could parody. This sort of nonsense requires Cecil B. DeMille." Another critic wrote, "Lana Turner gives the film all her glamour but none of her talent as an actress."

Bosley Crowther, writing in *The New York Times*, continued as Lana's main critic. "*The Prodigal* is pompous, ostentatious, vulgar, and a ridiculous charade. Miss Lana Turner conducts the rituals as though she was 'Little Egypt' at the old Chicago World's Fair."

Variety claimed, "Metro has filled the movie so full of scene and spectacle that Richard Thorpe's direction is hard put to give it any semblance of movement or to get life and warmth into the characters and incidents."

One critic pounded away at the weakness of this epic, but had praise for thestunning Metrocolor beauty of Lana. *Newsweek* called the movie "a Biblical pot-boiler, a combination of an old Ziegfeld Follies and a traveling carnival."

Columnist Sidney Skolsky, who had remained Lana's friend, wrote: "The long walk Lana takes through the Temple of Love is the best reason for seeing the picture…pure poetry in motion."

Playboy labeled Lana as "the Pinup Queen of Hollywood—move over Marilyn!"

In the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, W. Ward Marsh wrote: "Lana Turner, glorifying the flesh, also exhibits plenty of her own glorification. I have never seen her walk better in her life, as she parades around, sometimes with a candle in her hand, as the Goddess of Samarra."

Since its initial release, *The Prodigal* has gained a cult following in the wake of several television screenings.

When Lana was last asked about it, she quipped, "It should have played Disneyland."

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Warner Brothers tapped John Farrow to direct *The Sea Chase (1955)*, a World War II drama about the German sea captain of a fugitive freighter with a strange cargo that included a beautiful blonde-haired Nazi female spay. The studio paid $10,000 to acquire the rights to this thriller by novelist Andres Geer. The film was to be a vehicle for John Wayne as the anti-Nazi sea captain, but who would play the Mata Hari type spy?

Farrow couldn't seem to make up his mind, offering the role first to Grace Kelly and then to Joan Crawford. Both of them were less than thrilled to play "second fiddle" to Wayne.

Speculation in Hollywood grew about who might best execute the role. For a while, attention focused on Deborah Kerr, although she would be about the last actress that audiences at the time might even remotely associate with a Nazi spy. Later, it was Susan Hayward, who might have been more believable, but not really. What about the Irish lassie, Maureen O'Hara? No, she was out. Gene Tierney and Arlene Dahl were also considered.

Finally, Hedda Hopper, in one of her columns during September of 1954, announced that the role had been assigned to Lana Turner and that she'd be a most unlikely choice as a Nazi spy, and that such bizarre casting would be a bit of a stretch for her.

At the time, Lana was one of the few bigtime stars still under contract to MGM. Dore Schary decided he wanted to get the most out of her before her contract expired, as he didn't plan to renew it. He was paying her $5,000 a week, but could make more money on her by "leasing her out" to other studios.

By the mid-1950s, both John Wayne and Lana had evolved into living legends, although Wayne had an advantage based on the number of tickets his name tended to sell at any box office.

They certainly were not equal in height. Even when she wore what were known at the time as "Joan Crawford fuck-me high heels," she rose only to a height of the Duke's shoulders.

Finally, for her collaboration in their newest movie, *The Sea Chase*, Warners agreed to pay MGM $300,000 for her services.

Audience acceptance required a leap of imagination about the "odd couple" casting of Wayne with Lana before settling back into their seats to enjoy the latest Wayne adventure story. With his distinctive voice and much-imitated walk, Wayne, often cast in Westerns as a misogynistic, *machismo*-soaked cowboy, would not even try to imitate a German accent. Nor would Lana.

Roughly based on a true event, *The Sea Chase* is the story of the German-born Captain Karl Ehrlich, who despises the Nazis, who have taken over his Fatherland. When Germany invades Poland in September of 1939, England declares war. Fearing that his vessel will be confiscated by the Australians, who are allied with the British, he hastily embarks on a mission to move his rusty, 5,000-ton freighter, the *Ergenstrasse* from Sydney to Valparaiso, in Chile.

His mink-clad passenger, Lana, playing Elsa Keller, comes aboard as a passenger. She, too, must escape from Australia before she is arrested and jailed as a Nazi collaborator and spy.

Off they sail, with a British man-of-war, the *Rockhampton*, in hot pursuit. Ironically, as part of a subplot that could only happen in Hollywood, Elsa is engaged to Jeffrey Napier (David Farrar), commander of the pursuing *Rockhampton.*

As the film unrolls, Wayne is as American as cowboy boots. Maybe Marlon Brando in his future movie in 1958, *The Young Lions*, could get by masquerading as a German, but Wayne is the same man he was in *Red River* (1948) directing a cattle drive.

As might be predicted during their race across the ocean, the captain falls in love with the lovely, immaculately groomed spy. Lana used her own wardrobe and chest of jewelry during her characterization of the role.

She would later say, "Most of my part was that of a fashion mannequin standing around wondering where all the sharks went." She also appeared with a revised hair color, called "coralescent blonde," invented by Myrkl Stoltz, whose choice was "inspired by a coral reef shimmering in the phosphorescent sea." For the first time, Lana applied coral-colored lipstick, abandoning her usual "Victory Red" lipstick used as part of her look in the films she'd made during wartime.

Even aboard a rusty, dilapidated freighter, Lana—thanks to an army of hairdressers and a wardrobe that would NEVER fit into a cabin—had to appear glam.

For *The Sea Chase*, Lana was returning to the studio, Warners, which had first discovered her in 1937, featuring her in *They Won't Forget* with that by now immortal walk that earned for her the label "The Sweater Girl."

John Farrow seemed to have been the ideal director. He had only recently directed Wayne in the successful *Hondo* (1953), in which the star had been cast as a tough, wily cavalry officer who must deal with a pending Apache uprising.

Farrow was firmly established in Hollywood as a director-producer and screenwriter. In 1942, he'd been nominated for an Oscar for his direction of *Wake Island*, starring Brian Donlevy and Robert Preston. In his immediate future, he would also be nominated for an Oscar for best screenplay for writing the 1957 *Around the World in Eighty Days* for producer Mike Todd, then married to Elizabeth Taylor.

Ironically, Farrow had been born in Sydney, where *The Sea Chase* opens. Not only that, but as a young man, he had run away to sea aboard an American barquentine, "sailing all over the Pacific and fighting in revolts in Nicaragua and Mexico." During World War II, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy, working aboard anti-submarine patrols until he contracted typhus.

When Lana met Farrow, he was married to the actress Maureen O'Sullivan, with whom he would have seven children, including a future famous actress, Mia Farrow.

Lana was known for seducing her leading men on many a film. But she had never viewed Wayne as a sex object. He had famously said, "Women scare the hell out of me. I've always been afraid of them."

Director William Wellman told her at a Hollywood party, "Wayne walks like a fairy. He's the only screen hero in the world who can get away with that." At another party, Joan Crawford, on the rare occasion she spoke of Lana, claimed, "GetWayne out of the saddle and you've got nothing."

Wayne had proclaimed that Marlene Dietrich, his co-star in *Pittsburgh* (1942), "was the best lay I ever had."

When Dietrich heard that, she lit a cigarette and said, "How very strange. All I did was give him a bit of fellatio."

Besides, Wayne was already in love with the Peruvian starlet, Pilar Palette Weldy, and planned to take her as his third wife at the conclusion of shooting *The Sea Chase.*

Nevertheless, rumors of Lana sustaining an affair with Wayne made several of the gossip columns.

Before filming began, Ava Gardner sent Lana a good luck note: "I'm going to stay here in Europe, *honey chile*," she wrote. "I can't find any men in Hollywood who can go all night. Where is Gary Cooper or Jimmy Stewart? Of course, they're getting long in the tooth and can't quite cut the mustard like they used to."

Lana boarded a plane for Hawaii, with Del Armstrong, her makeup man, and Moss Mabry, her costume designer. Leaving from San Francisco, they flew to Honolulu, where they took a smaller plane to the Kona region of the Big Island of Hawaii, where the cast and crew had already assembled.

Warners had booked accommodations for Lana in a two-room suite at the Kona Inn. She wanted the second bedroom to be assigned to Armstrong, her makeup expert, who would therefore be readily accessible for those early makeup calls.

To her distress, she discovered that the other bedroom, directly accessible through a connecting door, had been assigned, at his request, to Farrow.

His reputation as a womanizer was already familiar to her. Even before he'd met her, based entirely on her own reputation, he'd described her as "a man-hungry vixen hot to trot." As he'd described to Wayne, "She'll be easy pickings. I don't plan to ever lock that connecting door between our bedrooms."

Lana threatened to fly back to the U.S. mainland if she had to have Farrow as her "roommate." He was soon replaced with Armstrong, as she had originally intended. He came into her suite every morning at 4:30AM to apply her makeup. What Lana had really wanted was a private villa like the one Wayne occupied with Pilar.

In the film, Lana is supposed to be engaged to Commander Napier (as portrayed by the English actor, David Farrar). After meeting the Englishman—voted the ninth most popular star in Britain—she told him, "You have Elizabeth Taylor eyes." She was referring to their violet color.

He'd broken into films the same year she had. "I find him dashing," she told Del Armstrong. "If I didn't have Lex, I might make a play for him." She was informed that he was still living with the wife he'd married in 1929.

One actor who relentlessly pursued Lana during the shoot was Lyle Bettger. She had recently seen him in the Oscar-winning film, *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952). He was good looking and imbued with a strong masculine appeal, but she spurned all his sexual overtures, even though he told her, "I'm dynamite between the sheets."

In the film, he played Chief Officer Kirchner, the villain of the piece. During are fueling stop, this pro-Nazi murdered three marooned seamen. He doesn't tell his captain, who is later blamed by the British for the brutal deaths. Napier vows to bring Wayne to justice as a war criminal.

As Lana would later confess to Virginia Grey, “In those long, lonely nights away from that philandering husband of mine, I turned to James Arness, all six feet, seven inches of him. He’d wanted to be a pilot during the war, but was too tall.”

That was true. Arness instead served as a rifleman in the U.S. 3rd Infantry until he was severely wounded on the Italian beaches of Anzio. Of Norwegian and German ancestry, Arness was married, although that never stopped Lana.

Lana spent time off the set with Richard Davalos, cast as Naval Cadet Walter Stemme, a handsome, sensitive young man of Finnish and Spanish descent. The same year he appeared with Lana, he was cast in the role that makes him famous today, that of the older brother of James Dean in *East of Eden* (1955).

The Hollywood gossipy grapevine stretched all the way to the Hawaiian islands. Lana was enraged at the news she received. Rumors reached her that during her absence, Barker was dating other women, including a weekend spent in Palm Springs with Jayne Mansfield, the chief rival of Marilyn Monroe. Had word reached her that her husband was also seducing ten-year-old Cheryl, Lana would have flown back to the mainland at once.

Fuming and alone on Hawaii, she was determined to instigate what she called a “revenge fuck.” As a means of creating it, she turned not to Bettger, Davalos, or Farrow, but to one of Wayne’s best friends. James Arness had been cast as Schlieter.

“When I flirted with Jim Arness, I wondered how we’d fit together in bed,” Lana said to Grey. “I’m so short and he’s so tall. But we worked out an accommodation and what a thrill he was. Who said all actors are sissies? Incidentally, all his length wasn’t confined to his height, if you get my drift.”

The brother of fellow actor, Peter Graves, Arness was soon to become a household word, thanks to his performance as Marshal Matt Dillon in *Gunsmoke*, the hit TV series that ran from 1955 to 1975.

Lana’s conclusion about Arness. “In Minnesota, they grow some big boys, rearing them on corn-fed beef.”

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Wayne had arrived on location some time in advance of the shoot, and during the interim, he had gone snorkeling. It resulted in a serious ear infection that causedhim constant pain. He was taking codeine to kill the ache, especially when his ear became so swollen that Farrow had to shoot him from one side. Often, he was in such pain, he could not remember his lines. At times, his eyes looked glazed. Off screen, Lana could be seen putting ice packs on his ear.

Tab Hunter had a dread of John Wayne, who was known for calling homosexuals “fairies.” But he liked the way Hunter was handling his role, even suggesting that he might buy out his contract with Warners and assign him to his own production company, Wayne-Fellows.

“I found Wayne a straight shooter both on and off the screen,” Hunter said. “However, he had little regard “for football jocks” and deplored “macho bullshit.”

Tab Hunter, cast as Cadet Wesser, had many chances to observe Lana and Wayne. Toward the end of the decade, this handsome, blonde-haired actor became big box office for Warners.

In a memoir, he wrote, “Sparks often fly between a leading man and a leading lady. Not so with John and Lana. I felt a layer of cool between them on screen. Wayne wasn’t like Bob Mitchum, who had that twinkle about him and was a devil with women. Wayne was more like Gary Cooper who was always very professional.”

Wayne’s biographers, Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, wrote that during filming, “Lana Turner was a deeply troubled woman whose recent years had been pock-marked by soured love affairs, migraine headaches, divorces, miscarriages, and a suicide attempt, plus problems with the IRS. She found solace by drinking herself into oblivion every night. Nursing disabling hangovers, she arrived late on the set not knowing her lines.”

When she didn’t show up for five morning calls, Farrow, the director, fired her. “Get Lauren Bacall on the phone and see if she’ll fly to Honolulu. She had wanted to do the film.”

When Wayne heard that Lana had been fired, he went to Farrow and finally persuaded him to give her a second chance.

After being humiliated by her firing, she showed up on time the following morning and for subsequent morning calls too, even though she continued to drink heavily at night. Her main concern seemed to be Barker. As she told Del Armstrong, “I wonder who he’s fucking tonight,” not realizing, of course, that it might be her underaged

daughter.

Several writers had tried to fashion a script, none of which Wayne really liked. He told Lana, “Farrow took a great story and made a dime novel out of it. My role is that of an unromantic bore, just a cold, commercial guy.”

Behind the backs of Lana and Wayne, Farrow complained about them after watching the first rushes. “There is just no chemistry between them. The Duke is doped up on codeine, and Lana is drunk most of the time.”

Tab Hunter was a great fan of Lana Turner movies, and he’d later record his impression of her in a memoir: “She arrived on the floating set. She broke the ice by hunkering down in the tight space with all the rank-and-file actors. She was tiny, but every inch the radiant movie star. I was awed, just like John Garfield when he first sees her in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, wearing those little white shorts and that white turban.”

“I said the stupidest thing a twenty-three-year-old could say: ‘I’ve been a fan of yours since I was a kid.’ She shocked hell out of me by reclining langorously across my lap, looking up at me with a teasing smile. I must have turned ten shades of red. I didn’t know what to do with my hands.”

That night, at a dinner party for cast and crew at the inn where they were staying, he found himself lured into dancing the hukilau, winning a coconut frond hat. “Impulsively, he placed a plumeria *[a tropical flower akin to a frangipani]* around Lana’s neck. “Her laugh was like champagne. She was sweet and funny and down to earth, and I couldn’t wait to work with her.”

Two days later, Farrow informed Hunter that his big scene with Lana had been cut. “As for Lana, I got so tongue-tied working with her that I flubbed a line, saying, “Thanks for *looing* my *daundry.”*

As shooting progressed, Hunter grew increasingly disenchanted with Farrow. “He made a big show of his conversion to Catholicism. But in spite of his marriage, he was a garden-variety lecher. He real interest during production was doting lasciviously on Lana. Farrow was creepy, with beady eyes like a pair of piss holes in the snow. I couldn’t work up any respect for him.”

Hunter went on to say that Farrow had a “lecherous quality. There was something seedy about him.”

Cameraman William Clothier claimed that Farrow “spent much of his time chasing after Lana.”

Paul Fix was a close friend of the Duke’s and observed what was going on. He said, “Lana Turner, hangover or not, was stunning. But she seemed insecure about her talent and the script. She compensated by becoming obsessed with her looks. I mean, talk about vanity in her love scenes with Duke. She said to him, ‘Don’t touch my hair,’ or ‘Don’t smudge my makeup.’”

Later, Duke complained to Fix: “How am I supposed to make love to a woman who won’t let me touch her?”

Fix claimed, “He had to make sure that when he held her, his hands didn’t go near her hair, and when he kissed her, he couldn’t make it too passionate out of fear of ruining her makeup. That’s why the love scenes in the film looked so false.”

During the final scenes of *The Sea Chase*, Wayne’s freighter pulls into the port at Chile, where he is welcomed as a hero by the German colony. But he learns that he is still being pursued by the *Rockhampton* for his alleged killing of those fishermen at that island outpost, although it was his chief officer who had committed the atrocities.

The *Ergenstrasse* sets said for Europe, where Wayne, as captain, devises some unrealistic plan to join anti-Nazi forces to defeat Hitler. By this time in the movie, Lana’s character of Elsa has fallen madly in love with him, and she sails from Chile back into the European war theater with a reformed Nazi at her side.

Eventually, Farrer, as Napier, catches up with the freighter and sinks it with British shells.

The film does not make it clear whether Wayne and Lana escape a watery grave. At the end, Farrar, as the narrator throughout, says, “We searched for survivors, but all that we found was a riddle of the sea. Had the ocean taken them, or had they reached a nearby shore, where the fjords of Norway could hide a secret? Who can say? There are only two people who can answer that, wherever they are. But knowing Karl Ehrlich as I did, I have an opinion.”

FADE OUT

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During the filming of *The Sea Chase*, Wayne didn’t spend too much time fretting about Lana, as most of his thoughts were either on Pilar or on his ear infection. At the end of the shoot, on November 1, 1954, he would wed Pilar, his third wife, in the Hawaiian town of Kailua.

Lana was invited to the ceremony, but an hour after the shoot had finished, she left the set “in a huff,” boarding the next plane to California.

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The Sea Chase opened to bad reviews, but was saved by the pairing of Lana and Wayne. In fact, it was among the top ten grossing films of 1955, where it was up against such competition as *Oklahoma!* and *Mister Roberts*.

The New Yorker wrote, "The novel by Andrew Geer was an exciting, straightforward bit of work. You'd never know that from this cinematic interpretation."

A critic found the pairing of Lana with Wayne "the strangest casting of the year. John Wayne, that All-American hunk of man, is a German sea captain, and Lana Turner, that All-American hunk of woman, is a Nazi secret agent."

Lee Rogow, writing in *The Saturday Review*, said, "Miss Turner boarded the *Ergenstrasse* with a cruise wardrobe that would have all lady spies in town asking their governments for more charge accounts."

Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times* called *The Sea Chase* "a conventionally heroic and ideologically silly sea romance. Wayne plays it like he's herding a herd of cattle up the old Chisholm Trail. Farrow and his writers have turned the MataHari of Geer's yarn into a stiff-necked, mink-clad female spoil sport whose singular presence among all the men is about as exciting as would be that of an albatross. As played by Lana Turner, she is a gaudy but very dull bird. To see Miss Turner in oilskins—that's the end of the rope."

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After her completion of *The Sea Chase*, Lana, with Lex Barker, flew to Acapulco, their favorite retreat in Mexico. For years, she'd rented a small cottage on the grounds of Villa Vera, owned by the former bandleader, Teddy Stauffer. His former wife, Hedy Lamarr, had long gone. The villa had been the scene for some of Lana's trysts with Howard Hughes.

Barker, too, had developed a fondness for the resort, enough so that he and Lana decided to buy a strip of land that opened onto the water and a good, sandy beach.

She was overly committed financially, with bills piling up and thousands still owed to the IRS. To pay for the land, she asked her jeweler in Beverly Hills to sell the marquise diamond that Bob Topping had dropped into her martini in a Manhattan nightclub when he'd proposed to her. The sale of the ring was enough to purchase the beautiful strip of land where they planned to erect a "love cottage."

During his time at the resort, Barker also purchased an adorable little German Shepherd puppy which he named "Pulco." Lana didn't really want to return home with this dog, but Barker insisted. "It was love at first sight between Pulco and Lex," she said.

Back at the villa, Barker always paraded around in the nude, evoking the lifestyle (and exhibitionism) of Fernando Lamas. She found this disconcerting, because she was certain that the two Mexican houseboys hired by Stauffer were gay. "They seemed to devour Lex with their eyes," she said. "I came to realize that Lex was an exhibitionist."

One afternoon, when Barker went on a fishing trip with Stauffer, she stayed behind. Her friend and former agent, Henry Willson, had arrived in Mexico with one of his latest beefcake discoveries. Lana invited him over "for a girl-to-girl talk."

Since Willson had already undressed Barker on that long-ago night of her first date with him, she felt that she could talk candidly with him. She shared her concerns about Barker, suggesting that if Sol Lesser had asked him to, Barker would have cheerfully appeared in those Tarzan films without the loincloth.

Willson had seen the two Mexican houseboys, and, using his gay radar, he told her that both of them were definitely homosexual.

"Lex lies nude around the pool, and the boys always find some reason to cluster around him. As you know, he's very well hung, but he seems to fluff himself up around these boys, much to their delight. Actually, I think those kids are in love with Lex. They'd be his slave if asked."

She also revealed that Barker was very oral, and he wanted her to reciprocate "in ways that I'm not prepared to do."

"In other words, a tongue on his rosebud," Willson said.

"Is that what you gay guys call it? I think that's repulsive."

"Actually, it's quite enjoyable," Willson responded. "I demand it from my stable of actors."

Then, she shared her suspicions that whenever she was away from the villa, Barker got the boys to service him —"doing things I won't do."

"Well, dear one," Willson said. "Men from Rock Hudson to Guy Madison will be men. You can't trust them out of your sight."

"What should I do?" she lamented.

"Nothing. If someone has to do the dirty deed for Lex, just be grateful it's not you. Let's face it: You just don't

know what a great sexual thrill that is for some people, even certain women."

"You mean, whores?" she asked.

"You'd be surprised how many ladies become whores in bed, or so I've heard."

"You were seen around town with Margaret Truman some time back. Was that a torrid affair?"

"Oh, please!" I just took her out. Perhaps she was in love with me, I don't know. The point is, I'm not in love with her…or with any woman, except you, my love. I positively adore you, but from a safe distance, of course."

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[In her memoirs, Lana recalled Pulco growing up, turning from an adorable little puppy into a ferocious, 75-pound dog who seemed to want to charge anyone who came onto the property. After he attacked the postman, he sued for damages.

"Pulco is starry-eyed whenever Lex pulls into the driveway," Lana told Mildred. "He runs to his car and collapses in his arms. Let anyone else come around, and Pulco becomes vicious. He will attack if not restrained."

The dog was allowed to roam the property, which was encircled with stone walls and chain-link fences. Their neighbors at the time were Judy Garland and Sid Luft, living in their house with Liza Minnelli, Judy's daughter.

Cheryl and Liza became playmates. But one afternoon, young Liza crawled over the stone wall that separated the two properties.

The young girl fell a few feet onto Lana's grounds. Pulco, with fangs bared, darted toward her, tearing into the flesh of her right leg.

In her kitchen, Lana heard the screams and rushed out the door to keep Pulco from devouring Liza.

Garland, in her bedroom upstairs, with the windows opened, had heard her daughter scream. She made her way downstairs and through the gate adjoining the two properties.

To Lana, she appeared drugged when she tried to attend to her daughter. Fortunately, her maid summoned an ambulance, which rushed Liza to a hospital. There, she had to submit to twenty-one stitches to her leg before she was allowed to go home.

That night, when Sid Luft returned home, he wanted to file a lawsuit against Lana until Garland talked him out of it.

Lana urged Barker to get rid of Pulco, but he adamantly refused, reminding her that she'd been receiving a lot of threats, and that it was necessary to have an attack dog on the premises in case some prowler crawled over the walls or fences at night.

She relented, and let Pulco stay in her house. However, within a few months, she'devict the dog and Barker, too.]

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When Dore Schary informed the English actor, Roger Moore, that he been given the third lead in Lana Turner's latest picture, *Diane* (1956), he was delighted.

Later, in the MGM commissary, he met up with his friend and fellow Englishman, Edmund Purdom, who had recently made *The Prodigal* with Lana. Moore shared his good news with his friend, who didn't seem all that delighted. Purdom frowned, saying, "I guess that's all right if you don't mind a lot of booze and sex in Turner's dressing room."

[Moore thought that was an ungracious response to his big break until he learned that Schary had first assigned the male lead in Diane *to Purdom, who then lost the part after Lana announced to Schary that she refused to make another movie with him.]*

Around the same time, Schary summoned Lana to his office to inform her that she'd been cast in another picture, a 16th Century saga titled *Diane*, based on Diane de Poitiers

She protested, "Not another costume picture after we bombed with *The Prodigal*. And who is this Diane?"

He gave her a fast lesson in Renaissance French history, explaining that Diane de Poitiers (1499-1566) was a French noblewoman and the courtesan of Henri II, King of France. Her bitter rival was Catherine de Medici, the jealous and temperamental wife of the king. He went on to explain that Diane was "the most cultivated woman of the French Renaissance," though sometimes evaluated as "a silken, 16th Century tramp."

"Naturally, I get another tramp role," she said. "By the way, who is my leading man?"

"Roger Moore,"

"I know of him only because I saw him in *Interrupted Melody* with Eleanor Parker and Glenn Ford, a role originally intended for me. I don't know much about this Moore fellow."

Schary explained that he'd been a model known for posing in sweaters, and he'd become known as "The Big Knit."

"He also appears in some toothpaste ads," he said.

"Oh, goodie, goodie. At least, unlike Purdom and Ezio Pinza, with their garlic breath, he sounds kissable."

"Better lay off," Schary warned her. He just recently got married to some Welsh singer."

"I'll try to restrain myself," she promised. "I don't understand why you won't let me play a modern woman. I want to star in contemporary dramas about today's woman."

Schary explained that Diane de Poitiers was actually a forerunner of the modern woman. "She was Europe's first outdoor girl, a health fan, an advocate of the cold bath, and a devoted horse rider. She wasn't afraid to use her head, but was never caught with her brains showing."

Lana learned later from the producer, Edwin H. Knopf, that Metro had originally acquired the property for Greta Garbo, hoping to lure her out of retirement. Then, later, Schary had offered the script to Greer Garson. This staunch English-woman had little interest in playing "the whore of a French king."

When Moore was told who his fellow players were, he was at least mildly surprised. "I am an Englishman playing a French prince, Henri II. My father, King Francis I, was to be played by a Mexican, Pedro Armendáriz. Lana, of course, was an American cast as a French courtesan. My wife, Catherine de Medici, I thought was going to be played by Nicole Maury, the splendid French actress, but David Miller, our director, rejected her because she had a French accent. Instead, the role went to Marisa Pavan, the twin sister of Pier Angeli, who is Italian. Hollywood… You figure."

Before shooting began, Lana met with both Miller and also the producer, Edwin H. Knopf. He had launched the 1953 hit musical, *Lili*, starring Leslie Caron, Mel Ferrer, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and Jean-Pierre Aumont, Lana's former lover. Knopf also worked with many big stars, including Gary Cooper, Gregory Peck, Robert Taylor, and Greer Garson.

Diane de Poitiers (1499-1566), the French noblewoman portrayed by Lana, became—through diplomatic skill, charm, beauty, good advice, and perhaps witchcraft—the "favorite" of one of the most powerful kings of the French Renaissance, Henri II.

As a film director, Miller had had a varied career, having helmed pictures that included John Wayne in *Flying Tigers* (1943), and the Marx Brothers in *Love Happy* (1949), featuring a young Marilyn Monroe.

In *Diane*, Lana's actual husband was Count de Brézé (Torin Thatcher), although she becomes the mistress of Prince Henri (Moore). After the death of his father, the king, Henri inherits the throne. But his affair with Diane continues even after his politically motivated marriage to Catherine de Medici.

She is antagonistic to Diane, and her scheming eventually results in the death of Henri. Ruling as regent, she banishes Diane from the court, but spares her life.

Noted for the opulence of its Renaissance-era costumes, Lana, as Diane de Poitiers, was lavishly outfitted in costumes that included this awe-inspiring confection of velvet, ermine, and gold braid.

In a memoir, Moore, the screen's future James Bond, said he could be grateful to Lana for teaching him to "screen kiss." He claimed that at the age of twenty-eight, already into his second marriage and several girlfriends, he had always thought of himself as a good kisser. On hearing of the death of Francis I, and his upcoming ascension to the throne of France, he turns to Lana. "You made me a prince. Now make me a king."

"Our lips met, and I gave her the kiss of all kisses," he said.

Lana, as a grand diva, pushed him away and coughed. "Cut! CUT!" she called to Miller, before turning to Moore: "Honey, you're a great kisser. But I'm over thirty-five, and I've got to be careful of my neckline. So, could you kiss with the same passion, but without the pressure?"

Her leading man, not her screen lover, was actually Armendáriz. Along with Maria Félix and Dolores del Rio, he was among the best-known Latin American screen stars of the 1940s and '50s.

Lana (as Diane) met her screen rival, Marisa Pavan (playing Catherine de Medici) and spoke about having worked with her twin sister, Pier Angeli in *Flame and the Flesh* in Italy. Pavan was dating Jean-Pierre Aumont and would marry him the following year. "He's great in bed," Lana told Pavan.

Her remark was not appreciated.

In one particularly difficult scene in *Diane*, a CinemaScope epic, Moore, now ascended to the throne, was slated for the filming of an episode on horseback. Astride the horse as it headed at a fast pace toward a wall, his feet became separated from the saddle's stirrups, and he hit the ground really hard. Members of the crew rushed to his side, where they removed his armor to see if any bones had been broken.

Rushing to the scene, Lana called out in a loud voice, "Is his cock all right?"

Moore recorded her question in his memoirs. Her query suggested that Moore might have been servicing her throughout the shoot, but that doesn't appear to be the case.

"Thankfully, nothing was broken, not even my cock, but I was badly bruised. So was my ego."

During filming, Lana was being serviced by another cock, which had been injured, but which was back performing again.

The notorious Freddy, frequented the set almost every day. On each occasion, he visited Lana's dressing room.

The future James Bond, Roger Moore, claimed that Lana taught him the art of the "screen kiss—that is, passion without pressure. Don't ruin the hair or a woman's makeup."

As Moore wrote, "Freddy was terribly well endowed. On crowd days at MGM, he would get it out to show it around for fifty cents per person. On days when 1,000 people showed up, you can see how profitable an exercise it was for him."

Errol Flynn used Freddy for a gag he'd play at the dinner parties he hosted. Once, Flynn dressed him up as a butler in white tie and tails and placed his massive appendage on a silver tray filled with shrimp. Guests were asked to serve themselves from the tray until one of them screamed at the discovery, buried amid the shrimp and lettuce, of his large penis.

Shelley Winters was on to Flynn's trick, and she deliberately stuck her fork sharply into Freddy's penis, causing him to scream out in pain.

Fortunately, by the time Lana filmed *Diane*, his "money-maker" was back in operation. He charged a man or a woman fifty dollars for a private session.

Lana had confided to Miller that she found Moore very attractive and planned to seduce him. At the wrap party signaling the end of shooting for *Diane*, cast and crew gathered in a nightclub setting, which was used for the film, *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955), starring Doris Day and James Cagney.

Moore sat on the steps of the mock dance floor with a drink in hand. Lana approached from behind and began a slow, sensual massage of his shoulders. He was just getting into enjoying the massage, when he heard a strong, masculine voice ring out: "Hi, honey!"

He turned to star into the face of a giant of a man, Tarzan himself, Lex Barker, A jealous husband had come for his wife.

"I got the message quick," Moore said.

Two days later, when Lana visited the studio for some publicity stills, Christopher Isherwood, the famous author of *The Berlin Stories*, invited her to lunch. He had written the screenplay for *Diane* based on a story by John Erskine.

Over lunch, he told her fascinating stories about Diane de Poitiers that hadn't been included in the film. She had retained her good looks well into her 50s, her appearance immortalized in sculpture and in paintings. Rumor had it that she maintained her beauty through witchcraft. She was also known for drinking gold, pulverized into powder and flakes and mixed with wine. *[Indeed, she did. In 2009, when French experts dug up her remains, they found high levels of gold in her hair.]*

Over coffee, Isherwood spoke of the difficulty he was having with the censors at the Breen Office. "They claim I condone adultery. Frankly, if they had their way, I think those blue noses would punish adultery by stoning homosexuals and burning them alive."

In this tender scene, Lana as Diane offers comfort to Prince Henri (later, King Henri II), as played by Roger Moore.

"I could have offered him even more comfort off screen," she said. "But, alas, it was not meant to be."

At a screening of *Diana*, Isherwood invited one of his best friends, Tennessee Williams, who had once tried to write a screenplay for Lana himself.

At the end of the screening, Isherwood asked the playwright for his opinion. "I think Lana never looked lovelier."

Isherwood claimed that the script would have been better if Lana had not interfered so frequently with the director.

In advance of its release, MGM launched an aggressive publicity campaign: LANA TURNER DARES THE DEVIL IN DIANE.

Privately, she complained, "I hope this is the last time I'll have to appear in those costume stinkers."

Most of the reviews were bad. Arthur Weiler of *The New York Times* found *Diane* "more stately than exciting, more pageant than play." However, critic Frank Quinn called Diane "a brilliant Renaissance film."

As Moore lamented, "*Diane* was a huge flop and I was fired."

Lana herself would, indeed, be fired, but not until she completed one more loan-out from her home studio. *Diane* would be the last movie she ever made on the MGM lot.

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After the filming of *Diane*, Lana, with Lex Barker, returned to their rented villa in Acapulco for a holiday. As she later wrote, "I nearly didn't come back."

On their first day in Mexico, he invited her to the beach for a swim. He did not go into the water himself, but lay on the sands for a while, reading a novel that some author had sent him, hoping he would star in a movie adaptation, cast as a serial seducer. He soon fell asleep on the beach.

Enjoying the warm waters offshore, she at first found the ocean, the sun, and the cool breezes refreshing. In desperate need of a rest, she'd been wrestling with three major problems: A lack of money, a deteriorating marriage, and a movie career drifting into limbo.

Suddenly, without warning, a mammoth wave swept toward the shore, trapping her in its undertow. "I was drowning. The wave sucked me down as the water swirled around me. I was spinning like a top. I thrashed about like a wildcat trying to break the watery grip of this riptide. I just knew I was going to die."

"Suddenly, Tarzan must have awakened from his slumber. He didn't see my head in the water, and he jumped up, later telling me, 'I have never swimmed so fast in my life.' I felt him grab my ankle and yank me out of my watery grave. Tarzan to the rescue. He was the man to save me. After all, he'd fought with ferocious, man-eating alligators in the rivers of Africa. He brought me ashore and gently put me down on the sands. I was gasping for breath itself while coughing up water from my lungs."

"But that was not the end of my troubles on that fateful day."

Back at the villa, she wanted to take a long shower, not only to remove the sand from her body, but hoping it would steady her shattered nerves. Her near-death experience had left her badly shaken.

Barker, too, was upset, but one of the gay Mexican houseboys agreed to take him to the bedroom for an "in-depth massage."

She stayed under the refreshing water for nearly ten minutes, although she wondered why she wouldn't be afraid of water for the rest of her life. After the shower, she cut off the water, and stepped out of the pink marble bathtub. Missing her footing, she fell back, hitting her head on the far side of the tub. The blow was so hard it knocked her out.

When she awakened, a doctor, along with Barker, was standing over her. The doctor reported she had suffered a concussion and should be examined more thoroughly at the local hospital.

She spent two days there, feeling despair, almost abandonment. The doctor told her that he feared she would suffer dizzy spells and migraine headaches during the months ahead.

His diagnosis was correct. Throughout the remainder of the autumn of 1954, and into the winter and spring of the following year, these ailments persisted in causing her pain and suffering.

Barker showed up only once during her hospital stay, claiming that he had met a producer from Universal, who was going to try to cast him in "a meaty drama," in which he'd have the lead, perhaps opposite Piper Laurie.

She got into a fierce argument with him. At the end of their abortive "holiday," both of them flew back to Los Angeles in relative silence.

She later learned from her host, Ted Stauffer, in Acapulco, that Barker spent time within the villa of Merle Oberon, the porcelain-skinned film star and nymphomaniac, who had seduced many of Lana's former lovers: Turhan Bey, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, and Rex Harrison, plus countless others, including Prince Philip of England.

When Lana learned about her husband's adultery in Mexico, she said, "Now I have a new female on my hate list."

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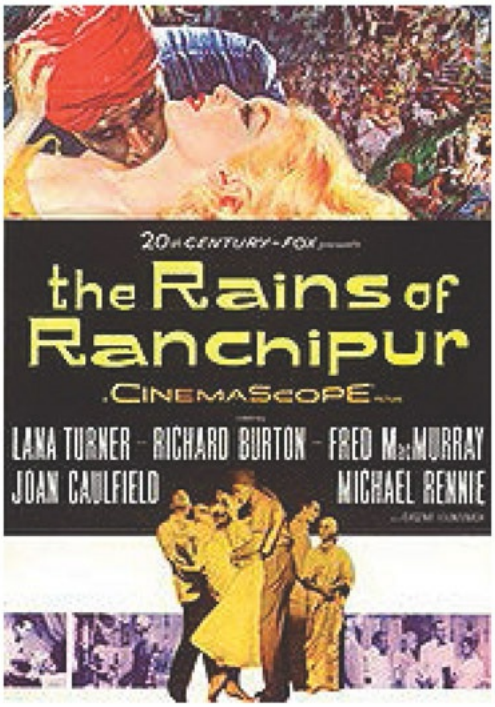
Lana's final film for MGM was a loan-out to Fox for *The Rains of Ranchipur* (1955), which she'd made after *Diane*. But its remake of the 1939 *The Rains Came* would be in the movie houses before MGM released the ill-fated *Diane.*



Shooting began only two days after her return from Mexico. Dore Schary could get another $300,000 by

lending her services out to Fox. Darryl F. Zanuck had always wanted her to work for Fox, or so he had said. She claimed, “He’s more interested in seducing me than starring me in any movie.”

In spite of her protests, Schary insisted that she fulfill her contract. Her scenes would be filmed in Hollywood, so she would not have to travel abroad.

Producer Frank Ross visited her home, and she warned him of her splitting migraines and occasional dizziness, but he promised he’d film his way around them.

During his talk with Lana, Barker, clad in a very brief bikini, emerged dripping wet from the swimming pool.

Lana later said, “Perhaps he thought Ross was a homosexual, which he was not.”

Barker had read the script of *The Rains of Ranchipur*, and he pitched himself for either the role of Lana’s husband in the movie, an English lord, or else for the part of Tom Ransome, a semi-alcoholic, disillusioned American engineer.

Ross told him he’d already cast Michael Rennie as the lord, and Fred MacMurray as the engineer.

“Tarzan sulked for the rest of the day,” Lana claimed.

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Lana was to report to Fox the following Monday morning. On the set, she’d meet her co-star, Richard Burton.

Barker had warned Ross, “The reputation of that horndog has already preceded him. If he makes a move toward Lana, you’ll have to get someone to dub his voice, because I’ll turn him into a soprano.”

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There was a certain irony in casting Lana in *The Rains of Ranchipur*. Back in 1939, when she was new to Hollywood, she came very close to getting cast in the original version of this drama, a film entitled *The Rains Came*, based on a novel by Louis Bromfield. Its plot involved the effect that a devastating earthquake has on a widely mixed group of “saints and sinners” in British colonial India.

Its director, Clarence Brown, had originally offered Lana the *ingénue* role of Fern Simon, but MGM refused to lend her to Fox. Instead, Louis B. Mayer assigned her to three other pictures that year—*Calling Dr. Kildare*, *These Glamour Girls*, and *Dancing Co-Ed*. Consequently, she had not been available for *The Rains Came*. She was very disappointed, because it would be her only chance to co-star with her all-time heartthrob and future lover, Tyrone Power.

In Lana’s place, starlet Brenda Joyce was cast in the Fern Simon role. There was another irony here, too, since a decade later, Joyce would play Jane to Lex Barker’s Tarzan in *Tarzan’s Magic Fountain* (1949). As Lana jokingly said, “Brenda got to swing on Barker’s vine before I did.”

Without Lana, Brown rounded out the ’39 cast with Myrna Loy as Lady Edwina Esketh, supported by George Brent, Nigel Bruce, and the formidable Russian actress, Marie Ouspenskaya, playing the regal Maharini.

Sixteen years later, for the ’55 remake, Lana was too old to play the *ingénue*. This time around, producer Ross cast his wife, Joan Caulfield, in the role of the younger woman. A model during World War II, Caulfield had established a reputation for playing roles that were “wholesome, pretty, and blonde.”

Instead, Lana, now a more mature woman, was given the role of Lady Edwina Esketh, the character previously portrayed by Myrna Loy. Merle Miller, the gay novelist and biographer, rewrote the character, transforming Lady Edwina into a wealthy American heiress married to a weak man she loathed, Lord Esketh (played by the British actor, Michael Rennie).

Lana, as Edwina Esketh, treats her husband, Lord Esketh (Michael Rennie) as a servant. She'd wed a title, and he'd married her for her money.

The original *Rain* was in black and white. For the 1955 remake, 20th Century Fox lavishly (and expensively) filmed it in CinemaScope and DeLuxe color.

Before filming began, its director, Jean Negulesco announced to the press that there were only three women in Hollywood capable of playing Lady Esketh: Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, or Rita Hayworth. This would be Lana's first film for Fox.

Is an earthquake on the way? Lana, in the arms of Richard Burton, cast as a Hindi doctor, fears disaster, as does the alcoholic, Tom Ransome (Fred MacMurray).

She would headline a cast that included Richard Burton, playing the Hindu Dr. Safti (the role originally handled by Power). Fred MacMurray would portray Tom Ransome (the role originally assigned to George Brent. And whereas Nigel Bruce had played the heroine's husband in the original 1939 version, Rennie was assigned the role in the 1955 re-make. The Maharani would be played by the Russian stage actress, Eugenie Leontovich, that country's answer to Sarah Bernhardt or Italy's Eleonore Duse.

Lana plays a bored, blatant man hunter, although her stated purpose of being in India was to purchase race horses. *[Actually, the exterior shots were filmed in Pakistan.]* Her marriage to Rennie is loveless. She is introduced

to the Hindu doctor (Burton was miscast). Although he resists her at first, he eventually falls under her seductive powers.

MacMurray is the hard-drinking Tom, who eventually wins back his self-respect and the love of Simon (Caulfield).

Ross, the producer, had previously made *The Robe* (1953) with Burton. He had once been married to screen legend, Jean Arthur, another blonde. Ross was anxious to work with Burton again. At the time, Burton was only a minor actor in Hollywood, years away from playing Marc Antony opposite Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra* (1963).

The Romania-born director, Negulesco, was very experienced, having previously helmed Jane Wyman in her Oscar-winning performance in *Johnny Belinda* (1948) and Marilyn Monroe in *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953). He'd also directed such divas as Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford before making his most recent hit, *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954).

Even though she was the producer's wife, Lana made no special attempt to ingratiate herself with Caulfield. She did remind her that she had originally been slated to play her role in *The Rains Came.*

"Oh, that was so long ago," Caulfield said. "I also heard that you had been set to star in *The Petty Girl* (1950), but, of course, the part went to me."

After that remark, Lana got a little catty with this former cover girl and Broadway *ingénue*. "Your career may be in danger with the arrival of Grace Kelly," Lanatold Caulfield. "She has your cultivated manner, but does it better." Lana was right, as she was around to watch Caulfield's screen career fizzle.

Michael Rennie, cast as Lana's husband, generated no excitement from her on or off the screen. She had recently seen him in *The King of the Khyber Rifles* the year before, but only because Tyrone Power was the star.

During Rennie's talks with Lana, he said, "I suppose women find me attractive because I am polite, charming, courteous, and a gentleman. My romantic reputation is an exaggeration. The realities are a bit different."

"I can believe that," she said. She noted that the English actor bonded more naturally with Burton than with her, as he'd recently made *The Robe* with the Welsh-man.

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When Lana saw the rushes, she told the director that she'd never been photographed so beautifully. She thanked Fox's Milton Krasner.

Helen Rose, one of her alltime favorite designers, had worked with her on such films as *The Bad and the Beautiful*, and she came through for her once again. Lana looked like a high fashion model.

The special effects would bring an Oscar nomination to Ray Kellogg. He simulated an earthquake which destroys a bridge and a huge dam, bringing floods, death, and destruction to the little town in India. Unlike the original version, in the remake, Lana was allowed to survive.

In the plot, writer Miller has Rennie denounce his wife as "selfish, greedy, corrupt, and decadent." She is a true *femme fatale.*

Her best line, delivered near the end of the movie, is uttered during a face-off with Leonotovich. "I don't give a damn," Lana says. The word damn did not cause the outrage it did when Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, in the closing scene of *Gone With the Wind*, tells Scarlett: "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

But this was 1955, not 1939.

The Rains of Ranchipur was Fox's feature film for the Christmas season of 1955, opening in theaters across the country.

Reviews were mixed. But whereas purists preferred the original Loy/Power film from 1939, *Redbook* selected the '55 version as "Picture of the Month," and the *New York Daily News* awarded it the top rating of four stars.

The movie was not a hit at the box office, garnering far fewer viewers than anticipated. At some showings, it half filled an auditorium, if that. Fox tried hard, with provocative advertising of sexy Lana and sexy Burton. One ad had Burton sneering at her: "I wonder what the word for you is in Hindi. In English, it's only one syllable."

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Although Lana, in her memoirs, promised to tell "The Truth," she gave a very incomplete rendition of her love/hate relationship with Richard Burton during the making of *The Rains of Ranchipur*, which was shot in Hollywood, not on location in India.

No doubt, she was restrained in her recollections because at the time that she worked with him, he was still married to actress Sybil Williams. As a potential lover, Lana wasn't robbing the cradle, as he was only four years younger than she was.

She wrote that it was hard for her to simulate any sexual chemistry with Burton in their love scenes, with her as a predatory American heiress and he as a noble Hindu doctor. At first, she was put off by his attitude, attacking his "bloated self-image." Behind his back, sometimes in the company of Rennie and MacMurray, she mocked and denounced him.

Burton constantly argued with the director, Negulesco, who accused him of not being very convincing as a Hindu.

"I'm a proud Welshman," he shot back. "Not a god damn raghead Indian."

Lana noted that Burton spent his time off-camera in his dressing room "seducing our dusky little extras, for whom he developed a great fondness."

What Lana left out of her memoirs was that after only three weeks, she, too, succumbed to the sexual magnetism of Burton and his Welsh charm, especially his speaking voice, which was the most alluring she'd ever heard.

He could be very candid about his sex life, even admitting, "Perhaps most actors are latent homosexuals, and we cover it up with drink. I was once a homosexual, but it didn't take."

[No doubt, he was referring to his time in the 1940s when, as a young actor, he was trying to break into the theater. He was seduced by some of its VIP notables, namely Emlyn Williams, Laurence Olivier, and John Gielgud.

Burton later seduced not only actresses, such as Sophia Loren, Raquel Welch, Barbra Streisand, Rachel Roberts, Tammy Grimes, Ava Gardner, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Geneviève Bujold, and especially Claire Bloom, but Elizabeth, Princess of Yugoslavia, and even a toothless middle-aged Jamaican maid "when I woke up with a big hard-on as she came in to clean my bedroom."]

The story of Burton's seduction of Lana was finally revealed in Michael Munn's biography, *Prince of Players*, published in 2008. Skyhorse Publishing advertised it as "Burton's darkest thoughts and secrets, revealing hell-raising stories that Hollywood quashed in order to save Burton's early film career—including affairs with Marilyn Monroe and Lana Turner, being caught in a brothel with Errol Flynn, and a fistfight with Frank Sinatra."

Munn was a friend of both Burton and Ava Gardner, who at the time was a rival goddess at MGM, vying with Lana, sometimes for the same film roles. Amazingly, they remained close friends, although later, their amity would get frayed, especially after Gardner, when drunk, would make derogatory remarks about Lana.

Gardner once told Munn, in reference to Lana, "That tramp fucked everyone. She fucked Burton. I bet it was one time he didn't have to chase. She would have gone after him."

"I suggest it takes two to tango, baby, and she saw Rich as a bit of a trophy. She felt she could have anyone she wanted. She wanted him because he had a reputation for fucking every one of his leading ladies."

When Lana heard about Gardner's gossipy evaluation of the situation, shequipped, "How can a pot call a kettle black?"

Munn told Burton what Gardner had said. Burton replied, "I was ever so happy being Lana's trophy during the filming of that *Ranchipur* movie. The film bored me to death, although I did my best with it. I liked to joke, 'It never rains but what it Ranchipurs.' Between takes, there was only one thing to do to make the time pass more agreeably. Lana and I passed the time together. She set out to get me, and I allowed myself to be caught. Why not? Who knows who else she was bedding? I didn't care, and I didn't ask."

A few years later, right before Burton headed for Rome to make *Cleopatra* (1963) with Elizabeth Taylor, Lana encountered him at a Hollywood party. He had been drinking heavily. She congratulated him on winning the role of Marc Antony, although he didn't seem to be looking forward to it.

"Whether she knows it or not, Miss Taylor is going to make me a star," he vowed. "I going to use that no-talent Hollywood nothing."

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In 1970, Burton recorded in his diaries: "Elizabeth watched me in an old film last night, *The Rains of Ranchipur*, which I made with Lana Turner way back when. Elizabeth said I was very handsome and sexy-looking, and the film was nothing like as bad as I had said it was. Perhaps it's mellowed with age."

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After wrapping *The Rains of Ranchipur* for Fox, Lana paid a final visit to MGM to pick up her clothing and other possessions. She got out of her car for a farewell look at the studio where she'd once reigned as queen in the 1940s.

MGM had notified her on February of 1956 that her contract had not been renewed. "It is not our intention to

make any more Lana Turner pictures," a lawyer for MGM had written.

Packing up her things in her dressing room, she wondered what new and younger star would be occupying it.

She checked her face in the mirror, relieved that at thirty-six, a fatal age for most Hollywood actresses, she still looked beautiful, except for a minor telltale sign of age here and there. She called this period in her life a time of emotional trauma. Lex Barker still offered sex with a powerful weapon, but he was having a hard time finding suitable vehicles for himself in his post-Tarzan years.

In her time, she'd earned millions for MGM, but that was in the days of Louis B. Mayer. The former mogul had been booted out in June of 1951. He defiantly issued a statement to the press which Lana read: "I am going to be more active than at any time during the last fifteen years. It will be at a studio and under conditions where I shall have the right to make the right kind of pictures—decent, wholesome pictures for Americans and for people throughout the world who want and need this type of entertainment."

It was an idle boast, as Lana sensed it would be, although he called her twice with picture ideas, for which he never arranged financing. At least he continued to think of her as a bankable star.

Mayer died in 1957, and with his passing went Lana's glory days at MGM.

During her last hour at MGM, no one came forward to tell her goodbye, except the two old guards at the gate. Some unknown grip called out to her, "Are you finished, Miss Turner?"

Too choked up to answer, she drew a finger across her throat to signal "Cut!"

The guards told her goodbye. She paused before driving through the gate. Nostalgia was telling her to look back for a final gaze at the studio that had made her an international legend.

"What the hell!" she said. "Fuck nostalgia!"

Without looking back, she headed down the street in her car.

That glory that was MGM and the glory that was Lana Turner were over. She recalled, "A movie MGM made said it all: *Gone With the Wind."*

The Hindu doctor, Richard Burton, nibbles at the neck of Lady Esketh (Lana herself). He boasted, "It's not really a triumph to be a success with these Hollywood ladies, because they have so little opportunity with real men. If there's a dame on the set, I can't screw, my name is not Richard Burton. And I'm including that very stuck-up Lana Turner in that. The more stuck-up they appear, the more likely you are to encounter them at the bottom of the orgy pile."

Chapter Fifteen

Tarzan Is Revealed as a Child Rapist

Lana in Her First Mother Role

On April 15, 1957, Hollywood learned that that Lana had changed her mind. In a column headlined LUSCIOUS LANA TO PLAY MOTHER ROLE, Louella Parsons revealed that Lana had at last accepted the starring role, that of Constance, in "the salacious *Peyton Place*…This will be the first time that Lana has stepped out of her glamour roles, but this is going to be such a picture she'd be foolish not to accept it, *pronto.*"

Fans bombarded Fox with letters, most of them urging glamorous *femme fatale* Lana not to switch to maternal parts. For Lana, however, her agreement to play Connie would be a forerunner for many equivalent roles in her future, notably *Imitation of Life*.

Throughout the course of 1956, Hollywood reporters were still fascinated by the life and loves of Lana Turner, still viewing her as hot copy, even though she'd been fired by MGM.

"She wasn't turned on by most of the emerging pretty boys that came along in the 1950s," said Del Armstrong, her makeup man and confidant.

"She'd already had James Dean, but told me she found him a bit creepy. Montgomery Clift was a film star, but he was gay and a bit weird. Marlon Brando was too much of a brute for her. The one emerging new actor who really turned her on was Robert Wagner. Press agent George Nichols told me that he saw Wagner disappearing into her dressing room during her last weeks at MGM."

A reporter, Joe Hyams, visited her at her home, where she came out to greet him in a black sweater, black slacks, and gold sandals. "She looked as beautiful as ever—still very fuckable, a living wet dream."

She welcomed him warmly, offering him a drink. "I think she'd had a few belts before I got there."

She settled onto her sofa in her most seductive pose, telling him, "I've been sprung from jail. I'm still walking around in a daze, as if I can't believe it. For all of my adult life, I've been in bondage to MGM except for that brief stint at Warners in the 1930s when I screwed Ronald Reagan. Don't print that last remark. He's settled down with Nancy now, as you know."

"I had become a fixture at Metro, like the Thalberg Building. If Louis B. Mayer or Dore Schary had a rotten picture to make, they'd say, 'Give it to Lana. Maybe she can save it.' If I absolutely refused to do it, they'd threaten to suspend me or else give it to Ava Gardner."

"Time and again on bended nylon, I pleased with the front office to give me better scripts. Joan Crawford at MGM did that before they dumped her. The last time I begged, I was cast in *The Prodigal*. Thanks a lot, guys"

"I'm thinking about forming my own production company, Lanturn. Lex Barker wants us to team up like Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn did, except I don't think the two of us on screen would be typical family fare. Our love scenes wouldn't be for the Disney people."

Later, after Hyams left, she said she hoped that she'd concealed her fragility. In many ways, her world seemed to be crumbling.

She'd been forced to sell her mansion in Holmby Hills for payment of back income taxes.

When she told her neighbor goodbye, Judy Garland wasn't all that encouraging. "Oh, Lana dear, it'll be our fate: We'll both end up, deserted by men, two old alcoholic hags with dreams of yesterday. I'll be singing 'Over the Rainbow' in some seedy tavern filled with whores and their pimps."

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Despite her bravado, Lana faced one turbulent conflict after another. Chief among them was her deteriorating marriage to Barker. Ironically, the studio that hired her as a freelancer was Universal-International, the same studio that had Barker under contract, starring in a string of low-budget "B" pictures. Lana had seen them, privately, saying, "B is too high a rating for that garbage Lex is turning out."

Barker was in Rome making another of his cheapie pictures for an Italian film company. As Fellini said, "Rome is becoming the stockyard for Hollywood movie stars past their prime."

On the lot at Universal, during her filming of *The Lady Takes a Flyer* (1958), Lana began hearing reports that her adulterous husband was "sleeping his way" through the starlets, one by one, evocative of how Clark Gable had seduced MGM's leading ladies in the 1930s.

Del Armstrong was often at Lana's side, listening to her marital woes and, on occasion, doing her make-up. "Lex is getting home later and later every night," she told him. "On some nights, he doesn't show up at all. He never tells me where he's been, and I never ask. Perhaps I don't want to hear."

Often, when he did come home, she fought with him about money. Her salary at MGM had been larger than his, but now her paychecks were no longer delivered by the postman, who didn't even ring once.

"I knew my star status threatened him. He left the Tarzan pictures to become the leading male star of the 1950s. Now Rock Hudson seemed to be taking over. There was also an array of pretty boys who were ascending: Jeffrey Hunter, Robert Wagner, Tony Curtis, Tab Hunter, Tony Perkins, Troy Donahue, Paul Newman, and John Derek. Warren Beatty would be lurking around the corner in the near future. Lex didn't seem to fit in with these male beauties. He had been born in 1919, and these guys were hatched yesterday."

One affair of Barker's particularly infuriated Lana when she heard the gossip coming from the set of *The Girl From the Kremlin* (1957). In this picture, the star was her old rival, Zsa Zsa Gabor.

"If God did create Adam, as rumor has it, and a director wanted to make a film about the guy, Lex Barker would be my top choice for the role," gushed Zsa Zsa. "He is living proof that all men were not created equal. He is the greatest physical specimen. Coming from me, *dahlink*, that's quite a compliment, since I'm the best judge of male flesh."

She was cast in a dual role in the movie, her most improbable character that of Greta Grisenko, the nurse of Josef Stalin. Her less malevolent twin, Lili, hires an O.S.S. agent (Barker) to locate her sister in Moscow.

"During the shoot, Lex was a man after my own heart," Gabor said. "I was expecting to meet some Tarzan beefcake, but I encountered a cultured, refined man who came from a society background and had gone to Princeton."

A cinematic quickie, *The Girl From the Kremlin* was shot in just ten days during February of 1957 on a budget of $300,000. In movie annals, it's listed as one of the worst films ever made, standing alongside *They Saved Hitler's Brain* (1963).

It flopped at the box office and was lambasted by critics, at least by those who had nothing else to review the day it opened. The *San Francisco Chronicle* defined it as "the most absurd motion picture of the year. *Variety* headlined its review: IF JOE STALIN DIDN'T DIE, THE GIRL IN THE KREMLIN SHOULD.

Later in life, gossipy Zsa Zsa said, "Lana Turner and I sometimes had the same men as Eva (her sister) and I did. To name a few: Richard Burton, Sean Connery, Conrad Hilton, Clark Gable, Howard Hughes, John F. Kennedy, Peter Lawford, Dean Martin, Tyrone Power, Frank Sinatra, Robert Taylor, and even that doomed gangster, Johnny Stompanato. I was especially fond of Lex's 'third leg' as Marilyn Monroe dubbed it."

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As early as the autumn of 1956, rumors appeared in the press about the rift Lana and Barker were facing in their marriage.

Bob Thomas of the Associated Press confronted Barker about this. He wrote: "Lex Barker is perplexed by rumor mongers. Recently, he was absent from Lana Turner, his wife, for five weeks, mostly on location, and partly to visit his stricken father in the East. While he was gone, the rumors flew."

James Bacon reported that Lana was cavorting with a bullfighter in Tijuana. Another columnist claimed that she would remarry her second husband, Stephen Crane, after she divorces Barker.

"Lana likes bullfighters," Barker said. "While I was away, she went to see the fights in Mexico, visiting with some of her friends. A bullfighter happened to be in the party—and that was all there was to that. As for the Crane remarriage, he is the father of my stepdaughter, Cheryl, and he visits the house to see her. His many entanglements do not include Lana."

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The last Christmas that Lana, Lex Barker, and Cheryl spent together had been in Acapulco in 1956. At her favorite retreat, Villa Vera, she learned that her quarters had been renamed "The Lana Turner Suite."

It was not a happy time, with a lot of bitter accusations of infidelity exchanged between the "Battling Barkers," as Del Armstrong labeled them. "I think Barker just wanted to pick a fight so he would have a chance to storm out of the villa for one of his off-the-record adventures with that great Mexican beauty, Dolores Del Rio, whose beautiful face looked like it had been dipped in porcelain. Not that I blame him. She was a kind of timeless wonder."

Lana recalled it as “a miserable Christmas. I knew I couldn’t go on with Lex much longer. The only thing I liked about him is his sheer physical beauty and sexual prowess. As for his personality, he’s a son of a bitch—selfish, egotistical, exasperating, devious, and thoroughly rotten.”

She revealed that, “There was a lot more going on that I didn’t know about. Some sort of secret life. A friend told me that he was seen dining one night at Chasens with Cary Grant. Why didn’t he mention that to me? Cary Grant, for God’s sake. Perhaps he was afraid to name drop.”

“He was always receiving expensive presents. When we returned from Acapulco, some of those presents had been delivered to my house. But he didn’t open them there, and refused to tell me who was supplying such lavish gifts. Was it a woman? Or a man? Perhaps women? Perhaps men like Grant. I know that Clifton Webb, when he didn’t have his tongue out panting for Robert Wagner, gave Lex one of the most expensive watches I’d ever seen.”

“I didn’t find out until after our divorce that he kept a secret apartment in West Hollywood for his assignations,” she said.

Back home again, the unhappy trio—Lana, Barker, and Cheryl—continued with their dreary lives. One afternoon, Lana left her house for a meeting with Greg Bautzer about legal steps needed to set up her own film production company in the future.

A lot of stars, including Burt Lancaster and Humphrey Bogart, were doing that, and she wanted to get in on it, hoping to retain most of the money from films she’d independently produce, if she could find the financing. During her absence, as she later learned, “Lex seized the day…or, put another way, seized poor Cheryl.”

That day, Cheryl, as she later confessed in her memoirs, was violently assaulted by Barker

He wanted sexual gratification. When Cheryl resisted his advances, he smashed into her face with his muscular forearm, which had been so amply on display in his Tarzan films. He held her down, and, as she claimed, tightened his powerful grip on her delicate throat. As he raped her, he denounced her, calling her, “You little bitch”!

At times, as she’d later write, she felt he was killing her, that she was choking her to death. The question peppering her brain was, “How long could she continue to endure these unbearably painful assaults from her stepfather?” At the end of his assault, she claimed, “His orgasm brought an ecstatic hiss of rage that died off in waves.”

These repeated attacks shattered her, both emotionally and physically. He was such a big brute of a man, and she was such a vulnerable teenager with a body still undeveloped for his raging desires. He would leave her bed as she lay crying in pain, feeling that her insides had been ripped apart.

In the meantime, Lana continued to remain unaware of all of this.

Bowing to Barker’s threats, Cheryl believed him a first, that if she didn’t keep silent, she would be sent away to some reform school. But in only a few short months, she began to realize that she would not be the one sent away. It would be Barker himself who’d be sentenced to jail, where he might be the one held down and gang raped.

One aspect never explained was why Barker turned to the young girl for sex in the first place. He was bombarded daily with fan letters from love-starved women and gay men whose wildest sexual fantasies were to be seduced by Tarzan. Why he didn’t take advantage of these countless offers is not known. Why then would he turn to an underaged girl whose body had not fully matured?

Lana may have provided the answer later on, telling Virginia Grey, “One night, Lex and I, after intercourse, were just lying awake in the moonlight talking about our sexual fantasies. I was surprised to learn that nearly all of his fantasies were about deflowering young girls. At no point, fool that I was, did I make that link to Cheryl, realizing that she fit the description of one of his fantasies.”

As this dark and murky drama was unfolding within the Turner/Barker residence, Louella Parsons, not always the most reliable source, printed an item about them in her column. “Lex Barker is good for Lana Turner. They have a happy home life that she has never had in any of her former marriages, beginning with band-leader Artie Shaw, then going on to Stephen Crane (now a successful restaurant owner), and ending with Bob Topping, the tin plate heir from back East.”

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During the final months of their marriage, the fights between Barker and Lana grew more hostile, each partner accusing the other of infidelity. He seemed to suspect that every man she was seen with was her lover, even though most of them were business associates. Actually, he was accusing her of what he was secretly guilty of as a serial seducer.

Gradually, Lana, as she relayed to Del Armstrong, “began to wise up to what he was accusing me of.”

He was gone for long periods of time, making such movies as *The Deerslayer* (1957), or *The Girl in the Black Stockings* (also 1957).

George Nichols, a press agent at MGM, said, “I think both Lana and Barker were playing around. He was on location most of the time, and I know for a fact that Lana, who never wanted to be left alone, was doing the night club scene, like she did in the early 1940s. I don’t think at that point in her life, she could get along without a man… any man, it seemed. She went a bit wild.”

Armstrong often escorted her to the Trocadero or the Mocambo. “She had an eye out for any hot guy, and Hollywood had more per square foot of them than any other place on the planet. They arrived daily from Kansas, from the Panhandle of Florida, from the shores of Maine, all with the same goal: To become a movie star.”

“She’d even go for a waiter or a bartender if he were good-looking and muscular,” Armstrong said. “She never made the pitch herself as far as I know. She had me do it for her. She almost never got turned down unless a guy was gay. Even some of the gay guys fucked her because she was THE Lana Turner. All these guys hoped she would use her influence to get them cast in movies. In all cases, they were disappointed. Lana was having enough trouble relaunching her own career.”

“Lana thought she had a chance with young Robert Wagner, because she’d heard that he’d been living with Barbara Stanwyck, certainly an older woman.” Armstrong said. “He’d been in her movie, *Titanic* (1953), which had also starred Clifton Webb, who wanted Wagner for himself. Lana’s former agent, Henry Will-son, represented Wagner for a time, having met him when he was only nineteen. He may have been the one who brought Wagner and Lana together. I don’t know.”

Wagner was getting a great press. Willson loved his charms at the studio. He raved about his clean-cut, All-American look. The gay agent proclaimed, “The face of boyish Robert Wagner can mirror every thought and word. He’s got a bright personality that really comes across on the screen. He has that casual, relaxed quality that girls go for. I don’t think he’ll miss.”

Lana went on to tell Armstrong that Wagner had seduced her. “Perhaps it was the other way around. All I know is, she gave him a rave review without going into a blow-by-blow description. She told me, ‘The boy has everything I had dreamed about…and more He’ll go far in this town.’”

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Late one afternoon, Lana was sitting alone in her living room chain smoking. She heard the phone ring in the hallway. Was it a film offer? A man calling for a date?

She lifted the receiver to hear the smooth screen voice of Gregory Peck, with whom she’d already chatted several times. Was he calling for a date? She’d first met him when he was having an affair with Ingrid Bergman during their filming together of the memorable *Spellbound* in 1945. In 1952, he’d been scandalously exposed in *Confidential* for having an affair with the hot-to-trot blonde, Barbara Payton, his co-star in *Only the Valiant* (1952).

Lana had long wanted to seduce Gregory Peck, whom she put at the top of her list of desirable males in Hollywood

“His deep, modulated voice could cause a woman to have an orgasm on the spot,” she said. “Oh, yes, and he

was impossibly handsome.

She was aware that Peck's first marriage to Finnish-born Greta Konen had ended in divorce in 1953. But she'd also read that he had married a Paris news reporter, Veronique Passani. He'd met her on his way to Rome to film *Roman Holiday* (1953) with Audrey Hepburn, with whom he also had had an affair.

The "date" she envisioned was not exactly what Peck had in mind. She agreed to go with him to Summit Ridge Drive in Brentwood, to see a house for sale there for $95,000. During the course of her marriage to Artie Shaw, Lana had lived there, and now it was on the market.

He told her he wanted to visit the house with her before buying it. "You don't really know a house until you live in it. I thought you might tell me any drawbacks to it that I've overlooked."

"Its main drawback is that Lana Turner no longer lives here," she said, flirtatiously.

She stood with him in the carpeted living room, in front of the fireplace, perhaps hoping he might make a pass at her. "Gre was the perfect gentleman," she told Armstrong. "I flirted. He was polite. What was a girl to do? I know that Barbara Payton, that whore, was the aggressor. I decided to follow in her footsteps."

"I've always wanted to ask you something," she said, "but never had the courage to bring it up."

"What's that?" he asked. "To star in a picture together?"

"That, too, but for the present time, it's something else I had in mind. Something of a more personal nature."

"You want me to fuck you?" he asked.

As she'd later reveal to Virginia Grey, "I was startled at his directness."

"I've always wanted to get it on with you," Peck told her. "After all, you're the most beautiful woman in Hollywood, and I'm a mere mortal. But I considered Tarzan a tough act to follow. I haven't had much training in jungle tactics."

"None needed," she said. "Artie and I used to get it on right here on this very carpet in front of the fireplace. Why not you?"

"I'm unbuckling my belt this very moment," he said.

When she told Grey about this, she invariably asked the question, "What was it like?"

She discussed her adoration for Peck, whom she considered "about the handsomest man ever to set foot in Hollywood. He has a quiet, unassuming sex appeal."

"Let me put it this way," Lana told her. "Without going into too much clinical detail, I will tell you this. Greg had me nibbling on his big ear before the deed was done. One ear is bigger than the other, and I took the big ear."

Grey asked her if she planned any repeats. "That's up to him. I know he is happily married. I also know that even the most happily married men, at least in Hollywood, like to get something on the side."

"He told me that in the future, I had a choice. Either a 'milkman's matinee' *[i.e., a morning session in his dressing room]*, or a 'sneak away' for love in the afternoon at the Château Marmont."

"I told him a milkman's matinee suited me just fine, providing he brought the cream."

"Oh, Lana, my dear, since marrying Lex Barker, you've become such a vulgar lady."

"You finally noticed," she quipped.

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Without warning, having decided she could endure no further assaults from Lex Barker, Cheryl made a choice to reveal everything, not to Lana, but to her grandmother, Mildred, whom she still affectionately called "Gran."

In February of 1957, in the wake of that awful Christmas in Mexico, she sat with Mildred and told her the whole story. She first had a look of disbelief, then of horror. Mildred's face would be a memory that would not fade.

In her apartment, convinced that her granddaughter was telling the truth—the story was just too vivid with details—Mildred went to the phone to summon Lana. She picked up the receiver to hear her mother's command: "Get over here at once. It's Cheryl. I don't want to tell you over the phone. And don't bring Lex Barker! Come alone. You've got to hear this."

Alarmed, from inside her house, Lana did not press for any further details. Barker had already retired upstairs, a bit drunk. Both of them had just attended a party at the home of Jack Benny. On the way back in the car, he'd confessed to Lana that when he asked Benny where the bathroom was, the comedian had accompanied him. "The fucker came on to me," he claimed. "I know he plays gay in those comedy skits, but he's not just play-acting. All he got to see was me haul it out to take a horse piss—nothing else."

Slipping out of her house without alerting Barker, Lana drove to Mildred's apartment, where she found the two of them sitting on the sofa, Mildred's arms wrapped around Cheryl, who was sobbing.

Within the next few minutes, Lana heard the entire story of the assaults on her daughter. Her mother and daughter each witnessed Lana's face stiffen, at first in stunned disbelief, before fading into an acceptance of a reality that had escaped her, "even though it's been going on right under my nose."

At first she wanted to chastise her daughter for not revealing these assaults much sooner. At this point, she had not decided how she was going to confront Barker. The only move she knew she was going to make, even though it was a Sunday, involved taking Cheryl to her doctor later that morning. "He'll open the office for me."

It was decided that Cheryl would spend the night with Mildred. "I don't want her to have to face that man ever again."

Back in her Cadillac, she drove home alone, not certain about what steps to take. She came into the house and ascended the steps to her bedroom. The light was on, the TV set on "snow," with no programs being broadcast.

Barker lay on their bed, asleep, his powerful genitals looking more menacing than ever. As she'd confided to Del Armstrong later that morning, "Flashing on his using such a powerful weapon on such a tender young girl was unbearable. For a moment, I was crazed."

Ever since she'd received death threats and calls that Cheryl would be kidnapped, she'd gone to Greg Bautzer, who had arranged for her to purchase a revolver. The gun made her extremely nervous, and she could never imagine herself using the weapon to kill anyone. She had placed it in her chest of drawers, concealed amid her lingerie.

As she later told Armstrong, "I went insane, at least temporarily. I went to that drawer, took out the revolver, and approached Lex, who was still sound asleep. I pointed the gun at his head. I wanted that perverted brain of his to explode in the blast of the bullet's impact."

"My whole life flashed in front of me as I stood there with that revolver pointed at the magnificent head of Lex Barker," she told Armstrong. "Suddenly, very gradually, sanity returned. I still had the rage, but not the desire to kill."

"I didn't want to destroy my career and spend the rest of my life in prison, fighting off lesbians."

She later said she'd been horrified when she'd seen the lurid *film noir, Caged* (1950), starring Eleanor Parker, a brutal story of women imprisoned.

She also realized that if she killed Barker, all the tawdry stories about his repeated rapes of her daughter would eventually be exposed. As she told Virginia Grey, "Cheryl's life would be ruined forever. Barker's arrest and imprisonment would be one of the biggest Hollywood scandals in years."

"I knew then that I was not going to kill him." She returned to the living room, and there she sat, smoking until dawn. The TV set had been left on, its "snow" finally reverting to the morning news. At least stories about her weren't leading off the dawn roundup of news. She could just imagine the lurid headlines: LANA TURNER ARRESTED FOR THE MURDER OF TARZAN.

Finally, Barker woke up and headed downstairs, where he confronted her. "What in hell is going on?" he demanded. "Why didn't you come to bed?"

Then, as if sensing what had happened, he asked, "Has that Cheryl been telling you lies? You can't believe a word out of her mouth."

"I'm giving you twenty minutes to get out of my house" she demanded. "And take Pulco with you. If you're not out, I'm phoning the police to arrest you."

Without arguing, he seemed to accept the fact that their marriage had just ended. He rushed upstairs, got dressed, and was out the door with his dog. He'd later send someone to retrieve his clothing and other possessions, including his gym equipment.

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After her sleepless night, Lana climbed grimly into her Cadillac and drove over to Mildred's, where she encountered her nervous, distraught daughter. Putting her into the car, she headed in silence to the medical office of Dr. R.H. Fagin.

In a voice that was barely a whisper, she explained how her husband had sexually assaulted her daughter. He said very little until after he'd given Cheryl her first pelvic examination. She looked so very young and so very frightened.

From inside the examination room, both Cheryl and Dr. Fagin could hear Lana, out in the waiting room, sobbing. Later, she was called in to hear the doctor's report.

"There are signs of a violent penetration," he said. "She had been so stretched, she should have had stitches. There's no doubt that she's been raped, perhaps repeatedly. The girl is telling the truth. You must believe her and protect her from any future assault. She might need psychiatric help."

During the drive back home, Lana told her that she was going to report what had happened to Stephen Crane.

He was in St. John's Hospital at the time, recovering from brain surgery. After that car crash in Paris, he had had a steel plate inserted and screwed into his skull by French doctors. During the months after that, he had suffered occasional fainting spells and migraines that lasted for days.

At the hospital, he was coherent. When Lana told him what had happened to his daughter, he flew into a rage, threatening to kill Barker. But finally, after she assured him that Cheryl would never have to confront Barker again, he settled down. Both of them agreed that for the sake of Cheryl, scandal must be avoided.

Through no fault of her own, Lana wasn't able to keep her promise about Cheryl never having to see Barker again. The following Monday, she had drivenher daughter to a dental appointment in Westwood. When it was over, she returned to her Cadillac. Her daughter was seated in the passenger seat beside her.

Suddenly, through the open front window on the driver's side, a strong, muscular hand and arm reached in to clutch her own delicate hand as it rested on the steering wheel.

That hand and arm belonged to Lex Barker.

In one of those terrible coincidences, he was on his way to an appointment in the same medical building as Cheryl's dentist, and had just emerged from his own car, now parked in the same lot. He had spotted her.

"Lana, let's talk" he shouted. "Your daughter over there is a liar. A god damn liar I never touched her"

Cheryl immediately panicked, and Lana screamed, "Let go of my arm"

"You're a liar" he shouted, in a rage, at Cheryl. "Tell your mother it never happened. I've warned you"

"I want you to take me back," he pleaded with Lana. "We'll fight this thing together."

"Get the hell away from us," she yelled at him. "And stay away. I never want to see you again. I'm throwing all your stuff out on the front yard. I'll have a security guard stationed at the front door."

Then she started the ignition, shifting the gears into reverse, with the intention of backing up and driving out of the parking lot. "I'm getting out of here" she called out.

"LIES LIES LIES" he kept shouting.

"Let GO" she threatened, "or I'll run over you"

Then, after backing out of her parking spot, she stepped on the accelerator, even though he was still holding onto the door of her car. She dragged him along for about ten feet before he lost his grip on the door and collapsed onto the asphalt.

Out on the street, she accelerated, looking back one final time. That was the last time she'd ever see Lex Barker.

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After he and Lana broke up, newspapers carried the story of their impending divorce. "Our careers pulled us in different directions," Lana told the press. "We went our separate ways. I wish him well in his future career and life choices."

Her petition for a divorce was granted in 1958. She told the judge, "He has an uncontrollable temper, which he showed to me many times. Once at the breakfast table, he slapped my face. He used profane language to me."

"During my marriage to Mr. Barker, I was very upset and agitated. It was very hard for me to be his wife and fulfill my professional obligations."

Outside the courthouse, she had a different, more emphatic ring to her voice when she told a reporter, "Apeman belongs back in the jungle, hiding out in trees."

Barker discussed his marital breakup with a reporter in Rome. "Our marriage would have worked out were it not for her daughter telling lies about me. Cheryl Crane is responsible for our splitting up."

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[Whatever became of Lex Barker? Many of his fans wanted to know.

He gained worldwide exposure when he appeared in a short but compelling role as Anita Ekberg's fiancé in Federico Fellini's La dolce vita (1960). While filming, he resumed his affair with that Swedish star.

When demand for his services dried up in Hollywood, Barker moved to Germany to make films there, and also to make recordings. His two most popular singles became "Ich bin morgen auf dem Weg zu dir" ("I'll be on the Way to You Tomorrow") and "Mädchen in Samt un Seide" ("The Girl in Silk and Velvet").

He made thirteen movies in German, a language he spoke fluently, based on the novels of the German author, Karl May (1842-1912).

He would marry two more times, the first to Irene Labhart, a Swiss actress with whom he had a son. She died of leukemia in 1962.

He then married María del Carmen ("Tita") Rosario Soledad Cervera y Fernández de la Guerra (her first marriage) in 1965. She'd been voted Miss Spain of 1962. She filed for divorce in 1972 and later married the billionaire art collector, Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza, influencing to some degree his choice to donate many of the priceless paintings in his legendary art collection to museums in Spain.

At the time of Barker's death in 1973, he was living with his fiancée, the talented actress Karen Kondazian. On Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, he collapsed on the sidewalk on the way to meet her and died instantly. He was cremated at the age of 54.

When Lana was told of his death, she asked "Why did it take him so long to die?"]

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Lana not only ended a marriage in 1958, but lost "the love of my life," Tyrone Power, too. She was vacationing in Acapulco in November of that year when the owner of the Villa Vera, her friend, Teddy Stauffer, phoned with bad news: "Ty Power is dead. A heart attack."

She remembered "going numb." Even though it had been a decade since they had parted, "I wasn't prepared to hear something so final. I didn't cry: My tears had been shed years before when he closed the door on me. Now it was truly closed forever. More men were to come in my tomorrows, but none like Ty. He was special, he was the beautiful, sensitive man who broke my heart."

Stauffer listened to her lament of a long-lost love. At the time of his death, Power was married to Deborah Ann Minardos. In Spain, he'd been filming *Solomon and Sheba* with Gina Lollobrigida. He was stricken by a massive heart attack while filming a dueling scene with his frequent co-star and sometimes lover, the bisexual George Sanders, who had once been married to Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Like so many men Lana knew, either lovers or fellow actors, Power died young at the age of 44.

On hearing news of his death, Henry Fonda said, "His heart attack was probably caused by his fellow bisexual, George Sanders, wearing him out in the sack as well as on the set."

Sanders was enraged when he heard that, and delivered blistering comments about Fonda's own gay past, especially with his best friend and former roommate, James Stewart.

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For a 1958 release from Universal-International, Lana signed on as a freelance actress to star in *The Lady Takes a Flyer*. Her leading man would be the handsome, masculine, Jeff Chandler, with Jack Arnold directing and William Alland producing.

The combination of players seemed a good match, the tall, virile, iron-jawed Chandler, the epitome of 1950s screen vitality, in love with the petite, delicate, short, and ultra-feminine blonde goddess.

Universal executives thought they had paired a winning team, capable of sexual chemistry on the screen. They toyed with the idea of a series of Turner/Chandler movies with "sparring of the sexes" plots. A hope was expressed that these movies might be Universal's answer to those 1940 hit films starring Lana with Clark Gable.

From its inception, its title was fluid, beginning with *Pilots for Hire*. That was later altered to *Lion in the Sky*, followed two weeks later by *Wild and Wonderful*. Universal finally decided *The Lady Takes a Flyer* might accurately describe the plot. Shooting began in April of 1957.

In the film, Chandler starred as a daredevil pilot, Mike Dandridge, who establishes a passenger and freight-hauling business with Al Reynolds (Richard Denning), his pal from his flight school days. Mike meets Maggie

Colby (Lana, cast as the lady flyer), an unusual occupation for women in the early 1950s.

Mike and Maggie become attracted to each other during a long intercontinental flight to Japan, and eventually they fall in love. At their wedding, Al is best man before he leaves the company to join the U.S. Air Force.

When Maggie becomes pregnant, she settled down to home and hearth to rear her child and to be Mike's housewife during his infrequent moments between flights. She begins to suspect that he's romantically involved with Nikki Taylor (Andra Martin), a flirtatious colleague and pilot.

Eventually, Maggie opts to resume her career as a pilot, leaving Mike to tend to their baby. Complications invariably follow before a "period of adjustment" concludes, amicably, between the male and female pilots.

Lana worked smoothly with her director, Jack Arnold, a New Englander known for his science fiction movies. He had only recently released *It Came From Outer Space* (1953).

Arnold's main collaborator at Universal was the producer of *The Lady Takes a Flyer*, William Alland. He had just produced *Revenge of the Creature* (1953), which marked Clint Eastwood's film debut.

Lana asked to see the first rushes of her newest film, but seemed disappointed. She told Arnold, "I'm not Amelia Earhart, not even Rosalind Russell impersonating Earhart in *Flight for Freedom* (1943).

During the shoot, Lana, since having evicted Barker from her life, was a free agent again, not only as an actress booted out of MGM, but as a woman on the prowl. She began to lead a promiscuous life evocative of her early Hollywood days in the '40s. *The Lady Takes a Flyer* offered many possibilities for seduction, not just with Chandler, but with actors Chuck Connors and Richard Denning, too. She decided to make a play for Connors first.

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Cast as Frank Henshaw, Alan Hale, Jr., was privy to Lana's off-screen flirtation. The son of character actor Alan Hale, Sr., he had worked with Lana before in such pictures as *The Sea Chase* with John Wayne.

"All the gals—and half the guys, at least the gay ones—were after Chuck. He stood 6'6", and was Lana's tallest conquest, or so she said."

A former basketball and baseball star, he had been one of America's best athletes before becoming an actor.

Hale said, "Chuck was a handsome, blonde-haired stud, a great guy, a prankster with a real sense of humor, a lot of fun to hang out with, and a dude who liked all sorts of people. He was captivated by Lana's beauty and told me he'd never seen such a gorgeous woman in his life."

"Once, when we were washing in a communal shower, I saw that Chuck was 'bigger than life' if you know what I mean. Now I know why he drove the gals crazy."

Connors had first appeared on the screen in a gay porn film which was later shown at a New York Times Square Theater along with several other porn scenes populated with actors who later became famous. In *Hollywood Blue*, Connors as a sailor sodomizes a young man.

Lana getting high on love with Jeff Chandler.

He made his “official” film debut in *Pat and Mike* (1952), co-starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. The bisexual Tracy fell for him, and George Cukor “directed” him to his casting couch every afternoon.

“Chuck might have let the gays have their fun as a means of breaking into the movies, but he sure knows his way around a woman’s body,” Lana said. “What a man”

Connors would become famous across America when he starred as a widowed homesteader in the hit TV series, *The Rifleman* (1958-63).

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In contrast to Connors, Richard Denning, like his producer and director, became known for science fiction films in the 1950s. Right before meeting and seducing Lana, he had starred in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) and *Day the World Ended* (1955). In time, he would become even better-known for appearing in the hit CBS-TV crime drama, *Hawaii-Five-O* (1968-1980).

Del Armstrong, Lana’s makeup man and companion, was often on the set. She told him, “Richard is a real gentleman. He’s tall, he’s blonde, and he has a good body, but he doesn’t take acting too seriously. He told me he views it just as a way to take home a paycheck. As a lover, he’s the kind of man you marry, take home to introduce to dear ol’ dad, and then settle down with into a happy family life with some kids.”

She confessed, “He’s a real decent guy, and seems uncomfortable having an affair with me. Richard can return home to his wife and watch *The Wolf Man* and *Son of Dracula.”*

Her reference was to Evelyn Ankers, whom he’d married in 1942, when she was known as “The Horror Film Queen.”

Less glam but eternally perky—Lana as a lady aviator.

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Brooklyn-born Jeff Chandler was one of Universal’s most popular stars of the 1950s. At an early age, his hair had turned gray, and he never dyed it. Before working with Lana, he had been seduced by Joan Crawford on the set of *Female on the Beach* (1955).

“Once again, that bitch got him before I did,” Lana complained to Armstrong. “Thank God she didn’t damage any of his vital parts. Everything is still in working order. She likes it rough, you know. Actually, Jeff was a schoolmate of my dear friend, Susan Hayward, and may have been the one who took her teenage cherry.”

“I didn’t know he was Jewish until he took me to bed, and I found a bit of skin missing. I hear he’s a switch hitter. He does women, but wanders down detours with the likes of Rock Hudson and Tony Curtis. That bit of data came from Henry Willson, my expert on all things gay.”

***

In her memoir, *The Million Dollar Mermaid*, Esther Williams admitted, “I was drifting dangerously close to the kind of lifestyle at which I had cast a jaundiced eye in my early years in Hollywood, critical of the carrying on of both Lana Turner and Marlene Dietrich, among others.”

Regardless of what distractions were happening in their personal lives, Lana and Jeff Chandler made convincing lovers in *The Lady Takes a Flyer.*

He was hoping he’d work with her again in *Return to Peyton Place*, but she rejected the role.

In that same book, Williams also wrote about the end of her affair with Jeff Chandler. She was in the kitchen of his house, cooking chicken cacciatore for his dinner, and went upstairs to his bedroom when he didn’t answer her call.

“At the bedroom door, I froze and started screaming,” she wrote. “I couldn’t trust myself. It was a high-pitched scream that a woman makes when she sees a mouse. It’s a scream that has no logic—sheer, uncontrolled panic.”

She found Chandler standing in the middle of the floor with a red wig, wearing a chiffon dress and expensive high-heeled shoes, plus lots of makeup.

“He was my lover—a strong, manly figure standing there in high heels and a dress. This was no joke He enjoyed this kind of thing. He was a cross-dresser.”

He left early the next morning to report to the studio. During his absence, she discovered a secret closet and opened it to find lots of dresses, hats, *négligées*, and high-heeled shoes. When he returned home that night, he tried to explain his preference for drag: “I like to envision myself as a beautiful woman making love to another beautiful woman.”

She admitted to having discovered and entered his secret closet. “I saw blouses with polka dots, dresses with polka dots, even hats with big polka dot bows. “Jeff, you’re too big for polka dots.”

That was the last she ever saw of him.

[Lana was dead when Esther Williams published her memoirs in 1999. She could have warned her about Chandler. At the end of the filming of The Lady Takes a Flyer, *when he was sleeping over at her house, she had come home early and had gone upstairs to her bedroom. She found him trying to fit into her lingerie. He stood before her in a black négligée. He had applied a coating of lipstick.*

“Are you getting dressed for a night with Rock?” she asked. “I’m breaking our date for tonight. I’ve got a bigger offer from Chuck Connors.”

She never saw Chandler again.]

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On screen, Chandler and Lana made a convincing pair of lovers, especially in a scene where he perches on the side of her bathtub, and in which she is indeed a bathing beauty.

The New York Times defined *The Lady Takes a Flyer* as "surprisingly ingratiating," though suggesting that the stars could have used a better script.

In the *New York Daily News*, Wanda Hale found the movie "a pleasing, honest comedy. Lana Turner moves and expresses herself just right as the woman torn between being a practical mother and a sweetheart to her husband."

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In 1955, Broadway audiences were stunned when the controversial play, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, by Tennessee Williams, opened. Its stars included Ben Gazzara in the role of a repressed homosexual, Brick, playing opposite his young wife, Barbara Bel Geddes, cast as the sexually frustrated Maggie the Cat trying to maneuver and lure her husband into bed.

Word traveled quickly to Hollywood that Williams' play would adapt into a dynamic film, with the condition that censors weren't so homophobic that they'd forbid any mention of "that perverted love" on the screen.

Many actors and actresses wanted to play Brick or Maggie after MGM acquired the play's film rights. Gazarra hoped to repeat his Broadway triumph, but he was curtly informed that an actor of more potent box office appeal was needed, instead. Bel Geddes received the same bad news.

The moguls at MGM felt that Grace Kelly would be ideal for the female lead. But she had another idea and ran off with Prince Rainier to Monaco.

Elizabeth Taylor's husband, producer Mike Todd, took her to see the play on Broadway, and her eyes lit up. "I'd give my left nipple to sink my claws into Maggie the Cat."

At first, George Cukor was set to direct the film version. After he devised a proposal to cast Vivien Leigh as the female lead, Williams vehemently objected, claiming, "I just adored Viv in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, but she's a bit long in the tooth for Maggie."

Cukor's proposal for the male lead was Montgomery Clift, in reference to which he told Williams, "What could be more perfect? A closeted homosexual playing a closeted homosexual."

When presented with the role, Clift rejected it as "too close to home.

Within two weeks, Cukor was ousted as the film's director, the position going to Richard Brooks. He had recently helmed Lana in *Flame and the Flesh* in Italy, and thought she might be ideal as Maggie. During a phone conversation with her, he learned that she and Lex Barker had seen the play on Broadway months before their divorce. "I'd be perfect as Maggie the Cat," Lana said, "and Lex claims he'd be the perfect Brick. He thinks as Brick in his underwear, and me in my petticoatwill generate long lines at the box office."

"File this under Believe It or Not," Brooks said. "Elvis Presley went to see the play and then phoned me. HE wants to play Brick, so that he can prove to the world that he can act—and not just in the shit his manager, Col. Tom Parker, has cast him in."

"Can you imagine a marquee with Lana Turner and Elvis Presley starring in a Tennessee Williams play?" Lana asked. "It would be the biggest hit of the year."

"Perhaps," Brooks said. "But we'd have to adjust the billing. It would have to read: 'Elvis Presley and Lana Turner.'"

Later that same day, Brooks learned that Marilyn Monroe had also seen the play, and she wanted to play Maggie, too. Brooks alerted MGM that both "Marilyn and Elvis want to do it. If they can, it will become the biggest hit of the 1950s."

But Monroe didn't follow through, and Col. Parker called Brooks, telling him, "There's no way in hell I'm gonna let Elvis appear in that faggot writer's crappy play. His fans would storm the movie houses in protest. Elvis as a fag? No way!"

The next time Brooks phoned Lana, telling her that MGM planned to cast Paul Newman as Brick. "Why don't you let me set up a rendezvous with you guys? I'll check out the sexual chemistry between the two of you."

"I can't wait," Lana responded.

The next day, over lunch with Newman, Lana expressed a fear that she might be too old to play Maggie. "Of course, makeup and lighting can do wonders."

"You're still beautiful and always will be," Newman assured her. "You are a very sexy woman, perhaps the sexiest ever to grace the screen, you and Ava. What a pair"

She leaned over the table and kissed him lightly on the lips. “Ever since I saw you in *The Silver Chalice* (1954), I’ve wanted to play opposite you. I think we’d make a great screen team. I’ve always regarded you as the heir apparent to those matinee idols—Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, and Robert Taylor. Of course, you’re different from them, more modern, a star of tomorrow. I predict that before the end of the 1960s, your reputation will be equal to those guys.”

“Talk like that will make me fall in love with you,” Newman responded.

“If you like blondes so much, I wish you’d married me instead of Joanne Woodward.”

“But if I’d done that, I could never be myself, ever again. I’d be forever known as Mr. Lana Turner.”

She dismissed such an idea. “You’re joking, of course. The world will be talking about Paul Newman long after Lana Turner is a forgotten memory, kept alive only by the soldiers who won World War II.”

“I doubt that. You’re unforgettable.”

“Of all the actors in Hollywood, you’re the one I most would want as a leading man.”

“I’m flattered,” he said. “You were always my dream girl.”

“And dreams do come true,” she said. “At least sometimes.”

After lunch, driving his own car, he followed her Cadillac to a private villa that he later learned was owned by Howard Hughes. She planned to spend the weekend there and invited him for an afternoon swim, adding, “or whatever…”

He didn’t know how the preliminaries would go, but, as he later told Brooks, “We got down to business right away. As soon as we were inside the door, she was in my arms.”

“I think she’s desperate,” Newman said. “At one point, when we were in bed, I held her. She was trembling like a leaf. In a very plaintive voice, she said, ‘Please, don’t ever leave me.’”

Within two weeks, Brooks phoned Lana with the devastating news that MGM had decided to cast Elizabeth Taylor instead of her as Maggie the Cat.

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Months later, Elizabeth Taylor was busy filming *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and was unable to accompany her husband, Mike Todd, on a hastily scheduled flight from California to New York. He departed from Burbank on March 2, 1958, and she would never see him again.

His aircraft, the badly named “Lucky Liz,” crashed during a storm over New Mexico.

Taylor was distraught. She was so hysterically upset that there was speculation that she might commit suicide.

When Lana learned through the gossip mill that Taylor might not complete the picture, she phoned Brooks: “I’m your Maggie the Cat.”

“Not so soon,” he cautioned her. “I think Elizabeth will pull herself together and report back to work at some point. The girl is a real trouper.”

“Perhaps,” she said. “But remember, darling, I’m only a phone call away.”

Brooks was right. Taylor recovered and finished the movie, which became one of her all-time most memorable performances.

Paul Newman, cast as a repressed homosexual, and Elizabeth Taylor in Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.*

Lana always regretted that she didn’t “get to sink my claws into the role of Maggie the Cat. At least I got Paul Newman before Taylor seduced him.”

Even though she'd lost the lead role in *Cat*, Lana had not abandoned her desire to play a Tennessee Williams heroine. In her future, a role far better suited to her age and talent emerged after she popped into a Broadway theater one night for a performance of *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

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Lex Barker was gone from her life, and, as a divorced woman, Lana was determined to resume a role that was both comfortable and familiar to her: playing the field. As the 1950s moved to its conclusion, Marilyn Monroe had become the most talked-about blonde in Hollywood.

Lana's old rival, Betty Grable, was well on her way to being a forgotten face—and set of legs—of World War II.

Carole Landis was dead, and Veronica Lake, that Peek-a-Boo Blonde, was a has-been.

Grace Kelly had flown off to Monaco to live unhappily ever after with the prince of a principality that Katharine Hepburn had defined as "a pimple on the face of France."

Jayne Mansfield and Mamie Van Doren were trying unsuccessfully to move in on Monroe's territory, terrain which she had previously "confiscated" from Lana.

Lana was well aware of "what time it is," as she said to Virginia Grey. "After a few summers, I'll be forty, retirement time for most Hollywood Cinderellas."

She felt that men had an unfair advantage. Lex Barker, according to reports, was one of the most desirable men in Europe, sought out by starlets across the Continent. Stephen Crane, having recovered from brain surgery, was seen about town, either with Mamie Van Doren or with Terry Moore, who was alleged to have married Howard Hughes, Lana's former lover.

A fear of growing old and not being alluring to the new generation of handsome young men may have been the reason Lana was lured into the arms of a handsome young actor, Michael Dante. He was all of twenty-two when she launched their affair. In case her seductive powers weren't enough to entice him, Lana promised Dante that she'd use her influence to get him movie roles.

As director Richard Brooks said, "Lana was using a reversal of the old casting couch approach that Hollywood biggies had used for years with young women—Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox and Harry Cohn at Columbia were the best examples of that. 'Sleep with me, baby, and I'll get you in the movies.'"

"Lana's worst fear in dating Dante was that some waiter or hotel desk clerk would mistake him for her son," said Virginia Grey.

Hollywood biographer Edward Z. Epstein summed it up: "Handsome hangers-on have always been part of the Hollywood scene. Many clever young men, with no visible talents, travel in Hollywood's highest circles, entertaining the lonely, vain, bored women who find excitement and diversion in them as they would with a new toy. So few of these men succeed. Most of them fade quietly into oblivion and are forgotten, as they are replaced by a newer, younger breed."

In spite of how it might look to some of her harshest critics, Del Armstrong claimed, "Even though she was much older than Michael Dante, Lana liked to be seen out on his arm, arriving at night clubs with him. It was like she was signaling the world, 'I'm still young myself, still alluring, still able to capture a fresh hunk of male flesh new to the scene. After all, Joan Crawford had been pulling that stunt for years.'"

In March of 1957, Lana invited her daughter, Cheryl, who was enrolled at Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy near Pasadena, for a weekend in Palm Desert at the Shadow Mountain Club. Other guests included Cheryl's friend, Maggie Douglas, daughter of character actor Paul Douglas and Virginia Fields, an English star of "B movies." Fields was the owner of the club, and it was understood that Lana's guests, after transiting from other points across L.A., would assemble there.

Lana showed up for the weekend with her latest boyfriend, whom Cheryl had not yet met, and as such, she was introduced to Dante. (His name had, until recently, been Ralph Vitti.)

A strapping athlete as well as a bit part actor, he played shortstop for the Hollywood Stars baseball team.

After the horror of the Barker scandal, still not known to the public, Cheryl wanted space between Lana and herself. As she wrote, "Newly divorced, nearly broke, her career in a slump, she was short-tempered and proud, not much fun to be with."

Perhaps jealous of her daughter's youth and beauty, Lana, on the second day of what was supposed to be a recuperative weekend, confronted Cheryl. She was filled with accusations, charging the young girl with flirting with Dante, "Smiling *that* way, wiggling your butt, your arm slung possessively around his broad shoulders."

Lana was not just angry, but furious. In the most outrageous accusation she'd ever made against Cheryl, she said, "You've done this *before*, and you know just what I'm talking about."

When Cheryl ran away from home, it made headlines across the nation. When she was rescued, photographers were waiting at Lana's home to capture her return.

Looking ever so glum are (left to right) Lana, Cheryl, and her father, Stephen Crane.

It was all too clear to Cheryl. She was being accused of flirting with Barker, leading him on, suggesting that in some way, she was responsible for his repeated rapes of her. To Cheryl, it seemed hopeless to deny any of these absurd accusations or implications. "You're a boy-crazy slut" her mother charged.

As time would reveal, Cheryl was not boy crazy at all. That would become clear, based on her eventual declarations about gender attractions.

During their angry drive home, Dante and Lana were in the front seat, Cheryl in the back seat with her school chum Maggie.

At Union Station in downtown L.A., Lana let the two girls off, with the understanding that from there, they'd board a bus for the twenty-minute continuation of their trip to their school in Pasadena.

But after her mother's departure with Dante, with a sense of independence and rebelliousness, Cheryl told Maggie she wanted to remain in the city, and that she should continue by bus to Pasadena without her. She had never before ventured into the seedy downtown neighborhood of Los Angeles, filled with hustlers, bums, beggars, perverts, and winos, who co-existed, densely among a coterie of respectable citizens going about their business.

As Cheryl later revealed in her memoirs, she began to explore the area, carrying only an alligator case and $12 in her pocketbook. She had adopted Veronica Lake's peek-a-boo hairdo. Along the way, she attracted unwanted attention. Three menacing young men followed her, perhaps for a gang rape in one of the many back alleys littered with garbage.

She fled, but soon encountered a Chicano in his 30s who wore blue jeans and a windbreaker. He introduced himself as "Manuel" and asked if he could help her.

To Manuel's surprise, she got into his car, believing his promise that he'd drive her to a cheap hotel. Once inside the car, he didn't seem to want to go anywhere, but just talked and joked with her, perhaps getting her to trust him.

Then, instead of taking her to a fleabag hotel, he delivered her to Skid Row's Hollenbeck Police Station. He escorted her inside the station, where she encountered other police officers who nailed her as a runaway.

Finally, under pressure, she correctly identified herself as Cheryl Crane.

“My god, you’re Lana Turner’s kid”

Unknown to Cheryl, Lana had been notified by a nun at Sacred Heart that Cheryl had not returned to the school with Maggie, and that she’d last been seen in the most dangerous part of Los Angeles.

Based on the fear that she’d been kidnapped, bulletins had been broadcast across the city with her physical description, and instructions had been issued to the police to find and retrieve her.

Within the hour, fighting their way through a mob of reporters and photographers, Lana, with Stephen Crane at her side, showed up at the station house to retrieve their daughter.

The next day, a headline read: LANA TURNER’S RUNAWAY DAUGHTER CAUGHT.

In her column, Louella Parsons publicly chastised Cheryl, praising Lana for being “a wonderful mother and strict with Cheryl.” Back at Lana’s house, Dante was waiting at the front door with a drink for her. Cheryl was ordered to her bedroom.

But instead of going to her room, she entered Lana’s bedroom and opened a drawer in which she discovered a revolver and a bottle of Nembutal. She considered suicide as an option, preferring the sleeping pills to a violent end with a gun.

But she finally decided against killing herself and fell asleep.

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In the mid-1950s, a young ex-Marine from Indiana arrived in New York wanting to become an actor. Like his rival, James Dean, he would morph into a major movie star, “the King of Cool,” Steve McQueen.

[Details about McQueen’s rise to prominence and his tumultuous private life are best explored in the tell-all biography, Steve McQueen, King of Cool—Tales of a Lurid Life. Authored by Darwin Porter, it was published by Blood Moon Productions in 2009.]

In 1956, McQueen would replace Ben Gazarra in *Hatful of Rain* on Broadway. But money was hard to come by, and the cash he brought in as an actor didn’t manage to pay his bills and expenses at the time.

His chaotic finances and his turbulent path to stardom led to his meeting and getting hired as a male escort by Floyd Wilson, a pimp who had tried but failed to succeed as an actor himself. “Handsome, intelligent, with oodles of charm” (Wilson’s own appraisal), he established a high-priced escort agency that provided attractive men as escorts to rich, lonely women in and around Manhattan. His agency’s patrons included visiting Hollywood divas, who often arrived in town without a proper date. Wilson’s “Gentlemen for Rent” service flourished.

McQueen made himself available as a player in this scenario, acquiring his first tuxedo as a necessary accessory for his act.

After McQueen proved he was a hit with women, Wilson arranged for him to go out on “your date of dates.” In need of an escort, Marlene Dietrich had arrived in Manhattan with the intention of attending an event at the Plaza Hotel.

At a gathering there, in 1955, McQueen met Joseph and Rose Kennedy and Senator John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy.

Before the evening ended, McQueen got to chat with the future president of the United States.

[A few years later, in 1963, McQueen, by then a bigtime movie star, wanted to portray Kennedy as a World War II naval hero in the film adaptation of Robert Donovan’s 1961 overview of JFK’s wartime exploits, PT-109. *His friend and rival, Paul Newman, also wanted the Kennedy role, but was rejected by the President “as looking too Jewish.” The part was eventually assigned to Cliff Robertson.]*

As a rule, Lana did not want to go out and be photographed with dates who had blonde hair. “I want to be the only blonde in the picture,” she told Steve McQueen, who—a struggling actor at the time—was working as an escort for an agency in New York.

He was surprised by what unfolded on his one night with Lana.

Because McQueen’s date with the great Dietrich had gone so well, she phoned Wilson, giving him an A-plus.

That led, a few weeks later, to another escort job with another legendary Hollywood blonde, Lana Turner. McQueen, as a paid escort, agreed to pick her up at her suite at the Plaza Hotel and escort her downstairs to a “Rat Pack” party hosted by Frank Sinatra for a few choice friends.

In a form-fitting white satin gown and a ruby necklace, Lana looked to him as good as when he saw her on the screen in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Either she was incredibly skilled at makeup, or age had been kind to her.

“So you’re a blonde,” she said, appraising him after he was ushered into the living room of her hotel suite. “Usually, I don’t date blondes. The agent, Henry Willson, always told me I should date men with raven black hair to offset my own blondeness. That’s why he fixed me up with Rory Calhoun.”

“If I’d known, I would have kept my hair black,” McQueen said. “That’s what I did when I appeared in the play, *A Hatful of Rain*. I was playing an Italian, and I thought black hair would make me look the part.”

Actually, I like blonde-haired men,” Lana continued. “You’re adorable looking in an offbeat kind of way. Of all my movies, which of them did you like the best?”

“*The Merry Widow,*” he answered. “As for Fernando Lamas, he can stick a dildo up his ass.”

Arriving at Sinatra’s party, Lana, with Steve, made a grand entrance. Sinatra’s guests included Sammy Davis, Jr., Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Marilyn Maxwell, and Judy Garland.

At the time, it seemed beyond McQueen’s wildest dreams that one day soon, he would be co-starring with Sinatra in a movie, *Never So Few* (1958).

McQueen was intrigued by Sammy Davis, Jr. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

At his party, Sinatra sang for his pals, and on the dance floor, McQueen danced with Lana until Garland, claiming a privilege usually reserved for men, cut in.

At the end of the party, McQueen’s biggest surprise came when Davis grabbed him and lip-locked him with a sloppy wet kiss. He did the same to Lana, too. McQueen discovered Davis’ fondness for French kissing without discrimination for gender.

At the Carlyle Hotel, Steve McQueen was shocked when Senator John F. Kennedy opened the door in his underwear. Lana was in the next room putting back on her clothing.

On their way out, McQueen turned to Lana. “I hope Sammy doesn’t think I’m a fucking faggot.”

“Oh, darling, don’t be so judgmental,” Lana said. “Without so-called faggots, there would BE no Hollywood.”

McQueen fully expected her to invite him back to her suite, where he hoped to spend the night. Instead, she asked for her sable and headed outside, where the doorman hailed them a taxi.

“Come with me,” she said. “I have an errand for you. We’re going to the Carlyle.”

Once inside that swanky nearby hotel, she directed him to the bar. “I have to meet a special friend upstairs: He never takes very long, so I’ll be back down here within the hour. I want you to wait for me.”

About thirty minutes later, a waiter tapped him on the shoulder. “You’re wanted on the house phone.” It was Lana calling from a suite upstairs.

“He says he knows you,” she said. “He met you one night with Dietrich. Come on up.”

When McQueen arrived at the suite whose number Lana had indicated, Senator John F. Kennedy opened the door clad in his underwear. Presumably, Lana was inside, repairing her makeup after the sexual encounter they’d just concluded.

Kennedy invited him in, and suggested that during his next visit to Hollywood, each of them should join in a race, as to which man could bed the most movie stars. “I must say, you’re dating from the top of the A-list. Lana Turner and Marlene Dietrich. My dad had Dietrich before I got my chance on the French Riviera.”

McQueen and Kennedy indulged in what men used to call “locker room talk” before Lana emerged from one of the suite’s other rooms. She did not look like she’d been ravished at all. McQueen’s duties as an escort weren’t over yet. It was back to the Plaza, where that long-awaited invitation to Lana’s suite did eventually emerge.

As he told his friend and fellow actor, Rod Steiger, the next day, “Guess what? I woke up this morning in the bed of Lana Turner.”

“Cut the bullshit, McQueen,” Steiger said, obviously not believing him. “I’ve got an even better tale to tell. Queen Elizabeth is my mistress.” Then he put down the phone.

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During a consultation in the office of producer Jerry Wald, Lana was defiant. “There is no way in hell I’m going to play the mother of a grown-up teenager. Forget it” Then she stormed out of the office.

Wald had reminded her that she only recently co-starred in a "string of clunkers in your dying days at MGM. You need a big box office attraction to put you on top again."

He also reminded her that in 1945, he'd convinced Joan Crawford to play the title role in *Mildred Pierce*, as the mother of an ungrateful daughter (Ann Blyth). Based on her portrayal of a mother, it had brought Crawford her first and only Oscar, and radically revitalized her career.

The role being offered to Lana was that of Constance MacKenzie, the romantic lead in a script based on the 1956 novel, *Peyton Place*, by Grace Metalious, a bawdy, rebellious housewife in New Hampshire. At the age of thirty, she was described as "broke, smelly, thirsty, exhausted, and desperate," feeding her three children an ongoing diet of lettuce-and-tomato sandwiches.

It took some doing, but Lee Philips, Lana's leading man, finally melted the secretive character she was playing, "the ice queen of Peyton Place."

The studio associated with the production, 20th-Century Fox, had originally recommended Rita Hay-worth as

Constance. Susan Hayward was also a strong contender, and in many ways, the part seemed tailor-made for her.

As part of a prolonged casting drama, Fox had already sent Wald a number of actresses that its executives deemed suitable—Barbara Stanwyck, Irene Dunne, Joan Fontaine, Ann Sheridan, Dorothy McGuire, Audrey Meadows, Deborah Kerr, Virginia Mayo, even Betty Hutton. None had survived the scrutiny.

The plot of the novel—denounced as "literary sewage"—had outraged critics, *The New York Times* calling it a "small town peep show." It had nonetheless swept the nation, many readers devouring it in secret, not wanting their neighbors, who were also reading it, to catch them "in the act."

Despite these howling protests, the novel remained on the bestseller list for fifty-nine weeks, selling 60,000 copies in just ten days in 1956, when most novels sold 3,000 copies or less. When it became clear that the book was a runaway bestseller, Wald paid Metalious $250,000 for the film rights.

Unusually forthright for a film during the Eisenhower years, its plot involved rape, incest, murder, abortion, and multiple seductions. Fox feared that it would run into censorship issues with the Production Code.

Most of Lana's friends warned her not to take the role, reminding her that at the age of thirty-six, she was "as glamorous as ever." It was also noted that her rival love goddesses of the 1940s, including Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth, had not yet been reduced to portraying mothers.

In the end, it was money—not the role—that persuaded Lana to play Connie. Wald offered her a contract for $125,000. She desperately needed it, as she was nearly broke.

In an interview with the press, Lana asserted that the mother of a teenage daughter did not have to look matronly. Reporters noted sardonically that Lana would be portraying, as Metalious' novel had revealed, an inhibited and sexually frustrated woman.

"Sexually frustrated?" said columnist James Bacon. "Lana Turner You've got to be kidding. She's going to have to do a lot of acting to pull that one off."

Lloyd Nolan as high-integrity Dr. Swain, "morally forced to perform an abortion."

The novel centered on the moral hypocrisy of a small, seemingly tranquil community, a fictional mill town in New England, in the years just before World War II.

Lana did not in any way resemble a drab housewife, not in wardrobe designer Charles LeMaire's dresses and gowns. The script had established her as the owner of the best dress shop in town, a device that allowed her character to appear in chic apparel throughout the run of the film. Her platinum blonde hair was darkened to a honey blonde. Makeup was by Ben Nye and hair styles by Helen Turpin. In CinemaScope and color by DeLuxe, Lana was prepped, primped, and coiffed, ready and set to appear on camera, looking much younger than her years.

Lorne Green interrogates Lana: Art imitating life?

As the film's prosecuting attorney, the Canada-born actor would go on to become a household name when he starred as the patriarchal Ben Cartwright in the long-running TV series, *Bonanza* (1959-73).

Lana played Constance as a widow with a dark secret: She was hiding the true origins of her daughter's father. Allison had been born out of wedlock to a married man.

Allison's best friend is Selene Cross, who lives on the wrong side of the tracks with an abusive stepfather, Lucas Cross, who rapes and impregnates her.

The town doctor, Matthew Swain, forces the rapist to leave town after he signs a confession. Based on the circumstances of Selene's pregnancy, the doctor performs an illegal abortion.

When Selene's stepfather returns from the war effort many months later, he assaults her again. This time, she kills him and buries his body in a deserted sheep pen.

In the background are lots of tangled romances and lesser dramas. Selena's secret is eventually discovered, and she stands trial for murder.

At the trial, Lana is summoned as a witness, performing her most dramatic scene in the movie. *[Ironically, in real life, in the months ahead, she would be summoned as a witness in the investigation of the murder, within her home, of her gangster lover, Johnny Stompanato.]*

When *Peyton Place* was released, moviegoers drew parallels between the on-screen Lana on Peyton Place's witness stand and their favorite star testifying in a real life courthouse in Beverly Hills. Both of them were testifying about a murder.

At the beginning of the film, Lana, as Connie, is a frigid ice queen, shunning the possibility of any romantic involvement. That changes when the handsome new principal of the local high school arrives in town. Michael Rossi (Lee Philips) slowly begins to thaw her out.

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The goal of scriptwriter John Michael Hayes was to tone down the more blatant sexual scenes in the Metalious novel. He was better known for "doctoring" scripts for director Alfred Hitchcock, including *Rear Window* (1934). He also showed that he had a talent for big budget melodramas such as *Torch Song* (1953) with Joan Crawford, or *BUtterfield 8* (1960), a role for which Elizabeth Taylor won the Oscar.

[Hayes would later incur Lana's animosity when he wrote the screenplay for Where Love Has Gone *(1964), starring Susan Hayward and Bette Davis. The plot was clearly based on the Johnny Stompanato murder and her involvement in it.]*

Russ Tamblyn was viewed as an odd choice to play the role of Norman Page, who eventually captures the heart of Allison (Diane Varsi).

He was mostly known as a dancer, having performed brilliantly, even acrobatically, in the incredible dance number in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954). After *Peyton Place*, his next job involved designing the choreography for Elvis Presley's *Jailhouse Rock* (1957).

Lana worked smoothly with Mark Robson, her Canada-born director, who had earned a reputation as a brilliant film editor. He'd previously helmed, or would eventually helm, such films as *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1955), starring William Holden and Grace Kelly, and Ingrid Bergman in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958).

When it came to casting, Lana, as always, wanted to know who her leading man would be.

For a while, Errol Flynn was the choice, before it was decided that the role would be better performed by Robert Mitchum, with whom Lana had also had a fling.

When an involvement by Mitchum didn't work out, it was decided that Richard Burton, Lana's co-star from *The Rains of Ranchipur*, should be offered the role.

But when that fell through, Gregory Peck was accepted as an ideal candidate for her leading man. Lana, perhaps remembering her secret sexual tryst with him, agreed, until that didn't work out, either.

When James Stewart's name was suggested, Lana asked Robson, "What in hell are you doing? Rounding up all my lovers from yesterday?"

Far down on the list was Van Heflin, another of Lana's former co-stars. "I just can't see him as a leading man. I never could."

Then Robert Ryan was suggested. "I saw something there when he made *Clash by Night* (1952) with Barbara Stanwyck, but he just doesn't ring my bell," Lana said.

Four of Lana's future co-stars were also considered, any of whom, in Lana's words, "could send me ring-a-dinging."

Cast as a rape victim, Selene Cross (Hope Lange) lives on the wrong side of the tracks with her abusive stepfather, Lucas Cross (Arthur Kennedy), who impregnates her.

They included Sean Connery, who would be cast as her co-star in her upcoming *Another Time, Another Place*. Another suggestion was John Gavin, her future co-star in *Imitation of Life*. “He’s just too beautiful for words,” Lana said. Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., her future co-star in *By Love Possessed*, and Cliff Robertson, a future co-star in *Love Has Many Faces*, were—at least temporarily—also considered, fruitlessly, as Lana’s onscreen lover and co-star.

After each of those big-name actors, Lana was rather disappointed to learn that the role of her lover, Michael Rossi, had been assigned to Lee Philips. Although he’d started out on Broadway, this handsome but relatively unknown New York-born actor was not familiar to movie audiences.

“He’s handsome enough,” Lana said, “although he seems to lack the charisma needed for a matinee idol. Fortunately, our love scenes are sort of vanilla, so no great sexual chemistry is required from me. It just wouldn’t be there.”

Lana played the mother of newcomer Diane Varsi, who starred as her daughter Allison. Lana is a concerned and chic matron with a scandalous past she hopes to conceal from her daughter.

When Robson introduced Lana to Lee Philips, he later asked her opinion of him. “Nice guy. But a movie star? No way!”

Maybe she was right. By the 1960s, Philips had shifted mostly to directing. Ironically, when *Peyton Place* was adapted into a TV series, Philips was named as its director.

Cast as Nellie Cross, the downtrodden wife of the man who raped her daughter, was Betty Field (right).

As the drab, bitter, plain-Jane housekeeper for Constance, she had a colorless, depressive role. During the course of the film, she commits suicide by hanging herself in a closet.

He was one leading man who Lana didn't seduce. Within the year, he would be married to Barbara Shrader.

When Lana sat through the film's final cut, she said, "My love scenes with Philips were those performed by respectable middle-class American couples."

One of the film's most pivotal roles was that of the much-victimized Selena Cross. At first, Debbie Reynolds, who'd had a minor role with her in *Mr. Imperium*, was suggested until it was determined that "she is just too sweet."

Then, briefly, ice blonde Carroll Baker was considered. Robson had been impressed with her role in *Giant* (1956), with Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor.

Barry Coe, in the role of Rodney Harrington, was the best-looking man in the cast. He'd appeared with Elvis Presley in *Love Me Tender* (1956). Lana thought he might have a chance to join the ranks of the pretty boys on movie screens of the 50s, but that didn't happen.

In *Peyton Place*, he conducts a torrid romance with the town slut, Betty Anderson (as played by Terry Moore). Moore had had a far better role in *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952), opposite Burt Lancaster. She'd been nominated that year as Best Supporting Actress.

Moore was the longtime partner, on and off again, of Howard Hughes, and may indeed have married him.

Finally, Robson decided to hire newcomer Hope Lange, who had recently made her film debut in William Inge's *Bus Stop* (1956), starring Marilyn Monroe and Don Murray. In the movie, although Marilyn made off with Murray, in real life, Lange married him.

The role of Lana's daughter, Allison MacKenzie, was debated as a vehicle for Joanne Woodward. Lana objected vehemently, claiming that Woodward was far too old for the part, having been born in 1930.

Other possibilities that were under discussion for the daughter role included Elizabeth Montgomery, Julie Harris, Susan Strasberg, Eva Marie Saint, and Natalie Wood. The part eventually went to the relatively unknown Diane Varsi.

Making her film debut in *Peyton Place*, Varsi, born near San Francisco, was considered "an oddball" even in high school. She'd dropped out of school at the age of fifteen, suffering from boredom. Shortly thereafter, she married an 18-year old, but the union was annulled.

Cast in the sympathetic role of Miss Thornton, veteran actress Mildred Dunnock gave her usual stellar performance. On Broadway, she'd been the first Mrs. Loman in *Death of a Salesman.*

Before joining the cast of *Peyton Place*, she had delivered a stunning performance in the 1956 film version of Tennessee Williams' *Baby Doll.*

She'd wanted to be a ballet dancer before switching her ambition to that of a folk singer.

Soon after hitchhiking to Los Angeles, she was discovered by producer Buddy Adler, who put her under contract to Fox, who decided to showcase her in *Peyton Place.*

After working with Lana, Varsi was involved in only a handful of other film roles, including *Compulsion* (1959), before suffering a nervous breakdown. By the spring of 1959, she'd bolted from Hollywood, claiming, "I'm running away from destruction."

During filming, she told Lana, "Unlike you, I'd rather meet Aldous Huxley, not Clark Gable."

Selena's boyfriend, Ted Carter, was played by David Nelson, the son of Ozzie and Harriet Nelson, whose younger brother was the famous singer, Ricky Nelson.

David would go on to become a producer and director, too.

"I know Gable very well," Lana answered. "But who is this Huxley actor?"

The key role of Dr. Matthew Swain was played by veteran actor Lloyd Nolan. He was mostly a B-movie star, though he did appear with such actresses as Dorothy McGuire, even Mae West. He was always steady, always reliable.

The role of the rapist and town sleaze-ball, Lucas, went to Arthur Kennedy, always brilliant on both the stage and screen. On Broadway, he'd been part of the original cast of Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*.

Rodney's romance with Terry Moore is forbidden by his stern father, Leslie Harrington (played by Leon Ames). The owner of the local woolen mill, he is the town's biggest employer.

Lana shared a reunion with Ames, who had played the district attorney hot on her trail in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

As one reviewer of *Peyton Place* noted, "It may be a long, long time before Hollywood gets another supporting cast of such talent and magnitude. Virtually every actor, based either on past performances or possible future roles, has star potential, even the character actors."

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In 1957, *Peyton Place* became the second highest-grossing film of the year, earning $26 million in the United States alone. When it first opened, box office receipts were somewhat average, but after the Lana Turner/Johnny Stompanato murder flared into headlines, long lines assembled at box offices around the country.

Ironically, although Lana feared that the murder of her gangster lover would destroy her standing as a movie star, it produced the opposite effect: It revitalized her career.

Grace Metalious saw the movie and phoned director Mark Robson. “I hated the fucking thing. You’ve botched up all my characters.”

Months later, he told her that even though she despised *Peyton Place*, the film, he hoped that she would accept a $400,000 check for royalties.

Critical reaction was mixed, the *Chicago Times* hailing it as “one of the best films ever made.” A critic in Baltimore wrote, “Lana Turner was nominated for an Oscar, although she resembles a department store mannequin that has somehow wandered away from the window.”

Variety claimed that “in leaning backward not to offend, scriptwriter John Michael Hayes has gone acrobatic. He underplays the dirty sex secrets of the little town depicted in the Metalious novel. In the film, these characters are not the gossipy, spiteful, immoral people she portrayed. There are hints of their hypocrisy, but only hints.”

Even Lana’s harshest critic, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times*, wrote, “Lana Turner did the role remarkably well.” In *The Saturday Review*, Stanley Kauffman said, “Lana Turner, given a role of some depth, proves that she can be as persuasive as some of the Method-dedicated girls flocking into the movies these days.”

When Lana saw this publicity still, she quipped: “Lee Philips got no more intimate with me than this when we shot *Peyton Place.”*

The *National Board of Review* cited *Peyton Place* as “an example of a fine motion picture that can be made out of a cheap and dirty book.”

Wanda Bale in the *New York Daily News* claimed, “Putting *Peyton Place* on the screen was a gigantic undertaking. And from it, Fox has made a picture that is better than the book. It is less shocking, although it is as candid as a French drama, as unreserved as Italian neo-realism. Grace Metalious couldn’t ask for a better cast to bring her characters to life.”

Chapter Sixteen

Who Killed Johnny Stompanato?

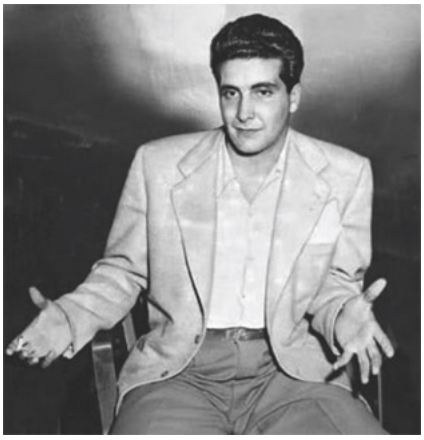
Lana Turner Fears Reprisals from the Mob: Acid Thrown in Her Face, or a Bullet.

The shocking murder of Johnny Stompanato made frontpage news across the nation, with bulletins issued frequently on radio. In Hollywood, the rumor mill began grinding out an alternate claim to the official version, and that was that Lana had plunged the knife into Johnny's stomach and allowed her daughter to take the fall.

Lana obviously knew that if she were exposed as the guilty party, it would mean not only the end of her movie career, but perhaps a lifetime in prison.

Cheryl, or so Lana's attorney, Jerry Giesler, had told her, would get off with only a few months in reform school, if that. Again, he pressed the case that a judge and jury would probably rule it as "justifiable homicide."

As Lana wrote, in her memoirs, about the most notorious event in her life, "It all started with flowers and an innocent invitation for a drink, and it was to end in screaming headlines, in tragedy, and in death."



Lana confessed, “Johnny’s consuming passion for me was strangely exciting. Call it forbidden fruit. My attraction to him was very deep—maybe it was something sick within me.”

Months later, when columnist Lee Mortimer learned about Stompanato’s break-in of Lana’s apartment, he called it “asphyxiation sex.”

“Lana was hot for the bastard,” Frank Sinatra said. “I hated the shithead. He was selling his dick to the highest bidder, male or female.”

In April of 1957, Lana, newly released from MGM, was working at Universal International. She was starring in *The Lady Takes a Flyer* with Jeff Chandler, with whom she was having a fling.

At the studio, she began to receive phone calls from a stranger, who identified himself as “John Steele.” At first, she ignored the calls, refusing to come to the phone. She wrote him off as “another god damn stalker—I’ve had plenty of them, but this one is more persistent than most.”

The calls came in frequently to her dressing room, whose number he had obviously obtained from someone. Flowers, enough for a funeral, arrived daily, along with his card and private phone number.

He appeared to know someone familiar with her, as he sent yellow roses, her favorite, not red ones. He also sent the most expensive boxes of chocolates in Beverly Hills, which she fed to the crew working on her picture, since she did not want to gain weight. As the calls increased, and as the flowers became annoying and overwhelming, more costly gifts arrived, beginning with a diamond bracelet.

Even sets of records were delivered. He knew that Tony Martin and Frank Sinatra, both of them former beaux, were her favorite singers.

Finally, she decided to come to the phone and speak to him. She liked the sound of his strong, virile voice. As a way of introduction, he told her that he was a friend of Ava Gardner, who often spoke lovingly of her. Gardner was in London at the time, and Lana made no attempt to confirm his connection with her.

“I’ve also dated Janet Leigh,” he claimed. “She told me that you and she became friends at MGM.”

That, of course, was true.

He invited her for dinner, but she turned down the offer, claiming, “I’m too busy.”

Actually, in the wake of her divorce from Lex Barker, she was experiencing many lonely nights. There was no one man in all of Hollywood that she wanted to date. “Most of my lovers are getting gray at the temples and have found other mates,” she complained.

One night, when Lana worked late at the studio, she got into her “Baby Whale,” the nickname for her steel-gray Cadillac. She drove to the apartment house, where she was living temporarily. During that unsettling period of her life, she seemed to be constantly changing addresses.

There was space in front of her apartment house, and she parked Baby Whale there. She could not help but notice a black Lincoln Continental parked across the street. A red glow of a cigarette signaled to her that the driver was behind the wheel, perhaps that of her stalker, John Steele. She didn’t know for sure, but at least his name flashed in her mind.

She hurried into the elevator and quickly got off on her floor and went inside, where her Mexican maid, Armida, was waiting, telling her that her dinner was in the oven and ready.

Fifteen minutes later, Armida announced that a Mr. Steele was standing outside her door, wanting to see her.

Out of curiosity, perhaps with the thrill of danger, she told Armida to let him enter her living room.

She didn't know what to expect coming face-to-face with this man of mystery, who seemed rather rich, to judge by that diamond bracelet, the endless flowers, and the lavish gifts, including the most expensive of French perfumes.

While working as a bouncer in one of gangster Mickey Cohen's bars, Johnny Stompanato (left) met the mobster himself. The two men almost immediately struck up a friendship, a very unusual move on Johnny's part.

He was subsequently hired as one of Cohen's bodyguards at $300 a week, although Cohen later admitted that his job was more akin to that of a pimp. "He could attract the babes, and I needed plenty of gorgeous gals in my enterprise to entertain my clients."

Before entering her living room to greet him, she spent at least ten minutes before her vanity mirror, working on her makeup, which had faded by this hour in the early evening. She also put on a beautiful champagne-colored cocktail dress and high heels before emerging. What greeted her dazzled her a bit. She later described him as "very handsome, very masculine, sexy as hell. He treated me like he was in the presence of the Queen of England. This Mr. Steele was oozing with masculinity, and wore a tailored gray suit with a red silk shirt unbuttoned all the way to the silver buckle of his belt."

He had obviously learned how to dress from watching George Raft movies, and was most often described as "cunning and cocksure," with an emphasis on *cock*.

Not wanting to appear overly awed by his striking presence, she chastised him: "You should have called first."

"I *have* called," he protested. "Day after day, spending my nights alone, dreaming of you. You're the first person I think of when I go to bed at night, hoping you will visit me in my dreams, which you always do. But a man can't spend his life dreaming. Will you go to dinner with me tonight?"

She turned him down, claiming that she had an early call. "Perhaps lunch in my apartment Saturday at one? Now, Mr. Steele, good night."

As he walked to the door, he leaned in as if he wanted to kiss her, but she backed away. "Until Saturday, I said."

"I'll bring the food."

Arriving exactly at one o'clock, he brought one of her favorite dishes: Vermicelli in white clam sauce from Mario's, an Italian restaurant she sometimes frequented. How did he know to do that?

Two hours before he showed up, a diamond bracelet had been delivered. It was fashioned from miniature gold leaves surrounding the sparking stones.

She greeted him, and after the maid had served him a drink, she protested. "I can't accept such an expensive gift! You must take it back!"

"I can't. I've had it engraved."

She checked the engraving. "To my beloved Lanita." She put it on her wrist. "Do you own a money tree?"

"Just the leaves," he answered.

"Never in my life have I had lunch with a man of such charm. He was flirtatious, courtly, treating me like a goddess, hanging on my every word like it was divinely inspired. When I dismissed him at three that afternoon, I promised I'd go out dining and dancing with him."

She later confessed to Virginia Grey, “His first sexual come-on was a winner. Since he knew so much about me, he’d found out that I have thing for well-endowed men. He told me he and Oscar shared something in common.”

“What might that be?” Grey asked. Both of them knew what he was implying.

Oscar is a foot long. She assumed he was exaggerating, as so many men do. “Every man with six inches often claims it’s at least nine,” Lana said.

That night, Johnny slept in Lana’s bed.

During a phone call to Grey, Lana confessed, “John Steele did not exaggerate. He could penetrate as far as Oscar. It was unbelievable. He can satisfy a woman’s deepest desires. I really don’t know much about him, but a man who can thrill a woman like John could be Jack the Ripper, and still a woman would invite him into her boudoir. He’s a walking streak of sex.”

Word of his endowment had already become legendary. Columnist James Bacon defined him as “The John C. Holmes of his day,” referring to the most famous male porn star in history.

Despite his flair as a great lover, Lana did not immediately make him her boyfriend. In fact, during the summer of 1957, she seemed to tantalize him, going out with other men, usually former beaux who were between marriages.

In early September, he told her, “I want to totally possess my little Lanita.”

She still wasn’t ready to commit, and for the next few days, claimed that she was always too busy to see him. He accused her of “dangling me like a puppet, knowing how much I love you.”

One night, after she’d turned him down ten times in a row, he climbed up the fire escape of her apartment house and broke into her living room window. She was in bed at the time. A noise must have awakened her, and she rose, seeing this shadowy figure moving toward her.

Before she could scream, he was on top of her. “With a jump, he was on the bed shoving a pillow over my face. Holding my arms pinned to my side, he straddled me and held my legs tight.” *[She wrote that in her memoirs.]*

What she didn’t put in her memoirs was that he raped her. At least it was rape in the beginning, but, as she told Grey, “before a minute or two, my fingernails were digging into his back.”

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Who was this mysterious John Steele? She didn’t really know.

He told her that he was forty-two years old, as compared to her thirty-six. She was sensitive about being seen as an older woman dating a younger man. Hollywood was filled with sex-for-pay couplings like that.

Over the years, the identity of John Steele has been revealed after massive research into his background and the testimony of various people who knew him, many with revelations appearing here for the first time.

John Steele was a pseudonym. His real name was John (“Johnny”) Stompanato, born into an Italian-American family in Woodstock, Illinois, on October 10, 1925. His father, John Sr., owned a barbershop, and his mother, Carmela, was a seamstress. Both parents were immigrants, but they had met in Brooklyn, fell in love, and married.

In 1961, they went to Illinois, seeking a better life. It was there that Carmela gave birth to four children, Grace and Teresa and a boy, Carmine. Her final child was John Jr., the youngest. He never knew his mother, who died of peritonitis six days after his birth. A few months later, Johnny had a new stepmother, Verena Freitag.

During his freshman year at Woodstock High School, Johnny got into trouble. “It was time to get out of Dodge,” as the local police chief said of the boy. He had impregnated two teenaged girls, causing a local scandal.

His father shipped him off to Kemper Military School for boys in Booneville, Missouri. Ironically, his roommate there was the future movie and TV star, Hugh O’Brian, born Hugh Charles Krampe the same year as Johnny.

In the 1950s, O’Brian became a household word starring in the hit TV series, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*, which ran on ABC from 1955 to 1961. In 1965, O’Brian would co-star with Lana, playing a gigolo in *Love Has Many Faces*. During that time the two co-stars sustained a torrid affair in Mexico.

“Johnny was an amazing guy,” O’Brian recalled. “Unfortunately, not all of it was put to use in the right direction. In the gym after playing football, we headed for the communal shower, a dozen showerheads in a row of naked boy ass. Usually, we walked to the showers with a towel around our waists, hanging them up at the door. But Johnny stripped bare-assed naked in the locker room, and he didn’t just walk to the shower, he paraded, shaking that monster dick. We had three or four gay guys in our gym class, and they always followed him with their tongues hanging, taking the showerheads on each side of Johnny. He was the ‘big’ attraction.”

“He was also the prize stud of school. All the gals were after him. At one point, he seduced the much older school nurse. Older women never turned him off. Maybe because he lost his mother, I don’t know. A lot of girls were attracted to me, too, but John was clearly the chief rooster of the henhouse.”

After his graduation from military school in 1942, at the age of seventeen, Johnny joined the U.S. Marines the following year. He served in the South Pacific theater, engaging in some of the most horrific warfare as American troops invaded island by island with an aim to attack the Japanese mainland. He saw some of the most horrendous battles in Okinawa.

He was on the island when U.S. forces captured it from the Japanese. An Army nurse, Betty Nulle, remembered him. "Johnny, as a Marine, was always getting into trouble. He attracted women to him like flies to a raw steak left out in the sun. He'd even borrowed the uniform of this gay lieutenant, who was in love with him, and he would wear it into the officers' mess which served better food that the grub offered enlisted men."

"That was the kind of guy he was. Nobody, not even a general, could tell that cocky bastard what to do. He was a great lover…the best. None of my future four husbands ever measured up to Johnny."

Although World War II ended in September of 1945 after two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, Johnny wasn't discharged from the Marines until March of 1946. At the time of his discharge, he was stationed in Tianjin, China.

Instead of returning to America, he decided to stay on for a while, opening a seedy little nightclub, where he hired underaged Chinese girls. His clientele consisted mostly of expatriates living in China and figuring out how to flourish (or at least how to survive) as foreigners in a post-colonial society ripped apart by war and the tides of history.

Barry Edwards, one of the American Marines who opted to remain in China for several months, said, "Johnny's sleazy bar became a great hangout, especially for pickups. Right after the war, a five-dollar bill would have bought anything. Of course, Johnny 'auditioned' every gal before hiring her. Some were gorgeous. He knew how to pick 'em."

Johnny's life changed when he walked into a dress shop in Tianjin where he was immediately attracted to a Turkish woman, Sarah Utish. "I just had to have her, even if it meant converting to Islam, which she demanded. Religion means nothing to me, so what did it matter? She was just so fucking petite and pretty." He made this confession to Edwards.

He didn't know her age when he married her. He was only twenty-one, and she was five years older.

Both Johnny and his new wife ran into some kind of trouble in China, Johnny no doubt with the police. He took her back to Woodstock, where he got a job driving a bread truck, later in an auto parts factory. In time, John Stompanato III arrived.

Sarah worked at night in a sewing factory, freeing Johnny to "sample the most gorgeous bitches of Woodstock," he later claimed.

Sarah modestly said, "Johnny had a good heart, but he was the boy who never grew up."

Eventually, he deserted his wife and son in Woodstock, and headed for Chicago.

There, in the bar of a hotel, he met Sir Charles Hubbard, a British aristocrat and heir to a fortune and a country estate in England.

Hubbard seemed much impressed with this handsome, sexy young man, and Johnny became his live-in companion. It was Hubbard who flew Johnny to Los Angeles, where he settled and, in Lana's house, eventually died.

Johnny came under an audit from the IRS for failing to pay income tax. An agent discovered that he had not reported $85,000 in cash that Hubbard had given him. In his defense, Johnny claimed it was a loan. The IRS didn't think so, interpreting it as a fee for services rendered, perhaps in blackmailing Hubbard.

This experience launched Johnny on his new profession, that of a hustler and blackmailer.

While working for Mickey Cohen, Johnny answered to a number of nicknames. One was Johnny Valentine, inspired by Rudolph Valentino, the legendary silent screen star who died young. He was also called "Handsome Harry" and "Johnny Stomp."

Marilyn Maxwell nicknamed him "Oscar," claiming that he had something in common with the size of the Academy Award statuette. She also boasted "He's got more than Sinatra."

In her memoir, Cheryl used the term "Academy Award size phallus," in reference to Johnny's outsized penis.

At night, he frequented Lana's favorite night clubs, the Trocadero, Mocambo, and Ciro's, hoping to meet rich women.

During the afternoon, he could always be seen by the swimming pool at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Merv Griffith, the homosexual TV host, spotted him there. Charmed and deeply impressed, he spread the word to his gay friends, including Liberace.

"Johnny wore a collection of almost sheer male bikinis," Griffin said. "As he emerged from the water, the fabric became almost transparent. It was at least eight inches long, soft, and very thick." Griffin picked Johnny up the first afternoon he met him and became a regular customer.

Liberace turned out to be the biggest tipper, at one point rewarding Johnny with a thousand-dollar bill.

During his first year in Hollywood, Stompanato met and married Helen Gilbert, a 33-year-old actress. The marriage lasted much less than a year.

Gilbert, who was eight years his senior, had appeared in Mickey Rooney's *Andy Hardy* series. In filing for divorce, Gilbert told the judge, "During our short marriage, Stompanato had no visible means of support. I did what I could for him."

In 1953, he married another actress, Helene Stanley. She had starred in severalB pictures, and was much older than he was. His marriage to this former Fox contract player lasted two years, but he was gone most of the time.

Helen Gilbert became Johnny Stompanato's second wife. She was a beautiful woman—at least Mickey Rooney thought so when she appeared in his Andy Hardy series.

"In her looks and blonde hair, she reminded me of LanaTurner," the pint-sized actor claimed.

At her divorce hearing, she told the judge, "Stompanato has an awful temper. He once tried to choke my mother when she mislaid his handkerchiefs."

Even during his marriages, Johnny went out with other men and women. He had an affair with a very young Janet Leigh and engaged in a torrid romance with Ava Gardner. Sinatra found out about this and protested to Mickey Cohen.

He pleaded with Cohen to force Johnny to break off from Gardner. At the time, Cohen was under 24-hour surveillance by the police. "I couldn't believe that Frankie wanted me to risk the cops looking me over in a case of his 'hot nuts.'"

Cohen told Sinatra, "I don't mix with my guys and their broads. Frankie, why don't you go back home to Nancy where you belong and quit running after this Tarheel slut?"

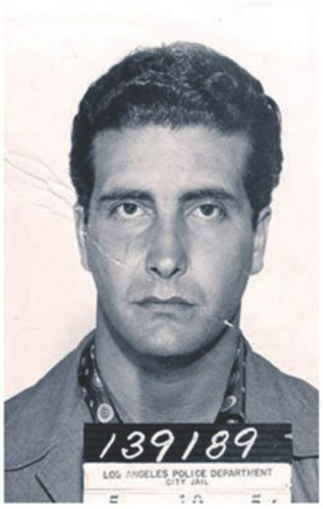
Stompanato's real money came from various scams, notably blackmailing Hollywood stars, male and female, by secretly photographing them in compromising situations. He went through a vast fortune at the time, mainly to pay off his gambling debts. He always lost money gambling, but was drawn to it like an addict to heroin.

Helene Stanley, Stompanato's third wife, was pretty and perky. She arrived in Hollywood hoping to make it as a star. She did get cast in some low-budget pictures, but major stardom eluded her.

Johnny also eluded her much of the time, occupying the beds of other "lucky broads" (his words).

Certainly not all of his dates were with movie stars, of course. It was discovered that the wife of a doctor, Rosemary Trimble, claimed she made two payments to Johnny—one for $2,500, another for $25,000.

These payoffs were first revealed in the Dell book, *Lana: The Public and Private Lives of Lana Turner*. In a separate, unrelated incident, a widow, Doris Jean Cornell told police she gave him $8,150 so that he could open a pet shop.



During the early 1950s, police records in Los Angeles reveal that Stompanato was arrested eight times, based on charges ranging from suspicion of robbery to vagrancy.

Cohen later mocked the vagrancy arrest. "When the cops took him in, Johnny had $5,000 in his wallet, all in one-hundred dollar bills."

As a front, he opened the Myrtlewood Gift Shop in Westwood, selling wood carvings as fine art and crude pottery.

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One Saturday afternoon, Lana's old friend, Mickey Rooney, dropped in. He'd heard rumors that Lana was dating Johnny Stompanato, and he wanted to warn her about the dangers involved.

She was very candid with her lover of long ago. In reference to Stompanato, "I think I've fallen in love with him, even though he broke into my apartment and raped me one night."

"He's bad news," Rooney claimed. "I mean *really* bad news. You referred to him as John Steele. That's not his god damn name. He's the notorious Johnny Stompanato, the henchman of Mickey Cohen. His name has been in the papers."

Before leaving that afternoon, Rooney gave her a copy of *U.S. Confidential*, a book-length exposé written in 1951 by Lee Mortimer and Jack Lait. He'd marked a passage for her to read.

"One of the minor tough guys is handsome Johnny Stompanato, who is the general stooge for Mickey Cohen. Johnny is the introducer of gals to visiting mobsters, and the dancing escort to stars and would-be's." Passages in the book also claimed, accurately, that Stompanato had a record of arrests by the Los Angeles police.

That night, Lana confronted Johnny with Rooney's revelations. He admitted that they were true. "If I'd revealed who I really was, you would not have had anything to do with me. I was planning to tell you, but only after you'd fallen in love with me and could not leave me. Now that I have you, I'll never let you go."

She recalled that the sound of his voice was ominous. Was this not a veiled threat? If so, it would be the first of many to come in the months ahead.

Almost from the beginning, money was a constant source of friction between Lana and Johnny. She paid his living expenses, but objected to having to settle his gambling debts. The first that he presented to her was for $3,500. "If I don't pay up," he warned, "I'm likely to meet up with a stray bullet one night."

"I know that Lana was giving Johnny sums of money at least every other day," Virginia Grey said. "Not huge sums, but at least hundreds of dollars. She told methat every time they had sex, he seemed to bill her. Of course, she was exaggerating, but there was some truth in that. I never confronted Lana with this—she was too much in love—but all of her friends, and especially her enemies, knew that he was nothing but a gigolo."

By now, Lana knew not only that Johnny was a gangster, but that he had a violent streak in him. In spite of that, she introduced him to Cheryl and even allowed them to spend afternoons alone together.

"Johnny and the kid were real close," Cohen said. "She was crazy about him. He told me that himself."

Cheryl even described her first impression of him. "B-picture good looks, thick set. Powerfully built and soft spoken. He talked in short sentences to cover a poor grasp of grammar and had a deep baritone voice. With friends, he seldom smiled or laughed out loud, but always seemed coiled, holding himself in."

"His watchful, hooded eyes took in more than he wanted anyone to notice. His wardrobe on a daily basis consisted of roomy, draped slacks, a silver buckled leather belt, and lizard shoes. By this time, he was also wearing a heavy, gold-link bracelet on his wrist with 'Lanita' inscribed inside."

Cheryl later said that the two of them went horseback riding together or else swimming, during which Johnny liked to show off his manly physique. Their closeness sparked rumors that he might be seducing Cheryl, evoking memories of her repeated rapes by Lex Barker. But there is no evidence that Johnny ever forced himself on the girl.

As a surprise gift, which delighted her, he purchased a red Arabian mare with a flaxen tail and mane. This was the same horse that Lana had ridden in her historical costume drama, *Diane* (1956). Cohen later said that he gave Johnny $900 to purchase the mare.

Johnny and Cheryl often went riding in the Hollywood Hills, overlooking the flatlands where the original silent screen version of *Ben-Hur* had been shot. It had starred Ramon Novarro, who, like Johnny, would meet a violent death.

At the stable, where the horses were kept, an associate of Stephen Crane later reported back to him: "That Stompanato guy seems to be putting his hands all over your daughter."

When Crane confronted Lana with this nasty bit of gossip, she denied that Johnny had ever come on to Cheryl.

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Although Lana was still entranced with Johnny's love-making, she decided not to fly him with her to England, where she had signed to make her next picture, *Another Time, Another Place* (1958). It was to be the first venture of Lanturn, her independent film company. Paramount had agreed to distribute it.

Before she left, she and Johnny had some severe arguments after he learned that he was not going to accompany her. She still found him very attractive sexually, but had ruled him out as marriage material—in fact, she'd abandoned any illusion about a long-term relationship with him.

She told a few friends, "Johnny is what is known as an interlude." Privately, she was hoping that with thousands of miles between herself and his sexual magnetism, she would be in a better position for a clean break, perhaps after sending him a "Dear John" letter.

Two weeks before her departure for England, he'd been in her bed every night. As she confessed to Virginia Grey, one session with him that began late one Saturday night lasted until dawn Sunday morning. "He has the stamina of a bull," she claimed. "He can't seem to get enough. A little rest and he's on fire again."

She decided to fly to London with her makeup man and confidant, Del Armstrong. Because of strict union laws in Britain, he could not practice his profession there, so she arranged to have him listed as an associate producer.

She met with her director, Lewis Allen, to discuss the production of the film. Although born in England, he had worked mainly in the United States, turning out eighteen movies from 1944 to 1959. He was also a film actor. After shooting war propaganda movies for Britain, he made his film debut as a (non-military) director in 1944 when he helmed *The Uninvited*, an atmospheric ghost story starring Ray Milland.

The screenplay for *Another Time, Another Place* was by Stanley Mann, a Canadian, who had penned a TV adaptation of *Death of a Salesman* in 1957. Lana's soapy film was based on *Weep No More*, a novel by Leonore Coffee. *[Coffee had also written for the screen, winning an Oscar nomination for* Four Daughters *back in 1938.]*

She had told Lana, "Hollywood picks your brain, breaks your heart, ruins your digestion—what do you get for it? Nothing but a lousy fortune."

Lana ordered Mann to come up with a new title. After lots of debate, it emerged as *Another Time, Another Place*. Although as a title, it was weak and somewhat nonspecific, Lana liked it.

From the beginning, she announced that it would be a woman's picture. Set in England during the closing months of World War II, it's the story of the wife of an English soldier killed in battle, in conflict with his grieving mistress. Whereas his kind and unpretentious wife lived in a small Cornish village, his emotionally bereaved mistress, Sara Scott (as played by Lana), had been stationed in London as a chic, mink-clad, impeccably groomed American newspaperwoman.

During her character's work-obsessed wartime sojourn in London, she had met Mark Trevor, finding him handsome and charming, a news commentator for the BBC. She begins to see a lot of him, as they start to date. By the time he confesses to her that he has a wife and son living in Cornwall, she has fallen desperately and irretrievably in love with him.

During the final weeks of the war, Mark is sent on a mission to France. His plane crashes, and he is killed instantly.

The sends Sara into shock and generates a kind of grieving obsession for her lost lover. Impulsively, she decides to visit the Cornish village where he'd lived and where his wife, and young son, also grieving, are living. The picturesque Cornish village of Polperro, in the southwest of England, was selected for the exterior shots. The interior shots were to be filmed at Elstree Studios outside London.

Jack Hildyard, who had won an Oscar for his high-caliber camera work on *The Bridge on the River Kwai* in 1959, would brilliantly recapture the English countryside, and photograph Lana looking as lovely as she did in the

early 1950s.

Seeking emotional closure, in defiance of the strident advice of her friends, Sara leaves London, traveling to Polperro to see where her lost lover had lived. Overcome with emotion, she falls ill there, and, by coincidence, is invited to recuperate within the home of Mark's wife, Kay, and his young son, Brian.

As would be inevitable, Sara's true identity as "the other woman" (Mark's grieving mistress) is revealed to Kay before the end of the film.

To complicate matters, Sara (i.e., Lana) has been conducting a subdued romance with her *fiancé*, Carter Reynolds, her publisher, and he's longing to marry her.

That role went to Barry Sullivan, who had worked with Lana before in, among others, *The Bad and the Beautiful*. When they'd met for drinks in Hollywood, he told her, "I've pursued you for years. But this time, I've thrown in the towel, deciding you're unobtainable. At least out of my league."

Glynis Johns was assigned the role of Mark's cheerful, long-suffering British wife, Kay. Noted for her husky trademark voice, she had begun acting and dancing as a child. She'd made her film debut in 1938, the same year Lana did. Over time, she had co-starred with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Alec Guinness, David Niven, James Stewart, and Danny Kaye.

During filming, Lana was often frustrated and in a nervous state, based on her ongoing difficulties with Stompanato and in her capacity as the producer of the film as well as its star. The actual producer—the one in charge of arranging and organizing its business affairs—was Joseph Kaufman.

In her anxiety, Lana nervously lashed out at Johns, at one point calling this talented and engaging actress, "the bitch of the world."

While her character decides who she's in love with, her boss, Barry Sullivan, waits patiently on tender-hooks.

Two other actors had key supporting roles: Raymond Burr as Walt Radak, and the English actor, Terrence Longdom, as Alan Thompson.

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Although her star power had waned since she'd been fired from MGM, Lana still retained the right to select her leading man. Twenty actors were considered before she settled on a newcomer to films, Sean Connery.

A Scotsman, the son of a cleaning woman and a factory worker, he'd been a milkman, truck driver, day laborer, coffin polisher (that's right), and bodybuilder. He'd also been a nude model. A student artist, Arlene Hector, later said, "Young Sean was magnificent in the nude and lacked nothing 'down there.' In fact, it was the biggest I'd ever seen. It made me drop my charcoal pencil."

Prior to his gig with Lana in *Another Time, Another Place*, Connery's film work was so insignificant that Lana decided to bill his appearance as "introducing Sean Connery."

Her hunch about his sex appeal proved Lana right. He would go on to become the movie's first "Bond…James Bond" in the highly successful *Dr. No* (1962). Not only that, he would become one of the biggest screen sex symbols in the world, accessorized by guns and a bevy of glamorous women lusting after him.

During the making of the film, Connery and Lana were seen everywhere together. She even rode on the back seat of his motorcycle. Rumors of an affair reached Hollywood, especially the ears of Johnny Stompanato, who

became enraged. Even at this early stage of his career, Connery had a reputation as a superb lover.

Cheryl wrote that "people working on the picture were persuaded that mother and Sean were really having a secret fling. They had a certain familiarity with each other."

In spite of (or perhaps in part because of) his bushy, caterpillar eyebrows—in contrast to Lana, who had none—she viewed Sean Connery as "very handsome, sexy, and virile." She was drawn to that glint in his eye and admired his rugged charm and physicality.

"Lana was Sean's type," said journalist Peter Noble. "How far did it go? With all that red-hot chemistry, one would imagine all the way. He certainly entertained Lana at his flat, and he accompanied her on a number of outings."

There was a ten-year difference in their ages, but Connery didn't see that as an obstacle. At one point, a London reporter asked him, "How does it feel to make love on the screen to an old woman?"

He later said, "I should have punched the bloke."

Years later, in 1992, all that Connery would say was, "Who can forget Lana Turner? She was a lovely lady. I adored her."

He didn't confess to an affair, but Lana did. "I've had them all," she told Virginia Grey, "and Sean ranks up there near the top."

Her name now appears on Connery's list of actress lovers, alongside Ursula Andress, co-star in *Dr. No* (1962); Claudine Auger, co-star in *Thunderball* (1965); Brigitte Bardot, co-star in *Shalako* (1968); Jill St. John, co-star of *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971); and Kim Basinger, co-star of *Never Say Never Again* (1983).

Biographer Michael Feeny Callan, wrote: “Friends of Sean Connery broadly hinted that the friendship between the Scot and Lana eventually bloomed into an impassioned affair.

‘Big Tam’ (his nickname) had Hollywood Incarnate in his arms, and he did with it what he did most effortlessly—he made love.”

Others of Connery’s seductions included Zsa Zsa Gabor (who had sustained intimacies with both Johnny Stompanato and Lex Barker); Shelley Winters; Lana Wood (sister of Natalie Wood); British actress Sue Lloyd; another British actress, Carol Sopen; Polish actress Magda Knopka, English photographer Julie Hamilton; and singer Lyndsey de Paul.

As he confessed, “There was never any trouble getting girls, but it’s big trouble getting rid of them.”

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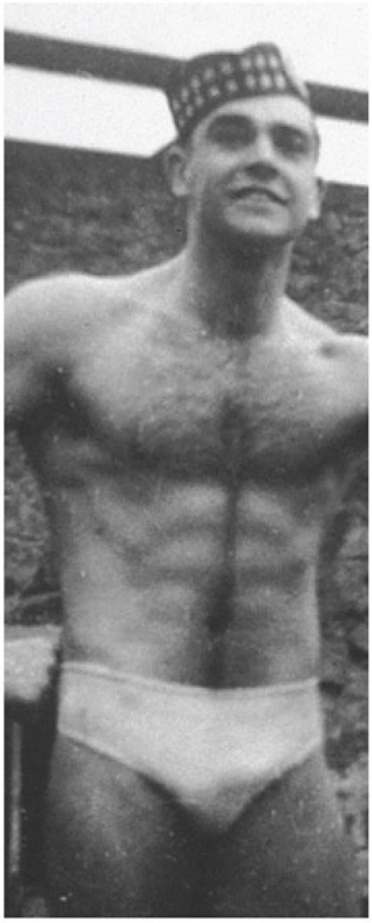
Lana with her nemesis, the very charming Glynis Johns. Lana was “the other woman.”

Although Lana claimed that her original intention involved staying in England alone as a means of dumping Johnny, her love letters to him (which were later published) indicate otherwise. From London, a typical one read: “Sweetheart, please keep well because I need you so—and so you will always be strong and able to caress me, hold me, tenderly at first, and crush me into your very own being.”

In another letter to him, in which she addressed him as “My Beloved Love,” she wrote: “Every line of your precious, exciting letter warms me and makes me miss you each tiny moment—and it’s true—it’s beautiful, yet

terrible. But, so is deep love. Hold me, dear lover. I'm your woman and I need you, my man! To love and be loved —don't ever doubt or forget that!"



Sean Connery at the debut of his career, as a contestant in a Mr. Universe bodybuilding competition.

She often received transatlantic phone calls from him, and he, too, wrote her, declaring his undying love.

However, while all this was going on, he had rented a $125-a-month motel room at the Malibu Sands Motel on the Pacific Coast Highway, where he became a resident for one month. Outside his door, he'd park two ostentatiously expensive cars: a white 1957 Thunderbird and a late model black Lincoln Continental.

Jeffrey Woods, the night manager there, spoke to the tabloid press after Johnny's murder.

"I may have missed a few, but I counted at least eighteen men—never a woman—who came and went from his apartment during the night hours when I was on duty. Some of them stopped and asked me the number of his motel room. I was convinced he was a male prostitute, since these guys were out of shape. No self-respecting homosexual would take them on unless they were paid."

Johnny continued to implore Lana to invite him to London, and she finally acquiesced. Many sources claim that Mickey Cohen supplied him with the airfare, but the mobster denied it. "He asked me for it, but I told him to make her send him a ticket. And she did. A one-way ticket."

He joined her at her rented house in Hampstead Heath.

In the beginning, "He was the most loving and kind I'd ever seen him," she said. "He couldn't get enough love making. But after a week or two, things changed."

He was angry that she refused to let him accompany her every day to the studio. He was growing increasingly bored, wandering around Central London, mostly near Piccadilly Circus. In Del Armstrong's view, "I think Johnny turned a trick or two there, since it was a gathering place for homosexuals in the Underground's men's toilets."

The arguments began when he accused her of having an affair with Connery. She denied it, telling him, "We're just good friends."

Once again, he revived his long-standing ambition to become an actor. He wanted her to produce and star in two screenplays he had read but not optioned, since he didn't have the money.

A homosexual friend of his, Philip Coburn, had written a script entitled *By Love Betrayed*. Ironically, the title evoked a former movie of Lana's, *Betrayed*, and a future one, *By Love Possessed*.

By Love Betrayed was about two A-list movie stars—one blonde, the other brunette—who not only vied for an Oscar, but for the same man, a world-famous aviator (i.e., Howard Hughes). The plot seemed to dip into the biography of those sisters and stars, Joan Fontaine and Olivia de Havilland. Johnny wanted Lana and Ava Gardner as the two stars, with himself cast as the aviator.

He showed Lana another script, *The Bartered Bride*, available for option for $1,000. The story by Robert Carson had already been publicized in Louella Parsons' column. She wrote that it might be a starring vehicle for Lana and Frank Sinatra. Johnny wanted to produce it, with the understanding that financing would be provided by Lanturn.

Lana rejected any involvement with the script, and refused to indulge the acting ambitions of the wannabe star (Stompanato), even if some producer could be found with the money. Every night when she arrived home, tired and exhausted from the strain of production, he increased his pressure and his demands.

One night, she could take it no more, and she screamed at him, "Get out of my house. Pack you god damn bags and get the fuck out of England. Go back to your gangsters!"

Defiantly, he refused to leave the house, but retreated instead to the living room, where he sulked until around 2AM. At that point, he barged into her bedroom. She was asleep, but he woke her up, shouting, "Like hell I'm going to leave!"

Although she feared a scandal, she threatened to call the police. "They'll kick you out of the country, especially when I tell them you're traveling under a fake passport with the name of John Steele."

Finally, he could no longer control his temper. She later wrote: "After he choked me and threw me on the floor, he then barged into the bathroom and came back with a razor. He came over to me and grabbed my head, all the time screeching violent things at me. Then he claimed that he was going to use the razor to make only a small incision at first, but soon, he would carve bigger scars. He said he'd scar my face for all time. I pleaded and pleaded with him to let me alone. I said I'd do whatever he wanted if he wouldn't destroy my face."

"If you claim you love me, why can you hurt me?" she asked. "PLEASE DON'T!"

She desperately reached for her phone. As she did, he lurched toward her, ripping the phone from her hands. Then his strong fingers tightened around her delicate throat. She screamed for help before he cut off her vocal chords.

Her maid, Annie, was asleep in a small room upstairs, and she heard the commotion. In her night gown, she came galloping down the steps and into the bedroom. A strong, bulky woman, she headed straight for Johnny.

She managed to yank him off Lana. For a while, they wrestled together on the floor. He could have overpowered her, even killed her, but sanity prevailed, and he did not use his full force upon her.

Jumping up from the floor, Annie covered Lana with her own bulk. “Get out of this room, or I’ll kill you!” she shouted at him.

At that, he seemed to bring his rage under control, storming out of the bedroom and out of the house. He slammed the front door behind him.

Annie spent the rest of the night with Lana, promising to protect her should he return.

Johnny stayed away from the house for several days. It was not known at the time where he went. Years later, Diana Dors, Britain’s sex symbol of the 1950s, revealed that he had stayed with her. She had been called “Britain’s answer to Lana Turner” and later, “Britain’s answer to Marilyn Monroe.”

It is not known how Johnny met Dors. However, this highly sexed star was known for staging orgies, and no doubt, he managed to come by an invitation to one of these sex parties, where he intrigued Dors with his sexual prowess.

Lana woke up that Monday morning with laryngitis, and Annie called Del Armstrong to alert the studio that she was too sick to report that day to work.

She’d lost her speaking voice. She had been flirting with a cold all weekend, and Dr. Stanwood Williams, who had once treated Laurence Olivier, was summoned. After examining her, he told her that her cold had developed into influenza.

She had to remain in bed for a week, shutting down production on the film and even threatening the existence of Lanturn, which was severely underfinanced.

Finally, Johnny returned to Lana’s home, and she was too weak to indulge in any more fights with him. He apologized for attacking her, claiming, “It’s because I love you so much.”

She demanded that he exit at once, but he made his most serious threat again. “If you kick me out, I’ll see that one of Cohen’s henchmen takes care of Mildred and Cheryl.”

That week, Lana returned to the set, but still could not speak in a normal voice. It would be another three weeks before “I sounded like myself. Otherwise, my voice recorded like a victim choking on a tough piece of steak.”

The director shot scenes where she had no dialogue, including shots of her walking, sometimes unsteadily, on high heels and in mink, across the uneven cobblestones of Polperro.

Alone again at Hampstead Heath during the day, Johnny grew bored and impatient. Rumors still persisted about the affair that Connery was having with Lana, Finally, one afternoon, Johnny bribed Lana’s driver to take him to the studio where they were filming. He wore a suit which contained a revolver in his breast pocket.

If necessary, he planned not to kill Connery, but to use the gun to threaten him.

He arrived just in time to stand in the background and watch Connery and Lana perform a love scene on camera. He whispered to a grip, “Those two obviously had a lot of practice off screen.”

Connery came off the set with an arm around Lana. Suddenly, Johnny shouted at him. “You keep away from her!” As he did, she let out a little scream.

Johnny took out his revolver and pointed it at Connery’s chest. As if in rehearsal for a future scene from a James Bond movie, the actor sprang into action before Johnny could pull the trigger. He twisted Johnny’s wrist until he dropped the gun, then he delivered a right hook to Johnny’s nose, causing him to bleed all over his tasteless lime-green suit.

Stunned by the blow, he did not rise at once. He reached for his handkerchief to cover his bleeding nose. By the time he rose to his feet, security guards had been summoned, and they forcibly escorted him out of the studio.

“You’ll get yours, you mother fucker!” he shouted back at Connery, as Lana stood looking on in stunned and horrified disbelief.

Raging and swearing, Johnny was deposited into the back seat of Lana’s chauffeur-driven limousine and driven back to her rented home.

Del Armstrong rushed to the scene and urged her to call Scotland Yard, explaining that he had a contact there who would hustle Johnny out of the country, based on, among other factors, his previous entry into Britain using a fake passport.

Two detectives from Scotland Yard agreed to go to Lana’s home to force Johnny to pack his luggage before escorting him to the airport for the next plane leaving for Los Angeles. Each of the detectives promised Lana that they would not leave the airport until his plane was airborne.

Days later, Lana awoke with the fear that Johnny might carry through with his threat to harm Cheryl and Mildred. “I decided to test the waters.”

Although she had vowed never to speak to him again, she wrote him two conciliatory letters, each of which she later described as “too sentimental.”

Perhaps they were, because what she wrote in them was so loving that it convinced him that he still had a chance with her, in spite of his previous violence.

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After Johnny was murdered, Paramount advanced the release date of *Another Time, Another Place* by three months to take advantage of all the notorious publicity Lana was getting. Even so, that didn't help the box office for this film. *[It did, however, greatly beef up the audiences for* Peyton Place*, a movie she had made previously, which was currently playing in theaters across America.]*

Nearly all the major reviews of *Another Time, Another Place* were unfavorable. The film historian, Leslie Halliwell, wrote: "Drippy romance unsympathetically played and artificially set in a Cornish village. Lana Turner unsympathetically played an American newspaperwoman who has an affair with a British war correspondent, unsympathetically played by Sean Connery."

The New York Times ripped into the picture. "*Another Place, Another Time* is a long way from making any contact with any interests that might serve to entertain. This one was made in England, evidently as part of the current 'Go Home, Yank' plan."

The New York Post noted that Connery was being introduced to American movie audiences. "The BBC commentator is played by a newcomer, Sean Connery, who will not, I guess, grow old in the industry."

How wrong could one critic be?

REVEALED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL. WHO DID STOMPANATO HUSTLE? LANA WAS NOT ALONE!

Pay and Play: A Rogue's List of Hollywood's Horniest

Mary Astor

June Allyson

Fred Astaire

Lucille Ball

Jack Benny

George Cukor

Marion Davies

Sammy Davis, Jr.

Yvonne De Carlo

SO THEY WERE DEPRESSED & LONELY ON A BAD NIGHT

Recipients of Stud Services from Stompanato (page 2 of 3)

Anita Ekburg

Errol Flynn

Zsa Zsa Gabor

Ava Gardner

Cary Grant

Merv Griffin

Rock Hudson

Alan Ladd

Janet Leigh

JOHNNY'S GOT A GUN, A MAFIA CONNECTION, AND A REPUTATION AS THE MOST STYLISH GIGOLO IN HOLLYWOOD.

Here are more of his clients (page 3 of 3)

Liberace

Marilyn Maxwell

Marilyn Monroe

Barbara Payton

Cole Porter

George Raft

Spencer Tracy

Clifton Webb

Lovely Lana Turner

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Lana decided, after her ordeal in London, that she desperately needed a vacation at her favorite retreat in Acapulco. She'd go there even before returning to Los Angeles.

In those days, there was no direct air link to the resort in Mexico except from Copenhagen. She remembered it as a gray, rainy day when she left England, telling Connery goodbye.

"I don't like English weather. You should move to California where it is always bright and sunny."

En route to Denmark, she recalled that she was overcome with an ominous feeling that her life was about to come apart.

After the plane landed in Copenhagen, she remained aboard until the other passengers had disembarked. Then, a young male flight attendant approached her: "Miss Turner, there is a gentleman waiting for you at the end of the ramp."

Startled as to who that might be, she followed him off the plane. From her position at the top of the ramp, she noted a tall man in a trench coat standing at its bottom. Slowly she descended until she came face to face with him. She would later remember his smile. "It was more of a smirk. It was Johnny Stompanato."

"Now I've got you," he said.

She didn't even speak to him, as he took her arm and directed her into the terminal. There, she found a bevy of photographers and reporters waiting to interview her.

She felt awkward and nervous throughout the conference, as she was peppered with the usual questions, such as, "What's your next picture?" She bluffed that, as she didn't know what her agent, Paul Kohner, might come up with. Throughout the press conference, Johnny hawkeyed her.

Finally, they left and she was alone with him. "It's time to board our plane. I'm going to Acapulco with you."

"The hell you are!" Those were her first words to him since arriving in Denmark.

He took her arm again, and almost blindly, she followed along with him. "I'll never let you go." It turned out that he had a ticket on her plane. Not only that, but he had the seat next to hers. She was amazed by how much information he'd gathered about her.

It isn't known what she said or did *en route* to Mexico. When they arrived at Teddy Stauffer's Villa Vera, Stauffer immediately noticed how chilly Lana was toward Johnny.

He was at the height of his season, but he had reserved for her a one-bedroom suite overlooking the bay, with a private swimming pool for nude sunbathing. When she saw the double bed, she turned to him. "Johnny here needs to be booked in separate quarters. I must keep up appearances, you know."

But almost every accommodation was booked. As he protested, Johnny was led to what looked like a broom closet with a cot. It had a sink but no toilet.

"I'll take it, but I plan to spend my nights in bed with Lana," he told Stauffer.

Somehow, word reached Louella Parsons back in Hollywood. On February 22,1958, she wrote in her column: "I sincerely hope it isn't true that Lana Turner, who is now in Acapulco, is not going to marry Johnny Stampanat *(sic).*"

During their second day in Acapulco, Johnny, with her money, rented a small yacht captained by Juan García, a salty old skipper who had been born in Galicia in northwestern Spain and spoke passable English. He owned the *Rosa Maria*, which he claimed he'd won by gambling in Venezuela. He later told a reporter, "Lana Turner and that Italian guy spent 20 of their 49 days in Mexico on my boat."

García said, “I couldn’t understand why a movie queen would have to keep chasing after this man, no matter what he was doing on board. She was always at his side, even following him into the shower. He would be sitting nude in a deck chair, and she would come over and plop down on him, causing a natural reaction as she wiggled her shapely butt across his genitals. Then he’d pick her up, his raging hard-on at full staff, and carry her below to their cabin. To judge from her squeals, he was a treat for any woman. She didn’t bother to muffle her screams of delight.”

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From Hollywood, film producer Jerry Wald placed some urgent phone calls to Lana’s suite in Acapulco. He was casting William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* for a 1959 release. The script followed the lives and passions of the Compsons, a degenerate once-proud Southern family now just scraping by.

The leads had already been cast with Yul Brynner and Joanne Woodward. Lana was offered the role of Caddy Compson, a fading Southern belle.

Critics had hailed the Faulkner novel as one of the hundred greatest of the 20th Century.

Wald outlined her role as the third lead. She turned him down, even though she needed the money. “There’s no way I’m going to play a fading Southern belle. I’ve not reached the point in my career where I’m reduced to that.”

Having failed to convince her, Wald cast Margaret Leighton the next day.

***

It wasn’t all love-making in Mexico. Stauffer had room service deliver bottle after bottle of vodka to Lana’s suite. Johnny wanted her to go with him to fancy restaurants and night clubs; he wanted her to back film projects with him as the star, and he wanted to marry her. She rejected every proposal.

When she’d heard too much from him, she shouted “You’re not the kind of man a woman marries, Johnny boy, especially to a world class movie star.”

He struck her, and she fell on the floor, where he kicked her before storming out. During their “vacation,” she got knocked around a lot. Once, he pointed a revolver at her head when she refused to have sex with him.

In her own memoirs, Lana contradicted the report of the skipper. “I had no intimacies with Johnny in Mexico until he forced his lovemaking on me at gunpoint.”

One night when she refused his invitation to go to a nightclub with him, he plowed his fist into her stomach, knocking her down. “I hate you!” she sobbed. Finally, he won her over, and she began to appear again in public with him.

One Friday afternoon, when she was sailing aboard the *Rosa Maria* with him, her agent, Paul Kohner, placed several urgent calls to her suite from Hollywood.

She had tried a number of agents before settling on this Austrian-American who managed top stars, at one point directing the careers of Greta Garbo and Maurice Chevalier. He signed big names, both movie stars and directors, including Marlene Dietrich, Billy Wilder, John Huston, even Ingmar Bergman.

Among other prestigious clients that Kohner had gathered were Liv Ullman, Henry Fonda, David Niven, Dolores Del Rio, and Erich von Stroheim. Many of his clients had fled from Nazi-occupied Europe for relocation in Hollywood.

Kohner was married to the Mexican actress, Lupita Tovar, who had starred in the Spanish-language version of *Dracula* (1931). He was also the brother of screen-writer Frederick Kohner. Paul’s daughter was Susan Kohner, who would be Lana’s co-star in the upcoming *Imitation of Life*.

The phone was ringing when a sunburned Lana returned with Johnny from yet another day trip aboard the *Rosa Maria*.

“Lana! Lana! Kohner shouted into the phone. You’ve been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar for your performance in *Peyton Place!”*

She couldn’t believe the news. She’d always felt she’d deserved Oscars for *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*. But *Peyton Place!*

“But Paul, I didn’t have all that much to do in that film.”

“Obviously, the Academy disagreed with you. Aren’t you delighted?”

“Of course I am,” she said. “But can I win? Who are the other bitches I’m up against?”

He informed her, beginning with Joanne Woodward in *Three Faces of Eve*.

“Oh shit,” Lana said. “Newman’s bitch has got it.”

“We’ll see. She’s got to beat out, first, Lana Turner. Then Deborah Kerr in *Heaven Knows, Mr. Alison;* Anna Magnani in *Wild Is the Wind;* and Elizabeth Taylor in *Raintree County.”*

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On her last night of her holiday in Mexico, Lana woke from a deep, vodka-induced sleep. It took a long moment for her to come to, until she realized that Johnny was sitting in an armchair near the foot of her bed, his features outlined in the moonlight streaming in. She became aware that he was pointing a gun at her head.

She sat up in bed and screamed.

"Shut the fuck up!" he yelled at her. "This gun is just a reminder that you're mine. I'm not going anywhere. You're going to let me escort you to Oscar night, including the ball to follow."

"And if I don't? she asked.

"Then I'll shoot you, even if I have to go to the chair for it. Better yet, after shooting you, I'll fall down on top of you and put a bullet to my own head."

"You'd take your own life just for me?" She was astonished. The suspicion that he might be insane swept over her.

"You see, Miss Turner, if I don't have you, I have nothing. You make me somebody."

The picture of Cheryl greeting Lana and Johnny on the occasion of their return from Acapulco was carried in dozens of newspapers, often on the frontpage. One of the headlines read: LANA TURNER RETURNS WITH MOB FIGURE.

On her home turf, Lana was filled with excitement about attending the 1958 Academy Awards presentation. Even Johnny behaved himself, thinking that he was going to be her escort to Hollywood's biggest night of the year.

Back in California, Johnny was on his best behavior for a while, and she even took him out in public. They were seen dancing together at the Mocambo, dining at Chasens.

Her rented home was not yet available, so she'd checked into a suite at the Bel Air Hotel. For appearances, Johnny stayed at his apartment on Wilshire Boulevard, although he was at Lana's every night. "He remained glued to me," she said.

Finally summoning her courage, she told him he wasn't going to be her escort. Instead, she'd invited Cheryl and Mildred to attend the Oscar presentations with her.

For once, he controlled his fury. Instead of becoming violent, he acted like a little boy who had been deeply wounded. He sulked around her hotel suite with his hurt feelings on display. Once, in anger, he said, "I'm good enough to fuck you, to make love to you, to hold you in my arms all night, but I'm not good enough to be photographed with you walking the red carpet."

"It's your own fault," she said. "If you hadn't been publicly linked to Mickey Cohen, it would be different."

On the afternoon of the premiere, she began working on her makeup and her outfit. Her designer had created a gown for her "to evoke the image of a mermaid." It was a clinging, strapless, white lace sheath. At the knees, it flared into three tiers of lace stiffened with tulle. She also wore dazzling diamonds: Rings on her fingers, a necklace around her shapely neck, a diamond bracelet, and diamond earrings like big raindrops.

Lana made several attempts to dump Johnny Stompanato because of his increasing violence toward her. At one point, he threatened to shoot her.

But in public, they concealed what was going on behind the scenes.

The big event was staged at the Art Deco Pantages Theater, the last time the ceremony would be presented there.

She dazzled the waving, cheering fans as she walked along the red carpet. Everyone commented on her appearance and her deep Mexican suntan.

She had been selected to present the Best Supporting Actor Award, the Oscar going to Red Buttons for his role in *Sayonara* (1957). He impulsively gave her a big kiss. Some observers noted that she seemed nervous and jittery. After all, this was the first time she had appeared before a live audience of fifty million people without a script.

There was entertainment, highlighted by Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas singing, "It's Great Not to Be Nominated" followed by that show stopping number "Baby, It's Cold Outside," sung by "the odd couple," Rock Hudson and Mae West.

As she'd predicted, the Best Actress Oscar went to a Georgia-born blonde, Joanne Woodward, who had once been dubbed "Plain Jane." In addition to her Oscar, she also had another Hollywood prize: Paul Newman.

Peyton Place was nominated for Best Picture of the year, Mark Robson for Best Director. The movie received several other nominations, too, all of which the stars or the production crew would lose. A Best Screenplay nomination from an adapted work went to John Michael Hayes.

In a surprise twist, both Arthur Kennedy and Russ Tamblyn were nominated for Best Supporting Actor, and both Hope Lange and Diane Varsi competed for Best Supporting Actress.

William Mellor was nominated for Best Cinematography for his brilliant depiction of a New England rural setting, at autumn, when the leaves turn.

After the ceremony, Lana attended a ball at the Beverly Hilton, where Sean Connery, flown in from England, sat at her table and later danced with her, holding her intimately, causing some gossip.

Before the night ended, she also danced with men with whom she'd had flings: James Stewart, Gregory Peck, and Clark Gable, even Cary Grant, whom she'd never seduced.

When Lana returned to her suite at the Bel Air, she put Cheryl to bed in the adjoining room. Mildred had left for her own apartment. Shutting the door to her daughter's room, Lana walked into her darkened living room where she saw that the only light came from the glow of a cigarette being inhaled.

She switched on the light to discover Johnny sitting in an armchair. Apparently, he'd bribed someone on the staff to admit him. He seemed anxious to have a fight with her for not taking him as her escort to the Oscar presentations.

Biographer Jane Ellen Wayne described what happened next. "He slapped her so hard, she hit the floor. He picked her up and hit her in the face. As she was still wearing those diamond earrings, the stones cut into her cheeks. He punched her body, knocked her to the floor, picked her up, and socked her once more. He threw her on the bed as she pleaded with him to stop."

"I want you to promise not to go anywhere without me again."

"In the bathroom, she rinsed her mouth, which was full of blood. Her cheeks were bruised, and her jaw was turning purple," Wayne wrote.

After a sleepless night, she rose from her bed, battered and bruised. He'd left her suite after the beating, but she expected him to pop in on her at any minute. She knew of no way she could get rid of him without inviting a scandal. By now, she was convinced that he was insane, as visions of herself being beaten and mutilated crossed her mind. She also feared attacks on Cheryl and Mildred, as he had threatened.

***

April 4, 1958 would live in infamy in the annals of Hollywood murders. In the case of Lana Turner, there would be sensational stories of sex, mystery, suspense, shocking revelations, and courtroom drama.

It all began on Good Friday. The setting was 730 North Bedford Drive on Beverly Hills in a large, fully furnished, colonial-style house that had been occupied by Lana and Cheryl for only four days. It had been built by Laura Hope Crews with money she'd earned as Aunt Pittypat in *Gone With the Wind*.

Dripping in diamonds, a suntanned Lana made a dazzling appearance in her “Mermaid Dress” at the 1958 Academy Awards ceremony, where she’d been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar.

She not only lost the award, but faced a severe beating when she returned to her hotel suite.

Her gangster lover, Johnny Stompanato, unleashed his fury on her for not letting him escort her to the presentations. She feared he was going to disfigure her, perhaps even kill her.

The afternoon had begun innocently enough when Lana invited her friend, Del Armstrong, over for a drink. He arrived with a newly minted friend, Bill Brooks, whom he and Lana met on the set of *The Sea Chase* with John Wayne.

Their trio sat amicably together in the living room, talking. Then Johnny entered through the front door with some purchases he’d made. At the sight of Brooks, he hastily retreated into the kitchen before Lana could introduce him.

After he was out of hearing, Brooks turned to Lana. “Who is that man? I think I know him. We went to military school together.”

“Johnny Stompanato,” she said.

“That’s the guy!” Brooks said. “At Kemper Military School, we were in the class of ’43.”

“I think Johnny would have been too old to be in that class, that year. He’s forty-three.”

“I was two years ahead of him, and I’m thirty-five. That would make him thirty-two.”

She was shocked, as it was suddenly obvious to her that Johnny had lied about his age.

The subject was dropped, and she spent another half-hour talking and drinking with her friends. As a parting gesture, Brooks said, “Give my regards to John. I sorry we didn’t have a chance to catch up.”

By now, Johnny had retreated to the upstairs bedroom. When he heard the two men leave, he came downstairs, where Lana was alone with a stiff drink of vodka. She immediately turned to him, accusing him of lying to her about his age.

He tried to defend himself. “I heard you say you never wanted to be seen going out with a younger man like a lot of dames in Hollywood. You once told me you didn’t want to be Norma Desmond supporting a gigolo, Joe Gillis.” *[He was referring to the 1950 movie,* Sunset Blvd.*, in which Gloria Swanson, as a brittle, aging, egomaniacal, and ultimately demented silent screen vamp, supports her lover, William Holden.]*

From that point on, the events of the approaching night went downhill. He was in one of his darkest moods, seemingly ready to pick a fight. He needed $4,000, but she refused to write him a check. He stormed out of the

house in anger.

But he called at around 8PM, announcing that he was coming over to take her to see Tennessee Williams' *Baby Doll* (1957), a film that Lana had missed because she was out of the country.

She told him that she had a lot of unpacking to do, and refused the invitation. He arrived within the hour and, as she remembered it, he seemed to be "itching for a fight." One argument led to another. She told him that she planned to dine the following night with Armstrong and Brooks. That set him off in a rage, as he obviously feared what Brooks would tell her about his days in military school.

Lana and Stompanato on holiday in Acapulco.

Upon their return, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "Tanned of face and bleached of hair, Lana Turner flew in from Acapulco, her favorite vacation retreat. She'd been to England and Mexico with Johnny Stompanato, one-time bodyguard to gangster Mickey Cohen."

"You were going to go off with those guys without me?" he accused her. At this point, he was shouting, and she asked him to keep his voice down. Cheryl was in her bedroom upstairs, watching television.

She headed upstairs to her own bedroom, and he followed close behind her, still haranguing her. Her own rage had been building for months, and now she was on the verge of exploding. Any love or a longing for intimacy with him had faded.

When he announced that in the future, she was to make no more plans without him, she, too, was ready for a fight. He was still shouting, even demanding, that she drop Armstrong, never to see him again.

Finally, she could take him no more. Nor could she tolerate his demands.

"You've become a god damn lush!" he shouted. "You do nothing but break promises to me!"

Her face was contorted as he'd never seen it before, as she turned all her fury onto him. "I want you right this minute to get the fuck out of my house—never come back! I don't want to ever see you again as long as I live."

At first, she'd been so distracted that she didn't hear a tinkling sound at her door. She recognized it as Cheryl's gold charm bracelet. She called out, "Cheryl, get away from the god damn door! Go back to your bedroom."

"Are you okay, Mother?"

"Just go and let us alone," she ordered her daughter.

When she had ascertained that Cheryl had gone, she turned once again to face Johnny, whose own rage seemed near to exploding. "Tonight, Mister, I'm giving you your walking papers. I'm through with you. It's over! You wouldn't be the first man I've kicked out on his ass."

"I'm sure the tally runs into the hundreds," he charged. "You're the ultimate user. You use people, suck them dry, and them kick them out, moving on to your next conquest. Lovers and husbands alike. When Miss Turner wants a new dick, it's bye-bye!"

“I could have a thousand and one guys like you any day, any time I want. All I have to do is cock my little finger, and they’ll come running to my side.”

“Don’t fuck with me,” he said, “or you’ll live to regret it. That is, *maybe* you’ll live. Maybe not. After I’ve taken care of you, I’ll go after Cheryl and Mildred. I’ll mutilate all three of you bitches!”

According to testimony, Cheryl had returned to her bedroom when she heard Johnny threatening to mutilate her mother and maybe go after her, too, as well as her beloved “Gran” (Mildred).

Impulsively, Cheryl opened her bedroom door and, in her pink mule slippers, ran down the stairs and into the kitchen, where she picked up a knife with a nine-inch blade and darted back up the steps.

[Other sources claimed it was an eight-inch blade.]

Once again, Lana heard the tinkling of her daughter’s charm bracelet. Armed with the knife, Cheryl stood at the open door. “Mother, Mother, are you okay? What’s wrong?”

Lana didn’t answer.

What happened next has caused a debate in Hollywood that has continued for decades. Although there were slight discrepancies, the version of both Cheryl and Lana more or less paralleled each other. Their accounts became known as “the official version.” There would be many other versions to challenge their testimony.

In the account that was made public, the events of that fateful night unfolded more or less like this:

Cheryl pounded on the door but did not open it or enter. “Let’s talk. Stop fighting!”

Thinking that he and Lana might go out that night, Johnny that afternoon had brought over a white shirt and a jacket, which he’d hung in one of her closets on large wooden hangers. She later said that when she saw him going to her closet to retrieve his clothing, she was overcome with relief, thinking that he was going to leave without any more fights or arguments.

Before that, he had been “running around the room looking like an enragedbobcat,” in her view.

With his clothing thrown across his right shoulder, he confronted her. “You’ll never get away with this, you stinking cunt!”

Then his voice grew louder: “I’ll cut you up. I’ll carve up your ugly, wretched face. You’ll never work in this town again. You may not even be alive when I’ve finished with you!”

“You’re a psycho!” she screeched. “Get out! never come across my doorstep ever again.”

Suddenly, Cheryl threw open the door and saw that his arm was upraised. Lana was heading out the door, and he was in hot pursuit right behind her. From Cheryl’s perspective, it appeared that he had a weapon that he was going to use against Lana’s head. She did not know that it was wooden hangers slung across his back.

As Cheryl testified, “I took a step forward, and he ran into the knife.”

Looking stunned, he said, “My god, Cheryl, what have you done?” Those were the last words he’d ever utter.

The kitchen knife she’d plunged into his abdomen had sliced one of his kidneys, struck a vertebra, and punctured his aorta.

Lana later claimed she did not see the knife in her daughter’s hand. “It looked to me like she’d punched him in the stomach. John took little circling steps in slow motion. Instead of clutching his stomach, he fell backward onto the floor, landing on his back. The sound coming from his throat was a weird gasping.”

As she bent over him, she looked up to see Cheryl holding a bloody carving knife. At that point, she dropped the knife and retreated to her bedroom, consumed with hysterical sobbing.

Lana didn’t see the wound until she lifted Johnny’s sweater. There, she viewed the puncture, but little blood, since the great injuries were internal, where he was bleeding profusely.

She picked up the murder weapon and ran with it into the bathroom, where she dropped it into the sink before reaching for a towel.

When she came back into the room, she must have realized how a towel would be of no help whatsoever. She dropped it and rushed to her phone to call Mildred, since she’d been away so long, she’d forgotten the number of her doctor.

As Mildred picked up her phone, she heard the hysterical voice of her daughter. “Mother, John is dead. Get Dr. John McDonald over here at once. There is no time to explain.”

Within twenty minutes, Mildred was on the scene, rushing at once to confirm that Cheryl was all right before heading for Lana’s bedroom. There, she took in the horrid scene, as she gazed upon a sobbing Lana and on Johnny’s body lying on the floor with his stomach wound bleeding. She bent over and tried to detect a heartbeat. Moving to his head, she began to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

As Lana later wrote, “I didn’t want her mouth on his.”

Dr. McDonald was the next to arrive on the scene. He put a stethoscope to Johnny’s chest, hoping to detect a heartbeat. There was none. From his bag, he removed a needle. It contained adrenaline, which he plunged into Johnny’s heart. It was of no use. “He’s dead,” he told a sobbing Lana. “I can’t help him now.”

She might have phoned the police, but instead, she placed an urgent call to the attorney, Jerry Giesler.

Jerry Giesler, the attorney you called when you'd committed murder.

He was a tough, battle-hardened lawyer, a veteran of many a court trial, having defended Errol Flynn on statutory rape charges, Charlie Chaplin in a paternity case, and Bugsy Siegel on a murder rap.

A short, plump man with a nasal voice, Giesler soon arrived and took immediate charge. What happened next differed remarkably from the official version.

One of his main tasks was to make sure that Cheryl and Lana did not contradict each other during their interrogations. Those would most likely be conducted with each of them in separate rooms.

It was later alleged that he did not find Johnny's body on the floor, but on Lana's bed. Giesler called Fred Otash, who later revealed "what really happened" (his words).

Otash presented a rather limited and highly censored overview of his life in *Investigation Hollywood: Memoirs of Hollywood's Top Private Detective*. Author James Ellroy used a fictionalized version of Otash in two of the novels from his *Underworld U.S.A.* trilogy.

In Roman Polanski's 1974 movie, *Chinatown*, Jack Nicholson's character was based on Otash. At the time of his death, Otash was writing a memoir to "blow the lid off Hollywood's greatest scandals." It included an overview of his secret involvement in the Stompanato murder. That manuscript was stolen and has never resurfaced.

Privately, Otash gave his own account of what he discovered in Lana's murder house.

Giesler often worked on cases with Otash, who claimed that on the night of Stompanato's murder, he received desperate call for assistance from Giesler.

"It was right in the middle of knocking off a choice piece of ass. When I picked up the phone, Giesler told me what had happened. 'Get your ass right over here. Stompanato's on Lana's bed, which looks like a hog was butchered.'"

When he got to Lana's house, Otash was ordered to remove the bloody sheets and replace them with clean ones at once. He stashed the bloody linens in the trunk of his car and burned them later. That would explain why there was no blood found around the body when the police looked it over later.

Otash later told fellow detective Milo Speriglio that by the time he'd arrived, Johnny's body had been moved from the bed to the carpeted floor.

"From what I gathered, Lana had walked in on Johnny in bed with Cheryl," Otash said. "Both of them were in a post-coital sleep. At least that's what I was told."

Otash also said, "Lana confessed to Giesler that she'd bought the kitchen knife the day before to protect herself against Johnny, who was threatening her. When she'd assumed he'd seduced her daughter, she went for the knife in a drawer in her nightstand, and plunged it into his stomach."

Fred Otash had been a police officer at one time, and a private investigator, and he was also the chief sleuth for the scandal magazine *Confidential*.

After his involvement in the Stompanato murder case, he would evolve, four years later, in 1962, into a key figure in the mysterious death of Marilyn Monroe, having been hired by Peter Lawford.

James Bacon, the famous columnist, heard the report of the murder late on the night it happened and drove at once to Lana's house, telling a policeman stationed at the door that he was from the coroner's office. A reliable reporter, Bacon later claimed that he saw Otash on the scene. He knew him well over the years.

Lana was also alleged to have placed a call to Frank Sinatra, perhaps hoping he might intervene with members of the mob, especially if Mickey Cohen wanted to take revenge on her. Sinatra's role in the events of that night has mostly been overlooked.

Lana reportedly confessed her version of what happened directly to him. "I can't bear to tell it," she told Sinatra in the presence of Giesler and Otash. "I discovered Cheryl and Johnny in bed together. They were both sleeping, but it was obvious what he'd done to her. I went berserk. I took the butcher knife I kept beside my bed in the drawer of my nightstand. I don't know what overcame me. I grabbed the knife and plunged it into Johnny's stomach. He was on his back, resting up having done the dirty deed. I really wanted to castrate him, not to kill him. Cheryl woke up screaming. It's all a sort of blur now."

Sinatra gave her some vague reassurances and then slipped out of the murder house before the police arrived.

At the scene of the murder, Giesler warned Lana that a jury would "throw the book at you. Let Cheryl take the fall. She'll get off easily, maybe a little detention—that's it. I'll try to get it ruled as justifiable homicide. She was protecting you. If you confess, it'll destroy your life for all time."

By the time the police were summoned, those who had gathered within the murder house seemed to be fairly well-rehearsed in their testimonies to come… well, almost.

Two police officers were on the scene before Clinton B. Anderson, police chief of Beverly Hills, barged through the door. He was all too familiar with the career of Johnny Stompanato, as he'd long predicted that the gangster would come to some violent end. He ordered that Lana and Cheryl be placed in separate rooms during their respective interrogations.

He was directed first to Lana's bedroom, furnished with pink carpeting, pink curtains, pink bed linen, and even a vase of pink roses resting on one of the tables. One of the officers knelt over the body and pulled up Johnny's sweater, revealing the stab wound in his stomach.

After grilling Lana, he was led into her bathroom, where he saw the bloody murder weapon in the sink. He ordered that it be carefully removed, preserving whatever fingerprints that might be on it.

Two days later, the report from the police laboratory stated that no identification of fingerprints could be concluded because the handle of the knife had been "smudged."

In another room, Anderson was introduced to Cheryl, who was crying. "I stabbed him! I didn't mean to kill him. I just meant to scare him!"

After a preliminary grilling of both Lana and Cheryl, Anderson later said, "Their stories were a perfect match… perhaps too perfect. Had they been given a script?"

Cheryl later admitted that Anderson had been rankled that Giesler had beaten him to the scene of the murder. He wanted both Lana and her daughter to be taken to the police station for more questioning.

Clinton Anderson, Beverly Hills Police Chief.

From the beginning, he was suspicious that a fourteen-year-old girl could attack a hardened street fighter and survive, unscathed.

Stompanato, a tough ex-Marine and street gang leader, had successfully defended himself in knife fights since he was a kid.

In the hall, Lana confronted him. “Can I take the blame for Cheryl?” she asked. “I’ll say I did it.”

Almost immediately, he was suspicious of such a spontaneous confession. Was this so-called confession part of the cover-up?”

Later, when Cheryl read reports of what had happened that night, she said, “The reading public must have imagined me to be a young Lizzie Borden.”

***

Stephen Crane was working late at his restaurant when the desperate call from Cheryl came in. “Daddy, Daddy,” she cried out to him. “Something terrible has happened!”

“What’s the matter?” he demanded to know.

“Don’t ask questions,” the teenager said. “Daddy, hurry. Please come!”

Arriving shortly thereafter, after outrunning a motorcycle cop, Crane came running through the front door of the murder house. Almost immediately, Cheryl raced into his arms. “I did it, Daddy! I killed John Stompanato! I did it! He was threatening mother. I didn’t mean to, Daddy. Please help me. Don’t let them take me.”

Like the loyal father he was, Crane stood by Cheryl through all the horrendous events that were soon to befall her.

The murder caused great tension between Lana and him. Up to now, they had enjoyed a rather peaceful relationship, having put their long-ago divorce far behind them.

“I’ll never forgive Lana for making our daughter take the blame for the murder,” Crane later told Jerry Giesler one night in his restaurant. “What was she thinking? Moving a gangster into her house? She was just inviting trouble.”

***

Sydney Guilaroff had been Lana's favorite hairdresser during her glory days at MGM, and their friendship had lasted. In his memoir, *Crowning Glory*, he revealed that just before the Stompanato murder, he had gone to a drugstore in Beverly Hills to pick up some medication. As he was coming out, he spotted Lana emerging from the nearby Pioneer Hardware Store.

"So this is where you go to buy your expensive perfume?" he joked.

"I needed a kitchen knife," she said.

After some small talk, he suggested they have dinner some night, and she agreed. After kissing him on both cheeks, she got into her car and drove away.

He thought no more about the knife until the next day, when he heard over radio that Johnny had been stabbed to death at Lana's home. Perhaps it was the same knife he'd seen after she'd purchased it the day before.

After hearing the news, Guilaroff wrote, "I got into my car and flew to Lana's house. When I arrived, none of the servants were on duty, and she opened the door herself. "Oh, Sydney, I'm so glad you came." She sobbed, falling into his arms. "She wept for a long time."

Sydney Guilaroff with Ava Gardner. Other than Lana Turner, she was his most favored client. "Whenever possible, each of them demanded I do their hair."

Apparently, this scene took place the morning after she had returned from further interrogations at the police station.

"Did you ever dream that this would happen?" she asked. "And with that very knife I bought yesterday?"

In her own memoir, Lana contradicted her hairdresser's account, claiming that Johnny had gone with her to the hardware store to purchase not one knife, "but several kitchen knives." She claimed that she let him select the knives "because he was an expert on knives, having indulged in many a knife fight in his life."

When Mickey Cohen got a call that Johnny had been stabbed to death, he, too, drove to Lana's house. Giesler was still there, although Lana and Cheryl were at the police station.

"If Lana comes back and sees you," Giesler said, "she's gonna fall apart. John's dead. The body has been sent to the morgue. Go there! You're the only person around who can make the funeral arrangements. I'll get the address for you."

***

Even though Lana was no longer a client of MGM, both Howard Strickling and Eddie Mannix went to work to plant sympathetic news articles about her. What followed was a steady stream of news depicting her as the "victim of Johnny Stompanato's insane rages and violent attacks on both her and Cheryl."

Otash later disputed the story that Lana had volunteered to the police to take the blame for the murder. "I was there," Otash told fellow detective Milo Speriglio. "She did no such thing. That was a lie about her volunteering to claim she murdered Johnny. It was a crock of the smelly stuff. What I saw was Lana running around hysterically. She didn't seem concerned about who murdered Johnny. She was screaming hysterically, 'My career! What's going to happen to my career? This will ruin me!'"

“I was the one who wiped the fingerprints off the knife in Lana’s bathroom sink,” Otash told Speriglio. “I was a naughty boy doing what I’m not supposed to do. But I never did what I was supposed to do. Rules were made to be broken, not followed in my book.”

Otash later claimed, “Some fucker ratted me out about the cover-up at Lana’s house. I was called into Anderson’s office two days later, and he threatened to charge me as an accessory based on what he’d heard that I did with Giesler. He told me that Giesler stood to lose his license, even though he was the most powerful lawyer in Hollywood.”

“I can’t go into details,” Otash continued, “but I told Anderson that a number of people held very damaging stuff on him that would also ruin his own god damn career. He was a smart fox. He never brought any charge against me or against Giesler.”

Years later, Otash wrote: “Giesler summoned me to the hospital, where he was dying.”

“Don’t ever tell the story of what happened that night at Lana Turner’s home,” the dying man pleaded.

“I promised I would not,” Otash said. “But who has to follow a promise to a dying man once he’s dead?”

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The coroner’s inquest began at 9AM on Friday, April 11, 1958, in the spacious but sweltering Hall of Records on the 8th Floor of the Courthouse in Beverly Hills. The temperature soared to 88°F at noon. Crowds of onlookers had formed as early as 5:30AM. Of the 160 seats, some 120 of them were occupied by the overheated press corps.

Authorities had ruled that Cheryl did not have to appear in court, but Lana did. At the entrance to the hall, she had to battle her way through a crowd of reporters, photographers, cameramen, and just the idle curious, plus many of her loyal fans. She looked distraught but glamourous in a gray coat and gray silk, tweed-type dress.

She took the stand in the crowded courtroom. As one reporter described it, “A hush fell over the crowd as the famous actress sat down and filled her lungs with a deep, steady intake of air. Photographers, desperate for a better shot, stood up on their seats and even on the large window sills. Almost everyone was standing on their seats.”

Another journalist wrote: “The audience soon grew frozen, the stillness broken only by the click and clatter of the desperately laboring cameramen.”

Lana’s voice came out identifying herself, as if she needed it, in a throaty, halting tone.

She dramatically removed one glove, revealing she’d polished her nails silver instead of her usual blood red. Her hand went up to her forehead, as she was visibly trembling. At times, she looked as if she were going to faint in the almost unbearable heat. She recited testimony—nothing new—that had already appeared in newspapers around the globe.

A week after the death of Johnny Stompanato, Lana was grilled on the witness stand.

Some members of the press claimed that she gave “the greatest Oscar-worthy performance of her career.”

A skilled prosecutor at a trial might have pointed out a lot of inconsistencies in eyewitness accounts of what had happened on the night of the murder, but that didn't happen.

It was brought out, however, that if Johnny had been stabbed in the stomach, chances were that he would have fallen forward, not onto his back. Lana tried to explain that by the "dance" she alleged that he did before his collapse onto his back.

Finally, since Lana had nothing new to add, she was dismissed after sixty-two minutes on the stand.

Mickey Cohen appeared in court, dressed like a gangster in one of those movies from Warner Brothers in the 1930s. He was chewing gum as he sat down for his questioning. He was asked if he had identified the body in the morgue. He then uttered a shocking statement: "I refuse to identify the body on the grounds that I may be accused of murder." He was then dismissed.

The autopsy report showed that Johnny had died only minutes after the stabbing. Attempts to revive him had been in vain, and it was made clear that even if an attempt had been made to rush him to any of the hospitals in the neighborhood, he would have arrived DOA.

A tantalizing detail emerged from the autopsy report, which claimed that even if Johnny had not been murdered, he would have died within a few months, as he suffered from an incurable liver ailment.

As Lana's defender, Jerry Giesler appeared before judge and jury, claiming, "This case is justifiable homicide. There is no justification for a trial."

When Johnny's stepmother, Verena Freitag Stompanato, heard that, she later claimed, "There is no such thing as justifiable homicide."

The jury of ten men and two women took just twenty-five minutes to deliver a verdict of justifiable homicide. Then Judge Allen T. Lynch ruled that the case was closed.

As he did, an unidentified spectator rose from the rear of the courtroom, shouting "*Lies! Lies! Lies!* This mother and daughter were in love with Stompanato. He was better than the both of them. All you people in Hollywood are no good." He was seized and led out of the hall by two security guards. On his way out, the spectator shouted back at the judge. "Johnny Stompanato was a real gentleman."

Cohen had nothing but contempt for the inquest. He told the press, "It's the strangest case I ever saw. The first time in history where the murdered corpse has been found guilty of his own murder."

Sitting through the entire inquest was District Attorney William R. McKenson, who had objected to Cheryl going free on bail. Although he had the legal right to prosecute the girl in a separate trial, he chose not to.

The judge also ordered that the teenager undergo psychiatric consultation. He announced there would be a separate hearing in Juvenile Court to determine the fate of the girl. Until that happened, she would be locked away in Juvenile Hall.

A tense Stephen Crane and Lana, parents of Cheryl, appeared in court after the inquest. Up for a ruling: Who would gain custody of their daughter?

Without actually saying so, McKenson left the suggestion that Cheryl might be sent to live with her grandmother, Mildred, or perhaps placed in a decent foster home where she might be reared properly. Looming over those arrangements was the nagging fear that she might be sent to reform school.

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By the time Lana returned home from the police station, her press agent, Glenn Rose, was handling the traffic and the reporters. “Lana that night was climbing the wall,” he said.

“Why can’t they let me take my baby home?” she asked.

Lana met with Del Armstrong. He realized at once that a strong glass of vodka would not solve the problem. She seemed on the verge of a nervous breakdown, so he once again summoned Dr. McDonald to give her a sedative.

Mildred and her hovering presence was also there, sometimes sobbing out her grief, which did little to help ease Lana’s anxiety.

Author Dominick Dunne lived nearby, and he rushed to the scene. He said, “It was a damn circus. Cars were arriving on the scene, disgorging entire families. People were hanging out of the trees like monkeys with binoculars trained on the house. The traffic jam in front of Lana’s house went on for a month or two. Apparently, the public couldn’t get enough of the gory details.”

That night, Sinatra reappeared to offer whatever comfort he could and to express his condolences. Cheryl later praised the singer for lending his support to her mother during her time of crisis, when many members of the film colony were predicting the end of her career.

Too many horrible memories haunted Lana in her rented house on Bedford Drive. Not only that, but crowds of onlookers formed outside to watch anybody coming and going.

Armstrong suggested she move into another furnished house, and he found one that was suitable on Canon Drive, about six blocks away. That address would be kept secret.

As for Cheryl, she said, “At least I missed the gas chamber.”

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For the most part, the press pillorried Lana, citing her as an unfit mother. But in his column, Walter Winchell defended her. “It seems sadistic to me to subject Lana Turner to any more torment. No punishment that could be imagined could hurt her more that the memory of this nightmarish event. And she is condemned to live with this memory to the end of her days.”

Winchell, however, also ran a comment he’d received from the silent screen vamp Gloria Swanson: “I think it is disgusting that you’re trying to whitewash Lana Turner. She is not even an actress…only a trollop.”

Ava Gardner in London was more charitable. She’d had a fling with Johnny long before Lana. She told the press, “When it comes to men, my friend Lana and I are the world’s lousiest pickers.”

Time magazine was one of Lana’s harshest critics, labeling her as “a wanton woman.”

The *Los Angeles Times* reported, “Lana Turner has always found the way to heal yesterday’s hurts with tomorrow’s diversions. In the turnover of husbands, wives, lovers, and mistresses, the Cheryls of Hollywood are the misplaced baggage, lost and found and lost again. In the Turner case, Cheryl isn’t the juvenile delinquent. Lana is!”

The *Los Angeles Times* ruled Cheryl as blameless: “Lana Turner is a hedonist whose narrative showed the lack of almost any reference to moral sensitivity in the presence of a child. Cheryl isn’t the juvenile delinquent: Lana is!”

Columnist Dorothy Kilgallen was one of many reporters who questioned the claim as to how Johnny got stabbed—that is, just by running into a knife. “The evidence shows that the knife was done with the skill of a trained commando.”

James Robert Parrish, the prolific Hollywood biographer, wrote: “To this day, there are people who insist that on that long-ago evening, it was actually Lana Turner who ended the life of her combative lover.”

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Johnny Meyer, the right-hand man (read that “pimp”) of Howard Hughes, phoned his boss to report that Johnny Stompanato had been stabbed to death at the home of Lana Turner, and that the blame had been placed on her daughter, Cheryl.

Then, Meyer went on to tell his boss, who was staying in a bungalow on the grounds of the Beverly Hills Hotel, that it had, in reality, been Lana who had murdered Johnny, and that Cheryl had been configured as the fall girl because she’d get a light sentence.

Lana herself phoned Hughes the next day, allegedly confessing that she had stabbed Johnny. In a state of panic, she told him she’d received death threats from the mob and that she needed protection. One caller had threatened to throw sulfuric acid in her face.

Hughes had always liked Lana when they were having an affair, and had even considered marrying her. He agreed to divert some of his security guards to protect her from any mob attack. Meyer later claimed that Hughes spent $50,000 on her security protection.

“I will always be grateful to Howard for coming to my rescue,” Lana said. “For eight months, I lived in fear of reprisal from the mob. He sent his men to fend off any possible attack on me or Cheryl.”

When Hughes learned that Jerry Giesler had suddenly become reluctant to represent Lana because of his pre-existing links to Mickey Cohen, the aviator reminded him that he, Hughes, was a far more valuable client of his than Cohen. “Protect Lana. That’s an order, Giesler. If you don’t, I’ll take my business elsewhere. Need I remind you, you’ve made millions off me.”

Mickey Cohen mourning and/or raging beside the corpse of Johnny Stompanato.

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In the beginning, Cohen didn’t believe the ruling of the court in the Stompanato murder case.

“I have no proof,” he later wrote in his autobiography, “but I don’t believe that Cheryl killed Johnny Stompanato. You know, Johnny was an athlete. He wasn’t a guy that would go and slug somebody, nothing like that, but if somebody came to challenge him, he could stand up for himself pretty well.”

Cheryl is seen with her grief-stricken parents, Lana and Stephen Crane. Her fate was to be decided by a judge.

“They say he was stabbed while he was standing,” Cohen continued. “But I can’t believe that anybody could. I think he was in bed by himself sleeping. Someone must have broke in and stabbed him. I don’t believe it was Cheryl or Lana.”

Regardless of what his ghost writers put into his memoirs, Cohen put the blame on Lana. His longtime mistress was the voluptuous, blonde-haired, and very outspoken actress, Liz Renay, who once won a Marilyn Monroe lookalike contest.

Liz Renay was the sometimes mistress of Mickey Cohen, and she even went to jail for him for refusing to testify against him.

The Beverly Hills police, in their review of evidence left behind by Johnny Stompanato, revealed that she had been a participant in a blackmail scheme against Lana.

According to Renay, “Mickey told me one night that it was Lana Turner herself—not her daughter—who plunged the knife into Johnny. He was seriously considering having one of his boys toss acid into her beautiful face.”

Furious that “Hollywood likes to protect its own—in this case, Lana Turner—Cohen vowed, “I’ll get even with her. She needs to be humiliated for killing Johnny, unless I decide to have my boys do something more dangerous.”

He also expressed resentment that he’d been stuck with Johnny’s funeral bills. A famous photograph of Cohen viewing Johnny’s corpse in its casket was flashed around the world.

Cohen had an apartment in the same building as Johnny’s. He had been given a key. When he first heard that his henchman had been stabbed to death, he went upstairs and entered the apartment.

What he was looking for was a wooden box that contained pictures of movie stars in compromising positions, always sexual. These photographs were being used for blackmail.

To his horror, he discovered that someone had already broken into the apartment by cutting the screen in Johnny’s bathroom window and climbing in. When he saw that the glass window pane wasn‘t broken, he surmised that Johnny must have left the window open.

There was no wooden box with the blackmail photographs. Obviously, the box and its contents had been removed shortly after Johnny’s death and before the police arrived to search the apartment.

Before exiting, almost as a keepsake, Cohen removed an alligator leather shaving kit he’d presented as a birthday present to Johnny.

It was only later, back in his own apartment, that he discovered that the shaving kit contained “mushy” love letters from Lana to Johnny. The thief had obviously overlooked this stash. He decided to have them published in the newspapers as a means of humiliating Lana.

He did admit that Johnny, on occasion, might have had to get rough with Lana. “My god, the bitch was deballing him, and what would Johnny be without his grapefruit-sized nuts?”

Lana suffered her most acute embarrassment when her gushy love letters to Johnny were reproduced word for word in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, and then picked up by other media outlets too. “The letters were a stark reminder of how foolish I was,” she said. “I sound like a lovesick schoolgirl with a crush on the high school football captain.”

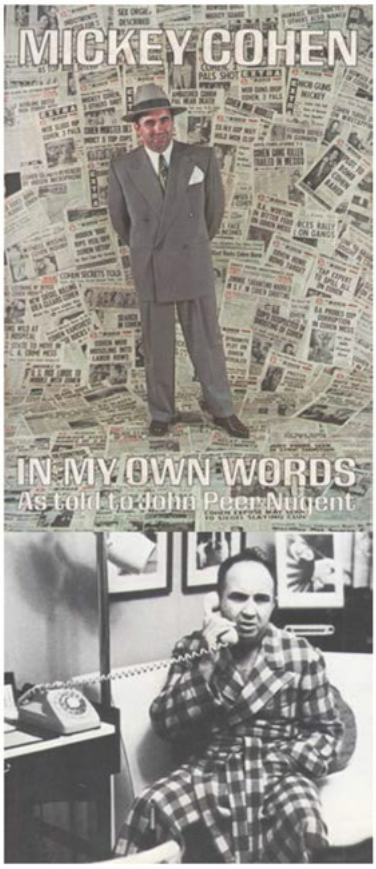
“I released the letters because Lana had been intimating that she was fleeing from Johnny’s unwanted advances,” Cohen said. “But the letters show that they were deeply in love.”

The mobster’s biographer, John H. Davis, wrote: “One of Mickey Cohen’s rackets was sexually compromising Hollywood stars for the purpose of blackmail. He had engineered the torrid affair between his accomplice and Lana Turner in the hope of getting pictures of the two of them in bed together.”

A grieving Cheryl Crane said, “At least I missed the gas chamber!”

Davis also claimed, “Others have reported that Cohen was successful in recording a sexual tryst between Stompanato and Turner. Copies of the videotape sold at fifty bucks a pop, and played to the delight of horny Friars Club members on both coasts.”

In the wake of the murder of Bugsy Siegel, Cohen had become Mobster No. 1. There are records of him presenting Johnny with bundles of cash, once $4,000 in twenty-dollar bills, based on their lucrative scheme of blackmailing movie stars, both male and female, who had been secretly photographed having sex with Johnny.



Mickey Cohen's so-called autobiography was not the most truthful of books. In it, he absolved Lana of the murder.

But privately, he told his associates, "Lana did it. She stabbed Johnny. He was having an affair with Cheryl, and Lana was jealous to see her lover attracted to a young girl—and not to her. It was a plot out of *Mildred Pierce."*

He was referring to Joan Crawford's Oscar-winning performace in which her on-screen daughter, Ann Blyth, steals her husband, Zachory Scott.

He had once bragged, "My penis has been the most photographed in the history of the world."

"Well, it's damn photogenic," Cohen told him.

Columnist Lee Mortimer had exposed the mob's blackmail ring. Although it officially operated out of Chicago, it was mostly centered in Los Angeles and New York. Cohen handled the illegal operation in Los Angeles.

The Mob's blackmailers also went after political figures in Washington. Some congressmen had been paying off blackmailers for years.

Mortimer revealed that "The ring employed gigolos of the Johnny Stompanato type, luscious babes, and homos who entrapped gay celebrities."

Police chief Anderson said he knew that Johnny, for several years, lived off funds generated from blackmail victims.

Brad Lewis, another Cohen biographer, wrote, "One of Stompanato's pimping chores was to keep a constant stable of women on hand for Mickey's out-of-town guests. His supply chain stretched all the way to Las Vegas, where demands for a steady flow of hot flesh ran high at the hotels."

Lewis also revealed that Johnny, on occasion, was seen in the company of wealthy homosexuals in the film colony. One informant stated that Johnny went with both men or women.

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Two days before Cheryl's hearing in Juvenile Court, Carmine Stompanato, Johnny's older brother, filed a lawsuit against both Lana and Stephen Crane, seeking $752,250 in damages for alleged parental negligence.

Johnny's brother flew from Illinois to Los Angeles, where on the first day in California, he obtained a trial lawyer and also contacted police chief Anderson. The 45-year-old barber was an elder in the Presbyterian Church in Woodstock, Illinois.

Johnny's stepmother, Verena Freitag Stompanato, charged that "a cold-blooded murder should be more thoroughly investigated."

Carmine told the press, "Lana Turner is a liar. She's trying to save herself, her career, and her daughter. I demand that she take a lie detector test."

He also told reporters, "Turner phoned her mother, her ex-husband, her press agent, and her lawyer before calling a doctor and the police. Johnny lay dying while all this cover-up was plotted. The police might have arrived with an ambulance, and Johnny's life could have been saved."

After Carmine presented his credentials to the police, Chief Anderson allowed him to go to Johnny's apartment house with two policemen and break in. Pulling up at the Del Capri, police also learned that this was one of the residences of Mickey Cohen.

Once they entered the apartment, the cops and Carmine found that the apartment had already been broken into and looted. There was nothing of value left. However, they did discover a key to a locker at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

The key was given to Anderson, who received a court order that the contents of that locker should be turned over to the police.

Carmine had to leave town, but Anderson told him he would forward the contents of that locker to him after a thorough investigation of its contents.

In 1961, the suit against Lana was settled out of court, some $20,000 going directly to Johnny Stompanato's son, who lived in Hammond, Indiana, with his mother.

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In the locker at Union Station, Johnny had stored a wooden box, which was retrieved and brought back to

Anderson's headquarters. A ticket inside led to four cardboard boxes stashed in a warehouse in West Hollywood. Their contents—discarded clothing, kitchenware, cowboy boots, and a lot of documents—were also sent to Anderson. Included in the documents were statements for a bank account maintained jointly by Stompanato and the wife of a prominent Los Angeles attorney, and several unpaid promissory notes to women for heavy debts he would never repay.

Police also found an unregistered .32 caliber revolver, eight cheap wedding rings, and some token gifts from "Lanita."

But even more than the documents, what intrigued Anderson the most was the large wooden box. It was stuffed with photos and some undeveloped negatives. Anderson examined each photo carefully. Many of the men and women depicted in compromising positions were well-known; others were not. Anderson was particularly interested in whatever photos, compromising or not, there might have been of Lana and/or Cheryl, but found none. Then he ordered his henchmen at the police lab to process the negatives.

In his own memoirs, Anderson did not reveal the names of the movie stars who were "clients" of Johnny's. However, he did cite them to his editors, and word leaked out. His publisher was reluctant to publish the identities of Johnny's conquests based on fear of libel.

It was later revealed that the women in these sexually compromising photos included Barbara Payton, Mary Astor, Lucille Ball, Marion Davies, Yvonne De Carlo, and Ava Gardner. Among the male stars were photos of Cary Grant, Rock Hudson, Fred Astaire (a surprise to Anderson), Jack Benny, Sammy Davis, Jr., Errol Flynn, Spencer Tracy, Cole Porter, Liberace, George Cukor, and Alan Ladd.

Most of these men were already known to Anderson as gay or bisexual. The appearance of George Raft among the photos provided another surprise, even though his former lover, Betty Grable, had once said, "George is probably a latent homosexual." Perhaps he wasn't that latent.

In her own memoirs, Lana wrote that Johnny's black book left within her house after his body was hauled off contained "dozens of phone numbers of Hollywood women—Anita Ekberg, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and June Allyson, among them—and some prominent male personalities as well."

When the negatives were processed, Anderson discovered several nudes taken of Lana when she was sleeping on top of the covers of her bed.

Two days later, his assistant, Louis Blau, arrived—after setting up a meeting—at Lana's newly rented house on Canon Drive. She described this private meeting in her memoirs, asserting that Blau had arrived with "a pool of exposed film."

She was horrified at the nude pictures of herself. As she recalled, Johnny once gave her a glass of vodka after she'd announced that she wanted to get some rest. "I must have passed out for six or seven hours. The drink was probably drugged. That's when he took those pictures."

She wrote, "Another sequence showed a blonde woman I didn't recognize performing fellatio on John."

The police later ascertained that the blonde was actually the part-time actress and prostitute, Liz Renay, Mickey Cohen's sometimes mistress who may have been hired as a participant in a set-up.

Blau speculated that Johnny might have been planning to do some trick photography, wherein the original image of the other woman's body might be retained, with the understanding that Lana's face might be substituted for the blonde's, giving the impression that it was Lana who had been performing the fellatio.

"He was always threatening to ruin my career," she said, "and this was how he might have plotted to do it."

She claimed that "the negatives were cut into tiny pieces and burned." She didn't mention the photographs which had been printed in the police lab. Blau assured her that each of the prints of her nudes would be destroyed.

Throughout the rest of her life, she wondered if someone had made copies for a private collection.

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Days after her appearance in court, the Associated Press received a call from an informant within the Beverly Hills Police Department. At least he identified himself as such. Reporters were accustomed to receiving tips from informants who did not want to be identified out of fear of losing their jobs.

The AP was told that two policemen had been summoned to Lana's new address on Canon Drive where they found Lana's nude body sprawled out on her bathroom floor with an empty bottle of sleeping pills nearby.

The reporter who'd received the call immediately alerted his editor. Within minutes, alarm bells—each of them a warning to hold the press for a fast-developing story—were ringing in newsrooms across the country.

Unexpectedly, within ten minutes, the AP sent out an urgent message to newspaper editors that the report was unconfirmed. That was followed, two minutes later, by another urgent message. "Police find Lana Turner alive at her home."

It had become obvious, by now, that whomever had reported the incident had intended it as a hoax.

Constantly surrounded with security guards, Lana continued to receive death threats at regular intervals for a period of at least three months. The anonymous callers always managed to procure her frequently changing unlisted phone numbers. “Johnny had a lot of friends who were loyal to him—and not just Mickey Cohen,” she said. “They wanted revenge and held me responsible for his death. I had become a target. At times, I was afraid to leave the house. Thanks to Howard Hughes, I had security. Otherwise, I would have been afraid to go to bed at night, thinking some mob members might break in and kill me.”

The next time Frank Sinatra phoned Lana to find out how she was holding up, he found her a bit delusional, as he later reported to Sammy Davis, Jr. and to Peter Lawford.

She believed in reincarnation and seemed convinced that in an ancient life, she was Cleopatra herself, Queen of Egypt. To escape from the post-murder trauma, she seemed to wander into some remote past that had never existed for her.

She’d been drinking heavily,” Sinatra said, “and this made her think that she was Cleopatra incarnate, and that her long-lost lover, Tyrone Power, was alive and well playing the part of Marc Antony.” At one point, Sinatra asked her, “So who am I in this drama on the Nile? Julius Caesar?”

On looking back on those horrible weeks, Lana said, “I shake my head every now and then, puzzling over how things had gone so wrong. I can never forget what happened that night, or even why it happened. I was weak, I’ll admit, lonely and vulnerable when Johnny came along. He moved in and seized the advantage, trying to get the upper hand. I never meant to harm anyone—God is my witness to the truth of that.”

As 1958 came to an end, Lana defined it as, “The worst year of my life. What’s past is past. I can’t let it destroy me. I must go on.”

Years later, on looking back, she said, “When two human beings go through tremendous emotional experiences, as Cheryl and I did, it either cracks them apart or brings them closer together. Cheryl and I became closer.”

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Years later at a dinner party hosted by TV talk show host, Merv Griffin and his co-hostess, Eva Gabor, Eva’s sister Zsa Zsa entertained their guests with her witty conversation. At one point Zsa Zsa discussed Lana and Cheryl.

Zsa Zsa had long suspected Lana of having conducted an affair with her former husband, Conrad Hilton, and a separate affair with his son, Nicky.

According to Zsa Zsa, “I got involved with Johnny Stompanato when he was shopping around for a wealthy woman in Beverly Hills to live with. He’d already had affairs with Elizabeth Taylor (*who hasn’t, dah-link*), Ava Gardner, Janet Leigh, and Marilyn Monroe.”

“He asked me if I thought he should continue with Lana because she was increasingly difficult and really didn’t have a lot of money for a movie queen,” Zsa Zsa said.

“I gave him the wrong advice and told him to stay with Lana, who might put him in charge of her new film company, Lanturn. My reasoning was that he couldn’t last forever as Hollywood’s young stallion—and he’d need some other profession. I also told him, ‘of course, if you turn her down, I’d understand. Frankly, I can take Lana Turner or leave her.’”

The Budapest bombshell also claimed that she was one of the few women who’d had affairs with both Johnny Stompanato and Lex Barker.

“As everybody knows, *dah-link*, all the international studs such as Porfirio Rubirosa have passed in and out of my boudoir. If it’s true that both Lex and Johnny raped young Cheryl, it must have caused her great pain because of their huge size. Those two men would be a challenge for the most experienced prostitute. I’m not surprised that getting assaulted by darling Lex and darling Johnny would turn her off men for life.”

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In his book, *The Bad and the Beautiful—Hollywood in the Fifties*, Sam Kushneer wrote: “Like many other celebrity children, Cheryl Crane rarely saw her mother. The girl would reach out to hug and kiss her flawlessly styled mother, and Turner would gently push her away, ‘Sweetheart, the hair,’ she’d say.”

“Cheryl would lie in bed at night looking up at the phosphorescent stars stuck to the ceiling. On a shelf stood a three-foot-high, life-sized Lana Turner doll a fan had sent her, but the real Lana Turner almost never made an appearance to tuck her daughter in.”

“Mother and daughter,” Kushner continued, “would soon find themselves forever bonded by one horrific

moment, and forever at the heart of one of Hollywood's most enduring scandals."

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In her later years, Lana lived with Eric Root, one of the leading hairdressers of Hollywood, familiar with the "crowning glory" of Rita Hayworth, Greta Garbo, Bette Davis, Veronica Lake, and—lest we forget—Richard Burton and Frank Sinatra.

Root also developed a deep-rooted friendship with Karen Kondazian, an award-winning actress who was Lex Barker's last lover—in fact, the former Tarzanwas walking along Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, on his way to meet her, when he collapsed and died of a heart attack.

Kondazian had become known for her skill at portraying characters from the plays of Tennessee Williams —*The Rose Tattoo*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Vieux Carré*, *Baby Doll*, *The Night of the Iguana*, and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*.

She told Root that Barker had spoken to Lana just days after the Stompanato murder. "She admitted to Lex that in the panic and hysteria to save her career, she allowed Cheryl to take the blame for her own misdeed."

Then, Kondazian disputed Cheryl's claim that Barker had repeatedly raped her during the course of his marriage to Lana. "Lex was the perfect gentleman. He was kind and gentle in every aspect of our relationship."

"Never did he force or insinuate himself in any improper way, although there was nearly a thirty-year difference in our ages."

Based on what Barker had told her, Kondazian believed that "Cheryl was very jealous of her mother. Lex said she flaunted her body in front of him. He always predicted that the girl would cause Lana a lot of trouble. She sure did!"

Lana also addressed the rape issue directly with Root, telling him, "When Cheryl made allegations against Lex, I had no choice but to believe her. I couldn't take a chance. Had it been true, and the world found out, my career would have been finished for allowing her to stay under the same roof with him. I've always had my doubts about her accusations against Lex."

In 1996, a year after Lana's death, Root published his memoirs, *The Private Life of Lana*. In it, he recalled the night both of them were living in a suite at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan. "We were watching TV and a documentary came on about Hollywood scandals. When pictures were flashed about the Johnny Stompanato murder case, I asked her, 'Do you want me to turn it off?'"

She insisted he keep the television on, as she sat through all the lurid scenes. Finally, when it was over, she said, "Turn the damn thing off!"

Then, after reaching for a cigarette, she confessed: "I killed the son of a bitch, and I'd do it again."

Eric Root, hairdresser, companion, friend, and confidant to Lana, claimed that she confessed to him that she stabbed Johnny Stompanato.

She also told Root that after she was dead, she wanted the world to know the truth. "You should not let my Baby take the rap all of her life for my mistake. Someday, when I'm gone, tell it all. *I was the one."*

In an interview with reporter Diesmond Lee, Root claimed, "When my book was published, I was called a liar and even threatened with death. If convicted, Lana would probably have been given the death penalty. Faced with that, it was obvious that the only real recourse would be to let Cheryl take the fall. There was also speculation that

Stompanato was frequently having sex with Cheryl."

After her tumultuous childhood, which had included rape and murder, Cheryl bonded with her mother in later life.

"We became closer, having shared so many tragedies together, Lana said.

Biographer Patricia Bosworth, in a feature story for *Vanity Fair* published in 1999, asked Cheryl about Root's claim that Lana murdered Stompanato.

Cheryl answered, "The idea that Root had in his book is far-fetched. You know, everybody has something to sell. I guess it was the only way he could get his book published."

Yet Cheryl herself at one point backed up her mother's confession. In her own memoir, *Detour*, she told her new lover, Joyce (Josh) LeRoy, "You know, I didn't do it. I love you so much more than anyone before in my life, Josh, that I don't want you to think I could do a terrible thing like that."

Josh responded, "I think it was a very brave and noble thing to go to your mother's defense. You have to live with that the rest of your life. Now you have someone to share it with."

Joyce ("Josh") LeRoy, pictured on the left, became Cheryl's lifelong companion.

She offered love, understanding, and stability after Cheryl's survival as Lana Turner's daughter.

As Cheryl wrote, “In that moment, while sitting in a candlelit booth in a Sunset Strip restaurant, my life changed.”

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In Root’s memoir, he also claimed that Lana was devastated when Cheryl published her own memoirs, *Detour*, in 1988.

“Who in the fuck does she think she is?” Lana asked. “How could she do this to me?”

He may have exaggerated, but Root claimed that after the publication of *Detour*, Lana took to her bed for six months. She was horrified by the revelations, especially Cheryl’s charges of rape by Lex Barker.

However, when Lana appeared in public and was asked about the book, she said, “I think it took guts for Cheryl to write it.”

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In 2007, it was announced that a new film, entitled *Stompanato*, was in pre-production. The script, according to a press release, would retell the scandalous murder of “the thug and wannabe actor,” the notorious hustler, Johnny Stompanato.

Lana would be played by Catherine Zeta-Jones, the wife of Michael Douglas. The role of Johnny Stompanato would be cast with Keanu Reeves. Adrian Lyne, a respected director known for such movies as *Jacob’s Ladder* (1990) with Tim Robbins, and *Indecent Proposal (*1993) with Robert Redford, was set to direct.

The screenwriters, so it was reported, were going to nail Lana, not Cheryl, as the culprit.

Writing about the proposed film, Mark Umbach said: “Rumors have surrounded the death, including that Crane and Stompanato had been lovers, and that Lana Turner actually killed Stompanato and her 14-year-old daughter took the rap.”

The actress who’d portray Cheryl was never announced, but the script called for love scenes between the underaged teenager and the hardened hustler. It was recommended that an 18-year-old be used, an actress could at least give the illusion that she was 14.

One scene called for the character playing Lana to walk in on Stompanato and Cheryl making passionate love on her own pink satin sheets in her own bedroom.

Zeta-Jones told the press that her father-in-law, Kirk Douglas, the rumored lover of Lana during the making of *The Bad and the Beautiful*, would be her “research engine” on the blonde love goddess.

“It’s a great role for me,” she said. “I have always wanted to play Lana Turner, but I’m nervous about it.”

News of the casting provoked outrage across the internet. One fan protested the casting choice for Johnny. “Reeves just doesn’t cut it as the handsome, macho stud, Johnny Stompanato.”

One fan lodged yet another complaint. “Zeta-Jones is totally wrong for the part of Lana. There is no way this actress can duplicate the star, who was stunningly beautiful, one of the most desirable women in the world at the time.”

The person who was the most disappointed about the casting was Sharon Stone, who, for years, had wanted to bring Lana to the screen. Reporters asked, “Is Sharon Stone getting the ice pick?”

That was a reference, of course, to Stone’s role as the vagina-flashing ice-pick murderer in *Basic Instinct* (1992).

Stone claimed, “I met with Lana herself, and she told me I was the only actress in Hollywood who could bring her image to the screen.”

The film was never made, as Cheryl refused to give her permission for her image to be depicted on screen.

Actually, in 2001, there had been another, earlier attempt, *The Goddess and the Gangster*, to adapt a movie from the Stompanato murder case. A news item claimed that Antonio Banderas had been tapped to play Johnny, with Sharon Stone as Lana. This film, too, was never made.

Over the years, many producers considered filming their own versions of the murder. A number of actors were considered for the role of Johnny Stompanato, including Richard Gere, Benjamin Brett, and Paul Hipp, known for playing rocker Buddy Holly in *Buddy* (1990) and for a role in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997).

A gay casting director said, “There is only one actor who can play Johnny Stompanato, and that’s Hugh Jackman. He’s sure sexy enough. Just imagine how he’ll look imitating Johnny, with his silk shirt unbuttoned to that tantalizing navel Jackman has on that magnificent Aussie body.”

Lana with baby Cheryl. Having survived death-defying medical problems at birth, both mother and daughter went on to face an array of other tragedies in life.

Cheryl later recalled her unhappy life growing up as “the baby of a star” in the glamourous Hollywood era of the 1940s and 50s.

[A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER: There is only one person, now alive, who knows exactly who murdered Johnny Stompanato on that long-ago night back in April of 1958. That is Cheryl Crane, the daughter of Lana Turner.

Compiled over many years, the information in this chapter, with all its conflicting opinions, is similar to what might have been presented at a murder trial.

Since that never happened, it is up to you, the reader, to form your own opinion. Was it the mother or the 14-year-old daughter who plunged the kitchen knife deep into the bowels of the ill-fated gambler, hustler, and blackmailer?

Chances are good that a definite answer will never be known unless Cheryl, perhaps on her death bed, revises previous statements.]

Chapter Seventeen

The Twilight of a Film Career

THE DECLINE OF LANA TURNER'S FILM ROLES:

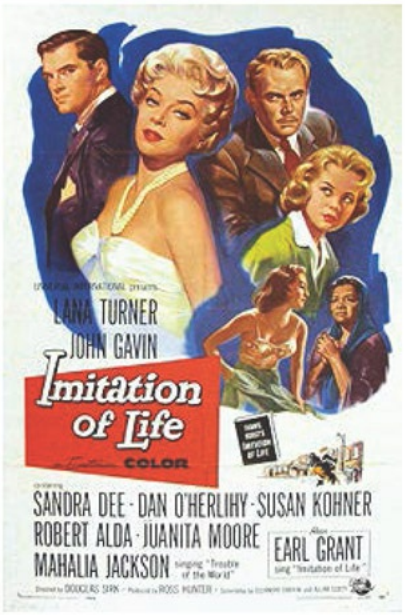
No Longer Cast as a Glamourous Millionaire Buying Hustlers, She Now Portrays a Broken-Down Old Whore

In *Madame X*, the public saw Lana Turner as she'd never been depicted on screen before. She cried when she first gazed at her aged and defeated image in the mirror.

In this scene, she appears with her hair brushed severely back and with dark circles under her eyes. The embittered, violently betrayed character she's portraying is, in fact, facing death.

She lamented to her friends, "My appearance in this remake of an old, old theme is going to destroy what career I have left."

"For mother, life was a movie," said Cheryl Crane.



Her friend, Virginia Grey, put it another way: “If the movies had not existed, they would have to be invented just for Lana Turner. She could have been nothing less but a movie star.”

In the weeks that followed the Johnny Stompanato verdict, Lana felt she was sinking into quicksand. Almost daily, some figure in Hollywood announced that her film career was over. Some producers sidestepped the issue. David O. Selznick claimed, “I would hire her in a minute, but I don’t have any suitable property right now.”

“Of course, I’d cast her,” Jerry Wald said. “Before all this shit came down, I tried to get her to co-star in *The Sound and the Fury*. Should another role arise, I’d be the first to go knocking on her door.”

“After all this publicity, Lana will come back bigger than ever at the box office,” predicted producer Byron Foy. “Audience surveys have shown that most of the public is sympathetic to her.”

It was Lana herself who almost daily told someone, “I fear even my most loyal fans have now turned against me.”

Money was one of her biggest problems. She needed work, because she still owed MGM a lot of money for covering her debt to the IRS. Her legal bills had become colossal, and she also had to support not only herself, but Mildred and Cheryl.

On April 24, 1958, Cheryl had been made a ward of the court, the judge ruling that she should go and live with her grandmother, Mildred.

After the court hearing, as she exited from the courthouse, Lana flashed a smile. As she said, “It was called putting up a brave front.”

“I’m pleased with the decision of the judge,” she assured reporters, perhaps masking her true feelings.

By December, the arrangement of Cheryl living with Mildred was extended by the judge with no definite cutoff date. His ruling did not bring any objection either from Lana or from Stephen Crane.

She gave up her rented house on Canon Drive, turning it over to Cheryl and Mildred, while she went to live at her mother’s former apartment. She was not happy with the accommodation, and soon moved into a small house at 515 North Roxbury Drive.

Del Armstrong had remained her trusted friend and confidant. She told him, “I’m not going to look back, but go forward into my uncertain future. I’ve got to push myself. That means facing up to my personal problems. Any future love affairs will have to be put on hold. I’ve got to find film work. What else is there for me to do? Work behind a sales counter in a department store? I saw Bette Davis attempt that in her movie, *The Star* (1952). It didn’t work out for Bette in that film, and it wouldn’t work out for me, either.”

Letters addressed to her still poured in at MGM, although she was no longer under contract. The mail department faithfully delivered all correspondence from both fans and enemies, perhaps censoring some of the most vicious ones. A telephone operator from Cleveland wrote, “There’s hardly a woman alive who at one time or another hasn’t loved an unworthy man. Only Lana got caught.”

On looking back at her life at the time, she dredged up a *cliché,* “For me, it was darkest before the dawn.”

***

That “dawn” arrived in the form of producer Ross Hunter, who since 1956 had wanted to remake the 1934 movie, *Imitation of Life*, starring Claudette Colbert as “The Pancake Queen” and Louise Beaver as her faithful black maid. The plot was based on a novel by the best-selling author, Fannie Hurst.

Originally, his intention was to turn the soapy melodrama into a musical, starring Shirley Booth and Mahalia Jackson. Hunter had become known for employing actresses “beyond their expiration date,” as in the case of Ann Sheridan and Joan Bennett.

When he changed his mind and decided to make *Imitation* into a melodrama, his phone started ringing. Three of the most honored and distinguished “drama queens” in the history of Hollywood called, each wanting to star in the remake. They were Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, and Joan Crawford. But he wanted Lana Turner.

Although Juanita Moore is employed as Lana’s housekeeper, she is more like a comforting, surrogate mother.

In the 1934 film, Colbert launched an empire based on a pancake recipe from her maid, as portrayed by Louise Brooks. Colbert’s daughter was played by Rochelle Hudson. The maid, Delilah Johnson, in the script, has a daughter, Peola (Fredi Washington) whose fair complexion allowed her to pass as white, even though she was of mixed-race ancestry.

From the day it was published in 1933, the Hurst novel had generated controversy. Until the 1967 Supreme Court ruling (*Loving v. Virginia*), Southern states required that persons of any known African American ancestry had to be officially classified in records as “black.”

Here's John Gavin, later a U.S. ambassador to Mexico, who NEVER tried to build a wall—at least not between Lana and himself.

When Hunter announced he was remaking the movie, the censors at the Production Code sent an advance warning, "You're just asking for trouble."

The day Hunter drove over to see Lana, he was at the peak of his success. He'd scored a big hit with Rock Hudson and Jane Wyman in *Magnificent Obsession* (1954). In the same year as *Imitation of Life* (1959) he'd also launched *Pillow Talk* with Rock Hudson and Doris Day, one of the most successful comedies of the 1950s, ranking up there with Marilyn Monroe's *Some Like It Hot* (1959).

Even though the critics attacked Hunter's films, the public flocked to them, especially women. "In my pictures, I give women the chance to live vicariously, to see beautiful women in jewels and gorgeous clothes, with plenty of melodrama going on in their love lives."

Over a drink at Lana's house, Hunter pitched the rewritten starring role to her. As a girl, Lana had been taken to see the Claudette Colbert version of *Imitation of Life*.

She listened patiently as Hunter outlined the character to her. When he'd finished, she said, "What? Another mother role?" She was referencing *Peyton Place*.

He quickly pointed out, "You did god damn well with that one."

One aspect of the plot particularly disturbed her. "In the movie, my daughter and I are in love with the same man. Don't you think that will revive rumors that Cheryl was in love with Johnny Stompanato?"

"So what?" Hunter asked. "You'll have to face life at some point, dear. It's a great role—potentially your greatest—and I think your fans will admire you all the more for the courage and bravery of your doing it."

"I need work, but this script is just too close to home," she protested.

"Take the role, or you'll regret it. Your friend, Susan Hayward, thinks it'll be an Oscar winner. Why don't you win that Oscar instead of Susan? To be nominated for *Peyton Place* is one thing. How about actually taking home the Oscar for a change?"

It took another three hours and a half bottle of vodka before she agreed to do the role. "Announce it to the press. Lana Turner is coming back!"

***

During their long session at her home, Lana had been impressed with Hunter's brutal honesty, especially when it came to himself. At one point, he admitted, "I'm in love with Rock Hudson. He's got a big one that he lets me sample two or three times a week. I don't kid myself. He's not in love with me, but that doesn't mean he won't have sex with me."

"That's the story of my life, too," she said, sympathetically.

The next week, one of her hopes was dashed, as she'd been wishing that Hunter would give her perhaps $150,000, maybe more, for her appearance. But over dinner with him, he told her the bad news.

Universal didn't have a lot of faith in the remake and would allow him only a budget of $1.2 million. The studio was willing to settle for another deal, paying her a salary of only $2,500 a week. But as an amazing concession, she would be given fifty percent of the profits. However, if the movie failed at the box office, she would have worked for far less than what she was accustomed to.

Finally, after listening to all of his reassurances, she agreed to sign the contract. As she recalled months later, "That was the best financial decision I ever made. I made at least a million dollars for the role long before Elizabeth Taylor became famously paid a million dollars for appearing in *Cleopatra* (1963)."

Before filming began, Hunter assured her she'd have a spectacular wardrobe that Jean Louis would design for her. "That, plus you'll be seen in at least a million dollars worth of jewelry. Just because I'm a gay man and not turned on by female flesh doesn't mean I can't make you look like a goddess."

Author Sam Staggs wrote, "Like *Myra Breckinridge* (a novel by Gore Vidal), Lana in the film embodies both heterosexual and homosexual camp while remaining oddly sexless."

To many other critics, Lana in the character of Lora Meredith was playing herself.

Hunter hired a German-Danish film director, Douglas Sirk, who had in the early years of the Nazi regime worked for Josef Goebbels at the UFA Studios in Berlin. He left Hitler's Germany in 1937 because he was married to a Jew, Hilde Jary.

Before her, he'd been married to Lydia Brinken, a member of the Nazi Party who had arranged for their son, Claus Detlef Sierck, to join the *Hitler Jugend*. In time, he became the leading child star of Nazi cinema. The last Sirk heard of his son was to learn of his death at the age of nine on the Russian front.

Sirk told Lana that he'd never been a Nazi, and he offered to arrange a screening of his first Hollywood picture for her, *Hitler's Madman* (1942).

Within days, Hunter and Sirk had arranged Lana's supporting cast. No longer a "pancake queen," like Claudette Colbert, Lana's Lora Meredith was a stunningly beautiful stage actress on Broadway. Her daughter, Susie, age 16, would be played by Sandra Dee.

Instead of the more racially charged part of the black maid, the Louise Beavers role would be essayed by Juanita Moore, cast as Annie Johnson, Lana's "housekeeper and companion."

Before deciding to cast Moore, Hunter had considered both Pearl Bailey and Marian Anderson.

The former Merle Johnson, Jr., Troy Donahue was one of Henry Willson's boys, having been worked over on the casting couch.

He was a handsome, rather bland, blonde-haired, blue-eyed sensation, one of the fabled "pretty boys" of the Eisenhower 1950s. Its ranks included such competitors as Tab Hunter and Rock Hudson.

Her mulatto daughter, Sarah Jane, would be played by Susan Kohner, the daughter of Paul Kohner, Lana's agent.

As a freelance photographer, Steve Archer, the leading man role would go to John Gavin.

Dan O'Herlihy was cast in the part of the playwright scripting those hit shows for Lana's character.

Troy Donahue would play Frankie, Sarah Jane's boyfriend until he learns she's a mulatto. Actor Robert Alda was cast as Lana's agent, Allen Loomis, in the film.

Growing up in the backwoods of segregated Mississippi, Moore and her family had gravitated to California in hopes of a better life. She made her film debut in *Pinky* (1949), with Jeanne Crain and Ethel Barrymore. This was Hollywood's other pioneer racial drama of a black girl passing for white.

During filming, Lana and Moore had many sympathetic talks. Hunter claimed, "Juanita became a sort of mother figure to Lana, even though she was born in 1914. And, as such, was only a few years older than Lana."

Lana was quite blunt with Moore. "When I signed for this picture, I was on my ass."

"*Honey chile*, you can't get much lower than that," Moore replied.

Even though she didn't get one of the leads, Mahalia Jackson, the African American singer, hailed as "The Queen of Gospel," appeared at the end of the movie, singing a brilliantly moving rendition of "Trouble of the World" at the funeral of the character played by Moore.

In her memoirs, Lana wrote about this "heartbreaking spiritual. When I heard the first strains of the song in rehearsal, I simply broke down. Images of my own life, by own dark fears flooded my mind, and I dissolved in tears. I fled to my dressing room."

The dashing John Gavin was a "dreamboat leading man" (as defined by both Lana and his gay agent, Henry Willson), who seemed to have a crush on Gavin. Willson had been the first to alert her to Gavin's manly charms and male beauty.

"As you know, my boy Rock Hudson is the biggest money maker in pictures today," Willson said. "I'm calling Gavin 'Rock Junior." He is tall, dark, and gorgeously handsome. You'll cream in your jeans when he takes you in his arms for a love scene. Some critics call him wooden. But with those looks, that body, who needs to act?"

"Is he one of your boys?" she asked.

"Don't take me for a total pansy," he said. "I know who to put on the casting couch, and I also know where not to trespass. When it comes to John, I can only dream of those mighty inches. He doesn't put out to get a role."

Once again, as in *Peyton Place*, Lana played a stylish mature woman involved in a mother-daughter conflict, this time with Sandra Dee.

Hunter arranged a screening for Lana of Gavin's latest picture. *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* (1958), based on Erich Maria Remarque's antiwar novel, the story of a young German soldier who wakes up to both the horror and futility of war.

"I'm awed by Gavin's screen presence," she told Hunter. "So strong, so virile, so yummy."

"During filming, I never got to seduce John," she confessed to Virginia Grey. "If he had raised only a little pinkie and beckoned to me, I would have come running. No woman in her right mind would turn down a guy like this. He could even change a lesbian's sexual preference."

"If anything, I found him a bit square," she said. "after work, he goes home to his wife, Cecily Evans. They have a small apartment in Beverly Hills, and they're expecting a baby."

Lana later became friends with Gavin and his second wife, Constance Towers, whom he'd married almost a decade after his divorce from Cecily came through.

Look magazine labeled Gavin a "non-neurotic newcomer," and Alfred Hitchcock cast him as Janet Leigh's boyfriend in *Psycho* (1960).

[Although Lana lobbied to play opposite Gavin in *Back Street* (1961), based on another Fannie Hurst novel, she was rejected. The role went instead to Susan Hayward.]

Susan Kohner played Sarah Jane, 18, the daughter of the black housekeeper who grows up "to pass." She performed brilliantly, her role winning her an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actress.

The year Lana met her, she had appeared opposite Sal Mineo in *The Gene Krupa Story*. The fabled drummer had been one of Lana's earliest beaus. She told Kohner, "I liked the original title of your movie better. If it was the story of Gene, it should have been called *Drum Crazy."*

From the depths of Bayonne, New Jersey, Sandra Dee, born in 1942, launched her career as a beautiful, blue-eyed, blonde-haired child model. Her parents divorced in 1950, and her new stepfather reportedly molested her.

Ross Hunter discovered Sandra on Park avenue in Manhattan, and by 1957, she was lured to Hollywood to make her film debut in *Until They Sail*, co-starring Paul Newman, Joan Fontaine, and Piper Laurie.

When Hunter cast her in *Imitation of Life* as Lana's daughter, she became a teenage sensation. Her position was firmly established that same year when she co-starred with Troy Donahue in *A Summer Place*, a "soaper" of adultery and teenage love.

INTERRACIAL IRONIES *(IMITATION OF LIFE)*

Psychic sisters, one white (Sandra Dee, left), another (Susan Kohner), "passing as white."

Also in 1959, she released her titular role of *Gidget*, a teenage comedy. In 1960, she married singer Bobby Darin and would go on to fill in the role of Tammy created by Debbie Reynolds in two sequels for Universal.

Cast against type in *Imitation*, Troy Donahue played a thug who beats up Susan Kohner when he learns she is a mulatto. In a pivotal scene, Donahue once struck her so hard, she ended up in the hospital. Hunter sent her flowers with a note: "Yellow roses for blue bruises."

In private life, Donahue was known to beat up on women, which, in one case at least, led to threatened legal action that was later settled out of court.

To Lana, Donahue didn't strike her as a sex symbol, even though he was called "The Blonde Cobra of Sex." The move magazines cited him as being the most worshipped young male star in pictures. Girls screamed hysterically whenever he appeared in public.

"I assumed he is bisexual," Lana said to Hunter.

"He certainly is," the producer said. "Right now, both of us are competing for Rock Hudson."

Donahue also became known for orgies staged at his open house. "One night he invited me, but I turned him down," Lana said. "first, I thought I'd be the oldest person there. Second, I feared his notorious parties would be raided by the police. All I needed was to end up on the frontpage in another scandal."

Robert Alda was cast as Lana's agent, with Dan O'Herlihy as her playwright.

The son of an Italian barber, Alda became the father of two actors, Alan (famous for his involvement in, among others, the TV serial M.A.S.H.), and Antony. Before becoming a Broadway star, Robert worked in vaudeville and burlesque, appearing with such stars as Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, as well as Phil Silvers. He won a Tony Award for starring in *Guys and Dolls* (1950).

O'Herlihy was no great admirer of Lana. "She was very much the star," he said. "Playing a love scene with her was hell. She was always worried about her makeup. I was afraid to touch her. Goddesses are only to be admired from a distance, not mauled. 'Don't smear my lipstick. Don't mess my hair.' Sirk had made an anti-Nazi film, but I think he learned directing from Josef Goebbels himself. He was always barking orders at me that sounded like a

Hitler rant, throwing me off my mark."

An Irishman, O'Herlihy appeared as Macduff in Orson Welles' *Macbeth* in 1948, his first American film. In 1954, in Luis Buñuel's *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, he'd won an Oscar nomination for Best Actor. He would later co-star with Lana in *The Big Cube* (1967), playing her husband.

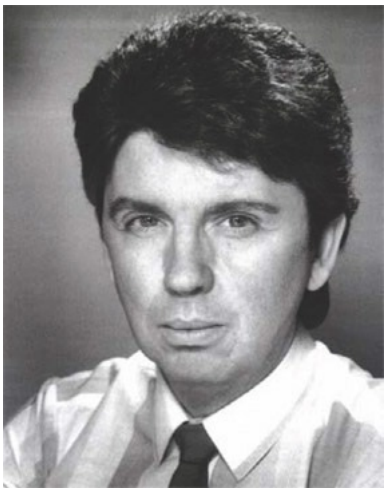
Her fabulous wardrobe in *Imitation* was designed by the Parisian, Jean Louis, who had also created Rita Hayworth's famous black satin strapless gown in *Gilda* (1946) and Marlene Dietrich's celebrated beaded *soufflé* stagewear for her cabaret world tours. He'd also designed clothes for Ginger Rogers, Vivien Leigh, Joan Crawford, Julie Andrews, Katharine Hepburn, and Judy Garland. In time, he'd be nominated for thirteen Oscars for costume design. In 1993, he married an aging Loretta Young, who was long hailed as the best dressed actress in Hollywood.

When Lana sat through the final cut with Hunter, she turned to him. "It's a four-handkerchief tear-jerker." She also told columnist James Bacon, "This is how old Louis B. (mayer) used to make movies before MGM kicked him out on his fat ass."

Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times* echoed Lana's point of view, labeling it "the most shameless tear-jerker in years."

Time magazine called the remake "still a potent onion."

Struggling financially, Universal was rescued by its release of *Imitation of Life,* which became its alltime biggest grosser at the box office.



John Cohan has been a celebrity psychic to the stars for more than three decades. He was a soulmate to both Lana Turner and Sandra Dee during turbulent times in their roller-coaster lives.

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Two blondes from different generations—Lana Turner and Sandra Dee—made two movies together, *Imitation of Life* followed by *Portrait in Black*.

They were completely different personalities, and had little in common. Ross Hunter, their producer, believed that Lana was jealous of Sandra's bubbling youth and beauty. Her star was rising on the Hollywood sky as Lana's sun was setting.

There was one factor in both of their lives that each of the stars had in common: celebrity psychic John Cohan.

At various times and through different periods, both actresses found comfort, support, and good advice from this kind, loving man.

Over the years, his other clients read like a *Who's Who* in the entertainment world, including Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Crawford, Rock Hudson, La Toya Jackson, Lucille Ball, and Julia Roberts, among many others.

Cohan was introduced to Lana through a family friend, actor Ray Danton. Her former agent, Henry Willson, once suggested that he thought Danton and Lana would make the ideal screen team. "his raven-black hair and your blondness would make a vanilla and chocolate image on screen."

Danton was known not only for his hair, but for his intense good looks with a distinctive cleft chin evocative of Kirk Douglas.

Willson helped launch the career of Rory Calhoun by sending the dark-haired actor on dates with the blonde goddess, having warned her not to date men as blonde as she was.

Danton and Lana, in spite of Willson's wish, never made a picture together. However, she was impressed with his virile image when she'd seen two of his pictures: *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond* (1960), and *The George Raft Story* (1960). As arranged by Willson, the movie gangster had been one of her first lovers when Lana arrived at Warner Brothers in 1937.

Cohan was particularly helpful to Lana during her decline in the 1980s. As she admitted herself, "I was on a serious downhill slide, in terrible health, and suffering a weight loss to the point of emaciation." She wasn't eating properly, but drinking too much and chain smoking, too. When she appeared in New Orleans in the early 1980s in *Murder Among Friends*, she often could not go onstage and had to send out her understudy as a replacement.

Sometimes, she and Cohan talked about her previous lovers. As she claimed, "All of them were unfaithful. My heart was broken into so many pieces I never thought I could put it back together again."

He tried to arouse her survival-sharpened instincts and instill in her a love and respect of self, giving her the will to go on. Or, as she put it, "to face the final curtain. I know that's a *cliché*. But, like most *clichés*, it's true."

Over the course of his relationship with Lana, he had a brief fling with her. "She was desperate for love," he recalled. But that fleeting romance turned into a deep friendship which led to her calling him "my soulmate."

Cohan also brought comfort and love to Sandra Dee after her film career started to flicker and die in the late 1960s. Universal didn't renew her contract. Her divorce from Bobby Darin came through in 1967.

Cohan was there for her during the years she suffered from poor health and lived as a virtual recluse. For many years, she battled depression, *anorexia nervosa*, and alcoholism, and also had to cope with a drug problem.

He acknowledged that Sandra "was the love of my life" on the dedication page of his revelation-laden memoirs, *Catch a Falling Star*, published in 2008.

In that book, he described how, on five or six different occasions, Sandra had urged him to marry her, but that did not come about.

He spoke to her on the phone in January of 2005, a month before she died. As he had so many times before, he talked about her health and heating habits. She revealed her desire to make a comeback, perhaps as a host on NBC's *The Today Show*.

He promised he'd be in California by the spring of that year, but by then, it would be too late. Sandra was gone.

As he remembered it in her desperation, she shared a dream with him that Darin had reached out his hand from above, beckoning her to come and join him, as a kind of "See you in Heaven," offer.

"I told her that Bobby wants you to stay here and live life to the fullest," Cohan said. "But she was ready to go. I loved and adored her. She will be missed."

***

With lines forming around the block for *Imitation of Life*, more film offers poured in for Lana. For various reasons, many of them fell through. Projects were either completely abandoned, or else she rejected roles which were then assigned to another actress.

Ever since he had cast *Forever Amber*, the tyrannical director, Otto Preminger, had wanted to star Lana in a picture. But the studio had insisted on Linda Darnell. Even before that, Lana had wanted to star in the director's *Laura*, but that role had gone to Gene Tierney.

Preminger had already cast James Stewart in *Anatomy of a Murder* when he approached Lana and asked her to take the female lead. She read the script and liked the role, since it evoked memories of her starring role as Cora in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

She was concerned that the title of the movie, *Anatomy of a Murder*, would revive recent memories of the fatal stabbing of Johnny Stompanato at her home. She told a reporter, "I wish I could have learned these things another way, but what's past is past. I can't let it destroy me, and I want to move on. It's a terrific role, and I want to do it."

Lana signed a contract to co-star in *Anatomy of a Murder*, a taut suspense thriller directed by the ferociously undiplomatic Otto Preminger, who's depicted above.

A bare-knuckled dispute over Lana 's wardrobe demands ("couture, and only by Jean Louis!") led to screaming arguments and a bitter parting of their ways.

The problem arose over wardrobe and her appearance. Preminger took her to be fitted for the wigs she'd wear in the film. "She objected to everything," he told his staff. "This woman, I fear, is going to drive me crazy. I'm having second thoughts about casting her. To begin with, I think she's too old for the part. I should have gone with a younger actress."

Hope Bryce, the costume coordinator, made an appointment to meet Lana at a western shop on Rodeo Drive, then waited two hours for her to show up. The plan involved purchasing off-the-rack clothing for her, perhaps slacks, Capri pants, or Western pants *à la* Dale Evans.

Since she didn't show up, Bryce bought some outfits in her size and drove to her home for fittings.

But when Lana saw the selection, she refused to even try them on. "I want the clothes I wear in the film to be designed by Jean Louis!"

When Bryce informed Preminger of her rejection, he exploded: "I, and nobody else, determine what my actors are to wear. Her character is a junior officer's wife living in a trailer. How in hell can she afford Jean Louis? it's ridiculous to dress her up and turn her into a glamour puss. This is not *Imitation of Life."*

He ordered Bryce to assemble "some cheap, sleazy clothes that a slut in a trailer camp would wear. Even some plastic shoes."

When Bryce presented Lana with this apparel, it was her time to explode. She immediately called her agent, Paul Kohner, and ordered him to present her costume demands to Preminger.

Kohner called Preminger with Lana's demands and objections.

"Fine," the director said. "Send me a letter stating that she wants to cancel the contract she signed with me unless her clothes are designed by Jean Louis. Once I get the letter, I'll release her at once."

That night he'd been drinking heavily, fuming about Lana. He phoned her and, in his thick Viennese accent, began to denounce her. In her memoirs, Lana referred to the vile expletives hurled at her, without mentioning the actual words.

In his final screech, he shouted "CUNT! CUNT! CUNT!" into the phone right before she put down the receiver never to speak to him again.

"I can't possibly work with this beast," she told Kohner. "I hope my family is never so hungry that I would have to be in a picture he directed. Too bad, though, as I would love to have co-starred with Jimmy Stewart again."

***

Portrait in Black, Lana's only film release for 1960, was once again produced by Ross Hunter from a script that had gone dusty on the shelves at Universal International for thirteen years.

Hunter told his director, Michael Gordon, "Lana turned down scripts for *Luanne Royal* and for *The Chalk Garden*, but at last she's found something she can sink those painted claws of hers into. A murderess."

Gordon answered, "It's type casting, Ross old pal, A murderess playing a murderess."

"Don't let her hear you say that," Hunter cautioned.

The play by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts had opened on Broadway in 1947, running at the Booth Theatre for sixty-one performances, starring Clair Luce, Sidney Blackmer, and Donald Cook.

After seeing the play, producers Jack Skirball and Bruce Manning acquired the screen rights. Sir Carol Reed, famous for his 1949 *The Third Man*, was set to direct, with Joan Crawford in the star role. The project didn't get off the ground, and the rights were sold to Universal but the studio let it languish until 1960.

Portrait of a cinematic murderess, Lana Turner, starring in *Portrait in Black*.

Her role, and the publicity it generated, traumatized Lana with comparisons to the recent, spectacularly controversial, death of Johnny Stompanato.

As a follow-up to *Imitation of Life*, Hunter wanted an all-star cast and crew. Gordon had just directed *Pillow Talk* (1959), one of Hunter's most successful movies, starring Rock Hudson and Doris Day.

In the early 1950s, during the McCarthy era, Gordon had been blacklisted and was *persona non grata* in Hollywood. Ironically, in 1950, he'd just directed Jose Ferrer in his Oscar-winning performance in *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Lana insisted the Jean Louis once again be tapped to design her fabulous wardrobe. Music would be by Frank Skinner. The original playwrights, Goff and Roberts, had revised their script. Russell Metty, who had photographed

Lana so beautifully in *Imitation of Life*, was also hired for *Portrait in Black*. Richard Ried had won an Oscar for his art direction of *Pillow Talk*, and he was hired. Photography would be in EastmanColor.

Portrait in Black would be a murder/blackmail mystery filled with some gaping holes that Hunter would try to conceal with a glamourous décor and offbeat casting, including Anthony Quinn as her leading man. When the role was first presented to him, he told Hunter, "You've got to be kidding."

He would be cast as David Rivera, a doctor who falls in love with mink-clad, diamond-laden Sheila Cabot (Lana). He's treating her ailing husband, shipping magnate Matthew Cabot (Lloyd Nolan). The couple have a stepdaughter, Catherine Cabot, played by Sandra Dee, who had been Lana's daughter in *Imitation of Life*. Unable to get a divorce, Lana plots with the doctor to murder her husband by injecting an air bubble into his veins.

Once again, she was plotting with a lover to murder her husband, evoking *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

"This will be my first role as a drawing room menace," Quinn told Kirk Douglas, who had recently co-starred with him in *Last Train from Gun Hill* (1959). Knowing that he was miscast, Quinn signed on anyway, telling Douglas, "It's the money, comrade, money, money, money."

As it turned out, Quinn was right: The role was wrong for him. As *Time* magazine noted, "His speech was oddly strangled, and his general acting was that of a beaten prizefighter who routinely protests a decision he knows to have been fair."

Before he had established himself as a Hollywood star, Quinn had played an Indian, a Mafia don, a Hawaiian chief, a Filipino freedom fighter, a Chinese guerilla, and an Arab sheik, among other varied roles.

[Quinn was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, to a Mexican mother with Indian blood and an immigrant father from Ireland. The family later came to the U.S., where as a young boy, Quinn picked walnuts in El Paso, harvested tomatoes in San Jose, and, as a "Chicano," ran with gangs in the Mexican slums of Los Angeles. For a time, he played the saxophone at the street corner rallies of Aimee Semple McPherson, the most famous evangelist of her era.

In just a few years, he'd be in Hollywood, hanging out with John Barrymore and "fucking Mae West" (his words). She'd cast him as a Latin gigolo in her play, Clean Beds.*]*

Lovers colluding and trapped in the murder of her inconvenient husband.

Above, Lana, as an *haute* diva (“I am a movie star!”) draped in mink, with Anthony Quinn, spruced up as a society doctor who kills.

When he got to know Lana, he told her, “Back then, I wanted to be Napoléon, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Picasso, Martin Luther, and Jack Dempsey—all rolled into one body.”

By 1937, he’d married Katherine DeMille, the adopted daughter of Cecil B. DeMille. Regrettably, their little son, Christopher Anthony, drowned in the swimming pool of W.C. Fields.

When Lana began emoting on camera with Quinn, and as he nuzzled her neck, she was well aware of his reputation in Hollywood as a master seducer of movie stars, ranging from Carole Lombard to Shelley Winters. While making *Blood and Sand* with Rita Hayworth in 1941, he’d seduced her, too, and also agreed to lie on the casting couch of the gay director, George Cukor, who later boasted about the size of Quinn’s penis.

As Evelyn Keyes, “Scarlett’s O’Hara’s Younger Sister,” said, “There was simply too much of Tony—yes, down there, too.”

Quinn’s manly charms did not fail to attract the attention of Lana. Ross Hunter said, “Before the first week of filming, Quinn was making visits to Lana’s dressing room. I even asked her if Quinn had exaggerated his sexual prowess, as so many men do. I should know! She assured me he’s hot as a firecracker.”

On the set, Quinn introduced Lana to Anna May Wong, who had emerged from retirement after eleven years to play her mysterious maid, “Tani,” in *Portrait in Black*.

Lana asked her why she’d been absent from the screen for so long.

“My father told me not to be photographed too much or else I’d lose my soul.” After a long and distinguished career, *Portrait* would be her last film role, as she died the following year (1961).

Wong and Quinn were old friends, having worked together before, co-starring in such movies as *Daughter of Shanghai* (1937) and *Dangerous to Know* (1938).

Although born in Los Angeles, Wong became the first Asian American actress to gain international renown and was labeled as “the first Chinese American movie star.”

Lana still had enough star power to make demands, and she successfully urged Hunter to cast her dear friend, Virginia Grey. He gave her the small part of “Miss Lee,” and the actress made the most of her role as a secretary.

Lloyd Nolan was cast as Lana’s husband, Matthew Cabot, a dying shipping magnate lying in a hospital bed stroking his Siamese cat. He’s still trying to hold onto his shipping empire with the help of Howard Mason (Richard Basehart), his lawyer.

Sandra Dee had played Lana’s daughter in *Imitation of Life*, but in *Portrait*, she was her stepdaughter, Catherine Cabot. Behind Dee’s back, Lana told Grey, “She’s the new blonde on the block. Hollywood’s getting a new crop. As strange as it seems, Marilyn Monroe in a few years is going to be forty.”

In 1960, just minutes before the explosion of “flower power” and the hippie movement, Sandra Dee—portrayed above in *Portrait in Black*—was critiqued for dressing like a young nubile twenty-something who never evolved from the tastes and fashion aesthetics of her cinematic mother and the Eisenhower era.

Over lunch, Dee told Lana, “The last man I’m going to marry is a man in show business. They’re selfish, unreliable, and make lousy husbands. A Hollywood type marriage is not for me.”

The next time Lana heard of Dee’s marital status was when she read in the newspaper that she’d married singer Bobby Darin, who definitely was in show business. The press dubbed Darin and Dee as “the dream lovers”—that is, until reality set in.

When Lana met Richard Basehart, he was just ending his marriage to the Italian actress, Valentina Cortese. She found his deep, distinctive voice and good looks appealing, but, according to Grey, she made no attempt to go after him. “Actually, I was the one who went after Richard, but he turned me down.”

An Italian American born in Brooklyn, John Saxon was cast as Blake Richards, a tugboat owner who is the fiancé of Lana’s stepdaughter.

Henry Willson had seen a picture of the handsome Saxon on a magazine cover and had contacted him with a familiar line, “Do you want to be in pictures?”

Willson went after him, promising him to get him a movie role. Meeting him for the first time, the agent said, “He looks like a male Sophia Loren, age twelve.” Saxon was seventeen at the time.

Portrait in Black was filmed against the dramatic backdrop of San Francisco. As usual, Lana made a glamorous screen presence, especially in one scene where she is shown wearing a big white orchid on her black sequined gown and adorned with her favorite diamonds.

In the film, in the aftermath of Nolan’s murder, the homicidal lovers, Lana and Quinn, think that they’ve gotten away with it. Then, anonymous letters arrive, nailing them as the murderers.

Suspicion falls on Nolan’s daughter (Dee); his lawyer (Basehart); and the Chinese housekeeper (Wong). Lana and Quinn finally decide that Basehart is sending the threatening letters and that he will also have to be eliminated. Basehart is murdered, this time the suspicion centering on Saxon.

Even with Basehart out of the way, the letters keep coming. Near the end of the film, Quinn manages to make Lana confess that she is the one sending those letters. She believes that she can hold onto him based on their shared guilt and their murderous dark secret.

Dee eavesdrops on their dialogue wherein their collaboration in the murder of both her father and his lawyer is expressed, and Quinn goes after her. She eludes him, and he falls to his death from a window ledge. That leaves Lana to face the grim reality of a lifetime in prison, or possibly the electric chair.

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Before the release of *Portrait in Black*, Hunter sent most of its cast, including Lana, on a publicity tour through key cities which included New York and Chicago. It became a box office success, although critics, for the most part, blasted it.

Variety attacked it as “a contrived murder melodrama with psychological character interplay that is more psycho than logical.” *Cue* magazine pronounced it “Highly polished and generally incredible. The high-class killings are done amid the lushest settings and the most expensive costumes.”

An unusual appraisal came from a critic on London, where *Portrait in Black* had once served as a stage vehicle for Diana Wynyard, a famous actress in the West End.

Susan Mann, writing in *Women’s Mirror*, said: “There she is in *Portrait in Black*, Lana Turner, as ravishing and wildly improbable as ever. The moment she slipped her mink coat carelessly around her shoulders and rushed out to meet a secret lover, leaving her bedridden husband behind, I breathed a sigh of luxurious relief. To me, she’s the *grande dame* of tormented heroines. She used to turn up in film after film; so did Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Neither Joan or Bette have been filming lately. So Lana Turner has taken over as the top representative of my favorite species of celluloid Queen Bee.”

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Lana had lost out on playing the role of Maggie the Cat in Tennessee Williams’ *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. That part had gone to her friend, Elizabeth Taylor. In competing for the role, she’d had a brief fling with the film’s co-star, Paul Newman.

Once again, she made a final stab at appearing as a Tennessee Williams heroine in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. There weren’t that many good roles for an actress of a certain age, and she wanted to see why the play was generating such excitement on Broadway.

The play had opened on March 10, 1959 at the Martin Beck Theatre in Manhattan, with Geraldine Page starring as Alexandra del Lago and Paul Newman as the hustler, Chance Wayne.

Lana came back into Newman’s life when she became one of the many actresses who flocked to see Tennessee’s new play.

She phoned the playwright and agreed to meet him for a drink at Sardi’s before the curtain went up. They laughed about his long-ago attempt *[described in Chapter Ten of this book]* to write “a celluloid brassiere” for her, a reference to her movie *Marriage Is a Private Affair.]*

He spoke about his dismissal, and she chimed in, “MGM and I parted ways, too. There was no one to show me to the gate. But if they buy the screen rights for *Sweet Bird*, maybe I’ll return to the studio.”

That night at the performance, Tennessee noted that Lana studied Page’s every movement and expression “like a hawk. She was already rehearsing for the movie version.”

Geraldine Page, an aging actress, pays for the sexual services of a younger man, Paul Newman, in the film version of Tennessee Williams’ *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

One can only wonder how Lana, as an older actress, might have fared in her place?

After watching the play, Lana suggested that it might have to be “cleaned up for the screen.”

She was all charm and grace when Tennessee escorted her backstage for a reunion with Newman. Right in front of the playwright, she kissed Newman. It was a long and lingering, open-mouthed kiss that forced her to repair her makeup in the mirror of his dressing room.

“I’m all alone in New York,” she told him in front of Tennessee. “I’m so dependent on a man. But aren’t most women like me?”

“I can definitely assure you that most women aren’t like Lana Turner,” he said.

It was agreed that Tennessee would take both of them to dinner at Sardi’s before he had to go elsewhere. Lana wanted to go dancing later, and Newman agreed to escort her.

Later at Sardi’s, all heads turned as the famous trio made their entrance. Newman seemed indifferent to all the attention, but Lana and Tennessee basked in the glow.

Over dinner, Tennessee appeared drunk or drugged, and he made a startling revelation: He was going to Cuba.

“You’d better stay out of there,” Newman warned him. “You could be kidnapped and held for ransom.”

“If that’s what it takes to come together with Fidel Castro, I’ll take that risk,” he assured them. “I dream at night of getting raped by him. I’m willing to take the risk.”

Lana told him that she found a rape by Castro a ghoulish idea, and she feared for his safety. “We need you to write dramas for Paul and me in our future.”

After dinner, Tennessee told them farewell, and tottered off into the night. “I have a date with a hustler,” he confessed. “The most expensive in New York. Five-hundred dollars a night instead of the usual twenty-five.”

At a nightclub uptown, a hush fell over the patrons when “the most beautiful couple in Manhattan” entered. She looked gorgeous sheathed in a body-clinging white gown that was slit high up one side and low down the front. Her blonde hair was cropped short.

Dancing in Newman’s arms, she told him, “Everybody is looking at us. We’d make a fabulous pair on the screen.”

“Everybody is looking at YOU,” he corrected her. “To attract attention, I’ll have to take off my jacket, shirt, and undershirt.”

“Later, darling,” she whispered to him.

He never shared the details of what happened to them later that night. But he took her back to her suite and didn’t leave until the following morning.

He did admit to Tennessee two nights later, “I found her clinging and desperate. The next morning, as I was heading out, she delivered a shocker.”

“You may not know it now, but one day in the not-so-distant future, you are going to be my next husband.”

Of course, that never happened. Neither did her chance to play Alexandra del Lago in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Both Newman and Geraldine Page repeated their stage roles on screen.

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Lana was excited to learn that she was being offered the lead role in *By Love Possessed* (1961), whose script would be adapted from the best-selling novel by James Gould Cozzens. It had won the William Dean Howells Award "as the most distinguished work of fiction published during the last five years," although *Time* magazine labeled it "the worst good novel of the past decade."

Lana was paid $300,000 to star in the movie, plus a percentage of the profits. As always, she wanted to know who her leading man would be, and was told that Robert Taylor had been offered the role of her lover. She anticipated working with him again. It had been a long time since the two of them had made love on and off the screen in *Johnny Eager*.

She was also told that the scenario had been written by Charles Schnee, the Oscar-winning writer of one of her three most famous films, *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

He'd been given the awesome task of dramatizing Cozzens' 575-page novel, which was mostly filled with "twenty-five years of soul-searching among its characters. Much of the novel had been revealed through flashbacks and introspections, not ideal material for film-making.

The final script spun around rape, suicide, embezzlement, and sexual unfulfillment, the movie drawing comparisons to *Peyton Place*.

Lana invited the director, John Sturges, and the producer, Walter Mirisch, to her home to discuss the upcoming film. It was to be a joint venture of Mirisch Pictures and Seven Arts, with distribution by United Artists.

Director Sturges had just completed *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), starring Yul Brynner and Steve McQueen. In time, it would become a film classic. He'd also directed Spencer Tracy in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), for which he received a Best Director Oscar nomination.

Born to a Jewish family in new York, Mirisch had founded Mirisch Productions, an independent film company that would win three Best Picture Academy Awards—*The Apartment* (1960), *West Side Story* (1961), and *In the Heat of the Night* (1967). His film version of the mammoth James Michener novel, *Hawaii* (1966), was nominated for seven Oscars.

The good news was followed by some bad news. Sturges called to tell Lana that Robert Taylor had dropped out because of other commitments. She tried to conceal her disappointment when he told her that he had been replaced by Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. He was hardly a name she knew, or a career with which she was familiar. She set out to learn what she could about him.

Born to Russian Jewish parents in New York, the handsome young actor had gone to Yale, later serving in the U.S. Army during the war for five years, during which time he'd won the Purple Heart.

He'd made his Broadway debut in *The Rugged Path*, starring with Spencer Tracy. By 1956, he'd landed at the gates to Warner Brothers, where he signed a contract. After that, he'd made both feature films and performed in TV

roles, starring with James Garner in the hit series, *Maverick*.

Lana had already sized up “the sexual potential” of her leading man. But in spite of his good looks and seductive appeal, Zimbalist seemed off limits to her predatory eyes. She was told that he was “quite spiritual,” having converted to Christianity.

Lana “possessed” by then-newcomer Efrem Zimbalist Jr.

Even before rehearsals began, Lana was informed that Sturges had not liked the scenario written by Schnee and had employed three “script doctors”—William Roberts, Isobel Lennart, and Ketti Frings. When Schnee read what this trio had done to his scenario, he threatened to sue to have his name removed from the credits. A compromise was reached: Upon the film’s release, he was identified as “John Dennis.”

In a quiet New England town, there are three partners in the local law firm: Zimbalist as Arthur Winner; Jason Robards as Julius Penrose; and Thomas Mitchell playing Noah Tuttle, the aging senior partner.

Winner is a solid citizen married to Barbara Bel Geddes (Clarissa) until he develops a passionate affair with Lana in her role as Marjorie Penrose, the wife of his law partner, Julius.

He is impotent because of a car accident, but he won’t give his wife a divorce. He tells her, “Go find what you want somewhere else. Just don’t tell me about it.”

It all works out in the end, as the errant spouses return to their respective mates. However, the film never answers the question: What is a hot-to-trot love-hungry female like Lana going to do for sex?

During the first week of rehearsals, Lana met her strong supporting cast, headed by the third male lead, veteran actor Jason Robards, Jr. He had recently married Lauren Bacall, the widow of Humphrey Bogart.

Cast as the wife of Zimbalist in the film, Bel Geddes was reduced to a very minor role. In her heyday, she’d starred as Maggie the Cat on Broadway in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Two of her greatest films had been *I Remember Mama* (1948) and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958).

Once again, Lana was cast with Susan Kohner, the daughter of her agent, having recently completed *Imitation of Life*. Lana praised her for her talent and predicted a great future for her in film.

That did not happen. In 1964, she married John Weitz, the writer and menswear designer, and retired from the screen.

Thomas Mitchell had played Scarlett O’Hara’s father in *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and had won a Best Supporting Actor Oscar, cast as the drunken Doc Boone in *Stagecoach* (1939) with John Wayne. He had become the first actor to win a triple crown: Academy Award, Tony, and Emmy.

In the film, he played a fading, aging lawyer, Noah Tuttle, who is guilty of having embezzled funds from the firm to repay “a debt of honor.”

A native of Tennessee, the perpetually suntanned George Hamilton was growing tired of hearing reporters claim that he resembled Warren Beatty. When he met Lana, he had starred in the romantic comedy, *Where the Boys Are* (1960). Before that, he’d starred in a more serious film, *Crime and Punishment U.S.A.* (1959), a re-imagining of the Fyodor Dostoyevsky novel, his performance winning him a Golden Globe.

Hamilton was assigned the role of Warren Winner, Zimbalist’s son, a Harvard Law School graduate forced to enter his father’s law firm. He becomes sexually involved with Kohner’s character, Helen Detweiler.

In his memoir, *Don’t Mind If I Do*, he described her character as a “virgin orphan heiress client.” After he deflowers her, she commits suicide by drinking a can of cleaning fluid.

In that same memoir, hamilton recorded his impression of working with Lana. “she was the most notorious woman in America right then, coming off the murder of gangster Johnny Stompanato. All the rumors were that Lana had stabbed him to death and gotten her teenage daughter to take the fall.”

“But those rumors were never spoken anywhere near the Great One,” Hamilton wrote. “Not that Lana and I hung out. Instead, she hung me out, forcing me to do at least thirty takes of a scene in which all I had to do was help her on with her mink coat. The idea was to slide the mink to her neck, then let it drop away. Having learned from the master of the game, I thus became adept at putting an endangered species on an endangered species. I had a future in cloakrooms if all else failed.”

By Love Possessed opened in Manhattan in July of 1961. It also made another debut, becoming the first movie ever shown on the regularly scheduled first-class flights of Trans World Airlines.

Reviews for the most part were poor, critic Brandon Gill writing in *The New Yorker, “By Love Possessed* contains few traces of filmable material. It’s a very talky affair.”

Robert Freund, in a review in Fort Lauderdale, cited Lana “for playing her usual role—and doing it well, the dame with surface elegance glossing a wanton brassiness.”

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Since the 1950s, Lana and Bob Hope had been friends, and had worked together on television, but never in a feature film. She was surprised when he phoned her and asked her if she would co-star with him in the romantic comedy, *Bachelor in Paradise*, to be released in 1961, which would mark her second picture that year, following in the wake of *By Love Possessed*.

“What’s the problem?” she asked. “Lucille Ball not available?”

Talking it over with Hope, she decided to accept the role of Rosemary Howard, a single woman living among married couples in suburbia.

There was another reason she wanted to do the film, and that was for business purposes. It would mark her return to MGM, a studio that had not renewed her contract back in 1956.

The casting of the new screen team of Bob Hope with *femme fatale* Lana struck many columnists as a mating of "an odd couple."

One headline read: LANA TURNER TO PLAY STRAIGHT MAN TO BOB HOPE.

However, before leaving the studio, she had arrived at a rather loose agreement that for the next five years, she'd make one picture a year for the studio at a relatively modest salary.

Although she did not follow through with that agreement, based on her agreement to film this final movie for MGM, she'd be allowed to collect $92,000 from MGM's pension fund.

Bachelor in Paradise cast Hope as Adam J. Niles, a writer who has penned books on the sex lives of every nationality from the Greeks to the Swedes. After months of "research" overseas, he returns to America to face a daunting problem. Because of his crooked business manager, he owes a million dollars in back taxes to the IRS. His publisher wants him to write a book, *How the Americans Live*, about the sex lives of the "happy couples" living in postwar suburbia.

To facilitate that, the publisher had arranged for Hope to move into a rented home in Paradise Village, a modern suburban housing development awash with such innovations as big supermarkets, gadgets like a garbage disposal, babysitters, the hazards of the new freeways, and bored housewives waiting claustrophobically at home as their husbands labor frantically at white-collar jobs.

Hope moves in, causing speculation, since he's a bachelor.

Of course, the assumption of any sexual chemistry between Hope and Lana would not be palatable to most viewers today, but, after all, it was only a movie. It might have been the type of comedy Doris Day would make with either Cary Grant or James Garner. As anticipated, Hope was ready to deliver his one-liners and his by now familiar facial expressions.

Lana confessed to Grey, "I think sometime, years ago, that Bob made a pass at me. I didn't catch it. I was afraid that if he took me to bed, i'd end up laughing hysterically. I'm told that men don't like that."

"I wonder why," Grey answered.

At the age of forty-one, Lana appeared perfectly coiffed with makeup by her friend, Del Armstrong, wearing dresses and gowns by Helen Rose. She was photographed in CinemaScope and MetroColor by Joe Ruttenberg, who made her look years younger.

Hope had warned her, "This *Bachelor* is not Oscar material." In fact, however, Henry Mancini, who wrote the title song, would be nominated for an Academy award for his music.

Some viewers thought that Lana looked like a stylishly dressed "robot," but she does break loose in one scene. After downing one too many Polynesian cocktails, she takes to the dance floor to perform a hip-swinging hula, her fun moment on screen.

The best review for *Bachelor in Paradise* derived from Bob Considine, who claimed that it was "Bob Hope's funniest movie ever." Of course, that was gross exaggeration. Hope himself told friends, "I'm not proud of this one. Of course, Lana, as always, looked luscious."

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Finished forever with MGM, Lana received an unexpected offer for a Paramount release, *Who's Got the Action?* it would be the only film she'd make in 1962 before disappearing from the screen for three years.

As with Bob Hope, *Who's Got the Action?* would be another "odd couple" pairing, this time with singer-actor Dean Martin, the "King of Cool." He was the no. 2 rodent in the "Rat Pack" led by Frank Sinatra.

The script about betting on horse races was by the film's director, Jack Rose, who based it on the novel, *Four Horse Players Are Missing*, by Alexander Rose (no relation).

This wacky racetrack yarn would be promoted not based on what happened on the track, but in the boudoir.

Rose picked Daniel Mann to direct, which came as a surprise to Lana. *Who's Got the Action?* seemed like a lightweight comedy farce for a respected director whose reputation had been built on such distinguished films as William Inge's *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952) with Burt Lancaster and Shirley Booth; Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo* (1955) with Lancaster and Anna Magnani; *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (1955) with Susan Hayward in the saga of the alcoholic singer, Lillian Roth; and *BUtterfield 8* (1960), an Oscar winner for Elizabeth Taylor.

The plot has Lana playing Melanie Flood, a dizzy but engaging socialite and wannabe author, married to happy-go-lucky Steve Flood, as charmingly depicted by Dean Martin. At first, she thinks his obsession is with other women, but soon learns that it involves gambling on horses.

In *Who's Got the Action?*, Lana got to appear in a bathtub scene for the fourth time in a movie.

Before that, she'd been bubble-bathed in *Ziegfeld Girl*, *The Merry Widow*, and *The Lady Takes a Flyer*. She told Mann, "Why not call me Bubbles?"

She comes up with a far-fetched scheme that plot-wise doesn't make a lot of sense. Martin is losing a lot of their money at the tracks.

She turns to his law partner, Clint Morgan (Eddie Albert), to help her in her scheme to secretly become her husband's "bookie."

That way, his losses would be paid to her.

Her plot backfires when, unexpectedly, Steve starts to score big wins on his bets, and as his (clandestine) bookie, she has to raise the money to pay him off.

Her financial position becomes more hazardous when he involves two horse-playing, gambling-addicted judges, portrayed by Paul ford and John McGiver. One reviewer called Ford "hilarious as a bird-brained, spaniel-eyed llamalipped pony player."

To raise the money she needs to keep "the action" going, Lana, as the secret bookie, is forced to sell her jewelry and their furniture.

Lana's role in this gambling network attracts the attention of syndicate boss Tony Gagoots (Walter Matthau), who is furious about losing bets. He decides his boys will have to eliminate the competition, in this case Melania (Lana herself).

Matthau's role—as was much of the picture—was inspired by Damon Runyon. Matthau delivers such lines as "*Give disgenulman eighteen tousan' dolluhs frum petty cash*."

As it so happens, Gagoot's girlfriend, "Saturday Knight" (the very charming and funny Nita Talbot, who stole most of the scenes she appeared in) lives next door to Lana and buys many of her possessions. A New Yorker, Talbot, a sort of latter-day Eve Arden, usually played "slick chicks" and sharp-witted career girls.

Since it's a movie, everything works out happily in the end. Lana weans Martin from the horses and even is able to reclaim her furniture.

Even though she had passed the big 4-0, a burial ground for most Hollywood female stars, Lana managed to look gorgeous throughout the movie in gowns and costumes designed by Edith Head, who had previously dressed virtually every major star in Hollywood.

Both Eddie Albert and his wife Margo, were cast in the film, with Margo playing Rosa, Melania's wacky Hispanic maid. Both Albert and Margo had had some rough rides in their careers, ever since they landed on the Red Channels list in the 1950s.

The movie did not get good reviews. *The New York Morning Telegraph* wrote, "Dean Martin, Eddie Albert, and Lana Turner go through their paces with great good will. None of the film can be taken seriously, a good deal of it is as ridiculous as it is preposterous." *Time* magazine wrote, "The syndicate has the last laugh in this yak derby, but the customers get most of the others. The film is not the merriest 'oatsmobile' that ever came down the track, but Dean and Lana make a surprisingly smooth entry."

Most critics panned the movie for not getting out of the starting gate.

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Nicknamed the "King of Cool," Dean Martin was one of the most popular singers and actors in America when he teamed up with Lana to make *Who's Got the Action?*

Ashe first met him in Los Angeles early in his career when he was teamed with comedian Jerry Lewis. She was seen in the audience at a club called Slapsy Maxie's, which was a popular spot, attracting many stars such as Doris Day and Danny Kaye.

At the time, Martin was married to his second wife, Jeanne Biegger, a model and former Orange Bowl Queen from Coral Gables, Florida.

But that didn't stop his womanizing, something he shared in common with another of Lana's beaux, Frank Sinatra.

"The most beautiful broads were crazy for Dean," Lewis said. "In truth, I fucked more than he did, but it was always like they wanted to burp me."

A strong supporting cast zestfully poured themselves into their roles as eccentrics indulging Lana in her (adorable) whims.

Above, Nita Talbot, playing a gun moll, and Eddie Albert.

Ann sheridan, one of his early movie star conquests, said, “Dean was a love ‘em, leave ‘em kind of guy. He was a bastard, all wine and candlelight at night. For your efforts in the boudoir, you got a pat on the ass in the morning, right before he headed out the door.”

Sinatra is credited as the man who fixed Lana up with Dean in encounters that included a long weekend in Palm Springs. He joked to Martin and some of his other “Rat Packers,” like Peter Lawford, “As is well known, Lana seems to like Italian pepperoni, the bigger the better.”

Martin’s biographer, William Schoell, wrote: “Lana had the hots for Dean and wasn’t afraid to let him—or anyone else in the room—know how she felt.”

“The fires of September” had cooled to a burning ember when Dean Martin and Lana reunited on the set of her latest movie.

He told Peter Lawford, “Lana is still beautiful, even a bit sexy, but she’s become a bit matronly for me. As you

know, I like ‘em young and fresh. I hope she doesn’t demand that I fuck her regularly, like we used to do in the good ol’ days.”

Years before she co-starred with him in a film, Lana showed up with Martin at such clubs as Herman Hover’s Ciro’s, later going to a late night party at Hover’s home after the club closed. After a wild night of heavy drinking, Lana with Martin would slip out the door at around 2AM in the morning and disappear into the night.

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One afternoon, Lana encountered Marilyn Monroe on the set, heading to Dean’s bungalow. The two blondes had not seen each other since the days when Monroe was trying to get her career launched in Hollywood, using Lana as one of her inspirations.

“Lana, you look gorgeous,” Monroe said. “*Still*. As you remember, I once used you as a role model before I created my own screen persona. And now I’m a bigger star than you are—that’s Hollywood for you!”

“All stars flicker out,” Lana said. “You’ll find that out one day.”

“I don’t want to think about that,” Monroe said.

Then Marilyn reported that she was going to be the star of a new movie with Martin as her leading man. “It’s called *Something’s Got to Give.”* She explained that it was a remake of *My Favorite Wife*, the 1940 film that had starred cary Grant and Irene Dunne.

“Which role do you play? Lana asked with a smirk.

“The Irene Dunne part, silly,” Monroe said. “Gotta go.” Then she tottered off on high heels.

That afternoon, Lana told her makeup man, Del Armstrong, “Dean might make it through the picture, but I don’t think Marilyn will. She’s coming unglued.”

She was right. Marilyn was murdered in August of 1962 after the picture had been shut down, her death still a mystery.

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Lana’s next movie, *Love Has Many Faces*, set by Columbia for a 1965 release, evoked those women’s pictures of the 1940s.

Still looking gorgeous in a bathing suit, Lana was cast as one of the richest women in the world, buying male flesh in Acapulco.

Here she has a tense scene with Cliff Robertson, whom she’d “purchased” and married.

The plot by Marguerite Roberts focuses mainly on Kit, who is married to a former beach boy and hustler, Pete Jordan (Cliff Robertson). Kit is pursued by Hank Walker (Hugh O'Brien), another sexy hustler who preys on older women, often blackmailing them.

One line in the movie was drawn from Lana's own life. "She was meant to have seven husbands, and I'm next." It was uttered by Hank.

To complicate matters, yet another "beach boy" has washed up on the sands dead. Lt. Riccardo Andrade (Enrique Lucero) sets out to investigate his death. It is discovered that he was a former paid lover of Kit, who had given him a bracelet engraved LOVE IS THIN ICE.

The dead American's deserted girlfriend, Carol Lambert (Stefanie Powers), flew in from Detroit to learn what she can about her former boyfriend's death. As a subplot, she falls in love with Pete, Kit's husband.

This time, Lana's competition was a brunette, Stefanie Powers. It was speculated that Lana was jealous of the screen beauty, a star of tomorrow, all fresh-faced and beautiful, as Lana herself was drifting into middle age.

There is another subplot, as Hank and his friend pursue two American women on vacation—Margot Eliot (Ruth Roman) and Irene Talbot (Virginia Grey). Lana had insisted that her friend, Grey, be cast as one of the aging women with an eye for young beach boys on the make.

Roman, known as the "Ice Beauty" in many films of the 1950s, was at the nadir of her career after a successful run of A-list pictures in the past decade. Those included her most memorable, Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951), co-starring Farley Granger and Robert Walker.

Near the climax of the film, Kit and her husband go to a Mexican ranch where bulls are trained. Here, she meets Manuel Perez, an actual bullfighter played by Jaime Bravo. Carlos Montalban, the older brother of Ricardo Montalban, was cast as Don Julain. Lana talked with him about working with his brother on *Latin Lovers*.

Del Armstrong, her makeup man and confidant, claimed, “Lana was happy working again in such a glamorous role. As a fringe benefit, she had two of the handsomest leading men in Hollywood to enjoy after dark, each of them very sexy, and very available, each unattached at the time they worked with Lana—not that that would have stopped her.”

Depicted above, Lana with Cliff Robertson.

Kit has seen a relationship developing between Pete and Carol. Exasperated, she rides off on a horse but falls from it and is gored in the stomach by a rampaging bull. This near-fatal accident seems to rekindle Pete’s love for his wife, and he rushes to her side to see her through recovery. A wiser Carol returns to Detroit.

A large selling point of the movie, views of which were included in the advertising, was the fabulous wardrobe created for Lana by Edith Head, who had designed her wardrobe for *Who’s Got the Action?*

Producer Jerry Brasler had ads released with headlines that screamed LANA TURNER IN A MILLION DOLLAR EDITH HEAD WARDROBE.

During its filming in Mexico, Lana may have taken the role of Kit Jordan too literally, as noted by press agent George Nichols.

“Acapulco reminded Lana of some of the good times in her life, as well as a nightmare or two, especially when she spent time here with Johnny Stompanato. It was difficult for me to believe that Lana drank during working hours, but she did. She also had romantic flings, as she was very lonely, a frightened child. Alcohol gave her the confidence to face life every day.”

The entire cast, especially Grey, became aware of Lana’s flings with both Cliff Robertson and Hugh O’Brian, as well as the charismatic bullfighter, Jaime Bravo.

Hugh O’Brian had fascinated Lana ever since she’d watched an episode of his hit NBC-TV series, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* (1955-61). she learned that he’d been the roommate of Stompanato when they’d attended military school together.

In *Love Has Many Faces*, O’Brien appears in a tight-fitting bathing suit “that made things—or rather his thing—rather obvious,” Lana said to Grey.

Lana knew that O’Brien had never married, although he’d had certain affairs, including one with singer Margaret Whiting.

As regards his inspiration for how he interpreted the character he played, O’Brien admitted to the director, “I’m basing my character on everything I’ve heard about Stompanato.”

She was even more intrigued by Robertson, who had appeared as Lt. John F. Kennedy in the 1963 PT 109. After his rather thankless role in *Love Has Many Faces*, he would go on to win a Best Actor Oscar for his 1968 role in the movie *Charly*.

Another Dubious Day in Paradise

Depicted above are Hugh O'Brian (left) and Ron Husmann, cast as two omnisexual and amoral beach boys who peddle their flesh to older women.

Love Has Many Faces was a precursor of such later novels as *Midnight Cowboy* and *Butterflies in Heat* about young men who hustle and their dynamic with women (or men) they service in sex-for-cash deals.

Her affair with Robertson occurred right before he married the elegant and rich Dina Merrill, actress and Post Cereals heiress.

He was a skilled pilot and one weekend, when they were free, he rented a private plane and flew her along the western coast of Mexico. They landed at a cactus-studded outpost, a modest inn, where he first seduced her.

Back in Acapulco, Lana had a somewhat chilly relationship with Stefanie Powers. She had just appeared in the 1966 film, *Die! Die! My Darling* (released in Britain as *Fanatic)* starring Tallulah Bankhead.

Her career fading, Ruth Roman was cast as an aging American heiress who goes to Acapulco for a vacation and hooks up with the beach boy and hustler, Hugh O'Brian, who really has his eye trained on bigger and richer game–Lana herself.

Born in Hollywood, Powers was 21 years younger than Lana. And both seemed to have an eye for Jaime Bravo, a well-known matador of his era, known for his skill as a bullfighter and his many widely publicized celebrity affairs.

Lana was a devotee of bullfights, and an "aficionado" of Bravo. He'd received rave reviews from her friend, Ava Gardner, who had seduced the handsome young man in 1957.

The first time he took Lana to bed, she reported to Grey, "Jaime shares something in common with the bull. When he appears in that bullfighter costume, he doesn't need padding like some matadors."

Shooting *Love Has Many Faces* wasn't all about lovemaking. For a week, Lana came down with some mysterious virus and was unable to report to work. At one point, her temperature hovered at 104 degrees. Even after

she returned to work, she had a relapse and had to go to bed again.

Reacting to that, Bresler began secret negotiations with both Joan Crawford and Susan Hayward as replacements for Lana. But she recovered in time.

In spite of Lana's highly advertised million dollar wardrobe, *Love Has Many Faces* was not a success at the box office. However, one critic found it, "the perfect antidote for bored housewives who thrive at the sight of beautiful clothes and emotional turmoil in opulent surroundings."

One of the leading film critics of her era, Judith Crist, wrote, "It's a soapy melodrama, the kind of film that over the years has given the term 'a woman's picture' all the opprobrium it bears."

Another critic dismissed it as "a lushly wrapped dime novel escapade on a Mexican beach and a luxurious villa." Yet another reviewer found it "a sordid romantic tale of the beach boy set."

After the movie failed at the box office, Lana knew she had to have a good strong role, as well as a hit movie, if she were to continue with her film career.

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As the 1960s marched forward, Hollywood was a radically different town from what it had been in 1937, when a plucky little starlet arrived at the gates of Warner Brothers. The Golden age had ended, and each year brought more and more deaths of her friends and lovers of long ago.

She was desperate for the right role. Her brand of movies, called "a woman's picture," just weren't being made any more in this era of Dustin Hoffman, Steve McQueen, Joan Collins, Jane Fonda, and Faye Dunaway.

She had rechristened her company Eltee Productions, and in the mid-1960s, she searched for the right script.

Lana had had such great success working with Ross Hunter, she turned once again to him to revive a tired old property of yesterday.

A four-handkerchief "soaper," *Madame X* was first presented on stage in 1908 by the French playwright, Alexandre Bisson. It was one of the prototypes for the many "fallen woman" plots that followed. The role was cited as one of the best known examples of the literary tradition of portraying the mother figure as "being excessively punished for a slight deviation from her maternal role."

In 1916, Pathé filmed it with Dorothy Donnelly in the lead role. Four years later, Samuel Goldwyn put his stamp on it, casting Pauline Frederick—a celebrated star of the silent screen—in the role.

More versions were to follow.

In 1929, Lionel Barrymore had directed Ruth Chatterton, one of the reigning stars of early talkies, in the first sound version of *Madame X*.

The only version screened for Lana was a sanitized 1937 remake of the pre-Code version, directed by Samuel Wood and starring Gladys George, with Warren William. The film was released by MGM and did well at the box office.

Lana knew that there was only one producer who could get financing for another remake and that was Ross Hunter. They'd had such success in the past. She met with him, and they agreed to do a remake as a Ross Hunter-Eltee production with Universal releasing it and also financing it.

Hunter went to Douglas Sirk to ask him if he'd direct Lana again, but found him in such ill health it was not possible.

Hunter assigned a former radio actor, Jean Holloway, to pen the script, but after several versions, neither Lana nor Hunter were satisfied. The movie was delayed for three years before shooting began in April of 1965.

When Sirk turned down the job, David Lowell Rich, whose resumé included many television dramas, was signed as director.

This New Yorker helmed 100 films and TV episodes between 1950 and 1987. When Lana met him, he'd just shot *See How They Run* (1964). She considered him "very commercial—just grind them out and under budget." She was shocked when he told the cast and crew that they would have only eight weeks to bring "this soaper in on time."

Whereas she was allowed to look glamorous in the beginning, especially in gowns by Jean Louis, she'd have to age twenty-four years during the course of the film.

Although by now, 1966, most housewives were getting their soap opera fix on TV dramas in the afternoon, Lana and Hunter hoped that the targeted audience, women of Lana's age, would drag their husbands to see *Madame X* in an actual movie house.

The plot of this tired old tear-jerker was familiar to old-time Hollywood people.

In a nutshell, it was the story of a lower class woman, Holly Parker (Lana), who marries into the wealthy Anderson family. Her husband, Clayton Anderson (John Forsythe), has political ambitions and is always away, neglecting her to pursue his career in the diplomatic corps.

A well-known playboy, Phil Benton (Ricardo Montalban), lures her into a tryst. He and Lana had been good friends since they made *Latin Lovers* together.

During one of their encounters, he is killed in an accident. Her venomous mother-in-law (constance Bennett) becomes aware of it and seizes upon the playboy's death to break up Holly's marriage. She had always detested her daughter-in-law anyway. She convinces her to abandon her family as a means of saving her husband's career and to avoid disgracing her young son.

Holly (Lana) runs away to Europe, and, when her money runs out, sinks into a pit of despair, turning to absinthe and prostitution.

Hunter had lured Constance Bennett out of a twelve-year retirement. The sister of Joan Bennett, she had been a bigtime star in the 1920s and '30s. In the early 1930s, she was the highest-paid actress in Hollywood. Before appearing with Lana, she had starred with some of the biggest names in Hollywood: Cary Grant, Clark Gable, even Greta Garbo.

There was no love lost between Lana and Constance Bennett (right) when they made *Madame X*. But producer Ross Hunter got them to agree to appear with him at the film's premiere.

Madame X would be Bennett's last screen appearance. Shortly after this picture was taken, she collapsed and

died from a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of sixty.

It seemed inevitable that the blonde goddess of the 1930s, and the blonde goddess of the 1940s and 50s, would be envious of each other when they came together on the set. They did not engage in open warfare, but there was tension between them.

Lana had managed to get Virginia Grey cast in the role of "Mimsy," and as such, she had a front row seat to watch the simmering rivalries between Lana and Bennett.

"Each actress wanted to be better dressed and better made up than the other," Grey said. "In the movie, they were supposed to dislike each other intensely. Believe me, those two weren't just acting."

Columnist Sheilah Graham didn't endear herself to Lana. She visited the set one afternoon and wrote that Bennett, in her late 50s, looked younger than Lana, even though at that stage of the filming, Lana was beautifully made up and attired.

As a rejoinder to the comments she'd made, Lana called Graham: "Regardless of what you wrote, I'm still here, still going strong. You can't say that for Hedy Lamarr or Rita Hayworth, can you?"

"Lana and Bennett were very competitive in their scenes together," Grey said. "Each actress wanted to be better dressed and better made up than the other. In the movie, they also disliked each other. They weren't acting: They meant it."

As the plot unfolds, Lana's descent into degradation and despair deepens. By now, the plot has moved her into a seedy hotel in mexico, where she gets involved with Dan Sullivan (Burgess Meredith), a con artist and blackmailer. When he learns of her identity, he concocts a plot where he plans to contact her diplomat husband and reveal her identity to her young son, who has become a lawyer on the rise.

Lana hadn't seen Meredith in years, not since he was married to her friend, Paulette Goddard, and had made a pass at her.

Learning of his scheme, she fatally shoots him and goes on trial for murder, where she is identified as "Madame X."

In one of the ironies so often found in films, the court appoints Clayton Anderson, Jr. (Keir Dullea) as her attorney to defend her on a charge of murder. He doesn't know he's fighting for his mother's life.

Makeup was by her trusted friend, Del Armstrong. Their friendship was tested during the filming of *Madame X* when he had to apply makeup to add some quarter of a century of hard living to her face.

He would not let her look in a mirror when he aged her. When he turned her around and allowed her to evaluate the changes he'd wrought, she screamed in horror. "When my fans see me looking this old, they'll desert me in droves."

Before a verdict comes in, Lana collapses and dies.

She found Dullea, playing her son, quite handsome. “If only I had been fifteen years younger.” He was on the dawn of his greatest success: astronaut David Bowman, whom he portrayed in the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The year he met Lana, he had co-starred with Laurence Olivier, Carol Lynley, and Noël Coward in *Bunny Lake Is Missing (1965)*. Lana found Coward’s assessment of Dullea a bit cruel: “Keir Dullea, gone tomorrow.”

Unlike *Love Has Many Faces*, Lana was not in a seductive mood with any of her leading men. John Forsythe was cast as her husband. She found him good looking but dull. “He was a good family man,” she said.

The actor from New Jersey, who signed a contract with Warner Brothers when he was 25, would be married to the same woman, Julie Warren, for fifty-one years. When Lana met him, he was best known for his TV sitcoms, *Bachelor Father*.

Because of the intense production schedule, she and Hunter frequently conflicted, often engaging in bitter arguments where the word “fuck” would pop up.

But at the end of production, she made up with him and even sent him an “epergne” *[a tiered decorative centerpiece]* of lemons. “For some reason, Ross was queer for lemons,” she told Grey.

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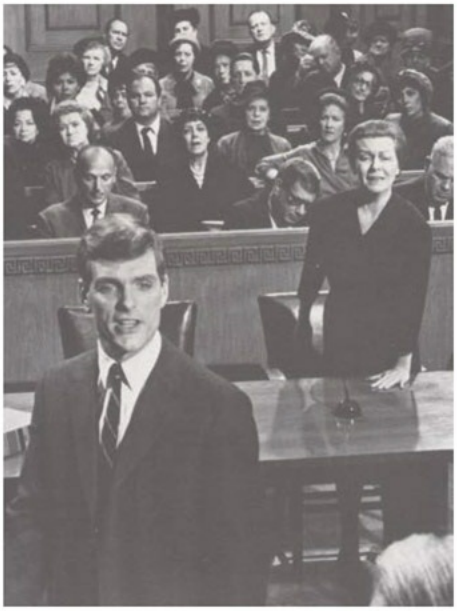
Hunter and Lana, hoping for the box office bonanza of *Imitation of Life*, were disappointed by the box office receipts of *Madame X*. Many of the reviews were bad.

Writer René Jordan wrote: “Even the carefully resurrected dream world of the Ross Hunter-Lana Turner Rhinestone melodramas became *passé* in the ‘serious’ Sixties. Fakery had permeated the real life of the public beyond the saturation point. Blatantly glamourous movies were being rejected with a wave of the hand.”



In one of her most dramatic scenes in *Madame X*, the young actor, Keir Dullea, cast as Clay Anderson, Jr., is an attorney defending her in court on a murder charge. He doesn't know that *Madame X* is his mother. He develops a compassion for her and fights valiantly to save her from the electric chair.

Fans of Lana have defined poignant moments like this as "four-hanky weepers."

In the *Chicago Tribune*, Clifford Terry Claimed, "When Lana Turner takes the stand in the final courtyard scene, her face resembles a Dust Bowl victory garden."

The most devastating review came from Pauline Kael: "Lana Turner is not *Madame X*. she's Brand X. She's not an actress. She's a commodity."

One critic made another bitchy comment: "If you haven't seen a movie since 1930, you may think Lana Turner's *Madame X* is just great."

In the *Los Angeles Times*, Charles Champlin championed Lana's acting in her courtroom scene and in her

death-bed performance. “The unsparing, guileless honesty of her performance is very touching.”

The Chicago critic, Ann Marsters, claimed, “Corny, perhaps, and mawkish, too, but it plays with a kind of dramatic splendor. I haven’t cried so much in years.”

In the *Hollywood Reporter*, James Powers wrote, “Only producer Ross Hunter would dare to do a remake of *Madame X*, and it has turned out to be an electrifyingly right decision. A superb cast of players, headed by Lana Turner, takes this rather shabby old piece and gives it immediacy, vigor, and credibility.”

The *London Evening Standard* wrote: “We should be grateful that Hollywood still has the face to make an unabashed weepie with the sluices open.”

London critic David Quinland wrote: “One can never remember a more affecting performance by Lana Turner, especially in the latter half of the movie, when she is so much more impressive than one could ever imagine. She is almost entirely captive to a portrayal in which she is utterly deglamourized and says so much with brown eyes that seem old and fathomless.

Film reviewers in Italy told moviegoers to “get out your handkerchiefs.” In fact, the picture proved quite popular in Italy. Even though the Academy ignored her, Lana won the David Donatello Award as “Best Foreign Actress” in Rome. Theater owners of Italy presented her with La Perle Verde, the Green Pearl Award, for her fine performance.

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Near the end of her life, Lana told her friends, “*Madame X* should have won an Oscar. Regrettably, I was lured into making four more feature films, and I even agreed to appear in that hit TV series, *Falcon Crest* (1982-3). I had to appear with that bitch, Jane Wyman, who resented me.”

“When I appeared, it became the most highly rated show in the history of nighttime soapers. Wyman was furious and tried to sabotage me. Perhaps she resented that I had fucked Ronald Reagan before she did. I told her she should have hung in with Reagan and she’d be First Lady now, a figure for the history books. As it was, I told her, ‘Now you’ll be only a footnote in Hollywood history.’ For some reason, she didn’t like that.”

Jane Wyman had long resented Lana.

Tensions flared when producers of Wyman’s hit TV series, *Falcon Crest*, hired Lana as its co-star for an appearance as Jacqueline Perrault, earning the highest ratings for the series.

Ferociously territorial, Wyman ordered the producers to “kill off Miss Turner,” suggesting that her rival be buried in a coffin in the season’s final segment.

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In an attempt to hook into the youth culture that had emerged in the turbulent 1960s, Lana agreed to star in *The Big Cube* (1969), the title a reference to sugar cubes spiked with LSD, then all the rage.

The movie threw her into a world of drug parties, psychedelic episodes, rock music, and more nudity than any picture she’d ever made.

It was set for a release through Warner Brothers and Seven Arts, with Tito Davison directing and Lindsley Parsons producing.

It was a low-budget picture shot in Mexico, employing some high-class talent, including Gabriel Figueroa, the

foremost cinematographer in Mexico, and the famous "Travilla," who had been the costume designer at 20th Century Fox, dressing many of Tinseltown's biggest stars before beautifully attiring Lana.

She was cast as Adriana Roman, a major star on Broadway, who is retiring to marry Charles Winthrop (Dan O'Herlihy), a business tycoon. Previously, she had starred with him in *Imitation of Life*, and both of them agreed that *The Big Cube* was a comedown for them.

ALMOST KILLING LANA: Campy cliffside struggle, fueled by clandestine ingestions of acid, with evil stepdaughter and her hustling boyfriend.

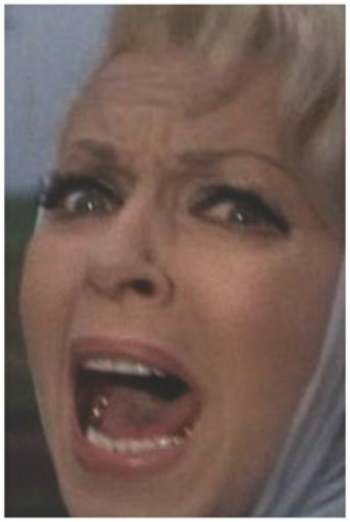
One part of the plot cast Lana in a familiar theme of stepmother vs. Stepdaughter. Winthrop's daughter Lisa (Karin Mossberg) resents Lana from the moment she gets emotionally involved with her (somewhat clueless) father. An actress from Sweden, she had not lost her native accent, and spoke with such a thick Swedish accent that her voice had to be dubbed.

HOW did Lana's character get herself into this druggy-hippie LSD-fired mess? Like many of the characters she played, SHE DID IT FOR LOVE.

Here, Lana's character cuddles while cruising with her new husband, mega-rich but clueless Dan O'Herlihy, whose untimely drowning sets off the chain of events that redefine her as a drug-tolerant flower child who trips.

Winthrop is killed in a boating accident, leaving Lana as his heir with the ability to disinherit Lisa if she marries her sleazy boyfriend (George Chakiris). In the 1961 film version of *West Side Story*, he'd played the leader of "The Sharks," a performance that won him a Best Supporting Actor Oscar.

In *The Big Cube*, his role is pure evil, a womanizing medical student who sells LSD cubes for profit. He convinces Lisa that her father was murdered by Lana. They conspire to lace her prescribed sedatives with enough LSD to drive her insane. Johnny intends to drive her, in a state of utter terror, to suicide.



Lana's primal scream, as recorded as part of the plot line of *The Big Cube*.

Were equivalent screams being expressed by Lana, secretly, and at home, during this period of her wildly traumatized life?

At the last minute, however, Lisa saves her. Johnny is revealed to be the homicidal hustler he is, and stepmother and stepdaughter reconcile.

As one of the male leads, Richard Egan has the sympathetic role of Frederick Lansdale, a playwright friend of Lana's who is secretly in love with her. He is mostly known today for starring as Elvis Presley's older brother in the 1956 *Love Me Tender*.

Maurice Forley in *Motion Picture Daily Review* called the film "*Peyton Place* with generous doses of LSD." Since it had been filmed in Mexico, it did better business South of the Border than it did in the United States. It was entitled in Spanish *El Terron de Azucar*.

The Big Cube was one of the least distributed of all Lana Turner movies. Kinney Services, Inc., an American conglomerate, took over Warner Brothers from 1966 to 1972.

In the confusion of that acquisition, several films slated for release in the U.S. more or less ended up on the junk heap. *The Big Cube*, if it was released at all, played in second-tier movie houses or in drive-ins, always as the less important half of a double feature.

Swedish actress Karin Mossberg was cast as Lana's vengeful stepdaughter, plotting with George Chakris, an LSD-peddling male hustler who wants to drive Lana to suicide.

Lisa Marie Bowman wrote: "In 1969 mainstream Hollywood, filmmakers were still struggling to figure out how to deal with the counter-culture. In *The Big Cube*, old school movie stars like Lana Turner were menaced by long-haired men and amoral girls in miniskirts. Not only do you get to watch some of the most evil hippies in history, but you get a once-in-a-lifetime experience of seeing Lana Turner on acid!"

Critic Jeanine Basinger wrote: "*The Big Cube* is one of the worst films ever made. After thirty-two years in the business, Lana looks less than gorgeous on film for the first time. She wears an expensive wardrobe, but is undermined by a series of gorgonlike wigs, knee-high boots that belong on a teenager, and armloads of jewelry. She is an imitation of Lana Turner. Or, worse, an imitation of Mae West."

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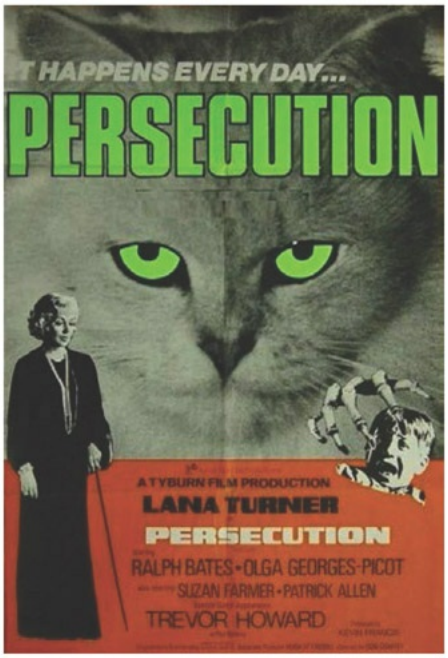

Throughout most of the 1960s, Lana had resisted the temptation of appearing in horror films, as had Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, and Bette Davis before her.

Yet finally, her former lover from World War II, Robert Hutton, called her and asked her if she'd read a script he'd co-written with Rosemary Wootten. She agreed to read it, but warned: "I will not wear a fright wig, and I won't

wield an ax."

"That's not called for," he said. "The role calls for you to be felinely wicked. You'll still get to look glamorous as carrie."

"send it over, darling," she said, "and I'll read it this afternoon. And, Bob, dear, we had some good times, didn't we? Even though there was a war on."

"It was the pinnacle of my life," he assured her.

"In a fit of madness, I agreed to star in the film even though it was to be shot in london with that horrible weather," she said. "I don't know how the locals endure it. Now, if only they'd agree on a title."

The film was generally called *Persecution* when it was released in 1974. Since much of the plot centered on a series of ominous Persian cats, each named Sheba, other titles included *PURRsecution, Sheba, The Seven Lives of Sheba*, and even *I Hate You, Cat*. She detested the last title. For a VHS release in the 1980s, the title was changed to *The Graveyard*.

Persecution was an obvious attempt to create a British version of *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962).

Arriving in London, Lana told the press, "I'm sure I'll get a lot of hate mail playing a very wicked mother who torments her poor son. It's unlike any role I've ever played before."

At Pinewood Studios, she met with Kevin Francis, the film'sproducer. He was the son of Freddie Francis, a noted cinematographer and horror film director.

He introduced Lana to her talented English director, Dan Chaffey, who was also a writer, producer, and even an art director.

He had been tapped for *Persecution* because of his involvement in a number of Anglo-horror movies.

She would be appearing with co-stars, Trevor Howard, Ralph Bates, Olga Georges-Picot, and Suzan Farmer. Only Howard was a familiar name to her.

Lana's character, Carrie Masters, was a mother from hell, with an obsession with a series of cats, each of them known as Sheba. "In this psychological horror tale I play a matriarchal monster," she told her friends. "There's a hint of the supernatural, me with my creepy Persians."

What Becomes a Movie Legend Most? HORROR!

Like Lana, near the end of their careers, movie queens of yesteryear also "descended" into roles conveying psychoses, mental illness, and decay.

Top to botton: Joan Crawford in *Strait Jacket* (1964); Bette Davis in *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964); and Lana in *Persecution* (1974), carrying the corpse of her beloved Sheba in a mini-coffin.

Early in the film, a child actor, Marks Weavers, played her ten-year-old son, David. An American *émigré* to England, Carrie has been crippled in her leg, and she blames her boy for her state and sets out to wreak vengeance on the poor lad, with the aid of her wicked Sheba.

Frightened almost out of his mind, David retaliates by drowning the cat in its milk, claiming that his mother loves it more than she loves him.

Time goes by, and David (played by Bates) is now twenty-four. He arrives at his mother's house with his wife, Janie (Farmer) and their newborn baby.

Carrie (Lana) is opposed to her son's marriage and wants to break it up. It's as if she is toying with him, in a style copied from the way her Sheba might play with a mouse before devouring it. Her latest cat, another Sheba, malevolently suffocates the tender little infant under a pillow.

After the death of her child, Janie suffers a nervous breakdown. In a diabolical scheme, Carrie hires a sexy, sultry French nurse, ostensibly to look after her daughter-in-law. Actually, Carrie wants her son to be seduced by Monique Kalfon (played by Olga Georges-Picot).

Monique manages to seduce David. At that point, Janie enters their bedroom, catching her young husband in intercourse with the so-called "nurse" (who's really a prostitute). Janie rushes from the room, but stumbles, falling down the stairs to her death.

At this point, David "flips out." He not only kills the prostitute, but goes into the garden to dig up the graves of the past shebas. In doing so, he discovers the bones of Carrie's former husband, Robert Masters.

As it turns out, he was not David's father. Carrie murdered her husband years ago. Her son's actual father is Paul Bellamy (Trevor Howard). It was Bellamy who crippled Carrie.

All of these revelations are too much for poor David. At the conclusion, he drowns his mother in the cat's milk.

Lana said she was honored to be working with Howard, who arguably was described as "the greatest British actor of his generation."

Thus goes the way of all flesh:

Lana, former sex goddess of MGM, plays a vengefully geriatric lunatic with a penchant for pampered, homicidal cats.

"I'm semi-retired," he told her. "But I wanted to work so I took on this thankless role. Blame it on my poor

state of mind."

***

Persecution, with later title changes, received very limited distribution in the United States and became known as one of Lana's worst failures. She infuriated the producer when she told the press, "It's a bomb!"

In promoting the film, the following taglines were used: THE HORROR OF A TWISTED MIND! A WARNING: THIS FILM IS NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH. NOW IT'S DAVID'S TURN TO GET EVEN—AND HE HAS A VERY SPECIAL TREAT FOR HIS MOTHER.

In the *London Daily Mirror*, Margaret Hinxman said: "Silly as it seems, here is the spectacular Lana Turner playing a crippled, cat-loving mother dominating the life of her unfortunate son (Ralph Bates, who deserves a better fate). Given a more astute script, I imagine that able director, Don Chaffey, would have done justice to his star. As it is, the film is surprisingly stodgy, barely a gasp of surprise in it."

Richard Schleib in the *Science Fiction, Horror, and Fantasy Movie Review* wrote: "Turner hams it up, and she and Ralph Bates have fun playing games with one another."

Geoff Brown, in *BFI Monthly Film Bulletin*, called *Persecution* "a tawdry and tedious psycho-drama, and as repulsive as most movies exploiting Hollywood's leading ladies. One can only admire Lana Turner's fortitude. She strives to exhibit the same dignity of *Portrait in Black* and *Madame X*. Aside from her, there is little of interest in this strike-out."

In *Variety*, the critic called the movie "an old-fashioned meller riddled with ho-hum and sometimes laughably trite scripting. Also, it's very tame in the shock-horror department. But under the circumstances, Turner's performance as the perverted dame of the English manor has reasonable poise."

It came as a total surprise to Lana, after all the bad reviews, but in October of 1975 at Sitges, on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, she won the Silver Carnation Award at the annual festival of horror films, walking off with the Best Actress prize.

After making the film, she flew back to California to settle into her condo at Century Park East on Santa Monica Boulevard in Century City. Often she stood there at night, looking at the city lights and thinking about yesterday. After a somewhat nomadic existence, moving from one place to another, this would be her last and final home.

Lana as a rich, lonely widow confronting an incest issue in *Bittersweet Love*, seems, in her later years, to cling more desperately than ever to her expensive accoutrements.

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Jac Fields, Lana's agent for the 1970s, persuaded her to star in the melodrama, *Bittersweet Love*, set for a 1976 distribution from Avoc Embassy Pictures. A Zappala-Slott Production, it was written by Adrian Morrall and D.A. Kellogg. Lana would head a talented cast that included Robert Lansing, Celeste Holm, Scott Hylands, and Meredith

Baxter-Birney.

In it, as a rich, lonely widow, Lana confronted an incest issue. To make herself more glamourous, she clung to her fur coats and diamonds, but the film bombed. She said, “I’m semi-retired. But I wanted to work, so I took on this thankless role. I’ll never return to the screen,” she vowed.

But she did.

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For a 1980 release, *Witches’ Brew*, Lana made her last big screen appearance playing a witch. Once again, she was allowed to wear her diamonds and furs as a rich society lady indulging in the black arts.

On seeing the final cut, she said, “I didn’t know whether to laugh at myself or cry. What a sad *adieu* to a film career!”

Why Lana, among the best-preserved of the Golden Age Stars, wanted to appear in an *adieu* to feature films as a witch would require a probe of her psyche.

Witches’ Brew was actually shot in 1978 by first-time writer and director Richard Shorr, but few were pleased with the editing and final result. Another director, Herbert L. Strock, came in months later and reshot several scenes, hoping to salvage the project. Plagued with lawsuits that broke out among the principals, *Witches Brew* never had a theatrical release. However, in 1985, it had a TV premiere and was also made available on home video.

When a reporter asked Teri Garr—who was later famous for her Oscar-nominated role as Best Supporting Actress in *Tootsie* (1982)—about working with Lana, she said: “I don’t think either Miss Turner or myself will be remembered for *Witches’ Brew*. The film will not be mentioned in our obits.”

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On looking back at her career, Lana said, “I shouldn’t have made those last four films after *Madame X*. I also, in the 1960s, should not have married my last three husbands. But I did.”

Chapter Eighteen

Where Love Has Gone

Three Failed Marriages To Much Younger Husbands

Sporting a buzzcut that Lana the Barber had given him, rancher Fred May, Husband #5, escorted Lana to the Bal Montmartre in 1959, where she was photographed as the epitome of oldtime Hollywood glamour.

"He loved me for myself and, unlike all my other husbands, before and since, he didn't fall for a celluloid image, but for me as a woman. Our breakup was silly, all my fault. Blame it on my cheating heart, I guess."

"I accused him of being the Gestapo. He was so punctual, so well organized, but he loved me and I loved him. If only I'd been a faithful wife, we might still be married. Fred was the kind of man a gal could grow old with. He was also good looking and a wonderful lover. How stupid of me to leave him."

In the weeks following the murder of Johnny Stompanato, Lana became a recluse, not wanting to go out "to be observed like some sort of freak murderess by the public."

However, that summer, she accepted an invitation from an actor friend, Kem Dibbs, to go to a beach party in Malibu, where she would eventually move. The host was film executive Robert Whittaker, whom she knew only casually.

Other than the host, she didn't know anybody at the party, and the much younger guests paid no attention to her, intent as they were on having fun at the beach.

Sitting all alone, she noticed the arrival of a handsome young man.

As she remembered him, he was "dressed all in brown—everything about him was brown, especially his tanned

face and sandy hair. Even his dark glasses were brown."

"Something about him grabbed me," she said. "Maybe it was his resemblance to Tyrone Power."

Dibbs brought him over to introduce him to Lana. He was Fred May, a 34-year-old real estate agent and horsebreeder. She was forty-four at the time, with her greatest movies in her past.

He reminded her that he'd been introduced to her in 1939 when he was an extra on her picture, *Dancing Co-Ed*. "Back then, you had eyes only for Artie Shaw."

"Don't remind me," she said.

As they talked, he told her that he owned a ranch where he raised thorough-breds for racing. She flirted with him, suggesting that she'd like to visit it sometime. He asked for her telephone number, and she gave it to him, noting that he didn't write it down. She never expected to hear from him after that, especially when she saw him talking to an attractive, much younger woman later on.

Unlike most of her husbands or lovers, Fred May was said to have fallen in love with "the real Lana, not the celluloid Venus up there on the screen."

He must have had a good memory because he phoned her two days later, suggesting she visit him for barbecued steaks at an apartment he had in Hollywood. He'd recommended that venue because she had told him that she did not go to restaurants in the wake of the death of Johnny Stompanato because she didn't like to be stared at.

After their dinner, she left his apartment with the understanding that she would go with him the next day to his ranch, the Circle M, at Chino, California, about an hour's drive from Los Angeles.

When she got there, as she was putting away some casual clothing she'd brought along, she noticed a large stack of newspapers in the closet. All of them focused on coverage of the murder of Johnny Stompanato.

Over dinner, she asked him about the collection.

"From afar, I think I had fallen in love with you. But I wanted to know everything about you, even all the bad stuff people unfairly wrote attacking you. I read through all that, finding it to be crap. If anything, it made me more sympathetic to you than ever. I wanted to love and protect you from the bastards exploiting you."

She accepted that and trusted him enough to move in with him. Throughout most periods of her past life, she went out in public only if she were "glamourized." At the ranch, however, she was often seen wearing sweat shirts and blue jeans.

When Virginia Grey arrived, Lana told her, "I get up with Fred at 6AM, and, after breakfast, I'm out there shoveling shit out of the stables."

Grey said, "I liked Fred. He seemed to be bringing her back to life after the tragedy she'd suffered."

At around this time, Cheryl had violated her probation. On two separate occasions, she had escaped from El Retiro Reform School, but was apprehended each time.

Lana's first months with May seemed idyllic, a new lifestyle for her. They attended horse races, went marlin fishing off the coast of Baja, California, and enjoyed trout dinners in Pomona. She was surprised that she was rarely recognized in her drab garb, and with little or no makeup except for her painted eyebrows.

On another occasion, when Grey arrived to spend the weekend, she found Lana out mowing the sheep meadow.

"I had Fred chase away the snakes first," Lana told her.

As a real estate agent, May arranged for her to acquire a home in Malibu Colony, an exclusive enclave of mostly film people. These were a series of beach homes with glass walls opening onto sundecks with views of the Pacific. She re-decorated the house and installed a swimming pool. This became her home for the next seven years.

Lana later told Grey, “As you know, the first thing I notice about a man is whether he’s handsome or not.” More important than that, I want to know what he’s concealing in his pants. But with Fred, it’s different. I’ve learned to look past those surface things. I’m attracted to his mind, his heart, and the feeling of stability he gives me.”

He also played a role in her business affairs, taking care of details and advising her about what he thought she should do with the remainder of her career.

Both of them were intrigued when Frank Sinatra came to visit. *Variety* published a story the next day, stating that Lana might hook up with Frank Sinatra’s Essex Productions, turning out starring roles for them as a team. The stars had never made a movie with each other before, and May agreed that as a duet, they might become strong contenders at the box office.

But the deal fell through.

As the autumn arrived, Lana became aware that certain tensions had arisen because of their differing habits and lifestyle priorities. Grey called May “the cruise director.” Whereas he was incredibly punctual, and always on time, she liked to delay a public appearance for hours, working on her hair, makeup, and wardrobe. “I fear I tested his nerves.”

One day, while driving to the race track at Del Mar, both of them agreed to stop at the courthouse in Santa Ana and apply for a marriage license. A county clerk leaked word to the press, and the morning papers carried the headline—LANA TURNER TO MARRY AGAIN.

Six months would pass before they finally wed. It was on the day before the license expired.

Lana placed a phone call to Virginia Grey, asking her to serve as her matron of honor. May selected as his best man, George Mann, a well-known comedian. The wedding took place on November 27, 1960, at the Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, with a Methodist minister officiating at the ceremony.

The public had already been made aware of the couple, based on photos of them at the Hollywood premiere, on June 29, of *Portrait in Black*. Both Cheryl and Mildred attended.

After Lana and May were married, Cheryl was allowed by a judge, beginning in January of 1961, to come and live with them. Unlike her previous stepfathers, especially Lex Barker, the young girl and May got along very well. She later referred to him as “a warm, huggy-bear of a man.”

As time went by, Lana seemed to grow bored with staid married life. After all, she’d been known as the party girl of the 20th Century. There were reports that her “roving eye” had returned, even rumors that she was holding “auditions” in her dressing room, seducing well-built young men who worked on the crew of the pictures she was making. She began to return home to May later and later in the evening.

In an unusual statement, *Time* opined: “Lana Turner has never been compatible with a man one day longer than the moment she grows bored with him in bed.”

While Lana was filming *Who’s Got the Action?* with Dean Martin, May suspected her of having an affair with the womanizing singer-actor. Actually, she wasn’t. She’d had an affair with Martin more than a decade before.

One night, when Lana didn’t return home until around ten o’clock, and had not called, she and May got into an argument. Although she’d been drinking, she fled back to her Cadillac and took off into the night.

Both of them were staying at her house in Malibu at the time. After two hours had passed, without a call from her, and worried for her safety since she was driving drunk, he drove along the Pacific Coast Highway in an attempt to find her.

In the meantime, she’d pulled up at a bar called “The Cottage.” After more drinks there, she’d been attracted to “a dreamy man,” a very handsome blonde-haired, blue-eyed 22-year-old. Cody Ryan was a former cowpuncher from her native state of Idaho. She was turned on by his imposing physique, and agreed to wait around for him until he got off work at 1AM.

They left the bar together, and in her Cadillac, she followed his battered Ford to his modest apartment up the coast.

She braked in front of his apartment house, encountering the manager in the hallway and engaging in a dialogue. He even asked Lana for her autograph.

Meanwhile, driving along the coastal highway, frantically searching from Lana’s car from the vantage point of his own car, May spotted Lana’s convertible parked in front of the cowpuncher’s apartment building. He went inside the apartment house and knocked on the manager’s door. With no sense of discretion at all, the manager told May that Lana and Ryan were in the building’s rear apartment.

Pounding on their door, May heard rumblings inside. Lana, in bed with Ryan, hastily grabbed only her dark glasses and wrapped her mink coat around her otherwise nude body, fleeing through his rear kitchen door to the back of the building where she made her escape.

In one of those strange coincidences, Mildred, too, was driving by *en route* to Lana’s Malibu house, and she

spotted Lana driving off in her highly visible Cadillac. May later told his mother-in-law what Lana had done.

In the days that followed, the would-be actor, Cody Ryan, peddled the story of his encounter with Lana to *Confidential* magazine. Since Lana had left her undergarments behind in his apartment, including a pair of pink silk panties, he sold them to "a Lana Turner fetishist."

In the aftermath of all this, May did not return to Malibu, but drove to his ranch instead. He phoned Lana and asked her to come for the weekend. It was a rather tense reunion that ended with him asking her for a $5,000 loan, which he agreed to pay back with interest. She them gave him a check for that amount.

Two days later, when they were driving together to Del Mar, he stopped in front of a Cadillac dealership. She didn't want to enter the store, but May insisted. Once inside, a salesman directed her to a white Cadillac with a large red ribbon tied around it. "It's a gift from me to you," May told her.

She exploded, sensing that's why he had wanted the loan. "I already have a god damn Cadillac, and I don't need another one," she shouted.

That night exploded again. She later admitted, "In the middle of a Battle Royal, we broke up our marriage. I felt used. I felt cheated. I felt stupid. Maybe I was wrong to have erupted like that."

In September of 1962, a reporter discovered May living at a hotel in Santa Monica, although he claimed he visited Lana two or three times a week. Within weeks, Lana was on her way to Juarez, Mexico, for a quickie divorce. She was a free woman again, and was soon on the prowl, although later, she regretted divorcing May.

For most of her life, she remained his friend, and they often talked on the phone. Eventually, he became the mayor of Malibu.

He met an artist named Julie, and the couple settled into a seeming happy marriage that lasted until his death in 1994.

In the wake of his divorce, May said, "Real life can't be lived as if it were a movie script. And husbands and wives can't exist happily every moment of the day as though a movie camera were turned on them."

Lana responded, "Yes people do learn from their mistakes. But their characters never essentially change."

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"I started fucking when I was eleven years old. All I know is I get violent headaches if I don't fuck every day."
—Robert Eaton

Long before Lana met him, Robert P. Eaton was known around Malibu as "The Stud." Like Fred May, he was a decade younger than Lana.

He was a close friend of a handsome, rising young star, Clint Eastwood. It was Eastwood who introduced Eaton to Lana, and they chatted for about an hour on the sundeck at a cocktail party in Malibu.

It was around this time that he had to get rid of his competition, a young man dating Lana who had been identified with different names. Currently, he was using "Carl David."

At Malibu, while Lana was waiting around for a good script, David had moved in on her during one of her "extended vacations," spending her long days sunning, swimming, and entertaining an assortment of people she didn't really know.

According to Lana, "After only a week or so, Carl was running my life. He began inviting his friends for drinks every afternoon at five, and the partying often lasted past midnight."

As she told Virginia Grey, "He wasn't very much in the romance department."

After he'd known her for a while, he asked her for a loan of $6,000 so that he could invest in a business in New York City.

David was known to Eaton, who had learned that he was a hustler, working the bored, rich women of Beverly Hills and Malibu and also making himself available to wealthy homosexuals.

As Eaton talked to Lana, he let her know that David was not in New York, but in Palm Springs, driving around in a shiny pink Cadillac, which he claimed that Lana had bought for him.

When David returned to Lana at Malibu, she confronted him with Eaton's revelation. Finally, he admitted it was true. In the bedroom, he packed his clothing. At the front door, he turned and looked back at her. "You're a pathetic old woman. Out with Lana Turner, in with Alfredo de la Vega. Thanks for the Cadillac."

He slammed the door and disappeared from her life forever.

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Lana had met De La Vega, a wealthy Mexican real estate tycoon, at a party at the home of Nancy and Ronald

Reagan. He was known as a serial seducer of handsome young men, and in the 1980s, would become the frequent escort of First Lady Nancy Reagan when "my Ronnie is too busy."

Lana felt grateful to Eaton for alerting her to what David was up to. She came together with Eaton at a New Year's Eve party to bring in 1965.

Actually, she did more than that. As Eaton later confessed, "She took me to her home, and I didn't leave her bedroom for the next two weeks."

He suggested, but didn't actually say so, that she was so turned on by his love-making that she didn't want to let him go.

As she told Grey, "We made love time and time again, day after day, night after night. What stamina! At least I've found a man who can keep up with me in bed!"

It was sex, not love, that drove Lana into the arms of Robert Eaton, who at the time, was known as "The Stud of Malibu."

She also informed Grey that "Bob is definitely marriage material."

Her actress friend cautioned her not to enter into another marriage, "but Lana was in love. She didn't know much about this guy, other than he was handsome and extremely well endowed. If he had any imperfection, she told me, it was one bad eye. But he'd soon have it replaced with a glass eye, which she paid for. She didn't really know what he did to support himself, some vague thing about being in "film production."

As winter gave way to spring, which blossomed into summer, Lana journeyed with Eaton to Arlington, Virginia. There, on June 22, 1965, she married her sixth husband in the home of his father, a retired U.S. Navy captain who had seen action in World War II. The service was performed by a magistrate whose Southern accent, as she remembered it, "was so thick I thought he was spitting cotton."

Robert Eaton and Lana snapped as they are about to enter a restaurant.

Although he was great in bed, he squandered her money and staged orgies at her home when she was absent.

Her dress was described as “peach-colored Italian lace over China silk.” Peach-colored carnations were laced into her honey blonde hair, and she was glittering in diamonds—earrings, a necklace, and a bracelet. Eaton placed a wedding band of Florentine gold on her hand.

She told the first reporter she met in Virginia that, “Age to me is what I feel inside. I have no fear of growing old.”

That statement was perhaps the second-biggest fib she ever told. The first was her declaration that, “Sex doesn’t mean that much to me,” and that from a siren who had devoted much of her time in Hollywood to the pursuit of sexual conquests, even dwarfing the affairs of Marilyn Monroe, Marlene Dietrich, and Joan Crawford.

In distinct contrast to his very famous wife, Eaton was unknown to the press, and when she was asked about what he did, she said, “Bob is going to head my film production company.”

After marrying him, she began to hear stories about her roving playboy, who was known to Clark Gable, Gene Kelly, and even to her former lover, Greg Bautzer. It was rumored that Bautzer had been the one who previously introduced Eaton to Ginger Rogers.

Like Lana, this aging, legendary star had fallen for Eaton’s good looks and his sex appeal, and had invited him to come to live with her, where she paid all the bills. When she caught him dating other women, she had kicked him out.

Eaton was frequently seen on the Beverly Hills Tennis Courts, where he was sometimes mistaken for Robert Wagner. Eaton announced that this was his first marriage.

A snooping reporter for *Time* magazine turned up a different story. He discovered that Eaton had no record in film production. Not only that, he’d been married once before, on August 11, 1956, in Las Vegas to a 26-year-old actress, Gloria Pall, who stood six feet tall. She divorced him the following year. In court, she testified that during their short marriage, she was his sole means of support.

Perhaps “sole” was not the right word. She also claimed that “another woman purchased a Thunderbird for him.” That other woman was later identified as the sultry French actress, Denise Darcel, who in 1949 had co-starred with Van Johnson in MGM’s *Battleground*.

For their honeymoon, Lana flew Eaton to Acapulco, her favorite vacation retreat, where she’d had trysts with Tyrone Power, Howard Hughes, Fernando Lamas, Lex Barker, and where Johnny Stompanato had beaten her.

But there was evidence that she was tiring of the Mexican resort. At the airport, she was spotted by a reporter. She told him, “I didn’t enjoy Acapulco as much this time. The party crowd down here is even wilder than the jet set.”

After her honeymoon with Eaton, they returned to Hollywood, where she knew she'd have to support him. But she was convinced that he'd succeed as a film producer.

In the meantime, she wanted to improve his wardrobe. She was seen taking him to exclusive men's stores in Beverly Hills, where he was measured for tailor-made suits. The scene evoked the famous episode in *Sunset Blvd*., where Gloria Swanson gets a gigolo, as portrayed by William Holden, outfitted with a new wardrobe.

Robert Eaton (left) dines out with Lana and his best friend, the emerging young actor, Clint Eastwood.

"After meeting Clint, I wondered if I had married the wrong man," Lana confessed.

Lana was a millionaire now, and she could afford it, thanks to her work with Ross Hunter. "Thank God for gay men," she said.

She even had Eaton's bad teeth fixed, as well as that previously mentioned glass eye, and she bought a car for him as well.

Lana and Eaton flew to New York *en route* to Miami Beach for the premiere of *Madame X*. In Manhattan, she spoke to Howard Thompson of *The New York Times*. An outwardly adoring Eaton was at her side. "Love is the only security there is," she told the reporter. "Don't let anyone tell you different. You know something? I've got real roots now." Then she leaned over to plant a kiss on Eaton's lips.

In Florida at the premiere, with Eaton, she made a dazzling appearance in a floor-length white mink and a gown provocatively slit up one side, where you could see "all the way to Honolulu."

At a post-premiere party thrown by the TV talk show host, Ed Sullivan, Lana showed up drunk.

Madame X was a big hit on Miami Beach, no doubt because of Lana's appearance. But when it played across America, audiences diminished. A columnist, George Bourke, claimed, "The fabled career of 'The Sweater Girl' is now all but over. All that remains is for the corpse to be buried."

However, she flew with Eaton to Italy to accept the David di Donatello Award as Best Actress in a Foreign Film for her dramatic performance in *Madame X*.

In Rome, Eaton and Lana dined with his good friend, Clint Eastwood. There was talk of forming a production company, in which Eastwood and Lana would co-star.

She also met with producer Carlo Ponti, who suggested she should co-star in an Italian movie he was producing, with Marcello Mastroianni as her leading man. That never happened. The role went to his wife, Sophia Loren.

Back in Hollywood, recovering from a mysterious virus, she was mentioned in *Variety*. It was announced that she and Gregory Peck would co-star in *The Stalking Moon* (1969), but the role was eventually assigned to another blonde, Eva Marie Saint.

By January of 1966, she financed the opening of a lavish new office for Eaton in the 9000 Sunset Building on Sunset Strip, the same building where her former agent, Henry Willson, had an office.

To call attention to her new production company, she called in the press, sitting on a desk and showing off her still shapely legs for photographers. As she'd once told Grey, "The legs are the last to go."

Lana told *Variety*, "I'm hoping to audition new talent."

Gossips ridiculed her remark: "Lana Turner has been auditioning 'new talent' ever since she got off the bus from Idaho."

During her marriage to Eaton, Lana would make only one film, *The Big Cube*.

Bored with life in Hollywood, "where nothing seems to be happening, at least for me," Lana agreed in the autumn of 1967, to go on a good will tour of Vietnam, entertaining the homesick soldiers, many fighting a war in

which they didn't believe. She had a mishap there, seriously spraining her ankle. As she put it, "I did that by jumping from trench to trench."

After her return to California, after three days in Malibu, while Eaton was at the office on Sunset Strip, Mildred came to her in tears. "While you were gone, Eaton turned your home into a madhouse. Nonstop parties day and night. They began the moment you boarded the plane."

She called the maid, who had saved the bedsheets as evidence. Lana was aghast at the sight of lipstick smears and semen stains on her linens. Within the hour, she phoned Eaton, demanding that he leave his office and return to Malibu at once. After confronting him with the evidence, she ordered him to leave her house.

Eastwood's biographer, Patrick McGilligan, wrote: "Clint and Robert Eaton, Lana Turner's husband, were running-around pals, and when she was off on location, her house was open range."

As members of their "tight-knit" group, he named actors Brian Keith, Jim Arness, and Chill Wills.

But after a few days in exile, Eaton, turning on all his charm, came back into her life with great apologies for his behavior.

When Grey asked her why she'd taken him back, she said, "The sex is that good."

Her reconciliation with Eaton didn't last. There were rumors that the marriage was deteriorating when Eaton flew alone to Rome.

When asked about that, Lana told a reporter, "Bob is going over to talk about a co-production deal with Clint Eastwood. Maybe hooking up with an Italian film company."

Back in California, Eaton announced that he had formed his own company, Forum Films, and that his first picture would co-star Lana Turner and Clint Eastwood.

Although he purchased a thoroughbred for her for Christmas, the Associated Press carried the headline—LANA'S SIXTH HUSBAND MOVES OUT.

Columnist Sheilah Graham wrote: "Lana Turner insists there is no hope for a reconciliation with her sixth husband, Robert Eaton.

However, by February of 1967, it was reported "Lana Turner and Robert Eaton, or so it seems, are back together again. But how long will it last this time?"

She spoke to the press: "Bob and I are still looking for a woman's picture, which no one seems to be making anymore. It's a man's world: Steve McQueen, Paul Newman. Young actresses today think that making a movie is all about showing your bosom. As for me, I look twelve years younger than my actual age. People think I'm fifty because I've been around for so long. I arrived in Hollywood when I was in diapers. Doris Day and I are about the same age, and she's still playing virgins being pursued by Rock Hudson or Cary Grant."

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Harold Robbins was one of the best-selling novelists of all time, writing more than two dozen best-sellers, including the mega-hit *The Carpetbaggers* (1961), selling more than 750 copies in 32 languages. He was called "as much a part of the sexual and social revolution as The Pill, *Playboy*, and pot."

He often based his characters on actual people. The main character in *The Carpetbaggers* was a loose composite of Howard Hughes, Harry Cohn, and Louis B Mayer.

"Harold Robbins was an over-sexed, overpaid, hack of a novelist, and I hated him for libeling me in his novel

and film, *Where Love Has Gone,"* Lana said.

"Now, I'm appearing in a TV series he's conceived. You figure."

In the wake of the 1958 murder of Johnny Stompanato in Lana's home, he wrote a 1962 novel entitled *Where Love Has Gone*.

Lana was horrified when she read it. She later wrote, "He had turned the worst tragedy of my life into a cheap, mean, best-selling novel based on cruel fabrications."

Her hatred of Robbins grew more intense when a movie, also entitled *Where Love Has Gone* (1964), revived the Stompanato scandal once again. Amazingly, perhaps as an "enhancement" for this dark and provocative film, its director, Edward Dmytryk, and its producer, Joseph E. Levine, even offered Lana its lead role. "We've disguised your identity. Instead of an actress, we'll make you a sculptor," Levine told her.

Without hesitation, she rejected the role, which went instead to Susan Hayward, which caused a rift in their long-standing friendship. Bette Davis was cast in a role based on Mildred, with Joey Heatherton tackling the role inspired by Cheryl Crane.

While Lana was in Mexico shooting *The Big Cube*, Eaton, back in Hollywood, was negotiating with Robbins about a TV series. He offered to get Eaton hired as part of the production staff if he could convince his wife to play the lead in the series, that of a troubled married woman in the habit of going from bed to bed.

The first Sunday after her return from Mexico to Malibu, Eaton invited Lana to the Bel Air Country Club, where he introduced her to Robbins. She had extended her hand, but snatched it back at once when she heard his name. "It was as if I'd touched a snake."

Ironically, Robbins had moved into the office she'd originally rented for Eaton in the 6000 Sunset Building. Eaton, in contrast, had been moved into a small cubbyhole.

Lana and Eaton had a violent argument that night. "How could you do that to me?" she asked Eaton. "You know what pain Robbins has caused Cheryl and me?"

Days later, her new agent, Sam Kamens at William Morris, approached her about appearing in a television series. With the scarcity of movie roles, she had seriously considered a move to TV for some time. But when Kamens told her Robbins was the writer behind the series, she was furious.

Nonetheless, Kamens finally convinced her to consider the role, which would be filmed on the French Riviera, among other locales, as part of twenty-six teleplays running for an hour each.

"Lana, in Hollywood, you've got to let bygones be bygones," Kamen told her. "You, of all people, known that everybody betrays everybody out here."

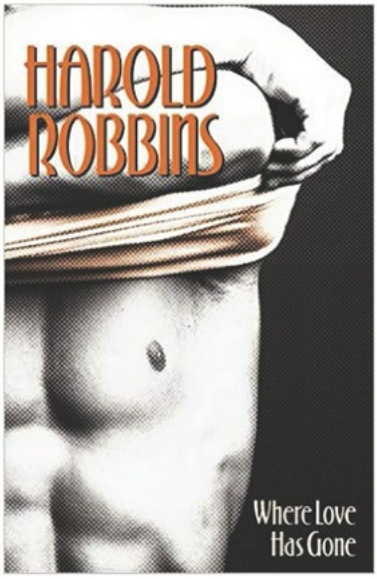
Both her agent and Eaton finally convinced her to sign for the role, which would be entitled *The Survivors*. "A survivor, that's what I am, all right!"

To launch the series, Robbins himself hosted a lavish bash at The Bistro in Hollywood. Although Lana would always detest him, she was friendly to the novelist on the surface.

Invitations had been extended to columnists and other members of the Hollywood elite. They read, "If you're interested in booze, broads, and the better things of life, why not join Lana Turner and George Hamilton, stars of our new ABC-Universal television show, *The Survivors*, in an old-fashioned drink-up upstairs at The Bistro?"

Lana dazzled by appearing in a black strapless chiffon, her bosom covered with black ostrich feathers on which she'd pinned eight diamond brooches and pins. Her blonde hair was page-boy style.

Although Robbins was highly paid for his scenario, his plot was never used by Universal, which dismissed it as "too blatantly sexual." In one scene of his proposed scenario, Lana's lover is depicted positioning himself down under the sheets to perform cunnilingus on her, the camera concentrating on her impassioned facial expression as she enjoys a powerful orgasm.



When the British edition of *Where Love Has Gone* came out, its publishers fully realized that its authorship by Harold Robbins was more important than the book's title.

Its publishers also understood that cover art depicting a hot male stripping down could sell as many books—perhaps more—than a traditional depiction of a woman on the cover.

As it turned out, Robbins would not write that series. He was too busy working on another exploitative novel with the intention of co-opting it into a new and unrelated series, tentatively entitled *For the Survivors*. He'd written only a nine-page synopsis, for which he'd been paid one million dollars, a historic first for a television series.

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For her contribution to *The Survivors*, ABC-Universal agreed to pay Lana $12, 500 a week. Along with Eaton, she was flown to Nice on the French Riviera. From there, they were driven in a limousine to Cannes. The next day, she was introduced to her director, William Frye, who had produced *General Electric Theater*, a weekly half-hour anthology TV series hosted by Ronald Reagan.

Frye introduced her to her fellow cast members. She needed no introduction to her co-star, George Hamilton, since they had previously appeared together in the movie, *By Love Possessed*.

Lana would play Tracy Carlisle Hastings, the daughter of a banking tycoon, as portrayed by veteran actor Ralph Bellamy. She would be the mother of Jan-Michael Vincent, and Hamilton would be her half-brother. Rosanno Brazzi played the father of her illegitimate son. Her estranged husband was acted by Kevin McCarthy, with Louis Hayward cast as her uncle.

Ultimately, the family gets involved with South American revolutionaries.

Beginning the first week, the filming was a disaster. Lana exploded when she learned that Hamilton was not only getting paid $17,500 a week, but would get star billing over her. Frye explained that he was more of a name than she was because of all the publicity he'd received while dating the daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Hamilton claimed that Lana on two different occasions threatened suicide "because I was getting more money than she was. Every day, she tried to banter my self-esteem. She picked on me mercilessly, typically accusing me of trying to up-stage her by wearing a brightly colored coral tie, which had been given to me by the costume designer."

At one point, Robbins, with the almost universal understanding that his lavish yacht was conspicuously docked in the harbor, showed up. According to Hamilton, "I found him looking more like a bookie than a best-selling author. He wore a flowered hat, big collars, and more chains than a sommelier."

Lana with her two leading men, George Hamilton (standing) and Kevin McCarthy, in the ill-fated TV series, *The Survivors*.

"It was a question of which actor I disliked the most," Lana said.

Lana complained constantly to Frye. New writers came and went, each of them tinkering, adding to, or tearing apart the scripts. Some days, at the end of filming, she was assigned ten pages to frantically memorize. The next morning, she'd be handed an entirely different script.

Totally fed up, Frye became tired of her complaining and called her a bitch in front of the cast and crew. She slapped his face, and he slapped her back. In a rage, she took the afternoon off, secluding herself in her dressing room and applying an ice pack to her face.

The next day, she went to the Cannes Yacht Club for lunch. There, she discovered Frye. She walked over to his table to continue their argument. Tensions escalated, and she became so angered this time that she punched him in the face. He rose to his feet and punched her right back, knocking her down onto the floor.

Back in her dressing room, she called executives at Universal, demanding that Frye be fired for attacking her.

Lana is depicted here with her on-screen son, Jan-Michael Vincent.

"I think the series would have been a hit if the writers had made him my young lover instead of my son. It would have been hotter."

He was immediately dismissed, and Grant Tinker—the husband of Mary Tyler Moore and, from 1981 to 1986, the Chairman of NBC—was flown to the Riviera to assume temporary command. After two days on location, he surmised that *The Survivors* was a "turkey."

The studio rescued him by sending in director Walter Doniger, who had piloted the TV series based on *Peyton Place*.

In the meantime, Eaton claimed, "I was squeezed out of all decisions." With nothing to do, he began to disappear during the course of workdays. Lana claimed, "He was whooping it up with his new French female chums."

She said, "In the beginning of the shoot, the cast hated each other. We ended up merely disliking each other."

Lana feuded with the noted fashion designer, Luis Estevez, claiming that his wardrobe made her look "too matronly." She succeeded in getting him fired, too. He told columnist Joyce Haber, "I was kind to Miss Turner. I should have been awarded the *Croix de Guerre."*

She also feuded with Kevin McCarthy, cast as her husband. She told him, "I've worked with the great leading men of Hollywood. You are not one of them." She ordered the director to curtail her scenes with him, suggesting "We should get a divorce so he won't be in any more of the series."

She and Eaton occupied the same two-bedroom hotel suite, but they came and went at different hours. On the plane back to Los Angeles, they sat in different seats, each of them in First Class, but far away from the other.

Lana had already announced, "My marriage to Eaton is over."

As it turned out, most of the episodes shot on the Riviera ended up on the junk heap.

Shooting resumed in Hollywood on fifteen episodes. The series would never be completed.

In August, one month before *The Survivors* had its debut on ABC-TV, an anonymous ad appeared in *Daily Variety*. It read: "Congratulations to ABC-TV for coming up with the new series, *The Survivors*, starring $8 million and no sense."

As predicted, the series was viciously panned by critics, Lana receiving some of her worst reviews. She called it, "The revenge of Harold Robbins on me."

William Greeley, writing for *Variety*, said, "This meller about the jet set turned into an old-fashioned soap opera about a banking family. There was the taint of a novel in the Machiavellian twists of character and plot, but it finally boils down to suds with the gambits of daytime drama working overtime. The old debbil pregnancy, etc."

A midnight call came in for Lana from Stan Kamen, her agent, letting her know she'd been fired.

Because of clauses within his contract, Hamilton, however, was retained in a downsized TV production that was renamed *Paris 7000*. It tried for ratings using stars past their prime, such as Anne Baxter.

As Hamilton said, "That series, like *The Survivors*, went nowhere."

***

Back in Hollywood, Lana announced to the press that she was divorcing Robert Eaton. At her divorce hearing on April 1, 1969, she testified, "I found myself living under almost unbearable anxiety and nervous tension, which was beginning to tell on me, as reflected in the strained look on my face and in my actions. All this was seriously damaging my work as an actress."

The judge listened to her testimony and granted her a default decree. At last, she was freed of Husband No. 6.

She appeared on *The Today Show* and was interviewed by Bryant Gumbel. "Eaton was charming, handsome, and he adored me, carrying me around on a satin pillow. He wooed me, really introduced me to beautiful physical love that I had never known before." She'd never been so candid on TV.

To Virginia Grey, she confessed, "It was the best sex I ever had, and, as you know, darling, I've had the best of 'em."

After the divorce, she continued to live in Malibu until one day a real estate developer knocked on her door and offered her $350,000 for the property. Even though she was given only thirty days to vacate, she accepted. Hurriedly, she moved into a rented home on Coldwater Canyon in Beverly Hills.

She vowed, "I will never make another movie. I will never appear in another television series. And I will never marry again."

As the weeks quickly passed, she broke all three of those vows.

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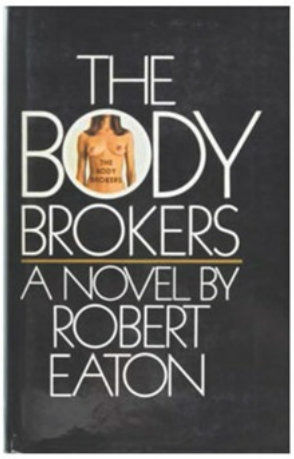

In the meantime, the divorced Eaton was pounding out a sensationalized *roman-à-clef*, entitled *The Body Brokers*, based on his marriage to Lana.

Its publisher announced that it was a complete work of fiction, not based on the life of any living person. Readers, however, knew differently.

Marla Jordan, the leading character in the novel, was a fading movie actress, who had been discovered at a soda fountain in Hollywood when she was seventeen. In her movie debut, she showed off her bouncing breasts in a tight sweater.

As Eaton rather artlessly phrased it in his novel, Marla used her "tits and cunt" to advance herself as a movie queen. She also had a teenage daughter and took a young lover. At one point, she demanded that he seduce both of them—mother and daughter—at the same time. When he refuses, she pushes him off a steep cliff.

Marla was also depicted as a boozer, who had to work for hours before she could appear in public. Not only that, but she was depicted as a "switch hitter," who had once been caught by a popular male vocalist in a sexually compromising position with another Hollywood beauty queen.

Readers quickly identified those veiled references as Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner.

In promoting his novel to columnist Sheilah Graham, Eaton told her, "I truly believe there's not a man in the world who can handle marriage to a movie star—the old-time film star. The mere fact of all the divorces proves my point."

He seemed aware that Lana had a large gay cult following, and he called *The Advocate*, the nation's most widely circulated GLBT magazine, to set up an interview.

The writer described the encounter. "The super stud knew how to dress for the part. He appeared in tight white pants, and it was obvious he wore no jockey shorts. He slid back in his chair, making his mighty bulge even more obvious. There was meat there for the poor."

"Every other word that came out of his mouth was 'fucking. Fuck Harold Robbins. Fuck this one, fuck that one.' He claimed he attended his first orgy at the age of twelve, where he was the prime attraction. He said he'd been broken into sex by his babysitter, who demanded he wear a sailor hat."

The writer from *The Advocate* concluded, "Even now, close to forty, Robert Eaton could command a very good price. Maybe a Rolls-Royce, if he were being kept. Perhaps a Caddy, or an Impala for sure."

***

In Hollywood, The Candy Store was a popular, sexually liberated disco that was packed every night, luring dancers into its darkened premises with its strobe lighting and loud music. To Lana, it seemed that all Hollywood had "gone hippie," especially along the Sunset Strip. Although she wasn't ready to live the rest of her life as a recluse, she felt isolated from "the scene,".

One night, she ventured alone into The Candy Store. From her position within the roiling crowd, she focused her eyes on the bar, where, to her dismay, she saw her divorced husband, Robert Eaton, talking to a seductive brunette who looked like Elaine Stewart, the starlet who had stolen Kirk Douglas from her in *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

Suddenly, a handsome man in a white suit emerged from the crowd and asked her to dance. He had come to her

rescue. About the last thing she wanted was for Eaton to discover her wandering dateless at The Candy Store.

In the smoke-filled disco, the stranger took her into his arms and held her close to his body. With little room to maneuver, they were encircled by gyrating dancers. Rescuing her again at one point, he guided her over to a distant table. There, he introduced himself as Ronald Dante. Then he asked, “And who might my dance partner be?”

Surprised that he did not know who she was, she answered, “I’m Lana Top-ping,” giving the surname of her third husband.

As they talked, she learned that he was a hypnotist who performed his act in night clubs. She said she was a heavy smoker, and that he might hypnotize her so she could break the habit. Then she suggested that he might visit her sometime, and she gave him her phone number.

He telephoned her two days later, and asked if he could come by. “It was unlike any date I’d ever had. “I thought Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* had arrived on my doorstep. He had a persuasive voice and strange, compelling eyes.”

As the venue for their first date, he rode into her driveway on a motorcycle wearing a leather jacket. He invited her to get on, holding onto his back as he roared off, speeding through the hills above Malibu. That led to moonlit walks along the beach. He even taught her how to fly a kite.

A new Lana emerged, not accessorized with ostrich feathers and satin gowns, but an updated version wearing cowgirl boots, fringed leather jackets, and designer blue jeans.

Only weeks before, she’d told syndicated columnist Shirley Eder, “There is no new romance in my life, and I suspect there will never be again. Six husbands are enough for anyone, except Zsa Zsa Gabor. She once told me, ‘A woman can’t have too many husbands.’ I want to be free as a bird.”

“I was ripe for it when Ronald Dante came into my life,” Lana said. “I also fell for a good snow job and then later got kicked in the teeth. He seemed to be my salvation. It turned out worse than the Inferno. He would have charmed a bird out of a tree. So would a snake.”

Dante soon learned who Lana Turner was, although he had never seen one of her movies. One afternoon, she invited him to watch *Madame X*. As he remembered it, “She cried through most of the picture.”

She phoned Virginia Grey: “I’m in love again. A young man named Ronald Dante, a hypnotist who appears in night clubs. Maybe he’s put me in a hypnotic trance, I don’t know. I know I’m in love when he holds me in his arms at night. When I wake up, he’s still there, sleeping peacefully by my side. It’s 5AM, and I have to rush to Universal to be made up.”

“I can’t warn you enough,” Grey answered. “He sounds like trouble. Don’t get too involved. It’s safer to use this new male escort service that’s opened. Very professional. Handsome, well-hung young men, some of whom look like Tyrone Power, Clark Gable, or Robert Taylor. Why don’t you call them when you get the urge? A hundred dollars and they’re out the door when you finish with them.”

“Dear, that’s not for me. I know for many women it is. But I want romance with a capital R.”

"Believe it or not, on the doorstep of the big 5-0, I'm still a romantic. Insecure, lonely, looking for love. I'm ripe for one final chance at happiness when the right man comes into my life. Even though I had vowed never to remarry, perhaps I was wrong."

Dante left her for several days as he had a night club act to perform in Phoenix. He deliberately opted not to phone her during that interim, hoping that "absence would make the heart grow fonder." The ploy worked. She eagerly welcomed him back to Beverly Hills into her warm embrace and hot bed.

Two nights later, he proposed that they elope to Las Vegas. "I'm game," she said, although she didn't really want to marry him.

When she'd first met Dante, she was living at the Sheraton-Universal Hotel on the Universal lot. But by the time they started seriously dating, she had moved into a large rented home in Beverly Hills—"One that befits a movie star" (her words).

Universal urged her to start granting interviews to help promote *The Survivors*, as the TV series "needed a blood transfusion."

A reporter and photographer from *Life* arrived to interview her. Her picture with Dante was taken beside her swimming pool. His arms are around her, and her own arms are outstretched to the sun.

When Lana was asked about Cheryl, she responded that her daughter was now working for Stephen Crane, her father, and doing well in the restaurant business. "She's a very successful business woman," Lana said.

On another occasion, another writer showed up and found Lana dressed in "flower power" garb, an aging hippie. She told the woman reporter, "My boyfriend, Ronald Dante, has thrown out all my Jean Louis designed gowns in favor of what I'm wearing now. My dress cost twelve dollars."

Yet another reporter, Terry Watson, showed up on her doorstep and found her intoxicated. "I tried to interview her, but she seemed in some far and distant place. I talked to her about her leading men. She remembered Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy, but didn't seem to know who Van Heflin and John Hodiak were."

He decided not to publish his interview because it would be too unflattering, too contrary to the Lana Turner image. Watson said, "Lana was turned down for the role of Alexandra Del Lago in Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Now, she is living the part. Ronald Dante is her Chance Wayne."

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Just who was this strange new man who had become her seventh and final husband?

She knew little about him, only what he'd told her. He said he had been born in Singapore and that he had a doctorate in psychology. He also claimed that he'd been a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Marines, and that he was thirty-nine years old.

He did not have a doctorate; he had not served in the military. Nor was heborn in Singapore. The city of his birth was Chicago, in 1930.

To anyone who asked, Lana referred to her new husband as "Dr. Dante," asserting that he was writing a book on hypnotherapy. In the days that followed, Lana, with Dante, was often seen dining in one of Stephen Crane's restaurants, where her former husband never presented her with a bill.

She was still a faithful reader of *The Hollywood Reporter*, whose publisher had discovered her decades before at a soda fountain. In a gossip column appeared an item that shocked her. "Is Lana Turner's seventh husband, Ronald Dante, the same hypnotist—real name Robert Peller—who had such a messy annulment suit against him in Florida in 1963?"

As it turned out, her new husband was indeed Ronald Peller. In Hollywood, Florida, he had married Clair Kisie, who a few weeks later asserted in court that he had hypnotized her and taken her $20,000 in savings.

Her request for an annulment was granted, and the judge ordered him to return the money, or whatever was left of it.

During the first weeks of Lana's marriage, further embarrassments emerged for Dante. He called the police and claimed that he'd been shot at six times in a parking lot by an unidentified assailant wearing an "Aussie bush hat." He went on to assert that he'd fallen on the ground, and the bullets had shattered his wind-shield. The police diagnosed him with cuts and bruises, but without any serious injuries.

The item made the news. When it was broadcast, a policeman was listening and wondered if this were the same Ronald Dante for whom a grand theft felony warrant had been issued the previous year in Santa Ana.

Despite his marriage to Lana, Dante still maintained a private apartment. By a strange coincidence, Cheryl worked at one of her father's restaurants across the street. She had been drawn to the window to see the arrival of squad cars, as four policemen, two with their guns drawn, entered his building. Within twenty minutes, Dante, handcuffed, was escorted out and hauled off for questioning. Cheryl called her mother and reported what she'd

witnessed.

As it turned out, the owner of a boat company had accused Dante of breaking into his lot at night and hauling off $18,000 worth of boats in a rented truck. He was arrested, but allowed to post $12,500 in bail. He later jumped bail and never showed up for his court date.

To get him out of jail this time, Lana phoned Greg Bautzer, asking him to handle Dante's case, and even posted bail for him on this second charge. Somehow, Bautzer managed to have the charges against Dante dismissed.

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In August of 1969, Taylor Pero entered her life as her secretary/personal manager. He would remain for a decade.

Lana had been invited to appear at a fundraising benefit for children in San Francisco at the Presbyterian Hospital Auxiliary. She flew north, with a publicist for Universal, Phil Sinclair, who had organized the event. Pero and Dante went with them.

The highlight of the evening occurred when she was to be auctioned to the highest bidder, who would be awarded with a date with her.

At the time, it would have been impossible for her to imagine that this was the last time she'd ever see Dante.

Herb Caen, a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, reported on her check-in at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, where she was mobbed by autograph seekers. Some of her most loyal fans turned out for the event. Because she was running late for the scheduled event, she was soon back on the sidewalk in front of the hotel, getting once again into a limousine.

She was wearing a Nolan Miller original. *[He had designed her wardrobe for* The Survivors.*]* For her appearance, he'd created a red jumpsuit over which she wore a magnificent floor-length lace vest made of the most expensive Spanish lace.

It was estimated that she was adorned with $250,000 worth of diamonds. She told a reporter, "I sleep with my diamonds. That way, if a thief breaks in to steal them, he'll have to steal me, too."

Caen would later write: "Lana Turner may look her 49 or 50 years under close scrutiny, but she's still every inch (or every other inch) the kind of movie goddess they don't make any more. By turn regal and petulant, demanding and generous, temperamental and cuddly."

At the charity event, which included a fund-raising auction, in front of an adoring public, a richly dressed young man, who looked no more than nineteen, entered the winning bid for a date with her. After the auction, she was seen "smothering him in motherly kisses."

Before leaving, she arranged details of their upcoming date, with the understanding that it would occur two nights later, in San Francisco.

Then Lana, with her tuxedo-clad husband, along with Pero and Sinclair, went to Finocchio's, the most famous female impersonator club in San Francisco. It was here that Howard Hughes had once fallen in love with a drag queen but demanded that he submit to a sex-change operation, in Mexico, before bedding her.

As the evening wore on, Lana was surrounded by her fans and by many of the drag queens who jealously evaluated her designer outfit, her jewelry, and her furs.

After the show, Lana wanted to continue to party, inviting her guests to a flamenco club, Casa Madrid. At one point, she put a flower in her teeth and danced a drunken flamenco in the center of the floor.

Back at the Mark Hopkins, Sinclair agreed to go out to retrieve some submarine sandwiches. For some reason, Dante wanted to accompany him. Both men set off together in the studio limousine, whose driver had not yet been dismissed for the night.

It grew later and later. Finally, Sinclair returned from his errand and seemed reluctant to tell her what had happened. He reported, "Dante told the driver to stop, telling him, 'I want to get out.' Those were his last words. I saw him hail a taxi and disappear into the night, or whatever was left of the night."

Lana tried to make up excuses for him, expecting him to call. By mid-morning, when he still hadn't called, she left the suite and toured San Francisco on Pero's arm. She phoned the hotel repeatedly during her absence, but there was no news of Dante.

Eventually, she and Pero flew back to Los Angeles. Arriving at her home, they each noticed that Dante's expensive, Italian motorcycle was missing from the driveway. Inside her house, they entered the bedroom, ascertaining that all his clothing had been removed from his closet. Only empty hangars remained. In her bathroom, he'd pasted a note, written on her personal blue stationery.

It read: "It's obvious that you have your thing to do, and I have mine, and I have to keep on doing it."

It was signed "Muggs," her nickname for him.

Pero reminded her that she'd transferred funds to him worth $35,000 for the launch of a real estate development he'd defined as "a stack sack." Conceived as the lowest-cost housing in the area, it was to have been constructed with walls of cement bags.

She phoned her business manager and learned to her dismay that he'd fraudulently written checks against this deposit to fictitious people for all but $1,000 of her original deposit. Fortunately, she was able to stop payment on most of these checks, all except for one, which had been made out to "Harry Firestone" for cash.

As Pero observed, Lana then entered one of her worst periods. She'd lost her young husband, and her fading career was battered by the dismal ratings of *The Survivors*.

Her nerves shattered, she asked Pero to accompany her to Palm Springs, where her interior decorator, Vincent Patere, had made his home available to her.

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In Palm Springs, at 3AM, Pero and Lana were asleep when he was awakened by the persistent ringing of the phone. He answered to learn that it was Dante calling, insisting that he urgently needed to speak to Lana.

Pero aroused her from her bed, and she went to the phone.

"I was thinking about you," came his familiar voice. "I just had to hear the sound of your voice."

"At three o'clock in the morning?" she asked.

He did not explain his sudden disappearance. He went on to tell her how much he loved her and how he wanted to come back into her life. She agreed to think it over later that morning.

Before ringing off, he asked her, "How long do you plan to be in Palm Springs?"

She told him, "three or four nights."

The next morning, she told Pero and Pastere, "There was something fishy about that call."

She learned just how fishy when she returned three nights later to her home. Pero went into the house first. Nothing seemed out of place until they entered the bedroom.

It had been ransacked, her locked chest of drawers forced open. One drawer had contained a box with $100,000 worth of jewelry. A thief had made off with it.

Fearing a scandal, she never phoned the police, although both of them knew it had been Dante. That explained his phone call to her in Palm Springs. He had planned to loot her jewelry while she was away.

In December of 1970, she was in the divorce court once again, charging Dante with embezzlement of the $35,000. She did not mention the $100,000 in stolen jewelry.

Her attorney presented her with a document containing her signature. The document stated that she had agreed to give Dante $200,000 in case of a divorce. She felt he had tricked her into signing this document through some subterfuge.

The judge seemed to agree with her, and dismissed the document as fake. He went on to accuse Dante of "malice, oppression, and fraud." He was ordered to pay her $25,000, plus another $10,000 in compensatory damages. Yet she obviously had no intention of pursuing him, fearing additional scandal.

After her divorce from Dante was granted, Lana told a reporter, "Each one has its own individual hurt. I'm not bitter. You know to love and be loved are two different things. I always believed I was being loved for myself—and not just for the image of Lana Turner. But time and time again, I have been so god damn gullible. I'm sick and tired of being gullible."

She told friends, "Please do not speak of my marriage No. 6 or my marriage No. 7 ever again."

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Whatever happened to the mysterious Ronald Dante? Four years after his divorce from Lana, on November 9, 1974, the Associated Press moved a story about him across its wires.

> *"Ronald Dante, the nightclub hypnotist, was found guilty in Tucson, Arizona, yesterday of attempting to contract for the murder in San Diego of the widely known hypnotist and entertainer, Michael Dean, his chief rival. In the Pima County Superior Court, a jury found Dante, 53, former husband of Lana Turner, guilty of second degree attempted murder."*

He was sentenced to five years in prison, but served only three and a half before his release. In the 1990s, he was also tried and convicted for what was called "the greatest diploma-mill scam in U.S. history." He was granting doctorates from Columbia State University, which did not exist. This time, he served eighteen months.

The last that was heard of him was in the summer of 2006, when J. Henry Jones, a staff writer for the San

Diego *Union Tribune*, found Dante living in a modest mobile home in Pauma Valley, California. At the age of 86, although he claimed that $20 million had been stolen from him, he was surviving on a Social Security check of $450 a month.

He was making extra cash by creating artificial flowers from napkins and toilet paper. “I’m suffering from cancer,” he told Jones. “Do you know I was the last husband of Lana Turner?”

***

In 1982, Taylor Pero wrote a book, *Always Lana*, about his decade of service to her. In it, he said, “Dante had come into her life when she was at an emotional nadir. She could have been perfectly content to let him come home and spend the night and then dismissed him. But he proved too magnetic than that. He must have charmed the pants off her, for at first she acknowledged she felt very safe and loved by Dante.”

Without any good reason, Lana dismissed Pero after his loyal and faithful service to her. His book reflected his bitterness. “Lana Turner is the ultimate user and manipulator of people. Accordingly, she discards people, friends, and husbands alike, when she has no further use for them.”

EPILOGUE

A heavy smoker for decades, Lana was diagnosed with throat cancer in May of 1992. “I’m going to fight this,” she vowed and bravely carried on. She never smoked another cigarette. In February of 1993, she announced, “I’m cancer free.”

But by July of 1994, the cancer had returned to her throat and also to her jaw and lungs. It was now hopeless for her, and she knew she had only months to live. Not able to speak, she communicated by writing notes.

Cheryl now stood to lose her mother. In February of 1985, Stephen Crane had died of cirrhosis. He’d made millions with his restaurants, but in the last months of his life, he sank into despair and alcoholism.

On June 29, 1995, a bulletin went out across the wire services that the legendary Lana Turner, reigning screen goddess of the 1940s, was dead of throat cancer. She was to be cremated, her ashes turned over to Cheryl. She requested that there be no funeral.

Tributes poured in from around the world from her beloved fans, many of them aging, although she’d discovered a new fan base, based on the television revival of many of her films.

One headline read: THE LOVE GODDESS IS DEAD.

Comments varied, one critic defining her as “a beautiful lie.”

Another claimed, “Born a star, dies a star.”

Yet another stated, “She downloaded her fabulousness onto us.”

Months before she died, she was asked how she wanted to be remembered before the memory of Old Hollywood itself grew dim for future generations.

“I want to be known as the dame who put *tinsel* into Tinseltown.”

With Respect and Admiration and Affection to the Queen of MGM

Lana Turner

American Movie Star
(1921-1995)

One reporter described her as “The timeless beauty for the ages, a woman who brought passion to the screen and lived a turbulent life to the fullest, surviving countless love affairs, broken marriages, a murder, endless tragedies, suicide attempts, abortions, a failing career, and the first telltale signs of aging.”

“She survived all the disasters until the final curtain. She must have said, ‘God, enough is enough!’”

LANA TURNER
Hearts & Diamonds Take All
Its Authors:

DARWIN PORTER

As an intense nine-year-old, **Darwin Porter** began meeting movie stars, TV personalities, politicians, and singers through his vivacious and attractive mother, Hazel, an eccentric but charismatic Southern girl who had lost her husband in World War II. Migrating from the Depression-ravaged valleys of western North Carolina to Miami Beach during its most ebullient heyday, Hazel became a stylist, wardrobe mistress, and personal assistant to the vaudeville *comedienne* **Sophie Tucker**, the bawdy and irrepressible "Last of the Red Hot Mamas."

Virtually every show-biz celebrity who visited Miami Beach paid a call on "Miss Sophie," and Darwin as a pre-teen loosely and indulgently supervised by his mother, was regularly dazzled by the likes of J**udy Garland, Dinah Shore,** and **Frank Sinatra.**

It was at Miss Sophie's that he met his first political figure, who was actually an actor at the time. Between marriages, **Ronald Reagan** came to call on Ms. Sophie, who was his favorite singer. He was accompanied by a young blonde starlet, **Marilyn Monroe**.

At the University of Miami, Darwin edited the school newspaper.

He first met and interviewed **Eleanor Roosevelt** at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach and invited her to spend a day at the university. She accepted, much to his delight.

After graduation, he became the Bureau Chief of *The Miami Herald* in Key West, Florida, where he got to take early morning walks with the former U.S. president **Harry S Truman**, discussing his presidency and the events that had shaped it.

Through Truman, Darwin was introduced and later joined the staff of **Senator George Smathers** of Florida. His best friend was a young senator, **John F. Kennedy.** Through "Gorgeous George," as Smathers was known in the Senate, Darwin got to meet Jack and Jacqueline in Palm Beach. He later wrote two books about them—*The Kennedys, All the Gossip Unfit to Print*, and one of his all-time bestsellers, *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis—A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams*.

For about a decade in New York, Darwin worked in television journalism and advertising with his long-time partner, the journalist, art director, and distinguished arts-industry socialite **Stanley Mills Haggart.**

Stanley (as an art director) and Darwin (as a writer and assistant), worked as freelance agents in television. Jointly, they helped produce TV commercials that included testimonials from **Joan Crawford** (then feverishly promoting Pepsi-Cola); **Ronald Reagan** (General Electric); and **Debbie Reynolds** (Singer sewing machines). Other personalities appearing and delivering televised sales pitches included **Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne,** and **Arlene Dahl,** each of them hawking a commercial product.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Darwin joined forces with the then-fledgling **Arthur Frommer** organization, playing a key role in researching and writing more than 50 titles and defining the style and values that later emerged as the world's leading travel guidebooks, ***The Frommer Guides,*** with particular emphasis on Europe, California, New England, and the Caribbean. Between the creation and updating of hundreds of editions of detailed travel guides to England, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, the Caribbean, and California, he continued to interview and discuss the triumphs, feuds, and frustrations of celebrities, many by then reclusive, whom he either sought out or encountered randomly as part of his extensive travels. **Ava Gardner** and **Lana Turner** were particularly insightful.

It was while living in New York that Darwin became fascinated by the career of a rising real estate mogul changing the skyline of Manhattan. He later, of course, became the "gambling czar" of Atlantic City and a star of reality TV.

Darwin began collecting an astonishing amount of data on Donald Trump, squirreling it away in boxes, hoping

one day to write a biography of this charismatic, controversial figure.

Before doing that, he penned more than thirty uncensored, unvarnished, and unauthorized bioraphies on subjects that included **Peter O'Toole, James Dean, Marlon Brando, Merv Griffin, Katharine Hepburn, Howard Hughes, Humphrey Bogart, Michael Jackson, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, the notorious porn star Linda Lovelace, Zsa Zsa Gabor and her sisters, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal,** and **Truman Capote.**

Darwin is also the author of ***Love Triangle,*** devoted to the Hollywood careers of **Ronald Reagan** and his two actress wives, **Jane Wyman** and **Nancy Davis.**

As a departure from his usual repertoire, Darwin also wrote the controversial ***J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson****: Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women*, a book about celebrity, voyeurism, political and sexual repression, and blackmail within the highest circles of the U.S. government.

In time for the 2016 race for the White House, and in addition to the Donald Trump book *(The Man Who Would be King)*, Darwin also wrote ***Bill & Hillary—So This Is That Thing Called Love***.

Porter's biographies, over the years, have won twenty first prize or "runner-up to first prize" awards at literary festivals in cities or states which include Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Hollywood, San Francisco, Florida, and Paris.

Darwin can be heard at regular intervals as a radio and television commentator, "dishing" celebrities, pop culture, politics, and scandal.

A resident of New York City, Darwin is currently at work on history's first comprehensive biography of Rock Hudson, *Erotic Fire*.

DANFORTH PRINCE

The co-author of this book**, Danforth Prince** is president and founder of Blood Moon Productions, a firm devoted to salvaging, compiling, and marketing the oral histories of America's entertainment industry.

Prince launched his career in journalism in the 1970s at the Paris Bureau of *The New York Times*. In the early '80s, he joined Darwin Porter in developing first editions of many of the titles within *The Frommer Guides*. Together, they reviewed and articulated the travel scenes of more than 50 nations, most of them within Europe and The Caribbean. Authoritative and comprehensive, they became best-selling "travel bibles" for millions of readers.

Prince, in collaboration with Porter, is also the co-author of several award-winning celebrity biographies, each configured as a title within Blood Moon's Babylon series. These have included *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!; Hollywood Babylon Strikes Again; The Kennedys: All the Gossip Unfit to Print; Frank Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer, Elizabeth Taylor: There Is Nothing Like a Dame; Pink Triangle: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Members of their Entourages*; and *Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis: A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams*. More recent efforts include *Peter O'Toole—Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel; Bill & Hillary—So This Is That Thing Called Love;* and *James Dean, Tomorrow Never Comes*.

One of his recent projects, co-authored with Darwin Porter, is *DonaldTrump, The Man Who Would Be King*. Configured for release directly into the frenzy of the 2016 presidential elections, and winner of at least three literary awards, it's a celebrity overview of the decades of pre-presidential scandals—personal, political, and dynastic—associated with The Donald during the rambunctious decades when no one ever thought he'd actually get elected.

Prince is also the co-author of four books on film criticism, three of which won honors at regional bookfests in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

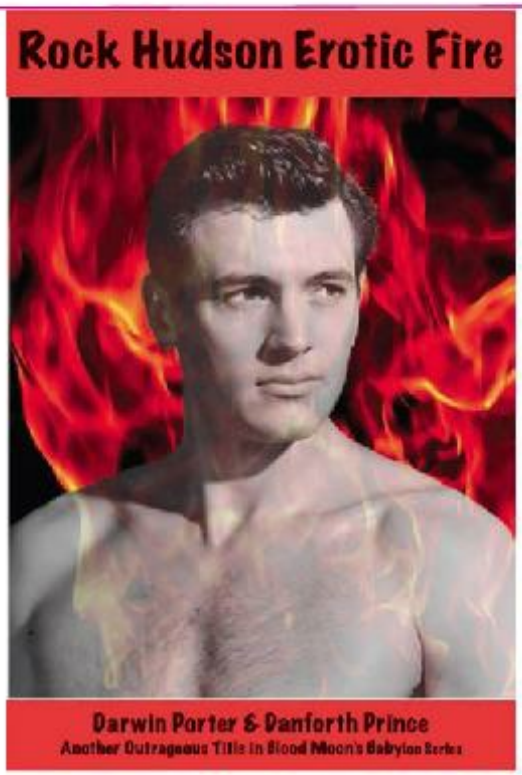
Prince, a graduate of Hamilton College and a native of Easton and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is the president and founder of the Georgia Literary Association (1996), and of the Porter and Prince Corporation (1983) which has produced dozens of titles for Simon & Schuster, Prentice Hall, and John Wiley & Sons. In 2011, he was named "Publisher of the Year" by a consortium of literary critics and marketers spearheaded by the J.M. Northern Media Group.

Publishing in collaboration with the National Book Network *(www.nbnbooks.com)*, he has electronically documented some of the controversies associated with his stewardship of Blood Moon in at least 50 documentaries, book trailers, public speeches, and TV or radio interviews. Most of these are available on **YouTube.com** and **Facebook** *(keywords: "Danforth Prince" or "Blood Moon Productions")*; on **Twitter** *(#BloodyandLunar);* or by clicking on **BloodMoonProductions.com**.

He is currently at work writing and researching two upcoming biographies, one that focuses on Rock Hudson,

the other on the mother-daughter saga of Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds.

Who's Blood Moon working on now? HINT: He's a MOVIE STAR and his name is ROCK.



Available in September, 2017, from Blood Moon Productions

Rock Hudson Erotic Fire

By Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

In the interim since Rock Hudson's tragic death as one of the early (and perhaps the most shocking, based on his celebrity) victims of AIDS, his legend has evolved into a nationwide cult. Yet despite his post-mortem fame, his salaciously poignant story has never been fully told. Until now.

Loaded with details never set into print before, this unvarnished, uncensored overview of Rock Hudson's scandal-soaked rise to fame and subsequent fall from grace, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of his death, is the most comprehensive ever published.

Compiled in the aftermath of 50 years of research, this provocative, scandal-soaked overview of the most macho sex symbol of his era presents an empathetic look at the ironies, hypocrisies, and compromises of a Great American movie star.

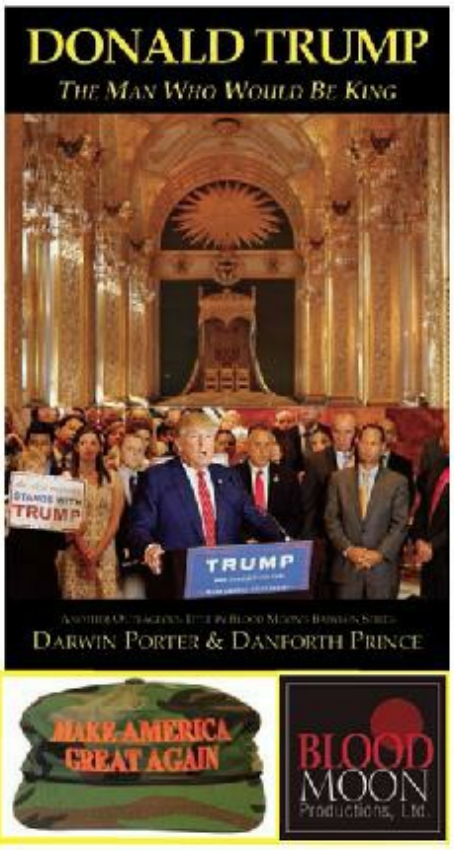
A Shocking and Salacious Softcover with Information about Rock You've Never Read Before.
600 pages, with dozens of photos. New from America's Hottest Celebrity Biographers.
ISBN 978-1-936003-55-6

DONALD TRUMP IS THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

This is the most famous book about our new President you've probably never heard of.

Winner of three respected literary awards, this is an entertainingly packaged, artfully salacious bombshell of a book, a world-class first, a post-recession overview of America during its 2016 election cycle, a portrait unlike anything ever published on America's President-Elect and the climate in which he thrived.

Its release during the heat and venom of the Presidential campaign has already been heralded by the *Midwestern Book Review, California Book Watch, the Seattle Gay News*, the staunchly right-wing *WILS-AM* radio, and also by the editors at the most popular Seniors' magazine in Florida, *BOOMER TIMES*, which designated it as their September choice for **BOOK OF THE MONTH.**



TRUMPOCALYPSE: *"Donald Trump: The Man Who Would Be King* is recommended reading for all sides, no matter what political stance is being adopted: Republican, Democrat, or other.

"One of its driving forces is its ability to synthesize an unbelievable amount of information into a format and presentation which blends lively irony with outrageous observations, entertaining even as it presents eye-opening information in a format accessible to all.

"Politics dovetail with American obsessions and fascinations with trends, figureheads, drama, and sizzling news stories, but blend well with the observations of sociologists, psychologists, politicians, and others in a wide range of fields who lend their expertise and insights to create a much broader review of the Trump phenomena than a more casual book could provide.

"The result is a 'must read' for any American interested in issues of race, freedom, equality, and justice—and for any non-American who wonders just what is going on behind the scenes in this country's latest election debacle."

Diane Donovan
Senior Editor, California Bookwatch

DONALD TRUMP, THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

by Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

Softcover, with 822 pages and hundreds of photos. ISBN *978-1-936003-51-8.*

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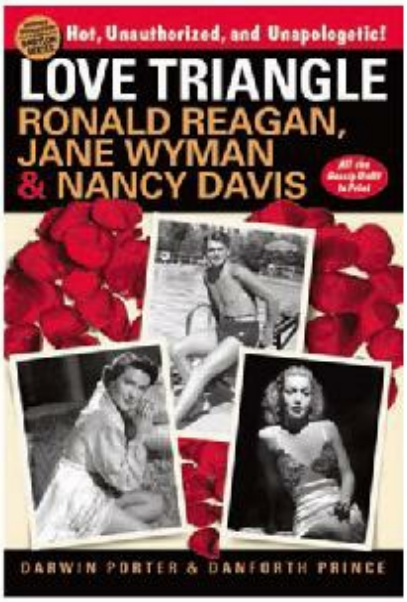
Biography/Presidential & Rich & Famous.

HOW MUCH DO ANY OF YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE REAGANS?

LOVE TRIANGLE

RONALD REAGAN, JANE WYMAN, & NANCY DAVIS



Unique in the history of publishing, this scandalous triple biography focuses on the Hollywood indiscretions of former U.S. president Ronald Reagan and his two wives. A proud and Presidential addition to Blood Moon's Babylon series, it digs deep into what these three young and attractive movie stars were doing decades before two of them took over the Free World.

***

As reviewed by Diane Donovan, Senior Reviewer at the California Bookwatch section of the Midwest Book Review:

"Love Triangle: Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman & Nancy Davis may find its way onto many a Republican Reagan fan's reading shelf; but those who expect another Reagan celebration will be surprised: this is lurid Hollywood exposé writing at its best, and outlines the truths surrounding one of the most provocative industry scandals in the world.

"There are already so many biographies of the Reagans on the market that one might expect similar mile-markers from this; be prepared for shock and awe; because Love Triangle doesn't take your ordinary approach to biography and describes a love triangle that eventually bumped a major Hollywood movie star from the possibility of being First Lady and replaced her with a lesser-known Grade B actress (Nancy Davis).

"From politics and betrayal to romance, infidelity, and sordid affairs, Love Triangle is a steamy, eye-opening story that blows the lid off of the Reagan illusion to raise eyebrows on both sides of the big screen.

"Black and white photos liberally pepper an account of the careers of all three and the lasting shock of their stormy relationships in a delightful pursuit especially recommended for any who relish Hollywood gossip."

In 2015, LOVE TRIANGLE, Blood Moon Productions' overview of the early dramas associated with Ronald Reagan's scandal-soaked career in Hollywood, was designated by the Awards Committee of the **HOLLYWOOD BOOK FESTIVAL** as Runner-Up to Best Biography of the Year.

LOVE TRIANGLE: Ronald Reagan, Jane Wyman, & Nancy Davis

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

Hot, scandalous, and loaded with information about their Hollywood careers that the Reagans never wanted you to know.

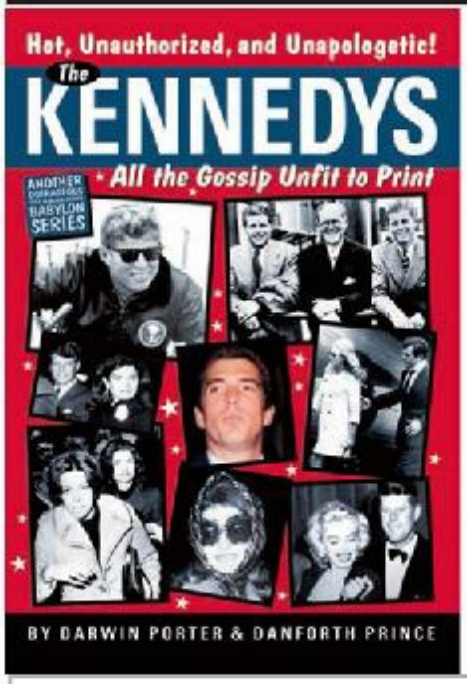
Softcover, 6" x 9", with hundreds of photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-41-9

THE KENNEDYS

ALL THE GOSSIP UNFIT TO PRINT

A Staggering Compendium of Indiscretions Associated With Seven Key Players in the Kennedy Clan; A Cornucopia of Relatively Unknown but Carefully Documented Scandals from the Golden Age of Camelot

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince



The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic."

—John F. Kennedy

"Pick this book up, and you'll be hard-pressed to put it down"

—Richard Labonté, *Q-Syndicate*

The Kennedys were the first true movie stars to occupy the White House. They were also Washington's horniest political tribe, and although America loved their humor, their style, and their panache, we took delight in this tabloid-style documentation of their hundreds of staggering indiscretions.

Keepers of the dying embers of Camelot won't like it, but Kennedy historians and aficionados will interpret it as required reading.

Hardcover, with hundreds of photos and 450 meticulously researched, highly detailed, and very gossipy pages with more outrageous scandal than 90% of American voters during the heyday of Camelot could possibly have imagined.

ISBN 978-1-936003-17-4.

Temporarily sold out of hard copies, but available for e-readers.

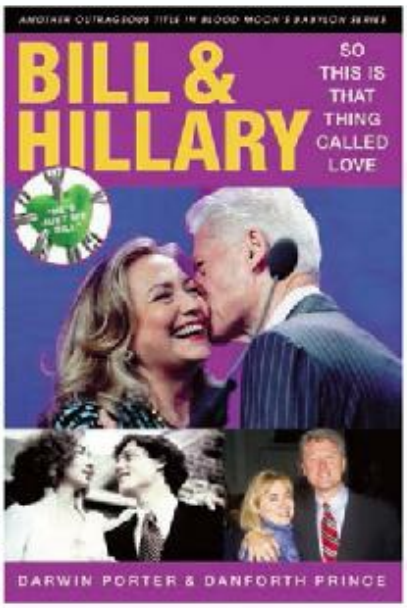
BLOOD MOON Productions, Ltd.

CONFUSED ABOUT HOW TO INTERPRET THEIR RAUCOUS PAST?
THIS UNCENSORED TALE ABOUT A LOVE AFFAIR THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF POLITICS AND THE PLANET IS OF COMPELLING INTEREST TO ANYONE INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL SLUGFESTS AND INCENDIARY WARS OF THE CLINTONS.

Bill & Hillary

So This Is That Thing Called Love

As defined by Diane Donovan, Senior Reviewer at the *Midwest Book Review* and *California Bookwatch*:



"This is both a biographical coverage of the Clintons and a political exposé; a detailed, weighty exploration that traces the couple's social and political evolution, from how each entered the political arena to their White House years under Bill Clinton's presidency.

"Containing gossip, scandal, and biographical sketches, it delves deeply into the news and politics of its times, presenting enough historical background to fully explore the underlying controversies affecting the Clinton family and their choices.

"Sidebars of information and black and white photos liberally peppered throughout the account offer visual reinforcement to the exploration, lending it the feel and tone of both a gossip column and political piece - something that probes not just Clinton interactions but the D.C. political milieu as a whole.

"The result may appear weighty, sporting over five hundred pages, but is an absorbing, top recommendation for readers of both biographical and political pieces who will thoroughly enjoy this spirited, lively, and thought-provoking analysis."

***

Shortly after its release in December of 2015, this book received a literary award (Runner-up to Best Biography of the Year) from the New England Book Festival. As stated by a spokesperson for the Awards, "The New England Book Festival is an annual competition honoring excellence in books, with particular focus on projects that deserve closer attention from the academic community. Congratulations to Blood Moon and its authors, especially Darwin Porter, for his highly entertaining analysis of Clinton's double-barreled presidential regime, and the sometimes hysterical over-reaction of their enemies."

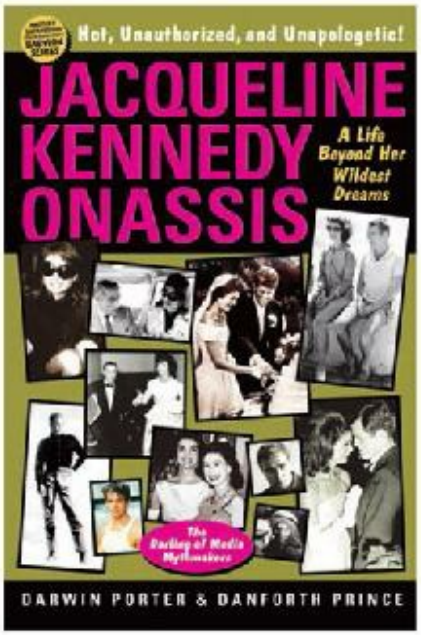
Available Everywhere Now, in Bookstores and Online

BILL & HILLARY—SO THIS IS THAT THING CALLED LOVE

Softcover, with photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-47-1

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS

A Life Beyond Her Wildest Dreams



After floods of analysis and commentary in tabloid and mainstream newspapers worldwide, this has emerged as the world's most comprehensive testimonial to the flimsier side of Camelot, the most comprehensive compendium of gossip ever published about America's unofficial, uncrowned queen, **Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis**. Its publication coincided with the 20-year anniversary of the death of one of the most famous, revered, and talked-about women who ever lived.

During her tumultuous life, Mrs. Onassis zealously guarded her privacy and her secrets. But in the wake of her death, more and more revelations have emerged about her frustrations, her rage, her passions, her towering strengths, and her delicate fragility, which she hid from the glare of the world behind oversized sunglasses. Within this posthumous biography, a three-dimensional woman emerges through the compilation of some 1,000 eyewitness testimonials from men and women who knew her over a period of decades.

An overview of the life of Mrs. Onassis is a natural fit for Blood Moon, a publishing enterprise that's increasingly known, worldwide, as one of the most provocative and scandalous in the history of publishing.

"References to this American icon appear with almost rhythmic regularity to anyone researching the cultural landscape of America during the last half of The American Century," said Danforth Prince. "Based on what we'd uncovered about Jackie during the research of many of our earlier titles, we're positioning ourselves as a more or less solitary outpost of irreverence within a landscape that's otherwise flooded with fawning, over-reverential testimonials. Therein lies this book's appeal—albeit with a constant respect and affection for a woman we admired and adored."

Based on decades of research by writers who define themselves as "voraciously attentive Kennedyphiles," it supplements the half-dozen other titles within Blood Moon's Babylon series.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS—
A LIFE BEYOND HER WILDEST DREAMS

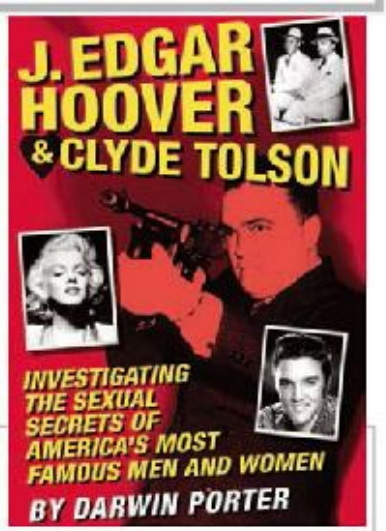
Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince

Biography/Entertainment 6" x 9" 700 pages with hundreds of photos
ISBN 978-1-936003-39-6 Also available for E-readers.

J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson

Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men & Women

Darwin Porter



This epic saga of power and corruption has a revelation on every page—cross dressing, gay parties, sexual indiscretions, hustlers for sale, alliances with the Mafia, and criminal activity by the nation's chief law enforcer.

It's all here, with chilling details about the abuse of power on the dark side of the American saga. But mostly it's the decades-long love story of America's two most powerful men who could tell presidents "how to skip rope." (Hoover's words.)

"Everyone's dredging up J. Edgar Hoover. Leonardo DiCaprio just immortalized him, and now comes Darwin Porter's paperback, *J. Edgar Hoover & Clyde Tolson: Investigating the Sexual Secrets of America's Most Famous Men and Women*. It shovels Hoover's darkest secrets dragged kicking and screaming from the closet. It's filth on every VIP who's safely dead and some who are still above ground."

—Cindy Adams, The New York Post

"This book is important, because it destroys what's left of Hoover's reputation. Did you know he had intel on the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but he sat on it, making him more or less responsible for thousands of deaths? Or that he had almost nothing to do with the arrests or killings of any of the 1930s gangsters that he took credit for catching?

"A lot of people are angry with its author, Darwin Porter. They say that his outing of celebrities is just cheap gossip about dead people who can't defend themselves. I suppose it's because Porter is destroying carefully constructed myths that are comforting to most people. As gay men, we benefit the most from Porter's work, because we know that except for AIDS, the closet was the most terrible thing about the 20th century. If the closet never existed, neither would Hoover. The fact that he got away with such duplicity under eight presidents makes you think that every one of them was a complete fool for tolerating it."

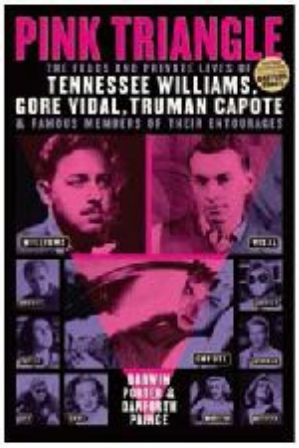
—Paul Bellini, FAB Magazine (Toronto)

Winner of Literary Awards from the Los Angeles & the Hollywood Book Festivals
Temporarily sold out of hard copies, but available for E-Readers. ISBN 978-1-936003-25-9

TRUE GRIT: THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS

PINK TRIANGLE: The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Famous Members of their Entourages

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince



This book, the only one of its kind, reveals the backlot intrigues associated with the literary and script-writing *enfants terribles* of America's entertainment community during the mid-20th century.

It exposes their bitchfests, their slugfests, and their relationships with the *glitterati*—Marilyn Monroe, Brando, the Oliviers, the Paleys, U.S. Presidents, a gaggle of other movie stars, millionaires, and international *débauchés*.

This is for anyone who's interested in the formerly concealed scandals of Hollywood and Broadway, and the values and pretentions of both the literary community and the entertainment industry.

"A banquet... If PINK TRIANGLE had not been written for us, we would have had to research and type it all up for ourselves...Pink Triangle is nearly seven hundred pages of the most entertaining histrionics ever sliced, spiced, heated, and serviced up to the reading public. Everything that Blood Moon has done before pales in comparison.
Given the fact that the subjects of the book themselves were nearly delusional on the subject of themselves (to say nothing of each other) it is hard to find fault. Add to this the intertwined jungle that was the relationship among Williams, Capote, and Vidal, of the times they vied for things they loved most—especially attention—and the times they enthralled each other and the world, [Pink Triangle is] the perfect antidote to the Polar Vortex."

—Vinton McCabe in the NY JOURNAL OF BOOKS

"Full disclosure: I have been a friend and follower of Blood Moon Productions' tomes for years, and always marveled at the amount of information in their books—it's staggering. The index alone to Pink Triangle runs to 21 pages—and the scale of names in it runs like a Who's Who of American social, cultural and political life through much of the 20th century."

—Perry Brass in THE HUFFINGTON POST

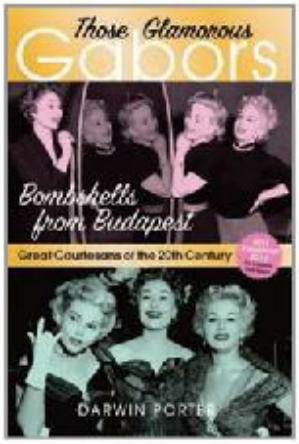
"We Brits are not spared the Porter/Prince silken lash either. PINK TRIANGLE's research is, quite frankly, breathtaking. PINK TRIANGLE will fascinate you for many weeks to come. Once you have made the initial titillating dip, the day will seem dull without it."

—Jeffery Tayor in THE SUNDAY EXPRESS (UK)

PINK TRIANGLE—The Feuds and Private Lives of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and Famous Members of their Entourages
Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince
Softcover, 700 pages, with photos ISBN 978-1-936003-37-2 Also Available for E-Readers

THOSE GLAMOROUS GABORS

Bombshells from Budapest, by Darwin Porter



Zsa Zsa, Eva, and Magda Gabor transferred their glittery dreams and gold-digging ambitions from the twilight of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Hollywood. There, more effectively than any army, these Bombshells from Budapest broke hearts, amassed fortunes, lovers, and A-list husbands, and amused millions of *voyeurs* through the medium of television, movies, and the social registers. In this astonishing "triple-play" biography, designated "Best Biography of the Year" by the Hollywood Book Festival, Blood Moon lifts the "mink-and-diamond" curtain on this amazing trio of blood-related sisters, whose complicated intrigues have never been fully explored before.

"You will never be Ga-bored…this book gives new meaning to the term compelling. Be warned, *Those Glamorous Gabors* is both an epic and a pip. Not since *Gone With the Wind* have so many characters on the printed page been forced to run for their lives for one reason or another. And Scarlett making a dress out of the curtains is nothing compared to what a Gabor will do when she needs to scrap together an outfit for a movie premiere or late-night outing.

"For those not up to speed, Jolie Tilleman came from a family of jewelers and therefore came by her love for the shiny stones honestly, perhaps genetically. She married Vilmos Gabor somewhere around World War I (exact dates, especially birth dates, are always somewhat vague in order to establish plausible deniability later on) and they were soon blessed with three daughters: **Magda**, the oldest, whose hair, sadly, was naturally brown, although it would turn quite red in America; **Zsa Zsa** (born 'Sari') a natural blond who at a very young age exhibited the desire for fame with none of the talents usually associated with achievement, excepting beauty and a natural wit; and **Eva**, the youngest and blondest of the girls, who after seeing Grace Moore perform at the National Theater, decided that she wanted to be an actress and that she would one day move to Hollywood to become a star.

"Given that the Gabor family at that time lived in Budapest, Hungary, at the period of time between the World Wars, that Hollywood dream seemed a distant one indeed. The story—the riches to rags to riches to rags to riches again myth of survival against all odds as the four women, because of their Jewish heritage, flee Europe with only the minks on their backs and what jewels they could smuggle along with them in their *decolletage*, only to have to battle afresh for their places in the vicious Hollywood pecking order—gives new meaning to the term 'compelling.' The reader, as if he were witnessing a particularly gore-drenched traffic accident, is incapable of looking away."

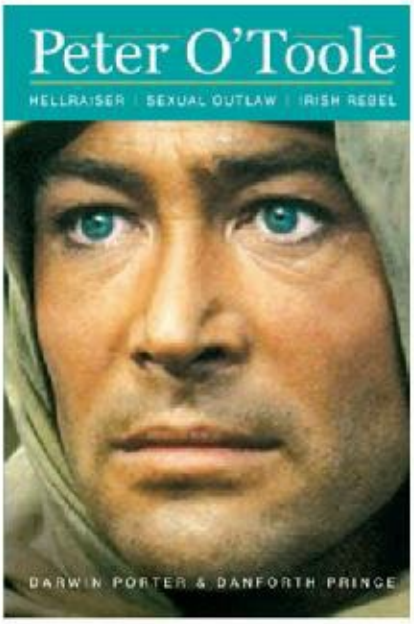
—New York Review of Books

Those Glamorous Gabors, Bombshells from Budapest, by Darwin Porter.
Softcover, 730 pages, with hundreds of photos ISBN 978-1-936003-35-8

PETER O'TOOLE

Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel

At the time of its publication early in 2015, this book was widely publicized in the *Daily Mail*, the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Post*, the *Midwest Book Review*, *The Express (London)*, *The Globe*, the *National Enquirer*, and in equivalent publications worldwide



One of the world's most admired (and brilliant) actors, Peter O'Toole wined and wenched his way through a labyrinth of sexual and interpersonal betrayals, sometimes with disastrous results. Away from the stage and screen, where such films as *Becket* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, made film history, his life was filled with drunken, debauched nights and edgy sexual experimentations, most of which were never openly examined in the press. A hellraiser, he shared wild times with his "best blokes" Richard Burton and Richard Harris. Peter Finch, also his close friend, once invited him to join him in sharing the pleasures of his mistress, Vivien Leigh.

"My father, a bookie, moved us to the Mick community of Leeds," O'Toole once told a reporter. "We were very poor, but I was born an Irishman, which accounts for my gift of gab, my unruly behavior, my passionate devotion to women and the bottle, and my loathing of any authority figure."

Author Robert Sellers described O'Toole's boyhood neighborhood. "Three of his playmates went on to be hanged for murder; one strangled a girl in a lovers' quarrel; one killed a man during a robbery; another cut up a warden in South Africa with a pair of shears. It was a heavy bunch."

Peter O'Toole's hell-raising life story has never been told, until now. Hot and uncensored, from a writing team which, even prior to O'Toole's death in 2013, had been collecting under-the-radar info about him for years, this book has everything you ever wanted to know about how THE LION navigated his way through the boudoirs of the Entertainment Industry IN WINTER, Spring, Summer, and a dissipated Autumn as well.

Blood Moon has ripped away the imperial robe, scepter, and crown usually associated with this quixotic problem child of the British Midlands. Provocatively uncensored, this illusion-shattering overview of Peter O'Toole's hellraising (or at least very naughty) and demented life is unique in the history of publishing.

PETER O'TOOLE: Hellraiser, Sexual Outlaw, Irish Rebel

Softcover, with photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-45-7.

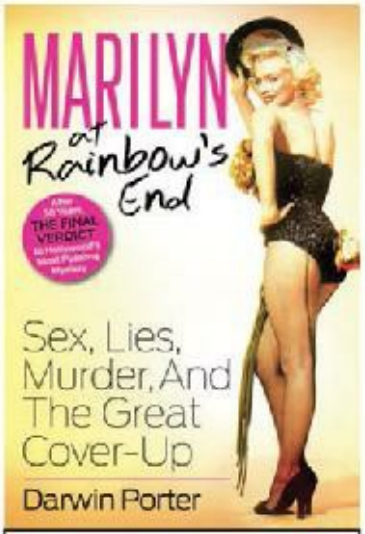
Also available for e-readers

This book illustrates why *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and why Marilyn Monroe was too dangerous to be allowed to go on living.

Less than an hour after the discovery of Marilyn Monroe's corpse in Brentwood, a flood of theories, tainted evidence, and conflicting testimonies began pouring out into the public landscape.

Filled with rage, hysteria, and depression, "and fed up with Jack's lies, Bobby's lies," Marilyn sought revenge and mass vindication. Her revelations at an imminent press conference could have toppled political dynasties and destroyed criminal empires. Marilyn had to be stopped...

Into this steamy cauldron of deceit, Marilyn herself emerges as a most unreliable witness during the weeks leading up to her murder. Her own deceptions, vanities, and self-delusion poured toxic accelerants on an already raging fire.



"This is the best book about Marilyn Monroe ever published."
—David Hartnell, Recipient, in 2011, of New Zealand's Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to the entertainment industry, as defined by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Winner of literary awards from the New York, Hollywood, and San Francisco Book Festivals

MARILYN AT RAINBOW'S END

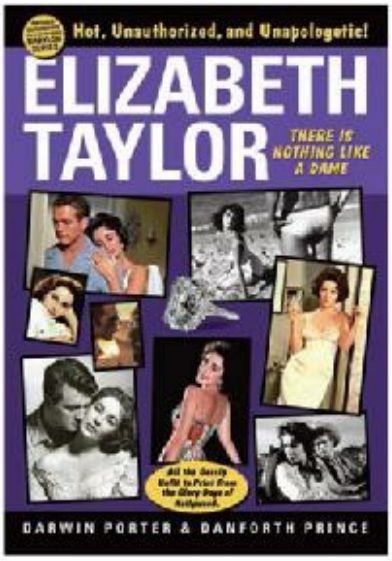
SEX, LIES, MURDER, AND THE GREAT COVER-UP, BY DARWIN PORTER
ISBN 978-1-936003-29-7
Temporarily sold out of hard copies, but available for E-Readers

"Darwin Porter is fearless, honest and a great read. He minces no words. If the truth makes you wince and honesty offends your sensibility, stay away. It's been said that he deals in muck because he can't libel the dead. Well, it's about time someone started telling the truth about the dead and being honest about just what happened to get us in the mess in which we're in. If libel is lying, then Porter is so completely innocent as to deserve an award. In all of his works he speaks only to the truth, and although he is a hard teacher and task master, he's one we ignore at our peril. To quote Gore Vidal, power is not a toy we give to someone for being good. If we all don't begin to investigate where power and money really are in the here and now, we deserve what we get. Yes, Porter names names. The reader will come away from the book knowing just who killed Monroe. Porter rather brilliantly points to a number of motives, but leaves it to the reader to surmise exactly what happened at the rainbow's end, just why Marilyn was killed. And, of course, why we should be careful of getting exactly what we want. It's a very long tumble from the top."

—ALAN PETRUCELLI, Examiner.com, May 13, 2012

Elizabeth Taylor, *There is Nothing Like a Dame*

All the Gossip Unfit to Print from the Glory Days of Hollywood



For more than 60 years, Elizabeth Taylor dazzled generations of movie-goers with her glamor and her all-consuming passion for life. She was the last of the great stars of Golden Age Hollywood, coming to a sad end at the age of 79 in 2011.

But before she died, appearing on the Larry King show, she claimed that her biographers had revealed "only half of my story, but I can't tell the other half in a memoir because I'd get sued."

Now, Blood Moon presents for the first time a comprehensive compilation of most of the secrets from the mercurial Dame Elizabeth, whose hedonism helped define the jet set of the tumultuous 60s and beyond.

Throughout the many decades of her life, she consistently generated hysteria among her fans. Here, her story is told with brutal honesty in rich, juicy detail and illustrated, with a new revelation on every page.

It's all here, and a lot more, in an exposé that's both sympathetic and shocking, with a candor and attention to detail that brings the *femme fatale* of the 20th century back to life.

"What has never been denied about Elizabeth Taylor is that the young actress, though small for her age, was mature beyond her years, deeply ambitious, and sexually precocious...Insiders agreed she always had a strong rebellious streak. Could the studio system's vice-like grip on publicity have stopped scandals about their most valuable child star from leaking out?

"A recent biography of Taylor claims that as a teenager, she lost her virginity at 15 to British actor Peter Lawford, had flings with Ronald Reagan and Errol Flynn, was roughly seduced by Orson Welles, and even enjoyed a threesome involving John F. Kennedy.

The authors—Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince—also allege Taylor was just 11 when she was taught by her close friend, the gay British actor, Roddy McDowall, the star of Lassie Come Home, *how to satisfy men without sleeping with them."*

Tom Leonard in THE DAILY MAIL, October 19, 2015

"Before they wither, Elizabeth Taylor's breasts will topple empires."

—Richard Burton

Softcover, 460 pages, with photos ISBN 978-1-936003-31-0.
Temporarily sold out of hard copies, but available as an E-book.

James Dean, *Tomorrow Never Comes*

Honoring the 60th anniversary of his violent and early death

America's most enduring and legendary symbol of young, enraged rebellion, James Dean continues into the 21st Century to capture the imagination of the world.

After one of his many flirtations with Death, which caught up with him when he was a celebrity-soaked 24-year-old, he said, "If a man can live after he dies, then maybe he's a great man." Today, bars from Nigeria to Patagonia are named in honor of this international, spectacularly self-destructive movie star icon.

Migrating from the dusty backroads of Indiana to center stage in the most formidable boudoirs of Hollywood, his saga is electrifying.

A strikingly handsome heart-throb, Dean is a study in contrasts: Tough but tender, brutal but remarkably sensitive; he was a reckless hellraiser badass who could revert to a little boy in bed.

A rampant bisexual, he claimed that he didn't want to go through life "with one hand tied behind my back." He demonstrated that during bedroom trysts with Marilyn Monroe, Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Newman, Natalie Wood, Shelley Winters, Marlon Brando, Steve McQueen, Ursula Andress, Montgomery Clift, Pier Angeli, Tennessee Williams, Susan Strasberg, Tallulah Bankhead, and FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.

Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton, one of the richest and most dissipated women of her era, wanted to make him her toy boy.

Tomorrow Never Comes is the most penetrating look at James Dean to have emerged from the wreckage of his Porsche Spyder in 1955.

Before setting out on his last ride, he said, "I feel life too intensely to bear living it."

Tomorrow Never Comes presents a damaged but beautiful soul.

JAMES DEAN—TOMORROW NEVER COMES
DARWIN PORTER & DANFORTH PRINCE
Softcover, with photos. ISBN 978-1-936003-49-5

INSIDE LINDA LOVELACE'S DEEP THROAT

DEGRADATION, PORNO CHIC, AND THE RISE OF FEMINISM

DARWIN PORTER

An insider's view of the unlikely heroine who changed the world's perceptions about pornography, censorship, and sexual behavior patterns

The Most Comprehensive Biography Ever Written of an Adult Entertainment Star and Her Relationship with the Underbelly of Hollywood

***Darwin Porter**, author of some twenty critically acclaimed celebrity exposés of behind-the-scenes intrigue in the entertainment industry, was deeply involved in the Linda Lovelace saga as it unfolded in the 70s, interviewing many of the players, and raising money for the legal defense of the film's co-star, Harry Reems. In this book, emphasizing her role as a celebrity interacting with other celebrities, he brings inside information and a never-before-published revelation to almost every page.*

The Beach Book Festival's Grand Prize Winner: "Best Summer Reading of 2013"

Runner-Up to "Best Biography of 2013" *The Los Angeles Book Festival*

Winner of a Sybarite Award from HedoOnline.com

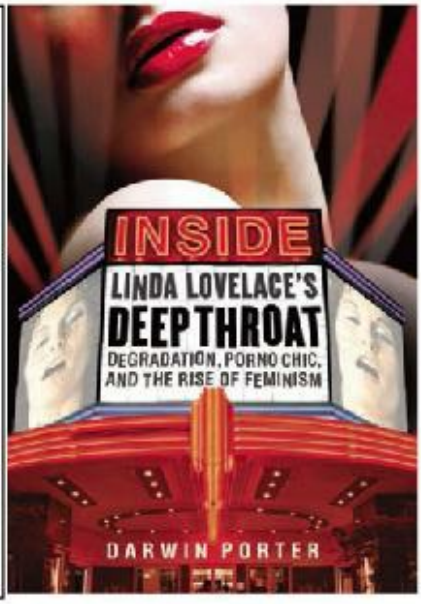
"This book drew me in..How could it not?" Coco Papy, *Bookslut.*

The Award-Winning overview of a story that changed America and the Entertainment Industry forever:

Another hot and insightful commentary about major and sometimes violently controversial conflicts of the American Century by

Darwin Porter

Softcover, 640 pages, 6"x9" with photos.
ISBN 978-1-936003-33-4



Scarlett O'Hara,

Desperately in Love with Heathcliff,

Together on the Road to Hell

Here, for the first time, is a biography that raises the curtain on the secret lives of **Lord Laurence Olivier**, often cited as the finest actor in the history of England, and **Vivien Leigh,** who immortalized herself with her Oscar-winning portrayals of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, and as Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Dashing and "impossibly handsome," Laurence Olivier was pursued by the most dazzling luminaries, male and female, of the movie and theater worlds.

Lord Olivier's beautiful and brilliant but emotionally disturbed wife (Viv to her lovers) led a tumultuous off-the-record life whose paramours ranged from the A-list celebrities to men she selected randomly off the street. But none of the brilliant roles depicted by Lord and Lady Olivier, on stage or on screen, ever matched the power and drama of personal dramas which wavered between Wagnerian opera and Greek tragedy. ***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*** is the definitive and most revelatory portrait ever published of the most talented and tormented actor and actress of the 20th century.

Darwin Porter is the principal author of this seminal work.

Roy Moseley, this book's co-author, was an intimate friend of both Lord and Lady Olivier, maintaining a decades-long association with the famous couple, nurturing them through triumphs, emotional breakdowns, and streams of suppressed scandal. A resident of California who spent most of his life in England, Moseley has authored or co-authored biographies of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Rex Harrison, Cary Grant, Merle Oberon, Roger Moore, and Bette Davis.

"**Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara** *can be a dazzling read, the prose unmannered and instantly digestible. The authors' ability to pile scandal atop scandal, seduction after seduction, can be impossible to resist.*"

—THE WASHINGTON TIMES

DAMN YOU, SCARLETT O'HARA

The Private Lifes of Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh

Darwin Porter and Roy Moseley

Winner of four distinguished literary awards, this is the best biography of Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier ever published.

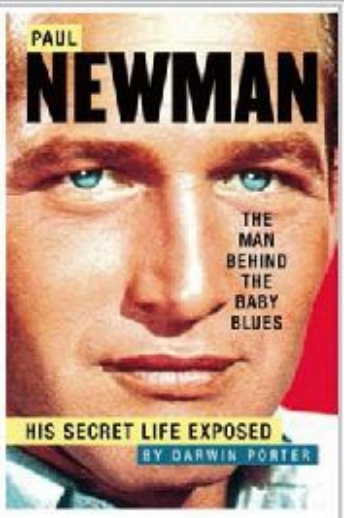
ISBN 978-1-936003-15-0 Hardcover, 708 pages, with about a hundred photos and hundreds of insights into the London Theatre, the role of the Oliviers in the politics of World War II, and the passion, fury, and frustration of their lives together as actors in the West End, on Broadway, and in Hollywood.

Also available for E-Readers

Paul Newman, The Man Behind the Baby Blues

His Secret Life Exposed

Darwin Porter



Drawn from firsthand interviews with insiders who knew Paul Newman intimately, and compiled over a period of nearly a half-century, this is the world's most honest and most revelatory biography about Hollywood's pre-eminent male sex symbol.

This is a respectful but candid cornucopia of once-concealed information about the sexual and emotional adventures of an affable, impossibly good-looking workaday actor, a former sailor from Shaker Heights, Ohio, who parlayed his ambisexual charm and extraordinary good looks into one of the most successful careers in Hollywood.

Whereas the situations it exposes were widely known within Hollywood's inner circles, they've never before been revealed to the general public.

But now, the full story has been published—the giddy heights and agonizing crashes of a great American star, with revelations and insights never before published in any other biography.

"Paul Newman had just as many on-location affairs as the rest of us, and he was just as bisexual as I was. But whereas I was always getting caught with my pants down, he managed to do it in the dark with not a paparazzo in sight. He might have bedded Marilyn Monroe or Elizabeth Taylor the night before, but he always managed to show up for breakfast with Joanne Woodward, with those baby blues, looking as innocent as a Botticelli angel. He never fooled me. It takes an alleycat to know another one. Did I ever tell you what really happened between Newman and me? If that doesn't grab you, what about what went on between James Dean and Newman? Let me tell you about this co-called model husband if you want to look behind those famous peepers."

—Marlon Brando

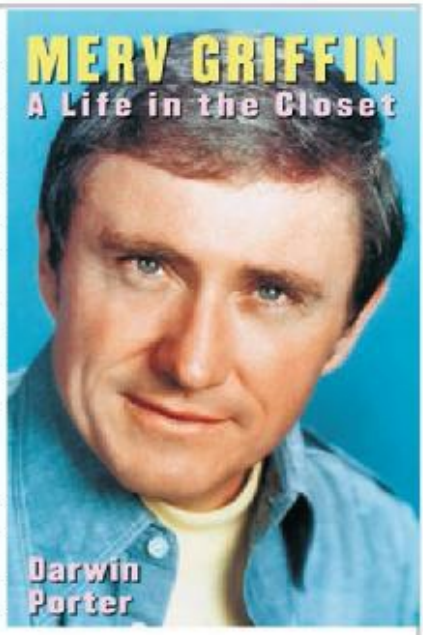
Paul Newman, The Man Behind the Baby Blues,
His Secret Life Exposed
Recipient of an Honorable Mention from the New England Book Festival
Hardcover, 520 pages, with dozens of photos.
ISBN 978-0-9786465-1-6 **Also available for e-readers**

Merv Griffin, A Life in the Closet

by Darwin Porter

HOT, CONTROVERSIAL, AND RIGOROUSLY RESEARCHED,

HERE'S MERV!



Merv Griffin began his career as a Big Band singer, moved on to a failed career as a romantic hero in the movies, and eventually rewrote the rules of everything associated with the broadcasting industry. Along the way, he met and befriended virtually everyone who mattered, including Nancy Reagan, and made billions operating casinos and developing jingles, contests, and word games. All of this while maintaining a male harem and a secret life as America's most famously closeted homosexual.

In this comprehensive and richly ironic biography, Darwin Porter reveals the amazing details behind the richest, most successful, and in some ways, the most notorious mogul in the history of America's entertainment industry.

***

"Darwin Porter told me why he tore the door off Merv's closet.....*Heeeere's Merv!* is 560 pages, 100 photos, a truckload of gossip, and a bedful of unauthorized dish."

Cindy Adams, The New York Post

"Darwin Porter tears the door off Merv Griffin's closet with gusto in this sizzling, superlatively researched biography...It brims with insider gossip that's about Hollywood legends, writ large, smart, and with great style."

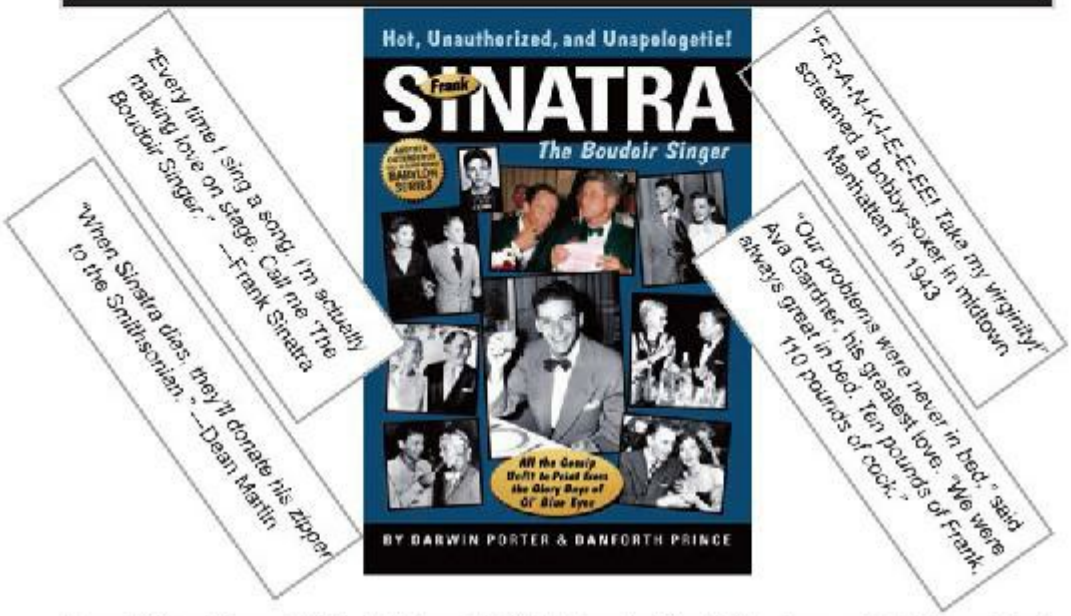
Richard LaBonté, BOOKMARKS

Merv Griffin, a Life in the Closet, by Darwin Porter.
Hardcover, with photos. ISBN 978-0-9786465-0-9. Also available for E-Readers.

FRANK SINATRA, THE BOUDOIR SINGER

All the Gossip Unfit to Print
from the Glory Days of Ol' Blue Eyes

Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince



Even If You Thought You'd Heard It All Already, You'll Be Amazed At How Much This Book Contains That Never Got Published Before.

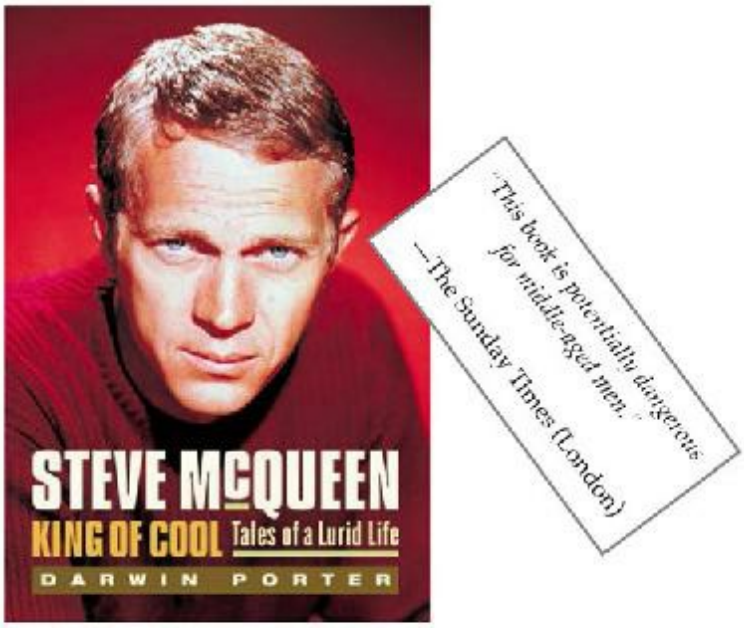
Vendettas and high-octane indiscretions, fast and furious women, deep sensitivities and sporadic psychoses, Presidential pimping, FBI coverups, Mobster mambos, and a pantload of hushed-up scandals about **FABULOUS FRANK AND HIS MIND-BLOWING COHORTS**

"Womanizer Sinatra's Shocking Secret Sins are revealed in a blockbuster new book, including his raunchy romps with Liz Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Jackie-O, and Nancy Reagan. Every time the leader of the Free World would join him in Palm Springs, the place was a sun-kissed brothel, with Kennedy as the main customer."

— THE GLOBE

Frank Sinatra, The Boudoir Singer
Hardcover, 465 pages with hundreds of photos
ISBN 978-1-936003-19-8 Also available for E-readers

Finally—A COOL biography that was too HOT to be published during the lifetime of its subject.



The drama of Steve McQueen's personal life far exceeded any role he ever played on screen. Born to a prostitute, he was brutally molested by some of his mother's "johns," and endured gang rape in reform school. His drift into prostitution began when he was hired as a towel boy in the most notorious bordello in the Dominican Republic, where he starred in a string of cheap porno films. Returning to New York before migrating to Hollywood, he hustled men on Times Square and, as a "gentleman escort" in a borrowed tux, rich older women.

And then, sudden stardom as he became the world's top box office attraction. The abused became the abuser. "I live for myself, and I answer to nobody," he proclaimed. "The last thing I want to do is fall in love with a broad."

Thus began a string of seductions that included hundreds of overnight pickups--both male and female. Topping his A-list conquests were James Dean, Paul Newman, Marilyn Monroe, and Barbra Streisand. Finally, this pioneering biography explores the mysterious death of Steve McQueen. Were those salacious rumors really true?

Steve McQueen
King of Cool
Tales of a Lurid Life
Darwin Porter

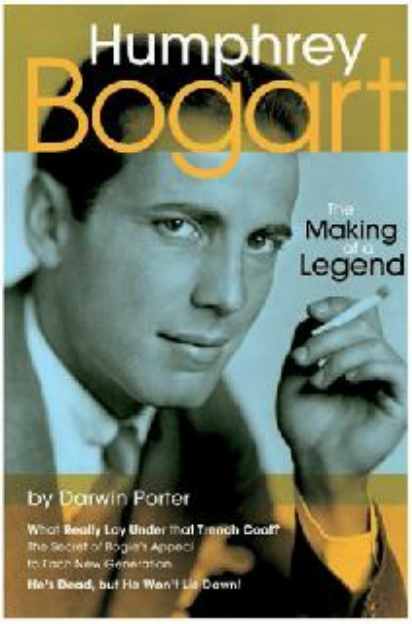
A carefully researched, 466-page hardcover with dozens of photos
Temporarily sold out of hard copies, but available now for e-readers

ISBN 978-1-936003-05-1

Humphrey Bogart, The Making of a Legend

Darwin Porter

A "CRADLE-TO-GRAVE" HARDCOVER ABOUT THE RISE TO FAME OF AN OBSCURE, UNLIKELY, AND FREQUENTLY UNEMPLOYED BROADWAY ACTOR.



Whereas **Humphrey Bogart** is always at the top of any list of the Entertainment Industry's most famous actors, very little is known about how he clawed his way from Broadway to Hollywood during Prohibition and the Jazz Age.

This pioneering biography begins with Bogart's origins as the child of wealthy (morphine-addicted) parents in New York City, then examines the love affairs, scandals, failures, and breakthroughs that launched him as an American icon.

It includes details about behind-the-scenes dramas associated with three mysterious marriages, and films such as *The Petrified Forest, The Maltese Falcon, High Sierra,* and *Casablanca.* Read all about the debut and formative years of the actor who influenced many generations of filmgoers, laying Bogie's life bare in a style you've come to expect from Darwin Porter. Exposed with all their juicy details is what Bogie never told his fourth wife, Lauren Bacall, herself a screen legend.

Drawn from original interviews with friends and foes who knew a lot about what lay beneath his trenchcoat, this exposé covers Bogart's remarkable life as it helped define movie-making, Hollywood's portrayal of macho, and America's evolving concept of Entertainment itself.

This revelatory book is based on dusty unpublished memoirs, letters, diaries, and often personal interviews from the women—and the men—who adored him.

There are also shocking allegations from colleagues, former friends, and jilted lovers who wanted the screen icon to burn in hell.

All this and more, much more, in Darwin Porter's *exposé* of Bogie's startling secret life.

WITH STARTLING NEW INFORMATION YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE ABOUT BOGART, THE MOVIES, AND GOLDEN AGE HOLLYWOOD

542 PAGES, WITH HUNDREDS OF PHOTOS **ISBN 978-1-936003-14-3**
ALSO AVAILABLE FOR E-READERS

Katharine the Great

HEPBURN, A LIFETIME OF SECRETS REVEALED

BY DARWIN PORTER

Katharine Hepburn was the world's greatest screen diva--the most famous actress in American history. But until the appearance of this biography, no one had ever published the intimate details of her complicated and ferociously secretive private life.

Thanks to the "deferential and obsequious whitewashes" which followed in the wake of her death, readers probably know WHAT KATE REMEMBERED. Here, however, is an unvarnished account of what Katharine Hepburn desperately wanted to forget.

"Darwin Porter's biography of Hepburn cannot be lightly dismissed or ignored. Connoisseurs of Hepburn's life would do well to seek it out as a forbidden supplement."

***The Sunday Times* (London)**

"Behind the scenes of her movies, Katharine Hepburn played the temptress to as many women as she did men, ranted and raved with her co-stars and directors, and broke into her neighbors' homes for fun. And somehow, she managed to keep all of it out of the press. As they say, Katharine the Great is hard to put down."

The Dallas Voice

"The door to Hepburn's closet has finally been opened. This is the most honest and least apologetic biography of Hollywood's most ferociously private actress ever written."

Senior Life Magazine, Miami

The First Book of Its Kind, A Fiercely Unapologetic Exposé of the Most Obsessively Secretive Actress in Hollywood

Softcover, 569 pages, with photos

ISBN 978-0-9748118-0-2
Also Available for E-Readers

BANDO UNZIPPED

An Uncensored *Exposé* of America's Most Visible Method Actor and Sexual Outlaw

by Darwin Porter

BRANDO EXPOSED!! This "entertainingly outrageous" (*Frontiers Magazine*) biography provides a definitive, blow-by-blow description of the "hot, provocative, and barely under control drama" that was the life of America's most famous Postwar actor.

"**Lurid**, raunchy, perceptive, and certainly worth reading...One of the ten best show-biz biographies of 2006." ***The Sunday Times (London)***

"**Yummy**. An irresistably flamboyant romp of a read."

Books to Watch Out For

"Astonishing. An extraordinarily detailed portrait of Brando that's as blunt, uncompromising, and X-rated as the man himself."

Women's Weekly

"This shocking new book is sparking a major re-assessment of Brando's legacy as one of Hollywood's most macho lotharios."

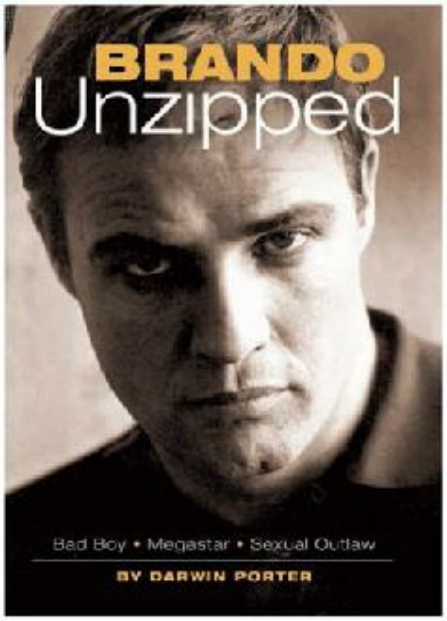
Daily Express (London)

"As author Darwin Porter finds, it wasn't just the acting world Marlon Brando conquered. It was the actors, too."

Gay Times (London)

"*Brando Unzipped* is the definitive gossip guide to the late, great actor's life."

The New York Daily News



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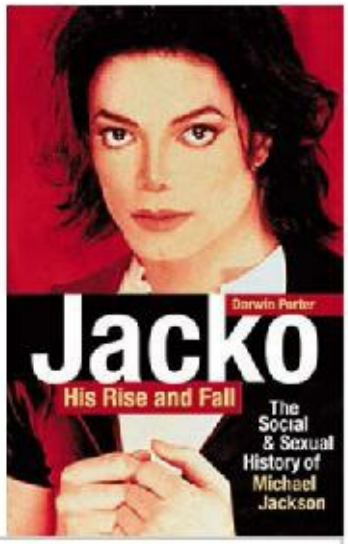

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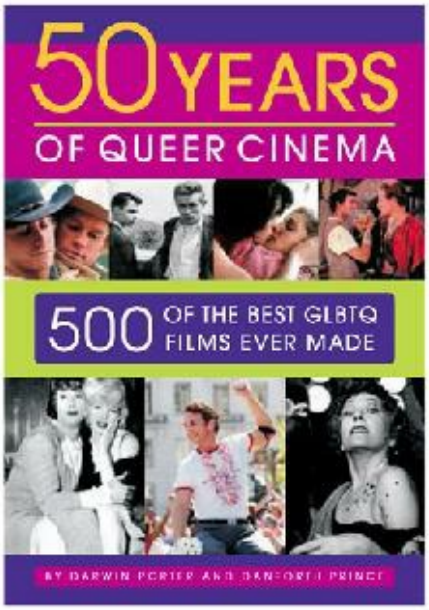

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***

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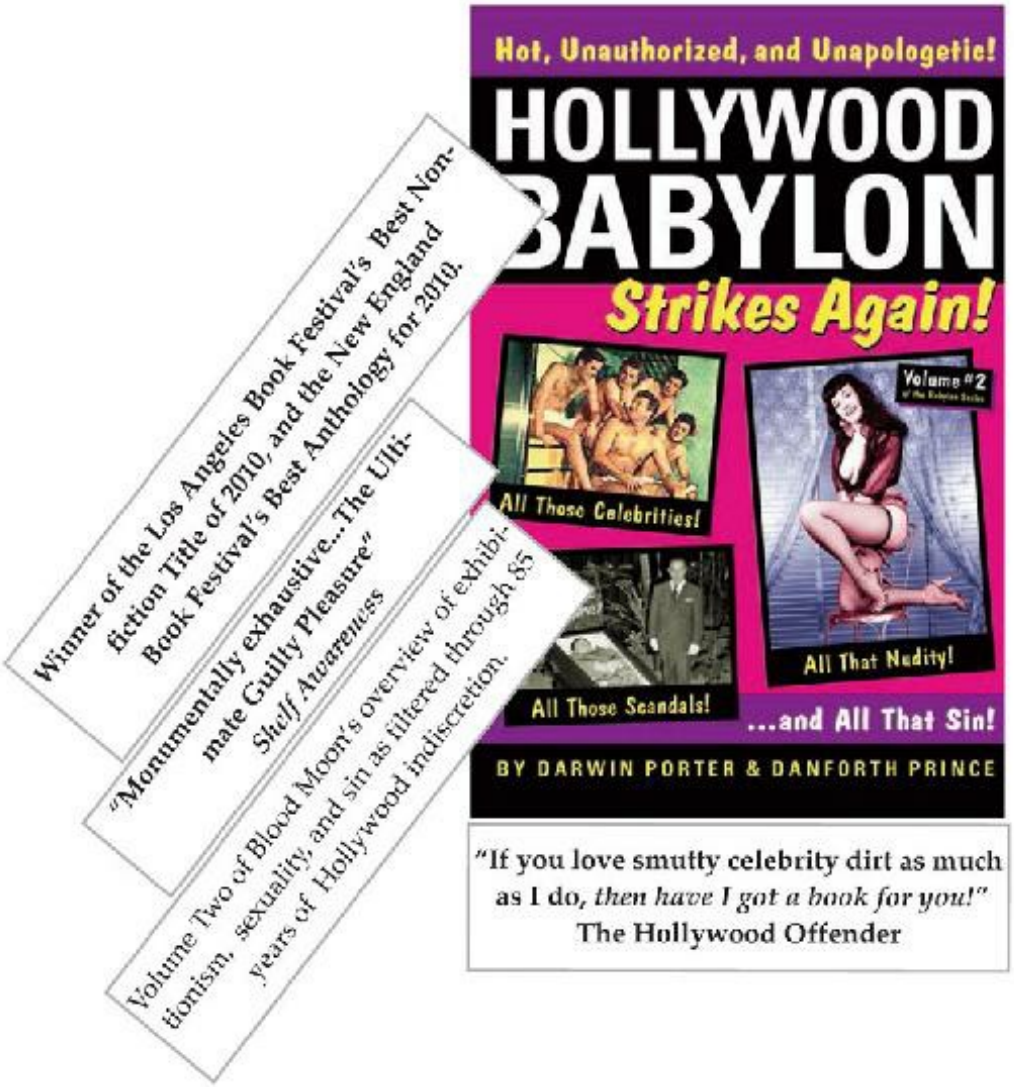

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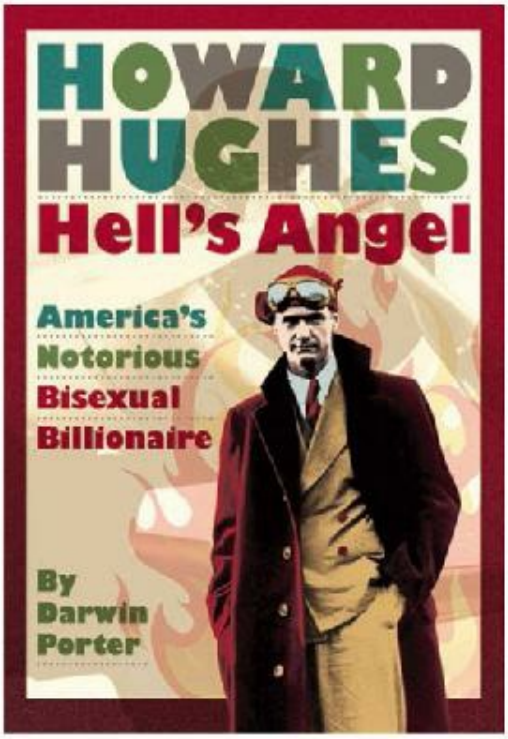

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MARILYN at Rainbow's End

After 50 Years, THE FINAL VERDICT to Hollywood's Most Puzzling Mystery

Sex, Lies, Murder, And The Great Cover-Up

Darwin Porter

MARILY ’S DEATH ELICITED OUTRAGE FROM ALMOST EVERYBODY

HERE’S HOW IT WAS REVIEWED BY SOME OF HER CONTEMPORARIES:

“A simple, decent-hearted kid whom Hollywood brought down, legs parted.”

—Director **Elia Kazan**

“More and more, Marilyn was involving herself with some of the most dangerous men on the planet, power figures who played rough and would stop at nothing. What did a blonde sex goddess mean to them? Some of them regarded her as no more than a whore, an easy lay for them to pick up and discard.

—**Shelley Winters**

“Marilyn’s death is of historical interest. There is no statute of limitations on murder.”

—L.A. District Attorney **Ira Reiner** in 1985

“They murdered Marilyn. The amazing thing is why after all these years they didn’t find a reason to murder me, too.”

—Frank Sinatra

“The title of the movie we were going to make said it all: Something’s Got to Give.”

—George Cukor

“It is doubtful that either Kennedy saw past the beauty and the intel igence to the truly shattered nature of her personality— one which, as her psychiatrist later admitted, would have made her a candidate for an institution had her name not been Marilyn Monroe.”

—Anthony Summers

“Clues that pointed to foul play vanished. Once cleaned up, the death scene indicated suicide. All of Monroe’s bed linen and personal laundry had already been washed and put careful y back in cupboards. By sealing the crime scene, Fox was merely adhering to the tradition of studio policy, san-itizing real-life Hollywood murder scenes.”

—Patte B. Barham, veteran Hollywood reporter

“Marilyn was slapped around. On the tapes, you could actually hear her being slapped, even hear her body fall to the floor. One of the men said, ‘What do we do with her body now?’”

—“Tom,” a “Deep Throat” wiretapper inside Bernard Spindel’s operation

“Marilyn’s death was to apear to be an accidental suicide, exploiting her false reputation for reckless overdosing. Marilyn Monroe would commit suicide according to their schedule. Maf, her small poodle, was her only bodyguard

that night, and he was barking ferociously."

—Detective **Milos Speriglio**

"There are those who see Marilyn Monroe's death as the seed of assassinations to follow— those of her boy friends Jack and Bobby Kennedy."

—Norman Mailer, to poet Norman Rosten

"My feeling was that she (Eunice Murray) had been told what to say. It had all been rehearsed beforehand. And why was she washing Marilyn's sheets at that ungodly hour of the morning?"

—Sergeant Robert Byron of the LAPD

"I'm often asked to comment on Marilyn Monroe, and the autopsy I performed on her. Words fail me, so I quote from the Latin poet, Petrarch: 'It's folly to shrink in fear, if this is dying. For death looked lovely in her lovely face.'"

—Dr. Thomas T. oguchi, Marilyn's coroner

"You might cal it a convenient death. She died just before the shit was about to hit the fan."

—J. Edgar Hoover to Guy Hotell

MARILYN
AT RAINBOW'S END

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AND THE GREAT COVER-UP

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MARILYN
AT RAINBOW'S END

SEX, LIES, MURDER,
AND THE GREAT COVER-UP

DARWIN PORTER

MARILYN
AT RAINBOW'S END

SEX, LIES, MURDER, AND THE GREAT COVER-UP

by Darwin Porter

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THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

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Milo Speriglio

Bernard Spindel
John Springer
Robert Stack
Susan Strasberg
Frank E. Taylor
Billy Travilla
Hazel Washington
Billy Wilder
Tennessee Williams
Shelley Winters

"I got a call from Life magazine's bureau chief, Richard Stolley, at six that Sunday morning. 'Marilyn Monroe's dead. Go to the morgue and shoot what you can.'

"I rounded up three bottles of the most expensive whisky I could find. It was a bribe to the guy in the morgue. 'Ever seen a dead body before?'he asked before he led me to a steel-lined refrigerated corridor.

"He opened a door to wheel out a corpse. A white sheet covered her body. He tied a tag to her left big toe. Its inscription read CRYPT 33—MARILYN MONROE."

—Photographer **Leigh Weiner**

The Mistress of Camelot

O, Time,
Be kind.
Help this weary being
To forget what is sad to remember.
Lose my loneliness,
Ease my mind
While you eat my flesh.

—Marilyn Monroe

AUTHOR'S MEMO: Consistent with the trend in modern biography, this book deals with reconstructed quotes, which are presented as told to me by various sources at the time. Word-for-word conversations were reported "as remembered," which means that the exact wording of dialogues may not be correct, but the points being made, as well as the action taking place, have been honored and replicated.

Any memoir or biography of Marilyn Monroe always invites a host of attacks, many of them so violent in expression that the attacker in some cases has ended up paying damages to the author either in court or as part of out-of-court settlements. Many of these at acks are senseless and without reason. Others, of course, are valid, but too often intemperate.

Let's look at it this way: It is truly amazing that a luminous movie star of the 1950s can still shine her light into 2012 and beyond. The world has moved on, and Hollywood is no longer that place she set out to conquer at the end of World War II. Yet her memory lingers to enchant each new generation.

It seems that everyone who ever met Marilyn left with a very different opinion of her, and many of those who met her are staunchly commit-ted to defending that opinion, even if misguided. This book brings together not one, but a wide sampling of points of view about Marilyn. If those being quoted did not "know" Marilyn as well as they thought they did, they should be forgiven, as Marilyn probably did not know herself.

I'm grateful to those who shared their experiences of Marilyn with me, for, in spite of the differences in their respective points of view, a portrait of this fabled star nonetheless emerges.

Imagine it is the year 2012: Marilyn is eighty-four years old, with remaining traces of her former beauty. Beside her sits her twenty-four-year-old boyfriend, her latest conquest. With champagne, still her favorite drink, they're watching the latest Monroe-inspired movie, TV series, or documentary.

After the telecast, the young man asks, "Marilyn, is that what really happened? I mean, did you really go to bed with President Kennedy?"

She giggles as she reaches over to kiss him. "Something like that, sweetie, something like that. Memory fades as time goes by. But what a hell of a story from an orphan who nobody wanted."

PART ONE

THE MISFITS

"Here we are, Pussy, at this God-forsaken place, a land of shadows, a burial ground for prehistoric monsters. And your soon-to-be ex-husband, Arthur Miller, calls this drama The Misfits. Is that what we are, Pussy? Hollywood will use us, rip the flesh from our bones, and then bury us with those extinct reptiles."

—Montgomery Clift to **Marilyn Monroe**

In the burning cauldron that was the summer of 1960 in the Nevada desert, a long, sleek, black limousine, carrying a precious, delicate cargo, Marilyn Monroe, in its back seat, came to a stop on the location shoot of her final film, *The Misfits*. The movie had been written by her estranged husband, Arthur Miller, and starred Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift, and Eli Wallach, with John Huston directing. He'd helmed her once before, in 1950, when she was but a budding starlet in *The Asphalt Jungle*, with "Dirty Pillow Slip" blonde hair, her favorite shade. Before assigning her the role back then, he'd put her on the casting couch.

Dizzy from a sleepless night, she glided from the limo when a handsome young man opened the door for her. She reached back for her purse to retrieve her sunglasses before accepting his firm, masculine hand.

She stared into his eager face, so anxious to please, so willing to be seduced by whatever movie star, male or female, that came into his life. She'd met guys like him pumping gas in every station between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

She took in the vast landscape that threatened to engulf her. Miles of cactus- and shrub-studded sands stretched before her, against a backdrop of the dark camel bumps of the rattlesnake-infested Washoe Mountains. From where she stood, she spotted three Piute Indian trails shooting off in all different directions. "I bet these trails lead to no where," she said.

They were fifty miles from Reno, but she told him, "I think we've landed on the fucking moon. We passed three little ghost towns on the way here."

"They were once silver or gold mining boom towns," he said.

She studied his face. "Everywhere I look there is nothing but death, but in your face is life. Just who are you? A desert rapist? A serial killer, probably. Someone who looks too good to be true."

"I've been assigned to cater to your every wish," he said. "My name's Sandy Paroe. I want to be a movie star myself, but right now, I'm assigned to be your gofer. Whatever you want, I'll get it for you, even out here in the desert."

"My every wish?" she said. "We'll see about that. Sandy, a perfect name for someone in these sandy badlands. Just how old are you?"

"Nineteen, ma'am."

She giggled and squeezed his muscled arm. "I'm told that when a boy is nineteen, he's at his sexual peak. After that, it's all downhill."

"I hope not, ma'am. I'm just getting broken in like a wild colt."

"A film crew is the perfect place for that. This Hollywood crew will drain you dry. I was a nineteen-year-old Hollywood starlet, so I know what I'm talking about. Has Monty arrived?"

Montgomery Clift with Marilyn Monroe in *The Misfits*

"You mean Montgomery Clift, my favorite actor?" Sandy said. "He left a note for you, telling you he'll meet you tonight in the bar of the Mapes Hotel in Reno. I can't wait to meet him. You're my favorite actress, and Monty is my favorite actor. Both of you are beautiful."

"Just you let Monty know that I saw you first," she said.

"Are you telling me that Mr. Clift is a fag?" he asked.

"Oh, Sandy, you have so much to learn. Don't you know, honey, that we're all fags in Hollywood, including me? We just drift across the desert like tumbleweeds bent on corrupting the innocent."

"I know I've got to learn," he said.

"You'll find no better teachers than Marilyn Monroe and Monty Clift. At least we can teach you what not to do."

"I hope so, ma'am."

"Please stop calling me ma'am just because I'm thirty-four, on the dawn of middle age."

"You're not old—in fact, you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, maybe the most beautiful woman in the world. All the boys at my college say that."

"I've got to visit them one day if we ever get this stinking movie made," she said. "Now show me to my dressing room trailer."

Inside the cramped, scalding hot trailer, she gasped for breath. "Haven't they heard of air conditioning in this hell hole?"

While he fumbled with the air conditioner, she pulled off her tight white dress, revealing that she wore no underwear.

"Let's take a cold shower together and then mix some stiff drinks."

"You mean, I'm to take my clothes off and get in the shower with you?"

"I mean exactly that," she said. "Who else is here to scrub my back?"

"Miss Monroe, I have to warn you, I'm liable to get an erection. That shower is mighty small."

"Well, I hope *you* aren't, so get out of those clothes. When the day comes when Marilyn Monroe can't raise a

hard-on in a nineteen-year-old boy, I'm retiring."

He slowly began to unbutton his cowboy shirt. "I'm a little nervous. I read movie magazines. Joe DiMaggio, Frank Sinatra, Marlon Brando, and Rock Hudson are tough acts to follow."

"What's this? A bedtime *Who's Who*? Get out of those jeans so I can see what I'm getting." She moved toward the shower in the back of the trailer. In minutes he was under the tepid shower stream with her, laughing and reaching for her breasts.

In the shower, she lathered his body with soap. "My God, your penis is a dead ringer for Dean Martin's whang."

***

Heading for Reno on an airplane, Monty was almost forty years old. On the plane, the flight steward had refused to serve him another drink. He almost pleaded for another round, even though he was clearly drunk. Five weeks before, he had been booked into Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, suffering from alcohol-induced hepatitis.

He'd agreed with both John Huston and Arthur Miller to accept the role in *The Misfits* of a thump-drunk bronco buster. To sustain himself on the set, he planned to keep tanked up on vodka and grapefruit juice from his thermos.

Making his way to the rear of the airplane, he went into the toilet and checked his face in the mirror. His days of being known as "the male Elizabeth Taylor" were over. He'd earned that title when the press contrasted his male beauty to her female beauty in *A Place in the Sun* (1951). Looking at his ruined face, he remembered that he'd told Elizabeth "the beauty butchers never put my face back together again."

***

On the night of May 12, 1956, nearly four years earlier, Montgomery Clift had reluctantly agreed to attend a party at the home which she shared at the time with her now-estranged husband, Michael Wilding. Even back then, he was spending more nights with his lover, fellow British actor Stewart Granger, than he was with her.

Rock Hudson also attended the party at the Benedict Canyon house. Throughout the evening, Monty had begged Rock to follow him down that treacherous canyon road "to fuck me, really fuck me," but Rock had turned down the drunken offer.

Eventually, tanked up on way too much alcohol, Monty had stumbled out of the house and gotten behind the wheel of his car, although Elizabeth feared he was in no condition to drive. He didn't listen to his beloved "Bessie."

Monroe with Clift

Driving in the car in front of Monty, his longtime friend, actor Kevin McCarthy, agreed to go first, instructing Monty to follow him, slowly and carefully, down the dangerous road.

On the way down, McCarthy became alarmed that Monty was riding too close to his bumper. He was driving erratically. Hearing the screech of brakes, McCarthy looked back in horror as Monty's car went over an embankment, plunging into a ravine and crashing into a telephone pole.

One of the world's most celebrated faces, at that exact time being flashed across movie screens across the world, was smashed in seconds into bloody pulp.

Alerted to the wreck by McCarthy, Elizabeth, Wilding, and Rock raced down the hill. Rock and Wilding forced open the driver's door to let Elizabeth into the car. There, she found Monty a bloody mess, his entire head looked like chopped meat. He was choking. She'd taken her delicate hand and reached into his throat, dislodging his front teeth, which were trapped there, cutting off his breathing.

Attracted to the scene by a police radio call, photographers rushed up the canyon road. Elizabeth jumped out of the car and started cursing them. "I'll kick all of you bastards in the nuts if you take one picture of Monty." At that point his head seemed to have swollen like a big blood-red pumpkin.

***

Thoughts of that long-ago accident surely crossed Monty's mind, as he was scheduled to face the cruel cameras of John Huston the following morning. A limousine at the Reno Airport waited to take him to the Mapes Hotel, where Sandy met him. Monty asked to go directly to the bar while a porter carried his luggage upstairs. Monty seemed enchanted by Sandy and sat very close to him at a darkened table.

As Sandy sipped a Coca-Cola, Monty ordered a drink. Marilyn was nearly two hours late, so as the time passed, he had quite a few. When Marilyn finally arrived, all the men in the bar stopped talking and stared at her tight-fitting white dress studded with cherry-red polka dots.

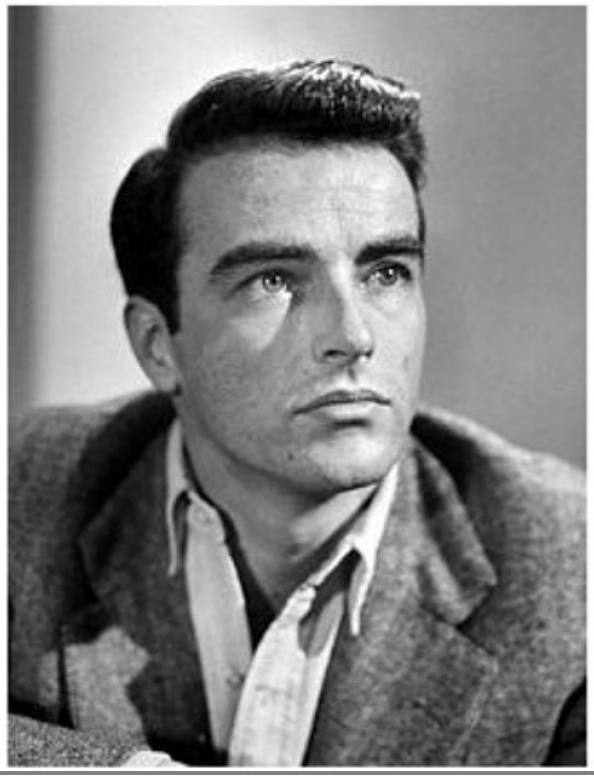
The actress tried to conceal her shock at seeing Monty's wrecked condition and his face. It was even more

ravished than when she'd seen him last. But she wasn't clever enough tonight pull that off in front of him. Her first glance, lasting for just a second, was enough to tell him what he didn't want to know.

"Hi, Pussy," he said, kissing her. "I know my face is a wreck. When I first met Sandy here, he asked me if I were 'Mr. Clift's older brother.'"

"Sandy should have known better than that," she said, casting a scolding look at the teenager. "After all, he's a more experienced man than the boy I met this afternoon."

"I didn't mean anything bad…really, I didn't," he protested.



Montgomery Clift, before his car accident

Monty looked him over. "You can make it up to me later tonight."

Marilyn kissed Monty on the lips and ran her porcelain-like fingers through his hair.

"Oh Pussy, Pussy, it's so good to see you." Monty told her, taking her hand. Their talk quickly gravitated to drugs. "What is it? Doriden? Luminal? Seconal? Phenobarbs? Nembutal? And plenty of liquor?"

"Don't forget trusty Benzedrine," she said. "Downers for the night, uppers to get me through another day."

"Even with all that, you and I are famous for our sleepless nights," Monty said.

"That's a hell of a lot of drugs," Sandy said. "One night when I went with some guys to Las Vegas, I smoked a marijuana cigarette, so I'm no stranger to drugs."

Both Marilyn and Monty laughed.

"I still can't sleep at night," she said. "The only time I can sleep without taking drugs is on that rare night—that very rare night—when Jack sleeps with me and holds me in his arms."

"I'll see if that works for me tonight," Monty said, "How about it, Sandy?"

"Well," he said with hesitation. "Whatever the job requires. But no funny stuff."

Monty turned to Marilyn. "And how is this thing with the senator."

"I'm working on him, but he can't divorce Jackie during his run for the presidency."

"That makes sense."

"After our recent experiences, you and I both should stay away from married men," Monty said. He turned to Sandy. "Are you married, kid?"

"No, and I don't plan to get married," Sandy said. "I want to devote my life to my movie career."

"I hear you've lost your Frenchman," Monty said to Marilyn. "I've also lost my Frenchman. The cute little fucker left me and has gone back to his wife."

“Yves Montand is out of my life,” she said. “Back to the faithful Simone Signoret. I read in the paper that he told reporters that ‘it’s within any fool’s power to seduce a woman. The art form is knowing how to break it off.’”

“*Paris-Match*, that sarcastic rag, claimed that ‘the Montands have survived Hurricane Marilyn’” Monty said.

“I met Yves at Idlewild when his plane to Paris was delayed for four hours because of a bomb threat,” she said. “He wouldn’t go with me to the hotel suite I’d rented nearby. We sat in the back seat of the Cadillac where he drank my champagne and ate my caviar. He even turned down my offer of a final blow-job for old time’s sake.”

“I didn’t know there was any man on the planet who would turn down a blow-job from Marilyn Monroe,” Sandy said. “I’m learning things.”

“I’ve got a lot more to teach you, kid,” Monty said, bending over and nibbling on the boy’s ear.

“Please don’t do that,” he said, glancing around nervously. “The guys here in the bar will think we’re a couple of fags.”

While Monty was debating the point with Sandy, Marilyn reached into her compact and checked her own face. Perhaps Monty’s lost beauty reminded her of how fragile her own looks were.

She suddenly looked up as Arthur Miller entered the bar. He glanced just briefly at them and then walked out.

“I thought Arthur was my friend,” Monty said. “He didn’t seem to recognize me.”

“You made the mistake of hanging out with the enemy,” she said. “For appearance’s sake, we’re booked into the same suite, with Sandy next door to us and you across the hall. I decided Arthur and I will try to hold this ridiculous marriage together until the picture is finished—that is, if it ever is.”

Monty had been a friend to both Miller and Marilyn. But as their union was unraveling, he vowed his allegiance to Marilyn. Before flying to Nevada, he had told a reporter, “Marilyn’s marriage to Arthur is all but over. It’s just waiting for a burial in the cold, cold ground. He’ got to face that fact, as painful as it might be to him. Surely he knows by now it’s dangerous to fall in love with screen goddesses…or screen gods for that matter.”

No one really wanted to talk about Miller, so the conversation quickly shifted to the star of the picture, Clark Gable, once known as “the King of Hollywood.”

“You and I may be in bad shape, but I hear Gable is on his last legs, too,” Monty said.

Doomed and in the desert: Monroe and Clift in *The Misfits*

“He flies in tomorrow,” Sandy said. “I’m dying to meet him. I saw *Gone With the Wind*. He was terrific.”

“Sweethearts, Marilyn Monroe has got to go,” she said. “I’ve got to face that craggy face of my bitter husband. He behaves like a three-year-old child.”

“All of us have our burdens, Pussy,” Monty said before turning to Sandy. “I feel another sleepless night coming on, and I want you in my room all night.”

“I guess that will be okay,” Sandy said. “But I warned you—no funny stuff.”

“Have fun, kids,” she said, kissing Monty on the lips. She rose and gave Sandy a long, lingering wet kiss.

“Thanks for this afternoon,” Sandy said. “I’ve never done anything like that before.”

“I know, precious,” she said. “Next time hold back a bit. A woman needs more time.”

“Don’t worry,” Monty said. “When the rooster crows, Sandy will know everything there is to know about sex.”

“I said no funny stuff,” Sandy protested.

“Listen, kid,” she said, “you told me you want to be a movie star. Well, okay. Listen to the gal who became one. To become a star, you’ve got to suck half the cocks in Tinseltown.”

***

An hour later, John Huston arrived in the bar with Frank E. Taylor, the producer of *The Misfits*. The bartender told Huston that “Miss Monroe and Mr. Clift have left.”

“I don’t need them tonight,” Huston said. Turning to Taylor, he guided him to the bar’s far corner. “Let’s finish off a bottle. Tomorrow, we’ll deal with those two psychic twins, Miss Monroe and Monty Clift. They’re on the same wave length, but broadcasting from a planet not of this earth.”

Arthur Miller

***

When Miller flew into Reno, he didn’t need Monty to announce the demise of his marriage to Marilyn. He already knew about that. She’d told him that she’d fallen in love with Yves Montand Arthur Miller and planned to divorce him to marry the Frenchman. At that point in their fading relationship, Miller had not been made aware that Montand had dumped her.

Originally, the script for *The Misfits* was conceived as a valentine to Marilyn, a sort of macabre valentine in memory of the child they had lost through a miscarriage.

As he steadily kept working and revising the script, it was turning into a *film noir* Western.

In creating the character of Roslyn, Miller had ripped off Marilyn’s *persona*, capturing her depressions, nervousness, paranoia, insecurity, and panic attacks.

He had written Roslyn as a disillusioned divorcée living out her six-week residency in Reno as a means of ridding herself of her husband, as played by Kevin McCarthy. In the film, she was on the skids, sustaining herself through booze, pills, and sex.

Instead of a valentine to Marilyn, the script evolved into a portrait of their deteriorating marriage. Much of the dialogue in the script had actually been spoken by her at one point or another during their marriage.

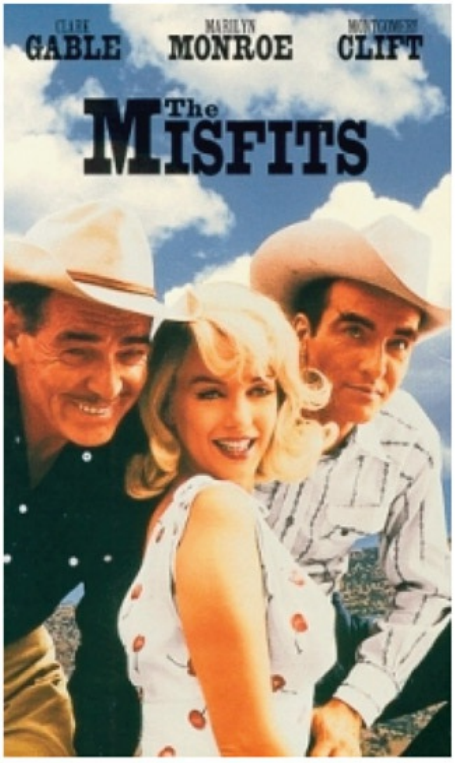
After reading the first draft of *The Misfits*, she had told her husband that she didn’t like her dialogue, the plot, or any of the characters, especially her own which she described as that of a degenerate. “My God, you bastard, you’ve even written in a scene where I fuck a tree.”

Newly divorced on the screen, Roslyn takes up with a ruggedly independent, aging cowboy, Gaylord Langland (Clark Gable). They move into the uncompleted house of Gay's friend, Guido (Eli Wallach), a part-time mechanic who has turned into an aimless wanderer.

This offbeat menagerie needs money, and Guido convinces Guy to round up some wild mustangs called "misfits" because they are too small to ride. Later in the plot, Roslyn learns that the horses are being rounded up to be slaughtered and turned into dog food.

Guy and Guido need a partner and come across a battered and disillusioned rodeo performer, Perce (Monty Clift), a part he called "that of a unisex mama's boy."

When Sandy retired with Monty to his bedroom across the hall, the actor told the boy, "The real fireworks won't be with us tonight, but in that suite with Marilyn and Miller." As it turned out, he was right.



In the middle of the night, Sandy, in Monty's bedroom, heard the sounds of a crashing object and shouting between Miller and Marilyn. Jumping up from the bed, he put on his underwear and, not bothering to dress, raced across the hall way. Using his passkey, he entered the brightly lit suite, just as Miller in pajamas was retreating to his own bedroom.

Tables had been overturned, vases broken, and a glass coffee table cracked into two pieces. From Marilyn's bedroom came a loud crashing noise. He rushed to discover that she'd thrown a champagne bottle at a large mirror.

She stood nude before him. "I won't make this fucking picture. He's made me into something not quite human."

Sandy rushed over and scooped her in his arms, afraid she'd severely cut herself on all the broken glass.

He carried her across the hall and put her in bed with Monty. She was sobbing and desperately reached out to both of them, needing to be comforted.

The next morning, they were huddled together like orphans in a storm when John Huston, with the aid of a passkey from the maid, barged into their room and spotted the three nude bodies in bed together. Marilyn was sandwiched between the two men.

Huston had come to their room when neither Monty nor Marilyn had shown up on the set.

"Rise and shine, my sweeties," he said. "From the looks of things, this is going to be a hell of a picture."

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On the set, Marilyn sat with Sandy having a cup of black coffee served by a Chinese waiter from Reno. "Is that

black book you carry around a diary?" she asked. "I keep a diary too—only it's red."

"No," Sandy lied. "I'm sort of forgetful, so I write down any instructions I'm given."

Actually, she'd been right. Realizing he was watching film history in the making, Sandy was writing down everything that happened, including details about the conversation between Marilyn and Monty in the bar last night. At the end of the filming, he planned to sell his notes to a magazine for enough money to buy a used car.

Arriving on the set was Eli Wallach, Marilyn's friend from the Actors Studio in Manhattan. He rushed over to her, and she hugged him tightly and kissed him on the lips. Without asking him how he was, she poured out her grief. "Oh, Eli, Eli, my marriage to Arthur is on the skids. We're just not compatible."

"I could have told you that from the beginning," he said. "You just aren't the little Jewish wife making *matzo* balls for her husband."

"I know that now, you silly thing," she said. "Why didn't you warn me about what he's like? He's a monster."

"Have you ever met a writer who isn't?" he asked. "Ever spent a night with Tennessee Williams?"

"Actually, I'm in love with Yves Montand," she said.

"Sounds like two divorces are coming up," Wallach told her as Sandy listened intently.

"The shit has gone back to Paris and his wife, but he'll probably write about our affair in some French magazine, maybe even in his memoirs."

Marilyn was correct in her prediction. In his memoirs, Montand would write about how their affair began.

"I bent down to put a good night kiss on her cheek. And her head turned, and my lips went wild. It was a wonderful, tender kiss. I was half stunned, stammering. I straightened up, already flooded with guilt, wondering what was happening to me. I didn't wonder for long."

Wallach was also a friend of Monty's, and the actor asked about his fellow actor.

"If you can believe it, Monty is even more fucked up than I am," Marilyn claimed.

At that point, Huston signaled her to join him about thirty feet away.

Miller appeared on the set and spotted Wallach, who was also his friend. He joined Wallach as the Chinese waiter also served him coffee. Miller ignored Sandy and devoted all his attention to Wallach, but Sandy was like a sponge, absorbing everything that was said.

As expected, Miller complained to Wallach about Marilyn, but this time, it was relatively philosophical—not the usual nagging gripe.

"The simple fact, terrible and lethal, is that no space exists between Marilyn herself and Marilyn the star. She has become Marilyn Monroe, and that is what is killing her. There is no real Marilyn Monroe. She never existed except as a fantasy creation of hers. She knows she will one day vanish, but not Marilyn on the screen. Since she was a teenager, she's been creating this imaginary character for public consumption. But the character she's created has become the living, walking Marilyn herself. She has slowly and deliberately murdered Norma Jeane, and now she's ripping Norma Jeane's rotting flesh from her body piece by piece. All that will be left is this cardboard caricature, Marilyn Monroe."

Sandy didn't really understand Miller's point, but Wallach seemed to know what he meant.

The teenager looked up from this intense conversation and his coffee to see Clark Gable walking onto the set and heading to the chairs where Marilyn and Huston sat. To Sandy, he looked like his own grandfather, old before his time. He'd only seen Gable in *Gone With the Wind*, and this overweight actor didn't resemble the dashing Rhett Butler he'd viewed years before on the screen.

In the hot morning sun, Sandy decided to ingratiate himself with Gable.

Eli Wallach or even Arthur Miller didn't make hot copy for a magazine. But Monty did, and so did Marilyn, and most definitely Clark Gable did, too.

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Known for his "cobra grin," John Huston stood up tall, lanky, and erect in his African safari suit, evoking Ernest Hemingway. This macho man under a ten-gallon hat extended his weathered hand to another macho man, Clark Gable.

Sandy was already moving toward the trio, when Huston signaled him to get more black coffee for all of them. Sandy had to introduce himself to Gable. Unlike Miller, Gable extended a firm handshake and met Sandy eye to eye.

"Sandy's been hired to wipe your ass every time you take a crap," Huston said.

"An honorable profession," Gable said, flashing a smile. Gable also extended a hand to Marilyn. "Miss Monroe," he said. "We meet again. It's been years. I don't recall how many. My memory isn't what it used to be.

That's why John here cast me as the old bronco rider facing his last roundup."

Clark Gable

"You have plenty of pictures left in you, Mr. Gable," she assured him.

"I think since we once knew each other intimately, we should be on a first-name basis." Gable said.

"I wanted our affair to last," she said. "In fact, I was hoping you would propose to me."

"I can just see the headline—Clark Gable robs the cradle."

"You are a man of the ages," she said. "Jean Harlow in the 1930s, Lana Turner in the 1940s, and Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s."

"Time does march on, doesn't it? You left out Carole Lombard. She was my true love. Just the other night, I told Carole that I will be seeing her soon."

"Not that soon," she assured him. "Rhett Butler is invincible, the kind of man who will live forever. That's why you're the King. If only you would make me your Queen."

"I don't think that will happen," he said. "It's too late. Maybe in our next lives."

"Okay then, have it your way, Rhett," she said. "If I can't become Queen of Hollywood, I will become First Lady of America."

He looked puzzled at that remark, but didn't ask her to explain it.

Days later, when Sandy was keeping Huston's ice fresh in his bourbon, the director sat quietly, waiting for Marilyn to show up. In the stifling head, Huston revealed that he knew all about that affair with Gable Marilyn had had back in 1950 when he'd cast her in *The Asphalt Jungle*.

"I introduced her to the director, Clarence Brown, and he was quite taken with Marilyn," Huston told Sandy. "He took her to the set of a picture he was directing called *To Please a Lady*. It starred Clark and Barbara Stanwyck. Both of these big stars were quite taken with Miss Marilyn. Clark bedded her and so did Stanwyck. In fact, she got Marilyn a role in her upcoming movie, *Clash by Night*. Yes, Marilyn would lay for both men and women in those days, just like you're doing with Monty and Marilyn today. Nothing ever really changes in Hollywood."

***

As Norman Mailer would later write, "The filming of *The Misfits* proceeded with the pace of a wounded caterpillar."

In less than a week into the shoot, Huston had to face endless delays from Marilyn. One morning, Sandy was unable to get her out of bed for the entire day. Sometimes, he'd usher her makeup man directly into her bedroom,

especially when she was running so late her face was worked on even as she sat on the toilet.

"During the filming of *The Misfits*, I had a double-barreled shotgun aimed right between my eyes," Huston recalled. "Not just Marilyn, but the Black Widow Spider herself."

John Huston

Onto the set during the second day of shooting arrived Paula Strasberg, the wife of Lee Strasberg of the Actors Studio in Manhattan. Officially, she was announced as Marilyn's acting coach, but Huston was well aware that she was actually there in the scorching desert heat to direct Marilyn in all her scenes.

She did not believe that one should wear white to reflect the rays of the sun. She dressed instead entirely in black—a black caftan, a wide-brimmed black straw hat, and a pair of large black sunglasses. She held a black palmetto fan in her hand, and always carried a large black umbrella. By the second week, she demanded that Huston shoot a simple scene with Marilyn a total of sixty-five times, even though he, as director, had approved the fifth take.

As Marilyn's coach, Paula was making three thousand dollars a week. She'd told columnist Leonard Lyons, "Marilyn has the fragility of a female but the constitution of an ox. She is a beautiful hummingbird made of iron. Her only trouble is that she's a very pure person in an impure world."

Friends of Marilyn didn't know exactly who Paula was describing, but it certainly wasn't the Marilyn Monroe they knew.

Huston ordered the crew to "ice Strasberg out." He did it with condescension, bidding her an elaborate good morning and bowing at the waist. If she had anything to say, he listened "as if she were delivering words writ by God." At the end of the shoot for the day, a slightly drunken Huston would be even more condescending in his ritualized good night before heading to the gambling casinos of Reno, where he was losing big bucks.

His losses made him particularly grumpy on the set the following morning—that and the endless production delays caused by Marilyn not showing up.

Paula Strasberg

"As his gambling losses mounted and as Marilyn caused more delays, Huston became almost sadistic to her," Sandy later claimed.

The morning she had to shoot her first scene with Gable, she was so nervous, she'd swallowed a fistful of Nembutals. "We had to take her to the local hospital and get her stomach pumped," Sandy said.

Throughout the shoot, her psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, had prescribed 300 milligrams of Nembutal to put her to sleep at night, even though the maximum dose that was usually defined as safe was 100 milligrams.

Marilyn carried her feud with her husband onto the set, often denouncing him in from of everybody. In one of her drugged states, she accused Miller of "letting Monty suck your cock."

She was wrong about that, but behind her back, love was brewing in the playwright's heart. It was not directed at Monty.

It was with a certain irony that Miller, married "to the most desirable woman in the world," met the love of his life on the set of *The Misfits*. Four years older than Marilyn, Austria-born Ingeborg Morath was a freelance photographer who stood tall and attractive. Very discreetly, he began spending time alone with her away from the set of *The Misfits*. It is not known when their actual affair began, but he did tell Monty that "Inge is helping me mend a broken heart."

After his eventual divorce from Marilyn in 1961, the playwright married Morath on February 7, 1962.

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Her body ravaged by drugs and liquor, Marilyn had told Sandy and Paula, "I go to bed each night with a foreboding there will never be a morning."

The first week of tolerating Marilyn's endless delays made Gable call her "a self-indulgent twat."

One afternoon, Marilyn came to Gable in tears. She'd read in a Las Vegas paper that gamblers were placing bets as to which of its trio of big-name but unbalanced stars would crack up or even die before shooting on *The Misfits* came to an end.

After that experience of showing him such raw emotion and pain, Gable became more sympathetic to her. From then on, he waited patiently for her to show up, sometimes for four or five hours at a time. He realized it was more than her marriage coming unglued—the problem involved Marilyn herself.

He could afford to wait. It was written into his contract that he'd be paid $48,000 a week for overtime. That was in addition to his generous salary of $750,000, plus ten percent of the gross. "I know there will be plenty of overtime on this picture," Gable told Huston. "I'll end up a rich man even if the film bombs."

Throughout the entire filming, Marilyn constantly complained to Huston that she wanted to get paid as much as Gable. Previously, she and Miller had agreed to do the film for half a million dollars between them, plus a small percentage of the gross. She was sorry that she'd agreed to that. She told Huston, "Poor Monty looks awful and Clark looks like he could play Andy Hardy's grandfather. As for me, I should have been photographed in Technicolor. The public will buy tickets to see me, not some broken down hayseed cowboys."

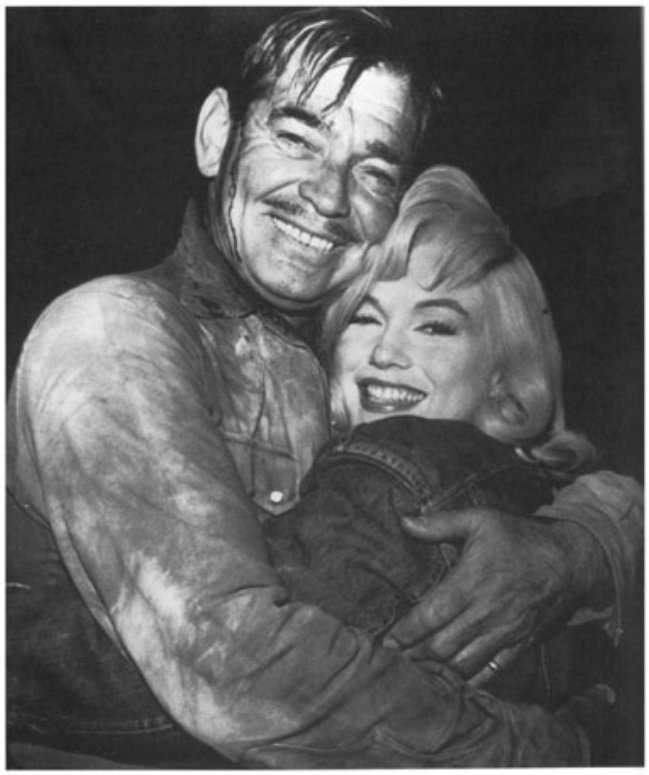
When she did show up on the set, she looked physically exhausted, wandering around in a drugged daze. When Huston barked at her, as he frequently did, she would run to the “honey wagon” to vomit. The night before, Miller tried to rehearse her in new lines he’d written, but she couldn’t remember them, sometimes confusing them with an earlier script. The script girl had to write out cue cards for her.

Gable also objected to Miller and Huston constantly changing the script after he’d laboriously learned his lines. At one point, Gable found the working conditions intolerable and called his agent, threatening to walk off the set. Since he had script approval, he could have closed down the shoot.

It was Marilyn who went to see him and, even though she herself wanted to bolt from the set of *The Misfits*, she prevailed upon him to stay.

It was that very night she made a play for him, partly because she’d been told that his wife, the actress-socialite Kay Williams Spreckels, would be arriving in Reno the following afternoon. Gable had married her after his disastrous fourth marriage to Lady Sylvia Ashley, who had been previously wed to Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.

Since the late 1930s, Gable had been Marilyn’s Hollywood fantasy man. She told people that he was her real father, and laughingly suggested that she wanted to make the relationship “incestuous.” A decade before, her dream had come true when he’d taken her to bed. She wanted him to stay and live with her, but he’d moved on. In her mentally deteriorating condition, she felt that by seducing him again, this time before his wife arrived in Nevada, she could once again prove that he was still attracted to her.



Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe

But an aging Gable, nearing the final days of his life, was in no mood for sex. That day, he’d drunk an amazing two quarts of whiskey over a period of several hours, and he’d smoked three packages of cigarettes. At one point, in the scorching sun, he’d developed uncontrollable shakes, and Sandy had to help him back to his dressing room.

Unaware of all that, Marilyn came to his door at around eleven that evening. Apparently, he’d been sleeping, something she rarely managed to do. “I’ve come by to give you a present, the same present you gave Scarlett O’Hara when you carried her up those stairs and raped her.”

“Not tonight,” he said. He kissed her lightly on the lips and patted her butt. “Now, fatso, go to bed and get some sleep so you’ll be ready to face the camera at ten in the morning.” He gently shut the door in her face.

She ran crying back to her own suite. Sandy was waiting there. “That was one fast fuck,” he said.

“He rejected me,” she said, sobbing. “He turned me down. No man turns down Marilyn Monroe.”

“Fortunately, you’ve got a young man like me, not a grandfather, to pork you tonight.”

"Yeah, right," she said, looking at him. "Why don't you get the fuck out of here?"

The next day, Gable told Huston what had happened. "Ten years ago, I would have fucked the hell out of her all night. But in my present condition, I can't even satisfy Kay."

The next morning, Gable tried to deflect Marilyn's sexual interest. At lunch with Monty and her, he removed his false teeth and placed them beside his plate. Then he proceeded to do the most amazing impersonation of that old cowboy sidekick, Gabby Hayes.

In spite of that, Marilyn looked at him with a kind of adoration. "Teeth or not, you're still Clark Gable."

But the very next day, he filmed a scene in which she was nude in bed, covered only with a thin sheet. He bent down to kiss her, and at one point, he caressed her breast.

She later told Monty, "I was thrilled. I got goose bumps. I've never tried to seduce a man harder in my entire life. I must be slipping. The young Marilyn certainly had no problem seducing Clark."

"I suspect Clark was a hell of a lot younger then," Monty said.

At the luncheon table, Sandy was shocked to see "The King of Hollywood with no teeth." In the middle of Gable's impersonation, he was tapped on the shoulder. "Call for Huston," a grip told him. "Get him."

Sandy rounded up Huston. He'd learned that the caller from Los Angeles asking for Huston was Humphrey Bogart.

"Bogie's on the phone for you," Sandy told the director.

Sandy eavesdropped on the conversation. Apparently, Huston's friend was calling to learn how things were going on the set. Sandy heard Huston say, "Miller is sulking away somewhere with this photographer—female, that is—and Gable is dying. Marilyn is drunk, acting like the self-destructive slut she is. Monty is wandering around on Jupiter, and I'm losing big time in the Reno casinos and robbing the production money. The picture is way over budget. Now how are you, Bogie, running off with your mistress and leaving your young wife at home?"

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Later that morning, Sandy escorted a wobbly Marilyn over to Huston, who sat in a director's chair sipping a bourbon. She'd had a bad night. Sandy had been unable to get her into a cold shower to wake her up.

She was in a foul mood, one of the worst he'd ever witnessed.

Huston studied Marilyn carefully, perhaps evaluating that she looked too dissipated to face the camera. "Honey, I have some advice for you. You're a sweetie, but you really must bathe more frequently, particularly out in this desert heat. In Los Angeles, I encountered Bette Davis at a party. She said that a year ago, she ran into you at a party. She felt your odor evoked the offal market at the Chicago slaughterhouse."

"Some men like the natural scent of a woman," she protested.

"Natural scent is not Camembert cheese," he told her.

She ran from the set. On the way to her trailer, she told Sandy, "I could kick Huston in the balls." Back in her dressing room, she was very agitated. "With Miller's help, he's making an anti-Monroe film. Not only that, but I'm coming off as anti-male, not to mention as a narcissistic bitch."

Marilyn lay down on a sofa and instructed Sandy to tell Huston that she was unable to work that day. Back on the set, he found Gable and Huston in a deep conversation. He brought them fresh drinks and listened to what his director had to say. He was afraid that Huston was going to fire Marilyn.

"I think this is Monroe's last picture," he told Gable. "She's beginning to show her age. Her tits are starting to sag. *Let's Make Love*, so I hear, is a disaster. I fear this dreary *film noir* will keep them away from the box office and at home watching TV. Her reputation in Hollywood is ruined. When these two pictures are released, she'll be box office poison. She's on her way out. Do you know how many movie stars fall from the sky?"

Gable lit a cigarette and took a stiff drink. "Yeah," he said. "You're looking at one right now." He seemed to take umbrage at Huston's comments. "You give me this over-the-hill broad and a sleazy little homosexual runt, and you expect me to carry the picture for these two zombies." He turned his back on Huston and walked away.

After a night of great despair, Marilyn had stayed up until dawn, with Sandy offering her companionship, but not much else. He tried to arouse her at ten the following morning, but she seemed in a daze. He answered her phone, fearing an attack from Huston.

It was not a local call. He heard the voices of two operators. As it turned out, a call was coming in from Switzerland from Charlie Chaplin, who was living there in exile.

At first, Sandy didn't believe that the real Chaplin was calling, thinking it was some kind of joke. Since he'd never seen a Chaplin talking picture, he did not recognize the sound of his voice.

When he became convinced that he was on the phone with "The Little Tramp," he tried more aggressively to

awaken her.

"A guy who says he's Charlie Chaplin is on the phone from Switzerland," he told her.

The impact of that name seemed to shock her awake. "Charlie is calling? I'll take it!" She signaled him to leave the room and give her some privacy. As he headed out the door, he heard her say, "Charlie, you sweet man. I can't believe it's you after all this time!"

At the door, Sandy could hear her voice, but couldn't make out what she was saying. He kept hearing the word "horses." Why would Charlie be calling her about horses?

When he didn't hear her voice any more, he came back into the room. She was on the bed crying. "Oh, my God, I couldn't believe it. I'd once dreamed of doing a comedy with Charlie directing me. So my big break comes, but what did I get? He's pitching a script about shooting horses. What is it with Arthur Miller and Charlie Chaplin? They both want to make a movie about shooting horses. What would I become on the screen? The enemy of all animal rights activists?"

She didn't seem to make sense. "I could not believe that Chaplin would call her to make another movie about shooting horses," Sandy recalled.

It wasn't untill1969 when Sandy, in Las Vegas, went to the movies did he figure it out. Chaplin, at least back in 1960, must have acquired the rights to a property called *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* Jane Fonda took the role originally offered to Marilyn, and it became of her finest films. It wasn't about shooting horses at all, but about those grueling endurance contests, the dance marathons of the depression-plagued 1930s.

Back in the Nevada desert in 1960, the call from Chaplin seemed to have awakened Marilyn. She staggered out of bed and called for Sandy to come to the bathroom. He found her sitting on the toilet. She ordered him to look at the top of her head. "Am I getting a bald spot?" she asked.

Charles Chaplin, Sr.

For the first time, he looked beyond the glamorous façade of Marilyn Monroe and discovered an ordinary woman, who, like millions of other women throughout America at that very moment, was also "sitting in a crapper dumping a load," as he would later so graphically describe the incident in his diary.

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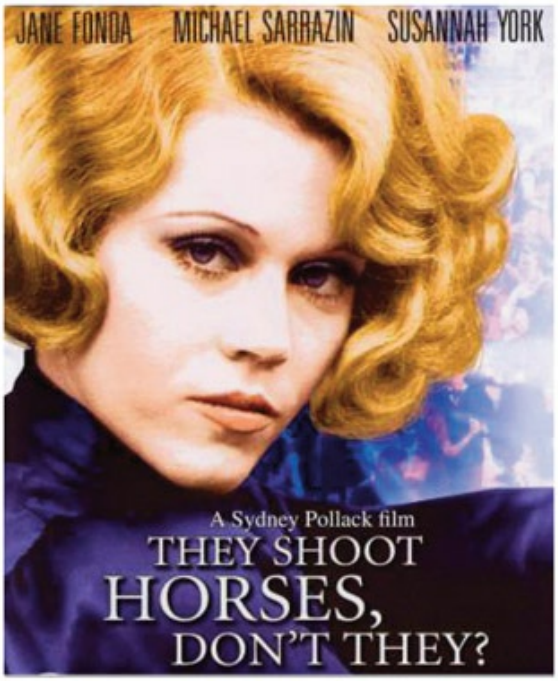
Back on the set, both Sandy and Marilyn were introduced to Rex Bell, the lieutenant governor of Nevada. He'd been a movie star cowboy like Gene Autry or Roy Rogers, appearing in such films as *The Idaho Kid* (1936) and such television series as *Cowboys and Injuns* (1950). He'd agreed to appear as an old cowpoke in a cameo appearance in *The Misfits*.

What thrilled Marilyn was not Bell himself, but the knowledge that he was the husband of Clara Bow, the silent screen vamp once known as "The It Girl."

As a child, Marilyn had made Bow her role model until she switched her affection to that platinum blonde, Jean Harlow. After the release of the film, *It*, Bow had achieved international stardom as the sex symbol of the 1920s. In 1928 and 1929, she'd been the number one box office draw in America.

Marilyn had been greatly flattered when she'd read in the paper that Bow, long ago retired in Nevada, had claimed that "Marilyn Monroe is my favorite actress, but I've never met her."

Like Marilyn, Bow's life had been characterized by scandal, including one urban legend that asserted that she had taken on all the members of the 1927 University of Southern California football team.



Jane Fonda, in a role that might have been Marilyn's

In 1931, *The Coast Reporter*, a tabloid, published lurid allegations about her, wherein she was accused of "exhibitionism, incest, lesbianism, bestiality, drug addiction, alcoholism, and of having syphilis."

Even though Bow never met Marilyn, there was an affinity between them. In the words of Bow's biographer, David Stenn, "Both Clara and Monroe had mentally ill mothers and maternal grandmothers, all of whom were committed to asylums; both suffered physical and emotional abuse in their childhood; both had been catapulted to oppressive fame, then underpaid for their services and underrated for their talent; and both had been endowed with, then entrapped by, the same sexual-vulnerable, womanly babyish, stupid-shrewd image."

Life magazine once hired Richard Avedon to shoot pictures of Marilyn as Bow in a red wig. Bow was flattered but nixed the idea of Marilyn portraying her in a film during her lifetime.

Later that night, Marilyn knocked on Bell's door. He slept in the nude, but hastily put a robe around his body and answered the door himself. In 1960, lieutenant governors of sparsely populated states did not have much security.

From all reports, he was startled to see Marilyn there. He invited her in for a drink. But according to Sandy, he turned down her offer of a night of sex. He told her that if she had extended that invitation ten years before, "I would be willing to go at it all night. I'm not the man I used to be."

Perhaps he knew that the only reason Marilyn wanted to seduce him was because he was the husband of Clara Bow.

After giving Marilyn that drink and a pat on her ass, he showed her to the door. He had only months to live before dying in office on the Fourth of July, 1962, at the age of fifty-eight.

His years of rough living finally caught up with him. It was only after his death that Marilyn learned that he no longer lived with his wife, but refused to divorce her. He'd fallen in love with a blonde divorcée ten years younger than Clara. Marilyn was equally disappointed to learn that Bell had split his estate among his sons and his mistress, Katie Jenkins. Bow got nothing.

Marilyn's own death followed Bell's a month later. Deeply saddened by the man she'd once loved, and by the

fate of the star she'd never met, Bow told the press, "Marilyn was so lovely and far too young to die. Being a sex symbol is a heavy load to carry when one is tired, hurt, and bewildered."

Silent Screen vamp Clara Bow (top), her husband, Rex Bell (middle), and (bottom) a scene from their unhappy marriage.

The Silent Screen vamp had only a short time to live herself. Clara Bow died in 1965 of a heart attack at the age of fifty.

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Gable's sympathy and understanding of Marilyn did not extend to Monty, at least not at first. During most of the shoot, a very shaky Monty tried to hold himself together, aided in no small part by his hip flask filled with a concoction of vodka, orange juice, and barbiturates.

One scalding hot afternoon in the desert, Monty could not seem to pull himself together in a scene he was shooting with Gable. Growing increasingly impatient, Gable finally lashed out at him. "You god damn little fag, why don't you sober up? I'm tempted to smash the other side of your face. You can't coast on your looks anymore."

The Misfits, on location Counterclockwise from far left: Frank E. Taylor, Arthur Miller, Eli Wallach, John Huston, Clark Gable, MM, and Montgomery Clift

"You're not exactly Rhett Butler anymore," Monty shot back.

"You little bitch," Gable said. "I should beat you to a pulp."

Seeing the oncoming fight from twenty feet away, Marilyn broke from Huston and ran between Gable and Monty. She pulled him away. On the way back to his dressing room, Monty shouted back at Gable, "Take out your fucking dentures and kiss my ass."

During the next week, Gable refused to speak to Monty except in front of the camera. One afternoon, he watched as Monty and Marilyn shot one of their more memorable scenes in which she cradles Monty in her lap. Each of them seems to identify with the other as two lost souls. The scene and its dialogue could have been ripped from the pages of their own lives, which it probably was."

Don't say anything," she murmurs to him. "Just be still. I don't know where I belong—maybe this is just the

next thing that happens. Maybe we're not supposed to remember anybody's promises."

Gable was so impressed he turned to Huston and said, "I have to hand it to him. The little fag can really act." Standing nearby, Sandy heard that remark to record in his diary.

The next day, Gable made peace with Monty. "Why don't you give me some of that stuff you keep pouring from your thermos?"

Without telling him what it was, Monty offered him a drink. For the first time, the two actors really talked, but it was mostly about Marilyn.

"She once told me that when she was a fatherless little girl, she used to carry around this picture of you," Monty said. "She told all the kids in school that you were her father, she your bastard daughter. She was so proud to be your daughter."

Monty offered Gable another drink, which he accepted. But when Sandy asked for one, Monty turned him down.

Sandy noted that the story seemed to touch Gable's heart. After that day, Gable was much kinder to both Marilyn and Monty. As Huston told Sandy, "Gable's becoming a father figure to both the fag and the broken-down whore."

Toward the end of the shoot, Sandy, Huston, Marilyn, and Gable began to notice that Monty was falling apart again. One day was particularly troubling when Huston insulted him on the set.

That night, Monty revived his reputation as a hopeless pill addict and a drunk.

He disappeared in the late afternoon and no one knew where he went. A call came in for Taylor, the producer, that night to come and rescue Monty. Calling Sandy to go with him, the two men drove to a lesbian bar near Truckee River, Nevada, to take Monty back to his hotel.

When they got there, the bartender told them that Monty had pulled down his jeans and mooned the hard-drinking cowgirls at the bar, calling them bull dykes. Two of the burly lesbians had picked him up and carried him outside the building, tossing him into an alley with the stray cats.

That is where Sandy and Taylor found Monty. The two men picked up the drugged actor and drove him back to Reno.

Taylor later told Monty's biographer, Patricia Bosworth, that "Around five in the morning, I was awakened by Monty's naked form sleepwalking in the hall, heading toward the elevator. I vaulted after him and managed to sling him over my shoulders just as the elevator door opened and hordes of tourists poured out. I panicked. Here I was, holding Montgomery Clift bare-assed in my arms, but nobody blinked an eye."

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Paula Strasberg was almost on the verge of a nervous breakdown, like Marilyn herself, claiming she'd been "the whipping boy of a cabal that consists of Miller, Huston, and Eli Wallach, the traitor."

In desperation, Paula summoned her husband, Lee Strasberg, and her actress daughter Susan to fly to Nevada to help her. "If I'm forced to quit," Paula claimed, "Marilyn will walk off the picture."

Stopping off in Reno, where their plane had landed, Lee and Susan attired themselves in cowboy gear. "We were just two Jewish greenhorns trying to fit into the desert scene," Susan later recalled.

The Strasbergs: Lee, Paula, and Susan

After embracing Lee, her longtime friend and acting mentor, Marilyn allowed him to go off to comfort his wife. Susan joined Marilyn in her badly air-conditioned trailer. “Oh, please, tell them I’m exhausted. I’m supposed to work six days a week here. I’m thirty-four years old, and I’ve been singing and dancing for five months in that lousy picture, *Let’s Make Love*. I need time to rest and get my spirits up. I’m so tired and hey, I’m not so young. It takes me longer to get my motor running.”

In the stifling trailer, Marilyn pulled off her dress and stood completely nude in front of Susan, searching for something cold to drink.

Susan had become comfortable with Marilyn’s nudity. Before she’d met Marilyn, she was very shy about taking off her own clothes, even using a large bath towel to protect her privacy as she changed at the gym.

One afternoon in Manhattan, Susan had gone shopping with Marilyn at Bloomingdale’s, looking for a sexy dress. “In the dressing room, Marilyn took off her dress,” Susan said. “She wore no underwear. I blushed and I thought the saleslady was going to faint. But Marilyn was as free as a child. She examined her breasts and even held them up for my inspection, wanting my opinion. She even examined her rear in a full-length mirror, complaining about what she called, ‘my nigger ass.’”

In her memoirs, *Marilyn and Me*, Susan recalled her first meeting with Marilyn during a filming in Hollywood. But it was in Chicago where they became better acquainted during a game of strip poker. “Both of us ended up naked as a jaybird.”

Even though Susan found Marilyn “sweet and lonely,” she claimed she didn’t befriend the star until later in New York. “I had too many friends like her, and I couldn’t handle it. Monty and Marilyn were birds of a feather.”

The friendship ripened when Marilyn began to stay over at the Strasberg home. Marilyn also befriended Johnny Strasberg, Lee’s son. He later claimed. “I knew my father and Marilyn were having an affair. It was something I felt when I saw the energy between them.”

Susan in her memoirs also confessed her own intimate moments with Marilyn. “We often talked about sexual things. She told me that she had to initiate relationships. ‘With men, it’s hands off. They don’t know what the hell to do with me. I almost have to say, ‘Do you want to fuck?’”

In her memoirs, Susan also relayed the details of her first intimacy with Marilyn when she came into her bedroom late at night. “She was out of it, her eyes glazed; she was groggy. She came over to where I was sleeping and we sat there together. She had on a bathrobe and nothing underneath, and I was thinking. Would I? Should I? Could I? I was a virgin still, and I sensed she would have done anything for comfort. There was a sense of sensuality because she was drugged, very loose.”

Back on the set of *The Misfits*, Sandy brought drinks to Lee and Paula. She told him, “I’m glad Susan is here. She’s the only person who can cheer Marilyn up.”

“She hasn’t smiled since filming began,” Sandy said before indulging in some teenage boasting. “Of course, I knew how to put a smile on her face.”

That night, Sandy saw Marilyn in better spirits than he'd ever known. "We had a cookout that night. Marilyn drank a lot. It was a fun evening. She put on a wig and some music and did a devastating impression of Mitzi Gaynor, an actress whom Marilyn claimed had once snubbed her. She sang Gaynor's trademark song, 'I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair.' The crew went wild."

Later, Marilyn learned that Miller had moved back into his suite. He'd been spending his nights in someone else's bedroom. She wasn't sure whose bedroom that was. Marilyn invited Susan to sleep over with her.

In the middle of the night, Miller heard drunken giggling and squealing coming from Marilyn's bedroom. He barged in, only to discover Marilyn and Susan, both nude, engaged in a pillow fight.

"Get out of here," he shouted at Susan.

"She's staying!" Marilyn shouted back. "I have to get my jollies some way. Certainly not from the male penis, the most unreliable of all organs."

"Then I'm leaving," Miller said.

As he slammed the door, she called out, "Good riddance."

The next morning, Miller told Huston and Sandy that he'd caught Susan and Marilyn in "a lezzie romp."

On the set, Sandy took Susan over to talk to Gable, to whom he was bringing his morning coffee. After chatting about Marilyn for about five minutes, Gable made a strange statement. "I'm glad I'm not a woman having to look beautiful and not wilted in 110-degree desert heat. Of course, a lot of hetero-sexual men I've known told me they wished I had been born a woman, so they could make love to me,. On the other hand, maybe I did miss out on something by not being a woman. I guess I'll have to ask Monty about that. He should know."

Clark Gable with Susan Strasberg on the set of *The Misfits*

Leaving Paula behind to face Miller and Huston, Lee and Susan headed for Reno after tearful goodbyes to Marilyn. Susan later claimed, "The St. Valentine's Day Massacre was not confined to the opening scene of *Some Like It Hot*, where Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon saw all those Chicago gangsters being gunned down. The real St. Valentine's Massacre was taking place on the set of *The Misfits."*

When Johnny Strasberg saw Marilyn for the final time, he told his sister, Susan, "I think Marilyn is a sick woman, a classic schizophrenic. She is dedicated to love. A schizoid will do anything for love. They are totally infantile, pulsing with life. They see the walls move. The amazing thing about her is that she has survived for as long as she has. People love her, but they have to cut her off or abandon her, which is the thing she expects. With Marilyn, you're dealing with an abandoned infant who's not an infant any more."

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In the midst of the chaos among the crew shooting *The Misfits*, a rumor spread that John Wayne would be driving up from Las Vegas for a visit to the film's location. The word was that Gable had had a minor stroke, and that he'd been taken to a hospital in Reno, but that he had appeared two days later looking reasonably fit. His most difficult scenes, those requiring great physical stamina, were yet to be shot. He was insisting on doing his own stunts.

Marilyn told Sandy and Monty that she was greatly concerned by the rumored possibility that all of her scenes with Gable would have to be reshot, perhaps with his replacement, John Wayne. “At the rate we’re going, *The Misfits* will reach the theaters in 1965 when John F. Kennedy will be in his second term as President of the United States.”

The night before Wayne’s arrival a drunken Monty wanted to talk to Marilyn about the tortuous relationship he’d had with Wayne during the making of the Western, *Red River*, in 1946, a picture that hadn’t been released until 1948.

During the evening, Sandy kept the drinks flowing and his ear tuned to what he could later record in his diary.

The director, Howard Hawks, had successfully lobbied to have Monty cast in *Red River*. Monty claimed that he’d told Hawks at the time that he feared he’d be no match for Wayne on the screen. “I’m rail thin and stand only five feet ten,” he said. “The Duke will blow me right off the screen like a tumbleweed.”

“You’re an actor, Clift,” Hawks had assured him. “Act big on the screen.”

Heavily in debt, Monty had agreed to do the picture. “Once Wayne got beyond all that shit about me being a fag, we bonded. By the time of our big fight scene in *Red River*, the director, Howard Hawks, had turned me into a crackerjack cowpoke with an old five-star cowboy hat that Gary Cooper had used in some of his westerns. I had to learn a few rodeo tricks too. It took four days to shoot that fight scene with Wayne. I was black and blue and bruised all over. But thanks to what I learned, I can convincingly play a cowpoke in *The Misfits.”*

John “The Duke” Wayne with Monty Clift in *Red River*

Despite his memories of working with Wayne years before, Monty nonetheless had deep insecurities about encountering Wayne after the passage of so many years.

Marilyn was even more nervous, fearing that if Wayne were to commandeer Gable’s role in *The Misfits*, she’d have no onscreen chemistry with him. “He’s not the type of man I gravitate to.”

The next day, shortly after Wayne’s arrival on the set of *The Misfits*, he immediately began looking for Gable. It was Sandy who unearthed why Wayne had come for a visit. He wasn’t planning to replace Gable in *The Misfits*. He’d come instead to pitch a script to Gable, whom he wanted to co-star with him in an upcoming movie slated for filming in Africa, *Hatari!*, whose name translates as “danger” from Swahili. Scheduled for filming in Tanganyika (now northern Tanzania), the plot of the film involved a group of western expatriates who catch wild animals and sell them to zoos. Howard Hawks had signed on as director, but he believed that Gable would be more receptive if Wayne, as his potential co-star, made the sales pitch.

That night, Marilyn ordered Sandy to bring her a bottle of whiskey. After putting on her tightest dress, she headed for Wayne’s bedroom at the Mapes Hotel. She asked Sandy to wait up for her because she wanted him to give her a bubble bath when she came back.

He expected to wait for hours, but she was back in the room within twenty minutes, looking very agitated.

“Duke must be in bed like he is in the movies—quick on the draw,” Sandy said to her.

“It was nothing like that,” she said, her face looking pale. She began to pull off her clothes. “I knocked on Wayne’s door, and he answered it in his underwear, probably thinking it was room service. I sorta made my intentions known. But then I heard Monty’s voice. I looked into the living room. Monty was lying on the sofa with a drink. He was completely nude. I left quickly, knowing that boys will be boys.”

"I'm not exactly a duke, but maybe tonight is my lucky night," Sandy said.

She looked him up and down as she removed her clothing. "You're on, kid. Arthur is impotent with me. Gable can't get it up any more. Huston hasn't fucked me in twenty years. Eli Wallach, the idiot, is in love with his wife. Monty likes to be the fuckee, not the fucker. And Mr. John Wayne has secret desires I can't fulfill. Just for the record, I'm known as the world's most desirable woman. What bullshit is that?"

As she talked, Sandy was slowly doing a striptease for her, with his jockey shorts the last item to go. "Take a look at jumbo here. You're getting a rise out of me even before I give you that bubble bath."

As she headed for the bathroom, she turned to him. "The last time I had a bubble bath was with Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. He's the man who's going to become the President of the United States this year."

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As the filming of *The Misfits* neared its inexorable end during Nevada's scorching late summer months of 1960, Sandy noticed Marilyn moving deeper and deeper into depression—not just a melancholy one, but the lament of a deeply wounded psyche.

She told him one night about how, during July of 1957, she'd learned that she was pregnant. "It might have been Arthur's child, although I doubt that. The father could have been any of many many men. I don't really know. What I knew is that I desperately wanted that baby. I wanted to be a mother. Intuitively, I believed that it would be a girl. Could you imagine the life that girl would lead as my daughter? Every straight man in America would want to fuck her."

A month later, as she recalled, her doctor told her she'd been diagnosed as having an actopic pregnancy. "After hearing that, my life went on a roller coaster ride to hell. As a girl, I had dreamed of becoming the next Lana Turner, making love on and off the screen with Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, and Clark Gable."

"After losing my little girl, I said 'to hell with my career.' My marriage was collapsing, my life falling apart. Instead of Arthur making a rare appearance in my bed, I preferred to sleep with a bottle of liquor and fifteen bottles of pills on my nightstand."

"I've tried other men—Yul Brynner, Oleg Cassini, Sammy Davis, Jr., Elia Kazan, Dean Martin, Robert Mitchum, Paul Newman, Franchot Tone, Darryl F. Zanuck, even pint-sized Mickey Rooney. These men are famous and could deal with my fame. But when I screw unknown men, I find they become impotent during their attempts to take on the world's most seductive woman. Perhaps out of intimidation, even fear, their little weenies recede into their bodies. It's awful. It's like I'm the great castrator of the Western world."

"I didn't hear any complaints from you," Sandy said. "And I'm not all that well known…yet."

"Oh, honey, a boy of nineteen can get it up looking at a dirty postcard. Believe me, I know. After my miscarriage, the only man I could trust to rise to the occasion was Joe DiMaggio. When Arthur was away, I could rely on him to come over and fuck the stars out of my eyes. Trouble was, he's only good for one round. Then he falls asleep and snores all night."

"Far more devastating was a letter I got from my mother, Gladys [Gladys Baker Eley]."

"*Dear Norma Jeane,*
You are a very dumb girl, unlike your mother. You must have gotten your brains from your father. You have no talent. You'll never keep a man. As for Marilyn Monroe, as you call yourself, being a mother, don't make me laugh. You can't take care of yourself, much less an infant. You'd be the most unfit mother there ever was. Every night I pray to God to rescue you.
Gladys"

"No 'with love'…just nothing," Marilyn said. "But she added a P.S."

"You're selling your tits to the world. Don't forget where you inherited those money-makers. I'd like some of that loot you're hauling in to pay me back for all the sacrifices I've made raising you."

One afternoon, when Sandy arrived with two bottles of chilled champagne, she was standing nude in front of a full-length mirror. "Come over here and see how much fat you can bunch up around my stomach."

Although reluctant to do so, he did as she instructed, meanwhile telling her, "These are love handles—very sexy."

"Love handles, like hell! I'm fat. *Fat!"* With a little yelp, she rushed to her night table, where she removed two capsules from a bottle, sprinkling them into a champagne glass as he popped a cork. "Pour the bubbly over this

powder."

The following afternoon, he arrived once again with two chilled bottles of champagne. Once again, he found her standing nude in front of the full-length mirror. This time her dialogue was different. "I'm fat and I don't give a rat's fart if I am. In fact, I intend to become bloated, maybe weighing up to three-hundred pounds. A fat, obese Marilyn Monroe to spring on the world. I'll call Hugh Hefner and sign on to do a double spread in *Playboy*. A roly-poly Marilyn Monroe, former sex goddess. For once and for all, I will destroy the image of Marilyn Monroe as a love goddess. I hate being a sex symbol All it means is having rotten sex from a lot of impotent men. Of course, there's a downside. My nude spread of a fat Marilyn in *Playboy* will attract all the chubby chasers in the world."

"Marilyn, after we finish this movie, you can take me back to Hollywood as your boy," Sandy said. "My past performances have shown you that I can be called 'Ever Ready.'"

She whirled around and confronted him, her soft features giving way to a harshness he'd never seen there before. He'd later write, "The kindly female Dr. Jekyll gave way to the hideous Miss Hyde. It's like she's a total split personality."

"Like hell I can count on you," she shouted at him. "You're a two-minute man. You're incapable of giving a woman an orgasm."

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Women don't have orgasms—only men have those."

"Fuck you, you stupid little brat. Why don't you get the hell out of here and leave me alone? I can't stand the sight of you. Go fuck Arthur Miller. That tight-assed son of a bitch needs someone to blast open that anally retentive rosebud."

She turned from the sight of him and reached for two more capsules.

"Miss Monroe… *please!"*

She looked up at him. "Are you still here? If you're not gone in thirty seconds, I'm going to break this champagne bottle and castrate you with its jagged edge so you'll never again leave another woman unsatisfied. Get out of here!"

At the door, as he was rushing out, he heard a different voice, a soft, alluring Marilyn, her words almost a purr. "Don't leave me, Sandy…please don't go."

He slammed the door in her face wanting to turn to someone for help, but not knowing who to go to. Then he thought of Monty.

In Monty's bedroom, he found him lying nude and drugged on his unmade bed. He was staring blankly at the ceiling.

Even in that condition, he seemed to comprehend what Sandy was telling him. Tears welled in Monty's eyes. "Go to her. Rescue her. I can't help her. I can't even help myself right now."

He kissed Monty on his forehead and, bracing himself, went back into the bedroom of Marilyn's suite. There was no sign of Miller.

Like Monty, Marilyn was lying nude on the bed. On the floor, he noticed an empty bottle of pills. "Oh, my God," he shouted.

In an ambulance on the way to the hospital, he made a note to remember the date for his diary: August 27, 1960. He'd forgiven her for her harsh words, because he didn't think she really meant them.

With a young paramedic, he was at her side, holding her hand, trying to get her to stay awake, to talk. He'd told the ambulance crew that she'd swallowed a bottle of barbiturates.

The driver of the ambulance had alerted the nearest hospital in Reno that they would be arriving with a patient, her name—Marilyn Monroe—not revealed as a means of avoiding reporters and photographers.

"Marilyn, stay awake," he said in a loud voice, shaking her.

"No, no, let me go," she said softly. "I'm going…to a peaceful place. All around me…pink clouds."

At twilight back on the set, Huston assembled cast and crew, including both Monty and Gable. "I'm shutting down the film until Marilyn recovers. She desperately needs rest. She won't be with us for a while. The hospital in Reno pumped her stomach. Tonight, she's being flown to the Westside Hospital in Los Angeles, if you want to send her a get-well card."

Later, during a particularly realistic talk with Gable, Huston told a different truth. "Actually, I'm shutting down production because I've gambled away the film's financing at those fucking casinos in Reno. All the tables are rigged."

"With Marilyn in the hospital, I'll have more time to come up with some more loot. I know it's not very gentlemanly of me, but I'll have to blame Marilyn for the shutdown, not the real reason, which is my gambling debts. When a picture usually shuts down in Hollywood, either the director or the star is blamed. In this case, let it be our flickering star."

"The way I feel, I may be joining Marilyn very soon," Gable said.

"That may be true," Huston said. "Regret ably, I'll not get out of life so soon or so easily. I'm a tough old *hombre."* His gaze was cast upon the oncoming night of the desert. "I was born in Nevada…Nevada, Missouri, that is. We're tough there. I've got steel in my guts, and I'll survive. I might even make it to 1990, but Marilyn will not. Hollywood is destroying her, but she's also giving Hollywood a lot of help."

Huston would die in his bed on August 28, 1987.

The day before, he told his family, "I've been fighting my body for twenty years, demanding that it keep me alive. But it's winning the war against me. I'm sick and I'm tired of fighting. At some point, all men come to the end of the trail. Hell, I outlasted Bogie by thirty years."

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Marilyn would remain in L.A.'s Westside hospital until September 5, when she returned to Nevada to complete work on *The Misfits*. While resting and recuperating, she received a parade of distinguished visitors.

Later, Marilyn shared details of these hospital visits with her best girlfriend, another blonde bombshell, Jeanne Carmen, a struggling actress and model who bore an amazing resemblance to Marilyn herself. In Carmen's case, that was no accident, but a deliberate choice in dress and makeup. She was called "a Marilyn Monroe clone" by her enemies.

In addition to being a B-movie actress, Carmen was a pin-up girl and trick-shot golfer. Until she was thirteen, she picked cotton in fields near her home town of Paragould, Arkansas, but ran away to New York.

Fully developed by that age, she landed a job as a dancer in *Burlesque* with Bert Lahr. She later told Marilyn, "I didn't go hungry…I found a lot of men in New York who liked to have sex with a thirteen-year-old girl with big tits."

In her twenties, she went to Hollywood to make a string of B movies such as *Untamed Youth* (1957), where she was cast as a teenage rock 'n roll delinquent. That same year, she appeared as an Indian girl, "Yellow Moon," in *War Drums*, starring Lex Barker of Tarzan and Lana Turner fame. That devastatingly handsome, muscular star is still hailed on some web sites as "the greatest male beauty ever to appear in films."

Naturally, Carmen went after him. She later recalled, "It was the greatest seduction of my entire life, and my lovers have numbered in the hundreds. Lana should have held onto this hunk even if she did discover him seducing her lesbian teenage daughter."

Over the years, Carmen would seduce many of Marilyn's lovers, including John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Frank Sinatra, and even Joe DiMaggio. Both of them shared tales of Elvis Presley's seductions of them. Amazingly, both of them had also been seduced by Clark Gable. But the most dangerous lover they shared in common was the gangster, Johnny Roselli, who would have a far greater impact on Marilyn's life than on Carmen's.

Carmen claimed that Marilyn's first visitor to the hospital was Patricia Kennedy Lawford, who was married at the time to the bisexual English actor, Peter Lawford. Patricia was well aware of her brother's attraction to Marilyn. John F. Kennedy was also aware of his sister's own adulterous affairs. Each of them, brother and sister, often covered for the other while committing extra-marital indiscretions.

Not wanting to be recognized, Patricia arrived at Westside Hospital wearing a ridiculous black wig and horn-rimmed glasses.

She later told Lawford and her friends, "At first, I thought Marilyn was dead. She had kicked off the sheet and was lying nude on the bed with her eyes closed and her mouth open. She looked like a woman in a casket at a funeral home. I almost screamed for the nurse, but felt her pulse. It was still beating. When I touched her, she opened her eyes and looked up at me. 'Who in the fuck are you?'"

"I pulled off that ridiculous wig. Then Marilyn said, 'Oh, Patricia, it's you. Thank you for coming. I so desperately need a friend these days. By the way, get rid of that wig. It doesn't become you.'"

As Patricia later recalled to her friends at her Santa Monica house, Marilyn, according to her, seemed like "she was indulging in a post-mortem review of her own life."

She told Patricia, "All of my life as Norma Jeane Mortensen, I wanted to transform myself into this thing called Marilyn Monroe. Now, lying here in this damn hospital bed, I want to be simple Norma Jeane again, living in a bungalow with a loving blue-collar husband and three adorable children. I want nothing more than to kill off Marilyn Monroe. I don't like her. I'm not that artificial woman. I've come to realize that if I don't murder Marilyn Monroe, she will kill me."

Patricia later admitted to her friends that the alliance—"a close bond, really"—that she'd formed with Marilyn during the final years of her life "was a case of the odd couple. After all, I was also a friend of Jackie's, but I found her a bit distant. I didn't feel that I was betraying my friendship with Jackie by being friends with Marilyn. I had the

same feeling about my relationship with Ethel when Bobby became involved with Marilyn."

Her closely knit family called Patricia "the Hollywood Kennedy," although her father, Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, was the first of the Hollywood Kennedys and the first to seduce movie stars such as Gloria Swanson. All four of his sons, Joseph Jr., JFK, RFK, and Teddy would follow in their father's footsteps, during their respective encounters with glamorous movie stars becoming notches on their belts.

A handsome young naval lieutenant, John F. Kennedy, would be the first to seduce Norma Jeane. In 1950, when introduced to her by John Huston, Joseph P. Kennedy would do the honors with Marilyn during a weekend jaunt to Palm Springs, followed with latter-day seductions by Bobby and Teddy.

Patricia Kennedy Lawford

In spite of his own involvements with movie stars, Joe Kennedy strenuously objected to his daughter, Patricia, marrying Peter Lawford, and not just because he was "a part-time homosexual."

"I detest actors," he told his daughter. "Especially English actors."

Being an independent spirit, Patricia married Peter anyway, even though her father had warned her against it.

She wanted to be in show business herself, but realized she didn't have the looks for it, thanks to her sharp nose, longish face, and that toothy Kennedy grin.

To those who didn't comprehend her relationship with Marilyn, Patricia said, "I was Jane Russell to Marilyn in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes."*

Marilyn always spoke fondly of Patricia. She once told her friend, Jack Benny, "Pat has bigger balls than either Jack or Bobby."

Patricia was well aware that her husband and Marilyn had had an affair years before. "If I excluded the women from my life who had affairs with Peter—Lana Turner, etc.—that would eliminate most of the *femme fatales* of Hollywood, not to mention the pretty boys. The trouble with having sex with Peter is I don't know what black hole he stuck it in the night before. A girl can come down with something with a philandering husband like mine. After all, Jack came down with a venereal disease on the night he lost his virginity in a whore house in Harlem."

Christopher Lawford, Patricia's son, said his mother treated Marilyn "like she was my little sister. I, too, loved her in my own way. She's so out front with her emotions. I came from a family that repressed their feelings."

In a story that is little known, on rare occasions Marilyn functioned as the Lawford family's babysitter during times when Peter and Patricia wanted to visit Frank Sinatra in Palm Springs. Patricia had a wicked sense of humor. "I trust you were merely playacting when you starred as that psychotic babysitter in *Don't Bother to Knock* with Richard Widmark."

"Peter will never babysit for our kids," Patricia told Marilyn. "He can't stand to smell of babyshit. When Christopher was only two months old, Peter had him moved out."

"I don't understand," Marilyn said. "At that age?"

"Peter found an apartment across the street from us and moved Christopher into it," Patricia said. "Of course, we had to hire a nanny to look after him."

Patricia became such a confidant of Marilyn that the two women even discussed the sexual performance of men they'd seduced in common, and not just Lawford. Both of them had been seduced by Porforio Rubirosa, the famous playboy who had married two of the world's wealthiest women—tobacco heiress Doris Duke and Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton.

"When Rubi dropped his shorts, I screamed," Marilyn said. "Seeing was not believing. I didn't know men came in that size."

"I'm well acquainted with Mr. Rubirosa," Patricia said. "He's a good friend of Jack's but not such a good friend that he won't fuck his sister behind Jack's back."

Marilyn confided to Patricia that her own marriage to Arthur Miller was crumbling, and Patricia claimed that the same thing was happening with her marriage to Lawford. "He is truly weird. He'll drink himself to death. He hires prostitutes in Las Vegas to bite his nipples until they bleed. He likes to be spanked at least three times a day. He claims that his mother, Lady Lawford, spanked him a lot when he was a young boy. She also dressed him in girl's clothing and tried to make a girl out of him, although she detests homosexuals. You figure. He's always trying to get me to participate in orgies with various men and women. He also vies with Sinatra as a pimp for Jack."

She later confided to Peter and others that on her return visit to see Marilyn, "I did something I later regretted. I brought her pills. She claimed she couldn't live without them."

"I've taken pills for so long they don't have an effect on me like they do most people," she told Patricia. "I have to take heavier doses of them every year I live, although I don't know how much longer that will be."

"You'll live forever," Patricia told Marilyn on her last visit to the hospital.

"Yeah, right," a cynical Marilyn said.

Patricia later explained herself, claiming that she meant Marilyn would live forever as an image on the screen.

***

A surprise visitor during her stay in L.A.'s Westside hospital was Marlon Brando. The attending nurse was startled when he walked over to Marilyn's bed and planted a wet kiss on her lips. "And how is Mrs. Brando today?

The nurse later told a reporter, after receiving a twenty-dollar tip, that the actor had referred to Marilyn as "Mrs. Brando." Both the nurse and the reporter were puzzled.

To understand the complexities of the relationship between these two stars—the "sexiest man on the planet" and his female counterpart, one would have to dip into their respective pasts. Only a few were privy to the length and depth of their complicated relationship. They included directors Elia Kazan and Fred Zinnemann, as well as Jeanne Carmen and Brando's closest male friend, Carlo Fiore.

Brando had told Fiore that he'd first met Marilyn at a bar on Eighth Avenue in New York City way back in 1946. According to Fiore, Brando had offered her fifteen dollars, the going rate at the time, to return with him to his rented room, where he claimed that he'd made love to her all night. In the morning, while he was still asleep, she'd left his room. He would not see her again until he filmed *The Men* (*1950)* in Hollywood.

During the day, Marilyn, then known as Norma Jeane, worked in an aircraft factory during the week and moonlighted on weekends as a model while her young husband, James (Jim) Dougherty, served in the Merchant Marine. On Saturday, she was usually off somewhere with a photographer who expected to seduce her as part of whatever fee he'd agreed to pay her.

At one point, according to Sally Broyne, a fellow worker at the factory, "Marilyn had saved up the fare to fly to New York. She announced she was going "to break into show business," suggesting that she'd be hired to dance in the chorus line of a Broadway musical.

Nothing worked out, including a promised modeling job from a New York-based photographer. Norma Jeane found herself wandering broke on the streets of New York, or so Marilyn told Broyne after her return to California.

Lena Pepitone, who functioned as Marilyn's maid from 1957 until her death in 1962, revealed that Marilyn admitted to "turning tricks" for fifteen dollars each during the 1940s in Los Angeles. Pepitone, author of *Marilyn Monroe Confidential*, stated that Marilyn had told her that she'd picked up men in bars "for pocket money, but mainly to eat a square meal. I like food. A girl needs it to keep her figure."

Brando's second encounter with Norma Jeane—now Marilyn Monroe—occurred in front of an apartment house in Los Angeles. Details are sketchy, but what happened between Marilyn and Brando has been pieced together from remembrances of director Fred Zinnemann and Carlo Fiore. Although their respective versions differed slightly, Brando told each man essentially the same story about interchanges between Marilyn and himself. He said to Zinnemann, "I wouldn't call her a rising starlet. Seems to me she spends more time on her back."

It is believed that one night, he was waiting for blonde-haired Barbara Payton, who would become a scandalous

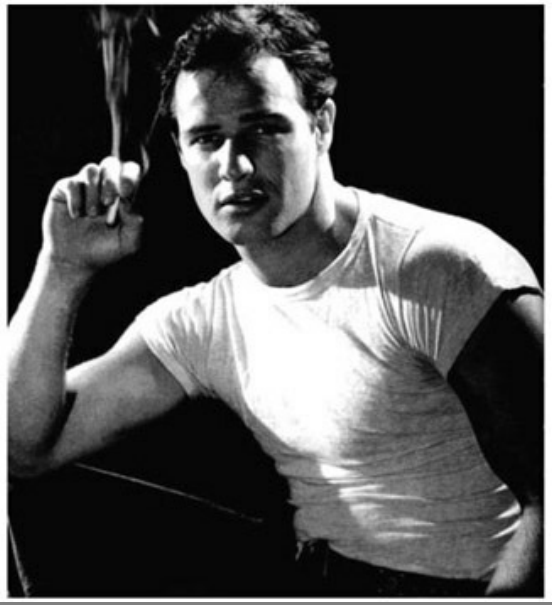
movie star during the Fifties, but at that particular moment, he stood her up for Marilyn.

Rushing out of Payton's apartment building was a beautiful woman with a stunning figure, as Brando later recalled to Zinnemann. Seeking a man in a car parked on the far side of the street, she apparently mistook him for her date for the evening. She was breathless when she peered inside the car. "You're not Sammy," she said, stepping back. "But you look familiar. You're Marlon Brando!"

"And who might you be?" he asked. "Do I know you?"

"You don't recognize me with my new hair color," she said. "I'm Norma Jeane, but now I'm known as Marilyn Monroe. You don't remember the time we got together in New York, and you invited me back to your place?"

"That could fit a thousand encounters," he said. "Get in the car. Perhaps you can do something to me to joggle my memory."



Marlon Brando

She giggled and ran around the rear of his car, wiggling her shapely butt onto the passenger's seat. "I didn't want to be with Sammy tonight anyway. He's fat and bald." As he started the car, she ran her hand across the back of his neck. "You're very good looking but not as pretty as before. Did you do something to your nose?"

"It was broken and not set right," he said.

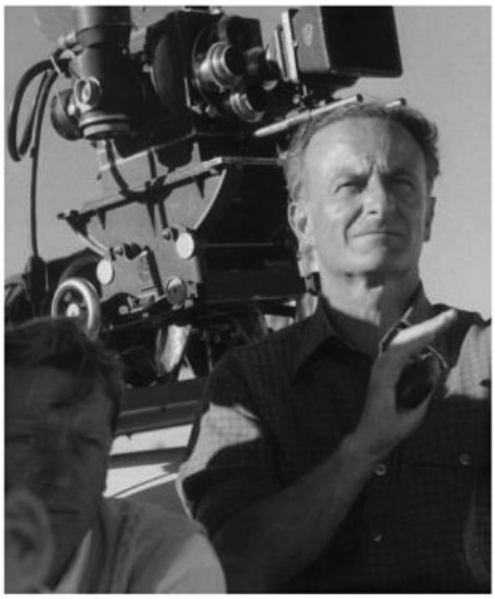
"Adds character in my view," she said. "I don't like men who are too handsome."

"Thanks a lot!"

"What I mean is you're a handsome man now. When we met a few years back, you were just a pretty boy. I never go to bed with pretty boys. Of course, in my present situation I have to go to bed with almost anyone to get ahead. Get it? Give head to get ahead. But when I become a big-time movie star, I'll never suck another cock again—unless I want to, of course." Sexily, she looked over at him. "Unless I'm in the mood." She cuddled closer to him.

Zinnemann, according to reports, repeated this story at a number of dinner parties. Thanks to his repeatedly telling that story, the tale of young Brando meeting young Marilyn as early as 1946 was, for a while at least, an oft-repeated topic of gossip in Hollywood.

"Forgive me, but I still don't remember you," Brando is alleged to have said to Marilyn. "Perhaps if you'll go back to my place, you and I can repeat what you said we did in New York. I'm sure that will bring it all back to me."



Fred Zinnemann

“That would be fine with me,” she said. “I hope you’re not pretending that you don’t remember because I’ve become too old for you. I mean I was young when we met. A teenager, really. Some men out here like only teenagers, not an old broad like me.”

“You’re not an old broad,” he said. “In fact, with your sex appeal, your allure will be timeless.”

“That’s very flattering but you know yourself it’s not true.”

“Do I desire you?” he asked. “Put me to the test. Back at my place, we’ll get naked together. If my noble tool rises to do its duty, then I still desire you. Fair enough?”

“The suspense is killing me,” she said. “I can’t wait.” Leaning over him, she began to unfasten his trousers. As he later told Zinnemann, “I practically had three accidents before we got there. Since that night in New York, someone had been teaching Marilyn new tricks. Maybe a lot of someones.”

The next morning, Marilyn lingered over breakfast and stayed with him “for a matinee performance,” as she called it. Later, he said, “I didn’t think she had any place to go.”

She shared her dreams about becoming a movie star with him. “I know a lot of gals arrive in Hollywood dreaming of becoming a movie star. But I have one up on them.”

“What’s that?” he asked.

“I can dream harder than they can.”

His ongoing affair with Marilyn would stop and go, heating up in the mid-Fifties, but never completely disappearing, until her mysterious death in 1962.

Despite what he revealed to a handful of close friends, he had very little to say “officially and on record” about Marilyn. He never demeaned her and spoke about her only in the highest regard. “Marilyn was a sensitive, misunderstood person,” he said, “and much more perceptive than was generally assumed. She had been beaten down, but had a strong emotional intelligence—a keen intuition for the feelings of others, the most refined type of intelligence.”

“Marlon lived through the whole Marilyn legend,” Fiore later said. “The nude calendar scandal, her lesbian relationships with such movie queens as Joan Crawford and Barbara Stanwyck, her tortured affair with the Kennedys—you name it. He was privy to her secrets and often gave her very good advice. She never seemed to heed Marlon’s words, but still continued to call him for guidance she rarely followed.”

Marilyn herself made few comments about Marlon, telling anyone who asked that, “He’s very sweet and tender, not at all the Stanley Kowalski rapist people think he is.”

Reporters clamored around her at an actors’ benefit in December of 1955. She was escorted by Brando. One reporter asked, “Miss Monroe, are you very seriously interested in Mr. Brando?”

“I’m not serious,” she claimed, “but always interested.”

Brando kept Zinnemann up to date about his affair with Marilyn. He once told his director, “Marilyn’s studio is claiming her bust measurement is 37. However, Marilyn herself disputes that. She says her bust measurement is 38.

As for me, I have a built-in tape measure in my brain. I'm never wrong about these things. I'd put her bust at 35, and I should know."

But why, at the hospital, would he refer to her as "Mrs. Brando?"

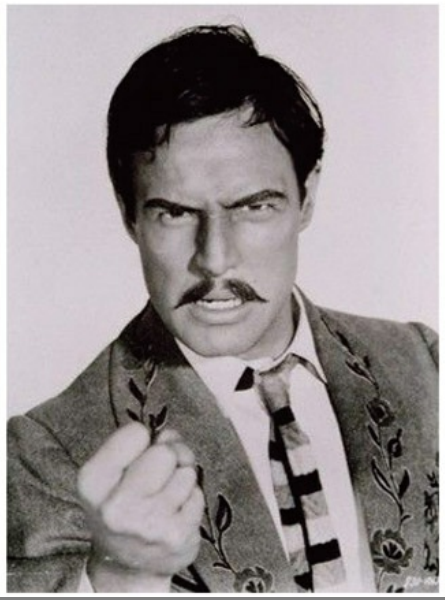
After much infighting at 20th Century Fox, Marlon had agreed to star in *Viva Zapata!*, despite the objections of Darryl. F. Zanuck, the studio head who held out for Tyrone Power. In this 1952 film, Elia Kazan directed not only Brando but Jean Peters (otherwise known as Mrs. Howard Hughes), and Brando-hating Anthony Quinn. With a script by John Steinbeck, it was a vibrant film about a Mexican peasant's ascendency to power and the presidency of his country.

Marilyn showed up on the film's location. At first, Marlon thought she's shown up to continue their affair, but he discovered that she actually had arrived to sleep with Kazan, hoping he would cast her as the female lead in his new movie, whatever that was. She didn't know.

For the first three nights, she avoided intimacy with Brando. But that situation changed one morning at three o'clock, when there was an urgent rapping on his door. Stumbling nude to answer it, he discovered it was Marilyn wrapped in a white terrycloth robe that probably belonged to Kazan. She rushed into his room, and, as he'd later relate to his director, she said, "Something dreadful has happened. Molly Kazan and Gadge's kids have arrived unexpectedly. They weren't due until next week but decided to come a week earlier. Gadge sent me to be your girlfriend while his family is here."

Pulling her into his arms, he told her, "We'll have a wonderful time pretending you're my girlfriend."

During the week she spent on the set of *Viva Zapata!*, Marlon got to know her as never before. She revealed to him that Kazan had introduced her to his longtime friend, the playwright, Arthur Miller, and that, "We're a threesome. I don't mean all three of us go to bed together. Sometimes I'm with Arthur, and on other nights when he's not with Molly I'm with Gadge. Gadge told me he doesn't think I'm star material, but Arthur has great faith in my talent and my future as an actress. He told me in time I might even become a modern day Sarah Bernhardt. To do that, however, I've got to stop playing all these dumb blonde parts."



Marlon Brando in *Viva Zapata!*

During the time Kazan was preoccupied with his wife, Brando kept him posted on what he and Marilyn talked about. They spent hours discussing acting, Lee Strasberg, and the Actors Studio. "Lee told me that one day I could star in plays by Eugene O'Neill. *Anna Christie*, for example. He even told me that he'd like to direct me as Lady Macbeth one day."

"You're going to become a big star, Marilyn," Brando told her. "But beware of Strasberg. You're his ticket to the big time. He'll just use you and exploit you, and take you for all you're worth."

Brando could not have known how prophetic his comment was. Even post-millennium, Marilyn's estate, left to Strasberg, still brings in millions of dollars a year in royalties and residuals associated with the use of her celebrated image.

Every male member of the crew was captivated by Marilyn—all except one, Anthony Quinn, who called her

“an empty-headed blonde with a fat rear. Oh, Monroe was pretty enough to look at, but there were hundreds of better looking actresses poking around Hollywood. Even after she hit the big time, with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, I never could see what all the fuss was about. All knew was that she walked around our dusty Texas set in a slinky dress that showed the crack of her ass. There seemed to be precious little going on beneath her glorious blonde mane.”

One hot afternoon, according to Kazan, Brando approached him with a deadly serious look on his face and asked him what his intentions were regarding Marilyn. He wanted to know if Gadge (as he called Kazan) was going to divorce his wife, Milly, and marry Marilyn.

“Hell, no!” Kazan told him. “Marilyn will never be anybody’s wife again. She’s not wife material. Girlfriend, yes. Mistress, definitely. Wife, never. Watch out for her, Marlon. She’s in a marrying mood. She might be laying a trap for you.”

Kazan also told him that, “even as we speak, Marilyn is also trying to get Arthur Miller to divorce his wife and marry her. The woman is absolutely capricious. If some fool man marries her, he’ll sit home at night wondering what man—or in her case, what woman as well—she’s out fucking that night. Joe Schenck. Joan Crawford. Darryl F. Zanuck. Maybe even Rock Hudson, and he’s gay. Marilyn told me she likes to fuck gay men for variety.”

Not satisfied with any of these answers, Brando again pressed Kazan to explain fully how he saw his own future with Marilyn. “You’re going to keep fucking her? Is that right? Exactly what will she be to you?”

“Okay, if you must know, I can tell you,” Kazan said. “A mascot—nothing more!”

On the fifth night in Roma, Texas, Marilyn confessed to Brando that she was pregnant. She said that condition was “not unusual for me. I prefer natural sex, and I’ve had several abortions before. I don’t remember how many.”

Elia Kazan

He wanted to know if she knew who the father was. “I honestly don’t know,” she said. “I suspect one of four men in this order: Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller, Fred Karger, and Marlon Brando.”

“Why do I come in last?” he asked. “My noble tool is as fertile as any of those jokers.”

“I was a little more careful with you—that’s all,” she said.

A year or so later, Kazan confided in Tennessee Williams and his companion, Frank Merlo, “the most outrageous event that took place during the filming of *Viva Zapata!* You’re not going to believe this.” The director’s claim was that some time during the shoot of *Zapata!*, Brando and Marilyn slipped away from the set. Using assumed names, according to Kazan, they somehow obtained a license and were married one weekend in some Texas border town.

“Later on, when she was sleeping with me,” Kazan said, “she called herself Mrs. Brando and told me that since I was married and since she was married we were committing adultery. I told her I had no problem with that.”

No record has been found to show that Brando actually married Marilyn, but it’s entirely possible. Kazan later said, “It was amazing what a hundred-dollar bill could accomplish in those days in those little Texas towns. Both Marlon and Marilyn were two crazy mixed-up kids. They may have gone through a wedding ceremony on a lark,

finding it an amusing thing to do. Marlon was a practical joker, and I could see him going along with that. Marilyn was so reckless she'd definitely do something like that. If they were telling me the truth, and I suspect they were, then Marlon's subsequent marriages to those three women, and Marilyn's marriages to Miller and DiMaggio would make both of them bigamists."

After she returned to Los Angeles, Marilyn the following week placed an urgent call to "my husband," telling him, "There will be no little Marlon Jr. No, you're Marlon Jr. There will be no Marlon III. I've had a miscarriage. What a great little guy he would have been with Marlon Brando as his daddy and me as his mommie."

"How do you know it would have been a boy?" he asked.

"Don't be a silly goose," she told him. "Women have an instinct for knowing things like that."

"If you want a kid at some future date—I mean, one with me—just think of me as your sperm bank."

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Resting in her hospital bed in Los Angeles, some eight years after their "marriage" during the filming of *Viva Zapata!*, Brando behaved like a husband.

As she'd later tell Carmen, who also had an affair with him, "Marlon was more of a husband to me than Arthur Miller, the son of a bitch. He was very solicitous, really concerned if I lived or died."

He told Marilyn that both of them should run away to an island in the South Pacific and live there for several months, making love every day and eating coconuts. "We both need to forget about Hollywood," he told her. "It's no fucking dream factory. It lives on nightmares. It'll kill you, like it's killing me. Except in my case, I don't destruct easily."

As he kissed her good-bye and was leaving her hospital room, she called him back and, with a certain desperation, she clutched his hand. "There will be a divorce here or there, but maybe we should get married. Make that drunken pretend wedding of so long ago the real thing."

"That's damn good thinking, Marilyn," he said. "Both of us will have to ask each other the ultimate question. Will destroy you? Or will you destroy me first?"

And then he was gone.

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Two days after Brando's visit, another on-again, off-again lover, Frank Sinatra, showed up unexpectedly, with white roses and a diamond bracelet.

Marilyn had first met him in Los Angeles in 1954 while she was still married to Joe DiMaggio. Her marriage was heading for a disastrous ending, as was Sinatra's marriage to Ava Gardner.

Sinatra, who already knew DiMaggio, had invited him to dinner at Roman off's, and he requested that Marilyn come along, as he was anxious to get to know her.

During dinner, when DiMaggio got up to go to the men's room, Marilyn slipped him her phone number. Imitating Mae West, she said, "Why don't you come up and see me sometime? Joe's visiting relatives in San Francisco next week."

"No red-blooded male turns down an invitation from Marilyn Monroe," he said. "Kid, you're the hottest ticket in America."

According to Marilyn's friend and photographer, Milton Greene, the first sexual tryst between Marilyn and Sinatra occurred on the night of the second day after DiMaggio left Los Angeles for San Francisco.

Over pillow talk, Sinatra and Marilyn shared a mutual dream of starring together in a movie musical. She told him that she'd been offered the chance to star in a movie called *Pink Tights*, a remake of a film her screen idol, Betty Grable, had made during World War II called *Coney Island*. This was the turn-of-the-20th-century story of a saloon entertainer who becomes a famous musical star. Grable herself remade the film seven years later, calling it *Wabash Avenue*.

At first, he was reluctant to take on the role originally played by George Montgomery. He told Marilyn that he'd be playing second fiddle to her. But she could be very persuasive, and she finally got his agreement to co-star with her in *Pink Tights*.

What he didn't know was that DiMaggio was dead set against Marilyn starring in the role. His main objection involved the low salary she would be paid. "You're the star of the picture; you're the one who will have them lined up at the box office to see you in those skimpy costumes. But Sinatra will be walking off with the big bucks. What you'll get is a bag of peanuts."

Not knowing any of this, Sinatra showed up on the lot of 20th Century Fox ready for work on the first day of the shoot. When Marilyn hadn't reported to work by noon, he began to curse and steam. He'd already smoked a pack of cigarettes before the lunch break was called. Phone calls to Marilyn's home were not answered. Fox even sent studio emissaries to the DiMaggio residence, but no one seemed to be home.

Back at the studio, Sinatra, comforted with a bottle of Jack Daniels, waited until closing time. At five o'clock, he stormed out of the studio, telling Fox, "I'm off the picture. Leave a message for that two-bit blonde whore. Tell the cunt never to call me again."

It wasn't until four days later that he learned that Marilyn had flown out of Los Angeles with DiMaggio. They'd landed in San Francisco for a reunion with his Italian family. News of this reached Fox executives, who suspended their hottest star on January 5, 1954.

Betty Grable: Marilyn's role model

Back in Los Angeles, Marilyn made several attempts to reach him at his villa in Palm Springs, but he was not taking her calls. He sent her a telegram: "TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE, KID. WE'RE THROUGH!"

She was not a star who took rejection lightly. One Saturday afternoon, she put on her most alluring dress, with a plunging *décolletage*, and showed up on his doorstep in Palm Springs. Although reluctant to do so, Sinatra invited her in, especially when he saw how she was attired. As he later told Sammy Davis, Jr., "I could say no to working with Marilyn again, but I could hardly Betty Grable: Marilyn's role model say no to a chance to bang the hell out of her. I invited her in, and she delivered…and delivered. By the time she drove back to Hollywood, I was one exhausted dago stud."

In Palm Springs on her first day there, Marilyn and Sinatra had enjoyed a nude swim in his pool. Later, as they rested on *chaises longues* she gave him her version of why she didn't show up that morning at Fox on the set of *Pink Tights*. "I liked the script," she told him, "but Joe found it too *risqué*. It was also the money thing, meaning I wasn't getting enough. Joe feels Fox is just exploiting me. There's more. Joe told me that he absolutely wouldn't allow me to make a movie with you. 'I know him too well,' he said. 'Sinatra will spend more time in your dressing room than in front of the camera.'"

"Old Joe was right about that," Sinatra said. "Now get your sweet ass over here and give daddy a sloppy wet one."

Before she left Palm Springs, she told him that she was splitting from DiMaggio. "I'm my own girl again. I control my own life."

Marilyn's trip to Palm Springs came at a time when Sinatra was at his most despondent from the loss of Ava Gardner. He was virtually in mourning for her. And although Marilyn wasn't Ava, in 1954, she was the most sought after woman in the world.

Before leaving Palm Springs, Marilyn made a tempting offer: She wanted to move in with him as his mistress.

As Dean Martin later advised him, “That’s an offer no man can refuse. Let’s face facts: Ava Gardner is the most beautiful woman in the world, but Marilyn is the sexiest. If you can’t have Ava, God has sent the next best thing. No man on the planet can sympathize with you over your loss of Ava if you’ve replaced her with Marilyn. Hell, man, you’ll be the envy of every dude with a hard-on.”

In spite of friends such as Martin urging him to accept Marilyn’s offer, he was still hesitant. She began to call him repeatedly, often late at night. She sounded more and more desperate.

James Whiting, a close friend of Sinatra’s, claimed that Marilyn was becoming dependent on him. “She always had to have a man in her life. With DiMaggio gone, she had to have an immediate replacement of a male authority figure. Frank was that lucky man if he could just get over that hangdog, lovesick illness he had about Ava.”

Finally, he relented and called Marilyn, telling her she could move in.

She was elated, telling Whiting, “If you have any problem in the world, Frankie is the man to turn to. He can solve anything, even rescuing a damsel in distress like myself.”

Frank Sinatra

She sought out her friend, Robert F. Slatzer. He was her long-time confidant who later claimed that he and Marilyn had been married in Mexico, although only briefly.

After Marilyn’s death, he wrote two books about his relationship with her, revealing “the naked truth.” One was called *The Marilyn Files*, the other *The Curious Death of Marilyn Monroe*. Both exposés claimed that the star had been murdered.

As Marilyn herself later admitted, “Bob was always in love with me, but I could tell him everything about my other love affairs. He was the best listener in the business.”

After a week, she told Slatzer, “Frank Sinatra is the most fascinating man I ever dated. He has always been kind and understanding. When we’re together, I feel I don’t need pills. He makes me laugh. He makes me feel secure. He makes me happy. He’s the man who taught me to love life—not be afraid of it. A real gentleman. Of course, he’s still so upset over Ava that he’s sometimes impotent, but I’m curing that.”

In J. Randy Taraborrelli’s *Sinatra: A Complete Life*, he wrote: “Marilyn cured Sinatra of his impotency, at least for a while. She said she didn’t care how long it took. She was determined that he was going to perform in bed with her. They were innovative sexually. For instance, they began sharing intimacies outdoors. Sinatra had never done that before Monroe, and it excited him. According to Sinatra’s friends, he and Monroe engaged in sexual activity at night on the roof of the Sands Hotel above the Las Vegas strip.”

He told Whiting that after Ava left to “to fuck every bullfighter in Spain,” he became impotent. “But Marilyn is the best cure for that. At home she never puts on clothes, but runs around naked.”

With the passage of each day he spent with Marilyn, he thought less and less about Ava, although he was still in love with her, a bond that would last a lifetime.

Those close to him claimed that he actually fell in love with Marilyn after his divorce from Ava in 1954. “He was still in love with Ava,” Dean Martin said. “But he also loved Marilyn in a different way. Frank was capable of loving two women at the same time.”

During the first two weeks, he and Marilyn lived in harmony. But he gradually began to be irritated by her

flaws, and she also witnessed firsthand that he wasn't always the gentleman that she'd originally thought he was.

Sinatra's right-man man for many a year, George Jacobs, said that his boss came to regard Marilyn as "a total mess. She was a drunk, and he could put up with that. But he was a very neat man, and he couldn't tolerate Marilyn being a dirty pig. She often didn't bathe. She ate in bed and left foodstuff like pizza under her mattress, sleeping in the filth. Her hair became matted because she didn't wash it. Often she was more than twenty-five pounds overweight, although going on a crash diet right before filming a new movie."

He found it "particularly disgusting" that MM didn't use tampons or sanitary napkins and left her sheets with blood on them.

Although he was protective of Marilyn when he thought she was being abused by others, he could turn suddenly on her when he was in a foul mood.

Marilyn always liked to walk around naked. "Clothes inhibit me," she told her maid, Lena Pepitone.

One night he called a "Summit" of his fellow Rat Packers—Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Dean Martin.

"We were drinking and shooting the shit," Davis recalled. "In walks Marilyn. Jaybird naked. I think all of us got an erection right away, except Joey. I never saw anything popping up in his pants, but he was true blue to his wife. After that night, and behind Frank's back, all of us 'rats' were determined to fuck Marilyn. One by one we knocked off that piece."

On another night in front of the Rat Packers, a teary-eyed Marilyn was detailing stories of childhood rape, whether true or not. Finally, Sinatra could tolerate it no more. "Listen, Norma Jeane, toughen up or get the hell out. We've all gone through shit. Get over it!" She ran in tears from the room.

One night at Peter Lawford's Santa Monica home, a drunken Marilyn was talking to Davis, Dean, and Lawford about her ambitions of becoming a serious stage actress. She claimed that she was considering touring America with Marlon Brando in a repeat of his Broadway and film success of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "Marlon would get a chance to be Stanley Kowalski again, and I, of course, would play the doomed heroine, Blanche DuBois. I'm sure that darling Tennessee would love the idea."

"Shut up," Sinatra shouted at her. "You don't know what in the fuck you're talking about. As Blanche DuBois, you'd be laughed off the stage. Stick to those dumb blonde roles."

She ran in tears from the living room and locked herself into one of the guest bedrooms. Sinatra stormed out of the house. But in a few weeks he apologized to her, and he and Marilyn started seeing each other again.

Still plagued by impotency, Sinatra, according to Davis, flew to Las Vegas for a gig. Once installed in a suite at the Sands, he ordered the most expensive prostitutes, who tried to give him an orgasm. Reportedly, he went through a rainbow of women hailing from Senegal to Thailand, from Canada to Brazil. But no hooker succeeded.

When he returned to Los Angeles, he found that Marilyn hadn't quite given up on trying to "get him off." As has been revealed, she took bubble baths with him and went down on him in a giant bathtub. He later told Davis, "Sometimes I get so excited I hold her head down too long. If she's ever found drowned, you'll know who the culprit is."

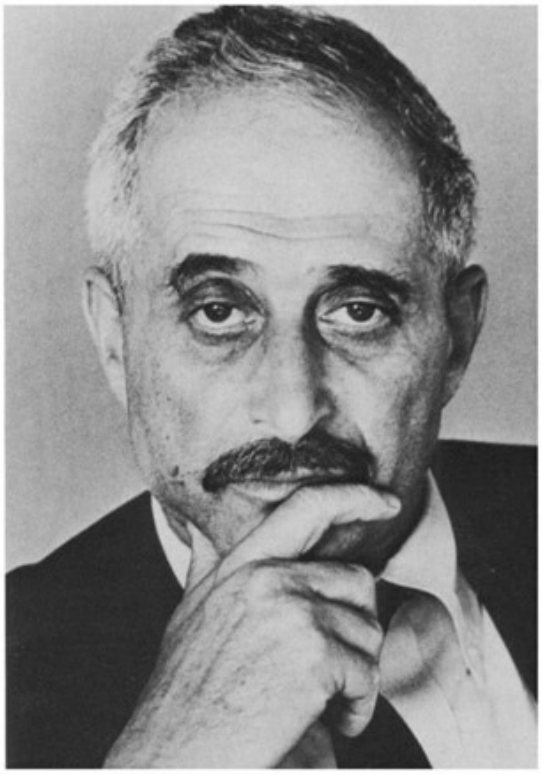
One morning, unusual for him, he awoke early and found Marilyn gone from his bed. In his jockey shorts, he walked into his kitchen. There he discovered a nude Marilyn standing in front of his refrigerator, trying to determine if she wanted orange juice or grapefruit juice.

"I took her right there on the kitchen floor," he later told his friend Whiting. "She cured my impotency. I shot off. Marilyn got her orgasm, rare for her, or so she said. From that morning on, my plumbing was in working order—and to hell with moaning over Ava."

After Marilyn moved out of his house in 1954, he saw her only occasionally and rarely for sex. Sometimes when he was performing in Los Angeles, Marilyn visited him "for that occasional blow-job in his dressing room," according to Lawford.

During the course of their relationship, and in spite of their blow-up over *Pink Tights*, Sinatra and Marilyn continued to discuss starring in a film together. The most improbable suggestion came when Billy Wilder offered Sinatra the role of Joe/Josephine in *Some Like It Hot*, Marilyn's classic comedy. But when Sinatra heard that he'd have to play the role in drag, he immediately turned it down. Tony Curtis took it and gave his most memorable performance.

A more workable idea involved a remake of *Born Yesterday* which brought Judy Holliday her Oscar opposite William Holden and Broderick Crawford. Sinatra was suggested for the gangster role, but he eventually decided it would be bad for his image.



Dr. Ralph Greenson

Marilyn's psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, discouraged her affair with Sinatra. On call for her day and night, Dr. Greenson said, "I try to keep her from being destructively lonely. During such times, she often retreats to drug use. I told her to avoid destructive people like Sinatra. I viewed their relationship as sado-masochistic, with him acting the role of the sadist. Even though she was seeing me two or three times a week, she would cancel at a moment's notice if Sinatra invited her to his villa in Palm Springs."

Dr. Greenson also claimed that Marilyn confided to him that when she made Sinatra angry, he was given to violent out-bursts. "He could hold his liquor, but he never forgave a woman who couldn't," she said. "I couldn't.. at least, not always."

One night, when she was staggering around drunk, he tossed her into his pool. She nearly drowned, as she was too drunk to swim and no one, especially Sinatra, seemed sober enough to dive in and rescue her.

On another occasion, Carmen confessed to Marilyn that he had made her pregnant, and that he had subsequently arranged and paid for an abortion. "If I ever become pregnant with Frank's child," Marilyn said, "I'd go ahead and have it and wouldn't even tell him. Could you imagine the talent a little boy or girl would have with Marilyn Monroe and Frank Sinatra as his mama and papa?"

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All those memories came flooding back to Marilyn when Sinatra visited her at the Westside Hospital in Los Angeles. Before he left that day, she felt their relationship was on a steady course again, as was their love-making. After slipping a nurse a twenty-dollar bill to stand guard at the door, he gave Marilyn a long, passionate kiss—"and a hell of a lot more"—as she later told Carmen.

Previously, he had vaguely discussed marrying Marilyn, and in her hospital room, feeling despondent, she brought up the subject again. He told her he'd consider it.

She had only recently considered marrying Brando. As Carmen later said, "Marilyn wanted a guarantee of a strong man in her life after Arthur Miller—Sinatra or Brando, it didn't really mat er. I'd gone to bed with both men, and considered none of those two whoremongers husband material."

"But once Marilyn was determined," Carmen continued, "she wouldn't listen to anyone else, only to her inner voice, which I guess you'd call her feelings. My God, she even discussed marriage to her former husband, Joe

DiMaggio. Around the time of her divorce from Miller, she definitely wanted another husband, preferably one who was famous like Miller. She could have had all the well-hung gas jockeys in Los Angeles. I should know."

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Every day that Marilyn spent in the Westside Hospital, Carmen visited her and gossiped with her until she was tired and wanted sleep. On one afternoon, as Carmen was talking, a nurse came in with a special delivery letter for Marilyn, who asked Carmen to open it.

Carmen tore open the envelope, finding a segment of toilet paper with the word WHORE written on it in fecal matter. She tossed it in a nearby wastepaper basket.

Marilyn told Carmen that she'd talked to John Huston and told him that she planned to return to the Nevada set of *The Misfits* within four days.

While still in the hospital, Marilyn's next famous visitor—and her most anticipated—was escorted into her room by Carmen herself. DiMaggio slipped into the hospital on a rear elevator as a means of avoiding the press, who had staked out the front of the building. If Marilyn were aware that her former husband was having an affair with Carmen, she gave no indication, but greeted him warmly and kissed him passionately.

Since their divorce, DiMaggio had been having sex with Marilyn Monroe clones, including Jayne Mansfield and starlet Liz Renay, who had won a nationwide Marilyn Monroe lookalike contest.

Carmen knew that DiMaggio wasn't in love with her, and that he'd seduced her only because she reminded him of Marilyn.

The country was filled with Monroe impersonators, both male and female. Since divorcing Marilyn, he'd dated dozens of them. "If DiMaggio was drunk enough, I don't know if he could even determine their gender," Carmen said. "Some of those girlie boys with their big breasts and G-strings hiding their little weenies looked more like Marilyn than Marilyn herself. Except for me, or maybe one or two others, DiMaggio went in only for one-night stands. Marilyn herself specialized in those. I estimated that both of them made at least 2,000 seductions each—maybe more. They often preferred a love 'em and leave 'em pattern of conquest."

In the hospital room, DiMaggio stood looking down at Marilyn in bed. "I should never have let you leave me," DiMaggio whispered to Marilyn, loud enough for Carmen to hear.

"I should never have left," she said, holding him.

Carmen realized that was more of a romantic illusion that anything based in reality. Perhaps it would be forgotten in the cold dawn of another day. She had delivered DiMaggio to Marilyn's hospital room for a reason.

The previous afternoon, Marilyn had been blunt: "Round up Joe. I need a good fuck. Bring him here. So he'll have his full energy, tell him to lay off the blonde bimbos the night before. Let him know that if he comes over, he can experience the real thing—not a Mamie Van Doren type."

Since time was limited, a deal was struck. Carmen was to be stationed outside the door as a guard to prevent anyone from entering Marilyn's room while she and DiMaggio had intercourse. Actually, Carmen would have preferred to stay to watch, or to join in. DiMaggio and Marilyn having sex would offer no surprise for her. She'd seen them in action before, but although Marilyn had orchestrated it, DiMaggio had not been aware of it. Ever since she'd been dating DiMaggio, Marilyn had bragged to Carmen about the athlete's bedroom prowess.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe DiMaggio

Once, when Carmen was visiting Marilyn for girl talk—"mostly about men, what else?"—they heard DiMaggio's key rattling in the lock. In fear, Marilyn bustled her into the bedroom's closet, because, as she explained, "He'll think we've been having sex."

DiMaggio had heard rumors that Marilyn had been involved in a lesbian relationship with her drama coach, Natasha Lytess, and that she'd also endured "casting couch" auditions with screen divas Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford, among others.

The details of this strange encounter were revealed in Carmen's memoirs, *Jeanne Carmen, My Wild, Wild Life*.

While Marilyn and DiMaggio were engaged in their mutual seductions, Carmen believed she was suffocating in the cramped closet behind all of Marilyn's clothing. She heard noises from the living room and kept wondering when she could escape. Marilyn was trying to get him to take her down to the Villa Nova because she said, "I'm starving."

But DiMaggio told her he was hungry for something else—"and it's not food."

Marilyn ran into the bedroom and whispered to Carmen, "Hang in there a little more. He's got to have it and have it now."

Within minutes, he had entered the bedroom with Marilyn, who was giggling and stripping down for action. Through a crack in the closet, she saw DiMaggio disrobing.

She later recalled that when he pulled his pants off, she saw for herself what Marilyn had been bragging about for so long. "That was one well-hung baseball player."

Carmen claimed that Marilyn seemed to enjoy tormenting her as she and DiMaggio engaged in "gymnastic sex for almost an hour. At one point, I got so hot I almost came out of the closet and cut myself in on some of the action."

"Those lovers who claimed Marilyn was not capable of having an orgasm didn't see her being ridden with DiMaggio in the saddle."

True to what Carmen had been told, DiMaggio fell into a deep sleep after intercourse, which allowed Marilyn to slip her out of the house.

At the door, Marilyn kissed her goodbye on the lips and then shooed her off. "Just think, you saw the Greatest Show on Earth, and I didn't even charge ad-mission."

Thinking of that long-ago evening as she stood guard by the hospital door, Carmen re-created in her mind the "second act" that Marilyn and DiMaggio were performing in that hospital bed without her voyeuristic eyes overseeing them this time.

She feared that even though she had a date with DiMaggio that night, he would be of no use to her after his workout with Marilyn. She knew that she'd have to wait until he woke up the next morning before he'd swing his bat her way.

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In addition to watching DiMaggio in the saddle, Carmen had ridden with Marilyn through her romance, marriage, and eventual divorce from DiMaggio.

"It was a rocky road," Carmen recalled.

In the spring of 1952, DiMaggio had met Marilyn on a blind date at the suggestion of press agent Roy Craft, who was hoping to generate some newspaper coverage for the emerging star.

She'd been reluctant to go after him, fearing she'd encounter some sports-talking jock in a loud jacket and a pink tie. But the graying man she met was twelve years her senior and different from what she'd expected.

Mickey Mantle once claimed that, "Off the field, Joe dresses, looks, and acts like a dignified senator." That's what Marilyn encountered when he picked her up at her apartment. He wore a tasteful, charcoal gray, pin-striped suit, a conservative tie, and he looked elegant and well-groomed, with not a hair out of place.

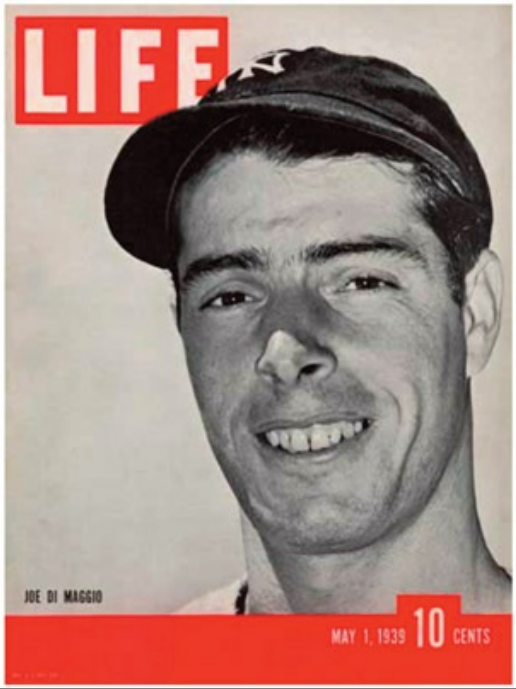
Stories still persist that Marilyn didn't know who DiMaggio was on their first date. "Of course, I'd heard his name," she told Hedda Hopper. "Who hasn't? I've never been to a baseball game, but I played soft ball at the orphanage."

Joseph Paul ("Joe") DiMaggio, nicknamed "Joltin' Joe" or "The Yankee Clipper," spent his entire thirteen-year baseball career playing for the New York Yankees and was elected into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1955. He was a disappointment to his father, Giuseppe, who wanted all his five sons to grow up to become fishermen.

"But the smell of dead fish makes me puke," DiMaggio told his father who denounced him as a "good for nothing."

In the Depression-stricken 1930s, DiMaggio became America's icon as the immigrant boy who made it big. He became a national hero partly because of an astonishing string of home runs, (a 56 game "hitting streak") he executed between May 15 and July 16, 1941. Despite his acclaim at the time, he styled himself as "the loneliest hero who ever lived."

It was Darryl F. Zanuck who explained DiMaggio's claim to fame to Marilyn, telling her that in 1941 he'd hit 56 runs in 56 consecutive games, even using a borrowed bat since his own had been stolen. Thanks to that sports triumph, The New York Yankees won the pennant and the World Series that year. The legend of Joltin' Joe was born.



Joe DiMaggio in 1939

"Is that it?" Marilyn asked. "I'd rather have a hit movie."

She was unaware that DiMaggio had been married before. In 1939, he'd wed a New York night club singer, Dorothy Arnold. They had a son together, Joe DiMaggio, Jr., who would figure into Marilyn's later life. After four years of marriage, DiMaggio's wife had divorced him on grounds of mental cruelty. DiMaggio never wanted to talk about his ex-wife, and he certainly didn't want to talk about previous conquests.

Nevertheless, Marilyn was blunt with him to the point off embarrassment. “I hear you’ve gone to bed with really big stars, like Marlene Dietrich.”

His face turned red. “Forget Dietrich. Bad breath.”

The press got wind of Marilyn’s first date with DiMaggio, and one Hollywood newspaper ran the headline JOLTIN’JOE STRIKES OUT. To contradict that, Marilyn confided to author Ben Hecht that, “On our first date, Joe gave me multiple orgasms, unlike Ronald Reagan who in 1950 was forty minutes in the saddle, with few results.”

On the set of *All About Eve* (1950), Marilyn had told Bette Davis, “I like distinguished, successful older men.” Years later, Davis said. “From what I heard, DiMaggio likes young, sexy blondes. So it should be an ideal coupling.” Between puffs on her cigarette, she didn’t bother to disguise the sarcasm in her voice.

Marilyn bragged to her women friends, or even her gay buddies, that “Joe always scores a home run. When he first drops his shorts, you don’t think you’re getting all that much.”

Joe DiMaggio, MM, and Cary Grant on the set of *Monkey Business*

“You mean he’s a grower—not a shower,” Capote asked.

“Exactly,” she said.

As she began to date DiMaggio, their romance supplied tabloid fodder across the nation. As one reporter asked, “If Mr. America marries Miss America and they split, who gets custody of the Wheaties?”

Author Roger Kahn wrote, “Ten million shopgirls and schoolboys had dreams, both dry and wet, that Joe and Marilyn would wed.”

Marilyn’s first photograph with DiMaggio was posed with Cary Grant on the set of *Monkey Business* (1952). Privately, Hedda Hopper joked, “The contest will be between Cary and Marilyn as to who is going to get Joe.” The columnist, of course, was referring to Grant’s homosexuality, the worst-kept secret in Hollywood. In most of the newspapers that ran the picture, Grant’s face was cropped.

After a final night with Marilyn, DiMaggio had to return to New York on business, promising to call her every day.

Shortly after that picture with Grant was taken, Marilyn began to experience stomach pains that caused her to cry out in agony. The studio called for an ambulance which, with red dome flashing, rushed her to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. She was suffering from acute appendicitis.

Before she was given an anesthesia, she’d written a note to the doctor and taped it to her belly.

Most important to Read Before operation:

Dear Doctor

Cut as little as possible. I know it seems vain but that doesn’t really enter into it—the fact that I’m a woman is important and means much to me. Save please (can’t ask you enough) what you can—I’m in your hands. You

have children and you must know what it means—please, Doctor—I know somehow you will! Thank you—thank you—for God's sakes Dear Doctor. No ovaries removed—please again do whatever you can to prevent large scars. Thanking you with all my heart.

Marilyn Monroe

After the operation, she recovered very quickly and with her new beau, Joltin' Joe, on the East Coast, she began her usual pattern of seeing other men. In New York, the manager of DiMaggio's hotel reported that a steady stream of beautiful young women came and went from his suite.

Marilyn also had men coming and going from her home or dressing room, an occasional new conquest, but often a favorite of yesterday. Dean Martin, Robert Mitchum, and the film director, Nicholas Ray, were in that category.

Nico Minardos

Around the time she met DiMaggio, she also launched an affair with a young actor, Nico Minardos, a dark and handsome Athens-born stud working on the set of *Monkey Business* while going to UCLA.

He later claimed, "I was involved with Marilyn before she met Joe, during her marriage to Joe, and for a few weeks after her divorce. She was a lousy lay, but beautiful, and I was a young buck. What can I say? Trouble was, I could never bring her to climax, but I sure as hell tried."

Hoping for better roles, she was also shacked up with that mogul at Fox, Spyros Skouras. "One night, he caught us in her apartment with my pants off," Minardos said. "He was sure pissed off at me."

It was also revealed that at the same time, Marilyn was battling Jane Wyman, the ex-Mrs. Ronald Reagan, as to who would get Fred Karger, the bandleader and musician. Eventually, Karger became Wyman's fourth husband. She later divorced him, but, like Elizabeth Taylor with Richard Burton, Wyman would remarry Karger only to divorce him again.

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Marilyn married DiMaggio on January 14, 1954 at the San Francisco City Hall, although he'd suggested Reno instead.

A divorced man, DiMaggio was excommunicated from the Catholic church on the day of his wedding. The secretary to the archbishop at San Francisco's St. Peter's and St. Paul's church said, "If Mr. DiMaggio is concerned about the sulfurous fires of eternal hell, he doesn't seem unduly worried."

Their honeymoon was at the cheap truck stop, the Clifton Motellin Paso Robles, California, some 175 miles south of San Francisco. The cost was ten dollars a night, but DiMaggio managed to negotiate the price down to six dollars and fifty cents. All he asked was that the small room contain a TV set and a double bed.

The manager reported that they checked in at eight one evening and didn't depart until one o'clock the following afternoon, although they were supposed to check out at ten that morning.

The Clifton didn't make all that much profit on the room itself, but the manager sold the soiled sheets for five-hundred dollars, stains, and all, to a MM devotee.

A two-week honeymoon in Palm Springs was followed with a trip to Tokyo, where Marilyn's Japanese fans

numbered in the thousands. To his dismay, DiMaggio discovered that he had married a woman far more internationally famous than he was. The Tokyo press wrote about “the honorable buttocks-swinging madame.”

While in Japan, Marilyn received an invitation from the U.S. Army to entertain its troops in Korea. She was thrilled, although DiMaggio demanded that she turn the invitation down. Defying him, she flew to Korea anyway, where thousands of randy soldiers cheered her arrival. Many soldiers later claimed that when she came out in a low-cut dress, help up by spaghetti straps, they produced erections. She opened with her hit number, “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend,” from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

What really sent the soldiers into a fever pitch was when she sang—

Ooooh, do it again
I must say, no, no, no, no—
But do it again.

During the number, a light snow was falling on her bare shoulders, and some of the young men masturbated, concealing their erections under their caps.

Back in Tokyo, Marilyn told DiMaggio, “Joe, you’ve never heard such cheering.”

He looked harshly at her. “Yes, I have.”

After her honeymoon, and back in Los Angeles, she had lunch with her favorite columnist, Sidney Skolsky, speaking strictly off the record.

“I’m going to marry Arthur Miller,” she announced to him.

He was astonished, at first thinking she was joking. “You just got back from your honeymoon. You must be crazy. Was Joltin’ Joe a dud in bed? I thought you would have found that out before you married him.”

“No, Joe’s a real slugger in bed,” she said. “Really great. Even so, I’m going to marry Arthur Miller.”

Later, Skolsky recalled, “She wasn’t bull shitting that day. She really did marry Arthur Miller, of course.”

She forced DiMaggio to return to Hollywood with her, which he called “the land of the phonies.” She was unable to iron his shirts, as he had expected, since she had to report to work on *There’s No Business Like Show Business* (1954) which co-starred Ethel Merman, who made a pass at her, and Donald O’Connor, who also made a pass at her. Mitzi Gaynor snubbed her, but Johnnie Ray, also in the cast, hung out with her. He didn’t make a pass at her, but he was gay. Dan Dailey, one of the stars, used to come to her dressing room for a drink with her. He, too, didn’t make a pass at her because “Johnnie Ray drains me dry,” he confided to Marilyn.

Proving indeed, that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*

There's No Business Like Show Business, whose theme was devoted to the music of Irving Berlin, was an unfortunate choice for Marilyn. Her rainbow skirts and fruit salad head gear evoked Carmen Miranda at her campiest. Writing in *The New York Times*, Bosley Crowther called "Miss Monroe's wriggling and squirming embarrassing to behold."

When DiMaggio showed up on the movie's set and saw the skimpy costume she was wearing, he sulked for five days, refusing to speak to her at their big empty house on North Palm Drive that cost them $750 a month. Her marriage was collapsing, but somehow there was always time for a nightly bout of sex.

Once, at a party, Marilyn encountered Jean Peters, with whom she'd appeared in *Niagara* (1953). They did not discuss their mutual interest in Howard Hughes, but Marilyn did speak candidly about DiMaggio.

A scene from *Niagara* with MM and Joseph Cotten

"He prefers to live in San Francisco. I'm a Los Angeles gal. He likes golf, but I told him all the other men I've met are interested in plugging another hole. Nights are devoted to jock chatter with his cronies and five hours in front of the TV set. I like to flirt with anything in pants. He's possessive and jealous. I like to spend an hour sucking cock, and he prefers to go to the missionary position. He likes me to dress conservatively like Irene Dunne or Myrna Loy. I prefer to go out the door in a ' *Hello, of icer!* ' dress."

Marlon Brando said, "Marilyn talked about settling down, becoming a housewife, and having six kids. Maybe DiMaggio fell for that line. But once married, he learned that she wanted not six kids, but six Oscars."

One day, she received a call from the prominent agent, Charles K. Feldman, with whom she occasionally had a sexual rendezvous. He wanted to visit her to show her a newly written script and perhaps to arrange for what he called "love in the afternoon."

In her dressing room, the love-making preceded his pitch of the script, *The Seven Year Itch*, in which she would play "The Upstairs Girl" who kept her panties in the refrigerator during a hot summer in Manhattan. There was a role for "the summer bachelor" who lived downstairs. The gay actor, Tom Ewell, was being considered for the male lead, though she found him unattractive. "Wouldn't Rock Hudson be a better choice?" she asked Feldman.

Marilyn complained that DiMaggio refused to see any of her friends, although he would sometimes invite one of his own pals over for dinner and to watch sports on TV. Joe Nachio, his longtime companion and confidant, often came over, "sometimes while Joe and I were watching a game, Marilyn would come in and remove Joe's socks and start sucking his toes. Imagine having a woman with red, succulent lips like that sucking your toes?"

As DiMaggio's biographer, Richard Ben Cramer wrote: "DiMaggio seemed to resent anybody she was with. Even with girlfriends, Marilyn conspired to meet them away from home, or get them in and out of the house while Joe was away, so he wouldn't get mad. Sometimes, days would pass and she wouldn't see anyone."

Desperate for companionship, Marilyn called actor Brad Dexter.

Ever since Marilyn and Dexter had been cast in *The Asphalt Jungle* in 1950, they'd had an ongoing affair, although they didn't see each other that much. He went on to marry singer Peggy Lee, and she hooked up with DiMaggio.

Both Marilyn and Dexter referred to their marriages as "weddings in hell." And each of them would be married to their spouses for only nine months.

Marilyn was also intrigued that Dexter had acted as a stud to Mae West when he was cast alongside the aging

diva in *Diamond Lil*.

Square-jawed, like Charlton Heston, broad-shouldered, and handsome, Dexter appealed to Marilyn. He loved men as much as women, and had an ongoing affair with the closeted Paul Newman. Film critics called him “the sweetest meanie to ever slug a hero or tussle with a lady.”

At three in the afternoon, Dexter pulled up in front of the DiMaggio/Monroe household, knowing that her retired baseball player wasn’t expected until seven that evening.

Marilyn and Dexter wasted no time in heading for the bedroom she shared with DiMaggio. They wanted to have sex and be done with it in case her slugger returned home early.

She suggested he stay for dinner, thinking that DiMaggio might relate to him. He agreed. In the words of DiMaggio’s biographer, Richard Ben Cramer, “Dexter was a man’s man—a poker player, racetrack fan, a friend of Sinatra’s—she thought Joe and Brad might get along. But as Dexter remembered, he was in the house with Marilyn when Joe walked in, and it was obvious DiMaggio only wanted to know what the hell he was doing with his wife. As Dexter said, ‘the whole house went creepy with DiMaggio’s suspicion. So I pretended to have another appointment, and I didn’t stay for dinner.’”

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Brad Dexter *(top photo)* and Marilyn (lower photo) in a scene from *The Asphalt Jungle*

Sam Gilman was a minor actor whose bond with Marlon Brando became so close that the bigger star almost adopted him. Brando moved Gilman into his home and used him somewhat like a servant to cook his meals, shine his shoes, or remove some unwanted girlfriend from the premises.

Gilman had evolved more or less into his assistant when Brando was oddly cast as Napoléon during the filming of *Desirée* (1954). Gilman was on the set when Marilyn showed up when she was working nearby on *There's No Business* Like Show Business.

She giggled when she saw him dressed as Napoléon. Dressed in a formal gown, she posed for pictures with him. On the surface, everything seemed all right. One major star calling on another major star.

But in his dressing room she showed him where makeup concealed black and blue marks on her right arm. “Marilyn abhorred violence of any kind,” Gilman said. “Marlon was furious to learn what a mean shithead DiMaggio was in private, in contrast to his public image. He’d come home drunk and accuse Marilyn of continuing her affairs with both Marlon and Frank Sinatra, and countless others, even though married to him. That may have been true. Even so, violence was not the answer. Marilyn told Marlon that DiMaggio had started beating her and that she’d run into their bedroom and locked the door. He broke down the door and continued beating her, avoiding her face so that she could still appear before the camera. At least he knew enough to do that. He didn’t want the press to learn what a shit America’s hero really was. Marlon became incensed when he learned of this. He wanted Marilyn to move out, and he told her she could come and live with him until she found a place of her own. He also advised her to file for divorce. Two nights later, he told me that Marilyn’s marriage to DiMaggio wasn’t legal anyway, because technically she was still married to him and had not gotten a divorce. I still don’t know to this day if Marlon was actually married to Marilyn—or whether he was just putting me on.”

Publicly, she was informing the press, especially her favorite columnist Sidney Skolsky, that, “Marriage is something you learn more about while you live it.” Privately, she told Brando that the marriage to DiMaggio was all but over except the formalities.

“I think Marlon and Marilyn seriously discussed marriage—the real thing for all the world to see, not that fake ceremony, or whatever in the hell it was, that they had on location with *Viva Zapata!”* Gilman said. “Marlon told me that Marilyn agreed to the marriage, providing that she would not be expected to have children.”

Three nights later, when Marilyn came over for a dinner cooked by Gilman, Brando said, “DiMaggio’s going to be a tough act to follow if I take up with Marilyn.”

“What do you mean?” Gilman asked.

“Marilyn told me, ‘Joe’s biggest bat is not the one he uses on the baseball field.’ She also told me that, ‘If sex is what it took, I’d stay married to Joe.’”

“I’ve never heard any woman complain about your noble tool,” Gilman said to reassure his friend.

One week later, as Gilman recalled, a new and different Marilyn fled to the set of *Desirée* to see Brando. “Instead of a formal dress, she wore a tat ered bathrobe that was last washed in 1913,” Gilman said. “She wore no makeup and looked awful. At first I didn’t recognize her. Marlon later explained to me that Marilyn Monroe was just a show business concoction. The real girl wasn’t anything like Monroe.”

Sam Gilman

During her second visit to the set of *Desirée*, Brando saw at once that Marilyn was in serious trouble. “He just walked off camera,” Gilman said, “and headed for Marilyn. Wrapping a strong arm around her, he led her once again to his dressing room where he put out the DO NOT DISTURB sign. All shooting had to be suspended for the day. The director was furious. I hung around in case Marlon needed me later. I never knew exactly what drove Marilyn in such a condition to the *Desirée* set. Later Marlon quoted her to me. ‘My brains are leaving me just like they did with my mother,’ Marilyn told Marlon. ‘They’re going to come for me. Lock me away in some hospital.’ Perhaps without knowing it at the time, Marilyn was having a prophetic vision of her future.”

Brando said that Marilyn begged him to run away with her. “Any place in the world,” she told him. “Just a place where we can hide out forever.”

"I fucked her," Brando told Gilman. "That was the only way my noble tool knew how to calm her down."

"Marilyn did hide out for several days with Marlon before everything blew up between Jumpin' Joe and her," Gilman claimed.

Suddenly, without even leaving a note, Marilyn disappeared.

"I told Marilyn good-bye," Gilman said. "I even saw the man who had come to take her away. It was Frank Sinatra. I told Marlon that Marilyn had left in a taxi. If I'd ratted that it was Sinatra, he would have exploded on me. God, did he hate Sinatra. And believe me, the feeling was mutual."

He said that later, during Marilyn's filming of *The Seven Year Itch*, Brando forgave her for running out on him without a good-bye.

"They would be close until the day of her death," Gilman said. "But never again did I hear talk of marriage."

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In Nevada once again, Marilyn reported back for work on the set of *The Misfits* after she was released from the hospital in Los Angeles. Momentarily at least, she forgot about Brando, Sinatra, and even DiMaggio. She thought mostly of how she, Clark Gable, and Monty Clift were going to hold themselves together to finish what she had taken to calling "Miller's awful god damn picture. If anybody's a misfit, it's Miller himself, thinking he knows how to write a western. Naturally, he's cast me as a degenerate whore."

The Misfits became the last movie that Gable and Marilyn would ever finish. Both were soon to die, although Monty lived on a while longer, dying four years after Marilyn on July 22, 1966, at the age of forty-five. After a lifetime of drugs, liquor, and dissipation, his heart just gave out.

The movie the star-crossed actors left behind as their legacy went way over budget, costing more than $4 million. It was a flop, its first run on opening week at the box office netting only $55,000.

Marilyn treasured her last scene with Gable, cast as Gaylord, and herself cast as Roslyn. They're seated together in the front seat of a truck, driving into an uncertain future in the desert.

"How do you find your way back in the dark?" she asks him.

"Just head for that big star straight on," he told her. "The highway's under it. It'll take us home."

It wasn't in the script, but she hastily add, "Oh, to go home but where. I never was there."

Huston cut her line from the final print.

On the night of November 16, 1960, Gable was lying in a hospital bed, where he'd been taken after having a stroke at his home while changing a tire. That very day, he'd received a telegram from President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Mr. Gable,
I, of all people, know that the heart is a tricky thing. But that organ has seen both you and me through some good times and bad times, in peace and in war. Hopefully both of our tickers will continue beating for many more years to come.
Dwight D. Eisenhower

In his hospital room, Gable kissed his final and fifth wife, Kay, good night. At the age of forty-four she was pregnant and also suffered from a heart condition.

"I think I'll read a bit before shutting my eyes," he told her. These were the last words ever spoken by the King of Hollywood.

He was reading a book about the making of *Gone With the Wind*. He was discovered at around 10:30pm when the nurse came in to check on his. She spotted the book on the floor and Gable dead in his bed, his open eyes staring up at the ceiling, seeing nothing.

Within hours, the Associated Press was moving a bulletin to newspapers around the world: THE KING IS DEAD!

In New York, at 3am, Marilyn, still awake after a sleepless night, received a call from John Huston. "Clark is gone," he told her. I just heard the news."

She dropped the receiver and ran screaming into the living room. Seeing no one, she raced toward the bathroom. "I killed Clark Gable! I'm going to kill myself!"

Sleeping in another room, her maid, Lena Pepitone, heard her, got up, and hurried to the bathroom.

There, she discovered Marilyn swallowing capsules from a bottle. "Don't try to save me this time," she commanded. Of course, Pepitone didn't listen to her, but helped her induce vomiting through means never clarified.

The maid later said, "Somehow, Marilyn got it into her head that she was responsible for Gable's heart attack

after all that stress she put him through on making their last picture. Her awful nightmares started after finishing that picture. Every night, she found it impossible to sleep. She lost her appetite. For days after coming home, she would lie on her back in her bed, her eyes bulging out, wringing her hands in frustration."

Her recovery came slowly. Pepitone found her standing nude by the window, looking out at a dreary, rain-soaked New York cityscape. "Clark is gone now. I think Monty and I are next. I don't know which will go first, Monty or me."

"Neither one," Pepitone said. "When you're eighty-five, you'll be mounting some stage in Las Vegas, dressed in a low-cut gown in shocking pink, singing 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend.'"

"What man will be chasing after me then?" she asked.

"No doubt John. F. Kennedy, Jr."

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Days after Gable's funeral, his pregnant widow, Kay, told the press, "It wasn't the physical exertion of *The Misfits* that did it. It was the horrible tension, that eternal waiting, waiting, waiting. He waited for everybody. He'd get so angry waiting that he'd just go ahead and do anything to keep occupied. That's why he did those dangerous stunts."

Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, and later, 34th President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower

Marilyn burst into tears when she read that. Even though Kay didn't mention her by name, she knew that the widow was singling her out.

Once again, she became consumed by guilt over Gable's death. In her New York apartment, she stood in front of a window at three in the morning, contemplating jumping to her death. When Pepitone told her good night, she'd burst into sobs, claiming, "I did kill Clark. Yes, I did, and Kay Gable and half Forces in Europe, of the world know that."

"It's Christmas, Marilyn," Pepitone told her. "The city is filled with lights. You can disguise yourself, and we'll walk to Rockefeller Center tomorrow."

"I have nothing to live for," Marilyn said.

"Of all the women in the world, Marilyn Monroe has the most to live for. If you'd pull yourself together, you can have a great life."

The next morning, Marilyn told Pepitone that "I came that close to jumping out of the window this morning,

but Joe called. He's coming to New York to do his duty as my husband."

"He's not your husband," Pepitone said. "You divorced him."

"Joe will always be my husband."

It was Kay Gable who helped Marilyn recover from Gable's death. She invited her to attend the christening of her son, John Clark Gable, who was born in March of 1961 after a difficult pregnancy.

At the christening, Kay approached Marilyn and hugged her. "I'm sorry I was misquoted in the press," Kay said to her. "Clark never had anything unkind to say about you during that troubled shoot."

"Oh, thank you for telling me that," Marilyn said. "Oh, please, may I hold him?"

With great affection, Marilyn held the infant son of the dead Gable as if he were the most precious treasure she'd ever seen. She looked into his face. "You wonderful boy. You don't know it now, but you're going to grow up to rule over Hollywood like your papa did. You are going to be the reincarnation of Rhett Butler."

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Back in the Nevada desert, Sandy would always remember sitting with Marilyn after the shooting of *The Misfits* was finished. She got in the back seat of a large limousine which would take them to the airport at Reno.

Miller approached the car and tried to get in after her, but she slammed the door on him, nearly trapping his hand. She ordered the driver to go on.

"I'm going to divorce the son of a bitch." Both of them looked back, watching Miller standing in the desolate wasteland with no other car in sight. Every other vehicle had already gone. Lowering her window, Marilyn yelled back at her husband, "Eat my dust!"

"She truly had washed that man right out of her hair." Sandy said. "Ignoring the driver up front, she unzipped my jeans and gave me a goodbye present, a great blow-job. Her final words to me were, 'Honey, your cock is made more for sucking than for fucking.'"

"Two months later, I tried to sell my story of working with Monty, Clark, and Marilyn on *The Misfits,*" Sandy recalled. "All the editors read it with fascination, but no one would publish it—even for free. Remember, this was 1960. Journalism was different then."

Gable never lived to read the reviews of *The Misfits*, but Marilyn did. *Time* magazine reviewed Miller's screenplay, comparing the on-screen Roslyn with the real-life Marilyn. "Like Marilyn, Roslyn is a fractured, manhandled woman always searching for relationships. Helpless, yet flush with appetite."

Bosley Crowther in *The New York Times* wrote, "The characters are shallow and inconsequential, and that is the dang-busted trouble with this film. film Miss Monroe is completely blank and unfathomable."

Miller's biographer, Martin Got fried, wrote: "Monroe's acting is all but non-existent in *The Misfits*. Her expression is almost always distracted, even va-cant, while her interpretive efforts are transparent and sad, for she is plainly in a scary condition, unable to make contact with her fellow players. The Marilyn Monroe who could be so disarming in comedies and so magnetic simply as a presence on the movie screen is not to be found in this picture."

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On January 20, 1961, Marilyn obtained a Mexican divorce from Miller, then rushed back to her hotel to watch "the love of my life," John F. Kennedy, be inaugurated as President of the United States.

The next day, the Soviet magazine *Nedelya* reported on the divorce, the article claiming that Marilyn Monroe represented "another broken life on her climb to the stars."

Ironically, many newspapers gave Marilyn's divorce priority over President Kennedy's taking the oath of office at his inauguration.

Clark Gable with Kay Spreckels

It is commonly assumed that journalists did not report on the Kennedy/Monroe liaison during his presidency. Actually, prior to the president's inauguration, Art Buchwald in *The Los Angeles Times* wrote an item about Kennedy and the "Monroe Doctrine," asking if his first order of business in January would involve "Marilyn Monroe, now that she was divorcing Arthur Miller." Because Buchwald was also a humorist, most of the press at the time dismissed his question as a joke.

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Sandy Paroe himself never made it as a star, although he became a popular bartender in Hollywood, working at three different hotels before he died of AIDS in 1991. He was always open and willing to talk about his life, although it was obvious that the greatest event of his career had involved being a "gofer" on the set of *The Misfits*, back in 1960 and 1961, with Marilyn and Monty.

"The other day I read in the paper that Arthur Miller told a reporter that Marilyn was a Sixties person a whole decade before the Sixties really began, that she launched the Sixties back in 1950. It took the rest of the world ten whole years to catch up with her."

"Honey, we've all gotta go sometime, reason or no reason. Dying's as natural as living. A man who's too afraid to die is too afraid to live!"

—Clark Gable to Marilyn Monroe in *The Misfits*

In Memory of a Monument: The Mapes Hotel in Reno, Nevada

Opened in December, 1947, the Mapes Hotel was the grandest hotel in northern Nevada, and the setting for some of the dramas described in this chapter.

In 1984, it was imploded and demolished, *(photo, right)*, carrying with it the memories of when Marilyn Monroe and the cast of *The Misfits* were lodged here during the filming of a movie that was pivotal to the lives and careers of everyone involved.

Generating sexual hysteria, onscreen, in *The Misfits*

PART TWO

NIGHTMARE IN THE DREAM FACTORY

In Beverly Hills at an exclusive A-list party during the summer of 1954, attention focused on a handsome, charming, well-dressed, slender young man from the East Coast. His family name was already a Hollywood legend. He'd recently married "the Queen of Debutantes" in New England at a wedding attended by his right-wing father, who had made millions producing movies and peddling bootleg liquor during Prohibition.

In the late 1920s, the philandering Joseph P. Kennedy had arrived in Hollywood and had begun systematically, like a serial killer, to bed its most famous stars, ranging from Greta Garbo to Constance Bennett. His most notorious affair was with the imperial vamp of the silent screen, Gloria Swanson, with whom he'd launched the ill-fated silent, *Queen Kelly*, which was never completed, thanks to the arrival of new technologies—the Talkies—in Tinseltown.

At a Beverly Hills party hosted by super agent Charles Feldman, John F. Kennedy, the charismatic senator from Massachusetts, was getting the attention usually reserved for the world's top box office attractions. A rising political star, he was one of ten young men, including rival Richard M. Nixon, who had each been named as possible candidates who might seek the presidency in 1960.

Feldman had been known as the town's most suave marketer of talent (sometimes called a "flesh merchant") before graduating to a career as a movie producer. For a while, he had represented Marilyn, at which time they had launched an affair that was still ongoing.

When Feldman heard that JFK had hit town, he telephoned his suite at the Bel Air Hotel and told him he wanted to invite him to a party peopled with Hollywood stars. "I want you and Marilyn Monroe to be the guests of honor."

JFK couldn't turn down an invitation like that. Since he'd left Jackie on Cape Cod, he attended Feldman's party with his new brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, who had married his favorite sister, Patricia, earlier that year.

By the Eisenhower era of the 1950s, JFK was no stranger to Hollywood. Before flying to Los Angeles, he said to his younger brother, Bobby, "You know how I like to get one up on Dad. I want to dwarf his fabled conquest of Swanson by seducing the most desirable star in Hollywood—female, that is."

"You've had Lana Turner," Bobby said. "Jayne Mansfield, Gene Tierney, Grace Kelly, Judy Garland, Betty Grable, Marlene Dietrich, Hedy Lamarr, June Allyson, Sonja Henie, Joan Crawford, Ava Gardner. Who does that leave?"

"There's only one… *Marilyn Monroe*."

What he didn't remember was that without any particular fanfare, he had seduced Marilyn eight years previously, in 1946, right after the end of WWII. She was known at the time as Norma Jeane Baker. The seduction had occurred when JFK's longtime friend, the glamorous actor, Robert Stack, had invited JFK to stay with him in Hollywood. He held out the promise that he'd introduce him to the most beautiful stars and starlets in Hollywood, and perhaps even to an Oscar winner or two.

Back in the 1940s, Robert Stack and JFK were the two most desirable males in Hollywood, at least in the opinion of Judy Garland, who'd had affairs with both of them. "Even Howard Hughes pursued Robert and Jack, getting Stack but losing out on Jack," Garland claimed.

As Stack later recalled, "Jack at the time was the only man in Tinseltown who was better looking than me, and all the hot tamales in Los Angeles took notice. He really knew how to attract women. I've known him to have sex in the afternoon, sex at cocktail time, sex after dinner, with a midnight sleepover as part of the agenda. Oh, and did I say, each of these trysts was with a different woman?"

Robert Stack and JFK

"Like father, like son, but they handled women differently," Stack said. "Joe sorta denigrated Rose and rubbed her nose in his affairs. I think Jack did that somewhat to Jackie, especially after he got to the White House. After weeks of philandering, Joe always came back to Rose carrying expensive presents. Jack didn't even bring flowers to Jackie when he returned from whoring in Hollywood."

To his jealous best friend, the very gay Lem Billings, JFK had referred to Stack as "my libidinous buddy."

According to Lem, "Stack threw down the red carpet. Crossing it were beautiful stars, lovely starlets, and, what he didn't promise, a lot of so-so wannabees who lacked star power, but made up for it in other departments. Those kind of gals wanted to get ahead and would do more than give head. They'd do anything."

JFK's Boston accent was a bit off-putting to those who lived in Texas, the Deep South, or the Rocky Mountains, but his words were as "soothing as licking honey off a woman's breasts," or so claimed an article submitted to *Playboy* but rejected by Hugh Hefner.

A New Yorker, Feldman had known Joseph Kennedy for years. Through the former ambassador, Chuck Spalding, one of John Kennedy's closest friends, had gone to work for Feldman at United Artists in 1946. When young JFK went on one of his self-proclaimed "poontang hunts" in Hollywood, he was often the guest of Feldman, who was known for giving some of the best parties in Tinseltown. JFK had also dated such Feldman clients as Peggy Cummins and Gene Tierney, who had wanted to marry him.

A confidant of both Peter and Patricia, JFK was privy to all their extramarital affairs—Patricia with handsome, well-endowed young men, and her husband, Peter, with handsome, well-endowed young men plus hookers, studio messenger boys, and a few top female stars.

At the party, JFK sat between Lawford and Feldman on the sofa in the center of a large living room. JFK was nursing his second drink when he noticed a hush fall over the room. Feldman jumped up to greet his late-arriving guest.

JFK turned to look at the arrival of Marilyn Monroe clad in red alligator "Joan Crawford fuck-me high heels," a black, low-cut dress tailored two sizes too small, and a white fox fur draped over her creamy nude shoulders.

"What tits! What an ass!" JFK whispered to Lawford, who was already a bit drunk, perhaps drugged. "I bet you've had her."

"Who hasn't?" responded a cynical Lawford. "On my first date with her, I had to step over dogshit in her bedroom to get to her nude body sprawled drunkenly on her bed. I was drunk, too, so we were evenly matched. I don't think either of us had a climax that night, but we continued to date on and off."

Charles Feldman

In spite of a sharp pain in his lower back, JFK rose to greet Marilyn as she wiggled across the room, waving at her fellow stars such as Alexis Smith, Virginia Mayo, Dana Andrews, and Melvyn Douglas.

She had just emerged from her hair dresser as a glorious honey blonde. The hairdresser had also bleached what she called "the hair down below—I like to be blonde all over, although sometimes I get burns on my sensitive vagina."

Feldman made the introductions.:"Miss Monroe, our fellow guest of honor, Jack Kennedy, the senator from Massachusetts, and, of course, you known Joe DiMaggio. Like Marilyn herself, he needs no introduction, I'm sure."

"Miss Monroe," JFK said, taking her hand and gazing deeply into her eyes. "My pleasure. Jackie and I agreed that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* was the best musical of all time, or at least I did. I thought you were the greatest thing in the picture, Jackie sorta going for Charles Coburn."

Marilyn laughed. "Thank you for the compliment and tell Jackie she's welcome to Coburn."

She would later claim that "Joe and Jack didn't have much to say to each other. They were like two roosters circling the only hen in the barnyard. Jack didn't bother to conceal his attraction for me, and that really pissed off Joe."

Before she was served a drink, DiMaggio excused himself to go to the Feldman's ground floor bathroom.

During the time he was gone, she cuddled closer to JFK. "You said it was a pleasure to meet me. Actually, you've had the pleasure before. It was back in 1946 at Robert Stack's place."

"You were one of those girls we auditioned!" he said in astonishment. "Surely I would have remembered Marilyn Monroe."

"I was Norma Jeane Baker back then, with brown hair, very young, a bit shy. That was before I created this Marilyn Monroe thing."

"I still can't believe we did it," he said.

"If you want evidence, I can describe exact details of your anatomy."

"Let's not go that far," he said.

She reached into a red sequined purse and handed him a card with her private phone number on it. An imprint of her red lipstick was already on the card.

"Do you give a lot of these cards to men at parties?" he asked.

"Just a select few—bigtime movie stars, bigtime directors, bigtime producers, and any man that Peter Lawford and Charles Feldman tell me is going to become the Vice President of the United States in 1956."

"How did you know I was going for that?"

"I'm not as dumb as I look."

At that point, DiMaggio returned to protect his possession.

Seeing him coming, JFK changed the subject. "Are you in person like that fortune hunter, Lorelei Lee, in the movie?"

“Not at all,” she said. “I think a girl should make her own fortune and not depend on a man to do it for her.”

“Good thinking,” DiMaggio said, “since I’m retired and living off past glory.”

At that point, Feldman’s butler, attired in a red dinner jacket and a pink bow tie, announced that dinner was being served. In the dining room, DiMaggio seemed peeved that he wasn’t placed next to Marilyn. He was seated next to Patricia Lawford instead, and she knew a lot about baseball.

As prearranged with Feldman, JFK was seated between Lawford and Marilyn. On Lawford’s left was another glamorous blonde, Marilyn Maxwell, who was the on-again, off-again lover of both Lawford and Frank Sinatra.

Monroe whispered to JFK, “It’s bad enough that Maxwell and I have to share Frank and Peter, but I think this town isn’t big enough for two blondes named Marilyn.”

She once expressed that complaint to Feldman, who told her, “Maxwell was in pictures during World War II, meaning she got here before you.”

“From the looks of things, she must have been in pre-War films, perhaps even the Silents.”

“Meow!” he said.

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As the dinner progressed beyond the soup, Lawford became aware of the guerilla tactics going on under the table to his right. While talking to Maxwell, he also managed to eavesdrop on Marilyn and JFK.

“I thought all senators were grandfatherly types,” she said, “until I met you.”

“If I met you in ’46, you must have been in the cradle. You look like you’re fresh out of high school.”

“Talk like that will get you anything you want,” she said.

“Lawford would later recall, “My God, she was practically inviting him to crawl under the table and go down on her. No, Tenth Avenue hooker working the night shift in Manhattan could have been more obvious that night.”

Young JFK

After Marilyn left the party two hours later, Lawford approached JFK. “Gonna go for that hot box?”

“Yeah, the way you, you fucking child molester, seduced that poor, virginal, teenager, Elizabeth Taylor.”

“Believe me, Marilyn is no innocent, much less a virgin.”

“That’s OK with me—neither am I. I’ll benefit from her vast experience. Do you think Feldman will be jealous? We know DiMaggio will, but we’ll see that he doesn’t find out.”

“Feldman will be okay with it,” Lawford said. “With his hairpiece, sagging jaw, belly over the belt, not to mention an unreliable dick, he knows Marilyn is only rewarding him for favors he’s done for her career. It’s not a

romance."

Marilyn and DiMaggio had been the last guests to arrive at the party, but the first to leave after dinner.

Over a nightcap with Lawford, JFK went into more detail about what was going on under the table. "My right hand slowly began to creep up her left leg, arriving at her creamy thigh. I was forced to eat with my left paw. When I got to the thigh, she warned me, 'I don't want you to be shocked. I'm not wearing panties tonight.' I continued on my voyage of discovery. By the time the cherries jubilee was served, I had three fingers inserted into that overworked pussy of hers. After all the guys she screwed, she's still tight, a perfect fit for a guy like me."

"I'm sure it'll become the romance of the century," Lawford said. "But watch out for that dog shit."

The following morning, in his suite at the Bel Air Hotel, JFK dialed the number Marilyn had given him.

To his regret, DiMaggio answered the phone. Hearing a man's voice, he asked, "Just who is this?"

"A friend," JFK said.

DiMaggio slammed down the phone.

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When DiMaggio announced that he was going to spend the day playing golf with Bing Crosby, Marilyn seized the opportunity. As soon as DiMaggio was gone, she fled from what she called "my prison and my jailer," taking a taxi to the Bel Air Hotel. During a call she'd placed, JFK had invited her for a late breakfast.

What happened next is the subject of some conjecture, and details can only be pieced together by snippets of information Marilyn revealed to Jeanne Carmen, Peter Lawford, and Shelley Winters, among others.

Apparently, she found JFK in his suite with a terrycloth bathrobe dangling open to reveal that he wore only a pair of white jockey shorts. He was having his coffee while reading *The Los Angeles Times*.

Marilyn's friend, Shelley Winters, recalled that "She was as excited as a teenager to be having an affair with the handsome senator. She told me, 'Jack is married to the most beautiful woman in Washington, but he desires me. He told me that I will do things to him that only a hooker will do.' Marilyn apparently took that as a compliment."

"I often wondered what she meant by that," Shelley said. "Kennedy was known for having said that he wasn't finished with a woman until he'd had her three ways. That could only mean that Miss Jackie didn't go for any of that rear door stuff."

Shelley continued: "Marilyn told me that Kennedy had told her that he was going to become President of the United States, and then she said, 'He's going to appoint me First Mistress.' But she quickly added, 'there can be no official announcement, of course.'"

"Later, Marilyn would upgrade her role, claiming that she had set her eyes on becoming First Lady. All this must have been heady stuff for a little abused girl who grew up in an orphanage and foster homes. Jack Kennedy was the biggest thing who had ever come her way, after years in Hollywood, time spent lying on casting couches, and 'sucking a lot of Jewish cock,' as Marilyn put it. Time spent in the late 40s saying only one word on the screen and sometimes, as in the case of *Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!*, even getting that cut."

After a day spent in JFK's suite, interrupted with a lot of phone calls from back East, Marilyn was eager to share her good fortune. DiMaggio would call it Monday morning quarterbacking—"He also watches football games," Marilyn said.

In a call to Lawford, she told him, "I've known far better men in bed than Jack, including yourself, at least in the oral department. He uses the excuse of back pain, which is a signal for me to do all the hard work in getting him off. Frankly, he's a bit quick on the draw for me to get any real satisfaction."

"Are you going to continue this after he flies back to Washington?" he asked.

"By all means," she said. "We've reached an understanding. Back East he'll be faithful to Jackie. But out here, I'll be his only woman. In other words, Jackie and I will share him with no other interlopers."

Peter Lawford

"I know Jack very well, and when he promises something, he's a man of his word." It is not known if she realized that Lawford was being cynical.

"I'm not in it for the good sex, because the sex is not good," she confessed. "You and I both know we can pick up studs all over Hollywood just by walking out the door. A lot of guys out here would like to fuck a movie star, particularly the very handsome Peter Lawford and the very beautiful Marilyn Monroe. I understand even straight guys will put out for you."

"Something like that," he said.

"When I'm with Jack, I feel that I'm with a powerful man making big decisions that could affect the entire world one day," she told him. "Women will understand that. For centuries, they've been attracted to men with power. I'm sure Eva Braun didn't stay with Adolf Hilter just for the sex."

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Arthur James, a rich real estate agent living in Malibu, had known Marilyn in the late 1940s when she'd become involved with the sons of Charlie Chaplin, both Sidney and Charlie, Jr. James was a close friend of The Little Tramp, who eventually got around to seducing Marilyn himself, since he liked very young girls. Apparently, according to Marilyn, the original Chaplin wanted to convince her that he was better in the boudoir than either of his sons. He referred to his penis as "the eighth wonder of the world."

Over the years, James had witnessed many of her affairs, and he also had a front row seat to watch the drama associated with the debut of her love affair with John F. Kennedy. James revealed some of what he knew to biographer Anthony Summers, author of *Goddess, the Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe*.

According to James, a favorite watering hole of JFK and Marilyn was the raunchy Malibu Cottage, a battered bar and grill along the coast. It had fewer than a dozen stools and some scattered tables along the sawdust-littered floor. If clients needed them, there were a few "hot beds" to rent nearby.

JFK wasn't that well known on the West Coast at that time, and he felt he didn't need to be so guarded about his burgeoning relationship with Marilyn, as he'd have to be in the years ahead.

Over various visits, they also checked into the Holiday House in Malibu, using assumed names, including Fritz Gerald and Jeane Mortensen, and they were seen, on occasion, coming and going from the Château Marmont on Sunset Boulevard, where everyone, from Greta Garbo in the old days to Paul Newman in the 1950s, went for off-the-record sexual trysts.

JFK was said to have liked Malibu Cottage because it evoked some of the low-rent Boston taverns he'd frequented as a horny young college student.

With all the elegant bars from which to choose, A-list movie stars often patronized Malibu Cottage as one of their favorite hangouts. Jayne Mansfield claimed, "You could take your pickups there—you know, blue collar types with dirt under their fingernails and big sausage in their jockeys—and no one asked questions, no one judged."

A frequent patron of Malibu Cottage, Marilyn had invited JFK to go there with her "because it's a lot of fun.

Everything that goes on there is off the record." JFK referred to it as "going slumming."

However, there was always the possibility of embarrassment with that chance encounter. Such an event happened when Marilyn showed up with JFK to spot Lana Turner and Lex Barker (of Tarzan fame) drinking together in the far corner. Lana's affair with Lex—Marilyn called him "Sexy Lexy"—would grow so intense that eventually, in 1953, he put a wedding band on Lana's finger.

As the bartender, Bryan Pickins, recalled, "Lana and Lex invited Marilyn and JFK to their small table. The movie Tarzan had never met Kennedy before. But, perhaps unknown to Lana, Marilyn and Lex had had an on-again, off-again affair for some three years. Not only that, but all of Hollywood knew that Lana had been involved in an affair with Kennedy when he was still a congressman, right after the war."

She'd been introduced to JFK in 1946 by another of her lovers, Robert Stack. After seeing Lana's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, JFK told friends that Lana was the "sexiest thing in pictures." Before the war, Lana had also seduced another future U.S. president, Ronald Reagan, and she'd also had a long-running affair with Peter Lawford, JFK's brother-in-law.

Lex Barker (left) as Tarzan and Lana Turner

Marilyn nursed her own fantasies about Lana, though presumably, they were not of a sexual nature. Ever since she'd seen Lana walking down that street, "bouncing her tits" in *They Won't Forget* in 1937, Marilyn had dreamed of becoming the next "Sweater Girl" of the 1950s, usurping the title originally bestowed on Lana.

To Marilyn, Lana had been the ultimate symbol of a movie star—blonde, beautiful, wealthy, with numerous lovers and an occasional husband.

Marilyn dreamed of seducing some of the same men that Lana had bedded—Desi Arnaz, Kirk Douglas, John Garfield, John Hodiak, George Montgomery, Tyrone Power, Robert Taylor, and especially Victor Mature. Both of them had already shared Ronald Reagan, Dean Martin, Clark Gable, and Howard Hughes, not to mention John F. Kennedy and Lana's husband, Lex Barker.

As a young, struggling model, Marilyn had purchased every movie magazine with Lana on the cover. She was drawn to her superficial glitz and glamour. Marilyn also knew that Lana didn't depend on any great acting ability but was living proof that a beautiful young woman could get by in pictures with just her looks.

By 1954, movie columnists were hailing Marilyn as "The New Sweater Girl," replacing Lana as the screen goddess of the 1940s. If Lana harbored any resentment toward Marilyn, she didn't show it. But if she had known that Lex was Marilyn's lover, that surface hospitality would surely have vanished.

Marilyn wasn't the only woman—or male, for that matter—pursuing Lana's husband. Today, thousands of his still loyal fans still mourn his passing in 1973. Born in New York, Lex had been a soldier during World War II. Unlike the Tarzan he depicted on the screen, the Ape Man was actually debonair, sophisticated, and well-educated. In addition to being blond and athletic, he stood a towering 6'4".

During the course of a date with Lawford, Marilyn had met Lex at the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in the Ambassador Hotel when he was still married to the also beautiful, flame-haired Arlene Dahl.

Lex had telephoned Marilyn the following day, in spite of his marriage to Dahl. Their affair began that afternoon, although each of them would continue to date other people during the course of their romance. At one time, Marilyn had wanted Lex to marry her, not Lana.

During her meeting with Lana and Lex, Marilyn somehow worked into the conversation the fact that DiMaggio would be out of town for several days. She was sending a signal to Lex, and he picked up on it.

She called Carmen that night: "Not bad for a working gal, don't you agree? In the next few days, I'll be screwing the handsomest politician in Washington and the handsomest actor in Hollywood. Of course, their cocks are different— one an acorn on the tree, the other the trunk of that tree."

In the future, Marilyn would resent it when Jeanne Carmen, cast as the Indian girl, "Yellow Moon," starred in Lex's 1957 picture *War Drums*. Carmen went into lavish praise of Lex in the boudoir. "When he takes off his undies, you know you're going to get something really special. But you've made it clear that you've been there before. There's no need to be jealous. Lex screws a lot of beautiful women. There's enough meat there for the poor. Besides, we've doubled up on men before."

"I'm not jealous of you," Marilyn said. "It's Lana Turner. I wanted Lex to marry me, not her."

"Don't worry, kiddo," Carmen said. "Turner is yesterday. You're Hollywood's new Lana."

Inevitably, JFK had to fly back to Washington, but Marilyn had promised to drive over to Bel Air for "an adieu fuck," as she put it. As was her custom, she was late.

As she came into his suite, she saw that he was fully dressed in a blue suit, and the bellboys were already carrying down his luggage.

"I wanted a private farewell, so you wouldn't forget me like you did in 1946." Marilyn told JFK. Shelley Winters, her former roommate, would learn all the details later that evening.

"After hustling the bellhops out with his luggage, Jack locked the door and signaled me to get into position—that is, on my knees. He didn't unzip, since he liked me to do that for him. I gave him a terrific blow-job—really inspired. I thought he'd call me when he first got to Washington, but he didn't. I guess he couldn't shake Jackie to sneak away."

Blondes who gossip: Jeanne Carmen (left) and Shelley Winters

“Even so, I’m in luck,” Marilyn told her longtime confidant. “Lana has to fly to New York for a few days, but Lex is here pursuing some sort of film role. That means I’ll have Tarzan swinging that vine my way for at least three days, maybe more. I’m going to try a new technique that Jayne Mansfield uses on her tricks. I’m covering Lex’s vital parts with the richest whipped cream I can find.”

“Marilyn!” Shelley said as if chastising her. “Don’t you know how fattening whipped cream is?”

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In the autumn, and at long last, Senator Kennedy called her, inviting her to come and see him in New York. He told her that he’d be staying in a suite at the Hotel Carlyle, but “for the sake of appearances,” he’d had one of his aides book her a suite at the St. Regis.

Before flying to Idlewild Airport in New York, she spent money on wardrobe she could ill afford, because the clothes she wore around Los Angeles somehow didn’t seem appropriate for the drab streets of New York. She also needed some disguises, because she’d be mobbed if spotted on the street. “After all,” as she later told Jeanne Carmen, “I’m far more famous in New York, or anywhere else, than Mr. Kennedy.”

Marilyn had also received a call from Lex Barker, telling her that he, too, would be in New York for four days at the time she was flying there. In her final goodbye call to Carmen, Marilyn told her, “I’m sure that any sexual desires I have that Senator Kennedy can’t satisfy can be magnificently fulfilled by Lex, Mr. Third Leg himself.”

“What about Joltin’ Joe?” Carmen asked.

“I’ll give him to you. He can teach you how to play baseball and you can teach him golf.”

On her first night at the St. Regis Hotel in Manhattan, Marilyn was told to wait in the King Cole Bar where a driver would come for her. As instructed, Marilyn was later slipped discreetly into the Hotel Carlyle, her blonde hair concealed by an Hermès scarf and her face partially hidden by large sunglasses. She was delivered to the bachelor pad that JFK maintained in the midst of the rare shrubs and small trees of the hotel’s roof garden. In a scarlet satin bathrobe, he came to the door to receive her himself.

The suite would become familiar to her in the coming months. So would a special bedroom set aside for them at the mansion of Peter and Patricia Lawford in a sprawling Santa Monica residence that had once belonged to MGM mogul Louis B. Mayer. Another venue would be a suite at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, or a suite at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. On rare occasions, and in a heavy disguise, she would be slipped aboard Air Force One after her lover assumed the presidency in 1961.

She could be very candid about admitting her sexual affairs. Some film historians claim she was the first A-list star who ever admitted that she promoted her career in films by lying on the casting couch.

“It comes with the territory,” she was fond of saying. “Producers weren’t shooting all those sexy movies just to sell popcorn. They wanted to sample the merchandise first hand. I was available. Had I not gone along with it, there were two dozen other bottle blondes waiting in line. I did make one amazing discovery. There are a lot of fat producers in Hollywood with three-inch dicks, Darryl F. Zanuck excluded, of course.”

After her first night in the suite with JFK at the Carlyle, Marilyn became a kiss-and-tell kind of woman. She insisted on re-living her sexual encounters with such trusted confidants as Peter Lawford, Shelley Winters, and especially Jeanne Carmen. She also bragged about her experiences even with her maids such as Lena Pepitone and her long-time friend, Robert Slatzer.

As Marilyn relayed the story, “Jack had three bottles of champagne cooling, the very expensive kind. I had on an extra-thick coating of ‘fuck-me-now’ lipstick. When I sipped my first taste of bubbly, I left a lipstick smear on the rim of the glass. He reached over and took it from me, offering me his glass. Then he put my glass with the red smear to his own lips and tongued off my lipstick. Isn’t that the most romantic thing you’ve ever heard in your life?”

She claimed that he’d told her “there are at least ten million men in the world who would give their left nut to be sitting where I am right now with the world’s most desired woman.”

“When I leaned over to give him an appreciative kiss, he got excited, wanting so much more. It was time for tongue down the throat. Once or twice he backed off to suck in more air, then went gangbusters on me. We must have gone at that for at least ten minutes. When he did back off, he confided in me that Jackie didn’t like a tongue in her mouth. ‘Her kisses are very chaste,’ he told me, ‘and I need so much more.’”

She told him that she’d read in the papers in September of 1953 that “you married that debutante. The press claimed she was getting America’s most eligible bachelor—in fact, yours was called the celebrity marriage of the year.”

“It wasn’t much of a honeymoon; There was constant pain in my back.”

“I want to know about that,” she said.

“Later. Right now I have something more pressing I want you to take care of.”

“Carmen was eager for a blow-by-blow description. “After all that commando activity on the sofa, his robe had fallen open,” Marilyn claimed. “At the Bel Air, he’d worn a pair of jockey shorts. But at the Carlyle, he was nude under the robe.”

In bed, Marilyn learned once again that JFK was no athlete like her retired baseball hero husband. “He spread-eagled himself on the bed and expected me to do all the work,” she said. “I was top gun that night. Actually, I was using him like men use a Saturday night whore. I was in the command decision post, manipulating him. When he was about to explode, and I wasn’t quite satisfied, I slowed down the action, much to his frustration. Then I worked him to fever pitch again.”

“God damn it, Marilyn,” he’d shouted at her, or so she claimed, “I’ve got to get off. Stop teasing me.’”

“Finally, I headed home,” she said. “During all this time, the fucker had been working my breasts. He got so carried away, he practically bit off my left nipple. It was bleeding, but I guess he couldn’t help himself.”

“When it was over, I fell on him, nibbling his neck, sticking my tongue in his ears, and even his nostrils. He loved that. He said that none of his previous women had ever attacked his head with so much passion.”

The evening, as she confided, took a sad turn for the first time when he confided to her the extent of his illness. He said that in October of 1953, he’d undergone a life-or-death operation on his back for a double fusion of his spine to correct a ruptured disk. Crushed bone fragments had to be removed and steel pins inserted. X-rays revealed that his fifth lumbar vertebra had collapsed.

He also told her he had an adrenal deficiency. “People call it Addison’s disease. That means that my surgical wounds might not heal.” As he explained it, the disease was caused by a deficiency of hormones needed to regulate potassium, blood sugar, and sodium.

JFK

“The doctors gave me a fifty-fifty chance,” he had said to her. “I told my dad that I’d rather die than spend my life in a wheelchair. But he pointed out that Franklin Roosevelt was elected president four times while confined to a wheel-chair.”

“Mr. Roosevelt in a wheelchair?” she’d asked in astonishment. “I’ve seen pictures of him. No wheelchair.”

“The press was kind,” he’d told her. “I fear I can’t expect such generosity if I become a cripple for life.”

She also claimed that before she left that night, JFK had reached for a bottle of capsules by his bed. “He took a little knife with a silver handle and just barely pierced the surface of his inner thigh. He told me he didn’t want to bleed very much. He inserted the capsule under his skin and bandaged it. “The tablet will dissolve in my bloodstream.”

“That time at the Carlyle was one of the very few occasions during their affair that she could spend the entire night in his arms, at least until seven o’clock the following morning, when he had to return to Washington.

Before the dawn’s light, he confided another secret to her. “My doctors told me I might have leukemia.”

“That I’ve heard of,” she said.

Before she checked out of his suite two hours after his departure, she had learned something that only a few people knew. She still wasn’t exactly sure what Addison’s disease was, but it sounded frightening. As she was later to find out, the leukemia turned out to be a false alarm, but Addison’s disease was real and threatening. It made her

doubt for the first time that he might ever become President of the United States.

Before exiting from the hotel, she'd dressed herself up as her character of Marilyn Monroe. As the doorman hailed her a taxi, she was spotted by at least three people who screamed out her name. A crowd of onlookers quickly formed. Fortunately, the taxi whisked her away as she blew kisses to her fans.

On the plane back to Los Angeles, she knew she possessed one of the many "deadly secrets" about JFK she'd learned before the summer of 1962. She'd only confide them to people she really trusted, confidants who would not betray her—or so she thought at the time.

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Getting off the plane after visiting JFK in New York, Marilyn was approached by a tall, sinister-looking man, his face hidden with very dark sunglasses and his body draped in a Humphrey Bogart-style trenchcoat. He didn't introduce himself, but said, "Johnny's waiting for you in his limo."

She knew at once who "Johnny" was. There had been a number of Johnnies in her life before, including actor John Carroll, who was once billed as the replacement for Clark Gable (it never happened), and her agent, Johnny Hyde, an ugly little Russian whose parents had been circus performers in Moscow. He stood five feet three and was known in Hollywood as "The Ugly Dwarf," yet he had represented such stars as Lana Turner and Rita Hayworth, the love goddesses Marilyn most wanted to be, except for Betty Grable, whom she also hoped to replace on the screen.

With her baggage retrieved by the bodyguard, she was directed to the back seat of a long stretch limousine, its rear windows shaded.

The bodyguard opened the door to reveal a man in a dark coat sitting in the far corner, his black hat covering most of his face. "Hi, beautiful, get in. Haul that delectable ass over here and give your Johnny a wet one."

It was the gangster, Johnny Roselli, who had issued the summons to her. She had long ago learned not to disobey any order issued from Roselli, or his boss, Sam Giancana.

After getting into the limousine and giving him the mandatory deep throat kiss, he announced to her that she was being driven to Las Vegas that night. She didn't want to go, but dared not turn down the mob.

The smoothest of the *Mafiosi*, Roselli moved with grace between Hollywood, Las Vegas, and Washington. He'd been one of the mob who'd forced Harry Cohn to give Marilyn a contract at Columbia, where she'd made *Ladies of the Chorus* in 1948, where another blonde, Adele Jergens, cast as a burlesque star, played her mother.

Fellow mobsters referred to Roselli as "handsome Johnny." Always immaculately dressed in $1,000 suits, he had jet-black hair sleeked back and olive skin, with a mouth full of "pearly whites" as he called them. He also had a pencil-thin mustache, and was smoking a Camel cigarette. "Lucky Strikes are for fags," he always claimed.

Marilyn had first met Roselli at the home of the aging producer at Fox, Joseph M. Schenk, with whom she was having an affair whenever he could produce an erection.

The year was 1947, when Roselli had been paroled from a Chicago prison, where he'd been sentenced in 1943 to ten years on racketeering charges. Harry S Truman's crooked attorney general, Tom C. Clark, had made a deal with the mob for Roselli's early release.

Johnny Roselli

Schenck had warned her not to get involved with Roselli, and she promised she wouldn't. Two nights later, she was seen leaving the gangster's suite after an overnight sleepover.

Otherwise, Schenck was her mentor. Born in Russia to a Jewish household, he'd arrived in New York City in 1893 and eventually entered the entertainment business, which led to his relocation to Hollywood. He became a key player in the fledging motion picture world of the Silents. He was a partner with Marcus Loew in operating a chain of movie theaters. In 1916, he'd married Norma Talmadge, one of the top silent screen vamps.

In Hollywood, he was the first president of United Artists, and in 1933, he became a partner with Darryl F. Zanuck in creating 20th Century Pictures, which two years later merged with Fox. Schenck became chairman of the new 20th Century Fox.

But in time, he was convicted of income tax evasion and was sentenced to prison until freed by a presidential pardon.

When he returned to Fox, he'd spotted a young actress, Marilyn herself, "walking with a wiggle," and had asked her to get into his limousine.

Schenck was fat, bald, and squinty-eyed, and was described as "looking like Kubla Khan after too many years at Xanadu." But to a near-starving $75-a-week contract player like Marilyn, he looked promising.

Soon, she was living in his guest cottage. Their affair lasted until 1957, when he suffered a stroke from which he would never recover.

Unlike most gangsters, Roselli like to talk about his early days in the film industry. He'd arrived in Los Angeles in 1924, where he made a living as a bootlegger. In time, he'd become the West Coast representative of gangster Sam Giancana.

Roselli's dream involved becoming an updated version of Brian Foy, a movie producer who was instrumental in the production of 214 films between 1924 and the time of Marilyn's death. He was the eldest son of the vaudeville star Eddie Foy, and had been one of the original "The Seven Little Foys." When film producing didn't work out, Roselli found other ways to make money.

Over pillow talk, Roselli once confessed to Marilyn that as a mob figure "I extorted millions from the studios. The real key to Fort Knox came in 1936, when we forced all the major unions to contribute heavily to us. If a union didn't march to our drum, I soon saw that they got in step."

She was also astonished to learn that many of Hollywood's top stars during the 1930s were "gang sponsored," including George Raft, Clark Gable, the Marx Brothers, Jimmy Durante, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, and Jean Harlow. "I used to fuck Jean Harlow in the 1930s, and now I'm fucking her 1950s replacement. We got fabulous contracts for all our stars, but, of course, they had to fork over a lot of their loot to me."

MM with Joseph Schenck

On the way to Las Vegas, Marilyn looked with a certain despair out the window as night was falling across the Nevada desert. Roselli was telling her that he was more or less abandoning Hollywood for the rapidly growing and very profitable gambling mecca of Las Vegas. He was always blunt with her, knowing that he could trust her with his secrets because he had blackmail evidence on her.

He claimed that he was the Las Vegas emissary of "the boys in Chicago who want their fair share of casino revenues earned through skimming. Officially, though, I'm on the books as a producer for Monogram in Hollywood."

In Las Vegas, Roselli dominated the booking of A-list celebrities in the hotels. Before arriving along the Strip, he'd told Marilyn that he was bringing her to town to entertain "some of the boys: Frank Costello will be there, Meyer Lansky, Mickey Cohen, and of course, Sam." Then he informed her that Sam Giancana wanted to have dinner with her after her performance.

Because of the blackmail evidence Giancana and Roselli had on Marilyn, she had to perform on command.

When first informed of the blackmail, Roselli had warned her, "Your career survived that nude calendar, but it won't survive our release of the blue movie we have on you."

He was referring to a secret loop, filmed with a concealed camera, showing her performing fellatio on gangster Johnny Stompanato, and later having intercourse with him. "You look great," Roselli told her, "when you're sucking Johnny's big cock. You have one deep throat."

Stompanato's greatest notoriety lay in his future, when he was stabbed by Lana Turner, his lover, or else by her daughter, Cheryl Crane, depending on which story you want to believe.

The handsome, well-endowed Stompanato was the trusted henchman and pimp for Mickey Cohen. Marilyn had met Stompanato at a Hollywood party in 1953 and had been impressed with his physique, flashing brown eyes, black wavy hair, and courtly manners. George Raft called him “the most cunning and cocksure man in Hollywood.”

Marilyn had succumbed to his charm, little knowing that he was a high-priced gigolo, having serviced such stars as Janet Leigh and Ava Gardner.

In his memoirs, *In My Own Words*, Cohen wrote, “Johnny Stompanato was the most handsome man I’ve ever known that was all man. He was an athlete and a real man, without any queerness about him.”

Unknown to Marilyn, Stompanato, through an arrangement made with Cohen and assisted by some of his goons, secretly filmed movie stars having sex with Stompanato and later using the “blue movie” to blackmail them.

At that point, Marilyn had very little money. Even though she was a film star, she had signed a low-paying contract at Fox. Since the mob could not extort the big bucks from her, she was forced to pay them back in other ways, one of which included making herself available to men such as Roselli and Giancana.

At the Desert Inn in Las Vegas, two bellhops directed Marilyn to Roselli’s suite while he excused himself for an urgent meeting with Giancana. She’d protested that she didn’t have a wardrobe.

“You’ll find everything waiting for you,” he promised her. “Listen, doll, this is Las Vegas, the entertainment capital of the world. There are more show biz costumes here than in Hollywood. The wardrobe mistress from Columbia is waiting for you with some two dozen gowns. If you don’t like them, I’ll have two dozen more sent up.”

“Thanks, Johnny,” she said, rushing into the elevator.

Waiting for her in the suite was the wardrobe mistress and two handsome young waiters who had placed champagne and caviar on ice.

After emerging from the bathroom, she reached for a glass of the bubbly. In front of the trio, she pulled off all her clothes for a fitting. The wardrobe mistress had seen nude stars for years and was blasé about the matter, but the waiters looked enthralled, although Marilyn had suspected that they were homosexuals.

The fifth gown, a satin outfit in shocking pink, fitted her perfectly. It was cut so low that she claimed that “only Jayne Mansfield would wear it.” But she liked it. “I guess the boys really want to see my tits tonight,” she told the wardrobe mistress.

As she was posing in front of a full-length mirror, three of the hotel musicians arrived with her music, which had been pre-selected for her. Although they had only an hour to rehearse, the songs were already familiar to her.

Lana Turner, Johnny Stompanato, and Cheryl Crane in 1958

She was to open with “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” from the film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and follow with “I’m Gonna File My Claim” and “River of No Return” from her recent movie with Robert Mitchum. Her brief performance would conclude with “Bye Bye Baby,” also from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

An hour later, Roselli, looking distressed, arrived in the suite just in time to approve her selection of wardrobe and to change into a tuxedo. Giving her a kiss, he escorted her downstairs to a private party. Two armed security guards watched over the entrance. Seeing who it was, the guards quickly granted Marilyn and Roselli access to the

dining room.

The party was already well under way when they came in. Waiters rushed about serving food and wine to some fifty members of the mob. At their tables sat some of the most glamorous showgirls in Las Vegas. Roselli whispered to her that six of the performers were stunningly beautiful transvestites who, later in the night, would allow mob members to beat and rape them for five-hundred dollars. “A lot of regular gals won’t allow that.”

By the time Marilyn stepped into the spotlight onstage, she was a little drunk on bubbly. She was greeted with such hysterical applause that at the appropriate time, she planned a slight “wardrobe malfunction” when one of her breasts would be momentarily exposed. She knew that would bring a standing ovation from the mob, but not from the jealous hookers, except those “more lezzie inclined.”

She viewed the show as a success. As anticipated, the exposed breast brought down the house. The applause was thunderous. “You were great,” Roselli told her backstage, giving her a wet kiss on the mouth.

Within minutes, Giancana embraced her like his long lost lover and gave her a kiss that was more tongue than lip.

“The boys loved you,” Giancana told her. “I’ll have to fly you to Chicago for another party sometime soon. We’ll have dinner in an hour.”

He reached into his breast pocket and pulled out an envelope. “You went over big tonight but you shouldn’t have to work for free. There are ten one-thousand dollar bills in this envelope. Roselli is such a cheap fucking bastard, I know he won’t give you anything.”

“Oh, thank you,” she said.

“I gotta go now,” he said. “But we’ll hook up later, doll.”

Roselli watched him go before turning to Marilyn. “Just look at him. He’s the big man. The boss. The Don. The Capo. But one day if he should meet a bullet, I might be the head honcho. We’ll see. Come along, cutie.”

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The “boss of bosses,” Mafia chieftain Sam Giancana, sat on the shaky throne once occupied by the notorious mobster Al Capone. Giancana had launched his career in crime by being a hit man for Capone in Chicago.

In his bathrobe, he received his honored guests of the evening, Marilyn and Roselli, in his suite, where the champagne waited. The dinner was secretive and could not be held downstairs. The Desert Inn’s *maître d’* himself served as their special and very discreet waiter.

Marilyn would later relate to her confidants that after the third glass of champagne, her favorite drink, Giancana turned to her and toasted her as “the Queen of Hollywood.”

“You think you’re the Queen now, but wait until you see what I’m gonna do for you,” he said. “Instead of just being the Queen of a lot of blonde bimbos, I’ve decided you’ve got what it takes to become a world player.”

“I don’t know what that means,” she asked. “What kind of world player? Checkers? Chess? Pool?”

He laughed. “None of the above. “There are two roles open for you, and I can’t decide what part you’re to play.”

“But I’d be the star, right?”

“No, you’d get second billing to one of two very famous men. The two I have in mind are not quite there yet, but they’re on their way.”

“Could one of these men be Jack Kennedy?” she asked.

“You do get the point. I have it on reliable authority that he’s been poppin’ you. He’s bragged about it to his shithead brother. I’m friends with his old man, Joe. The other night, Joe told me that Bobby wants to pork you, too. The Kennedy brothers share, you know. Sometimes old Joe himself likes to get to the honeypot, too, if his boys praise a cunt enough.”

“But what does my giving Jack an innocent kiss once or twice have to do with you?”

“He’s going places—maybe to the very top. Leader of the Free World and all that crap. There’s talk that the Democrats in ’56 are going to run him as their vice presidential candidate with Adlai Stevenson heading the ticket.”

Two views of Sam Giancana

"What a joke!" Those were about the only words Roselli had uttered all evening. When he was with Giancana, he let his boss do all the talking. "Stevenson and Kennedy. A faggot and a whoremonger."

"Mr. Stevenson is a homosexual?" she asked. "But he's dated my former roommate, Shelley Winters."

"Faggots sometimes use a woman as a beard," Roselli said.

"A woman with a beard," she asked. "What a dreadful combination."

"I like to look to the future." Giancana said. "Even though he's a Catholic, I think I smell President on this kid, at least by 1960, not before. I plan to help put him in the Oval Office."

"I don't see how I can help you do that just by fucking him," she said.

"Fucking is just the honeytrap," Giancana said. "What I want you to do is to write down everything he tells you, and report back to Roselli, who'll keep me posted. Blackmail is our game, and you of all people should know that. The other night, before I flew to Vegas, I watched that film of you and Johnny. Have you ever been deep-dicked by a cock like Stompanato's?"

"On a few occasions," she said, somewhat defiantly. "Take Milton Berle, for example."

Brad Lewis, the author of *Hollywood's Celebrity Gangster: The Incredible Life and Times of Mickey Cohen*, wrote:

> *"Misogynist Mickey regularly set up famous actresses, including Marilyn Monroe and Lana Turner, with many of the young men who worked for him. He filmed them having sex, so that he could sell the movies on the black market. If he wanted to influence an actress's activities, he would threaten to make the film public."*

At Giancana's private dinner, Marilyn signaled that she wanted more champagne. She seemed confused in trying to figure out just what Giancana wanted from her, as she'd later claim. "I think I get where you're going. You want me to play a role like Greta Garbo in *Mata Hari."*

"You catch on fast," Giancana said.

"Well, maybe I will and maybe I won't," she said, although it may have been the champagne talking.

"I'm sure you will," he said. "We've had to deal with the likes of Harlow, Lana Turner, and Rita Hayworth. It's not just the blackmail we accumulate. It's something else."

"And just what is this something else you use to threaten a woman when she doesn't play the game?"

"Even the greatest beauty in Hollywood such as yourself don't look so good when one of our boys tosses sulfuric acid in her pretty face."

She recoiled in horror, one hand gently touching her cheek as if it was contaminated. "You boys play rough. Screwing around with Jack Kennedy could get a girl in a lot of trouble. Who is this second man you mentioned? Maybe a relationship with him would be less dangerous."

"Sorry, I can't tell you that tonight," he said. "I'll ask Johnny here to set up our next meeting. He'll bring you to me." He looked at her suggestively. "Maybe then we'll have a more pleasant evening." He cast a glance over at Roselli. "Why should Johnny have all the fun?"

Back in Hollywood, when Marilyn relayed the details of her encounters with Giancana and Roselli, she left out a conclusion to her story. She didn't say if she'd acquiesced to Giancana's demands or not.

Years later, Carmen revealed that Marilyn did give in. "She could never imagine her face without its beauty. The idea of seeing her face as an acid-scarred monster, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, would not be her idea of a good time."

She did confide to Carmen the conclusion of her weekend in Las Vegas with Roselli, knowing that her friend was an occasional off-again, on-again lover of Roselli.

"Did you sleep with Johnny, with Giancana, or with both?" Carmen asked her.

"With Johnny," she said, "so you know the abuse I was in for. He doesn't take a woman to bed to make love to her, but to humiliate her."

"Tell me something I don't know," Carmen said.

"As you know, he likes to parade around naked as much as I do," Marilyn said. "When we finally went to bed at around three in the morning, he plopped down and commanded, 'Suck!' I wet my lips and began to perform my specialty. But he slapped my face. 'Listen, bitch,' he told me. 'When I say suck I mean only one thing.' He turned over, presenting his buttocks to me."

"Been there, done that," Carmen said.

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With no time off, Marilyn finished *There's No Business Like Show Business* and flew to New York in September of 1954 to film the sequences in Manhattan for *The Seven Year Itch*. Fox wanted to keep the cash registers ringing.

It seemed that every studio in Hollywood wanted to produce *The Seven Year Itch* by Billy Wilder and George Axelrod, based on Axelrod's play, with Wilder set to direct. But, to Marilyn, her role as "The Girl," a TV model, was "just another one of those dumb blonde parts, and I want something more serious."

Charles Feldman, her sometimes lover, had won the part for her, although she'd objected to having Tom Ewell cast as her leading man. She'd seen him in *Adam's Rib*, in which he'd co-starred with Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, and Judy Holliday.

"Ewell is really ugly, and I also hear he's a homosexual," she said. "I find his mouth looks like a carp. I hope we don't have a kissing scene. God knows where that cocksucking mouth of his was the night before. He has the deadpan face of a hound dog."

Feldman later observed that "Ewell might have directed that 'cocksucking mouth" charge right back at Marilyn."

"The part calls for an average-looking homely man," Feldman had protested. "It's not a pretty boy part; otherwise we would have cast Robert Wagner. The part calls for Ewell to have a lusty mischief in his eyes, and he does that better than any of the pretty boys."

"I think all directors might as well call my character Marilyn Monroe, for that's exactly what I play on the screen over and over again," she said.

"But my dear," said Feldman, "You've been around Hollywood long enough to know that all truly great stars play only themselves on the screen—Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Mae West, Greta Garbo, Jean Harlow, Humphrey Bogart."

Marilyn was cast as "the Girl," who lived upstairs from Ewell and liked to keep her panties in the refrigerator during a long hot summer in New York City.

Arriving alone at Idlewild, Marilyn was besieged by reporters demanding to know if her marriage to DiMaggio was over. "Everything is fine between us," she lied. "A happy marriage comes before anything."

Donald O'Connor with MM in *There's No Business Like Show Business*

"What she should have replied," said Feldman, "was that a happy marriage comes before anything except her career, a family, and dozens of other men."

During the filming, Marilyn bonded with her co-star, Evelyn Keyes, "Scarlett O'Hara's Younger Sister," and they shared memories of director John Huston. Marilyn had had an affair with Huston the same year that Keyes divorced him (1950).

In spite of her original objections to Ewell, she ended up finding him very loving, supportive, and sympathetic to her angst. "Tom and I have one thing in common," she told Wilder. "We both adore well-built men. It's a competition between us as to whose will get Sonny Tufts first." Actually, she had already seduced Tufts years before, in Las Vegas.

She was referring to the handsome actor who had fourth billing in the film. Tufts, when faced with the choice of *Ewell vs. Marilyn*, didn't vacillate. Marilyn won.

Big (all over), blonde, and broad-shouldered, Tufts was on a downward spiral when he signed for his role in *The Seven Year Itch*. During the 1940s, he'd appeared on screen with another blonde, Betty Hutton, and with Paulette Goddard, Charlie Chaplin's wife.

He was hoping that the Monroe picture would revitalize his career. At the time Tufts met Marilyn, the mere mention of his name had become a punch line for comedians.

Marilyn had told Keyes, "I fear that someday I'll be like Sonny. The mere mention of my name will evoke laughter in Hollywood. Jayne Mansfield will look like a serious actress when compared to me. My one hope is to enroll in the Actors Studio."

Tufts, on the set of his final cinematic disaster, *Cottonpickin' Chicken-pickers* (1967), claimed that Marilyn was very despondent over DiMaggio. "She couldn't sleep, and in the wee hours of the morning liked to wander the deserted streets of Lower Manhattan, with a scarf covering her hair and wearing sunglasses. The Wall Street crowd was still asleep. I went with her, wandering through those ghostly caverns and willing to protect her. She could have been raped. She would walk for three or four miles without saying anything. Back in her hotel room, I got my reward for all those god damn strolls. That's some gal, and I've had some of the best pussy in Hollywood, believe me."

One night in New York, Tufts took Marilyn to an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village where the waiters sang opera. Management allowed Tufts to sing three numbers. "No one in the world would think Sonny Tufts is an opera singer," she told him. "You're good."

"Everyone thinks I'm some dumb cowboy on the screen, but actually, I went to Yale," he confessed. "But you know, in Hollywood, image is everything. In real life, you're not Marilyn Monroe."

On another night he took her to see Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Later, during an après- theater dinner, she confided to him that "Miller is going to be my next husband, but he doesn't know it yet."

"That's too god damn bad," Tufts told her. "Tonight was the night I was going to propose."

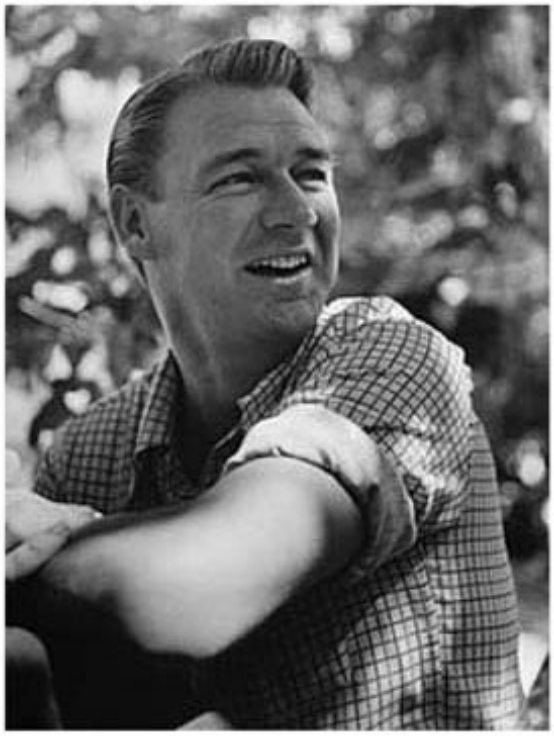
"It could never be," she said. "The marriage of Sonny Tufts and Marilyn Monroe would make us even more of a laughing stock around America, even more than we are now."

One night in Manhattan after midnight, Marilyn would film a sequence from *The Seven Year Itch* that became her most iconic image. In a scene set on a hot summer night, Ewell escorts Marilyn to a movie. On the way home to cool off, she stands, wearing a white dress, over a subway grate.

The novelist, Joyce Carol Oates, described it best:

"A lush-bodied girl in the prime of her physical beauty. In an ivory georgette crepe sundress with a halter top that gathers her breasts up in soft undulating folds of the fabric. She's standing with bare legs apart on a New York subway grating. Her blonde head is thrown rapturously back as an up-draft lifts her full, flaring skirt,

exposing white cotton panties. White cotton! The ivory-crepe sundress is floating and filmy as magic. The dress is magic. Without the dress the girl would be female meat, raw and exposed."



Sonny Tufts

"Do I wear panties or not?" she facetiously asked the director, Billy Wilder.

The first shot, with all the bright lights turned on, made her panties translucent.

Billy Wilder said, "You could see all the way to Honolulu." The original footage of the scene was stolen from the Fox archives, and is believed to rest today in the files of a private collector.

DiMaggio arrived on the set with Walter Winchell, the columnist, who Marilyn had previously rewarded with her "favors," although DiMaggio apparently had no knowledge of that.

Along with one-thousand early-morning rubberneckers, DiMaggio looked on in horror as Marilyn did seemingly endless takes of the wind whipping her dress up. Finally, he could stand it no more. "Let's get the hell out of here," he told Winchell.

Later, Winchell claimed that "the death march of the Monroe/DiMaggio marriage really came to an end that night in the center of Manhattan. It was just one week short of becoming nine months of wedded hell."

The billowing dress scene was the most famous shots of one of the most photographed actresses of all time. It would be blown up nearly fifty feet and placed in front of Loew's State Theater in New York City for a long run.

Her poster became the best-selling in America. Marilyn herself later admitted that "red-blooded teenage boys probably masturbate to it."

Noting her pouting delivery and puckered lips, the *New York Daily Mirror* claimed that she was "the personification of this decade's glamour."

The press called the skirt scene "the most dramatic since Lady Godiva took that horse ride in Coventry."

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Shortly before dawn at their suite at the St. Regis Hotel, DiMaggio and Marilyn indulged in their most violent confrontation. Her friend and makeup man, Whitey Snyder, claimed that "Joe often slapped her around. It was in his nature. It probably reminded her of her foster home with Albert and Ida Bolender, who often beat the hell out of her when she was a girl."

A couple registered across the hall from Marilyn and DiMaggio later told the press what they heard coming from their suite. “You fucking slut!” came a man’s voice. “Showing your crotch for all the world to gape at.”

In the suite, he balled his slugger hands into fists, big hands, the hands of an athlete, and struck her body with them. After beating her severely, he stormed out the door of their suite. He didn’t plan to ever come back.

She confided to her hair-dresser, Sidney Guilaroff, “Joe slapped me around the hotel room while I screamed. I’m sure I was heard in the rooms nearby, but no one came to rescue me. You know, Sidney, the first time a man beats you up, it makes you angry. When it happens a second time, you have to be crazy to stay. I left him.”

Tom Ewell with MM in *The Seven Year Itch*

The next day, her makeup man discovered black and blue marks on her back, her left arm, and on her forehead. “No nude scenes today,” he told her, “but I can cover up that mark on your brow.”

“It’s over between us,” she said, “between Joe and me. I should never have married him. Even Tom Ewell would have been a better choice. Let’s just say Joe DiMaggio has struck out with Marilyn Monroe. Game over.”

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Marilyn spoke frequently on the phone to her stepson, Joe DiMaggio, Jr. In one of those rare moments when “Big Joe” contacted “Little Joe,” he’d called his son after leaving the St. Regis “It’s all over between Marilyn and me,” he told the boy. “There is love there, but she is from Venus and I am from Mars.”

Joe Jr. immediately put through a call to Marilyn, telling her he was arriving in New York that night and wanted to stay with her in her suite at the St. Regis, so recently vacated by his errant father, who had also vacated most of his son’s life as well.

She invited him and eagerly looked forward to his visit. In spite of her troubles with his father, “Little Joe” had always held a special place in her heart. The family preferred to call him “Little Joe,” but she named him the more intimate “Joey.”

In her despair over Big Joe beating her and storming out, she called Jeanne Carmen. At some point, she related to her best girlfriend the news of Little Joe’s imminent arrival.

Joe DiMaggios, Jr. and Sr.

Marilyn revealed the details of her talk to Little Joe. She giggled before confiding in her friend, as if slightly embarrassed. “He told me that he had hoped ‘that you two guys would make it. But I’m not sure you will. Whatever happens, I want you to know that I’ll be the new man in your life to replace Joe. You can count on me. I’m old enough now to hit a home run.’ He actually said that to me,” Marilyn said, sounding drunk on champagne.

“Marilyn,” Carmen said, her name sounding like a chastisement. “How old is this kid? Isn’t he still in diapers?”

“We’ve gone swimming in the nude,” Marilyn said. “He may be called Little Joe, but he should be called Big Joe No. Two.” She giggled. “I knew he was coming on to me. Maybe it was the champagne. But I told him, ‘Are you making a girl an offer she can’t refuse?’”

“You’re taking a ride down a steep hill in a car with no brakes,” Carmen cautioned her. “Don’t even think about it.”

“It’s not so strange,” Marilyn said. “I mean, Zsa Zsa Gabor seduced her stepson, Nicky, when she was married to Conrad Hilton, and he was married to that cow, Elizabeth Taylor. When she was married to Nicholas Ray, Gloria Grahame had an affair with her thirteen-year-old stepson and later married him. I’ve gone to bed with Charlie Chaplin, but also with Sidney Chaplin and Charlie Chaplin, Jr. In fact, I used to share a bedroom with his two sons.”

“I know you’re taking your breakup with Joe really bad, but this is crazy talk,” Carmen said.

“Joe beat the hell out of me, and I want to get back at him,” Marilyn protested. “I’m black and blue.”

“But don’t do it with the kid,” Carmen said. “It will just fuck up his mind.”

“Fourteen used to be a fine old age,” Marilyn said. “At least back in the days of Daniel Boone, or so I read. Most men died by the age of thirty-five. Nature intended for young men to begin their sex lives at the age of puberty. Besides, I got his dad when he was graying at the temples. Maybe if I take up with his son, I can get to experience what it was like to have Joe at his peak, just as he was in 1941.”

“Dear, dear Marilyn,” Carmen said. “Please be careful. You’re swimming in shark-infested waters. If Joe ever finds this out, he’ll do more than beat you up.”

“But don’t you see?” Marilyn asked. “It’s good practice for me. When I’m fifty-five, I don’t plan to date any man who’s over twenty-five. That way, I’ll be known as the ageless beauty. The last time I hugged and kissed Joey goodbye, I could feel his erection pressing against me. One night in San Francisco, he admitted to me that he jerks off every night looking at my nude calendar.”

As author Fred Lawrence Guiles accurately wrote in *Legend, The Life and Death of Marilyn Monroe*, “Marilyn won over the boy very early in their relationship. Visits with Marilyn became one of his chief joys whenever he was on vacation. His friendship with his stepmother would survive the marriage to DiMaggio and last until her death.”

Even when Joe Jr. was only twelve years old, Marilyn paraded around their house naked in front of him, especially when Joe Sr. was away. “Marilyn always liked kids,” claimed her former lover, the musician Fred Karger. “But she didn’t know how to relate to them. If it was a boy, she approached him with a come-on, very seductive. She liked young boys to be attracted to her. I’m sure her behavior was just as inappropriate in front of DiMaggio’s

boy as it was with my own kids. That's why I refused to marry her, because I didn't see her as a proper mother."

Sometimes DiMaggio complained to Marilyn that "you're ruining my son." Once, when they were staying in New York at the Hotel St. Moritz, they'd gone for a walk in Central Park. Passing Rumplemayer's, a famous ice cream parlor, Joe Jr. wanted an ice cream soda, but DiMaggio refused, claiming, "Don't you know how much those god damn things cost?"

Later, back at the hotel, Marilyn slipped Joe Jr. a twenty-dollar bill. Later, when DiMaggio found out what she'd done, he slapped her in front of his son.

In San Francisco, Marilyn and Joe Jr. often went off on their own, exploring the city and lunching and shopping together. She wore little makeup, dark glasses, and a wig. On only a few occasions was she recognized. Apparently, she was aware of his growing sexual interest in her as he matured and reached puberty, and she did Little to discourage that. "If anything, she prick-teased him," in the words of her friend, Robert Slatzer. He once drove them to the beach at Venice. "My God, I couldn't believe it. She was openly flirting with him."

At one point, Jeanne Carmen joined Joe Jr. and Marilyn when she went shopping for new dresses. "She took us right into the fitting room and stripped down naked in front of the boy. It was obvious he was mesmerized. I didn't want to piss her off, so I didn't say anything."

She used to tell Joe Jr. that, "I desperately want to have children. I picture myself having as many as six kids."

As Joe Jr. reportedly told one of his friends, "If Marilyn really wanted to have children, she could have had that brood of six by now. At least one of them, if it were a boy, would have been Charlie Chaplin III."

DiMaggio seemed to resent the burgeoning relationship between Marilyn and his son. He complained, "I love him or at least I used to, but I just can't bond with him. He rejects me. I think he'll soon be a pothead. As I found out, he smoked his first marijuana cigarette when he was twelve years old. I beat the shit out of him."

Joe Jr. confided in Marilyn that when he was growing up, "Dad was always gone somewhere. Of course, his career as a baseball star was at its peak back then. Even when he could stay home, he preferred to go to Toots Shor's restaurant with his buddies and not stay home with me and mother. He never even taught me how to play baseball."

He also complained that his father never attended even one of his football games when he went to Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. "Hot damn!" he said to Marilyn. "Would I have been a big man on campus if my famous dad had shown up for just one game."

When he lived with his mother, Dorothy, at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Manhattan, he said, "my only entertainment as a kid was riding up and down in the elevator. For me, it was summer camp, military school, boarding school. He just threw his son away for more important things in his life."

When DiMaggio had first met Marilyn, he was considering reuniting with his former wife, Dorothy Arnold, a minor actress whom he'd married in 1939. Joe Jr. was born on October 23, 1941.

After divorcing DiMaggio, she had married a stockbroker and that union was even less successful than her first. She divorced him and began dating DiMaggio again, spending a romantic snowbound weekend with him in Nevada. She even told a reporter that, "Joe and I are seriously considering getting married again."

That plan quickly ended when DiMaggio began dating Marilyn. Dorothy was furious when the newspapers published a photograph of Joe Jr. posing with Marilyn in a skimpy bathing suit beside the pool at the Bel Air Hotel. Infuriated, Dorothy filed charges against DiMaggio, hoping to restrict his visitation rights. Privately, she told friends, "I don't want that sluttish blonde around my boy. I don't want him exposed to drinking and jive talk." She filed charges with Judge Elmer Doyle. "Little Butchie should not be taken to adult places," she insisted.

Newspaper reporters called it a catfight "between the ex-bride of the Yankee Clipper and the future Mrs. DiMaggio." Privately, Dorothy told friends, "From what I hear, Joe and Marilyn would leave Butchie in the pool and go upstairs to one of the hotel rooms to shack up."

Leaving court, Dorothy told reporters that Joe Jr. was "a little young for the smart set." In a court document, she claimed that she had hoped that the birth of her son would have made her husband "realize his responsibilities as a married man, but even the baby's arrival did not change him."

One night at a party, Marilyn encountered Joseph Cotten, who two years before had been her co-star with Jean Peters in *Niagara* (1953). She told him that she was devastated at all the unkind charges Dorothy was making against her. "I'm being called an unfit mother. I'd kill myself if I am the reason Joey can't be with his father." Even so, she continued to flirt with Joe Jr.

DiMaggio, Sr. refused to attend a ceremony at Blackfoy Military Academy when his son was ranked at the top of his class. Marilyn attended, arriving late, interrupting the ceremony when all eyes turned on her.

Joe DiMaggio, Jr. with MM.

It was natural for young boys on the dawn of puberty to exaggerate or brag about their sexual conquests, and Joe Jr. was no exception. He'd told his classmates that he'd taken nude swims with Marilyn and that she'd let him feel her breasts.

At the end of the ceremony, Joe Jr. rushed to embrace Marilyn and give her a passionate kiss. He later told her, "My instructors tell me that I'm very good in weaponry."

"What kind of weaponry?" she asked, teasing him.

Dorothy tied up DiMaggio in court for two years, but Judge Doyle, a baseball fan, eventually ruled against her. He said, "It's too bad we don't have more men like Joe DiMaggio coming to this court, trying to make good American citizens out of their boys."

When Joe Jr. came home in uniform from the military academy, Marilyn tried to explain her relationship with him. "I can never take the place of your mother, but I want to be your special friend."

"Make that special girlfriend, and you've got a deal," he told her.

"Aren't you a bit young to be talking like that?" she asked him.

"Growing bigger every day," he bragged. "I'm advanced for my age. All the cadets are jealous of me when we take a shower together. I'm lifting weights, building myself up. Getting quite a build on me, wouldn't you say?"

"You're going to make some girl very happy," she assured him.

"I want to marry a gal like the gal who married dear old Dad, if you get my drift."

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Before leaving New York for a return to Hollywood, Marilyn spent an off-the-record weekend in Washington, D.C. She flew there for a secret rendezvous with Senator Kennedy in a suite at the Hay-Adams Hotel.

She was a kiss-and-tell mistress. Shelley Winters said, "Marilyn liked to brag about her relationship with Jack, and she told several of us plenty. She wore her affair like a badge of honor and seemed to shout, 'Look at me. I'm sleeping with the man who'll be, some time in the future, the leader of the Free World.' Of course, she'd slept with big time movie stars and producers, but nothing like a future candidate for such high office."

At the Hay-Adams that night, she spent a complete evening with the senator. Usually their time together was very limited, as he always seemed on the verge of having to leave for another engagement.

But on this occasion, so she claimed, she spent all night in the same bed with him, but didn't actually get that much shut-eye. She'd decided not to take sleeping pills, and she lay awake throughout most of the night. She was

afraid to move, not wanting to disturb him. After they'd had sex, he'd fallen asleep. "He was a gentle snorer," she later said. She was disappointed that, like Joe DiMaggio, "the senator was not a cuddler. He just did the dirty deed, turned over in bed, and went to sleep."

The sex with him was as before. "He lay on his back, which always caused him pain, and let me do all the work."

That morning, both of them rose at ten. She discovered that he, like herself, was not ashamed to walk around nude. Even Jackie confessed that at Hyannis Port, Jack often came out naked under a towel. "Sometimes that towel dropped, and he didn't exactly rush to cover himself again. He was very casual about nudity, even when ladies were present."

When Marilyn learned that Jackie was in Hyannis Port, she made a special request. Please drive me down into Virginia so I can see where you live." At first, he seemed reluctant, but finally gave in to her request since it was a Sunday and the servants were off.

For a girl who had grown up in California, the ride through the horse country of Virginia, with its gentleman farmer estates, was like entering another world. As they drove along, he pointed out estates owned by influential movers-and-shakers from among the East Coast establishment, but the names were not familiar to her.

As they neared JFK's home at Hickory Hill, he told her that the house had once been the command headquarters of the Union's General George McClellan during the Civil War. He even told her what he'd paid for it: $125,000. "Jackie spent more remodeling it and furnishing it with antiques than the purchase price," he said.

When the house came into view, she found it a dream estate, a sprawling white Georgian house set on six acres of woodland above the Potomac River.

The location was in McLean, two miles from Merrywood, the home where Jacqueline Kennedy had spent part of her childhood. JFK told her there was a swimming pool at the bottom of the hill. The old stables had been restored and housed Jackie's horses. Inside the house, she was stunned at the antiques and paintings. "My god, it looks like a museum."

He looked at her and smiled. "That's what it is. That's Jackie for you. If I ever get to the White House, she'll probably throw out all the furniture and redecorate it."

Hickory Hill.

He led her to the kitchen, where he made coffee. Sitting at the table, she asked him, "Do you two spend much time here?"

"No," he said, "we're too busy. We often have different schedules. The place is too big for us. I don't like it. We're thinking of selling it to my brother, Bobby. He and Ethel plan to have at least twelve kids."

"I hope all of them are boys," she said. "It would be nice to know that an array of beautiful girls in the future will have a dozen Kennedy boys to enjoy."

"I'll take that as a compliment," he said.

His telephone rang, but he didn't bother to answer it.

"Sometimes Jackie and I go off together. One time we were invited aboard a yacht, the *Christina*. It's owned by Aristotle Onassis. I had wanted to meet Winston Churchill who was on board. He was at least eighty, I think, and had retired as prime minister. He didn't have much to say to me. I was wearing a white dinner jacket. Jackie later

told me she suspected that Churchill thought I was a waiter. She impressed both Churchill and Ari. Ari told me that he thought my wife had a carnal soul."

"What would he have said about me?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said. "He would merely have ripped that polka dot dress off you and raped you right on deck."

"Men, you can't get enough," she giggled.

"I have a medical reason for that," he said. "I have to take large doses of cortisone for my Addison's disease," he said.

"Does that do something to your libido?" she asked.

"It does, but not in the way you may be thinking. The doctor warned me that it makes me priapic."

"What in hell is that?" she asked.

"It's named for the Greek God Priapus, the god of male generative powers. It makes you virile. Horny, if you like."

"Oh, Jack," she said. "Not again. We already did it this morning."

"Time for a *matinée*." He led her upstairs to the bedroom where he slept with Jackie. Fully dressed, he lay down on his back, patting the mattress. "Come over here, doll, and unzip me and do your thing."

When it was over, she asked him, "Does Jackie know you have women on the side?"

"Sure she does," he said. "She learned to accept that all men have their mistresses. She was taught that lesson as a girl. Her father, "Black Jack" Bouvier, had numerous affairs with lots of other women, even men like Cole Porter and Cary Grant. Jackie and I have our rules. I'm never to rub her face in it."

Once again, he fell asleep after some pillow talk. But, as she later claimed, she couldn't sleep. She decided to explore the house a bit, beginning with Jackie's closet. She was fascinated by her wardrobe, and found a white gown particularly appealing. She was nude, so she tried it on.

As she was looking at herself in a full-length mirror, she saw and even felt how wrong it was for her.

Suddenly, Jack woke up and discovered her. "What in hell are you doing?"

"I was just trying on one of Jackie's Dior gowns. But it doesn't fit in the breasts. Doesn't Jackie have breasts?"

He rose up in bed in anger. "Get the hell out of that dress and hang it back up where you found it. Don't ever do that again."

During the ride back to Washington, he was mostly silent. She feared he regretted taking her to Hickory Hill. She shouldn't have tried on that Dior.

He let her off about a block from the entrance to the Hay-Adams Hotel. "I don't want to be seen," he said.

Before getting out of the car, she asked him, "When will I see you again?"

He didn't answer at first. "I don't know. I'll call you. I'm thinking of seeking the vice presidential nomination on the ticket with Adlai Stevenson. I'm going to be busy."

"But I'm sure you'll miss your Marilyn," she said. "I'll come running whenever you call, even if you interrupt an acceptance speech I'm giving the Academy for winning an Oscar."

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Fearing disapproval and perhaps afraid that DiMaggio would find out, Marilyn never spoke of the brief time in New York she spent with Joe DiMaggio, Jr. He did stay with her in her suite, but they didn't appear together in public.

Jeanne Carmen referred to it as an "off-the-record weekend." Whatever happened, a bond between Joe Jr. and Marilyn was sealed that would endure throughout the remainder of her short life. It included a phone call from him on the night before her murder. Joe Jr. did tell one of his girlfriends, "I loved Marilyn Monroe, but she seemed out of my reach. You can't blame a guy for trying."

Lena Pepitone, Marilyn's one-time maid, privately told friends that one morning she caught Joe Jr. and Marilyn in her bed, both of them nude.

Back in Hollywood, and under the guidance of her drama coach, Natasha Lytess, Marilyn completed work on *The Seven Year Itch* in November of 1954. It had run $150,000 over its budget.

At the end of the shoot, Charles Feldman threw a lavish private party for Marilyn at Romanoff's, inviting only guests on the A-list. Darryl F. Zanuck, Samuel Goldwyn, and Jack Warner were there. Famous couples showed up, including Betty Grable and Harry James and Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Jimmy Stewart was seen talking with Claudette Colbert and Doris Day.

Marilyn was especially attracted to William Holden and Gary Cooper. She'd told Carmen that she'd seen Holden in *Golden Boy* and had fallen in love with him. "I can show him a better time than that dyke," She was

referring, of course to his *Golden Boy* co-star and lover at the time, the bisexual actress Barbara Stanwyck. Stanwyck had put the make on Marilyn during the making of *Clash by Night* (1952).

"I'd also like to have at least a one-night stand with the Montana Mule," Marilyn told Carmen. Gary Cooper went by that nickname among the women of Hollywood because of his prodigious endowment.

"As she was preparing to divorce DiMaggio, Marilyn was staging so many one-night stands I couldn't keep up," Carmen recalled. The slogan 'So Many Men, So Little Time,' must have been created for her."

Keeping A-list Hollywood waiting for one hour, Marilyn had shown up at Romanoff's in a black tulle gown cut low. She danced with her idol, Clark Gable, and she still carried a picture of him as Rhett Butler in her wallet. Many biographers have claimed that Gable and Marilyn had a one-night stand that night. Actually they'd had a one-night stand years before.

Marilyn was slightly heavier and pregnant, with Carmen recalling her "looking radiant." She was an expectant mother, but confessed to Carmen, "I don't know who the father is. I doubt if it's Joe's child."

Biographer Sandra Shevey claimed that Dr. Leon Krohn, Marilyn's gynaecologist, had examined her and arranged for her to be admitted to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. She was there for four days, and from reports, she had an abortion in spite of her previous claims that she'd wanted children.

William Holden.

After checking out, she appeared dissipated and in desperate need of rest. She said, "I looked into a mirror, and Marilyn Monroe was nowhere to be seen. What happened to her?"

Back home, she acted out a different script from the happy marriage scenario she'd presented at Idlewild Airport when she'd arrived for the New York shoot of *The Seven Year Itch*. She called attorney Jerry Giesler and asked him to proceed with court papers for her divorce from DiMaggio. Giesler called Harry Brand, who handled publicity at Fox, to make the announcement that led to world headlines.

Robert Mitchum, Marilyn's lover from the set of *The River of No Return*, had advised her "to get Giesler." He'd gotten Mitchum off on a marijuana rap. Thanks to Giesler, Errol Flynn had avoided going to jail for statutory rape, and Busby Berkeley had escaped a murder charge. Giesler had also won acquittals for three performers who had been Marilyn's former lovers—the stripper Lili St. Cyr, Charlie Chaplin, and gangster Bugsy Siegel.

Giesler had become *the* attorney for the stars. He'd started out in Los Angeles on his first job, driving a horse-drawn lumber wagon, for two dollars a day.

The Monroe/DiMaggio love affair and their subsequent doomed marriage had been one of the 20th century's most dazzling pairings, and their clash of two powerful egos was played out in public. Shadows loomed on their path— her need for endless love, her affairs; his temper, his jealousy. In time, the hawk-faced baseball hero and the screen goddess ended their marriage because, as he claimed, "I was tired of sharing my wife—*naked* at that—with the world."

On October 4, 1954, Harry Brand, chief of publicity at 20th Century Fox, announced to the press that Marilyn and her baseball player were breaking up "because of the incompatibility resulting from the conflicting demands of their careers." That terse announcement launched a media feeding frenzy.

At the time of the announcement, DiMaggio was still living under the same California roof as Marilyn, but sleeping in the ground-floor den, not in her upstairs bedroom. When she had to face an array of international reporters who had gathered outside—"like vultures," she'd said—she called makeup artist Whitey Snyder to come over and repair her face.

He made his way through the crowd of reporters and photographers gathered outside her home on Palm Tree Drive in Beverly Hills and entered the house through the back door. In the living room, he found DiMaggio watching a football game on television.

Going upstairs, Snyder discovered Marilyn with two black eyes. Apparently, the night before, she had refused DiMaggio's attempts at reconciliation.

She would later tell her confidants that "Joe raped me when I refused to have sex with him. He also beat me."

It took a lot of work, but Snyder repaired her face as best he could. "We can always claim it was eye shadow or else your mascara was running."

In the living room, DiMaggio took his eyes off his game on TV to tell her goodbye. By that point, Giesler had arrived on the scene to escort Marilyn out the door.

When she stepped outside, her appearance created a sensation. Questions from all corners were yelled at her. But all she could do was sob, "I'm sorry…I have nothing to say." Giesler escorted her into the rear seat of a waiting limousine.

Jerry Giesler, Marilyn Monroe

Within a half hour, DiMaggio himself emerged from the house. When reporters asked him where he was going, he allegedly said, "I'm going back to the City On the Bay," meaning, of course, San Francisco.

Once in San Francisco, DiMaggio privately told friends that Marilyn's sexual behavior was "abnormal—I mean with men, but she's also abnormal in that she has occasional lesbian affairs, including with her drama coach." He was referring, of course, to Natasha Lytess.

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Unknown to DiMaggio, Marilyn had met privately with Frank Sinatra and told him she planned to divorce DiMaggio in a court in Santa Monica. "He's cruel to me, goes for days without speaking, and holds my film roles in contempt. One time he went ten entire days and spoke not a word to me. I begged him to tell me what I'd done wrong. Finally, when he did speak, he said, 'I'm tired of your God damn nagging.' Then he stormed out the door and was gone for an entire month."

Before leaving Sinatra's villa at Palm Springs that hot afternoon, she made an astonishing request. "If I divorce Joe, will you promise to marry me when we're both free of entanglements? Knowing you'll eventually marry me will give me the courage to go through with the divorce."

"You're on, kid," he told her, although it is highly doubtful if he meant it.

Privately, he told Dean Martin and others, "I wish Marilyn would divorce Joe. He's not right for her. She even offered to give up her career for the sucker, and even that didn't help the relationship. For Marilyn to give up her

career— now that's making the big sacrifice."

She called Sinatra when Judge Orlando H. Rhodes granted her interlocutory decree, with her divorce scheduled to become final in one year. "I've just counted the days on my calendar. I was married to Joe for 286 days."

Sinatra was playing a dangerous game, being Marilyn's confidant and protector on the one hand, and DiMaggio's good pal on the other. He seemed torn in his loyalties.

DiMaggio didn't want the divorce and developed a plan to sabotage it. Sinatra agreed to meet him for dinner at one of their favorite Italian restaurants in Hollywood, Villa Capri. Previously, he had lent DiMaggio the services of his private detective, Barney Ruditsky. As a favor to DiMaggio, Sinatra agreed that Ruditsky could "get hot on Marilyn's trail and learn the dirt, especially who she's fucking."

When Ruditsky arrived at the Villa Capri, he told both DiMaggio and Sinatra that Marilyn was "shacked up with some woman" at an apartment at Waring Avenue and Kilkea Drive.

This came as no surprise to either man, both of whom had heard of some previous lesbian involvements of Marilyn's, with such stellar lights as Shelley Winters, Joan Crawford, and Barbara Stanwyck.

DiMaggio told Sinatra that he wanted him to accompany him to the apartment house and break in on Marilyn. That way, he might stall the divorce, or make her forget all about it, if he had a detective photograph her in a compromising situation with another woman. "Marilyn might have survived that nude calendar scandal, but none of her fans would stand for it if she's caught in some lesbian affair," DiMaggio said.

"After all these years in Hollywood, I'm never surprised at what men will do with other men when they're alone or women with women," Sinatra said. "Surely you've had a few blow-jobs in your day in some lonely shower room."

"Forget that shit," DiMaggio said. "I want you to go with me. I need you to back me up."

"Okay, God damn it," a drunken Sinatra said. "I think it's a stupid stunt, but you seem determined to go through with it."

That night of November 5, 1954 would live in infamy in the annals of Hollywood scandal. In separate vehicles, Sinatra and DiMaggio, and four "private dicks," arrived at the apartment house where they hoped to entrap Marilyn.

Sinatra later maintained that he waited in his automobile outside, but witnesses asserted otherwise. The corps of private detectives consisted of Ruditsky himself, along with his cohorts, John Seminola, Philip Irwin, and Patsy D'Amore.

One of the detectives had brought an ax to cut through the door; another carried a camera to capture the sexual tryst in a photograph.

After the apartment's door was smashed in, DiMaggio led the "posse" into the room as one of the detectives shined a flashlight on the bed's lone occupant, who had gone to sleep.

It was not Marilyn and a girlfriend, but the fifty-year-old Florence Kotz, who had retired for the night. Thinking it was a "band of burglars," as she later claimed, she screamed at the top of her lungs.

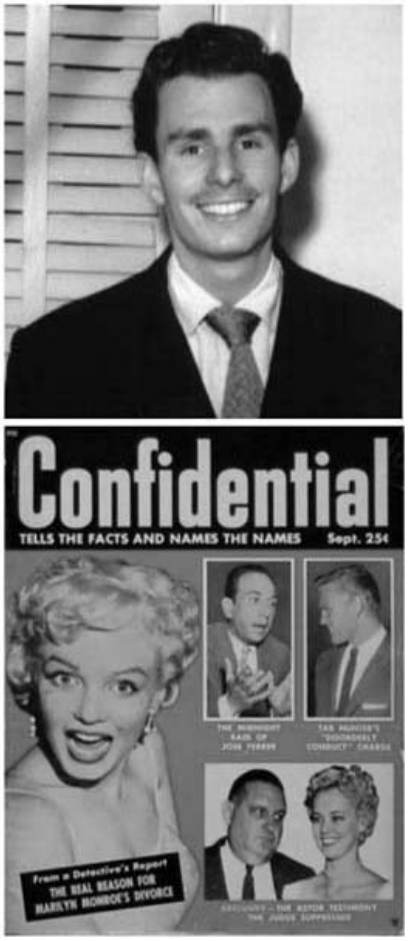
She later told friends, "I thought they were going to rape me."

Joe DiMaggio with Frank Sinatra

When Sinatra turned on the light, she recalled, “I couldn’t believe my eyes. Along with these other guys, I recognized Frank Sinatra and Joe DiMaggio, two of the most famous men in America. I suspected those two Lotharios wouldn’t have needed to break down any woman’s door for rape.”

DiMaggio had ordered the break-in at the wrong door. Marilyn, along with her lover, Hal Schaefer, were in the upstairs apartment, which belonged to a girlfriend of hers, Sheila Stewart, who had graciously lent it to Marilyn for the night. Grabbing Shaefer’s arm, Marilyn fled with him out the back door and hailed a taxi, leaving her own car parked in front of the building.

Schaefer remains one of Marilyn’s least publicized lovers. His career spanned seventy years, and he was one of the leading vocal coaches of Hollywood. He’d worked with Marilyn on *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, orchestrating her biggest hit, “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend.”



Hal Schaefer (top) and (bottom) front page of the tabloid that exposed the Sinatra and DiMaggio “Wrong Door Raid”

Schaefer was also a pianist, conductor, arranger, composer, and accompanist. As long as it lasted, he had a romance with Marilyn.

The police were called, but by then the “burglars” were back at the Villa Capri, ordering fresh pasta. In the police report, the raid on Florence Kotz’s apartment was reported as an attempted burglary.

There was an ironic end to that night that was not reported. Yet another private detective had been assigned to stake out the blonde bombshell’s official residence. After the raid, Marilyn drove up alone and entered her house. About an hour later, DiMaggio by himself also drove up.

The detective saw Marilyn answer the door in her panties, wearing no bra. She let DiMaggio into the house. The detective remained at his post until five o’clock that morning. DiMaggio had not left the house all night.

As Sinatra had anticipated, Kotz filed a $200,000 lawsuit, but his attorney was able to get her to settle for $7,500. When word about the raid leaked to a reporter, Sinatra angrily shouted, “Case closed.”

He paid the final settlement himself. “Tightwad Joe didn’t cough up a penny. And it was the fucker’s idea, not mine.”

The story might have died, but *Confidential* magazine published the details in its September, 1955 issue. The break-in on Kotz became known as “The Wrong Door Raid.”

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“As much as I understood Marilyn, and I think I understood her better than any of her friends, she shocked me every time we got together with another revelation,” Carmen said. “I visited her after the divorce and she delivered her shock *du jour.”*

Marilyn had revealed to Carmen that the nights both before and after her hearing before a divorce judge, where she testified against DiMaggio, she spent it with him in Frank Sinatra’s apartment. “He violated his rule of only one round per night,” Marilyn said. “Before dawn’s early light, Joe was good for three rounds, each of them terrific. And do you know where I spent the first night *after* I was granted a divorce from Joe? Also in Sinatra’s apartment. And do you know who was in bed with me that night? The ex-Mr. Marilyn Monroe.”

Even though she’d pressed for a divorce, Marilyn felt lonely and abandoned after leaving court. She made an attempt to get in touch with Stanley Gifford, whom she believed may have been her real father, and not Martin Edward Mortensen as so often reported. Gifford had recently married for the third time, and Marilyn got his new wife on the phone.

Even though she was arguably the most famous movie star in the world, he refused to take her call. She was mortified and plotted revenge. She told friends that she was tempted to disguise herself, approach her father in a bar (he was a heavy drinker), and “shack up with him and then ask him, ‘How does it feel to fuck your own daughter?’”

Back in Los Angeles, two policemen spotted Marilyn, a divorced woman, scantily dressed late at night. They stopped the squad car and inquired about what was the matter. She was crying.

“My God, you’re Marilyn Monroe,” one of the cops said.

She looked at them. “I’m just a pretty girl the world will soon forget.”

“She practically threw herself at us,” one of the policemen confessed to a tabloid, which refused to publish his revelations. “I got in the back seat while my friend drove. She gave me a blow-job. Then my friend got in the back seat while I drove around, and he got a blow-job. She was a great cocksucker. Obviously, she’d had a lot of experience. She swallowed, too. When it was over, we drove her home and thanked her.”

In the days that followed, Marilyn suffered a recurring pelvic pain, with severe cramps that extended down to her legs. For the first time in her life, she experienced *dyspareunia* [*painful sexual intercourse due to medical or psychological reasons*]. Her agony became so severe, she visited a doctor, who conducted a gynecological examination.

It revealed that she was suffering from endometriosis, a medical condition in which cells from the lining of the uterus appear and flourish outside the uterine cavity, in this case, in and around her ovaries.

“Oh, my God,” she lamented to her doctor and her close girlfriends. “I have the most desired vagina on the planet, but if any man could see an X-ray of what is going on inside me, he’d never want to put his most treasured possession down that hole.”

Ten days after the divorce, DiMaggio, to the surprise of almost everyone, was seen driving Marilyn to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles. There, he checked her in for a gynecological operation.

He held her hand before and after the delicate operation and filled her room with red, white, yellow, pink, and lavender roses.

When Sidney Skolsky asked her about her post-divorce relationship with DiMaggio, she told him, “In most movies, certainly romantic comedies, the couple live happily ever after—fade out, kissing scene. Joe and I are now living out what comes *after* when they lived happily ever after.”

A week after the divorce, DiMaggio called from San Francisco. What he said to her is not known except for one lingering statement that she later claimed sounded almost like a threat.

“He told me that I’d never get rid of him…ever.”

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Wanting “to get the hell out of Hollywood,” Marilyn flew into New York during the closing weeks of 1954 to turn much of her life and all of her career over to her Svengali, fashion photographer Milton Greene.

As Marilyn remembered it, “Milton wasn’t much bigger than me. He had the sweetest brown eyes and could

have looked like a young John Garfield if John Garfield had been chewed over by a lion who didn't have all of his teeth."

Ever since they'd met in 1949, she had been entranced by him and had talked endlessly about forming a partnership with him one day. She was only a starlet when she first met the personable twenty-seven-year old. "You're young enough to be a boy," she said.

"And you are young enough to be a girl," he answered back.

From such an unlikely introduction, a bond was formed. It was obvious that each of them was attracted to the other. He told her how much he wanted her to pose for him.

"With or without clothes?" she asked.

"With clothes," he told her.

By ten o'clock that night, she found herself in his bedroom at the Château Marmont on Sunset Boulevard. "Milton was an ardent lover," Marilyn later confided to Shelley Winters. "But he's more attracted to fashion model types than to a Venus like me."

Marilyn would tell her maid, Lena Pepitone, that Greene "did everything he could to make me look like a *Vogue* model…a fat *Vogue* model. Mr. Kenneth, nail girls, makeup girls, skin girls, dressmaker, everything. I think he wanted to make me another Amy, a sophisticated New York fashion model. He gave up pretty quick." Greene, at the time, was married to Amy.

As a celebrity photographer, Greene wasn't in the same league as Richard Avedon or Cecil Beaton, but he was rising fast. He was also a well-known photographer of celebrities, his subjects including Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Marlene Dietrich, Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, Judy Garland, and Ava Gardner.

In 1953, *Look* magazine assigned Greene to photograph Marilyn in Hollywood, and it was here that their dream of forming a business partnership was cemented, with a little romance thrown in on the side.

Greene had been married before, but had divorced his first wife and had married Amy. The two of them lived in a farmhouse near Litchfield, Connecticut, to which they invited Marilyn.

Marilyn anticipated that she would not like Amy, but she bonded with Milton's wife, finding her "as tiny as a nightingale, the smallest fashion model in New York. She was as beautiful as if she'd just popped out of a cake on the society pages. Except her arms were so thin I didn't see how she could make love without getting crushed under Milton's weight."

While in Hollywood, Greene photographed Marilyn "the way I want you to look." Before their partnership ended, he would pose her for fifty-two different sessions, including the celebrated "Black Sitting," where she was photographed against deep black backdrops, with her face sometimes only slightly illuminated.

Over dinner in Hollywood, Marilyn had confided to Greene that she'd been paid only $18,000 for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, her co-star, Jane Russell, getting $100,000.

Three views of Milton Greene

"You're worth a million dollars per picture," he told Marilyn. "Fox is just using you."

She also shared her dream that in future pictures, she'd be teamed with such actors as Marlon Brando, Richard Burton, Paul Newman, and "most definitely James Dean."

From Manhattan, the Greenes drove her to their Connecticut farmhouse, where she more or less moved in. For the final day of 1954, she preferred to remain in their home while they attended a New Year's Eve party. Before he left the house that night, she told Greene, "I want to be more than a movie star. I want to be a *great* movie star. You must see that that happens."

For Christmas, he'd given her an elegant leather-bound diary—not the infamous "Red Diary" she maintained in

1961 and 1962.

Greene told her that in it, she should write down the details of her encounters with famous men and women, including Senator Kennedy. “We’ll need all these memories when we publish your memoirs when you’re eighty. I assure you that I can get an advance of twelve million dollars for them. You keep a diary, and in time, it will keep you.”

Before facing the world as “the new Marilyn Monroe,” Milton set out to change her look and especially her wardrobe. “You dress like a slob…a *shmatte,”* he told her. “You exhibit no class, no taste. If you want to be a great actress, quit dressing like a dumb blonde and carry yourself with elegance and grace like Audrey Hepburn. Don’t look like some whore trying to turn a trick on 8th Avenue.”

“Been there, done that,” she said. “That’s how I met Brando.’

Milton asked Amy to take Marilyn on a shopping expedition along Fifth Avenue and purchase a new wardrobe for herself, which he agreed to pay for, including a white sable coat. Amy had told her, “Mink is for *futbol*. If you must wear fur, make it sable or ermine.”

Later, after she’d gotten the coat, Marilyn claimed, “I loved every Little animal that sacrificed its life to make the coat happen for me. The first night I owned it, I slept with all those dear little white animals in my bed.”

At Saks and Bonwit Teller’s, Amy discovered that Marilyn wasn’t embarrassed to go nude in a dressing room, in spite of Peeping Toms who saw fit to open the curtains to gape at her.

On that afternoon, Amy, along with several sales clerks, discovered that Marilyn wore no panties and wasn’t entirely displeased with what she called “the scent of a woman.” Since she hadn’t used peroxide, her pubic hair appeared quite dark.

“Maybe I should use deodorant,” she told Amy, “but I do like a Little sniff of myself from time to time—and so do many of my lovers, except Ronald Reagan. He took a shower before sex and right after sex. He was the cleanest man I ever knew.”

On January 5, 1955, Marilyn and Greene were ready to face the press with the announcement that they’d formed Marilyn Monroe Productions, with Marilyn herself as its president.

Before a sea of photographers, she looked dazzling with her hair dyed platinum like Jean Harlow’s, her role model of the 1930s. She faced nearly a hundred members of the press, wearing a white ermine coat and a white satin dress.

She made it clear that she wanted to be taken seriously as an actress— “no more dumb blonde roles.” It was ironic that her first choice of a movie for Marilyn Monroe Productions would be William Inge’s *Bus Stop*, in which she’d play Cherie, another bubble-headed blonde.

She revealed to the press that day that she was considering appearing in such films as Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. “Not as one of the brothers, but as Grushenka.”

“How to you spell that, Marilyn?” one of the reporters shouted at her.

She looked annoyed. “Look it up.”

Milton Greene was a friend of Marlene Dietrich and arranged a meeting between these two *femmes fatales* on the night of Marilyn’s press conference. “The world’s most glamorous grandmother” allowed herself to be caught on camera standing next to the more youthful Marilyn with her protruding breasts.

After the session, Marlene invited Marilyn back to her apartment. “I’m a very good cook. I also hear that Fox is preparing to film *The Blue Angel* again, the movie that made me a star. I must talk to you about this.”

Marilyn seemed somewhat embarrassed that Marlene had learned that Fox was working on a script for a modern version of *The Blue Angel*. Marilyn had only recently seen the English-language version of Marlene’s *The Blue Angel*, which had originally been released in 1930 and directed by her Svengali, Josef von Sternberg and starring Emil Jannings, who was an immensely popular star in Germany at the time. Marlene played Lola Lola, a petty bourgeois Berlin tart, with dazzling legs and a come-hither manner. One German critic wrote that she played the role with a “callous egotism and cool insolence.”

Although nervous about being alone with Marlene—she’d heard tales—Marilyn was eager to be in the company of one of her early role models. As a young girl, she’d seen most of her American movies from the 1930s.

In the book *My Story*, published more than a Truman Capote decade after Marilyn’s death, Marilyn is alleged to have written: “I was young, blonde, and curvaceous, and I had learned to talk huskily like Marlene Dietrich and to walk a Little wantonly and to bring emotion into my eyes when I wanted to. And though these achievements landed me no job, they brought a lot of wolves whistling at my heels.”

Truman Capote

Marilyn's night with Marlene would be the first entry she would make in the leather-bound diary Greene had given her as a Christmas present. En route to Marlene's apartment, she talked not of *The Blue Angel*, but of author Truman Capote.

"Milton told me you're having dinner with Capote tomorrow night," Marlene said. "Have your guard up. He pretends to be your friend, and then spreads the most vicious gossip about you. His latest claim was that he was visiting me and saw Eleanor Roosevelt emerge nude from my bedroom. He claimed that Eleanor had long had a crush on me. That may be true, of course, and, if so, I don't blame her. But Capote did not see Eleanor emerge naked from my bedroom."

As she sat drinking champagne with Marlene on her champagne-colored sofa, Marilyn decided to bring up *The Blue Angel* herself. "I want you to know I'm thrilled at the idea of playing Lola Lola. Of course, I could never create the performance that you did."

Top: Marlene Dietrich Bottom: MM, Marlene Dietrich, and Milton Greene

"Of course not, darling, and I understand that," she said. "Zanuck is out of his mind to think of redoing *The Blue Angel*. Every actress in Germany wanted to play Lola Lola, even Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's mistress. The search for an actress to play Lola Lola was not equaled until David O. Selznick began his search for Scarlett O'Hara."

"Do you have any advice on how I should play the part?" Marilyn asked, appearing more innocent than she was, as she later confessed to her diary.

"Josef von Sternberg, my director, said the part called for an actress to represent a new incarnation of sex. At first, he didn't want me. He said my bottom was all right, but that Lola Lola must have a face."

"What an odd thing to say," Marilyn said. "You have one of the most fabulous faces ever seen on the silver screen."

"That's true," she agreed, "but Josef and I had to invent that face the way you invented your Marilyn Monroe character. Lola Lola must be an irresistible presence, singing on a barrel and showing off her *derrière*. She must have electricity and charm, her songs crackling with sex. She must be corrupt, decadent, actually vile, and evil."

"I don't know if I could be that," Marilyn said. "That's a pretty tall order."

"I understand," Marlene said. "Even when you're playing a slut on screen, you project a virginal innocence. The actress Lola Lola, in contrast, must be an alley cat screaming for a tomcat, especially in that song. 'Tonight, kids, I'm gonna get a man.' Lola is jaded, lustful, naked in her emotions. A harlot who can destroy a man, especially the professor in the film. It calls for a voice singing out in a crude German *bierstube* late at night, cutting through the smoke of a cabaret catering to perverts."

Marlene continued with her pronouncements, as Marilyn's insecurities were reaching a feverish pitch. "Critics have written that the screen character of Lola Lola must never be repeated, that I have immortalized it. If any actress

dares, she will be weak lemonade on the screen. It could destroy a woman's career. Audiences might get up and walk out on the wrong Lola Lola. Your sensuality is wholesome and real, whereas Lola Lola is an artificial creation of the night. She is the wrong image for you. Edith Piaf would understand that. So would Greta Garbo. When men flock to see one of your movies, they want to see the Marilyn Monroe they love—not some prostitute in a Berlin cabaret. Men want someone who will make love to their prick—not castrate them."

Marilyn burst into sobs, as Marlene moved closer to her, taking her in her arms and comforting her. "I can't play Lola Lola. It's not for me."

"A wise decision, my dear. You need to go on to greater parts, like you said in your news conference, not be a low-rent German trollop, a devouring female predator."

Over a harmoniously flavored *coq au vin*, Marlene said, "Your attempt to play Lola Lola would be as foolhardy as an attempt to star as Scarlett in a remake of *Gone With the Wind*. You'd be laughed off the screen: Don't do it! You are an all-American girl, not Lola Lola. European characters, especially those who worked the cabarets of 1920s Berlin, are not for you. Don't allow yourself to be ridiculed and mocked."

Marilyn later recalled that she fell asleep in Marlene's arms in her bed, as the chanteuse sang softly in her ear.

Ic bin die fesche Lola

Der Liebling der Saison

The next day, Marilyn wrote about her night with Marlene in her diary. "I stayed over," she said to Greene. "But lesbian sex is not really my thing, although I've indulged in it. Marlene is very oral. She did her own thing down there, but I didn't reciprocate. It was worth staying over for the career advice and to taste her scrambled eggs, for which she is so famous. She's such a good cook, she would have made a wonderful wife for Josef Goebbels. Isn't he the one who liked movies so much?"

"He did indeed," Greene said. "And movie stars. As for Hitler, he liked movie blondes himself, but both you and Marlene would lose *Der Führer*. His favorite blonde was Alice Faye."

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In Hollywood, executives at Fox, especially Darryl F. Zanuck, were shocked to read of Marilyn's press conference. The studio's lawyers had told the producer that their contract with the blonde goddess was still valid, and that she was not free to appear in any independent production, or in any film for a different studio.

During a meeting with Fox executives, Zanuck told them that "Monroe has complained about dumb blonde roles. She overlooked telling the press that I am right now supervising preliminary work on a movie called *The Queen of Sheba*. I'm giving Monroe a great chance, placing her up there with Salome and Cleopatra, even Helen of Troy. Sex, glamour, seduction—what more can movie audiences ask? She might win an Oscar as the glamorous but evil temptress. I think *Queen of Sheba* might be one of the biggest box office draws of all time."

The film was never made, but in time, Fox would produce an epic of one of these great female icons of the ancient world. The picture was *Cleopatra*, and it starred not Monroe, but Elizabeth Taylor. *Solomon and Sheba* was released in 1959 by United Artists, with Gina Lollobrigida starring as Sheba.

In the more immediate future, Zanuck had ordered Nunnally Johnson to write another dumb blonde role for Marilyn in a movie entitled *How To Be Very, Very Popular*.

When Johnson's script was completed, Zanuck ordered his New York office to send a copy to Marilyn. She was shocked to read that it was the role of a stripper, the type of role she wanted to avoid.

She wired Zanuck that she wouldn't accept the role. "Too bad for you, kiddo," he told her. "There's a number in it called 'Shake, Rattle, and Roll' that could make a star's career. If you don't do it, I'm casting Sheree North, your replacement at Fox."

In subsequent calls, Zanuck threatened Marilyn with suspension. Still, she refused to do the role. He therefore reneged on a promise to pay her a $100,000 bonus for her role in *The Seven Year Itch*.

"You would do that to me?" she said, "after I've sucked that big cock of yours you're so god damn proud of?" She slammed down the phone on him.

For the rest of 1955, she had virtually no income, and Greene was obliged to support her. He felt that while in New York, she should live like a star, and he installed her at the Waldorf Astoria Towers. He also purchased a wardrobe for her, and even presented her with a black Thunderbird sports car in which she could drive out to spend weekends at the Greene farmhouse in Connecticut.

Privately, Greene told such friends as author Stanley Mills Haggart, "When I get through with her, the public is

going to be introduced to an entirely new Marilyn Monroe."

***

In Florida, during the course of his affair with actress Evelyn Keyes, Mike Todd encountered an old friend, John Ringling North, who was a household name in America because of his Ringling Brothers Circus. Ever the entrepreneur, Todd pitched the idea for a charity performance of the circus at Madison Square Garden. It was for a good cause, the Arthritis and Rheumatism Foundation. Eventually the event was scheduled for March of 1955.

Todd conceived a headline-grabbing idea of having a bigtime movie star ride into the arena on a pink elephant. At first he came up with a wild scheme to enlist the aging Mae West as the "passenger" atop the elephant. He knew she was unlikely to accept, but he always dared go forth when other producers were more reluctant.

He had had an affair with the aging diva when he produced *Catherine Was Great* on Broadway in August of 1944 at the Shubert Theatre in Manhattan. Over his objections, West had insisted on playing Catherine as a serious dramatic role, and Todd wanted high camp. The critics were ravenous, the *New York Daily News* asserting, "The play is a bust, which will give Miss West one more than she needs." In spite of the attacks, West's loyal fans kept the show running for 191 performances, plus a successful road tour.

Todd telephoned West in Los Angeles, and she turned him down. "I don't do animal acts. Why not get that dumb blonde Marilyn Monroe? If the party was stupid enough to pose nude for a calendar for fifty bucks, she'll do anything…and anybody, so I hear."

"Why not?" Todd asked. That afternoon, he called Milton Greene, who seemed to go for the idea. Todd was smart enough to know that with Marilyn off the screen, her backer needed to keep her name in front of the public. "Get her to go for it, and I guarantee she'll have her picture—and a pink elephant—on the frontpage of every major newspaper in America."

The publicity-shrewd Greene already knew that.

That night, he pitched the idea to Marilyn, who seemed intrigued. "I once saw Marion Davies in a movie called *Polly of the Circus*, and I decided then and there when I became a movie star I'd like to make a circus film, something on the order of Cecil DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*. The pink elephant thing isn't exactly my childhood fantasy, but I'll do it."

Back from Florida, Todd was invited at eight o'clock one evening to visit Marilyn at her Waldorf Astoria suite. He didn't leave until four o'clock the next morning.

The following day, Marilyn joined Greene and a writer and photographer, Stanley Mills Haggart. She told the men that, "I've never met a man quite as cocky as Mike. What an impresario, what a larger-than-life figure."

Haggart told her, "I knew he'd go for you. A friend of mine, Joan Blondell, was married to him, and she said he was partial to blondes. Mae West, Veronica Lake, June Havoc, Evelyn Keyes. He's versatile, too, or so Hedda Hopper, my former boss, told me. I understand that on one drunken night or two, Todd has even persuaded Eddie Fisher to get plugged."

She looked at him with a wry smile. "Okay, you can add the name of Marilyn Monroe to that illustrious list."

That night, Todd invited Marilyn out for drinks with the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee. In the powder room, Lee told Marilyn, "Mike has more *chutzpah* than any producer on Broadway." The stripper had to explain what *chutzpah* meant to Marilyn.

Stanley Mills Haggart

She told Greene and Haggart the next day, “I’ve added a new word to my vocabulary. Also, Gypsy gave me some great tips about how I should play Cherie in *Bus Stop*.”

One afternoon, when Greene was in the studio with Haggart, taking photographs of Marilyn, she told them an amusing story. “Mike took me to a dinner party and introduced me as Tondelayo Schwartzkopf. The hostess and all the guests claimed I was a dead ringer for Marilyn Monroe, although the hostess added that to really pull off the Monroe impersonation, I’d need to take off a pound or two. After the dinner party, when I was getting into a cab, Mike patted me on the ass. ‘Okay, fatso, he said to me, ‘bumping up and down on that pink elephant at Madison Square Garden will take a few pounds off that butt of yours.’”

Later on, so it was said—and the story could be apocryphal—Mike pulled the same stunt with Elizabeth Taylor before their marriage, but it seems almost unbelievable that the guests at a hip New York party would not have recognized either Marilyn or Taylor.

When Greene went to see about dinner that night, she confided a secret to Haggart. “Actually, Mike wants me to dump Milton and Lee Strasberg. He wants to take personal charge of my career, and I think he would do such a terrific job. He’s like the father every girl should have.”

“Are you going to go with him?”

“I’m afraid of him,” she said. “He’s too mercurial, even for me. Besides, your dear buddy, Arthur Miller, is dead set against it. He’s also my father-lover. Two father-lovers would be just too incestuous for me.”

Finally, the big night at Madison Square Garden arrived. Backstage, Marilyn was reunited with Milton Berle, who’d first seduced her in 1948 when she was making *Ladies of the Chorus*. She whispered to Greene that night, “It’s as big as Uncle Miltie says it is.”

Berle announced her appearance: “Ladies and gentlemen, boys and *goils*, here comes the only *goil* in the world who makes Jane Russell look like a boy.”

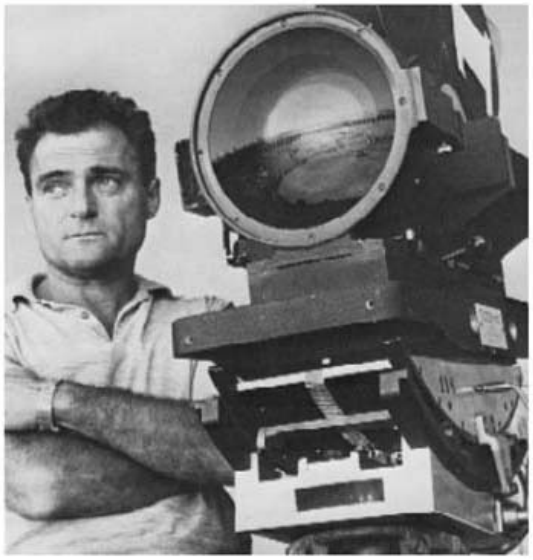
Dressed in a white blouse, a black pompom skirt, and looking like a *Dégas* ballerina in feathers and spangles, Marilyn rode out on that pink elephant and faced a wildly cheering crowd.

The ordeal lasted twenty minutes of searing pain. She’d been fitted into her costume at the last minute, and a pin had been left in it. As she bounced bareback on the elephant, the sharp pin dug into her flesh. By the time she’d finished her act and dismounted behind the stage, her costume was bloody.

In spite of all this, she stole the show, according to the nation’s press. She even bonded with the pink elephant, later saying, “He was not so dumb—just speechless.’

Noting her career changes and her ability to generate publicity, *Time* magazine claimed, “There is persuasive evidence that Marilyn Monroe is a shrewd businessman *(sic).*”

In time, Marilyn confronted Todd and turned down his offer about taking over the management of her career. His response was explosive: He slapped her face. His violence against women was well documented by former wives and girlfriends.



Mike Todd

Not succeeding with Marilyn, Todd would begin the pursuit of her chief rival for the title of Queen of Hollywood. He'd have better luck winning over Elizabeth Taylor.

Marilyn claimed, "She can have my rejects if she wants them."

***

"In Hollywood, I am just another movie star," Marilyn told Milton Greene. "But in New York, I'm treated like an exotic creature descended from the planet Venus. "Everybody is extending invitations."

"To my party tonight," he told her, "I've invited Truman Capote. He wants to know you better. He said he danced with you one night at El Morocco."

"He's very flamboyant," she said. "The press calls him an *enfant terrible*. Whatever in the hell that means. When he comes, send him back while I get dressed. I've never read anything he wrote, but he seems like a more interesting character than anything he can create on a page."

"You'll find him fascinating," Greene said. "He knows more indiscreet gossip than anyone in New York. As an example, he privately tells friends that he knows the dick size of every major star in Hollywood, and what they like to do in bed. He writes it all down in some diary, which may be published one day when the world has grown more sophisticated."

"Who did he tell you had the biggest one in Hollywood?" she asked. "I'd cast my vote for Milton Berle."

"Would you believe John Ireland?" he said, "at least according to the Truman Capote Bible. Ireland fucked Monty Clift when they made *Red River*, that picture with John Wayne. Joan Crawford also awards Ireland top prize, and she should know. She's fucked every big star except Lassie."

"Thanks for the tip," she said. "I must work him into my schedule."

"I asked Capote by a little early so you can gossip over a pre-party drink. When the party is in full blast, he becomes the center of attention, with a crowd clustered around him as he tells one outrageous story after another. Much of what he says is actually true, but he does embroider a bit. He says all good Southerners never let truth get in the way of a good story."

"Send in my amusement for the night," she said.

When Capote did arrive two hours early, Greene directed him to Marilyn's quarters. He knocked on her door. She called for him to come in. Not finding her in the bedroom, he heard her voice summoning him to the bathroom, where she was taking a bubble bath.

"Hi," he said, "Truman Capote, in your boudoir and now in your toilette." He spoke in a high-pitched voice, and had grown up shunned by other children because of his "sissyish traits." In the way he walked and talked, he was different from most men, with that babylike, slightly artificial voice. She would remember him as a writer "trapped forever in boyhood, as if refusing to mature."

As Capote himself later said, “The way I spoke in the fourth grade is the way I talk now. When I was growing up, everyone told my mother I should have been born a girl. She even took me to psychiatrists hoping to find a drug or therapy that would turn me into a boy. In spite of my odd behavior, I always had to be myself.”

And that is what he presented to Marilyn, who seemed mesmerized by him. He immediately established his credentials as a gossip. Gazing at her in the claw-footed tub, he said, “The last time I saw a movie star in a bubble bath was in a hotel in Barcelona. The star was Errol Flynn. After I bathed him and dried him off, I discovered what ‘in like Flynn’ means.”

She giggled. “You’re my kind of guy, Truman. What a name. It sounds so presidential. Why don’t you wash my back for me so we can get acquainted? I hope you won’t get too turned on.”

“You can rest assured that I won’t,” he said, taking off his jacket and moving toward her. “Half the men in America would want to be in my shoes right now, and I’m not even tempted.”

As he reached for the soap, he said, “You must tell me everything about Joe DiMaggio. I want all the details. Cock size. Duration in the saddle. Cut or uncut. I suspect uncut. The exact taste of his semen. What does he prefer? Fellatio? Analingus? Around the world? The missionary position?”

“My, you’re an inquisitive little demon. But I like you for some perverse reason. Humphrey Bogart told me you’re the kind of guy he’d like to put in his pocket and take home.”

“Wait until I get to know you better and tell you stories about *that* one on the set of *Beat the Devil.”*

“Joe’s biggest bat is not the one he uses on the field,” she said. “If that’s all it took, we’d still be married.”

“Lucky girl!” he said. “How I envy you.” He began an expert soaping of her luscious back.

As she emerged from the bath, he helped dry her off. She put on a robe. In her bedroom, he took a chair beside her dressing table, sipping a glass of champagne that Greene’s cook had brought in. The cook thanked Marilyn.

After she’d left, Capote asked, “Why is she thanking you?”

“This afternoon, I peeled potatoes for her and snapped beans for dinner tonight.”

One of Marilyn’s biographers, Fred Lawrence Guiles, in his book, *Legend*, wrote: “She was never very serious with Capote. They spoke a secret language liberally sprinkled with sex and gossip.”

Marilyn heard Greene’s party guests arriving, but she wanted to extend her private talk with Capote. He noticed that she was reading a book about Napoléon Bonaparte and Josephine. “I didn’t know you were interested in history,” he said.

I’m not, but when I visited Marlon Brando on the set of *Désirée*, where he played Napoléon, I became interested in playing Josephine in a movie focused on her. Perhaps you’ll write the script for me.”

“Perhaps,” he said. “Unlike Josephine, I wouldn’t have gone to bed with Napoléon. His cock was too small. I’ve seen it.”

She looked astonished. “How in hell could you have seen Napoléon’s cock? I didn’t know you were that old.”

“Before he was buried, someone cut off the emperor’s little penis, and it is preserved in alcohol. Today, it’s owned by this old queen in Connecticut. He exhibits it on occasion. It looks pretty withered these days. Perhaps it was an inch or two longer in the days of the Empire.”

“That is such a ghoulish story. It’s delectable,”

“Speaking of small cocks, can Senator Kennedy satisfy you?”

“We manage,” she said. “Don’t tell me you’ve been to bed with him too.”

“Not at all,” he said.

“What I don’t understand is why everybody thinks the Kennedys are so sexy. I know a lot about cocks—I’ve seen an awful lot of them—and if you put all the Kennedys together, you wouldn’t have a good one. I used to see Jack when I was staying with Loel and Gloria Guinness in Palm Beach. I had a little guest cottage with its own private beach, and he would come down so he could swim in the nude. He had absolutely nuthin’.”

Marlon Brando as Napoléon, with MM

"Unlike you, I haven't seen all the cocks I want to see," she said. "But I'm not on the East Coast to chase after them, at least that's not my first goal. As you know, I want to be a serious actress."

"If you mean that, I've got the right acting coach for you, since you seem to have left Natasha Lytess back in California," he said. "She's a British actress, rather old at this point: Constance Collier."

"I've heard of her," she said.

"Constance is the best acting teacher in New York. If you'd like to meet her, I can take you to a luncheon this week. I've been invited to her apartment. Greta Garbo and Katharine Hepburn will be there."

"Garbo?" she asked in astonishment. "And Hepburn? Are they still taking acting lessons?"

"No, they're admirers. Will you accept?"

"Are you kidding? I'd be honored. But I don't know what to wear."

"A single string of pearls and Chanel's little black dress."

"Can't wait," she said. "But I fear I'll be speechless."

"I wouldn't worry about it," he said. "All three of them are dykes, and each of them will be salivating when you walk into the room. You don't have any skin blemishes, do you?"

"No, but why do you ask?"

"Hepburn won't go to bed with any gal with blemishes on her skin," he said. "But Garbo doesn't mind all that much, considering that she slept with Marie Dressler."

There was a sudden knock on the door. "Marilyn, the guests are here, and you're the guest of honor," Greene said. "Shake your ass, girl. Norman Mailer's here. So is Gene Kelly. He's with a real cute trick. I bet if you work it right, you can take the hunk from Gene."

Capote rose to his feet. "I don't care who they are. Kelly always manages to get them first before anyone else in Hollywood, even beating out Joan Crawford."

She called that she'd be right out after putting on her white high heels. "I'm anxious to meet this Adonis," she whispered to Capote. "With Amy hanging on to Milton all the time, I haven't been getting much."

"In that case, after Constance's luncheon, I can arrange a date for you with Porfirio Rubirosa. After all, the two richest women in the world, Doris Duke and Barbara Hutton, spent millions on that eleven-inch octoroon dick. But I can get it for you for free."

"Is that why in a restaurant when some men request a pepper-mill, they ask for a Rubirosa?"

"You learn quick, gal. Now it's show time. There are a lot of important people out there tonight. It's time for you to become Marilyn Monroe."

Constance Collier

On the way out the door, he took her by the arm. “By the way, I forgot to ask. Why in hell do you have a picture of Abraham Lincoln by your bedside? That’s weird.”

“I’ve always had this fantasy about going to bed with Honest Abe,” she said. “I know it’s crazy, but that’s how I feel. Since he’s cold and in his grave, I’ll settle for someone who reminds me of him. Call it second best, since I can’t have the real thing. He’s coming to the party tonight, if he’s not already here.”

“You have stumped me on that one,” he said. “Who might this august personage be?”

“My next husband,” she said. “*Arthur Miller.*”

Arthur Miller

PART THREE

LET'S MAKE LOVE

Truman Capote escorted a nervous Marilyn Monroe along West 57th Street, not her favorite part of Manhattan. He'd instructed her to dress, act, and talk like Grace Kelly. He also told her not to be too apprehensive. "Garbo will be intoxicated by your innocence. I mean, your innocent look, and Katie will adore you because you have no skin blemishes."

Arriving at the apartment door of Constance Collier, the "secretary" to the actress, Phyllis Wilbourne, showed them in to the dark, dank apartment where the furnishings had been young in 1901.

Although it was a luncheon date, Collier was attired in a mauve-laced evening gown. Looking like a character from an Oscar Wilde play, Collier sat on a battered sofa upholstered in a fading red velvet. She extended a frail hand to Marilyn, as Capote made the introductions.

"My dear," Collier said, "I'm nearly blind, but the luminosity of your face and golden hair illuminates this old room."

"I'm honored to meet you," your highness," Marilyn said, curtsying.

"Oh, Marilyn, Constance is not the Queen of England," Capote said.

"That is true, Truman," Constance said, "but I should have been. I'm regal enough."

As they settled in and Constance was smoking her second cigarette, Capote explained that Marilyn wanted to take acting lessons from her. "In essence, she wants to reinvent herself as an actress."

"I want to so much," Marilyn said. "All the men, all the glamour, all the jewelry and gowns are not important. After all, I'm not using Elizabeth Taylor as my role model."

Collier complained that she was losing feeling in both her hands and feet.

"I suppose I could teach you something about acting. At any rate, I need the money to supplement my meager income. My little darling, I could start you out by teaching you how to interpret the role of Ophelia. Once you master that, you can succeed in any part. The one thing I can't teach you is how to play sexy."

"I already know how to do that," Marilyn said.

"I'm sure you do," Collier said.

"You're so elegant," Marilyn said. "I wish I knew how to be elegant."

"Darling, I've had decades to become who I am. Of course, I inherited exotic features." Like all actresses on their last legs, she wanted to relive past glories. "I inherited some of my features from my Portuguese grandmother. Believe it or not, I was considered one of the great beauties of the early 20th century stage."

"Queen Victoria must have adored you," Capote said.

"Truman, you're such a nasty little demon, but I always like to have you around to sharpen my sense of bitchery."

She spoke in a fading voice that still retained a husky, contralto quality. "My mother was an actress. She wrapped me in a blanket and left me backstage, nursing me between acts. At the age of three, I toddled out onto the stage, cast as Fairy Peaseblossom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream."*

As Collier wandered down memory lane, Marilyn took in the room, its walls covered with decaying, saffron-colored wallpaper highlighted with antique racing horse prints. On the sofa with Collier lay a little black fox terrier, which Collier stroked with one hand, holding a golden cigarette holder in the other hand. Marilyn also spotted the largest brandy inhaler glasses she'd ever seen.

With her weak eyesight, Collier followed Marilyn's gaze, quickly adding, "Those glasses haven't been used in years. I'm diabetic."

Two views, each circa 1905, of Marilyn's acting teacher Constance Collier

A large portrait hung on the wall. Marilyn asked, "Was he your husband?"

"Constance is not the marrying kind," Capote quipped.

"Truman, sometimes you smart-ass bitches think you know it all, but get it wrong. Marilyn is right. I was once married to an Irish actor, Julian L'Estrange. It was a perfect arrangement. He traveled most of the time with a young pianist, Albert Morris Bagby, who took care of my wifely duties. Julian was a homosexual and beautiful husband and a marvelous companion if I ever needed to be escorted to a gala. He died in this apartment, in Albert's arms, in 1918, while I sat in the corner having a brandy and smoking a cigarette." Fortunately, the ringing of the doorbel broke Collier's reminiscences.

With a forceful, confident stride, Katharine Hepburn came into the room wearing rose-colored slacks and a battleship gray jacket.

She'd applied only a slash of lipstick, no other makeup, and her hair was pulled back into a tight bun. "This divine creature must be Marilyn Monroe, America's reincarnation of Helen of Troy."

"Miss Hepburn, I'm honored. Ever since I was a little girl, I've gone to see your movies. You were great as Mary of Scotland."

"Oh, you sweet girl, never tell an aging actress you enjoyed her movies when you were but a toddler. It will only add another line to my face."

"Your face will be eternal," Capote assured her. "You're one of the very few actresses from the Golden Age who will be appearing on the screen when you're ninety."

"Oh, Capote, you always say such flattering bullshit to old actresses. Later on, you tell your friends what you really think of all of us battle axes."

Seated on the sofa with Marilyn and Collier, Hepburn learned that Marilyn was going to study acting with the aging duenna. "What a fabulous idea. Constance taught me every stage secret I know."

"And a lot more," Capote said with a smirk.

"Marilyn, why didn't you lobby to get me that Jane Russell role in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes?* Hepburn asked. "I would have been terrific."

Marilyn seemed taken aback. "I don't know…I'm sure…"

Capote came to the rescue. "There is a role you could play. I've read an early draft. It's from Tennessee Williams' *The Garden District*. Katharine, you'd be ideal as the cold bitch of a tyrannical mother, Violet Venable. Marilyn could play the beautiful twenty-five-year-old who ran away with your poet son, Sebastian, one summer to write his annual poem. In the plot of the play, you're trying to get a young doctor to lobotomise the girl and erase the memory of how your son was killed. She was used as bait to attract young men for his sexual pleasure."

Katharine Hepburn

"Tennessee himself has told me about this play," Hepburn said. "I'd be cast as a faded beauty who is now an old harpy. When I was younger and more beautiful, I was used as bait to attract the young men my son sexually desired. A play about perversion. From what Tennessee told me, the subject of incest, even cannibalism, is raised."

"Oh, Miss Hepburn, you're too much of a lady to undertake such a role," Marilyn said.

"I wish you could convince Capote and Tennessee of that. The last I heard from him—he's down in Key West—he told me he's working on another Broadway play. He wants to co-star Bette Davis and me."

"I've worked with Bette," Marilyn said. "You know, on *All About Eve*. She's not the actress you are—and not nice at all."

"Truer words were never said," Hepburn said.

"Oh Kate," Capote said. "You survived Hollywood in the 1930s, going from John Barrymore to Marlene Dietrich to Howard Hughes. You've seen it all. If there's something you missed, I'm sure Spencer Tracy will fill you in."

"Capote, dear heart, you remind me of a naughty little chihuahua who has never been house broken."

Hepburn turned to Marilyn again. "Constance is a wise choice as a drama coach—the very best, in fact. She has a real zest for all that is good and wonderful in life. You will blossom under her, find dimensions in yourself as an actress you never knew existed. I should know. She did wonders for me."

The ringing of the doorbell signaled the arrival of the remaining guest, mystery and all.

Greta Garbo entered the room, an Hermès scarf covering most of her head and dark sunglasses concealing a good part of a fabled face that had not been seen on a movie screen since 1941.

Throughout the luncheon, Hepburn ate heartily as Garbo nibbled. She rarely took her eyes off Marilyn and seemed enchanted by her. Marilyn also seemed transfixed by Garbo, even more so than by Hepburn.

Collier retreated a bit, giving way to her age and a consumption of far too much alcohol.

Tanked up on pre-luncheon vodka and wine that had been set out on the table, Capote became even more provocative. "Katie, I've often wondered about something. Other than Bette Davis, female impersonators such as T.C. Jones like to imitate you. But I've never seen one of these drag queens do Greta."

Collier suddenly seemed to revive. "Let me answer that. I know why. Among all the great film stars, Garbo cannot be impersonated. Her appearance and femininity are unique. She has the cold quality of an Arctic mermaid. She really is hermaphroditic on screen."

Capote remained silent, but wanting to tell Collier that she'd stolen that impression from a magazine interview with Tennessee.

Garbo didn't seem insulted to be hermaphroditic, and actually seemed proud of it. Hepburn was even more articulate. "Greta is to be congratulated for representing the aspiration of both sexes, uniting the two sides of her nature, the feminine and masculine, in every role she's ever played. Her freedom from being trapped in either sex allows her to create a cryptic amorality in each part she plays."

"I allowed a film-goer to create his or her own fantasy," Garbo said. "I do not let them look inside me, only

inside their own dark desires."

"The miracle is that such a face as Greta's can even exist," Hepburn said before turning to face the star. "I know at times you must feel regret, even view it as tragic, that you were given the responsibility of owning such a face. Your look represents the apogee of the progression of the human female face."

"Oh, please," Garbo said, as if dismissive of all this praise. "Let me finish my salmon, and quit speaking of me as if giving a eulogy at the funeral. I am still alive, still enjoying the comforts of the damned, such as they are."

Collier's secretary served her favorite dessert. Before tasting it, Marilyn wanted to know what it was.

"It's junket, my dear," Collier said. "I first discovered it in my nursery."

"What is junket?" Marilyn asked. "I thought that was a trip you took with some man."

"It's a British dessert," Collier said. "It's made with sweetened flavored milk with rennet. Rennet, of course, is the lining membrane of a calf's stomach used for curdling milk."

"I'd better skip it today," Marilyn said. "I'm watching my figure."

"So is everybody else at this table," Capote added, his remark meeting with stony silence. Recognizing his gaffe, he quickly changed the subject.

He turned to Garbo. "When I was a twelve-year-old boy, I got very mad at you during one long, hot summer in the South. I'd had this awful mishap when a pack of ebony-colored boys, perhaps eight in all, brutally raped me. I was incapacitated for the rest of the summer. During all that time in bed, I wrote a play called *The Most Beautiful Woman in the World*. I sent it to you with a fan letter, asking if you'd star in it on Broadway. You never answered me, and I nursed this grudge against you until I was nineteen. I later burned the play."

Greta Garbo as Mata Hari

"I'm so sorry I ignored you," Garbo said. "Too bad I'm too old to play in it now, since I'm no longer beautiful."

"But you *are* beautiful," Marilyn said. "Amazingly so. People say I'm beautiful, but I don't think so. I'm sexy-looking, but only after I've applied a lot of whorish makeup. Otherwise, I think I look like a milk maiden from Norway."

"In my home country of Sweden, the young men always journeyed in summer to Norway to seduce its beautiful young women."

"Miss Garbo, do you think you'll ever return to pictures?" Marilyn asked.

"Thank God Marilyn didn't use that awful word, 'comeback,'" Hepburn said.

"That proves that she saw *Sunset Blvd."* Capote chimed in. "Gloria Swanson as Norma Desmond objected to the word 'comeback' too."

"Over the years, I've considered it," Garbo said. "I've always wanted to play Dorian Gray, based on the Oscar Wilde play. If I do, I'd like you, Miss Monroe, to play one of the girls that Dorian seduces and destroys."

"Garbo and Monroe," Collier said, "What box office! I could see a Best Oscar for Greta, but would you be nominated as Best Actor or Best Actress?"

"I'd be terrified to appear opposite you on the screen," Marilyn said. "But since you'd be cast as a man, I guess

I might pull it off if Miss Collier coached me. There's no way I'd appear on the screen in a woman-to-woman role with you. I'd be mocked."

"I, too, wanted to do a film with Greta," Hepburn said. "*Mourning Becomes Electra,* with George Cukor directing. The year was 1947. I failed to convince Louis B. Mayer."

After the luncheon, Garbo excused herself to go to the bathroom. Marilyn was next. After coming out of the toilet, Garbo slipped Marilyn her private phone number. "Call me," she whispered. After thanking Collier and hugging Hepburn and Capote, she departed.

Likewise, Hepburn departed fifteen minute later, but not before inviting Marilyn to visit her at her home in Connecticut. Marilyn said she'd be honored.

Out on the street again, Capote warned Marilyn, "If you accept invitations from those two regal dykes, you might have to sing for your supper."

"What in hell do you think I've been doing all these years," Marilyn said. "Call me the canary."

"I must congratulate you. You've come a long way from the days when you were the teenage bride of that sailor boy—I don't care to remember his name. You're sure dating from the A-list: John F. Kennedy, Katharine Hepburn, and Greta Garbo. Speaking of big name legends, who does that leave out? Let me see—Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein."

"Been there, done that."

Capote came to a stop in the middle of the sidewalk. "Like me, you're known for telling some tall tales. A whoremonger like Chaplin I can believe. But you must admit that Einstein is a bit of a stretch."

"Silly boy, didn't you read in the papers that Einstein told an interviewer that I was his favorite movie star? After that, what could I do but get in touch with him? I wanted him to explain to me his theory of relativity. I simply cannot understand it."

In the weeks leading up to her death, Marilyn visited Collier's apartment two or three times a week for acting lessons. The two women became close. Marilyn later said, "She opened up doors within me that I had kept locked all my life," without explaining to Capote exactly what she meant.

In April of 1955, Capote called to tell her of Collier's death. She was deeply saddened.

As a remembrance, Collier had given Marilyn a playbill from her 1906 performance as Cleopatra, in which she appeared on stage crowned in silver and carrying a golden scepter and a replica of the sacred golden calf.

Capote asked Marilyn if he could be her escort at the funeral, and she gratefully accepted.

Arriving dressed all in black, with Capote on her arm, Marilyn sat through the service "gnawing an already chewed-to-the-nub thumbnail," in Capote's words, "periodically removing her spectacles to scoop up tears bubbling from her blue-gray eyes."

After the service, she told Capote, "I hate funerals. I don't want a funeral—just my ashes cast on the waves by one of my kids, if I ever have any."

Collier's "secretary," Phyllis Wilbourn, whom Marilyn had come to know, was at the funeral, too. Marilyn offered her her deepest sympathy and was happy to learn that Hepburn was going to take her in. She would remain as Hepburn's "secretary" for the next forty years—there was talk.

Long after Collier's death, Capote published what the actress felt about Marilyn's talent or lack thereof.

"*Oh yes, there is something there—a beautiful child, really—I don't think she's an actress at all—certainly not in a traditional sense. What she has is this presence, a certain luminosity, a flickering intelligence. These marvelous traits could not be captured on stage because they are too subtle, too fragile. Her wonder can only be caused by the camera. It's like a hummingbird in flight. Only a camera can freeze the poetry of it. But anyone who thinks this girl is simply another Harlow or harlot or whatever, is mad. I hope, I really pray, that she survives long enough to free the strange lovely talent that's wandering through her like a jailed spirit."*

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After Collier's death, and in need of an acting coach, Marilyn was invited by Paul Bigelow to a dinner party where he seated her opposite producer Cheryl Crawford, one of the original founders, in 1947, of the Actors Studio. Lee Strasberg would become its director four years later. Early members included Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando.

Crawford claimed that at early auditions, many of the young actors removed most of their clothing. "I suspect that they wished to show us how free and uninhibited they were. We certainly witnessed a good number of bare breasts and jock straps. Both Steve McQueen and James Dean showed off their wares in jock straps. Paul Newman appeared in boxer shorts, as he would do so many times in his films. Dean, more than anyone, helped create what

was known as the Actors Studio style—that is, slouching, mumbling, and wearing dirty, torn jeans."

At the dinner party, Marilyn shared with Crawford her hopes and future plans for what she wanted to become as an actress. Intrigued by her openness and sincerity, Crawford invited her the following day to go with her to the Actors Studio.

Crawford picked her up at the Waldorf Towers and drove her there, where she met Lee Strasberg, who would become her mentor and ultimately, the heir to her estate.

Norman Mailer characterized Marilyn's meeting with Strasberg as tantamount to introducing Jacqueline Susann to T.S. Eliot. "An empty box office blonde ignorant of acting, theatre, culture, or technique."

Author Maurice Zolotow described Strasberg's appearance at the time: "He was on the small side, and he looked undistinguished. His cheeks had the dark stubble of men who always look unshaven. He was wearing a dark-blue shirt and no tie and a badly fitting rumpled suit. He looked like a harassed small businessman, a drugstore owner maybe, or a delicatessen store owner on the verge of bankruptcy. But when he began to talk, he became transfigured."

Movie producer and Actors Studio co-founder, Cheryl Crawford

Lee Strasberg's daughter, Susan, said, "Marilyn's arrival in our lives was a double-edged sword. Father's celebrity rose; he became more famous, almost infamous. When he publicly affirmed Marilyn's talent, he was called soft in the head, a star fucker, an opportunist. Actually, it turned out that my father was risking more than he was gaining."

Her words might have been true at the beginning of the relationship, but not beyond the grave. The Strasberg estate still takes in millions of dollars annually by licensing her image.

Director Elia Kazan, one of Marilyn's lovers, saw the relationship between the drama coach and the star emerge. "Actors would humble themselves before Lee's rhetoric and the intensity of his emotion. The more naïve and self-doubting the actors, the more total was Lee's power over them. The more famous and successful these actors, the headier the taste of power for Lee. He found the perfect victim-devotee in Marilyn Monroe."

Strasberg's son, Johnny, said, "The greatest tragedy was that people, even my father in a way, took advantage of Marilyn. They glommed onto her special sort of life, her special characteristics, when what she needed was love."

When word leaked to the press about Marilyn's involvement with the studio, she was mocked in print, one reporter calling her "Sarah Bernhardt in a bikini."

Almost from the beginning, she formed an affectionate bond with Strasberg, nicknaming him "Israel," his original name when he was born in 1901 in a far corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She told this "patriarch of American Method acting" that she was more interested in "getting in touch with my feelings than in mastering Shakespeare."

She met with him at his apartment at 135 Central Park West, with its towering bookshelves, whose décor she called "early Brentano's."

He sat her down in front of a fireplace. As the flames illuminated her much-photographed face, he fired off a number of questions at her, demanding fast answers.

"Describe what it feels like when a new lover penetrates you for the first time."

"Do you indulge in sex for your own pleasure, or for the pleasure of the man?"

"You are not a stupid girl, so how do you manage to effectively play the dumb blonde role?"

At the end of the interview, he told his wife, Paula, that "Marilyn has limitless talent." He also shared with his wife the questions he'd put to her, but didn't reveal what her answers had been.

Cindy Adams, the columnist, called Strasberg's feeling for Marilyn "So deep it's beyond logic. She had to have been his childhood dream incarnate, the embodiment of all his fancied heroines, the epitome of everything a poor Jew from the Lower East Side could imagine. Yet it was he who was sought out by the Goddess. She needed *him*. She came to *him."*

At some point, Marilyn seduced Strasberg, as she had a tendency to reward men with her sexual favors if she felt they were doing something good for her. She confided the details of her affair to friends such as Milton Greene and Shelley Winters. Somehow, Marlon Brando also found out, as did Lee's daughter, Susan.

In spite of overwhelming evidence, including Marilyn's own confession, Strasberg denied a sexual link. "She's not my type," he said. "My type is a dark-haired beauty like Jennifer Jones. Do I love Marilyn? I don't know what people mean by such a question. All I can say is that I did like her very much."

Word spread through the Actors Studio that Marilyn and their dream coach were having an affair, although Marilyn had yet to show up for classes. Paul Newman likened Strasberg's infatuation with Marilyn to Professor Unrath (Emil Jannings), who was fascinated by the charms of Marlene Dietrich (Lola Lola) in Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel*. Others claimed that Marilyn was trying to turn the very serious Actors Studio into a circus act.

Strasberg had almost nothing to say about his private life with Marilyn, but he issued high praise for her potential as an actress. "When I finally got around to seeing her films, I was not impressed. But when I met her, I saw that what she looked like was not what she really was, and what was going on inside her was not what you saw on the outside, and that always meant there was something to work with. In Marilyn's case, the results have been phenomenal. It was almost as if she had been waiting for a button to be pushed which would open a door to a treasure of gold and jewels."

In spite of such praise, he was often a hard taskmaster and very critical of her work. Virtually echoing Josef von Sternberg's words to Marlene Dietrich, Strasberg told Marilyn, "Only hard work and endless rehearsals will make a truly great star, either on the stage or the screen."

"Marilyn was too shy and terrified to come to class at the studio," said Susan Strasberg. "Eventually, she 'graduated' to sitting in on private classes with the other students. On one such occasion, she met Laurence Olivier, visiting from London, little knowing that she'd soon sign him to Marilyn Monroe Productions to make a film with her."

Shelley Winters, her former roommate and longtime confidante, went with her on her first day of class at the Actors Studio. "She was very nervous. She came out of the building in a schleppy old coat, looking like my maid, and people on the street pushed her aside to get my autograph. She loved that."

Once at the studio, she didn't dare do a scene, but watched the other actors. She was mesmerized when George Peppard, that handsome, blond-haired hunk, came onstage to do a nude scene in bed with a woman. A lot of actors would have kept on their jockey shorts. But George was proud of his equipment. He walked out on stage completely nude and performed the scene in bed with some lucky gal. Marilyn was enchanted. Months later, she was so very disappointed when she didn't get to perform her own love scenes with George in Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's.* " Audrey Hepburn got the man intended for me," Marilyn complained.

Monty Clift's close friend, actor Kevin McCarthy, later to be one of Marilyn's co-stars in *The Misfits*, remembered sitting next to her, watching a scene being performed from Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. In his words, the work was performed by "dimly talented humans struggling through the murk."

He only vaguely noticed the woman sitting next to him, referring to her later as a "tousled piece of humanity, looking like nothing. Then, fifteen minutes later, I looked again. I realized that a breathing, palpitating Marilyn Monroe had developed out of nothing. I remember looking and thinking, 'My God, it's her—she's just come to life.'"

Winters remembered another day when "Joan Crawford, of all people, showed up overdressed at the Actors Studio. She had made several nasty remarks about Marilyn. I knew that Crawford had the hots for Marilyn, and had seduced her in the past, until Marilyn rejected her. Crawford was seriously pissed off. Like Norma Desmond said, 'Great stars have great pride.'"

"When Marilyn saw Crawford come in, she scrunched into the fartherest corner of the studio to avoid encountering *Mildred Pierce*. Later, she told me, 'My pussy's no longer for sale—even to Joan Crawford.'"

Weeks later, another Crawford, Cheryl Crawford, persuaded Marilyn to perform a scene in front of the class, arranging her pairing with Maureen Stapleton, one of Tennessee Williams' favorite actresses. Maureen agreed to work with Marilyn and each of them set about selecting material that they found challenging.

Marilyn and Maureen jointly rejected a scene from Noël Coward's *Private Lives*, settling instead for an excerpt from Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*. It was memorable as a key moment within the 1931 movie that had marked the first time Greta Garbo ever talked on screen.

Marilyn played Anna, a prostitute, and as such, had to deliver the same lines as Garbo: "Gimme a whisky. Ginger ale on the side. And don't be stingy, baby." Stapleton played a broken-down old hag—the role previously played by Marie Dressler.

Shelley WInters in 1959

A rumor persists to this day that Garbo, in disguise, came in to see the performance at the invitation of both Marilyn and Strasberg. Garbo entered the auditorium just as the lights dimmed, and departed just before the lights came back on again.

Marilyn's performance had been cancelled several times, because of her fear. "Eventually, she went on," said Cheryl Crawford, "and her performance was luminous, with exciting gradations of feeling."

Norman Mailer also watched Marilyn perform. "She can exhibit every emotion but anger. Nothing of the near-violent anguish Garbo had shown in the film. For Marilyn, just the pain, no anguish. Even if her hostility would soon be visible everywhere in her professional relationships, it does not appear in her art."

Greta Garbo *(left)* with Marie Dressler in a scene from *Anna Christie*

Marilyn Monroe *(left)* and Maureen Stapleton *"And don't be stingy, baby."*

Although she received praise from the Strasbergs and fellow actors who included Kim Stanley, Marilyn lamented, "I was bad, very bad. I could just feel it."

The next day at the studio, Strasberg praised Marilyn for her "extraordinary and inviolate sensitivity. This sensitive core should have been killed by all that had happened to her in adolescence, including repeated rapes and forced sex, or so I've heard. But here she is, still fresh and alive. Her chief deprivation was the loss of her father, a role I hope to fulfill in the coming months."

In his public pronouncements about Marilyn, Strasberg became absolutely purple: "She was engulfed in a mystic-like flame, like when you see Jesus at *The Last Supper*, and there's a halo around him. There was this great white light surrounding Marilyn."

So far as it is known, Strasberg was the only person who ever compared Marilyn to Jesus Christ.

The ties with Strasberg became so close that she invited him to go to Hollywood with her during the filming of the upcoming movie version of *Bus Stop*. She promised him that he could veto every scene if it wasn't right, even over-riding the director.

But because of his intense involvement in New York with the Actors Studio, he turned down her offer, volunteering the services of his wife, Paula, instead. Paula agreed to become Marilyn's new acting coach at a salary of $1,500 a week, which later rose to $3,000 a week on the set of *The Misfits*.

Arthur Miller detested both Lee and Paula Strasberg. He said, "Without Paula, Marilyn felt lost. In effect, Paula was Marilyn's mother all over again. A fantasy mother who would confirm everything Marilyn wished to hear."

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Perhaps the meeting was inevitable. For the previous two years, Marilyn had just missed encountering James Dean, even though she had expressed a desire to meet him. She had been enthralled with his appearance on the screen in *East of Eden*, which she'd seen at a special screening with Shelley Winters.

As she was heading into the Actors Studio, she ran into Marlon Brando leaving with Dean. Her first impulse was to regret she had not made herself up as Marilyn Monroe. She wore no makeup, and a scarf covered her matted hair.

He looked like he'd just emerged from the set of *Rebel Without a Cause*, wearing blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and the same red jacket he'd worn in the movie, a gift from Nicholas Ray. Her gaze traveled to his crotch and his scuffed brown penny loafers before she met him eye to eye.

"Marilyn, meet this asshole who thinks he's a better actor than I am," Brando said. "I forget the kid's name."

"Hi, Marilyn," Dean said. "Wanna fuck?"

Coming from anybody else, she might have been insulted. But the way Dean extended the invitation with a challenging look made her giggle.

"How did you know what I want to do more than anything else on earth?" she asked. She looked skeptically at Brando. "I need to get it from somebody. I haven't been seeing much of this guy's noble tool, as he affectionately calls it."

"Neither have I," Dean said provocatively.

"Sorry, guys," Brando said, "I guess I find too many other holes to plug. Speaking of that, I'm late for an appointment. I won't tell you voyeurs with whom. Marilyn, do you mind if I dump Jimmy boy here on you?" He kissed both of them on the lips and left hurriedly, disappearing into the crowds on the street.

"'C'mon, doll," Dean said, taking her arm. "Forget this fucking Actors Studio. I'm taking you over to the Blue Ribbon Café. It's where all the out-of-work actors hang out."

"I'm out of work too," she said.

On the way there, he confided in her. "I hate that Jew asshole Lee Strasberg. He humiliated me one afternoon, and I've never forgiven him. I don't know why I don't boycott the place."

"What happened?" she asked.

"I had to perform a scene," he said. "I came out in this bullfighter's black cape with a red lining. I'd adapted a scene from Barnaby Conrad's novel, *Matador*. After I did the scene, there was silence, as the jealous actors waited for the master's words. Guess what he told me? 'You fail to create a sense of being in an authentic place. You're not doing the work. You're acting, not being.'"

"Don't worry about it," she said. "*East of Eden* proved what a great actor you are. I can't wait to see your next two pictures."

Seated at a table in the café, they attracted almost no attention from the other patrons. Only a handful of other tables were occupied at four o'clock that afternoon.

"I guess I should ask the big question," Marilyn said. "Which one of you, Elizabeth Taylor or yourself, got to fuck Rock Hudson first?"

He laughed. "Rock and I were assigned to live in the same house in Texas. So I guess that answers your question. I got him first. But it wasn't a match made in heaven. He eventually drifted over to Elizabeth."

James Dean

"They're both big stars now," Marilyn said, "and you're going to rise up there with them. How one gets to be a star in Hollywood is another subject. I've been famously quoted as saying, 'I sucked a lot of cock to get where I am.' I don't remember if I actually said that or not."

"And I've had my cock sucked by some of the biggest names in Hollywood. When I started out, I was starving. In New York, I used to let guys give me a blow-job in subway toilets so I could buy a milkshake to give me some energy."

"On Santa Monica Boulevard, I'd give it away, just to get a hearty breakfast, which could last me almost a day

and a half."

"Where are you crashing?" he asked her.

"At the Waldorf Towers," she said. "Isn't that posh?"

"I guess so," he said, "as long as somebody else is picking up the bill. What's his name?" Rosenberg? Cohen? Katz?"

"Milton. Milton Greene," she said. "Jimmy, I didn't know you were so anti-Semitic."

"I'm not really," he said. "I guess their money is as good as anybody else's. Hey, I've got an idea. It's getting late. Why don't you invite me to your pad for an audition? I'm good. Really good."

"Audition?" she said, looking at him skeptically. "To tell you the truth, after seeing *Eden*, I want to star in a picture with you. I guess we might as well start practicing our love scenes to see if we have any chemistry together."

"You're on. You won't regret it. Fifty years from now, you'll be writing about it in your memoirs."

"I've got a better idea than the Waldorf," she said. "Lee Strasberg, the man you hate, has given me the use of his cottage on Fire Island any time I want it. It's a bit chilly out there this time of year, but there's a fireplace and some electric heaters. We'll have the place to ourselves. Who wants to go to Fire Island at this time of year but crazy nuts like us? I've got a car parked in a garage near the Waldorf. Why don't you forget what you were doing tonight and run away to our cottage by the sea?"

"I think that comes under the category of an invitation a guy can't refuse."

"If you don't mind my asking, what were you planning to do otherwise?"

"I was going to go to Tennessee Williams' apartment. He claims he's writing a play about a repressed homosexual and his hot-to-trot wife named Maggie the Cat. He thinks the part would be ideal for me. I think my audition will consist of an expert blow-job."

"Sounds like fun," she said. "So you'll be skipping out on him for a couple of days?"

"It's a deal," he said. "And I'd much rather be getting blow-jobs from Marilyn Monroe than from Tennessee Williams."

"Those are about the most romantic words I've ever heard spoken to me."

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It was nightfall when Marilyn and Dean arrived at the Strasberg cottage on Fire Island. They rushed around trying to make the place livable, and he set ablaze the driftwood in the fireplace.

She rested a small nightbag on the floor of the living room. He had chosen not to bring a change of clothes. Before it got too late, she asked him if he'd go for a walk on the beach with her. Looking into the closet, she found a parka for him.

The moonlight on the water's surface made it look like glass. Each of them stood silently, taking in the vast expanse of dark water.

Even though it was cold, both of them sat down on the beach, huddling together. Neither one of them said anything for a long time. She was the first to speak. "When I was a little girl, I would sit for hours just staring out at the sea. I felt that somewhere, someday, a sea captain, a beautiful, loving man, would want me. He'd take me away on a long voyage to a far and distant land."

Suddenly, they both became aware of the penetrating chill of the night. She stood up and reached for him. Hand in hand, they walked back to the cottage, which, thanks to the driftwood fire, had become warmer.

Fortunately, she'd brought champagne with them in the car. It had already been chilled because of the cold weather. They sat on large cushions watching the flickering flames of driftwood. He had his arm around her. "I hardly know you, but I feel I've met my soulmate," she said.

"Me too, babe," he said. "From now on, it's just you and me against the wind."

"And all the storms at sea," she said. "You know there will be many of those."

She made ham sandwiches for their dinner, and was eager to retreat under the blankets with him. She'd later confide, "Now I know why he's so desirable as a lover and why so many people, men and women, want him. He doesn't leave you unsatisfied like so many other bastards."

Exhausted, they huddled together until each of them fell asleep.

They awoke to the chill of a late morning. He put on his jeans and a jacket, and she wore jeans, too, with a heavy sweater. She wanted to cook his breakfast. He went outside to gather up more firewood.

After breakfast, he looked into her eyes. "Let's call this our honeymoon cottage. When we get married, maybe we should book this cottage for a whole month, just the two of us."

"Jimmy, you're proposing!" she said. "Proposal accepted, but let's wait until the autumn leaves start to fall

before we get hitched."

"That's okay with me, but I demand conjugal rights now."

The day was just beginning.

She would later refer to those two nights on Fire Island as the most idyllic of her life. When she returned to the city, Shelley Winters called, eager for news. "I heard you ran away with Jimmy Dean. I want to know everything, a blow-by-blow description. Don't leave the slightest detail, regardless of how revolting. Did he make you crush out a cigarette on his overused butt?"

"Shelley, please," she said. "He's not like that. Nothing kinky. He was very loving, very romantic. I've agreed to marry him."

"Please come to your senses, gal," Winters said. "You don't know what you're getting yourself into. Jimmy is a sicko."

"Maybe he was on his best behavior. And I've agreed to marry him in October."

"What drug are you taking?" Winters asked.

Marlon Brando called around lunchtime and was equally discouraging. He, too, wanted a full report of what had happened between the two of them. When she told him, he said, "Jimmy is my stalker and wants to be my clone. If you're not careful, when you guys return to Hollywood, you might find him parked in front of your place, smoking cigarette after cigarette until all hours, waiting for you to return home. You won't be able to get rid of him. He developed a fixation on me. In a way, it's kind of creepy."

"Oh, Marlon, you and Shelley are taking all this too seriously. Our romance will probably disappear like a summer wind. But then again…Who knows?"

During the days and months that remained for them, Dean and Marilyn would have a love affair conducted more or less on the phone. But the small amount of time they spent with each other would forever be etched in her memory, even if "forever" wasn't far away for her…. and even less so for him.

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In January of 1951, two best friends, director Elia Kazan and playwright Arthur Miller, boarded the 20th Century Limited on its New York to Chicago run, where they changed onto the Santa Fe Super Chief, taking them across the Great American Plains to Los Angeles. Both of them were hoping to interest a film studio in producing Miller's latest play, *The Hook*. Mired in a marriage to his wife, Mary Slattery, Miller was "starved for sexual release," in the words of Kazan.

Kazan had directed Miller's first Broadway play, *All My Sons*, in 1947, and was eager to work with him again on a film project.

Two days after their arrival, Kazan took Miller to 20th Century Fox, where he planned to pick up "a blonde starlet" he was secretly dating. She was appearing in a film called *As Young As You Feel*, starring Monty Woolley, whom Miller referred to as "my father's *bête noir."*

Marilyn herself referred to Woolley as "that pervert." The film also starred Thelma Ritter, who had known Marilyn on the set of *All About Eve*. Also in the cast was Jean Peters, more famously known as Mrs. Howard Hughes. Peters would eventually co-star with Marilyn in the upcoming movie, *Niagara* (1953), with Joseph Cotten.

Miller was immediately attracted to the beautiful blonde who appeared shy, almost lost. Her body was sexily showcased in a black, openwork, tight-fitting lace dress.

When Kazan introduced Miller to her, she said, "Monty Woolley told me you were born in Harlem."

"Monty's such a liar," Miller said, "but in this case, he's right."

"I hope you don't mind my asking, but are you a mulatto?" she said. "You don't look it. You look more Jewish."

Although he found Marilyn extremely attractive, in her form-fitting dress, he made no moves on her, viewing her as "Elia's girl."

It was Miller who made an indelible impression on Marilyn. She telephoned Shelley Winters that night. "Arthur makes me feel like a high school girl who's fallen in love with her teacher."

"Hell, I know Arthur," Winters said, "but not as David knew Bathsheba."

"He's so Lincolnesque," Marilyn said.

As her former roommate, Winters knew that Marilyn always kept a picture of Abraham Lincoln beside her bed. "She was nuts about him. He was her fantasy man."

When Miller met Marilyn, his clothes were what author William Styron called "a gentleman farmer's rumpledness."

“With those craggy features of his, Miller’s no pretty boy,” Winters said. “Give me Errol Flynn or Burt Lancaster any day, even Clark Gable, though he isn’t great in the sack.”

“You know, I don’t go in just for pretty boys,” Marilyn said. “My men don’t have to be beautiful. I bring beauty to the relationship. My first husband, Jim Dougherty, was no beauty. Neither was Johnny Hyde.”

Hyde, her agent and lover, the Russian-born American talent agent, had died only a month before. He was thirty-one years her senior and had left his wife for Marilyn. But when he wanted to marry her, she repeatedly refused. On many an occasion, Marilyn had said, “I love Johnny, but I’m not in love with him.”

“You know that Miller is married?” Winters asked. “I know his wife, Mary. She’s a good woman.”

“The world is full of good women who love their husbands,” Marilyn said, “But the way Arthur looked at me sent me a signal. He wants me. Maybe he’s bored with his wife after all these years.”

“Watch it, you,” Winters warned. “You’re wandering into a garden of explosives.”

Kazan was staying at the home of producer Charles Feldman, who was launching the film, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh. Feldman was away, and Kazan as the host invited Marilyn and suggested that Miller drive over and pick her up.

Miller arrived with Marilyn at that party two hours late. She was already known as “taking forever” to get dressed. Perhaps that was the reason for her tardiness, or maybe it was something else. “Elia was pissed off when we got there,” Marilyn later said. “He suspected something.”

When Marilyn made her late entrance at the party, virtually every eye in the room focused on her. In his memoirs, Miller recalled how she looked. “She seemed almost ludicrously provocative, a strange bird in the aviary, if only because her dress was so blatantly tight, declaring rather than insinuating that she had brought her body along and that it was the best in the room.”

Knowing that Hyde had died, many men at the party in Feldman’s home, married or otherwise, moved in on Marilyn. Evelyn Keyes wanted to connect with Miller, having previously divorced director John Huston. She found him on the sofa in the middle of the living room. Marilyn had removed her shoes, and Miller was playing with her red-painted toes. “Miller seemed all wrapped up with Monroe, so I walked on,” Keyes recalled.

He became so amorous that at one point Kazan whispered to him, “Remember, I saw her first.”

Since his wife was returning that night, Kazan could not drive Marilyn home. The chauffeur duty fell once again to Miller.

He would later tell Kazan that he faced the “temptation of my life” when Marilyn invited him in for a drink, but he turned down the offer in spite of his urges. “My brain said not to go with her, but my body had a mind of its own.”

He did invite her for a luncheon the following day.

There, he learned that she had neither seen nor read one of his plays. After lunch, he took her to a bookstore in Hollywood that was patronized by actors. It had a large drama section, and in it, he found a copy of his play, *Death of a Salesman*. “I saw out of the corner of my eye a Japanese man masturbating in his pants. I quickly moved her away from the man, whom she had not seen.”

Brando called her early that evening, wanting an update about what had happened between Miller and her. It seemed that everyone at Feldman’s party had been speculating.

“Nothing much,” she said. “He’s very shy. But when I kissed him, I did reach down and feel an erection, so I know I was getting to him.”

“Don’t get too carried away,” he said. “Miller wants to be the Jewish pope.”

Miller retreated back to New York before, in his words, “satisfying my own unruly appetite for self-gratification.” In Brooklyn, he congratulated himself on “having escaped destruction,” yet wondered why he’d left Marilyn in California. Of course, a wife had something to do with it.

During one of Marilyn’s studio lunches with Winters, she told her, “Except for Fred Karger, that fuck who ran off with Jane Wyman, I always let men chase me. But in Arthur’s case, I’m going to chase him. I’ll catch him one day, too. I know I will.”

Miller not only yearned for Marilyn, but was professionally disappointed that he had failed to set a literary fire in Hollywood for his screenplay.

As he told her goodbye, she had promised to write him, but he made no such commitment to her.

Kazan continued to seduce Marilyn, although he complained to Brando: “I’m getting tired of hearing Marilyn talk about Arthur even when we are *in flagrante delicto.”*

“Most people admire their fathers,” she wrote Miller, “But I never had one. I need someone to admire as much as I admire Lincoln.”

He suggested that since she was so fond of Lincoln, she should read Carl Sandburg’s study of the assassinated president.

In her next letter, she was more candid. “I’ve decided you’re the man for me, the man I’ve dreamed about for so long, but never found.”

He wrote back to her: “Believe me, Marilyn, I am not the man of your dreams—in fact, I’m not the kind of man women dream about. I’m far from ever becoming a ladies’ man.”

“Good,” she wrote back. “That means I’ll have fewer women to fight off to get to you.”

She told him that all he had to do was call, and she would be on the next plane to New York. But he repeatedly turned down her offers, and continued to do so for the next four years.

Even though he kept refusing her, he later admitted, “There were parched evenings when I was on the verge of turning my steering wheel west and jamming the pedal to the floor.”

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Before leaving Hollywood, Marilyn accepted Marlon Brando’s invitation to visit him on the set of *Guys and Dolls*. She chose a day when his co-star, Frank Sinatra, wasn’t there, since she didn’t want to become involved with the feud she understood they were having.

She had lobbied for the role of Adelaide in the film, which was based on the long-running Broadway musical filled with Damon Runyon’s colorful characters. In maneuvering for the part of Adelaide, she had once again begun a brief fling with the film’s director, Joseph Mankiewicz, who had given her the attention-getting role in *All About Eve*. To her great disappointment, Mankiewicz eventually cast Vivian Blaine in the part of Adelaide instead.

On the way to Brando’s dressing room, she encountered the director, but walked past him without speaking. Earlier, she’d told Brando, “Fuck Mankiewicz. I could have won an Oscar playing Adelaide, even if it’s a supporting role. He’ll never crawl in my bed again. He’s trying to sabotage my career.”

Welcoming her to his dressing room, Brando gave her a deep kiss before introducing her to his best friend, Carlo Fiore, who would later provide details about Marilyn’s visit to the set. When Brando learned that Marilyn had taken to drinking champagne at midday, he ordered Fiore to go to the commissary and bring back three chilled bottles of the best French champagne. Within thirty minutes, he was back in Marlon’s dressing room, popping the cork.

On the surface, Marilyn looked vastly more pulled-together than when she’d visited him on the set of *Désirée*. But after fifteen minutes with her, he concluded that it was merely an act. He was alarmed to learn that she was popping pills, surrendering to barbiturates.

Fiore would later recall that she opened up, if only for a moment, and became the frightened little girl, Norma Jeane, not Marilyn Monroe. As they drank the champagne together, she was very candid in the warm glow of Brando’s company with his adoring friend. Incredibly poised in front of the camera, she seemed vulnerable off camera, revealing that the mere thought of making a new acquaintances caused her “to break out in red blotches.”

She felt that the only way to face life was to “take a lot of sleeping pills. At three o’clock in the morning, I often take pills to put me to sleep, even though I have to get up at six o’clock and drive to the studio.” To regain consciousness, she said that she took the stimulant, Dexamyl.

She admitted that the reason she drank so much and popped so many pills was because of her fear of not only facing the camera, but even of another day. She claimed that she often sat for hours at a time, merely staring out the window into space and pulling on a lock of her hair. “At times I become so nauseated, I throw up when there’s nothing left to vomit.”

“I find it harder and harder to turn myself into Marilyn Monroe every day,” she said. “The public wants me to be one thing, which I’m not. I really can act, but no one wants me to. They want me to be Marilyn Monroe—nothing else.”

On this visit, she didn’t even mention Joe DiMaggio, but she seemed thrilled to talk about Arthur Miller. She quizzed Brando about his analyst and asked if he were doing him any good. She claimed that Miller had said that her own analysis had been a failure, and that if she continued with her sessions, they would eventually harm her career.

She quoted Miller, “Too much time on the analyst’s couch might destroy your creative spark, the very thing that makes you Marilyn Monroe. It might steal your charm from your very soul. You might emerge from that couch as some dreary, boring thing, removed of that magic that you possess and all your imitators do not. You have a wonderful quality of walking with two left feet. If you walk with a right foot and a left foot, the public might not want to go to your movies anymore.” Later, her director, Billy Wilder, would echo more or less the same sentiments about Marilyn and analysis.

She was also terrified that reporters for *Time* magazine had descended on Hollywood as a means of learning more about her. According to her, they planned to spend months of investigation for an upcoming cover story.

“They’re even talking to Norma Jeane’s schoolteachers,” she claimed. “I have spoken of my past. But these goons from *Time* seem to think I created my past. They’re telling people I know that I made up stories. Spun a myth, so to speak. They seem hell bent on exploding that myth. But in doing so, they might shatter Marilyn Monroe herself. I want to bury my past. I don’t want *Time* digging it up. I view my past like a body that should have been put into a coffin and the lid closed, never to be opened again.”

“Our past exists only in our minds,” Brando told her. “All the reality is gone. Those *Time* researchers might file massive reports on you, none of which will have anything to do with you. Remember that. All they’ll come up with are other people’s opinions. People who hardly know you. You once admitted to me that you don’t know yourself. How can other people know you? I have found that friends—acquaintances, really—exaggerate their role in a star’s life. They want to feel important. To bask in our glow. That will never change.”

Even while drinking with Fiore and Brando, she reached into her purse to take more pills. He issued another warning. “You don’t want to sleepwalk your way through life, now, do you?”

Marilyn need not have worried about the reporters from *Time*. Their cover story wasn’t published until May of 1956. Journalist Ezra Goodman claimed that *Time* editors locked away most of the damaging evidence its own staff had uncovered about Marilyn, and ran a rather reassuring report about her, focusing on her as an actress and a personality.

Marlon Brando in *Guys and Dolls*

She admitted that she was visiting a gynecologist. “I’m contemplating surgery to tighten my vagina.”

Neither man had any vocal response to that startling piece of information. “I’m also consulting a doctor about injections to have my breasts enlarged.”

“You don’t need to do that,” Fiore assured her.

At one point Marilyn startled Fiore by revealing that, “I’ve had almost as many abortions as I’ve made films.”

“Surely you don’t mean two dozen?” Fiore said. She did not answer.

“I’ve sent at least that many women to an abortionist myself,” Brando said. “When will the god damn government make abortion legal so we won’t have to slip around back alleyways finding some quack?”

Marilyn had come to see Brando not just to talk about herself. She was also interested in doing business, telling him of a script in the works called *Paris Blues*. She was enthusiastic about it, feeling that it would be the perfect vehicle for launching themselves as a “screen team.”

“In the movie, we fall in love,” she said. “We’ll take long walks by the Seine until the sun rises over Paris. We’ll be seen at a café drinking endless cups of coffee and eating freshly baked croissants. You’re a drummer. The movie will show off your talent. Your character will be called Ram Bowen. I’ll be Lillian Corning. We’ll get to appear with two talented blacks, Sidney Poitier and Diahann Carroll. The producer even wants Louis Armstrong to appear in the film as Wild Man Moore.”

“Sounds like my kind of movie,” Brando said. “I’ve always felt that American jazzmen in Paris are treated like kings. Ram Bowen, huh? I’ve always wanted to play a character called Ram.”

Paris Blues would actually be filmed and released in 1961, but by that time, Brando and Marilyn had lost interest, the roles going to Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward.

Before the afternoon waned, Marilyn revealed that she wanted to make movies with her independent film company "working hand in glove" with Marlon's production crew. "We could become the greatest screen team in movie history," she predicted before they finished their third bottle of champagne, "better than Clark Gable and Jean Harlow, Myrna Loy and William Powell, or Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy."

Before finishing her final glass of champagne, she revealed her greatest dream: Starring in a film with "my two favorite actors in all the world: Charlie Chaplin and Marlon Brando."

At that point, Brando rose from the sofa, signaling Fiore to leave. "Marilyn and I have some private business to transact, and we don't need an audience."

She giggled, standing up on wobbly feet and giving Fiore a sloppy wet kiss with the darting tongue of a snake.

Backing off from Fiore, she glided into Brando's body as he protectively put his arms around her, almost like a loving father instead of a seducer.

She giggled again and nibbled on Brando's ear. As Fiore was leaving, she called to him. "Do you know why I love Marlon so much? He's the only man in the world who can bring me to orgasm. With my other lovers, I just fake it."

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Through Kazan, Marilyn learned that Miller was planning to divorce his wife Mary. On hearing the news, she flew to New York and tried to reach him. Apparently, they spoke briefly on the phone, but he refused to meet with her.

Feeling lonely and despondent, she put through a call to Senator Kennedy's office in Washington. He invited her down and arranged for her to stay in his permanent suite at the Mayflower Hotel, which he maintained for just such an off-the-record rendezvous.

Before her flight to Washington, Marilyn read an underground newspaper published in Hollywood that listed all her known one-night stands. In addition to the familiar names (which included John Huston and Robert Mitchum), there appeared a bizarre list of names less often associated with her. They included Mickey Rooney, Humphrey Bogart, Johnny Weissmuller, Edward G. Robinson, Roy Rogers and Trigger, Cary Grant, Tom Mix, Jimmy Hoffa, Groucho Marx, W.C. Fields, Jimmy Durante, Mae West, Ava Gardner, Gloria Swanson, Eddie Fisher, Richard Widmark, Hopalong Cassidy, Robert Taylor, and Paul Robeson.

While still in New York, an aide to Senator Kennedy called her, referring to her as "ma'am." He told her that when she landed at the Washington airport, a car and chauffeur would be waiting to take her to the Mayflower Hotel. "Oh, yes," he said, "the Senator would prefer you to dress inconspicuously. A wig and dark glasses would be suitable."

Fortunately, she always carried two black wigs with her whenever she traveled; otherwise, she'd be mobbed by her fans.

She hadn't eaten that morning, and on the flight to Washington, she felt like vomiting, even though there was nothing on her stomach. With her credit card, she'd purchased a well-tailored spring green dress at Saks on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Edith Head, the lesbian wardrobe duenna of Hollywood, had once warned her that "No sex symbol should ever wear green—shocking pink, pumpkin orange, melon gold, cranberry red, whatever, but never green." But she liked the dress and bought it anyway, hoping Milton Greene would pay the credit card bill when it came due.

Getting off the plane in Washington, she felt a distinct chill in the air. Wind was blowing in from the north. The chauffeur approached her in the arrivals hall and picked up her one suitcase. It was going to be a short visit.

A rather handsome fellow in his thirties, the driver said not a word to her but delivered her to the Mayflower. A young man, who identified himself as an aide to Senator Kennedy, hustled her into an elevator and up to his suite.

In addition to a living room, there appeared to be two bedrooms. She was ushered into the smaller of the two, but not before she heard a man's loud voice coming from the master bedroom. Apparently, the senator was giving some-one hell on the phone.

The aide was very young, perhaps no more than nineteen. He spoke with a Boston accent, and he looked very fey, rather effeminate. Did he service the Senator when a woman wasn't around? His face revealed his disdain for her. Instead of treating her like the star she was, he seemed to regard her as a call girl.

She'd remember all these details because Shelley Winters had said, "I want to know everything that happened." Winters was dating Adlai Stevenson, who planned a bid for the Democratic presidential nomination yet again—even

though a few years before, he'd lost in the 1952 presidential race with Eisenhower.

In the bedroom, Marilyn discarded her clothing and sat nude at the dressing table. Having removed her black wig, she adjusted her honey-blonde hair and painted her mouth scarlet red. She'd been warned by the aide that Senator Kennedy didn't have a lot of time, so she readied herself for a quick seduction by putting on a see-through black *négligée*.

Back in the living room, she spotted a bottle of Dom Perignon chilling in a silver bucket on a glass-topped coffee table. The rail-thin young aide asked her if she'd like a glass.

"Yes," she said, "and don't be stingy, baby," she said, imitating her line from *Anna Christie* which she'd performed at the Actors Studio.

The door to the master bedroom was cracked open. Perhaps JFK had entered the living room while she was getting made up. His voice was much softer, but he constantly referred to this caller as "Dad." She knew at once that it was Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, who had once made love to her in 1950 in Palm Springs. She wondered if his son knew about that.

Apparently, he was arguing with his father about seeking some nomination. Surely he wasn't planning to challenge Eisenhower for the Presidency?

After finishing her first glass of champagne, she was halfway through her second round of the bubbly when she decided it was time to check her face in her compact mirror, which she carried with her in her handbag. The bright fuchsia lipstick set off the creamy beauty of her face. She inspected her red alligator shoes, noting how succulent her big toe looked. A lot of men liked to suck on it, especially Sammy Davis, Jr.

The aide emerged from the kitchen of the suite, telling her that the Senator would see her now. He led the way toward the master bedroom.

Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr. ("Papa Joe")

Opening the cracked door slightly, he said, "Senator, Miss Monroe is here."

"Well, show her in, for God's sake," JFK snapped at the young man. "You know I'm in a rush to get to the Senate."

"Hi, Marilyn," he said as she came into the room. "Great to see you again."

"Glad to be here, Jack," she said. What she saw shocked her. On the bed, he lay on three pillows and was fully dressed from the top, complete with a dark blue suit jacket, a reddish brown tie, and a white, stiffly starched shirt. But he'd pulled down his trousers and his white jockey shorts, exposing a limp penis that didn't look all that promising.

To her amazement, the aide remained in the room, checking something in an appointment book. "Don't mind him," JFK said. "I'm expecting three important calls, and he's got to take them and make a note or two for me. I've got to run real soon, but I'll be back later tonight."

He reached out an arm for her, and he placed his hand on the nape of her neck, bringing her to his mouth, where he kissed her long and passionately. When she came up for air, she noted the aide looking at her with

disapproval. Perhaps he wanted to be in her place.

She didn't even have time to remove her *négligée*. Still holding the nape of her neck, he directed her toward his groin. With his other hand, he reached in to feel her firm breasts. His penis began to rise. She knew what was expected. She descended on him, using her time-practiced technique, and he rose fully to the occasion.

During the act, the aide answered the phone and handed it to him. "It's Senator Kefauver."

He took the phone and talked to a man he called "Estes," arguing with him over some issue she didn't understand. JFK's firm hand on her neck signaled that he wanted her to continue. As his conversation evolved into an argument, his penis weakened, but she worked even harder to keep him in a full state of arousal. Finally, he slammed down the phone, as the aide reminded him of what time it was. Her jaws were aching, but he signaled he wanted a release and began pumping it to her. Finally, he let out a little yell. "Swallow it!" he ordered. "Every drop."

When she rose from his groin, he told her, "The other night this bitch didn't swallow me and spat it out. A woman should view a man's semen as a tribute."

She didn't answer, having spat out the semen of many of john during her days as a hooker.

Rising from the bed, and wincing with pain, he stood up. His aide kneeled down on the floor. With a wet cloth, he wiped the Senator's penis clean. "My back hurts so much I can't bend over," he said. He seemed perfectly natural about having this menial task performed for him.

Suddenly, with his trousers pulled up, he was gone after uttering a vague promise about returning later that evening. "We've got some unfinished business."

At eight o'clock, the aide left and another appeared. He was very masculine, appearing to be in his late twenties. He was much more appealing to her, and actually seemed to be a fan. She made herself as alluring as she could, but it was obvious that he viewed her as the Senator's woman, and, as such, maintained a strict hands-off policy.

Room service brought her a dinner a nine o'clock. After that, she watched television and read from the first volume of Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln.

Around eleven o'clock, she felt sleepy, and the aide directed her to Senator Kennedy's master bed. Around midnight, she fell asleep, feeling completely exhausted.

At around four in the morning, she was awakened. A nude man was on top of her, pressing against her, penetrating her. At first she thought of resisting, thinking it might be the aide. But when he whispered to her, it was the voice of JFK himself. He'd returned at last. Even though he, too, must have been exhausted, his climax came quickly and violently. Without so much as a kiss, he rolled over and seemed to fall asleep right away. Within minutes, a gentle snore was coming from him. There was no aide this time to wash his penis.

She lay awake for two more hours, afraid her slightest movement might disturb him. Somewhere along the line, she fell asleep and didn't wake up until eleven the following morning. She felt for the Senator beside her, but he was long gone.

After showering, she put on her *négligée* and came back into the living room, where the effeminate young man had reported once again for duty. He had a cold breakfast and hot coffee waiting on the silver tray where the champagne had been placed the night before.

"Ma'am," he said, "the chauffeur is waiting to take you back to the airport. Your plane leaves at one o'clock. I have a ticket for you to New York."

"And the senator?" she asked. "Did he leave a note?"

"No, ma'am," he said. He's very, very busy these days. He's going to seek the vice presidential nomination at the Democratic Convention, and he's lining up support."

"I see," she said. "How very nice for him. Maybe he'll get it. Maybe the Democrats will take over the White House. If it's Adlai Stevenson again, maybe an assassin will gun him down, and Senator Kennedy can assume the presidency."

"We can only wish that something like that happens," the aide responded. "Imagine America with a very young president instead of one of those creepy old men."

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With his yacht, the *Christina*, occupying a prime berth in the harbor of Monaco, Aristotle Onassis wanted to be a player in the principality on the southeastern coast of France. "The place has unabashed opulence," he told Prince Rainier III, "It has hedonism like no other place on earth. All it needs is for you to marry a movie queen. Get massive publicity around the world and lure rich Americans to your gaming tables."

Onassis met with George Schlee, the Russian entrepreneur and former lover and mentor of Greta Garbo. The

shipping tycoon suggested that Schlee become an ambassador-at-large, spreading the glories of Monaco to the rich and famous of the world. The hope was to lure them to Monaco, where they'd be encouraged to throw away their money at the gambling tables.

Schlee agreed to do that, but didn't have much success. He brought the problem to Gardner (Mike) Cowles, Jr., the founder and publisher of *Look* magazine. The publisher came up with what he called a brilliant idea. "Have Rainier marry an American movie star, the biggest there is."

"Well, Garbo is retired," Schlee said. "That could mean only one woman—Marilyn Monroe."

"Why not start at the top?" Cowles asked.

Many sources claim that Cowles pitched the idea directly to Marilyn. But she told Shelley Winters and also Peter Lawford that it was Aristotle Onassis himself who presented the idea to her.

The Greek thought it was a magnificent proposition, and when Marilyn returned from Washington, she received a phone call from him. Without telling her the reason, he invited her to dinner in his suite at the Hotel Carlyle, where she'd already become a familiar face.

Before that, she had spoken to Peter Lawford. "He's not only the richest man in the world, but he could set you up like a Queen. You'd have your own private Greek island. Your own fleet of airlines. Your own fleet of ships. Unlimited credit cards."

Rushing out to Saks on Fifth Avenue, Marilyn bought a clinging red gown with a white fox stole to go with it. She paid for it with her credit card, hoping that once again, Milton Greene would pay for it when the bill came due. For the final touches, she called in both a makeup man and a hairdresser.

Before heading out for her dinner with Onassis, she nervously dialed Winters, who claimed, "I've just been fucked by Burt Lancaster."

"I've never looked more glamorous," Marilyn told her friend. "As I was standing in front of this full-length mirror, I decided that if I ever met a woman as glamorous as I look right now, I'd turn lesbian."

"A Greek as rich as Onassis can have any woman on the planet," Winters said. "Elizabeth Taylor. Princess Margaret. Grace Kelly. Brigitte Bardot. *Me*. Even Marilyn Monroe, in spite of her being in love with Arthur Miller. Let's face it: Money talks."

Onassis had discussed Marilyn with Spyros Skouras at 20th Century Fox. The movie mogul told him that, "I think Marilyn is falling big for Arthur Miller."

"That's bullshit," Onassis said. "What chance would a poor Jewish playwright—a one-hit wonder—have when stacked up against a prince who rules over a kingdom? Besides, beautiful women cannot bear moderation. Marilyn wants it all. Women like her, like Elizabeth Taylor, need an inexhaustible supply of excess."

"I'm not for the deal at all," Skouras said. "The executives at Fox have demanded that I get her out of New York, get her back to Hollywood, and into a movie at once. She can make millions for us."

Making a grand entrance into Onassis's suite, Marilyn found the tycoon "utterly charming, even though he isn't the best looking animal on the planet."

By the time the cork had been popped on the second bottle of vintage champagne, Marilyn heard the pitch. To her surprise, it didn't involve her becoming his mistress.

"Prince Rainier of Monaco is looking for a suitable bride to reign as his princess in his kingdom, and I've spoken to him about you," Onassis said. "He's very interested in meeting you during his up-coming trip to America."

"I've never been there, but I saw Marlene Dietrich in the movie."

"No, that's Morocco, and that's in Africa. Monaco is a principality in the southeastern corner of France. You know, the French Riviera."

"Oh, so he's French?" she said. "I like Frenchmen. They're so Continental."

"He's very rich, and he lives in a pink palace."

"But what does he look like?"

"I knew you'd want to know that," Onassis said. "I have an eight-by-ten glossy of him." He went over to his desk and retrieved a portrait of Rainier. She studied it carefully. "I don't think he's very handsome. He also looks a little on the portly side. I'll have to put him on a diet. What would it look like with me marrying a fat king?"

Aristotle Onassis

"Not a king. A prince. You'd be called 'Princess Marilyn.'"

"What makes you think the prince would want to marry me?"

"Because he saw you in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and he thinks you are the single sexiest woman on the screen. I can set up a weekend between you two at an undisclosed location. Maybe arrange for you to sail off the coast of California with him. You'd be very private and would get to know each other."

"Just give me two days with any man, and I could win him over, providing I want to. There's just one problem. He's only a prince. I'd rather be married to a king. That way I would be on the same footing as Queen Elizabeth."

"Well, not quite that," he said. "I can have my assistant come by tomorrow to show you a travelogue of how beautiful Monaco is. It's very small. Actually, Rainier calls himself the Prince of Monaco. But I practically own the joint, thanks to my holdings in the SBM (*Société des Bains de Mer*). Monte Carlo is my plaything. The prince is a puppet."

"What's the big attraction there?" she asked.

"Gambling," he said. "Haven't you heard of breaking the bank at Monte Carlo?"

"I like gambling casinos," she said. "I adore Las Vegas. Since he's the prince, he could get me the highest salary to perform in the casinos."

"You don't understand," he said. "As a princess, you couldn't do that. It wouldn't be dignified. You'd no longer have to work for a living. You'd attend charity functions, stuff like that. You would become the number one tourist attraction in Monaco. Hell, if the prince marries you, your fame would put that principality on the map. You'd attract the world's richest tourists."

"I've got to think about it," she said. "I was toying with the idea of marrying Arthur Miller."

"A communist pauper, come on," he said. "Let me set up a rendezvous with you and the prince. That way, you can test him in the sack. If it doesn't work out, I have a consolation prize for you."

"And what in hell is that?"

"Me," he said. "I could buy and sell Rainier and his whole principality any day."

"Mistress or wife?" she asked.

"Wife."

"Would you buy me all the clothes and jewelry my little heart might desire?" she asked.

"For you, anything."

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With fantasies of fairytale kingdoms dancing in her head, Marilyn flew back to Los Angeles. The most exciting event on her agenda was the seductive weekend that Onassis was arranging with Prince Rainier at a private address

in Beverly Hills. He didn't tell her who was the actual owner of the property.

Much of what happened that weekend still remains a mystery, although she provided a preview of it to Peter Lawford, among others. The end result was that she did not come away with a marriage proposal. That dream about becoming Princess Marilyn of Monaco was added to all the other many disappointments of her life.

When Onassis called Rainier to find out how it went, he was very frank. "I've fallen in love with Grace Kelly. She has the dignity and beauty to reign as queen. But I'd like to continue seeing Marilyn. In other words, Kelly for marriage, Monroe for mistress."

What Onassis didn't seem to consider was that Marilyn was not Catholic. She'd also been married twice before. "Did the Prince of Monaco really want to let Marilyn Monroe be the face of his public image?" asked David Niven, a friend and lover of Grace Kelly's when he heard gossip about Rainier marrying Marilyn.

At a party, Niven encountered Elizabeth Taylor, and reported the news to her. "I approve of his choice," the screen goddess said. "Grace Kelly is the absolute antithesis of Monroe. Grace might have been born the daughter of a bricklayer in Philadelphia, but she has the chiseled beauty and the proper manners, or whatever it takes, to be called your Serene Highness. Besides, she's sown her wild oats, fucking everybody from Frank Sinatra to Bing Crosby to Gary Cooper. Grace can now become a respectable princess. As for Monroe, she'll always be a slut."

Later, when that comment was relayed back to Marilyn, she remarked, "Who does Taylor think she is? Why would I be interested in the opinion of an international whore? I heard she even bedded Lassie. She's fucked every man in Hollywood, even the gay ones like Montgomery Clift."

Rainier III, Prince of Monaco, at his wedding to Grace Kelly

Onassis met privately again with Marilyn, this time in Los Angeles, to tell her about Rainier's rejection of her. "So I'm not going to become a princess," she said. "Maybe I'll marry Arthur Miller after all. Or else…" She paused for dramatic affect. "Or else I'll take your second option."

"Exactly what is that?" he asked.

"That I marry you. I guess my becoming a rich bitch as your wife would make up for your lack of beauty. What the fuck? Most of the men I've gone to bed with weren't raving beauties, except for my Tarzan, that Lex Barker."

"I'll get back to you on that," he promised.

"If that high-faluting cow, Grace Kelly, hadn't come into the picture, and Rainier not tossed me aside, what other actresses were you considering fixing him up with?"

"Eva Marie Saint, another blonde. If you switch hair colors, Deborah Kerr."

"What the hell!" she said. "I heard Monaco is very small, like the Prince himself. I wouldn't be getting all that much with that one, anyway."

"I'm glad you could get your ass over here tonight. You may not know this, but Greek men look at a woman's ass even before they check out her face or tits."

"It's fortunate for me, then, that Robert Mitchum broke me into sex that way when we made *River of No Return."*

"Tonight, let's celebrate. The world's most vintage champagne. The best caviar just flown in from Iran. And, while we're on the subject, *me.*"

"At least you're serving two of my favorite things."

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"I'm miserable in Los Angeles, and I'm flying back to New York," Marilyn told Shelley Winters. "I'm not working now, and there's more going on in New York."

She arrived in Manhattan in time to attend the benefit opening of *East of Eden* on March 9, 1955, a movie she'd already seen as part of a sneak preview in Los Angeles. To garner publicity, the producers of the film arranged for superstars to function as usherettes. When Marilyn learned that Marlene Dietrich and Eva Marie Saint had each volunteered to show ticket holders to their seats, she agreed to serve as an usherette, too.

The press was already hailing the event as the splashiest movie premiere of the year. As she told Walter Winchell, "A working girl needs to keep her name in the papers when she's off the screen."

Even though the studio and the stars were depending on Dean to show up, he called Marilyn three days before the event saying, "I know I promised, but I can't make the scene. I can't handle it. I'm flying to Los Angeles tonight."

"It's a benefit for a good cause," she pleaded with him.

"Fuck good causes," he shot back. "Don't you know by now that I'm a *Rebel Without a Cause?"*

She begged him to change his mind, but after talking with him some more, she realized that he couldn't face the public.

She followed through, however, with her own commitment. Members of the audience that night were shocked to see Marilyn taking their tickets and guiding them to their seats.

At the end of the screening, Dietrich approached Monroe and kissed her on the lips, "Why not a repeat visit to my apartment tonight, you lovely child? Love is so much better the second time around."

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In late spring, when the weather was warmer, James Dean returned to New York. Once again, Marilyn invited him for a holiday at the Fire Island retreat of Lee Strasberg. He eagerly accepted.

On the island, it was unseasonably windy and rainy throughout most of their stay, but they didn't seem to mind. "The sun is bad for my skin anyway," she claimed. Since it was during the week, and the weather was bad, the community was at low ebb.

She would recall the experience with Shelley Winters, claiming, "Both of us tried to be completely honest with each other."

At one point, she asked him his real name. "I made up Marilyn Monroe. What about you?"

"My name is James Byron Dean."

"Wasn't that the name of a poet I've never read?"

"He was one of the romantic poets, I think," he said.

"Forgive me, but I think it would have been better if you'd billed yourself as James Byron. That would look better on a marquee. Dean reminds me of some stern schoolmaster with a ruler in his hand."

"It's too late now," he said. "In some ways, I preferred being anonymous. In New York I used to go to an all-night café and just sit there until the dawn, talking to strangers. I learned that there are a lot of people like us in the world who regard life as pretty god damn frightening."

"Sometimes I'm so frightened I'm afraid to get up and face the day," she said.

"With all of our hang-ups, it's good that both of us drifted into acting. Acting is the most logical way for people's neuroses to manifest themselves."

Sometimes he kidded her about her image—and his, too. "I'm playing that 'little boy lost' for all it's worth, and I stole it from your 'little girl lost' act."

"Do you think behind that innocent victim image I'm a cold-hearted, calculating bitch?"

"I think both of us are bitches, using and manipulating people," he said. "Sex is our weapon. Now gimme a kiss and let's change the subject."

She was eager to hear stories about how it had been working with director Elia Kazan, her on-again, off-again lover. "He flew with me to California to shoot *Eden*. It was my first time on a plane. I was frightened. He was amused when he saw my luggage: Two grocery bags tied with string."

"Elia is always threatening to star me in one of his movies, but so far, nothing."

"It's nothing all right, nothing to look forward to. Being directed by him is like receiving electric shock treatments. Thank God for Julie Harris. Without her, I don't think I could have gotten through the picture."

As two stars talking shop, they inevitably came to the subject of salaries. "How much did they pay you?" she asked.

"A big $1,250 a week," he said. "That's better than living in New York on two dollars a day."

"That's the exact weekly salary that Fox paid me for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. I was worth so much more—as you are, too."

Both Marilyn and Dean were on a voyage of discovery with each other. They both suffered from insomnia. During their first night on Fire Island, they sat up talking until dawn.

Finally, they went to bed. When they awakened, at around noon, she tried to fix his breakfast. "I didn't expect you to be a great cook," he said, "but I've survived in New York on a hot dog a day, if I could afford it."

They didn't make love their first night there, but they did in the afternoon, as she'd later relate to Winters, who seemed eager to hear every detail.

"He works hard to satisfy a woman," Marilyn said. Her opinion this time differed from her first appraisal of him as a lover. "You know he's bi, of course. He said that when he's fucking a man, he can maintain an erection until climax. But with women, he sometimes grows limp. He has to disconnect and masturbate himself hard again before entering a woman. I understand this, and was most sympathetic. Later, I asked him what he thought about when he jerked off. He told me, 'Sal Mineo, Natalie Wood, Pier Angeli, Nick Adams, and Eartha Kitt.'"

"That's not very flattering with the Love Goddess of the World lying underneath him," Winters said.

"I didn't get offended," Marilyn said, "considering all the men I've dreamed about while getting plugged by some slob. I even fantasized about Rudolf Valentino."

"He was another fag, too," Winters said.

Marilyn revealed that Dean even talked about "getting hitched." He told her, "Let's admit the truth: both of us need babysitters. Maybe if we got married, we could become each other's babysitters."

"It wouldn't work," she said. "We both have destructive personalities. We'd end up destroying each other, without meaning to."

"Maybe you're right," he said. "In that case, let's just be fuck buddies."

As Marilyn told Winters, "Jimmy knows that I'm completely accepting of his personality. After all, he claims he doesn't want to go through life with one hand tied behind his back. He even suggested that during our makeout sessions, he would like to invite a male friend in. 'While I'm fucking you, he could plug me. It'll make it more exciting for the both of us.'"

"Sounds like fun," she told him. "I suspect that one of those guys you'd like to bring in is Marlon Brando."

"Well, that one sure knows how to have a good time."

She told Winters that Dean was almost as uninhibited as she was. "He has no false modesty. When he has to go, he goes, regardless of where he's at. He said that he was filming a scene from *Giant* in Mafra, Texas, with Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, and he had to pee. He walked over to the edge of the set and pulled out his dick in front of some two hundred of the townspeople watching the filming. 'I took a horse piss and to hell with them,' he said."

She claimed Dean "was a lot of fun, and sometimes we played games designed to reveal our darkest secrets. In one game, we both had to name four very unlikely people we'd slept with. He named Barbara Hutton, Howard Hughes, Tallulah Bankhead, and J. Edgar Hoover."

"And who did you name, my dear?" Winters asked.

"You can guess one of them: Charlie Chaplin. But did you also know about Fidel Castro, Jimmy Hoffa, and Albert Einstein?"

"Oh, Marilyn, I never know when you're telling the truth or fantasizing," Winters said. "But knowing you as well as I do, I have to leave open the possibility that you're telling the truth. I know Charlie fucked you, because I was also fucking his son, Sydney. But the other three? It's hard for me to believe."

Marilyn had brought two copies of William Inge's play, *Bus Stop*, to Fire Island. One afternoon she asked Dean to read a few scenes with her, with him playing the dumb cowboy Bo, and with herself cast as the stripper, Cherie.

His interpretation of Bo, According to her, "was so tender, so real, so believable that I cried. But he said he wouldn't play another cowboy."

"I did that in *Giant*. I don't want to get typecast as the next Roy Rogers."

Months later, she'd tell Lee Strasberg that Dean gave the best reading of all the actors who wanted to play Bo. "If he had lived, and we could have made movies together, I think the chemistry between us would explode on the screen. Even though he turned down the role, he gave me some advice."

"And what might that have been?" asked a very skeptical Strasberg.

"Live fast, die young," she said. "He told me that way I would always be remembered by my public as being young. 'Never live long enough to let them see you grow old and gray,' he claimed."

Because of Dean's tragic auto accident that September, the cinematic pairing of Dean and Marilyn never became a reality, only in their dreams. Ironically, they became more linked in death as screen icons then they were in life. In bars in such remote countries as Nigeria, pictures of Dean and Marilyn often can be seen hanging on the walls.

As Dean biographer Donald Spoto put it: "At the end of the century, it is not outrageous to say that Dean and Monroe—even to those who have a low estimation of them—remain the most royal of deified Americans, if only because of the brilliant marketing strategies of their celebrity."

Dean's death mask at Princeton University has been placed beside those of Beethoven, Thackeray, and Keats; and Marilyn's image during the second decade of the 21st Century is bigger than it was when she died.

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Marilyn had walked out on *Pink Tights*, a film in which she'd been set to appear opposite Frank Sinatra, but she was eager to star with his nemesis, Marlon Brando. Her latest idea for a co-star for *Bus Stop* was Marlon Brando. "He's from Nebraska," she told Elia Kazan, something he already knew. "Aren't there a lot of cowboys in Nebraska?"

When Brando flew into New York, Marilyn reached him by phone and made her pitch. "I'm getting some 4,000 fan letters a week, and many of them suggest that you and I make a movie together."

"I'm getting some 6,000 fan letters a week, and I don't recall any of them suggesting that. What makes you think our chemistry would work on screen?"

"It might not in just any film," she said, "but Bill Inge's *Bus Stop* would be ideal for the two of us."

"Are you kidding?" he asked. "I've appeared in Shakespeare on the screen. Now you're asking me to play a dumb cowboy chasing after a dumb blonde stripper?"

"It's a great part," she said. "You'd wipe up the screen. I can see an Oscar in your performance, and that's for sure."

"Okay, sugar," he said. "Come over tonight and we'll talk about it. At least I'll get a good fuck out of it."

"Oh, Marlon, how you talk."

Over dinner, he told her he was getting at least one film offer a day. "That shitbag, Louis B. Mayer, is gone at MGM, and Dore Schary is far more appreciative of me. He just told his brass to let me play Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* if I want to. I think I'm going to settle for playing a Jap in *Teahouse of the August Moon*. That cowboy role wouldn't mean anything for me."

"I convinced Marilyn that her pitch was hopeless," Brando later told his best friend, Carlo Fiore, when he reported on the incident. "But we made our own chemistry in bed together."

Brando bragged to Fiore that "I could take Marilyn in a minute from Arthur Miller if I wanted to. But my trouble is, I can't love anyone. I just can't. I know I should, but I don't trust a woman enough to fall in love with her…or a man, either, for that matter."

He noted that while Marilyn was going around professing "all this love for Miller, she's screwing both Jimmy Dean and me, plus god only knows how many others. She is the Queen of the One-Night Stand."

The following night, Fiore went with Marilyn to a party at the apartment of Barbara Baxley. In Key West, during her filming of *The Last Resort* in the 1970s, she recalled the evening. "Marlon spent much of the night attacking Jimmy Dean for copying everything he did—the motorcycles, the jeans, the V-neck pullovers, and last year's acting style. He was really furious, especially when some members of the press started referring to Jimmy as 'the new Marlon Brando.'"

Later that night over a spaghetti dinner in a West Village tavern, Brando continued to attack Dean in front of Marilyn and Fiore. He was obviously aware of her involvement with Dean.

"Kazan offered me that fucking role in *East of Eden,"* Brando said, "and I turned the fucker down."

Fiore asked Brando, "What do you think about Dean being called 'the poor man's Brando.'"

"Not much," he said.

"I'm not so hard on him," she chimed in. "All of us start out imitating someone. I used to go to any Lana Turner movie at noon and stay in the movie house all day until the midnight show. It's just a phase we go through."

"Not me," Brando said. "I'm an original."

"You're an original who is changing every actor's style in America—except for Clifton Webb," she said. "Miss

Priss."

"Dean and I have only one thing in common—and not just our Midwestern origins. Both of us had fathers who claimed that all actors are 'faggots and fairyboys.'"

"Well, aren't they?" she asked provocatively, as she'd had too much to drink at Baxley's party.

"I'm not as hard on Dean as I pretend to be," Brando said. "Actually, he needs to be nursed like a baby. Sometimes, when he's in need of a mother, I let him suckle at my breasts."

"It's getting late," she said. "Why don't we go back to your apartment, and do some suckling on my breasts?"

"It's a deal," he said, rising to his feet. "Get lost, Fiore."

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Frank Sinatra in 1953 had taken Marilyn to see a performance of the Broadway play, *Picnic*, on an evening when a young Paul Newman was filling in for its star, Ralph Meeker. She was intrigued with playing the female lead in the film version that was in development stages at the time. On Broadway, the role was interpreted by Janice Rule.

After the performance, over dinner that night, Sinatra applauded the idea of pairing Newman with Marilyn as co-stars in *Picnic's* film spinoff . "You guys would be terrific," Sinatra claimed. He was possibly spot-on accurate in his assessment.

But like many actors' dreams, the Hollywood version of William Inge's Pulitzer Prize-winning play reached the screen with a different cast, the roles eventually awarded to William Holden and Kim Novak, another blonde goddess.

The only reward for Marilyn and Newman was an extended "one-night stand."

Since they had not been in touch for some time, Newman was surprised when he received a phone call from Marilyn during her time in New York.

With her shooting schedule, DiMaggio problems, and other extended (and chronic) pressures, he didn't expect to hear from her. But she did reach him by phone to extend an invitation.

She wanted him to take her to see *Bus Stop*, which she'd previously viewed with Sinatra. Of course, she didn't tell him she'd already asked Marlon Brando if he'd play opposite her in the film version.

Kim Stanley was very convincing as Cherie, but Marilyn was working on her own interpretation. Secretly, she'd felt Newman might be brilliant as Bo, the dumb cowboy.

He agreed to pick her up and take her to Broadway's Music Box Theater. Both of them entered and took their seats as the lights dimmed. Throughout Kim Stanley's performance, Marilyn kept squeezing Newman's hand, indicating her eagerness to perform the role on camera.

When the curtain went down, she asked him if he would take her backstage to congratulate the cast, including its star.

He discouraged her, claiming, "Kim has her heart set on playing Cherie in the movie version. With you seeing the play, she'll know at once that you want the role for yourself."

Marilyn agreed, but began her exit from the theater after most of the audience had left. Tipped off that Marilyn was in the building, playwright Inge was waiting in the lobby to greet them. He asked them to join him for a hamburger and a beer at a nearby Broadway tavern, where they weren't likely to be disturbed.

After some drinks, Inge sensed what both of these actors wanted. "I think you're hot on stage, Paul, and Marilyn, you light up the screen. When I was writing *Bus Stop*, I had both of you in mind—you, Paul, as the perfect Bo, and you, Marilyn, as the ideal choice for Cherie." Whether that was true or not is not known.

Remembering their previous encounters, a slightly drunk Newman said, "Marilyn and I can generate heat off the screen—why not on?"

She giggled and kissed him on the lips, as the playwright reached for both of their hands. "The two of you, a casting couch dream come true. I can see Oscar in both of your futures."

"I can already picture myself rubbing my fingers over Oscar's smooth ass," she said.

It was midnight before Inge told them goodbye. They'd spent their time together discussing how the screen version might differ from the stage version.

Newman kissed one cheek of Inge's, Marilyn the other.

"I'm going back to my hotel to make love to Paul all night," she cooed.

"Lucky girl," Inge said. "I wish I could make love to Paul all night."

Jokingly (or not?) Newman promised Inge, "You'll get your chance if I get that role of Bo. After all, both Marilyn and I aren't strangers to the casting couch."

In the next two weeks, and to Newman's dismay, he'd heard from Kim Stanley that Elvis Presley had also attended a Broadway performance of *Bus Stop*. He'd come backstage and made his intention clear: "That character of Bo has my name written all over it."

"That's my shit sandwich for the day," Newman told her after hearing about it.

"There's more," Stanley told him. She'd encountered Josh Logan, who was set to direct *Bus Stop*. "He told me that he thought Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, together on the marquee, would be the greatest thing since God invented cocks."

"He's got a point there," Newman said. "Marilyn and Elvis would be the biggest box office draw of the decade. But there's something Logan hasn't considered. There's no way in hell that Colonel Tom Parker is going to let his moneymaker play a mainstream dramatic part."

William Inge

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One of Marilyn's all time favorite movies was *A Place in the Sun* (1951), which had starred Montgomery Clift and Elizabeth Taylor, with Shelley Winters in a supporting role. Marilyn gave the film her own reviews. "Monty and Shelley were wonderful, marvelous acting. Taylor did no acting at all, merely tried to look beautiful."

Marilyn had always fantasized about appearing opposite Clift on screen. Having reconciled herself to the fact that Dean and Brando didn't want to get involved, she talked to Joshua Logan, who had signed to direct the movie version of *Bus Stop*. "I saw Monty in *Red River* with John Wayne. As you know, he played a cowboy in that and he was terrific. He'd be great in a very different cowboy role—in this case, in *Bus Stop* opposite me. Promise me you'll at least talk to him about it?"

The idea of casting Clift and Marilyn in *Bus Stop* did not go over well in Hollywood. As Robert LaGuardia, Clift's biographer, put it,

> *"Starting in the mid-fifties, no major movie company would use a star who could not be insured. Marilyn Monroe was a special case. Although there was the constant risk that she would be found dead from sleeping pills or in a sanitarium, there was also the inescapable fact that she was one of the biggest money-makers in Hollywood. With Monty, however, as with Judy Garland, there was no longer the same guarantee."*

Logan was well-acquainted with Clift, and, in honor of his promise to Marilyn, he invited him to lunch, noticing how nervous and shaky he was. He passed along Marilyn's flattering appraisal of himself as a cowboy actor, and her desire to work with him in *Bus Stop*.

To Logan's surprise, Clift not only rejected the idea, he was also dismissive of Marilyn as an actress. "In my view, she's just a sex commodity—nothing else. Besides, I've played my last cowboy role on the screen."

Ironically, in just a few short months, he would sign on to play a cowboy opposite Marilyn in *The Misfits*.

Bus Stop was still in pre-production, as various actors were discussed as candidates for the role of the cowboy. Marilyn had already accepted the role of Cherie when the actual filming began.

She was still shopping for a stage property that might be filmed with her in the lead. She told friends, "All the great women's roles are being written by gay men these days." Her reference obviously included Bill Inge's *Bus Stop* and also Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which had announced a Broadway opening for March 24, 1955.

She asked Walter Winchell if he'd accompany her to its opening night performance, and he said he'd be delighted. The stars included Barbara Bel Geddes in the role of Maggie the Cat, playing opposite Ben Gazzara cast as her husband, Brick, a repressed homosexual who was not satisfying his wife sexually.

As Winchell noted, Marilyn sat through the play mesmerized. It was obvious to the columnist that she was seeing herself cast as Maggie the Cat.

Winchell went with her backstage to congratulate the cast. She wanted to meet Tennessee, but he had mysteriously disappeared.

Both Winchell and Marilyn were invited to the cast party, an event scheduled at Gracie Mansion, the official residence of the mayor of New York. She found that an odd venue, and wondered how Elia Kazan, the play's director, had managed to arrange that.

She learned, with a touch of dismay, that Kazan had invited a few people, including Tennessee, to his apartment for a private party before the Gracie Mansion bash, and that Kazan had opted not to invite her, even though he was her sometime lover.

Wearing a skin-tight gold mesh gown, Marilyn made a grand entrance at Gracie Mansion, her hair a shining platinum. She even managed to attract attention away from the reigning stars already in the room—Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds. "America's Sweethearts" were on the honeymoon of a doomed marriage.

Marilyn had heard that Debbie often gave a devastating impression of her at private parties, and she hoped she would not use the occasion of the Gracie Mansion bash for a repeat performance.

Debbie was gracious to Marilyn, who was particularly intrigued with Fisher, even though she wondered why Marlene Dietrich, of all people, would select him as a lover.

She knew that Eddie was Mike Todd's best friend, and she chatted with him about her having done "the pink elephant show" produced by Todd at Madison Square Garden. Without her realizing it, Debbie had wandered off to greet friends, leaving her new husband alone with Marilyn.

"Mike told me what a wonderful guy you are," Marilyn said, moving closer to Fisher and appearing seductive. "I hope you and Debbie will be very, very happy, but she looks too wholesome for a man of the world like yourself."

"She's for home and hearth, perhaps to raise a family," he told her. "Marriage doesn't mean I'm out of circulation."

"Glad to hear that," she said secretively, passing him her phone number. "You must come up and see me sometime at the Waldorf Towers. Now, I'd better get back to Winchell. Every now and then he gives me a great plug in his column but, in return for that, he expects a plug-in himself, if you get my drift."

"I'm always drifting," he said, "and will call tomorrow."

"Okay, but don't let Debbie wear you out," she cautioned. "It's always good to leave something for the poor."

Years later, she'd boast to Winchell, "I had two of Elizabeth Taylor's husbands before she descended on their crotches—both Mike Todd and Eddie Fisher."

Marilyn would remember encountering Averell Harriman at the party. She didn't really know who he was, only that he was some very important politician. She had once heard JFK refer to him. "I hear you're very, very rich, and you've known all the presidents since FDR," she said to him.

"I hear you know one of our future presidents," he said, provocatively.

"I hear that you were the governor of a big state," she said. "What state?"

"The one we're standing in right now," he said, seemingly amused. "You'll have to forgive me. I know who you are. Could anybody who reads a newspaper not know who you are? Joe DiMaggio's wife. I know Joe. I haven't seen any of your movies, but I'm certain you couldn't look as beautiful on the screen as you do in person."

Before he was called away by an aide, she gave him a light kiss on the lips. "That's to remember me by."

In the corner sat a sulking Tennessee Williams, who had slipped into the party virtually unnoticed. He was all by himself.

A waiter had served him an entire bottle of white wine. Marilyn went over to him and congratulated him on his "stunningly brilliant play with a great movie role for a blonde bombshell."

Pretending at least for a minute to be a Southern gentleman, he told her what an honor it was to meet her.

Tennessee Williams

After tonight, I know you're the greatest playwright on Broadway," she said. "Your cat on that hot tin roof is mesmerizing. For an actress, the role of Maggie the Cat is a dream part. With such a success under your belt, why do you look so sad?"

"It's going to be a disaster—the critics will rip the flesh from my bones. I caught my agent, Audrey Wood, leaving the theater fifteen minutes before the curtain fell. She was like a rat fleeing a sinking ship."

"Don't worry," she said. "The reviews will be terrific. I just know it."

One of the mayor's aides came for him, and he excused himself.

She reached out to him. "Could we have dinner some night? I want to talk to you about the role of Maggie the Cat."

"Of course," he said.

"I'm staying at the Waldorf Towers," she said. "I'd love to hear from you."

"Consider it done," he said before walking away. She suspected he was drunk. Even though she'd slipped him her phone number, he seemed so intoxicated, he might not remember.

Two weeks later, a call from him and an invitation to dinner came in to her suite. In the lobby, she met Tennessee and his Sicilian lover, Frank Merlo. He was young and dynamic. Tennessee told Marilyn that Frank was "the role model I used for Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire."*

On the way to an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village, she sat between them for the bumpy ride south.

Frank knew the owner of the restaurant, and he went back into the kitchen to order the house specialties. Soon he came back, finding his lover and Marilyn talking about who might play the roles in the movie version of *Cat*.

"Would you believe that Elvis Presley wants to play Brick?" Tennessee asked. "I can just imagine what Colonel Tom Parker would say about his boy playing a repressed homosexual still in love with a dead football hero."

"And for the Maggie role?" she asked.

"Would you believe they're talking about Lana Turner? I once was hired to write a screenplay for her. I never got beyond the brassiere."

"At least they're not considering Bel Geddes," she said. "She's all wrong for the role. Just ask Howard Hughes. He told me that she doesn't have it at all."

"I fought with Gadge (Elia Kazan) over casting her. She's not the kind of actress I appreciate. But, and I know you know him well, when he makes up his mind, it's hard to budge him. He has this theory. Barbara was once fat. Of course, she slimmed down. Gadge thinks that women like that still doubt their sex appeal. That's why they try extra hard to convey a strong sexual appetite."

"That sounds silly," she said, looking over at Frank, who seemed to be hanging onto their every word. "Maggie should be real sexy on screen. In fact, dare I say it myself, some people consider me real sexy."

Frank Merlo, Elia Kazan, and Tennessee Williams

"I think you invented sex," Frank chimed in.

"You might be terrific in the part," Tennessee said. "Barbara is a cool, somewhat cold-looking blonde. But I conceived of Maggie as a sizzler on stage."

"Well, if Marilyn can do anything, she can sizzle," Frank said.

"I'll try to lobby for you," Tennessee promised. "As for the man, I was considering Marlon Brando, but he told someone that he will never appear again on Broadway in a Tennessee Williams play. Why, I don't know. Maybe he'll do it on the screen, but I hear he's going to turn it down. I also hear Paul Newman wants to do it, but I think he looks too pretty boy Jewish to portray the son of a plantation aristocrat in the Deep South."

"Ben Gazzara might want to repeat his stage role in front of the camera," she said. "That reminds me. I'll call him up and audition him at the Waldorf Towers to see if he and I have any chemistry. Regardless of who plays Brick, the one thing I know is that I am Maggie the Cat. Can't you just hear me saying, 'Skipper is dead. I'm alive. Maggie the Cat is *alive!'*"

"You would be electric in the role," Tennessee said.

"Don't give it to Elizabeth Taylor. She can't act."

"I'm considering playing Big Daddy myself," he said.

"You'd be wonderful."

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Months later, Marilyn lamented to Brando. "I thought Tennessee adored me. So what happens? The role of Maggie the Cat goes to that damn Elizabeth Taylor. "You and I should have done it."

"I hear she's also going to film Tennessee's *Suddenly, Last Summer* with Monty," he said.

"Just my luck. I get the dumb blonde comedies, and Taylor gets the meaty dramas. *Hollywood."*

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The years had gone by swiftly, but in the spring of 1955, Marilyn had a reunion with Arthur Miller, as his own marriage to Mary Slattery was disintegrating. Actors Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson had taken her to a party at the Brooklyn Heights apartment of Norman Rosten, the poet and playwright, who would become one of her closest friends and confidants.

Marilyn's opening remarks to Miller were boastful and sassy. "Four years ago when we met, I was a struggling starlet. Today, as you know, I'm an international movie star. Not bad."

"Not bad at all," he said, "and you look, if anything, even more dazzling than when I first saw you."

"You look fabulous, too." She said.

"I'm not so sure. My craggy face has a few more lines. If I were in the movies, a director would cast me as your father."

"Sometimes a girl needs a father," she said. As part of a subtle inquiry about his marriage, she asked, "Are you still living in Brooklyn?"

"Still living on Willow Street in Brooklyn Heights," he said. "I recently in-stalled a cork floor in my study. It cuts down on noise."

"That indicates you're planning to stay there," she said. "Eli told me that things are a bit rocky at home."

"Perhaps," Miller said. Nothing, even a marriage, is forever."

"That was true of my marriage to Joe DiMaggio," she said. "Today, I'm free, white, and twenty-one."

"Marilyn, please, this is an integrated party, and that phrase is increasingly viewed as racist."

"I'm not a racist," she said. "In fact, I have black blood in me."

He looked at her in astonishment, but didn't question her further.

Throughout her life, she told people that she had black blood in her and often referred to her "nigger behind." There seems to be no basis for her claim. Yet it could never be proven one way or the other, because of the uncertainty about who her father was.

On the way home with Anne Jackson and Eli Wallach, Marilyn denounced Miller. "The god damn bastard didn't even ask for my phone number."

Two weeks later, Miller called her at the Waldorf Towers. Apparently, he'd gotten her phone number from Paula Strasberg. He invited her to meet him again at the home of Norman Rosten. "Norman is away for the weekend, and I have the use of his apartment."

Changing into three different dresses before one satisfied her, she took a taxi to the Rosten home, where she encountered the informally dressed play-wright wandering about in his bedroom slippers.

It was the beginning of their affair. As she would later tell Shelley Winters, "He's not an athlete in bed like Joe, but he brings sincerity of purpose."

"What in hell is that?" Winters asked, sarcastically. "Any other unusual characteristics?"

"There is one," Marilyn said. "When we slip around to dine in out-of-the-way restaurants, he never picks up the check."

"That I understand," Winters said. "It's been a long time since he's had a hit."

"Arthur is that mystery father-lover I've always been searching for, and he evokes my historical hero, Abraham Lincoln. Shelley, do you think Lincoln and Arthur have the same type of penis?"

"How in hell would I know?" Winters asked. "I've never fucked either of them. When Lincoln was president, I was still a virgin."

When Marlon Brando called to find out what was going on, she told him, "If I was nothing but a dumb blonde, Arthur wouldn't be in love with me. You can't spend an entire lifetime in bed. You have to spend some time talking to your boyfriend. He respects me. He even said I have the makings of an intellectual."

"That's funny," Brando said. "Miller told Norman Mailer that you're an amazing girl with the breath of a turnip."

"Breath or brain?" she asked.

"How in fuck do I know?"

As Miller's affair with Marilyn intensified, the venue for their sexual trysts was often the apartment of Norman Rosten. Miller was also a frequent visitor at the Waldorf Towers. When the weather turned warm, they often slipped away to the Rosten summer place in Port Jefferson, on the north shore of Long Island. Miller was an occasional visitor to the farmhouse of Milton Greene in Weston, Connecticut, although Greene and Miller seemed engaged in a battle over possession of Marilyn.

Miller also resented her other mentor, Lee Strasberg. The playwright told her that she had the potential to become one of the great actresses of the stage. He resented Strasberg's intrusion into their life, and criticized the drama coach whenever he had the chance.

In his enigmatic way, columnist Walter Winchell broke the news of Miller's romance with Marilyn. He wrote: "America's best known blonde moving picture star is now the darling of the pro-left." Privately, Winchell said, "Miller is nothing but a big communist. Just ask J. Edgar Hoover."

Sometimes, when Marilyn wanted to go to a party, she asked Eli Wallach to go with them. The actor served as her "beard." At the party, she would "accidentally" encounter Miller.

When she moved from the Waldorf Towers into an apartment, Miller would continue to be her most frequent visitor. More and more members of the press were learning of the affair. When cornered, she told a reporter from *The New York Daily News*, "You must be kidding! Arthur Miller is a married man, and I don't date married men, for

your information."

She told her maid, Lena Pepitone, "I'm extending my stay in New York. Arthur is going to make my life different, better, a lot better. He is the key to the existence I've always wanted, but never found."

In her confusion, Marilyn continued to see her psychoanalyst, Dr. Margaret Hohenberg. She told the doctor, "I need sessions with you to get me through the day and barbiturates and vodka to get me through the longest nights."

When Capote came to visit Marilyn at her new apartment, she threatened to have him bumped off if he went around New York gossiping about her affair with Miller. "I know people in Murder, Inc." she said. "One call to Sam Giancana, and your wispy little voice will be heard no more."

Miller had nothing to say when asked by the press. However, uncharacteristically, he did speak to Robert Ajemian, a reporter for *Time* magazine. "She is the most womanly woman I can imagine. Being with her, people want to die. This girl sets up a challenge for every man. Most men become more of what they are natively when they are around her. A phony becomes more of a phony, a confused man more confused, a retiring man more retiring. She's kind of a lodestone that draws out of the male animal his essential qualities."

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As Marilyn packed up her possessions to fly back to Los Angeles during the waning months of 1955, she felt more empowered than ever, and although insecurities lingered, she was more experienced and confident as an actress. She was still $50,000 in debt, and Milton Greene had run out of money to finance both her and Marilyn Monroe Productions.

But a bail-out was on the way. The head honcho at Fox, Darryl F. Zanuck, who "treated me like a Saturday night whore," was gone. Buddy Adler had taken over the studio. The silver-haired executive showed more belief in Marilyn's star power than anyone else in Hollywood.

She was lured back for the filming of *Bus Stop*, with a contract that called for an upfront check of $150,000.

In addition to her fee as a star, more money was added to her bank account when she sold Fox a screenplay called *Horns of the Devil*, a film property which she had previously optioned with Milton Greene.

With this extra money coming in, Greene and Marilyn had purchased the film rights to Terence Rattigan's new comedy, *The Sleeping Prince*, which was a year away from opening on Broadway with Barbara Bel Geddes and Michael Redgrave in the leading roles. In Marilyn's view, neither actor had any chemistry at all.

Laurence Olivier *(left)* and Richard Burton

Although she was flirting with asking Laurence Olivier to star opposite her, during a period that lasted a few months, she felt that Richard Burton would be a better choice, and she wanted to set up a rendezvous with him.

Virtually unprecedented, Marilyn's revised contract gave her approval of directors, and named sixteen—"and only them"—that she would allow to helm her. They included Billy Wilder, George Stevens, Fred Zinnemann, William Wyler, Elia Kazan, Carol Reed, David Lean, John Huston, Joshua Logan, John Ford, Lee Strasberg, Vincent Minnelli (for musicals only), Vittorio de Sica, Alfred Hitchcock, George Cukor, and Joseph Mankiewicz.

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Back in Hollywood, preparing for her role in *Bus Stop*, Marilyn "rounded up the posse," as she called her friends such as Jeanne Carmen, Shelley Winters, and Robert Slatzer. She also called Peter Lawford, the brother-in-law of John F. Kennedy, on whom she was showering lots of attention. Otherwise, as she told Carmen, "Peter would be yesterday's news for me if not for his link to Jack."

Lawford became more urgent in her life when JFK told her that he wanted his brother-in-law to be his liaison, arranging secret meetings between the two of them.

He explained to her that he wanted to see her any time she came East, and he also said that he'd be making several trips to California where he would have a suite at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, at least officially. "Unofficially, I'll be staying with Peter and Pat in Santa Monica. My sister and my brother-in-law will be the perfect cover for us."

Long before JFK had become a senator, she'd had a relationship with Lawford. It had begun in 1951 when she met him in the office of the William Morris Agency. Reportedly, he found the twenty-five year old "voluptuous," and began dating her.

She wasn't that physically attracted to Lawford, or so she said, but she accepted his invitation. She'd later tell Jeanne Carmen that, "When a big movie star asks you out, and you're struggling up the Hollywood ladder, you go for it."

When Lawford met Carmen through Marilyn, he began to date her, too, although neither of the blondes seemed jealous of the other, as neither of them regarded Lawford as "a big catch."

Marilyn told Slatzer, "Peter wants me for arm candy—nothing more, nothing less. We've rolled around in the hay a few times, but it was no big deal. Most of the time I get a good night kiss on the cheek, maybe a feel of my breasts in the car going to a premiere."

Carmen presented much the same story, telling Marilyn, "I think Peter is gay. You and I are the two sexiest things walking around on two feet, and you'd think he'd never let us out of his bed. But, no, not Peter."

Marilyn claimed that Slatzer had told her that Lawford liked to cruise public toilets looking for "rough trade" on whom he liked to perform fellatio, his favorite sexual expression.

"I believe that," Carmen said.

Lawford's homosexuality became apparent to Marilyn when he showed up at her house with fellow actor Robert Walker, who was to die in 1951. "He wanted a three-way that night," Marilyn told Carmen, "and I obliged. After all, Walker is a handsome actor in his own right and former husband of Jennifer Jones. It didn't work out too well. Peter spent most of the night servicing Walker and not me. I felt like the third wheel."

"Both of them are dating Nancy Davis, and I wonder if she goes in for that kinky stuff," Carmen said.

"I don't know," Marilyn said. "But Peter told me that Nancy gives a better blow job than I do."

"That's why she's called the Fellatio Queen of Hollywood," Carmen said.

June Allyson, MGM's "sweetheart," gave a different version of Marilyn's relationship with Lawford. Allyson and her husband, Dick Powell, had been invited as weekend guests of Gene Kelly. Allyson claimed that Lawford showed up for the weekend with Marilyn, and that they shared the same bedroom.

"In the middle of the night, maybe three in the morning, Marilyn pounded on our door," Allyson said. "Wrapped only in a bath towel, she begged us to let her come in and sleep in our bed until morning. 'Peter is just too kinky for me,' she told us, but she didn't explain what that meant. We let her sleep with us. She pulled off that towel and crawled in with us, but I insisted on sleeping in the middle."

(left to right) Robert Walker, Peter Lawford, and Tony Curtis

Lawford confided to director George Cukor, with whom he'd had a long-ago affair, that he had liked Marilyn in the beginning "when she was still Norma Jeane. She was vulnerable and even shy. But when she truly became Marilyn Monroe, she turned me off. What is she doing? Trying to become another Jayne Mansfield? Those skin-tight dresses and a *décolletage* that plunges all the way to San Diego. Wanton women leave me cold, and I think Marilyn should wash her vagina more often."

In an interview, Lawford seemed to forget that he'd had an affair during the late 1940s with the blonde goddess, Lana Turner. He told a reporter, "There are many girls with long blonde hair and a sexy figure whom men consider beautiful. But I don't. To me, a girl with a well-groomed look, not the flamboyant type, but a quiet beauty who radiates health and vitality is the greatest beauty of all. I go for the college type, not movie sirens."

When Marilyn read this, she told Carmen, "I guess that this is Peter's way of telling me our dating days are over."

She was ready to move on from Lawford, but when she became involved with JFK, she changed her mind.

Late in 1955, he called her and invited her to a party. He said that Tony Curtis would be delighted to escort her. In the late 1940s, Curtis and Marilyn had had a brief fling, and she was aware that he and Lawford "were a sometimes thing."

Before ringing off, Lawford told Marilyn, "Have I got a surprise for you at the party."

She had been at the party for only half an hour before Lawford approached her and whispered, "You have a visitor waiting upstairs behind the second door to the left. Tony will understand. He'll be occupied with me later tonight."

"It's *him*, isn't it?" she asked.

"Why don't you go up the steps and find out for yourself? You don't want to keep him waiting."

Excusing herself, she did not rush up the steps, but walked slowly and seductively. Adjusting herself, she knocked on the door and heard a voice call for her to come in. When she opened the door, she was delighted to see JFK lying nude on the bed except for a pair of white briefs.

"Lock the door and come to papa," he told her. "Let's get down to business. We'll catch up on all the gossip later."

She did as instructed. As she'd later confide to Carmen, "I bent over to kiss him and with my right hand, searched inside his underwear. With one of his hands, he checked out my breasts. I kissed him so hard, his mouth ended up with scarlet lipstick."

In some of their encounters, JFK had to get dressed and rush away after having sex. But on this particular night, he was sleeping over at the Lawfords and had plenty of time, it seemed. She watched as he took a shower, but didn't want to join him because she'd so careful y made herself up that evening—"and didn't want to look like a river rat."

He liked to hear the latest Hollywood gossip, but on this night he seemed burning with a certain political passion.

Before the night ended, she felt she'd gained an insight into American politics that few others knew. She came

away feeling more politically informed than her more activist friend, Shelley Winters, who was having a sometimes affair with Adlai Stevenson.

Before he flew out of Los Angeles, JFK told Marilyn that he and his father had it on good authority that Eisenhower was going to step down in 1956 and that Richard Nixon would be the heir apparent for the Republican nomination for president.

He also claimed that the ambassador had promised Lyndon Johnson financing if he'd make a run for the White House, providing "he'd name me as his vice presidential running mate."

"Would you believe that Texas rattlesnake turned dad down?" JFK asked. "The arrogance of that shithead. I'm still seeking the vice presidency but, alas, maybe with Shelley's boyfriend, Adlai Stevenson, at the head of the ticket. My goal is to serve as the vice president for 1956 and 1960 and then run as president in 1964 and 1968."

"Ambitious plan, I would say," she said. "For all I know, I'm shacked up with a man who one day will be in the history books, right alongside Abraham Lincoln." In fact, I'll be your chief supporter—read that, 'athletic supporter.'"

"Come over here, kitten," he said, "I'm not finished with you yet."

The next day, Lawford called Marilyn. "I want you to take this as a compliment. Jack spent more time with you than any other woman. He's sort of a rooster in the hen house. It's *bam, ba bam*, and thank you ma'am, and then he's on to his next conquest. I once gave this party for him, and he disappeared with this brunet e into my library. He placed her up on a desk, hiked up her dress, and did his business before she even knew the games had started. No sooner had he done that than he was back in my living room looking for his next victim. I had to remind him to zip up his pants."

"Ever our shining knight," she said. "You must realize that our future fame will lie in the fact that we knew and were intimate with this great man. Long after the world has forgotten *Ladies of the Chorus* and *Son of Lassie*, we'll be remembered because of him."

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"She was a great teacher, but got really jealous of the men I saw. She thought she was my husband."
Marilyn Monroe on Natasha Lytess

Natash Lytess, the acting coach at Columbia, met Marilyn in the early spring of 1948. In her unpublished memoirs, the Russian-born woman recalled the day:

"*Marilyn Monroe wiggled nervously into my office dressed in a red frock of knitted wool that hugged her thighs. It was cut very, very low. It was clear that she did not wear a bra. There was a lump on her nose which needed a plastic surgeon. Her voice was like a knife clattering on a cafeteria plate. She had dyed, pale yellow hair, a petulant mouth, and a body…well, a gauche, vacuous-faced girl dressed like a trollop."*

What Marilyn saw was a very Slavic-looking woman with a pencil-thin figure, a thick mane of graying hair, and an imperial manner. Her face was so pale it looked like her body had been dug up from a graveyard. Her dark, men-acing eyes seemed to penetrate Marilyn.

Natasha had been shown a screen test Marilyn had made at Columbia and was not impressed. But on second thought, she claimed that she saw "some potential there." Harry Cohn had just signed Marilyn to a six-month contract at $125 a week, and he was "seriously pissed off when she wouldn't let me fuck her."

Marilyn was taken on as a pupil in some of her communal classes, and Natasha also agreed to give her private acting lessons. For these, a check arrived from Howard Hughes.

Although Marilyn and Natasha were the odd couple, as they were called at Columbia, a working relationship was nonetheless cemented between them. Natasha worked particularly hard on Marilyn's delivery, although she taught her the unfortunate habit of moving her lips before actually speaking. Slowly, very slowly, Natasha seemed to make Marilyn feel more secure. "When I met her, she was afraid of her own shadow."

"You've named yourself Marilyn Monroe," Natasha told her, "but you're still Norma Jeane. Under my instruction, I will make you into this thing…this Marilyn Monroe."

Almost from the beginning, Marilyn came to realize that Natasha had a lesbian fascination with her. Marilyn confided to Shelley Winters, "She's falling in love with me, and I don't really want to submit, but I guess I'll have to."

In her autobiography, Natasha admitted that after three weeks of training, she told Marilyn, "I want to love you."

As Marilyn confided to Winters, “I told her that she could make love to me, but that I would be passive. I said I appreciated her instruction, but that I could not really return her love. She agreed to those terms. After the war, when I decided to become a star, I knew I’d have to fuck a lot of men in Hollywood, guys like Joe Schenck, but I didn’t realize that included women, too.”

“I might have lesbian feelings,” Marilyn once said. “I know many men who picked me up claimed I must be a lesbian because I didn’t really respond to them. Of course, I might not have responded because they were such turn-offs.”

During the early stages of their relationship, Natasha and Marilyn had many confrontations, especially when Marilyn started spending more and more time with Johnny Hyde, her aging mentor. Natasha mockingly referred to Hyde as “the hunchback.”

Although Marilyn occasionally walked out on Natasha, she came back eventually, her relationship with the acting coach enduring for six long years. She even lived for a time in Natasha’s small apartment. But when Hyde left his wife, and moved into a luxury rental, Marilyn moved out and went to live with him. She still continued her acting lessons with Natasha, however.

As the months went by, Natasha came to accept how very limited her relationship with Marilyn would be.

As she wrote, “I was the older woman holding out for a crumb from the cake. Marilyn knew how much I cared for her, and she exploited my feelings, the way a beautiful young boy will take advantage of an aging homosexual. Actually, I found that Marilyn, in spite of the fact she always pictured herself a victim, was not so innocent. She was very manipulative. She was willing to do anything to get ahead, to use anybody who came into her life.”

“Natasha and Johnny were enemies,” claimed Winters, “because each of them wanted to possess Marilyn.”

After the death of Hyde, Marilyn tried to commit suicide, according to Natasha. “I saved her life. If it were not for me, there would be no Marilyn Monroe strutting her stuff before the camera.”

When Marilyn made a movie, Natasha was always on the set, telling her what to do, even if she contradicted the director’s wishes, which she often did. Jane Russell on the set of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* found Natasha annoying. Once, Natasha clashed with the director Howard Hawks, who subsequently banned her from the set.

Natasha claimed that Marilyn was not a natural actress, but that in time, she could become a good one. “She has to learn to have a free voice and a free body to act. Luckily, she has a wonderful instinct for the right timing.”

Natasha Lytess

Natasha also had conflicts with producer Nunnally Johnson on the set of *How to Marry a Millionaire*. “That dyke broad is going to ruin Marilyn’s marriage to DiMaggio, and she may even end up ruining Marilyn,” Johnson charged.

During his brief marriage to Marilyn, DiMaggio detested Natasha so much that he referred to her as “Morticia.”

By 1954 and 1955, Natasha’s long reign with Marilyn was coming to a sad ending. Whatever role she had played in Marilyn’s life was being usurped by Milton Greene and Lee Strasberg in New York.

At the Actors Studio, Maureen Stapleton claimed that Marilyn often talked to her about her problems with Natasha. “Imagine the difficulty of rehearsing love scenes with a female drama coach who’s in love with you,”

Stapleton said. “Marilyn knew that Natasha wasn’t play acting, but really meant it. Few actors could hold up under that kind of pressure.”

Under Marilyn’s orders, Fox had added Natasha to its payroll. But during Marilyn’s long sojourn in New York, the checks began arriving later and later and, finally, weren’t mailed at all.

Since the Fox money was her sole means of support, Natasha was thrown into a desperate situation. Her calls and letters to Marilyn in New York were not answered. She was finally reduced to calling Marilyn “that ungrateful little bitch.”

To support herself, Natasha gave acting lessons to bottle blondes who wanted “to become the next Marilyn Monroe.”

Even after Marilyn returned to California, she continued to ignore Natasha, refusing to take her phone calls. “I want a new beginning,” she told friends, “and I don’t want to wander down memory lane with Natasha. I’m a different person today from that little girl who walked into her office in 1948. Paula Strasberg has replaced Natasha in my life, although at times I think she has the hots for me, too. It’s a curse that comes with being too sexy.”

Ignoring what Natasha had done for her, Marilyn began to blame her for all those “cutie pie dumb blonde roles” she’d starred in. “I keep playing the same character, and I’m sick of it. With Paula and Lee, I can grow as an actress. Natasha has nothing else to teach me.”

As tensions mounted, Natasha virtually stalked her, forcing Marilyn to call her attorney, Irving Stein, to warn her “to back off.’

In her plea to Stein, Natasha claimed, “My only salvation is Marilyn, an actress I created. At the studio, I fought for her, making myself the heavy. When I call her house, she refuses to speak to me. I am horrified. I feel she’s my private property, since I molded her into this thing called Marilyn Monroe. I’m in ill health and have no savings. I’m totally dependent on her. Let me spend just half an hour with her, and I can change her mind. I know I can.”

“No way!” Stein shouted into the phone. “Stay away or else I’ll swear out a complaint against you for harassment!” Then he slammed down the phone.

Natasha made one final effort to reach Marilyn, even going to her home in Beverly Glen. Milton Greene answered the door and refused entrance to her. “I have cancer,” she sobbed. “I’m dying.”

“Okay, I’ll have Marilyn send you a check for a thousand dollars. A farewell gift. Now get out of here!”

Feeling completely morose and dejected, Natasha headed back to her car. She looked up at the second floor window to discover Marilyn looking down at her through parted curtains.

By 1964, two years after Marilyn’s tragic death, Natasha was living in a small apartment in a ghetto in Rome. Her doctor told her that her cancer was growing worse. She took a train to a cancer clinic in Switzerland, where she subsequently died.

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Paul Newman’s words about Elvis Presley had been prophetic. Colonel Parker adamantly rejected the idea of *Bus Stop* as a suitable vehicle. Parker’s exact words were, “I’m not gonna let my star appear in some play by a queer. The next thing I know, Elvis will be asking for a role in a play by Tennessee Williams.”

Bus Stop was still running at the Winter Garden in Manhattan when shooting on the film version began in February of 1956. The play would run until April 21, 1957.

During the shoot, Norma Jeane Mortensen legally and officially changed her name, in court, to “Marilyn Monroe,” informing the judge that she found “my real name is a handicap in motion pictures.”

Her acting coach, Paula Strasberg, showed up on the California set to direct Marilyn, even though the picture already had a talented director in Joshua Logan. What a New Yorker like Paula knew about rehearsing Marilyn in a cornpone drawl and as a “bad singer” remains a mystery.

Almost until shooting began, Marilyn held out for “any actor except Don Murray” to play Bo Decker, the bronco-riding obnoxious but hunky braggart. After her disappointment about her first choices—Marlon Brando, Monty Clift, Elvis Presley, and Paul Newman—having either dropped out or being turned down for the role, Marilyn then decided that she and Rock Hudson would cause combustion on the screen. Although Hudson seemed willing to be her co-star, Universal would not release him, even though Marilyn promised to make a picture for them as part of a casting deal.

Paul Newman

At the debut of filming for *Bus Stop*, the cast, crew, and executives at Fox were sharply divided over Marilyn's makeup, which was supposed to simulate "a girl who never saw sunlight." Whitey Snyder was instructed to apply plenty of white, cornstarchy face powder with just hint of a pale pink rouge, although he later claimed that it made Marilyn "look like hell."

Marilyn herself rejected the original costume she was to wear as the saloon singer Cherie. She went to wardrobe and finally found a flea-bit en costume off the rack, a goldish-green lamé with a ratty monkey fur. Logan said it was "something that Ida Lupino might wear playing a roadhouse whore in a 1940s picture."

When Marilyn encountered the female supporting star of the picture, Hope Lange, she told Logan that he had to insist that she darken her fair hair. "The picture already has its blonde star," she said.

John Springer, publicist for the film, told the author, "Marilyn also became jealous of Lange when she saw that Murray was falling in love with her. They would later marry. Marilyn did not find Murray sexually attractive, but she seemed to resent that he fell for Lange and not her."

Springer also hired another publicist, the attractive and well-educated Patricia Newcomb, who had impeccable credentials as a "bluestocking" woman of culture and breeding.

At first, Marilyn got on with her, but later accused Newcomb of trying to lure a boyfriend in his 30s away from her. Even though "madly in love" with Miller, Marilyn nonetheless slept with a number of men during the filming.

Newcomb vaguely resembled Marilyn, both of them standing five feet six. She also had blonde hair and that little girl smile that evoked the on-screen Marilyn. Logan referred to Newcomb as "a jungle cat in repose." After Marilyn got into a jealous fight with Newcomb, she demanded that she be fired. Ironically, Newcomb would eventually come back into Marilyn's life as one of the key players in Marilyn's final days, during August of 1962.

A powerful director like Logan was bound to clash with Paula Strasberg. One afternoon, when he approved a scene, Paula objected and demanded that it be shot again. "I threw the cunt off the set," he said, "and told her never to come back."

As if to retaliate, Marilyn came down with bronchitis, probably because she'd been overexposed to the cold while wearing a flimsy outfit. Greene drove her to the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles and checked her in.

When Greene came by for a visit to Marilyn's hospital room the following afternoon, he found Joe DiMaggio putting on his pants. It was obvious that the baseball hero had had sex with the patient. Apparently, she took the occasion to tell DiMaggio that she was going to marry Arthur Miller, who was currently residing in Nevada, establishing a residency requirement before his upcoming divorce from his loyal wife, Mary Slattery.

Logan wondered how the love scenes between Bo and Cherie would go, since Marilyn obviously held Murray, who was making his first movie, in contempt. Their first shoot together had been a disaster.

As a rambunctious and tactless cowboy who's far from home, Bo has accompanied Cherie (Marilyn) to a dive called the Blue Dragon Café. As she tries to escape his amorous advances, he grabs her costume and rips off the sequined train. She yanks it back from him. "Give me back my tail." Her jerky movement was so violent that she hit

him in the face, causing two cuts and a seriously damaged eye.

Logan hoped she would apologize—in fact, Murray demanded it. But instead, Marilyn yelled at him, “Damn you, damn you, and damn you. I will NOT APOLOGIZE! You don’t belong in this picture. It’s only justice that you got hurt.” Bursting into tears, she ran to her dressing room and wouldn’t come out for the rest of the afternoon.

In spite of that, Logan was able to make peace between his two actors, and even enticed her into a passionate kissing scene, which also became a bone of contention. Forgetting her true feelings about Murray, she kissed him almost violently. It was so passionate she even drooled, the camera catching a string of saliva pouring out of her succulent mouth and running down her chin.

When Marilyn wanted the scene kept in, “the prissy film editor” [her words] cut the scene, infuriating her. She unfairly blamed Logan, accusing him of being a homosexual. “You don’t know what love between a man and a woman is like. I bet you drooled a lot when you sucked Paul Newman’s cock.”

The next day, Logan forgave her and, being the professional director he was, continued with the shoot. Perhaps from the Strasbergs, she’d learned about Logan’s closeted life as a homo-sexual in New York.

Even so, at one point she became so frustrated that she placed a hysterical call to Miller in Nevada. “I can’t make this picture. I’m going to walk off the set. The crew, including Logan, hates women. They are cruel to me. I’m trying my best, but everybody is plotting against me. I no longer trust Milton Greene. He’s just trying to use me as a meal ticket.”

Marilyn as Cherie in *Bus Stop*

Miller finally got her to cool down, and eventually persuaded her to hold out until the end of the shoot. Suspecting during the call that she was heavily drugged, he promised her that he’d be with her soon.

“Papa, you’ll protect me, won’t you?” she asked.

“Yes, Norma Jeane, I’ll be there for you.”

After a bad night, the following morning she tried to enlist Logan’s sympathy. “I’m nearly thirty years old,” she said, “and some mornings I don’t know if I can get up to face the camera. My rough life, the abuse of my body, is beginning to show in my face. When I have a close-up, I die a thousand deaths.”

At the end of the shoot, Marilyn did not say goodbye to Murray.

During her farewell to Logan, she said, “I’m getting ready to join Arthur Miller in New York. Cooking for my husband, Jim Dougherty, was easy: a slab of beef, mashed potatoes, and peas and carrots. Joe DiMaggio liked only his family’s Sicilian recipes. But Arthur’s mother is having to teach me all of his favorite dishes—chopped chicken liver, chicken soup with matzoh balls, gefilte fish, and borscht. As for potato *pierogies*, forget it. He can go home to mother for that dish.”

Upon its release, *Bus Stop*, Marilyn’s twenty-fourth film was, according to many critics, her finest performance.

In spite of all the difficulties between them, Logan told the press, “She can become one of the greatest stars we’ve ever had if she can control her emotions and guard her health. I don’t think she ever really had two days of

happiness in her life."

Hope Lange, Don Murray

Before leaving the set of *Bus Stop*, she presented him with a picture of herself portraying Sarah Bernhardt. "Please, every morning, place a yellow rose beside this picture. Please."

He was taken aback, finding that an odd request. "I won't even have to go to a florist. I grow yellow roses at home." Of course, he did not honor such a ridiculous request.

Most of Marilyn's fans liked her portrayal of Cherie, although many critics blasted her. Columnist Sheilah Graham praised Marilyn's performance, but Alain Brien lambasted her, claiming she never looked less glamorous. "Her blue saucer eyes are chipped at the edges. The soft yellow hair is as synthetic as springy as oak shavings. And her voice has the flat whine of a Liverpudlian doing a bad imitation of Shirley Temple."

Privately, Miller was critical of her performance, calling it a burlesque. And he found Murray's acting hardly worthy of a daytime TV soap opera.

She dreamed of an Oscar nomination, but didn't get it. Ironically, the most criticized actor on the set, Murray, was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor.

Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* wrote the film's most sensitive review, noting that she'd "gone beyond previous roles where she would wiggle, pout, and pop her big eyes playing a synthetic vamp. Joshua Logan has gotten her to be the beat-up B-girl of William Inge's play, even down to the Ozark accent and the look of pellagra about her skin. He has gotten her to be the tinseled floozie, the semi-moronic doll who is found in a Phoenix clip-joint by a cowboy of equally limited brains. He has also gotten her to light the small flame of dignity that sputters pathetically in this chipper and to make a rather moving sort of her."

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Marilyn's link to the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) has never been fully explained. Every year or so a document turns up shedding more light into the shadows of her past.

It is known that mobster Sam Giancana was linked to the Kennedy administration in the 1960s and to a rogue group within the CIA, plotting the assassination of Fidel Castro in Havana. But Giancana's link to the CIA actually went back years earlier—to the Eisenhower administration.

Because of Giancana's links to Marilyn, agents of the CIA recruited him in an attempt to accumulate blackmail evidence on President Kusno Sukarno of Indonesia during his state visit to the United States in 1956. Because of Sukarno's links to communist countries such as China, he received a chilly welcome from John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State.

Before his visit, the CIA agents set out to learn all they could about this controversial Third World leader, a hero to the people of Indonesia during a four-year struggle which culminated in Indonesia's independence, in 1949, from the Netherlands.

One spy learned that Marilyn was Sukarno's favorite movie star, and that he'd watched both *Niagara* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* nearly eighteen times each.

At CIA headquarters, it was suggested that Marilyn could be used to entrap Sukarno in a sexually compromising situation. But first, someone had to enlist her, someone who had influence over her. It was known at the time that Sam Giancana could blackmail her into doing his bidding. Consequently, he was the one designated to approach her.

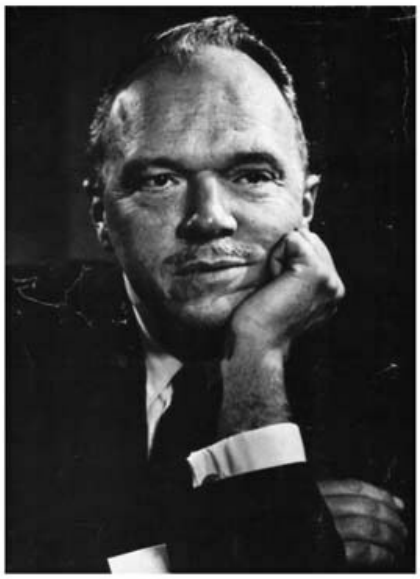
This revelation appears in a controversial book, *Double Cross*, written by the brother of Sam Giancana, Chuck Giancana, and his son, also named Sam Giancana. "Marilyn's desire to achieve stardom, coupled with her childlike desire to please, was exploited by the Mafia and the CIA as well," the Giancanas wrote. "Her sexual charms were employed by the CIA to frame world leaders, among them President Sukarno of Indonesia. 'Mooney' [meaning mob boss Sam Giancana] lined Marilyn up as bait. Marilyn, perhaps more because she enjoyed the attentions of the world's most powerful men than for reasons of patriotism, became a willing participant in the intrigue."

Before she actually met Sukarno, she received a call from Senator Kennedy, who had been made aware of the plot through his own contacts within the CIA. Before Sukarno had flown out of Washington, JFK had met privately with him. Kennedy's reputation as a ladies' man was known to Sukarno, a womanizer himself who would go on to have more wives than Henry VIII.

JFK referred to Sukarno as "the commie prince." "He wanted to know the names on my list of whatever pretty girls in Hollywood put out," JFK told Marilyn.

"Don't worry about it," she said. "By the time I finish off this little brown man, he won't be fit to seduce any other pretty gal."

The organizer for some of the events scheduled for Sukarno in Beverly Hills was Joshua Logan. It was he contacted Hollywood's most elite couple, William and Edie Goetz, asking them to sponsor a "Welcome to California" party for Sukarno at their Beverly Hills mansion. As the daughter of Louis B. Mayer, Edie had an address book that included the Hollywood A-list, such as Dore Schary, Samuel Goldwyn, and Jack Warner, plus such stars as Clark Gable and Tyrone Power.



Joshua Logan

Fred Lawrence Guiles, author of *Legend*, wrote, "Marilyn was invited and when she stepped into the salon, she was instantly surrounded by little men from Southeast Asia. Logan said that he had never before heard such a spontaneous sexual roar as came from the excited throats of the diminutive Asians."

Columnist Drew Pearson was one of the guests. He later wrote "Throwing her arms around President Sukarno, Marilyn exclaimed, 'I'm so pleased to meet the President of India.' 'I'm the President of Indonesia,' prompted Sukarno.' 'Never heard of it,' said the frank Marilyn. A friendship thereupon ended before it began."

This story is probably apocryphal. If indeed it really happened, it was just a ruse to throw off the press. Before their meeting, Marilyn had been briefed by an agent from the CIA who had been driven to Marilyn's apartment by Sam Giancana himself.

In Jane Ellen Wayne's biography, *Marilyn's Men*, she'd written, "Sukarno took a shine to Marilyn at the Beverly Hills party. She responded and, to the delight of the other guests, the sensual sparks flew between the two of them."

On the final day of her twenty-ninth year, Marilyn looked radiant at the party. She also felt more confident than she had in years.

She was definitely on the A-list, with her handprints in cement outside Grauman's Chinese Theater, her apartment on those movie star maps, and a bronze star on the sidewalk at Hollywood and Vine.

Sukarno was very discreet. His Nehru jacket was seen leaving the party a good forty-five minutes before Marilyn's own departure. Outside, she got into the back seat of a long stretch limousine and was delivered to Sukarno's luxurious hotel suite. He was waiting for her with champagne and caviar.

Unknown to the president, Giancana had arranged to have his bedroom install ed with equipment that would photograph Marilyn's sexual tryst with the Indonesian leader. Giancana had employed Fred Otash, Hollywood's most notorious detective and an expert on secret taping of stars, to perform the bugging.

After Sukarno's departure from Los Angeles, Otash removed the tape from the hotel and shipped it to the CIA in Washington. It is unclear exactly what agents there planned to do with this incriminating and embarrassing piece of evidence.

In his book, *Goddess, the Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe*, Anthony Summers wrote: "The CIA wanted to curry favor with Sukarno by using Marilyn as bait, but nothing came of it."

While it is true that nothing but a one-night stand came of it, the tape might one day have had some potential use as blackmail.

Marilyn later admitted to Robert Slatzer, "I seduced Sukarno. I started out by stripping down nude in front of him and telling him, 'Now that you've got what you want, what are you going to do with it?' He rose to the challenge."

President Sukarno of Indonesia

"How was it?" Slatzer asked. "Not as good as me, I hope?"

"Not as good as you. You look like an average Joe, but you're okay between the sheets. With Sukarno, I got smaller equipment but faster action."

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After Elvis had seen *Bus Stop*, he was greatly disappointed that he did not get to play Bo. "The role would have been perfect for me," he told his cronies. "Instead, I got to make some quickie shit called *Loving You"* (1957).

Nearly all biographies ignore the fact that Elvis and Marilyn met in the mid-50s. Those books will have to be rewritten in the wake of revelations in October of 2006 by Byron Raphael, a retired William Morris agent who worked for Elvis. He spilled the beans on a salacious secret he'd been harboring for nearly half a century, revealing

a “one-night stand” between Elvis and the blonde goddess in 1956.

Raphael claimed that he received a call one night from Elvis, requesting that Marilyn be brought to him at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. The agent called Marilyn, doubting if she’d accept such a request. But even though she was involved at the time with Arthur Miller, Marilyn took the bait and agreed to the rendezvous.

Raphael reported that when Marilyn came into Elvis’s suite, the famous pair started kissing even before saying a word to each other. Finally, she broke the silence, telling Elvis, “You’re not bad for a guitar player.” After only a few minutes on the living room sofa, according to Raphael, they got up and disappeared into the bedroom. He waited in the living room to take her home, but fell asleep, awakening hours later to find Marilyn and Elvis, both nude, emerging from the bedroom.

Not knowing when their sexual gymnastics would end, Raphael said he “bolted” from Elvis’s suite. Five days later, when he encountered Elvis, Raphael asked how it had gone with Marilyn. “She’s a nice gal, but a little tall for me,” he said. She was also nearly a decade older than him, but he was too much of a Southern gentleman to bring that up.

Raphael got the “historic” coming together of Elvis and Marilyn right. But there was much more to the story than what he knew.

One night in 1966, at an actor’s hangout off Times Square in New York, Shelley Winters, Marilyn’s roommate when she first hit Hollywood, revealed to actor John Ireland (star of the 1949 version of *All the King’s Men*) and to the author of this book a lot more about the interaction of Marilyn with The King. She claimed that their one-night stand blossomed into an on-again, off-again affair that lasted throughout the rest of the 50s, interrupted only by Elvis’ stint with the U.S. Army in Germany.

A lifelong friend and confidante of Marilyn, Shelley said that Marilyn also told her that Elvis as a lover didn’t match the allure of baseball legend Joe DiMaggio. She also claimed that Elvis “didn’t have Joe’s bat to hit home runs with.”

When Shelley asked Marilyn why she continued to see Elvis over the years, MM said, “Other than me, he’s the most famous person there is. How could I refuse? I don’t think Albert Einstein would be a great lover either, but if he called me to his bed, I’d come running. After all, I think he invented the atomic bomb or something.”

The author of this book also knew a young actor, Nick Adams, who arguably was Elvis’s best all time male friend. Nick had appeared with James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), but is remembered today chiefly for his 1962 TV series, *The Rebel*. Nick died, allegedly from a drug overdose, in 1968. Many Hollywood insiders, including actor Forrest Tucker, insisted that he was murdered.

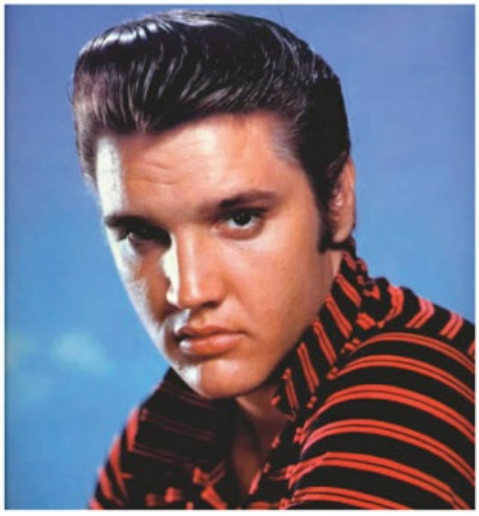
In 1964, when he was making *Hell Is for Heroes*, Nick confirmed to the author details about the Elvis/Marilyn tryst, telling much the same story that Shelley did.

“Elvis was never really that attracted to Marilyn,” Nick claimed. “Not only was she an older woman, she wasn’t really his type. He much preferred Ann-Margret.”

“Then why did he keep seeing her?” the author asked.

“It was an ego trip for him,” Nick said. “At the time, she was the world’s most beautiful and sexiest woman. And she probably found it thrilling to fuck with the man every other woman wanted. Hanging out together was a thrill for both of them. The sex was mere icing on the cake—not the cake itself.”

Although Shelley kept most of Marilyn’s secrets when she was alive, she privately told indiscreet stories about her after she’d died. “Marilyn and I fucked some of the same guys, but I never got around to Elvis. From what I hear, I didn’t miss all that much. Give me Burt Lancaster or John Ireland any day.”



Elvis Presley

Nick Adams as “The Rebel”

When Elvis began to see Marilyn secretly, he expressed his great regret that he had not co-starred with her in *Bus Stop*.

“Don Murray was no Elvis,” she assured him. “The two of us would have at least had the power of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. We would have created a nuclear blast that would have made us the screen team of the century.”

Sometimes Elvis didn’t want sex at all with Marilyn, and told her, “I just want to cuddle.” During some of these evenings, he would talk about his beloved mother, Gladys. Marilyn confessed to Elvis that mental illness ran in her family and that her maternal great-grandfather, Tilford Hogan, had hanged himself at the age of 82. Her maternal grandmother, Della, had died in a mental asylum at the age of 51—one year after Marilyn’s birth. She also told Elvis that her grandmother tried to smother her before being shipped off to the mental ward. But it is unlikely that Marilyn could remember such an incident, since she would have been barely 13 months old at the time. Elvis later confided to Nick Adams that “Marilyn fantasizes a lot about her past. Shit, man, she even told me that Clark Gable was her father.”

Marilyn’s most memorable evening with Elvis—at least according to Shelley—was when he danced “Jailhouse Rock” for her in the nude. “I giggled as I watched him flipping up and down. It was very funny and strangely erotic. Elvis could deliver, I guess,” Marilyn confessed to Shelley. “But he sure wanted to postpone penetration as long as possible. In my opinion, I think his ideal form of sex would be mutual masturbation. He sure likes to play with you

down there. But he likes to use his fingers more than he likes to use the rod. One night, I was a bit drunk and jokingly kidded him, 'Spare the rod, spoil the fuck, Elvis.' He didn't like that at all. In fact, he got up and put on his pants and told me to go home. But he called the next day and apologized."

Elvis Presley in *Jailhouse Rock*

Elvis read less than one percent of the fan mail he received, and Marilyn read even less of her own. But the two of them liked to share some of their more outrageous letters with each other. Men throughout America sent Marilyn nudes of themselves, telling her in graphic detail just what they'd like to do with her in bed. And dozens of lesbians wrote with similar requests.

Most of Elvis' mail—some ten thousand letters a week—came from young girls. Many of them wanted Elvis "to take my virginity," and most enclosed photos of themselves ready, willing, and eager to be deflowered. Some of them threatened suicide if Elvis didn't agree to meet them. The strangest letters came from distraught parents, who threatened to kill themselves if Elvis didn't "cool down his act."

"You're turning my girl evil!" was a typical comment among these parental letters.

"I don't see how I could be a threat to any parents' daughters. I'm just up there on that stage doing what comes naturally," Elvis said.

"Forget it," Marilyn told him. "You're doing fine. Just keep doing what you're doing. Speaking of doing what comes naturally, why don't you come over here and join me in bed and we'll let Mother Nature take her course?"

After Elvis and Marilyn stopped dating, around 1960, and as a token of his gratitude, he bought her a moon-shaped bed whose headboard was upholstered in "shocking pink" leather with scarlet-red sheets and accessories.

When a truck pulled up with the bed at Marilyn's bungalow, she refused to accept delivery. "Tell Mr. Elvis that I don't rock and I don't roll in a Valentine box," she told the deliverymen. "I would never sleep in a bed that would attract more attention than me. After all, I'm the star!"

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In a letter to Cecil Beaton, Truman Capote wrote: "By the time you get this, Marilyn Monroe will have married Arthur Miller. Saw them the other night, both looking suffused with a sexual glow. I can't help feeling this little episode will be called *Death of a Playwright."*

The saga of the Miller/Monroe romance became tabloid fodder, one headline citing them as THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE NAKED VENUS. Robert Levin, a magazine writer, claimed, "The upcoming marriage of the pinup girl of the age and the nation's foremost intellectual playwright seems preposterous." *The New York Post* referred to the coupling as, "America's number one representative of the Body & the Mind."

Marilyn told her friends at Actors Studio "We're going to have the greatest kids in America. With my beauty and his brain, how can we go wrong?"

On June 21, 1956, during the peak of the McCarthy era's "Red Scare," Marilyn was caught up in a political scandal as Miller was summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Ostensibly, the hearings dealt with his application for a passport so that he could fly with Marilyn to London for the filming of *The Sleeping Prince*, later retitled *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

But he knew that conservative lawmakers would make intense efforts to link his name with any communist party affiliations he might have had during the early 1940s. Like Elia Kazan, his friend, Miller would be asked to name names of "fellow Reds."

At first, he was tempted to cooperate with the committee, if only to free himself so he could continue his career as a playwright and author. It was Marilyn who talked him out of it, not wanting to bring any more pain to the already troubled lives of Hollywood writers.

The hearing virtually went nowhere, as Miller evaded most questions until he was threatened with a contempt of Congress charge. Then, the Democratic Representative from Pennsylvania, Francis E. Walter, told Miller that if he could arrange for him (Walter) to be photographed with Marilyn, he would drop the contempt charges. Both Miller and Marilyn refused the offer.

After endless wrangling, Miller was granted his passport so that he could travel to England. It was valid for only six months.

Marilyn was delighted, but on occasion, when she got mad at Miller, she referred to him as "that fucking communist" to her maid, Lena Pepitone.

It was later revealed that Senator Kennedy intervened on Miller's behalf, using his influence with the State Department to get Miller's passport validated.

The case of the U.S. government against Miller would drag on for months. On July 19, 1957, a judge ruled that the Congressional committee did have the right to demand that Miller inform a Congressional committee about members of the Communist Party who he had known. For contempt of Congress, he was fined $500 and given a suspended jail sentence of one month. Miller's lawyers continued to appeal through the courts until the U.S. Supreme Court reversed charges against him in August of 1958.

During the 1956 hearings, Miller announced to the world that he was going to marry Marilyn. She was furious. "He hasn't even proposed yet," she shouted at Milton Greene. Actually, she wasn't sure she wanted to marry him and break up his family. At times, she seemed content to continue with their affair.

By June 22, she'd changed her mind and held a press conference announcing her intention of entering into her third marriage (or was it her fourth?). On June 29, 1956, in a brief civil ceremony in front of Judge Seymour Rabinowitz at the Westchester County Courthouse in White Plains, New York, she married him. On July 1, she married him again in a Jewish ceremony with only family and such friends as the Milton Greenes and the Strasbergs invited.

The second time around, Rabbi Robert Goldberg conducted the ceremony at the home of Miller's literary agent, Kay Brown. Marilyn appeared resplendent in a champagne-colored chiffon dress, carrying a bouquet of purple roses. Both she and Miller exchanged Cartier wedding bands.

Marilyn shocked many of her fans when she announced that she was converting to the Jewish faith. From Goldberg, she was given the tenets of the Re-formed branch of Judaism. The rabbi, who seemed a bit mesmerized by her, asked that she take along a copy of the Torah to study during her honeymoon.

Spyros Skouras, President at the time of Fox Studios, sent her not a telegram of congratulations, but one expressing his fears that patriotic Americans would boycott her future movies because of her association with Miller.

The coverage of her wedding to Miller was topped only by the oceans of ink devoted to the marriage of the abdicated King Edward VIII of England to the American divorcée Wallis Simpson. On the back of her wedding portrait, Marilyn scribbled: "HOPE! HOPE! HOPE!"

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As early as February 9, 1956, it had been announced that Marilyn Monroe Productions had acquired the screen rights to Terence Rattigan's play, *The Sleeping Prince*, which Milton Greene and Marilyn would later re-title as the more commercial *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Apparently, Laurence Olivier, the world's leading Shakespearian actor, was going to be her co-star, although the contracts were yet to be signed.

Until the contract was signed, Marilyn secretly wanted Richard Burton to play the prince to her showgirl. Her history with the Welsh-born actor is muddled. When Burton was dating Susan, the daughter of Lee Strasberg, Marilyn told Susan's father, "I had Burton back when he was making *My Cousin Rachel* with Olivia de Havilland. It was so very easy to take him away from that uptight bitch. He seduced me with that voice of his. As for his pockmarks, I told him they made him look vulnerable."

Helen Hayes was cast on Broadway in a romantic French comedy, *Time Remembered*, with Burton and Susan as her co-stars. Burton wasn't particularly enamored with Susan, but Susan fell madly in love with him.

Marilyn went out on several occasions with Burton and Susan. The younger actress may never have found out that behind her back, Burton was also in hot pursuit of Marilyn. She told Peter Lawford, "When a man like Burton chases after me, he usually catches me because I can't run all that fast, especially in high heels."

Negotiations with Burton didn't work out because of other commitments, so Marilyn offered the role to Olivier. In England, he'd previously starred onstage in *The Sleeping Prince* alongside his mentally disturbed wife, Vivien Leigh, the screen's immortal Scarlett O'Hara. Vivien had been horribly miscast as the American showgirl and was also considered too old for the movie version. Besides, Marilyn told the press, "The part is mine. I own it."

At a press conference with Olivier in New York, Marilyn appeared in *décolletage* with a rather stiff and formal Olivier, a study in contrasts. Already, the press had hailed them as the greatest combination since the mating of black and white.

Her dress was held up with spaghetti straps, and one of the straps broke—deliberately or accidentally—during the confab. Reporter Judith Crist rushed to the rescue with a safety pin.

At this point, Olivier seemed annoyed at being upstaged. He told photographers, "No more leg pictures, boys." He might as well have said "no more breast pictures."

Privately, he whispered to an aide, "I've checked my zipper—I don't want anything else falling out. I'm sure my very English cock would generate far more publicity than Miss Monroe's already overexposed breast."

When asked about Marilyn's sexiness, Olivier said, "She has the extraordinary gift of being able to suggest one moment that she is the naughtiest little thing, and the next that she's perfectly innocent. The audience leaves the theater gently titillated into a state of excitement by not knowing which she is, and enjoying it thoroughly."

En route to England, a grumpy Arthur Miller complained about Marilyn's twenty-seven pieces of luggage and having "to live in a goldfish bowl." The Greenes and the Strasbergs flew to England with the honeymooning couple, and apparently this displeased Miller even more than the extra baggage.

Not since the arrival of the Spanish Armada had a foreign invasion created such chaos. On July 14, 1956 nearly one-hundred bobbies could not control the crowds. Cameras were crushed in the stampede. One reporter fell to the floor and was trampled upon by the mob. An ambulance arrived to rush him to the nearest hospital.

Waiting for them at the airport were Sir Laurence Olivier and Lady Olivier. If Vivien were jealous of the American star flying in to "take my role," she masked it completely and was most gracious to Marilyn.

"Is this how you're usually greeted?" Vivien asked her.

"Not bad for California orphan #3,463 who is now the most famous woman on Planet Earth," Marilyn said. Perhaps Vivien found that statement immodest.

Vivien later regretted her decision to pose with Marilyn for the tabloids. "I should never have posed next to a woman twelve years younger than me. It was more than the age. No woman should pose next to Marilyn."

Initially, the British press lauded Marilyn, although as reporters learned more about her, they turned against her and wrote unflattering copy. From the beginning, no reporter seemed to like her very dour husband. Miller got horrible reviews, one reporter calling him "as cold as refrigerator fish—not like a hot lover, more like a morgue keeper left with a royal cadaver."

That night the *London Evening News* proclaimed, "She's over here. She walks and she talks. She really is as luscious as strawberries and cream." Reporters noted it was not only her first trip to England, but her first trip to Europe.

Hounded by the British press, Marilyn denounced them as "a pack of sex-starved schoolboys."

The Oliviers had arranged for them to stay at Lord Moore's country mansion, Parkside House, on ten acres of land outside Englefield Green, adjoining Windsor Park. "Sir Laurence told me it was a cottage," Marilyn later said. "It's a big drafty castle with no heat."

She did ask Lord Moore what lay ahead down a long, dark corridor. "I don't know, old girl. I always found the walk too boring to go down there and find out. I'd rather sit in the living room and enjoy a gin and tonic. How about you?"

Still recovering from working with Marilyn on *Bus Stop*, director Joshua Logan sent Olivier a telegram. "Load up the camera and put Marilyn in front of it, and keep Paula Strasberg off the set. Know in advance that she'll never be on time. Perhaps she won't show up at all."

Olivier called Marilyn and begged her to show up for the press conference the following morning. She was an hour late. Olivier remarked, "At least she's living up to her reputation."

Olivier had first met Marilyn at a gala in Hollywood thrown by his lover, Danny Kaye. Years later, at their joint press conference in New York, he'd said, "One thing was clear to me: I was going to fall most shatteringly in love with Marilyn. It was inescapable. I thought she was so adorable, so witty, such incredible fun, and more physically

attractive than anyone I could have imagined. I went home like a lamb reprieved from the slaughter just for now. Poor Vivien."

He'd predicted to friends such as Noël Coward, another of his former lovers, "Marilyn and I will be wonderful in bed."

From the very beginning, Marilyn had planned to seduce Olivier. "That's the only way I know how to win him over to my side."

Oswald Frewen, Olivier's longtime friend, visited the set on several occasions. On his first day there, he said, "It was obvious to me that Larry had developed a crush on Marilyn. Her radar picked up on that. I knew it would be just a matter of days before they were fucking."

The actual seduction may have occurred at Pinewood Studios when Marilyn stayed late one afternoon "to go over a scene in my dressing room with Sir Laurence." Vivien had invited Miller to accompany her that night to the performance of a play in the West End.

Other than Paula Strasberg, Milton Greene may have been the only person to whom Marilyn admitted her seduction of Olivier. She told Greene, "I've known some great men—John F. Kennedy, Arthur, and now Sir Laurence. But sometimes they are better in their public performances than in the shows they put on in private."

Soon after their unsuccessful seduction, Olivier soured on Marilyn. As he told Miller, "She does not care about who she keeps waiting, whose money she is spending. I also feel she's on the verge of a nervous breakdown. My patience has worn thin. We should place Vivien Leigh and Marilyn Monroe in the same insane asylum. I'm going bonkers."

Marilyn later confessed to her maid, Lena Pepitone, "He hated me. At parties, I wore tight, revealing gowns which I thought might help him overcome his English reserve. It didn't help. He looked at me like he had just smelled a pile of dead fish. Like I was a leper, or something awful. He'd say something like, 'Oh, how simply ravishing, my dear.' But he really wanted to throw up."

John Gielgud attended a party Rattigan threw at his country estate. "Poor Larry," Gielgud said. "He has to deal with Vivien, a manic depressive, and now Miss Monroe, who seems so emotionally unbalanced she would make Frances Farmer look like a temple of mental health."

From the beginning, Olivier found Paula Strasberg more difficult to handle than Marilyn herself. Paula was, in fact, directing her star. One day he overheard Paula tell Marilyn: "My dear, you are the greatest sex symbol in human memory. Everybody knows and recognizes that, and you should too. You are the greatest woman of your time, the greatest human being of your time, of any time. You can't think of anybody, I mean—no, not even Jesus—except you're more popular."

Olivier was flabbergasted. In all his life, he'd never heard such flattery. "What was worse, Marilyn was eating up every word like it was the Ten Commandments or something."

When Olivier challenged Marilyn on a particular scene, she reminded him that she was President of Marilyn Monroe Productions. "I own this film, and I own you, at least when you're the director. You work for me, remember that, Mr. Director."

Sometimes he would try to give her a very articulate direction, but she would look at him with a blank gaze. Then she'd go over to Paula, who would give her her marching orders for the scene. "Marilyn, honey, just think of Coca-Cola and Frankie Sinatra."

Privately, Olivier told Rattigan, "Paula Strasberg knows as much about acting as a cleaning woman out in the foyer."

Olivier claimed that Marilyn often showed up "looking like one of those witches in the opening scene of *Macbeth*. Bad skin. Matted hair. But she'd later emerge looking stunning. She was a real schizoid. She could literally transform herself into a completely different person. She became Marilyn Monroe, what-ever that was—perhaps an illusion onto which we could project our fantasies."

Paula would order Marilyn to play a scene one way, and Olivier would give a contradictory direction. Confused and usually drugged, Marilyn would in-variably blow her lines.

The most infamous scene was when Marilyn tasted caviar. Her line was simple: "Oh, you poor prince." But it took two days, more than three dozen takes, and twenty tins of caviar.

When she asked for better direction, Olivier told her, "Just look sexy."

She ran from the set, screaming that Olivier had no respect for her as an actress. She rushed to her dressing room and called Lee Strasberg in New York, and kept him on the phone for three hours. He agreed to fly to London at once.

When Norman Mailer learned that Olivier had ordered Marilyn to be sexy, he claimed "that was like asking a nun to have carnal relations with Jesus Christ."

When Lee Strasberg arrived at the gates of Pinewood Studios, Olivier had him barred from entering. Later,

Strasberg met privately with Marilyn. But instead of helping her, he pressed an outrageous demand on her. Seeing her in a weakened condition, he concluded how dependent she was on Paula. He demanded $3,000 a week, with a ten-week guarantee, for Paula's services. "Plus expenses, of course, and double pay for overtime."

In her drugged condition, Marilyn conceded, although she'd have to pay a lot of that out of her profits. Milton Greene was furious, and his fight with Marilyn over Paula's bill was the beginning of the end of their working relationship. Their love affair had ended long ago.

Miller sided with Greene on the matter, calling Paula "a hoax and a charlatan." Dr. Margaret Hohenberg had flown in from New York as well to provide Marilyn with counseling. When Miller heard that the doctor was urging her to give in to the "Strasberg extortion," he charged that she was in on the deal.

Strasberg had one final suggestion for Marilyn before flying back to New York. "Fire Olivier as director. I can fly in George Cukor to do the picture. Olivier is fucking it up."

Miller, Greene, and Paula only increased Marilyn's insecurities in dealing with Olivier. Miller told Marilyn that "Olivier is a notorious homosexual like John Gielgud. He's trying to compete with you like one woman competing with another woman in the same film. Think Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins. He's like a coquette wanting to draw the attention to himself and away from you in the film."

Greene also amplified her suspicions about Olivier: "This ham actor is fifty years old if he's a day. His days as a romantic leading man are over. He puts on more makeup than you do. He also insists on photographing your bad side so he can turn his right side, his so-called good side, to the camera. He wants you to look as unattractive as possible."

Paula set out to prove that Olivier was in love with himself. She relayed a comment he'd made to director William Wyler after viewing his appearance in *Wuthering Heights.* " I was so beautiful, I could go down on myself."

Not content to merely direct Marilyn, Paula one afternoon approached Olivier, charging that "your acting is totally artificial."

He gave her his famous "gray-eyed myopic stare that can turn a person into stone."

When Paula had to fly back to New York to attend to a personal emergency, there was a temporary respite on the set. Her departure gave Marilyn time to pursue her private life. Miller was sequestered in his study most of the time and didn't want to go out at night, except for the rare occasion he accompanied Olivier to see the latest offerings in the theatres of London's West End.

In his memoirs, *Hollywood in a Suitcase*, Sammy Davis, Jr. revealed one affair that Marilyn had that summer "with a close friend of mine. They met at my house. We had to arrange all sorts of intrigue to keep the affair secret. I used to pretend we were having a party, and Marilyn would arrive and leave at different times from my pall."

Senator George Smathers of Florida told the author that that pall of Davis was none other than John F. Kennedy. He had lost his bid for the 1956 Democratic vice presidential nomination to Estes Kefauver, the conservative, coon-skin cap-wearing senator from Tennessee, by a narrow margin of only thirty votes. After that ordeal, then-Senator from Massachusetts JFK wanted a vacation, and he invited Smathers and Teddy Kennedy to go along, leaving a pregnant Jackie back in America.

Their ultimate destination was the French Riviera, where they rented a forty-two foot yacht. They hired a skipper and a French cook, and took along a "bevy of blondes."

Feuding with Olivier, Marilyn refused for three days in a row to show up on the set. Vivien went to see her at her mansion, hoping to intervene as a peace-maker. Vivien shared her personal anguish with Marilyn and spoke of her own breakdowns, especially when she collapsed on the set of *Elephant Walk* in Ceylon (aka Sri Lanka). Elizabeth Taylor had been hired to replace her.

"That cow is probably waiting to replace me any day as the Queen of Hollywood," Marilyn said.

Vivien told her that she'd fall en in love with her co-star, Peter Finch, and "at this very moment I'm carrying his child. I know it doesn't belong to Larry."

Vivien shared her impression of Marilyn with her friend Oswald Frewen. "The girl is rather vulgar and not the brightest bulb in the chandelier."

Frewen later wrote, "Monroe had the brain of a *poussin* and one dress for day and evening: black and cut low."

Later, Marilyn was saddened to learn that Vivien suffered a miscarriage on August 13, 1956.

The press had staked out Parkside House, and one sharp-eyed reporter spotted the Queen's gynecologist paying a visit to Marilyn's mansion. As a result, the tabloids accurately concluded that she was pregnant.

She'd hoped that a child might improve her ailing marriage, but it didn't. Miller had to fly back to New York to attend to his ailing daughter. Before he departed, he left his diary on the desk in the library. When Marilyn went looking for something, she spotted it and could not resist the temptation to read it. The passages he'd written about her broke her heart, as she'd later claim. He called her "a troublesome bitch—not worth the effort. What a waste of

love!"

She was fearful that she was going to have a miscarriage like Vivien. She began to drink vast amounts of champagne while still pill popping. She didn't seem to be aware of the possible damage she might be causing to her fetus. When served English tea, she liberally poured gin into the teacup from a silver flask she carried around with her. Dexamyl was shipped in from New York, as each day she went through a never-ending cycle of uppers and downers. When Olivier tried to direct her, he found her in a barbiturate haze.

Gossip maven Louel a Parsons, on a visit to London from Hollywood, noted what was happening on the set. She later claimed that Marilyn "was like a child asking to be spanked."

After several delays, Paula returned to London from New York. On her very first day back, she confronted Olivier with allegations she'd heard the night before from Marilyn, who claimed that without her in London to protect her, Olivier had been verbally abusive to her. When she delivered these accusations to Olivier, he called her "an overpaid cunt. You've already ruined this film. What other damage do you want to cause?"

Miller's return to England did little to improve his marriage. On his first night back, he told Marilyn he'd accepted an invitation from Olivier to see a play in the West End. She screamed hysterically at him, referring to Olivier as "a cocksucker," and accusing Miller of having an affair with him.

In New York, he'd told such friends as Stanley Mills Haggart, "I deliberately left my diary for her to read. I knew from the first day our marriage was a disaster. It should never have happened. Artists should not marry the Marilyn Monroes of the world—a brief fling, perhaps, but no exchange of wedding bands. Marrying Marilyn made about as much sense as marrying Jayne Mansfield."

Vivien Leigh

Hoping for reconciliation, the next day she told him she was pregnant. "Who's the father?" he asked.

That drove her to a psychiatrist, Anna Freud, the sixth and last child of Sigmund and Martha Freud and one of the founders of child psychology. When Marilyn's own analyst, Margaret Hohenberg, had to return to New York, she arranged for Marilyn to see Freud.

At one point, Miller talked to Freud herself, and both of them agreed that Marilyn was "but a child."

Miller told Freud, "Larry Olivier calls my wife a spoiled brat, and I'm inclined to agree with him. She's not as intelligent as she thinks she is. Maybe she is that dumb blonde she projects onto the screen."

When Marilyn was later asked what it was like to be analyzed by one of the Freuds, she claimed, "She put me on the couch, the casting couch."

It is not known if Marilyn was relating what really happened, or whether she was being witty.

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The highlight of Marilyn's visit to England was an invitation to meet Queen Elizabeth II at a reception following a Royal Film Performance.

For her role in the movie, Olivier had already taught her how to curtsy. Before going to meet the Queen, he

warned her how inappropriate it would be to show a lot of cleavage.

In the receiving line, Marilyn stood next to the handsome Victor Mature. She'd heard many stories about his sexual prowess, and had long been anxious to meet him. She'd once told Shelley Winters, "I need to find out what thrilled Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Lana Turner, Veronica Lake, Rita Hayworth, Gene Tierney, Betty Hutton, and Elizabeth Taylor."

Winters told her that when author Gore Vidal saw that infamous nude picture of Mature taken when he served in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II, he said, "If the Nazis had seen that picture, they would have surrendered immediately, bringing the war to an end."

She later complained, "Victor's dick is too big. He made me bleed. He wanted repeats. I said, 'No way!'"

Marilyn would later claim, "Meeting the Queen was the most exciting thing ever to happen to me. I really didn't know what to say. I just curtsied but I nearly lost my balance and fell over."

Back in Hollywood, Marilyn told Peter Lawford and Jeanne Carmen, "Let's face it: It was a case of the Queen of Hollywood meeting the Queen of England. Before Her Majesty extended her hand to me, I caught her running her eyes up and down my figure and looking right at my breasts. Do you think she has lesbian tendencies like her sister, Princess Margaret? Marlon Brando told me all about that one."

To make small talk, the Queen asked Marilyn, "Do you like your new home? We're neighbors, you know."

"I thought you lived in Buckingham Palace!" Marilyn said.

"We often stay at Windsor Castle, so that makes us neighbors, doesn't it?"

Oh yes, Windsor Park," Marilyn said. "My husband and I have permits to ride our bicycles in *your* park."

She was later introduced to Prince Philip and could not stop talking the next day about how handsome he was. "His Royal Highness undressed me with his eyes," she claimed.

After meeting the Royals, she disappeared with Victor Mature, spending the night in his hotel suite. She arrived the next morning at Pinewood Studios.

She would later confess to Shelley Winters, "It was reading Arthur's diary that drove me into the arms of Jack Kennedy, Victor Mature, and Prince Philip."

"I can buy Kennedy and Mature, but aren't you fantasizing about Philip? You know in the past you've told some tall tales. Albert Einstein comes to mind. Need I go on? When I first met you, you told me that Clark Gable was your father."

"You can believe me or not," Marilyn said. "I don't give a fuck. I know the father of my baby is Prince Philip, and I also know it will be a boy. Do you think that one day he'll become King of England, if some Irish terrorist blows up the Queen's family?"

"Oh, Marilyn, I'm not sure that the crown is passed on that way in the Windsor family."

It is not known if Miller knew of the various affairs Marilyn was having during the course of their so-called honeymoon. However, on one page of his diary, he'd scrawled the word "WHORE!"

Paula became increasingly worried about Marilyn and would later tell both Lee and Susan Strasberg, "Marilyn is delusional. At least I think so. She told me that Prince Philip has promised to divorce Queen Elizabeth and marry her. Of course, I realize men like Jack Kennedy will say anything and promise anything to screw Marilyn. Perhaps Philip did say something like that to her in a moment of passion. But perhaps he said nothing at all like that. Perhaps he was never alone for a moment with Marilyn. It could all be in her mind."

Somehow, the story made its way around *tout* London. John Gielgud told a visiting Truman Capote, "A rumor is going around that Prince Philip is the father of Marilyn's baby. How ridiculous!"

Dr. Anna Freud

Don’t be too skeptical,” Capote warned Gielgud. “I’ve found that Marilyn tells many a preposterous story, but later on, I learn that some of her tales are true.”

From Pinewood Studios during a break, Marilyn sent a telegram to Marlon Brando. “So many men, so little time. I love London. Unlike Arthur, the men are uncut here, just like you.”

Marlon showed the letter to his closest pall, Carlo Fiore. “Isn’t that the oddest letter any woman ever wrote on a honeymoon? Miller’s wrong for her. Only I can handle Marilyn, but I’m not volunteering.”

While at the studio, Marilyn received a letter from her mother that was signed: “Love, Gladys Baker Eley.” In the letter, Gladys asserted: “I am writing personal letters to J. Edgar Hoover about you. There is much that he wants to know about your life.”

Marilyn was furious, but had long ago decided she could not control Gladys.

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After his return to London from the States, Miller remained friends with Olivier as part of a relationship that evolved into that of two serious men of the theater. But Miller’s attacks on the Strasbergs and Greene made Marilyn’s relationships with her mentors increasingly difficult.

Miller referred to both Paula and Lee as “poisonous and vacuous,” and he denounced her ties to them as “religious dependency.” The author also fought with Greene, accusing him of purchasing valuable antiques in London and shipping them to Connecticut, after charging them to Marilyn Monroe Productions.

Dame Sybil Thorndike

The Prince and the Showgirl marked the beginning of the end of Marilyn's relationship with Milton Greene. Back in New York, Marilyn told Stanley Mills Haggart, who was also having legal troubles with Greene, "He's served his purpose, and I want to get rid of him. The trick will be how to do so without his suing me."

Greene blamed Miller for his growing tension with Marilyn. "He wants her for himself. He wants her to work for him. Perhaps star in one of those dreary plays he writes."

In the months ahead, Marilyn would dump Greene and manage to buy him off for only $100,000.

At Pinewood Studios, Marilyn had scenes to shoot with Dame Sybil Thorndike. She kept her waiting for two hours, but Dame Sybil was most gracious when introduced to Marilyn. "Thank God you're not known as Dame Dike," Marilyn said.

"I've been called worse," said the dowager actress.

"I'm sorry I'm so late," Marilyn said.

"Don't concern yourself with it, my dear. You're the most sought-after woman in the world, and I'm sure you have to concern yourself with your affairs instead of some silly little film written by that twat Rattigan. I love gossip. Is it true that Prince Philip propositioned you the other night? He's known for doing such things."

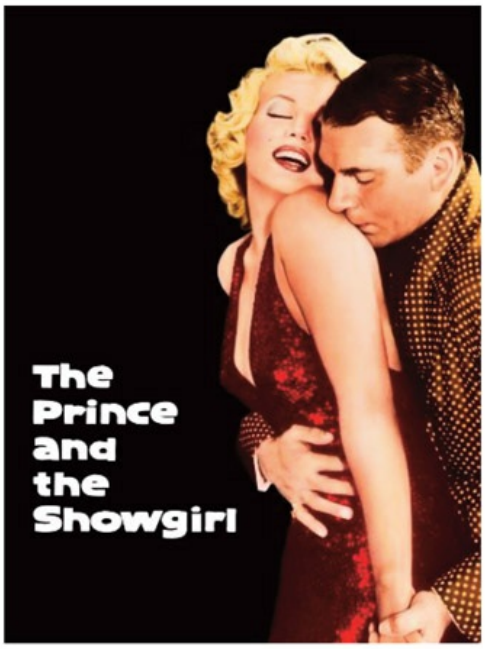
"Yes, he wanted me. I don't truly understand royal protocol. If a royal prince summons you to his bedchamber, isn't a girl obligated to go?"

"Indeed, Dame Sybil said. "That has been true since the days of Henry VIII."

Before she flew out of London with Miller, the British press had come to view Marilyn as some sort of "Hollywood monster." As she departed on November 20, 1956, one tabloid reporter wrote that her exit from the U.K. was "like the thud of a soggy carpet.'

Nonetheless, Sir Laurence and Lady Olivier decided to put up a brave front and were at the airport to see Marilyn off. After her plane was airborne, Olivier was overheard telling Vivien, "Good riddance to that bloody cunt!"

The next day, Olivier called Dame Sybil. "I detested the little bleached blonde whore. She can act only when the camera is rolling. She has bad hygiene. She's a selfish little tart who fucked her way up the ladder. In front of the press, we put on a show for the cameras—and that's it. Monroe and I are finished. The picture is a disaster. Only in Hollywood would a two-bit hooker like Monroe get to act opposite Sir Laurence Olivier, and I say that in all modesty. Do you know what the silly cunt told me at one point? She said she'd like to play Lady Macbeth opposite me."



Marilyn Monroe with Laurence Olivier

Stepping off the plane at Idlewild, a pregnant Marilyn looked dazzling in a black Chanel dress with a mink coat. Technically, her marriage to Miller would continue into the early months of the 1960s. But as she'd later tell Peter Lawford, "Our marriage ended on our honeymoon."

In New York, a reporter asked her how she'd liked London. "It rains there all the time, and I mean that both symbolically and realistically."

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Marilyn dreaded reading the reviews of *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Even some of her most loyal fans found the movie "a waste of her talent."

In London, Noël Coward, told the press, "Larry is superb. Marilyn Monroe looks very pretty and is charming at moments, but there's too much emphasis on tits and bottom."

In *The New York Times*, Bosley Crowther wrote, "The main trouble with *The Prince and the Showgirl* is that both characters are essentially dull. And, incidentally, the scene shown in advertisements of Sir Laurence kissing Miss Monroe's shoulders does not appear in the film."

Actually, the advertisement shots were taken in New York after the film was wrapped. Before his photo shoot with Marilyn for the posters, Olivier told Milton Greene, "I can't stand being in the same room with Miss Monroe. I'd rather make love to that repulsive old sod, Charles Laughton. But, what the hell, it's show business.

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Back in New York, Marilyn and Miller leased a large apartment on the thirteenth floor of a building on 57th Street. Miller still owned a farmhouse in Roxbury, Connecticut, but it was under renovation.

So that they would have a summer place outside the city, the Millers, in 1957, rented Story Hill Farm in Amagansett, a two-hour drive from Manhattan, near the eastern tip of Long Island. While Miller wrote in his study —or tried to—Marilyn, awaiting the birth of her child, took long walks on the beach, read Carl Sandburg's biography of Abraham Lincoln, cooked meals as best she could, read scripts she hated, made a lot of phone calls back to Hollywood, and tried to keep her weight down.

In England, Marilyn had been convinced that her baby was going to be a boy. But during those long walks along the shorelines of Long Island, she abruptly changed her mind. She announced to Miller, "You are going to be the father of a baby girl."

On occasion, she still took the train into Manhattan to see the Strasbergs, although her passion and devotion to them had lessened. She saw more of her psychiatrist, Dr. Marianne Kris, than anyone else. Kris had been recommended to her by Anna Freud in London. As regards the time and attention she devoted to her therapy, Miller complained that, “It was all too much, spending five days a week on the couch re-living all that childhood trauma.”

Since he was also having professional troubles with Milton Greene, author/photographer Stanley Mil s Haggart and Marilyn formed a bond. He often drove out to visit Marilyn and Miller on Long Island. His primary friendship was with Miller, whom he’d known and befriended since the 1940s, when he presided over what was known as “a literary salon” in Greenwich Village, attracting the likes of Anaïs Nin, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, Norman Mailer, and Carson McCullers.

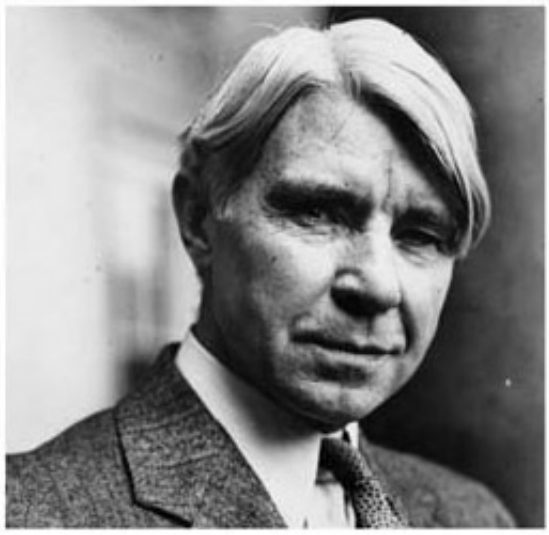
Since Miller didn’t like to be disturbed during daylight hours, Stanley got to enjoy walks and chats with Marilyn, and sometimes they prepared that evening’s dinner together.

One afternoon, Marilyn was seized with a panic attack. “I’m going to lose my baby,” she blurted out. “I just know it. I’ve given up sleeping pills and even champagne…well, almost. I can’t completely give them up or else I’ll have a nervous breakdown.”

Even though Stanley was primarily Miller’s friend, Marilyn nonetheless poured out her frustrations about her playwright husband to him. “Arthur is such a distant husband. He’s always in his study. He claims he got this idea about writing a movie for me while waiting out his divorce in Reno. He calls it *The Misfits*. As you know, I can’t even play music around here, and I have to tiptoe around the house all day out of fear of disturbing our genius in residence. These intellectual husbands aren’t a lot of fun. As for Mr. Joe DiMaggio, he spent all day in front of the TV watching games. My first husband spent day and night fucking me.”

Marilyn also complained to Stanley: “At dinner, he always takes a book or a magazine to table and reads while he eats. I guess he thinks I’m too much of a dumb blonde to talk to. When his parents come to dinner, I’m not included. They talk in Yiddish. Even when they explain their jokes to me, I don’t get it.”

Marilyn’s fantasy, Abraham Lincoln, with his biographer....



Carl Sandburg

"Arthur does everything by himself…" She paused. "Well, almost. I don't think he jerks off because he does visit my bed on occasion. He's got his own bathroom and virtually lives in his study as you well know. He has lunch alone in that study. Stan, did you know that Jewish mothers cut off the foreskins of their infant boys? I don't know why. Men tell me that a circumcised penis has less sensation for the man. Maybe their mothers don't want their sons to enjoy sex that much."

One afternoon, Marilyn began to scream in pain. At last, Miller left his study. "I'm going to lose my baby girl," she shrieked at him.

He found her in the garden, where she'd been tending to some flowers. She clutched her belly. For some reason, he decided not to check her into a hospital on Long Island. He called a local ambulance service and accompanied her as it made the two-hour journey into Manhattan, where she was rushed into emergency at Doctors Hospital, close to the Broadway theater district.

After a valiant struggle—her screams could be heard up and down the hall—her baby was lost. It was an ectopic pregnancy. *(Editor's note: Ectopic Pregnancy (def.): An abnormal pregnancy that occurs outside the womb, often in one of the fallopian tubes. The fetus rarely, if ever, survives, and is usually lost within the first trimester.)*

"We did the best we could," her doctor assured Miller. The doctor also told him that if her baby had been brought to term, "It would definitely have shown fetal alcohol damage, perhaps a deformity, and it would have been born a drug addict."

Stanley brought her tapioca pudding, and Miller's mother, Augusta, arrived with her homemade chicken soup.

Marilyn wasn't so far lost in mourning that she neglected her appearance when she checked out of the hospital. She even called in "Mr. Kenneth" to do her hair. Miller brought her a special wardrobe from home.

Marilyn told him, "You'd think I was dressing for a premiere." She wore heavy dark sunglasses to conceal the red in her eyes. As she exited from the hospital, reporters cheered her, and she resented it. "I lost my baby. Why in hell are the jerks applauding me?"

Back at home, she pulled off her clothes, revealing blood-stained panties. "The nurse insisted I wear them."

Miller retreated to his study, and Stanley arrived the next day. He found her sitting in the bedroom, crying. "It was my last chance," she sobbed. "See the little pink cradle I had bought for her." She rose from the bed in anger and tried to smash it, until he restrained her, gently lowering her back into bed.

He knew she was on pills again. "I hear Milton Greene is taking you to court over a contract dispute," she said. "I hope you win. He'll probably be suing the hell out of me, too, any day now."

Miller knew that Marilyn needed help, and he hired a maid for her, Lena Pepitone. She would remain with Marilyn until her death, and she became a virtual surrogate mother to Marilyn, who took to calling her, "Baby Lamb."

After Pepitone prepared her first dinner, Marilyn pronounced her "one of the best Italian cooks in Manhattan." She had learned the recipes in her native Naples in southern Italy, where she'd married an American soldier at the end of World War II and subsequently moved to New York City. Starting out as a personal maid and wardrobe mistress, Pepitone in time became one of Marilyn's closest friends and most trusted confidantes.

“After the loss of her baby, Marilyn seemed to have lost her self-confidence, almost a will to live,” Pepitone recalled later. “One morning over a late breakfast, she seemed enraged.”

“Not one card of sympathy,” Marilyn said. “Not a god damn one. Fuck the jerks in Hollywood. Fuck the jerks in New York. You’d think Lee and Paula could have sent a shitty ten-cent card.” She sighed. “Call me the loveless love goddess.”

That night, after Pepitone had left for the day, Miller arrived home to find that Marilyn had fallen onto the floor of the living room. He attempted to revive her. She was still breathing but unconscious. He feared she’d deliberately taken an overdose of sleeping pills, or some other drug.

He called an ambulance, which rushed her to Doctors Hospital, where three doctors worked to save her life.

When Pepitone visited her in the hospital the next morning, she asked her boss, “Why did you do it, Marilyn?”

“I did it because Arthur has found out the truth about me. I’m a monster threatening to devour him.”

“That’s not true,” Pepitone said.

“Yes, it is. That’s exactly what he wrote in his diary, and it’s true. He knows I’m not the beautiful innocent I present to the world.”

She spent nearly a week in bed recovering from her ordeal. Miller occasionally looked in on her, but she told Pepitone there were no conjugal visits. He often went out a night, claiming he was going to the theater or being entertained by friends.

Late one afternoon, he came in and presented Marilyn with some pages from *The Misfits* he’d been laboring over for months. The next morning, when Miller left for lunch in Greenwich Village, Marilyn gave Pepitone a review of what she’d read.

“Arthur let me read his crap,” she said. “He may be a great playwright, but he’s a failure as a movie writer. Baby Lamb, I’ve seen hundreds of film scripts, and I know a turkey when I read one. I hate my character of Roslyn. She’s completely one-dimensional. Where is Truman Capote when I need him? Arthur says he’s writing *The Misfits* as a tribute to me. To show his love for me. Some tribute! Some love! It shows his hatred of me. I have figured out what he’s doing. He’s using his movie star wife to cash in—that’s what.”

The next day, complaining that he was suffering from writer’s block, Miller told Marilyn and Pepitone that he was going to the farmhouse where he could write in peace and quiet.

When he’d gone, Marilyn shut her bedroom door. Pepitone heard her making a number of calls. When she finally came out of the room, she told Pepitone to pack two suitcases for her.

“Don’t tell Arthur where I’ve gone if he calls,” she said.

“Will you tell me where you’re going in case of an emergency?”

“I will if you’ll keep it a secret,” Marilyn said. “I’ll be at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. At least there, I’ll get some loving from a man who really cares about me.”

PART FOUR

TWILIGHT OF A GODDESS

The Senator John F. Kennedy Marilyn had last seen in Washington was not the man she encountered at the Mayflower Hotel. Early in 1958, he came into the suite hobbling on crutches, and at first, she feared he'd been in an automobile crash.

She rushed to kiss him, but controlled her passion, sensing he was in agony.

Like a loving mother instead of a hot-to-trot mistress, she found the most comfortable place in the living room for him to sit, discovering it was a special rocking chair made for him in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Before her secret visit to him was over, she would have to go out and buy a medical dictionary.

She had read a definition of Addison's disease, but she still wasn't clear about how it affected him. The dictionary defined it as "a destructive disease marked by deficient adrenocortical secretions and characterized by extreme weakness, loss of weight, low blood pressure, gastrointestinal disturbances, and brownish pigmentation of the skin and mucous membranes."

He threw out other words to her she'd never heard before. She was more than familiar with the concept of "testosterone—I'm on good terms with that myself," she'd told him—and she had at least heard of steroids and cholesterol. "But the rest is Greek to me," she said.

When the occasion was right, she could be very sympathetic to a man, very loving, very kind, and most attentive. That was the case on this visit. Actually, she was longing for the rough-and-tumble sex provided by her former husband, Joe DiMaggio. But she seemed willing to accept JFK on his special terms, which were different from those of every other lover she'd known.

Although the President's health was a state secret, Marilyn indiscreetly provided a blow-by-blow description of her encounter with JFK with such confidants as Jeanne Carmen, Shelley Winters, and Peter Lawford. Only Lawford seemed deeply concerned with JFK's health; the women were more interested in what JFK and Marilyn did in bed. Winters even wondered, "With all those ailments, you'd think sex would be the last thing on the President's mind."

Up until now, she'd more or less dismissed his ailments as a garden-variety back pain, unaware of the gravity of the senator's medical condition.

For the first time, he explained to her just how serious his health issues were. He revealed to her that in September and October of 1955, he'd spent a total of twenty-two "of the most miserable days of my life" in and out of hospitals, submitting to and recovering from surgical procedures.

"Repeated bouts of colitis cause me horrible pains in my abdomen," he told her. "I also suffer from bouts of diarrhea that cause me to lose weight, and I'm already thin enough. I also suffer prostatitis."

"What in the hell is that?" she asked.

"It means I experience pain when I take a piss or even shoot off."

"You mean it hurts you when you get your jollies? That's supposed to feel good."

"I know that. But god damn it, it hurts."

"Then explain something to me," she said. "If it hurts, why do you…"

He interrupted. "The proper term is 'ejaculate.'"

"Then why do you pursue sex so much?"

"I'm given testosterone to deal with my sudden weight loss, and that heightens my libido."

"You don't make your life sound like much fun," she said.

"It's a case of grinning and bearing it and then pressing on. I come down with these fevers of unknown origin, and these fucking specialists Dad hires for me—neurologists, surgeons, urologists, gastroenterologists,

endocrinologists, whomever—can't explain them most of the time."

It was later revealed that the steroids he was prescribed weakened his bones, increasing both back and leg problems. He told her that often, he couldn't reach down to put on his socks. "Sometimes I can't even bend my right knee. I take cortisone—sometimes orally, sometimes as an implant—for my Addison's disease, and I gulp down penicillin and antibiotics for my abcesses and prostatitis."

"I just take Nembutal…well, maybe some other drugs, too," she said.

"At last we have something in common. I, too, take Nembutal to put me to sleep."

"I don't understand. With all these ailments, why do you want to be president?" I would think the job, with all its stress, might do you in."

"I don't think my ailments will prevent me from doing a good job. That's why I'm beginning right now to run for president in 1960. I've got to build up a political machine in every state. For a New Englander and a Catholic to carry the redneck states will be a challenge. Southerners will not like my stand on civil rights."

After her return to Hollywood, Marilyn would make a candid confession to Jeanne Carmen. "Actually, Jack turned me off. I was almost afraid to go to bed with him out of fear that I might catch something I couldn't get rid of. Is Addison's disease contagious? How can you get romantic with a guy who might suddenly be overcome with the world's worst case of diarrhea? It's hard to make love to a man sitting on the can smelling like runny baby shit."

"Why don't you drop him?" Carmen asked.

"Well, there is the remote chance he might become president, and I might sign on as First Mistress, or even First Lady if he divorces that uptight wife of his. I might even enter the history books like my hero, Abraham Lincoln."

"Now, Marilyn," Carmen cautioned. "That's aiming a bit high."

"Jeanne, the trouble with you is that you don't aim high enough. All you care about is seducing another movie star and adding another notch to your garter belt. So you fucked Jack Benny and Errol Flynn. I like to pursue bigger game…like presidents. Going to bed with Jerry Lewis is no big deal any way you look at it."

"Okay, okay," Carmen said. "What I want to know is, did you get it on with this patient? He looks good on the outside, but inside he seems totally fucked up. A basket case."

"We did, but it wasn't one of history's great rolls in the hay. Not when he blasts off and feels pain. I'll let you in on a secret. When he comes in my mouth, I don't swallow. I'm an actress and I can conceal it as I disappear into the bathroom to freshen up. I flush the toilet and spit it out. The toilet makes so much noise, he doesn't hear what I'm doing. His sperm might contain something that would be hazardous to my health."

"Good thinking, girl."

Marilyn later revealed that JFK told her that he and Jackie had sold Hickory Hill to Bobby and Ethel, and that they had purchased a townhouse in Georgetown. He agreed to take her there, since Jackie was out of town.

"Later, I wandered around their house and inspected everything," Marilyn said. "Jackie has good taste. This time, I didn't try on any of her dresses. We did it on the same sheets where he'd slept with her. I could tell they hadn't been changed. Of course, I don't know if he actually fucked Jackie on those sheets.

I suspect she doesn't get much."

"What did you do when you weren't hopping up and down on him?," Carmen asked. "As he lay in pain on his back, I mean?"

"He talked about her," Marilyn said. He claimed they hadn't spoken in three days."

"Jackie did something I'm finding hard to forgive," JFK had told Marilyn.

"My wife hates my mother, Rose. She calls her *belle-mère*. At parties, she breaks everybody up with these devastating impressions of Rose. Perhaps to get even with me for my whoring, she made this special recording and played it for me. Here, put it on…you can hear it." He motioned to a record which lay on the coffee table.

She started to play it and heard Jackie's mocking voice. She'd never heard Rose speak, and didn't know how accurate the imitation was, but his mother's mock voice was telling an imaginary audience that, "I raised three young boys who grew up to be whoremongers."

"Does Jackie know about us?" Marilyn asked.

"I think she does. She told me that she knew you were my favorite movie star because I'd watched your movies three or four times each. Jackie said that since Peter Lawford knows you, I should request an autograph from you as a souvenir."

"That means she knows," Marilyn said. "I'm sure she's aware that I give you souvenirs that are a bit more than an autograph."

Before she left Washington, JFK, according to Marilyn, made a request that might seem unusual except that male fans around the world were making the same request.

"Other than that autograph, what did the fucker want?" Carmen asked.

“He wanted me to pluck out at least three of my longest pubic hairs and give them to him to carry around in his wallet as a token to remember me by when his heart yearns for my special kind of loving.”

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Marilyn had liked retreating from the city, and she and Miller shopped for a house in the Roxbury region of Connecticut, near the site of their former abode. She fell in love with a house built in 1873 and convinced him that they should buy it. “It’s where we’ll live out our final days,” she told him, suggesting they add a nursery for their future children.

Billy Wilder

Her money was used to buy the place, although her accountants warned her that her bank balance was running low. “I guess somebody around this house has to make some god damn money,” she told her husband.

Then, Billy Wilder sent Marilyn a short synopsis of his newest screenplay, *Some Like It Hot*. Marilyn was surprised to learn that each of its male stars would be required to dress in drag throughout most of the movie. Wilder said he was going to try to get Sinatra to play the male lead in drag.

Shooting was scheduled to begin in August of 1958.

Having not read the final script—it didn’t exist—Marilyn had no evidence that she was about to film what many critics would eventually hail as “the greatest screen comedy of all time.” She needed the money and took the role, calling it “another featherbrain blonde part.”

***

For years, Marilyn had defined Montgomery Clift as her screen idol. Before his car accident, which permanently marred his face, she called him “the most beautiful man in the movies, even more so than Tyrone Power and Robert Taylor in the 1930s.”

In contrast, Monty Clift had been dismissive of her. He was rumored to have attended her performance of *Anna Christie* at the Actors Studio, but walked out before it was over.

With one of his male lovers, he went to see Marilyn in *Bus Stop* and reportedly was dazzled by her performance. He expressed regret that he’d turned down the role of the cowboy, Bo.

Having avoided her for years, he abruptly changed his mind and expressed a desire to meet her. Rex Kennamer, who had known both actors for years, arranged a dinner that included each of them. To his surprise, they had little to say to each other. “It was a disaster,” he recalled. “Monty kept downing one glass of Scotch after another. Marilyn preferred Caribbean rum cocktails with a floating gardenia in them.”

Even Frank Sinatra, who had co-starred with Monty in *From Here to Eternity*, was said to have brought them together again for a weekend at his house in Palm Springs. Sinatra had bonded and even lived with Clift during the

making of *Eternity*. But during the previous few years, he had lived through some conflicts with the actor over the issue of Monty's homosexuality. Once, he threw Monty out of his home when he made an aggressive sexual pass at one of his male guests. But in time, they made up.

Sinatra told Dean Martin, "Both Monty and Marilyn are emotional cripples. Perhaps together they could re-learn how to walk."

During the weekend they spent together in the desert, Sinatra more or less left Marilyn and Clift to themselves, as he devoted most of his attention to two blonde showgirls he'd "shipped in" from Las Vegas.

Eventually, Clift and Marilyn opened up to each other, and found that they had more in common than they'd imagined. Before the weekend ended, he was affectionately calling her "Pussy." Their friendship would last until the end of her life.

Long before Marilyn ever met Clift, he had been befriended by Arthur Miller, who had once attended a dinner party where fellow guests included Arthur Laurents, Norman Mailer, and Monty. Miller later wrote, "Regrettably, except in sophisticated circles, homosexuality isn't acceptable in any disguise in most of society. Monty has great guilt over his sexual preference. As an extremely sensitive man, he suffers more than most. But his struggle against his own urges seems to be destroying him. He's always miserable. He drinks all the time, not wanting to grow up and face life as who he really is. He has my deepest sympathy."

When Monty first invited Marilyn for a visit to his apartment in Los Angeles, she was shocked to see how Spartan it was. Empty pill bottles lay everywhere. "We have something in common. Both of us seem to be the druggist's best friend."

He admitted to her that if you're a movie star, "you can get a doctor to issue a prescription in the names of your friends, lovers, or some made-up person."

"We have to do whatever we can to keep us going in this rotten town where someone is trying to stick a knife in your back any chance he gets," she said.

That led to a revelation from him about their mutual agent, Lew Wasserman. "Guess what he's telling producers? That I'm unstable. Me, his fucking client. He was a father figure to me. I thought he'd help me."

"So much for father figures," she said. "I thought Arthur would be a father figure to me. But here I am, the woman, trying to bring home the bacon."

When Truman Capote breezed into town, Marilyn had dinner with him, mainly to talk about "the new man in my life," a reference to Monty.

Capote was dismissive. "He hangs out with street trash, guys with names like Dino, Buck, or Guido. He claims that lower class white boys have bigger dicks than the ruling class."

Capote had worked on the script for *Indiscretions of an American Wife*, a 1953 film set in the *Stazione Termini* (Main Railway Station) of Rome and released in 1953. Directed by Vittorio De Sica, it had starred Jennifer Jones.

"Jennifer didn't know Monty was a homosexual," Capote said. "She developed this really big crush on him. When I confronted her with the truth, she went ballistic. She rushed to her portable dressing room and tried to stuff a mink jacket down her portable toilet, but only succeeded in flooding her room."

What a strange reaction," Marilyn said.

"Monty is wasting his life and his talent," Capote claimed. "You've got enough trouble in your own life. You don't need to take on his troubles, unless you want him to pass on some of that rough trade he picks up. I used to say that a movie star has to be ignorant to be good. Take Garbo, for instance. She never had a thought in her head. She brilliantly performed the words of the scriptwriter, taking her cues from whatever director was handling her. Monty's different. For a screen actor, he's smart. He knows what to do in front of a camera, unless he's too drugged to realize what picture he's making."

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It was the summer of 1946, right after the war. Nineteen-year-old Ohio-born Robert Slatzer had migrated to Hollywood for his summer vacation, hoping to find a minor movie star he could interview. His aspiration was to write articles about Hollywood and its stars.

In the waiting room at 20th Century Fox, where he'd already sat for an hour, out walked a female model. She was dropping off her portfolio, hoping for a screen test. "Hi," she said to him.

"Hi, yourself," he said. "I'm Bob Slatzer."

"I'm Norma Jeane Dougherty," she said. "Just recently divorced. How about you?"

"Never been kissed," he said facetiously, making her giggle.

"By the way, you got any money for lunch? I could use a juicy hamburger and greasy fries."

"I'm carrying around a hundred dollar bill, which is about all I've got to live on out here, unless my parents send more cash."

"That should do it," she said. "I won't eat too much, I promise." A cheap luncheonette offered a sixty-five cent luncheon for workmen at Fox. She skipped the hamburger and ordered the full sixty-five cent meal.

When it was over, he asked her for a date that night. "I could borrow a car from a friend. We could drive out to Malibu. It's lovely there. I was there last night."

"You got yourself a date, big boy. I hear the nicest people in the world live in Ohio."

"I hadn't heard that, but if you say so."

He borrowed a car from a friend of his, Noble ("Kid") Chissell, and drove her to Malibu. At a beachfront dive, she had that hamburger and fries, ordering a coke with it. Later, they went for a walk on the beach.

"Hey, let's go for a swim," she said.

"I didn't bring a suit," he protested.

"You go something to be modest about?"

"It's not that..."

Before his stunned eyes, she stripped down for him. "Race you to the water."

He chucked his clothes, but kept on his underwear, and he chased after her. In the cool waters, he swam to her. Up close, she hugged him, pressing her breasts against his chest.

"We made love that night right on the beach," Slatzer wrote in his memoirs. "I'd known a couple of gals before Norma Jeane. You know, lovemaking in the cramped back seat of a car that was new before the war, that kind of thing. She was very experienced. She told me that her former husband, Jim Dougherty, used to fuck her before he left for work, when he came home all sweaty, and once again before he turned in for the night."

She made it clear to him that night that she didn't want to go steady. "I like to date a lot of men out here, but I'll try to work you in any chance I get."

She kept her promise in the years ahead. Still hoping to become a Hollywood gossip columnist, he was a quick learner about secrets unfolding behind closed doors.

As the months went by, as Norma Jeane transformed herself into Marilyn Monroe, she talked to him about her other boyfriends. He had by then been swinging on the Hollywood grapevine. According to what he'd heard, he was already aware of the gossip associated with her current boyfriends.

"There's Nicky Hilton, for one," she said.
"The Hilton heir," he said. "Foot-long dick. Bisexual."
"Yes to all three. Mel Tormé"
"Love his music," he said.
"Eddie Robinson, Jr."
"Mixed-up kid, lives in his father's shadow."
"James Bacon," she said.
"I want to be the next James Bacon. He's my favorite Hollywood writer."
"Billy Travilla," she said.
"Don't know him."
"He designs dresses for me," she said.
"Just so he doesn't wear them. After all, this is Hollywood."

During the months they were getting to know each other, he worked odd jobs, usually as a waiter, although on a few occasions he was seen unloading bananas at Long Beach. "I helped her pay for her acting lessons whenever I could."

Over the course of many months, Slatzer, like Jeanne Carmen, became one of Marilyn's most influential confidants. "We both discovered that we had U.S. Presidents for ancestors—James Monroe for her, and Warren Harding for me, on my mother's side."

Between odd jobs, Slatzer became a caddy on a golf course for the likes of Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, and Gary Cooper. "These guys like me a lot—I've even been invited on fishing trips with them"

"I wish they'd invite me along too," she said, "as a mascot."

"Hell, they could use you as bait."

Somewhere along the way, Slatzer secretly dated Jean Peters, the future Mrs. Howard Hughes, who would later co-star with Marilyn in *Niagara*.

"We were only occasional lovers at this point, as Marilyn was seeing a different man every night," Slatzer claimed. "She liked to talk to me, really intimate stuff. She said that she'd saved up and paid for a tube-tying

operation. She would later reverse that surgical procedure."

"I did it because I knew having a kid could ruin my career," Marilyn said, according to Slatzer, "Besides, I got tired of all those Back Street butchers. Right before I married Jim, I gave birth to a little girl, but those welfare people came and took her away from me. I was just a kid myself. Hell, at the time, I didn't even know girls as young as I was could even have a child."

Later, she would claim that it was a boy, not a girl, she'd delivered and given up.

She also confessed that while married to Dougherty, she'd once tried to commit suicide. "I turned on the gas in our small kitchen. I might have died had not the mailman arrived to deliver a package for Jim. He smelled gas in the oven and rushed into my kitchen and cut it off. I told him I was just a young bride and didn't know my way around the kitchen. He was tall and handsome, with chestnut brown hair. I felt I owed him something. After all, he saved my life, and I had only one thing to give him."

"Remember that Lana Turner movie, *The Postman Always Rings Twice?"* she asked. "Well, that postman rang more than twice as long as I lived there. He made me realize why I wanted to kill myself. I was not the kind of gal who wanted to face the same old dick every night for the rest of my life. Marriage is such a trap for a woman—it should be against the law."

The influential columnist, Dorothy Kilgallen, learned about Marilyn's affair with Slatzer and wrote about it on August 16, 1952. "A dark horse in the Marilyn Monroe romance derby is Bob Slatzer, former Columbus, Ohio literary critic. He's been wooing her by phone and mail, and improving her mind with gifts of the world's greatest books." That same month, Kilgallen invited him to write a guest column about Marilyn, and he did, publishing it on September 12. *Confidential* picked it up and exposed the Slatzer/Monroe affair, thereby infuriating a jealous Joe DiMaggio.

Shortly before she married DiMaggio, Marilyn may have embarked on a strange adventure during a southbound excursion she took with Slatzer in his 1948 Maroon Packard convertible.

In a bitterly disputed assertion, Slatzer claimed that they were married on the weekend of October 3-6, 1952. Some researchers have disputed this claim, stating that Marilyn in Los Angeles wrote one or two checks during these dates. However, that evidence is not conclusive, because Marilyn paid little attention to the day of the month on many checks she wrote. "I'm not good with numbers," she said. "Isn't remembering the month and the year enough?"

As a result of that much-disputed marriage ceremony, before the end of her life, many sources listed Marilyn's name as "Jeane Mortensen Dougherty Slatzer DiMaggio Miller." In one of the books he wrote, *The Curious Death of Marilyn Monroe*, Slatzer presents a detailed portrait of their quickie marriage, an account which was witnessed and corroborated by "Kid" Chissell, Slatzer's longtime friend, the man who lent him the car he used on his first date with Marilyn in 1946.

Actress Terry Moore, the mistress of Howard Hughes, remembered Marilyn telling that she'd married Slatzer in Tijuana. Jeanne Carmen also claimed that Marilyn told her that she'd married Slatzer. Marilyn later referred to the marriage as "my three-day folly, a madcap adventure South of the Border."

Later, that same year, she'd participate in a mock marriage ceremony with Marlon Brando when she visited director Elia Kazan and him on the set of *Viva Zapata!*, so an impulsive move like this one with Slatzer was not out of character for her.

At Fox, Darryl F. Zanuck learned about the Monroe/Slatzer marriage and exploded in fury, summoning Marilyn to his office. Apparently, he told her that Fox had an enormous investment in her—and "you're fucking up your career. Get your fat ass back over that border and get the God damn so-called marriage annulled. Are you out of your mind?"

Since Marilyn wasn't really in love with Slatzer, and because she was beginning to have second thoughts about it, she quickly told Slatzer what she wanted. He drove her to Tijuana once again, dropping in on the lawyer who had applied for their marriage license. It turned out that the attorney had not filed the papers. According to Slatzer, many Tijuana lawyers who had been hired to arrange marriage licenses for *gringos* never filed the license with the *Distrito Federal*, pocketing the money instead.

Slatzer later asserted his suspicion that the Mexican lawyer he had hired might have recognized Marilyn from one of her film roles, and that he had salvaged a bona-fide marriage license to use later as blackmail. Slatzer demanded that the license be destroyed in front of them. "Our marriage just went up in smoke in a big ashtray filled with cigar butts," Marilyn said.

Whether one believes that Slatzer actually married her or not, he provided very specific details, with witnesses to back them up. He wrote that Marilyn was barefoot when he'd married her because she'd left her shoes at the doorway to a church and that some thief had made off with them. He also claimed that she'd wanted to go nightclubbing at a joint "where Rita Hayworth once danced when her father was forcing sex onto her."

Slatzer also wrote about their honeymoon night at the Rosarita Beach Hotel, where an investigative reporter drove south and subsequently learned that indeed, there had been a couple registered during that time period in that hotel as "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Slatzer."

Slatzer's claim became even more believable when he said that at least three times during his so-called honeymoon, he overheard Marilyn calling Joe DiMaggio and "talking lovey-dovey."

She, of course, went on to marry DiMaggio for a brief union, and Slatzer eventually fell in love with an auburn-haired woman from Ohio and married her. Their union was stormy, even violent, and a divorce followed within two years. He went back to seeing Marilyn again whenever she made herself available to him, usually when she was feuding with some lover and wanted sympathy.

When she returned to Hollywood for her role as Sugar Kane in *Some Like it Hot*, she called Slatzer and invited him to come over for a reunion breakfast prepared by her maid.

Arriving at her home, he was let in by the maid. Marilyn emerged from her bedroom completely nude. "I couldn't find my robe," she told him.

"She never minded exhibiting herself, but I couldn't help but notice that she'd put on weight. It wasn't the body I had first seen on the beach on that long-ago night in Malibu."

He said that she drank three Bloody Marys before the morning toast was served. Then, when the maid served breakfast, "she picked at her food and sipped a champagne split. From the living room came the sound of a Frank Sinatra recording. In fact, she played Sinatra records all during my stay."

After breakfast, she invited him into her bathroom, where she took a bubble bath, inviting him to scrub her back. "She was bitter about almost everything," he said.

"I can't trust anybody anymore, you being an exception," she told him. "Especially that Arthur Miller. He's trying to use me to sell this fucking Western script he's written. Once you become a big star, everybody tries to use you. You're the only one who's not a bloodsucker. If a guy doesn't want my pussy, he wants to use me to make a buck."

Actually Slatzer, after Marilyn's death, would write two books about her and devote much of the rest of his life to capitalizing off his relationship with her. He would also extensively investigate the mysterious circumstances of her untimely death.

As the day progressed, and as Marilyn's drinking increased, she told him, "My dream of becoming a serious actress is over. *The Prince and the Showgirl* is a flop, thanks to Laurence Olivier. He's a lousy director, a lousy actor, and a lousy lay. I need money, and I'm forced to play Sugar Kane—another dumb blonde role. Isn't that an adorable name? Sounds like a Las Vegas stripper working the Ohio Turnpike."

"Marilyn was coming unglued," Slatzer said. "She kept ordering her maid to bring her food—hamburger and French fries, later five small lamb chops, and by six o'clock that night a plate-size *Wiener schnitzel*. She also devoured a monster bowl of chocolate pudding."

"I'm going to make myself so God damn fat that Billy Wilder won't want me to star in his fucking picture."

In spite of the setting—"and the nudity"—Slatzer later said he didn't have sex, although he spent most of the day and night with her. "Sex seemed about the last thing she had on her mind. At one point, she invited me into her bedroom, where she was sitting in the nude playing a ukulele and singing 'I Wanna Be Loved by You.' She told me she was rehearsing to do that number with the ukulele in *Some Like It Hot."*

Back in her living room at around midnight, she confessed to Slatzer that she was having an on-again, off-again affair with Senator Kennedy, who was laying the groundwork to run for President in 1960.

"I was born on the wrong side of the tracks, and Jack was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Even so, he's madly in love with me. If it wasn't for that presidency thing, he would divorce his wife and marry me right now. He's intelligent, just like you, Bob. Both of you have read a lot of good books."

Before he left at two o'clock that morning, he said she had clung to him and given him a passionate kiss. "You and I should have stayed married. Settled down somewhere on a small ranch in the Valley and raised six kids—three boys and three girls."

"Well, we both live in Hollywood, the town of broken dreams," he told her before giving her a good night kiss." Welcome back home, darling. Hollywood's biggest star has returned to reclaim her throne."

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In the summer of 1958, Marilyn made the Billy Wilder film, *Some Like It Hot*, based on an obscure German movie musical, *Fanfaren der Liebe (* aka *Fanfares of Love)* first produced in 1932. For the American remake, the first version of the script was entitled *Not Tonight, Josephine*.

It's the story of two unemployed musicians who witness the St. Valentine's Day massacre in Chicago. To escape from the mob, they disguise themselves as women musicians in an all-female band named Sweet Sue's Society Syncopaters. The lead singer in the band is "Sugar Kane," the role in which Marilyn eventually starred.

As Wilder had envisioned it, Sugar was to be played by Mitzi Gaynor and the drag queens by Bob Hope and Danny Kaye. The director was hardly a casting genius. His original dream for *Sunset Blvd*. involved casting Mae West as Norma Desmond, the fading vamp of the silent screen.

A one time, Wilder envisioned Frank Sinatra playing Josephine, who falls in love with Sugar. Sinatra dropped out when he got the script. "There's no fucking way I'm going to play a broad."

Although Marilyn had been absent from the screen for two years, she was still listed among the film industry's Top Ten Box Office Stars, a list that included Sandra Dee, John Wayne, Rock Hudson, and Doris Day.

She agreed to play the role after being offered $200,000, her highest fee ever, plus ten percent of the gross over $4 million. Her share would eventually come to $4.5 million, most of the money eventually going to Lee Strasberg's second wife, Anna, whom Marilyn never met.

Fanfares of Love, the German-language inspiration for...

Some Like It Hot *(left to right)* Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, and Marilyn, with four musicians from Sweet Sue's Society Syncopaters

Before shooting began, Marilyn learned that her male co-stars, both of them cast as women, were comedian Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis. The film would represent a reunion of sorts, since during her early days as a struggling starlet, she and Curtis had briefly been lovers.

The producers arranged for the very gay Orry-Kelly, the costume designer, to design the men's drag. Later, Orry-Kelly infuriated Marilyn when he announced "Tony has a more delectable ass than Marilyn."

During pre-production, Wilder hired Judy Garland to coach Marilyn in the delivery of her songs as Sugar Kane. For years, Marilyn had virtually worshipped Garland, who was her favorite singer after Sinatra.

When Marilyn was first introduced to Garland at a party at producer Charles Feldman's house, she followed Garland from room to room like a stalker.

The two stars had much in common. Both were known for alcohol, drugs, numerous affairs (with both men and women), pills, and emotional upsets that caused delays in film production.

Producers regarded both Garland and Marilyn as unreliable. The difference was that by the late 1950s, Garland was no longer big box office, and Marilyn was, so Fox was willing to put up with almost anything, as long as she kept the box office millions coming in.

On their first day of working together, Marilyn confessed to Garland, "I'm scared, so very scared. I've been so emotionally upset lately, I'm afraid to face those cameras."

"Welcome to the club," Garland said. "I've been scared all my life. The press has learned about some of my suicide attempts, but not all of them."

"You, too?" Marilyn asked. "I first attempted suicide when I was sixteen."

"And we're still here," Garland said, "although perhaps not for long. You and I are two dames who don't believe in sticking around at the party when the host no longer wants us."

"You're still idolized," Marilyn said.

"I still have my fans, who consist mostly of the boys today," Garland said. "You're riding high on the horse, but this town likes to push you off your saddle to make room for someone younger, prettier. In your case, that won't be easy to do. I think you and I are unique show business personalities. There is probably no *new* Judy Garland, as there will be no *new* Marilyn Monroe."

"Thank you for saying that," Marilyn said. "It means a lot."

"Now let's get down to work, baby lamb," Garland said.

The complete professional, Garland went through Marilyn's three songs in the film, including "I'm Through With Love," "I Wanna Be Loved by You," and "Running Wild." Although Garland and Marilyn had completely different styles, Marilyn later told Wilder that "Judy was a great help to me. By showing me how she'd do the song, I learned to find my way through the number."

The two women were warm and cuddly with each other, with lots of kisses and hugs. Garland knew full well what Marilyn was suffering through, having been there so many times herself. Sometimes Marilyn would call Garland at three o'clock in the morning, and on several nights, she slept over with Garland.

When filming began, Wilder spread the rumor that Garland was having an affair with Marilyn. Sinatra heard that, too, from Garland herself, and it was a secret he could not keep to himself. Neither could fellow Rat Packers Peter Lawford and Sammy Davis, Jr.

But, like that summer wind that Sinatra sang about, the Monroe/Garland friendship and their devotion to each other came and quickly went, as both of them moved forward to face their respective upcoming disasters. "It was an interlude," Marilyn later told Wilder. "But for one shining moment, I felt I'd met one person who truly understood me—and it wasn't my so-called husband, Arthur Miller, a total loser."

Shooting for *Some Like It Hot* began on August 4, 1958. The dreaded Paula Strasberg, acting coach from hell, was on the set, Wilder regarding her as a "god damn annoyance." Throughout the first week, she offered advice in a code perhaps understood only by Marilyn herself. "Play the scene like Mae West and Little Bo Peep combined." Or else she'd say, "As Sugar, walk like Jell-O on springs."

At the beginning of the shoot, Marilyn invited Curtis, her lover of long ago, to her room. After some talk about the movie, she moved toward him, signaling him to make love to her.

In a memoir, he wrote, "We spent the night together. We were affectionate with each other. I stroked her hair, and my hands moved all over her. Touching her, any part of her, never felt obscene or vulgar. I couldn't be vulgar with her. I didn't know what effect it might have on her. But how do you define vulgar? I didn't know. That was my problem with her. I genuinely didn't know what she wanted or didn't want. That was probably because she didn't know herself. She was a little girl with this incredible body. And I mean incredible. A body that had everything a man could want. She had hips like a Polish washerwoman. Not to the point that she was ungainly, but there was such a contrast between her hips and her back. She had that narrow back. And full breasts. And a long, graceful neck. She had an incredible, unique body. And she knew it. She used her sexuality."

Judy Garland

After that night of passion, everything else was downhill for them. Her endless delays caused a rift between them. He was best during his first three or four takes. She was often at her best after she'd done three dozen. Naturally, since she was the box office attraction, Wilder had to use the scenes where she, not necessarily Curtis, appeared at her best. Curtis' best takes usually ended up on the cutting room floor. "After forty-five takes, I wasn't my best," he confessed. "But she blossomed after a series of lackluster takes. Although I was hailed in some quarters for my interpretation of Josephine, actually my best work never made it into the movie because of her retakes."

During the early stages of filming, Wilder hired three different female impersonators to teach Lemmon and Curtis how to "do drag." When Wilder came into Curtis' dressing room one afternoon without knocking, and caught one of the drag queens going down on Curtis, he fired the cross-dresser on the spot. "That's not what I had in mind," he told the bisexual Curtis.

When Marilyn first saw Curtis in drag, she said, "My God, you look like a cross between Joan Crawford and Frankenstein."

Perhaps because of all her personal problems, Marilyn had never been more difficult during a shoot. Wilder, of course, had worked with her before on *The Seven Year Itch*. "To her, everybody was a cocksucker, a shithead, a bastard, a fuck-up," Wilder said. "Only Elizabeth Taylor had a worse potty mouth."

Later, Curtis' emotional link with Marilyn collapsed. Because of her endless delays and foul treatment of everybody, he came to hate her. When asked what it was like to make love on camera to Marilyn, he said, "Kissing her is like kissing Hitler."

Over the years, his attitude toward her mellowed, and he denied having ever said that. But he did.

When reminded of his remark, she said, "I don't understand why people aren't a little more generous with each other. I don't like to say this, but I'm afraid there is a lot of envy in this business. If I have to do intimate love scenes with somebody who really has these kinds of feelings toward me, then my fantasy comes into play. In other words, out with him, in with my fantasy. He was never there."

That was Marilyn's public comment. Privately, she told friends, "Let's face it: Tony would rather be sucking cock than making love to me. His boyfriends tell me he takes it up the ass."

"She was the meanest woman I ever met," Wilder said, "and I worked with the witch of Hollywood, Gloria Swanson, on *Sunset Blvd."*

During an interview with *Time Out*, Curtis said, "She was a 600-pound gorilla. But she acted like a spoiled six-year-old brat. She told me that I was funnier than Jack Lemmon as Daphne, but she told him she wished she ended up with him and not me at the end of the picture."

Marilyn put on weight during the filming. When she saw the first rushes, she denounced Wilder "for making me look like a fat pig."

One day, she had been scheduled to show up on the set at ten o'clock that morning, but she didn't appear until six o'clock that evening. She looked around the set and didn't see anybody. Wilder had dismissed the crew, since he had to pay them overtime whenever they worked at night. Marilyn shouted to Paula Strasberg, "Where is the fucking Kraut? What in hell am I supposed to do with this shitty role, playing straight man for two drag queens?"

Tempers flared as expenses skyrocketed. On some days, Marilyn didn't show up at all. On other days, she was too drugged or drunk to remember her lines. One piece of dialogue, "Where is that bourbon?" had to be shot fifty-five times.

"I got fucking tired of hearing about her God damn problems," said Wilder. "I didn't give a rat's ass about the dame's fucking problems. I wanted to get the film made. Thank God it was in black and white. A color film would have really run up the budget."

When Marilyn got back to New York, she told Shelley Winters and others, "I hate Hollywood. It's full of big tit blondes trying to look like me. Everybody hates everybody else, but pretends to kiss each other at parties. It doesn't mean a fucking thing. It's all shit! One thing I found out about most actors, producers, and directors out there. All of them, with an exception here and there, have tiny dicks."

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Arthur Miller arrived on the set of *Some Like It Hot*, and a writer there referred to him as "A New York Jew wandering in the Land of Oz."

When he was informed by Wilder of how Marilyn was behaving and delaying production, he chastised her: "How can you show up and not know your lines? And how dare you be late and hold up the crew?"

"You can kiss my ass, Mr. Miller," she said before storming off the set.

As if to make it up to her, Miller, the following day, approached Wilder and asked him, "Would you go easy on her? Let her off at four o'clock instead of making her work late?"

"My dear man," Wilder said, "I might do that if she showed up for work. Many days at four o'clock, we are still waiting here for her."

On some nights, Marilyn arrived back at their residence, in the words of one writer, with "the semen of another man leaking from her cunt and the stink of cigarette smoke in her matted hair."

On the evenings she did come home to him, she spent it behind the locked door of her bedroom, sipping gin out of Sugar Kane's flask, a prop she'd brought home from the set.

After perhaps the worst argument she'd ever had with Miller, on September 12, 1958, she locked herself away and took an overdose of sleeping pills. Sensing what was wrong, Miller broke down her door and found her comatose. He called an ambulance, and she was rushed to the hospital, where her stomach was pumped.

A month after her suicide attempt, she discovered she was pregnant once again. When Miller heard this, he was furious, because he knew that he hadn't been sleeping with her.

Years later, in a memoir, Tony Curtis confessed, "I knew the kid was mine."

Her gynecologist, Dr. Leon Krohn, warned her that her continued massive consumption of barbiturates and alcohol would damage the fetus. As a response, she told him that if she gave up drinking and pills, "I might not live long enough myself to have the baby."

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Tony Curtis with Marilyn in *Some Like It Hot*

A rare insight into Marilyn's emotional state during the filming of *Some Like It Hot* appears in a memoir penned by David Conover, the first photographer to take pictures of her for publication. His contact with her occurred in 1944 when she was still known as Norma Jeane. Some one hundred pictures of women factory workers were submitted to Captain Ronald Reagan, who was stationed in California, handling public relations for the Army. He selected Norma Jeane as an ideal subject, and assigned Conover to photograph her, at work, as a feature to appear in *Yank* magazine about women at work on the home front turning out aircraft, munitions, and parachutes.

Years later, in the depths of her despair during the filming of *Some Like It Hot*, Marilyn heard from Conover. Normally, she might have ignored his letter, but he evoked a memory of a more innocent time. She wrote to him, saying, "I probably have you and Ronald Reagan to blame for putting me on the road to stardom. What you and Reagan didn't tell me was how empty stardom is once you have it."

In his memoir, Conover published her response to his letter, which she wrote that early day in September during a lull on the set of *Some Like It Hot*.

"I am pregnant again. God know I should be happy, but I'm not. I'm depressed—and to be honest, scared. The pain is growing worse and my breasts are intensely sore. Oh, how I want the child—I've struggled so hard—but now I don't. Not really—not deep down. What am I to do? You see, our marriage is—well, it's like a sinking ship and I have no one to cling to—like a life preserver. Arthur is cold and remote. He really doesn't want the baby. Maybe this is why I've been such a meanie lately. I take out all my anger and frustration on everybody else. Marilyn"

By the first week of November, Wilder was no longer speaking to his star. He told a reporter he'd never make a third picture with Monroe. "I have discussed this project with my doctor and my psychiatrist, and they tell me I'm too old and too rich to go through this again."

In spite of the downright hatred that was flourishing on the set, the movie ended in one of the funniest scenes in the history of Hollywood.

Throughout the shoot, comedian Joe E. Brown, playing the very wealthy Osgood Fielding III, had been chasing Daphne (played by Lemmon, in drag). During the film's final reel, as they are fleeing together in the back seat of a speedboat on their way to his yacht, with Tony Curtis and Marilyn in the back seat, Osgood tells Daphne that he wants to marry her. Daphne pulls off her wig. "I can't marry you—I'm a man."

Without losing a beat, and just before THE END flashed across the screen, Osgood says, "Nobody's perfect" and smiles demurely. The irony that only the most hip of the viewers of the 1950s understood involved the fact that Osgood had been aware all along that Daphne was indeed, a man in drag.

Marilyn with Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot*

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After flying back to New York, Marilyn settled in to leading a separate life, although living under the same roof as her husband. On December 17, 1958, she experienced acute pains and was rushed to Lenox Hill Hospital in Manhattan, where she was hauled in on a stretcher.

Dr. Hilliard Dubrow, her New York physician, rushed to her side. The last thing she remembered was his assurance that "Everything is going to be all right."

When she woke up the next morning in a sedated daze, she learned that everything wasn't all right. Once again, she'd lost her baby.

She blamed herself for the loss, "I killed it!" she yelled at her New York maid, Lena Pepitone. "I killed it just like I stuck a knife through its poor little heart. Gladys told me I wasn't fit to bring a child into the world. I hate to admit it, but she was right. Gladys knows a lot about unfit mothers."

She would stay out of hospitals until June of 1959, when she would go in again for some exploratory surgery to determine if she could ever give birth to a child. At Lenox Hill, Dr. Oscar Steinberg told her that she could not get pregnant again. "It's just not going to happen. But I will name my firstborn in your honor."

Marilyn spent a dull, depressing winter mourning the loss of her baby. But in the early spring of 1959, Miller persuaded her to attend the March 30 premiere of *Some Like It Hot* at Loew's State Theater in Manhattan. Throughout most of the screening, she covered her face in embarrassment. The audience roared with laughter throughout the film.

When she returned home, she grabbed a bottle of champagne from the refrigerator and ran toward her bedroom. When he called to her, she screamed, "It was disgusting. Did you hear them laughing at me? I was a funny fat whore. That's why they laughed."

She locked her bedroom door to him. He hadn't left the marriage yet, and *The Misfits* was yet to come, but for all practical purposes, both of them knew their marriage was over, as they confided to their respective friends.

Around the time one of Marilyn's biggest fans, the writer Norman Mailer, went to see *Some Like It Hot*, he had heard that she was breaking up with Miller. "I do not think Marilyn Monroe would be married to anybody. She belongs to all men."

The film was a hit worldwide. Even the government of Iraq allowed it to be shown, although censors there had previously banned *Bus Stop*, asserting that it was "dangerous to boys and young men."

In Istanbul, a young Turk had slashed his wrists while watching Marilyn emote in *How to Marry a Millionaire*. During *Some Like It Hot*, many young men masturbated in the theater while watching Marilyn as Sugar Kane. In some countries, censors cut 105 feet out of one of her seduction sequences with Curtis.

The success of *Some Like It Hot* didn't help Marilyn's depression. Lena Pepitone, the maid, said, "Every day she was either angry, hysterical, or both."

The film today lives in legend. The American Film Institute named it number one on its list of "100 Funniest Movies of All Time."

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Although many scripts were presented to her, Marilyn did not work in 1959. The role that interested her was that of Holly Golightly in Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, based on his best-selling novella.

"When I created the character of Holly, I had Marilyn in mind for the role." Capote said.

To his friends, Capote referred to Marilyn as "unschooled, but enormously brilliant."

At one point, Capote claimed that Marilyn had deliberately intended to "sabotage" Miller's *The Misfits* through her lobbying for the role of Holly Golightly. As her biographer, Barbara Leaming, put it, "She seemed eager to subvert Arthur's plans. If he was willing to put up with anything to get his picture made, then she, apparently, was ready to do anything to stop it."

"Meeting with Tennessee Williams and his lover, Frankie Merlo, Marilyn presented her dilemma to him. "Which picture should I make? Arthur Miller's *The Misfits* or Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's?"*

" It's no contest," Tennessee advised her. "Go for Capote's Holly Golightly. Miller's play is about rounding up mustangs for the slaughter house, where the meat will be canned as dog food. Is he out of his mind? Who would want to see a play about that?"

Elizabeth Taylor in *Butterfield 8*

"Don't condemn it too much," Merlo cautioned him. "After all, you wrote a play about beach hustlers cannibalizing a homosexual in Italy. I'd rather eat horse flesh that human flesh."

"Of course, Holly is another slut role for me, but you've made up my mind for me," she said.

"Slut roles can be fabulous," Tennessee said. "I hear Elizabeth Taylor's going to play a slut in *Butterfield 8."*

" Call that type casting," Marilyn said.

Capote went on to work with her during his creation of two of the scenes from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, excerpts which she performed in front of the highly critical Actors Studio.

Later, Susan Strasberg recalled Marilyn's performance at the Actors Studio, but only after she'd seen the completed movie version. "It was a great moment for Marilyn and should have been captured on film. Audrey Hepburn, who eventually got the role, was wonderful, if you could believe such a delicate little creature could be a working whore. I don't mean that Marilyn was sluttish, but she looked like she was familiar with the profession. Actually, she would have brought a dimension to *Breakfast at Tiffany's* that Audrey didn't. But Marilyn had earned such a bad press for all the delays on *Some Like It Hot* that Blake Edwards, the director, didn't want to use her, fearing she'd break the bank."

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In September of 1959, the First Secretary of the Soviet Union's Communist Party, the most powerful communist in the world, Nikita Khrushchev, embarked on an official visit to the United States. In anticipation of that event, Spyros Skouras, director of 20th Century Fox called Marilyn in New York and asked her if she'd fly to Los Angeles to greet him during his upcoming visit to Hollywood. Skouras told her that the visit of the Soviet chairman would be the media circus of the year, and he wanted Marilyn there to mingle with Elizabeth Taylor, Debbie Reynolds, Judy Garland, and Kim Novak. "If we're having all those broads, why not the Queen of the Love Goddesses?"

That argument seemed to win her over, and she asked Arthur Miller if he'd accompany her. After thinking it over, he refused, saying, "J. Edgar Hoover already thinks I'm a card-carrying communist. If I flew across the country to shake the hand of Nikita Khrushchev, that's all the evidence the fucker would need to nail me."

Instead, Miller asked his friend and publisher, Frank E. Taylor, if he'd accompany Marilyn to the West Coast, and he agreed. At the time, Taylor was editor-in-chief of Dell Books, but within a few short months, he would become the producer of *The Misfits*.

Years later, in Key West, Taylor shared memories not only of that trip, but of the filming of *The Misfits*, with the author of this book. In fairness to him, some of his astonishing remarks were not meant for publication.

Reporters surrounded Marilyn as she landed at the Los Angeles airport. As Taylor remembered it, "She ambled down the ramp slowly, her pelvis thrown back, her chest thrust forward, her hips swimming rhythmically from right

to left and back again. It took all of three minutes for her to reach the bottom of the ramp."

A reporter waiting there asked, "Marilyn, have you come back to Los Angeles to make another movie, or to cozy up to Khrushchev?"

"I'm here to meet *him*," she said, smiling provocatively. "That is, if he didn't bring Mrs. Khrushchev."

"Do you think he wants to meet you?" the reporter asked.

She threw him a hostile look. "I certainly hope he does, or else I've wasted my time flying across the country to say hello."

After she'd settled into her bungalow, she placed a call to Frank Sinatra, who was filming *Can-Can* with Shirley MacLaine, a role that had originally been offered to her.

She had heard that he was going to marry Juliet Prowse, the star dancer in *Can-Can*. Until that time, Marilyn had held out some vague hope that Sinatra would marry her after she divorced Miller.

"I like what we have between us," Sinatra told her, and "I'd like to continue it. Let's don't spoil it with marriage." He'd later change his mind.

Marilyn called Jeanne Carmen and told her that she was devastated by the rejection. "I can't believe Frank would treat me this way. He told me he loved me and wanted to spend the rest of his life with me."

"Oh, Marilyn," said the more realistic Carmen. "How many men have told you that?"

At her bungalow, Marilyn arose at seven that morning to prepare herself for her audience with Khrushchev. She summoned her friend, Ralph Roberts, "the masseur to the stars," to give her a wake-up massage. Agnes Flanagan arrived two hours later to work on Marilyn's body makeup. Soon, Whitey Snyder, her favorite makeup artist, entered the bungalow to "help me put on my warpaint." Then, her favorite hair stylist, Sidney Guilaroff, was the last member of her support team to show up.

Nina and Nikita Khrushchev

"Paint a face on me that says 'fuck me, Nikita,'" she instructed.

When she was fully made up and camera-ready, Skouras dropped by her bungalow. Then he told Taylor, her escort, "I want you to make sure she shows up. She's got to be at that luncheon…and on time. You see to that." Looking her over like his choicest slab of beef, the Fox executive predicted, "You are going to steal all the attention away from the chairman."

In a black net dress that was rather transparent in the bosom, Marilyn made her way to the limousine where her chauffeur, Rudi Kautzsky, had been waiting to begin the ten-minute ride to the Fox Studios on West Pico Boulevard.

When she saw the almost empty parking lot, Marilyn went into a state of panic. "Oh, I've done it again. We're late. Everybody is gone." Taylor assured her that for once in her life, she was actually early for a scheduled event.

Inside the Fox Studio, she turned to Taylor once again for reassurance. "How do I look?"

"You're bulging out in all the right places," he assured her.

"I'll tell you one thing," she said. "Nikita Khrushchev is a hell of a bigger name than President Sukarno of Indonesia."

As the other guests began to pour in, Sinatra was among the first to greet her, giving her a big kiss. "Oh,

Frankie, don't spoil my makeup. It took me five hours to get ready for this show."

"Don't worry about it, kiddo," he said. "You're a natural beauty."

Frank Taylor later claimed that Sinatra whispered in her ear that he'd try to knock off "a quickie before you fly back East and into the arms of Arthur Miller."

One of the guests was Richard Burton. He told Marilyn that he was sorry that he hadn't been available to play the role of her co-star in *The Prince and the Showgirl*. "I would have played that role completely different from Larry. I'd have made the fucking prince a little more human."

Elizabeth Taylor was among the stars filing into the luncheon. She walked past Marilyn without speaking. She may have noticed Burton, but this event occurred months before their affair in Rome on the set of *Cleopatra*.

Elizabeth had already visited Moscow during January of 1958, a cold, dark month. Khrushchev was made aware of her during her time there. When Elizabeth made her first appearance in Moscow, wearing fur-lined red leather boots and a mink coat, several fans approached, asking her for her autograph. "Every god damn one of them asked me if I was that Marilyn Monroe thing." As she later reported, "I came, I saw, I conquered."

Actually, that wasn't entirely true. On the arm of her then-husband, Mike Todd, later to be tragically killed in an airplane crash, Elizabeth discovered that most Russians did not know who she was. At an official dinner, Khrushchev, according to reports, kept casting an eye at her. The serpent eyes of Nina Khrushchev, Nikita's wife, followed those of her husband. She asked an aide, "Who is the pretty young lady?" after staff members of virtually every foreign embassy in Moscow had fawned over her.

Khrushchev was already familiar with Marilyn's image, however, before his arrival in America. He had attended the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, at which she had appeared as Sugar Kane on sixteen side-by-side movie screens at the same time. Some forty thousand Soviets cheered wildly. The chairman had attended the event after his much-photographed debate with Richard Nixon within a replica of a model American kitchen.

Shelley Winters later recalled that she'd attended a film festival in Moscow. She made an entrance in a slinky white jersey evening gown with diamond earrings, wearing a white mink cape draped around her shoulders. "That night I was constantly asked if I were Marilyn Monroe."

Guests at the Fox luncheon began filling in, each attired in their finest noon day outfits.

Marilyn received kisses from Cary Grant, her former co-star in *Monkey Business;* Gregory Peck, with whom she wanted to co-star in her next film, *Let's Make Love;* Bob Hope, who propositioned her; and then-lovers, David Niven and Rita Hayworth.

Niven whispered "something naughty" into Marilyn's ear, which, if she had been the blushing type, might have caused her to turn red. As she'd later confide to Jeanne Carmen, "He told me he'd get around to me after he finished off Rita. Then he added, 'ever had a beer can?'"

Hayworth glared at her during her lover's exchange with Marilyn. In front of the 1940s-era screen goddess, Marilyn actually curtsied, calling the fading star, "Your Majesty." Rita had, after all, been married to Prince Aly Khan. Marilyn had no way of knowing if Hayworth was aware of the brief but torrid affair she'd had with her former husband, Orson Welles.

At last, the formalities at Fox began. Khrushchev stood at the head of the receiving line to greet his guests.

Sinatra stood by, looking helpless as MacLaine cut into line. "How the hell are you, Khrush? I'm god damn glad you're here. Welcome to our country, and welcome to 20th Century Fox. I hope you enjoy seeing how Hollywood makes a musical. I'm going to perform the Can-Can number without pants in honor of you."

Marilyn paid almost no attention to the dour and unphotogenic matriarch of the Soviet Union, Nina Khrushchev. She later told Sinatra, "I didn't know she was the First Lady of the Soviet Union. I thought she was a bag woman who had slipped into the room looking for a handout."

A photographer stood by, hoping to get a snapshot of the First Soviet Secretary gazing down Marilyn's bosom, but at the last minute, he was chased away.

After Marilyn extended her hand to the Soviet dictator, he smiled at her and held it for a very long time, thereby stopping the progress of the receiving line. "You are a very lovely young lady," he told her in Russian. A translator was at hand. "I insist you sit with me at the head table."

She said to him, "My husband, Arthur Miller, sends his greetings. There should be more of this kind of thing. It would help both our countries understand each other."

In New York at the time, Miller would later say, "The Soviet chairman was very obviously smitten with her, and she in turn liked him for his plainness."

Sinatra said, "When Marilyn met Nikita, the atmosphere oozed with sex with a capital S. I would almost bet my left nut that she made a date to meet with him afterward. Elizabeth Taylor and I both felt that was true. We saw them in a huddle, after the luncheon, with a translator."

One snippet of luncheon conversation between Marilyn and Nikita was later revealed, thanks to a loose-lipped translator. Marilyn asked the Soviet chairman, "Have you seen anything in America you like?"

"Yes, he replied through the translator. "*You.*"

She giggled. "Anything else?"

"Yes, again. Those bumper stickers that read 'BETTER RED THAN DEAD.'"

At table, Spyros, a long-ago Greek immigrant, told Khrushchev that he and his brothers had arrived in America with only a few carpets to sell and the clothes on their backs. "Now I am the president of 20th Century Fox. This is the kind of opportunity America offers."

Khrushchev reminded him that he was the son of a poor coal miner. "Now I am the head of the Soviet Union."

Marilyn later said that she thought that was a fantastic reply. "Like me, Nikita is the odd man out."

During the luncheon at Fox, Khrushchev and Skouras debated the merits of communism vs. capitalism. Khrushchev's remarks incensed a drunken Richard Burton, who threatened to "go up on that stage and beat the shit out of that fucker." Two Fox security guards arrived to restrain him.

Sitting at a distant table, Elizabeth Taylor turned to her husband, Eddie Fisher. "That Welsh actor is foaming at the mouth. Leave it to him to make a public spectacle."

Later, talking to Skouras, she stood about ten feet from Marilyn and Khrushchev. "Pandro Berman wants me to play a whore in this piece of crap called *Butterfield 8*. And he was the man who produced *National Velvet*. I told him I won't do it, but he's threatening me financially. If he wants a whore to play the role, why not Marilyn Monroe?"

Marilyn, of course, heard the voice, whose harsh tone evoked the one Elizabeth would later use in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* She whispered to Sinatra, "I know why Elizabeth is so upset. I've been to bed with Eddie Fisher. She got short changed on that one."

It had been Sinatra's idea to stage a performance of the can-can for Khrushchev on Fox's Sound Stage 8, on a set that evoked Paris in the 1890s.

Marilyn was seated in the audience next to Gregory Peck. Three seats away sat Elizabeth and Fisher. She was still obsessing about Burton. "He's always ranting about something. Doesn't he ever know when to shut up?"

"I don't give a fuck what he says, just so long as he stays away from you," Fisher said.

"I won't let him get ten feet near me," Elizabeth said. "I know his reputation. I don't intend to become another notch in his belt."

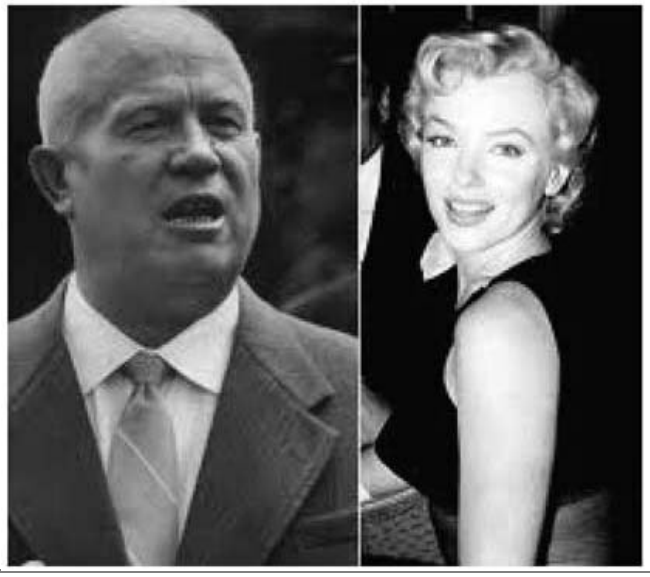
Hearing that, Marilyn whispered to Peck, "When am I going to become a notch on your belt?"

"When we make *Let's Make Love,"* Peck responded.

Khrushchev, the old perv, was secretly thrilled by the racy dance, especially the ending when the can-can dancers turned their backs to the audience to reveal their butts.

Ideologically, at least, Khrushchev had to pretend to be shocked by this open display of the sexuality associated with decadent capitalism. After the show, he said, "The face of mankind is prettier than its backside. We do not want that sort of thing for the Russians. The dance is lascivious, disgusting, and immoral."

More than any of the other dancers, Juliet Prowse, Sinatra's girlfriend-of-the-moment, attracted the most attention during the can-can she performed in front of the Soviet chairman. She later said, "Nikita, such a big teddy bear, was my greatest press agent. Before him, I was unknown. After his visit, I became a household word like Frank Sinatra himself. My career took off, thanks to the Red Menace."



Soviet austerity meets Hollywood: Nikita Khrushchev, Marilyn Monroe

According to Frank E. Taylor, Sinatra admitted that, “Before going back home to Arthur, Marilyn shacked up with both Gregory Peck and me.” Marilyn also claimed during conversations with Taylor to have had a quickie with Khrushchev in his hotel suite. She even described to Taylor what happened:

Through a translator, according to Taylor, Khrushchev and Marilyn had arranged to meet later over some vodka and caviar. “Nina was out shopping, I presume. After the preliminaries, Khrushchev told his security guards to beat it.”

“I knew that the time had come,” Marilyn told Taylor. “I did a striptease in front of him, but he kept all his clothes on. Finally, he stood up in front of me and I got his signal. He wanted me to give him a blow-job. I unzipped him. It was already erect. I don’t know how long it took Nina to bring him off, but it took me six intense minutes, and I think he really enjoyed it.”

“How’s he hung?” Taylor asked.

“Short, fat, and knobby, a mushroom head that tapered at the base. Not the world’s most beautiful cock, I can tell you that.”

Frank E. Taylor, with his wife, Nan, in 1951

Long after Marilyn was dead, and long after he’d produced *The Misfits*, Taylor, in Key West, reflected on the

bizarre encounter Marilyn had relayed to him about being alone with Khrushchev. “At first I didn’t believe her, but she could be very convincing. After thinking it over, I felt it might really have happened. It made sense in a funny sort of way. This unwanted child had become the most desirable woman on the planet. She could boast of the distinction of having given blow-jobs to two of the most important men in the world, John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev. Marilyn may be the only woman in the world who did both of them.”

She also claimed that when Khrushchev returned to Russia, he sent her an expensive present, although she never said exactly what the gift was. He did extend an official invitation for her to visit Moscow.

She later told Robert Slatzer that “Nikita was the most fascinating man I’ve ever met. But I think Carl Sandburg is more interesting.”

Then she said, “I could tell that Nikita liked me the most of all the pretty girls there. But there’s a problem, however. He’s got too many warts on his face. Who would want to be a communist, with a president with all those warts?”

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“Working the boondocks,” in his own words, Senator Kennedy pursued his conquest of the presidency, quietly but efficiently organizing a vast political machine for his run during the upcoming year.

Actually, Bobby Kennedy and Ambassador Kennedy ran the machine themselves. JFK confessed to Marilyn, “I am merely the showhorse they bring out to exhibit. They’re making all the decisions for me.”

She may have felt uneasy sleeping under the same roof in Santa Monica with Peter and Patricia Lawford, but JFK assured her that it would be all right. “Pat and Peter—don’t you like the easy sound of those names?—are currently sharing the same beach boy. I’ve seen him. He’s a knockout in this town of knockouts. He’s sort of a combination Tab Hunter and Lex Barker. Not my type, but Peter’s. *You’re* my type.”

Her night with JFK represented another of the few times in their years-long relationship that she actually got to spend a full night with him. She loved him, even his light snoring, or so she had convinced herself. She liked to cuddle in his arms, even though it didn’t seem to be his favorite thing. In describing all the details of her night with JFK to Jeanne Carmen, she confessed, “Prez wasn’t much of a cuddler. But he did make love to me twice that night in spite of those damn back problems of his.”

She only saw him briefly when he woke up the following morning. His wit and charisma were still there, but the morning light revealed a slightly battered face. He looked older than she’d ever seen him before. His eyes were bloodshot from all that champagne the night before. He seemed to have a wincing headache. “It’s this god damn intestinal flu that I can’t seem to shake off,” he told her.

He emerged from his shower still unshaven. She toweled him off. After that, he stood nude in front of the mirror, shaving. His hair was still damp and uncombed. She’d never seen him shave before. Had Jackie ever seen him shave? She doubted it.

As he shaved, she planted kisses on that tortured back of his, as if she could make it well again. She wanted to remember every single detail of her night and morning with him. Jeanne Carmen and Shelley Winters would demand blow-by-blow descriptions.

He seemed in a rush as her tongue traveled a familiar trail, and she wished she’d had more time. She was surprised at the number of freckles on his body, “The curse of red-haired Irish men,” he once said.

He was in California to raise campaign money, and she didn’t know when she’d see him again, as he was flying to San Francisco that afternoon.

She had been hoping that he would invite her to go with him, but his plans in Northern California didn’t include her. She’d heard stories from Lawford that he was frequenting a mysterious figure called Judith Campbell, who had been Frank Sinatra’s girlfriend before gangster Sam Giancana discovered her charms.

Giancana had told her that JFK was seeing a lot more of Judith than he was seeing of her. She was anxious to meet her competition. “I want to see what she has that I don’t have,” Marilyn said.

“The best way to do that would be to suggest a three-way,” Carmen said. “You know your lover boy is famous for organizing three-ways. How better to discover what her special talents are than by seeing the bitch in action?”

“You’ve got a point there,” Marilyn said. “I’ll have to think about that.”

Lawford was already in the kitchen when JFK and Marilyn came down together for breakfast. She wore white shorts and a pink halter, but Jack was fully dressed. Lawford, meanwhile, was wandering around in an open terrycloth robe that exposed his nudity.

“Where’s Pat?” JFK asked.

“Still asleep,” Lawford said. He motioned toward a Mexican maid standing near the stove. “Tell her what you

want. Tamales or tacos?"

"A glass of ice water," JFK said. "I've got pills to take. A cup of black coffee—and that's it."

Since she didn't want to consume food like a fat pig, she settled for coffee, a small orange juice, and a piece of toast ("no butter").

JFK looked at Lawford. "Tell me all the rumors going around Hollywood about Marilyn."

"Okay, buddy," Lawford said. "Marilyn, you'd better leave the room."

"I'm sure I've heard worse," she said.

"The latest story I've heard is that you lived for eight months with two fag junkies, and that they peddled you to support their habit. The other rumor is that you've fucked every Jew in Hollywood."

She brushed off the charges. "How nice," she said.

"And what do they say about me?" the senator asked.

"Not much, not much at all," Lawford said. "Believe it or not, a lot of show business people don't know a hell of a lot about you. Of course, they still tell stories about my dear old father-in-law."

"Well, I've got to change that. I want to become a household word. If you're trying to become President of the United States, you can't be an unknown."

After the Senator had consumed his coffee, he went to make some phone calls. She wondered if he were calling Jackie, but she didn't think so.

Seated in the harsh, revealing morning sunlight of Los Angeles, Peter was no longer the pretty boy he'd been in the 1940s. Graying temples and puffy jowls were descending. His frantic lifestyle was catching up with him. The eyes that greeted her seemed to conceal self-loathing. After all, being a faded movie star and functioning as the senator's pimp were hardly roles he welcomed.

After a quick kiss, the President was off, without having expressed any commitment about seeing her again.

It was the pimp who remained behind and extended an invitation to her. "Pat and I are going to a club tonight in Malibu. We want you to come with us. The drag queen who's performing there is attracting big crowds. It's said that he does an impersonation of Marilyn Monroe that's better than your own."

"Okay, I'll go," she said, "but I want to invite William Holden."

"Haven't you already fucked him?" Lawford asked. "Everybody else has. In fact, I once heard him say that when he was a young actor, new to Hollywood, he used to service actress after actress, most of them far older than him. He also said, 'I'm a whore…all actors are.'"

"That's not the issue," she said. "John Huston is considering him for the role of the cowboy opposite me in *The Misfits."*

"Okay, I'll call him," he said. "Hell, I could go for him myself."

"There's another reason I want to bed him tonight. I've heard that Jackie is shacking up with him."

"That's one I hadn't heard," he said. "You little devil. You want to take Jackie's husband away from her, and you want to take her lover away, too."

"All's fair in love and war," she said, rising from the kitchen table. "Now, give me two hours to make myself beautiful for the day."

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The 1960s had dawned, signaling the beginning of Marilyn's final years. It was January and cold in Los Angeles, as Marilyn and Arthur Miller moved into bungalow no. 21 at the swanky Beverly Hills Hotel. Over their heads, occupying the bungalow's second story, were the French actor, Yves Montand, and his actress wife, Simone Signoret.

They were in Hollywood for Montand's filming of a musical comedy entitled *Let's Make Love*, to be shot in CinemaScope and in color, a production supervised by Jerry Wald, directed by George Cukor, and based on a script by Norman Krasna. Marilyn and Montand were the designated stars, with supporting roles by Tony Randall and Frankie Vaughan, along with brief cameo appearances from Bing Crosby, Milton Berle, and Gene Kelly. Frank Sinatra had turned down the cameo role that eventually went to Crosby.

At the last minute, Gregory Peck had dropped out of *Let's Make Love*, which turned out to be a smart decision. Cukor had also sent a copy of the script to Cary Grant ("It's shit!") James Stewart ("Maybe I'd do it with Kim Novak"); Yul Brynner ("I've already fucked Marilyn"); Peter Lawford ("Marilyn would devour me onscreen"); Tony Curtis ("With Marilyn, never again"); Charlton Heston ("You've got to be kidding"); and Rock Hudson, who asserted that he'd be delighted to appear in a movie with Marilyn. But Universal wouldn't release him. "Too bad," said Cukor. "At least I could have gotten a mercy fuck from Rock."

In the surprise casting decision of the season, the role eventually went to Montand, a song-and-dance man from Paris. Ironically, the role of "The Billionaire" (which was the project's original title) called for an actor who could neither sing nor dance.

For a prolonged period, Montand had avoided visiting the United States, because of his refusal to sign a document asserting that he had never been a member of the Communist Party. Early in 1959, that requirement was eliminated, and Montand was allowed to fly to New York for his role in a one-man song-and-dance act on Broadway.

Montand had previously met Arthur Miller during one of the playwright's visits to Paris for a performance of his play, *The Crucible*. Montand first met Marilyn some time later, when Miller escorted her to Montand's debut on Broadway.

Other than defining Montand as "mesmerizing" both on and off the stage, Marilyn was shocked to discover that he spoke very little English. She did not feel, however, that that would be a barrier to his ability to co-star with her. "I'm sure he's a fast learner," she told her husband.

When he was introduced to her for the first time, Montand said, perhaps with irony, "To the people of France, America is Coca-Cola and Marilyn Monroe."

Although Montand was a household word throughout France, he was eager for international stardom, which he felt could only be obtained through a success in American movies. He viewed his debut as Marilyn's leading man as a major achievement on the road to his dreams.

When it was announced that Montand would be her co-star, Marilyn told the press that the three most attractive men in the world, in her opinion, included, number one, her husband, followed by Marlon Brando and Yves Montand. "Actually, Montand looks like my former husband, Joe DiMaggio."

She may have been correct in comparing Montand to DiMaggio. Biographer Fred Lawrence Guiles summed up Montand's look: "His appeal is a projection of primitive sexiness. Despite the disadvantages of a broad mouth, gaunt cheeks, and a weak chin, he has smouldering eyes sunken deep into their sockets, a natural grace of movement, a tremulous voice as forlorn and as tinged with Parisian back alleys as Piaf's, and a Gallic charm that appeals to men as well as to women."

The script had already undergone several rewrites, but Cukor was still not pleased with it, finding it lackluster. Then the Writers Guild called a strike. In desperation, Cukor turned to Miller to "touch up" some of the scenes and to rewrite others. The playwright was offered $15,000 for his work, even though screenplays were not his forte. As it turned out, Miller's role consisted of enlarging Marilyn's part and diminishing Montand's. Miller refused, however, to allow his name to be listed in the movie's credits.

Marilyn later referred to Miller's role in the film as "scab labor" and said to him, "Some fucking communist union man you are. Don't ever claim to me again that you're a champion of the underdog. And I once thought of you as a modern day Abraham Lincoln. Another of my illusions shattered."

In Hollywood, Cukor was known as a woman's director. Although he'd been fired by David O. Selznick back in the late 1930s as the director of *Gone With the Wind*, Cukor had continued to direct Vivien Leigh and Olivia de Havilland, from the privacy of his home, for their roles within that film. Cukor was also one of the closest friends and admirers of Katharine Hepburn.

Marilyn had always listed him as one of the few men in Hollywood whom she would allow to direct her. However, the relationship between them began on a sour note the first day she showed up for work. As if she were not insecure enough, he made her even more so. Cukor's first words to her were, "You're thirty pounds overweight."

As filming began, the Montands and the Millers often shared dinners together, the most memorable being a spaghetti dinner that Marilyn cooked for all of them. "I learned how to make spaghetti from the DiMaggio family in San Francisco," she told them.

While Miller and Montand bonded—they shared the same left-wing political views—Marilyn and Signoret often had long talks. She confessed to the French actress that the only time she had ever been happy was when the famous photographer, Richard Avedon, photographed her as a series of three incarnations of earlier film icons: Dietrich, Garbo, and Harlow. "Other than that, I am filled with nothing but fears and regrets."

Gallic charm: Yves Montand

It seemed that Marilyn spent a lot of time fretting over her perceived inadequacies associated with her hair style—particularly her "widow's peak." Eventually, she found "the one woman in California who I can trust to dye my hair." Previously, that hair colorist had maintained Jean Harlow as a platinum blonde when the legendary star had been part of MGM during the 1930s.

The elderly hairdresser was flown from San Diego to Los Angeles at weekly intervals to transform Marilyn into a blonde. Unfortunately, the roots at the front of her hairline didn't take to the dye very well. That deficiency usually had to be concealed with a lock of Marilyn's hair artfully draped across her forehead.

Marilyn always stuffed the hairdresser with plenty of gourmet food before her coloring sessions, during which the woman entertained Signoret and Marilyn with shocking stories about Harlow in her heyday. Marilyn told the colorist that her greatest dream involved interpreting Harlow's role onscreen as part of a film biography based on her life.

In her memoirs, *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used to Be,* Signoret had little to say about Marilyn's subsequent affair with her husband. But she did provide some insights about what life was like between the Montands and the Millers when the French acting team lived above them in a hotel bungalow on the grounds of the Beverly Hills Hotel.

During their communal dinners, Montand often amused the Millers with stories about his early life. Born in Italy, his family fled to Marseille to escape the rule of the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Montand said that at one point in his career, he became a hairdresser. His shop was adjacent to a nightclub for female impersonators. Montand told them that most of his clients were drag queens, who brought their wigs for him to repair. As he "decorated" their heads, they constantly groped him. "I was a *big* attraction for these guys," he said. He also told fascinating stories about when he lived with and loved Edith Piaf. "I was her boy. The little sparrow was so short, she hardly came up to my beltline."

"How convenient," Marilyn said.

The first jealousy Marilyn showed toward Signoret did not involve her possession of Montand, but the fact that Signoret had been nominated for (and later won) an Oscar as Best Actress for her role in *Room at the Top*. Marilyn was furious that she was not nominated for her interpretation of Sugar Kane in *Some Like It Hot*.

Later, Miller said that Marilyn was "horrified" that Shelley Winters went on to win an Oscar for her role in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. "All the bitches around me are taking home Oscars," she shouted at Miller, "but there's nothing for the Slut of Hollywood." She got so drunk on champagne that night that she couldn't report for work the next morning.

It was Simone who first advised Marilyn to buy the rights to *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, a book whose dramatization she'd previously interpreted in French, in France, right after World War II. Ironically, it was Charlie Chaplin who would eventually acquire the rights and (unsuccessfully) offer its leading role to Marilyn.

One night, Marilyn and Miller engaged in a bitter argument over changes he had proposed in his rewrites to her character. "You rarely agree with me on anything," she said. "You engage in all these intellectual conversations with Simone. She's too old for a man like Yves. Much more your type. Perhaps we should switch partners. I'm sure that

both of us would be much happier that way."

"I just might do that," he said before storming out of their bungalow.

When Miller was out of town, Signoret saw Lex Barker, the movie world's former Tarzan, coming and going from Marilyn's bungalow.

One evening, the Montands were astonished when Marilyn invited them to dinner. Her guest was DiMaggio. "Marilyn couldn't keep her hands off this athlete, even during dinner," Signoret recalled after Marilyn's death.

On another night, Signoret spotted Marilyn disappearing inside the bungalow of Howard Hughes, who was also in residence within one of the nearby bungalows.

At one point during the filming of *Let's Make Love*, Marilyn retreated to her bungalow, refusing to work, thereby shutting down production. She informed Signoret that every member of the film crew was a homosexual, and that they were deliberately making her appear fat and ugly before the camera. "It's no secret that they hate women, because they want the men for themselves. They're probably sucking the cocks of our husbands right now."

Signoret assured her that neither Miller nor Montand had any particularly large gay following. "Gays are more attracted to men like Rock Hudson, who, as you know, was originally intended as your co-star. You also have a large gay following, so don't say anything against these fellows. In France, we appreciate them more than you Americans, especially in the arts. When he's been away from home, Yves has occasionally been sucked off by some homosexuals. But I'm not jealous of them. At least he's not with another woman."

"Even the film's director, George Cukor, is the gayest goose in Hollywood," Marilyn said. "Incidentally, you'd better watch him. He's known for sucking off all the leading men in his films."

Simone Signoret

That might not have been just idle speculation on her part.

Billy Travilla, who had frequently functioned as Marilyn's dress designer, claimed that "Cukor was smitten with the French star. He often favored him at Marilyn's expense. Aware of this, Yves played Cukor for whatever it was worth. He also invited him out for cozy dinners."

Crew members became more or less aware that at some point during a day of filming, Montand would disappear with Cukor to get a blow job.

Shelley Winters, who visited Marilyn on the set, later said, "Cukor really turned on Marilyn because she was running around with Montand. That seriously pissed off her director. He was incensed when Marilyn began an affair with a man he sexually desired."

Rupert Allan, Marilyn's publicist, concluded, "Montand used both Cukor and Marilyn to gain a foothold in Hollywood. He used her shamelessly, just as he used his lovesick director."

Montand told the press, "I welcomed the chance to be working with Marilyn Monroe. Can you imagine, this *babi* from Marseille ending up in Hollywood starring opposite this film goddess?"

Marilyn's affair with Montand began when Signoret left for Europe to make a film, and Miller went location hunting in Nevada for *The Misfits* with that film's director, John Huston. Thus began a two-month romance.

Someone leaked the news to the press. Suspicion about who actually made the leak fell on "the gossipy gay," George Cukor.

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Marilyn's confusion over her upcoming divorce from Miller, which she hadn't filed for yet, and her love affair with Montand drove her into the care of yet another doctor, the controversial psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson, who would forever after be associated with legends surrounding her death.

Sometimes Marilyn, without telling Cukor, would leave the set to visit him. The psychiatrist would loom large during the final months of her life.

In New York, Marilyn had been dependent on Dr. Marianne Kris for her mental stability. But she quickly transferred her allegiance to Dr. Greenson, who in time became far more important in her life than Dr. Kris had ever been. Greenson often wrote to Dr. Kris about Marilyn and her treatments, and spoke with her frequently over the phone as a means of better understanding Marilyn's particular anxieties. In a letter that later surfaced, Dr. Greenson wrote, "Marilyn is such a perpetual orphan. I feel even sorrier as she tries so hard and fails so often, which also makes her pathetic."

In February of 1960, as Valentine's Day rolled around, Cukor was no longer speaking to Marilyn. Instead, as a means of communicating his wishes and intentions, he would tell the film's choreographer, Jack Cole, what he wanted her to do, and then Cole would relay the director's wishes, which Marilyn rarely, if ever, followed. She was often intoxicated during filming, drinking gin from a teacup, which fooled none of her fellow workers.

Reportedly, Miller became a direct witness to his wife's affair with Montand when he returned to Los Angeles a day sooner than he had announced and caught the couple naked and in bed together.

Marilyn told Dr. Greenson that "physically, Yves is like Joe and that is what excites me about it. He doesn't just look like Joe…there are other similarities, if you get my drift."

When news of her husband's affair became public, Signoret was flooded with letters, many women expressing their sympathy for the fact that her husband appeared to have fallen into the arms of "this sluttish vixen" or "this bottle blonde tramp."

Also to her amazement, Signoret received hate mail from Marilyn's fans, even though it was clear that she was the injured party. As she described in her memoirs, most of these letters were "pornographic, scatological, and patriotic." Some letters even suggested that she should become a sex slave of Arab men, "whose amorous aptitude is so well known. Your fat ass would make you desirable to these pigs." Several anti-Semitic letters even claimed that, "It serves Jew Miller right!"

Signoret later recalled, "I never detested Marilyn for going after my husband. What woman wouldn't want to go to bed with Yves? He's a great lover."

Later, Montand said, "I thought Marilyn was more sophisticated about affairs. Most French wives are. She had this schoolgirl crush on me—that's all. If she thought otherwise, she was mistaken. I have no intention of breaking up my marriage. If I were not married, and if Marilyn were not married, I would not object to marrying her. But I am married, and she is married, so let's leave it at that. All Frenchmen worthy of the name have an occasional affair. French wives, too, have affairs. These affairs come and go. In France, we do not put much emphasis on them."

Lena Pepitone, Marilyn's maid, recalled going to see *Let's Make Love* when it opened in New York. Dressed in a disguise, Marilyn attended the movie with her. At the end, after her character is reunited with the character played by Montand, who wants to marry her, Marilyn burst into tears. "Why is it, Lena, that the saddest words in English are 'what might have been.'"

George Cukor

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As Dr. Greenson loomed larger and more essential in Marilyn's life, Miller became adamantly opposed to the long hours she spent with him "dredging up all your past horror. You need to live in the present and deal with today's problems instead of thinking about getting raped a long time ago."

She called Greenson "Romeo," which was his real name, having been born in Brooklyn in 1911 and named Romeo Samuel Greenschpoon. His fraternal twin, a sister, was named Juliet, since their father was an avid fan of Shakespeare.

From the beginning, Greenson had trepidations about taking on such a high profile client as Marilyn. "I knew my name would be dragged through the mud. Taking on Marilyn was tantamount to having a grenade tossed into my office."

Greenson became known among Hollywood stars when Vivien Leigh came to Los Angeles to shoot the interiors for William Dieterle's *Elephant Walk*, the bulk of which had been filmed in Sri Lanka. A manic depressive, Vivien had suffered a nervous breakdown. During the seventy-two hour flight to California, Vivien had raved, raged, ranted, and torn at her clothes. She later claimed that appearing as Blanche Dubois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* had "tipped" her into madness.

"If Romeo could bring some help to Scarlett O'Hara, maybe he could save little ol' me," Marilyn said.

Greenson frankly admitted, "I failed with Vivien. Maybe I can save Marilyn."

He was a friend of Dr. Anna Freud, who had put Marilyn on the couch in London during her time there filming *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Ironically, while shooting *Let's Make Love*, Marilyn was offered the leading female role ("Cecily", a patient of Dr. Freud) in an upcoming movie entitled *Freud*. John Huston had already cast her friend, Monty Clift, as Freud.

Anna Freud had been sent a copy of the script. She later claimed, "I detested it." In a strongly worded letter, perhaps motivated by fears of what the experience might do to Marilyn's fragile emotional health, and also by her commitment to preserve the dignity and accuracy of her father's therapeutic legacy, she wrote to Marilyn in Los Angeles, pleading with her to turn down the role of Cecily, which Marilyn did.

Years later, reflecting on what might have happened if Marilyn had participated in the film, Gloria Steinem wrote, "Marilyn would have been called upon to enact the psychotic fate she feared most in real life, and to play the patient of a man whose belief in female passivity may have been part of the reason she was helped so little by psychiatry."

Frank Sinatra approved of Greenson, asserting that, "I went to him after the breakup of my marriage to Ava Gardner. It was a time of slashing wrists."

Even though he objected to the long hours Marilyn spent alone with Greenson, Miller approved of the doctor's

politics. He was on the Communist Party's list of analysts who were deemed suitable for the counseling of party members.

Making matters vaguely incestuous, Greenson was the brother-in-law of Mickey Rudin, the attorney who legally represented both Sinatra and Marilyn.

"I went with Marilyn to one of Greenson's parties," Shelley Winters recalled. "Our gal was certainly moving in a circle of Freudian-Marxists. That crowd of intellectuals definitely played ball in left field. I bet 'Nellie' Hoover was on Marilyn's trail. In fact, she went home with a tall, good-looking guy that I felt was a G-Man from back East. He probably reported directly to Hoover what fucking Marilyn Monroe entailed."

Based on his first visit to Marilyn's bungalow and base of operations on the set of *Let's Make Love*, Greenson learned that throughout most of the filming, she had been heavily sedated most of the time, consuming Amytal, sodium pentothal, Phenobarbital, and Demerol. He became furious when the evidence was spread before him. "You've got a fucking pharmacy here. Those idiot quacks prescribing all this for you should lose their license." He demanded that in the future, she deal with only one medical doctor, Dr. Hyman Engelberg, a well-known internist in Beverly Hil1s.

"I think I'd like a man named Hyman," she quipped.

Although they had emerged from radically different backgrounds, Marilyn bonded with Greenson during a five-hour session with him in her bungalow at the film studio. It evolved into a therapeutic interlude that delayed production of *Let's Make Love* and once again provoked Cukor's hostility.

"I'm a Jew, too," she told Greenson. "And as you know, I'm married to a Jew, too, the coldest and most distant man on the planet."

She began to call Greenson "my savior." During a phone call to Lena Pepitone, her maid in New York, Marilyn said, "Dr. Greenson is Jesus. He's doing wonders for me. If he wants sex, I will gratefully give it to him, but he hasn't asked me yet, although I know he is very, very interested. A woman knows."

"He's chasing away my ghosts," she said. "He listens to my stories of how cruel Arthur is to me, and I know I've won him over to my side. Dr. Greenson has convinced me that I've got to get out of this hopeless marriage. I can't stand Arthur Miller."

Winters claimed that Greenson was "in everybody's crotch. Not just Marilyn's, but he was also the therapist to that dago bastard, Sinatra. More and more, Greenson was taking control of Marilyn's life. He even tried to force her to dump her best male friend, Ralph Roberts, her masseur and confidant. That creep told Marilyn that there was room for only one Ralph in her life—and that was Ralph Greenson himself. Personally, I think the fucking shrink is a charlatan."

Patricia Kennedy Lawford, at a luncheon with Marilyn at the Beachcomber Restaurant in Malibu, warned her not to become too dependent on Greenson. "He wants to be your Svengali, taking over your career like Milton Greene did. You trust Jews too much. My father warned me about Jews. He also gave me some other good advice: Never marry an actor."

Greenson kept Marilyn's New York psychiatrist, Dr. Marianne Kris, informed. In one letter, he wrote: "I think she has terrible, terrible fantasies about mistreatment she suffered as a girl. I don't believe most of her stories. Her delusions and hallucinations, as you well know, are a feature of her schizophrenic disorders. She has many paranoid reactions. She even believes that J. Edgar Hoover has assigned FBI agents to follow her and tap her phone lines. She claims Hoover wants access to damaging information on John Kennedy that could be used against him if he ever becomes president."

In a phone call to Dr. Kris, the contents of which were later revealed, Greenson said, “Marilyn told me another tall tale yesterday afternoon. She claimed that her first husband, Jim Dougherty, once brought home Robert Mitchum to fuck her while he watched.”

“You mean, the movie star, Robert Mitchum?”

“Yes, her co-star in *River of No Return*. It’s true that Dougherty and Mitchum once worked side by side in a factory. She claimed that Dougherty took nude pictures of her and showed them to Mitchum, who got excited.”

“Do you believe her story?” Kris asked.

“It certainly occurs in marital relations, and from what I heard, Mitchum will do just about anything. I’m inclined to halfway believe her, because she’s had some wild adventures. Who knows? Sometimes I think she has come to believe the stories she told about her early life, whether they’re true or not.”

“Well, as we both know, there’s much to be learned through a person’s fantasies,” Kris said.

Greenson also told Kris that Marilyn claimed that she gave birth to a baby when she was about fifteen years old. “One time, she said it was a girl, but later became adamant that it was a boy. She sobbed for about an hour when she told me, ‘They took my baby from me. My beautiful baby boy.’”

“It *was* a boy!” she told Greenson. “I lied to you earlier when I said it was a girl. I had a boy, with a little pee-pee growing inside me. A boy, God damn it! I should know the sex of my own baby!”

During her third week of her counseling with Greenson, Marilyn confessed that she planned to commit suicide one day. “I want to go out like James Dean, while I’m still young and beautiful. I want everything in the room to be white, very Mae Westy. All white satin on the bed. White walls, white furniture. I want to be wearing a white *négligée*. It will be in New York. I’ll have my maid, Lena Pepitone, come in before the photographers arrive. She can close my eyes in death. Of course, I’ll have my makeup man and my hairdresser in. Then I’ll swallow a bottle of sleeping pills.”

She also discussed with Greenson that she wanted surgery both to tighten her vagina and to enlarge her breasts. She’d even acquired the name of two doctors who specialized in such treatments. “I want a vagina as tight as an

asshole. Men like to fuck assholes because of the tight fit. I also want to enlarge my breasts to a forty-inch bust."

Marilyn told Peter and Pat Lawford, "The Greensons became the family I never had."

Dr. Greenson would later be criticized by some of his fellow professionals for allowing Marilyn to become such an integral part of his family life. Not with other patients, but with her, he encouraged her to participate in his private life, sleeping over, having meals at his table at night, often breakfast the next morning. She'd had an equivalent relationship with the Strasbergs, insinuating herself into their family life as well.

The doctor and his wife occupied a hacienda-style home on a hillside in Santa Monica. Marilyn often stood there at night taking in the views from the second-story balcony. She became friends with Greenson's wife, Hildi, and especially their teenage children, Joan and Danny.

President Kennedy's outspoken sister, Patricia Kennedy Lawford

She gave Joan tips on boyfriends and how to do the latest dance step. Danny was viewed as a bit radical in his left-wing views. Years later, he said that he had expected Marilyn to be "just another rich bitch movie star," but that he became attracted to her warmth and charm.

"She didn't play movie star with us," Joan said. "After a long session with my father, she came into the kitchen and helped with dinner. She even stayed around to wash the dishes."

Both Winters and Jeanne Carmen later claimed, as have some biographers, that Marilyn's relationship with Greenson at some point became sexual. "How typical of Marilyn," Carmen said. "She liked to reward men like that agent, Johnny Hyde, with sex if she felt she was being helped. And she certainly felt Greenson was helping her, whether he was or not."

Winters also claimed that Marilyn's relationship with Greenson was sexual. "She told me it was. It was obvious to me she was giving her body in gratitude to Greenson. There was no passion involved on her part. She even complained to me that she didn't like giving blow-jobs to Jewish men because they were circumcised.

"I think he's falling in love with me," Marilyn told Winters. "What should I do? I don't want to break up his home. He has such a wonderful family."

"Hell, Marilyn, you're fucking the guy. You don't have to break up his family. Just love 'em and leave 'em when the time comes. That's what I do."

"Do you think Mrs. Greenson will detect that he's not coming to her bed that often?" Marilyn asked.

"Of all the problems you have in the world, I would worry about that one the least," Winters said.

"I've got another problem," Marilyn confided. "I've got to talk it over with Dr. Greenson. Jack Kennedy is getting increasingly excited by three-ways. Of course, I've participated in some of those. He said his all time fantasy would be to have Elizabeth Taylor and me in bed at the same time."

"I know Elizabeth," Winters said. "Unless she has drastically changed since we made *A Place in the Sun* together, she'll never go for it. Count her out."

"But if Jack becomes president, he could command it," Marilyn said.

"The last time I checked, the United States was a democracy, not a kingdom. Besides, he's not president yet, and I don't think he'll ever be. Now that my lover boy, Adlai Stevenson, no longer has to compete against Ike, he's

going to run yet again, in this case, a third time, for the office of U.S. president. This time, I think the country is ready for him. That means that *I'm* going to be the mistress of our next president—not you."

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In July of 1960, at the dawn of the Democratic Party's national convention in Los Angeles, John F. Kennedy, the leading contender, was growing more and more kinky in his sexual tastes, arranging and participating in orgies at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington and indulging in three-ways with various pairs of women.

Wanting a rest, JFK visited his friend and supporter, Frank Sinatra, at his villa in Palm Springs. Sinatra's valet, George Jacobs, asked Kennedy what he wanted arranged during his vacation.

Kennedy was blunt. "I want to fuck every woman in Hollywood."

Later, when Sinatra asked JFK what he might arrange for him during his stay, JFK told the singer, "I want to have a Naked Lunch." Kennedy was making a hip reference to the scandalous and *avant-garde* William Burroughs' novel, *Naked Lunch*, but Sinatra misunderstood.

"Okay, George can arrange that by the pool," Sinatra said. "I'll show mine if you'll show me yours."

"You don't get it," JFK said. "My favorite naked lunch is shaved pussy sprinkled with cocaine."

After he recovered from his surprise, Sinatra said, "I can arrange that, too, I'm sure."

According to JFK's aide, David Powers, the presidential candidate maintained fantasies of two women he'd like to seduce simultaneously: Shirley MacLaine and Elizabeth Taylor were the leading stars for his dream act, but neither actress seemed available for three-way hookups.

Finally, JFK confided to his close friend, Senator George Smathers of Florida, "I've settled on Judith Campbell —you known her—and Marilyn Monroe as my women of choice. I'm going to arrange something before I go before the convention and accept the nomination. I always like to have a sexual release before any big event in my life."

"I'm just the opposite," said Smathers, as relayed directly to the author of this book, "I always try to save my testosterone before I appear at some big event."

Perhaps through Lawford or through insider gossip, Marilyn had become increasingly aware of JFK's preference for three-ways. She asked Lawford about her competition, Judith Campbel. He described her as "a little bit of Jackie Kennedy, a little bit of Elizabeth Taylor. She's the perfect Eisenhower-era pinup of the girl next door."

David Powers
Assistant to the President

Of course, at the time Lawford said this, Judith's looks were misleading, as she was the fourth corner of the quadrangle that included Sinatra, JFK, and mob boss Sam Giancana.

In a call to Judith, JFK told her exactly what she wanted, and she'd agreed, as he'd previously talked her into equivalent sexual trysts like that before. At that point, she was more or less doing his bidding. "Marilyn detests Elizabeth Taylor, so I know I can't get those two into my bed at the same time," he told Lawford. "Marilyn will be real thing, of course, but as a stand-in for Elizabeth Taylor, I'll have to settle for Judith."

JFK thought that his pitch to Marilyn might be more difficult, although he'd heard rumors that she'd occasionally indulged in lesbian romps.

Instead of making the arrangements himself, JFK appointed his brother-in-law (Lawford) to set them up.

The next day, Lawford called JFK with the results of his negotiations: "Marilyn didn't take much convincing.

She'll go for it. I think she's curious about her competition. Frankly, dear brother-in-law, if I were you, I'd drop Marilyn in favor of Judith. I've had them both, you know."

On July 11, the opening day of the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, JFK summoned Judith to his hotel suite. "He told me he was highly nervous about the convention and needed to relax," Judith later told interviewers. "On our previous encounter, when we'd kissed passionately, and with his lips on mine, he'd asked me, 'Do you think you could love me?'"

"Yes, yes, yes," Judith said into his open mouth. "I love you. When I said that, he plunged his tongue in my mouth. At this point, I was under his spell."

After her passionate declaration of love, Judith said she was shocked when JFK told her that there was another woman who would be arriving soon. "I just couldn't believe it," she said. "I thought he was satisfied with me, but he seemed insatiable.

We were sitting in robes in the living room of the suite when this other woman was ushered in," Judith later said. "To my surprise, it was Marilyn Monroe. I'd heard stories that Jack was having an affair with her. I knew that a three-way was in the offing. It had become his favorite thing, or so I'd heard. I'm about the last woman on earth who could ever be called a lesbian, but I found Marilyn attractive. She kissed each of my cheeks before turning her attention to JFK."

"She pointed a finger at Jack like he was a naughty boy," Judith said.

"You brought along this lovely girl," Marilyn said to JFK. "She looks like Elizabeth Taylor. What fantasy are we having tonight, Mr. President?"

"He was not president yet, but she had already started calling him that," Judith said. "Right in front of me, she went over to the sofa, where Jack was sitting. She unzipped his trousers, took out his penis, and began to give him a blow-job. She took her mouth off him and looked at me. 'This is just to get the party going,' she said. 'Come over here and give it a try so I can rest for a minute.'"

Marilyn later told Jeanne Carmen, "Jack was Cock of the Walk that night, having two beautiful women—one blonde, another brunette—make love to him. Surprisingly I wasn't all that jealous. Judith was a bit of the reluctant debutante. It's hard to explain. In hours, Jack would officially set out on the road to the White House. Power is a great aphrodisiac. A woman wants to do everything for a man with such power. At least some women feel that way. I certainly do."

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After JFK won the Democratic nomination for president, Peter and Patricia Lawford tossed a wild party for him at their sprawling beach house in Santa Monica. JFK personally telephoned Marilyn to invite her and suggested, "You might bring along a girlfriend." She understood the intent of that invitation, and called Jeanne Carmen to ask her to go with him.

What happened next was later revealed by Carmen as part of a red-hot story in the tabloid newspaper, *The Globe*, which ran a four-part series entitled *True Confessions of a Hollywood Party Girl*. In the series, Carmen claimed that the wild party at the Lawford home quickly evolved into an orgy.

She said that after a swim with some of the other pool partiers, who were nude, she retreated to a bedroom at the Lawford home to take a shower. Marilyn, she claimed, knocked on her door and told her that JFK wanted her to come to his bedroom.

In the article, Carmen said that she at first rejected the offer, telling Marilyn, "I don't do that."

In print, however, Carmen was far too modest about her past.

She had had three-ways before, notably with actor Brad Dexter. Marilyn and Carmen had also each indulged in lesbian trysts, including with one another. Carmen admitted to this in her candid memoirs.

She claimed that Marilyn had to plead with her, saying, "We should think of it as doing something for our country."

There is serious doubt that Marilyn had to plead very hard. Without a lot of persuasion, Carmen entered JFK's bedroom, with Marilyn immediately behind her. The candidate for U.S. president was lying on the bed wearing nothing but his jockey shorts.

The notorious Judith Campbell Exner

He summoned Carmen over and began to massage her shoulders. He whispered that Marilyn and she should think of themselves as “prisoners of the New Frontier of the 1960s.”

Carmen admitted that finally she relented—“overwhelmed by Jack's extraordinary charm, good looks, and a buzz from the alcohol I’d consumed at Peter’s party.”

As she looked up after JFK had tongue-kissed her, she saw Marilyn dropping her towel and moving toward the bed.

Later, JFK told Senator Smathers, Sinatra, and Lawford, “If I live to one hundred years old, I don’t think I will ever have so much fun. Seducing virgins is one sport, and we’ve all done that, but being worked over by the two master whores of Hollywood is a treat few men will know. I was insatiable, demanding, wanting everything, and they delivered.”

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With John F. Kennedy installed in the White House, Marilyn was greatly disappointed that during first weeks of his administration, he didn’t even phone her. In repeated calls to his secretary, she was told that “the President is in a meeting” or some other excuse.

She was also hearing rumors that he had taken up with yet another woman, not just Judith Campbell, but perhaps Angie Dickinson. There was even talk that he’d had a fling with Jayne Mansfield, whom Marilyn always defined as “my caricature.”

Zsa Zsa Gabor, Lana Turner, Janet Leigh, Gene Tierney, Lee Remick, Susan Hayward, and Joan Crawford were also rumored to have shared his bed. “Next thing I’ll hear is that he’s fucking Mae West,” she said. “When does Jack Rabbit ever go to bed with Jackie? I wonder if William Holden is still doing the honors with our beloved First Lady?”

True Confessions of a Hollywood Party Girl, a four-part autobiographical (and confessional) newspaper series by Jeanne Carmen

Not fully recovered from the making of *The Misfits* and her divorce from Arthur Miller, Marilyn, within her Manhattan apartment, sank deeper and deeper into despair.

According to Lena Pepitone, on many days, she didn't even get up from her bed except to use the toilet.

Monty Clift was her most frequent visitor. "He showed up in rumpled clothing and a three-day growth of beard, looking like a bum from the Bowery, and she received him in a dirty old white robe," Pepitone claimed. "They sure didn't look like movie stars once hailed across the world for their beauty."

Clift prevailed upon Marilyn to get out of bed and make herself look dazzling for the premiere of *The Misfits* at the Capital Theater in Manhattan on January 31, 1961. He even pulled himself together for the event.

At the theater, she was mobbed by fans. "At least they're still loyal to us," she said.

"Speak for yourself," he said, noting that all the screams were for MARILYN! MARILYN! MARILYN!

She hated the picture, Miller's dialogue, John Huston's direction, and the way she had been photographed —"Like a big, fat whore."

Back at her apartment, she sobbed in Clift's arms. "I'm washed up. *Let's Make Love* was a disaster. So is *The Misfits*. I dread the box office and the empty theaters where it will play. After the release of *Some Like It Hot*, I was getting offered every role in Hollywood. Now I just get a few offers for some slut-of-the-month parts."

In the immediate aftermath of the release of *The Misfits*, Monty saw more of her. He, too, hated his role. "I looked like a truck ran over my face," he complained.

She was alarmed at his weight loss. During his visit to her apartment, she asked Pepitone to prepare a thick, juicy steak for him, but he preferred only caviar and vodka.

They talked a lot about his upcoming role in *Freud*, a picture she had already turned down.

"Mostly, they discussed drugs," Pepitone recalled, "especially the latest ones on the market. The next day, Marilyn would order the flavor of the month."

Truman Capote visited one night for dinner, and tried to convince her that Monty was one hundred percent gay —"and not the least bi."

She wasn't convinced. "Why would he be gay when he could have any girl he wants?" she asked Capote.

The next morning over breakfast, Marilyn continued to be fascinated by the subject of Monty. "I know Elizabeth Taylor fell in love with him when they made *Raintree County,"* she told Pepitone. He calls her Bessie, but he calls me Pussy. That should tell you something. I know he lived with Taylor when they made *Raintree*. The question is, did she get to fuck him? Tonight is the night Monty is going to get lucky with a genuine female and not some drag queen like Taylor. If Taylor can seduce Monty, and I'm sure she has already, I can, too."

She spent a good part of the day preparing herself, even calling in a hairdresser and a manicurist. She picked out a very sexy outfit—white Capri pants with a matching white silk blouse from Japan. The pants were so tight, Pepitone had to help her fit into them. With the pants, she wore a pair of matching white high heels. She sprayed Joy perfume on her knees, her arms, and her stomach.

Nervous before he arrived, she finished off a bottle of champagne by herself. She answered the door, and Monty seemed stunned by her gorgeous appearance. “Are you seeing Rock Hudson later tonight? To convert him, perhaps?”

“Just you, baby,” she cooed.

On her white sofa, she cuddled up to him, feeding him caviar as he downed vodka.

“When I came into the room, she was practically smothering him,” Pepitone said. “But he was not responsive. She’d later tell me he was oblivious to her charm. All her gimmicks had made men such as Lex Barker or Paul Newman rise to the occasion. But not Monty.”

Angie Dickinson

After three hours, Monty had had enough. He rose abruptly to his feet. “I’ve got to go.” She followed him to the door, where he gave her a swat on the rear. “You’ve got the most incredible ass. I know a lot of guys who’d like to plug it.”

“How about you?” she seductively asked him. “Robert Mitchum taught me how to be a rear door girl.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” he said, kissing her lightly on the lips. “I’m heading out tonight cruising. I want to suck the biggest cock I can find in New York.”

After he’d gone, she fell down on the sofa, laughing at herself. “So much for the seductive power of the Love Goddess of the 20th Century,” she said to Pepitone. “So much for the 20th Century’s Helen of Troy.”

“Honey lamb,” Pepitone said. “Monty prefers Frank Sinatra’s big ding-dong. He wouldn’t know what to do with a real woman like you.”

“I need a man tonight, and I don’t want to walk the streets of Manhattan soliciting like I used to. I’d be mobbed. Who’s in town that we know?”

“I read that Sammy Davis, Jr. is here,” she answered.

“I’ve got his number. Let’s ring him up. I’m what he likes, blonde all over. He’ll really go for what I have.”

Later that night, the brilliantly talented black entertainer took advantage of everything that Monty had turned down.

On the way out the door, Davis turned to Marilyn, giving her a wet kiss. “The less Frank knows about this, the better, okay, sweetheart?”

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The next day, Marilyn complained to Lee Strasberg that she feared she was washed up as the number one screen goddess of Hollywood. “Taylor seems to be sitting on that wobbly throne. But other than that bitch, Hollywood is for women in their twenties.”

Sensing that she was aware of the ongoing march of time, Strasberg persuaded her to draw up a will. She needed one. Because of her divorce from Arthur Miller, she didn’t want to leave him anything.

“I thought wills were something only old people signed. I’ve got a lot more movies I want to make.”

She finally relented, and Arthur Frosch, a famous attorney, met with her and drew up a will. Except for minor bequests, Strasberg would become the major heir to her estate, with a lesser amount (25%) bequeathed to Dr. Kris.

The ultimate beneficiary, the heir who would survive to collect millions, was Anna Mizrahi Strasberg, whom Lee married after the death of Paula in 1966. After Lee’s death in 1982, Anna became his sole heir, pocketing millions for the licensing of all those coffee mugs, T-shirts, pens, and memorabilia over the decades.

Strasberg came up with what he called a brilliant idea, a television dramatization of W. Somerset Maugham’s classic play, *Rain*, which had previously been brought to the screen by Gloria Swanson, Joan Crawford, and Rita Hayworth. “Another slut role,” Marilyn said. But Strasberg could be very persuasive, eventually steering her into an acceptance of the role. She said, “My character of Sadie Thompson is the kind of gal who knows how to be gay even when she’s sad. That’s important, you know.”

The script was pitched to the executives at NBC, who eagerly went for the idea, offering Marilyn $100,000 to appear in the telecast. Negotiations proceeded. Fredric March agreed to be her co-star, playing the angry and sexually repressed Reverend Davidson. His wife, Florence Eldridge, agreed to sign on with NBC in the role of the uptight Mrs. Davidson.

Ironically, it was Strasberg who sabotaged the deal when he insisted that NBC define him as the project’s director, which they were not willing to do.

At this point, Strasberg still had great influence over Marilyn, and she agreed to pull out, even though she needed the money, along with him.

She complained to him that, “Now that I’m on the road to forty, I think the parts will start drying up for me. I can’t see myself doing Thelma Ritter wise-cracking old lady roles.”

“Forget about Ritter,” Strasberg said. “Do something far more imaginative. When you’re old enough, we can turn you into a media event as Tallulah Bankhead the Second.”

She felt that a return to film work might be the answer to her sleepless nights and “blue, blue days.” In Hollywood, she still owed Fox a movie, and they were pushing a script on her called *Goodbye, Charlie* It was based on a play about a tough gangster who dies but returns to earth as a woman. She detested it and told Spyros Skouros her opinion. When he threatened her with legal action, she shouted at him, “The script is about as good as you are in bed.” Then she slammed down the phone on him.

Fox shopped the script to a long list of directors, some of whom had worked with Marilyn before and didn’t want to repeat the horrendous experience. Candidates included George Cukor, Billy Wilder, John Huston, Joshua Logan, Elia Kazan, William Wyler, George Stevens, John Ford, Carol Reed, and Alfred Hitchcock. Each director turned it down, and not just because they didn’t want to work with Marilyn. Like her, they too thought the script “a piece of shit,” in the words of Huston.

Goodbye, Charlie would be released in 1964. The studio finally found a director who’d handle it. He was Vincente Minnelli, who cast Tony Curtis in the starring role, with Marilyn’s role going to Debbie Reynolds. Marilyn had been right in her judgment. The movie turned out to be a tasteless flop.

Lee Strasberg

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Marilyn may have reached the depth of her greatest despair sometime in February of 1961. Clark Gable was dead, and she was being blamed for it. Her divorce from Arthur Miller had been finalized. Her last two movies, *Let's Make Love* and *The Misfits*, had each been defined as box office failures. Even more troubling, John F. Kennedy was to an increasing degree making himself unavailable.

Her one salvation, Dr. Ralph Greenson, was occupied with his family life and with his practice in California, and she found herself turning more and more to her New York psychiatrist, Dr. Marianne Kris, who was not as satisfying.

Miller's warning about Lee Strasberg had caused her not to trust him, even though his involvement in her career and personal life remained strong. His wife, Paula, seemed increasingly ill, and Marilyn no longer trusted her advice as much as she had during the filming of *The Misfits*.

Miller called Pepitone and asked if he could come by and retrieve his type-writer, papers, and books from the study. During his visit, Marilyn refused to come out of her bedroom. After he'd gone, she went into the stripped-down study with Pepitone, discovering only an autographed portrait of herself that she'd signed "with eternal love."

She sobbed when she saw that he'd taken all of their possessions, even three paintings she'd paid for herself. "He left only my autographed photo, a gift from me on our first anniversary. He didn't care enough for me to take it with him. So much for that eternal love I vowed."

Marilyn didn't want to leave the apartment and refused to see most people, even her friends. "Wherever I go, people stare at me, often unkindly. I can't walk into a room but what every woman is searching my face for telltale lines. Every man wonders if he can fuck the old broad that night."

Friends who came by to see her were turned away. Sometimes, visiting celebrities tried to arrange a rendezvous with her and were refused. Desi Arnaz, "one cocky bastard," in the words of Pepitone, successfully researched her apartment's address and knocked on its door.

Pepitone answered, but told him that Marilyn wasn't receiving visitors. Furious, Arnaz lashed out at the maid. "I hear she likes to get fucked, and I'm the man to do it. Tell the bitch she's missing out on a *big* thrill." Before he stalked away, he delivered a final insult. "In a few years, when I'm casting a grandmother role, I'll think of her."

Marilyn was not without men in her life. Pepitone revealed that she employed a handsome masseur who came early some mornings to massage her and take care of other needs. The maid heard "the craziest giggling and screeching coming from Miller's former study. The masseur always emerged looking exhausted after a session with Marilyn, but he always had a smile on his face."

Marilyn also took up with an Italian chauffeur who worked for a limousine company. Pepitone said he was a dead ringer for the late Rudolph Valentino. Marilyn called him "The Sheik." He told Pepitone that his real name was "Johnnie."

Desi Arnaz

When Marilyn didn't need a limousine, which was most of the time, The Sheik showed up anyway, and usually spent the night. "More squealing coming from her bedroom, more giggling, more crazy noises," according to Pepitone.

When Monty Clift came by, Marilyn complained that she could find no miracle drug that really satisfied her. "When are those shits in the laboratory going to come up with a miracle drug, a little pill that a gal can swallow and make the world right again?"

One night, she told both Clift and Pepitone that, "I think I'm going crazy, just like my mother and my grandmother. It's the asylum for me."

He told her, "The saner you are, the harder it is to prove it."

"I'm tired of living, tired of being Marilyn Monroe."

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Pepitone revealed in a memoir that the only bright spot for Marilyn had been that Christmas in 1960 when Joe DiMaggio showed up on her doorstep with large bouquet of red roses. Pepitone prepared one of his favorite dishes, spaghetti with sweet Italian sausages.

"I hadn't seen Marilyn so happy in months. She reminded me of that morning-after scene with Scarlettt O'Hara when Rhet Butler takes her up those antebellum stairs and presumably fucks the hell out of her."

The next morning, when Pepitone was preparing breakfast for DiMaggio, and Marilyn was still in bed, she asked him, "Why don't you marry Marilyn again? She still loves you. It would be wonderful for her."

He shook his head. "I love her, but remarriage is out of the question. There are just too many differences. It didn't work out the first time around. It won't work out the second time around."

By the time Marilyn woke up, Joe had already left the apartment. She told her maid, "I will never let Joe go. Never!"

She spent the rest of the day listening to romantic ballads by Frank Sinatra.

The relief that resulted from her reunion with DiMaggio had a short life span. Her depression returned, even darker than before. Early one evening, Marilyn told Pepitone, "Nothing in my life has worked out. Last night was the worst night I've ever had. It seemed so easy to leave this earth."

She confessed to Clift, to Pepitone, and to Dr. Kris that she had barely been able to stop herself from jumping out of one of her thirteenth floor apartment windows. "I squeezed my eyes shut at the open window and clenched my fists. It was only in the last second that I lost the courage."

The next afternoon, her psychiatrist, Dr. Kris, suggested she enter a hospital—"where every comfort will be provided for you—and you'll get some much-needed rest and recuperation."

At first, Marilyn didn't want to go, but Dr. Kris suggested that it was imperative. "The next time, you might not

hold back, and you might make that suicide leap."

Dr. Kris made the arrangements, and on February 5, 1961, she accompanied Marilyn to Cornell University-New York Hospital to check her in under the name of "Faye Miller."

After saying goodbye to Dr. Kris, two orderlies—a Hispanic and a black man—arrived to escort Marilyn to her room. She remembered walking and walking down long corridors and into another building. "We passed through steel doors," she said. "It was not like any hospital I've ever known. I never felt so alone in my life."

The orderlies seemed to be manhandling her, and she objected to being treated so roughly. Finally, she realized what was happening, discovering that she was a virtual prisoner within the walls of the Payne Whitney Clinic, whose reputation was already known to her. It was known as "a crazy house for rich people."

When she came to realize that she was in an insane asylum, she struggled to break free from the grip of the orderlies. She screamed and scratched the face of the Latino. Later, she realized that she was actually demonstrating that she was a dangerous patient.

She was dragged kicking and screaming into a sparsely furnished padded cell with barred windows. A small sign on an unbreakable plastic door read TOILET, but even it was locked. She was just dumped on the floor, as she heard the steel door close. She sat up and studied the walls, which bore scratches from the previous occupants, who no doubt had been struggling to free themselves from captivity.

For two hours, she banged on the steel doors with clenched fists, causing her hands to bleed. Two burly nurses finally came to her room. They warned her that if she didn't quiet down, they would return with a straitjacket. When they stripped her of her clothes, she denounced them as lesbians. After that, they forced her to put on a green-colored hospital gown. Before leaving that night, they switched off the room's only light. She was left in total blackness, sobbing until dawn and crying out for her medication. She'd later learn that the term for what she'd experienced was "going cold turkey."

Dr. Marianne Kris

The next day, when two doctors came to see her, she shouted at them, "You can't do this to me. Don't you know who I am? I'm Marilyn Monroe."

Then when the nurses returned, she kept insisting, "I'm not insane." She noticed an observation window, measuring about one foot square, through which anyone strolling along the hallway could stare in at her. It seemed that the entire staff, at one point or another during the day, appeared at that window to gape at her.

She'd later tell her publicist, Pat Newcomb, "Hour after hour, I keep seeing those Peeping Toms staring at me through that window. I decided to put on a show for them for free. If they were going to treat me like a nut, I'd become one. I lay on the bed masturbating, giving them a good show. Those eyes stayed glued to the window. One guy had to be pulled away so another could take his place to gape at me. And then another, and another…"

Norman Mailer, in his biography of Marilyn, wrote: "Perhaps as one drifts toward a state of near-insane, there is some impulse to turn inside out, reverse habits, fling off clothes, morals, and one's relation to time. Does psychosis, like death, move back into the past?"

While confined, Marilyn coerced a nurse and fan of hers to mail a note she'd written to Lee and Paula Strasberg. In her note, she pleaded with them to go to Dr. Kris and get her released. "I'm locked up with all these poor nutty people. I'm sure to end up a nut if I stay in this nightmare. Please help me! This is the last place I should be."

The Strasbergs did not respond to her letter, and they also refused to call Dr. Kris

In a letter to Dr. Greenson in California, Marilyn wrote: "There were screaming women in their cells—I mean they screamed out when life was unbearable for them. I guess—and at times like this I felt an available psychiatrist might have talked to them, perhaps to alleviate even temporarily their misery and pain."

She later claimed that every member of the clinic's staff brutalized her. However, a hospital nurse in an interview made a different claim to a reporter for *Life* magazine. "We felt so protective toward her. She made us all feel like we wanted to hold her in our laps. We wanted to soothe her, wanted to say, 'It's all going to be all right now. 'It was the feeling lonely, small children give you. You know, sort of dry their tears and pat them on the head, and hold their hands."

One strange man in a doctor's smock entered her padded cell. With his horn-rimmed glasses and profile, she was struck by how his looks evoked the memory of Arthur Miller. He introduced himself as Milton Faber, claiming his assignment involved examining her both mentally and physically. He informed her that "the mind and body are as one. Mental problems can destroy a perfectly healthy human body."

The first question the doctor asked her was, "I understand that you created quite a distubance last night, complaining about what a small tube of toothpaste you were given. Is that correct?"

"Yes, I want a big tube of toothpaste," she said.

"Do you realize, Mrs. Miller, that a large tube of toothpaste is actually a phallic symbol?"

She did not answer him.

She was nude under the sheet, which he pulled back to reveal her body. Slowly, ever so slowly, he began an extensive examination of her torso that would not be rivaled until she lay on a marble slab in a Los Angeles hospital undergoing an autopsy.

At one point, he placed his head on her breasts. According to him, this was the best way to determine a heartbeat. When he rose up, he told her, "I understand a woman of your sexual appetite requires at least two or three men a day."

"No, a dozen, at least," she said sarcastically. "Sometimes I take on the entire UCLA football team."

"Since you are deprived of sexual satisfaction in this room, do you masturbate a lot?" As he said that, he inserted his finger in her vagina.

She jerked away. "Don't touch me there. Go away!"

"Please, there was nothing sexual about my doing that. After all, using rubber gloves, of course, I stick my finger up men's assholes every day—it means nothing."

"Sexual or not, get out of this room," she ordered. "I'm reporting you to the administration. I may even sue this hospital."

Taking his chart, he abruptly left the cell.

A half hour later, another doctor entered her cell. He was fat, bald, and looked like Sydney Greenstreet's younger brother. He introduced himself, telling her that he had recently been assigned to her case, and that he'd just finished reading her medical records.

"But I was just examined by a doctor," she protested.

"Forget about that," he said. "A mistake. That was Joseph. He got out of his cell, but has been returned there now. I told that new nurse on duty to keep your door locked at all times. Steel doors only work if they're locked."

"I should sue," she threatened.

"Please, don't do that," he said. "He's one of your biggest fans, and right at this point in your life, you need all the loyal fans you can get, or so I hear. I am legally entitled to give you a thorough examination. If in doubt, you can verify my credentials with the front desk. We are so sorry about that intrusion. Please forgive our lapse in security. Now please turn over. I need to insert this thermometer. I'm sure you've had bigger things inserted there."

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Back in Hollywood, she would relive her final night at Payne Whitney through a dialogue with Jeanne Carmen. "I was heavily sedated and lying nude in a restrainer. I struggled hopelessly, trying to free myself. But even if I did, I was still in a padded cell with a steel door. I couldn't sleep in spite of the sedation. I might have dozed off for a minute or two. When I came to, I still felt I was in a coma."

“Suddenly, I became aware of these two shadowy figures descending over me. I opened my eyes as wide as I could. They were the two orderlies who took me to the cell in the first place—one Hispanic, the other black. The Latino gagged me. I was vaguely aware of the other guy stripping down. I knew what they were going to do. I struggled, but I was overpowered. When he entered me, it was like a knife stabbing into me. I thought the ordeal would never end. When he pulled out, I was bleeding.”

“That Spanish guy wasted no time. He jumped right on me. It didn’t hurt like the first one, but I felt humiliated. He said something like, ‘Could you believe I’m fucking Marilyn Monroe?’ It seemed to go on and on. Then the other, bigger guy came back for repeats. I passed out.”

“It was around noon when I woke up. I was in pain. Two of the nurses examined me. They claimed I must have deliberately hurt myself, but how could I have done that? I was restrained.”

“Are you sure this actually happened?” Carmen asked. “After all, you admitted that you were heavily sedated.”

“Of course, it happened. I said it did. Isn’t that enough for you? Do you think I have fantasies of men raping me? Don’t ever tell Joe what happened to me. He would go to that hospital and kill those two brutes.”

“I just don’t get it,” Carmen said. “I’m struggling to get the most minor of acting or modeling jobs, and you’re the Queen of Hollywood. You can have any role or any man you want. Why is it so empty for you here?”

“The answer is simple,” Marilyn said. “I’m back in Hollywood, the land of make-believe. Nothing is real here. Everybody is living a fantasy. I guess that’s why they call it Tinseltown.”

PART FIVE

MARILYN
AT RAINBOW'S END

While still in her padded cell at the Payne Whitney Clinic, a friendly nurse, a devoted Marilyn Monroe fan, came to take her for a walk along the corridor. When Marilyn spotted a phone on the wall, she asked the nurse if she would lend her the money to place a call to Florida.

On the other end of the line, Joe DiMaggio picked up the phone. He'd been hired as a batting instructor for the New York Yankees during their spring training of 1961 near St. Petersburg.

Unaware of her confinement, he listened to her plea. "What in hell are you doing in a loony bin?" he asked. "You're not nuts."

"Help me, please," she begged him. "I can't live through another day of this nightmare. I know you can get me released from this crazy house."

"I'm on the next plane, baby," he assured her. "Hold tight till I get there."

He called Dr. Marianne Kris, since she was the one who had committed her, the moment he reached New York, maneuvering for access to Marilyn. "If you don't, I'll take that nuthouse apart brick by brick—and I mean that!"

Before his arrival at the clinic, Dr. Kris had already been there, signing the release forms. Joe was presented with a bill for $5,000, and he immediately wrote a check.

In those pre-inflation days, $5,000 represented the average annual income for a lower middle class American family. Marilyn was asked to endorse the check, which was never cashed. A souvenir hunter at the hospital must have determined that one day the check, with the joint signature of Marilyn and DiMaggio, might be worth $100,000.

On his arm, she was escorted toward the clinic's rear entrance. She leaned in toward him. "Thank god you came to rescue me. You always know how to score a home run."

Waiting in a car was her faithful masseur, Ralph Roberts. DiMaggio got into the front seat after helping Marilyn into the rear, where Dr. Kris awaited her.

The very moment that Roberts drove off, Marilyn turned to Dr. Kris and started screeching and screaming at her. "You fucking bitch! How dare you do this to me? You betrayed me!" Out of control, and overcome with rage, she struck Dr. Kris in the face.

Defending her later, Roberts said, "I'd never seen Marilyn that angry and filled with such rage. Perhaps it was justified, considering what Kris had put her through."

DiMaggio, who had remained passive in the car, escorted Marilyn into her apartment. Dr. Kris and Roberts trailed them. At her door, Marilyn shouted at Dr. Kris. "Get out of here. I never want to see you again."

Dr. Kris complied, and would never again encounter her celebrated patient.

"The first thing Marilyn did when she went inside her door was to take off all her clothes in front of Joe and me and run naked around the apartment," Roberts said. "She shouted, 'I'm free at last. They made me wear those stinky old robes in that nuthouse. I'll never wear clothes again!' Then she took Joe's hand and lured him into her bedroom. They were in there for a long time. From the noises I heard, they were having a hell of a good time."

Later, Lena Pepitone arrived fresh from the market to cook dinner for them. After her session with DiMaggio, Marilyn tried on at least a dozen of her gowns. She told Roberts, "I want to see if I can still be Marilyn Monroe."

She and DiMaggio agreed that she was still in bad shape and needed at least three weeks of rest and recuperation. He'd made arrangements to check her into the Neurological Institute of the Columbia-University-

Presbyterian Hospital, where she would have every comfort.

After ensuring that she was comfortably settled and that her private phone was in working order, DiMaggio gave her a long, lingering kiss goodbye. He was headed back to Florida, where he promised to call her every day until she could eventually join him there.

After he was gone, the first call she placed was to the Oval Office. At his desk in Washington, President Kennedy accepted her call and was most sympathetic to her plight. She told him, “I feel I was put into prison for a crime I didn’t commit.”

“That’s funny,” he said. “That is exactly how I feel, sitting here in this office.” He promised that she would be contacted soon for a rendezvous.

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She found the new hospital, where she was catered to with great courtesy, to her liking. So that she would not be forced to eat hospital food, every day Pepitone brought her pastas, minestrone, and her favorite dessert, chocolate pudding.

Arthur Miller’s friend, the poet Norman Rosten, visited Marilyn at Columbia-University-Presbyterian Hospital and found that she was resting well. But he later said, “She is still a very sick woman, not just of the body and mind, but of the soul, the innermost engine of desire. That light was missing from her eyes.”

A withdrawal from pills and three weeks of rest and recuperation eventually led to Marilyn’s discharge. Publicist Pat Newcomb (they had patched up their differences) came to the hospital to help Marilyn check out. The crowd outside was clamoring for “red meat.”

Leaving Columbia, she was accompanied by six security guards who waded through a sea of fans, reporters, and photographers. Publicist John Springer was on the scene. “Marilyn looked great,” he said. “She was, in fact, radiant, and she’d lost those extra pounds. Her face looked healthy, and Mr. Kenneth had dyed her hair the color of champagne. She was elegant in a beige cashmere sweater and matching skirt. Her shoes were also the color of the bubbly.”

The crowd, pushing and shoving, quickly got out of control. Marilyn would later tell Susan Strasberg, “I thought they were going to rip off pieces of my flesh.”

At the end of March, 1961, she flew to Florida for a reunion with DiMaggio.

Before her arrival in St. Petersburg, DiMaggio had rushed around doing anything he could to make her comfortable. He’d booked two interconnected suites at the Soreno Hotel.

The Yankees, immersed in that year’s spring training, were looking forward to Marilyn’s visit. One player told DiMaggio, “Marilyn Monroe will be the greatest morale booster for our team.”

A journalist, on site reporting on the team’s progress, said, “to these young kids, DiMaggio was a god, a Hall of Famer—and a relic. He was as elegant (and bygone) as private railway cars.”

Marilyn and Joe DiMaggio

Semi-retired at the age of forty-six, DiMaggio seemed more at peace with himself. Reportedly, he told Marilyn,

“If I were you seven years ago, I would have divorced me, too.”

She was thirty-five and worried about her age. No one called her a girl anymore. “I’m a mature woman,” she said, “not that fat cow everybody saw in *The Misfits*. Come to think of it, not that many people saw me.”

Her presence at the Yankee camp attracted reporters and photographers from around the world. But most of the time, Marilyn was a no-show. Harry Harris, a photographer for the Associated Press, managed to take a picture of Marilyn and DiMaggio strolling arm in arm along Sarasota Beach. Her face was mostly obscured with sunglasses and a kerchief. Nonetheless, that picture was flashed around the world. Many editors headlined the caption—LOVE IS BETTER THE SECOND TIME AROUND.

When she went out on her own in the area to go shopping, she continued to wear a kerchief around her head, and sunglasses. She wore no makeup and dressed in slacks and an ill-fitting man’s shirt. No one recognized her. A nineteen year old checkout girl at the market told a reporter, “I thought it was Monroe, but I wasn’t really sure. She looked like so many other bored housewives in the area.”

When she eventually returned to Los Angeles, Marilyn told Jeanne Carmen that her future with DiMaggio would be a sometimes thing. “I love him dearly but can take him only in small doses.”

She said she’d enjoyed their domestic time together in adjoining suites. “He’s still good for only one round a day, but I can always lick him. I made tea for him while he watched sports. I made his one cup of coffee in the morning. I listened to his complaints about Joe Junior’s drinking and reckless driving. At one time, he told me ‘all my kid wants to talk about is Marilyn Monroe. If I didn’t know better, I’d say he was in love with you.’”

“The less Big Joe knows, the better,” Carmen warned her.

In Florida, Marilyn began to complain of stomach aches and cramps, which came and went with regularity. DiMaggio urged her to go to a doctor, but she told him, “I can’t stand to look at another doctor or another hospital clinic right now.”

On her worst day, when she was feeling the most pain, she received a note from George Cukor. He reported on some gossip he’d heard from an executive at Fox. He told her, “I think you look great, to judge from those recent pictures, but those jerks over at Fox are claiming that you look prematurely old for your thirty-five years. They noted deep lines under your eyes and also claim that your breasts have started to sag. Of course, they blame it on drug taking and alcohol abuse.”

After hearing that, she sobbed for a night, and even DiMaggio could not comfort or reassure her.

The Yankee’s training camp broke up in April, and the Yankees, along with DiMaggio and Marilyn, headed back to New York. Once there, Marilyn would create a sensation when she made an appearance at Yankee Stadium.

DiMaggio rented a suite at the Hotel Lexington, and Marilyn often lived there with him. She’d lost interest in her apartment on 57th Street.

During her absence, Arthur Miller had arrived with a moving van and removed most of the furniture. Some of the rooms were so bare that only the carpet was left. They’d owned a basset hound named Hugo, and he was gone, too.

She was in a very despondent mood, and was still bothered by those stomach cramps when she received a call from Frank Sinatra in Palm Springs.

“Hi, doll,” he said. “If the Slugger will release you, why don’t you get that much photographed ass of yours onto a plane and come home to your loving man?”

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Back on the West Coast after a long absence, Marilyn was once again in the arms of Sinatra. On many a night, she shared his bed, but there was no engagement ring on her finger. She was more or less hoping that he might propose. Instead of a ring, he presented her with a French poodle, which she nicknamed “Maf,” short for Mafia. She was always kidding him about his mob associations, although she had such links herself, and they would only intensify during the months to come.

Dean Martin dropped in to see her, and their dialogue revolved around Sinatra. “Frankie’s in love with you,” he told her, “only he doesn’t know it yet.”

Neither Marilyn nor Sinatra was faithful to each other. She planned to continue her affair with JFK whenever he might be available. She referred to their liaison as “a tropical heat wave,” thereby evoking one of her old musical numbers, but it really wasn’t as torrid as that phrase implied.

Actually, the main man in her life at the time was her psychiatrist, Dr. Ralph Greenson. After dumping Dr. Marianne Kris in New York, she had become more and more dependent on him. According to Jeanne Carmen, Marilyn resumed her sexual relationship with him. “It was just a mercy fuck,” Carmen claimed. “Her heart wasn’t

really in it."

When she had lunch with Robert Slatzer, she told him, "Joe has resumed his conjugal rights, but we don't have any intention of getting married again. I heard he was dating a Miss America. His son is coming to spend some time with me, but I'm not going to tell his dad."

"Be careful, Marilyn," Slatzer warned her. "You may be asking for trouble."

"But I love to play sexual games," she said. "Life is so short. Why not have some fun along the way? If only I felt better. I'm still having cramps."

Her masseur, Ralph Roberts, had followed her to California, where she rented a room for him at the Château Marmont, where she had given her famous interview for *Time* magazine in 1956, and where she'd conducted the early phases of her clandestine affair with Milton Greene.

She was still plagued with sleepless nights, so Roberts installed "blackout curtains" so she could sleep very late every morning, sometime until the early afternoon.

Accompanied by Sinatra, Marilyn was often seen at the home of Patricia and Peter Lawford in Santa Monica. She'd become much closer to Patricia than to Peter, and they often shared private luncheons together.

She was eager for any news from JFK. She told Lawford, "Since taking over the Free World, *El Presidente* has had little time for me. I hear half the female population of the East Coast is making themselves available to him."

"You'll be seeing him soon," Lawford promised. "He's coming out here, and Pat and I are throwing this big luncheon for him."

When the date was finalized, Lawford called her with an invitation. She seemed so excited that he had to warn her, "Don't go goo-goo over him. The ambassador told all of his sons, 'Get laid as often as possible.' Also, Jack has always managed to make a difference between sex and love."

"Don't worry," she said. "I won't get carried away."

With his acting career in decline, Lawford was finding renewed glory as the president's pimp. He envisioned that his palatial mansion, with its enormous heated swimming pool and movie projection room, would become a giant bordello for the president and his entourage whenever JFK visited California. Rat Pack wordsmith Sammy Cahn had already nicknamed the Lawford compound in Santa Monica as "High Anus Port."

Dr. Ralph Greenson with his wife, Hildi

Although eager to meet with the President again, Sinatra chose not to attend the luncheon, even though he'd been configured as the guest of honor. Milton Ebbins, vice president of Peter Lawford Productions, reportedly said, "The reason Sinatra didn't show up was because he knew that Jack would want to go upstairs with Marilyn. He didn't want to cause either of them any embarrassment, since he, too, had resumed his affair with Marilyn. Kennedy was the big cheese, so I guess he got first dibs on her. Sinatra didn't want to make a scene. He was known for making scenes, but not with the president."

Sammy Davis, Jr. agreed to escort Marilyn to the luncheon, although it was understood that he'd merely be functioning as a beard. After the luncheon, she disappeared upstairs into one of the bedrooms with the President. He'd developed a passion for bathroom sex.

After long, passionate kisses, he invited her to undress. He did the same before directing her into the bathroom, with its large, claw-footed marble tub.

She thought she was being asked to shower with him, and she was surprised when he wanted her to join him in the bathtub. He preferred to be on his back while she maneuvered herself on top of him for sex.

She was mildly surprised when Lawford came into the bathroom with a camera. JFK showed no shock at all, so she knew this "audition" had been prearranged by both of them.

"I hope it's okay," JFK said, "but I wanted to have Peter take some pictures of us doing it."

"I hope you don't mind, Marilyn," Lawford said.

"It wouldn't be the first time I posed for nude pictures," she said.

"Nor me, either," JFK said.

She wanted to know many more details about when he'd faced the camera nude, but dared not pursue it. She did say, "Mr. President," are you telling me that one day there will be a nude calendar devoted just to you?"

"All things are possible," he said.

Marilyn later told Jeanne Carmen what took place that afternoon: When they emerged from the bathtub and dried off, Lawford wanted to take frontal nudes of them while they were passionately kissing. At one point, JFK asked her to perform fellatio on him, so that Lawford could snap a picture of them together.

According to what Marilyn told Carmen, Lawford later asked if he could join them in bed. "But only in a service capacity," JFK told his brother-in-law.

She claimed she knew what that meant. "Peter, as you know, has quite a gay streak in him and welcomed the chance to get at Jack some way. Just for the thrill, Jack allowed himself to be serviced by Peter while the President was doing the honors for me. All of us had a gay old time, especially the President. But after a short while, he ordered Peter 'to get lost.'" The existence of these notorious photographs, including one of Marilyn performing fellatio on JFK, were first exposed to the general public in C. David Heymann's biography, *A Woman Named Jackie*. The whereabouts of these rare porn shots are not known today. Perhaps they were destroyed, but then again, perhaps not.

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On June 7, 1961, fourteen months before her death, Marilyn flew to Las Vegas after accepting an invitation from Sinatra to attend a lavish party at the Sands in honor of Dean Martin's forty-fourth birthday. She was not in good shape, still complaining of a sharp pain in her right side. She also suffered frequent bouts of indigestion. She had been warned by a doctor not to drink. But on the night of the party, she had started drinking heavily in the afternoon, and arrived at the party already drunk.

There, she encountered her long-entrenched rival or enemy, Elizabeth Taylor with her husband, Eddie Fisher. Marilyn extended her hand to Taylor who seemed to glare at her with stern disapproval.

Brothers-in-law Jack Kennedy with Peter Lawford Inset: Marilyn Monroe

Much to Taylor's annoyance, Marilyn gave Fisher a sloppy wet kiss. He later told Dean Martin and his fellow Rat Packers that he'd once visited Marilyn in her apartment. "What red-blooded male would turn down Marilyn Monroe, even a man madly in love with Elizabeth? I came over and I came once I got there, if you get my drift. Before the milkman arrived, the blonde vixen had me three times."

Our farewell wasn't all that romantic, Fisher claimed. "Thanks, Eddie," Marilyn had told him. "I just wanted to experience firsthand what turns Taylor on."

When the party moved from its private venue to a table close to the stage of the auditorium where Frank would be performing Taylor asked to be seated at the end of the table, presumably as far as possible from Marilyn. Seated with her were Dean Martin and his wife, Jeanne. Fisher, in contrast, was seated to the immediate left of Marilyn. According to Fisher, when the conversation eventually turned to a discussion of Frank Sinatra, Marilyn told him, "I can't tie him down, not Frankie, but I'll always love him." Later, after more bubbly, she asserted, "If it were possible, I would be married to both Frank and Joe. This is supposed to be a free country, yet bigamy is outlawed. It should be legal."

As the evening at the Sands progressed, Fisher watched in horror as a drunken Marilyn made a spectacle of herself. "She was slobbering all over herself," he later claimed. "Normally, she was a beautiful woman. But on this particular night, she looked like a broken-down and washed-up Vegas hooker. But what did I care? I was married to Elizabeth, the most beautiful woman in the world."

At one point, after returning from the women's room, when Marilyn was seated between Patricia and Peter Lawford, she fondled his crotch. "For old time's sake," she whispered to him. She also insulted him. "What happened, Peter? It seems to have shrunk!"

As Sinatra sang onstage, she swayed to the music, her ample breasts falling out of her low-cut pink satin dress.

After the show, Marilyn, along with the Dean Martin/Elizabeth Taylor/Eddie Fisher party, went backstage. She was the first to reach a sweaty Sinatra. She gushed over his performance and planted wet kisses on his face. Noting her condition, he looked at her with something akin to disgust.

Martin later said, "If there is one thing Frankie can't stand, it's a drunken broad."

"Then the unspeakable occurred," Taylor later claimed. "Marilyn was so drunk, she threw up on Frank's tuxedo." He ordered a security guard to take her back to his suite. A photographer stood nearby and tried to take a picture, but Sinatra knocked his camera to the floor, smashing it with his feet. He then fled to his dressing room to change into fresh clothes.

With Fisher at her side, Taylor stood next to the photographer and said, "Monroe is a mess, isn't she? How she holds onto her beauty, I'll never know. She drinks far too much and obviously can't hold her liquor. Now, me, I'm a girl who knows how to handle booze."

Later that night, Sinatra chastised Marilyn, but she pleaded illness, claiming that she was in great pain. He offered to call the hotel doctor, but she refused.

Far more intriguing than Marilyn's drunken debacle at Sinatra's opening was what happened the following afternoon. Marilyn called Elizabeth's suite and asked to drop in. She wanted to apologize to her for "my outrageous behavior last night." Somewhat reluctantly, Elizabeth allowed her to take the elevator up to see her.

Amazingly, in what might have been one of the casting blunders of all time, Marilyn had been seriously considered by Fox to star in the film *Cleopatra* (1963), a widely publicized role which eventually went to Taylor. Actresses who had also been briefly considered for the role had included Joan Collins, Susan Hayward, Gina Lollobrigida, Joanne Woodward, Kim Novak, and even Brigitte Bardot.

On that hot Las Vegas afternoon, what transpired between the two superstars, Marilyn and Taylor, is still a hotly debated topic. Years later, in their edition of April 11, 2011, *The Globe* revealed that the two women had a lesbian tryst.

In her diary, Taylor wrote that she was entranced by the way Marilyn moved. "She was the sexiest woman I ever met, and her touch was electric."

Taylor later confided to her best friend, Roddy McDowall, "I wanted to see how far the bitch would go. But she had to do all the work. I felt empowered somehow, like I was the grand diva and she a lowly slave, if that makes any sense."

Unless there is something not yet discovered, it's likely that Taylor had never had an encounter like that before. If she did, she carefully concealed it. Unlike Marilyn, who "could walk both sides of the waterfront" (a phrase used by Tennessee Williams), Taylor was a woman who reserved her charms for men—and a lot of them. Their make-up or make-out session was short-lived.

At the Beverly Hilton Hotel a short time later, Marilyn entered the bar accompanied by her masseur, Ralph Roberts. McDowall was Taylor's guest in the bar that evening. Taylor was overheard warning Fisher and McDowall, "Keep that dyke away from me tonight."

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During the third week of June, 1961, suffering from chronic pain, Marilyn, along with Ralph Roberts, flew back to New York. One June 28, at her apartment, she suffered a severe attack and was rushed on a stretcher into the emergency room of Manhattan polyclinic. When she was hauled in, her face was covered with a sheet.

After a preliminary examination, it was discovered that she was suffering from impacted gallstones and an inflamed gallbladder. Emergency surgery was required.

As Dr. Richard Cottrell later said, "She may have been beautiful on the outside, but internally, she was in serious trouble. In addition to her other problems, she was bleeding in the uterus and had an ulcerated colon."

Joe DiMaggio rushed to the hospital and met with her surgeon, Dr. John Hammett. "She's made her condition worse with all that liquor and barbiturates." DiMaggio was convinced how urgent the surgery would be as a means of preserving her life.

The actual operation went with relative ease. But before being sedated, she became hysterical, repeating that the hospital was preparing to scar her body and turn her into a monster.

When she woke up, DiMaggio was in her room, waiting patiently and hovering near her. "You're always here when I need you," she said in a soft voice. "I am so grateful."

"I'll always be here for you when you need me," he promised.

The publicist, Pat Newcomb, was on hand to deal with the press, and May Reis, a former secretary to Arthur Miller, handled her avalanche of mail. Lena Pepitone, still the guardian of her New York apartment, cooked fresh food for her every day and brought it to the hospital.

DiMaggio stayed around until her doctors assured him that his former wife was recovering satisfactorily, with no problems. He had scheduled a business trip overseas, and he had to fly out of New York. He kissed her goodbye and said he'd stay in touch with her.

He also told her that he had put through a call to his son, Joe Jr., and that he was coming to New York to be at her bedside.

Two hours later, Joe Jr. called, promising, "I'm on my way there to take care of my girl."

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Joe Jr. was waiting for Marilyn when she was released from the hospital. He wanted to stay with her, and take

care of her. Whatever he told her, she shared with Ralph Roberts, who at this point, for a period at least, had become her closest confidant.

"The boy talked to me about Marilyn's suicide attempts and miscarriages," Roberts said. "She had told him about them, or he'd found out somehow. He thought if he lived with her full time, he could prevent her from doing all these things. He even told me he could get her off liquor and pills. Trouble with that, Junior couldn't wean himself from the bottle. I think he was also taking drugs, maybe not as much as Marilyn, but he always seemed to be on something."

Joe Jr., would later tell her, "You can't believe how our names are linked. At school, I used to be a big man because I was DiMaggio's kid. Now all the boys want to know is, 'What is Marilyn Monroe really like?'"

"I tell the boys that you don't have that whispery voice," he told her. "That when the camera is off, you're just a regular gal. Talking like a real person. If only my mother could be more like you."

Marilyn wanted to know more about her rival, Dorothy Arnold, the first Mrs. Joe DiMaggio. Joe Jr., told Marilyn that Dorothy was always embarrassing him when he brought boys home after school. "She likes to put on a show, to attract attention. After all, she had Marilyn Monroe to compete with. One afternoon, she showed off by doing handstands. The outcome of it all was that she wasn't wearing any panties. The boys clapped and roared their approval. I was so embarrassed I wanted to die. It's not great fun when your mom shows her pussy to your schoolmates."

"I hope I don't embarrass you in front of your friends," she said.

"Not at all. You're not a mother. You're Marilyn Monroe."

The first day she was feeling better, she invited him as her escort for a stroll along 8th Avenue. She wore no makeup and put on a pair of dark sunglasses, hiding her blonde hair with a kerchief.

As they walked along slowly, his arm in hers, she spotted an old wino sitting down on the street corner. His face was covered with liver spots, and his whiskers were long.

"Hi," she said, coming over to him. "I'm Marilyn Monroe. What's your name?"

"I forgot my name a long time ago," he said. "I think it was John Henry, or something like that."

"Would a twenty-dollar bill help you?" she asked.

"My God, you beautiful gal," he said. "Have I died and gone to heaven? You're the answer to an old man's prayer."

She reached into her handbag and withdrew a twenty-dollar bill, handing it to him.

"Thank you, thank you, kind lady."

"Anything else I can do for you?" she asked, although Joe Jr. was urging her to move on.

"A bottle of Jack Daniels, and my day would be complete," he told her.

"Stay right where you are," she said. "We'll be back."

As she walked along with Joe Jr., he warned her, "You can't befriend every wino on the streets of New York. There are too many of them."

She wouldn't listen, spotting a liquor store ahead. Inside, she purchased a bottle of Jack Daniels.

"I'll tell you something, babe," the liquor store owner told her. "If you took better care of yourself, and didn't drink so much, you'd be a dead ringer for Marilyn Monroe."

"I'm a bigger star than Marilyn," she said. "I'm Jayne Mansfield."

She walked back with Joe Jr. and handed the old wino the bottle. He kissed her hand in gratitude.

It was around noon, and she decided she wanted a drink. Spotting a bar on the corner, she asked him to come in with her. He ordered a beer, and she asked for a vodka with orange juice. Only three men were sitting at the bar, one older man only three stools from her. When Joe Jr. excused himself to go to the men's room, that man came up behind her."

Listen, Doll, if you dump that boy, I've got twenty dollars burning a hole in my pocket. How about it? I usually pay ten. You're a bit over the hill, but worth it."

"No, no thanks," she said. "I'm not a hooker. I've got plenty of dough. I actually buy young men to service me."

"Oh, I see," he said. "You're worse than a whore!"

When Joe Jr. returned, she paid for the drinks, but didn't touch them. "Let's get the hell out of here."

On the way up the street, she told him, "There I was just like I was in the mid-1940s. Hanging out in the bars along 8th Avenue, getting some man to make me an offer. At least I can still pull that off. Prices have gone up. I was offered twenty dollars today. It used to be five dollars."

That night over a dinner cooked by Roberts, Joe Jr. brought up the subject of marriage. "She didn't laugh at him or bring up that he was far too young to marry her," Roberts later said.

"Don't ever get married," she warned him. "It only makes things tougher. You'll have lots of girls in your life,

but you don't have to marry them. Somehow, marriage takes the romance out of everything."

"Then I'll devote my life to the Marine Corps," he said. "I certainly didn't do so well at Yale."

"I want you in my life for always," she said. "We don't have to be married. I've got a better offer. I'll always be your girl."

As they were enjoying a cognac served by Roberts on her sofa, Joe Jr. said, "I've got to ask you a very embarrassing question."

"What might that be?" she said. "Don't ask me how old I am."

"Are you having an affair with President Kennedy?"

"Not at all," she said. "Another silly rumor going around. I met Mr. Kennedy once at the home of Peter and Patricia Lawford—and that's that."

"I don't think you've ever lied to me, and I feel you're telling the truth now," he said. "At least I want to believe you are."

Ralph Roberts, Marilyn's confidant and masseur

Roberts later said that Joe Jr. and Marilyn were definitely having sex, and that he slept every night with her during his stay in New York.

She even reported to Roberts about what it was like: "He's not quite the ball player his father is.. at least not yet. But he knows how to score."

"Please, please, Marilyn, be careful. He's very young, and you've had an operation."

"Oh, Ralph, you dear one, if I had been careful, I wouldn't have become Marilyn Monroe."

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By the time John F. Kennedy became president, the gangster Johnny Roselli had become a familiar figure in Marilyn's life. He was often a guest of Patricia and Peter Lawford at their house in Santa Monica. On various occasions, he was seen with Marilyn, wearing one of his $1,200 tailored suits brightened with a red tie like a touch of plumage. His hair was always coiffed, and he frequently flashed what he called his "pearls," his brilliantly white teeth. From his good-looking face came a soft, liquid voice.

As Sam Giancana's West Coast henchman, Roselli concocted some wild plots in his life, none more bizarre than when he schemed to use Marilyn Monroe in an attempt to assassinate Fidel Castro in Havana.

Roselli had learned that Marilyn was the favorite movie star of the Cuban dictator. Both he and Giancana agreed that if she were to visit Havana, it would be relatively easy to gain admittance to the private quarters of Castor. "He'd surely want to pop her," Giancana said. A renegade cabal within the CIA agreed, although citing how

risky it was.

Their first attempt to use a woman to murder Castro had failed, and none of them wanted things to go wrong this time around.

The earlier plot had involved the stunningly beautiful Marita Lorenz, a nineteen-year-old daughter of the sea captain *MS Berlin*, who had arrived in Havana aboard a cruise ship on February 23, 1959. Born in Bremen, Germany, of a German father and an American actress mother, she spent part of her childhood in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp because of the perceived anti-Nazi activities of her mother.

That fateful day in early 1959, Castro was invited aboard, and was mesmerized by Lorenz. He not only invited her to dinner that night, but after a few days, asked her to come and live with him in Havana.

Their affair led to a pregnancy. Castro made it clear that he didn't want to be the father of her baby, and urged her, six months into her pregnancy, to have an abortion. She adamantly opposed the idea, but in October of 1959, according to her report, she was given a spiked drink which caused her to pass out. When she awakened the next day in a clinic outside Havana, she learned that she'd undergone an abortion. Her doctor, a friend of Castro, defined it as a "miscarriage."

Their affair came to an abrupt end, and Lorenz, without funds, flew to Miami. The CIA knew of her affair with Castro and approached her as part of an evolving plot to kill the dictator.

Somehow, agents from the CIA convinced Lorenz that she should seek revenge for the enforced abortion. Agent Frank Sturgis later claimed that, "I was ordered to recruit her. We viewed her as pure gold. She was broke at the time, and we were prepared to give her six million dollars."

Eventually, she agreed to return to Havana to carry out a plot to poison Castro.

On March 11, 1961, Robert Maheu entered onto the scene. He had been a former FBI agent who was now secretly employed by the CIA, although, for appearance's sake, he ran what on the outside appeared to be a for-profit independent detective agency.

He asserted that he met with gangsters Santo Trafficante and Sam Giancana at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach to plot the assassination. Sturgis later claimed that it was he who presented the poison pills to Lorenz. She concealed them in her makeup box before flying to Havana.

Castro agreed to receive her at his penthouse within Havana's *Habana Libre* building. At the last minute, she couldn't go through with it. "I loved him too much. Instead of poisoning him, I made love to him. He figured out that I had been sent to kill him. In a daring move, he tossed his revolver onto the bed, challenging me to shoot him. I just couldn't do it."

"You can't lie to me," he told her. "You love me too much. *Nobody can kill me."*

After making love to her one final time, he put her on a plane back to Miami.

For reasons of their own, members of the CIA renegade group didn't want to bloody, firsthand, their hands with Castro's death, so they turned instead to the Mafia. After all, they were said to be expert hit men.

Love and a (failed) counter-revolutionary plot: Marita Lorenz and Fidel Castro

But first, Giancana ordered Roselli to visit Marilyn in New York to see if she'd go for such an outlandish

scheme. “Even with the blackmail we have on her, we can’t force her to pull off a stunt like this,” Giancana said. “She might even think we’re insane. And we’re not at all sure she’d want to take such a risk. Just because she’s fucking the President doesn’t make her a super patriot.”

When Roselli had visited Marilyn in the hospital, he feared she’d turn down such a scheme. But, to his surprise, she went for it. “I always wanted to be a Mata Hari. Perhaps if they remake that Garbo picture, I can play the lead. It sounds risky, but I’m game,” she said. “I think I could sell my memoir of the event and the movie rights for millions. It’d be a real boost to my career. A film like this, with me starring in it, has my name already engraved on the Oscar.”

Shortly after her release, Ralph Roberts accompanied her to the Waldorf Astoria. While her masseur/escort waited in the bar, she was taken upstairs by Roselli for a meeting with Giancana.

In his suite, Giancana, in his bathrobe, made Bloody Marys. “I’m the world’s greatest Bloody Mary expert,” he told her.

As she’d later relate to Jeanne Carmen, “Sam exaggerated about some things, but not about his Bloody Marys. They were the best I’ve ever tasted, and I’ve downed quite a few. I even ate the celery stick. He served them in redfrosted mugs.”

During their talk, as Marilyn later related, the agents of the CIA had approached Giancana when he made a trip to Mexico. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the CIA was humiliated, and President Kennedy was furious at the men who had orchestrated the botched covert operation.

“In no way does Jack Kennedy want to be linked to this plot,” Giancana said. “After that screwed-up job with the Bay of Pigs shit, that’s all he would need. There would go his re-election chances.”

Apparently, the President was under intense pressure from some of his advisors, who wanted Castro murdered, but he wanted the assassination carried out without any link to the Oval Office. He once asked his aide, Ted Szulc, “What would you think if I ordered Castro’s assassination?”

At that point in his presidency, he could hardly stand to hear any mention of the Bay of Pigs. His own press secretary, Pierre Salinger, had called it “the least covert military operation in history. The only information Castro didn’t have was the exact time and place of the invasion.”

Giancana told Marilyn that they could arrange to have her flown to Havana, where it was almost certain that Castro would be delighted to spend a night with her in his suite. “Apparently, from what we hear, he’s a highly sexed man and could really go for you,” Roselli said.

“The CIA has weird ways to get rid of someone,” Giancana said. “An elegant set of toiletries in a box of real gold might do the trick. They have this lethal bacterial powder, also a shaving lotion that, when splashed on the face, induces a massive heart attack. Lots of shit like that.”

“We’ve got a lot to work out,” Roselli said. “We wouldn’t want you anywhere nearby at the time of his death. We plan to have your plane waiting at the airport for you, ready to take off for Miami before the Cubanos learn their beloved commie hero is a dead duck.”

In case she didn’t already know, Giancana made it clear to Marilyn that the Mafia’s reason for wanting to wipe out Castro involved finances as well as politics. Castro had destroyed the mob’s multi-million dollar casino business. “Castro betrayed us in more ways than one. After he took over, my boys sent him millions of Yankee dollars on his promise that when the dust settled, he’d reopen the casinos. He pocketed the money and more or less told us to go fuck ourselves. Santo Trafficante, Carlos Marcello, and Meyer Lansky, and a lot of other guys, including your boyfriend, Frank Sinatra, want revenge. Castro now denounces us as a pack of crooks, gamblers, and pimps.”

“Could you believe the CIA offered us only $150,000 to pull off a job like this?” Roselli said. “Chicken feed. The money doesn’t interest us. The big deal involves getting Castro out of the way so we can reopen our casinos.”

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When Marilyn’s meeting with Giancana and Roselli was over, Roberts was waiting to ride with her in a taxi with her back to her apartment on 57th Street. But before getting into a cab, she wanted to walk for a few blocks. Along the way, she found a stationery store and went inside. Here—and Roberts later admitted it was true—she bought a red diary, which would in time become much disputed, its whereabouts unknown today.

The very existence of such a diary has been dismissed as a fabrication by some biographers, although Marilyn’s friends, including Jeanne Carmen and Robert Slatzer, have admitted to having seen it.

Columnist James Bacon in the 1950s claimed that Marilyn was making diary entries in a notebook of sorts. Susan Strasberg called her “a great note taker.” Amy Greene, wife of Milton Greene, confirmed that she made

frequent entries to a diary. And Dr. Ralph Greenson advised his clients, especially Marilyn, to keep a diary.

On that day with Roberts in the stationery store, she told him that there was a lot of important business that she needed to write down so that she wouldn't forget who said what. It can be assumed that nothing in her diary was more important than her involvement, such as it was, with the Mafia and with the CIA in the plot to assassinate Castro.

Although she didn't know it at the time, Marilyn that summer day in 1961, made herself "a subject of interest" to such diverse groups as the CIA, the FBI, the Mafia, and (later), to Jimmy Hoffa's Teamsters' Union. From that moment on, she'd be the subject of constant surveillance as part of an investigation of her life that would even extend into the next century.

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About a month later, back in Los Angeles, Marilyn felt the scorching desert winds of August blowing across the city. She was eager to escape, even though she'd just landed there. An invitation for a weekend yachting trip with Frank Sinatra to Catalina Island appealed to her. Other passengers included Dean and Jeanne Martin.

Jeanne remembered the trip: "Marilyn was into heavy drugs," she said. "She wandered around the boat nude at three o'clock in the morning, looking for some 'reds' to put her to sleep."

The first twenty-four hours of the yacht trip proved too much for Sinatra.

Before the second day of sailing, Marilyn was so drunk and drugged she couldn't even dress herself, and Sinatra had to send Jeanne below to assist her.

Later, he told Martin, "I can't wait to get her off the boat. The way I feel right now, I could throw her to the sharks. All through this trip, she's been pressuring me to marry her. In a weak moment, a few weeks ago, I agreed. But now, the marriage is off. I've ordered our return to shore. The trip will continue, but without Miss Monroe. It's over between us."

Sinatra misstated: Their relationship was far from over. Additional outrageous dramas would transpire before her untimely death.

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The assassination attempt on Fidel Castro, and any ancillary involvement on the part of Marilyn, had been thrown into disarray, to some degree because of the increasing hostility of the Kennedy administration toward the Mafia. After Sam Giancana helped JFK win the presidency through the use of the mob's money and influence in Illinois and West Virginia, he mistakenly believed that in the aftermath of the election, the Mafia would go about its business without undue government interference. "Jack Kennedy will be like his old man, working hand in glove with us," Giancana predicted. "Old Joe Kennedy promised me that the Chicago rackets would be left sacrosanct."

Does *everyone* look like Marilyn? Jeanne Martin and her husband, Dean

Those promises meant nothing after JFK appointed his brother, Robert Kennedy, as attorney general. Unlike J. Edgar Hoover, who had left the Mafia relatively unharmed for decades, RFK defined himself as a "crime buster."

In their book *Crypt 33, the Saga of Marilyn Monroe—the Final Word*, authors Milo Speriglio and Adela Gregory, claimed, "Giancana eventually concluded that the Kennedys were systematically attempting to erase their obligations to the Mafia. As Bobby continued to prosecute and apply constant surveillance of mob operations, Giancana continued to bug and tap rooms frequented by the President and his brother."

Those authors revealed that both Giancana and Sinatra were enraged by this reversal of the Kennedys' promises. They wrote, "Giancana had selected Sinatra as the mob's liaison with the president. The plan having failed, Giancana went so far as to consider a 'hit' on Sinatra for his ignorance and inability to carry out his tasks. But Giancana's anger toward Sinatra eventually diminished, and he instead blamed the 'assholes,' the Kennedys."

Giancana didn't seem to realize his phone had been tapped by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI when he placed a call to Roselli in Los Angeles. Giancana told Roselli, "Every boy in America wants to become President of the United States. I had a different ambition. I wanted to be a mob boss, the boss of bosses. I plan to hold onto that position by blackmailing the Kennedys. The president has a fatal flaw, and that is women. If he is as serious about Monroe as she says he is, we'll trap her, and him. I've already got stuff on him and that rotter shit he calls his father—photos, secret films, tape recordings."

In *Double Cross*, Giancana is quoted as saying, "The American public would be alarmed to see their president being serviced by three women—and one of them a shine (sic) broad to boot. Yeah, if I ever need to contain him, all I have to do is use a key." Around his neck he carried a small key, which opened a safe deposit box in a Chicago bank.

It appears that Marilyn may have exaggerated her role in the life of JFK when she discussed her affair with him to Giancana. At the time, she claimed that the Bouvier and Kennedy families had "forced" JFK to marry Jackie, but didn't supply the reason. Usually, that meant a child was on the way. "I feel sorry for them," she said to the Don. "They're locked in a loveless marriage. I can tell he's not in love with her. The other woman always knows."

She also told Giancana, "I'm convinced that Jack will divorce her and marry me. Instead of a divorce, he might get an annulment instead. After all, the Pope and him are in each other's crotches—that is, if the Pope actually has a crotch."

Later, as time progressed, Giancana found it hard to accumulate blackmail evidence about Marilyn and the president because they weren't having the close and frequent contact she'd indicated. The security surrounding the president also made it difficult to get to him. Giancana made it a point, therefore, to accumulate additional evidence to embarrass Marilyn. He felt the sex tape recorded with the dead Johnny Stompanato was not sufficient. He wanted more. For that, he called in "a specialist" in blackmail, bugging, and the placement of hidden cameras—Mickey Cohen.

As the Cold War progressed, White House attention focused on Nikita Khrushchev and the dictator's threats of open war over the access routes to Berlin. Soon, the Kennedys and even the CIA shifted their focus away from the Castro assassination attempt.

But Roselli still plotted a role for Marilyn as a potentiality in the plans being formulated for a possible assassination of Castro. "She's always on the table as the woman who might pull it off," he said from his base in Key Biscayne, where he tried to ingratiate himself with the anti-Castro community of exiles. As one reporter asserted, "There were speedboats on crystal waters and women in abundance, as well as optimistic projection of casino shares and cabinet positions once Castro was killed."

Marilyn revealed to very few friends the extent of her involvement with the mob and the CIA. Once exception was her longtime friend, columnist Sidney Skolsky. In his way, the journalist loved her, and protected and never attempted to expose her, although, as he admitted, "I knew too much."

He tried to bring some reality into her life and warned her to disconnect herself from the President. "It can only backfire. You're getting deeper and deeper into trouble."

Movie columnist Sidney Skolsky with MM

When she told him of the Roselli/Giancana plot to kill Castro, he went ballistic. “Are you out of your fucking mind? Do you want to live fast and die young like Jimmy Dean? You’re just asking for it. You’ll end up getting murdered yourself.”

She’d always turned to him for advice, and she promised to think it over. “Maybe I should just walk away,” she told him.

“Get out while the getting’s good,” he told her.

After a sleepless night, she felt that was the way to go, not realizing how deeply involved she already was.

But when she received a call from the White House, her fears vanished. It was the President of the United States extending an invitation to Washington.

Her first question was, “Will Jackie be there?”

“No, she’ll be in Virginia,” JFK told her.

“Oh, Mr. President, can we do it in the Lincoln Bedroom? You know how much I’ve always admired President Lincoln.”

“You come to Washington, and I’ll give you something you can admire about this sitting President.”

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A widely held belief is that Marilyn never visited the White House during the Kennedy presidency, but was stashed in JFK’s private suite at the Mayflower Hotel. Although she spent nights at the Mayflower under an assumed name, she did visit the White House, as some eyewitnesses have testified. Take pint-sized Mickey Rooney, for example.

In his 1991 memoirs, *Life Is Too Short*, he said that JFK on several occasions invited him to White House gatherings, probably because he was friends with Judy Garland and Peter Lawford.

He remembered one such occasion when the President was speaking to a diplomatic delegation from Madrid in the Rose Garden. Apparently, Jackie was out of town that weekend.

“In the distance, at the far side of the garden, I noticed this beautiful blonde wearing large sunglasses like that made popular by Jackie at the time,” Rooney said. “She stood by herself in the garden.”

“Jeez!” Rooney asked himself. “Does he do it with Marilyn in the White House?” Like most of *tout* Hollywood, Mickey had learned about the JFK/Monroe sexual tryst.

At the end of the ceremony, Mickey was making his way over to say hello to Marilyn, but was intercepted by an agent of the Secret Service. “Mr. Rooney,” the agent said. “The President would like to speak to you.”

After some preliminaries, JFK recalled the first time he’d met Rooney in the mid-1950s. It was in a New York City elevator heading down to the lobby of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

“Mr. Rooney,” Senator Kennedy had said, shaking his hand, “I’m one of your biggest fans.”

“I could almost see the wheels turning in his head,” Rooney later wrote. “I suspected he was saying to himself,

‘I wonder if this little bastard knows I’m fucking Marilyn Monroe.’”

“I’m one of your biggest fans, too, senator,” Rooney told JFK. That wasn’t true. Rooney always voted Republican. “You appear on TV so often, you’re stealing all of our Hollywood stardom.”

What Rooney didn’t say was, “And screwing one of our loveliest stars.”

In the lobby of the Waldorf that day in New York, after shaking Rooney’s hand, JFK said that he was off for an important appointment on Park Avenue. He was seen later that night entering a hotel suite occupied by Joan Crawford.

On yet another occasion Rooney visited the White House, he met privately with JFK and talked about Marilyn.

JFK said to Rooney, “She told me you were responsible for giving her one of her first roles in movies, a bit role but a part nonetheless.”

“That’s true,” Rooney said. “Johnny Hyde was our mutual agent, and he asked me to get her a part in a movie which she could use as a screen test. That was around 1949. The picture was called *The Big Wheel*. If you blink, you’ll miss her. She appeared in a crowd scene at the Indianapolis racetrack.”

Two views of Mickey Rooney, aged *(bottom photo)* and *(top photo)* with Marilyn

“I knew her before then,” JFK admitted. “When she was Norma Jeane.”

Rooney was eager for more details, but none was forthcoming. JFK was referring to his 1946 seduction of Norma Jeane when she was introduced to him when he was the house guest of actor Robert Stack, whom JFK jokingly referred to back then as “my babe supplier.”

In the next few months, Rooney, again through an arrangement with Johnny Hyde, got Marilyn a somewhat larger part in a 1950 film, *Fireball*, about roller derby racing. “I asked her out on a date and discovered she wore no bra, no stockings, and no panties.”

“I’m more than just a pretty girl,” she told him. “I can do—*anything.”* She reached over and placed a delicate

hand on his knee, traveling north.

He later wrote, “Marilyn Monroe made naughtiness a personal trademark.” Of all the male stars who have written memoirs, Rooney stands alone as the only memoirist who wrote that Marilyn was “one of the best cocksuckers in Hollywood.” He also claimed that his friends, Richard Quine and Blake Edwards, agreed with this assessment.

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Mickey Cohen (1913-1976) was one of the most colorful gangsters in Hollywood. Dangerous and vindictive, and concealing his 5’3” height with elevator shoes, he seemed to model his life on the reel life of such film stars as Edward G. Robinson, George Raft, Humphrey Bogart, and James Cagney.

He had been a boxer, a bodyguard for Las Vegas mobster Bugsy Siegel, a pimp for movie stars, a crooked gambler, a sleazy haberdasher, a notorious racketeer, a grand scale thief. He had also been a confidant of both Frank Sinatra and Jack Ruby, the man who had shot JFK’s alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, after Oswald’s arrest in Dallas.

Cohen was also known for having secretly taped Johnny Stompanato having sex with Marilyn and for supplying a reel of that film to Sam Giancana. Subsequently, that film had been used to blackmail her.

But it was getting stale, and both Giancana and Cohen wanted more recent and more damaging evidence on her, now that she was linked with President Kennedy.

Cohen usually hired handsome, well-built henchmen, many of them in their twenties. He was not a homosexual, although he’d liked the but of a young Sal Mineo. But he insisted that his henchmen be well hung. Before hiring them, he ordered them to “drop your pants—I want to see how it’s hanging.” It was clearly understood that their job included stud duties to the stars.

In his exposé, *Celebrity Gangster*, investigative reporter Brad Lewis revealed that a former police officer, Gary Wean, discovered that Marilyn had been set up with two of Cohen’s most gorgeous and seductive henchmen, George Piscitelle and Sam LoCigno. They double dated her, eventually orchestrating a three-way sexual fling, together, at the same time.

She was seen with them in such joints as Barney Ruditsky’s Plymouth House, often retiring for the night with both Piscitelle and LoCigno to a motel in Malibu, where hidden cameras had been installed by one of Cohen’s men. These sex scenes secretly filmed with Marilyn were only a prelude to their hope of capturing her on film with President Kennedy, which would, of course, be much harder to arrange.

What was amazing was that Cohen was able to direct this operation from Alcatraz, where he’d been sent in 1961 on a charge of tax evasion. His heavily armored Cadillac from this era was confiscated by the Los Angeles Police department. But before the beginning of his jail term, Marilyn was spotted riding down Hollywood Boulevard with him in this car. Perhaps it wasn’t Marilyn, but movie starlet Liz Renay, who herself was to spend three years behind bars for refusing to squeal on Cohen.

Months before his imprisonment, Cohen had met with Marilyn and threatened her. “You don’t want me to do to you what I did to Lana Turner, now, do you?”

She knew exactly what Cohen meant. His men had photographed Turner having sex with the “Italian Stallion,” Johnny Stompanato, who was called “the best bedroom performer in Los Angeles.” At a motel suite in Malibu, the bed had been wired for sound and a secret camera installed.

Cohen sold both the film and the recording, and each of them was played at Hollywood parties in the 1950s. The record sold for fifty dollars a copy, and he pressed two thousand copies of Turner’s squeals of ecstasy.

When Stompanato was stabbed to death in Turner’s home, the murder was splashed across the front pages of tabloids around the world. Cohen pressed thousands more of the recordings, making big bucks.

Cohen had not only secured a sex tape of Marilyn cavorting with his studs, LoCigno and Piscitelle, but he had “the dirtiest movie ever made (or so he said) of Johnny Roselli forcing Marilyn into “degrading” sexual acts within a hotel suite in Las Vegas.

Since Cohen was in jail, Roselli was selected to show Marilyn the film clip and recorded evidence they had on her. A private screening just for her was held within a bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

She pleaded with him to destroy all the tapes and recordings he had on her. “Get serious, gal. That would be like asking me to throw away a pot of gold.”

Almost from the beginning of her Hollywood career, Marilyn had been involved in one way or another with Cohen, dating back to the 1940s when the gangster worked with an even bigger gangster, Ben (Bugsy) Siegel. These criminals became the West Coast extension of the East Coast Syndicate. Together, these two Jewish mobsters turned

penny-ante operations into a multi-million dollar empire.

Although they were partners in crime, Cohen and Bugsy could not have been more different. Tall, handsome, and suave—and as rumor had it, "massively endowed,"—Bugsy was invited to A-list parties in Tinseltown of the 1940s. Listed among the glitterati, he liked fine French wine, gourmet food, tailored men's suits, and movie star bedfellows.

Mickey Cohen and his girlfriend, Marilyn lookalike, stripper, gal about town, and porn star, Liz Renay

In contrast, Cohen, the ugly little frog, hung out with cheap starlets like Liz Renay, along with Hollywood or Las Vegas hookers. When he wasn't in prison, he spent a dangerous life ducking bullets or bombs. He had the last laugh, though, on his enemies. He outlived them.

Bugsy is often listed as one of Marilyn's former lovers, even though he was assassinated in 1947. He apparently met her when she had a bit part in *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* for 20th Century Fox. The film starred the blond musical star, June Haver, who was billed as "the next Betty Grable." Ironically, it would be Marilyn herself who eventually dethroned Betty Grable.

Haver's connection with Bugsy is not know; however, she accepted an invitation to go to Las Vegas during the Christmas holidays of 1946 for the opening of The Flamingo. The event was a disaster, as the gambling resort had not been completed, and the suites planned for occupancy by celebrities were not ready.

Haver later entered a convent for a brief period, but left it to marry Fred McMurray and to retire on a ranch.

After meeting Marilyn, Bugsy began an affair with her, referring to her as "a hot little number."

She wasn't making enough money with the scrappy bit parts thrown at her, and he decided to use her as a hooker to service some of the top drawer clients he had invited to the Flamingo's grand opening.

Bugsy told his aides in Vegas, "Guys like to gamble, and they also like pussy on the side, and we must supply both."

Marilyn accepted Bugsy's offer, but she requested that she be assigned only movie star johns as men she'd entertain. She anticipated Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Errol Flynn, and Tryone Power. They didn't show up.

Instead, she was assigned to visit the bedrooms of gangster/actor George Raft, who entertained her with his "black snake." She also had a brief tryst with Sonny Tufts, which she would resume again when they made *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), less than a decade later.

She also ended up with Irish-born Brian Donlevy, whom she'd seen on the screen many times playing many villainous roles. He promised to secure for her "some sort of role" in each of his upcoming films, but he never did. It was becoming increasingly hard for him to find the right roles for himself, much less her.

Two views of Lana Turner *top:* as movie goddess and *bottom*, with her blackmailer and gigolo, Johnny Stompanato

She also met the portly character actor Charles Coburn, who might have gone to bed with her. But after having three drinks with her, it was all he could do to totter off to bed. She would later co-star with him in one of her most popular movies, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

Reportedly, the last time Cohen met with Marilyn, he gave her some advice. “Listen, kid, don’t’ do anything I wouldn’t do.”

“Well, that means I can do almost anything,” she shot back.

***

Johnny Roselli rarely called Marilyn any more, and she was relieved that he didn’t. She never knew where he was throughout most of 1961. Jeanne Carmen, his sometimes girlfriend, kept up with his whereabouts more than Marilyn did.

Roselli spent a lot of time operating out of bases in Las Vegas and southern Florida, but he was also in and out of Los Angeles, Washington, and Chicago, where he would meet privately with Sam Giancana.

When he did meet with Marilyn, he drove her to an apartment on Crescent Heights Boulevard in Los Angeles. He asked her to disguise herself. Once inside the apartment, she saw that it was heavily draped. He took her to the window and slightly parted a curtain, thereby opening a view of an apartment building across the street. He directed her attention to one window in particular. “I’m under twenty-four hour surveillance from FBI agents in that

apartment. I know they want to find out about mob involvements in Vegas gambling, but they also want to know a lot more. You and the president have evolved into one of Lady Hoover's fixations."

He explained to her that he had brought her here to discuss a very serious matter. "We've abandoned the plan that involved flying you to Havana," he said. "You're too hot. Our mole in Castro's inner circle told us the commie jerk has found out about you and Kennedy. You couldn't be sent to Cuba now. He'd become suspicious if Kennedy's girl suddenly arrived and wanted to spend her nights with him."

"It's just as well," she said. "I'm not the type to kill anybody. That's more your line, Johnny."

When Roselli led her into another room and switched on a lamp, she noticed that he looked spectacular after a two-week stint in Miami. Coiffed immaculately, he was suntanned and looked like he'd been working out. He was expensively dressed in a battleship grey pin-striped suit, with alligator shoes and a $2,500 Rolex watch.

"If I'm not the right girl for the job, then who?" she asked.

"We don't know yet," he said. "But those CIA bums have developed one of the most sophisticated poison pills in history. It works anywhere at any time and with anybody. The CIA's plans are evolving into something even bigger. They're talking about the assassination of not only Fidel Castro, but his brother, Raoul, and Che Guevara."

"Oh, I see," she said. "But since I'm no more use to you, I guess I can go."

"Not so fast," he said. "You still figure into our plans. As long as you're linked to Kennedy, we view you as a valuable resource. We've been betrayed by the Kennedys—especially by the fucker."

Somehow, she just knew that "the fucker" was a reference to Robert F. Kennedy.

"We're trying to work with the CIA to eliminate their deadly enemies, and what do they do? Bobby Kennedy goes after us, trying to shut down our legitimate enterprises. They've got to be stopped. We'll blackmail the bastards."

"I would never do anything to harm them," she said, "and I don't even know Bobby."

"That's about to change," he said.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"You'll hear from Lawford…and soon."

"Is he on your payroll, too?"

"Never mind. You'll do what we say, or we'll ruin you. Take your choice. We're not asking you to kill the Kennedys, but we want them to back off. You're going to help us do that."

"I don't want to play."

"You don't have a choice," he said.

"You mean all those pictures and film of me?" she said. "I don't think I even care to hold onto a career anymore."

He grabbed her wrist and with his other hand yanked the back of her neck, holding her up for exposure to the cruel naked light bulb in a lamp. "We can ruin that pretty fact of yours within sixty seconds. Even without a career, you wouldn't want that. No sex goddess would want that. No man would look at you ever again."

"I'm getting out of here!" she said.

"No, you're not," he said, grabbing her and ripping her dress. He pushed her into the bedroom, where he stripped her.

As he undressed himself, he said, "You know that your president and I have a lot in common. In history's touch of irony, we are fucking two of the same women—Judy Campbell and Marilyn Monroe. Isn't that a gasser? I haven't had a piece for the last three nights. So get your fat ass over here. You're really going to get a workout tonight."

On her way out the door the next morning, a nude Roselli stood in the living room as she prepared to leave. "Tonight, I'm having your gal buddy, Jeanne Carmen, up here. She's even dyed her hair to match yours. I think she wants to be you."

"She's a little bit jealous, that's all," Marilyn said.

"You should invite her to your place today and tell her everything that happened last night, including what went on in the bedroom. Since the last time I saw you two hookers, I learned a couple of tricks from this Cuban *putana* down in Miami. You got a demonstration of some of the new ways I get my kicks."

"And everybody in Hollywood always tells me what a gentleman you are," she said, heading for the door. *"Some gentleman!"*

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Arthur Schlesinger, a Kennedy loyalist and a biographer of Robert F. Kennedy, told a journalist, "Bobby was

human. He like to drink and he liked young women. He indulged that liking when he traveled, and he had to travel a great deal."

When his brother-in-law, Peter Lawford, asked RFK what star he'd like to meet in Hollywood, his first choice was Marilyn Monroe. The Attorney General had gotten rave reviews from his older brother, John F. Kennedy.

Early in October of 1961, Attorney General RFK flew into Los Angeles to address law enforcement officers about mob activity in southern California, an act of defiance which seriously "pissed off" Johnny Roselli.

RFK's sister, Patricia, along with her husband, Peter Lawford, staged a dinner on October 4 to honor him. Lawford invited Marilyn. It was long believed that RFK didn't get involved with Marilyn until February of 1962, but too many eyewitnesses now cite October 4, 1961, as their first encounter.

Marilyn viewed the dinner as important enough to have a special and very sexy gown designed for the occasion. She chose black as its color, knowing that it would contrast with her porcelain white skin and blonde hair. The dress had a strapless bodice whose fabric included lacy eyelets that permitted a sketchy but provocative view of her bare nipples.

Joan Braden, a friend of the Lawfords, recalled Marilyn's arrival at the Lawford's Spanish colonial beach front home in Santa Monica. "Everybody noticed that she was wearing no bra. Bobby devoted all his attention to Marilyn. He held back a bit, but Marilyn finished off glass after glass of champagne. She even taught Bobby to do the Twist."

Right in front of Pat and Peter, Marilyn asked RFK, "As Attorney General, have you ever arrested a woman in bed?"

"No, but I've done other things to them," he shot back.

Lawford later warned RFK, "When Ethel's in the room, you shouldn't hold Marilyn so close when you dance with her. Her bosom was pressing into your chest, not to mention what you were pressing into her."

Before the end of the evening, Marilyn had become so intoxicated that she was in no condition to drive back to her apartment on Doheny. RFK agreed to drive her home. For appearance's sake, he asked his press aide, Edwin Guthman, to accompany them.

The story becomes rather muddled at this point. Apparently, Guthman helped RFK escort Marilyn upstairs to her apartment and then left after RFK made it clear that he would undress her and put her to bed himself.

Lawford later told Sinatra and members of the Rat Pack that "Bobby didn't get home until four o'clock that morning. I just hope Ethel was asleep."

Eager for details, Lawford couldn't contact Marilyn until two o'clock the following afternoon. He wanted to know, "Did Bobby fuck you?"

She was non-committal, "As you know, I was too drunk to drive home, and Bobby was so sweet to drive me back. I left my car at your place and will taxi over later to pick it up. I guess Bobby was tired, and had to have a little rest on my living room sofa before driving back."

Over drinks at sunset, Marilyn was more forthcoming with her fellow Doheny apartment dweller, Jeanne Carmen. "He gave me a farewell fuck—maybe two farewell fucks—before he left my apartment. I woke up around two o'clock, and he was deep dicking me. It is said that if a gal goes for one brother, she's likely to go for his younger brother, too.:"

"Well," Carmen said sarcastically, "You've had Jack. And you had his father, the ambassador, back in 1950. Now you've had Bobby. That leaves only Teddy."

"Give me time," Marilyn said, "I'm sure Teddy will go for me."

"It fits into the Kennedy pecking order," Carmen said. "I heard Jack or Old Joe usually gets them first, then passes them on to Bobby or Teddy. Jack had a brief fling with Jayne Mansfield, or so I heard, before passing her on to Bobby."

"I didn't know that," Marilyn said. "At least the Kennedy brothers are getting the real thing—not that Mansfield clone."

His sister, Jean Kennedy Smith, wrote to him from Palm Beach, "Dear Bobby, I hear you and Marilyn Monroe are the new, hot item among Hollywood gossips."

After he finished a fourteen-country goodwill tour with Ethel, RFK called Marilyn for another rendezvous. Their affair began in earnest. At the same time, Marilyn was also sending handwritten love poems to JFK at the White House.

Carmen recalled that she was inside Marilyn's apartment one day and opened the door for a surprise view of RFK. When Marilyn learned who it was, she came rushing out of the bathroom, not fully dressed. "She jumped into his arms," Carmen said, "and they started kissing madly. We had a glass of wine together before Marilyn reminded me that I had important business to take care of."

After that, Marilyn logged many a call to RFK at the Justice Department, as asserted by his press aide, Guthman. Then Guthman added a tantalizing detail: "Judy Garland placed almost as many calls to Bobby as

Marilyn. What was going on between Dorothy and Bobby? I never found out."

"When Bobby Kennedy wasn't in California, he and Marilyn talked for hours on the phone," claimed Hazel Washington, Marilyn's maid at Doheny. "I think they invented phone sex. She actually made love to Bobby on the phone. I heard everything."

"Jack was the first to sample the honeypot," Marilyn told Robert Slatzer. "I'm not really in love with Jack, but I'm falling madly in love with Bobby."

Carmen also asserted that early one afternoon, she went with Marilyn and RFK to a nude beach near the present Pepperdine University, north of Santa Monica. Marilyn wore a black wig, and RFK put on sunglasses and a fake beard. Each of them went unrecognized. "Could you imagine what a sensation it would have been if a nude Marilyn Monroe and a nude Attorney General had been snapped on the beach by some photographer?" Carmen asked.

In Washington, RFK bragged to aide David Powers about bedding Marilyn. Powers at first didn't believe him, calling him "the biggest bullshitter in the world." He later claimed, "Bobby wouldn't have the balls to play like that in the big league. That's something Jack would do—not Bobby."

But nonetheless, RFK claimed it was true. "Not only have I had Marilyn's pussy on more than one occasion, but I think she's in love with me."

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Robert Kennedy *(left)* and his brother Jack Kennedy

As 1961 was coming to an end, Marilyn was adrift and without a job, which gave her too much time to concentrate on her own troubles. It was a rare day that she didn't visit Dr. Greenson at least once, and she talked to him so frequently that it was difficult for him to work on the book he was struggling to write, to see other patients, and to spend time with his family.

In the days before her upcoming November reunion with "The Prez" (her new nickname for him), she called him at least once a day at the White House. Often, he was away or in a meeting and couldn't come to the phone. Once, she called his private apartment within the White House, and Jackie picked up the phone. Recognizing her by her famous whispery voice, Marilyn quickly hung up.

She really didn't like to go out, because she claimed that, "I'm always running into someone from my past, someone I want to avoid, and every evening seems to end in disaster."

One night at a party in Beverly Hills at the home of producer Charles Feldman, who had long ago been her lover, he called her into his library to give her some advice.

She pointedly asked him, "Why do you think Fox is treating me like Typhoid Mary?"

"Marilyn, you look awful, and it takes a dear friend like me to tell you that."

"Thanks a hell of a lot, Charlie," she said. "That's what every blonde goddess wants to hear."

"You've got to pull yourself together, gal, or else you'll be finished in this town. You may not know this, but Fox is getting a lot of hate mail directed at you. Apparently, there are many people out there who know about you and the president, and they're writing to Fox with threats about exposing the affair. Since Jackie is universally

admired and you're viewed as a home wrecker, you're usually denounced. Letter after letter calls you a harlot. Fox is afraid to launch a big production involving you, because some major career-breaking scandal is likely to erupt at any moment."

"Thanks," she said. "I'm having such a wonderful time as a guest in your house, but I must leave. It was a fun evening." She rushed to retrieve her wrap before heading out the door.

She spent nearly a week within her apartment and didn't venture out. During a phone call to the president, she complained about her sleepless nights. He responded by sending her a large sheep skin that he had put under his back when he was in the hospital for surgery. "It will make you feel all warm and cuddly," he promised.

After receiving it, she called him. "I love it and sleep on it every night thinking of you. Of course, I'd rather have the former owner of the sheepskin than the actual thing."

"I'll take that as a compliment," he said.

"It was then that he told her he'd be flying to Los Angeles in November, and that he wanted to meet with her.

"We'll do more than shake hands," she promised.

When she couldn't get the President on the phone, she frequently called Peter Lawford for any news he might have. Aware that she rarely went out, he prevailed upon her to accept a dinner invitation to dine with him and Sammy Davis, Jr., at the elegant Chasen's restaurant.

She arrived nearly an hour late, but both Lawford and Davis, both of whom had made love to her at various times before, had anticipated that. Before her appearance at the restaurant, both stars had had more liquor than they needed. As she approached their table, she realized that she was interrupting a fierce argument between these two Rat Packers.

After kissing her and seating her, they resumed their argument. "Frank told me you're getting too big for your trousers," Lawford told Davis. "You're telling people you're a bigger star than he is. The other night, he called you 'a jig—a one-eyed nigger who fucks white girls.'"

"I don't believe he called me a nigger," Davis said. "Frank gets furious when someone calls somebody else a nigger in his presence."

"Maybe he made an exception for himself," Lawford said.

"I'm not a nigger," Davis protested. "I'm a Jew."

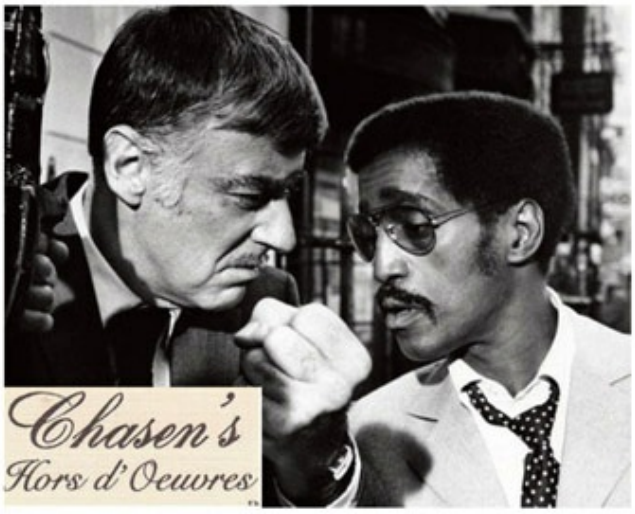
A champagne-drunk Marilyn then tried to intervene. "I'm a Jew too. One of the chosen people. Arthur told me I was. But, Sammy, you're not a real Jew." She turned to Lawford. "I've gone to bed with Sammy and he's not circumcised. Wouldn't a real Jewish man be circumcised?" Then she turned back to Davis. "Maybe you'd better see a rabbi."

Lawford laughed mockingly. "Sammy used to let me go to bed with him, too, but all he would let me do was give him a blow-job."

Davis turned in anger. "Thanks for the publicity. You know what you are, Lawford? A limey cocksucking motherfucker!"

"I've been called worse," Lawford said.

As the evening progressed, and the trio got drunker and more belligerent, Marilyn began to lose control. In a loud voice, which nearby diners overheard, she told them, "I'm Marilyn Monroe. I'm going to Washington, and I will become the First Lady. The President is going to divorce Jackie and marry me."



Finally, Davis said, “I’ve got to take this white gal back home and plow her. Maybe that will quiet her down.”

The horrified and very formal staff watched them go with a sigh of relief. The manager ordered the Chasen limousine to drive them home, as neither of them looked like they’d make it back alive if they took control of their own vehicles.

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“A sex symbol becomes a thing, and I just hate being a thing. But if I’m going to be a symbol of something, I’d rather have it be sex than some hideous thing.”

—Marilyn Monroe

In November of 1961, President Kennedy flew into Los Angeles to thank his major supporters in the area. Since he’d already been president for almost a year, the reception was long overdue. Some two hundred and fifty guests showed up at the Beverly Hills Hotel, crowding into its Escoffier Room.

Marilyn made a stunning entrance in a skin-tight white dress. After Feldman’s insult about her looks, she had spent days trying to get into shape, submitting to frequent massages from Ralph Roberts, facials, and a spectacular hairdo. Whitey Snyder had created a tasteful yet sexily alluring makeup style for her.

Mark Boyar, JFK’s chief financial officer in California, later recalled that he was surprised that JFK had invited Marilyn, since almost the entire room had heard rumors about his affair with her. The Secret Service reacted carefully, not allowing a photographer to snap Marilyn in the same frame as the president.

A small private reception, one that fol owed the evening’s main event, had been scheduled within the president’s suite. It included Marilyn as well as some of JFK’s top financial contributors.

Later in the evening, both Marilyn and JFK departed in separate limousine for the Lawford compound in Santa Monica, where another, much wilder party was in full swing. Whitey Snyder accompanied Marilyn in her limousine, redoing her makeup so that she’d “appear dewey fresh” at the Lawford party.

At around two o’clock that morning, Marilyn and the president disappeared, each going upstairs, but at different times.

After a night with one of the Kennedys, Marilyn always like to “replay” what had happened with her confidant, Shelley Winters, with whom she dined three nights later to talk about the status of their careers.

Four years older than Marilyn, Winters was on the dawn of her plump, matronly years, and could no longer pull off the blonde bombshell screen persona that Marilyn still could.

According to Winters, Marilyn expressed her horror about the reports she was receiving from Fox executives, who were suggesting that her big money-making days were over. “I’m hearing they think all my anguish, the pills, the booze, whatever, have prematurely aged me. I’ve considered plastic surgery to remove those god damn lines under my eyes. My but is still far too big, and I fear my breasts are heading south.” Then Marilyn told Winters that Dr. Greenson “has become my lifeline.”

“I wish I had some of your troubles,” Winters said. “You still look great. I’m getting the mother roles. But enough of this: I want to hear what you and Jack Kennedy did. I often wonder what you guys talk about, since you’re not as politically hip as I am.”

“We discussed how we have entered the fantasy lives of other people and how hard it is for us to live up to the fantasy other people have of us when we honor one of them with our favors,” Marilyn said.

“One of those magazines did a survey of its readers,” Winters said. “You were voted the gal most men would like to go to bed with, and the President was voted as the man most women would like to go to bed with.”

As if ripped from real life, novelist Michael Korda captured this dilemma Marilyn and JFK faced in his novel *The Immortals*, which to many readers was a rather accurate portrait of what was going on among Marilyn and the Kennedy brothers.

In his novel, Korda quotes his Marilyn character as saying, “Ever since my tits started to grow, I entered into other men’s fantasies. I’ve known what men think when they see me—know that when they go home to fuck their wives or jerk off, it’s me they’re fucking in their minds, my tits they’re licking, my cunt they’re coming in. It’s like I don’t belong to myself at all, I belong to *them.”*

According to Winters, Marilyn said that JFK expressed an awareness that he, too, figured into the sexual fantasies of millions of women. “I’ve been told that some women have my image in their mind when they’re getting fucked by their husbands or boyfriends.”

“I know that my conquests spread the word I’m a lousy lay,” he reportedly said, “but I’m almost never turned

down by a woman. Women are excited by me because I'm the president, even though I come before they do."

Marilyn shared with Winters what she considered the President's most endearing confession. "When he's fucking Jackie on that rare occasion, he thinks of me. He actually admitted that."

Winters was skeptical, but listened attentively. In time, she would become one of the main sources of gossip about Marilyn and the Kennedys.

Marilyn said. "Jack and I sat out on the balcony in the early morning hours, talking, kissing, and loving each other. We smoked a few joints, too."

Winters wanted to know the condition of the President's health.

"His libido is still intact, but because of all that cortisone, he's got puffy cheeks." She giggled a bit.

"What is it?" Winters asked, eager for the slightest revelation. "Something about his dick?" He couldn't get it up?"

"No, silly," she said. "He always manages to do that. It's something else. At first he didn't want me to see him without his shirt. I finally got it off of him. Now I know what he was hiding. He's developed at least a suggestion of breasts."

Winters said, "Hell, some men have bigger tits than we do."

"While we're talking about fantasies," Marilyn said, "I have one when Kennedy is fucking me. He thinks I'm thinking about him, but I'm really thinking about my all time hero, Abraham Lincoln. I had that fantasy when he fucked me in the Lincoln bedroom. I once thought Arthur Miller was my Lincoln fantasy come true. Now I think it's Jack. He's a great leader. In time, he will become known as the greatest president in the history of the United States."

"My, you do have fantasies," Winters said.

"Well, what does Miss Smartie Pants think of our president?" Marilyn asked.

"I think of him as Jack in the Box, always jumping out to grab another woman. He's got lots of money, power, good looks, wit, charm, a bad back, all sorts of diseases, and plenty of female admirers, including a blonde movie star whose crush on him will lead to heartbreak."

"We'll see," Marilyn said smugly. "When the cheering stops, Jack and I will be sitting in one of his many rocking chairs that people donate to him, fading into old age. We'll read all those crazy books or see those preposterous films that will be written or shot about us. We'll be linked romantically in the pages of history like Romeo and Juliet."

"I don't know what you're on, Marilyn," Winters said, "but give me some of it."

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Through Dr. Greenson's intervention, a birdlike woman named Eunice Murray came to live with Marilyn as a sort of social secretary, housekeeper, butler, companion, wardrobe mistress, and cook. Jeanne Carmen called her "a spy in the house of love."

As Murray wrote in her tell-nothing memoirs, "Dr. Greenson gave me certain instructions about Marilyn, but I can't say what they were."

She learned to poach eggs for Marilyn's breakfast just like she preferred them, and to make strong Italian coffee.

None of Marilyn's friends liked Murray. When Whitey Snyder, her makeup artist, came to visit, he later said, "Murray was extremely quiet, very secretive, and always hovering over Marilyn watching her every move."

Bespectacled and dowdy, Murray was destined to become one of the most controversial figures in the final months of Marilyn's life. Before coming to live with her, Murray had sold her Monterrey-style home to the Greensons. This Chicago-born woman was assigned to report on all of Marilyn's activities, and she was asked to prepare a dossier on every person, male or female, who visited.

Her first assignment was to check the medicine cabinet, where Murray discovered a stash of plastic vials containing Nembutal, Seconal, Demerol, and chloral hydrate, among other drugs. She later said, "During my first week with Marilyn, I was appalled by her lack of personal hygiene. If she weren't going out, she'd go for a whole week without taking a bath. Her hair became matted, one tangled mess. She loped around the house wearing a dirty white terrycloth robe which she wouldn't let me launder. Sometimes, she didn't bother to wear even that."

Her former lover, the columnist James Bacon, came to interview her one day without a photographer. She received him in that robe, wearing no makeup. He later said, "I thought I was calling on Dracula's daughter."

One afternoon, Marilyn agreed to be photographed by Douglas Kirkland. For the first time, Murray watched her boss transform herself into Marilyn Monroe before facing the camera.

“It was an elaborate ritual,” Murray recalled, “and it took forever. She insisted on Sinatra music playing in the background. She took a perfumed bath—*finally*—and had both her makeup man and hairdresser in to work her over. Both ice packs and hot wax were part of her beauty ritual.”

Kirkland recalled his session with Marilyn. “I was young and inexperienced, but she made the shot easy for me. She stripped down completely naked and got into bed under white silk sheets. Sinatra music was playing, and Murray brought her chilled Dom Perignon. She was luminous as she floated under that semi-transparent silk. She had her entourage there that day, but told them, ‘I’d like to be alone with this boy. I find it usually works better that way,’ There was sexual tension in the air, and that was reflected in the final photographs.”

One day, Marilyn decided that she wanted a home of her own, and ordered Murray to go on a search for one through various real estate agents in the area.

“I’ve lived in forty different places,” she told Murray, “everything from the Hollywood YWCA where I had to fight off the lesbians, to a railroad flat in Van Nuys.” Marilyn told Murray that she preferred a Spanish hacienda-style house, and, after days of searching and looking at dozens of properties, Murray found a house she thought Marilyn would like.

Built by a studio accountant in 1928, it stood at the end of a *cul-de-sac* at Fifth Helena Drive in Brentwood. A tile roof, thick walls, a garden, and an oval pool attracted Marilyn, as did a stand of eucalyptus trees which had been planted in 1901 when the community was still farmland.

Marilyn invited publicist Pat Newcomb to inspect the outside of the property with her to see if she’d be interested in involving a real estate agent as a means of gaining access to the inside.

Thinking that no one was at home, Marilyn and Newcomb went around to the back to survey the landscaping and pool. As they were doing that, an unidentified woman inside the house spotted them through the kitchen window and came outside to challenge them as trespassers.

After looking Marilyn up and down skeptically, the irate woman said, “I know who you are! Get the hell out of here at once, you dirty whore!”

Marilyn started to protest, but the woman threatened to call the police and have them arrested for trespassing.

Later, Marilyn, accompanied by Murray, went to the real estate agent in charge of selling the house and reported the hostility of the woman, who turned out to be a housekeeper looking after the property while the owners were away. The agent arranged for Marilyn to go inside and inspect the house when the owners, William and Doris Pagen, were back in residence.

The house was unpretentious inside, and the rooms were small, Marilyn likening it to a doll’s house. The living room with its fireplace had space for only a sofa and two armchairs. “That’s fine with me,” Marilyn said. “I don’t plan to throw bal s here to rival Versailles in the heyday of Marie Antoinette.”

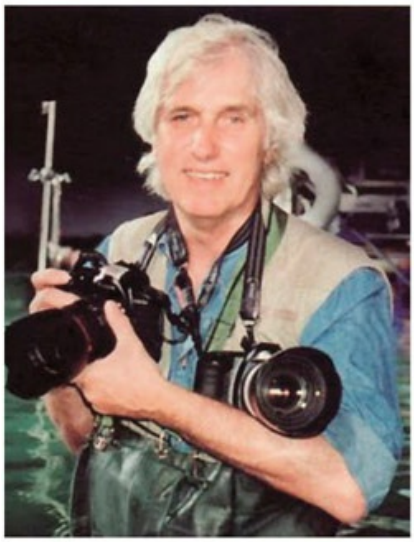
A sun room led to the garden, and there was a small guest room and garage under the same roof.

“I feel I could shut myself off from the world here,” Marilyn said.

The asking price was $77,500, and Marilyn borrowed the down payment of $42,500 from DiMaggio, whom she invited to spend Christmas with her in her new home.

He accepted. But when he arrived, he took an instant dislike to Murray. He told Marilyn he would not stay unless she ordered Murray away during his time there. Flashing anger at DiMaggio, Murray agreed to return to her family over the holidays.

"Dracula's daughter" with columnist James Bacon



Photographer Douglas Kirkland

DiMaggio and Marilyn were seen holding hands as they shopped for Mexican Christmas ornaments along Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. People who saw them claimed that they looked like two people deeply in love, and there were predictions that they planned to remarry. Marilyn later told Winters that "Joe is older, but hasn't lost his skill in my boudoir."

He wasn't that impressed with the place, finding it too small. "If you want to take me back," he told her, "we'll have to get a much larger house to raise our eight children."

In spite of the rumors he'd heard, DiMaggio for many years refused to admit that Marilyn was promiscuous. He also refused to read stories about her affairs and grew angry if friends presented him with tales of her sexual relationships. For a long time, he'd denied that Sinatra, his friend, had been involved with Marilyn.

On many an occasion, DiMaggio, Sinatra, and Marilyn were seen dining together in relative peace and harmony.

While in the Los Angeles area, DiMaggio had a two-hour meeting with Dr. Greenson about Marilyn's condition. Since Marilyn wasn't married to DiMaggio at the time, the psychiatrist violated her right to privacy in his personal discussion of his client's affairs with her ex-husband.

It is not known what Greenson said to DiMaggio, but he left the office greatly troubled. Perhaps for the first

time he learned of the involvement of Marilyn with the Kennedy brothers, or at least with the president.

After leaving Greenson's home, DiMaggio called Fred Otash, Hollywood's most notorious detective, known for his spying on and bugging the phones of movie stars.

John Danoff, a security guard who had once worked for Otash, claimed that DiMaggio hired his former boss to make Marilyn a target of his investigations. Otash not only slipped in and wired her new home, but hooked into her answering service.

In a clever move, the logistics of which are not known, Otash also managed to bug the Lawford mansion at Santa Monica.

Even though paid by DiMaggio, it has been alleged that Otash shared data on Marilyn with both Johnny Roselli and Mickey Cohen. At the time, Roselli passed along anything pertinent to his boss, Sam Giancana.

When DiMaggio eventually departed for San Francisco, Marilyn invited a sulking Murray to return. "The place looks like a pig's sty," Murray said when surveying the holiday wreckage of the house.

Marilyn told Murray that she wanted her to go with her to Mexico to purchase furnishings for the house.

She also organized a farewell luncheon with Shelley Winters and invited her to come along too. "Like hell I'll go to Mexico, but thanks for the invitation. I've got better things to do. Right now, I'm having an affair with John Ireland, which explains why I'm walking bowlegged. The line-up of both men and women trying to sample that slab of meat stretches around the block, so I'd better stay here and take advantage of that club of his."

Before kissing her goodbye, Shelley advised Marilyn, "Find yourself one of those South of the Border lovers like Tony Quinn. You'll have to try him sometime. He told me he wants to impregnate every woman in the world, and I found out later that he means that literally."

"Forget Tony Quinn," Marilyn said. "I read somewhere that he was born in 1915. I want a boy born in 1942."

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Eunice Murray had contacts she wanted to pursue in Mexico, and she flew south ahead of Marilyn, who agreed to meet her there within a week. While Murray was in Mexico, Marilyn flew to Florida.

She stopped first to visit DiMaggio at his winter training camp for the Yankees near St. Petersburg.

According to later reports, their rendezvous didn't go well. By that time, Otash had informed DiMaggio that Marilyn "is hanging out with a very dangerous crowd, and not just the Kennedys."

DiMaggio's questions led to an argument, particularly when he told her that "Bobby Kennedy is a manipulator, who will only use and abuse you. Drop him! I'm tired of getting sloppy seconds all the time."

She became furious, claiming he didn't own her any more, and that she'd do as she pleased. After packing, she left his quarters and took the next available plane to Miami, where she had planned a very secret rendezvous with another lover.

[Almost a dozen years had passed since she had last shacked up with a lover on Miami Beach. He was a fading movie star who was making B-list pictures such as *Bedtime for Bonzo*. It happened around 1950, and his name was Ronald Reagan.]

Now, fresh from her argumentative reunion with DiMaggio, she'd been booked into a pre-paid suite at the Fontainebleau Hotel on Miami Beach, from which she'd arrive in a limousine which had been sent to fetch her from the Miami Airport. Her check-in was not at the lobby desk itself, but conducted privately in her suite. The staff seemed to know more than they were saying.

JFK had a connecting suite on the same (seventeenth) floor. It had already been announced in the papers that he was spending February 6 and 7, 1962, at the Kennedy compound in Palm Beach. She knew, however, that his time in Florida would not be spent exclusively with his family.

Unknown to her at the time, she had come under the surveillance of the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover had ordered that agents follow her and tap her phone. Also, his agents in Mexico had already been alerted of her imminent arrival there.

Booked into a smaller and less expensive accommodation within the Fontainebleau, without any direct view of the beach, Ralph Roberts, her masseur, had accompanied her to Miami, with the understanding that he would not continue on the next leg of her trip to Mexico.

Marilyn had only an hour to make herself up for JFK's arrival. She called room service and ordered the delivery of five bottles of champagne. She didn't want to start drinking before the President's arrival, but nonetheless, the thought of drinking a bottle was almost irresistible.

Once inside her suite, she wrote DiMaggio a letter, apologizing for her anger. "I do not want to argue with you. When I'm with you, I want to make you happy. To know how I've saddened you fills me with grief. Somehow, I

always disappoint people, and now I've disappointed you. The one person in the world I want to please."

[After he received her note a few days later, DiMaggio telephoned her and both of them made up, agreeing to meet in Hollywood after her return from Mexico.]

A few moments later, Marilyn heard a lot of sound and movement in the hotel's hallway, and she realized that the president, along with his Secret Service agents, had arrived in the adjoining suite. Two men from the Secret Service knocked on her door. She let them in. With many apologies, they inspected her suite before leaving. Within thirty minutes, the suites' connecting doors were opened, and JFK greeted her. She ran to him and fell into his arms for a long, passionate kiss.

Later, as she sat on the sun-filled terrace with its view out over the water, she noticed that he seemed older, heavier, larger than life. She was awed by his presence, perhaps more by the office he represented than by the man himself. After all, he was the most powerful man on the planet, and he was using his valuable time to be with her.

"After a long silence, he asked her, "What are you thinking?"

"I was just thinking that you have the power to blow up the world if you want to."

"I'd rather not think about that," he said. "I have other thoughts on my mind—namely that I'm horny."

As she'd later relay to Roberts, "Those words didn't sound particularly presidential or Lincolnese, but I knew what was expected."

As she rose from a *chaise longue*, he took her hand, leading her into the bedroom. He was no longer the junior senator she had known. He seemed more confident somehow, more aware of his power.

"It's getting harder and harder for me to sneak away to see you," he told her. "So let's not waste time."

She knew what that meant, as she began to remove her clothing. He headed for the bathroom where she heard the sounds of him taking a leak. He didn't bother to close the door. Back in the bedroom, he said, "I'm due in Palm Beach tonight, so we don't have a lot of time."

The sex was familiar, not exciting, as he lay on his back. He didn't need to tell her what to do. Experience had taught her all the right moves. She wanted to give him pleasure, which she did. She would have preferred pillow talk, but he was exhausted after his release, turning over for a much-needed nap.

When he woke up an hour later, he came into the living room nude and joined her on the private terrace. She wore a white terry cloth robe so short that it almost didn't cover vital areas. He kissed her and plopped down on a *chaise longue*.

"You know, I've seen many pictures of you snapped with your mouth open, forming a perfect 'O'," he said. "Very suggestive. "Why don't you come over here right now and put those lips to use?"

She obeyed him, surprised that he was still horny after the seduction in the bedroom. He blamed it on his medication.

After it was over, she went to get them a bottle of champagne from her fridge. Out on the terrace again, she poured a glass for each of them. He toasted her, "The King of the World salutes the Queen of Hollywood."

"We do have a lot of royal fun together, don't we?" she asked.

He didn't answer, but wanted her to amuse him with the latest Hollywood gossip. "Tell me everything. Who is Brando fucking? Who is Sinatra fucking?"

He surprised her with his next question. "Who is Angie Dickinson fucking?" Marilyn didn't know the answer to that one.

Finally, he looked at her with a penetrating gaze, "And who is Miss Monroe keeping company with these days?"

"When I'm not with you, I get myself to a nunnery," she said.

"I guess I'll have to ask Peter if I want the scoop," he said. "He bad mouths you a lot."

"He's just jealous," she said. "He wants you for himself. Didn't you get that idea when he crawled in bed with us after that photo shoot in Santa Monica?"

"I've always known that," he said. "But I'm not available. He talks about all the guys you've known—Brando, Lex Barker, Sinatra, Paul Newman. But he also accuses you of going to bed with Sam Giancana, Johnny Roselli, and—get this—Senator Joseph McCarthy a few years ago."

"Never! NEVER!" she protested. "McCarthy is a pig."

"In Peter's words, you agreed to sleep with McCarthy to save the neck of your 'commie Jew husband.'"

"Peter must have learned that line from his Jew-hating, homophobic Mother, Lady Lawford."

"I didn't believe you screwed McCarthy, and I know why. Bobby once worked for him. He's a big fag. He wouldn't know what to do with you. He likes young men…boys, really, the younger the better."

"If I hop in all those beds, why aren't you afraid you'll catch something by bedding me?" she asked.

"I'm not scared," he said. "Why aren't you afraid to go to bed with me? I'm sure my reputation has preceded me. Actually, I caught a so-called 'social disease'the first time I ever bedded a woman, a hooker in a Harlem

whorehouse."

As she would later tell Roberts, JFK did not bring up the subject of his younger brother.

Before JFK left that late afternoon, she made him an offer. "I've been reading about Marie Antoinette. I want to play her in a movie. I read that her father-in-law, Louis XV, always had his mistress, Madame de Pompadour, at his beck and call and could summon her to court at a moment's notice." Marilyn went on to suggest to the President that if he wished, she might abandon her career and move to Washington, perhaps renting a residence in Georgetown where she would be available to see him day or night. "First Mistress," she said. "Sounds like an honorable title for me, and a great convenience for you."

He told her he didn't think that would be a good idea. What he didn't tell her was that since January of 1962, he already had a blonde mistress, Mary Pinchot Meyer, stashed at his beck and call in a Georgetown residence.

He'd first met Meyer when he was young, handsome, and a swinging bachelor and she was attending Vassar. She had married Cord Meyer, Jr., a military aide to Harold E Stassen. JFK had paid too much attention to Mary, which led to a break in his friendship with her husband.

The years went by, and JFK didn't resume his affair with Mary until January of 1962 when she was forty-two years old. Evelyn Lincoln, JFK's secretary, claimed that between February and December of that year, Mary logged thirty visits to the White House. In fact, the President had a sexual union with her right before he made that fatal trip to Dallas.

Jackie was aware of his involvement, later referring to Mary as "The Jezebel of Camelot," after she discovered a pair of women's panties in JFK's bed. She told her husband, "They're not my size."

At one point, Mary confessed to James Truitt, the former vice president of *The Washington Post* that when she visited the White House, she often "snorted coke and smoked pot" with the president.

During the final weeks of his presidency, JFK also confessed to his aide, David Powers, "Marilyn and Judy are out. Mary is now the court favorite." He was, of course, referring to his discarded mistresses, Marilyn herself, and Judith Campbell.

[On October 12, 1964, almost a year after JFK's assassination, Mary was fatally shot while taking a walk along a towpath bordering the Potomac River near her Georgetown studio. A young man, Raymond Crump, was arrested and charged with first degree murder. He went on trial on July 19, 1965,. The evidence against him was judged as circumstantial, and a jury found him not guilty. The Mary Meyer murder still remains the subject of lurid speculation even to this day.]

At twilight time on Miami Beach, JFK kissed Marilyn goodbye before he was hauled in a chauffeur-driven limousine to Palm Beach. Marilyn remained at the hotel for a final night, at which time Johnny Roselli, who was staying nearby at Key Biscayne, visited her.

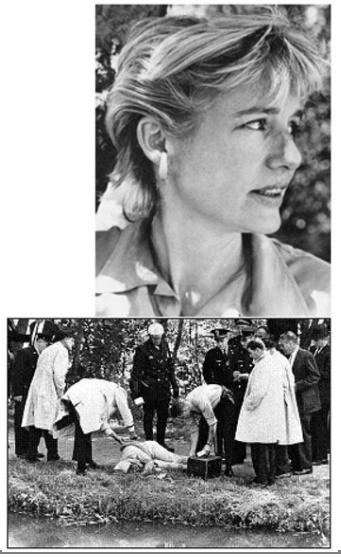
He pressed his usual sexual demands on her. This time, he didn't have an assignment for her, but delivered to her a warning instead. "He held back and didn't tell me everything," she later told Roberts. "But he warned me not to go to Mexico. He wouldn't tell me why, but suggested I would be in danger there."

"Then don't go," Roberts urged her. "With all his connections, Roselli knows what he's talking about."

"He told me that the CIA has agents in Mexico," she said. "So does the FBI. Do I look like a security risk? I'm just going there to buy furniture."

"You could well be a security risk," he said. "You're playing around with the big boys. You might know a lot more than you think you do."

Even though she was still determined to go, she spent a sleepless night, having ingested too many drugs and too much champagne. The next morning, Roberts had a hard time awakening her and preparing her for her trip to Mexico.



Two views of presidential mistress Mary Pinchot Meyer: *(bottom)* Police examine the scene of her murder beside the Potomac

An hour before her own departure, he left for the Miami Airport and his own flight back to New York. He later remembered that she was rather belligerent that late morning.

When she emerged from her suite, she found two men from the Secret Service waiting to escort her downstairs. "We've been assigned to you to see that you get off safely," one of the agents told her as he directed her to the service elevator. "We'll go out a rear entrance so you don't have to pass through the lobby. A limo is waiting for you on a side street."

"I'm all made up and camera-ready," she said. "Fuck you! Who in hell are you to tell me I can't parade through the lobby and be seen by my fans. I'm a fucking movie star, asshole."

One of the agents grabbed her arm, hurting her. "I have my orders. You'll come with us."

She tried to break free, but the other agent moved in to restrain her. After an initial resistance, she submitted. She was suddenly afraid. "Okay, show me the way. But I still think you're an asshole, both of you."

"Actually, Miss Monroe," one of the agents said, "I'm one of your biggest fans."

Seated between the two Secret Service agents on her way to the airport, she later recalled the ride to Roberts. "I was enraged at Roselli telling me not to go to Mexico and these agents treating me like I was some cheap Saturday night call girl. I felt I'd lost control of my life. To hell with Roselli's warning…I was flying to Mexico. I'm a big girl, and I know how to take care of myself."

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When Marilyn arrived in Mexico City, she was welcomed by Eunice Murray, hairdresser George Masters, and publicist Pat Newcomb. Photographers and reporters waited for her at the airport. She made a spectacular entrance onto Mexican soil, wearing a tight-fitting spring green dress designed by Pucci.

"Did someone sew that dress on you?" shouted one of the English-speaking reporters.

Her answer was enigmatic. "You should see it on the hanger."

She was rushed into a waiting car driven by Churchill Murray, the former brother-in-law of Eunice. Eunice had divorced her husband, John Murray, before he died in 1958.

Churchil had agreed to drive Marilyn around during her stay, although other people she was yet to meet would make the same offer.

Eunice's son-in-law, Norman Jeffries, was in Brentwood restoring Marilyn's newly bought home. He later claimed that "Churchill Murray is a communist if there ever was one. He ran a communist propaganda radio station in Mexico and had a number of radical political contacts, including diplomats from the Cuban and Soviet embassies."

Without her knowing it at first, Marilyn was moving into an expatriate cabal of American communists. The residential section of Mexico City where many of these expats lived was called "Zona Rosa" (The Pink Zone) by

locals. It was inhabited by many Americans who had fled south of the border following the "witch hunts" of the McCarthy era. Some members of the notorious Hollywood Ten, who had been hauled before HUAC (the House Un-American Activities Committee), also resided here, after having served jail terms for their refusal to cooperate with congress and "name names of fellow reds."

Marilyn may not have known that she was moving into a communist cell group, but both CIA and FBI agents were aware of what was happening.

After showering and settling in to her lodgings, Marilyn was told by Eunice that she had been invited to an elegant party that night at the home of Fred Vanderbilt Field and his Mexican wife, Nieves ("Snow").

Known as "America's most silver-spoon communist," Field had served two months of a ninety-day sentence in a Federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky, in 1951.

He was a friend of Dr. Greenson, and her psychiatrist had called him and asked him to take care of Marilyn during her time in Mexico. Field was the great-great-great-grandson of the railroad tycoon and "robber baron" Cornelius (Commodore) Vanderbilt. He'd been disinherited by his wealthy relatives for his radical political views, a disinheritance which had cost him a fortune valued at $70 million. He supported many communist groups, defining himself as a Communist party "member at large" in a 2002 memoir.

For Marilyn's first night in Mexico City, he'd invited her as guest of honor to a lavish party he was hosting with his wife, Nieves.

It was assumed by Field that Marilyn was "one of us" because of her previous marriage to the left-winger playwright, Arthur Miller. Indeed, Marilyn was a liberal Democrat, but there is no evidence that she was ever a communist, even though J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI had long ago labeled her as such.

Wearing a low-cut gown, Marilyn made a spectacular entrance at the Fields'party, her hair touched up by the hairdresser, George Masters, who had given it a glamour evocative of Jean Harlow. Even he was amazed at her transformation that evening from the woman he'd encountered in her hotel suite at five o'clock that afternoon.

Apostate capitalist Frederick Vanderbilt Field

"Some incredible change happened when she turned herself into Marilyn Monroe," Masters said. "Her voice changed, her hands and body motions altered, and suddenly, she was a different woman from the plain girl with faded blue jeans and a worn shirt I'd seen moments before. I've never seen anything like this complete change of personality. She was brilliant. She knew how to become what people expected."

Masters, however, was not impressed with Eunice, defining her as "very weird, like a witch. Terrifying, I remember thinking. She was terrifically jealous of Marilyn, separating her from her friends—a very divisive person."

Unknown to both Marilyn and Field when they spoke together on the phone, their voices were being recorded. The FBI in Mexico City had long ago identified Field as a spy for the Soviets. Electronic listening devices, installed by a bribed servant, had been placed within his residence.

Field later said that he found Marilyn "beautiful beyond measure—warm, attractive, bright, and witty; curious about things, people, and ideas—also incredibly complicated."

He and his wife volunteered to be her guide during her stay in Mexico.

Nieves, a former model, warmed to Marilyn, too. She, too, was a glamorous woman, having been the mistress of Diego Rivera, the famous Mexican painter and socialist who had died in 1957.

Field introduced Marilyn to the writer Dalton Trumbo, who was the most prominent of the blacklisted "Hollywood Ten" writers. He had come to Mexico after having served jail time for his refusal to cooperate with HUAC. He had recently written the screen play for *Exodus*, as directed by Otto Preminger. After Marilyn's death, he'd win a posthumous Oscar for *Roman Holiday*, which had been released under a pseudonym in 1953, starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck.

She also had a chat with the Brooklyn-born Albert Maltz, another of the infamous "Hollywood Ten," who had been Oscar-nominated in the past for his screenwriting. In 1953, he was uncredited as the scriptwriter for *The Robe*, a 1953 picture starring Richard Burton. Frank Sinatra had told her, "Maltz is the best god damn writer in Hollywood," but when the singer hired him to write a World War II story, the backlash was so severe, Sinatra never made the picture, but paid Maltz his $75,000 fee anyway.

At one point, Marilyn noticed all heads turning toward the doorway for the second spectacular entrance of the evening. (Hers had been the first.)

Nieves Orozco Field in 1947

She immediately recognized the legendary screen actress Dolores del Río. She did not know the young man who had accompanied her to the party. He was dressed as a matador in a tight-fitting, mauve-colored "suit of lights." At the crotch, his pants fitted him so tightly, she could tell that he was not circumcised. She turned to George Masters. "No wonder the bull chases him. Wearing pants that tight makes the bull jealous."

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Marilyn's mother, Gladys Baker Eley, had seen silent films starring Dolores del Río, who was the first Latin

American star to enjoy international acclaim. When movies didn't talk, Dolores was viewed as the female equivalent of Rudolph Valentino. Hailed as "the Princess of Mexico," del Río seemingly had dipped her face in porcelain.

Although she had been born in 1905, there wasn't a wrinkle on her face that Marilyn could notice. Later, when she got to speak to del Río, she asked the secret of her ageless beauty. "I survive on a diet of orchid petals, and I sleep sixteen hours a day," del Río said "My greatest fans tell me I have better legs than Dietrich and better cheekbones than Garbo. You, too, are beautiful, but more of the milk maiden variety."

Marilyn asked del Río about her escort of the evening, who was away at the time. "Is he a bullfighter?"

"No, but he used to be," del Río said. "Now he's a screenwriter. Jose Bolaños."

Like so many guests at the party, del Río in the 1930s had been tainted with communist associations, as had her cousin, Ramon Novarro, along with such other stars as Lupe Velez and James Cagney.

Del Río had married Cedric Gibbons, one of MGM's leading designers. It was he who created the image for the Oscar statuette presented ever since at the Academy Awards.

But in 1940, she'd fallen madly in love with Orson Welles, an affair which ended her marriage to Gibbons. By then, she'd been labeled as "box office poison." During her time in the limelight, her affairs include trysts with both Errol Flynn and his wife, the French actress Lili Damita. Other rumored affairs included flings with Garbo, playboy Porfirio Rubirosa, Marlene Dietrich, and the German writer, Erich Maria Remarque, who also happened to be Dietrich's lover.

In his matador's outfit, Bolaños suddenly reappeared. Del Río excused herself to talk to the hostess, Nieves. Bolaños used the opportunity to move in close to Marilyn, speaking only three inches from her face. She found him dark and handsome, with a magnetic personality. Hollywood would eventually interpret him as a Latin Lover archetype, competition for both Fernando Lamas and Ricardo Montalban. Actually, Bolaños would tell her that it was his dream to move to Hollywood to put those two actors out of business.

When Marilyn returned to Los Angeles, she told Jeanne Carmen, "Jose stood so close to me he was practically rubbing that big package up against me. He exuded masculinity and treated me with such politeness, I thought I was Queen of the World—and not just of Hollywood."

"I am here tonight with Miss del Río, who seems to think she possesses me," Bolaños said. "But the only person in the whole world I would allow to possess me is Miss Marilyn Monroe."

"I can't wait to assume ownership," she said.

"Fortunately, del Río was surrounded by her many admirers, which left Bolaños in Marilyn's clutches. After his third beer, he had to excuse himself to go to the toilet. He whispered to her, "At least three *mariposas* at this party will follow me. They always do. Every time I go into a men's room, every *mariposa* in Mexico has to follow me."

She watched as he left her, and indeed three young men trailed him into the toilet. When he came back, she said to him, "I hope you put on a big show for them."

"I did, but I'd rather put on a show for you."

"Are you sure Miss del Río won't be furious at me?"

"She doesn't have to know," he said. "There is no need for us to put the first wrinkle on that incredible face of hers."

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Field took Marilyn and Eunice to the Toluca market with Nieves. Then the couple invited their two American guests to spend the weekend with them at the mountain resort of Taxaco. Once there, Eunice and Nieves wandered off to shop, and Field and Marilyn had long and serious talks.

He would later write about their encounter. "She talked about her failed marriages. She told me she wanted to quit Hollywood, give up her career, and find some guy who was a combination of Arthur Miller and Joe DiMaggio. Someone who would be decent to her, but also her intellectual leader and stimulant. She wanted to live in the country and change her life completely. She spoke a lot about her intellectual shortcomings, her inability to keep up with people she admired. She talked of her age, the fact that she would be thirty-six, and the need to get on with her life."

Dolores del Rio “The most beautiful woman in Mexico”

Field also recalled that she spoke to him for a long time about her marriage to Miller in terms of what she’d lost. “The marriage just didn’t work out,” she said. “Those miscarriages were devastating to me. I feel less a woman now than ever.”

Even during the day, he noted that she had discovered a new drink for herself, and that was tequila. “She drank quite a lot of it, too,” Field said.

Eventually, they spoke of his strong communist beliefs, and she challenged him for still being devoted to the memory of Josef Stalin. “Because Comrade Stalin said so, we have to assume that all those trials and subsequent deaths during the Great Purge were just. Perhaps Stalin realized that to build a great society of the future, he had to get rid of millions of undesirables.” He was parroting the party line, consistent with the status he had maintained as a Mexico City correspondent for *The Daily Worker*.

Bolaños learned where Marilyn had gone for the weekend, and he traveled to Taxaco. Around midnight at her little villa, she was awakened by the sound of mariachi musicians serenading her. She opened the window to discover Bolaños standing in front of the band with a mammoth bouquet of sweet-smelling flowers.

After the midnight concert, she invited him into her suite, where he spent the night, the first of many other evenings to come.

When she returned to Hollywood, she told Jeanne Carmen, “Jose is all over you, discovering every erotic zone on a woman’s body. He doesn’t believe in giving a woman an orgasm, he gives them multiple orgasms. His tongue is the world’s most skilled. He can actually make you scream. His cock is the world’s most beautiful—long and thick. Leonardo da Vinci in drag would love to have painted it. Joe and Frankie can’t compete with Jose.”

Bolaños left the following morning after giving her long and passionate kisses. She promised she’d go out with him her first night back in Mexico City.

Over lunch that day, Field warned her against Bolaños. “He’s a member of the Lothario set, a real star fucker. He got his start by pounding it to Merle Oberon. Now it’s Dolores del Río. He fucks both sexes. When del Rio’s cousin, Ramon Novarro, came back to Mexico City, Bolaños spent every night with him. Novarro drained him dry.”

Field also claimed that Bolaños worked like a double agent. “When he is with us, he discusses his commitment to left-wing politics, but the next night he’s hanging out with the most reactionary forces. He also has contacts with CIA agents down here, especially a guy named E. Howard Hunt, who flies in and out of Mexico City from Washington.”

Marilyn did not heed Field’s warning, and she accepted Bolaños’ invitation to visit an orphanage filled with Indian children. “I was once in an orphanage myself,” she told him. Upon leaving, she wrote the Mother Superior a check for $1,000, but then tore it up and replaced it with a check for $10,000.

That night, Bolaños taught her the samba and the rumba, and bought her a dozen Latin records. She would later tell Lena Pepitone, her New York maid, “All we did was dance, drink, and make love. But Jose scares me at times. One minute he’s laughing, and then he starts thinking about something and goes into a crazy mood. I never know what he’s thinking. If he sees another man even look at me, he wants to kill them.”

She also claimed, “I’m falling madly in love with him.”

As Pepitone relayed in her memoirs, “As Marilyn described him, Bolaños was dark, intense, powerful, and a ‘man,’ one word she used the most often. She told me he’s special because of his unbelievable manners, and that he was the greatest lover in the world. ‘He makes me feel like I’m the only woman on earth,’ she said.”

“I hear he writes some of the worst movies ever made, silly romances,” Marilyn said. “But what do I care? Everything else he does is incredible.”

There was one movie he wrote of which he was extremely proud. It was entitled *La Cucaracha* in Spanish, and *The Soldiers of Pancho Villa* north of the border. The star player in its cast was the respected Mexican actress, María Félix, portraying a fiery revolutionary, *La Cucaracha*. She was often photographed with an ammunition belt across her breast and a rifle in her hands. Dolores del Río played the second female lead. Both women in the story were in love with Colonel Antonio Zeta, played by Emilio Fernández, one of the best-known names in Mexican cinema.

Bolaños seemed to want Marilyn to realize that he was friends with some of the most famous names in Mexico. He arranged a luncheon between her and Fernández. She was fascinated to learn that he had posed nude as the model for the first prototype of the Oscar statuette given out to winners of the Academy Awards. Cedric Gibbons, the art director and future husband of del Río, was assigned to create the gold statuette, and he asked Fernández to pose in the nude during its crafting. Reluctant at first, he finally agreed.

Jose Bolaños with MM. In how many ways was he a double agent?

“I’ve always admired the ass on Oscar,” Marilyn told Fernández.

When Bolaños went to pay the restaurant bill, she slipped Fernández her phone number and later made a date with him. As she’d later tell Carmen, “I wanted him to fuck me. I know I will never win an Oscar, so this is my only chance to get screwed by the real thing. Of course, he was born in 1904, and he posed for that statuette in 1928, so his ass has sagged a bit since then, but the front part of him is still in good working order.”

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Bolaños had not only been a friend of the late, great painter, Diego Rivera, he was also an intimate of the director Luis Buñuel, a towering figure in world cinema. Born in Spain, Buñuel eventually settled in Mexico, where he became a citizen and made twenty films.

Marilyn found him “the most fascinating man I’ve ever met.” Among the many tales Buñuel told her was one about when he was an *estudiante* in Madrid in 1925, where he became part of an experimental group of Dadaist existentialists. “We had to perform certain stunts. I was assigned to dress up as a nun and go through Madrid late at night knocking over blind people and throwing the pesetas they’d collected into the gutter. As a nun, I was supposed to go into the most dangerous of male bars and drink the night away while telling the vilest and most perverted jokes, including my favorite about how as a bride of Christ I dreamed that he brutally sodomized me and made me rim him until dawn broke.”

Buñuel also described his reaction to how the media had interpreted his avant-garde films. “My favorite review

came from Henry Miller," Buñuel said. "He wrote that I, like an entomologist, has studied 'what we call love in order to expose beneath the ideology, mythology, platitudes, and phraseologies the complete and bloody machinery of sex.' In fact, before I started directing movies, I wanted to become an entomologist. I'm still considering writing a script and casting actors disguised as giant insects. I would like you to star in it, Miss Monroe. Cast as the Queen Bee, of course."

Three of Mexico's greatest movie stars, María Félix, Dolores del Río, and Emilio Fernández, acted in a movie whose script was written by Marilyn's lover, Jose Bolaños

"I'm sure that if that comes to be, I'll win one of those statuet es that Fernández posed for."

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José Bolaños has remained a mystery to Marilyn biographers, all of whom have downplayed his role during the final months of Marilyn's life. In the two interviews he granted, he was very unhelpful and misleading. But among friends and certain business associates, he talked more freely.

One case in point occurred in 1963 in Acapulco, Mexico, when Bolaños spent nearly two weeks in the company of Bernie Rubin, President of TV Graphics, a television production company based in New York City, and art director Stanley Mills Haggart (later an author). Bolaños was leading a campaign to get American TV companies to shoot their outdoor commercials in Mexico instead of in Florida or the Caribbean, claiming that film production would cost about one-third of current prices within the U.S.

When Haggart, working for TV Graphics, arranged the production of a TV commercial set on a beach near Puerto Vallarta, Bolaños was on hand to make all the arrangements. He was also spending a great deal of time at Casa Kimberley, the villa that Elizabeth Taylor had rented while her husband, Richard Burton, filmed Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana* (1964). Williams was also staying nearby, at another villa.

A dinner for Bolaños was hosted within Williams' villa, at which Haggart and the author of this biography were guests.

Bolaños talked about Marilyn's desire to have a child and also his strange friendship with E. Howard Hunt, the rogue CIA agent who later became a household word in America during Nixon's Watergate crisis.

Vanderbilt Field had accused Bolaños of being a double agent, moving between involvements with expatriate American communists to right-wing elements from the States. As if to prove Field's point, Bolaños in Mexico in 1962 arranged a dinner between Marilyn and Hunt. Hunt's motivation involved the hope of gathering damaging information about Marilyn and the Kennedy brothers.

During the Nixon White House years, Hunt was one of the "plumbers' who engineered the Watergate burglary that later brought down the presidency. As a contributor to that conspiracy, he served thirty-three months in prison.

Marilyn meets the avant-garde:

A grisly scene from Luis Buñuel's surrealist film, *Un Chien Andalou*

No one, certainly not Bolaños, told Marilyn that Hunt was a CIA agent, but she began to suspect that he was. He spent most of the dinner talking about his hatred of Fidel Castro, and how he "absolutely loathed" the Kennedy brothers. He did not refer to Marilyn's relationships with either the President or the Attorney General, but she suspected from what he said that he was aware of them.

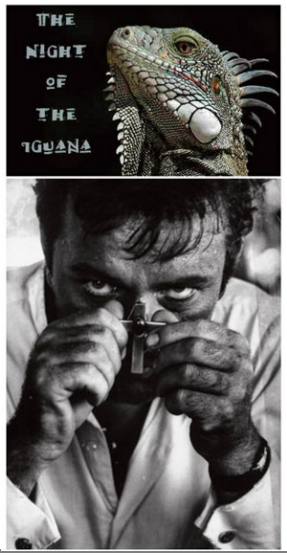
She really disliked Hunt, and didn't want to see him again, as she later told Bolaños. Obviously, his left-wing friends were more appealing to her than such right-wingers as Hunt. When she left the dinner that night to return to her suite with Bolaños, she, of course, had no way of knowing what role Hunt might play during this final year of her life.

The purpose of the dinner with Hunt, as arranged by Bolaños, involved giving the CIA agent a chance to "size her up," and Hunt wasn't referring to her bust measurements.

Hunt told Bolaños and others, "Whether Miss Monroe knows it or not, she has become one of the key players in a conspiracy of which she knows absolutely nothing. Right now, her sole interest might be in the Kennedy boys' dicks, but she's taken a lead role in a script she has not even read."

She would not live to read reports that in the years ahead would variously refer to Hunt as "a master spy, OSS agent and soldier of fortune, World War II vet, Bay of Pigs line manager, rogue dirty tricks handyman, Watergate plumber, burglar and break-in artist, presidential blackmailer, spy novelist, CIA paymaster for the JFK conspiracy, and Secretary of State for our 'Shadow Government.'"

During her time in Mexico, Marilyn learned that she'd won another Golden Globe Award that would be presented to her in March. She asked Pat Newcomb if it would be all right if she asked columnist Sidney Skolsky to be her escort at the awards ceremony.



(lower photo) Richard Burton gets guilty in *The Night of the Iguana*

"Hell, no!" Newcomb said. "He's the ugliest man in Hollywood. Take Jose with you. He's young and handsome…better publicity for you." Bolaños would eagerly accept the subsequent invitation. According to his attorney, Jorge Barragna, Bolaños had already expressed his desire to marry Marilyn on her turf in Los Angeles.

On the day of her departure from Mexico, Marilyn and her entourage, including Bolaños—who had requested and been given permission to return with her—arrived dysfunctionally at the airport. She was drunk and had to be supported by two airline employees, who helped her up the ramp to board the plane. Seeing the waiting photographers and reporters, all she could manage to say was, *"Adios, muchachos."*

Then she flew north to live out the final months of her controversial life.

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In February of 1962, Marilyn landed back in Hollywood, without a lot of furniture, but with a handsome young Mexican lover beside her. Jose Bolaños was introduced to Hollywood reporters when he accompanied her to the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, where she received a Golden Globe Award as the World's Favorite Female Movie Star.

George Masters was called in to help her get ready for the big event. She had ordered a floor-length beaded dress crafted in emerald green fabric, but when she saw it, she wasn't happy with its design. Two women from the Fox wardrobe department came over, and she had to stand for seven hours while these seamstresses recut the dress. After its transformation, instead of a plunging *décolletage*, the dress featured a daring display of her back. Bolaños warned her, "Now, Marilyn, be a lady, and don't show the crack of your creamy ass."

All eyes were focused on her when she appeared the next evening at the event. Suddenly, Hollywood reporters seemed desperate to discover the identity of Marilyn's new Latin lover.

Her friend, Susan Strasberg, attended the event. She later said, "Marilyn arrived drunk. She was barely in control, her voice slurred. She obviously had to be sewed into her dress. I felt sorry for her. She was embarrassing herself in front of all of Hollywood. The only good thing was Jose Bolaños. He was a living doll, so handsome, so polite, so gorgeous. The gossip was that Marilyn had stolen him from Dolores del Río, a much older woman. Perhaps he was her Joe Gillis to Marilyn's Norma Desmond in *Sunset Blvd*. These two gay guys I was with went apeshit over Bolaños, saying they'd rather go to bed with him that with Fernando Lamas. I suspected he was going to become Hollywood's latest Latin lover on the screen, but it didn't happen."

Evaluating Marilyn for the CIA E. Howard Hunt, testifying

Strasberg talked privately with Bolaños at one point during the gala. He told her he was worried about all the drugs Marilyn was being given by the doctorsto relax her. “I told her that screwing mewas a far better way to relax than taking drugs, but she won’t listen. Those drugs trigger her desire. She wants more and more of it, and fortunately I’m a man who can deliver that.”

“From what Marilyn told me, Bolaños should have been cast as a bull fighter in some picture,” Strasberg said. “Too bad *The Sun Also Rises* had already been made.”

Marilyn’s drunken appearance, of course, was her own responsibility, but her doctors, both Dr. Greenson and Dr. Hyman Engelberg, had filled her with too many drugs, according to reports. She also took far too many “Mickey Finn knockout drops” as a means of helping her sleep. Professional pathologists later criticized the doctors for not coordinating the medications they were giving Marilyn, who seemed to want more barbiturates than ever before.

Marilyn’s love affair with Bolaños was suddenly interrupted when she received a phone call from Joe DiMaggio. Apparently, he’d read the reports of her disastrous appearance at the awards ceremony, and wanted to fly in to Los Angeles to rescue her.

She had to stash Bolaños somewhere, and she called Carmen to come to her rescue. Arriving at Marilyn’s door in Brentwood, Carmen later admitted that she was “really impressed with this hunk of male flesh Marilyn had brought across the border. He looked to me like he knew how to handle a woman.”

Marilyn asked Carmen to check him into a suite at the Beverly Hilton Hotel at her expense. “He was very upset to be leaving Marilyn, but she promised to visit him the next afternoon.”

“On the way to the hotel, he was very flirtatious with me. After all, I was just as much of a blonde goddess as Marilyn was. Assigning me to protect Bolaños was like bringing in a she-wolf to guard a helpless sheep. I was very attracted to him.”

DiMaggio arrived in L.A. and went at once to Marilyn’s house in Brentwood. His biographer, Richard Ben Cramer, wrote that he settled into Marilyn’s house and cuddled her in his arms like a kitten. “They curled up on the living room floor. There was still no furniture, just white wall-to-wall carpeting, by now stained with poodle pee.

She mused to him about adopting a Mexican orphan, claiming they were so beautiful."

She spent a lot of her reunion with her former husband complaining about a script she'd been given called *Something's Got to Give*. She lodged the same complaints to Carmen. "I hate the script. They don't want Marilyn Monroe."

"I don't understand," he said. "If they don't want you, why did they sign you?"

"Of course, you silly-dilly, they hired me to do the picture, but they don't want me to be Marilyn Monroe in it, but to play some other woman. I want out. I don't want to make it. But after two flops, I'm desperate for work and money. Dr. Greenson told me I must make this god damn piece of shit, which I fear will be flop number three. You know what they say in this town, 'you're as good as your last picture.'"

"To hell with Hollywood," DiMaggio told her. "Come away with me. I can take care of you. Hell knows I have enough dough."

Carmen later reported that she checked Bolaños into the hotel and suggested they have dinner at around eight o'clock.

"To my shock and surprise, he turned me down, telling me he had a business appointment. But he asked me if I'd come by in the morning and take him swimming at Malibu, so it wasn't a total rejection."

She later claimed that the traffic was light that morning, and she got to the hotel a bit early. "When I rang his buzzer, there was no answer at first. Then the door opened. To my shock, Ramon Novarro came running out without acknowledging me. I knew that Bolaños knew him because of their mutual link to Dolores del Río. It was apparent to me when I came into the suite that Bolaños had spent the night with Novarro, probably in exchange for some solid cash. I knew then that Marilyn had a hustler on her hands."

"I went into the suite, and Bolaños called to me from the open door of the bathroom. He was taking a shower. After he'd finished, he came into the living room with a towel draped around his nude body. As he was getting himself a beer, the towel fell from his body. I saw what the big attraction was for Marilyn. He took a hell of a lot of time picking up that towel and wrapping it around his waist."

She reported that they drove to Malibu for a day at the beach. "He wore a white bikini so revealing that when it got wet, you could see his cock and balls. He was a real exhibitionist. We were on the gay section of the beach, and he attracted far more attention than I did. I was also in a very revealing red bikini, but the guys were interested in him—and he was loving it. He told me he felt he would 'go over big in Hollywood,' and I agreed with him. Marilyn had him booked at four that afternoon, so eventually I had to rush him back to the hotel. But before his visit was over, I was determined to have him. I'd already had Joe DiMaggio many times before."

Carmen claimed that Marilyn was kept busy rushing from the bed of DiMaggio to the bed of Bolaños. "I did get to fuck him one night when DiMaggio and Marilyn had to attend a private event. I don't want to go into graphic detail, but let me say this: Marilyn didn't exaggerate. Bolaños was everything she said he was—and more. I wanted her to marry him and keep this stud in America. He was wasted on those horny *mexicana* women."

Since DiMaggio couldn't stay forever in Los Angeles, and since Marilyn refused to run away with him, he planned his departure. On the final night of his stay in Brentwood, a call came in from Joe Jr., as Marilyn later reported to Carmen. He called her collect from Camp Pendleton, California, where he was in the Marine Corps after dropping out of Yale.

Joe Jr., told her, "Don't let Dad talk you into marriage again," or at least that was what Marilyn told Carmen that he'd said.

"I'm dating this gal, Pamela," the marine said to Marilyn. "But there's only one woman I want to marry—and you know who that is."

Carmen said that Marilyn looked very impish when she reported on their talk. She urged him not to marry Pamela. In her coquettish way, she said, "Your heart belongs to mama. No other woman will satisfy you like I can."

"As soon as I can go on leave, I want to fly to your new home and make love to you twenty-two hours a day," he told her.

"A girl could hold a cute guy like you to that promise," she said flirtatiously, even though drunk and drugged. "Everybody calls Slugger 'Big Joe' and you 'Little Joe.' I think you should be called 'Big Joe Segundo.' I'm learning Spanish."

"Don't let Dad fuck you," he said. "Promise me?"

"I promise," she said.

Like so many of her promises to men, she did not plan to honor that one.

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After Marilyn flew out of Mexico, the FBI in Washington received a document dated March 6, 1962, and marked MARILYN MONROE—SECURITY MATTER—COMMUNIST. It landed on the desk of J. Edgar Hoover.

The document alleged that Marilyn had learned top secret government information while sharing the beds of both JFK and RFK, and that she then turned over that data to espionage agents working for the Soviets in Mexico City, including Fred Vanderbilt Field, a notorious communist and spy.

After reading the report, Hoover called in his top agents. "Let's face facts, gentlemen," he said. "This cannot go on. For the first time in American history, both the President of the United States and the Attorney General are security risks."

Since 1955, the FBI had tracked the movements of Marilyn, beginning with her involvement with Arthur Miller. The CIA was also closely watching her. Stacks of paper documented her involvements with Milton Greene in Connecticut, and with Lee Strasberg at the Actors Studio, even her proposed trip to Russia at the invitation of Nikita Khrushchev. The FBI had also been hot on her trail when she went to London with Miller to film *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

But what really turned Hoover against Marilyn was a report from a "mole" he had planted in the Santa Monica house of the Lawfords. At a party, Marilyn was overheard recommending to Bobby Kennedy that he fire Hoover. "He's always poking his nose into other people's business," she said.

RFK reportedly responded: "Jack and I would love to fire the shit, but we can't do that right now."

At another gathering, Jeanne Martin, wife of Dean Martin, heard Marilyn talking to RFK. "He spies on all the stars in Hollywood, at least those who count. The man is a *voyeur*. He even spies on me. All I do is make movies and make love. That doesn't make me a national security risk."

RFK only nodded and seemed to brush off her concerns. "Just because you're paranoid," he told her, "doesn't mean that the FBI isn't trailing you wherever you go. Hoover's on my ass every day of my life—and Jack's too."

In November of 1961, Hoover at FBI headquarters had received an anonymous package. In it were sexually explicit photographs of JFK with Marilyn. The package carried a Los Angeles postmark. It is not known if the President was ever informed of this delivery, and the sender of the package was never determined. Peter Lawford owned such photographs, but it is highly doubtful that he would release such damaging evidence about his brother-in-law.

Hoover rather accurately concluded that in his private life, JFK was "the most reckless man ever to occupy the Oval Office." As evidence, he cited his appearance in November of 1961 at a reception at the Beverly Hills Hotel. "For all the world to see, Marilyn Monroe was his date," Hoover told his agents.

In spite of his feud with the President and his Attorney General, Hoover had always maintained a friendly but guarded relationship with their father, the former Ambassador Joe Kennedy, Sr. At one point, Joe Sr. had offered Hoover a highly paid position as head of his security forces, with the understanding that before he'd accept it, he'd resign from the FBI.

As anticipated, Hoover turned down the offer. But before the ambassador suffered his stroke, he told Hoover that Marilyn was "a walking time bomb" and that he had offered her a million dollars "to drop Jack from her list of conquests."

Negotiations had continued until late in 1961, but the deal was never consummated because on December 19, 1961, at the age of 73, Joe suffered a stroke. This once-powerful figure was left sitting in a wheelchair, helpless, mute, and drooling, aware of his family's ongoing sorrows and tragedies until his own death, at the age of 81, in 1969.

Marilyn, however, did report, enigmatically, the rather enticing offer to Jeanne Carmen. "I've always thought diamonds are a girl's best friend. Enough money can make any gal change her mind."

"Marilyn didn't say she was going to accept the offer, but from what she revealed and the look on her face, she was certainly considering it. She didn't see that much of Jack, and, of course, it was a fantasy that he'd ever leave Jackie, especially if he wanted to run for President in 1964," Carmen said.

With the Kennedy family patriarch, Joseph Sr., technically alive but no longer making decisions, Hoover knew he'd have to deal with JFK and RFK on his own terms. He ordered the FBI to intensify its accumulation of blackmail evidence on the President's love affairs, particularly those that concerned his "steady" girl friends, Judith Campbell and Marilyn.

Hoover told his lover and Associate FBI Director, Clyde Tolson, and their mutual friend, Guy Hotell, "The Jack Rabbit in the White House can be controlled—but not that rodent who sits in the Attorney General's office. We'll increase our surveil ance of him. We've concentrated too much on Jack Kennedy. I hear Brother Robert is as much a womanizer as his older brother, except he's more discreet. Round up your men. Let's find out what dirty deeds our so-called boss is up to."

Using whatever means were within his power, Hoover pursued the nocturnal life of both of the Kennedy

brothers with a certain ferocity. He referred to them as “the Kennedy Bastards,” and he called Marilyn “that slut,” or “that whore.”

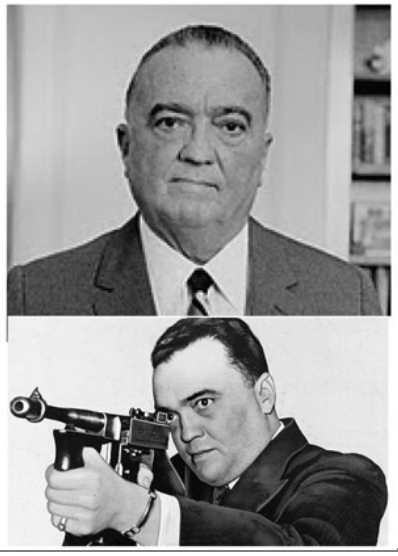
Hoover had heard rumors that the Kennedy brothers had wanted to fire him, something no other sitting president had ever managed to do. Gathering up a lot of the blackmail evidence he’d accumulated, Hoover met with the President in the Oval Office for a luncheon on March 22, 1961. RFK was not invited. Neither the White House nor the FBI kept any record of what transpired during that historic meeting.

It was later reported that the FBI director gave the president a preview of some of the incriminating evidence he had on him. He surely talked about the danger of “cavorting” with Judith Campbell, warning the President that Campbell was also the girlfriend of Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana, a fact already known to JFK.

Hoover also revealed the latest information about Marilyn being entertained by acabal of Soviet agents and spies during hertrip to Mexico.

Later, JFK laughed off Marilyn’s alleged communist links. “It’s a joke,” he told aide Kenneth O’Donnell. “I know Marilyn. She’s not taking her marching orders from the Kremlin. That old queen over at the FBI is out of his mind.”

Apparently, although JFK took Hoover’s observations seriously, he didn’t give up either Marilyn or Campbel after Hoover’s visit. He did become more discreet, however. Campbell claimed that he continued to see her until the summer of 1962. JFK also saw Marilyn on several occasions after hearing Hoover’s warning.



Who’s really in charge here? Two views of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover

JFK also told his aides and his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, “I’m heading for Palm Springs for a little rest. I’ll discuss Marilyn’s spying for the Russians with her. I think I’ll stay with Frank Sinatra. I sure had a good time the last time I was Frankie’s guest. He really knows how to entertain a guy, or at least round up those who do.”

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Marilyn received a personal call from John F. Kennedy, who, from the Oval Office, invited her to Rancho Mirage, near Palm Springs, California, for a visit during the early spring of 1962.

“That’s wonderful,” she told him. “I saw Frank the other night. He’s invited us to stay with him.”

She would later recall there was a long silence on the other end of the phone. “Bobby hasn’t worked out all the security arrangements yet. Peter will get back to you and escort you there.”

At the time, Marilyn had no way of knowing what a hornet’s nest she was reaching into, and JFK had returned from the California desert to Washington before she got the full story from Lawford.

Although JFK had been a guest at Sinatra’s villa before, Bobby warned him that he had to distance himself from the singer this time because of Sinatra’s known mob associations with such gangsters as Sam Giancana. “I’m investigating that son of a bitch, as you know,” Bobby told his older brother. “How would it look for you to sleep with Marilyn in a bed where Giancana has already warmed the sheets?”

At first reluctant, the President finally agreed that it was time to break from Sinatra. Lawford was told to find

another house for the President, and an invitation was soon forthcoming from Bing Crosby, a Republican who maintained a vacation home nearby. Crosby and the President had once shared another blonde movie star: Both of them had seduced Grace Kelly before she married her prince.

Frank was among the last to know of the change in the President's plans. To prepare for JFK's visit, he had already arranged for a construction crew working around the clock, adding bedrooms to his villa, tightening the security system, and even installing a helipad. He even went so far as to arrange for the installation of a direct phone link to the White House.

After an inspection, Floyd Boring, a Secret Service agent, claimed that "Sinatra's house is too exposed." This was just an excuse for JFK not to stay there.

At some point, Sinatra would have to be notified, and Boring accompanied Lawford to Sinatra's villa. Agent Gerald Blaine was also part of the group that was assembled to deliver the bad news. It was Blaine who eventually blurted out the change in the president's plans to Sinatra.

Sinatra looked shocked and immediately confronted Lawford. "I'm sorry, Frank," Lawford said. "I was overruled. I just found out the news myself about an hour ago."

"It's purely for security reasons," Boring told Sinatra. "No other reason."

Of course, Sinatra knew that Boring was lying. The agent told him that since his house opened onto the Tamarisk Country Club, with much open space, it would be difficult to guard. He said that Crosby's house had been selected because it backed up against a mountain, and was accessible by only one access road.

When Boring and Blaineleft, Sinatraturned on Lawford, blaming him for the rejection.

"I've seen Frank mad before, and I've seen him violent," Lawford later told Marilyn. "But he became a madman that afternoon. He lunged toward me and began choking me. He was strangling me to death. I tried to fight him off, but his anger seemed to give him a strength he never had before. He was killing me."

The nextday, Sinatrasent word to Lawford that he was *persona non grata* in Rat Pack circles. He also fired him from two upcoming movies. "If I meet the faggot again, I'll give him a punch in the nose."

"Forget the Kennedys," Sinatra told his remaining Rat Packers, including Dean Martin. "I think I'm gonna become a Republican like Bing Crosby."

Although he cut off Lawford, he did not hold Marilyn responsible for the switch in JFK's plans, and continued his relationship with her, all the while denouncing Lawford and the Kennedys whatever chance he had.

Marilyn claimed that any time she saw Sinatra, he denounced Lawford, although they would come together again in July. "The cocksucker is dead meat in my freezer. If you want to hang out with that faggot, it's your problem. Cut me out."

"Please, Frankie," Marilyn told him. "Don't denounce cocksuckers. I'm one myself."

Milt Ebbins, Lawford's manager, claimed, "Peter was destroyed by Frank's rejection. He loved the man, although God knows why, and he relished being a member of the Rat Pack. Suddenly, he was kicked in the seat of his pants, landing on his ass out the door. He later blamed Sinatra for the downward spiral of his career."

"Frank has effectively blacklisted me in Hollywood," Lawford lamented to Marilyn and Sammy Davis, Jr.

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On Saturday, March 24, 1962, Lawford was assigned the task of transporting Marilyn to Palm Springs for a visit with the president that had grown, thanks to his rejection of Frank Sinatra, increasingly contentious. Lawford drove to Fifth Helena Drive, arriving at 9am. Naturally, she wasn't ready. Her water had been cut off because of repairs, so she had to go to Dr. Greenson's house to bathe and wash her hair.

As Lawford paced the floor, she finally emerged, dressed, at two o'clock that afternoon. She was wearing horn-rimmed glasses, a Norman Norrel suit, and a brunette wig. She was also armed with a steno pad and some sharpened pencils.

Introduced as a new White House secretary, she boarded Air Force Once and was flown to Palm Springs. On the way there, she became furious at Lawford for actually making her take dictation as a means of maintaining her cover as a secretary.

Arriving in Palm Springs, Lawford drove to the Crosby estate, where he and Marilyn had to pass through a heavy flank of security guards. She was taken to a secluded guest cot age on the property, which was concealed from the main house by trees and shrubbery.

JFK did not emerge to see her until after ten o'clock that night, as he was hosting a formal dinner, to which she had not been invited, in the main house. He changed into khaki pants, a pale blue turtleneck, and penny loafers with no socks before calling on her. Having already downed a lot of champagne, Marilyn was waiting for him, at ired in

white silk Chanel lounging pajamas.

"It was all so familiar," she would later tell Jeanne Carmen. "The blow job, then my getting on top of him to ride to the finsh line. All the time, I fantasized about his divorcing Jackie and making me First Lady. Just think. I would have married the world's greatest athlete, the world's greatest playwright, and the world's greatest politician. Not bad for a dumb blonde, wouldn't you say?"

Ralph Roberts, her masseur, was awakened at his home in Los Angeles at around 2am that morning. It was Marilyn, calling from the bed of the President in Bing Crosby's guest cottage.

"I'm here with a friend," she said, "and we're having a debate about back muscles. I'm giving him a massage. Let me put him on the phone."

Roberts quickly recognized the voice of the President, who did not identify himself. "He asked questions about back massages, and we briefly discussed the right muscles to massage. He thanked me and hung up."

Later, when the President was airborne and on his way out of California, Marilyn was returned to Brentwood by Lawford. She told him that her two nights with "the Prez," as she called him, had been passionate.

JFK's close friend, Florida Senator George Smathers, later confirmed that "Jack told me about his time with Marilyn in Palm Springs. He claimed that she had fallen in love with him, and wanted to marry him, a ridiculous notion, of course."

"When Jackie was away, pretty girls came and went from the White House," Smathers said. "I joined in some of those nude swimming parties in the White House pool. I got the impression that Marilyn felt she was different from the other girls. After all, she received letters from all over the planet, from men in all sorts of life—presidents, kings, actors, athletes, whomever. I don't think she was that different in Jack's eyes. To him, she was just another fling."

"Increasingly, from what I heard, Bobby was appearing on the scene. He may actually have fallen in love with Marilyn. But I could almost swear that Jack never did. The only two people in the world who Jack loved were his children, Caroline and John-John. Jackie was for the sake of keeping up appearances, and Marilyn was just another piece of ass."

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"*I'd rather have a President or an Attorney General who does it to a woman than to the country.*"

—Marilyn Monroe

Two films, each glorifying the Kennedy brothers, were in pre-production in Hollywood in 1962. One, *PT 109*, would glorify the exploits of JFK as a naval lieutenant during World War II.

The second, and the one that most directly related to Marilyn, was *The Enemy Within*, based on an exposé written by RFK during the summer of 1959 when he was thirty-three years old. It was the story of his days working as chief counsel for the McClellan Senate Rackets subcommittee, trying to put Teamsters boss James Hoffa in jail.

Marilyn remembered that during the early discussions of that film project, RFK was obsessed with Hoffa, referring to the Teamsters' Union as "a conspiracy of evil."

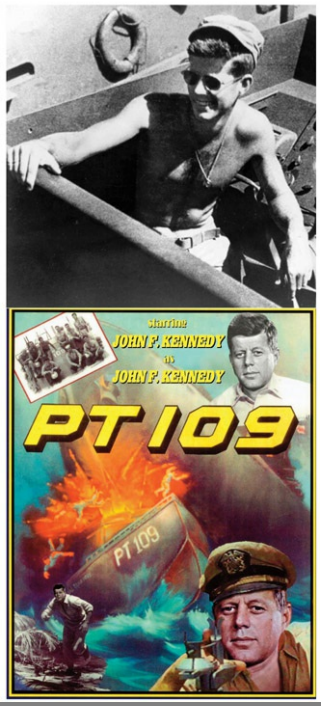
During the spring of 1962, RFK appeared several times in California to discuss the production of the film, meeting with its producer, Jerry Wald. "He sometimes descended at the studio in a blue helicopter borrowed from the Army," Wald said. "The Secret Service men with him were dressed in dark blue suits, but Bobby often wore faded blue jeans, a white T-shirt, and sneakers. Marilyn Monroe's bungalow was only fifty yards from mine, so after our discussion, he made a 'courtesy call' on her, which usually lasted two or three hours. Through the grapevine, I'd heard that Bobby took much longer with a woman than Jack. Some people at the studio also saw her going in and out of the presidential suite at the Beverly Hilton where Bobby was staying. They were even seen together dining at his favorite restaurant, La Scala."

Bobby gave Marilyn a copy of *The Enemy Within*, and she had high praise for it when she talked about it. "It perfectly captures what a scrappy, wiry Irish street fighter Bobby is when taking on that teamsters' meanie, Jimmy Hoffa, who, by the way, is spying on us."

To her surprise, Bobby told her that his wife, Ethel, wanted Marilyn to play her on the screen. "She says you're a much underrated actress, and she thinks you'd be perfect in the role of my wife."

"Does this mean in the *real* sense or in the *reel* sense?" Marilyn asked.

Apparently, Bobby didn't answer that. But he did tell her that he wanted Paul Newman cast as him self, and heasked her to meet with Newman and "feel him out."



(top photo) JFK aboard the real *PT 109* and *(lower photo)* as amplified by Hollywood

She jokingly said, “I hope you don’t really mean *feel* him out.”

“No,” he said, “if you want to feel someone up, here I am.”

Ostensibly together for “script conferences,” Marilyn and Bobby were seen together on several occasions.

The columnist James Bacon spotted them together at a party at the Lawford mansion in Santa Monica. “It was some sight. Marilyn was following Bobby around wearing horn-rimmed glasses and carrying a notebook. She took notes on whatever Bobby said—civil rights, Hoffa, whatever.”

Ralph Greenson’s daughter, Joan, was in her early twenties and very bright. “I’m taking a crash course on currentevents from Joan,” Marilyn said. “Thatway, when I see Bobby again, I’ll knowwhat to talk about.”

When she met with Robert Slatzer, she told him how hard she was studying to keep up with Bobby. “Don’t worry so much about it,” he said. “You’ve slept with bigger men than Bobby. His brother, for example. And Nikita Khrushchev.”

“I’ve never gone to bed with Khrushchev,” she said, although she’d told others she had committed an act of fellatio upon him. Technically, she was telling Slatzer the truth. She’d never actually “gone to bed” with the Soviet dictator. A blow job in his hotel suite was not tantamount to going to bed with him.

At a party, Shelley Winters wanted Marilyn to “tell me the latest about the Kennedy brothers.”

Earlier, she’d told Patricia Lawford that Bobby was far more cuddly in bed than Jack. But she changed her story slightly with Winters, telling her, “There are no niceties in sex with Bobby or Jack. It was in and out. No feeling for foreplay, not romantic talk.”

“I understand that,” Winters said. “These are two busy boys trying to rule over the world.”

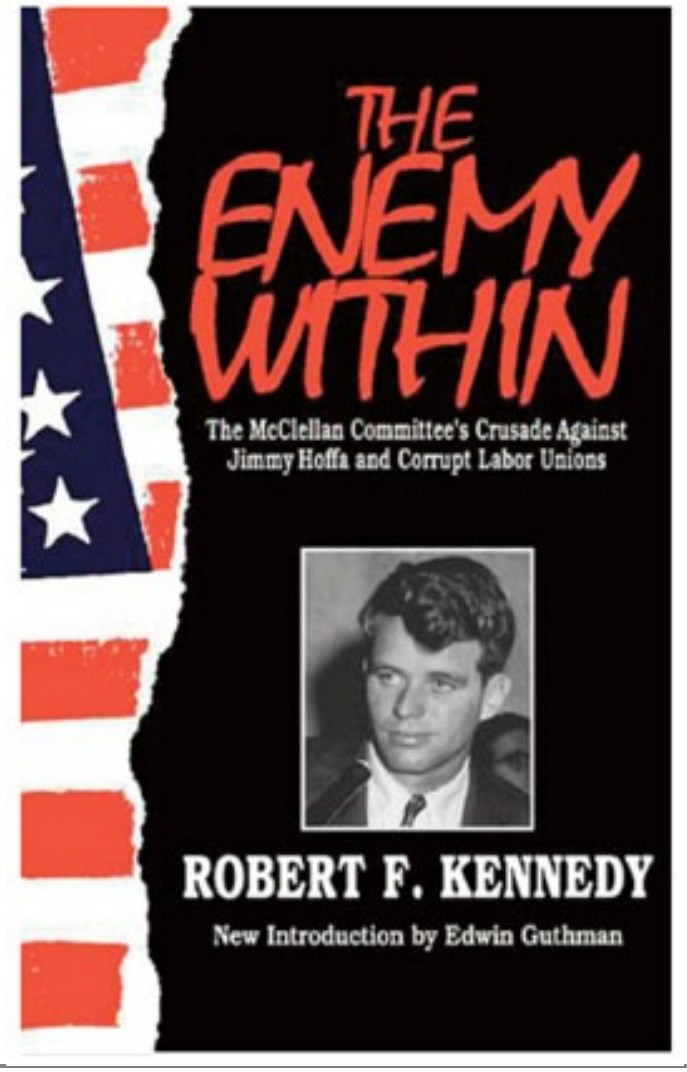
Eunice Murray, Marilyn’s housekeeper, recalled meeting Bobby on occasion at the Brentwood house. Whenever Bobby came to visit, Marilyn didn’t want Eunice or anyone else there.

“She knew both John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy,” Eunice said. “One afternoon, she wanted me to help fit her into a dress. Later, I answered the door. It was the Attorney General himself. He had arrived in an open car. He wore a shirt with a turned-back collar and looked like a college boy. He was very gracious when I let him in. They sat out by the swimming pool, and I left for the day.”

Her revelations dispute the theory that Bobby as Attorney General never traveled anywhere without Secret Service protection.

Wald recalled getting a call from Bobby during one of his visits to Los Angeles. He invited me to “a house belonging to someone—he never said who—in Malibu. I had expected to be invited to the Lawford mansion in Santa Monica, but arrived instead at this much smaller retreat.”

The producer was shown in by a young Japanese man and ushered out to the swimming pool. “I was surprised to discover Bobby swimming in the nude with Marilyn,” Wald said. “On seeing me, Bobby emerged from the pool. His dick looked like Marilyn had been working on it. He grabbed a towel and sat down with me on a *chaise longue*. She waved at me from the pool and emerged about ten minutes later, like some mermaid rising from the seas. Marilyn and I went way back to 1952 during the making of *Clash by Night*. She walked around for a few minutes before Bobby ordered her to put on a white terrycloth robe. But I saw all the way to Honolulu. She needed a dye job on that pussy. It was ginger-colored, not platinum blonde.”



The book that, except for Hoffa’s death threats, might have been a movie featuring Paul Newman as RFK and Marilyn as Ethel Kennedy.

By the pool, Bobby told Wald, “I want Paul Newman to play me, and Marilyn to play Ethel. At least that’s what my wife wants. I’ve got to leave town and go back to Washington, but I want Marilyn to set up a meeting with you and Newman.”

“Consider it done,” she told Wald and Bobby. And she meant that.

***

Marilyn’s breathless voice came over the phone. “Paulie,” she said. “I’ve missed you. Have you missed your baby?”

Paul Newman knew at once that he was speaking to Marilyn. “Of course, I have. Anyone who has been with

you will miss you forever."

She told him she was calling from a "secure" phone, as her own residence had been bugged. After some idle chitchat, she invited him to meet with her at a mansion in Beverly Hills. She claimed she was hiding out from the mob. That remark completely baffled him. What danger did the mob pose for her?

"Tell no one we're about to get together," she said, "especially your wife. I've learned that the less wives know about their husbands' affairs, the better."

The following afternoon, Newman arrived at the Beverly Hills mansion "of God knows who," and was ushered by a black maid out onto a patio where Marilyn, in a white bikini, awaited him. She jumped up and ran toward him, giving him a sloppy wet kiss.

Over a late lunch, she nibbled and Newman ate heartily. "Bobby wants you to play him in a movie based on his book, *The Enemy Within,"* she said. "It's about Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters. Bobby wanted me to contact you."

"I'd be honored," Newman said. "I'd like to meet with him to discuss it."

"That's not possible right now," she said. "We have to be careful. People are spying on us, watching our every move. Jerry Wald is negotiating with Bobby for the screen rights. I want to co-star in the movie with you. Ethel wants me to play her."

At one point, she ordered the maid to bring Newman a bikini. "Make it as revealing as possible," she instructed the maid, right in front of Newman.

Before the afternoon ended, Jerry Wald arrived on the scene and was ushered into the pool area. "I spotted Marilyn, topless, at the far end of the pool," he later said. "She was making out with a man in a white bathing suit. I thought at first that it was Bobby. The man rose to his feet. It was Paul."

Wald told Newman how glad he was to see him again, and they began a serious discussion of the movie. During their talk, Wald claimed that Marilyn never put on her top, in spite of his presence. "It was very distracting trying to talk to Paul with Marilyn's breasts exposed."

Wald later said that the afternoon with Marilyn and Newman had gone peacefully. "Then trouble began."

"The studio began to receive death threats, no doubt from shady members of the Teamsters' Union." Wald claimed that he was warned that if the film were made, "it'll be your last picture." The producer was also threatened that any movie house showing the film would be bombed.

"Both Marilyn and Paul received death threats," Wald said. "She had many reasons to fear the mob—but that's a story for another day."

The Kennedys, of course, had many enemies, and thousands of Americans didn't want *PT 109* or *The Enemy Within* made. A barrage of letters arrived at the studio, mostly denouncing JFK as "a sex pervert." The general public had not heard many stories about Bobby's sex life, so he came off easier.

Some two dozen sexually explicit photos of Marilyn with JFK arrived at the studio, and some of these shots were sent to key members of the press. Today, they would have been published in the tabloids, but back in those more journalistically repressed times, none was printed.

Milo Speriglio, known as "the investigator of the Hollywood stars," wrote about them in his book, *Crypt 33*, suggesting that these clandestine photos were taken by agents working for Hoffa, Giancana, the CIA, and the FBI.

Speriglio wrote: "One identified shot was taken in a swimming pool of a naked president with Marilyn exposing her erect nipples. Another had them in bed in the White House basement which was reserved for 'top secret' undercover agents. The location of at least three photos can be identified as Marilyn's Brentwood home. One wide-angle photo depicted the profile of Miss Monroe kneeling at the foot of the bed and JFK sitting on what appears the edge with his visibly erect penis in her mouth. Another photo taken in what appears to be a hotel room shows a clear view of Marilyn's right side with the naked president on top of her."

The final blow came when Newman read a rough draft of the script and rejected it, calling it "a piece of shit."

"I don't know why he was so violent in his objection. He'd made shit before," Wald claimed.

When Bobby next saw Marilyn, he told her how angry he was at Newman for rejecting the role. From that day on, he carried a grudge against the star. He even wrote Newman a note under the letterhead of the Attorney General. It was short: "FUCK OFF!"

Like so many projects in Hollywood, the film died a slow death, drifting into oblivion. Everybody—Newman, Marilyn, and Bobby—was caught up in fast-changing and rapidly evolving lives.

Wald, like Marilyn herself, died in the summer of 1962.

In contrast to his unwillingness to portray Bobby, Newman told Marilyn that he very much wanted to play JFK in the film *PT 109*. Reacting to that, Bobby became even more furious at Newman when he learned that he'd be willing to play his brother, Jack, but not Bobby himself.

But when Marilyn called the President at the White House, she asked about the casting of *PT 109*. What he told her shocked her. "I don't want Newman to play me. There are two problems. First, Newman is too old for the part.

And actually, Jackie wants Warren Beatty for the role. You know how she's always getting crushes on movie stars? There's another reason. I hesitate to bring it up. Newman looks too Jewish, not Irish at all. He just wouldn't do. If you see him, convey my apologies, would you?"

She never called Newman with the news. "Let someone else do it. Besides, he can read about it in *Variety."*

She was referring to a story citing Cliff Robertson as having signed for the movie's leading role. She said, "Jack thought Paul was too old for the part, and Cliff young enough to play a twenty-six year old. But Cliff and Paul were each born the same year—1925. You figure. This makes me wonder. Who will play me one day when they make *The Marilyn Monroe Story?* I'll be too old myself."

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Bernard Spindel and Fred Otash practically made a career of illegally taping John F. Kennedy and his younger brother, Robert F. Kennedy, as well as Marilyn and Peter Lawford. Both were colorful characters, each of them worthy of a book filled with their bizarre exploits. Often, Spindel and Otash worked together in tandem.

Paul Newman *(left)*, Jerry Wald

Spindel developed his skills as a bugger and eavesdropper when he worked for the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II. This six-foot, 201-pound sack of a man saw himself as the latter-day and transistor-ized Robin Hood of privacy invasion. Reporter John Neary, in a 1966 issue of *Life* magazine, defined him as "an expert pilot, consummate lock-picker, foreign adventurer, electronic wizard, and no. 1 big league freelance eavesdropper and wire tapper, the best in the United States."

Arrested 204 times, he beat every rap but one: A jury in Springfield, Massachusetts, found him guilty of eavesdropping, for which he served a brief sentence in jail. On the way to prison, he told a reporter, "I'm all ears."

When he wasn't investigating the Kennedys, Lawford, and Marilyn, Spindel was employed in the Los Angeles area gathering evidence for divorce cases and fraud probes.

His sometimes partner, Fred Otash, was Hollywood's most notorious private eye, referring to himself as "a gumshoe with glitter." His role model was the fictional Hollywood detective Raymond Chandler. In a chauffeured Cadillac full of gorgeous hookers—he called them "little sweeties"—he prowled Hollywood at night. He drank a quart of Scotch and smoked four packages of Camels every day.

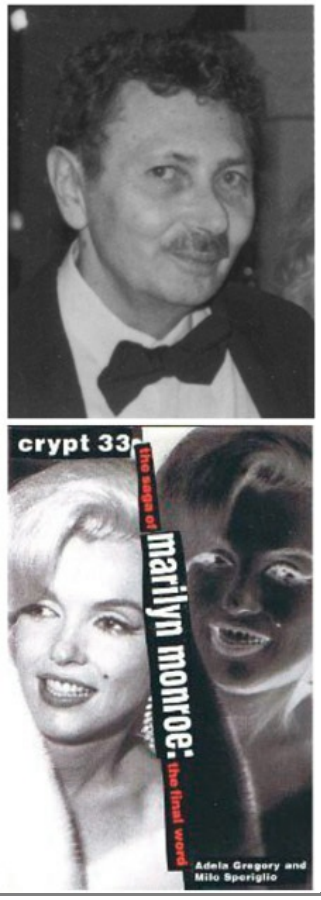
From a life of poverty as a boy, he rose to become a powerful and dangerous detective attending to the needs and wishes of some of the biggest names in Hollywood. His roster of clients included Errol Flynn ("the stuff I have on that one would make a sensational paperback sizzler"); Edward G. Robinson ("he always insisted on showing me what he called his 'Betty Grable legs'"); Judy Garland ("she was part lez"); Bette Davis ("she surprised me by some secrets she wanted buried"); and Frank Sinatra ("he should have been arrested"). Otash also collected incriminating data for such celebrated lawyers as F. Lee Bailey and Jerry Giesler. ("Those two guys knew where all the bodies were buried.")

Robert Kennedy wanted to send James (Jimmy) Hoffa to prison because of his illegal activities as President of

the Teamsters' Union. Hoffa moved forward to "deball" him, as he so colorfully put it. Sam Giancana had long ago informed Hoffa that Marilyn was having affairs with both Jack and Bobby Kennedy.

Hoffa contacted Spindel and ordered a series of wiretaps, especially within her newly acquired house in Brentwood, and also within the apartment she still maintained on Doheny. Hoffa also ordered the bugging of Lawford's mansion in Santa Monica.

Since it was being renovated, Marilyn's Brent-wood home was an easy target for electronic eavesdropping. It was virtually unguarded and unlocked every day during the construction crews' two-hour lunch breaks. On weekend, the rear entrance was never locked.



Investigator Milo Speriglio with the cover of his book *Crypt 33*

Otash was assigned to the Lawford mansion. To his surprise, he discovered that the house was already bugged. The detective later learned that Howard Hughes had ordered the property bugged in 1959 so that he could "get the dirt on both of the Kennedy brothers," with the possible intention of passing the information on to Richard Nixon. Otash installed additional wires to match those already in place.

Ironically, Marilyn, knowing of Otash's reputation, also called him and requested that he bug her own phone, including her answering service. "I think she wanted to have something to hang over Bobby's head," Otash later said. "He was making a lot of promises to her that I am certain he had no intention of keeping."

Lawford told Sammy Davis, Jr., that Marilyn was "passed from Jack to Bobby in the most callous manner."

Jeanne Carmen was surprised when Marilyn went "bigtime for Bobby. When she first talked about him, she said he repelled her. 'He's so skinny,' she said. 'Not my type. He lacks the good looks of Jack, and doesn't have the President's charm.' After putting him down like that, the next thing I heard was that Bobby was fucking her and that she was crazy about him."

During one of his visits to California, Bobby was spotted in the back seat of a car in a dark parking lot. The parking lot attendant, Chuck Pick, later claimed, "Marilyn was in the back seat with him. He had his clothes on, and she did too. I think she was going down on him."

When Pick came too close to the car with a flashlight, a Secret Service agent blocked him. He told Pick, "You

have eyes but you can't see. You have ears, but you can't hear. You have a mouth, but you can't speak."

By the late spring of 1962, both Marilyn and Lawford each had a jumble of competing wires and listening devices installed and functioning within their homes."

Spindel was a crook among crooks," said author Ted Schwarz. "He would charge a client for one tape, but then sell copies of that tape to other clients— J. Edgar Hoover, perhaps, Jimmy Hoffa, Mafia boss Carlos Marcello, even the CIA."

Robert Slatzer said Marilyn knew her phones were tapped, and she carried a heavy purse of coins around to call from pay phones. "She seemed very paranoid, but perhaps she had reason to be."

Slatzer also said that during the last months of her life, she felt she was in great danger. "She told me that a number of people wanted her dead, and she trusted nobody except me."

"The Kennedys, the CIA, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, Jimmy Hoffa—a lot of guys want me erased," she claimed.

Conducting his own investigation, Detective Milo Speriglio said: "Everything that took place within the walls of her home in Brentwood was tapped, taped, bugged, and recorded. Every word she or anyone else uttered would find itself transposed onto tapes. They even listened in her bathroom. Bobby Kennedy one night was heard taking a horse piss. Some of the most advance bugging apparatus of its time—such as the voice-activated recorder—was operating in her home."

In addition to all the surveillance she was under, Marilyn—presumably for therapeutic reasons—also taped herself at the suggestion of Dr. Greenson. He urged her to record "free association" tapes while she was being driven to work or even resting in her bedroom.

In these tapes, she discussed Frank Sinatra, Jose Bolaños, both Jack and Bobby Kennedy, Joe DiMaggio, her film career, her fear of growing old.

In addition to all the other surveillance, the Los Angeles District Attorney's office, since the Democratic Convention of 1960, had been keeping close tabs on the Kennedy brothers during their visits to the West Coast.

Frank Hronek, considered the best intelligence investigator in the department, was given the task of overseeing the surveillance. He paid special attention to the Lawford mansion.

Hronek reported that on several occasions he saw Marilyn dining out with Johnny Roselli and on at least one occasion with Sam Giancana. Hronek learned that movie studios regularly hired Roselli to suppress whatever scandals their male and female stars generated at night, no matter the cost.

When Marilyn was found dead, Hronek claimed that he believed that she had been murdered. Years later, Hronek, "the man who knew too much," was also believed to have been the victim of foul play, according to private investigator Milo Speriglio. But he provided no details.

Earl Jaycox, Spindel's assistantin 1962, claimed he listened to some 1,500 feet of tape at Spindel's home. "The tapes definitely prove that there was a sexual relationship between President Kennedy and Marilyn, and later, a sexual relationship between Bobby and Marilyn. If anything, she seems more intimate with Bobby than with the President."

"I heard tapes of both Bobby and the President fucking Marilyn," Otash claimed. "The sounds of the Bernard Spindelbed springs. Cries of ecstasy. After all, Marilyn was at work at her best cast in the role of the most desirable whore of Babylon."

Bernard Spindel at work

The Spindel tapes also captured Marilyn in conversations with her friends. Shelley Winters was overheard telling Marilyn that Lee Remick, “Bobby’s latest whore, is going around town telling everybody that Bobby told her you were nothing but another dumb broad. Remick is claiming that Bobby likes her better because with her, he can carry on a respectable conversation.”

Marilyn was heard bursting into tears at this revelation.

At one point, Winters is heard telling Marilyn, “Al of Hollywood is talking about you and the President—Bobby, not so much. At every party I go to, and I go to a lot, all I hear is about Marilyn Monroe and the President. The vilest of gossip. You always come out the loser.”

“Oh, hell,” Marilyn was heard saying. “Just how much is a girl supposed to take? For less than two minutes in the sack, where I don’t even get off, I’m supposed to put up with all this shit.”

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Robert Slatzer remembered the first time he mentioned the name of Jimmy Hoffa to Marilyn.

“Doesn’t he have something to do with unions?” she asked, with that innocent, bewildered look she often assumed.

“He’s the president of the Teamsters’ Union,” Slatzer told her. “A real crook. His worst enemy is your boyfriend, Bobby. You’ve got to be careful. Don’t ask me how, but Hoffa might try to get at Bobby by using you.”

“I could go to bed with Hoffa and persuade him to call off his war with Bobby,” she said.

“Not likely. You’ve gone to bed with Bobby, and I bet you couldn’t persuade him to call off the hound dogs chasing after Hoffa.”

The notorious Fred Otash

The next time she met with Bobby, she brought up the name of Hoffa. Bobby reacted with fury. “I want to see that son of a bitch in jail, and I don’t care how I do it. He keeps out of jail by intimidating witnesses and jury tampering.”

Even as Bobby and Marilyn talked, Hoffa was being supplied with information gathered through the wiretaps of Spindel and Otash. Since Hoffa maintained links with the Chicago syndicate, he shared his information with Sam Giancana, who was also being investigated by Bobby.

There was talk of having Bobby assassinated, but that was considered too dangerous. “Maybe we should have Marilyn murdered when she’s with Bobby and blame it on him?” Giancana said.

“That’s a better and less dangerous idea,” Hoffa said. “After all, she’s only a movie star.”

Hoffa’s power and influence were so great in the early 1960s that he even managed to bribe two officials within RFK’s Department of Justice in Washington. Bobby’s private phone was bugged, as FBI documents would later reveal.

Amazingly, Marilyn’s frequent phone calls to Bobby at the Justice Department were recorded and secretly delivered to both Giancana and Hoffa.

Eventually, Bobby became aware of at least some of the bugging and began to carry anti-bugging devices in his briefcase during top-secret meetings with his aides. It is not known if he ever discovered that his phone calls to Marilyn had been taped.

Hoffa had utter contempt for Bobby. Whenever his name came up, he denounced Bobby as a “girlie man.”

Apparently, that label stemmed from Hoffa’s 1957 Senate hearings before the McClellan Senate Committee. Bobby was chief counsel for the committee, and his brother, then Senator John Kennedy, also served.

Someone on the committee suggested that Bobby and Hoffa have dinner together, and talk over their differences.

Hoffa later claimed that he was shocked when “this kid challenged me to an Indian hand-wrestling contest;

Hoffa later wrote of the encounter:

“Christ, I couldn’t imagine a grown man seriously acting like that. But obviously there was only one way to shut him up. So I stood up and peeled of my jacket. I didn’t even bother to roll up my sleeve. Meanwhile, he had cleared a table and we sat down facing each other, put our elbows together, and locked hands.

‘Whenever you’re ready,’ I said, and it was all so damned ridiculous I had to laugh.

I let him strain for a couple of seconds. Then, like taking candy from a baby, I flipped his arm over and cracked his knuckles on to the top of the table. It was strictly no contest and he knew it. But he had to try again. Same results.

He didn’t say a word.

He just got up, his face red as fire, rolled down his sleeve, put on his jacket, and walked out of the room.”

Until RFK’s death, Hoffa continued to belittle Bobby’s manhood, referring to him as “a spoiled brat—he’s just a kid, really.” When he heard the tapes of Bobby having sex with Marilyn, he mocked them. “Bobby can’t satisfy a woman. I don’t think he can satisfy a fourteen-year-old girl. If I worked over this Monroe bitch, I’d have her

screaming with joy."

After Marilyn's death and after the assassination of Robert Kennedy, Hoffa was asked if he ever spied on them, because rumors were persistent. He vehemently denied it.

On another occasion, after a night of heavy drinking, Hoffa did admit to a columnist that he had a tape of the Kennedys "with some girl, not Monroe," he claimed. "It is filthy and nasty. Many people encouraged me to release it but I never did. I put it away and forgot about it. I would not want to embarrass Ethel and his children.

"By midnight, he called the columnist and asked him not to print that. "It was just drunk talk. I don't have any such tape."

However, after Hoffa's disappearance, one of his former aides, who refused to be named, claimed that his former boss possessed "enough tapes to drown both of the Kennedy brothers in their own shit. Hoffa was saving it up to release to the press if Bobby ran against Nixon in the 1968 election. After Bobby was assassinated, that plan was hardly operative, of course. But Hoffa could have destroyed the bastard for giving him such grief."

Bobby never entrapped Hoffa during his tenure as Attorney General. But his successor in that position, Nicholas deBelleville Katzenbach, brought charges against the union boss and sent him off to prison in 1967 to serve a sentence of thirteen years. After serving five years, Hoffa was set free by his friend, Richard Nixon. But he was a broken man at this point, and the Teamsters no longer wanted him.

James Hoffa *(right)* with Bernard Spindel

On the night of July 30, 1975, Hoffa disappeared, and his body has never been found.

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Her film career long dormant, Marilyn signed with 20th Century Fox to make *Something's Got to Give* after rejecting the script twice. According to her contract, Fox would pay her $100,000, and she was furious that she was getting so little when she read in *Variety* that Elizabeth Taylor was earning a record-breaking million dollars to star in *Cleopatra*, and that Dean Martin, Marilyn's co-star in the film, was to draw a salary of $500,000.

Had she not been forced to go ahead with the Fox deal, she could have taken several other offers from major studios, which were tempting her with multi-miliion dollar deals.

She had evaluated the script as "trite, a mere trifle."

If she refused to star in the film, Fox threatened legal action, "You won't be able to work again until you're in your mid-forties," a studio lawyer had warned her.

The plot concerned a woman long thought dead who returns from a desert island to discover that her husband has remarried. *Something's Got to Give* was based on a 1940 film that had starred Irene Dunne in the part slated for Marilyn, and off-screen lovers, Cary Grant and Randolph Scot.

To prepare her body for the role, Marilyn watched *Sunset Blvd*. again, particularly the scenes in which Gloria Swanson, portraying the silent screen vamp, Norma Desmond, prepares herself to face the camara after a long time

away.

Perfumed baths were followed by daily massages from her confidant and masseur, Ralph Roberts, who worked on her body for hours a time while she listened to the romantic music of Frank Sinatra. In addition to peroxide, laundry bluing went into the solution that produced the tone of white platinum she preferred. Elizabeth Arden provided mudpacks and hot wax. Marilyn consumed massive dosages of megavitamins. None of these prevented the deep wrinkles that were forming around her eyes.

During pre-production, she was supposed to show up at Fox for costume fittings. But when she had not appeared by noon, Producer Henry Weinstein called her Brentwood home. Eunice Murray finally got her to pick up the phone.

"She sounded far off somewhere," Weinstein said. "Like I was talking to her through a very long tunnel. Murray was stupid not to know something was wrong with her. I rushed at once to her home, breaking the speed limit. When I got there, I saw that she was near death. I called a doctor and an ambulance. She was rushed to the nearest hospital, where her stomach was pumped. After that, I suggested that when she recovered, costume fittings be done at her home."

Recovering from a near death experience, Marilyn looked radiant the day she received designer Jean Louis, along with his fitters and seamstresses, at Brentwood. For a late afternoon lunch, she had ordered champagne and caviar for the staff.

High-profile crimebusters: Robert Kennedy *(left)* with his brother, John F. Kennedy

Dean Martin, her longtime friend, was happy to be appearing as her leading man, taking over the Cary Grant role. She also was excited to be appearing with the very handsome, square-jawed actor, Tom Tryon, whom, she was told, had served in the U.S. Navy, fighting the Japanese in the South Pacific.

`"A military record. Just like Jack Kennedy!" she told George Cukor, who had signed on as her director again after that disastrous filming of *Let's Make Love*.

"Try on sounds like my kind of man," she told Cukor.

"Don't get your hopes up," Cukor warned her. "He's a homosexual."

The glamorous Cyd Charisse was cast as "the other woman," or, in this case, the other wife. The cast was rounded out by Wally Cox.

Since filming had not begun, Marilyn accepted an invitation that came from both Robert and John Kennedy, who wanted to meet with her in New York. Bobby spoke to her on the phone. "Our little brother Teddy is anxious to meet you. You're his favorite movie star. But you've got to watch him, as he comes on pretty strong."

"Actually, to judge from his photographs, he looks bigger than both you and Jack," she said.

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While George Cukor at Fox fretted over rewrites of the script of *Something's Got to Give*, Marilyn headed to

New York.

In disguise, she flew out of the Los Angeles International Airport, her blonde hair covered by a babushka designed by William (Billy) Travilla. She was not recognized in first class. Her Fox studio maid, Hazel Washington, flew with her, carrying a Jean Louis gown and a mink coat.

Marilyn had two goals in mind: To meet with Lee Strasberg for a review of the script of *Something's Got to Give*, and to attend an important fundraising event for the President of the United States.

Other than the President, she was to be the star attraction at a $10,000-a-plate affair in the Park Avenue skyscraper apartment of socialite Fifi Fell. The black tie event that night was the most exclusive invitation in all of New York.

Bobby Kennedy had assured attendance by informing JFK's well-heeled supporters that Marilyn would indeed make an appearance.

Peter Lawford would play the role of host, and his manager, Milt Ebbins, was designated as Marilyn's "handler." It turned out to be a thankless job.

Bobby told Lawford, who told Ebbins, "Make god damn sure Cinderella makes it to the ball. A lot of campaign money is riding on this." Lawford also told Marilyn that the President wanted to meet her later for "a drink in his suite at the Carlyle."

For the black tie gala, Marilyn worked all afternoon preparing herself, bringing in a makeup expert (on loan from Marlene Dietrich), and "Mr. Kenneth," the celebrated hair stylist. Cosmeticians came and went from her apartment on 57th Street.

As agreed upon, Ebbins pulled up in a limousine at her apartment at 7:30 that evening. He was ushered in by Hazel Washington, who told him that "Miss Monroe is not ready yet."

At 8pm, the phone rang for Ebbins. It was an angry Lawford. "Where in the fuck is Marilyn?" he shouted at his agent. "Dinner is ready to be served."

"I'll do what I can," Ebbins promised. Washington assured him that Marilyn was getting ready as fast as she could.

Lawford called again at 8:30pm. "Any news from the princess? Tell her that Jack is seriously pissed off."

Finally, Ebbins could take the pressure no more, and he barged into her bedroom, finding her sitting in front of her dressing mirror completely nude. "Please, Miss Monroe!" You're holding up the President of the United States and some of the biggest names in America!"

"Thank God you're here," she said. "I need someone to help me on with my dress. I'm not bothering with panties tonight."

Ebbins later recalled the experience. "I wasted half an hour getting her zipped, fastened, and poured into that Jean Louis fantasy. She even asked me to adjust her tits. At one point, I was on my knees so close to her crotch I could smell it. The dress should have been sewn onto her instead of fitted over her body. The thing was so fucking tight she didn't have room to fart."

"Go easy," she yelled at one point. "You'll tear the beads."

In the living room, Washington handed her a red wig, which worked as the perfect disguise. At the designated address, she slipped unnoticed past the fifty paparazzi assembled in the lobby.

At the entrance to Fifi Fell's penthouse, three Secret Service agents helped her remove her wig, and one of them held up a mirror so she could give a final inspection to her face. Ebbins noticed as she sucked air into her lungs, causing her breasts to protrude. "Well, fellows, it's time to become Marilyn Monroe. As I parade in, I bet fifty guys will get hard-ons, including the leader of the Free World."

She may have been right. The entire room quieted down as she made a spectacular entrance. All eyes focused on her, including those of not only the President, but the Attorney General and his younger brother, Teddy.

Using the walk which she'd made famous in the film *iagara*, she headed for the President, who rose to greet her. "Hi, Prez," she said.

"Marilyn, you're here *at last,"* he said. He whispered in her ear. "Turn it on. They're heavy contributors here tonight." Loud enough for those around him to hear, he said, "I want to introduce you to some people, including your number one fan, my little brother, Teddy."

Out in the hallway, Ebbins thought his job was over for the night. But Lawford, along with Kennedy aide, David Powers, confronted him. "You fucked it up bigtime, you scumbag," Lawford shouted at Ebbins. "Dinner was going to be served but the guests filled up on *hors d'oeuvres* and liquor. Everyone is staggering around drunk at this point. No one wants dinner. The chef is threatening to jump out the window. The dinner he cooked for the President was to be the highlight of his life."

Powers was so enraged, he grabbed Ebbins by the col ar, practically choking him. "I don't know why Lawford keeps a shithead like you on."

Rupert Allan, the publicist for Princess Grace of Monaco, was at the gala. He focused on JFK dancing with Marilyn, later claiming, “When I saw them together, I could see she’d fallen for the president in a big way. It was a little scary. I knew Marilyn from Hollywood, and I knew she didn’t do anything halfway.”

For Teddy, the highlight of his summer was meeting Marilyn Monroe. He’d heard so much about her from his two older brothers. Lawford had told her that “Teddy is a destructive thril seeker,” but she found him a man of boyish charm and politeness.

Before interrupted by others, they shared a few private moments with each other. “I hear you and I have something in common,” he told her. “We bridle at the constraints put on us.”

“I never did play by the rules,” she said. “I read a feature story on you. It said you have ‘volcanic physical energy.’ But I’m from Missouri. You’ve got to prove that to me.”

“Willing and able,” he said.

“Catch me later, big boy,” she whispered into his ear, as Lawford pulled her away to greet the mayor of New York.

The fundraiser ended at four o’clock that morning. After saying goodbye to the Kennedy brothers and Lawford, Marilyn was escorted to a limousine downstairs, which took her back to her apartment. There, she’d hurriedly changed her clothing, slipping on a pair of slacks and a simple white blouse. Covering herself with a champagne-colored coat, she put on a black wig and headed out the door, where that same limousine then delivered her to the Carlyle Hotel, where she entered through the rear entrance and was put on a service elevator to the President’s bachelor pad.

Whatever was said between Marilyn and the President during those pre-dawn hours has gone unrecorded, except for two revelations. When she returned to Hollywood, she told Jeanne Carmen that she had unprotected sex with JFK. “He hates condoms anyway, and I had no objections at all. Actually, I was trying to trick him. I want to have his child, although I fear I can’t get pregnant again.”

“Before he left for an appointment, we had a bubble bath together, and I poured champagne over his head. We had fun.”

When Marilyn encountered actress Terry Moore back in Hollywood, she bragged to her that the President had given her his private phone number that rang directly into the Oval Office without having to go through the White House switchboard.

Half an hour after the President left his suite, Bobby arrived, all freshly shaven and at ired in a business suit. “It didn’t take me long to get him out of that suit,” Marilyn later told Carmen “I also had unprotected sex with him. After all, Bobby’s big dick has proven more a baby-maker than Jack’s. He didn’t pay particular notice to the condom. In fact, he put one on his dick, but I gently slipped it off him and guided him inside. After that, he had only one thing on his mind.”

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Nearly every person in America had heard about President Kennedy’s affair with Marilyn, and perhaps another million or so know about her affair with Bobby. But only a few thousand seem to be aware that she also had an affair with Teddy during the final months of her life.

That revelation came to light in June of 2010, thanks to disclosures within formerly confidential files from the F.B.I. Senator Edward (“Teddy”) Kennedy’s death from cancer in August of 2009 was followed by the Bureau’s release of 2,352 pages of formerly confidential documents.

One astonishing claim referred to orgies held within the presidential suite at New York’s Carlyle Hotel. At one orgy in particular, Marilyn was the “guest of honor,” according to revelations made by Mrs. Jacqueline Hammon, the divorced wife of a former U.S. Ambassador to Spain.

She claimed that Marilyn serviced all three of the Kennedy brothers on the night she was there, beginning with the President, followed by the Attorney General, and concluding with Teddy. She also maintained that both Peter Lawford and his wife, Patricia, were in attendance, as were Rat Packers Sammy Davis, Jr. and Frank Sinatra, who seemed to have made up with the President after he snubbed him on his last visit to Palm Springs. At least five hookers were there to service Lawford and the Rat Packers. According to the evidence, Patricia Lawford paired off with a handsome Secret Service agent.

To Milton Ebbins *(above)* fell the thankless task of getting Marilyn to the party on time

Teddy had tried to seduce JFK's other notorious mistress, Judith Campbel (Exner), and was very competitive with his other brothers in the pursuit of women. Judith had turned him down, but Marilyn was very responsive.

After that orgy at The Carlyle, she invited Teddy over for dinner at her apartment the following night. He arrived to find candlelight, roses, champagne, and Marilyn in a see-through *négligée*.

"Teddy was all too eager after encountering Marilyn," Lawford later said when he learned of the coupling. "The night Teddy met Marilyn at the Carlyle, he had to wait his turn, taking thirds after Jack and Bobby were finished with her. But I was glad to hear that Teddy got to have Marilyn all by himself and didn't have to wait in line."

When Shelley Winters learned of Marilyn's triple affair, she said, "My dear friend must be coming unglued. How could she maintain any semblance of love for either Bobby or Jack when she was carrying on like a cheap hooker that night? Not that I am one to cast stones. If the Kennedy brothers had asked me, I would also have taken on all three of them."

Marilyn told Jeanne Carmen that Teddy, unlike his brothers, "indulged in foreplay and was really quite romantic."

Of all the Kennedy brothers, Marilyn knew the least about Teddy and got to know him much better during their first night alone together.

He told her, "I was a wild man when I went to Harvard and the University of Virginia." He was nicknamed "Cadillac Eddie," and often tried to outrun police cars in high-speed car chases. "I was also a terror on the sea." He said that one afternoon, he and a friend were sailing a dinghy off the coast of Maine, when a man aboard a yacht screamed "FAGGOTS" at them. "I steered the dinghy up to the yacht, which I boarded. I threw not only that man overboard, but eight of his friends, all into the deep."

She said to him, "I also hear you're quite a man with the ladies."

"My mother told me it's all part of the game," he said. "She told all the Kennedy women that their husbands should be forgiven because women chase after politicians, especially if they're handsome, rich, and powerful."

"You seem to meet all three qualifications," she said. "I haven't checked out the rest."

"We'll get around to that," he told her, as she savored every word for the detailed reports she'd relay to her voyeuristic friends back in Hollywood.

Like a gossip maven evocative of Hedda Hopper, she wanted to know if he'd ever been to bed with any movie stars.

"Yes, thanks to the courtesy of my brother-in-law, our mutual friend Peter Lawford, the grand pimp. But I usually find that Jack has got there first, some-times Bobby."

"That would be the situation in my case," she said.

"I've had a few notches on my belt, affairs in Hollywood nobody knows about—Jayne Mansfield."

"You can do better than that," she said.

“I am right now,” he said, flattering her. “Peter set me up with Lee Remick and Janet Leigh. I really went big time for Christina Ford and also for Candice Bergen. But mostly I go to bed with beautiful but unknown college girls or secretaries.”

“It looks like I’m getting an experienced man,” she said.

“Well, let me quit bragging about my conquests and show you what I can do.”

“Slow time,” she said.

Teddy’s seduction of Marilyn, although known by many Kennedy insiders, never surfaced in any public way during her lifetime.

The F.B.I. documents were so explosive that Teddy’s widow, Victoria Reggie Kennedy, fought to have them squelched forever. She was ultimately defeated by a law court, which upheld the Freedom of Information Act.

Author Christopher Anderson claimed, “Teddy, like the rest of his family, was engaged in an almost frantic pursuit of power, money, and sex.”

Teddy told Florida’s Senator George Smathers, “I’m now screwing the women whose poster Jack used to jerk off to when he was in the hospital. MARILYN MONROE HERSELF. She told me that I make better love than either of my two brothers.”

Unknown to Teddy, she had once told Robert Kennedy that he was “a far better lover than Jack.”

Teddy seemed to come and go so quickly in her life it was like a mirage. But he’d assured her, “I’ll be back. You never know when I’m going to pop up in California. I make secret visits there.”

During her time in New York, when she wasn’t occupied by the Kennedys, she spend hours in the living room of Lee Strasberg, going over the constantly changing rewrites of the script for *Something’s Got to Give*. He had what he called “the worst cold in the history of mankind,” and he warned her that she might catch it. But she continued to work with him anyway.

Before fleeing from New York to return to the West Coast, she persuaded Paula Strasberg, on April 18, 1962, to fly back with her and to serve as “my real director” when filming began.

“I no longer trust Cukor,” she confided to the Strasbergs. “That so-called woman’s director is trying to sabotage everything for me. He’s even trying to re-create me as a slut instead of the true blue wife Irene Dunne played in the original version.”

“Elizabeth Taylor did all right playing a slut in *But erfield 8,”* Lee pointed out.

“I know,” Marilyn said, “and she won a fucking Oscar, playing a whore, which was hardly a stretch for her. Type casting, I’d call it.” That derogatory comment about Elizabeth was something she’d repeat several times in her life.

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Day after day, Marilyn spent as many as five hours on a sofa talking to Dr. Greenson, pouring out her frustrations. Increasingly, she saw herself “used and abused” by nearly every man she met, and she was growing increasingly hostile to 20th Century Fox, especially Cukor.

The 1960s, the era of crackpot gurus, had arrived in Los Angeles, and Marilyn read about one that particularly intrigued her.

======He called himself “Ponce Leon” (real name unknown), taking his name from the Spanish *conquistador*, Ponce de Leon, who had embarked on an (unsuccessful) search for the Fountain of Youth during the 16th Century in what is now Florida.

Marilyn invited Leon to her home. He arrived in a saffron-colored robe with a pink handkerchief tied around his neck. He also wore red boots and had“a Jesus Christ haircut.” He claimed that he was eighty-five years old, although he did not look a day over twenty-five.

He wanted two-hundred dollars a session, with the money expected in cash and in advance. Only when the finances were settled did he give her the secret of “eternal youth.”

The Brothers Three: Entitlement, wealth, and privilege *(left to right)* Teddy, Jack, and Bobby Kennedy

He revealed that the secret of becoming "age-less" was achieved by swallowing the semen of young men daily, perhaps two or three times. But there was a caveat. It could not be just any semen, but sperm from a man who drank a great deal of pomegranate juice and who ate five to six of the "overripe" fresh fruit every day. "The body must then go through its process of converting the ingredients of the pomegranate into semen," the guru told her.

Marilyn was vastly intrigued with his theory and sent for Jose Bolaños, asking him to fly at once to join her at her new home in Brentwood. She en-closed a one-way ticket with her request. He eagerly accepted her offer.

In the meantime, she confided the guru's secret to Jeanne Carmen, who remained very skeptical. "That certainly gives this guru the excuse to suck a lot of the cocks of his male followers," she told Marilyn. "But I'll give it a try. I'll feed my boyfriends a lot of pomegranates."

When Bolaños joined Marilyn for a reunion in Brentwood, she fed him six ripe pomegranates a day, plus at least a quart of fresh pomegranate juice.

Later in life, in Mexico, Bolaños confided, "I really wanted to screw her, but she insisted on draining me dry of all that pomegranate juice, not my favorite fruit."

He also claimed that it was a time of desperation for her, as she was sick much of the time. "Sometimes I practically had to walk her to the bathroom. She was mixing Demerol and Nembutal with bottles of champagne to wash it down. Her hair was matted, and she wore no makeup. She didn't look like the glamorous Marilyn Monroe at all. I went through many a sleepless night with her."

Bolaños also revealed the she'd become obsessed with the idea of having a child. Originally in Mexico, she told him that her Los Angeles doctor didn't think it possible that she would ever have children again. She decided to adopt one.

When she'dvisited the orphanage in Mexico City, she had been introduced to what she called "a beautiful ten-year-old with olive skin, jet-black hair, and perfect manners." She wanted Bolaños to arrange for him to be adopted by her, saying that "a kid should have a mama and a papa." Even at that stage, she suggested that she and Bolaños might get married so that her boy would have a father. "She got carried away with the idea of adoption, but never went through with it," Bolaños said.

A year after Marilyn's death, a reporter in Mexico, Glenn Thomas Carter, tracked down the boy she had wanted to adopt. They boy told Carter, "I was sad for many months waiting for the beautiful blonde *señorita* to return and take me away to her golden mansion in Hollywood, where I would be very, very rich. Week after week I waited, but she never came back for me."

With Bolaños back within her orbit in California, she decided that she could get pregnant after all, having visited a different doctor.

"At least then I got a reprieve and could screw her once again," Bolaños said. "We had unprotected sex. She

wanted a baby from her own womb, and I was the guy to give it to her."

Mostly, she complained to him about her upcoming movie. "She was under great pressure from Spyros Skouras, who had told her that 'the fate of Fox rests on your bosom.'"

"I'm supposed to make millions for Fox to make up for all the millions Elizabeth Taylor is losing for them during the filming of *Cleopatra,"* Marilyn told Bolaños.

On an afternoon when Marilyn was feeling better, she often asked Bolaños to accompany her to a nearby playground. "She would sit there for two or three hours, saying nothing but watching the kids run and play. I felt sorry for her. She really wanted to have a kid."

Sometimes, she was feeling really sick, and she wouldn't allow Bolaños into her bedroom. On one such night, Tom Tryon, who had the second male lead in *Something's Got to Give*, came by the house to call on her and see how she was.

She couldn't see him, but Tryon was struck by how handsome and mascu-line Bolaños was. He was very attracted to him, and invited him to a cozy restaurant in Hollywood frequented by gays. Tryon rightly assumed that Bo-laños might be bisexual, and later took him home that night. He stayed until 4am, when Tryon drove him back to Brentwood.

It was the beginning of an off-the-record affair that Marilyn, so distracted by her own problems, may never have found out about.

Years later, in his home in Key West, Tryon, who had become a best-seling novelist, told the author of this biography that Bolaños was "some little hustler. Here he was screwing around with me behind Marilyn's back and betraying me at the same time. I learned from Cukor that when *Something's Got to Give* was delayed, he lobbied to get my role in the film. That guy could get a hard-on for anybody, male or female, if he thought they'd give him a break in films."

"I must say, though, Marilyn was one lucky girl. That *Mexicano* could really deliver. He was hot stuff in bed, and he knew how good he was, too. He could make love to you all night and sel you down the river the very next day."

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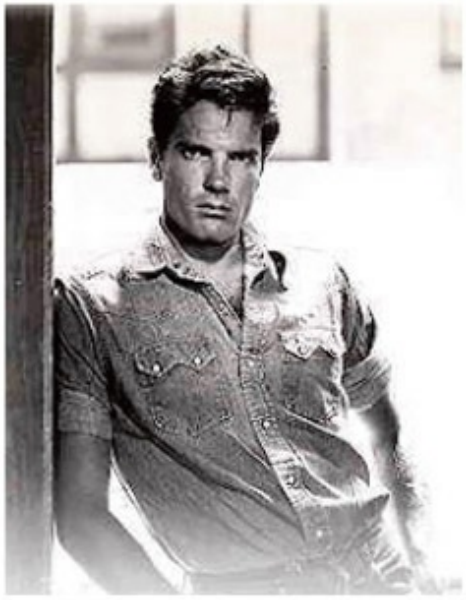
Filming on *Something's Got to Give* was set to begin on April 23, 1962, less than five months before her death, but Marilyn was still suffering from a virus. As a harbinger of the many absences to come, she had to miss the first day of filming.

On April 30, her limousine passed through the gates of Fox. She faced a studio going bankrupt. Having part of its property sold off for condos and office towers, Fox was not the same studio she'd first encountered in 1946 when it was more successful than any other studio, including Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount. At that time, its land stretched across some three hundred acres. Now much of that land was being turned into Century City.



Tom Tryon: Competing with Marilyn for Bolaños

As Marilyn came out onto the sound stages, she could hear the bul dozers moving closer and closer. Construction crews were breaking ground, destroying old movie sets where so many great pictures had been made, movies starring her favorite stars such as Tyrone Power and Betty Grable. Lana Turner's town square in Peyton Place was giving way to the Century Plaza Hotel. George Cukor told her, "We're the only game in town, the only movie being made at Fox right now."

After only ninety minutes on the set, Marilyn grew dizzy and had to be escorted back to her dressing room, where the Fox doctor, Lee Siegel, examined her. He ordered her confined to bed until May 11, and even then, he wouldn't confirm if she'd be well enough to face the cameras.

At home on May 1, Marilyn received disturbing news about her former acting coach, Natasha Lytess. The magazine, *France-Dimanche*, had paid her $10,000 for her memories of Marilyn, including an account of their lesbian affair. Marilyn was horrified, fearing that if the article were published, her fan base would turn against her.

She asked her publicists, the Arthur P. Jacobs Agency, to intercede and offer to buy the article. The magazine refused, telling Jacobs that it stood to make at least $200,000 in sales if the article ran. But eventually, for legal and other reasons, *France-Dimanche* eventually opted not to publish Lytess's damaging memoirs.

On the morning of May 5, Marilyn woke up with chills, her sheets drenched with perspiration. Bolaños called Dr. Siegel, who came to her house and examined her. He ordered her to continue her bed rest, and he sedated her.

Under extreme pressure from Fox, Marilyn, on May 7, staggered nude from her bed, aided by Bolaños. He helped her get dressed, although warning her it was against doctor's orders.

In her limousine, she arrived at Fox filled with Nembutal, chloral hydrate, and phenobarbital, along with massive doses of antibiotics and painkillers.

"At last I'm going to have children," she told Whitey Snyder, her makeup man. "At least on the screen." She was referring to an upcoming scene where she is reunited with her son and daughter after an absence of several years. "Of course, there was…" Her voice drifted off, perhaps in memory of the child she had to abandon when she was a teenager.

One Fox producer (name unknown) came by to watch Marilyn film a scene with two young actors, Alexandra Heilweil and Chris Morley, who played her children in the movie. Before filming, she hugged them. Years later, the young actors would have high praise for her. The Fox producer told Tryon, "I can't figure out why anyone would cast Monroe as the mother of anybody. Everybody on the lot knows she's the biggest slut in Hollywood. Did you know I heard she gave fifty blow-jobs to get that small part in *All About Eve?"*

Before the day ended, she suffered a relapse, and Dr. Siegel had to confine her to bed again.

One scene was going to depict Marilyn and Tryon on a beach, as part of the time the characters they played were stranded for five years, alone, on the same deserted island. Cukor spent a lot of time planning that scene. He wanted to show as much flesh as he could get away with, and he spent more time select-ing a Lycra bikini for Tryon than he did for Marilyn.

Tryon later recalled, "I was given a bikini so brief that it fitted into a small handkerchief box. When it became wet, you could see my cock and balls. Cukor insisted on shooting test footage of me in that bikini."

"At one point, he suggested that I go to my dressing room so he could rearrange me better," Tryon said. "With all that manipulation of my dick, I got hard, and he took advantage. There wasn't even a casting couch. He got down on his knees."

Eventually, because of budget cuts, Cukor was ordered not to shoot the scene.

Marilyn managed to make it to work on May 14, 15, and 16, but Cukor thought she was drugged. At times, she was incoherent.

When she did show up for work, she brought her entourage, including choreographer Jack Cole and acting coach Paula Strasberg. A reporter visiting the set claimed, "She was Trilby pawed over by a contingent of Svengalis."

Cukor, meanwhile, denounced Paula's Method Acting techniques as "pretentious maundering."

Detested by Cukor, and barely tolerated by Bolaños, Paula Strasberg made matters even worse for Cukor's production schedule. "The cunt is more of a li-ability than an asset," he told executives at Fox.

When Cukor showed Marilyn the first rushes of scenes with Cyd Charisse, she exploded and threatened to walk off the picture. She falsely accused Charisse of padding her bra. She also claimed that Charisse was lightening her hair to make it blonde, so she could compete with Marilyn. "It's her natural hair," Cukor said to an unreasonable Marilyn.

"My accusation against her still stands," Marilyn raged. "She obviously wants to be blonde in her heart. You've

got to stop her from portraying the role as a blonde, regardless of the color of her hair."

What she didn't say and what was ironically obvious to Cukor, was that Charisse, although older by five years, photographed so much younger than Marilyn. Charisse was born in 1921, Marilyn in 1926.

Author Patrick McGilligan, in his biography, *A Double Life*, of George Cukor, compared Marilyn's filming of *Something's Got to Give* to Judy Garland's erratic behavior during the shooting of *A Star is Born*. "If Monroe came to the studio at all, she came in late and went home early. To keep the production on schedule, Cukor filmed cutaways and contrived to shoot scenes around her character."

Marilyn had liked Nunnally Johnson's original script, and he'd worked with her before, enjoying bedtime with her. But during the making of *Something's Got to Give*, he turned on her. "Marilyn made me lose sympathy for actresses. In most of her takes, she was fluffing her lines or freezing. I don't think she could act her way out of a paper bag. She had no charm, delicacy, or taste. She's just an arrogant little tail switcher who's learned to throw sex in our face."

Cukor complained to Johnson that, "Sometimes I'd shoot a perfectly good scene between Marilyn and Dean Martin, but then Paula Strasberg objects to it, accusing me of 'favoring Martin.'"

Starlet Terry Moore had remained Marilyn's friend and commented on her condition. "The pressure from Fox became almost too much for Marilyn. She was afraid to face the camera and would remain in her dressing room staring at her face in the mirror for hours at a time. When she was forced to become this character she'd created, this Marilyn Monroe, her insecurities came out. She just couldn't pull herself away from the mirror. It wasn't narcissistic, really, but she never thought she looked good enough to bephotographed. She was overcome with a deep-rooted terror that defied all psychiatric help."

Growing increasingly exasperated, Cukortold his crew, "Marilyn Monroe makes Lucre-tia Borgia look like a pussycat."

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On May 17, at around 11:30am, Peter Lawford, in a blue helicopter lent to him by Howard Hughes, landed on the helipad at the greatly diminished Los Angeles premises of 20th Century Fox. He quickly disembarked, leaving publicist Pat Newcomb aboard.

He walked hurriedly to Marilyn's bunga-low, where she was ready and waiting. After checking her makeup one final time, she boarded the helicopter with him for its short flight to the Los Angeles International Airport.

As one writer would later put it, "A Space Age chariot had arrived to take the Lady of Shalot to Camelot."

As Cukor told executives at Fox, "A Blue Bird descended from the sky and snatched our star away."

At the airport, with Lawford and Newcomb, Marilyn boarded an airliner bound for New York and an event at Madison Square Garden that was to become the most enduring event of her legend.

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Set led into a first-class seat on a cross-country clipper, Marilyn sat with Lawford. She told him, “The world’s sexiest movie star is going to New York to sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to the world’s sexiest politician.”

During the flight, she knew she was openly defying the “suits” at Fox who had already threatened to fire her for holding up production when she was already way behind schedule.

Nevertheless, she flew East for a fund-raising gala to celebrate the birthday of JFK, even though it wasn’t his actual birthday.

Before embarking for New York, she’d talked to Bobby Kennedy, who told her that he would use his influence with Fox to rescind the threatening letters she’d received from the head of the studio. She trusted Bobby completely, confident that he would take care of the dispute for her.

Cyd Charisse

Arriving at New York’s Idlewild airport, herface concealed by large black sunglasses, she descended, sheathed in a platinum-colored mink coat, from the plane onto the tarmac, her high heels click-ing against the steps of the ramp. A mob of photographers and reporters awaited her stunning appearance.

Back in Hollywood, eighteen seamstresses worked frantically to complete a $12,000 gown she had hired Jean Louis to design. Studio maid Hazel Washington was to hand carry the gown—soon to become the most famous garment in America—on asubsequent flight to New York scheduled for that upcoming Saturday morning.

Marilyn’s instruction to Jean Louis had been“to design a gown that only Marilyn Monroe would Cyd Charissewear.” At that time, he did not know the occasion for such a garment, which he came to call “the nude dress,” relieved only by beads and sequins. He imported a fabric from Paris called “silk soufflé,” made on miniature looms with threads fifty times more delicate than ordinary thread.

“I literally sculpted the dress onto her nude body,” Louis said. At the final fitting, the seamstresses applauded. Marilyn turned to them, “Not bad for a thirty-six-year-old broad.”

Before leaving for New York, Marilyn told Louis, “With this gown, I will officially declare war on Jackie Kennedy.”

Jackie had learned of Marilyn’s scheduled involvement at the event, and she’d stormed into the Oval Office to

confront her husband. “Either you get rid of me or you get rid of Monroe.”

The President chose Marilyn over the First Lady, and consequently, in lieu of attending the event, she opted to take her children, John Jr., and Caroline, to Virginia to go horseback riding.

Richard Adler, the New York director, composer, and producer of several Broadway shows, was the chairman of the President’s gala. When he’d met with Monroe, she promised him that she’d sing the “Happy Birthday” song in a *straight* way, and that she’d wear a beautiful high-neck black dress designed by Norman Norrell.

Knowing nothing of the actual dress she’d wear, Adler found himself under increasing pressure from the bigwigs of the Democratic Party, including its chairman, to cancel Marilyn’s appearance. He went so far as to negotiate with Shirley MacLaine to replace Marilyn. Even Adler’s old friend, Jack Benny, called him a *schmuck* for booking Marilyn in the first place.

With a sense of desperation, Adler called JFK at his suite at the Hotel Carlyle in New York City. JFK assured him not toworry—“the people will love her.”

Adler finally gave in, although later tellingBenny, “I think we’re heading for a national scandal and a national disaster. After keeping Kennedy’s affair with Monroe out of the press all this time, we’re now going to televise it to the nation.”

Robert Mitchum, who had been Marilyn’slover and who had co-starred with her in *River of o Return*, revealed a tantalizing detail of her New York trip.

“I was in New York the night she sang at Kennedy’s birthday party. Wearing that dress, she came up to my hotel room and told me that she wasn’t going to appear. I convinced her that she *must* go and took her down to the lobby into a swarm of Secret Service agents, who had been assigned to her. She called the day after the event and sounded urgent. She pleaded with me to see her. For some shallow and selfish reason, I regarded her concern as trifling and begged off. I never saw her again.”

Terry Moore

By limousine, Marilyn arrived at Madison Square Garden after her brief visit with Mitchum. She could not go down the stairs to backstage because her gown was too tight. Two Secret Service agents virtually had to carry her down the steps.

For the finale, Adler signaled to Lawford that Marilyn was ready to go on. “This lovely lady is not only pulchritudinous but punctual,” Lawford told the audience. “Mr. President…Marilyn Monroe.” He gestured to the wing, but the spotlight focused on an empty area of the stage.

Other entertainment followed before Lawford appeared again. “A woman of whom it may truly be said—she needs no introduction.” All heads turned to Marilyn’s stage entrance as a drum beat rolled. No Marilyn.

More acts followed before Lawford once again stood before the microphone.

“Mr. President, because in the history of show business there has been no one female who has meant so much, who has done more, who…”

At that moment the crowd sees Marilyn and roars, as she steps into the spotlight. She walks toward the podium,

taking tiny, mincing steps. She releases her ermine from her shoulders, handing it to Lawford. “Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, “the *late* Marilyn Monroe.”

She flicks her microphone. With her right hand, she gently touches her breast and begins to sing:

Happy…birthday…to you.
Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday, Mr. Pres…i…dent.
Happy birthday to you.

After thunderous applause, she sings to the tune of “Thanks for the Memory.”

Thanks, Mr. President,
For all the things you’ve done.
The battles that you’ve won.
The way you deal with U.S. Steel,
And our problems by the ton.
We thank you…so much.

With a cigar in his mouth, the President stared at her on stage with an utter fascination. “What an ass! What an ass!” That was his comment to writer Gene Schoor, who sat in the presidential box with him, but who wouldn’t have dared to print that comment.

It took several waiters to haul in a five-foot birthday cake.

When JFK came onto the stage, he joked with his adoring fans. “Now I can retire from politics after having ‘Happy Birthday’ sung to me in such a sweet, wholesome way.”

After her appearance before the entire world, Marilyn greeted Bobby and the President, who thanked her. Bobby agreed to meet her later at a party. Retreating to her dressing room, she had to be cut out of her designer dress. After a bath, she headed by limousine to a party given by Arthur Krim, the theater magnate and president of United Artists.

Statesman/politico Adlai Stevenson was at Krim’s party. He later claimed,“I never got to dance with Miss Monroe. Bobby Kennedy put up strong defenses around her. He was dodging around her like a moth around the flame.”

In her morning column, Dorothy Kilgal en reported that the Attorney General danced with Marilyn five times. What she didn’t report was that Ethel Kennedy, in a far corner of the room, stood glaring at the couple with a fury about to spill over.

Before dawn, Marilyn was slipped into the president’s suite at the Carlyle. She’d later tell Lawford, “I had sex in one bedroom with Jack. Then when Bobby arrived, I had sex with him in the other bedroom.”

JFK was seen leaving the Carlyle at around 6am. As far as it is known, this was the last time he saw the blonde goddess. Bobby was seen leaving after that.

After the gala, reporter Robert Grazen wrote: “Marilyn is the sexy vixen, greedy for other women’s husbands and notorious fame. Jackie remains the princess, elegant, decorous, and a true lady. Marilyn is back street trash, Jackie is royalty. One of the most tasteful things she ever did was to stay away from that outrageous birthday sung to her husband, who should not have all owed it.”

That day, Rose Kennedy was besieged with calls about her two errant sons. She phoned each of them personally, urging them to “drop Marilyn Monroe and spare your family more disgrace.”

The story of the Monroe/JFK affair was about to break. Aware of this, the President sent William Haddad, a former reporter with the *New York Post* who was working at the time for the Peace Corps, to the top editors at *Time* and *Newsweek*, cautioning them not to print any news of an all eged affair between Marilyn and the President.

JFK would later tell his friend, Senator George Smathers, “My affair with Marilyn has become too public. I can’t see her anymore. Jackie’s raising the roof, and the shit is about to hit the fan. Bedding an aging sex symbol isn’t worth it anymore.”

When she returned to Hollywood, Marilyn repeatedly called JFK on his private line and later through the White House switchboard. But he wasn’t taking her calls.

“I remember when she told me she’d been cut off,” Jeanne Carmen recalled. “She was enraged and wanted vengeance. She was so bitter she mocked the President, claiming he made love like a thirteen-year-old boy. At this point, Bobby hadn’t cut her off. That was to come.”

Lawford later claimed that “Marilyn couldn’t get it through her head that the party was over. I kept telling her

that she didn't know Bobby and Jack like I did. When each of them was through with a woman, she was toast. She really knew that, but somehow couldn't bring herself to admit it. She constantly wrote letters to Jack at the White House and kept calling him, but it was no use. I warned Jack she was trouble, and Bobby, who always said he could handle any situation, told me that he knew how to keep the lid on Marilyn. Bobby was a smart man, but even he could say the dumbest things. No one ever born knew how to keep the lid on Marilyn Monroe."

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After her return to Los Angeles from New York, Marilyn told Hollywood reporters—most of whom believed she'd been drunk at Madison Square Garden, that, "I liked it. I like celebrating birthdays, even my own. I enjoy knowing I'm alive. You can underline *alive*, guys. But I lost my good luck charm, apawn from a chess game."

"Happy Birthday, Mr. President"

Most reporters noted that she appeared extremely fatigued. So did the cameramen when she finally showed upfor work at Fox. They had to use filters tohide the exhaustion reflected on her face.

She also told the press that, "I con-sidered it an honor to appear before the President of the United States."

The hip reporters joked about thatline. Ralph Rennie quipped: "Did Mari-lyn say 'before' the President or '*under*'him?"

Ten days after singing to JFK in Madison"Happy Birthday, Mr. President"Square Garden, Marilyn sent him an ex-354pensive Rolex watch, along with a love poem, to the White House.

Inscribed on the watch were the words: "Jack, with love as always, Marilyn. May 29, 1962." Her handwritten poem, transcribed below, was entitled, "A Heartfelt Plea on Your Birthday."

Let lovers breathe their sighs
And roses bloom and music sound
Let passion born on lips and eyes
And pleasure's merry world go around
Let golden sunshine flood the sky
AND LET ME LOVE, OR LET ME DIE!

Interpreting the poem and the watch as incriminating, JFK turned to his chief aide, Kenneth O'Donnell, who was with him in the Oval Office at the time. "Get rid of it! Now!" he ordered his aide.

O'Donnell, however, could not stand the idea of destroying such a "valuable piece of American history" and

consequently, he opted to keep it, preserving it among his personal heirlooms.

Four decades later, O'Donnel's family sold the watch at Connecticut's Alexander Autographs Auction House to an unnamed col ector for $120,000.

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In Los Angeles, on the set of *Something's Got to Give*, George Cukor waited impatiently for Marilyn to show up. He finally received a call from Dr. Hyman Engelberg, her physician. He informed Cukor that he had diagnosed Marilyn's condition as "chronic sinusitis," which often required four weeks of heavy antibiotic treatment.

Cukor did not believe his star was really sick. In frustration, he claimed that "she was malingering."

He sent the studio doctor, Lee Siegel, who had been treating her since 1951, to examine her. When he took her temperature, the thermometer read 101 degrees. In a report to Cukor and Fox, Siegel claimed that her respiratory tract was "badly occluded," and that she also had a serious throat infection. He report also stated, "It will take weeks to cure an infection like this."

"I'm at the mercy of god damn doctors," Cukor lamented.

A completely revised script was sent to her Brentwood home, the rewritten version the work of Walter Bernstein, a blacklisted writer who had been recalled from exile in London.

That night, she and Bolaños read the script together, with him feeding her the Dean Martin or Tom Tryon lines. She called Bernstein and expressed her outrage.

Bernstein later said, "Monroe had plenty of script changes of her own. Her demands became increasingly intuitive, contrary, inscrutable—change this, change that, first approving, then disapproving. Such ambivalence."

Back on the Fox lot on May 21, 1962, less than two and a half months before her death, Marilyn learned that it was now Dean Martin's turn to come down with the flu. Ever the trouper, he showed up for work, although admitting that he was running a temperature of 100 degrees. She refused to work with him, fearing that he might infect her again after her recent recovery from her own virus.

Both Marilyn and Martin showed up for work on May 25, but the very next day she phoned Fox that she was il again with another virus and would not be able to face the cameras.

On May 28, Cukor had scheduled a scene with his four leading stars, including Marilyn, Cyd Charisse, Dean Martin, and Tom Tryon. "I knew something was wrong after the first three minutes," Tryon said. "All her moves were very tenuous, like she was coming unglued on camera. She couldn't utter her lines. At one point she started calling out 'FRANK! FRANK!' We knew she meant Sinatra, who was on a world tour."

"She broke from the set and ran toward her dressing room. I learned later from Cukor that she'd taken lipstick and written *FRA K, HELP ME! HELPME!* on the mirror. I felt sorry for her."

At his home in Key West, years later, Tryon privately confided to his lover, the porno star, Cal Culver, and the author of this book, "I felt a bit guilty where Marilyn was concerned. She was sick so many days, I took advantage. Instead of fucking her, Bolaños was fucking me. but I, too had to sing for my supper, on more than one occasion. I had to let Cukor do me. I found him repulsive, so I closed my eyes and thought of Bolaños."

Even though the movie was never released, the scene of Marilyn swimming nude in a swimming pool was flashed around the world. Cukor said that Marilyn was in the water for four hours. At first, a body stocking was provided for her, but it didn't look quite right. On her own initiative, Marilyn took it off, as photographers Billy Woodfield and Larry Schiller snapped photographs with a certain hysteria.

Their pictures of her nude swim appeared on the covers of seventy magazines in thirty-two countries, earning a total of $150,000, far more than the $100,000 Marilyn was paid for making the film.

In Cukor's words, Monroe "was stark jaybird naked. Those images became the most reproduced of any motion picture images ever made. This was the first time a major movie star had appeared nude in a film."

Paula Strasberg later said, "Those pictures were Marilyn's way of showing the world that at the age of thirty-six she was not washed up like so many Hollywood beauties who reached the dawn of middle age. She still had a great body, and didn't mind showing it off."

At one point, Peter Levathes, the Fox Studio head, and Henry Weinstein viewed the footage shot of Marilyn up to that point, about forty minutes of film. Levathes was horrified, telling his producer that there was little footage that could be used. "She's vacant, completely disconnected from the other characters, as if living in a world of her own," Levathes said.

Actor Wally Cox worked with Marilyn in some of her last scenes, and he befriended her. Both of them had been lovers of Marlon Brando. Cox was one of Brando's lifelong friends, and the two men had shared a bed when they were roommates.

Cox later said, “Marilyn was never better than in her final scenes—great acting, great beauty, and perfect timing, and she knew her lines.” His defense of her was in contrast to others in the cast and it especially contrasted with the director’s dim view of her.

Marilyn’s birthday on June 1, 1962, would mark her final appearance in a motion picture scene. Each member of the cast and crew contributed five dollars to a party, with Martin funding the cost of the champagne. The Fox com-missary sent over a large urn of coffee, for which it would later bill Marilyn’s estate.

With money gathered from the cast and crew, Evelyn Moriarity, Marilyn’s stand-in, purchased food and a large birthday cake. But Cukor told her she couldn’t bring out the cake until six o’clock when the shooting for the day came to an end. He wanted a full day’s work from everybody before any celebration took place.

Marilyn told those gathered around her, “I am thirty-six years old, and I don’t mind the age. I like the view from here. The future is here for me, and I have to make the most of it—as every woman must.”

She could not show up for work on June 4, 5, and 6. Fox sent studio doctor, Lee Siegel, to her Brentwood home, where he confirmed that she was “dangerously ill, running a temperature of 102.” He also reported that “she also seems in desperate need of her psychiatrist, Dr. Greenson.”

Since May, he had been vacationing in Europe, leaving her adrift during what would become the most crucial weeks of her life. At the urging of producer Weinstein, Greenson rushed back from Europe and arrived in Los Angeles on June 6, where he met at once with Marilyn, who was sick in her bed.

After her birthday party, even though she wasn’t feeling well, Marilyn made the final public appearance of her career. She appeared in Los Angeles at Dodgers’ Field, where she tossed out the opening ball, revealing that she was no female Joe DiMaggio. Weeks earlier, she had agreed to appear at a charity event for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The night was chilly and she wasn’t adequately dressed. Before midnight, she came down with the flu, and had to notify Fox that she was unable to report to work.

In an emergency meeting on June 5, Cukor told Fox executives that *Something’s Got to Give* was already sixteen days behind schedule and already a million dollars over budget.

Fox executives became convinced that Marilyn would not be able to complete the picture. They were already in negotiations with Lee Remick and Shirley MacLaine as potential replacements. MacLaine had previously replaced Marilyn in two other movies which she had turned down, including *Can-Can* and *Some Came Running*.

Two other blondes, but of very different sorts—Doris Day and Kim Novak—were also considered as replacements for Marilyn.

News of this turmoil at Fox was leaked to the press. Writing in *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, Harrison Carroll, movie columnist, reported the story under the banner headline: STUDIO IN CRISIS OVER MARILYNMONROE.

Dr. Greenson’s arrival was too late. On June 8, Fox lawyers notified Marilyn that she was not only off the picture, but her contract had been terminated and legal action was proceeding against her.

During thirty-five days of shooting, Marilyn had arrived at the studio only twelve times, and during some of those appearances, she was unable to work.

Levathes called a press conference, enduring his fifteen minutes of fame as the man who dared fire Marilyn Monroe. “We can’t afford to risk millions on unreliable stars,” he told reporters. “This was behind my decision this week to sue Miss Monroe and her corporation for half a million dollars. We may have to increase that figure to a million.”

Fox finally settled on Remick, who was officially offered the role. No selection in Hollywood could have infuriated Marilyn more. Ironically, and perhaps unknown to Fox executives at the time, Remick and Marilyn were locked into a dead heat contest for the role of Bobby Kennedy’s Hollywood movie star mistress.

Marilyn told her masseur, Ralph Roberts, “That bitch, Remick, now wants to replace me on the screen, having failed to replace me in Bobby’s affections.”

Dean Martin and his lawyers had written a clause into his original contract stating that he had the right to exert approval over the female star who would appear opposite him in *Something’s Got to Give*. That meant that if Marilyn were dismissed, he could not be forced to appear in any subsequent version of the film with another actress.

He told his cronies, “Marilyn gave me too many good fucks in the past to double-cross her now. I’m walking. No Marilyn, no picture. Besides, what moron would believe that I would leave a woman like Cyd Charisse for Lee Remick. Come on, fellows…”

When production shut down, Cukor called gossip maven Hedda Hopper, telling her that “Marilyn had finally gone ‘round the bend. We have shot for seven weeks, and we have five days of work. And the sad thing is that the five days’ work are no good. She couldn’t remember her lines. It was as if she were underwater. She’s intelligent enough to know she’s no good. And there’s a certain ruthlessness, too. I think it’s the end of her career—and you can print that.”

In desperation, Marilyn sent out an S.O.S. to Bobby Kennedy. Although he wanted to distance himself from her at this point, he came to her rescue and intervened to get her reinstated at Fox with a far more lucrative contract. Fox had already filed lawsuits with Judge Samuel Rosenman, and Bobby spoke to the judge personally, and he also called the directors at Fox, who did not want to incur the il will of the Attorney General of the United States.

Spyros P. Skouras was on the way out the door at Fox. He still remembered his affair with Marilyn in the early 1950s, and still called her "the greatest whore in the world." But he admitted that he had taken part in negotiations for a second picture with Marilyn after she completed *Something's Got to Give* during the winter of 1962. "The second deal upped her salary to $750,000. That wasn't quite up there with the million dollars we'd given Elizabeth Taylor for *Cleopatra*. But it was a hell of a lot better than making $1,200 bucks a week working with Jane Russel on *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Of course, no one at Fox knew what that second picture would be."

Cukor later revealed to this author that in the midst of the filming of *Cleopatra*, when Elizabeth Taylor became sick, he was summoned to a meeting of the top brass at Fox. "I was shocked at what they were talking about. They actually discussed seriously that Marilyn take over the role of Cleopatra from Elizabeth. Their plan was to delay *Something's Got to Give* until *Cleopatra* was wrapped. I couldn't believe my ears. Substitute an unreliable Elizabeth for an even more unreliable Marilyn? Their argument was that Marilyn was costing them only $100,000, whereas Elizabeth had wrangled a guaranteed fee of a million dollars.

"Of course, Elizabeth was costing them millions and millions in production costs," Cukor said. "Fortunately, the idea of Marilyn as Cleopatra died the death of a plucked spring wildflower."

When Elizabeth heard the news of the possible change in casting for *Cleopatra*, she went into a tirade, breaking vases around her Roman villa. "Monroe can play a ditzy blonde. She'd be laughed off the screen as the Queen of the Nile."

Elizabeth became particularly incensed when columnist Max Lerner wrote, "Elizabeth Taylor is a legend, Marilyn Monroe a myth."

The next day, an angry Elizabeth called Lerner. "You have some fucking nerve saying that Marilyn is a myth, and that I'm just a lousy legend. I'm much more beautiful than Monroe ever was, and I'm certainly a better actress. Just ask my Oscar. What the hell do I have to do to become a myth, die young, like James Dean?"

Unknown to her fans, Marilyn had once lobbied for the role of Cleopatra in early 1959, even calling Spyros Skouras and pleading with him. The studio's parent company, William Fox Films, had made *Cleopatra* once before in 1917 starring the vamp, Theda Bara.

Skouras dismissed Marilyn's pleading. "It's just a low-budget stinker. We're using old costumes and sets from the silent screen. We're going to use a starlet, Joan Collins. It'll just be a cheap B-picture. The film, including salaries, is going to be shot for $100,000."

Marilyn had long wanted to do a historical drama, having fought to star in *The Egyptian* in 1954 opposite Marlon Brando, who eventually turned down the role.

Marilyn's new contract specifically stated that Paula Strasberg was not to be all owed on the set. Perhaps tiring of the Strasbergs at this point, Marilyn dismissed her acting coach, paying her final salary and giving her a one-way ticket back to New York.

In 1990, the footage for *Something's Got to Give* was discovered in a Fox vault and was viewed by author Fred Lawrence Guiles for his book *Legend: The Life and Death of Marilyn Monroe*. "The most striking thing about the scenes is the antique and puerile quality of the comedy. Nunnally Johnson's script as rewritten by Walter Bernstein has none of the brisk humor of *How to Marry a Millionaire*. Cyd Charisse is arch beyond belief. Dean Martin reads every line with tongue in cheek; Steve All en as Charisse's analyst is given banal dialogue he could have improvised better on the spot. Cukor had no rapport whatsoever with Marilyn. Al the actors seemed more badgered than directed. Cukor must have gone into the project hating it from the beginning. In sum, the film could only have done harm to the careers of all concerned by its completion."

Lee Remick: Competing with Marilyn for the same roles and for the same Kennedy

Cukor's biographer, Patrick McGilligan, wrote that after Marilyn's death, the director had "a brief, itching desire to do a behind-the scenes film about her and the abortive filming of *Something's Got to Give*. It would be the ultimate Hollywood inside story, with the cold-blooded studio machine and the insanity of the omnipotent star. It would be a tragedy, of course, but it ought to be scathingly funny besides. Cukor himself would be a character. There was even a (working) title: *It's What's on the Screen That Counts*. The idea was too close to him, however, and it never went beyond the speculative stage."

Something's Got to Give would eventually be made, but in a far more lack-luster and toned-down version. Entitled *Move Over, Darling* it starred Doris Day—"no nude swimming scenes"—and James Garner, and it was released in 1963.

It was an amusing remake but didn't carry the sexual punch that Marilyn's version would have, as was obvious to the studio brass who viewed the Doris Day version.

Back on the homefront at Brentwood, "Bolaños was becoming a bit of a drag on Marilyn," Eunice Murray later recalled. "*Something Had to Give*, and it was the Mexican. She shipped him back to Mexico City, but would soon call for him again."

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In June, Marilyn told journalist William J. Weatherby, "Maybe I'll get married again. The only problem is, he's married right now. He's famous, so we meet in secret." The writer assumed she was talking about Bobby Kennedy.

Bobby's secretary, Angie Novello, said about him, "He was such a sympathetic kind of person. He never turned away from anyone who needed help, and he was well aware of Marilyn's problems. He was a good listener and that, I think, was what she needed more than anything. After the birthday gala, she logged call after call to him in Washington or New York."

JFK once said, "If I want something done and done immediately, I rely on the Attorney General. He's very much the doer in this family."

When JFK wanted to "contain" Marilyn and prevent her from calling him any more, he sent RFK to California in June to handle her and cool her down.

A heavily made-up Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra

If anything, Bobby succeeded only in diverting Marilyn's romantic interest, shifting it from the President to himself. He may—just may—have fallen in love with her, however briefly.

Bobby, according to Jeanne Carmen, was sexually involved with Marilyn every time he came to the West Coast.

"She wanted to be part of his world," Carmen claimed. "She thought Bobby might be her passport to becoming a great lady instead of just a dumb blonde broad on screen. I saw her diary. She wrote down things he said, even notes on Jimmy Hoffa, whom Bobby despised. He talked of the need to get rid of Fidel Castro."

"In one entry I read, Marilyn wrote down what Bobby had said about J. Edgar Hoover. 'What a cocksucker! What a bastard! Any day now, I expect him to walk in the door wearing one of Jackie's discarded Dior dresses. Someday, I'm going to get rid of Hoover, the blackmailer."

To his close friends, Bobby would sometimes admit that he had a kinship with Marilyn, though he was born six months before her as the seventh child of one of America's richest men, and she'd entered the world il egitimate in the charity ward of a Los Angeles hospital.

Author Fred Lawrence Guiles claimed that "Bobby took a personal interest in Marilyn, which the President did not. This was far more dangerous to her than a strictly sexual attraction might have been."

Carmen was the most intimate observer of Marilyn's affairs with the Kennedy brothers. "To John Kennedy, Marilyn was just another fuck," Carmen claimed. "I don't think he really cared about her the way Bobby did, and I don't think she was in love with the President. He wasn't good in bed. I can tell you that first hand because I had him, too. He was a two-minute man. I think sex to him was just another conquest. Bobby was different—sweet, cute, and playful. He really cared about Marilyn. He treated her very well, at least in the beginning. In his own way, he was in love with her, a least a little bit."

Slatzer, in his book, *The Curious Death of Marilyn Monroe*, revealed that Marilyn told him that, "Bobby has promised to marry me after he divorces Ethel. What do you think of that?"

He didn't think very much of that promise, if it were indeed made. "I knew how ut erly ridiculous it was for her to think that Bobby would jeopardize his political career by divorcing his wife, abandoning their children, facing the threat of excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church, and disgracing the President of the United States and the Kennedy family name as well."

Marilyn was heavily influenced by Bobby's stand on civil rights, as revealed in her final interview for *Life* magazine with Richard Meryman in July.

"What I really want to say is that what the world really needs is a feeling of kinship. Everybody: stars, laborers, Negroes, Jews, Arabs. We are all broth-362ers." Her heartfelt plea for tolerance and equality would more or less match that of Bobby when he ran for President in 1968.

It can never be determined how many times Bobby saw Marilyn during that fateful summer of 1962. Almost everyone seemingly connected to their affair either lied or distorted the facts.

In his biography of RFK, author C. David Heymann claimed, "For once, Robert Kennedy failed as his brother's

keeper. Instead of cutting Marilyn off, as Jack Kennedy had asked him to, he drew her even deeper into his family's orbit. Possibly, this sometimes compassionate man saw this troubled actress as a wounded animal in need of aid. For whatever combination of reasons, the Attorney General fell in love with the film star."

Senator George Smathers, long after his retirement in Miami, told this author that "Jack often spoke to me about his affairs. One time, when he was a little drunk and pissed off, he said Bobby often got his sloppy seconds—Marilyn Monroe, Judy Garland, Elizabeth Taylor, and Grace Kelly, for example.

"With Marilyn, he made a mistake I didn't," JFK said. "Bobby's fallen in love with her. Surely not for long. On most nights, he's a very rational person."

When JFK heard that Bobby had not brought Marilyn under control, but may have become even more involved with her, from all reports, he did not confront Bobby directly. He did ask his friend, Smathers, to talk to her. "Jack asked me what I could do to help by talking to her, and I did. In essence, Jack wanted me to put a bridle on her mouth and keep her from revealing too many secrets. The story of their affair was spreading around the country. But not that many people knew of Bobby's involvement with her at the time."

A Kennedy aide, Charles (Chuck) Spalding, was asked by JFK to fly to Los Angeles to talk with Marilyn, because he'd heard that she was getting out of control with liquor and pills. "When I got there, I found that she was really sick. I called Lawford, and we took her to the hospital to check her out, to see if we could sober her up for good. We didn't succeed."

Vernon Scot, a longtime Hollywood reporter for United Press International, understood the attraction of Marilyn to the Kennedys. "She was gorgeous and she was funny. She had more sex appeal than any woman I ever saw, and I've seen lots of them. She was probably every man's dream of the kind of woman he'd like to spend the rest of his life with on a desert island. She was much smarter than people gave her credit for. She never did or said anything by accident."

At the Beverly Hills Hotel, Marilyn told Scot that she had to date famous men like the Kennedy brothers. "They're rich and famous themselves, and not awed by Marilyn Monroe. I often meet some nice guy and we go to bed. Then he can't get it up. He eyes glaze over when he realizes, 'I'm going to fuck Marilyn Monroe.' His hard-on becomes a soft-on."

Then she asserted, "Men expect too much of me. They all want my image, not myself. I'm a sex symbol to them, not a real person. They expect bells to ring and whistles to blow. I can't live up to their fantasies.'

Michael Selsman, who had been one of Marilyn's publicists, spoke to reporter Seymour M. Hersh, and his revelations later appeared in Hersh's book, *The Dark Side of Camelot.*" Marilyn was a loose cannon who toggled between high-spirited charm and mean-spirited cruelty. Sometimes, she had to put on this costume of Marilyn Monroe. Otherwise, she was this other person. Norma Jeane, who felt abused, put-upon, and unintelligent. As Marilyn Monroe, she had enormous power. As Norma Jeane, she was a drug addict and wasn't physically clean."

Carmen said that RFK was in and out of Los Angeles a lot during 1962, ostensibly promoting the filming of his book, *The Enemy Within*. She claimed that Marilyn's affair with him was conducted at more places than her home in Brentwood. He also met her at the apartment she still maintained on Doheny and at Lawford's house in Santa Monica.

Carmen recalled that Bobby would drive straight into the garage at Doheny, walk through the apartment building's courtyard, and enter the ground floor apartment to which he had a key. "It was very secretive," Carmen said. "Apparently, no one ever saw him or recognized him. Perhaps he disguised himself a bit."

"While Marilyn was getting dressed, I once quizzed Bobby about the danger of maintaining a relationship with Marilyn. He'd had a bit to drink that night. He told me, 'I'm in love. I don't give a fuck. The whole world can just go to hell!' That didn't sound like Bobby at all. He was in a strange mood that night. Marilyn later confided to me that he delivered the most aggressive sex she'd ever received from a Kennedy brother that night."

"During his bedroom trysts with Marilyn, Bobby was often talking on the phone with government officials when not fucking her," Carmen said. "He probably paid no attention to her at those times, he was so intense. But she was listening to what he said and would later make notes."

During one of RFK's sexual trysts with Marilyn, he was caught on camera with her. The circumstances of how that camera was placed in Marilyn's bedroom, if indeed it were her bedroom, or who put it there, is not known.

"Mickey Cohen, it is believed, blackmailed Marilyn into agreeing to do it. Of course, Cohen could also have ordered the tape without her permission, as he had done before, with other stars, not just Marilyn.

He may have suggested that she might want a copy of the sex tape herself in case one night "you have to bring that Kennedy boy into line."

Liz Renay, the actress girlfriend of Cohen, said that "Mickey had it all planned. He was convinced that Bobby would become president in 1968 and would be re-elected to a second term in 1972. He told me, 'I'm set for eight good years, free of government interference in any of my activities.'"

News of the existence of a Marilyn and RFK sex tape first emerged in a book by William C. Sullivan, assistant director of domestic intelligence for the FBI in the early 1960s.

Sullivan claimed that J. Edgar Hoover's favorite sex tape was of Marilyn performing fellatio on Bobby, or at least on a man Hoover claimed was the Attorney General. He showed the tape to Sullivan and several of his most trusted agents. The nude man's face did not appear, but Marilyn was clearly visible. Sullivan had seen Bobby in a bathing suit, and the chest in the film definitely looked like Bobby's.

Sullivan said that it was a silent, three-minute, black-and-white loop. A nude Marilyn appears on her knees giving a blow-job to a man.

Hoover said that the loop was secretly taken with a hidden camera that had been planted in Monroe's bedroom in Brentwood.

It was later reported that Hoover, in January of 1966, showed the film to Clark Clifford, who had been one of JFK's aides, and who was serving at the time as an advisor to LBJ.

Clifford said that he later met Jackie Kennedy at a dinner party hosted by Diana Vreeland, the editor of *Vogue*. "Jackie cornered me and asked me if I knew about the sex tape of Bobby and Marilyn. I denied knowing anything about it. She didn't really believe me, but didn't press me, either."

"The noose was tightening around Marilyn's throat that summer, and I dreaded seeing her cling to the Kennedy brothers the way she did," Robert Slatzer later said. "In most cases with boyfriends, she was the one who walked out the door, shutting it softly behind her. Perhaps to get even with Jack and Bobby, she deliberately took up with Teddy that summer. She got mad at me when I told her, 'Marilyn, you're out of your mind.'"

"Almost to the very end, regardless of how ridiculous it was, Marilyn believed that there was a chance that she would be First Lady one day—not with Jack Kennedy, but with Bobby," said actress Terry Moore. "I told her how impossible that was, but she wouldn't listen. She believed what she wanted to believe."

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The walk along the beach in Santa Monica was lit by moonlight. Teddy Kennedy strolled along in the darkness, holding Marilyn's hand. He'd slipped into town as part of an unofficial visit, taking time out from his busy schedule and his run for the Senate seat from Massachusetts that had once been held by President Kennedy.

Earlier, in a bedroom at the mansion of Peter and Patricia Lawford, he'd made love to her. Marilyn wanted to remember the night with Teddy, so that late the following morning, she could relive it with Jeanne Carmen. As she'd once told Carmen, "What's the fun in fucking a Kennedy if you can't tell somebody about it?"

She claimed that she hadn't meant to ask the question, but somehow had blurted it out. "How is married life treating you?" she asked, as she was aware of his marriage to Joan Bennet.

He showed no sense of guilt discussing his married life with a movie star girlfriend. "The day I got married, Jack came over to me and whispered, 'Teddy, just because you're getting married doesn't mean you have to become a monk.'"

"Jack certainly knows of what he speaks," she said, barely disguising the sarcasm in her voice. "By the way, I hear there's a Teddy Jr. in the world."

"Yes, my daughter Kara now has a little brother," he said. "I told Joan I want to match Bobby in the baby factory. He and Ethel are going for an even dozen."

"I once saw a movie called *Cheaper by the Dozen* with Clifton Webb," she said.

"Don'tbelieveit,"hesaid. "Imaginewhatit'sgoingtocostput ingtwelve kids through Harvard."

"Does Joan want to have all those children?"

"Not really," he said. "Her doctor warned her she doesn't have the consti-tution for it."

"Good," she said, squeezing his hand. "That means you'll have more time for me."

At a secluded spot, he sat down with her on the sands, putting his arm around her. The night was warm, the ocean breezes refreshing. "So you decided to follow your brotherinto politics," she said.

Wltnessing details about the Kennedy tribe's porno: William C. Sullivan *(left)* with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover

"It wasn't my idea," he said. "I didn't want to run for the Senate. Actually, Joan and I were considering moving to Arizona to escape Dad's trying to run my life. But he summoned me back. He said, 'Jack is president and your brother Bobby is Attorney General. You're going to get your fat ass in gear and run for the Senate. I paid for that god damn seat. It belongs to the Kennedy family."

"Once you get there, do you plan to stay there forever?" she asked.

"No, Dad has other plans for me," he said. "Jack will run for President again in 1964, Bobby in 1968 and 1972, and me in 1976 and 1980. I'll be third in line, following in their footsteps."

She giggled. "You're certainly following in their footsteps with me."

"I don't like to think about that," he said, rising to her feet and extending a hand. "Let's go back to the house."

On the way back, he said, "At least I got to Joan first. But Jack might get her yet. I know he's at racted to my wife. He calls her 'The Dish.'That sounds like trouble to me. You can't trust Jack with your girlfriend, your wife, and especially, your mistress."

To reassure him, she said, "When it comes to the boudoir, you are the champion—and I should know."

"I suppose so," he said.

In bed that night, he was an ardent lover, giving as much pleasure as he received.

But over the morning newspapers, he was troubled. "The at acks on me are getting really vicious."

"That means you'll win the sympathy vote," she said.

"Listen to this," he said, holding up the paper. "'Teddy Kennedy is a modest man with much to be modest about.'Another piece of shit here says I'm a featherweight."

"Not at all," she protested. "Last night you were very deep."

He smiled at her *double entendre*.

She continued. "I know you have to go this morning, but I want you to know that I think you will be president one day. In fact, you'll be the fourth man who told me he plans to become President of the United States."

"I can guess two of those guys. I'm the third. Who's the fourth?"

"Ronald Reagan…it was a long time ago."

"*Bedtime for Bonzo,"* he said. "You've got to be kidding."

In the bedroom after he'd dressed, he gave her a long, lingering kiss. "Until next time."

She was sad to see him leave. Over a late luncheon with Carmen in Brentwood, she would relive the experience.

Carmen wasn't impressed. "I don't know why you bother with the Kennedy brothers. They just use a woman and then toss her aside."

"Teddy's exempted from that," Marilyn said. "He told me he truly loves me and wants to be with me any chance he has. I'm not in love with him, but I find him an adorable Teddy Bear—in fact, that's what I call him."

"You don't have to love him," Carmen said. "Wasn't falling in love with two Kennedy brothers enough?"

“Teddy is different from Jack and Bobby,” Marilyn said. “I’m finally convinced that Jack will always be married to Ethel unless I persuaded him otherwise, a remote chance. Teddy is different. I don’t think he’s going to be with Joan forever. My best hope to marry a Kennedy is with Teddy.”

“Well, maybe you will make it to the White House after Jack and Bobby serve all those terms. Just how old will you be as First Lady in 1976?”

A gorgeous fifty year old.” Marilyn said. “Not the youngest First Lady, but the most fun. Teddy and I will throw White House parties wilder than any Jack Kennedy has ever tossed there in the Presidential swimming pool.”

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At her home in Brentwood, Marilyn spent three hours making herself ready to greet Bobby for his upcoming arrival in the presidential suite of the Beverly Hilton. She wanted to look her best.

On the night of June 24, William Travilla, Marilyn’s longtime friend, spotted her dining with Bobby at La Scala in Los Angeles.

The following night, Bobby was fêted by Patricia and Peter Lawford at their Santa Monica mansion, where they’d invited fifty guests. Ethel Kennedy was not part of the trip to California.

Jeanne, Dean Martin’s wife, reported that Bobby’s dinner companion at a big barbecue was Marilyn herself. Later, Bobby and Marilyn were seen going upstairs into one of the fourteen bedrooms.

Before arriving at the party, Marilyn ordered designer Elizabeth Courtney to alter three different dresses before she finally decided on which one to wear. “She told me she wanted to make a spectacular entrance and be the highlight of the party in a thousand-dollar dress,” Courtney said.

At sunset, a bare-chested Bobby, wearing Levis, not a swimming suit, was seen strolling along the beach with Marilyn, who was wearing a Pucci caftan.

He and Marilyn dined alone that night on the terrace. He had something important to discuss with her.

Later, she dissolved into tears. She told Patricia Lawford that Bobby had talked to her about the difficulties he was having maintaining a clandestine relationship with her.

Peter Dye, a friend of the Lawfords, who lived next door and was a frequent guest, said, “Marilyn had stardust in her eyes. She was crazy about Bobby—that was obvious.”

When one of the Kennedys was in residence, Lawford could close off an entire wing for their private use.

In looking back on the relationships, Robert Litman, a UCLA psychiatrist, said “Bobby Kennedy was another of those father figures in Monroe’s life who eventually betrayed her.”

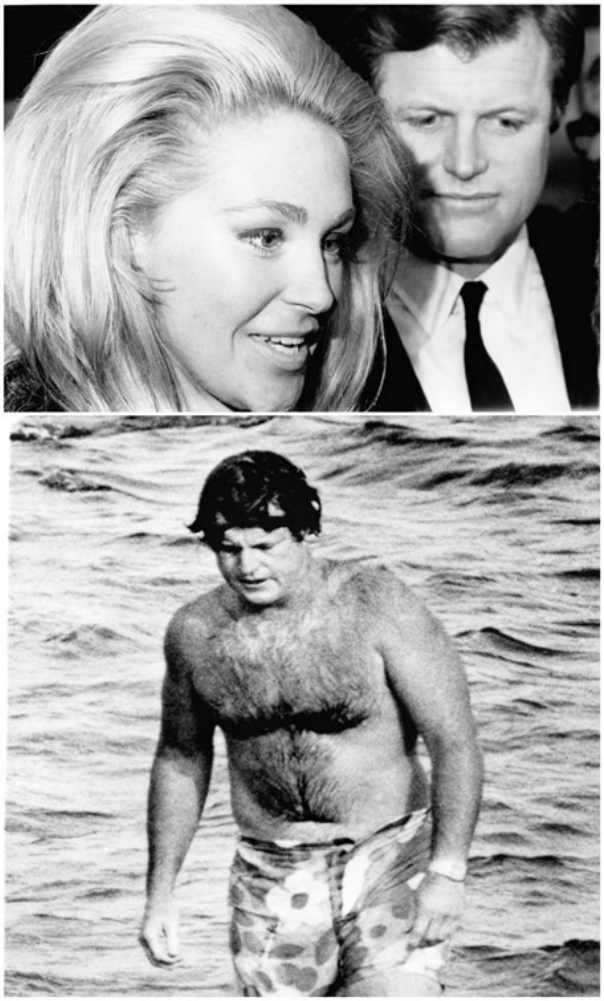
Theodore Sorenson, a Kennedy aide, said, “Bobby and Jack—Teddy too—are going to do more for sex than Eisenhower did for golf.”

The day following the barbecue, Marilyn chased out her housekeeper, Eunice Murray, telling her, “Bobby and I want to spend the day running around naked, and we’ll want the place to ourselves.”

Carmen was at Marilyn’s Brentwood home the next day when Bobby discovered that Marilyn had been keeping a diary and writing down what he’d told her. “Bobby has a real rattlesnake side to him,” Carmen said, “and it showed itself when he found out about that red diary. He was furious. Hewent through the house, shouting and screaming. ‘Get rid of the thing,’ whenhe discovered it in her bedroom. He grabbed the diary and tossed it against one of her white walls. I think he realized how lethal the diary was. He trusted her to get rid of it. Of course, he could have taken it away himself and destroyed it, but in some way he respected her right to her personal property. After all, he was the Attorney General of the United States and knew about the law.”

“Bobby was growing increasingly worried about the exposure of his affair,” Carmen said.

On June 25, he gave a speech in Los Angeles about the government’s crack-down on crime. Later, he was seen arriving at the Lawford mansion in a Cadillac convertible. “I was at the party,” Carmen said. “He was dressed casually in charcoal gray slacks and a robin’s egg blue dress shirt—no jacket.”



Two views of Edward ("Teddy") Kennedy *(top photo)* with his first wife, the former Joan Bennett *(bottom photo):* Marilyn's "Teddy Bear"

"Bobby admitted to me that he loved Marilyn Monroe," Carmen said. "But he knew he had to end it for many reasons, the main one being that he finally realized his enemies had taped much of their private talk with each other and had probably bugged her home. He had plenty of enemies, including Hoffa, the Mafia, Hoover, you name it. He and Marilyn were playing a dangerous game. Even as early as 1962, Bobby was plotting to become President of the United States after Jack served his final term."

Marilyn delayed it as long as she could, but on her final night with Bobby at Brentwood, she told him she had learned that she was pregnant. "You're the father."

His reaction was devastating to her. "How do you know that? Jack could be the father, even Teddy, or one of your many other lovers. Maybe Joe DiMaggio returned to score a home run." He became furious and urged her to get an abortion, promising that he could arrange that and pay for it.

She was at Brentwood when she told him the news, and she ran from the room and barricaded herself in her bedroom.

A car was waiting outside to take him to the airport. After pounding on her door and getting no answer, he headed out of the house for his flight back to Washington.

When he returned to the capital, Bobby abruptly changed the private telephone numbers he'd given Marilyn, for getting that she had his home number at Hickory Hill. Two days later, when she called him at the Justice Department, she was horrified and very deeply hurt when she realized that he had cut off her phone connection to him.

Frustrated when the switchboard at the Justice Department would not put her through to Bobby, Marilyn called his home at Hickory Hill, which she'd previously visited with JFK. Ethel picked up the phone. It is not known what

they talked about, but there is almost no way that Bobby's wife and the mother of his large brood hadn't heard at least some of the gossip streaming through the entire Kennedy clan.

Time was running for both Bobby and Marilyn. Like that summer wind that Frank Sinatra sang about, their bit ersweet romance came to an end sometime in July. As author Peter Harry Brown put it: "Bobby ended it cruelly, like a rich college boy dumping a girlfriend from the wrong side of the tracks. She had been fun, and she had been exciting. But she was used up. Protected by their wealth, safe behind the walls of their compound at Hyannis Port and Palm Beach, and hidden behind hundreds of functionaries, the Kennedy family quietly locked Monroe out."

Carmen claimed that Marilyn suffered Bobby's rejection with far greater pain than she had the President's. "Bobby left her with an incredible insecurity which bordered on terror. Pills, liquor, sleepless nights, desperate phone calls that went unanswered. At one point she told me, 'Maybe I'm a sexless sex goddess.'"

Slowly, very slowly, she was beginning to see that she was playing a role unfamiliar to her—that of a woman scorned. Of all the Kennedys, only Teddy and Patricia stayed in touch with her.

Not really certain of all the other electronic surveillance of her, Marilyn had also ordered the tapping of her own phone. It would later be revealed that she'd recorded RFK's promises to her, and their phone sex, as had many of their enemies.

Late one night, she placed a call to Lawford. She revealed the evidence she'd accumulated on Bobby, both in her tapes and in her diary.

That phone call would mark the first of several threats she'd make about organizing a press conference and announcing her affairs with Bobby and the President. She discreetly left out her latest involvement with Teddy. "Fuck both Bobby and Jack," she told Lawford. "I'll show them. I'll tell the world."

She would continue to make those threats up until her death, although Lawford repeatedly tried to assuage her.

"Don't threaten Bobby Kennedy," Slatzer warned her. "He's too powerful. He could have you wiped off the map with just one phone call."

"I later thought it over," he said. "I did not understand her threat because normally, she wasn't a vindictive person. But she knew such a press conference could destroy the political future of the Kennedys."

Before Slatzer left her that night, she told him, "I'm not afraid of them. They're just overgrown boys."

In the wake of a sleepless night, at 4am, she placed a desperate call, this one through the international operator. It was to Jose Bolaños at his apartment in Mexico City.

She urged him to return at once to Brentwood, but didn't tell him the reason why. "I want to get married to you, and I don't want another day to go by until you become Mr. Marilyn Monroe."

Like some of her former lovers, he didn't mind being Mr. Marilyn Monroe, if he could brag that his wife was the most famous woman on earth.

He promised her, "I'll be on the next plane."

As she'd tell Hazel Washington, her studio maid, "Every baby needs a papa."

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Jose Bolaños returned to Marilyn's home in Brentwood, and, according to Jeanne Carmen, "They spent most of the time in bed. Every time I came over, he was either swimming nude in the pool with Marilyn or sleepily emerging from her bed wearing his jockey shorts."

"One afternoon, when he was swimming, Marilyn and I sat in the living room drinking a bottle of champagne," Carmen said. "She confided in me that she'd told Bolaños that the child was his. But she didn't want to child to be his. She wanted to have a baby by one of the Kennedys."

"Marilyn was prepared to go through the ordeal of pregnancy and give birth to her child," Carmen said. "Then when she had me over one afternoon, she claimed that she had decided to abort after all. She'd been unsuccessful in reaching Bobby or Jack. Marrying Bolaños and having his kid didn't seem her top priority any more."

Carmen asked if she'd told Bolaños that she'd decided on an abortion.

"Not yet," she said. "I fear he'll explode. I'm telling him tonight."

The next afternoon, when Carmen arrived at Brentwood, Bolaños had stormed out of the house. Marilyn had a black eye. "I told him," she said to Carmen, "He went apeshit."

In Mexico years later, Bolaños admitted to striking Marilyn. "I didn't mean to, but I became a madman when she told me she was going to murder our child. I said all the wrong things, I guess. I told her that I just knew we'd give birth to a beautiful girl, perhaps a little darker than Marilyn's skin. I said that when our girl grew up, she'd become the sex goddess of Hollywood when Marilyn became too old. I guess that was not smart of me. The idea that she'd be replaced on the screen with her own daughter was too much, I guess. She went into a rage. She was pounding my face, and I struck her. I didn't mean to."

Unknown to Bolaños, Marilyn had decided to make one last-ditch effort to reach Bobby.

She called Slatzer and told him of her plan, but he warned her that it was completely unrealistic. “It’s too late for all that. The only thing Bobby Kennedy doesn’t need is another kid.”

“But I’m sure he’s a man of his word,” she protested. “He did tell me that he planned to divorce Ethel and marry me as soon as he got things straightened out.”

“And he’s a man of his word, right?” Slatzer asked her. “You’ve got to face facts: the fucker won’t even accept your phone calls. It’s over. Get on with your life with Bolaños.’

“But he’s a nobody, and Bobby is a somebody,” she said.

“I finally talked some sense into her, and she agreed to check into the hospital for some tests,” Slatzer said. “Of course, at Cedars of Lebanon, abortion was il egal. She’d made an arrangement with a studio director at Fox to go to Tijuana with Bolaños where abortions were legal. But first, those tests.”

The day before she was signed in, she asked Bolaños to take her to Cold-water Canyon Park where she sat for hours watching children on the playground.

“I begged her not to have the abortion,” Bolaños said. “I told her our kid would one day be playing with the other kids. She was coming around, not quite sure. I think I was getting to her.”

At the hospital, Marilyn learned that her pregnancy was progressing, even though other doctors had warned her that she’d never have a child again.

On July 23, before she checked out, she made a final call to Bobby at the Justice Department. Once again, he refused to take her call.

“Abortion was legal in my country of Mexico,” Bolaños said. “But Marilyn didn’t want to be worked on by some back street quack in a dark alley in Tijuana. She wanted an American doctor to perform the surgery, and through someone at Fox, she got a studio doctor to go with us across the border. Since he’s still alive, I won’t give his name.”

“I drove Marilyn and the doctor to Tijuana, where arrangements had been made at a clinic which received Marilyn and the visiting doctor,” Bolaños said.

Months later, Marilyn’s gynecologist, Dr. Leon (“Red”) Krohn, claimed that Marilyn never had an abortion, although she’d admitted to having had several abortions in her past. She’d also gone through three ill-fated pregnancies, including two miscarriages and an ectopic pregnancy during her marriage to Arthur Miller.

This testimony contradicted what Dr. Thomas Noguchi, the Los Angeles coroner, later claimed. He said that during Marilyn’s autopsy, he found evidence of “multiple abortions.”

A very weak and tired Marilyn returned to the Los Angeles area. When Bolaños got her back to Brentwood, he put her to bed right away.

“I felt we’d committed a terrible sin against God,” Bolaños said. “I feared he’d punish us in some way—and he did.”

Bolaños, Carmen, and Slatzer aren’t the only people claiming Marilyn had an abortion. Hazel Washington, her studio maid, said that Marilyn told her that she’d gone through the procedure. Publicist Rupert Allan was also told. He said, “If word had got en out that Marilyn had aborted a child by one of the Kennedys, if that had reached the press in those pre-tabloid days, everyone connected with it would have been ruined, including the Kennedys.”

Arthur James, Marilyn’s wealthy realtor friend whom she had known during her long-ago days of living with the Chaplins, came to visit and found her“looking dreadful—not herself at all.” She told him she’d had an abortion. When Agnes Flanagan came to do her hair, she also confided in her that she’d had an abortion.

Bolaños revealed that one night Marilyn received a late call from New York. “It was a woman’s voice. I asked who was calling.”

“This is Mrs. Kennedy,” came the voice over the phone.

“I was scared half out of my mind, but asked her to hold while I got Marilyn. I told her that Jackie Kennedy was on the phone. At first, she seemed to panic, but she picked up the phone. I didn’t hear what was said. But when Marilyn came into the living room, she said, ‘We’re leaving for New York in the morning on the first flight.’”

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In the tradition of Southern storytel ers, author Truman Capote was clearly the master. Regret ably, he dined out on more stories than he recorded on paper. There is no doubt that he was privy to many of the secrets of the rich and famous, some of whom he betrayed by writing thinly disguised portraits of them when he published excerpts from his unfinished novel, *Answered Prayers*.

One night in Key West in 1969, Capote told an astonishing story that he claimed was going to appear as an

entire chapter in his upcoming novel. Listening with eager ears were Tennessee Williams and another author, James Leo Herlihy, Stanley Mills Haggart, and the author of this book.

All biographers assume that Marilyn and Jackie Kennedy never met, although they occasionally shared the bed of the same man, namely, President Kennedy.

Jackie had met the handsome young politician in May of 1951, and by the time she'd married him and moved into the White House, she was well aware of her husband's affairs with other women, including Marilyn. Jackie called it "the curse of being married to a Kennedy man."

She always warned her husband not to humiliate her by publicly parading"your whores in front of me." Watching on television in Virginia, she'd heard Marilyn sing "Happy Birthday" to her husband in the most outrageous fashion. Jackie had wisely skipped the event. "It was like Marilyn was making love to Jack in front of forty million viewers," Jackie said.

It is not known how Jackie learned of Marilyn's threat to call a press conference and announce her affairs with the President and with Bobby. But she did. Through Peter Lawford's intervention, Jackie was given Marilyn's private phone number, and she placed a late-night call to her. The two women agreed to meet at a certain date and time at Capote's apartment in Manhattan. The author had already promised Jackie that he'd host the event.

With Bolaños seated beside her, Marilyn flew from the West Coast to New York, checking into the Hotel Carlyle, site of her earlier trysts with the President.

In Key West when he was relaying the details of this secret rendezvous, Capote was deliberately vague about the exact date of the confrontation between Jackie and Marilyn. It had occurred sometime during July of 1962. He did reveal the agreed-upon time of 10pm.

Capote claimed that Marilyn arrived first, looking "camera ready" in a white satin gown with a white sable, even though it was summer. Jackie, according to Capote, arrived twenty minutes later and wore a plain black and severely tailored business suit.

Marilyn sat on a sofa opposite Jackie, who preferred Capote's favorite armchair. "Marilyn oozed charm, but Jackie was distant," Capote recalled.

After social pleasantries were exchanged, Jackie asked Capote to excuse himself while they conducted private business. He said that he retreated to his bedroom with a bot le, and before the evening ended, he had a few more drinks. Eventually, he drifted into sleep.

A loud pounding on his door woke him up around 1:30am. Opening the door, he confronted a hysterical Marilyn, her makeup smeared. She, too, or so it appeared, had been drinking heavily. The First Lady had left the apartment.

"It's all over!" Marilyn sobbed to Capote. As best as he could ascertain, Marilyn had agreed to call off the threatened press conference. She also said that Jackie had forgiven her for her affair with her husband, saying that "only a cadaver can resist Jack when he turns on the charm."

Jackie's icy façade "melted" at some point in the night as she begged Marilyn not to publicly humiliate her children in front of the world. She also pleaded with Marilyn not to make John Jr. and Caroline the victims of a divorce. According to Marilyn, Jackie even spoke of how John-John's face "lights up when his daddy walks into a room."

Marilyn, who had only days to live, promised that she would never hold that press conference.

One of Capote's biographers, who doesn't want his name revealed, tried to confirm the details associated with this story before actually printing it. As a means to that end, he hired a private detective. That biographer later refused to answer questions about the date of the alleged meeting between Marilyn and Jackie. But what that author did confirm was that Marilyn, on a summer night not specified, left the Hotel Carlyle around 9:30pm and was ushered into an unidentified limousine, not the hotel's usual car service. Jackie was also in New York that night to attend a charity event, but she called and cancelled her appearance at the late minute, citing flu symptoms.

There were no paparazzi to record where the two most famous female icons of the 20th century went on that historic night, which adds veracity to Capote's account, although the Secret Service had to be aware of Jackie's whereabouts. The detective, according to the biographer, concluded that "in all possibility" Capote appeared to be telling the truth.

Back in Key West at the house of Tennessee Williams, the playwright kissed Capote and wished him a good night. When Tennessee shut the door and turned to his other guests, he said, "I think we have to entertain the possibility that Truman is telling the truth. Even if he's lying to us, it still makes a hell of a yarn."

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Frank Sinatra invited Marilyn to the Cal-Neva Lodge shortly before she died. In Hollywood legend, it became known as "The Lost Weekend," the name taken from the Ray Milland movie about alcoholism for which that star won the Best Actor Oscar in 1945. Sinatra owned a percentage of Cal-Neva, which was billed as "Heaven in the High Sierras." Straddling the Nevada/California border, its gambling casinos were inside Nevada, its restaurant and hotel accommodations in California. Sinatra was appearing in the resort's main showroom that weekend, with backup support by entertainers Buddy Greco and Roberta Linn.

As a stockholder, Sinatra could invite any guest he wanted to the Cal-Neva Lodge, giving that person the best suites. "I felt I had to protect her," he told friends. He never made it clear if that meant protecting her from her self-destructive tendencies, or protecting her from a person or persons who meant to harm her.

On July 27, 1962, Sinatra sent his private plane, *Christina*, to Los Angeles to pick up Marilyn, along with Peter and Pat Lawford, flying them to Lake Tahoe and Cal-Neva. Lawford was invited, although Sinatra, for various reasons, was still "pissed off" at him. Although Pat didn't really want to go, Lawford persuaded her. "Turning down Frank would be like ignoring an invitation from the Pope."

"During the weekend, I put my anger toward Lawford on hold," Sinatra told Dean Martin. "But we won't exactly be hanging out together."

Once at Cal-Neva, Marilyn learned that she'd been tricked. She later protested, "It was just a ruse to get me out of town. I found out that Bobby had flown into Los Angeles for a brief visit and had checked into the Beverly Hills Hotel. I guess there was a fear that I'd barge in and demand to see him."

At Cal-Neva, Sinatra arranged for Marilyn to be lodged in the luxurious chalet #52, and he asked to be alone with her there. It is not known what they said to each other, although he did suggest to Patricia Lawford that the subject of marriage came up.

She obviously had marriage on her mind, having already agreed to remarry DiMaggio and also to wed Jose Bolaños after he returned to Los Angeles from Mexico City. She was even holding onto the very remote possibility that Bobby would divorce Ethel and marry her. She'd once told Jeanne Carmen, "I'll never get over my dream of marrying Frank."

Sinatra told the Lawfords, "Marilyn is a total mess. She's going over Niagara Falls without a barrel. I'm going to call her psychiatrist and give him hell," a reference to Dr. Greenson, of course. After his second meeting with Marilyn, Sinatra told the Lawfords, "She should be put in a sanitarium."

He also told them, "I can't cut her loose. If it had been any other dame, except Ava, I would have dumped her by now. But Marilyn gives me guilt feelings. I don't know why."

When DiMaggio heard that Marilyn was a guest at Cal-Neva, he immediately dropped everything and flew to be by her side. He didn't trust her hosts. But Sinatra had left instructions to bar DiMaggio from the premises.

DiMaggio had told friends, "If Sinatra doesn't want her, why doesn't he let her alone? He's only fucking up her mind. And she's also mixed up with gangsters at the place." He no doubt had been told that mob boss Sam Giancana and his henchmen were also guests at the lodge.

According to Nevada state law, Giancana, as a convicted criminal, was not supposed to set foot in any gambling casino. In spite of that (or in defiance of that), Sinatra sent his private plane back to Los Angeles to pick up the mobster. When Patricia spotted Giancana in the lobby, she told her husband that she wanted to fly back home, but he prevailed upon her to stay.

"That's all I need," she said. "To have my picture taken with some Mafia boss."

Once word reached the FBI that Giancana was in residence at the Cal-Neva, undercover FBI agents arrived. Lawford said, "They were easy to spot. I could spot an FBI agent a mile away."

The resort's bell captain, Ray Langford, had been instructed to tell DiMaggio that there was no more room at the inn. Langford did help him book a room, however, at the nearby Silver Crest Motor Lodge. Langford also pretended that he didn't know Marilyn's room number and that the reception staff could not put a call through to her, even though DiMaggio insisted that it was an emergency.

"She was really unkempt, and often showed up at the night club with no makeup," Buddy Greco claimed. "Most of the guests didn't even know it was *the* Marilyn Monroe. She tried to hide her bad hair with a scarf. She was boozing it real bad that weekend. I heard from Peter she was also taking Nembutal and Seconal."

At Cal-Neva, Marilyn chatted with Gloria, wife of restaurateur Mike Romanoff. "Marilyn told me that she'd had so many barbiturates that she had to take more and more of the pills for them to have any effect on her body. Her combination of pills and liquor seemed lethal to me."

For some reason, Marilyn still considered Patricia Kennedy Lawford one of her best girl friends. With her husband not invited, Patricia arranged to meet privately with Marilyn in her chalet.

After Marilyn's death, Patricia often spoke of her final dialogue with the fading star. She relayed her conversation not only to Peter, but to Sinatra and to her family back in Hyannis Port.

The dialogue that follows is “as remembered,” and therefore the words are not exact. But here is the essence of a transcription of the exchange that transpired between the two famous women:

MARILYN: *I’ve been used and abused by your brothers, both Jack and Bobby, and I don’t think I could let them get away with it. Each of them at dif erent times promised to leave either Jackie or Ethel and marry me*.
PATRICIA: *Let’s come to our senses. There’s no way in hell that Jack or Bobby would leave their wives and destroy their political futures by getting divorced and marrying you. Jack wants to run for the presidency again in 1964. He wants Bobby to run as his vice president. They plan to dump Lyndon Johnson. Bobby then wants to run for president in 1968. Please, be reasonable. They can’t give that up, either one of them, to marry you*.
MARILYN: *Then why did both of them make promises they didn’t plan to keep?*
PATRICIA: *When horny guys are trying to seduce a beautiful blonde goddess, be it Lana Turner or Jayne Mansfield, they’ll say anything. Promise anything. Marilyn, let’s face it: You’ve been around the block. You’ve been in Hollywood long enough to know what the score is*.
MARILYN: *But I fell in love with them, especially Bobby. He was the best, the most tender. Jack was always in a hurry*.
PATRICIA: You’ll have to get over it. Bobby and Jack are racing through their lives. They’ve got big plans, not only for themselves but their country.They have to give priority to their own ambitions and plans. They can’t let anything, or anybody, stand in their way.
MARILYN: *A promise is a promise*.
PATRICIA: *What does a promise from a man mean? When I married Peter, he promised me he’d be faithful. That vow lasted for less than twelve hours.Just because a man promises something over pillow talk is valid until he rises from the bed, puts on his pants, zippers up, and heads out the door*.
MARILYN: *Sam Giancana doesn’t like Bobby and doesn’t care much for Jack either. Because of his influence in Chicago, Sam claims he won the election for Jack. And now Bobby is pulling a double cross, trying to get him put in jail. He wants revenge on them. Sam said he would privately arrange* a press conference if I wanted to expose Jack and Bobby.
PATRICIA: *Don’t be out of your mind. You’re playing with fire. Don’t trust Giancana to do anything. He’d use you and then have you knocked of the following day. Don’t you see how dangerous it is for you to hang out with Giancana? In fact, I’m leaving Frank’s god damn hotel just because he has let Giancana check in. Run from him! You’ll regret it if you don’t. He could have you killed!*
MARILYN: *Sam would never do that. He’s actually quite sweet and cuddly when he wants to be*.
PATRICIA: *I’m sure Hitler was, too, with his dog and Eva Braun, in that order. You don’t need Giancana, Bobby, or Jack. Peter told me you’re having a wonderful fling with this hot Mexican screenwriter, José Bolaños. Is that true?*
MARILYN: *Yes, even in the midst of all my troubles, a girl needs to satisfy her sexual needs, and José is the man to do it. He’s incredible*.
PATRICIA: *Then settle down with him*.
MARILYN: *But I want more. I wanted to be First Lady like Jackie*.
PATRICIA: *ow you’re dreaming. Don’t threaten my brothers and don’t get involved with Giancana any more than you already have. I’ve lived around powerful men such as my father ever since I was born. You are a mere movie star. You don’t control empires. You can’t pick up a phone and order one of your henchmen to have someone killed*.
MARILYN: *I bet Bobby sent you here just to scare me*.
PATRICIA: *Perhaps he did. Someone had to*.
MARILYN: *GET OUT! I don’t trust you*.
PATRICIA: *I’m leaving, but you were duly warned*.
MARILYN: *I’m not afraid. I’m Marilyn Monroe. o one would dare harm me because I’m too high profile*.
PATRICIA: *Being high profile won’t save you. Jack is the most famous man in the world, and every day of his life, he’s faced with the possibility of assassination*.

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Giancana called Marilyn’s chalet and demanded that she come over, although she was too drunk and drugged to do so. Nonetheless, she obeyed his command. He found her in a “dizzy blonde state,” as he put it.

Somewhere during the course of a long drunken evening, one of his henchmen photographed a nude Marilyn

on all fours, with the mobster riding her piggyback. Even though she was naked, Giancana retained his shorts.

Photographer Billy Woodfield developed the film in his darkroom. He later said, “Marilyn looked unconscious and dazed. I gathered she was sexually abused by Giancana and his henchmen. She may have been half out of her mind when those pictures were taken.”

Woodfield showed the pictures to Sinatra. He was furious. “They make me want to vomit. Burn them.”

So far as it is known, no negative exists of these ghastly pictures, all of them perhaps destroyed, but maybe not.

Giancana later told Sinatra, “I fucked Marilyn last night. She’s lousy in the hay, as you know. I just don’t know what all the excitement is about.”

She got the last word, telling Jeanne Carmen, “Sam may be a big man in Chicago, but he’s nothing in the bedroom. Sometimes, when these bigshots get in the saddle, they’re not such big men after all.”

Johnny Roselli put through a call to Giancana at the lodge. The FBI recorded him telling his boss, “You sure get your rocks off fucking the same broad as the Kennedy brothers, don’t you?”

On the following foggy Sunday morning, DiMaggio from the grounds of his motel, could look down at the pool at the Cal-Neva. Marilyn stood at the edge of the pool, dropping her robe to reveal that she was totally nude. She had not slept all night.

She looked up at the foothill above the rustic lodge. In *The Assassination of Marilyn Monroe*, Donald H. Wolfe wrote, “Standing there in the mist, staring back was Joe DiMaggio. It was the last time he would see her alive.”

When he tried to enter the grounds of the Cal-Neva Lodge later that morning, Sinatra’s guards turned him away.

Back in her chalet, Marilyn overdosed on pills and placed a last-minute call to the operator, who summoned an ambulance. She was rushed to the local hospital, where her stomach was pumped.

Hearing the news, Sinatra rushed to her bedside and ordered the best medical attention available in that part of Nevada. The chief doctor pronounced her out of danger, and she was released that afternoon into Sinatra’s custody. He was told that Marilyn should be placed under constant supervision.

Hours later, Sinatra called Lawford. “If she stays here any longer, she’s going to die. I don’t want her to die on these premises. We have enough problems as it is with Giancana here.”

A guest spotted Marilyn leaving the resort with Lawford and being helped onto Sinatra’s private plane. Patricia had decided to fly to Reno, where she would make connections to return to Hyannis Port.

The pilot of Sinatra’s plane, Frank Lieto, later claimed that Lawford had an argument with him en route back to Los Angeles. “I had a dispute with Peter when he demanded I land at the Santa Monica Airport. I told him it was after midnight and the airport was closed. But he told me—can you believe this guy?—to land in the dark. I ignored him and flew to the Los Angeles Airport.”

He also said that Marilyn got off the plane and walked barefoot to a waiting limousine. “But Lawford didn’t have a ride, so I volunteered to drive him back to Santa Monica.”

“We were five minutes from his house when he demanded that I stop at a booth so that he could make a phone call that lasted for at least twenty minutes.”

It was later learned that Lawford was fully aware that his private home was bugged. His call, apparently, was to someone at the White House.

Marilyn would later tell her masseur, Ralph Roberts, “I hated that weekend. Sam Giancana was there. He threatened me and did other things. I felt like I was his prisoner. I plan to get even with the Kennedys. And I’m going to destroy Sam Giancana, too, after what he did to me. I’m no longer afraid of him. Joe was nearby, but the bastards wouldn’t let him get in to see me.”

Although Giancana may have said that he’d support Marilyn if she held a press conference denouncing the Kennedys, he’d later learn through a wire tap that if she did that, she also planned to tell many of the mobster’s dirty secrets as well. “That press conference must never take place,” he told Johnny Roselli.

Senator George Smathers claimed “During Marilyn Monroe’s final days, it seemed that everybody wanted to silence her big mouth. She was talking too much and threatening too many empires—not only the future of Jack and Bobby, but also the evil empire of that mobster, Sam Giancana, who would sell his own mother down the river for a buck.

”Dr. Ralph Greenson privately discussed his most famous client with friends. “It’s as if she’s trying to destroy herself. But in her self-destruction, she plans to take some gentlemen down with her—not Sinatra exactly, but definitely Sam Giancana and those Kennedy brothers. She wants revenge for the real or imagined harm they’ve caused her.”

At Cal-Neva, a local newspaper reporter approached Sinatra and asked him about his relationship with Marilyn. Apparently, he’d heard that she had been a recent guest.

Sinatra’s reply was sarcastic. “Who? Miss Monroe? Reminds me of a saintly young girl I went to school with

who later became a nun. *This is a recording."*

When Marilyn heard what he'd said about her, she suggested that he "can look me up in *Who's Who."*

The status of the Cal-Neva Lodge went downhil after that infamous weekend. Within a year of its opening, Cal-Neva skidded into trouble with the Nevada Gaming Control Board. Sinatra decided not to defend himself. "No useful purpose would come of it," he told friends. "I'd lose anyway." After his no-show at one of their hearings, the resort's gambling license was revoked on September 11, 1963, partly because Giancana had stayed there. In the after-math, Sinatra was ordered to divest himself of all his holdings in Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas.

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"It is my feeling that Marilyn looked forward to her tomorrows."

—Eunice Murray

In her last interview, this time with Richard Meryman for *Life* magazine, Marilyn took us inside her thoughts at the time.

"It might be a kind of relief to be finished. It's sort of like I don't know what kind of yard dash you're running, but then you're at the finish line and you sort of sigh—you've made it. But you never have, you have to start all over again."

She returned to her Brentwood home on July 30, and faced important calls, each of them viewed as "life changing."

The earliest call was to Bobby at the Justice Department. Perhaps it was only through the intervention of Patricia that he picked up the receiver. He'd been avoiding her for weeks. Records at the Justice Department show the call lasted for eight minutes.

Neither party ever commented on what was said, although Marilyn later told Jeanne Carmen that "Bobby Kennedy is a first-rate bastard." Obviously, he had not given in to her demands, which involved a face-to-face confrontation and a full explanation of why she'd been dropped so suddenly.

Shortly after Bobby ended his call to Marilyn, his younger brother called her. Caught up in the hysteria of trying to launch a political career, Teddy had spoken to his sister, Patricia. Obviously, she'd reported on the Cal-Neva weekend, and he seemed genuinely concerned about Marilyn's well-being. He suggested she might want to "dry out" at a clinic and do whatever was necessary to maintain her health. He seemed so worried about her well-being that, touched by his kindness, she cried.

He promised that he'd stay in touch, and that they'd secretly meet when he next flew to California or during her next trip to New York.

The next call was from Joe DiMaggio. After launching a tirade against Sinatra, he told her he seriously wanted a reconciliation and brought up the subject of a remarriage, which he had once resisted.

That call led to another, and soon they were speaking every three or four hours. She seized upon the idea of a remarriage and pressed forward with it, even going so far as to set the date of August 15 for their upcoming marriage. The venue would be in her garden, beside her pool.

Harry Hall, one of DiMaggio's most trusted friends, said that Joltin' Joe was furious at what Giancana and Sinatra had put Marilyn through at Cal-Neva. "Joe heard stories of sex parties and of photographs taken of a nude Marilyn in humiliating positions. I've never seen him so enraged."

At the time, DiMaggio was working as a representative of V.H. Monette, Inc. a company that supplied American Military post exchanges. He was drawing a salary of $100,000 a year, considered very good pay in 1962. But he told Malmore Monet e, the company's president, that he was quitting and was going to spend all his time "rescuing Marilyn—I still love her very much. I've talked to her on the phone. She's going to remarry me. We'll have a fresh start."

As Marilyn planned their wedding during the final hours of her life, she wrote a letter, never mailed, to DiMaggio:

"Dear Joe,

If I can only succeed in making you happy—I will have succeeded in the bigest (sic) and most dif icult thing there is—that is to make one person completely happy. You happiness means my happiness."

On her first day back, Marilyn also placed a call to Bolaños in Mexico City. He had not accompanied her to Cal-Neva, but had instead returned to Mexico for some unfinished business. He seemed eager to return to Los Angeles and began to make plans.

She'd almost forgotten that in her drugged, drunken condition, she had agreed to marry him, too. But that was before her proposal of a remarriage from DiMaggio. She didn't know what to do, and after speaking to Bolaños, talked to Carmen about it.

"You juggle oodles of boyfriends at the same time," Marilyn said, "How do you do it?"

"So do you, but we're talking marriage here—that's slightly different. My suggestion is that you marry Joe and make Jose your off-the-record boyfriend. That's what most Hollywood wives do anyway. You can stash Jose at your apartment on Doheny and run back and forth between the two. Besides, Joe will be out of town a lot on business."

"Do you think I could get away with it?" Marilyn asked. "I'm tempted."

"You're an actress, darling," Carmen said. "You'd be getting two great studs in bed. They're terrific lays."

Marilyn looked skeptical. "How in the fuck would you know that?"

Pausing for a minute, Carmen said, "You told me, darling…remember?Also, did you forget about the day I saw you and Joltin' Joe in action while I hid out in that cramped closet?"

Carmen still remains the best source of information about Marilyn's affairs. As she put it, "Marilyn loved her sexual conquests, and also wanted people to be there to witness them, especially if it were with one of the Kennedy brothers. To her, that made her affairs even more fun."

After Carmen left, Marilyn spent part of the day weighing various business offers that had come in.

An Italian company in Rome wanted her to sign a contract for a four-picture deal, for which she'd be paid $250,000 for each movie.

The Sands in Las Vegas offered her $100,000 a week to star in a revue called *Gentlemen STILL Prefer Blondes*.

Arthur Jacobs was also in discussions with her to star in *I Love Louisa*, with music by composer Jule Styne, who was also promoting a musical version of Betty Smith's best-selling novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. A non-musical adaptation of that novel had already been made into a successful Fox film in 1945. She'd scheduled a meeting with Styne in New York for August 9. He was also in talks with Frank Sinatra for his possible role as the male lead.

There was also a proposal for the filming of *What a Way to Go*, a dark comedy starring a woman who goes through many changes as each of her seven husbands die right after their respective weddings. Her husbands were to include, among others, Sinatra, Dean Martin, Gene Kelly, and Paul Newman.

What a Way to Go would be released two years after Marilyn's death, starring Shirley MacLaine, who once again took over a role originally intended for Marilyn.

Gene Kelly also wanted to meet with Marilyn to discuss plans for a big Technicolor musical he was dreaming about.

Marilyn busily began filling in her September calendar, planning to attend the opening of a new Irving Berlin musical, *Mr. President*, directed by Joshua Logan. She'd spoken to Logan on the phone, and he'd told her that both JFKand Jackie would be guests of honor for its debut at the National Theater in Washington. Marilyn ordered a $6,000 dress from Jean Louis. "Make sure I'll make a more spectacular entrance than Jackie in some old Oleg Cassini sack."

On July 31, Marilyn invited her makeup artists, Whitey Snyder and his girlfriend, Marjorie Plecher, over for champagne and caviar to celebrate their upcoming wedding. She told Plecher, "Your boyfriend has gone over every inch of my body."

Over her second glass of bubbly, Marilyn shared the latest gossip with Whitey and Marjorie about a change in management at 20th Century Fox. "Two nights ago I picked up the phone. Guess who's back at Fox? Darryl F. Zanuck, my old nemesis. He told me that he's in charge again and here was my final chance to sample that big dick of his. I didn't accept that invitation, but I did tell him that I'm going to become known as the most punctual actress in Hollywood."

Unlike other reports by other observers of Marilyn at the time, Snyder claimed that "she radiated charm and beauty and looked in good health."

Other than Carmen, Robert Slatzer remained her other major confidant. She wanted to see him after her return, but received a phone call from him that he was in Columbus, Ohio, working on a wildlife TV series.

"She was looking forward to going back to work," Slatzer later recalled. "She was also confident that things would go better for her at Fox. But she said matters with the Kennedys were far from resolved. She'd heard from Lawford that Bobby was flying to San Francisco. She said she was going to try to reach him there, and that she was going to try to force him to fly to Los Angeles to meet with her."

"When he comes here, I'm going to warn him that I might go public unless he shapes up," Marilyn threatened.

"That's the worst thing you could do," Slatzer told her.

This would be the last time Slatzer would ever speak to Marilyn. He was with four friends, two of whom confirmed that they, too, talked briefly with Marilyn over the phone. One man, in particular, had sent her a play

called *This God Bu$ine$$*. She told him she liked it very much, and thought the lead role would be suitable for her. She invited him to come to Los Angeles with Slatzer when he returned from Ohio.

Before ringing off with Slatzer, she told him that "Paula Strasberg is out of my life. I'm through with her. I've made up my mind to rid myself of people who are exploiting me. This is the mature Marilyn Monroe, no longer a waif, no longer a victim. I'm also going to get rid of Pat Newcomb and Dr. Greenson. Eunice Murray is also out the door any hour now. I'm replacing Newcomb with Rupert Allan now that he's no longer sucking Grace Kelly's breasts."

In her final call to Allan, she found him sick with a bad case of bronchitis. "Hell," she said, "I wanted you to set up a press conference for me Monday morning."

On that same Wednesday, Peter Levathes from Fox visited Marilyn at her home, talking over her new status at his studio and her vast increase in salary.

"I don't want to work with Cukor," she said.

"He's out," Levanthes assured her. "I've talked to Jean Negulesco. He told me you and he got along beautifully when he helmed you in *How to Marry a Millionaire*. He also called you 'a hurricane of glamour.'" Levanthes went on to tell her that *Something's Got to Give* could not resume shooting until Dean Martin finished his latest picture, *Toys in the Attic*.

Roberts also came that Wednesday to massage Marilyn. He encountered a hostile Eunice. "She looked at me with real venom, like a snake about to at ack. She told me, 'I had hoped that Marilyn had gotten rid of you.'"

Actually, it was Eunice who Marilyn wanted to dump. The perfect opportunity came when Eunice announced that she wanted to go on vacation on August 6 with her sister and brother-in-law.

When she informed Marilyn of this, Marilyn seemed delighted. She wrote Eunice a check for a month's wages. As she handed it to her housekeeper, she told her, "I don't want you to come back in September. I'm making other arrangements."

"You mean, I'm fired?" asked a stunned Eunice.

"If you wish to put it that way," Marilyn said. "Actually, I don't know if I'll even be here myself. Your last day of work will be this coming Saturday. By Sunday morning, I want you out of the house."

Eunice could barely control her rage, as she had often said, "I have found a job for life."

When Marilyn was involved in the living room, Eunice called two of her relatives, admitting, "I am bubbling over with fury, but trying to keep it under control. If it's the last thing I ever do, I'm going to get my revenge on that bitch."

That Wednesday night, she invited Michael Song, hair stylist to both John and Robert Kennedy, over for champagne and caviar.

Song thought she merely wanted her hair restyled, but actually, she spent her time with him pumping him for information. "I kept telling her I didn't know anything. But she wanted to know what other women Bobby and Jack were seeing, shit like that. She knew I was being evasive. She tried to win me over by telling me the Kennedys were using me like they were using her. That wasn't true in my case. They were wonderful to me."

After Marilyn's death, Song encountered Bobby. Bobby said to him,"Thank you for defending the Kennedys—that's good. I appreciate your not telling Marilyn anything indiscreet."

"I was stunned," Song said. "I had no idea Marilyn was taping me. And I don't know how Bobby acquired a copy of the tape."

Whitey Snyder, Marilyn's makeup expert in life and in death

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On August 2, Marilyn spent three hours at Frank's Nursery in Santa Monica, wanting to create a lusher landscape for her new home in Brentwood. She was especially fond of flowering trees, and she wanted more shrubbery in the garden before her anticipated wedding to DiMaggio in her back yard, with just a few friends invited.

That afternoon, she had a session after lunch with Dr. Greenson, first at his home and later, an extension of that session at her house.

Eunice later recalled that some of that time was spent in Marilyn's bedroom where sounds indicated that she was having sex with her psychiatrist. A snoop, Eunice listened at the door to the bedroom, as she always did when Marilyn took a man into her sparsely furnished boudoir.

That night, Marilyn drove over to the Lawford mansion in Santa Monica. At this point, Patricia and Peter were married in name only, and both of them were having affairs outside of their marriage.

A friend of Lawford's, Richard Livingston, recalled that Marilyn showed up wearing a pair of lime green hip huggers and a shocking pink silk blouse. Her bare midriff was exposed, revealing a scar from a gallbladder operation. She'd already been drinking heavily before she arrived, and at the party, she walked around with her own bottle of champagne.

"You look like you haven't seen the sun in a month of Sundays," Livingston said to her. "Why not a day out by your own pool?"

"You're right," she said. "I could use some color…and a man."

"Don't tell me that Marilyn Monroe, the most sought after woman on the planet, can't find a man."

"Something like that," she said before Lawford arrived for a private talk on the terrace. He told her that Bobby, Ethel, and the kids would be arriving in San Francisco early the following night.

"Has he agreed to fly down to see me?" she asked."

Not yet," he said. "Forgive me, but you really seem to have the hots for Bobby. I'd love to know what he's like in bed. I've had Jack. All of us have had Jack. Is Bobby bigger than Jack?"

"God damn it, Peter," she said. "You're drunk. I'm not going to talk about size.

"Back in Brentwood, she stood out by her pool, listening to the antique bronze wind chimes Carl Sandburg had given her. When the winds blew in from the Pacific, they lent a soothing cadence to everyone but Maf. When he heard the chimes, her dog barked, and she had to put him in the guest house so he wouldn't keep everybody awake all night.

It didn't matter for her. In spite of the Nembutal, she faced another sleepless night. At one point, she decided she didn't want to get married again. Joe DiMaggio, Jose Bolaños—each candidate for marriage carried problems,

and more problems. It was all too much for her.

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On Friday, August 3, the westbound airplane carrying RFK, Ethel, and four of their children touched down in San Francisco. Bobby remained in the city, and Ethel and the children were driven to the ranch of John Bates outside Gilroy, some eighty miles southeast of San Francisco, where Bobby was scheduled to join them. The American Bar Association had paid for Bobby's suite at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. He was scheduled to address the bar that Monday.

Even before his plane landed, RFK knew that the columnist Dorothy Kilgallen, whom Sinatra had nicknamed "the chinless wonder," was close to exposing Marilyn's affairs with both Bobby and the President.

That very morning in the *ew York Journal-American* she'd written "Marilyn Monroe is proving vastly alluring to a handsome gentleman who is a bigger name than Joe DiMaggio in his heyday. So don't write off Marilyn as finished."

Calls from both Kilgallen and rival columnist Walter Winchel went unanswered at Marilyn's home.

According to Eunice, Marilyn spent most of August 3 puttering around the house, deciding where she was going to place the furniture that was being shipped from Mexico. Now that her dispute with Fox was settled, she seemed at ease, although her mood would change drastically by the end of the day.

She placed a total of six urgent calls to the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco in a failed attempt to reach Bobby. None of the calls was returned.

Jeanne Carmen came over for lunch, and she and Marilyn got into an argument about Bobby. "I can't believe a smart little stud like Bobby Kennedy would propose marriage," Carmen said.

Marilyn revealed that she'd had her own phone tapped and offered to play back Bobby's exact words.

"She played that tape," Carmen said. "I couldn't believe my ears, but it was Bobby's voice.

"The memory of this tape appeared in the book *Jeanne Carmen, My Wild, Wild Life:*

BOBBY: *When I run for President, I'm going to need someone at my side who knows how to handle the media.*
MARILYN: *What are you saying?*
BOBBY: *I'm saying I want to marry you, Marilyn. I want you to be at my side. To share the spotlight with me. I want you to be my First Lady. You'll be better than Jackie. We'll make a team that the world has never seen before.*
MARILYN: *First Lady? Me?*
BOBBY: *Yes, you, Marilyn. You'll be the greatest.*
MARILYN: *Well, I don't know, Bobby. I'll have to think about it. You're still married. The press will make a scandal of it. They turned into vultures when Arthur left his wife for me.*
BOBBY: *Go ahead. Let them. I don't give a damn what the press says. I'm in love with you and the rest of the world can go to hell.*
MARILYN: *Bobby, are you sure?*
BOBBY: *Yes, I'm sure. I don't care what the world thinks. They can't throw us in jail for being in love. ow answer me. Will you be my First Lady?* Will you marry me?
MARILYN: *Yes, I'll marry you. I'll be your wife. I love you, Bobby, I really do.*

Many persons who knew Marilyn claimed that she'd never have gone through with that press conference. But after a long talk with Marilyn, Carmen said, "This was a new and different woman from before. I've never seen her so determined. She was serious all right…deadly serious. She was like a hurt little girl bent on revenge."

After Carmen left, Marilyn placed a call to Anne Karger, the mother of musician Fred Karger, her long lost love. "I've always loved Fred," Marilyn said. "I'll always detest that bitch, Jane Wyman, for taking Fred away from me. She should have stayed married to Ronald Reagan."

She shocked Anne when she told her that she was going to marry Bobby Kennedy.

"Oh, Marilyn," the woman said. "Surely you don't mean that. He's pretty much married now and the Father of the Year."

"If he loves me, like he says he does, he'll marry me."

With the prospect of a more likely husband, Joe DiMaggio, and the hope of a renewed life and career, Marilyn, at long last, was ready to break from Dr. Greenson.

When Greenson came by, she did not dismiss him, but told her there would be a long interruption in his services, as she planned to remarry and her future plans were uncertain.

Ethel and Robert F. Kennedy arriving at the San Francisco Airport just prior to Marilyn's death

Ralph Roberts said, "Marilyn told me that her dependence on Greenson was over. He not only wanted to get rid of me, but get rid of a lot of her friends, and she wasn't going to stand for it. She felt that Greenson was trying to separate her from Joe, the man she planned to remarry."

Norman Rosten, the poet, remembered a call from her in the afternoon. He recalled that the talk was "rambling but pleasant. She was very much concerned about her future and looking forward to spending part of the autumn in New York. She urged me to come over and use her pool."

Her words that would always remain with him were, "Let's all start to live before we get old."

Pat Newcomb, Peter Lawford, and Marilyn, along with an unknown young man (rumored to have been a "trick" of Lawford's), were spotted dining at Frascati Restaurant in Beverly Hills.

Billy Travilla, a former lover and dress designer for Marilyn, spotted them in the restaurant and went over to say hell o. He later recalled, "I couldn't believe my eyes. Marilyn looked awful. Her hair was matted and her skin was lifeless. She stared at me and didn't seem to know who I was. Finally, she blurted out, "It's Billy! Billy is the guy who created that pleated white dress I wore over the subway grate in *The Seven Year Itch."*

Over dinner that night, Newcomb complained that she was suffering from a bad case of bronchitis and was considering entering the hospital the following morning.

Marilyn invited her to spend the night in Brentwood and "to dry out in the morning sun by my pool."

Lawford invited Marilyn over for a late night gathering at his home in Santa Monica. "Warren Beatty will be there, and I know he's dying to meet you. Haven't you wanted to fuck him? Every woman in Hollywood, and half the men, want to get into that guy's pants. So do I."

He seemed to be holding Beatty out as "bait," and perhaps trying to induce her into a new romance to take her mind off Bobby.

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Driving Marilyn to his home, Lawford told her that Beatty was seriously dating Natalie Wood, "but she's no real competition for you. When stacked up against you, Natalie is a boy."

What happened that night at Lawford's has never been fully documented. All that Beatty would admit to an interviewer was, "I did see her the night before she died," but he refused to add any additional details.

Natalie was more helpful, remembering a drugged Marilyn wandering about saying, *"Thirty-six, thirty-six thirty-six. It's all over. "*

Later, Natalie recalled that the experience haunted her. "I don't want to join that long gray line of faded movie stars who are left with yellowed scrapbooks and memories."

After Natalie heard about Marilyn's death, she phoned her friends, claiming, "I don't want to end up like Marilyn, dead and alone, taking too many pills."

Although they had not come together before, both Marilyn and Natalie had each worked on the film *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* in 1948.

Marilyn had come very close to working with Beatty in 1960 when Jerry Wald at Fox was preparing a screen version of William Inge's *A Loss of Roses*. Wald wanted to star Monroe with Beatty as her leading man. But both Wald and Marilyn would be dead by the time the film was retitled and released in 1963as *The Stripper*, starring Joanne Woodward and Richard Beymer.

Lawford remembered Marilyn "outrageously flirting with Beatty during her short time at the party."

"When I met her," according to Beatty, "it was like I'd been all night in a whorehouse and I staggered out the next morning and met Marilyn Monroe."

As Beatty's biographer, Ellis Amburn, put it, "The allusions to whores and Monroe was indicative. Evidently, too much of a good thing, even sex, palled. Every burnout was looming, and it had already overwhelmed Monroe."

After surrendering Beatty to Natalie, and before leaving Lawford's party, Marilyn spoke privately with her host. Lawford was informed that, "You'd better get Bobby down here tomorrow—or else." She also thanked him for the"diversion of Warren. I'll put him onthe back burner for another day. Right now, I've got bigger game tocook."

Later that night, Lawford got through to his brother-in-law, RFK. No one knows exactly what they talked about, but Lawford indicated that he told Bobby that he could no longer contain Marilyn, and that she was demanding to see him and no one else. "You've got to slip into Los Angeles—or else!"

"Okay, fuck it!" Bobby yelled atLawford. "If you can't handle her, Iwill."

Taking a taxi back to Brent-wood, Marilyn discovered that Newcomb had gone to sleep in a room adjoining her bedroom. Marilyn hoped for sleep herself, as Dr. Engelberg had given her twenty-five Nembutal capsules to help her get through the night.

Natalie Wood with Warren Beatty

But sleep was not to come.

Some anonymous woman from San Francisco kept calling Marilyn until 5:30am. "Leave Bobby alone, you tramp!" she'd say before hanging up.

Marilyn did not believe it was Ethel, but perhaps a woman friend of hers.

The next afternoon, Marilyn told Newcomb, "The whole night was one of terror for me."

A night of even greater terror was about to unfold.

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After a sleepless Friday night, Marilyn finally fell into a drugged coma after dawn on Saturday. Swatches of heavy fabric stapled across her windows kept out the sunlight. When she did wake up, she noticed that the clock on her nightstand registered the time as 10:15am.

She stretched her arms and legs in bed, not wanting to get up. Noises of house repair greeted her.

After her firing at Fox, she was set to make the biggest comeback in the history of show business. The very thought filled her with terror. What if she couldn't pull it off?

Rising slowly, she stumbled nude toward her bathroom. The hot, scorching dog days of summer had descended on Southern California. Such days were to be endured. Autumn and its breezes would eventually come.

Somehow, she felt today might be different from all the rest.

It was August 4, 1962.392

PART SIX

THE FINAL DAY

AUGUST 4, 1962

"Who killed Marilyn Monroe? That's a question."

—Sean O'Casey

The murky, mysterious details of Marilyn's last day have fueled speculation for half a century. Entire books devoted to her murder, contradicting each other, have been printed, some doing no more than muddying the water. Today, nearly all the principals have died, and those who remain, tottering around and senile, aren't talking.

However, in the decade after her murder, many witnesses delivered bombshell revelations, if only on their death beds. Some of the key witnesses, including both Peter Lawford and Eunice Murray, repeatedly changed their original stories, which were complete distortions to begin with.

Other witnesses, separately or together, based on different motives and agendas, colluded in a cover-up.

The accounts of what most eyewitnesses established as their "official versions" can, for the most part, be dismissed as lies. Yet, in several cases, a few people close to the scene actually told the truth, despite the dense fog of deceit surrounding what actually happened that fateful night.

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When the morning sun blazed across the Santa Monica mountains, it suggested that it was going to be a hot, muggy day. At Marilyn's Brentwood home, the eucalyptus trees were like a rustling curtain in the morning winds, which would soon die down to a deadly stillness. Red and purple bougainvillea greeted the sun.

After a sleepless night, Marilyn didn't welcome the sun. Although her career seemed ready to be re-launched, her personal life was in a state of confusion.

Pat Newcomb was still asleep in the adjoining "telephone room," which had a cot, and the house was silent. Eunice Murray hadn't spent the night.

On her bedroom phone, Marilyn placed her first call of the day. It was to Jeanne Carmen, who had been out half the night and desperately wanted her own sleep.

Marilyn told her about being kept awake coping with the crank phone calls, and pondering a remarriage to DiMaggio or a new marriage to Jose Bolaños.

Carmen thanked Marilyn for the set of gold-colored golf clubs she'd sent her for her birthday. They both talked about their golf date on Monday, scheduled for around eleven in the morning. Before ringing off, Marilyn asked her to come over and spend the day with her.

Carmen declined. "Not today of all days," she said. "I've got three *beaux* coming over—at different times, of course—who have promised to give me *big* surprises for my birthday."

"I hope they're not exaggerating how big the surprise is," Marilyn said. "You know how men like to brag."

"These guys are for real," Carmen told her. "They've visited mama before."

"You're lucky," Marilyn said. "I'm the loneliest girl in the world today. Bobby Kennedy is in San Francisco, and I'm going to call him all day until he agrees to fly down and see me. We've got to have it out once and for all."

"Oh, dear one, why don't you take up with someone less controversial, less high profile?" Carmen said. "I met this kid on the beach at Santa Monica—I got to him before Lawford did—and he's god's gift to women. Let me get in touch with him and send him over. He told me he 'can't wait' to meet Marilyn Monroe."

"Perhaps late Sunday afternoon," Marilyn said, "He sounds worth the trouble. So many men aren't, as you, of

all people, know."

Carmen said she had to get back to sleep and would call Marilyn later in the day to see if she got through to Bobby.

Eunice Murray wasn't due to arrive for an hour, but Marilyn's first call of the day came in. It was from her loyal friend and chief supporter among the Hollywood columnists, Sidney Skolsky. He made a date with her to have lunch on Sunday to discuss his script for *The Jean Harlow Story*. "I'm sure Fox will go for it," he assured her. "Thank God you're already a platinum blonde so we won't have to dye your hair."

For Sunday evening, she had accepted an invitation to have dinner with Frank Sinatra and Mike Romanoff.

Marilyn was still making calls when Eunice arrived that morning. Marilyn was arranging a fitting for another Jean Louis dress that she was to wear at the premiere of *Mr. President* in Washington.

She also spoke to Gene Kelly and arranged a meeting scheduled for Monday afternoon to talk about the upcoming film, *What a Way to Go*.

Even though trying to conduct business that day, she couldn't seem to get Bobby off her mind. She placed the first of her calls to the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. As reporter Florabel Muir would discover, before the afternoon ended, Marilyn would place a total of six urgent calls, leaving messages for RFK, which were not returned.

Feeling he would never call her, she phoned Peter Lawford at his beach house. Suffering a hangover, he'd just risen for breakfast. "I know he's in California, and I know he won't see me unless pressure is put on him." She didn't identify who "he" was. "You tell him if he doesn't fly down to see me and talk things over, he'll hear from me at my press conference Monday morning. It'll make headlines around the world, although not of the kind that may help Jack's bid for re-election."

"Marilyn, you wouldn't!" Lawford said. "You of all people have had romances that went sour, or maybe shouldn't have begun in the first place."

"Let me make one thing perfectly clear," she said. "This is my last call. If I don't hear from him no later than six o'clock, watch me on TV. Tell Bobby to tune in. You might also call Jack at the White House. I know he has a busy schedule, but he'll have time to watch me. I plan to look dazzling." She put down the phone.

As Marilyn took her morning coffee, she chatted briefly with Norman Jeffries, Eunice's son-in-law, who was laying Spanish tiles in her kitchen. Since she'd fired Eunice, she also planned to fire Norman because she feared he'd be a spy and would report everything back to his mother-in-law.

Norman later said, "I think Marilyn was desperately sick. I thought something was terribly wrong with her—maybe it was the dope or the liquor or both. She seemed scared out of her mind. I'd never seen her this way before."

Eunice offered to cook Marilyn some breakfast, but she declined. She went outside to pull weeds from the flowers planted around her guest cottage. While doing so, photographer Larry Schiller appeared in the yard. Instead of calling, he'd come by without an appointment.

He'd been one of the photographers who had snapped the nude pictures of her in the swimming pool on the set of *Something's Got to Give*. But he was here this morning on a different matter.

Marilyn had posed for the first edition of Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* in 1954. Hours before her death, Hefner was negotiating for her to pose for a different cover—but this time, with no nude centerfolds inside.

He wanted her to appear on the front cover dressed only in a white fur stole which would conceal her breasts and vagina. However, on the back cover, her rear would be turned to the camera. The fur stole would be draped around her neck, the famous cheeks of her ass completely exposed. Philippe Halsman had once claimed, "Those cheeks seem to wink at the onlooker."

Taken by surprise, Marilyn told Schiller that she was still weighing Hefner's offer. "I'm trying to get away from this sex symbol stuff, and posing for the front and back covers of *Playboy* would put me back right where I was in 1954. I still haven't decided. Come by Monday afternoon. Tell Hugh he will have my answer by then."

At noon, Agnes Flanagan arrived to do Marilyn's hair. Marilyn told her, "I want to look my best for Bobby tonight."

During their hairdressing session, a messenger arrived with a package for her. Eunice brought it in, and Marilyn asked her to open it. It was a soft toy tiger. "Is there a message?" Marilyn asked.

"Nothing," Eunice said. "No card, just nothing."

Flanagan noticed that Marilyn suddenly went through a complete change of mood. She did not know what the significance of the toy tiger was, but Marilyn seemed to know what it meant. Before its arrival, she was preparing herself to see Bobby. But she seemed to have abruptly changed her mind. "Fuck him!" she said, without identifying that "him" meant the Attorney General. She ordered Eunice to bring the phone to her, and she immediately called her masseur, Ralph Roberts, and set up a tentative dinner date with him, asking him to call back at the end of the afternoon to confirm it.

Through all her turmoil, Roberts had remained her confidant, occupying the same position that Roddy McDowal had with Elizabeth Taylor. Eunice and Flanagan could hear what Marilyn said. From the sound of it, it was just idle gossip. Suddenly, he said something that made her furious. "*That cunt!* What a fucking liar. What a double crossing bitch!"

Eunice and Flanagan did not know who Marilyn meant, but they were to find out in half an hour.

A still sleepy Pat Newcomb came into the kitchen after having slept for twelve hours. Marilyn, still getting her hair done, seemed to resent that she'd rested so much after Marilyn herself had gone through one of her most troubled nights, interrupted by those bizarre phone calls from San Francisco.

When Newcomb walked into the kitchen, Flanagan sensed that she and Eunice detested each other. Newcomb at one time was quoted as saying, "I think Mrs. Murray should have been hung up by her thumbs." She made that statement in 1974 in an interview with Robert Slatzer.

With a steely look, Marilyn confronted Newcomb in front of Eunice and Flanagan. "I hope you and Bobby had a wonderful time together on his most recent visit to Los Angeles in July," she said to her publicist.

"Who told you about that?" Newcomb said defensively.

"It doesn't matter," Marilyn said. "I have people who tell me every time a cockroach walks across Hollywood Boulevard."

"It was just a short visit," Newcomb said. "I meant to tell you."

"But you forgot," Marilyn said mockingly. Then she went on the attack, pouring out her resentments.

Jeffries later confirmed that the argument between Marilyn and Newcomb" turned into a jealous catfight over Bobby Kennedy. Not once was President Kennedy's name mentioned. He seemed to have faded from the picture, although the President was the one that everybody was gossiping about, not the Attorney General."

Not wanting to engage in any further argument, Newcomb took a batch of film scripts sent to Marilyn and walked out to the pool area, where Marilyn had invited her the day before to take a sun cure to heal her bronchitis.

Marilyn had had a long history of jealousy with Newcomb, and the publicist was probably jealous of her as well. In fact, Marilyn's nickname for Newcomb was "Sybil," an abbreviation for "sibling rivalry." Dean Martin's wife, Jeanne, claimed that Newcomb was deeply in love with Bobby.

C. David Heymann, in his biography of Robert F. Kennedy, was the first to suggest that the Jack-Marilyn-Bobby triangle may indeed have been "a square." He wrote, "Marilyn and Newcomb had a relationship so close and competitive that it appealed to Marilyn's proclivity for lesbianism."

Other biographers and journalists have echoed that belief. George Carpozi said, "There's no question about it. Marilyn went both ways." Her former lover, Ted Jordan, claimed that Marilyn had a lesbian affair with his wife, the stripper Lili St. Cyr. She also had affairs with Jeanne Carmen, Shelley Winters, Barbara Stanwyck, and Joan Crawford, and especially with her acting coach, Natasha Lytess.

"Newcomb had a habit of inching in on people who were hot and heavy for Marilyn," Carpozi claimed. "Obviously, she was angry that Newcomb was seeing Bobby, who wouldn't return her calls."

"Lawford always maintained that Marilyn was bisexual. But, as Frank Sinatra said, "Peter is one to talk. That's the equivalent of the pot calling the kettle black."

In San Francisco, Bobby took a call from Lawford. It is not known what was said, but apparently, Lawford convinced the Attorney General how important it was to fly to Los Angeles almost immediately as a means of bringing Marilyn under control.

Back in Brentwood, Eunice asked Marilyn if she wanted her to prepare lunch. Apparently, her offer was refused, although Newcomb later claimed she had hamburgers with Marilyn. That doesn't appear to be true. It seemed that the only food or drink Marilyn consumed that day was glass after glass of champagne.

After getting Bobby's agreement to fly to Los Angeles, Lawford called Marilyn again. "Bobby's on his way. I'll drive him over as soon as he lands."

While Newcomb remained at the pool, a call came in from lawyer Milton Rudin. He wanted permission to go ahead with negotiations for a new film to star Marilyn and Sinatra, along with Peter Lawford, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis, Jr. The Rat Packers would join Marilyn in a script written by Harry Brown, who had created *Ocean's 11* "for the boys" in 1960. "Go ahead," Marilyn said. "I've had them all."

Jeffries, who had been critical of Marilyn's appearance that morning, changed his mind when he saw her in the early afternoon. "She looked gorgeous. Flanagan did wonders with her hair, and she wore a sexy dress and did her own makeup. She'd transformed herself into Marilyn Monroe, sex goddess of the Western World."

For the arrival of Lawford and Bobby, she wanted the house emptied. She asked Eunice to do some shopping. "Call before coming back to the house," she told her. Marilyn also asked Newcomb to go home, claiming that she had company coming, suggesting it was a date. About the last person she wanted in the house to greet Bobby was Newcomb. Jeffries agreed to work outside the house.

Just before leaving the house, Eunice answered the phone. A collect call came in from Joe DiMaggio, Jr. Eunice told the operator that "Miss Monroe is not here. We cannot accept the call." She abruptly hung up. She did not approve of Marilyn's relationship with DiMaggio's son, who was now a young adult.

With Jeffries, Eunice, and Newcomb out of her house, Marilyn was left alone with her pet poodle, Maf. She didn't know the exact time of Bobby's arrival, so she placed another call to Carmen.

"The fucker is on his way," Marilyn told her. "I guess he finally came to his senses."

"I don't mean to sound like your mother, but it's about time you came to your senses too, especially regarding Bobby and Jack."

Carmen claimed that one of her boyfriends had already visited her that morning. "Sometimes the fuck a gal gets at ten in the morning is better than ever. The guy's well rested. He hasn't started to booze yet, or hasn't had to face the stress of the day."

"I think that may be true," Marilyn told her. "But there's also something to be said for love in the afternoon. Before I kick Bobby out the door, I think I'll insist on a farewell fuck. Something for him to remember me by. I'm sure I can still get a rise out of him."

"Honey, you could even get a rise out of one of the many gay boys you hang out with," Carmen assured her. "You've still got it, kid, and you're going to hang on to it for a very long time."

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Bernard Spindel, who had bugged Marilyn's residence, taped the arrival of Bobby and Lawford at her home. He and Fred Otash, along with others who listened to his tapes, estimated Bobby's arrival time at around three in the afternoon.

After landing at the Los Angeles International Airport, Bobby had taken a helicopter to the helipad at 20th Century Fox, which had allowed him to use it since the studio was still in negotiations with him to film his book, *The Enemy Within*.

Lawford was waiting in his car to drive Bobby to Marilyn's home in Brentwood. Although the dialogue among the three once they reached Marilyn's house was not always clear, a rough scenario of what happened that fateful afternoon can be pieced together from snippets of sound, as remembered later by Otash and Spindel.

Apparently, in the beginning, their reunion went smoothly, although tense negotiations loomed. Some reports have Bobby storming into the house, demanding Marilyn's red diary, but that did not come until later.

Before their arrival, she had called a local cantina in Brentwood, which had delivered a small buffet of Mexican food, including guacamole. Resting on a coffee table was a chilled magnum of champagne, with more of the bubbly chilling in her refrigerator.

Knowing that Bobby and Marilyn needed to talk, Lawford went out to the back yard for a nude swim in her pool.

She would later tell Carmen, and the Spindel tapes clearly indicated that as well, that she used all her seductive techniques to lure Bobby into her bedroom.

At one point, he can be faintly heard saying, "Marilyn, not now. Now's not the time." But he seemed to be giving in.

Carmen speculated that while he sat on her sofa, she unzipped him and began to perform fellatio on him. "That will get them all the time," she'd once confided to Carmen. Judith Campbell had witnessed her perform the same stunt with the soon-to-be-President in 1960 in JFK's hotel suite in Los Angeles.

The sound died out in the living room, but was picked up in her bedroom, which was also bugged.

She was one of the most seductive women in America, and, according to Spindel, Bobby gave in.

Both Otash and Spindel had seen film clips of Marilyn in the sack, and each of them knew the treat Bobby was receiving from her. But this time, according to Otash's memory as expressed in dialogues and interviews he gave later, only the sounds of their sexuality on this hot afternoon were heard. From the sound of her moaning, the men knew that Bobby was getting to her, arousing her passion in spite of her rage at him over the previous few days.

She was emitting short, staccato, animal-like noises. They knew Bobby was almost there, as he uttered a long, low groan, reaching the pitch of orgasm.

Then it was over. But the next sounds surprised them. She seemed to be kneeling in front of him, licking and coddling his supposedly limp cock. Sounds of her kisses could be heard.

Finally, he could take it no more and seemed to be pulling away. Like perverts, Otash and Spindel had to imagine what was going on, having been privy only to the sound effects.

In the afterglow, Marilyn could be heard saying, "Oh, Bobby, Bobby, you've come back to me. I thought I'd

lost you forever."

It seemed that that farewell fuck she'd envisioned during her discussion with Carmen had shifted into a renewed hope for the continuation of their affair.

Bobby could be heard saying that he still loved her, but that a relationship "cannot be. Hoover's on to us. Hoffa, God knows who? It can ruin Jack's presidential chances. Destroy my marriage."

She protested, reminding him he'd promised her that he'd divorce Ethel and marry her.

He admitted that he had done that, "But you've got to forgive my moment of insanity. I could never leave Ethel. I've got my brood to think of. I need to be a good father to them, and I love them. Please understand. We have to make sacrifices."

On the Spindel tapes, the action shifted to the kitchen. Bobby's voice was difficult to hear. He was speaking softly, but her voice was growing increasingly strident.

"I want you to leave your wife— *today*, not tomorrow, not some other year, not after some god damn presidential election. *Today*, damn it!"

His voice was picked up again. "Be reasonable."

"What do you think I am? One of Jack's hookers to be used and discarded like a piece of meat? I'm Marilyn Monroe. I'm even more famous that you are."

"I've got to have the red diary," he said, imploring her. "I asked you to destroy it. Did you?"

"Hell, no, and I'm not going to," she said. "I also had Fred Otash, that detective, tape our phone conversations."

"You are trying to blackmail the Attorney General of the United States?" he asked. "You're out of your mind."

"Maybe you are the one out of your mind—you and that brother of yours, for getting involved with me in the first place. Promises, promises."

"Turn over the diary, Marilyn, and anything else you have to link Jack and me to you."

Their voices seemed to grow louder. When Otash heard the tapes, he claimed that, "If I had not known it was Bobby Kennedy's voice, I would not have been able to nail it. He was screeching, high pitched like an old lady."

The tape was unclear at this point. She screamed obscenities and seemed to flail away at his chest with her fists. In her fury, she picked up a small kitchen knife and lunged at him. It was at this point that Lawford's voice is heard.

"Marilyn, drop the knife. There was the sound of a scuffle, and apparently one of them, either Bobby or Lawford, wrestled the knife away.

"Fuck!" Lawford yelled. "Get a grip, god damn it, Marilyn."

Then she broke into hysterical sobbing, and no more sound came from the kitchen.

The next voice heard was that of Marilyn, who had returned to her bedroom. "Don't threaten me," Bobby told her. "Enough people are trying to destroy me. Not you, too. I'm really begging, and that's something I don't do."

Lawford chimed in. "Don't condemn him for falling in love with you."

"You're still seeing that Greenson guy, aren't you?" Bobby asked.

"Yes," she shouted back at him. "He's been fucking me, too. I'll also fix his wagon at my press conference."

"Don't do it!" Bobby warned her.

"Before I tell everything, Giancana will also go down," she threatened.

Lawford could be heard talking on her bedroom phone with Dr. Greenson. " If she does what she claims she's going to do, kiss your psychiatric career goodbye. You could end up in prison. I'm standing here with the Attorney General of the United States and he knows the law."

Bobby was heard speaking to Greenson. "You've got to come over right away. She's in bad shape. She's threatening to bring down everyone's House of Cards, including yours. You've got to sedate her."

"I'll be right over."

"All of us are in the dung heap together," Bobby was heard saying. He abruptly slammed down the phone.

She picked up on his last line. "Dung heap, is it? Are you saying I'm a pile of shit?"

"Nothing of the kind," Bobby said.

"Get out! Get out!" she was heard shouting at him. "I never want to see you again. If you don't get out right away, I'm calling the press and alerting the newspapers."

"Bobby said nothing else. Apparently, at this point, he stormed out the door, his famous temper flaring.

"Cool it, Marilyn," Lawford said. "Be a good sport about this. I've got to go, but I'll call you later. I want you to come over and be with me. Let's be good friends again. My party will cheer you up."

"Get out, too," she yelled at him.

"I'll still call you later," he promised. "Dr. Greenson will give you something. You'll feel better soon."

After both Bobby and Lawford left, she could be heard dialing the phone. Apparently, she called the White House, where an operator must have told her that JFK was in Hyannis Port.

She was heard asking, "Then please give me his number in Hyannis Port, for god's sake."

She was obviously denied access to the number, because she ended her plea by saying, “Tell the President that Khruschev called. I’m launching a nuclear attack on Washington. Too bad he’s out of town.”

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Dr. Greenson arrived with a black bag shortly before five that afternoon and was seen by Marilyn’s neighbors, although they didn’t know who he was. Those same neighbors had recognized Lawford and Bobby when they’d driven up and had gone into the house.

When Greenson arrived, he found Marilyn in a state of hysteria. She’d just received a call from a woman with a deep voice. “She warned me that my life was in danger,” Marilyn told Greenson.

She also told him that she’d tried to reach the President to report on her disastrous reunion with Bobby. She told him that after his visit, she was going to call Lawford and threaten him if he didn’t give her the President’s private phone number in Hyannis Port. “I feel I have the right to call and tell him goodbye.”

When Eunice returned with supplies, the housekeeper noted that Marilyn was “panicky.”

Greenson was so alarmed by her condition that he called Dr. Engelberg, who refused to come over. Preparing to divorce his wife, he apparently was spending time with the new love interest in his life, and had more or less run out of patience with his most celebrated patient.

Ralph Roberts called to confirm his dinner date with Marilyn, as requested. He later said that Dr. Greenson answered the phone. “Miss Monroe is out this evening. Don’t call again.”

“I didn’t believe him.” Roberts later said. “He didn’t want me hanging out with Marilyn. I think she was in the house when I phoned, but he wouldn’t call her to the phone. He had long urged her to drop me.”

Since his social date with her was off, Roberts then called other friends and arranged to go out to dinner with them instead. Shortly before Marilyn died, his answering service reported that she’d made a final call trying to reach him.

Seeing that Marilyn was in such bad shape, Greenson asked Eunice if she’d stay over with Marilyn for the night, even though her services were being terminated in the morning. His mother-in-law also asked Jeffries to stay over and sleep in the “telephone room” so recently vacated by Newcomb. He, too, was being dismissed Sunday, even though he was far from finishing the renovations he had begun on the house.

Greenson told Marilyn that he’d made a dinner date with his wife and had to leave at once to pick her up and honor their reservations on time. She pleaded with him to stay, even though she was dismissing him this coming week. He refused, adding to her feeling of desertion and loneliness.

She placed an immediate call to Lawford, who picked up the receiver. He’d already started to drink his “sundowners.” He told her that Bobby had left.

Since his wife, Patricia, was with her brother, Jack, in Hyannis Port, and Lawford had their private number, Marilyn asked him to give it to her.

“They’d kill me if I gave it out,” Lawford protested.

“I got Bobby to come down, and I think I can get the President to speak to me one final time,” she said. “Here’s the deal. If you will get him to phone me, just as soon as possible, I'll call off the press conference. He’s safe. If questioned, I'll just say I once shook his hand at his birthday celebration in May.”

“If you really mean that, I think I can get him to call you,” Lawford said.

“They got what they wanted, and I don’t want anything else these two little Irish Catholic boys have to offer.”

“Hang in there and pick up the damn receiver when Jack calls, and I know he will. Let’s bring all this shit to an end. The way things are going between Pat and me, I'll soon be kicked out of the clan myself.”

“All right, Peter, but don’t fuck this up,” she warned him.”

I’ve got people arriving for Chinese take-out tonight,” he said. “I'll call you back in an hour or so and see if you’re up to being the guest of honor.”

She put down the phone to wait to see if the President of the United States was really going to phone her after all her failed attempts to get through to him.

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Bobby had spent only a short time at Lawford’s beach house. Lawford arranged for a helicopter to take him from Santa Monica to the Los Angeles International Airport. Two neighbors spotted him leaving, but later, when questioned, a neighbor couldn’t remember the time. “We’d had dinner,” he said, “so it must have been around nine o’clock that night. When these helicopters took off from a helipad near our home, they always blew sand into our

swimming pool."

At the airport, Bobby boarded a commuter flight to San Francisco. He was accompanied by two unknown aides from the Justice Department.

In San Francisco, he headed by limousine to the Bates Ranch, arriving there in time for Sunday mass, where he was seen with Ethel and some of his children.

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Earlier Saturday night, the phone rang in Marilyn's home. She immediately picked up the receiver. Could it really be him? "Hello," she said in a very hesitant voice that was filled with anticipation. Her voice and that of her caller were being overheard by others.

"Marilyn, it's the Prez, as you call me. I'm back home, not at the White House."

"I guess it's sometimes good to get out of that fish bowl in Washington," she said. "How are you?"

"Having more troubles than a man deserves and making a sworn enemy every second. I don't do enough for women's rights, for black rights, for bird-watchers, for teenaged pregnant mothers, and, in your case, for the Queen of Hollywood."

"I guess Bobby has called you," she said. "Things didn't go so well between us."

"I know, and I'm sorry, but we're doing the best thing. We could do no better favor for you than remove ourselves from your life. We were wrong to be there in the first place. Will you ever forgive us?"

"Of course, I will, and we'll both go on. I'm making a spectacular comeback and you're going to be the all-time greatest President." She paused. "Except for one."

"And who's my competition?"

"Abraham Lincoln…he's my favorite."

"I can't really talk now," he said. "People are waiting for me. But your forgiveness will make my world a lot better."

"I've got to step aside and let you do what you're going to do. By 1968, with you as Prez, no kid in America is going to go hungry. People who don't have insurance will get good medical care. You're going to transform America like FDR did in the 1930s."

"A big job, but we'll give it hell."

"As for Bobby, he's got a pretty big agenda, too, especially when he becomes President after you. And he's got a wife and a hell of a lot of kids. And you forgive me, too? You will, won't you?"

"There is nothing to forgive. You offered love and that is the greatest gift of all. Without it, why would life be worth living?"

"There's just one more thing," she said. "It haunts me, but I aborted your child. It would have been the most wonderful boy or girl in the world. Just think—President Kennedy for his father and Marilyn Monroe for its mama."

There was a long pause at the other end. Total silence.

Then he said, "Some things aren't meant to be," he said.

"You'll always remember me, won't you? I need to know."

"When I expire on some hot summer day at the Cape, say, in August of 1987, I'll feel your sweet kiss on my old man lips. It'll be my send-off as I depart this world for another one."

"That's the sweetest thing anybody has ever said to me," she told him, echoing a very similar line in *Bus Stop*.

"Goodbye, Marilyn."

"Goodbye, Mr. President."

After hanging up and brushing aside her tears, she phoned Carmen, not wanting to forget one single line of what she and the President said to each other.

Fred Otash later said, "I felt deeply embarrassed listening to something that was so personal. It made me feel like a rotter hearing such private stuff. There was a lot of real emotion there, a lot of pain. Hell, I'm getting sentimental, and that's not who I am or what I do."

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As Carmen would recall years later, "Marilyn caught me between fucks on my birthday. She wanted me to come over so she could tell me about her call from the president, but I told her that she'd have to give me a blow-by-blow on the phone."

"After Marilyn told me what the President said, I had more respect for him, a real gentleman in spite of his

reputation behind boudoir doors. That's one of the nicest send-offs I've ever heard. Better than my send-off from Lex Barker. One drunken night he told me that he'd rather fuck Lana Turner's daughter, Cheryl, than me."

I had a boyfriend due to arrive in seconds, and I wanted to get Marilyn off the phone, as I needed some repairs after an afternoon session I'd had. Talk about a workout. He wanted everything. I told her I had a date."

"Oh, Jeanne," Marilyn said. "Can't you cancel and come over and bring a bag of pills?"

"The request for pills was not unusual, Carmen said. "Marilyn and I often shared pharmaceutical drugs at that time, because they were fairly easy to get at any local drugstore. Frankly, back then, we didn't know how habit-forming or dangerous some of these drugs were."

"Over the years, I denied giving her drugs, because I didn't want to be one of the parties accused of contributing to her death, if even indirectly. Back then, I didn't want to reveal all that personal stuff about her—the final call from the President, claiming she aborted his child. Those revelations would have been like exploding bombs back then."

Before Carmen hung up, she reconfirmed her date for a game of golf on Monday.

"Marilyn couldn't really play very well, and I was a trick shot, but I was trying to teach her. I never figured out why she wanted to play golf, but she did. I promised to ring her up later to see how she was."

"It was an instinct, but she seemed a little too deliriously happy. She still hadn't decided if she were going to marry Bolaños or DiMaggio. I would have been happy to settle with either one. Of course, Joltin'Joe was where the money was. As a gal gets older, she has to think about money. Marilyn had a certain bravado that night. While planning this double marriage, she also told me that she'd met Warren Beatty last night, and she was definitely going to go for him and take him away from Natalie Wood. All of us showgirls and models in Hollywood in 1962 had set Beatty as our goal, but somehow I thought she would beat us out. Imagine having to compete with Marilyn Monroe for any Hollywood stud."

***

Another call came in to Marilyn, this one from Johnny Roselli. He told her to cancel her other plans, claiming he had something very important to talk over with her. He also warned her that the nature of his talk was so confidential that he didn't want her nosey housekeeper eavesdropping. "Clean out the house," he instructed her. "Maybe after our little talk, we'll have some fun."

Apparently, she asked him if he could make it some other night. On Spindel's tapes, the gangster was heard saying, "No, god damn it, it has to be tonight…or else!"

Lawford called back at around 7pm to see if she'd changed her mind about coming over. He seemed more interested in learning about her attitude toward his brothers-in-law than he did in having her as a guest. Her sudden shifts in mood had obviously alarmed him.

She did inquire about his guest list. He told her that he'd invited Marlon Brando, Wally Cox, and the television producer, Joe Naar, along with his wife Dolores. The Naars lived just two blocks from Marilyn's Brentwood home. "You don't have to drive over if you're not feeling up to it," Lawford told her. "The Naars can pick you up and bring you back."

She declined the offer.

"Is Warren Beatty coming back again?" she asked.

Sensing her interest, Lawford said, "I think Warren is getting tired of Natalie. Would you like me to call him and give him your phone number? Perhaps you and he would like to get together and talk about starring in a picture together. I think the Sexiest Man in Hollywood and the Sexiest Woman in Hollywood would be a casting dream come true."

"Give him my number," she said. "I'll become known as Joan Crawford, auditioning all the young male stars in town."

Lawford also told her that producer George ("Bullets") Durgom would be there. Lawford then revealed the real motivation for his call. "Did you speak to the President?"

"Yes, he called," she said.

"And…"

"And it's okay," she said. "It's over. It's over with Bobby, too."

"And Teddy? Don't forget Teddy."

"No one's forgotten Teddy," she said. "He's sweet, the sweetest of the lot. I'll always entertain him when he comes to the West Coast in case he can break free from all those hookers."

"I know you must be feeling a little depressed after what you went through this afternoon, so I'll phone you

later to check up on you."

"Okay, but don't call after ten o'clock. I've got an important guest coming over, and I can't be disturbed."

"Do I know this important guest?" he asked.

"You know him, but you don't want to get too close to him—that's for god damn sure."

All their dialogue came across clearly on tape, and would be described later by Otash. Later, Lawford would lie to the police, telling officers that she was "barely coherent" when he talked to her right before his house party.

Lawford's call was immediately followed by another one, all of it recorded on Spindel's tapes—and perhaps on other illegal bugging machines as well. Otash still had orders from her to have her own phone tapped.

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On his third attempt to speak to Marilyn that day, Joe DiMaggio, Jr. finally reached Marilyn. She picked up the phone herself this time instead of Eunice, who had kept lying, telling him that Marilyn was not at home.

He'd placed a collect call from Camp Pendleton, California. Later, he was able to determine the exact time of the call because he was watching the seventh inning of a baseball game between the Baltimore Orieles and the Anaheim Angels.

There had been a sense of urgency associated with all of young DiMaggio's calls that day. He told her that he'd taken her advice and had broken off his engagement to Pamela Ries.

She told him that she was delighted to hear that. For some reason, she'd felt that Ries was not the right girlfriend for him, and she also feared that he was far too young to get married. She repeated her objections on the phone.

"I'm old enough to get married," he said. "Old enough to marry you if you want me." Then he brought up the subject he dreaded. "Dad called me and told me that you guys plan to remarry, either August 8th or the 15th. He invited me to the wedding."

"He's telling the truth," she said

"Oh, Marilyn, don't do it. Don't go back there and repeat the same old mistakes. Plan a different life, like one with me. You know how much I adore you. It's my time to be with you now, not Dad's. Don't betray me."

"Oh, Joey," she said. "You're making this very difficult for me."

"Make me one promise," he said. "Don't commit yourself right now. I'm getting a leave. I'm flying up from San Diego next week, and just let me spend one night with you. Just one night. You owe me that much. I swear to you that by morning, you won't want to marry anybody but me."

"Joey, you certainly can be persuasive and you know how to make a confused gal all the more confused."

"Will you promise?"

"I promise," she said, reluctantly. "Let me know when you're coming. I'm not going to promise to marry you, but I will set aside time for you." She giggled. "Actually, I'm flattered."

"You need someone who treats you right," he said. "You deserve that in a husband. That's something you've never had before."

"You've always been wonderful to me. But you're so young and also you're his son."

"I have no control over who my father is or how old I am. Don't hold either of those things against me. If you don't think I'm experienced enough, you can teach me. I'm a fast learner."

"That has already been demonstrated, sweetie," she said. "You know I'm crazy about you. You make me feel like a kid again."

"I want to devote my entire life to making you happy," he said. "In some ways, you haven't grown up either. Maybe we'll grow up together, finding our way. Where you are concerned, age makes not one god damn bit of difference, and you know that."

"You really mean you'd devote your life to me?" she asked. "No man has ever promised that. I've loved you ever since you were a boy."

"Little boys grow up and get bigger every day," he said.

"You don't need to explain that to me," she said. "I bet you're the best looking boy in the Marine Corps."

"I'll even bring a little military discipline into your life," he said. "You'll love it!"

"You naughty boy," she said. "I know what you want to do."

"Joking aside, I'll be there soon," he said. "I love you. You're my girl, and don't you forget it."

"There will always be a place in my heart just for you," she said. "Good night, sweetie,"

"Good night," he said. "I love you."

She can be heard blowing kisses into the receiver.

Other than being on tape, these revelations were also confirmed by Joe Jr.'s next girlfriend, Pamela Lawson (not to be confused with the discarded Pamela Reis).

Eunice also eavesdropped on the conversation. She told her son-in-law, Jeffries, and later would tell others, "The whole thing was disgusting. She was just playing with that kid's mind and leading him on. I don't think she cared who she hurt. She was always complaining about how men had hurt her. She could also be destructive to men as well. It was a two-way street with that one, and I should know."

After her phone dialogues with Lawford and Joe Jr., Marilyn, according to Eunice, announced that she was retiring for the night. It was around 8pm. For years, Eunice stuck to that one story, although changing much of her other unofficial testimony, perhaps forgetting what she'd said before.

It appeared that Marilyn did retreat to her bedroom at 8pm to receive some more phone calls. But she also had a late date with Roselli, who wanted everybody out of the house.

What Eunice didn't tell was that Marilyn gave her a hundred dollar bill to go out and celebrate with her son-in-law, Norman Jeffries. Marilyn said she had a "hot date" and wanted some privacy. She told Eunice that her date would not be a long one because she was tired, suggesting they would be able to return by eleven. "But call first," she cautioned. Otherwise, she didn't want to be disturbed.

Eunice took her own time showering and getting dressed up. She would later be seen a mile away, in a Brentwood restaurant, dining with some man. A neighbor spotted her but didn't know the identity of her dining companion. It can be assumed that the man was Jeffries.

Eunice did admit that right before she left the house, she heard Marilyn in her bedroom "having a very bad reaction to what someone on the other end of the phone was telling her." All Eunice could make out was that Marilyn was telling her caller, "That's horrible. That's horrible. *He should be warned."*

"All I know is, somebody told her something awful," Eunice said. "She was still on the phone, I think, when we left the house."

That caller was later identified as Fred Vanderbilt Field, her communist friend, phoning from Mexico City with some alarming news.

Marilyn made the last outgoing phone call of her life, speaking to Carmen and complaining about how tired she was and how much she needed sleep. "How are you, Birthday Girl?" she asked.

"Speaking of tired," Carmen said, "I've been worked over by the two hottest studs in Hollywood today, with one more scheduled for around midnight."

"You can have my birthday present," Marilyn said. "Johnny Roselli is coming over. He says he's got to see me. It's urgent."

"Are you sure? Maybe he just wants a piece of you."

"No," she said. "There was something in his voice. I think there's trouble."

"Unlike you, I love Johnny," Carmen said. "He's been good to me, especially whenever it comes time to pay the rent. But if he asks about me tonight, tell him I got a job in Vegas."

"Oh, Jeanne," Marilyn said. "I've got really important news. Frank Sinatra might not want to marry me, and Jack and Bobby have presented me with my walking papers, but I've got three other hot men, each one wanting me to be their bride. There's also Warren Beatty, the new boy in town. I'm convinced he has the hots for me. Lawford practically told me so. I have more or less promised to marry two of these men, and I've got the third one dangling in the wind."

"What do you mean, three men?" Carmen asked. "You underestimate yourself, girl. I count at least eighty million men in all colors, shapes, and dick sizes, from Nova Scotia to Cairo, who'd give their left nut to marry you."

"The laws for this country are so god damn stupid," she said. "A gal should be allowed to marry as many men as she wants. And they call this the land of the free."

"Sweetheart, you're always saying that! You don't have to marry them," Carmen said. "Be like your role model, Miss Lana Turner. Marry once in a while and have many, many boyfriends on the side. It's the only way for gals like us."

"If you say so, baby," Marilyn said. "Guess what—I'll think about it tomorrow."

Carmen said that she joined in to repeat the next line with Marilyn. "Because tomorrow is another day."

It was Marilyn's favorite line from *Gone With the Wind*, as uttered in 1939 by Scarlett O'Hara.

"I certainly didn't know it at the time," Carmen later said, "but for Marilyn, that poor misunderstood dear, there would be no more tomorrows, only yesterdays."

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It was a busy night for Marilyn. No sooner had she put down the phone than a call came in from Jose Bolaños in Mexico City. The time was around 9:30pm. She welcomed that call but dreaded the arrival any minute from Roselli.

Some sources claim that Bolaños placed the call from a bar in Santa Monica. But years after Marilyn's death, he claimed, "That's ridiculous. I was still in Mexico. If I'd been in the Los Angeles area, I would have been with Marilyn in bed. I'd proposed marriage to her, and she'd accepted."

"That night, we talked about our wedding," Bolaños said. "She sounded tired but excited. We were going to be married in about two weeks. I was closing out my affairs in Mexico and packing up to head to L.A. I was going to move in with her at Brentwood. I'd feel at home, since all her major pieces of furniture were being shipped up from Mexico."

"Once married, I would definitely have a kid or two with her. But she was making a comeback. We'd need money, and I would wear protection during our first years. She couldn't afford to miss out on any more movie deals."

"Not only that, I'd written a new movie script that she'd agreed to star in. Well, almost… It was about an aging screen goddess who goes to Mexico and meets this handsome young actor. She falls madly in love with him. Eventually, she marries him and takes him back to Hollywood."

"At first, he lives in her shadow, and the big *enchiladas* in Hollywood treat him like the star's boy. But then he appears in a movie himself, and then another. In time, as her beauty fades, he has become a bigger star than she is."

"One night she catches him with a young blonde actress who has dethroned her as the Queen of Hollywood. She has a gun in this big Hollywood mansion she lives in. She shoots her young lover, who falls face down in her pool."

He laughed. "Marilyn told me that I'd have to rewrite the ending, that it was too close to an old Gloria Swanson movie called *Sunset Blvd*. After reading my script, she said the aging actress could be played by Joan Crawford, and that she could appear as the young goddess. Actually, I had meant for Marilyn to play the older role."

"Of course, she was killed that night, and my film was never made, although I did offer it to Lana Turner, who turned it down, but didn't turn me down on a personal level, if you know what I mean."

Bolaños has often been quoted as saying that Marilyn never hung up the phone, but perhaps laid the receiver down and stopped talking to him, with the suggestion that she drifted off to sleep.

Years later in Mexico, he claimed "that was an invention of some writer and other writers copied it. It never happened that way. After declaring her love for me, and me for her, with a promise that we'd be together in a few days, she blew kisses into the phone, wished me a good night, and then put the receiver back on its cradle. Everything else said is a lie."

After Marilyn died, Bolaños gave only a "limited hangout" about what they had talked about during her final hour. But he did say something that tantalized the nation's press. However, he never delivered the punch line until years later, in Mexico.

"Before I hung up that night, Marilyn told me a secret so deadly it would have shocked the world."

It took a lot of years and another celebrated death before Bolaños finally told what he'd heard that night.

[Editor's note: for more on this, see "Marilyn's Deadly Secret" within the final pages of this book.]

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Peter Lawford later claimed that he was the last person to speak to Marilyn, although how he knew that was never revealed. Marilyn's bugged phone indicates no final call to Marilyn from him. Otash later claimed that he believed that Lawford made up that final call.

Marilyn had two separate phones, one connected to a white phone and one connected to a pink phone. If Lawford had made such a call as he claimed, he would not have been able to get through to her, as her killers had taken both phones off their respective hooks. All that Lawford would have heard would have been a busy signal.

In 1975, during a police enquiry into Marilyn's mysterious death, Lawford told the police that her last words were, "Say goodbye to Jack and say goodbye to yourself because you're a nice guy." The police knew, of course, that the reference to "Jack" could only mean John F. Kennedy.

No such call ever came into Marilyn's house, to judge from the evidence. Lawford was setting the stage for defining her death as a suicide.

When a skeptical Frank Sinatra heard the details of Lawford's testimony, he said, "All that proves is that MGM should have hired Peter as a screenwriter instead of as an actor."

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Unknown to Marilyn, her fate was about to be decided by five men who'd arrived in Brentwood the day before, after a bumpy flight from Chicago. Their orders from Sam Giancana were firm: Kill Marilyn Monroe before midnight Saturday.

In their lifetimes devoted to murder, it would be estimated that this cabal of killers would assassinate some three-hundred people, mostly men but an occasional woman, too.

None of their murders was as high profile as that of Marilyn Monroe. But her reputation didn't seem to hold them in awe. Murder was their game, and they were professional. Even if they'd been instructed to assassinate the President of the United States, they would no doubt have proceeded with the same skilled efficiency. Of course, the higher the profile of their victim, the greater the price tag attached to the killing.

At the Los Angeles airport, Johnny Roselli, Giancana's henchman on the West Coast, was waiting to greet the killers. He knew each of them, not only by reputation, but he was also aware of who they had murdered in the past.

Each man got into a limousine with darkened windows, while a chauffeur drove them to a rented house in Brentwood, only two blocks from Marilyn's own hacienda.

Here, they would wait for their orders and listen to wiretaps coming from Marilyn's home. These hit men were not privy to all the behind-the-scenes negotiations that had led Giancana to place Marilyn at the top of his hit list. Those secret maneuvers, or the identities of all the men involved in the decision to silence Marilyn forever, will probably always be lost to history.

The listening post into Marilyn's home occupied an inconspicuous van bearing the name of the Anderson Cleaning Service, a company not registered in Los Angeles, and with no known address. The van looked battered on the outside, but its interior was equipped with top-rated audio equipment, including a Uher 4000 audio recorder. The van even contained a table and a small fridge stocked with Budweiser and cold cuts. Each of the men was assigned to take turns monitoring the audio input that was broadcast from the secret transmitters within Marilyn's house.

When Bobby Kennedy had entered her house that afternoon, a lot of sounds were obscured because Marilyn had insisted on playing Sinatra records in the background.

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In Chicago, Sam Giancana had assigned the "contract" to murder Marilyn to Felix Alderisio, whose nickname was "Milwaukee Phil." Within the Chicago outfit, he was the underboss to Giancana, whom he called "Momo" or "Mooney."

Alderisio's career as a criminal had been launched during Prohibition. His first minor arrest had been for vagrancy, since he was seen every day waiting outside All Capone's headquarters at Chicago's Lexington Hotel, hoping to get a job as a messenger. Eventually, he broke into the mob, who employed him as a "bagman," bringing cash payoffs to Chicago judges and police officers.

By the 1950s, he'd risen to the position of "the enforcer," working with his partner, Charles ("Chuckie") Nicoletti, who would also be hired to kill Marilyn.

As enforcers, the two men made gangland hits on merchants and others who did not pay the Mafia insurance money. They became known for their own version of a "Batmobile," except that in their case, their black vehicle was a"hit mobile," with special switches that controlled taillights and headlights as a means of obscuring the car's license plate and helping avoid police detection.In a concealed compartment within the vehicle, they carried pistols, shotguns, rifles, and plenty of ammunition.

Alderisio and Nicoletti also directed a gang of "cat burglars" who broke into homes in Chicago's upscale Gold Coast district, looting jewelry for the most part, and whatever cash was on hand. Alderisio and "Chuckie" eventually expanded their operations to Milwaukee, where they ran bordellos, striptease joints, nightclubs on Rush Street, and three small hotels.

From their collection of payments from various restaurants and nightclubs on the North side of Chicago, Alderisio and Nicoletti handed over millions to the Mafia after their cut was taken out.

As one of Giancana's top aides, Alderisio was probed by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the U.S. Senate looking into organized crime. Alderisio developed a personal hatred for Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, who had him hauled before the committee, where he refused to testify, pleading the Fifth Amendment twenty-three times.

Sometimes, Alderisio and Nicoletti arranged for the smuggling of heroin into the United States, traveling, at Alderisio's insistence, to Italy, Turkey, and Greece as a means of expressing his passion for classical ruins. While

Alderisio wandered among the ruins of yesterday, Nicoletti preferred to stay in his hotel room "fucking the local broads and giving them a treat," as he immodestly put it.

Alderisio was also involved in the CIA-Mafia link to the failed Bay of Pigs covert operation in Cuba aimed at toppling Fidel Castro.

During May of 1962, weeks before being hired to murder Marilyn, Alderisio directed an infamous mob torture incident. Billy McCarthy and Jimmy Miraglia had ambushed and shot two Mafiosi. Alderisio and Nicoletti captured McCarthy and tortured him until he revealed Miraglia's name. Alderisio and his henchmen extracted information from McCarthy by placing his head in a vise, slowly tightening it until one of his eyes popped out of its socket. After McCarthy revealed Miraglia's name, Alderisio slit his throat. Nicoletti then trailed Miraglia, eventually catching up with him and cutting his throat too.

Over a period of several decades, Alderisio was arrested three dozen times for bombing, racketeering, gambling, hijacking, counterfeiting, bootlegging, extortion, bribery, and murder for hire. By the late 1960s, years after his assault on Marilyn, he was convicted and sent to prison, where he died of a heart attack on September 25, 1971.

When not involved with Alderisio, Nicoletti often worked with Francis Schweihs ("Frank the German"). Giancana also selected Schweihs as a hit man to murder Marilyn.

Tom Knight, Assistant U.S. Attorney, would later refer to Schweihs as "one of the most violent people ever to stand before a judge."

As another of his cohorts, Frank Cullotta, would later testify, Schweihs wanted to rape and torture Marilyn before her execution, but Giancana demanded, under threat of death, that her killing be relatively painless.

When not murdering people, Schweihs sold "insurance" for the Mafia in Chicago, and was considered the best salesman among Giancana's henchmen.

Schweihs, or so it is believed by law enforcement officials, would later be the hitman who killed Nicoletti, with whom he had joined forces during the night of Marilyn's murder. Giancana had by this time turned against Nicoletti, accusing him of skimming money from the Mafia, and ordered Schweihs to murder him.

Long after Marilyn's murder, Schweihs was convicted of extortion in 1989 and sentenced to a thirteen-year term in prison. Schweihs, along with his partner, Angelo J. LaPietra, nicknamed "The Hook," were caught skimming millions from Las Vegas casinos in the 1980s.

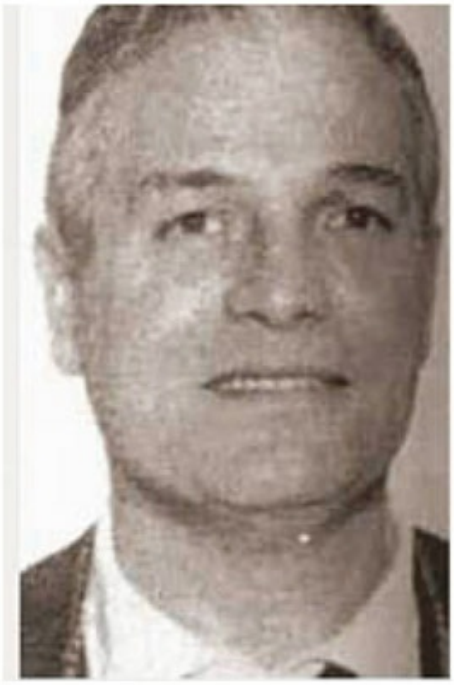
After prison, Schweihs was known to have lived for a while in Dania Beach, Florida.

Sought on a charge of murder in April of 2005, he became a fugitive, but was eventually caught in Berea, Kentucky, just before Christmas of that same year. In prison, he was diagnosed with cancer, and moved to a federal medical center at Rochester, Minnesota, where he seemed to recover, at least slightly, after a series of operations. He was set to go to trial on October in 2008, but died that summer on July 23.

When questioned by the police about the death of Marilyn Monroe and its link to Sam Giancana, he said, "Marilyn Monroe? Never heard of her. I always jerked off to the pictures of Jayne Mansfield with her tits hanging out. As for Giancana, someone once pointed him out to me in a restaurant."

Schweihs has the dubious distinction of being the longest surviving member of the gang who killed Marilyn, most of whom ended up murdered themselves. Giancana himself was murdered in 1975, assassinated in his Chicago kitchen, his brains splattered over the tile floor.Later that year, Roselli ended up in a barrel dumped into a Florida bay.

Felix Alderisio (“Milwaukee Phil”)



Charles (“Chuckie”) Nicoletti

Anthony (“The Ant”) Spilotro was the fourth mobster assigned to the Marilyn hit. TheChicago-born hood was only twenty-four years old when he joined in Marilyn’s murder.

FBI agent William F. Roemer, Jr., called him “that little pissant,” but the media didn’t want to use the word “piss” so they shortened his nickname to “Ant.”

Spilotro met Giancana because of Giancana’s frequent meals at Patsy’s Restaurant in Chicago, which was run by his parents, Pasquale and Antoinette Spilotro. In fact, Giancana often held mob meetings in the parking lot of

Patsy's.

After Marilyn's death, Spilotro's mob career took off, and by 1971, he was the Chicago mob's link to its operations in Las Vegas.

Spilotro embezzled ("skimmed") profits from the casinos and sent the money back to the Mafia in Chicago. Ten years after Marilyn's murder, Spilotro orchestrated one of the most vicious murders in America's mob history. He killed Leo Foreman, a real estate agent and loan shark by repeatedly stabbing him with an ice pick, cutting out chunks of his flesh. To further horrify his victim, as an act of psychotic sadism, he castrated Foreman, removing one of his testicles andchomping down on it with his teeth, as Foreman, screaming, looked on as blood dribbled from the corners of Spilotro's mouth.

In spite of overwhelming evidence, Spilotro was later acquitted of Foreman's vicious murder.

"The Ant" often worked with his brother, Michael Spilotro. Together, they established "The Gold Rush, Ltd." a Las Vegas operation for the fencing (distribution and sale) of some of the most valuable stolen goods in the country.

In 1979, evada's Senator Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate beginning in 2007 and still holding that title at presstime for this edition, got Spilotro blacklisted from all evada casinos.

The Spilotro brothers, in yet another venue linked to "The Gold Rush, Ltd." eventually spearheaded a burglary ring known as "The Hole in the Wall Gang," because of their penchant for drilling through the exterior walls and ceilings of buildings they burglarized.

Frank Sinatra knew the Spilotro brothers and actually suggested that some of their criminal antics be used as plot devices in Ocean's 11, a movie released in 1960 that featured some of his fellow Rat Packers.

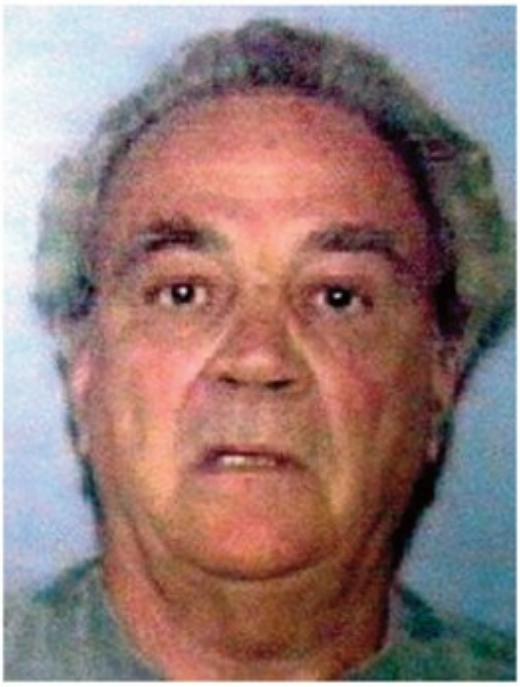
Eventually, Spilotro was indicted for his role in at least twenty-two murders, including that of Bill McCarthy.

In Martin Scorsese's 1995 film, Casino, Mc-Carthy's murder was depicted, albeit in a less gruesome way, through the murder of an onscreen character named "Tony Dogs."

Spilotro's murder of San Diego real estate heiress Tamara Rand was another event depicted in Casino. Rumors on the street also implicated Spilotro, along with Johnny Roselli, in the murder of Giancana.

In 1986, both of the Spilotro brothers were killed in the basement of an abandoned hunting lodge in DuPage County, Illinois. They were beaten and strangled to death before being buried in a cornfield beside Highway 41 in northwestern Indiana. Their former comrade, Frank Schweihs ("Frank the German") was arrested in 2005 and charged with their murders.

The fifth and most unlikely member of Marilyn's murder squad was Frank Cullotta (sometimes spelled "Culotta"), a former Las Vegas detective who "switched sides." He had been a childhood friend, growing up in Chicago, of the Spilotro brothers.



Francis Schweihs ("Frank the German")

Anthony (“The Ant”) Spilotro

Cullotta was arrested in July of 1981 during a botched robbery and was tried and convicted. In prison, he learned that Spilotro, “The Ant,” had ordered his execution.

“The Ant” had once trusted Cullotta to handle Mafia money, but he learned that Cullotta had been “skimming” the illegal profits before turning them over to the Mob. Cullotta was stashing a lot of the money in his own offshore bank accounts.

In nearly all cases when the Mafia discovered that one of their members was doing that, a death sentence was issued.

“The Ant” chose Lawrence Neumann, nicknamed “Crazy Larry,” to execute Cullotta. Neumann and Cullotta had been comrades-in-arms when they worked together murdering and robbing for the Hole in the Wall Gang.

Unaware that Cullotta had been tipped off that he was going to be murdered, Neumann believed that his Mafia comrade still trusted him. He arranged to pay Cullotta’s bail and to have him released into his custody. But Cullotta wasn’t having any of that, fearing that if he accepted a release into Neumann’s custody, that he’d be murdered that very night.

As his only chance for survival, Cullotta approached the warden and volunteered to become a state witness against his former comrades, who included both “Crazy Larry” and “The Ant.” When “The Ant” learned of this, he renamed Cullotta “The Canary.”

Interviewed by state law enforcement officers, Cullotta revealed “The Ant’s role in the brutal murders of both Miraglia and McCarthy, and he also testified that “The Ant” had engaged in a number of other notorious murders, including the 1979 slaying of Las Vegas mob member Sherwin (“Jerry”) Lisner.

Based on Cullotta’s charges, Spilotro was indicted (but not convicted) on murder and racketeering charges. Criminal Court Judge Thomas J. Maloney ruled that the case could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. However, the judge himself, in 1992, was convicted for accepting bribes.

Frank Cullotta

Cullotta was rumored to have been the only mobster to testify about the men who murdered Marilyn Monroe on the night of August 4, 1962.

His testimony was sealed and delivered to the Department of Justice in Washington. None of his revelations were ever released, and his confidential report has never been made public under the Freedom of Information Act. It remains sealed to this day or else was destroyed by some official in government, perhaps a Kennedy loyalist, although that is pure speculation.

After his release from prison, Cullotta was assigned to the witness protection program and relocated somewhere in Heartland America with a new identity. He was never heard from since then, and presumably died years ago.

These were the mobsters that Giancana sent to kill Marilyn, turning the matter over to Roselli to choreograph.

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On the evening of August 4, 1962, the arrival of Johnny Roselli on Marilyn's doorstep was not an immediate cause for alarm. He was known to have visited her on several previous occasions, even when she lived in apartments. He often bragged to his henchmen, "I've got to pop in at Marilyn's to pop her one."

Alone in the house except for her poodle, Maf, Marilyn answered the door. Perhaps eager to learn about what important message he had for her, she invited him into her living room for a glass of champagne.

When he came in, he must have flicked open the lock on her front door, as later, there would be no sign of forced entry.

It can be assumed that no threatening dialogue occurred between them because Roselli already knew that anything he said to her would be recorded. What survived on the Bernard Spindel tapes has long ago been destroyed…perhaps. The only record we have of this is Spindel and Otash's memory of the recording, as relayed to witnesses and interviewers after the event.

Maf began to bark, and Roselli got up and took the dog and removed him to another room, perhaps asking her permission to do so because the poodle seemed highly agitated. An hour or so later, the barking dog would be released from his captivity in the telephone room by Norman Jeffries.

Roselli and Marilyn idly chatted for no more than five minutes before two of the hit men, perhaps "The Ant" (Spilotro) and Schweihs ("the German") came into the room.

Slipping behind Marilyn, one of these men removed a chloroform-soaked washcloth from his bag. Perhaps at this point, alerted by the smell, she quickly turned around, but it was too late. The cloth was forced over her nose and mouth. Her struggle was useless. Giancana had issued orders that her body was not to be bruised.

Knowing that the living room was bugged, Roselli ordered the other hit men, who by now had entered the

living room, to remove her body to the guest cottage at the far end of the compound. Apparently, no one had ever bugged the cottage.

Before invading her home, Giancana's henchmen had prepared a solution of liquid Nembutal, chloral hydrate, and water.

All struggle gone from her, Marilyn was stripped, and her nude body was placed on the bed. A bath towel was placed under her buttocks. The solution had been transported in a Thermos bottle.

A bulb syringe was filled from the contents of the Thermos bottle, and the tip of the syringe coated with petroleum jelly for easy insertion into her rectum.

The poisonous concoction was then released into her colon. She was then given a second dose of the deadly solution.

Another hit man had gone into her bedroom and emptied the contents of her medicine bottles into his bag and had left the empty bottles. Apparently, the mob wanted it to appear that she'd swallowed all the capsules.

The entire assault had taken less than thirty minutes, or so it seemed. Perhaps hearing a noise, the men rushed out so fast they even left the door to the guest cottage ajar and a lamp turned on.

At approximately 10:15pm, Eunice and Jeffries returned from dinner. Marilyn had insisted that they call first before returning to the house, but when they tried, they had found both lines busy.

Getting out of the car, Jeffries was the first to notice that a light was on in the cottage and its door was ajar. Had Marilyn put an overnight guest in there?

The mother-in-law and the son-in-law went to investigate. As Eunice opened the door, she shrieked in horror to find a nude Marilyn on the bed, lying in her own waste.

As a trained nurse, she immediately checked Marilyn's pulse. She was still alive. "Call an ambulance," she yelled at Jeffries.

"She rushed to the other phone and placed an emergency call to Dr. Greenson. "Marilyn's dying Come at once. Get Engleberg." She slammed down the phone and rushed to attend to Marilyn. She didn't know whether the ambulance or Greenson would arrive there first.

At this point, the scenario becomes the subject of debate. Eunice obviously realized that the death of Marilyn Monroe would become an international headline, and she didn't want to be left alone with Jeffries to manage the press, the photographers, and the police.

It was at this point that it is believed that she called Pat Newcomb in spite of her hostility to her. Someone trained in public relations had to manage the crisis, and Eunice didn't want to be in the spotlight.

The sound of an arriving vehicle could be heard. Eunice pulled back the curtains of the guest cottage and looked out at the street. It was an ambulance. Two men were getting out and rushing toward the house with a stretcher.

She stood outside the cottage signaling the young men to come toward her and not to go in through the front door of the main house, which was being held open by Jeffries.

James Hall, the ambulance driver, later gave much disputed testimony, although any statement from anybody—all parties, in fact—is much disputed.

Some biographers have placed Bobby Kennedy at the murder scene, but this claim later seemed outrageous to Hall, who was actually there.

Hall claimed that his fellow ambulance driver was Murray Liebowitz, who later denied that he was Hall's partner, and denied, for a while, that he was at the scene at all. Hall said, "We were returning from a run to UCLA Hospital, when we received a call to rush to 12305 Fifth Helena. We were told it was an emergency. We were real close, practically around the corner. We were at the house within two minutes."

I'm her housekeeper," the unknown woman told Hall. "Come in here."

"It was the single most memorable moment of my life, a vision that would be with me forever, when I came into that cottage on that hot August night back in 1962," Hall recalled years later. "I looked down at the body on the bed."

"My God!" he said. "This woman is a dead ringer for Marilyn Monroe."

He remembered the hostility reflected on Eunice's face. "It *is* Marilyn Monroe, you idiot. Save her!"

"Marilyn Monroe?" he asked. "You gotta be kidding me!"

"*Save her life, you goddamned fool*!" she shouted at him.

Hall was nervous and inexperienced, and he was only twenty-two years old and new to the job. He felt Marilyn's pulse and determined that it was "very weak, very rapid, her respiration almost nonexistent. A classic symptom of overdose. In Los Angeles, I'd already seen a lot of that."

Hall and his partner decided to apply CPR. "The bed is too soft. We've got to put her on her back, a hard surface," Hall told his assistant.

The floor in the guest cottage was too cramped, so both men picked up her body to move her to the foyer. “Unfortunately, I dropped her on her fanny. It was my fault. Later, I heard that the coroner found two unexplained bruises on her body. The one on her upper arm was probably caused by my fingertips. I’d gripped her really hard. The other bruise, I’m sure, definitely came from dropping her. All the time, my partner had held onto her feet. We then picked her up again and moved her into the foyer. She was still breathing, but I thought [she was] going fast.”

The fact that she bruised showed that she was still alive,” he said. “I’d recently learned that dead bodies don’t bruise.”

While Leibowitz went back to the ambulance for a resuscitator, Hall inserted an airway into her throat to aid her intake of oxygen.

The housekeeper helped hook up the resuscitator.

“I felt the CPR was starting to work,” Hall said. “We were getting a good exchange of air from her body. Some of the color was coming back to her face. When I first saw her, she looked like she was still wearing that graveyard white makeup she wore in *Bus Stop*. I thought it was safe now to move her. I called out ‘get the gurney.’”

It was then that a hysterical woman in raincoat and pajamas ran down the hallway, screaming ‘SHE’S DEAD, SHE’S DEAD!’”

“She came and butted in,” Hall said, “hovering over the body. I wanted to knock the crazy bitch on her ass because I feared she’d fuck everything up.”

“Who in the hell are you?” Hall asked.

“I’m her publicist,” the woman shouted at him.

He later said, “At that time of my life, I didn’t even know what a publicist was.”

“We’re not ready for you yet,” he told the woman. “She’s not dead. You can publicize it if she’s dead. But we’re going to save her.”

As Hall and his partner were getting ready to remove Marilyn, a man appeared in the hallway, carrying a black leather bag. “I’m her doctor,” he shouted at me. “Give her positive pressure.”

“Turkey, what in the fuck do you think we’re doing?” an angry Hall said. He was tired of all this interference. “She’s breathing, thanks to me.”

“When I took the job, I had been instructed to follow doctor’s orders at the scene of any emergency—or else get fired,” Hall said. “I took the resuscitator off, put an extension on the airway, pinched her nose, and then started to give her mouth to mouth. You can’t get any god damn more positive than that.”

“At that time, this doctor guy began to give her CPR,” Hall said. “I thought he should apply it to her chest. Instead, the fucker was applying it to her lower abdomen.”

“Look, doctor, you blow and I'll push,” Hall suggested. “He didn’t pay me any attention. He opened his bag and pulled out this hypodermic syringe with a heart needle attached.”

Hall claimed he heard the doctor say, almost to himself, “I have to make a show of this.”

Then, according to Hall, the doctor removed a pharmaceutical bottle from his bag and then inserted the needle into the bottle, filling the syringe. “I’m sure it was Adrenalin.”

“He told me he had to inject her between the sixth and seventh ribs. He counted down her rib cage, pushed a breast to the side, and stuck the needle into her chest. He sure got it wrong. He entered at a bad angle, and the needle hit something, no doubt her rib. Instead of taking the needle out, he pressed down hard, and I heard this ‘snap.’ The fucking needle probably had broken a rib. He shoved the needle right into her heart. I knew at this point that it was curtains for Marilyn.”

“The doctor stood up and confronted me,” Hall said. “He looked like I had killed Marilyn. ‘She’s dead,’ he told me. ‘You guys can leave now.’”

“As we were heading out, he came up to me, standing very close like he was trying to intimidate me. ‘Whatever you do, don’t report one word of what happened here tonight. Don’t call the newspapers. We’ve got it handled. If you don’t follow my instructions, things will go very, very bad for you.’He gave me the creeps.”

As Hall was gathering his paraphernalia, to the sounds of that publicist screaming hysterically in the hallway, two men appeared on the scene.

One was a police officer, and the other guy wore a suit,” Hall recalled. The guy in the suit looked familiar, but like he was coming off a forty-day drunk. I thought he might have been a detective summoned from some bar.”

“Later, when I saw his picture in the paper, I recognized Peter Lawford,” Hall said. “He was no damn detective. I’d heard he was a movie star, but I’d never seen one of his films. The papers said he was married to one of President Kennedy’s sisters.”

Twenty years from the night of Marilyn’s murder, Hall said, “I firmly believe that Dr. Ralph Greenson—by then I knew his name—murdered Marilyn Monroe, who was already at death’s door. But he finished her off. Had he not shown up, and with me in charge, we might have gotten her to the hospital.”

"All that shit that appeared in all those books about her being rushed to the hospital is just so much bull," he said. "We never put her in that ambulance. It never happened."

Hall would be the only person at the scene of the crime who volunteered to take a Polygraph test. All the other people on the scene never even had to testify under oath, and most of them denied even being at the scene until shortly before dawn that Sunday.

[In 1982, Hall was flown to Florida, where he was introduced to John Harrison, the co-inventor of the Polygraph (a device popularly referred to as a lie detector). "I administered six tests on Hall," Harrison claimed. "I asked him, 'On the evening of August 4, 1962, did you attempt to administer life-saving techniques to Marilyn Monroe?' He was not lying. He passed each of the tests I gave him with flying colors. It seemed that everybody, even those remotely connected to Monroe, lied, told some more lies, and even changed their stories. I'd love to have given some of them my Polygraph test, especially Eunice Murray, Bobby Kennedy, Johnny Roselli, Peter Lawford, and Dr. Greenson…and that would be just for starters. My money's on Hall."]

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On the night of Marilyn's death, Arthur Jacobs operated one of the largest public relations companies in Los Angeles. One of his senior employees was Pat Newcomb, whom he had signed as Marilyn's personal publicist. Other clients of Jacobs included Judy Garland, Richard Burton, Rock Hudson, James Stewart, and Gregory Peck.

Jacobs would become better known for two major events in his life—the death of Marilyn Monroe and the production of the wildly popular *Planet of the Apes* series.

On that August 4 Saturday night, he had invited his girlfriend, Natalie Trundy, to the Hollywood Bowl to hear a Henry Mancini concert. They were accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Mervin LeRoy. He was a famous producer of such hits as *Quo Vadis?* and *Gypsy*.

Jacobs had planned, after the concert, to take Natalie to Chasen's to celebrate her birthday. As the concert was nearing its final half hour, at approximately 10:30pm, a messenger boy arrived from the manager of the Hollywood Bowl. The teenage boy told Jacobs that there was a "most urgent call for him" in the front office. Excusing himself, Jacobs rushed to the office and picked up the receiver to hear the startling news: "Marilyn Monroe is dead."

The famous reporter, Florabel Muir, later investigated and concluded that the call was placed by Pat Newcomb from Marilyn's home in Brentwood.

Natalie claimed that she did not see Jacobs for the next two days and two nights, but she was obviously aware of where he'd gone. "Pick up any newspaper, turn on the TV and radio, and you could figure it out."

"Arthur was in damage control at Marilyn's house," Natalie said. "Studios since the 1920s had guys like Arthur covering up scandals they didn't want the public to know."

"The man who became my husband fudged everything, he later admitted to me." She revealed this only after Jacobs had died at the age of fifty-one in 1973 of a heart attack. He chose to keep his Marilyn Monroe secrets.

Arthur Jacobs and Natalie Trundy

"Perhaps staging the scene after the death of Marilyn Monroe that summer of 1962 was Arthur's greatest achievement," Natalie said. "Much of the world today still believes that her death was a suicide, accidental, or deliberate. Arthur did not want the world to know that she was murdered. That would have led to an investigation that would have stretched from Los Angeles via Chicago to Washington."

PART SEVEN

THE MURDER THAT NEVER DIES

From midnight until 4:25am, when the police were officially called, the traffic in and out of Marilyn's Brentwood home was compared to that of Grand Central Station. Many concerned men and women who passed through the murder house that night later denied they were even there.

Much was riding on a hastily written scenario by Arthur Jacobs, with the goading of 20th Century Fox. He was put in charge of rearranging and re-choreographing the scene, an old Hollywood trick that dated back to the 1930s and the mysterious death of Paul Bern, Jean Harlow's ill-fated husband.

There was almost no talk of a gangland execution or of its ringleader, Sam Giancana. The Kennedy brothers were the first and almost only consideration. After all, the fate of a political dynasty was at stake. The future political map of America, and by extension the Free World, could be whirling around the dead body of this blonde love goddess, who at that moment in Hollywood was its most celebrated actress.

There were two major objectives, and Jacobs had to achieve both of them—namely, to establish that Marilyn's death was a suicide, and second, to destroy evidence of any possible romantic link between her and the Kennedy brothers, Bobby and Jack. Teddy was such a minor player in the drama that almost no one seemed aware that he, too, knew Marilyn and had visited her for private encounters at Brentwood.

If Marilyn's death were ruled a suicide, there would be no investigation. But if the police defined it as murder, then an investigation would be launched that might lead anywhere, even to the White House.

Before the police were alerted, the household had to be made camera ready, just like a movie script.

More arrivals at the house were on the way, but it is believed that, in addition to Marilyn's dead body, she had any number of guests at around midnight: Peter Lawford, Pat Newcomb (although she denied it), Eunice Murray and her son-in-law Norman Jeffries, and Dr. Ralph Greenson, who had been joined by Marilyn's doctor, Hyman Engelberg.

Lawford set about removing "the paper trail," as he called it, which linked Marilyn to the Kennedy brothers. From her filing cabinet, Lawford was said to have filled three cardboard boxes with her personal papers and other documents. Normally, it would have been locked, but someone had broken in only two weeks before and robbed many of her documents. The lock had never been repaired, although she meant to call a locksmith.

Lawford's greatest discovery, or so it was alleged, was her red diary, which he confiscated and removed from the filing cabinet. Eunice Murray had seen Marilyn writing in it Friday. Marilyn had given Eunice the diary to put back in the filing cabinet, from which it was later stolen.

Reportedly, all of these documents, including the diary, would, within a few days, be carefully shipped to the Department of Justice marked "for the eyes only" of the Attorney General.

Jacobs wanted Marilyn's body moved from the guest cottage into her bedroom. Eunice was ordered to wash the soiled sheets that were left behind, and to make up the bed again as if it had not been used that night.

Jacobs, the consummate press agent, reportedly said, "Fox will generate lots of money on Marilyn's pictures for years to come. We can't have our love goddess discovered in a pile of shit. How in the fuck would that look?"

With the cooperation of Marilyn's psychiatrist (Greenson) and medical doctor (Engelberg), a fictional plot had to be quickly and carefully devised as to how her body had actually been discovered.

Jacobs had spent most of his life reading scripts. For casual reading and relaxation, he preferred murder mysteries. Frantically, he set about creating his own movie-inspired plot.

Like a good film, the story of Marilyn's suicide would have a beginning, a middle section, and a dramatic conclusion. The press agent decided that the plot needed to begin at the Santa Monica mansion of Patricia and Peter

Lawford. Although still intoxicated, Lawford would have to be rehearsed in a credible scenario of events.

In his subsequent investigation of Marilyn's death, Robert Slatzer tried to answer why Jacobs was on the scene managing and spinning the story. Slatzer later claimed that Jacobs was there to rearrange Marilyn's death in such a way that the studio could collect a three-million dollar life insurance policy it held on its star.

After Marilyn's death, Fox was most gracious to Jacobs. He not only sold his agency for a huge amount of money, but became a producer at Fox. His first assignment was to direct *What a Way to Go*, a picture that had originally been developed specifically for Marilyn. He followed that with his mega-bucks release of *The Planet of the Apes*, with all the spin-offs it spawned.

It would have been logical for Jacobs to summon his "Marilyn Monroe expert," Pat Newcomb, to the scene that night. But as pointed out, she denied ever being there. Yet, after Jacobs died, his widow, Natalie, said, "If you really want to know what happened that night, ask Pat Newcomb. She knows the whole story."

The evidence is overwhelming. All of the key witnesses at the scene of the crime told stories about their involvement that were substantially untrue—and, in most cases, a blatant lie.

As the years went by, key witnesses, perhaps forgetting what they had originally said, changed their testimony. In some cases, as these witnesses neared their own deaths, they admitted some of their previous testimony had been untrue, as in the case of Eunice Murray.

The biggest lie that some of the people who were in the house that night told was, "I wasn't even there. The first time I heard the news was over the radio when I woke up that Sunday morning."

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Peter Lawford's account of what happened on the night Marilyn was murdered depended on what year it was and who he was talking to. He invented various dialogues that were probably never spoken, especially the remark about her telling him to "say goodbye to the President." In some of his other versions, it was, "Say goodbye to Jack."

It appears that he did make a call to Marilyn at around seven that evening, as reported in Part Five of this book. She was coherent, based on statements made by friends who called her that night.

Lawford later claimed that Marilyn called him and allegedly told him, "I can't take it anymore. It would be better off if I killed myself."

He claimed that she'd said that at the time, but that he did not take the threat seriously, as she'd made so many suicide attempts in her past. At first, he reported that he responded, "For God's sake, Marilyn, don't leave any suicide notes behind.

"Later, he must have realized how heartless that sounded, so he greatly altered his version of what was said between them.

At his home after 8pm on Saturday, Lawford told one of his dinner guests, George ("Bullets") Durgom, that he was worried about Marilyn, as he had tried to reach her several times on the phone, asserting that her line was busy. When he called the operator, she reported to him, or so he said, that her phone was off the hook. He had the number of her second phone line, but there was no mention of his attempt to dial that back-up number.

Then from the context of the party at his house, Lawford opted to phone his agent, Milton Ebbins. Lawford had, prior to his call to Ebbins, spoken to someone else on the phone, a person rumored to have been Bobby Kennedy, although that was never proven.

Lawford reported to Ebbins that "Marilyn's voice was barely audible, and she seemed distressed, disoriented, her speech slurred." He seemed to over-state the situation. Had Lawford been instructed to begin inserting the suspicion that Marilyn had been contemplating suicide that night?

Even though he was hosting a Chinese take-out dinner within his home that night, Lawford asked Ebbins advice about whether he should excuse himself and drive over to Marilyn's home.

"You can't be caught there if there's trouble," Ebbins told him. "Hell, you're the brother-in-law of the President of the United States. Let me get in touch with Greenson or her lawyer."

Ebbins was unable to reach Greenson by phone, but he did get to speak to Mickey Rudin, Marilyn's lawyer. Ebbins telephoned Rudin at around 8:15pm, getting his answering service. Asserting that it was an emergency, the answering service eventually located Rudin at a cocktail party at the home of Mildred Allenberg, the widow of the late agent from William Morris, Burt Allenberg, who had represented Frank Sinatra.

Alerted to Lawford's concern, and as a means of handling the matter, Rudin placed a call to Marilyn's home. Her second line wasn't busy, and Eunice picked up the phone. She was getting ready to go out to dinner with her son-in-law. Rudin told her about Lawford's concern and asked Eunice to go to Marilyn's bedroom and check on her.

Rudin claimed that he waited four minutes for Eunice to come back onto the telephone line. Then Eunice told him, “She’s fine.”

Rudin later claimed that he suspected that she never bothered to look, or else that she knew what was really going on in the house that night and didn’t want him to know. Rudin then claimed that he called Lawford back, telling him, “Mrs. Murray said that Marilyn is just fine.”

With Lawford at his party in Santa Monica that Saturday night were Joe and Dolores Naar, who lived only four doors from Marilyn.

“It was a fun evening,” Dolores later recalled. “Peter got quite drunk. He gave no indication during dinner that anything was wrong. But he was called away at one point. When he came back, he explained that a phone call he’d received was from Marilyn, ‘who is very tired and can’t come over.’”

At that time, the Naars were about to leave. It is believed that the anonymous caller who had previously spoken to Lawford was not Marilyn at all, but someone else, warning him about something.

The Naars left Lawford’s party in Santa Monica and were home after around 10pm. Dolores Naar later asserted, “As Joe was getting undressed, he got this urgent call from Peter. Joe said he sounded like he was in a panic. Peter asked Joe if he’d go down and knock on Marilyn’s door and see if she were all right. Peter told him he was afraid that she might have taken too many pills.”

“I put on my clothes again and was rushing out the door when another call from Peter came in,” Joe said. “Strangely, he told me not to go to Marilyn’s. ‘Everything’s okay,’ he said. ‘I’m just an alarmist. You know me, the old worry wart.’”

Lawford obviously didn’t want Naar to go to Marilyn’s, afraid by now for what his friend would discover. If he’d gone, Joe might even find Lawford arriving there himself.

Some time after 10pm, Lawford was spotted leaving his Santa Monica home, in his Mercedes, by a neighbor, Billy Ward. Peter, according to the neighbor, was staggering toward his car when the unidentified woman who was with him opted to get behind the wheel to actually drive the car. Later, it was believed that the woman was none other than Pat Newcomb, who was reported to have been a guest at Lawford’s party that night, even though she’d originally begged off from attending, complaining of a sinus infection.

It was only an eight- to ten-minute drive from Santa Monica to Marilyn’s residence in Brentwood. Lawford and Newcomb were believed to have arrived in Brentwood at 10:35pm, three minutes before the ambulance.

Lawford’s maid, Erma Lee Riley, later claimed that her boss never left his house and that he was there all night. Had she gone to bed early? Or was she trying to protect her job? Many other witnesses placed Lawford at Marilyn’s home well before midnight.

When Dolores Naar heard of Marilyn’s death, she said, “No wonder Peter didn’t want Joe to go over there that night. Peter heard from Jack or Bobby—probably Bobby—who told him to get over there and clean up the mess himself before the police and press arrived.

”Lawford would later claim that he did not learn of Marilyn death until 1:30am, although he refused to name who’d told him. This was obviously a lie, as he was deeply involved in the cover-up before midnight.

Deborah Gould, Lawford’s third wife, said, “He told me he went over there and tried to tidy up the place and remove anything linking Marilyn to the Kennedys before the police arrived.” Gould also claimed that Lawford told her, years after the event, “Marilyn took her last enema,” indicating that he knew the method of her death.

Jeanne Carmen later recalled that Marilyn was no stranger to enemas. “I saw her take a few myself. She was always complaining of chronic constipation.

”Fred Otash, the master detective and “bugger,” later claimed he received an urgent call from Lawford, who phoned from Marilyn’s house after she died. “It was at around midnight. I already knew, of course, that Marilyn was dead. I had my means of knowing that.”

“Peter wanted me to go over and remove any bugging equipment from the house, because he didn’t know how to do anything that elaborate,” Otash claimed. “I refused to go over there. I didn’t want to get messed up in that shit, which might lead to a murder trial.

”Otash said he advised Lawford how to get rid of some of the evidence. “Peter sounded like a fucking mess. It was like I was talking to a junkie going cold turkey.”

“Do what you have to do,” Otash told Lawford. “But get the shit out of there before someone else calls the police. I hope your buddy, Bobby, has gotten his skinny ass back into a San Francisco hotel by now.”

“He’s safe,” Lawford assured him. “But I don’t know what that fucking bitch might have written. She was always taking notes about things she shouldn’t have learned about in the first place.

”Otash claimed that he then asked Lawford the all-important question, “Did Bobby have anything to do with Marilyn’s murder?”

“Hell, no! He’s too smart for that.”

Of course, Otash, from listening to the tapes, already knew that Sam Giancana was behind Marilyn's murder. But he voiced one question which was never answered. "Who was behind Giancana giving the orders that were passed on to Johnny Roselli? There was big money involved here, but I sure didn't get my hands on any of it."

When Lawford returned to his Santa Monica home, which was also bugged, it was around three o'clock in the morning, perhaps later. On his tapped phone, he received a mysterious call coming in from San Francisco. At the time, or so it is believed, Lawford had Marilyn's private papers with him, including her red diary.

A secret recording picked up the sound of a man's voice. "Is she dead yet?" he asked.

"Yes," was all that Lawford said in response before the caller hung up.

According to Otash, "It did not sound like Bobby Kennedy's voice, [but] a man's voice much deeper."

On the day of Marilyn's funeral, Lawford was flying to Hyannis Port, where he would remain *incommunicado*. Before he left L.A., he told a reporter for *The Los Angeles Herald-Tribune* that he had spoken to Marilyn at around 7pm on the Saturday of her death. "She said she was feeling sleepy and was going to bed. She did sound sleepy, but I've talked to her a hundred times before and she sounded no different."

All that seemed innocent enough, but by the time he reached the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port, he told the clan, "I fear the shit's about to hit the fan."

[In 1992, thirty years after Marilyn's death, it was revealed that Lawford had placed a call at 6:05am to the White House, where the time was 9:05am on Sunday morning, August 5, 1962. President Kennedy had returned to Washington from his time "at home" in Hyannis Port. The very first entry into the presidential phone log listed Lawford as the person who placed a call from a "Pacific Coast Highway" address in Santa Monica., where his private number was recorded as GL1-1800.

He and the President, according to the log, talked for twenty minutes.

To many reporters, this early morning call was viewed as the smoking gun that linked the President to Marilyn's death. The call may have been no more sinister than Lawford giving JFK the inside scoop on what was about to explode into a nationwide media frenzy.]

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At the murder house in Brentwood, Arthur Jacobs, ace publicist, continued his rearrangements of the scene before calling the police. He found the doctors, Greenson and Engelberg, cooperative, but when he encountered Eunice Murray, he defined her as "a difficult bitch to deal with."

Mickey Rudin, the lawyer, also arrived at the Brentwood house that night, although he would deny it for years. In 1992, he finally admitted that he had, indeed, been there. "I got a call from Romi to come over," he said, using his nickname for Dr. Greenson. "I was told that Marilyn was dead. I drove over right away. Newcomb was there. She was hysterical."

His statement seemed to confirm the emotional state of the woman who James Hall, the ambulance driver, had encountered.

The spin about how Marilyn's body was discovered remained a major concern. A scenario had to be worked out. Jacobs wanted Eunice to have come upon the body in Marilyn's bedroom, and not within the cramped guest cottage.

Greenson and Engelbert had delicately moved the body into her main bedroom, and Jacobs had artfully arranged it. Marilyn remained nude, but a sheet was placed over her body.

Eunice was configured as the star witness. With help from the professionals on the scene, she began to spin a tale of discovery that would later prove to be moth-eaten.

At first, she said that she woke up after midnight to use the bathroom. On the way there, she noticed a light in Marilyn's bedroom and her phone cord extending out from under the door.

A white carpet with thick, plush piling had recently been installed. With the understanding that the pile would eventually be crushed down through the course of daily use, the piling, shortly after the carpet's installation, was so high that no light would have been seen beneath the door, and it's highly unlikely that a phone cord could have been slipped under it. In addition, Eunice had the use of her own bathroom, and would not have passed by Marilyn's bedroom as a means of reaching her own toilet.

Eunice would later claim that she attempted to enter through Marilyn's door, but found it locked. There was one major problem with that assertion: There was no lock on Marilyn's door. The housekeeper also said as a means of checking whether Marilyn was all right, she exited from the house, went into the garden, reached through the open window of Marilyn's bedroom and, from the outside, "parted the curtains." Eunice claimed that the lights were still on in Marilyn's room and that she was lying on the bed with the phone trapped under her stomach.

Eunice said that she then went back into the house and telephoned Dr. Greenson on the building's second phone line. He had just returned from dinner with his wife. Since he lived nearby, he said that he'd drive right over.

At the scene of the crime: Mickey Rudin

Eunice's timing certainly appears to be off, because James Hall encountered Greenson in the hallway at the time of Marilyn's death. To confound matters even more, Eunice would later tell the police that she didn't find Marilyn dead until 3:45am, when rigor mortis had already set in.

There were other discrepancies: Marilyn's bedroom windows had been bolted. There was no opening for Eunice to reach through as a means of parting those draperies. Although Marilyn had plans for the eventual fabrication of "black-out" draperies, they were not yet in place by the time of her death. Instead, Norman Jeffries had simply stapled a length of fabric over the windows as a temporary solution. The curtains could not have been parted from anyone standing in the garden, both because of the windows having been bolted shut and because of the way the bolt of fabric had been stapled into place.

A few weeks prior to her death, five high school boys, hearing that she had moved into the neighborhood, were caught as Peeping Toms trying to peer into her bedroom. Marilyn had always been sensitive about her privacy, and because of the fact that she liked to avoid the morning sun on those nights when she eventually fell asleep around dawn, she had taken pains to ensure that the windows were covered.

According to his contrived story, as relayed later to the police**,** Dr. Greenson asserted that he arrived and immediately took a fireplace poker and broke a window pane from his position in the garden, then claimed that he reached in and opened the window.

But there was a problem with that story: If he broke the glass pane from the outside, as he claimed, shards of broken glass would have fallen inside onto the bedroom's carpet. But instead, shards of glass were found outside the house, on the ground, indicating that the glass had been broken from the inside.

Greenson altered Eunice's story in another manner as well, claiming that he found Marilyn dead in bed with the phone's receiver clutched in her hand, as if she were trying to call someone, whereas Eunice claimed that Marilyn was actually lying on the phone, positioned under her stomach.

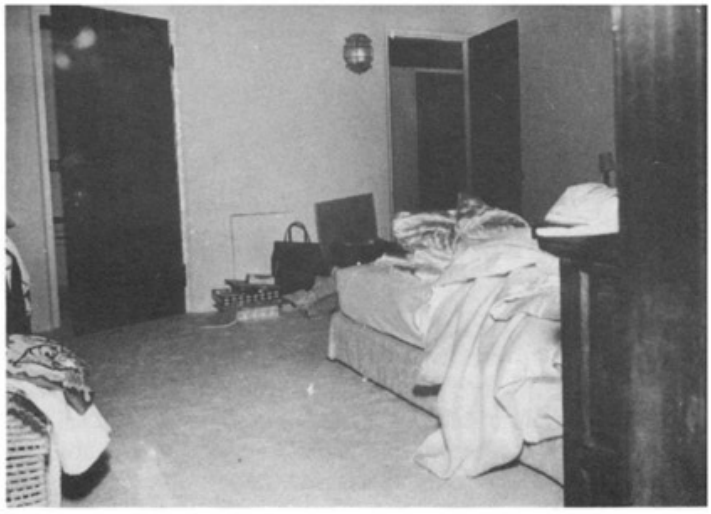
It seemed that no one had carefully rehearsed their stories, a shortcoming that led to many discrepancies.

It would later be determined that if anyone wanted to gain entrance to Marilyn's bedroom, all that he or she would have had to do was open the door over that thick, new, deep-pile carpet.

Eunice's version of the timing of the events that transpired that night seemed so weirdly off that as the years

passed, she would be asked to explain and re-explain the notable time irregularities of her various versions of what happened. “I think it was 3:30 or maybe 3:45am when I discovered the body. But it could also have been midnight.”

When pressed for information about the ambulance, she said, “I really can’t remember.” She also denied ever having called an ambulance, although company records later revealed that a “Norman Jeffries” had made the urgent call for one to be sent.



Crime Scene: Marilyn’s bedroom on Fifth Helena Drive

She also claimed that she had been the one to call Dr. Engelberg, but Dr. Greenson said he was the one. Engelberg later said it was Eunice who had phoned him. At one point, Eunice said that it was she, not Greenson, who had taken the poker and broken the window.

Dr. Greenson also got his time frames confused, at first claiming he was called to the house “at around midnight,” although Hall had reported him there at 10:30pm. If he had arrived at midnight, or even before, the question put to him was why he or Dr. Engelberg had waited so long to call the police.

What happened between midnight and 4:25am?

Engelberg had signed the death certificate at 3:50am.

Greenson, like Eunice, changed his story, claiming that he arrived at 3:30am.

As investigative reporter Matthew Smith later wrote: “That meant that Dr. Greenson was claiming that he dressed and drove to Fifth Helena Drive, then called Engelberg, who dressed and drove there, examined the body, and signed the death certificate—all in the space of twenty minutes. This was quite impossible.”

None of the eyewitnesses that night would emerge as pillars of consistency, frequently changing the time frames in response to challenging questions.

Later in her life, Eunice would finally admit that she lied on the night of Marilyn’s murder. When she got around to writing a highly unreliable memoir, *Marilyn: The Last Months*, published in 1975, she changed her story once again.

She admitted that she had seen no light nor any telephone cord under Marilyn’s bedroom door, a believable scenario because of the high pile of the newly installed carpet.

Seven years later, during an interview with researcher Justin Clayton, she came up with another story, saying that the door was found ajar, and that she walked right into the room. “It wasn’t necessary to break any window. I don’t remember how that window got broken. Maybe some kid threw a rock into it.”

At this point, all reference to a broken window as the means of access to Marilyn’s bedroom had been diminished to the status of a “red herring.”

But who, and when, and why, really broke the window?

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It was a dull Sunday morning at the station house of the western division of the Los Angeles Police Department. The time was 4:25am on Sunday morning, August 5, 1962. A burly police sergeant who wore black-rimmed glasses, Jack Clemmons, was about to have his fifteen minutes of fame. Actually, his fame would last far longer, since journalists would still be writing about him during the 21st Century.

"It had been a dead night," he later recalled. "Absolutely dead. Not even the cockroaches in the station house were moving about. Normally, I didn't take incoming calls, the desk did that. But I was standing outside at the front entrance when I heard the phone ring. I don't think we'd had a call all night. I picked up the receiver and heard this rather cultured voice."

"This is Dr. Engelberg. Marilyn Monroe is dead. She committed suicide."

"At first I thought some jackass was calling in as a prank," Clemmons said. "Probably drunk after a wild Saturday night. But I took down the particulars and decided to drive over myself. If the call was legitimate, the world would be descending on Fifth Helena Drive."

"Even as I drove there, I still thought it was a hoax," Clemmons continued. "We'd received those calls before. The year before, a call came in that someone had shot Lana Turner, and that she was dead."

"When I got to Marilyn's home and rang the bell, this rather ugly, black-haired, late middle-aged terror opened the door," he said. "She identified herself as Eunice Murray and told me she was Marilyn's housekeeper. She said the call was genuine. Marilyn Monroe had been found dead in her bedroom."

Clemmons would later recall, "It was a gut instinct, but I felt I'd arrived at the scene of a murder. This story was going to be big. I mean, really big. I asked the witch who else was in the house."

"Dr. Greenson and Dr. Engelberg," she said.

He would later learn that her son-in-law, Norman Jeffries, had spent the night in the murder house. "He was nowhere to be seen. I was told that Murray didn't want him to talk to the police, and had asked him to leave before people started to arrive. This was the beginning of her lifelong concealment of what actually happened that night."

"When did these two doctors arrive here?" Clemmons asked Eunice.

"Around midnight," she told the sergeant, the first installment in her frequently changing timetables over the decades.

"I was shown into Marilyn's bedroom, where the body was," Clemmons said. "These two doctors were there. They were introduced to me, but when I offered to shake their hands, they didn't respond. Engelberg was identified as Marilyn's personal physician. He was rather slender, late middle age, and gray haired."

"Greenson was introduced to me as Marilyn's psychiatrist. He seemed to have been designated as the spokesman. He was a bit taller, with a drooping mustache. His gray hair was rather thin, and he had the darkest rings around his eyes. Both of them stood about six feet from the corpse on the bed. It was obvious to me that they resented my presence."

"Marilyn's blonde head was clearly visible above a white sheet," Clemmons said. "I would have recognized her anywhere. I didn't pull the sheet back to expose her nudity. I'd seen plenty of that. In the toilet at the police station, we had her nude calendar on the wall. I didn't want to touch anything, including the phone. I felt that some ghouls

had already done that for me. Her body was artfully arranged by someone. It was obvious to me that this was a staged event."

"Her legs were arranged perfectly, as if she was getting ready to pose for another nude calendar. I had been at suicide scenes before, especially when the victim overdosed on barbiturates. In the last minutes before consciousness is lost, there is a great pain and the body contorts."

"I asked Engelberg if he'd moved the body. He told me, 'only to determine if she were dead.' I thought he was lying. He was definitely hiding something. I later found that this Murray woman was washing bed sheets. Why? At this hour of the morning? I felt that the scene of the crime had been tampered with. But it was not my job to be the investigative officer on this case."

"It was an eerie scene at the house that night, with the most famous woman in the world lying nude and dead in the bedroom," Clemmons said. "I felt that vital evidence had been concealed or even destroyed. It was just a hunch. Everybody was acting so suspiciously I felt that, unlike Marilyn, they were unskilled actors not trained as either a liar or a cover-up artist. Murray was one little busy bee running around straightening up things until I asked her to stop."

"'Was there a suicide note?' I asked Greenson.

"No note," he snapped.

"Before superior officers arrived, I spent an hour and a half going over the scene, looking for clues," Clemmons said. "There were empty bottles of prescription drugs by her nightstand."

Greenson volunteered that, "She must have swallowed all the pills."

"Where is the glass of water she used to swallow that many pills?" Clemmons asked. "I looked around; the doctors looked around—no glass. I went into the bathroom. It didn't have one glass or cup. I turned on the water. Not one drop. Murray told me that the water in Marilyn's bathroom had been temporarily cut off during a restoration of the house. She had to use the other bathroom at the end of the hallway."

Greenson had followed Clemmons into the bathroom and said, "It was definitely suicide."

"I turned to him and I was annoyed. Why don't we let the Los Angeles coroner decide that?"

"As I listened to their contradictory stories about how her body was discovered, I wondered why they'd waited for more than four hours to call the police."

"This Murray creature was very evasive, but so were the two doctors," Clemmons said.

"We were talking things over," Greenson said, according to Clemmons. "The people at Fox had to be notified because Marilyn was such a big star—the press, you know."

"That was his fucking answer as to why he'd waited four hours to call the police," Clemmons said. "He knew he was required by law to notify us at once."

"Attitude is important," Clemmons said. "Engelberg was polite, but this Greenson creep was very antagonistic. Each of his answers was sarcastic. I'd later learn that he was a communist. No one volunteered information. They gave only the briefest answers to my questions."

"My time at the house had come to an end," Clemmons said. "My relief, Sergeant Marvin Iannone, arrived. He told me that the detective who would take charge was on his way. Sergeant Iannone…that is a story for another day."

Within moments, Sergeant Robert Byron came in to take over," Clemmons said, "I drove back to the station. I was left with the impression that I had just interviewed three fucking liars. More than that, I believed there had been other people there during those missing four hours before the police were called. A lot of people had come and gone, but had cleared out before I got there. What were they covering up? The answer was most obvious to me: Marilyn Monroe was murdered!"

Back at the station house, Clemmons placed a call to a fellow police officer, James Dougherty, Marilyn's wartime husband, her first.

"Marilyn is dead," Clemmons told Dougherty. I've just come from her house. There were a couple of doctors there. They say it was a suicide."

"They finally got her," Dougherty said, without explaining who "they" were.

Clemmons later said that he began to realize some massive cover-up had begun when he read the Monday newspaper. "My call to Dougherty was reported in the press. But I heard what he told me. He said, 'They finally got her.' Guess what was reported in the press? He was quoted as turning to his new wife and saying, 'Say a prayer for Norma Jeane. She's dead.'"

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Arthur Jacobs tried to reach Jack Clemmons at the station house, but found the phone constantly busy. By Sunday at around noon, reporters had learned of Marilyn's death, and the phones were constantly ringing. Perhaps Jacobs wanted to vet Clemmons to see if he'd learned anything damaging during his visit to Marilyn's house.

His entire staff had been summoned. "We're in damage control," Jacobs told them "The whole world wants to know. We've got to deal with the press. Marilyn's death will make Second Coming headlines. Our official storyline is suicide.

"Because of the time difference, the residents of Japan were among the first mass of people to learn of the death of this fabled goddess.

In London, there were tragic consequences almost immediately. On learning of Marilyn's death, British actress and Mayfair hostess actress Patricia Marlowe, 28, swallowed sleeping pills, which led to her death. Unlike Marilyn, she left a suicide note that read, "I want to die like Marilyn."

Also in London, Gerdi Marie Havious, a dancer, turned to her husband, and asked, "Why did she do it?" Then she ran across her living room and leaped to her death from an open third floor window, impaling herself on a jagged iron gate.

In Mexico City, three teenage girls dangerously injured themselves during their attempts to commit suicide. There were other disasters as well, as much of the world received the news in stunned disbelief.

As dawn broke over the murder house, reporters and paparazzi, summoned early from their beds, were arriving at the scene. One unidentified woman, dressed in a raincoat and pajamas, was seen running from the house, screaming at the press, "You vultures! Murderers! Murderers! Are you satisfied now? You've killed her!"

Pat Newcomb and Norman Jeffries (behind her) being escorted out of Marilyn's house by two policemen

This woman was later to be identified as Pat Newcomb. Such an outburst may have led to her firing. This was hardly the way Jacobs wanted one of his publicists to face the nation's press.

Sergeant Marvin Iannone asked Eunice Murray when Marilyn Monroe's bodyhad been discovered. Unlike what she'd told Clemmons, Murray told Iannone that she'd discovered the body at 3:45am. When confronted with earlier statement that it was at around midnight, she said, "I'm tired. My nerves are frazzled. Anybody can make a mistake."

Iannone soon discovered the washing machine going full blast. When he inquired why she was doing this, Murray said that people would be arriving at Marilyn's Brentwood home, photographs would be taken, and she wanted "everything to be neat and tidy."

Then he asked her a potentially incriminating question. "That sheet over Monroe looks like it just emerged from the linen closet. Is it the same sheet over her body when you discovered her?"

"No, it's a fresh one."

"Did you remove a soiled sheet and put on a fresh one?"

Eunice burst into tears. "Please don't pressure me. I'm half out of my mind. How can I possibly be expected to remember such a trivial detail?"

Detective Sergeant Robert E. Byron was the ranking officer on the scene. Aiding him in the initial investigation was Don Marshall, a plainclothes detective in the West Los Angeles division of the Los Angeles Police Department. Both of them searched the house for incriminating evidence. In the guest cottage, they discovered that the lock had been broken on a three-drawer filing cabinet.

All the contents of each drawer had been removed. Only one letter remained. It was from a nightclub in Paris, offering Marilyn a contract for her to appear for a one-week revue.

The door to the guest cottage opening onto the street was slightly ajar, but its lock had not been tampered with. Byron assumed that the theft had been an inside job.

Beginning that very day, Byron would be attacked for his "superficial investigation," although he was considered one of the best detectives in the Los Angeles area. Over the years, it would be speculated that pressure was put on him by William H. Parker, the Los Angeles Chief of Police.

Parker was one of the leading supporters and friends of Bobby Kennedy in California. It was no secret that Parker wanted the Attorney General to name him as the replacement for J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI.

It seemed logical that to curry favor with Bobby, he would not pursue too vigorous an investigation into the death of Marilyn. He had actually been heard talking to Bobby in San Francisco that Sunday morning, and he knew that the Attorney General had been at Marilyn's house that Saturday afternoon.

Allegedly, Bobby told him, "Seize Marilyn's phone records before Nellie Hoover gets her hands on them. She'll try to use them to blackmail me."

In a daring move, Parker knew he could save Bobby a lot of embarrassment and political damage if the police seized those records instead of the FBI. He authorized two of his policemen to bring the records back to his office.

A bit later, in Washington, Hoover realized that the phone records might contain lots of last-minute calls to Bobby, or even to the President, and could be very damaging to them. He ordered his agents in Los Angeles to seize Marilyn's phone records. But when Hoover's agents arrived at the phone company, they were told that the records had already been confiscated by the LAPD.

Once the records had been delivered to Parker's office, he reviewed them and then ordered a special courier to deliver them at once to the office of the Attorney General in Washington—"For the eyes of Robert F. Kennedy only."

Hoover never spoke to the Attorney General about the death of Marilyn, but he did discuss it with close friends, including his lover, Clyde Tolson, and with another agent, Guy Hotell, and his "gal pals," Dorothy Lamour and Ethel Merman. "Monroe was murdered," Hoover claimed. "It was not a suicide." He chose not to reveal how he knew that or who had actually murdered her.

Back in Hollywood, Jacobs was already hearing what key figures in the entertainment industry were saying about Marilyn. Elizabeth Taylor told the press, "It could easily have been me."

Marilyn's final director, George Cukor, said, "Marilyn was not a lady who would have taken aging well. Her forties would have been a horror for her. She didn't have the integrity of a true actress—she would not have welcomed the riches of character interpretations, as a true actress would have. She was a star trading on certain gimmicks, and in her heart she knew that."

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Back at the murder house, someone (it was never made clear who) placed a call to Guy Hockett and his son, Don, the owners of the Westwood Village Mortuary. They were asked to drive to Marilyn's home to remove her corpse.

Arriving in a battered white van, they were ushered into Marilyn's bedroom, where they ordered everybody out.

"We were told that she'd been dead for only an hour or two," Guy said. "That was pure bullshit. *Rigor mortis* had set in. She'd been dead for hours. We had a hell of a time bending her arms and legs, trying to fit her onto our gurney to move her outside and into the hearse. We had to do quite a bit of bending to get the arms into position so that we could, you know, put the straps around her."

Although he was not a doctor, Guy was familiar with signs of mostmortem lividity, which is a bluish-purple discoloration of the underside of a corpse. This is caused when blood settles downward as a result of the pull of

gravity. “Lividity takes several hours to develop,” he said. “She had this discoloration on her body. Her fingernails had turned completely blue, like she had put blue nail polish on them. Somebody lied. We suspected a cover-up.”

William Parker, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department

Covered in a pink woolen blanket—pink had been her favorite color—Marilyn’s corpse was strapped onto that steel gurney and hauled out of her home in full view of the near-hysterical cabal of reporters and paparazzi who had rushed to the scene of the murder. They slid the body inside the Ford van and slammed the door, as photographs were madly snapped.

Presumably, in high-profile cases such as that of Marilyn, or in cases where the death of a person is suspicious (often involving young men or women), the body is delivered to the coroner’s office in downtown Los Angeles. But for some surprising reason, Marilyn’s corpse was sent to the nearby mortuary.

Her body was there for two hours and left unguarded in the back of the mortuary, except for an attendant whose name is not known.

Even as the body lay there, awaiting an eventual autopsy which would be ordered, the most ghoulish part of her legend was about to unfold.

Today, it’s dismissed as “just an urban legend,” but many of Marilyn’s fans still believe that her body was “violated” before an employee of the coroner’s office arrived to claim the corpse.

In Los Angeles, as in many large cities, unscrupulous employees in funeral parlors sometimes make deals with necrophiles when a dead body of a young man or young woman is brought in.

Necrophiles sometimes go for a year—or a lot more—without sexual relief and will often pay top dollar to have sexual intercourse with a recently dead corpse. The body of Marilyn Monroe would be among the most celebrated in the world for violation after death.

Before her funeral, word had spread that five necrophiles made a financial deal with some attendant at the mortuary and were allowed to spend time with Marilyn’s corpse, paying $1,000 each for the privilege of “seducing” her, postmortem. That was a lot of money back in 1962.

The Hocket s were gone at the time on other business, and would have been unaware of such an outrage, even, indeed, if it were true.

Urban legend or not, the rumor has legs and the alleged violation of Marilyn’s body still has its believers.

Dr. Greenson was once asked about this rumor by David Garrison, a reporter from *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. “That’s so disgusting. I can’t even contemplate such a thing, although I’m aware of the practice. If it’s true, and I don’t believe it for a moment, it would be the final, the ultimate, violation of poor Marilyn. She led such a painful, troubled life. If only she could rest in peace. But no, I don’t think the jackals will let her do that.”

The van with Marilyn's body drove through a growing crowd of reporters and photographers.

"Whether that horror is a fantasy or not, Marilyn is still being spiritually violated, and her reputation forever destroyed," Greenson said. "Perhaps a hundred years from now, people will still be talking and wondering about Marilyn. She's going to enter that special Nirvana of goddesses like Cleopatra and Helen of Troy."

Garrison's question and Greenson's comments were never printed in L.A.'s *Herald-Examiner*, Garrison's editor claiming, "This newspaper has to maintain some degree of integrity and decency, and there's no proof."

However, an underground newspaper, *Sleaze*, distributed mainly on Hollywood Boulevard, picked up the claim and printed it in August of 1962 for the titillation of its sensation-seeking but limited numbers of readers.

Back then, the story was suppressed, but today, based on today's more permissive standards, it might merit banner headlines in tabloids distributed at supermarkets to millions of shoppers.

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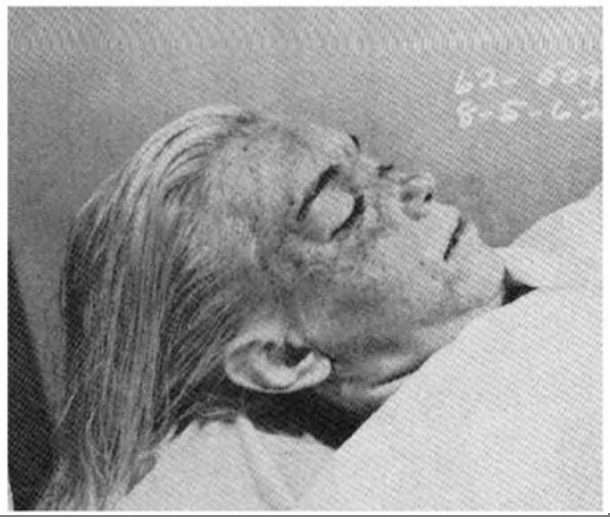
Lionel Grandison, the deputy coroner's aide for the County of Los Angeles, was charged with ensuring that persons who died under questionable circumstances should have their bodies sent first to the city morgue for an autopsy.

At first, he wasn't even sure where Marilyn's body was until he found out from Sergeant Iannone that it had been sent to the Westwood Village Mortuary.

When he arrived there, he discovered that the on-duty staff was already preparing the body for embalming. He later said, "The guys there squawked and didn't want to release the body in my custody, but the law was on my side."



Marilyn, post-mortem

As the hearse carried her to the county morgue, Grandison listened to the radio. He heard the voice of Peter Lawford, who said, “Pat and I loved her dearly. She was one of the most marvelous and warm human beings I have ever met. Anything else I could say would be superfluous.”

In New York, Susan Strasberg told the press, “Marilyn was called an iron butterfly. Butterflies are very beautiful, give great pleasure, and have very short lifespans.”

“The Sunday morning newspapers across America had been put to bed before the announcement of Marilyn’s death. The radio revealed that it was a young reporter, Joe Ramirez, who scored a world class scoop. He’d actually been on a death watch for the distinguished actor Charles Laughton, who was said to be dying. Actually, the British star would live until December of that year.

Ramirez had arranged for a contact within the LAPD to notify him of Laughton’s death. But his source called during the early hours of Sunday morning and said, “Marilyn Monroe is dead.”

Ramirez had rushed to the office of the City News, a small news agency, and had moved the startling news across the wire. It was flashed around the world. Most Americans first heard the news over radio. No one could reach Joe DiMaggio for comment. Nor could they locate Arthur Miller. In France, Yves Montand received a string of eighteen calls that came in from news agencies around the world.

Columnist James Bacon, who had once had a brief affair with Marilyn, was the first reporter to file an eyewitness report. Tipped off by a policeman, he’d rushed to Marilyn’s house and barged in. When a policeman confronted him, he claimed he was from the coroner’s office. He managed to get inside her bedroom before he was evicted. But he’d learned enough to file his story.

Grandison’s boss was the controversial Los Angeles coroner, Dr. Theodore Curphey, who, bowing to pressure, had ordered a last-minute autopsy on Marilyn’s corpse. He’d instructed that her body be transported to the basement of the dank and rat-infested basement of the Hall of Justice on Temple Street in downtown Los Angeles. The world’s most famous goddess had been designated as Case No. 81128 and placed into Crypt 33.

The morgue in L.A. had a notorious history of corruption, graft, and mis-management.

Assigned to the case to perform the actual autopsy that Sunday morning was Dr. Thomas Noguchi, a Japanese-born surgeon who had moved to the United States in 1952. He’d studied pathology at the Orange County General Hospital in California, and in 1960 had taken a position with the coroner’s office. In time, he would be elected president of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

But when his knife cut into Marilyn’s brain, he was still only a junior member of the staff.

In time, he would perform autopsies on the bodies of Sharon Tate (murdered by one of Charles Manson’s crazed killers), Janis Joplin, William Holden, John Belushi, Sal Mineo, and Natalie Wood after her body was brought to him after she’d drowned off the coast of Catalina Island. He would later write a controversial memoir, *Coroner*.

Ironically, about six years later, on July 6, 1968, it was the same Dr. Noguchi, then the chief medical examiner for Los Angeles County, who performed the autopsy on Robert Kennedy after his assassination at the Ambassador Hotel.

John Miner of the Los Angeles District Attorney’s office would be assigned as a witness to watch Noguchi’s work on Marilyn. Miner later claimed he was profoundly shocked when he first saw Marilyn’s nude body. “This young, young woman looked as if she could get up off the table and walk away at any moment.” Then Noguchi’s cutting began.

In one of the most controversial reports from Noguchi, he claimed that he had gone over Marilyn’s body, checking every millimeter for signs of an injection, but had found none. Conspiracy theorists who included Robert Slatzer were infuriated with this claim. Even after Marilyn was buried, he maintained that her corpse should be exhumed and her rib cage examined, because James Hall, the ambulance driver, had seen Dr. Greenson inject her, using a large needle, under her breast.

While exploring her body, Noguchi did not even find the injection mark that her physician, Dr. Engelberg, had given her the day before her death. Others claimed that the mark from Engelberg’s injection would have healed before Sunday morning, although that wouldn’t be the case with Greenson’s injection.

Dr. Engelberg had also reported that he had prescribed twenty-five Nembutal capsules to Marilyn on Friday. That prescription was filled the day before Marilyn died, as confirmation with her local pharmacist revealed.

Another controversial claim the autopsy revealed was that her stomach was empty. No traces of Nembutal or any other drugs were found there. The colon, however, showed marked congestion and purplish discoloration. To Miner, the discoloration of her colon indicated that foul play had been involved in her death.

At the time, Noguchi was relatively inexperienced and unfamiliar with the criminal use of enemas or suppositories, although in 1962, they were in use by the KGB, the Mafia, and the CIA.

Noguchi opened her chest and removed her rib cage as a means of examining her chest organs. If James Hall’s

report were accurate, Dr. Greenson's needle mark would have been noticed as slight damage to the rib cage. Grandison later claimed that he felt vital data was suppressed in the final autopsy report he was given to sign.

Within days, Miner would write a controversial memo, contradicting many of Noguchi's conclusions. "Without a more thorough examination, we could reach no conclusion as to how Marilyn died," he wrote in his memo.

The autopsy revealed a large bruise on the lower left backside of her hip area, but Hall had accounted for that when he claimed he'd dropped her body in the guest cottage.

Many critics attacked the suggestion of a drug-laced enema, yet no authority has ever disproved it, either. Miner would later interview some of the most famous pathologists in the United States. His final conclusion—not stated in Noguchi's report, read: "It seemed to me that in all likelihood, the route of the administration of barbiturates was by means of an enema that was very slowly administered and that contained barbiturates."

When Miner was asked if he thought Marilyn was murdered, he replied, "I think that's more probable than not."

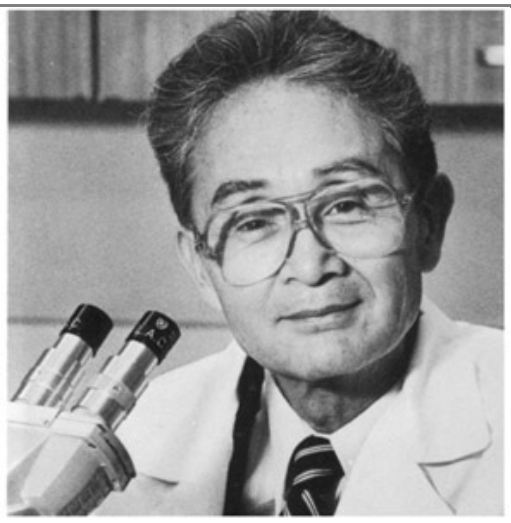
Noguchi's report was leaked to the press. It made dull reading, but voyeurs were particularly interested in the coroner's report on her vaginal area.

He claimed her external genitalia "shows no gross abnormality, and the distribution of the pubic hair is of female pattern. The uterus is of the usual size. No polyp or tumor is found. The cervix is clear. A vaginal smear is taken."

Rumors spread that Marilyn's vagina contained deposits of semen, suggesting that with in the past twelve hours or so she had been penetrated. But then, counter rumors were spread that her vagina had been washed out before it had been committed to the morgue. That fueled speculation that she had been raped, postmortem, by necrophiles, and that someone had attempted "to wash out" her vagina with cleanser before her corpse was moved to downtown L.A.'s morgue for the autopsy.

Lionel Grandison

Theodore Curphey



Thomas Noguchi

After his five-hour examination of the corpse, Noguchi removed her kidneys and intestines for further study. He announced at the time, “These specimens are vital in determining the mode of death. Without them, we can only indulge in speculation.”

The specimens were turned over to the morgue’s chief toxicologist, Raymond J. Abernathy, who ran tests only on the blood and liver, not the other organs removed. The blood tests revealed heavy traces—each of them well above what would have been fatal—of Nembutal and chloral hydrate, the latter the key ingredient in the notorious knockout drug “Mickey Finn.”.

When Noguchi, days later, approached Abernathy for the test results, he was shocked when he was told that the body parts had been disposed of because Abernathy felt that no other tests were needed.

Noguchi anticipated that the fact that specimen had been discarded would cause an uproar in the press, and it did. The question was asked, repeatedly, “Why would such vital evidence from the most famous corpse in the world at that time be routinely disposed of?”

Conspiracy theories associated with Marilyn’s death were launched.

Years later, Miner would proclaim, “In all my years as deputy district attorney, organ samples of victims would mysteriously disappear only twice—once in the death of Marilyn Monroe in 1962, and again after the autopsy performed on Robert Kennedy in 1968.”

It was suggested that Abernathy listened to a higher authority, “God and Chief Parker.

”Soon, another outrage became apparent: Each of the medical pictures taken during the autopsy had also disappeared. No investigation was ever launched as to who stole these gruesome photographs.

DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER
5¢
MARILYN DEAD
THE MONROE SAGA: 7 PAGES OF STORIES AND PICTURES

The autopsy report came under fire from points throughout the nation. Journalist Anthony Scaduito referred to it as “one of the weirdest autopsy reports ever confected.” Dr. Sidney B. Weinberg, chief medical examiner of Suffolk County, New York, claimed, “The evidence points to all the classic features of a homicide, much more so than a suicide.”

Robert Slatzer called the official report a fake. He charged that the actual autopsy report had been suppressed and a fraudulent copy substituted, leaving out vital data that would have revealed that Marilyn was murdered.

On the Sunday night of Marilyn’s death, Leigh Wiener, a photographer for *Life* magazine, entered the Los Angeles County Morgue and gave the guard three quarts of the most expensive Scotch money could buy.

In return, the guard wheeled out Marilyn’s body. A card tied to her left big toe identified her as “MARILYN MONROE—CRYPT 33.”

Wiener snapped several pictures. At one point, he removed the white sheet and snapped frontal nudes of her body, the way it looked after surgery. Her celebrated breasts were flattened.

A postmortem facial photograph of her was flashed around the world. As Marilyn herself might have said, “I didn’t look camera ready.”

County Coroner Dr. Theodore Curphey, Noguchi’s supervisor, announced that it was his “presumptive opinion” that Marilyn’s death was caused by an overdose of Nembutal capsules. In spite of overwhelming pressure, he said in his judgment that no formal inquest was needed. He did say, however, that he had appointed a Suicide Prevention Team to look into the star’s mental condition at the time of her death.

His comments did little more than ignite conspiracy theories regarding Marilyn’s death—suicide or murder?—that would still be raging during the 21st Century.

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Like the rest of the world, Frank Sinatra learned of Marilyn’s death on Sunday morning when he woke up early. For reasons of his own, he immediately placed a call to Ava Gardner in Madrid, who had not heard the news. “I always suspected that she would eventually do herself in,” Ava said.

He astonished her by telling her, “Marilyn didn’t kill herself. She was murdered.”

“I can’t believe that,” she said. “Who did it?”

“I’m not sure, but I intend to find out,” he said. Before ringing off, he made a vow over the phone. “When I find out the son of a bitch who killed her, I’m going to kill him myself.”

She warned him, “Be careful. You might be the one who ends up getting killed.”

"Honey, if Frank Sinatra had ever been careful, he would never have left Hoboken."

Deeply saddened by the news of Marilyn's death, Sinatra went into a deep, morbid depression. He told Sammy Davis, Jr. and Dean Martin that he had planned to marry Marilyn. Whether that was true or not is not known.

Two weeks later, Sinatra placed another call to Ava in Madrid. "I've learned who killed Marilyn. I know who the bastards are."

"Who?" she asked. "Who are you talking about?"

"I can't tell you," he said. "It's dangerous for you to possess such information, and your phone might be tapped. But I promise you this, if it's the last thing I do on this earth, I'm gonna bring the bastards down. One by one. That's how I'll get them. And not a one of the shits will know I was behind their down-fall."

That very next weekend, Sinatra called Bobby Kennedy, a man he detested, at the Justice Department. Through some connection, Sinatra had learned of the indirect involvement of Sam Giancana and the direct involvement of Johnny Roselli. He even knew who the killers were.

"The one thing I can't find out is who paid Giancana to carry out this murder, unless he did it on his own," Sinatra informed Bobby.

Bobby promised Sinatra that he'd look into it. But he never did, no doubt fearing that an investigation would reveal his own tortuous links to Marilyn.

It is pure speculation but Bobby perhaps knew a lot more than he ever revealed about who was the power behind Giancana during the plotting of Marilyn's demise. That "smoking gun" has never been discovered.

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Marilyn's body was once one of the most sought-after in America, but after her death, an issue arose about who would claim it. At Rockhaven Sanitarium, in Norwalk, California, Gladys Baker Eley was sixty-two years old and incompetent. She couldn't even look after herself, much less dispose of her daughter's body.

DiMaggio was devastated when he heard the news of Marilyn's death. "Suicide, hell. She had our future life together. We were going to remarry. It was the fucking Kennedys, that Bobby in particular. I hate him. And that fucking bastard Sinatra. I'm through with him. He was part of the plot to murder Marilyn."

DiMaggio flew from San Francisco to Los Angeles. Once there, he was able to reach Marilyn's half sister, Bernice Baker Miracle, in Florida, who authorized him, in lieu of Marilyn's family, to make the funeral arrangements. Bernice told DiMaggio, "I think it was definitely not suicide. I don't believe that Marilyn deliberately took her own life."

Whitey Snyder, Marilyn's longtime friend and makeup artist, was assigned the task of making her corpse ready for an open casket viewing. His new wife, Marjorie Plecher, helped him.

Weeks before she died, Marilyn had made Snyder promise something: "If something happens to me, you won't let anybody touch my face but you, will you?" He promised that he'd be there for her.

When Snyder arrived for the final makeup, he discovered that a heartbroken DiMaggio had spent the night by her side. "His eyes were red from weeping, and he was transfixed, gazing at her," Snyder said. "It was a bit eerie. I think he blamed Hollywood for her death—Hollywood and the Kennedys."

After the autopsy, Marilyn's breasts were flat. "She would never want to be exposed with a flat chest," Snyder said. Both he and Marjorie tore up a cushion and used the stuffing to give her a *faux* bosom.

Sidney Guilaroff, her favorite hairdresser, was summoned to arrange her hair, but he collapsed in the mortuary and had to be helped out of the building.

In desperation, Snyder retrieved the wig she'd worn in *The Misfits* and artfully arranged it on her head. Of the dresses brought to him from Marilyn's home by Eunice Murray, he and Bernice Miracle selected the pale green Pucci she'd worn at her press conference in Mexico City.

As Marilyn's body was prepared for viewing, the most aggressive members of the press, at least some of those who were aware of Marilyn's links to the Kennedys, tried to get comments from key figures within her orbit, including Jack, Jackie, and Bobby. Her closest friend, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, had no immediate comment, and Peter Lawford had mysteriously left the scene for Hyannis Port.

The First Lady had no intention of issuing any comment about Marilyn. She wisely fled from Washington, departing with her children on August 7 for an extended trip to Europe.

The President was in Maine, having a vacation at the retreat of former heavyweight champion, Gene Tunny, on John's Island. He was seen sailing on a Coast Guard yacht named *Manitou*.

The most speculation centered on the whereabouts of Bobby Kennedy, who had seemingly disappeared into the wild mountains of Oregon.

Arthur Miller was in New York, but was not taking phone calls from reporters.

Miller was working on *After the Fall*, a play based on his marriage to Marilyn. “A suicide kills two people,” was one of the most memorable lines of the play, which would have its New York premiere on January 23, 1964. The character of Quentin (based on Miller himself) speaks that line to Maggie, the blonde star.

The play was directed by Marilyn’s former lover, Elia Kazan. The poet, Norman Rosten, who had been a friend to both Miller and Marilyn, denounced the playwright for depicting her as a slut.

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Marilyn’s funeral was scheduled for April 8, 1962, in the Chapel of Palms at Westwood Memorial Park. The glitterati of Hollywood were adorning themselves for what was rumored to be the greatest funeral in Hollywood since the tragic early death in 1926 of the silent screen idol, Rudolph Valentino.

Westwood Memorial had seen better days. Even during its heyday, it was never as prestigious as Forest Lawn, where Marilyn’s many friends and fans had expected her to be buried.

Perhaps Westwood was chosen because Marilyn’s former guardian, Grace Goddard, and her favorite aunt, Ana Lower, were entombed there. Marilyn had always maintained that Grace and Ana, not her mother Gladys, were the only people who had shown any love toward her when she was a child.

Westwood Memorial looked a bit seedy, tucked behind Wilshire Boulevard in a dull neighborhood of stucco homes. The grounds were not well maintained and the pink paint on the mausoleum was peeling. The roar of traffic on the west side of Los Angeles could be heard day and night. It was not a very restful place.

At the last minute, the film colony’s most prestigious members, including George Cukor and the executives at Fox, were informed that attendance at her funeral would be by invitation only, with a very limited and abbreviated guest list. Learning that they couldn’t attend, many directors, executives, and stars sent masses of flowers, mostly pink carnations and tuberoses, which were said to have been her favorite flowers.

To all the people who wanted to personally pay their respects, DiMaggio issued a brief statement: “This will be a small funeral, so she can go to her final resting place in the quiet she always sought.”

The cameras were turned on to catch DiMaggio and his son, Joe Jr. arriving at the shabby memorial building. The senior DiMaggio was in a flawlessly designed business suit and his son was in full dress Marine uniform.

Other guests included Dr. Greenson and his family; Anne Karger (mother of Marilyn’s first “great love,” Fred Karger; Inez Melson (Marilyn’s business manager); Marilyn’s half sister, Bernice Miracle; Pat Newcomb; Eunice Murray; her masseur, Ralph Roberts; her lawyer, Mickey Rudin; her hair stylist, Sidney Guilaroff, and both Paula and Lee Strasberg.

Other wannabe guests, some of the most celebrated names on the planet, showed up but were turned away.

Remembering Marilyn: Bernice Baker Miracle

Frank Sinatra and many of his friends, who had always been close to Marilyn, decided to go anyway, even though they hadn’t been specifically invited. “That bastard, DiMaggio, wouldn’t dare turn us away,” Sinatra told his gang.

DiMaggio later explained his snub of many of those people who were closely associated with Marilyn. “If it wasn’t for her so-called friends, Marilyn would be alive today.”

Ironically, while many of Marilyn’s friends were turned away, DiMaggio invited some of the key players who were accomplices in the cover-up of her murder.

Getting nautical: JFK

Arthur Jacobs objected to the guest list. “If Marilyn had been in charge of the invitations, half the people on the list would not have been invited, and more of her friends would have been included.”

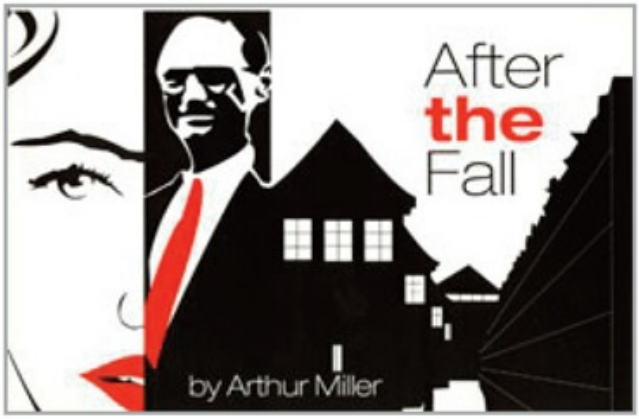
To pay his respects to Marilyn, Sinatra was driven to her funeral in a limousine with Patricia Kennedy Lawford, who had flown across the country to attend. Her husband, Peter, had left town.

Both of them were turned away at the door by a security guard. Sinatra offered the guard one hundred dollars to let them in, but he refused. “No one blocks Frank Sinatra from anything,” he told the guard. “You’ll hear from me.”

To his surprise, he saw Ella Fitzgerald coming up the steps. He kissed her on both cheeks. “Ella, Marilyn admired you so much,” he told the singer.

“I loved that little gal,” Fitzgerald said. “She was so lost. I used to hold her against my bosom.” To her shock, the security guard also had orders not to admit her to the chapel, either. She burst into tears, as Sinatra tried to comfort her.

Furious, yet fighting back tears, Sinatra stood with Patricia and Sammy Davis, Jr. on a grassy lawn outside the chapel. Davis, too, had been barred. They listened to the sounds of a Judy Garland recording of *Over the Rainbow*, Marilyn’s favorite song.



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When he’d flown to Los Angeles, DiMaggio had checked into the Miramar Hotel, near Marilyn’s home in

Brentwood. During his first hours there, he was seen drinking heavily, waiting for his son, Joe Jr., to arrive from Camp Pendleton, where he'd been granted leave to attend the funeral.

During one of his dialogues with Marilyn's lawyer, Mickey Rudin, DiMaggio said, "Bobby Kennedy is responsible for her death." He said that loud enough for fellow patrons at the bar to hear him. At least one customer called *The Los Angeles Times* to report on DiMaggio's accusation, but the item was interpreted as too incendiary to print, back in those relatively restrained days of the American press.

DiMaggio would never change his opinion of Bobby, and would carry his bitterness toward the Kennedys for the rest of his life. Three years later, at a charity game in New York City's Yankee Stadium, Bobby showed up and wanted to shake the hands of the players. As a guest of honor, DiMaggio was in the receiving line. The Yankee slugger saw Bobby coming. When Bobby approached DiMaggio, the baseball star turned his back.

At the funeral, both of the DiMaggios, father and son, sitting up front, were in tears throughout the entire solemn proceedings.

Lee Strasberg was assigned the task of giving the eulogy. He and Marilyn had grown apart during the previous few months. The last time he'd flown to Los Angeles, he had not even come by to see her. If she'd survived until Monday, August 6, she was planning to eliminate him from her will.

In his selection of Strasberg to deliver the eulogy, DiMaggio seemed unaware that his relationship with Marilyn was no longer close.

Only hours before, attorney Mickey Rudin had informed Strasberg that he was the principal heir to Marilyn's estate, "This more or less puts you in control of all future marketing of her image," Rudin said.

In *The MarilynFiles*, Robert Slatzerwrote: "Some journalists have slyly hinted that the Strasbergs have been implicated in Marilyn's death—that they may have killed her for financial gain. Ironically, Marilyn died broke. The expense of maintaining her lifestyle had drained her bank account dry."

DiMaggios, father and son

In time, however, the estate would generate millions. By then, both Paula and Lee had died and would not benefit from it. Instead, the windfall went to a young actress, Anna Mizrahi, whom Lee had married after the death of Paula. She and her two sons now enjoy the Monroe millions, even though they did not know the star.

In time, Marilyn's estate would be marketing inexpensive Marilyn Monroe dresses, even Marilyn Monroe toilet water and "Marilyn Wine," which carried a slight taste of vinegar.

With his theatrically trained voice, Strasberg delivered the eulogy:

"Marilyn Monroe was a legend. In her own lifetime she created a myth of what a poor girl from a deprived background could attain. For the entire world, she became a symbol of the eternally feminine.

But I have not words to describe the myth and the legend. I did not know this Marilyn Monroe.

We, gathered here today, knew only Marilyn—a warm human being, impulsive and shy, sensitive and in fear of rejection, yet ever avid for life and reaching out for fulfillment.

Despite the heights and brilliance she had attained on the screen, she was planning for the future; she was looking forward to participating in the many exciting things which she planned. In her eyes and in mine, her career was just beginning. The dream of her talent, which she had nurtured as a child, was not a mirage…

Others were as physically beautiful as she was, but there was obviously something more in her, something that people saw and recognized in her performances and with which they identified. She had a luminous quality— a combination of wistfulness, radiance, yearning— to set her apart and yet made everyone wish to be part of it, to share in the childish naïveté which was at once so shy and yet so vibrant.

Now it is all at an end. I hope that her death will stir sympathy and understanding for a sensitive artist and woman who brought joy and pleasure to the world.

I cannot say 'good-bye.' Marilyn never liked good-byes, but in the peculiar way she had of turning things around so that they faced reality—I will say'au revoir.' For the country to which she has gone, we must all someday visit."

Anna Mizrahi Strasberg

Inside the chapel, DiMaggio waited for all the guests to file past Marilyn's open coffin. Joe Jr., stood by his side. When most of the guests had paid their final respects, he placed three beautiful roses in her cold, dead hands.

Before the casket was lowered, he sobbed, "I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Joe Jr., moved toward the casket to kiss Marilyn like his father had, but the senior DiMaggio barred him

Perhaps the senior DiMaggio had heard disturbing stories about his son and his relationship with his late stepmother.

When a cynical Sinatra heard about DiMaggio's theatrics beside the casket, he said, "Joltin' Joe always said he and I would be friends until the end. *This is the end."*

The legend—myth, really—was already growing as Marilyn's body was entombed in the Corridor of Memories section of Westwood Memorial. Guards had to prevent crazed fans from attacking the tomb, as a hysterical race began for flowers, ribbons, and whatever else could be carried away from the event as souvenirs.

The body of Norma Jeane, the young model who set out to conquer Hollywood in the 1940s, was placed in a crypt behind variegated marble with a simple bronze plaque.

MARILYN MONROE
1926-1962

That night, by himself, Joe DiMaggio, Sr., returned to Westwood Memorial Park for his final farewell with Marilyn.

For the next twenty years, he ordered the weekly delivery of fresh red roses placed in the urn beside her crypt.

For reasons known only to himself, he cut off the deliveries in 1982.

PART EIGHT

THE AFTERMATH

As the years went by, dozens of books would be written questioning the whereabouts of Bobby Kennedy on August 4, 1962. They ranged from eyewitness accounts of seeing him in the Los Angeles area to Peter Lawford's stupid denial that Bobby was still on the East Coast. The denial was stupid because RFK's arrival in San Francisco had been written about in the newspapers with photographs and his arrival there was on the TV evening news.

No one of sane mind would claim Bobby was not in California. But the question remained: Was he in the San Francisco area or more than 380 miles away, in Los Angeles—and specifically, had he visited the home of Marilyn Monroe in Brentwood?

The evidence is overwhelming that he did indeed make an emergency visit to Los Angeles. His confrontation with Marilyn was recorded on a secret tape, the work of that master bugger, Bernard Spindel, who was employed by, among others, Jimmy Hoffa.

Jeanne Carmen claimed that in one of her final talks with Marilyn, the star had revealed to her, "I don't trust Peter. At times, I think he wants to be me. He's such a liar."

Carmen told Marilyn, "Wake up and smell the shit. Peter's whole life has been one lie after another. Let's face it: He's got more to cover up than Liberace. He lives in two worlds, including one in which he pretends to be straight. He is at times. He's had more whores than Jack Kennedy. No one invites more whores to their house for orgies than Peter. He spends his life in a drugged, alcoholic haze."

"I guess it could be said that all of us do that," Marilyn replied.

Sergeant Jack Clemmons, the police sergeant who had arrived at Marilyn's house in answer to the 4:25am call that Sunday morning, later told what he knew to Robert Slatzer. "A lot of guys at the police department and in the movie business were claiming that it was Bobby Kennedy who had Marilyn done away with. She was threatening to hold a press conference that might have been pure dynamite. The Kennedys might never have recovered."

"There were too many witnesses that Bobby was in town," Clemmons said. "Naturally, I expected Lawford to lie. He'd been covering up for his brothers-in-law for years."

On his own, without any authorization from the LAPD, Clemmons set out to prove that Bobby was in town.

Clemmons said, "Had Marilyn lived to go public, John F. Kennedy would have had to resign the presidency and the Kennedys would have had to go back to Hyannis. The American public simply would not have permitted them to remain in office any longer."

Slatzer wrote: "When it comes to Marilyn's murder, Bobby Kennedy has it all: the motive, the power, the will, and the opportunity—and, if Bobby did kill her, the ultra-elite, ultra-respectable Kennedy family has a vital interest in keeping his involvement a secret."

It is too farfetched to suggest that Bobby murdered Marilyn. He had too much to lose. For decades, it has been suggested that the Kennedy money was behind Giancana ordering Marilyn's death. But there is no evidence of that beyond a reasonable doubt.

Sam Yorty, Mayor of Los Angeles, said, "Damn right, the son of a bitch was in town. My office was always alerted whenever the Attorney General or the president was in town to fuck Marilyn Monroe. We knew what was going on."

However, William Parker, the Los Angeles Chief of Police, publicly denied that Bobby was in Los Angeles. But Yorty, the Mayor, later dismissed his police chief's claim. "All of us in my office know that Parker always wipes Bobby's ass. To get J. Edgar's job, he would claim that Joe Kennedy is not Bobby's father. He says whatever the Kennedys tell him to say."

Yorty admitted that officially "Chief Parker had denied that Bobby was here, but privately he admitted it to me. He might be a liar in public, but he knew better than to bullshit me in private."

Clemmons also interviewed some of Marilyn's neighbors. Elizabeth Pollard lived across from Marilyn on the cul-de-sac of Fifth Helena Drive. When interviewed by Clemmons, she claimed that she and three of her women friends were playing cards on Saturday afternoon, August 4.

"We had a good view of the entrance to Marilyn's home. We had seen Bobby Kennedy come and go on other occasions. We definitely saw him enter her house on that Saturday afternoon. Peter Lawford was with the Attorney General. Of course, we recognized both of them."

Frank Neill, a security guard at Fox, said he saw Bobby arriving by chopper at the helipad on the studio's lot, which was often used by the Beverly Hilton Hotel for their VIPs.

Ward Wood, a neighbor of the Lawfords in Santa Monica, later testified that he was walking his dog when he spotted Bobby entering the Lawford's Santa Monica house. Lawford stood at the door welcoming him in. The time was around 6pm on the afternoon of Saturday, August 4.

Facing off against the claims of Kennedy loyalists was a powerful armada of officials who declared that Bobby was indeed in Los Angeles. These included the LAPD's Sergeant Robert Byron, who was handling the investigation of Marilyn's death on Sunday morning, August 5. He learned that Bobby had visited Marilyn at her home that Saturday.

Daryl Gates, a former chief of police, also confirmed that Bobby was in Los Angeles. "The LAPD had people at the airport—airline personnel, for instance—who spotted him. After all, he was one of the most photographed men in America. How could you miss him?"

Billy Woodfield, who had taken nude photographs of Marilyn during the aborted filming of *Something's Got to Give*, became curious about the events of that Saturday night. He checked with the helicopter company Lawford used. Indeed, a helicopter had been dispatched to a helipad near the Lawford mansion right before midnight on August 4. The passenger was not named, but the client was transported to the Los Angeles International airport. It turned out to be Bobby Kennedy.

Joining Woodfield in his allegations was a reporter, Joe Hyams, who filed a story with the *New York Herald Tribune*. The story went to the newspaper's top management, and was subsequently rejected for publication. The memo associated with its rejection claimed, "The story is filled with libelous innuendo about the Kennedy brothers."

Shortly before midnight on August 4, a dark Mercedes was speeding east on Olympic Boulevard in Beverly Hills. Police officer Lynn Franklin flipped on his siren and gave chase. The Mercedes came to a stop. Franklin approached the car and shined his flashlight inside. He immediately recognized the driver as Bobby Kennedy.

"Peter Lawford was in the car with him. He looked drunk. I issued a polite and very mild warning. It would be a cold day in hell before I issued a speeding ticket to the Attorney General of the United States."

From his ranch near Gilroy, a 90-minute drive southeast from San Francisco, Bobby's host, John Bates, claimed that his guest of honor never left the grounds of his ranch all weekend. Bates was a loyal friend and Kennedy supporter, and was very protective of the Attorney General's reputation.

Bobby's loyal defenders claimed that it would have been impossible for him to fly from the San Francisco area into Los Angeles during the brief window he had on that Saturday afternoon and evening. However, it was entirely possible.

Edward Browning, an investigative journalist, was paid by a newspaper syndicate to fly the route and to time it.

A remarkably efficient round-trip air route, obviously available to the Attorney General of the United States, could easily have made that trip possible.

"It took a ten-minute helicopter ride from a little airport near the Bates Ranch to a nearby Naval Air Station," Browning said. "It took fifty minutes to fly from there to the Santa Monica Airport, and then a ten-minute commute to the helipad at Fox. From there, it's a five-minute drive from Fox to the Beverly Hilton. Bobby could have made the trip in less than two hours if organized properly with one-hour and fifteen minutes airborne, or something like that."

From the Beverly Hilton, Bobby was driven to Marilyn's house in Brentwood by Lawford.

Along came investigative reporter Frank Capell, who went to the Beverly Hilton Hotel and bribed someone to show him the register which listed Bobby as a guest on August 4.

A helicopter pilot, Hall Connors, and his co-pilot, James Zonlick, admitted to Capell that they landed at a helipad near Lawford's house in Santa Monica. So as not to attract attention, they did not turn on their landing lights. "Bobby Kennedy came aboard, we took off, and landed him at the Los Angeles airport, where presumably he caught a flight back to San Francisco."

Capell published his revelations in a book entitled *The Strange Death of Marilyn Monroe* in 1964. In it, he accused Bobby of being "the most likely candidate" for the order of Marilyn's murder.

In response to his work, Capell was labeled, pejoratively, as a right-wing activist and a Kennedy hater.

J. Edgar Hoover acquired an advance copy of the Capell manuscript and sent a memo about it to the Attorney

General. “The book will make a reference to your alleged friendship with the late Marilyn Monroe. Mr. Capell indicates in his book that you and Miss Monroe were intimate, and that you were in Miss Monroe’s house at the time of her death.”

It appeared at the time that Bobby gave no direct response to the FBI director, either by answering his note or phoning him. The Attorney General had to be relieved, however, that Capell’s book was almost universally ignored by the mainstream press.

Even as late as 1992, Bobby was still being blamed for Marilyn’s murder when two journalists, Patte B. Barham and Peter Harry Brown, published their book: *Marilyn: the Last Take*.

Three days after Marilyn’s death, RFK took Ethel and his kids on a camping trip to wilderness areas of Washington State. Accompanying them was associate Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas.

Jimmy Guiles was one of the guides on that trip, assisting with supplies and equipment. He later talked to a reporter in Seattle, but the interview was never published. His words reflect the widespread *naïveté* of that era.

“There was some whispered talk about Marilyn Monroe and Bobby,” Guiles admitted. “In my opinion, it was pure bullshit. I saw how happy Bobby was with his wife and kids. There’s no way a guy like that would cheat on his wife, especially with a Hollywood whore like Marilyn Monroe. I heard she slept with anybody in pants. You can take it from me, the Bobby Kennedy I met would never go for Monroe. He was a devoted family man. Monroe wouldn’t have tempted me either. Now take Audrey Hepburn. That is a different story.”

“I also heard stories about President Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe,” Guiles said. “People called him a womanizer and claimed that he, too, was involved with Monroe. That was pure bullshit. Does anyone really believe that Jack Kennedy, with a wife as beautiful and as elegant as Jackie, would want to hang out with some Hollywood tramp with bleached blonde hair?”

“There’s another thing: Judge Douglas told me that the President had met Monroe only one time, and that was when she sang ‘Happy Birthday” to him at Madison Square Garden. Come on, man. Douglas is a fucking Supreme Court justice. Are you trying to tell me that a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court would lie about something like this?”

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When Jimmy Hoffa learned that Marilyn was having an affair with the Kennedy brothers, the head of the Teamsters’ Union turned to the nation’s master wire-tapper, Bernard Spindel, who had wiretapped Marilyn’s house, the Lawford mansion in Santa Monica, and Bobby Kennedy’s phone lines at the Department of Justice. How he managed to pull off all this was his trade secret.

Hoffa had links to Sam Giancana and the Chicago syndicate, and these two gangsters were known to share information, especially about the Kennedys.

Very few people are known to have listened to the Spindel tapes. In most cases, only snippets were heard. Of course, there are those who may have listened to the entire collection of tapes, but those persons have never ventured forth. It is not known if the tapes even exist today. The select few who have heard snippets of them have claimed that they definitely prove the relationship between Bobby and Marilyn.

Fred Otash, Spindel, and Spindel’s assistant, Earl Jaycox, claimed they heard the recorded version of Marilyn and Bobby arguing on the day she died.

“Bobby wanted those tapes, especially later, when, in his capacity as a Senator from New York, he was contemplating a run for the presidency in the 1968 election,” Otash claimed.

In a highly secret meeting in 1966, within Spindel’s car in a dimly lit parking lot in Nashville, Tennessee, Bobby tried to bribe Spindel and get him to switch sides. Spindel was tempted by an offer of “a lot of money.”

Unknown to Bobby, Spindel had even bugged the interior of his own car. He didn’t make a deal that night, but “agreed to think it over.” Later, he told his wife and others that had he made such a deal with Bobby back then, “Hoffa would have me wiped off the map.”

In December of 1966, detectives working for Frank S. Hogan, the New York County District Attorney, raided Spindel’s home in Holmes, New York, and seized his tapes and files.

Mrs. Spindel later said that the tapes revealed secrets about RFK’s relationship with Marilyn. Spindel had also bugged his own home, and, unknown to the detectives, the sounds of the raid were captured on tape. One policeman can be heard asking another, “What does Marilyn Monroe have to do with the indictment?”

Hogan was a close friend of Bobby’s, and the district attorney claimed that the raid was not to protect Bobby, but to obtain incriminating evidence against Spindel for illegal wiretapping.

In a lawsuit filed with the New York Supreme Court, Spindel claimed that his tapes contained “evidence

concerning the circumstances of the death of Marilyn Monroe, which strongly suggest that the officially reported circumstances of her demise were erroneous."

Spindel did go to prison, indicted and convicted on charges of illegally wiretapping a Manhattan attorney's office. After serving time, he died at the age of forty-five of a heart attack.

While jailed, he was supposed to have received vital medication, but his embittered wife claimed that the medication was denied to him in prison, which led to his early death. "My husband was murdered, a long, slow death," she charged. "They wanted him out of the way." She didn't specify who "they" were.

The tapes and all of Spindel's private property seized during the raid were never returned. When reporters operating under the Freedom of Information Act demanded that the tapes be made public, the District Attorney's office in Manhattan reported that they could not be found.

Otash sometimes talked to the media, giving an interview at one point to *The New York Times*. His televised film interview was scheduled to appear as a segment on ABC's 20/20. During his interview, he claimed that Spindel's surveillance tapes "picked up a violent quarrel between Marilyn and Bobby, presumably over her red diary, which she was refusing to turn over to him. At one point, he claimed that she is heard saying, "I feel used. I feel passed around."

Bobby is heard yelling at her. "Where is it? Where is it?"

Two days before airing, the segment of 20/20 was abruptly canceled by Roone Arledge, president of ABC, who asserted that "it was a sleazy piece of journalism—gossip column stuff."

TV host Hugh Downs objected, and Geraldo Rivera, also involved with the show, vehemently protested. "I am upset at the way this was handled," Downs said. "I honestly believe that this is more carefully documented than anything any network did during Watergate."

TV Producer Stanhope Gould also defended the segment, which was cancelled in favor of a TV program about police dogs.

"The fact that the President and the Attorney General of the United States had put themselves in a position to have the nation's most famous actress and the nation's most powerful criminals eavesdrop on their affairs—that's one hell of a story," Gould claimed.

For his part, Arledge was often seen escorting Ethel Kennedy to various events, and there were rumors of a romance. Rivera cited conflict of interest, which led to his dismissal.

ABC may have at least temporarily suppressed denials about Bobby's affair with Marilyn, but it was a story that would not go away.

Ironically, Marilyn's assassination would be followed in 1963, about fifteen months later, by the assassination of President Kennedy, and later, in 1968, by the assassination of Bobby during his run for the Presidency.

On the occasion of RFK's thirty-eighth birthday, on November 20, 1963, he left the Department of Justice and was driven to Hickory Hill to attend a birthday celebration in his honor.

A lot of celebrities showed up, including dancer/actor Gene Kelly. He remembered sitting and chatting with Bobby until 3am the following morning. "We drank a lot of vodka and talked about Marilyn," Kelly later said. "He kept saying how beautiful and intelligent she was. The more we talked, the more we drank."

According to Kelly**,** Bobby told him that the president would within a few days be flying to Dallas, and that "Most of Jack's aides had told him to use a bulletproof bubbletop limo. I've advised him to travel in an open car. That way, he'll have more of a chance to make intimate contact with the crowd. Jack is going to take my advice and not listen to his other aides."

Two days later, RFK was sitting beside his pool at Hickory Hill.

The President, with pink-suited Jackie, was sitting in the back seat of an open-air limousine moving through the streets of Dallas. Jack had followed Bobby's advice about "getting closer" to the people.

At poolside, Bobby was eating some clam chowder when Ethel came out and called to him. "J. Edgar Hoover is on the phone."

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Langdon Marvin had long been a Kennedy loyalist and aide to the slain president. He'd also procured women for both JFK and RFK.

One chilly afternoon in January of 1964, he received a call from RFK to drive down to meet with him at Hickory Hill. "After our luncheon, Bobby met privately with me," Marvin said. "He had about a dozen letters he gave to me. 'Get rid of them,' he ordered me. 'They're lethal. They're letters Marilyn Monroe wrote to Jack and me.' I followed his orders and didn't read them. Nor did I make copies. I burned the fucking things. God did I hate

myself later. Could you imagine what those letters would be worth today?"

After RFK's assassination, Marvin made some revelations about his former boss. "After Marilyn was killed, Bobby became very indiscreet. At times, he seemed almost as sexually insatiable as Jack. Like I did for Jack, I provided a gaggle women for him—starlets, airline stewardesses, secretaries. At that point in his life, he preferred nymphettes—underdeveloped young girls. He occasionally entertained them in the presidential suite at the Hotel Carlyle in New York. One time, I sent up three beautiful fifteen-year-old high school girls. He told me, 'That's the best present anybody ever gave me. After I fucked them, I watched them have sex with each other.'"

A rather different, and somewhat more formal, assessment of Bobby was presented by author Norman Mailer:

"For if it is true of Bobby Kennedy that his presence developed every year, and he was not without his greatness by his last night, why not also assume that part of so fine and mysterious a process was not only commended in the house of his brother's death, but in the reckoning he took of himself on the escape from Los Angeles in the dead morning hours after Marilyn had gone?"

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The ambulance driver, James Hall, has been attacked, even vilified, over the years, but his story about arriving at Marilyn's house rang true to Sergeant Jack Clemmons.

"My own investigation showed that his story held up, but other people connected with that ambulance company lied. Hall's story explained a lot. Unlike the others, what did Hall have to cover up?"

Clemmons interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Abe Landau, Marilyn's neighbors to the west. Mrs. Landau told him that when they came home from a Saturday night dinner, they saw an ambulance in front of Marilyn's house.

Weeks after Marilyn's death, Clemmons finally got around to interviewing Walter Schaefer, the owner of the Schaefer Ambulance Service, which had been summoned to Marilyn's residence.

Astonishingly, Schaefer denied that Hall worked for him. To add to the mystery, Murray Liebowitz denied that he had been Hall's partner that night.

When Clemmons presented these findings to Robert Slatzer, he was very skeptical, claiming, "I think money somewhere exchanged hands."

As the years went by, revelations and new "evidence" continued to pop up. Ken Hunter emerged to claim that it was he, not Hall, who had driven the ambulance to Marilyn's house on the night of August 4, 1962. But when Slatzer investigated this, he found that Hunter had not worked for Schaefer in 1962. Hunter had not begun to work for the company until 1972. Even then, he was not employed in the area of West Los Angeles, so his account was dismissed completely.

When Clemmons interviewed Schaefer, he denied that one of his ambulances had even been called that night to Marilyn's residence. It wasn't until 1985 when he finally admitted that he'd lied. He was shown a bill he had submitted to the estate of Marilyn Monroe. When that bill was publicized, it was mysteriously removed from Marilyn's probate file.

Master detective Milo Speraglio checked with Social Security records and found that Hall was indeed employed by the ambulance company. "There is no question about his employment. I also secretly checked the ambulance dispatch record for the night of August 4. It showed that James Hall and Murray Liebowitz were the drivers sent to Fifth Helena Drive.

Two weeks after Marilyn died, a photograph of Hall standing adjacent to a Schaefer ambulance was published in a Santa Monica newspaper, showing him helping rescue a crime victim.

Hall's father, a respected and retired police surgeon, had a lifelong record of filing meticulous reports with the LAPD. When he was interviewed by Clemmons, he confirmed his son's employment.

Hall's former wife, although embittered about her failed marriage, nonetheless admitted that she once lived off the weekly check her then-husband was bringing home from his work as a Schaefer ambulance driver.

Hall's sister also confirmed that Hall had been an employee, as did family friend Mike Carlson. "Two days after Marilyn's death," Carlson said, "he told me the whole story—it was fascinating."

In the years spent investigating Marilyn's death, Clemmons encountered Robert Neuman, a former pilot for the Schaefer Air Ambulance Service based at the San Fernando Airport. "I think Schaefer wanted to protect his client's privacy and his own business. He was tied in with both Jack and Bobby Kennedy. I was employed as a pilot for him in the early 1960s. We often made clandestine flights for the government under the pretense of a medical emergency. In 1961, I once flew President Kennedy and Marilyn to a vacation retreat. I also flew the President with other women to other rendezvous, including a brief trip to Idaho. That was in 1961. I also flew Bobby Kennedy on

several flights, including one to the Bing Crosby ranch in Cabo San Lucas."

By November of 1982, Hall was a 43-year-old businessman in Nevada. Only then did he sell his revelations to *The Globe*, which ran them under the sensational headline I SAW MARILYN MONROE MURDERED. He was paid $40,000 for the article, which was published after he was given polygraph (lie detector) tests in Florida.

A decade later, faced with increasing criticism, Hall, in 1992, once again agreed to undergo a series of additional polygraph tests. They were administered by Don Fraser, a state-licensed polygraph expert working in Arcadia, California. Afterward, Fraser reported to authorities: "James Hall is telling the truth. There is no question about it. He passed every question after several exhaustive polygraph examinations."

Investigative journalist Anthony Summers discovered Murray Liebowitz living in a suburb of Los Angeles in 1985. Liebowitz told him, "Don't involve me in this, I heard about it when I came to work that next morning."

But later, after years of denial, Liebowitz, to reporters, finally admitted that Hall's account was true and that he had indeed been his partner in the ambulance during the night of Marilyn's murder.

"It happened the way Hall said it did." But he denied that he was given two car wash businesses in the wake of Marilyn's death, which, if true, would explain his long years of silence. Who gave him those car washes was never revealed. When he was queried, he said, "I don't remember."

In 1985, Walter Schaefer finally revealed the motive for his inaccurate statements over the years, admitting that indeed, it was his ambulance, driven by James Hall, that had answered the urgent summons to Fifth Helena Drive on the night of August 4, 1962.

"For years, I concealed this fact because the Kennedys were involved. I had a very lucrative business back then, and I didn't want to lose my accounts because of my indiscretion. A lot of my business, such as that with my air ambulance service, depended on my silence. Loose lips sink ships, you know."

Of all the stories connected with that mysterious ambulance visit to Marilyn's house, Hall's account has been the only one not riddled with bullets. When Hall was asked why his story put Marilyn in the guest cottage, and why Sergeant Clemmons found her in the master bedroom, Hall's answer was simple. "The body was moved."

Bebe Goddard, who had known Norma Jeane since she was ten years old, met with Hall at Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel in 1987. "We had a long talk, and I felt total sincerity and truthfulness from him. What he was saying was so logical—I think that was the most important thing. It was the most logical thing I had heard. Everybody else, including Peter Lawford, seemed in denial. For the first time, in talking to Hall, Marilyn's death made sense to me. I felt that this was really the truth. This was really something that actually happened, not some of those fantasies Eunice Murray was coming up with."

It won't be the final word—it never is in the case of the death of Marilyn Monroe—but Slatzer did issue an opinion: "If Marilyn's body were exhumed, it would be easy for pathologists to find out whether there was a cracked rib that might have been broken by a needle. If the broken rib were found, it would overturn most other theories of her murder and prove that the autopsy report was either hopelessly inadequate, bordering on complete incompetence, or was falsified. Until such an investigation is carried out, Jim Hall's account of his attempt to resuscitate Marilyn, and Dr. Greenson's fatal action, murder will remain another of the many baffling mysteries that surround her curious death."

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Sergeant Jack Clemmons, one of the first to suggest that Marilyn was murdered, lost his job and his pension after sixteen years of faithful service. He was dismissed and given no reason why. A lawyer suggested that he should sue for unlawful termination—"and get to the bottom of this," but Clemmons never did. Throughout the rest of his life, he continued his investigation and often met privately with Robert Slatzer to compare notes on any new leads.

One of the great mysteries that Clemmons never solved involved a report that Marilyn's neighbors had seen a police squad car parked alongside the Schafer ambulance on that late Saturday night of Marilyn's death. "I found that mind-boggling," Clemmons said. "If that story is true, it meant that someone in the police department had been notified before me."

He suspected it might have been Sergeant Marvin Iannone, who would later become Chief of Police of Beverly Hills. He checked the police garage and found that Iannone had checked out a car at around 11pm that Saturday evening, although his "official" arrival in Brentwood had occurred after Clemmons had pulled up in his own patrol car shortly before dawn.

At the time, Iannone worked for Captain James Hamilton in police intelligence. Iannone also handled security whenever President Kennedy or the Attorney General were in Los Angeles. Iannone also handled security during presidential visits to the Lawford mansion at Santa Monica, so he was intimately aware of the comings and goings

of the Kennedy brothers when they were in the Los Angeles area.

"If that report about the squad car is correct, and nothing was done about it at the time, such an order could only have come from LAPD chief William Parker," Clemmons said. "It now appears that the cover-up of Marilyn's murder began before I arrived on the scene, but I could never prove that."

"My mind went crazy," Clemmons said. "If true, that police arrival time opened up a keg of worms. It appeared that the police knew of Marilyn's death hours before, but I was the beginning of their official arrival. Was Parker giving some of the occupants of that house time to clean up the scene of the murder? It certainly appeared that way to me—and to Slatzer, too."

"I never openly confronted Iannone," Clemmons said. "Later, in September of 1962, I ran into him at the police station. I said, 'Marv, you know what I think? I think Marilyn Monroe was murdered, and that they are covering up the whole damn thing because the Attorney General was involved. What do you think?' He just stared at me for a few moments. He didn't say one word, but turned and walked away. After that, he had nothing to do with me."

Sergeant Robert Byron filed the death scene's initial report based on his pre-dawn investigation at the murder house. He had arrived after Clemmons, supposedly to relieve him.

His report was riddled with flaws and, at best, was carelessly investigated. Yet for years, his superficial summary of what happened that night was adopted as the "official" version of the LAPD. Byron also did not challenge obvious contradictions in the accounts of the eyewitnesses, particularly Eunice Murray and Dr. Greenson.

Although Iannone was told that Bobby had been there that day, he did not pursue that lead. "I didn't feel it was my position to investigate the Attorney General of the United States, the chief law enforcement officer in the nation," he later said.

The police did launch an investigation, of sorts, into Marilyn's death. Photographers took many photos of her bedroom and other parts of the Brentwood house. Columnist James Bacon said, "They were initially treating it like a murder, but then something happened."

All evidence was delivered to the desk of Parker, and marked "confidential."

Thad Brown, chief of LAPD detectives, was asleep in his trailer in Malibu when a policeman woke him up early Sunday morning to tell him that Marilyn was dead and that Chief Parker wanted him to come at once and take over the case.

Brown learned that both Bobby Kennedy and Peter Lawford had been seen going into the presidential suite at the Beverly Hilton. When Brown informed Parker of that, he was removed from the case and replaced with Captain James Hamilton, head of the LAPD's Intelligence Division. He and Bobby Kennedy were friends, and the Attorney General had praised Hamilton in his book, *The Enemy Within*. Bobby had cited Hamilton's role in helping him in his Senate Rackets Investigation of, among others, Jimmy Hoffa.

Jack Tobin, a crime reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, knew Hamilton and asked him about Marilyn's phone records. Hamilton admitted that he had seized them from the phone company, but told Tobin, "I have nothing more to say."

Another reporter, Florabel Muir, challenged the police secrecy surrounding the phone records. In her column of August 8, 1962, she wrote: "Police investigators have refused to make public the records of phone calls made from Marilyn Monroe's home Saturday evening. The police have impounded the phone company's taped record of outgoing calls. Normally in suicide probes, the record of such phone calls are made available to the public within a few days."

When Slatzer showed up at the LAPD's Central Division Headquarters in downtown Los Angeles, he demanded that he be allowed to see the phone records. In response, Parker ordered two burly police officers to escort Slatzer from the building.

Hamilton not only seized Marilyn's phone records, but directed the coverup of her murder. At all times, he operated under direct orders from Chief Parker, who was known within the LAPD as "Whiskey Bill," because of his heavy drinking.

Tom Reddin, who succeeded William Parker as Chief of the LAPD for a two-year stint beginning in 1967, said, "I can report on Hamilton's probe. He talked to two people about Monroe's death—God and Parker."

During its supervision by Hamilton, the Monroe case became stonewalled, and even the most trusted members of the LAPD were not cut in on any information.

Since Lawford was out of town, the police sent him a memo asking him to come in for an interview "at your earliest convenience."

Lawford took plenty of time honoring this request, eventually showing up at LAPD headquarters in 1975, at which time he was unable to shed any light at all on what actually happened that dark night in August of 1962.

In June of 1963, Hamilton resigned his position to become chief of security for the National Football League, a post which Bobby Kennedy had secured for him.

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No copies of the initial police reports on Marilyn's death have ever surfaced. When Sam Yorty, in his capacity as Mayor of Los Angeles, requested the file on Marilyn five years after her death, Tom Reddin, Parker's successor as police chief, told Yorty that no such file existed. When Parker had been queried about the file before leaving office, he said, "It should be sealed for reasons of national security." There was a rumor that Parker had personally removed the file from LAPD headquarters and turned it over to Bobby Kennedy.

A report revealed that Parker flew to Washington on December 10, 1962. On December 12, he met privately with Bobby at the Park University Motel in College Park, Maryland. No record exists of why that secret rendezvous occurred.

Yorty later said, "It's easier to tell the Mayor of Los Angeles that there isn't a file, rather than tell him he can't see it."

Police Lieutenant Marion Phillips was the chief aide to Captain Hamilton. When queried, he claimed that "in 1962, Chief Parker took the file on Marilyn Monroe to Washington. It was never returned, and we have no copies."

Hamilton died in 1964 of a brain tumor and never revealed what he knew. Two years later, Chief Parker, during a testimonial dinner honoring him, had a fatal heart attack.

LAPD Homicide Detective Thad Brown died in 1972. Each of these men probably had the material to write a best seller about the death of Marilyn, but they never revealed their secrets.

In 1978, when Daryl Gates took over as Chief of the LAPD, he faced growing demands to reopen the Marilyn Monroe investigation.

"I could not even find a file on her case at police headquarters. I tracked down some material we had on her in the garage of Finis Brown, the brother of Thad, who had worked on the case. There were some 700 pages, mostly newspaper articles on Marilyn's death and some relatively unimportant photographs. I reduced the report to nineteen official pages, the other information being of no importance."

On October 22, 1978, Gates issued a final statement denying the need for further investigations into Marilyn's death. "There is insufficient evidence to warrant an official investigation, as the evidence is as thin as a Depression food-line soup."

Milo Speriglio, the master detective who conducted a twenty-year investigation into Marilyn's death, disagreed, "There was a massive cover-up involving the district attorney's office, the coroner's office, and other politicians and bureaus. The LAPD made no real probe into the death of Marilyn Monroe. They claimed there was nothing abnormal at the scene of her death. If you ask me, every god damn thing there was abnormal."

Long before decades of cover-up, in 1961, Ethel Kennedy attended a Christmas party at the Department of Justice. She noticed a suggestion box and wrote out her idea: "Why not replace J. Edgar Hoover with Chief William Parker of Los Angeles as FBI Director?" She signed it "Mrs. Robert Kennedy."

Right after the New Year, in January of 1962, a member of his staff showed Ethel's memo to J. Edgar Hoover. As Hoover's aide, Guy Hotell, later said, "Eddie hated Robert Kennedy. And after that Christmas suggestion, he added the name of Ethel Kennedy to his shit list."

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No inquest was ever held into the mysterious death of Marilyn Monroe. Demands for one were ignored, in spite of massive protests from commentators around the world. A survey showed that the majority of Americans believed that Marilyn had been murdered. Yet no one, even the witnesses at the scene of her death, ever had to testify under oath, and therefore never had to be legally confronted with the conflicts within their respective testimonies. Eunice Murray was the perfect example of a witness who kept changing her story. Peter Lawford was also guilty of that as well.

The only person in the coroner's office who in time would have the courage to speak out was Lionel Grandison, the Los Angeles Deputy Coroner at the time of Marilyn's death. He was the one who signed her death certificate.

He worked with Thomas Noguchi, the deputy medical examiner who performed the autopsy on Marilyn's corpse. Grandison's boss was the pathologist, Dr. Theodore Curphey, Los Angeles' Chief Medical Coroner. Controversial and disliked, he was often defined as "curt, rude, tactless, and arrogant."

In the immediate aftermath of Marilyn's death, Grandison became suspicious that the body had been shipped to Westwood, "the wrong mortuary," in his words, instead of being sent directly to the coroner's office in downtown L.A. Grandison later said, "I think a cover-up began only minutes after Marilyn's death."

On several occasions, he reported how difficult it had been for him to get the Westwood Mortuary to release Marilyn's body. He suspected there had been an immediate order for her cremation. But he didn't know who issued such an order, or even who had that kind of authority. "I rescued Marilyn's corpse in time—or else she would have become ashes."

Grandison later claimed that there were other bruises on Marilyn's body not reported on her autopsy report. "There were bruises on her arms and the back of her legs."

John Miner, who had witnessed Noguchi perform the autopsy on Marilyn and who himself had qualified as a doctor before entering law, agreed with Grandison. He, too, reported seeing bruises on her body, "but nothing severe enough to have contributed to her death. However, such bruises would have indicated violence or the use of force to restrain her."

Grandison was put in charge of "The Marilyn Monroe file" at the Los Angeles Coroner's office, but Curphey took control of the investigative work. Curphey had never done that before, having preoccupied himself in the past with mostly administrative issues. From the beginning, Grandison suspected that "the scenario of her death by suicide had already been written before any investigation began. It was developed on a day-by-day basis. Every event going into the file was tailored to fit the suicide scenario. On some days, I noticed that a report indicating it was not suicide would disappear and never be returned. Some of the reports filed were removed, rewritten, and then returned. There was definitely a cover-up."

Grandison suggested that the LAPD and/or the coroner's staff should interrogate Dr. Engelberg and Dr. Greenson, but Curphey nixed the idea. "With Curphey controlling information in the coroner's office, and Chief Parker controlling the data of the LAPD, how could an honest investigation proceed?" Grandison asked some colleagues, although he never confronted Curphey directly.

Curphey's motives were suspect. "He was issuing marching orders to us, but I could never determine the powerful influences that were giving the coroner his own marching orders," Grandison said. "Obviously, he was listening and following the dictates of powerful authority figures."

"Some very sensitive areas were covered up," Grandison charged. "Evidence was suppressed, paperwork was taken from the files, and people who had knowledge of what happened were not listened to, nor were they sought out. The official file on Miss Monroe's death was doctored to support what someone wanted the public to think."

Curphey called Grandison to his office and asked him to sign the final autopsy report. "The paperwork, which usually backs up such a report, was missing. Not only that, I had seen the original autopsy report. The document presented to me had been completely changed. I was being asked to sign a fraudulent report."

When Grandison seemed reluctant to sign, Curphey flew into a rage. "You sign this death certificate…or else," he threatened Grandison.

"Fearing I would lose my job, and with a wife and children to support, I reluctantly signed the death certificate, which I knew was falsified."

After studying all the final reports, Curphey appeared before the press on August 17, 1962, very shortly after Marilyn's death, and claimed, "It is my conclusion that the death of Marilyn Monroe was caused by a self-administered overdose of sedative drugs and that the mode of death was probably suicide."

Instead of conducting a public inquest, as massively suggested, he chose to name a three-member team of mental health professionals, including Dr. Norman Tabachnick, a well-known psychiatrist. It was called the Suicide Prevention Team, but the press quickly dubbed it "the suicide squad." Its daunting task was to perform a "psychological autopsy" associated with the supposed suicide of Marilyn Monroe.

The suicide squad worked for only eleven days, conducting interviews, most often with persons barely concerned with the life of Marilyn. These witnesses had informal talks with members of the panel, and none of them were ever placed under oath.

The panel rejected any recommendations for interviews with associates and friends of Marilyn who included Peter Lawford, Eunice Murray, Pat Newcomb, either of the Joe DiMaggios (father and son), Robert Slatzer, Jeanne Carmen, Paula Strasberg, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy. Of course, in the case of the Kennedy brothers, it is highly unlikely that they could have been forced to testify before this informal panel anyway.

The final report from this committee was never made public. It was said that Curphey was the only man who ever read the committee's final conclusions, and he died in 1986 without revealing what they were.

After delivering their report, the Suicide Prevention Committee received a large grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, a government welfare program inaugurated by Bobby Kennedy.

In 1982, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office issued a detailed investigative report that, in general, supported the conclusions reached by Curphey.

For the rest of his life, Robert Slatzer continued to reject all these official conclusions and carried on with his

argument that Marilyn had been murdered, and that her death was covered up "at the highest level."

Slatzer has been dismissed as a fraud and a charlatan by many critics, some of whom have claimed that he met Marilyn only once and that was in New York State, not in California. He posed with her for an intimate photograph during the making of the film *iagara* (1953).

Stanley Mills Haggart (an author and TV director, and this author's former business associate of twenty years), in his diary wrote about a dinner party he hosted at his Hollywood apartment in 1948. His dinner guests included Doris Day; Craig Stevens; Alexis Smith; the dancer, James Mitchell; and Haggart's friend, Robert Slatzer. For his date that night, he brought the emerging starlet, Marilyn Monroe, who had previously been known as Norma Jeane Baker.

Haggart, later a business associate of Milton Greene and a close personal friend of Arthur Miller, got to know Marilyn a lot better that evening.

Haggart said that he continued to socialize with both Marilyn and Slatzer over a period of many years, and said that they definitely had a close friendship, although he had no personal knowledge of any quickie marriage they may have had in Mexico.

Regardless of one's opinion of Slatzer, it can be said that his 1974 demand for an official investigation into the death of Marilyn generated worldwide interest and set off enquiries from the public and various journalists that spanned decades. In 1974, Saltzer published many of his findings in his book, *The Curious Death of Marilyn Monroe*. He sent copies of his book to the Los Angeles Grand Jury, which wrote to him on August 12, 1974, that his request for a new investigation had been denied. Slatzer, controversial and strident to the end, died after a long illness in Los Angeles, at the age of 77, on March 28, 2005.

John Miner, who witnessed Noguchi's autopsy, later claimed that, based on what he'd observed, Marilyn died from barbiturates introduced into her system by infusion. Infusion, in this case, is a term that applies to a drug which is introduced through the rectum into the large intestine by means of an enema or the insertion of a suppository or suppositories.

Dr. Greenson was never called for an official testimony, although in 1964, he gave Miner permission to interview him for five hours, during which time he played some tapes Marilyn had recorded for him shortly before her death. For Miner to be granted this rare privilege, he had to sign a confidentiality agreement to not publicly reveal the contents of his interview with Greenson, except that he would be allowed to summarize his findings in a memo to Curphey

Critics have suggested that Dr. Greenson may have been in love with Marilyn. It has even been suggested that had she been an average patient, Greenson might have had her committed to an asylum**.** When he'd first examined her, he'd written "schizophrenia, psychotic manifestations, depressive and paranoid reactions."

Until the time of his death in 1979, the psychiatrist continued to maintain that Marilyn committed suicide because she could not handle rejection.

Miner would later reveal that Greenson himself told him that he did not feel Marilyn had committed suicide, but that she was murdered. Miner filed a confidential memo on the matter with Curphey.

When Curphey was later asked to turn over this report during discussions of whether a formal inquest should be called, he did not produce it. "Through no fault of my own, I find that Miner's report is missing, and my office cannot find it anywhere."

The final word from Dr. Greenson on Marilyn's death came from a reporter, William Woodfield, who called the controversial psychiatrist for an interview in 1967. Unknown to Greenson, his words were taped. "I can't explain myself or defend myself without revealing things I don't want to reveal," Greenson is heard saying. "You can't draw a line and say I'll tell you this, but I won't tell you that. It's a terrible position to be in to have to say I can't talk about it. Listen…talk to Bobby Kennedy if you want to know."

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In the aftermath of Marilyn's death, witnesses scattered or else became silent. Dr. Engelberg died at the ripe old age of ninety in December of 2005. At the nursing home where he died in Santa Monica, he had nothing to say about Marilyn's death, even though he had been at the scene. His former wife once asserted that her husband "banked money in Switzerland after Marilyn's death."

Nearly all the witnesses stood in direct contrast to Robert Slatzer, who at times was the sole voice claiming that Marilyn had been murdered. When news of his protestation of her death's official version was first announced, he received an anonymous call from a caller who threatened him. "A contract is out on you, you fucking asshole."

That was followed in 1964 by break-ins at his home and additional death threats coming over the phone. One

night, when he parked his car and got out to head into his front door, three men came out of the shadows and severely beat him, requiring his hospitalization.

Sometimes, Slatzer shared information with that ace detective, Milo Speriglio, who conducted on ongoing personal investigation, and who died in May of 2000. Along with another investigative reporter, Adela Gregory, he published his shocking revelations in his book, *Crypt 33, the Saga of Marilyn Monroe—the Final Word*.

Released in 1993, the book, with a great deal of accuracy, and as stated earlier in Part V of this book, named Marilyn's killers, each of the five working as a hit man at the time for Sam Giancana. They included Felix Alderisio ("Milwaukee Phil"); Charles ("Chuckie") Nicoletti; Frank Schweihs ("Frank the German"); Anthony ("The Ant") Spilotro; and Frank Cullotta.

Although Slatzer was an amateur investigating Marilyn's death, Speriglio was the ultimate professional. He was the "King of Hollywood Detectives," rivaling the standing of Fred Otash. Since the dawn of the 20th Century, some one million crimes in the Greater Los Angeles area had been solved by the Nick Harris Detective Agency, of which Speriglio was director.

He used the fictional detectives Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe, as his role models. Upon his death at the age of sixty-two, *The Los Angeles Times* said that Speriglio "could pass for a bank clerk" and that he handled more cases that all those fictional sleuths on TV, some 35,000 cases in all that he cracked.

Speriglio had arrived in California when he was three years old. His first case, at the age of sixteen, involved hunting down a missing panther, the press eventually dubbing him "The Panther Boy."

His professional career was launched as a rock disc jockey known as "Mad Milo." But he soon turned to his lifelong obsession of criminology. He once told a reporter, "I'm not a loving, adoring fan of Marilyn like Bob Slatzer. I haven't seen any of her movies. What interests me, and it's a profound interest, is tracking down the men who murdered her."

At the end of his life, when he'd named the Mafia hit men who killed her, he felt he'd achieved his goal, and so did thousands of other people. What he suspected, but never proved, was that Kennedy money was behind Sam Giancana when he ordered Marilyn's death.

Speriglio found case after case where key witnesses to Marilyn's death indulged in "shameless cover-ups—such a disgraceful group."

On some occasions, Speriglio met with another famous detective, Fred Otash, who arguably had seen more secret videos of Marilyn and had heard more illegal bugging of her than any other person alive.

A heavy smoker, Otash suffered from emphysema and high blood pressure at the end of his life, which came in October of 1992. Otash was working at the time on "a bombshell of a book," entitled *Marilyn, Kennedy, and Me*. Otash did not specify which Kennedy he meant, John or Bobby, but presumably it was Bobby on whom he possessed the most incriminating information.

After Otash's death, the manuscript for his book mysteriously vanished.

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Three key players at the scene of Marilyn's death—Peter Lawford, Eunice Murray, and Pat Newcomb—blew away with the wind in the aftermath of the star's death.

Until she died on March 5, 1994, Eunice Murray remained controversial. Her constantly changing re-creation of the events of August 4, 1962 didn't endear her to Marilyn's fans, who viewed her as dishonest.

With massive numbers of press reports raging about Marilyn's death, and although she had only $218.56 in the bank on the night Marilyn died, Eunice suddenly departed for a six-month tour of Europe.

Obviously, this money came from some mysterious source, and Robert Slatzer later suspected that she received $50,000 in a cash settlement from an aide to Bobby Kennedy. However, Slatzer never definitively proved that.

Eunice steered clear of foul play or Kennedy involvement when she penned her profoundly unhelpful book, *Marilyn: The Last Months*. If she knew anything about the involvement of Sam Giancana or Johnny Roselli, or any of their henchmen on the West Coast, she told nothing.

In September of 1962, a rumor spread around Hollywood that two *Mafiosi* broke into Eunice's apartment after she'd moved out of Marilyn's home. The late-middle-aged woman was said to have been stripped of her clothing and brutally sodomized by both men in an effort to put fear into her and show her that the mob could move in on her at any time she started to make revelations.

Sergeant Jack Clemmons said that he learned that Marilyn's housekeeper had very little money at the time of Marilyn's death. "Yet she took three luxury tours of Europe," the sergeant said. "To me, that looked like a payoff from somebody."

In their book, *Marilyn: The Last Take*, authors Peter Harry Brown and Patte B. Barham stated a belief that many people had that the Kennedys rewarded Eunice "for services rendered."

She certainly had no loyalty to Marilyn on the night of her death, since she'd been fired and had been ordered to have her possessions packed and out of the house by that fateful Sunday, August 5.

For decades, Eunice denied that Bobby Kennedy was ever at Marilyn's house that Saturday, August 4. In 1985, she agreed to submit to an interview for the BBC on a show called *Goodbye to the President*. After her interview, she failed to realize that her voice was still being recorded.

She was heard telling a BBC interviewer, "Why, at my age, do I still have to cover up this thing? Robert Kennedy did visit Marilyn on that Saturday when she died. A doctor and an ambulance also arrived on the scene when she was still alive." She was obviously referring to Dr. Greenson, but she did not name him, perhaps because he'd been her friend and benefactor over the years.

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Throughout her life, Eunice had tried to keep investigative reporters from interviewing her son-in-law, Norman Jeffries. Yet he was a key witness at the scene of the murder on the weekend of August 4th and 5th, 1962.

Although some have questioned his presence on the scene, he was restoring Marilyn's house that weekend. Newspaper photographs that appeared in Sunday's papers show him being led from the kitchen's side door, along with Pat Newcomb, by a police escort. The photographers next snapped photos of him opening the car door for his mother-in-law as she got into her Dodge. Jeffries was also pictured holding open the passenger door for Newcomb. Presumably, Newcomb's car was still parked in Santa Monica at Lawford's mansion, and Eunice was giving her a lift.

Attempts to reach Jeffries were blocked for years by Eunice. Investigative journalist Anthony Summers tried to reach him during his research for his biography, *Goddess*, and reporter Ted Landreth also tried to interview him. Both of these attempts in the 1980s failed.

However, in the early 1990s, Jeffries was discovered by reporters living in Russellville, Arkansas. Wheelchair bound, he was said to be terminally ill.

At long last, facing death, he spoke of Marilyn's final weekend, referring to it as "the worst I've ever experienced in my entire life."

Except for that dinner date with his mother-in-law that Saturday evening, Jeffries said he was in Marilyn's house from around 8am Saturday morning until 7:30pm Sunday night.

"I was there the night Marilyn died. That afternoon, I saw Bobby Kennedy and Peter Lawford arrive. I stayed outside and worked in a remote part of the garden, but there was one big argument going on."

"I also saw Dr. Greenson arrive that Saturday afternoon and later that night. There was also an ambulance summoned and some police squad car. But I was in the telephone room, where I'd spent the night on a cot, and only looked out the window. I did open my door later, when I saw two men moving Marilyn's body from the guest cottage into her own bedroom."

The presence of Jeffries in Marilyn's house has been confirmed in such books as *The Assassination of Marilyn Monroe* by Donald Wolfe. The author was a film editor and screenwriter who did a massive investigation into Marilyn's final weekend in Brentwood.

"The story Eunice told about the telephone cord and the light on under the bedroom door was not true," Jeffries claimed. "Eunice found Marilyn slumped over on the bed in the guest cottage. She screamed. Marilyn was comatose. When Jack Clemmons arrived, Marilyn was dead and had been moved. Arthur Jacobs was there. He seemed in charge of everything."

When asked about whether there was a conspiracy to cover up Marilyn's death, Jeffries said, "Does a bear shit in the woods?"

"There were a lot of secrets to cover up," he said, "and I never wanted to get involved. I didn't owe any loyalty to Marilyn. I had been told I was to go that Sunday, even though I still had a lot of work to do. She fired me. I think she liked my work. She fired me just because I was Eunice's son-in-law. She felt that if I stayed on in the house working, I'd be a spy for Eunice and Dr. Greenson.

"I want to go on record as saying that I didn't have anything to do with all the hysterical shit flying around that night. I kept my mouth shut and my door shut, except a few times when I peeked out. I wanted to stay out of the way. I'm only talking now because I figure they can't electrocute me if I'm in a wheelchair."

Jeffries had a parting comment. "All that talk about Marilyn being a slut is just so much crap. On two different occasions, when Eunice was out of the house, I hit on Marilyn. Neither time did she give me a tumble."

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Truman Capote was deeply saddened by Marilyn's death, telling friends,"I'm next."

Privately, he spoke to his elegant woman friends, whom he called "my swans."

"The Kennedys didn't kill her, the way some people think. But they did pay one of her best friends to keep quiet about their relationship with her. The friend knew where all the skeletons were. After Marilyn died, the Kennedys sent this friend on a year-round cruise around the world. For a whole year, no one knew where she was."

His reference was obviously to Pat Newcomb, who faded from the Hollywood scene right after Arthur Jacobs fired her from his public relations firm. For a while, she was seen at Hyannis Port, where Peter Lawford had also flown.

When Newcomb returned from her travels, she was given a post with the United States Information Agency. She arranged personal appearances for movie stars attending international film festivals. Trips were arranged for such stars as Kirk Douglas and Bette Davis.

Newcomb was also a frequent guest at Hickory Hill, where in the early autumn of 1963, she fell from a horse and broke her arm while riding with Bobby Kennedy.

She remained his trusted aide and friend. In fact, he asked her to stay with his family when he handled the funeral arrangements for his assassinated brother in November of that year.

Near the end of his term as Attorney General, Newcomb worked for Bobby, her office being only five doors down from his. They exchanged affectionate "Love and kisses" inter-office memos, she signing hers "Bertha Bronco," referring to her horseback riding. He signed his either "Charlie Pleasant" or"Charlie Generous."

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In Hollywood, after his return from the safety and calm of Hyannis Port, Peter Lawford went into total denial about Marilyn's death. Having dinner with his longtime friend, Sammy Davis, Jr., Lawford told him, "My days with the Kennedys are coming to an end. My marriage to Pat is on the rocks. We're seeing other people."

"Peter, my good man," Davis said, flashing his celebrated grin. "Since your honeymoon, you've been seeing others. I, of all people, should know that. You don't need the Kennedys any more. You'll go on to greater things."

"Cut the bullshit, Sammy," Lawford said. "It's no longer 1948."

In the weeks and months ahead, he was occasionally confronted with a question about Marilyn and the Kennedys. "She hardly knew them," he said. "A couple of handshakes at Madison Square Garden and a party at my house with a hundred other people—and that's it. There's nothing to tell."

One night at Chasen's, a drunken Lawford was asked if Marilyn really committed suicide. "Yes, regret ably, she did. She was despondent over her career. She'd been fired by Fox and out of work. She feared her glory days were over, as they often are for both male and female stars entering middle age. Believe me, I know that to be be true."

His testimony would not have held up in court. On the day of her death, Marilyn was negotiating the biggest and best-paying offers of her career—and Lawford knew that. At their last gatherings at his house, she talked to Lawford and his guests, sharing her excitement and enthusiasm with them.

He did confide in a few people what happened "that night," as he referred to August 4. He told his third wife, Deborah Gould, that he'd gone to Marilyn's house on the night of her death. "There was no suicide note, because there was no suicide. But I did remove a lot of stuff from her file cabinet."

Apparently, that night he was alleged to have admitted that he also took the red diary.

In the early 1970s, in New York, Lawford met with literary agent Jay Garon, who approached him with a "sweetheart publishing deal" involving the writing of his memoirs. Lawford needed money, and, for openers, Garon told him that a publisher would give him a $60,000 advance for a hardcover sale and a "fortune" for the paperback rights, plus another $100,000 for an exposé within *The National Enquirer*.

Lawford and Garon reviewed some of the revelations that Lawford would have to make in his book, including, of course, the true story of Marilyn's involvement with the Kennedy brothers.

Since JFK and RFK were both dead, Lawford seriously considered the offer. But then Garon pulled what Lawford later called "the deal buster." The agent also wanted Lawford to relay stories about his gay life and his involvement with such actors as Sammy Davis, Jr., Robert Walker, Noël Coward, Tom Drake, Van Johnson, Clifton Webb, and even ugly George Cukor, who, ironically, had been the lover of a very young Jay Garon himself way back in 1940.

Garon also wanted Lawford to write about his snapping of pornographic pictures in Santa Monica of the President and Marilyn having sex, and perhaps include one of the candid shots. Then Garon added, "And of course,

we can black out the President's genitals."

Even though his unpaid bills were mounting, the next day, Lawford told Garon, "I just couldn't do it."

By the 1980s, Lawford was blaming himself for Marilyn's death. He told a reporter in 1984 (the year he died), "To this day, I've lived with this guilt. I should have gotten in my car and gone straight to her house. I didn't do it." The journalist said that at this point, Lawford broke down and cried.

In the 1960s, Lawford had lived through "the murders of Jack, Marilyn, and Bobby"—the words he used with Garon—"and sometimes it's more than I can take."

In the years he had left, Lawford entered a world of drugs, especially cocaine, Scotch, and an ever-increasing use of prescription medications such as Percodan. He was forever consumed with guilt about what happened to Marilyn.

One Las Vegas call girl reported that he hired her for the night, but spent most of it crying for hours in her arms, lamenting what had happened to Marilyn.

Trying to dry out at the Betty Ford Center shortly before his death, he wrote a letter to President Kennedy in heaven.

"I know you're having a good time up there, you always do. Are you the president of anything yet? How are Bobby and Marilyn? Please give them my love.
See you soon.
Your buddy,
Peter Lawford."

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At the age of sixty-five, during the late summer of 1999, the century was coming to an end and so was the notorious Judith Campbell Exner.

For decades, she'd lived in fear of being wiped out by the mob, as she had been the mistress of both Sam Giancana and President Kennedy, delivering messages between them. She'd sometimes bring a briefcase of money from the Kennedys to Giancana in Chicago.

Taking an inordinate amount of the drug Taxol, she lived by herself and claimed that she was in constant pain. Detective Milo Speriglio came to visit her, wondering if she had any final deathbed revelations to make for perhaps a new edition of his book, *Crypt 33*, which had been published in 1993.

She told him, "I'm living on borrowed time, but I have nothing to fear from the mob, or the Kennedys. The thing I have to fear is death itself. Sam is long gone. He can kill nobody anymore." (He'd been murdered on June 18, 1975.)

Judith revealed to Speriglio that she had metastatic breast cancer, and that one of her lungs had been removed. Speriglio found it amazing that her beauty had once been compared to Elizabeth Taylor's. She said, "Stop looking at me that way. I know I no longer look like Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Taylor herself doesn't look like Elizabeth Taylor anymore."

"I knew Sam engineered the death of Marilyn Monroe," she said. "He told me that one night in Chicago. It wasn't something he was proud of—in fact, it gave him a lot of guilt. The idea of wiping her out originated from other sources. But he didn't tell me who those other sources were—perhaps a rogue element in the CIA. The Kennedys? I doubt that."

"I was also the lover of Johnny Roselli," she said. "I think he too was involved in Marilyn's murder, but he never told me anything like that. Yet he was the guy they called 'the Angel of Death,' and he was the one Sam turned to when he wanted to wipe out somebody in Los Angeles or Las Vegas."

"I lived most of my life in fear," she said. "I've got this gun under my pillow. I fall asleep on it every night. Sam gave it to me with a warning. He said the Kennedys might have me wiped out one night. It's amazing: I've survived all of them—Jack Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Sam Giancana, and Johnny Roselli. So I never had to use the gun. If somebody comes to kill me now, what will it matter?"

"After covering up secrets for decades, I can tell you for a fact that Sam Giancana ordered the death of Marilyn Monroe. I know I've said that already. But don't ask me on whose orders. Maybe we'll never know that. I'll be in heaven soon, and I plan to compete with Marilyn once again for the President's affections. Of course, when I get there, I hope I don't look like I do this afternoon."

"You'll be the most gorgeous woman who ever walked through the pearly gates," Speriglio assured her.

He never developed his article for *Vanity Fair*. He left her in September of 1999 for the last time, as he would

also fall victim to lung cancer, dying in May of 2000.

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Over the years, several critics have said that Jeanne Carmen exaggerated the closeness of her friendship with Marilyn, claiming that there was no "paper trail," of photographs or letters documenting their association.

There is a reason for that. On the Sunday Marilyn died, Carmen left her apartment at Doheny and drove to Brentwood, parking three blocks away because of all the cars backed up on Fifth Helena Drive.

She walked along leafy, once-quiet residential streets now swarming with policemen, newspaper and magazine reporters, TV and radio men and women, and the inevitable paparazzi.

Realizing how hopeless her quest was, she decided to drive to the beach at Santa Monica, where she spent the rest of the day reflecting on her life and wondering how Marilyn had died.

When she drove back to Doheny, she found that her apartment had been broken into. Someone had cracked a window and entered. "Al my photographs, some of Marilyn and me, and a lot of embarrassing stuff were taken, even some pornographic pictures I'd posed for when I was seventeen. I had three or four pieces of jewelry lying about, but they weren't taken. I knew at once that the robber wanted my stuff on Marilyn."

"I called the police, but my property was never returned."

She began to wonder whether, like Marilyn, she knew too much, particularly about Peter Lawford, the Kennedys, and the mob. Johnny Roselli had at times been her boyfriend.

"A lot of people were talking that Roselli directed the murder of Marilyn," she said. "But I didn't want to believe that. I liked the guy too much. Marilyn dated him too. I remember she once said, 'You know that he's called the Angel of Death.' He actually kills people—friends, their mothers, their mistresses, Giancana's gangland rivals. He really does."

"Johnny paid my rent and bought my groceries on many a night when there was nothing in the bank," Carmen said. "I preferred to think about the good side of him, not what he did for a living when he wasn't with me. I do know this: If Sam Giancana had ordered Johnny to kill Marilyn, he would have. It didn't matter if he were your friend or not."

One week after Marilyn's death, Carmen met with Fred Otash, who had been her on-again, off-again lover. "He was always bluntly honest with me, and almost more than anyone, he'd had Marilyn under surveillance. Freddie bugged everybody in those days. I'm sure he monitored his grandmother's potties."

By their third drink, Otash told her, "Marilyn's death was no suicide. It was murder, plain and simple, and it could easily happen to you, too. Don't you realize, Jeanne, that you know too much? You're lucky to be alive. After everything got fucked up, the mob wanted to go after you, but I talked them out of it."

He seemed to know all the details of Marilyn's murder, but at no point did he connect Roselli with it. "They held her down, shoved a tube up her ass, and poured enough chloral hydrate in her to send her to the fucking moon. Giancana wanted the world to think it was a suicide. He wanted the press to think she killed herself over Bobby and Jack. That scandal would have destroyed both of them."

After drinks with Otash, Carmen became afraid for the first time in her life. She felt that she was being watched at her Doheny apartment. "There was a car parked across the street from my apartment house. Every day I went out, I saw these two East Coast thugs. Not always the same guys, of course, but I definitely felt I was under surveillance. I soon came to realize that Freddie Otash was right. It was time to get out of Dodge."

Packing up her belongings, Carmen fled to Scottsdale, Arizona, where she lived *incognito* for more than a decade. She abandoned her platinum blonde locks, got married, and had three children. Outside of town at Rawhide, a Wild West amusement park, she worked as a cocktail waitress.

In 1972, she received an unexpected call from Roselli, who had tracked her down. He told her she was out of danger and could resurface again. He invited her to spend a weekend with him at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. He booked her a suite there, and sent her an airplane ticket. Once in Vegas over dinner, he blamed Giancana for Marilyn's murder, at no point implicating himself.

After that weekend, she never saw him again. On July 27, 1976, right before he was set to testify before a congressional committee, he was kidnapped and murdered. His body was dismembered and entombed in a fifty-five gallon oil drum. The canister was drilled with holes and dumped into a Florida bay. The decomposing gases of Roselli's body raised the barrel to the surface of the water, where it was spotted by two fishermen. When the barrel was opened, it was discovered that his murderers had cut off Roselli's left foot and forced it into his mouth, perhaps as a symbolic representation of his upcoming testimony in front of the congressional committee.

Eventually, Carmen returned to California, settling into Newport Beach. She spent a good part of the rest of her

life granting interviews about her friendship with Marilyn. Her final interview was given on November 12, 2007, for *SX*, a gay and lesbian newspaper in Australia.

At her home in Orange County, California, Carmen died on December 20, 2007. She was seventy-seven years old and suffered from lymphoma. She was survived by three children and three grandchildren.

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After her death, there was talk about a movie based on Carmen's wild and wicked life, possibly starring Kate Bosworthy, Scarlett Johansson, or Christina Aguilera. "The only actress who could really have played me—I mean, really—is Marilyn herself," Carmen said.

Back in November of 1963, when Carmen heard of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, she openly wept. "I knew him when he was so full of life," she said.

Three days later, she drove to Brentwood to stand on the sloping street where Marilyn had lived. It was early in the evening, and there were no lights coming from the house. The gate was unlocked, and she walked inside the yard and looked at the door which had once been open to her.

Spelled out on tiles was the Latin inscription *CURSUM PERFICIO*, which Marilyn told her had meant "the end of the journey."

Carmen later said, "The sign was a lie. It wasn't the end of the journey for Marilyn, but the beginning of a new and exciting journey into the future she was never given a chance to live. Her life was stolen from her. I think she would have achieved a greatness in Hollywood rarely seen before. She would have been wonderful with her grandchildren."

In 2000, as the century turned, Carmen told an interviewer, "I think of Marilyn every day of my life. How I long to go back to our lives in the early 1950s when we were posing for those pinup pictures. We were so young and beautiful then, so very blonde, if only from a bottle. We had dreams then. Okay, dreams fade with time, as do youth and beauty. But in Marilyn's case, she will be forever young."

"Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Jack Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, Johnny Roselli, Joe DiMaggio, Errol Flynn, Howard Hughes, Clark Gable, Lex Barker…All of them passed over us. Who was the best? On that Marilyn and I agreed. Sexy Lexy. Tarzan himself. That jungle boy had something to yell about. Those guys gave us their body parts, but never their hearts. A gal can't have everything in life."

"Like the beautiful flower she was, she bloomed and died...and so the cycle of life goes on. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. If Norma Jeane is looking down on us, I hope she is smiling."

—William Pursel, an early boyfriend, speaking at her funeral.

MARILYN'S DEADLY SECRET

Jose Bolaños, the Mexican screenwriter, is sometimes known as "the last lover of Marilyn Monroe." He later claimed that Marilyn and he planned to get married, although it appears that she was also promising a remarriage to the Yankee slugger, Joe DiMaggio.

Bolaños was one of the last people to talk to Marilyn on the night of her death on August 4, 1962. In contrast to Peter Lawford's report about her voice being slurred, Bolaños claimed that she was exuberant and making plans for the future.

What has tantalized reporters for years is one of Bolaños' statements: "Marilyn told me something that, if true, would rock the world." At the time, he chose not to reveal what that awesome secret was.

In October of 1963, Bolaños was working in Mexico on a commercial for the New York City-based television production company, TV Graphics, which was shooting a beach scene near Puerto Val arta.

Also near Puerto Val arta, Richard Burton and Ava Gardner were filming the movie version of Tennessee Williams' play, *The Night of the Iguana.* Elizabeth Taylor had flown to Puerto Val arta to stay with Burton during the filming.

Tennessee arrived unannounced on the scene with his lover *du jour*. He met Bolaños on the beach, and invited him as the guest of honor at a Mexican dinner he was hosting for a few select friends. Williams had read about Bolaños in accounts of Marilyn's death the previous year, and was most intrigued.

It evolved into a drunken night of revelry, and Tennessee exercised his talent for zeroing in on his subject. "And exactly what did our dear friend Marilyn tell you that was so shocking?"

Before he answered, Bolaños had to fill in some background, explaining that Marilyn had developed a friendship with Fred Vanderbilt Field, an avowed Communist and the leading American expatriate in Mexico City. Bolaños said that he'd introduced Marilyn not only to Field, but also to E. Howard Hunt, who, as he claimed, "has CIA connections."

"I talked to Marilyn on the phone right before she died," Bolaños said. "She'd received this terribly disturbing call from Field in Mexico City. According to him, he'd just learned that Hunt, who was my friend, was plotting the assassination of President Kennedy."

Coming a month or so before the actual assassination of the President, his comment did not cause any undue alarm, at least for the moment. Tennessee said that it was his understanding that a sittting U.S. President gets death threats every day. "I get death threats for suggesting homosexuality in my plays."

None of the guests at the party that night paid much at ention to the comment, and no one tried to reach the Associated Press on the phone. Perhaps no one at the time knew who E. Howard Hunt was.

But with the passage of time, it appears that Field was definitely onto a plot to assassinate the President.

E. Howard Hunt died on January 23, 2007. His own son, Saint John Hunt, said that his father, on his deathbed, asserted that he was involved in a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy on that November day in Dallas in 1963.

As ironic as it seemed, Marilyn may have known of that. The President might have lived many more years if he'd answered Marilyn's final call to him at the White House. Hunt's son reported that his father admitted his guilt in JFK's assassination. The alleged fellow conspirators even had a code name. Their operation was call ed, "The Big Event."

Although Marilyn learned of the President's upcoming assassination, she remained unaware of her own impending doom. Forces were already heading for her new home in Brentwood, on that hot summer night in August of 1962.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1950, while a schoolboy, Darwin Porter was introduced to a blonde starlet, Marilyn Monroe, by his mother, Hazel Triplet. The setting was the Helen Mar Hotel on Miami Beach. In charge of the hotel, Mrs. Triplet had been instructed by a fabled B-movie star, Ronald Reagan, to "give Marilyn whatever she wants." He was picking up the tab, although discreetly staying in a suite at the more fashionable Roney Plaza Hotel nearby.

A fashion designer on the side, Mrs. Triplet designed and crafted a stunning white bathing suit for Marilyn to wear at poolside. It was very similar to a suit she'd designed for Linda Darnel for the film, *Slattery's Hurricane*, shot the previous year in Florida.

"When Marilyn walked out by the pool in that bathing suit, she created a sensation," Porter recalled. "A star was born."

Years later, when Porter was an aspiring journalist and in college, Marilyn granted him a one-on-one interview when she flew to Florida to visit her former husband, Joe DiMaggio. "It was the beginning of my lifelong association with Marilyn Monroe," Porter said.

After 1962, Porter began collecting and reading every bit of material he could on Marilyn, her life and death. While working for a television producer in Hollywood, Porter got to meet and know many of her friends and enemies—"both those who loved her and those who were highly critical, perhaps jealous. I ended up with enough material for ten volumes."

Today, Porter is one of the world's leading celebrity biographers, having written books on such diverse figures as Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, Howard Hughes, Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, Merv Griffin, Michael Jackson, the Kennedys, Frank Sinatra, and J. Edgar Hoover.

He is also the co-author of the popular *Hollywood Babylon* series, and is also the co-author of *Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*, which exposed the complicated and deeply anguished private lives of Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh.

Currently, Porter is working on *Elizabeth Taylor: There is othing Like a Dame*, scheduled for publication in October of 2012.

When he isn't traveling, Porter lives in New York City.

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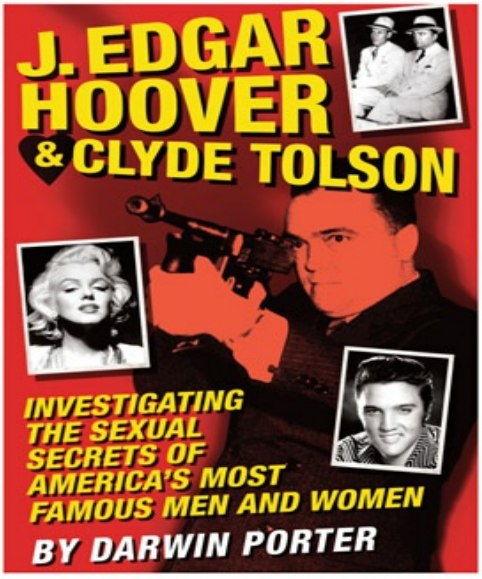

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The New York Post

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—Paul Bellini
FAB Magazine (Toronto)

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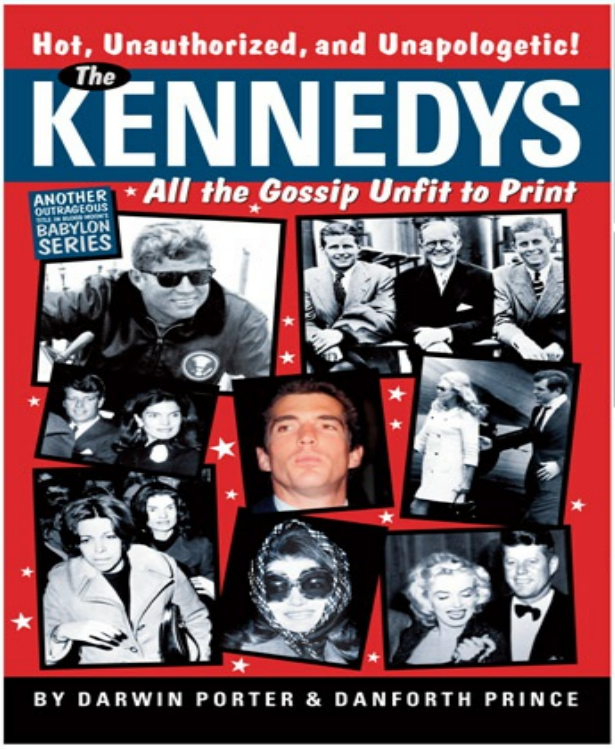

The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic."

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DEGRADATION, PORNO CHIC, AND THE RISE OF FEMINISM

BY DARWIN PORTER

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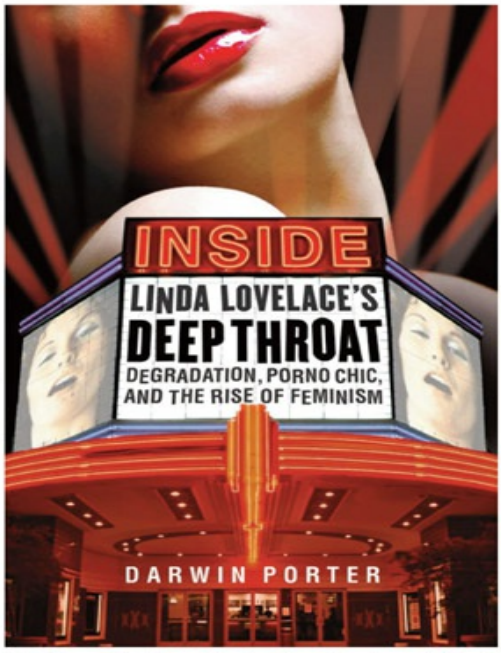

A Bronx-born brunette, the notorious Linda Lovelace was the starry-eyed Catholic daughter in the 1950s of a local cop who called her "Miss Holy Holy." Twenty years later, she became the most notorious actress of the 20th century.

She'd fallen in love with a tough ex-Marine, Chuck Traynor, and eventually married him, only to learn that she had become his meal ticket. He forced her at gunpoint into a role as a player within hardcore porn, including a 1971 bestiality film entitled *Dogarama*.

Her next film, shot for $20,000, was released in 1972 as *Deep Throat*. It became the largest grossing XXX-rated flick of all time, earning an estimated $750 million and still being screened all over the world. The fee she was paid was $1,200, which her husband confiscated. The sexy 70s took the film to thousands, and porno chic was born, with Linda as its centerpiece.

Traynor, a sadist, pimped his wife to celebrities, charging them $2,000 per session, It became a status symbol to commission an "individualized" film clip of Linda performing her specialty. Clients included Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Milton Berle, Desi Arnaz, Marlon Brando, William Holden, Peter Lawford, and Burt Lancaster. The Mafia had found its most lucrative business—pornography—since Prohibition.

After a decade of being assaulted, beaten, and humiliated, Linda, in 1980, underwent a "Born Again" transformation. She launched her own feminist anti-pornography movement, attracting such activists as Gloria Steinem, and scores of other sex industry professionals who refuted their earlier careers.

Critics claimed that Linda's *Deep Throat* changed America's sexual attitudes more than anything since the first Kinsey report in 1948, that she super-charged the feminist movement, and that to some degree, she re-defined the nation's views on obscenity.

The tragic saga of Linda Lovelace is soon to be a major motion picture.

Darwin Porter, author of more than a dozen critically acclaimed celebrity exposés of behind-the-scenes intrigue in the entertainment industry, was deeply involved in the Linda Lovelace saga as it unfolded in the 70s, interviewing many of the players, and raising money for the legal defense of the film's co-star, Harry Reems. In this book, he brings inside information, and a never-before-published revelation on virtually every page.

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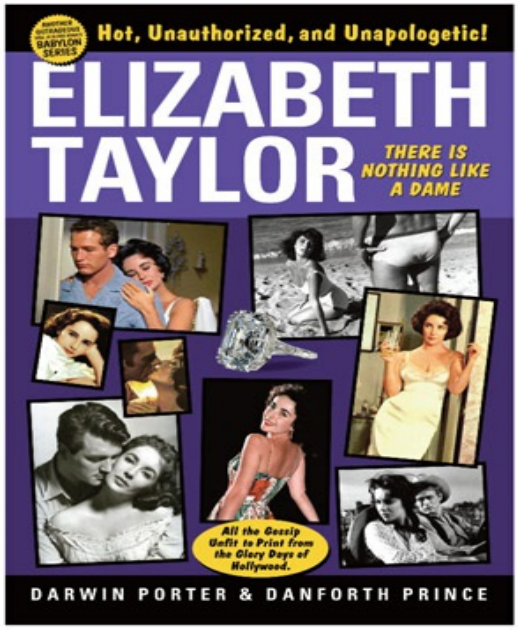

For more than 60 years, Elizabeth Taylor dazzled generations of movie-goers with her glamour and her all-consuming passion for life. She was the last of the great stars of Golden Age Hollywood, coming to a sad end at the age of 79 in 2011.

But before she died, appearing on the Larry King show, she claimed that her biographers had revealed "only half of my story, but I can't tell the other half in a memoir because I'd get sued."

Now, Blood Moon presents for the first time a comprehensive compilation of most of the secrets from the mercurial Dame Elizabeth, whose hedonism helped define the jet set of the tumultuous 60s and beyond.

Throughout the many decades of her life, she consistently generated hysteria among her fans. Here, her story is told with brutal honesty in rich, juicy detail and illustrated, with a new revelation on every page.

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"I'm called a scarlet woman," she said. "That's wrong. I'm positively purple."
—Elizabeth Taylor

"Before they wither, Elizabeth Taylor's breasts will topple empires."
—Richard Burton

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by Darwin Porter & Danforth Prince

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Here, for the first time, is a biography that raises the curtain on the secret lives of **Lord Laurence Olivier**, often cited as the finest actor in the history of England, and **Vivien Leigh,** who immortalized herself with her Oscar-winning portrayals of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind,* and as Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

The spotlight shone on this famous pair throughout most of their tabloid-fueled careers, but much of what went on behind the velvet curtain remained hidden until the publication of this ground-breaking biography.

Dashing and "impossibly handsome," Laurence Olivier was pursued by the most dazzling luminaries, male and female, of the movie and theater worlds. The influential theatrical producer David Lewis asserted, "He would have slept with anyone." That included Richard Burton, who fell madly in love with him, as did Noël Coward.

Lord Olivier's promiscuous, emotionally disturbed wife (Viv to her lovers) led a tumultuous off-the-record life whose paramours ranged from the A-list to men she picked up off the street. But none of the brilliant roles depicted by Lord and Lady Olivier, on stage or on screen, ever matched the power and drama of personal dramas which wavered between Wagnerian opera and Greek tragedy. ***Damn You, Scarlett O'Hara*** is the definitive and most revelatory portrait ever published of the most talented and tormented actor and actress of the 20th century.

Darwin Porter is the principal author of this seminal work. Winner of numerous awards for his headline-generating biographies, he has shed new light on Marlon Brando, Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, Katharine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, Merv Griffin, Michael Jackson, Frank Sinatra, J. Edgar Hoover, Howard Hughes, the Kennedys, and Marilyn Monroe.

Roy Moseley, this book's co-author, was an intimate friend of both Lord and Lady Olivier, maintaining a decades-long association with the famous couple, nurturing them through triumphs, emotional breakdowns, and streams of suppressed scandal. A resident of California who spent most of his life in England, Moseley has authored or co-authored biographies of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Rex Harrison, Cary Grant, Merle Oberon, Roger Moore, and Moseley's long-time companion during the final years of her life, Ms. Bette Davis.

DAMN YOU, SCARLETT O'HARA

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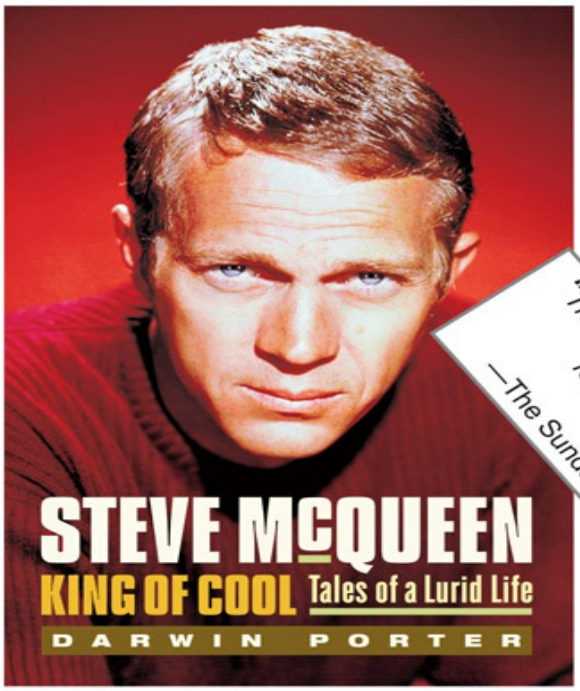

"This book is potentially dangerous for middle-aged men."
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The drama of Steve McQueen's personal life far exceeded any role he ever played on screen. Born to a prostitute, he was brutally molested by some of his mother's "johns," and endured gang rape in reform school. His drift into prostitution began when he was hired as a towel boy in the most notorious bordello in the Dominican Republic, where he starred in a string of cheap porno films. Returning to New York before migrating to Hollywood, he hustled men on Times Square and, as a "gentleman escort" in a borrowed tux, rich older women.

And then, sudden stardom as he became the world's top box office attraction. The abused became the abuser. "I live for myself, and I answer to nobody," he proclaimed. "The last thing I want to do is fall in love with a broad."

Thus began a string of seductions that included hundreds of overnight pickups--both male and female. Topping his A-list conquests were James Dean, Paul Newman, Marilyn Monroe, and Barbra Streisand. Finally, this pioneering biography explores the mysterious death of Steve McQueen. Were those salacious rumors really true?

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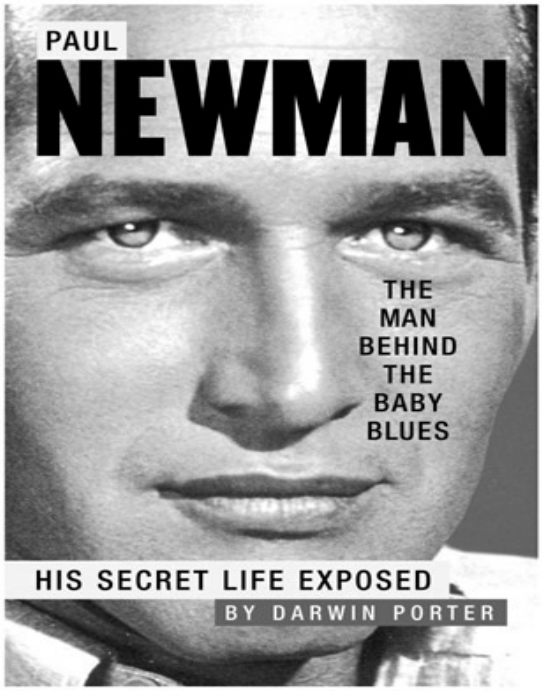
If you're a fan of Newman (and who do you know who isn't) you really should look at this book. It's a respectful but candid cornucopia of information about the sexual and emotional adventures of a young man on Broadway and in Hollywood.



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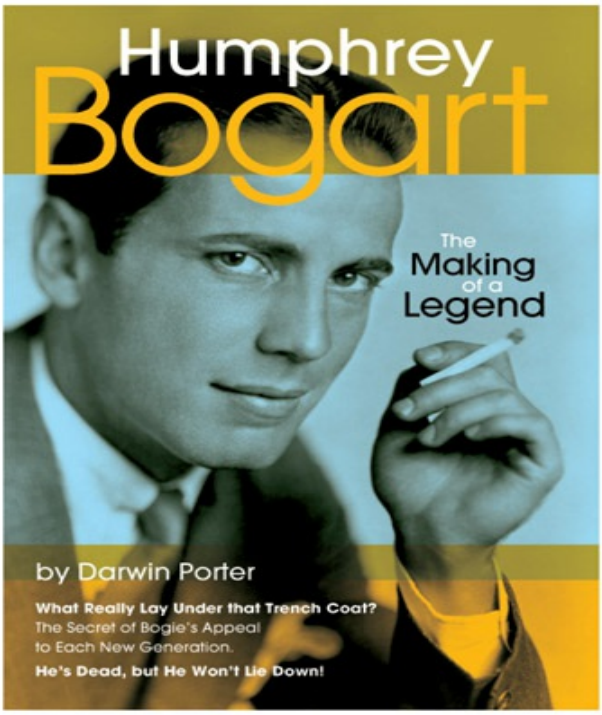

Whereas **Humphrey Bogart** is always at the top of any list of the Entertainment Industry's most famous actors, very little is known about how he clawed his way from Broadway to Hollywood during Prohibition and the Jazz Age.

This pioneering biography begins with Bogart's origins as the child of wealthy (morphine-addicted) parents in New York City, then examines the love affairs, scandals, failures, and breakthroughs that launched him as an American icon.

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Drawn from original interviews with friends and foes who knew a lot about what lay beneath his trenchcoat, this exposé covers Bogart's remarkable life as it helped define movie-making, Hollywood’s portrayal of macho, and America’s evolving concept of Entertainment itself.

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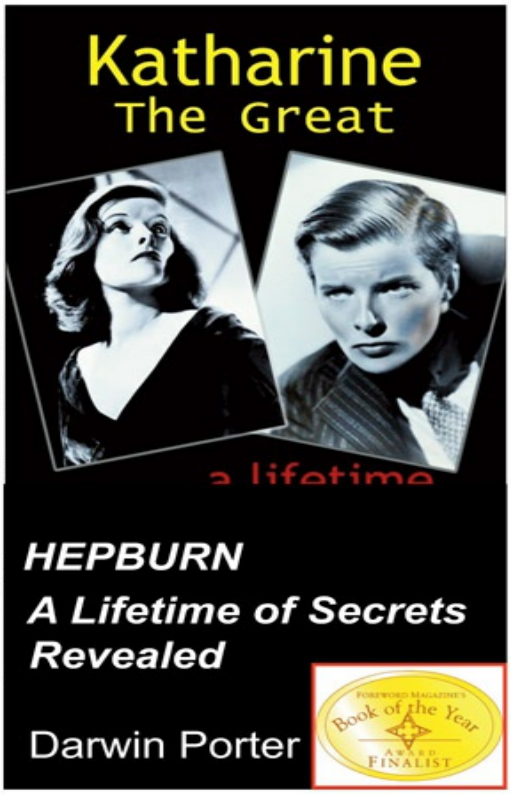

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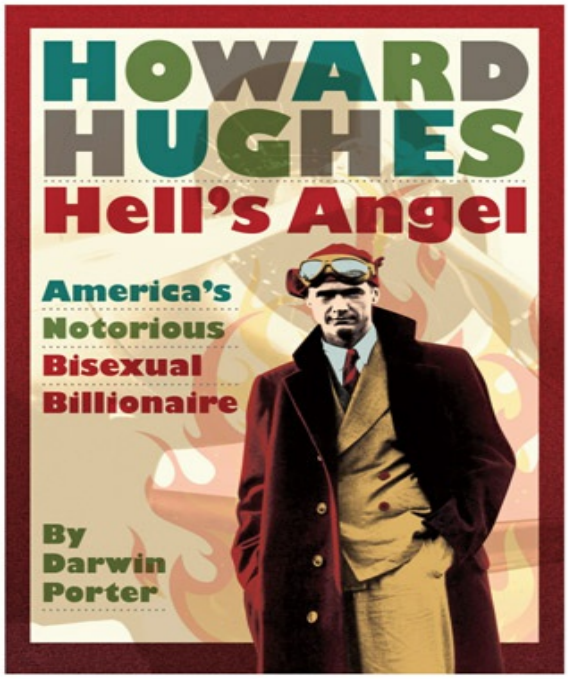

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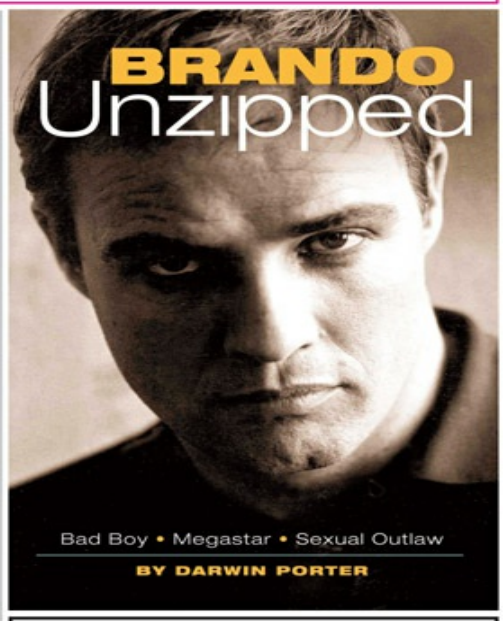
The New York Daily News



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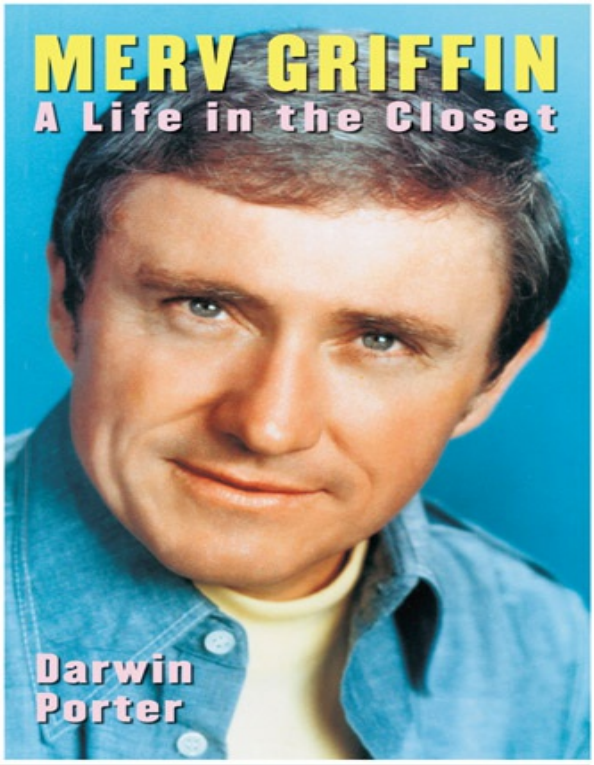

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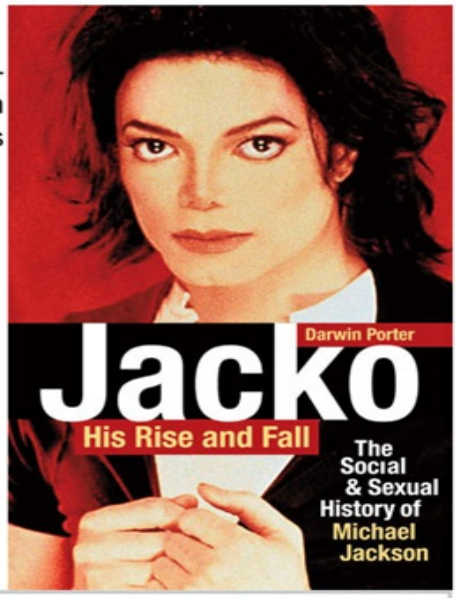

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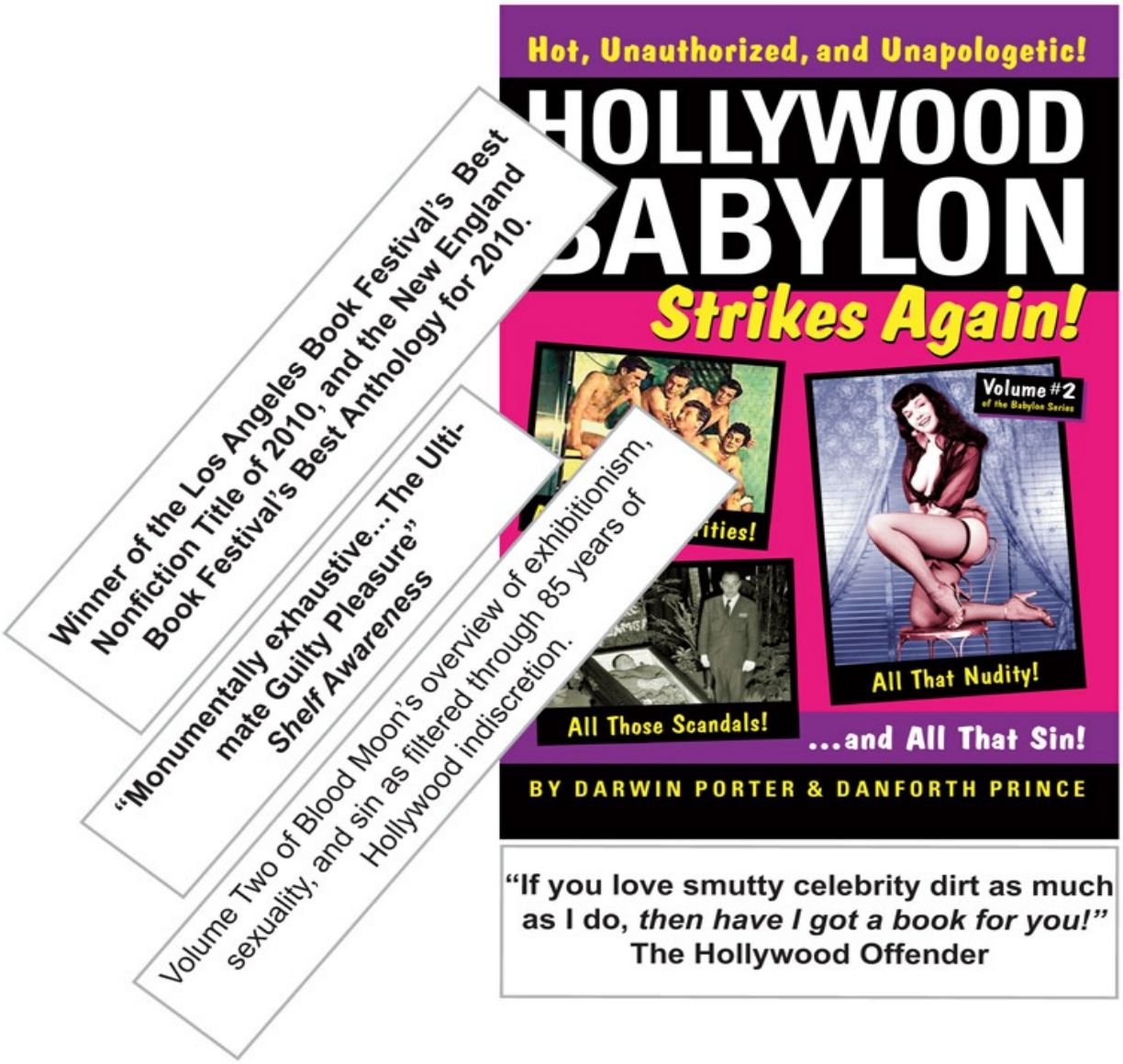

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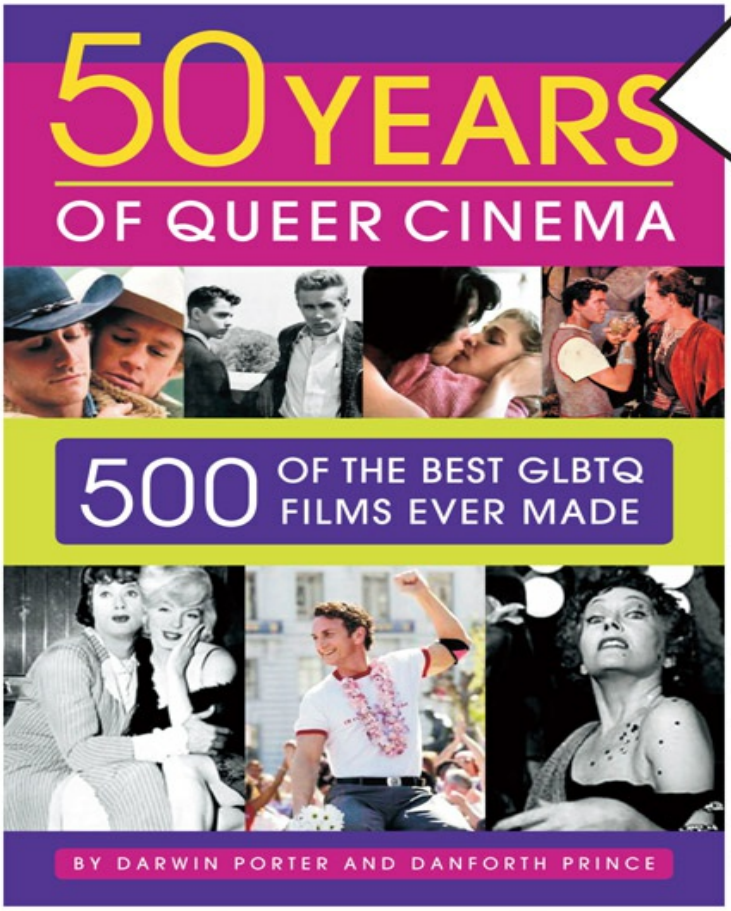

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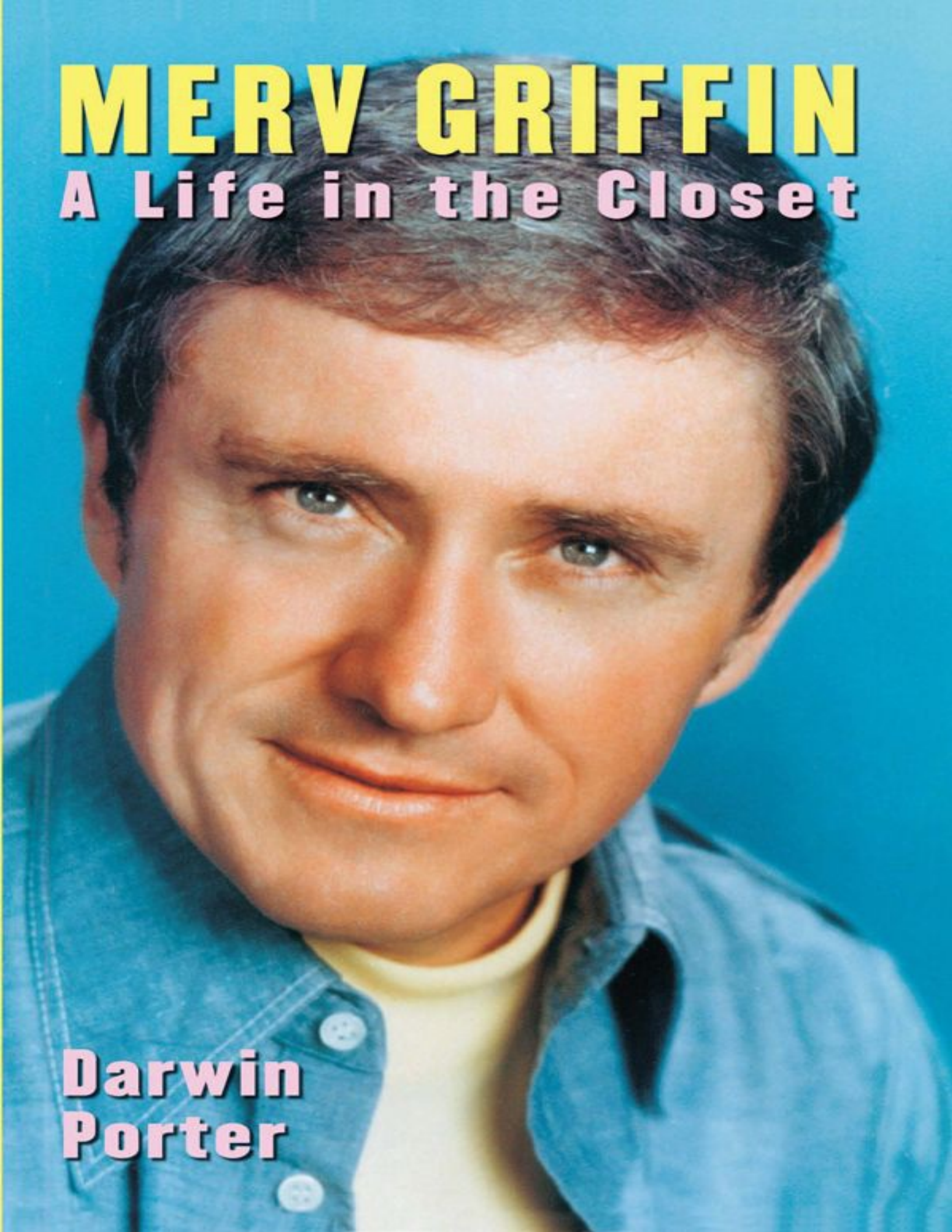
MERV GRIFFIN

A Life in the Closet



Darwin Porter

“Television is the world's first truly democratic culture, the first culture available to everyone, and entirely governed by what people want. The most terrifying thing is what people do want.”

Clive Barnes

“In the end, of course, the issue is not whether Merv Griffin's secret would be buried with him. In the age of Wikipedia, it's a given that anyone interested enough to Google Merv would quickly get the gist of the story, if not the gory details, or even the less savory details, such as those recounted by Michelangelo Signorile in his 1993 book *Queer in America*, in which an unnamed Hollywood “mogul” is described as firing men from his company for being openly gay. The real point of the episode is the enduring power of the Hollywood closet that held even a billionaire locked in its embrace, paying homage to the presumed prejudices of the public.”

Larry Post, author of
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MERV GRIFFIN

A Life in the Closet

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MERV GRIFFIN

A Life in the Closet

by Darwin Porter

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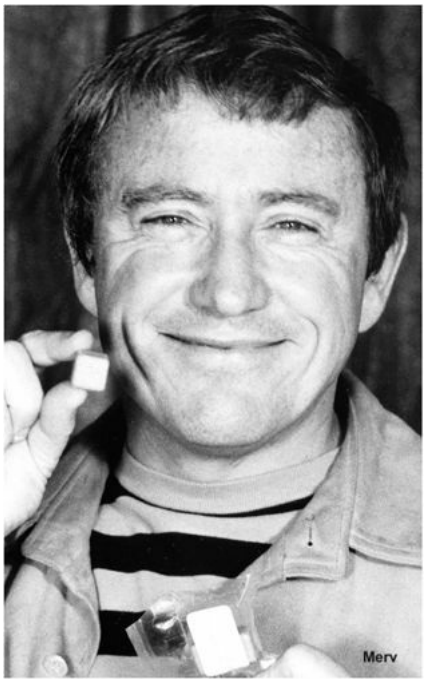
The author dedicates this book to Danforth Prince



Prologue

All heads turned as Merv Griffin made his way across the floor of L'Escoffier—“the most exclusive restaurant in the world”—on the eighth floor of the Beverly Hilton. And well they should. He not only owned the hotel but was the chief honcho of a multi-billion empire. The maître d' rushed toward him to usher him to the best table in the house. In fact, legend had it that Merv had bought the hotel to make sure he always had his favorite table.

Leading the march across the elegant room, with its panoramic views, was the Hungarian beauty, Eva Gabor, who'd become his permanent “arm candy.” He'd never seen her look more stunning in her taupe gown and what she called “my Cinderella slippers.” Around her swan-like neck was a diamond-andruby necklace he'd presented to her only that afternoon. He told her that it had once belonged to Marie Antoinette, knowing that she didn't really believe that but would loudly advertise it as fact.

She loved the necklace but had really wanted an engagement ring to solidify their relationship. He knew, however, that wasn't going to happen. There would be no other Mrs. Merv Griffin. It'd taken him three years to untangle himself from his one and only marriage. He had no interest—certainly no sexual interest—in entering into another permanent bond with a woman.

Earlier in the evening he and Eva had stopped off at the hotel bar, making the rounds and encountering Steven Spielberg, Harrison Ford, and Nancy Sinatra. She told him that she'd come just to sample the egg rolls at Trader Vic's that night.

He also ran into a deeply suntanned George Hamilton, who said, “Look around you. There are at least five or six big-time movie stars here with their off-the-record girlfriends. But it's so God damn dark you can't make out anybody. Thank God there are two entrances. If a wife walks in one, the waiter can hustle the mistress out the other door.”

In spite of the sad news he'd learned earlier in the day, Merv had a light step as he made his way through the restaurant greeting guests. He'd long ago learned to disguise his true feelings. He was still “every mother's favorite sonin- law,” although getting a bit long in the tooth for that appellation.

He always felt more of a man when he had a beautiful woman like Eva on his arm, even though she was an expensive adornment. Hollywood was nothing if not public images. It was a city where truth didn't matter. Only the method you chose to deceive the public. All his life he'd believed in playing by the rules, not changing the game.

Still eager to accomplish bigger and better deals in the future, he could rest secure that he'd become The King of Television. He'd failed to make it as the replacement for singing star Gordon MacRae in the movies, but he ruled the tube.

After all, for nearly a quarter of a century he'd been a household word as host of the Emmy Award-winning *The Merv Griffin Show* where he'd interviewed everybody from John Wayne to Joan Crawford. He'd created and launched TV's two most successful syndicated game shows—*Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*. The Beverly Hilton was just one property in his empire.

He estimated he had another ten to fifteen years to live, and he wanted to maintain his image until his dying day—and even after death if that were at all possible.

He didn't want to die like his best male friend, Liberace, did in disgrace, succumbing to AIDS and having his reputation destroyed. If Merv could control events, there would be no notoriety to surround his death the way it had in the case of Rock Hudson, his former lover in the 1950s.

Unlike Rock and Liberace, Merv knew how to protect himself. No virus would get to him. As he candidly told Eva, his most trusted confidante, who knew all his secrets, “I plan to die of natural causes. Not some disease I picked up from an overnight trick.”

He had spent a lifetime creating the character of Merv Griffin. If his true character was never revealed, and his self-created image could prevail, even beyond the grave, then he felt his life would have been a success. To most of his fans, he symbolized the good life, a man who had it all. One day he was going to write a book about being on top of the world, the way he felt tonight as he looked out over the sparkling lights of Los Angeles.

Eva Gabor with **Merv**

The title was already spinning in his head—*Merv: Making the Good Life Last.*

As he'd once told Liberace, “You and I have tasted the best that life has to offer, even if we had to spend our lives in the closet. For us, that closet was a jewel box, luxurious and spacious. Not a bad place to be. We've lived in worst dives. And what we did in private was our own fucking business.”

“Didn't Rosalind Russell say it all in *Auntie Mame?*” Liberace asked. “Something about life's a banquet—and most poor fools are starving to death, something like that.”

“Not us, pal,” Merv chimed in.

Seated at table in L'Escoffier, and looking like a Hungarian princess, Eva didn't have to request her drink of the evening. Her champagne was already chilling. “Could you imagine a Gabor drinking anything else?” she had once asked him. Indeed he couldn't.

But there was one big change on her menu for the night. She'd abandoned her usual caviar for a treat the chef had secured for her. The best salami from Budapest had been flown in.

Eva would give up anything for salami. “It is a delicacy created by the Gods,” she told him.

To take the “curse” off such a lowly cold cut, Merv had ordered the most beautiful orchids placed on their table. Eva said that when she consumed salami, she always wanted to be wearing diamonds and surrounded by orchids. In fact, she'd called her tell-nothing memoir, *Orchids & Salami.*

Tonight in familiar, swanky surroundings, Eva was in what she called “my gay mood”—she still used the word in its old-fashioned sense. Skilled as a courtesan and arguably trained at the role since birth, she knew her job was to entertain Merv.

She told him that at three o'clock in the morning she'd been caught swimming nude in his pool by two businessmen from Arizona.

When the men spotted her, they plopped down in a chair waiting for her to emerge from the water. “Hi, Eva,” the taller of the men called to her. “No, *dahlink,*” she shouted back at them, “it's Zsa Zsa.”

After that pronouncement, she emerged completely nude from the pool and grabbed her robe, before disappearing into the elevator to her suite upstairs.

Merv might have laughed at a story like that. But tonight he didn't even smile.

“What is it, *dahlink?*” she asked, sympathetically taking his hand. “You look so sad, so blue.” Usually he was jolly and fun, filled with amusing anecdotes. After all, he'd interviewed or else had known practically every celebrity in the world from Marilyn Monroe to Marlon Brando. “It's Nancy,” he said, looking depressed and dejected.

Eva knew that Nancy Davis Reagan was his best friend. He'd canceled many an engagement with Eva to escort Nancy to some function. Once when Eva had an argument with him, she accused him of plotting to marry Nancy after her husband, Ronald Reagan, died. “That would be the ultimate triumph for you,” she charged. “Marrying the woman who presides over the Free World. You could get a lot of publicity marrying the First Lady. Aristotle Onassis did. Did you know he proposed marriage to me before he asked for the hand of Ms. Jacqueline Kennedy?”

“In your dreams,” he said.

Eva had stormed out of his living room, but the next morning they made up at breakfast. It seemed that every night they had some silly argument, yet in most ways, she, not Nancy, was his best friend. He privately told his confidants that “Nancy is best friend, Eva first mistress.” He always laughed at his own joke, and so did his staff, although no one seriously believed that he'd ever gone to bed with Eva.

“You still haven't told me why you're so sad,” she said.

“You've got to keep this a secret,” he said. “Nancy will break it to the world when the time comes. No one must

know."

"What is it?" she asked, genuinely interested.

"Nancy called me this afternoon from Washington with the bad news. She's just found out: even Ronnie doesn't know yet. But the President has been diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease."

"Oh, my God!" she gasped. "No one must find this out. The Stock Market would crash. There could be calls for his impeachment."

The Reagans

"That's why you're going to keep this news under that pretty blonde wig of yours."

After fifteen minutes of trying to console Merv, she said, "You need some serious distraction. You need some fun and games, and I know you've got something planned later in the evening to take your mind off the Reagans. Your mother knows about such things."

"You're so understanding," he said.

"But you're such a cad. You could have planned some fun and games for little ol' Eva. Perhaps that handsome lifeguard you hired two weeks ago. Don't tell me you've not had him already."

"You know too much," he said. "Fortunately, you're not in a habit of calling the *National Enquirer*." After dinner, Merv ostentatiously escorted Eva to her suite. Passers-by in the hall saw him as he disappeared inside with her, an indiscretion he wanted them to publicize. But he was going only for a nightcap.

She poured him a drink and gave him a feather-light kiss on the mouth before heading into her boudoir and dressing room to begin her nightly beauty treatments designed to keep her, in her own words, "forever young."

He called down to Hadley Morrell, his most trusted employee whose name would never appear on his payroll. He was paid only in cash. The Minnesota-born Hadley had been Merv's lover in the 1950s. When passion dissipated, he'd stayed on as Merv's private assistant. For the sake of anonymity, Hadley was almost never seen in public with Merv. He wanted both Hadley's identity and their personal relationship kept secret. Merv once told Eva, "Hadley is the most trusted man in the world. What a guy! If you ever murder someone, call Hadley. He'll quietly dispose of the body—no questions asked."

When Hadley picked up the phone, Merv anxiously asked, "Is the kid here?"

"He's in bed buck naked and waiting for you," Hadley told him. "All bubble bathed and raring to go. He's very excited to meet *the* Merv Griffin. He claimed he'd rather meet you than any movie star, even Tom Cruise."

"That's the way I like to hear them talk," Merv said. "It looks like I'm in for a very special evening."

"The best. The agency said the kid does everything. And I mean *everything*. You deserve the very best."

"And so I do," Merv agreed. "This is one Depression Baby that didn't always get the best. Far from it!"

"But you're making up for it now," Hadley assured him.

"Hell, yes!" Merv said. "I didn't begin life in style. But I'm sure ending it with the most succulent prime rib. Let my enemies gossip. I don't care."

"They're just jealous of you, jealous of what you can get."

"You mean what I can pay for?" Merv said.

"That, too," Hadley said.

"My good man, just remember my motto: Living well is the best revenge."

“A Master of Talk TV”

Chapter One

“Please don't take my toys. Please, mister. I've been good.” It was almost a scene out of Charles Dickens. The year was 1930, and the place was San Mateo, California, a small community about 21 miles south of San Francisco.

A five-year-old Merv Griffin was in tears when a burly, moving man carted off his rocking horse, his favorite toy. “Not Smiley. That's my horse. He belongs to me. He's mine!” He rushed to retrieve the toy from the man but his mother restrained him.

Even at his age, Merv knew that the men sent by the bank were taking over their home, and even all of their possessions. At the height of the Depression, his father wasn't selling enough football and baseball equipment in the sporting goods store where he worked. It was hard enough to keep food on the table, much less pay the mortgage.

Like so many other families in the nation, the Griffins were six months behind in mortgage payments. The bank, within its legal rights, moved in to evict them and seize their possessions. The bankers had ordered the movers to “take everything,” hoping to find something of value. It seemed that bankers all over the country were doing that, humiliating their former clients by taking not only the roof over their heads but their meager goods as well.

The moving men left only some clothing, which seemed to have little value even to the Salvation Army. Merv hugged Barbara, his sister, who was two years older. She was crying. The two children joined their parents in gathering up their remaining belongings. They had until twelve o'clock to evacuate their former home.

Standing in the front yard, Merv in tears looked back at the only home he'd ever known. It was where he'd been brought on July 6, 1925 when he'd been named Mervyn Edward Griffin Jr.

He'd been born to Irish Catholic parents, Rita Robinson, the daughter of a newspaperman, and Mervyn Edward Griffin Sr., a tennis pro who'd won both the California State and Pacific Coast singles title. Rita had fallen in love with the athlete watching him play on the courts.

Behind the wheel of the family jalopy, which somehow still belonged to them, Merv Sr. called to his son to hurry up. Holding his mother's hand, Merv looked once more at their former home. “One day I'll be rich,” he vowed to his mother. “Richer than all those bankers. I'll build a palace for you, mama.”

“I'm sure you will,” she said. “Now c'mon, Buddy. We're going to my mother's. Bless her, she's agreed to take us in.”

Rita Robinson Griffin
in 1927 with **Merv**, age 2

The Griffins left behind only a toilet seat. In the late 1970s, Merv learned that the seat had sold for $2,000 at a charity auction in San Mateo. “To think some idiot would pay good money for a toilet seat,” he said. “Maybe I should sell the fool other souvenirs. Instead of flushing toilet paper I wipe my ass on, maybe I should save it. Put it up for auction. I could make a whole new fortune. The pizza crust I didn't eat. A pair of shoes I'm throwing out. My soiled underwear.”

Merv would remember the morning of the family's eviction in San Mateo for the rest of his life. That gray day left a deep scar on him. Decades later he would tell Eva Gabor, “That eviction changed my entire life, the way I

looked at things. In the years ahead, I would become obsessed with material things. Far more than a desire to perform, it was the hope of getting rich that drove me into show business. I listened to Bing Crosby on the radio. I heard he was getting rich singing. My family and friends told me I could sing. Even though I was a chubby little brat, I decided that I was going to go to Hollywood and replace Bing Crosby. Get rich by using my singing voice. There were times in my future when that dream of mine became a nightmare. But I never gave up hope. Never! Even on the darkest of nights."

Eva would always listen patiently to him. Like a good courtesan, she would be reassuring. "You succeeded beyond your wildest fantasies, I am sure. You became not only rich, but the wealthiest man on the planet."

"I wouldn't go that far," he cautioned her.

"Rich and also adorable, an irresistible combination," she said. "Zsa Zsa and I have found that rich men are all bastards. You're a marvelous exception to that rule. Who on Earth doesn't adore Merv Griffin?"

***

"From the age of five, I became a showman," Merv later recalled. "I've spent my entire life putting on a show." At his grandmother's house on South Eldorado Street in San Mateo, he took down the curtains from her living room and used them as a stage curtain. "I started putting on shows for our neighborhood on her back porch. By the time I turned seven, I was known as the P.T. Barnum of San Mateo. No one could believe a kid as young as me could have such talent."

A neighbor, Sally Paule, told him, "If you were a girl, I bet you could go to Hollywood and replace Shirley Temple."

"That was music to my ears," he said. "For a while I actually believed her, almost up until the time I began to face the disappointments and realities of show business."

Merv was the producer and emcee of all the shows, recruiting any kid in the neighborhood who had even a modicum of talent. All the shows began at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and tickets sold for a dime. Merv preferred musicals. He ripped off plots and scenes from almost any Shirley Temple movie, especially *Stand Up and Cheer*, *Little Miss Marker*, and *Wee Willie Winkie*.

He was also fascinated by "The Three Stooges" reserving the character of Moe Howard for himself. "I liked Moe the best. He was cranky and sour-faced, and I could do that. But what I liked most was his tendency to inflict violence on the other Stooges. I perfected the two-fingered eye-poke, and nobody slapped faces better than I did—or pulled hair. Yes, I even yanked noses with pliers. Once I got carried away and broke this fat kid's nose. He screamed bloody murder. My parents vetoed all further Stooges shows."

Mervyn Edward Griffin Jr.
aged 5

Once when asked why he was so attracted to The Three Stooges, Merv said, "In show business you can't go wrong being gloriously lowbrow. But I soon got back to my singing. Slapstick comedy was just a detour for me."

When not staging shows, Merv published a local gossip rag, *The Whispering Winds.* He was only eight years old

when he launched that sheet printed on an old Ditto machine. Nearly all the neighbors bought copies since it was filled with local gossip. *Whispering Winds* also contained rave reviews for any show Merv produced.

Mr. and Mrs. George Faber lived three doors down from the Griffins. When Mrs. Faber went to Oregon to visit her relatives, Merv noticed a beautiful blonde woman, perhaps from San Francisco, slipping into the Faber household. In the next edition of *The Whispering Winds*, he reported this tidbit of gossip. The issue became a best-seller, and screams could be heard coming from the Faber household when Mrs. Faber returned home.

Publication was suspended when Merv printed a dirty joke he didn't understand. Neighbors complained to the Griffins that their eight-year-old son was a pornographer. *The Whispering Winds* whispered for the last time.

From that early mimeographed paper, Merv developed a life-long love of gossip that would never leave him and which would become in time one of the underpinnings of his empire.

Rita Griffin,Merv's mother, had been born into a family of musicians, and she encouraged her son not only to sing but to take piano lessons. To earn extra money during the Depression, Claudia Robinson, Merv's aunt, gave piano lessons to some of the teenagers in the neighborhood. She also began giving Merv piano lessons when he wasn't even tall enough to sit on a piano stool and reach the keyboard. He had to stand.

Both Rita and Claudia knew that the lessons had to be kept secret from Merv Sr. He disapproved of a boy taking piano lessons, viewing most musicians as “long-haired sissies. Boys should be taught sports. Leave the piano playing to the fat lady at the church.”

After weeks of constant practice, Merv learned to play better than Claudia herself. “He's learned every one of my tricks,” she said. “The little devil plays better than I ever did. It's time he received more advanced lessons.”

Rita agreed and began to cut back on the grocery money, saving quarter by quarter to secure a more professional instructor for her son. She even baked cakes—a pineapple and coconut custard was her specialty—and sold them to her neighbors for fifty cents each.

Shortly before his thirteenth birthday, Merv Sr. learned that his son was a talented piano player. About thirty-five people, including relatives, had been invited to Merv Sr.'s birthday party. A neighbor, Betty Paulson, told him that she'd wanted to spend money on piano lessons for her own son. “But after hearing your Buddy play, I decided that I should encourage my boy to become a fireman or a policeman or something. I've never heard talent like Buddy's. He's a budding Mozart.”

Merv Sr. disguised his shock until he could corner his son alone. “Do you know how to play the piano?” he demanded.

“Yes, dad.”

“Then God damn it, sit down and play something. Play and sing *Danny Boy*.” After *Danny Boy*, Merv played *Tea for Two*, one of his father's all-time favorites.

From around two-thirty that afternoon until shortly after five, Merv never left the piano. He was occasionally joined by others at the party for a sing-along.

“Merv Sr. was stunned at the talent of his son,” Claudia later said. “And also angered that Buddy's piano lessons had been kept a secret from him.”

“From that day on,” Merv said, “my dad encouraged me to sing and play the piano as much as mom and Aunt Claudia did. When all the neighbors complimented him on my recitals, dad decided that having a talented musician as a son was something to be proud of—not ashamed of.”

In time Merv was taught by a mysterious woman named “Madame Siemmens,” who incorporated green and purple eye shadings in her makeup, giving her a vampiric look.

Merv dreamed of being a classical musician—Edvard Grieg was his favorite composer—and he temporarily abandoned his plan to go to Hollywood and replace Bing Crosby. When not playing Grieg's music at the piano, he became adept at mastering the works of Chopin and Beethoven.

One day he came across some sheet music resting on the piano. A big hit in its day, the song was called “In a Little Gypsy Tearoom.” He played the song and loved it so much that he didn't get up from the piano until he'd mastered it.

That night he couldn't sleep, as he kept hearing the sound of the song over and over in his head. The next morning he went to see his Aunt Claudia, informing her that he was going to devote his life—“from this moment on”— to pop music.

She was shocked at his sudden conversion, later telling the family, “It was like the most rigid Christian converting to Buddhism overnight. But I went along with it, because I knew he was sincere. I told him to follow his instincts. It was good-bye Grieg, hello Rudy Vallee.”

She was referring to Rudy Vallee, the very square, wavy-haired crooner with the quivery vocals who had all the women screaming, just like Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, and The Beatles would do years later. “I got pretty tired of hearing Merv sing ‘I'm Just a Vagabond Lover,’ and was happy to see the day come when he dropped Vallee as his idol. I kept telling him to develop his own style. I even urged him to take acting lessons, pointing out that singing in night clubs was limited. ‘A singer who can act *and* sing can make it big in the movies,’ I told him. Of course, I also pointed out to him that he'd have to lose a few pounds if he wanted to become a romantic singing star in films like Nelson Eddy.”

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“If Dad continued to be worried about me becoming a sissy, he never confronted me with it,” Merv later told his close confidant, Hadley Morrell. “I was a bit of a sissy when I was growing up. I don't mean effeminate or limp-wristed, nothing like that. But I just wasn't interested in football—maybe football players—and certainly not in gals. Instead of being on a baseball field or a basketball court, I'd rather sit in my room listening to Ethel Merman sing hits from Broadway shows. I also loved Billie Holiday.”

Merv hated St. Matthews grade school, rebelling at its strict code of discipline and rigidly enforced draconian rules. He was constantly sent to the principal's office for disrupting class.

When he was enrolled in San Mateo High School, he found the atmosphere more relaxed. Perhaps as a defense mechanism to protect himself from being too fat, he became the class clown. As he told Rita, “If they're laughing with me, they aren't laughing at me.” He became known as “that funny little fat boy,” a roly poly bundle of charm and humor. He was especially popular among girls, although not in any romantic sense.

He was terribly bright, one of the brightest boys in his high school. Yet because of an attention deficit syndrome, he made only Ds or even Fs, getting an occasional C.

As he grew older, he became interested in boys, developing one crush after another, usually on one of the handsome school athletes, especially football players. But the objects of his affection always seemed to have a girlfriend waiting for them at the end of the game. “Saturday's Hero always had a Saturday night date with a beautiful girl,” Merv later told Hadley.

“No one wanted to make it with a 240-pound boy,” Merv later recalled to Hadley. “Of course, in those days I didn't know what ‘make-it’ really meant. First things came first. My goal was to get a kiss on the lips. I'd seen girls getting them from handsome boys, and I wanted to know what it was like. Instead of lovers, I settled for male friends, both gay and straight.”

Merv as a plump teenager

One such friend was Bob Murphy, whose parents had bought him a mother-of-pearl drum set for Christmas. When he grew up, Murphy would pursue a career in real estate, although he maintained a taste for show business. In the early 1960s, Merv, remembering his long ago friend, hired him to work behind the scenes on his game show, *Wheel of Fortune*. In time Murphy became producer—later executive producer—of *The Merv Griffin Show* on TV.

Merv also became close friends with Cal Tjader, who would become one of the foremost popularizers of Latin music in 1950s America. He primarily played the vibraphone, but was also accomplished on the bongos, congas, timpani, drums, and, like Merv, on the piano.

At the age of seven, Tjader was brought by his parents to San Mateo where he became friends with Merv. His father had danced and his mother had played the piano on the vaudeville circuit. His father taught Cal to tap dance, and he became billed in the Bay area as “Tjader Junior,” a tap-dancing *wünderkind*.

Merv would call Cal in 1980 to congratulate him on his Grammy win for his album, *La Onda Va Bien*, capping off a career that spanned more than forty years.

But decades before that, Cal invited Merv to join him every afternoon at his parents' dance studio. Merv would later credit Cal and the Tjader family for “pushing and shoving me into show business.”

Although Merv hardly had the physique of a ballet dancer, he began to hang out at the dance studio after school let out. He watched the boys and girls go through their routines, and often accompanied dancers on the rickety piano during rehearsals. At no point did he ever attempt to learn dance steps himself. He didn't want the other students making fun of him and his weight.

It was at the Tjader Dance Studio that Merv met three of his future best friends, who would remain early confidants of his until time and distance eventually separated them. Paul Schone, Bill Robbins, and Johnny Riley.

Unlike Merv, each had a lithe, agile body, and each aspired to pursue dancing as a career. None of them had an interest in football either. Of the three, Johnny danced to a different drummer. He was bold in stating his wish “to become the greatest ballet dancer in the world.” Bill and Paul had more modest goals and would happily settle for the role of chorus boys on Broadway. Merv quickly bonded with these young men, especially the handsomest one, blond-haired, blue-eyed Johnny, who was the most charismatic of the lot.

Soon all three dancers became star performers in Merv's Saturday afternoon shows. “We were a precursor to those Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland movies where they were always putting on a show,” Merv said. Later he would talk about these shows of his to the real Judy Garland herself.

An adult view of Merv's
childhood friend **Cal Tjader,**

Merv Sr. had grown comfortable with the idea of his son becoming a singer or a piano player. But young Merv always thought his father disapproved of his dancer friends and really didn't want them in his house. He found Bill Robbins “too girlish” and once asked Merv not to hang out with him any more.

“He's my friend,” Merv protested. Since his father never brought up the subject again, Merv continued to see all three dancers. “My father was a kind man,” Merv later recalled. “I think he saw how I was developing and wasn't too happy about it. But Aunt Claudia was in my corner. For a woman born in her age and time, and with her strong religious beliefs, she was hip for her age. She assured my father it was just a stage I was going through.”

“He'll grow out of it,” Claudia told Merv Sr. “One day he'll settle down with a beautiful gal—that is, if he takes off some weight—and raise a house filled with happy kids. You'll be the proudest grandfather on the block.”

“I'm not so sure that's how it'll work out,” Merv Sr. told her. “Not if he goes into show business. We know the kind of men who inhabit the world of show business. Bad influences, every one of them.” But in spite of his reservations, Merv Sr. never again interfered in his son's present or future friendships.

Merv later told Johnny, “I think dad was disappointed in me, in the way I was growing up, but he never said anything. I sensed a growing separation between us, though we were very limited in what we could talk about. Many subjects were taboo, and we never went there.”

Of the three dancers, Merv grew closer to Johnny than all the others. Even though he was only fourteen, he seemed more experienced than Bill or Paul. Johnny sensed Merv's growing physical attraction to him and quickly deflected it. “Let's be sisters,” Johnny said. Merv had never heard a man refer to himself as a “sister.” “You're just not my type. It's better that we remain friends. I like sports heroes, men like that.”

To soften the blow, he invited Merv to “be my date” at a Saturday afternoon football game. “But you hate football,” Merv said.

“I may hate football, but not the boys who throw the balls. Especially one named Terry Fletcher.”

Merv knew the name. He was the stud of the school. All the girls were after him. A rumor had spread that the school bad boy had gotten one of the girls pregnant, and she'd had to drop out.

Merv attended the game with Johnny, who seemed mesmerized not by the game but by any play Terry made. It was a custom in those days that fathers of the players, perhaps their younger brothers as well, join the players in the locker room to congratulate them after the game or beef up their sagging spirits if they lost.

Although Merv was reluctant to come along, he was urged on by Johnny. In the locker room visitors were dressed in suits, the players in jock straps, uniforms, or nothing at all. Terry had been instrumental in winning the

game, and he received most of the congratulations.

As the crowds thinned out, Johnny urged Merv to stick around. Both boys were there to watch Terry undress and head for the shower, where he lathered his body with soap. The athlete seemed to be aware that he had an audience. If anything, he didn't attempt to shoo them away or conceal himself. Merv noted that he paid special attention to soaping his penis, which was beginning to grow hard.

When a coach came over, he threw a wet towel at Merv. “Get the hell out of here!”

But for some reason the coach shook Johnny's hand. “Welcome,” the coach said.

Merv waited outside for Johnny, only to learn later that he'd been given the job of water boy. “Oh, the fun I'll have. That Terry baby can be had.”

“Do you think?”

“Do I think? *I know.*”

As they were heading across the field, Merv had a question for Johnny. “Until today I didn't know that boys grew *that* big.”

“You mean Terry? Girl, you ain't seen nothing yet.”

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Johnny turned out to be a prophet. In later years, a type of young man like Terry would be referred to as “gay for pay.” Long before that, he would have been called “rough trade.” Soon Johnny was spending all his money on private sessions with the school athlete.

One day he wanted to show off Terry's prowess to all his friends, including not only Merv, but Bill Robbins and Paul Schone. When Johnny's parents were gone one afternoon, he invited his friends to his basement where they sat around Terry, watching him masturbate. The athlete was paid five dollars for his performance, money the boys earned by staging Merv's Saturday afternoon shows.

Before putting back on his blue jeans that day, Terry told the boys that he was available for private sessions with each of them, granting the three the same privileges he gave Johnny. “But it'll cost you,” he said as a final warning.

As far as is known, Merv had his first sexual experience with Terry. Merv later told Johnny that Terry “didn't find me much of a cocksucker compared to you, but he took my five dollars anyway.” There were many repeat performances, not just between Merv and Terry, but between the football player and both Bill and Paul—that is, when Terry wasn't engaged by Johnny, who always got first choice. Before the end of the school year, Terry had saved up enough to buy a car. Sometimes Merv and Johnny saw him riding around town with the campus beauty queen in the front seat with him. “I bet we get more of Terry than that stuck-up bitch does,” Johnny told Merv.

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The greatest mystery of Merv's early years revolves around “America's Bishop,” Fulton J. Sheen, the leading American Catholic of the 20th Century.

In time Merv would meet and in many cases get to know the most famous people on the planet, from Richard Nixon to Jacqueline Kennedy, from Elizabeth Taylor to Pablo Casals. Merv began meeting famous people when he was still in grade school, and Fulton J. Sheen, an American archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church, arrived on the Griffin doorstep to play tennis with Merv Sr. The two men had become great friends and both were avid tennis players.

Whenever Sheen was in California, he always called on Merv Sr. “Tennis is my only form of relaxation,” he once said. “You can't do God's work twenty- four hours a day, only twenty-three.”

The few times Sheen had visited the Griffin household had been during the day when Merv was in school. Usually Merv Sr. drove to San Francisco to give tennis lessons to Sheen, whose visits to San Mateo were extremely rare.

But one day, quite unannounced, Sheen had arrived at the Griffin household to be greeted by Merv, the only family member at home that day. Merv later told Johnny that he was awed by the presence of such an august person and was tongue-tied for a minute.

Sheen at the time was one of the most distinguished-looking men in America, with a slender build, wavy hair, and a rather thin face which made him look ascetic.

What Merv would forever remember was Sheen's deep-set, penetrating eyes. “It would be impossible to lie to a man like His Worship,” Merv later told Johnny. “He seemed to see right through me. It was like he was reading all those dark secrets I kept hidden from my family. I knew at once I wasn't fooling him for a minute. It was like going to confession without confessing anything. He just knew!”

It is not known what transpired during the approximate three hours that Sheen spent talking to Merv that day. “Merv didn't share all the dirt with me,” Johnny said. Whatever happened, a bond seemed to have formed between Sheen and the young boy. The relationship would last a lifetime.

Apparently, Sheen had been intrigued by Merv's ambition, particularly when the kid told the older churchman, “Some day I'm gonna become more famous than you.” The bishop was far more amused than insulted by this brassy young boy.

“Merv trusted Sheen completely, the way he had Father Lyon when he was fourteen years old back in San Mateo,” Bill Robbins later said. Like Merv, Bill was a member of the church choir.

At his young age, and in a surprise move by Father Lyon, Merv was made director of the church choir at the local Catholic church, a post usually held by an older man. Father Lyon also turned over complete creative control to the teenager. “What Father Lyon liked about me was my sense of drama,” Merv later said. “He liked it when I hit chords on the organ that made his entrance into the church seem like the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.”

Merv's unorthodox handling of the music at the church in San Mateo upset many members of the congregation. Avisiting priest from San Francisco wrote a letter to Father Lyon suggesting that Merv be “excommunicated.” That same priest, knowing of Griffin's relationship with Sheen, also wrote the bishop a letter citing Griffin's outrageous direction of the church choir. “His music is more Glenn Miller or Tommy Dorsey than church music,” the priest charged.

When he was next in San Francisco, Sheen asked for a private meeting with Merv to discuss his music and why it was causing some concern among parishioners. The details of that meeting aren't known, but Merv spent the night in Sheen's private quarters and drove to Los Angeles with him the following day where he spent another five days with the bishop.

In the days and years to come, whenever Sheen was in California, he met privately with Merv, and they often spent weekends together. In those days, when a Catholic priest took an interest in a young boy, it was assumed that it was for spiritual guidance instead of a sexual adventure.

All three of Merv's friends, Johnny, Paul, and Bill, later claimed that Merv had told them that the relationship had become sexual. “Merv didn't sound like a whining child bitching about getting molested,” Johnny recalled. “If anything, he seemed to enjoy his time with Sheen, and was excited that of all the boys in America, Sheen had singled him out. That made Merv special, and he loved it. I didn't see anything wrong with it, because at the time I was having sexual relationships with older men myself.”

Bishop and TV Evangelist
Fulton J. Sheen

Merv grew so intimate with Sheen that he began to call him “Uncle Fultie.” “After all, this guy chose me,” Merv told Bill Robbins. “He's dined with popes and princes and is on friendly terms with the President of the United States. And yet he chooses to be with me.”

When he was growing up in the 1930s, Merv gathered with his family to listen to Sheen's Sunday night radio broadcast, *The Catholic Hour*. By 1950 the radio show had a devoted following of four million people. But by this time Sheen was growing increasingly fascinated by the new medium of television.

He became the country's first TV preacher to achieve nationwide fame. His TV show faced serious competition, especially from Milton Berle, “Mr. Television” himself. At the peak of his popularity, Sheen drew more TV viewers than Milton. Newspapers called the rating battle “Uncle Miltie faces Uncle Fultie.” For his Catholic TV broadcasts, Sheen in 1952 won an Emmy as “The Most Outstanding Television Personality.” In accepting the award, he thanked

“my writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” It was Sheen's great success on television that encouraged Merv himself to try to conquer the medium in years to come.

As host of *Life Is Worth Living*, Bishop Sheen became a household word in the 1950s, beginning with the DuMont Television Network. Later he appeared on ABC from 1951 to 1957. At the end of his run, he was attracting an audience of thirty million TV viewers. In time he would also write 70 books—many of them ghost written—including his first, *God and Intelligence* (1925), and his last, *Treasure in Clay*, published in 1980 after he died on December 9, 1979.

Sheen appeared on TV in his full bishop's drag, the envy of his bitter rival in New York, Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, whom Vatican insiders had nicknamed “Nellie” Spellman because of his secret homosexual lifestyle. He was fond of hiring only the most expensive hustlers in New York. Homosexual rumors also plagued Bishop Sheen throughout his life.

Sheen appeared on TV wearing bright green alligator shoes, which were covered by his gown, and hand-sewn red silk underwear. He also became known for constantly checking his regal appearance in the mirror or in reflective glass. He did that at every opportunity. “I'm not vain,” he once said in answer to his critics. “I think a servant of God should look his best at all times, even if summoned on a mission of mercy in the middle of the night.”

Legal at Last: **Bishop Sheen**
on TV with a grown up **Merv**

Merv later told his friends that Sheen spent at least two hours every morning bathing, doing his hair, and getting dressed. He also was an artist at applying makeup skillfully. “You never know,” he told Merv, “when a photographer might be lurking in the bush.”

Merv later said that it was Sheen's formidable powers of articulation that helped him become glib on TV instead of tongue-tied. “I could listen to him talk for hours. God, did he have a way with words.” Merv cited such statements made by Sheen as “Christ without The Cross is effeminacy, degeneration, LSD, and mysticism which settles for pharmaceuticals instead of sacrifice.”

Sheen, whose TV programs are still broadcast, came back into the news as late as 2006. Two packages, containing documentation of two alleged miracles attributed to him, were sent to the Vatican where a panel of priests, doctors of divinity, and theologians have been examining them. After what may be years of study, the panel will “verify if indeed the alleged miracles are authentic.” Some of Sheen's most avid supporters want the Vatican to bestow sainthood on their hero.

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Like his father, two of Merv's uncles, Elmer and Peck, were also champion tennis players. The smallest brother, Peck, was actually the national doubles champion. But it was Elmer who made “Ripley's Believe It or Not” by winning three state titles in Oregon, all in one afternoon. Soon tennis-obsessed movie stars in Los Angeles were seeking the Griffin brothers out, wanting to hire them for tennis lessons.

Elmer became so popular as a tennis pro to the stars that in 1936 he launched the West Side Tennis Club in Los Angeles. Within months it became a rendezvous and social center for movie stars and film executives.

In time Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. showed up, as did a drunken John Barrymore, Clark Gable, Rod La Rocque, Johnny Mack Brown, and Louis B. Mayer himself.

As a very young teenager, Merv was allowed to journey to Los Angeles on occasions to stay with his Uncle Elmer and to hang out all day at the tennis club, watching the stars. On those occasions, Merv rarely left the locker room. Whether his uncle noticed that or not is not known.

It was at this club that Merv met his first movie stars. It was to become his life-long obsession. But instead of a locker room, he would meet many of the stars for the first time on television in front of millions of people.

One day at the club he spotted a hot, sweaty Humphrey Bogart stripping down to take a cold shower. Merv had

seen Bogart and Bette Davis in *The Petrified Forest*. Back home in San Mateo, Johnny Riley pressed Merv to divulge all the details. “Bogart has a long thing, but it's a bit on the skinny side.”

Elmer wasn't too fond of another member, Cesar Romero, who appeared frequently at the club. During one of Merv's many visits, he saw Romero with the actor, Tyrone Power. The two stars later played tennis together.

That afternoon Merv heard Elmer telling another tennis pro, “That Romero guy has fallen in love with Tyrone Power. I've already warned that Latin sleazeball, ‘No funny business in the locker room.’ Have you noticed that the other guys cover their privates with a towel every time Romero comes into the room? Word has gotten out about him.”

Back home, Merv told Johnny that “Ty Power is the second handsomest man in the world. No one, but no one, is as beautiful as Errol Flynn. He's the most beautiful man on the planet.” Although Flynn was a regular member of the club, he never appeared there when Merv was present.

In addition to Flynn, Merv had another idol, the Olympic athlete and movie star, Johnny Weissmuller. Merv had seen all his Tarzan movies. Begging his parents to let him go to Los Angeles, Merv made a special trip there just to meet Weissmuller. He wasn't disappointed.

Back home, he supplied another Johnny, his friend, with all the juicy details. “Tarzan needs a big loincloth to cover all that. I couldn't believe it. He put all the other guys in the locker room to shame. And he likes to show off what he's got. He parades around naked in front of all the others to make them jealous. But I never got to see the head of it even in the shower. He never skinned it back even though I was standing nearby waiting for the unveiling. Oh, well. Maybe some other time. I hear some of the guys get big erections when they're massaged. Maybe I'll get lucky and see Tarzan put on a show.”

Merv got lucky, but with another actor, his all-time favorite, Errol Flynn, “Satan's Angel” himself. At the tennis club, the reputation of the handsome star had already preceded him.

Johnny Weissmuller
as Tarzan, King of the Jungle

Merv was all ears as he listened to stories in the locker room about his swashbuckler super hero. He'd seen *Captain Blood* nine times, and planned to see it nine more times if he had a chance. When Merv sat through the first showing of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, watching Flynn in green tights at his most charming and daring-do best, in Technicolor no less, he later admitted to Johnny: “I've fallen in love with Errol Flynn. He's the man of my dreams.”

Merv shared all the gossip he'd learned about Flynn with Johnny. Was it really true that he had been a slave trader in New Guinea? Was he also a drunkard, lecher, pervert? Merv had heard that he had an amazing appetite for handsome young boys and underage girls. With his astonishing good looks, stunning physique, and legendary endowment, it was said that all he had to do was look at his conquest for the night, and any beautiful girl or boy would rush to the bed of this incorrigible hedonist to be deflowered.

Merv had heard Elmer telling of a visit to the tennis club by Jack L. Warner, head of Warner Brothers, Flynn's studio. “You know Errol. He's either got to be fighting or fucking.” The studio mogul also said, “The guy's so well hung that he often unzips on the set in front of everybody, whips it out for all to see. Just to set the record straight about who's the best and the biggest. It's hard to get him to appear on the set. He's often in his dressing room having sex with four different starlets a day.”

Years later in Las Vegas, Merv rewatched *Captain Blood* with his best friend, Liberace. One of Liberace's boyfriends heard Merv say: “For a fat little boy growing up in San Mateo, this film was a feast of homoeroticism. I never grew out of the letch I had for Errol. He was my dream man. When I saw him without his shirt in *The Perfect*

Specimen, I sat in a dark corner of the theater and masturbated. The film had the most accurate title of any movie Hollywood ever turned out."

In a memoir, Merv recalled his first solo trip at the age of sixteen to visit his Uncle Elmer in Los Angeles. Memory did not serve him well. Actually he'd made nearly a dozen trips to visit his uncle before. When Elmer told him that Flynn was his house guest, Merv was "trembling with excitement" when he walked into Elmer's house to confront his idol.

Swashbuckler and debauched
heartthrob, **Errol Flynn**

"What I didn't expect was that my film idol, fresh from the shower, would be sitting *starkers* in Elmer's living room. Now, how shall I put this? I think it's fair to say that Errol Flynn brandished a sword both on and *off* the screen."

"Hi, kid," Flynn said. "Come on in." Merv later recalled that he was so mesmerized by the sight of his nude hero that he couldn't speak. He knew that Johnny back in San Mateo would be eager to hear all the details. When Flynn saw that Merv's eyes were fixated on his private parts, he said, "Enjoy the free show. To see me on the screen will cost you twelve cents."

Merv was even more surprised when three beautiful girls arrived an hour later. He discovered that the swashbuckler had a date with all of them. To Merv's surprise, Flynn did not put on any clothes but sat drinking, talking, and fondling the girls on Elmer's big sofa. The star seemed oblivious to the little fat boy staring intently at them. Finally, Flynn got up with a big erection and proceeded to get dressed, stuffing his hard-on into his pants. Merv stood at the window watching the four of them disappear into the late afternoon in a white convertible.

He shared a bedroom with Flynn, who always slept nude and uncovered on the sheets. Merv would wake up early in the morning just to stare for an hour or so at Flynn's large penis, which was often erect.

One drunken night, Flynn came into the room and pulled off his clothes, flopping down on the bed. "For the first time in weeks, kid, I didn't get lucky. Those girls must have been lesbians." After about fifteen minutes, Flynn whispered to Merv. "Come on over here and play with it, kid. You know you want to. You can't take your eyes off it. If you play with it enough, I'll make *leche* for you."

Back in San Mateo, Johnny insisted that Merv tell him that story of masturbating Flynn over and over again.

Before leaving Los Angeles, Elmer had taken Merv to his favorite restaurant, Romanoff's, where all the stars gathered. They stopped briefly at Humphrey Bogart's table. Even though it was only one o'clock in the afternoon, the star appeared drunk.

When Merv spotted his favorite character actor, Monty Woolley, at the bar, he excused himself from Elmer's table and walked over. Merv thought Woolley could spit out insults with his razor-sharp tongue better than anybody on the screen.

He also knew that the bearded actor was the best friend of Cole Porter, and Merv knew all the composer's songs. Getting up the courage to approach Woolley at the bar, Merv said, "May I have your autograph, Mr. Woolley?" Forgetting Errol Flynn for the moment, he added, "You're my favorite actor."

"Kid, if you were a Botticelli angel, I'd give you my autograph—and a lot more. But you're nothing but a roly-poly fatso. Fuck off!"

Back at table, Merv told his uncle about the rude rejection. "Stay away from him. He's the biggest pervert in Los Angeles. I mean, how sick can you get? He and that Ty Power sicko have private parties where all the guests eat shit for a sexual thrill."

Merv was astonished, thinking at first Elmer might be joking. It was years later that he learned about coprophagia (feces eating).

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Merv got his driving license at the age of sixteen, just months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and he often drove Johnny Riley into San Francisco for the weekend. Johnny was having an affair with a 45-year-old stockbroker, who often gave both boys twenty-dollar bills for fun and games. Merv slept on the sofa in the living room of the stockbroker, where he heard noises coming from the bedroom at night.

During the day Johnny and Merv cruised the streets of San Francisco on the search for good-looking sailors. “Johnny got lucky … always,” Merv later told his gay pal, Liberace. “I rarely did unless Johnny fixed me up with one of his rejects. When I got to give a sailor a blow-job, he was too drunk to care if some little fat boy was doing the job or a beautiful blonde.”

Merv was drafted in 1942 after he'd graduated from San Mateo High School. He stood 5'9” at the time and still weighed slightly more than 240 pounds. “As remarkable as it seems, I had to show up at the induction hall in San Francisco ten different times for physical examinations,” Merv said. “I sort of got used to doctors playing with my balls and urging me to cough. On the final exam, the doctor discovered a heart murmur. He considered it serious enough to send me to the hospital. When I was released from the ward and went back to San Mateo, I learned that at long last I'd been classified 4F.”

His buddies, Paul Schone and Bill Robbins, had joined the U.S. Navy and were serving on battleships in the Pacific. Bill Robbins might have been “too girlish” for Merv Sr.'s tastes, but apparently he found no objections from the Navy. He later wrote Merv: “I'm making my way through the entire ship's crew. Only the captain has eluded me so far.”

Johnny Riley was more masculine-looking than Bill and would not have been rejected by the draft board as an obvious homosexual. However, he bluntly told the Army doctor examining him that, “I'm a cocksucker.” There were thousands upon thousands of homosexuals who fought in World War II, but Johnny and Merv were not among them.

Johnny agreed to help Merv sell War Bonds by staging entertainment on the streets of their hometown San Mateo and later in San Francisco.

“I became an early Bob Hope,” Merv later said, “staging shows for soldiers on the nearby bases in San Francisco. These guys were about to be shipped out to the Pacific Theater, and we knew—*and they knew*—that many of them would never see San Francisco again.”

Years later, when Merv met playwright Tennessee Williams, both of them privately agreed that for a gay male, being in San Francisco was the place to be in the early 1940s. “If a homosexual man couldn't get laid back then, he couldn't get laid anywhere,” Tennessee said. “The young sailors virtually lined up to get one final blow-job before sailing away. Perhaps no city in America has ever been so hedonistic. When you're facing death, conventional sexual morality no longer matters. Although Merv and I didn't know each other, we were taking advantage of these fresh-faced young men, some of whom came from the Middle West and had never confronted a gay man below. Many had never received a blow-job before, certainly not from their uptight girlfriends back home.”

“Merv and I agreed that it was a heady time for both of us, but it was also sad to realize that the young men we were servicing might be blown to bits by soldiers of the Japanese Empire,” Tennessee said. “What a waste!Wars always sacrifice the best of us, and leave rejects like Merv and me at home.”

When he wasn't singing on street corners, heckling residents to buy War Bonds,Merv and a civilian watch team scanned the skies of the Bay area looking for unauthorized aircraft. Asneak air attack from Japan was greatly feared. He and various friends used the tower of the San Mateo High School for their lookout post.

“The nights were long and cold,” Merv remembered. “Even if we spotted aircraft, I don't know if we would have known the Jap planes from our own Air Force fighters.”

One night one of his fellow skywatchers, a handsome, seventeen-year-old boy who was still a senior in high school, brought along a bottle of gin. He and Merv got drunk. Merv later told Johnny, “We fooled around some that night. I think he felt guilty about the experience. The next day he didn't speak to me, even though he'd shot off the night before. I was assigned a different guy the following night. We never saw any planes with the Rising Sun on them.”

His friend, Johnny, continued to prostitute himself with older men, but Merv never did that. “There was no

demand for me," he jokingly told his pals. Instead he made his money for gas (which was rationed) by playing the organ at weddings. He charged fifteen dollars for a wedding, commanding an extra five for funerals.

The worst year for the U.S. military both in Europe and the Pacific was 1942, and despite some success selling War Bonds, 4F Merv wanted to do more. He took a temporary job in the provisions section at Hunter's Point Naval Station outside San Francisco. From here, provisions were trucked to transport ships in the San Francisco harbor. These life-saving supplies were then loaded aboard cargo ships for soldiers and sailors fighting the Japanese in the Pacific.

Merv lost his job at the naval depot supply station when a sailor reported that Merv had propositioned him in the men's toilet. Although Merv adamantly denied this, he was still dismissed from his job. This would be the beginning of several sexual harassment charges that would be made against Merv by men during the years to come.

Through an acquaintance of Merv's father, his son was given a job as a bank teller at the Crocker National Bank. "You can't make a living as a piano player," his father told him. "You need a steady job."

"I lasted one day on the job," Merv recalled. "I talked to a late middleaged bank teller next to me. He'd worked there for twelve years until his salary was raised to thirty-five dollars a week. The next day I barged into the bank manager's office and quit. I was still determined to make it in show business … or else."

At the time, Merv was also enrolled in San Mateo Junior College where he majored in music.

While enrolled in Junior College, Merv developed a crush on his handsome male music teacher, who was about twenty-eight at the time and very popular with his students. Conveniently for Merv, the teacher turned out to be gay.

His name and the details of their brief romance are lost. Merv later confided to Johnny, "He was the first man to break my heart, the first of many I might add. It lasted about three weeks, and I was in Heaven which soon became Hell for me. Suddenly, my teacher didn't have any more time for me. I later learned that he was dating a very cute —*and much slimmer*—blondhaired boy. I was history. I moped around the house for weeks. My revenge came after two or three months when Blondie dumped the teacher for one of the football coaches."

After junior college, Merv enrolled in the University of San Francisco but dropped out before earning a degree. "I just couldn't concentrate on what the professors were saying," he later said. "I spent all my time in class day dreaming about breaking into show business."

"I educated myself by reading a lot," Merv later said. "In the years to come, I interviewed every prominent person in the world, except the Pope. Not only that, I hung out with many of these people. Like a sponge, I listened to them and learned things I would never have learned in college."

"Boy, did I learn," he said. "Stars were discreet on camera, but once back- stage or in their dressing room they seemed to want to share all their secrets with me. I guess I looked like a Father Confessor. If I would ever write a book about the secrets of the stars, it'd be a best-seller for sure. But then I'd lose the money in libel suits."

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Johnny kept urging Merv to lose weight, assuring him he'd be attractive if he got rid of the pudge. Merv tried dieting, but for his whole family weight remained a problem. "We kept eating and eating. I wanted to diet but had no willpower."

In spite of his weight, Merv still wanted to break into show business. While still in college he met Barbara McNutt, "a fat gal with pudgy hands," who, like Merv, had a beautiful singing voice. They teamed up and appeared on *Budda's Amateur Hour* for the local radio station KFRC.

Merv sat at the piano and sang patriotic songs, including "God Bless, America," "The Star-Spangled Banner,"

and George M. Cohen's “Yankee Doodle Boy.” The two-fatsos, as Merv called Barbara and himself, were clearly the best act but lost to a country fiddler from Kentucky who was also in the U.S. Army. Two show business pros, Gertrude Niesen and Billy (“Sneezy”) Gilbert, decided to vote for a man in uniform even though Merv and Barbara should have won.

Merv got really mad at Niesen, a big band singer. He vowed to turn off the radio if she came on again, although he loved her brief 1943 film appearance in *This Is the Army*.

Billy Gilbert realized he'd greatly undermined the boy's self-confidence and tried to befriend Merv after he lost. Since 1934 Gilbert had become one of the screen's most familiar faces, and Merv was enthralled when the star was cast as the voice of Sneezy in the 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. He'd even thrilled Merv when he'd danced with Alice Faye and Betty Grable in *Tin Pan Alley* (1940).

“I'm sorry, kid,” Gilbert told Merv. “You deserved to win, but there's a war on. We had to vote the way we did. It'll give a boost to our troops. When the war's over, I predict you'll become a big-time star. Even bigger than Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby.”

“Do you really believe that?” Merv asked.

“Not really. But I can't resist a good line when it comes to my head.”

Merv would later claim, “Barbara and I looked like Tweedledum and Tweedledee.” Even though they came in second, the host of the show, Dean Maddox, liked their music and secured bookings for Barbara and Merv all over San Francisco. Once they journeyed to Los Angeles for an engagement.

At some point, he deserted “fat Barb” and teamed up with a slimmer Janet Folsom, who was also the social director of the swank Pebble Beach Lodge on the Monterey Peninsula. At the time, it was a secret hideaway for movie stars, many of whom were there as part of an off-the-record weekend, with spouses back in Hollywood, or else partners in Palm Springs indulging in their own infidelities.

Janet told Merv that there was an opening at the hotel for the job of pianist, so he journeyed to Monterey for an audition.

Mrs. Lent Hooker liked the audition of Merv and Janet, and hired him as a party pianist to entertain the guests. Her father, Sam Morris, was the owner of the lodge.

With his jovial personality and perpetual smile, and his good—not great— singing voice, Merv became an instant hit with guests at the lodge. One morning at breakfast, Janet introduced him to her friend, Dinah Shore. Merv was in awe of the singer, one of his favorites.

Sitting next to Dinah, and looking rather stoic but devastatingly handsome, was the actor George Montgomery, Dinah's recently acquired hunk of a husband. Other than Tyrone Power and Errol Flynn, Merv thought Montgomery was one of the sexiest men on the screen.

Montgomery was in his soldier's uniform, and his much publicized marriage to Dinah had earned him fame. Merv and Johnny had thrilled to him when he appeared as the leading man opposite Ginger Rogers in *Roxie Hart* (1942) and opposite Betty Grable in *Coney Island* (1943).

Back in San Mateo, Merv later confided to Johnny, “One night I got to stand next to Montgomery at the urinal. Lucky Dinah, I'd say. He talks like he's speaking through clenched teeth. But what a man. He was a heavyweight boxer before becoming a movie star.”

Three views of **George Montgomery:**
Above, with then-wife, **Dinah Shore**

“I read in a fan magazine that he studied to be an interior decorator,” Johnny chimed in.

“I don't believe that,” Merv said, trying to defend this macho star. “Those fan magazines make up a lot of shit.”

That night as Merv sat in the lounge of the Pebble Beach Lodge at the piano, he was shocked when Dinah herself got up to sing a duet with him. She asked him if he knew the words and music to her hit, “You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To.”

“Do I ever!” he told her. “Let's go for it.”

The applause was so deafening that Merv and Dinah did an encore, “I'll Walk Alone.” The guests applauded even more wildly the second time around. “Kid, you and I should form an act and take it on the road,” Dinah said before kissing him on the cheek and returning to her table. Later, on his resumé,Merv claimed that he'd sung professionally with Dinah Shore. While technically true, the credit was misleading.

Relaxing by the pool the following day, Merv was surprised when Ann Sothern came over and joined him on a chaise longue. “Miss Sothern,” Merv said. “What an honor! My God, there are more stars at this lodge than there are in heaven.”

“I like your music, big boy,” she said, “but you've got to take off a few pounds. I fear that both you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives fighting the battle of the bulge.”

With such an unlikely beginning, a friendship was formed that would last for years. No one in movies, at least in Merv's view, could deliver wisecracks better than Ann. “The Queen of the Bs” at Columbia Pictures had come up in show business “one hard knock at a time.”

At the time she met Merv, Ann had been cast as the irrepressible namesake of the *Maisie* movies, films that evolved into at least seven sequels based on the original *Maisie* (1939) in which she had been cast as a brash vaudevillian stranded in a small town. Most of the Maisie films were released during the dark years of World War II, frothy comedies with names that included *Congo Maisie (1940), Gold Rush Maisie (1940), Maisie was a Lady (1941); Ringside Maisie (1941), Maisie Gets Her Man (1942)*, and last in the series, *Undercover Maisie* (1947).

Lesser Diva: **Ann Sothern**

Addressing his future, she became one of the first show business personalities to urge him to abandon movies and break into television. When her own film career virtually collapsed in the 1950s, Ann turned to the tube, playing the role of Susie in *Private Secretary* (1953), which ran until 1957. The following year she starred in *The Ann Sothern Show*, which ran until 1961. Over the years, Merv faithfully watched most of her appearances on TV and often talked over career moves with her.

He always admired her brutal honesty about herself. “Frankly, she said, “Jean Harlow was slated to play Maisie before she died. I won the role by default.” Merv was saddened when he talked to Ann in the 1970s and 80s. She called those decades “drought ridden. The buzzards are circling over me.”

In a mood of nostalgia, as he was getting old and blubbery, Merv visited Ann “for old time's sake.” He'd obtained a copy of his favorite film of hers, *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), in which she played a writer married to a younger man, Kirk Douglas.

At the end of the movie, which Merv adored, she turned to him and said. “You know something? I'm always amazed at what a lousy actress I was. I guess in the old days we just got by on glamour. Today's actresses and actors have real talent. Good looks are no longer an essential part of this rotten business.”

He was gladdened when she was nominated for an Academy Award playing Tisha Doughty in the 1987 *The*

Whales of August. “It's my Last Hurrah,” she told Merv in a phone call. “But I truly believe that working with Bette Davis has shortened my life span, and at my age I ain't got that many years to spare.”

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One high-profile regular guest at the Pebble Beach Lodge was even more famous than either Ann Sothern or Dinah Shore. She was Joan Crawford, who happened to be a friend of the socially connected Janet Folsom. To Merv's astonishment, Janet told him that she had checked into the lodge with her longtime flame, Johnny Weissmuller. Janet said that “Tarzan and Joan are sometime lovers … sometimes, on occasion. But they can't be seen together in the public rooms.”

Merv was hoping for another glimpse of one of his idols, which he'd seen in the nude at his Uncle Elmer's club. But Johnny made no public appearances that weekend, but stayed in Joan's suite.

Major Diva: **Joan Crawford**

Joan came down to dinner by herself and made a stunning entrance into the dining room, wearing all white, including those famous high heels that later became known as Joan Crawford “fuck-me shoes.” Even though Merv knew that Joan's days as the Queen of MGM were over, and she was struggling to reinvent herself, she was the epitome of self-confidence and graciousness when Janet introduced him to her.

When not entertaining guests, Janet and Merv wrote music and lyrics together. The following night, they composed one for Joan herself when she came down, again alone, to the dining room. She sat at a front table and had to suffer through:

Someone's out to kill me
‘cause
I'm honestly acting like a dilly
I'm silly
‘cause I'm in love,
I'm horribly, borably
So in love.

Joan's reaction? “I think you kids have come up with something *terribly, even horribly,* cute. Maybe a bit too cute. Try harder next time.”

Mrs. Lent Hooker not only got Merv his gig at Pebble Beach, but she also arranged for him to play the piano at private parties for twenty dollars. “I'd play in a treehouse for twenty bucks,” Merv said at the time. At a Halloween costume party at Mrs. Hooker's estate, everyone except Merv showed up in masks.

After midnight Merv was joined by a rather dashing figure dressed all in black, with a black mask concealing his features. In his autobiography, Merv remembered the guest disguised as a ghost, but other guests claimed he was actually in disguise as The Cisco Kid.

For about an hour “The Kid” joined Merv in a round of songs, Merv finding his voice “acceptable—not great.” But they were having fun, and by that time the other guests were too drunk to care.

Cesar Romero in his most famous role

At one point, the mystery man handed Merv some sheet music from the film, *Springtime in the Rockies*, one of Merv's favorite movies, starring Carmen Miranda, Betty Grable, and Cesar Romero. He asked Merv if he would play a few numbers from this film.

“Do you know the lyrics?” Merv asked.

“I most certainly do,” said the guest, removing his mask to expose the face of Cesar Romero himself.

The Latin star sat with Merv until around three in the morning, playing requests from the other guests. The two men got along famously, laughing and joking, with Cesar telling the more innocent Merv dirty jokes. Romero had been drinking heavily all evening, and Merv was given four cocktails, although liquor went to his head.

When Cesar invited him to join him in the back seat of his imported car, Merv went along with it. “I usually like them a little thinner, but all cats are gray at night,” Cesar said. In the rear of the car, Merv received a blow-job from one of the most talented and experienced mouths in Hollywood.

After that night, Merv and *The Gay Caballero* (the name of Cesar's 1940 film) never became lovers again, but their friendship would last for several years to come. One night when Merv was singing for the Freddy Martin band in San Diego, he was surprised to see Cesar seated at a front table with Desi Arnaz. Desi was also appearing in the San Diego area but had the night off.

After the show, both Cesar and Desi came backstage to congratulate Merv on his show and to invite him for a nightcap in their suite.

After an hour, Desi disappeared into the bedroom while Cesar and Merv kept talking. About thirty minutes later, Merv was startled to look up at the doorway to the bedroom. Desi stood completely nude with an erection.

“Griffin, it's time to say good night,” Desi called out. “I need that cocksucker to give me a blow-job so I can get some sleep.”

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Merv fell in love with the Pebble Beach area, and years later when he became rich and famous, he often took handsome young men here for his own off-the-record weekends.

Three decades would go by before Merv purchased his own vacation home in the area. He invited Janet to meet several of his famous friends, but one hour before the housewarming party was to begin, he received a call that she'd suffered a heart attack and had died in an ambulance rushing her to the hospital.

There was another ironic twist to those Pebble Beach days. Years later when the gay talent agent, Henry Willson, showed up at Merv's door, he spotted a fellow house guest, George Montgomery, sprawled nude out by the pool.

Merv explained George's presence to Willson, claiming that he had commissioned the actor to make some elegant cabinets for him.

While appearing in action movies, George, an excellent craftsman, ran a cabinet shop for four decades, making furnishings for the stars. He also designed and constructed a dozen beautiful homes for friends and family.

Henry and the handsome actor bonded, and Merv noted that they left Pebble Beach together that weekend. The agent had promised the hunk that he could revitalize his career, which he never did. At that point in their lives, both Montgomery's and Willson's sun had already sunk in the West.

But the question remains: Years after his gig as the entertainment maestro at the Pebble Beach Lodge, did Merv ever manage to seduce George Montgomery, the then-newlywed who had previously accompanied Dinah Shore to

her suite?

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Even though he didn't win first place in the singing contest, Merv did not give up on the radio station, KFRC. One afternoon when he was in San Francisco with Cal Tjader, Merv was urged to apply for a job as a staff musician. Tjader had heard that there was an opening.

Affiliated with the Mutual Network, KFRC would "birth" such famous TV personalities as Art Linkletter and Mark Goodson, the game show producer. Both Goodson and Linkletter would become powerful role models for Merv.

Alan Lisser, the program director, agreed to see Merv and Tjader. "Your friend here has told you wrong," Lisser said. "We don't need a piano player. What we need is a singer. You sing?"

At first Merv started to say no because, in spite of all his public appearances, he still did not think of himself as a singer. "Merv's the best singer in San Francisco," Tjader told Lisser. Urged on by his pal, Merv sang for the director in a voice that was no longer the school soprano but had developed into a melodious baritone.

That morning he'd been listening to the smooth sounds of Dick Haymes singing "IWas Taken for a Sleighride in July." He chose that song for his audition. Lisser was so impressed he brought out Bill Pabst, the station owner.

Merv went through the number again and was hired on the spot to appear every Thursday on *The San Francisco Sketchbook*, a fifteen-minute morning program. His salary would be one hundred dollars per show.

After signing the deal, Merv was told that he'd be backed up by a twenty- two man orchestra. That flabbergasted him. He felt he was on his way up the long ladder of show business.

At this point in his career, Merv had not found his own distinctive voice and was heavily influenced by other popular singers of his day. When he was hired for his first professional show, he'd focused on Dick Haymes as a role model.

Later, Merv attended many of Dick's nightclub shows and got to know him more or less well. Merv told bandleader Freddy Martin, "Never meet your singing idols. Regardless of how smooth they appear on stage, they will always disappoint you in private."

Argentine-born Dick burst into prominence during the Big Band Era of the 1940s, appearing with such bandleaders as Tommy Dorsey and Harry James (who was married to Betty Grable).

"I admired his singing voice," Merv later said. "When I got to know him personally, I thought he was a bastard. He was a hopeless alcoholic but that was only part of his problems. He was also reckless with money. I heard he squandered four-million dollars in just a few years."

As his career headed to the graveyard, Dick met Rita Hayworth in 1953 when she was filming the W. Somerset Maugham story, *Miss Sadie Thompson*, at Columbia. "He didn't love her," Merv later said. "At the time I knew Rita only casually but warned her not to marry the bastard. But she was too much in love to listen to me. The results were a disaster. To beef up his audience, Haymes insisted that Rita sit at the front table for all his nightclub appearances. The spotlight would often be turned on her. Even if the crowd didn't want to hear Haymes sing, *everybody* wanted to get a look at Rita. She was a goddess. Eddie Fisher pulled the same stunt when he married Elizabeth Taylor and hauled her out for public viewing at his nightclub appearances. It's amazing what fading crooners will do to hold onto their popularity—not me, boy. When fans no longer wanted to hear me sing, I switched professions. And how!"

After just one appearance on *The San Francisco Sketchbook*, Merv was offered a bigger and better deal by Bill Pabst. Beginning that Monday, he was to be the star of his own *The Merv Griffin Show*, at a beginning salary of $1,100 per week, which was soon raised to $1,500 per week. The station billed him as "America's New Romantic Singing Star."

Rita Hayworth with husband #4,
Argentinian crooner (and Merv's role model)
Dick Haymes

In just three weeks, Merv got his show picked up by the Mutual Network, of which KFRC was a member. He learned that his singing was being broadcast across wartime America, earning new fans for him in places like Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, and New York.

“I became filthy rich,” Merv said, perhaps unknowingly predicting his own future. “I went out and bought two new cars, one a white convertible just like the one I'd seen Errol Flynn drive away in with those broads. I joined three country clubs, and I didn't even play golf. One membership would have been more than enough. My underpaid dad thought I'd opened a string of bordellos in San Francisco.”

Even though his newly emerging fans liked his singing, Merv was smart enough to realize that he was no Frank Sinatra or Bing Crosby. He arranged to study voice with Bill Stoker, a Mormon who once sang with the orchestra of Kay Kyser. It was while attending one of Bill Stoker's voice lessons that he met another aspirant star, Al Cernick.

As Guy Mitchell, Al would become what Merv never became, a singing sensation across America.

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The same age as Merv, good-looking Guy Mitchell entered the world as Albert Cernick in 1925 in Detroit, the son of Croatian immigrant parents. After meeting his fellow pupil at Bill Stoker's vocal classes, Merv was immediately captivated by the young man's looks, charm, and personality. The first day they met, Guy was wearing his sailor's uniform, having been honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy.

“There was something about his smile that made me tingle all over,” Merv later told Johnny Riley. “He also has the kind of hair you want to run your fingers through.” After their vocal lessons, Guy and Merv spent hours together talking about their dreams for stardom.

In the 1930s Guy (or Al Cernick) had been signed by Warner Brothers to be groomed as a child star. He later became known as a singer on San Francisco radio, like Merv himself. Surprisingly, Merv did not feel threatened by Guy and didn't view him as a competitor. Instead they developed an unusual rapport with each other. Merv seemed thrilled when Guy, still billed as Al Cernick, got his big break when Carmen Cavallero signed him as the lead singer for his Big Band sounds in 1946.

Before that break came, Guy had supplemented his income working as a saddlemaker, a trade he'd learned from his father. Rather athletic, he also rode horses, and invited Merv to accompany him on trips into the wilds of northern California. Merv wasn't that much into horseback riding but gladly went along to be with the object of his desire.

Somewhere along these trails, Merv fell hopelessly in love with Guy. It was hopeless because Guy was basically straight, although he admitted to “having fooled around a bit in the Navy.” At some point on these long horseback-riding weekends, the relationship between Guy and Merv turned sexual.

One of Guy's closest friends at the time, Ralph Laven, later claimed that Guy told him that the relationship, in spite of his wishes, had become sexual. “I love Merv, but I don't *love* him,” Guy reportedly told Laven.

Merv confided the details of his relationship with Guy to his gay friends, including, as always, Johnny Riley. “Al [meaning Guy] wasn't really into it from what I gathered,” Johnny said. “He let Merv blow him—and that was it. He did not reciprocate. Merv told me that Al wouldn't even let him kiss him except on the cheek. Poor Merv. He wanted deep French kissing and all the works, but Al just couldn't go that far.”

Thus Merv shared something in common with gay boys all over America who fall for straight men. It was a pattern he would continue throughout the rest of his life.

Even after learning how Merv felt about him, Guy did not break off with his close friend, but continued in a relationship. Merv could not have been fulfilled by it, but he wanted to remain at Guy's side regardless of the price.

Putting any jealousy aside, Merv felt pride when Mitch Miller, in charge of talent at Columbia Records, discovered “Al Cernick.” “The name's got to go,” Miller said. “How about Guy Mitchell?”

Merv did a skip and jump of joy when Frank Sinatra turned down “My Heart Cries for You.” Mitch Miller then offered it to Guy, who scored his first million seller for Columbia. Even the B side of the record, “The Roving Kind,” was also a big hit. Guy quickly became a household name in the 1950s, with other hits to follow, including a 1956 biggie, “Singin’ the Blues.” His decade of the 1950s came to an end with yet another million seller, “Heartaches by the Number.”

Merv's boyfriend, teen idol and
singing sensation **Guy Mitchell**

Like Merv, Guy also wanted to break into the movies, and he did in 1953 when he starred with Rhonda Fleming in *Those Redheads from Seattle* and a year later with Rosemary Clooney in *Red Garters*. Merv was even around in 1957 to toast Guy when he starred on television in *The Guy Mitchell Show*.

Merv had dinner with Guy to console him when he was booted out of Columbia Records in 1961. “We talked about old times like two geezers, even though both of us had decades yet left to live.” Merv confessed to having a tear in his eye in 1965 when he heard the news over the phone that Guy was retiring from show business.

Upon learning of Guy's death at the age of 72 on July 1, 1999, Merv fondly recalled his friend and long-time companion, a man he'd never stopped loving. “Like me, Guy in his music evoked the last years of America's innocence in the 1950s. The world of music, even life itself, would never be the same when that decade came to an end. The horrible Sixties were upon us. Watching Guy's decline only reminded me what would have happened had I not reinvented myself after my decline as a pop singer and a so-called movie star in the Fifties.”

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Even though he continued to sing in San Francisco during the mid-Forties, Merv as a romantic singer was also developing a fan base in Los Angeles. The beautiful Joan Fontaine, star of one of Merv's all-time favorite movies, *Rebecca* (1940), listened to him along with her husband, the producer William Dozier. The “son of Nebraska” had only recently married Fontaine and would go on to wed actress Ann Rutherford after his divorce from Fontaine in 1951.

Joan and Bill became so enamored of Merv's singing that they called him and agreed to drive to San Francisco to meet with him at their suite at the Fairmont Hotel. Bill had hopes of turning Merv “into the next Dennis Morgan,” a singing star and fixture at Warner's during the 1940s.

Based on Merv's singing voice, and in advance of their first meeting, Bill judged him to be handsome and romantic with a big future in movie musicals.

It was Joan who answered the door of their suite. Merv recalled that she looked astonished. “*You* are Merv Griffin?” Quickly concealing her embarrassment, she invited him into her suite. “Bill, darling,” she called to her husband. “You've got to come out and meet Merv Griffin, the singing sensation.”

Merv later recalled that Bill's face “just dropped when he saw me. I could tell how disappointed he was. He knew at once that I wasn't going to be Hollywood's next romantic leading singer in films. But Bill and Joan were terribly polite and recovered brilliantly like the pros they are and invited me in for a drink.”

The only humor associated with that afternoon drink came when Joan said, “I really should introduce you to Olivia in case she ever does a musical. You'd be perfect as her leading man.” Joan, of course, was jokingly referring to her estranged sister, Olivia de Havilland.

Since Bill and Joan obviously couldn't talk about promoting Merv as a romantic singing film star, the conversation quickly turned to Bill's early days in Hollywood.

In 1935 he came to California as an agent for writers F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, and he had many

stories to tell about his misadventures trying to get serious writers launched. It made Merv sad to hear Bill tell about Fitzgerald's declining years.

At the door telling Merv good-bye, Bill finally got to the point. “Take off eighty pounds, kid, and then we'll talk.”

During the years that followed, Bill and Merv encountered each other on occasions and laughed about their first meeting. “If I knew you were going to become the richest man on the planet, I would have signed you at once,” Bill told him. “Fat or not. I could have become Col. Tom Parker to your Elvis. A fifty-fifty split, of course.”

Merv also followed Bill's career in television. He was amused as Bill demanded the insertion of phrases like *“Pow!,” “Wham!,”* and *“Zowee!”* as a means of infusing camp into the *Batman* TV series in the late 60s. Encountering Bill at Restaurant “21” in New York, Merv came up to him and extended his hand. “The King of Camp himself!”

Later Merv recalled, “Believe it or not, Bill thought camp was a place you sent your kids every summer. I guess he hadn't read Susan Sontag's article defining a new kind of camp.”

“As the Batman craze swept the country,” Bill said, “I learned what camp was. There are those who say I invented it.” Later Bill was accused of ushering in trash TV. But he told Merv, “I'm not ashamed. Were F.W. Woolworth and J.C. Penny ashamed because they weren't Tiffany and Cartier?”

In time Bill became a TV reformer, teaching college courses on Network Television, in which he urged his students to “reshape the tube.” He admitted to having produced, in addition to Batman, the *Green Hornet* and *The Tammy Grimes Show*—“the most conspicuous failure ever on television.”

But to his classes, whose members included U.C.L.A. undergraduates as well as Hollywood directors, producers, and press agents, he expressed admiration of Merv for bringing serious talk to television, citing interviews with everybody from the Kennedys to Martin Luther King Jr. “Of course,” Bill added, “he also had to bring on Burt Reynolds and Sophia Loren to keep the ratings high.”

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In San Francisco, with his new-found money from his successful singing career—“I was making the kind of money my old man could only dream about”—Merv established Panda Records in 1946 with Janet Folsom. With her help and professional advice, he recorded his first album of easy-to-listento melodies, including “Falling in Love with Love,” which remained his favorite on the road for many years to come. Even though the album, *Songs by Merv Griffin*, didn't sell well, it had its moment in music history.

Fresh from the battlefields of Europe, the album's recording engineer had made great strides in experimental technology. Merv's album was recorded on magnetic tape, the first U.S. label to be recorded in such a way. As such, it is displayed today in museums devoted to music history.

It was not the experience with Bill Dozier and Joan Fontaine, but an encounter with another star named Joan—Joan Edwards—that finally convinced Merv he had to take off the pounds if he ever wanted to be a star in the movies or even in the newly emerging industry of television.

Without ever knowing what he looked like, Joan Edwards had become a faithful fan of Merv's, listening to his romantic singing voice every chance she got. She was one of the most popular radio singers in America, and was regularly featured on the highly rated *Your Hit Parade* between 1941 and 1946.

She'd also been a featured singer with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra between 1938 and 1940, at which time Merv had become an ardent fan.

From her hotel room in San Francisco, Joan called Merv to tell him, “You sing like an angel.” Flattered at her attention, he invited her to appear the next morning on his show. “I'll be there with bells on,” she promised.

Merv later claimed she was shocked when she encountered him for the first time. Unlike the socially graceful Joan Fontaine, Joan Edwards was a very blunt woman. “You sing a romantic ballad better than Sinatra, although I'm sure you don't fuck as well. I'm speaking from personal experience. But that blubber has to go. There aren't too many Moby Dick scripts being written for whales these days.”

Merv later claimed that, “I almost cried when I heard her say that. But it was the truth. I just hadn't faced up to it. I knew my career could really get moving, but only when I shit and pissed away all that God damn fat.”

No more visits to Blum's Soda Fountain for his beloved hot fudge sundaes—“ with extra fudge, please.” No more big bowls of puffed rice in which he dripped honey and added two bananas for breakfast. No more spaghetti dinners with three desserts.

On a rigid diet for the first time in his life, Merv ate nothing but rare steak and salads without oil, only vinegar. Amazingly he managed to take off twenty pounds a month. Standing nude in front of a mirror, he admired his body for the first time in his life, at a fighting weight of 160 pounds.

“I suddenly saw that I was a handsome man, not a Guy Madison, but not a bad-looking guy either. I was just as pretty as Gordon MacRae, who had been signed by Warners and cast in *The Big Punch*. I could sing better than MacRae too.”

Although Merv had not been jealous of Guy Mitchell, he would become locked into a bitter rivalry with MacRae, even at the very beginning of that star's rise to fame.

Merv would become particularly agitated sitting through any movie in the future, such as *Tea for Two* (1950), that co-starred Doris Day and MacRae. “I tried to blot out MacRae's image and sub my own. I felt that I, not MacRae, belonged up there on the screen in Doris's arms.”

Merv's weight loss gave him a self-confidence he'd never had before. He even began to feel that he could compete with other gay men for some of the handsome hunks walking around San Francisco. “I would no longer be ashamed to take off my clothes. In fact, I had hopes to find someone who would love me back so my life wouldn't be entirely about servicing rough trade,” he told his friend, Bill Robbins.

With his new self-assurance, Merv even gave in to Johnny Riley's request to take off all his clothes to show off his new physique. Johnny later recalled, “I was so impressed with Merv's new look that I tossed in a mercy fuck that night just for old time's sake. After all, he'd been lusting after me ever since grade school, and I felt he deserved some kind of reward.”

Heady days remained ahead for Merv as he spent his last months in San Francisco, with continued success for “The Merv Griffin Show,” which was presented until that day in 1948 when he resigned. Another offer came in that was far more tempting than the radio show, which had begun to bore him.

At night he hit the gay bars of San Francisco. “With my newly acquired physique, and with certain good looks that had emerged from behind the blubber, I became a whore on the make,” he told Johnny. “I was like a kid just released in the candy store and told to pick up anything I liked. I was enjoying a sex life for the first time in my life. I was far too young to settle down, and I wanted to have experiences that had been denied me up to now. I broke a few hearts back then. How different that was for me. Up to now, I'd had my heart broken lusting after ‘The Guy.’ Get that? Guy Mitchell and a few others.”

Merv's life was about to change, although he had no clue as to what was about to happen.

At the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, Freddy Martin stepped out of the shower. The radio was on. On the air he heard the romantic, melodious voice of Merv Griffin singing “Let There Be Love.”

The popular bandleader was looking for a “boy singer” for his orchestra, and he was captivated by Merv's voice, feeling that the singer would blend in with his music. Before appearing that night in the hotel's club, he ordered his secretary, Jean Barry, to “get me Merv Griffin.”

Jean contacted Merv that day and agreed to have lunch that Saturday afternoon. The Merv Griffin she encountered was a newly created man— young, handsome, and *slender*. In Jean's view he possessed one of the most romantic singing voices in America.

“I knew after lunching with Merv that Freddy had found his man,” Jean later recalled. “Before I'd left the hotel that day, Freddy said to me, ‘I just pray the fucking kid is a looker. The horny women who dance to our music like romantic ballads sung by a guy they'd want to go to bed with.’”

Back at the hotel that night, Jean gave Freddy the good news. “He's a handsome—not pretty—boy, and you already know how he sings. There's a possible problem that I don't think will be any trouble at all. I suspect he might be a homosexual. But if he's got the looks and the voice, what does that matter?”

“Half the boys in my band are homosexual, at least when they're on the road,” Freddy said. “This Merv Griffin will fit in just fine with my boys.”

Merv's breakthrough as a “boy singer”
in the waning days of ballroom dancing
was with big band legend **Freddy Martin**

Chapter Two

Merv stayed awake all that night, pondering Jean Barry's offer to make him the lead singer with Freddy Martin's band. As dawn came up over San Francisco, he decided to go for it. The way he figured it, being the lead singer of Freddy's band would take him across the country, where he hoped to make millions of new fans. Reflecting on that career-changing choice years later, he said, “I was too much of a fool to realize that I was hooking up with one of the Big Bands just as that musical form was entering its death throes. It had peaked in the 1930s and during the war years. But I never regretted my decision to join Freddy and his boys.”

Appearing at the St. Francis Hotel's Mural Room that night, Merv met his mentor, Freddy himself. “He was such a nice guy I couldn't believe he was for real,” Merv said. “I thought his politeness might be a cover-up for the monster that lurked beneath.” Merv not only met Freddy but was asked to sing— unrehearsed—with his orchestra. Freddy asked him if he knew “Where or When.”

“Does a bear shit in the woods?”

“You're on, kid,” Freddy said.

“I don't know how I got through the number, but my voice held out,” Merv later recalled. “My legs were shaking more than those of Elvis in the years to come. But the audience clapped wildly, and I knew I'd made the right decision.”

The next day he began to feel he'd made a very rash decision when he was told that Freddy would pay him only $150 a week. Previously, he'd thought that it would be $150 a night. He was already pulling in $1,500 a week, very good pay for a singer in 1948.

Later Merv claimed that the actual money was not that important to him. That was hardly true. To this Depression era kid, money was vital.

Even so, he shrewdly interpreted this new job as a career advancement in spite of the low pay. “I decided it could lead to fame and fortune eventually. I'd be singing at the Starlight Roof in New York, the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles. Meeting all the big stars.”

The next day he barged into Bill Pabst's office at the radio station and resigned. It was easy to do since he didn't have a contract with the station manager. Pabst warned him he was making a big mistake and was shocked at the enormous cut in pay he'd be taking. What Merv didn't tell Pabst was that he planned to use his exposure with Freddy Martin's orchestra to launch a screen career. “Just think,” Merv said to Pabst, “with Freddy Martin's band, I'll be singing to Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra, Clark Gable, Lana Turner, and even Judy Garland.” As his own fortune teller, he was right on target.

“I see,” a skeptical Pabst said. “But think about this. What if Sinatra shows up one night at the Cocoanut Grove? He's highly critical of other singers, you know. You may be too sappy for him. What if he's drunk, a likely scenario. He might let out a catcall to disrupt your act. Embarrass you in front of everybody in Hollywood. And by the way, your act rips off Bing Crosby even more than it does Sinatra, and what if *Der Bingle* shows up to comment upon that personally?”

“I'll shit my pants and keep on singing.”

When joining Freddy Martin's band, Merv knew his new boss didn't rule the music scene in the 40s the way that Benny Goodman, Guy Lombardo, Glenn Miller, and Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey did. Even so, Merv daydreamed that he could pull off what Sinatra did when appearing with Tommy Dorsey, recording such hits as “Hear My Song” and “I'll Never Smile Again.”

Post-war dollars earmarked for entertainment were meager compared to what they'd been during the war years when men spent heavily, not worrying about saving for tomorrow when they didn't know if they'd have a tomorrow.

Now those same men who'd survived the war were moving to the suburbs where they built homes and began to raise families. The king of the Big Bands, Glenn Miller, was presumed to have died when his plane disappeared in December of 1944, and back home many ballrooms and night-clubs were either closing or doing poor business. Not only that, but many musicians returning from the battlefields, including Ray Anthony and Buddy Rich, were once again competing within the overcrowded field. “The competition was keen,” Merv said. “With more and more musicians on the scene, that pie was being sliced into thinner and thinner slices. Even admission prices to ballrooms dropped. Some of the lesser known bands ‘disbanded.’”

Frankly, Freddy Martin—nicknamed “Mr. Silvertone”—did not lead Merv's favorite band. He much preferred the sounds of Glenn Miller's band or even the Dorsey Brothers. The kindest word Merv had for Freddy's boys was

that they played “likable music.”

As a kid, he'd listened to their music, which went back to 1932 when they'd recorded for Columbia Records. His favorite among their repertoire was “Tonight We Love,” with Clyde Rogers performing the vocal. Freddy had based the arrangement on the first movement of Tchaikovsky's B-flat piano concerto.

When Merv joined Freddy's orchestra, it employed six violins, four brasses, and an equal number of sax. Freddy was a mean saxophone player himself— in fact, he was hailed as the best tenor saxophonist of the Big Band era.

By the time Merv joined the band, the orchestra had already been the focal point of a film, *Melody Time* (1948), which is interpreted today as a camp classic. In it, Freddy Martin appeared as himself, as did the Andrews Sisters and the homophobic Roy Rogers with his horse, Trigger. Regrettably, the scenes of “Pecos Bill” which appeared within the original were edited out of its re-release years later as a DVD.

Merv also watched as Freddy Martin and his Orchestra appeared as themselves in *Seven Days' Leave* (1942) in which Victor Mature starred opposite Lucille Ball. Merv told Johnny Riley, “I'd even give up Errol Flynn, I think, for Victor Mature. He's too hot to handle.”

Merv had seen *Stage Door Canteen* (1943) six times, little knowing that one of its cast members, Tallulah Bankhead, would become his lifelong friend. It starred some of the great ladies of the theater, including Helen Hayes and Katherine Cornell. Even Katharine Hepburn made an appearance. Merv thrilled to the appearance of “Tarzan,” Johnny Weissmuller, but was more intrigued by the orchestra conductors cast in the film. They included not only Freddy Martin, but Guy Lombardo, Kay Kyser, Benny Goodman, and Xavier Cugat. He later claimed that watching this movie made him a lifelong fan of Count Basie.

Merv told Freddy that he hoped more movie roles would lie in the orchestra's future now that he'd joined as lead vocalist.

“I'm not sure movies in the years to come will feature 1940s orchestras with boy or girl singers,” Freddy said. “Even The Andrews Sisters are fading. What went over during World War II is dying out. The 1950s demand a new kind of sound.”

The following night, waiting backstage at the Mural Room, Merv watched as Stuart Wade, the singer Merv was slated to replace, sang his last songs for Freddy's band. At the end of Stuart's act, Merv shook his hand as he came off stage. “Great show!” Merv said with all the enthusiasm he could muster. In the background, he could hear Freddy Martin introducing him as the band's new singer.

Young **Merv**

To be polite, Stuart also waited backstage for Merv to finish his act. “You were fabu- lous,” he told Merv. “You'll go over bigger and better than I ever did.”

It would take months before Merv learned that compliments one performer makes to another are usually insincere.

“What's next for you?” Merv asked.

“Tomorrow, I head for Hollywood where I'm going to become the hottest actor in show business. The Robert Taylors, Tyrone Powers, and Errol Flynns are getting long in the tooth. They're going to have to move over and make way for me.”

As Merv watched Stuart depart, he knew enough at the time to realize that most dreams of show business success end when you wake up. But not in his case. He was determined. The Stuart Wades of the world would come and go, perhaps into oblivion. But he was determined to make it … and big.

At the end of Merv's first week of performing with Freddy, the orchestra leader raised his salary to $175 a week because he also wanted Merv to be his second piano player. He promised more $25 raises every thirteen weeks. “But you've got to knock off some more pounds, kid.”

“I'm a skeleton compared to the balloon I used to be,” Merv said. “But I'll keep eating those rare steaks and

salads."

"Merv was not a natural in front of a live audience, but I took a chance on him anyway," Freddy later recalled. "He was very stiff and rigid. Very unsure of himself. It took weeks before he became natural."

"The boys in the band kidded him because every week he sounded like somebody else," Freddy said. "The first week we thought we'd hired Perry Como. The next week Merv sounded more like Bing Crosby. My God, one night I thought he'd been listening to Doris Day sing. I put a stop to him listening to her voice. We didn't want to signal to the ladies in the audience that Merv was a homo."

"Another thing," Freddy continued, "in the beginning Merv waddled on stage like a duck. When he came out with that walk, some people in the audience laughed at him. I think that waddle came from his fat period. I got around his awkward entrance by eliminating his walk-on. I had the boys kill the house lights. Merv could slip out onto the stage and stand before the microphone. The house lights would go on and the audience would see Merv standing in the spotlight instead of waddling on."

It was a sad day in San Francisco and San Mateo when Merv told his family and friends good-bye. It was the beginning of a nationwide tour of seventy- four one-night stands in towns he'd never heard of.

His introduction to life on the road as a "boy singer" began in the hardest, most grueling way. "Almost from the first, my daydreams about making it big in show business came crashing in on me," Merv said. "I was introduced to the realities of show business in Eureka, California. Reality instead of dreams was setting in."

He was heartsick after a long bus ride to Eureka, and he became even more so when he saw the patrons file in. They were loud and raucous, and many had already consumed far too many beers.

In the big cities such as New York, Freddy's band was known for attracting what was left of "café society." But the Eureka audience looked like farmers.

The club was dreary, but Merv did all his big numbers such as "Never Been Kissed" and "Wilhelmina." He tried his best and the audience clapped but with no enthusiasm. He felt the patrons would much rather be hearing Roy Rogers singing about how the stars were big and bright, deep in the heart of Texas.

It was clearly understood that after each of the one-night stands, Merv had to be packed and ready, following his performance, for a late-night supper at one o'clock in the morning. Immediately after that, sometime before 3am, Freddy and his boys would climb onto the bus for transit to the next performance. Often they pulled into town just before the beginning of the next evening's show. They slept on the bumpy bus.

"My god," he complained to Freddy. "I don't even have time to wash the piss stains out of my underwear."

Long used to life on the road, the band leader just smiled. "Then don't wear underwear."

Merv recalled celebrating his twenty-third birthday in Prairie du Chien, Wyoming, where the band threw him a surprise party. Even that wasn't spontaneous. Merv later learned that before leaving San Francisco, Jean Barry had been given a one-hundred dollar bill from Merv's mother, Rita, to honor him on the occasion. "At that point I felt so homesick I cried," he said. "Except for visits to Los Angeles, I'd never really been anywhere but the Bay area."

"Those tears finally came, and when they did, they rained like buckets," Merv said. It was early one morning as he walked the bleak streets of Fargo, North Dakota, with not a soul in sight. "It was my first time away from home, and I missed all my family and my friends like Johnny Riley. I kept in touch by phone on occasions, but calls were expensive and my new salary didn't allow for a lot of luxuries. My support group was gone. But I did make a friend in Jean."

Freddy's secretary traveled on the road with what she called "my boys." She bonded so well with Merv and spent so much time with him that some members of the band suspected a romance. "Far from it," Jean said. "We were good buddies—and that was that. I became the first of what Merv called his gal pals."

Beginning with Jean Barry, and ending with the glamorous Eva Gabor, Merv over the years formed relationships with a number of women. "From what he told me, no sex was involved, only good times," Johnny Riley later recalled. "He was like many gay men in the late Forties and Fifties who formed superficial relationships with women and 'dated' them."

"But after a kiss on the cheek at the doorstep, it was good night, sweetheart," Johnny claimed. "These romances of Merv's in New York and Los Angeles were about as serious as Tab Hunter dating Debbie Reynolds in the 1950s."

Bill Robbins, the other close friend of Merv's, said, "Of course, Merv had male friends. Take Paul Schone, Johnny, and me for an example. Even Cal Tjader. But he also sought out women to pal around with him. He genuinely liked women, and he liked to be in their company. He enjoyed taking them out. In the years to come, it was fun for him to be seen with Elizabeth Taylor on his arm. But I doubt if he ever fucked Elizabeth Taylor. For fucking, she had to turn to Richard Burton, Frank Sinatra, whomever."

On that first road tour with Freddy and his boys, Merv sat up front in the bus with Jean beside him. “As we crossed the American Plains, some trips lasting twelve hours, I grew bored. Freddy always had his nose buried in a book, and some of the boys played cards. I didn't play poker, and I didn't like to read. To pass the time, I invented word games, including one called ‘Twenty Questions.’”

“I was just trying to kill the time, little knowing that I would one day make millions of dollars in television off word games,” he said. “I guess I had to start someplace, and I got my start in word games on those long, long rides to Rinky-Dink, U.S. of A. Almost every night in some hell-hole, some drunk would call out for me to sing ‘Melancholy Baby.’ I got so tired of that I began to close my act with that song, anticipating a drunken request.”

The members of Freddy's band were of two minds, the more naïve musicians thinking Merv was having an affair with Jean, the other players suspecting that he might be a homosexual. “A few of us were birds of a feather,” one of Freddy's band members later said. “We suspected that Merv might be one of us. After all, musicians are the hippest people in America. We smoked pot decades before it caught on, and we were using the word *gay* when the rest of the world thought it meant *happily excited*.”

Studio Spin: **Debbie Reynolds**
“fake dating” with **Tab Hunter**

“One night, three of us were in a hotel room playing poker when one of the guys asked, ‘Don't you think Merv is gay?’ I thought for a minute and said, ‘By God, I think you're right.’ In those days, we got our rocks off wherever we could going from town to town.”

“We agreed that night that one of us should test the waters, and I was selected because the guys said I was the best looking. After I showered the following night, I knocked on Merv's door wearing only a towel. I made up some excuse that I wanted to borrow something. I brought along a couple of cold beers. One thing led to another, and in a couple of hours Merv was bobbing up and down between my legs. He was pretty good at it, too, and I knew he'd done this before. Perhaps many times before.”

“When I left the room that morning, I told the guys, ‘He's up for grabs, but remember I saw him first.’ Throughout the rest of the tour, Merv kept me happy, and he also kept some of the boys walking around with smiles on their faces. I don't think Freddy ever found out what was going on. Maybe he did. Knowing Freddy, I don't think he would have given a damn.”

In what Merv would later refer to as “one of the most memorable moments of my life,” he was able to see what was keeping the audiences away from ballrooms and night-clubs. That momentous event took place backstage at the Riverside Theater in Milwaukee.

An RCA television dealer brought in “a funny little box” (Merv's words) to demonstrate to Freddy Martin's band what their competition was. “I remember Milton Berle was appearing in drag of all things,” Merv said. “The picture was fuzzy. For a person who grew up watching Judy Garland in Technicolor on the big screen, I was very disdainful of this new invention. I thought TV was a novelty. How could I have known back then that it would dominate most of my life—and also be the key to my fortune?”

After what seemed like endless weeks on the road, Freddy Martin's bus approached the skyline of New York City as dawn was coming up. Merv was in awe. “Even though I was from San Francisco, I'd never seen anything like it. It was like a mirage to me. The tall buildings. I spent my first day just wandering around with my mouth open. I must have looked really dumb.”

“San Francisco has beauty but in those days it didn't have the hustle-bustle of New York,” he recalled. “Every person I encountered looked fired up and in a hurry to get somewhere like they had some important mission to perform. After that first day of rubber-necking, I knew I'd found my city. I also knew that someday I'd live in New York and establish my roots here. Yes, I knew it was in New York that I'd become famous … and rich.”

After all those one-nighters, Merv was happy to be booked for ten nights at the swanky Waldorf-Astoria. “I'd seen *Week-end at the Waldorf* with Lana Turner, and I was impressed. I even got to stay at the hotel, although I was assigned the maid's room. It must have been the maid's closet. Lana fared better in the movie.”

After closing at the Waldorf, Freddy told Merv that their next booking was the Strand Theater where the

orchestra would entertain between showings of *Johnny Belinda*, a film that would bring its star, Jane Wyman (Mrs. Ronald Reagan), an Oscar.

Merv remembered “shaking all over” as he made his first big appearance at a New York theater. The Waldorf debut had been in a relatively intimate nightclub, like the Mural Room in San Francisco, and he felt comfortable there. “I feared I'd forget the words to even my familiar songs. But when I led off with ‘Because,’ I knew I'd hit my stride.”

“At the end of the number, I expected deafening applause since I'd never played to such a big audience before,” he said. “Silence. I mean dead. You could hear a pin drop. I felt like I was going to have a stroke. Freddy and the band were also stunned. But they were pros and they continued on as I did.”

“I did all my hits,” he said. “Again nothing but silence. Even my novelty song, ‘Pecos Bill,’ didn't go over, and all the audiences went for it. I bombed with my popular ‘Miserlou,’ as well. Nothing but silence. I wanted to die. I'd bombed in a New York theater. I figured then and there that New Yorkers were the toughest audiences in the world.”

It was only when the curtain went down that both Freddy and Merv understood the deafening silence. The theater manager, as a publicity gimmick, had invited members of an organization of the deaf to see Wyman as a deaf mute. On screen they read the lips of Wyman and her co-star, Lew Ayres, but could not hear Merv's singing voice.

Benny Stillman, a music critic, covered the performance, writing the next day: “Merv Griffin has a compelling baritone voice. But I feel he is destined to enter the ranks as a second-rate Dennis Morgan since he doesn't have the range to take on Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatra. Yet Griffin sings as well as Fred Astaire if that is a compliment. There was something about him that made me think he would have done better singing with a Big Band in the 1930s. I think it highly unlikely that he will carve out much of a career as a crooner in post-war America.”

A few weeks later in Los Angeles when he would actually meet the star of *Johnny Belinda*, Jane Wyman herself, he'd relate the story of singing to a deaf audience. She did not seem amused, but her companion and her co-star in the picture, Lew Ayres, laughed.

As a kid growing up in San Mateo, Merv had read in all the fan magazines that Jane and her husband, Ronald Reagan, were the ideal American couple— he in uniform serving the country and she waiting at home for him with freshly baked cookies.

After meeting her, Merv understood a different reality. Jane appeared obviously in love with Lew Ayres. “The way she was holding onto Lew told me that the gal had gone bonkers over this handsome fella,” Merv said. “I was shocked to see her carrying on this way in public, as I hadn't read about her separation from Reagan. I was nervous and blurted out something stupid. ‘Where's Ronald Reagan? You should be with him—not this guy.’Needless to say, I wasn't asked to join them at the table.”

“In time Jane forgave me for my insensitivity,” Merv recalled. “Over the years we never became friends but acquaintances who nodded politely at parties. I think she resented my close bond with Reagan's new wife, Nancy. But Jane and I did have one great moment together in Los Angeles. One night when I was singing, she got up from her table and joined me in a duet. After hearing ‘In the Cool Cool Cool of the Evening,’ the audience applauded wildly.”

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While still appearing at the Strand in New York, Merv used to go out into the alleyway beside the theater for a breath of fresh air between performances. The alley opened onto the stage door of the Ethel Barrymore Theater, which had a hit play, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, starring Marlon Brando as Stanley

Kowalski and Jessica Tandy as Blanche Du Bois.

Every night Merv would encounter a young actor in the play, who was always polishing and checking out his motorcycle, which he'd parked in the alley. Even when he introduced himself to Merv as Marlon Brando, Merv didn't realize that the actor was the star of the play. “I thought he was an extra,” Merv said. “I'd never heard of Tennessee Williams either, and I just assumed that *Streetcar* was a musical, no doubt set in my native San Francisco, which is known for its streetcars, of course.”

At one point Merv asked Marlon if he sang any solos in the show. The actor burst into laughter and offered Merv one of his house seats for the Saturday matinee.

Marlon seemed less inclined to talk about *Streetcar* and pumped Merv for all the information he could about Freddy's band. “I'm a jazz musician myself. Just wait until you hear me play my bongo drums.”

Marlon was perhaps the most natural and uninhibited man Merv had ever met. “When he wanted to take a piss in the alleyway, he pulled it out in front of me and let it rain,” Merv recalled. “He made no attempt to conceal himself. For some reason, he liked me. I don't know why. He was so hip and I was so square.”

Years later, Merv recalled that he was shocked by Marlon's brutal but brilliant portrayal on stage. “The first shock came when I realized that he was the star of the show—not an extra. The second shock came when I saw that *Streetcar* wasn't a musical. In my naïve mind, I thought Broadway was nothing but musicals. At any moment, I expected to see Ethel Merman emerge to belt out a song, or at least Mary Martin. I was mesmerized and glued to my seat watching Marlon tangle with Jessica Tandy. In my future I'd see dozens of plays, but *Streetcar*, the first play I ever saw on Broadway, has remained my greatest moment in the theater. How could I have known that I'd become friends with not only its star but with Tennessee Williams, its author?”

Meeting Marlon that night in the alleyway between the theaters, Merv had nothing but effusive compliments for Marlon's performance. The actor seemed immune to praise and brushed off Merv's comments. “You seem to have a schoolgirl crush on me,” Marlon said. “Maybe we'd better do something about that. After we both get off tonight, meet me here in the alleyway, and we'll go for a ride on my motorcycle.”

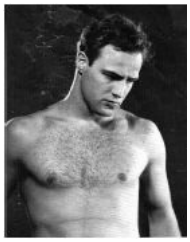
Midnight found Merv holding onto the muscled chest of the wild, sexy rebel, Marlon Brando, as they sped through the nearly deserted streets of New York City. At 2am, they ended up at Marlon's apartment on 57th Street.

Marlon woke up his roommate, the comedian Wally Cox. The men had been childhood friends when growing up in Nebraska. Naïve though he may have been, Merv soon realized that Wally and Marlon were lovers. The clue came when Marlon, in front of Merv, gave Wally a long, sloppy wet kiss with tongue.

Wally brought out a bottle of cheap red wine, and the men shared its contents in dirty, chipped glasses. The apartment smelled of feces and urine and was littered with garbage. Wally explained that Marlon kept a pet raccoon but that it had escaped that day. “It'll come back,” Marlon predicted. “It always does.”

To Merv's surprise, Marlon stripped completely nude and began to play his bongo drums, even though Wally warned him that the neighbors had been complaining about the noise.

“God damn it, Wally, don't be such a fussy old lady,” Marlon chastised him. “I want to show Merv here what a great jazz musician I am. If this acting thing doesn't work out, maybe Freddy Martin will hire me for his band.”



Marvelous **Marlon**

At 4am, Marlon finally abandoned the drums and rose to his feet. Merv could hardly miss the actor's erection. “Come on, Merv,” he said to his new friend. “I want you to join Wally and me in bed. He looks like just a little guy, but he's got a big surprise waiting for you.”

Although the details are missing, Merv later confided in Johnny Riley that he'd had a three-way that morning with Marlon and Wally. “They were lovers,” Merv said, “but hardly faithful to each other. Apparently, I wasn't the only guy they'd invited into their love nest. There had been many others.”

According to Johnny, Merv never had sex with either man again, although he became friends with both of them. “Marlon Brando loomed in my future,” Merv said. “When I left that dingy apartment about nine that morning, I didn't know I'd be taking over that rat-hole from them on a sublet. What an adventure that would be for me.”

Further New York adventures for Merv were put on hold when he reported to the Strand that night. In Merv's dressing room, Freddy informed him that the boys would soon be back on the bus heading for Los Angeles after a string of one-nighters in hick towns across America. He'd just booked the boys in his band into the legendary Cocoanut Grove at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

After the engagement came to an end at the Strand, Merv had only one free night, during which he attended a performance of Damon Runyon's *Guys and Dolls.* Unlike *Streetcar*, *Guys and Dolls* was what Broadway symbolized for him. It was a musical, even though he didn't understand most of the street talk delivered by the actors with their New York accents.

Years later, Marlon would star in the movie version of the musical. After seeing the film, he called Marlon. "And you laughed at me when I asked if you had any numbers in *Streetcar*," Merv said. "Well, I've seen you in a musical after all, and you can sing. Sort of … not as good as me, of course."

"I may not have sounded as good as you," Marlon countered, "but I sure beat out that rat fink, Frank Sinatra. What an asshole! Okay, so I've done a musical. Now it's your turn. Let me see you play Stanley Kowalski."

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Heading west on Freddy Martin's tour bus, Merv became bored with the series of one-night stands. After the excitement of New York, the American Heartland held little promise for him. "If you're an American, it makes sense to live only in New York or California," he said.

Looming before him was a four-month engagement at the Cocoanut Grove. All the movie stars went there every night, and Merv was determined to meet all of them.

"Merv was a star-struck kid," Freddy later recalled. "When we weren't playing, I retired to my dressing room, but Merv worked the room. He was a charming fellow, and nearly all the stars invited him to join their table. He got to know everybody who was anybody, and he had his radar out as to which table was the most important. He also formed friendships with some of the younger stars—Jane Powell, Elizabeth Taylor, Roddy McDowall, and especially Peter Lawford. Roddy in particular took to Merv right away and introduced him to an insider Hollywood that I had only heard about. I knew stars casually, but not intimately the way Roddy did, the way Merv would come to know them."

One night Merv was invited to join Clark Gable's table. "The King" introduced Merv to a young brunette starlet, Nancy Davis. Merv found her charming, and as the future Mrs. Ronald Reagan she would in time become his best female friend. When Nancy got up to "go powder my nose," Clark whispered to Merv, "You can have her if you want her. I'm dumping her. Go for it! She gives the best blow-job in Hollywood." Merv turned down the offer.

Still seated at Clark's table, Merv stood up to welcome Nancy back from the powder room. He couldn't believe that Clark had made such a disgusting remark about her. Nancy looked so prim and proper. He finally concluded that Clark was drunk and just making a vulgar joke.

He was stunned when Spencer Tracy and a companion walked up to Clark's table and was invited to sit down. Spencer and Clark had been friends since the 1930s, although it was clear to Merv that there was a sharp rivalry between them. At first Merv thought Spencer was dating a boy that night. After all, he'd heard all those homosexual rumors. It turned out to be Katharine Hepburn wearing pants, a hat pulled down over her face, and sunglasses. When she shook his hand and spoke to him, he immediately recognized her distinctive voice.

Katharine and Nancy had nothing to say to each other. At this point, Merv's new friend, Roddy, kept him abreast of all the Hollywood gossip. He already knew that Nancy had been a former lover of Spencer's, so the two women were not overly fond of each other.

On the Town: **Clark** (“The King”) **Gable** with
starlet **Nancy Davis (Reagan)**

“Clark, you made a big mistake when you turned down *The Philadelphia Story,”* Katharine said. “You would have been great in it.”

“Correction,” Clark said. “That was your picture. With you on the screen with me, I would have been no more than a prop.”

“Spencer here was supposed to play the other male lead,” Katharine said, turning to him. “Too bad, old man. You, too, missed out on doing a classic with me. “Could you imagine? Starring Katharine Hepburn, Clark Gable, and Spencer Tracy.”

“Watch it, kiddo!” Spencer cautioned. “I don't like the billing.”

Since Merv was left out of the banter, he drifted off to the next table of celebrities where he was welcomed by Joan Crawford, who remembered him from Pebble Beach. She, too, had been the lover of both Clark and Spencer. She introduced him to the handsomest man Merv had ever met in Hollywood. Rock Hudson, a young actor fresh out of the Navy. He was appearing in a small role as a pilot in *Fighter Squadron* at Warners. “He's new in town,” Joan said. “I'm showing him the ropes.”

“I like your singing,” Rock said. “Very romantic, and I'm a romantic kind of guy.”

Did Merv detect a wink? Even though Rock was dating a woman, Merv suspected that he was a homosexual. He became certain of it when Rock slipped him his phone number when Joan got up to greet Henry Fonda, who had costarred with her in *Daisy Kenyon*. During the filming, and again according to Roddy, Joan and Henry had had a brief, unsuccessful affair.

Hours before he actually appeared at the club that night, rumors spread that Frank Sinatra had booked the best table in the house. Merv knew that as a singer he wasn't in the same league as Frank and was “already shaking all over with nervousness at the prospect of singing before ‘The Voice.’”

“Sinatra can take a song and wrap his soul around it before one word comes out of his lips,” Merv said to Freddy. “His crooning makes girls swoon. But look at me. Chopped liver.”

“You'll do just fine,” Freddy assured him. “In fact, I want you to sing ‘I'll Never Smile Again’ and dedicate it to Frank.”

“I'd rather die!” Merv said.

“You're not going to get out of life that easy,” Freddy said.

Two hours later, at Freddy's command, Merv was indeed singing “I'll Never Smile Again.”

“I thought I heard my knees knocking,” he later said to Freddy. He feared that Frank would be rude during his number and perhaps talk loudly to a companion while Merv sang. He'd been known to do that when faced with performers he didn't like.

But on this night he did just the opposite. He paid attention. Too much attention as far as Merv was concerned. Although his face was enigmatic, Frank seemed to be studying him intently, as he smoked a cigarette and occasionally belted down some Scotch from a glass.

To make Merv even more nervous, Frank's companion that night was Lana Turner, who'd made a spectacular entrance into the club, wearing ermine and a white satin gown cut low. Roddy had told him that Lana had turned to Frank to help her get over a broken heart after Tyrone Power had jilted her.

After his number, Merv went backstage. He didn't dare approach Frank's table in the way he'd done with so many other stars. At Merv's request, a waiter brought him a glass of Scotch and soda. Merv felt he needed a bolt of liquor before attempting to go on again. Freddy's band was playing dance music as Merv looked out surveying the club audience. Frank was dancing with Lana.

“What's a gal like Lana doing with a skinny little wop like Sinatra?” Merv asked the waiter. “She could have any handsome hunk in Hollywood she wants. I bet his dick is no more than four inches long at full mast.”

“Don't kid yourself,” the waiter said. “The showgals here at the club claim he's got the biggest dick in Hollywood.”

“Oh, shit! A great voice and a big dick to go with it. I can't stand the competition.”

To his surprise, Freddy's next music was the song, “I'll Never Smile Again.” At the mike, Freddy announced, “Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a special surprise performance tonight. The one, the only Frank Sinatra.” The singer's appearance was met with thunderous applause.

Taking the microphone, Frank said, “Ladies and gentlemen, here's how ‘I'll Never Smile Again’ should be

sung.”

Merv burst into tears. He later told Freddy, “It was the most humiliating moment I've ever had in show business. I don't think I can face an audience again. I think I hate that bastard for what he did to me.”

“You'll recover,” Freddy said. “Get ready for your next number.”

“I can't go on in front of Sinatra again,” Merv protested.

“Don't worry! He and Lana have already left the room. But you're not off the hook yet.”

“What do you mean?”

“I just got word. Judy Garland has entered the room. She's sitting up front with Peter Lawford and another guy waiting for you to go on.”

“Oh, my God. Will my humiliations never end?”

Merv

Unlike Frank, Judy Garland was one of the most gracious stars he'd ever met. After his performance she invited Merv to join Peter Lawford and her at her pri- vate table. There Merv met a handsome young actor from Brooklyn, Tom Drake, who he immediately recognized as Judy's screen boyfriend in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), one of Merv's all-time favorite films.

More than any other actor in Hollywood, Tom fit the description of “the boy next door.” Indeed, his lasting claim to fame was those very words sung to him by Judy in the St. Louis film.

The sweet, soft-spoken Tom was in direct contrast to the charismatic Peter Lawford, whom Merv considered one of the handsomest actors in films. Tonight he was drunk, as was Judy. Only Tom seemed sober. At one point in the evening, he whispered to Merv. “Someone has to drive these two home tonight.”

Merv knew that Peter and Judy had had an affair in the early 1940s, which didn't last long. From it, a friendship had emerged. The night he met her,Merv sensed that Judy's emotional state was fragile. He appreciated Peter's sensitivity to the star. “To say that Peter was handling her with kid gloves is an understatement,” Merv later told Freddy. Even though Peter was drunk, he sensed how emotionally troubled Judy was and tried to soothe her, as if expecting an emotional disturbance at any minute.

Filled with too much booze, Judy was one of the most direct women Merv had ever known. Sometimes her honesty could be brutal. She didn't seem to mind whether she shocked people or not.

After he'd been at her table for less than 30 minutes, the talk became embarrassingly personal for him. “Do you know why I took up with Peter?” she bluntly asked Merv while glaring at Peter almost defiantly. “My fucking husband at the time, David Rose, was repulsed by cunnilingus, which is one of my favorite things. Peter here prefers that form of sex and is the world's expert on it. He won me over at once by giving me what David didn't. But, frankly, I think Peter likes to suck cock more than eat pussy. Don't you Peter?”

“From what I hear, Merv sucks cock too. We can be frank with each other.

After all, we're family. Let's invite Merv to join our little group.”

“I'd think that after this introduction, Merv might run in the other direction,” Peter said.

Judy Garland with **Peter Lawford**

“Not at all,” Merv chimed in. “You people are the most fascinating I've met so far in Hollywood. I want to be a part of your group.”

“Okay, kid,” Peter said, “But you don't know what you're getting in for. Before the night ends, we'll give you our phone numbers.”

That night didn't end until dawn. By four o'clock Merv was holding a sobbing Tom Drake in his arms, trying to comfort him. The actor had confessed that he was madly in love with Peter, who betrayed him at every turn. “He's never faithful to me,” Tom said. “I wait by the phone for him to call. I never know where he is from night to night. One night he's in the bed of Robert Walker, the next night with Lana Turner. Imagine being in love with a man who can't decide on his sexual preference.”

“Been there, done that,” Merv said.

For the past hour and a half, Peter had been upstairs in Judy's bedroom. He finally emerged, and Merv saw him walking down the steps clad only in his underwear. Pouring himself another drink, he told Merv and Tom that Judy was threatening suicide, and he had to spend the rest of the night with her. He'd promised to drive her to her psychiatric session that morning. “She's upstairs unleashing all those pent-up emotions. Right now she's launched into an attack on Vincente Minnelli, not that that rotten bastard doesn't deserve it.”

“Can I be of help?” Merv asked.

“You sure can,” Peter said. “Go upstairs and look after Judy until daylight comes.” He walked over to the sofa where Tom sat. “Right now I've got to look after Tom.”

As Merv left the room and headed up the stairs, he looked back at Peter and Tom. Tom was unfastening Peter's underwear.

In Judy's bedroom, he found her sobbing and demanding more booze. When she became aware of him for the first time, she reached out her arms. “Peter, hold me,” she said. “I'm afraid. Really afraid. I fear everything's about to come crashing in on me.”

He joined her in bed, holding her as she pressed her body up against his. He realized that she didn't want sex but love and comfort.

Before she drifted off into a coma-like sleep, she said, “Dear Peter, you've always been there for me. Hold me tight. Never let me go.”

He was still in her arms when a maid knocked on the door and entered. It was ten o'clock. “Please wake up Miss Garland,” the maid said to a sleepy Merv. “Mr. Lawford is waiting downstairs to drive her to her psychiatrist. Mr. Drake is with him.”

“Okay, we're getting up,” Merv said. “I'll wake up Judy.”

“That's easier said than done,” the maid said before leaving the room.

That night and early morning marked the beginning of Merv's tortured involvement with Judy Garland. For reasons known only to himself, he would leave his thick chapter on Judy out of his memoirs, and would even mislead his fans about when he'd actually met her. Perhaps he wanted to keep the Judy part of his life private from his public.

Before that troubled night had ended, Judy had finally figured out that it was Merv, not Peter, holding her. It was the beginning of a friendship, even a love affair, that would last until the day she died.

He later told Peter Lawford, “It was like a wild race around a mulberry bush, a race that had no ending and one that went on day and night, especially in the wee, wee hours of the morning, a time of terror for Judy.”

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Merv wanted to call Rock Hudson for a date but was afraid of rejection. “Yet he gave me his phone number,” he told Johnny Riley in a phone call. “Why would he do that if he didn't want me to call?”

“Call him,” Johnny urged. “It'll probably be the thrill of your life.”

The problem was solved when Rock showed up stag at the Cocoanut Grove one Friday night, sending a note backstage to Merv to join him after the show.

When Merv went on that night, he was more nervous than ever, knowing that Rock was out front, watching him, judging him. He wished that he'd taken his diet a little more seriously for the past month.

When he joined Rock later at table, Merv was put at ease at once. Rock seemed the most easy-going person he'd ever met. He was without airs and pretensions, and he spoke honestly and with candor about his life when he invited Merv to go for a midnight drive in the Hollywood Hills.

To test the waters, Merv said, “I was surprised when you asked me out. I feared my competition was that

effervescent blonde, Vera-Ellen."

"Oh, please," Rock said. "Let's get serious. My agent, Henry Willson, is deliberately trying to create a scandal. He knows that Vera is five years older than me, and Henry is hoping the scandal mags will pick up on my having an affair with an older woman. Actually, I'm not having an affair at all."

"Why would he want to provoke a scandal anyway?" Merv innocently asked.

Rock Hudson

"Better an exposé of me with an 'older' woman than the fact I'm living with a hot young guy at the moment."

"If he's so hot, why are you out with me?"

"It's my love of the chase," Rock said. "It's good to have prime beef at home, but even more exciting to capture something outside on the hoof."

"Thank God you chose me," Merv said. "I think you're the biggest stud ever to land in Hollywood."

"You flatter me." He looked into his rear-view mirror. "I do look pretty good. Henry thinks I should be more discreet. He's always trying to fix me up with guys from his stable. I don't want that. I think the chase is more thrilling sometimes than the actual sex." He paused. "Of course, both are great!"

Before the night ended, Rock had driven Merv to a lonely motel where they spent a total of three hours.

By the time Merv had kissed Rock good-bye and was delivered back to his hotel room, he placed an immediate call to Johnny Riley to tell him the news. "I got my man," he practically shouted into the phone.

"You are one lucky queer fellow," Johnny said.

Merv hesitated. "Well, half the night was great, but I don't know about the other part."

"Exactly what does that mean?" Johnny asked.

"I loved the sucking part, although the guy is a bull," Merv said. "But I'd never been penetrated before."

"I bet you loved every inch of it," Johnny said.

"Not at all," Merv said. "It was very painful. I even bled. The more I urged him to stop, the more excited he became. I don't know why guys like to get fucked. All pain, no pleasure."

"Does that mean you won't see Rock again?" Johnny asked.

"I've got a date with him tonight. He's a pain in the ass but the most exciting man I've ever been with in my life. Just to be with him, I'd go through torture."

"Merv Griffin, you may be the only homo in America who doesn't like getting fucked by Rock Hudson. If only it could have been me."

Details about the above-noted encounter between Merv and Rock were widely publicized in the late 1970s when Johnny Riley, after his breakup with Merv tried to shop a book proposal about his former friend to publishers in New York City. Merv had become a powerful figure in show business by that time, and each publisher who saw the material turned it down as too hot, and too potentially libelous, to handle.

Merv himself confirmed the details of his sexual and emotional encounter with Rock to show-biz agent Henry Willson when he and Merv became friends as a result of their mutual contact, Guy Madison, whom Merv had met during their appearance together in the 1953 film, *The Charge at Feather River*.

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Merv had met Roddy McDowall at least six times at the Cocoanut Grove before their friendship turned into something more intimate. Roddy always showed up at the club with a female star on his arm, even though it was no

secret that the British-born actor and former child star was “one of Hollywood's leading homos,” as gossip maven Hedda Hopper always claimed in private—never in print.

Merv had watched Roddy grow up on the screen, and had been captivated by him in such pictures as the 1943 *Lassie Come Home* and the 1944 *The White Cliffs of Dover*, in both of which he'd co-starred with Elizabeth Taylor, a child star Merv found mesmerizing.

Of all the male stars he'd met so far, Merv found Rock Hudson the handsomest and the sexiest. But for his tastes, Roddy was the most charming and charismatic. When Roddy talked, he brought you into his world and seemed to suck you into his orbit.

Even at that early stage in his career, Roddy seemed to know virtually everyone in Hollywood and was called “a friend to the stars.” At table at the Cocoanut Grove, Merv always admired Roddy's perfect diction and the way he spoke in clever lines. “I was a child thesp,” he once told Merv. “That's thespian with a T, my dear.” For the rest of his life, he would refer to Merv as “my dear.”

Roddy knew more about the secrets of Hollywood than any other star Merv had met—the covered-up scandals, the abortions, the furtive affairs, especially among married stars, the closeted homosexuals, the back alley deals, even the penis size of every popular male star, gay or straight. He worshipped the stars of the Golden Age—for example, tracking down Jean Arthur when she went into seclusion. He even kept in touch with the faded stars of the silent screen, including Louise Brooks and Alice Terry.

Roddy also told the most amusing stories, but never at the expense or embarrassment of anyone else.

“When I was appearing in *How Green Was My Valley*,” he said to Merv, “a studio publicist came to my dressing room. He'd been assigned to publicize me in the fan magazines. ‘What, little boy, would you like?’ he asked me. ‘A chocolate sundae with extra fudge?’”

“‘No,’ I almost shouted at him. ‘I want to meet Bette Davis!’”

Roddy McDowall

The publicist set up such a meeting, taking Roddy to the star's dressing room at Warner Brothers where she reigned as Queen. Ushered inside, Roddy met the great screen diva in person. Being worked over by a male hairdresser, Bette sat at her dressing room mirror, surveying her face. She looked Roddy up and down. “What do you want with me, young man?” she asked in that unmistakable voice of hers.

“When I grow up, I want to marry you,” he blurted out.

She burst into hysterical laughter before leaning over and giving him a big, sloppy, wet kiss on the mouth. “That, kid, is just a preview of the pleasures awaiting you. Now, go home and grow up! In the meantime, I've got to make up this tired old face of mine.”

Backstage at the Cocoanut Grove, Merv received a note delivered by a waiter. “Join us at table,” it said. “Love, Roddy.” Merv had finished his appearance for the night and eagerly entered the main floor of the club, wanting to know which star Roddy had brought to see him tonight. At table, Roddy introduced him to the bubbly, effervescent Jane Powell, whom Merv thought was “the cheeriest of the cinematic sopranos” on the screen.

It was the beginning of a long-lasting friendship between Merv and the star. Years later in recalling the beginning of their relationship, Merv said, “Dear, sweet Jane Powell belonged to a time when the world appreciated nice girls who lived next door with their rosy cheeks and birdlike voices. Those days are gone forever.”

Merv had seen Jane playing Walter Pidgeon's daughter in *Holiday in Mexico*, in which the character she played developed a crush on pianist José Iturbi, much to the chagrin of a young Roddy, playing her lovesick beau in the picture.

Roddy and Jane had bonded during the making of that film, and the singing star had become a regular fixture at the famous Sunday afternoon gatherings at his house. Many of the young stars of Hollywood gathered at Roddy's Sunday afternoon bashes. These gatherings were considered one of the most coveted invitations in Hollywood.

The night Merv met Jane was the same night Roddy invited Merv to his bash the following afternoon. Although

it was only Saturday night, Merv could hardly wait. He felt that his invitation to Roddy's house meant he'd been accepted into the inner circle of young Hollywood stars, even though he lacked the film credits of the other guests.

Roddy was popping up and down, constantly excusing himself to get up and greet other stars at table. This allowed Merv a chance to get to know Jane. Like all young stars of that time, she had only one thing on her mind—her career. “My great fear,” she confided, “is that Hollywood will grow tired of wholesome gals and will only cast *femmes fatales* in future roles, stars like Hedy Lamarr and Lana Turner. Elizabeth [Taylor] is a great friend of mine, but I think she's growing up too fast. She's appearing in her first adult film role with Robert Taylor. I predict she's going to turn sultry on the screen and dethrone Hedy herself.”

“Just keep on doing what you do best,” he told her. “The world will always love you for that. You and Judy Garland. I can't imagine Judy ever being a *femme fatale*.”

“Thanks, Merv,” Jane said, kissing him on the cheek. “Do you think Roddy is getting jealous having me sit here all alone talking to you?”

“Yeah, right,” Merv said. “Roddy is only jealous of you *in* the movies.”

She smiled that knowing smile of hers, and Merv sensed she wasn't as innocent about the dark alleys of Hollywood as she appeared.

That night at Freddy Martin's request, Jane agreed to perform what became one of her most famous musical numbers, “It's an Unusual Day,” from her latest film release, *A Date With Judy*. Merv was impressed with her delivery, a style she'd begun perfecting when she was only two years old. In spite of the sunny disposition she presented to the world, he suspected a lonely person lurking inside her. She seemed a bit lost in the confusing maze of Hollywood, and he knew of the enormous sacrifices she'd made to get as far in the business as she had.

Back at table, she received his congratulations on her number. “All my life I've wanted to be a singer. How about you?”

“All I wanted was to be a piano player,” he told her. “But other people had other ideas.”

Later, when Jane excused herself to go to the women's room, Roddy whispered in Merv's ear that he'd like to get together with him for a drink in Merv's hotel room. Merv eagerly invited him, suspecting how the night might go. Rumors of Roddy's fabulous endowment had already reached his ears.

He found Roddy handsome and sexually appealing but feared he wouldn't live up to Roddy's standards as a lover. After all, Roddy had seduced some of the biggest male stars in Hollywood. Only two years or so ago, as the rumor mill had it, Roddy had shared Peter Lawford with both Lana Turner and Elizabeth Taylor.

After Roddy had put Jane in a taxi to take her home, he accompanied Merv up to his hotel room at the Ambassador. Merv would remember that early morning as one of the most memorable experiences of his life.

He was eager to tell someone about it, but had no confidant he could trust until his friend from San Francisco, Johnny Riley, arrived in town the following week. Merv supplied Johnny with all the juicy details.

“Roddy was all over me the moment we got into my room,” Merv claimed. “As you well know, I'm pretty basic when it comes to sex. Roddy, on the other hand, is the world's greatest oral artist. He knows erotic zones on the human body I'd never even contemplated. Only problem is, he wants you to reciprocate. It was a bit much for me. I call him the jawbreaker. That damn thing of his looks halfway normal when it's soft, but it just grows and grows and grows.”

“We carried on so much Saturday night that it was all we could do to make it to Roddy's Sunday afternoon house party,” Merv claimed. “The host was almost late for his own party.”

Merv was so foolish and naïve in those days that he virtually confessed to Roddy that he'd fallen for him, all in one night. Roddy quickly realized he had a lovesick puppy on his hands. With great kindness, Roddy had to inform Merv that sex could only be a sometime thing between them.

“I was heartbroken and terribly disappointed,” Merv told Johnny. “I thought I'd found the man of my dreams, only to learn that Roddy had a constant string of boyfriends coming and going.”

“I wanted the relationship to be permanent,” Merv told Johnny. “But Roddy had other ideas. He was always after the next cute boy, and I wanted to settle down. Alas, my life. He would have been a great lover—and most amusing—to come home to.”

Roddy had such a great capacity for friendship that he managed to lower Merv down to earth gradually without tramping on his feelings too harshly. He was known in Hollywood for sustaining relationships, even with lovers he'd more or less discarded. Merv would be among them.

They became friends for life, standing by each other as their careers went on roller-coaster rides. Their relationship would continue even more deeply into the 1950s when Roddy left Hollywood, a town that had more or

less abandoned him, to try his luck on the Broadway stage and in stock. Roddy's film career had more or less collapsed, and he stood by Merv when the same thing happened to him.

“Roddy was not only a supportive friend,” Merv later recalled to Johnny, “but he kept me supplied over the years with more boyfriends than I could handle. I once called him in New York and said, ‘Hey, pal, cool it with all those handsome hunks. Who do you take me for? The Whore of Babylon? On second thought, keep sending ‘em!’”

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Merv arrived with Roddy at his house just as Ann Blyth was emerging from her car. After Roddy introduced them, he disappeared to get ready for the remaining guests. Merv agreed to serve as bartender, which wasn't difficult since all Roddy served were soft drinks.

At that point in her life, Ann had long grown tired of hearing compliments and comments about her role as Joan Crawford's bitch daughter, Veda, in the classic, Oscar-winning wallow, *Mildred Pierce* (1945). He had heard of how she'd suffered a broken back in a sledding accident at Lake Arrowhead and had to spend a long convalescence, more than a year and a half, in a back brace.

After inquiring about how she felt, Merv and Ann talked about what a wonderful woman Joan Crawford was, and about Ann's ambitions as a singer. By the time the next guest arrived, Merv and Ann had agreed to do a big oldfashioned film musical together.

That dream never came to be, of course. In one of the ironies of Hollywood, he eventually found himself costarring with Kathryn Grayson, Ann's chief rival at MGM. As the years passed, Merv watched the rise and fall of his fellow singer, even when Ann raised eyebrows at the 1954 Academy Awards. Despite the fact that she was seven months pregnant, she appeared before the world singing Doris Day's hit, “Secret Love,” from *Calamity Jane.*

Although the critics panned her, Merv loved her starring role in *The Helen Morgan Story* (1957), wherein she performed such hits as “Can't Help Lovin’ Dat Man.”

Ann was furious and humiliated when the studio decided to dub her own wonderful voice with that of another singer, the highly emotive Gogi Grant. To Merv, Ann's performance captured in perfect detail the kerchief-holding, liquor-swilling torch singer whose train wreck of a personal life seemed destined for celluloid.

It was with dismay that Merv in the 1970s watched Ann in TV commercials play the typical American housewife for Hostess in their Twinkie, cupcake, and fruit-pie commercials. “But,” as he noted, “in show business, a gig is a gig.”

That next guest at Roddy's party turned out to be a young actor, Darryl Hickman. Merv found him to be a captivating personality, although he would forever be confused with his better-known brother, Dwayne, who would one day achieve a cult following on TV for playing Dobie Gillis. Merv had seen both brothers emote in *Captain Eddie* (1945), in which Darryl had been cast as the aviator Eddie Rickenbacker as a boy.

Ann Blyth (left) playing
über-bitch
to Mommie Dearest
Joan (Mildred)
Crawford (Pierce)

Merv had first become aware of Darryl when he appeared in *The Grapes of Wrath* with Henry Fonda in 1940. Like Judy Garland, the performer had grown up in show business, having been discovered at the age of 13. Most recently Merv had seen the actor in *Any Number Can Play*, starring Clark Gable.

Merv didn't know if Darryl was gay or straight, but he later confessed to Roddy that he almost made a play for him to see what might happen.

“Like a bolt of lightning, and just as I was about to put the moves on him, he let go with a startling confession,” Merv told Roddy. “He said he was seriously considering abandoning acting to enter a monastery. Talk like that can

really take the air out of a hard-on. Think Bette Davis in *Winter Meeting*."

In 1951, Darryl lived up to his promise, and did indeed enter a monastery. It didn't surprise Merv at all. But he predicted that Darryl's stay among the monks wouldn't work out. "When you've appeared with such stars as Barbara Stanwyck, Gene Tierney, Alan Ladd, Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn, and Shirley Temple, how can you settle for some stinking old monks who aren't even allowed to jerk off?" Merv said. Lasting only a year in the monastery, Darryl returned to Hollywood once again to find his place in the sun, only to find that that sun wasn't burning too brightly for him.

Elizabeth Taylor was the last to arrive at Roddy's bash, and she made the grandest entrance. All eyes turned on her. Roddy introduced her to Merv at once—the star knew all the other guests—but it was an hour before Merv was able to corner Elizabeth alone.

He finally captured his "prize" when he saw Darryl leave her side to answer a phone call. "Alone at last," he said to Elizabeth.

"It's great to meet you," Elizabeth said, flashing her violet-colored eyes at him. "A coincidence, really, I'm going to the Cocoanut Grove next week to hear you sing. Lana Turner told me you really know how to deliver a romantic ballad."

"I'm surprised she noticed me with Frank Sinatra at her side," Merv said.

As Elizabeth talked to him, she would often tenderly take his hand. He looked directly into her eyes, which he considered the most enchanting he'd ever seen on the screen.

With those eyes, she seemed to take him into her confidence, as if allowing him to join her inner circle. But, for all he knew, she did that with everybody she met.

Top Tomato:
Elizabeth Taylor

Both of them looked across the patio at Roddy moving gracefully among clusters of his guests. "When I first met Roddy," she said reflectively, "I felt he was my twin. That we'd been separated at birth. He conceals the loneliness of his childhood— something I know a lot about—with a spontaneous playfulness. He is Peter Pan."

"Roddy told me that he's signed you up to our Sunday afternoon club," she said, smiling at him.

He'd later tell Roddy, "I don't know if she knows it or not, or what you told her about us, but Elizabeth seems the least judgmental of any person I've ever met. She seems to recognize that all people have needs—and that love takes many forms."

"Roddy might have grown into a man who loves women," she said, "if not for his mother,Winifriede. She doted on him almost obsessively. For years she even dressed Roddy like his older sister, Virginia. She wanted to make dolls out of them, not living, breathing children. My mother did that to me too. I think she came to regard me as a beautiful porcelain doll, not a little girl trying desperately to grow up in the spotlight."

"My mother regarded me as a fat, pudgy kid," he said.

She reached for his hand again. "Don't ever get fat. Once you've established a romantic image, fat is out. I gathered you didn't have a domineering mother like Roddy and me. That's good. It's easier to break away when you don't have apron strings tied in knots around you. Both Roddy and I are trying to establish independent lives." She looked across the patio once again at her friend. "What he's doing with these Sunday afternoon gatherings is trying to re-create a new family for himself. Welcome, kissin' cousin."

Without thinking of what he was saying, Merv blurted out, "Can I take you out some time? I mean … not like a real date. We could be friends."

She leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Of course, you can. Like a friend. Like the relationship I have with Roddy. We don't have to sleep together. We can find other people to perform that dirty deed." She leaned over close to his ear. "Sometimes I need an escort when I can't be seen in public with the object of my desire."

"You mean like when he's married or something?"

“Exactly. I'll tell you a secret. Don't tell anybody. You know who's picking me up three blocks from Roddy's house tonight? Robert Taylor.” She giggled like the sixteen-year-old she really was.

“Don't let Barbara Stanwyck find out,” he cautioned.

“That's not a real marriage,” she said, wanting to dismiss the subject. “They just live together. I've just played my first real grown-up role in *The Conspirator* with Bob. I'm an American debutante, and he's a Communist spy. Just imagine: Here I am playing love scenes with a man who's thirty-eight. When we shot our love scenes, he always stuck his tongue down my throat. The only thing he doesn't like about me is my legs. He's threatening to shave the hair off them himself.”

Merv rose to his feet as did she when they spotted Roddy coming across the patio to say something to them. “Louis B. Mayer told Roddy and me that both of us would be washed up by the time we turned seventeen,” she said. “He cited Shirley Temple as an example. Both Roddy and I are determined to prove Mayer wrong. Another shit, Hedda Hopper, warned me about the perils of having been a child star. ‘There is no second act for children in the movies,’ she told me. ‘What awaits a child star? A decline in fans. A dwindling bank account. Personal disasters in relationships. Booze. And, dare I say it, premature death. Most child stars can't adjust to life when the sound of applause no longer rings in their ears.’ Charmingly reassuring, that Hedda.”

A beaming Roddy appeared before them, looking fresh-faced and innocent, as if the past night with Merv had never happened. He kissed Elizabeth on the cheek, taking her arm. “Hot dogs are now being served. He turned to Merv. “I've got the most divine creature I want you to meet. You'll flip.”

“I've already flipped over you,” Merv said.

“By tomorrow morning, you will have forgotten all about me. Wait until you meet Richard Long. He should be arrested for being so handsome.”

“Oh, you guys,” Elizabeth said, leading the way across the patio.

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Roddy flitted from lover to lover, breaking hearts along the way. But often he didn't leave his jilted lover completely deserted. He procured other loves for the young men he deserted. He never called it procuring, as some did, but preferred to say he hooked up former lovers with “new talent.”

Such was the case when he introduced Merv to Richard Long. The face of this young actor had already enthralled Merv when he'd seen him in *The Egg and I*, playing Tom Kettle, whose movie parents were Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride. Merv and Richard bonded over hot dogs. Merv learned that Richard feared he'd been trapped in the Ma and Pa Kettle hillbilly flicks since the studio was determined to make an ongoing series of them.

Working it Out: **Rock Hudson** (left)
with **Richard Long**.
In the background, keeping things
safely hetero, is a publicity pinup of
Yvonne de Carlo

As the sun set in the West and Roddy's party was winding down, Merv remained at Richard's side. As Merv would later tell Johnny Riley, “If any man in the world could cure me of a broken heart after my one-night stand with Roddy, it is Richard Long.”

Richard whispered to him as the other guests were leaving that Roddy had invited both of them to stay over for the night, using his guest room. Merv was thrilled at the prospect of getting to sleep with this good-looking and charming young man.

When Merv later met with Johnny, his friend was eager for all the details. “There's not a lot to tell,” Merv

claimed. “Unlike Roddy, who is all over you, Dick is a gentleman in bed. He does it the old-fashioned way. It's all very satisfying. I think I've fallen madly in love with him.”

Merv was poised for another heartbreak. After only three sleepovers at Roddy's, Richard informed Merv of his decision. “I'm not a homosexual, and I don't care to be one. I've had some experiences in Hollywood with men, but I want to get back on the straight-and-narrow path. I plan to have a big career in Hollywood, and rumors of homosexuality would destroy that for me.”

“But we could keep on seeing each other in secret,” Merv protested.

“I'm sorry,” Richard said. “I've got to cut this off. I think you're someone I could really care for, and I just can't let that happen.”

To make matters worse, Richard even told Merv that he should start dating and being seen with attractive young women. “There's already been a lot of talk about you,” he said. “You've got to change that and get involved with a woman even if it's not in your heart.”

Richard was a man of his word. In 1954 Merv heard that he'd married Suzan Ball, a cousin of Lucille Ball. But she would die of cancer the following year at the age of 21. In 1957 Merv's former lover would marry the actress and model, Mara Corday, with whom he was living at the time of his early death of multiple heart attacks in 1974. Richard was only 47 at the time. Merv sent the largest wreath of flowers to the funeral but did not enclose a card identifying the source.

Merv thought seriously about Richard's warning about both of their careers. Even though he didn't want to start dating women, he knew it was a smart move. He didn't think Rock Hudson or Tab Hunter wanted to date women either, but it was what was expected of male heartthrobs. Dating a woman, he knew, didn't have to lead to the bedroom.

Richard had hardly exited from Roddy's front door before Elizabeth Taylor spotted Merv and beckoned him over. Standing beside her was a young woman.

“Merv,” Elizabeth said, “I want you to meet Judy Balaban.”

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Merv later wrote that Judy, a bright, lovely young redhead, “was nineteen going on thirty-five.” That was true. He also claimed that “we fell madly in love,” and that was not true. He genuinely liked Judy and they began dating, but it was never a serious romance on his part.

Instead of “my one true love,” as he claimed to his friends, Judy became “my best gal pal ever.” She was smart, fun, amusing, a kindred soul, and she could make him laugh, which she did at every opportunity. Most of the time he spent with her they played practical jokes on their friends.

When Merv would take Judy home, he'd give her a quick kiss on the lips, and that was about it for heavy romance. He genuinely liked Judy and wanted to be with her as much as he could. As the days turned into weeks, she fell in love with Merv and wanted to go on the road with him and Freddy's band when their engagement at the Cocoanut Grove came to an end.

Normally, the bandleader didn't allow girlfriends or even wives to travel on the road with his musicians. For Merv, he made an exception, as he genuinely liked Judy.

Her father, Barney Balaban, was a powerful figure in the movie industry, operating out of offices in New York. Along with his five brothers from Chicago, he'd founded the Balaban and Katz Theatre Chain. In 1936, Barney had moved to New York where he became president of Paramount Pictures, a post he held until 1964.

He was eased out of Paramount as the studio came under the control of Gulf + Western. Before that, he was a man to be feared. He also was a deeply religious Jew and overly protective of his daughter, Judy.

Freddy Martin had not wanted to offend Barney by denying his daughter's request. It was only later that the bandleader learned that he'd made Barney furious by allowing his daughter to travel on the road with his band and a *goy*.

“I knew what Merv was doing,” Freddy later said. “Merv was desperately trying to establish his credentials as a straight boy. There had been too much talk in the other direction. Dating Judy was a career move on his part. Throughout the rest of his life he'd have some gal on his arm. Since I didn't think Merv and Judy would be making the bedsprings squeak at night, I allowed her to travel with us.”

More publicity pinups:
Boy singer **Merv**

As was obvious to the boys in the band, Judy was far more entranced by Merv than he was with her. Even so, their so-called romantic fling set off alarms in Barney, who referred to Merv as “that Irish Catholic son of a whore.”

To break up their romance, he dispatched the famous New York show business columnist, Leonard Lyons, to see Merv and talk him out of dating Judy. Following strict instructions from Barney, Lyons met with Merv in New York, making his pitch that religious differences between Judy and Merv would doom a potential relationship and most definitely would “ruin” a marriage.

When Merv refused to listen to that line of reasoning, Lyons got tougher. “Barney knows a lot about you, Griffin. You wouldn't want me to publish some of what we know in my column. It's read by everybody in show business. It could destroy your promising career.”

“Get out!” Merv ordered Lyons. He was furious that Barney would send the columnist to threaten him. If anything, it made him more determined than ever to stay with Judy. There was a rebellious streak in him, and he even began to seriously consider marriage.

However, Roddy warned him against it, pointing out that Lyons would not come out and say he was a homosexual in print, but could make veiled references. He cited several instances where Cary Grant was “outed” by columnists in the 1930s, long before that term was invented.

Merv felt that once he was safely married to Judy, rumors about his homosexuality would be laid to rest. Judy was in Los Angeles when he called her and asked her to fly to Las Vegas where he was booked into The Last Frontier. He promised her that at the end of his engagement there, he'd marry her in one of the local chapels.

Somehow Dorothy Kilgallen learned of this marriage proposal and broke the news in her column. Barney was traveling in Paris with his wife when the column appeared, and he canceled his vacation, flying home at once to prevent the marriage of his daughter to Merv.

When Judy went to the studio cashier at Paramount in Hollywood, the woman in charge refused to issue her a ticket to Las Vegas or to give Judy any spending money. “I'm sorry, Miss Balaban, but I have my instructions. No ticket, no money.”

Ferociously protective father,
Merv-hater,
and president of Paramount
Pictures :
Barney Balaban

After his appearance in Las Vegas, Merv flew to Los Angeles to meet with Judy. He learned that her parents were en route to the West Coast for a showdown. Kilgallen continued to run several items in her column about their upcoming marriage, and about how it did not have parental approval. Merv later recalled that “Kilgallen treat- ed the event like a scenario for a spy movement, tracking our movements from coast to coast.”

A singing engagement caused Merv to fly at once to New York where Judy promised to join him soon. Without

Merv, she confronted her parents who threatened to disinherit her. Still claiming that she was in love with Merv, she borrowed the money from a friend and flew to New York to join him.

But after only a few weeks there, reality set in. Perhaps she realized that Merv wasn't really in love with her, but wanted to use her for some welcome boy/girl publicity.

At the time, Merv's agent was an ambitious young man named Jay Kanter. Astonishingly, Jay functioned at various points of his career as the agent for Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, and Marlon Brando as well. One night over dinner at a restaurant in Little Italy, Merv introduced Judy to Jay. It was love at first sight. Within the week, Jay, with Merv's approval, began dating Judy. Merv had already told Jay that, “I'm not ready for marriage,” And in a phone call to Roddy in Hollywood, Merv told him, “My affair with Judy was the romance that never was.”

At the marriage ceremony for Judy Balaban and Jay Kanter in 1953 Marlon Brando was best man, and Rosemary Clooney, the singer, was one of the bridesmaids. Clooney would go on to become one of Merv's closest women friends. Judy's marriage to Kanter would produce two children and end in 1961, the same year she went on to marry actor Tony Franciosa. In 1956, Judy was famously associated with Princess Grace of Monaco, when she served as one of her bridesmaids during her marriage ceremony to Prince Rainier of Monaco.

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Back on the West Coast for a return engagement at the Cocoanut Grove, Merv discovered that he had had a loyal devotee of his singing long before he ever had a fan club.

It was the eccentric and elusive billionaire, Howard Hughes.

Before Merv actually met him, he'd read all the magazine stories and heard all the rumors going around Hollywood. Some of the aviator's story was known to the world, including how he became the richest teenager in America upon the death of his father. His exploits in aviation, including an around-theworld flight, had been highly publicized, as was his attempt to build his controversial “Spruce Goose,” one of the great airline development failures of World War II.

His romances with such screen beauty queens as Billie Dove and Lana Turner were fodder for the fan magazines. Although he was believed to have actually gone to bed with Ginger Rogers, Merv had heard that his celebrated romance with Katharine Hepburn was more for public consumption than the boudoir. Rumor had it that she was “mostly dyke” anyway.

After her affair with Howard in the late 1930s, Bette Davis had spread malicious gossip about him, strongly suggesting that he was more homosexual than heterosexual. Gossip had it that on the set of his most notorious film, *The Outlaw*, Howard had pursued Jack Buetel, who played Billy the Kid, instead of busty Jane Russell.

Howard was known to stash a bevy of hopeful starlets in various apartments in Hollywood, promising each of them future stardom at RKO. But, or so it was said, he never got around to seducing most of them, although he paraded them out for public viewing at such clubs as the Cocoanut Grove. These women were trivialized as “arm candy,” and Merv would later use Howard as a role model when he, too, arrived at public gatherings with a glamorous woman on his arm, most visibly Eva Gabor during his later life.

Every night at the Grove, Howard brought a different woman. Sometimes they were famous, including Jane Greer, but most of the time these young aspirant actresses were starlets destined never to find stardom. Many of them eventually became housewives, the highlight of their lives being their dates with Howard.

“He was a creature of habit,” Merv later said. “During my entire engagement, I could always count on his being in the audience except for that rare night when he failed to show up. You'd think that a bigwig like Howard would have better things to do in life than listen to me sing. The waiters told me he always ordered the same thing, a big dish of vanilla ice cream. But not any ice cream. Howard didn't like the vanilla served at the Ambassador. So he sent over shipments of some ice cream he'd discovered so it would be available to him. He was also obsessive in his music tastes. Every night he requested the same song from me. Arhumba I sang in Greek called ‘Miserlou.’”

Wealthiest Man, Most Beautiful
Woman: **Howard Hughes**
with **Ava Gardner**

Merv dutifully sang that song night after night, directing it toward Howard. For his kindness, Howard slipped him a one-hundred dollar bill every night. “This surprised me because Howard was not known as a big tipper, at least among the waiters who always complained about their gratuity. When Saturday night came around, I had made more from Howard's tips than Freddy Martin paid me for the whole week.”

Other than requesting that one song, Howard had nothing to say to Merv and never invited him to table as did other big stars such as Clark Gable. That was why Merv was surprised when a waiter came to his dressing room one night with an invitation from Howard to join him and a lady friend at table.

“Apparently, Howard had heard that I was star-struck, and he wanted to thank me for singing all those ‘Miserlous.’After my performance, I hightailed it to his table. There sat the very luscious and very drunk Ava Gardner. Other than Elizabeth Taylor, she was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen. I could only imagine how great she looked when sober. Howard didn't have much to say, but Ava not only drank a lot but talked like a drunken sailor. She was the most vulgar woman I'd ever met, but utterly fascinating.”

Seated at table with Howard, with Ava between them, Merv sensed at once that the battling pair had just had a big fight, perhaps moments before his arrival. At the time of his meeting with them, they were already famous for their feuds, many of their explosive arguments turning violent. The musician, Artie Shaw, Ava's former husband, had told Freddy Martin that, “Hughes regularly beats the shit out of Ava, and that bitch has sent our aviator friend to the hospital on more than one occasion.”

Turning her back to Howard,Ava took Merv's hand and stared deeply into his eyes in her most seductive manner. “Howard here thinks he can buy me, but I ain't for sale, sugartit. He even offered Elizabeth Taylor a million dollars in gems, and still she said no. Liz and I are the only cunts in Hollywood who can't be bought. I'm more tantalized by the size of a man's cock than I am by the size of his bank account. Surely you agree.”

“I wouldn't know, Miss Gardner,” he said, startled at her bluntness. “I like girls. As for cock sizes, I don't think I've ever got around to measuring my own.”

“Don't worry,” she said, “I'll do it for you some night. So sorry if I offended you. But one of the boys in Freddy's band told me that you'd had him before I got around to him.”

“Well, he lied!” Merv said, offended by her accusation. “Hollywood is known for its unfounded gossip. Isn't that how Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons make their living?”

“Suit yourself, little darling,” she said. “But you can ask your friend, Roddy McDowall. He'll tell you I'm very understanding about such matters. Even with Howard here.” She turned and looked rather disdainfully at her host. “Howard may be my date for tonight, but you've got to understand that appearances are meaningless in Hollywood. He'll take me home and get rewarded with a kiss on the cheek—that's it. For all I know, morning will find him waking up in bed with Tyrone Power.”

Howard sat in stony silence listening to her drunken tirade.

Since Ava had been provocative with him, Merv uncharacteristically decided to strike back. “If you care so little for Mr. Hughes, why do you date him?”

“Good question, honey chile. He makes life easy for me. If I want to go to Mexico, a plane is waiting. If I need a first-class seat to New York at the last minute, one suddenly becomes available, even if Howard has to bump Cary Grant. Speaking of Cary, dear Howard has ‘bumped’ him a lot.”

Not surprisingly, she'd hit a delicate nerve in Howard. He became furious. In a voice dripping with sarcasm, he said, “Ava, would you shut your fucking mouth? You're a lush. If you keep on drinking, what beauty you now have

will be gone in three years. Then you'll be just another broken-down old alcoholic broad, a has-been. The Hollywood Hills are full of them, talking about how big they were in 1933. When all you pussies are faded celluloid memories, the world will still be talking about Howard Hughes."

"Yeah!" she said with utter contempt, her face flashing her fury. "They'll be talking all right. They'll mock you for being eccentric. Read that crazy." Diverting her eyes momentarily to Merv, she said, "Know something, kid. The real reason I don't go to bed with Long John here is that Lana Turner told me he gave her syphilis." She suddenly stood up and reached for her drink. Impulsively she tossed it in Howard's face.

She stormed out of the nightclub, as a waiter rushed with a white napkin to help dry Howard off, but he shooed him away. Flabbergasted, Merv sat there, not knowing what to do. He wanted to flee to his dressing room, but Howard signaled for him to remain seated.

Without bothering to wipe his alcoholic-soaked face, he turned to Merv. "Pat DiCicco, Errol Flynn, and I are going to play a game of tennis tomorrow morning before it gets too hot. I've played with your Uncle Elmer. He's good. I hear you play well, too. Why not team up with me to stand off Pat and Errol? How about it? Give me your phone number. I'll call you in the morning about picking you up here at the hotel."

At first Merv couldn't believe that Howard would pick him as a tennis partner. "I'd be honored. But I must warn you: I'm not as good as my uncle."

"Neither am I."Without another word, Howard stood up and left the table. Within a minute, he was back. Please come with me," he urged Merv. "I need to go to the men's room to clean up. But the door is shut, and I never touch doorknobs. Too many germs."

"Gladly, Mr. Hughes."

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On the tennis court that Sunday morning, Howard was growing impatient. Along with Merv and Pat DiCicco, he'd already waited forty-five minutes for that swashbuckler, Errol Flynn, to show up. Not a man to waste time, Howard made telephone calls to his staff. In those days if you worked for Howard, you had to make yourself available to receive his calls, not just on Sunday morning, but at three o'clock on any other morning as well.

Merv didn't mind the wait, as he was intrigued by the handsome but notorious Pat DiCicco, who was always appearing in the gossip columns involved in one scandal after another. With a suntan and in his tennis whites, Pat dazzled him. He would later confide to Roddy that, "Pat has the world's most beautiful legs, far better than Betty Grable's, at least for my taste."

Most tennis shorts in those days were loose fitting, but not Pat's. They were so tightly tailored that they revealed what looked like an ample endowment. Merv kept glancing at Pat's package. Once Pat caught him, but only smiled his approval. He scooted down on the bench, as his shorts rode higher, giving Merv an even better view. "In my business, it pays to advertise," Pat said. Merv wasn't sure exactly what business Pat was engaged in, and he pondered the nature of Pat's relationship with the mysterious Howard Hughes.

Several times that morning, Pat had called Howard "Lambie," which seemed to be his nickname for the aviator. Merv couldn't imagine a less appropriate name for Howard.

Pat had been famously married—first to actress Thelma Todd in 1932 and later to the heiress Gloria Vanderbilt in 1941. Both women had been former girlfriends of Howard. The oily Egyptian actor, Alexander d'Arcy, had once said, "Pat would fuck a rattlesnake if he thought it would advance his career." That pronouncement had spread among the gossips of Hollywood.

Pat's first wife, Thelma Todd, had died mysteriously on December 16, 1935, a year after her divorce from Pat, when she was discovered in a car parked in a garage. It was ruled at the time by the then-notoriously corrupt Los Angeles District Attorney's office that she'd committed suicide, dying of carbon monoxide poisoning. Merv had heard that the mob had ordered her murdered, and that Pat somehow was involved. But instead of making Pat a sinister figure to Merv, the notoriety made him all the more appealing.

Gigolo, stud, and
ace tennis player
Pat DiCicco

Finally a hung-over Errol arrived at the tennis courts. Even though worse for wear, he still looked dashingly handsome, though not as much so as when Merv had first met him in the 1930s at his Uncle Elmer's. At first Merv wasn't sure if the star would remember him, as there had been a long line of young boys and girls in Errol's life since their adventure. Merv had been young and pudgy when he'd first encountered Errol lying naked in his uncle's living room. Merv's appearance had changed drastically since then.

Errol came right up to Merv and kissed him on both cheeks. “You're looking great, pal,” he said. “Trimmed down, I see. I'll be at the Grove next week to catch your act.” As he turned to see Howard approaching the court, Errol hugged Pat, also kissing him on both cheeks. “C'mon, mate,” he said to Pat, “let's beat hell out of these two fairies.” He winked at Merv to indicate that he was only joking.

Maybe Errol was still drunk from the night before, but he lost the game for his team. Merv and Howard easily beat Errol and Pat. Howard seemed elated, inviting them for a plane ride that afternoon to Catalina Island.

On the way to the showers, Errol whispered to Merv, “Pat and I deliberately let him win. If Howard loses, he's furious for the rest of the day. He'd get back at us for winning, so we never win. Got that, sport?”

There were six shower booths with moldy plastic curtains. Still shy about nudity, Merv stripped off his tennis whites and took the first shower where he began soaping himself. He was about two minutes into his hot shower, when the curtain was pulled back. There stood Errol Flynn as nude as the first day Merv had met him. His body was not as lean and lithe as Merv had remembered, it, but he was still matinee handsome and seductively attractive.

“If I remember correctly what you like—and I do—I want you to know that here I am,” Errol said. He stepped inside Merv's shower booth and placed a firm hand on the back of Merv's neck. Merv seemed to follow the command of that hand, finding himself on his knees on the floor of that still-running shower, servicing Errol as he'd done as a kid. “You've improved,” Errol said, offering encouragement. “You must have been practicing.”

Errol must have had a lot to drink the night before, because it took him a long time to climax. As Merv was getting to his feet and Errol was soaping himself, the shower curtain opened again. A nude Pat DiCicco stood there. “You may have seen him first, but I'm next!”

Before Rainier and the
French connection:
Grace Kelly with
Bing Crosby

On the plane ride to Catalina, Howard honored Merv by letting him sit up front with him, while Errol and Pat occupied the seats in the rear. For the duration of the flight, Merv thought about only two things—the delectable taste of Pat DiCicco's cock, which he actually preferred to that of his former idol, Errol Flynn, and his chance meeting with Bing Crosby.

Although just as sweaty as they were, Howard had not joined the men in the showers. Merv had heard that he was quite shy. As Merv emerged fully dressed with Pat and Errol, he saw Howard chatting in the corner of the court with Bing Crosby and a very young honey blonde who looked like a princess. He was astonished when he realized that the court was being taken over by Bing and this dazzling creature.

Unlike Sinatra, who seemed jealous of other singers, Bing was more confident and self-assured. “Freddy Martin tells me you're the best male singer he's ever had,” Bing said, extending his hand. “I've been meaning to drop in to the Grove one night to catch your act.”

“I'd be honored, Mr. Crosby,” Merv said. “But it might take more guts than I have to perform before the world's greatest singer.”

“You're far too kind,” Bing said.

Merv was astonished that the singer did not introduce him to his demure companion. She smiled at Merv, and he smiled back—and that was the extent of their meeting. Years later, Merv would insist that Bing's companion at the time was Grace Kelly.

If Merv were correct in his identification of the starlet, that would mean that Bing and Grace had begun an affair long before it was generally assumed that they did and much before the 1954 release of their joint film, *The Country Girl*, for which she'd win an Oscar, beating out Merv's favorite, Judy Garland, who had competed with a spectacular performance of her own in *A Star Is Born.*

While still a model on the East Coast, Grace had flown to Los Angeles and could well have been in California at the time Merv first claimed that he'd seen her. How she met Bing Crosby so early in her career remains a mystery.

On Catalina, Howard had arranged for the quartet to stay in a private home. Whenever Howard needed a temporary residence, one always seemed to be made available to him. Pat and Howard shared one bedroom, Errol and Merv another, just as he'd done at his Uncle Elmer's. Later that afternoon Pat and Howard left without inviting Errol and Merv, though Howard agreed to be back in time to take them to dinner that night.

As Merv remembered it, Errol was drinking heavily that afternoon and complaining bitterly about the huge back alimony payments he owed to Lili Damita, a bisexual actress he'd married in the 1930s.

When he wasn't talking about Lili, Errol enthralled Merv with stories of the shooting of his latest film, *Kim*, in Jaipur, India. It was scheduled for release in a few months.

At the end of the shoot, or so Errol claimed, he'd invited all the men who'd worked on the crew—“all except our homo contingent”—to join him for a big private party on the sound stage. Spending money he could ill afford at the time, he hired the prop department to build a pyramid-like structure in the center of the stage and to paint it in gold.

The week before, he'd had his assistant round up the prettiest girls he could find in Jaipur. They were dressed in see-through gold lamé Turkish pajamas and arranged artfully on the pyramid. Errol's rule was that each of the young women had to make herself available for intercourse to any member of the crew attracted to her.

At the door to the sound stage, Errol had stationed two bare-breasted handmaidens to take all the clothing of the male crew, including their underwear. Errol told Merv that he'd spent most of the night watching the crew seduce the beautiful women before taking “the prize” at the top of the pyramid for himself. He described her as a fourteen-year-old virgin. “God, did she bleed that night.”

At the end of the orgy, as dawn broke over Jaipur, Errol handed out gold medals to each man. Each was engraved with the words, “Flynn's Flying Fuckers.” In time those medallions became highly prized souvenirs in Hollywood.

After dinner on Catalina with Howard and Pat that night, Errol and Merv shared a double bed, crawling in shortly before midnight. If Merv expected any more action, he was disappointed. As he would later tell Roddy, “The moment he hit the pillow, Errol was sound asleep and can that man snore. From the sounds coming from the next bedroom, Howard and Pat seemed to be having fun.”

The next morning, Merv rose early and wandered the beach by himself. As he was heading back to the house, he saw Pat emerge from the bungalow, wearing only his underwear. Rubbing sleep from his eyes, he invited Merv to walk along the beach with him to look at the seagulls. Merv found himself wishing that he'd spent the night with Pat instead of his childhood idol.

Pat was extremely candid about his relationship with Howard. “The fucker knows I'm mostly a ladies' man but he likes to bang me to show me who's boss, as if I didn't know. I hate it. It hurts me. Our aviator friend is huge.”

“Why do you put up with it?”

“I'm on his payroll, and have been for a long time,” Pat confessed. “At some point I decided to hang out with the rich and famous, knowing that would make me their servant, subject to their bidding. If I don't like it, tough. If that means that on occasion I have to spread my cheeks for Howard for a few minutes of pain and humiliation, so be it. The financial rewards are great.”

The two men strolled along in silence for a long time before Pat came to a stop and looked out toward the sea. “If you ever become rich and famous, enough so you can afford me, just call me up and I'll come running. I'm sure

you'd be a lot more fun to be with than Howard. He's nuts sometimes. You see, I'm what is called a hustler."

By the time Merv became rich and famous enough to hire Pat, he was no longer appealing to him. But on that beach in Catalina, Merv determined that when he got older, and no doubt pudgy again, he would hire a string of Pat DiCiccos.

The prospect thrilled him because it meant he wouldn't have to depend on his youth, good looks, or even his waistline to have the sexual adventures with young men he craved.

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Merv bonded with many men—only a few of whom became sexual relationships— over the course of his life. Along the way, he made a number of "to-the-grave friends," as he called them.

Marlon Brando was a friend of a then-unknown jazz vocalist, Harry Belafonte. Marlon had met Harry at the New School in New York in the 1940s and had formed a friendship. Since money was tight, Marlon and Harry sometimes bought only one theater ticket to a Broadway play, Harry sitting through the first half of the show, Marlon sitting through the ending—or vice versa— and comparing notes about the plot developments.

Marlon, of course, had found success on Broadway, but Harry was still struggling and going through a sort of identity crisis. Instead of a jazz vocalist, he had decided to become a Calypso singer, inspired by African and West Indian songs such as "Yellow Bird."

Marlon called Merv one night and invited him to hear Harry sing at a little dive along Bleeker Street in Greenwich Village. "He's a real good-looking guy, and you might fall for him, but I've got to warn you: He's not one of my fuck buddies. No way!" Puffing on a cigarette for emphasis,Marlon said, "Oh, in case it matters, he's black."

"Fine with me," Merv said. "I'm color blind."

Hearing Harry sing for the first time, Merv was immediately enraptured by his looks, his voice, and his style. He later told Marlon, "An electric bolt went up my spine when I heard the lyric 'Day-O.'Merv seemed to understand that Calypso could capture an American audience, although he could hardly have known that his "discovery," Harry Belafonte himself, would one day be dubbed the "King of Calypso."

Born in Harlem, Harry was the son of a cook from the island of Martinique. He later lived with his grandmother in her native Jamaica. Back in New York, he performed at the American Negro Theatre with Sidney Poitier, another rising star. Merv had already heard Harry's debut as a pop singer on the Jubilee Label in 1949, but on the night of their first meeting in the Village he told Harry that he could "scale a higher ladder" in the music world if he developed his talents as a Calypso artist. "You're the best, man."

"That's Mon!" Harry corrected him.

From the first night, Merv and Harry bonded so much so that Merv invited the singer to become "my first roommate in New York." Harry had recently separated from his first wife, Marguerite Byrd, whom he'd married in 1948. "He was very sad and didn't have a career going yet," Merv later recalled.

After his first week as Harry's "roomie," Merv called Marlon. "Harry Belafonte is the best reason I know for integration."

"Has he fed you any big black dick yet?" Marlon asked provocatively.

"Not yet—and maybe never," Merv said. "Sigh, I can dream, can't I? I don't think Harry swings that way, much to my regret. Since we're roomies, I can at least check him out to see what I'm missing."

Merv even went with Harry to Philadelphia where he sang an evening of Calypso songs, introducing "Matilda," which in time would become his first full release single after he recorded it on April 27, 1953. The song would remain his "signature" throughout his career.

"He bombed that night with 'Matilda,'" Merv said. "It was an all-white club and they couldn't relate to songs about Kingston Town and banana boats. In the middle of 'Matilda,' a fat drunk called out, 'Sing *Melancholy Baby*,

nigger, or get off the stage!' Harry bravely carried on."

Although not the ardent civil rights champion that Marlon became, Merv as a TV talk show host would expose the world to a parade of black entertainers, followed later by the most important civil rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Long after they were roommates, Merv stayed in touch with Harry and took pleasure in his success, especially when he became the first African- American to win an Emmy for his solo TV special, *Tonight With Belafonte* (1959).

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Around the time he met Harry Belafonte, Merv also became a close friend of Robert Clary, the Parisian entertainer, who was about his same age. The two performers became close when Merv was performing on *The Hazel Bishop Show* and also appearing with Freddy Martin's band at the Roosevelt Hotel.

Merv had met Robert in the summer of 1950 when "the little short guy" had come to see Freddy Martin's band at the Hollywood Palladium.

Robert was just getting known in the States because of his popular recording, "Put Your Shoes On, Lucy." Merv loved the song. At the Palladium, when he heard that Robert was in the audience, he went over after his act and introduced himself.

Robert (often known as Bob) was there with Red Doff, a publicist for Capitol Records, and he'd just signed a recording contract with Capitol. Merv congratulated Robert and praised his singing voice.

"I don't think I ever saw two men get along so well on first meeting," Doff said. "Before the night was over, Bob and Merv were in love with each other. Don't draw the wrong conclusions. In fact, the next day Merv would introduce Bob to Bob's future wife, Natalie Cantor, Eddie Cantor's daughter. Those two lovebirds, however, would wait until 1965 to get married. Eddie gave Bob's career a big push, but that wasn't the reason for the marriage."

Robert had long admired his future father-in-law, especially when he appeared in blackface as had Al Jolson before him. He was so impressed that he, too, performed in blackface in Paris between 1945 and 1947, long before it became politically incorrect for a white performer to come out with such makeup.

When Robert flew to New York for an engagement, he moved in with Merv at the Royalton. Merv later complained that, "I got little sleep because my new friend and I would sit up all night talking about our future plans for stardom for both of us. Today you'd call it a heavy rap session."

Merv became fascinated with Robert's horror stories about his childhood in Nazi-occupied France. He was the youngest of fourteen children, most of whom would die in concentration camps. As a young Jewish boy, Robert, too, would be deported by the Nazis.

"The whole experience was a complete nightmare," Robert told Merv and others. "The way they treated us, what we had to do to survive. We were less than animals. Sometimes I still have nightmares. I wake up in a cold sweat thinking the Nazis are coming for me. I fear they're going to haul me off to a concentration camp like they did my brothers and sisters."

"What a way for a kid to be introduced to life," Merv said. "You must hate them."

"I don't hold a grudge," Robert said. "Grudges are a waste of time. But I learned the hard way just how dark the human soul is. My fellow human beings can be more savage to each other than any animal who might kill you in the jungle and eat you. At least the animal is killing to survive, as nature intended. The Nazis killed for sadism, pleasure, and a psychotic political creed. When you meet a human being who is kind and generous, a friend like you, you cherish that person."

Merv also cherished Robert. The two men were seen walking down Fifth Avenue arm in arm. Sometimes, Merv would playfully rest his elbow on Robert's small head. These were just some of the endearing moments the two friends shared with each other. Some members of Freddy's band, knowing Merv's sexual proclivities, assumed the two friends were lovers, at least to judge by their open displays of affection. But that does not appear to be the case at all.

“I adored Bob,” Merv later said. “He brought a joy to my life, and he was a survivor. Except for getting kicked out of our house in San Mateo, I'd had it easy growing up. As his friend, I was always there to cheer Robert on, whenever my schedule allowed, at one triumph after another.”

That included the time Robert became an overnight sensation on Broadway when he appeared in Leonard Stillman's *New Faces of 1952* along with Eartha Kitt and other stars. Merv was also in the audience when Robert appeared on Broadway in *Seventh Heaven*, with such famous names as Ricardo Montalban, Gloria de Haven, Chita Rivera, Kurt Kazner, and Bea Arthur. Merv also watched every episode of *Hogan's Heroes* on TV, when Robert became a household word playing the quirky Louis Le Beauy. “Back in that concentration camp in the 40s, little did I know that I'd eventually play a prisoner of war in a Hollywood version of a Nazi stalag,” Robert told Merv.

“Although I was a singer myself,” Merv recalled, “I was never jealous when my friend sang such show stoppers as ‘Lucky Pierre’ or ‘I'm in Love with Miss Logan.’”

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Early in his career, Merv formed a friendship with another Robert. The two men would become bonded for life.

One of the unlikeliest of all his friendships—one definitely not sexual— was the bond Merv formed with an Italian-American actor from New York, the son of a shoemaker. Robert Loggia, five years his junior, was a character actor and leading man best known for playing crooks, thugs, and gravelly voiced cops. He even portrayed Joseph, the “stepfather” of Jesus, in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* in 1965, with Dorothy McGuire as the Virgin Mary.

It wasn't that film but the 1985 movie, *Jagged Edge*, with Glenn Close and Jeff Bridges that brought Robert his only Oscar nomination in the supporting role as a delightfully foul-mouth private investigator.

Loggia later told friends that it was Merv's philosophy of life that first attracted him to the singer. “My philosophy is that you have to constantly be turning the page,” Merv said. “That prevents me from getting caught up in negative vibes. It's all about change for me. I just keep moving and enjoying the ride.”

Over the decades, Merv and Robert would take sixteen long sails on Merv's yacht, including one that lasted three months. “Merv knows how to live and how to give,” Robert later said of his friend. “His spirit and charm are unwavering. Every sail with him into unknown waters was a new adventure because Merv is as close to me as any brother I could have.”

Robert, who probably spent more quality time with Merv than almost any other male friend, joined the chorus of those who praised Merv for, “Just being a great guy to be around. He's a storehouse of anecdotes and a walking history of show business in the 20th century. Bring up any name, and Merv will tell you about the weekend he spent with that celebrity in Cannes. My God, he even knew Pat Boone when both of them appeared in the 1950s on *Arthur Godfrey and His Friends.*”

“Merv always told me that he'd never retire,” Robert said. “His exact words were, ‘You'll have to carry me off and beat me over the head at my funeral to make sure I don't rise up out of the coffin for one last show-stopping number.’”

Robert didn't have to do that, but he had the saddest face at Merv's funeral, when he, along with Merv's son, Tony Griffin, and others, had the painful job of carrying a dear, lost friend to his final resting place.

“Merv had a great life,” Robert said, “one of the most fabulous of any show business personality who ever lived. It was my great pleasure to share in that life. During those long voyages at sea, I got to know one of the world's special people.”

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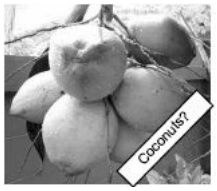
"I've got a lovely bunch of coconuts,
Every ball you throw will make me rich
There stands my wife, the idol of my life
Singing roll a bowl, a ball, a penny a pitch"



At long last, in 1950, Merv recorded a hit song, a puckish and rather silly novelty entitled "I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts." He recorded it despite the fact that he hated it, denouncing it privately as "fake and phoney." As its popularity grew, he would immediately turn it off when it came on the radio, as it did frequently over a period of several months.

Composed in 1944 by Fred Heatherton, an English songwriter, the ditty celebrated the traditional "coconut shy" (coconut toss) sometimes seen at English country fairs. What is rarely known today, and never mentioned in Merv's autobiographies, is that Danny Kaye also recorded his own, less popular, version of the same song in the same year, 1950, that Merv's version was defined as a hit.

Danny and Merv weren't the only two artists competing for sales of "Coconuts." Eventually, even Monty Python recorded it, and the song is still played over the public address system at Cambridge United football matches after home wins. It was sung on the *Magical Mystery Tour*, the special BBC broadcast by The Beatles in 1967, and it was heard in Judy Garland's last film, *I Could Go on Singing*.

The silly song became such a pop culture reference that the apes are seen singing the ditty in the Walt Disney film, *The Jungle Book*, and it appeared again in another Disney film, *The Lion King*, when Zazu is forced to sing it for the amusement of Scar.

Merv sang "Coconuts" with a Cockney accent, and it was such a big show stopper that fan clubs formed across America from New York to Los Angeles. He heard that a fan club had even been organized in Cleveland.

When Freddy Martin's Band returned to Los Angeles, the Cocoanut Grove could not meet the demand for reservations. Consequently, Freddy booked Merv and his band into the much larger Hollywood Palladium, a soldout ballroom that accommodated 6,000 fans.

"Thousands of screaming girls chanting 'We Want Coconuts!' greeted me," Merv remembered. "It's an image I'll never forget."

President of her local
Merv Griffin fan club,
a then-unknown
Carol Burnett

After his first show, an usher told Merv that the president of the recently created Hollywood High School Merv Griffin Fan Club had arrived and wanted to meet him. He'd never personally met even one member of his fan clubs, so he told the usher to bring her backstage. He decided to stand outside the door to his dressing room to greet her. He expected some shy little girl with an autograph book and was surprised instead to encounter a rather ugly duckling in pigtails—"all skin and bones"—wearing glasses and a dress obviously purchased at the five-and-dime. Years later he would recall her "big voice and marvelous laugh."

"Hi, Merv," the perky girl said to him, extending her hand. She didn't seem shy at all, but bold and brassy. "I'm Carol Burnett, the prexy of your fan club." He liked her at once, finding her enthusiasm and spirit contagious. But he could hardly have known he was shaking the hand of one of the brightest stars of television in the future.

"My God," she said standing back and appraising Merv's figure, but not in a seductive way. "Wait till I tell the

gals back at school. You're just a kid like us. They'll be so excited. From the sound of your voice on 'Coconuts,' we thought you were an old man like Bing Crosby."

The show was such a hit with fans at the Palladium that its organizers invited Merv and Freddy's band back for repeat performances. Carol promised to show up for every event. "Somewhere I'll find the money," she told him. "My Nanny and I are living on relief."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," he said. "I'm giving you a free pass to all the shows and ten tickets each night to distribute among my fans. I want to meet them, and I want you to keep me abreast of what you gals are up to. I'm not sure what a fan club really does. I assume the club is all girls."

"Well," she said, flashing a big-toothed smile. "A couple of guys. They're … you know."

"We're all God's children, and I welcome all fans wherever I find 'em."

"I couldn't agree with you more, but it makes it much harder for a gal like me to get a date."

True to her word, Carol and other members of Merv's fan club showed up for every performance. In time, he got to know her better, welcoming her bubbly personality and merry smile, which he later learned was a mere cover-up for the private tragedies in her life.

Living on welfare in a tiny one-room apartment with her grandmother, Carol was a spunky kid, bright and alert and always ready to make a joke about the bitter sweetness of life. Both of her parents were alcoholics. To escape that painful reality, Carol went to the movies at the rate of eight per week. One week, attending double features, she managed to sit through a dozen films, including two Tarzan flicks. Back at her small apartment, she practiced the Tarzan yell, which almost got Carol and her grandmother evicted.

Sleeping on Nanny's sofa at night, she dared dream the impossible dream, that she could become the next Betty Grable, her favorite star at the time. If not that, then at least Rita Hayworth. Sometimes her attractive grandmother tried to force Carol to face reality. "With that overbite of yours, you'll be lucky to get *any* boy to go out with you."

Carol wished she was as pretty as her Nanny, who was a Southern belle, a flirtatious and self-confident woman who, at the time of her death at the age of eighty-two, had a forty-year-old boyfriend.

As Merv got to know Carol better, she confessed to him that in addition to being the president of his fan club, she had "this crush" on Linda Darnell.

"Whatever happened to Betty Grable?" he asked. "Oh, *her*. I'm just crazy about Linda, although one of her nostrils is larger than the other. When I grow up, I'm going to become a big movie star like Linda. It'll be a challenge. Movie stars have to look like Marilyn Monroe and Tony Curtis. At the moment I look more like Tony than Marilyn."

In the years to come, Merv looked on in amazement as Carol's television career took off, as millions of viewers delighted in her wacky humor and selfeffacing wit. "I always thought Carol was a more brilliant comedienne than Lucille Ball," Merv once said. "Lucy was broader in her humor, real slapstick, like the Marx Brothers. Carol was more subtle and ultimately more devastating. Take her character of Eunice, a brilliant send-up of a type of American housewife that has never been equaled. And, of course, she also knew talent when she saw it, namely, yours truly and that fan club."

Saccharine and campy:
Carol Burnett
as Shirley Temple

For Merv's final performance at the Palladium, Carol presented him with a Christmas poem she'd written. He loved it so much he had it framed and for years carried it from dressing room to dressing room as a good luck omen.

i wisht i was a xmas star
perched atop a tree
folks wood see me from afar

cuz of how brite I'd be
i'd shine all nite
i'd shine all day
a lovely site to see.

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In the aftermath of the “Coconuts” success, Freddy Martin incorrectly assumed that he'd discovered, in Merv, “the next big singing star of the 1950s.” He instructed his songwriters to create witty lyrics and music for Merv, beginning with “Back on the Bus,” a clever song that mirrored Merv's own life of riding the bus every night with Freddy's band. Although audiences loved it, it came nowhere near becoming the hit that “Coconuts” was. Although as the years went by he valiantly attempted to duplicate his 1950 sensation, Merv would never have another hit song.

Ultimately “Coconuts” sold more than three million copies. Merv cut many other records, but only two became what might even be called a hit— “Wilhelmina” and “Never Been Kissed.” Each of those records sold about 500,000 copies each, more or less.

“Am I in Love?” also enjoyed minor but very brief success. “I'm a onehit wonder,” Merv lamented to Freddy.

Months after his sudden fame, Merv spoke with bitterness about his success with “Coconuts,” telling Judy Garland and Peter Lawford that, “All I got was a flat fee, a lousy fifty bucks.” He was under contract to Freddy, who pocketed all the money from the royalties generated by the ditty. “Freddy could have written me a check for some of it, but he never did.”

“I've been there,” Judy chimed in. “The MGM Lion has been fucking me in the ass for years without lubrication.”

Peter was more optimistic, reminding Merv that because of the song, RCA Victor had given him a recording contract. “You'll knock Sinatra on his ass.”

“I'm not so sure,” Judy cautioned. “I think Frank will be like me. Both of us will probably make three or four comebacks before we go Over the Rainbow for one final curtain.”

At that point Peter grew impish. “Tell me, Judy, just how deep is the penetration from Frank? I've seen him nude, even semi-hard, but just what depth can he really reach in a woman?”

Peter's drunken bluntness embarrassed Merv, but didn't seem to faze Judy at all. She was used to his outrageous behavior. “He's got three inches more than you,” Judy told Peter. “But he's lousy at giving head. In that, Ethel Merman is the world's expert.”

“But I give great head,” Peter protested. “As you know, it's my favorite thing.”

“Merman has all of you guys beat, although I hear Marlene Dietrich has a certain flickering tongue, like a feather, that drives the girls wild.”

Realizing she was shocking Merv, she turned to him and gently took his hand. “Forgive us, dear, but that's how show biz folk talk in private. Get used to it if you ever want to be a star.”

Merv definitely wanted to be a star—“and I definitely got used to it,” as he confided to Johnny Riley on his next trip to San Francisco. “After you've been worked over by the likes of Rock Hudson and Roddy McDowall, there isn't a lot more to learn. Sometime before the Fifties came to an end—and I'm not sure of the exact date—I buried that naïve little boy from San Mateo.”

Chapter Three

When Freddy Martin told Merv that “I've booked my boys” into the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, Merv was elated. It meant he'd have time to reunite with family and friends, especially his three best pals, Johnny Riley, Paul Schone, and Bill Robbins. He'd spoken to all his buddies over the phone, especially Johnny, but he was particularly anxious to see firsthand how their dancing careers were going in post-war San Francisco.

His family welcomed him with their usual love and devotion but treated him differently. During his first evening home, he deciphered the subtle change: They were treating him like a big-time star, even though he was a long way from achieving that lofty ambition. What impressed his family the most was that he was “dating” Judy Garland and planned to marry her. Merv later wrote in his autobiography, “I always thought one day I would go to Hollywood and marry her.” Later he confessed that he “misspoke” when describing the specific nature of his relationship with Judy.

“I had to say something,” he later told Johnny. “What was I going to say to my family? That Rock Hudson fucks me up the ass or that I gag trying to go all the way down on Roddy McDowall's whopper?” He just hoped that word didn't travel from San Francisco back to Judy in Los Angeles that he was planning to marry her.

At this point he'd gone to bed with her, not just on that one night when he'd held her in his arms, but on other occasions when she'd been drunk, sobbing, and suicidal. There had been no sex. He'd never had sex with any woman, but was seriously thinking about it. If he had to do the dirty deed, he wanted Judy to be his first conquest. He instinctively felt she'd be understanding and compassionate even if he failed. After all, she'd had a long track record of sleeping with homosexual men.

His biggest disappointment came as a result of hanging out with his friends. Johnny got an occasional job in the theater as a chorus boy, but supported himself as a waiter. Bill too, had become a waiter and had found no work in the theater at all. Through a contact of his father's, Paul had found a job selling hardware in a store run by what he called a “tyrannical Jew.” All three of the young men hated their jobs.

On the third night of going out with “the boys,” it became apparent to Merv that all of his friends were genuinely excited by his “stardom.” He also realized the degree to which their motives were selfish. Although none of them admitted it, each seemed to expect that when he became a really big star, he'd get them work in the theater. After two or three drinks, Merv more or less went along with this, making promises that he really couldn't keep, at least not at this point in his life.

Before he left San Francisco that month, Merv was acutely aware that the balance of power had shifted in his relationship with both his family and friends. He was no longer the fat, pudgy kid from San Mateo, but a romantic singing star who'd had one big hit record. He even had fan clubs, including one that had formed in the Bay area.

Before leaving his best pals and his family, he told his second biggest lie, one that topped the one about his romance with Judy Garland. He said that he'd been offered movie contracts at MGM,Warner Brothers, and Paramount, but had not as yet decided which studio he was going to sign with.

“I owe it to Freddy and the boys to keep singing with them for a few more months,” Merv claimed. “After all, Freddy made me a star. At the right time, I'll split, especially when I get offered a really big musical.”

In every reunion with family and friends, there is always an embarrassing moment you'd rather forgot, something that happens that makes you want to squirm later when you think about it. For Merv, that occurred when he invited Paul, Bill, and Johnny for a nightcap at his suite at the St. Francis.

Merv had promised to stay on for another few days and take a motor trip north with his pals, but he told them he'd been called back to Hollywood. Freddy had booked his orchestra, with Merv as the lead singer, to perform at a spectacular party for the columnist, Louella Parsons, celebrating her fiftieth anniversary as a Hollywood writer. Freddy had told Merv that “every big star in Hollywood will turn out to honor that witch, but not because they like her, but because she has the power to destroy most of their careers.”

After kissing Paul and Johnny good night, he turned to Bill, who asked to stay behind. Bill had had too much to drink, and at first Merv thought he just wanted to sleep over, since he wasn't sober enough to drive home. He lived outside the city.

It took Bill another hour and two more drinks before he worked up enough courage to tell Merv what was on his mind. “I know you were always attracted to me, and I deliberately didn't pick up on the signals you were sending out.”

Merv was flabbergasted. He'd never been attracted to Bill sexually, finding him far too effeminate for his tastes.

He had a crush on Johnny, not on Bill. Still, he listened politely to Bill's pitch.

"I've been thinking it over," Bill said. "I know you're going back to Hollywood and you're going to become a big star. I want to go with you. I want to become your boy." He slammed down his drink. "Now I've said it!"

At first Merv didn't know what to say. Finally, he blurted out, "But I told you, I'm going to marry Judy Garland."

Bill stood up on wobbly legs. "No you're not. Your family fell for that line, but me and Johnny don't buy that. Paul thinks you will but we don't. Let's face it: Judy can't do it for you. I can!"

As Bill moved toward Merv to kiss him, Merv stepped out of the way. "C'mon, buddy, I'm putting you to bed. We're not going to have sex. We're going to sleep. In the morning, let's forget this moment ever happened."

When morning came, Bill seemed embarrassed and did not press his case again. At the door, Merv kissed Bill good-bye after room service had served their breakfast. "We're friends, okay?"

"Okay," Bill said demurely, looking dejected.

"Bonded at the hip, right?" Merv asked.

"You got it," Bill said, hugging him one final time. "You'll call me when you get back to L.A. and tell me how that big party went."

"It's a promise."

Merv kept that promise and Bill never mentioned that night at the St. Francis ever again.

* * *

It was a night to remember as *tout* Hollywood gathered to pay homage to the self-styled "Gay Illiterate," Miss Louella Parsons. Merv had sung to movie stars before at the Cocoanut Grove, but never to such an assemblage. There "were more stars at the party than there are in heaven," press reports the next day proclaimed, parodying the words of Louis B. Mayer.

The gala was a private, invitation-only party held at the Grove. Merv had never met Louella and was terrified of her, knowing that a bad review of his singing tonight could jeopardize his hopes for a career in movie musicals. He was shocked to learn that one of the waiters had been instructed to place a rubber cushion under Louella's seat. When she got excited or agitated, she was known to wet her panties.

From behind the curtains Merv peeked out when word spread that Louella had entered the ballroom on the arm of the press baron, William Randolph Hearst, who was accompanied by his mistress, Marion Davies. For the occasion, Louella had swathed her corpulent body in black silk, whereas Marion was in white satin and sable. As for Hearst, he looked at least eighty-five years old and near the grave.

Freddy Martin had told Merv that Marion and Louella used to be "as close as sisters." But that was a long time ago. Somewhere along the way, Louella and Marion decided that they didn't like each other, but were forced into a position of keeping up appearances.

Marion had turned on Louella long ago when she learned that the columnist was a spy, reporting on her nocturnal activities with the likes of Charlie Chaplin or Clark Gable.

As the guest of honor, Louella sent word backstage to Freddy and Merv that she wanted to hear the song that was playing when she first arrived at the Cocoanut Grove in the 1920s. The band was playing "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby." Both men knew the song well and were glad to oblige.

Merv sang all his hits that night, including the Coconuts song, and each number was met with appreciative—not wild—applause. The biggest disapproval came from Hearst himself. One of the waiters overheard him telling Marion and Louella that Sinatra, not Merv, should have been booked for such an august occasion.

Marion shot back. "Frank's a has-been! World War II is over, duckie."

Even so, after his numbers, Merv went to their table to greet the honored guests. Hearst shook his hand firmly; Marion told him he "sang really nice," and Louella gushed that "you're going to be the biggest musical star in pictures."

Every evening has its embarrassments, and this gala was marred by Marion herself, who had obviously had too much champagne, thereby incurring the wrath of Hearst.

When Earl Warren, then governor of California (later U.S. Supreme Court Justice), rose to speak, he heaped more praise on Louella than she'd ever heard in her life. On and on he went, until Marion screamed at the stage. "Oh, sit down Earl and shut up! Enough ass-kissing for one evening." When Warren ignored her and kept on speaking, she cat-called to him again. "Bring on Freddy Martin," she shouted. "For God's sake, Earl, Willie and I

made you the governor of California, and we can unmake you too."

The "gay illiterate,"
gossip maven
Louella Parsons

Finally, the governor brought a quick end to his speech. By that time, Hearst had ordered two burly waiters to escort Marion from the Grove and into a waiting limousine to speed her on her way back to San Simeon.

* * *

Back in New York, Merv achieved one of his dreams by singing at the fabled Starlight Roof of the Waldorf-Astoria. He was still with Freddy Martin's band, but each day he thought of breaking away and doing solo gigs. He was getting tired of being referred to as "the boy singer" with Freddy Martin's orchestra. On his opening night, Margaret Truman, the president's daughter, attended the club and was impressed with Merv's singing.

When she was invited to appear on "The Big Show," NBC's top radio show in America, she mentioned to its hostess, Tallulah Bankhead, that she should have Merv on her show to sing.

Perhaps as a favor to Margaret, Tallulah called Merv the next day. Back in those days, the diva actually made some of her own phone calls. When Merv came on the phone, she said to him, "I don't need to tell you who I am, dah-ling. The whole word knows my voice. Of course, I must admit that female impersonators do it better than your old Auntie Tallu."

He would later tell his friends, "Tallulah's voice had more timber than the Yellowstone National Park."

"It's an honor to talk to you, Miss Bankhead. I think I know why you're calling me, and I'm doubly honored."

"I'm calling to ask you a very specific question, and I don't want you to lie to me like all other men have done. I have a way of getting the truth out of men in such matters. Dah-ling, forgive me, but just how big is your cock?"

He was completely flabbergasted and didn't know what to say. His embarrassment made her cackle into the phone. "Actually, dah-ling, I want you to sing on 'The Big Show' tomorrow. A lousy singer herself, Margaret Truman, told me you were divine."

With that introduction, Miss Tallulah Bankhead of Alabama became a permanent fixture in Merv's life.

* * *

The radio variety program, "The Big Show," which began a two-year run on November 5, 1950, was NBC's attempt to save talk radio from the onslaught of television. With Tallulah as its hostess, it became a Sunday night feature across America. The show had superior scripting, but what gave it "a big bang" was Tallulah's notorious wit and ad-libbing.

In immodestly assessing her own success, Tallulah proclaimed, "I snatched radio out of the grave. The autopsy was delayed."

Merv was honored to join all the big names she'd had on the show, including Gary Cooper, Bob Hope, Gloria Swanson, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, and Louis Armstrong.

At the time of his first meeting with Tallulah, she was front-page news around the country. Not only was she the new "Queen of Radio," she was involved in a sensational trial that generated as much press and interest as the O.J. Simpson murder trial would in years to come.

Tallulah had sued her maid, Evelyn Cronin, a former burlesque dancer, for adding too many zeros to too many

of her personal checks. The trial, before Harold Stevens, the first black man to sit on a General Sessions Bench, received more newspaper coverage than the ceasefire negotiations for the war in Korea.

Cronin's lawyer, Brooklyn senator Fred G. Morritt, played dirty, turning the embezzlement case into a personal attack on Tallulah, claiming she'd bought “booze, drugs, and sex.”

“I've never had to stoop that low,” Tallulah said. The charges against her were so vitriolic that she claimed, “The next thing you'll hear from the defense is that I have been vivisecting my fucking dogs!”

In spite of the many personal smears on her character, Tallulah would win the case. Cronin was found guilty on three counts of grand larceny and was given a one- to two-year prison sentence. The sentence was later suspended.

Fresh from court, where she'd been accused of being an excessive marijuana smoker, Tallulah was an hour late for rehearsals at NBC. Attired in a full-length mink coat for which she'd paid $2,000, she leisurely strolled into the rehearsal hall walking like Jeanette MacDonald in *Naughty Marietta*.

Meredith Willson was there rehearsing the NBC Orchestra, with 97 musicians. The music stopped and all eyes turned to look at Tallulah who sized up each man one by one. “Any of you cocksuckers got a reefer?” she asked. The boys in the band burst into hysterical laughter as she suddenly changed her movements. Instead of a demure Jeanette, she shimmied off the stage like the burlesque dancer, Gypsy Rose Lee, doing a mock striptease with her mink.

She walked into a room where Merv sat with the upcoming guests on “The Big Show.” The cast included Ethel Merman, Phil Silvers, and Loretta Young. Rising to his feet, Merv attempted to introduce himself and shake Tallulah's hand.

Instead of a handshake, Tallulah gave Merv a big, sloppy wet kiss with tongue before seating herself at the head of the table. She didn't speak to the other guests slated to be on her show, but eyed each of them skeptically. It was obvious to Merv that she knew all of them very well, even their darkest secrets.

After surveying the table, she said, “What a motley crew. Not a virgin here.” She cackled at her own appraisal.

She reached for Phil's hand and fondled it gingerly before kissing it as if it were the Pope's ring. “I love Phil dearly even though he's a manic-depressive and a compulsive gambler,” she said. “We were once together in Las Vegas, and he told me he was broke and had no money to pay his bills. But to pay for our drinks, he pulled out a large wad of bills that would have choked the most sword-swallowing of cocksuckers. I said, ‘Why don't you use that money to pay your fucking bills?’ He told me he couldn't because that wad was his gambling money.”

She abruptly dropped his hand as a harsh frown came across her face. “Why should I have all my sins published on every front page in America? I'm sure all of you do ghastlier things than my drunken brain could conjure up. Take Phil for example. Everybody in show business knows he gets off by going to men's rooms to watch guys urinate.”

“Tallulah,” he said, “you've got my number.” He said that with a smile and didn't seem offended at her revelation, which had shocked Merv. “I may indulge here and there but I never invited three actors back to my suite where I stripped nude, got into a bathtub, and invited them to piss on me,” he said, staring at Tallulah.

“*Touché*, darling,” Tallulah said before turning to Ethel. “Ethel here licks more pussy from Broadway chorus gals than Flo Ziegfeld himself. George and Ira Gershwin sure knew what they were doing when they cast you in *Girl Crazy*. *Dah-ling*, you were never big on brains, but Judy Garland told me you give great head.”

Without missing a beat, Ethel shot back, “Hattie McDaniel told me you were awful at it.”

“Mammy was right. I almost suffocated when she locked those fat, black legs around me. A real death grip.”

Throughout the exchange, Ethel, a voracious eater of peanut brittle, chewed away at her favorite snack. “Just for all that, I'm going to sing ‘I Got Rhythm’ on your show with a mouth full of peanut brittle.” She lived up to her threat. Later on the show, even with a mouth full, she managed to hold the high C note for a full sixteen bars.

At last Tallulah's attention focused on Merv. “Merv is too much an innocent for me to turn on him and tell you good folks what I learned that he does with his mouth when he's not warbling ‘Coconuts.’” He flushed red with embarrassment.

Tallulah instinctively knew that such tough show business pros as Ethel and Phil could easily handle her provocative banter. She saved her final victim for last, knowing Loretta would be the tastiest morsel to be devoured at the table. She moved toward Loretta like a *Tyrannosaurus rex* returned to Earth to devour a juicy water buffalo.

“Now take Gretchen here,” Tallulah said. Between 1917 and 1928, Loretta here appeared in pictures as Gretchen Young. “This WAMPAS Baby Star eloped when she turned thirteen. She was broken in earlier than any of us.”

“I was seventeen,” Loretta protested.

“All I know is that you appeared with your young husband, Grant Withers, in a movie ironically called *Too Young to Marry*. My sins are paraded in front of the press. But you cover up your dark deeds, like getting impregnated by Clark Gable when you two lovebirds made *The Call of the Wild*, and then later pretending to adopt the kid with the big ears she inherited from Gable.”

“Oh, please,” Loretta protested. “That was a mortal sin. Don't mock me for what I did. In an entire lifetime, I made one mistake. Otherwise, I've never betrayed any of my husbands, unlike you who could never be faithful to anybody. You should be ashamed of yourself. I read the newspapers. I know what you've been doing.”

“Don't you dare lecture me on morality, you sickeningly sweet little phony. That's bullshit. You were unfaithful to all your husbands. Just ask George Brent, Louis Calhern, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Norman Foster, Richard Greene, Wayne Morris, David Niven, Tyrone Power, Gilbert Roland, James Stewart, Spencer Tracy, and Darryl Zanuck. Dare I mention my own beloved Jock Whitney? He personally told me that the reason he broke from you was your demand that he perform anilingus on you?”

“I can't take this any more.” Loretta rose to her feet and rushed from the room.

Tallulah got up and walked over to the chair vacated a moment ago by Loretta. “No one must sit here. It still has the mark of the cross on it.”

She turned to Merv. “Better go and look after her before she jumps out of a building or something.”

Unknown to Tallulah, Merv was relieved when she commanded him to go look after Loretta. It had already been agreed that after the rehearsal runthrough, he was to escort Loretta to Fulton Sheen's suite for a dinner engage- ment. He found her in the hall weeping and tried to console her. After she went to the women's room to make emergency repairs to her face, he took her downstairs and hailed a taxi.

En route to the dinner with Sheen, neither Loretta nor Merv spoke of Tallulah but talked about their joint admiration for Sheen. At the bishop's apartment, Loretta requested that she meet privately in Sheen's study because she needed counseling after that attack from Tallulah.

A servant ushered Merv into the living room where he introduced himself to Irene Dunne sitting on a sofa.

“Miss Dunne,” he said. “I'm honored to meet you. I can't believe how the Academy hasn't given you an Oscar. Nominated five times and no award. You deserved all five Oscars. What a shame!”

“It doesn't bother me a bit,” she said. “I do not have the terrifying ambition of other actresses—take Joan Crawford for instance. I drifted into acting and one day I'll just drift out. Acting is not everything. Living is.”

For the next thirty minutes, Merv chatted with Irene, finding her one of the warmest persons he'd ever met in show business. She was the complete opposite of Tallulah. He learned that they shared some of the same background, as she too had taken piano and voice lessons and sang in local churches and high school plays.

By the time Sheen emerged with Loretta, Merv felt he'd formed a warm bond with Irene. Sheen walked into the room and shook Merv's hand, avoiding his usual embrace.

When he surveyed the finery worn by both Irene and Loretta, Sheen changed plans. Suddenly, he didn't think it appropriate that he be seen at Twenty-One, having dinner with such gorgeous and spectacularly dressed actresses. “People might get the wrong impression.” Sheen seemed to forget that he was also spectacularly dressed--right down to his red alligator shoes.

At 7:50pm, Sheen arose from his seat at the table and announced that the party was over. He always did this with his guests to get his sleep before beginning another nineteen-hour day. On the way out, Sheen whispered something to Merv. After he'd taken Loretta and Irene back to their hotel, Merv returned at 8:45pm and was ushered into Sheen's apartment. What happened between them that night is not known.

Merv was only mildly surprised when Loretta the following day showed up for her scheduled appearance on "The Big Show." On air, she and Tallulah, being the pros they were, greeted each other like longtime friends. No mention was ever made of Tallulah's drunken episode.

When Merv sang on the show, he was given another wet, sloppy kiss with tongue from Tallulah. "You were just divine, dah-ling," Tallulah announced to millions of Americans. "Let's all give a big hand to the next major singing sensation of America. Merv Griffin. Remember that name, dah-lings."

When Merv encountered Irene in 1957, president Dwight Eisenhower had appointed her one of five alternative U.S. delegates to the United Nations, recognizing her charitable works and her interest in conservative Catholic and Republican causes. She spoken to him of how important "keeping up appearances" was to Sheen.

She claimed that an angry husband had discovered a photograph of his wife, dressed only in a pair of shorts, getting into Sheen's car. The husband proclaimed to all who would listen that the monsignor was having an affair with his wife. "No one believed him," Irene said, "but our dear friend never set foot in Beverly Hills again until the husband died."

Years later Merv was asked to comment on Tallulah and "The Big Show." "It was big—the biggest thing on radio—but not big enough to kill TV. After all, TV had moving pictures and was free if you owned a set. I entered the Big Band era when it was dying. Tallulah entered radio in its dying gasps. Her Big Show was variety radio's last grand stand. Tallulah never had such a perfect forum to show her innate brightness and a razor-sharp wit that could make a Bob Hope sound like a dull carnival barker. If radio audiences wanted the best in grown-up entertainment in those days, they could always bank on Bankhead. I was honored to be a part of it."

* * *

In December of 1950 Merv found himself back in San Francisco with family and friends. Once again he was the boy singer with Freddy's band at the St. Francis.

As a special tribute to his increasing fame, Mayor Carrol M. Spears, along with 250 other citizens of San Mateo, drove to San Francisco and threw a gala in honor of Merv in the Mural Room of the hotel. Merv was given a gold key to the city, honoring the hometown boy who had made good.

Right after Christmas, Merv was in San Mateo at the Mills Memorial Hospital having his tonsils removed. He feared the operation would forever damage his singing voice, but, of course, that never happened.

As soon as he recovered, he drove to Los Angeles to make his motion picture debut in *Music by Martin*, a sixteen-minute short for Universal- International. Shot in only one day, the film did nothing to launch Merv into a movie career, centering mostly on Freddy and the boys in his band. Within the context of the short, Merv sang "Tenement Symphony," not one of his best numbers.

One night in Hollywood, as Merv returned to the Roosevelt Hotel, he was surprised to encounter Tom Drake, wearing sunglasses, waiting for him in the lobby. He looked as boyishly handsome as ever. He hadn't seen Tom since that night he first met him at the Cocoanut Grove with Judy Garland and Peter Lawford.

Tom wanted to talk to Merv in private, so he invited him up to his small hotel suite.

When they were alone in the elevator, Tom removed his sunglasses to reveal bloodshot eyes. He'd been up all night crying over Peter, who had broken off their relationship.

In his suite, Merv offered Tom a drink, which he accepted as he poured out his undying love for the errant Peter, who liked to maintain many relationships simultaneously, including those with women.

Merv tried to pass it off as a lover's quarrel, reminding Tom that Judy Garland had told him that Peter had kicked him out many times previously, but had then repeatedly taken him back.

Tom admitted that was true, but claimed that what was different from before was that this time, a drunken Peter had turned violent, threatening to kill him if Tom didn't quit stalking him. He also claimed that Peter had been spending many of his nights with the troubled young actor, Robert Walker.

Merv, later relating details of the evening to Roddy McDowall and others, claimed that Peter was someone you had an affair with--not someone you fell in love with.

As Merv later revealed to Roddy McDowall, he tried to assure Tom that he was still young and attractive and still loved by many people. Merv pointed out that Tom, like Merv himself, even had fan clubs.

But Tom countered that his fan clubs had reached their peak at the end of World War II, and that the members of those clubs had tended to have gotten married and moved to the suburbs to raise children.

Merv invited Tom to spend a few days with him at his hotel, where he would offer him comfort and friendship. He later claimed that he and Tom shared the same bed together, but Merv was doing so only as a means of offering comfort. He assured Roddy that no sex had ever taken place between them. Tom was just too depressed for that. “All we did was cuddle,” Merv told Roddy.

Falling in love with
the boy next door,
Tom Drake

Sometime during their discussions, Tom extracted a promise from Merv that he would go and see Peter the following morning, and beg him to take Tom back.

* * *

Keeping his promise to Tom, Merv called Peter Lawford. Peter had been staying at Robert Walker's house, and he invited Merv to come over. All of Hollywood was gossipping about Peter's relationship with Robert, an emotionally unstable actor, and Peter's simultaneous affair with Lana Turner.

Robert had been married to Jennifer Jones, his costar in the 1944 *Since You Went Away*, until David O. Selznick stole her away. Robert later married Barbara Ford, daughter of director John Ford. When Peter was with Lana, Robert was said to be moving from bed to bed—Nancy Davis (Reagan), Ava Gardner, and Judy Garland herself, among his conquests.

Privately Merv had told Roddy that he envied the bisexual lifestyle of Robert and Peter and wished he could live as they did, but he could not bring himself to get sexually involved with a woman.

When Merv drove up to Robert's house and rang the doorbell, there was no answer. He spotted a note tacked onto the mailbox. It was from Peter, telling him that he and Robert had gone for a ride in the Hollywood Hills and would be back soon. Merv was told to go around to the back of the house where Robert had left the door unlocked.

Merv entered the darkened house and plopped down on the sofa. The whole idea of talking to Peter about taking Tom back was a wildly foolish dream. With Robert and Lana in his stable, what did Peter need with Tom?

As Merv dozed off, he heard a sound. Bolting up, he was startled to see a nude woman emerging from the back bedroom. She was dripping wet from the shower and was obviously searching for a bath towel. Seeing Merv, she screamed and ran back into the bedroom, slamming the door behind her.

He'd seen her for only a moment, but immediately recognized her as Nancy Davis (Reagan). He'd met her at the Cocoanut Grove with Clark Gable. So, the rumor mill was correct. Nancy was said to be having an affair with Robert. Roddy had heard talk that Nancy, Robert, and Peter often enjoyed a three-way together. Could this be true? He suspected that it was.

Starlet, pinup, and future
First Lady
Nancy Davis (Reagan)

The roaring of motorcycles in the driveway dis- tracted Merv. He went outside to the graveled driveway near the garage where he saw Peter and Robert pull into the yard while mounted on their bikes. In spite of the hot weather, both actors were clad in black leather jackets.

Merv had heard that Peter rode his Enfield to MGM every morning until Louis B. Mayer put a stop to it, after the press reported that Robert had had a minor accident on his motorcycle. “I have no roles for movie stars with broken necks,” Mayer warned Peter.

When Robert invited Peter into his house, Merv wondered if Nancy would appear again. She never did. Merv suspected that she'd dressed hurriedly and fled through the front door when Merv went out to greet Peter and Robert. He never mentioned to Robert that he'd seen her.

At this point Merv still didn't know Peter very well, and had never seen him sober. Without the booze, he found him even more attractive than his 1930s idol, Errol Flynn. When Robert excused himself to take a shower, Peter stripped down to his underwear because the afternoon sun had made the living room very hot.

Merv appraised his tight physique which was hardly that of a bodybuilder but which was extremely sexy and appealing. His smile was one of the most dazzling of all the leading men in Hollywood, especially on that still boyish face of his. It was his sharp wit, his ever so polite demeanor, and that divine London accent of his that added to his almost irresistible charm. Little wonder that everyone from Noel Coward to Rita Hayworth had fallen for him.

Robert went to take a shower, as Peter watched him retreat. When he was out of hearing range, Peter asked, “Can you believe it? My two best friends are Robert Walker and Judy Garland. They view me as the steadying influence in their lives. No one except those two dears think I have a grip on reality. The fact that they turn to me for emotional support shows just how fucked up they are.”

While Robert was away, Merv decided to accomplish his mission and get it over with. “Tom's heart is broken,” he said. “He wanted me to come and see you today. To plead with you to take him back.”

“That's not going to happen,” Peter said, the soft lines in his face becoming harsher. He made his way to the bar for a drink. With his impeccable manners, he asked Merv to join him. “I'll see Tom once, maybe twice, a week. He's got a great little dick, made more for sucking than fucking, and I love it. But that's all. I'm not in love with him. I'm not going to live with Tom in some rose-covered cottage. Tell him he'll either take me on my terms—or not at all.”

Robert came out of the same bedroom door from which Nancy had emerged. He too was stark nude and looking for a towel. “God damn it, Peter, you used up all my clean towels.”

“A trick I learned from Sinatra,” Peter said. “He uses five big fluffy towels to dry himself on.”

“You'd think a shrimp like that could manage with a T-towel,” Robert said.

“It takes three towels just to dry his dick,” Peter claimed.

Forgetting to eat, Robert and Peter wanted to talk the night away with the bottle. Merv would have preferred some food. After three drinks, he stopped and switched to club soda. Peter and Robert continued to walk to the bar. Each actor seemed to have an unlimited capacity for alcohol. As the evening waned, Peter seemed to retreat into a zombie state, but Robert kept talking and was amazingly candid about himself.

“I can't live with my problems,” he told Merv. “That's why I turn to alcohol. It's my only escape.” At one point he launched into an attack on Selznick. “He had an obsession with my wife. He wanted Jennifer at all costs. I couldn't stand against a man as powerful as he was.”

Later in the evening, he broke into sobs. Merv moved over toward the sofa where he sat and tried to comfort him. “I've been unloved and unwanted ever since the day I was born,” he admitted.

“The world loves and adores you,” Merv assured him.

When Robert spoke of his early days working on a banana boat in Central America, Merv found that he had a heart-grabbing, little-boy-lost appeal.

He surprised Merv when he told him that he was playing a homicidal homosexual in Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*, opposite Farley Granger. “Farley and I will know we're playing it homo, but only the hip ones in the audience will get it.”

It was two o'clock that morning before Merv finally left Robert's house. Peter had already passed out.

Merv had an early rehearsal and suspected he'd wake up with a headache. At that point he didn't know if he'd continue to see Peter, Robert, or even Tom. All three men, especially Robert, seemed a little too self-destructive for him. He carried none of their baggage. In fact, Peter had told him, “You're the most happy-go-lucky guy I've ever met. Haven't you suffered? Don't you have any problems to drive you to drink?”

Actually, he didn't. His only dark secret was that he was a homosexual, but he seemed to be covering that up fairly well. At least he didn't plan to turn to drugs and alcohol to deal with his sexual preference. He was beginning to enjoy living in a secretive world and fooling the public. It made life more thrilling. He told Tom, “I owe the public a good performance, the best I can give them. I don't owe them a blueprint to my private life.”

* * *

Merv was elated at what he viewed “as a really big break” when Freddy Martin told him that he'd signed Merv and his orchestra for a twenty-six gig, “The Hazel Bishop Show” in New York. The televised thirty-minute program would be aired on Wednesday nights at ten o'clock. Merv would appear live on the show as the boy singer.

In spite of his nationwide exposure, he later felt that the NBC feature did nothing to advance his singing or his film career, fearing listeners only tuned in to hear Freddy Martin and his orchestra. “Lawrence Welk did more with this type of show than we did,” Merv later recalled.

The cosmetic queen, Hazel Bishop, was sponsoring the show, primarily to promote her new “lasting lipstick,” which she advertised as “Won't smear off, won't rub off, won't kiss off.” Merv was asked to do a commercial for the lipstick in front of a live audience. As pre-arranged, a beautiful girl came out in the middle of his song, ironically called “Never Been Kissed,” and kissed him on the cheek.

Acting surprised, he reached for a white handkerchief to wipe off the lipstick. He was wearing a lot of makeup that night, and as he wiped his face a big gooey makeup stain appeared. In front of the black-and-white TV cameras, the stain photographed like a lipstick smear. Noting this, the audience burst into hysterical laughter which went on for two minutes. At the end, Merv claimed, “See, no lipstick smear!” His words were drowned out by more laughter.

It was his misfortune that night to encounter Hazel Bishop in the flesh backstage. She'd chosen this night of all nights to come to the studio to meet Merv and Freddy Martin for the first time. Merv later remembered Hazel “looking like a lesbian prison matron,” not the beautiful lipstick beauty he'd imagined she'd be.

“You made a laughing stock out of me, Griffin,” she charged. “You're fired. I'm telling Martin tonight to get another boy singer. Dick Haymes could have pulled that commercial off without a glitch.”

Merv with fag

“Just a minute!” he said. “It was an accident. A blooper. Okay, so your lipstick doesn't smear. Dishwashers in diners across the country are grateful to you for no more lipstick traces on coffee cups. But those samples you sent over to Freddy's band caused a lot of trouble. They gave the lipstick to their girlfriends or mothers, and it made their lips swell. They ended up with bee-stung lips like Mae Murray in those old silents.”

She looked startled hearing his news, which astonished him. Surely some consumer had brought this to her attention before. She took his hand, all anger disappearing from her face. “Thank you, Merv, for telling me this. Don't tell another soul. I'll take care of it right away.”

As she was leaving, he called after all. “Instead of lasting lipstick, why not kissable lipstick?”

That very night the chemist went back to her lab and isolated the ingredient causing the skin irritations. She forgot all about firing Merv, and he was able to finish his gig.

Her no-smear lipstick became the foundation for a multi-billion cosmetic conglomerate.

When she next encountered Merv in Los Angeles in 1955, she greeted him with a smile. “That year I met you, I took in $49,527 from my lipstick. In no time at all, I was raking in ten million a year. You were so right about that flaw.”

On The Hazel Bishop Show, Merv made many close friends, who would later go on to hit it big in the entertainment industry. He was so warm and outgoing with people that he was almost universally liked. His capacity for friendship with people in all walks of life seemed almost limitless. In time, he became as close to women friends as he did to his straight male pals.

The director of the NBC show was Perry Lafferty, who in the 1970s created such hit TV shows as “All in the Family” and “M*A*S*H.” For eleven years he would be head of West Coast programming for CBS, earning the studio number one ratings with such hits as “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” or “The Waltons.”

In September 2005 when Merv sent flowers to Perry's funeral, he said that he had done more to awaken him to the possibilities of television than any other person in the business. “I was still day-dreaming about becoming a movie star when I met Perry,” Merv said. “But he knew the future was on the small screen—not the big screen. When I failed many times in my early days in TV, I turned to him like a father confessor. He told me never to give up, that I'd be big one day in television. And so it came to be.”

“Perry battled with censors most of his life, but he won out in the end,” Merv said. “His 1985 *An Early Frost* won an Emmy for a TV movie. The brass had told him that straight America wasn't ready for a realistic drama about AIDS—one that wasn't a fucking lecture on morality—and Perry proved them wrong. Of course, he had to take that teleplay through a dozen rewrites. He was a pioneer of television, a real Renaissance man, and I loved him dearly.”

Merv also became friends with Arthur Penn, the front stage manager. After making a name for himself as a director of quality TV films, Penn scored with such big-time movies as *The Miracle Worker* in 1962 and *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967.

Bill Colleran, the backstage manager, also bonded with Merv during the gig. After working with Merv, he became associate director of “Your Hit Parade,” a weekly TV variety show, and he also directed specials for Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, and was executive producer of “The Judy Garland Show.”

Bill would later marry the actress Lee Remick in 1957. When their daughter, Kate, was born, Merv was asked to become the godfather. He would remain friends with Bill and Lee for life, even after their divorce. He faithfully called her with congratulations after her hits such as *Anatomy of a Murder* in 1959 and *Days of Wine and Roses* in 1962.

It was early in 1991 that he called on her for one last time, not recognizing her at first because her face was so bloated by chemo treatments. They spoke of the many good times they'd had together, often with such mutual friends as Robert and John F. Kennedy. He was startled that she was still even talking about a possible comeback in films. “I make movies for grownups. When Hollywood starts making that kind of film again, I'll start acting in them again.”

After leaving her that cold afternoon in Los Angeles, he kissed her forehead. “Good night, sweet princess.”

Her final words were, “Baby, the Rain Must Fall,” a reference to a film she'd made in 1965. She died that July.

* * *

While appearing in New York, Merv picked up the phone to hear a famously seductive voice, even though it was coming from the throat of a teenager. “You said you wanted to date me,” she said. “Well, big boy, hop to it.”

It was Elizabeth Taylor. She'd introduced him to his only really serious girlfriend up to now, Judy Balaban, and Elizabeth must have heard that their so-called romance was over.

Breaking from the domination of her parents, a rebellious Elizabeth was in New York for her first extended stay. It was a city to which she would journey for the rest of her life.

When Merv arrived at Elizabeth's hotel suite, he brought her three dozen long-stemmed yellow roses. After smelling the flowers with that regal nose of hers, she kissed him. “How could you have known they're my favorites?” Smiling, she answered her own question. “How smart of you. You called Roddy McDowall.”

It was a new and provocatively different Elizabeth Taylor he encountered that night. She was no longer the beautiful young girl he'd met at Roddy's party in Los Angeles. While still in grade school, she'd made *The Conspirator* with the bisexual actor, Robert Taylor. Rumor had it that she'd given him such a raging hard-on that he had to be shot from the waist up in their scenes together.

It took him a while to adjust to her new look. No longer did she depend on her beautiful face and those violet eyes to get her across the threshold of Hollywood. She was dressed seductively with a plunging *décolletage*. “Let's go dancing,” she said. “I love to dance. Let's dance the night away.”

At the Stork Club, she danced with him through three numbers before the orchestra took a break. At table he ordered champagne. If the waiter might have had any concern that she was too young to drink, he did not reveal that. As they talked, he admired the way she could speak candidly about herself, as if “Elizabeth Taylor” were a product she was selling to the public, not the actual person who sat before him.

She confided to him that the master portrait photographer, Philippe Halsman, had told her, “You've got tits, gal. ‘Bout time you started cashing in on them.”

“After just one session with him,” she said, “I suddenly learned to become sultry like Ava Gardner and Lana Turner. I even know how to pose like Marilyn Monroe even though I don't feel the need to show my pussy. Incidentally, I like Ava and Lana. Can't stand Marilyn. Who does that slut think she is?”

At table, Elizabeth seemed self-enchanted. She kept turning one side of her face to him, then the other. “Philippe claims my left side photographs more mature than my right side which makes me look like a little girl. *Still*. What do you think?”

“Both sides look gorgeous to me,” Merv said to reassure her. “I think Philippe is full of shit.” One aspect of her body disturbed him, but he said nothing. For the first time, he noticed that her bare arms were peppered with tiny black hairs. It was unsightly and distracted from her otherwise stunning beauty, but he was certain that many makeup artists in her future would call this to her attention, with remedies of how to rectify it.

The occupants of the other tables couldn't stop staring at Elizabeth, who seemed to tune them out until she got up to go to the women's room. Then she was trailed by a retinue of adoring fans. Back at table she giggled and whispered to Merv, “I think the rubberneckers wanted to see me take a piss.”

Several hours later, at the door to her hotel suite, Elizabeth kissed Merv gently on the lips but didn't invite him to come in, much to his relief. The following night he took her for dinner at Twenty-One. In the middle of the meal, Clark Gable walked in with his new wife, Lady Sylvia Ashley, a willowy blonde with a peaches-and-cream complexion and Wedgwood blue eyes.

Nancy Davis (later Nancy Reagan) had failed to get Clark to marry her. Lady Sylvia pointedly ignored Elizabeth even though introduced. Clark shook Merv's hand, remembering him from the Cocoanut Grove, before leaning over and kissing Elizabeth on the cheek. The newlyweds departed quickly to their own table.

“I've had a crush on Clark for years,” Elizabeth confided. “If he wants to take my virginity, he's welcome to it. Now that's a real movie star. That kiss on my cheek made me shiver.”

“What did you think of Lady Sylvia?” he asked, eager for her response.

“That gold-digging bitch. I heard she got her start modeling bras and bloomers. You know, she was once a chorus girl in the seediest clubs in London's Soho.”

That night, back in front of the door to her hotel suite, Elizabeth did invite Merv in for a nightcap, but for no other reason than to continue their talk. “I'm thinking about getting married.”

“Well, I'm an available candidate,” he said, not at all seriously.

She looked at him lovingly and smiled, showing more far wisdom about human nature than a teenager might possess. “Oh, Merv, let's not kid ourselves. You and I will always be friends, not lovers, and you know that better than I do.” She quickly changed the subject. “For me, it's college or marriage. I've got to escape from my parents. Personally, I think marriage would be more fun than college.”

“Who's the lucky guy?”

“I have five candidates in mind,” she said. “I know I can take Bob Taylor from Barbara Stanwyck. She's a dyke anyway. I'm sure I can lure Clark away from that Ashley creature. But I've got other candidates in mind.”

“C'mon,” he said. “Tell me.”

“You'll read about it in the papers,” she said. “Now I've got to get my beauty sleep. Night, love, and thanks for a darling evening. You're sweet.”

* * *

Without any particular malice toward Elizabeth, and with no harm intended to her, Merv became the source of the rumors going around Los Angeles and New York that he was having an affair with the young star. Throughout his life, he went to great trouble, including outright lies, to establish heterosexual credentials. Since he was seen dating Elizabeth at both the Stork Club and Twenty One, he felt here was a golden opportunity for him to get some straight publicity, even if nothing appeared in the papers, although Walter Winchell ran an item.

“In those days,” Merv later said, “there wasn't a cockroach that walked across the floor of the Stork Room without getting Winchell's permission.

As was inevitable, those *faux* romance rumors eventually reached Nicky Hilton, son of Texas hotel magnate Conrad Hilton, whom the newspapers had dubbed “the man with 100,000 beds.”

Widely known as a playboy and womanizer, Nicky had replaced Glenn Davis, the centerpiece of Elizabeth's summer of 1948 romance. Glenn, a West Point football star and Heisman Trophy winner, had been shipped off to the Korean front, and Nicky—after being introduced to her by Peter Lawford, had moved in to replace him.

Merv wanted all the gossipy news he could get about Nicky, and naturally he turned to his friends, Peter Lawford and Roddy McDowall. “From what I've seen of Nicky's pictures, he has a real animal magnetism about him,” Merv told Roddy. “He's more than six feet tall and good looking, not to mention rich. I saw a picture of him in a bathing suit. Broad shoulders. Swimmer's waist. I couldn't believe the bulge. Too bad he's straight.”

“Yeah,” Roddy said sarcastically. “So straight he lets boys suck on that beer can dick of his. I hear it's not just thick but nearly a foot long.”

“Is that just a rumor?” Merv said. “You know how the boys exaggerate.”

“Why don't you call Peter Lawford and check it out for yourself?” Roddy advised. “He knows a lot more about Nicky Hilton than I do.”

Merv did just that, learning that Peter regularly supplied Nicky with a steady stream of beautiful starlets, hoping to make it big in the movies. “He returns the favor by letting me go down on that tree trunk of his,” Peter said. “He goes deep down the throat. I kid him and call him ‘Deep Throat.’” Without knowing it, Peter had hit upon the name of what would eventually be the world's most famous porno flick, which would be filmed years later.

Both Peter and Roddy believed that Elizabeth should not marry Nicky. They knew too much about him. They didn't want to say anything bad about Nicky, at least for the moment, based on their fear of offending her.

Hotel heir **Nicky Hilton** with his
wife, **Elizabeth Taylor**

Known for his volatile temper, a jealous Nicky had decided to confront Merv upon his return to Los Angeles. Earlier at his hotel Merv had called down for room service. When he heard a knock on his door, thinking that it was a waiter carrying his dinner, he opened the door only to discover Nicky standing there, with bitterness and anger on his face. His clothes were rumpled from a night of heavy drinking.

Not knowing what to do, Merv invited him inside, guiding him to the sofa. “I'm sure he came to clobber me, but

in that condition, he couldn't harm a fly," Merv told Roddy the next day. "He passed out right on my sofa. When dinner came, I enjoyed it while taking in the beauty of this man."

Merv later confided to Roddy that to make Nicky more comfortable, he had pulled off all his clothes—"yes, even his underwear. Peter had not exaggerated. It was the most impressive I've ever seen. I spent the night working it over while he slept it off. But it wasn't until ten o'clock the next morning that he woke up with a hard-on and gave me what I'd worked for for so long."

Around noon, when he was leaving, Nicky turned and smiled at Merv. "I'd heard that you were a fairy. Elizabeth always seems to gravitate toward fairies—take that Monty Clift, for instance."

The next day Merv called Elizabeth but didn't mention that he'd met her future husband. She tried to explain her reasons for marrying Nicky. Merv noted that at no point did she mention love.

"I love jewelry," she said. "Nicky's rich or at least his daddy is. His father gives him a new car whenever he wants one, even a private airplane. I bet Nicky can persuade his father to buy me all the jewelry I want."

No longer viewing Merv as competition, Nicky called him two weeks later and invited himself over. It was the beginning of a friendship that brought nothing but trouble. As attracted as Merv was to Nicky, he also experienced his dark side.

He was an extravagant gambler, never minding losing a fortune at a table in Las Vegas. But that wasn't the worst of it. He was not only an alcoholic— everybody who knew him knew that—but he was a secret heroin addict, as Merv discovered one night to his horror when he went into his bathroom to discover Nicky shooting up.

For Merv, getting acquainted with Nicky's fabulous endowment came at a price. "When he's sober, which is rare, he's a warm and generous person," Merv confided in Roddy. "But on liquor and drugs he turns violent. He's also quite a racist, ranting about 'kikes' and 'niggers' all the time. One night when he was sleeping over, he woke up and for no reason at all beat the shit out of me. I was black and blue for days. He didn't remember it the next morning."

On another night when Merv was staying at Roddy's house when the actor was out of town, Nicky pulled up around midnight in his black Cadillac convertible. Merv had never seen him this wild. Nicky carried a loaded .38 revolver. For fun, he began shooting out Roddy's lights until Merv wrestled the gun from his drunken hand.

When Roddy returned to Los Angeles, a check was waiting from Conrad Hilton to pay for the damage, with a suggestion that "It might be best for all parties to keep this out of the papers."

Seated in Roddy's living room that Merv had cleaned up, both men tried a little dime store psychology as it applied to Nicky. "He knows he'll never live up to his father's success, and his ego has been seriously battered," Merv said. "He's got to prove his masculinity every day of his life, not just with women, but sometimes with men. I think it builds up his self-esteem to have the boys worship that fabulous cock of his."

"Maybe it makes him a bigger man than he already is," Roddy said, surveying his living room. "But, for God's sake, don't invite him back here. Poor Elizabeth. What hell is she in for?" Should we warn her about him?"

"You can't tell a girl like Elizabeth what to do," Merv said. "She'll find out for herself. I have a feeling Nicky will be just the beginning of several husbands, all of them disasters."

"That's the curse of all of us who like men," Roddy said.

"Let's face it," Merv said. "They put us through hell, but we can't keep our hands off them."

"Proceed with caution," Roddy warned Merv. "Nicky sure must be attracted to those blow-jobs of yours. You are good."

"It's more than that," Merv said. "Nicky says I fry the best hamburger with onions in Los Angeles."

Even before his marriage to Elizabeth, Nicky on many a drunken night shared some dark secrets with Merv. He confessed one night of having had a long affair with his father's wife, Zsa Zsa Gabor. The duration of his affair with Zsa Zsa extended not only throughout the star's marriage to Conrad, but continued during her marriage to George Sanders and then into the period of Nicky's betrothal to Elizabeth Taylor.

Of course, at that time in his life, Merv's friendship with the Gabor sisters, both Zsa Zsa and especially Eva, lay far away in his own future.

* * *

For Merv, the 1950s looked like it was going to be his decade, as some of his friends had already predicted. Almost nightly someone he knew, including Ann Sothern, kept predicting he was going to make it big in show business.

Freddy Martin still wanted to retain Merv as his boy singer, and their appearances together at the Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles were usually sold out, in spite of the fact that each year the big bands of the 1940s waned in popularity.

With an RCAVictor recording contract in his pocket, Merv knew he needed another “Coconuts” song, a really big hit, but so far that had eluded him. One night he told Judy Garland, “I want to find my own version of ‘Over the Rainbow.’ Not some silly ditty like ‘Coconuts.’ A real romantic ballad that fans will request I sing every time I make an appearance.”

Despite the fact that a hit song simply didn't materialize, more and more job offers were pouring in for Merv, and he accepted quite a few of them, even though he knew Freddy resented it when he did a freelance solo gig.

With all the excitement going on in his personal life and with his career, Merv almost forgot that there was a war raging in Korea. Many Americans blamed President Harry S. Truman for the conflict, and he was at the lowest popularity of his political career.

Simultaneous with the growth of Merv's popularity as an entertainer, his relationship with Tom Drake had graduated from the cuddly stage into something serious. Merv had flown with Tom to New York, and was sharing his hotel suite with him. While the handsome actor still slept, Merv got up before him and headed for the kitchen to make his morning cup of coffee. On the table lay the mail which the bellhop had already brought up.

One letter caught his eyes. Tearing open the envelope, he read greetings from Uncle Sam. He was being called up for the draft. He'd already transferred his records from San Mateo to New York. An awful sinking feeling overcame him. Even his beloved morning cup of coffee felt like lead on his stomach.

He'd had all those physical examinations in San Francisco during the war, and had been rejected as a candidate for active service every time. But now, weighing eighty-five pounds less, he was an entirely different, and healthier, physical specimen. Intuitively, he knew there was no chance for a deferment.

Without even waiting for the results of his latest physical examination, he marched down to Freddy's suite in the same hotel and told him that he was quitting his job with the orchestra and going into the Army for two years. Freddy was bitterly disappointed at the news. “We've been together for four years,” the orchestra leader said. “I was looking forward to at least another four.”

“There's no way,” Merv said. “I just know I'm going to ship out. I have gut feelings about such things.”

When his time came to report, he splurged on a taxi and rode down to 39 Whitehall Street in Lower Manhattan with Tom, who had agreed to wait in a coffee shop nearby until the exam was over.

Once again, Merv had an Army doctor juggling his balls and examining him thoroughly. It was three o'clock that afternoon when he learned the news. “Your draft board in San Mateo fucked up,” the burly doctor told him. “You're not supposed to be here. You're over the hill. Too old.”

“I'm only twenty-seven,” Merv protested.

“The law changed six months ago,” the doctor said. “Twenty-six is our limit for inducting a guy. Now get out.”

Tom was waiting outside the induction center and did a hop, skip, and a jump of joy on hearing the news. Merv seemed more disturbed than happy. “Where do I go now?” he asked. “With my tail between my legs back to Freddy begging for my old job back.”

“Here's your chance to break out on your own,” Tom said, “To become a really big star. You don't need Freddy and his boys any more. Fly back to Hollywood with me tomorrow. I just know you can make it really big in the movies.”

Merv made up his mind not to go back to Freddy. When Freddy learned that his star wasn't going to be drafted after all, and wasn't coming back, he was furious. “God damn him!” he told the boys in his orchestra. “The fucker just used me. A step on the ladder. I even had plans to become his personal manager when his contract was up. By tomorrow I will have signed another singer. They're a dime a dozen.”

Despite the fact that he had staged this grand play in front of his orchestra, Freddy met the next day with his lawyer to see if he should sue Merv. After all, Merv had signed a five-year contract with a year remaining on the life of the contract. Freddy discussed the matter with his lawyer, who advised him not to press ahead with legal action.

Almost gleefully, Merv announced to his agent that he was free to accept singing engagements. The agent promised he'd work on it, but had no gigs for him at the moment.

Merv was sad to see Tom go when he had to fly back to the West Coast for an acting job. Merv had grown quite attached to him, although he knew he wasn't in love with him. Tom truly lived up to his movie billing as “the boy next door.” He was easy to be with, comfortable to talk to, and a nice companion at dinner. In bed, Tom lacked the fire and passion of Roddy McDowall or Rock Hudson, but who could compete with them?

Tom Drake

Every day Merv called his agent. Still no jobs. He grew lonelier than ever and con- sidered returning soon to Los Angeles before all his money ran out in New York. He missed Tom and his other friends.

One afternoon he bought a corned beef sandwich and ate it in Central Park. Cut off from steady work night after night, he didn't know how to fill his day, much less his nights.

All that would change when he got back to his hotel. The phone was ringing. Picking up the receiver, he was surprised to hear the familiar voice of Judy Balaban, his former girlfriend. She still seemed grateful to him for having introduced her to the “love of my life,” Jay Kanter. She was in New York by herself, and she wanted to meet Merv for dinner. He readily agreed, welcoming the company. As an afterthought, she added, “Oh, I'll be with a friend. You'll adore him.” She paused awkwardly. “Of course, sometimes he's a bit strange.”

* * *

The friend turned out to be the young actor, Nebraska-born Montgomery Clift, with whom Merv would launch one of the most mercurial love-hate relationships of his life. The actor was extraordinarily handsome and gifted, as he'd proved when he'd starred opposite Elizabeth Taylor and Shelley Winters in *A Place in the Sun* (1951). The media constantly compared him to Marlon Brando, often referring to both of them as “The Bad Boys of Hollywood.” But as Merv got to know Monty better, he came to realize just how very different the two men were.

Ever since Merv had seen Monty in the 1948 *Red River*, starring John Wayne, Merv felt that Monty was the most powerful, sensitive, and magnetic actor on the screen.

When Merv met Monty, the actor had already been nominated for an Oscar for his moving portrayal of a young G.I. in the 1948 movie, *The Search.* His second Oscar nomination had come for *A Place in the Sun.*

When Judy introduced Merv and Monty at Daly's Restaurant on Lexington Avenue, Monty's reaction to Merv did not suggest the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

“You're hot, kid,” Merv said, “Really hot.”

Monty was drunk and hostile. He'd obviously been drinking all afternoon. “Oh, Merv Griffin. The band singer!” He didn't bother to disguise the contempt in his voice.

Monty was obviously enjoying the attention he was getting from the other diners. His face, even during that early period of his career, was known around the world.

There was a claim made that Merv and Monty engaged in a food fight before the dinner was over and that both of them were ushered out of the restaurant by the manager. In his memoirs, Merv claimed that he shoved Monty's face into a lemon meringue pie after Monty started licking the meringue off it. But that is not how others in the restaurant remembered the evening.

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the hostility that was percolating between them, the two young men bonded on some level. After hailing a taxi for Judy and kissing her good night, Merv received an invitation from Monty to go for a night ride through Manhattan in Monty's car.

Alarmed at how drunk Monty was, Merv offered to drive. Monty wouldn't hear of that. “Get the hell in,” he ordered Merv.

Later Merv confided to Roddy McDowall, “He was just too appealing. I couldn't say no. In the first thirty seconds after Monty roared off, I knew I was in a death machine. I'd taken my life in my hands.”

Speeding away into the night, Monty appeared demonic behind the wheel as he raced through the nearly deserted streets of Lower Manhattan, running every red light he could. Amazingly, there was no squad car around to give chase.

Finally, Monty slammed on the brakes, coming to a screeching halt near a darkened pier where a lone sailor near a warehouse was obviously getting a blow-job from an older man in a trench coat.

As Merv gazed into Monty's eyes, lit by a street lamp, he appeared almost sober for one brief moment. The actor's eyes looked exactly as they did in the closing reel of *A Place in the Sun* when he confronts Elizabeth Taylor for one last time. Without warning, Monty lunged toward Merv, grabbing him into a death-like grip and kissing him so violently he caused Merv's upper lip to bleed.

“I need you,” Monty said, “Desperately. Don't ever leave me. I'll die if you leave me.”

The next morning, Merv told Roddy, “After that kiss, I fell in love with Monty. Who wouldn't? After all, he was the most beautiful man on the planet.”

* * *

Self-loathing and unstable:
Montgomery Clift

Much to the disappointment of Tom Drake, Merv did not immediately return to Hollywood, but stayed in New York. He felt he had a better opportunity to pick up solo gigs as a singer on the East Coast than in California, where there were fewer bookings. He still toyed with the idea of becoming a big musical singing star like Gordon MacRae or Dennis Morgan, but temporarily postponed that goal.

Roddy McDowall called to ask him to share the rent at an apartment he'd sublet in the Dakota, New York's most fabled apartment house. In years to come, John Lennon would be assassinated on the sidewalk in front. Merv gladly accepted.

After success as a child star, Roddy had entered a difficult phase of his career. Even though he was in his early 20s, he photographed like a lanky teenager. To save his career, he'd moved to New York to pursue work on the stage.

When Roddy and Merv moved in together, it was commonly assumed within New York acting circles that they were lovers. This was partially true. Gay actor Monty Woolley, who had starred with Roddy in the 1942 film, *The Pied Piper*, and who had continued his contacts with him, said, “Merv and Roddy slept together when they could find no other partners.”

One night when Merv had dinner with Roddy and Monty, Merv reminded the aging actor of his first encounter with him when as a kid he was rudely dismissed. In his candid, often astonishingly blunt fashion, Monty responded, “I'll make it up to you by sucking your cock tonight.” Merv turned down the offer.

Later, with Roddy, Merv lamented how disappointed he was at the sex that had transpired the previous night with Montgomery Clift. “He's no Rock Hudson,” Merv said. “To me, it looked like a little piece of foreskin. There wasn't much I could do with it.”

“You forget you're talking to your mother,” Roddy said. “I've been there, done that. But only once. In spite of all that male beauty, guys tend to go to bed with Monty only once.”

“In some strange way, I'm fascinated by him,” Merv said, “and I hope to hang out with him in the future. But I think I'll steer him away from the bed.”

“Believe it or not, our beloved Elizabeth is madly in love with Monty for reasons known only to her,” Roddy said. “Surely, it's not for the sex. After getting pounded by Nicky Hilton, I don't think she could even feel Monty down there. Anyway, she's coming back to New York and wants to call on you. She wants you to take her out to a few places. You'll get your picture taken with her. It'll cool down all those queer rumors about the two of us.”

“I'd love to be her escort,” Merv said. “But I certainly won't talk about Nicky Hilton to her. She must never unravel some of our little secrets.”

“I'm sure that every day of her life she grows wiser about what men are capable of once the lights go out,” Roddy said.

Merv surveyed their temporary apartment and liked what he saw. “Let's throw a party to welcome her to New York.”

“Great! I'll arrange it.”

“Hey, I've got an idea,” Merv said. “I met this sweet kid at RCA Victor,” Merv said. “Eddie Fisher. He's also under contract there. Real cute. Jewish. I bet Elizabeth will go for him. I also hear he's got a big dick. Maybe not as big as yours or Nicky Hilton's, but very, very respectable.”

“Invite him too,” Roddy said. “We'll be matchmakers.”

“If Elizabeth doesn't go for Eddie, I'll make a play for him.” He sighed. “But I hear he doesn't swing that way. Oh, well. Maybe in my case he'll make an exception.”

“Don't get your hopes up,” Roddy cautioned. “Stick to the fairies. You've got to get over your obsession with straight guys. It's such a difficult struggle to get laid if you date hetero.”

* * *

When Merv escorted Elizabeth Taylor into Asti's Restaurant in Greenwich Village, she was arguably at the peak of her beauty. All heads turned and stared at her, conversation coming to an end, as the maître d' showed Merv and Elizabeth to a table. Asti's was an odd choice of a restaurant to take a movie star. The Italian waiters not only served you pasta “like momma made,” but sang opera to you.

Elizabeth ordered ravioli and some other side dishes just to sample them, not finishing one complete plate. As she ate, she chatted about her failed marriage to Nicky Hilton. “He spent more time in bed with other women than he did with me,” she lamented. Merv didn't tell her that a few of those nights had been spent with him.

He arranged tickets to the Broadway Theater where Mae West was appearing in a popularly priced revival of *Diamond Lil*, which she had written herself and had first performed in April of 1928. In his memoirs, Merv remembered the play as *Catherine the Great*, which Mae had brought to Broadway in 1944. Ironically, the producer of that play was the flamboyant showman, Mike Todd, who in years to come would marry Elizabeth.

As Merv entered with Elizabeth, even though the lights had dimmed and the curtain was about to go up, a murmur went up from the audience. Word spread quickly that Elizabeth Taylor had entered the theater and was being ushered to her seat. Only the opening of the curtain silenced the crowd.

All thoughts of Elizabeth vanished as a usually blasé New York audience greeted Mae's appearances with applause and huzzahs lasting five minutes. In this mixture of comedy and melodrama, Mae seemed to take delight in reviving her “classic,” still getting laughs from such nowfamiliar lines as “I'm one of the finest women who ever walked the streets.”

Reviewers still called the play “pure trash … or rather impure trash,” but through it all the buxom, blonde Mae prevailed in her Gay Nineties garb. She was still maintaining her reputation as “the world's wickedest woman.” Ironically, in years to come, Elizabeth herself would be dubbed as such in the hate press.

Out of courtesy, Merv and Elizabeth went backstage to pay their respects to the star of the show. She was engaged in a noisy fight with producer George Brandt, and was furious that some critic had written of the “dromedary dip with which she walks,” and she was demanding a retraction. The producer was patiently trying to explain to her that she couldn't force a reviewer to retract something like that.

Seeing Elizabeth, Mae, who had changed into a white satin robe, became all smiles. She was introduced to Merv, but apparently had never heard of him.

Elizabeth complimented Mae on her wisecracks. “They made the play for me. You are so Americana. You're in the great tradition of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, W.C. Fields.”

“Please!” Mae protested. “Don't mention that old drunkard Fields to me. He once stuck his filthy paw up my dress to see if those stories about me were true. He learned I'm a real woman down there. Not a transvestite!”

The aging sex diva invited them back to her dressing room, which Merv claimed had more flowers than the funeral of a head of state. He remembered her “looking like a pagan love goddess, getting ready for the mating season.”

After arranging herself, Mae advised Elizabeth “to stick to the movies — don't go on the wicked stage. The damn producers when they go on the road will try to book you into an outhouse and try to ruin your play, washing it right down the turlet.” Merv was surprised that she still spoke in pure Brooklynese.

Mae liked to give advice, and she had plenty of it for Elizabeth but nothing to say to Merv. “I know everything worth knowing about show business,” Mae said. “First, you've got to insist to a director that at least one redheaded actor be hired. Redheads are good omens. I've got one appearing in this play with me. I run my fingers through his

red hair every night before going on. Second, you've got to surround yourself with a real swish, maybe two. A woman always looks more feminine when she's got a swish hovering over her, doing her hair, her nails, tightening her dress."

"I'll keep that in mind, Miss West," Elizabeth said.

"Now the important part," Mae confided in a confessional tone. Before facing the camera or going on stage in front of an audience, select the husky of the crew. Demand that he give you an orgasm if he wants to keep his job. When I was doing *Catherine the Great* for that God damn bricklayer, Mike Todd, in 1944, I had this *sri*, who not only supervised my yoga lessons, but could give me an orgasm in thirty seconds. Some men can't do that after sweating over a woman's body all night. After orgasm, a woman looks more beautiful, more regal than ever. Don't you agree, Griffin?" She looked him up and down skeptically, as if seeing him for the first time. "On second thought, you're not a man to answer such a question."

About fifteen minutes later, Merv escorted Elizabeth out of Mae's dressing room. The blonde goddess stood at her door. Ignoring Merv, she gazed into Elizabeth's violet eyes. Mae was no longer impersonating herself but looked like a real woman for the first time tonight — not a caricature. She also looked fifteen years older.

She took Elizabeth's hand. "There was a time, dearie, when I was as beautiful a woman as you are tonight."

* * *

After leaving Mae's dressing room, Merv put Elizabeth in a taxi to haul her to the Broadway hangout, Lindy's, whose patrons looked like a cast of characters released from *Guys and Dolls*. All the comedians hung out here — even Bob Hope who dropped in whenever he flew in from California. On any given night you could see Jack E. Leonard trading insults with Jack Carter or Joey Bishop. Milton Berle was a regular.

As Merv entered Lindy's with his "arm candy," even this rather sophisticated Broadway crowd stopped eating and started rubbernecking. Martha Raye they were used to, not Elizabeth Taylor, the screen goddess. One awestruck young waiter, an aspiring actor, almost spilled a double order of matzo ball soup onto Mary Martin's table.

Since she'd already eaten a big dinner, Elizabeth had come here for one reason, and that was to sample Lindy's celebrated cheesecake. Frank Sinatra had recommended it as a "must" on her visit to New York, although he claimed his mother could make a better one.

As Elizabeth dug into her cheesecake, Merv looked up to see "Uncle Miltie" heading for their table. Milton Berle usually ignored Merv, but tonight greeted him like his best friend. "Baby, I've missed you. We've got to get together. After all, you're my favorite band singer."

Merv knew that this effusive greeting was just staged so that Merv would introduce him to Elizabeth. After being introduced to the "King of Comedy," Elizabeth merely smiled before digging back into a large dab of her cheesecake.

Knowing all eyes were on him, Milton sat down in their booth and attempted in vain to engage Elizabeth in conversation. She just wanted to eat the cheesecake and get out the door. Looking disappointed, he finally got up and left, returning to his own table.

"Why did you snub Uncle Miltie?" Merv asked.

"Never heard of him," she said.

"Don't you watch television?" he asked.

"Never," she said. "It bores me."

"But he's one of the most famous entertainers in the business, the King of Comedy."

"Since when did he dethrone Bob Hope?"

Before leaving, Merv excused himself "to go to the little boy's room."

Standing at the urinal, he was surprised to see Milton enter and stand beside him. He reached in and pulled out what looked like a footlong cock, the biggest Merv had ever seen in his life — and it was still soft.

"What's with that stuckup little bitch you're dating tonight?" Milton asked. He shook his penis. "She needs for me to stick this whopper up her cunt. I'll have her screaming all night for more."

Merv quickly zipped up and headed back to Elizabeth, who was surrounded by fans complimenting her on her fur coat.

As he was shepherding her into a taxi, she said, "Women usually compliment my beauty, not my fur. I'll have to get rid of it. No woman should have her apparel detract from her looks."

As she snuggled into the fur for the ride back to her hotel, she said, “That was the best fucking cheesecake I've ever had in my life.”

* * *

When Roddy and Merv learned that Jane Powell was going to be in New York, they decided to throw a joint party for both Elizabeth and Jane at their sublet at the Dakota. In his memoirs, Merv claimed that the party took place at his suite at the Hotel Meurice, but Eddie Fisher accurately remembered in his autobiography that the venue was the Dakota.

Perhaps the evercloseted Merv did not want his public to know that he was rooming with one of Hollywood's bestknown homosexuals, Roddy McDowall. Merv especially wanted to conceal from the public that they were sometimes lovers.

Ever since he'd met Eddie Fisher at RCA Victor studios, Merv had wanted to get to know him better. Using Elizabeth as bait, he decided to call Eddie and invite him to the party.

Merv was jealous of Eddie as a singer, and knew their recording studio was predicting big success for him. Yet he also had a secret crush on Eddie, even though Roddy assured him that “You'll strike out with him. I know Eddie. He's a connoisseur of beautiful women.”

“So is Nicky Hilton, and look what happened,” Merv said.

“Regardless of what people say, lightning doesn't strike twice,” Roddy warned.

When Merv called Eddie, the singer at first didn't believe that Elizabeth would actually be at the party, but he agreed to come over anyway. He arrived at 1:45pm although the invitation was for two o'clock.

“Oh, yeah, right,” Eddie said skeptically. “I'm sure Elizabeth Taylor is going to show up at any minute.”

“Actually,” Merv said, “she's already here.” He led Eddie into the bedroom which he shared with Roddy. Seated on a padded stool in front of a vanity mirror, she was applying the finishing touches to her makeup. Unlike Milton Berle, she knew who Eddie was. She gracefully turned around and smiled at him. At first he didn't know what to say.

He later recalled the moment. “I was awestruck by her extraordinary beauty. I mean, by that point I had been around a lot of beautiful women, but I'd never met anyone like her. I fell in love with her that afternoon. I can still close my eyes and see her sitting there.”

Merv had disappeared to answer the buzzer for the apartment door, as Roddy was busy in the kitchen. It was Montgomery Clift at the door, another honored guest. For the first time in his life, the actor had arrived somewhere on time.

Rushing back to his bedroom, Merv announced to Elizabeth, “Monty's here.” Taking one final look for reassurance in the mirror, Elizabeth rose and headed for the living room and Monty.

“She brushed right past me and went to the side of her costar in *A Place in the Sun*,” Eddie said. “At that point I might not have existed. I spent most of my time that day talking to Roddy and Jane, but I cast frequent glances at Monty and Elizabeth, who seemed engaged in some epic battle.”

Merv later revealed what was going on between Elizabeth and Monty. “It was her final attempt to get Monty to marry her before he headed back to Hollywood. Even though Monty told me he'd never marry anyone, Elizabeth was persistent.”

Eddie Fisher

At the end of the party, Eddie went over to tell Elizabeth good-bye, but she was still engaged in her dispute with Monty. She brushed Eddie aside. He later told Merv that he saw her back in Hollywood when he was visiting the MGM lot. “She was obviously furious and talking out loud to herself. She walked right past me and didn't even look at me. At that time I could never have believed that one day she'd marry me. You figure.”

Weeks later, it was the betterinformed Roddy who told Merv that it had been announced in Hollywood that Elizabeth was going to marry the British actor, Michael Wilding. Merv looked shocked. “That dimestore version of David Niven? It won't last.”

“Poor Elizabeth,” Roddy said. “Another rotten choice in a husband. Wilding's completely bi. I know that Noel Coward's had him. He and Stewart Granger have carried on an affair for years.”

Still harboring his crush on Eddie, Merv called the singer's hotel to tell him the news. In some secret cell of his brain, Merv thought Eddie might be heartbroken. After all, he'd told him that he'd fallen in love with Elizabeth on first sight. Maybe, or so Merv “reasoned” with Roddy, he could get Eddie on the rebound, perhaps when he was sobbing his heart out for losing Elizabeth.

“Even Noel Coward with all his charm couldn't get Eddie,” Roddy claimed.

“What do you mean?” Merv asked.

“Noel encountered Eddie in a steam room,” he said. “I think it was on an ocean liner. Eddie was completely nude, and he's got a big one. But Noel didn't want to suck his cock but pat his ass. Eddie turned him down.”

Despite these warnings, Merv called Eddie's hotel suite anyway. He didn't pick up the phone. A world famous woman's voice came over the wire instead. “Hello, this is Mr. Fisher's residence. I'm his maid. Mr. Fisher can't be disturbed at the moment. If you care to leave a message?”

Without saying another word, Merv put down the phone. How could he compete with *The Blue Angel* herself? That was Marlene Dietrich speaking.

He later confessed to Roddy how he finally got over his crush on Eddie, realizing how hopeless it was. Judy Garland flew into New York and called Merv. “Where in the fuck is Eddie Fisher?” she demanded to know. “I've been calling all over town for him.”

“I'll try to get in touch with him,” Merv promised.

“As soon as you do, tell that little Jew bastard to get over to the Royalton right away. I want him to fuck my brains out.” She slammed down the phone.

* * *

Still hanging out in New York with Roddy, Merv had not uncovered any singing engagements, even though he contacted his agent daily. It was ironic that his first gig came from Freddy Martin. The orchestra leader and his boys were appearing for a twoweek engagement at The Last Frontier in Las Vegas. Merv's replacement, another boy singer, had a family emergency that forced him to return to New York.

“Will you do it?” Freddy asked over the phone after making his pitch.

“I'm on the next plane,” Merv said.

Even though he hadn't been away all that long, it was good being back with Freddy's boys again and playing Las Vegas, one of his favorite towns. The promise of a paycheck made it all the sweeter. Performing two shows a night, Merv sang to a packed room.

He was in his dressing room during the second week of the show when there was a knock on his door. What happened next is a matter of dispute. Merv confused the incident by presenting two different versions of what happened, one in a 1980 memoir, another in a 2003 autobiography. We'll go with a more reliable version promulgated by Marty Melcher.

When Merv opened the door, he was shocked to encounter a young boy who looked no more than ten years old.

“Hi, kid,” Merv said, “give me your autograph book.”

“I don't want your autograph, Mr. Griffin,” the boy said. “My mother sent me backstage. She wants you to join our table after your next show.”

“Sorry, kid, but no thanks. I'm tired tonight and want to get some shuteye. Tell your mama to give me a raincheck.”

“But, Mr. Griffin, she wants you to be her new leading man in her next big musical.”

“Just who is this mother of yours?” Merv asked. “Judy Garland?”

“Doris Day.”

Merv later told Freddy that he was so overwhelmed at the prospect of meeting Doris that his knees were knocking throughout that night's second act. Like himself, Doris had been a band singer. But now she was the newly

crowned Queen of Warner Brothers and one of the biggest box office attractions in the country. Instead of concentrating on his singing, Merv's head was filled with dreams of becoming Doris's leading man, replacing Gordon MacRae.

“It was a crazy thing to do,” Marty Melcher, Doris's husband, later said. “I should have gone backstage and introduced myself to Griffin instead of sending Terry. For the life of me, I don't know why I sent the boy. He was just a kid. And besides, Doris knew that Warner's at the time was planning future musicals with her and MacRae. They'd already filmed *Tea for Two* together. Frankly, she didn't like him. His heavy drinking had led to several fights on the set, and she wasn't hot to work with him again.”

“At the time we heard Merv sing, I was scouting around for another boy singer,” Marty said. “We needed a goodlooking guy with a voice who could be a good second banana for Doris. Someone who would let Doris shine like the star she was without any interference from MacRae's colossal ego. Merv seemed like the ideal candidate, although I was considering a lot of other boy singers.”

Marty later admitted that Doris wanted unchallenged star billing. Gordon, with his great baritone voice, seemed to think he was a much bigger star than Doris. “Doris wanted to get a virtual unknown for her leading man,” Marty said. “That way, there could be no doubt as to who was the star of the picture.”

After the show, a nervous Merv walked up to Doris's table and extended his hand. “Doris Mary Ann Von Kappelhoff,” he said. “Why did you ever change it to Doris Day? Kappelhoff would fit better onto a marquee.”

“Doris burst into laughter,” Marty said. “Merv showed us that he could not only sing, but had a sense of humor.”

After both Merv and Doris exchanged compliments about each other's singing, Marty got down to business. A waiter had already escorted Terry upstairs to their suite, as it was long past his bedtime.

“I want a new face,” Doris said abruptly. “Jack Warner is planning to team me with the same actors again and again. Jack Carson has already taught me all the tricks he knows about how to be in front of a camera. Gordon MacRae and I are not compatible. I've got my own career to think about. It's not my job to keep all the contract boys at Warner's working full time. The films are coming at me fast and furious. Jack Warner doesn't even want to give me a week off to lie by my pool. His excuse? The sun would give me too many freckles.”

When she returned to Hollywood, Doris promised Merv that she'd arrange a screen test for him at Warner's. “You'll find out for yourself,” she said. “Appearing before a camera will be a lot more rewarding — and a lot more fun — than standing in front of a live audience every night singing ‘Sentimental Journey’ for the ten thousandth time. In your case, that ‘Coconuts’ ditty.”

The next morning, going down on the elevator for breakfast, Merv encountered Terry again. He was checking out of the hotel with his parents, who had already gone to the garage. “Isn't my mom a great lady?” he asked.

“My favorite singer,” Merv said. “What a bubbly personality.”

Mary Ann Von Kappelhoff
(Doris Day)
with **Gordon MacRae.**

“When you become her next leading man, you'll find that she's wonderful to work with.” As he stepped off the elevator, the boy turned to Merv, a frown crossing his brow. “Watch out for that Marty Melcher. He's a real son of a bitch and a crook. He'll steal you blind.”

With that parting remark, Terry raced across the lobby. Even though he'd been given Marty's last name, Terry was the biological son of Doris's first husband, a trombonist, Al Jorden, who had committed suicide years before.

After Doris flew out of Las Vegas to return to Hollywood, Merv could hardly wait to finish his final appearances with Freddy's orchestra. “I was the little fat boy back in San Mateo dreaming dreams that could never come true.

Hollywood star. Doris Day's leading man. I just knew we'd become the new Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy of the screen. I couldn't wait to go back to Hollywood. I left it as a boy singer with a band. I was returning to become a bigtime star. Years later I looked back at how naïve I was. I did become a star but in another medium. The Hollywood I was about to enter in the early 1950s was dying on the vine, as television rose to challenge it. It was to become my baptism of fire. I don't want to get too melodramatic, but it became my season in hell. Even so, I had a lot of fun along the way and an occasional heartbreak."

Merv on the road to bigger things

Chapter Four

Back in Hollywood, and back in Tom Drake's bed, Merv's daydreams almost overpowered him. Stardom seemed only months away.

Tom warned that he'd felt the same way in 1945, only to be bitterly disillusioned. “I was hailed as the next Van Johnson, but Van is still going strong. You're hailed as the next Gordon MacRae even though he hasn't departed from the scene either. In fact, his career seems stronger than ever.”

“Maybe,” Merv said, not wanting the actor's pessimism to spoil his usually sunny outlook. “So maybe I won't replace MacRae. Yesterday, one of the trade papers predicted that I'd be the next Dennis Morgan. I hear Warners isn't going to renew his contract. Besides, I sing better than Dennis.”

“I don't think you and I are going to replace anybody,” Tom predicted. “Better that you find your own voice. Be yourself.”

“Okay, okay,” Merv said, slightly dismissive. Merv was already growing bored with Tom, finding him “too clinging,” as he relayed in a phone call to Johnny Riley in San Francisco.

“When you get tired of Tom, ship him north to me,” Johnny had said.

But on the way to his first meeting at Warner Brothers, Merv began to fear that Tom Drake and his pessimism might be right. He read a story about Warner Brothers in *Variety* that suggested the studio might be on the way down. In 1947, it seemed, Warners had earned more than $22 million. But in 1951 its earnings had plummeted to $9.4 million.. Dozens of personnel, Merv had learned, had been fired, including one quarter of the publicity staff.

Merv had grown up on movies made by Warner Brothers, seeing the entire output of such big stars as Bette Davis, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, John Garfield, Humphrey Bogart, and his special favorite, Errol Flynn.

For Warner's, 1952 was a crucial year. In 1946, a Federal court had ordered that the studio, and others, divest themselves of their theater holdings. That meant that Warners could no longer be guaranteed block bookings of its films, especially the duds. In the future, each movie would have to be sold on its individual merits.

Merv was confident, however, that he and Doris would produce an ongoing roster of musical box office hits. He was delighted that his name was recognized at Warners' security gate. The security guard there had even called him “Mr. Griffin.” He was escorted to a rehearsal hall with a piano where he was told to wait for Bill Orr, the casting director. Bill was married to Jack Warner's stepdaughter, Joy Page.

At the time of Merv's acting debut at Warners, many of the stars that he had hoped to meet there had already told the studio good-bye, or vice versa. Bogart and Lauren Bacall had departed, as had flatchested Ann Sheridan and “ballsy” Ida Lupino. The tough, cynical and edgy John Garfield was on his last legs and would die of a heart attack that May, reportedly nude and between the sheets with a starlet. He was only 39 years old.

Two of Merv's alltime favorites, Joan Crawford and Errol Flynn, were still on the lot, and Merv planned to look them up. He wasn't sure if Joan would remember him, but he was certain that Errol would. Joan was finishing *This Woman Is Dangerous*, and Errol was trying to launch *The Adventures of Captain Fabian*, which he had written himself.

The woman whom Merv referred to as “the demented screen goddess,” Bette Davis, was long gone, following the disastrous release of *Beyond the Forest* in 1949. His encounters with Bette lay in his future.

Ronald Reagan and his former wife, Jane Wyman, were still on the lot, although they avoided each other after their divorce. Freelancers such as Burt Lancaster came and went, appearing in such adventure epics as *The Crimson Pirate*. Patricia Neal had gained good notices after appearing with Ronald in *The Hasty Heart*. Much to Patricia's brokenhearted regret, her former costar and lover, Gary Cooper, was appearing with that sexy ice blonde, Grace Kelly, in *High Noon*.

Crosseyed Virginia Mayo, who was playing a burlesque queen in *She's Working Her Way Through College*, was costarring with Ronald Reagan. Rumors spread around the lot that they were having an affair, even though Nancy Davis was hovering in the wings to throw ice on the fire.

Now that Errol was getting long in the tooth, and increasingly drunk, Merv felt that the sexiest man on the Warners lot was Steve Cochran, who had been Mae West's leading man on the stage in *Diamond Lil* and her offstage lover. Steve had become known for playing sleazy pretty boys. “When it comes to menacing sexuality, no one does it better than Steve boy,” Merv told Tom Drake

In the rehearsal hall at Warners, Merv was told to wait until Bill Orr appeared. The casting director had worked for Merv's Uncle Elmer at a nightclub he owned on Sunset Strip. It was called The Sports Circle, and Bill appeared

there as an emcee doing impressions. At Merv's instigation, Uncle Elmer had called Bill asking for him to “give Merv special consideration.”

By the time the second hour rolled around, and Bill had not appeared, Merv mumbled “some consideration” to his agent, “Bullets” Durgom, who stood around with a pianist from Warners.

During this time, Merv at least got to know his agent a little better. Up to now, Bullets usually had less than fifteen minutes to devote to conferences or talks with Merv. He was one busy agent, hustling jobs for other clients who included one especially big one (in more ways than one), Jackie Gleason.

The agent's real name was George Durgom, but he preferred his nickname of Bullets. Long linked to Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra, Bullets at one time also represented Glenn Miller, who had died during the war.

His newer, sexier stars included Natalie Wood, and, for a time, even Marilyn Monroe. During their wait, Bullets told Merv he wanted him to meet another artist he represented, Sammy Davis Jr. “He's terrific. You guys will get along fabulously.”

Merv suspected Bullets was of some vague Arabic descent, perhaps Lebanese, but he didn't dare ask. A short, intense, railthin man, Bullets was balding and walked with a stoop. He always had a harassed look as if he were late for an appointment somewhere else. He'd earned the sobriquet Bullets in a Brooklyn schoolyard because he kept ricocheting his sentences from one subject to another without connecting them.

Finally, one of Bill Orr's assistants warned Merv and an increasingly impatient Bullets that “the boss man is on his way.” His temper flaring, Merv was furious at having to wait so long, even though Bullets warned him “to cool it.”

Merv knew it might blow his chances for a screen test, but he decided to get back at Bill.

Merv instructed the pianist to play the last notes of Cole Porter's “Night and Day.” Just as Bill entered the hall, Merv sang the last refrain of the song before bolting for the door.

Even though Bill introduced himself, and apologized for being late, Merv snubbed him. “I've just done my act. I'm not doing it again. Don't get too grand with me, Orr. If you want to hear me sing, catch my next solo gig in Las Vegas.”

Bill Orr could easily have walked away from Merv that day and never called upon him again. Merv was uncharacteristically rude and arrogant toward this major Hollywood player, and Bill himself told Jack Warner that “singers like Merv Griffin are a dime a dozen.”

Bill would go on to forge a big career as a TV producer, associated with a string of westerns and detective programs, including *Maverick* (1957), *Cheyenne* (1955), *77 Sunset Strip* (1958), and *F Troop* (1965).

Before coming to Hollywood, Bill had served as an officer in the Army Air Force's First Motion Picture Unit, making training films with William Holden, Alan Ladd, and Ronald Reagan. After the war, and after his marriage to Joy Page. Bill became in his own words “a big enchilada” at Warners. Behind his back, his coworkers claimed “the soninlaw also rises.”

Elmer had arranged for hetero pornographic pictures of Bill to be snapped when the casting director worked for him at his burlesque club on Sunset Strip. Rumors still persist that Elmer threatened to present those pictures to Bill's fatherinlaw, Jack Warner, if Bill refused to arrange a screen test for Merv.

Somehow, and it isn't known how it happened, Jack Warner eventually saw those pictures, and got a rundown on the whole sordid blackmail attempt. In the wake of that, Warner allegedly told his confidants that, “Merv Griffin got his screen test and his Warners contract because that old fuck, Elmer, blackmailed Bill into granting them. What Merv didn't know was that I was planning to cast him as the lead in only one of our pictures — and nothing more. So, fine….. I'll give him a god damn contract to be in some pictures, but if I'm still here, I'll see that he's uncredited and with no more than 30 seconds of screen time in each of them. I'll show those fuckers they can't piss on Jack Warner and get away with it.”

Amazingly, Jack later became friends with Merv and invited him on several occasions for Sunday afternoons at his palatial home. But in spite of this outward friendliness, Jack was “stubborn as a horse,” according to Bill Orr, and stood by his original forecast about how he'd handle Merv. “Jack Warner and Bill Orr completely fucked my chances for a film career,” Merv would later claim.

As the months went by, Bill and Merv “mended fences” (in Merv's words) and became confidants of a sort, even though Bill — perhaps the result of the remembered grudge — did almost nothing for Merv's film career. “I hung out with Bill Orr on a Saturday night but come Monday morning he always put me at the bottom of the cast — that is if he listed my name at all.”

Merv told Roddy McDowall and Tom Drake that Elmer had showed him those pornographic pictures he had of

Bill. “Orr is exceptionally well endowed. No wonder all the gals and closeted male stars went for him,” Merv said.

Bill liked to gossip about the stars, and so did Merv. Bill claimed that the very closeted Edward G. Robinson had come on to him, as had “shorty,” Alan Ladd. He also claimed that he'd had an onagain, offagain affair with Lucille Ball in the late 40s during her marriage to Desi Arnaz.

Because of the risks associated with his role as Jack Warner's soninlaw, Bill appears to have kept his bisexuality locked tightly in a closet. It seems that he did, however, have an occasional sexual involvement with a man, but mostly he pursued the ladies, with a rare exception every now and again.

“Bill's big mistake was in not recognizing what a big star I could have been at Warners,” Merv later said, only half kidding. “I could have stayed at Warners and presided over the death of the movie musical with Doris Day at my side. Even though Bill never realized my potential, he did have a nose for new talent. Armed with the power of granting a contract from Warner Brothers, he pursued James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Paul Newman. Not bad, not bad at all. He told me that he got to fuck Dean on several occasions.”

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“I was shaking like a burlesque queen,” Merv recalled, “when I arrived at the Warners lot for my screen test.” A studio employee handed him a scene from John Patrick's play, *The Hasty Heart*. Merv had seen the 1949 film, starring Ronald Reagan, Patricia Neal, and Richard Todd.

Fully made up in a borrowed dressing room, Merv waited for two hours to be called to the set. “I just assumed that I'd make the test opposite Doris Day,” he later said. “After all, the whole point of the test was to see if Doris and I had onscreen chemistry.”

False harmonies:
Merv with **Phyllis Kirk**

To his disappointment, he learned that he'd be appearing on camera opposite Phyllis Kirk. A former model, brighteyed Phyllis was an attractive *ingénue*, not really beautiful and certainly not magnetic. Merv had not been impressed with her appearance in the 1950 Samuel Goldwyn movie, *Our Very Own*, starring Ann Blyth. In that film, instead of looking at Ann and Phyllis, he'd fallen for the good looks of Farley Granger, a homosexual actor who at the time was being groomed for big stardom.

As for Phyllis, Merv was dismissive, telling Bill Orr, “You can find dozens of Phyllis Kirks on any college campus in America.”

Life after Merv:
Cover girl **Phyllis Kirk**

“I had respect — not enchantment — for Phyllis,” Merv later told Roddy McDowall. “She was hard working and rather personable, but rather full of herself. To me, she represented a new breed of postwar woman appearing on the screens of the 1950s. Most of them would not survive that decade. These gals lacked the box office magic of the

1930s divas that lured us to movie houses — Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo. These bubbly new personalities with their meager talents pop up on the screen like a bad dream. But I think most of them will end up as suburban housewives. Could you imagine anyone buying a movie ticket just to see Phyllis Kirk emote? I was furious, not that I had anything against her personally. I felt betrayed by Doris for not agreeing to do the test herself."

When Merv placed a call to Bill Orr to complain, he was told that Phyllis was going to become one of the studio's biggest stars. "Besides, Doris is too busy to make the test. Who knows? In the future, when you're not making a film opposite Doris, I might cast you in a picture with Phyllis. I think the two of you would make an ideal screen couple."

Merv suffered through the screen test with Phyllis, who proved competent in front of the camera, although it was obvious she had no great love affair with the lens the way Marilyn Monroe did. He thought Phyllis had about as much talent as Nancy Davis (Reagan), no great compliment. On screen, he sang, "I Don't Want to Walk Without You." It was not one of his best numbers and did not really showcase his singing talent.

Despite Merv's misgivings, Warners signed him to a contract at $250 a week after seeing the test. However, Jack Warner insisted that he change his name to Mark Griffin. "Merv sounds like a little old Jewish shopkeeper with a fat wife at home."

"I'm sticking with Merv," he stubbornly maintained. "I was named after my father, and it would be insulting to him to change it."

Jack Warner could have torn up the contract right at that point. But instead he invited Merv to come over to his home that Sunday afternoon. "Maybe we'll play a game of tennis."

The night after his screen test, Merv drove with Roddy to Rock Hudson's house for an allmale party. Tom Drake was in the back seat sulking, having complained earlier that Merv was not showing him enough attention. Merv secretly suspected that Tom was still daydreaming that he'd get Peter Lawford back.

At the party, both Roddy and Rock once again urged Merv to be seen in public with starlets, getting his picture taken with "arm candy."

"Those rumors about you being queer are all over town," Rock warned him. "That's why I date Vera-Ellen. You don't want to end up on the front page of *Confidential*."

Roddy joined Rock in urging Merv to publicly date women, and he looked over at a pouting Tom. "When you dump your date back at her door, you can always hurry home to Tom here. He'll be keeping the bed warm for you." Tom continued to sulk throughout the party.

Reluctantly, Merv called Phyllis the next day and asked her out on a date. She told him, "I'm very busy. Lots of appointments. But I'll try to work you in Thursday night."

From that unpromising beginning, Merv and Phyllis began to be seen all over town. "That gal had more appointments and more invitations than the Queen of England," he later said. "She was always rushing here, running there, and some of those appointments called for a male escort. That's where I came in."

Merv told Roddy that after three weeks of steady dating, all he'd done romantically with Phyllis was kiss her lightly on the lips at her doorstep. For publicity purposes, and without consulting him, she began to play up their dating as a big romance. She'd even vaguely hinted to gossip maven Louella Parsons that "marriage might be around the corner, though there's nothing official yet."

Merv shuddered when he heard this, as he had no intention of marrying Phyllis, or any other woman at that point in his life.

One night he invited her to an Italian restaurant, Dominick's. When he picked her up at her house, he knew something was seriously wrong. She almost didn't speak to him as he drove her to the restaurant. She was mad at him, and he had no idea why.

Over dinner, and to rescue the evening, he tried to get her to talk about herself, knowing that few ambitious young actresses could resist that temptation.

"You know," he said, "I've been hearing all this talk about us, and it occurred to me that I know almost nothing about you."

She addressed him as if talking to a newspaper reporter about her life. "My parents were Danish. I grew up in Syracuse, New York, as Phyllis Kirkegaard. I had several jobs slinging hash and once I sold perfume at a counter in a department store. I later became a model while studying acting under Sanford Meisner, a great coach. He helped me get cast in a Broadway play in 1949. I played a French maid opposite Jean-Pierre Aumont, who seduced me both on and off the stage."

She claimed that a talent scout had discovered her, which led to her going to Hollywood and signing a contract with Samuel Goldwyn, who'd cast her in *Our Very Own*." Goldwyn lent me out to MGM but didn't renew my contract," she said. "That's how I ended up at Warners."

The rest of their short evening was devoted to talking about her upcoming film. She'd been cast opposite Vincent Price, who played a maniac sculptor in *House of Wax* (1953).

She told Merv she'd been given the female lead, playing a character originally created by Fay Wray in the 1933 *Mystery of the Wax Museum*. "I'm being forced to do the role, but I don't want to become another Fay Wray. Hell, they'll remake *King Kong* with me doing love scenes with a big, hairy gorilla."

The film was to be shot in the revolutionary 3D, which Warners was hoping would bring hordes back into movie theaters. "As far as I'm concerned," she said, "3D is just a gimmick. I don't want to appear in a film that uses a gimmick to lure audiences in."

Years later she told a reporter, "I hated it when I was cast in *House of Wax*, although Vincent Price turned out to be a delight. The irony of it all is that throughout the rest of my life, this is the one film I am remembered for."

Merv listened patiently to her brief resumé, but still wanted to know why she was mad at him. He decided to be blunt and ask. "Just why are you pissed off at me?"

"With stardom on the way, I've got to think of my career and who I'm seen out with. A scandal could wreck my plans."

"What sort of scandal?" he asked, growing uncomfortable. "I mean, we haven't even gone to bed with each other. How could I knock you up?"

"I'll be frank," she said, sliding slightly away from him on the red leather upholstery. "I learned some disturbing news about you today. I won't tell you from whom. But I've got to ask you a question. Are you a homosexual?"

He looked flabbergasted, putting down his fork. "I definitely am not, and I resent such a question. I don't know what asshole told you that."

"Were you the lover of Roddy McDowall in New York, and are you the lover of Tom Drake here in Hollywood?"

"We're just good friends," he said, acutely embarrassed. He'd never been confronted with such a question from a woman before.

"I was told that you're dating me just to get publicity for yourself," she charged. "To fool the public into thinking you're straight. One of those Tab Hunter/Debbie Reynolds things."

"That's not true!"

"Then what are your intentions?" she asked. "Do you plan to marry me?"

"Well … marriage is something I haven't thought about. I think we should just continue dating like we've been and see what happens."

Suddenly, she stood up, flashing anger. "You're using me. I was falling in love with you until I learned the truth about you today. You're lying to me right now. You *are* a homosexual. I refuse to be a part of your sick publicity campaign to fool your public." She picked up her platter of spaghetti and tossed it over his head before storming out of the restaurant.

The many witnesses in the restaurant, fellow diners, spread word of this confrontation around Hollywood. Merv attempted a coverup, claiming that Phyllis had discovered that he'd been seeing another woman.

In his memoirs, Merv came up with a completely different story. He claimed that Phyllis was always talking about her busy schedule, and that she carried an appointment book around with her at all times. At one point during their dinner, Merv allegedly told her, "Now, you're not going to read me all your appointments, are you?" He falsely maintained that it was because of that question that she picked up that platter of spaghetti and dumped it over his head.

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Despite that episode, Merv did not hold a grudge against Phyllis and would occasionally encounter her on friendly terms in their future. He applauded her success when she was cast as Nora Charles opposite his friend, Peter Lawford, in the hit TV series, *The Thin Man*, which ran for three years (195759). Privately Merv confided to Peter, "Let's face it: Phyllis is no Myrna Loy." Merv might also have said that Peter was no William Powell.

Years later, Merv was saddened to learn that Phyllis had to abandon her film career. As a child she'd battled

polio, and throughout the rest of her life, had trouble walking. During the early 1970s, she fell and broke her hip, which deteriorated even further her ability to walk without limping. Partly because of her walk, directors would no longer hire her.

During her final years — she died in 2006 — Merv noticed that Phyllis was no longer as selfenchanted, and that she devoted much of her time to liberal causes under the banner of the American Civil Liberties Union. As he migrated more and more to the right, she went left. They especially differed in their beliefs about capital punishment, which he favored and which she adamantly opposed.

After Phyllis's break from Merv, he began to date Rita Farrell, a performer he'd met when he was appearing with the Freddy Martin Orchestra. Vivacious and irreverent, she appealed to him as a “fun gal” to date. They were seen around town together, and she later joined his act when he was booked for singing gigs by his agent. Rita and Merv made appearances together in Chicago, Houston, Reno, and even at a church benefit in Hartford, Connecticut.

Once Merv and Rita appeared on CBS's “The Jane Froman Show,” singing “I Like the Look of You” with the fabled host of the show. Jane had been the subject of a hit movie, *With a Song in My Heart* (1952), starring Susan Hayward.

Romantically, Merv never took Rita seriously. She became another one of his “gal pals.”

Merv was just filling in his time before he was cast in his first big musical at Warners. Bill Orr called him and told him that “it was almost certain that he was going to appear with Doris Day in her next picture, *Lucky Me*, the first Cinema-Scope musical. Phil Silvers, whom Merv had met through Tallulah in New York, had already been signed, as had Eddie Foy Jr. and Nancy Walker. One day on the Warners lot, Merv was introduced to actress Martha Hyer who had also signed to do the picture. A blonde, she was furious that the studio was going to force her to dye her hair red so as not to conflict with the blonde tresses of Doris herself.

Merv's hopes for his first big chance on the screen collapsed when the upcoming director of *Lucky Me*, Jack Donohue, saw Merv's screen test. “The kid's out of the picture,” Donohue said. “Christ, he photographs like he's nineteen. Doris will look like his mother.” The director cast Robert Cummings in the part instead, liking his “everyman appeal” and his bright speaking voice.

“Lucky Me, indeed!” Merv said. Despite the rejection, he added the song to his repertoire of night club standards. During his solo appearances, he'd warble: “Lucky me! Down the fourleaf clover highway, all the signs are pointing my way.”

Just when he began to think he'd never be cast in any film, Bill Orr called with good news. *Lucky Me* had been postponed, and Doris was going to film *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* (1953) instead. She had seen his screen test, and thought he'd be ideal playing opposite her as her romantic interest. “She didn't think you looked too young at all — she thought you were just right,” Bill assured Merv. Not only that, but she'd invited him for a facetoface in her dressing room the following afternoon.

“I felt like I was the King of Hollywood that night,” Merv said, “Bigger than Clark Gable. A better singer than Bing Crosby. The only thing I feared at Warners was running into Gordon MacRae. He was liable to make mincemeat of me when he learned that I'd replaced him opposite Doris.”

As Merv later recalled, “And then who did I run into that very night at a Hollywood party?”

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Bill Orr and his wife Joy were throwing a party at their house for some of the employees of Warners. The gathering was mainly for the behindthecamera staff. At the party, Merv presumably would be meeting the technicians he'd be working with when he became the leading man opposite Doris.

“I invited the big diva stars but when they heard it was mostly for technicians, they cabled their regrets,” Bill told Merv over the phone. “Doris is too busy to attend, and Miss Joan Crawford has a headache. Actually, I know for a fact that she plans to spend the evening fucking Steve Cochran.”

Before putting down the phone, Bill gave a stern warning to Merv. “The invitation is only for yourself. Don't bring Tom Drake. I figured the best way for you to meet your fellow coworkers is to sing to them. I'll have the piano ready. About five numbers should do just fine. Oh, yes, and don't forget the Coconuts ditty.”

As Merv put down the phone, he was stunned with the realization that Bill knew about his affair with Tom. He called Tom to tell him that he was deliberately not invited to the party. In anger, Tom said, “Accept one of those singforyoursupper invitations if you must. At least you'll provide the evening's free entertainment. Jack Warner pulls those stunts all the time, even getting Judy Garland to sing at his private parties.”

At the Orr house, Sammy Cahn, the lyricist and songwriter, befriended Merv. Merv was impressed with Sammy's previous output of Broadway songs, and the fact that both Frank Sinatra and Doris Day had recorded many of them, sometimes transforming them into hits. Sammy welcomed Merv to Hollywood and exchanged stories with him about working with the big bands.

Sammy was very interested to hear that plans were being activated for Merv to replace Gordon MacRae. “For all I know, if this changeover occurs, you and Doris might be recording my next big hit.” In 1948 Doris had introduced “It's Magic” in her film, *Romance on the High Seas*, and in 1949 she'd performed the same honor for Sammy's hit, “It's a Great Feeling” in the movie of the same name.

Merv was anxious to get to know Sammy and become his friend. The lyricist had been born of Jewish immigrants from Poland and grew up on Manhattan's Lower East Side, but Merv believed that Sammy had amazingly captured the essence of American romanticism. He just knew that if he could convince Sammy to write a song for him, he might have another hit, even bigger than Coconuts.

“Ever since I was 13 and saw my mother pay the musicians at my bar mitzvah, I realized there was money to be made in producing music,” Sammy told Merv.

“Don't you have another one of those Yiddish songs your mother taught you that you could adapt for me?” Merv bluntly asked. He was no doubt referring to a specialty number, *“Bei Mir Bist Du Schon”* (“Means That You're Grand”). The song sold more than a million copies for The Andrew Sisters.

“No Yiddish,” Sammy said, “but I do have a song for you that I think could be a big hit. It's called ‘Three Coins in the Fountain.’”

“Could I hear it?” Merv eagerly asked.

“I'm still working on it,” Sammy said. “But drop by my house late tomorrow afternoon, and let me hear you sing it for me … at least what I've written of it so far.”

Merv showed up the following afternoon, and thought “Three Coins in the Fountain” was one of the most romantic ballads he'd ever heard. He also learned that Jule Styne was working on the song with Sammy. After Merv sang for Sammy, the lyricist said, “We've got a hit. You were great!”

To Merv's great disappointment, he later read in the trade papers that Frank Sinatra had signed to record Three Coins, and that Frank would introduce it in the film of the same name. *Three Coins in the Fountain* eventually won an Academy Award. “If only it had been me,” Merv told Tom Drake. “I dropped my coin in that fountain, but I came up emptyhanded. That fucking Sinatra. All songwriters give him their best material first.”

“Welcome to Hollywood,” Tom said. “At MGM my case was even worse. Louis B. Mayer gave Peter Lawford, my lover, all the parts I wanted to play.”

Back at the Orr party, Merv diverted his eyes from Sammy to see Gordon MacRae approaching. This was the moment he'd been dreading. He didn't know if Gordon had heard that he was going to be Doris Day's new leading man.

During their brief talk, Gordon gave no indication that he viewed Merv as a rival. Maybe he hadn't heard the gossip going around the Warner lot.

“So, what brings you to Hollywood?” Gordon asked with such innocence that Merv thought he might not have heard about what he'd just signed with Jack Warner.

“Don't you know?” Sammy asked. “Merv's in town to replace you in Doris's next picture.”

Gordon looked startled before turning and walking away.

No sooner had Gordon left than Bill Orr approached Merv, telling him it was time to start singing. All the guests were assembling around the piano in the Orr's spacious living room. Before coming to the party, Bill had sent over the music and lyrics for five songs that Gordon had already recorded.

Merv had expected to sing them out of earshot of the star himself. He whispered to Bill that he wanted to change the music, but Bill practically pushed him into the spotlight, telling Merv that it was too late for that since he'd also hired five Warners musicians to accompany him.

Fearing disaster, and with knees knocking, Merv entered the room and headed for the piano. He scanned the room but saw no sign of Gordon. Maybe, he thought, the Gods were merciful and the angry Gordon had gone home.

No such luck. After Bill introduced Merv to mild applause, Merv began to sing the first lines of “On Moonlight Bay.” Suddenly, Gordon mysteriously appeared through the sliding glass doors from the garden. He took the microphone. “Ladies and gentlemen, I met Merv earlier this evening. He told me he wasn't in good voice tonight. So why not hear these songs from the star who originally recorded them?”

Humiliated and embarrassed, Merv was virtually shoved from the piano as Gordon launched into the song himself. Frank Sinatra had humiliated him in a similar way at the Cocoanut Grove.

Unknown to Merv at the moment, Judy Garland, late as usual, had entered the living room. Even though she'd married Sid Luft a few months ago, her husband was nowhere to be seen. Judy was accompanied by Peter Lawford.

Almost for protection, Merv gravitated to their side. Both Peter and Judy kissed him on the lips as Gordon finished his first number. Merv told Judy what had happened. Saying nothing, she kissed him once again for reassurance.

She was already formulating a facesaving device for Merv. At the end of Gordon's act, Judy strode forward, taking over the piano as Gordon bowed out to loud applause.

“As a special treat, I'm going to do ‘Over the Rainbow’ tonight for you,” she told the audience, the news causing the guests to burst into the loudest applause of the evening. “Accompanying me on the piano and singing with me tonight will be Merv Griffin, the new musical sensation of Warner Brothers.”

Merv joined her. He and Judy had never rehearsed the number, but Bill Orr later said that Merv and Judy delivered one of the finest and most tender renditions of this song he'd ever heard. “If only I had recorded it.”

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After leaving Bill Orr's party, Merv congratulated Judy on her wedding to Sid Luft, although he'd heard from songstress Peggy Lee that Sid frequently beat her, even before their marriage, which Merv didn't think would last. He also congratulated Judy on having turned thirty, and she apologized that Sid did not invite him to the celebration. Merv had also heard that Judy was pregnant, presumably with Sid's child, but he did not offer congratulations because she did not mention it.

Peter and Merv drove Judy home, and she kissed both men good night, a very wet kiss for each of them on the lips. She promised to call Merv soon and had plans to see Peter tomorrow for lunch. Peter dropped Merv off beside the spot where, earlier, he had parked his car. Before kissing him good night, he bluntly asked, “How's life with my ex?”

“I won't kid you,” Merv said. “It's not the most exciting spectacle. It has its dull moments. But he's a good kid.”

“On Tom's tombstone, I think they are going to write, ‘The Boy Next Door’ was a good kid,” Peter said.

“How's life with Mr. Robert Walker?” Merv asked.

“A thrill a minute,” Peter said. “Not just the sex. It's the feeling that with him you never know what's going to happen next, including the possibility that he's going to commit suicide at any moment.”

“He's a very attractive guy,” Merv said, “and I envy you. You're a very attractive guy too. I think I missed out on something.”

Before Merv got into his car, Peter stopped him and took his arm, squeezing it tightly. “You don't have to miss out on anything. Bob and I like threeways. The first night you can get away from Tom, give us a ring.”

“You're serious?” Merv said, not knowing at first if Peter were joking. The look on his face told Merv that Peter meant what he said.

“That's an offer I'd like to take you up on,” Merv said. “After all, I'm in the most decadent city on the planet and not wallowing in filth like I should be.”

Peter reached out and fondled Merv's genitals. Then, without saying another word, Merv got into his car and drove off into the night.

Before returning home to Tom, Merv called Roddy McDowall, giving him a playbyplay description of his encounter with Peter. Roddy's parting advice was, “Go for it!”

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The next day Merv received a call from “the girl singer,” Rosemary Clooney. She announced that she was back in Hollywood and wanted to get together with him. He'd met her on the road when traveling with Freddy Martin's orchestra and had been drawn to her wit, charm, warmth, and humor.

Actress Janet Leigh had told Merv that Rosemary was “one hell of a person,” and he eagerly wanted to pursue a friendship with her and to become a part of her inner circle of friends. They included Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Tony Bennett, and Billie Holiday. Merv had also heard from Roddy that Rosemary was seen frequently in the company of Marlene Dietrich, with whom she was recording some duets.

At the time, there was a lot of speculation about Marlene and Rosemary being an item, but Merv dismissed this as malicious Hollywood gossip, even though at parties, a drunken Louella Parsons often insisted that Marlene and Rosemary were having an affair. “She seems like a oneman woman to me,” Merv told Roddy. “But who knows? It's Hollywood. If Marlene could fuck Eddie Fisher, she might be capable of fucking Rosemary Clooney.”

Merv had first met Rosemary in Virginia Beach when she was singing at the Surf Club. Freddy Martin, with Merv as the lead singer, had been booked into the club following the closing of one of Rosemary's gigs. It was a longstanding custom there for the new entertainers to arrive the night before to hear the closing act of the previous group.

The club was positioned directly on the beachfront, and Rosemary strolled out between acts to breathe the ocean air. There she had encountered Merv for the first time, little knowing that he was destined to become one of her most loyal supporters and lifelong allies.

“He looked a little lonely that night, and I immediately gravitated to him,” Rosemary later told Janet Leigh. “I think he wanted to be *in* love instead of singing about love every night. At the time, I knew nothing of his sexual preference. But intuitively, I realized he wanted a friend more than he wanted a hot *tamale*.”

“We spoke and opened up to each other, sharing our mutual experiences of the hardships of the road,” Rosemary later said. “It was a tough life in those days, and we'd both been wounded in various ways. Later, when I got to know Merv better, I came to realize that we both shared a tragic flaw. He and I were always falling in love with the wrong man.”

Just before Rosemary was called back onstage, she kissed her new found friend on the lips and agreed to meet with him later at the Cavalier Hotel where both of them were staying. Merv came

Merv came in to the club to catch Rosemary's closing act. As she delivered her last song, he watched something remarkable happen. The band got up and paraded right off the stage and in to the Atlantic Ocean, soaking their baby blue dinner jackets and their red Scottish plaid dress pants. Merv eagerly reached out to take Rosemary's hand as they headed for the cold waters with the rest of the band.

Two views of
Rosemary Clooney

Merv later told Freddy Martin, “The waters were so God damn cold that night I think I got blue balls, but who would turn down Rosemary Clooney, Miss ‘Beautiful Brown Eyes?’” He was referring to her hit song that sold more than half a million copies.

After Merv agreed to see Rosemary, she called him two days later inviting him to “Come Ona-My House,”

referring to what would become her signature song, although she hated it and at first refused to record it.

She suggested to Merv that he bring a date, presumably a female, since she'd be with her new beau, the distinguished Puerto Rican actor, Jose Ferrer.

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When he met Jose Ferrer, Merv did the obvious and congratulated him for the Oscar he'd won as Best Actor in his portrayal of Cyrano in the 1950 film version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

“Yes, thank you,” Jose said sarcastically. “I celebrated by being subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee as a suspected Communist. I'm not, incidentally.”

When Merv first met Jose, he'd been Oscar nominated for the third and last time for portraying the French painter, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, in John Huston's *Moulin Rouge*. Jose was preparing to appear opposite Rita Hayworth in the 1953 *Miss Sadie Thompson*, a remake of *Rain*.

At the time of his first dinners with Jose and Rosemary, Merv was still dating Judy Balaban before she ran off with the agent, Jay Kanter. The first time the quartet got together, Jose did all the talking. “I was so in awe of him that all I could do was listen,” Merv later said. “He was the first intellectual I'd ever met in show business.”

Jose spoke seven languages fluently, and often reminded his listeners of that. He'd been accepted at Princeton when he was fourteen, and he'd studied at an exclusive boarding school in Switzerland. He could wax eloquently on seemingly any subject, from the literary output of Thomas Hardy to the plight of the underpaid workers at the time of the Industrial Revolution.

Love Triangle:
Rosemary Clooney with her husband **Jose Ferrer** and her friend **Marlene Dietrich**

Jose always preferred to take his guests to a steakhouse where he'd discuss in precise detail how marbled he preferred his choice cut of meat. He'd even inspect the steak before it sizzled on the grill.

When Judy and Rosemary headed for the powder room, Jose immediately took Merv into his sexual confidence, which Merv found incredibly indiscreet.

“I don't know if *Sadie Thompson* will ever be filmed,” he said. “I'll be too busy fucking Rita Hayworth in her dressing room.”

Merv had already heard that Jose was a firstrate womanizer. Later he'd tell Tom Drake, “I was stunned that Rosemary was planning to marry this rooster, even though he was the most talented actor in Hollywood. Here he was contemplating infidelity before ever putting the wedding ring on Rosemary's finger. Poor Rosemary.”

Merv didn't think Jose had any sex appeal at all, and in some respects he struck Merv as downright ugly. “However, he could charm the pants off anybody with that mesmerizing voice of his,” Merv recalled.

Even though he was fantasizing about his future infidelities, Jose seemed bitter and resentful about the perceived competition for Rosemary's affections.

“That god damn lesbian, Marlene Dietrich, is around our house day and night,” Jose claimed. “I can't even walk around with my dick hanging out without encountering her. She even puts on an apron and scrubs our kitchen floor. A *hausfrau* at heart. If Rosemary gets a slight headache, Dietrich puts her to bed and hovers over her like a newborn infant. The Nazi bitch is always making buttermilk soup for Rosemary and she completely ignores me. Actually, Dietrich is bi. When not chasing after Rosemary, she's out fucking Frank Sinatra. Frank told me that Dietrich gives the best blowjob in Hollywood.”

“If you've got to compete with Dietrich, I don't envy you,” Merv said.

“Not only Dietrich but Marlon Brando,” Jose claimed. “We run into him all the time, especially in New York.

He always drags Rosemary off into a corner and spends the rest of the evening whispering some shit in her ear."

"Marlon always gets what he wants," Merv said enigmatically, "And I speak from experience."

Just prior to one of their scheduled rendezvous, Jose had to cancel with a stomach virus, and Merv took Rosemary out to dinner by himself.

En route to the restaurant, she asked Merv to stop at a newsstand. "Please go and buy the latest copy of *Confidential* magazine. It's for Marlene. Even though she hangs out with famous writers like Ernest Hemingway, she reads every word of *Confidential*."

"No doubt to find out the latest gossip they're spreading about her."

Merv returned in a few minutes with the latest issue of the gossip rag. "I feel so sleazy buying it, but I love it, providing no one's writing about me. I like to keep my secret life to myself."

Over their steaks that night, she told him that the conductor Mitch Miller had introduced her to a hot new male singer. "It was Guy Mitchell, and he said he knows you. 'Great guy' were his exact words to describe you. Guy said you and he used to pal around together in San Francisco."

"What else did Guy tell you?" a nervous Merv asked.

"Nothing, nothing at all." Finally, Rosemary slammed down her fork. "Listen, if we're going to be pals, we've got to be honest with each other. There's no way in hell we can have a friendship any other way. I know you had a crush on Guy. I know you and Tom Drake are lovers. Surely you don't think I have a problem with that? In the future, I'll tell you about the different men who've made love to me, and you can tell me about the men you've loved or will love."

"Okay," Merv said, biting into his steak. "You've asked for it. Gal, can we talk. Who goes first?"

Some of the details Merv related to his new confidante involved his sexual involvement with Peter Lawford and Robert Walker.

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As related to Rosemary Clooney, Merv had accepted the invitation of Peter Lawford and Robert Walker to shack up with them as part of a threeway. He later told Roddy, "Until I met those guys, I was a bit of a square. They taught me tricks that only a whore in a bordello in Shanghai could have known."

In later years when Merv was rich and powerful, he staged many nights of debauchery himself with a paid "cast." He always credited (or blamed) Peter and Robert for liberating him. "Until I started hanging out with those guys, I was limited to just the missionary position," he once confided to Johnny Riley.

As Merv told Roddy, something the actor already knew, "Peter has only one physical flaw. A deformed right hand. He conceals it by hiding it in the pocket of his slacks or holding a jacket over his hand. Otherwise, he's perfection itself."

Merv related to several of his friends that Robert Walker had a profound effect upon the acting techniques of both Montgomery Clift and James Dean — both, according to Merv, were inspired by the rebelmisfit brand of sensitivity that Robert Walker had originally brought to the screen. The tortured souls he played on the screen, especially in Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*, mirrored his own life.

To Merv, Robert always spoke of "the demons haunting me," though he never specified exactly what those demons were. During the final months of his life, according to Merv, Robert seemed to be migrating toward deeper patterns of self-destruction.

Merv continued the *ménage à trois* with Peter and Robert for at least five more dates, taking great pains to conceal his sexual involvement from Tom Drake, who was still pining for Peter, despite his ongoing declarations of love for Merv. One evening, Robert told him that he had not been able to reach Peter for five days. He'd left several messages but Peter had not returned his calls.

Robert and Merv made love as part of a conventional twosome that night, relating to each other without the distracting presence of Peter.

To Roddy McDowall, Merv had high praise for Robert's friendship. "He's quiet, gentle, a lovely but very lonely man, at least when he isn't drinking. He's tender in his lovemaking. Very giving of himself. He always tries to satisfy his partner instead of selfishly thinking of himself." Merv would later lament, "If Robert had lived, I think I could have fallen madly in love with him."

With Tom out of his life, and Peter gone from Robert's life, Merv began to see Robert exclusively. But he hardly

had exclusive rights to Robert, since he had to share him with Nancy Davis. At the time, Nancy was trying to get Ronald Reagan to marry her, despite the fact that he was dating a roster of other women who included Doris Day.

Often when Ronald didn't call, Nancy spent her evenings with Robert, although Merv never encountered her again the way he had that first day he'd visited Robert's home.

As he spent more and more time with Robert during the final weeks of his life, Merv came to know him quite well. Robert often spoke of Nancy, although it was obvious that he still carried a torch for his first wife, Jennifer Jones.

One night Robert revealed that he'd once proposed marriage to Nancy, and that she had turned him down. “Nancy likes that vulnerable littleboylost quality in me,” Robert confessed to Merv. “When I'm around her, I turn that particular charm of mine on to the maximum.”

“Then why didn't she accept your offer of marriage?” Merv asked.

“She told me that over the course of a lifetime, Ronnie would be the better provider,” Robert said.

Nancy maintained enormous faith even then in Ronald as a prospective husband, even though his movie career at Warner Brothers was at low tide. A few months later, after Warners had dismissed him, Ronald was offered a job as emcee hosting a parade of bigbusted strippers as part of a burlesque act in Las Vegas. He turned down the gig.

Once, after a night with Robert, Merv arrived back at his suite in the early hours of the morning. He was startled to find Tom Drake packing his luggage. “I hate to do this to you, but Peter called,” he said. “He's in Palm Springs. He's taking me back. I'm leaving you.”

Merv was stunned, at first thinking that the reason Tom was deserting him was because he had learned of his ongoing *ménage* with Peter and Robert. At the very least, Tom had revealed to Merv where Peter was.

As Merv later told his intimates, “I was glad Tom was leaving. He never really loved me — always lusting for that fickle Peter — and I never really loved Tom, although he was mighty cute and adorable at times. But it was time to end it, and I let him go. We kissed tenderly — and that was that.”

During the latter days of Merv's involvement with Robert, he suspected that the actor was on the verge of another breakdown. He'd had a highly visible nervous breakdown in 1949 and had checked himself into the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. When he'd escaped and was arrested for public drunkenness, a picture of him in the police station had appeared on front pages across America.

As Merv would later recall to his friends, Robert would have good days and bad days. On a good day, he liked to drive Merv to little hidden, outoftheway places in Southern California. Once he took him to an enchanting Japanese garden teahouse, which could be reached only by climbing a mountain.

Long before the hippie communes of the late 60s came into vogue, Robert drove him to Laguna Beach for a long weekend. At this compound, they shared a Quonset hut. Young people in varying states of dress lived here and engaged in all sorts of sexual couplings. One longhaired young man told Merv that “one week I'm into girls, the next week I want to share my love with a boy.”

On another weekend Robert drove Merv to an unpopulated spot near Big Sur, where he was contemplating building his dream house. He claimed that he wanted to bring his two sons, Bobby and Michael, here when they weren't in the custody of their mother, Jennifer Jones.

One night Robert invited Merv to The Blue Note, a jazz dive in North Hollywood. It was strictly an offtherecord joint where stars sometimes took tricks who weren't suitable for public viewing.

Just as Robert and Merv entered the club, Ava Gardner was leaving. With her was a studly garage mechanic wearing a uniform with the insignia of Howard Hughes Aviation. Robert had had an affair with Ava when they filmed *One Touch of Venus* in 1948.

The sultry beauty was dressed very casually and wore no makeup. After approaching Robert, she suddenly slapped his face with all her power, then headed out the door, trailed by the mechanic.

When she'd gone, Merv turned to Robert, who was rubbing his cheek still stinging from Ava's slap. “What was that all about?” Merv asked. “You told her you didn't like her last picture?”

“When Ava and I were filming *Venus*, I made a surprise visit to her dressing room and caught her fucking Howard Duff. He retreated and let Ava and me fight it out. In a jealous rage, I slapped her. I guess tonight she was returning the favor.”

During the course of that weekend, Robert confessed that he'd once plotted to kill David O. Selznick for stealing Jennifer from him. “She's the only woman I've ever loved, even though I never felt I was good enough for her.”

The following week, Merv arrived at Robert's house, opening the door with the key he'd been given. Before

entering, he switched on the lights to discover Robert on the sofa making love to Peter. “The prodigal has returned!” Merv said to Peter.

“Come join us,” Peter said in his most beguiling voice.

Before he left, later that night, Merv learned that Peter had dropped Tom Drake once again.

Peter himself had been dropped by Lana Turner, but he'd wasted no time finding a new female love. In addition to a sexual reunion with Robert, and with Merv as well whenever he wanted to join the twosome, Peter was also seducing Jane Wyman, who was in the recovery stage from her previous divorce from Ronald Reagan.

As the summer wore on, Robert began to drink more heavily. In the past, he'd usually waited until the afternoon to start boozing. During the final weeks of his life, however, he was often plastered before noon. Peter tried to help Robert, but during those days, Peter him self was often drunk before noon as well.

Merv didn't want to return to Tom, and he seriously debated dropping both Robert and Peter from his life as well. He had a movie career to pursue and didn't know how he could do that sitting around with two debauched actors in their underwear, refilling their drinks.

And then without warning, Robert was dead. He died on the night of August 28, 1951, when his maid encountered him in a distraught, highly agitated state. She'd called his psychiatrist, who arrived within the hour but could not calm Robert down. He'd been drinking heavily since early morning.

Drunk, disorderly, and disheveled:
Robert Walker

The doctor injected a dose of sodium amytal into Robert's veins. He immediately suffered an acute allergic reaction to the drug and stopped breathing. Although the psychiatrist worked frantically, he could not resuscitate the actor.

Merv sent flowers to Robert's burial site at Washington Heights Memorial Park in Ogden, Utah, but did not attend the funeral.

One reporter, no doubt knowing about Merv's involvement with Robert, tracked him down for a quote. “You know,” Merv said, “Robert was the original choice to play Judy Garland's boyfriend in *Meet Me in St. Louis* in 1944. But the role went to Tom Drake, despite protests from Judy.” That was Merv's only comment about the death of his close friend.

With Roddy, Merv showed more sensitivity. “I'll always remember Robert standing in his doorway wearing only his underwear,” Merv said. “Talk about a deer caught in the headlights. ‘You know,’ Robert once said to me, ‘even as a kid I knew I was never meant to be born in this world. It was an accident. I've spent my life trying to escape this world, wanting to go back to the peace I knew before I entered it.’”

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Merv's jaw dropped when Warners told him that he'd been cast in his first picture. It was hardly a musical starring Doris Day. After he read the script of *Cattle Town* (1952), Merv knew it was going to be a disaster. It was a lowbudget “oater” (an early film nickname for a Western), and it was to be shot in black and white. “I thought I'd at least have one of the leads, but no such luck,” Merv later recalled. “I got twelfth billing, playing Joe, the secretary of the governor of Texas.”

On his first day on the set, Merv showed up hoping that the director would enlarge his part. Noel M. Smith informed him that the script was “locked up” on orders of Jack Warner himself. Between 1917 and 1952, Smith had helmed 125 films. *Cattle Town* would be his last effort, and he would face death in 1955.

Merv later recalled that Noel wasn't really directing the cast but “putting us through our paces. He had a faraway

look in his eyes like he longed to be somewhere else. I hated the whole experience of being in that damn film. Right from the beginning, I knew in my heart that movies were not my calling."

Merv and the director did not get along. On his first day of actual shooting, Merv had to deliver a line, "The governor wants to see Shiloh," the name of a character role played by George O'Hanlon. Merv was supposed to exit but when he reached for the door handle, it fell off in his hand. "Cut!" the director yelled. With a certain annoyance, Noel called out as loud and as sarcastically as he could, "You're gonna go far in movies, Griffin."

The next day Merv met the writer of that memorable first line of his, and he wasn't impressed. Not even when Tom W. Blackburn told him that he was also a lyricist — "not just a screenwriter." He was familiar with Merv's music, and had heard him singing with Freddy Martin's band.

Tom was working on "The Ballad of Davy Crockett." He played the song on a studio piano for Merv and asked him to try it. Merv refused, thinking it was just another silly novelty tune. "I could have beaten myself to a pulp when the Davy Crockett craze swept America," Merv said. "I could have made millions. I had forgotten that my one big hit, 'I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts,' was also a novelty song."

Merv was introduced to one of the female leads in the picture, the dynamic Rita Moreno. She was said to be suicidal over her illfated romance with Marlon Brando. He wanted to tell her that he too had gone to bed with Marlon, but hardly thought it was an experience to get suicidal about.

He bonded with the other female star of the picture, Amanda Blake. She was on the dawn of her greatest success when she'd play Kitty Russell in the hit TV series, *Gunsmoke*, which ran for 351 episodes beginning in 1955. He liked her immensely but on the downside blamed her for accelerating his smoking habit. "After trying to keep up with her, I found myself smoking two packages a day, a disgusting habit I kept up for far too long in my life. Poor Amanda contracted mouth cancer and underwent surgery in 1977. "That was a sort of wakeup call for me, but then I've been known to sleep through wakeup calls," Merv said.

Merv was saddened when he learned that Amanda had died in 1989 from AIDSrelated complications. She contracted the dreaded disease from her last husband, Mark Spaeth, who also succumbed to AIDS.

Meeting actor Philip Carey, a former U.S. marine, thrilled Merv. He'd heard that Philip was straight and Merv didn't have a chance with him. "At least I could admire him from afar," Merv told Roddy McDowall. "I thought he was one of the handsomest men I'd ever met, and incredibly sexy. No wonder Joan Crawford went apeshit over him."

The actor had finished *This Woman Is Dangerous* with Joan that same year. He was being groomed to appear with Doris Day in her upcoming hit, *Calamity Jane* (1953), a picture in which Merv also wanted to appear.

At six feet, five inches, Philip towered over Merv. He wished that he'd been ordered to share Philip's dressing room, but ended up instead having to dress with the extras. In 1958, Merv, with his passion still unrequited, gazed at the screen image of Philip as he starred in what became a cult fave, *Screaming Mimi* with Anita Ekberg and Gypsy Rose Lee.

Late one hot afternoon, when there was a long wait between scenes, Merv finally got to meet the star of the picture, Dennis Morgan. "It was a talk I'd remember for the rest of my life," Merv said. "Through Dennis I saw how the film factory sucked the young blood out of a performer and then discarded him when he got a little long in the tooth. It was a bitter lesson that Dennis was learning at the time I met him."

Launched near the closing years of World War II, the career of Dennis Morgan had peaked by 1949. Merv remembered him from his starring role opposite Barbara Stanwyck in *Christmas in Connecticut* and in another role with Ginger Rogers in *Kitty Foyle*. Even though Dennis was of Swedish descent, the star, like Merv himself, was known for his "Irish tenor voice."

Dennis acknowledged to Merv that he'd heard the rumor that Merv had been brought in to replace Gordon MacRae. "Believe it or not, Gordon was brought in to replace me as the singing sensation of Warner Brothers," Dennis said. "Before a guy even gets started, they bring in your replacement. *I* should right now be making movies opposite Doris Day, not Gordon. But here I am stuck in this stinker."

Dennis felt that his life mirrored the Bette Davis film, *All About Eve*. "Margo Channing is the reigning star. Eve Harrington wants to replace her. But at the end of the picture another eager young starlet is waiting to replace Eve Harrington. That's the movie business."

Dennis, like Philip Carey, had also appeared with Joan Crawford in *This Woman Is Dangerous*.

"What was it like working with Joan?" Merv asked.

"When she couldn't get Philip, she went for me and also for David Brian. Crawford's too much woman for me, but our other costar, David Brian, handled her just fine. He told me that the one way to keep Crawford happy is to

shove a big dick up either end of her."

Jack Warner still had a contract with Dennis but wanted him off the lot, because he was the highest salaried actor still left. To get rid of Dennis, Jack was sending him the worst scripts he could find, hoping Dennis would reject the latest offering and buy his way out of the contract.

"That's why I got *Cattle Town*," Dennis said. "This film should not even be made. Even though I know the screenplay is awful, I sent word to Jack that I loved it and couldn't wait to star in it. Do you think I'm going to pass up a weekly paycheck? I think my career in films is winding down, and I'm going to get every last penny coming my way, even if Jack Warner demands that I moon the camera in my next picture."

Dennis Morgan

Later a reviewer commented on the numerous songs sung by Dennis in the picture. "We usually like to hear Dennis Morgan sing. But not this time. The songs come across as irritating."

As Dennis was called to the set for a retake, Merv asked one more question, "Any regrets?"

"Yeah," he said, "one big one. In 1942 I was set to play Rick Blaine in *Casablanca*. Damn you, Humphrey Bogart. And just for fun, I should have let Jane Wyman have her way with me when we worked together in *Cheyenne*, but I insisted on being faithful to my wife, a good woman I married back in 1933."

When Jack Warner saw the first cut of *Cattle Town*, he didn't like the scene of a barroom brawl, and he ordered footage from *Dodge City* (1938) thrown in instead.

Merv finished his small part in the film and felt a wave of great disappointment come over him. He invited Roddy to go with him for a long weekend in Las Vegas, but he was too busy.

Roddy told him to check into the Las Vegas Sahara Club, claiming that there was a wellmuscled and incredibly handsome lifeguard there who was available to men or women. "You've got to pay."

"But I've never paid for sex in my life," Merv protested.

"Get used to it," Roddy advised. "Anyway I hear this guy is worth every inch. Speaking of inches, take along enough money."

"You've convinced me," Merv said. "I'm packing my bags right now, ready, willing, and able to meet this Adonis."

***

On the theory that the early bird gets the worm, Merv was at poolside at the Las Vegas Sahara Club when Gordon Werschkul reported to duty at ten o'clock. Later he would tell Roddy, "It was more like a snake than a worm."

Since no one else was at the pool, it was easy to strike up an acquaintance with this startlingly handsome athlete and his nineteeninch biceps. He stood six feet, three inches tall and weighed 218 pounds. Merv pretended he didn't know how to swim, and Gordon volunteered to teach him. The way Merv figured it, this would allow him to come into a close encounter with all those muscles.

After one hour of instruction, Gordon, after enduring a lot of fondling, turned to Merv. "I get off for an afternoon break at two o'clock. What's your room number? We both know what you want. But it'll cost you fifty bucks."

"It's yours, all in tens," Merv said.

Merv would later tell Roddy that even before Gordon got out of his swimming trunks, he warned Merv that "you can have me only from the waist down. I like girls."

In the months ahead, Gordon, either in Las Vegas or Los Angeles, would earn many a fiftydollar bill from Merv, who became obsessive about the bodybuilder's virility and good looks.

Months later Merv was astonished to read in one of the trade papers that the producer, Sol Lesser, had signed Gordon to a sevenyear contract to play Tarzan. He was replacing the equally handsome Lex Barker, who had been

married to Lana Turner.

Gordon Werschkul became Gordon Scott and a household name in America in the late 1950s. Gordon beat out 200 other male athletes to become Tarzan. Two of his more memorable pictures were *Tarzan's Hidden Jungle* (1955), costarring the actress Vera Miles, whom he married, and *Tarzan's Greatest Adventure*(1959) with a young, pre-James Bond Sean Connery playing the villain.

After leaving the Tarzan movies, Gordon went to Italy to star in a series of "swordandsandal" epics, featuring handsome bodybuilders. In one, *Duel of the Titans*(1961), he teamed with Steve Reeves, an old buddy from his days at a gym in Oakland, California. Gordon was cast as Remus to Steve's Romulus. The film became a cult favorite among homosexuals, and remains so today.

A wealthy homosexual in England became so fascinated with Gordon and Steve that he invited them to his estate in Surrey where he convinced them to make a porno film, starring just the two of them. His obsession compelled him to offer a fee of $100,000, a vast sum of money in the early 1960s.

After leaving films, Gordon was unemployed for decades. For three years he lived off that fee for doing porno. Merv once heard about the film and went to great trouble to obtain a copy of it but to no avail.

Near the end of his life, Gordon was rescued financially by Roger Thomas, who had become obsessed with the star when he'd appeared in those longago Tarzan movies.

Roger used to spend his vacation time trying to track Gordon down. Eventually he located him and invited him to live in a back bedroom of his South Baltimore rowhouse. Gordon came for a visit and stayed for six years, mostly spending his days watching old blackandwhite movies on TV.

Gordon Scott
"Me Tarzan, You Merv"

Long before that happened, Gordon used to send word to Merv that he needed money. Merv would often send him a thousanddollar bill, especially one time when he heard that Gordon was sleeping on a park bench.

The last time Merv ever spoke to Gordon on the phone, the former actor told him, "Years ago I never understood the attraction of you guys toward me when I became Tarzan. But I understand a lot more about it now. You guys still worship me when all those beautiful gals of the 50s have gotten old and forgotten me. After all, who wouldn't want to go to bed with Tarzan?"

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In a surprise call, Merv picked up his phone receiver to hear the voice of Monty Clift, who had arrived unexpectedly in Los Angeles. In the early 1950s every major director in Hollywood wanted Monty to star in his next movie, despite rumors that he was emotionally unstable and very difficult to work with.

Monty told Merv that he'd signed to film *I Confess*, to be directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Based on Paul Anthelme's play, it was the story of a priest who is charged with murder after the real murderer had confessed the killing to him in confessional.

Monty was troubled by the plotline and wanted to meet with Merv to read him the script to see how plausible it was. "After all," he told Merv, "you're a practicing Irish Catholic, and you should know about such things. I bet you brought a whole list of sins to confessional to your priest, who probably molested you in return." He giggled. "I'm just joking, of course."

Monty may have been joking, but Merv realized how accurate his intuition was.

That night at Monty's, Merv met Mira Rostova, the impoverished Russian acting coach. He'd never encountered

her before, although he'd been told that she and Monty were inseparable.

He seriously doubted if there was any great romance going on here, at least not on Monty's part. Mira, however, seemed in love with Monty and constantly referred to him as “my comrade.” If only to get a drink for Monty from the bar, she moved through his living room like a great tragedienne. Her students in New York claimed “She is Duse and Bernhardt all rolled into one.”

Merv was astonished to learn that even though the great Hitchcock was going to direct *I Confess*, Monty actually intended to take direction from Mira. She planned to send signals to him on the set. A pull on her left ear would mean the scene was no good and should be reshot. Monty carried out his threat. When *I Confess* was filming in Québec, Hitchcock might pronounce a scene “brilliant” and order it printed. But if Mira tugged on her left ear lobe, Monty would demand that it be reshot.

The reunion with Monty and his introduction to Mira occurred prior to Merv's screen test with Phyllis Kirk. The talented pair had given Merv acting tips before he'd shot that test. On the day that Merv's screen test was first shown on the Warner's lot to potential directors, Merv invited both Monty and Mira to the screening. Jack Warner had urged his directors to use contract players such as Merv whenever possible.

As the lights dimmed, Merv twitched nervously in his seat, glancing every now and then to see if he could determine the reaction of Mira and Monty in the light reflected from the screen. They remained respectfully silent throughout the brief showing, their faces emotionless.

At the end, Merv walked Monty and Mira to their car. Still no review from either of them. Finally, he asked, “Okay, guys, what did you think of Doris Day's future leading man?”

Mira remained silent, but Monty spoke up. “There was something up there on that screen,” he said. “Maybe a bit raw. But definitely something up there on that screen.”

With that enigmatic review, Monty drove off with Mira but not before inviting Merv to join them for a drive the following day down to Laguna Beach.

After that, Merv began to see more and more of Monty, usually with Mira. One day Monty complained that he found the noise at his hotel, Château Marmont, deafening. Merv invited him to come and live with him in a house he'd rented from his agent, “Bullets” Durgom. In the days and weeks ahead, Merv would regret that invitation.

One Saturday afternoon, Merv and Monty spent time alone together. Mira was nowhere to be seen, and Merv suspected that Monty was feuding with his “boundatthewaist twin,” as he called her.

Monty had not had one drink that afternoon, but Merv noticed that he kept retreating to the bathroom. Merv walked out on the patio and dreamed of other conquests, as his onagain, offagain sex life with Monty was not adequate for him. He gave in whenever Monty wanted sex, but never pursued it.

In his unexpurgated version of *Hollywood Babylon*, filmmaker Kenneth Anger referred to Monty as “Princess Tiny Meat,” and as a result, the actor had been deeply wounded that the size of his penis should be known to his public. “What is this going to do to my image?” Monty had shouted. “Jesus H. Christ. Is nothing sacred?”

When Monty emerged from the bathroom, Merv suspected that he'd been taking drugs, perhaps in pill form. Around seven that evening Monty abruptly announced that he had been invited to Alfred Hitchcock's house to meet with Olivia de Havilland to see if she'd like to take the female lead in *I Confess*. In 1949, both Monty and Olivia had made the highly successful film, *The Heiress*.

Seeing Monty's condition, Merv offered to drive him there. He also had an ulterior motive. He wanted to meet Hitchcock, hoping he might have a role for him in the film. He also wanted to meet Olivia since *Gone With the Wind* had been one of his alltime favorite movies.

Monty adamantly refused, claiming he preferred to drive himself. Sensing what Merv really wanted, Monty agreed to use his influence and star power to get Hitchcock to offer Merv a role in *I Confess*.

At Hitchcock's house, as later reported by Monty to Merv, the actor bonded with Olivia. After nearly three hours of talking, and shortly before midnight, Olivia decided the part wasn't for her. “I would be horribly miscast,” she told Hitchcock and Monty. The female lead eventually went to Anne Baxter.

Years later Olivia remembered that evening, recalling how “hyperintense and overexcited” Monty was, his pupils dilated. “He talked very fast in an almost hysterical voice,” she said. “Usually his speech pattern was much slower.” At the time she believed he had had a strange reaction to the alcohol he'd consumed, not suspecting drug use.

Shortly before midnight, Monty called Merv from a phone booth. His speech was slurred. It seemed that he'd had an accident after leaving Hitchcock's house and had crashed into a tree. Although badly bruised with some cuts, he apparently didn't have any broken limbs. He gave Merv his location and begged him to come and pick him up.

About thirty minutes later Merv, only half dressed, arrived on the scene but couldn't find Monty. Getting out of his car, he searched the deserted neighborhood, eventually finding the actor wandering dazed in a park. He was limping, and his cheek was bleeding.

Although Monty had summoned Merv to the scene, he was hostile at first, even refusing to get into Merv's car. Merv forced Monty into the back seat where he collapsed in sobs. Before taking Monty back to Bullets' house, Merv drove nearby to the scene of the accident, getting out to survey Monty's smashed car. It was so badly damaged that Merv wondered how Monty could have escaped relatively intact.

Back at their rented house, Merv tucked Monty into bed after undressing him and putting iodine on his cuts. The moment he hit the pillow, Monty passed out. In his living room, Merv impersonated Monty's voice and called the police. “My car's been stolen,” he said. “I wanted to drive it somewhere tonight and found it missing.”

The police apparently were convinced by Merv's act and took down all the information. Merv went to bed beside Monty that night, thinking he had saved him from embarrassing headlines the next morning, and possibly time in jail.

Monty's smashed car was blamed on “joy riders” who had hotwired his vehicle. Since the car could not be repaired, Merv went with Monty the next day to shop for what Monty called “new wheels.”

Grateful to Merv for rescuing him, Monty kept his promise to get Merv cast in *I Confess*. At first Merv was thrilled until he learned what part he had, and then he was bitterly disappointed. If Merv thought his screen appearance in *Cattle Town* was brief, he learned what brief really meant in *I Confess*. He did not even appear on the screen. He was unseen but his voice was heard on the other end of a phone call.

He complained to Roddy, “Just as Monty gets the juicy role of the year in *From Here to Eternity*, I get to do voice-overs.”

Two days later, Merv's luck changed, or at least he thought it had. He received a call from Bill Orr at Warner's informing him that he'd been cast in Doris Day's latest picture, *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*.

“I'll show Hollywood,” Merv vowed. “Doris Day and I will knock Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower off the front pages.”

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Two weeks later Merv drove to the Kirkeby Mansion to meet Monty for a game of tennis. The home later became famous as the setting for *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Monty was nearly two hours late, and Merv was ready to leave. At the last moment Monty showed up, looking bedraggled and depressed.

He couldn't even finish one game, as his heart wasn't in it. He asked Merv to drive him at leisure through the Hollywood Hills where they might find a secluded place to talk. Merv willingly agreed. On the way to a lonely little hillside, Monty didn't say a word. Merv found a place with a beautiful view and retrieved a blanket from the trunk of his car, spreading it out for Monty.

No sooner had Monty sat down than he reached for Merv and burst into uncontrollable sobs. Merv held him tightly until he'd cried himself out. “Tell me what happened. It can't be all that bad.”

Through tearstreaked eyes, Monty looked at him. “But it is. The worst humiliation of my life. What is it with me? I love women and want to be with them, but for sex I always turn to men.”

Slowly, very slowly and with great hesitation and embarrassment, Monty revealed his story. Over the past few weeks, and much to the regret of Mira Rostova, Monty had developed an obsession with Greta Garbo. She had seen three of his pictures, including *A Place in the Sun*, and was equally fascinated with him.

If such a thing was possible for Garbo, she seemed flattered that such a handsome, brilliant young actor would show an interest in her, since she'd faded from the screen after the disastrous release of *Two-Faced Woman* in 1941. Her heyday in the late 20s and 30s was becoming more and more a distant memory, as each year passed and her onceloyal fans died in droves.

Monty had been introduced to Garbo by Salka Viertel, the oncefamous Polish actress and writer who had moved to Hollywood in 1929 before marrying director Berthod Viertel. She had worked on such Garbo vehicles as *Anna Karenina* and *Camille*. Garbo was not only Salka's best friend, but they were said to be lesbian lovers.

Monty claimed that until the previous night, he had never had any sexual involvement with Garbo, except for a kiss on her perpetually chapped lips. “But last night that changed,” he sobbed. “It was horrible. My thing never rose up beyond the size of a peanut, and I was faced with the Grand Canyon. I rushed to the bathroom where I threw up. I think she heard me. How unflattering for any woman. But for Garbo it must have been terrible, as it was for me.

She'll never speak to me again."

That afternoon Garbo called and invited Monty for dinner. Impulsively he asked if he could bring a friend, and Garbo said yes. When Monty told Merv that he'd been invited to meet Garbo, he claimed it was a deliberate choice to avoid any embarrassment over discussing the previous night. Merv was delighted and accepted the invitation, although he wished that it had been extended under more favorable conditions.

Although her face had aged since Merv had last seen Garbo on the screen, he found that she was still a regal beauty with a thin, almost athletic body. In the years that lay ahead of him, he would become celebrated for the ease with which he dealt with celebrities, getting them to open up even in front of millions of people. Garbo, however, was not to be among his devotees.

Over the worst dinner of his life, cooked by Garbo herself, the diva wasted most of the limited number of words she uttered praising the merchandise at Hammacher-Schlemmer in New York.

Throughout the dinner, Monty did most of the talking. When not praising that department store, Garbo was mostly silent. When she got up to go to her kitchen, Monty whispered to Merv, "Isn't she terrific? My Sphinx Goddess."

After dinner, Garbo played a record on her phonograph and settled down in her favorite chair. To Merv's horror, Monty continued to drink heavily. He stood up only to take off his shirt and pants, retaining only his underwear. Lowering himself onto a position on all fours on her carpet, he began to crawl toward Garbo. At her feet, he removed her sandals. Once that was accomplished, he rubbed her big feet and then began quoting from *The Wanderings of Oisin* by William Butler Yeats:

The mistdrops hung on the fragrant trees.
And in the blossoms hung the bees.
We rode in sadness above Lough Lean,
For our best were dead on Gavra's green.

At the end of his recitation, he began to wildly kiss her feet.

Garbo claimed that Yeats had written her a fan letter after watching her emote in *Flesh and the Devil*. "He proposed marriage to me," she claimed. "He said that even though we'd engage in the 'tragedy of sexual intercourse,' we would still maintain the 'perpetual virginity of our souls.' I'm sure that must have been from one of his poems or something."

Over brandy consumed on her side porch, Merv sat with Monty and Garbo watching the fireflies. "God damn it, did I feel left out," he'd later recall.

Suddenly, a new excitement came over Monty, as he tried to revive Garbo's interest in appearing on screen as George Sand to his Alfred de Musset. Merv was not familiar with either the names or genders of these 19th- century French lovers, but his ears perked up when Monty said he wanted George Cukor to direct. Garbo suggested Salka Viertel for the screenplay, but Monty held out for the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre.

Merv learned that the George Sand/Alfred de Musset affair had first been suggested in 1948 as the theme of Garbo's comeback picture. Apparently, Monty was hoping to rekindle hope for the production.

At one point Monty assured Garbo that she'd look great in the men's clothing that Sand wore. Merv wondered how Monty and Garbo felt they could bring a homosexual love story to the screen.

After Merv surveyed a reluctant Garbo and a hopelessly wrecked Monty, he would later tell Roddy McDowall, "That film with those two will never be made. Maybe if they would cast me as George Sand, it might have a chance."

"You'd have to do the role in drag," Roddy warned him. "George Sand was a woman."

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William Butler Yeats,
Greta Garbo, and
"the perpetual
virginity of our souls"

Merv was disturbed that he still hadn't been shown a script for his upcoming movie with Doris Day. At Warners he had spare time on his hands, and he wanted to begin rehearsing the musical numbers he'd perform with Doris.

He was also troubled that Doris hadn't asked to see him on the Warners lot. She'd been responsible for his coming to Hollywood, but she hadn't even placed a call to him. He decided to go to her dressing room, knock on her door, and reintroduce himself to her, as he hadn't seen her since that night in Las Vegas when she attended his show.

Bill Orr had instructed him never to go and knock on the door of a star. It was not proper etiquette, but Merv decided to defy the mandate. Although his knees were knocking, Merv stood before the door of Doris' dressing room, took a deep breath, and knocked three times. It was Doris herself who threw open the door, greeting him with such a bright smile that one would have thought she was welcoming one of her alltime best friends for a reunion.

"C'mon in, Merv," she said. "I've been meaning to call you. There are some friends I want you to meet." Taking his arm, she directed him inside where she introduced him to Steve Cochran and Ronald Reagan, two contract players at Warners, although both of them were being shoved out the studio door at the time.

Doris was having a gettogether with friends she'd made while filming *Storm Warning*, a movie about the KKK. Merv had heard rumors that Doris had had an affair with Ronald before Nancy Davis snared him. Ronald was polite, friendly, and courteous, giving no hint that a grand friendship would one day form between Merv and himself.

As for Steve, Merv found him "about the sexiest thing walking on the planet," as he would later tell Roddy.

The conversation was mostly "shop talk," as Merv remembered it. He kept hoping that Doris would at least bring up the subject of working with him on *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, but she said not a word about the upcoming picture. Finally, Merv himself built up enough courage to bring it up. Her only response was, "We'll have a grand old time making the film."

The girl he didn't marry:
Ronald Reagan with **Doris Day**
in *Storm Warning*

After a while, Ronald shook Merv's hand and kissed Doris on the cheek, as he had to leave for another appointment. Steve remained behind to talk with Doris and Merv. At one point Merv complained that he still hadn't been assigned adressing room and was forced to dress with the extras.

"Jack Warner is such a cheap bastard," Steve said. "You're welcome to share my dressing room until you get one of your own."

Merv thanked Steve profusely, even though trying to conceal his eagerness to share the dressing room of the actor who'd been called "the male sexpot of Warner Brothers."

Doris abruptly shooed the men out of her dressing room, claiming she had to get dressed for a shot. She told Merv that she was looking forward to working with him and predicted that he'd become a big star at Warners.

Walking with Steve to his dressing room, Merv told him, "Getting to star opposite Doris is the big break of my life."

Steve stopped and stared at Merv, as if not comprehending what he'd just said. “Star? I ran into Gordon MacRae yesterday. He told me about starring once again with Doris.”

“There must be some mistake,” Merv said, utterly confused.

“Better clear it up, kid,” Steve said. “That God damn Silvery Moon has been shining for two weeks of shooting on both Doris and MacRae.”

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On their first day of sharing the dressing room, Steve laid down the ground rules. If a yellow ribbon was tied around the doorknob, Merv was to idle away his time by having a cup of coffee in the commissary. The ribbon meant that Steve was engaged, seducing one of the female extras on the lot. “Sometimes I bed a big star, but not that often.” He also confided that, “I have to have sex every afternoon. I often can't wait for the evening to roll around. If I don't shoot off in somebody, I get splitting migraines.”

Merv had heard all the gossip about Steve, but later said, “seeing was believing” when he arrived at Steve's dressing room the following morning to see him emerge from the shower. “It hung all the way down to Honolulu,” he confided to Roddy later that day. “Talk about meat for the poor.”

Steve appeared amused that Merv kept staring at his appendage but seemed in no hurry to cover it up. Merv suspected that the Bmovie bad boy might be an exhibitionist.

Steve Cochran

The Los Angeles crime writer, James Ellroy, had made more fans for Steve thanks to references to him in his novels *American Tabloid* and *L.A. Confidential*. Steve had one of the largest penises in Hollywood and was nicknamed “Mr. King Size” because of his endowment. In some of his writings, Ellroy referred to Steve with the sobriquet “The Shvantz.”

Virile and swaggering on the outside, Steve seemed deeply troubled to Merv, as if he possessed dark secrets that tormented his soul. The son of a lumberman from Wyoming, he exuded a rugged super masculine manofthewest appeal. He'd once worked as a cowpoke.

He'd had an ongoing affair with Mae West when he'd appeared on stage with her in *Diamond Lil*.

Steve told amusing stories about Mae, particularly one time when he had to administer an enema to her before she could go onstage. He grabbed his penis. “That's not all I administered to her. I made her squeal, and that from a woman used to taking the big ones.”

Steve called his seduction of such big stars as Mae West “mercy fucks.” He confided that he was still having an affair with Joan Crawford that had begun back when he'd appeared in her film *The Damned Don't Cry* (1950). “I don't fuck her because I have a hardon for her. I keep plugging her, hoping she'll get me cast in her next picture.”

Steve often drank in the afternoon while waiting to be called to the set. He drunkenly confessed that his dream in life was to have a harem composed entirely of thirteen and fourteenyearold girls. “For me, that would be paradise — not Crawford or West. Those broads have seen their day!”

Every afternoon, Merv sat in the commissary pondering his fate, waiting for Steve to finish off his afternoon seduction. One day when he wandered back toward the dressing room to see if Steve had done his duty, he spotted two teenage girls emerging from Steve's dressing room. The rather beautiful girls looked thirteen at the most. When they were out of sight, Merv came into Steve's dressing room, finding the actor nude, sitting in a chair with an impressive semi-erection.

“Those gals looked like jailbait,” Merv said.

“They are,” Steve said, smiling mischievously. “The way I like them.”

“Aren't you afraid of getting caught?”

“It's a risk worth taking,” Steve said. “I have a lust inside me that must be satisfied at all costs.”

At last Merv was allowed to meet David Butler, the director of *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, which he called “oldfashioned corn.” Merv was surprised that the director hadn't summoned him before.

Butler was a rugged Californian of the old school, although he still lived with his father and had never married. There were rumors. He'd even survived the San Francisco earthquake when he was eleven years old.

Merv wanted to talk about his role in the movie, but David deflected that, telling about his early days in silent films, including when he'd been hired to work as an extra for five dollars a day in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). He told Merv that it beat “scooping up camel dung.” His first job on films was shoveling up shit dropped by camels appearing in desert pictures. “I've directed everybody from Rin-Tin-Tin to Errol Flynn and Bob Hope,” David boasted.

Finally, Merv got up enough nerve to ask the big question. “Well, do you think you can make a star out of me?”

At that point David was called back to the set. Before leaving, he looked Merv up and down. “I'm still debating exactly what to do with you in the picture.”

The next afternoon Steve seemed very agitated. “Some god damn bitch stood me up.” He took Merv's arm and directed him toward their dressing room. “Count today as your lucky day,” he said, once he'd entered the dressing room and locked the door.“I've got to have it real bad. Think you can handle it?”

Merv said nothing but was enthralled as Steve stripped down for him. He'd later tell Roddy, “Maybe Mae West or Joan Crawford could swallow that log, but I couldn't. I did my best and I got him off. From now on, I'll be begging for it every chance I can get.”

“You are one lucky guy,” Roddy said. “Every homo in Hollywood dreams of seducing Steve Cochran. If not Steve, then John Payne.”

“He's available?” Merv asked.

“In Hollywood, if you didn't know it by now, all the handsome studs are available. It depends on how you approach them.”

One day Merv returned to his shared dressing room and noticed that the yellow ribbon was not on the doorknob. Thinking he might get lucky again, he entered the room and walked in on Steve, who was standing completely nude searching for his underwear.

Joan Crawford in a robe emerged from the rear where she'd obviously taken a shower. She remembered Merv from Pebble Beach and greeted him warmly, not seeming in the least embarrassed that he'd caught her with Steve. As Merv later said, she was not Nancy Davis running and hiding at Robert Walker's house.

Joan was also not shy about exposing her own body, as she got dressed. After putting on his clothes, Steve wetkissed Joan good-bye, as the diva continued to chat with Merv. She asked him if he'd escort her to a party Friday night, and he eagerly accepted. “Do you own a tux?”

“Do I ever!” he said. “I have two. Left over from all those years of singing with Freddy Martin's band.”

After Joan made arrangements for him to pick her up, she kissed him lightly on the lips. Before departing, she turned and smiled at him. “Don't you think Steve is the best lay in Hollywood? What talent that guy has.” And then she was gone.

Merv got lucky time and time again with Steve. He became better with practice and bonded with the actor. It was a sad day when Steve told him good-bye. He was leaving Warners to form his own production company, and he promised Merv he would get good roles for him when he started producing his own movies. In the weeks and months ahead, Merv waited and waited for the call that never came.

Encountering Doris Day on the lot of Warners, Merv confronted her about his role in the picture. He demanded to know from her when he was going to be called to appear on camera with her. She politely but firmly brushed him aside, assuring him that his big break would come soon. “I'll have a talk with Jack Warner,” she promised. “Everything will be fine, you'll see.”

By now Merv was growing leery of any promise from Doris. Then his luck changed, or at least he thought it had when he was summoned to Jack Warner's office. Perhaps Doris had come through for him after all.

In Jack's office, Merv was greeted warmly. “Griff, your time has come. I want you to play the male lead in *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*. Gordon MacRae's off the picture. We'll have to reshoot his scenes with you.”

Merv was elated.

“For three days in a row, MacRae has been too drunk to go before the camera,” Jack said. “I'm not putting up with any more of his shit. I fired him today and ordered him off the lot.”

Merv was so overjoyed he couldn't sleep that night. He and Monty went out and got drunk — or rather Merv got drunk. Monty had already been drinking before Merv arrived home from work.

The next day a note from Jack Warner arrived for Merv at Steve's dressing room. “I learned that we're too far into the picture to change stars at this point,” Jack wrote. “We've sobered MacRae up, and we think we can keep him dry until the picture is filmed. Be at my house Sunday night at eight for a big party. Bring a date. Someone with a title. Practically all my guests will be either a big movie star or royalty.”

At long last David Butler decided how to use Merv in *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*. To Merv's great disappointment, he learned that he had only one line of dialogue.

Dressed in a mackinaw, with a large bullhorn, Merv was cast as an announcer near the final reel of the film. “All you figure skaters grab your favorite partner and let's skate to our favorite song.” Naturally that song was “By the Light of the Silvery Moon.”

Even though his role was small, Merv hoped for billing along with the other supporting players including Billy Gray, Leon Ames, Rosemary DeCamp, and Mary Wickes, the latter cast as a sarcastic maid. Merv's appearance was uncredited.

When he finally got to see the final cut of *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, he found that his one scene was a disaster. He'd used a bullhorn to call out to the figure skaters, including Doris and Gordon, and that instrument practically obscured his face. His dream of movie stardom was growing dimmer by the day.

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On the days Merv wasn't working, he drove Monty Clift around Hollywood, searching for the right trumpet that would be the mouthpiece of his character Prewitt. He was about to immortalize himself in that role in James Jones's *From Here to Eternity*, which was to be directed by Fred Zinnemann.

Merv was mildly disturbed to learn that Frank Sinatra had also been cast in the picture. “If the role calls for a singer, why don't you get Zinnemann to cast me? I'd be great.”

Monty assured him that “Frankie doesn't get to sing in the picture. It's a war drama. Don't you ever read a fucking book?”

Monty just had to get the right horn, and Merv drove him to practically every store in Greater Los Angeles that sold musical instruments. Regardless of how many instruments he tried out, Monty could not find “the perfect fit.” Finally, he came across a dusty old store in North Hollywood that had sold instruments to jazz musicians back in the 1920s. After trying out the worn trumpet, Monty claimed he'd found his instrument.

The role of Prewitt began to consume Monty's life. He virtually worked night and day with his coach, Mira Rostova, when she returned to his life after they'd had a serious disagreement.

Watching Monty's intensity as he worked with Mira made Merv realize that he'd never be a serious actor. “I just don't have the concentration,” he told Monty. “Hell, you've rehearsed that one scene with Mira a hundred times, and she's still not satisfied. Neither are you. It's only a movie, for Christ's sake. Speaking of movies, I want to go out. Wanna come with me?”

“No, Mira and I have to rehearse,” Monty said.

Monty even coerced Merv into going with him to a gym for workouts, something Merv had resisted up to now. In *From Here to Eternity*, Monty, in spite of his frail frame, was cast as a boxer. He had to get his body in shape for the role. He'd even flown to meet James Jones, the author of the book, who taught Monty how to throw his famous left jab.

Back in Hollywood at their gym, Monty tried out the punch on Merv and succeeded in loosening a front tooth. Merv had to rush to the dentist for emergency work.

“Monty is driving me out of the house,” Merv told Johnny Riley in a phone call to San Francisco. He plays that God damn trumpet night and day to bugle sheet music. He's so offkey he's splitting my eardrums.”

Taking his training seriously, Monty woke Merv at five o'clock in the morning so that Merv would drive him to the Hollywood High School athletic field. The actor's license had either been lost or suspended. Merv didn't know which. Catching up on his sleep, Merv would nod off at the wheel of the parked car, which actually belonged to his agent, Bullets Durgom. Occasionally, he would wake up at some traffic noise only to see Monty still marching around the track pretending to be a G.I. during the weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Monty even wore a soldier's uniform.

One night Mira Rostova waited with Merv at his rented house until Monty showed up. Monty's invitation for drinks was at seven o'clock. By nine o'clock there was still no sign of Monty.

Suddenly, Merv heard him roar into the driveway. As Merv rushed out, Monty was crashing into the garage door. He slammed the gears into reverse. The car lurched across the lawn and crashed into a hedge concealing the mailbox. Finally, Monty came to a stop.

Merv and Mira rushed to his side, finding that he was not injured. The car was still in running order, but it had been badly damaged. Merv dreaded confronting his agent, Bullets, about the damaged car. While Monty's vehicle was being repaired, Merv had foolishly lent him Bullets' vehicle.

“Get in,” Monty said. Mira refused and so did Merv. In his drunken state, Monty screamed, “You're nothing but shitheads. Shitheads.” He backed the car up and pulled away, hitting the road again, with tires screeching.

From Here to Eternity: Wartime passion on and off the screen:
Left: **Donna Reed** with **Frank Sinatra;** *Right* **Burt Lancaster** with **Deborah Kerr**

Mira predicted that Monty would die in an automobile accident one day.

Two days later Bullets learned what had happened to his car and garage. Barely concealing his anger, he showed up at Merv's doorstep. He'd already inspected the damage to the mailbox, yard, and garage. Monty had sent the borrowed car to a garage for repairs.

After looking around at the debris and the wreck of his house, Bullets went into the kitchen where it looked as if the dishes hadn't been washed since Merv and Monty moved in. Politely but firmly, Bullets suggested that Merv and Monty should move out “sooner than later.”

The next day Merv set out to find a modest rental since money was tight. He finally found a place called the Commodore Garden Apartments behind Grauman's Chinese Theater off Hollywood Boulevard.

Two days after moving in, Merv had seen most of his fellow tenants coming and going. “There's not an ugly among them,” he told Roddy. “The most gorgeous guys and dolls I've ever seen in Hollywood. Or seen anywhere in one bunch for that matter.”

Roddy was familiar with the Commodore. “No wonder they're so hot: that building contains the most highpriced hookers in town and the most expensive hustlers. Movie stars go there to fuck them on offtherecord nights.”

Merv began to evaluate his fellow tenants. He kept an eye on two handsome young men who lived next door to him, but he'd never see them during the day. He agreed with Roddy that the male tenants at the Commodore were the most well built he'd seen in town. He suspected that all of them had come to Hollywood dreaming of becoming the next Rock Hudson, but had to hustle homosexuals as a means of supporting themselves.

Monty refused to move into the Commodore with Merv, but returned to his studio at the Château Marmont. Merv had heard that he was still seeing Greta Garbo, but Monty neither confirmed nor denied it.

Bullets called Merv to tell him that he'd found his second car in the garage, and all damages had been repaired, including those to his garage door, front yard, and mailbox. Monty had paid for all the harm he'd caused.

One night Monty arrived at Merv's door at the Commodore. He was drunk, and Merv showed him in. It took two hours of heavy drinking before Monty finally told him why he was here.

“I was getting too close to you and Mira, and I need my own space,” Monty told him. “I know you love me, and, believe me, I don't get off on breaking someone's heart. I want us to remain friends. But one part of our life has to end. The sexual thing. I've met someone I've fallen in love with.”

Merv appeared to be heartbroken, but never really was. He was Monty's friend but had never enjoyed one minute of their lovemaking. Monty slept over that night, and Merv put him to bed as he had so many times in their past. But when he went to sleep beside Monty, he felt relieved that their socalled romance was over. After his first intimate night with Monty, he never wanted to repeat the experience, finding it completely unsatisfactory.

Before leaving late the following morning, Monty told Merv that he was going to fly to Honolulu with the cast

of *From Here to Eternity* in a month or so, and that he wanted Merv to fly down to join him for a holiday. “I'll send you the tickets.”

Merv thought that was a graceful exit line and never expected Monty to carry through on his promise. To his surprise, tickets for a roundtrip flight to Honolulu did arrive on his doorstep. Merv cabled Monty he'd be arriving there in just ten days.

“Monty's a rotten lover,” Merv told Roddy, “but I suspect he'll be a great friend.”

Roddy agreed with that, but added an ominous comment. “He'll be a great friend until he kills himself.”

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When Merv got his next paycheck, he planned to sample some of the betterlooking hustlers at the Commodore Garden Apartments. He'd already staked out the object of his desire, a handsome, lanternjawed young man with a sculpted physique.

No doubt he was an actor, at least in Merv's mind, and probably hustled on the side to earn a living. Early every afternoon, he appeared on the roof lying on a chaise longue. A lot of the hustlers did that to keep their bodies tanned and ready for the next customer. Every actor wore a bathing suit except the young man who intrigued Merv. He wore the skimpiest of posing straps crafted from a gray velour that clearly outlined his genitalia.

On his first payday, Merv in baggy swimming trunks got up enough courage to make his move. Only problem was, he didn't know how much money to offer the actor. He finally decided that a twentydollar bill would do just fine.

“Hi,” he said moving in as close as he could to the posing strap. “I'm Merv Griffin.”

“Hi, yourself,” said the young man, shading his eyes from the sun to get a good look at Merv. “I'm Charlton Heston.”

Merv didn't feel comfortable initiating a dialogue, and felt nervous coming on to this handsome, athleticlooking man. Rather awkwardly, he said, “That swimming suit you're wearing is a bit brief. I would never be seen in that even in the privacy of my bedroom.”

Charlton laughed. “It's not a swimming suit. In New York I posed for art classes for $1.25 an hour. They didn't want me to show my dick, so I had to wear this strap. During all the days I spent posing nude, I got an erection only once. I had this problem. It gets pretty crowded down there.”

After that remark, Merv's suspicion was confirmed. Charlton Heston was definitely a hustler.

“My wife sewed on the velour,” Charlton said.

“Oh, I didn't know you were married,” Merv said.

“My wife, Lydia, is an actress. She's out of town on a job.”

On hearing this, Merv did not immediately abandon pursuing Charlton. He'd been in Hollywood long enough to conclude that all actors were at least bisexual.

Charlton did confirm that he was an actor and was actually appearing in a movie that was presently being screened at a nearby theater. He invited Merv to come and see it with him. “I've seen it ten times already. Each time by myself. It'd be good to get another opinion. “Are you an actor too?”

“Yes,” Merv said rather proudly. “Jack Warner is grooming me to become Doris Day's next leading man.”

After both men had dressed separately within their respective apartments, they met in front of the Commodore to stroll down Hollywood Boulevard together. At the movie house, Merv learned the film was *Dark City*, and was startled to see that Charlton was the actual star.

Noting his surprise, Charlton said, “I didn't get all that much money for it. That's why I'm still living at the Commodore Garden Apartments.”

During the screening of *Dark City*, which was first released in 1950, Merv was impressed with Charlton's performance. He'd been cast as a war veteran opposite the sultry blonde, Lizabeth Scott, who was hailed in the press as a combination of Lauren Bacall and Veronica Lake. The press often referred to Lizabeth as “one of the baritone babes of Hollywood,” hoping the reading public would draw their own conclusions from that.

In *Dark City*, Lizabeth played a nightclub singer, and Merv sat through five songs, later claiming that the movie was the only musical film noir he'd ever seen. “If this keeps up,” he whispered to Charlton, “Humphrey Bogart will be singing in his next film.”

The man who said “no.”

Charlton Heston

At one tense moment in the film, Merv decided to go for it. He slowly placed his hand on Charlton's left knee and let it gradually move upward to his target, which had been so recently encased in a posing strap.

With his own firm hand, Charlton took Merv's hand and slowly placed it back in Merv's lap. The actor leaned over and whispered into Merv's ear, “I'm not that kind of actor.”

When the movie was over, Merv complimented Charlton on his performance. On the walk back to the Commodore, no mention was made of the groping.

At the door to Charlton's apartment, Merv shook his hand and congratulated him one more time. “Let's be friends.”

“Sure thing,” Charlton said, “providing we carry on that friendship outside of a dark movie house.”

As Merv later sighed over the phone to Roddy McDowall, “Let's call him the man who got away. That package in the posing strap looked most promising.”

In the trade papers, Merv was startled to read that Cecil B. DeMille had cast Charlton as one of the leads in his next big epic, *The Greatest Show on Earth*. The film would go on to win an Oscar as Best Picture and gross $40 million, the equivalent of $300 million at today's prices. Very quietly Charlton moved out of the Commodore, without telling Merv good-bye.

Charlton did not mention Merv in his autobiography, *In the Arena*. He told friends that when he'd moved into the Commodore, he didn't know “it was the hottest whorehouse in Hollywood. You never knew what movie star you'd run into there. Clark Gable slipping down the hallway to knock on the door of a highpriced hooker. Even Gary Cooper and Robert Taylor came to call. With all that money exchanging hands, I found the tenants, both men and women, a little sad. They'd come to Hollywood to become stars and ended up working the oldest profession in history.”

In his own autobiography, Merv summed up his experiences at the Commodore this way. “So we had god in the front apartment, the boy singer upstairs, and hookers and con men everywhere else.”

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Dressed in his tuxedo from his days with Freddy Martin's band, Merv drove to Joan Crawford's house, not knowing what gala they'd attend. She hadn't informed him, and he didn't dare ask. It was only five o'clock in the afternoon, which struck Merv as a bit early to be attending some glittering function, which most often occurred at night.

For the occasion, Merv had borrowed a fancy car from Peter Lawford, who said it had belonged to his father.

Joan intimidated him, and he hoped he wouldn't make a faux pas and infuriate her, as he'd heard she had quite a temper.

Pulling into her driveway, he walked to her door and rang the bell. He was surprised when she answered the door herself, thinking she'd have a maid do that. She was fully made up and every bit the movie star in a black strapless gown and a white sable.

She marched him into her living room and poured a Scotch and soda, light on the soda. He was going to turn down the drink, because he didn't want to get drunk if he had to chauffeur her somewhere. She handed it to him and ordered him to deliver it to “the gentleman who requested it.” She directed him to climb the stairs to her bedroom at the top. “The door is open,” she said.

Walking up the stairs, Merv suspected that he'd encounter Steve Cochran in her bed. To his surprise, he walked in and found Clark Gable, lying apparently nude under the sheets.

“About time, kid,” Clark said. “I thought I'd have to fuck somebody other than Joan to get a drink around this house.”

“Mr. Gable, I'm Merv Griffin,” he stammered. “We first met when I was singing at the Cocoanut Grove. You were with Nancy Davis.”

“Yes, I remember her and I remember you,” Clark said, sitting up in bed, exposing a chest that had looked a lot better in *It Happened One Night* back in 1934.

“Now give me that drink, kid, and get the hell out of here. After I down this drink, I've got to take a shower. Joan doesn't know this, but I've got another date tonight, and I hope I can get it up again for the lucky gal. Joan sorta wore me out this afternoon.”

Excusing himself, Merv hurried down the steps where Joan was waiting impatiently. “I said deliver a drink to Clark, not take the time to suck his cock.”

She directed him to carry two clothing bags to his car. “I'm taking you to a party,” she said, “but before that, we're stopping off at Columbia. I have to meet Fred Zinnemann.”

Merv immediately recognized the name, knowing that the Austrian director had cast Monty Clift in his upcoming picture, *From Here to Eternity*.

At the studio, Joan and Merv were ushered into the director's office.

Fred was just showing Burt Lancaster to the door. When Joan and Merv walked in, Fred finished his story with Burt before even acknowledging Joan. “Directing Ethel Waters in *The Member of the Wedding* was impossible,” he said. “Every time I'd issue an order, she'd roll her eyes to the heavens and say, ‘God is my director.’ How can you argue with that?”

Burt kissed Joan on the cheek, and she introduced Merv to both Burt and Fred.

After flashing his by nowfamous smile, and showing glistening Chiclet-white teeth, Burt excused himself and started to leave. He paused and turned toward Joan. “I don't know how I'm going to do that love scene with you on the beach without getting an erection. And me in skimpy swim trunks.”

Merv was left standing awkwardly in the room holding two heavy clothing bags, as Fred and Joan engaged in a bitter argument which apparently had been ongoing for weeks. He learned from their shouting at each other that she'd been cast as the female lead in *From Here to Eternity* but was refusing to wear the drab clothes that an army wife might be seen in while her husband was stationed at Pearl Harbor on the eve of the Japanese attack.

Against Fred's wishes, Harry Cohn, the head honcho at Columbia, had cast Joan as the adulterous Karen Holmes, the faithless wife of an army officer in the film. From the beginning, Fred had opposed the choice.

Joan argued with Fred that she wanted everything in her wardrobe to be designed by her new costumer, Sheila O'Brien. To Joan's credit, Sheila had created a chic and highfashion new look for Joan more in keeping with her mature years. Though she still insisted on wearing the famous Joan Crawford fuckme shoes of World War II, Sheila had convinced her to abandon the shoulder pads, big bows, and other fashion excesses created by Adrian for Joan when she appeared in the pre-Depression films of the mid-1920s.

Joan ripped two or three dresses from one of the clothing bags and held them up in front of Fred. They were intensely glamorous, something that she might wear to a luncheon with the mayor of Los Angeles at Chasen's. Secretly Merv agreed with Fred but Joan was adamant.

After an argument that stretched out for more than an hour, Joan shouted at Fred. “If I can't wear this wardrobe designed especially for me, then I'm off the picture. You're trying to make me into a drab housewife. Joan Crawford is a movie star! She doesn't play a drab housewife.”

“Then you're fired!” Fred shouted back at her. “Get out! You're off the picture.”

At first Joan was stunned, as if it took a long time for Fred's words to sink in. She turned her back to the director and headed for the door. Suddenly, aware of Merv, she called, “Griffin, bring my clothes. I'll be directed in my next picture by a man capable of directing Joan Crawford, not this Austrian Nazi.”

In the borrowed car, Joan ordered Merv to drive her back home. She was crying and claimed, “I've ruined my face dealing with that idiot.” She said she could not face other Hollywood stars at a gala that night and just would not show up, even though the sponsors of the event were expecting her.

Back at her house, she asked Merv to carry her wardrobe into the living room. He felt embarrassed, not knowing what to say. He needed a drink like the one she'd mixed for Gable.

But she didn't offer one. While he sat on the edge of her sofa in her immaculate living room, she went into her spotless marbleclad hallway and made three or maybe four urgent phone calls.

“Griffin,” she finally called to him. “Get the hell in here. At times like this, I need a good fuck. Clark's no good at it.” She came up close to him, and without any warning her tongue was down his throat as she fondled his fly,

feeling for his penis.

She pulled him down on top of her right on the marble floor. It looked clean enough to eat off. “I have to have it now!” she shouted. “There's no time to go upstairs and get undressed.”

She raised her dress and tugged at her champagnecolored panties. At the same time she also managed to extract his penis and attempted to bring it to life. To his chagrin, it seemed to shrink to a record low.

He had no sexual desire for her at all, and, in fact, was in a state of panic. All of a sudden, he looked up. A little blondehaired girl had emerged from her bedroom and was standing at the top of the steps looking down at her mother and him. He gasped when he saw her, realizing that Joan was unaware of her presence.

Breaking from Joan, he stood over her as she writhed on the floor. He stuffed himself back into his trousers and headed for the door.

He looked back only one time as a halfdressed Joan was trying to get to her feet again. “Fuck you, Griffin! I should have asked a real man to escort me tonight. Stick to sucking cock!”

Both Joan and Merv read in the trade papers that she was off the picture. Harry Cohn had been willing to pay her a $100,000 salary, although she'd have to take second billing to Montgomery Clift. But Cohn had offered her a sizable percentage of the box office profits. Since *From Here to Eternity* went on to become one of the big hits of the 1950s, Joan would have made a fortune.

She put up a brave front to the public when she heard that Fred Zinnemann had cast the rather demure Deborah Kerr in the role instead. Fred was definitely casting against type, because Deborah was known for playing wellbred ladies on the screen. “That's great for that stuckup British bitch,” Joan told William Haines, her gay friend and former star. “It's about time *somebody* got to fuck her!”

Years later when Joan made a glamorous appearance on *The Merv Griffin Show*, both she and Merv pretended to be meeting for the first time.

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After fleeing from Joan Crawford's house, Merv drove back to the misnamed Commodore Garden Apartments. As he was walking across the courtyard, he noticed a man sprawled out on a chaise longue. He'd either passed out or was dead.

Merv moved closer to see if the stranger were all right. In the dim glow of the patio lights, he encountered Errol Flynn sound asleep with his mouth open emitting snores. Merv surveyed him closely. This worldfamous actor was no longer the same man who was the focus of his sexual desires in the 1930s.

At long last a reckless life and endless abuse of a onceperfect specimen had caught up with Errol. He looked beyond tired, a dissipation that couldn't be erased even after treatment at the best spa on earth.

The night was getting cold in the way a Los Angeles evening can; and Errol wasn't even wearing a coat. When Merv tried to wake him up, he failed. Errol muttered something before entering what seemed like a deep coma.

It was at this point that Merv saw the two young men who lived next door to him enter the patio heading for their apartment. He signaled to them and asked them if they would help him “get my friend into my studio. He's had too much to drink.”

Both of the young men agreed and practically carried Errol into Merv's studio after he'd unlocked the door. “Please put him on the bed and thank you so very much.”

It was only then that Merv looked at the two young men, finding them incredibly sexy and appealing. One of them was especially handsome.

“I'm Merv Griffin,” he said extending his hand.

“This here is James Dean, and I'm Nick Adams,” one of the young men said. “We've seen you around.”

“Sorry we didn't say hi before,” James said. He looked at the body resting on the bed. “If I didn't know better I'd say that was Errol Flynn.”

“He's a lookalike,” Merv said. “When he was a bit younger, teenage gals used to come up to him and ask for his autograph.”

“Yeah, he looks a little beat up for Errol Flynn,” Nick said.

“We've got to go,” James said. “Good night. Let's get together for a drink in the courtyard tomorrow.”

“Great idea!” Merv said, eagerly wanting to make the acquaintance of these two striking young men. “At sunset, okay?” As the men were leaving, Merv seemed to want to prolong the contact. “Say, are you guys actors?”

“Yeah, we're terrific,” Nick said.

Errol Flynn

“Let's be truthful with this man,” James said. “We want to be actors. But right now we might list our profession as hustlers.”

“I see,” Merv said, startled at such candor. “You mean, love for sale, or are you referring to pool hall hustling.”

“More like dick for sale,” James said, before tipping his cap in a good night.

Nick winked at Merv before heading out the door.

After locking the door behind them, Merv turned to Errol on the bed. Slowly, almost sensually, he began to undress him. He'd never had the opportunity to examine the body of his teenage fantasy hero in detail. When he'd completely stripped Errol, he surveyed the body like a doctor in an examining room.

“No, he's not for me,” Merv said in a whisper to himself. Errol chest had fallen and his stomach was paunchy. He still possessed that fabulous endowment, but that was no longer enough of an allure for Merv. He'd much rather be intimate with the two hustlers next door.

He stripped off his own clothes and got into the bed beside Errol, although his snoring kept Merv up for most of the night. This was the last time he'd ever sleep with the object of so many wet dreams of his past.

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“A slouching stance, youthful rebellion in faded jeans, a cigarette in the corner of a kissable mouth, alienation, even outright hostility at times, and the most angelic face I've ever seen on a young man.” That's the way many contemporary witnesses described James Dean at the time.

“This Dean guy is going to be a big star — maybe the biggest,” Merv later claimed to such friends as Bill Orr. “I have this feeling about him. But he's got a lot of weird habits. He'll smoke a cigarette so far down that it'll burn his lips. Yes, actually burn them with intent. He gets off on being burnt. He's a hustler/actor and will let some johns crush out a cigarette butt on his ass. The first night I was with him, and even before I had sex with him, he pulled down his jeans and showed me the cigarette burns on a beautiful ass. Strange boy. But I adore the kid.”

Rebels and starfucker buddies:
James Dean (left) and
Nick Adams(right)

The evening that followed his meeting with Nick and James, Merv waited impatiently on the patio of the Commodore Garden Apartments. Nick and James were nowhere to be seen. Merv sat there until long after the sun had set before both of them came rushing into the patio to greet Merv.

“We had a john who wanted us to stay over for more fun and games,” Nick said in the way of apology. To Merv's surprise, Nick gave him a light kiss on the mouth. James held back, saying nothing, until he somewhat bashfully invited Merv into their studio next door to Merv's own shabby apartment.

Dressed in a white Mexican shirt and jeans, James put on a pot of fresh coffee to welcome Merv. The whole place smelled like a dirty laundry bag. Yet Merv felt a sexual tension in the air, and this excited him. The prospect of having both young men strip down for his pleasure tantalized him.

As his eyes surveyed the studio, they drifted up to the ceiling where he was shocked to see a hangman's noose dangling. Following Merv's eyes, James said, “That's waiting for me when I decide to commit suicide.”

Merv didn't know if James were joking or if he really meant that. While James poured the coffee, Nick stripped down and dangled his penis in front of Merv. “Now you know why I'm called Mighty Meat along the street.” He headed for the shower.

Over coffee, Merv and James shared their experiences of surviving in New York. James told the best tales, especially about how he managed to live on twentyfive cents a day.

Merv suggested he should write a book. “All struggling actors coming to New York would buy it like a survivor's manual.”

“Mostly I just hung around,” James said. “Sometimes I'd get lucky, like when Marlon Brando would invite me into his place to fuck me and give me a meal. Often I'd sit on a door stoop for hours at a time. Once I sat on this bench in front of a barbershop for eight hours, needing a haircut real bad but I had no money to pay for it.”

Ever the practical one, Merv asked, “But didn't you have to take a leak?”

James looked at him strangely, but didn't answer.

Nick emerged freshly showered and dressed only in a bath towel. He joined them for coffee and shared his experiences of trying to break in as an actor in New York and Hollywood. “Being an actor is like eating a shit sandwich every day. It's kiss ass…” He paused. “Sometimes literally. Waiting for the next job, not knowing if it's gonna come or not. Trying to get that job and having to compete with a hundred other starving actors. Congratulating your best friend when he got the job instead of you.” He glanced furtively at James. “Waiting outside that producer's door. Even worse sometimes, getting invited inside the producer's door and having to submit to a blowjob from a disgusting piece of flesh. And then losing the job to the guy he planned to cast all along. Trying to get a job is half the job of being an actor — take it from me.”

As the evening progressed, Merv was amazed that Nick seemed to be “tooting his own horn,” often at the expense of James. It was clear to Merv that there was definite competition between the two actors. It was as if Nick sensed that James had far greater looks and more talent, and Nick was hellbent on convincing Merv that he, Nick — and not James — was the real star.

A latter day biographer, Albert Goldman, summed up Nick in ways that Merv felt but couldn't express at the time. “Nick was forever selling himself: a property which, to hear him tell it, was nothing less than sensational — ‘the greatest actor to hit this town in years,’” Goldman said. “In fact, he had very little going for him in terms of looks or talent or professional experience. He was just another poor kid from the sticks who had grown up dreaming of the silver screen.”

When James learned that Merv had been living with Monty Clift, James entertained him with a deadaccurate impression. “Now I ask you: Who is better doing Monty Clift? The real thing or me?”

“You, of course,” Merv said.

After that, he entertained Merv with an even deadlier impression of Marlon Brando. “Fuck, I do a better imitation of Brando than Jimmy,” Nick claimed. Merv watched in fascination as Nick almost became Brando before his eyes. But he didn't dare tell James that Nick was better.

Right in front of James, Nick confessed that his friend would take much kinkier offers when both of them “hustled the queers along Santa Monica Boulevard.”

“I turn down a lot of queens, but Jimmy here will go for anything,” Nick claimed. Merv glanced over at James who did not seem in the least embarrassed at this revelation. “One night this weirdo wanted to eat my shit,” Nick said. “I told him to ‘fuck off,’ but Jimmy went off with the creep in his car.”

“Why not?” James said with a devilish bad boy look. “I hadn't had a good crap all day.”

When Merv reunited with Johnny Riley, he would give him a blowbyblow description of the approximately two and a half weeks he spent in the company of Nick Adams and James Dean in the months leading up to their getting cast in *Rebel Without a Cause*. “I had to borrow fivehundred dollars from Bullets to pay the freight, but it was worth every penny. Nick had the bigger endowment but Jimmy was better at lovemaking. It was the best sex I've ever had, even if I did have to pay for it.”

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The night of the big Sunday night bash at Jack Warner's was imminent, and Merv still didn't have a royal to

escort to the party. Jack had warned him, “Don't show up with some lowrent piece of shit. Make sure she has a title. There will be plenty of royalty at my dinner, class acts who are visiting our town when they're not ruling over kingdoms in the east. Got that, Griff?”

Frantically searching his mind, Merv remembered that he'd once “dated” a woman named Lorraine Manville, the heiress to the Johns-Manville asbestos fortune and the sister of the muchmarried playboy Tommy Manville, who was always making headlines. Her brother had become a minor celebrity. In all, he'd eventually entered into 13 marriages to 11 women, winning him an entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Merv vaguely recalled that Lorraine had been married to some minor European count or something, which might mean that she could dust off her former title for the evening. When he called her, she told him that she had another engagement that night but was willing to cancel it, since she considered the Jack Warner affair the hottest ticket in Los Angeles.

Once again Merv borrowed a car from Peter Lawford to drive to Jack Warner's mansion for the grandest party he'd ever attended in Hollywood. As he recalled it, it was all flowing champagne and crystal bowls of caviar, with lots of minor European royalty, the stiffcollared men in tuxedos and the heavily coiffed ladies crowning their heads with diamond tiaras By request from Jack Warner, all the women were dressed either in black or white, perhaps a combination of the two.

As the butler was taking Lorraine's white sable, Merv felt a strong hand on his shoulder. “Griff, so glad you could make it.” It was Jack Warner himself.

Merv introduced the studio chief to the Countess Lorraine Dumanceaux, using her former title.

“Glad to meet you, countess, but I regret to inform you, babycakes, that you're outranked tonight.” He reached for the arm of a stunningly glamorous woman en route to the bathroom. “May I introduce Princess Aly Khan.”

Rita Hayworth appeared before them looking as glamorous as she had in any of her screen appearances. She was one of Merv's alltime favorite movie stars from the 1940s. He'd seen *Gilda* three times. At one of Roddy McDowall's parties, he'd once put on a red wig and had performed an imitation of her “Put the Blame on Mame” number from that film.

At the dinner table, Lorraine was seated across from Merv, Rita by his side. He had little chance to talk to her, since she was busy being fawned over by other guests sitting near her and directing questions at her.

Jack presided at the head of a long table worthy of one of the Rothschilds. It was set with Steuben glassware, antique silver, and gold and silver candelabra, everything lit by soft candlelight. Like an old time silent screen movie director, perhaps Erich von Stroheim, Jack shouted orders to his butlers and waiters. At the same time he managed to keep up a running dialogue about the filming of *Casablanca*. “That Ingrid Bergman looks so virginal on the screen, but Alfred Hitchcock told me she'd fuck a tree,” Jack claimed.

At the end of the dinner, Jack rose to his feet. “I hope your worships…” he paused. “I hope you enjoyed this little spread we put out before you.” The dinner guests clapped their approval. “Now it's time for the men to have some cigars and brandy and talk about their whores, while you ladies go and take a big piss.”

Leaving Lorraine and Rita to talk to each other with absolutely nothing in common, Jack grabbed Merv's arm and took him on a tour of what Jack called “my waxworks,” borrowing a designation from the film, *Sunset Blvd.*, wherein a bevy of geriatric silent screen stars arrived at the home of Norma Desmond as played by Gloria Swanson.

“I lost *count* — get it? — after being introduced to six counts,” Merv said. “There were also nine countesses and at least three duchesses. I kept looking for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, or at least the Queen of England, but they were noshows. I did get to meet Princess Fawzia and even the Queen Mother Nawzli. Who in the fuck were they? I had no idea what kingdoms they presided over.”

Hopefully out of earshot of royalty, Jack in a too-loud voice told Merv, “I'm farting countesses and duchesses out my ass.”

After dinner, Lorraine attached herself to a minor count, perhaps a future husband, and wandered off into the evening, forgetting about Merv. He didn't want to join the men for cigars, brandy, and talk about Las Vegas prostitutes—it wasn't his kind of thing—so he wandered aimlessly to the deserted terrace, enjoying the night air and a break from all this royalty and pretension.

From the main room, he heard Jack announce that “the hot Scot with the lovable larynx” was going to sing.” Merv knew that meant his rival, Gordon MacRae. Apparently, Jack and Gordon had made up after one of the singer's drunken bouts.

Rita Hayworth
"My husbands fell in love
with Gilda,
and ended up marrying me:"

Merv had avoided Gordon all evening and didn't want to hear him sing, so he remained on the terrace. It was hard for him to admit it, but he was jealous of Gordon's accomplishments and his success on *The Railroad Hour*, which was attracting 12.5 million listeners every week. Sales of Gordon's records were soaring, and at least one heavy bag of fan mail arrived for Gordon on the Warner's lot every day. Most of the letters were from female bobbysoxers, but a lot of the mail was from homosexual men attracted to the good looks and rugged virility of the star.

Newspapers had reported that Gordon's threeweek appearance on the stage of New York's Strand Theater, where Merv had appeared, attracted audiences of a size unknown since Frank Sinatra had appeared there before his own screaming bobbysoxers during the war years.

Still on the terrace, Merv felt depressed listening to Gordon's powerful voice. He asked himself, "How can I compete with that?" The smell of an intoxicating perfume distracted him, and he turned around to stare into the beautiful, cameraready face of Rita Hayworth.

They chatted pleasantly about nothing important for the first fifteen minutes. In person Rita was not *Gilda*, the sexy siren and sultry, flamehaired beauty who'd enthralled the world. She appeared sweet natured and rather homey, at least for a screen goddess and a princess. He'd read all about her fairytale marriage to Prince Aly Khan, the son of the Aga Khan III, the leader of the Ismaili sect of Shia Islam. From what he'd gathered that fairytale had turned into a grim nightmare.

"I'm back in Hollywood trying for a comeback," she confided. "Glenn [a reference to actor Glenn Ford] tried to recreate *Gilda* when we made *Affair in Trinidad*, but that old black magic just wasn't there. Reviewers called it a retread."

"I enjoyed it, and I thought you looked lovely," he falsely claimed.

"Thank you," she said. "You won't believe the latest script Joseph Mankiewicz offered me. It's a turkey called *The Barefoot Contessa*. The female lead is named Maria Vargas, but she might as well be Rita Hayworth. It's a ripoff of my own life. Mankiewicz stupidly thought I'd play myself in the film. I told him to give it to Ava Gardner."

"Sorry to hear about your marriage to the prince," he said. "You two looked like such a great couple."

"Oh, well, he spent too many days at the race track with his thoroughbreds and too many nights in the beds of other women," she said, sighing.

At one point Merv said, "I've always wanted to meet Rita Hayworth if only to put one question to her."

"Do you mean how's Glenn Ford in the sack?"

"No, not that," he said. "What did it feel like when you learned that your likeness was stamped on the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima?"

"I'd say that was quite a blast."

At that point, Jack Warner emerged onto the terrace, obviously looking for Rita to bring her back into the party to be photographed with him. "I've been looking everywhere for you, gal." He possessively took her arm.

"Jack, I'll meet you inside," she said, "after I've repaired my face. After all, it's not 1944 anymore."

The studio chief remained behind. "Griff, I've been watching you out of the corner of my eye all night. I like the way you handle yourself. If only you could sing as great as Gordon. But you can't and that's that. However, just for the hell of it, I'm casting you as the lead in a big movie musical, maybe the biggest to come along in some time."

“You mean opposite Doris Day in her next picture?”

“Not quite,” he said. “Doris stupidly turned down the picture. I'm giving the part to Kathryn Grayson.”

“But she's starring in *The Desert Song*with Gordon MacRae,” Merv said.

“She's going to drop Gordon in her next picture and star with you,” Jack said. “You're gonna be big, really big. You're on your way up, Griff. Now get into my living room and sing for your supper. My guests are getting restless. Gordon did only one number. I want you to do three.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. Warner,” Merv said, eagerly shaking his hand. “Thanks for giving me my big break. I can't wait to read the script.”

“Now get in there and sing ‘I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts,’” Jack said. “I love that song. And, Griff, if you fuck up this big Grayson picture, I'll personally cut off your balls. Got that, kid?”

“I got you,” Merv said, fleeing from the terrace and heading back into the party to entertain movie stars and mostly *faux* royalty.

Jack Warner with *real* Hollywood royalty:
Joan Crawford *(left)* **and Bette Davis**

Chapter Five

Someone in the administration at Warner Brothers had told Merv that a finished script of *So This is Love* wouldn't be ready for another two weeks, and that until then, he could go to Hawaii or anywhere else he wanted.

Soon after, Merv embarked for Honolulu on a ticket paid for by Monty Clift, probably wishing that he was flying there as a player in *From Here to Eternity*, and not just for a social call on an unreliable friend on his film set.

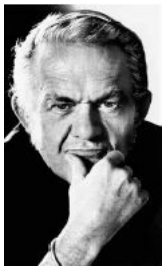
In Honolulu, brandishing a pot of espresso and a bottle of Scotch, Monty greeted Merv at the airport. He was staggering drunk and dressed as the soldier boy, Prewitt, the character that he played in *From Here to Eternity*. In a taxi on the way back to Monty's temporary rental, Merv realized that psychologically, the actor had virtually become Prewitt. He was living, breathing, sleeping, and eating the role. When asked a simple question, Monty would respond: “How would Prewitt answer that?” Before they arrived at the hotel, Monty confessed, “My character of Prewitt fucks me every night. I've become his bitch.”

At Monty's apartment, Merv was introduced to James Jones, the author of the original novel, *From Here to Eternity*, upon which the film was based. Merv assumed that the writer was Monty's new lover. Jones exuded a macho sexuality in his tightfitting blue jeans, even tighter, formfitting white Tshirt, and a thick cowhide belt dyed a bright orange and held together by a silver Navajo buckle.

The author had witnessed the actual attack on Pearl Harbor when he was twenty years old. He'd later faced combat in Guadalcanal where he was wounded in action. James's second novel, *Some Came Running*, would also be filmed. Like *Eternity*, it too would star Frank Sinatra.

When Monty went to shower and get ready to give Merv a tour of Honolulu, Merv chatted amicably with Jones. “So how's your affair with Monty going?” he bluntly asked.

“There is no affair,” Jones said. “For one reason and one reason only. He hasn't asked me. *I'm* willing. But he hasn't even admitted he's a homosexual.”



James Jones:
“If only Monty
had asked”

During the course of the evening, Jones told Merv that one of the reasons he was “hanging with Monty is to see that he gets through the picture. This movie means a lot to me even though that fucking Fred Zinnemann didn't use my version. Monty starts drinking at nine in the morning. By five in the afternoon, I often have to carry him bodily off the set.”

On the second day on the set, Merv was introduced to the female star of the picture, a very ladylike Deborah Kerr. “I'm surrounded by men,” she said. “All of them are a bit macho for me. I find Burt Lancaster very sexy, but so does everybody else. What woman in her right mind would say no to him? Or man for that matter. He's equally attractive to both sexes. As for Monty, I feel very protective of him. He came on strong to me, but I turned him down. I know he wants to love women, but sexually, he's attracted only to men. Sigh.”

They were interrupted by the appearance of Burt Lancaster, who was dressed in a military uniform. Very politely Deborah introduced Merv to her costar, not knowing they'd already met. Burt recalled meeting him when he'd escorted Joan Crawford to Zinnemann's office.

After some pleasant chitchat, Deborah excused herself to keep an appointment with her hairdresser. She told Burt to pick her up at eight o'clock that evening. After she'd gone, Burt flashed his toothy smile and invited Merv to go with him to a nearby gym for a workout.

At the gym, Burt confessed, “Zinnemann cast me as the film's beefcake. Christ, Frank Sinatra and Montgomery Clift look like they were just released from Auschwitz.”

Burt had been cast as Sergeant Warden, “a man among men,” who rallied his troops on the morning of

December 7, 1941 as planes from the Empire of Japan rained unexpected hell down upon Pearl Harbor.

"Would you believe I was only second choice for the role I'm playing? Zinnemann, that prick, preferred Robert Mitchum. And instead of your buddy, Monty, Harry Cohn wanted Aldo Ray. And for the role being played by Sinatra, Cohn wanted Eli Wallach."

Burt stripped off all his clothes and asked Merv to hold his ankles to the floor as he did pushups. Merv was only too willing, enjoying the view of Burt's penis as it bobbed up and down with his pushups. "I think he was teasing me, and I guess it was obvious that he had my full attention, but I knew I'd have to bide my time," he later told Roddy.

Burt Lancaster

Burt had a longestablished preference for working out in the gym in the nude during the late afternoon. When word of that spread around the set, every homosexual on the crew made up some excuse to visit the gym at five o'clock. As Merv later revealed, "Burt put on quite a show, especially in the shower when he paid extra attention to soaping up his genitals for a most appreciative audience."

After the gym, Burt invited Merv for a few drinks.

With liquor loosening his tongue, Burt admitted what had been obvious to Merv earlier that afternoon. "I'm having this thing with Deborah," Burt confessed. "We're getting ready for our scene on the beach with the waves washing up on our bodies. A scene like that takes a lot of rehearsals." He laughed at his own remark. "Tell you what: If she's busy one night, I'll give you your chance." He said that in such a matteroffact tone that Merv was stunned. The reference to sex was presented in the same voice Burt had used when inviting Merv for a beer.

It wasn't until his last night in Honolulu that Merv finally got lucky. After a final workout in the gym, Burt showered and invited Merv back to his hotel where they had a couple of drinks. In his suite, Burt confessed that his affair with Deborah was over. "It only lasted for the run of the movie. There will be other films to be made. Other pussies to conquer."

Suddenly, Burt stood up from his armchair and began to strip off his clothing in front of Merv. "You've been a great gym buddy, and it's been fun being with you. You deserve a reward, and I'm going to see that you get it. You've seen me soft many times, and I'm sure you've encountered a lot bigger looking. Now for your surprise: I'm a grower, not a shower. Come and get it, kid."

After Burt had climaxed, the actor told him, "When the world sees me on that beach making love to Deborah, no one will ever believe all those gay rumors about me ever again." Merv noted that he said gay instead of homosexual. The sexual (and sociological) meaning of the word had just come into vogue.

After Merv's return to Los Angeles, one of his first calls was to Roddy McDowall. "It finally happened. I've had Burt in all his uncut glory. He really enjoyed it too. This is the beginning of a great romance. I just know it."

"Don't get your hopes up," Roddy warned him. "Burt is fickle and very promiscuous."

Merv's friend turned out to be a prophet. When Merv phoned Burt the next day, the actor responded with, "It was great, kid, but it's over. Burt Lancaster doesn't do sequels."

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In Hawaii, and in a pattern that would repeat itself throughout the rest of his life, it became increasingly obvious that Monty was addicted to a wide spectrum of drugs. Along with his daily bottle of Scotch, he swallowed barbiturates and tranquilizers like they were peanuts. Merv was increasingly alarmed by Monty's physical and mental deterioration, despite the fact that he seemed to be making the greatest film of his career.

During the filming of *From Here to Eternity*, Monty had found the ideal drinking partner in Frank Sinatra. "They didn't just drink," Merv said, "they poured it down their throats. It was frightening. Both of them seemed to want to drink themselves into oblivion. Monty was still conflicted over his sexual preference, and Frank drank

because his marriage to Ava Gardner was in its death throes."

"Not only that, but Frank was at the nadir of his career," Merv later recalled. "Back taxes, maybe as much as $150,000. His $8,000 salary for *Eternity* wouldn't cover it. In fact, that paltry fee wouldn't even pay Frank's bar bills. Often Burt Lancaster and I had to carry both Monty and Frank back to their hotel, where we undressed them and put them to bed like little children. I personally took the responsibility of removing Frank's underwear to judge for myself if the legend was true. It was! Somehow Monty and Frank usually managed to pull themselves together to face the camera the following day, each giving brilliant performances," Merv said. "It was amazing."

When Monty sobered up and Frank sobered up, Monty actually managed to give Frank acting lessons. The singer later thanked Monty and claimed his help was the reason he got the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor that year.

Most evenings, Frank seemed to be always trying to place a call to Ava in Nairobi where she was filming *Mogambo* with Clark Gable and Grace Kelly. Word reached Frank that Clark and Ava had resumed their affair, which had been launched when they made *The Hucksters* years previously, back in 1947.

After the filming in Hawaii, Fred Zinnemann ordered the cast and crew back to Hollywood, where the final interiors for *Eternity* would be shot at Columbia Studios. Monty booked a suite at the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood and invited Merv to stay with him, at least until the end of the picture. "I can't stand to be alone."

Sometimes at three o'clock in the morning, Monty would hang dangerously out the window of his suite, tooting his bugle. There were endless complaints from other hotel guests and nearby tenants about the noise. James Jones was still on the scene, presumably to help the pieces and personalities he had originally created in his novel fit together in their film rendition, but Monty preferred to spend most of his time with Frank. Tough and gritty, the author of *From Here to Eternity* was a worldclass drinker and would usually still be standing after Monty and Frank had passed out.

Years later, in 1965, Merv would tape an interview with James Jones, by then an expatriate living in Paris with his wife, Gloria Mosolino.

When he met her, Merv immediately bonded with the former actress. She amused Merv with her stories of being a standin for Marilyn Monroe on *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). "I stood for hours over that subway grate with my white dress blowing up to get the shot set up for Marilyn. When Marilyn finally appeared, the director couldn't use her first take. Marilyn's panties were seethrough and showed pubic hair, which happened at the time to be black. We had to rush Marilyn back to the hotel where I helped her bleach her pubic hair."

"Shit," Merv said. "If only I could put *that* story on the air."

After meeting Gloria, Merv was almost tempted to do a TV show which focused exclusively on her and not on Jones. In Paris during that era, she had became the hostess of a literary salon the likes of which hadn't been seen since the days of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein. Her guests included Mary McCarthy, Romain Gary, William Styron, James Baldwin, and — just for fun — actress Jean Seberg and Merv's friend Peter Lawford.

Later, when Gloria moved with Jones to a farmhouse in Sagaponach, near the Hamptons on Long Island, such cultural icons as Norman Mailer, Peter Pattiessen, Kurt Vonnegut, and Arthur Miller showed up regularly at her gatherings.

During his time in Paris, Merv also interviewed another expatriate writer, Irwin Shaw, author of *The Young Lions* (1948). Like *From Here to Eternity*, it was one of the most famous novels to come out of World War II. Born in the Bronx to Jewish immigrants from Russia, Irwin expressed his extreme disappointment over the film adaptation of *The Young Lions* (1957). By coincidence, the movie, like *Eternity*, had also starred Monty Clift. This time, Monty played a sensitive Jew who becomes a war hero. He was cast opposite a blondhaired Marlon Brando, who played a Nazi officer. Irwin spoke to Merv with a wellarticulated bitterness about America. He'd been placed on the Hollywood blacklist, having been accused of being a Communist.

Shaw and Jones jointly invited Merv out for a night of boozing in Paris. Merv suspected that the two authors would be intensely competitive rivals, since they'd both become famous for novels about World War II. Outside the literary arena, their competitiveness was at its most obvious when it came to drinking one another under the table. He compared their uneasy friendship to that of two other American expats who had lived in Paris forty years earlier, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Literary Lion:
Irwin Shaw

Merv tried to match them drink for drink. “A big mistake. That and jet lag nearly killed me.” During the interview with Jones the next morning, Merv confessed that “I was a zombie.” Away from the camera, he asked Jones just one question. “What's the most important thing you ever learned in life?”

“When fighting,” Jones said, “never kick a man in the crotch.”

Back in Hollywood, as the *Eternity* film was being wrapped, Merv confided to Roddy McDowall that he didn't believe Monty and Frank had become lovers, even though they had occasionally slept drunkenly nude in each other's arms. “I came in many times to wake them up, and saw them huddled together for comfort,” Merv confided. “But I think it was more for the moral support they gave each other — not sex. What a contrast. There was Monty's peanut exposed only a foot from Frank's monster Italian salami.”

Once, when Frank got drunk in a bar along Sunset Strip, the remainder of the evening became devoted to his ongoing obsession with Ava Gardner. “Frank was a womanizer,” Merv said. “But at this point in his life, he wasn't interested in other gals. His rage about Ava consumed his life — that and his *Here to Eternity* role of Maggio. I kept urging him to get over her and get on with his life, but he wouldn't listen. After the release of *Eternity*, I predicted a big comeback for him but he was all gloom and doom. He claimed he was finished. He called my talk bullshit.”

“He confessed to me that his vocal cords were hemorrhaged,” Merv said. “He'd also received a devastating blow from MCA. His agents there informed him that ‘no one wants you, Frankie, no more movie deals, no more night club offers.’”

“Every night,” Merv said, “Frank threatened to commit suicide. It was Monty, as messed up as he was, who would talk him out of it.”

One Saturday morning around four o'clock, Merv got up to go to the bathroom, which opened onto the hallway. Thinking Monty and Frank were asleep in the next bedroom, he turned the knob and walked into the bathroom. What he saw shocked him. A nude Frank lay sprawled on the tiled floor, an empty bottle of sleeping pills beside him.

Frank appeared to be dead. It seemed pointless to scream for Monty to help, because he was completely wasted. Merv ran into the living room and called the hotel desk, demanding an ambulance and the police.

Frank Sinatra:
Without Merv, he'd probably
have died that night.

Covered with sheets, Frank's body was hauled out of the hotel on a stretcher through the back entrance. In the back seat of a squad car, Merv followed the ambulance's flashing dome lights.

At the hospital, while Frank's stomach was being pumped, Merv put through an urgent call to Columbia's chief publicist, strongly advising him to get Harry Cohn involved. “Cohn knows how to keep stuff like this out of the papers,” Merv said.

The call paid off. Within an hour, the PR staff at Columbia had launched itself into damage control. Cohn was an expert at keeping scandals about his stars out of the papers, and he managed to cover up Frank's latest attempt at suicide.

Three days later, a sober Frank returned to Monty's suite at the Roosevelt for a reunion with Monty and Merv.

He thanked Merv for “saving my rotten life.” His weight had dropped to 118 pounds, which Merv thought would make his interpretation of a defeated, burntout Maggio all the more convincing in *Eternity*.

He talked openly about why he'd tried to kill himself, claiming that Ava had flown to London where she'd had an abortion. “Her exact words to me,” Frank claimed, were ‘I killed your son.’” It is not known if Ava ever knew the sex of her unborn child. Perhaps by asserting that it was a boy, she hoped to cause Frank greater grief.

Frank and Monty learned no lessons from the singer's suicide attempt. Within three nights, Frank and Monty had resumed their heavy drinking, referring to their binges as “sloshing good times.” Merv joined them on their nightly rounds, having little to drink himself because he knew he had to get both of them back to the Roosevelt intact.

The script for his first starring film, *So This Is Love*, arrived, and Merv read it eagerly. He was bitterly disappointed. Even though he was cast as the male lead, the role was meager, not what he'd wished for. “It's definitely going to be Kathryn Grayson's picture,” he told Monty.

The next day, while Monty and Frank were at Columbia Studios, Merv quietly packed and left the Roosevelt. He'd found an apartment of his own. He went by the Commodore Garden Apartments to get his stuff, learning that Nick Adams and James Dean had moved out without a forwarding address.

One week later, Monty placed a desperate call to Merv, begging him to come over to his suite at the Roosevelt. Once there, Merv found that Monty had been severely beaten. Fortunately, he'd shot his last take at Columbia. He was far too beat up to face any camera. At first Merv assumed that Monty had picked up some rough trade along Santa Monica Boulevard, who had robbed and beaten him up.

When he wiped the blood off Monty's wounds and put iodine on the cuts, Monty related the details of what had happened. In a drunken rage, Frank had attacked him. Monty refused to tell Merv what had set Frank off.

The house doctor examined Monty, finding no broken bones. Merv called and ordered a male nurse to stay in Monty's suite and take care of him. That night he drove to Roddy's house to tell him what had happened.

Roddy had some ideas about what had caused the uncontrollable rage that had swept over Frank. “I bet Monty confessed to Frank that he'd fallen madly in love with him, and that was more than Frank could take. He sure as hell wasn't going to go from the arms of Ava Gardner into the arms of Monty Clift. No way! Not Frank.”

“Frank and Monty are too rich for my blood, and frankly, they're just too complicated.” Merv told Johnny Riley in a phone call to San Francisco. He was urging his friend to drive down to L.A. for a visit. “My big movie break is coming up, and I've got to think of myself. I can't get sucked into their whirlpool. I love the guys dearly, and I'll keep seeing them. But we were living in each other's crotches like The Three Musketeers. Our relationship got just a wee bit incestuous, and all of us need some space. The main reason I had to get out of the Roosevelt was that I'm not into selfdestruction.”

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Kathryn Grayson, Merv's costar in *So This Is Love*, was the reigning coloratura soprano at Metro Goldwyn Mayer, but had taken a shortterm leave to work at Warner Brothers. Merv had thrilled to her 1951 film, *Show Boat*, in which she'd starred as Magnolia opposite Ava Gardner. At the time, both women were being pursued by Merv's friend, Howard Hughes. Kathryn later recalled the jealousies that ensued as Ava “shot daggers at me on the set with those Tarheel eyes of hers.” Kathryn herself was a fellow Tarheel, having been born in Winston Salem, North Carolina.

Kathryn Grayson with **Merv Griffin**
in *So This Is Love (1953)*

So This Is Love was a cinematic biography of the opera star Grace Moore. Nicknamed “The Tennessee Nightingale,” she helped popularize opera by introducing it to a large audience. As a young kid, Merv had seen

Grace's 1934 film, *One Night of Love*, for which she was nominated for an Oscar as Best Actress of 1935. He later said that, “I was too young to appreciate her talent when my mother dragged me to see it.”

On the morning of January 26, 1947, Grace Moore had boarded a KLM DC3 in Copenhagen, after a wildly popular concert that attracted hundreds of fans who demanded countless encores. She was sitting with Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden, father of the present king, Carl XVI Gustaf. They'd had an illicit affair in Denmark and were en route to Stockholm when the aircraft at an altitude of 150 feet stalled, crashed to the ground, and exploded. Unexpectedly, Elvis Presley so admired the operatic performances of Grace Moore that he named his beloved Graceland after her.

In *So This Is Love*, Merv was cast as Buddy Nash, the manager and fiancé of Grace, as played by Kathryn. For his role in the movie, Merv, a future billionaire, was paid $250 a week. Other cast members included players who at the time were well known: Marie Windsor, Walter Abel, Joan Weldon, and Rosemary DeCamp.

So many dire warnings had been issued to Merv about “that impossible diva,” Kathryn, that he had trepidations about meeting her. There was a legend at the time that the worst thing that could happen to an actor was to get cast opposite Kathryn. Her former husband, Johnny Johnston, had warned Merv that “Kathryn will hog the camera and shove you out of the picture.” Johnston had divorced the singing star two years previously.

To his surprise, Merv even received a phone call from Mario Lanza, who had starred with Kathryn in *That Midnight Kiss* in 1949 and in *The Toast of New Orleans* in 1951. “I despise the cunt, and so will you after making this picture,” The Great Caruso warned Merv. “Those two big tits of hers kept knocking me down in every scene. She's a camera hog. She'll eat you alive.” The actress was noted for having the largest bust measurements in Hollywood, putting Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe to shame.

On the first day of the shoot, Doris Day showed up to wish Merv good luck. “You're gonna be big one day,” she predicted.

“But when is that day coming?” he asked her.

“Just be patient,” she assured him. “It'll happen. In fact, I'm considering casting you as the male lead in my next musical.”

He smiled indulgently, having heard Doris's worthless promises before.

When Merv finally met Kathryn, she seemed to be the opposite of a monster. A pretty, petite brunette, she had a heartshaped face and an engaging smile. Her costar in *Show Boat*, Howard Keel, had described her as “the most beautiful woman in the history of movies.”

Merv disagreed with Mario Lanza. “I found Kathryn a peach to work with,” Merv claimed. “She gave me the most favorable camera angles, though she was known to nudge her leading man out of the scene. She encouraged me at every turn. In closeups I had no problem with those big tits of hers because wardrobe had bound her breasts so she wouldn't project so much. After all, she wasn't trying to look like Jayne Mansfield. Perhaps Kathryn sensed I was a fish out of water, and she practically guided me through every scene.”

The difficult point came in a kissing scene, which had to be shot nearly thirty times. At one point, Merv stuck his nose in her eye. To make matters worse, he had to act out the scene in front of the entire football team from the University of Texas. In town for the Rose Bowl, they were visiting the set that day. Practically to a man, every member of the team later claimed they could have done a better job of kissing Kathryn than Merv.

At one point the director, Gordon Douglas, insulted Merv in front of the homophobic team. “Griffin, just pretend Kathryn is Rock Hudson, and you'll do just fine.” The team members cackled with laughter at Merv's humiliation, but he got through the next scene, and it was good enough for a print. The movie lives on today as a footnote in film history. It was the first major motion picture to focus on an openmouth kiss.

Even though he received top billing alongside Kathryn, in the final version of the film he appeared onscreen for less than twenty minutes. He did get to sing, “I Kiss Your Hand, Madame,” but it was one of his more lackluster numbers.

Kathryn found Merv “a nice guy,” but feared he lacked the aggression and drive needed to become famous as a movie star.

Gordon Douglas later apologized to Merv for humiliating him on the set, and then promised to cast Merv in his next movie. Merv was excited at the prospect until he discovered it was to be a Western. To reinforce his reconciliation with Merv, Gordon singled him out for long talks between takes, and never insulted him again, even after he flubbed several takes. A native New Yorker, Gordon had had a long career in movies, beginning with those *Our Gang* tworeelers and graduating upward to Laurel and Hardy comedies.

After Gordon's death in 1993, after a career that had spanned nearly 50 years of filmmaking, Merv facetiously

remarked, “He was the only filmmaker in the history of Hollywood to direct four screen legends — Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Liberace, *and* Merv Griffin.”

The press screening of *So This Is Love* was held at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood, and both Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons were star guests. Merv remembered slinking down so low in his seat that he was almost hiding on the floor. He'd never seen himself in a featurelength movie before, and he was horrified at his image as projected on screen. He especially hated his big number, “I Kiss Your Hand, Madame.”

In the lobby, Merv encountered Hedda, who kissed him on the mouth before exclaiming, “You're the next big star in Hollywood, maybe destined to be the biggest. I was flabbergasted by your performance.”

In his attempt to escape from her clutches, he fell into the arms of Louella. “Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, move over. They've got nothing on you. That wop, Sinatra, can't even sing any more. Jack Warner should cast you in all his next big musicals, not Gordon MacRae. He's drunk all the time anyway.” It was obvious to Merv and virtually everybody else that Louella herself was drunk that night.

“Before I fell asleep that evening, I deluded myself into believing those old bitches,” Merv later said.

As part of the film's release, Jack Warner ordered Merv to go on a crosscountry tour to promote the movie, even though the studio chief had serious misgivings about the film. “It stinks,” he told Merv. “You stink in it. But I want to earn my money back.”

On the road with Kathryn, Merv flew to Knoxville, Tennessee, the hometown of the illfated Grace Moore. Arriving at the airport, he was mobbed by teenage girls. Merv experienced “my first taste of being Tab Hunter. I was a romantic hero on the screen to these gals. The little fat boy from San Mateo had come full circle, or so I thought at the time.”

“I even got to meet those hulking brothers of Grace Moore,” Merv said. “Each of them insisted on slapping me on the back. No sadistic masseur ever delivered such blows.”

Before appearing on stage before their fans that night, Kathryn and Merv rehearsed with the Kentucky Symphony. She went through her four big numbers and Merv did his solo. Later that afternoon, Kathryn and Merv rode in a convertible through the streets of Knoxville, waving at their fans. Rumors circulated that they were lovers. Even Governor Frank Clement of Tennessee turned out to greet them, inviting them to a reception after their performance that upcoming evening.

Hours later, with a beautifully gowned and madeup Kathryn on his arm, Merv paraded down the aisle of a packed auditorium. She suddenly gripped his arm. “I'm desperately tired,” she whispered in his ear. “I can do only one number. You'll have to carry the rest of the show.”

Merv in Knoxville promoting *So This Is Love (1953)*

This was so unexpected that Merv was stunned. But ever the showman, he gallantly mounted the stage. After only one number, she retreated. The spotlight then shone on Merv, who cleverly won over the audience by singing “The Tennessee Waltz.” After that, the crowd was his. Among others, he entertained them with his Coconuts song.

Later that night, after the governor's reception, Merv answered a knock on his hotel room door. It was a handsome young room service waiter, delivering a bottle of champagne from the governor. After uncorking the champagne for Merv, the waiter was invited to stay over to help Merv drink it. “That's great,” the waiter said. “I just went off duty at midnight.”

“That's what I call room service,” Merv said jokingly.

In bed, the waiter told Merv he didn't know what to do. “I've never done it with a man.”

“Good,” Merv said, “I'll teach you.”

The following morning Merv's ego was a bit deflated when the waiter begged Merv to “take me to Hollywood so I can become a bigger movie star than you.”

Knoxville was Merv's last public appearance with Kathryn. For wider coverage, Warners split up the stars. Merv flew to Boston, checking into the Statler Hotel's presidential suite, an accommodation which had once been

occupied by General Dwight Eisenhower.

Merv was delighted to learn that Freddy Martin's orchestra was appearing in Beantown. He called his former boss and invited all the members of Freddy's band to his suite after their final show. The musicians each predicted big stardom for Merv, as they devoured the champagne and caviar he'd ordered. “Warners is paying for this blast, so eat and drink like it's going out of style,” Merv told them. He even made the suite's bedroom available to them, urging them to call their girlfriends, boyfriends, or wives.

One of the musicians, who had previously fooled around with Merv on the road, stayed over for the night. “No one handles ‘Jimmy’ like you do,” the trombone player said before jumping into bed.

In the aftermath of that party, the accountants at Warners were furious that Merv's fiesta had run up a bill of three thousand dollars. In 1953, that was a lot of money.

Without Kathryn, the crowds diminished. By the time Merv reached Denver, there were fewer than one hundred fans who waved as Merv rode in a parade in a convertible along one of the city's main streets. Miss Denver got more applause than he did.

The publicists at Warners had arranged for the Colorado press to interview Merv at a reception within his suite at the Brown Palace. He was familiar with the questions that tended at this point in the tour to be routine: “Do you sleep in the nude?” and “What was it like kissing Kathryn Grayson?”

Around midnight, after a lot of alcohol had been consumed, there was a knock on the door. Uninvited, Peaches Browning burst into the room and kissed Merv on the lips. He remembered her from parties he'd attended in San Francisco during the war. She was the Anna Nicole Smith of her day, famous for being famous. Draped in furs and diamonds, the blonde, blueeyed, buxom headlinegrabber had married Edward W. Browning, a.k.a. “Daddy” Browning, as the tabloids called him.

The aging millionaire playboy had discovered Peaches in a ballroom in New York. Although at the time she was a fifteenyearold Irish colleen, she soon became his bride. In 1927, after a few months of marriage, she filed for divorce, creating a media feeding frenzy by levying a series of fiery accusations — “degrading passion, depravity, and lewdness. One of the charges involved how he kept a big fat goose in their bedroom to arouse his erotic passion.

At Merv's reception, Warners' publicists didn't want Peaches horning in on their publicity, but Merv welcomed her and they posed together for pictures.

Merv was sad to learn of her death three years later. Peaches was found dead in her bathroom, and Merv always claimed that she had been murdered, although he had no evidence to back it up.

After Peaches, the tour dwindled down. Merv didn't remember the exact city where the publicity jaunt ended. “I blotted it out. By then, we'd learned that *So This Is Love* had bombed at the box office. On the last day of the tour, five fans showed up, and I'm exaggerating the number a bit. By the time I limped back to Hollywood, I feared my dream of stardom was eluding me once again. Yet hope bloomed eternal.”

In 1953, instead of going to see *So This Is Love*, movie fans in America were lured away from their television screens to see such cinematic spectacles as *The Robe*, which 20th Century Fox had released in the new medium of widescreen Cinema-Scope. Briefly, Hollywood moguls believed that widescreen spectaculars would lure fans back into the theaters and away from TV programmers and their “nasty little boxes.”

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During the filming of *So This Is Love*, Merv had continued to play tennis with Howard Hughes, who was deep into his mostly unrequited obsession with Kathryn Grayson. Howard warned Merv not to tell her that they were friends or even tennis partners. Merv later said, “Howard had no real friends. He was the loneliest man in the world.”

Howard was jealous of any person, male or female, he became involved with, and he spied on both his current lovers and even his wouldbe lovers.

As studio chief of RKO, Howard had hired Jeff Chouinard, a dashing exfighter pilot, to be the head of an elaborate spy ring, giving him a budget of two million dollars a year. Chouinard's specialty was somehow managing to install a “bugging radio” in the bedrooms of each of Howard's paramours.

Howard had organized a team of drivers — mostly collegeage men — to infiltrate Los Angeles, trailing the beautiful women and handsome men upon whom Howard maintained a fixation at the time. When Howard learned that some of his drivers were actually encountering some of the women they were spying upon, and then seducing them, he fired all of them, demanding that henceforth, Chouinard hire only homosexual drivers.

One Sunday afternoon, while lunching with Merv after a tennis match, the aviator confessed that he had an army of some fifty detectives following such stars as Mitzi Gaynor, Barbara Payton (who later became a hooker), Gina Lollobrigida, Susan Hayward, and Zizi Jeanmaire, the French ballet star. His most sophisticated stateoftheart eavesdropping devices were installed in the residence of Jean Peters.

Every morning at breakfast, Howard listened to the recordings derived from monitors positioned within the bedrooms of these stars. Howard was particularly fascinated by a tape of the Swedish actress, Anita Ekberg, making love to a former college football player.

Howard arranged for his sometimes lover, Pat DiCicco, to escort Elizabeth Taylor out on a date. Despite the fact that she'd repeatedly spurned Howard's advances, he was still fascinated by her. One of Howard's detectives climbed a telephone pole behind Elizabeth's apartment on Sunset Boulevard and reported that Pat didn't leave Elizabeth's bedroom until 8am the next morning. “I told him to escort her, not fuck her,” Howard said. “For his punishment, I'm going to fuck that twotiming bastard until he bleeds,” Howard told Merv. “That'll teach Pat a lesson.”

By this point in their relationship, Merv had come to believe that Howard was completely deranged. He'd heard rumors that the billionaire had contracted syphilis from the actress, Billie Dove, a former love, back in the 1920s, and that it had never been cured, adversely affecting his brain and thought processes.

After the first day's shoot on *So This Is Love*, Merv went to bed early to get his beauty sleep before facing the cameras in the morning. At 3am, a mysterious call came in from Howard, who wanted to meet him in a parked car in a seedy neighborhood of Los Angeles. A sleepyeyed Merv drove to the rendezvous point and met with Howard in the back seat of a twentyyearold car that Howard used, since he believed that none of the press would believe that he was driving such a beatup old jalopy.

Howard's proposal was blunt. The aviator wanted to spy on Kathryn during the shooting of the film, as he suspected that she was having a torrid affair with her handsome, dashing co-star in *Show Boat*, Howard Keel.

Merv found the idea of spying on someone distasteful. “But who was I to say no to Howard Hughes and live to tell about it?” he later said. For Merv's services, Howard agreed to pay him one thousand dollars a week, and Merv, who desperately wanted the money, agreed.

In Hollywood and later on the road, Merv dutifully recorded Grayson's every action, later submitting his written notes to Howard. One of Howard's obsessions involved wanting to know the exact number of times Kathryn excused herself to go to the toilet. In the past, Howard had been known to supervise the bowel movements of some of his conquests, both male and female. Cary Grant, for one, found that habit of Howard's “outrageously objectionable.”

Howard kept his word, arranging for those thousand dollar checks to be sent to Merv every week. Once Merv and Kathryn split up their road tour campaign as a means of carrying the publicity into more cities, Merv suspected that the checks would stop coming.

But once Merv was back in Hollywood, Howard wanted to keep him employed, this time as a midnight driver. Howard was continuing his personal surveillance of Kathryn. He often did his own driving, but whenever Merv encountered him, he claimed to have blinding migraines that made it impossible for him to steer a car. Merv suspected that these headaches were brought on by all those airplane crashes he'd survived.

On his first night as Howard's driver, Merv drove him to Kathryn's Tudorstyle mansion, parking a block away so as not to be detected, even though no one would have suspected that Howard Hughes was being driven around in Merv's old car. The pattern established on Merv's first night would be repeated frequently in the weeks to come.

Howard would stake out Kathryn's house from a lonely position in her rose garden, where he could look up at her bedroom window. One night she spotted him and informed her father the next morning. He threatened to take his rifle and “kill the whorechasing son of a bitch.” But Kathryn talked him out of it, claiming that such a scandal would destroy her career.

Dangerous liaison: **Kathryn Grayson**
with her billionaire stalker, **Howard Hughes**

On the nights that Howard stalked the Grayson garden, Merv fell asleep at the wheel, waiting for Howard's return, which was usually right before dawn.

On their third night of stakeout, Howard confessed what his real interest was in Kathryn. “It's her breasts, knockers from heaven. As you know from seeing Jane Russell in *The Outlaw*, I'm a breast man.”

Seeing Howard wandering night after night alone in her garden, Kathryn in time took pity on him. She invited him inside and allowed him to sleep in her guest room, but not in her own bedroom. The Grayson home became the perfect hideaway for Howard and an escape from the press and the everincreasing problems of Hughes Aircraft, RKO, and TWA.

Howard warned Merv one night that “both of us might be killed. I'm a marked man.” He claimed that he was constantly pursued by process servers and, in fact, had a total of twentysix law-suits pending, some of them paternity actions. He was sometimes chased by jealous boyfriends.

Howard was eventually accepted into the Grayson household as one of the family. Even her father grew to like him. For Merv, this acceptance led to financial disaster. But whereas paychecks stopped, the tennis matches continued.

The relationship between Howard and Kathryn lasted on and off for eight tumultuous years. She finally tired of his games and abandoned him at the altar. Much that he did infuriated her, including when he appeared at her live show in Las Vegas. She was honored that he showed up to see her perform, but she later learned that he had stashed two of his other mistresses, actresses Jean Peters and Terry Moore, within different suites at the same hotel. Hughes would later marry Jean. Terry also claimed that Hughes married her, although no marriage licence has ever surfaced.

“I wish Howard had married me,” Merv later told Johnny Riley. “Alas, he never proposed. Not only that, he never asked me to go to bed with him. I guess I wasn't his type. Once when I visited his suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel, I noticed that he had three barechested pictures of the actor John Payne photographed both in his boxing and swimming trunks. I made a mistake that night when I wandered into Howard's bedroom to take a leak in his toilet. He later had the bowl ripped out. I pissed off Howard Hughes by taking a piss. No one, or so I learned, uses the same toilet bowl as Howard.”

In the years to come, Kathryn later recalled “a warm and wonderful relationship” with Howard. But Howard confessed that he'd once gotten violent with her. Merv suspected that her assessment of that warm and wonderful relationship was mere fodder for the tabloids, having nothing to do with reality.

In some ways, Merv was glad to escape from the clutches of Howard, as he found the job distasteful. He hadn't had a decent night's sleep in weeks. With Howard out of the picture except for Sunday tennis matches, Merv turned to the task of living his own life.

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Throughout the early 50s, Merv made and maintained a friendship with Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh, two highly photogenic and congenial newcomers who were married on June 4, 1951. Having appeared on the cover of virtually every movie magazine in America, they were often headlined at the time as “America's Sweethearts.” During the course of their bumpy elevenyear marriage, they would costar together in five films, the bestreceived of which was *Houdini* (1953). During the era of their early friendship with Merv, Janet's careerdefining role as stabbing victim Marion Crane in the Alfred Hitchcock classic, *Psycho* (1960), lay in her future.

Sometime during the period when they were still defined as newlyweds, Tony called Merv and asked if he'd join Janet and himself for a Halloween costume party at the home of Jerry Lewis. Merv agreed and told him that Marilyn Erskine would be his date that night.

Merv had only recently gotten to know Tony and Janet, both of whom he found to be open and candid with him, enough so that he felt he didn't have to keep secrets from them. Both Tony and Janet were already aware of Merv's homosexuality. And at least when they were separate from each other, both of the young stars were equally candid with him.

From the beginning of the friendship, Merv became aware that Tony was cheating on his wife. At the time, he didn't know whether Janet suspected that her handsome husband was “playing the field,” as Tony described his lifestyle to Merv.

Without Tony, Merv and Janet frequently had lunch together to gossip about their romantic involvements. She delighted in telling Merv about how Errol Flynn had seduced her when they'd appeared in *That Forsyte Woman* (1949). “Yes, but I had him long before you did,” Merv boasted to Janet.

“Well, at least I got to sample Joe DiMaggio before some of these other starlets,” she said to Merv. She'd met the baseball great when he'd appeared in her movie, *Angels in the Outfield* (1951).

Later during Merv's friendship with Janet, she'd be cast with Robert Wagner in their rather laughable adventure film, *Prince Valiant* (1954). Merv confessed to her that he thought the stunningly handsome Robert Wagner was the sexiest man who'd ever lived. He begged Janet to go to bed with the young man, so "you can give me a blowbyblow, inchbyinch description."

"I'll get back to you on that," Janet promised.

Both Janet and Merv had slept with Peter Lawford, so Merv didn't need for her to spill any secrets about him. But he did want to know "all the details about that Tarzan stud, Lex Barker," who would go on to marry Lana Turner. Merv also heard about Janet's involvement with the gangster Johnny Stompanato, who later would become involved with Lana and who would eventually be stabbed to death under murky circumstances in her home.

During the period Merv was hanging out with Janet, she was also being pursued by his friend, Howard Hughes. "I'd call it sexual harassment more than a romance," Janet confided. What surprised Merv most was Janet's confession that she'd married a student, Kenneth Carlyle, when she was only fourteen years old. That marriage was later annulled.

Knowing that for career reasons Merv needed to keep dating a string of beautiful women, Janet promised to arrange a date for him with her friend, Gloria DeHaven. Ironically, Tony Curtis had also dated Gloria.

With Merv, Tony was equally candid about his sex life. "I don't know what there was about me," Merv later said. "Perhaps I was just a Mother Confessor. But stars always wanted to tell me their secrets. I had this ability to get them to open up and talk. That certainly came in handy when I became a talk show host."

Tony revealed that he'd first ejaculated when he was eleven years old in a dark movie theater in the Bronx while holding hands with a girl from his neighborhood. "But it wasn't until I was in the Navy that I lost it in a whorehouse in Panama City," Tony said. "I was eighteen at the time."

Merv had continued to find accommodating young women to date, doing what was deemed necessary to keep up appearances and mask his private homosexual lifestyle. Marilyn Erskine, Merv's date, had been briefly married to the director Stanley Kramer in 1945, but after a few weeks this mysterious union was annulled. Around that time of her date with Merv, she was costarring in *The Eddie Cantor Story* (1953). Merv and Marilyn jointly decided to dress up as drag versions of Shirley Booth and Burt Lancaster, who were appearing on screens across the nation in *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952). Merv dressed in drag as Shirley's character of Lola Delaney, with Marilyn disguised as the male character played by Burt Lancaster, Doc Delaney. In synch with the cross-dressing choices of Merv and Marilyn, Janet dressed as Tony, and Tony appeared in drag as Janet.

"Marilyn and I looked like refugees," Merv later said, "but Tony and Janet had been professionally made up by people at the studio," Merv said. "They looked like a pair of high-class transvestites."

Tony Curtis with then-wife
Janet Leigh, London, 1957

Behind the wheel en route to the party, Janet roared out of her driveway, breaking all speed records until a motorcycle cop on Wilshire Boulevard pulled them over. He ordered all of them out of the car, proclaiming, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph."

From beneath a wig of blonde curls, Tony tried to talk his way out of this embarrassing dilemma, but both Janet and he had left their drivers' licenses at home. At first the cop didn't believe, dressed as they were, that they were America's most widely publicized romantic couple. He looked with even greater skepticism at Marilyn and Merv. "But after I did my famous Cary Grant impersonation, he finally let us go," Tony said.

The policeman had tales to tell when he returned to his precinct. This was probably the source of those hot rumors that later distorted the actual events of the evening. By the next day, stories were going around Hollywood that Merv and Tony had been arrested dressed as drag queens. Not only that, but according to the rumor mill they were also having a torrid affair with each other.

Years later, during an encounter with Tony Curtis in 1960, Merv quipped, "You did better with your drag act

than I ever did.” In drag, Tony had completed the final scenes of *Some Like It Hot* (1959) with Marilyn Monroe.

Years previously, way back in 1949, while still a starlet, Marilyn had had a brief affair with Tony. Reminiscing about that affair, Tony often asserted that the gay costume designer, Orry-Kelly, a former lover of Cary Grant, had told him, “Your ass is tighter and better looking than Marilyn's.”

When she heard this, Marilyn quipped: “But Tony's ass gets more workouts than mine. I'm usually a front girl.”

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“Who are these unknown hookers you keep dating?” Jack Warner bellowed into the phone to Merv. “You've got to go out with name stars. Okay, so I understand why your thing with Joan Crawford didn't work out. Go for the starlets then. You'll never get your picture in the paper dating five-anddime sales gals who give blow-jobs for five bucks a swallow.” Then the studio chief slammed down the phone.

Even though Merv hadn't taken out any hookers, he agreed with his boss. Dating Rita Farrell was not a good way to get on the cover of *Photoplay* magazine like his friends, Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh. He searched around for suitable dates, focusing on women who needed publicity as much or more than he did. Through the intervention of Janet Leigh, Merv hooked up with Gloria DeHaven.

Despite roles which had included Mickey Rooney's sweetheart in *Summer Holiday* (1948) and Judy Garland's disagreeable sister in *Summer Stock* (1950), and despite occasional film appearances alongside “America's sweetheart,” June Allyson, Gloria had never made it big in MGM musicals

Though a competent and rather beautiful performer, Gloria just wasn't exciting enough on screen to join the upper echelons. In the mid1950s, during the period when Merv was dating her, her career was winding down, fading into the sunset with the type of 1940s musicals in which she'd originally triumphed, as represented by *Two Girls and A Sailor* (1944). And whereas Gloria needed publicity to revitalize a career in decline, Merv needed exposure to jumpstart a fledgling one.

Knocking on her door, he was startled when John Payne threw it open to greet him. “Come on in, kid,” he said to Merv. Here was Howard Hughes' erotic fantasy in all his studly beauty, a heroic, muscled, and strikingly handsome hunk of All-American male. Like Gloria, John's major films were behind him, although he'd be known in decades to come for playing the leading role in *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), which graces TV screens every Christmas.

Merv knew that John had married Gloria in 1944, divorcing her in 1950, a union that had spawned two children. “I'm babysitting tonight,” John said to explain his presence in his former wife's home.

The actor didn't seem in the least jealous of Merv, perhaps realizing how harmless the date was. Merv later gave his impression of John to Johnny Riley in a phone call. “While I was waiting for Gloria to get dressed, and after he'd poured our second drink, I'd fallen madly in love with John Payne. He's my type. Forget Errol Flynn. I've left him in the dust. I had the hots for John the first moment I laid eyes on him, even though I remembered Roddy McDowall telling me how straight he was. Both Clifton Webb and even that mouthwatering beauty, Tyrone Power, had each failed to seduce John when they'd appeared with him in *The Razor's Edge* back in 1946.”

It was with great reluctance that Merv tore himself away from John that night to escort Gloria to some event. Later he couldn't recall what function they attended, but the memory of John lingered.

John Payne had become famous among both horny women and homosexual men when he'd posed for a series of beefcake photos in the late 1930s, around the same time he was stripped down to a pair of tightfitting boxing trunks for his costarring role in *Kid Nightingale* with Jane Wyman. These two upandcoming stars had a torrid affair, even though John was married at the time to actress Anne Shirley. When that affair cooled, Jane opted to pursue Ronald Reagan instead.

Gloria De Haven with
Merv's ex, **Tom Drake**

At the time of Merv's date with Gloria, John's career had been reduced to a series of forgettable Westerns and

films noirs at Paramount, and seemed headed for oblivion.

Merv came up with a scheme. If he couldn't get John himself, “I figured I might earn brownie points with Howard,” Merv later told Roddy. Merv called Howard and told him he'd met John Payne, and that the actor might be interested in flying to Catalina with him for the weekend. The aviator took the bait, inviting both of them to “Come fly with me.”

Merv then transmitted the invitation to John, slyly suggesting that Howard might be intrigued by the idea of signing him to an exclusive contract when his present deal with Paramount ran out. John also took the bait.

The following afternoon, when John showed up at the airfield, Howard immediately informed John that he'd seen *Kid Nightingale* three times. John seemed flattered by the attention of such a famous and rich patron. During the flight to Catalina, Merv was assigned to the back seat while John sat up front with Howard, who manned the controls. Even though Merv knew that John was straight, he also suspected that few actors would reject the attentions, sexual or otherwise, of the great Howard Hughes.

As Merv later reported to Roddy, that rainy weekend in Catalina had been a dud for him, although John and Howard seemed to have a good time. “They were locked away in Howard's bedroom for most of the weekend, and I was on the sofa in the living room watching old Westerns on TV. My biggest thrill happened one night around one o'clock in the morning when John wandered into the living room for a cigarette. He was stark, raving nude as the day he was born. Quite a dangler on him. All I could do was drool and daydream. He knew what he was doing. He lingered long enough in front of the flickering light of the television to give me a grand view. Right then and there I decided to become a billionaire like Howard himself so I could entice the John Paynes of the future into my bedroom.”

Films noirs and beefcake:
John Payne

As it turned out, Howard did nothing for John's career except to give him a great piece of career advice. Howard suggested that the actor acquire the rights to an Ian Fleming novel, *Moonraker*, and secure a deal to play the British spy in the book, James Bond. John followed this advice and took out a ninemonth option at a thousand dollars a month on *Moonraker*. He decided to drop the option when he learned he couldn't acquire the rights to the entire James Bond series. Big mistake. For the rest of his life, he'd regret his decision to drop the option, as in the years ahead he watched the James Bond films make countless millions.

In May of 1961, John suffered extensive, lifethreatening injuries when struck by a car on the streets of New York City. His recovery, which left him with facial scars, took two years. In New York at the time, Merv visited him, bringing a box of chocolates and flowers.

“Thanks, Merv,” the grateful actor said. As they chatted, Merv understood how lonely John was. When Merv started to leave, John begged him to stay on longer, as he seemed starved for company. In their final hour together, John became confidential. “I should have taken care of you that weekend with Hughes on Catalina. I'm sorry I didn't. Forgive me. Considering how I look now, and what condition I'm in, I can't do much for you now either.”

“No need for that,” Merv assured him, smiling even though embarrassed.

“I sang and danced on screen with Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Carmen Miranda, and so many others, but you're the only celebrity to come and see me in the hospital. There's nothing more forgotten than a forgotten movie star.”

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Although Merv's earlier film, the 1953 film *So This Is Love*, had bombed at the box office, its director, Gordon

Douglas, nonetheless opted to cast the perpetually willing Merv in yet another film, *The Charge at Feather River*. It was one of the first Westerns to be filmed in 3D, and it starred that heartthrob of the 1940s, Guy Madison.

Merv eagerly looked forward to meeting Guy, one of "the boys" in the stable of Henry Willson, the notoriously gay talent agent who "created" a stable of newly minted male movie stars, renaming them with monikers like Tab Hunter and Rock Hudson.

On the set of *The Charge at Feather River*, Gordon ordained that the death scene previously filmed by another actor, a citizen of Poland, had to be reconfigured and reshot. The original actor had returned to take a job in Warsaw, and "I was elected to redo the entire death scene," Merv recalled. "I was seriously pissed off at Gordon. What a fucker. I felt I'd been doublecrossed by being given such a paltry role when I was dreaming of costarring in the film with Guy Madison."

Gordon promised Merv that if "I ever direct a film that calls for a guy who can play the piano and sing too, I'll cast you."

"Yeah, right," Merv said.

Gordon, as director, later recalled, "Even though I didn't do much for the film career of Merv Griffin, I liked the kid. Like a politician, he sought out the stars of the film and ingratiated himself with them. He had the power to form instant friendships more effectively than any other actor I've ever known. And he was star struck. To Merv, a star meant anybody who got at least fifth billing in a film."

Merv didn't become friendly with Vera Miles, one of the stars of the film. But he'd already sampled the charms of her future husband, Gordon Scott, who became famous as one of Hollywood's sexiest (and most promiscuous) Tarzans. Merv did get to shake hands with the squarejawed, intense, nononsense Frank Lovejoy, born in the Bronx. "He brought the Bronx with him," Merv said. "In fact, Frank was the best thing in the movie."

Merv was no doubt referring to a scene where the actor "discouraged" a rattlesnake with tobacco juice and even aimed a squirt at the 3D audience, who screamed at the prospect of getting tobacco juice in their eyes.

Merv claimed to have enjoyed meeting the other female star of the film, Californiaborn Helen Westcott, who began her acting career at the age of four. He loved talking to her about her handsome father, Gordon Westcott, who had been cast in several Warner Brothers films until his early death at the age of thirtytwo in 1935. Those films had included Gloria Swanson's illfated silent, *Queen Kelly* (1929), and Bette Davis's *Fog Over Frisco* (1934). "A lot of young actors were interested only in hearing about Rock Hudson or Marilyn Monroe," Helen recalled, "but Merv could listen for hours to tales about Hollywood during the silent days or during the early talkies. I liked that about him."

Near the end of Merv's association with *The Charge at Feather River*, Helen introduced him to a friend of hers, the garglevoiced Aldo Ray who earlier had been a *protégé* of gay director George Cukor. Born Aldo DaRe to an Italian family, the former frogman for the U.S. Navy had been cast opposite the bisexual actress, Judy Holliday, in the 1952 *The Marrying Kind*.

According to Roddy McDowall, both Cukor and Spencer Tracy had enjoyed Aldo's considerable erotic charms when he was cast in *Pat and Mike* (also 1952), costarring Katharine Hepburn. Roddy had told Merv that Aldo was "basically straight, but didn't object if some gay male wanted to service him."

"My kind of man!" Merv said.

Much of inside Hollywood was surprised at the almost instant friendship that developed between Aldo and Merv. Helen herself called them "the odd couple." After being introduced by Helen, Aldo and Merv were seen together frequently, especially when Aldo became involved with another of Merv's newly made friends, Rita Hayworth, with whom Aldo had costarred in *Miss Sadie Thompson*. Another of Merv's friends, Jose Ferrer, was also a star in that steamy film of the tropics. "Jose planned to seduce Rita," Merv said, "but he was thwarted when Aldo got the Princess instead."

Merv was attracted to Aldo's husky frame, thick neck, and even his raspy voice, which made him perfect for playing tough, macho roles. At the time Merv met Aldo, his marriage to Shirley Green was coming to an end. On a few occasions Merv double dated with Aldo. "He was taking a girl out for serious purposes," Merv later told his friend Johnny Riley. "If Aldo would strike out with a woman, I'd get him later in the evening for sure. Okay, our socalled affair consisted entirely of me giving him a few blowjobs, but in Aldo's case that was enough to satisfy me."

Aldo enthralled Merv with stories about George Cukor. "He did a lot for my career," the actor said. "So I felt there was nothing wrong with dropping my pants and letting the guy enjoy himself. I got pissed off at him, however, when he made me go to ballet school because he claimed I walked too much like a football player."

One night Aldo called Merv and asked if he could come over later. Merv eagerly invited his newly enlisted friend, hoping that this would be their first real “date.” Aldo dispelled that notion when he asked if he could bring a friend.

When that friend showed up at Merv's door with Aldo, it turned out to be a recently acquired friend of Merv's as well. Rita Hayworth, who was starring in *Miss Sadie Thompson* with Aldo. They told him they would soon be flying to Hawaii for location shooting and wanted some place to escape from prying eyes for a few hours. “No one will think of looking for us at Merv Griffin's house,” Rita said.

Merv immediately sensed that “two is party enough, three a crowd,” as he put it, but Rita urged him to stay for a while to talk to them.

Merv knew that Rita, in the wake of her divorce from the Aly Khan, the then fabulously wealthy spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, had gone back to playing the field. Amid torrents of international controversy, she resumed affairs with former loves who included Victor Mature and Glenn Ford, and also dated newer contenders who included Kirk Douglas. She was also seen increasingly with an Argentine, the crooner Dick Haymes, a rival of Frank Sinatra. Haymes was known among Hollywood insiders as “Mr. Evil” because of his record as a mean drunk with a penchant for beating up women.

After three failed marriages, Rita was very candid about herself and why she had returned to Hollywood. “I'm trying to reinvent myself, and that ain't easy, dear hearts.”

During their meeting, Merv noticed that she was distraught and kept asking for a refill of her drink.

“Rita and I are just having fun getting to know each other,” Aldo interjected. “Both of us know we're not ideal candidates for marriage.”

In spite of what she said, Merv suspected that Rita would impulsively race into another illfated marriage with yet another womanizer. She was the marrying kind, he'd determined. She looked disheveled, and he knew she was dissatisfied with her more mature appearance, and had been horrified at the way she'd been photographed in certain scenes in *Salome* (1953), her latest picture.

“*You Were Never Lovelier*,” he assured her, quoting the title of her 1942 movie before disappearing for the night, after offering the couple his guest bedroom and making sure they had plenty of bath towels.

In the morning when he woke up, both Aldo and Rita had departed. “We've got to get back to our other lives,” Rita had scribbled in her note of thanks. The evermischievous Aldo had written under it: “Why didn't you come and join us in the middle of the night? It would have been fun.”

From that night forward, and until the end of his role as a player in 1950s Hollywood, Merv became accustomed to lending his guest room to offtherecord couples. Many times he wished he'd been the lucky one snaring the “hunk of the week,” but he enjoyed having a lot of sexy men running around his house in their underwear. “Who knows?” he told Roddy. “Maybe the gal won't put out one night, and I'll get lucky.”

Merv and Aldo remained friends for many years. In 1958, he accompanied Helen Westcott and Aldo to a screening of a film in which they had appeared together, the steamy drama, *God's Little Acre*. That film was based on a notorious novel by Erskine Caldwell which had sold more than fourteen million copies. In that film, Helen played Aldo's spurned wife.

By then, Aldo had long ago ended his affair with Rita, as she'd entered into another disastrous marriage, this time to Dick Haymes, who “used and abused her,” in Merv's judgment. Aldo had lived up to his self-styled judgment that he wasn't a good candidate for marriage. He'd wed actress Jean Marie (“Jeff”) Donnell in 1954, but divorced her two years later.

Invitation to a three-way with
Aldo Ray

During the decades to come, as his own career took off, Merv watched with sadness as Aldo's own career began a long, slow, and painful decline. Hollywood's appetite for his particular brand of machismo had waned. Near the end of his career, Aldo even appeared in a porn movie, *Sweet Savage*. When he was dying of throat cancer in Martinez, California, Merv secretly paid a number of his exorbitant hospital bills that even Aldo's family didn't know about.

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Although Merv had met most of the supporting players in *The Charge at Feather River*, he still hadn't been introduced to Guy Madison, the star of the film. To Merv, the handsome actor was the epitome of the post-World War II male sex symbol. "Ever since I'd seen Guy in *Since You Went Away* in that sailor uniform, I'd had the hots for him," Merv told Roddy. "I even had three beefcake pictures of him from the late 40s nailed to my bathroom wall. Guy's pecs did for me what Betty Grable's legs did for a lot of homesick GIs during World War II."

Incidentally, the word "beefcake" as it applies to a male sex symbol was actually coined by Sidney Skolsky, the Hollywood columnist, to describe Guy Madison.

At the wrap party that Gordon Douglas threw for the cast of his film, Merv, from across a crowded room, spotted Guy standing in the corner. The rest of the party was rather formally dressed, but Guy appeared in tightfitting blue jeans and a white Tshirt which revealed the outline of his pecs. For Merv, it was love at first sight. On wobbly legs, he found himself heading across the room to shake Guy's hand. "I would gladly have eaten his toe jam as well," he later told Roddy. "In person he looked even more edible than in his photos."

"I'm Merv Griffin," he said extending his hand and holding onto Guy's just a bit too long.

"I'm Guy Madison," the icon said, flashing his famous smile. "My agent, Henry Willson, wanted to call me Guy Dunhill, but named me for my favorite baker, The Dolly Madison Bakery. Dolly was a bit much, so Henry came up with Guy."

"Hell, one newspaper referred to me as Mary Griffin."

"Maybe we should team up, Dolly & Mary, and take our act on the road," Guy said jokingly.

This secret language between them, so familiar to closeted gays of the 1950s, was music to Merv's ears. As he later predicted, "That Guy Madison hunk can be had."

That became more evident when Guy invited him to go with him to one of Henry Willson's notorious pool parties that weekend. As Merv related to Roddy the following day, "In the case of Guy Madison and Merv Griffin, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

Prior to his appearance in Hollywood, Guy had previously pursued several macho professions that appeal, at least in their fantasy versions, to gay men, including telephone lineman and a sailor in the U.S. Coast Guard. In the closing years of World War II, when he was on leave from active duty in San Diego, his striking good looks and manly physique had caught the eye of Henry Willson, who in addition to having a voracious appetite for handsome young men, was also head of talent for David O. Selznick.

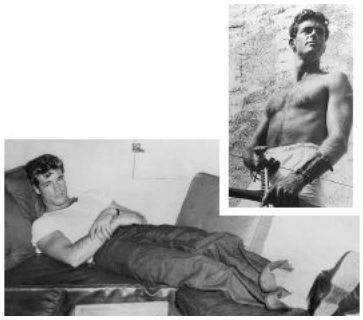
Guy (actually Robert Mosely of Bakersfield, California) immediately fell, partially undressed, onto Henry's casting couch. After doing his duty for Henry and his career, he signed a personal management contract. The agent promised him, "I'll make you the biggest movie star in Hollywood." Guy (a.k.a. Robert) foolishly believed him.

After Guy finished his tour of duty in the Coast Guard, he joined Henry's stable of "Tom of Finland" stars, all of them marginally talented actors known for their stunning male beauty. Originally Henry was going to call his new discovery "Rock Madison," but decided to reserve the name Rock for some future actor.

Henry succeeded in getting Guy cast in a small part as a sailor in the sentimental 1944 tearjerker, *Since You Went Away*, starring Claudette Colbert. Homosexual men and teenage girls, figuratively speaking, "fell out of the balcony" when Guy made his appearance in this Selznick film.

At the time Merv became romantically involved with the actor, Guy was married to the bisexual actress, Gail Russell, though their troubled relationship was heading for the divorce courts.

Guy arrived at Merv's house on a Friday night before the big pool party at Henry Willson's home on Saturday. "We didn't roll in the hay right away," Merv later told Johnny Riley. "Guy spent a good part of the evening talking about his failed marriage to Gail Russell. She was deep into her alcoholism whenever she wasn't involved with her affair with John Wayne or whatever hot female tamale she'd picked up on Santa Monica Boulevard."



All Aboard!
Two views of beefcake **Guy Madison**

In the course of their first evening together, Merv was astonished to learn the sheer numbers of male actors Guy had slept with. They included Robert Mitchum, with whom he'd costarred in *Till the End of Time* (1946). Guy also confessed to having conducted an ongoing affair with Rory Calhoun, another handsome young star in Henry's stable. The two actors had met on the set of *Massacre River* in 1949. At the time of his involvement with Merv, Guy surmised that Rory "will fall into the clutches of Marilyn Monroe." It had already been announced that Rory, Marilyn, and, ironically, Robert Mitchum would all be on location together, costarring in *River of No Return* (1954), and Hollywood insiders were already speculating about the romantic and sexual imbroglios to come.

"I sympathize with you," Merv said. "It's hard to compete with Marilyn Monroe."

The actor complained that his career "as a serious actor" was going nowhere since he'd been cast in the hit TV series, *The Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok. "*

"That gutbelly on my sidekick, Andy Devine, grows bigger every day," Guy said, "and his voice sounds more and more like it needs oiling."

The following morning Merv dutifully reported the details of his night with Guy to Roddy McDowall in their ritual morning phone chat when they exchanged notes from their affairs of the previous evening.

"Unlike Rock Hudson, who can be brutal, Guy is a gentle lover," Merv said. "But I fear he's beyond my reach. The competition for him is too much for me. Guy's not only got a wife, but Rory Calhoun keeps popping in and out of Guy's life, that is if Marilyn Monroe doesn't steal him away."

"My dear boy, call it a fling and enjoy it for what it is," Roddy advised. "You don't have to install every guy you meet in a rosecovered cottage as the love of your life. Take delight, as I do, in playing the field."

On the morning of the day that Guy had offered to take Merv to Henry's pool party, Merv received a phone call from San Francisco. At first he thought it was from Johnny Riley. But it was from Bill Robbins, his San Mateo school buddy, whom he hadn't heard from in months. Bill and Merv's other friend, Paul Schone, had not been able to find much work as dancers in San Francisco and wanted to move to Los-Angeles. Bill asked Merv if he and Paul could take over his guest bedroom until they found work. Without hesitation, Merv invited both of them to come down — "and stay as long as you want."

"We dance better than Gene Nelson," Bill said. "Like you, I think we're gonna take Hollywood by storm."

Rory Calhoun

"I'm not exactly taking Hollywood by storm," Merv warned. "Instead of a tropical hurricane, it's more like a twentysecond summer shower."

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Guy Madison escorted Merv to the door of Henry Willson's house, where they were ushered inside by a maid and directed toward the pool. Here Merv was astonished to see at least fifty of the handsomest young men he'd ever seen in one assemblage in his life.

Most of the men were in the skimpiest of bathing attire, some in bikinis that were more like the flimsy *caches-sexe* “sex-hiders” then prevalent in St-Tropez on the French Riviera. Some of them were completely nude.

In a pair of conventional bathing trunks, Rock Hudson was the first to greet Merv, giving him a wet, sloppy kiss before introducing him to the actor George Nader. To Merv, George looked as well built as Rock and even sexier.

Guy ushered Merv over to meet the host, Henry Willson, before disappearing into a bedroom to change into his own swimming trunks.

At long last Merv was chatting amicably with the most notorious homosexual in Hollywood. At first Merv was intimidated by Henry and feared he'd say something stupid to the agent, which he did. “Mr. Willson, your reputation has preceded you.”

“Don't believe those rumors that I'm a lecherous, dirty old queen,” Henry said, smiling. “I take a bath every day —never alone, of course—so you can strike dirty from my list of credits.”

Despite the tinges of awkwardness which marked the beginning of their conversation, Merv and Henry were soon talking with candor and animation as if they'd known each other for years. It was another example of Merv's ability to form an instant friendship with a kindred spirit.

Although the gay talent agent was known for his discoveries, including Rock Hudson, it was clearly evident from the beginning that he had no sexual designs on Merv. Merv was young and handsome at the time, but he hardly fitted Henry's concept of “the beefcakes” he preferred. It was obvious that Henry knew exactly what was going on in his stable of boys, because he complimented Merv on “seducing two of the most fuckable guys in Hollywood, Guy and Rock. You must have some hidden talent that's not immediately apparent.”

With no need for pretense with Henry, Merv said, “I'm a great cocksucker. Word of a talent like that spreads fast along the Hollywood grapevine.”

That made Henry laugh, and he patted the seat on the chaise longue beside him, inviting Merv to sit down “for some serious girl talk.”

In the fading afternoon of a hot California day, that chat between Henry and Merv would become one of dozens they would share over the years that followed. Merv would later recall that “Henry was the ugliest man at poolside that day. Fortunately, his bulky bathing suit covered up a lot of sins.” Henry had a hawkish nose which evoked a bird of prey sniffing out his next meal, and a protruding lower lip that implied a deep capacity for petulance. And like the famous New Yorkbased Broadway columnist, Dorothy Kilgallen, Henry had no chin. Frank Sinatra had famously referred to Dorothy as “the chinless wonder,” but the same appellation could easily have applied to Henry. Merv also noted Henry's “feminine hips” and sloping shoulders, with legs shorter than those of Elizabeth Taylor.

Sensing that Merv was evaluating him physically, Henry said, “I don't need male beauty to seduce a boy, gay or straight. In Hollywood you need power, and if you've got that, you can have virtually any actor, even if he's straight. You'd be surprised how many straight guys drop their pants and show you a hardon if you've got a part for them in a movie.”

Time after time, the press on Henry was the worst in Hollywood, and it had even been suggested by some of his critics that he “exuded evil.” Even Merv's best pal, Roddy McDowall, had warned him that “Willson is like the slime that oozes from under a rock you don't want to turn over.”

Rock Hudson had told Merv that “Henry operates the longestrunning gay casting couch in the history of Hollywood.” Since it was obvious that Merv wasn't Henry's type, he didn't have to face the possibility of going to bed with this rather repulsive creature and could get on with their friendship.

But for reasons he never fully understood, Merv liked Henry. Or, if not that, he was at least tantalized by the possibilities that Henry held out for him before the sun faded that afternoon.

“I'll toss you my rejects,” Henry said, “and don't take that the wrong way. My rejects are some of the sexiest men in the world. I've got more handsome, beefy young guys in my stable than I can handle, and they're all horny and hot.”

“I'm ready, willing, and able to host as many as you can send over to my bachelor pad,” Merv claimed.

“I'm a flesh peddler, baby, and that's all I'll ever be,” Henry said. “Before sending a guy out on a job, I always take a pound of that flesh for myself.”

Henry Willson
courting Harry Truman's daughter
Margaret in 1954.
What would her father have said?

“My kind of guy,” Merv said.

To this day, the question has remained unanswered: “What did Henry Willson see in Merv Griffin? His movie career was going nowhere, and instinctively Henry knew that Merv would never be one of the stallions in his stable.

Henry later told Rock Hudson, who conveyed the impression to Merv: “I sensed naked ambition in Griffin, although he disguises it as Mr. Nice Guy,” Henry said. “I latched onto him like a dinosaur ready for lunch because I sensed that this boy one day is going to be big in this town. I bet he ends up a producer or something, perhaps the owner of a studio. I have this feeling the kid is going to be making billions one day, and that I'll be knocking on his door with my latest big dick discovery. He is not going to make it in front of the camera, but in back of the camera. I'm never wrong about these things.”

On the afternoon he met Henry, Merv asked for career advice. “Do you think I could get better roles if I shed a few pounds?”

“Don't worry about it, kid,” Henry advised. “Become a producer—that's where the money is. Hell, you can put one of these movie star boys under contract for $200 a week, maybe $300. There's no money in that.”

You just named my present salary,” Merv said.

“When a big dick on a great body is trying to break into films, they can be had for twenty bucks a night, ten if they're hungry. If you become a producer, you don't have to worry about your weight. Look at me. I like my liquor, good food and lots of it. Let Rock and Guy spend all day in a gym — not me. When I got into the business, I looked positively epicene. People said I looked like Vincente Minnelli—God knows what Judy Garland saw in that faggot. Now that I've put on a few pounds, they say I look like Alfred Hitchcock. It's not your weight, but your influence that matters in Hollywood.”

Merv wanted to make the rounds of the party, like his “date” for the evening, Guy Madison, was doing, but something compelled him to hang out with Henry instead. “I'll invite you to go to Ciro's with me,” Henry promised, “maybe the Mocambo. You'll meet plenty of pretty boys from Florida to Kansas, from Texas to Montana. I like to get them while the smell of hayseed is still on them. Not a bad life, huh?”

“Sounds great,” Merv said.

“Just a word of advice, though,” Henry said. “At midnight always promise a boy that you'll turn him into a movie star. In some cases you might even carry through on that promise when you become a big producer. But even if you don't plan to do that, always feed a boy in the morning after you've had him every which way. Not just toast and jam, but waffles, bacon, a threeegg omelet. Never let a boy leave your bed hungry and go out to face a day in the Hollywood jungle.”

“That's good advice I'll carry with me until the day I die,” Merv said.

The chat with Henry was interrupted by a blast of music. Merv recognized the recording at once. It was a recording of his friend Rosemary Clooney singing a duet with Marlene Dietrich. From a bedroom and behind beaded curtains emerged Rock Hudson and George Nader, each wearing only a pink bow tie with cherryred polka dots.

Standing at the edge of the pool in front of the awed young men, Rock as Marlene and George as Rosemary lipsynched the Dietrich/Clooney song. At the end of the number, the bathers around the pool roared their approval.

For their finale, Rock and George waved their big dicks at the cheering audience.

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In his description to Johnny Riley of the Henry Willson pool party, Merv remembered meeting the livein lover of Rock Hudson, although he could not recall the young man's name. The handsome Korean War vet, still in his 20s when he met Merv, might have been “Jack Navaar,” a pseudonym created by certain biographers to protect the identity and privacy of Rock's companion.

Jack, as he will be called, was engaged at the time in a hot, passionate affair with Rock and was jokingly referred to as “Mrs. Rock Hudson,” even though it was suspected that he was actually bisexual, and may have married and fathered children later in life.

He could be seen driving around Hollywood in Rock's buttercup yellow convertible, and the movie star supported him financially. Ever faithful to Rock, Jack stayed home and cooked a hot dinner for Rock when he returned from the studio. In her own highly unreliable memoirs, Phyllis Gates, the only woman Rock ever married, referred to Jack by the name of “Bill McGiver.”

It is doubtful if Jack Navaar is still alive today to set the record “straight” about his affair with Rock.

Sara Davidson, with Rock's blessing, drafted a memoir with him when he was dying of AIDS. She described Jack as “tall, lean and fit, with blond wavy hair, blue eyes, and a beautifully sculpted, heartshaped face.” This fits the description of the young man Merv met around Henry Willson's pool on that long ago day.

On the day of the party, Jack appeared so distraught that Merv asked him if anything was wrong. “Rock's gonna be a big star,” Jack said. “Henry Willson and everybody else in Hollywood knows that.”

“Yes, isn't it wonderful?” Marv responded. “I should be jealous.”

“It may be wonderful for Rock,” Jack said, “but not for me. Willson told me today that when Rock becomes a star, we can't live together any longer. He's worried that *Confidential* will expose our relationship. That could ruin Rock's career before it gets off the ground. He loves me and I love him. He once told me he'd give up a fucking career in Hollywood to run off with me. But I don't think he meant it. It looks like I'm going to get my walking papers.”

“That's the price of stardom,” Merv said.

That response was just a little too glib and flippant for Jack, who turned and walked away. Merv never saw him again.

Jack's situation—he was eventually kicked out of Rock's house and cut off from any money—touched Merv in a deep, disturbing way. When he got to know Henry Willson better, Merv asked the agent if the Jack/Rock affair might have implications for his own life.

“Your safest bet is never to fall in love and never take in a livein lover like Rock did,” Henry advised. “It's too dangerous. If you want to become a movie star, get married to an understanding woman, the kind of gal who will let you slip around and get dick on the side, since obviously that's something she can't supply for you. Of course, you've got to provide for her financially so she'll keep her damn mouth shut. Hell, I was about ready to marry Margaret Truman until her father, that asshole of a Missouri mule, put a stop to it. He was on to me. Perhaps that nelly faggot, J. Edgar Hoover, gave him the low-down.”

“The president's daughter,” Merv said. “I'm impressed. You aim high. As for me, if I get married, it'll be to some gal the world has never heard of. I like to keep it quiet. I don't like a spotlight shining where it doesn't belong, I mean, one that's lighting up my private life.”

“Keep it that way and you'll go far,” Henry said.

In his impish way, Merv asked, “Tell me, have you managed to get that handsome hunk, Robert Wagner, to fuck you yet? I think he's the cat's pajamas.”

“That, my dear boy, is for you to find out,” Henry said. “In time, I'll tell you all the dirt as well as all the dirt on everybody else as well.”

He was true to his word, and in his gossipy way kept Merv informed with a blowbyblow description of his involvements, such as they were, with Troy Donahue, Rory Calhoun, Tab Hunter, Alain Delon, John Saxon, Mike Connors, Clint Walker, and an array of other handsome young men who never made it in show biz but ended up pumping gas and frying burgers.

“I decided to start pimping for Merv the first day I met him,” Henry later told Rock, who passed the word along the grapevine. “I realized that he and I are attracted to the same hunky men. Both of us don't go for effeminate men.

We want all-American hero types." Before the end of the 1950s, Henry was telling his boys that Merv's ultimate fantasy types were Tab Hunter and Troy Donohue.

At a dinner party attended by Merv, a drunken Henry told his fellow guests, "Merv here doesn't go for the Continental types. A lot of guys thought Alain Delon was sexy and handsome when he first came to Hollywood." He held up a breadstick and broke it in half, holding it up in the air where it met with derisive laughter. "Delon just didn't have what it takes to make it in this town."

Weeks after Rock had starred with Jane Wyman in *Magnificent Obsession*, he drove over to Merv's house without previously announcing himself. Fortunately, Merv was home alone. It was very late, perhaps after one o'clock in the morning, but Merv was up listening to recordings. He liked to keep abreast of what the competition was singing.

Rock looked very distraught, and his eyes were bloodshot, perhaps from both crying and drink. Merv remembered that he and Rock sat up talking until dawn's light.

In the course of a long, drunken early morning, Rock confessed that Jane, the ex-Mrs. Ronald Reagan, had fallen in love with him. "I've got to turn her down," Rock said. "In bed she does nothing for me. I have a hard time getting it up. But her assurance that I'm so much bigger than Ronnie sort of turns me on."

"She's a big star," Merv said. "Let her down gently. And for God's sake, don't alienate her."

"Henry's convinced that after this movie, I'm gonna be the biggest male star in movies," Rock said. "After all, Gary Cooper and John Wayne are getting a little long in the tooth. But there's a price to pay. I've already had to kick Jack out. Henry forced the issue. I even pretended I hated Jack, and I love him. I called him a dirty, rotten faggot, all those names, anything to turn him against me. As a star, my life will never be the same again, and I know that. I'll be under intense scrutiny day and night."

"You could always marry me," Merv said, only half joking. "No one would ever believe that a guy with my ugly Irish puss could possibly be Rock Hudson's lover."

Even though still teary, Rock laughed at Merv's selfdeprecating humor. "For me to marry you, you'd have to dye your hair blond. I'm partial to blonds, you know, and we're not talking Marilyn Monroe here." He smiled to soften the blow of what he was about to say. "And you'd have to add at least one or two more inches to your dick."

"Even if I did, it would never match that monster of yours," Merv shot back.

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In 1953, it was mandated by Warners that Merv escort actress Dolores Dorn (sometimes known as Dolores Dorn-Heft) to the premiere of *The Charge at Feather River*, even though he was embarrassed by his limited involvement in the movie. Nevertheless, he and the glamorously dressed Dolores arrived in a stretch limo in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater on the night of the premiere.

They walked the long red carpet to the entrance where an announcer with a microphone awaited them. Hundreds of fans yelled for their autographs, although Merv was convinced that not one of them behind the ropes knew who Dolores was or who he was. After they each spoke briefly into the microphone to the cheering crowd, they disappeared into the lobby of the theater. Then, Merv shook Dolores' hand before she faded through a side door to meet her real date of the evening. Merv scribbled a note to the star of the film, Guy Madison, agreeing to meet him at midnight after the premiere.

In an autobiography, Merv wrote, "That was the first and last I heard of Dolores Dorn-Heft." Like many of the statements Merv either said or wrote about his own life, that wasn't quite true. In 1956, Dolores made front page news when she married aging actor Franchot Tone, Joan Crawford's discarded husband of the 1930s. On September 14, 1951 Tone had barely survived a beating from a jealous, heavily muscled actor, Tom Neal. Rushed to the hospital, Tone fought for his life. Neal had serious objections to that actor's plan to marry the drugaddicted actress/hooker Barbara Payton, who had also promised to marry Neal.

Merv had other, more private reasons to recall Dolores. He had had a brief affair with her future husband, the actor Ben Piazza. In 1969, Ben wrote and costarred in a play he had created for his thenwife, *Khaki Blue*.

Merv had fallen for the Arkansasborn actor when Henry Willson had introduced the two of them around 1959 when Ben was appearing in *The Hanging Tree* opposite Gary Cooper. At the time Ben was being hailed in the press as "the new Marlon Brando."

As Merv later told Johnny Riley, "Our affair consisted entirely of three long weekends in Malibu, where I got very well acquainted with Ben's Italian sausage." Merv later admitted that he had a "onenight stand for oldtime's

sake" with Ben in New York in 1962, when he went to see him on Broadway. An accomplished actor, Ben had replaced the original cast member, George Grizzard, in the role of Nick in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* In 1973, perhaps for sentimental reasons, Merv ordered his staff to arrange for a private screening of *The Candy Snatchers*, a film in which Ben and Dolores appeared together as Avery and Katherine.

Merv encountered Ben two or three times after their brief affair. Privately, to friends, he expressed regret that the actor never lived up to his promise and certainly never became the next Marlon Brando. He was sad to learn of Ben's death on September 7, 1991, in Sherman Oaks, California, of AIDSrelated cancer.

"God damn it, I'm gonna die too one day, but I swear it won't be from AIDS," Merv vowed to his close friend, Eva Gabor. This was not the first time he'd made such a declaration to her.

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"My Hollywood career's going so great I don't even appear on the screen anymore," Merv sarcastically told anybody willing to listen. "I'm assigned to voice-overs." He was referring to such previous films as *Stop, You're Killing Me*," a comedy directed by Roy Del Ruth and starring such firstrate talent as Broderick Crawford and Claire Trevor. Merv was uncredited, his voice used as that of a radio announcer. The film was a funny farce about gangsters who'd gone straight.

"*Guys and Dolls* it ain't," Merv said, "but it is pure Damon Runyon all the way." Roy Del Ruth was old Hollywood, a former newspaperman who'd entered films in 1915 as a screenwriter and gagman for Mack Sennett. He'd also directed the worst sports biography of all time, *The Babe Ruth Story* (1948), but had fared better with Doris Day and Gordon MacRae in both *The West Point Story* (1950) and *On Moonlight Bay* (1951).

Audaciously, Merv told Roy that both of those pictures would have generated bigger profits if Roy had cast him in Gordon MacRae's roles. Roy seemed to like Merv and promised him he'd give him a "juicy part in my next picture."

In his next picture, Merv was also uncredited, cast as the voice of a football broadcaster in *Trouble Along the Way* (1953), a bigbudget film starring John Wayne and Donna Reed. The director was the abrasive, muchdreaded, Hungarian-American Michael Curtiz, who'd achieved screen immortality thanks to his direction of the wartime tearjerker *Casablanca* starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

Throughout the ups and downs of his long career, Merv was never afraid to meet and talk to the big names in movies and politics. The moment he met Michael Curtiz, he had the nerve to ask him for a bigger role.

"*Gree-fing*, this is a man's picture about football. A man's sport, Not girlyboy shit, not chorus boy shit from a big band crooner. I vant to hear you as the allman voice of a football broadcaster. I vant you to sound like man on the air. With your stink of a talent, you're luck to get work. Who in hell do you think you are, keed? Bogie?"

"I just want to be in front of the camera sometimes, not just a voice-over," Merv protested.

"Tell you vhat, keed," Michael said. "I'll cast you in my next picture. A real heman part, not shemale. I'll put you on a horse in a Western. Turn you into the next John Wayne. With one great big different. He's got small balls. I'll give you big balls in my picture. Make you big, bigger than Bogie. All the hot pussies will be scream out for Gree-fing dick."

"That's sure something to look forward to," Merv said. "I'll hold you to your promise. Say, I didn't know The Duke had a small dick."

"Yeah, not like Garee Coop," [Gary Cooper], Michael said. "When we did *Bright Leaf*, I pissed next to him. Big dick. Gals like men with big dick. Ingrid Bergman told me she goes to bed only with big dick. Bogie has big dick. Errol Flynn, son of a bitch, has big dick. But I married his first wife, Lili Damita. She said I was better fuck than Flynn."

Waiting for the next scene to be set up, Michael told Merv that he'd heard that he had fucked Joan Crawford. "I fuck her on *Mildred Pierce*. I fuck Bette Davis too. Those two are bitches. But they have the biggest dicks in Hollywood. Davis tells people I'm a god damn nothing no good sexless son of a bitch. I tell people she's a fuck lesbian who can't face truth about herself."

At one point before he was called to the set, the director said, "Get up! Let's go to toilet and make poodle together."

"Fuck a poodle?" Merv asked in astonishment. "I'm not into bestiality."

"Make poodle, you dumb stupid idiot," Michael said. "You don't speak English?"

“Oh, you mean make puddle?” Merv asked.

“C'mon get off your fat ass and come take piss with me. That way I'll see if your dick's big enough for my next movie.”

Merv never told his friends what happened next or if he passed inspection. But he did relate a story about Michael's “conquest” on the set of *Trouble Along the Way*. The director had never been faithful to any of his wives, and he was known for having sexual involvements with female extras on the sets of his movies.

One such extra was a tall, strikingly beautiful “woman” who identified herself as Loretta Zotto. She was a dead ringer for Jane Russell with a bust to match. But there was something suspicious about her, and Merv noticed an Adam's apple that seemed inconsistent with the anatomy of a beautiful showgirl. He began to suspect that she was a drag queen. Every day at around noon, Michael disappeared with her into his studio office where they were together for at least an hour and a half.

One night Judy Garland and Peter Lawford called to invite Merv to a drag show in West Hollywood at a club called Tabu. Judy told Merv that, “I hear there's a drag queen there who does Judy Garland better than I do.”

At the club, after sitting through three boring drag acts, the star of the show emerged singing “The Trolley Song” from *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944). She was billed as “Stormy Weather,” but Merv recognized her instantly as Loretta Zotto, Michael Curtiz's “girlfriend.”

At the end of the show Judy graciously agreed that Stormy sang “Over the Rainbow” better than she did. Backstage, Peter got Stormy's telephone number and promised to call her for a date. “I'll find out what sex we're talking about here,” Peter promised.

When Peter reported back to Merv that Stormy [i.e. Loretta] was, biologically speaking, a male, Merv kidded his director the next day. Instead of taking the teasing, Michael exploded.“*Gree-fing*, I know the different between dick and pussy. I fuck that gal every day. I should know.”

“But do you go through the front door or the back door?” Merv provocatively asked.

“You sick pervert!” The director stormed off the set.

“God damn it,” Merv later told Roddy McDowall. “I just blew my chance to get cast in Curtiz's next movie. Me and my big mouth!”

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To Merv's surprise, he encountered James Dean on the set of *Trouble Along the Way*. Like Merv, James was also appearing in the film as an uncredited extra. Merv hadn't seen James since he had moved out of the Commodore Garden Apartments in the middle of the night.

James bonded with Merv like he was a longlost buddy. He made no mention of Nick Adams, but said that he was planning to abandon Hollywood forever as soon as he finished his brief appearance in “this John Wayne piece of shit. How can you respect a town that would make that Nazi jerk a star?”

That same day, shortly after five o'clock, both actors headed for a drink at a bar near Warner Brothers. James quickly informed Merv of his new ambition. “I'm going to be a Broadway star. I've already appeared in *See the Jaguar*. I got rave reviews.”

Merv had read in the trade papers that the play had closed after five performances. “I appeared on stage locked in a jaguar's cage,” James said. “I bet Marlon Brando can't do that. I even got to sing, ‘Green Briar, Blue Fire.’ People raved about my singing.” He smiled and winked at Merv.“Move on, baby—make room for the competition.”

Over his second drink of the day, James confessed to Merv, “I've given up hustling. Before I hit it big on Broadway, I found an easier way to make money. Homosexuals in New York went crazy for me. They even sent me gifts backstage.” He paused. “An invitation for various things. I'm one pretty boy, or so the love notes said.”

“So how are you turning that into money?” Merv asked.

“I posed for nudes in New York,” James confessed. “Including one with a big erection. I sell these photos to my most ardent fans at twentyfive bucks a picture. It beats hustling. They get to look at what I've got and they pay for the privilege—and no one even touches me. Not bad, huh?”

“Sounds like a great way for an actor to make a living if these photos don't come back to haunt you after you've made it as a star.”

“Like I give a damn about that,” James said. “I've even set up some sessions with photographers here in Los Angeles. I've got a posing session around nine tonight. Wanna come with me?”

“I'd love to,” Merv said. “There's more than a bit of the voyeur in me.”

Just outside the photographer's apartment later that evening, James removed his denim shirt and blue jeans. He wore no underwear. He handed his apparel to Merv for safekeeping. “I like to arrive at the doorstep dressed for action.” He chuckled at his own comment.

At the door, the shocked photographer hustled his visitors inside. “I've got two Eisenhower Republican old maids who live upstairs,” the photographer said. “They might see you and have a heart attack. I don't want those old biddies to know what goes on down here.”

That night, Merv assisted in James' photo shoot whenever and however he was called upon, fetching a glass of water or, in one case, holding a spotlight. But mostly he stared at the subject in fascination. As a nude model, James seemed to have no inhibitions at all. At one point he grabbed a black lace mantilla left over from a previous posing section and plucked a red rose from a vase, grasping on the stem with his teeth.

“That may be too girlish a pose for most of our clients,” the photographer warned, but snapped the campy picture anyway. “But we'll do this one just for laughs.”

At the end of the session, James put on his jeans and denim shirt but turned down the photographer's invitation for a threeway with Merv.

Back out in the open air, on the sidewalk with James, Merv asked, “What's next?”

“I want to go back to your place and fuck you,” James said bluntly.

“A man after my own heart,” Merv said. “Let's go!”

The pictures that James posed for that night—still in private hands—are a valued collector's item today.

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On the Warners lot, Merv reintroduced himself to Donna Reed, John Wayne's costar in *Trouble Along the Way*. He'd met her briefly in Hawaii when she was costarring in *From Here to Eternity* with Monty Clift. They spoke only briefly, and she praised Monty as the “most sensitive actor on the screen today. But how long will it be before he destroys himself? Two years? Maybe three?” She raised an eyebrow. “Perhaps you can save him through your friendship.”

“Only Monty can save himself,” Merv replied.

“I don't think he will,” she said, before turning to leave. At that point John Wayne walked up, kissing her on the cheek. She introduced The Duke to Merv before excusing herself to get ready for a scene.

John shook Merv's hand. “I heard you at the Grove one night. Nice voice. I like the old songs, the romantic ballads. Not this fucking rock ‘n’ shit coming out of Miss Elvis Presley. What a faggot!”

The Duke clearly intimidated Merv. He'd heard from Michael Curtiz that the actor had been grouchy and grumpy on the set that morning and was absolutely “merciless” with minor actors who blew their lines. Even though he was undergoing horrendous personal problems with the women in his life, he arrived camerarady every morning, with all his lines memorized. He was taking his role seriously, playing a poolshooting, divorced football coach at a financially strapped Catholic college.

The Duke invited Merv to his dressing room for a drink. Once there, Duke drank and talked, and Merv mainly listened. He was one of the most candid actors Merv had ever met. If he thought something, John didn't seem to censor his tongue before he spoke. “That Hungarian Jew, Curtiz, tells me you hang out with Rock Hudson,” John said. “Better keep your pants zipped up around that cocksucker. God damn it, what I could have done with a face like Hudson's. Too bad it's wasted on a queer.”

Merv and John chatted for about an hour before John was called to the set. “C'mon, walk with me.” He handed Merv his flask. “Hang out this afternoon. When I'm not on camera, I'll slip over to join you, and I'll take a drink from my flask. Guard it with your life.”

On the set, Merv encountered Curtiz, who seemed to inspect and assess the odd combination of tall John with short Merv. “Hey, kid,” he said to Merv, “Wayne here walks like a fairy and gets away with it. You can't! If you're going to be in my next picture, you're going to have to learn to walk like a man.”

John seemed to take a liking to Merv, who had no other work, as his meager part in the picture was finished. He spent the rest of the week hanging around the set as “John Wayne's flaskboy,” as Merv later put it.

John was being smeared in the headlines by Esperanza Baur, his second wife. He'd met her in 1941 when she

was working as a prostitute in Mexico and had married her in 1946. But by 1953, she was blackmailing The Duke to get “the largest alimony settlement in history,” as she vowed.

Duke called her Chata. “She turned into a stark raving bitch,” he told Merv.“She's trying to destroy me. She claims I beat the shit out of her. Maybe I've slapped her around once or twice, but the puta once tried to kill me.” The Duke/Chata divorce resembled a soap opera, as she spread sensational and scandalous stories, with the expressed intention of destroying both his reputation and his career.

Merv lent a very sympathetic ear, especially when Duke confessed that Chata had hired private detectives to follow him everywhere. To complicate his life, Duke had met a Peruvian starlet, Pilar Palette Weldy, while scouting for a film location. He seemed quite taken with her, but was trying desperately to keep her hidden from Chata's detectives. There was more. Duke was also still involved with Gail Russell, with whom he'd launched an affair in 1947 when they'd made *Angel and the Badman*.

Merv turned red. Unknown to Duke, Merv was seducing Gail's husband, Guy Madison, although his marriage was also heading for the divorce courts.

On the last day of the shoot, Merv invited Duke to “use my spare bedroom if you want to slip away with one of your lady friends. Chata will never find you there.”

Duke looked at him for a moment, as if mulling over the idea. “I think I'll take you up on that, kid.”

After the movie was wrapped, days went by before Merv heard from Duke again. Every day Merv read a story in the papers about the steamy divorce. At one point Chata told the press that “John Wayne is an awful man — a drunk, violent, unfaithful.” Merv worried that these allegations would harm Duke's career, but his fans remained faithful, turning against Chata.

Months after her contested divorce from John, Chata was found dead in a hotel room in Mexico, with dozens of empty liquor bottles scattered about. When she was sober enough, she had been writing a memoir. She told a Mexican reporter that her memoir would forever destroy John Wayne. “No one will go see one of the bastard's movies ever again. I'm also writing about how lousy the great John Wayne is in bed. And he calls himself a man.”

At the time of her death, her incomplete manuscript, although viewed prior to her death by the Mexican reporter, had been stolen from her hotel bedroom.

Finally, a call came in one Saturday night from The Duke. “Kid, I've decided to take you up on that offer. Gail and I need to slip over for the night.”

“I'm going out on a date, but I'll leave the key under the doormat,” Merv said. “Stay as long as you want.”

“I'll owe you one, kid,” John said.

Merv turned down the offer to meet Gail Russell (a.k.a. Mrs. Guy Madison). Ironically, Merv's date that night was with her estranged husband, who at that point was living apart from his wife.

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The next morning, while Merv was preparing his breakfast, he heard a loud noise coming from his guest bedroom, into which John Wayne had taken Gail Russell the night before. When Merv had returned home around three o'clock that morning after a hot night with Gail's husband, Guy Madison, he didn't bother to check the guest room. Duke's car was not in his driveway, and Merv just assumed that the lovers had already departed.

While still seated at his breakfast table, Merv looked up as the door to his guest bedroom was thrown open. Over his scrambled eggs, he encountered a bedraggled Gail Russell, staggering out of the room in a bathrobe that was split open to reveal all her goodies. He turned from the sight of her. The press often compared Gail's beauty to that of the screen goddess, Hedy Lamarr, but on this particular hungover morning, Gail looked more like Harpo Marx after a bad night.

Merv had been following Gail's career in the newspapers, reading detailed and careerdestroying accounts of her drinking problem. She'd been convicted of operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated, which led to Paramount dropping her after she'd filmed *Air Cadet* in 1951. She'd been offered no more movie roles after that. To make matters worse for her, she was in the midst of divorcing Guy, who at the time was her sole means of support.

All Merv could do was offer black coffee and sympathy. He had no intention of telling her that only a few hours before, he'd been sucking on her husband's cock.

Angel and the Bad Man (1947):
John Wayne with **Gail Russell**

“I'm Mrs. Moseley,” she said, sitting down and tightening her robe to conceal her breasts. “As if you didn't know.” He was aware that Moseley was Guy's legal name.

Behind her currently shattered face with its hungover droop, he detected an incredible doeeyed beauty. In spite of her failed life and outofcontrol drinking habits, she still projected an image of innocence and vulnerability that he'd seen in such pictures as *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1948) with Edward G. Robinson and *The Uninvited* (1944) with Ray Milland.

Over coffee, she told Merv, “I ran into Jane Russell the other day. I knew the bitch when we attended Van Nuys High School together. I told the big tit cow that there was room for only one Russell in this town, and she'd have to change her name. Fans still come up to me and say, ‘Jane, will you sign my autograph book?’”

Merv got up and squeezed Gail some fresh orange juice, inviting her into his living room. Her fragile appearance mirrored an even more fragile psyche. Yet he was blunt with her.“You've got to stop drinking and get your career back on track. You could be a bigger movie star than ever if you straighten yourself out.”

“Thanks for the advice, but no thanks,” she said. “I know how at ease you are with an audience. Not me, boy. I'm selfconscious because I know I have no real talent. I'm afraid. I started drinking on the set because I couldn't bear to face a camera. My insides feel like a fist is gripping my guts every time I see a lens. My face breaks into a sweat, and my hands grow clammy. Sometimes when I open my mouth to say my lines, my throat constricts. Nothing comes out. It's always been that way. Back in Chicago when my parents would invite company to our house, I'd run and hide under the piano.”

“But you seem selfassured on the screen,” he said.

“It's all an act,” she said.

“That's why it's called acting.”

“Don't get smartass with me!” she said, her face turning harsh. Up until then she'd been open and vulnerable with him, but perhaps his remarks had been too flippant. She suddenly looked threatening and hostile.

She deliberately dropped the glass of orange juice onto the tile floor, shattering it before storming off to the guest bedroom. In about half an hour, she emerged with a small night bag colored a shocking pink and chartreuse. She was wearing a white summer dress with red polka dots and had repaired her face as best she could.

With that angry look still on her face, she confronted him in his living room. “Call me a taxi,” she commanded. “I'm going home.”

“I'll drive you,” he volunteered. “I have no work today.”

“Welcome to the club,” she said. “I have no work any day. That fucking whore The Duke married is dragging me into her nasty divorce trial against him. By using me, she's hoping to get more money out of him. And more Godawful headlines for me. Just what I need. As if things weren't bad enough for me already.”

“I'm sorry,” he stammered, wanting her to leave as she was making him uncomfortable.”

“Not as sorry as you're going to be, big boy,” she threatened him. “Guess what I found hanging in the closet of your guest bedroom? Clothes belonging to my husband. I should know them when I see them. I bought them for him.” Her eyes glanced nervously around his living room, as if seeing it for the first time. “So this is where the queer bastard has been spending his evenings now that Rory Calhoun's out of town fucking Marilyn Monroe.”

Merv was acutely embarrassed that Gail had discovered details of his affair with Guy.

“Talk about getting messed up in a divorce,” she said. “Like Chata with The Duke, I'm gonna take Guy for every penny he's making on that hit TV series. His fans wouldn't want to know that their favorite action hero takes it up

the ass.” She stood at his front door, looking back at him. “Oh, by the way, if Guy doesn't cooperate and meet my demands, I'm gonna destroy his career. Not only that. My revelations will destroy your career too—not that you have much of one.”

As she slammed the door in his face, he experienced panic. She seemed like a very determined and very wronged wife. His first thought was that he hadn't called her a taxi, but then he figured she'd see the pay phone booth on the corner. He immediately went into his kitchen and called Guy at the studio to tell him about his confrontation with his wife.

“Oh, shit!” Guy said. “I've got to hang up and call my lawyer.”

Fortunately for Guy, his attorney hired a private detective who during the two months leading up to the divorce proceedings managed to compile an extensive dossier on Gail's secret lesbian life.

“It was a Mexican stand-off,” Guy later told Merv. “She had me, and I had her. If she wants to work another day in this town—and she does—she doesn't want to be branded a dyke. I reminded her what that did to Lizabeth Scott's career.”

In time, Merv and Guy drifted off to other boyfriends, and much to Merv's relief, Gail never aired her explosive charges in a divorce court. The last years of Gail's life were spent in and out of sanatoriums.

Despite his ongoing affair with Gail, The Duke would deny until the end of his days that there had ever been anything going on sexually between him and the ravenhaired beauty. Merv, however, knew differently.

In spite of her threats against him, Merv was still saddened to read about Gail's death on August 27, 1961. In her small oneroom apartment in Brentwood, Los Angeles, her partially decomposed body wasn't discovered until a week after her death. She'd died from a heart attack attributed to alcoholism. In her apartment, police found thirtysix empty vodka bottles, which ironically represented every year of her young life.

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When Merv drove up behind a yellow convertible parked in his driveway, he suspected at first that Rock Hudson had come for an unannounced visit. Then he spotted his old friends Paul Schone and Bill Robbins sitting on his stoop. They'd driven down from San Francisco with an enormous amount of luggage, which included three large stage trunks, each resembling something from the wardrobe department of a Hollywood studio.

Bill and Paul rushed to embrace Merv and kiss him as part of a longdelayed reunion. Suddenly, from out of the bushes jumped Johnny Riley, who'd driven his friends south to Los Angeles in that yellow convertible.

After the many setbacks of his on again, off again Hollywood career, Merv later recalled that “the reunion was one of the happiest days of my life. It was great being back with the old gang.”

Those trunks, it turned out, belonged to Bill, and they were filled with stage gowns. In between his fewandfarbetween dancing jobs, he'd become a nightclub entertainer who regularly appeared in drag doing impersonations of movie queens who included Mae West. “Bill was always the lady of our group,” Johnny said, mocking him but not in a meanspirited way.

All three men complimented Merv on his new looks, as he was suntanned and fit, weighing less than he ever had in his adult life. Whereas Merv was being appraised, he was also doing a quick evaluation of his friends. If anything, Bill seemed more effeminate than ever, while Paul and Johnny were movie star handsome, seemingly born for show business careers. He jealously suspected that either of them would project a more intense and more masculine screen presence than he did.

As the sun set that afternoon, Merv invited his rediscovered friends to the back yard for barbecue. All three of them emerged after showering wearing swimming trunks. Johnny and Paul were barechested, showing off their sixpacks, but Bill demurely covered his frail chest with a white Tshirt. “My God, fellows, you guys would put Rock himself to shame.” Merv obviously didn't include Bill in that appraisal. “Until you get jobs, I think I'll hire all of you out as hustlers.”

Merv meant that as a joke but no one laughed. He scanned each serious face. For a moment, there was nothing but silence. “That's how I make my spending money,” Johnny confessed. “That's how I bought that new convertible. It should come as no surprise to you, ‘cause you know I was doing that back in San Francisco when I was just a kid.”

Although Merv did indeed remember that, he was still surprised, since in all their longdistance calls, Johnny had never revealed that he was still hustling. “Of course, if I meet a guy who's really cute, I give him a freebie,” Johnny said.

“What about you guys?” Merv asked, turning to Bill and Paul.

“I've turned a trick or two,” Bill said. “Believe it or not, there are a lot of men out there—most of them married—who get off fucking a drag queen.”

“Not me!” Paul said. He seemed adamant. “I can only get it up for goodlooking guys with big dicks. I'm a size queen. I couldn't make it with some repulsive old queen.”

“And you, Merv?” Johnny asked. “Confession time. How many casting couches have you worn out?”

“None, absolutely none,” Merv said. “Maybe that's why my career has stalled. On Monday I'll take you to the studio and show you a film I was hired for, and then you'll see why I'm not setting Hollywood on fire.”

By ten o'clock that night, all three of Merv's guests were sleepy and wanted to turn in early. Bill and Paul agreed to share the guest room, and Johnny said he'd sleep in Merv's bed “for old time's sake.” Back in his living room, Merv called Roddy McDowall and asked if he could bring his friends over the following afternoon for one of his Sunday soirées. “All of them are great guys: Bill Robbins, Johnny Riley, and Paul Schone.”

Roddy readily extended an invitation to Merv's three friends, saying “the more the merrier. I just hope they're handsome.”

“Johnny Riley looks like a more masculine version of Tab Hunter,” Merv said. “Eight and a half inches—and very, very thick. I've had him. Paul Schone looks like a young Gregory Peck. I don't know his measurements. I've never fucked with him.”

“And your other friend, Bill Robbins?” Roddy asked.

“Oh, yes,” Merv said. “Do you mind if he dresses up for the occasion?”

“I get it!” Roddy said. “I hope he comes as Bette Davis and does all the dialogue, especially that ‘what a dump line,’ from *Beyond the Forest*. See you tomorrow,” he said. Before hanging up, he blew a “kisskiss” into the phone.

Chapter Six

Merv became almost jealous of how his friends in Los Angeles embraced Bill Robbins, Paul Schone, and Johnny Riley, taking these young San Franciscans directly to their bosoms. Bill was a hit at Roddy's Sunday afternoon *soirée*, thanks in part to his drag imitation of Marlene Dietrich in her *Destry Rides Again* costume. And throughout the course of the party, Johnny seemed to have three or four of the most attractive actors in a cluster around him. But despite the popularity of Merv's other guests, it was Paul that Roddy invited to sleep over that evening after the party ended.

When Merv's household woke up the following morning, Merv invited Johnny, Bill, and Paul to the Warner lot where he treated them to a showing of his uncredited appearance in *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). Based on a story by Ray Bradbury, the film's beast was a hibernating dinosaur. Awakened by an atomic test north of the Arctic Circle, it terrorizes New York City. In later life, Merv remembered his one line in the film, wherein he was cast as a radio announcer: “Well, folks, here's another of those silly reports about sea serpents.”

Merv confessed to his friends that he'd fallen for the star of the picture, Paul Hubschmid, who had been defined by some press agents as “the most beautiful man in postwar German cinema,” and who was billed in the United States as Paul Christian. The Swissborn star had been a leading man in a number of Austrian stage and film productions.

“I made several plays for him,” Merv confessed to his friends. “But I don't think he ever knew I even existed.”

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms —made for just $250,000—was a financial success, grossing five million dollars. It did nothing, however, to advance the American career of Paul Christian, much less Merv. The picture did go down in film history, however, as the first movie to deal with a prehistoric monster unearthed by an atomic explosion. As such, it spawned many other equally cheap imitations.

Just when Merv thought his film career had come to a grinding and permanent halt, Rosemary Clooney arrived at his doorstep with big news. She'd been cast in the film *Red Garters*, to be directed by George Marshall, and she'd be appearing opposite veteran actor Jack Carson, who'd be playing the male lead. “The third lead, the character of Reb Randall, is ideal for you Merv, and George has agreed to test you for the part,” Rosemary said. “You ride into town—a singing cowboy like Roy Rogers—chasing the villain who murdered your brother.”

“Hell's bells,” Merv said, “I have to ride a horse? When Guy Mitchell and I used to go riding, I was always falling off.”

“Oh, you just did that so he'd pick you up in his manly arms,” she said. “You'll get to sing, baby, so don't worry about it. It's more of a musical than it is a Western. George thinks it'll photograph like a Broadway musical filmed in a theater. We'll do a number together.”

“Will I get to wear a red garter?” Merv jokingly asked.

“No, but Edith Head is designing one just for me, sweetie,” she said.

Each of Merv's friends predicted that *Red Garters* might do for him what *So This Is Love* with Kathryn Grayson didn't do—and that was to make him a star.

The director of *Red Garters*, George Marshall, gave Merv a screen test and concluded that he'd be ideal as the third lead. “All my disappointments have been worth the wait,” he said in a phone call to Rosemary that night. He later told his friends, “I'm on my way up. You guys brought me luck. Stick around forever.”

There was one nagging fear he had, although at the time he didn't share it with anyone. *Red Garters* was to be shot on the Paramount lot, where Barney Balaban still yielded great power. The studio honcho would have to approve Merv's contract, and he knew that Barney absolutely loathed him because of memories associated with his attempt to elope with his daughter, Judy.

Bullets Durgom, Merv's agent, was a good friend of Barney's and was convinced that he could talk the executive into signing Merv. “After all, Judy is happily married now. I bet he's forgotten all about it.”

On the following afternoon, Bullets phoned Merv. “Barney's memory is long,” he said. “His exact words were, ‘Merv Griffin will never set foot on the Paramount lot as long as I'm around.’”

“Oh, shit!” Merv said, “my losing streak goes on and on. That really pisses me off. Who's getting the damn part. Gordon MacRae no doubt?”

“That singer, Guy Mitchell,” Bullets said.

“I met him years ago and should have figured that he and I might be competing for the same role one day,” Merv

said. Later that night he called Rosemary. “How are you and Jose doing tonight?”

“Just sitting here all by my lonesome,” she said. “Mr. Ferrer is out tonight fucking June Allyson. How you doing?”

“Crying in my beer,” he said. “Thanks for all you did for me, but losing that part to Guy hurts like hell. Why did they have to cast my former lover in my part? That's salt on my wound.”

“It's called show business and get used to it,” she said. “I did what I could for you. I'm sure you'll get another part—an even bigger one—and soon.”

“What are the Las Vegas odds on that?” he asked. “I'm not giving up, but I'm getting the hell out of this town as soon as I can. New York here I come.”

“There's another side to show business,” she said. “Just when you think you'll never work again, the phone rings with the break of your life. Just ask your buddy, Judy Garland.”

Rosemary was a prophet. The very next afternoon, Bullets called him. Knowing how disappointed he was at losing the role in *Red Garters*, he'd come up with another part for him, that of the ensign, Willie Keith, in *The Caine Mutiny*, which Stanley Kramer was going to direct at Columbia.

“I'll take it!” Merv shouted into the phone.

“There's just one thing,” Bullets said. “How shapely are your legs?”

“They're not like Betty Grable's,” he said, “but I can walk on them.”

“In one scene you've got to strip to your underwear, and there's a closeup of your legs.”

“I can do that,” Merv said, “providing the closeup is of my legs and nothing else.”

Bullets promised to send the script over in three days. That night Merv boasted about his upcoming involvement in the film to his houseguests. As a diversion that evening, each of them piled into Johnny's yellow convertible and drove to a dingy little club in West Hollywood where Rosemary had secured a gig for Bill. That evening Merv was vastly entertained watching Bill impersonate Judy Garland, Peggy Lee, and Carol Channing, with only fifteen minutes to transform himself between the various impersonations.

A few afternoons later, after returning from a privately negotiated tryst with Henry Willson, Paul showed up at Merv's apartment looking bedraggled. “I did it!” he shouted at Merv and his friends. “I survived a night with that lecherous beast without throwing up. He started by slobbering in my ears and ending up sucking my toes. He must have wasted a gallon of spit on me. I have to get rid of all that slime.” On the way to the bathroom, he called back to Merv, “If anyone asks, my new name is Lance Hart. Henry Willson renamed me. He's going to make me the next Rock Hudson.”

When the script of *The Caine Mutiny* arrived, Merv tore the package open and feverishly read it before getting up off the sofa. He wasn't sure which role Jose Ferrer was going to play but the part of the ensign was a small one. Yet he felt it could be a careermaker. Hours later, when he was playing tennis with Howard Hughes, he told him of his lucky break, hoping Howard might use his influence to guarantee him the part.

Howard seemed familiar with the script and urged Merv to go for it. “You can't be doing voice-overs all your life,” Howard warned him. That made Merv wonder why Howard hadn't gotten him cast into something before now. After all, he owned a studio.

After a game of tennis, a sweaty Howard rather nonchalantly asked Merv, “Do you have a copy of the script?”

“Right by my bedside,” Merv said. “It's pretty dogeared by now.”

“There's a great kid in town I want you to meet,” Howard said. “Robert Francis. I'm teaching him to fly. He's probably the bestlooking piece of meat to hit Hollywood since Jack Buetel.” He was referring to Jane Russell's costar in *The Outlaw*. “Mind if I give him your number and have him give you a call?”

“Are you setting me up, Howard?” Merv asked.

“In this case, let nature take its course.”

Merv returned home to hear his phone virtually ringing off the wall. Picking up the receiver, he heard, “Merv Griffin, this is Robert Francis.” The voice sounded seductive. “I've been dying to meet you.”

“Oh, yeah,” Merv said, a bit cautious. “Howard mentioned that you might call, but I didn't expect it so soon.”

“I couldn't wait,” Robert said. “I want to see you. I'm sitting out here on my sundeck putting oil on the biggest hardon of my career.”

“That sounds exciting,” Merv said. “I'm busy this afternoon but call me the next time you get out that oil.”

“How about tonight?” Robert asked. “Have you got a date?”

“Not exactly a date,” Merv said. “I'm joining friends for a drink.”

“Great!” Robert said. “Then I'll be your date. If I show up at eight, is that okay? I know where you live. I drove by your house three times today.”

“Yeah, I guess it'll be okay,” Merv said. “I'll be ready and waiting.” As he hung up, he had an ominous feeling. If Robert Francis was as good-looking as Howard had promised, no gay man would turn him down. On the other hand, he seemed a little too aggressive for Merv's tastes. But he figured that if he didn't click with Robert, perhaps Johnny, Paul, or Bill might.

Robert Francis

After notifying his friends that his date would be joining them for the evening, Merv found himself taking extra care to make himself as attractive as possible. Almost exactly at eight o'clock, the doorbell rang. Nervously, Merv opened the door.

In a pair of white slacks and a white shirt that was unbuttoned to reveal his chest was a stunning looking man. “Hi, I'm Robert Francis. You must be Merv Griffin. Or, am I dreaming?”

As Merv later described it to Johnny, “There, right before my eyes, was the man I'd been waiting for all my life.”

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Cleancut and All-American looking, Robert Francis had a swimmer's build and a fashionable 50s brushcut. Before he'd arrived at the Griffin household, Merv had already called Henry Willson for the low-down on this rising star.

It was Henry who'd introduced Robert to Howard Hughes at one of his pool parties. “Robert's going to be one of the biggest stars in Hollywood,” Henry predicted. “After all, Humphrey Bogart, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, and especially Bogie remind a lot of gay men of their daddies. I've got to recruit hot new guys to replace these old farts. Robert represents the brash new face of the 50s. The gals will go wild for him, not to mention some of us guys. I still haven't bedded him, but Howard raves about his performances after dark.”

Up close and personal in Merv's living room, Robert was soft spoken, not like the aggressive personality Merv had heard over the phone. A native Californian from Glendale, he was gorgeous but wooden in his movements, a trait Merv considered ideal for military roles. Robert's good looks and warm, engaging nature won over Merv's friends as well as Merv himself. Once again Merv and his boys, this time accompanied by Robert, piled into Johnny's yellow convertible to see Bill's second and final drag appearance at that West Hollywood dive.

As an added bonus that evening, the club was also conducting an amateur allmale striptease. Merv was surprised when Robert volunteered as one of the contestants. The young actor seemed to have two sides to him—one of them rather reserved, the other with a streak of aggressive exhibitionism. Onstage, in front of the allmale audience, Robert began one of the most erotic and provocative stripteases that Merv had ever seen, not that he'd seen that many.

Under the glare of a spotlight, against a background of catcalls and screams of approval, Robert's personality seemed to radically change. He slowly removed his coat, his tie, his shoes, and his pants, revealing a tightfitting pair of underwear with a promising bulge, beating the other men competing that night and walking off with first prize.

After Merv and Robert retreated to the privacy of Merv's bedroom later that evening, Merv learned just how promising that bulge really was. As he'd later confide to Paul, “Until I met Robert, men were mere boyfriends. Robert Francis, however, is husband material.”

“Merv, you darling!” Bill said. “You have an endearing ability to fall in love with a guy after less than five seconds. It takes me at least an hour.”

When Merv woke up the following day, he sleepily felt for Robert in bed, finding him missing. He eventually

located Robert beside his pool reading the film script for *The Caine Mutiny*. “I hope you don't mind,” Robert said, jumping up to give Merv a kiss. “I woke up early and wanted something to read.”

“Feel free,” Merv said. “My agent's getting me the role of Willie Keith.”

“I've read that part,” Robert said. “I bet you'll be terrific in it.”

Merv spent most of that day in bed with Robert. As he later confessed to Bill, “Robert and I made love again and then made love again and then again. For me, it was a world record.”

“Can I be a bridesmaid at the wedding?” Bill asked.

“What else?”

After a second night of passion, Merv woke up on Monday morning, reaching once again for Robert, but finding him gone, as before. Since he figured his new boyfriend was an early riser, he was not unduly alarmed. He took a leisurely shower and tried to spruce up his face, as he looked bedraggled after the weekend workouts. He put on coffee and, with two steaming cups on a bar tray, he headed for the pool where he expected to encounter “the new love of my life.” Robert was nowhere to be seen.

A search of the house revealed no one—not even a note. Even a peek into the guest room turned up only Bill and Paul still asleep. Outside, Robert's car was missing from the driveway.

Settling in for the morning, Merv decided to read the script of *The Caine Mutiny* one more time. He searched for it but couldn't find it, even though he distinctly remembered placing it on his nightstand after Robert had finished going over it. A slight apprehension came over him. Had Robert taken the script?

By early afternoon, even though Merv had heard from Johnny, who was off in Laguna shacked up with a new conquest, Robert still hadn't called.

The next day Merv called Bullets, his agent, to report on the missing script and to ask if he'd arranged his screen test for *The Caine Mutiny*.

“Sorry, but I just learned that the role's already been cast,” Bullets said. “I was about to call you. Van Johnson's been signed for one of the leads, and he's promoting this handsome young actor for the role of the ensign. Van got him a screen test, and he's got the part.”

“Let me guess,” Merv said. “Could that young actor be Robert Francis?”

“So, you've already heard?” Bullets asked.

“Yeah, something like that,” Merv said, suspecting that Howard Hughes—not Van Johnson—had been instrumental in Robert's getting cast.

When *The Caine Mutiny* was finally released, both Merv and Rock Hudson agreed that Robert was a striking screen presence within it. Rock, in fact, viewed him as future competition, and Merv conceded that Robert had photographed beautifully and sexily, especially in that scene when he'd pulled off his sailor pants to reveal his shapely masculine legs.

Merv never encountered Robert again, although he heard he was being pursued by Spencer Tracy on the set of *Tribute to a Bad Man*. Despite feeling betrayed by the young actor, Merv was still saddened to hear that on July 31, 1955, his weekend lover had been killed when the small aircraft he was piloting crashed after takeoff from the Burbank Airport. The plane had suddenly lost power and exploded upon violent impact in an abandoned parking lot.

Merv skipped the funeral which was conducted two days later at Forest Lawn Cemetery, but showed up with Bill Robbins the following day with flowers for Robert's grave. “No hard feelings, old pal,” Merv said to the newly dug grave. “You were great in *The Caine Mutiny*. Better than I could have done it. You could have been big in this rotten town.” Just prior to his death, Robert had been voted one of *Screen World* 's “Most Promising Personalities of 1954.”

***

When Johnny finally returned from his adventures in Laguna, he had to drive immediately to San Francisco after packing his clothes. There was no time to see Merv. “For your hospitality, I've left you a housewarming present,” he told Merv in a call to the studio. “You'll find it in your bed with a red ribbon tied around it. Your surprise is waiting but you've got to enter the room exactly at six o'clock. The gift is perishable and has to be eaten at once.”

“Okay, I'll be there,” Merv promised. “Exactly at six. Perishable? Exactly what is this gift? A banana split?”

“Something bigger and tastier,” Johnny promised before ringing off.

Keeping his word, Merv arrived home right at six. Finding no one in his living room, he headed for his bedroom

and threw open the door to discover his surprise.

There lying in the middle of his bed was a goodlooking blondhaired young man with a Davidesque physique. Like Johnny had promised, a red ribbon had been tied around Merv's gift, which in this case was a humongous erection.

In a seductive voice, the stranger said, “Hi, I'm Hadley Morrell—your new livein lover.”

***

In the dawn light of another day, Merv studied Hadley's body as he lay nude on top of the sheets. His frame was long, lean, and well muscled without being of the beefcake “Henry Willson” variety. There was a gracefulness and undeniable masculinity to Hadley, as evoked by his strong chest, long arms and legs, and trim waist. To Merv, he was like some blond Olympian. He exuded sexuality.

Merv attempted to get to know Hadley better, since he showed no apparent willingness to leave. It just seemed to be assumed that after such a great night in bed, Hadley would be moving in. Merv wasn't even sure at that point that he wanted a livein lover, and there was a slight resentment that his life was being directed by Hadley and, from afar, by Johnny Riley, who had instigated this setup in the first place.

As Hadley ate, he looked over at Merv's poolhouse. “While you were cooking, I checked that place out,” he said. “It would make a great little livein suite. An extra bedroom if you have company. I'd like to renovate it for you. After all, I've got to do something around here while you're away making movies.”

“So you're good with your hands?” Merv said, suddenly realizing the implication of what he'd just said. “And I'm not referring to last night.”

Merv's attempt to learn the details of Hadley's past failed that morning as well as during the days and nights to come. Hadley was almost obstinately vague about what he'd done during the first twentynine years of his life. He said he was from Minnesota, but at one point, Merv suspected that despite the fact that he spoke perfect English, he might be foreignborn, perhaps from Holland. Merv wasn't even sure that Hadley was his real name. Merv was left with the distinct impression that Hadley was running away from something.

In spite of these misgivings, erotic sensuality won out. Hadley, based on an unexpressed but mutual consent, was definitely moving in on Merv. What was agreed upon for the immediate present, however, was that since there was no work for Merv at the studio that week, Merv would drive with Hadley down to Laguna Beach to retrieve his meager possessions. They were stashed in a room at the motel where he'd previously been shacked up with Johnny Riley. With the understanding that Merv and Hadley would spend a few days together at the beach, they headed south in Merv's car.

With Merv at the wheel, they drove along the coast under a sky that shone brightly over deep blue Pacific waters. It was just assumed that from now on Merv would be paying Hadley's bills. He brought fabulous sex to the relationship, but not a bank account.

The motel where Johnny and Hadley had had their torrid affair was the most sordid Merv had ever stayed in, even during his crosscountry tours with Freddy Martin's Band. “So this is my honeymoon cottage?” he said, surveying the wreckage Hadley and Johnny had left behind.

“Who needs a great room when you've got me?” Hadley asked.

Merv felt he'd launched himself on a new adventure into the unknown with a perfect stranger.

Later that evening in Laguna, Merv and Hadley walked along the beach until they discovered an offthebeatentrack bistro. From a seat inside, and for the first time, Merv really studied Hadley's eyes, which were large and blue, clear and intelligent, set in an angular face with spectacular bones and perfect honeycolored skin. As Bill later said, “When Merv got back to Los Angeles, he gave us a blowbyblow description of his time away with Hadley. He didn't spare us the slightest detail.”

After dinner they wandered the streets, stopping off at a club, The Thundering Surf, with a bright neon sign that flashed letters in fire engine red, sunflower yellow, and Halloween orange. Finding the club too raucous, and the music too loud, they wandered next door to a club called The Fighting Cock, marked outside with a neon red rooster. It was more intimate, the music more subdued.

Midnight found Merv in bed once again with Hadley. Their honeymoon in this tacky motel lasted three nights. By the end of the third night, Hadley was proclaiming undying love for Merv. Yet Merv held back. He wasn't quite sure he wanted to commit to Hadley. It was all too soon, all too fast. He needed more time to think. Hadley was virtually proposing that they live like a married couple.

On the way back to Los Angeles, Hadley promised eternal fidelity. But Merv said nothing. Back in Los Angeles, he talked privately to Bill and Paul, while the sound of hammering could be heard outside. Hadley was certainly industrious, having launched the restoration of the poolhouse.

“It looks to me like he could become the love of your life.” Paul said. “If you don't want him, pass him on to me.”

“And you can always slip away in the night and get fucked by Guy Madison,” Bill told him.

“So much for serious advice from two horny queens,” Merv said jokingly. “I'd better go and fetch my new husband a glass of something…”

***

When Bullets called the next day, the agent didn't disguise his enthusiasm. “You've finally hit it big. Roy Del Ruth liked you when he directed *Stop, You're Killing Me.* You've been cast as the male lead in *Three Sailors and A Girl.* Your buddy, Jane Powell, is the lead. The third lead is the guy I think she's having an affair with, Gene Nelson. What a dancer. And Jack E. Leonard has been appropriately cast as ‘Porky.’ And it's a musical, so you'll shine, baby, shine.”

“What role will I play?” Merv eagerly asked. “Hopefully someone not called ‘Porky.’ I don't want to be reminded of my past blubber.”

“Choirboy Jones.”

“Choirboy?” Merv asked astonished. “Porky and Choirboy?”

“Gene Nelson plays Twitch,” Bullets said.

“Who in the fuck named these characters?” Merv asked. “What character does Jane play? Cooze?”

“Penny.”

“Are you sure you've nailed down this role for me?” Merv asked. “I've been screwed so many times.”

“It's in the bag!” Bullets promised. “Who loves you, baby?” He hung up.

This time, Merv not only got the script and liked the role, but received a personal call from the director himself. “You don't have to test for it, kid,” Roy Del Ruth said. “I know what your voice sounds like, and your acting is not all that bad. We start shooting in a week. In the meantime, drop fifteen pounds.”

“How do I do that?” Merv asked.

“One lettuce leaf a day,” Roy said, “without dressing.”

When the script arrived, Merv, emerging from the shower, didn't even finishing drying himself off. He ran to a chaise longue by the pool and began to read. He even ordered Hadley to stop hammering so he could concentrate.

To Merv's surprise, he found the script oddly familiar. *Three Sailors and a Girl* evoked the film, *Born to Dance (1936),* which, significantly, had also been directed by Roy del Ruth. It had starred Eleanor Powell and it had included a scene wherein Jimmy Stewart actually sang a song by Cole Porter.

Merv had been told to report to the studio the following Monday, and he spent the weekend rehearsing his lines and the music.

At six o'clock on Monday morning, as Merv was awakening for his anticipated first day on the set, there was a persistent ringing of his telephone. Sleepily he answered it to find Bullets at the other end. “Real bad news. Sammy Cahn — he's the producer—just signed Gordon MacRae as Choirboy. It was a lastminute casting change. But don't worry. Del Ruth is still going to cast you as one of the sailors in the movie. Of course, the part is uncredited, but I know you'll be just great in it.”

“Fuck!” Merv shouted into the phone, suddenly angry at Bullets for leading him on. “Here we go again. Of course, I should be used to getting dumped at the last minute. Riding high yesterday, shot down in flames today.”

In disgust, Merv wanted to walk off the picture, but he had a contract and he needed the money. He not only had

rent to pay but another mouth to feed.

Merv showed up the following day and shared a dressing room with other extras in sailor uniforms. As his bad luck would have it, he encountered Gordon MacRae the moment he appeared on the set.

The singing star rather sarcastically looked him up and down as if he was a piece of meat. “I must say, Griffin, I fill out my sailor's uniform better than you do, especially in the crotch area. Haven't you given up trying to be a star in Hollywood? You'll never make it in this town, kid.” With that prediction, the romantic lead of the picture turned and walked away.

That night and for days after, Merv raged to Hadley that Gordon's mother should have smothered him at birth.

Merv quickly realized that Roy Del Ruth was using him mainly for set decoration. “Whenever I appeared on screen, I was always pictured standing behind Jack E. Leonard, who made Jackie Gleason look like a starving fashion model. People called him ‘Fat Jack.’All through *Three Sailors and a Girl* it looked like Jack had a wart on his head—namely me!”

In spite of his resentment at being shuttled to the side as an extra, Merv bonded with the rotund, bespectacled, baldheaded comic. Merv defined him as “the funniest man I know—he was always breaking me up.” Jack's *forte* was the comic art of the insult, and his most enthusiastic and devastating imitator became Don Rickles.

In years to come—during May of 1973 to be exact—Merv sat in the audience listening to Jack's hilarious performance at the Rainbow Room at New York's Rockefeller Center. “Good evening, opponents,” Jack quipped as an opening line. “I see Merv Griffin is here tonight. He brought a girl for a change.”

After the show, Merv headed backstage for a reunion with Jack. But a stagehand denied him access. Immediately after his performance, the comic had collapsed en route to dressing room. He was rushed to the hospital, where he died the following day from complications following emergency heart surgery.

***

On his final day on the Hollywood set of *Three Sailors and a Girl*, Gordon MacRae—Merv's most clearly defined enemy—approached him again. “You've got a great future, kid,” he said, “but not in this business.” He turned and walked away. It was not Merv's nature to hate people, but in the case of Gordon, he was willing to make an exception. He simply could not stand the man or his put-downs.

Right on the spot he vowed he was going to steal Gordon's next big musical from him. That afternoon he called Bullets. “Find out what picture Gordon is up for next,” he commanded Bullets.“And, also, the name of the director. If it's the last thing I ever do in Hollywood, I'm going to show that egotistical shit that he's underestimated Merv Griffin. I'll be making millions when he's a brokendown old drunk singing at roadside motels in Indiana.” In his utterance of that prediction, Merv turned out to be a prophet.

As Merv later told Bill and Paul, “There was only one good thing that came out of his appearance in *Three Sailors and a Girl*.“I had a reunion with Burt Lancaster. He made a gag appearance as himself at the end of the film. We not only met up with each other, but I got to sample that delectable uncut meat of his one more time in his dressing room. I've hardly begun my affair with Hadley, and I'm already twotiming him. And I'm sure it'll happen again.”

“Baby, you and me are fated to be twobit whores,” Bill chimed in.

***

Once again, the temperamental, almost psychotic Michael Curtiz cast Merv in a movie, *The Boy from Oklahoma* (1954)—“another God damn oater,” as Merv described it to Hadley. Dressed as a cowboy, Merv showed up on the set, where Curtiz shook his hand. “It's not another *Casablanca*,” he said. “I'm directing this turkey for one reason and only one reason. To pay my pussy bill from all my cunts.”

“Sounds like a good enough reason to me,” Merv said, secretly appalled at the director's phraseologies.

The stars of the film included Will Rogers Jr., Nancy Olson, and Lon Chaney Jr., none of whom had been scheduled for an appearance on the set that day. Merv spent most of the morning talking with such oldtime actors as Wallace Ford and Slim Pickens.

With his hoarse voice and pronounced Western twang, Slim would later immortalize himself by riding an atomic bomb in Stanley Kubrick's *Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). “All Curtiz

needs to do is turn the camera on me and let me be myself," the former rodeo clown, bronco rider, and bullfighter told Merv.

Wallace Ford seemed disgusted with his role in the movie. "I've been in practically every film ever made—and now this piece of shit."

When called to the set, Merv sauntered over to Curtiz in an imitation of John Wayne. "I told you to stop walking like fairy," Curtiz called out to him in front of the entire cast.

That night Merv told Hadley: "Curtiz is a fucking sadist." Only hours before, the director had ordered him to lead a posse of three dozen men on horseback down a dusty hill. "I'm terrible on a horse," Merv protested.

"Gree-fing, get on the fucking horse," Curtiz ordered.

It turned out that all the extras were experienced horsemen who'd appeared in many Western films. Wardrobe positioned a tengallon hat on Merv's head, and it was far too large, repeatedly falling down over his eyes. Brandishing a bullwhip, and evoking memories of Erich Von Stroheim, Curtiz called for action.

The cowboys roared off on horseback down the hill. Although Merv was supposed to be leading them, the other riders left him in the dust. His oversized hat blew off his head, disappearing like a tumbleweed in a tornado.

At the bottom of the hill and at the rear of the posse he was supposed to be leading, Merv fell off his horse.

"Cut! Cut! Cut!" Curtiz shouted through a megaphone, snapping his bullwhip with his free arm. "*Gree-fing*, you stink on rotten horse. Go back to the top of the hill. We shoot fucking scene again, you dumb shit!"

After ten more takes, Merv still hadn't gotten it right. "*Gree-fing*, you no Garee Coop. I can't shoot no more. You'll never get it right. I'll order fucking editor to make you look like Gene Autry on his horse Champion."

The next day was even worse. The script called for Merv to shoot a gun. After the first take, Curtiz screamed at him: "You fire gun like fucking cunt. You blink eyes before firing. I want you to act like Garee Coop in *High Noon*."

By the ninth take, Curtiz had grown so exasperated with Merv that he cracked his whip very close to his face, narrowly missing his eye. "You god damn faggot," he shouted at Merv. "You're off the picture. I use only hemen in my future pictures, not pussy boy like you."

"Thank you, Mr. Curtiz," Merv said, trying to maintain what little dignity he had left.

Still on friendly terms with Jack Warner, Merv called the studio chief and told him he'd been fired. "You stay in the fucking movie," Jack said. "You're on the payroll. I'll call that pussychasing Curtiz and tell him who does the hiring and firing."

Merv stayed on the picture until the last day of the shoot, reporting to work in cowboy garb every day. Curtiz, however, never looked his way again and never used him in another scene.

In lieu of actually working in front of the camera, celebritystruck Merv used the time to chat with the stars of the film. He found it ironic that both Will Rogers Jr. and Lon Chaney Jr., had each been cast as costars in the same film. Both of those actors had to live in the long shadows of their more famous fathers, neither of them expecting, or achieving, the fame of Will Rogers Sr. and Lon Chaney Sr.

Like his father, Will Jr. was quick with a rope. Merv got to chat with him several times, learning that he'd served as a Democratic congressman from Southern California between 1943 and 1944, when he resigned to join the U.S. Army. Merv had read about his heroic efforts to try to save the Jews of Europe during World War II and of the opposition he'd faced, even from President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself.

In later years, Merv would invite Will, Jr. as a guest on his TV talk show, but the actor always opted not to go on. He was in poor health and had suffered several strokes. His hip replacements were a source of constant pain.

In 1993, at the age of 81, as a means of ending his suffering, he drove into the desert and shot himself in the head.

Circumstances were somewhat different with Merv's other onset friend, Lon Chaney, Jr. Although he resembled his father physically, he admitted, "I hate trying to cash in on his name just as much as I hate people constantly comparing me to my dad. He was an original. I'll never be as good as he was. I fail to live up to his reputation every single day, and I handle my disappointment by drinking myself into a stupor every single night."

Since he had nothing else to do on the set, Merv encouraged Lon's conversation. "My father pushed me out onto the stage when I was just six months old. When I was a teenager, he never gave me money, even though he was a big movie star. I had to earn my own money—a meat cutter's apprentice, a metal worker, a plumber, and at one point, a farm worker in the Midwest shoveling cow shit."

Left: **Lon Chaney** as himself
and (center) as Werewolf. Right: **Will Rogers, Jr.**

Lon was a secret drinker. He would disappear into the men's toilet every now and then to down booze from a flask. “Chasing the fame of one's father is never a good thing,” Lon told Merv. You're lucky to have been born to an unknown father.”

“Well, at least you've done what no other actor has accomplished,” Merv said. “You got to play all four of the major monsters—The Wolf Man, Frankenstein's Monster, the Mummy, and Dracula.”

A pathetic moment occurred near the end of the shoot. Around three o'clock one afternoon, Merv encountered Lon again. He was so drunk he could hardly stand up, but he seemed to recognize Merv. “Help me, my friend,” Lon said. “I don't know where I am or why I'm here.”

Merv escorted the drunken actor back to his dressing room and eased him down onto the sofa. There, Merv removed Lon's shoes and put a blanket over him so he could sleep off his intoxication.

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Despite the fact that most of his energies were being devoted to being cast as a romantic lead, Merv retained an unshakable belief in the viability of his appeal as singer. And as the competition for singing roles got more intense, he cited a particular sense of rivalry with Eddie Fisher, upon whom he'd once had a crush. His feelings for Eddie had turned first to covert jealousy and later to occasionally expressed outrage at his success.

Merv couldn't stand hearing Eddie's voice on radio or TV, and would immediately switch channels if the young star came on.

“And to think I introduced Elizabeth Taylor to the bum,” he told Hadley.

As Merv moved deeper into the 1950s, he spent time in recording studios when he didn't have movie work. Still under contract with RCA Victor, he recorded “Morningside of the Mountain,” with the Hugo Winterhalter Orchestra. Very briefly, it appeared among the Top 40 hits, but soon after sank into oblivion.

In the mid50s, Merv recorded “Once in Love with Amy,” with high hopes for the song. Ray Bolger, in 1948, had had a hit with this song. But Merv's version failed to generate any excitement.

By 1956, RCA had decided not to renew his contract. Merv drifted from Columbia to Decca, but failed to turn himself into another Perry Como. In 1958, he recorded songs which included “Introduce Me to the Gal” and “You're the Prettiest Thing,” both recorded with the Sy Oliver Orchestra. When the records were released, the public wasn't interested.

Still pursuing a recording career, Merv found himself at the relatively obscure Carlton Records in 1961, singing the disastrously campy “The Screamin’ Meemies from Planet X.”

Merv experienced a secret *Schadenfreude* when he learned that Eddie Fisher, too, had been dropped by RCA Victor. But that didn't happen until 1960. At the peak of Merv's TV successes a decade later, he read in the papers that Eddie, burdened with debts of more than a million dollars, had declared bankruptcy.

“So he married, in quick succession, both America's Sweetheart and America's *femme fatale*, and all that it got him was an addiction to methamphetamines,” Merv said. “I hear that Debbie Reynolds also told friends that Eddie is lousy in bed. I'll have to check with Elizabeth for the real low-down.”

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Asleep with Hadley at four o'clock in the morning, Merv was awakened by the ringing of his telephone. In those days, he had only one phone, and it was in the living room. Arousing himself from bed, as Hadley mumbled something and rolled over, a nude Merv stumbled toward the phone.

Picking up the receiver, he heard a worldfamous voice: “It's Judy. You've got to come over right away. I can't tell you over the phone. Promise me you'll come over NOW.”

Merv somewhat reluctantly agreed. He was hesitant because Judy sounded drunk. He feared she might be making another suicide attempt. After scribbling a note for Hadley, he dressed and drove over to Judy's house. If they were in the house at all that night, her husband, Sid Luft, and the children were asleep upstairs. Merv encountered Judy looking distraught and wearing no makeup. She'd been drinking and looked far older than her years.

Once he was inside, she spoke to him in a soft voice. “It's Peter. A member of the vice squad arrested him in the men's toilet of a state park. The charge is lascivious conduct. I just found out about it tonight. He's supposed to be arraigned tomorrow. If the press finds out about this, you won't be seeing the name of Peter Lawford on any more marquees.”

“Oh, my God,” Merv said. “I'm so sorry to hear this, but what can I do?”

“You know Howard Hughes, don't you?”

“Of course,” he said. “We're playing tennis together later today.”

“Brother-in-lawford”
to the Kennedys
Peter Lawford

“Howard will know what to do,” she said. “He can get Peter out of jail and cover up this whole shitty mess. You'll go to Howard, won't you?”

“For Peter… anything,” he promised.

Over badly made cups of coffee, Judy and Merv talked emotionally in her kitchen for about an hour, plotting what they could do to help Peter. Merv couldn't get Howard on the phone—no one ever could—but Merv told Judy that Howard always showed up faithfully on the tennis court exactly at ninethirty every Sunday morning. Merv promised Judy he'd make the pitch to Howard then.

Before he left, he kissed her goodbye on the lips and headed out into the dark morning, as the first light of dawn pierced the sky over Los Angeles.

A few hours later, on the tennis court, Howard didn't want to talk business until he'd played a game. “I don't want to be distracted,” Howard said. But during the game, Merv noticed that Howard seemed very distracted indeed by the sudden appearance of the startlingly handsome Hadley.

When Merv introduced them, he noticed that the aviator held Hadley's hand for a very long time during their initial handshake. Hadley was dressed in the tightest white tennis shorts Merv had ever seen, making his endowment rather obvious.

After the match, which Merv deliberately let Howard win, Merv called Howard to the far end of the court and told him about Peter's dilemma.

“Shit like this happens in Hollywood all the time,” Howard said. “I'm an expert in covering up for stars. You won't believe the jam I got Robert Mitchum out of one night. I'll help Peter. Not because I like the boy, but he's getting connected with the Kennedys. That family might be very useful to me one day.”

Changing into his street clothes, Howard agreed “to take care of business,” but only if Hadley drove him where he needed to go. “I've got a blinding headache, and I don't trust myself behind the wheel. I might run over somebody who's got a good lawyer. That happened to me once, you know.”

To Merv, Hadley seemed a little too eager to drive away with Howard. Although he hugged and kissed Merv goodbye, and promised to be back soon, Merv was consumed with jealousy watching his newly defined lover disappear into the late morning sunshine with Howard Hughes. “That's the last I'll ever hear from Hadley,” Merv told his friends.

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As Merv had anticipated, Howard managed to quietly secure Peter's release from jail. No charges were ever filed against him, and the story of the men's room arrest was kept out of the press. Merv tried to reach Peter by phone, but no one was picking up at his house. Hours after they'd taken off together, Hadley still hadn't returned from “driving Howard Hughes.” Merv placed a call to Judy to tell her the good news about Peter.

She immediately pleaded with him to join her on a drive to Palm Springs where Peter was hiding out after his ordeal. Almost to defy Hadley if he did opt to return that weekend, Merv agreed to drive her, ordering Bill Robbins not to tell Hadley where he'd gone.

During the eastbound drive to Palm Springs, Judy was jittery and anxious, wanting the drive to be over. She drank from a flask she carried in her purse. “Don't be surprised when we get there,” she said. “I mean, you'll meet Peter's new lover, and it may come as quite a shock to you.”

“I read Hedda and Louella,” he said. “I know about his fling with Patricia Kennedy, although I hear old Joe Kennedy is completely opposed to it. Apparently, Old Joe thinks all actors are fag-gots.”

“He's probably right about that,” she said. “Mr. Ambassador is completely opposed to Patricia seeing Peter, and he's persuaded that vicious drag queen, J. Edgar Hoover, to conduct a complete investigation. I hope Nelly Hoover doesn't discover Peter's fondness for tearooms.”

“What do you mean tearooms?” Merv asked. “They seem harmless enough. It's his English upbringing.”

“Oh, darling, you can be so naïve,” she said, brushing his cheek lightly with her fingers. “A tearoom is gay slang for a men's toilet. It's called latrine sex. Some guys prefer that.”

“Sex in a smelly toilet doesn't strike me as very romantic,” he said.

“True, true,” she said. “Incidentally, the lover you'll meet in Palm Springs isn't Pat. By the way, I'm having an affair with Pat's brother, and my philandering husband doesn't know about it. He's handsome and charming. Jack Kennedy, or John F. Kennedy if you want to get formal. I'll introduce you to him, but you can't have him. I saw him first. He calls me up sometimes late at night and asks me to sing ‘Over the Rainbow’ to him on the phone. Isn't that adorable?”

“You know I'm a bit of a voyeur, and I just have to ask,” he said. “Is he great in bed? I heard that for years, his old man regularly fucked Gloria Swanson.”

“Jack's no Frank Sinatra,” she said, “but I adore him. He's got a bad back. Usually, I have to be on top doing most of the work.”

Merv was absorbing all of this with the full intention of sharing every word, every sordid detail, with Roddy McDowall and Henry Willson.

At a beautiful Spanishstyle villa in Palm Springs, Peter in bathing trunks greeted Judy and Merv at the door with wet kisses, inviting them in. Judy excused herself, rushing off to the nearest bathroom. When she was gone, Peter profusely thanked Merv for interceding with Howard Hughes. “It worked out OK this time, but you'd better clean up your act,” Merv warned him.

“Oh, what the hell,” Peter said. “I'm just a tearoom queen and that's all I'll ever be. There's nothing more sexually thrilling than giving blow jobs to strangers in a men's toilet.”

When Judy returned, Peter kissed her lips gently again. “I've arranged for you guys to have the master bedroom.” Judy led the way, asking Merv and Peter to bring her luggage.

Merv lingered behind, tugging at Peter's arm. “Judy and I are sharing a bedroom?” he asked.

“Yeah,” she told me about the romance you guys are having,” Peter said. “Nothing serious. Just fuck buddies.”

“She told you *what*?” Judy was calling from the bedroom for Merv and Peter to hurry up with her luggage. Entering the room with suitcases, Merv spotted white sheets already turned down. A sense of panic overcame him. Peter gave Merv another quick kiss on the lips before departing toward the pool patio. “After you guys settle in, come and join Smokey and me on the patio.”

“Smokey?” Merv was bewildered. He wanted to ask Peter who Smokey was.

Judy began undressing before him the way she'd done in front of dozens of people in the MGM wardrobe department. “C'mon,” she urged him. “Shuck those duds.” In Palm Springs all the stars go skinny dipping. Even Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo show off their pussies to each other.”

He stripped down but turned his back to her when he slipped into his bathing suit.

“Nice ass,” she said before rushing out of the room. “Last one in is a rotten egg!”

Ignoring the invitation to go nude, Merv came onto the patio in his bathing suit. He immediately noticed that Peter had peeled off his trunks and was lying nude on the chaise longue. “Sammy, meet Merv,” he called to a black man in the pool who was frolicking with Judy. She too had ripped off her bathing suit.

Merv had been promised an introduction to Sammy Davis Jr. but hadn't expected it to come like this. “Hi, kid, pull off your suit and come join us chitlin's,” Sammy yelled to him.

“Yeah, Merv,” Peter urged him. “After all, you're not Princess Tiny Meat.”

“But to get naked with a black man” he whispered to Peter. “I'm not sure I can compete.”

“It's not a competition,” Peter said.

Hurriedly Merv pulled off his trunks and made a running leap into the pool.

Sammy swam over to him. “You can shake my hand or else grab King Kong,” he said. “Whatever turns you on.”

After that introduction, Merv soon overcame his shyness, finding Sammy enchanting and charming. They continued chatting even when the pool splashing ended. Peter and Judy donned robes and moved toward the bar to begin the heavy drinking of a fading afternoon. Dressed in a robe, Sammy lounged by the pool with Merv.

“Peter used to be a part of our Rat Pack,” Sammy said, glancing over at Peter and Judy at the bar. “I keep begging Frank to take him back, but he's too stubborn. Ever since Louella Parsons wrote that Peter was seen out on the town with Ava Gardner, Frank cut him off. The Rat Pack's not the same without him. Judy's only a sometimes member. Before Peter was banished, the Rat Pack consisted of two dago singers, a kike comic, a limey swell, a hot puta with red pussy hair, and a slightly offcolor entertainer—the best in the business.” He was, of course, referring to Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, Shirley MacLaine, and himself.

Sammy looked over at Peter and blew him a kiss before asking for a drink. “Don't get the idea I'm gay,” Sammy said. “I'm not! I've fucked more blonde showgals than Frankie himself. I've even fucked Ava Gardner. But don't tell Frankie that. He'd have some of the boys in the mob cut off King Kong if he knew that. But I like a little gay action on the side for variety. After all, you know yourself that Peter is the best cocksucker in Hollywood. That boy's got a very deep throat.”

Drinks and more drinks preceded and followed a patio barbecue presided over by Sammy. “We niggers know our barbecue,” he said. Shortly before midnight Sammy and Peter disappeared into the bedroom, leaving Merv alone with Judy.

She urged him to join her at the piano. “Let's sing some songs together,” she said. “You're the only person in Palm Springs who knows as many songs as I do.” Merv sat and sang with her until around two o'clock that morning, as both of them were drawn to good lyrics and wellwritten melodies.

“You know,” she said, finally rising to her feet, “we should take our act together on the road.”

King Kong and Rat Packer:
Sammy Davis Jr.

Reaching for his hand, she led him to the master bedroom, shutting the door behind them. Unfastening his robe, she also dropped hers at her feet. In bed she pressed her nude body against his. “There's always the first time,” she said. “Didn't you tell me that as a little fat boy growing up in San Mateo, you told all your friends that you wanted to marry Judy Garland one day? Well, just imagine that this is our honeymoon night.”

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Late the following morning, Frank Sinatra called and invited Judy and Sammy as his house guests to a home he'd borrowed from a friend in Palm Springs. Although he knew that Peter was within earshot, he pointedly didn't invite him. So after Judy and Sammy checked out, that left Merv alone with “the outcast,” Peter. Merv agreed to drive Peter back to Malibu where he was to hook up with Patricia Kennedy.

En route to the coast, Merv learned that Peter's marriage to Patricia was imminent. Peter had little to say about his future bride, although he made it clear that he did not plan to give up sex on the side once he'd married “this Roman Catholic school girl who needs some breaking in about the way we do things here in Hollywood.”

Until he actually met her, all that Merv knew about Patricia was that she was the sixth of nine children born to Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and that her brother was a rising politician in Massachusetts. Peter claimed that Patricia was the most beautiful of all the Kennedy siblings, “although Jack is pretty cute—I'd like to fuck him too.”

“I talked to Rose the other day,” Peter confided. “She's not as opposed to the marriage as that monster she's married to. Once I assured her that our kids would be raised Roman Catholics, she became more at ease about her daughter's upcoming marriage. Pat is clearly not her favorite child. She told me that her daughter had a fine physique and a good mind, but then Rose complained that she puts neither of them to any particular use. ‘She's not competitive like my other children,’ *Mamma Mia* told me. ‘Pat won't really succeed at anything,’ she said. She told me that Pat's major accomplishment in life might involve marrying a movie star.”

At Peter's house in Malibu, Merv was introduced to Patricia, discovering that she had a certain regal bearing like her mother Rose. Lithe and athletic, she seemed the epitome of grace and East Coast charm school breeding. Also in attendance that day was Lady May Lawford, Peter's mother. Rather formally dressed for a hot afternoon, Lady May sat under a large umbrella protecting her fair skin from the harsh rays of the California sun.

It was obvious that Lady May did not approve of her future daughterinlaw. She seemed to endure her presence. Peter and Patricia quickly excused themselves for a walk on the beach, leaving Merv alone with the stern and rather judgmental Lady May.

Never in his life had Merv met a more outspoken woman. He didn't know if Lady May meant what she said, or whether she merely uttered scathing observations as a means of shocking people. No sooner was Patricia out of sight than she launched into an attack on the Kennedys. “They're nothing but a bunch of barefoot Irish peasants,” she claimed. “By marrying Peter, that bitch hopes to link herself with the British aristocracy. My God, the next thing I hear, old Joe Kennedy will be buying a title for her. There are a lot of them for sale these days. I like her brother Jack, but he always has his mind down between his legs. I told Peter he should have married Elizabeth Taylor. She's always been in love with him. Besides, Elizabeth is going to make a lot of money one day, and then Peter and I could live in the style to which we were once accustomed.”

Lady May asked Merv if he'd get up “and fetch me another gin and tonic. I share my taste in drinks with the Queen Mother.”

When Merv came back onto the patio, Lady May, a bit tipsy, wanted to continue with her revelations. Like the TV talk show host that he was to become, Merv was all ears.

“Peter told me that Kennedy gal was a virgin when they met. Jack Kennedy introduced Peter to her in Palm Beach, and she fell madly in love with him right away…and started pursuing him that very day. She might have been a virgin when she first met Peter, but she's not a virgin now. I found contraceptives in their bedroom. Old Joe gave the gal ten million dollars, but I've warned Peter he'll have to pay all the bills after they get married. That bitch holds onto every last red cent she's got.”

Before she'd completely downed the gin and tonic Merv had brought her, and before she requested a refill, Lady May launched into an attack on the Rat Pack.

Above: **Patricia Kennedy** with her brother, **JFK.**

Left: Her toxic
mother-in-law,
Lady May Lawford
as displayed on the
cover of her 2006
autobiography

“I'm glad Peter is no longer fraternizing with that dried-up piece of spaghetti, Frank Sinatra. He hates me as much as I hate him. But Peter's still seeing that queer Van Johnson. Johnson is the one who got Peter to wear those damn red socks. One night at a party I saw Peter and that Pat Kennedy kissing that darkie, Sammy Davis Jr. They call him ‘Chicky.’I'd call him a nigger and tell him never to get within ten feet of me.”

Merv sighed, wondering how Lady May would react if she knew what her son had been doing with Sammy only the night before. Certainly a bit more than kissing.

Just before sundown, after Peter and Lady May went upstairs to get ready for the evening, Patricia sat with Merv on the patio watching the sun go down. Still in her sports attire, she looked tan and lovely, and Merv was enchanted by her New England accent. “May must have filled you in on a lot of things — her version of things, that is. I find it rare that a socalled lady of breeding would be so uncouth. When Peter and I get married, we'll have to muzzle her, especially if Jack continues his career in politics. We definitely have to keep May away from the press. Her class prejudice went out of style with Queen Victoria.”

Patricia would later express the same sentiments to dozens of her friends and, once, in a letter to Lady May herself.

Before she went upstairs to get dressed for dinner. Patricia turned to Merv. “Did Lady May tell you that she used to dress Peter as a girl until he was ten years old?” With that startling remark, she turned and left.

Merv felt the need to excuse himself from further contact and dinner that night with this dysfunctional trio. He wanted to get home where perhaps he would learn some news about Hadley.

As Merv was leaving, Patricia rushed down the stairs and kissed him on the cheek. She even extended an invitation to him to visit the family compound at Hyannis. “You'll love my brothers, especially Jack. He's got more personal charm than any of the other Kennedys. Only Peter has more charm.” As an afterthought, she said, “I hope you're athletic. The whole family is athletic, especially me. The only reason I was still a virgin when I met Peter was that I could outrun my brothers.”

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After his return to L.A., Merv opened the door to his living room to find Hadley sitting there in his boxer shorts. “What went wrong?” Merv asked. “Howard Hughes got tired of you? I could have told you that would happen.”

“C'mon, baby, and give your daddy a big, sloppy kiss,” Hadley said. “Sexual fidelity was invented by heterosexuals, and even they can't play by their own rules most of the time.”

“You want me to take you back?” Merv asked.

“I never really left, not in my heart,” Hadley said. “For me, you are the man.”

“I'm not sure I believe that,” Merv said. “You fly away with Howard Hughes and then you just show up whenever you like. I'm not sure I'm taking you back.”

Hadley rose from the sofa. “I think I have something here that will make you change your mind.” He unfastened his shorts and let them fall to the floor. Merv could not resist the temptation.

Sitting in an adjoining, plantfilled garden room, Bill Robbins heard every word but remained stonily silent during the interchange. He was later to confide to his friends that that afternoon set the tone for the future relationship of Merv and Hadley. “It was an agreement to betray each other any time their little ol’ cheatin’ hearts desired it.”

That night Merv and Hadley, after making love, had dinner with Paul and Bill. Paul was still dreaming of stardom, which he insisted would be brokered by Henry Willson. “I love Henry dearly,” Merv said, “but don't you think his promises are just bullshit?”

“No way!” Paul said defensively. “I know he's told dozens of Hollywood hunks he's going to make a star out of them like Tab Hunter or Rock Hudson. But there's one big difference in my case. Henry's fallen in love with me. I'm going to hold out and endure all that slobbering over me until I hit it big. When I do, I'll say ‘*adios* forever’ to Henry.”

Merv sighed as he sipped a cocktail. “I'm not sure the scenario will work out that way. But good luck, kid. Tread lightly into that pit of vipers. They bite. They sting. They kill.”

“I know how to take care of myself,” Paul said. “Just you guys wait and see.”

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It was the last big gathering Merv would ever attend at the home of Jack Warner, to whom he was still under contract with a movie career going nowhere. Hadley had wanted to come to the party as Merv's date but Merv rejected the idea. “How in the fuck do you think it'd look if I showed up with you on my arm?”

At Jack Warner's mansion, Merv was greeted by the studio chief himself. “Hi Griff. Great news. I'm getting you cast in the *Phantom of the Rue Morgue*. Great part. Great cast. A 3D horror production. It'll be bigger than *House of Wax*.”

“Do I get to play the lead?” Merv asked.

“Not exactly, but it's a great part. You'll be a French student at the Sorbonne in Paris.”

“Me, playing a Frog with my nighttraintoDublin puss?”

“You'll be great, kid,” Jack promised. “Do I see an Oscar for best supporting? Now circulate. I've got more MGM stars here tonight than that fart, Louis B. Mayer, ever had in heaven back in the creep's heyday.”

“Do I have to sing for my supper tonight?” Merv asked.

“If Judy Garland, Gordon MacRae or Doris Day had showed up, I'd never have asked. But none of those pussies are here.”

“Can I quote you about MacRae being a pussy?”

“What I mean is that he's usually so drunk he can't get it up. The only way he can have sex is if somebody shoves something up his ass. But you can forget about singing tonight. We've got Mimi Benzell who's about to go on.”

Merv joined the others in the large living room, waving at Elizabeth Taylor with her second husband, Michael Wilding. He noticed Robert Taylor with his sultry new wife, Ursula Thiess, although Merv would forever remember him as the husband of Barbara Stanwyck.

Humphrey Bogart was also standing nearby, but not with Lauren Bacall. Merv hadn't seen Bogie since staring at him nude in the shower at his Uncle Elmer's sports club. Merv introduced himself again to Bogie, who in turn introduced him to an attractive brunette named Verita Thompson. Bogie claimed that “Verita here is in charge of my toupées.” But Merv already knew that Verita was Bogie's longtime mistress, an affair that predated Bacall and which had lasted through the course of the marriage itself.

Mimi Benzell had never been Merv's favorite singer, although the American soprano had performed at New York's Metropolitan Opera and was a Broadway musical star as well as a performer on television and in night-clubs.

In front of Jack's invited guests, she went through her familiar repertoire, ranging from *Roberta* to *The Vagabond King*. Not ending it there, she delivered renditions from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Met credits that included *La Bohème*, *Rigoletto*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*. As she was deep into her sixteenth number, Jack approached Merv, whispering in his ear, “Griff, get this fucking broad to sit down.”

Studio Chief **Jack Warner** with

opera diva **Mimi Benzell**

"Griff, get this broad to sit down!"

Merv was surprised that Jack, the host, didn't take it upon himself to bring an end to Mimi's concert. At the end of her latest number, Mimi asked the audience, "Any special requests?"

Merv piped up, "How about 'Tippy Tippy Tin?'" As the other guests burst into laughter, Mimi fled from the room in tears. Later Merv felt bad about having embarrassed her in such a way.

Jack came up to him. "Great, Griff. You were just great. I'll owe you one. Perhaps I can arrange for you to fuck Hedy Lamarr."

Wandering down to the terrace overlooking the garden, Merv encountered Robert Taylor smoking a cigarette. Although Merv felt that Robert in the 1930s had been one of the three most handsome men in Hollywood, ranking up there with Tyrone Power and Errol Flynn, he clearly saw that time had taken its toll. Robert had moved deep into middle age and was a bit jowly.

At the time Merv met Robert, he was trying to hold onto his box office allure with epic pictures, including the Biblical spectacle *Quo Vadis?*, which had brought a temporary reprieve for the fading star.

Even so, despite the passage of time, Merv was still thrilled to meet one of his schoolboy crushes of the 1930s, even if Robert no longer looked as he did when he played opposite Greta Garbo in *Camille*.

Hoping to ingratiate himself with Robert, Merv immediately mentioned his mutual friendships with Howard Hughes and Errol Flynn. He knew that Robert, a bisexual, had engaged in sexual dalliances with both of them. "They've both told me a lot about you, and I've been dying to meet you."

Merv knew at once that he'd said the wrong thing when anger flashed across Robert's face. "I don't know what in the fuck they told you, but I haven't seen either of them in years. Everything they say is a pack of lies."

"Oh, no," Merv said, "they spoke of you only with the highest respect."

"Yeah, I bet," Robert said. He moved menacingly toward Merv. "Get this and get it good. I'm not a God damn faggot like you guys. All you pansies run up and down Hollywood Boulevard trying to slander every straight actor in town. In my case, you're barking up the wrong tree." The actor stormed off the terrace.

"What a son of a bitch!" Merv said out loud.

"I've been called many things in my life, but not that, although I'm sure I deserve it." Merv whirled around to see who he was talking to. The voice came from Michael Wilding.

"Whenever I get mad at Michael, I call him a cocksucker," came a woman's voice behind Michael. It was Elizabeth herself, looking beautiful in the moonlight. She was glamorously attired in purple. Moving in on Merv, she kissed his cheek.

Merv shook Michael's hand, gazing into his handsome, intelligent face. "I've been dabbling in Hollywood for a spell, but the results so far have been less than sterling," Michael said. "Did you see me in *Torch Song*?"

"Who could forget Joan Crawford in black face?" Merv asked.

With Elizabeth between them, both Merv and Michael escorted her back into the party. "You've got to drive up and visit us one night for dinner," Michael said.

"It's a deal," Merv said. "But I've got to warn you. Not so long ago, your wife and I were having a torrid affair."

"That's right, darling," Elizabeth chimed in. "Merv could go all night, sleep an hour or two and then start all over again."

"That's certainly more than I can do," Michael said, smiling. "Of course, a woman as beautiful as my bride can inspire a middleaged man to great glory. Wouldn't you say so, Merv?"

"I would indeed," Merv said. He never expected Michael to call him with that promised dinner invitation, and he forgot all about it as he entered the foyer to hear the familiar voice of Jack Warner.

"Griff, get your fat ass over here," Jack said. "I want you to meet the great, the one and only French dwarf, Claudette Colbert."

Jack laughed at his own line, but was greeted with a stony silence from Claudette.

"Since both of you arrived stag tonight, I want you to be Claudette's escort," Jack said.

"An honor, Miss Colbert," Merv said, bowing to kiss her hand.

"How gallant," she said to Merv, as Jack rushed off to greet arriving guests. "Far more gallant than Jack Warner. He's the rudest man in Hollywood. I only show up because he throws the greatest parties in town."

“I loved you and Gable in *It Happened One Night*,” he said.

“That was so long ago,” she said. “I wish you'd have congratulated me for *All About Eve*. I was set to play Margo Channing until I hurt my back. Bette Davis ruined that picture.”

“You'll make bigger and better pictures than *Eve* in the years to come,” he said.

Claudette Colbert

Suddenly Jack Warner appeared again with a studio photographer. “Quick,” Claudette said, taking Merv's arm and altering his position. “You stand on the right side of me. I can only be photographed from the left side.”

***

As an actor, Merv always considered Michael Wilding a poor man's James Mason. He had a facile British charm and impeccable manners. Merv found him likable during the three or four occasions he was invited to the home Michael shared with Elizabeth Taylor and their housemates, Stewart Granger and his wife, Jean Simmons.

Having been sexually involved with Elizabeth's first husband, Nicky Hilton, Merv, after evaluating her second husband, concluded that as a sex object Michael was a flame that flickered at a lower voltage.

After Elizabeth's firsthand contact with the mental cruelty, the womanizing, the drinking, and the hard fists of Nicky Hilton, Michael must have seemed like a relatively comfortable father figure. But during Merv's second visit, he sensed the tension between Elizabeth and Michael, to whom she was barely speaking. Monty Clift acted as intermediary between the newlyweds, seeming to hover protectively over the marriage. In their discussions, Monty confided to Merv, “I'm Elizabeth's platonic husband. She's the other half of me, the only woman who ever turned me on.”

Merv found Stewart Granger dazzlingly handsome—easily as seductive as the swashbuckler he played in movies such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1950). With Errol Flynn frequently drunk and going to seed, Stewart seemed his heir apparent in adventure movies.

Merv had casually mentioned to Michael that his new friend, Hadley, had remodeled his pool house into a nurturing safe haven and love nest for overnight guests. The very next day Michael called him. At first Merv misunderstood the call and got rather flirty with Michael.

“Elizabeth is fucking Victor Mature,” Michael said with anger and an uncharacteristic bluntness. “Do you mind if I borrow your poolhouse for the night?”

Merv was filled with anticipation at the prospect of seducing the second husband of Elizabeth. But he sensed a hesitation in Michael's voice. “And, oh yes, dear chap that you are, you don't mind if I bring a guest.”

Even before Michael arrived with his guest, Merv knew who it would be. None other than Stewart Granger. Roddy McDowall had already told Merv that Michael and Stewart had been engaged in an ongoing affair for years.

In Merv's living room, Michael excused himself to go to the bathroom, leaving Merv sitting opposite Stewart and taking in his muscular figure. He knew of the actor's past affairs with the likes of Hedy Lamarr and Deborah Kerr, and he envied Michael for having such an appealing lover. Sitting on Merv's sofa, the actor was complaining about Michael. “He eats my food, he drinks my expensive wine, and he even fucks my women. Yet he won't do pressups with me.”

“Maybe he'll do something else tonight,” Merv said provocatively.

“He's always willing to do that,” Stewart claimed. “Don't get the wrong idea about me. I'm the top.”

“I could have guessed,” Merv said. “Michael is so passive, and you look like you're charged with testosterone.”

“That I am, my dear boy,” Stewart said. “Perhaps you'll get lucky one night and learn what the excitement is all about.”

When Michael returned, Stewart said, “My bloke here should have married Marlene Dietrich, not Elizabeth Taylor. Marlene still adores him. She's just a *hausfrau* at heart and would have taken wonderful care of Michael's health, which has never been good. Marlene would make a wonderful wife, smothering him with good food and love. She once told me, ‘Tell Michael he needs me, since he's too stupid to figure that out for himself.’”

“Marlene would be too much woman for me,” Michael said. “Besides, she'll never divorce her husband, and I could never marry a woman who sleeps with more beautiful women than I could ever attract.”

“What a thing to say,” Merv chimed in. “For God's sake, man, you're married to the most beautiful woman in the world.”

“Beware of what you think you want,” Michael said. “My marriage was a ceremony performed in hell.”

In the weeks leading up to Merv's departure from Hollywood's film industry, Stewart and Michael shared his poolhouse on at least three occasions. Hadley was disappointed that he wasn't invited to join “the two limeys.”

On a Saturday night, Michael called late and asked to use the poolhouse once again. Merv agreed and Michael arrived about an hour later. Instead of Stewart, Michael had Marlene Dietrich on his arm.

Talented British blokes shacked up together
chez Merv in Hollywood
Stewart Granger (center) and **Michael Wilding** (right)
Left photo: **Marlene Dietrich** as temptress

Merv sat briefly with the blonde goddess in his living room. She was wearing a pink dress and black hosiery that highlighted her fabulous legs.

With candor, she chatted. “Taylor and I are forced to share Michael. Right now Taylor and I are also sharing Sinatra. Every time we make love, Michael tells me he cannot live without me. And then he goes home and fucks that Taylor bitch. It must be those huge breasts of hers. Michael likes them to dangle in his face.” She raised the hem of her dress slightly. “Of course, Taylor has short, dumpy legs, the legs of a peasant. Not like mine at all.”

“Miss Dietrich, your legs are legendary around the world,” Merv said. “I heard that even Hitler wanted them wrapped around him.”

She crushed out her cigarette with a certain fury, flashing her anger. “Hitler was a homosexual.”

Getting up early the next morning, Marlene had apparently forgiven Merv and had prepared him the best scrambled eggs of his life. At the door that morning, he kissed Marlene and Michael on their cheeks and invited them to use his love nest any time they wanted.

An hour later, Hadley arrived without telling Merv where he'd been all night. He expressed regret at not getting to meet Marlene and then informed Merv that he was exhausted and didn't want to be disturbed for the rest of the day.

On yet another occasion, Merv wasn't surprised to hear Michael's horny voice on the other end of his phone line. “Mind if I show up with a blonde goddess?” Michael asked.

“Bring her on,” Merv said, assuming that Michael had another date with Marlene.

At the door he was surprised to encounter a leggy and voluptuous blonde starlet. He recognized her at once, although he'd only seen one of her pictures and that was a piece of fluff called *Getting Gertie's Garter* back in 1945. Kentuckyborn Marie McDonald—a.k.a. “Miss New York of 1939”—was known in Hollywood as “The Body” and

the description fit her perfectly.

Michael went to check out the lighting within the poolhouse. When he returned, Marie looked him up and down and said in front of Merv, “I like my men rich and handsome. In Michael's case, I had to settle just for the good looks. Unless, of course, he can shake some money from Taylor's piggybank during their divorce.”

“The Body”
Marie McDonald

Michael shocked Merv when he told him that he planned to divorce Elizabeth and marry Marie. As it turned out, however, Elizabeth divorced Michael, and he never married Marie.

Marie faded from Merv's life as fast as she'd entered, but her memory lingered. Years later he got an idea for a film script. He wanted to base a movie on Marie's tumultuous life, calling the film *The Body*.

He even hired a script writer to develop it, suggesting that reallife fragments from the experiences of other “popcorn blondes” might be incorporated, including Lana Turner, Betty Grable, Betty Hutton, Marilyn Monroe, and Jayne Mansfield. Merv had followed Marie's career as she went from a pinup girl in World War II through seven husbands, addictions to alcohol and prescription drugs, arrests for drunk driving, and various suicide attempts. In 1957, she faked her own kidnapping, generating headlines worldwide when the plot unraveled.

As the years went by, Merv avidly followed the tabloid accounts of Marie's various scandals. They included a prolonged affair with the notorious gangster Bugsy Siegel. She was twice married to the shoe tycoon, Harry Karl, who went on to marry Debbie Reynolds and to lose both his and her fortunes. In her final film, a failure of a comedy entitled *Promises! Promises!* (1963), a fortyyearold Marie costarred with Jayne Mansfield, whom she bitterly disliked.

As a means of showing Marie and the rest of the world who had the better body, Jayne opted to appear topless.

The producer of that otherwise forgettable film was Marie's seventh and final husband, Donald F. Taylor. In 1965 Marie presumably killed herself with an overdose of Percodan. Taylor was suspected of murdering her, but he committed suicide shortly after her death and never went on trial.

***

The ongoing poolhouse trysts between Stewart Granger and Michael Wilding would lead to embarrassing repercussions in the years ahead. In 1962, Hedda Hopper published her candid, self-congratulatory memoir, *The Whole Truth and Nothing But.* Although within its pages she protected her friends and protégés, she used the autobiography as a mouthpiece for the airing of decades of private grudges and vendettas. She loathed Michael Wilding and outed him as a homosexual in the book. He threatened a retaliatory law-suit.

Reacting to that, Hedda summoned Merv to her house, offering him a glass of champagne.

True to her style, the gossip maven got right to the point. “I want you to testify in court that Michael Wilding is a homosexual. I know about those hot nights the cocksucker spent in your poolhouse with Stewart Granger.”

“Hedda, be reasonable,” Merv pleaded. “I can't do that.”

“You *can* do it and you will in exchange for favorable mention in my column,” she said. “I'm still powerful enough in this town to destroy a performer, especially one with your mediocre talent.”

“You didn't hear me,” he said. “I can't do it.”

“You know what I wrote is true,” she said, increasingly agitated.

“That's beside the point,” he said. “I not only can't do that for you, I won't do it!” He rose from his armchair and handed her a halfempty glass of champagne. “I didn't finish it. You can have the rest of it. I'll show myself out.”

That night Merv told Hadley, “Now and forever more, I'm officially on Hedda's Hopper's shit list.”

In the days to come Hedda would reach out to other performers, including Eddie Fisher, with the same request. Each of her prospective witnesses rejected her request to testify against Michael Wilding, even though at least some of them knew that Hedda's accusations were true.

During the months which followed, thousands of copies of the book were sold for $4.95 each to a public which demanded to know what Hedda had to reveal about the inner secrets of Hollywood's elite.

Stewart Granger weighed in with the last word. He dialed Hedda's number and shouted into the phone: “You monumental bitch! How bloody dare you accuse a friend of mine of being a queer, you raddled, dried-up, frustrated old cunt.”

***

In the early 1950s, just as the 3D vogue was dying, Merv was cast in the doomed 3D version of *Phantom of the Rue Morgue*, which was eventually released to lackluster sales in 1954. The film would mark the end of his career as a Hollywood actor, although later he'd make several final desperate and unsuccessful attempts to salvage his dream.

Cast in the role of Georges Brevert, Merv once again was directed by Roy Del Ruth, who had helmed *Three Sailors and a Girl*, in which Merv had made a minor impression in his sailor uniform. Based on a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, the *Rue Morgue* film starred Karl Malden, Patricia Medina, and Steve Forrest. Although years later Merv would write that the only time he ever met or saw Dolores Dorn was as part of their arranged “date” one night at a premiere, she too was cast in the film as Camille.

After it was released, the public understandably confused it with the previously released and roughly equivalent film *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. (Warner Brothers had used many of the same sets for both of the Rue Morgue pictures.)

Briefly during the context of the film, the character played by Merv became a suspect as the serial killer. Ironically, even the film's director, Roy Del Ruth, doubted the wisdom of the casting, saying, “No one would believe Merv playing the role of a serial killer.” The director was right.

During chats with Karl Malden, Merv jokingly referred to his part as “type casting.” He knew the actor was a close friend of Marlon Brando, having appeared with him in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Karl, a Serbian, would also appear that year in Marlon's second greatest picture, *On the Waterfront*. In reference to his role in *Phantom*, he told Merv, “Sometimes an actor has to pay his bills. To be honest, I love every movie I appear in—even the bad ones. I'm a workaholic. As long as I work, I'm happy. At least in this turkey I can camp it up as an evil mad scientist with an ape as my sidekick.”

Merv also met the female star of the picture, Patricia Medina, a voluptuous, exoticlooking leading lady who was born in Britain. She didn't look British at all, having inherited her sultry looks from her Spanish father. A veteran, she'd worked in movies since 1937 and had been famously married to the handsome English actor, Richard Greene. Patricia had already divorced him by the time she met Merv.

Within six years of their picture together, Patricia would marry Joseph Cotten, who'd starred in Merv's alltime favorite movie, *Citizen Kane* (1941), directed by Orson Welles.

In years to come, Merv would become friends with Orson and would invite him for frequent appearances on *The Merv Griffin Show*. In one confidential moment backstage, Orson told Merv that “Joseph absolutely hates you. He keeps urging me not to go on your show.”

“Why?” an astonished Merv asked. “I never put the moves on Patricia Medina.”

“Maybe you should have,” Orson said. “Joseph calls you half a man. That's how he refers to men he suspects of being homosexuals. I know in your case you're not gay, but Joseph is convinced.”

“Joseph Cotten, a homophobe?” Merv said. “I can hardly believe that.”

Orson chuckled as if he knew a secret. “Some men with a gay past feel they can cover their tracks by attacking gays. That way, they think no one will ever suspect them.”

***

Shamed by the failure of the *Rue Morgue* picture, Merv made plans “to get out of Dodge,” as he put it. But dreams die hard, and Merv seemed fated to make a few final attempts before abandoning his hopes for a career in films as a romantic lead.

Merv's great ongoing hope had involved starring as Curly McLain in the film version of *Oklahoma! (1955).* When he heard that Fred Zinnemann had been hired as its director, he requested a meeting. He'd known Fred when he'd directed *From Here to Eternity.* Receiving Merv, Fred was gracious and spared ten minutes of his time. He was

quick to share the names on the list of actors he wanted to play Curly.

“To be frank, I found an upandcoming actor who is the exact type for Curly,” Fred said. “Paul Newman. But regrettably, he lacks the singing voice needed.”

“I can sing,” Merv said. “And all my many girlfriends tell me I've got the looks.”

“Maybe. But I've got my hopes riding on another young actor who, physically at least, would be ideal.” Fred said. “James Dean.”

“You've got to be kidding,” Merv said. “I mean Dean can do the acting part, but what about the singing? You plan to dub him?”

“We'll see,” Fred said. “But under no circumstances am I going to let you play Curly. Better luck next time, kid. I know a guy who's working on a script called *The Alligator People*. Would you allow makeup to transform you into an alligator?”

“Any day now,” Merv said, heading out the door.

A few weeks later Merv called James Dean, not telling him that he, too, desperately wanted the part of Curly. James had just flown in from New York after testing for the role. He told an amusing story of getting kicked out of the lobby of the snobby Hotel Pierre because he showed up “dressed like an old cowboy wino.” He wasn't allowed to pass through the main entrance of the hotel but had instead been directed to the rear service entrance, where he took a freight elevator up to Fred's suite.

“Zinnemann loved my ‘Poor Jud Is Dead’ number with Rod Steiger,” James claimed. “Zinnemann said it was the best screen test he'd ever shot.”

“And your singing?” Merv asked. “You can sing?”

“I'm not sure yet, but I might become a singing star in film musicals if I pull this one off,” James said.

Eventually Fred decided against James, offering the *Oklahoma!* lead to a real singer, Frank Sinatra, instead. Rising from the depths of the depression he'd reached during the filming of *From Here to Eternity*, he'd leveled off in his drinking and was making a comeback. He'd signed a contract with Capitol Records, and with his more mature voice he'd go on to record a string of albums that would display his brilliance as a pop singer for decades to come. And after its release in 1955, his riveting performance as a junkie in *The Man With the Golden Arm* would eventually earn him another Oscar nomination.

When Merv called to congratulate Frank, he was shocked to learn he'd just turned down the role. “I learned the God damn thing is going to be filmed in Cinema-Scope and then again in Todd-AO,” he said. “Frank Sinatra is known as onetake Lulu. I said no way.” [Partially owned and heavily promoted by Mike Todd, Todd-AO was a highdefinition widescreen film format developed in the mid1950s by the American Optical Company in Rochester, New York. Todd memorably characterized it as “Cinerama outta one hole” because, unlike Cinerama, Todd-AO required only a single camera and only one set of lenses.]

Later that day, Merv learned that other actors were rejecting roles in *Oklahoma!*, including Betty Hutton, who'd refused the role of Annie, which would have jumpstarted her comeback. Eventually, tonedeaf Gloria Grahame got the part, singing without dubbing, which meant that her songs had to be edited together from recordings made almost literally note by note.

In quiet desperation, and without alerting Frank, Merv contacted Fred again, asking for a second chance at the role of Curly. “Too late, kid. This very morning I cast Gordon MacRae. He's got the right baritone voice. Only problem is the bastard refuses to curl his hair. Curly got his nickname from his curly locks. Gordon refuses to get a permanent. But his wife Sheila has agreed to fingercurl his hair every morning.”

“Ain't that wonderful?” Merv said. “I'm about as crazy for MacRae as Bette Davis is for Miriam Hopkins and Joan Crawford.”

***

Even though he didn't get the role of Curly, Merv was still determined and tried again. He wanted the role of Billy Bigelow in the Rodgers and Hammerstein blockbuster musical, *Carousel (1956)*. It was to be directed by Henry King, a Virginiaborn native who'd gotten his start in girly burlesque shows before breaking into “flickers” in 1912. Still going strong in the 1950s, he'd directed such previous hits as *Twelve o'clock High (1949)*, *I'd Climb the Highest Mountain (1951)*, and *The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1952)*.

In jockeying for the role, Merv used his influence with Henry Willson, who called the director and arranged a

facetoface interview for Merv. As the interview unfolded, Merv was carefully studied by a skeptical Henry. “Just what role do you think you can pull off in this film?”

“Billy Bigelow, of course,” Merv said defensively. “I know all the numbers. Can I perform for you right now or else be screen tested?”

“The only song you could sing from *Carousel* is ‘You're a Queer One, Merv Griffin,’” Henry said.

“Are you insulting me?” Merv asked.

“A mere slip of the tongue, my laddie,” Henry said. “I meant to say, ‘You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan.’ Sorry but I've already cast the leads. I'm going to ask Frank Sinatra to play Billy. The female lead's going to Judy Garland if she can hold herself together.”

That night Merv called Frank once again to congratulate him on being cast as the lead. “I've turned down the God damn part,” Frank responded. “The same way I turned down *Oklahoma!* This fucking picture's being shot twice — once in 35mm and again in 55mm. But not with me in it.”

Three weeks after Frank had prematurely rejected the juicy role, and too late for him to recoup it, studio technicians found a way to film only in 55mm, which could then be transferred onto 35mm.

In the final hour, Merv made one last, desperate plea, virtually begging Henry for the role of Billy. “You're too late, Griffin,” Henry said. “I came to my senses and offered the role to…”

Merv interrupted him, “Gordon MacRae.”

“How did you know?” Henry asked. “I haven't told anybody.”

“At night I moonlight as a fortune teller,” Merv said before putting down the phone.

Even though he'd been disappointed, Merv wanted to appear sporting about his rejection and called Judy Garland to congratulate her for being cast in *Carousel*, which he thought might be an appropriate followup to *A Star Is Born*.

“Don't congratulate me,” she said. “I'm off the picture. Henry King thinks I'm not—in his words—‘emotionally stable enough.’ He fears his God damn picture will run over budget. He cast Shirley Jones instead.”

“You've got to be kidding,” Merv said. “With you as the star, King would have had a great picture. With Jones, he'll get a mediocre one.” He failed to mention that he had secretly sought the role of Billy Bigelow for himself.

The only news emerging from the set of Carousel that delighted Merv came weeks later when he heard that Gordon MacRae had been arrested for drunk driving.

***

Despite of the ongoing rejections, Merv continued reading the trades, hoping for one last chance. One morning he read that one of his former directors, Gordon Douglas, had been designated as director of *Sincerely Yours*,a schmaltzy film about a piano player. Previously, Gordon had halfjokingly promised him the lead if he ever made a movie about a piano player.

Before his rendezvous with Gordon, Merv told Hadley, “I'm still gonna be big in Hollywood.” He paused. “Or maybe not. Wish me luck.”

“Aren't you showbiz people supposed to say ‘break a leg’ or something?” Hadley asked as Merv headed for the door.

***

Face to face with Gordon Douglas, the helmer gave it to Merv straight. “Don't make me laugh, Griffin. You, the lead in *Sincerely Yours*? Haven't you heard? The God damn sappy picture is a vehicle for America's leading faggot, Liberace.”

“Oh, I see,” Merv said. “Hollywood's first big gay picture.”

“Don't be an asshole,” Gordon said. “I've got to make Miss Sequins look straight as an arrow onscreen, with two hot pussies, Joanne Dru and Dorothy Malone, chasing after him. Joanne Dru has been fucked regularly by John Ireland, and he's got the biggest dick in Hollywood. How can I make movie audiences believe that a woman getting plowed by Ireland would go for Liberace? Much less that little hottie, Dorothy Malone. I wouldn't mind plugging that bitch myself. Frankly, I don't know what any woman would want with Liberace. Or any man for that matter. He's not my type. If I were gay, I'd rather fuck you than Liberace.” He answered a call from his secretary. “Say, if

you stick around for fifteen minutes, I'll introduce you to the piano player himself. Seeing this guy still isn't believing it."

"No thanks," Merv said. "I'd better go. Sorry to take up your time."

"It's okay, kid," he said. "Don't feel too bad. Some guys aren't suited to make it in the movies, and you're one of them. You're too much of a nice guy. Too weak. No charisma. Not ruggedly masculine enough. John Wayne and Gary Cooper, even Clark Gable, allowed guys to suck their dicks when they were young and trying to get ahead. But they project a sense of macho on screen. You just can't do that."

"I'm a singer, not a cowboy," Merv said.

"Why don't you consider doing lounge acts in night clubs?" Gordon said. "Forget that big band shit—those days are over. You can still sing, right?"

"Better than ever, and I'm about to open in Las Vegas," Merv said defensively. "My opening is gonna get national coverage."

"Sure, kid," Gordon said, looking down at his papers. "Don't slam the door on your way out."

Heading for his car, Merv stopped to watch a purplecolored Lincoln Executive limousine pull up. From behind the wheel emerged a startlingly handsome and very tall chauffeur in a pink uniform, tall black boots, and a gold hat. He grandly opened the rear door. Out emerged the flamboyant showman himself, the one, the only Liberace, darling of bluehaired grannies from coast to coast.

From the blasting radio in front came the song "Mr. Sandman" by the Chordettes with the line, "wavy hair like Liberace."

Emerging from the limousine, Liberace reached back for his white cape, as the chauffeur excused himself to go to the studio's men's room.

Not meaning to stand there staring like a rubbernecker, Merv resumed his steps without acknowledging the showman. "Hey, I know you," Liberace called out. "You're Merv Griffin. I once heard you sing with Freddy Martin's band. I love your voice. Do you want to come on my show? We could do that Coconuts I number. I'll even rent a monkey and dress him in sequins. It'll be a laugh riot."

Merv was flabbergasted that this flow of words—even a job offer—would come from the syrupy mouth of this showbiz eccentric before he'd even said a word. "Hi, indeed…I'm Merv Griffin, as you said." He reached to shake the entertainer's hand.

Liberace withdrew his paw as if it were burned on the stove. "I can't shake hands," he said. "I have to protect my mitts for the piano." Merv looked down and was astonished to see Liberace wearing seven rings, each of them as large as a fat escargot.

"I was born Wladziu Valentino Liberace," he said, "but I've been billed as Walter Busterkeys, Walter Liberace, Lee Liberace, Liberace Chefroach, or else The Glitter Man. My friends call me Lee. You can call me Lee."

"Where in hell did you come up with a name like Chefroach?" Merv asked. "I don't know you well enough to call you Lee, but I do admire your work. I've watched every one of your shows. I must say I'm a bit envious. I too play the piano, but not like you."

"No one does, you dear sweet thing," Liberace said. "I'm unique." He leaned over to whisper something in Merv's ear. "I hear we share someone in common."

Onstage and over the top with **Liberace**

"Who, pray, might that be, other than the piano?"

"We've both known Rock Hudson as David knew Bathsheba," Liberace said. "I got Rock back when he was a struggling actor and playing an Indian in the movies. Quite a tomahawk he carries around."

“I know.” Merv was taken back that Liberace knew any detail about his private life.

“We have even more things in common,” Liberace said. “Rosemary Clooney told me about your new boyfriend, Hadley Morrell. That darling boy lived with me once for three weeks, but I had to get rid of him. Too clinging. I need my freedom.”

Merv was astonished. “You and Hadley? He never said anything.”

“Hadley's paying you a great compliment in linking up with you,” Liberace said. “He's a starfucker. If he's hitched his wagon to yours, it means he thinks you're going to the moon. He thinks you'll be big.” He glanced at his rings. “And rich.” Then he checked his diamondstudded watch. “I think I'm going to be late for my appointment with Mr. Douglas. He's directing my new picture. It's called *Sincerely Yours*.”

“I've heard about it,” Merv said in a soft voice.

“Say, I have this great idea,” Liberace said. “I'm throwing a little dinner party tonight for the Queen of Hollywood. No, I wasn't describing myself, you darling. I'd like you and Hadley to be my guests. It'd be a delight to see that stud one more time.”

“Oh, I don't think so,” Merv said, “but thank you anyway. Just out of curiosity, who do you mean, the Queen of Hollywood? There are so many who fit that description.”

Liberace laughed. “Mae West, you dear thing,” he said. “If you doubt it, ask her.”

“Hot damn,” Merv said. “I'd swim a moat filled with alligators and crocodiles to meet Mae West. I think she's the cat's pajamas.”

“Darling, you've got to update your vocabulary. *Cat's pajamas* was something to say back in the days when Clara Bow was fucking that divine Gary Cooper.”

At that point the chauffeur came back from the men's room. “This is my driver, Paul Richardson,” Liberace said. The driver shook Merv's hand and smiled smugly as if he knew all about Merv.

Before his exit, Liberace whispered in Merv's ear, “He's hung down to his knees.”

After Liberace's departure, Paul made arrangements to pick Merv and Hadley up at seventhirty that evening.

As Paul drove off with Liberace in the back seat, Merv stood staring at their dust. That scene with Liberace had happened so fast he suspected that it might have been a mirage. The Los Angeles sun seemed to be frying his brain. *Liberace and Hadley*. It was a mindboggling concept.

Merv drove home, his heart beating fast. He had a few things to discuss with Hadley before the evening's upcoming dinner party.

As he steered his car down the street where he lived, he said, almost as a whisper to himself, “Mae West! My God. I don't have a thing to wear.”

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In red silk lounging pajamas, Liberace received Merv and Hadley at his spectacularly overthetop home. He kissed both Merv and Hadley on the lips and told Hadley that he'd missed him but was happy to learn “you've found a good home with Merv here.”

“You make me sound like some stray dog being passed around from master to master,” Hadley said defensively.

“When you work the kennel, that's how the game is played, my darling boy,” Liberace smirked, inviting them inside.

Hadley preferred to anchor at the bar, while Liberace shared his house treasures with Merv. After all, Hadley had seen it all before. During the tour, Liberace showed off an exquisitely crafted desk that he claimed had been the property of Louis XV at the Court of Versailles. Merv even got to bounce up and down on a bed once slept in by Rudolph Valentino and one of his lesbian wives. Back in the living room, Liberace invited Merv to play a piano which had once belonged to Fréderic Chopin.

Paul Richardon had gone upstairs to change out of his pink chauffeur's uniform. Coming down the stairs to take drink orders, he emerged this time as the waiter. He wore some Basquelike outfit with a white shirt open to reveal his sixpack stomach and tight black trousers with a red sash fastened around his waist. He even wore a pink beret, a gift from Liberace. When Paul was out of earshot, Merv whispered to Liberace, “You really know how to pick ‘em.”

“You should see my rejects,” Liberace said.

“If only I could be so lucky.”

At the ring of the doorbell, Liberace became hysterical. “My God, it's Mae. She's right on time.” Standing in front of a fulllength mirror, he asked everybody, “How do I look?”

“Loverly,” Merv assured him.

Paul tried to answer the door, but Liberace blocked his movement, preferring the honor for himself. Merv, who would later describe every nuance of the evening to his friends, said that “Mae West really knows how to make a grand entrance.”

“Hello, boys,” she said. “Feast your eyes on a real woman!” She stood under the glittering hallway chandelier for an inspection. Pink was her color of choice, from her satin gown to her satin shoes, and of course, for her fluttering feather boa as well. She also wore an ermine stole and diamonds — more than enough to justify those clichéridden comparisons to *Diamond Lil*.

Before her introduction to Merv, Mae sized up both Paul and Hadley, beginning at their toes and spending far too long evaluating the potential of their crotches. “I've had the Montana Mule, Gary Cooper. And Mr. King Size, Steve Cochran. Oh, yes, and Mickey Hargitay, Mr. Universe as you know. If I recall, “beer can” David Niven had the time of his life, and even though he denies it, I've had everything that Anthony Quinn has got. There was Black Snake George Raft, and Bugsy Siegel carried his gun in the right place. A few moons ago, Mr. America, Richard DuBois, fell big for me. Even Harry Houdini didn't escape Mae's trap.” Mae had the habit of sometimes referring to herself in the third person.

After a final onceover of both Paul and Hadley, she said, “Unless Mae is very, very wrong, and I'm never wrong about such things, I'd say you two studs have all those boys I mentioned beat. I bet I could take you two hunks from these two queens quicker than it takes Cary Grant to ejaculate. He was always premature, you know.” She smiled as Paul eased her fur from her shoulders. Putting one hand on her hip, she said, “Mae never has to take her clothes off in front of the camera like the Marilyn Monroe or the Jayne Mansfield sluts of today. Men can imagine what's underneath. Adolph Zukor once said, ‘When I look at that dame's tits, I know what lust means.’”

“Mae, when I look you over, I know that you're the only woman in the world who could convert me,” Liberace gushed.

She cast a skeptical eye toward him. “At least you're dressed for me. I hear you play the organ. Just how well do you play the organ?”

“Just ask Paul or Hadley,” he said. “Either boy. They can give eyewitness testimonials to my talent.” Giggling, he reached for Merv's arm. “Oh, yes, Mae West meet Merv Griffin.”

“Oh, yeah, the big band singer.” She sounded a bit dismissive. “I've already had two of the boys in the Freddy Martin band. But I'm sure you beat me to ‘em.”

Embarrassed at her candor, he said, “Miss West, the greatest honor of my life. To me, you'll always be *My Little Chickadee*.”

“Dream on, sugartit,” she said. “I'm too much woman for you. I could take on Paul and Hadley both, leave them exhausted, as I screamed for round two to come on. But if you guys love me so much, you could do Mae a big favor. Get Rock Hudson to ball me. I haven't sampled him yet. Have you both had him?”

Liberace confirmed that they had.

“Well, I hear he likes to fuck Golden Age stars. Jon Hall. Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power. Even that slutty dyke Joan Crawford. I'm sure Marlene Dietrich is running after that alleged ten and a half inches. Marlene tried to get my honeypot, but Mae doesn't make it with lesbians. Don't forget. Get Rock to come up and see me sometime.”

“Mae, I'll see that he's delivered with a pink bow tied around it,” Liberace promised, as he ushered Mae into his candlelit living room. Paul took her order for green tea, as she said she didn't “touch the hard stuff, unless it's attached to a man.”

Then, before the evening had really begun, she warned Merv and Liberace, “Mae works solo. Not even W.C. Fields could steal a scene from me. If there are any oneliners to be delivered tonight, Mae herself will do the honors.”

As Merv would later tell his friends, “Lee might wear more elaborate costumes on stage, but for sheer flamboyance, no one topped Mae West. She might call herself a real woman, but I've had my doubts. I think all those rumors about her being a drag queen are true. She's the mother of all female impersonators. In fact, I think she invented the gig just for herself.”

Within the hour, Liberace bounced up out of his chair, announcing that he was to be the chef of the evening. “All the recipes are from my book, *Liberace Cooks!* ” he said.

“I'm glad you're the chef,” Hadley said. “Merv's idea of cooking is to overboil spaghetti, then heat up catsup to

pour over it."

"I'm sure the dear boy is good at other things," Liberace said, leading the way to the kitchen with an impish wink.

Merv was going to escort Mae, but Paul beat him to it. Looking up into his eyes, she said, "I've always had a healthy appetite both for the wellendowed male like yourself and for food that is aphrodisiac. Ever since Eve gave that apple to Adam, women have known down through the centuries what foods they should feed men to stimulate them sexually."

"I never knew that," Merv said.

Rhinestones, kleig lights, and Über-camp
Mae West with **Liberace**

"Tonight Lee and I will share some of our secrets in attracting men, other than our stunning good looks," Mae said.

Mae was speaking strictly privately. In the more public forum of her 1975 book, *Mae West on Sex, Health, and ESP*, she claimed, "I've never relied on food to turn on the guys in my life!"

Propped on a stool, she suggested that there was something to the ancient belief that a man could stimulate his sex drive by eating the sexual organs of animals, especially those of a bull. "I once hired a Spanish chef from Barcelona, who prepared the most divine bull's testicles. I fed them to my men and found that after eating them they could go all night. Of course, in the case of Steve Cochran, he didn't need any stimulation at all." She turned to Merv, "But, dearie, I'm sure you know that already after sharing that dressing room with him."

Merv was surprised that Mae even knew his name, much less the identity of a man he'd seduced.

Sensing his surprise, she said, "I might not have made a picture since 1943, but Mae knows what's going on in this town. A cockroach doesn't cross Hollywood Boulevard without getting Mae's permission."

As Liberace, wearing a red apron, stood over his range, putting the finishing touches on dinner, Mae warned him to "cool it with the spices. I don't believe in using too many, perhaps a bit of curry. I have discovered, however, that a bit of freshly ground pepper in a dish can get a man's sexual glands working overtime."

Over an elaborate dinner table set with gold tableware, Mae claimed she always enjoyed an evening out "with the boys. Ever since my days in vaudeville, you boys have always adored Mae. I've always been your champion. I remember when the cops on Broadway in the 20s launched a cleanup campaign in the district and started roughing up you boys. I called the flatfeet together and gave them a piece of my mind. I reminded them that when they were clubbing one of you, they actually were beating up on a lady. After that, they let up on you homosexuals."

"Mae is an expert on homosexuals," Liberace said with a touch of mockery in his voice.

She did not pick up on this subtle put-down, accepting it as gospel. "That's because I understand you boys," she said. "Homosexuality comes from the soul. When a man is born with a female soul, he becomes homosexual. When a male soul is trapped in a woman's body, she becomes a lesbian. It's an accident of nature. I have nothing but pity for you homosexuals."

"I'm sure some of us don't want your pity," Hadley said. "We're having too much fun."

For the first time that evening, she seemed insulted but she carefully masked it. "Some homosexuals—obviously not the brightest—just think they're having a good time. They're deluding themselves. In fact, gay sex is only a form of masturbation. In the end, it doesn't satisfy."

Merv laughed at the *double entendre*, even though she didn't seem to realize why.

"Only sex between a man and a woman can satisfy," she went on. "Also gay sex is only transitory. Most gays end up sad old aunties."

Mae's pronouncements were met with stony silence at table. She got up to excuse herself to go to the toilet to repair her makeup.

After she'd left the room, Merv in a soft voice said to Liberace, “I can't believe what I just heard. Mae West a homophobe? What if her millions of gay fans knew that? They'd turn against her, and they're the only fans she has left.”

“The poor dear was born back in the Stone Age of 1893,” Liberace said. “For a woman of that century, Mae is considered enlightened. After all, she wrote that play *Drag* in the 1920s.”

“I'm sure drag is something on which she is an expert,” Merv said sarcastically.

Later that evening, the entire party went once again to Liberace's kitchen where he served Mae's favorite dessert, rice custard. Over her second helping, she talked about her novel, *Babe Gordon*, which had first been published in 1930. With the help of some collaborators, she had adapted it into the Broadway play, *The Constant Sinner*. “I deliberately set out to offend public taste. Let my critics scream, but I had them lined up with erections for me at the box office. I based the character of Babe on myself. Call me a daughter of joy. The French, or so I was told, call women like me *les femmes amoureuses*. We're not talking street walkers here. Daughters of joy might be the lowest tramp on the street or a queen in the fanciest of boudoirs. People have called Mae immoral. How wrong they are. Like my character of Babe Gordon, I'm non-moral.”

Before departing that night—“I've got to get my beauty sleep”—Mae gave Merv some unsolicited career advice. “If you want to succeed in show business, you've got to have a gimmick, a personality that audiences can immediately identify. With me, all I have to do is flash some diamonds. Perhaps walk across the stage in my distinctive way. I have my costumes — my spectacular hats, my hipswirled gowns. Lee here takes after me. All he has to do is swish out onto the stage in bejeweled drag and seat himself at his glasstopped piano with his flickering candelabra. The world will get to know you, Griffin, if you find a gimmick. That's what show business is all about. Jean Harlow was nothing until she discovered peroxide. Monroe followed her example. Veronica Lake had those peekaboo bangs. When she cut them off, her career was over. You've got to create a vivid personality to get the suckers to part with their greenbacks. Get a gimmick, for God's sake. Being a bland Mr. Nice Guy doesn't make it in show business. Maybe in hardware. It's okay to sing those romantic ballads. But crooners are a dime a dozen. You've got to get a sound like Frank Sinatra. Hell, you don't need a great voice to become a sensation as a singer. Billie Holiday, when she wasn't drugged, thrilled audiences and she couldn't sing a note. But we listened to her. Take Louis Armstrong and that foghorn voice. See how far you can go even with no talent.”

“I'll take your advice, Miss West,” Merv promised.

And suddenly the evening came to an abrupt end, Merv remembering Mae's departure as a vision in pink encased in ermine. That vision would remain in his memory forever.

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“Ain't Mae grand?” Liberace asked, settling himself later on a chaise longue by his pianoshaped pool.

“Narcissistic as hell and maybe touched in the head with some of those opinions, but completely adorable,” Merv said.

As Hadley and Paul came out onto the patio, Liberace asked the two men to take off their clothes and go skinnydipping in his pool. “That would amuse Merv and *moi*,” he said.

Without the slightest hesitation, Hadley stripped down like he'd done so many times before and jumped into the pool. Like a professional stripteaser, Paul slowly removed his Basque outfit. Standing before the two voyeurs, he took off his white shirt, revealing a powerful chest—long, lean, and beautifully muscled. A thin line of golden hairs trickled from the center of his chest to his navel, contrasting with the rich tan of his entire body. His broad pectoral muscles tapered to a slim waist. Merv looked on with anxious excitement. The pathway of Paul's golden hair led to a curly, lustrous bush of golden pubic hair. His extremities—legs, fingers, and arms were lean, his cock long and thick. After he was assured that both had taken a satisfying look, he ran to the edge of the pool, jumping in to join a nude Hadley. The two men yelled and splashed about in the water.

Alone at last:
Liberace at home

“That is some piece of meat,” Merv said.

“Let's make a deal,” Liberace said. “I can have Paul any night, but I'd like to shack up tonight with Hadley for old time's sake. You can take Paul to my guest room for fun and games. A deal?”

“You're on, buddy” Merv said. “There are side benefits to our friendship that I am only now beginning to realize,” Merv said.

“You ain't seen nothing yet, Fannie Mae,” Liberace promised.

Merv would later confide to Paul Schone and Bill Robbins. “Paul Richardson took me into dreamland. I'd been a good boy until I met Liberace. But I have a feeling he's going to teach me how to live. You can say that that night at his house officially launched me into my Age of Decadence. Incidentally, my new nickname for him is Sadie. He calls me Fannie Mae.”

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Merv appeared on the set of *East of Eden,* released in 1955, for a reunion with James Dean. The two men had talked and smoked cigarettes for only fifteen minutes during a break in filming before they noticed two other men walking toward them.

Merv immediately recognized both figures. One was Humphrey Bogart, the other was Solly Biano, head of casting at Warner's. Under his breath, Merv whispered to James, “I hope Solly does more for your career than he did for mine.”

Ignoring Merv, Solly introduced Bogie to the rising young star, who completely avoided eye contact with the screen legend. Solly had thought that Bogie and James would hit it off, because both of them were graduates of the “I Don't Give a Fuck” school.

“They say you're the hot new rebel in Hollywood,” Bogie said. “I remember when they said the same thing about me. Welcome to the Rebel Club.” Bogie shook James' hand, but the young actor did not look him in the eye. Still the gentleman, Bogie complimented James on his acting technique. That brought no response from James at all and he continued to stare at his own feet.

“They say you're great, kid,” Bogie said.

“Yeah,” James said. “So they say, whoever in the fuck *they* are. As if I give a good God damn rooster's asshole what people think of me.”

That was too much for Bogie. He grabbed James by his jacket and yanked him around. “Look me in the eyes, you little cocksucker! When I talk to you, show some respect. I was wrong about you. You're just another stupid little punk with skid marks on your underwear. Another Brando clone. Just what Hollywood doesn't need. In two fucking years from now, no one will ever have heard of you.” He shoved James back, nearly knocking him down.

Merv stood with Solly, as both of them looked perplexed as Bogie in a rage stormed off the set. James watched him go with a stunned expression on his face. “I never saw *Casablanca*,” he said, “and I don't intend to. But I hear that Mr. Bogart plays a queer who ends up with Claude Rains and not Ingrid Bergman.” He turned and walked away. That was the last time Merv ever saw him.

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Even though his contract had less than three months to go, Merv wanted out. From out of nowhere, he'd received a surprise call with the offer of a gig, but was told “to keep your mouth shut until I announce the damn thing myself.” To deal with his hurt pride, Merv had mentioned the gig only once to Gordon Douglas, but hadn't filled him in on any of the details.

Since his days in Hollywood were obviously numbered, Merv, along with Hadley and his other friends, began to throw a number of farewell parties. In many cases he invited men (and often their wives) with whom he'd enjoyed brief affairs.

One Sunday afternoon Jack Warner arrived on his doorstep without an invitation. Merv was astonished to see him. “Griffin, you've been to at least two dozen parties at my house, and you've never invited me once to one of your parties. Can I come in?”

When Jack was ushered into Merv's living room, the other guests, including Peter Lawford, Aldo Ray, Rock Hudson, and Janet Leigh were stunned. They became subdued in the presence of such a powerful studio mogul. After all, each of them might be up for a Warner Brothers movie in the future. But Jack put everybody at ease and became the life of the party, playing “Tea for Two” on Merv's old piano or else tapdancing like Ann Miller on the blackandwhite tiles of the kitchen floor.

At one point Merv and Jack sat by his pool devouring barbecue. The studio chief spotted Merv's Uncle Elmer across the way. “Who's the fatso?” Jack asked.

“That's my Uncle Elmer,” Merv said. “The best tennis player in Los Angeles.”

“Oh, yeah?” Jack said. “What am I? Chopped liver? I'll challenge him to a game next Sunday at my place. I'll give him Bill Orr—he's a really good partner—and I'll take Solly Biano. You can call Bill and Solly and make the arrangements,” Jack said. “I'm too busy turning down script proposals from Joan Crawford. I hear even that old broad, Bette Davis, wants me to take her back.”

Before the tennis match that Sunday, Jack called two dozen of his friends, inviting them to “watch me beat the fat ass off Merv Griffin's uncle. He's Jackie Gleason plus two. I'll clobber him.”

At the actual game, Merv sat under the shade of a giant peppermintstriped umbrella with Doris Day and Judy Garland, sipping sweet ice tea. Judy spiked hers from a flask in her purse. Doris complimented Judy for her performance in *A Star Is Born*, and then concentrated on the game and seemed genuinely interested. Merv later claimed that “Judy looked as amused as she would have been at a lecture on the mating habits of caterpillars.”

The aging Uncle Elmer defeated the studio chief six love. No one did that and still drew a paycheck at Warners. Upon losing the game, Jack was in a steaming rage, so angry in fact that he threw his tennis racket across the court at Merv, narrowly missing his head.

The next day Merv showed up at Jack's office and told him he wanted out of his contract. “I mean, all your stars are gone. Who have you got left under contract these days? Doris and me? You need her. You don't need me.”

“Five thousand and you're free as a bird,” Jack said.

Merv wrote him a check on the spot. In front of Merv, Jack tore up the check after extracting a promise from Merv that he would not work for another studio for the next two years.

“I'm heading for New York and a live audience once again,” Merv said.

Later that night he told Hadley that he'd counted on Jack tearing up that check. “Let's face it. We don't have five thousand dollars in the bank.”

That same night Merv also told Hadley, “We're going to Vegas.” Only a few nights before, he'd received a drunken phone call from Tallulah Bankhead, who remembered him from his appearance on *The Big Show*, her NBC radio program back in 1951. She didn't request but demanded that he be her opening act for her upcoming debut at the Sands Hotel.

Jack Warner would appear one final time in Merv's life when he gave his only television interview on December 14, 1972, on *The Merv Griffin Show*. He and Merv talked about the good old days in the heyday of Hollywood. Merv's former boss told anecdotes about Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Humphrey Bogart, and even Al Jolson. As one of the prime players in Golden Age Hollywood, he embarrassed Merv by launching into what Merv later called a “Queegian rant” (a phrase inspired by the tyrannical Captain Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny)* about the new standards of Hollywood.

Jack attacked the new permissiveness and even defended the honor of the American flag against “pinko Communists.” The studio audience applauded his John Wayne politics and Jack's stand for the American way of life, motherhood, and apple pie. Even though the audience cheered the patriotic comments, the old showman seemed to realize belatedly that his remarks would be condemned by much of young America. The appearance was his last and

only television interview.

In the few years that remained, Merv heard that Jack was slowly fading, the oncemocking, buoyant “Prince of Hollywood” ending up sitting lifeless in a wheelchair, his eyes vacant, no longer knowing the old stars who came to call. Eventually he was shut off from even those visitors.

At the Cedars-Sinai Hospital, he died on September 9, 1978, at the age of eightysix. “I'll miss the old fart,” Merv said upon hearing the news. “In some hidden place in my heart, I sorta loved the monster. At least he gave the most fabulous parties in Hollywood. People don't know how to give parties like that any more. The party's over.”

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Merv left Hadley behind in Hollywood to pack up their possessions and close down the house, perhaps sprucing it up for the next rental. No one wanted the owner to assess damages to the property in the wake of the residency of Merv, his friends, and their many wild parties.

“While I'm doing the gig in Vegas, I don't want you to be the Slut of Hollywood,” Merv warned Hadley. “Don't pick up something you can't get rid of, and, if you do, don't pass it on to me.”

Hadley promised to be a good boy, although Merv heard that on only the second night of his stint in Vegas, Hadley was already in bed with Henry Willson, who was promising to make him a bigger movie star than Rock Hudson.

Henry had tactfully asked Paul Schone to move on. “Stardom isn't in the cards for you, kid,” Henry had told the terribly disappointed young man.

“I noticed you waited to tell me this until after you'd sucked me dry,” Paul said in protest.

“Nature has a marvelous way of replenishing the *leche* I drained,” Henry assured him.

Disgusted with Hollywood agents and their promises, Paul took a job as a waiter in West Hollywood to earn enough money to resettle in New York along with Merv.

Bill Robbins was also disappointed that his career as an impersonator wasn't taking off. On the final night of his previous gig, he'd worked for no salary—only tips—netting only ten dollars. He'd promised Merv that he too would be joining him in New York as soon as he got some money together. “It's a known fact,” Bill said, “that New Yorkers appreciate female impersonators more than the idiots who inhabit the hills of Hollywood.”

In a goodbye call to Johnny Riley in San Francisco, Merv learned that his longtime friend was fed up with “going nowhere day after day.” He wanted Merv to rent an apartment in New York “with a spare room for me.” He promised that he'd be joining Merv and Hadley in New York in just a few weeks. “I should have been a star by now,” Johnny said.

“Tell me about it!” Merv said.

“In New York, I bet all of us will hit it big,” Johnny said.

“Something like that!” a more skeptical Merv replied.

In a final call to Merv before flying to Las Vegas, Tallulah had told him, “Bette Davis got to play me in *All About Eve*. But at least I got to play Margo Channing on radio, and everybody told me I was better than that Davis bitch. Patsy Kelly and I went to see Jane Wyman, another bitch, in *Magnificent Obsession*. Wyman, so I'm told, got to fuck Rock Hudson. I decided after watching that damn stinker that I too wanted to fuck ‘The Rock.’ During all those years in bed with Ronald Reagan, I'm sure Wyman didn't learn anything about sex. I decided the next time I head west, I'm going to hit the Rock pile. I'm sure he'll know how to get my rocks off. After all, the only reason I came to Hollywood in the first place in the early 1930s was to fuck that divine Gary Cooper.”

Her chance to snare Rock occurred when she'd signed with The Sands in Las Vegas for *An Evening with Tallulah Bankhead*, for which she was to be paid $20,000 a week. That was far less than Marlene Dietrich or Liberace could pull in, but Tallulah welcomed the $60,000 for a threeweek stint. “I'm glad to see some hard cash flowing in,” she told Merv. “The wolf is always at my door, dah-ling.”

According to her agreement with The Sands, she had to appear on stage for only 45 minutes. She'd liked Merv's singing when he'd appeared on *The Big Show*, and she told The Sands she wanted him to open her act. “He's harmless enough, dah-ling, and won't be so sensational as to take the attention away from the *real* star of the show,” Tallulah told Jack Entratter, the entertainment director. “He likes to suck cock, and I'm sure you can fix him up with some of your betterhung waiters.”

Also appearing as warmup acts were the Clark Brothers and the singer Virginia Hall. These performers, along

with Merv, would be backed up by the Ray Sinatra Orchestra.

From Los Angeles, he migrated to Las Vegas, checking into a suite of his own at The Sands. He called Tallulah for a reunion, and she invited him to come up at once.

He was ushered into her suite by Patsy Kelly, one of the screen's best lowbrow ladies of mirth, always good for a biting barb and a disgruntled look in any film in which she was cast. Merv had heard that Patsy and Tallulah were lesbian lovers when they couldn't find more enticing partners. The fading actress was hung over. “Go on into Tallulah's bedroom,” she told Merv. “She's expecting you. I'm going back to bed. I feel like shit.”

In Tallulah's bedroom, Merv didn't see the fabled star. “Tallulah,” he called out. “It's Merv.”

“Come on in, dah-ling,” she called from the bathroom.

Figuring she was applying her makeup, he stepped into the bathroom only to discover her sitting stark naked on the toilet, taking a big, smelly dump. “Don't be afraid, dah-ling,” she called to him as he started to make a speedy exit. “Receiving you this way is a sign of affection. It's also a power play to show you who's boss. Lyndon Johnson has business conferences with his fellow senators while sitting on the can. I learned the trick from him. Don't tell Lady Bird, but Lyndon fucked me one night in Washington after a reception. He's got the biggest dick in Texas.”

“Let's talk when you get dressed,” an embarrassed Merv said.

She held up her not altogether fallen breasts for him to inspect. “These jugs in their day used to drive John Barrymore crazy. I just had them lifted, and I had to show someone. You're it, you lucky pervert. You're the first man who's seen them other than the surgeon.”

“I'm honored…” he stammered.

“Tell all your straight friends, if you have any, that Tallulah Bankhead's in town and ready to receive. Spread the word that my tits look like those of a sixteen-year-old virgin. That'll have the boys knocking on the door to my boudoir at all hours of the day and night.”

For her opening night, some of the biggest stars in Hollywood showed up. The most honored guests were the most famous couple of television, Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball. Wearing a gold lamè dress and looking stunning, Marlene Dietrich sat beside the nation's most celebrated redhead and the Cuban bandleader. Friends of Merv's, Montgomery Clift and Jane Powell, were seated in the front row.

Tallulah
(“What's left of her, *daaahling*”)
Bankhead

Before the show, Monty had stopped by Merv's suite for a big kiss and a hello. “I couldn't miss the chance to see Tallulah fall on that well-worn ass of hers,” he said. “I met the bitch in the late 40s. No good memories there. She groped me frantically. ‘Where do you hide it, dah-ling?’ she asked me. ‘I can't feel a thing.’” He did a perfect imitation of Tallulah's voice. “A man doesn't forget a put-down like that.”

With shaky knees, Merv got through his opening numbers. He felt rusty appearing again before a live audience.

The crowd rose to its feet when Tallulah belatedly made her appearance. Heavily made up to cheat on time, she looked stunning in a sparkling white Hattie Carnegie gown. In her best baritone drawl, she sang “What Do I Care?” and “You Go to My Head.” At the end of those numbers, she tapped the microphone. “dah-lings,” she said, “it's the mike that's flat—not me.”

Her singing was followed by dead accurate impressions, including a devastating one of her favorite actress, Ethel Barrymore. Tallulah brought screams of laughter, especially from her gay male fans, when she imitated Bette Davis in *Beyond the Forest*.

“Tallulah's ‘What a dump!’ line was better than a thousand female impersonators,” Merv later said.

“Bette impersonated *me* in *All About Eve*,” Tallulah told the firstnighters. “So it's okay for me to take my revenge.”

Knowing that Marlene was in the front row, Tallulah performed a caricature of her slutty appearance in *The Blue Angel*. Later that evening, Lucille Ball told Merv, “Marlene wasn't impressed.”

Tallulah was less caustic and more sympathetic quoting Dorothy Parker's “The Waltz.” She ended her performance with a tender and rather nostalgic “I'll Be Seeing You,” which brought the soldout room to its feet.

For her curtain call, Tallulah stepped in front of the audience and delivered her favorite lines of poetry, which happened to be from Edna St. Vincent Millay.

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends,
It gives a lovely light.

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Backstage, Tallulah in a makeupsmeared white robe greeted her wellwishers. When Marlene came into the overcrowded room to kiss Tallulah, she opened her robe to expose her newly lifted breasts to her. In a loud voice Tallulah told Marlene, “dah-ling, I know you're ashamed of your breasts, and I don't want to make you jealous. But let's face it: Marilyn Monroe doesn't have knockers like this pair.”

“Oh, Tallulah,” Marlene said. “It's true that in America no one with good taste ever succeeded in show business.”

Privately smoking a cigarette with Desi Arnaz, Merv recalled their meeting in San Diego with Cesar Romero. “Just between us fellows, you look great tonight,” Merv said to Desi. “You look even better without your pants on.”

“Maybe you'll get lucky one night when I don't have any other place to put it,” Desi said. “Perhaps I'll let you sample the goodies if I'm drunk enough. I like to throw you girly men a bone every now and then.”

“I can't wait,” Merv said.

On the second night, Merv could not appear because he'd lost his voice. “It's the God damn desert virus,” Jack Entratter told him. “I book acts into The Sands all the time. It's amazing how many performers—both men and women—come down with this sore throat.”

Merv appraised Jack from head to toe, finding him the most physically rugged and the biggest man he'd ever seen in Vegas. “I bet before you became an entertainment director, you were a bouncer. Am I right?”

“Cut the shit,” Jack said. “I've seen the way you've been checking me out. Cool it! I don't go that way. Just get your voice back by tomorrow night, and everything will be fine.”

With his voice back the next night, Merv finished the engagement and later pronounced it, “the most exciting gig of my life.” He would talk privately for years with his friends about all the fun he had hanging out in Las Vegas with Tallulah, the tempestuous heroine of the Broadway stage, several bad films, and one good one—*Lifeboat* (1944) directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

Three days went by before Tallulah invited Merv to her suite again. She had avoided him when he had laryngitis, because she said she always picked up the symptoms of anyone sick. “Not only that,” she said, “but if a person stutters around me, I stutter; if he's got a tick, I involuntarily pick up that tick, even though I don't mean to mimic. Just fifteen minutes with Louis Armstrong, and I'm speaking in foghorn.”

Invited for morning coffee, Merv was ushered into Tallulah's suite, where he was greeted by Patsy, who was hung over once again. She directed him to the sofa in the living room. “Make yourself at home,” she said. “Jerk off. Do what you want. I'm hitting the sack again till mid-afternoon.”

Staring at the walls, Merv heard sounds coming from the bedroom. The door opened. Instead of Tallulah, out emerged Rock Hudson with an impressive erection at half-mast.

“Rock!” Merv said in total surprise. “You and Tallu?” I can't believe it. President Eisenhower in that bedroom I could believe, even Queen Elizabeth II. But Tallulah Bankhead!”

“Stranger things happen during the Hollywood mating season,” he said, moving toward Merv. “Now gimme a kiss and be quick about it.”

Jumping up from the sofa, Merv attempted to kiss Rock on the lips. “Not there, dumbdumb,” Rock said. He took his big hand and clasped it around the back of Merv's neck, lowering him to the floor. His erection was now at full mast.

Rock had been shacked up with Tallulah only for the weekend and had to return to Hollywood that Monday afternoon. After kissing both Merv and Tallulah goodbye, he wished them the best of good luck during their return to New York, where they'd each pursue their separate goals. Tallulah would have to face a fading career, and Merv would have to confront no career at all.

Tallulah immediately spat on the carpet, then explained her bizarre action. “Any time someone wishes me good luck, I spit. Wishing someone good luck is a bad omen.”

“The next time you're in Los Angeles, I'll be your escort,” Rock told her before turning to Merv. “I'll call you in New York. Sing to make Frank Sinatra lose his hardon.”

After stepping into the hall, he stuck his head back in the door. Addressing Merv, he said, “Speaking of the devil, I ran into Sinatra last night in the casino. He wants to hook up with you. Give him a call.”

“What about your mama here?” Tallulah asked. “Doesn't Frank want to fuck *me*? I'm not Ava Gardner, but hardly buttermilk either.”

“Next time I see Frankie, I'll run that offer by him,” Rock said with a departing smile.

After Rock's departure, Tallulah evaluated him to Merv: “I'm sure you've had him too. You boys in Hollywood always pass around the big meat. Rock is a walking streak of sexpure testosterone. He's more masculine than any of those fag-gots—Clark Gable, Burt Lancaster, Robert Mitchum. They exude masculinity on the screen, but I know their past histories. All of them have taken it up the ass, at least when they were breaking into the business. Rock may be a big homo, but he's more man than any of those limp-wristed fag-gots.”

“I wouldn't exactly call Gable, Mitchum, and Lancaster limp-wristed fag-gots,” Merv said.

“So I exaggerated to make a point,” she said. “It's the first time in my life I've ever stretched the truth. I'm from Alabama. One mark of a Southerner is that he always tells the truth—no tall tales.” She cackled and reached for her drink.

Rock's friendship with Tallulah didn't end at The Sands. He would remain a fixture in her life and would continue to see both Merv and her. When Tallulah flew into Los Angeles, Rock was often her escort as he'd promised. She was one of the first visitors to arrive at his new home, which he'd christened “The Castle.”

When her driver pulled up at his mammoth gate, she was surprised that it was left open. Ushered into his living room, she asked, “Why the open gate, dah-ling? I mean I know you're glad to see me. But aren't you afraid your fans will camp out on the grounds?”

“The reason is simple,” he said. “If some goodlooking stud wants to break in and fuck me, I don't want him to get all exhausted climbing some high fence.”

At a premiere, a reporter asked Tallulah why she was seen so frequently with Rock. “I have learned that he carries a magic weapon,” she shot back, parodying a line from his Arabian nights fantasy, *The Golden Blade*, a picture released in 1953 and now a gay camp classic.

In the years to come, Tallulah did more to establish the heterosexual credentials of Rock Hudson than any other actress in Hollywood. As quoted in David Brett's biography of the tumultuous star, she told all who'd give her an ear: “This divine young man is hung even better than Gary Cooper—and, believe me, dah-lings, Rock sure knows how to handle that twohander of his.”

***

When they weren't performing or drinking in lounges, the fiftytwoyearold Tallulah and the twentynineyearold Merv were seen together on the town. Most observers thought Merv was Tallulah's latest trick, and, wanting to maintain his straight image, he didn't deny it to anyone who asked.

On some occasions she invited the most handsome and masculine of bartenders to feel her new breasts, following her mammoplasty. “Unlike some of those Vegas showgals with their plastic bobs, dah-ling, these jugs are real. All me! And a good place to lay that beautiful head of yours tonight.”

Many of these bartenders accepted her offer. If she later discovered that they were gay, and had only come to her suite to “hang out with the legendary Tallulah Bankhead,” she generously handed them over to Merv so he could service them. On one such occasion, she held up her fingers. “Thank God for masturbation,” she said. “The practice has saved my life on many a dark night.”

At times, the star, being Tallulah, made a drunken nuisance of herself. She asked Merv to accompany her to the hotel lounge across the street to hear Bobby Short perform. Once seated, she talked loudly through his entire

performance. When Merv gently chided her to keep quiet, she answered in a loud voice, “I've always respected darkies, even as a young gal growing up in niggerhating Alabama. I even went down on both Hattie McDaniel and Billie Holiday so that proves there's not one bone of prejudice in my body.”

When she wasn't watching other performers, Tallulah was fascinated with Las Vegas gangsters, with names like Slasher, Lefty, Louis, Wingy, and Cincinnati. “Oh, dah-ling, I just love men who wear their hats indoors. Bugsy Siegel told me that all gangsters in Vegas are built like brick shithouses and hung like tyrannosaurs.”

During her final week in town, Tallulah ordered Merv to invite five of the sexiest gangsters she'd met to her suite for a private party. On the afternoon before the party, she'd been drinking heavily. True to form, the five gangsters arrived and after checking out the rooms for a hidden assassin, they filed in.

Tallulah divided her time among the gangsters, sitting on each of their laps as she tongue kissed them, followed by a clinical grope. And in spite of her age and booze consumption, she even performed cartwheels for them. During the cartwheels, she revealed to the men that she wore no panties.

Before midnight, she whispered to Merv that she wanted him to usher each gangster—there were five in all—one by one into her suite at fortyfive minute intervals. “That's half an hour for them to do their business, with fifteen minutes left for me to freshen up between bouts. After all, a lady wants to look presentable for her next suitor.”

In later years, Merv swore that this gangbang actually happened and wasn't just another one of those apocryphal Tallulah stories.

In her suite that night, Cincinnati was mobster number two to enter Tallulah's bedroom. She later invited him to spend the night for an encore.

When Merv arrived for coffee the following morning, Tallulah called for him to come into her bedroom. He discovered her lying nude in her bed with Cincinnati, who was just waking up. Seeing Merv, she pulled back the sheets to reveal the gangster in all his glory. “Take a sneak preview of that threehander. Not since my honeymoon with John Emery have I encountered a billy club like this.”

***

Dining at The Sands at the best table, near the end of their threeweek gig, Tallulah and Merv were having a gay old time. She'd told the handsome waiter to take back her chicken and tell the chef to cook it more. “dah-ling, we Southern belles like our fried chicken well done—not a rosy pink like the head of Sir Winston Churchill's big prick.”

After the waiter left, a tall, slim, wellbuilt young man approached their table and introduced himself as Truman Herron. “Actually, my professional name is Mark Herron.”

“And what profession is that, dah-ling?” Tallulah asked. “Other than an answer to a maiden's prayer. Smart thinking to change that name. Truman's already taken, both by our beloved president and that squeaky voiced Capote.”

She introduced him to Merv and invited him to sit down between Merv and her. “That way I can grope you, dah-ling. I always like to check out a man before going to bed with him. I don't want any unpleasant surprises later. By the way, I have to warn you. Merv, that dear, dah-ling boy, gets my sloppy seconds. So it may be a long night for you. I just hope you know how to perform at both ends of the stage.”

“I always rise to any occasion,” Mark assured her. He launched into a rave review of their show, although he paid far more attention to Tallulah than Merv. Even so, he managed a flirtatious glance or two at Merv. He called Tallulah “the Queen of the American theater.”

“Don't tell that to Katherine Cornell or Helen Hayes,” she warned.

As the dinner progressed, Merv found himself increasingly attracted to Mark, although Tallulah seemed to have booked him for the night. He was goodlooking but not extraordinarily handsome. Later when Tallulah discussed Mark in private with Merv, she claimed “he looks like a model for an Arrow shirt commercial. It's what Ronald Reagan should have looked like but didn't.”

Under a head of deep brown russet hair, Mark had the most inquisitive brown eyes Merv had ever seen. He listened to what each of them had to say as if one of them were delivering the Ten Commandments, which he was hearing for the first time and would obey religiously. Not only that, but he had a quick wit and a bright mind. Merv thought that as a pet to have around, he'd beat any dog.

Almost immediately Tallulah picked up on his slight Southern accent. He told her that he was from Tennessee.

“I detected just a scent of the magnolia,” she said. “A true Southern gentleman like my Daddy. I should have

known you were from the South. It's the only place in the country where a gentleman knows how to treat a lady."

"Are you an actor?" Merv asked, suspecting that gigolo was his actual profession.

"How did you guess?" Mark asked. "I was voted Best Actor of the Year in 1952 at Los Angeles City College."

Judy Garland and Merv
shared a common love interest:
Her husband, **Mark Herron.**

"And I was voted the worst actress of the year by the New York Film Critics when I barged down the Nile in *Antony and Cleopatra* back in 1937. That was centuries before you were born, dah-ling."

"Not quite," Mark said. "I was about nine at the time."

"Oh, please, dah-ling, people are eating!" she said.

"I'm sure you were magnificent as Cleopatra," he said, "and I wish I had been there to see it."

"Tell that to my critics," she said.

After dinner and after drinks in Tallulah's suite, the star motioned for Merv to get lost. Fortunately, he'd already arranged a midnight rendezvous with the waiter.

Merv showed up for coffee at his usual time the following morning and was greeted by the sight of Mark in his underwear. The young actor explained that Patsy Kelly was still "sleeping one off." In the living room seated opposite Mark, Merv had a chance for a more detailed exploration of his body, which he found very sexy. As if realizing he was being appraised like a hunk of meat, Mark said, "I look even better without my drawers."

"I'm sure Tallu found that secret out last night," Merv said, flirting with him. "She got the goodies while I was left out in the cold."

"Don't kid me," Mark said. "I saw you slip that note to our waiter. Just because Tallulah has invited me to fly back with her and live with her doesn't mean I've entered a convent. She said you're going to New York too for a new start. There's no reason we can't get together. Why don't you call me at Tallulah's?"

"That can be arranged," he said. "But I must warn you, I already have somebody."

"Hell!" Mark said. "We're not getting married. Only shacking up on the side. Guys as good looking as we are have already been taken by somebody."

"Let's keep this a secret," Merv said. "I don't want to make Tallu angry."

"She's hardly branded me," he said. "Realistically, I'd give this thing with the temperamental bitch three weeks, a month at the most. But I'm sure I'll get at least a thousand dollars—maybe two thousand—out of the gig before she kicks me out on my arse."

"A gig?" he asked. "Strange way to refer to it."

"You see, babycakes," he said, "I'm a star fucker. My goal is to marry one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. I mean, *big*."

"Who did you have in mind?" Merv asked.

"It doesn't matter. Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Marilyn Monroe, even Judy Garland, although I hear she's a mess. Even if one of those pussies already has a husband now, how long will it last? Divorce lawyers make more money than movie stars in Hollywood."

"I'm not a big star, but I'd love to get fucked by you," Merv said.

"You don't have to ask," Mark said. "I do men for the fun of it."

"So I figured," he said.

"With women, I do the dirty deed for career advancement. Sometimes it turns my stomach and I have to go to the bathroom and throw up. I turn on the water in the faucet real loud and flush the toilet. That way the bitch in the bedroom can't hear me vomiting."

“How romantic!” Merv said.

Suddenly the husky voice of Tallulah bellowed from her boudoir. “Would one of you queens bring this real queen some fucking black coffee?”

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Before he left Las Vegas, Merv got through to Frank Sinatra, who invited him for a night on the town. Frank promised him he'd fix him up with some of the “hottest pussies in Vegas.”

“I'd rather not,” Merv said. “But I'd like to spend an evening with you.”

“Okay, I get it, pal,” Frank said. “That's fine with me. We'll go on a binge like we did in Honolulu.”

Merv later told Tallulah that Frank was still very grateful for Merv's having rescued him after he'd overdosed on sleeping pills. “He thinks he owes me something, but he doesn't owe me a damn thing. Frank doesn't like to be in debt to anyone.”

“I'm proud of you, dah-ling,” Tallulah said. “You saved one of the great musical talents of the 20th century. But did he fuck you? That's what I want to know. And, if so, is it as big as Ava claims?”

“No, regrettably,” Merv said. “But we did end up in bed together last night. Both of us completely wasted. I should have held back on the booze and let him get sloshed instead. At least I can say, like Monty Clift, that I slept with the great Frank Sinatra.”

“Dah-ling,” she said, “Tallulah is never wrong about these things. If you play your cards right, Sinatra can be had. Go slow at first. Plot your moves carefully. I've developed a theory based on my wide knowledge of the subject. All the bigtime womanizers can be had by a man who's a skilled seducer. Your day—or night I should say—will come. When he's in a weak and vulnerable moment, make your move like a coiled snake ready to strike its victim.”

“That sounds pretty gruesome,” Merv said, “but I'll take your advice.”

“Now, let's get ready,” she said. “It's our last night in Vegas, and I think we should gamble away all our earnings.”

Tallulah meant what she said. Entertainers at The Sands were forbidden to gamble, but since when did Tallulah ever play by the rules?

Drinking heavily before hitting the tables, Tallulah told him that she'd heard about “a new tropical punch—it's called a Zombie, dah-ling.” When the waiter served it, she was disappointed. “What is this? Kool-Aid?” Nevertheless, she drank it, and Merv also downed his Zombie.

Not realizing how lethal it was, she decided to order another round for them, and both of them drank their second Zombie. “I can't feel a thing. Let's switch to daiquiris.” And so they did, having two daiquiris on top of the Zombies.

Not too steady on his feet, Merv practically had to hold Tallulah up as he escorted her to the blackjack table.

At the table, she told him she had two thousand dollars in “my lady's handbag—it's black, dah-ling. A true lady never wears brown at night. Merv had just cashed his paycheck that afternoon and had one thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills.

Amazingly, they won the first round and kept on winning. “I'm on a roll, dah-ling,” Tallulah shouted at the crowd that had formed a half moon around them to oversee their plays. The winning streak continued throughout the night, as Tallulah ordered the waiter to keep those drinks coming.

Before dawn, Merv later recalled, “both Tallu and I had a mountain of chips piled up in front of us.”

A member of the staff alerted entertainment director Jack Entratter. Rising from his bed, he half dressed as he rushed downstairs to bodily remove Merv and Tallulah from the blackjack table, where some of the morning onlookers were standing around in their bathing suits. Jack cashed in the soggy pair's chips for them. Almost carrying them up the steps like they were ragdolls, he had Tallulah on his strong left arm, with Merv dangling from his right.

As predicted, Tallulah just had to have an exit line. Turning to the audience, she yelled, “Which one of you lucky bastards gets to fuck me tonight?”

Jack dumped Merv in the hallway while he put Tallulah to bed in her suite. Returning to the hallway, he retrieved Merv, then and hauled him away to Merv's suite.

All Merv remembered was the feel of hundreds of dollars stuffed into his trouser pockets. In the center of the

darkened hotel suite, Jack turned on a light. Sitting in an armchair in the corner was a tall, dark man smoking a cigarette.

Leaving Merv on wobbly legs in the center of the room, Jack left but only after politely greeting the stranger. “Good evening, Mr. Hughes.”

Merv passed out.

Chapter Seven

In his highly unreliable autobiographical writings, Merv claimed that he drove crosscountry to New York with a former girlfriend. Johnny Meyer, the “public relations man” (read that as “pimp”) for Howard Hughes had a completely different version. He claimed that Howard Hughes flew Merv from California to a small airport on Long Island.

Meyer said that he and his boss had attended the last show at The Sands featuring Merv as the warmup and Tallulah Bankhead as the star. “Neither Bankhead nor Griffin knew Howard was in the audience that night,” Meyer said. “Howard learned that he was going to lose his favorite tennis partner, Griffin, who announced that he was going to New York for a new start. Since Howard was flying east the next morning, he decided to take Griffin along for the ride.”

According to Meyer, Howard got the manager of the hotel to let him into Merv's suite. When Howard discovered Merv “falling down drunk,” he had him carried out of the hotel by two bellhops and placed in the back of his car. Meyer packed Merv's luggage.

Piloted by Howard, the private plane flew Merv and Meyer across the country. “When Merv finally woke up, we were somewhere over the Middle West,” Meyer said.

Merv did remember waking up with a mouth that was so dry it was like it'd been stuffed with cotton. He also recalled the most pounding headache of his life. But in Merv's account, he claimed he woke up in a car being driven to Los Angeles. He did say, however, that the driver of that car was a friend called “Howard.” Merv gave no last name.

Meyer had stuffed Merv's winnings in his shoes because “he had hundred dollar bills falling out of his pockets.”

On the plane, Meyer told Merv that he'd won $15,000 at the blackjack table. Merv was elated. This was enough for a nest egg for relaunching himself in New York.

After counting his money carefully in the back of the plane, Merv settled in for a smooth ride. After all, he was being flown by the world's greatest aviator.

After their airplane landed, Merv had recovered to the point where he could play a game of tennis that afternoon with Howard on a lavish estate on Long Island. Howard had rented the estate in Southampton for the summer. After Howard had beaten Merv at tennis, he lent him a car to drive into New York City.

On the Lower East Side, Merv was reunited with Hadley, who'd driven crosscountry with their luggage. Their living standards had changed drastically, going from a rented house with a pool in Los Angeles to a sublet in a cramped and tacky, cockroachfilled, fifthfloor walkup apartment in Manhattan.

After a reunion in bed with Hadley that lasted for most of the night, Merv woke up groggy but sober enough to place a call to his agent. He urged his agent to find him work—“any kind of work so long as it's not as a dishwasher.”

Before leaving Los Angeles, Merv ended his association with Bullets Durgom, his longtime agent. Merv knew that Bullets was devoting most of his time to his topgrossing client, Jackie Gleason, and had little time or energy left over for him. Bullets also devoted time to the careers of both Marilyn Monroe and Sammy Davis Jr.

Needing a new agent based in New York, the thirtythree year old Merv signed with Marty Kummer of MCA, who predicted big things for Merv in his future career. Marty not only worked for the largest talent agent in the country, but he also handled Jack Paar and Ed Sullivan. Merv told Marty, “I want either of their jobs. This big band singer shit is yesterday. I want to be an emcee on TV.”

“Don't you watch *The Eddie Fisher Show*?” Marty asked. “Eddie is fine singing about his papa or that lady in Spain, but he can't talk. He's a fucking train wreck.”

“But I can sing *and* talk,” Merv protested.

“I'll do my best for you, kid,” Marty said. “But let's start at the bottom before we knock Paar off the air.” Merv later had only the highest praise for Marty, claiming that he paid as much attention to a client if he “were making ten dollars or ten thousand dollars” on a job.

Within a week, Marty came through for him with a summer telecast for CBS. *Summer Holiday* was broadcast in two fifteenminute segments on Tuesday and Thursday at 7:45pm. In winter the show was very popular, featuring stars who included Perry Como, Jo Stafford, and Dinah Shore. Merv and singer/actress Betty Ann Grove were the summer replacements.

A petite redhead with a powerful voice, Betty never made it big on Broadway, although she'd starred in Cole Porter's *Kiss Me Kate.* She would achieve her greatest fame appearing on *The Bert Parks Show*, where she worked well with that star's manic, eye-batting vitality.

Before she left for the summer, Jo Stafford greeted Merv and wished him well. In San Francisco during World War II he'd listened to her wistful singing voice. She was nicknamed “GI Jo” by American servicemen and was viewed as the vocal embodiment of every GI's dream, the voice that kept the home fires burning while the men were fighting overseas.

Merv was impressed that her recording of “You Belong to Me” had sold two million copies in 1952. He envied her success. For her finale on the show, she invited Merv to join her in a duet with her standard, “I'll Be Seeing You.” Their voices blended harmoniously, and she invited him to join her for dinner. Since she was one of Hadley's favorite singers, Merv asked if his friend could come along too. Jo graciously extended the second invitation.

Over dinner Merv told her how his voice had deserted him in the sandy winds around Las Vegas. “I don't think I'm going to depend on my voice to put bread on the table,” he said. “It's too unreliable. I want to do something else.”

Instead of urging him to stick to singing, she encouraged him to go in another direction. “Sinatra…” She paused. “I'm meeting him later tonight. Don't say a word about it or I'll cut off the balls of both you boys. Sinatra and Judy will probably go on until The Grim Reaper comes to call. At this point they're icons. Not little ol’ me. I fear my days as a pop singer are coming to an end. Of course, I can always work the market of GIs nostalgic for the songs they heard during the war. But my kind of music—your kind of music—may be over. I'm not sure America will be listening to romantic ballads in 1965. Haven't you heard ‘Shake, Rattle & Roll’? There's a new sound in the air. A new kid on the block. His name is Elvis Presley.”

On *Summer Holiday*, both Merv and Betty were to simulate trips to various places in the world. On his first day on the show, Merv met the producer, Irving Mansfield. Today Irving's claim to fame is his marriage to the bestselling novelist Jacqueline Susann, a failed Broadway actress who would write *The Valley of the Dolls* (1966), one of the bestselling novels of all time.

Irving invited Hadley and Merv to dinner where they met his sultry wife. Merv had heard all the gossip about the bisexual actress, who'd had an affair with Carole Landis when she appeared with her on Broadway in *A Lady Says Yes* in 1945. Landis would later commit suicide in 1948 by overdosing on sleeping pills. She was said to be despondent over the breakup of her affair with Rex Harrison, whom Merv called “Sexy Rexy.”

The gossip circuit along Broadway also claimed that Jacqueline was having an onagain, offagain affair with Ethel Merman. In 1959 Jacqueline would also have an affair with the fashion designer Coco Chanel.

After dinner that night with Mr. and Mrs. Irving Mansfield, Merv and Jacqueline Susann never became friends, Merv preferring to speak of her privately as “my old acquaintance,” borrowing the title from the Bette Davis/Miriam Hopkins movie. He would know her until the day of her death on September 21, 1974. At the age of sixtysix, Susann succumbed to cancer.

Merv and Susann never liked each other, but each of them figured they'd have some use for each other in their futures. Behind his back, Susann called Merv “a faggot.” On the other hand, he was delighted when Truman Capote appeared on *The Tonight Show* and claimed that Susann “looks like a truck driver in drag.”

When she started writing novels, and Merv was a successful talk show host, he claimed that the bubble gum author was the first to effectively exploit the TV talk show circuit to promote a novel.

When he heard that she was in the hospital, Merv in 1974 visited her, hoping that she'd make a final appearance on TV with him. But he discovered that she was “too eaten up with cancer, too weak.” She told him she was unable to complete her last novel, *Dolores*. After her death, the movie critic Rex Reed completed the final chapters, which was to be Susann's take on Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

Upon hearing of her death, Merv told a reporter, “Jacqueline Susann was the Joan Crawford of novelists.” In time Susann became a gay male pop culture icon.

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Mark Herron had seen it coming: after only three nights with Tallulah Bankhead in her New York home, she asked him to move on. Merv had arranged through his agent, Marty Kummer, to give Mark his telephone number should he try to contact him.

Mark called Merv and invited him for lunch in his suite at the Plaza Hotel.

“The Plaza?” Merv said. “Our dah-ling Tallulah must have taken care of you very well.”

“Not at all,” Mark said. “Not a cent. But I've got another gig. Come on over and I'll tell you all about it.”

A handsome sixfooter, Mark greeted Merv in his suite and gave him a long, passionate kiss on the lips. “I've been hot for you, baby, ever since that first night,” Mark said. “I know you've been dying to see what's in my underwear.”

“I want to do more than see it,” Merv said as he looked around the suite. It was filled with gowns, highheel shoes, makeup kits, and recent shopping purchases. “Your new ‘gig’ must be some super glamorous puss… and rich.”

“She is,” Mark said smugly. “You know her as Lana Turner. Right now she's shopping on Fifth Avenue and plans to spend the early evening getting plowed by Frank Sinatra.”

“I didn't know either of them was in town.” Merv gave Mark a congratulatory kiss. “I've got to hand it to you, boy. First, Tallulah Bankhead. Then Lana Turner. Who's next?”

“I can't decide,” Mark said. “If you make it big on TV, it'll be Merv Griffin. I'm trying to hook up with Marilyn, but so far Miss Monroe has evaded my butterfly net. She won't even return my calls. Maybe I'll switch to redheads. I'm thinking about Arlene Dahl right now—she's beautiful. I've fucked Cary Grant, and he's got the hots for me. But, so far, the tightwad hasn't set me up in my own apartment. I've got two other prospects crazy for my ass. Henry Brandon, for one.”

“You mean Acacius Page from *Auntie Mame*?” Merv asked.

“One and the same,” Mark said. “And get this. Charles Laughton has taken a more than fatherly interest in me.”

“He's a brilliant actor, but the ugliest man on the screen. We're talking *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* here.”

“I don't just fuck beauties or little cutie pies like you,” Mark said. “I screw anybody, male or female, beast or beauty, if they're a star.”

“Let's quit talking about fucking and do some of it,” Merv said.

“You're in for a treat,” Mark said. “I'm good.”

Two hours later, with both men sitting in their underwear in the living room of Lana's suite, Merv agreed. “You're good. You motivate me to really make it big so I can have you full time.”

“I'll be ready whenever you are,” Mark promised.

Suddenly, the door to the suite opened and in barged Lana Turner, accompanied by a bellhop loaded down with packages. “Don't bother to get up or get dressed for me, gentlemen,” she said when she saw them sitting half dressed on her sofa. She kissed Mark on the lips and shook Merv's hand. “I know you. Frank took me to the Grove to hear you sing.”

“I remember it well,” Merv said, feeling embarrassed to have been caught like this in front of the screen legend.

“Speaking of Frank,” Lana said, “that God damn wop fucked up my plans for the night. Would you believe it? My darling gal pal, Ava Gardner, winged into town on her broom, and Frank's hardon tonight is reserved for her. Of course, they invited me to join them in a three way, but I wasn't up for it. I tried three ways with Tyrone Power and Howard Hughes. Those two paid more attention to each other than to me. Then I figured that in a threeway with Ava, Frank would pay more attention to his lady love than to me. I never like second billing. So I told them I didn't want any part of their fun and games.” She checked out the male bodies on her sofa. “Did you boys have fun this afternoon when mama was away?”

“Lover-ly,” Merv said. It seemed that she didn't have a jealous bone in her body. Years later, Lana's daughter, Cheryl Crane, revealed to talk show host, Larry King, that her mother, for a woman of her time, was remarkably sophisticated about homosexual relationships.

Merv excused himself to get dressed in the satellite bedroom where Mark and he had so recently made passionate love. Lana retired to her boudoir to get dressed for dinner. Back in the main living room, Merv looked for Mark but didn't see him. He assumed that he'd retired with Lana to her boudoir.

About half an hour later, as Merv was pouring himself a drink, Lana emerged from her boudoir. A vision in white satin, she'd never looked lovelier. “I want you to escort me to dinner tonight,” she said, almost as if issuing an imperial command. “My darling Mark was called away to spend an evening with Charles Laughton, who is also in town. Mark is Laughton's new *protégé*, you know.”

Merv eagerly agreed to escort Lana, calling Hadley to tell him that he didn't know when he'd be home. He was proud to be seen on the town with Lana, and he hoped that Walter Winchell would write it up in tomorrow's column. He'd been dazzled by Lana ever since he'd seen her on the screen in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946).

When Lana made a spectacular entrance into Sardi's every head at every table turned to take her in. She was, after all, one of the most glamorous stars of Hollywood's Golden Age. Even though she held her head high, Merv sensed Lana's nervousness. She held onto him too tightly. She was really scared, although she relaxed a bit after she was seated and after her drink had arrived. She looked fabulous, yet was sensitive about her appearance. She had reached *that* certain age—in her case, her midthirties.

To make the moment a complete disaster, two elderly ladies passed by their table, stopping to gaze upon Lana. "Honey, you sure don't look like you did when you were in the movies with Mickey Rooney."

"Who in the fuck does?" Lana shot back. The ladies hastily retreated, one of them saying, "Well, I never…"

"Lana you look great," Merv immediately reassured her. "The hottest woman in New York. In the whole world as far as that goes."

She merely smiled at him before ordering another drink. He noticed that her hands were visibly shaking. "But how long can I go on looking like this? How long will it last? Every day I stare for an hour at my face in the mirror, looking for telltale changes. New blondes are coming along—take Marilyn Monroe for instance. One night Betty Grable and I had a long talk about what was going to happen to pinups like us from World War II. Rita Hayworth is facing our same problem. Those glory days of World War II are long gone. I meet young GIs from 1945 who are now bald and pot-bellied."

"You'll go on forever," he said, not really meaning it.

What happened later in that evening became fodder for a Hollywood legend. Lana herself, of course, never addressed the rumors spread about her that night. Merv, to protect the lady's privacy, never commented either. Years later, Mark Herron claimed that the legend was true, although he was not with Merv and Lana that night.

The rumor may have been apocryphal, an urban legend.

After Merv's "date" with Lana, a story spread from the New York islands to the coast of California. According to an unverified report, Merv took Lana to the Cotton Club in Harlem that night. After one long drunken evening, Merv reportedly was put in charge of guarding the entrance to the men's room.

Presumably inside the toilet, Lana was said to have performed fellatio on five "Mandingo types" that had been preselected by her earlier in the evening. It was claimed that Merv allowed the lucky men in one at a time.

In her autobiographical writings, Lana denied her interest in oral sex, especially with Howard Hughes, but many of her lovers claimed that she was a skilled oral artist in the boudoir. Lana's antics that night in Harlem even made the newspapers, but only as part of veiled references.

When cornered by Hadley for the sordid details, Merv said, "That's one secret I'll take to my grave."

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Late the following morning, Merv had brunch with Charles Laughton and Mark Herron. If Merv revealed secrets about what had happened the previous evening with Lana in Harlem, they'd have been told to Mark, in private, following brunch with the great actor.

When he met Charles, Merv exclaimed, "Oh, my God! Captain Bligh and Henry VIII all rolled into one."

"The honor is mine," Charles said, seating himself on a banquette between Mark and Merv. Merv later swore that the actor kept groping both of them throughout the course of brunch. Skipping the bacon and eggs, Charles demanded that the chef prepare cucumber sandwiches—"light on the mayonnaise and with the crust cut off the bread."

Fleshy, with a jowly face and beady eyes, Charles was a star in spite of his looks. He was versatile, inimitable, and unforgettable. Knowing that Merv had appeared with Tallulah Bankhead, Charles related stories about her when they'd made *Devil and the Deep* back in 1932. "Both of us were pursuing Gary Cooper, but Tallulah got him," Charles claimed. "How could I compete with a tornado like her? I'll always remember her first words to me. 'Gary Cooper is a divine man,' she told me. 'But you, Charlotte, are a repulsive, fat mess of glop!'"

The paunchy actor was the first to admit, "I know I'm no Tyrone Power. Let's face it: I have a face like the ass of an elephant."

Over his delicate sandwiches, Charles also related stories of the filming of *Night of the Hunter* (1955), in which he'd directed Robert Mitchum. "I came to his dressing room and begged him to let me see him in the nude. I confessed that there was a strong streak of homosexuality in me. Mitchum is never known to be shy about dropping his trousers. He stripped for me and put on quite a show. Even got it hard. But he refused to let me play with it."

Merv was all ears during the brunch, letting the actor do all the talking. But he did interrupt Charles's dialogue long enough to find out how he'd met Mark. It seemed that the aging actor had become so fascinated with Mark at a tryout in Hollywood that he'd taken him East to appear in the Broadway revival of George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*. He'd gotten Mark cast as Barbara's stuffy brother, Stephen.

During a tryout in Boston, however, the backers of the show decided that Mark wasn't up to the role. Defying Charles's protests, they fired him.

“What chance did I have?” Mark asked defensively. “I was up against a cast that included Glynis Johns, Eli Wallach, and Burgess Meredith.”

Charles placed his hand lovingly over Mark's, which was resting on the table. He assured him that he'd secure bigger and better roles for Mark in the future. Merv felt that Charles was just using promises of future work as a tool of seduction, which, of course, he was.

At the end of the brunch, as Charles heaved himself up from the table, he patted both Merv and Mark on their cheeks. “Both of you charming boys will have to excuse me but I have an appointment with that darling Tyrone Power this afternoon at his hotel.”

“My final advice to both of you precious chaps is this. If either of you make the horrible decision to get married, believe you me such a marriage can survive the obstacle of homosexuality. Of course, there will be pain from time to time on the part of the wife.”

Charles Laughton

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Since Lana was entertaining Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner that night in her suite, Mark scheduled a date with the Germanborn veteran actor Henry Brandon. He usually played villains in films and had just completed what was to be his most memorable role, that of Chief Cicatrice in John Ford's *The Searchers*. In spite of a famous marriage that lay in Mark's future, he and Henry would become lifetime companions until Henry's death of a heart attack in Los Angeles in 1990.

When Frank heard that Merv was in town, he asked Lana to include him as one of her guests that night. Merv was the first to arrive at Lana's hotel suite, and was greeted by the smell of chicken frying. “It's Ava's favorite food,” Lana said. “I have this small kitchen, so I hired one of the hotel chefs to cook dinner for us tonight. It'll be *intimate*. Frank and Ava aren't here yet.”

Within thirty minutes, Ava arrived wearing a red dress and a mink coat. “Where's that son of a bitch?” she asked before greeting Lana and Merv. “The fucker told me he'd be on time for once in his wasted life.”

After settling in for drinks, Ava an hour later claimed she was starved for some of the fried chicken she'd been smelling all night. Even though Frank still hadn't appeared, she begged Lana to order dinner served. “If the bastard shows up, I'll call room service to bring up some spaghetti. That's all Ringa Ding Ding eats anyway other than pussy.”

When the chicken was placed on the beautifully set table, Ava looked horrified. “Where's the fucking gravy? What's fried chicken without gravy?”

MOVIE STARS!
Left, **Frank Sinatra** with **Ava Gardner**
Right, **Frank Sinatra** with **Lana Turner**
Inset: **Merv**

Though wearing an expensive dress, she went into the cramped kitchen where she emerged later with the gravy. “This Tarheel Bitch is the best God damn gravy maker on God's green earth,” she said.

After tasting it, Merv agreed that it was the best he'd ever eaten. Ava had demanded both cornbread and hot biscuits, and she got her wish. The freshly baked apple pie she'd requested was sent up by room service from the hotel kitchen below.

After dinner, when Frank still hadn't arrived, Ava rose from the table, a bit wobbly on her feet. “I'm out of here. If Frank shows up, tell him I'm fucking Mickey Rooney tonight for old time's sake.”

An hour later Frank came into the suite, with apologies to Lana. When he asked where Ava was, Lana gave a weak excuse, suggesting she might have given her the wrong date.

“Fuck her!” Frank said. “We'll party without her.” He warmly embraced Merv. “Here's the guy who saved my life. I owe him one.”

“You don't owe me anything,” Merv protested to him once again. “Payback is hardly necessary.”

What happened later that night may never be known. All three participants—Frank, Lana, and Merv—are dead, and none wrote about the night in their memoirs. Mark Herron later provided the most speculation, but he wasn't there in the suite until three o'clock the following morning.

According to Mark, Frank finally let Merv give him that blowjob while he was kissing Lana and fondling her breasts.

It is for that reason that Merv appears today on those international lists of Frank's lovers. A typical list—say, one compiled by Mark Winburn—includes Lauren Bacall, Doris Day, Marlene Dietrich, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Shirley MacLaine, Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, Jacqueline Kennedy, Nancy Reagan, Elizabeth Taylor, Gloria Vanderbilt… and Merv Griffin.

A tantalizing show business hierarchy.

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The gigs, around 1953, were few and far between, and bookings to sing were so insignificant that Merv had difficulty recalling them in later years.

He became accustomed to lastminute appearances on radio and TV, especially if someone got sick and had to fill in. “I was a utility singer,” Merv told *The Miami Herald*. “I knew every song that was ever written. If someone couldn't do their number singing in front of a waterfall, everybody would say, ‘Call Merv—he knows all the waterfall songs.’”

His reviews were never raves, but pleasant. *The New York Herald Tribune* referred to him as “a glib, likable, singing emcee type.”

Of those days, Merv said, “I did anything that was offered to me. I just loved the feeling of a live audience.”

Suddenly, as if to break Merv's monotony of a stalled career, Monty Clift showed up in New York. He'd filmed *Indiscretion of An American Wife* with Jennifer Jones. It was produced and directed by Vittorio De Sica, with extra dialogue by Truman Capote.

Over the phone, Monty told Merv that he was having a brief affair with Truman Capote and asked Merv if he could bring the author over for dinner. In response, Merv invited both Truman and Monty. “I'm eager for you guys

to meet the one true love of my life.” Merv, of course, misstated the depth of his romantic attachment to Hadley, which was far more casual than what he was suggesting.

He was shocked when a dissipated and underweight Monty arrived on his doorstep. He was gaunt and disheveled, his clothes looking as if he'd slept in them for the past four nights. Truman seemed as drunk as Monty but was immaculately groomed, wearing a white sports coat with a chartreuse lining.

It was obvious that Monty was still taking too much Demerol. Merv had heard that the drug made its victims increasingly paranoid. Truman appeared not to care, but it was obvious to Merv as the evening progressed that Monty felt everyone was out to get him…everyone except Hadley.

Seated on Merv's sofa, Monty was almost on top of Hadley, virtually ignoring Merv and Truman. “At last,” Monty announced, “I've found a man who understands me. A kindred spirit. I have the same kind of feeling when I'm with Elizabeth.”

Intoxicated though he was, Truman still had his eagle eye, and he kept glancing at Merv for signs of jealousy. At that point in their relationship, Merv had gotten used to sharing Hadley, so he wasn't particularly jealous of Monty's interest in his boyfriend.

Merv's dinner of beef stew, cooked by Hadley, was interrupted that night by a phone call. The call upstaged Truman just as he was relating the most tantalizing story about the night Errol Flynn fucked him.

“I'm Monty's friend,” came a rather ominous voice on the phone. At first Merv thought the call was for Monty, but the strange voice claimed he wanted to speak to Merv.

Terrible Truman

Earlier in the evening, Monty had told Merv that he'd given out his number to three different friends, any of whom might be calling. “You don't love him!” the mystery voice said to Merv. “I do! You hangerson just use Monty. You're trying to destroy him. You'll pay for what you're doing to him. I'm going to follow you down streets on dark nights. You're fucking with the wrong person when you're messing with me. One foggy night I'm going to stab you in the back.” He slammed down the phone.

At first, Merv thought that Monty had been playing some cruel joke on him, as he'd been known to do such things in the past. But the voice had sounded too real, too upset, and too psychotic to be a joke.

At the dinner table, Merv interrupted Monty's fixation on Hadley and Truman's heavy drinking to tell about the phone call. “A weird friend of yours called,” he told Monty. “He's threatening to stalk me. Stab me in the back on one Jack the Ripper night in New York.”

“Oh, that's just Manfred,” Monty said. “He's perfectly harmless—just had too much to drink. He tries to possess me, and he never will. He's a personal friend, a plastic surgeon by profession. As a side line, he's a necrophiliac.”

“What's that?” Hadley asked.

“A person who gets off having sex with dead bodies,” Truman said.

“That's disgusting!” Hadley said. “I like mine live and kickin’.”

“Necrophiliacs have always fascinated me,” Truman said. “Monty has promised to take me to his friend's next sex party. These parties are staged spontaneously. You have to wait until some young hot body—preferably male—dies, perhaps in a car accident. The body is taken to this morgue where they have a deal. I want to observe how one makes love to a dead corpse. I'm considering writing a short story about it. Perhaps I'll call it *Dead Bodies and Other Delicious Indulgences.* ”

“Monty, I always thought you liked live people,” Merv said. “Is this some new kick?”

“Don't be an ass!” Monty said. “I go to their parties because, unlike you, I'm not judgmental. I believe an artist must take the blinders off and look at all forms of human behavior, even love that takes a bizarre twist. I don't condemn people like you do. That's why I love Elizabeth so much. She tries to understand human foibles, not apply some stupid, smug condemnation to desires.”

“But dead bodies?” Merv protested. “Come on. As Tallulah would say, ‘Please, *dah-ling*, people are eating.’”

At that point, Monty indulged in one of his food attacks, for which he was becoming known around town. He picked up his plate of beef stew and tossed it into Merv's face. Sitting silently, Merv looked down as the stew beef, carrots, and onions oozed down his white shirt.

“C'mon,” Monty said to Hadley. “Let's get the fuck out of here.”

Hadley rose to his feet, as Monty almost collapsed into his strong arms. The actor stood on wobbly legs, almost too drunk and drugged to leave the room without bodily help. “I hope you won't mind,” Hadley said to Merv. “I'd better see that he gets home safe. I'll be back real soon.”

“Yeah, right,” Merv said. “You are, after all, a star fucker, and there's no doubt that Montgomery Clift is a genuine star.”

As Hadley helped Monty to the door, Truman under his breath said, “Yes, a fallen star.”

After they'd gone, Truman turned to Merv. “Now we gals can get down to some serious gossip. I'll tell you about the time I went down on Humphrey Bogart when we were making *Beat the Devil* in Italy. He said he'd let me suck him off, but absolutely forbade me to swallow his semen. He told me I had to spit it out. But after the son of a bitch came in my mouth, I swallowed it down to the last drop.”

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That fall, with no local television jobs available in New York, Marty booked Merv in night-clubs and hotel lounges in the East, principally in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Merv remembered these gigs in what he called “dives, blood buckets, and seedy motels.”

Still dreaming the dream of being an emcee on television, Merv sang “I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts” every night to drunken, smokefilled rooms, along with many of the songs he'd performed in the 1940s while touring with Freddy Martin's band.

Both Hadley and Merv tried to hold onto their diminishing nest egg, which had dwindled to less than $10,000. On some nights, the money Merv made didn't pay for the gas and the motel room. To economize, Hadley shopped at local grocery stores. Before leaving New York, he'd purchased a hotplate on which he fried hot dogs or scrambled eggs. He recalled that some of their motel rooms were “so small that mice had to go piggy back to cross the floor.”

To add spice to their sex lives, Hadley sometimes managed to lure a handsome young waiter or a bellhop to their bedroom. Before heading on tour, Liberace had given Merv a list of socalled gay bars in some of the towns where he'd already played.

“Everything was very discreet in those days,” Hadley said. “There were gay bars but they were risky. Any bar filled only with male patrons could be raided at any time by the police. Still we found some secret hideaways, and many of them had pianos. After singing all night in a club, Merv often entertained the boys at these tawdry bars with his singing. He was also a great hit in these bars, and often we'd pick up something on the hoof for the night. It was fun, really. In those days Merv always threatened that he was going to give up singing. But he'll be singing when he's eighty. Merv Griffin is a total ham, but I find that quality in him adorable.”

When Merv learned that his old friend, Marlon Brando, was sailing to Europe, he called Marlon and asked if he could sublet his apartment, the one where the star had lived with Wally Cox and his pet raccoon. Marlon was relieved to have Merv as a tenant and asked that only one closet be reserved for his personal items—“and kept locked at all times.”

Once in residency, Merv could not resist the temptation to see what the mystery closet held, thinking it might contain pornographic pictures of Marlon with various stars, male or female. To his surprise, the closet mostly seemed to hold the wreckage of an electric toy train. Nonetheless, he went to the hardware, as he'd promised Marlon, purchased a lock, and securely locked the closet, leaving the key for Marlon upon his return.

The apartment still reeked of Marlon's pet raccoon, which had long departed. The animal had never been potty trained. When Shelley Winters once visited the apartment to get seduced by Marlon, she said, “the raccoon smelled like it'd just let eighteen farts.” When Merv and Hadley moved in, it took them nearly a month to erase the lingering odor of that raccoon.

Marty tried to get work for Merv on Broadway, and even advised him to wear platform shoes so he'd look taller on stage. Merv auditioned for Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II, hoping to secure the part of Prince Charming in their TV production of *Cinderella*. Before these music men, he sang “It Might As Well Be Spring.”

Before he could finish the number, Rogers called for him to stop singing. “Let me get this straight,” he said to

Merv. “Are you impersonating Margaret Whiting or Frank Sinatra? Dismissed. Next!”

Max Liebman agreed to audition Merv for a role in his TV special, *The Desert Song*. Merv walked on stage a bit wobbly in his elevated shoes. “What are you trying to be? A comedian?” Liebman asked. “What makes you think you're right for the role?”

“You got me there,” Merv said. “Frankly, I think I'd be lousy in the part.”

“Then get the hell out,” Liebman said. “You're wasting my God damn time.”

Marty was furious when he heard what Merv had said. He warned him, “Don't pull that shit again. Who do you think you are? James Dean?”

He eventually got over his fury at Merv and once again set about getting work for him. A break came when Marty found Merv a job filling in as host for Barry Gray. The smoothtalking but tarttongued Gray in time became known as “The Father of Talk Radio.” His shows were broadcast from Chandler's Restaurant on East 46th St. between midnight and 3am.

At first, sponsors didn't believe that listeners would stay up that late. But they did. Not only that, but Gray began to book top talent onto his show, including Danny Thomas, Phil Silvers, and Eddie Cantor.

When Merv filled in for Gray, he could not have known at the time that he was beginning a career as a talk show host that would bring him fame and fortune in the years to come. Instead of radio, it would, of course, be on television.

When Merv took over the show, the columnist Walter Winchell was still feuding with Gray over an incident involving Josephine Baker at the Stork Club. She'd claimed on Gray's show that the club owner, Sherman Billingsley, had refused her service.

One of Billingsley's best friends, and a regular at the Stork Club every night, Winchell counterattacked. He denounced Gray as a “pro-Communist” and made veiled references claiming that the announcer was also a homosexual. He spread the word at the Stork Club that Gray sucked off men in subway toilets. The feud between Winchell and Gray became so intense that both men began carrying pistols threatening to kill each other.

When it was announced that Merv was going to be a substitute host, Winchell placed a secret call to him one Saturday around two o'clock in the morning. “I know you're trying to get a career jump started,” Winchell said to him in an ominous voice. “Hedda Hopper has given me the goods on you. There are two things your listeners might want to know about you.”

“What's that?” Merv asked.

“First, that you're a cocksucker. Hedda gave me the full report. Second, that you joined the Communist Party in Los Angeles as an active cell member.”

“That's a god damn lie,” Merv said. “I'm not a homosexual, and I don't even know what a Communist smells like.”

“Go on the show and I'll ruin your career.” Winchell slammed the phone.

Defying Winchell, Merv subbed for Gray whenever he was needed. As a favor to Merv, Frank Sinatra once came onto the late show. He was accompanied by a blonde showgirl but didn't introduce her. “We stay up late, you know,” Frank said. “As the song goes, Broadway babes don't get to bed until the dawn. Until the milkman comes. Shit, I forgot the fucking words.”

Winchell did not attack Merv in his column, but Merv later claimed that Winchell hired “a goon” to mug him as he was walking back to Marlon's apartment in the predawn hours. Merv's wallet was stolen and his eye blackened, and he always blamed Winchell for the assault, even though it could also have been a routine mugging.

At long last, in 1954, a big break came when Marty got Merv cast as one of the male leads opposite Helen Gallagher in a revival of *Finian's Rainbow* by the New York City Center Light Opera Company. Cast opposite them was Will Mahoney, who would be nominated for a Tony as Best Featured Actor in a Musical.

Even though he'd emerged as a Broadway “star,” Merv was disappointed to learn that his salary would be only eightyfive dollars a week. “I made more singing with Freddy Martin's band in the 40s,” he told Hadley.

It didn't help Merv's ego when Will Mahoney told him that at the peak of the Depression in the early 1930s, this vaudeville and musical comedy star was pulling in $5,500 a week, the highest paid variety star in the world.

As Woody Mahoney, Merv played the romantic lead in this play of whimsy, romance, and political satire. His big number was “Old Devil Moon,” Merv's rendition meeting with hostility from the orchestra conductor, Julius Rudel. “You sing like Sinatra in a recording studio. This is the stage, Griffin. Project your voice, dumbass.”

For reasons not known to Merv, the star of the show, Helen Gallagher, took an instant dislike to him.

Reportedly, she was “seriously pissed” when Merv went to the director, William Hammerstein, and asked him if he —not Helen—could sing the show's hit song, “How Are Things in Glocca Morra?”

Multitalented, Helen was a singer, actress, and dancer, but was known on Broadway for her fiery temper. Before meeting Merv, she'd won the Tony in 1952 as Best Featured Actress in a Musical, appearing in a revival of *Pal Joey*. After their first day of rehearsal, she told Merv, “I've worked with some of the most talented people on Broadway. You're not one of them. It's a drag working with bad people.”

In the first week's run, she got the idea that Merv was upstaging her during one of her big numbers. She kicked him into the orchestra pit. Fortunately, he escaped without injury except for some bruises. He got even with her the following night by squeezing her so hard in one scene that she was breathless for her big number.

A Merv-hater:
Helen Gallagher

On opening night, critic Darlene Stafford wrote: “What can you say about Merv Griffin? His voice is better suited to a hotel lounge than Broadway. Miss Gallagher makes mince meat pie out of him whenever they appear together. The original 1947 cast of Ella Logan, Albert Sharpe, and David Wayne were far superior to the present cast except for the always superior Miss Gallagher and Will Mahoney. Again, I ask, what can you say about Merv Griffin? He was supposed to be romantic, although when he was with Miss Gallagher he looked more like Hitler calling on Churchill for tea than a romantic star of the stage.”

Another comparison to a World War II dictator was made when Merv told the director, “I'd rather be locked into an embrace with Josef Stalin than Miss Stage Hog.”

Will appeared on stage in *Finian's Rainbow* bedecked in a green felt hat, a plaid scarf, and a checkered vest, playing a bibulous rascal who makes off with a pot of gold. “How can I compete against Will?” Merv asked. “He steals every scene. What he doesn't steal, and what Gallagher doesn't hog, goes to a beloved leprechaun.” Merv was referring to the role of “Og,” as played by Donn Driver.

In 1968 Merv heard that Francis Ford Coppola was making a film version of *Finian's Rainbow*, starring Fred Astaire and Petula Clark. Rather facetiously, he sent a telegram to Francis. “If I couldn't make the damn thing work, nobody can. So don't even try. Besides, haven't you heard? The big movie musical is over.”

The public seemed to agree with Merv's own assessment, “a Broadway star I'm not. Nor will I ever be.”

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A former bootblack, Anthony L. Aste, founded Griffin Shoe Polish to rival sales of Esquire, which had been the nation's bestselling shoe polish since World War II. Esquire had been founded in 1938 by two brothers, Albert and Sam Abrams, from Long Island. Their greatest success came when they hired Kate Smith, a robustly large entertainer from Virginia, to host *The Kate Smith Hour* on television.

She was dubbed “The Songbird of the South,” but she was more than that, of course. During the war, she became a true American icon, singing her inspiring rendition of Irving Berlin's classic “God Bless America.”

She had heard Merv's voice in *Finian's Rainbow* and asked him to appear on her show several times. He later recalled that she was a “plump, jolly, doublechinned fat lady with a great soul.” He remembered that one night, as he stood in the wings listening to Kate sing “When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain,” he stepped on the foot of Tennessee Ernie Ford.

Over Kate's objection, Merv was fired from the show when the executives at Esquire finally took notice that his last name of Griffin was the trademark of their rival. But Kate, who'd objected to his firing, invited him to a cast party. At the party, the only remotely bitchy remark he ever recalled her making was when she said, “both Gene Autry and Bing Crosby tried to record ‘God Bless America,’ but they just didn't have the voices to pull it off. It takes a big gal like me to sing that song.”

She ended the party with a touch of selfmockery when she sang “Pickaninny's Heaven,” which she'd performed on live radio back in 1933. “I don't mean to be insensitive,” she said. “I sang that number just to show how far we've come since 1933.”

Merv always carried a fond memory of Kate and was instrumental in getting his friend, Ronald Reagan, to award her the Presidential Medal of Freedom Honor in 1982.

Later in life, he tried to get her to come on his show but found out that she was wheelchair bound and was suffering brain damage as the result of a diabetic coma.

One of Merv's young staff members had asked him, “Who is Kate Smith?”

“My God, kid, in 1942 she was the second most popular woman in America after Eleanor Roosevelt,” Merv said. “Now she's remembered only by grandmothers with first names that no longer are popular—Sadie, Viola, Mabel, Edna, Maude, and Gertrude.”

Upon her death in 1986, Merv told reporters that Kate Smith was the origin of the expression, “It's not over till the fat lady sings.”

From fat lady to fat man, Merv's next assignment was with “The Great One,” Jackie Gleason.

Although Merv had parted company with his agent, Bullets Durgom, they'd remained friends. Bullets asked his best client, Jackie Gleason, if Merv could sing on two or three of his shows, and “The Great One” agreed.

Merv was granted the rare honor of actually meeting Gleason in person before the show. Sometimes even his writers didn't get that chance and had to slip their manuscripts under the door of what Gleason called “my sablelined dump” on Fifth Avenue.

One night at around ten o'clock, Merv was ushered into Gleason's penthouse apartment by a bellhop who told him to wait in the living room. It was decorated with memorabilia, including framed photograph of Gleason as Gleason in a World War I outfit.

Off-camera, he was
anything but jolly:
Jackie Gleason

Gleason kept Merv waiting for about an hour until he finally emerged from his bedroom wearing baggy underwear and looking hung over even before the night had really begun. There were no introductions, no handshakes. His first words to Merv were, “Bullets told me Marlene Dietrich used to slip in and out of your house in Los Angeles. Were you fucking her?”

“Never had the privilege,” Merv said. “I fear Marlene's interests lay elsewhere.”

“Too bad,” he said. “I've always wanted to fuck Marlene. The closest I've come to that is insisting that Frank Sinatra share every detail with me. Hearing about his plugging the Kraut practically makes me cream in my pants.”

“The next time I see her, I'll tell her of your admiration,” he said.

Gleason looked skeptically at Merv. “Don't do me any favors, kiddo,” he said. “Around this joint I dispense the favors. In fact, as a favor to Bullets, I'm gonna let you sing on my show. You can even do my theme song, ‘Melancholy Serenade.’”

“Thanks, Mr. Gleason.”

At that point a scantily dressed blonde showgirl type emerged from the bedroom and headed for the kitchen, but Gleason didn't bother to introduce her.

After chatting briefly with Merv about the numbers he wanted him to sing on the show, Gleason got up and went over to the bar and poured himself a hefty whiskey. Looking over at Merv, he said, “Help yourself. I'm no God damn bartender.”

“I'm fine,” Merv said.

“What's the matter with you, boy?” Gleason asked. “I've never known an Irishman to turn down a drink.” After a

big gulp of whiskey, his face lit up. “I've got a great idea. I'm taking you to my favorite saloon. There's this terrific onearmed trombone player you've got to hear.” He didn't ask Merv if he wanted to go, but merely assumed it. “I'll even take Blondie if she ever comes out of the fucking kitchen. You can call your boyfriend to join us. Bullets gave me the full scoop.”

“Thanks,” Merv said, “but I don't have a boyfriend. I date gals.”

“Sure, kid, whatever turns you on,” Gleason said. “But I'm from Missouri—actually Brooklyn—and I'll give you a chance to prove what a lady's man you are tonight.” He bounded up from the sofa to get dressed. “Don't believe all that shit you read about me in the papers. That I drink six quarts of Scotch a night, dine at a dozen different restaurants every evening, and fuck three dozen women before the rooster crows. The jerks in the press make one big mistake in writing about me. I fuck fiftyfive women before the rooster crows—and that's every night.”

In the elevator on the way down, Merv checked out Gleason's date, who looked like Alice Faye on a bad night. The hotel desk had ordered a limousine for them, and it was parked outside, a uniformed driver holding open the rear door for them.

When Gleason looked inside the limousine, he refused to get in. Turning to the driver, he said, “You're supposed to haul celebrities around town. Who in the fuck did you have in here last night?”

“Frank Sinatra and some of his girlfriends,” the chauffeur said.

“I think one of Frank's bimbos threw up in the backseat,” Gleason said. “Tell your company to send a vomit-free car.”

On the sidewalk, Merv waited with an increasingly agitated and impatient Gleason for nearly half an hour before another limousine pulled up to the curb. Merv still hadn't been introduced to Gleason's girlfriend, but she took advantage of the wait to file her nails.

When Gleason wasn't cursing the limo company, he shared vignettes from his life with Merv. “I've never fucked Marlene, but I once plowed Ann Sheridan when we made *Navy Blues* together. She complained that she couldn't find it beneath all my blubber. I told the bitch, ‘Shut your face. You've got no tits, so let's call it a Mexican stand-off.’”

When the new limousine came, Gleason, Merv, and the gumchewing bimbo piled into the backseat. Merv was astonished that the driver had to go only one hundred feet before letting them off at a seedy saloon.

Gleason must have been a regular, because the manager and the waiters hovered around him, treating his arrival like the big star that he was. Gleason was known as the biggest tipper in New York City. At the bar Gleason ordered a whiskey and placed five onehundred dollar bills on the bar.

He asked Merv for his wallet. Astonished at the request, Merv nonetheless handed his wallet to Gleason, who removed all his money right down to the last dollar. He threw Merv's meager cash on top of his and shouted to the other patrons, “Drinks on the house!” There was a mad rush to the bar.

After the round of drinks, Gleason, Merv, and the blonde sat at the head table, listening to a onearmed trombone player, Finger Lickin’ Bollweevil. “I have this thing for onearmed trombone players,” Gleason confided. It started back in 1943 when Sinatra and I discovered one, Wingy Manone. We used to go to this jazz joint every night and listen to the amputated fucker.”

“I wouldn't think that there would be a lot of onearmed trombone players around,” Merv said.

“There aren't,” Gleason admitted. “That's why we've got to respect them. That's why I'm so devoted to Finger Lickin’.”

Before midnight Gleason made a call to his hotel and sent Merv back to the desk to pick up another five onehundred dollar bills. By the time he came back into the bar, Gleason was already deep into his second bottle of Scotch. Three other blondes had joined their table. Again, Merv was not introduced.

As the night progressed, Gleason placed a hundred dollar bill in Finger Lickin's pocket. “Play ‘That's a Plenty’ for me,” he requested. The comedian did that five times, requesting the same song, until all the money was gone.

For his finale, Finger Lickin’ announced to Gleason and the audience, “my swan song for the night is dedicated to ‘The Great One’—and it's on the house.” The trombone player must have realized that Gleason had run out of hundreddollar bills.

Before the saloon closed, Gleason turned to Merv, after surveying each of the blondes at table. “All these dames have trained their vaginal muscles to suck a man dry. Take your pick. Any one of these gals will make you swear off cock sucking for life. Trust me on this one.”

“Thanks for the offer but no thanks,” Merv said, getting up. “I've had it for the night. I'm out of here.” For his departure, Merv did an impression of Gleason's famous exit line, “Away we go.”

Without looking back, he raced for the door.

***

The summer of 1955 brought Merv his longawaited emcee job but it wasn't what he'd been expecting. He was astonished when Marty told him he'd be hosting a Sunday morning religious program for CBS called *Look Up and Live*. The job paid only $120 a week, and the gig was for thirteen weeks. Having no other work, Merv, at Hadley's urging, accepted the gig. Although Merv was a Catholic, the show's producers thought he was a Protestant. The Catholics would get their thirteen weeks after the Protestants went off the air.

Even though the idea of hosting a religious program appalled Merv, he had vowed to Marty that he would “take any talk show host job.” He kept his word. On the show, the script was fed through a Tele-Promp-Ter. In those days of early television, the instrument often chewed up the rolls of paper feeding into it.

During his second show, the machine broke down, forcing Merv to ad lib his way through the rest of the broadcast. “I'm not a pastor or minister,” he later said. “But I'd read books by my good friend, Fulton J. Sheen, so I just borrowed material from my memory of his writings until we went off the air.”

Merv had to introduce a string of boring pastors but he also met gospel singers. His favorite, of course, was the greatest gospel singer of them all, Mahalia Jackson. He was without racial prejudice, and in later years Merv would do more than any other TV talk show host in introducing black performers to audiences numbering into the millions.

“Getting to know Mahalia Jackson was one of the highlights of all the jobs I held down in the 50s,” Merv later said. Born in the Black Pearl section of New Orleans, Mahalia grew up in a threeroom dwelling that housed thirteen people.

Merv listened in fascination as Mahalia told him stories of her early life, especially how her aunt used to beat her with a “catonine tails” for the smallest infraction when she went about performing her sunup to sundown household chores.

Backstage, Mahalia talked music with Merv, uttering such startling remarks as “Elvis Presley stole rock ‘n’ roll from the black churches.”

On Merv's show, Mahalia in her grainy, fullthroated soprano sang her signature recording, “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” The artist seemed to save all her love for the Lord, as she had little use for men. She'd married Isaac Hockenhull in 1936 but had finally divorced him. “All during my marriage to him, he kept pressuring me to grant him that divorce,” she told Merv. “The devil finally got his wish. Frankly, I don't think most men are worth messing up your mouth with.”

One morning Merv asked her to sing the William Herbert Brewster song, “Move On Up a Little Higher.” That recording had sold eight million copies. She also sang Merv's favorite, “Go Tell It On the Mountain,” her big 1950 hit.

In 1961, Merv watched with pride as Mahalia sang at the presidential inauguration of John F. Kennedy. Before 250,000 African-Americans, she also went to Washington again in 1963 to sing “I've Been ‘Buked, and I've Been Scorned.” Martin Luther King Jr. listened intently before he too appeared before that rally to deliver his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Mahalia died on January 27, 1972, suffering from heart failure and diabetes complications. She was only sixty years old. Merv sent flowers to her funeral at Providence Memorial Park in Metairie, Louisiana.

Harry Belafonte had been Merv's roommate at one time in New York. On the *Look Up and Live* show, Merv also got to meet Sidney Poitier, another black performer on his way to great fame and achievement. At the time, Sidney ran a drama school in Harlem.

Like Mahalia, Sidney told Merv fascinating stories of his early life. Although born in Miami, he grew up on Cat Island in The Bahamas, where his father had been a tomato grower. When Sidney came to New York to try to make it as an actor, he was so poor that he often had to sleep in the bus terminal. He finally found a job as a dishwasher in Harlem.

(Left to right) The Defiant One, The Queen of Gospel, and Yellowbird:
Sidney Poitier, Mahalia Jackson, and Merv's roommate, **Harry Belafonte**

Even though appearing on a Christian TV show, Sidney privately told Merv that he'd been “involved” in local voodoo traditions on Cat Island where he was also a juvenile delinquent. “I was once arrested for vagrancy in New York,” Sidney confessed.

Merv had not seen Sidney's major film debut in the antiracist *No Way Out* in 1950. Sidney told him that it was deemed too explosive to be shown in its entirety by the colonial government of The Bahamas. The butchering of this explosive film for its presentation before a Bahamian audience caused such a protest that it gave birth to the political party that eventually overturned British rule.

Hadley was in the studio on the day that Sidney first appeared. He later told Merv, “I don't give a damn about all his racial politics. I'd be satisfied if he'd throw me one good black dick fuck. I think Sidney Poitier is the best reason for integration that I can think of.”

***

In 1955, Merv joined a parade of gay New Yorkers attending the premiere of the Broadway play, *The Desperate Hours*, starring a young Paul Newman. The word “gay,” as it relates to male homosexuality, had just come into vogue.

Those gay men who had seen the preview of the play made a collective pronouncement: You couldn't call yourself a gay man if you hadn't seen the film *Sunset Blvd*, starring Gloria Swanson, or the new play, *The Desperate Hours*, starring Paul Newman. Paul's stunning appearance on the New York stage made him, almost overnight, the poster boy of gay New York.

Co-starring as his kid brother, another handsome young actor, George Grizzard, was making his Broadway debut in this play. Both Paul and George appeared as jailbreaker brothers who invade a home and terrorize its occupants, as portrayed by Karl Malden and Nancy Coleman.

Merv's reject:
George Grizzard

Invited to the cast party, Merv met Paul Newman and later told Hadley, “He was the most dazzling creature I ever feasted my eyes on. I could look into his dreamy blue eyes forever.” In reference to that night, Merv also claimed that “gay boys were clustered around this hunk like bees in a honey tree. I couldn't get near him.”

Merv turned his attention to George, a native of North Carolina. “He seemed a little frightened. Although he was only three years younger than me, he had the look of a lost kid who was definitely out of his element with this fastmoving Broadway crowd.”

Before the night was over, Merv learned that Paul Newman had seduced the young actor on several occasions before dumping him. Perhaps following Paul's example, Merv later did the same thing to George.

One night in the 1970s at Ted Hook's Backstage Bar in New York City, George told Darwin Porter, “Merv and I hooked up pretty well, at least I thought so. The sex was vanilla, and he was a bottom, but that was okay by me. I thought he was my new boyfriend. My thing with Paul had gone nowhere, especially after he told me he was straight. Merv, on the other hand, was gay as a goose. I didn't see anything wrong spreading the word he was my

new BF. That was the worst mistake I ever made. Word soon got back to Merv, and he dropped me like a hot potato. I ran into him again in 1962 when I was starring in *Who's Afraid of Virgini a Woolf?*, and that devil pretended to his friends that we were meeting for the first time."

***

When Merv and Hadley found an apartment on 57th Street they liked much better than Marlon's place, they decided to move out. Merv called Marlon's agent, his old friend, Jay Kanter, and asked if he could find a sublet for Marlon's apartment, which no longer smelled of raccoon piss.

Within an hour, Jay called back and said he had a prospective renter, although mysteriously he provided few details. Merv suspected that the client might be another celebrity.

That night Merv hit the bars with Hadley, forgetting all about the appointment the following morning.

Arriving drunk back at Marlon's apartment at four o'clock that morning, Hadley threw some clothes into a suitcase. He told Merv that he had to catch an early morning bus to go to Philadelphia for a family reunion.

"But I thought you said your relatives lived in Minnesota," Merv said.

"They do," Hadley said, "but a lot of them live in Pennsylvania." He kissed Merv goodbye, promising to call, although he never did.

After drinking all night, Merv collapsed in bed until there was a loud pounding at the door. Marlon had long ago disconnected the doorbell. Merv had forgotten about the nine o'clock appointment he had with Jay Kanter and the prospective renter. Throwing Marlon's tattered and smelly bathrobe around himself, he stumbled to the door to find Jay and his client.

He was startled. With a kerchief tied around her hair, the client had enclosed one of the world's shapeliest bodies into a dull raincoat dyed a battleship gray. Even without her customary makeup and in this disguise, Merv knew at once that it was Marilyn Monroe. Anybody could have recognized her. She was at the time the most photographed face in America, as well as the model for the country's most famous nude calendar.

After the first thirty minutes, it became apparent that Marilyn had no intention of renting the apartment. She just wanted to see where Marlon lived. Merv knew that she and Marlon were onagain, offagain lovers.

Jay soon excused himself to rush to an appointment, leaving Marilyn in the apartment alone with Merv. Just because she insisted, Merv even unlocked the secret closet, showing her the wreckage of Marlon's electric train, which for some reason seemed to fascinate her.

"This closet is all I'll need for my wardrobe" she said. "I don't have many clothes. A few sweaters, two pairs of jeans and some tight Jax slacks. My most valuable possession is a mink coat Joe gave me for Christmas."

"You're always photographed in glamorous clothes," he said.

"They're not mine," she claimed. "They're borrowed from the studio."

Merv invited her into Marlon's kitchen for coffee. He noticed that she wore no stockings, and there was a big, ugly pimple above her left ankle. She wore a white silk blouse and matching slacks. Sipping her coffee, she surveyed the bleak kitchen. "Did I ever tell you my secret name for Marlon is Carlo?"

She settled in a bit and showed no sign of leaving that morning. Removing her kerchief, she revealed unkempt hair to him. She looked as if she'd suddenly risen from bed without combing her famous blonde tresses.

Returning to the living room, she focused on Marlon's piano. "Please, pretty please," she said, "play something for me."

They ended up at the piano for more than an hour, as he played her familiar songs. They began to sing duets together before she tired of that. She plopped down on the sofa, placing her feet under her body. After bringing her some cheap red wine Hadley had left behind, he settled in with her, just knowing that it would be a gossip fest about Marlon.

Gorgeous, glam, and
gossiping about Marlon:
Marilyn Monroe

"Marlon doesn't really respect women," she said. "He makes love to them—to men as well—but he lacks the maturity to go the long haul in a relationship, unless you call his long friendship with Wally Cox a relationship. I'm a bit of an exception in that I'm blonde. Marlon usually lies to fuck darkhaired Latina putas. Even so, we make love from time to time. He's a far better friend than a lover. As a friend, he's gentle and caring. As a lover, he thinks he has to be Stanley Kowalski."

"You mentioned that Marlon likes to have sex with men," Merv said, feigning innocence on the subject.

"Oh, Marlon does have sex with men just to be daring," she said. "He probably doesn't really enjoy it. He does it because it's part of that rebel image he so carefully cultivates. Since society doesn't approve of homosexuality, Marlon thinks he has to be the sexual outlaw. Even with women he's got to flaunt convention. If men are supposed to enter women through the front door, Marlon always insists on knocking on the back door."

Tiring of the sofa, she rose to her feet. With wine glass in hand, she moved throughout the room. "Marlon is a lost cause. I've decided that Monty Clift is the one for me." She noticed a look of disbelief on Merv's face. "Don't believe all those stories about Monty being a homosexual. I know you two guys used to live together—and all that. But he's not gay. He just hasn't found the right woman to love him."

"Are you absolutely sure that's the case?" he asked.

"Of course, I'm certain," she said defensively. "For the life of me, I can't picture two men in bed together. Maybe in those bunks in the military when there are no women available. What man in his right mind would settle for another man when he could have this?" She ran her hands lovingly along the contours of her body. "Don't tell anyone, but I've always found the idea of two men seducing each other weird. I mean, if you think about, it's a bit creepy. Bumping two pricks together. How ghastly!"

"Marilyn, if millions of your gay fans could hear this talk, they'd desert you in a minute," he said. "C'mon, you've been in Hollywood far too long to be this naïve. For God's sake, you're sounding like Mae West. She's got plenty of strange ideas about homosexuality."

"Don't get me wrong," she said. "I adore the gays, like Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote. But, as I said, Monty is not a homosexual. He told me he loves women. He also told me that the finds sex with men dirty. I know for a fact that he's fucking Elizabeth Taylor, although what he sees in that cow I don't know. If I don't marry Monty, I'm certain that Frank Sinatra will marry me. If either of them wants to marry me, I'll divorce whoever I am married to at the time. Of course, bitch Taylor is also chasing after Sinatra. I wish the cow would leave my men alone."

Marilyn's talk quickly turned from men to her own career, which she seemed to think was about to take a new and daring step forward. "I just talked to Tennessee today." She was, of course, referring to the playwright Tennessee Williams. "It's almost set with him and Elia Kazan that I'm gonna play *Baby Doll* in their new movie. Elia is a little bit hesitant, but Tennessee is behind me all the way. Elia claims that I'm too old to play a teenager. Marlon has almost agreed to appear opposite me in the role of Silva. *Baby Doll* will give new meaning to my career. It'll show those assholes in Hollywood that I'm more than a dumb blonde."

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When Merv read in the papers that Elia Kazan had turned down Marilyn for *Baby Doll*, he called her to console her, finding that she was bitterly disappointed. She sounded like she'd been drinking. "I'm not giving up," she vowed. "Somewhere in some dark attic in America a guy is writing a magical script for me that will change the direction of my career. I just know it." Before she put down the phone, she invited him over. "If you'll come and sing to me, it might cheer me up."

"Do you mind if I bring a friend?" Merv asked. "Hadley Morrell. He thinks you're the greatest thing since the invention of ice cream."

"The more the merrier," she said.

Later, he and Hadley found her occupying Rock Hudson's secret hideaway in New York. It looked like a hurricane had blown through. During her short term in residence, she'd completely wrecked the apartment. Dirty pizza boxes were found in the corner, the dishes looked like they hadn't been washed in a month, and empty champagne bottles littered the floor.

She found Hadley extraordinarily attractive. "Merv, you selfish boy," she said, "keeping this hunk for yourself

when he should be shared with the world. Don't tell me he's gay, too. I refuse to believe it. He looks like he can handle any woman and call for reinforcements."

Hadley beamed hearing such praise of his manly charms, although Merv was growing jealous, realizing how foolish it was to take a lover to meet Marilyn Monroe. She could seduce any man, gay or not.

Once settled in, she offered them champagne, her favorite drink. "Do you know what that fucking Kazan told me? He said that I have a nigger butt. Can you imagine him saying that to me? I want both of you to judge." In front of Hadley and Merv, she lowered her jeans and exposed her ass, revealing that she wore no underwear. "Judge for yourself, fellows."

"That is the most beautiful ass in creation," Hadley said. "There is no ass in the world more fuckable."

"Hear that, Kazan," she said, "you old meanie." She looked at Hadley as she turned around. "I hope you're not another Marlon, always wanting to enter a woman through the back door." In front of him, she lowered her jeans, revealing that she'd dyed her pubic hair blonde.

What happened next depends on how reliable a witness Hadley is. He later claimed in a proposed memoir that he had sex with Marilyn right on Rock Hudson's carpet and that Merv hovered over Marilyn like a voyeur but did not actually penetrate her. In Hadley's words, Merv merely felt her breast while goading him on to action.

If an actual seduction took place that afternoon, it cannot be verified. Hadley later claimed that in a taxi back to their apartment, Merv turned to him in bewilderment and said, "I didn't know you were bisexual."

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Upon its release, Merv and Hadley went to see *Baby Doll*. Instead of Marlon and Marilyn, it starred Eli Wallach and Carroll Baker. In Merv's own review, he said, "Tennessee was right in pushing for Marlon and Marilyn. Marlon would have eaten up the scenery, and Marilyn would have made it a classic. With Wallach and Baker, Tennessee has ended up with a merely mediocre film."

Months later Marilyn called Merv. "I've found the great script I've been waiting for all my life. At least with this script I'll be taken seriously as a star. You've got to read it."

Without telling Hadley where he was going, Merv went to Marilyn's apartment, which was no better kept than Rock Hudson's dive. Clothes were thrown about, along with remnants of long forgotten meals. When Merv excused himself to take a leak, he found a used condom on the bathroom floor.

Seated on the sofa, he read the badly written script with all its typos. She didn't leave the room for one minute as he read, and kept bouncing up and down on the sofa, her robe opening at times to reveal her vagina. Unlike that time with Hadley, he noticed that she hadn't bleached her pubic hairs.

As he put down the script, he looked at her in astonishment. "Who wrote this screenplay?"

"A gay friend of mine," she said. "Dickie Knight. He's a chorus boy on Broadway."

"This is a ripoff of Judy's *A Star Is Born*. You said earlier you wanted me to play the role of your husband. A big band singer from the 40s whose career in Hollywood is going nowhere. That's a little too close for comfort. You're a star on the rise, trying to hold our marriage together with this hasbeen, who happens to be a drunk and who happens to walk into the sea at the end of the picture and drowns himself. James Mason is a tough act to follow."

"You don't understand," she said. "In *A Star Is Born*, Judy was a singer. As Lola Velez in this new script, I'm a dramatic actress who gets nominated for an Oscar. In *A Star Is Born*, Mason played a hasbeen movie star. In this script, you're not a movie star but a failed singer. Don't you get the difference? Dickie has come up with a lovely flashback. You could be made up to look younger. In the flashback, you could be shown in your heyday singing 'I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts.'"

"I'd do anything to play opposite you on the screen," he said. "But you've got to come up with a better—read that original—script than this piece of shit."

"You won't be so nasty when I walk away with an Oscar for this script," she said. "And if you don't want the part I can always offer it to Frank Sinatra."

"I'm sure Frank would love to play the role of a failed singer from the 40s," he said.

"Frank will do what I ask him to do," she said. "He's madly in love with me and still fucking me—and doing a better job of it than you did. So there!"

When Merv encountered Marilyn months later, she made no mention of the script that would have costarred them. He didn't bring it up either.

At the time, Marilyn was being considered as the lead in a new movie called *Some Like It Hot*. But, at least in Merv's opinion, she still had bizarre casting ambitions associated with Frank Sinatra. She'd been delighted to hear that the director, Billy Wilder, hoped to cast Frank Sinatra in the movie. It seemed that Billy wanted Frank for the cameo role of the gangster "Spats," but had to settle for George Raft. Marilyn had misunderstood, thinking Billy wanted to cast Frank as the male lead, with the understanding that he'd have to appear in drag for some of the pivotal scenes. The role eventually went to Marilyn's former lover, Tony Curtis.

Later, when Merv read a copy of the script, he told Hadley, "Frank Sinatra doing a movie in drag? Fat chance. At times I think Marilyn is out of her mind. There's about as much of a chance of Frank playing the part in drag as there is of Eisenhower getting caught in a love nest with Tab Hunter."

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Merv had long ago forgiven Monty Clift for the beef stew attack, and the two old friends spoke occasionally on the phone. Monty revealed to Merv that he had been spending many of his nights with either Roddy McDowall or Libby Holman, who had been accused of murdering her twentyyearold gay husband, Zachary Smith Reynolds, the tobacco heir.

"In many ways, Roddy is the only person I've found worthy of being my mate," Monty told Merv. "We spend a lot of time in bed together, but, as hard as we try, we can't work up a lot of passion for each other."

A few weeks later, Monty mailed Merv a script for a film adaptation of William Inge's hit Broadway play, *Bus Stop*. It was being readied as a vehicle for Marilyn Monroe. At one point Elvis Presley was suggested as the cowboy lead, but Col. Tom Parker, his manager, turned down the offer, which promptly went to Monty. After reading the script, Merv called Monty, telling him, "this could be a classic." He urged him to sign to do the movie with Marilyn. After mulling it over, Monty turned down the role as "not worthy of me. How dare Hollywood cast me as a dumb cowboy playing opposite a dumb blonde."

One afternoon in New York, Monty showed up at Merv's apartment unannounced, which is the way he often preferred to call on his friends. "I want to catch people like they really are—not gussied up for company," he said. He asked Merv to accompany him to a five o'clock showing of *Guys and Dolls*. "Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando singing in a picture together," Monty said in amazement. "What a riot!"

On the way to the theater, Monty confided to Merv that a few days before, he'd gone with a friend to see the first screening of *Guys and Dolls* at Loews 86th St. Theater. He'd been drinking heavily and had screamed at the screen: "Brando's vomitable! Sinatra's a pansy in this shit-stinker!"

An usher asked Monty to leave. Escorted to the lobby, Monty was furious. With his bare fists he smashed a display case, advertising the movie. Shattered glass littered the lobby, and he'd badly lacerated his hand. Blood was dripping onto the shards of broken glass. When the manager rushed out and saw that the damage had been caused by one of Hollywood's biggest stars, he called an ambulance to rush Monty to the hospital.

This time around, at the same theater, Monty sat through the entire movie without saying a word. Later, in a nearby bar, he reviewed the movie for Merv. "Brando used to have something on Broadway back in 1947," Monty claimed. "Whatever talent he once had has been ruined by Hollywood. What a dirty, corrupt town that is. Marlon Brando is a horse's ass in this stinker. As for Sinatra, *Eternity* showed he could be an actor, but he's made all the wrong career choices since then. Like Brando, he's throwing everything away. Incidentally, Sinatra and I aren't asshole buddies any more. He kicked me out of his party in Hollywood. I got a little drunk and came on to Dean Martin. I'd heard that he has a big one, and I wanted to try it out for myself."

After that, Merv didn't see Monty for several months. One early morning at around three o'clock, a call came in from Hollywood. It was Monty, who sounded drunk. He professed his undying love for "Bessie Mae," his nickname for Elizabeth Taylor. He told Merv that her divorce from Michael Wilding was imminent and that he planned to marry her. "We are going to learn how to be as intimate as two people can be without sex," Monty said. He then revealed plans for their upcoming film together, *Raintree County*, where Elizabeth would play a neurotic, predatory Southern belle.

The next news from Monty came not from him but as part of a desperate early morning call from Elizabeth in Los Angeles. In a teary voice, she informed Merv that after a dinner party at her house Monty's car had gone over a ravine as he tried to maneuver it down a winding hill to Sunset Boulevard. "When I ran down the hill and got to him, his face was a bloody pulp," she almost screamed into the phone. "It was gone!"

She burst into hysterical sobbing and had to put down the phone. Merv later learned that she'd raced from her

house down the hill to the wreck where she'd discovered Monty choking to death. In desperation, she'd reached deep into his throat and removed his two front teeth, which had been rammed into his throat by the impact of the accident.

Like one of the movie heroes he played, Rock Hudson, also a guest at Elizabeth's house that night, had raced down the hill. After struggling for half an hour, he managed to extricate Monty from the wreckage, which looked like a crumpled accordion. An ambulance called by Michael Wilding finally arrived.

Merv was deeply saddened by the news and wanted to fly to Los Angeles to be at Monty's bedside. But he'd already committed himself to a number of gigs and couldn't get away. When Merv finally got through to Monty on the phone, the fallen star had left the hospital and was living in someone's house on Dawn Ridge Road.

“They've made a new face for me,” Monty told Merv. “Remember that movie you made about the Rue Morgue? I could star in it now. Those magazines that used to say I had the most beautiful face of any male star in Hollywood won't be writing such shit about me any more.”

In his first autobiography, Merv relates an incident involving Monty's return to New York after his accident. The disfigured star went from the house of one friend to another to see if he would be recognized with his remarkably altered face, the creation of plastic surgeons. One night after midnight, Merv had to get up to answer the urgent ringing of his doorbell. With his dog, he made his way down the steps since his intercom was out of order.

Montgomery Clift
after the rebuilding of his face.

He dared to open to the door just a crack to see who it was, thinking it might be an old drunk or else a serial killer. A mysterious stranger was standing on the stoop, wearing a black overcoat, a wide-brimmed black felt hat, and sunglasses in the dim light. Sounding as ferocious as he could, Merv demanded to know who it was. In his book, he quotes the stranger as saying, “You don't know me, do you?”

Merv knew Monty's voice at once and apologized for not recognizing him in the darkness. It was too late. Even though Merv called for Monty to come back, he disappeared down the street, as if running away from himself.

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Merv's next job was for CBS on *The Morning Show*, which was that network's answer to the challenge imposed by NBC's popular *Today* show. “I took the job—first, because I needed it, and, second, because this was the show where Jack Paar got his start, and I wanted to be the next Jack Paar.”

On the show, Merv was to sing and talk with Paar's replacement, Texasborn John Henry Faulk. The TV talk show host was later blacklisted because of the long arm extended from the McCarthy era of the 1950s. Faulk was falsely accused of being a member of various Communist front groups.

Faulk later sued Aware, Inc., an organization that screened performers for the television industry, systematically exposing anyone alleged to have affiliations with various Communisttainted front groups. In his case, Faulk was represented by famed attorney Louis Nizer.

After a sixyear battle in the courts, Faulk was awarded the largest libel judgment in history to that date, $3.5 million. His suit, and his subsequent victory, was largely responsible for breaking the “Blacklist” within the television industry.

Merv bonded with Faulk and sympathized with his dilemma, later praising the Emmy Awardwinning TV movie, *Fear on Trial*, made in 1975 and shown on CBS. It starred William Devane as Faulk, with George C. Scott playing his lawyer, Louis Nizer.

On air, the sponsor of *The Morning Show*, American Airlines, served Faulk and Merv a large breakfast of flapjacks, scrambled eggs, and sizzling bacon with hash brown potatoes at seven o'clock every morning. Both Faulk and Merv had to eat the same mammoth breakfast at nine o'clock for their California audience. There was no tape in

those days, so the show and that breakfast had to be repeated in its entirety. Merv grew so bored with the show that one day he set the weatherman's report on fire.

Faulk became too much of a “hot potato” for CBS and was let go. “When I left the show, I recommended to CBS that they promote Merv as my direct replacement, elevating him from the #2 ‘cohost’ role,” Faulk said. “He was easy to work with and came across as very amiable on camera. He was witty and a skilled interviewer, though he never asked embarrassing questions. Sometimes we sat chatting on air with each other and often couldn't remember the name of our next guest or why he'd been booked on our show.”

CBS rejected the idea of promoting Merv as the show's frontman, hiring instead a struggling young newcomer, Dick Van Dyke, who'd previously worked as a disc jockey in New Orleans. Before getting this break, Dick had found show business a hard road. At one point, he and his wife, Margie Willett, were so poor that they had to live in their car.

Minutes before the taping of Van Dyke's debut show, the director had waited until the last minute for Dick to show up. Only one minute before air time, he informed Merv that no one had been able to reach Dick and that Merv had to go on alone as the host of the show.

With no preparation, Merv more or less adlibbed his way through the show. As the show was going off the air, Dick called the studio. He'd overslept.

To Merv's surprise, Dick went on to great success. Merv was always a bit jealous of Dick, viewing him as a rival. But whenever he encountered him in the years ahead, he masked that feeling. There was always a friendly banter between these two performers.

Unknown to Dick, Merv had been one of several competitors for the role of Rob Petrie on what later became *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961). Merv lost the role, initially to Johnny Carson, who, at least in the talkshow circuit, eventually become Merv's biggest rival. Merv later read in *Variety* that Johnny's bid for the role of Rob Petrie was rejected at the last minute in favor of Dick Van Dyke, who went on to achieve phenomenal ratings in a show that ended up bearing his name.

Merv went to see Dick attempt a Cockney accent in *Mary Poppins* (1964), and he ran into him later at a party.“That was the worst attempt at a Cockney accent I've ever heard,” Merv jokingly chided him. “If you want to know what Cockney sounds like, listen to my recording of ‘I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts’ day in and day out.”

“Some day, Alice, to the moon,” Dick said.

A hot new talk-show host:
Merv

The Morning Show became Merv's best rehearsal to date for his future as a talk show host. He was on for about six months before CBS let him go. The executives decided to give the host job to-Will Rogers Jr., with whom Merv had worked on the film, The Boy from Oklahoma. An executive at CBS told Merv that he was competent and qualified for the host job, but lacked the folksy, homespun quality that Will Jr. could bring to the show. “If Will runs out of something to say, he can always twirl a rope,” Merv said.

Merv's everfaithful agent, Marty Kummer, almost immediately came up with another job offer wherein Merv would fill in for Bob Smith, the emcee of TV's popular children's program, *The Howdy Doody Show*. Smith, a beloved pioneer of that program, had had a heart attack, and Merv was offered a role as his replacement, with the understanding that it was only temporary, and that it would end when Smith recovered from his nearfatal stroke. Bob went under the name of Buffalo Bob Smith and wore an Indian costume, claiming that he was a descendant of the Native American chieftain who had once worn the same costume.

Merv needed a job, but he was hesitant about filling the shoes of a TV personality who had won the hearts of millions of America's babyboomer children. Merv also protested to Marty that “I'm not an Indian.”

After mulling it over, Merv finally turned down the job. “Howdy Doody, a god damn puppet, would steal every

scene from me," he told Marty."Get me another job—and quick. My bank balance is dropping even as we speak. Besides, I think Howdy Doody is a sissy."

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The Robert Q. Lewis Show was a popular TV series that was broadcast over the-American airwaves between 1954 and 1956. Its bespectacled host and namesake was a wellknown and highly eccentric radio and television comedian, Robert Q. Lewis. Irving Mansfield, husband of the bestselling novelist Jacqueline Susann, was responsible for scouting new talent for the show.

When the producers brought Irving in, there was immediate tension between Irving and Lewis, who wanted to be in charge of the selection of talent for his show himself.

Irving had learned that Lewis needed a summer replacement for his juvenile singer, Richard Hayes, and Irving also knew that Merv was out of work and in desperate need of a job.

Irving pitched an offer to Merv's agent, and Marty called Merv with the details. The gig paid five hundred dollars a week. Although Merv would have preferred the job held by Lewis himself, he gratefully accepted because he direly needed the money.

Although a forgotten name today, Richard Hayes was a pop music star in what is now called "the Interlude Era," between the crooners of the mid1940s and the rockers of the mid50s.

Merv was leery of replacing him, since he knew that he was Lewis's favorite singer. "That fucker, Lewis, is going to hate me before I even open my mouth," Merv had told Marty, and was amazingly accurate about that assessment.

Lewis was known for his fondness for show business nostalgia, and in general he liked the numbers Merv selected to sing. "I love the songs, hate the singer," Lewis told Irving Mansfield. But instead of reinforcing Merv, he ridiculed him, telling associates, "That creep Irving Mansfield forced Griffin onto me. I didn't want him on my show. He doesn't really have a voice. He takes a great number like 'That Old Black Magic' and completely fucks it up."

Actually, Lewis suspected that Merv would make a terrific emcee of the show and as such, might represent a serious threat. In time, and as Merv's reputation as a competent talk show host grew, Lewis substituted for—and ultimately replaced—Merv as host of *Play Your Hunch*, a TV show that lay in Merv's future.

Before actually meeting Lewis as part of a confrontation Merv dreaded, he tried to learn all he could about his new boss. Lewis, who was born with the name of Goldberg, was associated with distinctive hornrimmed spectacles, which became a virtual trademark on his TV programs. Lewis frequently sat in for TV host Arthur Godfrey when he was ill or otherwise unable to perform.

Godfrey, however, eventually turned on Lewis for reasons which aren't clear. In front of their associates, Godfrey claimed that the "Q" in Lewis's name actually stood for "queer." On the air he made veiled references to Lewis's homosexuality, and in private, Godfrey called Lewis "a faggot." At one point Godfrey, getting it all wrong, even spread a story that Merv and Lewis were having an affair.

Actually the "Q" in Lewis's name stood for nothing, and certainly not his middle name. He'd borrowed it from a fictitious radio character, "Colonel Lemuel Q. Stoopnagle," which originated as part of a comedy routine developed by radio comedian F. Chase Taylor in 1942.

Lewis had scored his biggest hit in 1951 with a dialect novelty song, "Where's a Your House?," an answer to Rosemary Clooney's hit, "Come Ona-My House." For a brief period, Rosemary became romantically involved with Lewis. She was dating him at the time she met her future husband, Jose Ferrer, who was appearing on Broadway with Gloria Swanson in a revival of *Twentieth Century,* a play which had made its debut back in 1932.

Merv called Rosemary as a means of finding out what she might reveal about Lewis. "He's a real pain in the ass to work with," Rosemary said. "He likes to control everything. Our romance never got off the ground. He's really gay, but he gets hysterical if someone suggests that. That's why he hates Arthur Godfrey so much. Godfrey's a prick, but he knows the truth about Robert. To deflect suspicion about himself, Robert calls you the gay singer, and he hasn't met you. When Irving booked you on the show, Robert called me and asked me if you were gay. I told him you weren't—that you chased after showgals all the time. I don't think he believed me."

Merv wanted to meet the orchestra leader of the show, Ray Block, and he went up and introduced himself to the diminutive and bespectacled music man. "I don't think I can ever forgive you for ruining my Hollywood career," Merv said with a smile.

Block looked astonished, not really knowing what Merv meant.

“You were the vocal coach for Gordon MacRae—don't deny it,” Merv said. “Had it not been for MacRae, I would have been the one romancing Doris Day on screen.”

By the second day on the job, Lewis still hadn't spoken to Merv, but Merv nonetheless saw a display of Lewis's temper up close. Lewis became so mad at the way Block was conducting a number that he picked up a chair on the sound stage and tossed it at him. The chair narrowly missed Block, landing in the otherwise empty orchestra pit.

A particularly dynamic entertainer who appeared regularly on the *Robert Q. Lewis Show* was Coloradoborn Jaye P. Morgan. Her rich singing voice and wholesome appeal captivated audiences, and she helped improve Lewis's sagging ratings. By the time Merv met her, she'd evolved into one of the top recording artists of the 1950s. Merv bonded with her the moment they were introduced. They began “dating” on an irregular basis, with Jaye becoming another of Merv's “gal pals.” It was not a serious romance, and the friendship which formed in the 1950s endured into the 1970s when Jaye became a regular on *The Merv Griffin Show*.

“I loved the way she laughed,” Merv recalled, “and she had an outrageous sense of humor.” These characteristics would later be showcased on *The Gong Show* where Jaye was a resident female celebrity judge.

She'd started singing at the age of three, and later took the nickname Jaye P. from the banker, J.P. Morgan. Merv had wanted to record a duet with Jaye. It was called “Chee Cheeoo Chee,” but Perry Como beat him to it. The song became a smash hit with Perry and Jaye. “It would have sold more millions,” Merv said, “if Jaye had let me do it.”

Early talk-show monsters:
Arthur Godfrey (top),
and **Robert Q. Lewis**

Like Rosemary, Jaye warned Merv about Lewis's temper. In an autobiography, Merv quoted Jaye as saying: “Lewis will scream at you in rehearsal, he will throw things. He just goes into fits and there's hell to pay. You'll know he's about to blow when his face gets red and his nostrils flare and his eyebrows go up to his hairline—that's when to duck.”

In Merv's second autobiography, published after Lewis's death, Merv claimed that Lewis was “insane,” citing the talk show host's lack of humor and comparing his looks to a “dyspeptic accountant.”

During his days on *The Robert Q. Lewis Show*, Merv officially “dated” Jaye P. Morgan, unofficially going home to Hadley after midnight. In his column, Walter Winchell, even though he knew better, wrote that “wedding bells will soon be ringing for two singers, Jaye P. Morgan and Merv Griffin.”

Such was not to be the case. Whereas Merv struck out with Lewis, he formed a bond with Lewis's secretary, Julann Elizabeth Wright. They became friends and eventually dated in a rather casual way, not exclusively. The friendship between Merv and Julann led to their marriage in 1958. Their union produced a son, Anthony Griffin, nicknamed “Tony,” who was born December 8, 1959.

Time and distance would drive the Griffins apart, their divorce becoming finalized in 1976 after a difficult financial settlement. During his marriage, Merv continued to lead a private and closeted life, far removed from his family, and presumably even beyond the knowledge of that family. Tony eventually married and gave Merv two grandchildren, daughter Fatah and son Donovan Mervyn.

After his departure from the Robert Q. Lewis show, Merv accepted an offer as emcee of a travelogue and variety show, *Going Places*, whose weekly broadcasts emanated from different venues within Florida, including the Jai-Alai Fronton or Cypress Gardens.

Merv and Hadley flew to Florida every Friday afternoon, returning the following Sunday night. Hadley loved Florida, and sometimes stayed there after Merv's Sunday departure, remaining on site and at leisure for the entire week.

The show was covered by the local press, but Merv was still so unknown that few of the local papers spelled his name right. He was variously known as Herb Griffin, Mirth Griffin, and Mark Griffin. *The Miami Herald* called him Mary Griffin. “A paper in California also called me Mary Griffin,” he told Hadley. “Maybe these newspaper boys know me better than I want them to.”

The low point of the TV series came in Cypress Gardens, where three minutes before air time, Merv took a call from his sister Barbara in San Mateo. She informed him that their father had died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-five.

Merv had spoken to his parents only the week before and had no clue that Merv Senior's health was in any jeopardy. Before putting Merv's mother on the phone, his father had uttered his final words to his son. “Keep up the good work—I'm proud of you—and keep your nose clean.”

“After I put down the phone, I don't remember what happened next,” Merv told Hadley later that night. “The TV cameras were on me. I remember that much. I must have said something, but I don't recall the show at all. I was in complete shock.”

That very night, Merv flew to San Francisco with Hadley. To Hadley's disappointment, he was stashed in a room within the same hotel that Merv had occupied in the 1940s during some of his performances with Freddy Martin's band.

When Merv told Hadley that he'd be renting a car and driving to San Mateo alone, Hadley exploded in anger. This led to a bitter fight between the two men. “I'm your lover,” Hadley said. “I have a right to be there. To meet your family. What are you trying to do to me? Lock me in a closet or something? Pretend I don't exist?”

“You're everybody's lover,” Merv angrily charged before heading toward the door.

“You're right about that,” Hadley said, his fury bubbling. “You might as well know. Robert Q. Lewis sucked me off in the men's room one afternoon. He liked it so much he's promised me he'll rent me an apartment in New York and take care of me.”

Merv stopped at the door. “I'm not surprised. You are, after all, a known star fucker, although I wouldn't exactly call Robert Q. Lewis a star. Did you get cum on his hornrimmed spectacles when you shot off?”

“I won't be here when you get back from the funeral,” Hadley warned.

“Good riddance!”

In San Mateo, Merv had a tearful reunion with his family, to whom he had not paid much attention in recent months. After his father was laid to rest, Merv held his mother in his arms. “I loved my father,” he told her. “But I never got to know the man.”

“It was his loss,” his mother assured him.

Back in San Francisco, Merv learned that Hadley had forged his name on three of his paychecks and had cashed them. He'd checked out of the hotel after running up a big bill, leaving no note, no forwarding address.

In his moment of despair, and like a show business cliché, the phone rang, a call from Marty, his agent in New York. In a futile effort to restore the glory days of radio, ABC was going to invest six million dollars into a radio variety show.

The executives wanted Merv to host the show, singing and talking. The TV broadcast was slated to be on the air for fortyfive minutes and might later expand to one hour and fortyfive minutes if Merv could find an audience.

Bruised from both *The Robert Q. Lewis* fiasco and the dismal *Going Places*, but eager for another gig, Merv accepted. He was delighted at the pay, knowing that he would be solvent once again.

After accepting, he put down the phone, then picked it up again to call Johnny Riley in Los Angeles. It took only a few minutes of talking before Johnny agreed to abandon his job as a waiter. He flew to San Francisco that night and joined Merv for a reunion.

They slept in the same bed that night, but there was no sexual contact, even though Merv made it abundantly clear that he was still physically attracted to Johnny, just as he'd been in San Mateo years before.

That following morning, Johnny sat beside Merv on a flight to New York. He assured Johnny that it was all over

between Hadley and himself. En route across country, Merv and Johnny plotted their new lives and anticipated the arrival of Paul Schone and Bill Robbins in New York. “We can all live together, at least for a while” Johnny said. “The boys will find work and get their own places. It'll be like the old days in California all over again. New York here we come. Ours to conquer.”

Before the plane landed in New York, Merv made a very determined decision. Whatever he did in his future, he planned to keep his world with “the San Mateo Gang” separate from his newly acquired straight friends. Only in rare exceptions, such as his friendships with Monty Clift or Liberace, would he allow his two separate worlds to come together.

With his new salary, he was even contemplating renting a secret hideaway address, now that he was getting better known. Only the other day, a newspaper critic had claimed, “Merv Griffin, for my money, sings better than Perry Como and with a lot more feeling.”

More than love, Merv craved success. He was still wounded by his failure to become a Hollywood star, and he wanted to show Jack Warner and the rest of Hollywood that he had the talent to make it big.

When he discussed with Johnny his plans for maintaining a “compartmentalized” life, his friend said, “Sounds to me like you want to have your cake and eat it too.”

“Exactly,” Merv said. “Who's to say a guy can't do that? It's never been tried. I'm going back to New York to make it—and make it big. Pretending you're straight is part of the game for making it big. It's in the rule book. Name one big star who's openly gay?”

“Liberace.”

“Are you crazy?” Merv said. “Liberace tells the world he's straight.”

“Is there anybody in his right mind who believes that?” Johnny asked. “If Liberace can convince the world he's straight, then anybody can. As for your being straight, does that mean birthin’ babies and all that shit? If so, count me out. I don't know nothin’ ‘bout birthin’ babies, Miss Scarlett.”

“Yes, I'm going to enter the breeding grounds for procreation purposes,” Merv said. “People will think I'm as straight as Ronald Reagan. What I do behind closed doors, and in the privacy of the various hideaways I'll have over the years, is my own damn business.”

“Have it your way,” Johnny said. “Just keep me informed, leaving out no sordid details.”

“It's a deal,” Merv said. “You've been working as a hustler. Well, hustlers have to put out. If I'm going to be paying all your bills, keeping you in New York, I want some action.”

“You got it, boy,” Johnny promised.

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Ultimately, Merv's radio show collapsed. At the peak of its limited success, it attracted ten thousand fan letters a week. “ABC failed to bring back the great days of radio,” Merv later said. “If Tallulah Bankhead and all those famous guests on *The Big Show* couldn't do it, what chance did I have?”

After the failure of that show, my phone stopped ringing,” Merv said. “Marty Kummer couldn't even come up with a gig for me in some seedy lounge in South Trenton.”

Before landing in New York, Merv had agreed to take care of Johnny Riley, but for several months Johnny took care of Merv.

“Johnny always seemed to have money in his pockets” said Bill Robbins, who had found work as a waiter after moving to New York. Occasionally Bill got a booking as a female impersonator at some dive in Greenwich Village. “Paul Schone and I knew how Johnny was making his money,” Bill said. “I believe Merv knew too but nothing was ever said.”

After Paul had also moved from Los Angeles to New York, he found no work as a dancer in Broadway shows and once again, like Bill, took a waiter's job.

Through the darkest days of his career, Merv continued to hold onto his famous friends such as Rosemary Clooney, Roddy McDowall, and Liberace. “When it came to friends, Merv had the Midas Touch even before he became famous himself,” Bill said. “Not only that, but he often met and befriended people who were on the dawn of fame. It was a special gift he had, which became more evident when he was a talk show host. He discovered major talent before the world had a clue.”

Such was the case with a young songwriter who lived across the street from Merv's apartment on 57th Street in

New York. His name was Burt Bacharach, and he and Merv bonded from the first time they were introduced by a mutual acquaintance. Burt was just starting to date again after his failed marriage to the singer, Paula Stewart. As a pianist, he used to accompany her, as he had far better known entertainers such as Imogene Coca, Mel Tormé, Vic Damone, the Ames Brothers, Steve Lawrence, and Polly Bergen. When Merv met Burt, he was dating Rose Tobias, an assistant to producer David Susskind.

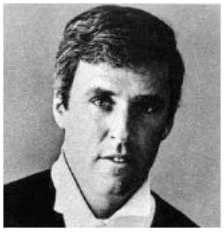
Merv was seen frequently on the town with Burt when Johnny was otherwise engaged. One night in a club, Merv saw Robert Q. Lewis in an adjoining booth, sitting with Hadley Morrell. Hadley did not speak or acknowledge Merv. Neither did Lewis. Although Merv had no proof, he always suspected that it was Lewis who spread the false rumor around town that Burt and Merv were lovers.

Burt came up with the idea that if Merv, Rose, and Robert Barry, an agent, would pool their meager funds, they could rent a beach house on Ocean Beach (Fire Island) for the summer. The little resort had a reputation as an artists' colony, and there was a local bar where Burt could earn extra bucks playing the piano.

Merv agreed, but was reluctant to invite Johnny, as he didn't want to appear as part of a male/male couple. As it turned out, Johnny didn't want to spend weekends on Ocean Beach, but preferred another part of Fire Island, Cherry Grove, which had become a notorious homosexual hangout. Somewhat reluctantly, Merv agreed to spend his weekends apart from Johnny, while Johnny pursued whatever he was after in the Grove.

At Ocean Beach, this hastily assembled house party wasn't congenial. Burt's dog fought constantly with Poochie, Merv's dog. When the dogs weren't fighting, Rose Tobias was arguing with Burt.

One night Burt invited a troupe of Spanish dancers to their house for a party with wild music. Having had more than his share of drinks, Merv wanted to dance the fandango along the top of a stone wall. He was in no condition to do that. Losing his balance, he fell off the wall, his head almost colliding against a large rock. He landed in a bed of poison ivy and seriously injured his back. He had to be hauled away in an ambulance, and although he never returned to Fire Island, his back injury was to plague him for the rest of his life.



Composer
Burt Bacharach

A few weeks later, Burt also left Fire Island, flying to Los Angeles for a gig. When he returned, he called Merv. “I got this cold out there,” Burt said. “Guess who cured me? Marlene Dietrich herself, the femme fatale of the 20th century. And doctors claim there is no cure for the common cold. Those doctors haven't met Miss Dietrich.”

Suspecting something, Merv asked, “And what else did Marlene teach you?”

“We made fantastic love together,” he said.

“But you're twentyeight years her junior,” Merv said.

“How lucky for me,” Burt said. “That means she's had all those years to perfect her technique. I'm the lucky beneficiary. Not only that, but she's asked me to be her accompanist during her world tour.”

“Congratulations,” Merv said. “But don't get burned. Marlene is terribly fickle. The last I saw of her, she had the hots for Michael Wilding.”

“She's forgotten all about him,” Burt said. “I've seen to that.”

Merv watched in amazement and from afar as the affair between Marlene and Burt heated up. She was soon telling her friends that “Burt takes me to seventh heaven. I even wash his socks and underwear. He's my Lord and Master.”

In the years to come, Merv saw little of Burt although he followed his career with a sense of pride but also with a touch of jealousy. “I shouldn't have lost him as a songwriter,” he said. “I mean, I could have recorded ‘What's New, Pussycat?,’ not Tom Jones. I could have recorded ‘Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head,’ not B.J. Thomas.”

Merv was intrigued to learn of Burt's marriage to actress Angie Dickinson in 1965, following her celebrated affair in the early 60s with President John F. Kennedy.

Merv one dull afternoon decided to take the rest of the money he had in the bank and fly on a vacation to

Jamaica with Johnny. He'd already asked Burt if he could get Marlene to arrange a meeting with Noel Coward, who was in residence on the island.

Paul warned Merv that if he spent all his money, he'd have nothing left for groceries and the rent. “Oh, I'll be like Scarlett O'Hara and think about that tomorrow. Besides, why should I worry? Johnny always manages to come up with grocery money.”

Before flying to Jamaica, he called Rosemary Clooney. On the phone she'd never sounded so bubbly, even though her marriage to Jose Ferrer was still as troubling as ever. Alhough Jose's affair with June Allyson had ended, his womanizing had continued.

“I've fallen in love,” Rosemary confided to him, “for the first time in my life. He's wonderful, the man I've always wanted. But there's one big problem. He's married.”

“Jose is married to you, and that doesn't stop him,” he said. “What's good for the goose is good for the gander.”

“I'm glad you see it that way,” she said. “I need a big favor. My new beau is very famous, and we have to slip around and see each other in secret. We need a place to hide away where no one would think of looking for us. How about your apartment?”

He readily agreed, advising that he and Johnny were flying to Jamaica but that he could arrange for Bill Robbins to deliver her the key. “When I get back, can I meet this Mr. Wonderful?”

“I'll introduce the two of you,” she said. “You'll adore him.”

“Can't you tell me who he is?” he asked. “A famous actor, no doubt.”

“Not at all,” she said. “But I'll give you a clue. He plans to run for President of the United States in 1968 after his older brother has served his two terms in the White House. It'll be the beginning of a dynasty.”

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Waiting in the lounge of New York's Idlewild Airport for the departure of their flight to Jamaica, all Merv and Johnny could hear was Elvis Presley music. Merv turned to Johnny. “Both of us will be in our mid30s sooner than later. Do you agree with those who say that's the beginning of middle age?”

“We're certainly not schoolboys from San Mateo any more,” Johnny said.

“I think I'm washed up,” Merv said, as another song came on from Elvis. “Rock ‘n’ roll is here to stay.”

Showing an amazing gift of prophecy, Johnny said, “Don't worry about it. Next summer, or maybe a summer or two after that, you're gonna be the biggest talk show host on TV. The next Steve Allen. You're a born entertainer.“

In Ocho Rios, a room had been reserved for them at the distinguished Jamaica Inn, where Sir Winston Churchill had stayed, capturing the local landscapes in watercolors during his retirement years. For reasons not fully known, Errol Flynn had been forcibly ejected from that hotel one early morning at three o'clock.

Mad about the boy:
Noel Coward
at the posh and venerable

JAMAICA INN

Merv stayed in bed until noon of the following morning. When he finally woke up, he found Johnny still asleep. After a shower and after dressing, he wandered down to the main lobby, after checking out the beachfront.

The weather that morning was uncharacteristic for Jamaica at that time of the year. The north shore was steamy, and there was a dull gray mist that hung in the air.

Merv didn't know whether Marlene Dietrich had previously called or written Noel Coward, announcing his arrival in Ocho Rios. At the desk of the concierge, Merv asked if he could put through a call to Noel's residence. He'd read that whenever Noel was in Jamaica, he was a frequent luncheon guest at the Jamaica Inn.

"You're in luck," the courtly black concierge told him in accented English. "The great man is in the lobby today, sitting in his favorite peacock chair."

Merv walked into the lobby and spotted Noel at once, but was too shy to approach him. He sat near him. Noel seemed to be struggling through a crossword puzzle. Merv viewed himself as an expert on crossword puzzles.

"Bloody difficult," Noel said out loud. "Eight letters for the first word, five for the second." When Merv heard that, he used that as an opening to introduce himself to Noel. Years later Merv could not remember the word he came up with, but it had fitted the puzzle perfectly. As Merv introduced himself to Noel, he seemed appreciative to have received help in solving the puzzle.

"Come and join me for a drink, dear boy," Noel said. "They make the best mint juleps in Jamaica here."

Over drinks, Noel told him that he was waiting for the arrival of Miss Claudette Colbert, who was to be his guest for lunch. "Forgive me for name dropping—of course, I know half the people in the world, and the other half isn't worth knowing."

Trying to sound important, Merv said that he too knew Claudette Colbert and had been her escort at a party thrown in Hollywood by Jack Warner.

"By the way, who are you?" Noel asked. "You seem to be in show business—an actor, no doubt."

"A failed actor," Merv said. "I'm really a singer—radio, TV. Nothing that has shaken the world. I love singing your songs."

"Good," Noel said. "That shows you have taste. I hope you send me royalties."

At that point a sleepy Johnny in tight white pants emerged. Merv introduced him to Noel. "One of the world's great beauties," Noel said, inspecting him head to toe. "Human perfection if I ever saw it."

"A great fan of yours," Johnny said, extending his hand to Noel for a shake. He had a little difficulty getting his hand back.

"As for you, Griffin," Noel said in a slightly accusatory voice, "You have somehow managed to capture this prize specimen of manhood. Ivor Novello, at the height of his male beauty and charm, would pale in the luminosity cast by one of such pulchritude."

"I don't know what pulchritude means, but I'll take it as a compliment," Johnny said.

"A boy like you should lie on satin sheets and have mere mortals like me bring you gifts all day. The evening would be spent worshipping you."

At that point a whitejacketed attendant arrived to announce to Noel that "Miss Colbert's car has arrived."

"I hope you weren't exaggerating, and that Miss Colbert does indeed know you," Noel said to Merv.

"I'm sure she'll remember me," Merv said. He paused. "At least I hope she will."

Indeed Claudette did remember Merv fondly, and the four of them had an enchanting luncheon that lasted for three hours. When Claudette had to excuse herself, Merv, Johnny, and Noel remained at the table, finding it almost impossible to move. All those mint juleps. The steamy afternoon had gotten even hotter, and their clothes, even though lightweight, seemed to cling to their bodies.

"My friend, Graham Payn, will be arriving soon to pick me up and drive me back to Blue Harbour," Noel said. "He'll be sorry that he couldn't join us today. But I'm inviting both of you for a mid-afternoon swim and dinner tomorrow. The concierge will give you the directions to my little hideaway."

"We'd be honored, Mr. Coward," Merv said.

"Call me Noel," he said. "I'm sure by tomorrow night we'll know each other intimately enough to be on a first name basis." He turned to Johnny. "You, dear boy, deserve a long, lingering, and wet kiss on those succulent red lips of yours." He proceeded to plant one before turning to Merv, who was puckering up. "You, Griffin, at least deserve a firm handshake for bringing this beam of sunshine into the dreary life of a songwriter and playwright on a rare gray day in Jamaica."

The next day at Noel's vacation home on a hilltop above Blue Harbour, which he said he reserved for "my bloody loved ones," he introduced Merv and Johnny to his lover, Graham Payn, a British actor. Merv found Graham handsome to the point of being mesmerizing. Noel invited them to put on their swimming suits and join Graham and him in the pool. Johnny had forgotten to bring his. Noel agreed to take him back to the house to find one to fit him.

As Graham and Merv frolicked in the pool, Merv noted that Johnny and Noel were gone for a long time. Johnny

emerged in a tightfitting white bathing suit, almost a bikini, that made things rather obvious.

After a swim and over drinks, Noel told them how he came to buy land in Jamaica. “I came here back in 1944 and fell in love with the place at once. Before I bought land, I rented Goldeneye from Ian Fleming. Can you believe that old sod charged me fifty pounds a week? Extortion. He left us with Violet, his housekeeper, who cooked for us.”

“Salt fish and ackee every night except Sunday,” Graham said. “Then we were treated to curried goat. The pud was the same every night. Stewed guavas and coconut cream.”

“Violet's cooking tasted like armpits, except for the succulent armpits of Graham, which always taste divine,” a slightly tipsy Noel revealed.

As they lay on *chaises longues* in a fading afternoon, Graham laughingly recalled how he first had met Noel in London. “I was only fourteen at the time and with my mother, Sybil. I had no idea that Noel was a pedophile.”

“I'm not, dear heart,” Noel interjected. “But I've always believed that nature intended young men to start having sex when they are able to ejaculate.”

“Sybil took me to an casting call for a revue called *Words and Music*,” Graham said. “She insisted I sing ‘Nearer My God to Thee’ to show off what she called the purity of my boyish treble. She also ordered me to tap dance like Ann Miller while I sang the song.”

“I wasn't really impressed,” Noel said, “but rather astonished at the versatility. I cast Graham as an urchin street singer in *Mad About the Boy*.” He reached over to pat Graham's hand. “I've been ‘Mad About the Boy’ ever since.”

“That might be so,” Graham said, “but he still called me his illiterate little sod. But I learned fast. Soon I was hanging out with Larry and Vivien, Katharine Hepburn, John Gielgud—who made a pass at me, Gertrude Lawrence, Tallulah, of course, Marlene, and inevitably, the Queen Mother.”

“Graham is certainly good looking enough,” Noel said. “He has humor and a sense of fun. I've always found that a bubbly personality makes up for a barrage of other failures. And he's hung as well as any man should be without being a grotesque like Rubirosa. But do you know why I've stayed with him all these years?”

“We're all ears,” Merv said.

“The dear boy has never refused to perform any act in bed that my perverse mind can conjure up,” Noel said. “And I do have a very active mind.”

As twilight fell, Noel seemed particularly intrigued by Merv's appearance with Tallulah Bankhead in Las Vegas. He speculated at length and wanted to hear Merv's opinion about Las Vegas being a proper venue—or not—for either his own oneman show or perhaps a stage for Marlene.

Noel told about going to Chicago in the 1940s to introduce Graham to Tallulah when she was appearing there in his *Private Lives*. “We took Tallu to Chez Paree to hear Carmen Miranda in cabaret. Both of us loved the show. Later Carmen joined us at table. Tallulah got loud and drunk and propositioned her. Carmen eventually went back to the hotel with Tallulah. I knew all about Tallu's escapades but until that night I didn't know the Brazilian bombshell was part dyke.”

“Tallulah can be so naughty, yet she is so generous,” Graham said. “When Noel and I went to check out of our hotel in Chicago, we found out that she'd paid the bill for us.”

Merv, hoping to appear like a show business insider, brought Noel up to date on the latest gossip about Marlene, telling him that she'd hooked up with Burt Bacharach. “My dear Marlene,” Noel said. “God certainly had a talent for creating exceptional women.”

Over a dinner of salt fish and ackee that night, Noel grew increasingly intoxicated and even more indiscreet. “I lost my virginity at the age of thirteen to Gertrude Lawrence. She was only two years older than me. The seduction took place on a moving train. All that open plumbing revolted me. Being in bed with a woman is like feeling the skin of a snake.”

As the drinks kept coming, and the party grew more intoxicated, the revelations became more lurid. Merv, like the skilled interviewer that he was to become, goaded Noel into more indiscretions.

“Roddy McDowall has presented me with a fairly detailed list of your seductions,” he said to Noel. “*Impressive* I might say. Richard Attenborough. Louis Hayward. Cary Grant. Laurence Olivier. Tyrone Power. Michael Wilding, whom I know. Peter Lawford who claimed to me personally that you seduced him. But tell us the most unlikely men you ever seduced?”

“First, I'll confess to two that got away. Years ago I was a guest of John Gilbert in Hollywood while I was waiting for a boat to take me to the Orient. His affair with Greta Garbo was going nowhere. Sitting on a sofa in front of his fireplace, we enjoyed a nightcap together. I let my hand creep slowly upward until it landed on his crotch

which felt promising. He jumped up, ran up the stairs, and locked himself into his bedroom, with me, obviously, on the other side.

Once on an ocean liner sailing from Southampton to New York, I found myself in the nude in the steam room with that divine little piece of ass, Eddie Fisher. I ran my hands over his smooth buttocks. He too fled from me."

"Those are great stories, Noel, but we want to hear the two most unlikely conquests," Merv said. "Those who didn't get away."

"Okay, but you are a dirty bitch for prying into my private affairs," Noel said. "I will tell you if all of you promise not to tell the Queen Mother."

"It's a deal," Johnny said.

Finishing his drink, Noel settled back onto his *chaise longue* prolonging the suspense. "James Cagney and Leslie Howard. As God is my witness."

After that, there was silence. No one could top that.

Before the dinner party broke up, Noel suggested that Merv and Johnny spend the night, as the winding, rutted, steeply inclined road back to Ocho Rios was dangerous in the pitch blackness.

As Noel staggered to his feet, he placed a possessive hand on Johnny's shoulder before running his fingers through his hair."I'll protect this dear boy from all harm tonight," he said to Merv."And you can sample Graham's undeniable charms."

"Sounds like a fair trade to me," Merv said. "I would be honored to sup at the trough where the great Sir Noel Coward has fed."

"Inelegantly put but to the point," Noel said. Taking Johnny's hand, Noel guided him to the house.

There was a long moment before Graham put his hand on Merv's knee. "You're not going to be like John Gilbert and escape from my clutches tonight, are you?" Graham asked.

"Breathe in my ear and I'll follow you anywhere," Merv said.

The two men rose from their chairs and headed toward the guest room. "Something tells me we're not going to arise for breakfast before noon," Graham said.

In 1963 Merv called Noel again when *Doctor No*, with Sean Connery, was being filmed on location in Jamaica. Merv had seen pictures of Noel posing with his arms around the Scottish hunk, and he wanted Noel to use his influence to arrange an onisland television interview.

On the phone, indiscreetly, Noel confided that "my lifelong ambition is to commit an immoral act of fellatio on this divine Scotsman and to discover what's hiding under his kilt. Tallulah is still raving about Gary Cooper from back in 1932, but for my quid, Sean is the sexiest man alive. I hear his endowment is twice or even three times that of an ordinary man. John Gielgud disputes the point with me. He claims that Louis Jourdan is the best hung man in Hollywood. His opinion is not based on any close personal encounter with the French God, but on what Louis Jourdan revealed on screen when he wore those tight trousers in *Gigi*."

Bosom buddies:
Sean Connery & Sir Noel
in Jamaica

Months later, when Merv reencountered Noel facetoface in New York, Noel sighed, "Alas, Sean Connery can be added to my list of the men who got away."

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The following day when Merv and Johnny returned to the Jamaica Inn, a cable was waiting from Merv's agent, Marty Kummer. Mark Goodson and Bill Todman, the producers of such hit TV shows as *What's My Line?, I've Got*

a Secret, and *To Tell the Truth*, wanted Merv in New York for an audition. They were putting together a new show, *I've Got a Hunch*, which was heavily inspired by *To Tell the Truth*. Merv and Johnny flew back to New York the next day.

Merv arrived at Idlewild in time to make it to the Goodson-Todman production offices for a seven o'clock appointment. A secretary told him he'd have to wait. From the next room, Merv heard the sound of hysterical laughter from an audience. He thought that Johnny Carson might be auditioning for the same show.

Marty was supposed to have shown up to go into the audition with him, but he was nowhere to be seen. After waiting an hour, Merv said, “to hell with this.” He headed for the elevators just as Marty was getting off. He urged Merv to stay, claiming, “We're almost ready to close the deal if the audition goes well.”

Ushered into a large room, Merv discovered himself in front of an audience of Goodson and Todman employees. “You're on,” Mark Goodson called out to him. Suddenly, Merv found himself as the emcee of a trial run of *Play Your Hunch*. Using all his skills, he sang, he danced, he performed skits, he interviewed guests hastily summoned to the stage.

At the end of the show, Mark Goodson led the loud applause, as Bill Todman sat in a front row seat, seemingly unmoved. Mark asked Merv to come with Marty to his office. Bill Todman left the room.

“Where's Todman?” Merv asked. “I don't think he liked me.”

“I thought you were terrific,” Mark said. “Don't worry about Bill. What does he know about show business? When I met him, he was selling insurance door to door. We have a love/hate relationship. If I like a performer, he hates him—and vice versa. If we agree, we know that one of us isn't doing his job.”

“So, did you call me in here to tell me I don't get the job?” Merv asked.

“You're hired,” Mark said. “We've got to do a pilot and sell it to CBS.” He paused and looked sternly at Merv. “You're not a Communist, are you?”

“I don't even wear the color red,” Merv claimed.

Merv made the pilot, and even Bill Todman approved of it. The problem remained for the show to win over what Merv called “the suits at CBS.” It took six long months for CBS to make up its mind to go ahead with the show. In the meantime, Merv took any job Marty tossed his way.

Taking over for Carl Reiner, an emcee on ABC's *Keep Talking* show, Merv proved that he was a skilled adlibber. “I was paid $1,500 per show, which allowed me to stay ten paces ahead of my creditors.”

The show had two teams of celebrities competing in improvised comedy bits. For Reiner's last show, Merv was asked to sit in and watch to see how the series was filmed.

Backstage he encountered Reiner, a selfstyled “Jewish atheist,” who gave him the same advice he shared with nearly all rising comedians. “You have to imagine yourself as not somebody very special but somebody very ordinary. If you imagine yourself as somebody really normal and it makes you laugh, it's going to make everybody laugh. If you think of yourself as something very special, you'll end up a pedant and a bore. If you start thinking about what's funny, you won't be funny, actually. It's like walking. How do you walk? If you start thinking about, you'll trip.”

Merv later claimed he took that advice. “It was the secret of my success, and I owe it all to Carl Reiner.” It's not clear if Merv was serious, or merely joking.

On *Keep Talking*, Merv found himself working with such familiar TV faces as Morey Amsterdam, Peggy Cass, Pat Carroll, Orson Bean, Ilka Chase, Audrey Meadows, Elaine May, and Joey Bishop, who would later become Merv's rival for TV ads and audiences.

In a few weeks, Merv met with Bud Collyer, the host of *To Tell the Truth*, with the understanding that Merv would be taking over for him during a temporary leave of absence. Merv wore a bow tie in honor of the one Collyer often wore on TV. “I remember as a kid screaming at the radio, ‘this looks like a job for Superman!’” He was recalling Collyer's job in the early 1940s when he supplied the voices of both Superman and his alter ego Clark Kent. “I never missed a program,” Merv claimed.

He might have taken Carl Reiner's advice, but Merv did not take Collyer's advice, which was to contribute ten percent of his winnings to the Christian church. After meeting Merv, Collyer shook his hand and proclaimed, “God and I will be watching you.” Collyer was extremely religious and often delivered pronouncements which he said had been revealed to him directly from God, having claimed to have talked personally with Him the night before.

On *To Tell the Truth*, Merv got to deliver the show's most famous and most oftrepeated line: “Will the real [*person's name*] please stand up?”

On one episode of *To Tell the Truth*, Merv met a panelist, Johnny Carson, a comedian who at the time was

hosting a rival show, *Who Do You Trust?* This was Merv's first meeting with the star who was destined to become the most successful entertainer in the history of television.

Earlier, backstage, Merv had introduced himself to Johnny. The first question Merv presented to the TV host bombed. “Johnny, how does it feel to be a WASP in a field filled with Jewish comedians?”

“I don't want to talk before going on the air,” Johnny told Merv. “It destroys my concentration.”

“And that was that,” Merv said. “I found Carson cold and distant: I didn't like him at all, and I think he viewed me with as much excitement as stepping on a mule turd in Nebraska. Maybe we both sensed in that brief meeting that in a few short years we'd become bitter rivals.”

CBS finally came through and at long last offered Merv the job of hosting *Play Your Hunch*. The show did more than any other at the time to make Merv Griffin a household word. But the survival of *Play Your Hunch* would soon devolve into something akin to a twisting, highanxiety ride on a rollercoaster. As it staggered through its many permutations, it became known as “The Game Show That Would Not Die.” After six months with Merv as the host, CBS killed it. ABC picked it up with options, but after six months, it too canceled the show.

Finally, the game show found a relatively secure home at NBC, where it would last for four years—mostly as a daytime TV show but with occasional brief forays into prime time.

Its formula was simple: Usually a husband and wife would face another team of contestants and be presented with a puzzle which involved associations with the lives of up to three celebrity guests, or with something associated with up to three veiled objects. The competing teams would be given three choices marked X, Y, and Z, and the winner would be whichever team opted for the correct choice.

Between 1958 and 1962, Merv would be the show's longest running host, although the show sometimes brought on other announcers as well, including Johnny Gilbert, Don Pardo, and Johnny Olson. Olson would go on to additional fame as the first announcer for the Bob Barker version of *The Price Is Right* and, eventually, the announcer and host of *The Match Game*.

During Merv's tenure as host of *Play Your Hunch*, many celebrities appeared, the most famous of whom was Bob Hope. Merv wanted to ask Bob some really tough questions, including some about a rumored affair he'd had with Milton Berle when they were both young. Other, somewhat less controversial leads which Merv wanted to pursue involved Hope's seductions of such stars as Paulette Goddard, Betty Hutton, Marilyn Maxwell, Dorothy Lamour, and countless Las Vegas showgirls.

Bob's whoring had remained a relative secret until *Confidential* magazine exposed his sexual liaison with blonde starlet, Barbara Payton, who later became a prostitute and drug addict after her star had fallen from the Hollywood sky.

When Merv was talking on the phone with Marlon Brando, and informed him that Bob Hope was scheduled to appear on his show, Brando wasn't impressed. “Bob Hope will go to the opening of a phone booth in a gas station in Anaheim, provided they have a camera and three people there.”

As always, Bob was a success on the show, using such familiar lines, as “The other day I was asked why I didn't run for President of the United States. I thought about it. But my wife said she wouldn't want to move into a smaller house.”

A more unusual booking came in the form of an Englishman, Boris Karloff, Frankenstein himself. Merv told him, “I didn't recognize you without your neck bolts and asphalt spreader's boots.

Boris did not find that amusing, confessing to Merv that he suffered from chronic back trouble as a result of the heavy brace he had to wear as part of his Frankenstein costume.

One of Merv's favorite guests was the comedian and improvisational genius, Jonathan Winters, who'd just been released from a mental institution where he'd been sent after suffering a nervous breakdown. Seemingly well again, and appearing frequently on the shows of Merv's rival talkshow hosts as well, Jonathan shone brilliantly.

Backstage after the show, Merv lamented to Jonathan about how difficult it was for him to find a proper niche in show business. The comedian's response? “If your ship doesn't come in, swim out to meet it.”

Merv's most anticipated moment came when he got to meet the gloriously lowbrow Three Stooges. He told the comedians that he'd gone to see all the movies made by the Stooges in the 1930s. “Later, with some local kids, I staged recreations of your films on my back porch in San Mateo and charged admission. I could face slap, pull hair, and yank noses with pliers with the best of them,” Merv said.

The cranky, sourfaced Moe Howard told Merv, “You little fucker! We should have charged you royalties.” Merv didn't bond with the comedians the way he'd hoped, and they quickly went on their way.

Merv seemed insulted by their dismissal of him. In the wake of Curly Howard's death in 1952, Merv told his

producer that as far as he was concerned, “the group was never the same again. They're on their way out. Without Curly, they're nothing.” But for years, Merv imitated Curly's fabled “*nyuk-nyuk-nyuk*.”

Arthur Veary Treacher, a celebrity guest hosted by Merv on *Play Your Hunch*, would have an enormous impact on Merv's subsequent television career. Born in England in 1894, he played an eccentric English valet better than virtually anyone had before or since. “She denies it,” Arthur said, “but Mae West and I are about the same age.”

Standing six feet four, he towered over Merv, who had seen all three of the movies in which he'd appeared with Shirley Temple—*Stowaway* in 1936, *Heidi* in 1937, and *The Little Princess* in 1939.

Before Arthur left the studio, Merv cornered him. “If I ever get the gig as host of *The Tonight Show* —or some other talk show—I want you to be my Jeeves.” He was referring to Arthur's creation of P.G. Wodehouse's perfect valet character of Jeeves in two movies—*Thank You, Jeeves!* in 1936 and *Step Lively, Jeeves!* in 1937. Arthur had also played the perfect valet or butler in several other films, including *Curly Top* in 1935.

Obviously believing that such an offer would never come through, Arthur patted Merv's shoulder affectionately. “You dear little man,” he said before going on his way.

It was while hosting *Play Your Hunch* that Merv had another chance encounter that would have an enormous impact on his career. At Radio City Studios, the audience participation show was broadcast live every morning. Later in the day, the set was altered for Jack Paar's latenight TV appearance.

After a nightmare he'd had about falling to his death in an elevator, Paar refused to take one. His habit of reaching his office via a labyrinth of stairwells, corridors, and shortcuts had become virtually an obsession.

He usually arrived at his office at noon. One morning he arrived early and followed his usual series of stairwells and shortcuts, unaware that *Play Your Hunch* was being broadcast.

Thinking it was a planned appearance, Merv's audience went wild when Paar suddenly appeared from behind the curtains. Seizing the opportunity, Merv locked a vise grip on Paar's arm and lured him into a spontaneous interview. Paar already knew Merv, who had sung a few times on his *Tonight Show*. “So this is what you do in the daytime,” Paar quipped to Merv.

Paar would later recall how Merv had cleverly “milked” the incident to its maximum effect. Later, when Paar was scouting around for a substitute host to fill in for him on *The Tonight Show*, he thought once again of Merv.

Merv noted with a certain glee that his enemy, Robert Q. Lewis, had functioned as the host of *Play Your Hunch* during a low point in the show, just before it went off the air. “Lewis just wasn't Merv Griffin,” Merv himself said. “Four Eyes just didn't have what the public wanted. I did.”

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Merv kept an “official” apartment in New York City, as well as a “secret hideaway” in Greenwich Village where the rent payments were split among himself and his friends, Johnny, Bill, and Paul. In addition to those two apartments, he maintained a twentyacre farm in Califon, New Jersey, for his family. He retreated there whenever he could, although legitimate business and his continuation of a secret life kept him away from them for much of the time.

The farmstead in New Jersey had been the setting for a famous murder, which later became the subject of a book. A former occupant, the pastor of a local church, had injected small dosages of arsenic into apples and fed them to his wife. “It was a twist on the Adam and Eve story,” Merv said. “Talk about forbidden fruit.” The minister was later tried and convicted on a murder charge, and became the last person in the history of New Jersey to be publicly hanged.

Once, after a weekend on the farm and somewhat bored with his stalled career, Merv returned to New York to discover a surprise in the mail. An invitation to visit Liberace and a roundtrip ticket to Palm Springs awaited him. Liberace had enclosed a tantalizing note: “Come for the weekend. I want you to meet my mystery guest. Hint: he's the most famous man in America.”

Johnny begged Merv to take him on the trip to Palm Springs. Merv turned him down, citing the fact that Liberace had sent only one ticket.

In Palm Springs, Merv was dazzled by Liberace's estate, with its Valentino Suite, its Marie Antoinette room, and —for orgiastic fantasies—its Persian Tent Room. After a long trip, Merv had to visit the bathroom. In all his life, before or since, he would never see such a bathroom. The giant bathtub, big enough for eight, had mirrored walls and ceilings with shower curtains depicting gay porno scenes. Merv took it all in as he sat on a Louis XVI giltandmahogany commode. “What a place to take a shit,” Merv later told Liberace. “I felt like a queen on my

throne."

"That you were, Fannie Mae," Liberace said.

A handsome, shirtless Paul Richardson emerged to greet Merv with a kiss. Paul had remained Liberace's lover and bartender. Merv embraced him warmly, with fond memories of their previous intimacies.

Like all of Liberace's paid lovers, Paul would be no exception. His days with Liberace were numbered. But it is because of him that the details associated with this infamous weekend at Liberace's Palm Springs estate have not been lost.

After Liberace released Paul with only one thousand dollars in cash, Paul went to publisher Robert Harrison of *Confidential* magazine with explicit details about this secret weekend. Harrison wanted to run the story, but the magazine's lawyers turned him down since Liberace might sue—and win once again—on a charge of libel.

In London in 1957, "Cassandra" (actually journalist William Connor) wrote in *The Daily Mirror* that Liberace was "… the summit of sex—the pinnacle of masculine, feminine, and neuter. Everything that he, she, and it can ever want… a deadly, winking, sniggering, snuggling, chromiumplated, scentimpregnated, luminous, quivering, giggling, fruitflavored, mincing, icecovered heap of mother love." Liberace sued for libel, claiming in a London court that he was not a homosexual—and had never taken part in any homosexual acts. Amazingly, he won the suit on the basis of the term "fruitflavored," which was held to impute homosexuality. Liberace received eight thousand pounds in damages from *The Daily Mirror*.

As Paul served drinks, Merv seated himself in a comfortable chair in a courtyard which contained a fountain in the shape of a wellendowed boy embracing a white swan.

The courtyard also contained an Olympicsized pool. Liberace dazzled Merv with stories about the notorious pool parties that took place here. "It's the talk of Palm Springs," Liberace said with a certain glee. "I invite all the big male stars, and you'd be surprised how many show up for these private allboy parties. Naturally, Tyrone Power and Errol Flynn wouldn't miss them. Even Gary Cooper shows up, and Clark Gable has become a regular."

"You don't mean Clark Gable as in Rhett Butler," Merv said, totally shocked.

"One and the same," Liberace said. "He's one kind of man in Hollywood, quite another in Palm Springs. All the Palm Springs insiders are on to Gable's gay streak. Someday his biographers will write about his exploits which began in Hollywood back in the 20s. Of course, all the boys were putting out then, not just Gary Cooper, but guys like John Wayne. John Ford sucked that one's dick on a regular basis."

Later Merv sat at Liberace's Louis Philippe rosewood piano, and the two of them sang their favorite duets. "The party favor's late tonight," Liberace said. "You can wait around or else I can arrange a stud for hire. Or perhaps you want to sample my darling Paul again."

Liberace disappeared into an adjoining salon and emerged a minute later with a sixfoot stuffed male doll with an erect penis. "Or else I can give you my adorable Adonis—that's his name—to keep you company."

It was shortly before midnight that the guest of honor arrived. Merv was astonished when Liberace introduced him to Elvis Presley in person. Merv was used to meeting stars, and never seemed in awe of them. Elvis was different. Merv was so awed by his sudden presence that for the first time in his life he was at a loss for words.

Elvis wore a pink shirt and a pair of simple blue jeans that were skin tight like Marilyn wore them. Merv couldn't help but notice Elvis's trademark blue suede shoes. He turned down a drink from Paul, who seemed dazzled by Elvis. The singer did ask Paul to prepare him a midnight snack. He told Liberace that he wanted to go for a midnight swim, and he emerged about fifteen minutes later in baggy white swimming trunks with a red stripe on each side. He joined Merv and Liberace in the courtyard, allowing both men to inspect his then thin body, before jumping in the pool to swim four laps.

After the swim, Elvis emerged from the pool where Paul held up a white terrycloth robe for him to wrap around himself. He sat beside Merv as Paul handed him a peanut butter and banana sandwich with fried bacon.

Paul sat nearby listening to every word, although ostensibly available for any drink orders. He got up to answer a telephone call, only to come back onto the patio. "It's urgent," he said to Liberace, who heaved himself up from his chair and excused himself.

With Paul back in attendance, Merv turned to Elvis. "I didn't know you and Sadie—that's my pet name for Lee—knew each other. In fact, I read in some gossip column only the other day that every time you see Sadie on TV, you throw something at the set."

"That's just for public show," Elvis said. "Actually, we see a lot of each other, but we do it in private because of all that publicity we received when we first got together. We like to keep our friendship a secret."

"Personally, I like to keep my friendship with Sadie a secret too," Merv confided.

Elvis claimed that when he'd first opened in Las Vegas at the New Frontier in 1956, his show had bombed. “I was a teenage heartthrob, but my act didn't go over with more mature audiences. Read that drunken audiences.”

Liberace returned to the patio and immediately picked up on their conversation. “It was actually Colonel Tom Parker who set up a meeting between Elvis and me,” Liberace said. He came backstage one night when I was appearing at the Riviera where I was making $50,000 a week, and poor Elvis was taking home only $7,500.”

“‘My boy is appearing across the street and he's having some problems,’ the colonel told me. ‘I think you're the man to help him. He admires you so much. He thinks you're a great showman.’ I went over on my free night and caught Elvis's act. I loved his movements and his voice, but not his costumes. I advised him to put more glitz in his act.”

“Lee here has been practically dressing me ever since,” Elvis claimed.

“Or undressing as the case may be,” Liberace said. “Since he started dressing the way I told him to, Elvis became hot as a tamale fart!”

“Could you put that more elegant?” Elvis asked, cracking a smile. “The first night I met Lee he gave me an autographed picture to take home to my mama in Memphis,” Elvis said. “She adores him and never misses one of his shows.”

Since Liberace had attended Elvis's show at the New Frontier, Elvis returned the favor, appearing on November 14, 1956 at Liberace's opening night at The Riviera. In snowy white tails, Liberace welcomed Elvis, as the house lights went up to reveal Elvis in a widestriped jacket in the front row.

Later that night Elvis went backstage to congratulate Liberace. Ever the showman, Liberace in front of cameramen suggested that they exchange jackets and entertain the press. Wearing Elvis's striped jacket, Liberace played Elvis's guitar, while Elvis himself sat at Liberace's piano wearing his gold sequined tux jacket. The odd couple sang duets for about twenty minutes. “I'll Be Seeing You.” “Deep in the Heart of Texas.” And, of course, “Hound Dog.” “Lee did a better ‘Hound Dog’ than mine,” Elvis said.

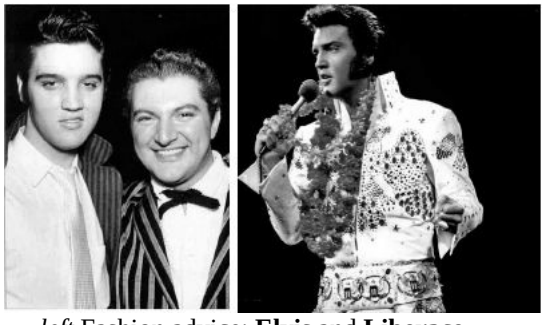
“I told the press that Elvis and I may be characters—me with my gold jackets and him with those sideburns—but, as I said, ‘both of us can afford to be characters,’” Liberace chuckled.

“I got really pissed off the next day by the press coverage,” Elvis said. “One jerk said that up against Lee I was ‘just a jug of corn liquor at a champagne party.’ Those photographers did all they could to make us look like the two biggest queens in show business. In one picture Lee looks like he's practically drooling over me.”

“I was,” Liberace confessed.

It was Liberace who first suggested that Elvis have his tailor, Nudie Cohen, famous for his rhinestonestudded Western gear, make a simple pair of black trousers to better show off Elvis's sparkling gold coat. In time, Liberace would be the inspiration behind several of Elvis's outfits, including a famous white Bill Belew extravaganza, an outfit encrusted with rhinestones with a matching thighlength cape that weighed an astonishing fortytwo pounds. The similarity between the wardrobes worn by Elvis and Liberace did not escape detection by the press.

It was an exposé in the scandal magazine, *On the QT*, that led to Elvis and Liberace going underground with their friendship. The article, published in 1957, was about “Presley's Powder-Puff Pals.”



left Fashion advice: **Elvis** and **Liberace**
right Singing in public, stripping in private

“The suggestion was clear that I'm a queer,” Elvis angrily said. “The article practically had Lee sucking my dick. They published photographs of us, calling Lee and me the most prominent bachelors in the entertainment business. The fucker who wrote the article suggested that Lee and I would never be able to find the right gals to settle down with because our interest lay elsewhere.”

“It's better to be compared to Liberace than a comparison I recently read,” Merv said.

“Yeah, I saw that piece of shit too,” Elvis said. “Some asshole compared my performance to an appearance of Zsa Zsa Gabor.”

Liberace advised Elvis that he should sue *On the QT*.

“Like hell I will,” Elvis said, “and have a court case airing charges of me being a fag.”

“Well, I once sued and cried all the way to the bank,” Liberace said.

It was three o'clock on a Palm Springs morning before a famous duet and a wellknown performer, Merv himself, began to break up their party. Paul had spent the night serving drinks. To cool off, Elvis wanted a final dip in the luxurious pool.

It was Liberace who persuaded Elvis to remove his bathing trunks and put on a show for them. At first Elvis was reluctant. Finally, he said, “What the hell.” He pulled down his trunks, exposing himself, and jumped into the pool.

Elvis was gone the following morning when Merv woke up. Over breakfast Liberace claimed that Elvis allowed him to give him a blowjob, “as he has several times in the past.”

Merv didn't know if Liberace actually did that or was merely indulging in wishful thinking.

“I did give the boy a special gift,” Liberace said. “A stunning and frightfully expensive gold watch studded with diamonds and rubies.”

When Merv went to see Elvis's next live show, he saw him wearing just such a watch. Maybe, or so Merv thought, Liberace might not have been exaggerating about his conquest.

One night when Merv was talking to Liberace on the phone, he said that he'd seen a picture of Graceland covered in snow with five Cadillacs parked in the driveway. “I went at once to Tiffany's and ordered a silverplated snow shovel for Elvis,” Liberace said. “Before I sent it to him in Memphis, I had Tiffany's gold plate it.”

Liberace also revealed that during his latest opening in Las Vegas, Elvis sent him a guitar made of flowers. “He enclosed a note,” Liberace said. “It read: ‘I only send this special guitar to people I love.”

When Elvis died on August 16, 1977, Liberace was among his chief mourners. Even so, he was very guarded in a statement to the press. “A lot of Elvis's troubles were selfinflicted,” Liberace claimed. “I knew him very well. He always felt somebody was after him. When you have that kind of fear, that kind of attitude, you attract people who want to do you harm.”

In a private call to Merv, Liberace said, “to borrow a line from Noel Coward, I was mad about the boy right from the first time I met him. Of course, it was a completely onesided love affair. He had all those young girls. What would he want with an old queen like me? Yet on many a night he came to me and let me hold him in my arms. Sometimes he cried like a baby. He seemed to know how fucked up he was at the end. One thing I never told him, as it would have frightened him and made him run away. But he was the love of my life. And now he's gone.”

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Back in New York, Merv was invited to sing on *The Arthur Murray Party*, a popular TV series that stayed on the air for a decade, beginning in 1950. It was basically devoted to ballroom dancing, plus songs, comedy, and dance contests. Merv sang a song he'd written, “Eternally,” which was recorded with the Hugo Winterhalter Orchestra.

Hugo and Merv had known each other for years, and the orchestra leader had scored countless hits with such stars as Perry Como, Eddie Fisher, Billy Eckstine, and Tony Martin. But “Eternally” was a bomb for Merv as was “Hot-Cha-Cha,” which he'd recorded with Mitch Miller and his orchestra.

Frank Sinatra had warned Merv not to work with Miller. “He and he alone is to blame for my fall from the charts when I was recording for Columbia. He forced me to sing such shit as ‘Mama Will Bark’ and ‘The Hucklebuck.’”

When Merv talked about this with Miller, he said, “that's bullshit. The contract signed by Sinatra gave him the right to turn down any song. He's blaming me for his own failure.”

Mitch and Merv worked well together. They remained friendly acquaintances. When Miller turned 89 at the millennium, Merv sent him a telegram. “You'll be one hundred before I reach that mark.” In the year 2008 Mitch, born on July 4, 1911, was still alive.

Merv had greater luck with two other songs, “Banned in Boston” and “Charanga,” both of which hit the top twenty on the charts. “Even so, they had the life of sickly butterflies,” Merv said. “At any rate, I didn't make Elvis quiver in his blue suede shoes. The King still sat safely on his throne—that is, until the Beatles came along to unseat him.”

Merv was grateful to Arthur and Kathryn Murray to allow him to showcase his music on their *Arthur Murray*

Party, even though the TV show existed mainly to publicize their chain of dance studios. The show would always end with the famous dancing couple—the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers of television—performing a Johann Strauss waltz. Years later Merv said his chief memory of the show was not his failed music but of Ann Sheridan, a fellow guest, "teaching me to jitterbug."

Merv's next gig, *Music for a Summer Night*, started as a summertime replacement on TV in June of 1959. The show was not successful and went off the air in 1960. It came and went so fast in Merv's career that he hardly remembered what happened except for one episode. "I encountered Dick Haymes, a singer whose voice I used to admire and imitate."

He came up to Merv and said, "You're a stinking piece of faggot shit."

"Why Dick, it's so good to see you again," Merv said. He later speculated that the crooner had learned that Rita Hayworth and Aldo Ray had used his home in Los Angeles as a venue for their trysts.

Merv made yet another attempt at a TV show when he not only directed *Saturday Prom*, a weekly series, but cohosted the show with Hugh C. Daly. Beechnut Gum was the sponsor, and Merv spent a lot of air time chewing gum and trying to imitate Dick Clark's more successful *American Bandstand*.

In a game of oneupmanship with Dick Clark, Merv persuaded the network to hire a live orchestra directed by Bobby Vinton, who was just on the dawn of his great success which would come in the 1960s. Ironically, Bobby got some of his greatest exposure on *American Bandstand*, not Merv's *Saturday Prom*.

Merv thought Bobby was a musical genius and envied his talent. Like Merv he could play the piano. Unlike Merv, Bobby could also play the clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, drums, and oboe.

In the years ahead, Merv watched in awe as Bobby plucked a hit single from the reject pile and recorded "Roses Are Red (My Love)," which spent four weeks at No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. His most famous song, however, was to be the 1963 "Blue Velvet," which had originally been a minor hit for Tony Bennett about a dozen years previously, in 1951.

Merv:
Smirking host/enabler
of illicit trysts

During the course of his career, Bobby would sell more than 75 million records and became, in the words of *Billboard* Magazine," the alltime most successful love singer of the Rock Era. From 1962 to 1972, he would have more *Billboard* Number One hits than any other male vocalist, including Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley.

Merv later lamented, "If I'd been successful in my singing, I would have wanted a career like Bobby Vinton had in the 1960s. Alas, it was not meant to be. But even Bobby could not stave off the British Invasion, although he made a spectacular comeback with 'My Melody of Love' in 1974—singing partly in Polish. Who would have thunk that?"

In many ways, *Saturday Prom* was a traumatic experience for Merv, making him feel "like yesterday's spaghetti." He came face to face with "tomorrow's competition" on live television. Some of the most popular rock 'n' roll performers of the time appeared on camera—The Shirelles, Brenda Lee, Hank Ballard, Chubby Checker, Sam Cooke, The Playmates, Jo Ann Campbell, and Johnny and The Hurricanes. No lip sync was permitted. High school kids made up the studio audience. But whenever the cameras rolled, members of the relatively wholesome NBC Teen Workshop stood around Merv and his fellow performers so that no punk would present "the bird" to the camera.

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Marty secured a booking for Merv on the *DuPont Show of the Week* series. He'd be appearing on TV in a segment called *The Wonderful World of Toys*. The setting would be New York's Central Park, where on the first day of filming he met one of the stars, Harpo Marx.

Merv had always been fond of the Marx Brothers when he'd watched their movies in the 1930s. He was eager to meet Harpo. At first, though, he didn't recognize him. When Harpo shook his hand, he encountered a bald man. Harpo had always been seen on screen with his poofy, curly red hair. It was a wig.

As they talked, Merv learned that Harpo, the silent one on camera, was actually very articulate. He told Merv that he too had wanted to learn to play the piano when he was a kid. “My family could afford to give lessons to only one of us,” Harpo said. “My brother Chico was selected. I *mastered* the harp instead.”

While waiting for the cameras to be set up, Harpo enchanted Merv with stories of his life, and those of his brothers. He said that Chico once appeared on TV as Harpo in wig and costume on *I've Got a Secret* in 1952. “Chico fooled all the panelists, including one in particular—Groucho himself.”

Harpo said that he was once vacationing in Nice on the French Riviera and enjoying sunbathing in the nude. “An elderly man and woman approached. I grabbed my bath towel from the Carlton and wrapped it around my genitals. The man yanked the towel from me, exposing me. He reached to shake my hand. ‘Good afternoon. I'm George Bernard Shaw. This is my wife, Mrs. Shaw.’ It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship.”

Appearing before the cameras in Central Park, Merv launched into his song, “Hot-Cha-Cha.” Just as he did, a pigeon with diarrhea flew over and dumped on his head.

“That God damn pigeon got to me before the critics crapped on me,” Merv said.

During the filming, Merv had a reunion with costar Carol Burnett, who was no longer the president of his fan club in Hollywood. In fact, Merv no longer had fan clubs anywhere.

Merv was also surprised to encounter Milton Berle playing himself in the show. He hadn't seen Milton since that night in New York when Merv was escorting Elizabeth Taylor, who claimed at the time that she didn't know who Milton Berle was. “Has the bitch heard of me by now?” Milton asked Merv.

“She's not only heard of you, but thinks you're twice as good as Bob Hope. Elizabeth told me the other night that you're an original. She heard that Hope without his writers wouldn't know what to say.”

“The whore got that right,” Milton said, still obviously offended by Elizabeth.

When Merv was introduced to Audrey Meadows, another star of the show, he said, “You don't have slanty eyes at all. He was referring to her birth in China, the daughter of missionaries. “Well, I spoke only Mandarin Chinese until I was five,” she told Merv.

Merv's favorite show on TV at the time was *The Honeymooners*, where Audrey played Alice Cramden at that twoburner stove in her Chauncey Street kitchen. As Merv had coffee with her, he noticed that she was a chain smoker. The actress would later die of lung cancer in Beverly Hills in 1996.

“I almost didn't get the role of Alice,” Audrey said. “Jackie Gleason thought I was too chic and too pretty to be Ralph Kramden's wife. I made myself up for the part and wore frumpy clothes and sent him photographs of me. He went for it. You know Gleason. He's short and has a Napoleonic complex. That's why he hires short actors. I'm five feet nine so he made me wear flats.”

Audrey had just married Robert Six, the CEO of Continental Airlines. When Merv shook his hand, Merv indiscreetly blurted out, “You were married to Ethel Merman. Why would anyone in his right mind marry Ethel Merman?”

Merv was also introduced to Edie Adams, the actress, singer, and comic, who was also starring in *The Wonderful World of Toys*. He'd just seen *The Apartment* in which she'd costarred with Shirley Mac-Laine, Fred Mac-Murray, and Jack Lemmon. It had been Edie's first major film.

In the movie Lemmon played a guy at the bottom of the ladder, who is trying to work his way up by lending the key to his apartment to his higherups — in this case Mac-Murray—for trysts.

Over lunch that day with Edie, Merv confessed that he too had lent his home in Los Angeles to illicit lovers. Although Merv around most people kept his own life closeted, he was often indiscreet in revealing the love affairs of his friends.

Reportedly, Merv told Edie a secret that day, revealing that Rosemary Clooney had been using his New York apartment to have an affair with Robert Kennedy that had to be kept a dead secret since his brother was the president of the United States. Other sources claim that Merv revealed that secret to Elsa Maxwell, not Edie.

“Unlike Lemmon in the movie, I'm not trying to advance my career this way,” Merv allegedly said. “But I do believe in the secret life. Not all affairs were meant for public consumption.”

Johnny Riley later claimed that Merv allowed his secret hideaway to be used by a number of stars conducting offtherecord weekends. “I think he got a vicarious thrill out of it,” Johnny said. “I encountered Bob Kennedy and Rosemary on several occasions. Who am I to judge? I'm not exactly a candidate for sainthood myself.”

Merv liked Edie and sent his condolences to her when her husband, Ernie Kovacs, died a few months later in a car accident in 1962 following a party at Milton Berle's home where Kovacs had had too much to drink. Upon his death, Kovacs owed half a million dollars in back taxes to the Internal Revenue Service. When Merv had met Kovacs, the comedian told him that the American tax system was “unfair, unjust, and illegal. That's why I'm not going to give those fuckers a penny of my money.” Merv told him he was playing a dangerous game.

After the death of Kovacs, Edie refused to go along with her lawyers, who urged her to declare bankruptcy. She took every job she could until she'd paid every cent back to the IRS.

Years later, Merv, head of his own production company, saw a proposal for a film that seemed to have the endorsement of Edie. It was to be based on the life of Kovacs, and Merv understood that Edie wanted George Clooney to play her late husband. Merv passed on the script. He'd already seen a 1984 TV movie, *Ernie Kovacs: Between the Laughter*, starring Jeff Goldblum, and thought the movie was unsuccessful.

Elsa Maxwell, the short, stout American hostess and celebrity tattletale columnist, had also been cast in *The Wonderful World of Toys*. At the time Merv met her on set, he'd seen every episode of her controversial appearances on *The Jack Paar Tonight Show*. Merv was already telling friends like Peter Lawford and Rosemary Clooney that he was one day going to replace Paar as emcee of the show.

“When I do, Elsa is just the type of guest I'm seeking,” Merv said. “She's never boring, and she knows everybody's secrets—perhaps my own. Elsa's parties for royalty and high society figures of her day earned her the nickname of “the hostess with the mostest.”

Elsa spread gossip, but was also its victim. He knew that she was a lesbian and had actively pursued Maria Callas, who was repulsed by her. Even so, Callas appreciated Elsa's introduction to Aristotle Onassis. Elsa was quickly discarded as the Greek shipping tycoon and the Greekborn opera singer launched their own torrid and tormented affair.

Merv met Elsa at the end of her celebritystudded life. She was to die in New York on November 1, 1963, when she'd declared that “I didn't do bad at all—not bad for a short, fat, homely piano player from Keokuk, Iowa, with no money or background, who decided to become a legend and did just that.”

During the filming, Elsa invited Merv to a party at the Plaza Hotel. She already knew about Rosemary's affair with Robert Kennedy—in fact, she knew everybody's darkest secrets. She even confessed to Merv that she'd introduced Patricia Kennedy Lawford to the notorious Porfirio Rubirosa, and that they'd had an affair.

“My darling Rubi has affairs with anything that moves. When he gets drunk, he doesn't give a damn what kind of legs are open to him. He's going to be at my party tonight. I'll introduce you to him.”

The party was a starstudded event, but Merv had eyes only for Rubirosa. Stories about the size of his penis were legendary. Jerome Zerbe, the society photographer, claimed that the penis “looked like Yul Brynner in a black turtleneck sweater.” The tobacco heiress, Doris Duke, Rubirosa's third wife, told anyone who was interested, that “it is the most magnificent penis I have ever seen.”

From gossips, Merv already knew that Rubirosa's conquests had included Ava Gardner, Veronica Lake, Marilyn Monroe, Susan Hayward, and countless others, ranging from chambermaids to the upper crust of royalty and international society, even multi-millionaire male size queens with a preference for their own sex.

At the party, Merv noticed that Rubi was drinking heavily, and Merv knew that at some point the handsome, dashing stud would have to heed nature's call at a hotel urinal.

Celebrity hostess **Elsa Maxwell:**
The dyke from Keokuk

Merv waited for his chance, and followed the former diplomat of the Dominican Republic into the men's room, where he stationed himself at the urinal immediately next to Rubi's.

The playboy of the Western world sensed at once that Merv wanted him to put on a show. Rubi unbuttoned his trousers and let it all hang out. He was used to having men, even merely curious straight ones, follow him into urinals around the world. In fact, the legend of his penis was such that men, including Merv, called for a “Rubirosa” when they wanted the waiter to bring a giant peppermill to table.

Merv was not disappointed at Rubi's show, later telling Johnny that it looked like “a fat baby's arm dangling from his pants.”

Zipping up and shaking himself dry after his show, Rubi shook Merv's hand. “I would have shown it to you hard,” Rubi said, “but it takes so much blood to get it up that I would have passed out. And you would have passed out at the size of it. When it gets hard, I can balance a phone book on it. For my virility, I drink Japanese mushroom tea.”

Merv would learn a lot more about Rubi when he became a friend of Zsa Zsa Gabor, who had had a notorious affair with the playboy during his marriage to the Woolworth heiress, Barbara Hutton.

One morning in 1965 Merv picked up the newspaper to read that Rubi, at the age of fiftysix, had wrapped his sports car around a tree in Paris' Bois de Boulogne and was dead.

Paul Schone was sitting opposite Merv having his morning coffee.

“I don't think I could have handled it even if Rubi had given me the chance,” Merv said. “Six inches in circumference is a bit large even for my big mouth.”

Finally, the final star of *The Wonderful World of Toys*, Eva Gabor, came onto the set and immediately enchanted Merv. “She even invited me to a lunch of salami and champagne, which I later learned was her favorite snack,” Merv said.

Before meeting Eva, Merv had seen her hilarious TV appearances with Jack Paar. When Merv was first introduced to Eva, she was deep into her fourth marriage, this time to Richard Brown.

Playboy **Porfirio Rubirosa:**
The size queen's favorite

Years later, as Merv recalled his first luncheon with Eva, she rather cautiously told him virtually nothing about herself but spent most of the time complaining about her sister, Zsa Zsa, and her “eternal fascination with that awful George Sanders. He was a complete scoundrel through-out his entire marriage to Zsa Zsa.”

Eva went on to assert that her sister knew that George had been cheating on her throughout the course of their marriage. “Hedy Lamarr, Marilyn Monroe, Lucille Ball, you name her. The bastard even slept with Doris Duke. But Zsa Zsa got even with George by having an affair with Porfirio Rubirosa, Doris Duke's former husband. Zsa Zsa taunted George by telling him that Rubi was three times the man he was, at least in one department, and could go all night.”

Releasing additional details about her sister Zsa Zsa, Eva maintained that “Throughout the course of the marriage, George humiliated Zsa Zsa by insisting that he should have married a rich woman. But by marrying George, Zsa Zsa had relinquished the alimony that was coming in from her earlier marriage to Conrad Hilton. And then, as a means of taunting her, George had the cruel bad taste to tell everybody that when it came to women, ‘there is no greater aphrodisiac than money.’”

At the time of their first luncheon together, Merv was not sexually attracted to Eva, even though he found her fascinating and “incredibly beautiful.”

As Merv later recalled, when they parted that day she gave him a light kiss on the lips. “Someday when we're older,” she predicted, “we'll be great friends. We Hungarians are like gypsies. We know of such things. But, right now, both of us have too much living to do.”

The glamorous Eva Gabor:
“Too much living to do.”

Chapter Eight

As 1958 neared its end, Jack Paar was the king of latenight television.

Evoking Merv's own experiences in Hollywood, Paar's screen career had gone nowhere, despite having been cast in a role opposite Marilyn Monroe in *Love Nest* (1951). Paar's TV guests included, among others, a drunken Judy Garland making fun of Marlene Dietrich. Hungarian sexpot Zsa Zsa Gabor could also be trotted out for a laugh. But Paar could get serious too, as when, in 1960, he brought on both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, appearing separately, when they were running for president. Robert F. Kennedy had also granted Paar his first televised interview after the assassination of JFK in Dallas.

Merv would watch nearly every lineup of Paar's guests, using his methods as a role model. Frequently, Paar would book, as part of the same show, both serious authorities in their respective fields and guests who could be counted on for light amusement. What Merv chose not to imitate was Paar's unpredictable emotional style.

Biographer Laurence Leamer called Paar an “emotional hemophiliac — scratch him and he bled all over the media.” Leamer went on to say, “Paar took his private neuroses and turned them into a public spectacle. Eight million viewers waited every night for Paar's catharsis of the moment. He might walk off the show, break into tears, steamroller a guest, insult a politician or a commentator, or threaten to quit altogether.”

“He's a total shithead, but I still watch him,” Frank Sinatra told Merv in a phone call. “If you get a call to sub for him, don't do it. It'll mean your graveyard. His devotees love him too much, and they would hate you. And those who'd love you—that is, those who hate Jack Paar—wouldn't be watching anyway.”

When Paar encountered Merv's agent, Marty Kummer, at a restaurant, he told him that Jack been impressed with their impromptu encounter on *Play Your Hunch*, and he wanted Merv to sub for him.

At long last Merv's dream had come to be. But he stayed up the night before wondering if this big chance would turn into a nightmare.

For Merv's Monday night debut on *The Tonight Show*, the regular production team took the evening off, not wanting to be linked to what they forecast as a potential disaster.“Putting Merv Griffin in Jack Paar's chair is like asking Jayne Mansfield to sit in for the President of the United States,” said a jealous Robert Q. Lewis to anyone who wanted to listen.

As a producer for his debut, Merv was assigned Bob Shanks, a grassroots American who grew up in Indiana. This was viewed as a lucky break for Bob as well—his first chance to be the producer of a TV show. Up to that point, he had been a preshow interviewer for Paar's guests. Before landing on the Paar show, Shanks had been a struggling actor and freelance writer.

Meeting Bob for the first time, Merv formed one of those instant friendships he'd become known for, although he could hardly imagine he was meeting the future producer of *The Merv Griffin Show*, both for NBCTV and CBS-TV.

Right before showtime, Marty Kummer phoned all the network executives he knew, urging them to watch Merv's inaugural performance on *The Tonight Show*. With knees knocking and hands quivering, Merv walked out in front of millions of *Tonight Show* fans to sub for Paar. From the live audience, there arose a murmur of disappointment, which did little to quell Merv's anxieties.

“I knew I was bombing only three minutes into the show,” Merv said. “After seven minutes when we broke for commercials, I bolted from my seat. I couldn't go on any more. I was overcome with panic. The worst stage fright of my life.”

Behind the curtains he collided with Bob Shanks. “I'm out of here,” Merv said. “Get someone to fill in for me. I'm going home. I can't do this.”

Bob gripped Merv firmly by the arm. “You're going to turn your ass around and get back out there in front of the camera and deliver a show better than any that Paar has ever done.”

Bolstered by Bob's encouragement, Merv walked back on stage to finish the show. Seated in Paar's chair once again, he felt a renewed confidence. “I was going to bring on Mickey Rooney tonight,” he told the live audience, thinking he was on air. “But Jack kicked him off for having one too many.” The audience laughed before a member of the crew signaled Merv that broadcasting would begin in five seconds.

When Titans clash:
(left) **Jack Paar** (right) **Merv**

Years later there was a lot that he didn't remember from that night except for Aretha Franklin, who was making her first talk show appearance on live TV. “She was just great,” Merv claimed, “a phenomenal entertainer. The audience loved her.”

He had long supported black entertainers, but it was because of Aretha's stunning performance that he decided that if he ever got his own talk show, he would book frequent appearances of black entertainers, both the known and the unknown, both male and female.

After the show, backstage, Merv embraced Bob warmly. “You saved my TV career tonight, and I'll always be grateful. If I go on from here and get my own talk show, you're the producer, kid.”

Paar sat up that night watching Merv's performance, and liked it. “He's not as warm and personal with the audience as I am,” Paar later told Bob, “but he's a natural. Invite him back as the host this coming Monday night. I'm taking off to have dinner with Judy Garland.”

On his second Monday night appearance on *The Tonight Show*, Merv did something provocative, so daring that it could have raised the ire of Paar and led to Merv getting kicked off the show forever: Merv summoned Woody Allen for an appearance on the show again.

Woody had gotten his start at the age of fifteen, writing oneliners to gossip columns. Behind those thick glasses he always wore, he would later become famous for his oneliners: “Join the army, see the world, meet interesting people—and kill ‘em,” or “Not only is there no God, but try getting a plumber on weekends.”

Bob Shanks, who served as a kind of talent scout for Paar, had caught Woody's act at The Duplex in Greenwich Village and, with Paar's consent, had booked him on *The Tonight Show*.

Paar, who had not met Woody before the show, later claimed that he looked like “he'd been plugged into an electric socket and someone had flipped the switch.” Merv later claimed that impression as his own opinion, publishing it word for word in his second autobiography.

Paar found Woody's act vulgar. He particularly objected to one line, “The difference between sex and death is, death you can do alone and nobody will laugh.”

“The difference between sex and
death is, death you can do alone,
and no one will laugh.”
Woody Allen

As Woody finished his act, the cameras cut back to Paar, who was obviously enraged. In front of his audience, he angrily said, “Whoever booked that man and knew what he was going to say, I want to see in my office immediately following this show.” Fortunately for Merv's future in TV, Bob Shanks wasn't fired that night.

Merv had been watching Paar's show on the night the Brooklynborn comedian made his TV debut, and despite the gaffes, recognized Woody's talent and audience appeal. Paar had given Merv total control over booking any guest he wanted to while he filled in for him, but Bob was nonetheless shocked when Merv asked him to book Woody Allen for a comeback. Defying Paar, Bob booked Woody once again—and he was a big hit. “Even though

Woody had a peculiar New York kind of humor, audiences seemed to eat it up, probably because Woody was so different," Merv later said.

Woody later went on to face spectacular success as a writer, a film director, an actor, a comedian, a playwright, and to a somewhat lesser extent, a jazz musician.

To Merv's dismay, Paar for decades dined out on the claim that he'd "discovered" Woody Allen and exposed him for the first time to nationwide attention. Woody, of course, would later be nominated for more awards than Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, or Harold Lloyd.

For years, Merv and Paar competed about which of them had actually "discovered" Woody Allen. Merv, however, would also take credit for saving Woody from potential injury and disaster.

Years later, when Frank Sinatra, former husband of Mia Farrow, learned that Woody was having an affair with her adopted daughter, Soon-Yi Previn, he called Mia and threatened to have "my boys" work over the comedian.

When Merv learned of that, he phoned Frank and asked him to call off his boys and spare Woody. "After all, Frank, you owe me one." Frank called off his boys, but spent the rest of his life raging against what he called "that incestuous bastard."

On the nights Merv did not join his family—and there were many of those—he might be sitting next to Johnny Riley watching Paar on *The Tonight Show*.

"Merv had this incredible instinct that Paar was about to commit *hari-kiri* right in front of the *Tonight* audience," Johnny said. "And so he did."

Paar sealed his doom on the evening of February 10, 1960, although it would be months before he was off the air. One of his harmless jokes was cut from a broadcast by studio censors. It involved a woman writing to a vacation resort and asking about the availability of a W.C., meaning water closet or toilet. The person who received the letter thought W.C. meant "wayside chapel." The full joke was filled with *double entendres* that seemed innocent even back in 1960. Paar became so angered at the censorship that he walked off the show, but then allowed himself to be lured back. However, his days with the network were numbered. Claiming that he was "bone tired," he signed off for the last time at the end of his show of March 29, 1962.

"Merv practically jumped out of his seat," Johnny later reported. "I've never seen him so elated. He announced to me, 'I'm taking over *The Jack Paar Show*.'"

While the network debated a replacement, Merv, as he'd anticipated, was called by NBC to fill in for Paar on many a night. In all, Merv's gig totaled six weeks. He was not the only guest emcee, however. Temporarily occupying what was known as Paar's "tearsoaked seat," were other entertainers. They included Jerry Lewis, Soupy Sales, Steve Lawrence, Mort Sahl, Joey Bishop, Jan Murray, and Peter Lind Hayes.

In spite of this competition, Merv still clung to the belief that he was Paar's heir apparent. One night his agent, Marty, rained on Merv's parade. "I've got the scoop," Marty said. "NBC's first choice is Johnny Carson. But you're second choice if Johnny doesn't sign."

Merv was horribly disappointed. "At least they're not offering the deal to that fuckface, Robert Q. Lewis," he said. His face brightened. "Frank Sinatra's always claiming he owes me one for saving his life. Maybe I should call Frank and ask him to have his boys work over Carson so much he won't emcee any show."

"I hope you're joking," Marty said.

"It's no joke!"

Paar watched all the appearances where Merv took over for him on *The Tonight Show* and had this comment: "Merv is a quick study. I would have to give him an 'A' in economics, because he knows more about the money end of television than anyone. He will never need food stamps. He will probably outlast Johnny Carson and all the rest because of his 'laidback' approach. He is a decent and likable man."

That was Paar's public opinion. Privately he had a darker one. He told Johnny Carson and the NBC suits, "I still can't believe all those stories about Merv being a homosexual. I hear he likes wellbuilt, wellendowed men and attends orgies staged by his best pal, Liberace. The evidence is overwhelming from countless sources: Merv Griffin is gay. Yet, amazingly, he doesn't come off as mincing or limp-wristed like most fag-gots. To give him his due, he conceals his homosexuality very well, although I predict that one day all that man chasing will get him into serious trouble."

It was Paar's discomfort with Merv's homosexuality that led him to endorse Johnny Carson for the latenight slot. Carson signed the deal.

"Merv later claimed that at the time, he fully expected Carson to take over the show," said Johnny Riley. "But that wasn't true at all. He thought he had the inside track. When he got the bad news, he went into an incredible

depression, thinking his TV career—his big chance—was gone forever. I did everything I could to bolster his ego and make him believe in himself again. We were never closer than we were during this period. And then something happened. I fell in love with a guy. Nobody special. But I loved him. I was never in love with Merv. We were bedmates, but never lovers in the full sense of the word. The only problem was, I couldn't tell Merv the bad news—not when he was down."

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As it turned out, NBC did not want to cut the umbilical cord with Merv. In July of 1962, he was offered a 55minute daytime chat show to be launched in October. Hailing Merv as an entertainer of "star magnitude," NBC's Mort Werner, one of the network's vice presidents, promised that Merv's new show would be "amusing, adult, articulate, and alive."

Although elated to have his own talk show, Merv was terribly disappointed that it was scheduled for broadcasting every weekday at two o'clock in the afternoon. "That is the graveyard for daytime TV," he claimed. Merv's show was positioned within the orbit of his newly established Merv Griffin Productions, which gave him creative control of the guests he could book.

NBC made a mistake in announcing that Merv's show was going to be part of their autumn lineup. When he found this out, Merv had not yet signed a contract, so with his lawyer, Roy Blakeman, he pounced.

Meeting with Herb Schlosser from NBC, Merv listened politely as the executive offered $8,000 a week.

"Merv had us by the cojones," Schlosser said, "since we'd already announced him as part of our team. He refused to accept the $8,000 and wanted another $10,000 a week to sweeten the kitty. No one in those days made that kind of dough. When I faced the executives at NBC, I was shocked that they agreed to the $18,000. It was just unheard of."

In the wake of that decision, Merv reached out for "my savior," Bob Shanks, raising his salary as producer from $200 to $1,000 a week.

Call it beginner's luck, but Merv managed to hire a trio of the most talented young writers in television, each man headed for future acclaim. Dick Cavett was the first to sign on. He'd come from Nebraska, a state that had produced such other talents as Henry Fonda, Marlon Brando, and Montgomery Clift.

"Thank Zeus I finally made it here with a contract," Dick told Merv. "I once applied for a job as a page at NBC's office in Rockefeller Center but was turned down." Merv discovered that Dick was one of the most brilliant comics he'd ever encountered, but he suffered from a manicdepressive disorder that had begun during his freshman year at Yale. Both Dick and Merv's rival, Johnny Carson, were also magicians, Merv learned.

He told Dick that, "The salary that I'm shelling out to you will more than pay for your $51 a month walkup."

Although Merv liked the material Dick submitted, years later he would complain to associates that "Cavett writes better lines for Johnny Carson than he ever did for me." Merv especially liked it when Dick had Carson say, "Having your taste criticized by Dorothy Kilgallen is like having your clothes criticized by Emmett Kelly."

Years later, Merv expressed a kind of malicious glee when Cavett got his own talk show and competed against Carson in the same time slot. But after that, Merv came to view Dick "as more competition than Carson himself."

Paul Schone, Merv's friend, said, "If you want to make our boy angry, just compare him to Dick Cavett."

A critic for a New York newspaper had already done just that. "Cavett is an intelligent, penetrating interviewer who is not afraid to ask probing questions or even insult an obnoxious guest, the way Jack Paar did. After listening to Timothy Leary blabber on, Cavett right on the air told him, 'I really think you're full of crap.' Merv Griffin on the other hand is Mr. Nice Guy on the air. Being interviewed on his show is like having a steakandpotato dinner with an insurance salesman from Kansas City."

Pat McCormick was the most outrageous writer Merv ever hired. Over the course of Pat's career, he would also write for Bill Cosby, Don Rickles, and Jonathan Winters. When doing so, he tested the barriers of what was acceptable as comedy on TV.

Merv was startled the first day Pat, all 270 pounds of him, lumbered into his office. Standing 6'6", he had blond curly hair and a big walrus mustache adorning his ruddy face. After Pat's first week on the job, Merv told Bob Shanks that "Pat's weird, but he can deliver one-liners as good as Woody Allen."

Pat's most notorious appearance was not on Merv's show but on Johnny Carson's show. On an episode of Carson's *Tonight Show* in 1974, while Carson was delivering his opening monologue, Pat suddenly emerged from behind the curtains. Totally nude, he streaked across the stage behind Carson.

Today Pat is best remembered for playing Big Enos Burdette alongside Burt Reynolds in *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977) and its two sequels.

Brilliant, witty,
and manic-depressive:
Dick Cavett

The third writer Merv hired was David Lloyd. Mild-mannered and unobtrusive, he evolved into one of the top writers on serial television, creating 30 episodes of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in the 1970s. He also wrote many episodes of series which included *Taxi*, *Cheers*, *Wings*, and *Frasier*.

With creative freedom over who would appear on his show, Merv hired Woody Allen as a performer, getting him to sign a contract for an appearance every Friday. Welcoming the exposure, Woody gladly accepted the deal.

Merv wanted big names for his debut shows, and he asked his former roommate, Harry Belafonte, to come on. When Harry showed up at the studio, however, Merv realized that he'd lost his youthful beauty and even much of his charm. “But I embraced him and treated him like my best and long lost friend,” Merv said. “People in show business do that all the time.”

Merv recalled that Harry “seemed a bit full of himself,” reminding Merv of some of his achievements. Frank Sinatra had recruited Harry to perform at the inaugural gala of President Kennedy, and Harry's latest album, *Jump Up Calypso*, had become another of the star's million sellers. Also, Harry reminded Merv that whereas he'd succeeded in the movies, Merv had not.

To the surprise of Bob Shanks and the rest of the staff, one of Merv's most interesting and most provocative guests was an acquaintance from the 1930s. Adela Rogers St. Johns had met Merv when she'd played tennis with his Uncle Elmer. Merv had been her “ball boy.”

Adela was a famous and wellconnected American journalist, novelist, and screenwriter. She'd reported on everything from the controversial Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney “longcount” fight in 1927 to the 1935 trial of Richard Bruno Hauptmann for kidnapping and murdering the son of Charles Lindbergh. “She knew where all the bodies were buried in Hollywood,” Merv said. “And I mean *all*. The stories she'd privately tell about Rudolph Valentino, Gloria Swanson, and Greta Garbo would shock the unshockable.”

In anticipation of one of the several shows he did with Adela, Merv called on Joan Crawford, not knowing if she would even speak to him after their last disastrous encounter. The aging movie queen accepted the offer to appear on the show, treating Merv as if she'd never met him before.

Later, Merv said he regretted that he didn't let Adela interview Joan, as the columnist had done so many times in the past. On the air, Merv asked Joan if she'd ever felt any romantic attraction toward any of her leading men. Assuming a wideeyed, innocent look, Joan claimed that she had not.

“Now, Joan, you *married* three of them,” Adela butted in. “You *must* have had *some* feelings.”

Backstage Merv walked into a screaming argument between Joan and Adela. “HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS ME LIKE THAT?” Joan shouted. “WHY DIDN't YOU JUST ASK WHAT IT's LIKE TO FUCK CLARK GABLE? But, of course, you could have answered that one yourself.” Then Joan grandly stormed out of the studio.

After she'd left, Adela turned to Merv and said, “That Joan! From Henry Fonda to Glenn Ford, she's fucked more of her leading men than Lassie has taken shits. You should have asked her what it was like going to bed with President Kennedy.”

Initially, Merv attracted biggername guests than the then relatively unknown Johnny Carson. Merv asked Danny Kaye's agent if the star would come on the show, and was rather surprised when Danny accepted. Merv wondered if Danny resented the fact that he'd done far better with his recording of “I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts” than the star had done with his. But when Danny came onto Merv's show, no mention was made of the Coconuts song.

Merv often bonded with his guests, but not with Danny. Privately Merv wanted to ask Danny all the big

questions (“Tell me about your longstanding affair with Laurence Olivier.” “What's it like fucking Princess Margaret?”) but didn't dare.

After the show, Danny graciously invited Merv and a few members of the staff back to an apartment he was temporarily occupying. There he prepared what Merv called “the best Chinese dinner I've ever had in my life.”

Over afterdinner drinks, Danny told amusing stories about his fabulous career in Hollywood. Suddenly, he abruptly said, “Nobody wants to fuck Danny Kaye.”

“I do,” Merv said, chivalrously, smiling to indicate he just might be joking.

“I don't mean it that way,” Danny said. “Samuel Goldwyn himself uttered that statement about me, telling his associates that I don't have sex appeal. In *The Court Jester* I had to show off my legs in tights. Frankly, my gams aren't that great. I called in this expert costume designer, and he had me wear symmetricals. You might know them as leg falsies. That's why in that picture I had the shapeliest legs ever shown on the screen. But they weren't really mine.”

“The other day I heard that Edward G. Robinson is proud of his shapely legs and likes to show them off every chance he gets,” Merv said.

Joan Crawford with **Merv**
Wide eyed innocence,
screaming denunciations

There was a sudden silence in the room. After Merv's flippant remark, the party died. Merv never became the intimate friend with Danny that he'd wanted to be.

Hoping for another big name, Merv called yet another former roommate, Monty Clift, who had forgiven him for not recognizing him that night he'd showed up at Merv's apartment following his plastic surgery in the wake of his terrible automobile accident.

Merv hadn't seen Monty in months, so he placed a call to his friend Lee Remick for an update. She'd filmed *Wild River* with Monty. “His body is birdlike,” Lee said. “He's all skin and bones—practically half the man he was. If you put your arms around him, it's like hugging yourself.”

Monty showed up at the studio drunk, and Merv tried to sober him up with black coffee. He'd never seen the once startlingly handsome star look this awful. At first Merv considered canceling Monty's appearance and bringing in a substitute guest.

“Monty did appear on the show,” Merv said, “and I hated every minute of it. At times, he was so incoherent that he seemed retarded. The drugs in his body did all the talking—not Monty. I was on the edge of my seat all during the interview. I felt that Monty was going to have a nervous breakdown in front of millions of people.”

Backstage, Merv asked Monty if he'd join him for dinner “for old time's sake.”

Monty turned down the offer. “It's not that I don't want to hang out with you, but I don't want to talk about the past.”

“Well, we'll talk about the future,” Merv said.

“There is no future, at least not for me.” Monty embraced Merv and walked away.

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The Merv Griffin Show had been on the air for less than a month before Johnny Riley told Merv that he was moving out and moving on. His new boyfriend was much older and a TV executive. Johnny would be living on the Upper East Side in the future, not in Merv's secret hideaway, which was still used infrequently for trysts between Rosemary Clooney and Robert Kennedy.

“It was the strangest thing,” Johnny later recalled. “Merv showed almost no reaction. He seemed neither elated to get rid of me nor terribly disappointed. He wished me well. If anything, it showed me that we should have always

remained friends and should never have attempted a love affair. It wasn't a love affair, really. Call it an affair. If anything, Merv seemed to relish his newfound freedom. He already had the stability of a family. I think he wanted to play the field in his spare time, and not be tied down with any one person on the outside."

Johnny moved on, but Merv continued to maintain the hideaway with Paul Schone and Bill Robbins, neither of whom showed any indication that they wanted to settle down with anyone. It would be three years before Johnny saw Merv again, although Johnny continued to see his friends, Paul and Bill, apart from Merv, on the side.

Not only did Merv lose Johnny, but he temporarily lost his show as well. NBC pulled it off the air in favor of the Giants/Yankees World Series.

During the interim, Merv flew to London to tape a series of interviews. Through a publicist, one of the interviews was arranged with a young actor, Peter O'Toole, who had just completed filming *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Marlon Brando had foolishly rejected the leading role in this film, and at the time, the media was filled with talk and speculation about this movie.

When Merv with his TV crew showed up at Peter's home outside London, Peter wasn't there. Merv later learned he was drinking at the local pub. The interview was rescheduled for the following day, at a locale in central London, although Merv was so furious at being stood up that he almost cancelled the gig altogether.

This time, Peter and his publicist showed up. As Merv would later tell Bill Robbins, "I found him devastatingly handsome with steely blue eyes and beautiful brown hair. He wore socks that were the brightest green I've ever seen."

"I always wear one item of green clothing," the actor explained, "because I take pride in my Irish ancestry."

A brilliant Shakespearian actor, the harddrinking O'Toole was the son of an Irish metal worker, football player, and racetrack bookmaker. His father had taught Peter much about life, introducing him to hard drinking and teaching him how to escape from a racecourse with gambling proceeds even when the wrong horse ran past the post.

The interview with Peter went so well that the actor agreed to appear on Merv's show in three months, when he'd scheduled a trip to America for the preview of *Lawrence of Arabia* in December.

Merv had called Noel Coward the previous evening. Although the playwright was too busy to see him, during their phone dialogue Merv told Noel that he was about to interview Peter O'Toole.

Peter O'Toole (Lawrence of Arabia) and **Omar Sharif:**
Rendezvous with a transsexual

"I saw the dear chap only the other night," Noel said. "I told him if he were any prettier, the movie would have to be called *Florence of Arabia*."

During his interview with Peter, Merv found him the most candid star he'd ever met. Noel had already told Merv that only Richard Burton had seduced more women. Peter confessed to Merv that at the age of twelve, when he was a schoolboy in Leeds, he formed the Mutual Masturbation Society with his male friends. "We called ourselves the MMs," Peter said. "Even when the headmaster found out about our club, he wasn't appalled. He felt it was a healthy alternative to ordinary sex. But three years later, I had sex with a woman, a trollop. From then on, no more masturbation for me. There is nothing on earth as good as a man and woman coming together."

"I suppose that would depend on your taste," Merv said.

What Merv really wanted to ask Peter involved details of his involvement with a British transsexual, a young model named April Ashley. Born in Liverpool in 1935 as George Jamieson, she was destined to become the most famous transsexual in the UK. Peter and his costar, the Egyptian actor, Omar Sharif, had met April in Spain where some scenes from *Lawrence of Arabia* had been filmed.

Peter, Omar, and April had been seen out together almost every night. In Spain, they had appeared together at the opening of a new bodega in Jerez de la Frontera at a party staged for the press by the Marques de Domecq d'Usquain. Omar was on one of April's arms, Peter on the other.

Later, April joined Omar and Peter in their shared suite. Peter's biographer, Michael Freedland, claimed, "Peter found her deliciously feminine — soft, creamy skin, gently curving hips and breasts that would have delighted the readers of *Playboy*."

April later recalled, “When Peter strips off his clothes, he's like an El Greco.” She had also, she related, visited Omar's bed as well. It was while Omar was making love to her that April allegedly told him that she'd once been a sailor in Her Majesty's Navy.

Merv was intrigued with Omar Sharif, and he asked Peter to help arrange an interview with him. As the years went by, Merv avidly followed Omar's career both on and off the screen as the Egyptian launched into serial seductions of his leading ladies. They included Ingrid Bergman (*The Yellow Rolls Royce*, 1964); Julie Christie (*Doctor Zhivago*, 1965), Sophia Loren (*More Than a Miracle*, 1967), both Catherine Deneuve and Ava Gardner (*Mayerling*, 1968), and Barbra Streisand (*Funny Girl*, 1968). After Omar romanced Streisand on screen, a furor erupted in his native Egypt. The actress was not only Jewish, but she'd raised money for Israel.

The best story Merv ever heard about Omar was a tale the actor relayed about himself. The actor claimed that when he was in Dallas, a woman with a handgun broke into his hotel room. Aiming the gun at him, she demanded that he strip off all his clothes and make love to her. He looked down at his flaccid penis. “It's not possible at the moment,” he told the disappointed woman.

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That night in London, back in Merv's suite, a call came in from Noel Coward, claiming that he was so disappointed that they couldn't get together. “I'm sending Graham over to keep you company.” Within the hour, Graham Payn arrived, having lost his Jamaican suntan.

The actor spent the night with Merv. “Somehow it wasn't as romantic as it had been in Jamaica,” Merv later told Paul Schone. As if sensing that there was no longer a spark between them, the resourceful Graham suggested that he show Merv “some of the pleasures of London” the following night.

In a taxi en route to Belgravia, Graham told Merv that he was taking him to a pub, The Grenadier, which had been a former hangout for officers serving under the Duke of Wellington. Behind the scarlet door of the pub, Merv during the course of a long evening was introduced to five of the Queen's guardsmen, each of whom were known to Graham. Merv had agreed to give each of them twenty pounds if they'd return, with Graham, to his hotel suite. None of the guardsmen had ever been paid that much for their sexual services before.

Merv did not go into great detail when he flew back to New York, but he told Bill Robbins and Paul Schone that he and Graham had had an orgy with these guardsmen. “Merv claimed it was one of the most thrilling adventures of his life,” Bill said. “That night in London set a pattern for Merv. He would set up many orgies in the future with young models and actors. But he always claimed that Liberace was better at staging orgies than he was.”

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As promised, Peter O'Toole and his publicist showed up at the prearranged time in New York for an interview on *The Merv Griffin Show*. Merv, however, did not meet the actor backstage before he was summoned to go on. Later Merv recalled, “It was the most disastrous interview of my life.”

When Peter, now a platinum blond, walked out onto the set, Merv did not recognize him. At first he thought Bob Shanks was pulling some joke on him, having hired some British actor to impersonate Peter. Before his arrival in America, Peter had dyed his hair so that audiences would recognize the look he'd had in *Lawrence of Arabia*.

After a few minutes with the sullen guest and an interview going nowhere, Merv asked Peter why he'd dyed his hair, although by this point in the interview, he'd figured it out for himself.

“I'd rather not discuss that, Mr. Griffin,” was Peter's acidic response.

From that point on, Peter mumbled oneword answers to Merv's increasingly desperate questions. The interview would evoke a future appearance of Anne Bancroft on *The Johnny Carson Show* when she responded in much the same way.

In exasperation, Merv finally asked Peter if he'd like to return to England.

“I would, yes,” Peter said.

“Thank you for coming,” Merv said. “Goodbye.”

Peter got up and walked off the show. The audience could hear Peter yelling backstage. “GRIFFIN's A SON OF A BITCH.” This appearance, which became notorious, was America's first introduction to the degree to which O'Toole had become a temperamental diva.

After the show, Merv talked to his staff, asking, “What pissed this guy off so?”

“By asking if he'd bleached his hair, maybe he thought you were suggesting that he was a faggot,” said a staff member.

Another member of his staff had a different answer. “I hear he gets belligerent when he's drunk, and he's always at least a little bit drunk.”

The disastrous interview with Peter O'Toole was the exception to an otherwise rather benign rule. Nearly all the guests Merv brought on related to him and gave relatively uncontroversial interviews. Merv rarely probed too deeply into a star's personal life, even though he had a gossipy nature and knew a great deal about the personal lives of his subjects. For example, he interviewed many gay actors who presented themselves as straight, and Merv dutifully went along with their charade, never wanting to embarrass or force a guest to reveal more than he or she wanted to air before the public.

With Bob Shanks, Merv made the decision to bring onto his program stars who had been blacklisted during the infamous Communist witch hunt launched by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950s.

One of his first guests, the Brooklynborn comedian, Jack Gilford, was on the Red Channels list of both real or suspected Communist sympathizers. Gilford and his wife, the actress Madeline Lee Gilford, were specifically cited as Communist sympathizers by choreographer Jerome Robbins in his testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

After interviewing Gilford, the witty but rather ugly comedian, on his show, Merv said, “He seemed harmless to me, not exactly a Russian bear or The Red Menace that his detractors claimed.”

In the years ahead, Merv noted that in spite of a distinguished acting career, Gilford became best known to millions of Americans when he appeared in television commercials for Cracker Jack.

Much to the annoyance of the “suits” at NBC, Merv also booked the New York bornandbred character actor, Phil Leeds. He won the audience over by announcing at the beginning of Merv's interview, “I'm not pretty, but I'm warm and feisty.” Even though he'd entertained American troops in the Pacific during World War II, Leeds found himself caught up in McCarthy era, anti-Communist hysteria. He too joined a list of entertainers who had already been blacklisted and in most cases, were out of work.

As regards booking Leeds onto his show, Merv defiantly announced, “I've never paid any attention to the Red Channels list, and I don't intend to now.”

One star wasn't officially blacklisted, but had her career derailed anyway when she was forced to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee. That was Judy Holliday, who'd won the Oscar as Best Actress for her portrayal of Billie Dawn in the 1950 *Born Yesterday*. By winning that award, she beat out such formidable contenders as Gloria Swanson for *Sunset Blvd.* and Bette Davis for her role in *All About Eve*. Even though Judy had an IQ of 172, her lawyers advised her to “play dumb like Billie Dawn” during her appearance before the committee. Even though the committee's chairman repeatedly threatened to ruin Judy's career, she steadfastly did not reveal the names of other alleged Communist sympathizers. Having no real charges against Judy, the committee was forced to let her go. But despite the fact that she was cleared of all charges, the stigma of being called for interrogation before the committee caused her to lose major job offers, especially from TV.

“Book Judy,” Merv told Bob Shanks, “and to hell with any blacklist. Bring her on.”

Merv bonded with Judy so well on the air that he wanted to socialize with her. She readily accepted his invitation to dinner because she claimed to have some personal matter to talk over with him.

Two nights later Merv invited Judy to an Italian restaurant in Greenwich Village, after she'd assured him of her fondness for Mediterranean food.

In the early part of the evening, she amused him with stories of her career in Hollywood. Her funniest story occurred when she was called into the office of 20th Century Fox mogul Darryl F. Zanuck. He told her that all the women at the studio “belong to me.”

“Don't ask, don't tell”
Judy Holliday

“Then he whipped out his super-size dick and exposed himself to me,” Judy said. “‘Have you ever seen a whopper like this?’ he asked me. At that point I removed my falsies and threw them in his face. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I guess these belong to you too!’”

With the understanding that Merv was a bisexual like herself, Judy was very candid with him, even hinting that she'd had an affair with Katharine Hepburn during the making of the MGM film *Adam's Rib* in 1949.

Before the end of the evening, Merv and Judy openly discussed their sex lives. She claimed that she'd lost her virginity to a New York policewoman, Yetta Cohn. She also alleged that her first sexual encounter with a man involved the handsome English actor, John Buckmaster, who had raped her. John happened to have been the son of the famous actress, Gladys Cooper, and the brotherinlaw of Robert Morley. In the 1930s, John had had an affair with Vivien Leigh, Merv found these revelations fascinating.

Judy seemed to be delaying discussing the personal matter she'd mentioned several days previously. Almost as a means of avoiding it, they chatted about crossword puzzles, both of them claiming to be experts in solving them. Throughout the meal, Merv noticed that she was such a chainsmoker that she'd developed a cough. This heavy smoking would lead to her death from breast cancer in 1965 at the age of forty-three.

Finally, she revealed what had been on her mind all evening. She said that she'd met and befriended Hadley Morrell when he was being supported by Robert Q. Lewis. Lewis had dropped Hadley, cutting off his support, and

Merv's former friend was working at a grocery store on 8th Street to pay his bills. “I hope you don't mind,” she said, “but I've invited him here tonight. I know you guys still love each other, and I want you to talk things over with him.”

Merv later claimed that he felt trapped when Judy got up from her seat, and was almost immediately replaced by Hadley, who had been watching him from outside the restaurant.

Recalling that night years later, Hadley said the one hour he spent with Merv that night was filled with recriminations, Merv accusing him of “betrayal and sleeping with the enemy.”

Hadley revealed that it took a month before Merv let him move back into the hideaway with Bill and Paul. “But it was never the same again between us,” he said. “Merv agreed that we should remain friends, but he told me we'd never be lovers again.”

Merv did allow Hadley to quit his job, promising that he'd give him a hundred dollars a week in cash. It seemed that Merv was getting too well known because of his TV show, and he needed a discreet intermediary to help him arrange sexual liaisons with young actors and models.

“He said I could be his ‘Minister of Mischief,’ and I know how corny that sounds,” Hadley said. “Merv found the word pimp too hard to pronounce. I thought about it and finally decided it might even be fun for me. Little did I realize at the time that I'd just assigned myself to the role of Back Alley Friend for life, one that Merv was ashamed of. Year after year I swore I'd break away and find other, more dignified, employment. But I never did. The night I moved back in with the boys, I'd doomed my life but hardly knew that at the time. There would be many thrills in store for me, but also a heavy dose of pain.”

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Months before Merv's interviews from London, his friend Mark Goodson had asked him and Betty White to go through the trial run of a new TV game show called *Password*. Betty and Merv were so good they sold the idea to “the suits.” Because of other commitments, it was understood that Merv would not be the show's emcee.

Ironically, *The Merv Griffin Show* eventually ended up in the same afternoon time slot as *Password*, and soon *Password* began outrating Merv's show by a fourtoone margin. “It was killing me in the Nielsen ratings,” Merv said.

At long last Johnny Carson had found his voice on *The Tonight Show*. He was not only getting four times more advertising revenue, but he was also luring many of the bigname guests who had originally launched the debut of Merv's show.

On April 1—April Fool's Day—1963, NBC notified Merv that his show was being taken off the air. “You have too much polish, too much sophistication for daytime TV,” one of the NBC “suits” told him.

Adela Rogers St. Johns was one of Merv's last guests. “It was one of the most tender moments I've ever seen on daytime TV,” she said. “The stage was dark, almost black. Suddenly, a spotlight shone down on Merv as he

emerged with tears in his eyes. He was carrying a battered suitcase, a hat, and a raincoat. ‘I'm so sorry,’ he said to his audience. ‘I just hate ending the show. Haven't we had a good time?’ Then he sang ‘Lost in the Stars.’ I found myself shedding a tear or two, and in Hollywood they call me Hard-Hearted Hannah.”

Adela Rogers St. Johns
Merv brought her on just to
insult other guests--and she did.

Merv had some hope that year of salvaging his pride when he was nominated for Outstanding Performance in a Variety, Musical, or Series. He was up against competition which included Danny Kaye, Andy Williams, and Edie Adams. The award went to Carol Burnett. “Just to prove that there is no justice in the world,” Merv said, “the Best Supporting Actor award went to Don Knotts. He beat out Robert Redford. You figure.”

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As thousands of letters poured in from NBC, protesting the cancellation of Merv's show, he said goodbye to his friends in New York and headed for Europe for a vacation. He later estimated that the studio received nearly 175,000 letters of protest from viewers, which at the time was an alltime high for any network. The “suits” at NBC belatedly realized that they had let a valuable property escape and that they had committed to Johnny Carson too early.

Paris and London were fine with Merv—“That is,” he said, “if you like the charms of yesterday.” But when his feet touched the soil of Ireland, he felt he'd come home again, as this was the green land from which his ancestors had sailed to the New World so long ago.

While NBC tried to find the proper showcase to woo Merv back on the air, he signed a twoplay contract on the strawhat circuit after having been inspired watching Judy Garland perform in her 1950 movie *Summer Stock.*

The comedy, *The Moon Is Blue*, was presented at the Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Many of Merv's friends, including Hadley, Bill, and Paul, drove down from New York to see him emote. The comedy by F. Hugh Herbert seems harmless today, and it is almost inconceivable that it could have caused nationwide protests in 1953 when Otto Preminger had brought it to the screen in a version that starred William Holden, David Niven, and Maggie McNamara.

At one point, Maggie herself came to Bucks County to see Merv in the play, which had been her one crowning moment on screen, thanks partly to the Oscar nomination she'd earned for her performance. The play involved two aging playboys who were attracted to the same young woman.

Backstage, Maggie told Merv that her movie had been the first to use the words “virgin,”“seduce,” and “mistress” on screen. In the more permissive 60s, Merv told her that he'd been aware of no protests at all.

The pert, perky actress had been charming on the night Merv met her. In 1978 he was saddened to read about the failure of her career. She'd ended up barely supporting herself as a typist, and had killed herself with an overdose of sleeping pills.

When not performing on stage in Bucks County, Merv rushed to and from New York to host *Talent Scouts* for CBSTV, the summer replacement for *The Red Skelton Hour*.

The series was an attempt to revive Arthur Godfrey's popular 1950s show. With Merv as host, the show went on the air for CBS on July 3, 1962. Young newcomers were asked to perform, and they were introduced on stage by such stars as Jim Backus, George Maharis, Ann Sheridan, Lauren Bacall, Hugh O'Brien, Liza Minnelli, and “Mama” Cass Elliot.

Merv wanted to make a name for himself by discovering exceptional talent like Godfrey had done. Many young performers who got their first major exposure on Godfrey went on to great success. They included Pat Boone, Tony Bennett, Rosemary Clooney, Eddie Fisher, Connie Francis, Steve Lawrence, and Patsy Cline. Merv expressed a

certain sense of glee when hearing how wrong Godfrey could be in appraising talent. He had turned down both Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly.

During his hosting of *Talent Scouts*, Merv did showcase some new talent, but made no great discoveries like Godfrey. George Carlin, Charles Nelson Reilly, and Vaughn Meader did go over big, however, and Meader did an impression of JFK which led to a hit album.

Merv's next acting gig was *Come Blow Your Horn*, the first play written by Neil Simon. It had premiered on Broadway in 1961. Even though Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin had starred in the movie version in 1963, “The play still had legs,” according to Merv. “William Bendix and I sold out every seat.”

As a footnote to this play, the offstage character of Felix Ungar later became one of the onstage protagonists of Simon's *The Odd Couple*. Reportedly, the producers of the show had considered Merv for the role of Felix, but he turned them down, claiming that the character he'd have played “is that of a menacing queen.” Eventually, the part went to another closeted gay, Tony Randall.

Merv's costar in the play, William Bendix, hated him on sight. By the time he met Merv, Bendix's star had faded. He'd been popular in the 1940s, playing a dimwitted but lovable lug. In 1944 he'd starred in the radio series, *The Life of Riley*, which had made him a household name.

In Warren, Ohio, Merv overheard Bendix telling the director, “I've starred with Hepburn and Tracy, with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, even Kirk Douglas and Groucho Marx. And now you give me Merv Griffin, a mediocre leftover from the Big Band era.”

“Well, at least you don't have to wear a dress in this play,” the director told Bendix, referring to his drag role in *Abroad With Two Yanks* in 1944.

Merv's stage nemesis:
William Bendix

Merv knew that Bendix had appeared during that same war year with Tallulah Bankhead in her greatest film, *Lifeboat*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Merv wanted to swap Tallulah stories with Bendix, but the actor cut him off. “I do not know Miss Bankhead,” he said. “Nor do I care to.”

After that encounter, Bendix never spoke to Merv again except on the stage. Actually, he didn't speak to him then, either, addressing comments meant for Merv to the audience instead. The former star did what he could to sabotage Merv's performance, “but I turned out to be a trouper,” Merv recalled. “I would have been more understanding if I'd known that Bendix was in great pain during the run of the play.” Suffering from a long bout with cancer, the actor died the following year, 1964, just before Christmas.

During his lonely nights in a hotel room in Bucks County, Merv worked on an idea for a television quiz show. He continued to perfect his idea in Warren, Ohio during other lonely nights, although a handsome young Ohioborn stagehand relieved the bleakness of many of those nights.

That show of Merv's was tentatively called *What's the Question?* Even if Merv dreamed of its future success, he could hardly have imagined that it would become the rock on which he'd build a billion dollar fortune.

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Merv returned to television with his own show, *Word for Word*, for which he was both producer and star. The “suits” at NBC had wanted to cast him in a show which, in their opinion, might be more popular, but Merv held out for *Word for Word*, which was tied in with his passion for word games.

Contestants tried to extract the greatest number of threeor fourletter words out of a bigger word. Launched in October of 1963, the show was not a critical or popular success. The reviews were bad, the worst coming from some nameless critic in Newark, who wrote, “Watching Merv Griffin perform in *Word for Word* is about as exciting as scrubbing your kitchen floor with a very stinky mop.” Most reviewers, however, found Merv a “likable but

mediocre performer—the show just has no excitement."

One executive at MGM gave Merv some very bad advice. "I think you should look elsewhere," he said. "Game shows are not your *forte*." Even Merv grew bored with the show, later comparing it to "sleepwalking." The audience, of course, picked up on his boredom.

Merv's boredom was relieved when he got what he called "the most surprising invitation of my life." From the White House, he received an invitation to emcee the 1963 White House Correspondent's Dinner in Washington for President John F. Kennedy. "I started quivering like a bowl of jelly and didn't have a clue about what to say in my monologue. I immediately called Pat McCormick."

As a gag writer, Pat reigned supreme, and was an expert at offbeat, often warped humor. "No one did topical jokes better than Pat," Merv said. "He could even make politicians laugh at their own mistakes, and if you could pull that one off, you could get away with murder…at least. My favorite Pat story was when he celebrated the baptism of his baby boy. He invited some buddies over for dinner. After plowing them with booze, he went into the kitchen, emerging later with his naked baby child on a silver platter surrounded by cooked vegetables like carrots and onions. He gently took hold of his little boy's wee wee and asked his friends, 'Who wants the Pope's nose?'"

Merv's job was not only to entertain the President but the press corps, members of Congress, Supreme Court justices, the President's Cabinet, and the Diplomatic Corps.

Previously, he'd worked a few times with Edie Adams, so he contacted her and she agreed to appear. He also called the comedian Guy Marks, whom he would book on several of his future talk shows. Guy was a topnotch entertainer who was known as a master of impersonations. "He could do anybody or anything—birds, animals, even inanimate objects," Merv said. "He sounded more like Bogie than Bogie himself. I just knew he'd be a big hit."

During the early planning stages of the event in Washington, Merv received a surprise call from the White House. It seemed that on the night of May 12, 1963, the president was watching Dinah Shore's popular NBC talk show when he became mesmerized by the appearance of a young singer, Barbra Streisand. Merv was informed that Kennedy wanted Barbra to sing at this big event.

Merv would later admit that he'd been the last talk show host to appreciate Barbra's singing talent. Jack Paar had been one of her early supporters, but Merv had turned down her agent's request five times. "I just don't dig her voice," he told her agent. "Not my thing at all."

Unholy trio, polluted protocol:

Merv (lower right) arranges for **Barbra Streisand** (above) to sing for **JFK** (upper right).

Of course, he would honor the President's request and book Barbra, but he warned the White House aide, "I still can't believe Streisand is the President's cuppa. Maybe she can get a nose job before the dinner. She's completely sexless. Not the President's type. Why don't you let me contact Marilyn Monroe? Isn't she more the president's type?"

"The President doesn't have a type," the young White House aide stiffly informed Merv. "But if he does, she's Mrs. Kennedy herself."

Against Merv's better judgment, he booked Barbra for the show. Nervously standing in front of the august audience, including the President, Merv introduced "the little girl from Brooklyn with the powerful voice."

Barbra made a spectacular entrance wearing a satin gown that showed plenty of cleavage. She wowed the audience, including the President, with "Happy Days Are Here Again." At no point in her song did she take her eyes off the President.

"Knowing Kennedy's penchant for whoremongering," Merv said, "Barbra readily signaled him that she was

ready, willing, and able to do his bidding."

Merv was a smooth emcee and kept the President and the audience laughing. After the reception, Merv and Barbra, along with the others, were invited to join a receiving line to meet the President. A White House aide had warned them in advance that it was impolite to ask for the President's autograph.

Barbra stood in the receiving line before Merv. When she was introduced to the handsome, charismatic president, she curtsied as if meeting the Queen of England. He smiled at her and asked, "How long have you been singing?"

Without losing a beat, she shot back, "About as long as you've been President." He laughed and smiled at her. Defying the White House aide, she stuck the evening's program into Kennedy's face and handed him a pen. "Mr. President, if I don't get your autograph, my mother back in Brooklyn will never allow me into the house again."

Peter Daniels, Barbra's accompanist, was standing nearby, and he quickly offered the President his back to write on. Accepting the autographed program, Barbra said, "You're a doll, Mr. President, and thanks. I'd sing for you any night."

Merv was shocked at her blatant disregard of protocol and how she'd been so suggestive with the President.

When he had breakfast with Edie, Guy, and Barbra the following morning, he chastised Barbra. "For God's sake, why did you have to go and ask for his autograph?"

"Because I wanted to," she said rather grandly.

"At least you could tell us what he wrote," Merv said.

"He wrote, 'Fuck You, the President,'" she said.

Later Barbara confessed to friends that he'd actually written, "Best Wishes, John F. Kennedy." She also admitted that she'd lost the autographed program. "I slipped it inside my dress and it must have fallen out somewhere."

Later that morning when Merv read the newspapers, he realized how clever Barbra had been. He suspected she didn't really want the President's autograph. A nearby photographer had snapped a picture of Barbra standing next to the President as he autographed the program on Peter's back. That picture made the front page of newspapers across the nation, and became one of the biggest publicity breaks of Barbra's career.

Throughout the course of breakfast that morning, Merv kept a secret from Barbra, Guy, and Edie, but later confided it to his friends, Hadley, Bill, and Paul. In the receiving line the previous evening, as Kennedy was shaking Merv's hand and congratulating him on a job well done, he whispered an invitation in his ear. "Join me and some of my friends upstairs for some cigars and brandy." He motioned to an aide to escort Merv upstairs.

"Thanks, Mr. President," Merv said. "I'm honored."

"It was the most vulgar gathering of macho men I'd ever attended," Merv later said. "All these guys did was talk about cheating on their wives and the various specialties of prostitutes they'd encountered. Senator George Smathers of Florida was one of the guests. One very unattractive man—I don't have a clue as to who he really was—told the President about his encounter with this incredibly beautiful showgal who was called 'the Queen of Anal Sex in Las Vegas.' Apparently, Frank Sinatra and countless others had had her. The President announced that he'd arrange for Peter Lawford to hook him up with this backdoor whore."

After Kennedy retired for the evening, an aide in white gloves escorted Merv down the steps toward the door. At the foot of the steps, Merv encountered Jacqueline Kennedy. She kissed him on the cheek. "Truman tells me you're a delight." She was referring to her friend, Truman Capote. "Let's lunch. I'll call you."

"And then she just seemed to disappear," Merv said. "At first I thought I'd just dreamed her appearance. She was one of the most beautiful and enchanting creatures I'd ever met. She moved with the grace of a summer butterfly. Of course, I didn't really expect her to call me. I thought it was just a polite thing to say. I was wrong about that. Jackie Kennedy, or so I learned, always meant what she said."

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After their joint appearance in Washington, Merv did a complete "about face" as regards his opinion of Barbra Streisand. He was so impressed at how she'd gone over at the White House that he called Liberace and suggested that he hire Barbra for his opening act at the Riviera in Las Vegas.

Taking Merv's suggestion, Liberace signed the young star as an extraadded attraction, granting her a salary of $7,500 a week.

Regrettably, on opening night and on the two following nights as well, Barbra bombed in front of Liberace's

older bluehaired ladies. His fans seemed startled by her innovative belting style and didn't get her act at all.

A critic for the *Hollywood Reporter* wrote, “Her makeup made her look like something that just climbed off a broom. When she sang, it was like the wailing of a banshee bouncing up and down on marionette strings. Her outrageous grooming almost nullifies her talent.”

At this point Liberace intervened, showing the same overthetop flair he'd used in salvaging Elvis's act after his first appearance in Las Vegas. In Barbra's dressing room, Liberace tossed out her dull gray wardrobe and replaced it with an almost electric gold lamé gown with dangling earrings. Remembering what Shirley Temple's mother had told her moppet star, Liberace said, “Sparkle, Barbra, sparkle! This is Vegas.”

The gimmick worked. When Barbra made her fourth and most stunning appearance, her act ended with thunderous applause.

Liberace called Merv the next day and thanked him for hooking him up with Barbra. “The gal is gonna go far,” Liberace predicted. “Maybe even become a bigger name than both of us.”

“No one in show business will ever become as big as you, Sadie,” Merv assured him.

“That's true, Fannie Mae,” Liberace said. “Now let's get down to some serious gal talk. I want to know who's fucking you now—and don't leave out a single detail, regardless of how sordid. After you've spilled the beans, I'll tell you who I had last night. You won't believe it!”

“You don't mean….”Merv said.

“Yes, I do mean *that one*,” Liberace said. “The straightest man in show business. Mr. Skirt-Chaser himself. And we're not talking Sinatra either. I'll leave *that* conquest for you. After having that man of my dreams, I can only say those Vegas showgals didn't lie. It's a whopper.”

“I bet he left you singing ‘That's Amore.’”

“Not only that,” Liberace said. “I won't be able to sit down at my piano for a month.”

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During her next trip to New York, Jackie Kennedy called Merv and arranged a luncheon meeting. She preferred the bar of the Carlyle Hotel because she was assured of more privacy there. Watched over by the Secret Service, she greeted Merv warmly. When he appeared reluctant to kiss her on the cheek, she said. “You can touch me. After all, I'm not the Queen of England.”

Throughout their rendezvous that afternoon, he wanted to look into her eyes, but she kept them hidden behind large dark glasses.

Unlike the serene princess she evoked in front of TV cameras, in person, she was warm and rather earthy. She obviously had a love of gossip, and she pumped Merv for scandalous revelations in the movie industry. She was particularly interested in who was sleeping with whom. Merv filled her in on some shocking details, carefully avoiding speaking of his friend Marilyn Monroe. Actually, he'd wanted to ask her about her own affairs with various movie stars, notably Marlon Brando and William Holden, but he didn't dare.

Jackie spoke candidly about their mutual friends, especially Truman Capote and Peter Lawford. “I know that Truman befriends me to my face,” she said, “then spreads the vilest gossip about me behind my back. But I still adore him. He tells me more about what's really going on in the world of celebrities than any other person. As for Peter…” She hesitated, putting down her glass. “I don't know how to say this. He's confided to me about your own involvement with him, so we can speak frankly. Peter's in love with me, and I don't know how to handle it.” She didn't say anything for a long moment, perhaps realizing she'd revealed too much.

To rescue her from her embarrassment, he immediately changed the subject. He urged her to come onto his show. “Talk about ratings. We'd blow everybody else off the air.”

He could only imagine the mischief reflected in her eyes when she came up with an idea for one of his shows. “I could list all the men in the world I'd like to seduce—that is, if I haven't gotten around to some of them already.”

“Name names,” he said. “I'm all ears.”

“Henry Kissinger.”

“But he's so ugly,” he said.

“Beautiful women down through the ages have not always sought out equally beautiful men,” she said. “Perhaps just the opposite. A woman can be attracted to a man's brain. Or his power. Look at all those silly German housewives throwing themselves in the path of Hitler.”

“I think beautiful women should bed ugly men, and only for their money,” he said.

Later in her life when Jackie married Aristotle Onassis, Merv told Hadley, “I think I planted the idea in her head.”

Jacqueline Kennedy
as First Lady

Back at the Carlyle, Jackie seemed to be enjoying their game. She continued to name names. “Prince Philip, of course. He's so handsome, so stately. John Glenn, most definitely. Andrè Malraux. Dr. Christiaan Barnard. Robert McNamara. General Maxwell Taylor. If they weren't gay, I'd add Cary Grant and Rudolph Nureyev to the list. Did you know that Jack often calls Cary Grant because he likes to hear the sound of his voice? I could go on and on. Alistair Cooke. Franklin Roosevelt Jr., Gianni Agnelli. And out of deference to your opinion, Eugene R. Black. If you want money, who better than the president of the World Bank?”

Months later, shocked and horrified at the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Merv sent his condolences to Jackie. A few weeks later he received a warm reply, thanking him.

At the beginning of her marriage to Aristotle Onassis, Merv received another call from Jackie. She was seriously tempted to go on nationwide television to counterattack headlines around the world calling her a golddigger. Such rumors had existed since she was first seen with Onassis. But these rumors exploded when a steward on the shipping tycoon's yacht wrote a tellall book.

In it, he claimed that he'd personally witnessed Jackie sign a 170clause marriage contract that stipulated, among other agreements, that man and wife would occupy separate bedrooms throughout the marriage. According to the steward, the contract also called for her getting an allowance of $585,000 a year. In case of a divorce, she was to be given $20 million in cash.

“Such lies!” Jackie said to Merv. “The day I married Ari, my annuity from the Kennedy Estate was cut off. I also lost my widow's pension from the government, which I'd been drawing since Jack died. There was no prenuptial agreement with Ari. Right now I have less than five thousand dollars in my bank account. To manage, I have to charge everything to Olympic Airlines.”

Merv was elated at the prospect of such an appearance on his show by Jackie, knowing it would be one of the most watched interviews in the history of television. But two weeks later she phoned him again. “You must forgive me,” she said. “I called you in a fit of madness. I can't go on your show and make a public spectacle of myself.”

“But you are a spectacle, Jackie.” he said. “Through no fault of your own, of course.”

“Such an appearance would be too personal,” she said. “Only make more unwelcome headlines.” She seemed near tears as she put down the phone.

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In the summer of 1964, Merv decided to go back onto the strawhat circuit, contracting to appear in a revival of the George Abbott and Philip Dunning play, *Broadway*, which had originally opened in 1926.

Over the years since then, the play had been presented in many different productions across America and Europe. The chanteuse Greta Keller had starred in the Viennese production of the play, with a young Marlene Dietrich in the chorus line. Backstage and in various boudoirs, she entertained Greta and the other showgirls by playing her saw. Later Marlene entertained Greta in a more intimate way.

Merv met the playwright, who'd journeyed from New York to New Hope in Pennsylvania to see the latest production of his play. Born in 1887, George Abbott was still going strong. Merv mistakenly assumed that Abbott was on his last legs. As the years went by Merv was amazed that the playwright “was the man who refused to die.” Merv heard that at the age of ninetynine, Abbott was revising and directing a production of *Damn Yankees*. In 1995, when Abbott died three weeks short of his 108th birthday, Merv was astonished to read that a week and a half before

his death, he was dictating revisions to the second act of *Pajama Game*. Merv told friends that he wanted to be like Abbott, plotting his new game show as he neared birthday number 110.

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Working night after night at the dining table of his New York apartment, Merv slowly developed a new TV quiz show concept. Initially calling it *What's The Question?*, he later changed the title to the more dramatic *Jeopardy!*

TV quiz shows had enjoyed tremendous popularity in the 1950s until headlinemaking scandals broke in the latter part of the decade. Contestants came forth to testify that they were often supplied with the answers by producers desperate to make the shows more entertaining. “We got around that problem by openly supplying the answers to our contestants, and then letting them figure out what the question was,” Merv said.

Contestants faced such dilemmas as:

ANSWER: JOHN BILLINGTON, WHO ARRIVED ON THIS BOAT, IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED AMERICA's FIRST MURDERER.
QUESTION: WHAT WAS THE *MAYFLOWER*?

OR

ANSWER: HE COMMANDED AT THE SECOND BULL RUN AND IS SAID TO HAVE DEVISED A SPORT THAT LATER USED A BULLPEN.
QUESTION: WHO WAS ABNER DOUBLEDAY?

To make the show livelier, Merv interjected such concepts as the “Daily Double,” which was inspired by his love of horse racing. This would lead to objections from the network. Executives felt the term was too suggestive of gambling. But Merv stood his ground and the feature was retained.

When he first presented the show to Mort Werner, head of NBC, he didn't like it, finding the “answers” to the questions too hard. His assistant, Grant Tinker, however, urged him to buy it. Tinker later became producer of such programs as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and later, president of NBC.

Although reluctant, Werner bought *Jeopardy!* for NBC early in 1964. Remembering a longago promise, Merv called Bob Murphy, his schoolmate in San Mateo, hiring him to interview potential contestants. In time, Bob would climb Merv's corporate ladder to producer status of *The Merv Griffin Show*.

Until *Jeopardy!* found its voice and its audience, its history was shaky. Basically, it was a quiz show based on trivia about such topics as literature, music, pop culture, history, and science, among other topics. The show first aired on NBC on March 30, 1964. Eventually it found an audience, running until January 3, 1975.

As the emcee of the show, Merv hired Art Fleming, an actor who'd made his Broadway debut at the age of four. Standing 6’ 4”, he was a former carnival barker and naval hero. When he signed on, Art thought it was a temporary gig that might pay his rent for a few months, hardly realizing that he'd be the host of 2,858 shows before his eventual termination.

Merv later claimed that *Jeopardy!* wasn't canceled because of bad ratings, but because eleven years after its debut, NBC wanted to “redecorate” its daytime lineup of programming. “That time period has never since duplicated the ratings strength of *Jeopardy!* ” Merv said. “Chalk it up to a bad roll of the dice.”

Three years after its cancellation, between October 2, 1978 and March 2, 1979, *Jeopardy!* was temporarily revived, with Art Fleming functioning as host. But the second time around, the show was not particularly successful, and once again it was canceled.

But like the beast that wouldn't die, *Jeopardy!* was brought back for an encore, going on TV again in September 10, 1984—and still running until this day. Various foreignlanguage versions of *Jeopardy!* were adapted for international audiences as well.

Lin Bolen, in charge of programming, conflicted with Merv on many an occasion. She activated her plan to fire Art Fleming, preferring to jettison old men and bring in "young studs" like Alex Trebek. Reportedly, Faye Dunaway based her character of the takenoprisoners executive in the movie, *Network*, on Bolen.

Trebek was well known to Merv, having filled in as a substitute host on Merv's other show, *Wheel of Fortune*, when its regular emcee, Chuck Woolery, became sick. Under Trebek, *Jeopardy!* became the secondmost watched game show in the history of syndicated television, the first spot being occupied by Merv's own *Wheel of Fortune*.

Art was bitterly disappointed when his contract wasn't renewed, claiming that his emcee gig on *Jeopardy!* "was the high point of my life." He ended up hosting a trivia show Sunday nights in St. Louis. With his glory days on *Jeopardy!* long behind him, he died in Florida in 1995.

Under the Canadianborn Trebek's hosting, *Jeopardy!* achieved its greatest success. He won two Emmy Awards for his role in the show, and the show itself has won eleven Emmys, a record for a quiz show. In January of 2001, *TV Guide* ranked *Jeopardy!* as Number 2 among the *50 Greatest Game Shows of All Time.*

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During the early months of 1965, despite the success of *Jeopardy!*, Merv was restless. He still yearned to be a bigtime talk show host, and a deal was slow in coming. He had, however, received a number of offers to sing on variety shows or to emcee other game shows.

The biggest offer involved his hosting of a TV series that would travel around the world, introducing international circus acts. He instructed his agent to turn it down, the job subsequently going to a fallen movie star, Don Ameche, instead.

Merv eagerly wanted to return *The Merv Griffin Show* to television. Each night as he watched Johnny Carson on latenight TV, he bit his nails. "I was always a nail biter," he told friends. "To me, nothing relieves anxiety as much as biting your nails. It also cuts down on manicure bills."

Early in 1965, Chester H. (Chet) Collier—at the time, VP of Group W, the Westinghouse Broadcasting company—made an appearance in Merv's life. Two years younger than Merv, Chet with his balding head, waist bulge, and double chin looked fifteen years older.

Merv had been impressed with how Chet had launched *The Mike Douglas Show* in Cleveland in 1961, later transferring its base to Philadelphia. Thanks to its syndication of original programs, that show had signaled the debut of a new era in television. No longer did a successful show have to be created by teams affiliated with CBS, ABC, or NBC.

Chet also had a formative hand in returning Steve Allen to television with his own show and jumpstarting the career of Regis Philbin. Still active in the mid1990s, Chet joined Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes in the launching the Fox News Channel.

Chet convinced Merv to sign with Westinghouse, an organization best known at the time for its manufacture of washing machines. "You could be the master of your own show," Chet promised Merv, "and you wouldn't be censored by NBC or CBS, as you were in the past." Merv interpreted that argument as a powerful lure.

Trusting Chet's vision, Merv signed with Westinghouse in February of 1965, calling Chet a "oneman think tank." There was only one significant drawback. At the time, the company's broadcast division was active in only five regional markets: Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Merv's native San Francisco. Chet promised Merv that he would soon be broadcasting coast to coast, including Canada.

As headquarters for his efforts, Merv was assigned the intimate Little Theater (later renamed the Helen Hayes Theater) on 44th Street in New York City, close to Sardi's. Originally the show was slated for a daytime slot, with Merv's faithful Bob Shanks functioning as producer and with Kirk Alexander directing.

Over strong objections from almost all of his associates, Merv kept his promise to hire Arthur Treacher as his sidekick. Chet referred to the selection of Arthur as "Merv Griffin's folly." The executive producer finally gave in, however, since he'd promised Merv creative control. Every objection involved the Englishman's age. "Wasn't Treacher born back when Queen Victoria sat on the throne?" Bob Shanks asked Merv.

Left photo : “Let ‘em eat cake!” Merv's trenchant sidekick, **Arthur Treacher**, faces another birthday bash.

Right photo : Merv with his role model **Steve Allen**, creator of the TV talk show.

Arthur signed with Merv and thanked him. “I knew you'd come through for me one day, you dear little man,” Arthur told Merv.

Long of face and tall in stature, Arthur stood before Merv's TV audience using crisp diction and what appeared to be a snobby disdain for almost everybody except Merv himself. “Look sharp!” he told the audience. “Here's the dear boy himself. Merrrrvyn!” At the ripe age of seventyone, Arthur would deliver that same introduction countless times.

What Merv's producers didn't realize was that Arthur had previously developed a fan base of young people who'd seen him play the constable in the hit film *Mary Poppins*, which had been released a year before Merv's new show went on the air. These teenagers referred to Arthur as “granddaddy” and followed him down 44th Street every night after the show, clamoring for autographs and demanding that he sign his name as “Constable Jones,” the character he played in the Poppins film, instead of Arthur Treacher.

Merv's fans never knew what Arthur was going to say, especially when a politician came on. He never liked politicians. Merv might be interviewing Hubert Humphrey and Arthur would make some wisecrack on the side. The audience would burst into laughter. Merv was constantly having to remind his guest, “Don't mind Arthur.”

After some preliminary dialogue with Merv, Arthur would retreat to the far end of the sofa, which became known as “Treacher's Corner.” He didn't try too hard to be entertaining, feeling perhaps that he'd done his job. After all, his philosophy of acting was simple: “Say the words. Get the money. Go home.”

The most embarrassing incident occurred when Dan Dailey came onto the show. Arthur had known this singer/dancer/actor back in their vaudeville days. During one broadcast, Dan was telling Merv that shortly after he signed with MGM, Louis B. Mayer had cast him as a Nazi in *The Mortal Storm* in 1940. “Looking at the rushes, Mayer realized I was no Nazi. From then on, it was musicals for me.”

Just as Dan was telling Merv about his onscreen appearance with a then relatively unknown Marilyn Monroe in *A Ticket to Tomahawk* (1950), Arthur woke up and noticed Dan. “Hello, Dan,” Arthur said. “Are you still wearing dresses?” Merv's offscreen staff immediately cut to a commercial.

Unknown to the general public, Dan, a bisexual, often dressed in drag. He often “borrowed” (or stole, depending on how his actions were interpreted at the time) the gowns of his costar, Betty Grable, then showed them off at crossdressing parties throughout Hollywood.

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In 1965, Roddy McDowall was appearing in a movie, *Inside Daisy Clover*, starring Natalie Wood and Robert Redford. There was an uncredited part in it for a radio announcer, and Roddy called and asked if Merv would take it, pending the approval of the director. When approval was granted, Merv signed on.

Appearing in archive footage were some of the great stars of Hollywood. After the completion of his work, Merv said, “At least I can claim to have appeared in a movie with John Barrymore, Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, and Tyrone Power. Alas, I had no love scenes with them.”

“Mickey Rooney was also in the film,” Roddy said jokingly.

“Forget it!” Merv said.

The trenchant and gritty film provided an account of Daisy's rise as a Hollywood star in the 1930s, but upon its release, and despite its allstar cast, it misfired. One reviewer condemned it for portraying “caricatures instead of people.”

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“Guess what?” came a familiar early morning voice over the phone. “I just married Judy Garland.”

A sleepy Merv recognized the voice at the other end. It was Mark Herron, with whom he'd enjoyed a brief affair. “I don't know whether to congratulate you or sympathize with you,” Merv said. “Judy—and I know her well—is not your typical doting American housewife.”

Somewhat shocked at the news, Merv was eager for details. The decision to get married had been made in May of 1964 when Mark and Judy spent a week vacationing together in Hawaii. The press had described Mark as “Garland's new escort.”

Judy had married Mark in Las Vegas' Little Church of the West on November 14, 1965, at 1:30am. After the wedding, they'd attended Don Rickles' late, late night club act. As was his oftrepeated style, the comedian gave the newlyweds a terrific ribbing before the couple flew to San Francisco for their honeymoon. “Liza approves,” Mark assured Merv. “She calls us the Scott and Zelda of the 1960s.”

“If you've read anything about F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda, that's not exactly a compliment,” Merv said.

“Judy's going to promote my career,” Mark said. “We're going to star together in plays—dramas, not musicals. She wants us to do Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*.”

“I'm not sure that's a good idea,” Merv cautioned. “People might get the wrong idea. After all, that play is about an aging actress who takes up with a young gigolo.”

There was a long silence on the other end of the phone. “You've got a point there.”

As part of their honeymoon, Mark and Judy completed eight months together of hopping around the world. Their tour included stopovers in Hong Kong and an appearance in London, where Peter Allen became a hit with the critics as Judy's opening act.

Mark and his new bride finally landed back in the United States in 1965. Mark called Merv and wanted to get together for drinks and dinner. Merv gladly accepted and said he was bringing Hadley. “That's fine,” Mark said. “I'll bring my boyfriend as well.”

“Boyfriend?” Merv asked. “You mean, Judy won't be there?”

“She's flown to Los Angeles,” Mark said.

“Well, bring him on,” Merv said. “I'm eager to see who's captured your heart.”

At a secluded restaurant and bar in Greenwich Village, Hadley and Merv were introduced to Peter Allen. Both of them were mesmerized by this charismatic young Australian with ginger hair, an infectious exuberance, and a lopsided but very engaging smile.

Gradually, Merv pieced together the story of these complex relationships. While Judy was in a hospital in Hong Kong, Mark had gone to the Starlight Room of the Hong Kong Hilton to catch an act by “The Allen Brothers” from Australia. After one of the best shows he'd seen in many a year, Mark went backstage and introduced himself to Peter.

“We made love that night,” Mark said in front of Peter. “And we've been making love every night we can since then. London. And now New York.”

“Does Judy know about the affair?” Merv asked.

“I don't think so,” Peter said. “But there's one complication. Judy has introduced me to Liza, who's fallen in love with me.”

“Judy's had one gay husband already,” Merv said. “During their marriage, Vincente Minnelli spent more time getting fucked by Gene Kelly than he did fucking Judy. And now Mark. She could write a book on gay husbands.”

Other than wanting to show off his new boyfriend, Mark had a motive for introducing Peter to Merv. He wanted Peter to appear as a guest on Merv's show.

Peter filled Merv in on his background. Born in a small town in Australia, he'd begun his career in showbiz by entertaining rowdy crowds at the local pub. Later he'd teamed with Chris Bell, a guitarist and singer, the duo billing themselves as “The Allen Brothers.” In the spring of 1964, they'd toured Asia together and ended up in Hong Kong.

When Judy was released from the Chinese hospital, Mark took her to see Peter's act. She was so impressed that she booked him as her opening act in London.

Mark revealed to Merv that it was Judy who had introduced Peter to her daughter, Liza Minnelli. “Judy is encouraging Liza to go after Peter, even though she knows Peter is gay,” Mark said.

“I do make that rather obvious,” Peter said.

“Liberace should be your role model,” Merv advised Peter. “If he could be flamboyant and campy in the 50s, you can sure get away with that in the 70s.”

Ironically, Peter would eventually become a household word in America, but not as Merv's guest, but because of his appearances on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*.

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Like Johnny Carson before him, Mike Douglas became Merv's TV rival, based on ratings, advertising revenues, and on the “celebrity quotient” of their guests. Merv was jealous when Mike became the first syndicated TV talk show host to win an Emmy.

Right from the beginning, and based partly on the similarity of their names, the public confused Merv and Mike. Their backgrounds were similar. Merv had been a big band singer with Freddy Martin, and Mike had been a big band singer with Kay Kyser. Many fans came up to Merv and said, “Please, Mr. Douglas, may I have your autograph?” Merv hated that.

“I was often confused with Merv Griffin,” Mike said. “We were both the same height, the same weight, and we were both Irish tenors.” Unlike Merv, however, Mike had had a recent hit recording with his 1966 version of “The Men in My Little Girl's Life.”

Merv found the song corny and was amused to hear that Elvis Presley had shot out the TV screen in his hotel suite at the Las Vegas Hilton while watching *The Mike Douglas Show*. Later, Merv learned that Elvis did not hate Mike, but couldn't stand his cohost, Robert Goulet.

That other Irish tenor from the big band era:
Mike Douglas

As the battle for TV ratings between Merv and Mike intensified, the two men came to loathe each other. Sometimes they competed for the same guests, and Mike often won out, snaring everybody from Truman Capote to Richard Nixon. After Rosemary Clooney appeared on Mike's show, Merv called her. “How could you do that to me, you Benedict Arnold?”

Zsa Zsa Gabor appeared on both shows. After she made a vulgar insult to Morey Amsterdam on *The Mike Douglas Show*, Mike's shows were no longer taped live. Mike's highest ratings were achieved when John Lennon and Yoko Ono cohosted the show with him. Reaching six million viewers every day, he saw his salary rise to $500,000 a year.

Much to Merv's regret, Mike extracted unusual performances on air from his guests, getting Barry Goldwater to play the trombone or golf prodigy Tiger Woods to putt before cameras. Both Barbra Streisand and Joan Crawford each agreed to cohost Mike's show for a whole week. Mike even persuaded Judy Garland to sing “Over the Rainbow” when she was reluctant to perform that song any more.

On looking back at TV programming in the mid60s, Merv said, “It was a great time for a guy like me to have a talk show. The whole nation was having a debate over which direction to take. Hippies everywhere battling the Establishment. An unpopular war in Vietnam. Even religion itself had come under assault.”

Privately, Merv told Hadley, “If you ever wondered how that studly jock on your football team was hung, you've got a chance now. Nudity's everywhere. Somewhere, some place he's taking off his clothes and letting his thing cool in the breeze.”

When some rightwingers attacked Merv for having Communistic leanings, he proclaimed, “I've arrived! I loved it. It meant I was reaching them, that the show wasn't just a piece of fluff. Of course, I had controversial guests, but some of them—most of them—in fact, were booked just for the fun of it, including my very first guest, Miss Carol Channing.”

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Saucereyed and scratchy in voice, Carol Channing, in Merv's view, was “a space cadet but always good for a laugh.” He'd first seen her playing Lorelei Lee in the original stage version of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in 1949, eventually losing the movie role to Marilyn Monroe as she'd also lose the title role in *Hello, Dolly!* to Barbra Streisand.

As Merv's first guest, Carol came across as a largerthanlife personality, just as he expected her to. Privately, he knew that the most famous blonde on Broadway was part African-American on her father's side. She wasn't blonde at all but wore a wig, as she was allergic to bleach.

Carol claimed that she'd first met Merv when he sang at Lowell High School in San Francisco, although somehow the years don't seem to match up here. If Merv sang at her high school, he would have been thirteen years old. Carol was born in 1921, Merv in 1925. She also claimed that she became “fast friends” with Merv in New York, which was a bit of an exaggeration.

Merv did come to her rescue when she was starring in *Hello, Dolly!* at the St. James Theater on 44th Street and he was a few buildings away at the Little Theater broadcasting his show.

When there was a power breakdown at Con Edison, and the St. James went black, Merv ordered his crew to snake a series of extension cables over to Carol's stage. The Little Theater was on a different electrical system than the St. James.

“The airconditioning went off, and it was in the middle of summer—terribly hot,” Carol said. “Merv came over with a huge box of Kleenex and went up and down the aisles giving everyone a tissue so they could mop up the sweat. Merv stayed through the whole performance and told the crew exactly where to focus the lights because he'd seen the show so many times. Oh, I loved him. Everybody did!”

Merv didn't just stick to Broadway legends like Carol, or even to movie stars. He brought back his “regulars” like Woody Allen, but he also searched for new talents, including Dick Cavett, his future latenight rival. “If I knew that Cavett and I would one day compete for the same audience, I wouldn't have brought him on at all,” Merv said. “But how can you predict who will be tomorrow's competition?”

When Merv, or others, tried to get Cavett to tell them, “What is Johnny Carson really like?” he deflected the queries with humor. “Just because everybody says he is a drugaddicted, sadistic, commie sex pervert, he never showed me that side of himself. He *is* cold. One day he was napping in the nude in his dressing room, and I shoved a thermometer up his ass and the mercury froze.”

Word spread quickly across Broadway that Merv was showcasing new talent. “Dozens of performers tried every gimmick in the book to get on my show,” Merv said. “One stripper wanted to come on with a python. Only a few got booked, and years later I was proud to have discovered so many of them. Great talents.”

George Carlin and Richard Pryor were littleknown standup comics performing in dives in Greenwich Village when Merv discovered them in 1965. Merv signed both of them to multishow contracts.

Carlin made successful appearances on Merv's show, beginning in 1965. The astringent standup comedian was the natural heir to Lenny Bruce. Network “suits” were worried, claiming he “assaulted the barricades of censorship,” but Merv loved his indignant counterculture humor, and always laughed. In all, Carlin made 29 appearances on Merv's shows.

“Want to hear an oxymoron?” Carlin asked the audience. “Military intelligence.”

Before every performance, Carlin faithfully promised Merv he would not use his infamous schtick about “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.”

“By the way, George, what are those words again?” Merv often asked.

Carlin dutifully replied, “Shit, Piss, Fuck, Cunt, Cocksucker, Motherfucker, and Tits.”

Richard Pryor, whom Merv had known for years, had become a friend by the time he appeared on the show. Merv knew a lot about this controversial African/American actor/comedian, the son of a prostitute who was reared in his grandmother's brothel. Richard had survived child molestation—once at the age of six by a teenage neighbor and later by his local priest.

“Our own little Richie Pryor,” Merv would tell his audience as he brought on the gangly, wideeyed kid from Peoria. Merv sometimes referred to him as “a comic genius.”

Sadly, Merv realized early in their relationship that Richard was struggling with drug addiction. When Merv went to see him portray a drugaddicted piano player in *Lady Sings the Blues (1972)*, Merv defined it as type casting.

As the years went by, Merv witnessed Richard sinking deeper into drug addiction. In the early 80s, Merv heard that Richard had attempted to commit suicide after freebasing cocaine. Richard's managers tried to make it seem like an accident, but according to several reports, Richard had very clearly tried to kill himself by setting himself on fire.

Merv always remembered Richard's enigmatic statement: “It's been a struggle for me because I had a chance to be white—and I refused.” He once told Merv, “I'm a survivor with no pity, and that got me through eight marriages —twice to the same woman.” He told Merv's audience that he had served in the U.S. Army but spent “most of that gig in the brig.” Along with some other blacks, he became annoyed when a white soldier seemed “a bit too amused” at the racially charged sections of *Imitation of Life*, the Lana Turner movie. Richard and three other black soldiers beat up the white soldier and stabbed him. Fortunately, the beating and stabbing weren't fatal.

Three of Merv's favorites: **Carol Channing (center)**, big-mouthed, saucer-eyed, and spacy.

Merv referred to **George Carlin** (left) and **Richard Pryor** (right) as
the most vulgar acts in show business.

Merv liked Richard before he developed his raw and racially provocative style. When he took his nephew to see Pryor perform in a theater in Baltimore, Merv later said, “I was shocked. The filthiest routine I've ever heard in my life.”

Richard Zoglin, in an appraisal of Merv's career as a TV talkshow host, accurately summed it up. “Your ultimate goal was to land on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*. But for many upandcomers who weren't yet on Carson's radar, the first TV stop was the friendlier, more accessible, less highpressure showcase that Merv provided. His show didn't have the cachet or the clout of Carson's. But Merv and his producers were smart enough to realize that to compete they had to take more chances with guys like George Carlin or Richard Pryor.”

The tunnel-mouthed comedienne, Jo Anne Worley, stood tall with piledon jetblack hair and had Merv's audiences laughing long before she wowed them on Rowan & Martin's *Laugh-In* (1968). Merv found the brassy, indefatigable performer a delight both before and off the camera. He knew that she'd been Carol Channing's standin for *Hello, Dolly!* But as Jo Anne told Merv, “Channing is known for never missing a performance.”

“I have this big mouth,” she told Merv, “and I've always had it. When I sang in the church choir, I only mouthed the words so I wouldn't drown everybody else out.”

Merv had discovered Jo Anne when she created her own nightclub act in Greenwich Village. He was so impressed with her talents that she became a regular on his show, eventually making two hundred appearances.

She later recalled, “I became part of Merv's family, you know, his onair family of people.”

Reni Santoni, an American actor of French and Spanish heritage, started his career as a comedy writer, and frequently entertained and amused guests on Merv's show. In 1967, he was on the dawn of his breakthrough role in Carl Reiner's *Enter Laughing*. Merv predicted “big things,” for Reni, but he never became a top star, even though he played memorable roles in such films as Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* in 1971 or Howard Stern's *Private Parts* in 1987.

Straight from the “Borscht Belt” in the Catskills, where he'd perfected his brand of Jewish humor, Sandy Baron had made his Broadway debut in *Tchin-Tchin* in 1962. Sandy found inspiration for comedy in such unlikely subjects as hate, prejudice, and bigotry.

Years later, he achieved his greatest fame playing the role of Jack Klompus on the NBC sitcom, *Seinfeld*. His character became the comical nemesis of Jerry Seinfeld's retired father.

Sandy met with notoriety when he released his controversial album, *God Save the Queens*, in 1972. It was an earnest but nowdated attempt to break down the stereotypes and mystique about homosexuality. Sandy promoted his album on Merv's show, causing a lot of “snickers in the audience,” he later recalled. “My promoters urged me not to go on the Griffin show and be so open about my album. They feared the audience would think I was a fag. As predicted, there was much talk that I was queer. If I refuted it, they'd say, ‘Me thinks the lady doth protest too much.’ What did I have to do to prove I was straight? Bring the audience into my bedroom and let them see me penetrating my woman?” Years before his death, Sandy said, “My false reputation as a gay came about from

Griffin's show. There's still all this talk that I'm gay, which I'm not. The irony is that it was Griffin—not me—who is gay."

Sandy continued to make appearances on Merv's show in the 1970s. He was so influenced by comedian Lenny Bruce that many fans thought he was Bruce. He did impersonate him in the show *Lenny* in Hollywood in 1972.

Like Sandy, Stanley Myron Handelman was another Brooklynborn comedian who went over with Merv's daytime TV audiences. He performed comedy egghead schticks, some of it inspired by his relationship with his mother.

Tall and gangly looking, he wore large, darkrimmed glasses, like Merv's nemesis, Robert Q. Lewis, and stood with a nerdy demeanor under a porkpie cap. Years later, he sent Merv a copy of one of his latest films, *Linda Lovelace for President*. Lovelace, of course, was the star of the highest grossing porn film of all time, *Deep Throat*.

Merv claimed that John Denver, the son of an Air Force officer, was an instant hit the first time he appeared on Merv's show. He found John appealing with his longish blond hair cut in a Dutch boy style. He wore bellbottom jeans and cowboy boots.

Merv liked John so much he invited him out for drinks. "I thought he had an offbeat sex appeal," Merv later confided to Hadley Morrell, "and I was hoping to get lucky. Boy, could that boy drink. I made a pass at him but I think he was too drunk to even know it."

John later had two drunk driving arrests, and he was to die in 1997 when a private plane he was piloting crashed into Monterey Bay in California. "Sigh," Merv told his friends. "Sean Connery got away from Noel Coward. John Denver got away from me."

Most of Merv's audience could relate to him, but he liked to shock his fans by bringing on an occasional "alien from Outer Space."

Taking his name from the crippled lad in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim stunned audiences when Merv introduced him. The ukuleleplaying singer of 1920s ditties confused yet amused audiences, many of whom asked, "Is this guy for real?" His falsetto voice became an instant hit, and he was on his way to becoming an icon of the 60s. As one critic put it, "Tiny Tim became a cultural specimen that elucidated the *Zeitgeist* of that era."

When it was made known that Tiny Tim had fallen in love, Merv wanted him to marry "Miss Vicki," his 17yearold girlfriend (Victoria Budinger), on the air, as part of the programmed content of *The Merv Griffin Show*. Merv was furious when the performer selected Johnny Carson's show instead as the wedding's TV venue. That ceremony drew the biggest audience ever recorded for a nighttime talk show, garnering 85% of all TV viewers.

Muhammad Ali (a.k.a. Cassius Clay) appeared on Merv's show. "He was not the brightest bulb, but he was a colorful figure," Merv said. Suddenly realizing the implication of that remark, he said, "I don't mean the color of his skin."

Merv said that he learned that the world heavyweight boxing champion, through a distant link with his maternal grandmother, had Anglo-Saxon origins. He was linked by blood to Presidents William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, and Benjamin Harrison, as well as to Confederate general Robert E. Lee.

Before Cassius arrived at the studio, an assistant had shown Merv a picture of the boxer in trunks with his penis hanging out the leg of his shorts, which he'd pulled up to expose himself. The picture had been printed in underground gay magazines and was sometimes sold in porno stores. At first, Merv wanted to quiz the boxer about his reaction to this exposure, but staff members talked him out of it.

Instead Merv asked him what it was like meeting The Beatles. The boxer had posed with The Fab Four in the ring. "They're the greatest," he said, "but I'm still the prettiest." Later he modified that praise. "I don't admire nobody but Elvis Presley," he said. "He was the sweetest, most humble, and nicest man you'd ever meet."

Merv had intended to see Barbra Streisand on Broadway in *Funny Girl* but when he got to the theater, he was disappointed when the stage manager announced that her understudy, Lainie Kazan, was going on in her place. Barbra had a throat problem that night.

Lainie's dynamic performance, however, won Merv over, and he invited the Brooklynborn actress and singer to appear on his show. She was so successful that she was asked back. He agreed with her own personal summation of her voice.

"I get a sensual feeling from my own singing voice," she said. "When I am right, whether I'm moaning it or winging it, I just fly. I soar. I get all caught up in myself. And, baby, when that happens, you just know the audience has to be with me, having a ball."

Merv was also having a ball doing the show, but "I was getting itchy," he said. I wanted to expand the show. The Little Theater was making me claustrophobic. I wanted to get out and see the world and bring on a whole new set of

guests. ‘Let's go to Europe,’ I told Bob Shanks. ‘Hang out with Princess Grace. Attend the Cannes Film Festival. Fly to London. Maybe have a cuppa with Queen Elizabeth.’”

Privately, he told Hadley in jest: “Maybe I can get Prince Philip to fuck me. I hear the Queen married him only when she found out he's got a big one. She had to bring some different genes into the House of Windsor. After all, her kin, including the Duke of Windsor, were known for having history's smallest dicks.”

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Before Merv arrived in Monaco to interview Grace Kelly, he'd heard all the stories about her wild, promiscuous days in New York and Hollywood and about her affairs with Bing Crosby, William Holden, Ray Milland, Marlon Brando, and her unrequited love for Clark Gable. Merv had also heard that she'd had affairs with Cary Grant, although he was mostly gay, James Stewart, Frank Sinatra, David Niven, Oleg Cassini, and Prince Aly Khan. Gary Cooper had told Merv that “She looked like a cold dish until you got her pants down. Then she'd explode.”

Except for his control over some of the most expensive real estate in Europe, Merv didn't consider His Most Serene Highness, Rainier, the Sovereign Prince of Monaco, as “much of a catch.” Grace had put on weight since her movie days, and Merv had heard gossip that she'd been drinking heavily. Yet she remained elegant, nurturing a prim whitegloveswearing image which she presented to the public and his cameras. Back in Hollywood, director Henry Hathaway's wife had already proclaimed, loudly and in public, “Grace Kelly wore those white gloves, but she was no saint. In the old days they'd call her a whore.”

Even offcamera, Grace was all charm and style to Merv, inviting him back to her kingdom on some future occasion. Nonetheless, he still found her just a bit of an “Ice Queen,” and their friendship would always be superficial.

During the introductions at the palace, Merv had become aware of a strikingly handsome young man, perhaps French, who looked almost like the twin brother of Alain Delon. No matter where she moved, the young man followed Grace with his eyes. Merv had been introduced to him but couldn't remember his name. He later told Hadley, “I wanted to take him home as a party favor.”

Grace had a commitment that night for dinner, but invited Merv to join her for afterdinner drinks at a small private party in a salon within the Monte Carlo Casino. He showed up at ten o'clock and found a very different Grace there. No longer the prim and proper princess, she was tipsy, light hearted, and full of fun. The young man Merv had seen earlier in the day sat beside her.

Ava Gardner had already told Merv, “Give her a couple of dry martinis, and Her Serene Highness becomes just another girl who likes to dish the dirt.” Rock Hudson had told him, “Grace likes to get ripped to the tits and then begs you to fuck her, even though you want to fuck her boyfriend instead.”

The Princess looked puffy, and had lost that stunning beauty that she'd displayed in such films as *To Catch A Thief*.

Before the evening ended, Grace seemed to be aware that Merv was evaluating her through the cruel eyes of a Hollywood camera. “I've been svelte all my life,” she said. “What's the point of trying to maintain an image of long ago?” She looked Merv up and down. “You look like you could lose a few pounds yourself. Let's face it: I'm older now, but so are you.”

“Your Majesty,” Merv said, “you will always live in the public's mind as the most beautiful blonde who ever graced the screen. The one with the most class.”

In 1956, Merv defined it as “The Wedding of the Century.”
Ranier, the Sovereign Prince of Monaco and his bride, movie star **Grace Kelly**

Grace graciously kissed Merv on each cheek before heading out the door. She walked with an uncertain step. The mysterious Alain Delon lookalike followed her.

Merv turned to a trusted staff member. “If I'm judging the scene right, and I'm never wrong about these things, the Princess of Monaco is going to get the fucking of her life tonight. Gary Cooper may have been the best hung man in Hollywood, but he had no ass to push it with. That boy going to that door has not only the goods up front, but, as those tight pants reveal, the world's greatest ass as well. Lucky Grace. When will my Prince Charming ever come? Forget that pudgy Rainier. I bet he has a twoinch dick. Let's get the fuck out of here and head for Cannes. Monaco is too dull for me.”

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After Monte Carlo and his interview with Grace Kelly, Merv journeyed west to Cannes for the famous film festival. His bookers had already arranged for an interview with Sean Connery, who was scheduled to appear the following day.

In the meantime, Merv had met a young man of nineteen from the old papal city of Avignon. Hadley had not been invited along for the trip and Merv was lonely.

The young man, whose name is not known, seemed only too willing to help Merv through his nights… and some French francs, of course.

When Merv learned that the slender, strikingly handsome beach boy wanted the equivalent of only twenty U.S. dollars a day, Merv struck up a deal with him, even though language was a barrier.

The boy spoke only a few words of English. “We used the universal language known to aging men and young hustlers the world over,” Merv boasted to Hadley upon his return from France.

On the beach in Cannes, Merv was on a *chaise longue* figuring out a crossword puzzle, waiting for the return of his young Frenchman, who had gone for a walk on the sands. He rushed up to Merv, brimming with excitement. At the time Beatlemania was sweeping England, the United States, and Europe. “Lennon, John Lennon,” the young boy said. “Over there. Look! Beatles.”

A beach encounter with
John Lennon

At first Merv thought the boy was mistaken. He pointed in the direction of a young man who was in swimming trunks and lying on a padded quilt, reading a book all by himself on the beach. Merv thought he was seeing things. Surely Lennon would be surrounded by bodyguards, or else he'd be mobbed by adoring fans.

Merv walked over to discover that it was indeed John Lennon. Introducing himself, Merv learned that Lennon was to some degree vaguely familiar with his name already. To Merv's surprise, Lennon agreed to an interview. It would mark his first interview on an American talk show. With no preparation, Merv called his camera crew and spontaneously interviewed Lennon on the beach.

His studio in New York viewed this as a major coup, and Merv even rewarded his French boy with a hundred dollar bill before he flew back home from the Nice airport.

“When the film was developed,” Merv recalled to his friends, “we realized that at one point, Lennon had raised his legs, exposing his uncut cock and balls. Apparently, his trunks didn't have a lining to hold himself in. Lennon didn't seem to notice or care. Of course, the editors had to cut that bit from the film. I guess it didn't matter if Lennon showed the full monty or not. Both he and Yoko Ono would reveal the full monty—or whatever you call that thing between her legs—to the whole world when they posed for that notorious album cover.”

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Merv's encounter with Sean Connery included not only an interview for *The Merv Griffin Show*, but also an insight into his selfimage as a singer. Unknown to many of his fans, the Scottish actor in his pre-James Bond days had already sung in films. But few of his 007 fans had ever seen him. He had starred in Walt Disney's unsuccessful movie *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* in 1959. In the film, he sang “Pretty Irish Girl” to his onscreen love interest, and his version of that song was eventually released as a single.

Although Sean remained reticent throughout their time together, Merv at least got Sean to confirm one rumor. During his adolescence in Scotland, he had worked as a coffin polisher.

Merv wanted a juicier interview, but Sean closed the doors to his private life. In England, Sean had filmed *Another Time, Another Place* (1958) with the sultry Lana Turner. They'd engaged in a torrid affair. When word of that tryst reached Lana's gangster boyfriend, Johnny Stompanato, he showed up on the set, threatening to shoot both Lana and Sean. Sean managed to wrestle the gun from him and eject him from the set. Then he went about his business, making love to Lana on the screen, and for his pleasure, making love to Lana off the screen as well.

“He didn't even whip it out for me,” Merv complained in a transatlantic phone call to Hadley. “But at least now I know why Noel Coward is so ‘Mad About the Boy.’”

The following Christmas, Noel sent Merv a drawing of Sean in a Gstring; a female student had drawn it in Edinburgh when Sean was posing nude for one of her art classes. As a joke, Noel also included a photograph of himself taken in a Gstring on a beach in Jamaica.

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Michael Chaplin agreed to appear on Merv's show. The third son of Charlie Chaplin, he was born in Beverly Hills in 1946, eventually moving to Switzerland with “The Little Tramp” and his mother, Oona O'Neill, the estranged daughter of playwright Eugene O'Neill. As a tenyearold, Michael had been cast in his father's final film, *A King in New York* (1957).

Michael had written a book, *I Couldn't Smoke the Grass on My Father's Lawn*. Even though he grew up in luxury with his parents, surrounded by swimming pools and servants, Michael had rejected his father and was highly critical of him.

Fleeing from home at the age of fifteen, Michael descended into a twilight world of poverty, radical politics, and LSD. In London, reporters tracked him down to a seedy dive in Hampstead, where he was living on a National Assistance grant of ten pounds a week.

When he interviewed Michael, Merv suggested that nineteen was a bit young to be penning memoirs.

“Not when you've led the life I had,” Michael said. “I've packed sixty years of living into my first twenty years.”

Merv wanted to know what it was like to be born “to the most famous movie star of all time.”

“To be the son of a great man can be a disadvantage,” Michael said. “It is like living next to a huge monument. One spends one's life circling around it, either to remain in the shade, or to avoid its shadow.”

***

In London, Merv wanted to bring on some “heavyweights” as he called them. “I was attacked throughout my career for interviewing drag queens, drug addicts, child molesters, or commie sex perverts, but we could have class too.”

One of those heavyweights was Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher, historian, and logician. A worldfamous advocate for social reform, he'd won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950.

Merv was mildly surprised when he met Lord Russell at his bonebare flat in Chelsea. “I didn't expect him to be so old. He was ninetythree at the time, but he was sharp of mind and still articulate.”

Russell's views on sexuality shocked Merv's audiences. He attacked Victorian notions of morality, advocating sex out of wedlock, even trial marriages, and he was one of the first to endorse sex education and widespread access to condoms. He also advocated a change in the law regarding homosexual practices in Britain, and lived to see homosexuality legalized there in 1967.

Privately, after the taping, Russell told Merv that his efforts to have homosexuality legalized “will make the

world a finer place for men such as yourself to live a long and happy life."

Merv appeared shocked. "Oh, please, Mr. Russell," he said, "you've been misinformed. I'm a happily married man. I'm not a homosexual."

"Have it your way," Russell said. "But there is homosexuality in all men." He turned and walked away.

As a pacifist, Russell used Merv's show as a platform to attack the United States for its war in Vietnam.

After the airing of Merv's interview with Russell, massive protests poured into the studio, most of them objecting to Russell's views on the war. He'd called America's policies "neargenocidal."

Russell's denunciation of the Vietnam War and charges of genocide against the United States contributed to the most controversial show ever presented on the air by Merv. Even though he specifically stated that he was airing Russell's viewpoint—and not his own—Merv was nonetheless denounced across the country. Newspaper editorials referred to him as a Communist and a traitor, despite his wellestablished status as a conservative Republican.

"What did the fag have to say today?"
(Left to right) Pacifist and Nobel Prizewinner **Lord Bertrand Russell,**
Merv, and **President Richard Nixon.**

Months after the Russell interview, Merv himself came to oppose the Vietnam War, much to the annoyance of Richard Nixon. In one incident, Nixon reportedly asked an aide, "What did the fag have to say today?"

***

The British journalist, author, and satirist, an English gent named Malcolm Muggeridge, became a familiar face on American TV chat shows. Merv was eager to interview him, not knowing what the former communist sympathizer, former British spy, former alcoholic, former heavy smoker, and former womanizer was going to say. "That's what made him a fascinating media personality," Merv said.

In his role as editor of *Punch Magazine* from 1953 to 1957, Muggeridge had written an article, "Does England Really Need a Queen?" The reaction to the article was so violent that the BBC banned him for months, and his contract with Beaverbrook newspapers was canceled.

When he came onto Merv's show, he railed against the "Pills and Pot" of the late 1960s, attacking both birth control pills and marijuana. He even blasted The Beatles, calling them "four vacant youths… dummy figures with tousled heads and no talent." The audience booed him.

Years later, Merv was surprised to hear that during his final years, at the age of 79, Muggeridge had converted to Roman Catholicism. He became known as the "discoverer" of Mother Teresa and launched her legend in a TV documentary he filmed in Calcutta. It was called *Something Beautiful for God*, as was his bestselling book of the same name. "I liked him better when he was a downanddirty whoremongering drunk, before he started protesting against the commercial exploitation of sex and violence," Merv said. "What's wrong with the media exploiting sex? Of course, we don't need the violence."

Merv continued to have what he called "thinkers" on his show. After Muggeridge, he booked Buckminster Fuller to come on, though some members of his research staff dismissed this architect, author, designer, futurist, and inventor as a "hopeless utopian."

Fuller coined the term "Spaceship Earth" and was one of the world's first advocates of renewable sources of energy such as solar or windderived electricity. He contributed a wide range of ideas, designs, and inventions to the planet, among the most visible of which was the geodesic dome. This visionary wasn't always right. For example, he predicted that the world would successfully conquer poverty by the year 2000.

"A lot of what he said went over my head," Merv later admitted. "I was finally reduced to asking him a question like, 'Why do you wear three watches, Mr. Fuller?'"

“I'm a frequent flier,” he said. “I have one watch for the time zone I'm in, another from the zone I've just left, and a third watch for the time zone I'm flying into.”

Feeling out of his depth, Merv in desperation asked Fuller, “Can you conclude with some advice for all of us.”

“Yes,” Fuller said. “Stop using the words ‘up’ and ‘down.’ They are awkward in that they refer to a planar concept of direction that's inconsistent with human experience. Use the words ‘in’ or ‘out’ instead. They better describe an object's relation to the gravitational center, the earth.”

As he went off the air, Merv looked puzzled. “I don't know how yet, but somehow I'm going to work in Buckminster as an answer on *Jeopardy!* See if one of the guests can come up with the question.”

***

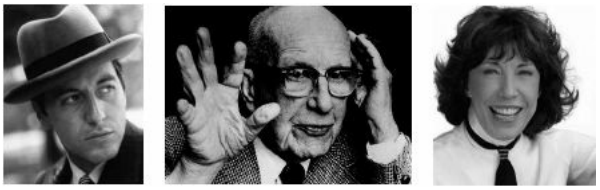
Unlike Arthur Treacher, Merv rarely insulted a guest. “Sometimes the chemistry wasn't right between a guest and me,” Merv said. “Peter O'Toole is a case in point. I also struck out with Al Pacino, whom I found very hostile right from the beginning.” Merv brought the young actor onto his show long before he achieved fame in *The Godfather*.

Knowing he came from an urban neighborhood of the Bronx before breaking into show business, Merv asked, “How did you make it from the Bronx to Broadway?”

“By subway,” Pacino said, garnering loud laughter from the audience.

Years later, Pacino told an interviewer that he'd abandoned talk shows forever “after being asked a completely stupid question by Merv Griffin.”

Although Pacino is hailed as one of the greatest and most influential actors of all time, Merv was not impressed. He once claimed to a reporter that, “I've never seen one of his films and I've never had him on my show,” even though millions of Merv's fans knew otherwise. He once told Roddy McDowall, “Pacino's asshole is too tightly clenched for my dick.”



Various degrees of provocation, *chez Merv*, on daytime TV
Left to right: **Al Pacino, Buckminster Fuller,** and **Lily Tomlin**

In contrast with Pacino, Merv bonded immediately with Lily Tomlin, the American actress and comedian who made her first television appearance on *The Merv Griffin Show* in 1965. She told him that her first “professional gig” was as a waitress at Howard Johnson's on Broadway near Times Square. “There was a mike in the restaurant, and I delivered zingers. I was a lousy waitress but I had the customers in stitches.”

Merv laughed at her one liners. “There will be sex after death—we just won't be able to feel it,” or “The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat!”

Merv was delighted when five years later she shot to fame as a cast member of the slapstick sketch show, *Rowan & Martin's Laughin*. He always claimed that her impersonation of the wacko telephone operator Ernestine was one of the best comedic acts ever broadcast on TV.

At the time of her appearance on Merv's show, Lily was living in a shanty near the rail tracks in Yonkers. “She might have been skipping a meal or two,” Merv said. “But I knew this gal was going places.” He paused. “There was the lesbian thing, of course, but somehow I didn't think that was going to hold her back.”

***

To Merv, Mark Herron's marriage to Judy Garland followed a predictable pattern. Merv could almost anticipate the urgent calls before receiving them.

After *Time* magazine wrote that “Judy Garland may have gone over the rainbow for the last time,” she took a lethal overdose of Seconal. Mark saved her life when he found her in a coma and rushed her to the hospital.

Mark called Merv on August 16, 1966, announcing that he planned to sue Judy for a divorce.

“This does not come as a surprise,” Merv said. “I've talked to Judy. She claims that the marriage was never consummated.”

“That's a question for the courts,” Mark said. “I let her give me two or three blowjobs. Does that constitute consummation?”

“You got me on that one, kid” Merv said. “I've had entire relationships that consisted of oneway blowjobs, with me blowing in the wind.”

On December 3, 1966, Judy counterattacked, amending her plea in court from divorce to annulment, and indeed citing that the marriage to Mark had never been consummated.

Judy's divorce from Mark was finalized on April 11, 1967. She spoke to Merv two weeks later. “I've changed my name,” she proclaimed.

“You did pretty well with Judy Garland,” Merv said. He advised her to hang on to her name.

“Believe it or not, my legal name has been Frances Ethel Gumm Rose Minnelli Luft Herron. Today I'm officially Judy Garland.”

“Well, *Miss* Judy Garland,” Merv said, “I've got a great idea. I want you to come onto my show. You'll be spectacular. I'll get back to you with details. After all, you're only the biggest star in the world.”

“Oh, yeah,” she said. “If that's true, why am I perpetually broke?”

“Good question,” he said before hanging up.

Merv announced his plans to bring Judy onto his show. He was also considering designating her as hostess while he went on vacation. But in April of 1966 he received a midnight call from Peter Lawford in Hollywood. “I think Judy's gone over the deep end.”

“You mean, *again*?”

“You haven't seen her in quite a while,” Peter said. “She's crazy most of the time. Totally out of control. Her most recent rage against Mark Herron was the most violent ever. During the course of that socalled marriage, she phoned me one night claiming that Mark had attacked her with a razor. I think she called me because she knew that at the time, I was having an affair with Mark. I rushed to her house, nearly getting ticketed along the way by a cop for speeding. When I got there, I ran upstairs to her bedroom. Judy's face was a mass of blood. It had been cut badly in several places. The maid was trying to stop the blood. I couldn't find any disinfectant, so I used the vodka by her bed side. I doused her with that while the maid called for an ambulance. She's become completely selfdestructive. She'll be dead in a year or so. I just know it.”

“Thanks for the grim news,” Merv said, “but I still believe in Judy's ability to put on a show. In spite of all her suicide attempts, she's eternal.”

“We'll see,” Peter said with a sigh before hanging up.

Superstar **Judy Garland**
“Over the Rainbow
a few times too many”

Although he'd sounded optimistic on the phone with Peter, Merv had second thoughts about bringing Judy onto his show. He called her on the afternoon of the following day. At first he didn't believe it was Judy on the phone. She spoke in a voice angry and bitter.

During the course of their talk, she denounced Mark, calling him a “faggot,” and he'd never heard her use that word before. She even called her loyal fans, especially the gay ones, “sonsofbitches!” He assumed that she was either drunk or drugged—perhaps both.

On an impulse he called her again the next day. This time, the voice that came over the phone was more conciliatory. It was the Judy he'd known and loved. Vulnerable, yes, but not bitter, although she maintained her gallows humor.

Putting aside his doubts, he decided to arrange for her to come onto his show. “Fasten your seat belt,” he told Bob Shanks. “It's gonna be a bumpy ride.”

***

A week before she was scheduled to go on the show, Merv finally succeeded in speaking to Judy “after calling all over the country.” She was a patient in a private hospital, where she was registered under a false name, trying to recover from an overdose of drugs which, mixed with her huge alcoholic intake, had almost killed her.

She was desperate, aggressively denouncing Sid Luft, her former husband before Mark Herron. “He's trying to sabotage my career. He took all my arrangements, even my wardrobe. I have nothing. Not a penny. In my state, no one in his right mind would want to give a booking to the broken down old hag from yesterday, Judy Garland. If MGM remakes *Meet Me in St. Louis*, I can take the Marjorie Main part.”

She meant it when she claimed that she was broke. He wired the train fare she'd need to come to New York, and reserved a suite for her at the Americana Hotel. He also promised to hire a designer for her wardrobe. “As for musical arrangements, Mort Lindsey is my conductor,” Merv said. “He's conducted music for you for years. Just leave it to old Mort.”

After putting down the phone, Merv booked her into the hotel at his expense and called Christian Dior, ordering an expensive sequined gown for Judy. He also phoned Mort to prepare arrangements for her appearance.

It was agreed in advance that she would sing, “I'd Like to Hate Myself in the Morning,” followed by “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” and “The Trolley Song.”

Judy's train arrived in New York the following evening. She took a taxi to the Americana. The night manager had not been informed about the details of her arrival, or that her expenses would be covered by Merv.

When she got there, the night manager ordered her out of the hotel lobby. Unknown to Merv, Judy had run up a big, and unpaid, bill at the Americana during a previous visit. Management had issued a standing order to eject her if she came back and didn't settle her way overdue account.

Humiliated and out on the street, Judy called a girlfriend in Brooklyn and spent the night with her. When Judy phoned the next morning and explained the situation, Merv swung into action. He called the New York Hilton and arranged a suite for her, and then he hired a messenger to rush some cash to Brooklyn so she could get a facial and book the town's best hairdresser. She'd warned him that she couldn't deposit a check into any bank because the Internal Revenue Service was systematically confiscating her funds to pay off a tax lien.

Basking in Merv's beaming approval, and with her beloved Mort Lindsey backing her up, Judy wowed Merv's audiences and her millions of fans. “You've still got the magic,” Merv told her after the show, hugging her and kissing her.

He startled her by asking her to take over his show while he flew to Zurich for a Christmas holiday in Switzerland. Merv suggested that she bring on as guests some of her most loyal friends.

She began to tick them off immediately. “Burt Lancaster, of course, he adores me. James Mason, my most loyal fan. We'll get Gene Kelly. Naturally, you must let me have Liza on.”

Merv was shocked the next day when his staff reported that each of the “friends” had turned Judy down. Liza had claimed she'd be out of town on an engagement. Merv belatedly learned that Liza hadn't spoken to her mother in months.

Burt Lancaster said, “I wouldn't trust that drunk on the air” before slamming down the phone. James Mason declined, claiming that their roles in *A Star Is Born* should have been reversed. “Judy should have played the broken down drunk who walks into the sea.” Ethel Merman, who'd once adored Judy and had reportedly had an early lesbian relationship with her, called Merv personally. “I can't go on the show. I'll be *conveniently* busy. Got that?”

Merv managed to conceal from Judy that all her “dear friends,” including her own daughter, had turned her down.

When the show was taped on December 23, 1968, Merv's staff had arranged for Judy's line-up to consist of Margaret Hamilton and Moms Mabley. Judy's loyal friend from her MGM days, Van Johnson, also agreed to come onto the show. She'd once had a crush on him in the 40s.

On the air, Margaret Hamilton confided that ever since the release of *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939, in which she'd played "The Wicked Witch of the West," children had scorned her, asking her why she was so mean to Dorothy. For nostalgia's sake, Judy asked her to deliver her most famous line from *Wizard*. Switching into the greenfaced and (at least to children) terrifying character from long ago, Margaret screeched, "I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!" She then burst into her witch's cackle.

Billed as "The Funniest Woman in the World," Moms Mabley was an African American who had a "bag lady" persona and a sharp wit. She had Judy in stitches. "There ain't nothing an old man can do for me except bring me a message from a young one." Moms had no apparent feminine characteristics. Her cackling, scratchy voice led to various rumors that she was actually a female impersonator.

Judy and Arthur Treacher wooed the audience with "The Only Girl in the World" and "Just in Time."

The show marked Judy's last American television appearances. Regrettably, the studio lost its archival tape, although it exists in a grainy pirated version that some young Judy fan recorded by actually filming what appeared on the TV screen.

The day after Judy's appearance, fans flooded the studio with letters. A typical comment: "Judy did not look good, thin as a rail. Sang awful and was out of it. Where the hell was Liza? Or Sid? Or any number of her supposed friends? Any one of them should have taken her and saved her. Watching her I realized it was all over except for the funeral."

Other fans responded more positively. "On Judy's worst day, she's better than most on their best day."

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As a footnote to Merv's career, he created the game show, *Reach for the Stars*, which aired on NBC on weekday mornings. Launched in January of 1967, it ran for a total of 65 episodes. Longtime broadcaster Bill Mazer hosted the show, which was similar to the more enduring *The Match Game*. A correct answer allowed a contestant to "reach for a star" on a game board, but a wrong answer meant the loss of a star. Later Merv called the show "one of my minor efforts."

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Robert Kennedy was assassinated in the early hours of June 5, 1968, at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Merv's close friend, Rosemary Clooney, had spent months campaigning across the country for the man she wanted to be president and the lover she could never have just to herself. She'd been forced to share him not only with this wife, Ethel, but with Marilyn Monroe, Lee Remick, and surprise surprise, Rudolph Nureyev, who had also enjoyed the charms of Jacqueline Kennedy.

The days had long passed when Robert and Rosemary conducted their sexual trysts in Merv's hideaway. Even though Robert had long ago moved on to other lovers, Rosemary was still madly in love with him.

"Bobby was the passion of Rosie's life," Merv confided to Hadley. "He never really loved her—he was still in love with Ethel—but he wanted her friendship and support. He abandoned her bed, but he never abandoned the friendship."

With two of her five children in tow, Rosemary arrived at the second floor Embassy Room of the Ambassador. The crowds were overflowing that night, and at one point Rosemary went to the floor below and entertained the burgeoning crowd with "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "This Land Is Your Land."

"I was in the VIP section," Rosemary later said, "and I never got to say a final goodbye to Bobby. After his victory speech, he was supposed to come into the ropedoff VIP area to greet us and thank us. Instead some aide led him toward the adjoining banquet room, where he was directed to take a shortcut through the kitchen." Tears welled in her eyes. "Even now, I can't stand to think of what happened next."

Other than Ethel Kennedy, perhaps no woman in America suffered the death of Robert Kennedy more than Rosemary. "She literally went into exile," Merv said. "Reports reached me that she had begun dangerously mixing excessive booze with drugs. The pain in her heart was just too great. She had to dull it. She literally became a basket case. I knew she'd always loved Bobby and had for years, but until I went to see Rosie at the hospital, where she'd

collapsed into a nervous breakdown, I never realized the full extent of that obsessive love. After Bobby's death, he was all she could think about. I'd never seen anything like it. She was behaving like the grieved widow, as if she were the mother of all of Bobby's children."

"Other than Ethel Kennedy, no
woman in America suffered the
death of RFK more than
Rosemary Clooney"

After his visit that day to the hospital, Rosemary cut Merv out of her life and wouldn't answer his urgent phone calls. Years went by before he finally reached her by showing up, unannounced, on her doorstep. "A nanny or somebody let me in," Merv said, "and I marched immediately to her bedroom and confronted her. 'For God's sake,' I told her, 'get the hell out of that God damn bed and get on with your life. Bobby's dead. He's not coming back.'"

At least this is the story that Merv told his friends in Los Angeles. In his second autobiography, he claimed he reached her on the telephone.

After that painful reunion and confrontation, Merv admitted that he nagged the singer day after day. Even so, it took weeks before she agreed to come onto his show.

Merv had predicted to Rosemary that she'd be a big hit if she appeared in public again—and she was. The fans in the studio responded with massive applause after her beautiful rendition of "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" Merv admitted that he teared up at the end of that song.

He brought her back on the show time and time again until Rosemary pleaded with him, "Your audience will get tired of hearing me sing 'Come Ona My House.'"

For the rest of her life, Merv stayed in touch with her, even though most of their friendship was conducted over the phone. He called frequently and offered his moral support during Rosemary's eventual bout with lung cancer. Then a call he'd dreaded came in on June 29, 2002. Rosemary had died in Beverly Hills.

As Merv later told the press, "Those lungs that gave us some of the most beautiful music of the 20th century will breathe no more. I was hoping until the very end that she'd pull through. I called her as often as I could. She was one of my closest friends. The spot she occupied in my heart will never be filled by anyone else."

***

In 1968, Merv made an illfated move, bringing a liberal producer, David Susskind, onto the same show on which he'd booked Richard Nixon, who at the time was making what would turn out to be a successful run for the presidency.

Nixon had never been at ease on camera and seemed to be especially upset at the presence of David Susskind. When the producer suggested that many anti-Catholic Democrats had voted for him, and not for John F. Kennedy, in the 1960 election, Nixon was furious but masked it until Merv broke for a commercial.

At the beginning of the commercial break, Nixon got up and shook Merv's hand, telling him that he was walking off the show. After the commercial ended, when Merv came back on the air, he explained that Nixon had been called away on urgent business.

The next day Merv got a call from Herb Klein, Nixon's communications director, who urged him not to run the interview. Defying him, Merv ran the tape of Nixon's appearance anyway.

***

For a vacation, Merv flew to Hawaii, where he retained memories of Monty Clift and Frank Sinatra during the filming of *From Here to Eternity*. While walking through the lobby of his hotel, wearing his tennis whites on the

way to his game, he encountered Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. “She couldn't take her eyes off my bare legs,” he later said. “I think she wanted to fuck me.”

More and more, Merv was having fun and paying for sex, as he'd long ago learned to do. Much of the actual day to day management of his various enterprises had been handed over to Murray Schwartz, who was now the president of Merv Griffin Productions. During the period when Merv had been represented by the William Morris Agency, Schwartz had been his agent.

***

Merv's beloved Tallulah Bankhead died in 1968, a nurse telling Merv that her final words were a desperate outreach for “bourbon” or “codeine.”

In the years leading up to her death, the indomitable “Tallu” had been one of the most popular, most memorable, and amusing guests on Merv's daytime talk show.

After filming an episode for the *Batman* TV series, Tallulah had appeared twice on Merv's shows. Her last appearance was on January 23, 1968, eight days before her sixtyfifth birthday. She was so ill that Merv had to order his chauffeur to physically carry Tallulah from her bedroom to the waiting limousine. From the limousine, she was then carried through the studio to her dressing room.

Before they went on the air, Merv ordered his cameraman to steer clear of her face. Suffering from emphysema, she was having a hard time breathing. On the air Merv handed her a tumbler of water, or so it appeared. Actually it was filled with gin.

For her farewell appearance, she spoke of her favorite politicians, including Harry S. Truman, her fondness for bridge games, her various illnesses, and even her loneliness. So many of her favorite people in the world had died.

As the credits were rolling, he popped one final question, wanting to know why she'd gone to so much trouble to appear on his show. “I wanted to prove to all my fans that I'm not dead, dah-ling.”

Back at her home, her condition over the following months continued to worsen until she had to be taken to a hospital. She ranted and raged with the hospital staff, and had an intravenous tube injected into her body. One night as she was tossing and turning, she ripped the tube from her arm and immediately lapsed into a coma, from which she never recovered. She died on the night of December 12, 1968. Merv wept openly upon hearing the news. Privately, he journeyed to Frank Campbell's Funeral Home in Manhattan to see her body before her casket was closed. The coffin was lined in baby blue. “Pink is for *little* girls,” Tallulah always said.

He couldn't help but notice that cigarette burns were etched into the silk wrapper that draped her body.

“Good night, sweet lady,” Merv whispered to her before bending over to kiss her cheek. Rising up, he turned to one of his staff. “There will never be a hellraisin’ gal like Tallulah Bankhead ever again. God threw away the formula.”

***

Merv met Mickey Deans when he was managing a club called Sybil Burton's Arthur Discothèque in New York. With the divorced wife of Richard Burton showing up frequently, it was the most popular disco in town. Merv had gone there one evening with Hadley and had been enchanted with the charismatic manager. “Mickey Deans knows how to treat a star like a star,” Merv said. “That boy's going places. He's made this damn disco the most popular and entertaining place to be at night in all of America.”

The following day, the first place Mickey went was into Merv's bed. Their sexual bonding was so successful that the two men became a “couple” the very next day, at least according to Hadley. Throughout the course of their brief relationship, Hadley acted as gobetween between Merv and Mickey, carrying messages back and forth and arranging their private times together.

Merv was adamant that no member of his staff or family and especially the press got wind of this new relationship.

Through Mickey, Merv arranged to rent Arthur's one evening as the venue for his staff's Christmas party. As a courtesy, Merv invited Judy Garland to attend.

Ignoring Merv and the business of hosting a party, Mickey spent all evening at a table in a remote corner of the disco talking to Judy.

Every now and then Merv looked over at Judy and Mickey, both of whom had been drinking heavily all evening. Shortly after midnight, a waiter tapped Merv on the shoulder, saying that Judy wanted him to come over to her table. Once there, she handed the phone to Merv. “[The columnist] Earl Wilson wants to talk to you,” she said.

“Hi, Earl,” Merv said, not knowing what to expect.

“Is Judy Garland drunk or is she marrying Mickey Deans for real?”

“Just a minute.” Merv looked into the eyes of both Judy and Mickey. “You two getting married—or not?”

Judy claimed that she'd accepted Mickey's proposal of marriage only an hour before.

“They're getting married,” Merv said to Earl. “Print it!” He put down the phone and walked away.

Judy called after him. “Aren't you going to congratulate us?”

Merv was furious. Before leaving the club that night, he had an angry confrontation with Mickey in his private office. “I can't believe you're doing this to me?” he said. “You're my boy friend, or at least you were until tonight.”

“All of us have to move on,” Mickey said. “Life is about change.”

“Don't give me that God damn cliché,” Merv shouted at him.

“C'mon, you've got to understand,” Mickey said. “What gay man on the planet would turn down a chance to marry Judy Garland?”

Rumor had it that Mickey had originally met Judy when, at the suggestion of a friend, he'd rushed to her hotel suite with a bagful of amphetamines.

Mickey was good looking, with piercing blue eyes, and a voice so deep it seemed to emanate from a cave. He was ruggedly masculine, and his lovers reported that he was “well endowed.”

“There was a kind of John Garfield toughness to Mickey Deans,” said author Gerold Frank. “Mickey was a sturdy, muscular man, who could wheel and deal as well as sing, play the piano, entertain, manage a discothèque—all of which must have attracted Judy. It was his Icanhandleit assurance that was reminiscent of Sid Luft.”

London gossips kept Merv up to date with what was going on within the marriage. Judy was said to have caught Mickey in bed with the singer Johnnie Ray, with whom she was living for a time. Johnnie, like Judy, was also falling in popularity.

Singer **Johnny Ray** *(left)* slept with **Judy Garland's** final husband, **Mickey Deans** *(right)* on the night before her wedding to yet another gay husband.

The marriage managed to survive that embarrassment. By now Judy must have been familiar with catching one or another of her husbands in bed with other men.

On June 22, 1969, Merv was informed that Mickey was on the phone calling from London about Judy. Merv was still furious at the way Mickey had dumped him for Judy, and at first, he decided not to take the call. But his secretary returned, telling Merv how urgent the call was. He picked up the receiver to hear Mickey's distressed voice. “Judy's dead,” he announced bluntly.

Merv later told Hadley, “I'm ashamed of myself. My response was too bitchy.”

Over the transatlantic line, Merv said, “I'm not surprised. I guess you'll start trying to get a book offer today.” Then he hung up the phone.

At Judy's funeral in New York, Merv noted that many of the people who had refused to come onto *The Merv Griffin Show* with Judy showed up at the funeral, along with 22,000 hysterical fans outside.

“James Mason gave the eulogy,” Merv said. “But he wouldn't come onto my show when I invited him when Judy was still alive and needed his support.”

Merv sent a stunning array of flowers to the funeral. He wrote on the card, “*Bonne Nuit*, Judy. With eternal love, Merv.”

When he walked out of the funeral home, he heard Judy's voice on the portable radio of a fan.

“Forget your troubles and just get happy. Get ready for the judgment day.”

***

When Roddy McDowall phoned and asked Merv if he'd appear as himself in a film called *Hello Down There* (1969), he accepted because of his longstanding relationship with the actor. It was only when filming began that Merv learned from one of the codirectors, Jack Arnold, that the role had originally been intended for Jackie Gleason.

Merv enjoyed seeing Roddy again, his passion for the handsome actor a distant memory. Their relationship had evolved into a deep friendship. Merv also enjoyed a reunion on the set with Janet Leigh.

The film was a silly 60s comedy about a family living in an underwater house off the coast of Florida. Appearing as himself, Merv interviewed the “aqua family” for his TV show.

Merv's lifelong contempt for the star of the film, Tony Randall, stemmed from their dealings together on the set of *Hello Down There*. Through Rock Hudson, Merv had learned that Randall was a closeted homosexual. Yet when he was around someone he suspected of being gay, Randall often launched into bitter put-downs.

In front of Merv, and without provocation, Randall attacked homosexuals. “I've had to give up the ballet,” he said. “I'm surrounded there by a bunch of fags. Definitely not my bag. Friends of mine even showed me a gay male porno film. It was disgusting but it confirmed a longheld suspicion of mine. Homosexuals don't really like sucking each other's cocks. Throughout the film the guys didn't even get aroused, unlike the kids who do straight porn. Straight couples really go at it.”

“If gays don't enjoy it, then why do they do it?” Merv asked.

Anger flashed across Randall's face. Usually quick with a comeback, he at first seemed stuck for an answer. “They just do it to defy society. It's a way of saying ‘fuck you’ to the Establishment. In fact, there's no such thing as homosexuality. It's all a joke. They just pretend to dig each other. Actually homosexuality is just a manifestation of self-hatred.”

“Tony, sweet babycakes,” Merv said mockingly. “Don't get so worked up about it. You're fooling no one. Rock Hudson told me you're one of the best cocksuckers in Hollywood.” Merv turned and walked away.

***

Not just Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon, but other U.S. presidents came onto Merv's show, including Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. But an anticipated interview with Dwight Eisenhower slipped through his fingers.

Merv almost got to interview Eisenhower in retirement with Mamie at his Gettysburg farm. He journeyed to Pennsylvania to personally ask Ike if he'd agree to be interviewed. What Merv discovered was a frail, greatly weakened man who no longer looked as strong and powerful as he did when he was commanding Allied forces during World War II. The presidency and a harsh life in the military had taken a great toll. Merv was reassured when Ike firmly shook his hand and told him that he and Mamie were “faithful watchers” of his talk show.

After agreeing to allow Merv's camera crew to film at his farmstead, Ike immediately discussed money, suggesting that his fee for appearing would be donated to charity. Merv's show at Westinghouse always paid guests under onethousand dollars for their appearances. Ike wanted $30,000.

Merv was taken aback by the figure. He later wrote, “I knew that that was a lot more toasters than Westinghouse would ever pay.”

Back in New York, Merv was pondering where he'd get the money when a bulletin came over television. Ike had died of a heart attack in Washington, D.C. The date was March 28, 1969.

Merv watched stunned as television stations across the country broadcast film clips of Ike, going back to the State of Texas where he was born in 1890, though he'd been raised in Abilene, Kansas.

“Maybe it's just as well that I didn't get to interview Ike,” Merv later said. “I was saving two provocative questions for the end of the show. I wanted to ask him why he had tried to hide his upbringing as a Jehovah's Witness. Then I was going to deliver the zinger. I wanted to know if Kay Summersby, his aide, was really his wartime mistress. After asking the bombshell, I guess his Secret Service guys would have kicked me off that farm in Gettysburg.”

***

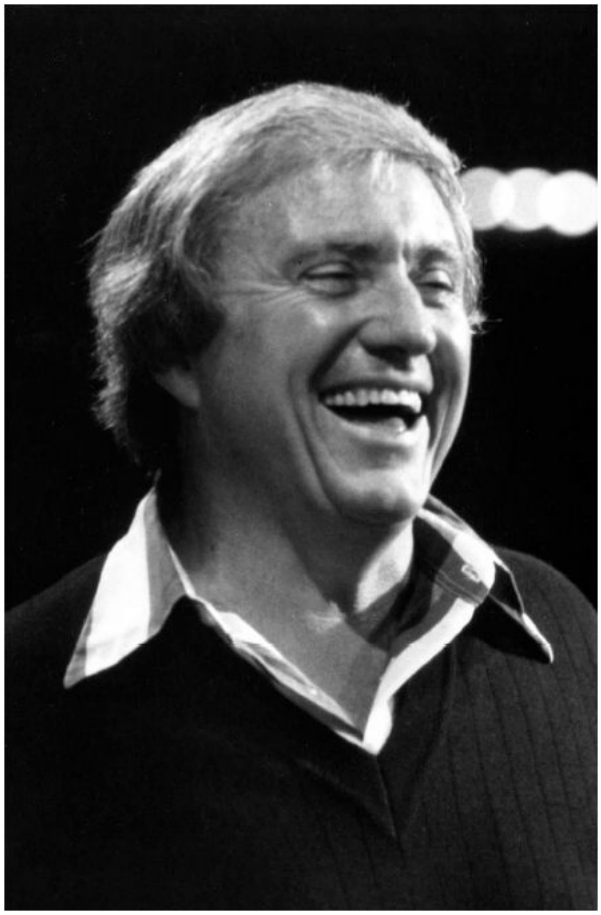
As the 1960s came to their tumultuous end, Merv was in his 40s and deep into middle age. But at long last, and after many failures, he'd found success. His game shows, *Let's Play Post Office*, *One in a Million*, *Talk It Up*, and *Reach for the Stars* had been purchased and aired, although, unlike *Jeopardy!*, each had had a short life.

One TV critic noted that Merv's game shows appealed to viewers "with a lot of time to waste." He specifically singled out *Let's Play Post Office*. On that show, three contestants were read letters from celebrities one line at a time. They tried to guess the identity of the letter's author. As each subsequent line from the mystery letter was read on air, the money value of the prize decreased.

Despite his many successes, Merv was bored and desperately wanted a challenge. Later, as events unfolded, "The tooth fairy must have heard me and granted my wish," Merv said. "And how!"

Retired President **Dwight D. Eisenhower** agreed to an exclusive interview with Merv, but priced himself too high.

He's pictured here, on the left, with his then-Vice-President **Richard Nixon**



Merv

Chapter Nine

In 1967, despite the popularity of *The Merv Griffin Show*, Westinghouse, its sponsor, seemed to be “dragging its feet” (Merv's words) about renewing his contract.

Then an unexpected call came in from CBS, asking Merv if he'd signed his contract. When Merv responded that he had not, “the suits” began secret negotiations with Merv about hosting a latenight talk show on CBS.

As negotiations continued, Merv demanded that CBS pay him “twice the money” that Carson was hauling in. “There were a lot of bank vaults in New York that needed filling,” Merv said, only half kidding.

At the time, Carson was pulling in $40,000 a week, which meant that Merv was demanding $80,000. The negotiators at CBS were outraged, one executive calling the salary demand “highway robbery.” Nevertheless, CBS was desperate, as they'd been running old movies in an unsuccessful attempt to lure latenight audiences away from Carson. “Not that many people wanted to see Kay Francis in *Transgression*,” said an executive at CBS, referring to a movie the star had made in 1931.

When Merv's salary demands moved upstairs at CBS, the brass there agreed to it almost without protest. Merv was told that lawyers would begin drawing up the contract immediately. “It was the shock of my life,” he said. “I couldn't believe they'd pay me a salary that was to the moon—unprecedented in the history of television.”

For a combined total of two million dollars in renovation costs, CBS converted the 1912 Cort Theater, on West 48th Street in Manhattan, into Merv's television studio.

As soon as his contract with Westinghouse expired, thanks to CBS, Merv returned to network TV, taking on the other talking heads, notably Johnny Carson. From August 18, 1969 to February 11, 1972 at 11:30pm on weeknights, he challenged the more popular Carson to a duel for viewers and market share.

Carson's show was carried by two hundred and twelve stations, with Merv in second place with one hundred and fifty outlets. Merv scored best in his native San Francisco and also opened strong in Los Angeles, pulling thousands upon thousands of viewers away from Carson, whose appeal was the greatest in metropolitan New York.

It was an uphill battle for Merv. After a few months, when Merv's style didn't catch on with their latenight audiences, many stations dropped him, some of them opting instead for a roster of old movies from the 1930s and 40s. “I found myself competing with everybody from Betty Grable to John Wayne,” Merv said.

In his scrabbling for audiences, Merv faced other hurdles—and not just from Carson. “I was in a rat race with a lot of other rats, all of us vying for the same piece of cheese,” Merv said.

CBS wanted Merv to slay Carson as well as a lineup of other “dragons,” especially an ABCaffiliated Rat Packer appearing nightly as host of “The Joey Bishop Show.” Some nights, Merv's audiences were slightly larger than Carson's, but “Johnny always bounced back like gangbusters. But at least I managed to stay ahead of Joey, holding in second place,” Merv said.

Perpetually glum, the Bronxborn standup comedian, Joey Bishop, was best known at the time for being a member of Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack. Carson felt particularly betrayed when Bishop competed with him on air, since the comedian had guesthosted *The Tonight Show* more times than anyone else before breaking away for his own ninetyminute latenight talk show.

The Joey Bishop Show ran from 1967 to 1969, with thennewcomer Regis Philbin percolating cheerfully as the show's cohost. Merv was always a bit contemptuous of Bishop, claiming that his face had the look of “an untipped waiter.” (The put-down may not have been original to Merv.) When Bishop told an interviewer that he'd never seen Dean Martin or Frank Sinatra drunk, and Merv heard about it, Merv mocked the claim openly among his friends and colleagues.

In the battle for ratings, Bishop proved no match for Merv and Carson, and ABC eventually dropped the show from its listings. Dick Cavett was hired to fill the latenight talk show void at ABC.

Talk Show King and Wannabe:
Johnny Carson (left), **Joey Bishop** (right)

When asked privately about Merv, Bishop said, “He's an asshole, and I don't fuck assholes. I'm a pussy man myself—and married to Sylvia Ruzga since 1941.” But despite what Merv and Bishop might have said privately, the two competitors seemed like the dearest of friends when Bishop, years later, in 1978, appeared on Merv's show.

Even after the demise of Joey Bishop as a competitor, Merv still had to compete for guests with Mike Douglas, who was luring stars to Philadelphia for his afternoon show. “All these talk shows, fighting for guests, were eating up interesting people the way a dinosaur might devour an animal for lunch,” Merv claimed. “There were just so many times that I could bring on Eva Gabor.”

As regards the décor of his latenight interviewing style, Merv preferred the old deskandsofa setup that Steve Allen, Dave Garroway, and Jack Paar had popularized years before. As Merv recited later, “Johnny Carson, Joey Bishop, and I sat there every night, playing a game with viewers called ‘Pick Your Host.’ Or more likely ‘Pick Your Guest.’”

More than Bishop and Carson, Merv seemed to genuinely like surprising his viewers with the unexpected. Examples included Max Yasgur, the upstate New York dairy farmer who had rented his land to the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, or writer Billie Young, who, using the pseudonym Penelope Ashe, had contributed to the text of *Naked Came the Stranger*.

Naked Came the Stranger, published in 1969, was a literary hoax perpetrated by a group of prominent journalists. The project was conceived by Mike McGrady of *Newsday*, who assembled a committee of two dozen journalists to write a deliberately terrible book with a lot of sex to illustrate their point that American literary culture had become brainlessly vulgar. The text was deliberately mediocre, a dysfunctional pseudoliterary hodgepodge, with heavy editing of any segment which was too well written. Fulfilling the committee's cynical expectations, the book was wildly successful, even appearing briefly on *The New York Times* Bestseller List, perhaps a result of the intensive sales and marketing campaign associated with its release. As sales increased, some of the co-authors felt guilty about the money they were earning, and went public. At least some of the fallout from the hoax was explored on *The Merv Griffin Show.*

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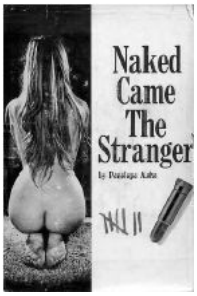
David Frost, an articulate, breezy import from London, was perceived as another talk-show dragon for Merv to slay—and doing so became a formidable challenge.



During its heyday, *The David Frost Show* presented serious competition for every other talk show host in the world. Frost's weekly routine involved taping his show in America during the week, and then flying to England every weekend for an appearance on *London Weekend Television*. Eventually, thanks to his ability to articulate complicated social, political, artistic, and intellectual trends, David Frost became known as “the Charlie Rose of his

day.”

Merv was usually furious when the press compared him unfavorably to Frost, whose shows were critiqued as “having more depth, with more intelligent conversation.” In time Frost would interview every living U.S. president, as well as every living British Prime Minister, with Margaret Thatcher scoring the highest ratings.

As a counterpunch to Frost's string of VIPs, Merv brought on a controversial and deeply eccentric African American who had run for president, but not been elected. Dick Gregory had run for the nation's highest office in 1968 as a writein candidate for the Freedom of Peace Party.

One amusing tale that Gregory related on Merv's show involved a publicity stunt his campaign had run, printing, as a satire on American presuppositions about power and wealth, U.S. $1 bills with Gregory's image on them. Some of these counterfeit bills were circulated within the money supply and used as currency in cash transactions. The Federal government moved in for punitive action, but Gregory wasn't charged. On the air, he joked with Merv that the bills “won't ever be accepted as legitimate cash because everyone knows a black man's image will never make it onto a U.S. dollar.”

In later years, Gregory, like Harry Belafonte, became too provocative and too Left Wing for Merv, or at least for appearances on his show. The final straw, at least for Merv, came when Gregory angrily and publicly denounced the United States, referring to it as “the most dishonest, ungodly, unspiritual nation that ever existed in the history of the planet. As we talk now, America represents five percent of the world's population and consumes ninetysix percent of the world's hard drugs.”

In reaction to the provocative nature of some of his guests, Merv received frequent memos, many of them addressed to “Mervin Griffith,” from corporate executives with-in CBS.

“Merv's polar opposite”
David Frost

The suits would, for example, object to Zsa Zsa Gabor's plunging *dècolletage* and, predictably, her off-color chatter and gossip. Both on and off the air, she spared no one, especially former husbands such as George Sanders and Conrad Hilton. One memo from a CBS executive to Merv read, “The bitch is out of control. Expect a lawsuit filed for libel.”

Merv received constant objections to guests who attacked the Vietnam War. Jane Fonda (“Hanoi Jane,” as her enemies called her), proved especially annoying to the suits.

CBS had almost had it with Merv in March of 1970 when he booked the prominent antiwar activist Abbie Hoffman, cofounder of the Youth International Party (“Yippies”), onto his show. Abbie had been arrested and tried for conspiracy and inciting a riot as a result of his role in the violent confrontations with the police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Along with Jerry Rubin and Tom Hayden, Hoffman, during his prosecution, was widely referred to by the press as a dangerous subversivea member of “The Chicago Seven.”

Hoffman appeared on Merv's show wearing a red, white, and blue shirt whose pattern evoked the American flag. The censors at CBS interpreted this as objectionable, and blurred Hoffman's image electronically so that his voice emanated from “a jumble of lines.” When Merv saw this, he was furious and complained loudly to CBS, to no avail.

“The way it appeared on screen, it looked like I was talking to an empty chair,” Merv said.

CBS's legal department declared that broadcasting the image of Hoffman wearing an American flag might be illegal in some states. Ironically, that very night, TV commercials touting the Ford Motor Company starred “The King of the Cowboys,” archconservative Roy Rogers, and his wife, “The Queen of the Cowgirls,” Dale Evans. Both of them were nattily dressed in more or less the same shirt Hoffman wore onto Merv's show.

CBS shot off harshly worded protests to Merv, denouncing his habit of bringing on guests who attacked the Vietnam War. “In the past six weeks, thirtyfour antiwar statements have been made on your show and only one prowar statement by John Wayne,” one memo read.

Merv fired back. “Find me someone as famous as Mr. Wayne to speak out in favor of the war, and we'll book him.”

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Censored Red, White,
and Blue:
Abbie Hoffman

Although Merv's selection of guests in the late 60s and early 70s sometimes infuriated CBS, it appealed to many critics. Merv's "awshucks" style was effective at both catalyzing and controlling controversy in a sometimes frantic effect to woo viewers away from Carson. In the words of one critic, "Griffin brought on more would-be makers of controversy than all the David Susskinds combined. Merv's parade of politically oriented comedians such as Dick Gregory was the most controversial in show business."

Merv also invited classic, relatively uncontroversial, comedians as well, including Bob Hope and Jack Benny. Benny was a great success when he first appeared on Merv's show, telling hilarious anecdotes about his early days making movies. After the show, Merv visited his dressing room to congratulate him. "Mr. Benny, forgive me, but I've always wanted to pop the big question to you."

"A marriage proposal," Benny said. "I'm already taken."

"No, something else," Merv hesitated. "Are you gay?"

"Takes one to know one," Benny said without missing a beat. "And shut the door on your way out, sweetie."

Peter Barsocchini functioned as the producer of *The Merv Griffin Show* between 1980 and 1986, during which he won two Emmys. He was also the coauthor of Merv's first autobiography, *Merv*, published by Simon and Schuster in 1980. In 2006, he once again attracted attention for his role as screenwriter of *High School Musical*, an Emmy Awardwinning television film that inspired at least four franchised spinoffs. Originally released in January of 2006, it became one of the most successful movies that the Disney Channel Original Movie organization ever produced.

When Merv interviewed such guests as Sophia Loren, Henry Fonda, Bette Davis, or James Stewart, "the energized curiosity we all saw on the screen was real," claimed Barsocchini. "He usually did not socialize in advance with guests who appeared on his show, because he felt it would dampen the freshness of his interviews. I think there was always part of Merv who saw himself as the kid on the other side of the fence, watching the rich and famous, wondering about them."

Like Merv's autobiography itself, Barsocchini's statement is only half true. Merv was extremely intimate with many of his guests prior to their arrival on his show. A good example is Rosemary Clooney. In some instances, as in the case of both Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift, he'd even had sex with them.

A few of his TV guests appeared on competing talk shows on the same night, as in the case of Senator Hubert Humphrey, who landed on *The David Frost Show* and then had to be hustled into a limousine to face Merv's cameraman. Jerry Lewis set the alltime record, appearing on the Carson show, the Cavett show, and Merv's lineup—all on the same night. "The double crosser didn't tell me what he was up to," Merv said. "So if you tuned in that night you got Jerry Lewis, Jerry Lewis, and Jerry Lewis. How unappetizing! A little of Jerry goes a long way."

All this stress led to Merv undergoing a physical change right in front of the TV cameras. "I grew fat and then fatter and then more fat," he said. As 1969 seguéd into 1970, he actually gained thirtyfive pounds, a development that became obvious to many of his viewers and fans. Simultaneously, he was smoking three packages of cigarettes a day. "A great way to give yourself cancer," he later said.

He smoked so much on the air that some viewers complained that he was obscuring the faces of his guests. "I'd rather look at Hedy Lamarr—at least what's left of her—than see Griffin go up in a cloud of smoke," claimed one viewer from New Jersey.

***

Although TV talk shows exploring a specific, predefined theme are relatively commonplace today, thanks partly to their later evolution by Oprah Winfrey, Merv pioneered a style of theme show wherein several guests discuss and debate the same (usually controversial) issue on a single show. He introduced programs devoted to onceunmentionable issues such as incest and child molestation. And at one point he brought on Christine Jorgensen, the most famous transsexual in America, who'd migrated to Copenhagen as George, a former G.I., and had returned as an elegant, articulate, and wellspoken lady.

Merv later seemed jealous of the success of Oprah Winfrey. “The bitch has never acknowledged her debt to me.”

Johnny Carson sometimes made fun of Merv's provocative shows. “Catch Merv on the tube tomorrow,” Carson said mockingly. “He's bringing on five women who left the nunnery and are now running a brothel in Las Vegas.” Despite that, during the closing years of the 1960s, Merv captured the ferment of the revolutionary era that changed American life for all time.

He was never awed by celebrities, regardless of their fame and stature. He recalled that in the course of his career, he was intimidated by only one guest—“and that was Miss Rose Kennedy.”

One observer noted Merv's “leanin closetalker style of interviewing. You were sure that at any moment he was going to end up in the lap of Jane Fonda or Roger Vadim.” Before bringing that notorious couple onto the show, Merv had spent time at their farmhouse outside Paris, presumably familiarizing himself with issues he'd raise (or not raise) on camera later.

Merv's folksy style was remarkably different from that of the more aloof and sometimes chillier Johnny Carson. With his guests, Carson was a sardonic outside observer with a rapier wit. In distinct contrast, Merv appeared like a wellestablished friend at a gabfest, a style which translated into genuinely intimate interviews with such old acquaintances as Grace Kelly or Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Merv's talk show career will be forever compared to that of Carson, “the King of Late Night Talk” between 1962 and the late 1980s. Ironically, Merv began his first daytime talk show on NBC the same day as Carson began his reign on NBC's *The Tonight Show*.

The two men were very different. Nebraskaborn Carson had emerged from the Hollywood of the mid1950s. For his inspiration, Merv looked elsewhere, especially to such liberal and edgy TV journals as David Susskind's *Open End* and Mike Wallace's *Night Beat*.

For his celebrity lineup, Merv didn't just stick to movie stars, singers, and comedians. Among many others, he brought on such “high brow” guests as cellist Pablo Casals and Will and Ariel Durant, the brilliant and provocative Pulitzer Prizewinning historians.

Critic John Colapinto in *Rolling Stone* best summed up Merv's appeal as a schmoozy talkshow host. “His talk show, with its unabashed celebrity worship and cozy *intime* atmosphere, offered the illusion of entering a livingroom salon where a slightly risqué cocktail party was in progress. As a host, Merv used a cunning combination of obsequious fawning and probing interrogation to elicit disclosures more revealing than the stars would offer anywhere else.”

When Merv heard that Carson had had a falling out with his younger brother, Dick Carson, and that Dick had quit after six years of directing *The Tonight Show*, Merv hired him. “That will show Johnny,” Merv claimed.

Dick remained with the Griffin organization for nearly three decades, becoming director of *The Merv Griffin Show*, before eventually retiring in 1999. “My brother's kind of famous for standing off,” Dick later said. “But Merv made working fun. Johnny was not like Merv, who appears very comfortable in any situation.”

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In a call from his old friend, Harry Belafonte, Merv was told that Martin Luther King Jr. might agree to an interview. “But I thought his Excellency didn't do talk shows,” Merv said.

“I think I can persuade him, especially if you'll let me introduce him,” Harry said.

Merv agreed, pushing hard to finalize the arrangements. At this point in his career, Merv had drifted more and more toward the Republican Party, mainly because of the growing influence of his friend, Ronald Reagan. Merv had actually taken objection to some of Dr. King's previous remarks, although he personally opposed the war in Vietnam.

The interview was widely publicized in advance, and millions tuned in. But despite the advance ballyhoo, Merv's “Dr. King” show bombed.

On camera, Dr. King repeated his alreadyfamiliar opposition to the Vietnam War, claiming that the U.S. was in

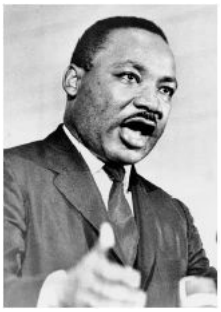
Southeast Asia with the intention of “occupying it as an American colony. The Vietnam War wastes money that should be spent on the War on Poverty…A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

Merv later revealed that in advance of Dr. King's arrival, his staff had prepared some explosive questions to ask Dr. King oncamera. J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, had submitted incriminating and embarrassing evidence about Dr. King's womanizing. “On the one hand,” Merv told his confidants, “King holds himself up as a great moral leader, but in hotel rooms around the country he's acting like a Tom Cat in an alley after dark.”

The day before Dr. King's appearance, an array of provocative information about Dr. King had already been splashed across magazine and other nationwide media. *Life's* editors had denounced Dr. King's anti-U.S. tirades as “demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi.” *The Washington Post* had also condemned King, charging that the leader had “diminished his usefulness to his cause, his country, his people.” The newspaper was responding to King's outrageous claim that the United States had “killed a million Vietnamese, mostly children.”

But fearing viewer backlash, and in advance of the interview, Merv had already decided not to bring up anything that was potentially embarrassing to Dr. King. During his interview, Merv listened politely to Dr. King as he condemned America's war policy.

Aggressively, and in a style that polarized the audience and transformed the interview into a complete disaster, Harry Belafonte, who had configured himself as part of the “package” associated with having Dr. King on-air in the first place, virtually took over the show, lavishing praise on Dr. King—and then a long list of additional tributes. Merv's audience began to drift off, many switching to other channels.



Dr. M. L. King, Jr.
Merv's critics were screaming

Backstage, when it was over, Merv chatted in a very friendly manner with Dr. King, who congratulated him for his effective use of *The Merv Griffin Show* as a platform for up-andcoming black entertainers. He'd been particularly amused by the appearances of Dick Gregory and Richard Pryor—“and the singers too,” he interjected.

“Speaking of singing,” Merv said impishly, “my staff came up with the nugget that you'd sung as part of a church choir at the 1939 Atlanta premiere of *Gone With the Wind*. As you know, many African-Americans don't like the way your people were depicted in that movie. Did you, in fact, sing at the premiere?”

“There are things in any man's life that are best forgotten.” Dr. King said before turning and heading out of the studio.

Then Harry embraced Merv as part of his goodbye. “I know Dr. King is a bit to the left of some of your own political views, but remember—dissent is central to any democracy.”

After their departure, Merv turned to some of his key staff members. “The show got so boring that at one point I was tempted to ask Belafonte to sing ‘Yellow Bird.’”

***

From the days of his early childhood, Merv had been raised on John Wayne movies. As such, he was delighted when “The Duke” agreed to be interviewed. Aired in January of 1971, the show was called “Duke and I — Merv Visits John Wayne.”

As part of the experience, Merv and his crew spent a Thanksgiving weekend at the cowboy star's 22,000-acre ranch near Phoenix.

Wayne and Merv got drunk together the first night, and Merv later revealed how shocked he was at The Duke's candor. He admitted that “women scare the hell out of me,” yet during the course of his long career, he'd already

seduced such screen goddesses as Clara Bow, Joan Crawford, Carmen Miranda, and Claire Trevor.

“Marlene Dietrich was the best lay I ever had,” Wayne claimed. He'd costarred with her and Randolph Scott in *Pittsburgh* in 1942. “Things didn't work out too well with Joan Crawford, though.”

“Things didn't work out between Crawford and me either,” Merv confessed.

Wayne had made *Reunion in France* with Joan in 1942, the same year he'd appeared with Dietrich. Crawford later told her gay pal, William Haines, “Get Duke out of the saddle and you've got nothing.”

Wayne kept Merv amused until the rooster crowed, relating stories of his career. He spoke of the time he'd starred with the British bisexual actor, Laurence Harvey, in the 1960 *The Alamo*.

“Please, Duke,” Wayne quoted Harvey as saying to him. “Tonight. Just one time. I'll be the queen, if you'll be the king.” Wayne claimed he turned down “my chance to be a king with a queen.”

Because of his strong, perhaps obsessive, political views, Wayne was asked if he'd ever consider running for political office. “I've already been asked, and I turned it down. George Wallace wanted me to run as his Veep on his American Independent Party. ‘No way,’ I told Wallace, although I do agree with a lot of his positions.”

Before dawn, Wayne shocked Merv by confessing, “Ever since I arrived in Hollywood, women have been attracted to me like flies on a steak dinner left in the sun. Men, too. You know, don't you, that John Ford is gay? But there's a downside to all this. When I take them to bed, they expect me to be hung like King Kong. I'm afraid I've disappointed quite a few of them. Paulette Goddard actually complained about my pecker. I guess that thanks to her getting regularly fucked by Charlie Chaplin, I couldn't satisfy her. Nowadays, when I can still get it up, I warn the gals, “If you want the Montana Mule, call Gary Cooper. In bed, I'm more pony than horse.”

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In the 1970s, as pornography became more prevalent and more or less legal, Merv developed an interest in the medium, especially after Hadley brought him a copy of *Boys in the Sand*, released in 1971. A landmark in gay pornography, and viewed today as a “classic,” the film was directed and written by a former Broadway choreographer, Wakefield Poole. It starred “Casey Donovan,” a wellbuilt, welleducated actor and model. Born in 1943 in East Bloomfield, New York, he'd had an employment history which included a stint as a teacher in a private school on Central Park West in New York City, experience as a romantic lead in several summer stock productions, and moonlight jobs as a male hustler. His birth name was John Calvin (“Cal”) Culver.

Merv was so enchanted with the film that he insisted that Hadley run it three times. According to Hadley, Merv thought Cal Culver was “Guy Madison, Tab Hunter, and Troy Donahue—all rolled into one bankable commodity.”

Hadley claimed that Merv “let out a gasp of joy” when the image of a naked Cal first appeared. The clip of Cal emerging from the ocean like Venus, or rather Apollo, rising from the sea, is today interpreted as an iconic moment in gay porn.

The scene on shore that immediately followed became very graphic, with a dark, bearded Peter Fisk, who was Poole's reallife lover, performing oral sex on Cal. Later Cal penetrates Fisk on screen.

The most controversial segment of the film, called “Inside,” involved interracial sex, which was very daring at the time. An African-American telephone repairman was played by Tommy Moore. Most of this segment involved Cal's fantasies about sexual encounters with the studly “pole man,” including scenes where Cal sniffs poppers and penetrates himself with a mammoth black dildo.

The three segments that make up the film were each shot at Cherry Grove on Fire Island, a gay beach resort off the southern coast of New York's Long Island, in just three successive weekends. Amazingly, its budget was only eight thousand dollars.

Boys in the Sand became the first gay porn movie to be both reviewed and advertised in *The New York Times. Variety* carried a fullpage ad on it. Reviews, both appreciative and scathing, appeared in newspapers and magazines across the nation. *Variety* claimed, “there are no more closets,” and *The Advocate* made the boast that, “Everyone will fall in love with this philandering fellator.”

Merv, along with virtually everybody else, was astonished at the success of this film. *Boys in the Sand* —the title inspired by the Matt Crowley play (and later film) *The Boys in the Band* —was the first gay movie to achieve mainstream crossover success. It preceded Linda Lovelace's *Deep Throat* by almost a year.

Almost overnight, “Casey Donovan” became an underground celebrity. Wherever he went in Los Angeles, San Francisco, or New York, he was immediately recognized, and in many cases, propositioned. Although he'd pursued a legitimate career as a screen God, his hopes for that were dashed with the release of this controversial film. Instead

of offers for legitimate stage and film roles, he was hired for everincreasing roles in porn flicks. Also, an intense and lucrative demand had emerged for his services as a paid male escort.

Merv wanted to host a show that focused on the emergence of gay porn as a legitimate art expression whose freedom had recently been approved by the courts. His vision involved interviews with both Cal and his director, Wakefield Poole. He wasn't sure about what other guests to invite, but considered the avantgarde gay filmmakers, Kenneth Anger and Andy Warhol.

Merv's plaything, and
the world's most famous gay porn star
Cal Culver, aka Casey Donovan

Merv asked his staff to provide background material on Wakefield Poole. As for Cal, Merv asked Hadley to privately arrange “an audition.”

Poole's name was already known to Merv. The director had been a wellknown Broadway choreographer. Both Poole and Merv had shared the sexual favors of Rock Hudson, and the choreographer had previously collaborated onstage with such big names as Hal Prince, Stephen Sondheim, Jane Powell, and Debbie Reynolds. Poole even knew the campy aspects of both the good and bad witches from *The Wizard of Oz* thanks to his friendships with Billie Burke and Margaret Hamilton.

Poole's banishment from the Great White Way came when he sued Richard Rodgers in court—and won—for the show, *Do I Hear a Waltz?* The waltz in the show had been staged and choreographed by Poole, who had received no credit and no royalties. Even though he won the case, he found himself suddenly barred from future involvements on Broadway because he'd dared to sue a theatrical icon like Rodgers.

Merv's staff retrieved evidence that Poole had wanted to make a serious statement with *Boys in the Sand*, a somewhat highbrow but highly commercial onscreen fusion of art and hardcore sex. As he later recorded in his autobiography, *Dirty Poole*, “I wanted to present high profile homosexuality without the guilt.” Merv learned that prior to filming, Poole had issued a command to his actors and collaborators on Fire Island—“No top, no bottom, just two men discovering each other.”

Hadley contacted Cal and arranged a private meeting with Merv. “Merv was eagerly anticipating Cal's arrival,” Hadley said. He expected some dumb blond with a big dick and a small brain.

“When Cal came into the apartment,” Hadley said, “he had the big dick—we'd already seen that on the screen—but he was well educated, a cultured young gentleman.”

“He's an elegant, buttoneddown male courtesan,” Merv later told Hadley.

This blond California Golden Boy, with a healthy appetite for the pleasures of the flesh, sometimes described himself as “Robert Redford's younger brother.”

During Cal's conversations with Merv about the theater, he seemed to have inside knowledge about show business personalities. “Merv was fascinated, imagining that Cal was somebody you could invite to the Queen's Garden Party,” Hadley said. “He was very preppy, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie. He was the old Arrow Shirt man of yesteryear come back to life. He was gracious and charming, not some hardened hustler. And he was a real blond—no bleach. Actually his hair was golden like wheat, and he had blue eyes that would put Paul Newman to shame. His sex appeal was natural, not some girly man on the screen pretending to be macho. The press had described him as the boy next door. Any gay man should have been so lucky to live next door to Cal Culver, especially if that man had a strong pair of binoculars.”

Hadley said that when he saw that the chemistry between Merv and Cal was bubbling, he excused himself and went around the corner to the local gay bar. Later Cal claimed, “I liberated Merv sexually that night. He was one uptight dude until I had raunchy sex with him. When it came to sex, Merv was rather vanilla. I taught him to put some gooey chocolate fudge over that white vanilla sundae.”

When Johnny Carson learned that Merv intended to host a TV show devoted to gay porn, he said, “Why not? Griffin's already interviewed transsexual witches from Transylvania and boylovers wanting to revive the ancient Greek tradition of sodomy.” Carson obviously was speaking tongue in cheek.

Perhaps because of Carson's mockery, or perhaps for personal reasons, Merv decided not to forge ahead with the show. His rival, David Susskind, turned out to be more receptive to the idea of doing a TV talk show devoted to gay porn.

Merv had to tell a disappointed Cal that he had abandoned the idea of such a show. “That does not, however, have to mean the end of our friendship.”

Cal later claimed that Merv clearly suggested that it would be “extremely lucrative” if Cal continued their relationship, especially the sexual aspects of it.

“Sign me up,” Cal told him.

***

When Merv tired of Cal after eighteen months, he shipped him off to the beds of both Liberace and Rock Hudson. Through various connections established by these stars and others, Cal, whenever he wasn't shooting porn, eventually obtained full employment as a gay male escort. In a claim he made in Key West, where he functioned briefly as the unsuccessful manager of an unsuccessful gay guesthouse, The Casa Donovan, he said, “For several years I was America's number one star fucker, and I owe it all to Merv Griffin for getting me launched.”

Ever the sexual opportunist, Cal detected an interest on Merv's part in young emerging porn stars. He saw a chance to make money by arranging discreet introductions to male stars who intrigued Merv after Cal showed him porno films, which often starred Cal interacting with a prospective lover for Merv.

As the months went by, Cal more or less evolved into Merv's pimp, linking him up to “big names” in the porn business. Collectively, Cal and his associates managed to replace the array of otherwise unknown models, outofwork actors, and surfers that Hadley might have otherwise proposed as sexual diversions for Merv.

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“Our old gang was breaking up,” Paul Schone lamented. “Once in San Mateo Bill Robbins, Johnny Riley, and Hadley Morrell had each promised Merv that they'd be his friends for life.”

But it didn't work out that way. Johnny was the first of the quintet to move on, establishing himself as a kept boy in a new relationship.

Merv, too, had moved on to other friendships, other relationships, and other business affairs, finding that he had less and less time for his old friends of yesteryear.

Sometime during the 70s, Merv parted company with both Paul and Bill. “There was no final goodbye, and no little bonus for the way we'd served him so well over the years,” Paul lamented.

Both Paul and Bill called Merv repeatedly, leaving messages, but the calls were never returned. “I don't think he was actually angry with us,” said Bill. “I think he just outgrew us. We were going nowhere in life, and Merv was shooting to the top.”

More than Johnny, Paul, and Bill, Hadley had been the most intimately involved with Merv. “But as time went

by, I too was replaced in Merv's life," Hadley said. "He'd developed other friendships by then, and Cal Culver seemed to be supplying him with tricks, and eventually, I simply wasn't needed."

Consequently, when Hadley's ailing mother, who had moved to Texas, became seriously ill, Hadley and Merv more or less separated, and remained apart for years. Then, after his mother died, Hadley came briefly back into Merv's life in the late 1980s or early 90s. But Hadley grew tired of being a friend that Merv kept hidden in the closet. Perhaps he also grew tired of the servant role as well. Since he'd been bequeathed some money from his mother's estate, Hadley knew he could retire in reasonable comfort if he watched his spending. According to some reports, Merv gave him $50,000 in cash. Presumably, Hadley returned to West Texas to live out his days in his mother's house and was never heard from again.

***

As a means of making money, and perhaps in a spirit motivated partly by jealousy and revenge, Paul and Bill began drafting page after page of sometimes negative memoirs about their experiences with Merv. It's because these notes and memoirs were circulated in the 1970s to publishers and literary agents (including the Jay Garon-Brooke & Associates Agency), whose president and namesake, Jay Garon, referred to them as "explosive") that we know some of the details of Merv's early life.

Jay Garon had a reputation as a ruthless and to some degree sleazy marketer of the often embarrassing memoirs of the rich and terribly famous, as proven with his successful launch of Hedy Lamarr's *Ecstasy and Me*, as well as an intensely embarrassing expose of Bette Davis by her estranged daugher.

Garon's enthusiasm for the Bill Robbins/Paul Schone memoirs dampened however, after months of shopping it around privately and unofficially to editors he knew personally at, among others, Doubleday, Random House, Simon & Schuster, and a paperback publishing house, Manor Books.

In every case, the Robbins/Schone book proposal was rejected, editors fearing with ample justification that Merv would sue for libel if such a book were ever published.

Presumably, Paul and Bill eventually left New York, their fate unknown. And having previously fallen out with Johnny, they lost track of him too. Then, after many a year, Johnny too disappeared from the radar screen.

Predictably, at one point, both Johnny and Hadley also floated and somewhat halfheartedly marketed their own rough drafts of memoirs, neither of which was as negative or as scandalous as that penned earlier by Paul and Bill. But whereas Paul and Bill felt deeply betrayed by Merv, Johnny and Hadley harbored feelings that were more benign. And when it had become obvious that the vitality of the relationship with Merv had faded, Johnny and Hadley departed without protest to pursue other lives.

The book proposal submitted by these former boyhood friends of Merv's after he'd dropped them amounted to an Outing of Merv as a homosexual. News of Merv's gender preference quickly spread along the cocktail circuit in New York City.

The mass media, largescale press Outing of Merv would be delayed until 1991, when two other men, with different agendas, exposed Merv to the public as a homosexual by initiating legal action against him.

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Merv appreciated any chance he could get to interview a celebrity on location, outside a studio, and he was delighted when Richard Burton agreed to let him tape an interview in Oroville, California. It was there that the Welsh actor with the great Shakespearean voice was filming *The Klansman* (1972).

Richard had arrived in town two weeks before Elizabeth Taylor, who had promised to join him on location after she'd satisfied some prior commitment. In the meantime, Richard, as Merv soon learned, was sleeping with a beautiful local girl. Merv was introduced to her at the time, but later couldn't recall her name.

The actor bragged to Merv, "If there's a dame in this town I can't screw, my name's not Richard Burton."

To Merv's surprise, Richard was completely candid in boasting about his sexual conquests. That tendency had been noted earlier by the cast of *Cleopatra* (1963) when Richard strode onto the set and announced to Rex Harrison and others: "I finally fucked E. Taylor in the back seat of my Cadillac last night."

Richard tried to explain his womanizing to Merv. "I fucked them all—Zsa Zsa Gabor, Ava Gardner, Sophia Loren, Jean Simmons, Lana Turner, even a toothless old maid in Jamaica. But Elizabeth is my only love. She's more

a mistress than a wife. She's pornography, but only the dreamy version through a veil. She's Sunday's child and can even tolerate my drunkenness. Come to think of it, she's a drunk herself. When I'm away from her, there's a tight grip in my stomach, worse than any belly ache, so I lose myself in other women."

Merv joined Richard for a night on the town in Oroville. They hit one bar which remained open for them until six o'clock in the morning. Merv absorbed Richard's tall tales like a sponge. Perhaps out of deference to Merv's own homosexuality, which must have been known to him, Richard admitted that, "I was once a homosexual but it didn't take. Nevertheless, during that period I got to fuck Laurence Olivier, Noel Coward, your buddy Roddy McDowall, Michael Wilding, Emyln Williams. I even let John Gielgud give me a blowjob. Victor Mature and I did a sixtynine when we filmed *The Robe*. He wanted to fuck me, but I demurely said no. The guy doesn't have a prick. It's more like a club. But except for a few dalliances here and there, I think of myself as straight. I guess that's true. No, it isn't. All actors are homosexuals. Some of them mask that with drink. I'll tell you a secret I've told no one. Rex Harrison and I, as you know, played two gay lovers in *Staircase* (1969). To make our roles more believable, we actually went to bed together. What I've done for the sake of my art."

"That surprises me," Merv said. "Sexy Rexy. Such a ladies' man."

"Those are the most suspicious types," Richard said. "Tyrone Power. Errol Flynn. Robert Taylor. Howard Hughes. Marlon Brando. The beat goes on. I'll tell you one final story, but with the understanding that I want to leave open the possibility that I might be joking. One night in Rome, when I was trying to break up Elizabeth's marriage to Eddie Fisher, I raped him just to humiliate him. Noel Coward was right. He has a great ass."

"Surely not!" Merv said.

"You'll never know," Richard said. With that parting line, he lifted himself up from his bar stool, reached for his young woman, and headed out to greet the California dawn.

***

Merv especially enjoyed interviewing his octogenarian friend, journalist and Hollywood columnist Adela Rogers St. Johns, as a vehicle for the deflation of the sometimes bloated egos of his other guests.

When Truman Capote had come on, basking in the glory of his nonfiction novel, *In Cold Blood* (1966), Adela hadn't read it and didn't mind telling Truman why not. "Why should I read a book about a page eighteen murder?" she asked the astonished author.

Years later, Merv brought Adela on once again to deflate another author's ego. He booked her on a show with Erica Jong, who'd written the feminist lifestyle guide *Fear of Flying* (1973). The book became the literary sensation of the nation. Adela wasn't impressed, claiming on the air that it was "too dull to read."

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Confessions of a satyrist:
Richard Burton discusses rape.

Like everything else in America at the time, viewer reaction to *The Merv Griffin Show* was mixed. One member of the audience wrote, "Merv is a bit of a bore. Arthur Treacher on the other hand is amusing." Yet another disappointed fan said that the only good thing about the program was Jack Sheldon on the trumpet and Mort Lindsey's Orchestra. "I often watched the show because with clueless Merv in charge, a train wreck was inevitable, especially when Merv got serious. And what was it about Merv and the Stephen Bishop song, 'On and On'? He sang that thing about three times a week. The sets were cheap. Merv couldn't carry a tune and got fatter by the year."

One viewer claimed that Merv's "interviewing skills were nonexistent. The guest lineup was terrible. You know it's bad when the most entertaining thing about the program is Miss Miller. How on earth did Merv get so rich and successful? He's incompetent!"

Most of the fans, however, approved of Merv, citing his “wonderful smooth style—one cool dude.” And most of these viewers genuinely liked his lineup of regular guests, who included Zsa Zsa Gabor and Moms Mabley. Actor Pat O'Brien could be counted on to appear every St. Patty's Day, spinning wonderful yarns. Demond Wilson from *Sanford and Son* came on, singing Kiki Dee's “I Got the Music in Me.” Fans wrote in, claiming, “he was absolutely horrible… couldn't sing a note!”

***

In 1973, Spiro Agnew was forced to resign as Vice President of the United States. Merv invited him on his show and was surprised that the disgraced politician accepted. He admitted that he and Nixon hadn't spoken to each other since he'd left office. “He called several times, but I've refused to take his phone calls,” Agnew claimed.

Polls early in 1973 had shown Agnew as the front leader for the 1976 presidential nomination, with California governor Ronald Reagan a distant second.

Out of office, Agnew became more controversial than ever. He dared to suggest, as TV cameras were rolling, that Nixon and Alexander Haig would have assassinated him if he had refused to resign the Vice Presidency. He claimed that Haig told him “to go quietly… or else.”

The former Veep also became embroiled in controversy because of his anti-Zionist statements, calling for the United States to withdraw its support for Israel because of its bad treatment of Christians.

Merv complimented Agnew on his alliterative epithets such as “pusillanimous pussyfoots,” “hopeless hysterical hypochondriacs of history,” and “nattering nabobs of negativism.” Agnew dismissed such praise, claiming these epithets were the creation of White House speech writers William Safire and Pat Buchanan.

On the show, Agnew discussed his new friendship with Frank Sinatra, who had been a lifelong Democrat until he felt rejected by Robert Kennedy. Agnew said that Sinatra had helped him pay back the $160,000 in back taxes he owed the government.

Merv later revealed that, backstage and after the show, Agnew tried to lure him into some dubious business associations. “A political cartoonist once lampooned Nixon with a caricature under which was written, ‘Would you buy a used car from this man?’ The same question could be asked of Agnew. I just didn't trust him. Even though he promised me I could make millions in some scheme in the Middle East, I turned him down.”

***

One of Merv's most controversial guests was writer Gore Vidal, who could always be counted upon to shock and polarize an audience. Merv focused a lot of attention on Gore's kinship with Jacqueline Kennedy. His mother Nina had married Jackie's stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss. Even though acquainted with, and to some degree, related to, the Kennedys, Gore sometimes demonstrated a scathing contempt for the President. “Jack wanted the presidency, and his father bought it for him,” Gore charged.

Merv later told friends that he'd never read a book by Gore Vidal except for the mysteries he'd written under the pseudonym of Edgar Box.

Gore was always consistently negative about how his plays had been adapted by Hollywood into movies, objecting strenuously to the casting of Jerry Lewis as the lead in the movie version of Gore's *Visitor to a Small Planet* (1960).

When Merv asked Gore why he was running for governor of California against the incumbent governor, Jerry Brown, Gore said that “the chance to compete against a Zen Space Cadet is too good to pass up.”

The author could always deliver a shocker, as when he told stories about working on the screenplay of *Ben-Hur* in 1959, the picture directed by William Wyler. “To explain the animosity between BenHur and Messala, I inserted a gay subtext, suggesting that the two had been lovers,” Gore said. “Stephen Boyd played it gay but Charlton Heston did-n't have a clue that he was playing a homosexual love scene.”

Bagman and disgraced VP
Spiro Agnew

A murmur would go up in the audience whenever Gore expounded on his sexual theories. “The human race is divided into male and female. Many human beings enjoy sexual relations with their own sex; many don't; many respond to both. That plurality is a fact of our nature and not worth fretting about. Therefore, there are no homosexual people, only homosexual acts.”

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Although Gypsy Rose Lee had evolved into the most famous stripper in America, she never completely undressed, never fully exposing her breasts and always retaining a wisp of a Gstring as a means of allowing viewers' imaginations a bit of free rein. Her roster of emotional involvements was impressive: When the burlesque mystery novel she'd written, *The G-String Murders*, was made into the film *Lady of Burlesque* (1943), she'd had an affair with Barbara Stanwyck. And between two of her three marriages, she'd enjoyed an affair with the director, Otto Preminger. A son was born to them, Eric Lee Preminger.

Years after the huge success of the film, *Gypsy* (1962) which had starred Natalie Wood in the title role, Merv was intrigued by the stripper and eager to interview her on his show.

When the aging burlesque queen appeared on Merv's stage, Mort Lindsey, the orchestra leader, broke into a strip number. As she'd done countless times in the past, Gypsy immediately—and to some degree, automatically —launched into her familiar bumpandgrind routine, dropping her drawers during the finale, cupping her breasts and revealing herself clad only in a Gstring.

Almost instantly, the network cut her off, hastily filling in with clips from a show that Merv had filmed with his childhood friend and possible molester, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen.

Later, despite the censorship disaster associated with her appearance on his show, Merv said, “Gypsy was a reallife Auntie Mame. Her humor rivaled that of Judy Garland and her spirit was indomitable. My God, when her son, Erik, grew up, she hired him as her dresser. Imagine that!”

***

During the early 70s, it seemed inevitable that Merv would cross paths with pop artist Andy Warhol. By that time, Merv had succeeded in getting hundreds of people to open up and talk to him as they were being televised. But even in private, he found that Andy was no great talker, and he was forced to agree with the artist's selfassessment: “I am a deeply superficial person,” Andy rightly claimed.

The homosexual and endlessly campy arbiter of pop went on to tell Merv, “I'm also the most celebrated of the celebrated, and I know them all: Jackie, Mick Jagger, Truman Capote, Calvin Klein, John and Yoko, Elizabeth Taylor, Bob Dylan. My life is nothing but parties, galas, art openings, chic clubs. I once jerked off Marlon Brando in an elevator going down. He wanted me to blow him but settled for masturbation.”

In anticipation of the upcoming show, Merv bluntly asked Andy, “Can I drop vague hints about your lifestyle?”

Andy looked at Merv as if he were an alien just descended to Earth. “I'd prefer to remain a mystery,” he said. “I never like to give my background. At any rate, I make it all up differently every time I'm asked. It's not just that it's part of my image not to tell everything—it's just that I forget what I said the day before—and then I have to make it up all over again.”

After his interview, Andy invited Merv to Studio 54—at the time, the most celebrated disco in the world—where he was introduced to Troy Donahue, the prettyboy heartthrob of the late 50s and early 60s. Troy had always been Merv's dream fantasy. Merv, like many others of Troy's fans, overlooked his lack of acting talent and reveled instead in his image as a male pinup and pop icon.

Merv had heard enticing stories about Troy from Henry Willson, who already took credit for discovering a thennew actor on the circuit, Merle Johnson Jr. It had been Henry who had changed Merle's name to Troy Donahue. Originally, he'd thought of naming him Paris, after the lover of Helen of Troy, but then he concluded, “No celebrity can be named Paris. That's a city in France. Let's go with Troy and throw in the Donahue.”

“Don't mix me up with Tab Hunter,” Troy said to Merv that night at Studio 54. “He's the other blond, blueeyed actor. I'm the straight one.”

At that point Liza Minnelli danced by, stopping to evaluate Troy with her eagle eye, and then whispered in Merv's ear. “The boy's a real looker—go for it!”

When Merv met Troy, his career was fading. He wanted work and Andy had a film project in mind. Before auditioning Troy, Andy had tossed the idea to three other stars, including Mick Jagger, and each of them had rejected it.

Merv was astonished when he learned more about Andy's film proposal. For the entire length of the movie, Andy wanted the camera to focus only on Troy's facial expression as he received a blowjob from a sixteen-year-old Vietnamese boy, hailed at the time as the most talented fellatio artist in Greenwich Village.

Addictively exhibitionistic:
Gypsy Rose Lee

At first Troy thought Andy was joking. “That's the picture you want me to star in?” an incredulous Troy asked. As the evening progressed, however, and Andy kept pitching the proposal, Troy came to realize that the filmmaker was serious. “You're out of your mind,” Troy said. “There's no way in hell I would do that!” He rose from the sofa and headed for the door.

“Oh, fuck,” Andy said. “I really wanted Troy but I'm sure Joe Dallesandro will do it. I've always been fascinated by my superstar. I did my first painting of him. That was before Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe.”

“You've already shot *Blow Job*,” Merv said. “You don't need to do it again.” He was referring to a film which had starred DeVeren Bookwalter, who at the time was supposedly receiving oral sex from filmmaker Willard Maas, although the camera never tilts down to see the action.

That night at Studio 54 was not the last time Merv would see Troy. Within a few months, Merv received a call from Henry Willson. “Your dream has come true. Troy Donahue is coming to New York. He's completely broke and needs a place to stay for about a month until he can land a job. He also needs someone to pay his expenses.”

“Troy Donahue,” Merv said in astonishment. “Old and gray, pot-bellied and bald, that hunk can put his shoes under my bed any night he wants.”

“Oh, and could you part with a thousand dollars a week in spending money?” Henry asked. “I mean, this star of yesterday is really broke.”

“Tell Boy Troy he's got a deal,” Merv said. “Send him on.”

Merv's dream did not come true with Troy. It was more like a nightmare. When the actor arrived at Merv's apartment, he was deep into drug addiction and alcoholism. When they had sex together, Merv closed his eyes and tried to imagine what Troy used to look like in *A Summer Place* (1959).

Merv later told Hadley, “Troy has a hard time getting it up. And when he does manage to get it up, there ain't much there.”

Troy's worst days were yet to come. In the 1980s, he was discovered sleeping in a cardboard box in Central Park.

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The Merv Griffin Show on CBS was simply not working out. Merv had to do something to save the show and his

own career. “I knew I had to come up with something, but I didn't know what. Then one afternoon an idea occurred to me. It was an impulse, but I acted on it at once. I decided to return to my roots.”

National pinup and
ruined teen idol
Troy Donohue

Without bothering to go home to pack, Merv called his wife from the airport to tell her he was flying to California, address uncertain. He promised he'd stay in touch.

Landing in Los Angeles, he rented a red convertible and drove to Malibu, where he talked to a real estate agent who rented him a house on the beach that was often leased to movie stars for offtherecord weekends, especially if those weekends were for gay old times.

On the fourth night, Liberace sent him what he called a “party favor.”

The “prize” Liberace shipped over to Merv was John C. Holmes, a wellhung actor popularly known as both “Johnny Wadd” and “The King of Porn.” Merv had already seen three of his movies.

Pop journalist John McAbee once wrote, “In the world of dicks, John Holmes was the DDay, the 1969 NASA moon landing, the JFK assassination, and the invention of television all rolled up into one big, giant cock. His penis truly defined a dick generation that came, but hasn't gone yet.”

Hadley later reported that Merv claimed that his weekend with the star was “the wildest of my life.” As a favor to his usually faithful Hadley, Merv promised that, “You can have Johnny, too, but only after I've finished with him.”

“Always sloppy seconds for me,” Hadley protested.

After that weekend, Merv called Liberace, who was vacationing in Palm Springs. “Thanks, but no thanks,” he said to his longtime friend.

“You didn't enjoy it?” Liberace asked. “I sure did. But then I can take a man's arm up my overworked ass. Where are you calling from?”

“I'm in the hospital about to get stitches!”

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When his California binge was over, Merv flew back to New York to announce to CBS that he was moving his show's base of operations to Television City in Los Angeles, even though it meant abandoning the network's two-million dollar investment in restoring the Cort Theater. He was convinced he'd attract better and more interesting guests on the West Coast, where he wouldn't have to compete with so many other talking heads like Johnny Carson. “Nearly all guests wanted to go on Carson,” Merv claimed. “But if they couldn't get a spot on Carson, Frost, or Cavett, they'd come to me.”

“King of Porn”
John C. Holmes
(Johnny Wadd)

Merv's decision to move his show from New York to Los Angeles forced him to re-evaluate the role of Arthur Treacher within the show's revised lineup. For months, CBS had been pressuring Merv to replace Arthur with a younger, betterlooking sidekick. When Merv approached Arthur with the news, he was relieved to hear that he did not want to "move to a place where the earth shakes. Virginia and I want to remain in the East." He was referring to his wife, Virginia Taylor, whom he had married back in 1940.

Briefly, Merv supported the idea of naming Desi Arnaz Jr., the theneighteenyearold son of Lucille Ball and her estranged husband, Desi Arnaz, as a replacement. But eventually, the suits at CBS decided that Desi wasn't the right choice. Despite CBS's objections to Desi Jr., he did collaborate temporarily, cohosting a few of Merv's shows.

From his home back on the East Coast, Arthur watched Desi Jr. in dismay, horrified at the show's new direction. Fortunately, he didn't need the income from Merv any more, as he'd signed to be the spokesman and figurehead for a fastfood chain (Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips) which by then encompassed at least five hundred locations throughout the United States.

As Arthur aged, his loyalty and enthusiasm for Merv waned, and a barely controlled bitterness set in. In a final interview, he referred to Merv as "that wretched little man."

Merv's second choice as a replacement for Arthur Treacher had been Sonny and Cher. The proposal, like many that had preceded it, elicited strenuous objections from CBS, but this time Merv persisted, and eventually won.

Ironically, CBS was so impressed that eventually, they hired Sonny and Cher as hosts of their own variety show. "They became the hottest act on TV," Merv said. "My judgment prevailed once again over CBS."

Merv was disappointed when his longtime producer, Bob Shanks, announced that he preferred to remain in the East. As a result, Merv hired a new producing team, Ernest Chambers and Saul Ilson. Other than that, however, he managed to retain most of his key staff members, paying the expenses of their moves to Los Angeles and helping them find homes there.

One viewer summed up the aftereffects of Merv's westward migration to California. "When Merv was in New York he brought on people like Norman Mailer and Jimmy Breslin. I also remember a special show that was broadcast from the streets of Harlem when John Lindsay was mayor. 'Give a Damn' was the big slogan in the city. Burt Lancaster was there as a guest. But when Merv went Hollywood, boy did he go off the deep end. From Mailer and Breslin to Charo. Wow!"

In December of 1975, Bob Shanks called Merv from New York to tell him that Arthur had died of a heart attack. Merv later recalled, "It was the saddest day of my life. I cried and cried some more and then made a decision. No one could replace Arthur. I'll just go out there at the beginning of every show and introduce myself to the audience."

And so he did for the run of the show.

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Merv's stint with CBS lasted for thirty tortuous months, and Merv's move to the West Coast, in clear opposition to the objections of the network suits, marked what Merv called "the beginning of the end."

Public reaction to Merv's move to Los Angeles evolved rapidly. Merv rented a house temporarily on North Bedford Drive in Beverly Hills. On his first morning there, some tourist buses stopped in front of the house. "My God," he said, "they've already found out where I live."

That afternoon, however, he discovered that he wasn't the main attraction. He'd rented the house where the boyfriend of Lana Turner, gangster Johnny Stompanato, had been stabbed to death. Cheryl Crane, Lana's daughter—a teenager at the time — was blamed for the stabbing, but Hollywood insiders such as Howard Hughes and Frank Sinatra knew that it was Lana herself who killed Stompanato, with Cheryl being blamed because she'd get off with a lighter sentence.

From his new base in "the murder house," Merv had more time to go swimming, boating, and to play tennis, as he'd done in his youth. He was still battling "the suits" at CBS whose roster of complaints had expanded to include the way Eva Gabor exposed so much of her bosom, and Merv's bringing the outspoken cast of *All in the Family* onto one of his shows. Right before that sitcom shot to number one, the executives at CBS informed Merv that it was about to be removed from the airwaves.

Merv's ratings continued to fall, and as a result, he lost stations. Behind the scenes, CBS plotted to replace his show with other contenders, one proposal which focused coverage, instead, on current artsindustry news. In a format evocative of *Broadway Open House*, it would have featured a theatrical program of breezy chitchat and musical numbers.

As his relationship with CBS deteriorated, Merv began secret negotiations with Metromedia for syndicated, nationwide broadcasting of *The Merv Griffin Show*, with less censorship and with less programrelated interference from “the suits” upstairs. The president of the company told Merv, “You're welcome aboard at any time.”

Meanhile, after months of private debates among management, CBS lowered the boom on Merv, firing him. By ending his contract in February of 1972, prior to its expiration, CBS was forced to pay him $250,000 in severance pay. That was in the dollars of the early 70s, which would be equivalent to about a million dollars today

CBS's management team was shocked to learn that Merv had already negotiated a deal with Metromedia, where *The Merv Griffin Show* would remain as a staple fixture for the next thirteen years. “I'd no sooner left CBS than I was popping up on TV screens everywhere, based on the syndication successes of Metromedia. I won that round with CBS.”

His newly reconfigured show made its debut for Metromedia on March 13, 1972 at the old Hollywood Palace Theater. Because of its ongoing direction by Dick Carson, Johnny Carson's brother, it seemed to carry an automatic, inbuilt form of oneupmanship for Merv against Johnny. Merv's producer was Bob Murphy, with Mort Lindsey once again conducting an eighteenpiece orchestra. A thinner, more visibly happy Merv greeted his guests, who on that important day included Milton Berle, Dinah Shore, Dom DeLuise, Angie Dickinson, and Dionne Warwick.

As one of the many regrettable administrative policies in the history of television, nearly all of Merv's film archives from the thirty months of shows and interviews he did in association with CBS were erased.

The “suits” decided to erase the tapes and use them again to record other shows. “Some of the great moments in television were lost forever,” Merv lamented when he heard about CBS's “tragic mistake, an action that showed CBS's utter contempt for what I'd done.”

“CBS could have made a fortune on those old tapes,” Merv claimed. “I'll give you just one example—there are so many more. One of my greatest shows was when I reassembled, on air, the stars of all those *Road* movies. Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, and Bing Crosby were wonderful. It was a moment lost to TV history unless somewhere, some place out there in America, somebody recorded our show.”

In 1973, following Merv's example, Johnny Carson also moved his show westward, in his case to “beautiful downtown Burbank.” Merv didn't feel the competition with Carson as intensely as he had before. Carson still went on weeknights at 11:30pm, with Merv taking the afternoon slot.

Once, perhaps as a means of stirring up a bit of drama, Dick Carson arranged for his brother, Johnny Carson, to appear on Merv's show as an unannounced surprise guest. After Merv recovered from his shock, he sat down and did a friendly hourlong interview with Carson.

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In spite of its failure under the CBS umbrella, Merv Griffin Productions continued to grow, with nearly fourhundred employees plus an annual gross that, in 1970, came close to ten million dollars. The company's assets included not only TV game shows, but radio stations, real estate (some of it platinum and within Rockefeller Center), and a hightech outfit known as Racing Patrol, Inc., developers of a closedcircuit TV system used at racetracks throughout the country.

Merv's drinking sometimes led to bizarre behavior on the air. On one show with Vincent Price that focused on the actor's talents as a gourmet cook, Eva Gabor and Merv drank wine until Merv got bombed. “Quite accidentally, I spilled wine on Eva's décolletage,” he said. “On another night I was singing with the microphone over my head.”

Seeking treatment, it was revealed that he had hypoglycemia. “I had to give up booze,” he said. “And whereas I could live with that, my having to give up Rocky Road ice cream was more than I could bear.”

In Los Angeles, Merv began to relish life as a bachelor, enjoying the privacy the sprawling city afforded. George Cukor, who lived near Merv, became a close friend. Merv got invited to the director's allmale parties. George was something of a procurer, introducing Merv to a steady supply of some of the most handsome young men in Hollywood.

Merv often took his choice for the night, perhaps an actor or model, back to the small cottage in the hills above the Sunset Strip. The house had once been occupied by Susan Hayward, who had died of cancer in 1975, no doubt from making the John Wayne film, *The Conqueror*, on locations that were very close to a highly radioactive site, a former atomic test site in Nevada.

In October of 1974, Merv knew that he'd “arrived” when his name became a permanent part of the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He was number 1601, and his star still shines there today.

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Merv made it a point, after his return to Los Angeles, to visit Rock Hudson. Accompanied by his pal Roddy McDowall, he found Rock “in a panic” about having turned fifty. “Can you believe that?”Rock asked Merv. “Me, fifty? Rock Hudson stands for youthful virility.”

Rock and Roddy shared memories of a birthday bash that had recently been staged for Rock at his house. The band hired for the night struck up “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby” as Rock made his entrance at the top of the stairs. He strutted down the grand staircase in a diaper as friends who included Carol Burnett and Buddy Hackett howled with laughter.

After an evening of memories and drinking, Rock invited Roddy and Merv to join him upstairs in bed. “Let's find out if we middleaged old farts can still cut the mustard.”

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It was a sad day when Merv was reunited with his old friend, Henry Willson, who had been moved into the Motion Picture Country Home for Indigent Show People at Woodland Hills. “I'm reduced to charity,” he told Merv. “It's all gone now.”

They talked nostalgically of the beautiful hunks they'd shared in common. But there was bitterness associated with Henry's memories of Rock Hudson. He'd never forgiven Rock for deserting him.

As Henry confided to Merv, he'd continued to live for a few years as richly as he had during his heyday by selling off his silverware, antiques, and other valuables.

Before driving away, Merv left Henry five hundred dollars as a nostringsattached gift. On November 2, 1978, he was saddened to learn about Henry's death at the age of 67 from cirrhosis of the liver.

Rock sent flowers to Henry's funeral. Merv did too, but did not identify where they had come from, as it was still considered dangerous for one's career to be associated too closely with Henry Willson.

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Merv was particularly enchanted by athlete Jim Palmer, whom he invited onto his show. Palmer had built a worldwide fan base thanks partly to his ads for Jockey underwear, especially the tightfitting bikini kind. Merv said that the sight of Palmer in his bikini underwear “gives new meaning to the term ‘pitcher's mound.’”

Before the camera, within the context of his show, Merv urged Palmer to take off his pants and reveal to the studio audience what underwear he was wearing that day. Palmer refused but did admit that he filled out his jockey pouch with no padding from wardrobe. Merv looked disappointed when the star pitcher for the Baltimore Orioles wouldn't perform a striptease.

Merv continued his fascination with underwear models, sometimes bringing young men onto the show who looked like they didn't really know why they were there. Jeff Aquilon, a Bruce Weber model and one of the most famous male images of the 70s and early 80s, was Merv's alltime fantasy male. “His rear end is classic,” Merv told Hadley. “There's nothing wrong with his front part either.”

In the late 1970s, Merv had first seen a fashion spread of the handsome beefy model in *GQ*. He was modeling a pair of Speedo briefs. “Daddy, buy me some of that,” he said to Hadley. Merv was also shown a flagrantly erotic photo of Jeff reclining on a bed, wearing seductively unbuttoned long johns.

Merv tried, perhaps a bit too strenuously, to attach social significance to Jeff's appearance on his show. Merv had been told about how fashion photographer Bruce Weber, in *GQ* 's own words, had discovered a college water polo player from California and in the pages of *GQ* redefined the American man. “We changed forever the look of magazines, photography, and advertising,” Weber said. He claimed that Jeff became “the most famous face—and body—of the modern *GQ*. Ah yes, I seem to recall his physical splendor—in intimate detail!”

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Merv had stayed in constant touch with the porn star, Cal Culver, and when he landed in California, he often

spent nights with Merv. Cal had continued to arrange introductions, hooking Merv up with handsome young actors and models. “A lot of studs back then wanted to meet THE Merv Griffin,” Cal said. “And Merv continued to be generous with me for the work I did for him.”

After Rock Hudson and Liberace tired of Cal, he went through the predictable conquests in Hollywood, including Peter Lawford, George Cukor, and “the usual suspects.” He'd even received a call from Sammy Davis Jr. who informed Cal that “I'm partial to blonds of any sex.”

Cal related to Merv some of the details associated with his seduction by George Cukor. “I managed to get through a night with old liver lips. He was repulsive but I kept my hardon.”

“It's unbelievable some of the calls I get from stars,” Cal told Merv. “I didn't know some of these guys were secretly gay. Orson Welles, Richard Harris. Even Christopher Reeve. Who'd have thought it? Someday I'll tell you what Steve McQueen wanted me to do.”

Cal's greatest dream was to play the runner, Billy Siuve, in *The Front Runner*, a bestselling novel by Patricia Nell Warren. Paul Newman had acquired the screen rights and had announced that he was going to play the gay coach. “Paul and I have been going at it like gangbusters,” Cal said. “You know, of course, that he's bi. All those rumors are true.”

According to Merv,
“Jim Palmer in bikini briefs gives
new meaning to the term
‘pitcher's mound.’”

The movie, regrettably, was never made. And although he'd seriously considered the project, Newman, in Cal's words, “chickened out.”

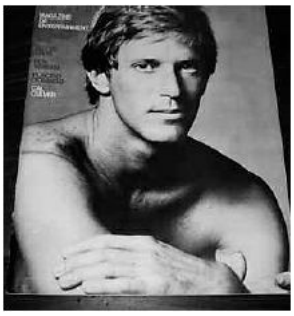
There were high hopes at the time that Cal would get the leading part in the movie adaptation of Mary Renault's novel, *The King Must Die*. “This Greek gentleman, who's really interested in me, has purchased the rights. He's agreed to star me in spite of my background in porn.” Regrettably, this became just another impossible dream that never came true for Cal.

In 1976, Cal told Merv that it was almost certain that he'd be awarded the protagonist's role of Numie, the male hustler, in the Key Westbased film, *The Last Resort*, starring, among others, Eartha Kitt. The film was based on a steamy, widely publicized novel by Darwin Porter, *Butterflies in Heat*, which Manor Reviews had described as:

“THE MOST SCORCHING NOVEL OF THE BIZARRE, THE FLAMBOYANT, AND THE CORRUPT SINCE MIDNIGHT COWBOY. THE STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL BLOND HUSTLER, NUMIE CHASE, HAS COME TO THE END OF THE LINE. HERE, IN THE SEARING HEAT OF TROPICAL TORTUGA KEY, HE AROUSES PASSIONS IN SIX FLAMBOYANT BUT VULNERABLE PEOPLE THAT EXPLODE UNDER THE BLOODRED SUN.”

After several “casting couch” auditions with Cal, the film's producer, Jerry Wheeler, decided to cast another blond male, supermodel Matt (“The Marlboro Man”) Collins, into the role instead. His reasoning? “Having a reallife porno star playing the romantic lead in *Butterflies* would send the wrong signal—after all, we're not making *that* kind of movie.”

Resentful that another chance for legitimate film success had eluded him, Cal briefly toyed with the idea of writing an autobiographical memoir. He had noted the fame and success of such roughly equivalent tell-all books as Michael Kearns' *The Happy Hustler* and Marc Stevens' aptly named confessional, *10½*. Cal wanted to produce a memoir, too, but in a style radically different from the others.



Cal Culver After Dark

"I want to depict two different *personas* in the book," he told Darwin Porter. "I want to write from the viewpoint of both Casey Donovan and Cal Culver. Casey will be the hustler, who will do anything, either on screen or at private parties, as long as he gets paid. Cal, however, will represent the serious side of me, a legitimate actor who became corrupted. A man who wanted to lead a quiet, respectable life with his lover, Tom Tryon."

Cal was referring to his older companion, the handsome Yaleeducated actor and bestselling novelist, Tom Tryon. He had played important roles in Darryl F. Zanuck's *The Longest Day* (1962) and in Otto Preminger's *The Cardinal* (1963).

Tryon had later publicly referred to Preminger as "a Nazi." After filming *The Cardinal*, Tryon had suffered a nervous breakdown and had spent time in a psychiatric ward.

In Key West, during his attempt to nab a leading role in *Butterflies in Heat/The Last Resort*, Cal relayed in great detail his wild adventures as a star fucker, with a special focus on his affairs with Merv Griffin and Rock Hudson.

He also revealed that he'd had a brief affair with the older, Swedenborn megastar Ingrid Bergman, "even though pussy isn't my thing," he said. "She taught me everything I know about being a star," Cal said, citing his brief onstage appearance with her in a revival in the early 1970s of George Bernard Shaw's 1901 drama, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion.*

Although Cal struggled for several months to find a voice and a market for the memoir he had threatened, its content and style were weak, unfocused, and uninteresting. "I guess I'm not that great at selfanalysis," he finally admitted. Much to the relief of Merv and other clients across the country, Cal's tellall book project was eventually abandoned

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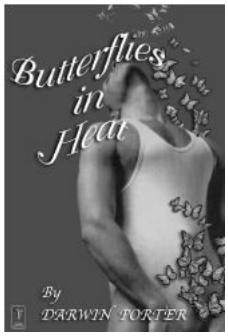
As the 70s seguéd into the 80s, Merv and Cal stayed in touch by phone. Merv was mainly interested in hearing what movie stars Cal had seduced, although Cal also took the opportunity to relate many of the manic and usually fruitless details of his fastfading career. It became obvious to Merv and everyone else that Cal, to an increasing degree, was walking on the shadowy side of the boulevard of broken dreams.



During the final months of Cal's life, he called upon Merv for a favor. Sexual relations between the two men had long ago ceased, but Cal wanted his old friend to devote the theme of one of his upcoming shows to AIDS. Cal agreed to appear on the show and confess to the world that he too had AIDS. "Your friend, Ronald Reagan, never mentions the subject," Cal told Merv. "Someone has to. It's the Black Death, and it's queer—and it's here to stay."

On Sunday, August 10, 1987, some unknown associate of Merv's called to tell him that Cal had died of a lung infection associated with AIDS, in Inverness, Florida, after a stint as a spokesman for the Gay Men's Health Crisis,

advocating techniques to avoid the spread of the disease.

In the wake of his death, Cal was eulogized by Jay McKenna in *The Advocate*, who described him as a “gay Adam, the first widely embraced gay symbol to appear during the post-Stonewall years.”

For obvious reasons, Merv did not attend Cal's funeral at a church in Greenwich Village.

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Merv's most lucrative idea for a TV quiz show originated with a game he used to play with his sister in the back seat of the family car during long rides with his parents in California. The game was called “Hangman.” Decades later, during a staff meeting, he proposed the adaptation of this contest into a televised game show. The final touch came when Merv remembered an annual church bazaar in San Mateo when a giant wheel used to spin around like a roulette wheel in a casino with various prizes written on the wheel's various spokes.

From this rather casual staff meeting, the concept for *Wheel of Fortune* was born. Millions of dollars of profits lay in the future.

Wheel of Fortune eventually became so profitable that, for large amounts of money, Merv was able to license international variations of the game in countries as diverse as Norway, Peru, Taiwan, and France.

Inaugurated in 1975 on NBC Daytime TV, *Wheel* didn't explode in popularity until a nighttime syndicated edition was conceived in 1983. The show became solidly profitable in 1984, and it's been going strong ever since. The show's 26th nighttime season, by then within the orbit of Sony Pictures Studio, premiered on September 8, 2008. Its theme song, “Changing Keys,” was written by Merv himself for the show's 198389 run. Since then, that same song has been officially adapted into at least three different musical configurations.

On *Wheel*, three contestants—or in some cases, three separate pairs of contestants—compete against each other in finding a solution to a word puzzle. The name of the show derives from a large wheel whose lettering determines the prizes and dollar amounts won or lost by the contestants.

The original host of *Wheel of Fortune* was Chuck Woolery. A handsome, devout, born again Christian from Kentucky, he was not always Merv's cuppa, as Merv himself put it. Woolery's religious background didn't prevent him from entering into four marriages.

Woolery remained as host of the show until his contract expired in the early 80s. Originally Merv paid him $65,000 a year. As incentive to sign on again, Woolery demanded $500,000. Merv came back with a counteroffer of $400,000 a year, which Woolery turned down, later confessing, “I made a big mistake.”

Throughout his gig on *Wheel of Fortune,* Woolery had remained an enthusiastic bass fisherman with a talent for selling his own line of fishing products, and he had an obsession with jewelry. He eventually amassed more than four hundred diamond rings and a bass guitar encrusted with diamonds. When Merv learned that Woolery had rejected his offer, he said, “Let him go fishing. We'll find someone even better.”

Anyone who's ever seen *Wheel of Fortune* is likely to remember the show's svelte and enigmatic assistant, Vanna White, whose every sinuous movement seemed to celebrate the spinning wheel's drama and propel the game forward.

The day he met her, Merv selected Vanna from a lineup of other contestants, and later said, “Even I could not have predicted the cult of Vannamania.” Although treated as a campy joke in some circles, the beautifully coiffed and elegantly dressed Vanna soon became indelibly associated around the globe as a key element in the ongoing allure of *Wheel of Fortune*.

Hailing from South Carolina, where she was known in high school as “Vanna Banana,” she made her first national television appearance on June 20, 1980 on an episode of the game show *The Price Is Right*. Vanna's first episode, where she functioned as Pat Sajak's assistant presenter, and a replacement for the show's original hostess, Susan Stafford, was aired on December 12, 1982, and she remained as a highly visible component of the show until its cancellation in 1991.

When the show moved to a prime time evening slot in September of 1983, Vanna was credited in part with making *Wheel* the highest rated syndicated program in broadcast television. Yet in fact, she rarely spoke, and her role in the show was almost purely decorative.

She was candid about her role on *Wheel*, claiming that “I don't have the most intellectual job in the world, but I do have to know the letters.” She also said, “And I enjoy getting dressed up as a Barbie doll.”

In the early 1980s, during her initial involvement in the show, Merv had been impressed with Vanna's handsome

boyfriend, John Gibson, a former Chippendale dancer. Acopy of *Playgirl* had featured him as a nude centerfold. “I could go for the hunk myself,” Merv told Hadley. Vanna became engaged to Gibson, but tragically, he died in a plane crash in 1986.

In 1987, Vanna released her autobiography, *Vanna Speaks!*, and it became an immediate bestseller. That same year she was featured in a *Playboy* pictorial. The photos of her wearing seethrough lingerie were shot prior to the debut of her career on *Wheel of Fortune*. Since she'd signed a release at the time the pictures were taken, there was no way legally that she could prevent the magazine from publishing these revealing photos.

In 1992, Vanna entered the *Guinness Book of World Records*, as the globe's most frequent “clapper.” Vanna puts her hands together for contestants some 28,080 times a season—an average of 720 times per show.

Always proud of the fact he had personally selected Vanna as his original choice for *Wheel*, Merv, with Pat Sajak and Alex Trebek, showed up when Vanna was awarded the 2,309th Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

A former TV weatherman, Pat Sajak, the son of a Polish American trucking foreman, took over for Woolery in 1981. Merv, who appreciated his jocular TV style, had personally selected him for the job. Sajak functioned as host of the daytime version of *Wheel of Fortune* between December 28, 1981 and January 9, 1989, and as the host of the syndicated evening version of *Wheel of Fortune* beginning on September 19, 1983.

Previously, Sajak's bid for his own latenight talk show had failed. Pitted unsuccessfully against Johnny Carson, Sajak's show had aired between January 9, 1989 and April 13, 1990, when CBS dropped it. “You were more successful than I was in battling Carson,” Sajak told Merv. “My gut feeling is that the only way to beat Carson is for him to retire.”

Like Merv, Sajak was a conservative Republican, and as such, they rarely conflicted over politics.

After Merv sold his rights to *Wheel of Fortune* and no longer functioned as Sajak's boss, they remained lifelong friends. Sajak visited Merv in the hospital shortly before he died. Merv's final words to his longtime collaborator were, “Goodbye, Pat. Give my love to Lesly and the kids.”

Spinmeisters:
(left to right) **Vanna White, Pat Sajak, Chuck Woolery**

“When you were with Merv, you rubbed shoulders with the most exciting and famous people on the planet,” Sajak claimed after Merv's death. “He was a biggerthanlife person. The solar system of which he was the center was filled with bright stars who seemed to gravitate toward him. Whether on a TV talk show or in a living room, no one could make you feel more alive than Merv Griffin. His entire life was a celebration.”

Between 1999 and the publication of this book, Harry Friedman was producer of both *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy!*, earning credit for many of the innovative ideas that kept both shows fresh and vital. During his childhood in Omaha, Friedman to a large extent witnessed the birth of television from the vantage point of his father's appliance store in Omaha. His father was the first retailer in the area to sell TV sets.

Thanks to his involvement in Merv Griffin Productions, Friedman is a seventime Emmy Award winner. In September of 2006, and under his direction, both *Wheel* and *Jeopardy!* became the first syndicated TV shows to broadcast in High Definition.

In 2003, Friedman lifted the fiveday limit for contestants on *Jeopardy!*, allowing returning champions to continue playing as long as they remained winners. This change of the rules led to the famous winning streak of Ken Jennings, a software engineer from Utah. In a historymaking, seventyfourday consecutive run, he won $2.5 million. During his appearance, viewership increased by thirty percent, leading to *Jeopardy!* becoming the single most talked about TV show in America.

In its 20072008 season, *Wheel of Fortune* became the longest running syndicated TV program in history, celebrating twentyfive seasons, during which $180 million worth of cash and prizes had been distributed to its contestants.

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As the decades moved closer to the millennium, Merv's socalled “movie career” sputtered on. In most of the films he agreed to appear in, he was either cast as himself or appeared in brief walkons. Sometimes only his voice was used, evoking the screen credits he'd compiled during his 1950s career at Warner Brothers.

In 1976, Merv returned to the screen in *Two-Minute-Warning*, a thriller that starred Charlton Heston, whom Merv had not seen since that day he came on to him in Hollywood back when they were struggling actors. No mention was made of that incident.

The film was about a psychotic man who's being hunted by both the police and a SWAT team. Armed with a rifle, he goes on a sniping spree. A great star of the 1940s, Walter Pidgeon, had been cast in a minor role as a pickpocket. Ruefully, Walter told Merv, “Show business sure does have its ups and downs, doesn't it?”

So what did Merv do in this cliffhanger? He appeared as himself, singing the National Anthem.

In *One Trick Pony* (1980), Paul Simon was cast as an aging rock star trying to write and record a new album in the face of an indifferent record label, a failing marriage, and a talentless producer. Some critics suggested that the film made many references to Paul's own life. For reasons known only to himself, Merv appeared, uncredited, as an *à capella* singer. He jokingly told Hadley, “I turned down the role of a blonde girl groupie. I didn't like the wig.”

On the set, Merv encountered Tiny Tim playing himself. “Tiny, what are you doing in this thing?” Merv asked him.

“Mr. Griffin,” Tiny Tim said, “I need the money. But I might ask, what are *you* doing in this thing?”

A Jerry Lewis movie, *Slapstick (Of Another Kind)*, whose plot had been adapted from a story by Kurt Vonnegut, premiered in 1982. The voice (but not the image) of Orson Welles intoned the words of the “Father of the Aliens.” It was Welles who persuaded Merv to accept the role of “Anchorman.” The plot, Merv found out on the day he showed up for work, focused on a rich, beautiful couple who give birth to deformed (and alien) twins. When their heads are together, and when they concentrate on a shared goal, they turn out to be the smartest kids on the planet.

“Oh, my God,” Merv told his friends. “I've bottomed out. I'm appearing in a Jerry Lewis movie. If my family finds out, they'll think I've gone on relief.”

In 1983, Ron Clark wrote and directed a film called *The Funny Farm* with a talented cast that included Peter Aykroyd, Miles Chapin, Jack Carter, and Eileen Brennan. The film was about a group of young entertainers performing at a comedy club called The Funny Farm. Clark asked Merv if he'd perform in the film as “The Voice of Merv Griffin.”

“Why not?” Merv told Clark. “No one does Merv's voice better than me.”

In 1985, *Alice in Wonderland*, based on a work by the Victorian writer Lewis Carroll, brought Merv to the silver screen once again. It wasn't the film but the cast that Merv enjoyed. It included Shelley Winters playing “The Dodo Bird” and Sammy Davis Jr. as “The Caterpillar.” Merv got to meet and talk to Martha Raye, who played, in what turned out to be her final screen appearance, “The Duchess.”

In November of 1998, Merv appeared in an episode of the TV series *Hercules*. He told his friends, “If you don't watch it, there will be no hard feelings.”

At the millennium's end, Merv decided that he wanted to be cast by director Harvey Frost in a comedy/drama called *Murder at the Cannes Film Festival*. Because Merv was one of the film's executive producers, Frost could hardly say no. Released in 2000, the film starred French Stewart, with much of the attention going to Bo Derek in a supporting role.

After the release of the film, Merv told Eva Gabor, “I think I'll abandon my film career. Or has it abandoned me? Okay, so I never became as big as Debbie Reynolds. But look what happened to her. She ended up having to sleep in her car.”

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Every year for an eightweek period, Merv left his luxurious Trans-American Video Studios (TAV) in Hollywood, and moved his staff and base of operations to Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

One of the guests Merv persuaded to appear at Caesars was Bing Crosby. “Bing wanted to visit this dental expert in Vegas. I called the pennypinching singer and agreed to pay his airfare if he'd appear at Caesars—and he agreed to it. He got his teeth fixed, he sang at Caesars, and flew home on my dime.”

Merv's most dangerous onair moment was associated with the appearance of Siegfried and Roy as guests on his Las Vegasbased show. At one point in the segment, one of their Bengal tigers escaped, leaving Merv alone, on the set, with the potentially lethal cat. “The cameraman ran and the orchestra fled into the dressing room,” Merv said. “The damn tiger sat on my foot. Siegfried and Roy, who are just fabulous, started talking in German. Finally, they got the beast to walk away. That's why I'm still alive today.”

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One day, Merv told his thenproducer, Bob Shanks, that he wanted Salvador Dalí, the mad Catalán surrealist painter, to be interviewed on his show. “He's an odd bird. No one had a clue as to what he'd say or do,” Merv said. Dalí, however, agreed that he'd appear on the show after filming a TV commercial for Lanvin chocolates.

The artist arrived with a chairsized leather replica of a rhinoceros, and refused to sit on anything else. On the show, he uttered a series of statements that some viewers found baffling: “The only difference between me and the surrealists is that I am a surrealist. Dalí is immortal and will not die.”

Backstage, he was even more entertaining than before the TV cameras. Talking with Merv, Dalí seemed fascinated by masturbation, letting it be known that back in 1929, he'd named one of his most celebrated paintings *The Great Masturbator*.

Dalí invited Merv to visit him at his studio on Spain's Costa Brava, north of Barcelona. “I have this sculpture which depicts a large armpit of the Christ figure. If you visit, I'll want you to strip off all your clothes and lie in a fetal position in this armpit. I'll take photographs of you as you masturbate. I ask many of my male friends to do this for me.”

“I'll get back to you on that,” Merv said.

Before leaving, Dalí kissed Merv on the lips, using tongue. He also gave him a miniature painting of an erect penis. “It looks very small in the painting, but actually in perspective, the penis is fourteen inches when fully erect,” Dalí claimed.

Merv took the penis home, but it was later stolen, perhaps by an overnight trick.

Merv was furious. “Who knows?” he asked. “That God damn penis might have brought me three million dollars one day.”

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Merv once told some friends that Zsa Zsa Gabor was more fascinating than Eva. Previously, columnist Earl Wilson had told Merv, “Zsa Zsa is unbelievable—you can't believe a damn thing the *dollink* says. You can't even trust her on when she lost her virginity. Once, she told me she lost it to her first husband, a Turkish diplomat, Burhan Belge. On another occasion, she told me that as a teenager she surrendered the cherry to the liberal Turkish dictator, Kemal Atatürk.”

“What I found the most fascinating,” Merv said, “was her marriage to Jack Ryan. Do you know he's the guy who invented the Barbie doll?”

Merv once tried to compile a list of Zsa Zsa's lovers. They included the most notorious and fascinating playboys in the world—Rafael Trujillo Jr. (son of the dictator of the Dominican Republic); Prince Aly Khan (the playboy and spiritual leader of the world's Ismailian Muslims who had married Rita Hayworth); and Porfirio Rubirosa, (the Dominican diplomat and playboy who had married both of the world's richest women, Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton and tobacco heiress Doris Duke).

Merv's list also included an armada of actors and singers, ranging from British imports Richard Burton and Sean Connery to singers Frank Sinatra and Mario Lanza, with whom she'd costarred in *For the First Time* in 1959. The most intriguing man on Zsa Zsa's list was President John F. Kennedy. “When Jackie found out,” Zsa Zsa told Merv, “she refused to speak to me after that.” Reportedly, Zsa Zsa also sampled the wares of Jackie's second husband, Aristotle Onassis.

After Zsa Zsa's final marriage to the German socalled nobleman, Frederick von Anhalt, Merv with his tongue in his cheek introduced her as Princess von Anhalt, the Duchess of Saxony.

He could spend hours listening to Zsa Zsa's stories of her conquests, and he was equally enthralled with the men who didn't hit it lucky. “I turned down Howard Hughes because Lana Turner told me he gave her syphilis. When I

was dancing close to Errol Flynn, he put my hand inside his zipper. ‘As you can clearly feel,’ he told me, ‘I have something in common with the stallions on my property.’”

Zsa Zsa laughed when she told Merv that Wayne Hays, a Democratic senator from Ohio, on the Senate floor had referred to her as “the most expensive courtesan since Madame de Pompadour.”

She also confided in Merv that her older sister, Magda, had married her discarded exhusband, George Sanders. During the heat of passion on their wedding night, George had telephoned Zsa Zsa for comfort and advice. “The marriage went downhill after that,” Zsa Zsa said.

In another gossipy tidbit, Zsa Zsa revealed that she had known Princess Grace—whom she referred to as “a bricklayer's daughter from Philadelphia”—for years. Both of them had been stars—or starlets in Zsa Zsa's case—at MGM. “She had more boyfriends in a month than I had in a lifetime,” Zsa Zsa rather inaccurately claimed.

She also asserted, utterly without satire, that Prince Rainier had wanted to marry her instead of Grace. “Actually, he really wanted to marry Marilyn Monroe.”

Merv's Mad Europeans:
Left: Catalán surrealist **Salvador Dalí**. Center: **Merv** with **Zsa Zsa Gabor**

Right: Zsa Zsa predicted that her sister Eva, if Merv would marry her, would become a 21st-century version of **Madame de Pompadour** (mistress to French king Louis XV)

At any dinner party, Zsa Zsa tended to be more outrageous than she ever was on Merv's television show. “Both Mike Todd and Richard Burton told me that I was far better in bed than Elizabeth Taylor. Of course, Nicky Hilton, my soninlaw and Liz's first husband, preferred my lovemaking to hers. But she was young and inexperienced when my darling Nicky took this poor girl to bed.”

Merv wanted to know which man was the better lover—Sean Connery or Richard Burton. “I've never been to bed with either of them,” Merv confided to Zsa Zsa, “and I'm curious.”

“Oh, Richard, most definitely,” Zsa Zsa said, “although Sean certainly had the more impressive equipment.”

Merv was once asked which was the most outrageous story that Zsa Zsa ever told him. “She claimed that she introduced The Beatles at a charity event in London called *Night of a Thousand Stars*. Later she invited them all back to her hotel suite. Naturally, it was the London Hilton.”

According to Merv, Zsa Zsa told him, “I loved the humor of those boys, their irreverence about institutions which most of the Western world viewed as sacred. They seduced me one at a time. Ringo Starr went first, then Paul McCartney, then John Lennon. George Harrison was last, and he was the best of the lot.”

In her memoirs, *One Lifetime Is Not Enough*, Zsa Zsa claimed that “I wasn't involved with any of them romantically,” which in a sense was the truth.

Her other most outrageous claim, according to Merv, involved the way Elvis Presley had seduced her during one of his gigs at The Flamingo in Las Vegas. She'd received a message that Elvis wanted to meet her in his dressing room.

“In her book, Zsa Zsa said she and Elvis didn't make it that night,” Merv said. “But facetoface, she told me a different story…namely, that she actually learned firsthand what ‘Love Me Tender’ meant. In her memoirs, however, all she said was that she found Elvis ‘gorgeous and sexy, a cross between a gentleman and a big black sexy snake. He radiated sexuality’”

As time when by, she grew increasingly confidential with Merv, yet he often suspected that she was holding back, not revealing the most shocking indiscretions of her private life. He knew that Zsa Zsa confided everything to Eva, so one night Merv asked Eva for details about the most shocking affair her older sister had ever had.

“It was with Prince Philip,” Eva said casually, using a voice that she might have used to read from a grocery list. “She met him at Windsor outside London when he was playing polo. The Queen and the Queen Mother were also watching that day. When Philip met Zsa Zsa, he was smitten. They had an affair that lasted on and off for several years.”

“Anything more shocking than that?” Merv asked.

“Zsa Zsa knew Lord Mountbatten of Burma,” Eva said. “A great war hero as you know. He was also the favorite uncle of Prince Charles. Zsa Zsa told me that when Charles was a teenage boy, he was regularly sodomized by his uncle.”

“Okay, okay, I'm saturated,” Merv said. “My head is spinning. To cap our lovely dinner, do you have a whopper that will keep me up all night?”

“Yes, I do,” Eva said coyly, and “it happened right after Zsa Zsa appeared on your show, the one you taped with her at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. If I remember correctly, and I do, she told the audience that ‘Richard Nixon is one of the greatest presidents of modern times. He was the man who opened Russia and China for us. Why don't you give the guy a break?’”

The audience booed her.

The next day Nixon called Zsa Zsa and thanked her for his public display of support. One call led to another, and Zsa Zsa, at least according to Eva, found herself flying to Key Biscayne where she evolved into a guest of Nixon's best friend, Bebe Rebozo.

“Nixon?” Merv said in astonishment. “I didn't believe he had it in him.”

“Actually, *dalink*, I read in the paper that archconservatives and Republicans have better sex than liberal Democrats. You should do a show on that subject one day.”

Once, when Zsa Zsa and Merv were dining alone, she asked him a provocative question. “Why don't you marry Eva and make an honest woman out of her? If not that, you could at least take her for your mistress. She could be Madame de Pompadour to your Louis XV.”

Heeeeeere's Merv!

Chapter Ten

Eva Gabor, the youngest of the three Gabor Sisters—was known as the last great courtesan of the 20th century. At the age of sixteen, Eva was the first member of her colorful family to emigrate from her native Hungary to America. In time, her sisters, Zsa Zsa and Magda, and their mother, Jolie, followed. As they matured, and grew more glib in the ways of America's entertainment industry, Eva and her outspoken sister, Zsa Zsa, were hailed as the world's most beautiful, desirable, and glamorous women.

Before Merv became more intimately linked with Eva, he often referred to Zsa Zsa and Eva as “my favorite and most amusing guests on TV,” the “Gorgeous Gabors” and “The World's Greatest Sister Act.”

He later claimed that what especially attracted him to both Zsa Zsa and Eva was their keen ability to deliver oneline zingers. “Take marriage for instance,” Merv said. “Zsa Zsa told me, ‘I believe in large families—every woman should have at least three husbands.’” On another occasion, Eva instructed Merv that “marriage is too interesting an experiment to be tried only once or twice.”

Before her association with Merv, Eva had followed her own advice, entering into five equally illfated marriages: Dr. Eric Drimmer, a psychologist who had served at one time as the inhouse shrink at MGM studios; realtor Charles Isaac; surgeon Dr. John E. Williams; stockbroker Richard Brown, and, finally, Frank Jamieson, vice president of the manufacturing and electronics giant, North American Rockwell. (North American Rockwell, after a complicated series of mergers, acquisitions, and spinoffs, later changed its name to Rockwell International.)

Ultimately, her intention involved making Merv her sixth husband. In that, of course, she never succeeded.

Eva may have had only onethird the lovers—her estimate—that her sister Zsa Zsa did, but Eva's beaux were strictly Alist: Glenn Ford, Tyrone Power, Frank Sinatra.

Of the fabled Gabor sisters, Eva was labeled “the good Gabor.” She was also an acute businesswoman, founding a wig company. “A girl likes to look her best, even if she cheats a bit, or especially if she cheats a bit. All women have to deceive the world, especially about their age.”

Sometimes Zsa Zsa reacted badly to Eva's comments about her on Merv's show. One comment, in particular, infuriated Zsa Zsa. As the cameras rolled, Eva said, “I was the first actress in the family, and am still the *only* actress in the family. I shouldn't be saying it. It just slipped out.”

Although Eva appeared in many lessthanmemorable movies and made a debut on Broadway in Rodger and Hammerstein's *The Happy Times*, it was a fluffy TV sitcom that's usually cited as her most memorable Hollywood achievement. She appeared as the glamorous female lead in *Green Acres*, a relentlessly cheerful sitcom which is still regularly broadcast worldwide. She played a “kind of dumb and kind of smart,” wellintentioned Park Avenue socialite who had humored her husband, as played by Eddie Albert, by moving to a rustic farm staffed by bewildered but amusing hicks. Loaded with innuendos about sophisticated urbanites coping with the realities of life in the middle of nowhere, the sitcom, with its canned laughs and pratfalls, ran for six consecutive years.

Merv was often asked if Eva were like the character she played on *Green Acres*.

“She was a smart business woman, but sometimes she could be just like her character,” Merv said. “I remember once when I invited Eddie Albert and her to stay at my ranch. That morning Eva came down the stairs in a feather boa. Eddie is a big animal rights guy, and he was outraged. ‘Eva, don't you know where those feathers come from?’ he yelled at her. She screwed up her face, very quizzical, and said, ‘Pillows?’”

One of Merv's fondest memories of Eva as a guest on his talk show involved the episode when she appeared with Eddie Albert, her *Green Acres* co-star, alongside the then-most-powerful TV critic in the industry, Cleveland Amory. “He'd panned their show,” Merv said, “And on-camera, both Eddie and Eva attacked him. He might have been the nation's number one television critic, but he left that show really scathed. I learned from that broadcast that you never wanted to get on the bad side of Eva.”

Life on the farm
Eva Gabor with **Eddie Albert**

Merv once claimed that “Eva was born to appear on TV talk shows.” In 1951 she'd been a guest of Steve Allen on his first talk show for CBS. Allen, in fact, did even more than Merv to introduce the Gabor Sisters to American television. “The glamour and humor of the Gabors came into family living rooms across the nation,” Merv said, “And Zsa Zsa was even better at the *double entendre* than Eva.”

Sometimes, especially when Merv had been drinking, he privately asked Eva outrageous questions. “Is it true that when you worked on *Artists and Models* with Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin, you slept with both men? And is it true that Jerry has three inches, Martin ten?”

“No woman should ever reveal a man's most closely guarded secret, even to his enemies,” Eva diplomatically responded.

Ultimately Zsa Zsa came up with funnier and more sophisticated answers to Merv's questions than Eva. Zsa Zsa was quick on the response. “How many husbands have I had?” she asked. “You mean apart from my own?”

Eva would say things whimsical, gracious, and charming, such as “All any girl needs at any time in history is simple velvet and diamonds.” On the other hand, Zsa Zsa would utter something funnier. “I wasn't born, *dahlink*, I was ordered from room service.”

Eva had humor, but she tended to be kinder than Zsa Zsa, who could at times be biting. As an example, Merv referred to Zsa Zsa's remark about her husband, actor George Sanders. “Ven I was married to George Sanders, we were both in love with him. I fell out of love with him, but he didn't.”

After watching so many appearances by both Eva and Zsa Zsa “on the couch” on TV talk shows, author Anthony Turtu said, “Eva's turns were always glamorous, witty, and serene—unlike appearances by her unpredictable sister, who could always be counted on for her brand of fireworks.”

Merv called Zsa Zsa, Magda, and Eva “*Vonderful Vimmen*. They conquered kings, princes, playboys, movie stars, and millionaires, broke hearts while amassing fortunes, and became adored by the world at the same time. Of course, all women held tightly on to their husbands when one of them walked into the room. They were the Budapest bombshells.”

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On an impulse in 1979, Eva called Merv and asked him to join her vacation party on their upcoming tour of Asia. In dire need of a long holiday, Merv told Eva, “What the hell? You only live once.” So Merv arranged for several shows to be pretaped in advance of his time away, and agreed to join Eva and her thenhusband, Frank Jamieson, on the tour, with the understanding that it would include stops in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

They were guests of William Rockwell Jr., the CEO of Rockwell International (a manufacturer of advanced weapons systems), and his wife, Constance. For Rockwell, this was a major showcasing of the company's products. For others in the party, including Eva and Merv, it was just a bit of vacation fun. Rockwell and his entourage were flown aboard a converted 727.

Preoccupied with the serious business of PR, corporate politics, and weapons sales, Frank “tolerated” Merv. Eva, however, adored him. It was the first time she'd ever spent a great deal of time with him.

“You really know how to enliven a boring party,” Eva told Merv, looking directly at her husband as she said that.

Rockwell's converted 727 had scheduled a stop on Midway Island, famed for a role during World War II as a battleground between the naval forces of the U.S. and the Empire of Japan.

When Merv landed there, he discovered that several hundred Navy personnel and their wives followed a daily routine which involved watching *The Merv Griffin Show* on a communal wide screen TV. During the broadcast, business in the Midways virtually came to a halt. “It was an important ritual for them in those remote islands,” Merv wrote in his second autobiography. “It was one of the ways they maintained a connection to home.”

When Merv, Eva, and members of the Rockwell contingent walked in, with fanfare, at the end of one of the broadcasts, it caused pandemonium.

After Eva's divorce from Frank in 1983, she turned to Merv for comfort. “Despite the many husbands she'd had, Eva was crushed by the final divorce,” Merv claimed. “In her way, she really loved Frank and hated losing him.”

He invited her to visit his ranch in the cool mountain air over the Carmel Valley. “She came to heal herself, and we grew close,” he said. He generously offered her longterm use of one of the half dozen guest cottages on site. “Stay here forever,” he told her. “You're most welcome.”

Like the protagonist in the play, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, Eva moved in, interpreting as a literal fact Merv's invitation to stay forever. It cemented the longenduring friendship that would last almost until her death.

Merv recalled that at the ranch she'd get up early every day. “I'd get up an hour later and walk down to the stable. By then, every horse in the pasture would have red lipstick on it.”

In the next few months, Eva became Merv's “arm candy,” going on trips with him and appearing with him at premieres and public events.

“Eva had a love for Merv, but at his age and at his weight it was not sexual,” Jolie Gabor confided to friends. “Every day of my life I tried to get Merv to marry my daughter. I knew if she married Merv, she would be secure for life and never worry about having to sell wigs or appear in some dumb TV sitcom.”

As Merv revealed in his second autobiography, he and Eva often passed the day together lying on sofas in his living room. “I'd get on one couch, Eva on the other,” Merv said. “We'd lie there for days at a time—laughing, sleeping, laughing, watching television, laughing, eating, and laughing some more. We almost never argued except when we watched *Wheel of Fortune*. She'd get furious because I knew all the answers in advance.”

Zsa Zsa knew the full details of the “arrangement” between Merv and Eva, but in her second autobiography, *One Lifetime Is Not Enough*, she chose to be discreet. “She is happily involved with Merv Griffin and has a marvelous life with him,” Zsa Zsa claimed. “I like Merv a great deal, did hundreds of shows with him, and am glad that Eva is now so happy.”

Behind the scenes, Zsa Zsa, like her mother, was constantly urging Merv to marry Eva and “make an honest woman out of her. There are many marriages without sex. It's an old Hungarian custom. Men marry, have children with their wives, and then stash them away so they can spend the rest of their lives with various mistresses.”

Merv got a taste of Zsa Zsa's famous temper after she'd been thrown in jail for slapping the policeman who stopped her for a traffic violation. “All my friends came to support me in court,” Zsa Zsa told Merv. “But not you—and not Eva.” She took particular exception to a quote by Eva that appeared in the press. The item quoted Eva as saying, “Mrs. Kirk Douglas and I just had lunch, and we agreed that if Zsa Zsa hadn't talked so much, this stupid thing would never have happened.”

Before slamming down the phone, Zsa Zsa told Merv, “I'll never speak to the bitch ever again.”

But in a few days, Merv succeeded as peacemaker, bringing the two warring sisters together for dinner. Over wine, with tears, both Eva and Zsa Zsa poured out their “undying love” for each other.

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As the 80s dawned, famous guests from Burt Reynolds to Orson Welles were showcased on *The Merv Griffin Show*.

Even during the early 70s, when Burt was still relatively unknown, Merv liked having the sexy, handsome actor on his show, almost preferring him to one of his underwear models.

Merv had booked Burt's first appearance after a strong pitch from the actor's agent. When Burt came on, Merv was enthralled by the good looks, wit, and charm of this half-Cherokee from Georgia, who would in the years to come (197882) become the number one box office attraction in America. Burt's appearances got even higher ratings after April of 1972, when he appeared “virtually nude” (but with genitals discretely concealed) for a centerfold in *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

Burt's first appearance went over so big with daytime audiences that Merv subsequently booked him for a series

of twenty shows.

He'd been launched as a megastar after his appearance in *Deliverance* in 1972 with Jon Voigt, and Merv followed his career avidly. Hadley always claimed that Burt represented Merv's alltime macho male fantasy. In Merv's case, he could only dream, as he had no chance of ever seducing Burt Reynolds, as he had other stars such as Rock Hudson when he was younger.

Burt got a big laugh when he said, “When I die, what they're going to write on my tombstone is ‘Here lies Burt Reynolds. The first guy to pose nude in a magazine.’”

Actually, Burt had been Cosmo's fourth choice as beefcake for their nude centerfold. The offer went first to football great Joe Namath, who declined the honor, as did, subsequently, both Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood.

First wife Judy Carne admitted that Burt beat her up on occasion but then went on to assert, “He has the most divine little ass.” Dolly Parton wasn't so kind. “Burt and I are too much alike to be involved. We both wear wigs and high heels, and we both have a roll around the middle.” Actress Sarah Miles said, “A *toupée* and lifts—the man's an imposter.”

Merv's ardor for Burt cooled when he learned about the lifts and the toupée. A killing blow came when Mamie Van Doren, a platinumhaired bombshell who struggled with unfavorable comparisons to Marilyn Monroe, and a onetime lover of Johnny Carson, revealed that Burt is “high on jive but low on substance.” On their first night together, Burt said that he considered himself “the male Mamie Van Doren,” an idea which she found offputting in a man.

Years later in her autobiography, *Playing the Field*, Mamie revealed what she thought of Burt's nude, almostfullmonty layout in *Cosmopolitan*. “I could only laugh,” she wrote. “An exaggeration. A cigar would have covered it nicely.”

Once Burt admitted, “I'm not a superstud, though I'm labeled as one. The reason I get myself into these kinds of situations is because I talk too much.”

Merv revealed to Hadley that the reason he kept booking Burt onto the show, long after he'd lost his fantasy passion for him, is “because he's such a great guest. Fabulous sense of humor and you never know what he's gonna say next.”

A charming, hairy beast
Burt Reynolds

In 1981, Burt met his future wife, Loni Anderson, during a taping of *The Merv Griffin Show*. Merv later said, “They seemed so happy, so right for each other. But that was before Burt — and Lonigate broke with all the cheesy accusations. What a messy breakup. Thank God I avoided that in my own life, even though I paid, and paid dearly, for my own divorce.”

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In 1980, Merv went to the movies with Hadley to see *The Blue Lagoon* starring Brooke Shields. At the age of nineteen, Christopher Atkins played opposite Brooke. Merv was thrilled by his male beauty, especially when he appeared fully nude on screen at a time when male frontal nudity in movies was rare.

Wherever he went after the release of the film, female fans—and some gay males—literally tore off his clothes. Atkins appeared on the cover of the September 1983 edition of *Playgirl*, posing nude for a pictorial inside. In the wake of that, Merv booked him for an appearance on his show. As the cameras rolled, Atkins talked about “the weenie cloth” he wore in *The Blue Lagoon*. Throughout the interview, “Merv was practically drooling over the kid,” one viewer claimed.

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The renowned filmmaker and intellectual, Orson Welles, and Merv became friends, and subsequently became known as television's odd couple. Most of Orson's friends thought he'd have dismissed Merv as a creative lightweight, but they bonded the first day they met.

The French author, filmmaker, and *enfant terrible*, Jean Cocteau, defined Orson Welles as “a giant with a child's face, a tree inhabited by birds, a dog who has broken his chains to sleep on a bed of flowers.”

As their friendship evolved, Orson became Merv's most popular guest, appearing fifty times on his show.

Christopher Atkins
The Blue Lagoon

Merv didn't actually meet Orson at the time of his first televised appearance. In 1967, Merv's assistants arranged for a camera crew to record Orson's responses to pre-articulated questions. Orson responded, on tape, with his predictably cadenced style. It wasn't until 1976 that Orson made a live appearance on Merv's show, facetoface, with cameras rolling.

Merv's staff had spent weeks researching the director's life. But once the interview began, Merv virtually had to throw out all his notes. Appearing for ninety minutes on a show devoted entirely to him, Orson was a selfgenerating machine, directing and channeling the flow of conversation in his witty way.

Merv usually preferred to interact with his guests only as the cameras rolled, but in advance of many of Orson's shows he went backstage for some chitchat.

At first Orson was intimidating. “Okay, okay, let's get it out of the way. You think *Citizen Kane* was the greatest film of all time.”

“As a matter of fact, I do,” Merv said.

“That just shows that you have good taste,” Orson said, checking his makeup.

Orson startled Merv when he warned him, “I do not want to dwell on my past career. Nor do I want to talk about the past in general. Also, I might as well come clean right now. Seventyfive percent of what I say in interviews is false.”

The show that day was followed by a luncheon with Merv. As it turned out, Orson was to some degree captivated by Merv. “I thought you'd be bland. After all, I'm used to hanging out with Marlene Dietrich. But you're not. You're actually a good listener. For some reason, I think I can confide in you.”

And over the years Orson did just that.

“I've toured the world, learned everything, done everything and everybody,” the great man said. “I've tasted the wares of every star, including Judy Garland and Marilyn Monroe, as well as all the women in the brothels between Singapore and Shanghai. I practically auditioned every beautiful married woman during the time I lived in Brazil. I even tried out a concubine of the Moroccan Pasha of Marrakesh. In all my world travels, would you like to hear the most important trick I learned?”

Thinking he was about to learn some new sexual technique, Merv said, “I'm all ears.”

“A gypsy in Rome taught me how to walk with a live chicken between my legs.”

It was three years before Orson got really confidential with Merv, getting down to what Merv called “the good stuff.”

“I lost my virginity when I was nine years old to some of my female cousins,” Orson confessed. “On my mother's side. The place, and I remember it well, was Woodstock, Illinois. These girls had their way with me.”

“Nine years old,” Merv said in astonishment. “I don't think I could even get it up back then.”

“Oh, please, childhood sexuality is a big thing. I started masturbating when I was five years old. Italian men, especially, believe that any young boy is meat for a quick seduction, and that seduction will have no effect on him or

on his masculinity when he grows up."

One chilly night in a Greenwich Village restaurant, when Orson was having dinner with Merv and Hadley, Hadley dared ask the question that he and Merv had speculated about for weeks. "Did you ever walk on the wild side like Merv and me?"

"You mean, gay?" Orson said. "Of course, my dear boy. I'm especially fond of seducing black women—take Eartha Kitt or Lena Horne, for example—and beautiful boy ass. In fact, I always seduce my actors and make them fall in love with me. From my earliest years in Hollywood, I was the Lillie Langtry of the older homosexual set. All of them lusted for me. Lucille Ball started all those rumors about me being queer in Hollywood because I couldn't get it up for the bitch one night. Let's face it: Hollywood has never been comfortable with the queer thing. One night at the Brown Derby, Guinn 'Big Boy' Williams came up to me and accused me of being queer in the loudest voice possible. There was sudden silence throughout that busy restaurant. A lot of people thought 'Big Boy' was going to punch me out. He pulled out this pocket knife. I thought he was going to stab me, but he merely cut off my red tie and then stormed out of the restaurant."

Merv liked it when Orson told stories about his early life and his encounters with Hollywood greats. "As a young kid, I worshipped John Barrymore and got to know him well. When he was appearing in *Hamlet* on Broadway, he wanted me to give him a blowjob in his dressing room before he went on stage. When he was performing *Hamlet*, I stood in the wings of the theater with a bucket of champagne. Between scenes he'd come to me and lustily drink from that bubbly."

In April of 1982, during one of his many interviews, Orson said to Merv, "I try to be a Christian, but I don't pray really because I don't want to bore God."

With minutes to live
Orson Welles

Merv appeared with Orson for a final taping on October 8, 1985. Before the show, Orson summoned Merv backstage and told him "we can gossip a bit on your show tonight."

"You mean all those gossipy questions I've wanted to ask for years about Marlene and Rita?"

"Yes," Orson said. "Ask *anything* you want. Even questions about *Citizen Kane*, and you know I don't like to speak about that."

Merv had never seen Orson look so bad. He was haggard, his eyes sunken deep into his head, and despite being supported with a cane, he could barely stand up. "Maybe there's one question I won't answer."

"What's that?" Merv asked.

"If I hadn't gone into films, I would have been a dress designer like Coco Chanel. I love women's clothes. I love the women who wear them. When I was young, I used to dress up like a woman. Not any more. No one designs tents to fit all this whale blubber I carry around."

Merv did not really take advantage of this taped opportunity for final insights into Orson, and as the cameras rolled, both his questions and Orson's responses were innocuous and rather bland.

After the show, Merv walked Orson to the limousine he'd arranged for him. Before getting into the car, Orson said, "I think what gives dignity and tragedy, as well as meaning and beauty to life, is the fact that we will die. It is one of the great gifts of God, if you happen to believe in Him, that we *are* going to die. It would be terrible if we weren't."

Merv watched as Orson hobbled to the waiting limousine, where the chauffeur helped him into the back seat. As the car drove off, Orson waved *adieu*. "I had this gut feeling I'd never see him again. Fifty shows. Imagine that. Fifty fucking shows."

A call from Hadley came in for Merv two hours later. "It just came on television. A bulletin. Orson is dead."

Rita Hayworth

"Merv, I hardly knew you."

As a commemoration of Orson's life, and as a sad footnote to his departure, Merv booked Rita Hayworth onto his show to talk about Orson. During their time together before the cameras, Merv was stunned when she said she didn't remember ever having met him before, despite the fact that she'd used his home in Los Angeles for her romantic tryst with Aldo Ray. At this point in her life, she'd begun showing signs of Alzheimer's disease, which as the years went by, would eventually destroy her life. As the cameras rolled, she said nothing of interest about Orson, her remarkable career, or the tabloidready aspects of her somewhat lurid personal life, which had included a widely publicized marriage to the Prince Aly Khan and a deep personal friendship with Marlene Dietrich.

"Rita is a fascinating person," Merv said. "I know that. But none of it came across that night. Except for her bizarre dress, I could have been interviewing a housewife from Duluth."

Merv told the press that Orson "was my favorite guest. An awesome character who was conversant on any topic I could think of. He'll be dearly missed."

"Days after Orson died, Merv received a handscribbled card mailed by an unknown person, probably whomever had cleaned up Orson's apartment in the wake of his death. On it, Orson had scribbled a final message to Merv:

"We're born alone, we live alone, and we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone."

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Both Merv and Nancy Reagan shared the same birth date (July 6). Both of these old friends also shared a fascination with the zodiac, living under the astrological sign of Cancer, the crab.

Nancy remembered watching an episode of *The Merv Griffin Show* in which he interviewed a panel of the country's leading astrologers. Merv later remembered introducing Nancy to Joan Quigley, a Vassar graduate and Nob Hill (San Francisco) socialite who wrote books on astrology.

Every morning, Merv read his horoscope before working the crossword puzzles. He and Nancy often talked about astrology, and both of them were firm believers in consulting the stars before making any big decision.

Ronald Reagan and Nancy had been heavily influenced by astrology even before he became governor of California. In those days, they relied on Jeanne Dixon for prophecy. When she accurately predicted specific details about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, she became the best known astrologer and psychic in America.

Nancy had arranged several meetings between her husband, who wanted to be president in 1976, and Dixon, most of them within the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C

When Dixon announced that Reagan's wish to become president did not coincide with the position of the stars, both he and Nancy broke off relations with her.

Merv first introduced Joan Quigley to Nancy when they appeared together on an episode of *The Merv Griffin Show* in the early 70s. After that meeting, Quigley called Nancy several times to discuss Reagan's future. But the astrologer and the First Lady did not really intensify their relationship until a deranged John Hinckley attempted to assassinate Reagan on March 30, 1981.

In the highly emotional aftermath of that attempted assassination, Merv was instrumental in bringing Quigley and Nancy together. He called Quigley to get her reaction, and was astonished to learn that she could have predicted it. Then he called Nancy at the White House and told her what Quigley had said.

In her book, *My Turn*, Nancy revealed that she said to Merv, "Oh, my God. *I could have stopped it?* "

"I'm such a worrywart," she revealed to Merv. "My weight has dropped from 112 pounds to just 100 pounds. I just can't hold down food." She also told Merv that she would suddenly burst into tears with no provocation. After her dialogue with Merv, she hung up the phone and called Quigley.

After that, Nancy became "hooked" on Quigley and turned to her almost daily for advice. They became fast friends and confidants during the remaining years of the Reagan administration. To enable her to talk privately with Quigley, who advised her on matters both political and personal, Nancy had special, highsecurity phone lines installed in both the White House and at Camp David.

Nancy revealed to Merv that thanks to her status as First Lady, she received many services for free, including those of her hairdresser. But she claimed that Quigley charged her $3,000 a month. Merv graciously agreed to discretely factor those bills into his own payroll, but Nancy turned him down.

After the assassination attempt, Nancy became obsessed with tinkering with her husband's schedule, sometimes keeping him a virtual prisoner in the White House because Quigley considered it too dangerous for him to meet the public. At one point in his administration, the president did not appear in public for 120 consecutive days. Quigley justified this at the time with the assertion that there were "malevolent movements of Uranus and Saturn," and she feared not only the danger of another assassination attempt, but also the possibility of impeachment.

Nancy and **Merv:**
Her link to a notorious obsession

Nancy's concerns led to conflicts with Donald Regan, her husband's chief of staff and a former bigwig at Merrill Lynch, as regards the details of Ronald's schedule. It was obvious almost from the beginning of his appointment that Nancy aggressively disliked Regan—and vice versa.

Quigley's input became so influential in White House affairs that it was she who picked the opening time and date for the summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland; the optimum time for the signing of an arms control treaty, and the best time for a presidential flight to Moscow.

Throughout these consultations, Nancy confided to Merv that "Ronnie is not just indulging me. He believes in astrology too. Regardless of the headlines, he reads first his horoscope and then the funnies before he peruses world headlines."

It was Nancy who played a crucial role in getting the chief of staff fired. He resigned in 1987 after the Iran-Contra affair and the distribution of mixed reviews about his job performance. He got even, however, writing a book entitled *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington*. In that book, which generated headlines throughout the world, Regan described "Mrs. Reagan's dependence on the occult." As the First Lady was mocked and ridiculed throughout the land, especially on latenight TV, Merv called to offer his support. "Hold in there," he advised her.

Public reaction throughout the late 1980s was the most unrelentingly negative of Nancy's career. Carl Sagan, writing an article entitled "The Demon-Haunted World," was particularly harsh. "Some portion of the decisionmaking that influences the future of civilization is plainly in the hands of charlatans."

As a result of this publicity, Quigley was dismissed as the White House astrologer. Nancy called her and demanded that she "lie and never tell anyone anything." Quigley's response? In 1990, she wrote and published a book, revealing everything.

Joan Quigley

In her tellall, *What Does Joan Say? My Seven Years as a White House Astrologer to Nancy and Ronald Reagan*, Quigley described herself as the power behind the throne. Her book even announced that she had advised the times and dates when Air Force One could safely take off. As she claimed within her book:

> *"Not since the days of the Roman emperors—and never in the history of the United States presidency—has an astrologer played such a significant role in a nation's affairs of State."*

Prior to the publication of Quigley's book, when Nancy had returned to her home in California, she increasingly relied on Merv, calling him "My Rock." On some days, he found she had been crying for hours. He tried to revive her spirits by urging her to get dressed and accompany him either for lunch or for dinner at little hidden places known to him along the California coastline. Gradually, she began to accept these invitations, relying on Merv more and more as her best friend and closest confidant.

In the late 1980s, shortly after her departure from the White House, Nancy had often checked with Merv about statements she planned for insertion in *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* as coauthored with William Novak. It was Merv who urged her to include a section on astrology and to explain, in simple terms, her interest in psychic phenomena. Immediately below is an excerpt which resulted from Merv's intervention:

> *"What it boils down to is that each person has his or her own ways of coping with trauma and grief, with the pain of life, and astrology was one of mine. Don't criticize me, I wanted to say, until you have stood in my place. This helped me. Nobody was hurt by it—except, possibly, me."*

Merv had been privy to one of the darkest secrets of the Reagan White House, learning that the president had contracted Alzheimer's disease while still in the White House. Merv was kept abreast of the devastating effects the disease had on the former president, as each day he escaped from reality into a world of his own, resurfacing only briefly before retreating again into his own private space.

"The coming years—maybe it will be only months—will be the most difficult of my life," Nancy confided to Merv. "*Please*, be there for me."

"It will be the greatest honor of my life to stand by you," Merv said gallantly.

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In the 1980s, Merv formed an unlikely friendship with the notorious wheelerdealer, Armand Hammer, the flamboyant U.S. business tycoon who, like the decade itself, was in his 80s. Noted for his fabulous art collections, his occasional philanthropy, and his close ties to the Soviet Union, the mogul was associated with Occidental Petroleum. Merv became friendly with Armand's third wife, Frances Barrett, a wealthy and stylish widow whom Armand had married in 1956.

Armand's claim to fame: "I am the only man in history to have been friendly with both Ronald Reagan and Vladimir Lenin."

Hammer dabbled in politics and made large illegal contributions to the Richard Nixon campaign. He was convicted for this, but was later pardoned by another Republican "buddy" of his, President George Herbert Walker Bush. Merv always suspected, perhaps accurately, that Armand laundered money for the Soviets.

Hammer hated *Jeopardy!* but loved *Wheel of Fortune*. Whenever he traveled, he ordered his staff to tape *Wheel* so he wouldn't miss a show. Later, in Moscow, he sold these tapes to the Russians, who used them as inspiration for the launch of their own Soviet version of *Wheel*. Merv never got one cent of royalties.

Armand kindled a passion in Merv for Arabian stallions, an interest that he retained for the rest of his life. Merv

and Armand often journeyed together to Scottsdale, Arizona for auctions of these stunning horses. Armand would rhapsodize about the beauty of an animal, the shape of its head, its high tail carriage, its intelligence and stamina, its spirit. “They have speed, refinement, endurance, and good bones,” Armand told Merv. “Their bloodlines are the finest of any horse in the world. The Bedouin people used to bring the horses into their tents at night to protect them.”

“I don't want to sleep with one,” Merv said jokingly. “Their dicks are too big. But I'd like to purchase one.”

Thus began Merv's collection of these Arabian stallions. He paid onehundred and fifty thousand dollars for a particularly fabulous specimen. Soonafter, the market for the animals collapsed. The monetary worth of the horses fell to an average of less than $3,000 each. But Merv wasn't interested in making money from his ownership of the horses. He wanted to own the most prized stallions in America.

Armand proposed a deal to Merv that seriously tempted him. For fortyfive million, Armand said he would purchase half of Merv Griffin Enterprises, whose most valuable nuggets included *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy!* To negotiate the fine points of the deal, Armand brought in the famed attorney Louis Nizer.

To counterpunch, Merv flew in Bobby Schulman, considered in legal circles to be the best tax attorney in the world. When Schulman discovered that Armand planned to put up “zero capital,” he urged Merv to veto the deal and flew back to London.

Years later Merv said, “Thank God Armand fucked up that deal. Around the corner was waiting the sweetheart deal of my life, only I didn't know it at the time.”

Appearing on TV with Bill Cosby, Armand proclaimed that a cure for cancer was imminent, but he died of bone marrow cancer in December of 1990 before living to see that happen.

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Whereas the death of Rock Hudson in 1985 brought out the loyalty and courage of such friends as Elizabeth Taylor, a certified and secure heterosexual, it did not inspire anything particularly admirable in Merv.

The world had changed many times since the halcyon 1950s when both men, each born in 1925, were part of a small, secretive colony of gay men in the Greater Los Angeles area. Since then, both Merv and Rock had become big stars. But whereas Rock's career had virtually collapsed, Merv's fame and earning capacity were bigger than ever.

AIDS had driven Rock kicking and screaming out of his closet, but Merv preferred to keep the doors of his own closet tightly locked. He feared that with reporters and paparazzi hanging out at Rock's estate, “The Castle,” he would be tainted with the suspicion of homosexuality for having come to call on his dying comrade.

To visit or not to visit was the question he fretted over before an unexpected call came in from Ronald Reagan at the White House. Like Merv, both Ronnie and Nancy had been longtime friends of Rock's. The President was flying to the West Coast with Nancy, and he felt that it might be appropriate for them to call on Rock for a final goodbye.

Knowing about Merv's private relationship with the stricken star, the President suggested that he accompany them to The Castle as part of their visit. Merv could not turn down a request from the President, and he agreed to go. He told aides “It'll be safe if I arrive there with Nancy and Ronnie on each of my arms.”

Nancy and Ronnie:
The Republican Lip-Lock

That very afternoon, after accepting the President's invitation, Merv received a shocker phone call from one of his attorneys (name not known). To his dismay, Merv learned that from his sickbed, Rock had been dictating an

authorized tellall autobiography. Because he desperately didn't want to be Outed in Rock's book, Merv became even more eager to accompany the Reagans during their visit. Merv's plan involved remaining behind with Rock after the Reagans' departure so that Merv could then discuss what Rock planned to include in the book.

Two days later, Merv received another call from the White House. With his trademark humor and charm, Reagan informed Merv that his advisers thought that it would be "politically unwise to call on Rock. It's a hot political potato, and Nancy and I can't pick it up without getting burned. We've always been fond of Rock, but we can't stand by him in his hour of need. He'll be in both of our prayers, however."

Merv said he understood and, before hanging up, sent his love to Nancy. The Reagan withdrawal left Merv alone with his dilemma. With the future book looming, Merv finally opted to call on Rock with his final request, with or without the Reagans.

Somehow Merv managed to slip in and out of The Castle without detection. It is suspected that Rock's closest friend, the gay actor, George Nader, arranged the secret rendezvous, without alerting Rock's staff or even his own lover, Mark Miller. Merv wanted his visit to be totally secretive, and he knew that George was trustworthy and capable of keeping a secret.

Lying on his deathbed, Rock was gaunt, frail, and enfeebled. Hollowcheeked and sunkeneyed, he was a shell of his former robust self, and his weight had dropped to an alarming ninetyeight pounds. AIDS, like some devouring cancer, seemed to be feeding on his body. He told Merv that the only food he could hold down was tapioca pudding.

Suffering from acute metastatic liver disease, he had lost control of his bodily functions, and his pajamas had to be changed frequently by a nurse.

Merv later told Eva Gabor that he was shocked by Rock's appearance. "My memory of him was of this big, strapping truck driver kind of guy in tight blue jeans. He was the sex symbol of the 50s. All of us wanted him, and I was among the lucky few whose dreams came true. When I saw him in his bed, he looked like he'd died already, except that the corpse hadn't been buried."

Seeing Merv, Rock expressed his bitterness that the President and First Lady had refused a final visit based on their fear of offending the Moral Majority. Rock had arranged for his former lover, Tom Clark, to deliver a brief statement to reporters and the paparazzi clustered around the gates to The Castle. It read:

> *"Reagan is yet to actually say the word AIDS in public. He and his people are so afraid of the Far Right. Fuck them all!"*

Exactly what transpired between Merv and Rock that day will never be known. What little is known came from Eva Gabor, who talked indiscreetly to her network of friends. Merv did tell Eva that Rock claimed "the vultures are circling over me."

Merv departed from The Castle that night with Rock's firm commitment that he would not be Outed in his autobiography. He told Eva that Rock had claimed that his book would not be "the authentic story of my life. It's a vanilla version." Apparently, Rock feared that if he wrote an authentic tellall, he would reveal details about the private lives of many famous men in Hollywood, who might then possibly sue his estate for libel.

Merv also told Eva that Rock had confessed to love affairs with three of the biggest stars in Hollywood, "names never before tarred with the lavender brush," Merv said.

"Never trust a man, *dahlink*," Eva responded. "When they're horny, any available hole will do."

It appeared that the main support for Rock's will to live were the cards, letters, telegrams, and gifts pouring in from around the world. And although the Reagans weren't standing by him, he was being contacted by dozens of luminaries who admired his courage and wished him god speed. They included Marlene Dietrich, Madonna, and Ava Gardner.

When Elizabeth Taylor organized a benefit dinner for Rock in Los Angeles, other stars also publicly stood up. They included Burt Reynolds, Ricardo Montalban, Burt Lancaster, Shirley MacLaine, and Linda Evans. Later, however, Elizabeth reported that dozens of other stars, including Frank Sinatra, had turned her down, not wanting to identify themselves with either AIDS or its victims.

When Roddy McDowall learned of Merv's encounter with Rock, he told friends, "Merv is not a crusader. I don't remember that he ever advocated anything politically—or artistically for that matter. Even though he has access to the Reagans, who could help our kind, his closet keeps him shockingly silent. His voice would make a huge difference if he'd speak out about all the suffering and horrific deaths occurring in America. But that's probably too much to expect from him. Let's face it: He created TV programs that entertained millions of people around the world. He has his fans to think of. Merv will do anything to preserve his image. You just have to admire his greatness and forget those moments when he's small."

It was George Nader who called Merv on October 2, 1985. “Rock left us at 8:45 this morning.”

Perhaps because he was dismayed and shocked, or perhaps because he didn't know how to respond, Merv uttered one of the blandest statements he'd ever made, so innocuous that at the time, it appeared insensitive. “Well, all of us have to go sometime.”

Another, more sensitive, acknowledgment of Rock's death came from Michael Nader, the nephew of George Nader. Michael had appeared with Rock in nine separate episodes of the hit TV series *Dynasty* in 1984 and 1985. “Rock's gone,” Michael told the press. “But the most important thing is that he was *here* —that he was a wonderful guy while he was here.”

The website, *QueerTwoCents.com*, did not admire Rock's courage, claiming, “The sad truth of the matter is that had he not contracted HIV and developed AIDS, Rock Hudson, like Merv Griffin, most likely would have continued to live his life in a ‘glass closet,’ no doubt abetted by the mainstream media.”

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In 1986, at the ripe age of sixty, while Merv vacationed in Rio de Janeiro, Columbia Entertainment, a branch of the Coca-Cola Company, was concluding its negotiations to buy him out. Merv Griffin Enterprises had originated in 1964 as Merv Griffin Productions, a name that had endured for two decades.

Even before his return to the U.S., the deal was cemented for a cool $250 million. He'd retain creative control of both *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*, and he'd also occupy a seat on the board of directors of Columbia Entertainment. At the time, that company was led by Frank Biondi, who would later take over Viacom, reporting directly to its aging chairman, Sumner Redstone.

“The syndicated Merv Griffin programs have fully penetrated American culture,” said Robert J. Thompson, founding director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University. “He was a producer who understood how those kinds of programs worked with viewers. We tend to be watching those types of shows when diapering a child or preparing a meal, waiting for the chaos of everyone coming home in the afternoon.”

After the sale was signed and sealed, Merv was bewildered, not only by getting such a bundle of cash, but in wondering what he was going to do with the rest of his life. “I'm too young to retire,” he told a staff member. “I'm too active, too much alive. I can't see myself sitting out in the California sun waiting around for lunch.”

He considered various options, including the purchase of Hebrew National Foods, which produced kosher products such as all-beef hot dogs.

Merv learned that his friend, Malcolm Forbes, had placed him on the list of the fourhundred richest men and women in America. He was less impressed when he learned that Forbes' editorial board had also included a dead woman on the list. Griffin knocked Bob Hope off the list as the richest performer in entertainment history.

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Having sold his major media assets to Columbia, Merv made another careerchanging decision, opting to retire from his involvement with *The Merv Griffin Show*. He announced that the final episode of the show would be aired on September 5, 1986.

As he made clear to his staff, “There's nobody left to talk to unless you want to book Zsa Zsa Gabor one more time. At least she's interesting, unlike those soap opera stars we've been booking. Do I really care about what some blonde bimbo starlet thinks about the way Ronnie is running the U.S. government or hear that she thinks Nancy depends too much on the color red?”

Merv sat with Peter Barsocchini the night before he recorded his last talk show. It would include a compilation of clips from the dozens of shows presented since he first went on the air with *The Merv Griffin Show* back in 1962.

According to Barsocchini, both men talked in his dressing room as Merv summoned the energy for a final appearance.

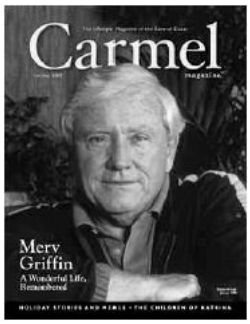
“Do you know what this feels like?” Merv said to Barsocchini. “It's like I've been at the best dinner party ever given—and that it's about to end.”

Thousands of fans felt the same way, and Merv was bombarded with letters from all over America, lamenting

the demise of the show. One housewife from Yonkers said she'd never missed a single Merv show since its inauguration in 1962, and that she'd followed him faithfully year after year as he moved from channel to channel.

Merv estimated that during his career as a talk show host, he'd had ontheair dialogues with twentyfive thousand people. “I've interviewed almost everybody important in the world, from all walks of life,” he told Eva Gabor. “And now, I've had it. I've decided to devote time to my game shows and a lot of time to just having fun.”

To Hadley, he said, “Life's too short not to have fun. I've been holding back. And anyway, what beautiful guy would agree to have sex with me without the exchange of a few hundred dollar bills?” Hadley was instructed to continue arranging “fun and games” for Merv. And he wasn't talking about TV game shows.



Carmel's most stately resident

After abandoning his show forever, and as the years went by, a reporter asked Merv if he missed talking to millions of Americans every day. “Sure, I do,” he said, “but what I miss most is introducing new talent to the world. Imagine giving a jump start to the careers of Whitney Houston and Jerry Seinfeld. Of course, they would have eventually done very well on their own.”

After taping his last episode of *The Merv Griffin Show*, he disappeared “into nowhere” with his young aide, Ronnie Ward. Although it was widely understood that Ward is straight, their sudden disappearance led to unfounded speculation.

With Ward behind the wheel, Merv ordered him to, “Just drive—wherever the car will take us. We'll stop at any place that amuses us.” As Merv later recalled, the couple ended up in the gambling town of Laughlin, Nevada, close to the California border.

“I talked Ronnie's ear off,” Merv later recalled to his friends. “I guess I was really talking to myself, trying to figure out where to go from here. More than friends or family, I was married to my career—always, ever since I sang with Freddy Martin's band.”

At the end of that long ride into the desert, Merv made a decision to promote Ward, at the time only in his twenties, as his personal assistant. Prior to that Merv had defined Ward as his secretary, even though his typing skills hadn't advanced beyond the huntandpeck system.

“I've never felt as compatible with anyone as I have with Ronnie,” Merv told his associates. “If I ask him to do something for me, I know he'll carry it out beautifully. I trust him completely.”

By December of 1995, most of Merv's business interests fell within the orbit of an entity known as Merv Griffin Entertainment. He took great pride in naming Ward as Vice Chairman of his newly organized company. He was put in charge of “establishing the strategy and focus” of Merv's many investments and business interests.

Merv told the press, “Ronnie has been with me for twentyfive years. Not only is he a brilliant facilitator of our established projects, but he also has a remarkable aptitude for spotting new areas of profitability. In addition to overseeing Merv Griffin Entertainment, he heads my thoroughbred operation, Merv Griffin Ranch Company, and he was responsible for the formation of our newest company, Worldwide L.P., which specializes in highend residential real estate.”

Ronnie Ward would not be the only young man Merv would pluck from relative obscurity and hurl into fame, the spotlight, and fortune.

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At this point in his life and career, Merv could buy any home he wanted. He purchased a spectacular home in Pebble Beach on Carmel Bay, near where he'd once worked as a struggling singer. Here he could “find peace and tranquility,” and entertain whatever private guests he wanted, away from the prying eyes of the press. Liberace

continued to send him “only the most prized of specimens.”

Whereas some of his neighbors, including Kim Novak and Jean Arthur, tended to be somewhat reclusive, others, such as Clint Eastwood were genuinely friendly and accessible to him. Another neighbor, Jane Wyman, remembered Merv “from the old old days.”

Whenever he needed “arm candy,” Merv enrolled Eva Gabor, or perhaps Barbara Mac-Farland, who dealt in valuable antiques in a shop in Carmel. The paparazzi snapped dozens of pictures of Merv and Eva attending Eastwood's premier of *The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing*. They were accompanied by the film's star, Burt Reynolds, who at the time was deep into his affair with an older woman, Dinah Shore.

Clint Eastwood had introduced Merv to Transcendental Meditation, which fascinated him. Merv later cited TM for removing stress from his life, and he started meditating twenty minutes in the morning, followed by another twenty minutes at sunset. Years before, as the cameras rolled, he had interviewed the leader of the TM movement, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. That episode of *The Merv Griffin Show* was credited with attracting almost fifty thousand converts to TM.

Merv's friendship with Clint had begun back in the 1960s, when Merv joined Clint as a resident of Carmel. An icon of macho, Clint was an unlikely candidate for the role of one of Merv's best friends. As owner of two homes within the region (one in Pebble Beach and one in the Carmel Valley), Merv supported Clint when he successfully ran for mayor of Carmel by the Sea. “We share the same political views,” Merv told reporters.

Merv loved hearing Clint's stories of his early days in Hollywood, going back to when he was a contract player at Universal International. Just before firing him, a director said, accusingly, “your Adam's Apple is too big.” That same director, that same day, also fired another contract player, Burt Reynolds.

It is presumed that Clint knew Merv was gay. If he did, that was hardly a problem for him. He once said, “The most gentle people in the world are macho males, people who are confident in their masculinity and have a feeling of wellbeing in themselves. They don't have to kick in doors, mistreat women, or make fun of gays.” Clint served as mayor of Carmel from 1986 to 1988.

Dirty Harry
Clint Eastwood

Growing up in Northern California, Clint had been a fan of Merv's long before he actually met him. Dirty Harry He recalled listening to him on radio KFRC, broad Clint Eastwood casting from San Francisco. The two men launched a tennis tournament at Pebble Beach that for years brought in a lot of celebrities. When Merv died, Clint noted that he had been a loyal friend to a lot of people, and recalled a dinner at his house in Carmel Valley that included Cary Grant, Lucille Ball, and James Stewart. Clint also revealed that Merv in later life became a close friend of Johnny Carson, their sometimes bitter rivalry for latenight ratings a thing of the past.

Even though they developed some semblance of a friendship later in life, Merv said he never really approved of Carson. “He was sad, depressed, probably in need of a shrink. He cheated on his wives. He stayed at this penthouse at Caesars Palace with a private pool. He'd invite all the beautiful showgirls up for skinny dipping, some two dozen on a good night. He had many of them. A real Sultan in his harem. He never visited his son when he was confined to a mental hospital. He was just as cold as his mother, who, or so I heard, was colder than any icicle in Nebraska in February.”

***

In his converted black military helicopter, Merv traveled the trafficsaturated 130 miles between Los Angeles and his elegant, 240acre spread, La Quinta Ranch, which he'd purchased with his newly acquired millions. The sprawling ranch stood in the Coachella Valley near Palm Springs.

The compound's airy, Moroccanthemed main house was modeled on Yves St. Laurent's mansion in Marrakesh,

Morocco. The estate boasted horse barns housing some fifty thoroughbreds; a manmade lake, Lac Merveilleux; a private racetrack, and some 3,000 cultivated roses.

Like Merv himself, Cary Grant was also a closeted homosexual, and during his late middleaged years, he occasionally visited La Quinta. “Why would you ever want to leave this place? It's Shangrila.” Cary stood at twelvefoot high French windows, opening onto a panorama of a fiftyfoothigh geyser spouting from the waters of Lac Merveilleux.

The next morning Cary joined Merv for breakfast, traversing one of the world's biggest Persian carpets, set atop floors crafted from purple and white marble, within a living room decorated with Moroccan rifles inlaid with ivory and silver.

Working on a crossword puzzle, Merv sat on his terrace under a mammoth umbrella painted with sunflower yellow butterflies and pink flamingos. He was eating oatmeal and smoking a lot of cigarettes.

Over breakfast, the two superstars spoke of retirement and their upcoming deaths. “To me, death is retirement,” Merv told him. “I'll never retire. On the way to my grave, I'll be devising some new TV game show. I'm still working. After breakfast, I'll be on the phone reaching out to my empire. It keeps me alive. Why don't you go back to work?”

“There are no good scripts anymore,” Cary said, “and at my age I don't do nude scenes.”

Out of earshot of Cary, Zsa Zsa had called Merv. “They keep telling me what a great lover he is, but you can't prove that by me.”

Cary and Merv discussed opportunistic hustlers who might try to expose them. “Of course, when we're dead, all the books will write about our homosexuality. But at least we can suppress it while we're still alive.” He warned Merv never to go to court on a sexual harassment or alimony charge. “Anything can happen before a jury,” Cary said. “Some son of a bitch could get millions.”

Privately he told Merv, who in turn told Eva, that he'd once been arrested going down on a young sales clerk in the men's room of a department store in Los Angeles. “Howard Hughes intervened for me and paid off the cops. I was released and the matter was hushed up.”

“Another, somewhat similar case was instigated by a woman,” Cary said. “She claimed I picked up her teenage son along the highway and made advances toward him. Once again, Howard came through for me. He'd faced similar incidents himself.”

Before parting, Cary gave Merv one final piece of advice: “Always wear women's nylon panties when traveling. They're easier to wash and hang up to dry.”

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Jolie Gabor, mother of the three most famous living courtesans in the world, took delight in Merv, even though, despite her urging, he constantly refused to marry her daughter, Eva.

“My God, Jolie,” Merv said in protest. “Between the three of them, your daughters have already had twenty-one husbands. You really don't need to add me to the list.”

Sometimes, Jolie cooked dinner for Merv, using lots of paprika and sour cream. But one night he found hot dogs in her stew. “Her stuffed goose neck, though, was the world's best,” Merv said. Jolie always asserted that Merv loved her goulash. “As anybody can see from the looks of him, he could never get enough of it.”

Confessions from
a men's room:
Cary Grant

Merv would annoy her by constantly pestering her to reveal her age. “I am a timeless wonder,” she told him.

“Ageless. An enchantress.”

Merv could sit and listen to Jolie for hours as she told tall tales about her remarkable life. He didn't know if they were true or not. Did President Dwight Eisenhower really make a pass at her?

“I don't think it would have done any good if I had accepted,” she told Merv. “I heard he was impotent. Poor Mamie. I failed with her too. I constantly tried to get her to cut her bangs and adopt a new hair style, but she refused.”

One night over wine Jolie confided to Merv that Zsa Zsa and Eva wanted as their escorts men with money. “And, God knows, you have money, Merv. Everything you touch turns to gold. Midas would be jealous. I, however, always followed my heart, and that's why I fell for Edmund de Szigethy of Transylvania. He had no money but he wanted to marry me even though I was an older woman. God, I detest that expression. He had only twentyseven dollars when we went out on our first date. Twentytwo of those dollars he spent on roses for me. After that gesture, I had to marry him.”

“Oh, that Conrad Hilton,” Jolie told Merv one night. “He was such a louse. Zsa Zsa had a poor divorce settlement with him. She should have taken him for millions, and she should have gotten free accommodations at Hiltons for the rest of her life, even a permanent suite for her at the Plaza. Whenever Zsa Zsa stays at a Hilton, she has to pay. Stupid! Ridiculous!”

“But Zsa Zsa got even with Conrad,” she claimed. “She slept with his son Nicky and told me that he was a much better lover than her husband, his father. Of course, you'll have to check with Elizabeth Taylor for the low-down on Nicky.”

“I don't need to check with anybody about Nicky Hilton,” Merv claimed.

“Oh, I see,” Jolie said, raising an eyebrow. “I have a theory about notorious womanizers. To them, all cats are gray at night.”

“Zsa Zsa's great love was Porfirio Rubirosa, and I desperately wanted him to be my soninlaw,” she said. “He was suave and sophisticated and knew how to treat a lady. But he dumped Zsa Zsa for Barbara Hutton instead. After all, she was one of the richest women in the world. Once, I spirited Rubi away from news reporters by dressing him in drag.”

“Rubi in drag is a bit much for my meager mind to conjure up,” Merv said.

“I've never told anybody this before, but once, at a formal dinner, I sat next to Rubi,” she said. “At one point he discreetly took my hand and placed it over his genitals. I had never felt anything like that in my life. Surely he rivaled any bull. Rubi told me, ‘That's what keeps Zsa Zsa as contented as a cow.’”

“Unlike my daughters, I have never pursued men with large penises,” she claimed. “Four or five inches are adequate for me, though three is too small. What about your tastes? What do you consider as the ideal penis size for a man?”

“Eight and a half inches,” he said. “Anything above that and you're a showoff.”

“Magda and Zsa Zsa had to double up on that rogue, George Sanders,” Jolie said. “I called George ‘The Deep Freeze,’ although I was tempted to go to bed with him myself just to see what sex appeal he had that enthralled my two daughters so much that they married him. Eva told me George once tried to seduce her as well, but thank God Eva had enough sense to avoid him.”

“Clark Gable also asked me to marry him, but I said no,” she confessed. “Too many women told me how inadequate he was in bed. He also had a homosexual side, believe it or not.”

She used to brag to Merv that in 1939 she had arrived in New York from Hungary with “only one hundred dollars and a diamond ring. I later ended up owning a jewelry shop on Madison Avenue. Even Elizabeth Taylor came to me in those days to buy her diamonds.”

When Merv visited Jolie at her modest home on Oscalete Road in Los Angeles, he was amazed at how she'd glamorized the place. “I like to make from nothing a something,” she told him.

Over the years, Merv concocted many schemes to bring Jolie onto his show, including once when he wanted to have all four Gabors on at the same time. “Jack Paar called me years ago and proposed the same thing,” she told Merv. On another occasion, Merv wanted to bring out five mothers of famous daughters for a gabfest. “Sounds more like a bitchfest to me,” Jolie countered.

Months before Jolie's death in 1997, Merv paid her a visit. “I found her disconnected from reality,” he later said. “She didn't remember that Eva, her youngest daughter, had died on July 4, 1995. I certainly didn't tell her. And at that point, I'm not sure if she even knew who Eva was.”

When Jolie died at Rancho Mirage in California on April 1, 1997, Merv was saddened and sent a huge bouquet.

He noticed that many newspaper accounts listed her age as ninety-six, but Eva had told Merv that Jolie was actually an astonishing 104.

The world's oldest
living courtesan:
Jolie Gabor

“My beloved mother lived in an era when women lied about their age,” Zsa Zsa said. “She always told me that a woman should lie by decades, not just five or six years. It's easier to remember dates that way if you lie by decades.”

Jolie's final advice to Merv, back when she was still coherent, was “pawn a diamond if you have to keep the champagne flowing. Life's a gamble. You must know how to play it—and you sure did play it more than anybody else I've ever known. Kings and royalty I have known were often penniless. They still have the title and no money. You have no title and lots of money. Zsa Zsa still loves titles, and even I married a penniless count myself. But I have decided in the end that it's money that is more important than worthless European titles of long ago.”

Asked to comment on Jolie's death, Merv told his aides, “If she hadn't trod on this Earth, Dominick Dunne would have had to invent her. Jolie was Euro before the word Eurotrash was invented. Her emeralds may have been flawed or faux but Jolie Gabor was the real thing.”

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At least five months before he died in 1987 at the age of sixtyseven, Liberace knew he had AIDS. He summoned Merv to his side. Slipping into Palm Springs, Merv drove himself to Liberace's elegant estate, The Cloister.

Merv later revealed to Hadley that he almost wanted to scream when he saw Liberace's wasted body and gaunt face. “He was a shadow version of himself, almost ghoulish. In his eyes I noticed this terrible fear. It was heartbreaking. He didn't want to talk about the present, only the past, only the good times around his pool, which had once been peopled with the most beautiful boys ever assembled. Oh, those pool parties of his. Rock Hudson with all his beautiful boys could never give pool parties like Lee. I never knew where he found all those guys. No one has ever seen the likes of Lee before—and perhaps never will again.”

A correspondent for *Newsweek*, Bill Barol, summed it up best when he reviewed a Liberace event at Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall. “Liberace flew in from the wings suspended on a wire; introduced his valet/chauffeur; put on a purple sequined and feathered robe; took it off; played Chopin on a Lucite piano with lacework trim; did a soft shoe; bestowed a selection of gifts on a audience member; shamelessly plugged his new book and Las Vegas restaurant; drove onstage in a red, white, and blue Rolls Royce; peeled away a red, white and blue sequinedandfeathered robe to reveal red, white and blue satin hot pants, and grabbed a red, white, and blue sequined baton to lead the Rockettes in ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever.’ This was all before intermission.”

Sitting up in bed, Liberace told Merv that, “A lot of those gay libbers are writing pestering me, demanding that I finally come out of the closet and admit I'm gay. I'm not going to do it, and I don't think you should do so either. Admitting I'm gay in my final hours would destroy what I've worked for for more than four decades. More than being an entertainer, I was this ethereal concept. I pleased everybody, offended no one. You should do the same. Besides, I'm not a crusader. Let Paul Newman or Marlon Brando do that. You and I should forever remain in the closet, although I have no doubt that biographers will Out us after we're dead. It's inevitable.”

When Merv complimented Liberace on the black lace negligée he was wearing, the entertainer asserted, “I've always liked drag. As a teenager, I was a student at West Milwaukee High. Every year we dressed up in costumes of famous people. I came as Greta Garbo. Slinky gown. Blonde wig. Heavy makeup. I won first prize.”

Liberace was so tired and ailing that he managed a dialogue with Merv for less than an hour before he told him he'd have to leave. “I want you to go now, dear old friend. But I don't want you to remember me as a pathetic old queer dying in bed of AIDS.”

He asked Merv to go out into the garden and then return to the living room in fifteen minutes. A male aide came in to help Liberace out of bed and slowly walk him to the living room, where he seated himself at his piano.

After his interval in the garden, Liberace told him, “I'm going to play my theme song, ‘I Don't Care,’ and I want you to leave and not look back. Just walk out the door to the sound of my music.”

Merv kissed Liberace's forehead and departed as he'd been instructed. Outside, the tears rolled down his cheeks. He later told friends, “I felt that I was leaving part of my life in that house with my dying friend. It was one of my most painful moments.”

Within the hour, Merv had fled, incognito, from Palm Springs.

After his death, Liberace's aides lied to the press, issuing a statement about how the flamboyant entertainer had died of congestive heart failure. Shortly thereafter, a coroner's inquest asserted that he'd died of complications resulting from AIDS. Ironically, even after his death, Wladziu Valentino Liberace remained locked in the closet, denying his homosexuality even from beyond the grave.

Face-lifted **Liberace:**
The final cover-up.

Merv, probably motivated by a fear of “Outing” himself, never publicly discussed his enduring friendship with Liberace. His only comment, delivered with a giveaway wink, was, “He certainly was one of the great peacocks of our century.” He went on to assert that Liberace had “paved the way” for such androgynous superstars as Michael Jackson, Elton John, and Boy George.

After his funeral, a reporter summarized one of show business's longestrunning acts. “Liberace's was a life of exquisite paradox involving flamboyance and repression, kitsch and concealment.”

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In 1955, the year of its opening, the Beverly Hilton Hotel was hailed as “the most sumptuous hotel in the world” as part of an opening celebration presided over by Conrad Hilton himself. Richard Nixon showed up as part of the ceremony, recalling a time when the land adjacent to Wilshire Boulevard was mostly farmland. In the audience, listening to Nixon, was a photogenic “Hollywood couple” affectionately known as Ronnie and Nancy.

It was at this same hotel that Merv appeared years later to celebrate President Reagan's 80th birthday dinner gala.

At the 1955 inauguration, Esther Williams, MGM's mermaid, had swum through thousands of floating gardenias as part of the launch of the Hilton's Aqua Star Pool, the largest in Beverly Hills. All but a few of the U.S. presidents, from John F. Kennedy to Bill Clinton, had been involved in sexual trysts within the hotel's presidential suite. Kennedy came to view the Beverly Hilton as the Western White House. Through the lobby paraded every movie star from Judy Garland to Elizabeth Taylor.

Dale Olsen, longtime Hollywood publicist and journalist, summed it up nicely: “There hasn't been a celebrity in Hollywood for the past fifty years that hasn't been to the Beverly Hilton at least several times. It is the gathering place of the stars.”

From the very beginning, the hotel was known for secret liaisons among the stars. Unfounded rumors spread quickly. Was Tony Curtis really seen late at night leaving the room of Laurence Olivier? Did Barbra Streisand and Steve McQueen share a suite for a night?

With the passing of decades, as celebrities flocked to newer and more cutting-edge properties, the 1950s landmark had become a bit battered and had lost much of its prestige,

For years, Merv had been “itching” to get into the hotel business, dreaming of restoring the Beverly Hilton to its former glory. When it came onto the market, he went for it. On November 16, 1987, Merv bought the hotel from Hilton Hotels Corporation and the Prudential Insurance Company. After the deal was signed, he spent $60 million restoring it.

The Beverly Hilton had been an old stamping ground for Merv, and it was associated with what he called “one

of the great nights of my life." In the hotel's International Ballroom, he'd been presented with the Will Rogers Memorial Award by the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Orson Welles waddled in that night to pay a public tribute to Merv, and even the latest incarnation of Freddy Martin's Orchestra turned out to provide the music. "As in olden days," Merv said, "I sang with Freddy's boys once again, warbling 'Tonight We Love.'"

After Merv's takeover of the hotel, he asked Eva Gabor to decorate the women's bathroom in the International Ballroom. She chose a soft pink marble, claiming, "I want to make it a room where a lady likes to linger while powdering her nose." Caught in the can in 2000 at the Golden Globe Awards, Renée Zellwegger was blasting off as her name was called to accept the award.

The Beverly Hilton had been hosting the Golden Globe Awards since March 16, 1961, when Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* took the award for Best Picture.

Merv was delighted when his hotel could host a Royal Tribute to Cary Grant on October 17, 1988, an evening that netted more than a million dollars for the Princess Grace Foundation. Everyone from Monaco royalty to Alist entertainers came.

Merv later told Hadley that during the break, "I found myself standing at the urinals side by side with Frank Sinatra, Burt Lancaster, and Cary Grant. Cary and Burt came up a little short, but Frank let it dangle with no hand needed. He lit a cigarette as all three of us took in the view."

Within the hotel, in 1998, Merv launched The Coconut Club, the latest incarnation of the Cocoanut Grove where he'd once sung with Freddy Martin's Orchestra. Merv loved the word coconut, probably because it evoked his Big Band hit, "I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts."

For decorations, he commissioned a fauxtropical setting with gold and silver palm trees and wildeyed monkeys. After the club's launch, Merv defined it as "The Supreme Dance Floor on the West Coast." Somewhat bitchily, his critics said he'd created the club just as a means of having a showroom in which he could perform.

Faced with declining revenues, the Coconut Club closed its doors forever in 2002. But during Merv's regime, a remarkable array of celebrities was spotted on its dance floor.

The Beverly Hilton Hotel:
Merv's kingdom on Earth

They included Billy Crystal, Hugh Hefner, Mickey Rooney, Victoria Principal, Tom Cruise, Antonio Banderas, Michael Jackson, Jerry Lewis, Mark Wahlberg, Vanna White, Mel Brooks, Anne Bancroft, Jackie Collins, Ted Danson, and Robert Vaughn.

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At this point in his life, and as new business opportunities were proposed and promoted, Merv recalled that, "I felt I had other dragons to slay. New challenges to meet. I was antsy to get on with the final phase of my life. I dared dream dreams of conquest in the business world that would have terrified me years before. I was ready to take chances."

From the eighth floor of the Beverly Hilton, where Merv maintained a luxurious apartment, he looked out every night at a hilltop where he dreamed of building his own San Simeon to rival the castle of William Randolph Hearst. The site was the highest point in Beverly Hills.

He owned one hundred and fifty seven acres of this choice real estate, which he'd purchased from Princess Shams, the sister of the Shah of Iran. These Persian royals had wanted to turn the site into a sanctuary for the Peacock Throne in exile. Merv's plans for the site had included an elaborate Palladian villa on the hilltop's summit, along with stables and a trio of lakes. But Merv unexpectedly changed his mind, selling the real estate to Mark Hughes of Herbalife, the nutritional supplement company, for nine million dollars.

Around the same time, Merv bought a vineyard, the Mount Mervillian Winery, and sunk money into Merv

Griffin Events, an outfit specializing in the organization of largescale fashion events for enterprises like Tommy Hilfiger and Gucci.

In the 1990s and beyond, Merv would buy and sell some seventeen hotels. Many of these became hangouts for celebrities, and occasionally one of his hotels would make headlines. Such was the case on July 22, 2002 when Robert Downey Jr. was arrested on charges of drug possession at Merv Griffin's Resort Hotel in Palm Springs. After that, Merv claimed his resort was deluged by clients wanting to book the room where Downey was arrested.

On September 15, 1993 Merv purchased Florida's Deerfield Beach/Boca Raton Hilton from the Prudential Realty Group, based in Newark, New Jersey. Some real estate agents in Florida wondered why Merv wanted a business travelers' hotel positioned at the intersection of Interstate 95 and Hillsboro Boulevard. “It's not his usual style,” said Danny Toldman, a real estate broker. “I doubt if Merv Griffin would even stay there. It's not grand enough. But who can figure out why Merv Griffin buys anything?”

In March of 1998, Merv acquired the Givenchy Hotel and Spa in Palm Springs from its owner, Rose Narva. The fourteenacre luxury property had been developed by the legendary fashion icon Hubert de Givenchy and had opened in 1995. As justification for its purchase, Merv told the press that he had enjoyed the hotel and spa since the day it opened.

By 2003, Merv's love affair with the Beverly Hilton was nearing an end. “It no longer has magic for me,” he confided to friends. Even so, *tout* Hollywood was shocked when he announced that he was selling his once beloved property to an investment group.

“After seventeen years,” Merv told the press, “I am pleased to turn over the reins, and I'm confident the new owners will continue the proud traditions of this extraordinary property.” On the last night of his ownership, Merv was seen “walking every inch” of the nine acres surrounding the hotel.

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When the Reagans returned home to California in 1988, after occupying the White House for eight momentous years, Merv threw a $25,000atable homecoming gala.

Inspired partly by his friendship with the Reagans, Merv had become a heavy donor to Republican causes and in 2003 publicly blasted CBS for the unfavorable slant of their twopart TV biopic, *The Reagans*. (Yanked by CBS because of massive rightwing protests, it was later picked up by Showtime and subsequently earned seven Emmy Award nominations.)

Merv seemed on top of the world. Everything in his life was “coming up roses,” as he put it. But at his first private luncheon with Nancy, she issued a dire warning: Her latest astrologer had told her that the upcoming 1990s were going to be the darkest years of both of their lives.

“I don't believe it,” he said boastfully. “I'm about to take on Donald Trump, and he ain't seen nothing ‘til he's dealt with this feisty Irishman.”

Chapter Eleven

Known for his extravagant lifestyle and his devotion to beautiful women, all of whom have given him high marks as a lover, New Yorker Donald Trump is America's most famous real estate developer. His celebrity is spread by the success of his NBC TV reality show, *The Apprentice* (“You're fired!”), of which he is the host and executive producer. “The Jewish Don” is also the founder of Trump Entertainment Resorts, which brought him into contact with Merv Griffin in 1988.

The idea of transforming a resort like Atlantic City or the one on Paradise Island in The Bahamas into a touristy destination linking entertainment with gambling appealed to Merv. “Big stars—or at least big stars from yesterday — with high rollers, what a combination!” Merv told Dale Scutti, a car dealer from upstate New York, who at the time was a shareholder in Resorts International.

With his newly materialized millions, and with perhaps a need for attention, Merv began to covetously eye Donald Trump's Resorts International. “The Donald” owned eighty percent of the voting stock and controlled a huge hunk of Paradise Island. He also owned two Atlantic City hotels and casinos, one of them an antiquated relic (The Resorts Atlantic City Hotel), as well as the as yettobecompleted Taj Mahal, which, when it opened, was the largest and costliest hotelcasino ever built along the New Jersey shoreline.

As a means of rounding out his ownership of Resorts International, Donald had originally offered to buy the outstanding shares of that organization for $15 a share. Later, under threat of law-suits, he raised his offer to $22 a share. Behind the scenes, as part of a complicated bidding war, Merv outbid him, offering an astonishing $35 per share.

“You mean, Merv Griffin?” Donald asked in astonishment. “That boy singer with Freddy Martin's boys?”

The counter offer brought Merv into gladiatorial combat with the powerful New York mogul.

Merv sued Donald as a means of sabotaging his attempt to purchase the remaining shares of Resorts for $22 a share. Merv then announced that he was willing to offer just under $300 million for ownership of the entire corporation, including the 85% controlled by Trump.

Donald's reaction was immediate. “Is Merv Griffin fucking crazy? In fact, his offer is so crazy that I don't think I should ask for more. Normally, I might say, ‘Merv, make it $40 a share and it's yours, sweetheart.’ Not in this case. Talk about *Jeopardy!* He will learn what *Jeopardy!* is when he gets deep into the shit of the gaming business.”

Flying into New York on a private jet, Merv had arranged a showdown meeting with his adversary at Trump's penthouse office on Fifth Avenue.

No one will ever really know what transpired that day high above the streets of Manhattan between Merv and Donald. The accounts both men have rendered are selfserving and contradictory.

Donald later claimed that he put some hard questions to Merv. “As a guy who's never built anything bigger than a *Wheel of Fortune* set, do you feel prepared to deal with the contractors, unions, bureaucrats, and politicians who stand between you and success?”

At the end of that afternoon in the glass penthouse, Donald agreed to sell out his ownership interest in most of Resorts International, but held onto the Taj Mahal and the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Merv ended up with Bahamasbased Paradise Island (which had been known years before as “Hog Island,”) and the less desirable of the two hotels in Atlantic City, Resorts Atlantic City. Originally known as Haddon Hall, it was the first Atlantic City hotelcasino launched after gaming was legalized there in 1976. An Atlantic City insider told author Gwenda Blair that Haddon Hall “used to be our shithouse along the boardwalk. After Trump converted the old building, we called it a shithouse with carpeting.”

After endless legal and financial hassles and “closing adjustments,” the sale was concluded on May 27, 1988.

The Nemesis:
Donald Trump

Merv's own lawyer, Tom Gallegher, called it “the deal from hell,” But Merv seemed unflappable. In looking back upon dealing with Trump, Gallegher said, “there was the good twin and the bad twin. In many ways Trump is a Jekyll and Hyde guy. He can be enor-mously charming and you get the feeling he's nice, decent, and warm. That's when the bad twin emerges.”

Merv had been able to pull off the deal by transferring ownership of $325 million of Michael Milken's junk bonds as the currency that was used to purchase Resorts International.

After the deal was signed, Trump encountered Merv and shook his hand. “Enjoy your Resorts, which is falling apart. Enjoy Paradise, which is the worst dump you've ever seen. Have a lot of fun.”

“I kicked his ass!” Trump told his friends. “It was a great deal for me. I got the Taj Mahal—he got shit!”

Most Wall Street financiers agreed that Merv got a bad deal from Trump. As Michael Craig put it, “Griffin was right to be so reluctant to complete the transaction. The deal was a horrible loser right from the start. For more than $700 million—the cost of buying out Trump and other shareholders and assuming all the debt, minus Trump's payment for the Taj Mahal—all Griffin got was decrepit Resorts, not especially well run, and in dire need of restoration.”

Merv went so far as to call Trump's account of their negotiation, as printed within the pages of his memoir, *Surviving at the Top*, “a novel.”

He later charged that Trump had completely misled him, claiming that he could “fix up” the Atlantic City resort for 15 million dollars,” when Merv knew it would take that much money just to renovate the lobby.

After taking over from Trump, Merv found himself saddled “with interest payments that equaled the treasury of many small countries.” His company president, David Hanlon, told the press that “museumpiece elevators and a leaky roof have kept Merv from trading on his cachet to book celebrities.”

Just paying the interest on the loans was more than Merv's money advisors could cope with. The money just wasn't there, unless the debt could be restructured.

As clever as Merv had been in his negotiations, often outwitting “The Donald” and his lawyers, he did not foresee the oncoming recession, with the hardships that lay ahead. Waking up one morning in 1989 he found himself $925 million in debt. Most of that debt, $600 million, had been assumed when he'd purchased Resorts International. To retain his twenty percent equity, Merv had to plow another $30 million of his own money into the company. Working behind the scenes, he was able to reorganize Resorts under Chapter 11 of the Federal bankruptcy laws.

To publicize his resorts, Merv began to invite stars for highvisibility visits, often friends from yesterday, including Burt Lancaster and Dinah Shore. He even brought in one of the nation's bestselling novelists, Sidney Sheldon, for a book signing.

For entertainment he booked such stars as the operatic great, Roberta Peters, or “my old buddy,” Tony Bennett, who on one drunken night in California, had been mistakenly introduced to the audience by Merv as Tony Martin.

Merv admitted that “I tried every trick in the book to gain business and publicity, at one point giving away $150,000 in thousand dollar bags to fifteen people every hour.”

Even so, he was forced to restructure the organization's debt again in 1994, Trump mockingly referring to it as “Griffin's Chapter 22.”

In 1996, Merv's promotional ploys for his New Jersey hotel, Resorts Atlantic City, brought in revenue of $64 million, up from the $16 million it was earning when he took it over in 1988. By 1996 Merv was able to terminate

his tumultuous venture into gaming, selling out at $20 a share to Sol Kerzner, the South African real estate developer.

All in all, it is estimated that Merv personally lost $50 million in his flirtation with the gaming industry.

Merv took the money from Kerzner and invested it in Player's International, an outfit that launched and maintained riverboat casinos in Louisiana, Missouri, and Illinois. He sold his investment to Harrah's at a profit in 2000.

As part of a final kissoff to “The Donald,” Merv called him in the 90s, when he was first considering a run for president in the Republican primaries. “Donald, I'm going to contribute one hundred dollars to your campaign. I've thought it over and that's all I can afford.”

“As always, generous to a fault,” Trump said. “I can't accept the money because I plan to drop out of the race. There are too many hands to shake. Germs, you know. In Atlantic City, I was in the men's room and this guy comes out of a booth after taking this big crap and wants to shake my hand.”

During the recession of the early 90s, Merv had been secretly delighted when Trump's most prized investments, including the Taj Mahal in Atlantic City and the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan, racked up a total of more than $1 billion in debt. In an interview with host Jim Palmer on WBAL Radio, Merv was promoting his second autobiography. “You wrote about Donald Trump in your book, Chapter 7 isn't it?” Palmer asked.

“Actually,” Merv said with a grin and a wink, “he's in Chapter 11 now.”

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In 1982, when Liberace's livein boyfriend of five years, Scott Thorson, sued his longtime companion for $113 million in palimony charges after an acrimonious splitup, it sent chills through Merv. He was terrified that someone might file either a palimony suit or a sexual harassment suit against him, although there wasn't enough fear there to get Merv to change his old habits. He still actively and aggressively pursued young men.

Double jeopardy came for Merv in 1991 when, at the age of sixtyfive, he was slapped with both a palimony suit and a sexual harassment suit. Filing the complaint was a handsome thirtysevenyearold former employee, Brent Plott. He had previously been Merv's “secretary/driver/horse trainer/and bodyguard.” In his complaint, Brent stated that in addition to the duties cited, he'd been Merv's lover.

He also charged that he'd been Merv's business consultant and was entitled to a share of the Griffin fortune. As an example, Brent maintained that he'd played a big role in the creation of *Wheel of Fortune*, and he also took credit for personally selecting Vanna White as hostess of the show.

The law-suit sought in excess of $200 million, according to Miami attorney Ellis Rubin, who filed the claim with Los Angeles attorney Stephen Kolodny.

Brent had left Merv's employment in 1985, moving to Florida. It is not known why he waited until 1991 to file the law-suit.

“We lived together, shared the same bed, the same house,” Brent told NBC news. “Merv told me he loved me, and he promised to take care of me for the rest of my life, to provide solace and emotional support.”

Through his attorneys, Merv issued a statement, denying Brent's claims, maintaining that the relationship was strictly professional, not sexual.

“This is a shameless attempt to extort money from me,” the statement said. “This former bodyguard and horse trainer was paid $250 a week, lived in one of two apartments underneath my former house as part of his security function, and left my payroll six or seven years ago. His charges are ridiculous and untrue.”

Merv filed a countersuit against Brent. “I said, ‘Well, I'm not going to pay him off.’ That's an admission of guilt. We go to court. I'm not going to pay hush money. I forget what it was—five million that he wanted? Five million, my ass!” Merv was later reminded that it wasn't just five million, but $200 million.

Brent claimed that he'd suffered emotional distress and illness at the end of a nineyear relationship because “of the wrongful and malicious acts of the defendant, Merv Griffin.”

The $200 million man:
Brent Plott

In his affidavit, Brent stated that he had met Merv in Monte Carlo in 1976, the year of Merv's divorce, and that Merv had been instantly attracted him. The handsome young man had been stationed in Germany as part of a threeyear stint in the U.S. Army. During one of his leaves, he'd taken a train to Monte Carlo.

Brent claimed that from the beginning, Merv had urged him to come back to America and live with him. Brent said that even before the end of his tour of duty, he'd received constant calls from Merv, urging him to come to California and "to enter into a cohabitation agreement on a fulltime basis."

In 1981 Merv finally convinced Brent to give up his job and to "move in with me in return for financial support." In December of that year Brent flew from Paris to Los Angeles to become Merv's lover.

Then-President George Herbert Walker Bush offered Merv his sympathy at a party at the home of Jerry Weintraub. Merv told the President that the law-suit was "a lot of garbage."

"Garbage or not," the president said, "it can get you in a lot of dodo." He wisely advised Merv to settle out of court.

The law-suit launched a media feeding frenzy. The story was carried by the Associated Press and appeared in major newspapers and magazines across the country, including *The New York Times* and *People*. "It was the official outing of Merv Griffin," claimed editor Dennis Holder. "All of us in media knew that Merv was gay, but this became a legal reason for us to expose this closeted old queen. I was a Mike Douglas man myself."

Many of Merv's neighbors in Carmel told the press that they always knew Merv was gay. "It's no big deal," claimed Adam Kramer, a local art dealer.

Suddenly, eyewitnesses to Merv's gayness began to emerge. One waiter at the swank Lodge at Pebble Beach said that he often served Merv an early breakfast. "He was always in his bathrobe, and he was always in the company of very handsome and virile looking young men. Each one I saw was different from the rest. I just assumed they were highpaid hustlers. Why else would these goodlooking guys want to go to bed with fat Merv?"

One typical case was cited in the book, *Queer in America*, by Michelangelo Signorile. It involved "Hal," who was described as a very pretty young boy, who had worked himself up from the mailroom to Merv's inner office staff. Hal claimed that one day at work, he was dressed in tightfitting jeans and also a tightfitting Tshirt. "Griffin placed his hand on my chest and said, 'Oh, you're getting pecs.'" Hal claimed he brushed Merv's hand away. "After that, I was demoted back to the mailroom. I was told that Griffin thought I acted too gay. That wasn't the case at all. I got demoted because I didn't respond to his advances. Other guys in the company were much more willing to sleep with Griffin to advance their careers."

Signorile noted that "if you worked for Merv, and he found out you were 'Out,' you were out the door."

After Merv's death, other outrageous examples of his aggressive sexual behavior were cited. David Ehrenstein posted a column called "Mervgate!" in *The Huffington Post*. He recalled a dinner in the early 1980s for the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, attended by, among others, Peter O'Toole and Dustin Hoffman.

The surprise of the evening, according to Ehrenstein, was "a gaggle of gorgeous muscle boys in multicolored Izod shirts running about hither thither and yon. They did all sorts of things: Showing us to our tables, delivering messages from the stars to an offstage Merv and such. There's no doubt Merv hired each and every one of them personally," said Ehrenstein. "It was a male harem to rival Hef's Playboy bunnies in every way. And the message was clear from Merv. 'Look at what I've got!'"

In spite of the evening's blatant exhibitionism, Merv was still known for firing gays for being too open. Ehrenstein claimed that a "secretaryexecutioner would tell a hapless homo—'We don't want your kind here.'"

Rolling Stone, in a piece written about Merv in 2006, analyzed the issues associated with Brent's palimony suit

and the subsequent sexual harassment suit.

“Merv does not refute the underlying implication in both cases: that he is gay,” the magazine claimed. “Nor does he admit to it. Instead, he mentions the highprofile relationship that he began with actress Eva Gabor at the time of his legal troubles. They were photographed everywhere: Atlantic City, La Quinta, Hollywood premieres. Merv says that they discussed marriage, and he parries any direct questions about his sexual orientation. ‘You're asking an eightyyearold man about his sexuality right now!’ he cries. ‘Get a life!’”

Brent had alleged that Merv's relationship with Eva Gabor was a coverup. “Every picture she's in, I am there too,” he claimed. “She went where Merv and I went. The editors crop me out.”

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The most insiderish look into Eva's relationship with both Merv and Brent was published by Camille (also known as Camyl) Sosa Belanger in her memoir, *Eva Gabor: An Amazing Woman*, in 2005. Camille had worked as a personal assistant to Eva for some twenty years.

Eva on the town with **Merv:**
Happy together?

In February of 1991, Camille recalled that she had been at Eva's home when Merv and Eva returned together from a trip to Palm Springs.

“*Dahlink*, can I tell Camille?” Eva asked.

“Sure, why not?” Merv said.

“Merv and I are getting married,” Eva told her friend.

Camille had been urging the marriage for years—“a better catch, forget it.” Her book makes it obvious that Camille knew that it would be a marriage based on financial security, not romance. The next day Eva told her that Merv was insisting on a prenuptial agreement.

After Brent filed his palimony suit in April of that year, Camille said that “all hell broke loose.” Merv called Eva, because he wanted her to know what had happened before it appeared in the news media.

After the call from Merv, Eva turned to Camille. “Remember Brent?”

Camille said that, of course, she remembered Brent. “Is he back?”

At one point Eva admitted to Camille that “the kid deserves all the money he's asking for. It is no peanuts. He wants millions. No wonder Merv asked me to marry him. He knew all along that Brent was planning to sue him.”

Camille later asserted that news of the law-suit did not come as a shock to Eva because she knew about “the close relationship” between Brent and Merv right from the beginning.

Eva called her friends, including Zsa Zsa, and Eva's voice was filled with remorse. “We've known for decades that Merv was a homosexual. Now the public will know. The whole world will know. The secret is finally out in the open.”

Camille wrote about Eva's tolerance, about her acceptance of Merv's homosexuality, and specifically about his love affair with Brent. “Eva was at the time really annoyed and humiliated because, after all, Eva loved and respected her friend, and seeing him like a wounded soul was no joy to Eva. Eva knew it all along, and she lived with them, and they went out to places together and to long trips on the road and to Europe, so Eva was used to that kind of life and she did not care.”

Camille wrote that Eva enjoyed “traveling like a queen and with expenses paid.”

Many of Eva's friends later admitted that “she's one of the most gayfriendly women in Hollywood, where the competition for that title is keen.”

Camille herself was saddened by the law-suit, because she too had seen the relationship between Merv and Brent first hand. “How can anyone destroy many years of happiness and drag each other in the ‘Mud’ when there was so much love during the young fresh years when one had eyes ‘only’ for each other? From what I had seen during the fresh years, it was love and equality and eating from the same table.”

In the days and weeks ahead, Eva was hounded by the national media for an articulation of her reaction to the law-suit. The *Star*, the *Globe*, and the *Enquirer* were virtually harassing her day and night. Camille claimed that both men, Brent and Merv, had treated Eva with “love and kindness like a little sister, especially after her last divorce.” Camille claimed that Eva respected both Merv and Brent, and it was obvious to Eva's friends that her loyalties were tested. In the end, of course, she sided with Merv.

Putting up a brave public front, Eva told the press, “I've been with Merv for nine years, and I can tell you, this is ridiculous.” Privately to her friends, Eva had maintained all along that Merv was gay and that her relationship with him was platonic.

In an outrageous statement on *The Joan Rivers Show*, Zsa Zsa suggested that it was Eva who should be suing for palimony. “After all, she lived with Merv for nine years.”

In November of 1991, Brent's case against Merv came before Judge Diane Wayne of the Los Angeles Superior Court. She dismissed it “with prejudice,” meaning that the case could not be refiled. The court also fined Brent two thousand dollars for bringing the case against Merv. A spokesman for Merv claimed, “This was a totally baseless suit from a guy trying to make a quick buck.”

Many observers disagreed with that opinion, thinking the case “had a lot of legs.” Others were surprised at the quick dismissal.

When news reached Camille and Eva that the law-suit against Merv had been dropped, Camille asked Eva about the status of Merv's marriage proposal.

Eva's answer was somewhat enigmatic. “Come on, *dahlink*, don't play dumb. It is out in the air and that is all—and there is nothing to worry now.”

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Not intimidated by the failure of Brent's case, Deney Terrio filed a sexual harassment suit against Merv in December of 1991, a month after Brent's case was dismissed.

Deney was seeking $11.3 million from his former boss, who he claimed had constantly propositioned him in 1978 when he was hosting Merv's *Dance Fever*.

Deney was a choreographer and former film actor. He achieved fame when he coached John Travolta in his dance numbers for *Saturday Night Fever*. As an actor, he appeared in such films as *The Idolmaker* and *Star Trek II*.

In his affidavit, Deney claimed, “beginning in 1978, and continuing through the parties' business relationship, the Defendant, Merv Griffin, made ongoing explicit homosexual advances toward me.”

The young actor also claimed that “Griffin persisted in said advances.” Deney alleged that Merv spoke of substantial financial gains if Deney would become his bed partner. Attorneys for Merv claimed that the allegations were “totally false.”

Like the case that preceded it, this second law-suit was widely publicized by the media.

Deney charged on *A Current Affair* that Merv attacked him in 1978. “Griffin fell on top of me and started grabbing me and tearing my shirt off,” he said. “It shocked me. I was terrified. I kept pushing him back, saying, ‘Merv, I'm not ready.’”

Shock jock, trashtalking Howard Stern also booked Deney for two episodes of his show in 1991 and 1992 to air his sexual harassment charges against Merv.

As in the case of Brent, Merv claimed that Deney's suit was motivated by greed. “It was after they started printing the money stuff,” he said. “After the sale of *Wheel of Fortune* and *Jeopardy!*, I was a target.”

Prompted by the case's media exposure, gay men in the discos of Los Angeles could be seen dancing in pink Tshirts with the slogan, I TOO SLEPT WITH MERV GRIFFIN.

In June of 1992, a judge dismissed the second law-suit against Merv.

In retaliation against Deney's law-suit, Merv threatened to destroy the young actor's career. He never carried through with this threat.

Deney went on to appear as a guest star on such popular TV series as *The Love Boat*. In the 90s he toured night-

clubs and judged dance contests. In July of 2005 he was hosting his own disco radio show for Sirius satellite radio network.

Deney Terrio

In 1993, after the two law-suits were dismissed, activist and journalist Michelangelo Signorile, who specializes in "outing," cited Merv as one of the "closeted power brokers still keeping the homophobic machine going. It's highly unlikely that Merv Griffin, for instance, will ever publicly discuss his sexuality, even though it would probably do him a world of good and would have an effect on the way his own gay employees, as well as gay people throughout the industry, are treated."

"I've been in the public eye for more than fifty years as Merv Griffin — not as somebody else's creation," Merv said. "I've never pretended to be someone I wasn't. If there was anything really important that people didn't know about me by now, then I would have to be the world's greatest actor. Forget Brando. Forget Hoffman. Forget De Niro. I would have to be the best."

"Since his entire life was based on concealing his true self from the public, Merv deserved an Oscar for deception," said Marlon Brando, who was far more open than Merv (and virtually anybody else as well) about the various outlets of his own sexual expression.

Merv tried to deflect the issue whenever he was asked if he was gay. "I tell everybody that I'm a *quartre*-sexual. I will do anything for a quarter."

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Marshall Blonsky, author of *American Mythologies* (Oxford University Press, 1992*)*, crafted one of the most controversial interviews of Merv ever written. Their meeting took place over lunch at the Beverly Hilton.

As Merv rose to "greet an exmovie queen," Blonsky contemplated "his Beverly Hills image, far removed from the professorial tweeds or Wall Street subdued sharpness. He is the greedy, contemporary Sidney Greenstreet, dressed in an oversize, richly textured sweater braided with black leather. His pants are black, and I realize: This is Hollywood, Merv is entertainment royalty, and Merv is dressed in robes, then about to build his Versailles on a plateau in West L.A., a project that will collapse when, reaching for the Maltese Falcon in the form of Resorts International, he finds a nasty surprise inside it. Happily unclairvoyant, I had left the finance capital to enter the fantasy capital, two poles, flesh and fantasy, base and superstructure, content and form."

In his unflattering portrait of Merv, Blonsky described him as financially successful but artistically limited. He noted that the key to Merv was "a desperate drive to be accepted by the rich and powerful," and he credited Murray Schwartz with much of Merv's financial success. The two partners separated in the 1980s. Blonsky did admit, however, that Merv had a genius for creating game shows on TV.

When the interview was published, Merv claimed, about Blonsky, "He tricked me, seduced me."

In his article, Blonsky aptly summed up Merv's unique character as a phenomenon still anchored in the 1950s. "It's everything I love," Merv said, speaking of the Beverly Hilton. "Ballrooms, bands, singing, entertaining." At one point Merv leaned forward and began to sing, *Dancing in the Daaark*.."

"I had the craziest image of Merv Griffin whirling me around the ballroom," Blonsky said. "For Merv, showbusiness heaven is still a ballroom, and in his ballroom fantasy he moves from one dream to another, and, as with our own dreams, they're always incomplete, inchoate. He ends up disillusioned and immediately begins a new fabrication. Failure is the end of the dream and the driving force to change again."

Eva, whether by fault of her accent or because she was making an ironic joke, always referred to Merv as a “typhoon,” not a tycoon.

Merv's success caused amazement in others, including Mike Dann, the chief programming executive at CBS. “For a guy like Griffin to have made it to the top is like Joe the Plumber becoming a bestselling novelist.” This Joe the Plumber reference was said years before John McCain immortalized another Joe the Plumber during one of his presidential debates in 2008.

Merv too was sometimes awed by how far he'd gone in show business. “I could have become even bigger,” he often said. Years after his $250 million sellout was concluded, many Wall Street financiers told him that had he waited another four or five years, he might have gotten one billion.

“Bankers like that are trying to give me a heart attack—and to think I seriously considered bailing out for $45 million,” Merv said.

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On numerous occasions and over many years, Merv had encountered Ronald and Nancy Davis Reagan, including that embarrassing runin at Robert Walker's house when she was “not dressed for the occasion.” As for “Ronnie” (as Merv then called him), Doris Day had introduced him to Merv back on the Warner's lot in the early 50s.

The Reagans' relationship with Merv remained casual until Nancy and Reagan, back when he was Governor of California, made a joint appearance on Merv's talk show. The oncamera banter among the three of them had been personal and intimate, but hardly revelatory. The Reagans weren't former movie stars who revealed their darkest secrets to millions in front of TV sets.

“Beginning with that talk show, the Reagans and Merv bonded,” Hadley claimed. “He talked about them all the time. Although they didn't see that much of each other, they talked a lot on the phone. Merv was much closer to Nancy than Ronald, as was to be expected. Merv and Nancy have much in common, including their joint interest in astrology. A true friendship between Merv and the Reagans didn't really blossom until he was invited to the White House. That was sometime around March—or maybe April, I don't remember—in 1983.”

As Merv relates in his second autobiography, he arrived at the White House around eleven in the morning and was ushered into the private apartments of the First Family. He'd worn what he called “my best dark suit,” but found them dressed in clothes they might have worn at their ranch in California. “Oh, that's just great!” he said to them. “Here I am dressed like Herbert Hoover and you two look like Roy Rogers and Dale Evans.”

That broke the ice between them, and the couple chatted like old friends over lunch that day. “Even though temporarily misplaced on the East Coast, Nancy, Ronnie, and I were Californians at heart, I being a native and they being transplants,” Merv said. “Their pleasant afternoon was broken by a grim visit to Andrews Air Force Base to salute a plane carrying sixteen Americans who had been killed at the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.”

When the Reagans returned to the White House, Nancy—and later the President himself—showed Merv around the family quarters. The President also took him into the Oval Office where Merv noticed big jars of multicolored jelly beans.

“You sure do love those jelly beans,” Merv said. “Not me. Pure sugar. They'd make me fatter than I already am.”

“Actually, I'm not crazy for jelly beans at all,” Reagan revealed. “Someone just wrote that in the press. After that I get daily deliveries of jelly beans, which we accept politely and Nancy sees that thank you notes are sent out.”

“If not jelly beans, what is your passion?” Merv asked.

“Aside from Nancy,” he said, “peanut brittle.”

From that day on, until the Reagans left the White House, Merv always sent the most expensive and besttasting peanut brittle that money could buy.

As President, Reagan respected what he viewed as Merv's media savvy. He called Merv on several occasions, seeking his advice on how to handle the press.

Toward the end of his administration, Reagan even called Merv to ask for advice about how to treat Jane Wyman in his memoir, *An American Life*. “Nancy doesn't want me to mention her at all,” Reagan said.

The Lion in Winter

"You can't do that," Merv cautioned. "Of course, you're the President and can do what you like. But you have to mention her. My God, you were married to her for eight years. She was a famous movie star. An Oscar winner. If you don't mention her, it'd be a sin of omission. The press would mock you for it."

"But Jane and I agreed at the time of our divorce not to write about each other or give interviews about our marriage."

"You've still got to mention her, Mr. President."

Finally, after mulling it over, and after overcoming Nancy's protests, the President called Merv with what he'd personally written. He read from a printed page.

> *The same year I made the Knute Rockne movie, I married Jane Wyman, another contract player at Warners. Our marriage produced two wonderful children, Maureen and Michael, but it didn't work out, and in 1948 we were divorced."*

The President paused for a long moment. "What do you think, Merv?"

"Short but sweet, Mr. President."

Presumably, the subject of homosexuality reared its head only rarely in the relationship between Merv and Reagan. It can be assumed that Nancy had told her husband that Merv was a homosexual. In private Reagan wasn't as antigay as he was often depicted.

Very rarely did he want to bring up the subject, however. "Reagan lived in an era when homosexuals were locked up in the closet so they wouldn't frighten guests in the parlor," said Truman Capote, no great admirer of the Reagans. "During his administration, with the outbreak of the world's AIDS disaster, the President didn't want to mention that either, thinking it a gay disease. But God likes to play tricks on men like Reagan. That's why God herself gave him Ron Reagan Jr. for a son."

In a private phone call to Merv, Reagan said, "I have to bring up a delicate matter. It's about my son, Skipper. Because he's into ballet, the press is making a lot of insinuations…." He paused. There was an awkward silence.

"They're saying he's gay, you mean?" Merv said.

"Exactly," Reagan said. "We've checked him out. He likes girls. The rumors are untrue. What can I do?"

"You can ignore it, Mr. President," Merv advised. "It's suggested all the time in the press or somewhere—mostly idle gossip—that I'm a homosexual, too. As we both know, that's not true. If some jerk in the press asks you if Skipper is gay, just deny it—and move on. That's the only way. The less said the better."

"Yes," the President said, "the less said the better. That's the way I've always treated the subject of homosexuality, and I'd like to live my life the way I was brought up. Did you know that I didn't know what a homosexual was until I got to Hollywood?"

"Hollywood," Merv said. "Well, that's the place to find out all about it."

"After being introduced to Errol Flynn, I learned far more about homosexuality than I'd ever wanted to know," Reagan said. Abruptly changing the subject, the President invited Merv to dinner with Nancy and himself.

Merv eagerly accepted.

The Reagans were so impressed with Merv that they allowed him to return to the White House about five months later to interview them in their private space, the President filling in the first forty-five minutes, with Nancy making an appearance for the final 15-minute segment of the hourlong show.

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The private encounters between Merv and the President and his Lady would never be known if Merv hadn't insisted on providing most of the details to his friends. Although he shared stories about the Reagans with his intimates, he never did so at their expense. “I think Merv had a genuine affection for the President, but he developed a deep, loving friendship with Nancy,” said Rosemary Clooney. “Like any good friend, he knew her faults and shortcomings, and she was willing to overlook some of the more sordid aspects of Merv's life. I'm sure all those gossips in California she surrounded herself with kept her well supplied with anecdotes about Merv's nocturnal life.”

In the years to come, Merv would become Nancy's closest male confidant. Since he was homosexual, the President would not get jealous of Merv the way he was with his wife's attention and devotion to Frank Sinatra, on whom she maintained a lifelong crush.

After her tenure as First Lady, Merv often took Nancy to Holmby Hills, an affluent neighborhood adjacent to Beverly Hills. There, they visited the mansion of real estate mogul Marge Everett, where the former First Lady and Merv often sang duets together at the piano. Johnny Mathis sometimes joined them. Nancy's favorite number was “Our Love Is Here to Stay.”

Living well is the best revenge.

Once, during his business involvement in The Bahamas, and after their tenure in the White House, Merv asked Ronald and Nancy Reagan to join him on Paradise Island. One afternoon when she was having her hair done, Merv invited Ronald to a bar for drinks. “Nancy was furious at me when she found out,” Merv recalled. “I told her, ‘Come on, lots of people drink at bars. John Wayne drinks at bars.’”

Nancy shot back, “John Wayne is not the former President of the United States.”

In 1994, when the ex-President wrote his famous letter to “My Fellow Americans,” informing them that he was afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, he accurately predicted that he had begun “the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life.”

Merv shared in that journey, being with Reagan whenever he was invited by Nancy to see the President. He saw a lot more of Nancy and was almost in daily contact with her, if not in person, then by phone.

When Merv first saw Reagan after he'd written that famous letter, the former President seemed cheerful and optimistic. “My mother always said that if life hands you lemons, make lemonade.”

Merv had a frontrow seat to watch the slow but steady postpresidential decline of his friend Ronald Reagan. He shared the gruesome details with Eva Gabor, who, without any malicious intent, shared those same details with her close friends—and that is why we know today about Merv's role in the life of the Reagans.

On several occasions, Merv attended private luncheons, arranged by Nancy, at Reagan's postpresidential office at Century City in Los Angeles. The former President arrived there late every morning and left early. He was incapable of doing any actual work except—perhaps—pose for a picture with some Girl Scouts.

It had been recommended to Nancy that Alzheimer's patients needed some sense of routine—hence, Reagan's ritual visits to his office five days a week. Nancy would write out a schedule for him for the day, just as his White House staff used to do, but it was filled only with busy work to keep his mind occupied. Merv was one of the few people she trusted to be alone with the former President.

In his first luncheon meeting, Merv was surprised when the former President tossed salt over his left shoulder. “I'm superstitious,” he said.

Merv told Eva a secret he'd never told anyone. Over lunch, according to Merv, Reagan talked about two things—Doris Day and flying saucers. He said that when he was dating Doris, during the aftermath of his divorce from Jane Wyman, he was seriously considering proposing marriage to her. “He spent most of the lunch talking about what marriage to Doris would have been like,” Merv told Eva, “but he hastened to add that he'd made the perfect choice

in Nancy."

The remainder of the luncheon involved talk about flying saucers. The President informed Merv that he was an ardent believer in UFOs, claiming that in California, back in 1947, he'd seen flying saucers on three separate occasions. He also told Merv that he believed that aliens had been spying on the Earth for decades, and he feared that an invasion of the United States was imminent. "I just know it," Reagan said. "They've selected some desert somewhere in the West here to make their initial landing."

As the months went by, Merv couldn't help but notice that the President's condition, and especially his memory, had faded. "As long as he was able to go to his beloved Rancho del Cielo with Nancy, he seemed okay," Merv said. "The fresh air there, the chance to cut brush, those still romantic moments when he could walk handinhand with Nancy to observe the beautiful sunsets—all of that seemed to keep his spirit alive."

One day Nancy called Merv to tell him that, "Ronnie has cleared his last brush." Her voice sounded melancholic. Ronnie had lost all interest in the ranch and didn't want to go there anymore. She was going to put it up for sale.

In 1997, Merv paid his last call on the President. He later told Eva, "Ronnie didn't know who I was. I respectfully addressed him as 'Mr. President.' He looked up at me confused. Very slowly, he asked me, 'President of what? I was never the President. That job belonged to Jack Warner.'"

After leaving the Reagans' home that day, Merv believed that Reagan had obliterated all memories of his years in the White House, as well as his memories of Sacramento when he was governor of California. "But he still retained some memory of being in films. His mind had gone back to a happier time, perhaps the 1940s when he was a movie star."

"When Nancy limited my access to the President," Merv said, "I understood completely. After all, she was the chief custodian of him — the gatekeeper, so to speak. In the end she wanted to protect the President from prying eyes. He had gone too far into that sunset he wrote about in the letter. Ronnie had already gone over the top of the world, and darkness—not even twilight—had set in. Ronnie had to be shielded. Old friends could no longer come to call and talk about the good times in Sacramento or Washington. At some point, and I'm guessing here, Ronnie no longer remembered even being a movie star, much less President."

Nancy Reagan:
Deep in December

In one candid moment, Merv claimed that Nancy had been virtually under "house arrest for ten years when Ronnie was sick."

Even in the darkest of times, Merv brought humor into the former First Lady's life, including a Saturday lunch he had with her at Chez Mimi, a chic Santa Monica eatery favored by celebrities. "Merv's a real, real upper," Nancy said. "He will not let himself be depressed or low. He cheers you right up!"

When Merv visited Nancy after Ronald had surgery on a broken hip, he knew the end was coming. "But she was so brave. She also knew it was the end yet she appeared optimistic. The actress in her put up a front for me."

"He's going to get well, you'll see," she told Merv.

Nancy also revealed that she was "stretched to my limits," when she'd visited Reagan's first daughter, Maureen, and her husband on the same day at the same hospital.

"Of course, Nancy, without saying so, knew she was conducting a death watch for both Maureen and Ronnie at

the same time," Merv told Eva.

Born in 1941, Maureen was the only biological child of Reagan and his first wife, Jane Wyman. She was active in Republican party politics, and the first daughter of a U.S. President to run for public office. She was defeated in both of the two elections she spearheaded. They included the race for US Senator from California in 1982, and a decade later, an unsuccessful race for California's 36th congressional district.

Maureen was never particularly close to Nancy (her stepmother) and sometimes endorsed political positions—including a prochoice platform on abortion—that opposed the widely publicized tenets of her famous father. Death for Maureen from melanoma cancer came prematurely, in 2001, at the age of sixty.

Nancy had slept every night of her life that she could with her husband, even during the months before their marriage in 1952, when she'd become pregnant. "The saddest thing for Nancy was when she was told she could no longer sleep at Ronnie's side," Merv said. "She had to order a hospital bed with bars on either side so Ronnie would not fall out of bed again and injure his hip."

"That bed I wake up in every morning these days feels very lonely indeed," she told Merv.

Merv sent flowers when the Reagans celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on March 4, 2003. "It wasn't much of a celebration," Nancy confided in him. "The cake was small and we sat in silence. Ronnie didn't know what we were celebrating."

Nancy called Merv on June 5, 2005, to tell her that "Ronnie has gone on his way." He promised to come over at once.

After the President died, Merv was among the first to visit Nancy with condolences. In tears she looked up at him. "The most painful thing for me to endure over the past few years was when the moment came that we could no longer share memories together."

To mask his grief, Merv turned a bright face to the press waiting outside the Reagans' Bel Air home. "In all the stories you're filing," Merv told the press, "don't forget to add that Ronald Reagan was the most successful actor in history. As for me, I'm going home to watch Ronnie and Nancy in *Hellcats of the Navy*."

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In 1990 Merv created a television game show based on the parlor game *Monopoly*. Hosted by Mike Reilly, the show premiered on June 16, with three contestants competing to answer crossword puzzlestyle clues and gain property on the Monopoly board. After only thirteen episodes, the show went bust. Many viewers claimed that Merv made the rules too complicated for the average viewer.

Recordings of each episode of the show survive, but so far no network has opted for reruns. In a touch of irony, it was announced in 2006 that Donald Trump, Merv's nemesis, was "going from boardroom to Boardwalk." *The Apprentice* star said he was going to become the executive producer of a reality show based on the classic board game.

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In the spring of 1998, Merv granted an interview with Matt Tyrnauer of *Vanity Fair*. During their time together, Merv discussed Eva, who had died three years before. "Those years had great ups and downs," Merv said. "We really loved each other a lot, but sometimes we would leave each other and go to different people. She would go to someone else, and I would go to—say, Princess Elizabeth of Yugoslavia. We had broken up just before her death, but when we were together we traveled everywhere: Morocco, all the islands."

Herb Caen of the late *San Francisco Chronicle*, once said, "If Merv and Eva ever stopped laughing, they'd get married."

"Now everyone says, 'God, we really miss the two of you,'" Merv said. "We were like another version of Lucy and Desi."

Merv refused to tell Tyrnauer the reason he split from Eva, although he did confess that they'd planned to be married, with Nancy Reagan serving as the matron of honor. "There was a premarital agreement," Merv said. "But we could never agree which house we'd live in, and I couldn't agree which of her staff she would bring with her and that really drove us apart. It's awful, because there is so much more I can't tell. It was a monstrous problem and it wasn't mine—but I will never drag Eva's name through the mud."

The “monstrous” problem that Merv referred to was Eva's demand that he settle fifty million dollars on her for all the years she'd been his companion. If he didn't come across with the money, Eva was threatening to file a palimony suit against him, like his former companion Brent Plott had done.

After learning of her intentions, Merv could not forgive her, and ordered her from La Quinta and all of his other properties. When she'd returned to her own home and recovered from her immediate anger, Eva told her friends, “I don't know what got into me. My Hungarian temper, I suppose. I would never have sued Merv, but he should have made some financial settlement on me.”

The unresolved marriage—or money—issues between them bubbled over when Merv fell madly in love with a young hustler and wanted to spend all his evenings with the handsome little stud—and no more evenings with Eva.

In June of 1995, after her split from Merv, Eva journeyed to Baja, Mexico, where she had a home. Bitterly disappointed over the failure of her relationship, she claimed she was in desperate need of a vacation.

On June 2, she “ate a bad piece of fruit” in her words and contracted viral pneumonia. As her condition weakened, she refused to seek help from Mexican doctors, having no faith in them. In her disoriented state, she collapsed on a staircase in her house, falling about ten steps to her foyer. Her hip was broken.

Eva's housekeeper placed a call to Merv, who claimed he was “devastated” to hear of Eva's injury. He immediately called for a private jet to transport Eva from Baja to the Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

When Eva was admitted there on June 21, doctors discovered fluid in her lungs and a blood clot. She was also running a dangerous fever. Put on a respirator, she was given the drug heparin for the clotting and antibiotics for the pneumonia.

Experts have speculated that Eva may not have died of viral pneumonia, but of pneumococcal pneumonia, a horrible bug that can kill within twentyfour hours.

Under heavy medication and with her condition worsening by the hour, she slipped into a coma. Death came at 10:05 on Tuesday, July 4, 1995. Presumably, Eva was seventysix years old, although some have disputed that.

The increasingly senile Jolie wasn't immediately informed of her daughter's death, but Zsa Zsa and Magda, her older sisters, attended a 7pm memorial service at the Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Beverly Hills. Eva had been cremated.

Paying his last respects was her faithful costar of *Green Acres*, Eddie Albert. He embraced Merv, who also greeted fellow mourners Rosie O'Donnell, Johnny Mathis, and Mitzi Gaynor. The matriarch of the Gabor clan, Jolie, and Eva's older sister, Magda, would each survive another two years, dying, respectively, on April 1, and June 11 of 1997.

From aboard his yacht, the *Griff*, Merv heard about Eva's death and went into shock. “Only because we'd had an argument, and we hadn't settled the argument yet, and I was mad, and I was off on my boat, and she died while I was gone. That was rough.”

Reportedly, Merv's final words to Eva before they departed forever were, “I've loved a thousand times, but never been in love.”

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Merv knew the Prince and Princess of Wales somewhat distantly. “We circled each other,” he later said, “although at a distance, but a respectful distance.”

In the 80s, Merv threw a party for Charles and Diana in Palm Beach. The Prince of Wales had given his first American TV interview to Merv. After that, Merv developed an ongoing relationship with the royal couple that never became close.

“I adored Di, who for some reason I kept calling Lady Di,” Merv said. “That stuck in my mind even when she became a royal princess. I simply adored her. But I also thought Prince Charles was wonderful—a really marvelous guy, funny and charming. Harry and William simply adored him, and he's wonderful with them.”

When Princess Di was killed in Paris in 1997, Merv sent Prince Charles a condolence note. “I hate that Britain's royal family has become the heavies in the tragic death of Di. It's foolish. People are even saying that Charles had Di killed—or that Prince Philip did it. Such charges are baseless. Ridiculous. Beyond libel.”

Although Merv's strongest attachment was to Princess Diana, he also got to meet Prince Charles' second bride, Camilla.

Merv admitted in 2000 that he “adored” George W. Bush, who invited him to the White House to attend a party

for Prince Charles and Camilla.

“The President yelled at me across the room,” Merv said. “‘Meeerv is here!’” Merv quoted the president as saying. “Ooooh, I love him! He's funny. He's bright. He's intelligent. And he loves to have a good time. I wish everybody could get to know him personally.”

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Built in 1784, and surrounded by fiftyfive acres of rolling green hills, “the most beautiful house in Ireland,” St. Clerans Manor, a Georgian estate in Craughwell, County Galway, had been acquired after World War II by John Huston. When he was in residence, the famed director entertained Hollywood luminaries who included Elizabeth Taylor, Cary Grant, Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, Peter O'Toole, and Paul Newman.

After Merv bought the property in 1997, he restored the estate to its original splendor, lavishly upgrading and redecorating it before its launch as a luxury hotel made available to paying guests whenever Merv was not in residence.

John Huston's bedroom is now called the Griffin Suite. Its bathroom still has gilded taps shaped like swan's heads. The Angelica Suite is actually a small separate octagonal guest cottage, once the bedroom of Angelica Huston, John's daughter.

The opulently furnished dining room that had hosted kings, princes, consorts, and movie stars, now feeds rich tourists.

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Merv responded to the challenge by the Federal Communications Commission to develop TV programs for young people that were more challenging than *Scooby Doo* and *Beavis and Butt-head*. Responding to the need for educational kids' programming, he created *Click*, a children's quiz show. “I want to do a fastmoving questionandanswer show,” Merv said. “I want to do one with high speed, because kids react to questions faster than adults do.”

He hired Ryan Seacrest as host of *Click*. Seacrest called Merv a perfectionist who personally oversaw the production of the show's first twentytwo segments. “Merv is very ‘on,’ very quickwitted,” said Seacrest. “He's very handson. He has a vision. He knows exactly what he wants.”

Ryan Seacrest / Merv

When Seacrest began his association with *Click*, in September of 1997, he was relatively unknown. The game show was based around computers and the then relatively novel medium of the Internet. *Click* aired in syndication from September of 1997 to August of 1999.

Other than Vanna White, Merv cited as one of his greatest achievements the discovery of Ryan Seacrest. Merv had developed a lateinlife crush on the handsome twentytwoyear old. “I saw energy in the boy. There's *the look* of him. Easy smile. He could do it!”

Seacrest, by now a familiar face on *American Idol*, was maliciously rumored to have slept with Merv to advance his career in media, and bloggers went to work posting these charges on the web. However, they were just that—rumors—and have never been proven.

Some of the blog postings were more humorous than real. “*Holy shee-it*, really?” wrote Fanatic. “I'd never heard the Merv rumor before. I thought when they said ‘screwed over your idol to get the gig,’ they meant ‘screwed

OVER your idol,' not literally banged. That's just too funny. Because Merv Griffin was actually my first 'celebrity crush' when I was only about three years old. I used to try to feed him potato chips through the television screen. So like, wow. My first celebrity crush and my last celebrity crush have apparently done the deed. Ain't that some shit? I've come full circle with my too foolish manslut obsessions."

Other bloggers such as "Ladyjaney," took a more reasonable point of view. 'As far as Seacrest and Merv go, I refuse to believe it. Or I sure as heck don't want to anyway."

"GJJ," another blogger, summed up "this newfound lust for Seacrest. It couldn't be because he appears to be 'enhanced' by packing a pair of tube socks in his pants, could it?"

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Merv's last *protégé* was Andrew Yani. At the age of thirtyone, he was appointed as head of Merv's television company. An extraordinarily handsome young man, Yani looks like a model for *GQ*. Merv's publicist, Marcia Newberger, claimed, "Merv loves having young guys around—it makes him feel young."

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At the age of seventy, Roddy McDowall died in October of 1998. He and Merv hadn't sought one another out with any particular frequency during the final years of his life. By that time, their friendship was essentially a distant memory of their youth. However, they occasionally remained in touch, usually by telephone.

Merv was saddened by Roddy's death, feeling his own life slipping away as old friends of the 40s and 50s died. He said, "Roddy was living proof that not all former child stars were doomed to be either forgotten or else a drug user or alcoholic. He was the world's greatest movie fan, and a star in his own right. All of his friends, including Elizabeth Taylor, who appeared with him in *Lassie Come Home*, were saddened today. A friend told me that he died very peacefully at his home in Studio City, just the way he planned it."

Later, Merv revealed to close friends that he'd visited Roddy privately during the weeks before his death. "He took my hand and looked deeply into my eyes. 'This is not a time to be sad,' Roddy said. 'We've both had incredible lives. It was like a visit to Walt's Magical Kingdom. With all our pain and disappointments, it was a life that most people only dream about. Too bad it must end, like all good things.'"

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Merv lived to accept many honors due him, including a lifetime achievement award at the Daytime Emmys. He was also honored by the Museum of Television and Radio, now known as the Paley Center for Media. Stuart N. Brotman, then president of the museum, said, "There really has been no one who has managed to have his type of success both in front of and behind the camera. He is a oneman conglomerate, and I can't think of anyone else who has had that reach."

In his final years, the awards came frequently. In 1994 he was honored with the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame Award, sharing it with Dan Rather and Diane Sawyer. Throughout his life, Merv won fifteen Emmy Awards, including the 199394 Outstanding Game/Audience Participation Show Emmy for his role as executive producer of *Jeopardy!*. The John Wayne Cancer Institute presented Merv with "The Duke Award," and he was also honored by the American Ireland Fund and the SHARE organization. As the awards piled up, Merv soon lost count.

His last big honor came in 2005, when he was presented with Daytime Emmy's Lifetime Achievement Award at the organization's 32nd annual award ceremony.

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In March of 2001, Merv released *It's Like a Dream*, a CD of mostly vintage songs he'd recently recorded. They included "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," as well as the album's title song, which he had himself composed.

Soon after, Merv endorsed a retrospective of the best of the thousands of televised interviews he'd conducted during his long and gregarious lifetime. Containing three separate discs, it was entitled *The Merv Griffin Show: 40 of*

the Most Interesting People of Our Time. Some of the younger viewers who played these discs were seeing *The Merv Griffin Show* for the first time.

In reviewing it, Ken Tucker, a TV critic writing in *Entertainment Weekly*, said that as a talk show host, Merv was about "as confrontational as Elmer Fudd. Not all of this stuff ages well. I'd been looking forward to seeing Totie Fields, a 60s comedian who's attained cult status as a pioneeringly ruthless female comic since her death in 1978, but the guest spot here finds her braying tired jokes about how expensive vacations are."

Merv's last "gig" would have involved singing at the Hollywood Bowl beginning on September 14, 2007, as an introduction to Pink Martini, a "little orchestra" devoted to a vintage blend of Latin, lounge, classical, and jazz music. Sadly, because Merv died the day before the scheduled date, his appearance at that event never came to be.

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Often, Merv was asked by reporters to comment on his rapidly expanding waistline. "I've been very fortunate with my health," he said. "I smoke, I drink—not heavily, but I like my wine. I don't exercise. I take a cab to a cab. It's all in your DNA. My philosophy of life? Turn the page. If something falls through, turn the page. It's over with, get used to it, get on with it. Very simple. It's always worked for me."

When he turned eighty, Merv admitted that he'd tried all the diets — Atkins, Scarscale, Jenny Craig—"and just plain water. Now I've given up worrying about my weight." Critics claimed that he'd become "mountainous—he's taking to wearing polo shirts that drape his girth like a tent," wrote John Colapinto in 2006. "Life is too short for fatfree brownies," Merv said.

"I've outlived all of my diet doctors," Merv said. "My first diet doctor was Dr. Atkins. And then I went through Dr. Stillman, the water diet. I think he drowned on his own diet. And I had Dr. Tarnower, and his girlfriend shot him. So I gave up dieting."

He was referring to Herman Tarnower, the cardiologist who wrote *The Complete Scarsdale Medical Diet*. His lover, Jean Harris, the usually prim headmistress of a private girl's school, fatally shot him on March 10, 1980 when she discovered that the confirmed bachelor had been seducing other women. Merv also tried the doctor's *Quick Weight Loss Diet* (The Stillman Diet). A creation of Irwin Maxwell Stillman, it was an early incarnation of the high protein, low carbohydrate diet.

Merv had referred to Robert Atkins, a nutritionist and cardiologist who created the Atkins Diet, a controversial way of dieting that entails close control of carbohydrate consumption, relying on protein and fat intake instead. On April 28, 2003, at the age of seventy two, Dr. Atkins slipped on a patch of ice while walking to work, hitting his head and causing bleeding around his brain. The fall killed him.

Even as late as 2003, friends were urging Merv to cut back on the package of Marlboro Lights he smoked daily. "Any day now," he told them. "I'm likely to coldturkey it. I've stopped countless times in my past. But, *ooooh*, that first cigarette after you go back. It's like your first time at Disneyland."

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Facing death by 2005, Merv told *The New York Times*, "I know death is inevitable, but I'm happy for the time being. I've got great energy, and I've got all my hair. For my tombstone epitaph, I'm suggesting—"*I will not be right back after these messages*."

When Merv was told by Dr. Skip Holden that he needed immediate surgery for prostate cancer, he said, "I don't want anything sliced out of me. I've never had an operation in my life. No, I don't want that. And, then they told me about radiation. I said that I'd do that. And then I went off on my boat out in the Mediterranean for two months. The doctor called and said, 'Merv, you have to undergo treatment. What are you doing out there?' And, I said, 'Well I will. I will. I will.' By this time I had forgotten and he ruined my whole day. He said, 'You've got cancer, remember?' So, I came back."

Back in California, Merv, at the age of eightytwo, entered Cedars Sinai Medical Center on July 8, 2007 for a recurrence of prostate cancer. He'd been treated for the disease more than a decade before. Once there, he undertook radiation treatments five days a week.

Before checking in, Merv said, "I'd rather play *Jeopardy!* than live it. I feel ready for another vacation. Cedars Sinai Medical Center was not the destination I had in mind."

Even on his deathbed, as he lay in the hospital, Merv was working on a game show—in this case a proposed

syndicated series called *Merv Griffin's Crosswords*.

Merv wouldn't live to see the show's debut on September 1, 2007. He had hoped that it would attain the success of *Jeopardy!*, but that appears to be a deathbed wish. The show's credits posthumously listed Merv as executive producer.

A frail Nancy Reagan, accompanied by Secret Service agents, made a bedside call on the Friday afternoon before Merv's death. She knew he didn't have long to live, but no mention was made of his grave condition.

She wisely listened to him talk about his success as a horse owner. His colt, “Stevie Wonderboy”—named for entertainer Stevie Wonder—had won the $1.5 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile in 2005, and his mind was drifting back to happier times.

When the nurse signaled Nancy that her time was up, she kissed her friend of fifty years a final goodbye on his forehead.

Merv drifted in and out of consciousness, with feeding tubes and morphine drips. The cancer had spread to his bones, lungs, and liver.

His last words were to his son, Tony. “You were my life.”

Merv died at one o'clock on Sunday morning, August 12, 2007.

Before he entered the hospital for the final time, Merv—perhaps knowing he was about to die—summed up his days on earth. “I like my life. When I look back on it, I don't have many regrets. It was all great fun.”

“Regrets. I've had a few…”

Epilogue:
MERVGATE

On August 17, 2007, the invitationonly funeral of Merv Griffin was held in The Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills. The interior of the church had sometimes been used by film companies for fake funerals, including a scene from Judy Garland's 1954 *A Star Is Born*. Elizabeth Taylor had also married her first husband, Nicky Hilton, in this same church.

Merv's coffin was buried under a mass of white flowers, with one single rose.

A grief-stricken Nancy Reagan was an honorary pallbearer. Merv had been an honorary pallbearer at President Reagan's funeral in 2004.

When the news reached her in Bel Air, Nancy's reaction to Merv's death had been immediate. “This is heartbreaking, not just for those of us who had loved Merv personally, but for everyone around the world who has known Merv through his music, his television shows, and his business.”

At the funeral, Nancy could be seen brushing away a tear as the choir sang “Amazing Grace.”

The other most distinguished guest was Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who had made his U.S. talk show debut on Merv's show in 1974. He told the assembled guests that, “I can say today I wouldn't have gone as far in my career if it wouldn't have been for Merv Griffin. He had me on many times. I was on his show to teach him about fitness, and he would teach me about acting. Well, neither worked.”

The governor spoke to five hundred mourners who included Alex Trebek, Vanna White, Larry King, Suzanne Somers, and Dick Van Dyke.

Pat Sajak, host of *Wheel of Fortune*, said, “I'm dealing with sadness and the realization that I will never hear that wonderful laugh of his again. He meant so much to my life, and it's hard to imagine it without him.”

Funeral rites:
Nancy Reagan,
Arnold and Maria Schwarzenegger

As a sign of changing times, Ellen DeGeneres and Portia De Rossi were caught walking hand in hand toward the chapel for Merv's funeral. Ellen later told the press, “Merv was, as you know, a genius. He was brilliant. He created all kinds of amazing shows. He sang, he danced, and he talked. I'm going to start singing in honor of Merv.”

The entertainment mogul, David Geffen, who is also “out,” was in attendance that day, too.

Yet another member of the audience was also “out.” Rosie O'Donnell, who claimed that her popular show was “totally Mervinspired. I didn't create anything. I just copied Merv Griffin.”

Forgetting past disagreements, Zsa Zsa told the press, “I'm very upset at the news. He was a very close friend of ours, a good friend of mine, and a good friend of Eva's. He was a *vonderful, vonderful* man.”

George W. Bush said, “For over half a century, Merv Griffin entertained America. He was a man of innovation and energy who greeted challenges with laughter and determination.”

Speaking to *People* magazine, Ryan Seacrest said, “Merv was a dear friend and my idol. He gave me my first break into show business, and for that I will forever be grateful. Merv is a true legend and will continue to be an inspiration.”

Seacrest also announced that as an empire builder, he wanted to become his generation's version of Merv. He also reminded *Entertainment Weekly* that, “I'm not gay.”

In his usual tasteless way, gaybashing Jerry Lewis announced to the press that “Griffin deserved to die,” because he avoided treating his prostate cancer. The comedian claimed that he was furious at his friend, “because he had the same disease I did, and I was cured after seeing doctors. You can't have cancer and say, ‘I'll be all right’. You're not going to be all right.”

The remains of Merv were interred in the Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery, where he joined such illfated ghosts of yesterday as Marilyn Monroe and Natalie Wood.

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All hell broke loose three days later, on August 20, when Merv was posthumously "outed." *Hollywood Reporter* scribe Ray Richmond wrote in his weekly column that Merv, the megamogul, was a "Big Ol' Gay Homosexual," which was hardly a secret within the film industry. As another mogul put it, "We knew that Merv was gay like we know our own names."

The story had been headlined, GRIFFIN NEVER REVEALED MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN. The news agency, Reuters, picked up the story in its news feed and syndicated it internationally.

Merv's "people" called the *Reporter* and made several threats, including the yanking of advertising. Some of Merv's associates cancelled a tribute ad that they had planned to run in the *Reporter*.

The column was yanked by Editor Elizabeth Guider, who caved in to pressure from Merv's angry cohorts.

Her action led to a reverse reaction. Readers deluged the *Hollywood Reporter* with demands that the column be restored—and after a few hours it was. Reuters, however, refused to restore the syndication of the column, unbelievably claiming that "it did not meet our standard for news."

In outing Merv, Ray Richmond claimed, "I wanted to make sure that the truth was out there and not a version of it that allowed everyone to make Merv the subject of gossip or the butt of jokes. I wanted to put the truth out there in a loving and concerned way. One could make the point that it was his business alone, but I don't think this was true, because he was a public figure—and this was who the man was."

Pam Spaulding, writing for *Pandagon*, gave her reaction to Mervgate. "The real problem is the news media, which has no problem recounting the endless romances of stars (real or alleged). The 'legitimate' press can be ridiculously squeamish about reporting basic facts about gay public figures (such as the partner left behind)."

The gay and lesbian press also weighed in. *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, published this statement: "One doesn't speak ill of the dead, but does saying that someone was gay qualify, and isn't that being homophobic rather than polite? Of course, Merv could have saved a lot of agonizing if he had just come out of the closet and taken a lover to be 'survived by' (and to inherit his billions)."

In a surprise move, even *The New York Times* virtually "outed" Merv when they mentioned in his obit that he'd been the victim of a palimony law-suit and a maleonmale sexual harassment law-suit.

Michelangelo Signorile, the noted gay author, wrote after Merv's death, "Though he'd quietly led a gay life—and had his pool parties filled with young men in the years past, as well as a parade of boyfriends—that was viewed as 'private information' that was not discussed in mixed company. I had interviewed many gay men who'd known Griffin as gay, as well as men who told stories about how his closet had him doing horrendous things—and how he was threatened by openly gay people."

When the furor died down over his *Hollywood Reporter* column, Ray Richmond reflected on the uproar. "I have to wonder if the response in defense of keeping Griffin's secret life a secret postmortem would have been as acute had he died penniless and forgotten. It would seem there is a direct relationship between the size of one's estate and the level of security guarding his or her heretofore undisclosed sexual orientation. And it appears that $1.6 billion will buy an awful lot of closet space."

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In the wake of Merv's death, hundreds of persons came forward with either fond remembrances or critical attacks. Most of Merv's fans wished him God's speed, but many bloggers went to work, criticizing Merv for having led a closeted life. His sexual peccadillos were also aired, including several postings from men who had serviced Merv over the years. "In later life he ordered four or five male prostitutes at one time," the head of a male escort agency in Los Angeles charged.

In one notorious incident, which took place at New York's Palace Hotel, a callboy claimed he was paid $2,100—$700 an hour for three hours—to attend a private little bash with four other handsome young men, mostly models.

Merv had booked the Presidential Suite, one of whose features was a marble bathroom. "Merv had us strip and get in the huge bathtub, where he delighted in pouring the most expensive champagne over our tight, muscular

bodies, and then licking the bubbly off our chests. He had his fun."

Merv's two tellnothing autobiographies were called "a series of *shticky* sound bites," reducing a complicated, closeted life to a simple and very vanilla version fit for daytime network TV.

"Talk about an unexamined life," said book critic John Stafford. "A lot of sounding brass, signifying nothing."

One blogger predicted that "the books will come out, telling all his secrets, all about his life of LIES."

Reporter Jon Ponder noted that "Griffin's internalized homophobia was tragic, but it pales in comparison with the hypocrisy of the Reagans, who spent their professional lives in the company of gay people, but then exploited the homophobic Christian Right to gain power. Their silence persisted when Rock Hudson, their friend and a much bigger star than Ronnie ever was, contracted HIV and withered away. Unfortunately, for the Reagans, their hypocrisy on gay issues will be a permanent stain on their legacies. Ironically, for Griffin, despite his many accomplishments, including decades as a talk show host and creating game shows, needlessly living a lie the last thirty years of his life will likely be the only thing he is remembered for."

The strongest reaction to Merv's death came from Margie Phelps, of the famous Phelps family, the most homophobic in America. They live in Topeka, Kansas, which is the center of their hate ministry.

"Mindless millions sit around watching programs engineered by Merv Griffin," she charged. "His goal was to dumb down everyone so he could slip around in the back halls doing his filth. America is doomed. We've turned this nation over to feceseating fags, and now you're *(sic)* children are coming home in body bags. It's too late for this nation. The siege is coming. You're going to eat your children."

A more reflective, more tolerant, and less psychotic view was posted on *The Data Lounge.* "A tiger does not change its stripes. Merv was from another time, another era. The times may have changed but he didn't. No stars/celebs from his day ever came out. It was careerkilling. Not Liberace, not Rock Hudson (until AIDS kicked his closet door down), not Robert Reed, nor Van Johnson, who took his glass closet to the grave. A very few have, Richard Chamberlain, Tab Hunter, Johnny Mathis, and a few more. Good for them, but Griffin, like Tom Cruise, has set his cap to portray himself as straight and he could never change his sails. It would have disputed a lifetime's worth of public/selfimage, and he could never have handled it emotionally, despite the fact that most people already knew. Who knows the innermost reasons WHY he never did? It is just not surprising nor particularly repugnant that he did not. I mean, did anyone ever even THINK that he would come out? Gay rights came along in the 60s and 70s, and a lot of things changed, but men who were young in the 40s and 50s simply did not discuss their homosexuality. Ever. Period. The few who found a way out of the closet, good for them. But Merv Griffin was not any different from millions of old guys out there today. They simply lived in a different time and will see the world in a different way until they die. I don't think they deserve our hate."

"I will not be back"

Acknowledgments

The first time I ever saw Merv Griffin was when my Aunt Bleeka took me to the premiere of *So This Is Love,* his first starring movie, in which he appeared opposite songbird Kathryn Grayson. We didn't really know who Merv Griffin was, but before the show there had been a parade along the main street of Knoxville, Tennessee. Our primary motivation involved a fascination with Miss Grayson, but as an aggressively promoted part of the venue, we saw Merv ride by, waving from the passenger seat of an open convertible. Teenage girls were screaming at him. Was a new matinee idol, like Rock Hudson or Tab Hunter, in the making?

I next encountered Merv in the late 50s when our University of Miami senior prom committee hired him to entertain us at our big bash. We paid him five hundred dollars for his singing engagement. This represented one of the university's last proms starring an oldfashioned crooner. In the rapidly approaching 1960s, rock ‘n’ roll would inevitably prevail.

Over the years, I encountered him many other times, mainly in California and New York at various parties. We often moved in the same circles, and knew many of the same people, including Montgomery Clift, Roddy McDowall, Guy Madison, Rock Hudson, and the agent and talent scout, Henry Willson.

As the decades passed, I accumulated enough “Merv stories” to fill three volumes. I have talked, literally, to hundreds of people associated with the entertainment industry, not just about Merv, but about dozens of other show business personalities as well. During countless conversations, Merv's name frequently cropped up. Everybody who'd met him had some story to relay, perhaps only a snippet of which I could use. But each of the pieces contributed to the interconnected puzzle of the star's private life.

Mentioned below are only some of the most significant contributors to this biography. Because I've had to leave out many people, I apologize, yet I am nonetheless grateful for their help. Of course, many people who discussed Merv did so strictly off the record.

When I lived in San Francisco, I made several visits to San Mateo, Merv's hometown. There, many of his friends who attended school with him and knew his family were still alive. Each was very helpful, including the musician, Cal Tjader.

The pals of Merv who contributed the most information about his early life were Johnny Riley, Paul Schone, and Bill Robbins. A great deal of the information in this book was provided by Hadley Morrell, Merv's longtime onandoff again companion. After their departure from Merv, each of these men attempted some form of memoir. The Jay Garon-Brooke Agency of New York tried to combine these reminiscences into a comprehensive text evocative of *Elvis: What Happened?,* the memoir of three of that singer's closest but bythenalienated companions. Every publisher we showed it to at the time deemed Garon's book proposal too hot and too potentially libelous to publish, and the project collapsed.

Other bits and pieces came from such witnesses as Janet Folsom, a source of the information about Merv and his days as an entertainer at the Pebble Beach Lodge. When Stanley Haggart and I worked with Joan Crawford on Pepsi-Cola commercials, she provided a tantalizing insight into her superficial relationship with Merv, whom she did not particularly admire.

Ralph Laven, a close friend of singer Guy Mitchell, attempted to explain the strange friendship that developed between Guy and Merv. When Rita Hayworth was considering appearing as the star of the film *The Last Resort,* which was based on my novel, *Butterflies in Heat,* she spoke frankly about her relationship with Merv.

Band leader Freddy Martin was a font of information about the Big Band era and about Merv in particular. In his later years, he was always receptive to granting interviews to reporters who wanted to document the heyday of the

Bands during the early 40s and 50s.

Special thanks go to Carlo Fiore, longtime friend of Marlon Brando, who enlightened me about Merv's relationship with Brando. I am especially grateful to my departed friend, Henry Willson, who provided many juicy details about Merv—especially about his relationships with the likes of Guy Madison, Rock Hudson, Troy Donahue, and others.

After many hours of dialogue, an aging Guy Madison in Thousand Oaks, California, turned down my offer to ghostwrite his memoirs. But he was very revealing in uncensored, private talks about his glory years in Hollywood. It was he who provided the information about John Wayne and his affair with Guy's wife, Gail Russell, as well as insights into Merv's minor involvement in this secret liaison.

Peter Lawford and Roddy McDowall were each longtime friends, and neither spoke on record, but each of them were privy to much that was going on in the lives of Hollywood stars who included Merv. Roddy, for example, supplied details about the relationship between Merv and Richard Long, plus details about numerous other encounters as well. I met with Tom Drake on three separate occasions, when he was selling used cars, years after he could no longer pass as Judy Garland's "boy next door."

Much of the information about Howard Hughes appearing within this book came from Johnny Meyer, a former personal assistant—read that as "pimp" — of the great aviator.

Both Robert Clary and Robert Loggia have either written or spoken of their friendship with Merv. The link between Merv and his fan club "prexy," Carol Burnett, is well documented in many sources.

Dear, tumultuous Tallulah Bankhead told hilarious stories about her involvements with Merv. She related these incidents when she was a guest of Mrs. Albert Peirce in Key West, Florida, following her late 1950s road tour of *Crazy October*.

I am also grateful to the author Shaun Bradford for letting me read his unpublished manuscript on the tragic life of Robert Walker. Likewise, the unpublished memoirs of my friend, Brooks Clift (brother of Montgomery), shed great light on the troubled life of his brother and his link with Merv.

Marty Melcher, former husband of Doris Day, has gone on record in many different published sources about his wife and her relationship with Merv at Warner Brothers.

Rosemary Clooney, during the many evenings she spent at Ted Hook's Backstage Bar in New York City, was no great diva, but an honest straightforward woman who spoke nostalgically about the disappointments in her life. She had only the highest of praise for Merv and what he did for her own come-back.

Even after many years, Jose Ferrer, Rosemary's husband, was still resentful of Marlene Dietrich's intrusion into his marriage. He also remained deeply resentful of Robert Kennedy's involvement with Rosemary, and Merv's small role in that illicit romance.

Acting coach Mira Rostova, who would be the fascinating subject of any book devoted entirely to her, shared memories of both Merv and Monty Clift. She was introduced to me by Brooks Clift and Kim Stanley, his lover.

Ralph Richards, a close friend and personal assistant to Bill Orr, provided insights into what was going on behind the scenes at Warner Brothers during the 1950s. After leaving the studio, he was very candid about Jack Warner and Warner's soninlaw, Bill Orr.

Years after her involvement in showbiz, Phyllis Kirk was bright, perky, and filled with regrets about her days in Hollywood. She spoke honestly of her brief involvement with Merv and about why she felt that she was betrayed.

Sammy Cahn was also full of stories about the entertainment industry, including anecdotes about Merv, and to an even greater degree, tales about Frank Sinatra.

Fred Zinnemann provided remembrances of his horrendous experiences directing the actors and egos associated with *From Here to Eternity*.

Nick Adams, a friend of mine, shared memories of James Dean and his own encounters with Merv.

When I was a member of the student press in Miami, I got to meet Robert Francis, in town on a publicity tour. He graciously accepted my invitation to show him the glories of South Florida. During that time with him, I learned many stories about his attempt to become a big star in Hollywood, as well as his rather unattractive brief encounter with Merv. His loss in a plane crash was a great tragedy.

Meeting Lady May Lawford at a party in Santa Monica, I encountered the most tactlessly outspoken woman I'd ever met. The mother of Peter Lawford had vitriolic opinions about everybody, including her son. She had nothing but barbs for the Kennedys, Frank Sinatra, and others.

Through mutual friends,and on several occasions, I met Claudette Colbert. Her remembrances were always "laundered," highly censored, and very discreet.

Director Gordon Douglas never censored himself when he relayed tall tales about Hollywood, including stories about his involvements with Liberace and Merv. He directed Liberace in *Sincerely Yours*.

I am deeply indebted to Paul Richardson, Liberace's assistant, for his stories linking Merv and Liberace into a deep friendship. He was especially entertaining in relating the details of an evening which Merv and Liberace shared with Mae West.

Once married to Judy Garland, Mark Herron articulated stories too hot to print, many of them about his troubled days with Judy. After Judy died, he seriously considered writing a tellall memoir, but the project was never completed. He spoke frankly about his brief flings with Merv and Tallulah, as well as equivalent involvements with Charles Laughton and the actor Henry Brandon. Herron also delivered a zinger about a notorious episode involving Merv's onenight involvement with Ol' Blue Eyes and sultry Lana Turner.

Truman Capote, in Key West, was characteristically candid about his relationships with both Merv and Montgomery Clift.

Agent Marty Kummer was a source for material about Merv's struggle in show business during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Actor George Grizzard, one evening at Ted Hook's Backstage Bar in New York, spoke with candor about his involvements with both Paul Newman and Merv during his appearance in *The Desperate Hours* on Broadway.

John Henry Faulk had only the fondest of memories of Merv when they cohosted *The Morning Show* for CBS. In contrast, Robert Q. Lewis had only venom for Merv, his rival. And perhaps in a kind of karmic symmetry, Irving Mansfield, the husband and promoter of author Jacqueline Susann, had only venom for Lewis.

Although discreet in print, Graham Payn spent the rest of his life after the death of his lover, Noel Coward, sharing raucous and sometimes hilarious stories.

My attempt to ghost write a memoir with Cal Culver didn't work out, but my head is still reeling from learning the

details of his personal involvement as “stud” to the stars, including Merv.

My dear friend, the Austrian *chanteuse*, Greta Keller, who lived for a year in my home in New York City, introduced me to her best friend, Jolie Gabor. Ms. Gabor arrived on many a summer night at my home and, perhaps without knowing it, provided material not only about herself, but about her daughter, Zsa Zsa, and especially about Merv and his relationship with Eva.

I am also deeply grateful to Monica Dunn for her tireless assistance during the preparation of this biography.

As a means of assisting readers of this book, within it I sometimes presented the stories related to me as “conversations remembered.” If the wording isn't exactly right in some of these recitations, the points I've made in my use of this device are dead-on.

Darwin Porter
New York City
February, 2009

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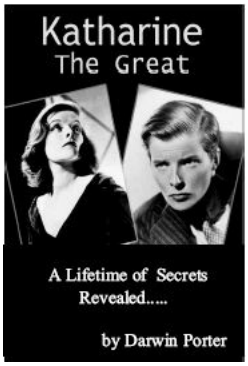

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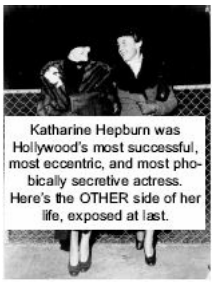

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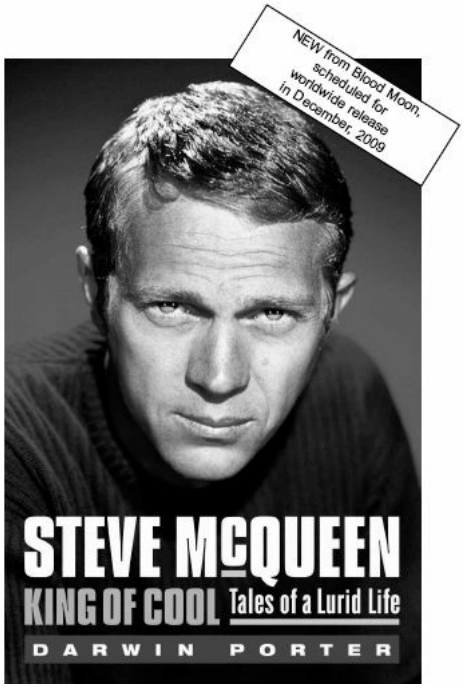

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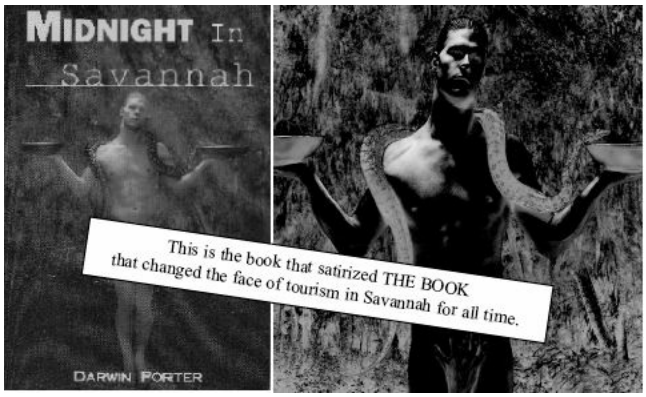
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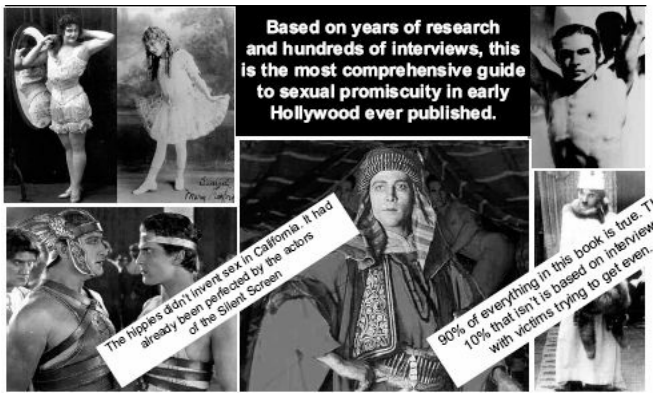

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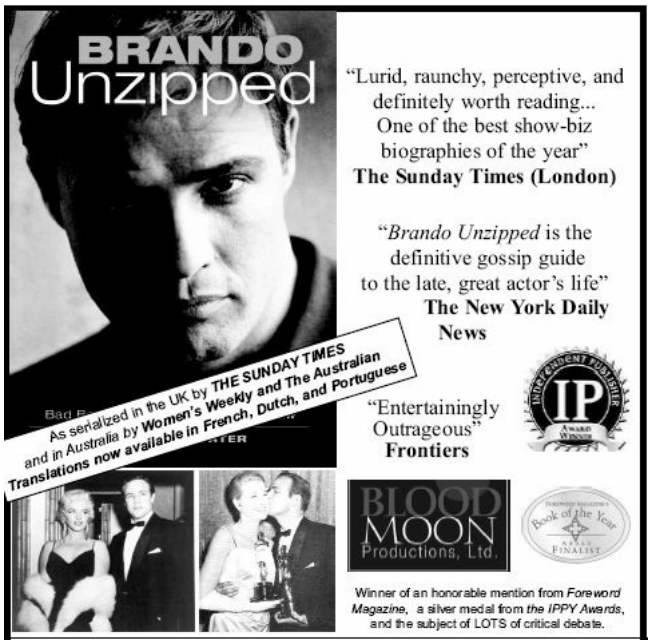

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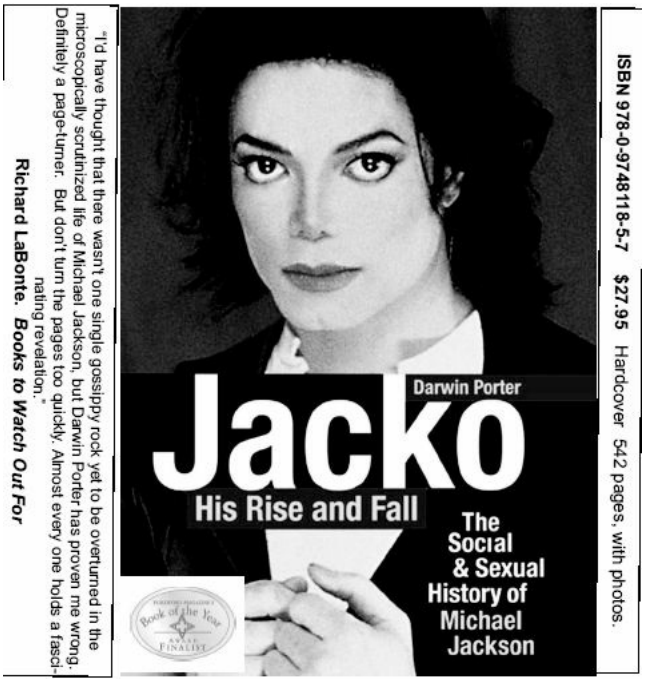

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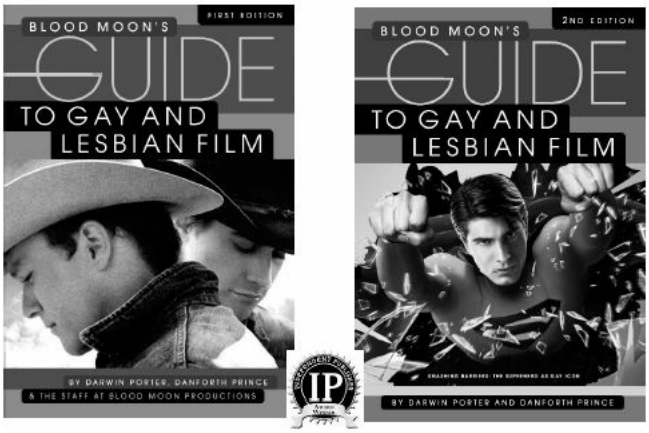

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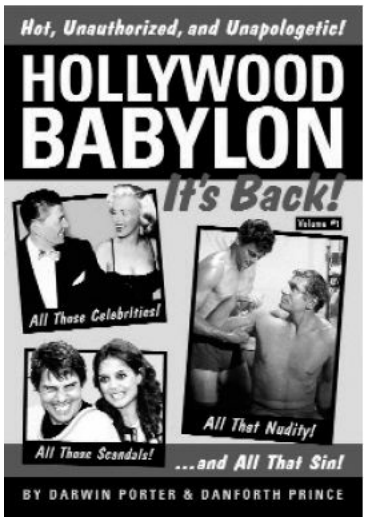

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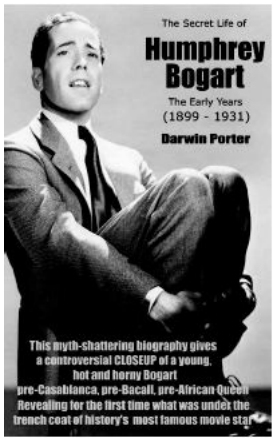

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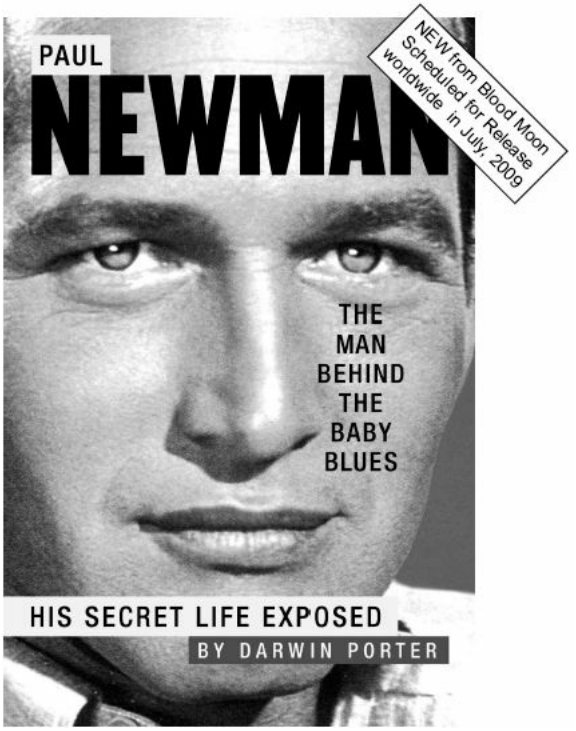

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

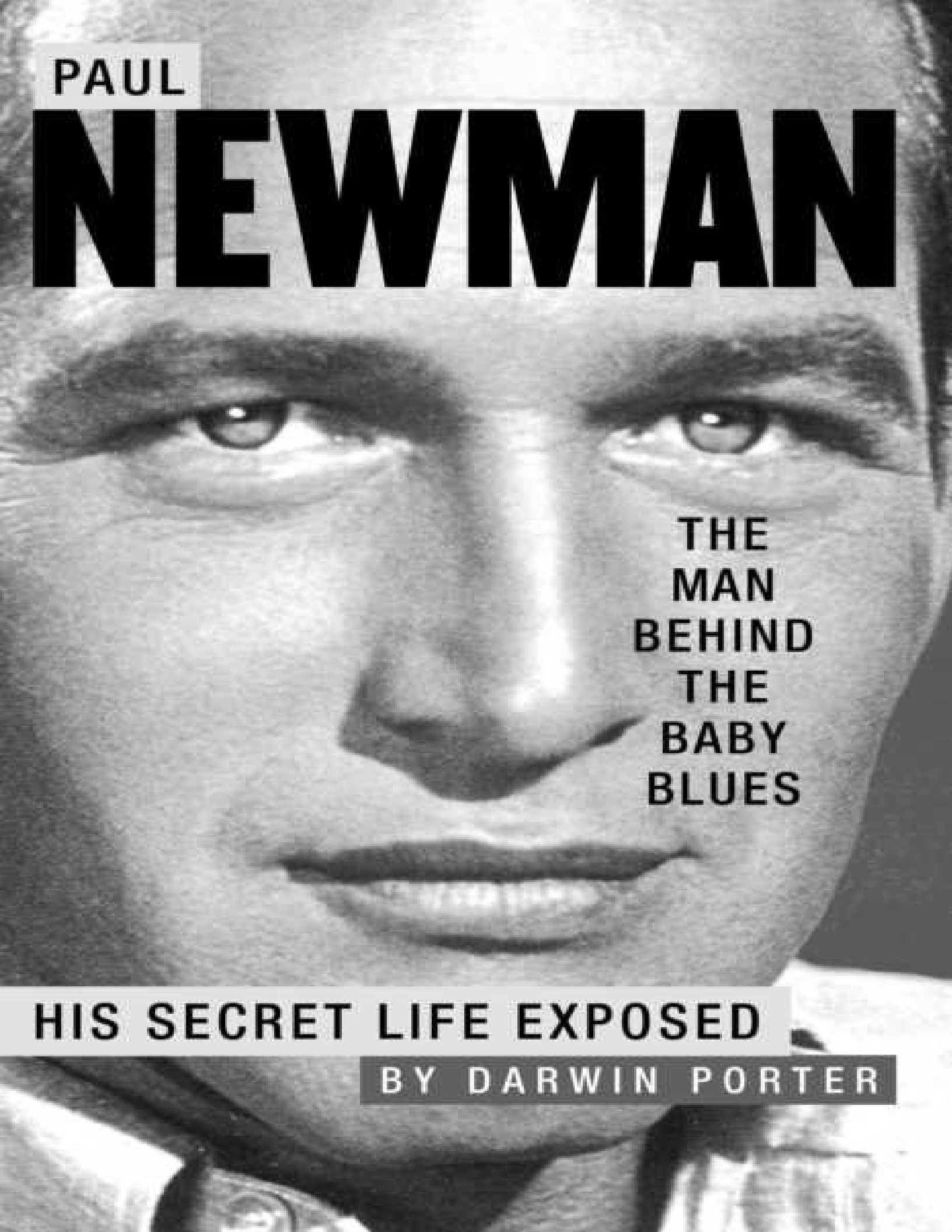
Darwin Porter's contacts with Merv Griffin began in college. As chief editor of the Student Press at the University of Miami, Darwin hired Merv as the featured entertainer for the graduating class's senior prom. From there, a friendship continued, as well as the systematic compilation of information over the decades which made its way into this book.

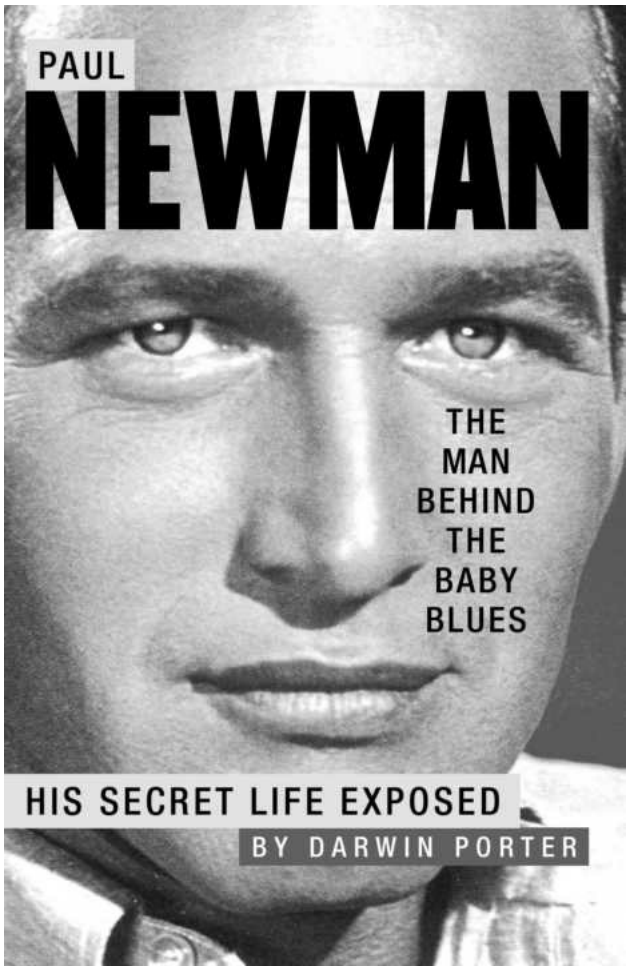
Merv Griffin is but one of the subjects in Darwin's list of biographies of showbiz personalities. Other celebrities he's profiled include awardwinning overviews of Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, Marlon Brando, Howard Hughes, and Michael Jackson. Several of these have been serialized in Britain, in either the MAIL ON SUNDAY or THE SUNDAY TIMES, which defined ***Brando Unzipped*** as “Lurid, raunchy, perceptive, certainly worth reading… one of the best showbiz biographies of the year.”

In 2008, Darwin's ***Hollywood Babylon-It's Back!*** was cited as the decade's best overview of exhibitionism, sexuality, and sin as filtered through 85 years of Hollywood scandal.

One of America's foremost travel authorities, Darwin is the widely read author of more than 50 ongoing titlesmost of them associated with coverage of Europe and the Caribbeanwithin ***The Frommer Guides,*** the world's bestselling travel series.

Most of the time, Darwin lives in New York City, with frequent trips to Los Angeles, London, and various other Frommer-related points around the world.


PAUL
NEWMAN
THE MAN BEHIND THE BABY BLUES
HIS SECRET LIFE EXPOSED
BY DARWIN PORTER



"You can't help feeling sorry for guys like Newman. They have too much to lose if they make one false step. Look

what Confidential did to Tab Hunter. Whenever Joanne Woodward came up, Newman became all macho. He was sad in many ways. Having to pretend to be what he wasn't. But most of us Hollywood hunks in the 1950s had to do that."

Matinee heartthrob Jeffrey Hunter

"Hell, guy, you just can't seem to realize what's happening. You're the new kid on the block. Every gay and every horny broad in Hollywood wants to go to bed with Paul Newman. You're doing pretty well for a married man. I've always had this belief that if a married man played it right, he can have more fun than single blokes."

Rod Steiger

"Paul Newman has the potential of becoming a magnificent actor if he ever gets through this complex he has about playing boy-macho."

Joan Crawford

"Even Newman's baby blues couldn't lure the women away from those TV boxes. We should have stripped him down more and shot the film with him half naked. That day will come for movies, I predict."

Robert Wise, lamenting the failure of the Paul Newman film he directed, Until They Sail

"Mr. Newman, Mr. Newman! Would you like to see my body?"

Sandra Dee, at 14

"I never got around to screwing Paul Newman, although I certainly intended to. He had as much sex in the 50s as I did, but whereas he got away with it, I didn't"

Rock Hudson

"Newman is just as much of a narcissist as Gore Vidal, but he disguises it completely, and, like the most skilled of actors, puts up a mask to confuse the world. I suspect he will go far in an industry that is all about illusion. There is no self-awareness in this handsome young man at all. He is an obvious homosexual, but does not dare admit that to himself. He's a selfish rogue while pretending to be benevolent, supporting all the right causes. He has a facile charm but no depth. In spite of the hot sun out here, he already knows that California is a cold, harsh land. He does not want it to hurt him. So what will he do? What must he do? He will inflict emotional pain on others, therefore avoiding the pain of having the blows strike him first. I predict Newman will turn into a cardboard figure. There will be no reality to him. He can't be real. A tragedy, really. But, this is, after all, Lotusland."

Anais Nin

PAUL NEWMAN

"I'm really a very ordinary guy. Sure, I drank whiskey a lot. For a while, it really screwed up me up. There are periods in my life in which I don't take any particular pride. I'm not very good at revealing myself. I cover for it by telling terrible dirty jokes."

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PAUL NEWMAN

The Man Behind the Baby Blues

His SECRET LIFE EXPOSED

Another Hot, Startling, and Unauthorized Celebrity Biography by

Darwin Porter

PAUL NEWMAN, THE MAN BEHIND THE BABY BLUES

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25 YEARS

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES THIS BOOK TO THE SOURCES WHO CONTRIBUTED TO ITS COMPILATION:

Janice Rule

Eartha Kitt

Sal Mineo

Anthony Perkins

Robert Francis

Tennessee Williams and Frank Merlo

William Inge

James Leo Herlihy

Lana Turner

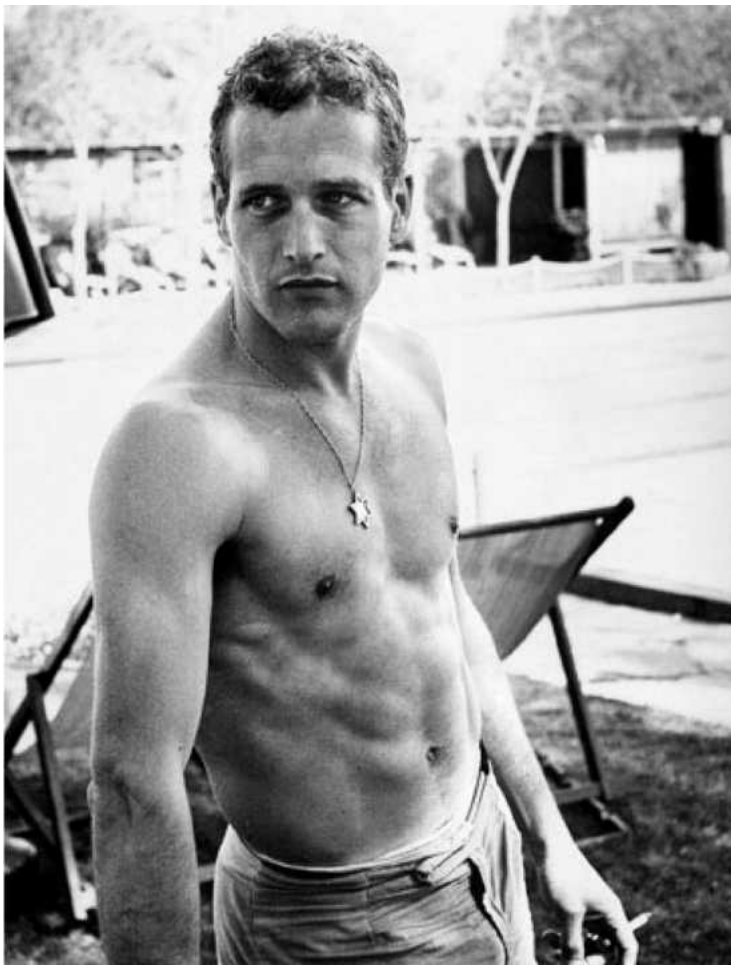
Maila Nurmi

Shelley Winters

Geraldine Page

and countless others.

Gone, but not forgotten



A world class American Icon

Paul Newman 1925-2008

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A DISCLAIMER FROM BLOOD MOON

CLIMBING THE LAVENDER LADDER

Paul Newman's Secret Life as a Bisexual

In the opinion of many of his fans, Newman's emotional and sexual involvements with the women in his life (Monroe, Crawford, Taylor, Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn, and perhaps most importantly, Joanne Woodward) are more compelling than the equivalent relationships he shared with men.

But according to Darwin Porter, the full story of what Newman did as a means to his end in Golden Age Hollywood hasn't ever been fully revealed-until now.

During a span of more than 50 years, insiders on Broadway and in Hollywood have spoken of Paul Newman's closeted life. Details about the megastar's bisexual history have been among the entertainment industry's worst-kept secrets.

For decades, the underground press has included Paul Newman on their list of bisexual or gay stars, a list that included Rock Hudson, Roddy McDowall, Richard Chamberlain, Farley Granger, Tab Hunter, Burt Lancaster, Marlon Brando, James Dean, Montgomery Clift, and countless others. "WAS PAUL NEWMAN GAY?" ran one headline. Yet another proclaimed: "DEEP INSIDE THE HOLLYWOOD CLOSET: RUMOR MILL IMPLICATES PAUL NEWMAN."

Even during Newman's lifetime, Larry Quirk, the dean of Hollywood biographers, wrote about Paul Newman's "homosexual panic" and how he maneuvered his way "up the lavender ladder." Quirk was making veiled references to his casting couch interludes with playwrights Tennessee Williams (author of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof--its film adaptation propelled Newman to stardom) and William Inge (author of Picnic, the play that launched Newman's legend on Broadway).

According to Darwin Porter, the secret life of Paul Newman reached the peak of its exposure and speculation during the 1970s, when Newman acquired the film rights to The Front Runner, a best-selling novel about a homosexual coach who falls desperately in love with his star (male) athlete.

In his role as the film's producer, Newman originally offered the role of the athlete to Robert Redford, who refused to play a gay character, fearing that it would harm his image at the box office. Consequently, Newman negotiated with Cal Culver, America's leading gay porn star of the 1970s, to interpret the role. Cal, a friend and confidant of Darwin Porter, later revealed to the gay press that he had had an affair with Newman. Additionally, Darwin's best friend, novelist James Leo Herlihy, had an affair with Newman when he was trying to persuade him to star as Joe Buck in the film version of his novel, Midnight Cowboy.

Many of Newman's personal friends, particularly those from the Actors Studio, spoke privately over the years about Newman's sexuality. They included actress Janice Rule (who later became a psychotherapist, with a respected practice in New York City), Rod Steiger, Geraldine Page, Eartha Kitt (who was introduced to Newman via her best friend, James Dean), and "Vampira," (aka Maila Nurmi), TV-land's first Goth, and a famous personality of the 1950s.

Tony Perkins, a friend of Herlihy's, privately admitted that he'd sustained a sexual affair with Newman when they both lived at the Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles in the 50s. The self-admittedly gay writer Gore Vidal spoke openly about his near-obsessional fixation on Newman during Newman's appearance in Gore's teleplay of Billy the Kid. And during one particularly complex point in their relationship, Paul Newman and his then "mistress," Joanne Woodward, shared a Malibu beach house with Vidal and his "husband," Howard Austen. Throughout that chapter of their lives, all four members of the menage remained "artfully nonspecific" as to the direction of the emotional links going on within that beach house.

Sal Mineo, another friend of Darwin's, confessed to having sustained a sexual affair with Newman that began on the set of Somebody Up There Likes Me. Sal confessed his undying love for Paul to yet another author, Larry Quirk, who published this then-first-time news in a book released by Taylor Publishing Company. Later, an unauthorized feature story on Newman revealed that Jackie Witte (Newman's first wife) threatened to leave him when she learned about his affair with James Dean.

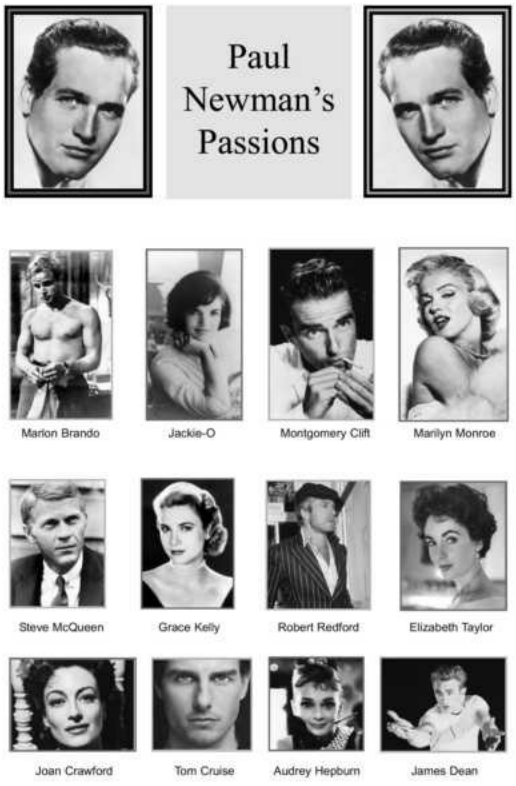
Brooks Clift, another of Darwin's friends, revealed the details of an affair that his brother, Montgomery Clift, had had with Newman. And actor Frank McHugh, a close friend of Spencer Tracy and a member of the hard-drinking "Irish Mafia" of Hollywood, claimed that he accidentally walked in on Newman and the recently deceased actor Jack Lord, catching them together "in an embarrassing position." Newman, Lord, and McHugh were each at the time filming a teleplay together.

For more on the startling details associated with the bisexual side of the actor whom no one seemed to be able to get enough of, Blood Moon hereby presents Darwin Porter's newest biography.

Best wishes to all of you, and many thanks.

Danforth Prince

President, Blood Moon Productions



Chapter One

Born on the Right Side of the Tracks

"Over my dead body will a son of mine go into the theater An actor? Are you out of your fucking mind? Do you want to lie on a casting couch for every cocksucker from Broadway to Hollywood? I'll tell you what will happen to you. The same thing that happens to every pretty boy sentenced to prison in Ohio. "

In Shaker Heights, Ohio, a young Paul Newman had finally confessed what his mother had known all along. One day he'd go to New York to become an actor.

Arthur S. Newman was to die in 1950, never living to see his son become one of the legends of motion pictures. His father had predicted failure for his son, warning him that he'd end up in the gutter, walking the streets of New York's Bowery, begging for a handout.

The elder Newman would have failed as a prophet. It was his son, Paul Newman, the actor, who in the decades to come would distribute millions of dollars worth of food for homeless, starving children.

***

On January 26, 1925, Paul Leonard Newman was born in Cleveland Heights, an affluent suburb of Cleveland itself.

"It was cold as all three tits on a witch the day my son was born," Arthur Senior later said. He arrived at the hospital in black leather boots, having plowed through snow more than three feet deep. It was fourteen degrees below freezing, the weather made even worse by the cruel winds blowing off Lake Erie.

In bed, Theresa presented her husband with an eight-pound baby boy. "Here is our incredibly beautiful son with the loveliest blue eyes God gave a man since Adam walked on the face of the Earth. My dream was to have a blond-haired, blue-eyed baby boy."

Most babies have cloudy eyes, but Paul's reportedly were a piercing shade of blue from the moment he popped out of the womb.

Arthur Senior looked at the baby more skeptically. "I don't know who he takes after. The men in my family all had black eyes."

A year later the family moved into a spacious, eleven-room home at 2983 Brighton Road in neighboring Shaker Heights, a suburb even more affluent than Cleveland Heights. A German Jew, Arthur Senior was a second-generation American. His wife, Theresa, had arrived at Ellis Island in New York at the age of four, coming from Hungary. The year before Paul was born, she'd given birth to another son, Arthur Newman Junior.

Theresa told her new neighbors in Shaker Heights that her younger son was "my pride and my joy. I love my older child too. But he's daddy's boy. Paul belongs just to me."

Sarah Cohn, a distant relative of Arthur Senior, was harshly critical of the way Theresa was bringing up her younger son. She frequently complained to Arthur. "Theresa is trying to make a girl out of him. She won't let him get one spot of dirt on his clothes before she bathes him and dresses him in finery. She even perfumes him. Didn't perfuming babies go out of style with Louis XIV? I must admit, though, that he's cute as a button."

"I'll make a man out of him if it's the last thing I do," Arthur Senior vowed. "Compared with how I grew up, the kid lives in the lap of luxury. I never really knew my father. He died when I was only a baby. I came up through the school of hard knocks. But look where I am today."

Arthur S. Newman and **Joseph Newman**
Newman's father (left) and uncle (right)

Even in the middle of the Depression that fell on the world in 1929, Arthur Senior provided generously for his family, giving them not only a luxurious home in an upmarket neighborhood, but seeing that they had meat on the table every night when much of America was waiting in breadlines.

As a teenager, Arthur Senior had been a pioneer in radio broadcasting. In 1917, he joined with his older brother, Joseph Newman, to found NewmanStern, a retail sporting goods business.

Even though sales were down in the early 1930s, the store still made a reasonable profit at the end of every year. In later life, Paul would deny his rather affluent early life, claiming he was the son of poor immigrants, which he was not, of course.

Sarah recalled that both Arthur Junior and Paul were the best-dressed boys in Shaker Heights. As they grew older, their father gave them fifty cents a week in allowance. But Theresa supplemented their income by presenting each of her children with a crisp five-dollar bill, which she took from the family's food budget. Many families in those Depression-laden days didn't even have five dollars a week to spend on groceries.

Paul had at least thirty different shirts, each of them starched and pressed. He wore a different one for every day of the month, beginning the wardrobe shift when a new month arrived. "With his blond hair and those blue eyes, he was a sight to behold," Sarah said. "Every woman wanted to pick him up and kiss him. The men restrained themselves, pinching his cheeks instead. Perhaps that's why his cheeks looked rosy red all the time."

"As a kid, I was split into two different personalities," Paul once told playwright Tennessee Williams in Key West. "Dad wanted me to be a tomboy, a great athlete, a commercial gent. My mother appealed to my sensitive side-the artist, the poet. She was the one who urged me to read every book I could find and to expand my mind. The character of Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof was perfect for me. All my life I was split into two different directions. One side of me wanted to live life with my dead friend Skipper in the play, the other side was tempted to fuck the living shit out of Maggie the Cat and be the heterosexual stud most of my fans wanted me to be."

"Dad liked to deny things to my brother and me or make us work hard for them," Paul said. "Take baseball mitts. The boys at school had shiny mitts purchased from the Newman sporting goods store. Arthur didn't get a new baseball mitt until he turned ten. Dad made me wait until I was eleven."

Years later, Paul and his older brother, Arthur Junior, were rivals competing for their father's affection. "At night over dinner, I heard nothing but praise for Junior's accomplishments," Paul said. "His prowess on the athletic field. He had more muscles than I did. He was a great swimmer. Good at football. A baseball hitter from hell. He could outrun me. He was everything in a son my father wanted. I got no praise at all from my dad. He was cold and distant. He once said at the dinner table that my mom should dress me like a girl, since that's what I was growing up to be."

Although Arthur Junior and Paul got along in later life, and even worked together, Paul once claimed that when they were growing up, their sibling rivalry was belligerent.

"Even though I was a short, scrawny, ninety-eight pound weakling in the ninth grade, I had my brother beat by an inch or two-at least in one department," Paul once confided to actress Shelley Winters one drunken night in Greenwich Village. "That is, to judge from the look of things. I never took measurements, of course."

Theresa, who had been born a Hungarian Catholic, had converted to Christian Science when Paul was five years old. She converted Paul to her religion before he entered the first grade, but her husband, as a German Jew, remained hostile to Christian Science.

She was hardly a fanatic and, unlike the tenets of her faith, allowed both her sons to have proper medical care. Later in life, his religious training seemed to have had little effect on Paul: "Most of it sounded like a lot of crap to me," he said.

Attending his first movie

It was Theresa who instilled in Paul the vision of becoming an actor. "Nothing would thrill me more than taking a train to Broadway to see my son's name in lights," she said. "I think he has the possibility of becoming the next John Barrymore-and even better looking."

"Whatever you do, don't tell the world you've got Jewish blood," she warned her son. "Most of the world hates Jews. Your real name is spelled NE-U-MAN. But I got your father to change it to Newman."

Paul did not take her advice. When he first arrived in Hollywood, he let his associates know he was Jewish. "It's nothing to be ashamed of," he told friends. "I'm proud of my heritage." Of course, he did not take out ads in newspapers, and many of his co-workers never knew he was Jewish. In fact, when Otto Preminger cast Paul in Exodus, several news accounts noted that the director had hired a "non-Jewish actor" for the role.

"I like the name of NEW MAN," Theresa told Paul. "It's poetic and symbolic of your bright future in America. My secret nickname for you is going to be `Numie.' It'll be just something we use in private. Our little secret. You can share all your secret desires with me. Never your father. He doesn't understand you have the sensitive soul of a poet. Men like him are concerned only with commerce. They treat their sons and especially their wives with brutality. I have to endure sex with him. It feels like a knife stabbing me in the gut. The only good that ever came out of sex was God's gift of you."

Theresa had a lot of spare time because her husband hired a combination maid and cook. Often she'd take a bus to downtown Cleveland and the Hannah Theatre where she attended matinees. She was reluctant to admit it, but Sarah Cohn claimed that Theresa wanted to be an actress herself. "She read all the fan magazines-Greta Garbo was her favorite," Sarah said. "She dreamed dreams that could never be."

Whenever Theresa returned from a stage production in Cleveland, she described in minute detail every scene to her young son. Amazingly, for reasons not known, she did not invite him to go with her to the theater.

When his mother wasn't attending the theater, she prepared elaborate Hungarian specialties for her family. "She made the world's greatest goulash," Paul later claimed. "It was dear old mom who gave me my love of food. She even taught me how to cook. I learned all her secret recipes, some of which I would one day publish in a book."

The cutest kid in Shaker Heights

"Dad took me on fishing trips," Paul said. "He encouraged me to go out for sports in spite of my small size. He taught me to swim. One time when he caught me cooking with mom, he shouted at her. `You're raising a son, not a god damn girl! Get that fucking apron off that kid. A kitchen is no place for a boy.'"

"But the world's greatest chefs were and are men," she protested.

"She also wanted me to be a musician," Paul said. "I took piano lessons. I failed. I tried the violin. I failed, never becoming a virtuoso like Jack Benny." As he said that, Paul flashed his famous grin to suggest he was joking.

"In the early years I told each of my parents what they wanted to hear," Paul said. "Dad learned that I wanted to grow up to be a baseball player. Mother believed that I wanted to go on the stage, even though I had not committed to acting."

***

Encouraged by Theresa to join The Curtain Raisers, a children's theater, Paul made his stage debut at the age of seven, playing a court jester in The Travails of Robin Hood. In that play, he yodeled a song composed by his uncle, Joseph Newman. His father's brother was a journalist and poet. "He was the artist in the family-not me," said Arthur Senior. Joseph, like Theresa, felt that a kid with Paul's stunning looks belonged on the stage.

By the age of twelve, Paul was playing Saint George in St. George and the Dragon. The dragon was actually a placid old bulldog, and Paul's job was to pour salt on its tail and vanquish him. "My legs were shaking on opening night," Paul later said. "They've been shaking on opening night ever since. I'll let you in on a secret. These skinny legs never shook more than when I had to go out and face the critics as the curtain went up on Sweet Bird of Youth."

After witnessing his performance as Saint George, Theresa told her son, "You have such beauty. Too bad it has to be wasted on a boy."

Years later he confided a secret to his mother after he returned from his first job in Hollywood. "Believe you me, that beauty has not been wasted."

Paul recalled that "it was Uncle Joe who defined the rewards awaiting a young man who devoted himself to the artistic life. He became my surrogate father."

When Paul was only sixteen, Uncle Joe had told him, "Your mind is a flame to be kindled."

There is a certain irony in the fact that the man who would grow up to become a sex symbol around the world did not early in life fill out the potential of his frame.

When he attended local elementary schools, he was frequently beaten up by older bullies. Since most of these boys were not too familiar with homosexuality, they referred to Paul as a sissy. One day after school a group of six bullies attacked him and hauled him off into the bushes. There Paul was restrained while one of the boys pulled down his pants. One of the boys later claimed, "We wanted to see if pretty boy was really a boy. All of us had to look at his jewels just to make sure."

At Shaker Heights High School, Paul wanted to be a football player but didn't have the build for it. I did get offered the job of a male cheerleader, though. I also wanted to play baseball. But I was no good at that either. The coach told me I pitched like a girl."

"I worked in some school plays as an actor and stage manager," Paul recalled, "but I had no real interest in becoming an actor. Early in life I learned a bitter lesson about the theater. An actor doesn't always get the role he wants. In a school production, I tried to get the role of first grave-digger in Hamlet. It went to another guy."

When he told his mother of his loss, she comforted him. "Forget about playing a grave-digger. That's not for you. My dream is to live long enough to see my son starring in Hamlet on Broadway."

"My father just assumed I was going to join him in the sporting goods business," Paul said. "I worked there after school and on Saturdays. He paid me less than he did his other employees. But he promised both Junior and me that one day he'd give us the family business. I wasn't looking forward to selling footballs and baseball mitts for the rest of my life."

In his final years of high school, Paul's height shot up four inches. His exact height would remain a lifelong debate. His most generous appraisers claim that at his peak he stood five feet, ten and a half inches tall. His critics countered that he "towered" no more than five feet, six inches.

In 1986 Paul's height, or lack thereof, became a nationwide debate. The New York Post launched a campaign that promised to pay $1,000 in charity donations for every proven inch the actor measured over five feet, eight inches.

Appearing on the TV program, Live at Five, Paul responded to The Post in anger. "For a newspaper that makes ten million a year, a thousand dollar bet is chicken feed. I'll write a check to The New York Post for a half-million dollars. If they're wrong, though, then it's time to start playing hardball. Let's not make it one thousand dollars an inch. Make it one hundred thousand an inch, or one hundred twenty-five thousand a quarter-inch for anything above five feet, eight inches." The Post backed down and refused to take Paul up on his offer.

Saint George
Paul's first starring role

Like his future friend, Tom Cruise, Paul was extremely sensitive about his height, claiming he stood five feet, eleven inches. Many co-workers in the film industry doubted that. One in particular, Sandi Burton, posed with him for promotional pictures for A New Kind of Love. She claimed that she measured five feet nine inches, and "I remembered looking down at him."

The London Mail hired a policewoman, the city's expert on body height. She used an elaborate trigonometric formula on a photograph of him walking down Piccadilly in London. The Mail announced her scientific conclusion. "Paul Newman measures exactly five feet, seven inches tall."

When Paul shot up in height, he also began to fill out, becoming more muscular, although his well-defined body would always be taut, not massively developed like that of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"There was no contest," Mary Schribner, a classmate said. "Paul Newman was the best good-looking guy in school. He wasn't just handsome but strikingly good looking, the most beautiful boy I'd ever seen. But girls didn't want to date him. He was always pulling pranks on girls, always up to some mischief. He once put a dead snake in a girl's lunchbox. He was a cut-up, the class clown. He liked to play gags. He sat right behind me in class and was always

annoying me. Once when I sat down, it sounded like I'd let out a big fart. He'd put some rubber contraption under my seat. The whole class laughed at me. I felt so embarrassed I cried. What girl in her right mind would want to date Mr. Tomfoolery?"

Media frenzy and
a question of size

Eventually, the school bullies stopped calling him a sissy and began wanting to hang out with him, especially one friend named Ralph Sage. His wild nights out with the boys led to a serious accident in 1940. Paul had borrowed his father's car to go on a joyride with his friend Ralph. Losing control of the wheel, Paul crashed the vehicle into a big oak tree, almost totaling it.

Miraculously both he and Ralph escaped with only minor injuries. As punishment for this, for a full eleven months every day after school ended, Paul was confined to the house unless he was otherwise needed to help out in the sporting goods store.

Paul might not have been popular with the girls at his high school, but as he grew into manhood he attracted attention from one of his neighbors-let's call her Jane Doe. She'd first met Paul when he had a paper route along Brighton Road and had watched him grow up. Back when he was nine years old, she used to invite him inside her

home for freshly baked cookies.

Jane's husband had died in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the neighbors reported that she was the loneliest, saddest woman in Shaker Heights. Even after Paul gave up the paper route and went to work for his father, he still saw Jane on occasion.

Following the car accident, when his father refused to let him drive the family car, Paul secretly borrowed Jane's car "whenever I needed wheels," as he later admitted. Arthur Senior had no knowledge of this. The car had belonged to Jane's sailor husband, and she almost never used it.

Details are lacking, and Paul told only a few close friends, including one Chris Chase, but at some point in their relationship, Jane attempted to seduce the handsome sixteen-year-old. From all reports, the sexual encounter was a disaster, and Paul had been too nervous to perform adequately with the older woman. That ended their years-long friendship, and Paul avoided her house from then on and was no longer seen driving her car.

The experience may have turned him off girls, and especially older women, for years. While appearing on Broadway in William Inge's Picnic, he confessed to the playwright that, "It took me years to decide which direction I wanted to go in. I was very confused at the time, and I let a lot of people, especially in the Navy, take advantage of me. Even back then, I knew one thing, and that was I did not want to live the life of a homosexual. It was too limiting, too degrading. I wanted to spend my life making love to beautiful women, but I just didn't know how to go about it. A lot of boys my age were getting girls pregnant without meaning to-and being forced to marry them. I didn't want to be forced into anything like that. I was also a growing boy with needs, and those needs were very sexual. My hand came into intimate contact with a certain part of my body night after night. But I wanted more."

***

Part of Paul Newman's legend is that he was a "romantic loner" while growing up in Ohio. He always appeared to be dreaming "the impossible dream," Arthur Senior said. His mother had the opposite point of view. "He will do great things, accomplish much. He can do whatever he sets his mind to do, only he's not sure what that is yet."

Braving the winter winds of Ohio

When he was just thirteen, Paul began his long, rambling walks around Greater Cleveland, discov ering hidden beauty spots. He was also attracted to tawdry scenes, and was fascinated to see female prostitutes soliciting their trade in the seedy parts of Cleveland. Once he walked for miles, just following the railroad tracks, as if that would lead him out of the Cleveland area and into a new life. He explained to Theresa that, "I need time to think, to get away, be myself, and figure things out." He never explained exactly what he was figuring out.

His distant relative, Sarah Cohn, had always observed the young boy closely, and she was filled with opinions. "Behind those blue eyes was a bubbling cauldron," she said. "Paul never invited anyone, not even his mother, to look inside his head. There were things going on there that we could not even conceive. Those penetrating eyes of his only told you that something was going on, but you didn't know what. I suspected that he was dangerous. I knew

he'd started drinking beer, and a lot of it, when he was only fifteen. He managed to conceal this from his father, but Theresa found out. She forgave him. He could have been exposed as a serial killer, and that woman would have pardoned him his sin. If anyone knew what was going on with Paul, it was Chris Chase, who became his buddy. I think he attended another school. For a time, Paul and Chris became inseparable."

Every high school in the country had a hunky stud like Chris Chase. Many girls avoided him out of fear, but others clustered around him. The guys sought him out too. Blond and blue-eyed, he was handsome in a menacing sort of way.

Although he was only seventeen, he looked much older. He was the most physically developed of all his classmates, with on most occasions a day's growth of beard, when the other boys needed only one shave a month, if that. His chest hair was always visible above the neckline of a white T-shirt.

Forbidden to drive:
Paul in Shaker Heights

The circumstances of how he met Paul, who was enrolled in another school, aren't known. But soon they were going everywhere together, attending football games and going for long rides in the Ohio countryside in Chris's hot rod.

Paul may have been honored that such a soughtafter student wanted to spend time with him instead of joining in the more usual pursuit of available girls.

"There was a chemistry there," said Betty Cally, who attended school with Chris. "I saw them having an ice cream soda one afternoon, and though they were the center of attention, these guys didn't even know anyone else existed. When they met each other, Chris stopped dating girls and Paul gave up that rough gang of guys he used to pal around with. In those days, it wasn't unusual for a boy to spend more time with his best pal than he did with his girlfriend. Boyfriends were an everyday affair. Being with your girl was a special occasion-dressing up for a date to the movies, or on rare occasions a visit to a cheap restaurant, perhaps attending some school event together."

Chris was also a guitar-picking singer of limited talent. He was a dimestore Elvis Presley long before that singer swept the nation. Thanks partly to Chris' good looks and dynamic sex appeal, he got a few weekend bookings at bars and nightclubs in downtown Cleveland.

Paul was given permission to spend a weekend in the city with Chris. The lie told was that they were going to stay at the house of Chris's uncle. In fact, Chris had booked them into a seedy hotel a block from The Blue Note, where he was appearing as a singer. Chris, who looked far older than his actual years, had presented a fake ID when

he was hired. Chris then persuaded the club's manager to allow (the underaged) Paul into the club as well.

The night Chris took him out was Paul's first exposure to a night club. He didn't know what to expect. Chris told him to stand at the bar where he'd cleared it with the bartender that Paul was allowed to order beer. Excusing himself, Chris went backstage to change into his costume for the night.

As Paul waited for Chris to go on, he found himself the center of attention from a lot of older men, one of whom asked him, "Are you skipping your boy scout meeting tonight?" Paul was too terrified to speak and tried to ignore the men's lewd propositions. As he scanned the bar, he could not see one woman in attendance.

When the beer consumption led to the inevitable, a tipsy Paul headed back to the men's room. Chris still hadn't made an appearance. On the way to the toilet, Paul was groped two or three times. He struck at the hands that felt him up.

Standing at the urinal in the men's room, he found it impossible to urinate with so many eyes fastened on his crotch. He slipped into a private stall and locked the door. By the time he emerged from the toilet, Chris was on the stage. Paul was shocked at his appearance.

Chris was the original Naked Cowboy, pre-dating the famous iconic image in Times Square. With his guitar strapped on, he wore only white boots and a tight-fitting and very revealing bikini. Paul didn't think he was much of a singer, but he enthralled the audience. His signature song was "You Are My Sunshine."

At the end of his act, which met with roaring applause, Chris removed his ten-gallon hat and passed it around the audience. The men filled it with dollar bills.

A waiter came and ushered Paul backstage to Chris' dressing room, where he was changing into street clothes. He ordered Paul to count the money in his hat. As Chris dressed, Paul counted out one-hundred and eleven dollars. He'd never held that much money in his life.

"Let's get some grub," Chris told him. "After that, I'll rent us a hot whore for ten bucks. We'll enjoy her together."

Two hours later Paul found himself in bed naked with an equally naked Chris and a much older hooker who seemed bored with the two young boys. Chris went first, as Paul watched in fascination. When it came time for his

turn, he was reluctant to mount the prostitute but was urged on by Chris.

"I began to rub my hands over Paul's body until it produced the desired effect," Chris later claimed. "He finally did the job. I really believe if I hadn't been rubbing and fondling him, he'd never have gone through with it."

Senior Class
of
Shaker High School

Chris also claimed that a month later, when Paul obtained permission from his parents for another nocturnal excursion to downtown Cleveland, he seduced Paul. "I figured if he'd let me feel him up, he wouldn't resist my next moves. This time no whore. I had him all weekend in that flea trap. I taught the kid everything he knows about man-on-man sex. He took to it like a pig in shit. He was a natural. He ended up doing everything I wanted, and I'm a God damn demanding guy in bed."

Paul's affair with Chris did not last long. There was a scandal that was whispered about in Shaker Heights. It seemed that Chris, for pay, had gotten sexually involved with one of his high school teachers, who had taken pornographic pictures of him. Somehow this became known to the police who moved in. The scandal was hushed up but the teacher was fired and disappeared from town.

Without a final good-bye to Paul, Chris also left town.

His involvement with Paul might never have been known if Chris didn't surface a year later in Greenwich Village. For a brief moment of glory, his Naked Cowboy act drew several hundred gay men into whatever club he was appearing in.

Years later, after Paul had became a famous movie star, Chris "dined out" at such Village restaurants as the San Remo, telling tall tales of his seduction of Paul to such figures of the literati as Jack Kerouac, Edward Albee, and a young novelist, James Leo Herlihy, who'd later write Midnight Cowboy. It was because of Chris that rumors of Paul's homosexuality spread through the Greenwich Village underground long before they surfaced in Hollywood.

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After Chris's scandal with his teacher and their sudden departures from Cleveland, rumors and gossip spread through the school. Because of his close ties with Chris, Paul became the victim of unwanted speculation.

As if to erase the memory, Paul devoted himself to pursuing debate and became the most skilled in his class. He was articulate, with a charisma that grabbed the attention of his audience. "It was not that his points were so valid," said William Walton, his English coach. "It's that he knew how to sell them so effectively that you wanted to believe everything he said. He also had a keen intelligence. In addition to being a good debater, he became interested in serious drama."

During this period, it isn't known why he quit working for his father at the sporting goods store. Perhaps they'd had an argument. But Paul was soon seen hustling sandwiches at Danny Budin's Corned Beef Palace. He no longer wanted to depend on an allowance from his parents, but preferred to make money on his own.

"He was stubborn and defiant," Sarah Cohn said. "Of course, many young boys go through a rebellious period like Paul did. He was so independent. He didn't want anybody telling him what to do. It was the beginning of his restless years, where he would wander aimlessly from job to job. He even took a job selling encyclopedias from door to door. He told me he wanted to see if he could sell himself to people. He made several hundred dollars. Frankly, I think a lot of bored housewives bought the encyclopedias from him because he was so handsome and charming."

Somewhere along the way he became involved with a somewhat plain but remarkably intelligent sixteen-year-old girl, Betty Roberts. "Many of the girls were afraid of Paul," she said. "There were a lot of rumors about him. He was often moody and wouldn't speak to you. On other days, he could be absolutely charming. I pursued him. For weeks, he didn't pay attention to me. Then one day he invited me out and after that, we began to date. I was serious. He wasn't. But he told people I was his girl. He'd give me a good night kiss and that was that. I guess I would have done more but he never asked me."

"When we were alone, he never put the moves on me," she claimed. "But when we were with others, he always put his arm rather possessively around me. I began to feel that he was saying, `I'm Paul Newman, and I like girls.' I found our relationship very confusing. I could never figure it out. I wanted him to talk to me about our future. Maybe our getting married one day. Every morning when I woke up, I never knew if I was still his girl or not. He would sometimes go for days without even speaking to me. Then he'd show up with that wonderful grin of his, and he'd be just as charming as ever. I almost said he could charm the pants off a person, but that never happened between us."

After he was graduated in 1943, Paul immediately dropped Betty without a farewell and enrolled in the U.S. Navy for flight training. He would not be called up right away, so he signed up for courses at Ohio University in Athens. "My subject was Lager 101," he'd later recall. "I drank enough beer to sink a tanker." If drinking was his major, economics and business were his minor. Arthur Senior still had hopes of Paul coming back from college and taking over the sporting goods business.

When sober, Paul appeared as a boxer in the university's theatrical production, The Milky Way, showing off his newly muscular physique in scarletcovered trunks. In this play by Lynn Root and Harry Clark, Paul was cast as Speed McFarland, a middleweight boxing champion, foreshadowing his eventual, much bigger role in his first hit film, the 1956 Somebody Up There Likes Me, where he played the role of middleweight champion Rocky Graziano.

Working on that production of The Milky Way was Janet Holsom, whose parents had settled in Ohio after years of braving the winters of Manitoba. "She's the sexiest gal I've ever met," Paul wrote a buddy, Ralph Sage, a member of his former gang of pals back in Shaker Heights. Ralph was serving at the time in the U.S. Navy, as he'd signed up in December of 1941, right after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Paul wrote to Ralph during a period of several months while he himself was in the Navy. Perhaps Paul wanted to counter those rumors that had spread among his contemporaries about Chris Chase and himself.

In contrast to his restrained behavior with his girlfriend, Betty, Paul became sexually intimate with Janet, perhaps even on their first date-that is, if his letters to Ralph are to be believed. Paul's letters were almost porno graphic, as were those of thousands upon thousands of other young men in the 40s, writing to pals about their conquests, often in foreign ports. He called her breasts "melons," and referred to her vagina as "a dark blueberry bramble." He confessed to Ralph, perhaps exaggerating, that "I nearly choke her when I come. She calls the big vein on my dick `the come canal.'"

In 1958, after Paul had become a world-famous movie star, Ralph would attempt to sell Paul's steamy letters to Confidential magazine, but was turned down. Even so, mimeographed copies of these scalding letters would circulate through underground Hollywood, challenging rumors of Paul's alleged homosexuality.

It remains somewhat of a mystery why Ralph even bothered to save Paul's letters in the first place, since Paul was not famous at the time and their friendship back in Shaker Heights hadn't been particularly intimate. It has been speculated that Ralph may have had a secret schoolboy crush on his "pretty boy friend."

Paul's studies at Ohio University ended abruptly when the Navy called for him to report for duty. Two days before he was called up, Janet informed him that she was pregnant. Although Paul promised to marry her when he got out of the Navy, Janet wasn't so certain. She'd heard that a lot of servicemen all over America were making such promises to abandoned girlfriends on the homefront with no intention of "carrying through with their sweet talk." She demanded that Paul get the money "from your rich parents" for an abortion.

He had no intention of letting his parents know he'd gotten a girl pregnant. He still had one thousand dollars in the bank, money he'd earned when selling encyclopedias from door to door.

With that money, Paul rented a car and drove Janet across the U.S./Canadian frontier to an abortion clinic that had been used by many other students at Ohio University. In a letter to Ralph, Paul claimed that following the abortion, Janet had cried all the way back to Athens. Apparently, at one point, she had screamed at him, "You killed my baby!" She seemed to forget that the abortion was her idea. In spite of the tensions between them, Paul still called Janet "my girl," and promised to return to her and settle down at war's end.

"We'll see how all this comes out," she reportedly told Paul. "What if America loses the war and the Nazis invade Ohio? The soldiers will probably capture me and send me to some prison camp as a sex slave."

He assured her that "there is no way the United States is going to lose, and I'll be back."

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Paul was ordered by the Navy to report to the grounds of Yale University, where he signed on for training in the V-12 program of the Navy Air Corps. "I'll be a flying ace and shoot down twenty, maybe even thirty, of the Luftwaffe," he told his mother back in Shaker Heights.

But during his first week at Yale, his hopes of becoming a Navy pilot were dashed. All recruits were subjected to an eye test. Paul's results revealed that those incredibly blue eyes of his could not determine the difference between red and green, a skill he'd need as a pilot.

He was dismissed from the air corps and sent to boot camp, little knowing that he would have his first intimate encounter with a movie star, thereby beginning a parade of conquests that would continue throughout most of his life.

Paul had heard stories from other recruits about how brutal the conditions were at boot camp. He'd seen enough movies to know what to expect from his drill sergeant, anticipating a bully of an officer-the kind Ernest Borgnine would play years later, tormenting poor Frank Sinatra in From Here to Eternity.

But when he met his instructor, to Paul's astonishment, he encountered a man of almost stunning beauty, Robert Stack. He'd seen Robert give singing sensation Deanna Durbin her first on-screen kiss in First Love (1939), the actor's debut movie. Paul had been captivated by Robert and had seen his other movies, including his turn as

Frank Morgan's Nazi son in The Mortal Storm (1940).

In the fan magazines, Paul had read that Robert had been born into a wealthy family and was both a polo player and the world's greatest skeet champion. He was known as "The Swinging Bachelor" of Hollywood, and he'd had affairs with Judy Garland, Ingrid Bergman, and countless others.

His father, an advertising executive, had created the slogan, "The beer that made Milwaukee famous." What the fan magazines didn't know, or at least didn't report, was that Robert was also a bisexual, having had affairs with both Tyrone Power and Howard Hughes. In the summer of 1940 he'd shared his small double bed in the Hollywood Hills with a libidinous new buddy of his, John F. Kennedy, the son of the former ambassador to England.

Even though Robert was an officer and Paul an enlisted "swabby," the attraction between the two men was electric, enough so that Paul's fellow sailors became aware of it. Both Robert and Paul tried to keep their ongoing affair a secret, but in that they did not succeed. Apparently, none of the officers ever found out about the time Robert and Paul spent together off base, but Paul's comrades in the barracks knew and gossiped about the clandestine relationship.

The exact details of Paul's involvement with the dashing movie star will never be known. What is known is that when Paul left the base he'd walk for half a mile to a point where Robert was waiting for him in his private car.

Paul had been merely color blind, but a Navy optometrist had pronounced Robert "practically blind." Even so, he'd been allowed to enlist as a gunnery officer. "It pays to be a movie star when you want something," Robert later said.

Paul never became an aerial gunner during the war, but he was taught airto-air gunnery by Robert in case he ever had to face Japanese Zeros with 20mm automatic cannons. Robert warned Paul and the other men that in a crash, the pilot often walked away, whereas the poor gunner in the rear was usually hauled off in a meat wagon. "The mortality ratio is something like three to one, gunners to pilots," Robert claimed.

It can be assumed that Robert instilled fear in Paul, but used the upcoming danger he might face in the war as a seduction tool. Later, in Hollywood, Robert told his friends that since he might have died in the war, he'd been

"determined to live life to the fullest in case it was blotted out by the Japs." "I think Paul developed some very strong feelings for Robert," said another Paul, Paul Reiner, who served with Newman. "Stack wasn't interested in any school-gal romance," Reiner claimed. "He was a love `em and leave `em kind of guy. You know the type. A girl in every port-or, in Stack's case, a girl or a cute boy in every port. The bastard pursued the thrill of the moment, and seemed always open to some new sexual adventure. On the other hand, Paul took their relationship seriously. When Stack eventually was reassigned, Paul took it real bad. I think Paul thought he meant more to Stack than he really did."

After training the recruits, Robert was assigned to tour naval bases in America along with five other men, seeking to sign up volunteers as gunners. There was a shortage of gunners, as not many men wanted to take such a high-mortality job in what they called a flying coffin.

Robert Stack:
Drilling Paul

Years later, in his memoirs, Robert claimed that the bus assigned to his men was no more than a "portable cat house. I was put in charge of a bunch of swingers that put Hollywood's best to shame. When I arrived at each destination, there would be complaints from outraged mothers whose innocent daughters had been misused or had run away with sailors in official Navy vehi- Iles. My men also left a trail of demolished bars and unpaid bills."

Even through his tumultuous and later heart-breaking affair with Robert, Paul continued to write love letters to the girl back home. "He talked about this Janet all the time," Reiner said. "She must have been a regular Betty Grable. He tried to convince us how much he was in love with Janet, but his true love seemed to be Robert Stack. Those two male lookers could have had any girl within a radius of fifty miles, and they wanted each other."

Reiner later claimed that Robert had had a profound influence on the more innocent Paul. "After Stack dumped him, Paul went into a kind of lovesick mourning, although he tried to conceal it. He drank all the beer he could hold and adopted this devil-may-care attitude. `We gotta live for today,' he told me, `because tomorrow we die.'"

"Even though he talked about this Janet creature all the time, he became the wildest one of our bunch," Reiner said. "When we went carousing, drinking and chasing whores in clipjoints, the bitches flocked to Paul in droves because he was so good looking. He didn't' turn them down either. One whore told me she'd do Paul for free. Beneath it all, I suspected he was lonely, depressed, and a bit heartsick. He still wasn't sure who to be. One side of him seemed to want to go back to Ohio, marry Janet, have eight kids, and run the family business. But there was also a wild streak in him. One drunken night, Paul told me that Stack had promised to take him to Hollywood after the war was over and make a movie star out of him."

"I just might go to Hollywood on my own and become a movie star without his help," Paul told Reiner.

As far as it's known, this was Paul's first admission that he was even considering trying to become a movie star. Robert had been the first to plant that idea in his beautiful head. There would be many others who would also promote that dream.

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After boot camp, Paul was assigned as an aviation radioman, third class, aboard torpedo planes, and flown to stations in the Pacific that included Guam, Saipan, and Hawaii.

In spite of studio publicists who, years later, tried to present Paul as a great naval hero along the lines of John F. Kennedy, he really wasn't. He saw no combat. His most dramatic moment during World War II involved a quirky

coincidence which, if circumstances had been different, would probably have killed him. Paul's plane had been scheduled to join five other aircraft aboard an aircraft carrier somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Unexpectedly, on the morning of the mission, the pilot in charge of Paul's squadron developed a severe ear infection, and the mission on which Paul was to have flown was aborted. A substitute plane was sent instead, and Paul, along with the rest of the crew, was grounded until their pilot recovered.

The substitute plane landed, mid-ocean, aboard the carrier, where it was positioned in "The Ready Room" for takeoff. Suddenly, roaring out of a dense cloud cover, came a Japanese kamikazi pilot, his plane loaded with explosives. He plummeted from the sky onto the deck of the aircraft carrier, careening into The Ready Room where the substitute plane exploded. Everyone aboard was killed.

Two hours later, Paul heard about the fatalities. He later recalled the experience to his family and friends, referring to it as "the most terrifying news I'd ever heard in my life. My heart is still beating today because of my pilot's earache. After I heard the news, I developed the shakes. I couldn't sleep that night. I lay in a pool of my own sweat. I was still shaking the next morning."

After that incident, Paul retreated into a womb, not having contact with any of his fellow sailors except when necessary. He recalled reading ten to fifteen books a week, from Willa Cather to Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind. "I'd be better playing Ashley Wilkes than Rhett Butler," he once said. He still drank as much beer as he could get, and looked forward to shore leave in Honolulu when his ship would arrive, loaded down with horny sailors.

En route to Saipan, Paul received a "Dear John" letter from Janet. She told him that she was marrying the divorced father of three children who had a good business going in Cleveland.

> "I will always love you, but you are far too unpredictable for me to consider as a marriage partner It's more than the drinking. It's something else that bothers me. What drives you to drink so much in the first place? Please don't answer this letter
>
> Eternally, Janet. "

Hellcat in the Navy

Feeling great remorse, Paul became moody. When his fellow sailors approached him, he snapped at them. He didn't like being rejected by anyone. He'd once told his mother, Theresa, "In my life, I'll be the one doing the rejecting. When it's time for me to move on in a relationship, I'll be the decider."

Janet's "Dear John" letter had made a mockery of that boast, and Paul felt defeated, wondering what was wrong with him. All of the homosexual sailors aboard his troopship hit on him, and when he landed in port, the available girls flocked to him, each making themselves available.

Noticing the sudden change in Paul's usually genial disposition, the handsome chaplain aboard Paul's troopship

approached him one afternoon as he was reading Nietzsche. Throughout their time in the service together, the chaplain had always been excessively friendly with Paul, putting his arm around him on many occasions and offering to meet with him privately to discuss spiritual matters. Paul had never taken him up on those offers.

That afternoon, however, was different from the rest. Years later, Paul told his friend, the author Gore Vidal, that the chaplain came on strong to him, openly soliciting him for sex. "Now that really put me off," Paul told Vidal. "Did that put you off Christianity or homosexuality?" Vidal asked.

"Neither," Paul said flippantly. "Nietzsche."

In years to come, Paul told a completely different version of the incident to his close friend, the gay actor Anthony Perkins. Paul said that he followed the chaplain to his cabin where he allowed him to perform an act of fellatio on him. "I was feeling completely rejected, and somehow the chaplain made me feel wanted, desirable. It was a harmless arrangement. The chaplain got his sexual thrill, which he'd wanted since he first laid eyes on me, and I got a relief from my tensions. No one was harmed."

Paul also confided to Anthony that he visited the chaplain's cabin frequently during their time in the service together. "It was a hell of a lot better than jerking off. He was crazy about me, and I got my jollies. And I knew that the moment I sailed into port, I'd be chasing girls again."

When Paul's troopship arrived in the port of Honolulu, he joined many of his sailor buddies and lined up to sample the girls at Pearl's Garden of Delights, just one of the many whorehouses that flourished here during World War II. Newsreel footage of that era showed sailors lined up around the block waiting for their chance with a prostitute.

The working girls in any house were limited, but the horny sailors numbered in the hundreds. To combat this problem, the madam of Pearl's bordello came up with a rather startling solution: Every sailor would be allowed only one minute on top of a woman.

The madam had hired a beautiful Hawaiian in a blond wig to stand at the door and be "the fluffer," long before that term came into vogue decades later. The Huffer masturbated the young men and got them close to an eruption before they were ushered into a cell to mount a prostitute. The sailors were processed as in a factory.

Paul allowed himself to be fluffed into readiness by the skilled masturbator before his turn inside the room where he faced a mulatto prostitute who was part black, part Hawaiian.

The fluffer's wrist never seemed to tire. In 1948, an underground mimeographed memoir circulated on the back streets of Honolulu. It sold for a dollar and was called "The Adventures of Fifi." In it, Fifi claimed, "I jerked off half the sailors in the Pacific fleet. I was so skilled at what I did that many of the sailors made dates with me. Even when some of them discovered that I was a beautiful young man in drag, pretty as any girl, they didn't kick me out of bed but enjoyed all the pleasures I could provide for them. I was very, very good at my work. In fact, I'm living today with one of the blond gods I was introduced to when I masturbated him. He's corn fed. From Kansas, and he loves me."

It is not known if Paul were one of those men who later dated the very talented "Mr. Fifi."

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Discharged from the Navy in April of 1946, Paul returned to a post-war Ohio and enrolled on the GI bill in the all-male Kenyon College in the town of Gambier, a rural area some ninety miles southwest of Cleveland. For the moment at least, he had no intention of getting hooked up with another woman after his rejection by Janet in Athens.

After his return home, he found that nothing had changed very much in Shaker Heights. Arthur Senior still regarded his son as a lightweight, praising instead the achievements of his older son. He told his relative, Sarah Cohn, that "all Paul did for the war effort was lie in a bunk reading Tolstoy's War and Peace. He was no hero. America won the war without him."

In Honolulu, a good-looking sailor boy meets "The Fluffer"

His father ordered Paul to study economics in college so he'd be prepared to work in the family sporting goods business. He obeyed his father, but found his business studies boring. In spite of his weight of only 150 pounds, he dreamed of becoming an athlete. He did make the second-string football team, "but I was no Saturday's Hero," he later confessed.

At this point in his life, he was still turned off by women. "I got the clap from some whore in Honolulu," he told his team members, who seemed to view this as a badge of honor, not a disgrace. It seemed to prove that Paul was a real man and at the age of twenty-one had had more experience than the late teens he hung out with.

Paul broke his "fast" from women when he agreed to go with five of his teammates for a night of skirt-chasing, hell-raising, and beer drinking at The Rusty Nail, a seedy beer joint in neighboring Mount Vernon, where Hank Williams-not Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatra-was king of the jukebox.

The club was patronized by the good of boys of Mount Vernon and a lot of horny young women whose husbands were away. "The suds flowed and the girls were the kind of whores who didn't charge," Paul later said.

What exactly happened that night remains cloudy. It seems that a young husband from Mount Vernon had come into the beer hall looking for his errant wife, finding her in the arms of the football captain from Kenyon. After a few blows were exchanged, a full-fledged fight erupted between the males of Mount Vernon and the "invading" college boys from Kenyon. In the melee, Paul was hit over the head with a beer bottle, but the blow did not knock him out and he kept on fighting.

When the police arrived, they found the club in shambles. Many of the patrons had fled, but Paul, lying unconscious in a corner, was discovered by a policeman. His forehead was bleeding, but he was not seriously injured, although hopelessly drunk. One of his teammates had been slashed across his shoulder blade with a knife and had to be rushed to the hospital.

In the Mount Vernon Police station, Paul was locked up in a cell with four of his other teammates. He remembered waking up the next morning "with a volcanic headache lying in a pool of my own vomit, slime green in color, or so I was told. I don't see green."

Arthur Senior read about his son's exploits on the front page of The Cleveland Plain Dealer. Two students were expelled from Kenyon, the other four, including Paul, placed on suspension. As a final blow, he was kicked off the football team.

Even though Theresa told her husband that "boys will be boys," Arthur Senior went two months before speaking to his "bad boy" son. When Paul came home from college breaks, he was forced to eat alone in the kitchen and not at the family table.

Back at college, Paul resumed his heavy beer drinking, seemingly forgetting about his time in jail. His classmates predicted he'd graduate from Kenyon "Magnum Cum Lager."

To redeem himself in his father's eyes, and to show what a keen sense of business he had, Paul opened a laundry off campus. He'd saved up a few hundred dollars and could afford the rent. It was the first laundry in the area ever run by a student.

He came up with a scheme to lure students away from the competing laundries nearby. Two kegs of beer were on tap at all times. Paul offered the brew free to his classmates. Even though he pulled in sixty dollars a week from this enterprise, he grew bored with "being the Chinaman of Kenyon." He sold his new business to two of his classmates for six-hundred dollars.

The two young men who took over were not successful, even though they continued to offer the kegs of beer. One afternoon one of the college men, who'd arrived with a bag of smelly underwear, had too much of the brew. He wandered onto the nearby square and tried to masturbate a tied-up horse.

The animal bolted, but the student hung on to the horse's penis. A policeman not only reclaimed his horse but tossed the student in jail, charging him with bestiality. The beer kegs were hauled away, and the laundry shut down.

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Years later, Paul's drama professor, James Michael, recalled, "I had trouble not casting him as the lead in every play we put on. He had such stage presence." Nine plays followed, ranging from the riotous Charley 's Aunt to the more classic The Taming of the Shrew.

Paul didn't agree with his professor's assessment of his acting talent. "I just learned my lines by rote and spoke them in a monotone. I didn't really react to my fellow cast members. I could have phoned in my performance. I didn't know a horse's piss about acting until I joined the Actors Studio in the summer of 1952."

"Magnum Cum Lager"

Years later, Paul told another actor, Karl Malden, "from the very beginning, acting scared the shit out of me. It's like going on stage, pulling down your pants and flopping your dick at the audience so they can appraise its size. I felt vulnerable and I still do every time I face a camera or a live audience."

When Professor Michael returned from a field trip to Broadway, along with eight senior drama majors, he raved to Paul about the quality of post-war theater in America, singling out one performance in particular, that of Marlon Brando in A Streetcar Named Desire.

"He will change acting for all time. Brando is a genius. If you want to be an actor, you've got to go and study his performance, his technique. It is nothing sort of sensational. He dominates the stage even when he is standing silently by and Jessica Tandy is going into her Tennessee Williams theatrics."

With money from the sale of his laundry, Paul made a solo journey by train to New York "all by my lonesome," he'd later recall. His parents objected, but in a show of independence, he made the trip East without their permission.

With the six hundred dollars stuffed into his pants, Paul arrived at Grand Central Station. Armed with a street map, he walked to the YMCA to save the taxi fare. He wanted to spend his money only on theater tickets, planning to survive on hot dogs until he returned to Shaker Heights.

Ever since December 3, 1947, when the curtain rose at the Ethel Barrymore Theater on A Streetcar Named Desire, Marlon Brando had been the sensation of Broadway. The play was sold out when Paul tried to buy a ticket, but standing room was available.

"From the moment Brando walked on that stage," Paul later confided to Geraldine Page at the Actors Studio, "I was mesmerized." In a sweaty, tightfitting red T-shirt, and even tighter jeans, Brando was like an animal in heat. Some of the women in the audience swooned.

"He was raw meat up there on that stage," Paul told Geraldine. "Vulgar, a pig really, but what a pig. He was violent, crude, and I was completely hooked. As for myself, I realized that I'd merely been standing on the stage, delivering lines. I'd put no emotion in them. I'd never inhabited a character like Brando did. I mean he dug under his skin like a parasite sucking for blood. Brando inhabited the soul of Stanley Kowalski. He was not play-acting. He was real. All the acting I'd seen up to then had been phony shit."

A bit shy, Paul summoned his courage to go backstage and congratulate Brando. About a hundred other people, mostly women, had the same idea. The stage manager controlled the crowd.

Months later at the Actors Studio, Shelley Winters told Paul that she'd been dating Brando at the time until she found out that he was simultaneously seducing some of the biggest names in Hollywood. Many of these fabled stars, including Joan Crawford, had gone backstage ostensibly because they were intrigued at the prospect of playing Blanche DuBois in the play's muchanticipated film version. "Even a broken-down old whore like Crawford knew she'd be wrong cast as Tennessee's delicate moth," Shelley said. "Crawford came backstage for one reason, and one reason only. She wanted Brando to fuck her."

After seeing Brando's performance, Paul decided he didn't want to waste his money going to any other Broadway plays, not even All My Sons, by Arthur Miller, which had also been recommended to him by his college professor. He planned to spend every evening of those remaining in New York attending performances of Streetcar, watching Brando.

"There was so much to see and study in his performance," Paul later told Geraldine. "You couldn't take it all in

with just one viewing. Brando was a hard book to read, one with many pages, each turn of the page more enigmatic than what you'd read on the previous page. But I was determined to figure him out."

Buying better seats, Paul showed up for each of his remaining nights in New York. On the second and third nights, he continued to go backstage but was turned away by the stage manager, although he noticed that some young pretty women were allowed access to Brando's dressing room.

After watching yet another of Brando's mesmerizing performances, Paul came up with an idea. He'd read in a magazine that Brando rode his motorcycle through the streets of New York after every performance. Paul figured the motorcycle had to be parked in the alleyway outside the theater.

He left the theater through the main entrance and walked around to the alleyway. Indeed, there was a motorcycle parked there, bright, shiny, and locked for safekeeping. He must have waited for an hour until the crowd backstage had departed. Finally, the theater's back door opened, and he heard Brando's recognizable voice. "Good night, Charlie. Keep those pussies coming, and nothing ugly, okay?"

Alone in the alleyway with Brando, Paul confronted the actor. What happened next depends on the veracity of Carlo Fiore, Brando's longtime companion. The dialogue reported by Fiore was allegedly said by Brando.

Marlon Brando
An object of desire

Apparently, Paul knew instinctively that if he rushed Brando for an autograph, he'd be brushed aside. He'd worked all night on his opening line to attract Brando's attention. "Mr. Brando, you're the greatest thing since God granted men the right to come."

At first Brando looked startled before bursting into laughter. "You're okay, kid," he said. "What a beauty! You're almost as good looking as I am."

"You're not just good looking, you've got sex appeal," Paul is reported to have said. "I'm an actor too, but I don't know how to project sex appeal."

"You've got to act from your crotch," Brando said.

"I wish you'd teach me how to do that," Paul said.

Brando walked over to his motorcycle and unlocked it. He turned to Paul again. "First, you've got to have lowdown, rotten sex. I mean the type of sex that would make a hardened old whore puke. That kind of sex. Now get

your fucking cute little ass over here and plop it down on my cycle. I'm going to take you on a tour of the midnight sights of Manhattan."

Paul apparently was afraid, but joined Marlon on his bike for a ride through the canyons of New York.

Fiore later claimed that Brando boasted that "I fucked the kid in all known positions. He even inspired me to some new positions. The kid resembles me. He looks a bit like I used to look, but I'm different now. I know this is the strangest thing to say. It was as if I was fucking my younger self, even though I'm only about a year older than the guy. Of course, by the time he got on that train for Cleveland, he'd fallen madly in love with me."

"That kid has something I can't put my finger on, but it's there," Brando told Fiore. "I think when all the semen from my noble tool permeates his blood stream, it'll be the beginning of his liberation. Mark my words. He's got something. There's a star quality lurking deep within his bowels."

"Do you think you'll ever see him again?" Fiore asked. "Invite him to New York. You're planning to go to Paris after your contract is up. Maybe take him to Paris. He is one cute guy. And those blue eyes. I could go for him myself and I'm completely straight."

"Yeah, right," Brando said sarcastically. "No, what do you take me for? A lovesick puppy. You should know better. No pretty boy or beautiful woman can get enough of my horny tool. I like to walk out just when they're begging for more."

Back at school, Paul wrote Brando a fan letter every week. None was answered. When Brando's contract with Streetcar was up, and he bowed out of the play, Paul's letters to Brando were returned, not forwarded.

He fully expected never to encounter Brando again, but he planned to watch all his hero's future movies, studying his every nuance. "If I ever become a movie star," he told his mother, Theresa, "I want to be known as the second Marlon Brando."

Paul would live to regret uttering those words.

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Back at school, Paul switched his major from economics to English and speech. "That didn't last long," he said. "I grew bored with Keats, Shelley, and especially Lord Byron." Using Brando as his role model, he changed his curriculum to drama.

It was a long jump, but acting soon replaced football playing as a fixation in his life. "I went from being the worst football player on the team to becoming the worst actor in the history of American colleges," he later recalled.

"I tried to be Brando, but couldn't get there," he said. "In trying to imitate Brando I came off as a big ham. I even took to muttering. It wasn't until I joined the Actors Studio in New York in the months ahead, that I truly learned what Brando was all about."

That was Paul's own negative self-assessment. His early audiences back in the Middle West saw great talent in the aspirant actor, enough so that he was cast in the lead role of ace reporter Hildy Johnson, a part played on the screen by Pat O'Brien in the 1931 film adaptation of The Front Page.

The play by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur had been a hit on Broadway in the 1920s. "Even if Paul couldn't act all that great by then, he could still mesmerize an audience by his sheer male beauty," said cast member Stella Broggan, who had to drop out of rehearsals when she learned about her unexpected pregnancy. "No, Paul wasn't the daddy. How I wished he was."

Paul later called The Front Page "a corker of a play that had a lot of mileage still left in it. On opening night I took five separate curtain calls. The wild applause went to my head. It was my first real taste of adulation."

In spite of his self-assessment as an actor, in 1948 he was offered a job in summer stock at the Priscilla Beach Theater in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Almost nothing has ever been written about the summer of his junior year, and years later, Paul himself refused to talk about it.

Since its establishment in 1937, the oldest barn theater in America had become one of the country's best known venues for the training of young actors. Not just Paul, but many future stars got their start here, including Bob Reiner, Sandy Dennis, Pat Carroll, even Monte Hall.

Paul drew a salary of eighteen dollars a week. To make ends meet, his mother, Theresa, enclosed a twenty dollar bill in many of her letters.

Terry Lewis, a young actress in the company, recalled that Paul felt embarrassed whenever he was complimented on his good looks, especially those baby blues. He told her he wanted to be cast in character parts, not as a handsome matinee idol.

"I don't want to be known as a pretty boy with all the implications that label carries," Paul said. "I'd even be willing to disguise myself with makeup and appear as a hunchback, or at least hide my face behind a long beard. Instead, I look like Goldilocks."

"When I wasn't chasing after him," said actor Barry Ritter, "I felt sympathy for him. Here was this incredibly beautiful boy from the Middle West suddenly thrown into a viper's nest of homosexuals. I think he got propositioned by every guy in the cast. Well, almost. Girls found him a hottie and were after him too. For the first time in his life, Paul Newman learned what it was like being a sex symbol. From what I've heard, that summer was just the beginning of what would go on for the rest of his life. From the New York islands to the California coast, Paul Newman would be pursued. He couldn't even go to the bathroom without being followed by guys."

Ritter revealed that Paul claimed he had sex with two or three young women in the cast, but he didn't follow up on a subsequent date with any of them. He didn't seem to want to get involved. "I plotted to seduce him to no avail," Ritter said. "He took great care not to get undressed in front of me. He shared the upper bunk, and sometimes I could hear him jerking off at night. Finally, one night he gave in to me. We'd been drinking heavily. Lots and lots of suds. When we got back to our room, I made my moves on him. I started giving him a blow job. At first he resisted but then he gave in to me. Although I brought him to a climax, he was as responsive as a dead fish. He just lay there and endured it. It wasn't that great for me, and I didn't come on to him after that. But in the gay bars of my future, I always bragged about sucking off Paul Newman. Since my acting career didn't pan out -I went into the insurance business-giving Paul Newman that blow-job became my claim to fame."

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At two o'clock on the afternoon on June 13, 1949, Paul was graduated from Kenyon College with a Bachelor of Science degree. With a contract in his pocket, and accompanied by his father, he waited for two hours at the local train station as his father urged him to abandon his summer plans and work instead in the family business. Paul adamantly refused, waving goodbye as the train headed for Williams Bay, Wisconsin. There, he had a "room-and-board" deal for a season of summer stock at the Brecksville Little Theatre.

Paul as ace reporter in *The Front Page*

Paul made his stage debut in Williams Bay in a play called John Loves Mary, playing the role of a soldier named John. The film version of the play, starring Ronald Reagan in the same role, was being shown at the same time on movie screens across the country. "I was far better than Reagan," Paul later claimed. He was beginning to have a higher opinion of himself as an actor, although he admitted, "I was miles from being in Brando's league."

Cast as Mary, the role played on screen by Patricia Neal, Jackie Witte was a Wisconsin native. She was an attractive, brown-eyed blonde with charm, personality, and as much wit as her last name implied. Soon, Paul was smitten with her and began to date her, becoming more and more involved as the summer deepened. He hadn't been seriously involved with a woman since Janet Holsum had dumped him. At first their dating was casual, and Paul continued to have sporadic and brief sexual encounters with both men and other women.

When Jackie and Paul co-starred together in Dark of the Moon, they spent more time kissing behind the curtains than in front of them.

Jackie and Paul met at a time when young girls across America were dreaming of romantic love, the theme of which blared constantly over jukeboxes playing the hits of, among others, Pat Boone. In addition to their role as generators of romance, these women expected their future husbands to be good providers.

Jackie was different. She urged Paul to pursue a highly unreliable career in the theater and "to take chances. Life's an adventure and has got to be lived to the fullest. You're an artist, not some dull businessman working in a Cleveland suburb."

No woman had ever talked to him like that before. "Jackie urged me to pursue my dream, even though I wasn't sure I knew what that dream was at the time," Paul said. "I still had hopes of returning to Kenyon and becoming a drama professor. But Jackie convinced me I was more than that. I later gave credit both to Marlon Brando and to Jackie for turning my head around and getting me to pursue a career as an actor, although I fully expected at the time that I'd starve to death."

Paul's role as a soldier was followed by his portrayal of The Gentleman Caller in Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie, which had been a huge hit on Broadway. Having seen Tennessee's other play, A Streetcar Named Desire, on Broadway with Brando, this was Paul's second and more intimate introduction to the work of a playwright who would loom large in his future.

At the time it would have been inconceivable that Paul would star on the screen in two of the playwright's most famous plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Sweet Bird of Youth. It was perhaps even more inconceivable as well that one day he'd direct his future wife in The Glass Menagerie.

Just as his relationship with Jackie was heating up, along came Richard Casey, an extraordinarily handsome

young actor who bore a striking resemblance to Robert Wagner as he appeared in the 1956 film, A Kiss Before Dying. Ironically that film co-starred Joanne Woodward, Paul's second wife to be.

Paul, at least according to Richard, was torn between Jackie and him. "I was just as good looking as he was, and I knew from the first day we met that he was attracted to me. When we got together, it was like plugging something into an electric socket. I went after him big-time, and I don't know if Jackie was even aware of it. It seems she had stars in her eyes and couldn't see straight. I think she fell in love with Paul long before he fell in love with her. I was determined to have him, and it didn't take long for me to win the prize. I was a prize myself. One prize meeting another prize. The results were explosive."

Richard later claimed that one or two guys in the cast had already "had" Paul and had found him unresponsive. "I kindled his fire. We had sex in every position, and he came on strong to me, wanting to try everything he'd done in the sack with Brando. He told me all about that. It's a wonder we had enough energy left after a night together to appear on stage. I don't know if he was also making it with Jackie, because when Paul left my bed I didn't think there was much left for her."

Uncertain of where to go in his future, Richard mapped out the road for both of them. They'd both work in stock as actors until they got their big break on Broadway. "I told him my name would be up on the marquee starring in a hit play on Broadway. At the same time I promised him he'd also have his name up in lights at the theater across the street, appearing in another hit play. For a time, we believed this fantasy. Actually, it was only half a fantasy. For him, the dream came true. For me, it didn't."

The big break came for Richard when he was spotted by a theatrical agent showcasing summer stock productions, looking for the male stars of tomorrow, many of whom he'd sample on the casting couch before agreeing to find jobs for them. He saw Richard's performance and went backstage to introduce himself. He was immediately mesmerized by Richard's sex appeal and good looks, completely ignoring Paul.

Summer love: Meeting actress **Jackie Witte**

The agent promised he'd get Richard work on Broadway if he'd come to New York. Foolishly believing the agent, Richard agreed to follow him. He urged Paul to go to New York with him. That is when Paul experienced what one of his biographers, Lawrence J. Quirk, called "homosexual panic."

It was a turning point in Paul's life. He decided he didn't want to pursue life as a homosexual. Richard remembered Paul sobbing when he had to tell him goodbye at the train station. "I knew he wasn't just telling me goodbye, but saying goodbye to a whole way of life. He was a very macho guy and just didn't want to be known as a pretty boy queer. He told me he didn't want to end up like another Farley Granger."

Both actors had gone to see pretty boy Granger in Alfred Hitchcock's experimental Rope, in which he played John Dall's fellow killer and nervous lover. "I watched Paul fade in the distance at the train station," Richard claimed. "Our paths never crossed again. I saw all of his movies and wondered what might have been."

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Eventually, Jackie and Paul opted to leave the Brecksville Little Theater in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, in favor of an autumn season with the Woodstock Players in Woodstock, Illinois. They were intrigued by the idea of appearing jointly in plays together while living the domestic life of a married couple even though they were unmarried.

As the autumn leaves began to fall, Paul found himself also falling, this time in love and for the first time. Never before had any relationship in his life, male or female, been called love, infatuation perhaps.

At least for a short time in his life, he gave up all other relationships and devoted himself to Jackie. Their love had become sexual, and he felt fulfilled with another person. He may still have harbored other desires-and no doubt he did-but like many men of his time he tried to suppress them.

Their talk was of marriage. On his forty-five dollar a week salary, he bought a used 1937 Packard. He managed to keep up payments on it, because their modest little apartment cost only ten dollars a month in rent.

Apparently, Paul never confided to any friends or associates at the time his exact feelings about his upcoming marriage. There must have been a part of him that wanted to flee to New York, hook up with Marlon Brando, and become a glamorous actor on the Broadway stage. But he held back.

Jackie may have sensed the inner turmoil raging within him. Unexpectedly, he's sometimes become irritable and hostile among people who wished him well. "I could tell that Paul was unhappy," said John Bremmer, who worked at the theater. "But when he was with Jackie, he seemed happy and very much in love. Even so, I sensed she was not enough for him. He wanted more. Without knowing it, and like most of the other young men of his age in the Middle West at the time, he was slowly drifting into something he didn't really want-marriage and fatherhood. His father constantly wrote him to come home and join the family business, something Paul vowed he'd never do."

"I didn't know Jackie very well, but I observed her from a distance," Bremmer said. "I could understand why Paul went for her. She was no prom queen or empty-headed bottle blonde. She seemed to have opinions about everything, and they made sense. She was very sensitive to other people, and the cast liked her. She was a very talented actress and probably would have gone far in the theater if Paul hadn't turned her into a housewife. She was not only smart, but very well spoken, very articulate. She seemed to meet Paul passion for passion. I once spotted the two of them during a break in rehearsals, and they seemed to have their tongues down each other's throats."

Jackie Witte onstage:
The career she abandoned for Paul

By December of 1949, Jackie had convinced Paul to marry her. "It wasn't much of a honeymoon," he later recalled. "Like I had the money to fly her to Bermuda." In fact as the marriage progressed, he found money so tight he took a temporary job as a worker on a nearby farm.

Jackie wanted to have a child with Paul, although he warned that their life was too unsettled, their future uncertain. Nonetheless they began to have unprotected sex. By the spring of 1950, she was pregnant.

Their lives changed in significant ways. An urgent letter arrived from Theresa, urging Paul to return to Shaker Heights. At the age of fifty-seven, his chronically ill father had taken a sudden turn for the worse. His mother admitted to him her greatest fear. "The doctor privately told me Arthur has only weeks to live."

Closing down their operations in Woodstock, Paul and Jackie, with their possessions stored either inside their dilapidated Packard or roped down on top of its roof, drove to Shaker Heights.

Knowing the clock was ticking, Paul went in for a reunion with his father. Even though Arthur Senior was in a weakened condition, Paul talked to the dying man for more than an hour. Later he told Theresa and Jackie, "Dad was always disappointed in me, and I know that. But I promised him that I'm gonna make something of my rotten life. I begged him to hold onto life. I told him I wanted him to live so he could be proud of his son one day."

Five days later, a doctor summoned to the Newman household came out of the bedroom. He told the family, "He's gone. I couldn't save him."

In frustration, Paul pounded the wall. "I never got a chance to show him." Jackie and Theresa looked on in astonishment. Paul's brother, Arthur Junior, said what might have been on everybody's mind. "That's a pretty selfish way to look at Dad's death."

Despondent over his father's untimely death, Paul buckled under, giving in to Theresa's demands to fulfill his father's last wish. Paul agreed to help run the family's sporting goods business. He spent long hours at the store, sometimes working two or three hours after its 5pm closing. He wanted to be a success.

Jackie waited impatiently for him at the Newman household. A son was born on September 23. Paul named him Alan Scott Newman.

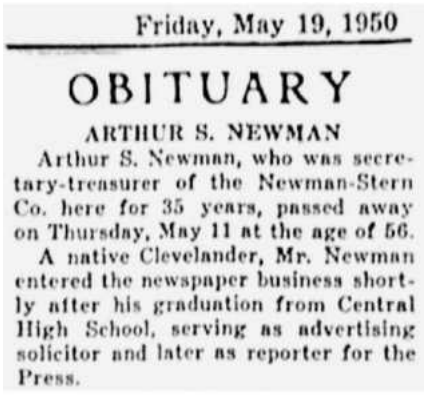
Since they couldn't afford to buy a home in Shaker Heights, Paul and Jackie purchased a modest home in neighboring Bedford. "My life in the suburbs has begun," he lamented to Arthur. "Just like thousands of other young men who returned from the battlefields. A wife, a family, a kid, a house with a mortgage, a lawn to mow, maybe more kids in the future. The prospect of getting old and never having made something big out of my life."

He grew increasingly alienated and bitter and started taking those daylong walks whose patterns he'd established when he was much younger. Sometimes he'd disappear for long stretches at a time, not telling Jackie or his family where he went. On some of those excursions, he'd drive into Cleveland, where he'd absent himself for an entire weekend.

No one knows exactly what he did during those periods away from home, or who he saw. In almost every case, he chose not to talk about them after his return to Bedford.

For eighteen months, he'd been a dutiful son, competently running the sporting goods store, succeeding at it, and generating a quite good profit at the end of every month.

But one Sunday, he excused himself for an early morning drive to a nearby lake. He didn't return home until late that evening. He claimed he'd gone fishing, although he hadn't taken his equipment with him. Apparently, he spent the day staring into the lake.



Friday, May 19, 1950

OBITUARY

ARTHUR S. NEWMAN

Arthur S. Newman, who was secretary-treasurer of the Newman-Stern Co. here for 35 years, passed away on Thursday, May 11 at the age of 56.

A native Clevelander, Mr. Newman entered the newspaper business shortly after his graduation from Central High School, serving as advertising solicitor and later as reporter for the Press.

That evening, back home after his day at the lake, he called his brother, at first neglecting to tell Jackie what he planned to do.

Speaking to Arthur in a very determined voice, he said, "I've had it! I will not relive my father's life. You've got to run the store yourself. Sell those baseball bats. As soon as I sell the house, I'm heading east to pursue a dream."

"Are you taking Jackie and Scott?" Arthur asked.

"Sure, why not?" he asked. "They can come along if they don't mind living through some hard times."

Arthur decided that without Paul he didn't want to operate the family business either. The brothers put it up for sale. In the meantime, to earn money with his extra two mouths to feed, Paul took a temporary job on a golf course range. He searched for lost balls, digging them out of the mud and washing them in cold water for later re-use. His hands remained constantly chapped.

He also broadcast radio commercials as a spokesman for the Ohio Bell Telephone Company, and he was hired by the McCann-Erickson Advertising agency for voice-overs because of his theatrically trained baritone voice.

When the sports goods store sold three months later, Paul had his nest egg to head East with Jackie and Scott. His day of flirting with other occupations was over. He was going to live in New Haven and work for a master's degree in drama at Yale University. Even more important, he'd pursue a career as an working actor in the theater.

From behind the wheel of his Packard, with his wife in the front seat and baby Scott in the back, he drove in the direction of New York City. Four thousand dollars in cash were concealed in a black leather pouch in the glove compartment.

At one point during the trip, he lowered the window and yelled out at a passing car, "Broadway, here I come!"

Chapter Two

Crotch Acting

Enrolling in the Yale School of Drama, Paul moved his family into a cramped top floor apartment in New Haven in the autumn of 1951. He knew that even if he failed as an actor on Broadway, he might still qualify to teach speech and drama one day at a college like Kenyon, his alma mater.

As his savings were meager, he supplemented his income by selling Colliers Encyclopedias in New Haven, finding many bored housewives willing to purchase a set from such a handsome huckster.

His first role at Yale was in a production of Saint Joan by George Bernard Shaw. The part called for him to cry. "I tried and tried but my eyes were dry," Paul said. "When my fellow cast members started making fun of me, I began to sob. I was filled with frustration. When the waterworks came, I couldn't turn them off. Somehow I got through opening night. After that, I concentrated more on studying to become a director, thinking that might be my true calling."

Jerry Morgan worked for a modeling agency in Manhattan. Every season he arrived on the Yale campus to photograph young men who wanted to earn extra money modeling, usually as a clothes mannequin. Among his recruits that sunny afternoon was Paul, who agreed to pose for him, as Jerry had assured him it was a quick and easy money. At one point, Jerry asked Paul to remove his shirt. So far as it is known, this was the first professional photo ever taken of Paul without his shirt. There would be many more such pictures in his future.

Straight Arrow

The photo shoot ended in disappointment for Paul when Jerry asked him to return with him to his motel. Paul refused, thinking he'd never see Jerry again. He suspected the photographer didn't even work for a modeling agency.

Two weeks later Paul got a call from Jerry, who told him he'd landed him his first gig, modeling white shirts for a Macy's photo layout. The pay was one hundred dollars for an afternoon. Putting on his one and only suit, a gray-andwhite seersucker, Paul rode the train into Manhattan.

Two women in the modeling agency seemed impressed with Paul's good looks and flirted with him when he

was signing a contract. That same afternoon, Jerry took the photos, and Paul had to change into five different shirts in front of Jerry's devouring eyes.

At the end of the day's work, Paul accepted Jerry's invitation for a drink at the bar of the New Yorker Hotel. When Jerry tantalizingly held back the check that had already been made out to Paul, Paul eventually submitted to Jerry's request for a blow-job. The act of fellatio was committed later in Jerry's apartment two blocks away.

"He didn't even take his pants off," Jerry later told his gay colleagues, "but I enjoyed him. I got three other jobs for him in the next three months, and passed him around to other photographers. That Newman kid got quite a lot of blow-jobs, but male models in those days were used to that, viewing it as part of the job."

Out of sheer boredom, Paul joined the local campaign headquarters to elect Adlai E. Stevenson, who was running on the Democratic ticket for president of the United States. He was up against the popular general, Dwight David Eisenhower, running on the Republican ticket. Although Paul realized that Ike had been a brilliant commander during World War II, he did not want a military man in the White House.

Paul's involvement in the campaign had begun casually, his duties consisting mainly of stuffing envelopes, but the Stevenson campaign marked the beginning of Paul's lifelong commitment to politics.

Paul's New Haven apartment, which rented for sixty dollars a month, was in a decaying clapboard-sided structure that was rotten in places. The floors sagged, and two families lived downstairs. "Their babies screamed at night," Paul recalled. "Scott screamed all day. The place drove me crazy. I hated to come home to face all those hollering children, even one of my own."

At night he preferred to walk the streets of New Haven, still a relatively small town back then. He'd stop into a tavern or two, having a few beers before bracing himself to return home to Jackie and Scott.

As he neared his twenty-seventh birthday, he told Jackie, "Even if a director casts me in something, I'll be too old for the part."

Frank McMullan, a professor teaching Paul how to be a director, prided himself on spotting stars of tomorrow. Paul had a charismatic aura about him and his looks on stage were dazzling. He told Paul, "You don't belong on the stage but in movies, where the camera can zero in on those blue eyes of yours." Paul thought he was coming on to him.

In the spring of 1952, McMullan cast Paul in the role of Karl in an original play, written by a student at Yale, about Beethoven. Paul felt uncomfortable in the role of Beethoven's nephew, complaining, "I should be cast in modern pieces, not period dramas."

On Beethoven's opening night, word reached the student actors backstage that Audrey Wood and William Liebling were in the audience. She was the literary agent for both Tennessee Williams, the hottest playwright on Broadway, and William Inge, the Kansas-born dramatist. During the 1950 season, his play, Come Back, Little Sheba had earned him a reputation as the most promising playwright on Broadway. Audrey's husband, Liebling, was one of the most successful theatrical agents in America, having represented at various times both Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift.

Both agents were always on the lookout for new talent, and New Haven was a place where, in the past, they had often found it. Backstage, Audrey encountered the hopeful student playwright. Although on some previous occasions she'd been gentle and indulgent with emerging talent, she was curt with the student. "Not even a rewrite can save this play."

Audrey and her husband had headed backstage to introduce themselves to Paul Newman. Facing hostile stares from the other jealous student actors, Paul greeted the agents. "Liebling appraised me like I was a piece of meat," Paul recalled. "Even though with wife in tow, I took him for another casting couch agent. I thought he wanted to get into my pants more than he wanted to get me a part on Broadway. I was wrong, as I later learned."

Liebling gave Paul his card and asked him to call him after he'd finished his studies at Yale, but only if he decided to move to New York. "Thinking it was a come-on, I almost threw away his card that night," Paul told Professor McMullan. "But for some reason I held onto it. I carried it around in my wallet but months would go by before I was desperate enough to call on this short, ugly-yes, repulsive-little guy with the beady eyes. He'd practically salivated over me that night at Yale, and I was sure he couldn't wait to get my cock in his mouth."

In the weeks ahead, Paul admitted that he "walked up and down every street in New Haven, trying to figure out what to do." Stopping at a tavern, he ordered beers until he ran out of money. Staggering back to his family's apartment, he decided to drop out of Yale and check into an uncertain future in New York.

As he climbed the steps to his studio, he heard the screams of his twoyear-old son. Inside, he learned from Jackie that Scott had been crying all day. "Nothing will pacify him," Jackie told Paul.

"A change of scenery will do the brat good," he told her. "We're moving to New York. I've decided to shit or get off the pot. I'm going to become a full-time actor."

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In a rented truck and en route to Manhattan, Jackie delivered a stunning piece of news. She was pregnant with their second child. "That hit me like a ton of bricks," Paul recalled. "Here I was with little money, a wife, and a growing family, and I was heading for New York with no prospects, only a dream. I felt trapped. I should be a bachelor arriving in the city, not a family man nearing the ripe old age of thirty. As I approached the city, I felt as if a hunk of lead as big as a baseball had settled permanently in my stomach."

Jackie's aunt lived on Staten Island, and she'd secured an apartment for them near Curtis High School on the island's North Shore.

Although the rent, sixty dollars a month, was the same as in New Haven, the Ambassador Apartments at 30 Daniel Low Terrace were a vast improvement. These six stories of cream-colored brickwork with black accents represented Art Deco at its best. Paul felt he'd come up in the world and always admired the metalwork on the entrance doors, done in a peacock pattern, before he entered the building.

"We were still poor as church mice," Paul recalled, "but we had a touch of class after moving from that baby factory ghetto in New Haven."

"The summer we moved to Staten Island was the hottest on record," Paul claimed. "The apartment was a cauldron. I stripped off my clothes the moment I entered. On some days, Scott screamed so loud the neighbors complained."

From Monday to Friday, Paul put on that seersucker suit and, in the stifling heat, walked the 12-minute downhill slope to the Staten Island Ferry and boarded it, heading across the murky waters of New York Harbor to the canyons of New York. He carried with him a baloney sandwich for his lunch.

Once in Manhattan, he made the rounds, one casting agent after another. The results were always the same. No jobs available. Back on Staten Island at three o'clock, he went door to door, selling encyclopedias. One week he got lucky and made five hundred dollars. But there were lean times too.

Although some casting agents had complimented Paul on his "striking male beauty," his first role was that of an extra, playing an old man applauding the inauguration of President William McKinley. The play was called The March of Time.

Paul's stunning looks were disguised by a makeup artist. For three hours of work, he was rewarded with a seventy-five dollar paycheck, enough to pay the rent and electric bill for the month. When no other jobs came in, Paul summoned his courage and reached for that business card that he'd been carrying around in his wallet. Without an appointment, he arrived at the cluttered offices shared by Audrey Wood and William Liebling. He figured if

Liebling could get him a job on Broadway, he could always shut his eyes and imagine it was the beautiful young actress, Marilyn Monroe, giving him a blow-job.

Liebling not only remembered Paul from Yale, but agreed to see him. First, Paul had to spend more than an hour sitting on a bench without a cushion in the agent's outer office. In times past, or in the future, many future stars would get their start by warming this same bench, including Cloris Leachman, Eli Wallach, Julie Harris, Cliff Robertson, and even the great Montgomery Clift, who'd gone on to stardom in Hollywood.

Fifteen minutes into the interview with Liebling, Paul realized the agent didn't have seduction on the brain but was serious about finding work for him. "I deal only in star parts," Liebling told Paul. "I don't book walk-ons for actors. There's nothing that I know of for you right now. But William Inge has written what I think will be the hit of the coming season. A play called Picnic. I think I can get you something juicy in it. Let's stay in touch."

"In the meantime, I've got mouths to feed, including my own and one on the way," Paul said.

"I suggest television," Liebling said. "It's booming. There are tons of jobs for handsome actors. I'll get you an appointment with my friend, Maynard Morris. He discovered Gregory Peck and Barbara Bel Geddes. Maynard gets work for actors in television. I'm a stage agent."

With a warm handshake, Liebling wished Paul well, and said he'd call him when he set up the appointment. "Who knows? You may become a bigtime TV star before that Broadway role comes through. I'm no bullshitter. I'm going to pull something out of the hat for you and it's going to be on Broadway."

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True to his word, Liebling arranged an appointment for Paul with Maynard Morris of MCA, Inc. The interview was successful, and Paul signed with the agency. He was turned over to John Foreman, who would eventually become Paul's business partner. Going to work at once, Foreman found work almost immediately for his new client, whom he described to casting directors, especially the gay ones, as a "Greek god."

Paul was cast in a live broadcast, Tales of Tomorrow, playing an army sergeant. He was given about two dozen lines to speak. "I survived shaking like a leaf in the wind," he later recalled. Offstage the sound of menacing ice creaking and crackling could be heard. "It was supposed to be scary," Paul said, "but it really wasn't."

This was one of television's first attempts at science fiction. At that time in media history, the movies handled the genre much better.

Paul's debut into live television came during that medium's launch of its golden era, when writers who included Paddy Chayefsky and Rod Serling were churning out first-rate dramas. Paul followed his venture into science fiction with appearances in teleplays called The Mask, You Are There, Danger, and The Web, the costs of which were underwritten by such companies as Philco, US Steel, and Playhouse 90.

"I was an untuned piano being hauled out to play in various TV productions," Paul said.

The most visible of these was an ongoing role between 1952 and 1953 in a TV soap-opera series known as The Aldrich Family. Based on Clifford Goldsmith's play, What a Life, it originated as a popular radio series focusing on a teenager, Henry, a bumbling adolescent whose "Coming, Mother" catchphrase opened each episode. The radio series had been followed by eleven Henry Aldrich movies, each released by Paramount between 1939 and 1944, the first two featuring Jackie Cooper in the title role.

For his role in the TV version of this ongoing ode to Americana, Paul was paid $200 a month for a part which in his words, "sucked."

Paul would later tell Shelley Winters that, "I knew I was getting cast for my body and my looks, and not for any Marlon Brando acting technique. But it didn't matter so much. I was working, supporting my family, and

learning more about acting every day. In my gut, though, I felt something big was about to break for me. For a while, at least, there was a temporary reprieve from those casting couch blow-jobs, but they resumed when I broke into the Broadway theater."

Sometimes, when he couldn't face the idea of another late-afternoon sales pitch for encyclopedias, Paul would avoid rushing downtown for the ferryboat back to Staten Island. Actor friends, at least those with jobs, were usually willing to buy the handsome hunk a drink in an Irish bar on Third Avenue or a cheap meal in the theater district along 44th Street. He may have shared more than food and drink with some of these actors. A few years later, when Paul became famous as a Hollywood star, many of these actors boasted of having had brief affairs with Paul, although these reports can't be verified.

Some nights Paul walked alone through the theater district, hoping and dreaming. "It was one of the greatest moments in the American theater," he later recalled. "Not just Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, but all sorts of emerging playwrights were turning out masterpieces. It was a dynamic time, and I wanted to be a part of it. I imagined it was like Elizabethan London at the time of Shakespeare. I knew if I could just hold out, my time would come."

In September Paul had a brief flirtation with a young actress, Sally Beckham, while his wife on Staten Island tended to Scott. Sally's good looks made up for her lack of talent on the stage. Her big hope rested on her auditioning for the Actors Studio. Three days before, the actor who was to appear with her came down with the flu.

In desperation, she asked Paul to play a scene with her from Battle of Angels, an early play by Tennessee Williams. He readily agreed, wanting to enter the august precincts of the school that virtually every actor on Broadway had praised. The Actors Studio had given the world Marlon Brando, who was still Paul's role model. Having received no responses from his letters to Marlon, Paul had stopped writing.

Watching Paul emote were other actors climbing the ladder to fame. They included Karl Malden, Rod Steiger, Eli Wallach, and Kim Stanley. Sitting by himself in the corner, and looking sullen, was a handsome, rather intense young actor, James Dean.

Although many of these actors had already gone through their initial training, they'd shown up that particular afternoon because Lee Strasberg had announced a party for them that evening at his home.

Paul thought he gave a dreadful performance, but, nevertheless, he was asked to join the Actors Studio. Heartbroken, Sally was rejected. She fled the premises, and Paul never saw her again.

He was introduced to burly Rod Steiger, who seethed with intensity both on and off the stage. He had already appeared on the screen in the 1951 film Teresa, in which he'd played John Ericson's therapist. "You've got something, kid," Steiger told Paul. "You just don't know how to express it yet."

"In Elizabethan London"

Paul later told Geraldine Page, "If I had known all those more talented actors were sitting out there judging me, I would have passed out." Geraldine herself was on the dawn of one of her greatest successes. She was soon to win the role of the Southern spinster in Tennessee Williams's Summer and Smoke. At the time, Paul could not have imagined that one day he'd co-star with her in both the stage and later, in 1962, the movie version of another Tennessee Williams play, Sweet Bird of Youth.

Paul was awed to meet Karl Malden, who didn't need acting lessons but often dropped into the Actors Studio. He made no comment about Paul's acting, but accepted the young actor's congratulations on his performance, both on stage and on the screen, in A Streetcar Named Desire. "Perhaps we'll appear on the stage together one day," Malden told Paul, suggesting he might be a prophet. That play, The Desperate Hours, lay in both of their futures.

Eli Wallach seemed like an actor dedicated to his craft. "If you join up with us," he told Paul, "be prepared to take a lot of ribbing. You'll hear it all. Be like a snake! Don't bathe! Mumble your lines! Wear torn T-shirts.'" He walked into the afternoon, uttering the pained cry "Stella! Stella!"

Paul recognized the actress walking toward him as Kim Stanley. Instead of reaching out to shake his extended hand, she kissed him on both cheeks and congratulated him on his performance in Battle ofAngels.

"She was one of the most intense women I'd ever met," he later told Marlon Brando. "There was a turbulence in her face, like a woman who'd known trouble all her life." All traces of her New Mexican accent had been lost when she first spoke to Paul.

He took in the beauty of this blonde, who was glamorous but not in the fake, campy way of Marilyn Monroe. Kim's beauty seemed to come from within. Weeks later, he'd tell Shelley Winters, "I think I fell in love with Kim the first day I met her. I know it sounds like I had a schoolboy crush, but she made me feel that I'd married the wrong woman. Kim seemed to be the gal I'd been waiting for all my life. In many ways, Kim-and to some extent Geraldine Page-was but a mere rehearsal for the real girl of my dreams, Joanne Woodward."

At the Actors Studio:
"Keeping my mouth shut"

Impulsively, Paul asked her to "go have a Coke with me." She laughed. "No boy's asked me out for a Coke since I took the bus from Tularosa with twenty-one dollars stuffed in my bra." She kissed him again on the cheek. "Can't make it today. Got another date. What about meeting me here tomorrow at three o'clock? Then I'll belong just to you."

"Lady, I can't wait."

"Now don't you go jerking off in your dreams about me tonight," she cautioned. "I want you to save it all for me tomorrow."

He watched in stunned disbelief as she headed out of the studio, still not believing his ears. Had she really said that? Surely she was joking. But, then again, maybe not. Perhaps that's how women at the Actors Studio talked. Maybe talk like Kim's was what "The Method" was all about.

"She turned you down, too?" came a soft voice from behind him. "When I came on to her, she told me to go home and grow up, and then she'd give me a roll in the hay."

Paul turned around to stare into the face of a broodingly handsome young man with an appealing vulnerability. On closer look, he seemed dangerous. Perhaps psychotic.

"Hi, I'm James Dean," he said. "Loved your performance. But you need to find your fire. If you'd get up there on stage with me, we could play a love scene in front of all these fuckers. You and me, emoting together, would set this whole studio on fire."

"I usually play love scenes with girls," Paul said defensively.

"I'm James Dean, the guy to break you in."

"That's like going through life with your right hand tied behind your back."

"Hey, pal, let's slow down," Paul said. "First, Kim Stanley. Now you, Mr. James Dean himself. I've heard of you. I'm just a country boy from Ohio. Back where I come from, we like to work up to things. First, a few harmless dates. Get to know each other a bit."

"Life's too short for all that shit." He lit a cigarette and offered one to Paul. "A smoke? Shall I nigger-lip it for you?"

"No, I light my own."

"Stubborn little fucker, aren't you?" Dean said. "I love a challenge. I want to be the guy who breaks you in."

"Let's cool it a bit," Paul said. "The temperature's rising."

"Yeah, and that's an impressive hard-on rising in your pants. Somebody, and I know who, wants to fuck James Dean." He possessively linked his arm with Paul's. "Let's hit the sidewalk and give all the queens a treat. The two prettiest boys in New York parading down the avenue. We'll have them salivating, but we'll have eyes only for each other. C'mon, Blue Eyes, let's get the hell out of this joint."

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It was six o'clock the following morning when Paul finally boarded the Staten Island Ferry for transit back to his apartment. He'd been out all night with Dean and hadn't called home. Whatever reception he got from Jackie is lost to history.

What isn't lost is the tortuous relationship that Paul launched with Dean in the few years that remained before his death.

The young actor, perhaps in a sadistic way, insisted in sharing news of his sexual trysts with his sometimes lover and patron, Rogers Brackett, a TV producer. It is only because Rogers in later life revealed the details of Dean's private life that we know of the actor's link with Paul.

Paul may have been shocked when Dean took him back to an apartment on Fifth Avenue at West 38th Street, an elegantly furnished retreat within a relatively posh neighborhood. Perhaps Paul thought the struggling young actor would be living in a seedy hotel room. "I'm a kept boy," Dean explained to Paul. "It's not something I'm proud of, as I'm the independent type. But it's what I'm doing for now. Hanging out with an older man is a learning experience for me in case I ever have to play a male whore on the screen."

"I can play many roles, but I'd never accept the part of a male whore," Paul said with conviction. Apparently, he'd changed his mind when he was eventually cast in Sweet Bird of Youth by Tennessee Williams.

"It's safe to assume that Dean was like no other lover Paul had known before or would know again," Rogers said. "When the Indiana farm boy with the angelic face in the faded blue jeans met pretty boy with the intense blue eyes from Shaker Heights, a volcano erupted. At least for three weeks. Jimmy could never sustain such intensity for a longer period, although he would continue in ongoing relationships. It's just that the love-making became more casual, a sometimes thing instead of a burning passion. If Jimmy is to be believed, Paul Newman fell madly in love with him. From what I hear, Newman is a level-headed guy and would eventually come to his senses, but not before he took that perilous journey as Jimmy's lover. I could only sympathize with Newman. Following Jimmy around like a lovesick puppy is a journey into hell. I should know!"

From the very beginning of his relationship with Paul, Dean wanted to be in charge. On the second day of their affair, Dean gave Paul a copy of The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Dean claimed he'd read it eighteen times "and it changed my life." Crossing to Staten Island on the ferry, Paul read the first chapter and found it silly and ridiculous, tossing it into the sea.

During the period when their love affair was still torrid, Paul and Dean would meet in the late afternoon at the Blue Ribbon Cafe, an actors' hangout in the Broadway district. Paul had made the casting rounds that morning, and Dean had often finished some minor role in a television production, a part that his patron, Rogers Brackett, had secured for him.

One afternoon when Paul walked into the cafe, he found Dean sitting in the corner, nursing a coffee and wearing a red baseball cap. On the table rested another red baseball cap. "Put it on," he ordered. Paul tried on the cap, finding it a perfect fit. "From now on, I want us to walk around New York in matching red baseball caps. It'll be a bond between us. Let people think what they will."

Paul not only wore the baseball cap that day, but was soon seen on the streets of New York walking with Dean with his matching cap. Paul was seen on the West Coast wearing that red baseball cap even after Dean's untimely death. And then one day he no longer wore it.

When Rogers returned from Chicago, Dean sadistically pointed out the stains of semen he'd exchanged with Paul on Rogers' bed. Dean seemed to take delight in describing in minute detail the sex he'd enjoyed while Rogers was away. "I fucked him; he fucked me, and I taught him to swallow my spit just like you do," Dean claimed.

Rogers was always hurt and jealous to learn of Dean's affairs, but at that point in their relationship he was willing to hang on. "It was the price I paid for keeping Jimmy in my life."

"I am liberating that boy from Ohio," Dean told Rogers. "One night I got him to fuck me in the doorway of an abandoned building in the meat-packing district. Sex is all the more exciting when it's done in a dangerous public place."

Dean and Paul had endless long walks and deep, intense talks in the cof fee houses of Greenwich Village where they dared to dream impossible dreams. At one point, Dean suggested that Paul desert his family.

According to Dean's plan, both of them could set out hitchhiking from New York to Los Angeles. "I want to leave without a cent in our pockets," Dean claimed. "We'd be on the cutting edge. Live off the land, or as Tennessee Williams says, `depend on the kindness of strangers.' Remember one thing: A pretty boy never has to go hungry."

"Are you suggesting we hustle?" Paul asked in astonishment.

"Why not? Everybody in life, from the President of the United States to some housewife preparing dinner for her husband, is a hustler."

Apparently, Paul went through a period of enormous guilt about his neglect of his growing family. At some point it was rumored that Jackie found out about his relationship with Dean and demanded that he give it up.

Presumably, Paul agreed to her demands and promised to drop Dean, but he never did. If anything, he became more secretive than ever.

The relationship continued even, or especially, when they reached Hollywood, each of them arriving there through very different means.

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The Actors Studio changed Paul's life and brought him into contact with some of the stellar lights in the American theater, especially the Method Acting visionary Lee Strasberg, director Elia Kazan, and producer Cheryl Crawford.

"I meet all of you young actors, and I have nothing but sympathy for you," Kazan told Paul. "All of you waiting for that one part that will make you a star. In your case, you're probably hoping for a defining role like Marlon had when he played Stanley Kowalski. Year after year I see actors living the illusion and growing older as their dreams don't come true. Don't let that happen to you. Take the work you're offered. Chances are you won't be as lucky as Marlon. Become a working actor instead. But maybe around 1964 `the part' will hit you like a ton of bricks. Who knows? Maybe I'll be the guy who directs you in your defining role."

Kim Stanley
"The sexiest woman
I've ever met."

In later life, in reference to his successes at the Actors Studio, Paul referred to it as a case of "Monkey see, monkey do. I just sat there and watched how actors like Julie Harris and Maureen Stapleton pulled it off. I had enough sense not to open my big mouth. In truth, I never became a true Method actor like Brando," Paul said. "I was more of a cerebral actor. Even so, Lee Strasberg taught me to become the part I was playing, drawing upon memory of past experiences. Of course, that caused a lot of inner turmoil and pain in me. I came to realize I'd buried certain parts of my life, things I didn't want to face. Going to the Actors Studio was like lying on a headshrinker's couch."

In years to come, Paul would have only the highest praise for the Actors Studio, and he contributed financially to it. "I learned everything I know about acting at the Actors Studio."

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That "homosexual panic," as labeled by Paul's biographer, Lawrence J. Quirk, set in almost immediately after his night of "dirty sex" with Dean.

Although a bit battered, Paul headed out the following afternoon from Staten Island for his three o'clock

rendezvous with Kim Stanley. It seemed important to his sense of self that he quickly re-establish his heterosexual credentials.

Meeting Kim at the Actors Studio, Paul went for a walk with her in Central Park. Like himself, she had been involved in an affair with Marlon Brando, who had left her for other lovers, both male and female. "At least Marlon worked with me to get rid of my Southwestern drawl," she told Paul.

Kim was not the world's most beautiful blonde, but there was a loveliness to her and a warmth that drew him close to her. She smelled delicious, fresh and fragrant, as if she'd just emerged from a bath. In the park, she closed her eyes and stood still for a long minute looking into the sun. "I come from the land of the sun," she said, "New Mexico. New York is often cold and gray. I miss all the rattlesnakes slithering about."

"Why are you here, trying to be a famous actress, if you just want to go home?" he asked. "I have no intention of returning, except perhaps for a visit, to Shaker Heights."

"I can't answer that," she said. "I've got these battles going on inside myself. It's as if there are two Kim Stanleys. One wants to spend the rest of her life in an adobe hut in the desert making tortillas. The other wants to be a Marilyn Monroe of the stage." She stopped abruptly, looking into his intense blue eyes. "Tell me the truth: Do you think I'm sexy?"

He moved closer to her, bending over to lick the salt from her neck. There was a growing excitement in him. "You may just may-be the sexiest woman I've ever met. Not in an obvious, fake way like the glamour gals of the screen. But like a real woman should be." He stood back from her, looking into her face. "I bet you have creamy tits."

"Does your wife have creamy tits?" she asked.

"Not that I ever noticed," he said. "But what is that question leading up to? Are you getting around to the fact I'm a married man?"

"Hell, no," she said. "I don't care whether a man is married or not. Do you think Marlon Brando worries about such matters? Why should I, just because I'm a woman?"

"That's fine with me," he said. "I find marriage restricting. I should never have rushed into it. I think actors should be free and independent, experiencing life as it comes along, and not becoming some henpecked guy rushing home at night to a screaming kid and a nagging wife. What kind of life is that for an artist?"

"If you're trying to convince me to go to bed with you, don't," she commanded. "Even before we set off on this walk, I'd already determined to surrender my creamy tits to you and a lot of other good stuff ."

The details of this encounter between Kim and Paul appeared in the unpublished memoirs of Brooks Clift, brother of Monty. He too took Kim as a mistress, and, to judge from his book, he shared his love affairs in great detail during pillow talk with her, and she did the same with him.

If Brooks is to be believed, the two-week affair between Kim and Paul fizzled out for one major reason. One afternoon when they were in bed, making jungle animal noises, she called out "MARLON" as Paul penetrated her. Apparently, that made Paul's erection deflate, and he got out of bed and put on his clothes. "I'm not Marlon Brando, and I'll not be his replacement in your life. My name is Paul Newman, and I'm a very different man."

"Don't judge me," she said. "When Marlon moves into your life, he takes over your soul. He possesses you. I'm trying to get over him. You look like him. You can help me get over him. You don't know what it's like to get fucked by Marlon Brando."

Stepping into his pants, he looked at her with a certain disdain. "You're wrong about that. I am one of the many who knows exactly what it feels like to get fucked by Marlon Brando." In anger, he stormed toward the door. "Baby, it's over between us. Kim Stanley does not exist for me."

He looked back one final time to see her standing naked by the bed. "Don't go," she managed to say. "Please don't leave me alone."

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Late in 1952, after only two months of training at the Actors Studio, the call Paul had been waiting for materialized. William Liebling had arranged for him to read for William Inge, who had finally finished his Broadway-bound play, Picnic. The play would change Paul's life for all time.

On his way to Inge's apartment, insecure and nervous, he encountered a woman on the street who stopped him and asked for his autograph. "You're Marlon Brando, aren't you?" she asked. "I loved you in A Streetcar Named Desire. Could I have your autograph?"

This was just the beginning of such requests from fans who, throughout the 50s, mistook him for Marlon Brando. He dutifully signed Brando's name and headed into the apartment building and up the elevator where Inge waited for him.

He checked his appearance in a tiny mirror near the elevator buttons. Author Charles Hamblett described what he looked like at that time in his life. "His eyes could have come straight from an identikit (sic) picture of Monty Clift, his mouth was a refinement of Vic Mature's Magyar leer, and the shade of John Garfield hovered around the thrust of his jaw."

Kansas-bred Inge came from the same Midwestern roots that had given birth to Paul. As a former teacher of high school English and drama, Inge was familiar with the nervousness of an aspirant young student actor. He offered Paul a drink. "I've already had five drinks in the past two hours, so you need to catch up with me."

The drink put Paul at ease. As a prelude to Paul's reading from the script, Inge spoke of his hometown. "I'll always remember Independence, Kansas. A beautiful little town with enormous shade trees and lots of fine spacious homes. I've been to Shaker Heights. Our towns have much in common. I recall the celebrations of Halloween and the city park. We had a sad old river there. There was an old wives' tale that the Indians had left a curse on the river and that it would take one life a year in vengeance on the white man for having usurped their land."

When Paul was sufficiently at ease, Inge asked him to read the part of Hal, the leading male role. Paul later claimed, "I was awful but Inge was very indulgent."

William Inge:
"Please take off your shirt."

In Key West years later, Inge told Tennessee Williams, "Paul messed up bigtime, but I found him exciting. First, he was a beautiful man. I just wanted to strip off his clothes and tongue him from head to toe. I'd never seen an actor with this particular type of male beauty. And he was also a nice guy with unbelievably nice manners. I was

determined to have him at all costs."

At the end of Paul's bad reading, Inge congrat ulated him. "You're very talented as an actor," he said, not meaning it. "Forgive me, but I must ask you to pull off your shirt. On stage Hal appears shirtless in a pivotal scene, and the actor who plays him has to have a certain build."

Without being asked again, Paul stood in front of Inge and pulled off his shirt and underwear top. "Inge asked me to walk around while he devoured my chest," Paul later told Kim Stanley after they'd reconciled. "I felt like a piece of meat being inspected. But I'd do anything to get cast in a Broadway play. Inge knew just how far I'd go."

With the passage of years, the story of just how Paul parlayed his good looks into success as an actor became widely known on Broadway, but because of the fear of libel, it couldn't be described in print at the time. In 1996, writing while Paul was still alive, biographer Lawrence J. Quirk cited Paul's "climbing the lavender ladder" en route to success on Broadway.

"I knew what Inge wanted, and he was going to get the prize," Paul later confided to Kim. "We song-and-danced each other that day. Or should I say that the cat toyed with the mouse? When he invited me for a romantic dinner the following night, I knew what was coming, and I proved to be the man for the job. God damn it, Inge was like a suction pump. I don't think there was one orifice left unexplored. When I got on the 2am ferry to Staten Island, I was drained dry. But Inge had promised to arrange an audition for me with Joshua Logan, who was to direct Picnic."

The next day, Liebling called Paul and wanted to meet with him shortly before noon in his office. He'd received a call from Inge praising Paul's talent, although warning that the producers might give the role to a bigger star like Marlon Brando should he become available. "I'll personally lobby for Paul," Inge assured Liebling. "Even if Paul loses out on the role of Hal," Inge promised, "I'll do what I can to get him one of the other parts."

Joshua Logan:
"In search of the unobtainable"

As Paul was leaving Liebling's office that day, he had a chance encounter with one of the agent's former clients. It was Montgomery Clift, who had recently flown in from Los Angeles. Paul seemed dazed by the actor's stunning beauty. He'd seen him in Red River opposite John Wayne, and had been mesmerized by his screen image. He'd also been enthralled watching Monty in the screen's most clinging embrace, the goodbye scene between Elizabeth Taylor and him in the 1951 A Place in the Sun.

Like many of the actors Paul was meeting, Monty was very direct, making his intentions known. "Where has God's gift been hiding all my life?"

In spite of himself, Paul blushed. Monty took his hand and did not release it for the longest time. "You're the

greatest," Paul managed to mumble. He was clearly awed and could have cursed himself for appearing like some gangly schoolboy fan in front of Monty. "I ... I ... don't know what to say."

"I've got to run now," Monty said. "Just give me permission to get your phone number from Liebling. Let me call you. It's not every day I meet up with a man who's more beautiful than I am." Monty kissed Paul gently on the lips. There was just a flicker of tongue.

That afternoon, on the way back to Staten Island, one would have to imagine just what was dancing through Paul's brain. Surely he thought that being in New York at that particular moment in the history of the theater was the most exciting place he could be on the planet. To complicate matters, Liebling told him that he'd received a call from Marlon Brando that morning, wanting to know Paul's address and phone number. Marlon was coming back to New York. "I thought Marlon had forgotten all about me," Paul said. "Gone Hollywood."

"Don't fool yourself," Liebling told him. "No one who links himself with Paul Newman is likely to forget him. You're unique and I feel the world is about to discover that sooner than later."

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A closeted homosexual, Joshua Logan suffered from frequent bouts of manic-depression. On the day he met Paul, Logan was in an uncharacteristically ebullient mood.

Paul was immediately impressed with this man of the theater who had emerged out of Texarkana, Texas to become president of the drama group at Princeton. Its players included Henry Fonda, Margaret Sullavan, and James Stewart. In the 1930s Logan had actually visited Constantin Stanislavsky in Moscow.

In 1958, when Logan was directing Blue Denim on Broadway, a play by gay author James Leo Herlihy, Logan confided to the playwright, "I not only wanted to direct Paul in Picnic, I wanted to sample what was actually in his picnic basket. As you know, I've had many actors in my day, but Paul was exceptional and that was immediately apparent when he walked into my apartment. His arms and legs moved in perfect rhythm. The fact that he was a bit shy made him all the more adorable. Long, lean, and muscular, his body radiated a power that back then he hadn't yet tapped. His nose was well formed and aquiline, as if he had patrician ancestry. His hair was thin but the kind you wanted to run your fingers through. He was extraordinarily handsome with clear blue eyes, bluer than an alpine lake in summer. He had perfectly formed lips. And when he smiled, he revealed strong white teeth. There was just a stubble of beard, which appeared like golden flecks against his perfect skin."

"Sounds like you fell in love," Herlihy said.

"I did indeed," Logan said. "I always go for the unobtainable. That way I can revel in my depression at the inevitable rejection."

Paul read for Logan that day, and, overcome by the moment, the director promised Paul the lead role of Hal, a juicy part that would have been ideal for Marlon Brando. The role of Hal was that of a drifter, an uninhibited stud who was "Inge's jerk-off fantasy," in Paul's view. Entering into a small Kansas town where women were deprived of men, leading lives of strained sexual relations and quiet desperation, the character of Hal was like a firecracker, igniting long-suppressed emotions.

That night when Paul arrived back on Staten Island, he told Jackie, "I'm going to be a Broadway star. It's happened at last!"

Based on Logan's promise to star him in Picnic, Paul moved Jackie and Scott out of Staten island and into a two-bedroom apartment in Queens Village on Long Island. The plan involved Paul's daily transit by car from there into the heart of Manhattan to star in the play.

Lost in the fantasy of overnight stardom, Paul got a jolt of reality when Liebling called him with the bad news. Apparently, Ralph Meeker had become available, and Logan, having changed his mind, had cast him in the role of

Hal instead.

The brazenly macho Meeker was obviously more suited for the part than Newman. Logan had worked with him on Mr Roberts, for which he'd received a Theatre World Award, and he'd taken over the role of Stanley from Marlon Brando in A Streetcar Named Desire. He also had a number of screen credits under his belt.

Paul was bitterly angered at both Logan and Inge, but promised Liebling he'd conceal his fury. "Losing the role of Hal was one of the hundreds of disappointments I would eventually experience in my long career," Paul later said.

The news from Liebling wasn't all bad. For a salary of one-hundred and fifty dollars a week, Logan would hire Paul as Meeker's understudy and also give him a one-line walk-on role. Paul would play "Joker," a slightly menacing gas station jockey who would make a pass at Madge, the play's heroine, which would be played by the very beautiful Janice Rule.

Even after he'd signed to join the Picnic cast, Paul continued to pursue additional work with his new MCA agent, John Foreman. Paul referred to his performances in teleplays as, "the best thrill in town, a totally new experience for me. I was able to play all kinds of roles, since I hadn't been categorized."

In July of 1953, Foreman landed Paul a TV role in "The Bells of Damon." In September of the same year, a part in another teleplay, "One for the Road," would also be presented to him.

One morning at the offices of MCA, Paul's meeting with Foreman ran longer than an hour, even though the agent had a young blonde-haired actress waiting outside to see him as well. As Foreman opened the door to his office to let Paul out, Joanne Woodward jumped up from her seat. Foreman introduced her to Paul, who apologized for "eating into your time. We got carried away."

"Oh, that's okay," she said in a cornpone Southern drawl. "I've spent all my life waiting for one man or another."

There were no great sparks, no love at first sight.

"My introduction of these two was a historic moment in theater and film history," Foreman recalled. "They couldn't have seemed less interested that day. Who could have predicted what was to come?"

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"I hated him on sight," Joanne Woodward later recalled. "He was pretty and neat like an Arrow Collar ad. He looked like a snobby college boy type in an unimpressive seersucker suit, the kind insurance salesmen wore in summer making the rounds in my native Georgia."

Like Paul, Joanne had been born a winter baby but not into freezing weather. When she entered the world on February 27, 1930, it was 70 degrees Fahrenheit in Thomasville, Georgia, a town that had once flourished as a winter resort, lying only ten miles north of the Florida border.

With her blonde hair and pixie face, she looked at the world through inquisitive green eyes. By the age of five, she had become an avid movie-goer. She told her parents, Wade Woodward and Elinor Trimmier Woodward, that she wanted to grow up to become an actress like Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Ironically, at the time of her birth, her mother had wanted to name her after Joan Crawford, but after prolonged wheedling, her Southern relatives succeeded in getting the child named Joanne instead. A brother, Wade Jr., had been born earlier.

When Elinor took Joanne to see Laurence Olivier playing the melancholy Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, Joanne developed her first serious crush.

That same year of 1939, when the newspapers announced that the premiere of Gone With the Wind was to be held in Atlanta, Joanne begged her mother to take her.

In Atlanta, she even convinced her mother to wait outside the hotel where Olivier was staying with Vivien Leigh, who played Scarlett O'Hara in the film. When the door to their limousine opened, Joanne, aged nine, jumped inside, landing on Olivier's lap.

In school it was revealed that Joanne had a high I.Q., and she excelled in her grades. Life seemed so happy in the Woodward household that she later said she was devastated when her parents announced that they were divorcing. "It took years for me to adjust to that," she said. Her father went to New York, where in time he became vice president of Scribner's, the publishing house.

When Joanne and her mother moved to Greenville, South Carolina, the future actress had not abandoned her dream of life in the theater. She began to attract attention in high school productions. Weighing 117 pounds, she had measurements of 32-24-34, which attracted the interest of some of her male classmates. She generally ignored their glances, and continued to do so during her two years at Louisiana State University

Returning to Greenville, she appeared in a local production of Tennessee Williams's The Glass Menagerie-ironically, the same play in which Paul had appeared during his own school years in Ohio. Years later, Joanne would star in a film version of that same play, directed by none other than Paul himself.

Persuading her mother to let her go to New York, Joanne arrived there by train at the age of twenty-one. Until she got work in the theater, she planned to support herself on the sixty dollars a month her father gave her. Almost immediately she enrolled in the Neighborhood Playhouse, which, like the Actors Studio, trained the aspiring stars of tomorrow.

Joanne Woodward with **Paul**
"I hated him on sight."

At the playhouse, she studied under the great dramatic coach, Sanford Meisner, who warned her to "get rid of that Southern drawl, or you'll appear only in plays by Tennessee Williams."

Like Paul, Joanne signed with MCA, under whose management she pursued roles in live television dramas. She appeared in an original teleplay, Penny, which aired on June 9, 1952. Other live television roles followed.

Between jobs, Joanne liked to hang out with her fellow actors, talking about the theater. She had long cups of coffee with Rod Steiger, a newly made friend of Paul's. She even befriended a young aspiring actor, James Dean,

hardly know ing that he was sleeping on occasion with her future husband.

Her big goal involved starring on the Broadway stage, and she avidly followed casting calls. As a result of attending a cattle call, she was summoned to appear before Joshua Logan, who asked her to read a scene from the upcoming play he was directing, Picnic. Amazingly, he liked her reading and hired her to understudy both Janice Rule, playing Madge, and also Kim Stanley playing Millie, Madge's younger sister.

When Joanne reported for work the next day, Logan introduced her to Paul. "We've met before," she said.

Paul claimed he didn't remember their initial encounter in John Foreman's office. "I meet so many aspiring actresses," he said. That remark didn't endear Paul to her and confirmed her earlier impression that he was a conceited snob.

"I had all the lovers I could handle at the time," Paul later confided to Rod Steiger. "I wasn't about to take on another, even though I could tell that Woodward was attracted to me. Besides, I had a wife at home, a son, and a baby on the way. Maybe Jackie thinks that by becoming a baby factory she can hold on to me. Or else my rubbers had big leaky holes. I'm practically a walking sperm factory."

Paul wasn't exaggerating about all those lovers. According to Rod Steiger, "He should have kept his pants unzipped for convenience. In those days, he was one busy boy."

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Backstage, Logan introduced Paul to a relative newcomer, character actress Eileen Heckart, who was cast in Picnic as a schoolteacher named Rosemary. Eileen and Paul chatted amicably until Logan tapped him on the shoulder. "There's another cast member here. She says she knows you and is waiting for you in her dressing room." For some reason, Logan was being mysterious. Walking up to the dressing room, Paul knocked on the door.

Paul's dream come true, grainy and gritty : Checking out the signage on Broadway for his role in ***Picnic***

"Come on in, it's open," came a voice that sounded familiar, though he wasn't sure.

Opening the door, he encountered Kim Stanley in bra and panties, with her feet propped up on her dressing table. "Come on in, big boy," she said to him, "and lock the door behind you. We've got some unfinished business. Now come over here and take care of momma."

As Picnic went on the road, opening in such cities as Cleveland, Joanne began to look at Paul with a different eye. "He wasn't conceited at all. In fact, I found him rather modest for such a good-looking boy. He had a protective wall around him when I met him, but deep down he was a sensitive man with the soul of an artist. He just didn't

want the world to know that."

On the road, Paul began to "date" Joanne in a casual way. They often met for a cheap lunch in some dreary coffee shop or treated themselves to a latenight dinner together after the evening's performance. They talked about the weakness of the play's third act and how Logan was fighting with Inge to rewrite it. Sometimes Paul didn't tell Joanne good night until two o'clock in the morning.

In the beginning of their relationship, Paul claimed he did not view Joanne as a romantic attachment but as a good and like-minded friend. They talked about books they'd read, Method acting, movies or plays they'd seen. When not performing in Picnic, they often attended a movie matinee together.

"I have no doubt but that they were sexually attracted to each other, but weren't admitting it, not even to themselves," said Kim Stanley, who seemed jealous of Joanne.

"Kim was looking for a series of good fucks during the long run of Picnic," Logan later said. "She told me that her greatest fantasy was to have a three-way with both Newman and Brando. I don't know if Paul was paying secret visits to Joanne's hotel room-or not. But it wasn't a question of if they'd start fucking, but when."

***

Paul's lucky break came when Logan decided that the actor playing Alan Benson, Hal's roommate in college, was dull and slowed down the action of the play. Firing him, Logan hired Paul to play Alan, the rich boy who loses his girl (Janice Rule) to the more seductive jock, Hal, as played by Meeker.

After rehearsing Paul for three days in the role of Alan, Logan began to feel that he'd made a mistake. "Paul has no fire either," Logan confessed to William Inge. "He's pretty and has a sexy body, but doesn't know how to use it."

"Let's seek an outside opinion," Inge told Logan. "We're both hung up on Paul and can't be objective."

Called in to watch Paul's performance as Alan were Tennessee Williams, Elia Kazan, and Dorothy McGuire, who had scored such a box office hit in the film, Gentleman's Agreement, in 1947.

After Paul's performance, both Kazan and Tennessee congratulated Paul, although McGuire remained noncommittal.

"You are not just beautiful," Tennessee exclaimed, embracing Paul, "but spectacularly beautiful. Up to now I thought Marlon was the most beautiful man I'd ever seen on the stage. Now you come along, making my fickle heart waver. With you on the stage with Ralph Meeker, all homosexuals will have a difficult choice. Do they want to see sexual menace or do they want to worship at the altar of male beauty?"

Paul was embarrassed at Tennessee's adulation, but he returned the compliment. "It's an honor to get a seal of approval from America's greatest playwright."

"With a compliment like that," Tennessee said, "all you have to do is blow in my ear and I'll follow you anywhere. One of these days, I'm going to write a role for you, one so great you'll always be remembered for it."

"A promise I'll hold you to, Mr. Williams."

After Kazan and Tennessee had approved of Paul for the role of Alan, Logan decided to head to Broadway with Ralph Meeker and Paul as his male stars. Even so, Paul complained to Logan. "I'll do what I can with Alan. But he's an unreconstructed square. Meeker eats me alive on stage in his juicy part. I play Madge's boyfriend, but it's obvious to the audience I'm going to lose her to Meeker's more threatening sexuality. Alan is a thankless role for any actor."

"All of us must start somewhere," Logan told him.

Paul also complained to Inge. "Could you rewrite Alan a bit? I mean, he's without depth or resonance. Give me a chance." Inge turned a deaf ear to him, as he was angry with Paul, who had refused to become the playwright's off-duty stud.

Ralph Meeker,
"There's no sock stuffed
into *my* crotch!"

Meeker was Paul's rival both on and off the stage. The more experienced actor had virtually ignored Paul during tryouts on the road. One day he called Paul to his dressing room, where he was relaxing in his boxer shorts while drinking a beer. He offered Paul one, which he gladly accepted.

Paul sat down next to Meeker, who carefully evaluated his understudy. "So you think you're man enough to replace me as Hal in case I get sick or go on vacation?"

"You're great in the part," Paul said. "I couldn't really replace you. Of course, I'd try to give an adequate performance. Perhaps I'd feel the same way you did when you replaced Brando in Streetcar."

"That faggot," Meeker said with contempt. "Brando's a big fucking asshole. I was much better in the role of Stanley than he was. But he got all the credit."

"Who said life is fair?" Paul took a big gulp of his beer.

"I've called you here to give you one acting tip, and only one," Meeker said. "And you'd better listen and listen good. When you walk out on that stage, you've got to make every faggot in the audience dream of sucking your big dick. You've got to make every horny bitch in the audience want to get plowed by your whopper. If you don't have a big dick like I do, you've got to convince the audience you do."

"That beats everything I've ever learned at the Actors Studio," Paul said. "I'll heed your advice."

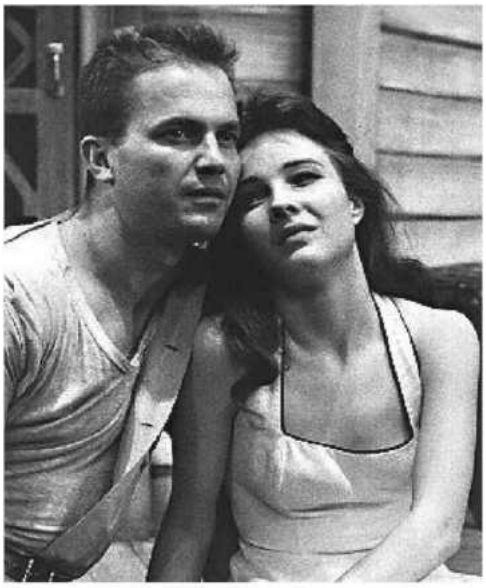
"Ever since you've met me, you've been salivating every time I come around," Meeker said. "Tonight's your lucky night. I didn't get any pussy last night, and I'm horny as hell." He reached inside his shorts and pulled out his penis. "Try this on for size."

"You've got the wrong bitch," Paul said. "I'll summon Kim Stanley for you." Paul slammed down his beer and headed for the door.

"Fuck you, faggot," Meeker called after him.

Years later Paul told Shelley Winters, "Meeker gave me a hot acting tip. But I don't think I ever followed his

advice until I made Hud."



Ralph Meeker and **Janice Rule**
Sexual menace

The following afternoon Logan decided to rehearse his two understudies, both Paul and Joanne, in a slow jitterbug to the tune of "Moonglow." "This was the sexiest moment in the play," Logan told his actors. "While Hal is dancing with Madge, I want him to virtually fuck her-symbolically, that is."

After Joanne and Paul had gone through the routine three times, Logan grew frustrated. "With Meeker and Janice Rule, I get sizzle. With Woodward and Newman, I get fizzle. Let's do it again."

Paul still didn't please Logan, who urged him to "do some dirty dancing. Wiggle your ass more." The director put his hands on Paul's buttocks and moved them in rhythm to the music. "I had almost given up on them, and then all of a sudden they got it. They moved into each other like some sort of erotic mating dance. They were falling in love just like in Inge's script. But it wasn't play-acting. This was for real. After that dance that afternoon, I knew that Jackie had lost her husband."

Over a drink that night, Joanne confessed the truth to Logan. "I've set my hat for that guy. Married or not, I'm gonna get him."

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Thanks to his promotion to the status of a featured player, Paul earned two hundred dollars a week. With trepidation, he approached the Broadway opening night for the Theater Guild's production of Picnic, which premiered on February 19, 1953. Although Meeker, Kim Stanley, and Janice Rule stole the night, Paul's role as Alan did not go unnoticed. The critic, Richard Watts, Jr., cited his "excellent work" in the Inge play. Picnic would run for fourteen months and 477 performances, eventually winning the Pulitzer Prize.

After only two nights of appearing in Picnic, an emergency call came in for Paul backstage. He learned that Jackie had been rushed to a hospital, where she'd given birth to a baby girl.

After the curtain closed, Paul sped along in his Volkswagen to Long Island where he met a beaming-faced Jackie, holding a little baby whom she'd already named Susan Kendall Newman. Paul was allowed to hold her in his arms, although he appeared so nervous Jackie feared that he might actually drop the baby.

"Instead of being a proud father like I should have been," Paul later confided to Kim Stanley, "I felt I was still trying to find my own way in the world, and here I was responsible for a wife-and now two kids. I didn't want to become a typical suburban husband of the Fifties."

In spite of his newborn baby, Paul spent the rest of 1953 and the years to come devoted to his career and his newly minted friends in the theater. The self-image he retained as a "family man" seemed less and less appropriate. When he and Geraldine Page were voted two of the "Most Promising Personalities of 1953," the actress whispered to him, "It's hard being a husband, father, and full-time actor, isn't it?" He agreed.

During the run of Picnic, Paul had been seeing more of Joanne than Jackie. Officially Paul assured fellow cast members that he and Joanne were "just friends." But no one, especially Kim Stanley or Logan, believed that. It was suspected that Paul had occasional sleepovers at Joanne's apartment on Fifty Sixth Street and Madison Avenue in New York. It was a five-flight walkup.

A female cast member recalled that one day when she dropped in on Joanne, she found both Paul and Joanne stark naked, and painting the ceiling and walls of her cheap rental. Joanne wore a shower cap to protect her hair.

As Paul hurried to the bathroom for his clothes, Joanne claimed that they didn't want to spill paint on their street clothes.

How Paul explained these sleepovers to his wife Jackie is not known. He learned what breakfast at the Woodward household was like. It meant walking down to the street and purchasing two hot dogs from a street wagon vendor and carrying them back up those five flights.

When Rod Steiger learned about Jackie's second child, he said that Paul wanted to keep his wife "barefoot and pregnant," and stashed safely out of sight in Long Island while he pursued his stage career and various affairs in Manhattan. Paul told Steiger that Jackie had "abandoned forever" her dream of becoming an actress. With Paul away from the house most of the time, Jackie had become a full-time housewife and mother.

Even though he'd grown older, Scott was still screaming. "I feel my son has an outrage against the world," Paul claimed to Steiger. "Like he didn't want to be born, and he hates me for bringing him into such a fucked-up world."

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In addition to his many affairs, Paul still avidly pursued roles in live teleplays as a means of supplementing his income from Picnic. Along the way he met director Sidney Lumet, who in 1982 would helm The Verdict, starring Paul. Impressed with the young actor, Lumet cast him in three episodes of the CBS series You Are There. Paul recalled, "I remember playing everybody from Nathan Hale to Julius Caesar."

Even though he was appearing on Broadway, Paul still showed up regularly at the Actors Studio, where Lee Strasberg and Elia Kazan continued to guide and encourage him as an actor. One day Strasberg introduced him to one of the studio's famous alumni, Shelley Winters.

Blowsy, effusive, and brassy, the star latched onto Paul like a Tyrannosaurus rex who'd sunk its teeth into a tasty smaller dinosaur for lunch. She could appear drab or sexy on the screen, as exemplified by A Place in the Sun (1951), in which Montgomery Clift drowns her so he'd have a chance at Elizabeth Taylor. She could also be sexy and vampish as she was in Cover Girl (1944). She invited him to her favorite Italian trattoria in Greenwich Village, where he drank beer and she devoured her favorite dishes, a scene eerily evocative of the 1966 movie, Harper, in which they'd appear together.

She was filled with remarkably candid stories about Hollywood, which greatly amused Paul. He'd never met a woman so full of personal revelations regardless of how embarrassing. One amusing incident concerned a dinner party Yvonne De Carlo had invited her to. "In the powder room, she bluntly asked me, `Which one do you want tonight-Clark Gable or Errol Flynn?' I went with Flynn. Now I know what `in like Flynn' means."

She had Paul laughing and feeling wonderful. "You're my kind of broad," he told her.

Before that night was over, Shelley became another woman in whom he could confide, even the dark secrets that he'd told no man or woman. "Don't worry, sweetcheeks," she told him. "Marlon has told me everything about the two of you. We have that kind of relationship."

He flushed with embarrassment.

"Don't be shy," she said. "All actors do it. Me, too. When Marilyn and I roomed together, we sometimes got each other off when there were no men around. There's nothing to be ashamed of."

She jumped up. "Speaking of Marlon, I've got to get to the phone. I was supposed to meet him tonight to get fucked."

When she came back to the table, she asked for more wine. "I told Marlon I was dining with you. He's on his way here. He wants to see you again."

"He's not jealous that I'm out with you?" Paul asked.

"Don't worry. He wants to be a part of it. Call it a double date."

"But I always thought a double date was a man and woman going out with another couple."

"Kid, you've got a lot to learn. In Hollywood a double date is when I take on two men at the same time, or a horny male like Sinatra goes for two women in the same bed."

Later when Marlon joined them in the restaurant, he was all charm and smiles. "I went over on my motorcycle to visit you on Staten Island, but found out you'd moved. I was terribly disappointed."

"I wished you'd tracked me down," Paul said.

"Hey, fellows," Shelley said. "Don't forget I'm the girl sitting here. I'm the star of this picture, remember?"

Marlon turned to Shelley. "Everybody is telling me that Paul looks like me. Another Brando."

"Just what the world needs," she said sarcastically, "Paul's his own man and has his own face and style." She slammed down her wine glass. "I've got other plans for the two of you tonight. Enough of you lovesick puppies sitting here staring at each other to see who's the most gorgeous. I've got needs too. In fact, I plan to take A Streetcar Named Desire to a Picnic, and I want both of you to imagine I'm Marilyn Monroe for the night."

If Shelley Winters is to be believed, she had a three-way that night with Marlon Brando and Paul Newman.

As she once told her lover John Ireland and four other dinner guests, at a table at Downey's Restaurant in New York, "In the Forties I had the two hottest men on the screen, Clark Gable and Errol Flynn. In the 50s I sampled the two hottest actors in the American theater, Paul Newman and Marlon Brando. I wonder what the 60s or even the 70s and 80s will bring for me. I can't wait."

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When Ralph Meeker announced he was leaving on a two-week vacation, Josh Logan came to Paul and said, "Here's your big chance. At last you get to play Hal."

Paul was elated about his first big break on Broadway, until Logan punctured his balloon. "Frankly, I don't think you're sexy enough for the part. Meeker is very sexy on stage or off, from what I hear. But you're an uptight college boy, which is okay for the role of Alan, but not for Hal. Meeker acts from his crotch. You move across the stage like you don't even have a dick. Brando in Streetcar was a crotch actor. For this role you've got to be white,

trashy and sleazy-a low-down sexual menace."

"I can do that," Paul said. "Give me a chance. I'll study. I'll work with you. I'll do anything."

"Okay, I'll take you out to my house for the weekend, but you've got to do everything I tell you to do. If you'll learn and cooperate, I'll mold you into Hal. I might even let you play Hal in the road show version."

Logan drove Paul to a friend's house in Connecticut, where they could be alone and undisturbed for the weekend. Details of what actually happened on that weekend are sketchy, the only surviving account being what Paul later confided to Shelley Winters. Reportedly, Logan insisted that Paul strip naked for the entire weekend, presumably to "get in touch with your crotch." Completely nude, Paul was rehearsed in how to walk like a stud, stand like a stud, and move like a stud. In spite of his initial reluctance to appear nude before Logan, he grew more comfortable under the director's tutelage. "Even though you're wearing pants, I want the audience to be aware of your crotch at all times."

Paul told Shelley it was "a boot camp initiation. I wasn't happy satisfying the voyeuristic pleasures of a closeted homosexual, but I knew he could teach me something-and he did. I know I've got a lot to learn. I just can't do sexual menace like Meeker and Brando. Maybe it'll come to me."

Of course, Shelley asked the obvious question. "Did you guys get it on?"

"In a very one-sided way," Paul said. "I figured if I could give it to Inge, I might as well pump it to Logan. He had such praise for my dick that when we drove back to New York that Monday morning, I felt it was fourteen inches long."

Years later, Paul gave a highly edited version of his experience with Logan to a reporter from The New York Times. "At that time in my career, I probably wasn't a sexual threat like Logan suggested. When he told me to get in shape, I thought he meant spend six hours in the gym every day. I went to work to build up a muscled physique, which I've been working on ever since and certainly have shown off plenty of times on the screen. That lack of sexual threat comment still rankles me, though. I've been chewing on that one for almost thirty years."

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Word had gone out along Broadway and had even reached Hollywood that a hot new star was appearing on Broadway, taking over for Ralph Meeker in Picnic. "It didn't match the excitement that Brando had generated," Shelley Winters said, "during his performance in Streetcar, but the word was out to catch Newman's act."

Movie studios, even potential stars wanting to play one of the parts, arrived nightly. Paul didn't need to make any phone calls to alert potential producers or directors. The New York papers widely publicized his appearance.

Just before one of his performances, during his second week as Hal, he was alerted by Logan that both Frank Sinatra and Marilyn Monroe were in the audience. "I wasn't just nervous that night, I had butterflies coming out of my asshole," Paul told Geraldine Page. "I wasn't so afraid of Marilyn, but of Sinatra. For some reason, I thought he'd make fun of me. I knew he hated Method actors like Brando."

Frank Sinatra "Suicidal over Ava Gardner"	Marilyn Tinseltown's glam star meets the most beautiful boy on Broadway

Backstage, Marilyn chose not to be herself that night, but appeared as all that was good, bad, glamorous, and phony about a movie star. "She was beautiful and tacky at the same time," Paul later told Shelley, her former roommate.

With that breathy voice and exaggerated sexuality, she came on strong, kissing Paul on the lips as part of Paul's introduction to Sinatra. "She was playing the bubble-headed innocent number she did in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, but I knew right from the beginning that she was one smart cookie," Paul said.

Sinatra was still depressed and almost suicidal over the recent breakup of his marriage to Ava Gardner. But, in spite of Paul's fears about meeting him, he warmly extended his hand and congratulated Paul on his performance. "You're great, kid," Sinatra told him. "Originally Logan wanted Brando for the part. That jerk would have fucked it up big time."

"Now, now Frankie," Marilyn said. "Marlon has his nice side."

"Yeah, right," Sinatra said.

Paul accepted their invitation for an apres-theater dinner. Every head in the restaurant turned to watch Marilyn slither across the restaurant floor. Paul and Sinatra were virtually ignored by the rubber-peckers.

Over drinks and dinner, Paul deciphered the real purpose of the visit. Marilyn was lobbying for the role of Madge in the movie version of Picnic. "Janice Rule would be okay," Marilyn said, "but no sex appeal. In the movies, you've got to have sex these days to lure them away at night from The Box."

"If you say so, sugar," Paul said, feeling tipsy from the wine. Being in the presence of two fabled stars, and accepted by them as an equal, was going to his head even more than the wine.

Shortly after midnight the party was over, and Sinatra suggested they go back to his hotel suite for a nightcap. Marilyn giggled and Paul readily accepted.

En route to Sinatra's hotel, Marilyn whispered in Paul's ear that Sinatra was so horribly depressed over Ava that she was trying to help him get over her.

"You're the gal to do it," Paul assured her.

Back in Sinatra's suite, the champagne flowed. Marilyn didn't like the hard stuff. She gave them a detailed description of how she'd play Madge differently from Janice Rule's interpretation. Shortly after 1:30am, Sinatra rose

to his feet. "I'm going to leave you kids alone for some fun while I hit a latenight spot with some buddies of mine." He leaned over and kissed Marilyn, patting Paul's cheek. "Take good care of our gal," he told Paul. "For this, you're gonna owe me big time."

When he was gone, Marilyn giggled and snuggled up close to Paul. "Now I want to know something."

"Ask me anything," he said.

"What does the most beautiful boy on Broadway do with the most glamorous star in Hollywood when they're alone together?"

"I can answer that," he said, as his lips came down on hers.

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No one knows exactly what Marilyn and Paul did that night. The only after-the-fact "review" came from Marilyn's friend, Shelley Winters. At the Actors Studio, the loud-mouthed actress told Paul, "Marilyn said you were better than Brando. A more considerate lover. She said she likes a man who is kind and takes into account a woman's needs. She prefers that to brute sex."

"I hope that's a good review, but I want people to stop comparing me to Marlon Brando. We're different."

"That's true," Shelley said. "Your cocks are certainly different, but you do look like him a bit."

Before the curtain went up on Picnic the following night, Paul dropped off a thank you note at Sinatra's hotel. He expressed his gratitude for the hospitality and the introduction to Marilyn.

He never expected to hear from him again. One evening, days after Meeker returned to take back the role of Hal, Sinatra called the theater, inviting Paul to come by his hotel for drinks after the show.

Paul was eager to see Sinatra again, rushing over to the hotel and arriving in a breathless condition. Sitting in his suite in his underwear, Sinatra welcomed Paul. It appeared that he'd been drinking all day.

"And how was Marilyn?" he asked. "I assume she took good care of you before flying back to the coast."

"I think I'm in love," Paul said. "She's the best."

A frown crossed Sinatra's brow. "Don't get hung up on any chick regardless of how gorgeous she is," he said. "Marilyn will fuck you unknowns one day and forget you the next-that is, unless you're a big star, and I think you're heading there."

Sinatra said he hadn't been out all day and wanted to go for a walk. The day had been balmy. Once the two men hit the streets, it started to rain. Paul wanted to dart for cover, but Sinatra restrained him. He wanted to continue to walk the lonely streets of New York, even though both of them were getting soaked. "I wasn't about to chicken out," Paul told Shelley.

Later, Sinatra, with Paul in tow, arrived back at his hotel where he asked Paul to strip down. "I remember thinking, `Oh, no, don't tell me Sinatra is gay, too, "' Paul later said. "It wasn't like that at all. He called room service to come and get my clothes to dry. We sat around in the hotel's terrycloth robes getting drunk."

According to Paul, Sinatra looked him up and down. "You like girls, don't you?" he asked. "I get mixed reports on you."

"Yeah, I'm a pussy man," Paul claimed. "Just ask Marilyn herself."

"She's not a reliable witness," Sinatra said. "Even gay men like to fuck her." Getting up, he went over to the

phone and dialed someone. After he'd put down the receiver, he came back to join Paul. "I called a pal of mine. He's arranging for two hot showgirls with big tits to come over tonight and take care of us."

In about half an hour, two showgirls-one a shapely blonde, the other a leggy brunette-arrived at Sinatra's suite. Paul remembered seducing the blonde on the carpet in the living room, with Sinatra reserving his bed for the brunette.

After that night of intimacy, Paul assumed he'd become a member of Sinatra's inner circle. He began to doubt that when there was no follow-up call from the singer. Two weeks went by before he heard from Sinatra calling from Mt. Sinai Hospital, in New York City's borough of Queens. He wanted Paul to come over to slip him a bottle of liquor, which, of course, was against hospital rules.

With a bottle concealed under his trench coat, Paul came into the hospital where Sinatra had pre-cleared him through security for a trek upstairs to his private room. The singer had checked incognito into the hospital.

In bed, Sinatra looked as if he'd lost weight and his eyes seemed sunken into his head. "Pal, did you bring the good stuff?"

"Indeed I did, my man." With an eye out for the nurse, Paul poured Sinatra a drink. As he reached for it, Paul noticed that his wrists were heavily bandaged. "What happened?" Paul asked.

"I tried to slit my wrists," Sinatra candidly admitted. "I've tried to kill myself before. My buddy, Jimmy Van Heusen, found me on the floor of the elevator in his apartment house on Fifty-Seventh Street. I was bleeding heavily. He called an ambulance and they rushed me to this hospital."

At that point, the phone rang. "Get it for me?" Sinatra asked. "Take a message."

"Hello," came that familiar breathy voice over the phone. "Frankie, you don't sound like yourself."

"This is Paul Newman," he said. "I'm taking messages for Frank."

"Oh, Paulie," she said. There was an awkward pause. "I like the sound of that name. You do such nice things to a girl. I want to see you again. But right now we've got to save Frankie. Got a pencil?"

"I'll get one." He found a pencil on a nearby table and came back on the phone.

"Tell Frankie I've arranged for him to see Dr. Ralph G. Greenson when he gets back to Los Angeles. I call him Romy."

Paul wrote down the data.

Realizing who it was, Sinatra said, "I'll take the call."

Paul excused himself and stood in the corridor until Sinatra and Marilyn had finished a private conversation. Called back, Paul walked into the room, where he noticed that Sinatra was finishing off another glass of Scotch. "Marilyn and I agree you're one cute guy. I told her I'd fuck you myself if I were into boys. Ava accuses me of sleeping with boys."

"You, Frank Sinatra!" Paul said in astonishment. "The greatest lady-killer in the history of Hollywood?"

"Even the Caesars liked a little diversion," Sinatra said.

"You're joking, of course," Paul said.

"I don't know," he said, cracking a smile. "I slipped a peek and saw your naked ass bobbing up and down on the sofa in my suite while you banged that two-bit whore. It looked mighty tempting."

"I'll pretend I never heard that," Paul said.

Sinatra had another week in New York, and he hired Paul as his "babysitter," paying him two hundred dollars a week. What his first wife might have known about this deal can't be ascertained.

"I strolled Fifth Avenue with him," Paul said when he later confided to Shelley Winters. "I got a haircut if he wanted a haircut. I sat with him when he got his shoes shined. I went and had massages with him, Frankie insisting that the girls be bare breasted and give blow-jobs at the end of the session. I even drove him down to a joint in New Jersey where he sang. The pain of Ava seemed to make his ballads more soulful, especially when he sang of `a gal that got away.' I even fucked with him. I'd moved up in his world. I was no longer on the floor, but on the bed with him, pounding away at some broad, meeting Frankie thrust for thrust. Every now and then he'd look over at me. `How's it coming, kid?' he asked."

"And then he was gone," Paul said. "It was the fastest week I'd ever spent in my life. In one week, Frank lives what most people do in a year. He was off to Hollywood, to Marilyn, and countless others. I never expect to hear from him again."

***

Janice Rule, cast as the female lead, Madge, in Picnic, began her career as a dancer but broke her ankle during the Broadway run of Miss Liberty in 1949. Before that happened, she'd been spotted by a scout for Warner Brothers, who had signed her to a supporting role in the 1951 film Goodbye, My Fancy, which starred Joan Crawford.

During the run of Picnic, many of Hollywood's biggest stars, both male and female, came to see the production, some of them eager to be cast in one of the roles. By 1953, Joan Crawford knew that she was far too old to play the leading role of Madge. But when she came backstage to congratulate Janice, she had another motive. She actually wanted to meet Paul Newman. Tennessee Williams, who was superficially acquainted with Crawford, had told her that the actor was "divine."

In a pattern well known to Hollywood insiders, Joan Crawford always wanted to be among the first to seduce whatever new boy happened to be in town. "Town" in this case usually meant Hollywood, but in some cases the geography extended to New York.

Previously, as this rule applied to Brando, Crawford had already joined a long line-up of leading ladies going backstage, expressing their hopes to play Blanche DuBois in the film version of A Streetcar Named Desire. But in most cases these women had one single-minded goal: To seduce the dynamic, sexy young Brando.

Crawford had even seduced child star Jackie Cooper when he was only seventeen. Before meeting Paul, she'd also seduced Jeff Chandler, Rock Hudson, and countless others. She definitely wanted to add another notch in her garter belt by sampling Paul's sexual goodies.

Backstage, she congratulated every member of the cast, but focused primarily on Paul. He seemed flattered by her attention. After all, she was one of the grandest of all movie stars, even though her glory days as the queen of cinema were fast fading.

Her casting couch technique involved the suggestion that she wanted to use a young actor as her co-star in a future movie project. She'd been given a script, and she told Paul he'd be ideal playing one of its leading men.

When Crawford invited Paul for dinner the following night after the show, she told him she'd like to discuss the role further with him.

A telegram for Paul arrived the next day from Crawford, claiming that he'd given "one of the most riveting performances I've ever seen on Broadway."

He told Logan, "Can you imagine, Joan Crawford all to myself. A date with a movie legend. Out of all the young studs on Broadway, she picked me. I may be starring with her in her next film."

Joan Crawford:
"We Texas gals eat beefcake."

Logan looked at Paul skeptically. "You've got a lot to learn, kid, both about Crawford and about Hollywood in general." He walked away.

Before the curtain went up on Picnic that night, a messenger delivered a rented tuxedo to Paul and a note from Crawford. He was instructed to change into the tux, and that after the show she'd be waiting outside in a rented limousine to take him for dinner at the 21 Club.

Janice Rule and Paul had not really bonded during the stage run of Picnic. The development of their close but rather secretive friendship wouldn't evolve until later. Paul was learning fast, however, that beneath her rather prim and proper facade, Janice nurtured a secret passion. She loved Hollywood gossip, even though she pretended to hold it in disdain. It's because of what she called "my loose lips sink ships" revelations that we know so much about Paul himself.

Janice's "loose tongue," as she called it, got her into occasional trouble. After her involvement in Picnic, she became romantically involved with Farley Granger, a popular cinematic heartthrob. After the abrupt termination of their engagement, she told many of her friends, "Farley prefers hot men to a doll like me." It was partly because of Janice and her passion for gossip that word spread throughout Hollywood that Granger was actually a homosexual. Later in life, moving on to other interests, Janice abandoned her acting career and became a successful psychotherapist in Manhattan.

After his highly visible date with Joan Crawford, and consistent with her hunger for gossip, Janice sent Paul a note, asking him to come to her dressing room. "Oh, God," Paul told director Logan. "Another horny broad for me to service. At least this one's a looker."

Paul had never really appreciated Janice's beauty until he was called into her dressing room. In her slip, she was a leggy and long-waisted young redhead with the clearest skin he'd ever seen on a woman. Up until then, he'd noted that she was feisty and especially competitive around Kim Stanley.

Janice welcomed him into her dressing room, and soon they were talking, laughing, and joking. He loved her deep throaty laugh. She was having a vodka and tonic before curtain and offered him one, which he gladly accepted. "I came from an Irish family from New Jersey. My father taught me how to drink when I was a kid."

As it turned out, Paul was wrong about Janice's intentions of summoning him to her dressing room. She didn't intend to seduce him, but wanted instead to learn the gory details about his tryst with Crawford.

He confided to Janice that the aging star was the "most take-charge woman I've ever met. For the benefit of the limousine driver, she even defined the best route to take to 21."

In those days photographers-they weren't called paparazzi then-waited outside the popular joint to take candid

shots of visiting celebrities, many of whom derived from Hollywood.

From the back of her limousine, the regal movie queen spotted the pho tographers from afar. She checked her face in a compact mirror and applied a finishing touch before turning to Paul. "You darling boy, you want to see how a star makes an entrance?"

As the photographers snapped away, she emerged from the limousine draped in mink and wearing a white turban. It was an elaborate ritual, carefully rehearsed, with Crawford showcasing her famous legs during her exit from the vehicle. Just before she glided out of the car, she turned back to Paul, who was still inside. "I gotta show the boys that Crawford still has her gams."

Every photographer captured her glittering image that night.

Every celebrity at the club came to Crawford's table to pay homage to her that night, including Milton Berle, her former lover Glenn Ford, and even Porfirio Rubirosa, the playboy from the Dominican Republic. He'd already been famously married to two of the world's wealthiest women, Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton and tobacco heiress Doris Duke.

After Rubirosa had departed from their table, Crawford, now on her fifth vodka, confided to Paul, "That octoroon dick of his is three times the size of Clark Gable's."

"Joan," he whispered to her, "if we make it together tonight-and I suspect we're heading there-you're not going to broadcast my dick size all the way to LA, are you?"

"No, dear boy, your secrets will be safe with Mother Joan," she said. "I trust, however, I won't be dealing with any deficiencies here."

"Rest assured," he bragged, "I'm all man."

When columnist Walter Winchell came by, Crawford gave him an item for his morning column. She claimed that it was all but certain that Paul would be the leading man in her next movie.

"News to me," Paul said after Winchell had left.

"Don't worry," she assured him. "I still have a lot of clout, especially when it comes to selecting my leading men. Picture it. Joan Crawford with Paul Newman."

"Joan directed everything," Paul confided to Janice the next day. "Even what I had to eat. She ordered me a rare steak."

"I'm from Texas, darling, and we Texan gals know how to eat meat," Paul quoted Crawford as saying.

"She obviously was going for double entendre there," Paul told Janice.

She wanted a blow-by-blow description, but Paul was a bit shy in revealing all the details. He did tell Janice that the moment they entered her suite, Crawford pulled off her gown, dispensing with such preliminaries as offering him a nightcap.

"Her body was still quite firm," Paul claimed. "Rather beautiful as a matter of fact. Great legs. I took her on her white carpet right by a TV set broad casting the night's news."

"Did you satisfy the insatiable?" Janice asked.

"I did my job," Paul claimed. "That's for sure. Even got a compliment. She said I was real clean, telling me she liked men without a lot of hair on their chest. She told me that Steve Cochran was a great lover and packed a magnificent pistol, but he had just too much body hair."

"I didn't know what to do when it was over," Paul told Janice. "She still hadn't invited me for that drink, and I could sure have used one at that point. Then I came to realize that the dirty deed was done, and that she expected me to leave. She told me she had to pack for an early morning flight to the Coast and that we'd stay in touch. It was goodbye. I did get a long, lingering kiss with tongue, and then I was out the door, back home to Jackie and the kids, having fucked one of the biggest stars in the history of Hollywood. I just hope that in my future there will be a lot of other big name stars who'll want to fuck me. I get off on doing the real big ones, even if they're past their prime."

Janice assured him that if he ever found success in Hollywood, all the big stars would want a piece of him. "Your phone will be ringing day and night. And it won't matter one God damn bit if you're married or not."

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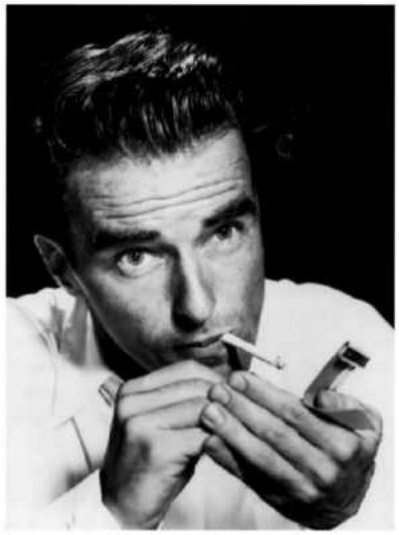
A few minutes after Paul accidentally met Montgomery Clift outside Liebling's office, the handsome young star-at the time the hottest property in Hollywood had promised to call him. He never did.

When Monty learned that Paul was filling in for Ralph Meeker in the role of Hal in Picnic, he showed up unexpectedly to see the performance. Going backstage, he asked to be directed to Paul's dressing room.



Montgomery Clift:
"Don't I get a kiss?"

In his boxer shorts, Paul opened the door and was astonished to see the drunken Monty standing outside. He quickly invited his screen favorite inside.

"Got a drink?" Monty asked.

"I'm a drinking man myself," Paul said, "and I always keep something stashed away." He reached underneath his dressing table and produced a bottle. As he finished dressing, he was nervous, perhaps fearing a critique of his performance from this gifted actor.

"You played the role of Hal just as I would," Monty said.

"Considering that you're the most powerful, sensitive, and magnetic actor on the screen, I take that as high praise," Paul said.

"Don't I get a kiss for my appreciation of you?" Monty asked.

A bit taken back at first, Paul leaned over for a brotherly kiss on the cheek. Monty was having none of that. He pulled Paul to him, and soon his tongue was exploring Paul's mouth. This incident and the subsequent role Monty was to play in Paul's life were revealed in the unpublished memoirs of Monty's brother, Brooks Clift, who wrote about Monty after his untimely death in 1966.

Although details are lacking, it is presumed that Monty invited Paul back to his underfurnished duplex, where they had sex. At any rate, Paul didn't leave Monty's studio until eight o'clock the following morning.

"It was the beginning of a very complicated relationship," Brooks said. He claimed that he first met Paul when he went backstage to pick up Kim Stanley, with whom at the time he was having an affair. "Monty had already told me he was involved with Paul, and Paul knew that I was aware of all the details. So we didn't play cat-and-mouse with each other. Instead, Paul spoke openly of his relationship with Monty, both the good times and the bad times. I feel the bad times outweighed the good."

One evening when Brooks invited Paul to dinner, and both of them had had sufficient alcohol, Paul told Brooks, "Your brother is a sadistic bastard. He likes it rough, and I'm more vanilla. When Monty kisses, he doesn't do it with love, but to hurt you. His victim comes away with a bloody mouth."

"Rather vampiric, I'd say," Brooks shot back. "But you love him, right?"

"You got that right," Paul said. "Just when you want to kick him out of your life forever, he looks up at you with those soulful eyes, and you melt. He's a great actor, but a self-destructive one."

"I know about those eyes," Brooks said. "He uses them as his secret weapon. Elizabeth Taylor compares Monty's eyes to green diamonds. When he looks at me, he seems to be probing into my soul with his X-ray eyes. I'm sure he does the same with you."

"It's not the eyes, but the other shit," Paul said. "When I wake up in bed with him, I find myself battered and bruised. He sure likes to be the dominant one."

"Monty's just high-strung and filled with nervous energy," Brooks told Paul. "You need to restrain him a bit. He doesn't know what limits are. Don't let him dominate you. You should be the controlling factor. I love my brother dearly. Help him! He's disturbed."

Years later, reflecting on the early days of Paul's career, Brooks said, "When I first met him, he was still struggling for his own identity, both as a man and as an actor. After a few weeks with Monty, he began to pick up some of my brother's mannerisms, which translated into his acting style. He tried being Brando. He tried being Monty. I later learned he'd also taken up with James Dean. I think he wanted to draw upon the talent of all three of Hollywood's bad boys. It must have been so difficult for him."

"When he went to Hollywood, Paul was referred to as `the second Brando,"' Brooks said. "After a few pictures, he was referred to as the new Montgomery Clift. In just a short time, he was even competing with James Dean for parts. And aside from the professional rivalry, there was the private thing going on between these guys. I fear that Monty, Brando, and Dean took our squeaky clean Ohio boy down a murky road unlike any he'd ever traveled before."

***

Monty and Paul spent long hours discussing acting and scripts. Whenever Paul visited Monty's duplex, he found the actor deluged with scripts. In the wake of Monty's phenomenal 1953 success in From Here to Eternity, it seemed that every director in Hollywood wanted Monty to star in an upcoming movie.

Paul noted with alarm that Monty had taken to drinking, sometimes heavily, in the daytime. He seemed to be held prisoner by his own nerves. "I'm going to send all these scripts back," Monty told Paul one day. "They're all shit. Nothing exceptional." He picked up one script after another and dropped it on the floor in front of Paul. "Nothing exceptional," he kept repeating.

"Man, I wish some director would offer me just one of these scripts," Paul said. He picked up a discarded script called East of Eden. "How about this one? I read the John Steinbeck novel. I think it would make an exceptional movie."

"It sucks," Monty said. "Nothing exceptional about it."

"Since you're turning it down, could you ask the director to test me for a part in it?" Paul said.

Monty looked at him skeptically. "Okay, pal, if that's what you want. But why make your Hollywood debut in a film that I know will be a dud?"

The next day Paul encountered Brooks backstage. "Monty is turning down some real hot shit," Paul told Brooks. "He's going to try to get some good parts for me. Call it sloppy seconds. But I think I can really do some big stuff with Monty's rejects."

"Sounds like you're turning this relationship into a sing-for-your-supper type of thing," Brooks said. "Is this becoming a male version of All About Eve, Eve Harrington lusting for the roles of Margo Charming?"

"Not at all," Paul claimed. "My feelings for Monty are genuine. I can learn from him, though. Let's face it, he brings more intensity to the screen than Brando. And, in Monty's case, it's coupled with a romantic vulnerability.

"You should be a movie reviewer," Brooks chided him.

Paul lit a cigarette after offering one to Brooks. "Back to what you said before. I want to be honest with you. All of us sing for our supper in one way or another. The only problem we're having at the moment is when I have to go into that bedroom of his. He's draped it in black velvet to block out all daylight. It's like making love in a coffin."

"At least Monty doesn't lie there like a zombie," Brooks said. "We used to make it together when we were teenagers. I know firsthand about what a live wire Monty is in bed."

Even if I don't get off on the sex so much," Paul said, "I genuinely like and admire the actor I'm performing it with."

"Stick with Monty," Brooks said. "I know it sounds cynical, but it'll be worth your while. I also feel you're a good steady influence on him. Are you planning to follow him when he returns to Hollywood? You'd be the most beautiful thing on the screen."

"Yeah, so people tell me, but I'm nervous about what parts a studio might offer me."

Brooks laughed. "Most actors are worried about a studio offering them any part, especially in these days of television. But I think you might do well if you don't mind the pecking order?"

"What does that mean?" Paul asked.

"In Hollywood, you'll have to learn your proper place in the food chain," Brooks said. "First, the best roles will be offered to Monty. If he turns down the script, Brando will be the second choice. If he turns it down, and a director is still looking for a Method actor, you'd do well to position yourself as third in the line. That's what I call the pecking order."

Paul seemed to consider that for a moment. "If that's how they play the game, I might as well learn the rules."

"Both you and Dean are lining yourself up to become the heir apparent to Monty and Brando," Brooks said. "Good luck."

"Hell, man, I haven't completely decided that I even want to be a movie star," Paul said.

"Cut the shit!" Brooks told him. "Every loser at the Actors Studio expresses a disdain for Hollywood. But just

offer one of the fuckers a movie contract, and I bet you those Method farts will start salivating."

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James Dean called Paul one afternoon and asked him to go with him to the Actors Studio. When Paul met Dean, he found him draped in a scarlet matador's cape. He told Paul that he was going to perform a solo piece at the Actors Studio. He'd culled a script from a novel, Matador, by Barnaby Conrad, the story of an aging bullfighter facing his last hurrah or "moment of truth" in the bullring.

Up to now, as Paul had noted, Dean had never performed at the studio, but had sat watching the other actors emote, silently judging them.

When it came time for Dean to walk onto the stage, he entered awkwardly, still shrouded in his flamboyant cape. As he moved through the motions of his performance, Paul scooted down in his seat in embarrassment for his friend. Paul could not be certain, but he felt that Dean had cut off his performance only halfway through his material. Perhaps he realized how bad it was.

As Dean sat down, Lee Strasberg came on to critique what he'd just seen. Dressed haphazardly in baggy clothes, the head of the studio was a small man, looking more like a college professor than the master of the Method and a role model for both Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando.

Strasberg had an uncanny ability to determine what was artistically true on stage and what sounded false.

"In the history of American theater, Dean's exhibition-I wouldn't call it a performance-has to rank as the worst," Strasberg charged. "He mumbled his lines; he had no power of conviction. Another clone of Marlon Brando we don't need. Why did he choose a fading toreador? Dean has no experience as a bullfighter, much less an old one staging his last fight in the ring. What does Dean know about aging? At best, he could be cast as a confused and not very articulate juvenile. We did not feel this bullfighter's angst. All we saw on stage was a very conceited and arrogant punk who thought he could master material completely foreign to him. He cannot. He did not. A miserable failure."

Elia Kazan was in the audience that afternoon. He remembered Dean "sitting in a sort of poutish mess in the front row, scowling as Lee delivered his tirade, which was cruel even by his standards."

Wrapping himself in his cape, Dean rose to his feet and walked rapidly out of the studio, with his head held high. Paul followed him to offer what comfort he could.

Out on the street, Dean turned to Paul. "That fucker is trying to castrate me. He wants to suck my blood and destroy my uniqueness. He attacked me like some mad scientist in a lab dissecting a rabbit. I won't stand for it. I felt he was removing my skin, exposing me raw and bleeding to the other actors, each one a jealous bastard."

Dean asked Paul to go with him on a long walk through Central Park. "I once had this diamondback rattler as a pet. When he grew too big, I released him behind that bush over there. Let's go over and see if he's still there."

"I don't cotton to diamondbacks," Paul said. Nevertheless, he followed Dean behind the bush.

Concealed from the trail, Dean grabbed Paul and pulled him close. "Kiss me," he commanded. Paul obliged, although he wasn't comfortable with this display of man-to-man love in a public park. Dean was an exhibitionist, Paul was not.

"I'd prefer to do this in some other place," Paul said. "Like in private."

"But I need it now," Dean protested. "I need to feel that somebody out there loves me after that fucking take-no-prisoners attack on me by that damn little Jew."

Back on the park's main trail, Paul bought Dean a hot dog for lunch. After eating it, he impulsively turned to

Paul, tugging at his arm. "Let's leave this afternoon," he urged. "Drop everything. Leave everybody behind. I want to hitchhike with you back to my home in Indiana."

"Your last hitchhiking proposal was to Hollywood," Paul said.

"Fuck, Hollywood!" Dean claimed. "I'll never go there. I've changed my mind. I want out of the theater. Not that I was ever really in it. I want you with me. I know this old farm we can buy real cheap in Indiana. Make our living from the land. Be our own men. We won't have to listen to any more assholes telling us how to act."

"No way!" Paul said. "I'm not ready for that. I want to stay here and face the perils of a life in the theater. I want to put my talent on display and let the world judge me. Sure, I'll make mistakes and be ridiculed, but I want to stay in the ring, keep on fighting."

"Your choice," Dean said with despair. "Maybe I'm being impulsive. Maybe I should follow your example. Stay here and become such a big success that Strasberg one day will lick the dingleberries off my crack."

Later that afternoon Dean invited Paul to join him for his dance lessons. Paul splurged on a taxi that took them to the studio of Eartha Kitt, who had become a success on Broadway because of her appearance in New Faces of 1952, where she'd scored a hit with her song, "Monotonous." In 1950, when she'd appeared on stage with Orson Welles in an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, playing Helen of Troy, the actor had bitten her in front of the audience, claiming that she was "the most exciting woman alive."

After meeting the sultry singer and dancer, Paul agreed with Welles' assessment. Eartha had trained with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, and, as a skilled dancer herself, was giving twice-a-week lessons to Dean, whom she called "Jamie."

Ushering Paul and Dean into her studio, she hugged Dean and kissed him before planting a kiss on Paul's lips. Then she stood back and, with her catlike eyes, surveyed the full figures of both men. "The two most beautiful white boys in New York, and Eartha's got `em." When she spoke, her words had a purring intonation.

Embracing Dean again, she turned to Paul, "This is my soul brother. I'm his soul sister. Jamie and I can sit for hours without talking to each other, and we'll know what each other is thinking. Sometimes we burst into laughter at the same time, because we're both thinking about something that happened to us that was funny."

"She's my voodoo priestess," Dean said, hugging her tightly. "She even knows when I need to take a piss before I do."

To rehearse his dance numbers with Eartha, Dean stripped down to his underwear. Paul sat on the sofa, enjoying a cold beer.

She moved with panther-like grace in the dance. Dean tried to stay with her, but he was awkward, not getting the rhythm of the steps.

After the dance lessons, both Dean and Eartha played a pair of conga timbo drums, treating Paul to a concert. He concluded that Dean was better on the drums than on the dance floor.

"Great concert, guys," Paul said when they'd finished.

Eartha rose to her feet, reaching for Dean's hand. She walked over to Paul and stared down at him. He rose to his feet. "At the end of our bongo music, Jamie and I like to adjourn to the bedroom."

"I got it," Paul said. "I'm out of here. But thanks for the entertainment."

"You don't get it," Dean said, reaching for his arm to detain him. "Kitt here and I aren't opposed to a little company in bed."

"You aren't against a little poontang, are you?" she asked.

"It'd be a new thing for me," Paul said. "I'm ready to give it a try."

Eartha Kitt:
"White boys are so delicious."

"Come along then," she said, taking his hand.

In the late 1970s, when Eartha was in Key West starring as Lola La Mour in a movie, The Last Resort, based on a novel (Butterflies in Heat) by Darwin Porter, she spent several long weekends with the writer. He was particularly interested in all the juicy details she'd left out of her autobiographies. Although she talked of many things, her most tender moments were reserved for Paul and Dean.

"I had both of them that afternoon, and I came to the conclusion that white boys are so delicious," she recalled. "I spread the word. The creators of Hair stole that line from me and put it in their hit musical. In the future, I would seduce Paul and Jamie on other occasions, but always separately, never together. That afternoon back in my studio in New York ranks as one of the most celestial experiences of my life. Those two beauties transported me to heaven. I never knew that lovemaking could be that wonderful. Not bad for a yalla gal born in the cotton fields of South Carolina."

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Had not both Paul and Joanne been cast in Picnic, their long-enduring love affair might never have blossomed. Years later, Joanne told an interviewer that, "Paul and I tried to run away from each other for five years."

The outspoken Rod Steiger called that remark "pure bullshit! They were like two drivers in hot rods playing chicken as they rushed toward each other for a head-on crash. They came together in a fiery explosion of emotions. Once Joanne had decided that she wanted Paul more than any other man, she set out to get him. That he had a wife stashed away somewhere didn't really seem to matter. But it mattered to Paul."

"I knew him well at the time," Steiger claimed. "The man had a conscience and a strong feeling of responsibility about his kids. Of course, that didn't stop him from having affairs with everybody else. From James Dean to Eartha Kitt, Paul tumbled head-on into an extremely complicated life. He was the Golden Boy of Broadway. Hell, he was so fucking beautiful. Everybody wanted him, and he was willing to share the goodies with both men and women, not just Joanne and Jackie. Paul was so pretty I would have fucked him if he'd asked me to, and I'm about the straightest actor in the business. Marlon confided to me that he'd pounded Paul's beautiful ass on many an occasion. At one point Paul was more in love with James Dean than he was with either Joanne or Jackie."

"One day the Bitch Goddess of them all, Hollywood Herself, knocked on his dressing room door," Steiger said. "She'd come to claim our boy as one of her victims. Few could resist her allure, not even old Rod Steiger himself. Paul was a tasty morsel waiting to be devoured."

Knocking on that door was Stephen Brill, an agent from Warner Brothers. He made an offer a cash-strapped actor could hardly refuse: a five-year contract at one thousand dollars a week.

Although tantalized by the money and fame of becoming a movie star, Paul cringed when he heard what was in store for him. "We at Warners think you can be groomed to be the second Brando."

Chapter Three

Skinny Legs in a Cocktail Dress

Paul did not immediately rush to sign the five-year contract with Warner Brothers that had been offered to him during the run of Picnic. He needed time to think it over.

He also remained confused about his personal life-Jackie or Joanne? He told Rod Steiger, "Why do both women have to have names that begin with a J? It just makes it all the more confusing."

In 1953, at this point in his life, three roads lay before him, and he didn't known which one to travel. There were those who hailed him as "The Golden Boy of Broadway," and offers were coming in for future roles on the stage.

Other friends told him that he could become "The Golden Boy" of televi- sion-"the little box," as he called it. His TV roles, their scope and variety, were so daunting a challenge that he felt they were better opportuities for his growth as an actor than the Actors Studio itself.

The third possibility involved the biggest challenge of all: How to become the new golden boy of Hollywood, where the competition was much keener? He was tempted by the money Warners was offering, and he was not immune to the glamour of Hollywood, but he feared he'd be trapped in a long-term studio contract and forced to "make God-awful movies."

As he pondered his career choices, yet another possibility emerged before him. Instead of signing the contract with a studio, he could freelance and go after the roles that both Marlon Brando and Monty Clift were turning down. As a freelancer, he'd probably have greater control over his own destiny.

In the meantime, he had to earn a living. His agent presented him with a script that intrigued him for an episode ("One for the Road") within a television series called The Web. The teleplay would costar Wally Brown and Grace Raynor.

Although at the time, Grace was just breaking into television, she eventually became a familiar face on such future series as Perry Mason and 77 Sunset Strip before she disappeared from the radar screen in 1964.

Wally Brown, whose career dated back to the days of vaudeville, was already familiar to Paul. In the 40s, RKO tried to emulate the comedy schtick of Abbott and Costello by pairing Brown with Alan Carney. Their broad slapstick style wasn't commercially successful, although one of their films, Zombies on Broadway (1945), co-starring Bela Lugosi, eventually evolved into a camp classic. The wannabe duo lost their contracts in 1946.

Brown gave Paul some unwelcome advice. "The mistake Alan Carney and I made was in trying to imitate Abbott and Costello. They say you're the new Brando, but be yourself. Your own man. With that pretty face of yours, you'll go over big."

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Montgomery Clift, who continued a routine of heavy drinking, kept his promise to Paul about recommending him for film scripts he'd rejected. One such script was entitled On the Waterfront. Monty had already achieved acclaim playing a boxer in From Here to Eternity, which had been released in 1953, and did not want to be cast as a fighter again. But he felt the role of Terry Malloy would be an ideal vehicle to introduce Paul to movie audiences. Monty called Elia Kazan, the project's director, who agreed to give Paul a screen test, and arranged for him to receive a copy of the script.

As soon as Paul received it, he read it nine times in one night, believing not only that this would be a fantastic

part for him, but that the movie itself had a chance of becoming a classic film noir.

But before Kazan moved ahead with his decision to cast Paul in the role, he received a call from Sam Spiegel, the producer of the film, who demanded that the role be offered to Brando. "I know there's bad blood between the two of you," Spiegel told Kazan. "But I'm the boss around here and I want you to do it."

Reluctantly, Kazan sent a copy of the script to Brando. The actor had already told the press that he'd never work with Kazan again because "he turned canary and exposed all his commie friends." Brando was referring to Kazan's notorious 1952 appearance before the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities, where he submitted the names of eleven of his Broadway and Hollywood co-workers, accusing them of having supported Communist platforms and ideals.

Although Brando quickly realized that the role of Terry Malloy would be ideal for him, he called Kazan and told him, "I like the part but I can't work with a traitor like you." Then he slammed down the phone.

After rejections from both Brando and Monty, Kazan decided to take a chance on a newcomer, Paul Newman. "Monty had more or less convinced me that Newman could play the part, and I knew him and had seen his work. I thought he'd be convincing as a young fighter." Ironically, the director was predicting Paul's breakthrough role when he'd play a fighter in Somebody Up There Likes Me, released in 1956.

Kazan called Karl Malden and asked him to coach Paul, grooming him for the screen test. Malden had already been promised the role of the priest in Waterfront. "I've got to have something really hot to show Sam Spiegel. You select the girl to work with Newman."

Malden had been impressed with the acting of Joanne Woodward, and he asked her to rehearse with Paul. She gladly accepted. "There was a definite chemistry between the two," Malden recalled.

He worked tirelessly with both Joanne and Paul until he felt they were "camera ready." Then he called Kazan. "I've found your stars," Malden said. "Newman and Woodward as a couple will sizzle on the screen. You can give them a screen test and shoot the results over to Spiegel." Kazan seemed delighted with the test and sent it to Spiegel. Weeks went by and there was no response from the producer.

"Paul was nervous," Malden said. "He knew there was a lot at stake." When word came in from Spiegel, it was a devastating blow to Paul. The producer had promised the role of the young fighter from Hoboken to Frank Sinatra, who was virtually claiming "native son status," being the most famous man to ever emerge from this then-grimy New Jersey port city. Spiegel told Kazan that "Frankie would give his left nut to play Terry Malloy."

There were more surprises awaiting both Kazan and Paul. "Who knows why, but Marlon finally changed his mind without anyone twisting his arm," Malden wrote in his autobiography, When Do I Start? "I had to wonder if all this talk about Paul Newman or Frank Sinatra playing the part that Marlon knew in his heart belonged to him was all it took for him to put his political ideals aside and follow his actor's heart. It was simple really: How could he pass up that part?"

Karl Malden
Getting Paul camera-ready

As for Joanne, perhaps she never thought that she had a serious chance to play the female lead. Instead, the role went to another blonde, Eva Marie Saint.

The day Paul learned that Brando was back in the picture, he received a call from the actor himself. Although at first he was reluctant to accept, Paul agreed to come over that night and be with Brando.

Shelley Winters later claimed that Brando seduced Paul that night. "Marlon had this sick thing about fucking his male competition. He'd even seduced Burt Lancaster when Burt-my former lover-was seriously considering appearing on Broadway as Stanley Kowalski in Streetcar. I'm not a psychologist, but maybe Marlon felt that by inserting what he called `my noble tool' into his rival, he showed his dominance over them both as an actor and as a man. When it comes to Marlon, one can only speculate what goes on in that beautiful head of his."

"The more interesting question," Shelley said, "is why Paul allowed himself to be used like that. It must have been humiliating for him. But he was mesmerized by Brando. In my opinion, he wanted to be Brando. Yet he hated those comparisons between Brando and himself, even though they were deserved at the time. Paul told me, `Some day, dammit, they're gonna say Marlon Brando looks like me.'"

When Brando finally accepted the role, Spiegel dropped Sinatra, who threatened to sue him. "The reason is money," Spiegel told Kazan. "I can get my investors to double the bankroll with Brando instead of Sinatra."

After watching Brando win the Oscar for On the Waterfront, Paul later revealed that he received a call from Monty. "We got together and pulled the biggest drunk of our lives. For Monty, that was really saying something. The vodka flowed like a river. He cursed himself for turning down the part, and I drank for the role that got away."

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While filming On the Waterfront, director Elia Kazan plotted his next feature film, East ofEden, eventually released in 1954. His fantasy cast included Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando, playing brothers, even though physically the two actors did not look alike. Both Clift and Brando turned down the parts of a modernday Cain and Abel, as portrayed in the best-selling John Steinbeck novel.

Rod Steiger with **Brando**
"I could have been a contender!"

During the casting of On the Waterfront, Kazan had considered Paul and Joanne Woodward for the leading players.

Now, although he remained secretive about the casting of East of Eden, he once again considered Paul teamed with Joanne. But seemingly every other day, he thought James Dean and Julie Harris would bring more sensitivity to the roles.

Kazan was also considering Richard Davalos, a New York actor of GreekAmerican ancestry, for the lesser role of the brother Aron, with either James Dean or Paul playing the more prominent role of Caleb Trask.

In a bizarre move, Kazan decided to bring both Dean and Paul together for a joint screen test. He wanted to analyze whatever chemistry existed between the two actors if he cast them as brothers.

When Paul got a call to go to a Brooklyn studio for the screen test, he thought that once again Monty was looking after him, letting him have a chance at the bigger star's "rejects."

Eager to be cast in the role of Caleb in the movie, Paul was startled to encounter James Dean in the studio testing for the same picture. Paul was alarmed when he learned that their screen test would be together.

For the occasion Paul looked pretty, having dressed in a white shirt with a spotted bowtie. To give himself more of a rogue-like appearance, he placed a cigarette behind his left ear. In a casual blue sports shirt, Dean appeared more relaxed, with his glasses tucked into his shirt pocket.

Kazan didn't show up for the test but delegated it to a young, inexperienced director.

Part of the original sound track and film clips from that actual test remain today.

In the background you can hear the off-camera director calling to the actors, "Hey, you two queens, look this way."

"I don't want to look at him," Paul said. "He's a sourpuss."

"I don't like him either," Dean said.

The director then called for the men to look right into the camera. Paul and Dean followed instructions. Then the director called out for them to look at each other. At this point, both Dean and Paul broke into laughter as they stared at each other face to face.

The James Dean/Paul Newman screen test
"Kiss me!"

Dean moved toward Paul and said, "Kiss me!" "Not here," Paul shot back. Impulsively, he pinched Dean's ass instead.

The director called out to Paul. "Do you think Jimmy will appeal to bobbysoxers?"

Paul appraised Dean from head to toe. "I don't know. Is he going to be a sex symbol? I don't usually go out with boys. With his looks, sure, I think they'll flip for him."

The test was completely unscripted. Writing about that test years later, Dean biographer David Dalton said, "What determined the winner was the face: Both Jimmy and Paul Newman were nascent icons, with features that were to become as easily recognizable as Christ, Mao, or Mickey Mouse. But in this test, Jimmy's entire countenance rippled with expression while the signals in Newman's eyes and mouth were almost vaudevillian numbers restricted to isolated parts of his face. Newman's expressions were typecast into smile, frown, and cool stare, but Jimmy's face resisted and relaxed in alternating currents."

On leaving the studio, Dean seemed to realize the role of Caleb was his. "Maybe we'll be cast as brothers," he told Paul. "It's a lesser part, but Aron is a strong role."

As both Dean and Paul headed back to Manhattan that day, Dean turned to him and smiled. "The day is not completely lost. Let's go to this brownstone where I'm living on West Sixty Eight Street. You can fuck me for the rest of the day. That's gotta mean something."

En route to his brownstone, Dean told Paul, "I ran into Marlon the other day. He asked about you. I told him that on some days I'm in love with him. On other days I'm in love with you. But I claimed you and I never made it. Marlon told me that he'd never made it with you either. Both of us knew we were lying."

Two days later Kazan called Paul with the bad news. "I've decided to go with James Dean in the part of Caleb. He came out better in the screen test."

"What about me playing Aron?" Paul asked, barely concealing his disappointment.

"I've given the part to Richard Davalos," Kazan said. "He's ten years younger than you."

"Are you saying I'm too old for Aron?" Paul asked. "Then give me the father role. But, I'm warning you, you'll have to age me. I'm not that old."

"You're out of luck there too," Kazan said. "I gave the part of Adam to Raymond Massey."

"Okay," Paul said sarcastically, "I'll play Aron's girlfriend in drag."

"Julie Harris has the part," Kazan said. "Your girlfriend, Woodward, would have been terrific in the part, but

Harris will be great. By the way, I saw Julie yesterday at the Actors Studio. She said she adores you."

"Not my type," Paul said, putting down the phone.

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At that point in her life, Joanne had not committed to Paul. "How could I?" she asked Rod Steiger. "He's still married with a wife that's pregnant again." She was thrilled to have been accepted at Actors Studio. Like Paul, she was starting out getting experience in live television.

Teleplays kept coming Joanne's way, and in 1954 she could be seen on "the box" in such dramas as The Dancers, Stir Mugs, Unequal Contest, Interlude, Five Star Final, Segment, Welcome Home, and Homecoming.

It was her role in Interlude that brought her to the attention of Fox executive Buddy Adler. He promised her a film contract, which was slow in coming. In letters, she kept Paul posted, promising that she'd soon be joining him in Hollywood.

Paul was up for yet another movie role in 1954 during the casting of Battle Cry, based on the Leon Uris novel of marines in World War II, which had a key role for a young soldier, that of Danny Forrester.

Bill Orr, the son-in-law of Jack Warner, conducted a joint screen test of both Paul and Joanne. "They came in with a preconceived idea of what they wanted to do in the scene," Orr said. "First they rolled around on a mattress and on the floor, and then they jumped up and engaged in a boxing match. Then they rolled around on a blanket. There were other sundry peccadilloes. It had to be the worst screen test in the history of motion pictures. I suggested to Jack that he give the role of Danny to James Dean. Dean could pull this one off. Newman came off as a jerk."

On hearing the bad news, Paul said, "Losing out to Dean I understand. But the world must never know that I lost the role to Tab Hunter. How could I ever live that down at the Actors Studio? Another God damn humiliation from Hollywood. Too fucking bad. My baby blues in CinemaScope would have lit up the screen."

Janice Rule
Confidential

Joanne also lost the role of the love-hungry Navy wife, the part going to Dorothy Malone.

After the bitter disappointment of losing out on three consecutive movie roles, Paul decided "to become another hired hand at Warner Brothers." He signed the contract, even though Geraldine Page warned him, "Hollywood will destroy you."

He made another major decision. He was going to leave Jackie, Scott, and Susan stashed behind. It was a painful decision, and he knew the risk he was taking. Going to Hollywood as a "bachelor" could well lead to the dissolution of his marriage.

Janice Rule later revealed that Paul practically wept when he learned that Jackie was pregnant with another child. "Unless you want to produce eighteen offspring," Janice warned him, "there are precautions a couple can take."

In saying goodbye to Eartha Kitt, Paul told her, "Something tells me I've got to be free as a bird in Hollywood. It's not that I'm completely ducking my responsibilities. I told Jackie I'll send her a generous portion of my earnings. After all, I'm going to be making one thousand big ones a week."

In telling Rod Steiger goodbye, Paul told him, "I'm not sure I'm the type of guy who wants to come home to face an angry wife every night, especially one who wants to know what I was doing until four in the morning. I like to come home when roosters are crowing. Do you know how many propositions I get in the course of one day, mostly from women, but a ton from men too? Some of these offers are so tempting I can't resist. Maybe I'm more like Marlon Brando than I thought. He told me he believes in sharing `my noble tool with the world.'"

Steiger later speculated that it was far more difficult for Paul to say goodbye to Joanne than to Jackie. "I don't know what really happened on their final night together," Steiger said. "But I bet the sheets caught on fire."

Paul may have told Joanne and he certainly told his comrades at the Actors Studio, "I'll be more like Humphrey Bogart in Hollywood. He never sold out to any studio, and I won't either."

"Good luck," Eartha Kitt had told him after a final visit in her boudoir. "Those directors will treat you like another piece of meat to devour. They'll suck you dry. They are, after all, carnivores."

"Tell me something I don't know," he told her. "Paul Newman knows how to take care of himself."

"On the way to Hollywood, I had anxieties about my age," Paul later told Geraldine Page one night in Los Angeles. "Hell, Marlon made The Men before he was twenty-five, and James Dean is on the dawn of a big film career at an unripe age. Here I am pushing thirty. Some men in their thirties have daughters near the marrying age. Fortunately, I still look fifteen. I imagine that Dorian Gray portrait of mine in the closet is showing a wrinkle or two. I know how youth-obsessed America is, and here I am, `Daddy Newman,' trying to become the next hot stud. Who knows, if Joan Crawford keeps her promises to me, I'll end up her new leading man. Of course, that means I'll have to keep plowing it to the bitch."

"Brando inspires me," Paul said to Geraldine. "Also Dean, to an extent. I want to be as wild as those rebels, Hollywood's new bad boy. For the first time, I want to shake Shaker Heights out of my blood stream. A man like me would be a sucker not to live to the fullest, wife or no wife. Jackie was so hot for me, she insisted on marriage. She pushed me into that dubious institution before I was ready."

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Arriving in Hollywood for the first time, Paul checked into a seedy hotel near the Warners lot. "It was filled with hustlers, hookers, and drug dealers," he later recalled. "I didn't get much sleep. There were knocks on my door all night with offers. He quoted some of the temptations placed before him.

"Hey, man, I give the best blow job in Hollywood," came a high-pitched voice. "I've sucked off Peter Lawford and Burt Lancaster."

"Honey," came the sultry voice of a woman. "I've got the tightest pussy in Hollywood. I've had it surgically altered."

"I've got good stuff, hombre, fresh from Tijuana."

On his first day at the studio, he was told he had to take a screen test before winning the role of a slave, Basil, in The Silver Chalice, a toga epic that Warners hoped would make as much money as did Quo Vadis? with Robert Taylor or The Robe with Richard Burton.

His test with the star of the picture, Virginia Mayo, the former Samuel Goldwyn leading lady, was a disaster. Although Paul photographed beautifully, his acting was wooden.

When his screen test was shown to cigar-chomping executives at Warners, Paul was ordered to report to the Studio Hairdressing Department. "Mr. Kenneth," in charge of operations, already had his instructions in the form of a memo. "Make his hair blonder-not exactly Marilyn Monroe, but a cross between Alan Ladd and Tab Hunter."

Mr. Kenneth was a gossip, and he informed Paul that James Dean had been the first choice to play the young Greek sculptor, Basil. Dean said he told Jack Warner it was a piece of shit and turned it down. Wise choice. He's supposed to be terrific in East of Eden."

Studio chieftains asked Virginia to work seven days a week with Paul to get him ready for another try at a screen test.

At her home in Thousand Oaks, California, shortly before her death, Virginia recalled that working with Paul "wasn't exactly a hardship. He was extremely handsome and gifted. But he'd never done any classical pictures, and this one was simply too difficult for him. He was still a novice in the movie business, after all, and they probably shouldn't have expected this of him. He should not have agreed to do the film, but he was young and eager to make a name for himself."

She claimed she spent two entire weeks working with him and "I would have fallen in love with him if it had lasted any longer." On her second test with Paul, she said he had vastly improved, and this time the studio chiefs countersigned the contract that he'd originally signed in New York.

"Paul was off on that rocky road to becoming a movie star," Virginia said, "and I warned him about some of the pitfalls. Frankly, I misjudged him. I thought he'd end up on that long list of pretty boys who emerged in the 50s never to be heard of again. Working with him during his first picture gave me no clue that he'd become such a big star-and a legendary one at that."

"This is religioso shit," Paul wrote to Joanne back in New York. "I was horrified, traumatized appearing before the camera in a cocktail dress to show off my skinny legs."

This dull, confused, and muddled film was shot against cheesy sets with the actors clad in bargain-basement wardrobes. The plot was based on a bestselling novel by Thomas B. Costain. But Paul felt that Lester Samuels, writing the screenplay, had been inept.

"How can I recite such laughable dialogue?" he asked Virginia. He quoted a typical line to her: "Helena, is it really you? What a joy!"

Virginia Mayo was cast as Helena, with vampiric eyebrows. She played Paul's inamorata.

Pier Angell, as Deborra, was to be Paul's other love interest. Also dyed blonde, Natalie Wood, with whom Paul would become involved in the future, played Helena as a child.

The character actor, Jack Palance, gave the most show-stealing performance as Simon the Magician.

"Palance had the only good moment in the film," Paul recalled. The magician is convinced he could fly. Mounting a tower, he jumps off. And, of course, movie-goers could predict the consequences once Palance was air borne. In the picture, Paul, artisan turned slave, was ordered to craft the silver chalice that Jesus Christ drank from at The Last Supper.

The virginal **Pier Angeli** (left); and the vampiric **Virginia Mayo**
Torn between two lovers and a *Silver Chalice*

Paul wanted out of his contract, but was forced to complete the film, which was directed by Victor Saville, a British expatriate. Despite his illustrious past in the film industry, The Silver Chalice was the wrong film for Saville. Between 1927 and 1954, he'd directed 39 movies, and between 1923 and 1962, he produced 36 films. They included Goodbye, Mr Chips (1939), A Womans Face (1941), Above Suspicion (1943), and Green Dolphin Street (1947).

"Saville didn't like me, and I didn't like him," Paul said. "I accurately predicted that Chalice would be the last film he'd ever direct. He'd have to spend the rest of his life living it down, as would I."

Nothing Paul did seemed to please Saville. The director later said that, "Newman was just one of those troublemakers, anarchists, and eccentrics being shipped over like cattle from New York."

"Saville was a difficult bastard to put up with," Paul said.

"I introduced Paul to his co-star, Pier Angeli, at ten o'clock one morning on the Warners lot," Saville said. "By three o'clock that afternoon, I think he was hopelessly in love. As for Pier, I think she was still in love with Kirk Douglas, or perhaps Marlon Brando."

Frail, tiny, and undeniably lovely, this Italian actress-called "The Little Garbo"-had appeared in a pair of films in her native Italy before gaining prominence in the role of a war bride in Teresa in 1951. The tabloids created a ballyhoo of a big romance between Pier and Kirk Douglas during their time together in 1952 shooting The Story of Three Loves with an all-star cast.

Unlike the hardened, career-driven "bitches" he'd met on Broadway and at the Actors Studio, Paul was enchanted by Pier's infectious laugh. He called her "virginal" and referred to her "refreshing innocence."

Actually she wasn't all that virginal. The Italian director, Vittorio De Sica, had introduced Pier-then known as Anna Maria Pierangeli-to Brando, hoping to cast the pair of them in his upcoming movie. Pier had confided to Virginia Mayo that she'd fallen in love with Brando, and that he'd "deflowered" her on a grassy knoll near Rome's Colosseum. "He went back to America and dumped me," Pier told Virginia.

Cast as Deborra, the Christian girl Paul marries in The Silver Chalice, Pier "looked radiant in Madonna blue with a gold circlet in her hair," in the words of her biographer Jane Allen. Forgetting about his wife or even Joanne, Paul fell hard for Pier, at least according to Virginia.

Although the singer Vic Damone was still a presence in Pier's life, she began to date Paul secretly. She even invited him to her family's home for an Italian Sunday dinner.

Paul at first enchanted Pier's overly protective mother, Enrica Pierangeli. But the day turned sour when Enrica learned that Paul "is not a Catholic. Not only that, but he has the Jew's blood in his veins." That night Enrica forbade her daughter ever to see Paul again, except on the set of The Silver Chalice, where she'd be forced to say lines to him in front of the camera.

After that, Paul was never seen in public with Pier outside of the movie lot. Virginia noted that Pier spent long hours in Paul's dressing room, and "I could only assume they were having sex. Brando had already broken in this angelic-looking little creature."

"I don't think there was any great love affair going on between these two," Virginia claimed. "I know that seems to contradict what I said earlier about Paul falling hopelessly in love with Pier. Perhaps he did, but I think that spell she cast over him lasted for only a few days. Paul was a very sensible young man, and he soon returned to reality."

"For the rest of the shoot, their romance was relatively harmless in spite of the sex," Virginia said. "She always seemed to have the giggles around him, and he was always playing tricks on her. Of course, there was the inevitable touching. They couldn't seem to keep their hands off each other. But I think even these two little lovesick puppies knew that theirs was an affair only of the moment. Nothing serious would come of it."

To complicate matters even more, James Dean, who was shooting East of Eden on a neighboring set on the Warners lot, strolled over to see Paul work. He introduced Dean to Pier.

"A romantic Romeo and Juliet legend was born that day between James Dean and Pier Angeli," Virginia said. "From what I observed, Pier and Dean were smitten with each other for about three weeks. The press and all those Dean biographers made far too much of this romance. If James Dean was in love with anybody on the set of The Silver Chalice, it was Paul Newman himself."

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If Paul ever resented Dean taking Pier from him, he apparently never revealed this to anyone. "What could he say anyway?" Virginia asked. "He was a married man with two kids back in the East somewhere."

Pier Angeli dumps Paul
for a bored **James Dean**

Actually, during the shooting of East of Eden, Dean saw a lot more of Paul than he did of Pier. Whereas Enrica found Paul objectionable, she came to loathe Dean, who was rude and even downright hostile to her. "My daughter forced that horrible young man upon us until I put my foot down and ordered him out of our house forever," Enrica said. "But he was head over heels in love with my Anna Maria, although I began to hear stories about a wild homosexual streak in him."

Many biographers have suggested that the romance between Dean and Pier was platonic. Elia Kazan, the

director of East of Eden, disagreed. "My dressing room was across the hall from Dean's. I could actually hear them making love through the thin walls. Dean was very vocal. Not a sound could be heard from Pier. The sex would usually end in a big argument. After one of these blow-ups, Dean always got drunk. I don't know how I ever finished the picture with him."

For his dates with Paul, Dean preferred some hamburger joint near a beach. He might be photographed in a tuxedo with Pier, but when he was with Paul he wore casual tight-fitting jeans, a T-shirt, and a black leather jacket, evocative of Brando's appearance in The Wild One.

A Sunday afternoon in Hollywood might find Paul and Dean riding horses in Griffin Park. At one point, Dean purchased matching gold friendship rings, and offered one to Paul. According to Rogers Brackett, Paul wore the ring for only a few days, before putting it away somewhere.

"When Hollywood wasn't gossiping about Pier and Dean, they were even more secretively gossiping about the strange friendship between Dean and Newman," Elia Kazan said. "I'm sure word got back to Joanne in New York. Even more devastating, I was told that word had also gotten back to Paul's wife, Jackie, and that she'd threatened to leave him and take his children if he didn't end his friendship with Dean."

"Paul refused to end the friendship, and the marriage puttered on," Kazan said. "But the bells were tolling, signaling the end of that marriage. Even so, it took a long time to die. I think the marriage ended long before the divorce finally came."

While he was making The Silver Chalice, Paul received a letter from Jackie. She told him that she was leaving the New York area and taking his son and daughter back to Wisconsin to live with her parents. His reaction to that move has never been revealed. "He had James Dean," Kazan said. "What did he need with a wife and kids? Paul was enjoying every moment of his bachelorhood, and wilder days were on the way when he moved over to the Chateau Marmont."

Sometimes Pier would defy her mother and ask Dean to take her to his favorite restaurant, the Villa Capri, a Los Angeles rendezvous for celebrities such as Frank Sinatra. Photographers and autograph seekers staked the place out.

Dean's patron, Rogers Brackett, said that Dean specifically patronized the Villa Capri, usually with an attractive female in tow, because he'd been ordered by Jack Warner to be seen dating starlets. One of these was Terry Moore, the so-called secret "wife" of Howard Hughes.

In one of the rare instances he talked to the press, Dean spoke of his involvement with Pier. "Nothing complicated. I'm dating a nice girl for a change. One I can talk to. One who understands me. A good friendship. I respect her. She's untouchable, a Madonna. We move in different circles. Anyway, marriage is out of the question. Her old lady is the boss, and she doesn't like me. Not that I blame her."

The booze, the marijuana, the sudden outbursts of violence became too much for Pier. Without Dean's knowledge, she'd been dating Vic Damone. One night she suddenly broke off with Dean, telling him of her impending marriage. He beat her severely that night, or so he confessed to Elia Kazan. "I went crazy, I guess. Imagine marrying a singer who can't even sing. I sing better than Damone."

When Paul wasn't needed on the set of The Silver Chalice, he strolled over to visit Dean on the East of Eden set. Increasingly, Dean was feuding with both Kazan and the co-star of the picture, aging character actor Raymond Massey, who played his father.

Paul feared that Dean was becoming more and more anti-social. One afternoon when Kazan was showing some VIPs from New York around the set, Dean pulled out his penis and relieved his bladder right on the floor in front of an audience. "He didn't even bother to turn his back on us," Paul later said.

After urinating, Dean stormed off to his dressing room. When the VIPs had departed in shock from the set, Kazan walked over to Paul and put his arm around him.

"I made a big mistake in not casting you for the lead in this picture," Kazan told Paul. "As a result, you're filming that shit next door. I don't know if I'm going to survive this film with Dean. And I thought Brando was difficult to work with. Dean is highly neurotic. Is psychotic the word? Yesterday it got so bad I kicked his ass. He won't speak his lines clearly. He questions my direction. He may not even be an actor at all. I turn the camera on him and what I get is this obviously sick young man coming apart right on film. He is so stupid, so very stupid. His face is that of a poet, so very beautiful. It registers his pain and desolation. Maybe the Academy will take that for great acting and award him an Oscar."

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When he reported to work on the set of The Silver Chalice, Paul heard a knock on his door. It was a studio messenger summoning him to the office of the director, Victor Saville. "So, he's on to me," Paul told the messenger. "My gut tells me I'm getting fired today. I wonder what fucker-or should I say sucker?-Saville has hired to replace me in this turkey?"

In Saville's office, Paul was stunned to encounter Joan Crawford once again. He hadn't seen her since that torrid "audition night" in New York. He'd later tell Virginia Mayo that "Joan was dressed as if she were about to assume the office of the first female President of the United States."

Joan walked over and kissed Paul on the lips. I've missed you, darling," she said. "Welcome to Hollywood." She turned and smiled at Saville. "Victor and I go way back. Don't tell him how long, dear heart."

Saville had produced A Womans Face in 1941, a picture directed by George Cukor, and he'd also produced one of Joan's lesser films, Above Suspicion, in 1943, in which Joan starred opposite the wooden Fred MacMurray.

Rising from his chair, Saville discreetly removed himself from his office. "I know Joan has some private business to discuss with you."

Once the door was shut behind him, Joan moved toward Paul to give him a more thorough kissing. He responded with equal ardor.

"Stop, darling," she said, backing away. "Let's save those commando activities for tonight. A star never wants to mess up her makeup, especially when she's walking around a studio."

She walked over to Saville's liquor cabinet and poured both of them a vodka, even though it was only ten o'clock in the morning. "I'm not a bullshitter. In New York I promised we'd be working together, with you as my leading man. The deal's come through. Yes, yes, I know it's for Republic Pictures, but let's don't go into that. Nicholas Ray is going to direct, and he's the hottest in Hollywood."

"I'm under contract," Paul said.

"Please, don't you think I still have pull at Warners?" she asked. "For years I've been the virtual Queen of Warners."

Over drinks she informed him that she'd acquired the rights to a Western called Johnny Guitar. It was a novel by Roy Chanslor. "Peggy Lee's going to sing `Johnny Guitar.' I'm sure it'll be a hit. There are two strong women's roles. I'm urging Republic to hire Bette Davis for the other female lead. Can you just imagine the box office with Bette Davis and I starring in the same movie?"

"That I've got to see," he said in astonishment. "You and Bette Davis in Western drag?"

"Not only that, but at the end Bette and I will square off in a duel to the death."

"My God, I'm buying the first ticket."

"Here's where you come in. I want you for the role of Dancin' Kid. I'm cast as Vienna, a saloon keeper. Bette and I will be fighting over you. Johnny Guitar will make you one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. Not The Silver Chalice. Even Victor knows that picture's a bust before it's released."

"I'm for it," Paul said, almost without reservation. "To appear on the screen with Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, I'd do anything! I mean anything!"

"Darling, I'll hold you to that promise later tonight," she said. "By the way, you got that billing wrong. Republic has already agreed. It's Joan Crawford and Bette Davis in that order. Don't make that mistake again."

The next day Paul told Virginia Mayo that Joan Crawford "has fallen madly in love with me. What a night! What a woman!"

Wiser in the ways of Hollywood, Virginia warned him "don't get your hopes up until the ink dries on the contract. Even then, you can't be sure."

Johnny Guitar taught Paul a valuable lesson. Most pictures don't necessarily end up with the first cast mentioned. Two weeks later Joan called Paul at Warners with the bad news.

Herbert J. Yates, the owner of Republic, had decided that the combined billing of Joan Crawford with Bette Davis would be too expensive. "He told me my name along could carry the picture," Joan said. "As for the role of the Dancin' Kid, Yates has cast Scott Brady. But, as I told you, I'm not a bullshitter. I will virtually guarantee you that you'll get the lead in my next picture."

After hearing that bad news, Paul turned down Joan's invitation to come to her home for a nightcap that evening.

Joan Crawford in *Johnny Guitar*
rated Paul better in the sack
than John Wayne

A few days later, a columnist floated the item that Scott Brady and Joan Crawford were having a torrid affair.

The ruggedly handsome Sterling Hayden, who eventually played the other male lead in Johnny Guitar, later lamented that Joan's fantasy cast didn't work out. "It would have become the camp classic of all time. The gays alone would have made it a box office bonanza. Hell, each one of those fellows would have gone to see the thing forty times each. Picture it. Bette Davis and Joan Crawford as cowgals battling over pretty boy Newman."

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"If there were any jealousy over the mutual involvement with Pier Angeli, it didn't manifest itself. In the weeks that followed Dean's breakup with Pier, Paul and Dean grew even closer together, the most intimate they would ever become during the short history of their friendship.

With his $1,000-a-week paycheck, Paul could afford a motorcycle to match the one Dean rode up and down the southern coast of California.

Laguna Beach was their favorite spot for overnighting. One of Dean's favorite waterfront joints was called "The Point," and the two of them could be seen there every weekend. Sometimes late at night Paul, at Dean's urging, would strip naked and jump with him into the surf, where the waves crashed around them. After a midnight swim, Dean would make love to Paul on the moonlit sands.

It is only because of Rogers Brackett that we know of this secret period in Paul's life. Perhaps in a sadistic mode, Dean liked to give Rogers a detailed account of his sexual adventures, either one-on-one encounters or else his participation in orgies. He knew this would hurt Rogers, who was very jealous.

"Jimmy always felt he'd prostituted himself in front of me, and that I'd taken advantage of him when he was a struggling actor," Rogers said. "He felt he had to pay me back for that. I thought that once he became a movie star and was financially independent, I'd seen the last of him. But he always came back. The reason is simple: Perhaps without Jimmy really realizing it, I'd become the father figure he never had."

Dean invited Paul to spend many "wild, wild" weekends with him in Tijuana. One of Dean's favorite cafes had a Western name, The Last Chance Saloon. A battered neon sign outlining the figure of a cowboy in chartreuse flickered invitingly over the door.

Instead of songs of Old Mexico, the cafe played country and western music. A long wooden bar ran the entire length of the saloon. On a small stage behind the bar, three nude women, each quite busty and overweight, performed lascivious dances.

As the lead dancer gyrated her massive hips, Dean told Paul, "Look at her squeezing those jugs like maracas." At the end of the number, the patrons, mostly men from California, shouted "Ole!" Pesos were thrown at the nude uglies.

The act was followed by the appearance of two brown-skinned twins who looked no more than fourteen years old. They didn't dance but mostly rubbed their bodies together rotating their pelvises, eventually leaning backwards as they rubbed their young vaginas together.

When the pesos landed on the floor, each girl turned the coins on their sides. Straddling the money, they seemed to suck the coins into their bodies.

"We want those two," Dean instructed the manager. He turned to Paul. "We're gonna rent a room upstairs for an hour or two."

"Don't you think they're a bit young?" Paul asked.

"Nothing is too young for this cowpoke."

On another tequila-soaked weekend, Paul attended an orgy with Dean, at least according to the account told to Rogers. Marijuana smoke competed with incense in a candlelit upstairs room painted a garish purple.

There must have been eighteen people at the orgy, almost equally divided between men and women. Four of the visitors were German tourists. "It was a night of gliding hands, shifting bodies," Dean claimed to Rogers. "If there was an empty orifice, something was plunged into it. Paul and I were the star attractions. Everybody had us that night."

"What a hot, pornographic movie that would have made," Rogers said, masking his pain.

En route back to Los Angeles, Dean and Paul stopped at a cafe for cold beers. "We don't have to go down to Tijuana for an orgy. You can always find one going on at the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood. I'll help you move there this weekend."

Years later, in summing up his own experiences with Dean, Paul left out the graphic details. "Brando was originally offered the lead in Rebel Without a Cause," Paul said, "but Jimmy was the true rebel. Brando could be outrageous in his behavior, but Dean was beyond outrageous. He was in orbit. As he entered the last months of his life, his amusements and diversions became more and more bizarre. Ordinary sexual diversions no longer held his attention. He began to move toward a dangerous new sexual frontier for his excitement. It was as if he knew he was going to die, and he wanted to squeeze decades of life into his final precious months."

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"It was love at first sight," Paul wrote his wife, Jackie, the day Dean checked him into the Chateau Marmont, a faux Loire Valley castle above the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. Paul's favorite novel about Hollywood, The Day of the Locust, had been written while Nathanael West holed up in a room here.

The Chateau Marmont
"The best place in Hollywood
for an orgy"

The assistant manager who showed Paul to his room claimed that "Garbo once occupied this very same room."

When he'd gone, the scent of his perfume still lingered in the air. Dean told Paul, "He tells every new guest they're occupying the room where Garbo lived."

After Paul had checked in with his meager luggage, Dean told him he had to go as he was late for an appointment. "It's with Ronald Reagan, that hasbeen actor. He wants me for a TV show. If he's like most aging actors in Hollywood, he'll probably want me to fuck him."

Dean was referring to a teleplay for General Electric Theater, of which Reagan was the host.

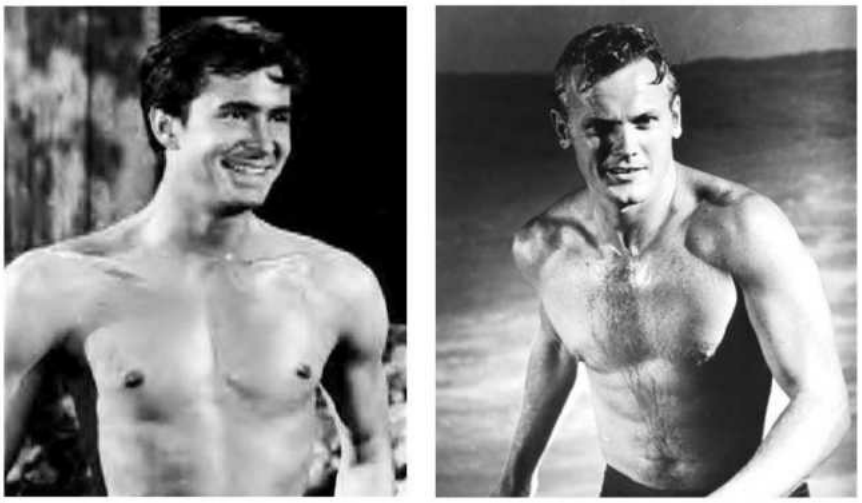
"Are you dressed for the part?" Paul asked, noting Dean's dirty clothes, his trousers held together with a safety pin.

"Reagan will have to take me as he gets me," Dean said. "I'm not gonna put on a suit and tie for that fucker, the star of Bedtime for Bonzo. How could he criticize anyone after that piece of shit?"

With co-stars Eddie Albert and the teenage star, Natalie Wood, Dean was appearing in I'm a Fool, which was adapted from a Sherwood Anderson story about an imprudent young farm boy who takes refuge in role-playing when he falls in love.

With the day off and nothing to do, Paul put on his swimming trunks and wandered down by the pool, hoping to meet some aspiring young movie stars like himself. Dean told him everybody from Tab Hunter to Peter Lawford hung out by that pool.

On this particular afternoon, there was only one guest by the pool, a tall, lithe young man, who looked extraordinarily handsome in a sensitive, poetic way. Perhaps the overcast gray day had made others stay away. Paul placed his towel on a chaise longue and settled in. The young man called to him, "Hey, come over and keep me company. I don't bite."



Lovers **Tony Perkins** (left) and **Tab Hunter** at the peak of their male beauty.
For Tony, Paul was "a sometimes thing"

Within minutes, Paul was shaking the hand of Anthony Perkins, who immediately became "Tony." As it turned out, he was the son of the famous stage and screen actor Osgood Perkins. He was in town to film Friendly Persuasion, playing a gentle pacifist farm lad, the Quaker son of Gary Cooper and Dorothy McGuire. Paul had heard of him when he played the gay student on Broadway in Tea and Sympathy, but had not gone to see his performance.

Tony explained to Paul that he was normally very shy, but a director warned him he had to learn to be more aggressive in Hollywood. "Otherwise, I would never have called to you like that. I would have stretched out, showed off my body like bait, and waited for you to come to me."

"What makes you think I'm interested?" Paul asked. "I'm a married man with kids."

"Tallulah Bankhead once told the press, `Show me a married man with three kids, and I'll show you a homosexual.'"

"Well, I am out here without my wife," Paul said, "and I'm young, handsome, and horny. A guy has needs."

Tony reached for his hand, squeezing it hard. "Let's go across the street and get better acquainted."

"You mean you don't live here?"

"I will when I get my next paycheck from the studio," Tony said. "In the meantime I'm living in this janitor's room across the street. Right now the building has no janitor, and the owner is renting me the room. It's not much but come on over to see where I live."

"I don't mind a little entertainment this afternoon," Paul said.

On the way across the street, Tony put his arm around Paul. "I read in the paper you're making The Silver Chalice with Mayo. Some columnists call you the boy next door, and others say you're the new Brando. Which is it?"

"That's for you to find out this afternoon," Paul said, smiling.

Tony met his smile with an even wider grin. "I think this is going to be the start of a beautiful friendship."

And so it was.

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What we know about the friendship and decades-long love affair between Paul and Tony Perkins comes from "Vampira," who was not only Tony's dear friend but an off-again, on-again lover of James Dean as well.

This Finnish-American actress was really Maila Nurmi. She claimed to be the niece of the legendary Finnish athlete Paavo Nurmi, who broke long-distance running world records in 1921, the year before her birth. In 1944 Mae West, fearing Maila was upstaging her, booted her from her Broadway play, Catherine Was Great. Arriving in Hollywood, she supported herself posing for pin-up photographs in men's magazines such as Gala.

Maila became famous on The Vampira Show at KABC-TV. Running for 16 episodes in 1954, with frequent reruns during the years that followed, it provided a campy format wherein she introduced movies after making a ghoulish entrance amid dry-ice fog. As the camera zoomed in on her vampirelike face, she'd let out a piercing scream before introducing the movie of the night, as she reclined seductively on a skull-encrusted Victorian couch.

Like a Zombie-like mate of Bela Lugosi, she had heavily painted long fingernails in blood red, with a mane of raven-colored hair, and a slim-waisted black-as-night outfit.

After their session in the janitor's room, Tony was hungry and invited Paul to his favorite haunt, Googie's, at the corner of Crescent Heights and Sunset Boulevard. It was a favorite stopover for up-and-coming actors like James Dean and Jack Nicholson.

"I can still remember Tony walking in with this beautiful young man," Vampira later recalled. "Like everyone else, I fell in love with his blue eyes. I think I met Paul while he was still hot from having fucked Tony. He had the smell of sex on him, or did I just imagine that in my fantasy?"

She said that, "I adored him at once. He and Tony made such a beautiful young couple. I had the same feeling about Tony and Tab Hunter, another beautiful young man Tony had just launched an affair with. James Dean had told me about Paul, although I'd never seen him act in anything. In those days all `the boys,' as I called them, were sleeping with each other. My friend Rock Hudson was making the rounds, and Joan Crawford seduced virtually every hot trick that arrived in Hollywood."

Finnish actress **Vampira** (Maila Nurmi)
The female Bela Lugosi.
In the 50s, all the pretty boys confided
their secrets to her.

Vampira claimed that she was surprised that Paul formed lasting friendships with both Tony and Dean. "They were wild boys. Both of them should have been put away somewhere. They were such tormented souls. Paul seemed only mildly disturbed. It was a difficult time for him. He hated working on The Silver Chalice, which he made abundantly clear."

"The afternoon I met him I was shocked to learn that he had a wife and kids stashed somewhere," she said. "But he didn't seem to let that influence the alternative lifestyle he was pursuing in Hollywood. After I got to know Paul better, I made a play for him myself. But he never gave me a tumble."

"I dated Tony too but he always took me home at nine o'clock, and I had to settle for a kiss on the cheek," she said. "With Jimmy, I saw some action, but I don't think his prick was really up for it most of the time. Oh, did I tell you? I was married at the time. To a guy named Dean Reisner. At least I think that's what his name was."

Vampira was only pretending that she didn't remember the name of her first husband. Reisner was a former child actor in silent films, and he later became an acclaimed screen writer. He, in fact, was the screenwriter for Dirty Harry, which, ironically, was a role offered first to Paul Newman before going to Clint Eastwood.

"Throughout his life, Tony kept me in the loop on all his secrets, especially his sexual ones," Vampira said. "He was a tormented soul who really wanted to go straight. It was a hopeless undertaking. I think Paul was basically straight, and had a great love for women, but there was a wild streak in him as well. I think he wanted to suppress that dark side. But in the years I knew him I was convinced that he could be had."

"He had this sense of adventure which came out later in life when he became a race car driver," she said. "Instead of racing cars in his youth, he pursued sexual adventures, as I did."

Vampira was convinced that even though Paul and Tony appeared to have an intense sexual attraction for each other, "They never had any intention of becoming a couple. Both of them were going through a period of sexual experimentation. Nobody was being faithful to anybody in those days. Certainly not Miss Vampira."

"From that afternoon in Googie's, Tony and Paul started hanging out together," Vampira said. "They would continue to do so for all the years left to them. At that time, Paul also had Jimmy when he wasn't engaged with a dozen others. As for Tony, he was about to embark on a hot, torrid romance with Tab Hunter that became the talk of Hollywood."

"I'll let you in on a secret," Vampira said. "Another hot specimen of American manhood, Robert Francis, a true Apollo, was also in Tony's life at the time and was about to enter Paul's orbit as well. That is, when Robert wasn't involved in being the plaything of Howard Hughes. What an incestuous time the 50s were back in Hollywood. And I loved every minute of it. My only regret is that I didn't get to seduce all of those pretty boys. But they were too busy fucking each other."

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During the white heat of their relationship, Paul managed to see Tony almost every day. How Tony also worked ongoing affairs with Tab Hunter and Robert Francis into his life remained a puzzle to Vampira. "You couldn't prove it by me, but Tony must have been insatiable back then," she said.

Tony even convinced Paul to walk barefoot with him from the Chateau Marmont for the entire length of the Sunset Strip to Doheny. "Those two lovebirds were before their time," Vampira said. "In the late 60s, thousands of hippies could be seen walking barefoot on The Strip, but Tony and Paul, it could be said, launched the fad."

"Jimmy Dean and I often ended our night at Googie's just as Paul and Tony were beginning their day," Vampira said. "We would be wasted and Paul and Tony would come in all bright eyed and bushy tailed. Tony would order a dozen prunes and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice, but Paul wanted the works, bacon and eggs. On some mornings, he even ordered a greasy cheeseburger for breakfast."

"Even though I knew they were bed-hopping like rabbits in those days, they seemed totally in love, totally devoted to each other when they were together," Vampira said. "Tony would tell us goodbye and then hitch a ride down Sunset Strip. He always got picked up right away. No sooner did that sexy young stud stick out his thumb than we could hear the screech of brakes from some gay male eager to pick him up and give him a ride to the studio . . . or whatever."

One evening Vampira remembered when Dean, Tony, and Paul all went with her to Googie's. "Paul and Jimmy were up on a soapbox that night. Jimmy said he was not going to become some performing monkey for the studio machine. Paul also claimed that he was not going to be turned into some paper doll created by a studio. `Surface glamour doesn't interest me at all,' Paul said. `These Hollywood stars can have all the false glamour they want. The estates in Beverly Hills. The swimming pools. Their fancy cars. Of course, the easy sex isn't bad.'"

"Tony shocked Jimmy and Paul when he took a different view," Vampira claimed. "`I'm going to climb the ladder of success out here,' Tony vowed. `Go to the right parties, meet all the VIPs. I want to be a movie star and enjoy all the trappings. You guys can ride your motorcycles into the desert and hang out with rattlesnakes. Not me. I want to drink champagne with the big boys.' At that point, Jimmy took his glass of freshly squeezed orange juice and slow ly drizzled it over Tony's head."

Dean was a frequent visitor to Paul's room at the Chateau Marmont. Nicolas Ray, who was directing Dean in Rebel Without a Cause, was also living at the Chateau Marmont. Dean confided to Paul how Ray came to select Sal Mineo for the role of Plato, the closeted gay teenager smitten with Dean's character in Rebel. In spite of the fact that young Sal had seduced Ray, the director still claimed, "I don't see any chemistry between you and Jimmy."

One Sunday afternoon Ray invited both Dean and Sal to his bungalow in the hotel's gardens for a script reading.

"We showed Ray we had chemistry," Dean told Paul, snickering.

"You mean you guys had sex in front of Ray?" Paul asked.

"We went at it like gangbusters, and must have carried on for an hour," Dean said. "Talk about chemistry. After that session, Sal got the part of Plato. The downside of it all is that the kid from the Bronx has fallen hopelessly in love with me. I'll have to introduce you guys and take the heat off myself."

"Thanks, but no thanks," Paul said. "I'm busy enough as it is."

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Tony brought Paul gossip from the set of Friendly Persuasion where he was working with Gary Cooper. "He's quite the ladies' man," Tony said, "in spite of his rumored bisexual past. He told me he's still having an affair with Grace Kelly. Let's face it: They were terrific together in High Noon in spite of the nearly three decades that separate them."

"From what I hear," Paul said, "Grace likes older men. I don't have a chance with her."

"She respects older men if they're big-time stars," Tony said. "The list is long. Oleg Cassini. Bing Crosby, Ray Milland. William Holden. Clark Gable. But I hear for fun she likes hot, good-looking young guys who can still get it up."

Paul to **Grace Kelly:**
"God had a talent for creating exceptional women."

"I've already struck out with her," Paul claimed.

"Spill the beans," Tony said.

"When I first got to New York, I was invited by some friends to attend this party in an apartment. It turned out to be Grace's apartment. I think she was a model at the time. I thought she was the most gorgeous piece of ass I'd ever seen."

"So did you make it?" Tony asked.

"I was the last guest to leave," Paul said. "I asked her if she'd mind if I stayed behind and read for her from a scene in The Glass Menagerie. I wanted to know what she thought about my acting. She listened politely and issued her verdict. `I suggest you pursue some career other than the theater,' she said."

He claimed that even though he felt terrible at the professional rejection, he wanted to try to see if he could provide some other services for her that evening. "She completely rejected me. `You're not my type,' she told me as she showed me to the door. I agree with those who call her The Ice Queen. Even so, I'm still smitten."

In one of those coincidences that often occur in Hollywood, Paul was lying by the oval-shaped pool waiting for Tony when he saw Grace leave from one of the bungalows in the gardens. She walked past him, but not before she checked out his trim, muscular physique. He wasn't going to speak to her unless she addressed him, which she did.

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" she asked. "New York, no doubt. I know that is the oldest pickup line in the books, but your face does look familiar."

He reminded her of that party in her apartment in New York.

"Oh, I was so cruel," she said. "It just goes to show you. Jack Warner knows more about talent than I do. I hear you're making a big Biblical epic that's going to be the hottest film of the year."

"Your scouts have misinformed you," he said. "A loser."

"All actors must face a dud from time to time," she said.

"But not for their Hollywood debut."

She thought for a second. "You're right. Not for a film debut. If you bomb the first time out, this town doesn't believe in giving second chances-at least not always."

"When I met you in New York, I thought you were the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life," he said. "Seeing you today, I want to revise my opinion."

She brushed her hair nervously. "I must look an awful mess." As she said that, she glanced at the distant bungalow. "A rough-and-tumble afternoon."

"You misunderstand me," he said. "You're more than the most beautiful woman. A regal princess. The Helen of Troy of Hollywood. God had a talent for creating exceptional women. Take Marlene Dietrich for example. And now we have Grace Kelly herself."

"You're such a bullshitter," she said, "but I love hearing you talk. Are you free tomorrow at three o'clock?"

"Not a thing in the world to do," he said. "No studio work at all."

She glanced at her watch and looked back once more at the bungalow. "Knock on that bungalow door over there. I've got to go. Until tomorrow."

"I'll count the seconds," he said.

She paused and looked back at him with admiration. "Eat your Wheaties," she cautioned before racing off.

"God knows what other deep-dicking she had lined up," Paul later told Vampira over breakfast the next morning at Googie's. "Yesterday afternoon and for most of the early evening, I fucked Grace Kelly. The little shit, Paul Newman, from Shaker Heights, Ohio, got the goddess herself. Gary Cooper told Tony that Grace `looks like a cold bitch before you take her pants downand then she explodes.' Truer words were never said."

"Is this going to be an ongoing affair?" Vampira asked.

"I doubt that very seriously," he said. "Of course, she claimed I was the best and most beautiful man she'd ever seduced. I'm not that flattered, considering that she usually sleeps with men over a hundred. Maybe she'll call, maybe she won't. I'm a small fish in the sea. She's looking for a big whale, at least in terms of money and fame. I may have a chance to become the beach boy in her life."

"Where does the beach come in?" she asked.

"I hear that rich women on the French Riviera hire beautiful French beach boys for an afternoon of sex. When they're finished with them, they pay the dues and show them to the door, the way Grace did with me that night in New York."

"I don't know," Vampira said. "I'm not advising that you sit by the phone waiting for her to call. But I hear that

even though she's promiscuous, she's terribly lonely and frustrated in her life. Looking for love that she's never found. If you settle for being a sometimes playtoy, there might be a role for you in her life. Perhaps the role of a leading man in her next picture."

"Yeah, right," he said. "I'm still waiting for that call from Joan Crawford."

"Crawford's yesterday," Vampira said. "Grace is the Hollywood of tomorrow. Fuck future Oscar winners, not the Academy winners of Hollywood's past."

"Based on what I experienced last night, I'd follow Grace Kelly to the ends of the world for another session like that. It was the best sexual experience of my life." He paused, sipping his coffee. A frown crossed his brow.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I just had this God-awful feeling in my gut," he said. "What if my time with Grace was the best sex I'll ever have in my entire life, the biggest high, the grandest thrill?"

"Don't worry," Vampira said. "That sexual high will only be realized, big boy, when you come to your senses and take on Vampira herself. If Grace Kelly is The Ice Queen, I'm Zorita, Princess of the Tropics. I feel a tropical heat wave coming on."

"Forget it," he said, getting up and kissing her lightly on the cheek. "I gotta go."

Years later she remembered the look of his back racing out of Googie's, and the look of something else. "Great ass!" she said to herself.

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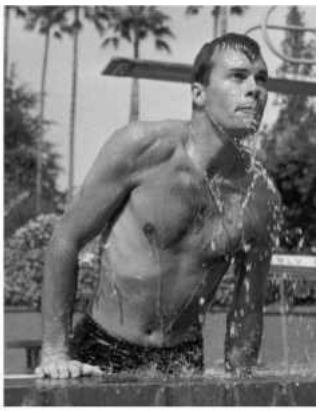
The following morning, Paul went down to the next floor and knocked on Tony's door. It was time for their Saturday morning barefoot walk along Sunset Strip. Tony called out to him but there was a long delay before he actually opened the door. He was stark naked. "Come on in," Tony said, flashing a wicked smile. "Hustle your ass, boy. I don't want to stand here in the doorway putting on a show for all the faggots in this seedy joint."

Sitting up in bed, a sheet covering the lower half of his body, was one of the handsomest men Paul had ever seen, Robert Francis, who was relatively new to the Hollywood scene. As the trade papers had it, he was playing the coveted role of Ensign Willie Keith in The Caine Mutiny, a role he might have won by having a torrid affair with Van Johnson, who used his influence to get him the part. When not with Van or Tony, Robert was rumored to be the kept boy of Howard Hughes.

Robert jumped out of bed to shake Paul's hand. He too was stark naked, impressively so. "I've heard great things about you from Tony," Robert said.

"You're the hot new kid on the block, and I can see why," Paul said. "You-not me-were voted one of Screen World's Promising Personalities of 1954."

Both Tony and Robert dressed and joined Paul for the walk over to Googie's for breakfast with Vampira, who would just be ending her night as they were beginning their day.



Actor **Robert Francis:** Cooling off after flying too close to the sun

As Vampira recalled years later, "I got there before them, and as I looked up I thought Paul, Robert, and Tony were the three most beautiful men I'd ever seen. Each one was an Adonis, a true Greek God. For the first time in my life, I wished I'd been born a handsome, good-looking gay male so I could join in on the fun."

"Robert and I became fast friends that morning," she claimed. "He had a great swimmer's build on him. He was very clean-cut. His barber had given him the faddish brush-cut at the time. I thought he'd have a career in Hollywood playing loyal, flag-waving military types. Robert was at least five years younger than Paul, but he and Paul looked exactly the same age."

Vampira claimed that even though Tony had made a date to be with Paul, he had cancelled it without explanation. "Frankly, I think Tony was racing off to hook up with Tab Hunter, preferring that blond heartthrob that day over Paul or Robert. That was his choice. It wouldn't have been mine. He brought Robert and Paul together, hoping Paul would accept Robert's invitation to go flying with him. Robert was a student pilot at the time."

Driving to the airport with Robert at the wheel, Paul was astonished to learn that the pilot teaching Robert to fly was Howard Hughes. Not only that, but Paul was en route to the airport to meet the famous aviator himself.

"He's crazy about me," Robert candidly confessed. "I've replaced Guy Madison and Jack Buetel in his life. When we're together, there's no part of my body that goes unattended, even my big toe. Howard is very oral."

"Are you sure you want me to tag along today?" Paul asked. "Sounds like three's a crowd."

"No, Howard wants me to introduce him to hot young guys, especially those as good looking as you. That's part of our deal. He likes women too, although most of the broads he has stashed away in the Hollywood Hills are just for show."

Meeting Howard Hughes for the first time, Paul was impressed, although somewhat surprised by his sloppy attire. For such a world-famous aviator and movie producer-not to mention one of the world's richest men-Hughes seemed shy. Robert had warned Paul to speak loudly around Hughes because he was hard of hearing.

With very little conversation, Hughes invited Paul into his two-engine plane. Paul took a back seat as Hughes eased into the pilot's seat. Robert sat beside him as the student co-pilot.

Howard Hughes: The Aviator crash-lands with Paul on Catalina.

Not even asking where they were going, Paul settled into his seat to take in a bird's eye view of the Southern California coastline. Hughes flew south, eventually heading out over the Pacific. He couldn't wait to get back to Hollywood to tell his friends that he'd been piloted by Hughes. It was only when the plane began to descend after the most scenic flight of Paul's life that Robert yelled back that they were landing on Catalina Island.

Once on land, Paul thanked Hughes for the flight and told him how much he'd enjoyed it. All three of them got into a waiting car, with Hughes the driver. He steered them to a beachfront, avant-garde modern house overlooking the crashing rocks below.

Paul found himself invited to spend the night, and Robert showed him to his room, as Hughes had some important calls to make to the mainland. "I didn't know this was going to be an overnight thing," Paul whispered to Robert in his bedroom.

"It'll be just fine," Robert assured him. "Howard told me he likes you a lot."

"I'm not a male prostitute," Paul told Robert. "I'm not for sale."

"You don't understand," Robert said. "This man has power, wealth. He's already promised to make me the biggest male star in Hollywood. Play along. Maybe he'll make you the second biggest star in Hollywood."

"I don't know," Paul said. "I'm not into this."

Hughes called for them from the living room where he invited them for a late lunch at this little eatery he knew along the coast. "Best food in Catalina," he promised Robert and Paul. Paul enjoyed the seafood platter and began to warm to Hughes, who told them fascinating stories about his failed attempt to launch the Spruce Goose, his gigantic wooden plane built during World War II. He even claimed that several prominent Republicans had asked him to run for President of the United States against Harry S. Truman on the Democratic ticket in 1948.

After a tour of Catalina, Hughes drove both men back to their beachfront house. It was siesta time. Robert and Hughes retired to the master bedroom, but Paul wasn't sleepy. He walked along the rocky coast, communing with the seagulls. Back at the house, he noticed that Hughes and Robert were still locked away in their bedroom.

Feeling tired, he too retired but was awakened by Robert around eight o'clock. Hughes wanted to take them to dinner. As Paul would later tell Vampira, "The dinner and the conversation were just fine, just like it'd been at lunch. But I feared Hughes was going to put the move on me when we got back to the house. Perhaps a three-way with Robert. That didn't happen. We sat out and drank in the moonlight and then Hughes got up and told Paul good night. Robert followed him back into that bedroom. I guess I'd misjudged him."

As Paul would confide to Vampira two days later, he was awakened around three o'clock in the morning by some presence in his bedroom. When he bolted up, he noticed Hughes standing in the light in the doorway, lit from a lamp in the living room. He was clad only in his underwear.

"He said he was lonely and couldn't sleep," Paul told Vampira. "He asked me if he could join me in bed. There was no way I could make it with Hughes. I don't know why. I just couldn't do it. I'd hustled my ass to get launched on Broadway, but I just couldn't pull off that stunt in Hollywood. I got up and walked over to the door, indicating I was ready to close it on him. `You've got Robert,' I told him. `You don't need me.' He didn't say one word but turned and went back to his bedroom. I not only shut my door, I locked it."

Paul claimed that when he finally fell asleep, it was almost dawn. He woke up to find the house empty. Hughes and Robert had apparently flown back to the mainland without him. There was no note. He had to sail back to the mainland on the public ferry and make his way by bus back to the Chateau Marmont.

Vampira said that although Paul and Hughes failed to form a relationship, he continued to see Robert and Tony. "Apparently, Paul didn't blame Robert for Hughes taking French leave."

"For the next few weeks, I saw Paul spending a lot of time with both Robert and Tony," Vampira said. "I think it wasn't long before all three of them started sleeping together. The three-way with Robert and Hughes didn't work out, but Paul seemed to go for a three-way with Tony and Robert. God, did I envy those boys. Today they would surely have made a sex tape, so we could at least enjoy their romps vicariously. Sigh."

After the completion of The Silver Chalice, and before Paul flew back to New York, another blonde, even more famous than Grace Kelly, checked into the Chateau Marmont late at night. She wore no makeup and had sunglasses on, her hair hidden under a large scarf.

The Silver Chalice was in the can, and Paul was due at the studio at one o'clock for some publicity shots. He decided to sleep until noon. Around eleven o'clock that morning, there was a knock on his door.

Marilyn Monroe:
Chateau Marmont's newest resident. "Is she as frigid as rumor has it?"

Thinking it was Tony or perhaps James Dean, Paul staggered to the door in his underwear. When he opened the door, he encountered Marilyn Monroe.

"My, you look good enough to eat," she said, appraising his almost nude figure. She carried a bottle of chilled champagne with her. "Why don't you invite mommy in and give her a big, sloppy wet one to welcome her back to Hollywood. After all, I'm the reigning queen of this dump."

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It is mainly through Shelley Winters and Rod Steiger that we know of the ongoing relationship between Paul and Marilyn. Steiger was fascinated by Marilyn and "dug" most of the secrets of the relationship from Paul. Marilyn herself confided all her romantic trysts to Shelley, her former roommate. Although she kept most of Marilyn's secrets during her short lifetime, after Marilyn's early death Shelley became more outspoken.

From scattered, fragmented accounts revealed over the years, a rather touching love story emerged between Paul and Marilyn. When she'd flown back to Hollywood from New York, Marilyn was still hoping to play the lead in Picnic, starring opposite Paul.

But career moves were hardly on Marilyn's mind when she came knocking on Paul's door that long-ago morning back at the Chateau Marmont. He would later tell Steiger that it was Marilyn's voice more than her body that he "found the most seductive tool I've ever known. No one has a voice like hers."

"It was the perfect voice to sing `Bye, Bye Baby,'" he would recall. "She almost whispers at times, luring you closer to her," he told Steiger. "She could raise that voice to make a point, then it would become a whisper again, almost a coo. There was the obvious sensuousness in her voice that sound engineers captured so brilliantly, but in person that voice was even more erotic, even though it carried a hint of desperation at all times. It also made a man feel that his cojones were bigger than they were. It made you want to protect Marilyn, perhaps save her from her own self-destruction."

Shelley claimed that in Paul Marilyn "found a safe port. There was no lusty pounding like you read in a pornographic novel. It wasn't that kind of a relationship. Marilyn knew that he was going through a sexually confused period of his life. Personally, I think she felt he could have gone completely gay at this point, and she wanted to lure him back to the warmth and comfort of a woman's breast. Both of them knew what a failed marriage was. Until the final day of her life, she had a tender feeling for Paul and always regretted never having appeared in a film with him. `The two of us would have brought magic to the screen,' she once told me."

Shelley wanted to emphasize the tender and more romantic side of Paul's secret relationship with Marilyn, but Steiger in his man-to-man talks with Paul preferred to get down to basics. "Is Marilyn as frigid as rumor has it?"

"Not at all," Paul said. "She's loving and giving of herself Not an acrobat like Joan Crawford. Marilyn's legs, like those of Elizabeth Taylor, are too short. Her stomach's a bit pudgy. Many younger and even more beautiful women have firmer breasts and more shapely thighs. It's hard for me to define exactly what it is that makes Marilyn so special. It's a luminous quality, I guess, the aura she carries with her, a radiance I've never known in any other woman. She has such a wistfulness about her. When she's with me, she seems to have this yearning thing that only I can satisfy. She immediately sucks you into her life, her problems, her love, her desires. No wonder she's America's sex symbol. Just compare Marilyn Monroe on the screen to Mae West, and you'll see how far America has come since the 1930s in its so-called sex symbols."

"Among women, Marilyn is the sex symbol," Steiger concurred. "She made Jane Russell in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes look like a truck driver in drag. As for the men, I hear you're about to replace Brando as the male sex symbol of the 50s."

"If only that were true," Paul said. "Marilyn and I aren't sex symbols, far from it. We're both two lonely people drawn to each other to share our desperate insecurities. We find comfort in each other."

After Paul had made love to Marilyn in his bed at the Chateau Marmont, the same bed that had been warmed by Robert Francis only hours before, he forgot all about his publicity photo session at Warners with Virginia Mayo and Pier Angeli.

"I remember her sitting in my armchair after we'd made love," Paul told Steiger. "She just sat there staring out the window at the blinding sunshine of the day. She'd washed off all that makeup and her hair was a bit matted. She didn't feel the need to talk, but huddled in that chair almost like a little girl. It was like she was waiting for some message to invade her mind. She was waiting for some answer. But an answer to what question?"

To break the silence, he said, "A penny for your thoughts."

Her eyes widened in a bewildered expression, as if she'd become aware of his presence for the first time that day. "I'm thinking of what I'll be on the day I'm no longer pretty anymore. When beautiful guys like you will no longer want to make love to me and when my only male companions will no longer be straight guys but homosexual men who will still be worshipping and adoring me when I'm eighty-five."

"That day will never come," he assured her. "You'll grow more beautiful as the years go by."

She suddenly rose from the armchair and stood before him, dropping the bathrobe he'd lent her and appearing stark naked. Her pubic hair was blonde, but he suspected she'd dyed it.

Thirty minutes later in his bathing suit, he was driving her to the crashing waves of the Pacific, where she wanted to frolic in her own skimpy white bathing suit. She splashed his chest with water. "Your chest is so beautiful. Especially your tits."

"You've got great tits too, babycakes," he said, splashing her back. "By the way, you're the first woman who's ever appreciated my tits. Up to now, women have ignored them."

"I've known men with more powerful physiques, but your chest is taut, sexy, and hard, not like that of an overly developed gorilla at Venice Beach, all muscle and beef except where it really counts. Yours is a real man's chest, not like some hairy ape rubbing against my tender breasts."

After nearly an hour frolicking in the waters, she sat with him on the sands staring out at the sea. "Sometimes I can sit for hours watching the Pacific Ocean," she told him. "It's not like the Atlantic. All I've seen of that ocean is from some industrial site. As a little girl growing up in California, I would come to the shore and sit for hours looking out at the sea. I know how dangerous it can be in a storm, and how many people it's killed. After all these years in Hollywood, I also know about shark-infested waters. But somehow I've always had this warm, cuddly feeling looking out at the sea because I associate it with freedom. That's something I've never had."

"It's something I don't have either," he told her. "I'm chained. To my family. To the studio. Even to my own sex drive that has taken some bizarre twists, especially after meeting James Dean. I want to be a faithful family man, a devoted father and loving husband bringing home the kisses and bacon every night. But that's not me. Deep down and late at night my true character comes out. I'm a bad boy just like Dean and Marlon Brando. I think I'm going to be a bad boy for the rest of my life. But I don't intend to let the world know me as such. I'm not going to live a life exposed in blaring headlines in tabloids."

"You and I are kindred spirits," she told him. "But it's too late for me to project the perfect image. There's no way at this point that I'll ever be squeaky clean again. I heard that Elia Kazan nailed me. He told Lee Strasberg that I was `just a simple, decent-hearted kid whom Hollywood brought down, legs parted.' Don't let that happen to you. I've sucked many a cock on the way to my horizon."

"It's different for men," he said. "We have it easy. All we have to do is stand there while some balding fart gets down on his knees and sucks our dick."

She laughed in that funny little way she had of expressing surprise and delight, and then she leaned over and kissed him tenderly on the lips. "Let's make a deal right today," she said. "Let's always be lover and friend to each other. Never to chain one another down. Only coming together when we need to, without any sense of obligation. Just two grownups loving and trusting each other until the end."

"You've got yourself a deal," he said. "Let's seal this pact with a kiss."

That would be the first of thousands of kisses exchanged between Marilyn and Paul in their futures. Bonded together, both of them would see many a sunrise light the Pacific, but also many a sunset.

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Fortunately, Paul's contract with Warners allowed him to do Broadway plays and even appear in teleplays. During the last week of the shoot on The Silver Chalice, he besieged his agent to "get me back on Broadway and make sure it's a god damn good play." He must have already made at least a hundred phone calls urging this. "I'm now finishing what will be the worst film made in the Fifties. I've got to find something great to save my fucking career."

To complicate an already-complicated life, Joanne Woodward flew into Los Angeles. She had signed a contract to film an episode, Interlude, starring Dick Powell, as part of a presentation on TV for the Four Star Playhouse.

The American singer, producer, actor, and director, Dick Powell, was her co-star. He was famously married to June Allyson, MGM's fading sweetheart of the 1940s. On meeting Joanne, he told her that "the best thing about switching from being an actor to being a director is that you don't have to shave or hold in your stomach anymore."

Joanne knew Powell from his 1940s tough guy roles at RKO and less so for his 30s musicals, often starring Ruby Keeler, including 42nd Street.

In Interlude, Joanne played a young woman in love with an older man. Throughout the shoot, Powell had high praise for her acting talent. At the show's wrap, he sent a print of her work to Buddy Adler, who had only recently won an Oscar for the 1953 film From Here to Eternity, starring two of Paul's friends, Frank Sinatra and Montgomery Clift. At the time Adler previewed Joanne's work, he was hoping to replace Darryl F. Zanuck as head of production at Fox.

Joanne Woodward:
Losing out to Marilyn

Adler, like Powell, was so impressed with Joanne's screen work that he showed clips to Zanuck, who was still his boss. The cigar-chomping studio boss wasn't impressed. "No tits, no talent, no looks, and no tail."

"What do you mean by no tail?" Adler asked. "Her ass looks fine to me."

"I mean I can't fuck her," Zanuck said. "She won't put out from what I hear. Besides, I hear she dates only fags like Newman and that writer, Gore Vidal. Sign her up if you want to. But if she fucks up, you're to blame. Fox isn't into losing money."

Chapter Four

Live Fast, Die Young

Back in New York, Paul had a reunion with Jackie, who was nearing term with their third child. Several months earlier, she'd left her parents' home in Wisconsin and moved back to Long Island.

The next day, Paul met once again with Geraldine Page. He spoke of his marriage, but didn't relay any details associated with what actually happened the night he got together with Jackie after their long absence.

After their class at the Actors Studio, he and Geraldine Page adjourned to a little actors' pub in the Broadway area near Ninth Avenue to catch up with each other. He spoke of his disintegrating marriage and his rapidly increasing family.

Over drinks, he confessed to her that he had fallen in love with Joanne and out of love with Jackie. "But I can't leave a pregnant wife. What kind of heel would that make me? I've got to hang in there and try to make it work." She remembered his being near tears. Finally, he blurted out the truth. "I'm torn apart."

Geraldine gave only romantic advice. "The heart has its way," she said, "and we must follow our hearts. We're artists and artists can't be bound by conventional morality. The goal of the artist is self-fulfillment. I'm not suggesting you abandon your family. Take care of them. See to their needs. But, for God's sake, don't become the family man from Long Island with three brats in tow."

"Even though I'm in love with Joanne, I can't be faithful to her," Paul said. "Marilyn told me that she always wants to be faithful to her husband or lover of the moment, but can't. It is physically and emotionally impossible for her, as it is for me. I can be seduced by a beautiful woman."

"Or a beautiful man," Geraldine said provocatively.

"That too," he said. "But I don't want to go into that."

"Don't worry about being faithful," she advised. "Have you ever heard of an actor who was faithful to anyone?"

"Come to think of it, I haven't."

"Then go for it!" she urged. "Do what is needed and wanted to make Paul Newman a star. Give love when you feel it and withdraw love when it's not real."

Paul did not necessarily follow Geraldine's romantic advice, at least not at once. Back with Jackie, he promised to give up Joanne but refused to discuss James Dean. "I'm finished in the movies," he proclaimed, saying that in the future he would pursue work in the theater and live in the New York area as they awaited the birth of another baby.

Jackie, or so it is believed, fell for that line, although Paul may have momentarily meant it. His wife seemed convinced that the birth of another child would somehow hold the marriage together.

While waiting for Paul to make up his mind, Joanne began to date other men, including James Costigan, the actor and playwright. Right before his death in December of 2007, Costigan spoke of his role in the lives of Paul and Joanne. He had retired to Bainbridge Island in the state of Washington where he lived as a recluse.

Was playwright **James Costigan** (top photo) a serious contender for Joanne Woodward's hand?

"I came into the life of Joanne Woodward when she was dating Paul on the sly," he claimed. "We were said to be in love but that wasn't the case. She wasn't in love with me, and I certainly wasn't in love with her. She was using me actually. She felt that by going out with me, she'd make Paul jealous. Her words, `Surely he'll come to his senses and divorce Jackie and marry me. She's all wrong for him. I'm Miss Right. I could make him happy.-

"I think in many respects that was true," Costigan said. "Time, or at least the longevity of the Woodward/Newman marriage, proved her right. The press even went so far as to print rumors of Joanne's engagement to me. Both of us got a chuckle out of reading that fiction. I think ever since their work on Picnic, Joanne was determined to get Paul Newman one way or another. I never quite understood it. His prick must have been made of solid gold."

"Joanne had heard that Jackie was prettier than she was, and this infuriated her," Costigan claimed. "Jackie was also said to be sexier, although I would think dumping three kids didn't improve that figure. Joanne kept repeating what she'd said so many times in the past. `That one trapped Paul, first with her good looks and then with all those babies.'"

"At one point, Joanne told me, `Paul is my best friend. I can't stand to see him so miserable. I'll never let him go. I'm determined to have him, and I don't much care how I get him. It's going to be harder than I thought, but in the end I'll prevail. I want that man. When a Georgia gal like me goes after a man, she usually gets him.'"

"Yes, Miss Scarlett O'Hara," Costigan said mockingly. "Always in pursuit of Ashley Wilkes when you could have a far sexier Rhett Butler."

Paul was already a familiar figure to Costigan. In 1953, they had appeared together in "The Bells of Damon," an episode within the TV series The Web, as produced by Mark Goodson and Bill Todman. "The Bells of Damon" was aired on July 19, during the hot summer of 1953.

"I don't think Paul and Joanne were even sleeping together," Costigan claimed. "Paul was still banging his wife, Jackie. He had to be. Or else those babies weren't his."

"I wasn't certain about Paul at the time," Costigan said. "The scuttlebutt along Broadway was that he had only married to mask a homosexual streak in him. I'd heard rumors that he was carrying on with both men and women, which turned out to be true. So all that talk that Paul and I were fighting over Joanne's hand was moronic. We actually became friends. Don't forget that both Paul and Joanne would star in my 1964 Broadway comedy, Bahy Want a Kiss."

"Paul and I actually shared more in common than Joanne," Costigan said. "His parents wanted him to take over their sporting goods business in Ohio. I was born in East Los Angeles. My parents wanted me to take over the family hardware store. We both told our parents to go fuck themselves, but ever so politely."

The script written by **Stewart Stern** for James Dean made him a legend.

But the one he wrote for **Paul** (pictured behind sunglasses on the left in the photo above) was a box-office failure.

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Stewart Stern was born into Hollywood royalty as the nephew of Adolph Zukor, the founder of Paramount Pictures. The young writer would become a key player in Paul's career. Stern is best known today for writing the 1955 film, Rebel Without a Cause. But prior to that, Stern chugged out some made-for-TV teleplays, one of which featured Paul Newman.

Broadcast on November 21, 1954, Thunder of Silence, written by Stern, was sponsored by the Goodyear Television Playhouse. Paul co-starred with Herbert Berghof and Inga Stevens in this drama of a troubled teenager and her father who wind up moving in with a farmer and his family.

From this telecast, a friendship developed between Stern and Paul that would last for years. At the time of their meeting, Stern was not only working on Rebel Without a Cause, but writing another feature film, The Rack, for Glenn Ford. Paul had no clue that he would ultimately become the star of The Rack or that in years to come Stern and Paul would collaborate on the 1968 movie, Rachel, Rachel, starring Paul's future wife, Joanne Woodward.

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When Paul was working almost night and day in rehearsals for The Desperate Hours on Broadway, it was announced that the premiere of his long dreaded The Silver Chalice would take place in the small resort town of

Saranac Lake in the Adirondack Mountains in Upper New York State. This remote town was selected because it had sold the most Christmas seals in a nationwide competition.

At the film's gala premiere in Saranac Lake's Pontiac Theater, Art Linkletter welcomed the stars of the film-all except one, Paul Newman himself.

After the premiere, and after its opening in theaters across the country, the film received a flood of disastrous reviews. Its dialogue elicited gasps, giggles, and embarrassed cringing from movie audiences.

The New Yorker pounced on Paul, its reviewer claiming that "Paul Newman delivers his lines with the emotional fervor of a Putnam Division conductor announcing local stops."

It was humiliating to Paul for reviewers to call him "the second Brando," especially when 1954 saw the original Brando release two archetypal movies, The Wild One and On the Waterfront.

The New York World Telegram, as did most newspapers, hammered home the Brando link. The Telegram reviewer noted Paul's "astonishing resemblance to Marlon Brando, an excessively sullen Brando."

Joanne didn't like the movie either, claiming, "Paul didn't lift his head. Perhaps he kept it buried in shame. You couldn't even see those baby blues."

In 1963, when Paul was one of the major stars of Hollywood, Channel 9 in Los Angeles announced that it was running The Silver Chalice for one entire week. In horror, Paul took out an ad in the Los Angeles Times. Encased in a black, funereal border, it proclaimed PAUL NEWMAN APOLOGIZES EVERY NIGHT THIS WEEK.

Instead of frightening viewers away from this multimillion-dollar flop, the ad had the opposite effect. TV watchers by the thousands tuned in to see the disaster, and The Silver Chalice scored one of the highest ratings in the annals of TV in Southern California.

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For months, from the West Coast, Paul had told his wife that he needed to be alone in Hollywood to concentrate on his role of Basil in The Silver Chalice. Now back in New York, with a Broadway opening scheduled at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre for February 10, 1955, he told her he needed all of his days and most of his nights to focus on his lead role in The Desperate Hours. Except on most of those nights, he wasn't alone.

Director Josh Logan thought Paul was horribly miscast in this chillerdiller, a play adapted from a suspense novel by Joseph Hayes, telling the story of three escaped convicts who break into a house in Indiana and terrorize the Hilliard family. Paul's friend from the Actors Studio, Karl Malden, played the lead as the family man whose home is invaded, with film actress Nancy Coleman cast as his wife.

In a wild departure from the role of the innocent boy of Picnic, Paul was cast as Glen Griffin, a swaggering psychotic gangster, evocative of Humphrey Bogart's performance with Bette Davis in the 1936 The Petrified Forest. Under a close cropped skull, Paul played the grinning gunman, giving a splashy performance. Paul's rival, Cliff Robertson, had been slated for the role but had to drop out.

Even before he went on the Broadway stage, Paul knew he wouldn't get the lead role in the film version. The Desperate Hours had been filmed in Hollywood between October and December of 1954, starring Humphrey Bogart, who was far too old for the role but still had star power. According to the terms of the agreement, the Bogie film could not be released until the Broadway play had had its run.

George Grizzard
Paul's onstage brother
and offstage lover

A handsome young actor, George Grizzard, was cast as Paul's brother, Hank, in the play. Paul bonded with George on the first afternoon they met and began hanging out with him almost immediately.

Robert Montgomery, a fading actor from the 1930s and 40s, was assigned to direct. After his movie career wound down, he'd successfully switched to television and directing, hitting it big beginning in 1950 with his Robert Montgomery Presents TV series, which ran for five years.

"When George and Paul met, it was apparent to all the cast that there was a strong sexual attraction there," said actress/writer Mary Orr, who appeared as Miss Swift in the play. "Even back in the 1950s, all the actors in our cast were sophisticated about such matters. But not our director. Robert Montgomery was the biggest homophobe I've ever met in the theater."

"Once Montgomery found out that George and Paul had become lovers, he made it really tough on them," Mary said. "Away from the other actorshe didn't want Karl Malden to know-he tore into the performances being given by George and Paul, leaving no flesh on their bones. George gave in to Montgomery, but Paul stood his ground. He fought constantly with the director. Before opening night, I thought either Paul or Montgomery would bolt the play."

"George and Paul made a lovely couple," said Patricia Peardon, cast as the daughter in the play. "I often went with them to Sardi's after the show. I was their beard. There were rumors on Broadway that we were having a three-way. I could be so lucky."

"George lost his heart to Paul," Patricia claimed. "It was obvious to me from the beginning that Paul was only using George for a sexual adventure. In a few months, I was certain that Paul would be back in Hollywood screwing James Dean, Tony Perkins, or whomever. He was very promiscuous in those days."

"I heard that he had a wife and kids," Patricia said, "but he never mentioned them. When Joanne Woodward came around, Paul would become very straight indeed. He didn't want Joanne to find out he was painted with the lavender brush. Of course, no one calls it lavender brush anymore."

Nancy Coleman was also very accepting of the hot romance going on between Paul and George. She also hung out with the two lovers, entertaining them with stories of her days in Hollywood and her many affairs with her costars. Even though he was married to Jane Wyman at the time, Ronald Reagan seduced her when they'd filmed Kings Row together. She'd also had scandalous affairs with Paul Henreid and Errol Flynn, and she said that her former costar, Barbara Stanwyck, had made lesbian advances to her.

Nancy Coleman
"Reagan committed adultery with me."

Montgomery had been badly stung by his only known venture into homosexuality. "It occurred during World War II with his friend Douglas Fairbanks Jr.," Nancy claimed. "When we went out together at night, both Paul and George attacked Montgomery and told me how much they hated him. From what I heard, Montgomery and Fairbanks were blackmailed when someone discovered their affair. Since that time, Montgomery seemed to have a chip on his shoulder about homosexuals, and he took it out on poor George and Paul during our pre-Broadway rehearsals and trial runs."

Paul returned to his old stamping grounds of New Haven in January of 1955 for the pre-Broadway run-through. After opening there, the play moved to Philadelphia. While in that city, another actor in the play, James Gregory, convinced George and Paul to go with him to see The Silver Chalice.

"Of course, George and I had to get Paul drunk before he'd go into the movie house," Gregory said. "Even drunk, Paul squirmed through the entire movie. He loathed his appearance on the screen."

Bronx-born Gregory usually played tough cops, but he liked George and Paul. "I knew they were carrying on but that was no one's business but their own. I don't know what happened. Paul abruptly dropped George. I mean he wouldn't even speak to him backstage. Paul had moved on, but lovesick George was hopelessly smitten. You could feel the tension between the two of them backstage."

In February of 1955, Paul flew his mother to New York for the Broadway premiere of The Desperate Hours. "At last I've lived long enough to see my son become a big Broadway star," she told him backstage. "But why did you have to be so mean to that nice family in the play?"

Every night, teenage girls surrounded the backstage entrance of The Ethel Barrymore Theater, clamoring for an autograph from Paul, a man who found it silly and foolish to give autographs.

Not only that, but Paul had become the poster boy of gay New Yorkers. "For a while there, you wouldn't be considered gay unless you listened to Judy Garland sing `Over the Rainbow' every night, had seen Gloria Swanson in Sunset Blvd. at least three times, and thought Paul Newman was the hottest thing since bare-backing," Merv Griffin claimed.

"Paul was off and running to challenge Brando as the male sex symbol of the 1950s," said Malden. "The adulation that would follow him around for decades began with his stage role in The Desperate Hours."

The New York critics raved about Paul's performance. "They restored my confidence as an actor," he told a reporter. "My ego would soon be battered again, but for a few good months I felt like I was the King of Broadway."

Two weeks after the play opened, Jackie presented Paul with his second daughter, which she named Stephanie. "To me, Paul didn't seem all that interested in the birth of a new daughter," Patricia Peardon said. "I think by the time Stephanie came along, her mama and papa were no longer rolling around in the hay."

During the run of the play, Richard M. Nixon, then a Wall Street lawyer, intervened. He represented the family of James J. Hill of Philadelphia, who was suing, claiming that the events in the play were based on an actual hostage situation that had befallen his own family. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, where the judges ruled against Nixon's arguments.

Perhaps this was the beginning of what became a famous feud between Newman and Nixon.

Like many plays on Broadway, The Desperate Hours did not survive the dreaded heat wave that descended on New York in the summer of 1955. After Karl Malden pulled out of the play and ticket sales slumped, the play closed down. When Bogie opened in the movie version, The Desperate Hours became one of his least attended films.

Montgomery won a Tony as the Best Director on Broadway that year, The Desperate Hours garnering another Tony as Best Dramatic Play of the Year.

Even during the eight-month, 212-performance run of The Desperate Hours, Paul became one of the brightest stars on television, appearing in one teleplay after another.

"On the verge of big stardom in Hollywood, in spite of The Silver Chalice, Paul was the Golden Boy of the Golden Age of Television," Josh Logan recalled.

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In the TV series, The Mask, Paul co-starred with Patricia Breslin and Jo Van Fleet in an episode called "The Party Night." One episode or another within the series was broadcast on ABC-TV twice a week. Each show was expensive to produce, and ABC could not find a sponsor, so the series was dropped after four months.

But while it lasted, Paul got to work with Van Fleet before she went on to win an Oscar opposite James Dean, playing his brothel madam mother in East of Eden. After flickering across TV screens, "The Party Night" would fade from memory, but in 1967, Van Fleet and Paul would later immortalize themselves in film history when they costarred together in Cool Hand Luke.

Jo Van Fleet
Paul's "Party Night" with her led to *Cool Hand Luke*.

In New York-born Patricia Breslin, Paul met a new kind of actress. With her green eyes and brunette hair, she was a beauty but not in a flashy way. Five years younger than Paul, she was a new breed, a true television actress who would specialize throughout the 1950s in guest roles in series ranging from The Twilight Zone to Robert Montgomery Presents.

For a brief while, Paul too considered becoming only a television actor with an occasional stage appearance. "Before TV pitched itself to the brainless," Paul said, "it gave me a chance to be almost any character I wanted to be. Within a year in TV, you could play such a wide range of parts it would take thirty big screen movies to cover such

a stretch. Patricia was a talented young woman who appeared in serious meaningful dramas. We would work together again the following year."

He was referring to an episode, "Five in Judgment," that was part of a series called Appointment with Adventure.

In September of 1954, Paul got a chance to work with first-rate talent when he was cast opposite Fay Bainter in Guilty Is the Stranger, part of the Goodyear Television Playhouse. The aging actress had become the first performer to be nominated in the same year (1938) for both Best Actress for her role in White Banners and Best Supporting Actress for her role in Jezebel. She took home the prize for Jezebel in which she had played Bette Davis's kindly Aunt Belle.

The teleplay also starred Pat Crowley, who became a leading lady or character actress in a number of 1950s TV series, including Maverick. She also became familiar in the 70s and 80s when she appeared in 10 episodes of the hit TV series, Dynasty.

"Pat was romantically linked to the gay actor Tab Hunter, but I knew there was no romance," said Tad Mosel, who wrote the teleplay's script. "It was just a ruse to trick impressionable gals who read movie magazines. I thought Paul might make a play for Pat, but he didn't. Too occupied with other affairs, I guess. Frankly, I wanted Paul just for myself, but I was smart enough to know he was out of my league. I did get to see him in his jockey shorts, however. He amply filled out the pouch, and it is a memory I have treasured for the rest of my life."

That life ended in 2008, as would Paul's. But Paul always cited Mosel as one of the leading dramatists of TV's Golden Age, and was delighted to learn that he'd won the Pulitzer Prize for his drama, All the Way Home, in 1961.

Tab Hunter and **Pat Crowley**
The romance that never was

Paul told Ted, "I find Pat perkily pleasant, the girl next door. But if I wanted the girl next door, I'd go next door. After Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe, how can you keep Paul Newman down on the farm?"

In 1950, Danger was launched as a TV series. One such episode written by Rod Serling was "Knife in the Dark," which aired on December 7, 1954, starring James Gregory and Paul. Paul had appeared on Broadway with Gregory in The Desperate Hours.

Paul enjoyed working with the Bronx-born character actor with his deep, gravelly voice. Although many movie stars still shunned television at the time, Gregory spoke to Paul of what a "respectable medium" it was for an actor.

Paul stayed in touch with Gregory and admired his endurance. "My god, the fucker set a record for live performances. He once performed in five different TV dramas in just ten days."

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Columbia bought to rights to Picnic, and the word was out that the studio was "testing unknowns" for the key roles. For some reason, Ralph Meeker had turned down the lead role of Hal in the film.

At the Actors Studio, Paul had met Jack Garfein, a Holocaust survivor and director. He was dating a blonde beauty, Carroll Baker, at the time. With her finely chiseled features, she evoked Jean Harlow and supported herself and paid her tuition at Actors Studio by dancing at night in a club.

Both Paul and Carroll were clients of MCA, the talent agency. Paul called Garfein and asked his permission to phone Carroll. He wanted to rehearse a scene from Picnic with her and ultimately make a screen test.

"He was such a gentleman," Garfein recalled. "He wanted my permission to call Carroll. I thought it was very touching. He didn't want me to think he was moving in on my woman."

"We had wonderful chemistry together," Carroll said after making the screen test with Paul. "I thought he was the most attractive man I'd ever met. But Harry Cohn obviously didn't think so." She was referring to the studio chief at Columbia.

Reportedly, Cohn had "the hots" for Carroll, but was unimpressed with Paul's acting. "Just what Hollywood needs: another pint-sized Jewish actor."

Baby Doll **Carroll Baker**
She got a movie contract,
Paul got the boot.

When Josh Logan was signed to direct the film version of Picnic, Paul went to him and tried to convince him he was right for Hal. "I learned my lesson well from you," Paul said. "Everything I need to know about crotch acting. I can do that part."

Logan, who had always been sexually attracted to Paul, momentarily agreed with him. But then one afternoon, he got a call from Cohn at Columbia. "William Holden wants the role."

"But he's too old for the part," Logan protested. "It's got to be played by a hot young kid like Newman."

"Holden has something Newman doesn't, and that's star power," Cohn said before slamming down the phone. For his performance in Billy Wilder's Stalag 17 in 1953, Holden had won the Oscar as Best Actor of the Year.

Actually Holden at first didn't want the role of Hal, knowing he was too old for the part of a charismatic bare-chested drifter, who dazzles the women of a small town in Kansas. But Cohn was very persistent, even after Holden initially told him he could "stuff Hal up your ass."

Although Carroll won a movie contract based on her screen test with Paul, she ultimately lost the female lead in Picnic, the role going to the icy lavender blonde, Kim Novak. Veteran actress Rosalind Russell was also signed.

Even though he'd lost out, Paul called Logan once again, asking to be cast as Alan, the role he'd played for so many months on the stage. Once again, Cohn ruled him out, casting a newcomer from Broadway, Cliff Robertson, in the part.

"I think Paul and I would have made a great screen team," Carroll said. "It almost happened."

In 1958, Carroll was being seriously considered for the lead in Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. But she'd feuded with her studio by refusing to act in a series of movies based on novels written by Erskine Caldwell, the Southern pulp fiction writer who'd achieved notoriety with the publication of Tobacco Road.

Not only that, but she'd lost the lead in The Three Faces ofEve in 1957. That role went instead to Joanne Woodward, who won an Oscar the following year for Best Actress for her portrayal of that film's schizophrenic heroine.

Kim Novak with
William Holden
A jaybird-naked
encounter with Paul

Ironically, on a trip to Hollywood, Paul was lying nude on a wood rack in a steam bath, which he had all to himself. Suddenly, another nude man entered. Paul looked up immediately to stare into the steamy face of William Holden. A flicker of recognition came across Holden's face.

"Here I was jaybird naked in front of this middle-aged actor who'd taken my role," Paul recalled. "After checking out each other's dicks, we evaluated each other's bodies. No contest. I won that round as I was in tip top condition. He was a heavy drinker and was beginning to show his age. His breasts sagged a bit. He was no longer Barbara Stanwyck's Golden Boy of 1939."

"It was embarrassing for both of us," Paul said. "I waited a discreet three minutes so as not to be that obvious, then made a hasty retreat from that God damn bath."

Ironically, the situation between Paul and Holden would happen in reverse in another steam bath, this one at the Universal Studio gym. Holden had wanted the coveted role of Jordan (`Kick") Benedict in Giant, which had gone to Rock Hudson. A naked Holden, at the age of thirty-seven, encountered a thirty-year-old, heavy hung Rock, standing six feet, four inches tall. Rock won out over Holden in more ways than one. "I didn't gloat," Rock later said. "By then I knew the ways of Hollywood. When I became fifty, I knew I'd enter some steam bath somewhere and stare at the young, buffed chest of some hot actor who'd just got a star role I wanted for myself."

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While trying to launch himself professionally, Paul's "love life seemed going in all directions," according to Lee Strasberg. "Forget the men. I'd settle for all those gorgeous women flocking to him. I had known Paul for months as an acting coach before I learned he had a wife and kids living in Queens Village or some such place," said Strasberg. "He was carrying on with everybody. All sorts of sexual preferences. I think a wife and brats were the last things on his mind."

"I don't know how much time he spent with his family," Strasberg said. "But it couldn't have been that much. He was gone from home all the time. I could only hope that his young wife had a lover on the side up in Queens. She didn't seem to be getting that much from her husband, except for that odd pregnancy here and there."

Lee Strasberg
"Paul's love life took in all sexual preferences."

"Paul was sharing that male charm and flash of his with many of our students, both male and female, at the Actors Studio," Strasberg said. "Shelley Winters told me it was the smell of him that attracted him. `He was the cleanest man I've ever known,' she claimed. `So sweet smelling, especially his breath. Not smelly and stinky like Brando, although a girl needs that brute on occasion too.'"

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Back in Hollywood, Paul had a reunion with James Dean on the set of Rebel Without a Cause, finding him more reckless and irresponsible than ever. Rebel had been based on a book written by Robert M. Lindner in 1944, a property acquired by Warner Brothers in 1946. In the late 40s, the studio had tried to launch it as a film to star Marlon Brando, but plans fizzled. Brando didn't want "to play a teenager with angst."

Director Nicholas Ray revived interest in the film in 1954. He'd already scored such hits as Knock on Any Door in 1949, with Humphrey Bogart and John Derek. Stewart Stern, with whom Paul had worked on the teleplay, Thunder of Silence, produced the final shooting script for Rebel.

Appearing on the set to see Dean work, Paul first encountered Natalie Wood, whom he hadn't seen since they'd appeared together in the ill-fated The Silver Chalice. Back then, he'd found the teenager had a "marvelous sense of mystery."

On the set of Rebel, she appeared far more sophisticated than her years. "I have ambitions to don a frilly gown by Don Loper and a silver blue mink and embrace Cary Grant in my arms before the camera," she told Paul. "I desperately feel I'm ready to play sexy parts. Instead I wound up playing the younger version of Virginia Mayo in Chalice. In Rebel, I'm a teenager."

"And indeed you are," he told her, "but growing up very fast in front of my eyes." She seemed flirtatious with him. Later, he learned from Dean that he was not only seducing Natalie, but so was the film's director, Nicholas Ray.

On the way to see Dean, Paul met Ray who introduced him to Sal Mineo, the former delinquent youth from the Bronx who in 1951 had co-starred with Yul Brynner on Broadway in The King and I.

In a phone call to Paul, Dean told him that "Sal is a very sexy young man, very pretty, and mature for his age." Dean had already told Paul how Sal had gotten the role of Plato in Rebel by "auditioning" for the director at the Chateau Marmont.

Years later in an apartment in Chelsea, in New York City, Sal said, "at the time I met Paul, I was crazy in love with Jimmy, very sexually confused. I hardly paid attention to Paul that day, although I couldn't help but notice what a beautiful man he was. I heard he was married but dating Joanne Woodward. I naively assumed that Paul was hopelessly straight. How wrong I was. Frankly, I didn't think I would ever run into him again. But, wow, what an important role he'd play in my future."

Once Paul made it to Dean's dressing room, "those two guys picked up right where they left off," according to Eartha Kitt. "I'd bet my right nipple that Jamie had Paul's pants off in less than ten minutes. He told me that his passion for Paul was still as strong as before."

"But Jamie also told me that he was being pulled in a million different directions sexually," Eartha claimed. "He had his regular affairs at the time, especially with a young actor named Jack Simmons, for whom Jamie had gotten a small part in Rebel."

"Even so, he was still out on many a night searching for something new and different," Eartha said. "While shooting Rebel, his behavior became even more bizarre. One night he picked up a girl with one leg and seduced her. On another occasion he met this very sexy hustler who had only one arm. They were seen driving away in Jamie's new Porsche Speedster."

"On another occasion he told me that five of the biggest names in Hollywood-all legends and all family men-had sucked his cock. I pressed him for details but he refused to divulge who they were. He did say the names of these fellatio artists were as big as Clark Gable or Humphrey Bogart."

While on the set of Rebel, Paul learned that East of Eden had opened to strong box office. Warners had made a decision to exploit Dean more in Rebel, deciding it would go from a black-and-white B picture to an A picture in color. Dean told Paul that in the early footage he'd worn a black leather jacket but had switched to a red nylon windbreaker for the color version.

Somehow Dean managed to fit Paul into his schedule when not sleeping with Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo, Nicholas Ray, and Jack Simmons, with an occasional call on his older mentor, Rogers Brackett.

Dean was also dating starlets, on orders of the studio. "There's a homosexual panic going on out here," he told Eartha. "Homosexual stars are being exposed. Rock Hudson is definitely not careful. He's getting too blatant. Word is reaching Jack Warner about my private life. Warner is insisting that I be seen out with girlfriends. Not just seen, but photographed."

"I saw a picture of you in the paper," Paul told Dean in the presence of Eartha. "You were out with Ursula Andress, the so-called female Brando. That takes some of the heat off me in the press, who's still calling me the second Brando. You and Ursula look so much alike I thought you were brother and sister. Are you fucking her?"

Rogers Brackett
"If I were a father symbol to Dean,
it was incestuous."

The doomed stars of *Rebel Without a Cause*
(left to right) **Sal Mineo, James Dean,**
and **Natalie Wood.**
"Everybody was sleeping with everybody."

"Come on, man, I can cum just so many times a day," Dean said. "Half of Hollywood wants my juice. They're sucking me dry out here. These blow-job artists make it hard for me to save up enough sperm for fucking."

"But you manage, don't you?" Paul said, smiling.

Dean flashed his own wicked grin. "You know me too well, man."

During the filming of Rebel, Dean told Paul that the censors were trying to remove all hints of homosexuality in the movie. "Sal's Plato is in love with me," Dean said. "In the movie. In real life. In one draft of the screenplay, we actually kiss. But when the top brass at Warners heard about this, that scene had to go. But Sal and I decided to play our roles homoerotic anyway. In our scenes together, Sal looks at me with moonglow eyes. It's obvious that Plato's in love with me."

Dean claimed that he was "lobbying" to get Sal cast in his upcoming film with Elizabeth Taylor. Edna Ferber's Giant was to be shot on location. "I've got to have a fuckmate with me if I'm going to Texas. I can't take chances on finding something on the hoof down there."

"Don't you think Sal is a bit young?" Paul asked.

"Haven't you heard of childhood sexuality?" Dean asked. "Hell, I once fucked a twelve-year-old boy time and time again. Kids shouldn't have to wait to have sex. When they want it, need it, they should have it."

"But there are laws," Paul protested.

"Still the boy from Shaker Heights," Dean said. "Loosen up. It's a new day out here. Just wait until you see Rebel. Then you'll understand."

Dean invited Paul to join him in May to watch him compete in the Santa Barbara Races with his Porsche. Before leaving, he had dinner with Paul and Eartha telling them, "I know I'll never be able to fly, but racing is the next best thing. Like a man in the future on a space flight to Mars. Racing is more powerful than any drug I could take. What a high. It's only when I'm speeding that I feel I'm not of this earth. I feel like a man. I answer to no one. I'm in control of my own universe."

Dean's infectious love of speeding may have influenced Paul's future hobby.

In Santa Barbara, Dean was given a bad starting position but tried to make up for lost time by accelerating. Two minutes into the race, another car swerved in front of him. To avoid ramming the car, Dean careened to the side of the road, hitting two bales of hay. Straightening out his Porsche, he was back in the race, moving up to fourth

position. Suddenly, his engine dropped a valve, and he had to coast off the track out of the way of other speeding cars.

This would be the last race of his life.

"I'll try and try again," Dean told Paul. "I'm a natural to win all the prizes. My dream is not to become a movie star but a race car driver."

Those exact words one day would be uttered by Paul. But at the time he watched Dean, he hadn't yet developed what would become a deep passion for racing.

Paul and Dean spent a drunken night in a roadside motel where Dean made an extravagant promise. He claimed that he was going to do "everything in my power" to get Paul cast as Bick Benedict opposite his character of Jett Rink in Giant. "We'll both end up fucking Elizabeth Taylor," Dean promised.

"But I heard that Rock Hudson has already been signed," Paul said.

"Don't worry about that," Dean said. "The shit's about to hit the fan. Rock will be fired from the picture before it begins shooting. Trust me, as I know about these things. You're the same age as Rock and a better actor. The part will make your career. Mine too."

As far as Paul and Eartha could later figure out, Dean knew in advance that Rock was about to be exposed as a homosexual in Confidential magazine. The editors had even obtained nude pictures of Rock and his friend, actor George Nader, at an all-male pool party.

At the last minute the article was suppressed and Rock's career was saved. He kept the role of Bick in Giant.

"I would never want to become a star because of some tragedy in the life of an actor," Paul told Eartha.

Ironically, Paul's first great breakthrough in films came about by doing just that.

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Warners had tied Paul into an iron-bound contract, which Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer later bought a share of. After the failure of The Silver Chalice, Warners didn't know what to do with Paul. But MGM came calling after Glenn Ford bolted from The Rack at the last minute.

James Dean in his death-trap Porsche

Paul eagerly read the screen play by his newly acquired friend, Stewart Stern, who was still basking in the glow of his success with Rebel Without a Cause. Stern had based his movie script on a teleplay by Rod Serling.

The Rack was a drab drama, depicting the life of a troubled young officer accused of collaboration with the Communists while being brainwashed in a North Korean prison camp. In the film version, which depicted flashbacks of torture in these "camps of hell," Paul had been "broken" by his captors, after which he tried to convince other U.S. soldiers that they were fighting an unjust war. When he returned to America, he faced a court martial on a charge of treason.

Producer Arthur M. Loew Jr. and director Arnold Laven had assembled an all-star cast, including that 1940s co-star with Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon, playing Paul's stern father. Wendell Corey and Edmond O'Brien also headed a cast that included good roles for Anne Francis, Lee Marvin, and Cloris Leachman. As a footnote, Leachman would later become one of Joanne Woodward's best friends.

"There were a lot of Hollywood bad boys in that cast," Paul said. "Especially Lee Marvin. I'd heard that he and Brando duked it out on the set of The Wild One."

Paul played the boy-man, Captain Edward W. Hall Jr., more effectively than the more mature Glenn Ford ever could. The most sensitive scenes in the movie were between Paul and Pidgeon, cast as his cold and distant father, who suggests that his son would have been better off had he died in action than return home to face a court martial for being a coward.

Paul Newman in *The Rack* playing a troubled young officer, brain washed and broken in a prisoners' camp from hell.

Wendell Corey (top photo) went from tormenting Joan Crawford to prosecuting Paul

Paul's onscreen defender, **Edmond O'Brien** (bottom center photo), was married to **Olga San Juan**, a Carmen Miranda clone

According to the plot, Paul broke under emotional pain because of his own damaged relationship with his father, a bit of a stretch.

The Rack marked the emergence of a new kind of hero, or anti-hero, on American screens, with Paul in the vanguard of movie actors of this genre.

The new hero, as evoked by Paul, was an alienated loner standing up against the world, vulnerable, yes, but masking it with a cynical face and a hard-boiled spirit. He was just as macho as Cooper and The Duke, but he could also express fragile, sensitive emotions, heretofore depicted on the screen by women.

Paul could even appear as a mama's boy, expressing regret that he had not experienced that "moment of magnificence" that so many American soldiers did in various wars, including Senator John McCain in the Vietnam conflict. Many soldier heroes endured torture and did not bend. Just the threat of more pain had caused Paul's character in the movie to break.

Wendell Corey, as Paul's prosecutor in the film, was ideally cast as Major Sam Moulton, maintaining that Paul gave in to his captors while under no legally accepted or unduly harsh torture or the infliction of emotional terror. The prosecutor raises the question in court as to why Paul broke under pressure, when so many other brave American soldiers did not.

Critic Philip Koffman, in appraising Paul's anti-hero role, claimed that "Newman showed us that the new American hero could be masculine though articulate, civilized, caring, feeling, yet a man of good character in spite of a flaw here and there. There is even a suggestion that a tragic flaw is what it takes to make a real man."

Although Paul would fight with future directors, he got on well with the cast and crew.

New Englander Wendell Corey, with his ice cold blue eyes, prosecuted Paul on screen, but was friendly off screen. He'd appeared with such screen divas as Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford, and had recently starred in a big hit, Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window. "I pursued Grace Kelly all during the picture, but she went for James Stewart instead," Corey told Paul. "All in all, he was the big star. Grace doesn't fool around with unknowns."

"I'm not so sure," Paul said enigmatically. "Wendell and I never became friends. After all, he was a Republican. The year The Rack was released, he even introduced Dwight D. Eisenhower at the ball for his second inauguration."

Rough looking Edmond O'Brien played Paul's defense counsel, Colonel Frank Wasnick. In 1954, he had received an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in The Barefoot Contessa, with Ava Gardner and Humphrey Bogart.

At the time, O'Brien was married to the fiery Olga San Juan, the "Puerto Rican Pepperpot," who had danced in 1940s musicals with Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire.

In a salacious story spread around Hollywood at the time, Lee Marvin claimed that "Olga gave nearly all of us guys in the cast, including Newman, a blow-job. She was tiny, tiny, and didn't have to get down on her knees. For most of us, she came to our beltline, which made it convenient for quickies."

Deserved or not, Olga became known as "the fellatio queen of Hollywood," following the abdication of that niche by starlet Nancy Davis after her marriage to Ronald Reagan.

Marvin had met Paul's sometimes lover, Robert Francis, when he'd played the ship's cook in The Caine Mutiny in 1954. "1 learned from Van Johnson that Robert was having an affair with Newman," Marvin said. "Until I worked with him in The Rack, I always thought Newman was gay. But after I saw Olga making a few trips to his dressing room, I changed my mind about him. Of course, Olga was very discreet. She timed her quickie visits when hubbie was busy elsewhere."

Despite the indiscretions of his wife, or perhaps because he never knew about them, O'Brien got along well with Paul. The New York City actor later predicted big-time stardom for Paul. While waiting between takes, off-camera, O'Brien sometimes performed vaudeville-derived tricks for Paul and other members of the cast, many inspired by the style of Harry Houdini. Early in his career, O'Brien had billed himself as a stage magician, "Neirbo the Great"-O'Brien spelled backward.

Paul was pleased with most of the reviews of The Rack, except those which referred to him as "a Brando clone" or a "monotonous sub-Brando." By now, he was getting used to that comparison.

"Unlike that atrocity, The Silver Chalice, The Rack was a very good movie except it had one big problem. No one went to see it."

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Her studio finally found a role for Joanne Woodward, casting her in the 1955 Count Three and Pray, opposite veteran actor Van Heflin, who could always be counted on to deliver an earnest, dependable performance even

though he didn't possess conventional leading man looks.

Their co-stars included the gay actor Raymond Burr and the dashingly handsome Philip Carey, whom Paul was about to meet. Paul would get to know Carey far more intimately than Joanne ever did.

For her appearance in Count Three and Pray, Joanne received good reviews as the rambunctious Lissy in this redemptive story of a former drinker and womanizer who returns home from the Civil War as a newly converted preacher.

It is said that Paul slept through part of the movie, but Joanne was later quoted as saying that Count Three and Pray was the only movie of hers that she "really liked-that I really, really enjoyed," but that may have been overstatement, not an accurate assessment of her own view of her film roles.

As part of the TV series, Appointment with Adventure, Paul appeared in an episode, "Five in Judgment," which aired on April 10, 1955. In this teleplay, he was reunited with Patricia Breslin and James Gregory.

Paul later recalled, "This adventure drama had an array of talent greater than the script. I was up against some stiff competition."

One of the actors, Jeff Harris, would in the future distinguish himself as a behind-the-scenes player in Hollywood, becoming, for example, executive producer of thirty-four episodes of Roseanne in 1989 and 1990.

Paul was impressed with the work of Frank McHugh, another of the costars. In time, he would appear in 150 films and TV productions. As a contract player at Warners in the 1930s, McHugh had been everything from a lead actor to a sidekick, often playing comic relief. By the time he met Paul in the mid-50s, his career was in decline.

McHugh had been part of the famous "Irish Mafia" of the 1930s in Hollywood, a group of Irish American actors that hung out together to talk and drink. This Mafia consisted of such members as James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and Spencer Tracy. "You think a six pack of beer a day makes you a drinker?" McHugh chided Paul. "We didn't just drink glasses of Irish whisky, we drank it by the quart."

Also cast in "Five in Judgment" was the son of a Louisville drama critic, Henry Hull. He'd already scored his biggest successes before he met Paul, including creating the role of Jeeter Lester in the long-running Broadway play, Tobacco Road, in 1933.

Paul had seen him in the first werewolf movie, Universal Picture's classic Werewolf of London in 1935. His last movie would be with two of Paul's friends, Robert Redford and Marlon Brando in The Chase in 1966.

A reed-thin actor with a furrowed brow, Hull specialized in playing practical oldsters and crotchety geriatrics. "I'm the granddaddy of all lycanthropy [i.e., the study of werewolves] movies," Hull told Paul.

He also claimed that the best reason for being an actor on Broadway or in Hollywood "is that you can get more pussy in this business than any other. It's always there if you want it. I fucked Tallulah Bankhead when we did Lifeboat together. I also fucked Katharine Hepburn but she's mostly dyke. Even Tyrone Power offered me his pussy when we did Jesse James, but I turned him down."

At least one of Hull's so-called conquests denied his claim. Hepburn once said that she admired Hull as an actor, but that he was "sexually repulsive." She had appeared with him in a summer stock production of The Man Who Came Back at the Ivoryton Playhouse in Connecticut.

Paul promised Hull that he would fuck as many of his leading ladies as he could get. "If they'll let me take off their panties, I'll do my job, and, dare I say, do it more competently than most men. As a lover, I'm good on and off the screen."

One of the actors in Five in Judgment, Jack Lord, was known to Paul from the Actors Studio, where the handsome rising star had been propositioned by Marlon Brando. Allegedly at least, he'd also had a one-night stand

with Marilyn Monroe. Since 1949, Lord had been married to his faithful wife, Marie, but he still had a roving eye.

"For a brief time in their careers, Paul and Jack seemed bonded at the hip," said Frank McHugh. "One day Jack was late for rehearsals, and we couldn't get him on the phone. I went to his hotel and knocked on the door. He answered it jaybird naked. Paul was lying in a double bed, still half asleep. I assumed he was naked under the sheets too. I just figured these two studs were making it, or else they liked to sleep naked together. Both of them had other beds to sleep in since both of them were married at the time."

McHugh claimed that Jack and Paul were practically "soulmates as well as bedmates," since both of them were liberal political activists. A man of culture, Jack read poetry out loud on the set and was also a very skilled painter, "a regular Leonardo," McHugh called him. Many of his paintings hang today in museums. As a merchant marine, he had painted landscapes from the decks of freighters as he sailed by Africa, the Mediterranean, and the China coast.

A rupture in the friendship between Paul and Jack came when Jack replaced Ben Gazzara on Broadway in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. At the time, Paul was angling to star in the film version of that play by Tennessee Williams.

Wanting the role for himself, Paul had seen Gazzara perform in the drama three times. When Lord took over, he'd gone to see his friend and sometimes lover perform. When Lord found out that he'd been in the audience one night, and hadn't gone backstage to see him, he was furious. "I'll never speak to that shithead again," he told a cast member. Lord was doubly hurt a few years later when newspapers announced that the producers of the film version of Cat had cast Paul in the lead role opposite Elizabeth Taylor.

Henry Hull
The *Werewolf of London*
making outlandish claims
of A-list seductions

Lord rose from the ashes of this loss and went on to become a big success in television, performing in the CBS series, Hawaii Five-O from 1968 to 1980. Along the way he accumulated forty million dollars before his death in Honolulu in 1998. Cast as Lt. Steve McGarrett in Hawaii Five-O, Lord became famous for his catchphrase to his sidekick, James MacArthur, "Book `em, Danno!" Those words have entered TV history.

In the short years that remained before his casting in the film version of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Paul would find that Lord wasn't the only dragon actor he'd have to slay before playing the role of Tennessee's repressed homosexual.

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The first film version of Billy the Kid was released in 1911, starring the forgotten actor, Tefft Johnson, who appeared in 131 films between 1909 and 1926.

Over the decades, many other actors would play the notorious outlaw. Oddly, most of them who were cast as the teenage Billy were middle-aged men, as exemplified by Robert Taylor in 1941. In the early Forties, Buster Crabbe almost made a career out of playing Billy the Kid in ridiculous stories that had nothing to do with the

outlaw's life.

The most notorious film about Billy the Kid was The Outlaw, first released by Howard Hughes in 1943, who cast his reluctant lover, Jack Buetel, as Billy. Arguably, Buetel was the sexiest of all actors in this role. The Outlaw also introduced the large bosom of Jane Russell to world audiences.

The nadir of all Billy the Kid movies was the 1972 release of Dirty Little Billy starring Michael J. Pollard. The Kid is portrayed as a moronic wimp and "yellow-belly" coward, who looks up to a pimp as a role model.

While performing on Broadway in The Desperate Hours, Paul accepted the lead in Philco Television Playhouse's The Death of Billy the Kid, which would be aired on July 24, 1944. The drama of William H. Bonney (1859-81) or Henry McCarthy, his real name, was written by Gore Vidal. At the time, newspapers were referring to Vidal as the "beau" of Joanne Woodward.

Jack Lord
Naked in a hotel room with Marilyn Monroe, and naked in a hotel room with Paul

Impressed with Paul, Fred Coe, a producer at NBC, gave him the role. Coe had first considered Brando, but the actor had no desire to appear in a live TV drama. James Dean was also approached and seemed interested but had other commitments. Finally, Coe turned to Paul. To direct him, he hired Robert Mulligan.

For the first time, Paul came face to face with Vidal, who was "engaged" to Joanne at the time. Instead of viewing the homosexual Vidal as a rival in love, Paul became one of the playwright's best friends.

Born in West Point, New York, Gore was the son of Eugene Luther Vidal Jr., who was a lieutenant in the military. Eugene was the son of the famous Thomas Gore, a Democratic senator from Oklahoma.

Gore's mother was Nina S. Gore, an actress and socialite who would later marry Hugh D. Auchincloss, the stepfather of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Nina also became known for her long-running off-and-on affair with Clark Gable.

At the time Paul came together with Vidal, the writer was notorious, having published his third novel, The City and the Pillar, in 1948. It outraged mainstream critics, including those at The New York Times, because it prominently featured homosexuality.

The fact that Paul and Vidal bonded as friends meant that Paul did not take those rumors about an "engagement" or "romance" between Vidal and his Joanne seriously. A mutual friend, Bill Gray, had introduced Vidal and Joanne at a cocktail party in Manhattan in 1953.

She admired his mind and found him "almost beautiful." But as an intelligent, intuitive woman, she almost certainly knew from the beginning that he was a homosexual. Far more hip and sophisticated than Joanne, Vidal was

aware that he was being "dangled" in front of Paul to make him jealous, perhaps to motivate him more strongly to divorce Jackie and marry Joanne.

Vidal told Paul that he wanted his teleplay to be "not so much about Billy himself, but the people who created the myth of Billy the Kid." Paul seemed uncertain about how to interpret that. Approaching Coe, Vidal complimented him on his choice of Paul for the role, claiming that the actor "has both vulnerability and strength."

Vidal's fixation on Billy the Kid began when he attended the ballet performance of John Kriza appearing in the title role of Eugene Loring's Billy the Kid in 1953. It was hailed as the most erotic ballet ever performed in New York, with Kriza dancing in chaps with bulging genitalia showing in his white briefs. Vidal became smitten with Kriza, and the two men soon were lovers.

Author **Gore Vidal** writes a gay *Billy the Kid* for Paul to play on TV

In the course of his career, Kriza would dance for John F. Kennedy in the White House and for Krushchev in the Kremlin. But Kriza's life ended in 1975 when he drowned while swimming in the Gulf of Mexico.

For some reason, Vidal, an American blueblood, identified with the character of Billy the Kid. The image of The Kid haunted him for years. In Billy, he found a character who is "forever young, undyingly loyal to personal bonds, resolutely insistent on individual freedom, and hostile to all injustice, especially from the government."

On the set of Billy the Kid, Paul worked with such veteran actors as Jason Robards Jr., cast as Joe Grant. Robards, son of a famous actor, would go on to greater fame and even step into Humphrey Bogart's shoes after Bogart's death in 1957 when, in 1961, he married Lauren Bacall.

Robards told Paul that he worked in films and on TV "so I can grab the money and get back on Broadway as fast as my ass will carry me. Once you're on stage, no fucking director can yell, `Cut it!' You're out there on your own, and there's always the thrill of a live audience. Don't sell out, Newman. Don't go Hollywood." He smiled. "Except for the money, of course."

Both Vidal and Paul felt that the teleplay of Billy the Kid could be "turned into a great movie." Indeed, in time it would be filmed, but not exactly as Vidal had envisioned it.

On seeing Paul perform on TV, Vidal claimed that Billy the Kid was his favorite of all his plays for television. But then he added enigmatically, "though by no means the most admired of all my teleplays."

Paul in Gore Vidal's teleplay for *Billy the Kid.* Offscreen, he gunned down Joanne's "beau."

After the telecast, Paul's life would move closer into the orbit of Vidal. A quartet, known in Hollywood as "The Unholy Four," was formed. The only woman in that household was Joanne Woodward. Depending on your point of view, she was either Paul's mistress or Vidal's fiancee. To the stew pot, Vidal added his lover, Howard Austen.

"When the four of them started living together in Hollywood, they were the hottest topic of gossip in Tinseltown," said Tony Perkins. "All sorts of kinky rumors abounded about what the four of them were actually doing after midnight."

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Deep in the throes of a hot romance with Tab Hunter in Hollywood, Tony Perkins had little time for Paul. But according to Vampira, they did get together at the Chateau Marmont on at least three different occasions to intimately connect.

Paul was shocked to learn that fans were mistaking Tony for Elvis Presley. The singer from Memphis was in town for his film debut. He'd been signed by Hal Wallis to star in Love Me Tender.

When Paul had his first reunion dinner with Tony, he learned that Jerry Lewis had encountered him on the Paramount lot and had spent thirty minutes talking to him before he realized he was not carrying on a conversation with Elvis Presley.

Ironically, Tony would be offered the starring role in Harold Robbins' A Stone for Danny Fisher, but he turned it down. Retitled King Creole, the role became a vehicle for Elvis.

"I don't think you look like Presley at all," Paul told Tony. "He's a greaser. You're not. Frankly, I think the King of Rock 'n' Roll stole his coiffure from Tony Curtis. Incidentally, have you seduced Curtis yet?"

"Not yet," Tony said. "He's on my list. As for Presley, he may have to watch out for me. I'm taking singing lessons, and I'm going to record. I've decided to become a singer/actor."

"You're joking!" Paul asked in astonishment.

"Hell no! My producers think I may have a hit with a little number called `Moonlight Swim.' Tab also plans to record. I'm sure both of us will have hit records."

"God damn and hot pussy momma," Paul said. "Brando's singing and fighting with Sinatra on Guys and Dolls. Does that mean Paul Newman had better find a vocal coach before the Hollywood sun sets on my ass?"

Meeting with Vampira later that day, Paul told her that, "Tony seems full of himself.

"He's having his moment," she said. "Up for a Supporting Oscar in Friendly Persuasion, playing a mentally tormented baseball player in Fear Strikes Out. I bet he'll get another Oscar nomination for that role."

"And what am I?" Paul asked. "Chopped liver?"

She leaned over to give him a reassuring kiss on the lips. "Your day will come."

Both Vampira and Paul commented on the coincidence of having Tab do Fear Strikes Out as a teleplay before Tony was cast in the film version as the star of the Boston Red Sox who has a nervous breakdown.

"Here's what I don't understand," Paul said. "How can we guys suck each other's dicks at night and the very next day be up for the same parts? Where's the jealousy factor? I don't really feel jealous of Monty, Marlon, Tony, our friend Jimmy, or even Tab Hunter. Well, maybe Tab a little bit. He's pretty damn good looking. In a town where a guy's looks mean everything, I think he's got me beat. If I come up against him for the same role, I think he's got it over me. After all, who walked off with the role of Danny Forrester in Battle Cry?"

"Don't worry about it," she assured him. "There will be plenty of roles for everybody, enough to go around. Guys like you and Tony are the new breed. I'd call you guys The Inheritors. Have you seen the latest movies with John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn? They are no longer fathers. They're granddaddies."

"Speaking of Tyrone Power," Paul said, "I'm having dinner with him tonight."

"That darling Ty has fallen for you?" Vampira asked.

"No, the dinner's also with Robert, our dear Robert Francis. Power has stolen Robert from all of our nests. It's a secondary romance. Howard Hughes still has Robert in his clutches."

"Play it right tonight," Vampira advised, "and you lucky devil you, you might end up in a three way."

"I could be so lucky."

***

In Hollywood, Paul picked up on his sometimes affair with Robert Francis, who was disappointed at the way his films had been received by the public. He was especially bitter about The Bamboo Prison in 1954, a prisoner-of-war drama in which he'd co-starred with E.G. Marshall, playing a Communist posing as a priest so he could gather information from American prisoners of war. "I should have won an Oscar for my performance," Robert immodestly told Paul. "But, no, nothing, just attacks from the critics."

When Robert had been cast as the lead in They Rode West (1954), he'd starred opposite Donna Reed, who became his friend. In that film, he played Dr. Allen Seward, a surgeon assigned to a western cavalry post. "The only good thing that came out of that was Philip Carey," Robert told Paul. "The first day I met him, I had to have him,

even though Joan Crawford kept him busy on many a night."

"Howard Hughes does the same for you," Paul countered.

"I'm not exactly sure what was going on," Donna Reed, years later, recalled. "Phil and Robert were definitely having an affair. One night I saw them dining in a restaurant together with a third party who turned out to be Paul Newman. I had my suspicions about that threesome."

"I befriended Robert, but he never completely told me everything," Donna said. "I know for a fact that Howard Hughes was keeping Robert, and they often piloted planes together. Both Robert and Newman reminded me of kids in a candy store when they first arrived in Hollywood. Everyone was after them, and since all their pursuers were gorgeous-and often rich and powerful stars-they weren't turning down many offers. Robert was strictly homosexual and Paul obviously bi, so that one was getting twice as many offers. Newman apparently settled down in later years, or so I hear, but when he first hit town, he wanted to sample everybody's goodies, both male and female. That was one busy boy. I met him on a few occasions, but he never gave me a tumble, so I can't report from first-hand experience."

"Even though Robert really enjoyed dating Paul, I always had the feeling that he'd drop Paul in a minute if that Phil Carey called," Donna said. "The former Marine stood 6 feet 5 inches and when he dropped his pants those five inches, so to speak, were doubled. At least that's what Robert claimed. I heard that even Phil's leading ladies, including Arlene Dahl, Doris Day, and Anita Ekberg developed crushes on him, but I don't think anything came of that. I know that Raymond Burr fell madly in love with Phil when they made Count Three and Pray in 1955, but Burr was rejected."

An outspoken **Donna Reed** was amazed at how her male friends played musical chairs with each other at night.

"Phil and Robert also appeared together in The Long Gray Line in 1955, but Robert had to spend more time with the star of that picture, Tyrone Power," Donna said. "I know that the female star of the film, Maureen O'Hara, walked in on the director, John Ford, who had his tongue down Power's throat. It's hard for me, a mere straight woman, to keep track of all those guys back then. They were in and out of each other's beds as fast as a revolving door. But I think they had great fun. I envied them their freedom."

The handsome former Marine, **Phil Carey**, was an object of desire chased by everyone from Doris Day to Paul himself.

"A woman has to be more careful unless she's Jayne Mansfield, Mamie Van Doren, Barbara Payton, or even Marilyn Monroe," Donna said. "And in those cases, it doesn't matter since they don't have any pristine reputation to uphold like that Grace Kelly, who was probably the biggest slut of them all, although the American public didn't know that at the time."

***

Paul met Tyrone Power in the waning years of his life. The movie idol was to die in 1958 of a heart attack on the set of Solomon and Sheba during a dueling scene. Paul had always admired Tyrone's movie star handsomeness, with one of the most classic profiles in the history of cinema. Paul had first seen Tyrone emoting onscreen way back in the late 1930s when he was a kid growing up in Shaker Heights.

When he actually met Tyrone for the first time, Paul noticed a remarkable change in the real man as opposed to his screen image. Although he was still handsome, Tyrone's face showed telltale signs of decay, including bags under his eyes and a certain jowly condition around his cheeks and throat.

Robert Francis seemed like he had a serious case of hero worship whenever Tyrone was in the room. Paul found the movie idol personable, articulate, well educated, and a gracious host.

Paul had driven to an address in the Hollywood Hills. Recently divorced from Linda Christian, Tyrone explained to Paul that he was temporarily renting someone else's house. "I need a hideaway. Smitty arranges these things for me." He was referring to Smitty Hanson, his longtime "trick."

In the early part of the evening, both Robert and Tyrone spoke of their experiences in shooting John Ford's The Long Gray Line at Columbia studios. Both of them had been filming interior shots with the understanding that they'd soon be heading East for the bulk of the filming at West Point.

During the course of the evening, Paul learned that director Ford was making it with both of his handsome stars, the younger one and the more vintage beauty.

"I thought Ford was the most macho male in Hollywood," Paul said.

The fading matinee idol of the 1930s, **Tyrone Power,** liked the smell and sexual excitement of other males at his orgies.

"Those are the kind to watch out for," Tyrone cautioned. "Hell, Ford used to throw John Wayne on his casting couch back in the Stone Age."

At the point when Paul entered Tyrone's life, the star was throwing caution to the wind, whereas he'd led a life of discretion up until then. Many of the scandal magazines were hovering over him like vultures. With Smitty Hanson's help, Tyrone was staging orgiesmany of them bisexual, others exclusively homosexual. It was the underground talk of Hollywood.

Van Johnson, Tyrone's friend, was a frequent guest at these orgies, as was Errol Flynn, who had been Tyrone's lover in the 1930s. Sometimes beautiful, young, aspiring actresses were brought in, most of them eager to meet Tyrone. Often the young men invited were well-built hustlers, who'd come to Hollywood to become movie stars but had ended up selling their bodies to the highest bidder.

At these orgies, Tyrone, in the words of his biographer Hector Arce, would have "to see and smell the sexual excitement of other males before he too could become aroused."

And now the screen grows black.

"Paul told me about meeting Tyrone and the early part of the evening," Vampira said. "But he didn't tell me how the night went. I know he stayed overnight. I just assumed he had a three-way with Tyrone and Robert. Not only that, I think Paul and Robert started to attend Tyrone's orgies-indeed, I'm sure those two good-looking boys were the star attractions. Paul seemed too embarrassed to talk about it."

"Maybe he'd hung out with James Dean too long, but Paul was shaking off those Midwestern morals and getting deep into the shit of Hollywood," Vampira said. "In later years he'd become more respectable, but 1955 was a year to let it rip. He was still young and full of piss, and he didn't want to miss out on a thing. I think he was really enjoying himself until tragedy struck that year. Like lightning, it struck twice."

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Paul awoke on the morning of July 31, 1955 with a bad cold. He'd been scheduled to fly to Catalina Island with Robert, but called him and told him he couldn't make it. Originally, Howard Hughes himself had been slated to fly with Robert, but some emergency at his office at 7000 Romaine Street prevented him from accompanying Robert, who then called Paul to "fly with me."

With both Paul and Hughes unavailable, Robert called another male friend to be his co-pilot. Still inexperienced in the air, in spite of taking lessons from Hughes, Robert set out on that clear, bright summer day.

Up in the air, something went wrong with the plane's single engine. It sputtered and then went dead. Trapped in the doomed plane, Robert and his friend hurtled to their deaths. When the plane hit the ground, it exploded, killing both men.

That afternoon, Paul heard the news over the radio. Robert's death brought on a morbid depression and a bout of heavy drinking.

According to Vampira, "Paul was not only mourning Robert's untimely death, but how his own life might have been violently snuffed out. Both Robert and Paul were on the dawn of what each of them hoped would be a spectacular career in Hollywood. Paul lived to see his dream come true. Poor Robert did not. I went with Paul on at least three visits to Robert's grave site at Forest Lawn. And, then, as might have been predicted, Paul seemed to place Robert in a far and distant corner of his brain and move on with his life. In just a few weeks, he'd be facing another untimely death of a friend and lover, and this would have a far greater impact on his life."

***

All actors are curious to see how another actor will interpret the role they originate. Such was the case when Paul went to see Richard Jaeckel perform in the West Coast version of The Desperate Hours, the same play that Paul had starred in on Broadway.

After slipping in to see the play once the curtain had gone up, Paul went backstage at the Carthay Circle Theater to congratulate Richard on his performance. "You did far better than I did," Paul graciously told him. "You were more menacing, more believable. We pretty boys have a hard time convincing audiences we're killers at heart."

Meeting Paul in his dressing room, Richard was "charmed" by him, as he later told Van Johnson, whose seduction of Richard led to his getting cast in the 1950 film, Battleground.

Short, stocky, and ruggedly handsome, blond-haired Richard, a year younger than Paul, had graduated from Hollywood High. While working in the mailroom of 20th Century Fox, a gay casting director spotted him and arranged for him to audition for the role of Private Johnny Anderson in Guadalcanal Diary (1943), one of that studio's major war epics.

Robert Francis invited Paul to "fly with me" on that fateful morning in July, 1955.

Richard's film career was interrupted by a four-year stint in the United States Navy from 1944 to 1948. When he returned to films, and based on his debut in Guadalcanal Diary, directors thought of him as ideal for war movies, casting him in Battleground with Van Johnson and Sands of Iwo Jima with John Wayne.

Bisexual Richard was not averse to having affairs with better-established actors who were either gay or bisexual themselves. Hollywood was filled with rumors of the affair that Van had sustained with Richard during the filming of Battleground. The Duke liked Richard so much during the filming of Sands oflwo Jima, that he invited him to share his dressing room, and no star ever did that.

Richard really came to the public's attention in 1952 when he played the role of Turk, Terry Moore's athletic boyfriend in Come Back, Little Sheba.

During the filming of this movie, Richard had an ongoing affair with Burt Lancaster. The star of the film, Shirley Booth, was well aware of this, as perhaps was Terry Moore playing Richard's girlfriend. After the film was wrapped, and perhaps to make him jealous, Richard revealed details of his affair with Burt to his longtime companion and lover, actor Casey Sullivan, "Lancaster and Wayne are both big, big stars," Richard said. "But off the screen, when I take off my pants, I'm the star. I've got three times more than either of them. Van's pretty well hung, though."

On the first night of their meeting, Paul invited Richard to join him for a night of drinking. "One thing led to another," Casey said, "and those two hotties ended up in bed together at a Laguna motel for the weekend. I always envied Richard for getting to seduce Paul Newman. He was my favorite."

After their initial meeting, Paul, at least according to Casey, continued to see Richard on and off for a number of years.

As the years went by, according to Casey, Paul kept holding out the promise of casting Richard in a picture opposite him. "Richard went along with these promises," Casey said, "but considered them empty. He liked Paul and continued to see him, but he didn't think he'd do anything to advance his career the way Van Johnson, Burt Lancaster, and John Wayne had. Then one day, surprise of surprise, it happened. But it was a long time in coming."

***

Suddenly, Frank Sinatra came back into Paul's life. Behind the scenes, after he was cast as the narrator in Thornton Wilder's Our Town, he had been instrumental in getting the thirty-year-old Paul cast as a sixteen-year-old high school student in the same play. In 1944, the play had starred a young Montgomery Clift at the City Center in New York.

Richard Jaeckel,
Sleeping his way
to the top

Our Town was Wilder's sentimental tribute to small-town America, and had netted him a Pulitzer Prize. Cast as George Gibbs in the play, Paul learns about love, loss, mourning, and death in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. The rehearsals would last for two weeks before a live transmission on TV.

Cast opposite was the lovely Eva Marie Saint, who had just completed On the Waterfront with their mutual friend, Marlon Brando. In years to come, Paul and Eva would again be cast together in Exodus. "Here I was playing this lovesick teenager opposite Eva," Paul said. "She'd just won an Oscar for playing opposite Brando in On the Waterfront. It was unfair considering how different the roles were, but I just knew the critics would once again compare my performance opposite Eva with Marlon's performance opposite Eva. Indeed they did, and I came out the fucking loser. I loved Marlon dearly, at least on that rare occasion when I got to see him, but sometimes I wanted to cut off his dick. Symbolically speaking, that is."

For the broadcast, Sammy Cahn wrote the lyrics for "Love and Marriage," Jimmy Van Heusen the music. Sinatra's version hit the charts in 1955, as did a competing version by Dinah Shore.

Even though he'd secretly gotten Paul cast in the part, Sinatra did not greet him like a friend. On the first day of rehearsal, he came over to him. "Listen, kid, I've got a monopoly on blue eyes. I fear if you become a star, like people are saying, we'll be competing for the title of blue eyes. You may have to start wearing glasses."

"I wouldn't dare to compete against you for anything," Paul said.

"Stick to that plan," Sinatra said. "I'd win in any competition with you, especially if we measured each other's dicks. Now get me some fresh coffee. Make it fresh or I'll snip your balls off-that is, if you've got any."

"Working with Sinatra is like defusing a ticking time bomb," Jimmy Van Heusen said to Paul the day he first appeared on the set.

After starring with Paul, Eva had only the highest praise for him, calling him "one of the most sensitive actors I'd ever seen on the screen."

With Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront*, **Eva Marie Saint** faced a sexual dynamo. With Paul Newman in *Our Town*, she confronted a lovesick teenager.

Paul told Sinatra that he found Eva "ethereally lovely, but I think she's aptly named. She's too much of a saint to mess around with my tool, although I'd whip it out for her at a moment's notice if she'd only give me the look."

"She's too decent a girl to get mixed up with us," Sinatra told Paul. "Both of us had better stick to Hollywood whores. Speaking of Hollywood whores, I've got a date with one tonight at her suite at the Plaza. She knows you and wants you to have dinner with us in her suite."

Paul was intrigued, thinking Sinatra had arranged another one of his busty showgals for a night of fun and games.

They rehearsed until eight that night and took a cab to the Plaza. When the door to the suite was thrown open, Paul was startled to see Grace Kelly in a white gown meant more for lounging than the street.

She kissed both men on the lips and invited them in for a dinner catered by room service. "I'm in town for some shopping," she told Sinatra and Paul, "and I wanted to see some dear friends." She looked with a certain enchantment at both men. Paul seemed flattered that Grace numbered him among her friends.

Sinatra and Grace had become close when he'd accompanied Ava Gardner to Africa for the shooting of Mogambo. Grace had co-starred in the movie with Ava and Clark Gable. During that time, Grace had a brief affair with Gable.

Over dinner, Grace and Sinatra enthralled Paul with stories of their adventures during the shoot in Africa. "There were all these tall Watusis in the film," Grace claimed. "Rather beautiful men in a primitive sort of way. All of them were hired as extras and they wore breechclouts. We were walking along by a row of them. All of a sudden, Ava said to me, `I wonder if their cocks are as big as people say. Have you ever seen a black cock?' I turned various shades of red. Then Ava reached out and pulled up the breechclout from one of the Watusis. His face was filled with pride as his mammoth cock flopped out. By then my face was beyond scarlet. Ava let the pouch drop. She turned to me and said, `Frank's bigger than that.'"

Paul burst into laughter but Sinatra did not seem amused.

Paul found that three's a crowd after dining with **Frank Sinatra** and **Grace Kelly.** But Grace was not opposed to a morning tryst the next day with Paul.

The rest of the evening Sinatra and Grace spent discussing their upcoming picture, High Society, a musical remake of The Philadelphia Story, which had marked the comeback of Katharine Hepburn to the screen in 1940.

Around one o'clock, Sinatra turned to Paul. "Grace and I have some private business to conclude. In other words, the party's over. Scram, kid."

Grace graciously showed Paul to the door where she secretly slipped him a note. On the elevator going down, he read it. BE HERE AT TEN O'CLOCK TOMORROW MORNING FOR BREAKFAST.

The next day at the Actors Studio, he told Rod Steiger, "I've become a call boy.

"Selling it by the inch, huh?" Steiger asked.

"No, I'm Grace Kelly's call boy," Paul said. "Every time she's in town, she calls me, and I come running to paradise."

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An unexpected call came in from Fred Zinnemann, the director, who was still basking in the glow of his success with From Here to Eternity. "I want you to play the part of Curly, the cowboy, in my upcoming Oklahoma! I don't have to tell you it's the role of the year."

"A musical?" Paul was flabbergasted.

"Of course, we'll have to dub your voice, but we do that all the time. Of all the actors around today, you're the perfect vision of Curly, the right physical specimen. We'll have to test you, naturally."

"I can do it if you'll take care of the singing," Paul assured him. "I sing only in the shower, but I sound great. The boy from Ohio can play a boy from Oklahoma. It's a bit of a stretch, but I can do it."

A week later Paul felt that he had performed poorly in the test, but Zinnemann assured him that "you photographed beautifully. I think you're going to be our Curly."

Paul later claimed that he felt he'd "queer the deal" if he mentioned the upcoming film to anyone before a contract was signed. Finally, however, Zinnemann's silence became deafening. Paul called Rod Steiger, who had been cast as Jud, the sinister hired man in the film, and told him that Zinnemann wanted him for the role of Curly.

"Not so fast," Steiger said. "I just made a test with James Dean in New York. Zinnemann said it was `the best screen test' he'd ever shot. Zinnemann raved about our `Poor Jud Is Dead' number. James did his own singing."

"I've been fucked!" Paul said before putting down the phone. He decided to "booze it up" for a few days to get over his disappointment.

When he finally called Dean and arranged to get together, he found that his actor friend was also wallowing in depression. "After practically assuring me of the role of Curly in Oklahoma!, Fred Zinnemann fucked me. I was out of the picture the moment Frank Sinatra wanted the role. As far as I'm concerned, I sing better than Frank Sinatra."

"If you say so, pal," Paul told him.

"Two weeks later both Dean and Paul read in the trade papers that Sinatra had bolted. Zinnemann had apparently come to his senses and cast Gordon MacRae in the part. Paul took the news philosophically. "What the hell? Let's face it: MacRae has that baritone voice needed for the role. When Hollywoodstyle movie musicals fade in

the dust, MacRae when he's seventy-five will probably be in some roadside inn somewhere singing `Oklahoma!' to a bunch of drunks."

Paul got the age wrong, but his prediction came true.

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It was ironic that in the weeks right before his death, Dean was rehearsing during the day with Paul and making love to him at night. At long last their dream of co-starring together had come true. Both of them had been cast in The Battler, a teleplay based on an Ernest Hemingway story.

Producer Fred Coe, who rose out of the depths of Alligator, Mississippi, to become a prolific television, theater, and film producer, came up with the idea of casting both Dean and Paul in the same teleplay. Coe was one of the major players in the Golden Age of television, having begun his career in 1945 when virtually no one had a TV set. He often relied on literary classics as a starting point for his teleplays.

Coe had been impressed with the dramatic potential of Ernest Hemingway's autobiographical "Nick Adams" stories, and his best friend, A.E. Hotchner, had agreed to write the teleplay for one of those stories, The Battler. In another touch of irony, Hotchner became Paul's best friend long after "Papa" had committed suicide.

The Battler was set to be aired on October 18, 1955 as part of NBC's Playwright '56 series. Coe hired Arthur Penn as the director. He'd been a member of Joshua Logan's stage company and had attended the Los Angeles branch of Actors Studio. In time, Penn would direct eight different actors in Oscar-nominated performances, including Anne Bancroft, Warren Beatty, and Faye Dunaway.

Paul looked forward to working with Penn, although he soon realized that the director was not a sycophantic admirer of Lee Strasberg. "That guy ruined an entire generation of actors with that sense memory crap of his," Penn told Paul.

With his horn-rimmed glasses and a cigar perpetually in hand, Penn showed great sensitivity in working with Dean and Paul. "He knew how to handle an actor," Paul said. "He was not just a director, but a philosopher and an artist. He knew how to let whatever limited talent I had breathe and develop at its own pace. He wasn't a dictator like Otto Preminger with whom I'd regrettably work in the future."

Paul was set to play Hemingway's Nick Adams as a young man. The character was Hemingway's literary alter ego. Dean was miscast as an aging boxer with a damaged eye and that inevitable cauliflower ear.

One night around three o'clock in the morning, Dean woke Paul up. "What's the matter?" Paul asked, groggy with sleep.

"I just had a golden dream," Dean said, jumping out of the bed and dancing around the room. "It was great! I dreamed that you and I are about to become the two hottest shits ever to hit Tinseltown. James Dean and Paul Newman. We're going to win more Oscars, make bigger pictures, than all the farts who came before us. Years from now when everyone's forgotten Bogie as the fag in Casablanca, the world will be talking about James Dean and Paul Newman."

"Come back to bed," Paul said.

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Marlon Brando did not seek out the press and did not like to talk to reporters. But when he did, his remarks were invariably controversial. He was particularly incensed when some critic, after seeing East of Eden, called Dean "not just another Ella Kazan actor, but one with far more depth and sensitivity than Brando himself."

Speaking on record, Marlon said, "Dean and I worked together at the Actors Studio. He has a certain talent. However, in East of Eden, he seems to be wearing my last year's wardrobe and using my last year's talent."

Dean's ego was weak and vulnerable, and his sense of self-esteem was always shaky and so fragile he could collapse emotionally at only the slightest provocation.

Such was the case when Marlon's remarks were told to him. Working with Dean in rehearsals for the Hemingway teleplay, The Battler, Paul claimed that "Dean practically had a nervous breakdown. He couldn't concentrate in rehearsals. At one point, he was shaking like a leaf in the wind. Marlon was a very bad boy. He must have known how devastating his remarks about Dean's talent would be. Maybe Marlon was trying to get back at some dumb critic and didn't consider how much Dean loved and worshipped him."

"Marlon wanted both Dean and me to be our own men, our own style of actor," Paul said. "Maybe this was the way he had of cutting the umbilical cord with Dean. After all, Dean had been pursuing Marlon for years like a lovesick puppy. Thank God Marlon didn't spill his bile over my body. I was too weak and vulnerable back then. An attack from Marlon on my own acting abilities would have shattered me."

"I must say Marlon always treated me with a certain respect, something he didn't always show Dean or another one of his rivals, Monty Clift," Paul claimed. "Even though they called me `the second Brando,' and this must have pissed him off, he never made me the butt of his practical jokes. I also never became the victim of his sadism. As for practical jokes on another actor, that would lie in my future when I met my fellow actor, Robert Redford."

Meeting with Dean at Googies in Hollywood, Eartha Kitt and Paul had never seen him so bitter about Hollywood, "Giant is my last picture," he proclaimed. "I've decided this incestuous cesspool called Hollywood is not for me. Marilyn Monroe is the perfect personification of Hollywood. All false glamour. There is no reality to her. A man can go crazy here."

"Fuck Hollywood!" Dean said in a voice loud enough to be overheard at the next tables. "Fuck Jack Warner and his studio. So he made movies with Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Big fucking deal. Who are they anyway? Davis was all about overacting and exaggerated mannerisms and Crawford is nothing but a self-created illusion. My greatest thrill in life would be to tie Warner down in a desert and crap over his face. Then I'd leave him to die in the desert, food for ravenous wolves."

"The best thing that could happen to Southern California is for an earthquake to come along and topple the whole fucking place into the Pacific Ocean like the lost continent of Atlantis," he said. "The whole town is filled with nothing but cocksuckers. I've stuffed my pecker into the mouths of some of the biggest producers and directors in Hollywood before those fuckers went home to give their wives and kids a big sloppy wet kiss. Those losers probably had my semen still in their rotten mouths."

"Rock Hudson couldn't get enough of my ass," Dean claimed, "when we started filming Giant. "He fucked me so much I thought his dick was going to fall off. Then he turned on me. Hudson is nothing but a piece of shit. There's nothing real about him. Like Marilyn, he's the perfect example of a Hollywood product. If Hollywood did not exist, Hudson would have been a truck driver getting blow-jobs at seedy truck stops."

That night Dean invited Paul to go with him for a midnight ride in the Hollywood Hills in his souped-up Porsche. Paul had another date and turned him down, but Eartha volunteered to go.

The next day she called Paul. "I wish I hadn't accepted Jamie's invitation. It was the nightmare ride of my life. I felt that he was committing suicide and trying to take me with him."

After she'd escaped from that death trap, she stood on the sidewalk, warning Dean. "This Porsche is going to be your coffin. I just feel it."

That was the last time she ever spoke to him or saw him again.

On September 30, 1955, Eartha called Paul. She'd just heard over the radio that Dean had died in a car crash. "That Porsche did indeed prove to be his coffin," she said sadly. "I'll never forgive Jamie for cheating me out of his presence in my life. No one else in the world understands me." She put down the phone.

Almost immediately another call came in. Still in shock, Paul picked up the phone. At first he thought it might be Eartha calling back, as she'd ended the call rather abruptly.

It was someone from Warner Brothers. Years later he tried to recall that phone call, but couldn't remember the name of the person calling. He thought it might have been Jack Warner himself, but he wasn't sure. "I was out of my mind at the time."

"Dean's gone but you're here, kid," the voice said. "Some actor has to fill his shoes. You probably didn't know this, but Dean was about to sign to do nine pictures in a row with us. All of those movies could star you. You'd be perfect. Here's the chance of a lifetime. It's a sad fact that Dean is dead, but we the living have to go on. Fuck all that talk about you being `the second Brando.' If you're smart and play all the angles, and if you lick enough asses, you could be the next James Dean."

Paul put down the phone.

Hollywood's hottest star, **James Dean**, came to a mangled end in September of 1955 on a lonely stretch of California back road.

His untimely death held many implications for the career of Paul Newman.

Chapter Five

A Tumbling Tumbleweed

Based on the flood of public emotion which followed in the wake of Dean's death, Paul assumed that plans for the teleplay, The Battler, would be scrapped. But Fred Coe wanted it to be aired on schedule within three weeks of Dean's fatal crash. And he wanted Paul to take over Dean's role as the star of the teleplay.

Coe called Paul. "I have no one else who can learn the part at this late hour. It would be easy to get another actor to play the secondary role you were originally assigned, but at this point, only you can be the star. Let's face it: You know Dean's part better than he did."

Paul didn't want to change roles. "I can't do it emotionally," he told a mourning Eartha Kitt, who was suffering greatly at the loss of her soulmate. "If I accepted the lead, I'd be advancing my career at Jimmy's expense. Both of us loved him dearly. I can't-I won't-fill his shoes. Coe and Penn will have to get someone else."

Yet somehow, Eartha managed to convince Paul that filling in for their departed friend would be a way to honor his memory. "That heavy makeup that the role calls for will help everyone forget your reputation as a pretty boy." she said. "You'll have to survive purely on your acting skills, `cause their makeup artists will make you look like a battered pug."

A.E. Hotchner, the teleplay's author, felt he had to apologize to Hemingway for pushing Paul into the lead role at the last minute. In a letter to Hemingway, he wrote, "We were forced to fill the part by risking young Newman in the lead." Papa Hemingway's reaction to Paul's performance that night in October is unknown.

"Suddenly, I agreed to play this punch drunk wreck of a man at fifty-five, a lean and hungry former champ," Paul said. "Since I was at the height of my so-called male beauty, it took the makeup boys hours to disfigure me."

In 1962 Paul would again portray The Battler when 20th Century Fox cast him in a big screen adaptation of that play, retitling it Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man.

After the telecast, Fred Coe took Paul out for a drink to congratulate him on his fine performance. A drunk in the bar had just seen Paul's TV portrayal of a boxer and challenged him to a fight. At first Paul tried to shrug him off, but the drunk was persistent. A brawl erupted, and Paul ended up with a black eye.

Two other industry insiders were watching the TV debut of Paul's telecast. One was the director, Robert Wise, the other a producer, Charles Schnee. These two men had recently received an agreement from Dean to star as Rocky Graziano in his life story, Somebody Up There Likes Me. Both Wise and Schnee were devastated by the death of their potential star. But after watching Paul in The Battler, both the director and producer decided that Paul would be ideal in the role of Graziano.

Wise called Paul and arranged a meeting. Paul showed up with his black eye. "You didn't have to get makeup to give you a boxer's black eye," Schnee said.

"By the way," Wise said, "that's the best black eye I've ever seen the makeup department create."

"That's no black eye makeup," Paul said. "That's the real thing. I got into a bar fight."

"With that shiner, you've almost got the role," Wise said. "We know you can act. All we want you to do at this point is strip down and try on these." He held up a pair of scarlet boxing trunks with large gold bands on the sides. "We want to see how you're built," Wise said.

Hesitant to strip down to his underwear, Paul eyed Wise skeptically. "You're not gay, are you? I don't have to put out to get this part, do I?"

"I'm a pussy man myself," Wise said. "So is Schnee here."

Paul stripped down, and both Wise and Schnee found his physique well defined.

Robert Wise
Orders Paul to strip.

"You could be beefier, so go to the gym and puff yourself up every day," Wise said. "You've got the part, though."

"It'll make you a star," Schnee promised.

"We've also got great news for you," Wise said. "We've cast Pier Angeli as the girl. I heard you used to bang her before Dean moved in to take her away."

"Something like that," Paul muttered. He felt reservations about Pier entering his life again.

He called Eartha and told her the news. "ii think people are going to stop calling me the second Brando. Now they'll be calling me the second Dean. When will I ever become Paul Newman?"

"Don't worry, sweetcakes," Eartha said. "You'll need to worry only when some younger stud is billed as the second Paul Newman."

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To Paul's dismay, Tony Perkins, his sometimes lover and friend, was undergoing a career move at Paramount. Noting the public hysteria that developed in the wake of Dean's tragic death, the "suits" at Paramount decided they needed a young actor as a direct replacement for Dean. Tony was their candidate for the job.

When Paul returned to Hollywood and called Tony for a "session," as he put it, he was shocked. Although he'd never mentioned any involvement before, Tony was mourning a relationship with Dean that had never existed. He not only maintained that he'd lived with Dean as his roommate at Sunset Plaza Drive, but that he had been "the love of Jimmy's life."

Not wanting to accuse his self-enchanted friend of lying, Paul said, "Jimmy was one busy boy."

"There are 365 days in a year," Tony said. "I know a guy who has sex with at least two different men a day. That's 730 men a year. If you look at it that way, Jimmy didn't set the world's record for seduction."

"I've been reading about you and Dean in the fan magazines," Paul said.

"Of course, in public I talk about living with Dean as his roommate, not as his lover. One has to be discreet about these things. The fans can draw their own conclusions about how close we were."

Before the night ended, Tony had proclaimed himself "the new James Dean." Ironically, Tony didn't seem to realize that it was Paul himself who was being hailed as the new James Dean.

Competing with lovers such as Brando had always made Paul feel uncomfortable. But whereas Tony was openly trying to profit from Dean's death, Paul had been the unwilling actor who'd had Dean's roles thrust upon him, both on TV and in the movies. He didn't want to be the new Dean. He resented that comparison as much as he did his label of a Brando clone.

"When will these newspapers stop making these stupid comparisons?" he asked Rod Steiger.

"When the next Paul Newman comes along," Steiger told him.

Paul had never felt so distant from Tony as he did the night of their reunion. He'd later relate this to Eartha Kitt. "Tony's making a big mistake," he said. "He's not James Dean. Nor was he his dearest friend and lover. That's all bullshit."

"I have an equally awful story to tell you," she said. "Rock Hudson, who knows what a good friend I was of Jamie, came up to me at a party. He told me that he'd always resented Jamie's meteoric rise in the business. `I'm glad he's dead,' Hudson said. `That fatal car crash removed serious competition from me.' I slapped the fucker's face."

A struggling young actor, Jack Simmons, emerged to refute Tony's charges. He claimed that he had been Dean's live-in lover at the apartment on Sunset Plaza Drive. He also told biographer Charles Winecoff that, "No one can ever be a new Jimmy Dean. Jimmy was all internal and driven, while Tony Perkins was sort of mechanical, physically plotted and contrived. There is no comparison."

Simmons had met Dean when they appeared together on The Dark, Dark Alley for General Electric Theater. Dean had also been instrumental in getting him cast as a gang member in Rebel Without a Cause.

A few weeks after Dean's death, Simmons contacted Paul with a proposition. He very accurately claimed, "I did everything for Jimmy. I was with him on the set. If he wanted a cup of coffee, I got it for him. Hungry? I brought him his favorite sandwich. At night my ass was always available to him. I hated it, but I even let him burn my butt with cigarettes. He liked to do that and have it done to him. It was awful painful, but I let him put his fist up me. He jerked off while I screamed in pain."

"Why are you telling me all this crap?" Paul asked. "I don't want to hear it."

"I'm out of a job," Simmons said. "I could be your personal assistant just as I was for Jimmy. I think you're going places in this business, and I've decided I'll never be a star myself."

"My God, man, you weren't a personal assistant," Paul said. "You were a slave." Anger rose in his voice. "I don't buy slaves." He slammed down the phone.

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Deep into his preparation for the role of Rocky Graziano, Paul received a stunning setback. Brando called Wise and Schnee, telling them that he wanted to play the role of Rocky Graziano in Somebody Up There Likes Me. Not only that, but he then called Paul and asked him to be his sparring partner in preparation for the role.

Stunned at his reversal of fortune, Paul agreed to box with him, but failed to tell him that Wise and Schnee had first offered the role to him.

At the gym the next day, a buffed Brando told Paul that, "I don't much like the idea of filling in for James Dean, but I've been studying Rocky and I want to go for it."

While they were working out in a gym together in Brooklyn, Brando told Paul that he used to box with Karl Malden while waiting backstage to go on in Streetcar. "One night I asked this fireman to go a few rounds with me,"

Brando said. "We squared off, circling each other. All of a sudden, he winds up throwing a haymaker at me. I saw it coming but it was too late. Next thing I know I was flying ass over heels into a pile of wooden crates. I saw stars and began bleeding from the nose like a stuck pig. I put some cold compresses on my beak but couldn't stop the bleeding. I had to rush out onto the stage with blood gushing from my nose."

Brando also claimed that when he was later taken to the hospital he encountered a doctor-"a sadist and butcher"-who set his nose badly.

"Your new look gives you character," Paul said. "If someone asks, now that your nose is set crookedly, I'm the pretty one. But put up your dukes, kid. In the ring they call me killer."

After three weeks of working out together in the ring, Brando told Paul, "I called Wise. I told him to get some other thug to play Rocky. I'm not going to make the picture." Then he delivered a shocker. "He told me you wanted to play Rocky. Go for it! Bring home an Oscar."

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As part of a loanout to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and as a means of getting into shape for the role of Rocky Graziano in Somebody Up There Likes Me, Paul worked out every day at the Hollywood YMCA. When he went to the showers, he was followed by admiring homosexuals who wanted to see him in the nude. As he later told Vampira, "I decided it was okay to give them a show, providing that none of them made a grab for the package."

Marlon Brando
"A sadist and a butcher"

"I've got to make good this time," Paul told his director, Robert Wise. "Maybe Hollywood will forgive me for The Silver Chalice, but if I fuck up Rocky, I'm a goner."

Before working with Wise, Paul had made it a point to view a copy of The Set Up, another boxing movie that Wise had made in 1949 starring Robert Ryan.

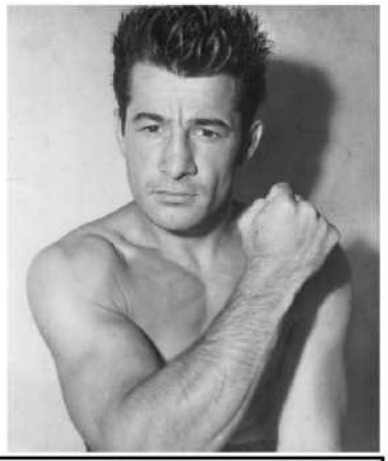
He was a skilled director and seemed to know how to bring out the best in Paul. "Day by day we forgot all about Paul Newman," he said. "Paul became Graziano up there on the screen. He had his speech down perfect, his walk, everything. He even learned to box like Graziano."

On the set, Paul enjoyed his reunion with Eileen Heckart, who had been cast as the mother of the character he played in Somebody Up There Likes Me. Both of them recalled their earlier roles on Broadway in Picnic when he had played Janice Rule's boyfriend, and when Eileen had been cast as one of the town's sexually repressed older women. Both Paul and Eileen lamented that Hollywood had not granted them the opportunity to repeat their roles in the film version of Picnic.

During their reunion, Paul congratulated Eileen on her Oscar-winning performance in The Bad Seed (1956). Years later, she ruefully told the press, "One night you're winning the Oscar and receiving those air kisses. The next day, you're photographed standing in the unemployment line."

Working for the first time with veteran character actor Everett Sloane, Paul came to admire his ability too. An original member of Orson Welles' Mercury Theater troupe, Sloane had been acting since the age of seven when he portrayed Puck in A Midsummer Nights Dream. Sometimes Paul worked secretly with Sloane on some of his difficult scenes before testing them out with Wise himself.

"He was one of the great pros of film noir, and I'll miss him," Paul said when he learned of Sloane's suicide from an overdose of barbiturates at the age of 55 in 1965. "I'd seen him three months before, and he told me he was going blind because of glaucoma," Paul said. "Everett told me he couldn't stand the thought of living in darkness."



Rocky Graziano
Teaching Paul the ropes.

Paul Newman
With a *Noo Yawk* accent.

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Still mourning the death of his lover, James Dean, a very young Sal Mineo approached Paul one day on the set. Sal had been cast as Graziano's friend, Romolo, in Somebody.

Fourteen years older than the Bronx-born Sicilian American, Paul congratulated him on his Oscar nomination for Rebel Without a Cause. "I thought you and Dean were terrific. I'm sorry he's gone."

"Not as sorry as I am," Sal said. He appeared on the verge of tears. "I noticed you work out every day. I'd like to join you at the Y."

Wise to Sal, Paul warned him, "Okay, but working out is all we're going to do. I don't intend to replace Dean in your life."

Sal's lip quivered, and Paul became aware of how insensitive he'd been. "Of course, you can work out with me. C'mon, get your stuff, kid. Just how old are you anyway?"

"I'm plenty old enough to know what I'm doing," Sal said. "Jimmy thought so."

"Yeah, but he had an affair with a twelve-year-old, so we can't cite him as a source," Paul cautioned. "As for me, I'm not a child molester."

At the gym and after a workout that stretched on for an hour and a half, Paul was keenly aware that Sal was, at least visually, devouring his body. Strangely, it didn't make him uncomfortable. He began to warm to the young actor, who seemed far older and more experienced than his years.

Sweaty and a bit tired, Paul finally announced, "I've had it for the day. Hustle your ass, kid, and join me in the shower. That way you can determine how I stack up against your buddy-and mine-Mr. James Dean."

Sal Mineo
"Hustle your ass, kid!"

That dying afternoon was the start of a beautiful friendship, most of it conducted in secret during the years to come.

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Paul once again came together with Pier Angeli, but their love affair, launched on the set of The Silver Chalice, had grown cold. She was distant, yet very kind and respect ful of him. "We both loved James Dean, and we both lost him," she said to him privately. "Now I have Vic Damone and you have Joanne Woodward." He couldn't help but notice that she'd failed to mention his wife Jackie.

Both of them found it ironic that he was Jewish playing an ItalianAmerican in the movie, and she, a bona fide Italian, was playing his Jewish girlfriend.

When he first encountered her, Pier was suffering from a broken ankle but mending quickly. She'd fallen down the stairs at her house. Until she recovered, he carried her in his arms to lunch and back. It was somewhere along the way that she seemed to fall in love with him again.

Their passion was rekindled when Wise flew them to New York to film scenes together on the East Side. "I'd never seen New York this cold before," Wise said. "In only a day or two, Paul was warming Pier's bed. Her plaster cast had been removed."

Paul introduced Pier to Graziano, saying, "Rocky, meet your wife."

The former champ took them on a tour of what he called "the landmarks of my life," including the Caponzzelle Bar and the tough streets where he'd fought in gang wars.

When Vic Damone flew into New York to reclaim Pier, Paul found another place to spend the night. "Paul had to go back to fucking the Mineo kid," Wise claimed.

Back on the West Coast, Pier became upset by a blonde-haired woman who kept appearing on the set and staring at her. "I can't work when she looks at me like that," she told Wise. Pier had never seen Joanne Woodward in a film and didn't really know what she looked like. But Joanne obviously knew who Pier was.

"I told Wise I couldn't act with this scary lady staring at me," Pier later claimed. "He asked her to stand out of my sight line. She must have thought I was stealing her boyfriend. But isn't that calling the kettle black, as you Americans say? It was Joanne Woodward who was stealing someone's husband."

Pier Angeli, Paul, and Everett Sloane
"I can't live in darkness."

Back on the West Coast, and with his putty nose and Noo Yawk accent, Paul was delivering a "Star-Is-Born" performance, the most effective in his young life. Wise was impressed with how he'd gotten all those deez and dews in the right place, with his marbles-in-the-mouth stammer.

In a statement uncharacteristic of Wise, he told Paul, "I think you're going to win an Oscar for playing Rocky, and I've never said this to an actor before. You're giving a tour-de-force performance. You're on your way, kid."

In spite of such praise from his director, Paul later recalled, "I was the most miserable guy in Hollywood." He was drinking more whisky than ever. "I'm screwed up but I don't want help," he told Vampira. He seemed guilt ridden about his rapidly dissolving marriage and his turning his back on his family, except to offer financial support. Yet he wasn't ready to commit to Joanne either.

"Somehow I've convinced myself I can screw my way out of the trap I'm in," he confessed to Vampira. "I forget my troubles only when I'm fucking, and I fuck a lot. I'm not particular who I plug these days just so long as it's a live body."

"Just who are the lucky recipients of your guilt?" Vampira asked. "I'm certainly not the beneficiary."

"The usual suspects," Paul said. "Joanne, of course. Tony's still around. When Pier and I teamed up again, our reunion was a bit chilly, but I ignited the flame again, at least when Vic Damone's not around. He's a bit young, but I'm helping Sal Mineo get over the love of his life, our beloved Jimmy. There's even a new kid on the block," Paul said. "Steven McQueen. I advised There's even a new kid on the block," Paul said. "Steven McQueen. I advised him to drop the `n' and call himself just Steve. Believe it or not, he too had an affair with Dean in New York and fell

madly in love with him. How did Dean get around to all these people?"

Rocky Graziano with Paul Newman
"A frontrunner for the Oscar"

"You seem to be following in his footsteps," Vampira said.

"Touche," he said. "I think this McQueen kid is going to go far. He's a wild fucker, though. Just when you think you've done it every which way, he comes up with a new twist to the old game."

"Tell me all about it, and don't leave out any sordid details," she urged.

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On the West Coast, his friend, Geraldine Page, was shocked to see how miserable Paul was. In spite of the pain it would cause his family, she urged him to divorce Jackie and marry Joanne. "Otherwise, you'll self-destruct, and then where will you be?"

When Sinatra flew into town and invited him out, even that hardened drinker was shocked at how much booze Paul could consume in an evening. "Fuck, kid," he said, "are you using me as a role model? Get that monkey off your back. Drink in moderation. Never more than a quart in one night. I also hear you're fucking everything that walks, just like Papa here," Sinatra said. "That's okay, but I'm still alarmed by those queer rumors about you. Tell me they're not true. What in hell are you up to? Trying to become another Peter Lawford? Another Monty Clift?"

"Frank, you know how Hollywood makes up shit," Paul said. "I'm no fucking queer, man. In fact, I'm off to meet a hot blonde right now."

"Glad to hear that, boy," Sinatra said. "We straight guys don't want to diminish our already diminishing ranks by losing a stud like you."

Paul lied to Sinatra about his sexual preferences that night, but at least told the truth in one regard. He was indeed meeting a hot blond.

Steven McQueen.

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It was on the set of Somebody Up There Likes Me that he had first met Steven McQueen, according to Janice Rule, Paul's "secret" confidante, during extended dialogues which Paul had with her in Los Angeles.

Paul was approached by a young actor with curly blond hair. He was wearing a plaid sports jacket, dirty jeans, and a beanie cap. "Hi, I'm Steven McQueen. Can I talk to you or have you gone Hollywood?"

"I'm the last person in Tinseltown who will ever go Hollywood," Paul said, reaching for McQueen's hand. At first Paul thought he was a greaser, until he realized he'd been cast as a blade-wielding punk member of Graziano's street gang in the movie.

"So, how does it feel, starring in another of these Hollywood fairy tales?" McQueen asked.

"This isn't Walt Disney," Paul said. "This is gritty film noir."

"Bullshit!" McQueen said. "Poor kid grows up on the East Side. Shithead father. Weak mother. Joins a gang. Becomes The Thief of Brooklyn. Gets sent up. Trouble in the military. Crawls out of a gutter using his fists-not his brain. Turns out a winner. Rags to riches. Meets a girl. Happy ending."

"Maybe it's a fairy tale after all," Paul said. "I never thought of it that way, kid."

"Don't call me a kid," McQueen said. "I'm just as much of a man as you are. Maybe more so."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Paul said.

"You want to check into some seedy motel with me, so I can prove it," McQueen said.

The two men seemed to circle each other for a silent moment, like two roosters sizing each other up before combat. "I don't go that route. You have nothing you need to prove to me."

"Don't kid a kidder," McQueen said. "I know you want it. Everybody on the set knows you're pounding pretty boy Mineo every night. Why not take on someone more experienced?"

"So what if I am?" Paul asked. "That's none of your God damn business. And if I'm so satisfied with Mineo, that would leave nothing left over for you."

"That's not a problem," McQueen said. "Even if you're worn out, we still could get it on. You see, I'm the pounder, not the poundee."

"My ass is strictly off limits," Paul said. "Don't even dream about it."

Steve McQueen
in one of his earliest
(legitimate) film roles
"A fairy-tale after all"

McQueen lewdly grabbed his crotch. "Within a week, I'll have you begging for it."

"Not bloody likely," Paul said. "With every hole in Hollywood spread before me, what makes you think I need to hook up with a cocky bastard like you?"

"There's a chemistry between us," P McQueen said. "I could feel it the first time I I saw you on the set. It's strange. I'm a man for the ladies, but when I saw you I said to myself, `Self, I'm gonna fuck that handsome boy one day. Sooner than later."

"That will never happen, but I must tell you, I admire your approach. I've been hit on by any number of guys, but your way of propositioning me is completely original. Believe it or not, I like you, in spite of your crude technique."

"Believe it or not, we're gonna be friends," McQueen said. "It'll be more than liking me. You'll end up loving me."

"You know, I would like to hang out with you," Paul said, "and I can't believe I'm saying this. But you're one of the most interesting characters I've ever met. Maybe if I get to know you, I'll find out if you're real or not."

"I'm all flesh and blood, red blood that is," McQueen said. "You'll find out just how real I am, man. One night when I'm plowing into your ass, and you're begging for me to stick in the final two inches, you'll know how real I am."

"That will never happen," Paul said.

"I've got to go," McQueen said. "I'm due on the set. Now gimme a kiss until we meet up again."

"A peck on the cheek is all you're gonna get from me," Paul said.

McQueen leaned into him. Before Paul realized what was happening, McQueen's lips seemed locked onto his, as his tongue explored Paul's mouth. Breaking away, and within an inch of Paul's ear, he said, "I just pretend to be a tough guy. After midnight, I'm an adorable, cuddly love machine."

Without saying another word, McQueen sauntered off. Paul did not wipe his mouth on his shirt sleeve. Instead he licked his lips, or so he claimed to Janice Rule, when he related this story to her.

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It happened during the fourth time Paul went out with Steve McQueen, who sometimes still called himself Steven. In spite of McQueen's posturing, nothing intimate had yet transpired between them. Meeting McQueen at his favorite hangout, a joint called Pete's, Paul settled into a booth opposite the young actor.

Paul found that he could talk and drink with McQueen for hours, during which he had no sense of time. They were forming a friendship, but it was tinged with rivalry. Their mutual competition would dominate their careers for years, as future directors would often propose both of their names for the same roles. Yet in spite of a slight jealousy, Paul found himself attracted to McQueen and wanted to spend as much time with him as he could.

"He was a liar, but such a charming one," Paul later told Janice Rule. "For example, he told me that Robert Wise had originally promised him the role of Rocky. Wise did no such thing. Steve just made it up."

McQueen didn't stop with the lie about Wise. He also maintained that during the course of his affair with James Dean, Dean had promised to maneuver McQueen into each of the many roles being offered to him at the time, claiming that within a few months, he intended to abandon the film industry altogether. Although that was also a lie, McQueen seemed to have convinced himself that every aspect of it was true. "One day, Wise will star me in a picture," McQueen predicted. Ironically, that forecast became true when Wise cast McQueen in The Sand Pebbles, after which McQueen was nominated for an Academy Award.

McQueen seemed deeply interested in how much money Paul was pulling in for his work on Somebody. Paul bluntly told him. In a voice filled with resentment, he said that Warners was paying him $1,000 a week but had lent him out to MGM for a one time fee of $75,000.

"You're making more than I am on this piece of shit," McQueen said. "I get nineteen big ones a day unless I'm speaking a line. Then I get fifty bucks."

It would sometimes take eight to ten beers before McQueen lost his tough guy image and became a vulnerable human being. He confessed to Paul that, "Just like the next guy, I'm looking for a little love and understanding. Hollywood is a cold place. Sometimes, I need to hold someone by a fire. Someone who can turn a tough street kid like me into a lover. Someone like you."

"You're barking up the wrong tree, kid," Paul said. "I'll be your friend. But let's keep it at that. I don't want to venture beyond that."

Somehow, however, that night at Pete's was different from the others. "There was so much sexual tension in the air between us that you could cut it with a knife," Paul told Janice Rule. "I was too drunk to even think straight, much less act straight. As the night wore on, Steve kept looking better and better."

Steve McQueen
"Now gimme a kiss"

"With my defenses down-blame it on the cerveza-I agreed to go back to his place. I knew what was going to happen. I can't pretend to be some college boy who wakes up the next morning and claims, `I was so drunk he took advantage of me.' Back at his place, a smelly hole, we had a little fun, but we were pretty wasted. It was ten o'clock the next morning before we really got it on."

He leaned back in his chair in the cafe where he'd been relaying this information to Janice. "I'm seeing the fucker again tonight, and this time I'm gonna try to remain at least a bit sober so I can enjoy it more. Steve's got this fabulous technique. He licks you all over until you're hotter than a firecracker. Then, while he's got you all worked up and panting, he comes on like gangbusters. Sexually, we're pretty evenly matched. Even our dicks are about the same. We could be brothers."

"Sounds like you're having fun," Janice said.

"I am," he answered, "but I'm uncomfortable as hell with the idea that I've stepped directly into each of Dean's

professional acting roles, and acquired each of his lovesick puppies as well-Pier Angeli, Sal Mineo, and now Steve McQueen. What would Dean think of that?"

"Wherever he is tonight, he'd probably be enjoying a good belly laugh. But how does Joanne Woodward fit into this picture?" she asked.

"I'm in love with her, and when I'm with her, I forget about all those other puppies," he said. "These experiences are teaching me one very important lesson: A man is a complicated creature, with many facets and multiple personalities, and Paul Newman intends to discover who he is regardless of what road he has to travel."

"In other words, you're embarking on a road of self discovery," she said, sounding like the psychotherapist she would eventually become. "I'm with you. One man will never be enough for me. Even if I'm in a marriage, my husband will never be enough. I just know that."

"You mean that?" he asked, looking startled. "You know, Janice, you're looking pretty good. Perhaps you and me sometime?"

"That's certainly an option, and I'm sure it'll happen sometime in our future, but right now you've got plenty of other places to shove it. Who's the lucky one tonight?"

"Sal," he said. "Steve's picked up this hot little number-female, that isand they're shacked up tonight. Pier is in bed with Vic Damone. So Sal won me by default."

"Worse fates can befall you," she said. "He's one cute kid."

"What I like about Sal is his willingness to do anything you command," Paul said, "and I mean anything."

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Paul worked out daily with Sal Mineo in the gym, which was usually followed by a session of love-making. "The kid is hot, hung, and fuckable," Paul confided to Vampira. "Far older than his actual years."

Sal was quickly becoming known as the "Switchblade Kid," and indeed he'd committed street crimes in the Bronx before making it to Broadway. There, he had appeared in Tennessee Williams' The Rose Tattoo. Later, he won a Broadway role in The King and I with the bisexual actor, Yul Brynner.

He was vainly proud that he'd received an Oscar nomination for playing the supporting role of Plato, the soulful teenager in Rebel Without a Cause. He told Paul that the director had actually filmed a scene of him kissing Dean in the movie. "Of course, it was cut from the final version."

If Paul's lovemaking with Sal ever reached a low point, it was when Sal, at the moment of climax, called Paul "Deano, baby." But Paul quickly forgave him for that, because he, too, missed the presence and lovemaking of Dean.

Since the release of Rebel, Sal had appeared to be on his way to major stardom. This dreamy-eyed, baby-faced rising star was frequently stalked by teenage girls, some of whom seemed to desperately want a lock of his hair.

He tried to lure Paul into taking pep pills, which he consumed at the rate of a dozen per day. Noting his habits, Paul said, "We can take the Catholic boy out of the Bronx, but he's still a Catholic in Tinseltown." He was referring to Sal carrying a rosary with him at all times, and refusing to work without a Saint Christopher medal around his neck.

"The kid is one of the most intense young men I've ever known," Paul told Rod Steiger. "He lives a feverish lifestyle. He's going to go Hollywood big time. Already, a manufacturer wants Sal to endorse its switchblades and zip guns."

Even before he matured to drinking age, Sal was seen sipping cocktails at Chasen's, the Brown Derby, and the Ambassador Hotel's Cocoanut Grove nightclub. There, he was photographed sitting at a table with Frank Sinatra and Lana Turner.

"I know how to bring Sal down to earth when he gets too carried away, bragging about how those red velvet ropes always come down for him," Paul told Janice. "He speaks of the fancy cars he'll own, the suits he'll have tailor made in Beverly Hills, and fans who trail him wherever he goes. I let him go on and on while I'm lying impatiently with him in bed. Finally, when I've had enough, I tell him, `Get over here, kid, and eat out my ass.' That brings him back to Earth."

Sal Mineo (left)
Falling in love with **James Dean**

Before Paul had to fly back to the coast, Sal confessed to him that he'd fallen madly in love with him. Years later, in an apartment in New York's Chelsea district, Sal admitted, "I thought I'd never love again after Jimmy died, but what I felt for him I transferred onto Paul."

To Paul's astonishment, Sal wanted him to move in with him and live together as a couple. "Give up Woodward. Give up all the others. I'm man enough to satisfy every need you have."

"That you are," Paul said. But before the night ended, he knew he'd have to tell Sal that they could be no more than "fuck buddies," and that he had another agenda to pursue that didn't revolve exclusively around him.

By midnight Paul lowered the boom and gave it to Sal straight. The young man looked devastated. He took it worse than Paul had expected. Perhaps Sal was in love with him after all.

He ran from the room and into the night. Paul didn't know where he was going. He went to sleep that night, thinking Sal would eventually accept the reality of what he was saying and come back.

Sometime before dawn, Paul fell asleep. Around five o'clock that morning, Robert Wise called Paul and told him to meet him at a hospital in South Los Angeles. It was an emergency.

Arriving at the hospital, Paul encountered Wise who told him that Sal had checked in under an assumed name. He was resting peacefully but had slit his wrists around three o'clock that morning.

The hospital staff would not admit Paul as one of Sal's visitors. Paul agreed to come back during visiting hours the following afternoon.

Around five o'clock the following day, Paul was led in to see Sal, who was sitting up in bed with his wrists bandaged.

"You foolish, foolish kid," Paul scolded him. "What were you thinking? You're on your way to becoming a

major heartthrob of the 50s. Do you really want to throw away your life?"

Sal just stared at him, waiting for a long time before speaking. "I want to hear the words coming from your own mouth."

Paul hesitated, but finally managed to say, "I'll always be there for you, kid."

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For a brief period, Gore Vidal lived with his lover, Howard Austen, at the Chateau Marmont, as did the married Paul Newman with his mistress, Joanne Woodward.

As The Los Angeles Times put it, "No wonder people come here to have affairs-it's got that air of history, where you know a lot of people did things they weren't supposed to do." Indeed if details about the shack-up of Joanne and Paul had been known to the general public, it could have seriously damaged their promising careers.

Paul remembered overhearing Harry Cohn, founder of Columbia Pictures, telling Glenn Ford and William Holden, "If you're going to get into trouble, do it at the Chateau Marmont." Although that advice had not been directly aimed at him, Paul took it seriously.

Nicholas Ray had told Paul, "If you're a novelist or actor from New York, you'll feel at home in this dark, rambling old French castle. It's not part of the state of California. If you want to pick up a garage mechanic with dirty fingernails, you can hustle him up on the elevator directly from the garage to your hotel room. Chances are, no one will see your comings and goings. After he's spurted, slip him a twenty and send him on his way. On the way up in the elevator, you can unzip him and cop a feel to make sure he's worth the twenty before you actually get him up to the room and undress him."

It was at the Chateau Marmont that Paul and Gore Vidal had plotted to convince Warner Brothers to film a movie version of Billy the Kid, the role Paul had originally played on TV. Gore had agreed to turn his teleplay into a full script ready for the cameras.

Without Joanne or Howard, Gore and Paul were often involved in intense discussions about Billy the Kid and were often seen alone together for hours at a time. That led to speculation around the chateau, and later among Hollywood insiders, that Gore and Paul were having a torrid affair.

The source of many of those rumors was Tennessee Williams, who had sustained a decade-long crush on Paul, and who was perhaps jealous that Paul had become "best friends" with Gore.

Gore seemed to take these rumors in stride. He once wrote, "There is a strange compulsion for journalists to reveal that stars of every sort and in every field are either homosexual or anti-Semitic or both. Most young men, particularly attractive ones, have sexual relations with their own kind. I suppose this is still news to those who believe in the two teams: straight, which is good and unalterable; queer, which is bad and unalterable unless it proves to be only a preference, which must then, somehow, be reversed, if necessary by force."

Howard Austen
Known as "Mrs. Gore Vidal"

It was around the pool at the Chateau Marmont that Joanne and Paul began to read Gore's novels, including The City and the Pillar, which had almost ruined the author's promising career before it had even started. Critics, including those at The New York Times, objected to how he'd written openly and without apology about homosexuality.

"I'd like to live to see the day when Hollywood has advanced to the point that it will make a movie based on The City and the Pillar," Paul said.

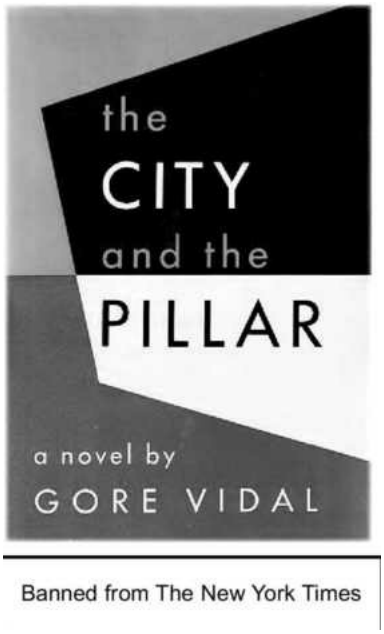
"I doubt if that day will ever come," Howard said. "Not in my lifetime."

Sometimes the English writer Christopher Isherwood would drop by to visit Joanne, Paul, Gore, and Howard. With him was a young Californian, Don Bachardy, a handsome, blond-haired painter who looked fourteen. The distinguished author of The Berlin Stories had met Bachardy on the beach one day and had taken him home. They'd been living together ever since.

Speaking privately one day with Paul, Isherwood confessed, "Since I'm seen with Don all the time, they call me a chicken hawk." In a soft voice, almost a whisper, the author said, "I'll lend you Don for the night if that would please you. Of course, you'd have to agree to let me watch you, the two most beautiful boys in Hollywood, making love to each other." Paul thanked Isherwood but turned down "your generous offer."

Sometimes all four of what had become known as Hollywood's most notorious quartet were seen gathered beside the pool. Sometimes, when Paul was away working, Joanne maintained intense discussions in private with Gore about the future of his race for the Presidency of the United States.

"Of course," Gore cautioned, "the specter of homosexuality might rear its ugly head during the campaign." Presumably, it was Joanne herself who volunteered to consider marrying him as a means of providing "cover."



"I wouldn't mind playing the role of First Lady," she said. "It'd be a hell of a lot better than this stinking part I've got in A Kiss Before Dying. And it also might be a hell of a lot more interesting than sitting around this pool waiting for Paul to make up his mind to divorce Jackie and marry me."

There remained another question. "What to do about Howard?"

"Perhaps we could let Howard permanently occupy the Lincoln Bedroom rent free," Gore said mockingly.

Fred Kaplan, in his biography of Gore, quotes Joanne as saying, "I think if we had gotten to that point and Gore had said, `Let's get married,' I might very well have done so. Because I was very fond of him. Many people have had that sort of marriage. I can't imagine how long it would have lasted. I would have driven Gore crazy, or he would have driven me crazy."

Both Paul and Joanne configured themselves as Gore's celebrity supporters, as did Eleanor Roosevelt, when he unsuccessfully ran for Congress in a Republican district in New York State in 1960.

Joanne played a pivotal role in the film noir, A Kiss Before Dying, released in 1956. It had a stellar cast which included Hollywood heartthrobs Robert Wagner and Jeffrey Hunter.

In that film, Mary Astor was cast as Robert Wagner's mother. An iconic screen great at the time, she had become famous in her portrayal of the calculating Brigid O'Shaughnessy, playing opposite Humphrey Bogart in The Maltese Falcon (1941). Robert was cast as a psychopathic but well-groomed college student who's scheming to marry the unsuspecting Joanne as a means of inheriting her father's Kingship Copper Mines. When he learns that she's pregnant out of wedlock, he takes her to the top of the City Hall building in Tucson and pushes her off the roof, hoping that her murder will look like a suicide. He then reaches out romantically to her sister, Ellen (Virginia Leith), in the hopes of marrying her to ingratiate himself with her conservative tycoon father.

After the release of the film, Joanne described it as "the worst picture ever made in Hollywood. It's my Silver Chalice." It's true that critics dismissed the film at the time as lurid melodrama, but over the years it has developed a cult following and is a far better thriller than reputation has it.

Vidal, Woodward, and Newman
Two bucks vying for the lady's affection

At the time of its release, its star, Robert Wagner, was dismissive of the film, referring to it as "a small bomb." But in later years he had a kinder appraisal, especially when latter-day critics lavished praise on the movie and cited his performance as Bud Corliss as the greatest of his life.

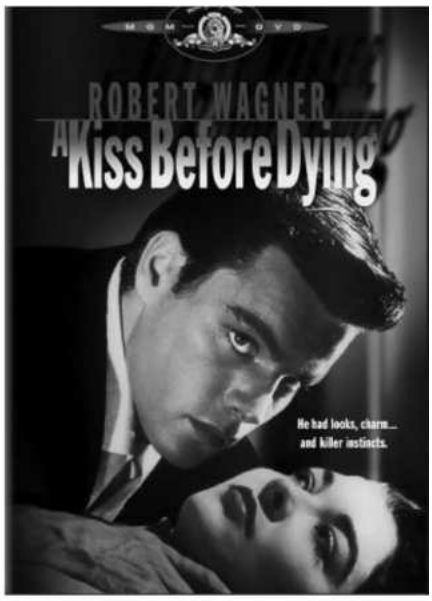
The film was based on a chiller novella by Ira Lewin, who would later write the horror classic, Rosemary's Baby. Ironically, Paul read the script before Joanne. An early version ofA Kiss Before Dying was sent to Montgomery Clift, who read it and rejected it as "cheap melodrama."

But he suggested to Paul that "you might do something with this character. You have the clean-cut image needed to hide a calculating black heart. Let's look at your own life, for instance. You live a life of betrayal, deceit, and lies. I bet Joanne Woodward, as smart as she is, doesn't have a glimmer of what you're up to most of the time. She understands only what you present to her."

Paul was not offended by Monty's remarks. "You're right. Secretly I'm a devil. I can be a very, very bad boy. But so can you."

"It was around this time that Paul met Robert Wagner," said Jeffrey Hunter, the film's co-star. "I saw lust in Paul's eyes. He found Robert's looks mesmerizing, and it was obvious that he was attracted to the gorgeous young man, who had narrowly escaped from the clutches of both Clifton Webb and the gay mega-agent, Henry Willson, only to land in the bed of aging actress Barbara Stanwyck."

"Robert Wagner was Paul's first serious crush," Janice Rule later said. "There would be two other serious crushes in his life. Robert Redford and later Tom Cruise. Robert Wagner gave him a bad case of unrequited love. This was a new emotion for Paul. Until he met Wagner, and later Redford and Cruise, Paul had managed to seduce practically any man or woman he wanted. If Paul is to be believed, he never went to bed with Wagner, but he sure had the hots for him. He just didn't dare face possible humiliation by making a play for him. He suspected that Wagner, because of his previous associations with Henry Willson, might be fair game, but Paul was afraid to risk a direct come-on."



"He **(Robert Wagner)** had looks, charm,and killer instincts"

"There was more to it than that," Janice claimed. "Paul not only wanted to bed Wagner, but he wanted to look like him. Ever since Paul had seen him on the screen playing the bit part of a soldier in With a Song in My Heart, with Susan Hayward, he'd found his looks dazzling. Even though Paul was called beautiful, one of the greatest looking men in the movies, he always felt he was too ethnic. He feared at times that he looked `too Jewish.' To him, Wagner represented the dreamy idol of WASP good looks and charm. `I'm a better actor than he is,' Paul told me, `and if I had his looks I could be the King of Hollywood. If I got that pretty boy in my bed, I'd send him to paradise. He can put his shoes under my bed any night. In this movie, he's supposed to have gotten Joanne pregnant. He could get me pregnant any night he wanted, and I don't know noth- in' `bout birthin' babies.'"

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Columnist Hedda Hopper was actually a far more sophisticated woman than she appeared to be. To appeal to her readership in small town America, she pretended to be narrow minded, "a provincial" as she called it.

Prior to the release of Somebody Up There Likes Me, a Warner Brothers' publicist arranged for Paul to visit Hopper at her home, presumably for a "getto-know-you" chat and interview. Robert Schaffer, a member of Warners' publicity department, told Paul, "Hedda and Louella Parsons don't have the power they used to, but they can still make or break stars in this town."

Less rebellious than Marlon Brando or Monty Clift, Paul dutifully drove over to Hopper's home to pay his respects to the aging journalist. He realized how crucial it was to cater to Hopper and her vanity, yet simultaneously, he feared that by granting an exclusive interview to Hedda Hopper, he'd deeply offend her arch-rival, Louella Parsons. Such was Paul's "Judgment of Paris" when he rang Hedda Hopper's doorbell.

Over drinks in her living room, Hopper at first amused Paul with her highly subjective stories from the Golden Age of Hollywood. He laughed when she told him, "Errol Flynn was seriously pissed off about something I wrote in my column, and rang my doorbell. The moment I opened the door, he began masturbating, while standing on my stoop and facing me. I began laughing, and continued laughing until he finished with a dramatic flourish all over my doorstep. I'll say one thing for Errol. He's the only man I know who can ejaculate in front of a fully dressed woman who's laughing derisively during the entire process."

Left to right:
Jeffrey Hunter, Joanne Woodward,
and **Robert Wagner.**
RJ: “Paul’s first serious crush”

Finally, Hopper moved in for the kill. "Do you suck up?" she asked Paul bluntly.

"I'm not sure if I follow you, Miss Hopper."

"I consider you one of the bad boys of Hollywood from what I hear, and I want to know how you plan to play me," she said. "Brando practically gave me the finger when he saw me. But Dean knew how to suck up. Once I encountered him in a restaurant and he came over and talked to me for an hour, leaving his boyfriend at table alone. Would you do that for me?"

"That sounds pretty rude to one's guest," Paul said. "I don't know if I'd leave my partner alone, but I would meet with you at the appropriate time if you wanted to interview me."

"That's not exactly a suck-up, but I guess it'll do. I'll be frank. Our relationship can go two ways. I know enough shit on you to ruin your career before it even gets started. I've been told that you had a fling with Dean, as well as one with that dreadful Marlon Brando. And I know you're married to some spineless clinging vine back East, and that out here, you're shacked up with Joanne Woodward and hanging out with that sissy queer, Gore Vidal. Such news could be very bad for you, and I'm the gal to spill the beans. If you don't want me to do that, how about giving me some good copy and for the moment, at least, we'll declare a truce. That is, unless you piss off Hedda the way I pissed off Flynn."

"Whatever happens," he said, "you won't find me masturbating on your doorstep."

"That's okay," she said. "Errol Flynn would be a tough act for one of you youngsters to follow."

Hedda Hopper
"You have to suck up to me."

"Other than the scandals you've suggested, what kind of red meat do you want from me?"

"First, I want to know if you've got balls. You see Robert Montgomery on the screen, and you can figure out he has balls. When Clark Gable came on with Carole Lombard, or whomever, you knew that he not only had balls but knew how to clank them. Which are you?"

"Given that choice, I'd follow in Gable's footsteps." He managed to get through the rest of the afternoon. He didn't exactly give Hopper red meat. As he later told Gore Vidal, "It was more like grilled hen."

At the door, Hopper, a little drunk, decided to give Paul some unwanted advice. "If you are as queer as some people say, I want you to stay away from my son and don't corrupt him. The other night I caught him in bed with Van Johnson going down on him."

"Miss Hopper, as a gentleman, I give you my word of honor. You'll never find me going down on William DeWolf Hopper Jr."

"At least you got his name right." She slammed the door in his face, but then suddenly reopened it. "If you marry that Woodward creature, make sure you give me the scoop. Don't let that bitch Louella know about it until I print it. Got that?"

"My God, I'll make you my best man if you want me to. Speaking of balls, you've got them, Hedda."

"That's Miss Hopper to you." She slammed the door a final time.

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Paul's appearance opposite Elizabeth Taylor in the 1958 release of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof was preceded by a bizarre sequence of casting sagas. Among others, they involved Tennessee Williams, Vivien Leigh, Grace Kelly, and Elvis Presley.

The dramas began in 1954 while Tennessee was still working on the play. Actually, he didn't complete the third act of the play until three days before opening night at the Morosco Theater on March 24, 1955. Even so, months before its premiere, there were undercurrents of speculation about the play. The Los Angeles Times, in an embarrassing bit of misinformation, even labeled it a "comedy."

Paul's involvement in what was to become one of his most celebrated movies began with a mysterious phone

message that came in to a publicist at Warner Brothers. The message was from a "G.K." The publicity department was savvy enough to know that the woman calling was Grace Kelly. The person who took the call recognized her voice.

Later, Paul, who was with Vampira and Tony Perkins that day, said, "Once again I'm Grace Kelly's call boy. But what man with red blood in him would turn down an invitation from that goddess?"

"Speaking of goddesses, even those of yesterday, how are you doing on your game plan to fuck all the fading beauties of the 1940s?" Vampira asked.

"It's slow going," Paul said. "So far, only Joan Crawford. But we'll see. How about you, Tony?"

"The love goddesses of yesterday don't appeal to me," he said. "I'd rather fuck those male matinee idols of the 30s that I used to swoon over in the movies. I've got to move quickly before they expire."

"Who do you have in mind?"

"Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Errol Flynn, and Tyrone Power."

"Better hurry up," Paul urged him. "I think you'll have no trouble with Taylor, Flynn, and Power, but I heard Gable gave up the gay life during the early 30s. From the looks of those screen idols today, their time on Earth is very limited."

Later that night, when Paul arrived at a secluded hideaway in the San Fernando Valley, he was ushered into a backroom where Grace was waiting at table with a man.

To his surprise, Paul quickly learned that the man was Tennessee Williams. She rose from the table with the grace of a swan to kiss him gently on the mouth. Tennessee also slowly rose to his feet, kissing Paul on both cheeks. "I've never forgotten you since Bill Inge and I saw you audition for Picnic."

After very routine chatter and congratulations on the recent accomplishments of each of these artists, Grace assumed a rather business-like aura. "Tennessee has the most divine proposal. He's at work on a Broadway play. It's called Maggie the Cat. He's proposing that I open the play on Broadway, run with it for 85 nights, then turn it over to-say, Kim Stanley. During this time, I'll sign a contract to appear in the movie. I'm crazy for the idea of the movie but appearing on Broadway frightens me."

"Grace Kelly in a new Tennessee Williams play," Paul said. "What a dynamite idea. How do I fit in? The guy who gets Maggie the Cat purring?"

"Like a true Hun, you get right to the point," Tennessee said. "You'd be cast in the male lead, and you don't get the frustrated Maggie purring at all. You'd be playing a homosexual."

Remembering his recent talk with Hedda Hopper, Paul said, "I've got the balls to do that if I don't have to wear pink."

"Actually, it's a very masculine role from what Tennessee has told me," Grace said. "Like me, you'd agree to appear in the stage version, followed by the movie."

"In the play Maggie has a foul mouth and is very earthy," Tennessee said. "In other words, Grace would be playing against type. I like that kind of casting."

"And me?" Paul asked.

"You'd be in your pajamas for most of the play," Tennessee said. "We'd naturally have to have some scenes to show off that sculpted Davidesque chest of yours, arguably the most beautiful in Hollywood. God created your chest for silken tongues to lap." He turned to Grace and smiled. "How I envy Grace for having sampled the world's tastiest

specimen. As for me, an aging queen can only dream of what a delight that must be."

Showing a slight embarrassment, Grace laughed to mask her feelings. "It seems that you've gone through your Brando fixation and turned to more modern stars. Paul is the embodiment of the new breed taking over Hollywood."

"You're known for appearing with older stars," Paul told her. "Gary Cooper. Clark Gable, Ray Milland, James Stewart. It might be fun for you to work with someone closer to your own age."

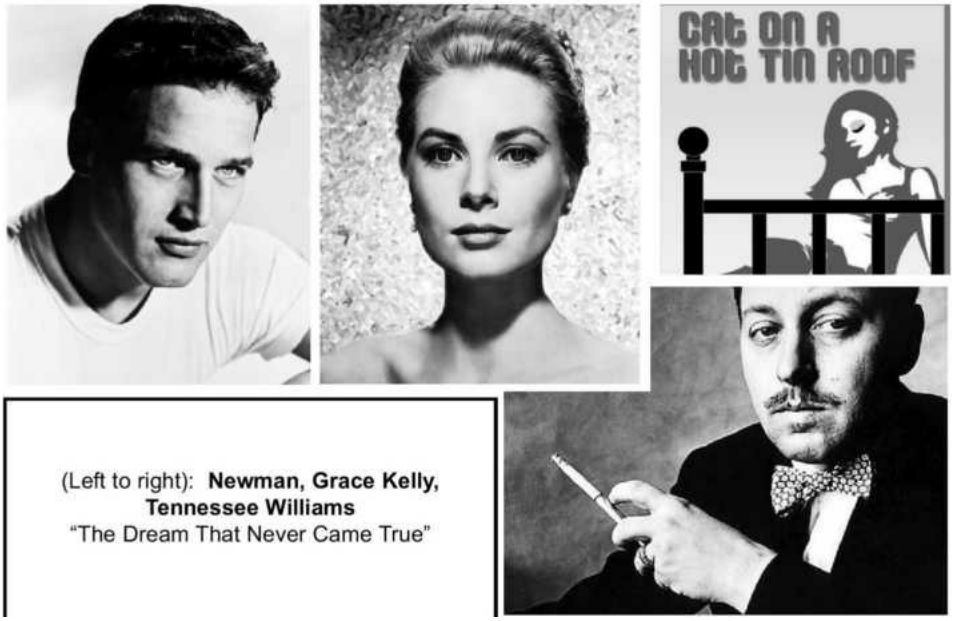
"It'd be more than fun," she said. "We'd burn up the screen."

"There is a great role for a character actor," Tennessee said. "Big Daddy. I have Orson Welles in mind."

"He's certainly big enough," Paul said. "If the arrangements can be made and those who hold us in bondage approve, I'll go for it. I don't have to read the play. Knowing that Tennessee wrote it is good enough for me. I'm sure it'll be a masterpiece."

At the end of dinner, a rather handsome young man with a slight growth of beard appeared in the rear of the restaurant to escort a drunken Tennessee back to his car. The playwright didn't bother to introduce his driver. "I was writing all my roles for Brando," Tennessee said, rising on wobbly legs. "But he's getting too beefy to play a Tennessee Williams leading man. Today I'm creating characters like Brick who are lean, mean, and astonishingly beautiful. Men who inspire sexual fantasies regardless of the viewer's persuasion."

He looked his driver over skeptically. "Right now I'm studying the world of hustlers. Someday I'll cast you as the lead in one of my plays where you'll play a hustler. I envision Tallulah Bankhead playing an aging, has-been actress opposite you." He gently kissed Paul on the lips before heading off into the night with his paid companion.



When Paul sat back down at table, he felt Grace place her delicate hand on his thigh. "I've booked us a room upstairs at this sleazy joint."

"Isn't this cockroach palace pretty poor digs for the glamorous Grace Kelly, used to sleeping only on satin sheets?"

"Perhaps it is," she said rather demurely. "But tonight I'm taking off the white gloves. I want you to treat me like some slut you picked up on the most dangerous street in South Los Angeles."

"Tonight you'll get your wish, sweetheart."

***

On the day he woke up to film a pivotal scene in Somebody Up There Likes Me, Paul stared into the doe-eyed eyes of Sal Mineo. It had been a rough night. Sal had a direct way of talking. "I bet my rosebud is hotter than Joanne Woodward's pussy," he said. Paul turned over and headed for the bathroom. He didn't like talk like that.

Director Robert Wise was waiting at the studio to direct Paul in a crucial scene, his on-film match with Tony Zale. Zale was a former middleweight champion who was playing himself in the movie. "Think of this match as a dance number," Wise instructed Paul.

As the morning lengthened, Wise was disappointed with the match. "Newman was gun-shy with Zale," Wise later claimed. "He was afraid that if he accidentally clipped Tony, Tony-in a fighter's reflex reaction-would cold-cock him. I've never forgotten the experience of seeing Paul pull back from Tony. Maybe Paul was also trying to save that pretty face of his."

In spite of the difficulty Wise had in filming his faux boxing match, after the film was released, Paul was praised for this climatic scene with Zale. In fact, the bout between Zale and Paul is still ranked as one of the greatest boxing scenes ever filmed. Bosley Crowther of The New York Times called the match "one of the whoppingest slugfests we've ever seen on the screen." Collier's was more impressed with Paul's chest and biceps, claiming they measured up to the "brawniest of Hollywood's beefcake actors."

In a touch of irony, right before the film was released, Monty Clift told Paul that Dean had not been the first choice to play Rocky. Originally Wise had offered the role to Monty, because he'd been impressed with his portrayal of a boxer in From Here to Eternity. Monty turned him down. "I don't want to become known for boxing roles," Monty said.

The second choice, Dean, had accepted the role even though he was not muscular like a professional boxer. His face was far too sensitive to convince audiences that he was a street fighter and an inarticulate pugilist.

Even though Somebody Up There Likes Me was Paul's breakthrough role, he was disappointed at the flood of reviews comparing him once again to Brando.

"Ersatz Brando," claimed many a reviewer, although there were those perceptive enough to know that in Somebody Up There Likes Me, Paul had charted his own path as an actor. "I don't want to be doomed forever to walk in Brando's shoes."

Privately, Paul knew that it was a question of who was imitating whom.

Brando had not only briefly considered playing the role of Rocky Graziano himself, but he'd "ripped off Graziano" for his interpretation of the character of Stanley Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire."

"Before I opened on Broadway, I spent weeks with the lug," Brando confessed to Paul. "I watched him like a hawk getting ready for a spring chicken dinner. I studied his speech patterns, the way he walked, his every mannerism. I understand you did the same damn thing. Except in your case you were studying to play the real Rocky. I was trying to form a character created by Tennessee Williams. No wonder people compare our performances. When I gave Rocky tickets to go see Streetcar, he knew that was himself up there on the stage raping the pathetic Blanche DuBois."

Paul put up a brave front for Brando, telling him that he'd picked up two bad habits from the boxer. "Graziano taught me to spit in the streets and say fuck every third word."

But privately he complained to friends such as Tony Perkins and Rod Steiger. "I had every right to rip off Graziano's character because I was playing him on the screen. Brando was playing Stanley Kowalski, an entirely

different character. Life isn't fair. Hollywood's not fair. Critics aren't fair. I'm going out tonight with Steve-yes, it's Steve now, not Steven-and pull the drunk of my life."

Tony Zale
Man of Steel

Paul went by himself to see Somebody at a movie house on Hollywood Boulevard so he could study his performance better without having to respond to the reactions of accompanying friends. As he emerged from the theater, a boy about fourteen years old came up to him. "May I have your autograph, mister?" he asked.

Paul, who hated to sign autographs, gave him one anyway. The boy studied it carefully. "Oh," he said, "you're not Marlon Brando. You're Paul Newman. Can I have another autograph?"

"Sure," Paul said, granting his request. "This one for your mother?"

"No, I need two of yours to trade for one of Brando."

***

For months, Robert Wise and his associates kept circulating the rumor that it was almost certain that Paul would be nominated for an Oscar as Best Actor of 1957. Joanne Woodward, even Gore Vidal, joined in this chorus of approval. One friend of Rocky's wrote Paul a fan letter from Brooklyn. "That was our boy Rocky Graziano we saw up there on the screen, not pretty boy Newman." Paul was a fairly modest guy, but eventually he came to believe that he was indeed going to break out and win the Oscar after having already made two box office failures.

Then one night, months later, a call came in from Brando at about two o'clock in the morning. "I've been nominated for an Oscar for Sayonara," Brando told him with pride, years before he'd eventually shun such an award. "The smart money in Vegas is on me. I'm the frontrunner."

Paul was too proud to ask him who else had been nominated. It wasn't until he read the papers the following morning that he learned he hadn't even been nominated. In the "Best Actor" category, Brando was up against Anthony Quinn for Wild Is the Wind, Charles Laughton for Witness for the Prosecution, Anthony Franciosa for A Hatful of Rain, and Alec Guinness for The Bridge on the River Kwai. Guinness walked off with the prize, much to Paul's disappointment.

"Fuck Hollywood, fuck their Oscars," he told McQueen over the phone. "Tonight, let's drink up all the booze in town."

"You're on, kid," McQueen said.

"Now who's the kid? I'm old enough to be your father."

"Yeah, right," McQueen said. "Your dick wasn't big enough at the age of five in 1930 to have fathered a stud like me."

***

Over the years Paul had many affairs, either with beautiful women or with handsome men with whom he was cast. Even so, he never tried to match Steve McQueen's record of "fucking every one of my leading ladies."

Bang the Drum Slowly was shot in New York, and aired on September 16, 1956 on The United States Steel Hour. During the shooting of the teleplay, in which Paul had a leading role, he became involved with the bisexual and closeted actor, George Peppard.

Bang the Drum Slowly was based on Mark Harris's baseball novel, which was first published in 1956 as a sequel to his other famous novel, The Southpaw, first published in 1953. In the teleplay, Paul was cast as Henry Wiggen, a celebrity pitcher, who relates the saga of a baseball season with the New York Mammoths, a fictional team loosely based on the New York Yankees.

The title of the teleplay was derived from the song, "The Streets of Laredo," which contains the lyrics, "0 bang the drum slowly, and play the fife slowly...."

In the teleplay, it's revealed that the starting lineup of the Mammoths will have to be altered by the worsening Hodgkin's disease of their catcher, Bruce Pierson, as played by actor Albert Salmi. George Peppard's role in the teleplay was that of Piney Woods, a slightly crazed backup catcher who's also ambitious, Southern, a hayseed, and ruthless. In the teleplay, Piney is plotting to replace Pierson (the official, not-very-bright catcher).

As part of the teleplay, the character of Pierson entrusts the secret of his worsening disease to the character played by Paul, who struggles with the moral implications of his loyalty to his team versus his loyalty to his friend.

The novel encompassed some wide-ranging geographies, but the set decorator had to compress all of them onto a single sound stage, and all of its chronologies into a span of less than fifty minutes.

The end of each scene was punctuated with blackouts, wherein the actors raced from one set and time frame to another. During each of the blackouts, a spotlight focused only on Paul, who functioned within the teleplay as the narrator. At the beginning of his performance, Paul warned the audience, "There's not much room in the studio here. You have to use your imagination."

The broadcast was a great success. Forty years after the telecast, TV Guide would vote Bang the Drum Slowly as one of the 100 Most Memorable Moments in the history of television, citing Paul's appearance at "the peak of his blue-eyed beauty."

Ironically, in some respects, the action behind the scenes was more intriguing than what went on in front of the camera. During rehearsals, Paul established two secretive and rather bizarre relationships with his co-stars.

Before being cast in the same drama, Paul and George had had only a passing acquaintance with each other from the Actors Studio. During one of his dinners with Janice Rule, Paul told her, "George is almost as handsome as I am."

As a budding psychoanalyst, Janice speculated that Paul actually wanted to look like George, just as previously, he had wanted to look like Robert Wagner. "Although Paul became the male sex symbol of the 1950s, he actually wasn't that pleased with his body," Janice said. "He believed he was too short. And he always wanted to have more meat on his legs."

George's second wife, actress Elizabeth Ashley, to whom he was married from 1966 to 1972, aptly described his appearance after her first meeting with the former Marine. "George Peppard looked like some kind of Nordic godsix feet tall with beautiful blond hair, blue eyes, and a body out of every high school cheerleader's teenage lust fantasy."

Paul's reaction, at least according to Janice, was similar to Elizabeth's. "Even though they knew each other, Paul's affair with George didn't burst into bloom until they worked together on that baseball play. I wouldn't exactly call it a love affair. But I bet they had great sex together. What male beauties they were."

"One night I went out with both of them together," she said. "I'd never seen two men drink so much. I thought each of them would become an alcoholic. Paul didn't. George did. He was also a smokestack. No sooner would one cigarette go out than he'd light up another one. Paul, who was always very open with me, jokingly said, `It's hard to give George a big gooey wet one because he's always got a cigarette in his mouth.'"

Except for Janice's observation, details about the relationship between Paul and George are sparse. However, the two actors knew each other for years. Author Truman Capote came to know George when in 1961 he was cast in his most famous role, that of Paul Varjak in Breakfast at Tiffany's opposite Audrey Hepburn.

"During the filming, Paul came onto the set to see both Audrey, whom he knew casually, and George," Capote said. "He departed for the weekend in New England with George. I just assumed they were having a little fling. It certainly appeared so to the rest of the cast. I wish those two hunks had invited me as their chaperone. At least they could have asked me to watch."

George Peppard
"Sexy but ruthless"

"Each of those actors should have been arrested for being so good looking," Capote said. "Looking at the two of them together would give a queen an orgasm. If some studio ever remakes Gone With the Wind, the director should cast George as Rhett Butler and Paul as Ashley Wilkes. I couldn't quite pull off Scarlett, but in blackface I could do the Butterfly McQueen role."

George would continue to have an occasional fling with a man, mostly young actors enamored of his screen image. He'd have a very brief affair with Rock Hudson when they co-starred in Tobruk in 1967. But, for the most part, he "loved the ladies," as his fellow students at the Actors Studio claimed. "From what I heard, he sampled the charms of many of them, including a number of famous actresses of his day," Janice said. "I would have gone away with him, but he never asked me."

Years later, in 1973, Michael Moriarty and Robert De Niro would bring Bang the Drum Slowly to the big screen. But many critics preferred the simplicity of the original teleplay. In the words of one critic, "Newman's and Salmi's basic warmth comes across better than Michael Moriarty's rather diffident performance and Robert De Niro's intense Method acting performance."

When Paul was asked if he'd seen the De Niro version, he snapped, "No, and I don't plan to, as I prefer to keep the memory of the original."

There were a lot of memories to keep. Out of respect for one of those memories, Paul called George when he learned he was dying in Los Angeles of lung cancer in 1994. All those years of heavy smoking had finally caught up with him. "I was my own worst enemy," George told Paul as he'd told so many others. "Mine isn't a string of victories. It's no golden past. I am no George Peppard fan."

"But I am!" Paul assured him.

***

Albert Salmi, with his tall, brawny physique, was a Method actor taught by Lee Strasberg himself, the same way that Paul was.

"I think Paul and Salmi spent the early part of their friendship either in a Turkish bath or a Finnish sauna checking each other out," said Rod Steiger. "Salmi was always trying to convince Paul that Finnish saunas were superior to Turkish baths."

"I don't really know if those two hunks bumped pussies in the night or not," Steiger said. "I came to suspect that Paul was playing Eve Harrington to Salmi's Margo Charming, even though Salmi was three years younger than Paul."

Steiger, of course, was referring to the scheming character that Anne Baxter played in the 1950 All About Eve where she plotted to fill the stage shoes of Margo Charming (Bette Davis).

One night, perhaps in a Finnish sauna, Albert revealed to Paul that he was under consideration for Bus Stop, the new play by William Inge. There was a juicy male role, Bo Decker, a brash young cowboy with boorish manners, who falls for a stripper.

Years before, Inge had promised Paul that he'd make him the biggest star on Broadway, tailoring all his male roles for him. But when Paul learned there were sexual strings attached, he rejected Inge, who had never forgiven him.

Paul volunteered to rehearse Albert before he faced an audition with Inge himself and the the play's director, Harold Clurman. As it happened, Albert had not been given a script and would have to go into the reading cold turkey. Perhaps hoping that Albert would fail in his audition, Paul advised him to wear a suit and tie instead of the Levis, cowboy boots, and plaid shirt that was called for as part of the role.

During the plays previews in Philadelphia, the role of Bo was being played by Cliff Robertson, but Clurman wanted to fire him and bring in a new actor better suited to the part. Robertson, of course, was the same actor who had replaced Paul as the boyfriend in the movie version of Picnic.

Albert called Paul to tell him that he'd pulled off the audition. Both Clurman and Inge wanted him to play Bo, in spite of his appearance at the audition in a business suit. While there, he learned that Kim Stanley had been cast in the coveted role of Cherie, the stripper.

Finally, Albert was delivered a copy of the script for Bus Stop. Paul was almost as eager to read it as Albert was. He promised to work with Albert in his role before he had to go on stage with Kim.

"The moment Paul read that script, he could see PAUL NEWMAN written on every page," Steiger said. "The character's not housebroken. He's an innocent with a combustible element. When he meets this hot pussy, Cherie, he wants her and is determined to have her at all costs. He's got an unbridled lust for life."

Paul had confided to Shelley Winters that, "I'm destined to play the role of Bo."

Albert Salmi and Newman
in *Bang the Drum Slowly.*
"A lot of time in the sauna"

"Destined is a pretty big word for a stage actor to use, but I think I understand why you said that," she said.

"I use the word and I mean it," he said. "I want that part, and I don't care who I have to fuck to get it."

"Even Bill Inge?" she asked provocatively.

"Even that, if I have to," he said. "That is, if I can get it up again for him."

Setting aside past differences, Paul braced himself and called Inge again, urging him to reject Albert for the part and cast him instead.

"As Picnic clearly showed, you don't have that wild streak in you to play Bo," Inge said.

"I've got a god damn wild streak in me, and I'll fucking show you," he told Inge.

The playwright slammed down the phone. Paul had been his crush of yesterday. New and younger game lay in his future, notably Warren Beatty.

"Paul was working hard behind Albert's back to get the role of Bo," Steiger claimed. "But to Albert's face, he pretended to be his best friend. I think that if that heavy drinking Finn had ever learned about this double cross, he'd have beaten the shit out of Paul."

In a final, desperate maneuver, Paul even resumed, at least temporarily, his on-again, off-again affair with Kim Stanley. She told Paul he was right for the role, and she promised to secretly lobby for him.

Brooks Clift, her other lover, claimed she didn't lobby very hard, because she believed that Paul was too pretty and not rough enough around the edges. "He is just too polished a gentleman to play a hayseed like Bo Decker. Paul has `class' written on his face."

Before going to Philadelphia, Albert worked with Paul on the script until two or three o'clock each morning for an entire week. Paul assumed the role of the beautiful showgal, Cherie.

"He deliberately gave Salmi bad advice," Steiger said, "although I don't know that for sure. Frankly, I think Paul wanted Salmi to bomb in Philadelphia, the way that Cliff Robertson had bombed. If Salmi also got fired, then Paul could step into the role. He knew every line of the play. He could even dress up in drag and play Cherie's part in an emergency."

Brooks claimed that Paul and Kim had another tiff when he learned that she didn't really back him for the role. Not only that, but Albert had claimed that Kim appeared at his hotel room one night in a robe, carrying a bottle of champagne and a couple of glasses. "She told me she was lonely," Albert told Paul. "I found her very attractive, and

she convinced me we should make love off the stage so that we'd have more chemistry on the stage."

Later Albert claimed he'd turned down Kim's late-night proposition, but perhaps he said that as a means of protecting her reputation, since she was married at the time to actor Curt Conway.

Not knowing of Paul's own involvement with Kim, Albert told him of his private seduction of the star. This made Paul doubly jealous of his rival, although he managed to conceal that.

Produced by Roger L. Stevens and Robert Whitehead, Bus Stop opened to rave reviews on May 2, 1955 at the Music Box Theater in New York.

At this point, Albert had not yet learned of Paul's attempt to steal the role from him. Tenaciously Paul was still clinging to his dream of playing Bo. He was certain that a movie of Bus Stop would be made, and he told Steiger that "Albert is not photogenic. His rough looks are okay on stage, but not in a close-up."

Kim and Albert were hailed as the toast of Broadway, and Bus Stop was voted the best play of the season. Despite that high praise, Albert told a national magazine that this "boy-meet-girl play is just a piece of fluff, nothing more, nothing less." His widely circulated observation enraged Inge.

After hearing about that, Paul once again called Inge and found him more receptive to his playing Bo, at least on the screen. Furious at Albert's remarks, Inge promised Paul that he'd lobby for him to bring the role of Bo to the big screen.

One night, Paul received a call from Marilyn Monroe, who had arrived mysteriously in New York. She wanted to dress up incognito and be taken to see Bus Stop. He agreed to have a reunion with her, and he accompanied her to the Music Box Theater. When the house lights dimmed, she entered the theater with him, taking an out-of-the-way seat. It was obvious what her designs were. She wanted to play Cherie in the movie version.

At the theater, Marilyn seemed to delight in the show, squeezing Paul's hand repeatedly. At the end of the play, she wanted to go backstage to meet Albert. But Paul discouraged the idea, claiming that Kim Stanley would find out and would be furious, thinking she was trying to steal the role from her. He told Marilyn that Kim had her heart set on playing Cherie in the film.

That night Paul took Marilyn back to her hotel where he made love to her-that is, when they weren't talking about the changes that they would make in Inge's play when it was filmed.

Kim Stanley
"Torn between two lovers"

The next morning, Paul encountered Steiger at the Actors Studio and swore him to secrecy about what he was to tell him about his night with Marilyn. "My dream is about to come true," he said. "Paul Newman and Marilyn Monroe starring in Bus Stop. I can see our names linked in movie marquees across the country."

"Perhaps," Steiger said skeptically. "But you've got the billing wrong. Any actor will always have to play second fiddle to Marilyn."

Twentieth Century Fox purchased the rights to the play and began to fashion it into a showcase for Marilyn's talents. The film's director, Josh Logan, called Albert to tell him that Fox was interested in having him test for the role of Bo.

Three days later, Albert told Paul he'd met with Logan, who was still touting the theory of crotch acting he'd articulated so well, years before, to Ralph Meeker.

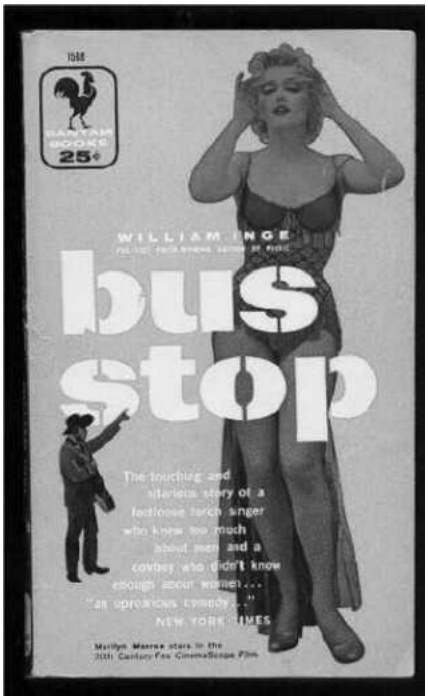
When Albert invited Logan to join him in a Finnish sauna, and when the director saw firsthand how well endowed Albert was, he came up with a suggestion. For the film, Logan proposed that Albert "wear skin-tight jeans and show basket. John Barrymore always claimed that when he appeared on stage in green tights, he stuffed a sock in there and that ticket sales among the ladies and homosexual males soared."

Albert told Logan that, "I can go for that since I'm right proud of what I've got. We Finns are gods among men."

To Paul's surprise, he learned that Elvis Presley had appeared in the audience to see Bus Stop. Like Marilyn, he had arrived incognito and was not recognized by his fans.

"I heard through Logan that Elvis wants to play Bo," Albert said. "If he's really serious, he'll get the part. Let's face it: Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe would be the box office attraction of the decade."

Paul warned Albert "not to worry. There's no way in hell that Colonel Tom Parker will let his moneymaker do a straight dramatic part."



The prediction came true. Colonel Parker completely rejected the idea of Bus Stop for Elvis. Parker's exact

words were, "I'm not gonna let my star appear in some play by a queer. The next thing I know, Elvis will be wanting to do a Tennessee Williams play."

Albert had contracted to star in the road tour of Bus Stop with former child actress, Peggy Ann Garner. Between 1938 and 1949, she had appeared in eighteen films. But by 1955 her star was dimming.

Taking time out from the play's road tour, Albert took the train to New York for a screen test with Logan. Back on the road, his relationship with Peggy Ann heated up. Albert later said, "I bedded Peggy Ann-or did she bed me?" Whatever, the couple got married in 1956, a union that lasted until 1963.

A week after his screen test, Albert heard from Logan. "The suits at Fox don't feel you're right for the movie role."

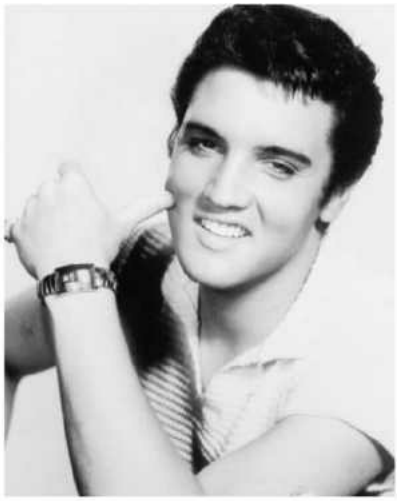
When that news reached Paul, he called Logan and practically demanded that he get the part. "I can play Bo. Marilyn and I have great chemistry together. Besides, you owe me one."

"I don't owe you a God damn thing," a drunken Logan told him. "Just because you let me suck your cock doesn't give you any claim to shit. Do you know how many actors' cocks I've sucked? Hell, back in the Thirties, I used to suck off both Henry Fonda and James Stewart."

One afternoon at the Actors Studio, Kim encountered Paul, managing to be gracious about her loss. "Marilyn had other commitments, and I got the role of Cherie. Logan even came backstage and told me it was definite. But now her schedule's clear, and she's available to take the role, and I'm the loser. I'm horribly disappointed. But Marilyn is such big box office, and she is right for the role. You and I have seen her act at the studio. We know how good she is. None of us believe that she's the lightweight her adoring fans seem to think."

Backstage that night at Bus Stop, Paul felt Kim's despair. Hoping to cheer her up, he stripped down and pulled off her robe. On the floor of her dressing room, he was making love to her when he heard a loud pounding on her locked door. It was her husband, actor Curt Conway. He was calling out for Kim.

Throwing her robe around her, she hustled Paul into her tiny bathroom before opening the door to greet her husband. She told her husband that she was alone, although he'd learned that she was having affairs with other men.



Elvis Presley
"Missing the bus"

Months later, when the filming of Bus Stop began, Kim wired Marilyn in California. "I send you my best. You have a lovely, lovely play to film."

Paul told Steiger, "I'm glad Conway didn't have to take a leak that night." In a way, Paul was rehearsing for his upcoming madcap performance in Rally Round the Flag, Boys!

Conway and Paul would not meet until both of them were cast in the 1963 Hud.

***

Back in Hollywood, Paul hooked up with Marilyn for a one-night stand, still hoping he had a chance to play Bo opposite her. She had more or less convinced him that she had persuaded Logan to cast him in the part.

After their lovemaking, she kissed him on the mouth. "Sorry, honey, I've got bad news. Logan, that bastard, has cast Don Murray."

Paul was crushed, especially by the way Marilyn had chosen to tell him the bad news.

"Murray's got no fire," he said. "He's a nice-looking boy-next-door type."

Even so, Murray got an Oscar nomination that year as Best Supporting Actor.

"Marilyn led me on," Paul raged to Vampira the next day. "She fucked Albert, and then she screwed Elvis. She was flirting and fucking with all the potential Bos."

"At least you got a few good screws out of the deal," Vampira said. "Fucking Marilyn was your consolation prize."

In time, Albert learned about Paul's behind-the-scenes maneuvering to grab the role of Bo from him. Although they would work together in the future, he never really forgave him.

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For the Kaiser Aluminum Hour on television, Paul was cast as Danny Scott in The Army Game, a teleplay directed by Franklin J. Schaffner. It aired on July 3, 1956.

The cast brought Paul into contract with Sydney Pollack, an actor who would become even more famous as a director.

As a Hollywood footnote, Pollack would be far more significant in the career of Paul's future friend, Robert Redford, than he would in Paul's filmography.

Long after appearing on TV with Paul, Pollack would be cast in Redford's film debut, the 1962 War Hunt. They became friends and would later collaborate on seven films, including The Way We Were in 1973 and Out ofAfrica in 1985. In time, Pollack would finally work with Paul when they filmed Absence of Malice in 1981. However, Al Pacino had been the director's first choice of a star.

Years later Paul with a smirk commented on the Redford/Pollack films, "I guess Sydney went for Redford's puss and that blonde hair instead of my baby blues and buffed chest. Because he fell for Redford's male flash, I lost out on a lot of good parts. I'm only joking, fellows. As far as I know, Redford and Pollack are straight arrows."

Also appearing in the cast of The Army Game was George Grizzard, whom Paul had dropped so abruptly when they were appearing on Broadway in The Desperate Hours.

In 1977, at Ted Hook's Backstage restaurant in New York, George spoke to actress Barbara Baxley and author Darwin Porter about his reunion with Paul. George and Barbara were discussing co-starring in The Last Resort, a film version of Porter's novel, Butterflies in Heat.

"When we came together again, I wasn't sure if Paul would even speak to me," George confided. "But he

walked right up to me in the studio and embraced me. We started up with our love affair where it had left off. I couldn't believe the change in his attitude from the last time I'd seen him. I fell madly in love with him all over again. And, guess what? Once again, after two torrid months, he abandoned ship like before. After that, I'd had it with Paul. I still loved him dearly, but I had to move on for the sake of my sanity."

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Also as part of The Kaiser Aluminum Hour series, Paul starred with Don Gordon and Silvio Minciotto in The Rag Jungle which aired on November 20, 1956. Paul had little contact with Gordon, a Californian who was his same age. Gordon would become one of the best friends of Paul's future rival, Steve McQueen, appearing with him in Bullitt, Papillon, and The Towering Inferno. The latter film would also star Paul, of course.

Years later, whenever the subject of the close bond between McQueen and Gordon would come up, Paul tended to be dismissive. "I'm tired of hearing all this crap about what blood brothers they are, riding off into the hills on their fucking bikes. Lovebirds like to flock together."

Robert Redford (left) with **Sydney Pollack**
"Falling for the hunk's male flash"

"I had the chance to become Steve's biker buddy, riding off in the middle of the night in the pissing rain," Paul claimed. "Sleeping buck-ass naked with the buck-ass naked Steve in a scalding hot motel room with bedbugs in a desert where if you walked ten feet outside the door you stepped on a rattlesnake. Steve wanted me above all others. He liked to go away with men while keeping his wife of the moment home barefoot and pregnant. I know the same charge has been leveled against me. It's not true in my case. It was true in Steve's case. A man's man. Women for sex, men for company, or whatever."

Janice Rule always claimed that she felt Paul was jealous of McQueen's ability to bond with other men. "In spite of his protests, I think Paul wanted to be out there riding in the moonlight on his bike alongside Steve. Discovering the world that way."

"The subject of the strange relationship between Steve McQueen and Paul Newman could fill an entire book," Janice said. "Frankly, I think the two of them, in spite of being such rivals, had the hots for each other. One time I told Paul that I thought he and Steve should get married and settle down on a sheep farm in Australia. He never spoke to me again for a month."

During rehearsals for The Rag Jungle, Paul spent more time talking to the aging actor Silvio Minciotti than he did with Gordon. Born in Italy in 1883, Minciotti had played Papa D'Amato in the 1952 film, Clash by Night, starring Barbara Stanwyck and Marilyn Monroe.

"Paul was fascinated to learn that Marilyn had a lesbian streak in her," Minciotti claimed. "I told him that when Marilyn wasn't fucking her goodlooking co-star in the movie, Keith Andes, she was screwing Barbara."

"I think Babs could have really fallen for Marilyn but blondie cut her off at the end of our film," Minciotti said. "She had other fish to fry. Paul was like a sponge absorbing all I knew about Marilyn and Barbara shacking up. I secretly suspected the image of those two pussies making it together provided a jack-off fantasy for him."

"He told me that he'd seduced Stanwyck's best friend, Joan Crawford, as indeed Marilyn had herself," Minciotti said. "Paul said that like Marilyn, he, too, planned to seduce some of his dream girl fantasies of the Forties. He even named his specific target victims, each a wet dream of his. Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Judy Garland, and Rita Hayworth. I was absolutely certain that before the Fifties came to an end, and before each of these bitches got too old, Paul would have them."

"He seemed very determined, and I can't imagine one of those aging movie queens kicking a young stud like Paul Newman out of their beds," Minciotti said. "Stanwyck was never a serious consideration for seduction. `I hear she likes to control the fuck,' Paul told me. `I could never go for that. When I fuck, I like to be the man. The one in charge.'"

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More and more television viewers came to know the name of Paul Newman during the mid-50s. Critics hailed his performance in such teleplays as The Five Fathers of Pepi, which first aired in 1956 as part of The United States Steel Hour. "Live television was a great learning tool for me," he said. "You had guys like Tad Mosel and Max Shulman writing for the medium. It was a very creative time, even though some critics dismissed our work as `kitchen sink.' It was a glorious period to be a young actor. I preferred the stage, but teleplays were my next favorite goodie. At that time, I had utter contempt for films on the big screen, which was getting even bigger at the time with CinemaScope."

"Of course, there were hazards," Paul recalled. "I remember in some military drama, I had to salute my superior officer. My fly was unzipped and my shirt tail was hanging out. Fortunately, that was all that was hanging out."

Years later, Paul would hardly remember his appearance in The Five Fathers of Pepi. Playing an Italian named Giorgio, he briefly befriended his co-star in the teleplay, Phyllis Hill, who had divorced Oscar-winning actor Jose Ferrer in 1953.

Paul took this classically trained ballet dancer out on a couple of dates, but all that he remembered was Phyllis lamenting "what a philandering louse Jose was." She told him that women who marry actors are fools. "Too much temptation is thrown at them. They are only men, after all, and they can't resist the next pretty girl. You marry an actor and he always comes in at four o'clock in the morning and never tells you where he's been."

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In 1956, Joanne Woodward returned to Broadway to star in the Leslie Stevens play, The Lovers, opposite actors Hurd Hatfield and Darren McGavin at the Martin Beck Theatre. The play opened in May of 1956, but closed after four performances. Some reviewers inaccurately hailed it as her Broadway debut, forgetting that she had filled in for both Janice Rule and Kim Stanley during the run of Picnic.

Janice Rule
"Why don't you marry Steve McQueen?"

At this time Paul was going through one of the most difficult and troubled periods of his life. "He drifted from bimbo to bimbo, or whatever, but his real love was for the bottle," claimed Rod Steiger. "One day he wanted to run off with Joanne. The next day he was overcome with guilt and wanted to return to Jackie and his three kids. He was completely messed up."

Geraldine Page also noted that "Paul never got so wasted that he missed a day's work. He always showed up cold sober the morning after. He knew his lines and gave a role, usually on TV, his best. He was a professional in every sense of the word. It was after six o'clock in the evening that he became a total mess."

Night after night, he drove home drunk, wherever that home happened to be. He escaped police detection until the night of July 5, 1956, when he pulled the drunk of his life. He was very despondent because he and Joanne had agreed never to see each other again.

He'd left the Jolly Fishermen Restaurant on Main Street in Roslyn, Long Island, and was heading to the home he shared with Jackie and his family in Fresh Meadows. Losing control of his car, he plowed into some shrubbery until he hit a fire hydrant. He could still maneuver the car, so he backed up and fled the scene of the accident. A policeman on patrol spotted him running a red light and gave chase, with dome light flashing.

Forcing Paul from the car, the policeman told him he was under arrest.

"Get out of my way," Paul shouted at him. "I'm acting for Rocky Graziano."

"Meet another Rocky who's hauling you off to jail." The officer's name was Rocco Gaggiano.

Handcuffed to the officer, Paul was taken in a squad car to the Mineola jail where reporters and photographers were waiting. At first he thought the police had tipped off the press, but he later learned that they were waiting for new developments in a local kidnapping case. One of the photographers recognized Paul and snapped his picture, which landed on the front page of The New York Daily News. Paul spent the night in jail, driving home stone sober the following morning.

The arrest and the publicity that ensued had no effect on his career. In the 1950s drunk driving wasn't viewed in the same way it is today. The public was long used to drunken celebrities like Frank Sinatra making a scene. Paul seemed to be living out the character of Rocky Graziano that he had played in Somebody Up There Likes Me.

Paul, however, took it more seriously. He knew he could destroy his career if he didn't stop drinking. Janice

Rule arranged for him to go to an analyst. He went only three times before not showing up for his fourth appointment. He turned to Janice instead, who to some degree functioned as his psychotherapist long before she earned the credentials to become one professionally.

She advised him to face the inevitable reality. "You know you've got to live with your guilt and go through the pain of divorce. You'll probably have to give Jackie custody of your children. You're making good money and can provide for them. The children may also suffer emotional scars, and you have to be prepared for that. Even so, at some point you've got to abandon your dreams of the past and go forward into the surprises of the future. You may not even end up with Joanne. Most likely it will be somebody else. In your case, it might be a woman or even a man."

"I need the security of a home and marriage.. .1 know that about myself," he told her. "But deep down and until I get too old, I know, and you know, I'll be a tumbling tumbleweed."

Our Hero Meets Rocky:
Arrested on a DWI in Long Island.

Chapter Six

What Becomes a Legend Most?

"This Newman?" came a heavily accented Hungarian voice over the phone. "How are your balls hanging?"

"Who in the fuck is this?" Paul demanded to know.

"Michael Curtiz, you prickless faggot. Bogie, Casablanca. Don't tell me you don't know me. I'm the best thing in Hollywood since God invented the pussy."

"What can I do for you?"

"Jack Warner, the fuck, gave me the KO to cast you opposite cunt Doris Day in a new musical."

It took a moment for Paul to realize KO meant OK. "Bitch can sing but can't fuck," Curtiz said. "In this movie, Virgin Day must sing and get fucked by you. Do you think hairs on pussy are really blond?"

"So, I hear," Paul said, "unlike Marilyn, who bleaches." He paused a moment. "Did you say musical? I don't sing."

"If that faggot, Brando, can sing in Guys and Dolls, so can you. You don't have to sing in picture. Day for singing, you for fucking the bitch. You play shithead boyfriend. A real louse. You beat cunt and then rape her."

"Sounds like a great part for me," he said sarcastically. "I'll get back to you. And, by the way, my balls are hanging just fine."

Feeling he was getting nowhere with the illiterate Curtiz, Paul called Warner Brothers and got connected with the producer of the film, Martin Rackin. The son of a silk mill owner, he would in a few short years become head of production at Paramount Pictures.

Rackin explained that in 1942, Warners had acquired the screen rights to Helen Morgan's life story and had begun plotting another boozy biopic about the torch singer to "The Lost Generation." He claimed that during the previous decade some 40 actresses, including Jane Wyman, had been considered for the role.

Rackin wanted Paul to play Larry Maddux, the fast-talking, double-dealing heel Helen Morgan falls in love with. "I can see it now," Rackin said. "Helen, as played by Day, perched atop that piano, plaintively warbling sad songs about men, especially you, Maddux, who mistreated her. In her torch song style, she'll be singing `Can't Help Lovin' That Man.'"

When the script was delivered to Paul, he found it a sudsy melodrama that had been worked over by twenty writers since the war years. "Too many cooks have spoiled the broth," Paul told Joanne. "I play a love `em leave `em type." "Typecasting, if you ask me," she said.

Hollywood likes to imitate success. The Helen Morgan Story was inspired by two previous box office hits: Love Me Or Leave Me (1955), where Doris Day starred as singer Ruth Etting, and I'll Cry Tomorrow (also 1955), in which Susan Hayward played the tragic Lillian Roth. Forever imitative, the producers had turned first to Doris, wanting to cast her as Helen Morgan, a doomed singer, in a similar story.

Even though Doris had already been the focal point of Love Me Or Leave Me, the so-called story of singer Ruth Etting (1896-1978), she at least momentarily considered depicting yet another singer, Helen Morgan (1900-4 1). In the Etting story, a gangster called "Gimp," played by James Cagney, would dominate her life. In The Helen Morgan Story, a gangster called Maddux, to be played by Paul, would play a similar role. Paul planned to let James

Cagney inspire his portrayal of this Prohibition-era gangster who seduces and then exploits Morgan.

Curtiz told Jack Warner, "Compared to Cagney, Newman might come off as girl. Maybe we should call Newman Pansy in the movie."

Michael Curtiz
"You prickless faggot"

When the Morgan story was first presented to Doris, the script was called Why Was I Born. Morgan, like Etting, had a lot of links to the Mob.

Evoking the Lillian Roth character that Susan Hayward had played, Morgan, according to her fans, always sang better drunk than sober. It was rumored that between acts she swallowed an emetic which let her drink more liquor again before she went out once more to face a live audience. "After a good vomit," Morgan said, "I always sing better."

Doris wasn't happy that Curtiz would be directing the movie. She hadn't forgotten when he called her "a sexless bowl of goulash," but appeared willing to work with him again.

After two weeks of mulling it over, Doris called Jack Warner and told him to find another star. "My fans would never accept me playing such an unsavory character. It would offend them."

What she didn't tell the studio chief was that she was getting thousands of letters protesting her proposed appearance in the film. "It's against the will of God," wrote one irate Kansas housewife. There were rumors that Doris had even received death threats. Many of her fans said they'd stayed away from Love Me Or Leave Me because they didn't want to see her play a drunken prostitute.

Reportedly Doris later said, "My only regret in turning down the movie is that I wouldn't have a chance to work with that hunk Paul Newman."

In spite of a jealous husband, Marty Melcher, Doris was said to have been previously involved with actors, often her leading men, including Jack Carson, Tyrone Power, Ronald Reagan, and Steve Cochran.

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After the fiasco casting of Doris Day, Curtiz told anyone who'd listen that "cunt Day is not the only blonde

bitch in this town."

Paul was summoned to the director's office around three o'clock one afternoon where he was introduced to Miss Peggy Lee, the singer Duke Ellington had dubbed "The Queen."

In person, she had that platinum cool and inimitable whisper she presented in front of a live audience.

Curtiz had directed Peggy in a remake of The Jazz Singer in 1953, and Paul had sat through only half of the film, finding it "so schmaltzy." Even so, he had only the greatest admiration for Peggy as an artist, and had been one of the millions who'd adored her recordings of "Golden Earrings" and "Mariana."

"Newman, meet the new Helen Morgan," Curtiz said. "Fuck Day. How could she play drunk? Probably never had drink stronger than Kool-Aid."

"I'm not a stranger to a drink," Peggy said, shaking Paul's hand and looking into his blue eyes. "My God, you're even better looking than my second husband, Brad Dexter. When I married the bastard, I thought he was the handsomest man in Hollywood. Obviously, I'll have to revise that."

"Your kindness is only exceeded by your beauty," Paul said. "That and your talent. Forget your pals Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. No one can wrap themselves around a song like Peggy Lee. I read the other day that you're Albert Einstein's favorite singer."

"I was flattered by that, but found it a little creepy when I learned that Josef Stalin likes to jerk off while listening to me sing."

After more than an hour of listening to Curtiz and Peggy talk about the picture and Helen Morgan, Paul was ready to go. Before midnight, he had to work both Sal Mineo and Joanne into his busy schedule.

Even though Curtiz had agreed to send Peggy home in a studio limousine, Paul volunteered to drive her. She readily accepted.

She made it clear on the drive there that she might be very willing to have dinner and accept an invitation for a sleep-over. Bowing out because of prior commitments, he asked permission to call her next week.

"I've been a nomad since I divorced Brad," she said, speaking with a candor that surprised him. "Lonely, but looking, searching. It's like I'm trying to piece together the puzzle that is myself. Some of the pieces are missing."

"I have that feeling too," he said.

As he drove into her driveway, a man was sitting on her stoop waiting for her.

"My God," she said, "That's Brad himself. I forgot I had an appointment to see him. We have some financial problems to work out."

Getting out of the driver's seat and opening the passenger's door for her, Paul turned to meet Brad Dexter. Square-jawed like Charlton Heston, broad-shouldered and handsome, Brad had been labeled "the sweetest meanie to ever slug a hero or tussle with a lady." Perhaps Paul imagined it, but Brad seemed to hold his hand for thirty seconds longer than necessary. He didn't seem in the least jealous that Paul had shown up with his former wife.

Top photo and insert **Miss Peggy Lee.** Above, with husband Brad Dexter on their "Wedding Day in Hell"

Paul congratulated him on his appearance in the film noir, The Asphalt Jungle (1950), in which he was rumored to have had a torrid affair with Marilyn Monroe. He'd also been known to supply stud service to Mae West when she'd cast him in Diamond Lil.

"I loved you in The Silver Chalice," Brad said to him. "Great legs."

Paul chuckled as he winked at Brad. "Keep that up and I'll blow in your ear."

"I don't want to break up this fling between you two lover boys," Peggy said, "but I'm the star. Get in the house," she commanded Brad. "We've got some unfinished business."

Brad shook Paul's hand again, as Peggy leaned in to give him a quick brush kiss on the lips. "The promise of more to come," she whispered into his ear. "Call me."

As he'd later tell Rod Steiger during the description of his encounter with Peggy Lee, "I decided that very day that I was going to have to employ a social secretary."

"Hell, guy, you just can't seem to realize what's happening," Steiger said. "You're the new kid on the block. Every cocksucker and every horny broad in Hollywood wants to go to bed with Paul Newman. You're doing pretty well for a married man. I've always had this belief that if a married man played it right, he can have more fun than single blokes."

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Paul did not call Miss Peggy Lee. Instead he showed up drunk at her doorstep around one o'clock one morning. She'd been wandering her lonely house that night, listening to music. After determining who it was, she opened the door for him.

"He was wasted," she later told Frank Sinatra, who passed the comment along to Paul. "But I'd never seen such a sexy bastard before."

"I'm horny," Paul ungallantly told her.

"You've come to the right place," she said, reaching out to guide him inside her door.

That was all he remembered until the next day, or so he claimed to Vampira and Tony Perkins. He said he woke up nude and alone in her master bedroom. "It was like a fantasy room and, in spite of my headache, I felt like a king. All blue velvet and white carpeting. Trompe 1'oeil paintings of vines on all the walls." Getting up from the bed, he immediately sat down in a Louis XIV chair, trying to decide what to do and what had happened.

Finally, he went into her bathroom and showered, brushing his teeth with her toothbrush. He looked around the bedroom but didn't find his clothes. He must have discarded them downstairs.

Throwing a towel around himself, he headed downstairs and followed the smell of freshly brewed coffee into a garden with a carp-filled pond. He had to cross a Japanese bridge that led to a pagoda where he found her sitting in a white robe, her blonde hair glistening in the late-morning sun.

"My Prince Charming, awake at last," she said.

"I swear I don't remember a thing from last night," he said, sitting down opposite her and taking the coffee she offered.

"I remember last night," she said. "But I'll never tell you what happened, except to say that I had the thrill of my life exploring every inch of the Golden Boy of Hollywood."

"You've had your memory, and I want mine," he told her, putting down his coffee cup. He looked up at the sky. "It must be noon already. Do you believe in Love in the Afternoon?"

"Isn't that the name of Gary Cooper's latest movie?"

"It is indeed, and I've seen a preview of it," he said. The cameraman had to use extreme shading to disguise Coop's features in his scenes as an aging Casanova with that angelic Audrey Hepburn." He held his face up to the sun. "Look at me. A man in his prime. No shading necessary."

"I never answered your question," she said.

"And what was that?" he asked.

"About Love in the Afternoon," she said. "Us gals from North Dakota believe in love in the morning, love in the afternoon, and love at midnight."

"I don't know what you did to me last night," he said. "But here's my chance to level the playing field."

The next day he learned from Vampira that Peggy was a married woman. She'd wed a handsome young actor, Dewey Martin, who climbed out of a cockpit in the South Pacific and made it to Hollywood and into her bedroom.

"Thank God he must have been out of town last night," Paul said. "I didn't notice any husbands running around. Too bad about the marriage thing." He had a smirk on his face. "I was hoping to become the next Mr. Peggy Lee. All is not lost. When we do the Morgan thing, I'll be spending a lot of time in her dressing room."

That was not to be. The next week Paul learned he wouldn't be appearing opposite Peggy Lee in The Helen Morgan Story.

Paul Newman
"Exploring every golden inch"

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On the morning of May 13, 1956, tragedy struck. Paul was awakened around two o'clock by an urgent call from Mira Rostova, Monty's acting coach and confidante. She was calling all the actor's closest friends with the grim news.

After attending a dinner party at the home of Elizabeth Taylor and Michael Wilding, at which Rock Hudson was a guest, Monty took off in his Chevrolet down a hill following a dangerously curvy road. Actor Kevin McCarthy, one of his closest friends, was driving a separate car in front of him on that foggy night.

Disoriented by drugs and alcohol, Monty lost control of his car, which jumped over the curb and plunged down the hill.

In panic, Paul demanded that Mira tell him if his friend were dead or alive. Apparently, he was alive, but Mira seemed more concerned with his appearance than his life. "That beautiful face," she told Paul, "is gone forever. I just know in my heart that the beauty butchers will never be able to restore it." She broke into uncontrollable weeping.

When she pulled herself together, she promised Paul that she'd keep him abreast of Monty's condition. She also said that she'd arrange for Paul's access to the hospital as soon as he was able to receive visitors.

Years later, Mira shared with the author her memories of how helpful Paul had been during the process of easing Monty into the second phase of his life with a much altered face.

When Paul was allowed to visit Monty, he drove to the hospital with Mira. En route, she blasted Elizabeth. "It's all the fault of that beautiful witch. Monty had told her the afternoon of the party that he was too tired to drive up that mountain. He never liked to drive at night, and he knew that the access road to her house was treacherous. She called him at least three times that afternoon, urging him to come because she really wanted him there. He relented and agreed to come. He should have gone to bed instead. They were shooting Raintree County, and the role was sapping all his energy. He desperately needed rest."

Mira remembered that when she entered Monty's room at the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, his head was swollen "as big as one of those pumpkins at Halloween. His face was a total wreck. Actually, you couldn't even make out his face in that mass of swollen flesh. A broken nose, a broken jaw, a cracked upper cheekbone, a gaping split in his upper lip, and cuts and bruises all over his face. I wanted to scream."

Monty Clift's near-fatal crash
The night he lost his beauty

Mira remembered Paul as going into shock. "He was holding back tears as he viewed the wreckage of what had been the world's most beautiful man. Poor Monty could not see the tears in Paul's eyes. At that point, he didn't even know who we were."

Throughout the ordeal, Mira had only praise for Paul for being such a loyal, devoted friend. "He didn't even tell his closest friends about our secret visits with Monty. In no way did he want to appear that he was generating personal publicity for himself and capitalizing off Monty's misfortune. When Monty finally could sit up and talk, both of his jaws were wired together. He was being fed a liquid diet through a straw. We could hardly understand what he was trying to say through clenched teeth."

"The only time I got mad at Paul was when he did a terrible thing," Mira said. "While I went to the toilet, Monty apparently asked Paul to slip him martinis into the hospital, which he could drink through a straw. As anybody knows, alcohol was about the worst thing for him at this time. I think Paul also slipped him Demerols. Once when I came into the room, Monty was walking around, half supported by Paul. The doctors had forbidden him to walk at all, because the cracks in his facial skeleton might come loose. It was just like Monty not to listen to a soul."

When Monty was able to go home after more than two weeks in a hospital bed, Paul and Mira drove him to his dingy little house on Dawn Ridge Road. At least it had a swimming pool. Paul came to visit as often as he could. On several occasions, he encountered Libby Holman, the famous chanteuse who'd been accused of killing her husband, the twenty-year-old tobacco heir, Zachary Smith Reynolds.

Sometimes Paul came alone to see Monty; at other times he was accompanied by Mira. He told her what she already knew, that Monty was drinking heavily and taking morphine-based painkillers.

"I can't bear to look at him sometimes," Paul said. "He was so beautiful. You know, and I know, and as sure as hell Monty knows, that his beauty will never be restored."

As if to demonstrate the truth of that, Monty once took his hand and rubbed it across the contours of Paul's face. "I was once young and beautiful like you."

"And you'll be again," Paul assured him. "But, first, you've got to get well."

"That's bullshit and you know it."

Mira knew all of Monty's secrets, including his intimate relationship with Paul. Paul confessed to her that on one afternoon when he came to visit, he found Monty lying out by his pool, taking in the sun and trying to recover to go back to the set of Raintree County. "He was in the nude and I was astonished when he asked me to give him a

blow-job. `I want to feel that I'm still desirable,' Monty told me. I obliged but I wasn't into it."

Already an expert on nutrition, a field of expertise he'd develop even further later in life, Paul often prepared meals for Monty. He'd go to the Farmers Market in Los Angeles and find the lushest avocados and papayas, Monty's two favorite foods. He'd then make delicious, creamy shakes in a Waring blender which Monty would consume through a straw.

Eventually, Paul shopped for soft foods such as squash, bananas, and potatoes which Monty could slip into his mouth, taste only briefly at the roof of his palate, and then swallow. "It caused me pain to watch him try to eat, and it caused him pain to eat," Paul said. "He winced every time he swallowed."

Although both Mira and Libby Holman urged Monty not to return to work, he did not take their advice. "I owe it to Bessie to finish the film," he told Mira and Paul. He was referring, of course, to Elizabeth Taylor.

Back on the set, Monty managed to finish the film with his damaged face, but it became a personal disaster for him. He really was in no condition to work.

When he flew back to Hollywood and checked into the Chateau Marmont, he called Paul to come over for a visit.

Paul later confided in Mira what had happened. "When I came face to face with him in his room, I stared into his eyes," Paul said. "They looked like they were made of glass. Monty Clift was no longer there for me."

As if sensing Paul's reaction, Monty turned on him in anger, shouting, "Get out of here, pretty boy! I never want to see you again."

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Michael Curtiz called to tell Paul that Jack Warner had nixed the casting of Peggy Lee in The Helen Morgan Story. "I want an actress, not a nightclub singer," Warner shouted into the phone at Curtiz. The director had to return to his casting couch.

No sooner had Curtiz arrived one morning at his office than he received a call from Jennifer Jones. He picked up the phone because she was still a big name in Hollywood, having married David O. Selznick. To his astonishment, he learned that she'd joined the chorus of other actresses wanting to play Helen Morgan. Privately, although he knew her voice could be dubbed, he felt she would be miscast as the torch singer. "I think I'd rather cast Joan Crawford in the part," Curtiz told his producer, Martin Rackin.

Through the studio grapevine, Paul heard of a possible change in casting. During his stint in the Navy, he'd seen Jennifer in her 1943 The Song of Bernadette, for which she'd won an Oscar. It was hard to imagine that an actress who looked so young, innocent, and virginal could play Morgan.

But Monty Clift had assured Paul that Jennifer over the years had undergone a remarkable change of personality-and "not for the better." Monty had had nothing but horror stories about working with the star in the 1954 release of Indiscretion of an American Wife.

Paul did not look forward to working with her, especially after Rackin introduced the star to him at the studio. She had never seen one of his movies, and didn't really know who he was, although she said his name sounded familiar. "Clark Gable, Gregory Peck, I know. Who can keep up with all these new stars?"

"Before the movie ends, Jennifer Jones will have Paul Newman tatooed onto her pussy," Paul told Tony Perkins. Just as he was gearing up to appear opposite her, following in the ill-fated footsteps of Monty, Michael Curtiz told him that "Jones is off the picture. The bitch with the red pussy, Susan Hayward, is now Helen Morgan. You still in my picture. Bogie would have been better choice."

Even though Paul never connected with Jennifer, he met her on other occasions in the years ahead. "After

seeing your latest work, I'm still determined to make a movie with you one day," she told him one night at a party.

"Let's see if that happens," Paul said, thinking such a casting event would never come to be. But it did when Jennifer made her last screen appearance in his 1974 The Towering Inferno.

Over the years, he and Jennifer exchanged an occasional note. These greetings were usually from her, congratulating him on a role he'd recently played.

In early November of 1967, he sent her a note at a hospital where she was recovering. She'd checked into a Malibu motel and had taken an overdose of sleeping pills. Instead of dying in her room, she was discovered unconscious on the beach and rushed to a hospital where doctors worked overtime to save her. "Hang in there," Paul wrote in his note. "Beat the Devil."

He was, of course, referring to her 1953 film, Beat the Devil, in which she'd costarred with Humphrey Bogart.

Monty Clift and **Jennifer Jones**
Performing Indiscretions

He'd send her another note in May of 1976, two years after appearing with her in The Towering Inferno, when he read in the papers that her daughter and her only child with Selznick, Mary Jennifer Selznick, had killed herself.

He wondered why these two women, who seemingly had all that the material world could offer, would want to kill themselves. But Jennifer, in one of her cards to him, wrote, "My mother told me never explain, never complain."

In the weeks leading up to the first shot of The Helen Morgan Story, Susan Hayward insisted on approving her leading man. The studio, at the instigation of Curtiz, arranged for Paul to visit the fiery redhead at her home.

From the slums of Brooklyn to the stenographers' pool to a modeling agency, Susan was an actress he admired, although he considered her a dime store version of Barbara Stanwyck. He'd found her portrayal of Lillian Roth in I'll Cry Tomorrow a stunning tour de force, but he was surprised that she'd agreed to play the disturbingly similar role of Helen Morgan.

A passionate firebrand, Susan was not unlike some of the tempestuous women she'd played on the screen. Sitting in her living room, he accepted the Scotch and soda she'd generously offered. It was obvious that she was at least three drinks ahead of him.

"I went after the role of Lillian Roth," she said. "Knocked June Allyson on her ass. That bitch is a nympho. Fucks every grip on the set of every one of her movies."

She looked him up and down. He'd later claim that he felt the Oscar-winning actress was undressing him. "At least I'm still enough of a money-maker to retain approval of my leading man. What makes you think you're enough of a man to handle a woman like me? You're not a fag, are you? I was married to that fag, Jess Barker. I caught him in bed with Howard Hughes. When I called him a queer, he ripped off my clothes and beat the shit out of me. Threw

me naked into the pool. You're not a fag, are you?"

Susan Hayward
"You're not a fag, are you?"

"I think you've asked that before?" he said.

"You never answered."

"You didn't give me a chance," he said. "No, I'm not a fag. But I don't condemn those who go in for that stuff."

"I'll buy that," she said. "Live and let live, I always say. Besides, you couldn't work in this business unless you had a tolerance for fags. I don't know about you, kid, but I've been through some tough times. Horrible depressions, the low of lows. A suicide attempt. When a beautiful woman like me reaches her mid-thirties in Hollywood, she's got a lot to worry about. I've been trying everything lately to escape my fears. Booze, of course, even sexual experimentation. My ten-year marriage has ended. I'm fighting to keep my kids from perverts. All my close friends are dying. I'm out there on a limb of a rotting tree dangling in the wind." Ending her monologue abruptly, she looked at him again, as if for the first time. "What's happening to you?"

Since she'd been so personal, he related to her on the same level. "My marriage is coming to an end. Like you, I've got kids, three in all, a boy and two girls. I'm doing some sexual experimentation on the side too."

"I hear you're shacked up with that A Kiss Before Dying gal," Susan said. "What's her name?"

"Joanne Woodward."

"If she were better looking, she might make it in the movies. She's a blonde, right?"

"A natural."

"I hate to break the news to Miss Woodward, but blondes are on the way out. Marilyn is starting to self destruct. When she goes, that will be the end of all her clones, dames like Jayne Mansfield and Mamie Van Doren. Those bitches will be buried in the same grave as Marilyn. Those blonde bombshells of the 40s are fading too if not completely over the hill. Lana Turner, a total cunt. Betty Grable, a nice gal but who wants nice gals? Veronica Lake, a total psychotic. Since you're dating Woodward, does that mean you're partial to blondes? Ever seen a redhead down below where the wind don't blow? It's quite a sight."

"There have been a few," he said boastfully, still resenting her suggestion that he might be a fag. "The gals come and go. I can't keep track of them, much less the color of their pubic hair."

"That's very interesting," she said. "At least I now know you're like me. You like to fuck around. I think you and I can heat up this fucking picture. Of course, I'll have to audition you."

"I'm sure we can get Curtiz to set up a screen test."

"Fuck Curtiz. Fuck that kind of screen test. There's only one way I audition my leading men." She shifted her eyes to the staircase leading up to her bedroom. "You said you weren't a fag. Here's your chance to prove it."

"You mean, you want me to make love to you?"

"No, asshole!" she said, standing up on wobbly legs. "I want you to fuck me."

***

Meeting with Vampira, Paul told her of how he'd been sucked into the private world of Susan Hayward. "`Fuck him right out of me,' was what she shouted to me in the middle of our tumble last night. I didn't know if she were talking about her divorced husband, Jess Barker, or Howard Hughes, who'd dumped her."

Paul claimed that he'd never had such violent sex with a woman. "She clawed my back and told me if I didn't satisfy her she'd tear it off. When she locked her legs around me, I felt like a trapped beast."

"You poor baby," Vampira said, not really meaning that.

"It was violent sex and I had the climax of my life," he told her. "If Susan calls me again, I'll come running, but I'll eat my Wheaties first."

The very next day Michael Curtiz phoned to tell him that "the red-haired bitch is off the picture. She doesn't want to play boozy singer. I should have sent a man to fuck the cunt, not a little girly boy like you."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," he told Curtiz. With yet another star abandoning The Helen Morgan Story, he was beginning to have second thoughts about playing the male lead. His attorney had warned him that he didn't dare risk suspension by bolting from the picture, for which he was under contract. "Remember, you've got a wife and three kids stashed somewhere to support."

"Don't remind me," Paul said.

When Hayward turned down the role, Martin Rackin came to Curtiz. "Now who are you going to cast as a broken-down alcoholic singer?"

Curtiz thought for only a second. "Judy Garland."

"My God," Rackin said. "How obvious. We should have gone to her as our first choice. But, first, we've got to determine that she's in any condition to play the part."

Curtiz called Paul the following week. "Judy Garland's our Helen Morgan. She's just been cast and wants to see you. Saw you as girly boy in that Jesus Christ piece of shit. She's not sure you have balls enough to play tough gangster."

Judy Garland
Sending Judy
Over the Rainbow

"Sounds like another casting couch call for me," he told Curtiz. "Do I have to fuck every broken down broad in Hollywood to get in this picture?"

Later that afternoon, he told Vampira, "As you know, screwing these legendary broads is one of my goals, but I don't want Curtiz to know that. Judy's a bit ripe, but she's always been at the top of my list. She's still a hot number. One day I'll pen my memoirs, and I need something to write about. To say I married an unknown actress and had three kids by her and then shacked up with Joanne won't sell one fucking copy."

"Go to it, big boy," Vampira advised, "and send Judy over the rainbow."

Arriving at Judy's house, he found her alone and a bit intoxicated. Did all screen legends drink in the afternoon? She no longer looked like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, but she still possessed a certain allure and a charm that he found mesmerizing. He didn't know if he were looking at the real Judy or the reel Judy. Instead of actually seeing what she looked like today, he envisioned her in all those Technicolor MGM movies from the 1940s.

"I once met Helen Morgan," she said. "Of course, I was a mere babe at the time, part of an act called The Gumm Sisters. Don't you love it?"

As the afternoon deepened, and as he and Judy talked, he realized how very different she was from Susan Hayward, who had absolutely no sense of humor. Judy, in contrast, had a quick wit and a gift for self-satirization. She was, in fact, the single most fascinating woman he'd ever encountered.

"I'm sure you've read all about me," she said. "Who in hell hasn't? The pills, the booze, the failed marriages. My being broke all the time. My being temperamental on the set or not showing up for work at all. My getting fired from gigs like Annie Get Your Gun."

"I don't believe what I read in the papers."

She giggled. "In my case, it's all true, but don't hold that against me. Clouds always get in my way." She moved over and joined him on the sofa. "But I'll change for this picture with that psycho bastard, Curtiz. I want to play Helen Morgan opposite you. I like you, kid. You and I can pull off this picture. Make it a big hit. I don't know you, but I feel there's a definite chemistry between us." She gently ran her hand across his cheek. "You like a woman on occasion, don't you?"

"Are you kidding?" he asked in astonishment. "I don't know what rumors you've heard, but I adore women, on all occasions. I adore you."

She kissed him gently on the lips. "If you do, and I think you're telling the truth, I want you to take me dancing tonight. I love to go dancing."

***

Two hours and five drinks later at the Cocoanut Grove, Paul sat with Judy at a secluded table. She seriously discussed why she wanted to do The Helen Morgan Story. "It gives me a chance to sing and be a dramatic actress." She clutched her throat. "My voice is my curse. I got cast in all those frothy musicals, but what I really wanted to be was a dramatic actress. Play Laurette Taylor's part in The Glass Menagerie. I could do that. Makeup could age me a bit." She uttered a little laugh that sounded like suppressed hysteria. "Of course, these days it wouldn't take much makeup to age me."

"Judy, you can do anything," he assured her. "Musicals, drama."

"You bet your left nut I can," she said. "Mickey Rooney and I are the most talented performers ever to walk through the gates of MGM. Hell, I could have become the most dramatic actress in the world, if those fucking bastards like Louis B. Mayer had given me a chance." She looked at her empty glass and then gazed into his blue eyes. "Order me another drink, sugar. The night's still young."

It was at that moment that a strikingly handsome man with a beautiful blonde danced by their table. He looked vaguely familiar. Suddenly, Paul realized he was staring into the eyes of Robert Stack, whom he hadn't seen since the war years.

Robert came to an abrupt stop. "Paul, Paul Newman? I can't believe it. And out with my favorite gal, Judy herself. Hi, Judy." He bent over and kissed her on the lips, as he let go of the blonde beauty. The blonde leaned over and kissed Judy on the cheek.

"Paul Newman, meet the one and only Lana Turner," Judy said. "And, Robert, why did you stop calling?" She faked a mock jealousy as she eyed Lana. She turned to Paul. "This sultry goddess here steals all my men."

"Nice to meet you, Paul," Lana said, "and, Judy, you know I don't take your men. It was you who shacked up with one of my husbands." She was referring to the musician Artie Shaw.

Switching from Judy to Paul, Lana extended her hand. "You almost got to make love to me."

"Have I lost my chance forever?" he asked smugly, taking in her beauty. He glanced furtively at Robert, also taking in his beauty. He felt awkward, not knowing what to say to him. He managed a "Long time, no see, buddy." It was back to Lana. "Exactly what did you mean about that making love thing?"

"You may not know this, but I was originally thought of for the Virginia Mayo part in The Silver Chalice."

Lana Turner
Bad but beautiful.

"Maybe you could have saved that turkey," he said.

"Listen, I've got an idea," Robert said, looking at Paul. "Why don't you gals indulge in a little girl talk while Paul and I go see a man about a horse and maybe step out into the garden for a cigarette to share a few wartime memories?"

Walking in the garden with Robert, Paul came to a stop and faced him in the moonlight. He'd lost his boyish glow of the 1940s, but had matured into a strikingly handsome man. "I've been meaning to look you up ever since you became a movie star, but I'm sorry I didn't get around to it," Robert said. "You look terrific." He leaned closer to him. "Still my cute little sailor boy with that adorable butt?"

"Cute little sailor boy is now a man in his thirties," Paul said.

"You still look sweet sixteen to me," Robert said. "Remember, I'm six years older than you. Now gimme a kiss and let's join the ladies. But, first, you've got to promise to spend the weekend with me."

"You've got yourself a deal," man" Paul said. "I'm not the innocent little sailor any more. I've learned a few tricks. This weekend I'm going to make you my bitch."

Robert joined Judy at table, while Paul asked Lana for a dance. On the floor, he whispered to her, "Wait until the gang back in Shaker Heights hears I danced with the glamorous Lana Turner."

"Someday maybe you'll be my leading man," she whispered back. "With all the privileges that entails."

"That would be a dream come true," he said. "After all, Tinseltown is the Dream Factory."

Robert and Judy had joined them on the dance floor. Judy broke from Robert and cut in on Lana, who was immediately swept away in Robert's arms.

Now it was Judy whispering in Paul's ear. "Way back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, Ida Koverman, a PR agent, arranged for Robert to date me. She thought we made a lovely couple for photographers. But after a few fucks, he drifted away. When I sing about the man who got away, I think of Robert. I didn't know you knew him too."

"From our Navy days," he said. "He was my instructor."

"Knowing Robert's reputation, I can just imagine what he instructed you to do." She laughed as he whirled her around the dance floor. When the orchestra played a slow number, she snuggled up close to him. To his surprise, he felt a deft hand unzipping him. Before he knew what was happening, Judy was inside, expertly feeling the family jewels. She performed this stunt with any number of handsome young men over the years, as Robert Vaughn related in his 2008 memoir, A Fortunate Life.

"Don't mind me," she said, noting his embarrassment. "I like to check out what I'm getting. That way, there will be no unpleasant surprises when your pants come off later in my bedroom."

***

Driving from Los Angeles to Palm Springs, Paul got to know Robert Stack, the lover he had loved but hadn't really known much about in the 1940s. During the long drive, Robert had a chance to talk about himself, and for the first time Paul realized he'd been born into Hollywood royalty, his parents on the A-list, entertaining everybody from Edward G. Robinson to Will Rogers.

Not only that, but Robert was one of the best friends of John F. Kennedy and had hung out with him and seduced beautiful girls with him when the young Kennedy's father, Joseph, was ambassador to England.

"I supported your buddy Kennedy for vice president when he tried, but failed to get on the Stevenson ticket,"

Paul said. "I once worked for the Adlai Stevenson campaign."

"I predict that Jack will be president one day. Would you like to meet him? He flies into town every now and then. I arrange dates for him with beautiful actresses. All he has to do is look at a gal and she tumbles into his bed."

"Sounds like my kind of guy," Paul said. "Sure, I'd be glad to meet him. Set it up. Does he swing both ways like us?"

"Not really," Robert said. "But he's got this best friend, Lem Billings, who's gay. I know Lem. They met back in 1933 and have been together ever since. I think he lets Lem suck him off now and then, but that's about it."

"I'd like to screw his wife," Paul said. "That is one hot woman. I'd marry her if she'd propose to me, or else let me be her lover. With her husband screwing around so much, she's probably lonely on many a night."

"I saw Jackie before you did," he said. "I'm first in line."

"Not that I'm jealous," Paul said, "but are you seeing any guy in addition to all the hot women you're balling?"

"Just one right now," Robert said. "Brad Dexter."

"I just met him the other day at Peggy Lee's place," Paul said. "He's bisexual too? He didn't strike me that way."

"You'll find that all actors in Hollywood are bisexual-and that's not much of an exaggeration," Robert said. "Putting on makeup turns us into girly men. I met Brad after he was coming down from a big affair with Tyrone Power. They did Untamed together. Brad and I met when we filmed The House of Bamboo together. The day we met, I told him, "You've had Marilyn Monroe, so why not me? After MM, I'm the next best thing in town."

"I'm one of the lucky guys who's had both of you hot bitches."

In Palm Springs, Robert drove Paul to a secluded villa. "A gay guy I know-he's in love with me-lets me stay here anytime I want. Thank God we have the place to ourselves this weekend."

An hour after arriving, both of them were in bed but agreed to a siesta before getting down to heavy maneuvers. "It was just like old times," Paul told Vampira when he returned to Los Angeles. "We picked up right where we left off back in the days when the Japs were bombing everything that moved in the Pacific."

"You guys getting married?" she asked, eager to hear every detail of their off-the-record weekend.

"Not at all. With Robert, it's always going to be a sometimes thing. It's like eating caviar. You don't want to devour it every day."

***

As he pulled into the driveway of Joan Crawford's home, Paul was filled with trepidation. He'd almost given up hope of ever becoming one of Crawford's leading men, but he was going to give it one last try. After all, she was Joan Crawford, or at least she used to be.

She'd called him the day before, reaching him through Warner Brothers. She'd invited him over to see her, claiming, "I have this incredible script that could be a career maker for you, even better for you than Somebody Up There Likes Me." Bait like that he couldn't resist.

Throwing open the door herself, Joan was immaculately groomed and made up. Dressed all in white, she looked as if she'd spent many hours preparing to receive him.

Shown into her immaculate living room, which was all in white, including the carpet, she offered him a drink.

Like the other movie legends he'd met, she obviously liked her booze.

The beginning of the afternoon was all business. She'd been sent a script called Autumn Leaves, the story of a typist who marries a younger man only to discover he is mentally disturbed and already married.

Joan Crawford & **Cliff Robertson**
The Falling Autumn Leaves

"I have a copy of the script," she told him, handing him one. "Let's read our parts together. I think you'd be ideal as my lover in the film."

Before beginning the reading, she looked at her mantle on which her Oscar rested. She'd won it for the 1945 Mildred Pierce. "Baby over there is going to have a brother after we make this picture."

As he read the screenplay with her, he found his role had some dimension. The male part was not that of a screaming maniac from an asylum. It had a lot of nuance and subtlety. After reading the script, he told her he wanted to do it.

"I'm getting a lot of scripts for an older woman with a young lover these days," she said. "But I think this is the best I've seen. The script beautifully portrays the desperation and loneliness of an aging woman seeking love. We can do it without overacting. Play it down a bit. I can help you through the mad scenes. After all I did a lot of research before filming Possessed."

As the sun began to set in the West, Crawford became edgy as if in tears. "You're young and beautiful. I was young and beautiful once."

"You are still beautiful," he said reassuringly.

"But no longer young. I've had to keep reinventing myself. I don't want to become a joke in fag circles like Bette Davis and Tallulah Bankhead. I want to continue to be taken seriously as an actress. Autumn Leaves is my big chance."

"Miss Crawford, I'm your man," he said with a sexy smirk on his face.

"I hope you mean that in more ways than one," she said, assuming the mask of the carnival girl she'd played in Flamingo Road.

"Indeed I do, as you shall soon see." He got up from the sofa, putting down the script, and walked toward the armchair in which she was sitting.

Two weeks later, he called Janice Rule. "You got your chance to work with Crawford. Looks like I never will."

"Why so?" she asked.

"I've had it with the bitch. I just read in the papers that Cliff Robertson has been cast opposite her in Autumn Leaves. She promised the part to me. Yes, the same Cliff Robertson who played me in Picnic on screen. If I ever meet up with this fucker, he's going to lose a few front teeth."

"Forget Crawford," she urged. "You'll be a bigger star than she ever was. Actually, you weren't her first choice. Originally she took the script to Brando. He turned her down, claiming, `I don't do mother-son pictures.'"

A few years later, when asked about Paul, Crawford said, "Paul Newman has the potential of becoming a magnificent actor if he ever gets through this complex he has about playing boy-macho."

***

As it turned out, Jack Warner had the final word on who was to play Helen Morgan. When Curtiz went to his office to tell him that Judy Garland was available, the studio chief said, "So what? I'm still recovering from her making A Star Is Born for us. I've called Ann Blyth. Without checking with you, I gave the role to her."

Throughout their careers, both Paul and Steve McQueen were known for seducing their leading ladies. Such was not the case when Ann Blyth was cast in the title role of The Helen Morgan Story. The star had gotten along beautifully with the temperamental Joan Crawford on the set of Mildred Pierce, but she found working with Paul difficult. "He was playing this cocky bastard both on and off the camera," she reportedly said, although this remark cannot be verified. There was no love lost between the two stars.

As Crawford's bitchy daughter in Mildred Pierce, Ann had also been directed by Curtiz. She was a singer herself and had trained for opera, which did not fit into Morgan's throaty torch song style. Gogi Grant was hired to dub Ann's voice for such numbers as "Body and Soul" and "Don't Ever Leave Me."

Knowing her career was coming to an end with the death of her type of musical, Ann told Paul on the last day of the shoot, "Why not go out playing the piano-sitting, kerchief-holding, liquor-swilling torch singer with a train wreck of a personal life?" She would later remember him as "gorgeously smirking" throughout the film.

Curtiz, who could not resist delivering a final insult to Paul, said, "Newman, if I direct a film-call it Lusty Lips-I'll cast you as the cocksucker."

While The Helen Morgan Story was being edited, Rackin and Curtiz were horrified to learn that Playhouse 90 had cast Polly Bergen as Helen Morgan in a teleplay of virtually the same subject matter. To their horror, the teleplay even bore the same name as their big-screen version. The teleplay of The Helen Morgan Story was broadcast for the first time on May 16, 1957. Polly delivered a brilliant performance as the doomed torch singer and even won an award. "Who will want to go see our movie when they've already watched it for free on TV?" Rackin asked.

Rackin's point was well taken. The big screen version reached movie houses six months later-on October 5, 1957. One of its advertising slogans trilled "NO STAR EVER CLIMBED SO HIGH, NO WOMAN EVER FELL LOWER."

Paul Newman & Ann Blyth
Going out with a bomb

Regrettably, The Helen Morgan Story marked the end of Ann Blyth's film career. She ended her status as a movie star with a box office bomb. Blasted by the critics, she faded into film history.

A.H. Weiler, writing in The New York Times, dismissed the film as "about as heart-warming as an electric pad." Paul was denounced as a "one-dimensional but grotesque and unbelievable character."

Paul recalled seeing Ann in the 1970s on TV, advertising Hostess Cupcakes.

"Hollywood should have done better by her," Paul told Joanne.

"Forget her," his wife said. "Hollywood should have done better by me."

***

A day after the wrap-up of The Helen Morgan Story, Paul reported for work on his third loan-out to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Like Somebody Up There Likes Me, the "soaper," Until They Sail, set in New Zealand during World War II, would also be produced by Charles Schnee and directed by Robert Wise.

It was the story of four love-starved sisters, deprived of their men who'd gone to war. The sisters were played by a stellar cast that featured Jean Simmons, Piper Laurie, and veteran actress Joan Fontaine, who was in the twilight of a luminous career which, in the 1940s, had included the romantic suspense film Rebecca. The fourth sister marked the debut of a fourteen-yearold blonde-haired model, Sandra Dee.

The award-winning playwright, Robert Anderson, had adapted Until They Sail from Return to Paradise, a story by James Michener.

On the first day of shooting, Paul told Joan Fontaine that "this is really a woman's picture, more suited to you than to me. The picture belongs to you ladies. I was hired as window dressing."

"There's nothing like a well-dressed window," she said, "to lure the ladies in.,,

He'd been cast as Captain Jack Harding, a loner who found solace in the bottle after a broken marriage. He told Robert Wise, "For me, this character is an easy slide to home base, a slice of my own life. I, too, am escaping to booze to deal with a marriage that's breaking up even as we speak. Right now I'm staring at the bottom of that bottle."

Until They Sail was another of those "overpaid, oversexed, and over here" WWII stories about horny American soldiers disrupting the private lives of local women. In most cases, these war dramas were set in England. What made Until They Sail unique was that Wise used the more exotic setting of New Zealand.

Paul had been enthralled with Anderson's emotional drama, Tea and Sympathy. "He walked a tightrope between realism and sentimentality," Paul said. Years later, with just a touch of regret in his voice, Paul said, "Of course, the fucker did a lot more for Steve McQueen in The Sand Pebbles than he did for me." He was referring to the hit drama released in 1966.

On the second day of the shoot, Charles Schnee, the producer, approached Paul. He was rather blunt. "Since you're still a relative unknown, we're counting on Jean Simmons to carry the box office," he said. "She's hot right now after appearing in The Robe. Of course, she's used to having Brando as her leading man." He was referring to her starring roles opposite Brando as Napoleon in Desiree and in the musical Guys and Dolls.

"After playing Rocky, this is pretty lightweight stuff for me," Paul said.

"In Hollywood, if you want to keep working, you can't always appear in gritty dramas. Romantic fluff has its place too. The important thing is that Wise and I can turn you into a romantic hero at the box office. You'd fit better into that role than either Monty Clift or Brando."

"I'm not sure that's what I want to be," Paul said.

"Who gets what they want in Hollywood?" Schnee asked. "Didn't you see my picture, The Bad and the Beautiful?"

Until They Sail brought Paul together with the red-haired Piper Laurie, who had toiled in fluffy programmers or else out-and-out garbage for all of the 1950s. Her studio hadn't used this fine actress properly. "You and Ali-Baba sure heated up the sands," Paul said, upon meeting her. He was referring to the "desert sandals" romps she'd made with Tony Curtis. "And you sure looked prettier than that talking mule, Francis."

He'd never taken her seriously as an actress until he'd seen her emoting in their current picture. Even so, both his talent and hers would be far better employed in The Hustler in which they co-starred for a 1961 release.

Paul attended the screening of Until They Sail with Vampira and Tony Perkins. After leaving the movie house, he said, "All I had to do was be sexually aroused from time to time with Jean Simmons. In case she ever wondered what that hard thing pressing against her was in our love scenes, it was my erect dick."

Paul Newman & Jean Simmons
"Oversexed, overpaid, over here."

In his final appraisal, he claimed that after Somebody Up There Likes Me, Until They Sail "was a dismal comedown for me. Hollywood has a way of making an actor's balls smaller in each picture. Even if an actor clanks them big time in his debut picture, he'll eventually get his low hangers snipped off. Of course, I was castrated in my first picture. Castrated again in The Rack. Restored to full testosterone in Somebody. And now once again snipped."

After retiring to a cafe with Tony and Vampira, Paul said he dreaded what the critics would say. "Surely,

they're not going to compare me to Brando again."

He was wrong. Writing in Films & Filmings, Kay Collier claimed "Paul Newman is gentler and less rugged than Brando, but his acting has the same arresting power."

Bosley Crowther in The New York Times, had a different perspective. "The genuine tugs at the heart are few and far between in this bittersweet and basically restrained chronicle. Unfortunately, there is a good deal of introspective soul-searching before this narrative arrives at its sad and happy endings."

Until They Sail ultimately flopped at the box office. "Even Newman's baby blues couldn't lure the women away from those TV boxes," Wise lamented. "We should have stripped him down more and shot the film with him half naked. That day will come for movies, I predict."

Back at the cafe with Vampira and Tony, Paul swore them to secrecy about an ongoing drama that evolved after the film was wrapped.

Although he'd worked on the film with three beautiful adult women, each of whom might have entertained a pass from him, it was the fourteen-year-old Sandra Dee who caught his attention.

It all began, according to Paul who was both amused and horrified, when he heard someone shouting at him through the open window of her dressing room.

"Mr. Newman, Mr. Newman," Sandra called, "Would you like to see my body?"

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When Sandra Dee extended an invitation to Paul to view her body, he told her, "Yes, I'd like to, but there are laws against it."

When she explained the situation, he dared enter her dressing room against his better judgment. In the film, Until They Sail, the young actress/model was supposed to age from twelve to eighteen. To make her look older with a more rounded figure, the makeup department had devised an inflatable rubber suit for her to wear under her clothing. He was captivated by this child-woman who sat across from him. She was a perky, doll-like creature with champagne-colored corn-silk hair.

"Isn't it wiggy that we're appearing in the same film together?" she asked.

"Wiggy?" he asked. "That's a new one on me."

"I've been meaning to tell you," she said. "Ever since I saw your picture, I think you're the handsomest boy in Hollywood."

"Honeychild, I was born in 1925," he said. "I'm no boy. When were you born? Yesterday?"

"Don't put me down," she said. "I was born in 1944. I'm mature for my age. I don't like things kids my age go for. Rock and roll makes me nervous. Who needs Elvis Presley when they've got Paul Newman?"

"You ain't exactly got me yet," he said. "Besides, even if you were the right age, I already have a girlfriend."

"You mean Joanne Woodward?" she said. "That old thing. She's also ugly. Old and ugly. What a combination. Young and beautiful sounds better to me."

"You are beautiful all right," he said. "And you're dying to grow up, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "When I reach sixteen, Butch is going to get me a four-seater T-bird."

"Is Butch your boyfriend?"

"No, silly, I don't have a boyfriend. At least I didn't until you came along. Butch is the name I call my mother."

"I'd better get out of here," he said. "You're jailbait."

"I'm at that awkward age," she said. "Too old to be a girl, too young to be a woman. Boys my own age are stupid. I like older men. Ever since I started going to the movies, I've had crushes on older men. All of them married or between marriages. William Holden. Ronald Reagan. Cary Grant. Clark Gable."

Sandra Dee aged 14:
"Mr Newman, Mr. Newman,
do you want to see my body?"

"A couple of those guys could be your grandfather," he said.

"I'm dying to become a woman," she said. "I want to experience life. I've got this awful crush on you, and I nearly fainted when I heard I was going to be in a movie with you."

"You seem breathlessly thrilled by it all," he said. "Like you're just discovering life."

"I am just discovering it, and I want you to be my guide," she said.

"I feel like I'm talking to Alice," he said. "And she's just dropped into Wonderland." He rose from his chair. "I've got to get out of here before someone calls the cops."

She stood before him. "Look into my eyes," she commanded.

He obeyed her, taking in a set of the most liquid brown eyes he'd ever seen.

"What color are they?" she asked.

"Brown."

"Not blue, like yours," she said. "You have the world's most beautiful blue eyes. I want to have babies with blue eyes. So, to make babies, I've got to find a man with the bluest of blue eyes, not brown like mine."

"You're crazy," he said, backing away. "What makes you think I'm going to father your babies, much less give them blue eyes? I'm not sure you even know how babies are made."

"I'm not exactly sure, but you're the man to teach me how to make babies," she said. "I'm pretty god damn sure of that."

"What a little nymphet you are," he said. "I don't want to be one of the guys telling you to go home and after you grow up, come back to me. But that's what I'm going to do. You're not only young but innocent. I know you need to find out about the birds and bees. But I'm no teacher."

"Don't judge me by the pig-tailed innocent I'm playing in this film," she said, moving toward him. "My stepfather, Eugene Douvan, started fucking me when I was eight years old. He married my mother just to get close to me."

At that point, as Paul was later to tell Vampira, he was prepared to walk out the door of that dressing room and never see Sandra Dee again. "But when I heard about the sexual abuse from some bastard, when I saw how vulnerable she was, I figured I could at least be a big brother to her. "When she came to me, I took her in my arms and held her. She was sobbing hysterically."

That late afternoon, with a rubber body suit lying on a chair beside them, Paul began one of the most secret-and also, one of the strangest-relationships of his life. Nothing he'd ever experienced had quite prepared him for the likes of Sandra Dee.

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Abandoning the Chateau Marmont, Paul moved with Joanne Woodward to a rented house in Malibu, which for an idyllic period they would share with Gore Vidal and his constant companion, Howard Austen. Their landlord, and the owner of the house, was none other than Shirley MacLaine.

Paul's marriage to Jackie had all but expired at this point. It waited only for the divorce papers to be filed. "Joanne has won her man," Lee Strasberg privately told members of the Actors Studio in New York. "But will she ever really have him? Paul likes to share himself with other admirers."

As for Paul's little children, he had nothing publicly to say about them. To friends, he expressed his fears. "I don't think my son Scott really digs me. He resents me far more than I did my own father."

The author, Christopher Isherwood, who had recently dined with Tennessee Williams, claimed that the playwright was "bubbling with jeal ousy" over Paul's decision to live with Gore. "I am certain that when Joanne is away, Gore is pawing those golden inches and sucking him dry," Tennessee, as reported by Isherwood, said. "Do you think Gore could resist Paul walking around at that beach house, in a pair of tight-fitting jockey shorts, coming downstairs for his morning coffee? Paul drinks a lot. It's inevitable that seduction is going to take place one night when the moon goes behind a cloud. Ask any gay man. The difference between a straight sailor and a gay sailor is a sixpack."

The unorthodox menage of Newman/Woodward/Vidal/Austen escaped serious scrutiny in the press, but was the hottest news racing along the Hollywood grapevine. This was not the first time this bizarre quartet had been gossiped about. Once again, there was much speculation about the various sexual combinations the household might pursue. Even a four-way orgy was suggested, with Paul as the main object of communal desire.

Paul, no stranger to orgies after Robert Francis introduced him to Tyrone Power, dismissed such talk to his friends.

In his memoir, Palimpsest, Gore addressed the rumor of a sexual tryst between Paul and himself. "I should note here that over the years, I have read and heard about the love affair between me and Paul Newman. Unlike Marlon Brando, whom I hardly know, Paul has been a friend for close to half a century, proof, in my psychology, that nothing could ever have happened."

The logic or lack thereof of such a statement could be challenged. The world has long been peopled with fifty-year friendships that began as youthful love affairs.

Among the great literary feuds of the 20th century, the names of Gore Vidal andAnais Nin surface near the top. At the time of Gore's occupation of the Malibu house, he was still on speaking terms with Anais, the fabled diarist.

Joanne & Paul
An unorthodox ménage

A femme fatale, at least in her own mind, Anais was a woman of mystery and passion, known for extravagant sexual exploits which included a torrid affair with Henry Miller and his wife, June. She was not known at the time for her bicoastal life where she had a husband stashed in New York and a younger husband in Los Angeles.

"She was liberated decades before female liberation," said the male chauvinist author, Norman Mailer. "I never let her seduce me that day she came on to me at a party in Greenwich Village. She got Jack Kerouac instead."

In the 1940s, the much older Anais had formed a friendship with young Gore that for a while had the intensity of a rocket taking off before its inevitable plunge to Earth. "We are the two narcissi of the Forties," Gore later recalled.

Reunited with her younger husband in Los Angeles, Anais drove alone to the Malibu house that Gore was sharing with Paul and their lovers, Howard and Joanne. Invited to lunch, she was eager to find out what was going on, as she was still gathering "portraits" for her as-yet-unpublished diaries, which in time Kate Millett would refer to as "the first real portrait of the artist as a woman."

Arriving at the Malibu beach house, she warmly embraced Howard and Gore. Gore introduced Anais to his roommates, Paul and Joanne. The diarist would later dismiss both of them as "starlets."

She told this author that Joanne was "a Southern belle lacking in grace and charm, the very antithesis of Tennessee's Blanche DuBois. I am Blanche DuBois. Not this actress, this Miss Woodward. She could be cast, perhaps, as a gum-chewing waitress at a burger drive-in, one on roller skates carrying trays of milk shakes."

She was far more intrigued with Paul, whom she described to novelist James Leo Herlihy, when he was lobbying to get Paul to star in All Fall Down, a movie role with similarities to the character Paul played in Hud.

"Newman is just as much of a narcissist as Gore is," Anais told Herlihy. "But he disguises it completely, and, like the most skilled of actors, puts up a mask to confuse the world. I suspect he will go far in an industry that is all about illusion."

"There is no self-awareness in this handsome young man at all," she claimed. "He is an obvious homosexual, but does not dare admit that to himself. He's a selfish rogue while pretending to be benevolent, supporting all the right causes. He has a facile charm but no depth. In spite of the hot sun out here, he already knows that California is a cold, harsh land. He does not want it to hurt him. So what will he do? What must he do? He will inflict emotional pain on others, therefore avoiding the pain of having the blows strike him first."

Anaïs Nin
"What is a man
without dreams?"

"I predict he'll have a miserable life in Hollywood," she said. "Beneath all of his swagger, I suspect there is a sensitive man lurking somewhere there. He can't be frank with himself. It's obvious that he can't have a dialogue between his own flesh and his true spirit. He has no soul, or, if he does, it is hidden behind the package of surface beauty that he presents. I advised him to write down his dreams and try to analyze them, or get help from an analyst. I even volunteered to help him myself, but he rejected me. Amazingly, he told me, `I don't dream.' What is a man without dreams?"

"His whole life is a deceit, a cover-up, and I join him in that," she said. "I, too, as you well know, am torn between two lovers. This balancing act has made me a mistress of deceit myself. Liars need to keep track of what they say. I have a secret Book of Lies that I write in daily. That way, I can remember what I told one lover and what I told another."

"I feel sorry for Newman because he will never be what he wants to be," Anais said. "If he wants to be a movie star, then he has to be as fake and artificial as Marilyn Monroe. He has to become a sort of dream figure for the women of America. American women are shallow. They always go for the superficial. They make gods and goddesses out of cardboard caricatures. I predict Newman will turn into a cardboard figure. There will be no reality to him. He can't be real."

"He's moving into a world foreign to him," she said. "He'll be an alien in Hollywood, as if he's landed from another planet. We'll never know who Paul Newman is, because he doesn't know himself. Perhaps one harsh, brutal morning, when the world tumbles in around him, he'll look into the mirror and see himself for the first time. But it will frighten him. He'll immediately reach for that mask to put on again, the one that conceals him from himself."

"While pretending to be one thing, which he isn't, he'll live a secret life in the shadows," she said. "He'll grab pleasure where he can find it and then flee from it back into this fake celluloid world. A tragedy, really. But, this is, after all, Lotusland."

Later, when Herlihy confided Anais's analysis of Paul to the author, Darwin Porter, Herlihy said, "I don't know if I learned anything about Paul Newman from listening to her. But Anais was not clever enough to conceal her own deceit. She was actually attracted to Newman, but could not admit that to herself. From the way she talked about him, I felt she wanted to add him to her stable of young men. But knowing how hopeless that was, she chose to trash him instead, the way she did Gore Vidal in her diary."

Ultimately, Herlihy himself faced "trashing" in an Anais diary, part of a perceived betrayal which led to a lifelong feud and which added, perhaps, to the events leading up to Herlihy's suicide at the age of 66 in 1993. But as it happened, many young men who did not satisfy Anais's libido ended up getting portrayed as impotent homosexuals in her diaries or novels.

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Two weeks later Anais accompanied Joanne and Paul, along with Howard and Gore, to The Mocambo to hear "The Little Sparrow," French chanteuse Edith Piaf, singing with a passionate intensity. Even though she was an object of veneration in France, there were no other patrons that night for her Los Angeles appearance.

"She sang only for us," Anais later said. "Her voice, as always, was poignant, haunting. If a nightingale could speak, it would have the voice of Piaf. In Paris and New York, I always identified with Piaf. Both of us are women who cannot live without love."

During her performance, Piaf sang nearly all of her songs to Paul, gazing dreamily into his blue eyes. "I got the feeling from the look in her eyes that she was falling in love with me," he said. "After all, she's known for collecting beautiful young men as her lovers."

Later Piafjoined them at table, explaining that American audiences didn't know how to accept her. "Americans and I aren't the same breed," she said. "Since I'm French, they expect me to come out adorned with sable, furs, and sequins, like a showgirl at the Moulin Rouge. The curtains open, and there I stand in my little black dress. Marlene Dietrich I'm not."

"You are Piaf," Paul told her, "and that is real and more genuine than all the fake furs and all the glamour queens in the world."

She leaned over and kissed him on the lips for his compliment.

As the happy quintet was departing for the night, Piaf discreetly slipped Paul a note. In private, he read it.

"Call me," she wrote, giving her private number. "I will sing `La Vie en Rose' only to you. You're like a young Brando."

"I never called," Paul would tell Eartha Kitt weeks later. Eartha knew Piaf from the days she had spent in Paris. "I'm not opposed to screwing some legends of the silver screen. I'm not even opposed to screwing Piaf, but it's not my cuppa. She's such a midget. But when she compared me to Brando, that was it!"

Edith Piaf
"Sadness fades so quickly"

Brando had told Paul that he'd seduced Piaf in Paris after he'd gone there at the end of his Broadway run of A Streetcar Named Desire.

Despite the fact that Paul had no intention of seducing Piaf, she was, after all, Edith Piaf, and he didn't want to ignore her invitation completely.

He wrote a note and personally delivered it to her hotel, leaving it with the front desk.

> "Dear Mme Piaf
>
> I am sure there are many songs you could teach me. One sunny day in Paree, we'll stroll along the Seine together; hand in hand. There will be new neighborhoods to discover for the first time. Montmartre. Montparnasse. The city will be as fresh, as new as a dewdrop on a ruby red rose. And if that trip to Paree never comes to be, we can still have joy in our hearts. The most glorious journeys are those only dreamed. Your eternal, devoted fan.
>
> Paul Newman. "

He added a postscript:

> Voila, jolie petite, Il nefault (sic) pas pleurers (sic) Le chagrin va si vite; Laisse-moi m'en alley

He made a copy of the note and let Vampira read it. "That's beautiful," she said. "But I didn't know you spoke French."

"I don't," he said. "I asked a French waiter in a restaurant to add something romantic at the bottom."

"And you sent it to her, not knowing what it means?" she asked.

"Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time." he said.

Worried later that he'd inadvertently insulted her in French, he returned to the restaurant and asked the waiter for a translation.

"Monsieur, I am not a poet," the waiter said. "I stole the words from a French song. Here, I'll write them down for you in English."

Listen, my pretty one, You mustn't cry, Sadness fades so quickly;
Let me go my way.

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"Why haven't I heard from you?" asked one of the world's most famous voices. It was Judy Garland. "I'm not a leper you know. I'm fucked up but it's not contagious."

She wanted to talk for half the night. After an hour, she was only getting started. Hoping to end her long, rambling, drunken monologue, Paul agreed to slip away the following afternoon and see her.

"Good," she said, before ringing off. "I'll make sure we have the house to ourselves."

The next afternoon when Paul drove up to Judy's house, he hoped that Sid Luft was in New York, or shacked up in some motel in Palm Springs with one of his prostitutes. He also hoped Judy didn't have any children running around the house.

Judy answered the door and ushered Paul into her foyer, where he was introduced to Nunnally Johnson, a writer-producer-director for 20th Century Fox, and his wife, Dorris. After a handshake and pleasantries, the Johnsons were out the door. Judy, wearing slacks and a man's white shirt, ushered Paul into her living room.

"Before we get down to commando tactics, I want to share a script with you," she said. "It's called The Three Faces of Eve. It's based on a book written by two shrinks. It's about this dame from Georgia who's got not two but three multiple personalities. I know The Helen Morgan thing didn't work out, but there's a great role in Eve for you. The part of her husband. Warners makes plenty of dough renting out your hide. Those bastards will gladly lend you to Fox."

The next hour and a half was spent reading the script.

When they finished, he told her, "It's a fabulous part for an actress. My role's not so great but not bad either. But I see Oscar on it for a woman who can tackle the role of Eve."

"That's amazing," she said, her face lighting up. "Orson Welles, God knows why, read the script and said the same thing. You know, of course, that Orson was an old fuck buddy of mine?"

"Actually I didn't know that," he said, smiling. "But I'm sure I can sell the news to Confidential."

Standing over him, she reached for his hand. "I can't go dancing with you tonight. The kids are going to arrive around eight o'clock." She checked the clock. "That gives us at least two hours alone. Sid's in New York trying to arrange a booking for me at the Palace. We're all alone. You lucky boy."

"We are indeed," he said, "and I know how lucky I am. I've got a confession to make. I got a hard-on watching you in Meet Me in St. Louis. I wanted to be the guy, not that wimpy Tom Drake, who took your virginity."

"Honey, I lost that a long time ago to Spencer Tracy when I was fifteen, give or take a year," she said. "Now come along upstairs."

When Paul shared the latest Judy story with his friends, he said, "When we hit the sack, she delivered a great line."

"Tell us," Tony Perkins said.

"She asked me, `Do you mind if we give each other blow-jobs before we get around to Number Two?'"

***

Paul borrowed the script from Judy, but did not rush home and show it to Joanne. She was in negotiations to do a low-brow version of John Steinbeck's The Wayward Bus so he didn't bother her with it.

He wanted Gore to read it, since he respected his literary opinion. He was also hoping Gore would write some pages to beef up his character as Eve's husband, in case he got the part. He could take the revisions to the director.

Reportedly, Gore approved the script, but also suggested it would be a star vehicle for Joanne.

When Joanne was presented with the script, she claimed that her mother had already read the book and had called her, urging her to go for it. "I told mother I didn't have a chance at a star part like that. Fox will want a big name. The most obvious candidate Fox can come up with is Susan Hayward."

"Would you believe Judy Garland?" Paul said. "She's been offered the role."

"She could probably do it if she can hold herself together," Joanne said. "But if Judy does it, Fox will have to call it The Five Faces of Eve."

A week later, back at Judy's house, Paul encountered a very different actress who'd changed her mind about The Three Faces ofEve. She informed him that she'd talked it over with Sid Luft, and that he was adamantly opposed to her appearing in "this tacky little film noir that no one will go see. He told me I could break records in Vegas. Make tons of money."

Over a drink, Judy talked more candidly about why she was turning down the role of the ordinary Southern housewife, given to splitting headaches and fainting spells as she switched personalities.

"I fear I have all of Eve's characteristics in myself," she confessed. "I think playing this gal could tip me over the deep edge. The role terrifies me. I identify too strongly with the character. There are no songs to sing. They want me to lose thirty pounds. I don't know if I can do that. I'm not going to do it, even though I'll put in a good word for you if you still want to play Eve's husband."

"We'll see," he said, not wanting to commit himself. He was eager to rush out of her house and inform Joanne that the part had become available, but he thought better of it. She might become suspicious as to why he knew so much about what was going on in the life of Judy Garland.

"Actually I've decided to do another movie, and there's a great part in it for you," she said. "The Gentleman Caller."

"You mean Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie?" he asked.

"No silly, I've been asked by General Teleradio-you know, Howard Hughes' old RKO-to do a remake of Alice Adams. I'll take the Katharine Hepburn role, of course, and you can be Fred MacMurray."

"I don't know," he said. "Tampering with a classic..."

"I'm sure before the night ends, I will have convinced you," she said, moving closer to him on the sofa.

Later, Paul would share a confidence with Frank Sinatra, perhaps seeking his affirmation. Frank found the story amusing and passed it along the grapevine.

"Newman told me," Frank said to Peter Lawford, "that he was learning something about seducing movie legends. There is no foreplay. They spend most of the night talking about their beauty or how wonderful they looked in their latest picture. Then, when they're ready to get plugged, they demand it. A man is virtually ordered to rise to the occasion whether he's in the mood or not. The only hope for my future is that Joanne Woodward doesn't become one of the great legends of Hollywood. It'll be the end of our romance. I want to fuck legends just to get another

notch in my belt. I don't want to marry one of these creatures."

Nunnally Johnson told a reporter that, "As so often happens, dear, dear Judy is obviously not going to do Eve. She won't even return my calls. Once again, clouds got in her way. She'd rather get laryngitis in the dry desert air of Vegas than play Eve. I've offered the part to Susan Hayward."

As Paul would later tell Vampira and Tony Perkins, "I've been out here on the coast long enough to learn to play the dirty games. Joanne must never find this out, but I'm going to sabotage Nunnally Johnson's choice of a star."

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"We meet again," Susan Hayward said, ushering him into her parlor for a long, lingering kiss. "After our last night together, I thought I would see more of you."

"I've been busy," he said.

"Was it as good for you as it was for me?" she asked.

"The best," he assured her.

It was different at Susan's from what it was at Judy's. Time lodged together in bed for wild sex preceded a script reading.

Fully satisfied sexually, he was back in her living room where he spent at least an hour talking and drinking before he got around to the real reason he was here. "I read that Nunnally Johnson has offered you the lead in The Three Faces of Eve."

"So, that's why you're here," she said, getting up and slamming down her glass as she rose to her feet.

He was appalled that she might already know he wanted Joanne to get the role.

"You didn't come here to make love to me," she said. "You came here to get my approval to cast you as Eve's husband in the film."

"It never occurred to me," he said. "I haven't read the script. But I do want to appear in a picture with you. You said we might. There's nothing wrong with that."

"You're a bullshitter, but I'll overlook that for a moment. All actors are bullshitters. I should know after all those years with Jess Barker, the stinking bastard."

When he managed to calm her down, she rejoined him on the sofa. "First, if I'm to star in this piece of shit, it's got to be in Technicolor. No more blackand-white pictures for me. Let's face it: my mane of red hair is the most famous in the history of Hollywood. Why would I want to conceal that fact in black and white?"

"Why indeed?" he asked.

"Let's read the script together," she said.

At the end of their reading, she said, "I can do something with this, but, frankly, I'm worried. It would take a tremendous commitment on my part. On I'll Cry Tomorrow, I worked myself into a nervous breakdown. I felt suicidal. I don't want to go through that hell again. On some days I started crying at eight o'clock in the morning and kept crying all afternoon. That's how emotionally wrecked I was."

"Frankly, Susan, I don't think this cheap little film noir is worth your taking a chance. It could cost you your life."

"Long before you got here, I was thinking the same thing," she said. "I don't think I could risk it."

"Then there's the problem of having to play three different women all in one body," he said. "That's hard to pull off. It could invite ridicule."

She walked into her den and came back with yet another script. "It's called I Want to Live. Read it."

He read a tragic and harrowing tale of the executed criminal and prostitute, Barbara Graham, the story of the first woman ever sent to the gas chamber in California. If anything, I Want to Live would be an even more strenuous role for Susan to play.

He chose to deliberately lie to her. "After putting down the script, he took her in his arms. "Baby, this script has Oscar written all over it. No actress but Susan Hayward can play Barbara Graham."

"Do you really believe that?" she said. "You're not bullshitting again?" "Not at all! Robert Wise is going to direct. Look what he did for me. You'll be in great hands." And, then he told her the biggest lie of all. "And through it all, I'll be there for you. That's a promise."

An hour later when he kissed her goodbye and walked out her door, he felt "like a dirty rotten heel," as he told his friends.

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Paul kept his promise and continued to see Susan until she finally made that call to Robert Wise, telling him that she was "much too fragile" to take on a challenging role like The Three Faces of Eve.

With Susan out of the picture, Paul no longer took her calls. He told Tony Perkins, "That fiery redhead is more vampire than Vampira. She's a bloodsucker. She'd also snip off a man's nuts while he was sleeping peacefully."

With Susan off the picture, the pathway was cleared for Joanne. But Nunnally Johnson had other plans. He sent the script to three different starsJennifer Jones, June Allyson, and Doris Day.

"Shit, piss, and hell!" Paul said. "All these same actresses were up for The Helen Morgan Story."

One by one, each of these screen legends turned down "the little film." In desperation, Johnson sent the script to Carroll Baker. She, too, turned it down. Johnson finally placed a call to Joanne herself. "Would you consider the role?" he asked.

"You've found your gal," she said. "I won't even have to fake a Georgia accent. I'm from Georgia. Pot likker talk comes naturally to me. Would I take the part? I'd cut off my mother's tit for a chance to play Eve."

The next day, Joanne gladly surrendered her role in The Wayward Bus to Joan Collins, the British bombshell.

"If Warren Beatty is to be believed, Collins is the hottest piece in Hollywood," Paul told Tony Perkins. "I've started thinking seriously about calling her up one night and feeding her the pork."

Susan Hayward
Feeling suicidal

At that point, neither Paul nor Joanne knew that both of them would soon be appearing in a film with Joan Collins.

"Paul, this is Natalie Wood," came an enticing voice over the phone. "Remember me? After all, we starred together in the greatest Biblical film of all time. Cecil B. DeMille, eat your heart out."

"My little pussycat," he said. "When you grew up, I had planned to deflower you. Now I hear it's too late for that."

"I hope you're not opposed to sloppy seconds," she said in her most flirtatious voice.

"I've been known to go that route on a dark, moonless night," he said. "But I have a feeling you're calling me for some reason other than to get into my pants."

"Getting into those tight pants of yours is only one of my dreams," she said. "I just got the news from Warners. You've been cast opposite me in Marjorie Morningstar. It's a love story. Don't you think we should start practicing our scenes right now?"

He was stunned at the news and was familiar with all the pre-publicity this film had received in the press. So far, no one at Warners had bothered to tell him what his next assignment was. He had to learn it from Natalie.

Marjorie Morningstar, the story of a "Jewish princess" rebelling from her parents and coming of age in New York City in the 1950s, had been a bestselling novel by Herman Wouk. When Jack Warner acquired the rights to the novel, which had been published in 1955, he announced that only Elizabeth Taylor could play the lead. He had planned to borrow her from MGM, but that studio had another picture for the star. Warner then decided that only Audrey Hepburn could play the part, but Paramount had other ideas.

Natalie had read the novel and announced that it was a role "I'm destined to play." She practically broke down the door to Warner's office. When she emerged from that heated session, the studio chief agreed to give her a screen test. Natalie even met with Wouk, but the novelist told Warners that she was not his concept of Marjorie Morningstar.

The director, Irving Rapper, conducted the screen test and pronounced Natalie's performance as brilliant. He called Jack Warner, "You have your Marjorie Morningstar." Rapper even showed the test to Wouk, who changed his mind about Natalie.

In spite of such endorsements, the producer, Milton Sperling, announced that he was going to launch a nationwide hunt for an unknown actress to play Marjorie. He compared such a launch to David O. Selznick's search for an unknown to play Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With the Wind.

Natalie was furious, having thought the part was hers. Once again, she barged into Jack Warner's office without an appointment. "Forget that God damn nationwide search," she told him. "You're fucking looking at

Marjorie Morningstar. If I have to suck your dick to get the part, I will."

The hardened veteran of many a confrontation with a movie star, including the formidable Bette Davis, was shocked at her language. From Joan Crawford, he would expect such talk. But such words coming from Natalie took him by surprise, since he still regarded her as a child star. He went over the head of his producer and ordered that Natalie be cast in the part. "If she's got that much fire in her belly, she'll be better than all the other actresses."

When Rapper asked Warner who he wanted to cast as the male lead, he said, "Throw Newman in the role. The fucker is taking a thousand a week from my pocket and not earning it."

Natalie had been given the script before Paul. Driving to her home that night, he was unaware of all the behind-the-scenes negotiations leading up to the final casting. He couldn't wait to see what kind of role he'd be playing. Unlike Natalie, he hadn't read the novel.

Before heading out, he told Gore and Howard, "I wonder what new shit Jack Warner has come up with for me. After The Silver Chalice, I don't trust anyone at Warners. I did better when they lent me out and made big bucks off my baby blues."

Natalie greeted him at the door and kissed him with a certain passion on the lips. Settling himself comfortably on a sofa, he took the drink she offered and together they read the script.

Paul found that his role as Marjorie Morningstar's summer romance was cardboard-flat and lackluster. Concealing his utter contempt for the script, he told Natalie, "You'll be great in this movie." He made no mention of himself. "There's probably an Oscar in it for you."

He couldn't bear to tell her the truth, because she'd worked and lobbied so hard for the part.

"It will send my career into the heavens," Natalie predicted.

Natalie Wood & Gene Kelly
What might have been for Paul

He'd save his negative review of the project for when he talked it over with Joanne and Gore the next day.

After reading the script with Natalie, the talk between them got personal-or "down and dirty," as he'd later confide to Janice Rule when he went over the details of that night.

Natalie told Paul that she'd wanted him to be "the first to do it," but that her mother had a different idea.

"Your mother?" he asked, astonished.

"She decided it was going to be Nick Adams," she said. "You know him. You met him with Dean on the set of Rebel. Even though I was only fourteen, mother decided that Nick was the guy to teach me `the ways of the world,' as she put it. She said that although she could trust Nick to be gentle with me, she couldn't trust some of my other boyfriends."

"I thought Dean kept Nick Adams fully booked," Paul said.

"Are you kidding?" she asked. "Dean has so many people to fuck during the course of any given day that it leaves plenty of time for Nick to screw around too."

She wanted another drink.

"Isn't teenage drinking against the law in California?"

"Fuck that," she said. "I'm pretty grown up, and in the privacy of my own home."

He poured that drink, thinking Natalie was growing up too fast.

"I'll show you just how grown up I am," she said, walking over to a desk in the hallway and removing a sheet of paper. She handed it to him. "Read my list of future conquests, and then don't question where my mind is."

He read:

PAUL NEWMAN

ELVIS PRESLEY

RAYMOND BURR

NICKY HILTON

DENNIS HOPPER

TAB HUNTER

JOHN IRELAND

ARTHUR LOEW JR.

SCOTT MARLOWE

STEVE MCQUEEN

AUDIE MURPHY

LANCE REVENTLOW

FRANK SINATRA

STUART WHITMAN

"Thanks for putting me at the top of the list," he said. "I'm flattered. I noticed the names of James Dean and Nicolas Ray are missing."

"Been there, done that," she said.

"As for Elvis, I guess he heads the list of a lot of teenage gals," he said. "I'm going to have him," she said. "I'm very determined. Both Nick Adams and I plan to fuck Elvis when he comes to Hollywood. He wants Nick to take

him to all the haunts where he hung out with Dean. The way I figure it, if he wants to hang out with Dean's boy, why not Dean's gal?"

"It looks like our friend from Memphis is gonna be one busy fucker," he said. "By the way, I didn't see Robert Wagner on that list."

"He's a bit of a bore," she said. "After hanging around with Jimmy Dean and Nicholas Ray, R.J. is just like white bread."

"But you gotta admit, this R.J. of yours is a beauty," he said.

"Takes one to know one," she said, stroking his cheek. "Maybe he'll go for you if you think he's so beautiful. Give him a call one night."

"Not my scene," he said, hoping to change the subject.

"I've got this bright idea," she said, jumping up from the sofa. "I've shown you my list. Now show me your list."

"Is this a show-and-tell night?" he asked. "I've never compiled a list."

She went over to that hallway desk and returned with a notebook. "Time's wasting."

A little drunk, he decided to play her game. At the top of the pad, he scrawled in very large letters the name of NATALIE WOOD.

"I know that already, silly," she said. "Go on. Give me more names.

He thought for a minute and then began to write:

LANA TURNER

AVA GARDNER

RITA HAYWORTH

ELIZABETH TAYLOR

AUDREY HEPBURN

GERALDINE PAGE

JANICE RULE

JOAN COLLINS

She studied the list carefully. "I noticed that Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly are both missing."

"Been there, done that." He glanced at his watch. "It's getting late," he said. "Way past your bedtime."

"The night's still young," she said.

And so are you," he said, reaching for her. "I'll tuck you in. You know what tuck rhymes with?"

"Indeed I do," she said, moving toward him and cuddling herself in his arms.

"There's a reason I want to get it on with you," he said. "I believe you will seduce Elvis, and I want to have you before he spoils you for all other men."

The next day Paul shared his adventures with Natalie with Tony Perkins and Vampira. But conveniently, he forgot to tell Joanne Woodward the details of his evening.

Later, he told both Gore and Joanne that he was turning down the role he'd been offered in Marjorie Morningstar. "You'll go on suspension," Joanne warned him, "and you need the money."

"I'll face the music," he said. "I'm not doing that picture and that's that."

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During the shooting of The Three Faces of Eve, word was seeping out that Joanne was delivering an Oscar worthy performance. But the star herself had her doubts, telling Gore and Paul that, "I think this could be the end of my career."

Eve was the first film to explore the subject of multiple personalities, although mental illness itself had been brilliantly depicted by Olivia de Havilland when she appeared in The Snake Pit (1948). Paul heard that his possible role as Eve's husband had gone to David Wayne, always competent, never a star. Lee J. Cobb was cast as one of Eve's psychiatrists. Orson Welles turned down the role, preferring to devote his attention to A Touch of'Evil.

When Paul was invited to see the first rushes, he told Gore, "Joanne breathes life into all three women. Each gal has a distinct personality. My favorite is when she plays Eve Black, a whore. If Oscar is awarded on merit, she'll get it."

"You know by now that Oscars are never awarded on merit," said the cynical Gore. "If that were true, you'd already have one for Somebody Up There Likes Me."

When he wasn't before a camera, Paul was guzzling beer day and night, reading film scripts ("why aren't they any good?"), and fretting over a possible nuclear war. He consistently turned down interviews. "The only aspect of my private life I'll discuss is what kind of underwear I have on and whether or not I sleep in the nude. As for who I sleep with, that's nobody's god damn business but my own."

With Joanne absorbed almost day and night in her difficult film role in The Three Faces of Eve, Paul had a lot of free time. He spent a weekend with Robert Stack at the Palm Springs villa. Somehow word got out about that weekend, and the news made the gossip circles throughout Hollywood.

To his private weekend gathering, Robert had invited not only Paul but Brad Dexter. The Hollywood grapevine had it that there had been a three-way orgy at the desert villa.

Paul often talked privately with certain close friends about his affairs, but he remained tight-lipped after returning from Palm Springs that weekend. Confidential got word of the weekend and was hot on the trail of the story.

Paul had very briefly met the former husband of Peggy Lee, and it was believed that he was immensely attracted to the ruggedly masculine star.

Without Peggy Lee, Brad was enjoying a reputation as a menacingly handsome actor who loved to play screen heavies. "They're always the bestwritten characters."

Paul was spotted two weeks later having lunch with Brad at a secluded restaurant in Santa Monica. He was also seen at a gym engaged in a boxing match workout with the actor. Brad had been a member of the boxing team at the University of Southern California and later became a Golden Gloves light heavyweight.

After his failed marriage to Peggy Lee, Brad told the press, "I doubt if I'll ever get married again." He would later marry two more women, one in 1971 and another in 1994.

Brad became known in Hollywood for having affairs with his leading men, including Tyrone Power, Yul Brynner, and Robert Mitchum. A room service waiter once walked in on Mitchum and Brad in bed with Gloria Grahame.

His close friendship with Brynner was once the scandal of Hollywood. In later life, Brad spent a lot of time with Frank Sinatra, who had become one of his closest friends.

"It's always been a mystery to me why Paul refused to tell any of his friends what was going on between Brad Dexter and himself," Vampira said. "Why the secrecy? He let us know what was happening with his other secret relationships. Brad seemed someone special, someone he didn't want to talk about. The two men conducted their affair-or whatever it was-like a Back Street relationship, definitely something to be ashamed of."

The only person with any credibility who discussed Brad's relationship with Paul was Miss Peggy Lee herself. She once confided in Frank Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney that she'd pursued Paul and tried to get him to become her next husband. "He turned me down," she confessed. "But when my ex called him, Paul always came running. I guess Brad had something between his legs that I don't. Hell, what am I saying? I know the fucker has something between his legs. I married him."

On the set of Exodus in 1960, Paul's co-star, the bisexual Peter Lawford, pointedly asked him why he was "hanging out with the former Mr. Peggy Lee."

"He's teaching me Serbo-Croatian," was Paul's enigmatic reply. Although born in Nevada, Brad was the son of parents who'd moved there from Yugoslavia. He'd learned to speak Serbo-Croatian as his first language.

"I think Paul became very jealous when Brad more or less dropped him and started hanging out with Steve McQueen when those guys appeared together in The Magnificent Seven in 1960," Vampira said.

"I asked Paul about that new relationship, and he seemed bitter but tried to mask his jealousy," she said. He answered me with a smirk. "The film is badly titled. "In Brad's case, it should be called The Magnificent Eight and a Half."

***

While Three Faces of Eve was being edited at the studio, Joanne was rushed into another movie, No Down Payment, in which she'd appear with an all-star cast, including Sheree North, Jeffrey Hunter, Tony Randall, Patricia Owens, and Barbara Rush.

Brad Dexter
Serial seducer

The director, Martin Ritt, feared tension on the set between two of his co-stars, Jeffrey Hunter and Barbara Rush. Formerly married, the couple had divorced in 1955. A former assistant to Elia Kazan, Ritt was bouncing back in his career as a director, having been blacklisted as a suspected Communist sympathizer throughout most of the 1950s.

Jeffrey Hunter, who'd co-starred with Joanne in A Kiss Before Dying, was frankly jealous of Paul and his success, although for the most part, he concealed it.

An extraordinarily handsome young man, who'd been born in New Orleans, Jeffrey was known for his beautifully piercing eyes. Those eyes would lead to his getting cast as Jesus Christ in the 1961 remake of King of Kings.

Hunter had met Paul before and became re-acquainted with him when he'd appeared on set of No Down Payment to observe a day's shooting. The jealous actor would later spread unattractive gossip about Paul.

Cameron Mitchell, another co-star in the film, observed what was going on. Hunter later told him that Paul came on to him seductively, but in a very subtle way.

"Knowing I was friends with Robert Wagner, Newman suggested that we might get together for a workout or else spend a Sunday at the beach at Venice," Hunter said. "It was obvious to me that Paul had a crush on Robert Wagner, and he wanted me to bring Bob along on one of these jaunts. He also wanted me as part of the package. Everything he suggested-the gym, the beach-would involve our stripping off some or most of our clothes."

"I led him on, just to see how far he'd go," Hunter claimed. "He went far but avoided an out-and-out proposition. I think he had too much pride for that. You can't help feel sorry for guys like Newman. They have too much to lose if they make one false step. Look what Confidential did to Tab Hunter. They can't go after what they want, like when a man sees a pretty gal. When Joanne Woodward came up, Newman became all macho. He'd brought cold beer to the set, but Martin Ritt refused to let us have any. Newman drank alone. He was sad in many ways. Having to pretend to be what he wasn't. But most of us Hollywood hunks in the 1950s had to do that."

***

Joanne was right. With a wife back East and three kids to support, Paul could not risk suspension from Warners. According to his contract, he had to accept whatever role the studio offered him.

Joanne:
One Woman, Three Faces
"The end of my career?"

When word reached him that Paul had rejected the script of Marjorie Morningstar, Jack Warner went into a screaming rage. "Who in the fuck does this little Jew bastard think he is? Bette Davis?" He called the legal department and had them send a special delivery letter, notifying Paul of his impending suspension.

But Warners never carried through on that threat. Paul was saved when 20th Century Fox called Warners, asking to borrow Paul to appear in a film, The Long, Hot Summer. The picture would co-star Joanne Woodward. Since Warners was paying him only $1,000 a week, the studio could get a lot more for him on a loan-out to Fox. The threatened suspension was revoked, as Warners went for the money Fox held out.

"Hitler danced a jig of joy at the fall of France," Paul told Gore, "and I did the same when I heard I'd be starring with Joanne."

Paul called Jackie and told his wife that he was going to fly to Clinton, Louisiana to "soak up local color" before filming began. When he did, Jackie confronted him with the newest spin on his affair with Joanne, in much the same way she'd scolded him for his too close relationship with James Dean. Apparently, Jackie viewed Joanne as a greater threat than Dean.

"I need the money," he told her. "I can't turn down the picture. They'll put me on suspension. You of all people know I have hungry mouths to feed."

"Fears of suspension didn't stop you from turning down Marjorie Morningstar," Jackie allegedly told him. "You couldn't be anxious to do this movie because the great Miss Woodward is in it, could you?"

"You don't understand," he protested.

"I understand more than you know," she reportedly said, or at least that's what Paul told his friends.

After telling him that she was taking their two daughters-"and your rebellious son Scott"-back to live with her parents in Wisconsin, she put down the phone.

At long last, he told Joanne that his marriage was over. "I tried straddling the fence for years, but I just fell off that fence into the briar patch. The next few months of breaking up my family are going to be hell for me, but I've got to get through it."

Robert Wagner (left)
with **Jeffrey Hunter**
A pass not intercepted

He reported all this conflict to Janice Rule, begging her to be supportive of his decision.

"Let's face it," she said bluntly. "In your heart you left Jackie Witte years ago. Now you're free to commit to Joanne. Does all this mean you'll be settling down with just one woman in your life? Or, are you going to continue to be a whore having a lot of fun?"

He paused a long moment before replying. "I'll go on my wicked ways until 1975. At least 1975. The way I figure it, that's when I'll settle down except for a few harmless crushes."

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He had many misgivings after reading the script of The Long, Hot Summer. Ostensibly, it was based on the amalgam of two short stories by William Faulkner. Paul, however, secretly believed that Fox was ripping off Cat on a Hot Tin Roof with another variation of a steamy Southern drama. The stage play of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof had opened on Broadway's Morosco Theater in March of 1955, running for a blockbusting 694 performances. Tennessee Williams had promised Paul the lead, but he'd lost out to Ben Gazzara. Grace Kelly, originally slated to play Maggie the Cat, had bowed out of the play because she had a royal wedding on her mind. Her part eventually went to Barbara Bel Geddes; with the role of Big Daddy going to Burl Ives.

"Fuck it!" Paul said, angered that he had not been offered the Broadway role of Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. "I'll get to play a Brick-like character before MGM even starts filming Cat."

The casting of The Long, Hot Summer might have caused elation at Paul's Malibu household, but there was only sadness at his home back East. It can be assumed that Jackie was well aware of her husband's ongoing affair with Joanne Woodward-the press certainly kept her informed. News of the illicit relationship had been frequently leaked to tabloid gossips.

Before he left for filming in the Deep South, Paul had one final tale to share with Tony and Vampira. Song-and-dancemaster Gene Kelly had called him and asked him to lunch. Meeting in a restaurant along Sunset Strip, Gene had thanked Paul for turning down Marjorie Morningstar.

Gene Kelly
Hand on knee, traveling north

Gene had ended his long bond with MGM in 1957. He told Paul that "they aren't making a lot of musicals today, especially the ones I used to star in. Both Fred Astaire and I are shopping around for dramatic parts. Pickings are lean. I saw Judy Garland the other day. She's also opting for dramatic parts. Both Judy and I know what time it is, at least by the MGM clock."

Paul revealed to his friends that the more Gene talked to him, the closer his hand under the table moved up from his knee toward his crotch.

"Nothing was said," Paul said. "It's like Gene was talking one way above the table and doing something else under the table. I didn't stop him. I knew he was bisexual and had had an affair with Vincente Minnelli. Gene was terrific in Singin' in the Rain. I felt I owed him one. I fully expected him to ask me to check into a hotel with him that afternoon. But guess what?"

"You went with him," Tony said.

"Not at all," Paul said. "I might have if he'd asked me. After all, he used to be Gene Kelly. But he didn't ask. At the end of the lunch, which he paid for, he thanked me again for turning down that dumb picture. Then he shook my hand like we were concluding a business deal. I stood watching him drive away from the parking lot. I never expect to see him again. Hollywood is one queer place."

"Are you just finding that out?" Vampira asked. "If you want to see weird, just look at me. How many dames do you know who are a vampire?"

Paul, Scott (age 5), and **Jackie**
A bumpy ride for a dysfunctional family

Chapter Seven

Changing Partners & Other Loves

Leaving his complicated love life behind him, Paul without Joanne boarded a plane for New Orleans. At that crucial point in his life, with a divorce pending, he did not want to be photographed getting off a plane with Joanne.

In the empty seat beside him rested the screenplay of The Long, Hot Summer, the creation of the husband-and-wife writing team of Harriet Frank and Irving Ravetch. He also had copies of two short stories by William Faulkner, The Spotted Horses and Barn Burning, on which the script was based, and he carried Faulkner's novel, The Hamlet, which included scenes that had also been worked into the film script.

Even though the screenplay took place in Mississippi, the director, Martin Ritt, had selected the towns of Clinton and Baton Rouge in Louisiana as backdrops.

Paul wanted to arrive two weeks before the film crew to soak up local atmosphere. "I decided I had to turn this Yankee boy from Ohio into a Mississippi redneck." To do that, he planned to hang out in the local bars and pool halls. Amazingly, though he was touted as Hollywood's hottest rising male star, not one of the redneck barflies recognized him. At one point, he asked a burly bartender, "Don't they show movies in this briar patch?"

When asked what he did for a living, he told them that he was a former boxer, a line no doubt inspired by his impersonation of Rocky Graziano. "Even before landing in Louisiana, I already knew how to drink more beer than any redneck in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi combined," he said.

Temporarily left behind in Hollywood, Joanne had to face an embarrassing question or two from reporters. In the wake of her appearance in The Three Faces of Eve, interest in her had increased because of the rumors that she'd become an Oscar contender. She was bluntly asked by a reporter if she planned to marry Paul if he got a divorce. Her response was vague. "I've always maintained that if a marriage doesn't work out, divorce is inevitable." Her statement was baffling, since millions of people have stayed in bad mar riages without getting a divorce.

She was also queried about her living arrangements. She told reporters that she was looking for an apartment to share with Joan Collins. A reporter from Variety seemed astonished. "Joan Collins? I didn't know Woodward was that kind of dame. After all, Collins out here is known as `the British Open.'"

In The Long, Hot Summer, producer Jerry Wald was hoping to create a new screen team to replace the aging Spencer Tracy and vintage Katharine Hepburn. Even though Paul and Joanne weren't in the same league as Tracy and Hepburn, they were formidable challengers for the role of Hollywood's next dynamic duo.

Paul shared something in common with Tracy and Hepburn. All three actors were bisexual. Joanne was not a member of that switch-hitting league, although her remark about moving in with sexpot Collins caused some minor speculation.

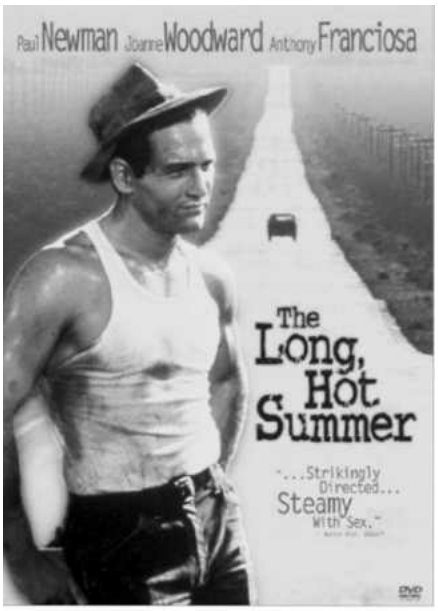
"At least with my newly acquired cornpone-and-molasses accent, I won't be compared to Marlon Brando," Paul told Ritt. "No one would consider Brando for this role."

Actually, Paul was wrong. What he didn't know is that originally, Ritt had wanted to cast Brando and his On the Waterfront co-star, Eva Marie Saint, in the film, figuring they would be magic at the box office in a return bout.

Saint had to bow out because she became pregnant, and Ritt had turned to Joanne, with whom he'd worked in her most recent film, No Down Payment. Paul had not even been Ritt's second choice for the role of Ben Quick. After Brando's rejection, the director asked Robert Mitchum to play the part of Ben. He, too, rejected the script.

Producer Jerry Wald told Fox executives that "I fully expect Newman to be a road show version of Brando in

this film. It's like the Mark of Zorro on him."



When Gore Vidal, in Hollywood at the time, was asked about the casting, he privately told friends, "Joanne is a real actress. Paul is a movie star. It will take years for him to turn into a real actor and a movie star." It is not known if the news of that remark ever reached Paul.

Cocky and seemingly amoral, Ben Quick in the movie is an alleged pyromaniac, accused of burning barns. He arrives in the small Southern town of Frenchmans Bend and goes to work for the bullying patriarch, Will Varner, as played by Orson Welles. Like Paul himself, Welles was Ritt's third choice after both Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney had turned down the role.

Varner sees Paul as a "big stud horse, good for breeding," feeling he might inject some new blood into his weak family. Cast as Clara, Joanne plays an uptight, sexually repressed schoolteacher with her hair arranged into a very tight bun. Her boyfriend is played by Richard Anderson. Paul, as Ben Quick, tells her, "If you're saving it for him, honey, you got your account in the wrong bank."

Cast as Welles' weak son, Jody, Tony Franciosa, who'd just married Shelley Winters, was appearing with Lee Remick as his flashy trollop wife, Eula.

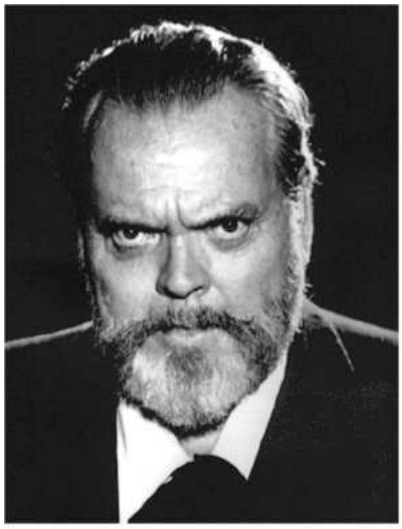
As the mistress of Welles, Angela Lansbury, playing Minnie Littlejohn, gave her usually brilliant performance, although Ritt did not use her enough.

During the first week of shooting, Welles and Paul were still speaking. "I'm flat broke," he told Paul. "I owe everybody. I even had to accept a $10,000 check from Rita Hayworth. Fox is giving me $150,000 for the role, and that's all the money I have in the world. The IRS is on my ass day and night."

For some reason not known, Welles by the second week had turned on Paul. "I detest Newman," the corpulent actor told Ritt. "Another Method actor. Give me a real actor like Joseph Cotten any day."

Paul weighed in with his own opinion of Welles. "It's like shooting a film with the devil."

Ritt and Welles clashed over every scene. Welles was battling not only the Louisiana summer heat, but a serious weight problem, which made it difficult for him to get around. His makeup ran in the blistering sun. He told Ritt that he hated the script, calling it "something Tennessee Williams might dash off after a long weekend of getting stinking drunk and gangbanged by three hustlers."



Orson Welles
Oligarch Lost in the Swamp

Even though he fought constantly with Welles, Ritt admitted Welles was giving a brilliant performance. In his scenes with Paul, viewers would later claim that they could "almost smell all that testosterone."

Scene-stealing Welles was "Big Daddy" at his best, evoking the character in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. "This was vintage Welles," Ritt claimed. "He was clammy, blustery, a fat cat with a bullfrog voice, jowly, bullying, overly brutish, domineering, and, finally, castrating."

Welles was only forty-three at the time he shot the film, although he could well have played a sixty-year-old without benefit of makeup.

One day when Ritt could stand this oligarch no more, he drove Welles into the swamp on a pretense. He lured him out of the car and sped away. From the depths of that sweltering den of snakes and mosquitoes, Welles had to find his way back to the set. After that, Ritt became known in Hollywood as "the lion tamer of Orson Welles."

When he saw the first rushes of Joanne and Paul emoting, Ritt was thrilled. "This is not movie acting," he wired Fox executives. "This is bona fide passion." The director claimed that Paul had a "great fuckability quotient."

On screen and off, the two lovers were creating an alchemy of fireworks-or "lightning bugs on a summer night," as one viewer of the rushes put it. In spite of the creaky melodrama of the plot, Ritt knew he was creating a Southern fried masterpiece.

Joanne, a Georgia girl herself, perfectly depicted a coyly seductive belle with hot pants. Ritt ordered Paul to take off his shirt and expose a sculptured, pumped, and ripped physique worthy of Michelangelo's David. The director predicted that women in movie theaters across America would swoon when Paul stripped down.

Paul and Joanne
Lightning bugs on a summer night

"In one scene I even made Paul strip down to his jockey shorts," Ritt said. "Gay guys in the audience will jerk off under their overcoats."

Paul and Joanne, absorbed in their own love affair and threatened with the possibility of a messy divorce, did not endear themselves to other cast members. Lansbury noted that Hollywood's most famous unmarried couple spent most of their off-camera time alone.

On weekends, Paul would take Joanne to New Orleans, where, in an antique store, they came upon a large brass bed that had been salvaged from a local bordello once frequented by Louisiana's dictator, Huey Long. Years later, when Tennessee Williams saw the bed, he tried to purchase it from the Newmans for his Key West house.

Paul warned Ritt that "If my dressing trailer is rock `n rolling, take the advice of that Marilyn Monroe film, Don't Bother to Knock."

Night after night, Paul agonized over having to divorce Jackie. Joanne had already experienced the pains of divorce as a child when her parents separated, and she didn't want to be portrayed in the press as the "home-breaking other woman." Nevertheless, she told Ritt, "I can't live without him."

Privately, Lee Remick was rather disdainful of both Paul and Joanne, although she showed great respect for them during public interviews. Privately, she spoke more bluntly with Ritt. "Just who are these two stuck-up snobs?" she asked. "They think they're such hot shit. Fuck them. I'm going to be First Lady one day."

Ritt looked astonished at her revelation, which she did not explain. She was obviously referring to her ongoing affair with a young Robert Kennedy. For years she entertained the illusion that he would divorce Ethel, leave his big family, and marry her.

The weather continued to be unbearably hot, and then a hurricane hit, shutting down production.

"Joanne and Paul were the only people on the set who took advantage of that hurricane," Ritt said. "They holed up for five days and nights. How can one man, even Paul Newman, fuck so much? At one point you'd think he'd come up for a breath of fresh air. No, not that one."

After the hurricane passed over, another hurricane descended in the form of Shelley Winters, Paul's friend and confidante from the Actors Studio. She'd heard that her new husband, Tony, was "balling some of the southern belles," and she wanted to investigate personally.

Shelley Winters, Tony Franciosa
Invitation to a three-way

The first person she encountered was Ritt himself. "You bloody cocksucker," she greeted him. "You promised me that Lee Remick role." Ritt fled back to his own trailer to escape Shelley's fury.

As always, Shelley bonded with Paul. "Lee Remick thinks she's hot shit because she's fucking a Kennedy. Well, I fucked Adlai Stevenson."

According to Ritt, but not confirmed by another source, Shelley at one point invited Paul to slip away with her and join her in bed with Tony. "You must be getting tired of all that southern poontang." During their marriage, Shelley and Tony became known for inviting a beautiful woman or a handsome young man into their bed.

"You did all right joining Marlon and me," Shelley reminded Paul. "Tony's an even better lover."

Paul turned down her invitation, though assuring her that Tony was "one cute guy."

Welles, however, was not impressed with Tony. He asked Shelley, "Why did you marry this string of linguine?"

"It's not linguine," she said. "More like an Italian salami."

It took five days to shoot the barn-burning scene. There was even a scene of a posse chasing a white man for a change. After the last week in November of 1957, Ritt wrapped the film, after congratulating the entire cast, including Welles himself.

When Paul flew out of New Orleans, he was unaware of how importantly the director would factor into his later career. Nor did he know that he'd work again one day with screenwriters Ravetch and Frank.

Embracing him, Ritt assured Paul that his reviews would be terrific, and so they were. Time called Paul's performance "as mean and keen as a crackle-edged scythe." Bosley Crowther, writing in The New York Times, found that "behind Paul's hard blue eyes lay the deceptions of a neo-Huey Long." Variety claimed that Paul slipped "into a cracker slouch with professional ease."

Paul would not win an Oscar for his performance as Ben Quick, but he did walk away with the Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival on the French Riviera.

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After months, even years, of agonizing over a divorce, the problem was solved for Paul at the completion of The Long, Hot Summer. Jackie finally came to realize that she'd lost Paul forever and filed for the divorce herself.

Sweating out a long hot summer
Arriving with a bag of tricks

Hollywood gossips had salivated, waiting for messy details and embarrassing revelations. Most of the gossip mavens of the day, including Hedda Hopper, were aware that Paul led a double life. Laws of libel had prevented them from writing about Paul's secret life.

But if Paul, along with his numerous affairs with both men and women, had been exposed as part of a courtroom hearing, the "Tabloid Teddies and Tillies" would have been free to blast Paul with "Second Coming" headlines. Undoubtedly, this expose would have destroyed his promising career.

Jackie made few demands, caused little fuss, and seemed to want to make a divorce from Paul as easy as possible. She reportedly told a friend, "The secret's out. When that Mississippi film is released, the whole world will see my husband making love to Joanne Woodward."

Paul flew alone from New Orleans to Mexico where the divorce would be granted.

"Jackie Witte was married to Paul for years; she fucked him; she bore him three children. Like the gentleman he was, he paid up." Those comments came from Jerry Wald, the producer of The Long, Hot Summer.

The divorce of Paul and Jackie remains shrouded in mystery even today. Jackie retained custody of their three children. Reportedly, she received a "lifelong financial settlement." The terms were apparently satisfactory to her, and she never again took Paul to court or challenged the terms of the settlement.

Paul was granted rights to visit with his children on weekends and in summer. Because of his incredibly busy schedule making films, he would not always be available to take advantage of those rights.

Years later, he said, "My children never lost the pain of my divorce from Jackie, especially Scott. He was older and seemed to almost hate me for deserting his mother. Joanne turned out to be a good mother, not only to the children we had together, but to the ready-made family I brought into our marriage."

As a new year, 1958, rolled around, Paul at long last was a free man. He could marry Joanne, a dream he'd

cherished for so long.

But Janice Rule claimed that Paul, after a night of heavy drinking, called her. "Now that I can marry anybody I want to, I suddenly don't want to marry anybody, with the possible exception of you. I want to be free."

"You're just getting cold feet," she said. "It happens to the best of us."

In the morning Janice proved to be right. He went ahead with his long stalled plans to marry Joanne. "But I'll carry the guilt of abandoning my wife and family until the day I die. If one's happiness is based on causing unhappiness to others, how solid can that relationship be?"

"I think I'll wake up one day and regret I ever married Joanne, like I feel now about having married Jackie," he predicted. "I don't think I'll be a great father. If she's to stay married to me, she's going to have to be a very understanding wife and overlook a lot of my crap. I know well-meaning friends will come to her in the future with tall tales about me. If our marriage is going to work, she's going to have to keep me on a very long leash. I'm one of those selfish dogs. Every time I see a fire hydrant, I want to piss on it."

In the short time leading up to his second marriage, Paul, from all reports, decided to stage a last hurrah. He began to date another woman, a stunning blonde from the Southwest, perhaps Arizona. Her identity isn't known, but she towered at least six inches over him. And Lita Milan was about to enter his life.

Sal Mineo still had him staked out, and Tony Perkins had become a permanent fixture. Marilyn, on the rare occasion that he saw her, was a sometimes thing.

Sandra Dee, on learning of Paul's upcoming marriage to Joanne, went public with her disdain for Paul's choice of an upcoming wife.

"I hate Joanne Woodward," she dared tell the press. "How could any man as good-looking as Mr. Newman stoop so low as to hang out with a Georgia woman like that. You know what I call Miss Woodward? Bessie."

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While The Long, Hot Summer was being edited at Warner Brothers, Paul and Joanne signed a contract to appear in a teleplay together, The 80-Yard Run, a Playhouse 90 Production. The 90-minute drama was adapted for TV by David Shaw from a short story by his celebrated brother, the novelist Irwin Shaw.

Aired on January 16, 1958, the show also starred Richard Anderson, who had played Joanne's boyfriend in The Long, Hot Summer. Once again, Anderson was cast as Paul's love rival.

Paul's Mystery Blonde from Arizona
A last hurrah before marriage

Darryl Hickman, a well-known actor in the 1950s, was also cast in the drama. He was the child star of the 1930s and 40s, trying to jump-start his career after he'd dropped out of Hollywood to enter a monastery, but decided that the life of a monk was not for him.

Evoking in some small way the character of Brick that Paul would soon play in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, he was cast as Christian Darling, a former college football star reliving his glory days when he scored a legendary 80-yard run in the 1920s.

That achievement had won him his 15 minutes of fame. But after the crash of 1929, he finds himself unemployed, broke, and turning to the bottle.

In contrast, his wife, Louise Darling, as played by Joanne, is a fast-rising star on a fashion magazine.

After a whirlwind teenage romance, Paul's character finds his marriage disappointing and coming apart. In some ways, the character conjured up his failed marriage to Jackie Witte, which had just ended.

Franklin Schaffner, the director, shot some sequences at the UCLA football stadium. At the end of the shoot, Schaffner had only high praise for Paul. At the time of his working with Paul, his great hit, Planet of the Apes, lay in his future. Paul claimed that Schaffner was "one of the most creative minds in early television."

Joanne, never one to suppress an opinion, found the script "dramatically weak," suggesting the teleplay might have been acted out in just 30 minutes. Yet some TV critics claimed that Paul gave his best performance to date as the fallen football hero. The teleplay must have evoked memories of his own attempt to become "Saturday's Hero" in front of adoring football fans back in Shaker Heights.

Quick to capitalize off an opportunity, executives at Fox purchased a commercial during the airing of the teleplay, hawking The Long, Hot Summer with joint appearances by Paul and Joanne.

Once hailed as the Golden Boy of live television in the 1950s, Paul was starring for the last time in a live TV drama. In the future, he'd often appear in dramas or comedies on TV, but these would be re-runs of his movies.

The teleplay had a typically 50s ending, as Paul redeems himself and takes a modest job as a football coach at his own alma mater. Joanne abandons her life as an overachiever and gives up her promising career to join "the man she loves." This teleplay was broadcast years before the launch of women's liberation.

Paul & Joanne in an 80-Yard Run
Last Call as TV's Golden Boy

The host of Playhouse 90 was veteran actor Mickey Rooney, once the world's box office champion. When he'd been thirty, he'd evoked Golden Age Hollywood. Both Paul and Joanne admired Rooney as one of the most talented stars to ever grace the screen. But at the time they met him, Rooney and his career were in an inevitable decline. He was trying to bring back his heyday of the Andy Hardy films by shooting Andy Hardy Comes Home, a box office failure. One critic noted, "This latest Andy Hardy film is too bland to even be considered camp."

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After more than five years, the ricochet romance of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward ended in marriage. The date was January 29, 1958. Uncharacteristically for them, they chose glitzy Las Vegas as the venue, marrying at Hotel El Rancho, not far from the gambling tables.

Only three days before, Paul had turned a ripe thirty-three although he didn't look it. Joanne was still twenty-seven, with another birthday staring her in the face.

In front of a Nevada judge, they at long last became man and wife. Paul designated Stewart Stern as his best man, with Joanne anointing Ina Bernstein, her manager, as maid of honor. Entertainers from the casino hotel witnessed the marriage. They included Sophie Tucker, comedian Joe E. Lewis, and singer Eydie Gorme, who had married another singer, Steve Lawrence, only the month before. At the end of the ceremony, Sophie, "the last of the red hot mammas," stepped up in front of Paul and said, "Lay one on me, big boy, and make it a wet one."

A publicist at Joanne's studio falsely claimed that the couple had fallen in love while shooting the teleplay, The 80-Yard Run. In Hollywood, after reading that piece of fluff, a jealous Joan Crawford pronounced it "pure bullshit. And to think the bitch that got him was named after me. He'd be better off sticking with the real thing."

Deserting Las Vegas, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Newman flew to New York where they checked into a small hotel in Greenwich Village for a few days. They were seen in coffeehouses, and Paul, often without Joanne, hit a few bars for mugs of cold beer.

On a number of occasions, his good looks brought some whistles from gay men as he walked down the street. One antique dealer claimed Paul bought a small wooden chest from him. "His eyes are really blue," he said. "The bluest I have ever seen. He might convert me. Up to now, I always went for boys with brown eyes."

Rod Steiger told friends at the Actors Studio, "It's about time they got married. You can't spend the rest of your

life slipping in and out of hotel rooms, although in Paul's case I'll bet he continues to do just that."

Flying to London for the final stage of their honeymoon, Joanne and Paul joined Gore Vidal and Howard Austen. "All four of them should have gotten married," remarked one British journalist. "What a friendly quartet they are, and we must not speculate any more than that."

What only a few close friends in Hollywood were privy to, and what the British press didn't know, was that Joanne was four months pregnant as she began her honeymoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Newman were registered at the prestigious Connaught Hotel. With Gore as their guide, they set out to explore London. "I got my education from Gore," Paul later said. "He knew everything about everything. He made Hampton Court come alive for me with all sorts of juicy tidbits about scandals from yesterday. He is the best tour guide in the world, especially when it came to court intrigue."

After that, Joanne and Paul rented a car to explore some of the English countryside. The honeymooners returned to London to stay with Howard and Gore at a mews house on Chesham Place. A spooky English butler named "Tattersall" was there to assist them. Joanne thought he looked like "he just stepped out of a Dickensian novel." Paul said, "at least he's not named Jeeves."

On February 20, a letter arrived for Gore from his mother, Nina Vidal. In that letter she attacked Howard as a "faggot Jew," and blamed Gore for all the troubles in her life. Before his glittering guests arrived from the theater world, Gore sat down and wrote his mother a letter in response. "I'll never see you again as long as you live." He was a man of his word.

The letter from Nina was unknown to Paul when he greeted Gore's guests, who included Kenneth Tynan, the influential and controversial theater critic.

"I had an affair with Marlon Brando," Kenneth said, "and I'd like to have one with you too. Otherwise, I have no basis to compare you two."

"What about our body of work?" Paul asked.

"That's important," Tynan said, "but I need more."

"Okay, I'll take you into the bathroom and give you a full mouth kissbut that's it," Paul said.

At that point Claire Bloom interrupted them. "You miserable fuck!" she said to Tynan before turning her back and walking away.

"I get this all the time," Tynan told Paul. "I panned her performance in Duel of Angels."

"I hope you had kind things to say about her co-star, Vivien Leigh, because I hear Larry Olivier is showing up here tonight."

"Oh, Larry," Tynan said. "He's completely harmless. Larry and I go way back, intimately so. Now let's you and I go to the bathroom for that promised kiss."

At the party Claire spent most of her time talking to Joanne. A friendship was developing.

Paul chatted briefly with Ralph Richardson, before moving on to John Gielgud, who'd been drinking.

"I hear that in the film, Gigi, Louis Jourdan, that divine Frenchman, shows an impressive package in tight pants," the distinguished actor said. "I'm dying to see the movie. What's your opinion about actors showing package on camera or on the stage?"

"I think it definitely detracts from the performance," Paul said. "Surely, as an actor, you wouldn't want to do that."

"As an actor, I don't have much package to show."

A tap on his shoulder and Paul turned around to stare into one of the most famous faces in the theater, Laurence Olivier himself. Directing him to a quiet corner of the room, Olivier and Paul bonded as intimately as did Joanne with Claire Bloom.

Somehow, through the grapevine, Olivier seemed to know about Paul's secret involvement with Marilyn Monroe, and he wanted to exchange opinions about the blonde bombshell. The stately actor had completed The Prince and the Showgirl with Monroe.

"The press has gone into great detail about my involvement with Miss Monroe," Olivier said, "so I won't bore you with a rehash. She is clearly two people. Total enchantment on the one hand, horribly rude and inconsiderate on the other. She thought I was just using her for box office, and in a way she might have been right about that."

"Finally, I came to my wit's end," Olivier continued. "I was appalled at her constant lateness, her lack of professionalism, and the annoying interference from Paula Strasberg who was trying to direct her performance. At one point when she asked me for my guidance, I told her, `Just be sexy-that's all that's required of you.' It was terrible of me to say such a thing, but my poor nerves had taken their final beating. Needless to say, we did not have an affair. Vivien asked me about that."

"And just how is your fantastically talented wife?" Paul asked. "I admire her so much."

"She's in Hollywood meeting with George Cukor," Olivier said. "That reminds me. I have some news for you. George Cukor's agreed to direct the film version of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. He wants Vivien to play Maggie the Cat. Cukor has two candidates in mind to play Brick."

"Please don't keep me in any more suspense," Paul said.

"First choice, Montgomery Clift," Olivier said. "Second choice, Paul Newman."

"I always get Clift's sloppy seconds," Paul said. "At least Tennessee hasn't asked Brando to play the role."

"Vivien is very excited at the prospect," Olivier said. "She's done very well playing Southern damsels. She definitely feels a third Oscar is in order with this script. Incidentally you must promise to see her when you fly back to the coast. She wants you to take her out to dinner."

"A date with Scarlett O'Hara," Paul said. "How could I turn that down?"

"I'll give you the details," Olivier said. "She'll be expecting you."

As Olivier went to find Gore's toilet, Tynan passed by, overhearing the conversation. "It'll be more than dinner. You'll have to fuck her as well. And thanks for that open mouth. You're good, but now I want more. Do you think your dick is long enough to reach the back of my throat?"

"That's for me to know, and you to never find out," Paul said before walking away to greet Peter Ustinov. The distinguished actor shook Paul's hand and took his arm and led him over to the far end of the living room for a chat. "Have all the stately homos of the London theater been making a play for you tonight?"

"As a matter of fact, they have," Paul confessed.

"Don't worry, my child," Peter said. "You're the new kid on the block. These lads have had Richard Burton and all the others. They are starved for fresh meat from America. If you're interested, Tynan gives the best blow-jobs, but Olivier is better at taking it up the ass. Forget Gielgud. He'll demand that you come three times before removing your penis from his devouring lips."

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Joanne's pregnancy had not been noticed by anybody, with the possible exception of Claire Bloom. One night Paul and Joanne had gone to The Salisbury, the original gin palace, a pub near Leicester Square that attracted English stage stars. The travel writer, Stanley Haggart, had written, "In its cutglass mirrors you can see reflected the Olivier of yesterday and of tomorrow."

After arriving back at the Chesham Place house, Joanne began to complain of stomach pains. Gore summoned a doctor to the house, who told Paul that his new wife was in the process of a miscarriage.

Transferred to St. George's Hospital, Joanne lost her child with Paul, but remained in the hospital to recover from the ordeal.

Very reluctantly, Paul had to leave her side and fly back to Hollywood to begin work on a picture. Gore and Howard were due in New York, and they too had to tell her good-bye.

Feeling abandoned, Joanne was delighted when her new friend, Claire Bloom, came to call on her every day and bring flowers. As Fred Kaplan related in his biography of Gore, "It was a terrible end to a lovely honeymoon."

When Paul returned to Hollywood by himself, it was speculated that his marriage had ended in disaster before it had even begun.

Claire Bloom had a private reason to be sympathetic to Joanne's plight. After the actress and her lover, Rod Steiger, a friend of both Paul and Joanne, had returned to New York from a vacation in Sicily, she found herself two months pregnant. Ever the gentleman, Steiger offered to marry her, the ceremony taking place in the office of the sheriff at Malibu. Unlike Joanne, Claire carried her pregnancy to term giving birth to a daughter, Anna.

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Paul had already played Billy the Kid in Gore Vidal's teleplay. Retitled The Left Handed Gun, Gore had crafted it as a sort of Greek tragedy, with modern overtones, into a full-length film script.

Arthur Penn, a young Turk from TV land, had already directed Paul in Hemingway's The Battler for TV. Both Penn and producer Fred Coe had also husbanded Paul through Gore's original teleplay of Billy the Kid.

Claire Bloom
And Steiger's baby makes three

Penn was given a modest budget of $700,000, and he was ordered to shoot the film in only twenty-three days.

For the setting of the town of Medaro, and to trim costs, he used old sets from the 1939 epic, Juarez, which had starred Bette Davis and Paul Muni.

Anxious to make good in his first feature film, Penn rode the cast without mercy. Paul admitted to Gore that he felt "disconnected" from the character of Billy the Kid in this revi sion of the original teleplay. He was, in essence, shooting a different script.

For months, Gore and Paul had struggled to get a studio to agree to make the movie, finally receiving the green light from Warners. Amazingly, the studio was holding out for a happy ending. "That's like filming The Saga of Abraham Lincoln, having him skip his date with destiny at the Ford Theater, divorce Mary Todd Lincoln, and ride on off into the sunset in Kentucky with his all-time love, Joshua Fry Speed," Paul said.

The brass at Warners didn't like the implicit homosexuality they found in the original version of Billy the Kid by Gore. "When movie-goers hear that Newman is playing a fag cowboy, they'll stay away in droves," predicted Jack Warner.

Paul didn't seem to have a struggle playing gay. As a liberal, he'd always taken a stand for homosexual rights, claiming, "Ever since I was a kid, I've never been able to understand attacks on the gay community."

Even its title, The Left Handed Gun, carried a double meaning. In some parts of America decades ago, left handed was a code word for being gay. The young gunslinger was actually right handed.

Leslie A. Stevens III, a playwright working on his first feature film, was called in to adapt Gore's original script. He shifted the plot from a repressed homosexual intrigue into more of a surrogate father-son drama, muting the Freudian subtext before its final release into movie houses. In Stevens' version, Billy is depicted as "half boy, half man," coming to regard rancher Tunstall (as played by Colin Keith-Johnson) as a father figure. The "half man" part of Paul's character gets to deliver "the cojones" line of the movie. "I don't run. I don't hide. I go where I want. I do what I want."

A Navy brat, born in Washington D.C., Stevens would, in time, create the cult TV series, The Outer Limits (1963-1965).

Paul as Billy the Kid
"Playing Gore Vidal's fag cowboy"

In his playful way, Paul nicknamed Stevens' script, The Left Handed Jockstrap. The adult Western was filmed on location in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which involved another separation from Joanne, with many more such absences to come in the future, one lasting six months.

"Anybody can have an ideal marriage," Laurence Harvey, a future costar of Paul's in The Outrage, one remarked. "That is, if they remain separated for most of the year. It worked for me."

Penn later claimed that Paul "Method acted his way through the entire film." At one point Paul curls up into a ball on the floor, a scene and acting style that Penn found "pure James Dean." In an ironic twist, Dean had once expressed an interest in starring in a possible film version of Billy the Kid.

"Through it all," Paul confided to Fred Coe, "I feel Dean could have done a better job than me in this film. That thought is driving me crazy. Tonight I'll have to have six extra beers."

One reason Paul wanted to make good in this film was financial. Still drawing that $1,000 a week salary from Warners, he also for the first time stood to collect 14 percent of the profits.

Penn turned out to be a clever, even experimental director, creating a black-and-white movie that was cutting-edge, at one point employing slow motion and vision blur in a death scene.

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In The Left Handed Gun, Hurd Hatfield was cast as "Multrie," a journalist and a sort of mysterious commentator remarking on the events taking place. His character seems to interpret Billy the Kid as a "star outlaw," an antihero with the power to enchant movie-goers.

Hurd disliked his role, finding his character an epicene figure holding a handkerchief to his nose. "It's obvious that I'm in love with Billy the Kid," he later said.

Meeting Paul for the first time, Hurd came up to him and shook his hand. "You should have been cast as Dorian Gray, not me," said the New York actor. "I never thought of myself as a great beauty, and I still don't know why I got the part. But with your baby blues and that Roman coin profile, you would have been sensational."

Hurd was talking about his infamous appearance as the star of The Picture of Dorian Gray (1945), the film version of Oscar Wilde's novel. The role made him a star, not his portrayal of a Chinese peasant, along with Katharine Hepburn, in the forgettable Dragon Seed, his first film, in 1944.

"I've spent the rest of my life regretting accepting that Dorian role," Hurd claimed.

"I thought you were splendid in the picture," Paul assured him. "Why the regrets?"

"It's hard to explain," he said. "I became very unpopular in Hollywood after making the film. I guess the picture was too weird, a bit avant garde for its time. All that decadence. It's obvious that I was playing a bisexual, actually a homosexual. Suddenly, after the film was released, no one would return my calls. I was a leper in Hollywood. You should be thankful they've removed the gay aspects from Billy the Kid, or at least tried to. Whatever you do in your future career, don't play gay. It will destroy your image."

Fred Coe, the producer, always claimed that Hurd and Paul had a brief fling during the filming of Billy the Kid. He is the only source for that, even though he claimed that Hurd admitted it directly to him. Neither Hurd nor Paul, nor any other cast members, have spoken out on the subject. Coe was a man of truth and integrity, not given to exaggerations or lies. He was possibly telling the truth.

If the two handsome men did have a brief affair, as was rumored, it was only a passing thing, having little importance other than relief of a temporary passion.

"They were two good-looking guys," Coe said. "Paul was bisexual and Hurd was completely gay. When two forces like that come together, it's not surprising something came of it. Hurd was seen on occasion coming and going from Paul's dressing room. I hope those two had a good time."

Both Paul and Hurd had a bond between them. Each of them maintained a handsome and relatively youthful appearance well into their seventies. Hurd said it was because, "I don't drink; I don't smoke, and I exercise every day." Paul said he maintained his looks because "I drink and I exercise every day."

In the years ahead, and on the few times Hurd and Paul would encounter each other, each actor checked out the other's face. "My God, you haven't changed a bit." That line was almost a joint refrain the two men exchanged. They would joke about the portrait each of them had hiding in the attic, a reference to Wilde's Dorian Gray.

"Oh, God," Paul told Hurd, "let that portrait get as many wrinkles as it wants to, but keep them away from my face."

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The sultry, even fiery, Lita Milan was cast as Celsa in The Left Handed Gun. Coe felt that in the movie Billy the Kid, the hero had hung out with too many cowpokes, and Lita's character was created for a diversionary romance, even though Celsa in the film is already married to a goodnatured locksmith (Martin Garralga).

Hurd Hatfield
"I hate Dorian Gray."

The daughter of a Polish homemaker and a Hungarian fur salesman in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, and originally named Iris Lia Menshell, Lita shot like a rocket into the film world of the mid-1950s before disappearing forever.

A wild and lovely young woman, she had a smoldering beauty. "She drew men to her like moths to a flame," said Fred Coe. "One of those moths was Newman himself. He showed that even though he was just launching a married life once again, he had no intention of staying faithful to Joanne. It was obvious that he did not want to be trapped into a monogamous relationship. Let's face it: He fucked everybody during his first marriage. How could such a hot, desirable guy reform overnight? He didn't want to feel trapped."

Lita had been a Las Vegas showgirl and model before getting cast as a spitfire senorita in The Ride Back in 1957.

In any biographical sketch of Lita, there appears this line: "She had a passionate affair with Paul Newman during the filming of The Left Handed Gun." Unlike some of his affairs, Paul did not share details of this short-lived romance with Lita to his confidants. Perhaps he felt embarrassed to do so because the fan magazines were filled with glowing tributes to his marriage to Joanne.

On the set, Lita amused both Paul and Coe with stories of the road she traveled on her way to Hollywood. "I dreamed of being a movie star," she said. "But my parents back in Brooklyn were dead set against it. I got as far as Las Vegas, where I ended up playing a slave girl in Shan Varr's revue at the Thunderbird. He's that East Indian dancer."

Along the way to her horizon, there was an encounter with Ralph Meeker, Paul's rival from Picnic, and a run-in with Kirk Douglas, Paul's friend.

Sultry Lita Milan in THE LEFT HANDED GUN

Left photo: **Lita Milan** rolling in the Hay with **Paul** both on and off the screen

Insert: Would-be Dominican dictator **Ramfis Trujillo** with **Lita**, his *esposa*

Right photo: Billy the Kid's *puta* and "**The Evita of the Caribbean**"

Along with 14 other beautiful actresses, Lita had been chosen as a WAMPAS Baby Star of 1956. She was pictured in a magazine getting advice from Ginger Rogers. Paul asked her, "Exactly what kind of advice did Ginger give you?"

"She told me to fuck my way up the Hollywood ladder," she said. "That, she said, would virtually guarantee my success."

After the shoot, Paul apparently never saw Lita again.

One afternoon he agreed to meet Steve McQueen at a cheap hotel in Long Beach. Inside the sweaty bedroom, where a Bible rested on a night stand, Steve told Paul, "I've got every horny woman in Hollywood trying to get me to fuck her. I'm only one man. I need a break, a different kind of action now and then. You're the kind of change I have in mind."

During the course of the night, Steve confessed that he was involved in a torrid affair. "She has that peasant girl kind of beauty. In bed, we sizzle like steaks on the grill." He called such encounters "fuck flings."

"What's the name of this sugartit?" Paul asked. "Sounds like I'd go for her myself."

"Lita Milan," he said.

Paul was stunned, but masked his surprise.

Lita and Steve were filming Never Love a Stranger at that time.

He told Paul, "When I check into some seedy hotel room, and there's a red neon light flashing outside the window all night, my dick grows an inch or two."

"Is that why you had me meet you at this dump?" Paul asked. "And exactly what is that fucking neon red sign advertising."

"Chinese take-out."

In only a short time, after she met Ramfis Trujillo, Lita would abruptly drop both Paul and Steve. Ramfis was the dashingly handsome son of the dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo y Molina. She was introduced to Ramfis at the Mocambo when she went out one night with Zsa Zsa Gabor, Porfirio Rubirosa, and Kim Novak.

Her torrid romance with Ramfis led to marriage and the abandonment of her movie career. After the assassination of the dictator Trujillo in 1961, Ramfis tried to seize power in the D.R. But, along with Lita, he was forced to flee the country, going into exile in Madrid. There went Lita's dream of becoming "the Evita Peron of the Caribbean."

The darling of the yellow tabloid press in Madrid, rivaling the coverage ofAva Gardner, Lita lived with Ramfis until his death in 1969, following complications from a car accident.

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In its bastardized, watered-down version, with bad editing, The Left Handed Gun opened in New York on May 7, 1958, to disappointing box office.

Film critics were waiting with poison pens. The reviews were devastating, as New York writers didn't know what to make of "these television boys venturing into feature films." The reference was to Fred Coe and Arthur Penn. "Poor Mr. Newman," wrote Howard Thompson in The New York Times. "He seems to be auditioning alternately for the Moscow Arts Theater and Grand Old Opry, as he ambles about, grinning and mumbling endlessly."

One radio reviewer was particularly venomous. "For this type of role," he claimed over the air, "We need to resurrect James Dean from his grave. Maybe Marlon Brando could have pulled it off, certainly not little Paul Newman. A midget off screen, a midget on screen."

Not every critic attacked the film. Writing for Time Out, Tom Milne called it, "A key stage in the development of the Western."

In spite of its initial box office failure, Paul, in later years, spoke kindly about the film, calling it "way ahead of its time and still a classic in France." Gore himself continued to be disappointed at the way his script had been butchered and rewritten. He called it "a movie that only someone like the French could praise."

Even though he and Paul remained friends, Gore still expressed his resentment of the way Paul handled the film when he wrote his autobiography, Palimpsest. "Paul, no tower of strength in these matters, allowed the hijacking to take place." He was referring to Penn's ordering a rewrite of his script, as Paul stood by, not uttering a word of protest.

Sometime during the 1970s, John Calley became head of production at Warners. He'd been intrigued by the critical reappraisals of The Left Handed Gun, particularly of Penn's own assessment that if his original version had not been edited so poorly, The Left Handed Gun would rank right up there with Gary Cooper's High Noon.

He called Penn and asked him to re-edit The Left Handed Gun into the original version he had wanted. But when a search was made in the archives at Warners, it was discovered that the unused footage had been junked.

Hollywood's fascination for sagas about the American West continued. As late as 1989, Val Kilmer would star in an all-new interpretation entitled Gore Vidal's Billy the Kid. Of the fifty or so films made about the life of this psychotic gunslinger, Kilmer's was the most accurate in adhering to the actual events in The Kid's life-a greater, more artful, and more historically accurate depiction than either of Paul's previous interpretations on television and on the big screen.

Ironically, in the wake of Paul's second attempt to play Billy, Marlon Brando would star in One-Eyed Jacks in 1961, his character also based on the notorious Kid.

"The Mark of Zorro is indeed on me," Paul said upon seeing One Eyed Jacks. "I can't escape the curse of Brando. My wife even had to go make a film with him. Don't get me wrong, I love Brando dearly. When he calls me, I come running. Even after all this time, I still find him mesmerizing. But there are times on a bad hair day when I think I will always live in his shadow."

Arthur Penn once said, "Some day, film historians will have to judge The Left Handed Gun on its own merits."

That judgment came down in 2004, when film critic David Thomson wrote of Paul's portrait of Billy the Kid as "the intellectual's noble savage."

Otherwise, Thomson was skeptical of Paul's "blue-eyed likability. He seems to me an uneasy, self-regarding personality, as if handsomeness had left him guilty. As a result, he was more mannered than Brando when young, while his smirking good humor always seemed more appropriate to glossy advertisements than to good movies."

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After purchasing the film rights for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, MetroGoldwyn-Mayer considered George Cukor as its possible director. But from the beginning, there were problems with the script. The explosive Tennessee Williams drama about a neurotic Southern family dynasty had enthralled Broadway audiences with its homoerotic subtext. Nonetheless, the studio felt it had to "laundry" this Pulitzer Prize-winning drama before it "went out to be viewed by every little homophobic town in America."

At first, the film's producer, Lawrence Weingarten, felt that Cukor might know how to make the script acceptable to mass audiences, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the director's own homosexuality.

The director was initially intrigued by the project, thinking it might be the proper vehicle to lure Vivien Leigh back to the screen. She was obviously too old to play Maggie the Cat, but Cukor was persistent in his choice of a star. Ever since he'd cast her as Scarlett O'Hara in Gone With the Wind, he'd always wanted to work with her again, but never had the chance.

When Paul returned to Hollywood after his honeymoon in London, Cukor invited him to dinner to meet Vivien Leigh, although he had not been actually signed to play Brick, the drama's protagonist/hero.

Paul seemed near the top of the casting line-up, but there were other considerations. He'd heard that Montgomery Clift had turned it down because he did not want to play a character who was a closeted homosexual. "Too close to home," Monty told his brother Brooks.

In a red dress and with a minimum of makeup, Vivien seemed to cast a spell of enchantment over the night. He found in her fragile voice a combination of flirtatious Scarlett O'Hara and a doomed Blanche DuBois.

"My enemies claim I'm washed up in Hollywood," she said. "Not at all. I've been waiting for the right script to lure me back. I've always thought of myself as a stage actress, but I've done all right in films as well."

"All right?" he answered. "Two Oscars and countless great roles. I'd say that was more than just `all right.'"

"You're such a darling man," she said. "I must taste you before the night ends."

"Taste me?" he asked puzzled. "You mean taste as in sampling caviar."

"That's Vivien's way of saying she plans to seduce you before the rooster crows," Cukor said.

As the trio settled in for a talk about how to bring Cat from the Broadway stage to the big screen, Paul noticed that Vivien was visibly shaking. She reached for Cukor's hand. "Oh, dear heart," she told him, "I'm terrified of taking on such a challenging part." She turned her focus to Paul. "As George knows, I get exhausted at times. There are spells of depression that descend. I call them ghosties. When I'm both tired and depressed, I'm a mess. I felt I must warn you."

"I think we can see it through," he said, reaching for her other hand.

"You give me such comfort," she said.

"I never got a chance to direct Vivien," Cukor said. "Here's my chance. It may never come again."

"You can be my Rhett Butler," Vivien told Paul.

"I've always thought of myself as more the Ashley Wilkes type," he said.

She paused for a moment of reflection. "I think you're right. Brick is more Ashley than that God-awful Rhett. You are Ashley. On second thought, you are Ashley with none of the brute qualities of Rhett. After all, Ashley was the love of Scarlett's life."

Vivien Leigh
"Did Larry have you first?"

"I've always wanted to ask you a question," he said. "May I?"

"Not a Scarlett question," she said, with a mild protest. "I positively loathe talking about Gone With the Wind."

"It's something else," he said. "Did you resent Marilyn when she took over your role in The Prince and the Showgirl? I know you did the part on the stage."

"Not at all," she said. "I never viewed Marilyn as a threat. As for a possible affair with Larry, it was out of the question. Poor Larry wouldn't know what to do with a woman like that. I decided during the shoot that if anybody was going to seduce Marilyn, it would be me."

"You and Larry seem to have the kind of marriage I had hoped for," Paul said. "But I fear Joanne is the jealous type."

"Regardless of how many lovers I take on, I've always remained under the spell of Larry Boy," she said. "But sometimes it causes a problem. If I bring a boy home, it's not certain whether he'll sleep with me or with Larry. This pattern of behavior began when I brought Marlon home when we were filming A Streetcar Named Desire. Larry wanted Marlon first."

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Shortly before dawn, Paul woke up in Cukor's guest bedroom. He reached for Vivien, but found the space in bed beside him empty. He switched on the lamp on the nightstand, its light casting a forgiving glow across the room.

Standing nude at the window overlooking the pool, she glanced back at him. "The night is such a thing of terror for me. Thank you for sharing it with me. You keep the ghosties away. They follow me everywhere, even

across the ocean to America. Darling, I have to ask you something."

"Fire away," he said.

"What a quaint American expression," she said. "So militaristic." She walked over and reclaimed her flimsy nightgown which had been draped across an armchair. "When you were fucking me, did you think of me or did images of Scarlett race through your head?"

George Cukor
A question of homosexuality

"I cannot tell a lie," he said. "I thought of Scarlett. But you were Scarlett. I was thinking of you."

"The key word there is were," she said.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I couldn't erase that image from my mind."

"No man ever can," she said, "especially American men. I have an apology to make to you as well. When you brought me to that divine climax, I apologize for screaming out Larry's name."

***

In the week that followed, Pandro S. Berman was brought in for the debate over the film script of Cat. During his tenure as chief at RKO, he'd overseen Cukor's cross-gendered allegory, Sylvia Scarlett, starring Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn. It had been a box office disaster, so Berman immediately took a dim view of having Cukor direct the Tennessee Williams play.

Berman told Lawrence Weingarten that if he weren't careful, Cukor would turn Cat into "a fag piece."

Berman became exasperated when Cukor announced to the press that the movie, like the play, would have to deal up front with the issue of homosexuality.

"Who in hell does this queer think he is?" Berman asked Weingarten. "We're not allowed to even mention the word homosexual in a movie. What does Cukor want? A flashback, showing Brick sucking off Skipper in their football heyday. Fire Cukor!"

The battle heated up between Cukor and MGM. Finally, the director withdrew. He told Louella Parsons, still the reigning gossip maven, that he could not maintain the integrity of Williams' play because of the censorship being

imposed on its film adaptation. "I am not sure the public will like this play or understand it," Cukor said. "But I just couldn't do an emasculated version, and I don't see how the movie itself could be properly presented."

With Cukor off the picture, so went the casting of Vivien. Weeks later, after it was announced in the papers that Elizabeth Taylor would be starring as Maggie the Cat, Vivien placed a call to Paul. "Elizabeth replaced me in Elephant Walk, so why not Cat on a Hot Tin Roof?" she said.

"No one could ever replace you," he said. "You're an original."

"You were so nice to send those flowers over to me the following morning," she said. "So many men I pick up-gardeners, garage mechanics, whomever just give me a pat on the ass the next morning and say, `Thanks for the memory, Scarlett. '"

***

For their living quarters, the newly married Paul and Joanne initially rented a house in Laurel Canyon in Hollywood. They also rented an apartment in the East 80s in Manhattan. "We're East Coast folks," Paul told a reporter.

His three children occasionally visited Paul and "Auntie Joanne." When Scott arrived at the Laurel Canyon house, he expressed his disappointment when he found they had no swimming pool. "I thought all movie stars had pools," he said.

Paul told him, "We're not movie stars, we're actors."

At this point in their lives, the Newmans were still pinched for money. Paul continued to draw his $1,000 a week salary from Warners, but a lot of that went for child support and alimony payments to Jackie. Joanne was taking home only $500 a week before taxes.

In just a few short months, Jackie herself arrived with her children in Los Angeles, eventually settling into a modest house in San Fernando Valley. Once, when Paul came to pick up the kids, Scott angrily confronted him. "You should never have left my mother to marry some whore."

When news reached the Newman household that Joanne had been nominated for an Oscar for The Three Faces ofEve, Joanne didn't seem impressed. She showed a lack of respect for the Academy of Arts and Sciences, suggesting to the press that many factors went into deciding who got the Oscar. "It's so rarely based on who gave the best performance," she claimed.

On Oscar night, 1958, as a side show to the more compelling drama associated with the Best Actress award, Paul and Joanne were asked to present a minor award, that of Best Editing. After the envelope was opened, the prize went to Peter Taylor for his work on The Bridge on the River Kwai.

The tension built as the evening progressed. Joanne was up against some formidable competition. She faced Elizabeth Taylor in Raintree County, Anna Magnani in Wild Is the Wind, Lana Turner in Peyton Place, and Deborah Kerr in Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison.

When her name was finally read, she forgot all about her bad-mouthing of the Academy, as she rushed to the stage to accept her Oscar from John Wayne. She burst into tears of joy, telling millions of people that, "I've waited for this moment since I was nine years old."

Oscar Night:
John Wayne and Joanne
"The Last of the Great Broads"

Still nursing her crush on Paul, a cynical Joan Crawford sat in the audience, an aging relic of Hollywood's Golden Age. Once she'd attacked Marilyn Monroe's wardrobe. Now she turned her fury onto Joanne, claiming that "she's set back Hollywood glamour twenty years by making her own dress." She was referring to Joanne's homespun creation in green satin and velvet.

Privately, Joan told friends, "For the life of me, I can't see what Newman sees in that Woodward creature. He could be shacked up with some of the biggest names in Hollywood. I'm sure Ava Gardner or Lana Turner would go for him. But, no, he prefers this Georgia redneck and her feedsack dress."

After seeing the movie, its original inspiration, Christine Costner Sizemore, writing in her 1977 autobiography, I'm Eve, revealed that she had 26 multiple personalities, not just three. She also charged that Dr. Corbett Thigpen, the author of The Three Faces ofEve, had forced her to sign over all rights to her story. "As a result, I received nothing from either the book or the Woodward film."

The day after Joanne received her Oscar, Paul received a call from Susan Hayward. "You dirty, rotten, cocksucking son of a bitch," she said into the phone. "You tricked me. You wanted the part for your ugly little girlfriend." She slammed down the receiver.

In the weeks that followed the Academy Award presentations, and Joanne's triumphant win over far better established stars, Hollywood insiders predicted she was headed for a glorious career in films.

That would not happen, although she'd make an occasional film, often with her husband. Ironically, many of the Newman/Woodward films would bomb at the box office.

As Crawford observed the Newman marriage as the years went by, she said, "I think he's an insecure male-very sexually confused as well-and can't stand having another big star in the family. I'll tell you what happens to insecure male movie stars. When an actor is married to a star bigger than he is, he can't get a hard-on any more. I was married to Philip Terry, and I know what I'm talking about. Take the case of Jane Wyman and Ronald Reagan. After she won her Oscar for Johnny Belinda, Reagan was so intimidated by her greater fame and talent that he couldn't get it up any more for her. Jane told me that herself when I was advising her to drop Rock Hudson because he was gay. At first she didn't believe that. The poor fool had developed this almost obsessive crush on Rock, whose heart lay elsewhere."

After that Oscar win, Paul and Joanne became the talk of Hollywood, and they would remain a hot topic of gossip and speculation for years to come.

Not only Janice Rule, but many other stars who didn't even know the Newmans, weighed in with an opinion. Paul called Joanne "The Last of the Great Broads." That caused Bette Davis to sneer. "I thought that title belonged to me."

As the marriage, launched under somewhat tawdry circumstances in Las Vegas, endured, Paul was constantly asked if he were tempted to stray. After all, he knew or had worked with some of the most desirable women on the planet. He always had a pat answer. "Why go out for hamburger when you've got steak at home?"

Crawford wasn't impressed with that response. "What a clever thing to say, but how true is it? First, I think Woodward is hamburger, not steak. As for Paul, he dines out frequently, and on the most succulent filet mignon, from what I hear."

As Paul waited for MGM to decide if he'd be cast in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, an offer came in for Joanne.

The box office receipts had been so profitable for The Long, Hot Summer that 20th Century Fox decided to revisit the Gothic Deep South. Producer Jerry Wald and director Martin Ritt once again cast Joanne, this time in William Faulkner's 1929 novel, The Sound and the Fury, which some critics considered one of the hundred greatest of the 20th century.

Screen writers Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank were hired again for another Faulkner adaptation. From their typewriters came a plodding tale of a girl seeking independence from her strict Old South family rule.

In the wake of his big screen success in The King and I in 1956, Yul Brynner was cast as the lead. Lana Turner was originally offered the third lead but turned it down because it was not a star part. The role went to British actress Margaret Leighton. Ethel Waters also signed on. The Sound and the Fury would be her last motion picture.

Lana had another reason to turn down the role. She was pursuing bigger game in the Hollywood jungle. Richard Brooks, the director of the oncoming Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, called her. "It's almost certain that you're going to play Maggie the Cat," he told the star. "We want you to come in for a reading with Paul Newman. He's one of the stars who's up for the role of Brick."

"I'd be thrilled to play Maggie the Cat," she said. "Me, Lana Turner, in a Tennessee Williams drama of the Old South. Vivien Leigh did just swell with Tennessee. I can do the same. Who would have thought it? I'd adore playing opposite that divine Paul Newman. But who is his competition? He'd be perfect for the role. Don't tell me Ben Gazzara."

She was referring to the actor who originated the role on Broadway.

"You're not going to believe this," Brooks said. "Elvis Presley."

"You've got to be kidding," said an astonished Lana. "Lana Turner and Elvis Presley starring in Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

"A distinct possibility," Brooks told her. "But you've got the billing wrong."

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Lawrence Weingarten, the producer of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, loved to dine out on stories about Old Hollywood. Born in Chicago in 1897, he would eventually win the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award, presented by Katharine Hepburn at the 46th Annual Academy Awards in 1974. Weingarten was married for many years to Thalberg's sister, Sylvia.

Weingarten was full of Hepburn and Spencer Tracy stories, since he'd produced both Pat and Mike (1952) and

Adam's Rib (1949). He told marvelous Jean Harlow stories, having produced Libeled Lady, back in 1936, months before her untimely death.

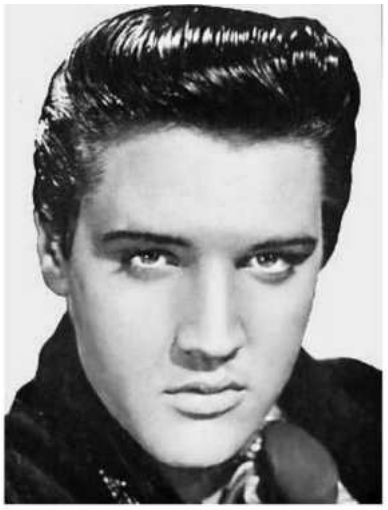
But, according to Richard Brooks, the director of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, no story rivaled Weingarten's tale about Paul Newman and Elvis Presley. Some claim the story is apocryphal, but both Brooks and Weingarten always insisted it was true.

Elvis was always trying to break away from Col. Tom Parker's influence and show that he was a bona fide actor capable of performing in high drama, even a Tennessee Williams play. "No one can play a Southern boy like Elvis Presley," the singer said. As a member of the audience, he'd seen the Broadway version of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof on three different occasions, watching Ben Gazzara perform opposite Barbara Bel Geddes as Maggie the Cat.

Elvis believed "the part has my name on it. So far, they turn the cameras on me and let me sing `Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear.'" He was referring to the 1957 movie, Loving You. "I can't go on forever shaking my butt at a group of screaming teenage gals. I want to show the world I'm a serious actor."

Without Col. Parker's permission, Elvis called Brooks and Weingarten, telling them, "I'm your Brick, and I won't even have to fake a Southern accent."

Although at the time both director and producer were considering Paul for the role, the idea of casting Elvis with Lana Turner had their eyeballs registering dollar signs at the box office.



Elvis Presley
"A piece of perversion"

After dark on Good Friday, 1958, Lana, or so it was believed by such Hollywood insiders as Frank Sinatra and Howard Hughes, had fatally stabbed her gangster lover, Johnny Stompanato, with a carving knife. The mob boy had also been the lover of Lana's best friend, Ava Gardner.

Lana's teen-aged daughter, Cheryl Crane, took the blame for the stabbing, admitting her guilt. But those in the know met the claim with scepticism. To this day, Cheryl insists that she was the one who thrust the knife into the gangster's stomach.

Unless Cheryl makes a deathbed confession, the actual truth may never be known, although various sources, including Sinatra himself, claimed that Lana confessed the murder to him. Peter Lawford, Lana's longtime friend and former lover, also made the same claim.

Far from damaging Lana's career, the notoriety surrounding the case stimulated a morbid rebirth of interest in Lana, increasing her box office clout, especially if teamed with Elvis. As Brooks himself so colorfully put it, "Elvis is the biggest thing in America since God invented baby shit."

If Elvis would make himself available, Brooks was willing to "throw Newman under the bus."

But when Col. Tom Parker heard that his breadwinner was conducting secret negotiations without him, he nearly had a stroke. "No man had a greater temper than Parker," claimed Bud Godsell, who once worked for the show business entrepreneur.

"I don't know what I'm gonna do with my boy," Parker told Godsell. "He's always trying to get cast in a drama by one of those faggot playwrights. First, Bill Inge. Now, Tennessee Williams, the biggest queer who ever walked across a Broadway stage. Now get this. Folks tell me that the character Elvis wants to play in this fucking piece of shit is a repressed homosexual. My Elvis playing a homosexual. I think at times he's trying to destroy the career I created for him."

"As long as I'm still able to smoke a cigar, there is no way in hell that my Elvis is going to appear in this piece of perversion," Parker said. "God made a man and a woman. He gave a man a dick and a bitch a hole. God's intention was to have a man stick his thing in the cunt and make babies. It was not God's intention to stick his thing up another man's ass. Assholes are made for shitting, not fucking. There is no way in hell that Elvis is going to appear in this crap."

In the end, Parker prevailed. Elvis had to bow out of the movie. The Colonel would approve of future scripts for his star, some of which included Girls! Girls! Girls! and Viva Las Vegas.

Elvis did get to team with a major star of the past when he appeared with Barbara Stanwyck in Roustabout in 1964. But even that was a disappointment to Elvis, since he'd wanted to costar with Mae West instead.

Even though Elvis was off the picture, Paul didn't know that when Elvis called him. "Hey, kid," Elvis addressed Paul, "I hear you and I have both got our hearts set on playing Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Even though Elvis called Paul a kid, Paul had actually been born ten years before the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

"May the best man win," Paul told Elvis, astonished that he was actually speaking to him on the phone.

"That would mean me," Elvis said. "Back in Memphis, guys have a way of deciding who gets the prize. I want you to come over to my house tonight, and we'll settle this shit once and for all."

"You mean duke it out?" Paul asked.

"Something like that," Elvis said. "I'll put one of my boys on the phone, and he'll fill you in on how to get here."

Paul was vastly intrigued at this bizarre invitation. "There's no way in hell I'm not going to show up," he said.

Elvis welcomed Paul into his home like a dear friend. There seemed not the slightest sense of rivalry between the two men. "I thought about one contest we could have tonight," Elvis told Paul. "We could invite Marilyn Monroe over. We'd each throw a fuck to her and let her decide who's the best man."

"That would be too easy for me," Paul said, with a smirk on his face. "You know I'd easily win that round."

"Don't be too sure, of boy," Elvis said. "Okay, then I'll come up with another game."

"What's that?"

"Later, later," Elvis said, "after we've both consumed a lot of beer. I hear you're a world-class beer drinker."

"That I am," Paul said. "But you know I'd win in any beer-drinking contest."

"You got that right," Elvis said. "I'm not that much of a soggy bottom. Let's talk a while before the fun and games. Get to know each other. I understand you used to pal around with James Dean."

"Indeed I did," Paul said. "He was one of my best friends."

"I never got to know him, but I thought he was one hell of an actor. Is it true he was homosexual?"

"I've heard reports," Paul said.

"Cut the bullshit," Elvis said. "You probably fucked him, but that's your business. I'll make a little confession. I'm about the straightest dude that ever walked the planet. But if that fucker had ever called me, I'd come running to his bed. Just to see what it was like if for no other reason. I guess you'd say I have this obsession with Dean."

"We all did, but it's time to turn the page."

If the story is to be believed, Elvis around midnight got up and invited Paul into his garden. He had been surprised earlier when he'd asked the direction of the toilet twice. "I need to piss away some of the suds," Paul said.

"Hold it for just a little bit," Elvis had urged.

Following Elvis into the moonlit garden, Paul said, "Do you mind if I piss on your flowers since your toilet must be stopped up?"

"Actually, I invited you here for a pissing contest," Elvis said. "In Tennessee when two men in a bar get into a fight over a girl, they can beat the shit out of each other. Or else go out back and see who can piss the farthest. That's why we're here now. Whoever can throw the longest arc of golden showers wins the role of Brick. Deal?"

"You're on," Paul said. "Let's whip it out. I'm raring to go."

Weingarten claimed that Paul later revealed that he won the pissing contest that night, but that Elvis was gracious in defeat. "I had the advantage," Paul said. "My dick hangs longer than his."

Paul was shocked when Weingarten told him that Col. Parker wasn't going to let Elvis do the picture. "The part is yours."

"Then why did Elvis put me through that contest? What's going on here?"

"I guess King Creole just wanted to see you take a piss."

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Even though Paul turned out to be the greater pisser, Elvis apparently was not impressed. Brooks later claimed that Elvis called him with some casting ideas of his own.

"The boy who can play Brick, other than myself, is Jack Lord," Elvis said. "He's my favorite actor in all the world. I hope you saw him in Cat on Broadway. He was far better than Ben Gazzara, and he'll be a hell of a lot better than Paul Newman. Trust Elvis on that one. Newman's quite a pisser. Say hello to him from Elvis." He put down the phone.

Eventually, in spite of Elvis's advice, Brooks cast Paul. Lana needed work and grew impatient waiting for MGM to cast her. She contracted to do another picture instead.

In a huddle in the executive offices at MGM, the "suits" decided that the perfect Maggie the Cat was already on their own lot. "Get Elizabeth Taylor on the phone," Weingarten ordered his secretary. "We'll send the flag up the pole and see if she salutes it."

Discreetly, through the studio, Lana arranged a luncheon meeting with Paul. She spoke with him briefly before setting up the rendezvous, asking that he tell no one about his meeting with her.

Over lunch at an off-the-beaten track restaurant in Laguna Beach, Lana arrived with her blonde hair concealed by a scarf and her eyes covered by a pair of large sunglasses. She was visibly shaken, and her eyes kept darting around the room as if she was expecting someone.

Over a cocktail, she confessed as to why she was being so secretive. She pointed out two men in casual sports attire dining at a nearby table, defining them as members of a 24-hour security squad paid for by Howard Hughes in the wake of Johnny Stompanato's death. Mobster Mickey Cohen, a friend of Stompanato's, never believed that Lana's daughter had stabbed his friend. He was convinced that the murderer was Lana herself. He vowed revenge.

"They're not planning to kill me," Lana said. "Cohen is plotting something worse. I received an anonymous letter. That letter writer claimed that one day when I least expect it, somebody is going to throw sulfuric acid in my face. If that day ever comes, I will commit suicide. Without my beauty, I'm ruined. I would be nothing. I wouldn't be able to face the world. I wouldn't even be able to face my own image in the mirror."

He tried to assure her as best he could that it was only an idle threat. Later he would tell Richard Brooks that Lana was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and he doubted very seriously if she could have held up under the strain of playing a difficult role like Maggie the Cat.

He advised her to drive to Palm Springs with her security guards and hole up there for a few months. "This thing will blow over," he assured her. "Some new scandal will come along, and Hollywood gossips will forget all about you and Johnny Stompanato."

She told him she couldn't retreat from Hollywood. "It's financial," she said. "I desperately need the money to carry on. My legal bills have taken all my hard-earned cash."

He understood her plight and was sympathetic, yet blamed her in some way for having taken up with a low-life like Stompanato in the first place. "How in hell did you ever hook up with a sleazeball like that?" he asked, while eating a fruit salad.

"It was all Ava's fault," she said. She was, of course, referring to Ava Gardner, another screen legend who loomed in Paul's future.

"I was very lonely and depressed one night," she said. "I hadn't gotten over Tyrone Power and his dumping of me. Sometimes Ava and I share boyfriends. We often pass a particularly good lover on to each other. She gave Johnny my phone number, and he called me one night, asking if he could come over."

She leaned in closer to him. "I shouldn't be telling you this, but Johnny told me he had something in common with the Oscar. I asked him what he meant. He said, `Go measure the length of that Oscar. When you do, you'll know exactly what I have in common with Oscar. It drove Ava crazy, and she wants you to enjoy some of the fun.'"

"I've heard a lot of lines guys use in coming on to gals, but I must admit that's an original," he said.

After lunch and over two more cocktails, Lana told Paul how much she had wanted to play Maggie the Cat. "My great fear is that I'm a bit too old for the role, but makeup and good lighting would have covered up a lot.

"You're still beautiful and will always be," he assured her. "You are a very sexy woman, perhaps the sexiest who ever graced the screen. You and Ava. What a pair!"

She leaned over and kissed him lightly on the lips. "Ever since I thought I'd be working with you on The Silver Chalice, I've wanted to appear in a movie with you. I thought both of us would be dynamite on the screen. I still think that. I've always regarded you as the heir apparent to all those great stars like Tyrone, Errol Flynn, Clark Gable. You're different, of course. You're a more modern type of star and also the star of tomorrow. I predict that by 1970 your reputation will have equaled any of those men I named."

"Talk like that some more and I'll fall in love," he said.

"If you like blondes so much, I wish you'd married me and not your darling Joanne Woodward."

"Then I could never be myself," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I'd be forever known as Mr. Lana Turner."

She laughed to dismiss such an idea. "You're joking, of course. The world will be talking about Paul Newman long after Lana Turner is a forgotten memory of soldiers who fought in World War II."

Since he'd learned that she wasn't able to appear as Maggie the Cat, he was impatient to learn why she'd wanted to meet with him. Finally, he asked her.

"Ever since I met you on your date with Judy Garland," she said, "I've been wanting to get to know you. Not today, but tomorrow I think a property is going to come along that would be ideal as a Lana Turner/Paul Newman vehicle. Of all the actors in Hollywood, you are the one I'd most want for my leading man."

At the Airport: **Lana Turner, Johnny Stompanato,** and **Cheryl Crane**
Lana's gangster lover had a date with destiny.
But which of these two women really stabbed him?

"I'm flattered," he said. "You were always my dream girl."

"And dreams do come true, at least sometimes," she said, rising from the table.

After lunch, Paul followed Lana in his car. Her two guards were driving her to a private villa, owned by Howard Hughes, where she planned to spend the weekend. She'd invited him by for an afternoon swim ... or whatever.

He didn't know how the preliminaries would go, but, as he'd later relate to Richard Brooks, "We got down to business right away. No sooner were we inside the door than she was in my arms."

"I think Lana is desperate," he said. "At one point, when we were in bed, I held her. She was trembling like a leaf. In a very plaintive voice, she said, `Please, don't ever leave me.'"

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A series of bizarre events occurred almost in succession in Paul's life. As he'd later tell Vampira, "Mother told me there would be days like this."

In response, she delivered her usual refrain, "Welcome to Hollywood."

Invited by Robert Stack to his villa retreat in Palm Springs, Paul arrived to greet his long-time friend. With a certain excitement, Robert told Paul, "He's here. He's in the back room entertaining a visitor."

"Exactly who is here?" Paul asked. "Brad Dexter?"

"No, my buddy Jack Kennedy," he said. "He's in the guest room with one of my favorite gals. She's married. He's married. You're married. What does a wedding ring mean in Hollywood anyway?"

"A wedding ring is just a license to screw around and make a hasty retreat claiming you're a married man," Paul said.

"You got that right, baby," Robert said. "Now gimme a kiss before they emerge from their den."

In bathing suits, Paul was sitting with Robert having a beer when Kennedy came out of the back bedroom. He was fully dressed in a suit and tie. All smiles, he shook Paul's hand firmly as he was introduced, but glanced nervously at his watch.

"I'd like to sit and chat," Kennedy told Paul, "but I'm very late as it is." He gave Paul another handshake. "Great meeting you. Give me a raincheck. I'd like to get together with you sometime."

Paul assured him he'd be eager for that to happen, and told him he'd been rooting for him in 1956 when he'd sought the vice presidential nomination, losing to Estes Kefauver, a liberal Democrat from Tennessee.

"My Boston accent worked against me," Kennedy said. "America still prefers a redneck in a coonskin cap."

An aide arrived to tell Kennedy that he had to leave at once for the airport. He thanked Robert for his hospitality, and seemed to disappear almost as quickly as he'd entered the pool area.

"So who's the babe he's shacked up with?" Paul said.

"That's for me to know and you to find out," Robert said smugly.

It was almost an hour before Kennedy's bed partner emerged. Paul was shocked to see Janet Leigh, dressed in a conservative business suit, enter the pool area. Mrs. Tony Curtis herself seemed in a bit of a rush, but she was warm and gracious to Paul. "Maybe we'll make a movie together one day, sweetie," she said, leaning over to give him an air brush kiss on the cheek. The movie, Harper, still lay in their future.

During her brief chat with Paul and Robert, Janet made it clear that she was in Palm Springs stirring up grassroots support for Kennedy. She claimed she'd fallen in love with him when he appeared at the 1956 Democratic Party Convention in Chicago. "I was so disappointed when he lost the vice-presidential bid to Kefauver. But all of us, including Pat and Peter, are vowing that will be the last election he loses." She was referring to her friends, Peter Lawford and his wife at the time, Patricia Kennedy, JFK's sister.

Janet said she had to go, but before she left she secured promises from both Robert and Paul that she could count on them for generous contributions when Kennedy actually announced for the presidency in the months ahead.

Psycho star **Janet Leigh**
Hysterical over JFK

After she'd gone, Robert asked Paul, "Do you think he has a chance?"

"No," Paul said. "He's too sophisticated, too young, and too urbane. And, from what I hear, too prone to scandal. Besides, his old man carries too much baggage. Not only that, he's a Catholic. America hasn't grown up enough to elect a Catholic to the White House. But I liked him. I'll support him if he makes the run. Of course, I'd like to meet him again if that chance ever happens. Mostly, I'd like to meet Jacqueline Kennedy. If I had a woman like that at home, I wouldn't be leaving her while I chased after Janet Leigh. Even Joan Crawford and Lana Turner have told me they've had affairs with him. What's his game plan? To seduce every major star in Hollywood?"

He could if he wanted to," Robert said. "I've pimped for him. There's not an actress yet who's turned him down. Gene Tierney, June Allyson, Peggy Cummins, Arlene Dahl, Marlene Dietrich, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Susan Hayward, Sonja Henie, Audrey Hepburn, Hedy Lamarr, Jayne Mansfield, Marilyn Monroe, Lee Remick, Jean Simmons, even Blaze Starr and Tempest Storm."

"Blaze and Tempest?" Paul asked in astonishment. "You mean, the strippers?"

"One and the same."

"What's he got that we don't have?" Paul asked.

"It's not dick size, I can assure you," Robert said. "It's his personal charm and magnetism. The ladies lap it up. I met his close buddy, another womanizer named George Smathers, that senator from Florida. He told me that, `No one is ever off-limits to Jack-not your wife, your sister... not even your mother. "'

***

In New York for a brief visit, Paul had a reunion with Sal Mineo, who was still complaining that Paul didn't see enough of him. Paul later recalled, "Of all the actors I've known, I never met anyone who enjoyed being a movie star more than Sal. He enjoyed being a movie star even more than Lana Turner, who practically invented the term."

Sal invited Paul to spend the day with him in Mamaronek, outside New York City in Westchester County. Sal had purchased Mary Pickford's old 20room mansion overlooking Long Island Sound for $200,000. Director D.W. Griffith had shot part of Birth of a Nation at the estate.

Before Paul's visit, Yul Brynner had just left. A very young Sal had appeared on the Broadway stage with

Brynner in The King and I. "He likes to fuck young boys and older actresses," Sal claimed. "He even named some of his conquests for me-Tallulah Bankhead, Ingrid Bergman, Anne Baxter, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe, and, of course, Marlene Dietrich. Right now, Yul is flying to Paris to smoke opium with Jean Cocteau. He's become fast friends with the French faggot."

"Now, now," Paul cautioned him, "let's not use that word."

"Forgive me," Sal said. "It's a holdover from my vocabulary in the Bronx."

Sal invited Paul to go for a swim in the Sound. He'd purchased two bathing suits for them-one white with red polka dots, the other white with blue polka dots.

"I hope all those photographers from your fan magazines aren't hiding in the bushes to take our picture," Paul said, slipping into the suit.

During the course of that afternoon, Paul learned that Sal the movie star was taking in $300,000 a year. The news made Paul eager to start thinking of ways he might get out of his own contract at one thousand a week with Warner Brothers.

Back at the mansion, Paul said, "All my relatives are in the Bronx tonight, visiting family. We've got the place to ourselves. I'm going to barbecue hot dogs out back for our dinner."

"Let me make the cole slaw," Paul said. "I discovered a secret way to make it. It'll be the best you ever had."

"You're the best I ever had," Sal said, moving in on Paul.

Sitting out with Paul in the backyard after dinner, Sal regaled him with stories of his adventures in Hollywood-some quite improbable, others more believable. The most startling piece of information passed along that day was that mobster Mickey Cohen, who had been threatening Lana Turner, had offered Sal $10,000 "to fuck my ass. That gangster likes a little boy ass along with his string of gun molls like Liz Renay, that Marilyn Monroe clone."

"Did you take Cohen up on his offer?" Paul asked.

"Why not?" Sal said. "He got off in just five minutes. Ten Gs for five minutes work isn't bad."

"Not at all," Paul said. "It takes me ten weeks to make that much money."

During the course of the evening, Sal claimed that he was being stalked by film actress Gloria Grahame, who was two years older than Paul. A familiar face in film noir dramas, she'd won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress in 1952 for The Bad and the Beautiful.

During her marriage to director Nicholas Ray, he'd caught her in bed with his then thirteen-year-old son, Anthony Ray. Years later, in 1962, she would scandalize Hollywood and damage her career when she ended up marrying Anthony, her former stepson, eight years after her divorce from his father, Nicholas. In time she would have children with both father and son.

Sal Mineo
In the footsteps of Mary Pickford

"What can I say?" Sal said. "This aging blonde sexpot likes young guys. Everywhere I go, she seems to show up. I think she believes all that shit written about me in fan magazines-that I'm girl crazy. Yeah, I'm girl crazy all right. If only my fans knew I was getting plowed by Yul Brynner, Paul Newman, and Mickey Cohen."

Sal told him that when Dick Clark on his American Bandstand show ran a contest called "Why I Want to Have Dinner with Sal Mineo," more than 28,000 eager applications poured into the show in less than three days.

"All of us live in a fantasy world out there on the coast," Paul said. "Now get me another beer. The fan magazines even think I'm a faithful husband."

"That'll be the day," Sal said.

Before he departed from Mamaronek the following morning, Paul was presented with a miniature of himself in oil. "I did it from a film still when you played Rocky," Sal said. "The portrait I did of Abraham Lincoln is much better, but I thought you'd find this more amusing."

Paul studied the painting carefully. Sal had drawn him without his boxing trunks. "You fucker," he said to Sal. "You could have made it an inch or two longer."

"I did it from memory since I didn't have you to pose for me," Sal said, moving in on him.

"Watch it, kid," Paul said. "I'm an old man. After last night, you drained me to the last drop."

"I like to leave `em satisfied," Sal said. "Now don't hold out on me. Nature has a way of replenishing these things."

On the train back into Manhattan, Paul picked up a fan magazine with Sal on the cover. It had been abandoned by a departing passenger.

The feature on Sal was headlined, "The Women in Sal Mineo's Life." Calling him Hollywood's Junior Casanova, the article claimed that swarms of teenage girls flock around Sal whenever he appears in public. "Can he fight them off?" the article asked. "If you're Sal Mineo, it's not easy."

***

Catalyzed by his bit part in Somebody Up There Likes Me, Steve McQueen and his career were climbing the Hollywood ladder at a dizzying pace. He'd been signed for a role in the TV series Wanted Dead or Alive, and critics were comparing him to Humphrey Bogart and Gary Cooper.

"At least that's better than comparisons I get to Marlon Brando," Paul said. Friends noted that he seemed jealous of McQueen, who one critic called "the Kool Kat's answer to John Wayne on the prairie, bow legs and all."

Word reached Paul that McQueen was fighting with everybody-the script writers, the producers, his sponsors, even wardrobe. He rejected their "starchy" cowboy outfits and showed up instead in scruffy clothes and an old cowboy hat that had once blazed across the West topping the head of Randolph Scott.

McQueen took on Ronald Reagan himself, arguing with and even screaming at him about a script submitted for Reagan's General Electric Theater.

"Steve McQueen is one of the biggest shits I've ever come across in show business," Reagan told his friend William Holden.

"That's funny, because I once said the same thing about Yul Brynner," Holden said.

Meeting with McQueen for lunch in a New York restaurant, Paul asked him, "What is this I hear about you? You've become as temperamental as Bette Davis. Is that true?"

"The talk from cunts," McQueen said. "I've been around Hollywood long enough to know that some men out there have bigger cunts than women. I'm not trying to be popular. Even my horse, Ringo, tried to attack me. I'm trying to be a star making quality movies. Is there anything wrong with that?"

"Go for it, boy," Paul urged.

During the course of their meal-Steve rejected two hamburgers before the waitress got his order right-he gave Paul some career advice. "Keep your second wife barefoot and pregnant like you did your first wife. That way you'll have the little woman waiting at home frying the chicken while you're out doing whatever in the fuck you want to do."

After lunch, Steve invited Paul for a drive in an XK-SS Jaguar he was trying out. He called it "The Green Rat."

Paul later recalled to his friends, "It wasn't a drive. It was a race to dare death. He made James Dean and Monty Clift look like safe drivers. When Steve took off, anyone on the road had to get out of his way."

As a harbinger of Paul's own future interest in speed, McQueen drove like "The Madman of Le Mans." He seemed to keep the accelerator pressed to the floor and not even know where the brake was. He lurched the car from one side of the road to the other, passing other cars, with his brakes squealing every time he had to slam on them suddenly.

Steve McQueen
Breaking and Entering

Amazingly, without ever getting stopped by a patrolman, he eventually got Paul to Montauk at the extreme eastern tip of Long Island.

"You got a place out here?" Paul asked. He had never been told where they were going.

"No, I don't need one," McQueen said. "These are mainly second homes for most people out here. Most of them are empty on weekdays. I'll just borrow a place, one that looks like a cozy nest, perhaps with some booze, a full bar and cold beer in the fridge for you."

Paul wanted to protest but didn't. He'd made headlines before, charged with drunk driving on Long Island. NEWMAN AND McQUEEN NABBED IN HOUSE ROBBERY. Paul could just see tomorrow's headlines.

"Like a fool," he later told friends, "I followed Steve up through someone's beautiful garden at the rear of a house. It overlooked the water. It would have been the perfect honeymoon cottage."

"I used to be a thief," McQueen said. "I was even jailed for it. I still know how to break into a house."

As the afternoon chilled, McQueen made a fire for them in the living room. Sitting in front of the fireplace, McQueen talked of his dreams. "I know I'm going to become the biggest star in Hollywood, the biggest box office attraction in the world. I can feel it in my gut."

"You're rising fast," Paul said.

"But I've got a problem," McQueen said. "In the years ahead, I view you as my major competition."

"It's highly likely we'll be up for some of the same parts," Paul said, accurately predicting their future.

"There's a way to avoid this," McQueen said. "You and I should team up and make buddy movies in the future when we have star power. Of course, there will be a cunt or two in the background. You gotta have pussy running back and forth so audiences won't think we're a pair of fags. But I want to do man-on-man action movies with you. I'm even dreaming of a script where we play rival race car drivers."

"You've got yourself a deal, good buddy," Paul said. "Let's become the John Wayne and Gary Cooper of the 1970s."

"That's for tomorrow," McQueen said. "Tonight we have some unfinished business. Long time, no see, partner."

***

When Paul visited Brando in his New York apartment, he found the actor in a bitter mood. Because the temperamental star had walked out on The Egyptian, he'd been forced to take a cut in salary to avoid a potential lawsuit. Consequently, for his role in The Young Lions, he'd contracted, against his will and as punishment from the studio, for a fee of only $50,000. During their meeting, Brando expressed fury about how his costar, Monty Clift, was pulling in a reported $750,000 for his role in the same film.

As the afternoon deepened, Brando discussed his love/hate relationship with Montgomery Clift, Brando comparing its dynamics to the emerging relationship between Paul and McQueen.

"We admire each other, and, yes, there's some love there," Brando told Paul. "Yet Monty and I hate each other at times."

"It's very strange, but I often feel the same way about Steve," Paul said. "I'm drawn to him but at the same time I resent him."

"You want to know Monty's reaction to Guys and Dolls?" Brando asked. "He told me that all he saw on the screen was this big, big, big, fat ass! What did McQueen think of your performance in The Left Handed Gun?"

"Not much," Paul said. "After he saw the movie, he had only one reaction-that he planned to fuck Lita Milan. Okay, I'll be completely honest. In this Western series he's doing on TV, he's a better star in an oater than I am. In some ways, he has more talent than I do, and I suspect he'll surpass me in the Hollywood rat race."

"I'll be truthful, too," Brando said, "for a change. I think Monty did a better job in A Place in the Sun than I did in A Streetcar Named Desire. I even voted him to win the Oscar. That's how fair I am about judging talent."

Brando surprised Paul when he told him about the debate at Fox over casting the third male lead in The Young Lions. "The studio wanted Tony Randall, that homophobic faggot," Brando said. "I told Dmytryk I wouldn't work with Randall."

He was referring to Edward Dmytryk, one of the original Hollywood Ten, who'd served a prison term for his refusal to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in its witch hunt for communists in the entertainment business.

"I told Fox they should borrow you from Warners for the role," Brando claimed. "But they turned down my casting idea and went for Dean Martin of all people."

Marlon Brando
A Sympathetic Nazi?

"That guy needs a good role to help him break away from the Jerry Lewis stereotype," Paul said.

"I didn't feel so bad when Deano told me he was getting only $25,000 for the picture," Brando said. "Just half of my salary. You've got to see The Young Lions. I make the Nazi I play a tragic hero."

"You're making a Nazi a sympathetic hero on the screen?" Paul asked. "How daring. I've got to see how you pull this one off. You've played Napoleon. The next thing I know you'll be bringing a cuddly Hitler to the screen."

"For that smartass remark, I'm going to punish your butt," Brando said. "You deserve it."

"We did shit like that a long time ago," Paul said. "Let's leave it as a memory."

"Who in the fuck are you talking to?" Brando asked. "I let go of an ass only when I'm finished with it-and not a moment before. Okay, if you don't want to fuck, let's do some nude wrestling. Take off your clothes."

"I guess I can do that," Paul said. "But no funny stuff."

Later that night when Paul met Shelley Winters for dinner, he confided to her, "The inevitable happened."

"He pulled the same stunt on me one night," Shelley said. "The brute is into nude wrestling with both men and women. He calls it foreplay. He always comes out the winner in the end."

"What an apt expression," Paul said, as they both broke into laughter.

***

Tony Perkins was also living in a New York apartment, plotting his next career move. A part-time maid answered the door to Tony's apartment, inviting Paul in and ushering him down a long corridor to a room in the rear. "Come on back," Tony called to him.

When Paul came into a brightly lit dressing room, with a stage mirror encased in light bulbs, Tony was seated applying blood-red lipstick. He was dressed in beads and spangles like a 1920s chorine.

"What on earth?" Paul asked. "Until now, I never knew you're a transvestite."

"I'm not," Tony said. "I'd kiss you but I just applied my lipstick."

"Now it can be told," Paul said with a smirk. "Tony Perkins wants to be a chorus gal in a 20s musical."

"Something like that," he said, standing up and raising his dress so Paul could better examine his showgirl legs.

Inviting him back into the living room up front, Tony linked his arm with Paul's. "Great to see you again," Tony said. "As always, you're looking fabulous. All that beer drinking never seems to take its toll."

Paul came to Tony's rescue as he wobbled shakily in his stiletto heels.

In the living room, Tony asked the maid to bring Paul a cold beer. "Billy Wilder dropped in the other day with a synopsis of a new script he's planning to shoot. He wants me to appear as one of the stars. It's called Some Like It Hot, and it's a comedy set in the 1920s. There's talk that Marilyn Monroe might star in it."

Tony admitted that "it's a great part," but claimed that his agent, Herman Citron, had advised him not to appear in women's clothing again after his star turn in The Matchmaker. "Herman thinks my appearing in drag might get me laughed off the screen." The actor's dressing up as his demented mother in Psycho still lay in his future.

He explained to Paul how, in Some Like it Hot, the two male stars witness the Chicago Valentine's Day Massacre. To flee from the scene of the crime, they dress up in drag as showgirls and join an all-girl band heading for Palm Beach.

"If you've called me here to try out for the other drag role, forget it," Paul said. "That's not the macho image I'm cultivating."

"No, silly," he said. "Wilder wants Sinatra for the other male role."

"Frank on the screen in drag?" Paul said. "I loved his Sunset Blvd., but Wilder must be out of his fucking mind. There's no way in hell that my rival for the title of Blue Eyes is going to dress up in drag onscreen. Cary Grant, maybe, but he's probably too old for the part. Why not your buddy boy, Tab Hunter? He's still pretty enough. You and Tab in drag would provoke more whistles than Marilyn Monroe, at least from the gay fraternity."

After Paul complimented Tony three times on how fetching he looked dressed as a woman, Paul read the brief synopsis of the plot for Some Like It Hot while Tony retreated to the dressing room. The actual script hadn't been finished yet.

Tony Perkins
In fear of *Confidential*

When Tony came back dressed in street clothes, Paul told him, "This thing, especially with Wilder directing it, has the makings of a really hot comedy. With Monroe in it, I think it could be a hit. I mean, big. You sure you don't have the balls to do it."

"I'm too afraid," Tony said. "Too many people between Broadway and Hollywood are discussing my homosexuality. I've got to be careful. I live every day with the fear of exposure. Look what happened to Tab."

He was referring to a devastating Confidential expose that had outed Tab as a homosexual. In the wake of that exposure, once-loyal fan magazines such as Teen Life were not only predicting Tab's downfall, but eagerly anticipating it.

Over dinner, Tony didn't seem much interested in Paul's career, but was filled with news and adventures of his own recent accomplishments. As the career of his lover, Tab Hunter, floundered, Tony had blossomed into a major star thanks to some recent releases. He'd even been nominated for a Tony for his appearance in Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward, Angel.

Tony was never pleased with his work, however, and he expressed disappointment over all of his films, even though he had enjoyed working with Shirley Booth in The Matchmaker. "She's my favorite actress," Tony told Paul. He also revealed that The Matchmaker, in its original conception, had been shaped as a vehicle to reteam Spencer Tracy with Katharine Hepburn. It would later, of course, become the inspiration for Carol Channing's Broadway musical, Hello, Dolly!

"I hated working with Sophia Loren in Desire Under the Elms," Tony said. "She hogged the camera." He warned Paul never to make a film with her, but he would ignore this advice. "They call Loren The Roman Rocket," Tony said. "She can blast off in another direction."

During the filming of This Angry Age, Tony had been intimately linked with his French director, Rene Clement. It had co-starred Silvana Mangano, called "the Italian Rita Hayworth" and Alida Valli, another Italian

beauty once hailed as "the new Garbo."

"Those gals are neither Garbo nor Rita," Tony said to Paul. "I spent my time in Rome shacked up with Tab when he drove down from Germany, and later with Rock Hudson when I welcomed him to Cinecitta Studios."

Tony told Paul that he was considering doing first a play, and then a film version, of F. Scott Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise. This turned out to be just a dream.

He also wanted to do a remake of Destry Rides Again, the film classic that had starred Marlene Dietrich and James Stewart. That would never happen either, although Andy Griffith would star in a Broadway play of the same name.

According to Tony, James Cagney wanted him to appear in Shake Hands With the Devil, the role eventually going to Don Murray, who'd scored a bull's eye with Marilyn Monroe in Bus Stop. Delmer Daves had also offered Tony the lead in a film called Parrish, the part eventually going to the blond, blueeyed heartthrob, Troy Donahue.

In spite of all these offers, Paul later said that Tony "made a horrible mistake" in agreeing to play a brave young fugitive in Green Mansions, opposite Audrey Hepburn as a wood nymph. Paul told friends, "Both stars were horribly miscast, and I couldn't sit through the thing."

Back at Tony's apartment, Paul found the actor deeply troubled, as always, by his homosexuality. He feared that Dorothy Kilgallen, "The Voice of Broadway," was about to expose the "Three Ts" in her column.

"Tony Perkins, Tab Hunter, and Timmy Everett."

Paul had read that Timmy was scoring a big success starring in Elia Kazan's production of The Dark at the Top of the Stairs, by playwright William Inge. After a lover's quarrel between Timmy and Tony over Tab, Timmy had attempted suicide by slashing his wrists. He recovered from the attempt, but Tony never came to visit him in the hospital.

"My God, man, you've got chorus boys threatening suicide over you," Paul said. "I've heard of lady killers. You're the boy killer."

"If someone falls in love with me, and I'm not always there for them, that's their fucking problem," Tony said.

"Thank God I never fell in love with you," Paul told him. "But you're a great piece of ass."

"I'll always be there for you, baby cakes," Tony said.

Two nights later, when Paul shared dinner and the episode with Janice Rule, she offered a grim assessment: "I don't think Tony will ever accept his homosexuality. It will probably destroy him one way or another."

***

When Paul returned to Hollywood, he decided to ignore the many telephone messages left by his "stalker," the underaged Sandra Dee. He had heard that the older singer, Bobby Darin, had taken an interest in Sandra and that she'd probably moved on to her next adventure. He was wrong.

Within less than a mile from the MGM parking lot, Sandra popped up from the back seat of his car like a Jack-in-the-Box. "SURPRISE!" she shouted at him.

He nearly ran the car off the road. "How in hell did you get in my car?" he asked, flashing anger.

"I bribed a guard," she said. "All I have to do is flash my brown eyes, and the world is mine." He ordered her into the front seat but pushed her away when she tried to kiss him.

En route to taking her to her own home, he ordered her to get over him. "I'm married to Joanne," he told her, "and I'm going to stay married to her. There has never been anything between us, and there will never be anything between us."

She burst into tears, and he tried to comfort her, deciding it was a useless endeavor. He parked a block from her home, as he didn't want to be seen pulling into her driveway. "Now get out of this car and never get in it again," he sternly told her. "Do you get that?"

"I'll get out of the car today," she said, her face a mask of steely determination. "But I want to put you on notice. I plan to have you. And when I plan to have you, I mean just that. You're not getting away from me." As she got out of the car, she looked back at him. "God, I hate Joanne Woodward. I wish she were dead, so you could be mine and mine alone."

***

Around midnight, Paul was awakened by a call from Richard Brooks. "Forget Grace Kelly. Forget Vivien Leigh. Forget Lana Turner. We've got a new Maggie the Cat. I've just returned from a late-night meeting. At long last, it's final. The contract is signed. Miss Elizabeth Taylor is your Maggie. No doubt she'll soon be meowing after you."

"Not as long as Mike Todd is still alive," was his immediate response.

Chapter Eight

Hot Cats & Sweet Birds

Hollywood gossip columnists buzzed with excitement when the news was finally announced that Elizabeth Taylor, then at the peak of her sultry beauty, would co-star with Paul Newman, then at the peak of his male flash, in Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

"When the man with the glacial blue eyes meets the girl with the eyes of a spring violet, the great movie romance of the century will surely unfold," one columnist wrote. "How can two such sex symbols resist the magnetism of each other?" The writer didn't even mention that Elizabeth was madly in love with her husband, showman Mike Todd, and that Paul had recently married Joanne Woodward after years of agonizing delay.

Shooting commenced on March 12, 1958, and Elizabeth showed up on the set to meet the cast. Coming together with Paul for the first time, she said, "You're more beautiful in person than on the screen, if such a thing is possible."

"You took the words out of my mouth," he said. "Surely you are the most beautiful woman in the world, maybe in the universe for all I know."

"Your flattery will get you everywhere," she said. "If I were naming a perfume after you, I would call it Temptation."

"If I were naming a perfume after you, I'd call it Enchantment."

"Come on, kids, break it up," said the film's director, Richard Brooks, who was standing with them. Elizabeth felt comfortable working with the director. He'd helmed her through The Last Time I Saw Paris in 1954, when she'd starred opposite the homosexual actor, Van Johnson. Brooks would later marry one of Elizabeth's best friends, her fellow British actress, Jean Simmons.

Before introducing Elizabeth to the rest of the cast, Brooks invited Paul and her to lunch in the MGM commissary. She was fresh from the shooting of Raintree County with Monty Clift. Paul was eager to hear stories about his former friend and how he'd held up during the completion of the film in the wake of his accident.

"Had Monty accepted the role of Brick, he would be standing here with you today instead of me," Paul reminded her.

"Had Grace Kelly not run off and married a prince, Maggie the Cat would be blonde-and not me." She said, "By the way, that Oscar Joanne took home belonged to me." She flashed her famous smile to indicate she was joking. "Tell your bitch when you get home that if she steals another Oscar from me, I'll cut off her right tit."

"We got your gracious note, congratulating Joanne on her win." Paul said. "It meant more to her than all the other congratulations she received. But I'll take your advice. I will personally see that Joanne never takes the prize from you again."

Elizabeth leaned over and gave him a gentle kiss on the lips. "I know you're a man of your word, and I'll hold you to that promise."

In the words of Brooks, Elizabeth "behaved like a queen" during her interactions with her fellow cast members.

Burl Ives was cast as "Big Daddy," the patriarch of the Southern Pollitt family. As the film begins, he's the only member of his clan who hasn't admitted he's dying of cancer as his dysfunctional family gathers around him for last rites.

Ironically, Burl Ives was only one year older than Jack Carson, who played his older son, Gooper, and only sixteen years older than Paul, who was cast as his morose (but preferred) younger son, Brick.

Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor
Temptation meets *Enchantment*

The brilliant lesbian actress, Judith Anderson, was cast as Big Momma, with Madeleine Sherwood playing Gooper's social-climbing, child-bearing wife, May. Her quintet of "no neck monsters" stampede roughshod at regular intervals amid the antiques and fine carpets of the Pollitt mansion.

The clan has gathered to watch Big Daddy fade from life. Gooper wants his father's millions and the plantation for himself, his breeding wife, and her kids.

Over lunch in the MGM commissary, Richard Brooks delivered disappointing news to Paul, who had assumed that the original plot and original theme of Tennessee's play would be transferred directly to the big screen.

The director told him that MGM executives had rejected the first draft of his script. In that version, Paul (Brick) confesses his homosexuality to Elizabeth (Maggie the Cat), informing her that he doesn't make love to her because he's still in love with his dead friend, Skipper. He goes on to confess that he blames himself for Skipper's suicide.

In the earliest draft of the script-later destroyed-Brick even confesses his homosexuality to Big Daddy. The men reach an understanding about both of their "sexual perversions," Big Daddy confessing that he used to "fool around" with some farm boy in the barn loft when he was a teenager growing up in redneck Mississippi.

To elicit their sympathy during his conflict with MGM, Brooks told Paul and Elizabeth that it wasn't the first time he'd seen a script "castrated" because of its references to homosexuality. Brooks had published a novel in 1945, The Brick Foxhole. It was a large success, telling the story of a group of Marines who pick up and then murder a homosexual serviceman. The novel was a stinging indictment of intolerance.

Brooks eventually sold his novel to be filmed, and in the ensuing conversion to the big screen, the ill-fated victim was recast as a Jew, and he died at the hands of an anti-Semite. Released in 1947, the film had been retitled Crossfire, and it starred three actors named Robert-Young, Mitchum, and Ryan, respectively-with sultry Gloria Grahame as the female lead.

"You've got to understand my dilemma," Brooks said. "The Production Code doesn't even allow us to mention

the word homosexual on the screen."

At this point they were joined by James Poe, a writer who was working with Brooks to adapt the Williams play for the screen. Elizabeth already knew Poe because two years previously, in 1956, he had worked with Mike Todd on the script of Around the World in Eighty Days. Both Poe and Brooks remain the major source of inside information about the relationship of Elizabeth and Paul that occurred during the tragic complications associated with the filming of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Director Richard Brooks
"Castrating scripts"

Brooks waited until their lunch was nearly over to deliver the punch line. In many scenes during the early part of the film, the script called for Paul to appear topless, wearing only the bottom of his pajamas. He'd have to hobble around on a crutch, having broken his leg one gung-ho drunken night while running the hurdle at his old alma mater. He was trying to recapture his days of football glory which he shared with his friend Skipper, for whom he is still in deep mourning, trying to drown his sorrow in the bottle.

In the filmed, watered-down version of Cat, Maggie lies to the family, especially Big Daddy, asserting (falsely) that she is pregnant. In the final stages of the script, Brick, as played by Paul, backs her up in her lie. He is seen throwing his pillow to a position beside Maggie's on the bed. The movie comes to an end as they are about to have a "horizontal reconciliation," with the implication that he will penetrate her and that they will actually make that baby whose birth has already been publicly announced by Maggie. As part of the film's happy ending, previous wrongdoings and misunderstandings fade away.

At the end of the lunch meeting, Paul turned to Brooks and Poe, saying, "I'll leave it up to you guys to show this shit to Tennessee."

Brooks tried to salvage the luncheon with at least some good news: Whereas originally MGM had opted to shoot the picture, budgeted at two million dollars, in black and white, Brooks and Mike Todd persuaded the studio to shoot it in Technicolor, if for no other reason than to show off the beautiful eyes of the two leading stars.

That afternoon, back in his dressing room, Paul received a phone call from Gore Vidal. He'd been working at MGM on a script for Ben-Hur, a remake of the famous 1925 silent film that had starred Ramon Novarro.

Gore informed Paul that Sam Zimbalist, MGM's studio chief, had wanted Paul to play Ben-Hur. "I nixed that idea," Gore said. After The Silver Chalice, I told the guys that there was no way you'd ever appear on the screen again wearing a cocktail dress showing off your skinny legs." Instead, the role went to Charlton Heston. Ironically, Zimbalist himself died in 1958, on location in Rome during the filming of Ben-Hur of a stress-induced heart attack

provoked by the making of that film.

The early rapport established between Paul and Elizabeth did not last through the rehearsals. "She is totally lifeless working with me," he told Brooks. "We have no chemistry at all. She's holding back."

When the actual filming began, and after Paul had seen the rushes, he revised his opinion of Elizabeth. "The moment the camera is turned on her, she becomes radiant," Paul said. "She's a much better actress than I ever imagined. I've never seen anything like it. She's a true film actress, not appropriate for the stage."

From the very beginning, Brooks was pleased with Paul's work on the screen. "Even though we were forced to remove a lot of the motivation from Paul's character, he pulled it off with his cool detachment cast opposite the hot-to-trot Maggie. In spite of the weakness of the script, Paul would succeed in making Brick a creditable character, if not always properly motivated."

Mike Todd showed up on the set one day, introducing himself to Paul. He, too, had seen the rushes and he thought Elizabeth "has never been better." He made no comment on Paul's performance.

"I completely changed my mind about her," he told Paul- "I didn't want her to play Maggie the Cat. I even flew her to London to see Kim Stanley when she was appearing as Maggie in the West End. I took Elizabeth backstage and tried to get Kim to convince her that the role was not for her."

"And why not?" Paul asked. "She's great as Maggie."

"I know that now," Todd said, "but originally I had one serious objection. I said, `No one's gonna believe that any man-even if gay-would turn down the chance to fuck Elizabeth Taylor.'"

After only a few days of shooting, Elizabeth developed a severe head cold. She was running a dangerous fever and had to be sent home in a limousine. Brooks and Paul learned the next day that her illness had developed into pneumonia.

Executives at MGM were anxious for Elizabeth to complete Cat, for which she was being paid $125,000, according to the terms of her contract. But that contract was running out and slated to expire on June 1, 1958. After that, it was speculated that Elizabeth could command far more money on her next picture, at least $350,000, perhaps a lot more.

Paul was still on his small salary. In a surprise move, Warners had asked MGM only $25,000 for loaning him out as the star of Cat. In contrast, Tennessee Williams was getting $450,000 for the screen rights.

Elizabeth Taylor with **Michael Todd**
Not-so-lucky Liz

Brooks was the first to inform Paul that he'd have to shoot around Elizabeth until she recovered enough to come back onto the set. "I know her," he said. "She's very fragile, a woman of delicate health. I feared something like this might happen. A head cold was bad enough, but pneumonia could threaten her life. I've just come from a meeting at MGM. They're so worried that Elizabeth won't be able to finish Cat that they've called Carroll Baker's agent to see if she could be made available."

"I don't think it'll come to that," Paul said in astonishment.

"Let's face it: Elizabeth could die," Brooks said. "I've always had this intuition. I can smell death in the air."

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On March 22, 1958, Mike Todd, along with a pilot and co-pilot, took off in a torrential rain storm from Burbank in a private, twin-engine Lockheed Lodestar he'd nicknamed Lucky Liz. The plane, as it came to be, was anything but lucky.

Ironically, Elizabeth was supposed to have been on that flight, but had to remain bedridden because of her illness. The virus that had infected her ended up saving her life.

In another irony, although Todd had invested $25,000 to install a lavender-colored bedroom aboard Lucky Liz, he'd shelled out only $2,000 to improve the aircraft's anti-icing system. The bedroom money should have been spent on the anti-icing system.

Todd was flying to a testimonial dinner at the swanky Waldorf-Astoria in New York where he'd been pre-announced as the guest of honor. A few hours after takeoff, Lucky Liz crashed into the Zuni Mountains of New Mexico. Todd and his pilots were killed on impact, their bodies charred beyond recognition. Lucky Liz's impact with Earth occurred at 2:40am, local time.

The producer's gold wedding ring was retrieved from the wreckage and returned to Elizabeth in Beverly Hills. At 6am in California, Elizabeth had not slept all night. She was waiting for the phone call from Todd that he had promised when the plane landed in Albuquerque.

It wasn't until 8:30am that Elizabeth was told of Todd's death. She became hysterical. Clad only in a see-through nightgown, she tried to flee from her home. Had she succeeded, she'd have faced a barrage of reporters, photographers, and TV newsreel crews. Doctors restrained her and sedated her. She was carried up the steps and returned to bed. Ironically, Debbie Reynolds, married at the time to Eddie Fisher and still on good terms with Elizabeth, had arrived at the house to take charge of Elizabeth's children.

A steady stream of well-wishers, including Samuel Goldwyn, also arrived at Elizabeth's house throughout the day.

It was on Day Two after the plane wreck that Paul was allowed into the house. Amazingly, one of the first persons he encountered in the crowd downstairs was Greta Garbo, coming down from Elizabeth's bedroom upstairs. She did not know Paul but recognized him immediately. "Go upstairs and offer her comfort. I did what I could," Garbo told him.

Mounting the stairs, Paul knocked on her door. There was no answer. As he turned, he spotted a photographer trying to conceal himself behind the open door of an adjoining bedroom. He confronted the photographer and demanded that he leave. As security later learned, the photographer had planned to barge into Elizabeth's bedroom and snap a picture of the grief-stricken widow, which no doubt would have appeared on the front covers of tabloids across the country.

After the photographer was evicted from the premises, Paul returned to Elizabeth's bedroom and knocked again. This time Elizabeth herself opened the door. She stood before him in a sheer nightgown.

When she saw him, she fell into his arms, and he guided her back into the room, where he gently returned her

to bed, covering up her nudity.

Without makeup and with no sleep for the previous two nights, she looked at him, her violet eyes bloodshot. In spite of her pain, she remained beautiful. She reached for him. "Don't ever let me go," she said, her voice barely a whisper. Those words eerily evoked what a frightened Lana Turner, under threat from the mob, had once uttered to him.

Through tear-streaked eyes, she told him that "Mike had a premonition about that flight. Before he left my bedroom that night, he returned five times and kissed me right on the lips even though I had pneumonia."

Elizabeth and Paul talked for an hour, a session Paul later shared with Brooks. Fearing she wouldn't be able to return to the film set of Cat, he desperately wanted to assess the emotional condition of his star.

"I was always the strong one in any relationship I ever had," she confessed to Paul. "Even with my parents and certainly through my marriages. But when Mike came along, I surrendered myself to him. He made the decisions. He was my shield against the world. I was his vassal. He solved all my problems. He loved me as no man has ever loved me. I was his. Without him, I have nothing."

Elizabeth with her brother, **Howard Taylor, Jr.** at Mike Todd's funeral "Day of the Locust'

On a wild impulse, he blurted out, "You have me." Later, he would tell Brooks that he didn't really know why he'd said that. "The words just came out."

"Stay with me tonight," Elizabeth whispered in his ear. "I can't stand to be alone. Mike slept here by my side. Last night I kept reaching out for him, finding nothing. No one."

"I'll be here for you," he promised.

If Brooks is to be believed, Paul told him that he made love to Elizabeth that night. "It was not a love of passion but a love of comfort," Paul allegedly told his director. "She needed me. My human warmth."

He also told Brooks that "I came to my senses the moment I left her house. I couldn't replace Todd in her life. I have a life of my own. A wife. Kids. I feared I'd horribly misled her. I can't be the next Mr. Elizabeth Taylor. I just can't."

Brooks assured him that he should feel no guilt for what he had done. "You were just tending to a desperate

woman's needs."

The next day Elizabeth placed three frantic calls to Paul on the set, but he didn't return those desperate pleas to speak to her.

Paul only grimaced when he learned the news of Mike Todd's funeral, a savage outpouring of hysterical fans evocative of the novel, Day of the Locust, by Nathanael West.

He heard that souvenir hunters had ripped the black veil that covered her face and had even yanked whole strands of her hair from her scalp. Security guards could not control the mob. Elizabeth finally escaped to a waiting limousine.

On April 14, Elizabeth returned to the set of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Embarrassed, Paul left his dressing room to greet her. There were no recriminations. She kissed him gently on the lips. "Thanks for being there for me when I needed you," she said. Her charm under duress made him feel like a heel, as he later told Brooks.

Above: **Debbie Reynolds** with then-husband **Eddie Fisher**
Below: **Eddie Fisher** with then-wife **Elizabeth Taylor**

The best of friends, the worst of friends

Having lost at least twelve pounds, Elizabeth in her grief looked more stunning than ever. She requested a private lunch with Paul. There was no talk of love. She seemed to be very practical. "I have to get back to work," she told him. "There are bills to be paid." After Mike's assets are liquidated and his debts paid, I'll receive only $13,000 from his estate."

Once again, he offered his sympa thy. Her response startled him. "He's not dead," she said, her face a mask of steely determination. "I know he parachuted to safety. He'll be found any day now wandering the badlands of New Mexico. I refuse to believe that he's dead."

Eddie Fisher, Paul learned, seemed to be at Elizabeth's house every night. He had been Todd's best friend. Paul could not forget his marital obligation to Joanne, but it appeared that Eddie had conveniently forgotten that he was married to Debbie Reynolds. In fact, "Debbie & Eddie" were widely identified throughout the media as "America's sweethearts."

Brooks told Paul that Elizabeth had made a startling confession to him during the final days of the filming of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

"I feared that a scandal was brewing, thanks to Elizabeth spending so much time with that Fisher boy," Brooks said. "I confronted her. I don't want to sound greedy, but I was afraid fans would stay away in droves if news got out that Eddie had become the surrogate Mike Todd in her life-yes, including the fulfillment of marital duties."

The next day Brooks shared with Paul Elizabeth's response. It was a shocker, and we have only Brooks' word for this.

"I've known for months that Eddie is in love with me," Elizabeth allegedly told Brooks. "Even Mike knew that. He just dismissed it as a harmless flirtation. `What red-blooded man on the planet wouldn't fall for Elizabeth Taylor?' he used to say. "I fear I've developed an attachment far more scandalous than Eddie Fisher. I think I'm falling in love with Mike Todd Jr."

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Except that he was the son of her late husband, Mike Todd Jr. might have made a proper new husband for Elizabeth. At least they were in the same age bracket: Todd Jr. was 28 when his father died, Elizabeth a ripe 26.

Left to right:
Eddie Fisher, Mike Todd Jr., and **E.T.**
Forbidden Love

He spent hours telling her about his dream of Smell-0Vision. That dream became a reality in 1960 with the release of Scent of Mystery, starring Peter Lorre and Denholm Elliott.

During every screening, smells released from tiny tubes beneath the viewer's seat assaulted the nostrils with the scent of roses, a woman's perfume, the odor of grape juice, even pipe smoke. Critics dismissed it as a gimmick, and Smell-O-Vision was never again associated with a feature-length film.

Quite by chance, the author of this biography, in Ireland in the mid-1970s with travel writer Stanley Haggart, once encountered Todd Jr. in a Dublin pub. He'd come in for a glass of gin and ended up having quite a few.

Todd, Jr., spoke frankly about his failed dreams of becoming a big-time showman like his father. During the course of the evening, and after his sixth gin, he admitted that he had once fallen in love with Elizabeth. "I was the one who pulled away," he admitted, "because I knew our marriage-which would have been possible only after I divorced my-then wife Sarah-would have destroyed Elizabeth's career. Look what happened to another Oscar winner, Gloria Grahame, when she married her stepson, the son of Nicolas Ray."

Todd Jr., after suffering for years from diabetes-he even had one leg amputated-eventually died on May 5, 2002 in Ireland, the victim of lung cancer.

Back in 1958, Todd Jr.'s then wife, Sarah Jane Weaver, rescued him from the clutches of Elizabeth. Eddie Fisher then abandoned his then-wife, Debbie Reynolds, and rushed to fill the role of Mike Todd Sr.

Throughout the remainder of the filming of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Paul provided Elizabeth with strong moral-but not physical-support. Their moment of intimacy, conceived and executed at perhaps the worst moment of her life, seemed to have been relegated to a far and distant memory within both of their brains.

In later years, Elizabeth expressed gratitude to Paul for his good manners during the conclusion of the shooting of Cat. "He was most courtly to me," she told friends, "a real gentleman. If I were about to have a nervous breakdown, he was by my side, guiding me through a scene."

"I think Elizabeth gave her greatest performance in Cat," Paul later claimed. "She turned out to be a real trouper."

That was his public position. Privately, he told Brooks, "I really wish I was a free man. In all my life, I never wanted anything as much. To be the man lying in bed with Elizabeth Taylor when she woke up in the morning. Those violet eyes gazing into my baby blues."

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At long last and once again, Paul felt he would escape comparisons to Brando after Cat was released. The first review he read, however, was by Penelope Houston, appearing in the London Observer. She claimed that Paul had "the look of a sulkier Brando, which seems, if anything, a little too strong for Brick."

Paul remembered with horror the day he sat in a viewing room with Brooks and Cat's playwright, Tennessee Williams. He cringed throughout the screening, and Paul kept shifting nervously in his seat. When the screening was over and the lights came up, Tennessee rose to his feet.

He looked first at Paul. "You looked fabulous without your shirt," Tennessee said. "One tasty morsel." Then he turned to Brooks. "You emasculated my play. You bastard! I'm going to urge the public to stay away from it." Then he stormed out of the studio.

On September 20, 1958, when Cat opened in theaters around the country, Elizabeth was sternly being denounced as "the other woman." Tabloid fodder for the press, she was accused of breaking up the marriage of America's socalled sweethearts, Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher. Assuming that modern-day Debbie Reynolds has some powerful lawyers lurking in the background, the true story of Reynolds/Fisher marriage probably won't be told until both parties have departed.

But instead of segueing "notorious Liz," as she was called, into box office poison, publicity generated by the illicit romance had movie-goers lining up around the country to gaze upon "this Jezebel."

Cat was nominated for Best Picture, Best Adapted Screenplay (in spite of Tennessee's assault), Best Director, Best Actor (Paul himself), and Best Actress (in spite of the negative press out there on Elizabeth).

At the Academy Awards, Paul faced stiff competition from Sidney Poitier in The Defiant Ones and Tony Curtis, also in The Defiant Ones. It can be assumed that two nominees for the same picture cancel each other out. Therefore, Paul had to measure up against David Niven in Separate Tables and Spencer Tracy in The Old Man and the Sea.

Niven, playing a bogus war hero and child molester, walked off with the Oscar. Paul modestly admitted to friends, "I didn't deserve the win this time. Maybe next time."

Ironically, Elizabeth lost to Susan Hayward for I Want to Live, a script that Paul had urged Susan to make.

That was not because he really wanted her to do it, but because he wanted her to reject The Three Faces of Eve so Joanne could get the role.

Since he'd lost the Academy Award, that left the Newman-Woodward household with only one Oscar resting on their mantelpiece.

Instead of Beverly Hills, the Newmans preferred to purchase a former coaching house in Connecticut. The property dated from 1780, and it was set on three acres of fruit trees with a trout stream running through.

When in New York, Paul chose not to arrive anywhere by chauffeured limousine, as did such visiting stars as Lana Turner, who was still calling him. Wearing a Tam O'Shanter and goggles, he buzzed around the city incognito on a motor scooter painted red.

As for Joanne's Oscar, thieves in the late summer of 1976 broke into the Newman home in Connecticut and made off with it. The police eventually found it and presented her with her Oscar in a mock ceremony honoring her performance in The Three Faces of Eve once again.

In 1958 Joanne, under contract to 20th Century Fox, and Paul, still under contract to Warners, were hot properties. "Either of them, more or less, could have their pick of roles," claimed producer Lawrence Weingarten. "But in a fit of madness, Joanne gave in to Paul's demands to do a comedy, Rally Round the Flag, Boys! Maybe Paul had drunk too much beer that day."

For his services, Paul was paid $1,750 a week, although Warners took in $7,500 a week for lending him out. When Warners later made an annual review of his salary, Paul was notified that in the future he would be making $2,000 a week.

This screwball comedy and suburban farce was based on Max Shulman's best-selling novel. Filmed in CinemaScope, it was the story of a community, Putnam's Landing in Connecticut, that got into an uproar over a projected missile base.

The old-time director, Leo Carey, was assigned to the project. A veteran of scads of comedies, Carey had directed the best silent films of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, and he'd also helmed everyone from The Marx Brothers to W.C. Fields.

Paul later learned that the film had first been offered to Frank Sinatra, Deborah Kerr, and William Holden. "At least Carey didn't offer it to Brando first," Paul quipped.

Joan Collins with **Paul**
Modeling lingerie in
Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!

In mid-June of 1958, just before filming began, Paul and Joanne clashed with Carey. For the second female lead, Carey wanted Jayne Mansfield, but Joanne and Paul held out for their friend, Joan Collins.

"Blondes are funny," Carey told them. "Not brunettes." Nonetheless, because of the star power of the Newmans, he was forced to drop Mansfield and go with the British import.

At the time, Carey was considering Mansfield for the third lead, the blonde bombshell had just scored a hit in the film, Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter? When Carey called her to tell her she'd lost the part, she shot back, "Tough shit! I could have shown that Newman boy what it's like to fuck a real blonde. There's one problem, though. I heard he's Jewish, and I usually don't like to be penetrated by men with cut meat. I like my hunks with a little foreskin like Mickey Hargitay, Ronald Reagan, Frank Sinatra, and John F. Kennedy."

To make Rally Round the Flags, Boy!, Joanne herself had turned down the role of the luckless floozy in Some Came Running (1958), the MGM melodrama starring Sinatra and Dean Martin. Reportedly, for reasons of her own, Joanne did not want to co-star with Sinatra. The juicy role went to Shirley MacLaine, who would later co-star with Paul in the disastrous What a Way to Go!

At the time she showed up to film the Rally Round the Flag movie, Collins was known as "The Dime Store Liz Taylor." In the movie, she played a neighbor, who turns her dark and roving eye on Paul, cast as Joanne's husband, in this splurge of slapstick.

With Natalie Wood, Paul had drawn up a list of possible conquests for seduction among the sexpots of Hollywood. Joan had been on that list. But when she became a family friend, especially of Joanne's, he struck her name from the list.

Paul told Carey, "Joan's close friendship with Joanne took the fire out of my hard-on." Collins had actually met Paul earlier in the 1950s at a party at the home of a millionaire playboy. On that night, she'd encountered not only Paul, but Marlon Brando and James Dean. Each actor was attired in tight-fitting blue jeans and eating juicy hamburgers.

"Marlon was the sexiest," Joan later called, "Jimmy the moodiest and most brooding. P.L. was the most handsome and charismatic." Close friends of Paul's often called him P.L. His middle name was Leonard.

Joan Collins *Rallying!*
Ablutions for the dime-store Liz Taylor

Collins once weighed in on rumors about Paul's promiscuity. "I believe he was totally faithful to Joanne in the many years of their love affair in spite of the fact that every starlet (and some stars) threw their caps at this charismatic, blue-eyed actor." At least that was Collins' public opinion. What she really thought is not known. By "stars," she may have been referring to Lana Turner, Judy Garland, Susan Hayward, Ava Gardner, and Elizabeth Taylor.

Carey and Collins had no love for each other. She later called him, "an old Hollywood has-been who seemed to have had a sense of humor bypass."

Collins liked the Newmans both socially and professionally. She had accompanied them to the Academy Awards presentation when Joanne had won the Oscar for The Three Faces of Eve.

Collins recalled that during the making of the film, Paul created the most delicious salad dressing, "which made the boring lettuce taste marvelous." He would later, of course, share that salad dressing with the world. "I was lucky enough to have been one of the guinea pigs who got to try that dressing out."

She later regretted turning down Paul's request to put her own image on the label of Newman's Own Virgin Lemonade-"for the obvious irony it lent."

She said that at the last party she attended with Paul late in life, the guests played a morbid game of suggesting their own epitaphs. With a beer in hand, Paul rose to his feet and quipped, "Here lies Paul Newman who died a failure because his eyes turned brown."

When Paul filmed scenes with Collins, she was amazed at his incredible intake of beer on the set. In one scene, he was actually drunk when he had to swing from a chandelier. A heavy drinker herself, she asked him if he ever got a hangover.

"Sure I do," he said, "but I take a cold shower when I wake up, then a hot, one, then another cold one, and then I dip my face in a tub of ice for five minutes. You gotta try it!" He also confessed that he did hundreds of push-ups and sit-ups every day.

She later recalled that in one madcap scene with Paul, she tripped and her ass came into intimate contact with Paul's face. He quipped, "Angela Hoffa [the name of her character], I'd know that face anywhere." The crew burst into hysterical laughter.

Once again Paul bared his skinny legs when Collins catches him alone in a hotel suite without his pants.

Other than Collins, Newman, and Woodward, Carey had assembled a talented cast, notably including Jack Carson who had just filmed Cat on a Hot Tin Roof with Paul. A shrewd and talented actor, "Jack could have played Paul's role in his sleep," Carey claimed. "Paul struggled day and night to get it right."

When Carson sat with Carey watching the rushes, he delivered an early critique at Paul's attempt at comedy. "Newman is full of hot shit," Carson told Carey. "The pukey, yellow, runny kind."

Carey agreed with Carson. "Newman plays it too broad," he said. "In some scenes he should be more subtle. I should force him to sit through some Jimmy Stewart and Cary Grant movies. At least Jerry Lewis won't have to lie awake feeling threatened by the competition."

Carson performed his own scenes flawlessly, playing an oafish Army officer who at the end of the picture is fired into space in a rocket.

Carey was much more impressed with Joanne's performance as Newman's wife, comparing her take on screwball comedy to that of the late Carole Lombard, Clark Gable's former wife.

In some scenes, Dwayne Hickman stole the picture. He was cast as a caricature of an American teen, spoofing Brando's black-jacketed motorcyclist in The Wild One.

Of all the cast, it was the doe-eyed, beautiful blonde, Tuesday Weld, who caught Paul's eyes. Cast as "Comfort Goodpasture," Tuesday played a nubile high schooler. "But with Sandra Dee waiting in the wings for me, and growing up every day, I'd better lay off," Paul said. "Besides, Joanne is here hawkeying my every move."

Later in life, Tuesday starred with Steve McQueen in both Soldier in the Rain and The Cincinnati Kid. Paul later said, "I hope of boy Steve did the honors for me. I missed out on that one. Tuesday Weld is one delectable piece, and she looks hot to trot."

When Paul saw the completed film, he admitted to Carey, "I was weak. Joanne was more forceful. I loathed myself in it."

Time magazine seemed to agree with them, claiming the picture "fizzles like an overheated bottle of pop."

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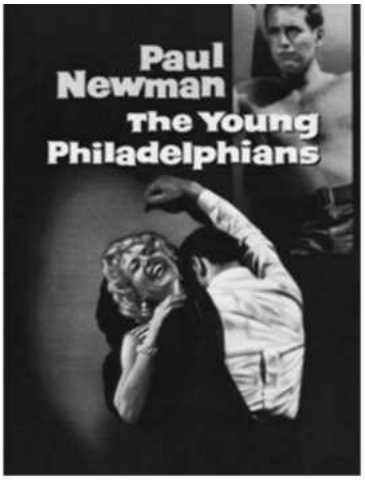
On the verge of buying out his contract with Warner Brothers, Paul agreed to make one final film for the studio that had held him in bondage for such a long time. He later said, "I had to make The Young Philadelphians. They had me trapped, but I knew from the start the picture was going to be a disaster."



Some movie exhibitors claimed that this poster depicted fornication.

What he really wanted to do was appear in a drama on Broadway early in 1959, playing Chance Wayne, the controversial hustler in Tennessee Williams' Sweet Bird of Youth. Even as Paul was shooting The Young Philadelphians, he was secretly meeting with Tennessee to discuss his role in the play and possible actresses who might star with him. The playwright had originally wanted Marlon Brando and Tallulah Bankhead to star in his play, but both stars turned him down. "There's that Brando once again," Paul said, "One day I'm going to turn down a role and let Brando take my sloppy seconds."

Based on a novel, The Philadelphians, by Richard Powell, the film told the story of a bright young lawyer climbing the ladder of success. The longtime director, Vincent Sherman, had assembled an impressive cast. He'd once been known for seducing his leading ladies, including Bette Davis and Joan Crawford.

Lined up to co-star with Paul were Barbara Rush, Alexis Smith, Brian Keith, Billie Burke, and Robert Vaughn.

Paul took delight in meeting Burke, the Good Witch Glinda from The Wizard of Oz. In 1914, she married theatrical impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, soonafter realizing that both of them had a desire for chorines.

Paul was also cast opposite another bisexual actress, Alexis Smith, who played a married woman in the film. She had to pretend she had the hots for Paul. "She was about as attracted to me as Eleanor Roosevelt was to Jerry Lewis," Paul later recalled.

Barbara Rush was the genuine straight female of the film. At first Paul was prepared to dislike her, dismissing her as "mere window dressing," but he came to respect her talent which had often been buried in programmers, including such films with Rock Hudson as Taza-Son of Cochise.

Still Paul resented her, but didn't want to tell her why. Who he resented was actually her former husband, Jeffrey Hunter, whom she'd divorced in 1955.

Jeffrey Hunter with
Barbara Rush
"The threat of a 14-inch dildo"

Paul told Vincent Sherman, "If that God damn Hunter doesn't stop telling everyone he knows that I made a pass at him, I'm going to stick a fourteen-inch black dildo up his much overused asshole. He's the one getting plugged-not me. He thinks that by gossiping about me, it'll take the heat off himself."

As a footnote, Adam West, the future campy Batman, played a socialite in the film. On screen and on his wedding night, he proves impotent and commits suicide. "Sherman had the good taste to get rid of that West guy right away," Paul later said.

Brian Keith, who specialized in playing gruff guys with a soft spot, also annoyed Paul. The actor had recently starred in a film, Dino, with Sal Mineo who played a troubled teen.

Somehow Keith had heard gossip about Paul's involvement with Sal, and he spread the word. "When I once visited Sal's dressing room during the shoot of Dino, I saw that he'd pasted six pictures of Newman on the wall, all shirtless," Keith told Sherman.

Perhaps Keith resented his role in The Young Philadelphians where he'd been cast as Paul's father, even though he was only four years older than Paul. "What is it with this stuck-up prick, Newman?" Keith asked Sherman. "I know he's had at least two facelifts. Sex symbol, my asshole. I bet my prick is twice the size of anything this aging Romeo has hanging."

Of all the stars in the film, Paul bonded more with Robert Vaughn, who was cast as his alcoholic ex-college buddy. In the film, when Robert is falsely indicted on a charge of murder, Paul agrees to defend him.

Paul even agreed to a screen test, but warned Vaughn that "I'll be off camera." Their big scene together was when Paul, playing a corporate lawyer, visits Vaughn in jail. The two actors had stayed up the night before, rehearsing for their big scene together.

To research his role, Vaughn, playing a Korean War vet and Main Line alcoholic, visited Skid Row, hanging out with winos who'd lost all hope. This diligence paid off. That year, Vaughn was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

On seeing the final cut, Paul detested his performance. "It's pure soap opera. I could have called in my performance."

Even so, The Young Philadelphians was the only film that Paul made for Warner Brothers that showed a profit.

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On "the hottest day in the summer" of 1958, Paul arrived at the offices of Jack Warner. The studio chief had asked his employee, Ira Thomas, who took shorthand, to record the exchange between the two of them.

Robert Vaughn with **Paul Newman**
Hanging out with Skid Row bums

It was because of her later "loose lips sink ships" revelations that we know of that now notorious dialogue that took place between Paul and the studio chief.

Before Paul arrived for a show down, Warner had told Ira, "Not since Miss Bette Davis have I had to deal with such a temperamental star. The kid has hated every script we ever sent him. I want you to record every `God damn' and every `fuck you' he says. As for me, I plan to keep smiling through the entire interview and treat the scumbag faggot with great respect. I promise, even when things heat up, I won't call him a cocksucker. If he sat in my seat, Louis B. Mayer would call the prick a cocksucker. I must not lose any patience with my fellow Jew. But before this day ends, I predict I will have taken this blue-eyed pipsqueak to the cleaners where he's going to face the hottest pressing iron of his wasted life."

Confronting Paul that day, Warner did not challenge him about all the rumblings he'd heard about Paul's discontent. One of his associates had even told Warner that Paul referred to him as "fuck-face." The studio chief confessed he'd been called worse by his own brothers. "Fuck-face is a new one, however. Usually I'm known as `the fucking Jew bastard.' Bette Davis even told me that she suspected my prick is so short that I wet my pants every time I take a piss. She claims that my little hose doesn't hang far enough from my zipper to do the job. I told her, in one of the few times I was not a gentleman, that I suspected her cunt was so big that men have to insert their entire heads, ears and all, in her vagina to bring her satisfaction."

"Now, now, Mr. Warner," Ira said. "Now, now. Let's not forget I'm a lady."

"Sorry," he said.

Ira, who made many revelations about the stars at Warner Brothers after she'd safely retired, claimed that Paul entered the office of Jack Warner, "his face a red purplish glow. He was obviously primed for a fight. But Mr. Warner disarmed him almost immediately. Using Joan Crawford's famous line, Mr. Warner had told me in advance, `I've dealt with bigger shits than Paul Newman.'"

Warner was known for a skilled negotiating tactic whereby he immediately threw his victim off guard by

making a startling revelation. As soon as Paul was seated before him, Warner surprised him by saying, "I just saved your career yesterday, though it cost me a bit of money. Not only that, I saved the career of your bitch."

"Don't call her that," Paul protested.

"Why not?" he asked. "The word is too good for her? I've called Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Olivia de Havilland, and countless other broads bitches. These are women with far more talent than your wife."

"Okay, okay," Paul said, growing impatient. "Sure, Joanne can be a bitch at times, but that's not why we're here. And just how did you save our careers. This I've got to hear."

"Confidential was about to expose you and Woodward," he said. "They have evidence that you're a secret faggot and that she's a lesbian. That you married each other to serve as each other's beards. I paid them off to the tune of $20,000."

"That's about what I get from making a film for you or for a loan-out."

"You don't have to pay me back," Warner said. "My treat."

"You know, of course, that that Confidential reporter is a fucking liar. Joanne and I are very much in love."

"I know nothing of the sort," Warner said. "And I don't give a fucking nickel what kind of arrangement you two New Yorkers have with each other. I envy you. I only wish my wife was as understanding. From what I hear, you plug any hole available, and you don't inquire about the your victim's gender. But let's not talk about indiscretions. Let's get down to business. What's on your mind?"

"Why is it that ever since I set foot in this hell-hole you've given me every rotten script that has come along, beginning with The Silver Chalice? If there's a good role, you see that I don't get it. You've thrown nothing but shit at me."

Jack smiled. When exchanges became heated, he always sat back and smiled. It was part of his negotiating technique. He knew that Mayer, in contrast, would have been screaming by now.

"I haven't given you a really challenging script because you can't handle it. You're too limited as an actor. I've worked with the best of them, or at least seen their work at other studios. Paul Muni, now that's an actor. Bogie, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson. I did pretty well with a guy named Marlon Brando. Surely you've heard of him."

"Let's stop the games," Paul said. "You've held me in bondage long enough. I want out of my contract."

"But you've got three years left," Warner protested. "I'm entitled to use you in whatever crap I come up with. Three years. After that, you'll be too old for romantic parts. I know that you were born in 1925. You were practically a middle-aged man when you arrived in Hollywood. You still look good, although if I were a homosexual, I'd probably go for the Errol Flynn type, not you. I must admit the fags and the ladies go for you when you take off your shirt. To me you look a bit puny. Believe me, Hollywood is filled with thousands of aspiring actors with greater chests than yours."

Paul rose to his feet. "How much do I have to cough up to escape from Warner's?"

"Just half a million meager bucks."

"I had twenty thousand in mind," Paul said. "Fifty thousand at the most."

The phone rang, and Ira answered it for him. "My God," she said. "It's Mae West on the phone."

"You've got to be kidding," Warner said. She's still alive. She used to be big."

"She's got this script," Ira said. "I heard she's shopping it around studio by studio."

"Okay, I'll take her call." Warner was the epitome of charm and graciousness as he picked up the phone. "My Little Chickadee, so good to hear from you."

Before launching into his talk with a fading star, he turned to Paul. All smiles had evaporated. "It's half a million-or else!"

Paul stormed out of the office, driving over to speak to his new agent, Lew Wasserman, a celebrated figure. Before their hour-long meeting ended, the shrewd Wasserman had advised him to go for it, although he promised to call Warner personally to see if he'd go down in his demands. "I know Warner, however, and once he utters a figure, his pride will force him to stick to it."

Before leaving the agent's office that day, Wasserman assured Paul that at the very minimum he could get $250,000 for his next picture if he broke the contract. He even held out the figure of $350,000. "In no time at all, you'll be able to pay Warner back."

"Get me out of that God damn contract," Paul said, standing up. "Let all of Hollywood know that from this day forth, Paul Newman is his own man. I'm on the auction block. For sale to the highest bidder." At the door, he looked back sternly at Wasserman. "Don't send over any more shitty scripts. I'm a star now, and I want only the pick of the litter."

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Asked to comment on his return to Broadway, Paul said, "You wake up in the middle of the night and find yourself drenched in sweat. You have this terrible fear that your fraud will be discovered, and you'll be back in the dog kennel business. That's why it's good to work on Broadway as well as Hollywood. You know you'll get the hell kicked out of you once in a while, but if you don't you'll fall back on a lot of tried-and-true tricks an actor always has stashed away in his pocket."

Paul had just signed a contract to appear on Broadway in Sweet Bird of Youth, the latest play by Tennessee Williams, who was then riding the crest of a wave of success before entering a long decline in the 1960s.

Unknown to Paul at the time, Tennessee had first shown the play to Marlon Brando. After reading the script about the doomed hustler, a gigolo to a faded movie star, Marlon flew to Key West to discuss his possible appearance on the stage. He later dropped out when he learned that producer Cheryl Crawford and director Elia Kazan really wanted "pretty boy Newman" in the role.

Marlon later regretted that he didn't pursue the role of Chance Wayne more aggressively. "I know more about hustling than Newman," he said. He also regretted not having appeared in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof opposite Elizabeth Taylor. "I know more about being a homosexual than Newman," he said. "It's very clear to me that Tennessee modeled Alexandra del Lago after Tallulah. I surely know how to appear opposite Tallulah better than Newman. Besides, I hear my prick is bigger than his."

For the role of Alexandra Del Lago (aka Princess Kosmonopolis), Tennessee first offered the part to his dear friend, Anna Magnani, whom he'd visited in Rome. Producer Cheryl Crawford, later said, "Tenn must have been on something at the time. Magnani is all wrong for the part. The role calls for an American star, and the Hollywood Hills is full of women who can play hasbeen actresses. Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Lauren Bacall, and the beat goes on."

Magnani had never viewed a Paul Newman film, and she demanded to see an image of him. Frank Merlo, Tennessee's longtime companion, found a publicity shot of Paul and presented it to the Italian diva. She studied it seriously for a moment and then ripped it to shreds. "No! No! No!" she shouted at Tennessee. "I can't play with this man. There is no poetry in his face."

After Magnani wisely turned down the role, Tennessee presented it to Tallulah. After all, he'd written the part with her in mind. She read the script and told Tennessee that she'd seriously consider it. Immediately she wanted to know what actor would be cast as the gigolo opposite her. "Not Marlon Brando!" she yelled at Tennessee, puffing furiously on a cigarette. "I will never work with that bastard again. Do you know what he did during my long monologue in The Eagle Has Two Heads? He turned his back to the audience and urinated against the scenery."

"That's our Marlon," Tennessee said. "He can urinate on me any day he wants. No, it's not Marlon. I want that divine creature, Paul Newman, to play Chance opposite you. His golden velvet body was designed by God herself to grace pink satin sheets."

Tallulah Bankhead
"I must meet this Apollo."

"I must meet this Apollo," she said. "I've only seen one of his movies, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. After seeing him shirtless, I decided I must have him. After all, I went to Hollywood with only one purpose in mind-not to make those stupid movies I did, but to fuck that divine Gary Cooper. Why don't you arrange for me to meet God's new wonder? Have you had him yet, dah-ling?"

"Not yet, Princess," he said, "but Bill Inge has. If Inge can get Newman, so can I. I'll place a hundred dollar bet with you that before Sweet Bird ends its run, I will have had him."

"You're on, dah-ling" she said. "I like bets. My whole life is a bet. Right now I'm betting against the clock. What type casting Sweet Bird will be for me. A fading has-been of an actress. Look at me, dah-ling. I used to be Tallulah Bankhead."

To his friends at Actors Studio, Paul recalled his first meeting with Tallulah. Upon being introduced to Paul by Tennessee, she went right to the point. "How big is your cock, dah-ling."

"That's for you to find out later tonight," Paul said.

"A promise I will hold you to," she said. "Come on in, dear one. I'm already seven drinks ahead of you pansies."

"I'm not a pansy," Paul protested. "I'm a happily married man."

"Oh, please, dah-ling, people are eating," she said. "Sit down and tell me all about your divine self. I'm especially interested as to why you haven't put out yet for my devoted friend here. After all, he wrote your greatest part in that Cat movie, and I think you'd owe him one."

Trying to be as sophisticated as this worldly pair, Paul looked over at Tennessee. "I do owe you one," he said. "But you can only have me from the neck down-and not tonight." He glanced toward Tallulah. "It appears that I'm

going to be booked up this evening."

For three hours, Tallulah amused Paul and Tennessee with her quick wit and drunken charm.

"Oh, God, dah-ling," she said. "I've had everybody from Hattie McDaniel to John Barrymore. I struck out with Ethel Barrymore, however. When I propositioned her, she slapped my face."

As she went on and the drinking continued, she said, "I've tried several varieties of sex. The conventional position makes me claustrophobic, and all the other positions give me either a stiff neck or lockjaw."

By one o'clock both Tennessee and Paul were ready to leave. As they rose to bid her good night, Tallulah urged Tennessee "to run along into the night, dah-ling. I know you're meeting up with this new kid on the block-Warren Beatty, I think that's his name. He's going to appear in Bill Inge's A Loss of Roses. He also wants to audition for you. Good luck tonight. This Warren Beatty sounds divine."

Paul started to leave with Tennessee but Tallulah possessively grabbed his arm. "Not you, dah-ling. Tonight you're going to experience first hand what brought such enchantment to Sir Winston Churchill."

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Tallulah later claimed she'd turned down the role and the chance to star opposite Paul because she'd already committed to do Crazy October, a play written by her friend James Leo Herlihy. Even though the playwright graciously offered to tear up her contract, she said she felt that "would not be right. If anything dah-ling, Tallulah is loyal to her friends," she said.

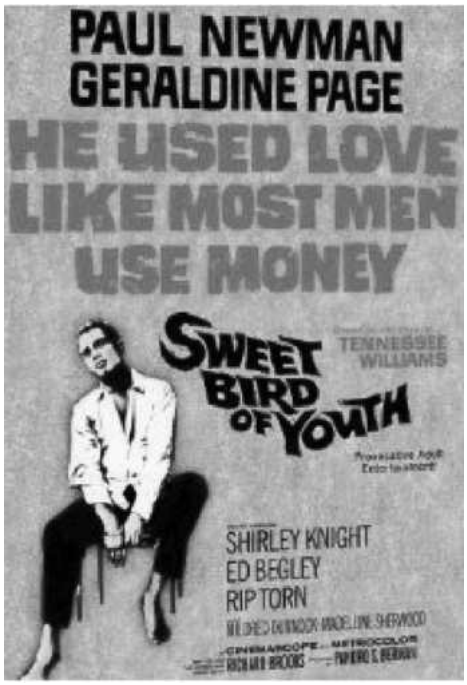
The role went to Geraldine Page, Paul's close friend from the Actors Studio.

Years later, Herlihy told the author of this biography, "I think Tallulah was afraid to go on the stage as Alexandra Del Lago. Tennessee had modeled the character on her, and she would have been better in the part. Let's face it: Tallulah is a debauched, drug-addicted ex-film queen, and Geraldine is not."

"With Paul Newman and Tallulah Bankhead starring in the same play, those two would have had theater-goers lined up for blocks," Herlihy predicted. "Incidentally, did you know that Tallulah, Tennessee, and myself all got our fifteen minutes of ecstasy with Paul? It was strictly a one-night stand for all of us. Notably, he never returned to any of our beds for a repeat performance."

One afternoon at the Actors Studio, Paul told Rod Steiger and Lee Strasberg, "In Tennessee's play, I'm a male whore. Guess who is giving me tips on how to play the character? Steve McQueen. In his teenage years, he had a lot of experience selling his meat to guys."

For the play, Kazan had assembled what was perhaps the most talented cast on Broadway during its 1959 season. Although she'd been considered too young for the part, Geraldine settled beautifully into the role of Alexandra Del Lago.



Even during rehearsals, she electrified the cast with her interpretation of this boozing, washed-up actress. Vain, insecure, and desperate, she played it with raw emotion, and she would well deserve her Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Drama.

Diana Hyland played Heavenly Finely, Chance's former girlfriend. In the play Chance takes Alexandra Del Lago back to his hometown in Florida to hook up with Heavenly again. Before leaving town, he'd infected her with a venereal disease, forcing her to have a hysterectomy.

Heavenly is the daughter of Boss Finley, a brutal figure who rules the town. The role was played on the stage by veteran actor Sidney Blackmer. Rip Torn, who would later take over the role of Chance, was cast as Boss Finley's son and Chance's avowed enemy.

Torn and Geraldine would marry in 1963, a union that lasted until her death in 1987.

In a brilliant performance, Madeleine Sherwood was cast as Boss Finley's discarded mistress. Bruce Dern, who became a great drinking buddy of Paul's, was cast in a small role.

Making some excuse to Kazan and presumably to his family, Paul flew to San Juan for a long weekend with Tennessee. Both the actor and playwright were world-class drinkers, and they shared a deluxe suite together at El Convento Hotel. One old-time retainer there remembered them checking in.

Once when asked during an interview, Tennessee, as predicted, denied their weekend together. "I have never auditioned actors that way," the playwright claimed, although his statement wasn't true. "Besides, Paul Newman is too big a star to lie on the casting couch." Tennessee, of course, was referring to Paul's career-advancing moves in the earlier 50s when he became involved with both Bill Inge and Joshua Logan.

Frank Merlo revealed to Tennessee's friend, Stanley Haggart, and the author that one night during "pillow talk" Tennessee confessed that he had indeed serviced Paul one weekend. "I knew it would be my one and only chance to have him, and I took advantage of it, just as I did with Marlon way back in those early days in Provincetown."

Although Frank and Tennessee were lovers, they had an open relationship and talked about their lovers with each other. Paul sometimes spoke to his confidantes, but he never mentioned that San Juan weekend with his friends, so far as it is known.

Paul as hustler
Chance Wayne
"Your body is designed
for satin sheets"

"Let's just call it The Lost Weekend," he told Kazan upon his return. Paul was referring to a film Ray Milland made in 1945, where he'd won an Oscar for playing an alcoholic.

Tennessee also told Frank that after their weekend together, Paul warned him. "Now, God damn it, the next time you have a great part, you come to me, not Marlon Brando. Who's the man, baby?"

In his memoirs, Elia Kazan, A Life, the director didn't seem to know that Paul, his male star, existed in Sweet Bird of Youth. But privately he told Tennessee that "Newman was too much of a pretty boy for the part. I'm going to dye his hair red to make him look more sleazy, and I'm also going to order him to get his hairline shaved. I want audiences to see him with a receding hairline. That will make him look over the hill. After all, he's playing a gigolo past his prime."

Initially Kazan had wanted Paul but after the first week of rehearsals he began to have his doubts. He feared that Paul was not adequately portraying the vulnerability of Chance. Then Kazan came up with a plan, although he knew it'd be brutal on the actor. He never gave Paul one compliment for his work, although he praised almost everything Geraldine did.

Years later Kazan confessed to Tennessee that he'd deliberately "coldshouldered" Paul throughout the rehearsals.

"Chance Wayne is terribly insecure, uncertain of his mankind, possibly gay, and afraid of tomorrow. By destroying his self-worth, I'll make Newman a more believable Chance Wayne on opening night," Kazan said.

In spite of the brutal treatment during rehearsals, Paul had only kind words to say about Kazan, who had so intimidated him. "Kazan has broad shoulders, and his invention, patience, and imagination are extraordinary," Paul later said. "Not once did the man who'd directed Brando compare me to him, and for that I was God damn grateful."

Before opening night, Paul tried to hide his private time with Tennessee from Kazan, but he did make one confession. During one drunken night, he'd gone to bed with Geraldine Page. "I was always planning to do it, but we finally committed the horrible sin. We're both Method actors. We felt it would make our characters more believable if we knew each other as David knew Bathsheba."

Kazan congratulated him on his good judgment. Unknown to Paul, the director was not the best person to keep a secret. After Kazan's appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he outed fellow Communists, Brando had nicknamed him "The Squealer." Kazan liked to discuss the private sex lives of stars he'd directed, including not only Brando but James Dean as well.

Paul Newman with **Geraldine Page**
Playing a male whore to a debauched actress

On March 10, 1959, Sweet Bird of Youth opened on Broadway at the Martin Beck Theater. The play had a shattering climax when Boss Finley's goons come to seek their revenge on Chance for deflowering Heavenly. Led by Rip Torn, the bully boys of the Old South descend to castrate Chance, so he'll never again ruin the life of another young woman.

Even though Paul played a heel, there were tears in the eyes of some first- nighters when he delivered his climatic line. "I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding-not even that-no, just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in all of us."

On opening night, Paul truly staged a coup de theatre.

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Paul received his best reviews to date in Tennessee's play about lost youth. So far, not one review has surfaced in which his acting was compared to that of Marlon Brando. Had he become his own man as an actor at last?

As the play became more deeply entrenched within its run, Paul received many visitors backstage, many of them world-famous stars. But on April 8, 1959 the most blessed visitor arrived in the form of an infant. Elinor Teresa Newman was born and named for two of her grandmothers. Paul and Joanne insisted on calling her "Nell." Paul was now the father-proud or otherwiseof four children, all of whom were girls except Scott.

Although he'd tried to bond with Scott over the years, father and son remained rather distant from each other. Scott adored his mother, Jackie, more than he did his father.

Scott always seemed to feel that Paul had betrayed his family "by shacking up with that Southern magnolia."

One of Paul's strangest visitors was an aging former hustler who sent Paul a note backstage inviting him to have a beer with him after the show. "I was the guy Tennessee based the character of Chance Wayne on," the note read.

Tennessee Williams
"Servicing" Chance Wayne

Paul was intrigued enough to allow the stage manager to show the man backstage. When Paul opened the door to his dressing room, he encountered a no-longer young man who looked unkempt, a kind of over-the-hill Tab Hunter. Somehow the years of heavy drinking and a wasted life had taken a toll, but, even so, Paul saw the remains of the hustler's former beauty.

He shook Paul's hand. "I'm Mitch Parker," he said. Once, when Frankie and Tenn broke up, I filled in. Back in those days I could get a hundred a night."

Paul invited him across the street for a beer, and the two men talked until the bar closed down. He believed Mitch's story, and the former hustler had several snapshots taken of his life with Tennessee.

"I was actually castrated," he said. "That's where Tenn got the idea. It wasn't on the orders of a political boss. Back then, I let men do me for money, but I screwed gals on the side. I once got caught. That was in a town down on the Panhandle. The husband and some of his friends kidnapped me and took me to an abandoned cornfield where they cut my balls off. I had broken up with Tenn at that time. I wrote him begging for him to send me some money, but he never answered. I read in the paper about the play. It sounded familiar. I knew I was Chance Wayne. I never shacked up with a movie star, but I told Tenn about the year I lived with this rich woman in Boca Raton. She had once been a great beauty, but time had passed her by. I just know you're playing me."

"And well I might be," Paul said. It was getting late. Paul slipped him a one hundred dollar bill and watched him disappear down a rainy street in the Broadway district.

As he watched him go, he speculated on the fate of Chance Wayne at the end of the play. To him, the Chance Waynes of the world just seemed to disappear in the vastness of the American wasteland, perhaps escaping into an early death.

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It was Tennessee who brought Ava Gardner to see the play. Perhaps imitating Ernest Hemingway, the playwright had always wanted to see Ava cast in one of his plays. Although somewhat pleased in the main with Geraldine Page's performance, he felt Ava would bring a "tragic loveliness" to the character of Alexandra Del Lago. He'd not been too happy that Geraldine was playing the role with a harpy's screech and looked rather blousy. He felt that the film version should present his character as a greater beauty, albeit faded.

At the end of the play, Ava told Tennessee that the role of Alexandra Del Lago "hits me in the belt. Did you base this character on me? I'm called a man-hungry movie star. I'm virtually retired now and certainly a has-been. That pill-popping and heavy drinking comes close to having been inspired by the life of Ava Gardner. The whole world knows that I ripped off Rita Hayworth's life in The Barefoot Contessa. Now it's time I got roasted."

Even so, she wanted to meet Paul Newman. "He's like so many men I've loved temporarily, then had to discard and move on to the next one."

Meeting Paul, she found him enchanting. "When you took off your shirt, I swooned. I always wished Frankie had a better chest. All of his growth went into his cock."

He'd already been warned that Ava had a "potty mouth," so he wasn't at all surprised to hear that line coming from what he viewed as one of the most beautiful creatures on Earth. In some ways, he found her beauty more arresting than that of Elizabeth Taylor herself, or so he would claim later to his friends.

Tennessee invited Paul and Ava to join him in a little hidden tavern in the Broadway district where actors often gathered after curtains fell.

"So what did you think of our little drama tonight?" Paul asked Ava.

She was not a woman to mince words. "I'm from North Carolina, honey, a real Tarheel. We call a spade a spade. There's some pretty strong stuff herea male whore, drug addiction, alcoholism, racism, venereal disease, and castration. That castration thing was a bit over the top. I shuddered to think America's reigning male sex symbol might be losing the source of his power."

"It gives me nightmares just to think about it," he said. "I find myself touching the family jewels every night just to see that they're still there."

"You need a beautiful woman to fondle them to reassure you that you're indeed still intact."

Tennessee later claimed he was rather insulted by Ava's critique. But in some ways she evoked the appraisal of Henry Popkin in the Tulane Drama Review.

"Williams now seems to be in a sort of race with himself, surpassing homosexuality with cannibalism, cannibalism with castration, devising new and greater shocks in each succeeding play. It is as if he is trying to see how far he can push the Gothic mode of playwriting."

Ava very accurately predicted that the writing would have to be cleaned up for the screen. "The day will come when Hollywood can present realistic drama. I want to be the first actress to use the word `fuck' in a major motion picture, but Elizabeth Taylor will probably beat me to it, since every third word that comes out of her lovely lips begins with F."

Ava Gardner
"A tragic loveliness"

Tennessee, who knew Hemingway only briefly from Key West, quizzed her about working on the adaptation of his novel The Sun Also Rises.

She spoke eloquently of the "last days" of Errol Flynn and Tyrone Power who had co-starred with her in the movie. Both stars would meet early deaths, Power in 1958, Flynn in 1959.

Ava told Paul and Tennessee that she'd dated both Power and Flynn back in the Forties. "When they showed up on the set of The Sun Also Rises, both of them looked like old men. They had prematurely aged. You know, of course, they used to be lovers."

"I didn't know that," Paul said.

"They must have made a lovely couple," Tennessee said. "I think they were the most beautiful men I've ever seen on the screen." He flashed his famous grin at Paul. "That is, until this divine creature came along."

"Flattery has already gotten you everywhere," Paul quipped.

Quick to pick up on the innuendo, Ava said, "Oh, I see. You two fellows already know each other."

"Don't worry," Tennessee said. "The passage will not appear in my memoirs."

"Half of my lovers, including Howard Hughes and Peter Lawford, were secret cocksuckers," she said. "Rory Calhoun, when he wasn't fucking Lana or Marilyn, told me that what Hollywood needs is more good cocksuckers."

Tennessee laughed, but Paul did not. In some way, as he'd later confess, Ava was one of the most outspoken women he'd ever known. She far topped his wife in giving her candid opinions.

"Flynn especially was a spectacular wreck, not a magnificent wreck," Ava said. "He was far too gone to be magnificent at anything. I should know. We tried it again one night for old time's sake. Forget it."

"You'd be perfect for the role of a lost exile from Hollywood," Paul said, abruptly changing the subject.

"Oh, darling," she said, "I fear I am indeed Alexandra Del Lago and don't really need to play her in a movie."

"Perhaps some time with me would convince you," Paul said.

At that point, Tennessee jumped up from the table. "I'll pay the tab and leave you two love birds. He's good, Ava. Enjoy." He kissed both Paul and Ava on the lips before wandering into the night like some lost feathered bird.

No one knows for sure what transpired that night, because Paul and Ava, at least in this case, didn't indulge in Monday morning quarterbacking after Saturday's game. Tennessee, however, always maintained that they connected, at least for a one-night stand. "It must have been a lovely coupling," Tennessee said, "the world's most beautiful woman, a bit past her prime, coming together with the world's most beautiful man."

In spite of their night together, Paul did not convince Ava to play Alexandra Del Lago, so they could at least continue their love-making on screen. He did tell Elia Kazan that Ava Gardner "is one of the world's most fascinating creatures. She is Venus." He might have been referring to her 1948 film, One Touch of Venus.

In 1964, Ava finally agreed to do a Tennessee Williams film, The Night of the Iguana, based on his Broadway play which had starred Bette Davis as Maxime Faulk. Davis had appeared in a wig so bright red she could have been mistaken for Lucille Ball.

Tennessee was intrigued with the idea of Ava playing opposite Paul as the lecherous, defrocked priest.

Over dinner at a Hollywood tavern, Ava expressed her reluctance to follow Bette Davis' stage interpretation of the role.

Ava told Paul and Tennessee that she had once met Davis when she was checking into a hotel in Madrid. "I rushed up to her and introduced myself. I told her how enthralled I was to meet her. She looked at me skeptically, almost like a queen eyeing one of her subjects. `Of course, you are,' she said to me before walking on."

Paul showed a strong interest in the role opposite Ava, but his prior commitments did not match the shooting schedule. Eventually, the role went to Richard Burton instead.

Finally, for the 1972 release of The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean, Paul and Ava came together in this First Arts Production directed by John Huston and co-starring Victoria Principal.

The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean

An illustrious cast on a bad hair day:
Paul (upper left) **John Huston** (upper right), **Tony Perkins** (lower left),
and **Tab Hunter** (lower right)

The film was significant for another reason. It brought Anthony Perkins back for a reunion with two of his former lovers-Tab Hunter and Paul himself.

On the set, Ava told Paul that she'd regretted turning down the role of Alexandra Del Lago. "We would have made a great team," she predicted.

Cast as Lily Langtry, mistress to the English king Edward VII on a holiday in America, Ava and Paul reunited as long-lost friends on the set. A photographer snapped their picture sitting together, his head cradled in her ample bosom. Huston jokingly told the crew that Paul and Ava were bosom buddies.

Ava's truce with Paul had the life of a sickly butterfly. When she invited him back to her hotel room for the night, he told her, "I'm an old married man and faithful to my wife these days."

That infuriated Ava. "That will be the day," she screeched at him.

"The second time around with Paul didn't pan out," Huston said. "She became even more furious when word

reached her that Paul had called her `predatory.'"

After her scenes were shot, she told her old friend Huston, "Paul Newman is one of my least favorite actors in all of Hollywood. Believe me, I've known all the shits, but he's the biggest shit."

"Ava, dear one, Marilyn sang it all. `We all lose our charms in the end.'"

"Fuck you!" Ava said, before disappearing inside a limousine to take her back to Los Angeles.

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Lana came back into Paul's life when she became one of the many actresses flying into New York to see and evaluate Tennessee's new play. There weren't that many great parts for aging actresses, and Lana wanted to see if she felt comfortable doing the role before making a play for it back in Hollywood. "After all," she told Tennessee, "MGM owes me a few favors. I practically saved them from bankruptcy in the 40s."

Ava Gardner as **Lily Langtry**
Love is never better
the second time around

Over a drink at Sardi's before the curtain went up on Sweet Bird of Youth that night, Tennessee and Lana laughed about his former days at MGM when he'd been assigned to work on the screenplay of Marriage Is a Private Affair that was set to star her. Although he fretted for days over the project, he ultimately could not relate to the plot, joking to friends that he was working on a "celluloid brassiere for Miss Turner."

"What happened to you at MGM?" Lana asked Tennessee.

"The studio heads finally decided that I was not going to produce a screenplay for you," Tennessee told her. "They then assigned me to a scenario about Billy the Kid. That was more Gore Vidal's fantasy-not mine. Then they asked me if I wanted to create a scenario starring Margaret O'Brien. I told them where they could shove Little Miss Margaret. Finally, MGM and I parted ways."

"Finally, MGM and I parted ways, too," Lana said. "But I may come back if I get cast in your Sweet Bird."

Throughout the performance of Sweet Bird of Youth, Tennessee noted that Lana studied Geraldine's every movement and expression "like a hawk."

Lana told Tennessee she'd loved the play but, like her best friend, Ava Gardner, she feared it would have to be "cleaned up" for film audiences.

She was all charm and grace when Tennessee escorted her backstage for a reunion with Paul. Right in front of Tennessee, she kissed Paul. It was a long and lingering open-mouthed kiss that forced her to repair her makeup in

front of Paul's dressing room mirror.

"I'm in New York all alone," she told Paul.

Lana Turner with her old flame
Ronald Reagan
"A celluloid brassiere" from Tennessee

He wasn't sure where her other lovers-or could there be a husband?were. He'd lost track of her many entanglements. "I need someone by my side at all times," she said. "I'm so dependent on a man. But aren't most women like me?"

"I can definitely assure you that most women aren't like Lana Turner," Paul said.

"I've always been alone," Tennessee said, not revealing his many companions over the years. "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers I meet along the way."

It was agreed that Tennessee would take both of them to dinner at Sardi's before retiring for the night. Lana wanted to go dancing later, and Paul agreed to be her escort.

At Sardi's later in the evening, all heads turned as Lana walked in with Paul on one side, Tennessee on the other.

This famous trio did not talk about Sweet Bird, but listened to a startling sexual confession by Tennessee. He claimed he was going to Cuba.

"You'd better stay out of there," Paul warned him. "You could be kidnapped and held for ransom."

"If that's what it takes to meet Fidel Castro, I will take that risk," he said. "I've got this powerful crush on Fidel Castro. I dream at night of getting raped by him. If it takes a kidnapping for me to meet my idol, I'm willing to take that risk."

This was no idle boast on Tennessee's part. His friend, Meade Roberts, once claimed, "Tenn wanted to be kidnapped by Castro-also by Che Guevara, another one of his fantasies. He'd had the hots for them when that pair was still outlawed and hiding in the Sierra Maestra, kidnapping Americans for ransom. Tenn thought very seriously

about getting himself into a situation like that-anything to meet Castro."

Lana told Tennessee that she found the idea ghoulish and feared for his safety. Later she'd tell Paul that she thought the playwright might possibly be insane.

"Like all great artists," he countered. After dinner with Tennessee, Lana, in a limousine with Paul, went to a night club uptown. As the stunningly beautiful couple entered, a hush fell over the patrons. She looked gorgeous, sheathed a clinging white evening gown that was slit high up the side and low down the front. Her blonde hair was cropped short.

Dancing in Paul's arms, she told him, "Everybody is looking at us. We'd make a fabulous pair on the screen."

Guerilla fighters **Ché Guevara** and **Fidel Castro** Tennessee's fantasy kidnappers

"Everybody is looking at you," he corrected her. "To attract attention, I think I'll have to take off my jacket, shirt, and undershirt."

"Later, darling," she whispered into his ear.

Paul did not share details of his later visit to Lana's hotel suite. He'd seduced her before, finding her clinging and desperate.

Even though he didn't give a blowby-blow description of what happened that night between Lana and him, he did share an intimacy two nights later when he had a drink with Tennessee.

"As I was leaving her suite the following morning, she held me close and delivered a shocker. `You may not know it now,' she said to me, `or even tomorrow. But one day in the not-so-distant future you are going to become my next husband. Note I said next and not last husband.' With that tantalizing remark, she shut the door in my face."

***

Paul was stunned when he received a note from the stage door security guard. He was used to beautiful movie stars arriving backstage to greet him, often on the pretense of wanting to appear as Alexandra Del Lago in the movie version. He told Frank Sinatra when he came to visit one night that he felt that many of these glamorous stars "are just coming backstage to hook up with me so that they can fuck me."

Sinatra laughed at the remark, telling him that an entire lineup of screen queens, ranging from Joan Crawford to Ingrid Bergman, had arrived at the stage door to greet the new sensation of Broadway, Marlon Brando, when he

appeared in A Streetcar Named Desire.

"Fuck those broads who appeal to you and tell the rest of them to go home and use a dildo," was Sinatra's advice.

One note that arrived was the most startling of all. Not from a women, it was from Elvis Presley. Once again.

Was he still bitter over not being allowed to appear as Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof? Intrigued, Paul told the guard that he'd meet Elvis when the curtain went down. In a return reply, Elvis told him that he'd be waiting outside in a white limousine, its windows darkened so that fans could not peer inside to discover him.

After the show, one of Elvis' "boys" opened the back door of the limousine and ushered Paul inside where Elvis was waiting, swigging blackberry brandy directly from the bottle. "Haul your ass in here, kid," Elvis said. "I'll take you for a ride."

"Another pissing contest?" Paul asked. "Don't tell me you want to play Chance Wayne in the movie."

"No more pissing," Elvis said. "You won that round. We've got some serious business to talk over tonight. And, yes, MGM has offered me the role of Chance Wayne. Fuck what Col. Parker says. I'm gonna play that male whore. As a film star, no one takes me seriously considering the shit I do." He swigged more from the brandy bottle. "But that day is gonna change."

"Actually I think you might be great as a hot-headed redneck male pros titute," Paul said.

"Thanks for the compliment," Elvis said. "Hal Wallis wanted me to appear in The Rainmaker with Katharine Hepburn and Burt Lancaster. I was set to do it, but the deal fell through. All the serious roles I've been offered I never got to do. That scumbag Parker saw to that. He sabotaged every deal."

In the suite of the king of rock and roll, Paul confronted a much more mature and rather bitter Elvis, not the man he'd encountered before. He continued swigging the blackberry brandy, but he was also popping pills. Paul suspected the drug was Seconals, viewed as relatively harmless in the late 50s.

Years before, Elvis had been considered quite the Southern gentleman, but the star tonight was snapping orders at his staff. He was rude and flashing a bad temper, but not at Paul, whom he continued to treat with respect.

"Col. Parker is a bloodsucker," Elvis claimed, "and he's virtually ruined my film career with junk movies. This time, thanks to Chance Wayne, I'm gonna defy the fucker."

"I got to ask you," Paul said. "Why am I here? I have no control over casting. If you want the part, you've got it. You're the hottest thing in town. I think you opposite Ava Gardner would be the biggest grosser of the year."

"Ava Gardner," he said. "I've never fucked her. Frank Sinatra told me he'd cut off my dick if I plunged into that succulent pussy."

"This time no pissing," Paul said. "If you want the role, it's yours. I'd love to play Chance Wayne on the screen, but it's yours for the asking."

"That would make me a heel," Elvis said, before turning to one of his boys from Memphis. "It's time my best friend here and I did some serious drinking. Get us a pitcher, asshole. We're ready to start chug-a-lugging screwdrivers."

Elvis turned his attention to Paul again, where his voice became softer. "I'd be a fucking son of a bitch if I took something you wanted," Elvis said, standing up and starting to pull off his clothes. "That's why I'm here to make a deal with you. I just learned that MGM is willing to pay you $350,000 for starring as Chance Wayne. Elvis is going to offer you $350,000 for NOT being Chance Wayne. You can find an even better script that will also pay you $350,000. That means you can double your money. Sounds God damn fair to me."

Elvis Presley
Trespassing
on the family jewels

He continued to strip down to his jockey shorts. "I'm not trying to turn you on, although I know you go for the boys. My masseur has arrived. I'm taking youth treatments. Would you believe I'm starting to sag a little bit here and there. After all, I was born in 1935."

"Want to hear an even sadder story?" Paul asked. "I was born ten years before that."

Two of Elvis' boys wheeled in a hospital bed with a curtain around it. They were followed by a masseur who looked a bit effeminate. "I know Fido here doesn't look like much of a man, but he's got the most skilled hands of any masseur in America. He's from Haiti. A High Yaller."

The mulatto smiled at Paul and motioned for Elvis to go behind the curtain. Pulling down his jockey shorts, Elvis stepped inside and apparently got up onto the bed. From behind the curtain, he continued to talk to Paul, who sat on the sofa enjoying the best screwdriver he'd ever tasted in his life.

After fifteen minutes of conversation, Paul heard Elvis scream, "You god damn cocksucking faggot." He stormed outside the curtains, knocking the masseur in the face. The masseur fell to the floor as a nude Elvis, boasting a semi hard-on, started kicking the young man in his ribs.

Two of Elvis' boys suddenly appeared and restrained him. "Get that faggot out of here! He was trying to jerk me off." A third member of Elvis' boys emerged with a red silk robe which he slipped on. "Better give him $10,000 to buy him off so the queer won't sue me."

And then the screen goes black. Two hours before the next performance of Sweet Bird of Youth, Paul was relating the story about his encounter with Elvis to Geraldine and Kazan.

They were interrupted, and Paul never finished his story of what had happened earlier that evening with Elvis.

In panic, Tennessee Williams came rushing down the aisle. "I'm dying!" he shouted. "I've just come from my doctor. He says I have inoperable cancer. I'm dying! This is the last play I'll ever write."

This was the beginning of fifty such outbursts from the playwright, each announcing his imminent death, until inevitably that day of doom arrived.

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After the fantastic success of The Three Faces of Eve, Joanne continued her losing streak by making The Fugitive Kind, co-starring Marlon Brando and Anna Magnani. To a small Key West movie theater, the author of this biography accompanied Tallulah Bankhead and Tennessee Williams to a showing of the film. At the end of the screening, Tallulah rose to her feet and boomed in a voice loud enough to be heard in the back row, "TENNESSEE,

THEY'VE MADE A PERFECTLY AWFUL MOVIE OUT OF A PERFECTLY AWFUL PLAY."

Without uttering a word, Tennessee ignored Tallulah and left the theater. That night, he didn't show up for a dinner staged in her honor. She flew back to New York without a reconciliation with him. Weeks would go by before he returned her calls. "Like a loving puppy dog, Tennessee would always return to Tallulah's side for more punishment," recalled novelist James Leo Herlihy.

Originally Tennessee in 1940 had offered his play, Battle of Angels, to Tallulah, but she had rejected it and denounced it. Even so, a friendship had formed. In time, Tennessee would take Battle ofAngels out of mothballs and rework it under the more pretentious title of Orpheus Descending. The movie producers insisted on changing the title to the more commercial The Fugitive Kind.

For his role in the movie, Brando was offered an almost unprecedented million dollars. When he contracted to do the role because he desperately needed the money, Brando told the director, Sidney Lumet, "I'll have to eat a shit sandwich made by Tennessee Williams himself." Paul, however, envied the paycheck since the part would have gone to him had Brando rejected it.

In a touch of irony, Paul had once performed in a scene from Battle of Angels, playing the sexy drifter, Val Xavier (Brando's role), which had led to Paul's acceptance as a player at the Actors Studio.

Joanne shocked audiences-what few there were-when she appeared on the screen playing an alcoholic nymphomaniac with white pancake makeup and kohl-rimmed eyes. She would later claim, "Hated the movie, loved Anna."

There was no love lost between Brando and Joanne. Brando was rude and uncooperative. At one point Joanne complained to Lumet, "There's nothing there for me to reach out to. He's a complete blank regardless of how much money he's hauling in for this turkey."

Perhaps Brando was punishing Joanne because of her marriage to Paul. For reasons known only to Brando at the time, he was furious with Paul. Carlo Fiore, Brando's best friend, later speculated that he knew the reason for Brando's discontent.

For the first time, many movie reviewers were no longer regarding Paul as Brando's clone. One reviewer, in praising Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, claimed that "Paul's performance is far greater than Brando, with all his mutterings and mannerisms, would have been in the role." According to Fiore, Brando feared that Paul would soon surpass him.

Left to right: **Anna Magnani, Marlon Brando,** and **Joanne Woodward** in *The Fugitive Kind.*
Spreading vile rumors

"To piss off Newman," in the words of Fiore, Brando spread the rumor that he was "shacking up" with Joanne during the filming of The Fugitive Kind. There isn't the slightest clue that this was true. "Marlon loved making Newman squirm," Fiore said.

It was rumored that Joanne had dated Brando briefly in 1953. Both Tennessee Williams and his companion, Frank Merlo, claimed that Paul had told them during the stage run of Sweet Bird of Youth that he suspected that Brando had at some point in the early 50s seduced his wife.

"For some reason this thought tormented him, even though he was unzipping all over Broadway at the time," Merlo said. "Paul felt the gander could play around and have his fun in the barnyard but that the goose should stay home nesting on her eggs."

By the time Brando was playing opposite Paul's wife, the intimacy between Brando and Paul had faded into something akin to a youthful indiscretion. However, they would remain superficial friends for years to come, especially when they bonded together to march for civil rights.

The Fugitive Kind, as predicted, flopped at the box office, signaling a long, slow, steady decline in Brando's career, which, except for a few shining moments, would see one disaster piled on top of another. Paul could not gloat too much, because a long string of box office disasters, mixed with some memorable hits, also awaited him.

Whatever Paul thought of The Fugitive Kind, and chances are it was unfavorable, he kept his critique to himself. He turned down a reporter's request for a "review of' Joanne emoting with Brando. As she moved forward into her second pregnancy, Joanne stated her lofty ambition to the press. "I want to be the best actress in the world. The best wife. The best mother."

***

Sweet Bird of Youth ran on Broadway for 375 performances.

Paul recalled his last performance as Chance Wayne at the Martin Beck. "I remember my last night going to the theater. I swallowed two jiggers of honey for energy and my throat. I felt completely exhausted. I must have been in the hot shower for thirty minutes. I broke down and started crying like a baby. It came to me: I'd never say Tennessee's words again. I'll never have that kind of quiet near the end of the third act. Never that specific kind of quiet, as a hush came over the theater."

Toward the end of the run of Sweet Bird of Youth on Broadway, Paul signed to do the film, From the Terrace, eventually released in 1960, for $200,000. During the day in New York he would be filming, but at night he'd return to Broadway to appear on stage as Chance Wayne.

Once again, Paul traveled back to the fictional setting of Philadelphia for his role of David Alfred Eaton, who moves from Philadelphia to the canyons of Wall Street, climbing the ladder of success as his marriage crumbles.

Starring with him was both his on-screen and off-screen wife, Joanne. Already they were becoming known as the husband-and-wife team of the screen, although they did not like to be known as such.

Playing his "true love" in the film, Ina Balin appears as a mysterious page in Paul's off-screen life. She is remembered mainly today for co-starring with Elvis Presley in his 1969 film Charro!

Paul felt she was a sympathetic soul, and he shared much in common with her, especially when it came to helping children.

On the first day Paul met Balin, she revealed a bit of trivia about his own career. Before Gene Kelly and Natalie Wood signed for Marjorie Morningstar, it was originally slated to star Paul Newman and Ina Balin.

"Those two got on beautifully together during the making of From the Terrace," director Mark Robson recalled. "It was obvious to me they were attracted to each other, but with Joanne around I don't think anything came of it. At that time in his life, Paul was playing a game with his buddy, Steve McQueen, to see how many of their leading ladies each of them could seduce."

Robson speculated that had Paul not already been married to a woman he loved, he might have found in Balin

a soulmate who shared his goals and dreams.

In 1970 Balin toured Vietnam with the USO. This would be the first of many trips she'd pay to this war-torn part of the world. She was there during the fall of Saigon in 1975 when she aided in the evacuation of orphans. Eventually, she would adopt three of these homeless children.

Ina Balin with **Presley** in *Charro!*
From Paul's soulmate to
"Arms around Elvis"

In 1990, when Balin was dying from pulmonary hypertension, Paul drove to visit her in New Haven, Connecticut, a secret, personal journey.

Robson also said that Paul seemed embarrassed when George Grizzard showed up on the set one day to appear in his role as Lex Porter. "I'd heard those two guys had been an item in New York," Robson said. "But they were totally professional together. In spite of the depth of their intimacy, they behaved more or less like two college alumni coming together. Yet I sensed the tension between them."

Paul renewed his acquaintance with writer Ernest Lehman, who'd written Somebody Up There Likes Me. Paul told Robson he found the script "creaky."

Although he struck out with From the Terrace, Lehman over the course of his screenwriting career received six Academy Award nominations.

Paul also complained about Robson's "weak direction. He was a bit full of himself."

Robson had reason to gloat, having been nominated for an Oscar for directing Peyton Place with Lana Turner and again the following year winning the same honor for directing Ingrid Bergman in The Inn of the Sixth Happiness.

Playing Paul's alcoholic mother, veteran actress Myrna Loy stole every scene she was in. The first day she arrived on the set, she found her dressing room bare, but flowers kept arriving in Paul's dressing room all day. She would later recall the nadir of her career. "While Cary Grant and Clark Gable romanced Grace Kelly and Sophia Loren on the screen, I mothered Paul Newman in From the Terrace. It's a man's world."

Myrna Loy
"I remember it well..."

Paul joined her for lunch, showing her his greatest respect. "My dear," she said, "there was a time back in the 1930s when I was the biggest female movie star in America. Today that seems like a distant dream."

At the end of filming, Paul approached Myrna, giving her a long, lingering kiss, which rather surprised the crew looking on. She told him, "After today I guess I'll sit by the phone hoping it will ring."

After From the Terrace, she would wait around nine years for another movie role, when she returned to the screen in The April Fools, released in 1969.

When Paul saw the final cut of From the Terrace, he was not pleased with his performance. "What else is new?" he asked. "I'm not pleased with any of my screen performances." Usually her own harshest critic, Joanne was more favorably disposed to her screen appearance. She told friends, "I looked like Lana Turner. That day will never come again."

The film was essentially another soap opera, but it did fair returns at the box office. Once again Paul had to read in The New Yorker that in the lead role he "is a dead ringer for Marlon Brando, complete with built-in pout."

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When they did return to Hollywood, Paul and Joanne rented a house from Linda Christian, who at the time was called "the world's most seductive woman."

Linda is noted today for being the first Bond girl. She appeared in a 1954 TV adaptation of the James Bond

novel Casino Royale.

Seduced by Errol Flynn, she later married his lover, Tyrone Power. In Linda's garden stood a nude statue of herself.

Meeting briefly with Paul, Linda joked about her tabloid reputation. "When it comes to men, I'm always the pursuer. Only once have I failed to interest a man. Cary Grant."

"Gay, perhaps?" Paul asked.

The Newmans settled into the house with their daughter, Nell. "Another baby's in the oven," Paul told friends.

[While Paul was filming Sweet Bird of Youth, Melissa Newman would enter the world on September 17, 1961, Paul's fifth child and his second daughter with Joanne.]

In the long gestation period it took to bring Tennessee's play, Sweet Bird of Youth, to the screen, Paul received a call from Orson Welles. It surprised him because the talented director/actor had made his distaste for Paul known during the filming of The Long, Hot Summer.

The Battling Newmans:
Joanne confronts **Paul**
"I looked like Lana Turner."

Speaking to Paul, Welles was at his most charming. It soon became apparent that he was shopping for the proper vehicle in which to star his former wife, Rita Hayworth. "She'd make the perfect Alexandra Del Lago," Welles predicted. "The screen requires a softer, gentler Del Lago, not that brash harridan Geraldine Page played on the stage."

In some ways, Paul agreed with him. When Welles invited Paul and Richard Brooks, the upcoming director of Sweet Bird, to Rita's house, Paul eagerly accepted, although Welles explained that he would not be present at the gathering.

Paul had always wanted to meet Rita, as she'd long been on his A-list of stars he planned to seduce. When in the Navy, he'd had a pin-up of her pasted to his locker door. In some ways, he found Rita far more enticing than Ava Gardner, a comparable beauty.

When Rita graciously received Brooks and Paul into her home, he was struck by how different she was from her screen image as best showcased in the 1946 Gilda. She was dressed simply in slacks and a blouse and wore little makeup.

Time had been a bit cruel to the Love Goddess of the 1940s, a vivacious, sexy, and desirable woman known for her sunny smile and the come-hither glint in her eye. In many ways, today's Rita would be perfect as a fading movie star. She was a fading movie star.

During their time with Rita, Paul and Brooks met a realistic, straight talking woman without the glamorous moves of Lana Turner, who could never stop playing Lana Turner even when the cameras were turned off for the night.

If anything, there was something very wholesome about Rita, in spite of her bizarre marriages, not only to Orson Welles himself, but to Prince Aly Khan. He'd read that after her divorce from the Argentine singer, Dick Haymes (whose marriage had lasted from 1953 to 1954), she'd married producer James Hill. But Hill was nowhere in sight.

Paul complimented her on her performance in Pal Joey. "Do you know that Mae West was originally offered the part?" she said. "Mae probably could have done it better."

Linda Christian.
landlady to the Newmans
Home runs with Errol Flynn
and Tyrone Power,
strike-outs with Cary Grant

"I doubt that,

" Brooks said.

Brooks and Paul talked about Rita appearing in Sweet Bird of Youth, but later when the two men discussed it together, they expressed their beliefs that she didn't really want to appear as the fading actress, but had been cajoled into meeting with them because of Welles. Still in love with Rita, he was trying to jump-start her dying career.

Her reddish auburn hair looked as lustrous as ever, but she was smaller than she appeared onscreen. Her maid kept supplying her with highballs, and Paul matched her drink for drink. Brooks held back.

"As Alexandra Del Lago, I can be what I am, a fading star," she said. "I might as well let it all hang out. Somehow people seem to think I'm as old as Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. I started so young-that's why they think that.

"You Were Never Lovelier," Paul told her, evoking the title of her 1942 movie.

"Thank you, dear," she said. "I've had a lifetime of compliments, but now they fall on suspicious ears. I know what I look like. I know what time it is. Like Alexandra Del Lago, I, too, am battling that old enemy, time."

"Would you be our Alexandra?" Brooks asked.

"Let me think about it." She turned to Paul and took his hand, holding it up to her cheek. "This beautiful man here and I could light up the screen, like Glenn and I did in Gilda." She was referring, of course, to her frequent co-star, Glenn Ford.

The maid came back into her living room with three more highballs, but when she started to hand a drink to Brooks, Rita motioned for her not to. "If you have to go, I understand," Rita said. Brooks did not have to leave so soon. "I'd like Paul to remain behind. We can sit in my garden and talk about appearing on the screen together. It'll give us a chance to discover each other. I think in this role I can show the world I have some depth. All my life Rita Hayworth has had only a few good moments, everything else was about image."

At the door, she kissed Brooks on the cheek. "Thank you for coming, dear one," she said. "We'll see if this offer leads to anything." He noticed that she was holding Paul's hand at that point.

Rita and **Orson** headed for divorce
"You were never lovelier."

"Well, you two take care," he said.

Brooks was the source of information about the meeting between Paul and Rita, and the director knew nothing of what happened after he left. Paul never confided in him. In a few weeks, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer rejected the idea of casting Rita.

Brooks' last memory of Rita was her standing with Paul at the doorway and looking into his eyes. Her gaze was penetrating, yet somehow suspicious. Her final statement was somewhat enigmatic. He would remember it for years.

"Before the night is over, I must convince Paul I'm not Gilda."

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It would not be until 1962 that Sweet Bird of Youth, in a "castrated" version, reached the screen, starring Paul Newman and Geraldine Page. Repeating their Broadway roles were Rip Torn and Madeleine Sherwood. Ed Begley contracted to play Boss Finley in the film version, as did Shirley Knight to appear as Heavenly, the girlfriend. The very talented character actress, Mildred Dunnock, was assigned to the role of Heavenly's Aunt Nonny, who is

sympathetic to Chance.

Signing a contract to appear as Chance Wayne in the film, Paul made his best financial deal yet, getting $350,000 for his performance, plus a percentage of the take. He'd finally arrived on the A-list of movie stars, where he would remain for a very long time.

Because of studio pressure, Richard Brooks was forced to water down the original script, just as he'd been ordered to do in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Instead of a castration, Chance suffered a beating at the hands of Boss Finley's goons.

Instead of being infected with a venereal disease, Heavenly undergoes an abortion instead. The biggest change, and one that infuriated Tennessee, was the happy ending Brooks added to the film. Heavenly and Chance run away, presumably toward a happy future, although that hardly seems likely after what has come down before.

Paul as an international star in ***Sweet Bird of Youth***
Decadence knows no borders

Sweet Bird of Youth, advertised as HE USED LOVE LIKE MOST MEN USE MONEY, premiered on March 21, 1962. Unlike the play, the vanilla film version of Tennessee's drama bombed, as audiences stayed away in droves. For the most part, film critics panned the movie. But when it came time for Academy Award nominations, Sweet Bird, in spite of its flaws, was not ignored.

The film brought Academy Award nominations for some of its actors, including Geraldine Page as Best Actress in a Leading Role. She would lose that year to Anne Bancroft, who appeared in The Miracle Worker. Shirley Knight was nominated as Best Actress in a Supporting Role. But it was Ed Begley, nominated as Best Actor in a Supporting Role, who walked off with an actual Oscar.

It took more than a quarter of a century for Sweet Bird of Youth to open in a theater in London's West End. It premiered on July 8, 1985, at London's Haymarket Theatre. Lauren Bacall, formerly known as "Bogie's Baby," played the role of Alexandra Del Lago. She was certainly typecast as a faded film actress.

In a foolish decision, Elizabeth Taylor in 1989 agreed to star as Alexandra Del Lago in a remake of the film. She captured none of the nuances of Geraldine Page and gave one of the flattest on-screen characterizations of her

career.

Casting actor Mark Harmon as Chance made the few viewers who watched the 1989 version of Sweet Bird realize just how good Paul and Geraldine had been in the original, both on stage and on the screen.

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In Los Angeles, a call came in to Paul shortly before midnight. "This is Otto Preminger," came the famous Viennese voice. "You are one lucky boy. I've just decided to cast you as a great hero, a Hagannah leader, Ari Ben Canaan. You will lead the Jews to the Promised Land."

Paul started to say something, but Preminger cut him off. "Not now. Be in my office at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. By the way, don't bring Joanne Woodward to Israel with you. I've already cast your co-stars. Many choice specimens for you to fuck." He slammed down the phone.

Three faces of **Alexandra Del Lago**

Left to right: **Lauren Bacall, Geraldine Page,** and **Elizabeth Taylor**

Chapter Nine

The 4-H Club:

The Hustler, Hud, Harper, & Hombre

Temporarily abandoning her own career, Joanne, along with Paul and their baby daughter, Nell, flew to Israel for the filming of Exodus, sections of which would eventually be shot in Cyprus.

The director, Otto Preminger, had heard rumors about Paul's private life. He quipped, "Miss Woodward is no doubt protecting her own interests. Maybe she doesn't trust Newman in the desert with all those hunks I've cast in the film-Sal Mineo, John Derek, Peter Lawford, and George Maharis. Each one of those guys is a homosexual's dream. With Eva Marie Saint, there is no sexual threat. She and Paul are old friends-good chums-from way back, nothing more. I'd bet my left nut on that if I hadn't already lost it to a quack surgeon."

Later, Preminger would claim, "All the gay boys in my film, or should I call them switch-hitters, were after Newman. They circled him, like sharks wanting to devour a tasty meal. Fortunately, he brought Woodward along as a security guard."

Before leaving for Israel, Preminger had negotiated with Lew Wasserman, Paul's agent, who wanted $200,000 for his client. "Too high," Preminger said. "I'll give him half."

"Fine," Wasserman said, without further negotiation. "It's a deal."

The novel by Leon Uris had been a bestseller. Rights to the film were originally purchased by MGM for $75,000. Fearing an Arab boycott of MGM films because of its pro-Israeli stance, MGM finally turned the property over to Preminger. As an independent producer, he would be relatively immune from a threatened Arab boycott. The story depicted the plight of Jews who had to fight their way to sail from Cyprus to Israel on a ship called Exodus.

In Tel Aviv, Preminger handed a copy of the finished script to Paul. The director told him that he'd launched the project with Uris himself but had to fire him. "He was hopeless. A novelist writes dialogue to be read. A scriptwriter writes dialogue to be heard." Preminger than hired Dalton Trumbo, the blacklisted writer.

Like Ben Hecht, Trumbo was one of the notorious "Hollywood Ten." He was forced to write under various pseudonyms to avoid the blacklist.

Later, when Trumbo's version of Exodus was released, Uris denounced it to the press. "That dictator [meaning Preminger] ruined my book."

The morning after he'd read the finished script, Paul confronted Preminger with six pages of suggestions. He'd done that with each of his previous directors, and the technique had been successful in implementing changes. But it didn't work with Preminger.

Paul had extensively rewritten passages of dialogue uttered by his character, who in the movie falls in love with an American nurse and befriends an Arab.

"Very interesting suggestions," Preminger said to Paul, without even reading them. "If you were directing the picture, you would use them. As I am directing the picture, I won't use them." He tore up the sheets of paper handed to him by Paul, dropping the shattered bits at Paul's feet.

"Fucking Nazi," Paul later told Peter Lawford.

In Tel Aviv, Preminger introduced Paul to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. Paul also met Golda Meier and General Moshe Dayan, members of the ruling Labor Party. They told Paul how disappointed they were with the script, objecting to Israelis being portrayed as terrorists. Preminger countered their argument by claiming that during the birthing of a Jewish state in 1947, violence had been inevitable.

From New York, Sal Mineo had called Paul in Los Angeles before his flight to Israel. "Here I am, a WOP from the Bronx, playing a Jew," Sal said. "I hope no one finds out I'm not circumcised."

"Your secret is safe with me," Paul said.

Sal protested Paul's commitment to bring Joanne on location. "Here is my chance for us to have some time alone together. With her tagging along, my plans are now fucked."

(Above, left to right): **Sal Mineo, George Maharis, John Derek,** and **Peter Lawford**
In praise of bisexual men.

"Too bad," Paul said. "She's determined. She knows that men stray when wifie is away."

"I know nothing about any wives," he said. "To me, a girl is someone to grab hold of only when a photographer from a fan magazine is nearby."

"See you in Israel," Paul said, hanging up.

In the movie, Sal had been cast as Dov Landau, a seventeen-year-old survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz who had been "used" by the Nazis.

In the movie's most controversial scene, Sal tells his interrogators what the Nazis did to him. "They used me. They used me like you use a ... a ... woman."

Hope Bryce Preminger, Otto's wife and the costume coordinator on Exodus, called Paul "a cold man. He was remote from the minute he walked onto the set and remained icy throughout the entire shoot. On the plane from Cyprus to New York after the film had been shot, he told Otto, `I could have directed the picture better than you.' Could you imagine saying that to Otto Preminger of all people?"

Jill Haworth, making her film debut in Exodus at the age of fourteen, later said, "At a certain point deep into the filming, Paul would not even take direction from Preminger. Paul was more or less directing himself, and that led to some regrettable mistakes."

When Paul wasn't needed on the set, he and Joanne toured Israel. "We were trailed by dozens of people wherever we went," he said. "You might have thought we were Marc Antony and Cleopatra returned from their tombs. These fans acted like they'd never seen movie stars before, which was probably true. To make matters worse, Joanne could not find the proper blonde dye. The roots of her hair were turning black. A God-awful state for a `true' blonde."

Paul's biggest insult in Israel came not from Preminger but from Mrs. Ben Gurion. Right to his face, she said, "For a Jew boy, I don't think you're all that pretty. We have far more handsome boys right here in Israel. I don't know why Preminger cast you in the lead when we have many home-grown actors who would have been better suited for the role."

Otto Preminger
A "Nazi dictator"
in Israel

Months later, when the controversial film was released, the Arabs, as predicted, dismissed it as Zionist propaganda. Critics also dismissed Paul's performance as "stiff," "wooden," and "lacking in depth and emotion." Even so, it grossed more at the box office than any of his previous movies.

The New York Times had kind words, calling it "a dazzling, nerve-tingling display that rips the heart." Britain didn't interpret the picture as breathlessly, however, since that country's soldiers were depicted as anti-Semitic.

One reviewer wrote that Paul's role should have been played by Charlton Heston, not Newman. "At least the fucker didn't say Marlon Brando," Paul quipped.

Variety weighed in with this: "Technically, Paul Newman gives a sound performance, but he fails to give the role the warmth and deep humanity that would give the character distinguished stature." That review more or less summed up the opinion of most of the world press.

Of all the actors in Exodus, including its director, only Sal Mineo emerged triumphant. He received an Academy Award nomination as Best Supporting Actor for his role as the bitter Jewish boy who joins an Israeli terrorist group.

The final word on Paul's appearance in Exodus was uttered by Joanne in London. She told a TV reporter for the BBC, "Paul can't stand to talk about Exodus. Or even think about it."

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Some aspects of the private relationship between Paul and John Derek during and after the making of Exodus remain clouded in mystery. On several occasions in the city of Haifa at the Hotel Zion during the filming of Exodus, Paul was spotted leaving Derek's bedroom. Interpreting the role of Taha, an Arab, Derek was cast as a mukhtar, a life-long friend of Paul's character, Ari Ben Canaan.

When word first reached insider Hollywood that Derek and Paul might have become an item, in spite of Joanne's highly visible presence during the shooting of Exodus, many people could not believe it. After all, John Derek was a certified womanizer, and is remembered today not so much for his movie roles, but for being the husband of such beautiful actresses as Ursula Andress, Linda Evans, and Bo Derek.

John Derek
Matching motorcycles

Adela Rogers St. Johns, the columnist, was far more sophisticated in these matters than her rivals, Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper. She weighed in on the possibility of an affair between Derek and Paul. "All the big-time womanizers in Hollywood, including Clark Gable and Errol Flynn, even Howard Hughes, always had a pretty boy locked up in the closet somewhere," she claimed.

It wasn't until years after the release of Exodus that some of the behindthe-scenes maneuverings were revealed. Paul was not the source. In the 1950s, he had shared a number of his private experiences with close friends like Eartha Kitt and Janice Rule.

"At one point, Paul just clammed up," said Tony Perkins. "I felt free in talking about my private life with him, but he was no longer forthcoming with details about his affairs. He remained my friend, but I obviously had lost a confidant."

It was Sal Mineo who first revealed what had happened during the filming of Exodus. "Paul just dumped me the moment he set eyes on John Derek," claimed Sal Mineo in an apartment in New York's Chelsea district. "It made me wonder what Derek had that I didn't have."

Sal confessed that for the duration of the filming, and in an attempt to make Paul jealous, he turned to the bisexual actor, Peter Lawford, the brother-in-law of John F. Kennedy. This Rat Packer, an on-again, off-again friend of Frank Sinatra, began an off-the-record affair with Sal that would last for about three convoluted years.

"I still loved Paul," Sal told the author, "but Peter was making love to me at night. And Peter was the Nijinsky of oral artists."

At first revealed in Darwin Porter's Katharine the Great, a biography of Katharine Hepburn, John Derek, then known as Derek Harris, had once hustled men. One of his clients had been Spencer Tracy, Hepburn's long-time bisexual companion. Derek had been born the son of writer/director Lawson Harris and bit actress Dolores Johnson.

Derek had shot like a cannonball to short-lived stardom when he played an incarcerated juvenile delinquent on death row in Columbia's Knock on Any Door (1949), opposite Humphrey Bogart.

Long after the end of their involvement with Exodus, Paul and Derek would remain bosom buddies. As late as 1969, a maid had discovered them in a motel in eastern Oregon one morning when she walked in on them, claiming that she had found them making love. She had tried to sell her tale to scandal magazines, but there were no takers.

Paul had escaped to Oregon that summer. He was hanging out with loggers and getting "the lay of the land" before filming Sometimes a Great Notion, based on the novel by Ken Kesey, who'd recorded the saga of an Oregon logging family.

The son of a dairy farmer in Colorado, Kesey was a novelist much admired by Paul, who had wanted to appear in a film based on his first novel, One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest (1962). A counter-cultural icon, Kesey viewed himself as "the missing link" between the Beat Generation of the 1950s and the hippies of the late `60s. "I was too young to be a beatnik," he said, "and too old to be a hippie."

The actual film as we know it today would not be shot until 1970, on scenic locations near the Oregon towns of Lincoln City and Newport, on the watersheds drained by the Siletz and Yaquina Rivers.

That previous summer, Paul had rented a retreat in western Oregon on a little peninsula that shot like a finger into the Pacific. He and Derek spent many a bucolic evening together in Oregon.

During the day Paul could be seen working with loggers, preparing himself for his upcoming role. In the late afternoon, Paul and Derek were observed on matching motorcycles roaring through the countryside.

That summer in Oregon Paul resumed his heavy drinking-consuming not just beer but large amounts of vodka as well. He and Derek were spotted in various local taverns.

Following examples established by James Dean, Paul was taking wild and reckless chances on his motorcycle. In one accident, he was injured so badly he had to be flown to Los Angeles for X-rays. Back in Oregon, he resumed riding his cycle, even though he had one foot in a cast. At a breakneck speed, he had yet another accident. Amazingly, his already injured foot wasn't damaged further.

When the filming of Sometimes a Great Notion began, Paul had to take over both the film's direction and its starring role when he became disappointed with the early rushes directed by an inexperienced director, Richard Colla.

Paul had veteran actor, Henry Fonda, to costar with him in the film, playing his cranky old father. In spite of their utter lack of chemistry during the filming of The Long, Hot Summer, Paul cast Lee Remick to play his wife.

She later recalled, "Newman, like Steve McQueen, was known for seducing his leading ladies. I can assure you that this is one leading lady who never slept with him. He turned me off "

"The one big scene I had in the movie was a love bout with Michael Sarrazino, who played Leland Stamper, Paul's half brother in the film. There was nudity in my love scene with Michael. But Newman cut it before release. Thank God I played that scene with Michael instead of Newman. There was no way I wanted to get in bed jaybird naked with Newman. The film in its second release was retitled Never Give an Inch. That would have been an appropriate title for Newman's relationship with me."

At long last, Paul got to work with Richard Jaeckel, with whom he'd had an affair in the 1950s. Richard Jaeckel was flown from Los Angeles to Oregon to appear as his cousin in the film. His character plays a drowning man who is trapped under a fallen tree in the water.

Originally, George Kennedy, no great beauty, had been cast in the role. But Paul nixed the idea. "If I'm gonna spend three days shooting an extended kissing scene with another guy, it's gonna be Richard Jaeckel. He's one good looking mother fucker, and I always promised him we'd work together. I'd throw up if I was forced to go lip to lip with George Kennedy."

Paul was referring to the most dramatic scene in the movie. As the tide is rising and Jaeckel's character is about to drown, Paul breathes gulps of fresh air to blow into Jaeckel's lungs. It's really a kissing scene, Paul's only mouthto-mouth encounter with another male on screen.

Henry Fonda claimed that "Jaeckel and Newman kissed each other for hours." Then he turned catty. "I think those two continued to practice that scene late at night long after the cameras had shut down for the day."

When one suspicious Hollywood reporter encountered Jaeckel and asked him about his prolonged mouth to mouth with Paul, the stocky actor said, "Paul saw me playing football one day on the beach with friends in Malibu.

He thought I had the right build for the part of a logger in the North Woods."

For his work in kissing Paul, Jaeckel received an Academy Award nomination. "Nice work if you can get it," Jaeckel said.

In spite of the critical and financial failure of Sometimes a Great Notion, Paul still believed in the film. According to friends, when the Academy Award nominations were announced, he was furious. In spite of the overwhelming odds against him, he still expected an Oscar not only for Best Actor but also for Best Director.

"Who do these upstart new actors think they are?" Fonda said upon hearing this. "Paul Newman is no Erich von Stroheim."

One wonders what Fonda meant: When Notion was released in 1971, Paul could hardly be called "new" in Hollywood. Yet Fonda thought so little of Sometimes a Great Notion that he didn't even mention it in his memoirs.

"Paul Newman and Jane [a reference to his daughter Jane Fonda] should do a film together," Fonda said. "The director could strip them down for most of the film. With those two naked on the screen, they might attract some sort of an audience."

Paul Newman with
Richard Jaeckel
"If I must kiss a man..."

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In 1961 Elizabeth Taylor seriously considered starring in the tiresome two-character piece, Two for the Seesaw. The play by William Gibson had been a medium-sized hit on Broadway for 750 performances between 1958 and 1959 when it had starred Henry Fonda and Anne Bancroft.

For its mutation into a movie, the producers wanted a bigger box office name than Bancroft for the female lead, and they turned to Elizabeth who entertained the idea. Robert Wise, who'd directed Paul in Somebody Up There Likes Me, suggested that he would be ideal as the sullen, self-hating Nebraska lawyer who gets involved with the eccentric "born victim" character of Gittel Mosca.

By reteaming Elizabeth and Paul, Wise was perhaps hoping to repeat the success of their first pairing in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Paul went to see the play and found it mildly amusing, although he felt that the man's role was weak and that Elizabeth, playing a dancer living in Greenwich Village, would steal the film. The prospect of appearing with Elizabeth again intrigued him, as he'd always believed she was not only one of the world's most beautiful women but one of its most fascinating.

Elizabeth had never left his life, as he had encountered her randomly as the years had passed. Usually these encounters were disastrous. Paul had looked on helplessly as Elizabeth had mired herself in her marriage to Eddie Fisher. Paul had referred to her mating with Fisher as a "mess."

The 1960s had arrived and Fisher's career was faltering. He was even talking of becoming his wife's producer, evoking unfavorable comparisons to Mike Todd, a real producer.

Connecting with Elizabeth in a private meeting, unknown to either Joanne or Fisher, Paul had a frank talk with Elizabeth, assuring her that he'd be honored to work with her again.

Most of that time was spent talking about Eddie Fisher. Janet Charlton, the columnist, had jokingly revealed that Elizabeth was threatening to write a memoir devoted to Fisher. Charlton claimed that Elizabeth was calling it Louse, and in her confessional "she might even claim that Fisher is impotent."

At this time Paul had yet to make Sweet Bird of Youth. Elizabeth startled him by confessing that only two weeks previously, she'd met with Tennessee and that he'd practically begged her to play the aging movie star has-been, Alexandra del Lago, in Sweet Bird of Youth.

Of all the actresses considered, Elizabeth was the last person Paul would have cast in the role. He told her so. "You're at the peak of your power and beauty," he said. "No fan will believe you in the part unless you put on thirty pounds and paint wrinkles on your face.

"Perhaps you're right," she said.

Instead of gaining weight, Elizabeth had been on a crash diet. Joseph Mankiewicz, who'd directed her in Suddenly Last Summer, in which she'd starred with Katharine Hepburn and Monty Clift, had told her that her upper arms looked like "a bag of dead mice." She was so horrified that she went on a diet the next day after a night of getting drunk and cursing Mankiewicz.

Speaking confidentially with Paul, she admitted that her marriage to Fisher had been "the biggest mistake of my life."

When she met Paul, Elizabeth was still bitter over her loss of an Oscar for her role in Suddenly Last Summer. She contemptuously referred to Katharine Hepburn, her co-star, as "a fucking dyke." Hepburn had also been nominated for an Oscar, which meant that she'd split the vote with Elizabeth, thereby paving the way for a win by the French actress, Simone Signoret, who took home the Oscar by default for Room at the Top.

Paul had not met privately with Elizabeth for quite a while. He'd always seen her with her people. Such was the case when she invited him to the Desert Inn in Las Vegas to catch Fisher's act during a two-week engagement.

Paul later told his associates that Fisher was "shamelessly exploiting Elizabeth," insisting that she sit at the ringside table. "Fans were coming to see Elizabeth, not Eddie," Paul claimed. He sings all his numbers to her, and she blows him kisses."

That night Paul was also invited to the Sands Hotel where his friend, Kirk Douglas, was celebrating his seventh wedding anniversary to his second wife, Anne-a union that would continue for at least another 50 years, despite wellpublicized infidelities on his part. Frank Sinatra arrived with Marilyn Monroe. Paul tried to talk to Sinatra, but he seemed distracted.

To Paul's dismay, Marilyn was incoherent. He wasn't certain that she even knew who he was.

She'd swallowed so many pills, which she'd consumed with a massive intake of alcohol, that she was actually drooling. Paul took a napkin and wiped the slobber from her mouth.

When Sinatra took to the stage to sing a tribute to Kirk and Anne Douglas, Marilyn disrupted his act. Sitting at ringside within reach of the stage, she pulled off one of her high heels and started pounding the stage. Sinatra

signaled his handlers to remove Marilyn from the room.

Paul followed the guards, who carried Marilyn to her hotel room. After the guards had left, he stripped her down and put her to bed. She was still mumbling incoherently, denouncing Joe DiMaggio for some alleged insult in a recent phone call.

When she seemed to be sleeping peacefully, he slipped out of the hotel.

The next morning, suffering from a hangover, he received a phone call from Marilyn, who had apparently recovered from the previous evening.

She cried into the phone. "I called Frankie, but the bastard won't speak to me. He said I made a spectacle of myself last night and embarrassed the hell out of him."

"He'll get over it," Paul assured her. "Sinatra's made an ass of himself on many a night. He can't hold that against you."

"You're sweet," she said. He turned down her invitation to make love to her that morning. But he did accept her invitation to visit her at a mansion in Beverly Hills the following week. She didn't tell him who owned the estate, but she said she was in residence there for a week, and she wanted to meet with him there.

She told him that she had read a "dynamite" script, and that she'd suggested to its producer, Jerry Wald, that she wanted Paul to co-star with her in the production.

He pressed her for details, but she refused to divulge any insights, claiming they would read the script together when he came to visit her the following week in Los Angeles.

"At long last," Marilyn predicted, "us two beauties will be up there lighting up the screen as it's never glimmered before. That is, if both of us aren't too drunk to play our roles."

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A few hours later, he received an invitation from Elizabeth. Having discovered that he was having an affair with a Las Vegas showgirl, she'd had a knock-down fight with Eddie Fisher, and she had kicked him out of her suite.

"What a schmuck!" Paul said. "He's got Elizabeth Taylor in his bed, and he's running around with some cheap hooker."

When Paul arrived at her suite, a maid directed him to Elizabeth's bathroom. There he was startled to find her in a bubble bath. She invited him to take off his clothes and join her. She told him that she liked to make love in the tub, claiming that it alleviated her back aches. "When Eddie can get it up, he fucks me in the tub and it seems to help. So let's go for it, big boy."

We're left only to imagine the outcome of that encounter. What we know was pieced together with a cackle by Tennessee Williams one night in Key West when the playwright told his guests what he'd learned about that Las Vegas trip from both Paul and Elizabeth.

"When she told me about Paul, she also informed me that she wouldn't be appearing in Sweet Bird of Youth. That is fine and dandy with me-my grandfather used to use that expression," Tennessee told his drunken dinner guests. "But actually, Ava Gardner would probably be more effective in the role of Alexandra Del Lago."

The novelist, James Leo Herlihy, a guest at Tennessee's dinner party, assured Tennessee that "there are dozens of fading actresses living in the Hollywood Hills who'd give their left tit for a chance to play that role. You might even consider Geraldine Page herself."

The leading role of Gittel in the film version of Two for the Seesaw eventually went to Shirley MacLaine, cast

opposite Robert Mitchum. Anne Bancroft later said, "I'd have given anything to make the movie of that, but it got away from me."

Ironically, Elizabeth had also been the first consideration to star in the film version of The Miracle Worker. United Artists had wanted Arthur Penn, the director, to "dump" Bancroft in favor of Elizabeth. He held out, claiming that only Bancroft could handle the role of Annie Sullivan, as she'd already demonstrated so brilliantly in the Broadway play.

***

Two for the Seesaw almost cost Paul his chance to film The Hustler, one of his most memorable roles. Because of delays with Cleopatra, Elizabeth was not free to accept the female lead in Seesaw, and the role, as mentioned, was eventually awarded to Shirley MacLaine, with Robert Mitchum accepting what would have been Paul's role.

While still filming Cleopatra, Elizabeth contacted Paul, claiming how sorry she was that they would not appear in Two for the Seesaw. She sent her love and promised that she'd get together with him "the next time I have a severe backache."

She held out the hope that they would still reteam on the screen when a great script came along. "If you find roles for us in the right property, don't walk. Come running."

In a few short years, Paul would see a play on Broadway that he believed would make a perfect joint vehicle for Elizabeth and himself. It was Edward Albee's controversial Whos Afraid of Virginia Woolf?. That play also starred George Grizzard, the actor with whom Paul had had a fling several years previously. But Paul did not go backstage that night to congratulate George on his performance.

Elizabeth Taylor
How to cure a backache

Paul felt that the part of a dysfunctional academic and his embittered wife would be idyllic for him and Elizabeth, a refreshing change of pace from roles with which they'd previously been associated. He called her, and she came to the phone at once.

With a certain eagerness, he told her about the play, asking if she'd had a chance to see it yet. "Yes, as a matter of fact, I have," she told him. "You'd be terrific in the part-I just know it. But it's too late. Richard and I have already signed contracts to star in it."

She, of course, was referring to her husband, Richard Burton. "Next time, cute stuff," she said. "Our day on the screen will come, I just know it."

Bitter at the rejection, he said, "Let's make sure it's sooner than later. Otherwise, we'll end up playing grandpa and grandma."

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After a series of critical and commercial disappointments, Paul needed a good strong role. He told his agent, "I've got a lot of mouths to feed, and I need a hit-a box office bonanza."

His wish came true when director Robert Rossen chose him to play a pool shark, "Fast Eddie" Felson in The Hustler, based on a novel by William Tevis.

The Hustler would be the first of four movies that Paul made in the 1960s, each of whose names began with an "H." These included The Hustler, Hud, Harper, and Hombre.

Paul looked forward to working with Rossen, who had scored a big hit with Broderick Crawford in All the Kings Men in 1949. Rossen, who was dying at the time from a terminal illness, was staging a kind of Last Hurrah with The Hustler, and he desperately wanted it to be a great picture.

After reading the script, Paul felt he could play a loser like Fast Eddie on his self-destructive path.

For Paul's back-up team, Rossen had assembled a formidable cast. Jackie Gleason was cast as Minnesota Fats, who was hailed as the greatest pool player in fifty states. Piper Laurie, freed from those horrible Technicolor "Westerns in the sands" pictures of the 1950s, was cast as Eddie's girl, Sarah Packard. The role had been offered to that "lavender blonde," Kim Novak, but she'd rejected it.

After he'd signed the contract, Paul learned that he was not the only actor who'd been considered for the role of Fast Eddie. Unknown to him, Frank Sinatra had originally optioned the novel, acquiring the film rights. But as it happened, Sinatra didn't like the finished script, claiming "it has too many pool halls, not enough raw emotion."

Jackie Gleason with **Paul Newman**
Minnesota Fats vs. Fast Eddie

The part was then offered to Jack Lemmon, who turned it down. Cliff Robertson, always Paul's rival for roles, tried to convince Rossen that he was right for the part of the pool shark, but Rossen wasn't convinced. The director continued to consider other actors.

On several occasions Rossen had mentioned Paul as the possible lead, but had dropped the idea when he'd learned that Paul had signed to act in Two for the Seesaw. When Paul unexpectedly became available, Rossen called him at once, touting what a great role Fast Eddie would be for him. After mulling it over, Paul agreed. Regrettably, Rossen had promised another actor the lead but had not yet signed him.

On the set Paul had a reunion with Piper Laurie, who had co-starred with him in Until They Sail. The actress hadn't worked in four years, and The Hustler marked her return to the screen.

Rossen later said that he felt "Piper and Paul had great respect for each other. Paul was known for seducing some of his leading ladies, but I don't think he scored with Piper. Now Ronald Reagan and Piper-that's another story."

Paul found George C. Scott, also cast in the movie, a formidable personality. He'd scored a big hit in Anatomy of a Murder, and seemed headed for stardom as one of the most dynamic, uncompromising new talents to hit the screen in years. With his gravelly voice and stern features, he was cast as Paul's cool, smarmy promoter, for which he'd receive an Academy Award nomination. He became the first actor to go on record as refusing the nomination.

Paul bonded with Gleason, and even challenged him for a real-life game of pool. A world class pool player, Gleason handily won. Paul had gotten a little cocky and had overestimated his ability as a player.

To prepare for his role as Fast Eddie, he'd worked with the world champion pool player, Willie Mosconi, learning the fine art of the game. In the film, close-up shots of Mosconi's hands would be used.

Paul Newman with **Piper Laurie**
"reality instead of dreams"

Rossen directed that The Hustler be shot in New York within a context of seedy hotel rooms and dark pool halls. Paul later said, "Both Rossen and I knew we were making a great movie. I gave it my best. The character of Fast Eddie was foreign to me, but I inhabited his skin."

Even before the film was officially released, word had spread that the picture was a winner. Fearing bankruptcy, 20th Century Fox, its producer, was desperate for a hit. The making of Cleopatra, starring Elizabeth Taylor, had driven them to a very high cliff. In spite of the early good reviews of people who'd seen rushes of The Hustler, Fox executives were still worried about box office. "All that pool hall crap will turn off female viewers," predicted one chieftain.

Just before the official premiere, Richard Burton had hosted a midnight screening of The Hustler for the cast of various Broadway shows. Paul's fellow actors, including those from the Actors Studio, gave him rave reviews. The actual world premiere was held in Washington, DC, on September 25, 1961.

Critic Roger Ebert wrote that The Hustler is "one of the few American movies in which the hero wins by surrendering, by accepting reality instead of dreams."

Paul came up with his own review. "It's a film that hits you in the gut with a punch that knocks you out."

The Hustler opened to good box office throughout the country. On the decline for decades in America, the art of playing pool came back into vogue.

Early in 1962 it was announced that The Hustler had been nominated for Oscars for Best Picture, Best Actor (Newman himself), and Best Director among other nods.

On the night of the Academy Awards, Paul was a heavy favorite. Both Maximilian Schell and Spencer Tracy were competing for the Best Actor award for their joint appearances in Judgment at Nuremberg. Historically, two frontrunners nominated as Best Actor (or Actress) in the same picture will tend to cancel each other out.

The honor of announcing the Oscar winner for Best Actor went to Joan Crawford, the nemesis of Joanne Woodward. One reporter noted Paul's reaction as the names were read. "He was a ball of fire and looked like he was about to break free of his skin. It was obvious: he really wanted that Oscar."

When Schell's name was read by Crawford as the winner, "Paul masked his pain and broke into that cheesy grin of his," the reporter claimed.

Paul would later tell Playboy, "I was really hurt by the loss." As compensation, he would win the British Academy of Film and Television Award as Best Actor. The Hustler, in the British sweepstakes, would emerge as Best Picture.

Ever the gentleman, Paul did not want to appear as a sore loser on Oscar night in Los Angeles. He went backstage and congratulated Schell. "Many Oscars await you in your future," Schell assured him. "This was my only chance-I just know it."

In contrast to Paul's impeccable behavior, Joanne did not experience her finest hour. She even refused to speak to Schell. Those who stood near her claimed she "threw a fit" upon hearing Crawford announce Schell's name. Joanne was heard cursing and crying.

"How awfully tacky of her-and so typical," Crawford said upon learning of this, using the opportunity to deliver yet another attack on Joanne. "She'll never work in this town again after the spectacle she's made of herself. She's also ugly to boot. I can't see what Paul Newman sees in her." Crawford was repeating her familiar refrain.

Speaking strictly off the record later that evening at a party attended by Rosalind Russell and Jennifer Jones, Crawford said, "It's true that many homosexuals marry ugly women. The poor dears are so delighted that anyone will marry them that they dutifully stay at home while hubbie is out turning tricks at night."

Even though Paul emerged from The Hustler as a full-fledged Hollywood star, he still hadn't reached the pinnacle of "Top Ten" at the box office. That position, among others, was reserved for actors who included Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and Doris Day.

Even so, producers from all over the world were trying to cast him as the male lead in their films.

Federico Fellini didn't want Paul for La Dolce Vita, but his producers did. Paul wisely turned down the role, knowing he was wrong for it. The part went instead to Fellini's friend, Marcello Mastroianni, playing the tabloid reporter who sees his life as worthless in shallow Roman society, but is unable to change it.

Paul's career would soar in the 1960s. The other artists who'd worked on The Hustler didn't fare so well. Gleason was never again offered a Grade A film role. Piper Laurie left the screen until 1976 when she came back with the hit movie, Carrie. Robert Rossen died in 1966 at the age of fifty-seven, after having completed one final picture, Lilith, two years previously.

After Lilith, Rossen lost interest in directing. During the making of the film, he'd had several grueling conflicts with its star, Warren Beatty. "It isn't worth that kind of grief," he told reporters, announcing his retirement. "I have nothing to say on the screen right now. Even if I never make another picture, I've got The Hustler on my record. I'm content to let that one stand for me."

Right before his death, he said, "At long last, Paul Newman is a star in his own right. In the future Marlon Brando will be accepting roles that Paul has turned down-not the other way around."

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If one fast-forwards nearly a quarter of a century, to the mid-1980s, Paul would finally get his Oscar for Best Actor, in 1987, but there would be nearmisses along the way. He'd be nominated for Absence of Malice in which he was directed by Sydney Pollack and cast opposite Sally Field. Paul had won the role by default after Al Pacino had dropped out.

Filmed in Miami, Absence of Malice was released in 1981. Henry Fonda, nearing the end of his life, was awarded the Oscar for On Golden Pond, a picture he'd made with his daughter, Jane Fonda, and Katharine Hepburn.

Paul almost got lucky again when he filmed The Verdict, released in 1982 and directed by Sidney Lumet. Paul was considered the heavyweight favorite, but the prize for Best Actor went instead to Ben Kingsley for Gandhi.

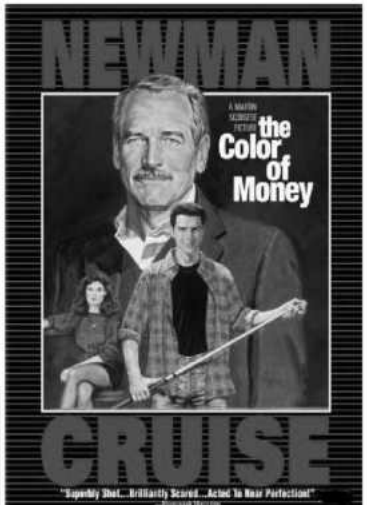
While filming The Color ofMoney, Paul learned that he was to be awarded an honorary Oscar by the Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was not thrilled, viewing an honorary Oscar as a consolation prize for stars who'd never won the real thing for a single performance. Even so, he was in good company. Honorary Oscars had previously been awarded to Charlie Chaplin in 1928 (the first ever); Greta Garbo (in 1954); Cary Grant (in 1969); Barbara Stanwyck (in 1981); and Kirk Douglas (in 1995). Paul told friends, "The Academy gives honorary Oscars when you're washed up."

Paul was furious and was about to announce that he would not accept the award, but Joanne prevailed on him to go for it. He reluctantly agreed but refused to attend the ceremonies in Los Angeles.

Accepting the award for him was Sally Field, who asserted onstage that Paul was "at the height of his career."

Back East, after the ceremonies, Paul quipped, "I'm grateful this award didn't come wrapped as a gift certificate to Forest Lawn. At least I now have a nude boyfriend to present to Joanne's Oscar." He was referring to the Best Actress Award Joanne had won way back in 1958 for The Three Faces ofEve.

Pool Sharks
Cruise with **Newman**
Young Bull vs. Old Bull



With his Honorary Oscar wrapped and in the mail to him, Paul resumed work on The Color of Money, a sequel to The Hustler. He'd be playing Fast Eddie Felson again. But in this new version, Paul, cast as an aging pool shark, finds a younger, greener version of himself. He decides to promote this hot shot kid for a chance at the bigtime.

Cast as Vincent Lauria, Tom Cruise in the film is eager to lay claim to Fast Eddie's throne. Cruise's girlfriend in the movie was Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, who had appeared as Al Pacino's doomed, coke-snorting sister in Scarface (1983).

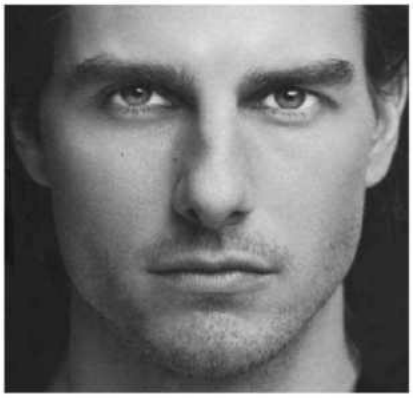
Paul had met Cruise before when the young actor had auditioned for the role of Howard Keach in Paul's 1984 release of Harry & Son. Paul had rejected the rising star for the role, awarding it to Robby Benson instead.

The director of The Color ofMoney, Martin Scorsese, had seen Cruise in his film, All the Right Moves (1983) and thought he'd be ideal as Vincent, Paul's younger partner. The director later admitted that the only reason he'd signed on for The Color of Money was as a means of financing his upcoming production of The Last Temptation of Christ.

Immediately previous to his agreement to film The Color of Money with Paul, Cruise had filmed Top Gun, which would eventually open to sensational box office around the country. The press went wild over the Newman/Cruise casting. Many stories were filed about the screen mating. "The Sex Symbol of the 50s and 60s Meets the Sex Symbol of the 80s," headlined one story. A reporter even suggested that Paul himself had been "something of a Tom Cruise in the 1950s."

Cruise had been eager to work with both Scorsese and Paul. "When the director first called me," he told the press, "it was like getting a call from John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Orson Welles."

Long before he became famous on movie sets for his dictatorial control tendencies-nicknamed "Cruise Control" by other film industry workers-Cruise arrived on the set rather humble. At first he called both Scorsese and Paul "Sir." Finally, it was Paul who broke through to him, telling the uptight young man to call him Paul.



Tom Cruise
"The kid has balls"

"He treated us with the same reverence the Chinese show their elders," Paul later said. "He made me feel like an old man making his last film. But we soon got over that, and he became one of my newest, but one of my best friends."

When he signed on, Cruise was no pool player. To prepare himself for the role, he showed amazing dedication. After seven weeks of training with pool hall sharpies, Cruise became so skilled at the game that he could keep up with the pros. Except for one trick shot, he was able to play pool on camera. Far from being jealous of Cruise's accomplishments, Paul bragged to the press about the young actor's newly acquired skill.

Even as a friendship developed, the old man of the screen and cinema's rising new star displayed a competitive edge in their emerging relationship. Paul was painfully aware that whereas he'd been born in 1925, Cruise had been born 37 years later, before the Fourth of July, in 1962.

It had to be obvious to Paul that his widespread identification as a sex symbol, with which he had always been uncomfortable, was being passed on to another man. "My God," he said one day to Scorsese, "I'm sixty years old."

Newman hugging Cruise:
And showing him *The Color of Money*

"I know how old you are," Scorsese said. "The whole world knows how old you are."

"And Tom is so young," Paul said. "I could be his father."

"If you started early enough, maybe even his grandfather."

"Don't remind me," Paul said, walking away.

News of the bonding of Paul with Cruise quickly reached both the press and the gossip circuit. A.E. Hotchner, Hemingway's biographer, and one of Paul's best friends, weighed in on the "Freudian father-son thing."

Newman and Cruise ready for battle
Sex symbol of the 50s
meets sex symbol of the 80s

Paul's own son, Scott, had died by the time he met Cruise, and in some ways Paul had become a surrogate father to the young actor. Cruise himself had shown signs over the years that he was seeking a substitute for his own absentee father.

Paul quickly made Cruise his protege, informing the press that he admired "Tom's courage. We've competed both on- and off-screen but that's good for both of us. It makes better actors out of us."

On the set, a reporter asked Paul about his developing relationship with Cruise. "It's like the story of an old bull and a young bull," Paul said. "These two bulls were walking together on a ridge when they spotted a herd of cows down below. Young bull says to old bull, `Let's run down and hump one of those cows.' Old bull says to young bull,

`Naw, let's walk down the hill and jump `em all!"

In one "vanilla" biography of the younger actor, a paperback quickie called Cruise Control by Susan Netter, she speculates that Paul, in addition to being a surrogate father to Cruise, provided a role model for him too. She quotes Cruise as saying, "Paul lives a normal life. He's got several businesses, a wife, a family. That's good for me to see."

"In Paul Newman, Tom recognizes a true modern Renaissance man, one who could give not only to his family but to the less fortunate of the world at large," Netter claimed. "He also saw a man who, even though one of the favorite actors of the century, was not limited by acting or fame."

Shelley Winters, Paul's on-again, off-again friend and confidante, laughed at all the copy being written about Paul functioning as Cruise's role model.

"Paul Newman is not the candy ass the press makes him out to be," she claimed. "He's as much a Child of the Devil as I am. The only difference between us, morally speaking, is that I don't have millions to donate to charities. I can hardly keep myself afloat."

"I know Paul very well," she said, speaking privately and not for publication. "I'm sure he's drooled over Cruise's chestnut brown hair, those dancing hazel eyes, and that handsome, clean-cut American profile, very masculine. At Paul's age, drooling is about all he can do, I would imagine. All my hot men of yesterday have grown too old, or too fat in Marlon's case, to cut the mustard any more. Men are different from us blonde bombshells of the '50s. Some of us gals will be carrying on into our eighties ... or beyond."

Shelley was not alone in thinking that Paul was sexually attracted to Cruise. At every Hollywood cocktail party, and in every gay bar from the New York islands to the California coast, there was speculation that Paul was having a torrid affair with Cruise. This appears to be mere speculation. No "smoking gun" has ever emerged.

However, everyone who worked with them, or encountered them in some capacity, had a story to relate. Whether that story was true didn't seem to matter to those eager for details, even if they'd been fabricated.

An attendant at a stock car stadium, where Paul and Cruise had raced that day, claimed he saw the two men showering together after a sweaty run. "They weren't doing anything other than washing off their grime," the attendant claimed. "I checked out each of their equipment. Newman wasn't staring at what Cruise had hanging and vice versa. Men routinely check out other men in the shower. If there was one thing I observed that day, it was that both men were going out of their way to keep their focus at eye level."

The attendant could have made up the story. Even so, it fell within the realm of possibility.

Perhaps Paul did check out Cruise, as he later claimed. "The kid has balls. He's going to become the next great legend of Hollywood." On the other hand, perhaps Paul was speaking symbolically about Cruise's cojones.

Another famous director, the controversial Oliver Stone, who had directed Paul in two films, predicted "a blazing future for Tom. He could become the next Paul Newman."

Some critics felt Cruise should have appeared more competitive with Paul on screen. "His pool shark toughness was diminished every time he looked at Newman," wrote one critic. "Through the film Cruise looked like he had a schoolgirl crush on Newman. The awe-struck actor should have played the role with a touch of greater hostility."

Cal Culver, the porno star who'd wanted to appear opposite Paul in the homosexual love story, The Front Runner, told a gay magazine that he, too, had heard all that talk about the romance of Cruise and Newman. "I didn't believe a word of it," Culver said. "To my knowledge, I was the last man on earth Newman ever had sex with, and that was in the late '70s. If Newman and Cruise had met in 1955, and both had been born in 1925, 1 bet there would have been fireworks. If a video had been shot of those two men, both young and in action back then, more guys would have seen them than went to my Boys in the Sand. When Newman was having sex with me, he wasn't ... how

can I say this diplomatically? He wasn't always sailing at full mast."

In a mock ceremony at the end of the shooting of The Color of Money, Paul placed a paper crown on Cruise's head. "You're the new Prince of Players," he told the young man. "I'm going to retire. After watching you dance around in your jockey shorts in Risky Business, I knew my day had come. With my skinny legs, I could never have pulled that one off."

It was Paul who introduced Cruise to his pet sport and hobby, stock car racing. One afternoon Paul rented an entire racetrack so that he and Cruise could practice. Both of them squeezed into the same race car.

"I loved going out with Paul to race," Cruise later said. "We spent hours and hours together doing just that. I have always loved fast cars and motorcycles. I wanted Paul to get me into stock car racing, and he did."

One reporter claimed that after Paul introduced Cruise to stock car racing, "He went from Cruise Control into Overdrive in just a few short months."

That statement is rather ambiguous. It perhaps meant that Cruise became more of an egomaniac after the testosterone buildup of the racing track.

In the years ahead, long after The Color ofMoney was wrapped, Paul and Cruise would continue to see each other. He was a frequent visitor at the rambling house that Paul and Joanne occupied in Westport.

Paul claimed that Cruise told him he wasn't going to let fame and fortune go to his head. "I don't know what's coming tomorrow," Cruise said. "That's the exciting part. I can't wait to find out what surprises are in store for me."

"Oh, you'll have a few," Paul predicted.

What Paul didn't predict was that in 1987 he'd win the Oscar for The Color of Money. By 1986 he'd given up hope for winning a real Oscar, something he considered distinctly more prestigious than the honorary Oscar he'd hauled in.

In the Best Actor race, Paul faced a less than formidable posse: Bob Hoskins for Mona Lisa, William Hurt for Children of a Lesser God, James Woods for Salvador, and Dexter Gordon for Round Midnight. As defined by Joanne, whose family had perfected a secret recipe for making lemonade, the lineup of competitors for the award was akin to "weak lemonade." Paul was definitely the front runner.

From his base in Connecticut, Paul had asked Robert Wise, who had directed him in Somebody Up There Likes Me, to accept the Oscar for him in "the unlikely event I actually win." As Paul told friends, "I never planned to show up for the awards because I can't stand one more humiliation. I know I'm going to lose. Some dark horse will probably walk off with Oscar once again."

A drunken Bette Davis, making a spectacle of herself, swept onto the stage. The program called for her to introduce Robert Wise, who would then pay tribute to Paul. But Davis spent all of the allotted time telling millions of TV viewers who Robert Wise was.

Nervous and somewhat flustered, and reacting to signals from the TV crew to wrap things up, Wise hurriedly accepted the statuette in Paul's name, and then beat a hasty retreat from the stage. In its aftermath, the presentation emerged as more of a tribute to Wise than to Paul.

Wise later told reporters, "Newman should have won for the film I directed him in-Somebody Up There Likes Me. I'm sorry it took so long."

Paul later joked to the press. "With this baby in my pocket, maybe now I can find work. How appropriate that Bette Davis made the presentation. She claims she nicknamed the statue Oscar because its ass reminded her of her first husband. So, in honor of that guy's ass, I accept."

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Back in Hollywood during the 1960s, Paul moved deeper into another decade of filmmaking. Those ten years would spawn some of his greatest successes, as well as some of his film career's most stinking bombs. Trouble lay ahead, both professional and personal. New seductions lay on the horizon, along with permanent breaks from old-time friends and confidants.

One alarm was sounded when a call came in from Robert Rossen, who had directed Paul in The Hustler.

"We've got a problem, at least a potential problem," Rossen told Paul. "Can you come to my office at two o'clock? A woman-more of a girl-is going to be here. I want you to talk some sense into her."

"Is this a looming paternity case?" Paul asked. "All big-time movie stars get them, and I guess my time has come. Should I bring a lawyer, and why is the bitch contacting you?"

"Just show up," Rossen said. "Everything will become clear at two o'clock."

Rossen was being so mysterious that at first Paul decided not to go. But curiosity won out, and he drove to Rossen's office at two o'clock where he was ushered in.

To his surprise, Sandra Dee, dressed in a woman's gray business suit with pink stripes, was seated in a chair opposite Rossen's desk. Taken by surprise, he leaned over to kiss her, finding her unresponsive. She didn't make eye contact. Had her crush on him vanished?

Prior to their meeting, Sandra had married the singer, Bobby Darin, in 1960, and her career had peaked the year before with the release of A Summer Place, a romantic film she'd made with Troy Donahue. Her name would be forever linked with that dreamy movie, in which she and Troy had fallen in love to Max Steiner's memorable theme music.

Darin had met Sandra when he was twenty-four and she was eighteen. Three months later they were married.

Rossen got down to business fast. "I've just learned through Sandra here that Darin is going to sue us over The Hustler?"

"On what grounds?" asked a startled Paul.

"Before you became available, I more or less entered into an agreement with Darin to play Fast Eddie Folsen. When you became available, I didn't sign his contract but offered you the role instead."

"That happens all the time in Hollywood," Paul said. "What's his case?"

Sandra turned to him and made eye contact for the first time. "Three top lawyers in a Los Angeles firm think Bobby has a powerful case. Bobby plans to pursue your asses, and he may take home millions. He thinks Fast Eddie was the role of a lifetime, and you've denied him his chance."

"Why are you here?" Paul demanded to know. "You're not his lawyer."

"Bobby doesn't know I'm here," she said. "I came to warn both of you what Bobby is planning to do. My motive? I was hoping you guys would meet with Bobby at our house and reach some sort of financial settlement before going to court."

Rossen turned to Paul. "Sandra requested that you be at this meeting although ultimately I think this is a decision that 20th Century Fox's lawyers will have to decide."

She rose to her feet. "If that's what you want, so be it. The papers will carry news of Bobby's lawsuit against you guys in the morning."

"Just a minute," Paul said. He would later tell Rossen that he had to reevaluate Sandra on that day. "She's one tough cookie," Paul said. "Not the virginal little gal I met on the set of Until They Sail."

Rossen said that Paul volunteered to drive Sandra home-"or some- where"-that day. "Half of Hollywood had known for years that Sandra had a crush on Paul. I summoned Paul to my office hoping he might calm her down. I think he did."

As for the threatened lawsuit, it never materialized. Right before he died, Rossen, at the home of the California multi-millionaire Gordon Howard, told the author of this biography that the Fox lawyers, after careful consideration, felt Darin did indeed have a case against them. In an attempt to avoid litiga tion, they secretly agreed to give him $150,000 in cash so he wouldn't have to report it on his income tax.

(Left to right:) **Paul Newman, Bobby Darin, Sandra Dee**
A question of adultery

Bobby accepted the offer, and the case was closed, one of many such cases in the history of Hollywood "that was just swept under the carpet," according to Rossen.

The director didn't know the outcome of Paul's relationship with Sandra. "We never discussed it again. The whole thing was messy, and the less said about it the better."

The conclusion of the Dee/Newman relationship was revealed years later by Lana Turner, a friend of the author. She had been a "mother confessor" to Sandra when they'd made Imitation of Life and Portrait in Black together.

"Sandra told me that she'd always wanted Paul to be the man who took her virginity," Lana said. "That didn't happen. But after that meeting in Rossen's office, Paul drove her down to Laguna. At long last that deflowering that Sandra had anticipated took place."

Having another drink, Lana said, "I think Sandra was a bit disappointed. You know, you can want, even anticipate something for so long that when it finally happens you don't want it anymore. With Sandra's marriage to Bobby, her passion for Paul had begun to fade. I had the same thing with Tyrone Power. He dumped me and months later called me and wanted me back. We came back together for one night, but it wasn't the same. I had turned the page, moved on."

Lana claimed that Sandra in the years ahead occasionally met Paul "for a roll in the hay, but it was no great thing. Paul was still in love with Joanne, and she loved Bobby, but they didn't love their spouses to the point they wouldn't have sex outside the home. The sex between Sandra and Paul might have been a little better if both of them weren't drunk whenever they went to bed together. I should know. I've been made love to by drunks all my life. I told Sandra she should try Paul in the morning when he's sobered up. But apparently she never took my advice."

Information about Paul's relationship with Sandra always remained a notso-well-kept secret in Hollywood. An item or two about them occasionally appeared in a column, mostly in the underground press. The established star and the fading star, so far as it is known, were never seen in public.

Over the years, Paul tried to see Sandra whenever she called him as she engaged in her nightmarish battle against booze, pills, depression, and anorexia.

Paul did tell Martin Ritt, "Imagine being Sandra Dee. You're not even thirty, and you're still blonde and perky and you're washed up, even though you used to be America's sweetheart."

Lana claimed that Sandra never loved Paul, although she was still drawn to him. "I think he was more of a father figure to her than a lover. She always loved Bobby even though she divorced him in 1967. They stayed together until he died in 1973. He was only thirty-seven. She came to my house and was almost suicidal, so I know she still loved him."

"At one time, I asked her what went wrong in the marriage," Lana said. "She told me, `Bobby went to see me when I played Gidget on the screen. He fell in love with Gidget and married her. But I grew up and became Sandra Dee, and he never expected that. My first mistake was in becoming Sandra Dee. I should have stuck with my original name, Alexandra Zuck."

Sandra never provided details about her relationship with Paul. However, in 1991 when she was appearing in a play, Love Letters, with John Saxon, she spoke to a reporter. "One of the great mistakes of my life was falling in love with happily married men like Paul Newman. I'll say no more about that."

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Marilyn Monroe's breathless voice came over the phone. Paul hadn't heard from her since Las Vegas, although Hollywood was buzzing with rumors of her involvements with both Kennedy brothers, John and Robert. There was the hint of secrecy in her voice. She claimed that she was calling from a "secure" phone, as her own residence had been bugged.

"Paulie," she said, "I've missed you. Have you also missed your baby?"

"Of course, I have," he said. "Anyone who has been with you will miss you forever."

"You're so sweet, the sweetest lover I've ever had. Joe is so brutal and Arthur so cold."

She was, of course, referring to husbands Joe DiMaggio and Arthur Miller. He didn't dare ask her about the Kennedys.

She told him that she couldn't talk long on the phone, but wanted to meet him tomorrow afternoon at a mansion in Beverly Hills. She claimed she was hiding out there running from the mob. He was completely baffled as to her link with the mob. But he agreed to meet her at the appointed time.

"Tell no one about our getting together," she said, "especially your wife. I've learned the less wives know about their husband's affairs the better."

Arriving at a mansion owned by God knows who, Paul was ushered in by a black maid and out onto a patio where Marilyn in a white bikini awaited him. She jumped up and ran toward him, giving him a sloppy wet kiss.

Over lunch, where she nibbled and Paul ate lustily, she told him a highly edited version of what was going on in her life.

"Bobby wants you to play him in a movie based on his book, The Enemy Within."

He just assumed that Bobby referred to Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General of the United States.

"It's about Jimmy Hoffa and the mob," she said. "Bobby wanted me to contact you because he wants you to star in it."

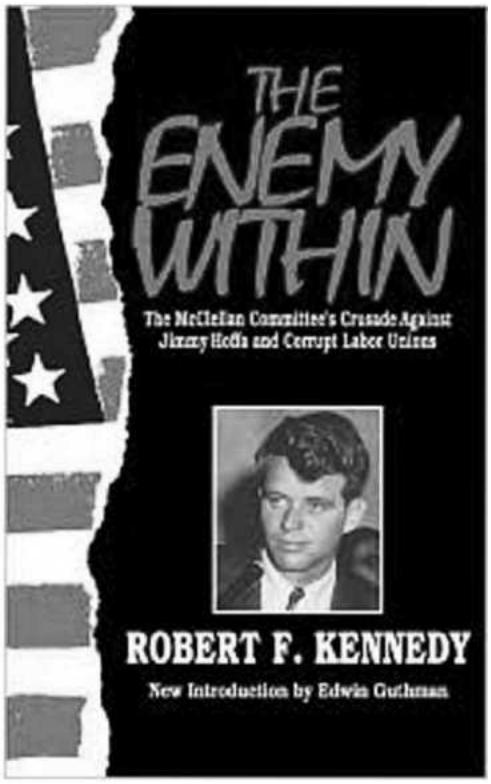
"I'd be honored," Paul said. "I'd like to meet with him to discuss it."

"That's not possible right now," she said. "We have to be careful. People are spying on us, watching our every move. Jerry Wald is negotiating with Bobby for the screen rights. I want to co-star in the movie with you."

"I haven't read the book yet," he said. "Is there a strong woman's role? Sounds like a man's picture to me."

"There isn't a strong woman's part as of yet, but Jerry has promised to write in a role for me. Bobby has agreed. I want to play a tough prosecutor in a business suit who, arm in arm, works with Bobby to bring Hoffa to justice. With me in the picture and with you as Bobby, we can virtually guarantee box office. Besides, I'm tired of those dumb blonde movies. I want to sink my beautiful teeth into a strong, hard political drama like Frankie did." She was no doubt referring to Frank Sinatra's appearance in The Manchurian Candidate, an upcoming release she'd seen at a special screening in Las Vegas.

At one point, Marilyn ordered the maid to bring Paul a bikini. "Make it as revealing as possible," she instructed her maid right in front of Paul.



Before the afternoon ended, Jerry Wald arrived on the scene and was ushered into the pool area. "I spotted Marilyn, topless, at the far end of the pool," he later said. "She was making out with a man in a white bathing suit. I

thought at first that it was Bobby Kennedy. After all, we were here to discuss The Enemy Within. I cleared my throat and moved closer. The man rose to his feet. I was stunned. It was Paul Newman. I'd wanted to meet with him to discuss his starring in the picture."

Marilyn hardly needed to introduce Wald to Paul. He was well known to both the Newmans. Paul only hoped that Wald would be discreet the next time he encountered Joanne. He'd produced No Down Payment with her as well as The Sound and the Fury. Not only that, but he'd also produced The Long, Hot Summer. In a touch of irony, he was about to produce Hemingway 's Adventures of a Young Man, in which he'd cast Paul, and also The Stripper, a film in which he'd cast Joanne.

Wald was long familiar with Marilyn as well, having produced her Clash by Night (1952) with Barbara Stanwyck and Lets Make Love (1960).

During their talk, Wald later claimed that Marilyn never put on her top in spite of his presence. "It was very distracting trying to talk to Paul with Marilyn's breasts exposed," Wald later recalled. "When she got up to go upstairs to get dressed, I quizzed Paul about everything that had happened before I got there. He'd confided in me before. He gave me a complete account, but was puzzled about how I was going to create a strong role for Marilyn in a movie devoted to Bobby and the mob. `Who is Marilyn going to play?' Paul asked me. `Jimmy Hoffa?'"

"Scriptwriters can work wonders," Wald assured him. "Besides, Bobby demands that we create a role in the movie for Marilyn. He owes her a favor or two."

"I can well imagine," Paul said.

Wald later discussed privately with friends why The Enemy Within was never made. The studio, 20th Century Fox, began to receive death threats, no doubt from some shady members of the Teamsters' Union. Wald claimed that he was warned that if the movie were made, "it'll be your last picture." The producer also claimed that he was told that movie houses showing the film would be bombed. W-V`_,,, 0 , , = , a ~ I

"Both Marilyn and Paul also received death threats," Wald said. "Marilyn had many reasons to fear the mob-but that's a story for another day-and The Enemy Within loomed as another nail in her coffin."

Marilyn with the **Kennedy Brothers**
A not-so-happy birthday greeting

"That role for Marilyn never got written," Wald said. "It was just as well. With her in the picture in a totally made-up part, it would have thrown off the focus of the film anyway. Her relationship with Bobby was deteriorating rapidly. Also, Paul pulled the plug. He was very concerned with those death threats, and was very anxious that no

harm come to his family. The final blow came when he read the first draft of the film script and rejected it. He called it a piece of shit. I don't know why he was so violent in his objection. He'd made shit before."

Pierre Salinger, the press secretary at the White House, privately told friends that "Bobby was furious when Newman rejected the role to play him in The Enemy Within. And Bobby was a guy to hold a grudge. He even sent Paul a note under the letterhead of the Attorney General. It was short, not sweet. FUCK OFF!!!"

Wald said that with Paul off the picture, he turned to a rising young actor, Jack Nicholson. "With makeup, Jack could be made into a more convincing version of Bobby Kennedy than Paul ever could."

Like so many projects in Hollywood, the film died a slow death. It just drifted into oblivion. Everybody-Paul, Marilyn, Bobby-was caught up in a different agenda. And each of their lives was changing, quickly and dramatically.

Wald's own life was also about to change for all time. He exited the world in the summer of 1962.

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Before he was felled with a stroke, Joseph Kennedy, the President's father and the former ambassador to England, worked behind the scenes to get The Enemy Within launched as a film. The elder Kennedy was long a veteran on the Hollywood scene, going back to the silent era when he'd romanced screen vamp Gloria Swanson.

When The Enemy Within fell through as a project, the former ambassador turned his attention to getting a film launched called PT 109, which documented young JFK's heroic pursuits in the Pacific during World War II. For months Old Joe had launched a relentless public relations campaign to get his son's exploits-real or exaggerated-before the widest possible public.

Cliff Robertson
Sinks PT 109 for Paul

Although he didn't want to play Bobby Kennedy in The Enemy Within, Paul was intrigued with the idea of playing JFK in the American campaign in the Pacific. It brought back memories of Paul's own lessthan-heroic service in the Navy.

Using his connection with JFK's close friend, Robert Stack, Paul arranged a meeting between the President and himself when JFK flew into Los Angeles. The President had a very rushed schedule, including a rendezvous with Marilyn Monroe. Out of loyalty to Stack, Kennedy agreed to meet with Paul, but he could only grant him an audience of fifteen minutes.

The Secret Service ushered Paul and Stack into Kennedy's suite, where the relatively young, handsome president greeted Paul warmly and embraced his longtime friend, Stack. Paul was only mildly surprised when the two men kissed each other on their cheeks a total of four times.

Kennedy talked briefly about his wartime mission, which he hoped the film would dramatize. "You're handsome enough to play me," Kennedy said to Paul. "Everybody in the press writes about how good looking I am. Actually, the best looking guy in the family was Joe Jr. He had not just me, but my brothers beat on all counts. Dad was going to run him for president if he hadn't been killed."

He was referring to Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., the eldest of the nine children born to Joseph and Rose Kennedy. The President's brother died on August 12, 1944 in a doomed flight during World War II known as "Operation Aphrodite."

Paul later told friends that he was almost certain that the role of JFK was his. The next day the President called Stack with the bad news. "I don't want Newman to play me," JFK said to Stack. "Definitely not. There are two problems here. First, Newman is far too old for the part. Maybe if they did a movie about Dad, that would be different. Actually, Jackie wants Warren Beatty in the role. You know how she's always getting crushes on movie stars. There's another reason. I hesitate to bring it up. Newman looks too Jewish, not Irish at all. He just wouldn't do. Convey my apologies to him, would you?"

The popular singer, Ed Byrnes, was considered, even Peter Fonda, before the Kennedys decided on Cliff Robertson. As for playing a twenty-six year old JFK, Robertson was born in 1925, the same year as Paul. On hearing that his "forever competition," Robertson, had contracted for the part, Paul was furious.

He got over his anger when he actually saw a screening of PT 109. "What a disaster!" he said. Actually, he'd walked out of the film about half an hour before it ended.

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Marlon Brando came up with what he viewed as a hot property for his Pennebaker Production Company. It was called Paris Blues, and he felt that the role of the female lead would be ideal for Marilyn Monroe, his on-again, off-again lover. For a week or two, she was convinced, throwing herself into the project and believing Brando's promise to take her on a voyage of discovery to the Paris he'd known after he left the Broadway production of A Streetcar Named Desire in the late 40s.

But a month or two later, Brando woke up and decided he didn't want to appear in Paris Blues. During the time it took him to make up his mind, Marilyn had already "turned the page," as she called it, signing to do The Misfits, a play with script by Arthur Miller. It would reunite her with Montgomery Clift and introduce her to Clark Gable, upon whom she'd had a crush since she was a teenage girl. For Gable and Monroe, it would be their last film.

As adverse as he was to accepting Brando's "sloppy seconds," Paul agreed to play the lead in Paris Blues, especially since Brando had already cast Joanne Woodward as the female lead before Paul signed on.

In 1960, Mr. and Mrs. Newman flew to Paris to begin location work on their next disastrous film together. It would be their fourth picture together. Paris Blues would also be Paul's second picture with director Martin Ritt.

Even before the picture was shot, Paris Blues cost Paul a once-valuable relationship. In Paris, Eartha Kitt met privately with him, a rendezvous apparently unknown to Joanne, who may never have known about the close bond between Eartha and Paul that dated back to both of their involvements with James Dean.

Eartha desperately wanted to play Paris Blues' fourth lead-the part of a black woman named Connie Lampson. There were very few good roles for black women in those days, and Eartha thought that by playing her, she could win an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress.

...betrayed

In response to her pleas for the part, Paul told her that he could not control casting, and that Brando himself had decided on casting Diahann Carroll opposite Sidney Poitier, who was Diahann's lover both on and off the screen, even though both of them were married at the time.

Eartha was furious, accusing Paul of not doing her "this one favor" in spite of her long-standing relationship with him as his confidant. "I was always there for you, and now I ask you to be there for me-and you're not."

He apologized to her but said there was nothing he could do. The last he saw of her was as she rushed to the sidewalk and hailed a taxi to make a speedy exit from his life.

It is entirely possible that Eartha, one of the best sources of information about the private details of Paul's life during the 1950s, would not have been so outspoken about him to her friends if he'd come through for her.

But since he didn't, she spoke openly and frequently about his private relationships with both men and women that she'd been privy to. In Key West, she once said, "What you see up there on the screen is not the real Paul Newman. He doesn't believe in friendship like I do. I would do anything for my true friends. He wouldn't give them air in a sealed jug."

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In Paris Blues, Paul played Ram Bowen, an American trombonist, who was living an ex-pat lifestyle with his black friend, as played by Sidney Poitier, the first African-American actor to attain A-list status in Hollywood. They are enjoying the bohemian lifestyle until two American tourists show up, Joanne Woodward and Diahann Carroll, who temporarily disrupt their lives.

The film explored racism and passion, neither one very well. It's more like a romp through gay Paree. Paul was forced to deliver lines like, "Baby, I love music morning, noon and night-d'ya dig?"

The Newmans in Paris, in love
Kentucky oysters doing their job

Just as he'd learned to play pool from the experts, Paul also worked with trombonist Murray McEachern, who had played in Benny Goodman's orchestra, to teach him how to be a jazzman.

Arriving in Paris in the middle of winter, Joanne rented an apartment for them in Montmartre, as she was intrigued by the fact that Picasso had once lived there. The two-story rental was cold and dark. Even so, Paul could be seen by his neighbors in the little courtyard of the rental, cooking steaks for his wife and himself.

In Paris, Poitier claimed that his role of Eddie Cook, an ex-pat jazzman, was one dimensional. Carroll, who had starred opposite Poitier in Otto Preminger's Porgy and Bess (1959), found her role more challenging.

At one point, Martin Ritt considered making the film very daring, at least by the standards of the day. He wanted to have the script rewritten to make Paul lovers with Carroll, Joanne lovers with Poitier. The producer, United Artists, nixed the idea.

Paul was an amateur compared to the musical greats Ritt had rounded up, none more notable than Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington.

After only two weeks of shooting, Paul complained to Ritt, "Joanne and I are playing second fiddle to the musicians."

In the beginning, Paul had said, "We have a surefire winner here," but his enthusiasm quickly diminished.

The author, at his favorite hangout in those days, Le Cafe des Deux Magots, on the Place St. Germain des Pres, spotted Paul and Joanne at a sidewalk table. She was drinking some sort of cocktail, and Paul was enjoying quite a few beers. They seemed very much in love, almost as if they were on a honeymoon. There were no other actors or actresses in Paris Blues to complicate Paul's love life.

Diahann Carroll with **Sidney Poitier**
Feeling guilty...an adulterous romance

To the Parisians, they did not look like movie stars. In those days Paris was used to stars arriving like royal visitors. Paul was dressed in blue jeans and a shabby sweater, and Joanne looked like a housewife from western Kansas. No one seemed to recognize them except yours truly who chose not to invade their privacy, at least for that one afternoon.

The author also encountered the Newmans again one night dining at Haynes, a Harlem-inspired restaurant on rue Chauzel. Their dining partner was Louis Armstrong, who had come here to fill up on barbecued spareribs, corn on the cob, and "Kentucky oysters." The diners recognized Satchmo but, again, didn't seem to know who the Newmans were. Paul stuck to ordering beer that night, but Satchmo preferred bourbon. "I drink the brown stuff," he told Haynes.

Big, burly Haynes, who hailed from the Deep South, U.S.A., was the owner of this American outpost. He presided over the Newman table, even serving them his old-fashioned homemade apple pie for dessert.

Upon its lackluster release, the editors of Cue Magazine nailed Paris Blues accurately as "self-consciously socially significant -a loosely amoral, romantically dreamy-eyed casually inter-racial, pseudo-realistic tale of music and music-makers, of love, conflict, boys-grab-at-girls, dope, tragedy, and raucously wild music, and all so slickly fricasseed and illogical as to add up to a Frenchified fairy tale that fobs off criticism."

Paris Blues opened across the United States on September 27, 1961, two days after The Hustler opened. Audiences ignored the former, flocking to the latter.

With the completion of Paris Blues, he had finally paid off his $500,000 debt to Warner Brothers. "Free at last," he shouted, ordering a keg of beer to celebrate throughout the night.

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After campaigning with Joanne for Gore Vidal's unsuccessful run for a Congressional seat from New York State, Paul flew back to Hollywood. Both Paul and Joanne had signed to appear in films with the sensitive young actor, Richard Beymer, hers called The Stripper, based on the William Inge play, A Loss of Roses.

Joanne *The Stripper*
Bursting balloons

In a move opposed by his agent, Paul had agreed to appear with Beymer in Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man (1962), a script penned by A.E. Hotchner, Paul's friend and neighbor in Westport. Martin Ritt signed on once again to direct Paul. Another of Paul's friends, Jerry Wald, signed on to produce the picture for 20th Century Fox.

As a punch drunk, fifty-five-year-old pug, Paul reprised his 1955 appearance in the teleplay, The Battler, based on Hemingway's autobiographical stories of "Nick Adams." At the time, Richard Beymer was being groomed as "the new Paul Newman." He'd been designated as the lead.

No longer cast as a pretty boy, Paul was heavily disguised to look like a battered old boxer who'd seen too much of life on the wrong side of the tracks.

He shocked his fans when he appeared on the screen with gargoyle makeup and using a hoarse voice.

Ritt later claimed that Dan Dailey, Betty Grable's song-and-dance partner of the 40s, made a pass at Paul during filming. Dailey appeared in the film as a drunken press agent. The pass was not intercepted.

It was Paul himself who made a pass when he met a beautiful young girl named Sharon Tate. As he was advising her to become a full-time actress, Beymer approached. Paul quickly realized that she was Beymer's girlfriend, and he backed off. Beymer himself also urged Sharon to pursue an acting career.

At the time he met Paul, Beymer was shooting to fame for his role as Tony in West Side Story, the one film for which he is most remembered today. He told Paul he'd hated his appearance in West Side Story. "I was sort of caught up in my own web of illusion."

Sharon Tate
Date with destiny

Sharon told Paul that she and Beymer were being flown to Verona, Italy, where they would film some concluding Hemingway stories in the actual locale of his World War I adventures when he was an ambulance driver.

As Nick, played by Beymer, is recovering from a wound in the hospital, he falls in love with his nurse, as played by Susan Strasberg.

Sharon was excited about going to Italy where she would appear as an extra and where she would meet Susan, who also encouraged her to become an actress.

Years later, on August 9, 1969, Paul was horrified when he received a phone call from his friend Steve McQueen. Sharon, eight and a half months pregnant and the wife of Roman Polanski, had been murdered in her home, along with four others. The massacre, it was later learned, was committed by Charles Manson and members of his cult. Steve added a chilling note, "I was supposed to have been a guest at that party."

More tragic news was on the way. Hemingway himself wrote the film's opening and closing narration and was scheduled to utter it himself. But the cast and crew, while filming a segment in Verona, Italy, received a blow. On July 2, 1961, "Papa" had committed suicide at his home in Ketchum, Idaho.

The film failed at the box office. The New York Herald Tribune claimed that Paul's performance was "essentially a caricature that fails to capture Hemingway's compassion for the indomitable in a man seemingly in the last ditch of defeat."

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Paul had known Susan Strasberg, the daughter of Lee Strasberg, since she was a young girl breaking out as an actress on Broadway. Over the years he'd still remained close to her father and the Actors Studio, but he had never paid much attention to Susan.

Richard Beymer
A promise unfulfilled

But when she arrived on the set of Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man, he paid close attention to her.

Susan had gone through a tumultuous love affair with Richard Burton and had not yet entered into her doomed marriage to the handsome actor, Christopher Jones.

Paul had always found her a "Jewish American princess," but meeting her on the set of the Hemingway picture, he encountered a more mature and alluring Susan. She had no scenes with him, but was going to Verona, Italy, to play Beymer's nurse in the film.

Since both Paul and Susan knew Marilyn Monroe, their initial talk focused on her, but Susan also spoke about her father and Method acting. Their talk grew so animated, he invited her out, claiming it was "purely social, merely friendship."

She told him that she expected no more "from a happily married man."

At a party in New York in 1977 that the author had taken her to, Susan admitted that her brief fling with Paul was "nothing more, nothing less. We both were a bit bored. I was between engagements. He was experiencing a dry period if you know what I mean. We both weren't that interested in being committed to one person one hundred percent. Our souls were too adventurous for that."

She claimed that over her first drink with Paul, she confessed that she'd never gotten over Richard [a reference to Burton], and that she'd developed a crush on Alain Delon.

"Alain is so beautiful," Susan told Paul. "Just like you."

"I was a little drunk that night, and I got flirtatious," she told the author. "I told Paul, `I hope you're beautiful all over.'"

He looked around the cafe. "Do you want me to prove it to you right now and take off all my clothes?"

"Later, darling," she said. "I'll conduct a complete inspection."

"A promise I'll hold you to," he said.

She later claimed, "It was very satisfying, a release of passion and pentup frustration. I liked Paul but I wasn't going to fall in love with him. No way. He was a married man. I never had any problem sleeping with married menthat hardly makes me a whore. In the theater, no actor-or actress for that matter-is ever faithful to their lover or spouse. That's not how it's played. Marilyn herselfmy surrogate sister-told me that being faithful to a partner is like

missing out on half the fun in New York."

Susan Strasberg
...a release of passion

Susan called Paul on another occasion when Fox invited her to fly to Los Angeles to promote Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man. Both Paul and Susan agreed that it would not be discreet to be seen together, so they slipped away somewhere private.

"It was a seedy motel out in San Fernando Valley," she said. "But I had fun. I felt I was being very naughty. In some way, I was competitive with Marilyn at the time. She had so many lovers and I didn't have all that many. I was jealous of her conquests. She'd had Paul Newman, and I wanted him so I could brag to her."

At the time of her California visit, Susan was dating-of all people-the bisexual actor Cary Grant. "Paul was flabbergasted. `Couldn't Grant be your grandfather?' he asked me. I guess he could. I was introduced to Grant by his former lover, Clifford Odets. I knew all about the gay thing."

Don't tell me that Paul Newman wasn't interested in gossip," she said. "He wanted to know all about my brief affair with Cary. There wasn't much to tell. We went to bed only one time, and he couldn't rise to the occasion. He broke down and cried. This famous actor. He told me his great dream in life was to have a child of his own. Of course, he later married Dyan Cannon, and he did produce a child, his one and only, Jennifer. I told Cary that if I ever have a daughter, I'll name her Jennifer too."

On March 14, 1966, Susan, in honor of her old commitment, named her daughter Jennifer Jones, as she'd promised. The father was Christopher Jones, whom she'd married the year before.

"Paul was always a great friend of the Actors Studio," Susan claimed, "but I saw him very infrequently in the years ahead. We never referred to the times we did it. It seemed so unimportant. While we were still together, we did discuss the Elizabeth and Burton thing that was making headlines around the world. I told Paul, `For years I've had to compete against Marilyn. Now I have to compete against Elizabeth. What chance does a girl like me have competing against Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor? God must be a very bad person to force a girl to face such competition.'"

"You'll find someone," Paul assured her.

"Actually, I have," she told him.

"Who's the lucky guy?" he asked.

"Paul Newman, but he's taken."

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About three weeks before her death on August 5, 1962, Paul received an urgent call from Marilyn Monroe, who wanted to meet with him privately in a room at the Chateau Marmont, their former hangout.

Rushing to her side, he encountered an unkempt Marilyn wearing no makeup and looking her worst from another sleepless night.

Because Paul confided the events of that late scorching morning in Los Angeles to Janice Rule, we know some details about the last time Paul met with Marilyn.

He'd never seen Marilyn filled with such self-pity. She was lashing out at Hollywood and all the people who'd used her, especially John and Robert Kennedy.

"They won't return my calls," she told Paul. "I leave messages for them everywhere. I thought I was more, but guess what-I turned out to be just another piece of ass to them. Figure that. What a fool I was. Can you believe I was so stupid? At one point in my relationship with each of them, I actually believed their promises about leaving their wives for me. Bobby will be with Ethel until the day he dies, and Jack will be with Jackie."

At one point, according to Paul, Marilyn pulled the sheet from her body and stood up on wobbly feet beside her bed. She was completely nude. At the window, she pulled back the draperies, letting in the sun which was soaring toward its noon-day high.

Even in her disheveled state, Paul found there was a loveliness about her, a moody melancholy that hung in the air. She turned from the window and commanded him "to look at my body."

"I haven't been able to keep my eyes off it," he said.

"You're kind," she said. "A real sweet man. Just like Peter Lawford. He's a good guy too. A little mixed up in the head, but who isn't?" The telephone rang but she warned him not to pick it up. Returning to bed, she crawled under the sheets. "Call room service. I need some champagne."

After Paul had tipped the waiter, he sat on the edge of Marilyn's bed, sipping a tulip-shaped glass of champagne with her. "The bubbly soothes my nerves." She talked as if she were drugged.

He said little that day, letting her do most of the talking.

"Fame's a bitch, isn't it?" she asked. "You've handled it so much better than I have. I've fucked up everything, my whole life. My career's in shambles. After I got fired from Somethings Got to Give, no studio will hire me again."

"Are you kidding?" he asked. "When you pull yourself together, you're going to come back bigger than ever. The whole world loves Marilyn Monroe."

"As I said, you are so sweet, Paulie. My life would have been so different had I hooked up with you. You're strong like a man should be. You're dependable. If I'd married you instead of Arthur and Joe, I'd be the Queen of Hollywood today." She leaned toward him to kiss him on the lips. "And you'd be the king. The former king of Hollywood is dead, after all. I killed him!"

She was referring to Clark Gable, with whom she'd starred in The Misfits shortly before his death. "I put him through so much shit on that picture, I shortened his life."

"He died of natural causes," he assured her. "You're not to blame."

"If only I could believe that," she said. She moved closer to him. "Hold me. I need strong arms around me. A man's arms. Paulie's arms."

After he'd embraced her for a long time, she broke away. "I want you to run away with me," she said, desperation in her voice. "We'll leave Hollywood behind. Perhaps go to Mexico. You can get a divorce there and marry me. I want to be the next Mrs. Paul Newman."

"I'm already married," he said. "I not only have a wife, but children, responsibilities. I'm a breadwinner. As tempting a romantic adventure it is, running away with Marilyn Monroe is out of the question."

"I thought your marriage is just a cover," she said. "Not a real marriage."

"It's real all right," he said, standing up. He felt the heat of the day. "Don't they have any air conditioning in this fleabag?"

"I turned it off," she said. "If the heat is too much for you in this room, you can leave. Get out! You're rejecting me too, just like the Kennedys."

"I'm not rejecting you," he said. "I just can't give up the life I've built and run off to the border with you. What would we do?"

"I won't bother to tell you, because it's not going to happen," she said. "I thought I could call on you, and you'd rescue me. I see that you won't. I'm on my own. I've always been on my own in Hollywood. They took my youth, used me. I'm on the way to becoming Alexandra Del Lago in that movie of yours, Sweet Bird of Youth. A has-been at thirty-six. Maybe when I'm fifty they'll book me into Vegas. I'll face a sea of gray staring back at me as I sing `Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend.'"

"Listen, I don't want to leave you like this," he said. "I can get help for you. I know this clinic up the coast. A lot of stars use it. I'll drive you there and check you in and visit you whenever I can. When you come out of that place, you'll be a new woman. A more mature Marilyn will take Hollywood by storm. Your greatest roles are ahead of you."

"I know we live in fantasyland, but cut this fantasy shit. That's not going to happen. I'm finished in this town. You're going to rise to the top-not me. Not Marilyn. With all the silly movies I've left behind, all those dumb blonde parts, I'll become a footnote in Hollywood history. I won't even be a legend like Jean Harlow unless I die young."

Misfits **Monty Clift, Marilyn Monroe,** and **Clark Gable**
"...betraying Monty, betraying me"

"That's fool's talk and you know it," he said. "You can bounce back. You've had setbacks before."

She rose up in bed, baring her breasts. "I'm cleaning house, baby. My socalled mentor, Paula Strasberg, is on her way back to New York with a oneway ticket. Bobby and Jack are gone. I don't ever want to see Sinatra again. Dr. Greenson's going to go. I'm even going to get rid of Mrs. Murray."

She was referring to Dr. Ralph Greenson, her analyst, and Eunice Murray, her housekeeper.

She looked up at him, as if seeing him for the first time. "Didn't I tell you to get out of my room."

"I didn't think you really meant it." he said.

"I meant it!" She shouted at him. "Get out. Monty told me how you treated him and mocked him for losing his beauty in that accident."

Monty Clift, following his disfigurement in his car accident, had also starred with Marilyn in The Misfits. "You know I never did anything of the sort," Paul said. "Monty's lying."

"Like hell he is," she said. "For all I know you'll leave my bedroom and tell the world you encountered Marilyn Monroe, the broken down old hag."

She picked up an alarm clock from her nightstand and threw it at him. He ducked before heading for the door. "I'm going, but I have to warn you: I won't come back."

"That's the only good news I've had today, you bastard," she said. "Just as sneaky as Sinatra. I'm calling a press conference. I'll denounce the Kennedys, and I'll denounce you. I'll tell them you've spent more time fucking me than you did Joanne Woodward. That will be the end of Hollywood's most idyllic couple. You only pretend to like women anyway. Sinatra and I talked about it in Nevada. He's always known that you're a fag."

He opened the door and walked down the hallway. He was devastated, but felt he could talk to no one with the possible exception of his secret friend, Janice Rule. He kept telling Janice that if the acting didn't work out, she should become a psychiatrist to the stars.

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Marilyn's press conference didn't happen. She was found dead-suicide or murder?-before she could "blow the lid off this rotten country," as she'd threatened.

Paul's marriage was left intact, but upon hearing the televised news of Marilyn's death, he was devastated. He could not share his grief with his wife.

Paul threw himself into his work, thinking he'd found the perfect vehicle in a script presented to him by his friend and partner, director Martin Ritt. It was a Western of sorts, and it was based on the novel, Horseman, Pass By, by Larry McMurtry.

"Of course, the title's got to be changed," Ritt warned Paul. After several title proposals, including The Man with the Barbed Wire Soul, Hud Bannon, even Coitus on Horseback, the movie was officially entitled Hud.

The screenplay had been adapted from McMurty's novel by Irving Ravetch and his wife, Harriet Frank Jr. Paul was already familiar with this husband-and-wife's screenwriting skills. They had previously adapted William Faulkner's works into screenplays for both The Sound and the Fury and The Long, Hot Summer

Paul wanted to start shooting right away. He'd be playing a world-class villain. He was so anxious to prepare for the role of a self-centered libertine that weeks in advance of shooting, he flew to Claude, Texas, to soak up atmosphere. He even became adept at wrestling a pig in the mud.

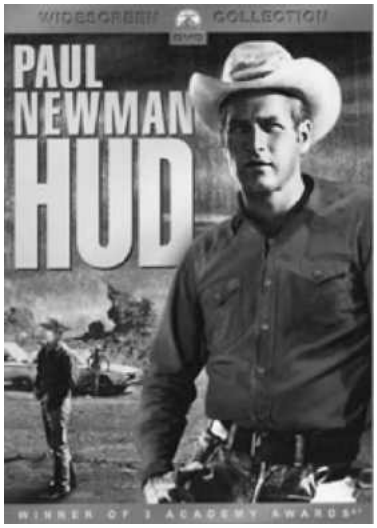
Hud was an arrogant, brash, and unscrupulous cowboy who devoted his life to "booze, broads, and barroom brawls," when not joyriding in his pink Cadillac, cruising for trouble.

The film depicted a conflict of three generations. Playing the elderly rancher-father, Homer, was Melvyn Douglas, an old-time romantic leading man who'd starred with such legends as Greta Garbo. In contrast to Hud's rotten character, he is deeply principled.

Also living on this Texas ranch is Hud's teenaged nephew, Lonnie, played by Brandon De Wilde. He was cast as the son of Hud's deceased brother, Norman, who was fatally injured in a car wreck caused by Hud's recklessness. Both Hud and Lonnie are attracted to Alma (Patricia Neal), the family's middle-aged housekeeper. Her memorable line, as spoken to Hud, is, "I've done my time with one cold-blooded bastard. I'm not looking for another."

Hud responds, "Honey, don't go shootin' all the dogs `cos one of them's got fleas."

In the novel, the Patricia Neal character had been that of a black maid, but the producers in 1963 were not daring enough to go there. "It's dangerous enough that Hud does not find redemption at the end of the movie," one executive said. "Clark Gable used to start out as a bad guy, but he always found redemption in the final reel."



The plot thickens when Homer buys some cheap Mexican cattle infected with hoof-and-mouth disease. He plans to destroy the herd but Hud wants to dump the cattle on another unsuspecting rancher. Lonnie has a challenging role, as he is torn between his adolescent adulation of Hud and his loving respect for his grandfather.

Unknown to Ritt and perhaps even to Paul, Brandon later claimed, "I played Lonnie as gay."

Arriving two weeks before actual shooting began, Brandon De Wilde, referring to himself as "hot and horny," checked into a seedy motel in Amarillo. The staff there had seen his memorable performance in the classic Western, Shane, released in 1953 and starring Alan Ladd.

The hotel manager believed Brandon when he claimed he had made arrangements to "bunk" with Paul. The tall Texan showed Brandon to Paul's room and unlocked the door, giving him a spare key. "You're gonna have to practically barricade the door. Gals have been swarming around this motel at night, hoping to get their chance with Newman."

Information about what happened between Paul and Brandon in Texas is attributed to the novelist James Leo Herlihy. He'd befriended Brandon when the young man had starred in the film versions of two of his works, one based on Herlihy's play, Blue Denim, another his novel, All Fall Down. Ironically, Herlihy's novel bears some resemblance to Hud. In All Fall Down, Brandon worships Warren Beatty, not Paul Newman.

Brandon De Wilde, born in Brooklyn in 1942, always appears on those lists of Hollywood bisexuals compiled by the likes of in-the-know observers such as Bill Dakota. He was a very experienced twenty-year-old when he first encountered Paul.

G11VVU11Llil VU 1 UU1. According to Herlihy, as related to him by Brandon, Paul turned the key to the door of his motel room to encounter a naked Brandon waiting for him in bed on top of the covers. "What took you

so long to get here?" Brandon asked a startled Paul.

Paul with Patricia Neal
"...cold-hearted bastard"

"What in hell are you doing in my room?" Paul asked.

"You do like to get down to business fast," Brandon said. "If you must know, I've been waiting half the afternoon to suck the cock of Paul Newman."

"Get out!" Paul said. "Or I'll call the manager and have you thrown out."

"No need for that," Brandon said, rising from the bed and moving toward Paul. "But before I go, Baby Want a Kiss." Without knowing it, Brandon was parroting the title of a Broadway play in which Paul would even tually star.

As Brandon told Herlihy, "when I moved in on Paul, his resistance lasted about five seconds. His tongue was down my throat before I knew it. After that, I knew I had him, especially when I reached down below to find my cowboy rock hard."

Brandon had been exceptionally beautiful as a child, especially as a seven year old in 1950 when he made his Broadway debut in Carson McCullers' The Member of the Wedding.

Twelve years later he'd grown into a strikingly handsome, almost irresistible young man. As Brandon told Herlihy, "Even straight men want to fuck me."

As a prelude to sex with Paul, Brandon told him that Martin Ritt had instructed him to play his role of Lonnie as "hero-worshipping and blindly idolizing my no-good uncle. You are a Method actor. Well, I want to give The Method a try. We can begin with my idolizing you right tonight."

According to Brandon's account, Paul pronounced him "Hot as a fire- cracker--that's about the best sex I ever had. You leave no orifice unexplored."

Brandon didn't just "go the homo route." He told Herlihy that he often had to seduce two or three girls a day "just to keep from going crazy."

His nights preceding the arrival of the Hud crew in Texas, and during the filming, were spent with Paul. When they tired of each other, they went cruising for "hot Texas gals," in Brandon's words. "The pickings were easy. Half the women in and around that part of Texas flocked to get a look at Paul Newman. These women, married or unmarried, followed him around, with me trailing behind."

"Women were trying to climb through the transoms at that seedy motel," Paul later recalled. "One night I emerged buck naked from the shower, and I spotted this coed at the transom staring down at my dick."

Brandon De Wilde, Melvyn Douglas, and Paul Newman
Three generations in conflict

"It wasn't a case of if we were going to make out that night," Brandon told Herlihy. "It was a case of which bitch we wanted that night. Often Paul and I fucked the same lucky bitch. When she left, we turned on each other for even hotter times."

It was rumored that during the shoot of Hud, one married man threatened to kill both Brandon and Paul for "violating" his wife.

Paul later told Ritt, "Our boy Brandon is a sex maniac. I've never seen anything like it. He's hot to trot day and night. He's a boy nympho. I have a hard time keeping up with him. I'm seventeen years older than the kid."

"I don't know how you guys face the camera in the morning," Ritt said. "I hear you spend all nights chasing booze and broads."

"Something like that," Paul said. "Something like that."

At the end of the shoot, Brandon told Paul, "Don't think it's over between us. I'm going to be tracking you down every chance I get. Once you've had Paul Newman, you can't get him out of your blood."

Back in Los Angeles, Paul confessed his affair to Janice Rule. He had taken to calling her "my mother confessor."

"What should I do? Drop him? Kick him out of my life? That's what I want to do. But that's not what I plan to do."

"I know that," she said. "You don't even have to tell me."

"The kid gets real low down and dirty," he said. "He's got all these tricks. God knows where he learned them. He told me he started having sex with both men and women when he was only nine years old. It's like he was born in a brothel."

"Maybe he's reached a little patch of your brain where depravity lives," Janice said. "We all have it. Even I, sweet cakes. I've never told you half the things I'm up to. Go for it. Slip away and be with Brandon whenever you can. But don't tell another soul. Before Brandon leaves your life, and he will one day, you'll find out what Paul Newman is really like."

"That may be true," he told her, "but do I want to face who I really am? Up to now I've been content to live

with the image I project to the public."

Brandon De Wilde
Paul's party favor

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On May 28, 1963, Hud held its premiere in New York City. In the weeks ahead, as it opened in cities across America, Paul enjoyed his box office success. "Maybe Hollywood will forget my failures," he said.

On the night the Academy Awards were presented, Melvyn Douglas won for Best Supporting Actor, beating out Bobby Darin in Captain Newman M.D. Patricia Neal car ried off an Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role, but Paul once again lost the Oscar as Best Actor.

But despite the loss, with his cruelly curled lips, his aw-shucks grin, and authentic calluses on his hands from roping steer, Paul had captured hearts across America playing an anti-hero. For the role, he'd developed the cowboy's lope and a Texas accent. Posters of Paul in tight-fitting blue jeans that revealed the outline of his cock vied for sales with Marilyn Monroe at her sexy best.

Paul lost his Oscar to his co-star in Paris Blues, Sidney Poitier, for his very appealing performance in Lilies of the Field. "I voted for Sidney," Paul told the press in New York the night of the Oscars. He'd decided against flying to Los Angeles to face another humiliating loss. Privately, he told friends, "That fucking Oscar belonged to me. No one in the history of movies ever played a cad with as much charm as I did in Hud."

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"After the release of Hud, Paul was at the top of the heap in Hollywood," Martin Ritt claimed. "He could have almost any property he wanted. The question remains, why did he then select a series of disastrous films that only tainted his image? Even his most ardent fans didn't go see some of the rotten movies he made. For my role in any of his poor selections, I sincerely apologize to the movie-going public who had to shell out their hard-earned cash to see shit."

"Paul was getting involved in politics," Ritt noted. "Civil rights, all that stuff. He became bitterly disillusioned when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. I think he was getting bored with his marriage. He really didn't take to the role of a father, although he kept having kids. Another daughter would be on the way. He was still battling Scott. I think he was also becoming bored with film making, but he pressed on. Frankly, I think he needed another big-time affair. But Marilyn was dead and there was no one to replace her. And Grace Kelly was having

affairs with men far younger than Paul."

Sidney Poitier receives Oscar (1963)
from **Anne Bancroft.**
Paul bites the dust for *Hud*

"He was drinking pretty heavily at the time, but that was hardly news," Ritt said. "He'd been drinking since the '40s, from what I heard. In some ways, Paul wan dered into the '60s a lost, lonely boy. He wasn't a boy any more, except he acted like one at times, especially when he got together to raise hell with Brandon De Wilde. Paul was moving into his forties and facing middle age."

"He longed for the return of the '50s, but they were gone and Hollywood was changing," Ritt said. "He spoke a lot about James Dean and the wild times they'd had. But Dean was long gone too. Paul's dream gals of the '40s-Lana Turner, Rita Hayworth-were already on their third face-lift. He was indulging in quickies like that thing with Susan Strasberg. But I don't think he found those flings very satisfying. Hollywood in 1963 just wasn't the Hollywood Paul walked into in 1953."

"Yet, through it all, the terrible, tumultuous '60s would bring Paul some of his biggest hits and successes, making up for those bombs he also made in that decade," Ritt said. "There would be a lot of compromises on the road to his horizon."

Hud
Chasing windmills
& trying to sell diseased cows

Chapter Ten

Winning Some but Losing More

"I'm not one to talk, considering the career choices I've made, but Paul Newman launched a series of downers in the '60s that could have destroyed a lesser star," said Shelley Winters. She was talking to her table mates at Downey's Restaurant in New York.

Paul's former lover, Susan Strasberg, once said, "If you went to Downey's, you didn't need to read gossip columns. There you found out everything that was happening, and to whom." The author agrees with her assessment, having gone there regularly throughout the 1960s.

Seeing that she'd captured the attention of her table, Shelley went on, giving a command performance. "When Paul and Brando weren't in Hollywood making all those turkeys, they campaigned for civil rights. My former husband, Tony Franciosa, even joined them, marching into the rotgut belly of redneck Alabama. Burt Lancaster, another one of my beaux, hooked up with them on some occasions. I've got a new spin on those guys marching for civil rights."

"All of these guys, including my ex-husband, are bi's," she claimed. "Away from their wives, spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, whomever, they spend more time making out than marching. Those pricks were screwing around big time-hot-to-trot, star-struck gals, impressionable boys, you name it."

"Paul told me that in Gadsden, Alabama, Brando invited him to join him in his hotel room," Shelley said. "He was shacked up with a teenage brother and sister. If I got the story right, these siblings were black. Paul claimed he turned down the invitation, but you never know. Have you ever met a man yet, especially an actor, who told the truth about his sex life?"

"One mayor in Alabama, at least according to Paul, threatened to throw both Brando and Paul in jail," Shelley said. "He was going to order the sheriff to have a photographer present while Paul and Brando were strip searched. Those pictures would surely have made the underground press."

"Maybe all those celebrities-Tony Curtis, Charlton Heston, Sammy Davis Jr., Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, James Garner-did some good for civil rights. I really don't know. A lot of people resented celebrities arriving in these small redneck towns. In Paul's case, it was another excuse he had to be away from home. If I hear one more story about how faithful Paul Newman is to his wife, I'll puke all over this table."

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Those turkeys that Shelley was referring to were lined up one after another, easy targets for critics to shoot down. First came A New Kind of Love (1963), followed by The Prize (1963), What a Way to Go! (1964), The Outrage (1964), and Lady L (1965).

Paul didn't want to make the Paramount picture, A New Kind of Love. But Joanne did, and she could be very persuasive.

Paul waited two decades later to give his impression of the film to a reporter from Time magazine. In an interview, he recalled:

"Joanne read it and said, `Hey this would be fun to do together. Read it.' I read it and said, `Joanne, it's just a bunch of one-liners.' And she said, `You son-of-a-bitch. I've been carting your children around, taking care of them at the expense of my own career, taking care of you and your house.' And I said, `That's what I said. It's a terrific script. I can't think of anything I'd rather do.' This is what is known as a reciprocal trade agreement."

After reading the script, he told the director and author, Melville Shavelson, that "The only reason Joanne wants to make this thing is to be seen on the screen in expensive French lingerie. After making The Stripper, she thinks she's Marilyn Monroe."

In contrast, Joanne told Shavelson, "It's the dirtiest script I've ever read-I love it!"

Brando (center) with **Paul:**
Speaking out for civil rights
A proposed strip search

Shavelson had lined up a formidable supporting cast, including the beautiful Eva Gabor along with the talented but deadpan Thelma Ritter, who always stole every scene she was in, even when appearing with Bette Davis in All About Eve. Other talented character actors included Robert Clary and George Tobias.

More stunning than any of the actors were the costume designs. The lesbian, Edith Head, who'd dressed most of the big stars from Bette Davis to Mae West, was in charge of wardrobe, with access to many original designs by Christian Dior and Pierre Cardin.

Even though he signed the contract, Paul knew better. "It was against my better judgment," he told the director. "Let's face it, we're not Doris Day and Rock Hudson."

Paul came up with that opinion long before Judith Crist, writing in the New York Herald Tribune, more or less echoed the same opinion. She added, "They're not Day and Hudson-and shouldn't aspire to be."

When Joanne signed on to this clunker, her career had lost its speed. Hollywood had almost forgotten that she'd once won an Oscar. After the failure of The Stripper, she was hoping for a box office bonanza.

She told the press A New Kind of Love was a "fast-moving comedy," but it dragged on for 110 minutes. One critic called the film "interminable."

On the plane to Paris, Paul's character meets Samantha Blake (as played by Joanne), a dull, drab career girl. Love-starved Samantha, in hopes of attracting Paul, does an ugly duckling-to-swan conversion, subsequently appearing as a sultry blonde in a wig and haute couture. In her reincarnation, Paul mistakes her for a high-class hooker.

Paul did prevail upon his buddy, Frank Sinatra, to sing the title song, but by doing so Paul set himself up for a critic's potshot. "Sinatra is the only one in the film who has show business talent, with the possible exception of Thelma Ritter. Who wouldn't love Ritter in anything?"

"The dirtiest script I've ever read."

One of Paul's lines in the movie gave critics a field day. His character, a newspaper columnist, Steve Sherman, says: "It must be a new kind of love. They ought to bottle it and call it `instant stupid.'"

It became obvious during the filming that Eva Gabor, youngest of the notorious Gabor sisters, was making a play for Paul. "He is the best-looking man I think I've ever seen," Eva said, "and I've just learned he's got Hungarian blood in him. No wonder I am so attracted to him." She was speaking to Shavelson.

Reportedly Joanne had to warn Eva that "Mr. Newman is taken. In case you didn't know, I'm his wife."

Behind Joanne's back, Eva told Shavelson, "Paul is divine but that Woodward creature is a bitch! Also, dah-link, you should have let me design that blonde wig of hers. It's hideous on the poor creature."

Years later, at a dinner party thrown by Merv Griffin for twenty-four guests, Eva was asked if she'd managed to seduce Paul while making the film.

"Of course, I did, dah-link, " she said. "You didn't think that Woodward creature could safeguard a handsome hunk like that twenty-four hours a day? I'm very experienced. I've been seducing other women's husbands for years."

A somewhat skeptical Zsa Zsa asked her, "Did you really seduce Newman, or are you just claiming that?"

"Let me put it this way," Eva said. "If I did not seduce him, I would claim my conquest anyway. After all, dah-link, I've got a reputation to maintain. So have you, Sister Dear."

A refreshing moment came in the film with the appearance of Maurice Chevalier as himself. Publicly, Paul presented a smiling face to Chevalier. Privately, he told Eva Gabor, "Marlene Dietrich goes around Hollywood claiming that Chevalier is impotent. She also claims that in spite of Chevalier's homophobic remarks, he's gay himself."

By the time A New Kind of Love premiered on October 30, 1963 in New York City, Paul and Joanne had been dethroned as the idyllic couple gracing the covers of fan magazines. The world wanted a duo more notorious and found it in Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, following their scandals during the making of Cleopatra in Rome. As a screen couple, Paul and Joanne retired until they made Winning in 1969.

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Freed of studio constraints, including his contractual bondage to Warner Brothers, Paul could pick and choose among "Grade A" film projects. With director Martin Ritt, he formed Jodell Productions, based on the names of their two wives, Joanne and Adella. With John Foreman, his former agent, he established the Newman-Foreman Company.

Eva Gabor
Boasting of seduction

Despite all this clout and new power, he foolishly chose to star as a drunken, womanizing novelist in The Prize, a sort of Hitchcockian thriller written by Ernest Lehman, who had penned North by Northwest, later filmed with Cary Grant.

Paul, a true Prize
"A male body for the ages"

Critics referred to Paul's appearance in this movie as his most exhibitionistic beefcake film to date.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was hoping for another box office bonanza like North by Northwest. But two elements were missing from The Prize: Alfred Hitchcock and Grant.

The Prize was based on Irving Wallace's novel which had sold more than 100,000 copies in hardback. Even though he'd starred in it, Paul later admitted that he'd never read the novel. He had a nostalgic soft spot for Lehman, who had written Somebody Up There Likes Me, although the scriptwriter had failed him in From the Terrace.

Throughout the shoot, Paul had an easy working relationship with Mark Robson, who had helmed him in From the Terrace. Cast opposite such temptations as Elke Sommer, he managed to keep his jockey shorts on throughout the shoot.

He later said, "I had more fun making The Prize than any movie I've made so far. I mean just plain fun. I raced to the studio in the morning to try all sorts of inventions on the screen. It was a real challenge." Perhaps it was too much of a challenge for him. Many reviewers felt the role called for a Cary Grant, or at least a David Niven.

Micheline Presle with **Paul** in
The Prize
Fleeing from a nudist colony

In trying to build suspense, the film also played for laughs, especially when Paul finds himself at a nudist convention. Some Paul Newman fans claimed that the only reason they went to see the film was to watch their hero cavort around half nude in a towel.

Even at his age and in spite of all that beer drinking, Paul still had the body for the nude caper. In one scene that caused gasps from certain members of the audience, he appeared in jockey shorts, revealing a promising mound.

Don F. Reuter, author of Shirtless!, a beefcake book devoted to Hollywood actors, referred to Paul as "a male body for the ages. Possessing an almost perfect body, Newman's lean, muscular, tanned physique set a standard for male bodies that was rarely if ever equaled, let alone surpassed. Of his dozens of films, such as The Prize, many offer glimpses of what some could call a body sculpted by some divine being."

Paul wanted to have his character wear a beard throughout the film, thinking it would add credibility to his role as a prize winning novelist. Producer Pandro S. Berman, who had also produced Sweet Bird of Youth, nixed the idea. He reminded Paul that Clark Gable's worst flop was Parnell, in which "he'd foolishly hidden his face behind a beard." Berman went on to say, "If I decide to let Paul drop his towel during the nudist convention sequence, I'll also

insist that he shave off the hairs on his ass."

With his clothes on, Paul diminished his sex appeal by appearing in hornrimmed glasses. Even so, Elke Sommer seemed to devour him on screen like a tasty smorgasbord.

In this implausible story set in Stockholm during the annual Nobel Prize awards, Paul has to solve the mystery of the kidnapping of a Nobel scientist and his replacement with a look-alike, as played by veteran actor Edward G. Robinson, who received $75,000 for the role.

In Stockholm, authorities objected to the script, claiming it cheapened the integrity of the Nobel Prize.

Allegedly, Paul based his characterization-or tried to-on the controversial renegade author, Norman Mailer. Encountering Mailer at a party in New York, the novelist told him, "I heard you played me in The Prize. If you'd really played me, you could have won an Oscar. After seeing this turkey, I told people you weren't playing me. I thought you were more Gore Vidal than me. Perhaps Truman Capote. You girly men just can't seem to get it right." With a drink in hand, a drunken Mailer turned and walked away, heading for the bar.

Edward G. Robinson
escaping the poison pen of critics

Although The Prize would ultimately be disappointing at the box office, it opened in New York on Christmas Day, 1963, attracting a brisk Yuletide business.

In spite of the bad movies, 1963 had been a good year for Paul in that exhibitors named him Number Nine among the Top Ten box office stars of the world. He'd never made the list before.

Except for the well-perceived perform ance of Edward G. Robinson, reviewers sharpened their pens for their attack on Paul and The Prize in general.

Arthur Knight in The Saturday Review labeled it a "melange of claptrap melodrama and purply passion," suggesting that The Prize be retitled Dr. No in Stockholm. Judith Crist, in the New York Herald Tribune, stated bluntly that Paul "seems intent on living down whatever artistic reputation he has earned."

Bosley Crowther of The New York Times suggested that the story "might happen at a bathing beauty contest but please, not at the Nobel Prize affair!" At least Elke Sommer's generous physical endowments, especially her protruding breasts, met universal approval.

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All Hollywood was confused as to why Paul would accept a minor role in a minor comedy, What a Way to Go! The studio was familiar, 20th Century Fox, which had purchased the rights to this J. Lee Thompson production, with a screenplay by Betty Comden and Adolph Green.

Now it can be told: Fox originally wanted Elizabeth Taylor in the lead role of Louisa Benson, an eccentric millionairess who marries, in rapid succession, five husbands. "Type casting," Hollywood wags said, when learning of Elizabeth's interest in this satiric comedy.

Even before Elizabeth was considered, the role was initially offered to Marilyn Monroe, months before her death. One of the sets used for a Hollywood mansion was originally created for Marilyn and Dean Martin in her unfinished film, Somethings Got to Give.

Paul appears with his former landlady,
Shirley MacLaine
Devoured by a machine

Ever since Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Paul had been eager to work with Elizabeth again on screen. "Every man has a fantasy woman of his dreams," said Janice Rule. "For Paul, that was Elizabeth. She was everything Joanne Woodward wasn't: incredibly sexy, even dangerous, more glamorous than any woman should be, earthy, vulgar, the forbidden fruit of a thousand boudoirs. A man might go to bed with his wife while dreaming it was Elizabeth Taylor beneath him, assuming he practiced the missionary position. I didn't blame Paul one bit. If I were a man, I'd pursue Elizabeth Taylor myself. She was Cleopatra. She was Catherine the Great. She was Eleanor of Aquitaine. She was Queen Bess. But, mostly, she was Helen of Troy."

Paul had already signed the contract to appear in What a Way to Go! when he learned that Elizabeth had dropped out and had been replaced with his friend and former landlord Shirley MacLaine. She was hoping to repeat her success in Billy Wilder's Irma La Douce (1963).

MacLaine was at a high point in her career, the sixth box office attraction in America, following Doris Day, Jack Lemmon, Rock Hudson, John Wayne, and Cary Grant. "And my leading men in the film were not chopped liver," MacLaine said. "There was Robert Cummings, who lived on vitamins; Dean Martin, who lived on Scotch; Dick Van Dyke, who lived on comedy; Paul Newman who lived; Robert Mitchum, who lived on life; and Gene Kelly, who lived on the perfection of song and dance."

Frank Sinatra was originally slated to play one of the husbands in What a Way to Go! But Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox balked at the singer's demands. Gregory Peck was then asked to play the part but he turned it down. Finally, Robert Mitchum agreed to accept the role.

Of all the cast members, Paul most enjoyed meeting Fifi D'Orsay. He was fascinated by this star of yesterday, listening for hours to tales of her life, including details about her torrid affair with Greta Garbo.

Earlier in her career, D'Orsay had played the quintessential Parisian coquette. At one point off-screen she was seen singing "Yes! We Have No Bananas" in French to Paul. She'd once sung the song at the Folies Bergere in Paris.

Although born in Canada, D'Orsay was known as "the French Bombshell." But she told Paul that when Ralph Edwards, in front of a camera on the set of his TV show, This Is Your Life (1952), presented her with a round-trip plane ticket to Paris, she cashed it in for money.

The writer-lyricists Comden and Green had fared better when they participated in the cinema masterpiece, Singin' in the Rain (1952). This usually talented pair went a little haywire in creating Paul's character.

Allowed to wear a beard for the first time, Paul was cast as the second of MacLaine's five husbands. Paul played Larry Flint, and for the third time he returned to Paris for his setting. A painter by night, he is a taxi driver by day.

His role was ridiculous, even outrageous. He invents a machine that converts music into paintings, which makes him rich. However, he eventually falls into the machine and is devoured.

MacLaine later said that "it was a delight working with Edith Head and her $500,000 costume budget, with seventy-two hairstylists to match the gowns, and a three and a half million dollar gem collection loaned out by Harry Winston of New York. Pretty good perks, I'd say."

The movie was slaughtered by the critics and performed badly at the box office, even though today it's defined as something of a cult classic.

Since Paul appeared in only one fifth of the film's running time of 111 minutes, he didn't have to endure the full onslaught of the critical attacks. The New Yorker noted that "Paul Newman makes his obligatory appearance stripped to the waist an odd trademark for a gifted man."

As one reviewer noted, "Paul Newman should give up his dream of becoming the next Cary Grant, a goal he will never reach. He'd better return to being Paul Newman on the screen, or else he may have no more career left in spite of the success of Hud."

Joanne wasn't doing much better, signing with director George Englund, Marlon Brando's close friend, to direct her in Signpost to Murder, a cheap thriller released in 1964. Joanne was cast opposite that handsome hunk, Stuart Whitman, who was coming down from an affair with Natalie Wood. Bushy browed and cleft-chinned, Whitman had a face that looked lived in, and he specialized in macho roles.

Later, all Joanne could remember about the film was that she was shooting a scene when the cast was notified that John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas.

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Arm in arm, Paul arrived with Tennessee Williams at Tallulah Bankhead's swanky apartment on East 57th Street. Once again, the great playwright wanted to hear Paul and Tallulah read scenes from one of his Broadway plays, in this case, The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore. The play's first Broadway run, though brilliantly acted by Hermione Baddeley, had flopped. Producer David Merrick, for reasons known only to himself, had agreed to bring it back to Broadway.

Tab Hunter with **Talullah** in *Milk Train*
"Us swamp bitches don't go in for hand kissin'."

The Tallulah whom Paul remembered was very different from the one who sat before him this night. She'd once possessed a gaudy sensuality and even a kind of sultry sexiness. Those elusive qualities had vanished. What he saw sitting opposite him was an old lady beginning the last few precious years of her life.

In elephant-gray silk pajamas, Tallulah showed off a horribly burned hand. "A package of matches exploded, dah-ling, when I was lighting my cigarette."

Paul later recalled, "I was staring at a tiny little old lady smoking incessantly as if she were trying to hasten her own death. She mumbled most of her words, and her face seemed to have aged twenty years since I'd last seen her. That battered face of this once-celebrated beauty was haggard and drawn. She was a grotesque version of Alexandra Del Lago. Dissipated. Debauched. Perhaps Tennessee knew what he was doing casting Tallulah as Flora Goforth, an ex-Follies girl in a frantic denial of her imminent death."

Both Tennessee and Tallulah, uneasy allies for a change, urged Paul to accept the role of Christopher Flanders, the "Angel of Death," an enigmatic poet who arrives on Flora's doorstep to help her soul make the crossing to the other side.

Paul was willing to listen to these two towering icons of the theater, even though he knew instinctively that their glory days were behind them.

After her third drink with the two men, Tallulah yelled out "Cunty!" as a means of summoning her maid.

From the rear emerged a woman who looked exactly like Hattie McDaniel in Gone With the Wind, an actress with whom Tallulah had had a notorious affair. The maid brought a tray of conch fritters, Tennessee's favorite from his days of living in Key West. Before the housekeeper excused herself, Tallulah planted a big sloppy wet one on her large lips.

Tallulah spent the next half hour attacking the British director, Tony Richardson, who had been hired by Merrick to direct his resuscitated version of Milk Train. "He doesn't really want me," she protested to Tennessee. "The son of a bitch claimed he really wants Katharine Hepburn. I know Kate. I've even gone down on her a few times. Hell will freeze over before Kate Hepburn agrees to play this role of a decaying hedonist."

Throughout most of the evening, Tennessee remained almost stoic, and Paul sat mesmerized at the spectacle he

was witnessing.

Before the night ended, Tallulah seemed to rise up and out of her decaying flesh. She promised that with Paul at her side on the stage, "I will make one grand exit from the theater. It will be my finest hour as Flora Goforth. I plan to give a legendary performance. As the bearded poet, this divine Paul Newman creature here will get even more spectacular reviews than he did in Sweet Bird of Youth."

At this point Tallulah rose to her feet. "Where is that bird?" she asked, raising her badly burned hand in the air. "Where have you gone, sweet bird? The sweet bird of my youth. It is said that youth is wasted on the young." She turned and stared into each of their eyes. "Miss Tallulah Bankhead never wasted one God damn fucking day of her youth."

As Paul and Tennessee were ushered to the door, there was no sexual invitation. Tallulah with some unknown person had no doubt performed her last sexual act. Paul later told Tennessee that evening that he suspected that "the candle that burned at both ends" which Tallulah always compared herself to has flickered out.

Over drinks Tennessee urged Paul to accept the role. "With help from both of us, Tallulah will rise like the phoenix from the ashes to deliver a performance that will compare with what Laurette Taylor did in my The Glass Menagerie."

Kissing Tennessee good night, Paul promised to call him the next day with his decision. He kept his promise, but rejected the possibility of his involvement with the reprise of Milk Train as part of the telephone call. Tennessee was very disappointed.

Two weeks later Tennessee contacted Paul, telling him that Richardson had wanted to cast his friend, Tony Perkins, in the role-that is, "until he met Tony's lover, Tab Hunter. Richardson fell for Tab big time."

"Tab Hunter co-starring with Tallulah Bankhead on Broadway?" Paul asked in astonishment. "Every queen in America will fly in for this one. I can just see the opening night audience."

"Tab always regretted turning down the opportunity to replace you in the role of Chance Wayne in Sweet Bird of Youth," Tennessee said. "In some way, he's making up for that lost opportunity by taking the role you turned down."

"I wish him luck," Paul said, "but I've got to be absolutely honest with you. Tallulah should not subject herself to a Broadway play. She needs to be in a nursing home with twenty-four hour supervision. You can prevent this disaster from happening."

"I am determined," Tennessee said. "You have to be a tough old bird to make it in the theater. Tallulah and I are tough old birds. We will show the world." He put down the phone.

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore opened at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on January 1, 1964. Tallulah played to her screaming queens in the audience, and somewhere along the way Tennessee's ruminations on death got lost in the footlights.

The audience's loudest guffaws and most raucous laughter occurred just after Tallulah told Tab onstage, "Us swamp bitches don't go in for hand kissin'."

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In August of 1964, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Paul attended the Democratic National Convention, supporting President Lyndon Johnson in the mistaken belief that he'd end the war in Vietnam.

After the convention, during a weekend in Georgia, a fan spotted Paul walking the streets of Savannah with Brandon De Wilde.

Back in New York, and back to business, both Paul and Joanne signed to appear in the same two-act comedy, Baby Want a Kiss. Starring in the play with the Newmans was James Costigan, Joanne's former "fiance" from the 1950s. Presented by the Actors Studio, it opened at the Little Theater in New York on April 19, 1964.

Perhaps after all his failure in comedy, Paul had learned a lesson or two, getting some of his best reviews in the play's four-month run. Director Frank Corsaro deftly guided Paul through any awkward moments on the boards.

Both Paul and Joanne played Hollywood stars-talk about typecasting. Paul was cast as "an aging juvenile," Joanne a "fading ingenue."

In the play-we trust not in real life-they can't stand each other. Paul's character of Emil at one point even makes homosexual advances toward Charlie, the third character as played by Costigan.

Author **James Costigan**
supporting spoiled movie stars,
with Paul making homosexual advances

Howard Taubman of The New York Times took a dim view of this gay scene. "In the scene where Newman proposes at great length to the author (Costigan), he is like an actor who has wandered into the wrong theater. And you wish you had, too."

Paul was cast as a homosexual hiding in the closet with his marriage serving as his "beard." That raised speculation throughout the theater world. Was Paul actually playing his true character?

The Newmans signed an Equity minimum deal for which they were each paid $117.50 per week. They weren't in it for the money, but to help the Actors Studio.

John Chapman of the New York Daily News dismissed the play as "more fun for those who are in it than those who were at it." In spite of such put-downs, the play earned a tidy profit of $150,000.

Baby Want a Kiss would mark Paul's last appearance in a Broadway

play.

"What gives with these two?" asked a Broadway columnist. "Why do they keep squandering their considerable talents on worthless properties?"

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It is not known how much, if anything, actor Ben Gazzara, knew about Paul's relationship with Janice Rule. Of course, he was aware that both of them knew each other, as they'd appeared on Broadway in Picnic in the '50s.

Many sources claim that Gazzara had turned down the film role of Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof that he'd originally created on the Broadway stage.

That is hardly the case. In his 2004 memoir, In the Moment: My Life as an Actor, he stated that when he learned that Paul had been cast as Brick in the film adaptation, it was hard for him to digest. "I'd created that role, lost the character, struggled and suffered to re-create him, and now a stranger to the play and the character of Brick would inherit what I'd done to bring Brick to life. It broke my heart. Never had I been so devastated in my career."

Gazzara had married Janice, the actress, singer, dancer, and eventually, psychoanalyst, in 1961. The tawny-haired beauty had been a confidant of Paul's ever since she'd played Madge on stage in William Inge's Picnic, but the relationship, at least according to Janice, had never been physical. That was about to change.

Ben Gazzara with **Barbara Bel Geddes** in Broadway's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* *"Never have I been so devastated."*

Originally, Janice had been drawn to Ralph Meeker, the sexy male star of Picnic. "I liked Paul's mind, but I infinitely preferred Ralph's body," she told the author at Downey's Restaurant in New York.

Janice claimed that her relationship with Paul turned sexual around the time she'd costarred in a Freudian Western, Invitation to a Gunfighter (1964), with Yul Brynner.

"My affair continued on and off for quite a while with Paul. Of course, there were others, including Marlon

Brando when we made The Chase in 1966. Ever since Paul and I starred in Picnic, there had always been sexual tension between us, but we resisted it until one night when we went at it. Although I was married to Ben at the time, I was only too willing to join Paul in bed. I'd always been curious. We were so compatible that both of us decided that we should have married each other and not the partners we'd chosen."

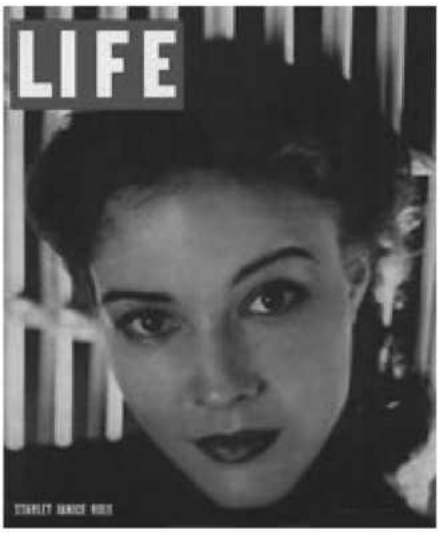
Unlike ordinary mortals, Janice did not interpret adultery as the biggest sin in the world. After all, she'd been married to the writer Robert Thom when she began an affair with Ben Gazzara during their appearance together in Night Circus. On stage, Gazzara had to play a scene, "kissing her full, soft mouth during our love scenes," and one thing led to another. He confessed that their scenes together "aroused me as much as it did her. A torrid love affair soon followed."

In his memoir, Gazzara confessed that one night he walked in on his wife and another man. He caught them in the act. Word spread along Broadway that the man in question in coitus was none other than Paul Newman himself.

There is no strong evidence that the man was Paul. If it were, it would have been ironic that the actor who'd replaced Gazzara in the film version of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof was now replacing him in his wife's boudoir as well.

Friends (or enemies) of Janice often speculated about why she was so open in discussing her relationship with Paul after they broke up. Tony Perkins said, "Janice revealed too much, told too much, spilled too many of Paul's secrets."

There is a possible explanation. Janice developed a nerve condition that sent pain racing up and down her left arm. Her friends said it was almost more than a human could tolerate. No doctor seemed to know the cause. Based on prescriptions written by one of the finest neurologists in New York, Janice began taking Percodan, hoping that would bring relief. Eventually, she became addicted.



Janice Rule
"I should have married Paul."

To deaden the pain even more, she mixed vodka with the drug. Gazzara claimed that the combination "altered her personality. Where once she had been simply opinionated, now she was strident. Where once she had been passionate, now she was loud."

There came a time when Janice would tell almost anything, providing graphic insights into her own life, including specifics about her brief affairs with Marlon Brando during their filming of The Chase and with Burt Lancaster during their filming of The Swimmer. "Janice even gave us penis sizes," Tony Perkins claimed.

Tired of sitting around waiting for the phone to ring, Janice studied at the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Institute with the intent of eventually becoming a psychoanalyst. Perhaps she turned to psychiatry for insights into her own emotional problems.

The details are lacking, but it is almost certain that word reached Paul that Janice was supplying friends with details about his intimate relationship with her. No doubt he was horrified.

"One day he was just not there for me," she confessed. "He didn't return my calls. It took me a while to realize that he was seriously pissed off. All that vodka and Percodan loosened my tongue. I was never a great one for keeping secrets. It is odd that I chose the profession of psychoanalyst. In time, I learned to keep my trap shut. But I admit I was loose-tongued for quite a while. I made a lot of enemies for my indiscretions, and I paid the price."

She claimed she really loved Paul, both as a friend and a lover. "We promised each other than we'd be friends for life. But in show business, those lasting relationships are hard to maintain because you're torn in different directions. In such a world where the husband and wife are separated for long periods of time, it's not only hard to maintain fidelity to your spouse, but to keep loving the same person. Basically, in spite of my marriages, I often fell in love with whatever man I was with. That is, until I woke up the next morning."

"My biggest regret in life is that I did not divorce Ben and marry Paul. Of course, he always returned home to Joanne regardless of how much he strayed. She must have known things were going on. After all, she's a brilliant woman, which was evident when she first appeared on Broadway with us in Picnic. Perhaps the secret for the success of their marriage was that she gave her husband a very long leash."

"Without being outrageous, we might compare Paul's marriage to Joanne to the Queen of England's marriage to Prince Philip," Janice continued. "One of the Queen's relatives, I don't remember which one, was quoted as saying, `Her Majesty doesn't demand fidelity from Philip. She demands loyalty.' Maybe that was the case between Paul and Joanne. In the end, regardless of what had gone down with him the night before, he was always there by her side for those important moments in life. How I wish my life had been different. How I wish that I'd had a man to stand by me through thick and thin. Often I was out there on a thin limb, dangling in the wind."

"I once wrote Paul a heartfelt letter apologizing for betraying him," she said. "I prayed he'd read it and get back to me. Then we could jumpstart our relationship once again. But I never heard from him. There was only a deafening silence between us. It was over."

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Both Martin Ritt and Paul owed a film to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Ritt was intrigued by the classic 1950 movie by Akira Kurosawa called Rashomon. Known for its multiple perspectives in relating a single moment in time, with conflicting versions, as told by different witnesses, of a single historical episode, it was later adapted for the Broadway stage by a husband-and-wife writing team, Michael and Fay Kanin. The play starred Rod Steiger and Claire Bloom, both friends of the Newmans. For the Newman/Ritt film production, Michael adapted the play, transferring the setting from feudal Japan to old Mexico.

The filmscript, originally entitled The Rape, presented four conflicting versions of the truth. Rashomon has even entered the English language as a word describing a situation characterized by multiple conflicting or differing interpretations.

Paul's original instinct was correct. He rejected the role of the Mexican bandit and alleged rapist, Juan Carrasco, proposing to Ritt that it would be an ideal vehicle for Marlon Brando. Paul was no doubt influenced by Brando's performance in the 1952 film directed by Elia Kazan, Viva Zapata!, in which Brando had portrayed the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, in a script by John Steinbeck.

Paul facing off with **Laurence Harvey**
"A King to my Queen."

Initially, after Brando read the script, he told Ritt, "I love it." Even so, although the debut of shooting was rapidly approaching, he wouldn't commit to the project.

The producer of The Outrage, A. Ronald Rubin, claimed that when Paul heard how much Brando liked the script, he changed his mind and wanted to play Carrasco after all.

On accepting the role, his fifth movie with Ritt, Paul said, "My character is an absolute primitive, which I had never played, with an entirely different sense of movement and an accent I'm not familiar with. I did it because it was a challenge. I didn't think I could pull it off, but I was sporting enough to give the thing a try."

Ritt had signed an all-star cast. Claire Bloom contracted to repeat her role on Broadway as a frontier woman who's the victim of the alleged rape. The British actor, Laurence Harvey, was signed to play her husband, who dies as part of the film's plot. Paul reunited with Edward G. Robinson, with whom he'd worked in The Prize. He also encountered Albert Salmi, playing the sheriff.

Perhaps to escape the responsibilities of being a husband and the father of a brood whose numbers were beginning to resemble the Brady Bunch, Paul fled to Mexico for two weeks prior to the beginning of the actual shooting. His announced reason was to learn the language, study the customs of the land, and familiarize himself with the manners of mexicanos. At that, he would not be entirely successful. The blue-eyed boy from Shaker Heights was never entirely convincing as a Mexican bandito and rapist.

At the first hotel he stayed at in Mexico, Paul met a startlingly handsome, eighteen-year-old bellhop, who called himself "Pepe." He'd previously lived for two years in Detroit and spoke a badly accented English. Paul would later claim he "stole" the accent he adopted for The Outrage from Pepe.

In Mexico, the green-eyed Pepe and Paul showed up together at many a sleazy cantina, drinking lots of cerveza with tequila chasers.

Paul was so entranced with this Pepe that he flew him to additional location shooting in Arizona, where on the

few occasions he introduced him to anybody, he was referred to as Paul's "language consultant." One of the actors Paul introduced Pepe to was the bisexual English star, Laurence Harvey.

Harvey seemed entranced by both Paul and Pepe. One night when Harvey went on a drinking binge with Paul, he asked him, "Would you be king to my queen for the night?" Paul rejected the generous offer. Harvey had once extended a similar invitation to John Wayne.

During the first week of the shoot, Paul's friend, Rod Steiger, sent him a telegram. Perhaps Steiger was slightly jealous of Paul for re-creating the role he'd originated so successfully on Broadway. "Welcome to my part," Steiger wrote. "I bet I was better in it than you will be. Here's hoping you fall up against a cactus and get thorns in your ass."

As Paul told Ritt, "Dear of Rod can be downright hostile sometimes. It wasn't the friendliest of greetings."

Although the film was shot in black and white, Paul showed up on the set wearing brown contact lenses, which made his eyes tear. Later, when his image came onto the screen, some members of various audiences laughed at seeing him in his latest re-incarnation. In buckskin chaps and large jangling spurs, Paul wore a sombrero over his matted hair and a poncho draped across his shoulders.

Although his hair was a black wig, the stubble on his face was authentic. The fake nose was not.

On reflection, Ritt later said, "Every time Paul veered from his screen image, he hatched a turkey."

During the shoot, Albert Salmi orchestrated a reunion of sorts with Paul. Both of them seemed to have a Pandora's box of shared memories that each of them wanted to keep closed.

Over the years, Salmi, who had not retained his ruggedly handsome look of the '50s, frankly told friends that he was jealous of Paul for becoming the star that he was. "Producers and directors conspired to take the big roles from me," Salmi claimed. As time had gone by, Salmi continued to work, but in minor roles such as playing a cowboy in TV westerns like Gunsmoke.

Salmi maintained a smoldering resentment of Paul for the rest of his life. Even so, Paul embraced the actor when his final scenes were shot and wished him well in his life.

In spite of the chill, Paul continued to hear of Salmi's work in the years to come. Paul was saddened to learn of Salmi's death in 1990.

At the age of sixty-two, he died tragically as part of a murder-suicide in Spokane, Washington. Separated at the time from his second wife, Roberta Pollock, Salmi fatally shot her with a .25 caliber pistol. Then, with a different weapon, a Colt .45, he then shot himself in the heart. Days went by before the police discovered their bodies on Monday, April 23.

Ironically, Salmi had been writing his memoirs in the weeks and months before his death. He'd told friends that he was devoting an entire chapter to Paul Newman. When the unfinished manuscript was discovered after Salmi's death, it appeared that he'd burned most of his material on Paul.

"From what I hear now, Newman's a nice guy and does a lot of good for people," Salmi said. "I don't want to reveal to fans what a snake in the grass he really was."

Albert Salmi
Murder before suicide

When filming The Outrage on location in Arizona came to an end, Paul gave Pepe one thousand dollars, but refused to bring him back with him to Los Angeles.

To the rescue came Harvey, who flew with Pepe to New York. Three months later Pepe was seen on the arm of Tennessee Williams arriving at a cocktail party. Harvey and Tennessee were friends.

Harvey, in Los Angeles a few months later, had seen the final cut of The Outrage. The always outrageous actor told Paul, "You had me tied to a tree throughout most of the film. It would have been more appropriate if you'd raped me instead of Claire Bloom."

"Dream on!" Paul told him, giving him a quick kiss on the lips. "That's just a hint of what you'll never get."

"You bloody sod," Harvey said. "English actors are so much more cooperative than you Yanks."

"Even more so than young Mexican boys called Pepe?" Paul asked.

"Touche!"

Holding its premiere in New York on October 7, 1964, The Outrage went into limited release nationwide, playing to diminishing audiences.

Critic Judith Crist compared Paul to a "junior grade Leo Carrillo, spitting and spewing and wallowing in dialect and playing the villain, the lecher, the social outcast, the lover and the coward to the hilt for his own very private edification."

Comparisons to Brando surfaced once again, much to Paul's humiliation. "Brando," in the words of one acid critic, "fitted comfortably into the role of a Mexican revolutionary. Apparently, as Newman confessed to one reporter, `I came close to crawling out of my skin as Juan Carrasco.' A truer self-assessment by an actor is unlikely to be heard any time soon."

The film would ultimately flop, but twenty years later Paul was still making the claim that it represented "some of my best work."

In Mexico City, when it premiered, both the public and critics greeted Paul's impersonation of a mexicano with ridicule. One critic wrote, "We have plenty of home-grown rapists who could have done the role so much better. Why did the director have to turn to a blue-eyed gringo from Ohio to play Juan Carrasco?"

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Perhaps Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's original cast choices, Tony Curtis and Gina Lollobrigida, could have saved Lady L. Although shooting had begun on the film, with George Cukor directing, MGM shut it down long before its completion. The bad script was left to gather dust in MGM archives until the late autumn of 1964 when Carlo Ponti revived it. He wanted his wife, Sophia Loren, to star in the picture opposite Paul Newman. A deal was struck between Ponti and MGM.

Ironically, the joint casting of Paul with Loren had been announced earlier for a screen version of Arthur Miller's controversial play, After the Fall, an intensely personal view of Miller's experiences during his marriage to his former wife, Marilyn Monroe. The version with Newman and Loren was never made.

Paul had met Peter Ustinov in England, and was impressed when this super-talented man signed on to write the screenplay of Lady L based on a novel by Romain Gary. Ustinov even agreed to direct the picture.

"What was my dear old buddy, Paul, thinking?" Tony Perkins asked. "Accepting a role as a bomb-toting French anarchist at the turn of the century? Talk about miscasting!"

Loren, also horribly miscast, came off better than either of her male costars, which also included the perennially suave David Niven.

"Paul liked a lot of the plot when I presented it to him," Ustinov said, "especially when he seeks refuge in a bordello. He saw his role of Armand as a French Robin Hood. He also liked playing against type as a bank robber. But somehow the project just didn't make Jell-O."

Ustinov cast himself in the movie as the visiting Prince Otto.

Ponti convinced Loren to play the girl who delivers the laundry to a brothel in Paris, then ends up marrying into the British aristocracy, becoming Lady L. Although she'd risen from the back streets of Naples, Loren by then already sounded like Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell, so she didn't need any language lessons for the role.

A lot of the difficulties Ustinov encountered involved the script itself, even though he'd written it. MGM executives were alarmed by the scenes that were to take place in a brothel. Today that would be a no-brainer, but, because of the pervasive censorship that still existed as late as the 1960s, it was a potential pitfall.

Loren reportedly ridiculed Paul's insistence that he wear a mustache in the film. He finally won out "by beating Ustinov to a pulp."

Ustinov despaired after the first two weeks of directing Paul. "He wants to talk over every motivation hour after hour," the actor said. "He needs this the way a car needs petrol. I had to steel myself to be worn out by hours of Method conversation about interpretation. I was groggy at the end of one of our sessions. Sophia just waited there as patiently as I did, saying `when is he going to stop?'"

Paul with Sophia Loren in Lady L
No chemistry, on or off the screen

Gore Vidal claimed that Joanne feared that Paul might stray from home and hearth as an after-affect of those love scenes with the legen darily voluptuous Loren. But intimacies between them never came to be.

Loren was no more attracted to Paul than she was to Marlon Brando, with whom she would co-star in A Countess from Hong Kong, directed by Charles Chaplin.

"Sophia just didn't get off on these so-called American sex symbols," Ustinov later recalled. "She might have been flirtatious with Cary Grant, but I don't think that romance ever got off the ground. I think she preferred a man like Rossano Brazzi, her co-star in Legend of the Lost."

Lady L was shot in France, Switzerland, and at Yorkshire's famous Castle Howard in Northeast England. "I couldn't help but notice that Newman kept himself amused with a series of young ladies, some rather beautiful," said Niven. "I doubted all those rumors about his being gay. The evidence pointed otherwise."

Of course, Niven said the same thing about his notorious former roommate, Errol Flynn, whom he always maintained was straight in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

At one point, Ustinov nearly had a nervous breakdown. He told Niven and others, "There is just no on-screen chemistry between Sophia and Paul, and they are supposed to be lovers."

Niven, perhaps joking but with a ring of sincerity, suggested that "Newman should fuck Loren and get her to fall madly in love with him. Then those two will light up the screen."

Ustinov later claimed that it was he, not Niven, who suggested to Paul that he seduce Loren, as Joanne had feared. But nothing ever came of it. Loren told Ustinov that she found "this American uncouth and vulgar. Let him go back to his beer drinking. He doesn't even appreciate the glory of wine."

Loren uttered that remark on the same day that she'd asked Paul how he attached his false mustache.

Before walking away, he replied, "Sperm."

After taking a beating from the press in both Britain and the United States, Paul said, "Anything wrong with Lady L is the fault of one man and one man only. The villain is Paul Newman. I have very American skin. When I try to move inside the skin of a foreigner, I flop."

"It was indeed a flop, although I came out looking good," Ustinov chuckled. "Of all the Newman films, this

one seems least likely for a big revival."

Lady L premiered in 1965 in England but its release was delayed in the United States until May of 1966. MGM in Los Angeles was not pleased with the picture, but they had good reports of Paul's role in Harper, which they predicted would be a big success. The release of Lady L was delayed until all the rave reviews came in for Harper. Then Lady L was released. It never managed, however, to cash in on Harper's success.

Paul celebrated his fortieth birthday on the set of Lady L in Paris, but he didn't look middle-aged, more like thirty-two.

Paul had something else to celebrate and that was the birth of his sixth and final child. Nicknamed "Clea," Claire Olivia Newman was born on April 21, 1965.

To regain her figure after "birthin' babies"-a line, of course, from Gone With the Wind, Joanne took up ballet to bring shape back to her shapely figure. She would be the mother of not only her own three daughters, but on occasion Scott and Paul's daughters with Jackie Witte.

As for Paul, he boasted to friends like Geraldine Page, "I've fathered six children, and I never changed a fucking diaper."

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One afternoon, in an unexpected move, Paul went to the phone at the studio to receive an important call. He recognized the voice at once. It was that of the lonely princess in Roman Holiday, the child woman Sabrina, the party girl of Breakfast at Tiffanys.

It was Audrey Hepburn.

Her director, Stanley Donen, had said, "Audrey's magnetism is so extraordinary that everyone wants to be close to her. But she places a glass barrier between herself and the world. You can't get behind it easily. It makes her remarkably attractive."

She was lowering the glass wall for Paul and inviting him to meet privately with her. "You must tell no one," she cautioned. "Certainly not my husband, Mel." She was referring, of course, to actor Mel Ferrer, with whom she was involved in what she referred to as an "emotionally sterile" marriage.

Audrey Hepburn
Breaking the glass barrier

Because of her secretary, personal assistant, and hairdresser, Freddie Stellars, who spoke extensively to the press after his dismissal from Audrey's inner circles, we know some of the details of what transpired over the next few weeks between Paul and this very private, mysterious actress of high chic.

Invited to her hotel suite, Paul was excited at the prospect of seeing her again. Her name symbolized elegance, grace, and style. She'd captured his heart in My Fair Lady and Funny Face, and she remained an elusive target on his A-list of women he hoped to seduce.

When Paul arrived at her suite, he was greeted by Freddie, who volunteered his services to get Paul a cocktail and even volunteered to restyle Paul's hair, giving him a new look for the 60s if he wanted it. Paul accepted the drink but turned down the restyling.

The suite looked surprisingly homelike. Freddie explained that Audrey always arrived anywhere she was going with twenty trunks. These trunks contained family pictures, her favorite possessions, drinking glasses, even flower vases. She would unpack all of her possessions and place them about the suite. She even traveled with her own bed linens and quilts.

Within ten minutes, Audrey emerged from her bedroom. Doe-eyed and pencil thin, she was as ravishingly beautiful off the screen as she was on. She greeted him with that heartbreaking lilt in her voice and kissed him on both cheeks in the French style. "I so admire you," she said. "I've longed to see you without others around us."

"I don't just admire you, I worship you," he said, bending down to kiss her delicate hand.

"I can worship you, too," she said provocatively, even flirtatiously, but later for that." What transpired over the next few hours and days is seen entirely through the perspective of Freddie's memory.

He maintained that during her reunion with Paul, Audrey threw down a gauntlet of challenge to the actor. Both of the stars were children born in the '20s, and Audrey feared that as Hollywood moved deeper into the '60s, each of them faced the prospect of becoming irrelevant if they didn't change with the times and accept the New Age that was dawning.

"I'm thirty-seven," she said.

He rushed to assure her that she didn't look her age.

"Neither do you look your age, but time will catch up with us. That's why I've asked you here. I want you to read a script." She signaled to Freddie to bring the script to Paul. "It's called Two for the Road. It's a complete change for me. A new image. And the leading male role is divine, ideal for you."

Albert Finney with **Audrey Hepburn**
in *Two for the Road*
Threats from a pissed-off husband

She briefly outlined the plot to him. In its most sim plistic form, it is the story of a bickering couple reminiscing about their twelve years of marriage. In the plot, they are trying to save their marriage.

"We would shoot it on the French Riviera," she said, her eyes dancing with glee. "Four glorious months away from husbands or wives, our responsibilities behind us. I've been on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I'm sure you need rejuvenation in your life. I think our working together . . ." She paused. "Or even playing together would become one of the highlights of our lives."

"Do you think teenagers would go for it?" he pointedly asked her. "They seem to be the arbiters of taste at the box office these days."

"I think everybody will go for it," she said. "It'll attract audiences of all ages. I'm taking a big chance. The role goes against my public image. In the film I'm even acerbic at times. Our bedroom scenes together will be rather frank." She almost blushed when she said that, at least according to Freddie.

"I'm eager to hop in bed with you," he said. "On the screen, naturally."

"Audrey held out that film script to Paul like Eve the apple to Adam," Freddie said. "But she was dangling more, so much more. She was seducing him. If she'd given the greenlight, he would have risen from the sofa and carried her rail-thin body into the bedroom and locked the door behind them. But that wasn't Audrey's way. She toyed with a man before seducing him."

Freddie claimed that during Audrey's stay in Los Angeles, Paul returned on five separate occasions. "How can I put this diplomatically? Those visits were conjugal. Of course, they weren't exactly married, but after her first night with Paul, I think Audrey fell in love. She always fell in love spontaneously, like that fling with William Holden."

"There was one big problem," Freddie recalled. "Paul was not seeing the real Audrey. He saw only Holly Golightly or one of her screen images. In the short time he knew Audrey, he failed to sort out the real from the reel."

"How do these quickie romances end?" Freddie asked himself. "In this case, with a whimper. I never knew Paul Newman well enough to know what he was thinking. He called Audrey's suite one day and got me on the phone. Audrey was out seeing someone. He told me that he'd read the script of Two for the Road and was rejecting it. He said he'd have a messenger return his copy later in the day."

"Audrey will be back at five," Freddie said. "Wouldn't you like to speak to her personally?"

"No," Paul said, "I'm leaving town. Just tell her the best dreams are those only dreamed." He put down the phone.

Freddie said it was his awful duty to break the news to Audrey. "When I told her, she cried all night. I think she was really beginning to fall in love with Paul. She was a waif-like creature, always willing to give away her heart to the wrong man."

"By dawn, when I went to deliver breakfast to her, she seemed to have recovered," Freddie said. "In some ways, in spite of her vulnerability, she could rally and be made of steel when the situation called for that."

With Paul out of the picture, Stanley Donen cast Albert Finney in the role. In the South of France, Audrey and Finney had a torrid romance until her husband, Mel Ferrer, arrived on the scene.

"Her husband threatened to divorce her if she continued her romance with Finney," Freddie claimed. "He told her that he would cite adultery as the motivation for his divorce action and name Finney in the suit. Then he delivered the final blow. He said that after the divorce he'd take their son, Sean, away from her. Audrey collapsed and gave in to him. Ever since they'd been married in 1954, he'd always coasted on her fame. She even got roles for him. I was glad when she divorced Ferrer. I never liked him anyway."

"In the years ahead," Freddie said, "she spoke only lovingly of Paul. One night when we were having a quiet

drink together, she said, "I fear the youth culture of America is making me passee. That's not the case with Paul. He keeps reinventing himself and bouncing back."

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Bounce back from his string of box office disasters is exactly what Paul did in 1965 when Warner Brothers asked him to read a script based on the novel, The Moving Target, by Ross Macdonald. The film that evolved from this novel would move Paul back to superstar status. It would also mark his return to Warner Brothers, the studio that had caused him so many disappointments and frustrations. But this time he was warmly received by management.

Jack Warner, whom Paul called "the second greatest vulgarian I've ever known," showed up personally on the set to welcome Paul back to the studio. The terms he proposed to his former boss were tough, $750,000 for his upfront salary, plus ten percent of the gross after $7.5 million. Amazingly, Warner, a hard bargainer, accepted these terms. Before leaving the set that day, Warner sent best wishes to Paul's wife, whom he referred to as "Joan."

The original name of the detective in the novel was Lew Archer, but Paul wanted it changed to Harper because of the success he'd enjoyed with movies that began with H, notably The Hustler and Hud. Ultimately, producers Jerry Gershwin and Elliott Kastner decided to call the film itself Harper.

When producers Gershwin and Kastner met with Paul, Kastner suggested that Paul play the role of Harper "as a man with big balls."

In accepting the role, Paul was following a long tradition established by such film veterans as Humphrey Bogart in The Maltese Falcon (1941).

To evoke the memory of Bogie, Warner had hired "Bogie's baby," his former wife, Lauren Bacall, to play opposite Paul.

William Goldman's script was taut and to the point. "Like a drink?" the sultry Bacall asks Paul.

"Not before lunch," he says.

"I thought you were a detective."

"New type."

His dialogue with Janet Leigh, playing Susan, his ex-wife, was equally brittle.

"What do you want from me?" she asks.

"A few kind words," he says.

"Anything else?"

"Anything I can get?"

Paul played Harper as hard-boiled, cynical, and stylish. He later claimed he modeled his persona on Robert F. Kennedy.

On the day of Paul's opening shot, the director, Jack Smight, told Paul that Frank Sinatra had been Warner's first choice for the role. "At least it wasn't Marlon Brando," Paul said. Ironically, Sinatra would get his own chance at playing a detective the following year when he made Tony Roma.

On the set, Paul had a reunion with Robert Wagner, who had been cast in a minor role as Allan Taggers. The world had changed since the early 1950s. Wagner's star was dimming, and so was his once startlingly beautiful

appearance. When he made Harper, he was merely handsome, but no longer "Stop the Press."

In days of yore, Paul reportedly had had a crush on Wagner and wanted to look like him, but that was no longer the case. Both actors, each of whom had enjoyed the favors of Natalie Wood, were friendly on the set and would soon star in a picture together.

Paul Newman as Harper
"A man with big balls."

But despite their nominal friendship, there had always existed a certain professional rivalry between Paul and Wagner. Actually Wagner had coveted Paul's role in The Hustler, and was very upset when he'd lost the part. Paul promised to make it up to him when the next good script came along. He was instrumental in getting Wagner cast in Harper, although the role was not a real star part.

Jack Warner objected to Paul's choice. Wagner remembered Paul going to bat for him. "Paul is quite formidable when he's on your side," he recalled. "The part in Harper was made for me. For the first time, I got some damn good reviews."

Playing an airline pilot, Wagner is involved with a junkie nightclub singer as played by Julie Harris, a friend of Paul's from their days at the Actors Studio.

Paul also had a reunion with his former confidant of the 1950s, Shelley Winters. She was cast as a once-gorgeous but now alcoholic former starlet, Fay Eastbrook. "I'm playing myself," she told Paul before giving him a sloppy wet one.

In a strange footnote to movie history, Paul's first wife, Jackie Witte, called him and asked for a small part in the film. Cast as Mrs. Kronberg, she was billed as Jacqueline de Wit. Since they still had three kids, Paul and Jackie had remained on speaking terms for the sake of the children.

Janet Leigh and Paul had met several times previously, including once during a chance encounter when she was sleeping with John F. Kennedy. They came to know each other more intimately on the set of Harper. Janet told the press, "When Paul looks at you with those blue eyes of his, he commands you to look at him and listen. He makes you respond to him. That's the basis of his sex appeal."

"Janet should know," Shelley Winters, years later, told the author. "She was sleeping with him-lucky gal. But I got there first a long time ago."

In addition to intimacies with Kennedy and her husband, Tony Curtis, Janet had slept around, having participated in previous flings with partners who included Peter Lawford and Tarzan, Lex Barker, who went on to marry Lana Turner. At one point Janet had even been involved with the gangster Johnny Stompanato who was stabbed to death one night at Lana's home, allegedly by her daughter, Cheryl Crane.

During the course of the filming of Harper, Paul was surprised to learn that Janet had married a student, Kenneth Carlyle, when she was only fourteen years old. The marriage was later annulled.

Paul feeding **Shelley Winters** in *Harper*
"Janet Leigh, not me, was sleeping with him."

Pamela Tiffin, who'd been cast into a minor role in the film, had made a memorable film debut in Billy Wilder's One, Two, Three, opposite James Cagney. She had nothing but praise for time spent working with Paul. She was less enthusiastic about Joanne Woodward, who had appeared on the set one day. Tiffin claimed that Joanne didn't have a sense of humor, but her marriage to Paul seemed to "be a working onesteady, not capricious, not flighty."

Paul, however, was fun-loving and amused by Janet. "Paul used to confide in me, but during the making of Harper, he turned all his attention to Janet," Shelley said. "Those two used to slip away for hours in his dressing room when they weren't needed on the set."

Though Harper was made after Paul filmed Lady L, it was released in the United States two months before his bomb with Sophia Loren.

After Harper was released, Paul got rave reviews. Rose Pelswick in the New York Journal-American called it "about the best performance of his career."

But not all critics were pleased. Pauline Kael, writing for The New Yorker disagreed, calling Paul's performance the worst since The Silver Chalice.

Paul would reprise his role of Harper when he made the far less successful The Drowning Pool, released in 1975, and starring, of all people, Joanne Woodward. Unlike the original Harper, Paul's second time around as the cynical detective was reviewed as "a dull, dreary, and hackneyed pseudo-thriller clunkily directed."

When Steve McQueen saw Harper, he called Paul. "Of all the film roles you've made, this one had Steve McQueen branded on it. You should have sent the script over to me, you fucker. I would have been better in it than you."

"The only thing you can do better than me is suck cock," Paul said.

"I'll plug your ass for that remark," McQueen said before hanging up.

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Paul often followed a hit movie like Harper with a disaster. Such was the case when he signed on to film Torn Curtain at Universal. He was eager to work with its producer and director, Alfred Hitchcock. The screenplay by Brian Moore was a dull and plodding Cold War so-called thriller.

In a surprise move, Paul was cast opposite Julie Andrews, the daughter of musical hall entertainers and one of the great singers of her age. Torn Curtain came in the wake of her incredible international successes with Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music. She certainly had a "backseat" to Paul in this Hitchcock film, but her name on the marquee attracted far more business than this film might have otherwise.

Paul was cast as Michael Armstrong, an American atomic scientist who passes himself off as a defector to East Germany, where in this guise he hopes to gain deadly secrets to bring back to the West.

Actually Hitchcock wanted to cast his stars of North by Northwest, Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint, as the film's key players. But Grant told the director, "I'm too old," and the studio vetoed the possibility of Eva Marie, preferring Andrews because of her box office appeal.

Hitchcock constantly referred to Andrews not by her name but as "the singer." When Universal wouldn't cast Eva Marie Saint, Hitchcock ironically proposed yet another singer for the role: Doris Day. He'd been impressed with her acting in The Man Who Knew Too Much and had even worked a song, `Que Sera, Sera,' into the plot. That song became a worldwide hit.

"Doris can pull this caper off," Hitchcock said. "Not Miss Mary Poppins."

He knew from the beginning that the casting of Paul with Andrews was wrong, but he was nonetheless forced to follow the studio's dictates. When the film was finally released, Archer Winsten of the New York Post nailed the problem. "Newman simply doesn't add up as a nuclear physicist. Maybe he was Harper too recently and was too good in it. And Julie Andrews doesn't resemble in any way the assistant to a nuclear physicist. She has been too much the Baroness and Mary Poppins or even an Americanized Emily, to fit this chore."

Julie Andrews with **Paul** in *Torn Curtain*
No Doris Day, no Cary Grant

At the age of sixty-six, Hitchcock was nearing the end of his career, and he'd begun to regard movie making "as a very dull task indeed, especially with the actors of the '60s." When the director saw the first rushes, he knew there was no chemistry between his stars. "In a laboratory it would be the equivalent of mixing plain water (Newman) with plain water (Andrews). Maybe I should have Andrews sing something from My Fair Lady. That she

can do."

Unmarried lovers:
Paul in bed with **Mary Poppins**
Denounced by the Legion of Decency

In the first version of the script, Paul was supposed to be a homosexual. The plot, very roughly, had been based on England's notorious Burgess-MacLean spy case of the '50s, where those two lovers defected to Russia.

Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean were British officials, one an intelligence officer, the other a diplomat, who spied for the Soviet Union, betraying Western secrets to the Russians during the Cold War.

Reportedly, Paul balked at playing a gay spy, and the script was rewritten.

"There's no way that Newman can play a homosexual," Hitchcock told Universal executives. Obviously, he hadn't seen Paul's stage role in Baby Want a Kiss or his film, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

Originally Paul had said, "You bet your sweet ass I'd like to work with Hitchcock." But tensions arose between the two men before shooting even began. When the director invited Paul to his home for a formal dinner, Paul showed up in clothes more suited to a fishing trip. When Hitchcock presented vintage wine from his cellar to his guests, Paul said, "Make mine cerveza. I'll get the beer myself" He headed to the kitchen and emerged with a bottle of beer, which he preferred to drink right from the bottle, refusing a glass or mug.

As a Method actor, Paul kept demanding that Hitchcock provide him with more motivation for his character. By the second week of the shoot, Hitchcock's patience was wearing thin. When confronted with yet another question about his character's motivation, Hitchcock replied icily, "Mr. Newman, your motivation is your salary." The director turned his back on Paul and walked away.

At one point an exasperated Hitchcock told an associate, "My attempt to direct this gentleman is impossible. Why is he concerned with the motivation of his character all the time? He presents endless memos to me about script changes. It's all a waste of time. He will end up playing just plain Paul Newman, as he's done in every film he's ever made. He has no range at all."

In an interview with The New York Times, Hitchcock made a widely circulated comment. "The most difficult things to photograph are dogs, babies, motorboats, Charles Laughton (God rest his soul), and Method actors." Under his breath, he said, "I have one such actor in mind. But don't print his name."

Paul murdering **Ludwig Donath**
What's this Method acting shit?

For years, it was widely and clearly understood, and in some cases virtually written into his contract, that Paul would agree, when requested by a director, to display his sculpted physique during the filming of a movie. In Torn Curtain, Hitchcock flirted with the idea of male nudity. He conceived a scene of Paul in the shower. A plastic curtain protected Paul's privates from the viewing public. Actually, he was protected in another way. The curtain doesn't obscure the fact that he's in the shower wearing underpants.

Paul was in great pain during the filming, as he'd recently suffered a motorcycle accident on Sunset Boulevard. He sustained such severe burns on his legs and left hand that skin grafts were needed. His primary physician predicted that he would never again regain use of his left hand. When not on the set, Paul was in his dressing room gripping a wet towel, an exercise he hoped would make his hand functional again.

Paul took to drinking heavily during the final weeks of shooting. He snapped at his wife and assistants around him. "It was obvious," Andrews recalled, "he was very unhappy during the filming."

Andrews hated the script, but was thrilled to work with Paul and Hitchcock. Paul got star billing over her, but she was paid $750,000 against ten percent of the gross. This was a larger cut than Paul was getting. A big hunk of the five million dollar budget for Torn Curtain went to Paul and Andrews, certainly not into the poor production values.

The film opens with a love scene in bed between Paul and Andrews. Paul and Andrews are not married, which brought condemnation from the Legion of Decency, which attacked Torn Curtain as "morally objectionable" because of its implications of premarital sex. The Legion issued an awkwardly worded statement declaring, "Parents should be aware that the `Mary Poppins' image of the female lead (Julie Andrews) shattered in this film cannot serve as any criterion of the film's acceptability for their children."

During the course of the filming, Paul tended to focus his ire on the director, not at Andrews. He announced that "she's the last of the great dames." Even so, no friendship developed between them, certainly no romance, as had been the case with some of his other leading ladies."

Andrews later said, "I did not have to act in Torn Curtain. I merely went along for the ride. I did it just for the privilege of working with Hitchcock. But why is he so afraid of women?"

Paul's comment on the film was very brief. "I dislike it!"

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Escaping from the clutches of Hitchcock, Paul at forty-two contemplated his next move. Tony Perkins said, "He continued to cheat Father Time. Of course, those baby blues were framing a wrinkle or two, but he still looked

thirty-four. Somehow he never got a beer gut, although his consumption was amazing. Those saunas, that health diet, and that daily plunge of his handsome face into a bucket of ice water kept him forever young."

As Paul moved deeper into middle age, his love life dimmed. The only person he was known to see outside his marriage was Brandon De Wilde, a friendship that was conducted in the strictest of privacy, away from family and friends.

Paul told Martin Ritt that he wanted to star in a buddy movie with Brandon, "probably a Western." Ritt was instructed to find the right script as a vehicle for the two of them. "That little boy in Hud is growing up," Paul said. "He's all man now."

The script Ritt came up with didn't have a role for Brandon, but it had a star part for Paul. Hombre became another one of his "H" films. Ritt would both produce and direct the movie from the screenplay by the husband-wife team of Harriet Frank and Irving Ravetch, writers who had served Paul so well through their authorship of The Long, Hot Summer and Hud. "They are my tried-and-true cohorts," Paul said. "A winning team."

Based on an Elmore Leonard novel, Hombre cast Paul as the stoic John Russell, an outcast figure who had suffered racial prejudice even though he was Caucasian. Paul would play an anti-hero. He'd done so in the past and would again in his future, but this role would be his most extreme in that genre.

"I was attracted to the script because Brando had taught me to appreciate the plight of the American Indian," Paul said. "Hombre was not your typical Western. We didn't need to kill off all the Indians in this film. It was a plea for tolerance, and the need for both the Indian and the Caucasian to come together and to cooperate for their mutual benefit."

Paul as *Hombre*
A Caucasian raised by Apaches

He was challenged by the role of a white man reared by Apaches, a loner who feels he belongs to neither race. As he did for most roles, Paul moved through the Southwest, often with Brandon at his side, learning as much as he could about Apache culture.

While Brandon and Paul roamed the desert, Ritt was lining up an extremely talented cast of players, notably veteran actor Fredric March, one of the greatest. The other stars included Richard Boone, Cameron Mitchell, and Diane Cilento. Once again, Paul would be cast in a movie with the beautiful Barbara Rush.

Hombre appears to be an update to John Ford's classic 1939 Stagecoach. Paul's character finds himself in

Arizona riding inside a stagecoach back in the 1880s. He's traveling with a group of whites, and their stagecoach is attacked by bandits. Paul's character of Russell becomes their only hope for survival. Originally the passengers had been disdainful of him because of his upbringing with Indians.

Of all of Paul's films to that point, Hombre contains the smallest amount of dialogue for him. He must convey his character to audiences through mannerism and action.

Sean Connery visited the set to meet with his then-wife, Diane Cilento. By coincidence, Connery at about the same time was filming A Fine Madness (1966) with none other than Joanne Woodward.

Reportedly, Paul asked Connery, "How do you manage in a marriage when the husband is a far bigger star than the wife? When you're hot shit and she's what is known as a highly respected actress."

"You don't," Connery told him. "Divorce is inevitable."

Indeed Mr. and Mrs. Sean Connery divorced in 1973.

Hombre would be the last film that Paul would make with Ritt. They parted as friends.

When Hombre was released in 1967, critical reaction was generally favorable.

The review of Joseph Gelmis in Newsday exemplified the mixed reception the film received in some media.

"In Hombre the H is silent and so is Paul Newman," wrote Gelmis. "He's strong and silent and mean. If he has more than a page of dialogue in the film, it would be a surprise. Hombre has less impact than his previous gallery of H films-Hud, Harper, The Hustler. I liked Hombre. It is rough, funny, exciting. But I couldn't take it very seriously. Newman's blue-eyed Indian, a Caucasian raised by Apaches, is somehow implausible, even when he is being his most nasty, inscrutable, or even violent. The heroic gesture at the end of the film is unbelievable, or, at least, out of character."

Brandon De Wilde
Riding side saddle with Paul

The picture was not a commercial success.

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Before the reviews were in for Hombre, Warner Brothers, a studio he once despised, sent Paul a script that he read three times in one night.

When morning came, he announced, "This is the role I was born to play. It may be the defining film of my

career. It's called Cool Hand Luke. The only other actor in Hollywood who can play it better than me is Steve McQueen. But there's no way in hell that I'm gonna let Steve grab hold of this baby. It's mine!"

Paul in the desert with **Diane Cilento**
"How does Sean Connery do it?"

Sean Connery:
An unexpected visitor
"Divorce is inevitable"

Chapter Eleven

Cool Hand Luke Meets Butch Cassidy

Paul rejected Columbia's offer to star with Steve McQueen in Truman Capote's In Cold Blood (1967), although these two rivals would probably have generated headlines in their portrayal of "cold-blooded killers. The roles went instead to Robert Blake and Scott Wilson. Both McQueen and Paul later regretted turning down these juicy parts.

Paul found the script for Cool Hand Luke more thrilling, figuring that he could top his almost classic anti-hero appearance in Hud with this existential tale of a free-spirited convict on a chain gang in the Deep South. As was the case with many of the roles he'd been offered during the course of his career, Paul emerged as "a sloppy second," the role having been originally offered to Telly Savalas.

Jack Lemmon had even considered playing Luke, since his company, Jalem Productions, was producing the film.

Gordon Carroll was slated to produce Cool Hand Luke, with newcomer Stuart Rosenberg as the director. Donn Pearce authored the screenplay based on his own novel. Pearce had served two years on a chain gang, and Luke was based on his personal experiences. Unhappy with some aspects of the script, the director called in Frank R. Pierson, who had co-scripted Cat Ballou (1965), as part of a much-needed rewrite.

One night Paul received a surprise phone call. He immediately recognized the voice as emanating from Miss Bette Davis. She'd been offered the role of Luke's mother, a brief cameo appearance. "Miss Davis, it's an honor to speak with you," Paul said, trying to show as much respect as possible.

She cut to the chase. "Tell your director, one Mr. Stuart Rosenberg, that I'm not going to play your mother in this chain gang picture. As far as I'm concerned, chain gang movies died in the '30s." With the abrupt announcement, she hung up the phone.

Paul always wondered why Davis called him to deliver this pronounce meat and not the director himself. After all, he had nothing to do with casting. The mother role eventually went to Jo Van Fleet, who'd won a much deserved Oscar for her appearance with James Dean in East of Eden.

Bette was even more cryptic years later when Joanne Woodward, living in Connecticut, encountered her, a fellow resident. Joanne invited her to come by the Newman home for a visit. "Why?" asked Bette before going on her way.

Upon seeing Paul again, Van Fleet kissed him on both cheeks. "I didn't get to play your mother in East of Eden. Now's my chance. What a fine son I have. If only I were a few years younger, it'd be incest."

For his actors in Luke, Rosenberg rounded up a strong supporting cast that featured both George Kennedy and Dennis Hopper.

Once again, Paul was co-starring with Strother Martin, with whom he'd worked in Harper.

Ironically, Richard Davalos was also cast. Paul had lost the role of one of the brothers in East of Eden to Davalos. "No hard feelings, pal," Paul said, shaking the hand of Davalos. "In either case, Dean would have sucked us up like red eye gravy."

In the film, Paul as Luke Jackson was sentenced to two years on the chain gang for unscrewing the tops from a series of parking meters. Naturally he'd been drunk at the time, as the movie so plainly demonstrated. Carrying Method acting too far, Paul was actually tanked up on beer when this sequence was filmed.

Defining his character "the ultimate rebel and non-conformist," Paul faced his most difficult scene in Cool Hand Luke when he had to eat fifty hard-boiled eggs in one sitting.

Several sources claim that Paul actually ate all those eggs depicted in the film. An assistant director, Hank Moonjean, who'd worked with Paul on other films, told the truth about this sequence.

"He would bite an egg and chew on it, and after the cut, he would spit it out. We had buckets all around him. This went on egg after egg. As for that `full stomach,' Paul could contort his stomach so that he looked bloated."

When not needed on the California set of Cool Hand Luke, Paul was often spotted driving around the countryside in a blue Mercury convertible with Brandon De Wilde.

The two men were often seen in several taverns soaking up beer. In one sleazy joint, an aging bartender, who never went to the movies, asked Paul, "What do you do for a living?"

While filming Cool Hand Luke, Paul was offered the lead role in the allegorical fable, The Swimmer, by John Cheever. William Holden and Glenn Ford had turned it down. After Paul rejected it, Burt Lancaster put on a tightfitting, revealing bathing suit and steered The Swimmer into a box office disaster.

Cool Hand Luke helped generate some of Paul's best reviews, leading to Paul's nomination for the fourth time as Best Actor by the Academy. George Kennedy was also nominated as the year's Best Supporting Actor for his role as well. The Oscar, that year, however, went to Paul's long-time friend, Rod Steiger, for his role in In the Heat of the Night in which he'd played a bigoted Deep South cop.

Even though he'd failed once again to win an Oscar, Paul received a consolation prize-the Golden Globe Award as the "World's Favorite Actor."

George Kennedy with **Paul**
in *Cool Hand Luke*
Chickening out over eggs

The most famous line from Cool Hand Luke is, "What we've got here is a failure to communicate." It was listed as number eleven on the American Film Institute's list of the 100 most memorable movie lines.

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Hank Moonjean had previously worked on three films with Paul-Until They Sail, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and Sweet Bird of Youth.

During the filming of Cool Hand Luke in the San Joaquin region near Stockton, California, Moonjean noted a strange new passion of Paul's. "He would sit at the first banquette table in the motel's dining room, with oil and all sorts of herbs in front of him, trying to concoct a new salad dressing. I'd walk by and he would say, `Sit down and try my new salad dressing, Sport!' I once saw Paul adding water to his concoction and I said, `You're not supposed to use water in an oil dressing. That's just not done.' How wrong could I have been? Paul has made a fortune with his salad dressings, and all profits are given to various charities."

Paul finally got that salad dressing right. In a most unlikely partnership, he teamed up with his close friend in Connecticut, A.E. Hotchner, Hemingway's biographer, and launched what became a multi-million dollar food industry.

"We did everything wrong," Hotchner recalled. "We did just the opposite of what the experts told us to do. Actually, we started with virtually no capital in the bank-a couple of bumbling amateurs trying to fish with no bait in a sea of sharks. It's one thing to want to put a bottle of salad dressing on supermarket shelves, but quite another to get it there."

The business had actually begun during the Christmas season of 1977 when they bottled the salad dressing in old wine bottles and presented it to friends and neighbors in Westport. The dressing became so popular that the following year Paul and Hotchner bottled it and sold it in local markets.

Each of the men put up $20,000 as capital, although experts in the food business warned them that they should be prepared to lose a cool million the first year of operation.

Cool Hand Luke
The ultimate rebel

Slowly Paul and Hotchner lined up a marketing strategy, hiring a marketing firm in Port Washington, New York, and a bottler in the Boston area. Operating out of a cubbyhole in Westport, the two men did not advertise the business they launched in 1982. Word of mouth launched them, and soon bottles of salad dressing were selling out, the demand outdistancing the supply.

Otherwise, 1982 was a sad year for Paul, as he lost his mother, Theresa. She died of cancer, having lived some thirty years longer than her husband.

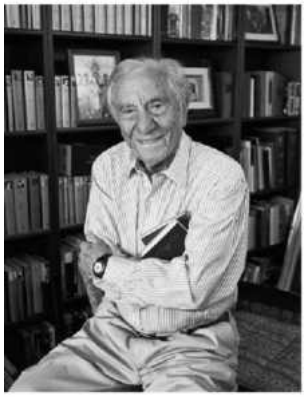
Their spaghetti sauce, Fra Diavolo or "Devil's Brother," followed the salad dressing, and it, too, became a big success. Paul then launched his favorite food-popcorn, calling it Old Style Picture Show Popcorn. By 1987, he'd launched Newman's Own Old-fashioned Roadside Virgin Lemonade. He mockingly claimed that the virginity of Joan Collins was restored after she drank four quarts of his lemonade.

A world class beer drinker, Paul wanted to market his own kind of beer until Joanne nixed the plan.

Once again Paul returned to the Roman toga, an outfit he'd shunned since the release of The Silver Chalice, to pose for a mock-up bust for Newman's Own Caesar Dressing.

At the end of 1983, their little Salad King, Inc., made a profit of nearly $300,000. "It's tacky for an actor and writer to be making money in the food business," Paul told Hotchner. "Let's give it all away to them what needs it."

From Guam to Greenland, consumers bought Paul's products, with his smiling face on the label. The charities to which they contributed ranged from the Actors Studio to the American Foundation for AIDS Research. Their donations to foreign countries ranged from Haiti to Vietnam.



A.E. Hotchner
"Fishing in a sea of sharks"

One of Paul's greatest charitable achievements was to launch a camp for children suffering from cancer or AIDS. Although it was located in the northeast corridor of Connecticut, its theme and architecture evoked the Wild West. The groundbreaking ceremony occurred around Christmas in 1986, the camp being built around a forty-eight acre lake.

By the late spring of 1988, the Hole in the Wall Camp opened. The first cancer-stricken children arrived that summer at the camp whose name had been inspired by the hideaway of the motley crew of thieves led by Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid in Paul's classic film with Robert Redford.

Nothing in the camp reminded children of the hospitals where they'd previously spent a lot of their time. Of course, Paul had to build an infirmary with a staff of volunteer doctors, but he disguised it, calling it the O.K. Corral.

After the founding of a multi-million dollar empire, Paul told a reporter, "I can only say that if someone told me twenty years ago that I'd have my face on a bottle of salad dressing, I'd have got them committed. But it's turned out in a way that we've never, ever expected."

Surveying reports of all the millions he's contributed to charities over the years, he said, "From salad dressings all blessings flow."

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Paul often followed a hit movie with a disaster. Such was the case when he shot The Secret War of Harry Frigg for Universal.

The plot, such as it is, revolves around five Allied generals held prisoner in an Italian villa during World War II. Known for engineering daring escapes, Harry Frigg, as played by Paul, is brought in to smuggle out the brass.

But he delays his mission when he falls for Sylva Koscina, who played a beautiful countess. She is, in fact, the best thing to look at in the movie, not Paul's awful mugging in yet another attempt at comedy.

Paul's director, Jack Smight, had directed him in Harper, but this time around, Smight seemed lost.

In the film Paul had a reunion with actor James Gregory, with whom he'd worked in The Desperate Hours back in 1955.

He told Gregory, "I've grown bored with acting. I need the money, but the scripts I'm getting suck. The more I try to perform, the more I keep repeating tricks I've already exposed to the camera. I might take up directing."

Paul ridiculed Gregory for his appearance with Elvis Presley in the 1967 musical Clambake, and he chastised him for "being a Benedict Arnold. I can't believe you made PT 109 with that jerk, Cliff Robertson. I was supposed to play Kennedy. I got double-crossed on that one."

Brandon De Wilde was seen on several occasions on the set, laughing when Paul called his character of Harry Frigg, "Henry Fuck." Brandon had very little to say to cast and crew, but stayed in Paul's dressing room, waiting for his return.

Paul with **Sylva Koscina**
Deadlier Than the Male

"It was obvious to me that Paul was banging Brandon," said Jack Smight to Gregory and some other members of the cast who'd seen the young actor hanging around. "Till then, I didn't believe those rumors. But after Harry Frigg, I believed them. Just like the impressionable teenager he'd played in Hud, Brandon clearly idolized Paul. I felt Paul was taking advantage of the kid. But I guess Brandon was old enough. I was a little worried, so I had my assistant check the kid's birthdate."

"He was born in 1942 so I was no longer afraid that Paul might be brought up on a child molestation charge," Smight said. "Hell, I suddenly realized he must be at least 25, maybe 26. 1 figured if he'd been around for a quarter of a century, he knew what he was doing. Brandon was free, white, and twentyone, although I hear it's not politically correct to say that anymore."

When Brandon wasn't around, Paul paid close attention to his lovely costar, Sylva Koscina. Born in 1933 of Greek and Polish descent, Sylva was from Zagreb, Yugoslavia, but grew up in Italy. In 1967, just before meeting Paul, she'd played a lesbian assassin in Deadlier Than the Male, but was best known for being the leading lady of Steve Reeves in two Hercules films, or for playing "herself' in Fellini's Juliet of the Spirits (1965).

Harry Frigg was shot mostly in the Los Angeles area, though scenes in the so-called Italian villa were filmed in the Sierra Madre, to which the crew journeyed.

One day when he wasn't needed on the set, Paul drove into the desert with Sylva. After he'd returned the next day, he'd nicknamed her "My Cactus Flower."

She was rhapsodic about the American desert. "I've never seen colors quite like it," she said to Gregory. "That particular orange, that special gold, the silver sky that can turn red at times. Paul found quartz crystals for me. He

bought me a piece of turquoise jewelry."

"He took me to this cantina where we had chicken tacos," she said. "I'd never eaten them before. They were served with refried beans. Why do cooks need to refry beans? You'd think once would be enough."

"Once was hardly enough for Sylva," said Gregory. "During the rest of the shoot, she seemed mad about the boy. She couldn't keep her hands off him. If only their chemistry on screen had been as good as their chemistry off screen."

Since Paul and Gregory's friendship went way back to the dawn of their respective careers, Paul could talk to him in a confidential man-to-man style. He told Gregory that, "I've fallen in love with the gal's tits. I could suck on them for hours. I got so worked up I dove into her like a torpedo launch."

But when the filming of Harry Frigg ended, Paul's passion fizzled just as quickly as it had flared. Sylva didn't understand what another star, Ronald Reagan, called "Leadingladyitis." Stars fell in love with each other during a shoot. When the film was wrapped, "those louses went back to their spouses," to paraphrase Marilyn Monroe's song.

"Sylva was heartbroken," Gregory claimed. "He seemed so fine and decent a man that I can't believe he won't return my calls," Sylva said.

"Paul will never leave Joanne Woodward," Gregory predicted. "Maybe for a few weeks or even months at a time, but not forever. Better get over him. Why don't you call Warren Beatty? I hear you're his type. Or Steve McQueen. Everybody is his type. Why not call Brandon De Wilde? I'm told that when he's not with Paul, he seduces two or three women a day."

"Men!" said Sylva in disgust. "Why do we really need them?"

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No longer associated in a working partnership with Martin Ritt, Paul joined with John Foreman, his former agent, to create the Newman-Foreman Company. Its corporate mission involved producing movies as well as finding "world class properties" in which Paul could appear as the star. They spent considerable time appraising and buying scripts that would appeal to Paul's growing numbers of international, and not just American, viewers.

As he moved deeper into the changing culture of the '60s, he witnessed old-fashioned supper clubs in Los Angeles biting the dust, including such once-famous names as Mocambo and Ciro's. The Cocoanut Club at the Ambassador Hotel was fading into legend, as had Clark Gable and the many movie stars who'd made the club famous. The defunct Romanoff's, once a favorite hangout of Bogie, had become The Jazz Suite.

When Paul by chance encountered Ava Gardner one night, she noted that the times were changing. "Can you believe it?" she asked Paul. "I always said Frank would end up with a boy-and so he did." She was, of course, referring to Sinatra's new love interest, Mia Farrow.

Impressed by a private club in Beverly Hills called the Daisy, Paul decided to join backers to create The Factory, which eventually evolved into a major rival. Co-investors in that project included such rat packers as Peter Lawford and Sammy Davis Jr., along with Anthony Newley and Pierre Salinger, who had been John Kennedy's press secretary during his years in the White House.

The men found an abandoned building at 652 North La Peer Drive in Los Angeles. The site dated from 1929 when William Fox, the studio mogul, constructed it as a camera company. During World War II, the building had been converted into a bombsight factory.

If you didn't know where you were going, you could have easily driven by The Factory without knowing it. Its plain facade was identified only with a black awning and a red flag emblazoned with a monkey wrench. A clue to its fame would be the steady stream of stars arriving in Rolls-Royces. Each of them paid $1,000 in annual dues.

Inside, except for the people, the scenery hardly improved. Windows were covered in chicken wire, and Paul himself purchased the cheap, rickety tables at various Flea Markets.

The nightly crowd, which might include Sonny and Cher or Barbra Streisand, melded blue jeans with tuxedos. After surveying a sea of scantily clad dancers, including Hollywood's most beautiful girls, Paul quipped, "All we need now is to install beds."

On any night Paul showed up, often with Brandon De Wilde, he headed for the bar in the rear, which contained four pool tables, one covered in red felt for the ladies. There he and Brandon, relatively unmolested by this hip crowd, could play game after game of pool.

"I thought I was witnessing a replay of The Hustler," Sinatra said after he dropped in to check the club out. He later headed for the second floor where he frugged with Mia Farrow to a live band called "The Nudies."

Warren Beatty showed up with his girl du jour, and Paul's longtime friend, Tony Perkins, still struggling with his homosexuality, appeared with female companions, hoping he could go straight. Before the night ended at dawn, Tony often dumped his female companion and made off into the bright light of morning with one of the waiters.

Each of the waiters was decked out in dungarees and blue denim work shirts. "Before The Factory closed down, Tony got around to balling most of us," said James Duval, one of those waiters. "All the waiters had wanted to score with Newman, but we struck out. That De Wilde was like a bodyguard protecting him. Jealous little bitch."

"The people who dig The Factory are going to dig it forever," said Sammy Davis Jr. How wrong he was.

The Factory, highly successful throughout most of its short life, soon faded into dust, as revelers rushed to a newer hot spot, The Candy Store, whose part owner was Tony Curtis.

Deserting his own club, Paul himself often migrated to The Candy Store, sometimes accompanied by Brandon. On other nights, Paul could be seen just driving aimlessly around Los Angeles with Brandon in his Volkswagen with its Porsche engine.

Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin,
Peter Lawford, and **Sammy Davis, Jr.**
Rat Packers' pool night at Paul's Factory

He and Brandon often stopped in at bars. Paul would request that the bartender serve him his beer in an unopened bottle. He'd take the "church key" attached around his neck like a dogtag and open the beer. At one point, Brandon was overheard chiding him, "When you're really cool, you'll learn to open that fucking bottle with your teeth."

In one bar, Rawhide, a heckler came up to Paul when he was standing with Brandon drinking beer. "Hey, Newman, take off those sunglasses and let me stare into those baby blues." Paul was so infuriated that he slugged

the intruder. Brandon restrained him.

Later, Paul gave the man five one-hundred dollar bills, asking him not to press charges for assault and battery.

"He's not a violent man," Brandon told Henry Slager, the club's owner. "Sometimes he can't stand for strangers to intrude aggressively into his space. He's a very private person."

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An executive at Paramount delivered the bad news to Paul. The only way the studio would consider his latest film project, Rachel, Rachel, was if Shirley MacLaine starred in it. "I know you want a job for your wife-and God knows she needs a hit after her last two films bombed. Neither A Fine Madness nor A Big Hand for the Little Lady rang any bells at the box office, in spite of her co-stars, Sean Connery and Henry Fonda. So what do you say?"

"I'm out of here," Paul said. "It's Joanne or no one." He put down the phone.

At MGM, Paul was told, "Frankly, the story is too downbeat. No one's gonna pay good money to see this shit. It's just not commercial. Now if you wanted to show me a script by Tennessee Williams and a contract to star Elizabeth Taylor, then we'd show some interest."

The statement turned out to carry a certain irony. In a 1968 release, Boom! Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, along with Noel Coward, had signed on to do a screen adaptation of the playwright's disastrous The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, in which Tallulah Bankhead and Tab Hunter had had such a dry run on Broadway that was mercifully brief.

At Columbia, another executive told Paul that, "It's been so long since Woodward's had a hit that she's become a footnote in Hollywood history. As for those films you two made together, I'd rather suck rotten possum eggs than sit through one of them."

Before hanging up, Paul angrily said, "You may not know this, sucker, but possums don't lay eggs."

At Universal, Paul was told, "This dud has about as much appeal as Jerry Lewis starring in Hamlet."

Agent John Foreman had sent Joanne a novel by the Canadian author Margaret Laurence called A Jest of God. Immediately recognizing the scope and potential of the project, Joanne tried to get Paul intrigued by the novel. At first he seemed reluctant to read it until she insisted.

It was a grim tale of a 35-year-old school teacher, living with her overbearing mother (Kate Harrington) and desperate to find a man to love her. She has become almost spiritually ill from the lack of love in her life.

The unhappy pair lived above a funeral parlor. Their undertaker husband/father had died. Before doing so, he had already engraved his daughter's name on the family gravestone.

To adapt the novel, Paul turned to a family friend, Stewart Stern. Despite the passage of years, Stern was still riding high over his scripting of James Dean's Rebel Without a Cause, although he was experiencing a career slump at the time. His friendship with the demanding Newmans almost didn't survive the scriptwriting session.

Stern complained that Joanne virtually wanted to see the script written her way, and Paul, in contrast, often had a different way of seeing things. "We had a lot of catfights at that home in Connecticut," Stern later said. "I didn't think the film would ever be made. At one point I stormed out of their house, never planning to return. The matter was resolved when Paul showed up at my house in a Nazi uniform. Giving me a Nazi salute and a Heil, Hitler!, he proclaimed, `I'm the boss.'"

The scene that caused a screaming match was one associated with a depiction of Rachel, in bed, masturbating. Each member of the trio believed that the masturbation scene was important to the drama, but Stern, Joanne and Paul each had a different idea about how it should be depicted on the screen. The argument centered on what

position Joanne as Rachel should be in when she "pleasures herself." A prone position or otherwise? That was the question.

Paul directing *Rachel, Rachel*
"I'm a virgin, use vaseline."

The script, of course, was eventually finished and shopped from studio to studio. With a female star of unreliable box office potential and no "bankable director," each major studio in Hollywood rejected it.

Paul had listed himself as the producer. But when he saw that Rachel, Rachel had no backers, he announced that he would direct the picture. After all, he'd studied directing at Yale University, and it had long been his dream to get behind the camera instead of in front of it.

With himself as the director, his dreaded nemesis of yesterday, Warner Brothers, agreed to back the project with a modest budget of $700,000. Any money spent over that amount would have to be paid for out of Paul's own pocket.

At Warners, he'd found a sympathetic soul in Kenneth Hyman, who wanted to make artistic films, hiring Sidney Lumet, for example, to direct the 1968 The Seagull, based on the Chekhov play.

There was also a poison pill clause in the contract. According to the contract he'd signed with Warner Brothers, Paul agreed to make two films for Warners at half his salary. Joanne also agreed to make a film for Warners at a greatly reduced salary.

If he'd signed on with a studio as an actor, he could haul in one million, a far cry from the $1,000 a week he was paid when filming The Silver Chalice. As a director, he agreed to take no salary at all. Rachel, Rachel was a true labor of love.

"They really had us over the barrel," Paul said, "so we reluctantly said okay. That's how committed we were to filming Rachel, Rachel."

Cleverly Paul had written into his contract that if the creative management team at Warners changed, he would not have to follow through with his twopicture commitment. When Hyman left the studio soon after signing on for Rachel, Rachel, the Newmans were freed from that "slave agreement," as they called it.

At one point it was decided to shoot the film in some barren California town, but Paul opted instead to film in Danbury near his own Connecticut home. He signed his brother, Arthur Newman Jr. as associate producer, and even

cast his daughter, Elinor, in the drama. Billed as "Nell Potts," she was to play Rachel as a young girl.

A terribly intense **Paul** directing **Joanne**
Telling her how to be a spinster

James Olson, who had starred in Jack Garfein's The Strange One in 1957, signed on to play Rachel's lover, an old high school friend who returns to town and seduces her before mov ing on. Estelle Parsons, riding high as an Oscar winner for her appearance in Bonnie and Clyde, with Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, signed to play Rachel's friend, a lesbian schoolteacher who makes advances toward her.

Paul also hired Frank Corsaro, who had directed the Newmans in Baby Want a Kiss on Broadway.

When asked why he'd decided to direct, Paul said, "Why be a violinist if you think you can conduct?"

On the first day of the shoot, Paul assembled cast and crew telling them, "I'm a virgin. So be gentle when you penetrate and use plenty of Vaseline."

In dark sunglasses and a ripped T-shirt, Paul with a Schlitz always in his hand set out to direct Joanne. He'd found acting in a film meant spending many boring hours sitting around, but directing was another matter. "I was kept busy with one problem after another," Paul recalled. "They even came to me when the delivery man didn't arrive with the pizzas for our lunch."

During the filming, Paul and Joanne seemed to have some shared vocabulary unknown to the rest of the crew. He'd order her to "thicken it" or "pinch it," and she intuitively seemed to know what he was talking about.

A reporter visiting the set asked Paul if there were any friction between Joanne and himself while he was directing her. "Oh, yeah," he said. "We had several spats and squabbles-big ones. There are never little ones in our family. But it had nothing to do with work on Rachel. In that sense, Joanne and I never had one harsh word in that entire period. It was really amazing. The reason we got along is that artistically at least, we trust each other."

When asked later why he'd been so successful in his first major venture as a director, Paul quipped, "I went barefoot and never washed my shorts during the entire shoot. I had piss stains all over them."

Dede Allen, who had previously edited both The Hustler and Bonnie and Clyde, worked hand-in-glove with Paul every day. It was later claimed that Allen was the real director of the picture, and that the honors eventually associated with the film should have gone to her, instead of to Paul.

The film took only five weeks to shoot but eight months to edit. Both Paul and Joanne were pleased with the final results. Joanne, reportedly, felt that she'd done her best work since The Three Faces of Eve.

At the finish, Joanne told reporters, "I just wish Paul could direct every movie I'll do again."

Joanne even compared Paul's directorial gifts to the Swedish director, Ingmar Bergman. Unfortunately, a neophyte reporter wrote "Ingrid" instead of "Ingmar."

After the strain of production, Paul was off to Florida "for some heavy drinking and speedboat racing."

"I'm having a boys' night out," he told a reporter he encountered in Daytona Beach. He was later seen checking into a suite at the Breakers Hotel on Palm Beach with one Brandon De Wilde.

In Florida, he was informed by his partner, John Foreman, that offers for him to direct pictures were pouring in from all over the world.

On most occasions, the Newmans shunned the press, but for the purpose of promoting Rachel, Rachel, both stars made themselves available. Paul was very revealing in his comments, exposing that the real reason he'd signed on as a director was to provide a proper showcase for his wife's talent, something Hollywood producers had rarely been adept at doing.

"Joanne really gave up her career for me," Paul said. "To stick by me. To make our marriage work. That's one of the reasons I directed this film with her." He might have said, "That's the only reason I directed Rachel, Rachel."

He told Playboy that Joanne had turned down major film work to stay with him and their six children, three, of course, from Paul's first marriage. "She's done this to the detriment of her career, I'm afraid, but it's helped keep us together. Without her, I'd be nowhere, nothing."

The film made a modest profit of $8 million, but won almost universal approval from the critics.

Writing in The Saturday Review, Arthur Knight claimed that Joanne "recalls Helen Hayes and Barbara Stanwyck in the films of the thirtiesactresses with a similar intensity and range-and suddenly we realize how much has been lost in the name of underplaying or `cool.'"

William Wolf in Cue Magazine admitted that Paul as a director didn't set the industry afire, but "shows a truth-seeking directness that stamps the film with conviction and honesty."

His co-star in Hud, Patricia Neal, called him after seeing the film. She'd suffered a massive stroke in 1965, which affected both her memory and her speech. She congratulated him on Rachel, Rachel, a film in which she would have been ideally cast before her stroke. Suddenly, she asked, "Who are you, anyway?"

The Golden Globe Awards gave Paul its Best Director in a Motion Picture Award, and presented a similar award to Joanne as Best Motion Picture Actress.

However, Paul was ignored when the nominations for the Academy Awards were announced in Hollywood. Rachel, Rachel received four nominations, however, for Best Picture, Best Actress (Joanne herself), Best Supporting Actress (Estelle Parsons), and Best Adapted Screenplay (Stewart Stern).

There were no winners. Paul felt he'd been humiliated by the Academy once again. "There's a God damn prejudice against me, and I think I know the reason why. It's because I prefer to shun Beverly Hills and live in New England."

Ironically, Patricia Neal competed with Joanne in the Oscar sweepstakes, Neal having scored a win in the film The Subject Was Roses. Both Joanne and Patricia lost to Barbra Streisand for Funny Girl and to Katharine Hepburn in The Lion in Winter. For the first time in its history, the Academy declared a draw-so both Hepburn and Streisand walked away with Oscars.

Even though he did not get that Oscar, Paul in 1966 was named the World's Favorite Actor at the thirty-third annual Golden Globes banquet, sharing the honor with his female counterpart, Natalie Wood. "That's not all they

shared that night," Martin Ritt claimed. In 1967 Paul was nominated Best Actor of the Year by the National Association of Theatre Owners.

Paul triumphantly told friends, "Now Marlon Brando licks the dingleberries off my ass, not the other way around."

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Turning down lucrative script offers, Paul in 1968 became a political activist somewhat in the style of Marlon Brando. He was disappointed at the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, and infuriated that "he'd pulled a double cross" and accelerated the Vietnam War. When maverick senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota announced that he would run against Johnson, Paul called the senator and enlisted in his cross-country campaign.

At first Paul felt that McCarthy didn't have a chance. But then the returns came in from New Hampshire, showing that McCarthy could best Johnson by running on an antiwar platform.

On the campaign trail, Paul faced a lot of opposition from people who didn't want a movie star telling them how to vote.

Supporters of Nixon attacked him verbally. He always had an answer for them. "I'm a citizen. I'm a father. I'm a voter. I have the same concerns as yourself. I'm speaking as a citizen-not a movie star."

In New Hampshire, a Jaguar dealer lent Paul the use of a car on weekends. He later learned that the same car was made available for Nixon on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Finding this out, he left Nixon a note:

"DEAR MR. NIXON. YOU SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE DRIVING THIS CAR. IT HAS A TRICKY CLUTCH. PAUL NEWMAN."

When the press found out, Nixon was gracious in his response. "He may think I'm a lousy politician, but I think he's a fine actor."

Privately, Nixon fumed. Perhaps that's why Paul ended up as number nineteen on the president's notorious enemies list. That list was made public in 1973, and Paul viewed it as "my crowning achievement."

From the lush countryside of Connecticut to the barren wastelands around Omaha, Paul stumped tirelessly for McCarthy, a man whose "courage and convictions" he greatly admired.

"This is my kind of town," Paul claimed when arriving in Milwaukee. "I've drunk so much beer in my time I've put Milwaukee on the map." Of course, that comment was a mere quip and not meant for publication.

Paul also popped up in Oregon, New York State, and Indiana. On some of those long trips from home, he was accompanied by Brandon De Wilde, who never appeared at any rallies in public with Paul, but often shared his hotel room later in the evening.

In Albany he was met with campaign workers, who greeted him with cornbeef sandwiches and plenty of cold beer. His taste for cerveza was, by that time, well known.

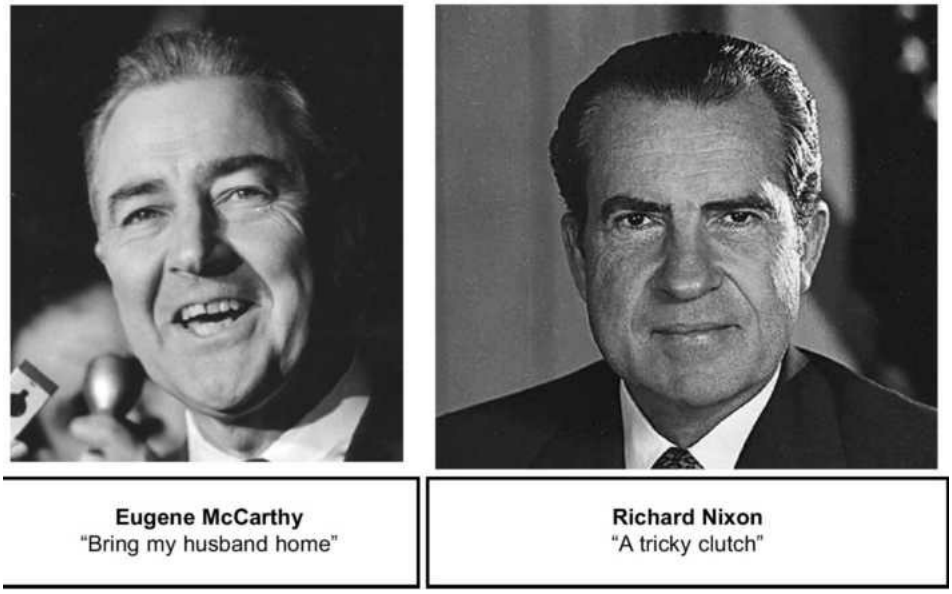
He drew his biggest audiences on college campuses, but was not adverse to speaking to factory workers from the tailgate of a truck in the Detroit area.

On the campaign trail, he encountered his friend, Myrna Loy, and other stars he'd made films with, including Lauren Bacall.

Paul was often uneasy during some of his public appearances. As long as he was speaking from a prepared

text, he seemed confident. But he often bombed with his answers to off-the-cuff questions. His main issue was the war, and he showed an appalling lack of familiarity with the other issues of the day.

He also grew increasingly uncomfortable with the demands his fans made, based on his status as a movie star. As he explained to the New York Sunday Times magazine.



"When a Mrs. Jones marches up to me for an autograph, I'm supposed to immediately stop what I'm doing, whether it's eating dinner, playing with the kids, or making love to my wife. I'm supposed to say, `Oh, sure, Mrs. Jones, I'll smile for you. I'll take off my sunglasses, then I'll put them back on.' The whole thing is ridiculous!"

The race heated up when Johnson announced he would not run for re-election. But McCarthy would not be a shoo-in for the nomination. The ever-popular Robert F. Kennedy joined the race for the nomination.

Immediately, a number of A-list Hollywood entertainers backed Kennedy, including Shirley MacLaine, Sammy Davis Jr., and Peter Lawford. Still miffed at the Kennedys, Sinatra announced that he'd cast his vote for Hubert Humphrey. Paul and other stars, including Dustin Hoffman, stuck with McCarthy.

At one point, Scott Newman joined his father on the campaign trail in Cleveland, but quickly dropped out when a Nixon supporter crushed a lemon pie in his face. "Politics is your bag," he told his dad. "It's not for me."

In a move viewed as not very bright, Paul urged the public to boycott his films as an "act of conscience" against the war in Vietnam. Similar pleas for a boycott of their own films were issued by Jon Voight, Arlo Guthrie, Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda, and Alan Arkin. Ironically, these stars actually owned a percentage of the films they were asking the public to boycott.

Paul attended the now-notorious Democratic National Convention in Chicago in '68. He was a delegate from the state of Connecticut, and was often photographed, standing alongside playwright Arthur Miller, Marilyn's ex.

Throughout the convention, Paul was horrified, especially at the violence occurring on the streets outside. He later reported that the convention "sickened me in my gut. When it was over and Humphrey emerged triumphant as the Democratic Party's designated presidential delegate, only Sinatra was happy. I just knew we'd lose to Nixon."

This was the infamous convention where Gore Vidal and William F. Buckley were moderators for ABC. When Vidal suggested that Buckley was a crypto-Nazi, Buckley shot back, "Now, listen, you queer. I'll sock you in your goddamn face."

Gracious in defeat, Paul told the press, "I feel I'm the better man-win, lose, or draw-for having been a part of this campaign." That quote was published in The New York Times.

After the defeat of the Democratic ticket in 1968, Gore Vidal urged Paul to enter politics, suggesting that he run first for Senator from Connecticut and follow it up with a bid for the presidency. The idea on the surface seemed preposterous to most political observers, but Paul considered it seriously for a few weeks. Finally, he rejected the idea, "I don't have the arrogance, and I don't have the credentials."

One drunken night in Connecticut, Paul called his friend, Tony Perkins. "God damn it, I've changed my mind. I'm gonna run for president of the United States against Nixon in 1972. And I'm going to start campaigning tomorrow morning, beginning in New England. Before election year comes, I will have visited every state. Stay tuned for my announcement in the morning."

When no announcement came the following morning, Tony called Paul. "What happened?"

"I woke up, sobered up, and chickened out," was the response.

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In New York City, Joanne had made an appearance, telling listeners that she wanted them to vote for McCarthy "so I can bring my husband back home. Since he discovered politics, I never see him anymore."

Joanne's remark in New York set off speculation in print about the Newmans' so-called idyllic marriage. "Were the couple really as in love as they seemed?" asked writer Susan Netter. "Even if they were, could the marriage survive the pressures of show business and the separations and temptations presented by not only one but two movie careers? Besides all that, Newman was one of the handsomest male actors around. All he'd have to do would be to wink one of those devastating blue eyes and hundreds of women would come running. Joanne was pretty enough, but she'd had three kids in seven years, gossips noted, and everyone knew what that could do to your figure. Could a woman really feel sexy and desirable and in the mood for fun and romance with all those kids underfoot?"

Alice Tucker, a writer for the short-lived Hollywood Screw, a notorious underground magazine that surfaced in the late Sixties, even published an article about Paul's "alleged" bisexual lovers. She ran beefcake pictures of Paul with some of his bedmates of yore, including Steve McQueen, Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, James Dean, Tony Perkins, and Sal Mineo.

In one of her most outrageous and unproven claims, Tucker reported that Paul had a tumultuous romance with Christopher Jones, the charismatic young actor-"the new James Dean"-who had been married to Susan Strasberg.

After that sleazy little tabloid ran a scandalous article about Frank Sinatra, it was rumored that he had Hollywood Screw shut down. How he managed to do that is not known.

Paul once summed up his marriage, claiming, "It's not always fine and dandy. We're two different people with very different attitudes to things, very different ways of seeing life. Even so, I think the marriage has a certain thickness to it. We go through bad periods, like any couple."

One author speculated that Joanne must have heard about Paul's "quickie, meaningless affairs" with some of his leading ladies or superstar sexual predators like Ava Gardner and Lana Turner.

"Joanne's a very smart woman," Tony Perkins once told Shelley Winters. "She must know about them. Paul's first wife found out about that James Dean thing. Joanne is a lot smarter. She must have known all along that her husband also liked guys. How could she not know? I don't know how much she reads the underground press, but `well-meaning' friends had to tell her about the rumors. She'd be living blind if she didn't know."

Susan Strasberg remembered that Paul's adulterous romances with both women and men were one of the principal topics of gossip at that show biz hangout, Downey's Restaurant in New York. "People who slept with Paul didn't keep it a secret. Marilyn, for example, told me all about her affair with Paul. Brando did too. With my father

and myself, Paul talked openly about his bisexuality, claiming `I am not ashamed.'"

***

Every straight or bisexual male has his fantasy woman. For Paul, he still considered Elizabeth Taylor one of the most enchanting women of her time. But, as he'd once told intimate friends, "Jacqueline Kennedy is the most desirable woman on the planet. Our Helen of Troy."

After her brother-in-law, Robert F. Kennedy, announced that he was going to run against Eugene McCarthy for the Democratic nomination for president, she placed a discreet call to Paul.

He was thrilled to be speaking to her and hearing that famous voice that in some way reminded him of Marilyn Monroe. He agreed to meet her in the bar of the Hotel Carlyle in Manhattan-the same hotel where John F. Kennedy had had sexual trysts with Marilyn Monroe.

The sale of her home in Georgetown in Washington, DC, had allowed her to purchase a Fifth Avenue apartment, but despite that, she chose to meet Paul at the Carlyle Hotel, perhaps as some kind of symbolic assertion of her independence.

Of his many involvements with famous personalities, Paul's short-lived link with Jackie is clouded in the most mystery and the subject of the most speculation. A doorman reported that Paul arrived at the appointed time of eight o'clock in the evening and was seen leaving the following morning around 8:30, hailing a taxi and quickly disappearing. He wore dark sunglasses and a hat. The sunglasses were familiar; the hat was not. Even so, the staff at the Carlyle recognized him and spread the word. The story was too good, too hot to keep to one's self.

Jackie O's Fantasy Men: Two Down, One to Go

Marlon Brando

William Holden

Paul Newman

Susan Strasberg claimed that within days, the story was making the rounds of Downey's Restaurant, where it quickly spread through the grapevine to Washington and on to Hollywood.

The only recognizable name who spoke openly about the night Paul spent with Jackie in her hotel suite was Truman Capote, her treacherous friend. In Tennessee Williams' New York apartment, Capote claimed that Jackie had confessed to him "only some of the details of that night."

Capote made his claims in the presence of Tennessee himself, Margaret Foresman (an editor on The Key West Citizen), Stanley Haggart, and the author of this biography. Capote is an unreliable source, but he often knew truths unknown even to insiders.

Jackie loved gossip, and in Truman Capote she'd found a soulmate. He not only was the untitled gossip queen of America, but believed that gossip as reportage would become "the literature of the future."

Capote claimed that one night he and Jackie, drunk on champagne, named the three movie stars they'd most like to seduce. For Capote, the size of a certain appendage seemed to dominate his selection of John Ireland, Steve Cochran, and Rock Hudson.

As her desirable stars of choice, Jackie named Marlon Brando, William Holden, and Paul Newman, claiming, "I've already attained two-thirds of my goal." At that time, she was referring to Brando and Holden, not Paul, whom she was yet to meet.

From what Capote claimed, a sketchy report has emerged. He said that over drinks he'd discussed Paul with Jackie.

In a secluded corner of the bar at the Carlyle, Jackie in dark sunglasses greeted Paul. He kissed her on both sides of the cheeks. She casually pointed to a man in a dark business suit sitting a few tables away. She told him that he was a member of the Secret Service assigned to guard her. "He's also my lover," she allegedly told Paul. If he were shocked, he masked it effectively. He even assumed that she might be joking because it was unbelievable that she'd be this frank with him.

Truman Capote's Fantasy Men: A Question of Appendage

Rock Hudson **Steve Cochran** **John Ireland**

Upon his arrival, he'd presented her with a porcelain rose, which was investment enough for him, even though he'd heard she would spend as much as $100,000 on an antique snuff box.

That night Paul met Jackie, he encountered a very different woman from the brave widow he'd read about in the press. Sitting opposite him was a flirtatious and attractive woman, with a mischievous gleam in her eyes, not the brave widow of a slain American president.

When she'd had enough champagne, Jackie could become outrageous, not the "steel butterfly" so often depicted on camera.

One night at a White House gala, when she'd had more than her share of the bubbly, Jackie took off her shoes and danced and flirted with every handsome man in attendance, much to the annoyance of her husband who hawkeyed her every move. Perhaps she was paying him back for his own sexual trysts with his woman du jour.

A minor friend of Jackie's, Paul Mathias, the New York correspondent for France's Paris-Match Magazine, summed her up. His assessment later appeared in A Woman Called Jackie by C. David Heymann. In Mathias' words, the former First Lady "was the tease, the temptress of her age. She perfected the art, she invented it. She was Miss Narcissist, perpetually searching mirrors for worry wrinkles and strands of prematurely gray hair. She didn't worry about growing old, she worried about looking old. Within 18 months of JFK's assassination she had two dozen of the world's most brilliant and important men dangling like marionettes, dancing at her fingertips, most of them very married, very old, or very queer."

In Paris, Aristotle Onassis told a reporter, "Jackie is too young and too vibrant a woman to spend her life maintaining the Camelot legend. It is time for her to come down from that pedestal and do something very, very indiscreet, like marrying Truman Capote."

Even John Kennedy told associates that "Jackie is known for developing crushes, like on Warren Beatty. But she's very fickle. They don't last long. She becomes bored quickly."

From what Capote learned, Paul spent a good part of the evening hearing about the Kennedys. Although Jackie was very supportive of Bobby, and urged Paul to switch his allegiance, she was highly critical of Rose Kennedy. "She'll eat a juicy steak for lunch and serve the rest of the table hamburgers, even hot dogs. To save money, she orders the chef not to make desserts, even bread pudding from stale bread."

One speculation she may have shared with Paul that night was her belief that her husband would not have been re-elected. "His indiscretions had become so plentiful, so well known, that they would have made headlines during the campaign and would have destroyed him."

During the course of the evening, she revealed to Paul that former Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson had pursued her after the death of her husband in Dallas.

Alone in her suite with Paul, she spent at least an hour or two extolling the virtues of Bobby Kennedy. She claimed that she personally knew Eugene McCarthy but also believed that he was a one-issue candidate. "The war," she reportedly said, "that God damn Vietnam War." She warned him that there were other issues of the day, including the war on poverty. "Bobby can offer hope to the downtrodden that McCarthy can't. He's a candidate whose stand on the issues, not just the war, is all-encompassing. He can save this nation from itself. That is, if he can save himself from an assassin's bullet. They've killed one Kennedy in this country. They might strike again." Supposedly, she never revealed who "they" were.

The most provocative line of the evening, if Capote is to be believed, is that Jackie confided to Paul that she'd never been able to satisfy her husband sexually. "Perhaps I can change that state of affairs with you tonight," she may have told him.

Jackie Kennedy Onassis
Miss Narcissist battling time

At least for one night Jackie may have convinced Paul to switch his political alliance. But in the sober light of morning, when he left the hotel, he remained in McCarthy's camp. He later told Tony Perkins, "I faced more temptation that night than did Antony when he met Cleopatra."

Of course, when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated in June of 1968allegedly by Sirhan Sirhan-Paul's support of Jackie's brother-in-law became a moot issue.

Howl!, a scandal sheet emanating from New York City's East Village that flourished for only two months during hippiedom's "Dawning of the Age of Aquarius," was the only newspaper, if that's what it could be called, that carried the rumor. The headline, as were all that short-lived paper's headlines, was rather blunt: PAUL NEWMAN

FUCKS JACKIE O.

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Weeks after his defeat, McCarthy called Paul to thank him for his support. He also revealed a shocking detail. He was planning to leave his wife, Abigail, after nearly a quarter of a century of marriage. "We were just sticking together to get through the campaign and into the White House. If elected, we planned to live together in the White House but in different bedrooms."

McCarthy was a man of his word. After talking to Paul, he separated from his wife in 1969, although he never divorced her. The senator was not alone. He engaged in an affair with Marya McLaughlin, a CBS news correspondent, until her death in 1998.

McCarthy died in 2005 at the age of 89. Suffering from Parkinson's disease, he lived in a retirement home in Washington.

His future attempts at running for president failed, particularly in 1972 and 1976. Today he is often confused with the anti-Communist fanatic, Senator Joseph McCarthy.

"Although they had the same last name, no two men could have been more different," Paul claimed. "I was proud to work for Eugene for a cause I believed in. There would be other causes in my future, for which I'd stick my neck out."

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In his next film, Winning (1969), about race car drivers, Paul was cast as "a boozing, workaholic, womanizer."

"Typecasting," said Eartha Kitt when she read about the film in Variety. At that point, her devotion to Paul was considerably diminished.

Once again in this John Foreman production for Universal, Paul would be cast opposite Joanne along with their long-time friend, Robert Wagner. Originally slated for a television presentation, it was turned into a feature film when the Newmans signed on. Critics later wondered what Joanne was doing in this picture. It was hardly her finest role. Perhaps she joined just to work with Paul.

Paul's character was Frank Capua, an ace auto racing driver, who meets a divorcee (Joanne) and her teenage son (Richard Thomas). His major rival, Wagner, playing Luther Erding, has an affair with Paul's wife. Rumors that this actually happened in real life have proved mere gossip, or else tantalizing speculation. But at least on screen Paul caught Wagner in bed with Joanne.

Paul was placed in the awkward position of having to give Wagner "points" about how to make love to his wife. Privately, he told John Foreman, "I didn't want this to become an XXX-rated picture, so I didn't tell him how to hit all of Joanne's hot spots."

For Foreman, Winning would be a loser. It was no Harper, and certainly no Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

"Long before Joanne met Paul, I pushed her off a building in A Kiss Before Dying," Wagner said. His memory of time sequences may be a bit off. He added, "She forgave me for murdering her-I was playing a psychoticand we've remained friends for a lot of years. They live in Connecticut, and I'm in California, or Aspen, but we stay close."

Long over his crush on Wagner, Paul claimed, "If I'm in the trenches, this is the guy I want next to me."

Wagner was a bit saddened when Paul announced his retirement from acting in 2007. But he noted, "I would bet you that if a great part comes along that Paul likes, and it's something he would be great in, he'll take the tap

shoes off the wall and go into his dance."

Before filming on Winning began, Paul, along with Wagner, began to prepare for his role as a race track driver. He studied at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance near Santa Ana in California. In just two weeks he could lap 142 mph in Indiana, the site of "The Indy," the toughest, fastest, longest (500 miles), and the most hazardous event in the world of sports car racing.

Paul in race car drag
An obsession with *Winning*

The most spectacular moment in Winning actually was a newsreel, showing a seventeen-car crash scene at the track in 1966.

To add verisimilitude to Winning, a number of real race car drivers appeared on screen, including Bruce Walkup, Roger McCluskey, Dan Gurney, Tony Hulman, Bobby Grim, and Bobby Unser.

For this $7 million feature film, Paul was given one of his best deals yet, a $1.1 million upfront salary, plus a percentage.

Insured by Universal for $3 million, Paul refused to use a double for the most dangerous race sequences.

The film was almost a forecast of the future marriage of Joanne and Paul. Her character, both on and off the screen, would be threatened and torn apart by Paul's obsession with his "career" as a race car driver. On the set she objected to Paul's refusal to use a double, and she also opposed his getting involved in such a dangerous sport that might, in a flash, remove him as her husband and the father of his five daughters and one son.

During the filming of Winning, his old friend, Steve McQueen, called him when Variety ran a story that he, McQueen, was now number one at the box office. "Hey, it's lonely at the top, old pal, old buddy. Come for a motorcycle ride with me in the desert. I'll fuck you in the sands until you get cactus up your ass."

"Dream on, faggot," Paul said.

Although they talked "dirty" to each other, each man, though a screen rival, still maintained a deep and abiding love and respect for each other. Paul continued to like McQueen so much he would even invite him to join him as an investor in a new production company in the immediate years ahead.

Only a year later, Paul called McQueen in revenge, when Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid made him number one at the box office again. "How does it feel to be dethroned, old buddy, old pal? And to think you could have been riding in the saddle with me if you'd signed on as Sundance."

"You might be number one at the box office-at least for 1969-but my dick is bigger than yours, and there's not a God damn thing you can do about that, fucker," McQueen said. "Say, kid, since you're now the Queen of the Box office, let's get together for some beer. I'll let you feel it under the table so you'll know what a real man is like." With that invitation, he put down the phone.

First Artists Production Company was launched in June of 1969 with Barbra Streisand, Sidney Poitier, and Paul. In 1971 Steve McQueen joined the trio. Although the company would have such hits as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, they would also release duds at the box office, including WUSA (1970), in which Paul would co-star once again with Joanne along with old friends Laurence Harvey and Tony Perkins. In WUSA, Paul played a cynical drifter who becomes a DJ for an ultra-Right Wing Louisiana radio station.

The new production company also released the flat and rather boring Pocket Money (1972), in which Paul co-starred with Lee Marvin. In this tepid Western, Paul played a debt-ridden cowboy who gets mixed up with shifty Marvin, a con man goof ball.

When Winning was released, it got a fairly good critical reception, William Wolf writing in Cue Magazine, "Newman and Woodward are zooming in stature as a film world couple. They are doing it without leading private lives that catapult them into headlines. Their own special ingredient is talent."

Leo Mishkin in the New York Morning Telegraph noted that one scene alone, with the two of them sitting in a garden rocker, drinking beer out of cans, "comes as close to their own marriage, I suspect, as could be depicted in a fictional motion picture."

Sometimes critical of Paul, Judith Crist in New York found that "Howard Rodman's screenplay and dialogue have more cliches and cornball phrasing than the telephone booth has Smiths and Joneses. But since Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward could, for my money, just stand there and read the telephone book-who's to quarrel?"

Joanne reportedly said, "Paul should never have made Winning. His life has been at risk ever since."

In the years that remained before him, before he officially entered old age, Paul became so consumed with the race circuit atmosphere that it replaced acting as his main endeavor. "Was he trying to prove something to himself or to the world?" Tony Perkins privately asked his friends.

A drunken McQueen was once asked if his interest, and that of Paul's, in sports car racing expressed a death wish. "Death wish?" he asked, puzzled. "Why should we have a death wish? Either of us can fuck anybody in the world we want. All we have to do is call `em on the phone, and they come running. There have been rumors about Paul and me, about most actors. There have even been suggestions that we're not masculine. Out on those race tracks, we show those faggot reporters who's the man, baby."

"I'm stoned on racing cars," Paul said. "For me, it's a natural high. I don't need pot. He compared his love of racing to a dog. "Like a terrier, I keep gnawing at it. Just trying to get my car to go faster and faster. Before I took up racing, I had never done anything more dangerous than ride my motorcycle in New York."

Paul's favorite racetrack was Lime Rock in his native Connecticut.

He relished this man's world and escaped to it whenever he could, which was most of the time. "He loved that world of macho guys, seedy beer taverns, and even seedier motels, the kind that are built around racetracks," said Bruce Broyhill, a race car driver. "What even married men do at these places-booking a hooker for the night, making it with another man-stays there. When morning comes, they return to wives, lovers, or whatever. We on the racing circuit aren't Hollywood gossips. We don't tell everything we know. We accepted Paul like one of the guys, figuring what he did was his own God damn business. I never saw what all that Hollywood bullshit about Paul was about. But then I'm no judge. I'm color blind. I don't see blue. To me, the world is gray."

On the circuit, Paul began so enamored of certain race car drivers that he sometimes invited them to what he called his "fuck flat," a reference to his apartment on New York's East Side. Marlene Dietrich became known for her scrambled eggs, but Joanne, according to all reports, made the "world's greatest caviar omelet.

In referring to his abode as a "fuck flat," there is no suggestion that Paul ever brought sportsmen there for any other reason than to be entertained by meeting Joanne and served a great breakfast.

Naturally, those homosexual rumors that dogged Paul for all of his life, at least until he got too old to be the subject of speculation, surfaced anew among his racing buddies. Paul was said to have had several affairs over the years with drivers, mechanics, or "track pals." Although homosexuals in the most limited and silly view are known as hair dressers or decorators, many gays are among the world's top athletes. Perhaps for the thrill, many of them are drawn to sports car racing, basking in all that male testosterone and camaraderie.

Another driver, Johnnie Brentwood, recalled Paul winning a chug-a-lug contest in a dusty backwater in Utah. Sometimes we'd go out back and engage in pissing contests with him. Newman claimed he once beat Elvis in a pissing contest, but I didn't quite believe that. Elvis, to me, is the King of all Pissers."

Sam Posey, one of the "kings of the tracks," praised Paul as "one of the finest endurance racers in the world. A born talent for getting the most out of a car without fucking up the engine."

As Paul's racing intensified, in spite of his years, he was often asked if he'd abandoned movies. "Not at all. Right now I'm working with Hemingway's biographer, my good pal, A.E. Hotchner. I'm going to play Don Ernesto on the screen." That film was never made.

"If I had it to do over again, I would have become a professional sports car racer in my twenties," Paul told reporters in Indiana.

When another reporter pressed him for more details about why he liked to race, Paul quipped, "It's a kick in the ass!"

Sometimes Joanne in a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses would show up for one of Paul's races. Perhaps they had a mutual agreement. If she attended the race track, he'd have to take her to a ballet performance.

Paul told reporters, "Joanne thinks sports car racing is about the silliest thing there is. It is also very scary to her. She reminds me I could get killed. I tell her I could get killed driving on any American highway. Even crossing the street."

It was apparent at times that Joanne missed her husband and perhaps became overwhelmed with the responsibility of caring for their brood while he was away racing. Once or twice she let her frustration spill out, particularly one afternoon when she quipped, "It's not always easy living with Sam Superstar."

Then a reporter asked her, "What is it like to live in Paul Newman's shadow?"

"I have to dwell there," she reportedly said. "He gives off such a glow I'd be blinded if I didn't have a good old shade tree somewhere."

In 1972, at the age of forty-seven, when most car drivers were retiring, Paul officially became a professional racer. In the future, he would try to limit his adventures into acting to the winter months so he wouldn't miss the summer racing season.

Driving a Porsche 911 IS, Paul engaged in a 12-hour endurance contest in Sebring, Florida. He was sometimes seen racing a Triumph TR-6. But in 1974 it was a Datsun that brought him two national championships. By 1975 he had formed his own racing team, using his initials of PLN.

As could be predicted, the inevitable accidents occurred, some of them life threatening.

In a Datsun 510, he faced a close call in July of 1977 in Garrettsville, Ohio. Competing in the Sports Car Club of America Race, a fellow driver lost control of his car. Hurled through the air, he landed on top of Paul's Datsun. Miraculously, both drivers, including Paul, escaped with only minor bruises. When the other car crashed through

Paul's roof, it was his helmet that saved him.

The other driver, Robert Dyson of Poughkeepsie, New York, reported that he had never heard curse words like that coming from Paul when he finally escaped from the wreckage. "Maybe he learned those words while serving in the Navy in World War II."

That same year (1977) Paul wasn't intimidated by his crash. In Florida during the Daytona 24-Hour Endurance Race in April, he drove Clint Eastwood's Ferrari and came in fifth in a tight race.

For his sponsors, Paul endorsed Budweiser, a beer he knew only too well, and the Nissan Motor Company.

Paul became so proficient as a race car driver that he, along with the Datsun factory team, won all four of the Sports Car Club of America races. At one of the most dangerous race courses in the nation, at Watkins Glen, New York, he even set a record.

Until the death of his son, Scott, in 1978, Paul had been a rather conservative driver on the race track. But following Scott's death, his race track friends reported that he began to drive more dangerously, taking more chances and not always following proper procedures.

"He was reckless, a dare devil," reported another driver. "At one time some of us speculated that he had a suicide wish."

Following Scott's death, Paul entered two of the world's most dangerous races, one at Daytona Beach in Florida, another at Le Mans in France.

The Daytona race was a complete failure for Paul. Only ten minutes into the race, his Porsche started rattling, and he was forced to pull off to the side, dropping out for the duration.

Le Mans was a different race. He had been relatively unmolested by fans and photographers in Florida, but in France it seemed like all the paparazzi turned out in full force. Even when he went jogging on the 300-acre estate of the Marquis de Vesins, photographers jumped out from behind trees to snap his picture.

For the 24-hour race in Le Mans, Paul teamed with Dick Barbour and Rolf Stommelen, the latter an ace German driver. This was a true endurance race, as they faced torrential rain and hazardous road conditions. But Paul and his teammates rode to glory in second place, he in command of a red Porsche 935 twin turbo. At his peak, he reached an impressive speed of 220mph.

As an actor in 1979, his record wasn't as impressive. For Robert Altman, he filmed Quintet, a bleak, futuristic story about an Ice Age world, in which some reviewers saw homosexual overtones in the script.

When Paul was introduced to President Jimmy Carter, he decided to talk about car racing. "Southern men really like the race track," Paul said. But he was surprised when the President showed no interest in the subject. He also seemed bored with Paul's pontifications on the nuclear threat. But what really excited Carter was when he began to ask Paul about the movie colony and filmmaking.

The President must have been impressed with Paul because he later appointed him a public delegate to a special session on disarmament at the United Nations. Paul sat with Senator George McGovern, who had unsuccessfully run for President against Nixon.

William F. Buckley, who had publicly insulted Paul's friend, Gore Vidal, now lambasted Paul. "Maybe Mr. Carter thinks that Mr. Newman will so confuse the Soviet delegates that they will dismantle their entire intercontinental missile system. More likely, they will determine that the farce at the United Nations isn't worth one more conference with Paul Newman."

Even as he moved out of middle age and into senior citizen material, Paul by 1985 had set ten new track records. Behind the wheel of what he called "my monster," a turbo-charged Datsun 300ZX, at speeds of 192 mph,

he'd win four national and five divisional auto sports car racing honors.

On one occasion, at Riverside International Speedway in California in May of 1987, his brakes failed as he was speeding at the rate of 140mph.

Finding an escape route, he managed to slow the vehicle down to 60mph before crashing into a wall. His car, according to a newspaper report, was "pretzeled," yet he escaped relatively unharmed with only minor bruises.

Riding with another driver on a track outside New Orleans, he hit a rut and his car skidded on two wheels. The speeding car turned over onto its right side, but Paul and his companion managed to escape with only minor injuries.

When Paul raced his last car, he looked back on his achievements, a staggering eight national titles, plus 107 victories in races against far younger drivers.

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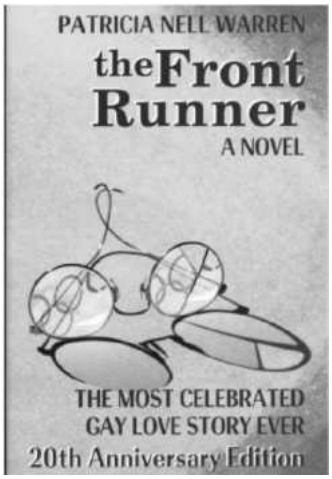
In 1974 Patricia Nell Warren published a novel, The Front Runner, that today is a classic in gay literature, having sold more than ten million copies. Although more than that, the novel is the story of a cross-country coach, Harlan Brown, who, at an obscure New York college, falls in love with a young Olympic runner named Billy Sive, the affair leading to disaster.

The plot very tenderly and with great sensitivity explores the developing love relation between the ex-Marine track coach and his openly gay athlete. The Front Runner became the first contemporary novel about gay love to be listed on The New York Times bestseller list. In publishing, it became known as a cross-over novel, meaning that it appealed to straight readers as well as gay ones.

It was Paul's producer, John Foreman, who first read the novel, buying a copy at the airport and reading it on his flight to London. When he returned to Los Angeles, he sent Paul a note. "Do we dare?" the note asked. As a whimsical postscript, he scribbled, "I know you still look devastatingly young and gorgeous, but I had you in mind for the coach, not the young front runner."

Paul read the novel that weekend and was intrigued at the prospect of bringing an openly gay love story to the big screen. He ordered his staff to acquire film rights to The Front Runner.



But within a few weeks, he began to have serious doubts. The director, George Roy Hill, reminded Paul, "No one will believe Paul Newman playing a homosexual." Hill seemed to forget that Paul had already played gay, both on the screen, though heavily masked, in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and on stage in Bahy Want a Kiss.

To make the story work, the onscreen chemistry between Paul and the actor playing Billy Sive had to be

idyllic. Ever since he'd made Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid, followed by The Sting, he and Redford had promised each other that they'd both be on the lookout for the perfect script in which they could co-star again, hopefully as successfully as they did in their two previous ventures together.

Reports still exist that Paul wanted Robert Redford to play Billy. However by the mid-1970s Redford had entered middle age-after all, he was born on August 18, 1937-although he didn't look it. Because of Redford's age, some sources claim he was never considered by Paul for the role. Actually, he was.

At that time in Redford's career, and with the right kind of makeup, almost twenty years, or at least fifteen, could be removed from his face.

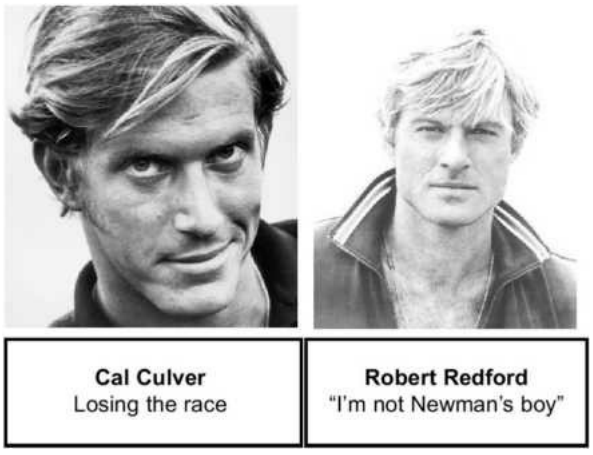
"One night," Foreman claimed, "perhaps when he'd had too much beer, Paul talked with great enthusiasm about playing love scenes on screen with Redford. Perhaps he knew in his heart that's the only way he could make love to Redford-that is, in front of a camera." Foreman was well aware of Paul's bisexuality.

It cannot be confirmed, but Paul sent Redford an early draft of the movie script for the Front Runner. If legend is to be believed, Redford read the script and rejected it outright. "There is no way I'm going to appear on the screen with you, playing a homosexual."

Redford, or so it was said, had been deeply troubled over his gay-bisexual role in Inside Daisy Clover and didn't seem inclined to play an openly gay athlete. Throughout his career, Redford has never been the supporter of gay rights to the degree that Paul was.

"I don't know what Redford's problem is," wrote reporter Barry Devlin upon hearing of Redford's rejection of The Front Runner. "For those who could see with any sort of open mind, both Redford and Newman had already played homosexual lovers in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and in The Sting. With that in mind, look at The Sting again and decide for yourself."

Paul may have had his feelings hurt at so abrupt a rejection. Nonetheless, he didn't hold a grudge against Redford. That Christmas he sent him a paperweight containing sparkling blue eyes in porcelain. It was inscribed simply FORGET ME NOT.



Perhaps to counter the sentimentality of Paul's gift, Redford sent Paul a wrecked Porsche. To get back at him, and perhaps embarrassed at the sentimentality of his earlier gift, Paul shipped Redford two boxes of toilet paper with Redford's face illustrating every sheet.

"Paul's wooing of Redford, such as it was, was about as successful as Joan Crawford's attempt to seduce Bette Davis," said Foreman.

With Redford removed from consideration, Paul conjured up his own choice for Billy. "The Front Runner," at

least for a few weeks, was Richard Thomas, the young actor who'd played his son in the race car picture, Winning.

Then for a brief time, Paul considered Robby Benson, who had starred with him in Harry and Son. Foreman reminded Paul that Benson had been nominated for a "Razzie Award" after his dreadful appearance in that film. Foreman also warned Paul that neither Benson nor Thomas were handsome enough for the part. "Billy should be blond, blue eyed, and gorgeous, Robert Redford in 1962, in other words."

"As if to answer a maiden's prayer" [Foreman's words], a picture and resume arrived from Cal Culver. Foreman rushed it to Paul. It was what Paul had been dreaming of, a photograph of a young, beautiful, and sexy Robert Redford reincarnate. Except, as both Foreman and Paul learned, Cal Culver carried a certain baggage.

Under the name of Casey Donovan, Cal had appeared in Boys in the Sand, a landmark film in gay pornography in the 1970s. Born in 1943, he was five years younger than Redford, but looked much younger than that.

In addition to evoking images of Redford, Cal also suggested Guy Madison, Troy Donahue, and Tab Hunter at the peak of their beauty.

With Foreman beside him, Paul watched a screening of Boys in the Sand. Both men agreed that the handsome young actor was stunning. A question was raised. Would Cal's previous appearances in porno ruin him for mainstream films? Foreman thought not. "He has a large gay following, maybe millions have seen Boys in the Sand, and that would only increase box office for us. Straight audiences, however, would not have seen Boys in the Sand, and could not possibly care."

"Fly him to Hollywood," Paul said. "I'd like to meet this angel."

It can't be ascertained exactly what Paul was expecting when he first met Cal, but perhaps it was not the well-educated actor and model who appeared before him. Cal was not only charismatic, but articulate and full of grace and charm. "He was a knockout," Paul told Foreman the next day.

In Key West in the late 1970s, Cal told the author of this biography that, "I seduced Newman the first night we got together. It was the easiest thing I've ever done. I'm a take-charge kind of guy, and I just moved in on him. He put up no resistance at all. To judge by the moans, I gave him great sex. As for me, I've had better. But he was Paul Newman, and I was thrilled to submit to the casting couch. Of course, it became a question of just who was casting whom on that casting couch."

"I had described myself to Newman as Robert Redford's younger brother," Cal claimed, "and he seemed to agree. For one month, I was in Hollywood, with Newman paying all my bills. The only offkey note was one night when we were going at it, and he called me `Robert.' I didn't like that, but I forgave him. After all, it was I who had been promoting the image of my own similarity in looks to Redford's. What could I expect?"

"We had great times together," Cal recalled. "Newman convinced me we were going to make the movie, and that we'd actually appear nude on the screen together-no full frontals, of course. He seemed to be looking forward to it."

"I was bouncing around up there in the clouds," Cal claimed. "In spite of my porno background, I wanted to go legit. After all, I'd appeared on stage with Ingrid Bergman. This was going to be my big breakthrough role. I even told myself that I might allow myself to fall in love with Newman, although another actor, Tom Tryon, had his stamp on me."

Tryon had been the star of Otto Preminger's the Cardinal (1963).

"Late one morning," Cal recalled with a certain bitterness, "the sky fell in on me. I came down from the clouds. Newman called shortly before noon. I was still asleep, groggy from the previous night. I fell down from the clouds. He told me that he had abandoned plans to film The Front Runner, and that our relationship was over. Before hanging up, he also told me that a check was in the mail. He put down the phone and that was it. End of my big, silly dream."

"I was devastated," Cal said. "Newman's check never arrived but John Foreman called me. I came by his office where five thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills was waiting for me. That's a hell of a lot more than either Liberace or Merv Griffin gave me for similar services. I flew to Miami knowing it was all over for me. Eventually even Tom Tryon didn't want me any more. It was back to hustling and porno. I was, after all, known as the gay Adam."

"Quite by chance I ran into Paul one night in New York," Cal said. "I thought he'd ignore me, but he didn't. He stopped and chatted for a minute or two, apologizing that The Front Runner didn't work out for either of us. I suggested that he might like to come back to my apartment for a drink, but he turned me down. He told me that his affairs were over, that he was going back to settle down in New England. `Everyone who's been a whore has to get out of the profession sooner or later-and that goes for you too, kid.' Those were his last words to me."

On the Sunday of August 10, 1987, Cal died of a lung infection associated with AIDS. Jay McKenna, writing in The Advocate, called him "the first widely embraced gay symbol to appear during the post-Stonewall years."

Years later, Paul claimed he regretted not making The Front Runner. "I made Slap Shot instead, and who cares about that fucker today? Had I made The Front Runner, it could have been a landmark-a turning point, really-in the history of cinema. Too bad I didn't have the balls. Cal Culver and I would have become the screen's new romantic lovers." He hesitated. "In the Greek tradition, of course."

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All of Hollywood buzzed with the news. At 20th Century Fox, it was announced that Richard D. Zanuck, head of production, had just paid a record high of $400,000 for a script entitled The Sundance Kid and Butch Cassidy, its original title. William Goldman, the scriptwriter, had spent six years researching the lives of these two legendary train robbers, drawing some of his material from the archives of the historic Pinkerton Detective Agency.

The speculation was that this film was conceived as a spoof of all Westerns ever made. It was to be a comedy but with plenty of action and gunfights, including one fatal sequence where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid take on the Bolivian army. Soldiers trap the outlaws after they flee into exile in South America.

Actually, the saga of Butch and Sundance had first been recorded on film way back in 1905 at the dawn of motion pictures. Butch and Sundance weren't gunned down until 1911. Reportedly, the real Butch and Sundance risked arrest to attend a screening of this early film, which was inspired by their own notorious lives.

Surmising that despite the passage of time, the saga of the two outlaws was still fresh in the public's mind, the screenwriter had spent six years polishing the story of these two legendary bandits.

Richly accessorized with a sense of nostalgia, the script conveyed the poignancy associated with the lives of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. At the dawn of the 20th Century, the Old West of legend was dying out. Notorious outlaws and bank robbers like Billy the Kid were becoming a thing of the past.

Word spread across Hollywood that the roles of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, scheduled for a 1969 release, would be plums in the year's pudding. Zanuck was firm in his choice of stars, wanting Marlon Brando to play Butch Cassidy and Warren Beatty to play the Sundance Kid. "Brando's career is in a slump, and I just know he'll go for this part," Zanuck said. "Let's face it: he's done Westerns before. He can handle himself in a saddle. And, after the release of Bonnie and Clyde, Beatty's a hot piece of shit. He can guarantee box office even if Brando can't pull it off any more."

George Roy Hill, the director who had just completed Thoroughly Modern Millie (1967), had agreed to direct the Butch Cassidy film, but he wasn't thrilled with either of the designated actors.

John Foreman, who had just produced Winning with Paul and Joanne, also agreed to produce the Sundance and Butch film.

Over the years, sources have reported that Zanuck was unable to locate Brando, and, after a few weeks, gave up on him as a possible star of this upcoming western. That is simply not true. Brando was in New York at the time, and he read the script on the same day he received it, according to his longtime friend and confidant Carlo Fiore.

"Marlon could be shrewd about many things," Fiore claimed. "He saw some possibilities in this film, but only if Fox would agree to make the picture the way he conceived it."

"It's a love story of two men," Brando said. "Butch and Sundance are lovers. In fact, I envision a scene in which they are depicted buck-assed naked in bed together. If I play Butch, I'll be the top. Sundance will be my bottom."

Fiore made the claim that it was Brando, not Fox, who called Paul Newman with the suggestion that he should go for the role of Sundance.

"Would you like to star in an adult fairy tale?" was Brando's opening invitational line to Paul.

"You mean about two gay guys?" was Paul's immediate question. "I've played a homosexual before, but I don't know if the world is ready for a big screen version."

"Butch and Sundance are practically living in each other's crotches," Brando claimed. "We'll get naked together, like we used to, except this time it'll be on the screen. And we've got to show an ass shot here and there. You have a very nice ass if I recall. Of course, mine's getting a little big for oncamera exposure."

"I see the fade-out like one of those romantic movies of the '30s and '40s," Brando continued. "After kissing each other-maybe a little tongue or a whole lot of tongue-you and I will go out in a blaze of gunfire and glory."

Without the approval of either Hill or Zanuck, Brando sent Paul a copy of the script, which he read immediately. Goldman had written the screenplay for Harper, and Paul was impressed with his writing, although he often wanted to make changes in his own character's dialogue.

Paul placed a call to Zanuck, claiming, "I might be interested in playing the role of Sundance."

Zanuck later reported, "I was all ears. The screen team of Newman and Brando was a thrilling suggestion. Besides, I wasn't getting anywhere pitching the role of Sundance to Beatty." At that time, Zanuck hadn't heard that Brando wanted to turn the script into a love affair between the two outlaws, with "hot man-on-man sex."

Beatty had been sent the script, but he was wavering, claiming at one point, "It's too much like Bonnie and Clyde. I don't want to be forever trapped in gangster or bandito roles."

Beatty made a lot of demands which Zanuck didn't like. If he'd accepted the role, he might have been offered as much as three and a half million dollars.

Paul would agree to do the part for $750,000.

Beatty called the director, Hill, and informed him that, "I don't feel like getting on a horse and riding around."

Hill had never wanted Beatty in the first place, and was glad to hear that. "If you don't want to ride a horse, why don't you take a walk." In anger, Hill then hung up the phone.

In a bad career move, and in lieu of opting for a role in the Sundance project, Beatty moved closer into the orbit of director George Stevens. Their property of choice for film development was the ill-fated Elizabeth Taylor movie, The Only Game in Town, an oddly old-fashioned saga about a gambling addict/pianist and a showgirl sharing an apartment in Las Vegas.

If Brando had signed on to the Sundance project, Paul would have played Sundance. If Beatty had signed on, Paul would have appeared as Butch. "It really didn't make any difference to me which role I played," Paul later said.

"Both parts were equally terrific."

But Brando, for reasons known only to himself, suddenly bolted from the proposed cast and refused to return calls from Zanuck. "At the moment, I'm just too tired to make another God damn movie." He called Paul and told him of his decision to withdraw his name from the roster of candidates. "Why don't you get Steve McQueen to play Sundance?"

The studio had other ideas than McQueen.

Jack Lemmon, who had made a 1958 movie called Cowboy, came to mind. At that time, Butch and Sundance was more of a comedy script than it later became. Lemmon rejected it, claiming, "I don't like spending all that time on a horse." He also had a scheduling conflict with another film, The Odd Couple (1968).

For a brief two weeks, Zanuck considered offering the role of Butch to Dustin Hoffman. He was particularly impressed with his acting in The Graduate, which had made Hoffman a big star.

Paul called both Zanuck and Hill and abruptly withdrew his name from consideration. "After bombing in The Secret War of Harry Frigg, I've decid ed comedy is not my bag."

"You don't understand," Hill protested. "The situations created by Goldman are comedic, not the part of the Sundance Kid."

Paul agreed to reconsider. "I'll get back to you. Don't call me. I'll call you."

In two weeks, Paul called both Hill and Zanuck. "I'll appear in your picture. But I've changed my mind. I want to play Butch instead of Sundance."

Both the producer and the director quickly agreed, before launching a search for the Sundance Kid. In the rumor mill of Hollywood, word reached all out-of-work actors, desperate for a part, that as a result of Paul having committed to playing Butch Cassidy, the role of the Sundance Kid had become available.

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John Derek was only a year younger than Paul, and still in fine shape. Paul hadn't seen the actor in several months but knew that his career was in decline.

When Derek reached Paul on the phone, Paul immediately proclaimed him "the stud of Hollywood. Ursula Andress-not bad. I haven't caught Nightmare in the Sun yet, but I want to see it. So you're a director too."

Paul was no doubt referring to Once Before I Die (1966), which marked Derek's directorial debut.

"Those nudes you shot of Ursula for Playboy were hot stuff," Paul said.

"Wait until you see my Childish Things with Linda Evans," Derek said. "I direct Linda in it. She's hot, man. Up there with Ursula."

"John," Paul said, "I know you well. You didn't call me to talk over all the hot pussy you're getting. You want to play the Sundance Kid, and you want me to go to bat for you at Fox."

"How is it you're able to read my mind?"

"You'd be great as the Sundance Kid," Paul claimed. "Really great. Two handsome fuckers on the screen like us. I promise you. You'll be my candidate."

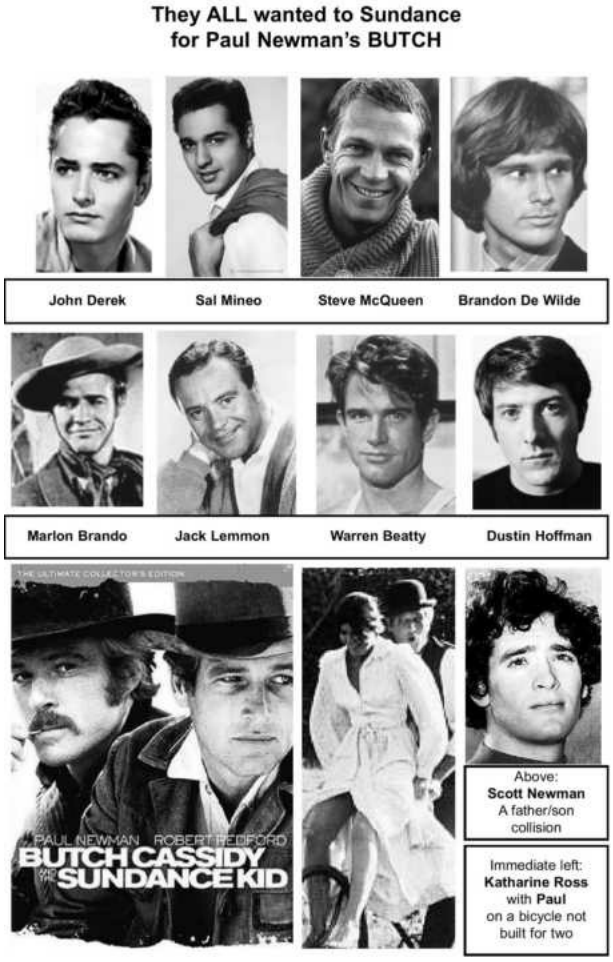
"You really mean that?" Derek asked.

"Of course, I do," Paul said. "Have I ever lied to you about anything?"

"Not that I know," Derek answered. "Maybe we exaggerate the size of our dicks to each other."

"But if I don't get it for you," Paul cautioned, "will you be seriously pissed and break off with me?"

"Not at all. I've been around Hollywood since the war years. At least Derek Harris, my former billing, has. I know how the game is played. If Richard Zanuck fucks me, I'm out, and I know you can't do anything about it."



"Let's have lots of beer together, and some day I want you to do some wilderness travel with me," Paul said. "How about it?"

"Ever since Exodus, I've been your man. All you have to do is call."

"I'll hold you to that promise," Paul said.

Indeed he would. John Derek remained Paul's friend in spite of his disappointment when he lost the role of the Sundance Kid to Robert Redford.

Derek told his friends that Paul used his influence to try to get the coveted role for him, but it was the director, George Roy Hill, who nixed him, not Zanuck.

Months later when Hill was questioned about that, he told Zanuck and others that he didn't remember Paul ever bringing up Derek as a possible Sundance. "I don't know how I could have forgotten something like that. It didn't matter if Paul backed Derek for the role or not. I would never have cast him. Frankly, I think he's just another pretty

boy. But he sure knows how to get the ladies. He must have a ten-inch dick ... or something."

***

According to the novelist, James Leo Herlihy, Brandon De Wilde and Paul ended their relationship over a fight they had about casting the role of the Sundance Kid. Ever since the shooting of Hud, they'd been conducting a secret friendship, often at clandestine places.

Paul, of course, was married during his years-long relationship and so was Brandon. Both men were bisexual and didn't let the women in their lives prevent them from carrying on a love affair. In 1963, Brandon had married Susan M. Maw. They'd had a son, Jessie De Wilde, but by the time of the casting of the Sundance Kid, that marriage was coming unglued.

"Brandon was in love with Paul," Herlihy said. "Even when the kid broke up with me, we remained friends until he died. I went from being his secret lover to father confessor. I would have preferred the lover role, but Newman beat me out."

"From the beginning, Brandon was always being the one hurt in his relationship with Newman," Herlihy said. "He was seriously pissed off that he was the only one of the four principal players not nominated for an Oscar for Hud.

"Brandon desperately wanted to play Sundance, and he felt Paul had the power to secure the role for him," Herlihy claimed. "I don't know exactly what happened. Those two guys had a bitter fight. I think Brandon could have played Sundance and pulled it off beautifully. Obviously Newman didn't think so. For all I know, he had already committed to Redford."

"Our young friend was convinced that the Sundance Kid role would have gotten him the Oscar he was denied in Hud," Herlihy said. "All I know is that after that fateful night when Brandon tangled with Newman, it was all over between them. I gathered Brandon punched Newman. When he called me the following day, he was so depressed he sounded suicidal. All through the years, ever since my Blue Denim, Brandon had dreamed of major Hollywood stardom, the kind Newman obtained. But the kid never got there."

"I felt sorry for him, and I always took his side when he'd pour out to me his hurt feelings about the way Newman was neglecting him," Herlihy said. "He once told me, `All I am to Mr. Box Office is a piece of hot boy ass. He never treats me like an equal. My marriage is breaking up. I wasn't happy in it anyway. I didn't want to live life as a totally gay man, although I would have if Paul had asked me to be with him all the time. He never will, though. He's much too fickle. Regardless of the great times we have together, he always wants to return home to Mama."

Brandon, of course, was referring to Joanne Woodward. "At times he couldn't even stand to repeat her name, because he blamed her for standing in the way of his happiness," Herlihy said.

During the final years of his life, Brandon accepted a series of second-tier stage roles, when he could find them, and dabbled with the idea of breaking into the music industry. During a 1965 holiday in The Bahamas, he'd watched as Paul McCartney wrote the song, "Wait," during the filming of the Beatles movie, Help.

Yet despite encouragement from a Beatle, Brandon never followed through on his music and soon became bored with it.

By the late 60s and early 70s, in lieu of any big movie roles, Brandon was accepting second- and third-tier stage roles whenever he could find them. In Denver he was appearing in the play, Butterflies Are Free. While driving to the theater one night, he was killed in a car crash in Denver's suburb of Lakewood. To avoid a head-on collision with a drunk driver, he swerved his car and crashed into a construction truck parked on the side of the street. Pinned under the wreckage of the massive truck, he lay there dying before an ambulance arrived after a thirty minute delay. He died three hours after his arrival into the emergency room of Denver University Hospital.

It was the evening of July 6, 1972. Brandon was only thirty years old.

Herlihy heard the news of Brandon's death over the radio. "I was shocked. He was still so young, so beautiful. To me, he would always be the blond, blue-eyed Joey in Shane. In Shane, he idolized that strange gunman played by Alan Ladd. In real life he idolized the bastard played by Newman in Hud. I don't know what Newman did the night that Brandon died, but he had to be hurt by the news. He must have cried. Even though he disappointed Brandon at the end of his life, they had had some good times together. I think they truly loved each other. It was a wicked night for me to hear of Brandon's death. The next morning I felt the world was a much less hospitable place without Brandon around."

Brandon's body had originally been buried in Hollywood, but his parents later had his remains transferred to Pinelawn Memorial Park in Farmingdale, Suffolk County, New York. Frederick De Wilde never recovered from the death of his beloved son. He died in 1980. His wife, Eugenia De Wilde, lived until 1987.

The only known reaction from Paul was reported to Herlihy by his friend, Tony Perkins. The actor revealed that Paul had admitted that he'd journeyed to Pinelawn Memorial Park and placed a porcelain white rose on the grave of Brandon. That rose was later stolen.

"I stayed at the grave all afternoon and talked to Brandon," Paul confessed to Tony. "It was our goodbye. It was our closure. He'd meant a lot to me, and the likes of him will never be replaced in my life. He would have made a great Sundance Kid. I know that now. Like the Sundance Kid, Brandon delivered up the greatest gift of all to the Gods: An unfinished life."

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By 1969, Sal Mineo's once vibrant career as a teenage star had virtually come crashing to an end. His young fans, mostly high school girls and gay boys, had grown up, the young women retreating with their husbands to the suburbs of the 1950s to raise children. A new generation had taken over, and new stars had emerged.

Born in 1939, Sal was no longer convincing as a teenage heartthrob.

In 1968, Sal was 29 when word went out that Paul was searching for a Sundance Kid. Soon after, Sal renewed his friendship with Paul, which he'd broken off when they'd filmed Exodus together and Paul had spent more time with John Derek than he did with Sal. Since then, both Paul and Sal had moved on to other lovers. Even so, Paul agreed to meet privately with Sal in Los Angeles.

Sal wanted to be the Sundance Kid, hoping it would revive his career. With Wayne Newton (of all people), he'd starred in 80 Steps to Jonah. Audiences stayed away in droves. He didn't fare much better in the Cinerama presentation of Krakatoa, East of Java, the climax being the eruption of the Krakatoa volcano. Actually, the volcano was west of Java.

At the premiere of Krakatoa, Sal stood up halfway through the screening and yelled, "This is the worst piece of shit I've ever seen," according to his biographer, H. Paul Jeffers.

Fleeing bill collectors, having squandered the hefty paychecks of his teenaged years, Sal met Paul in a restaurant and bar. Reportedly, Paul was shocked at how much Sal had aged. When Sal met Paul, the 1950s, Sal's heyday, was dead and gone.

Sal told the author of this biography that during his reunion with Paul, he did everything in his power to ingratiate himself with his former lover. "He turned a deaf ear to me," Sal said. "It was over. I knew when I invited him to go away with me for the weekend that he wouldn't go. I even reminded him of the size of my dick, but even that didn't turn him on."

"Paul was not the man I'd known when I caught up with him in 1968," Sal said. "He'd been the golden boy of the 50s. Everybody was after him in those days. He was a real hell-raiser. Now he seemed older, more mature, like

he'd settled down. In the '50s both Paul and I could have anybody we wanted. And we did. He still could get, more or less, what he wanted, but somehow he didn't seem that interested in hot sex any more. I mean, I'm sure he still got off with somebody, but not everybody, if you know what I mean. He was no longer classified as one of Hollywood's bad boys. The Paul I encountered that night was rapidly becoming an American icon, and I was deep along the road toward becoming a has-been."

"I did something that night I'd never done before," Sal claimed. "I literally begged Paul to get me the role of Sundance."

"Paul said the part called for an All-American type with blond hair and blue eyes," Sal said. "I told him the fucking part could be rewritten, that we'd be great on the screen together. He wouldn't listen. He wouldn't budge an inch. I reminded him that he'd once told me he'd loved me. I remember him looking at me, with that strange, quizzical look of his. `How many years ago was that, Sal?' he asked. He had me on that one."

"Finally, I took my cheapest shot, Sal said. "I told Paul, `James Dean would want us to star together in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Come on, Paulie: let's make the picture for Jamie."

"Now James Dean," Paul said. "What a guy! Dean would be perfect as the Sundance Kid. If Dean were alive, I'd see that he got cast in a moment's notice."

"That infuriated the shit out of me," Sal said, his eyes exploding with fury. "I knew then that Paul wouldn't get me a fucking job as the water boy. I stormed out of the restaurant. In front of everybody, I called him a faggot asshole."

Sal paused a long time before he agreed to finish the story. "I did something I'm not proud of even to this day. After my exit from Paul's life, I didn't know if he'd ever speak to me again. From his son, Scott, I got his private number and called him late one night. I told whoever picked up the phone that it was about his son. A matter of life and death. It wasn't Joanne Woodward. I think I was speaking to one of Paul's daughters. She brought Paul to the phone right away. Otherwise, I don't think he would have received my call."

"He came onto the phone very alarmed," Sal said.

"What is it?" Paul asked. "Where's Scott? What's happening? Tell me."

"Okay, you asked for it," Sal said. "Right this minute he's lying under me taking the pounding of his life. I'm feeding him my nine and a half inches just like I fed it to dear old dad. He's squealing like a pig. Can you hear him squeal?"

Paul slammed down the phone.

"After that night, Scott fell in love with me," Sal admitted. "I never loved him. I'm not sure I even liked him. But when I screwed Scott, I was really fucking Paul Newman. He could have rescued my career and made me a star again. When it really counted, he turned his back on me. Up in the Bronx, when that happens, we get our revenge in one way or the other. Since beating the shit out of Paul Newman wasn't really an option, I did it my way."

In 1969 when Sal could find no movie work, he turned to the stage in both California and off-Broadway in a gay-themed prison drama, Fortune and Men's Eyes. In California, he attracted sold-out gay audiences by his nude appearance in a prison scene in which he rapes a young Don Johnson.

In spite of that brutal ending to their friendship, Paul was said to be shocked when he learned about Sal's murder on February 12, 1976. On his way home from a rehearsal of James Kirkwood's P.S. Your Cat Is Dead, Mineo was stabbed to death in a deserted alleyway in back of his apartment building in West Hollywood.

He was stabbed through his heart and lived for only a few minutes after the attack. His murderer much later was identified as a pizza deliveryman, Lionel Ray Williams, who was sentenced to fifty years in prison for killing Sal and committing ten robberies in the area.

Sal Mineo: Misfortune and Men's Eyes
P.S. Your Star Is Dead

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Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were not the only two most coveted male roles in Hollywood at the time. When it was announced that director John Schlesinger had acquired the rights to the James Leo Herlihy novel, Midnight Cowboy, many actors vied for the roles of a naive Times Square hustler, the heavily endowed Joe Buck and his sidekick "Ratso." Joe Buck was hailed as "the sexiest role of the year," and the part of Ratso was viewed as a character role so stunning that one was "guaranteed" to win an Oscar.

Originally and ironically, it was Sal Mineo himself who was the first star to read the novel. He flew down to meet with Herlihy in Key West. Although interested in acquiring the rights, he, of course, did not have the financing. As he told an interviewer, "the book's fuckin' fantastic, man."

He spent the weekend in Key West. Herlihy admitted to the author that he had sex with Sal. "He was like a firecracker. Paul Newman might kick him out of his bed, but Sal could put his shoes under my bed any night he wants."

When the author of this biography expressed amazement that Sal thought he could play Joe Buck, Herlihy quickly corrected him. "No, no. no. Sal wants to play the streetwise Ratso. The kid's from the Bronx. He'd be terrific as Ratso. He's hip enough to realize that my novel is really the love story of two men, Ratso and Joe Buck."

James Leo Herlihy
"Sizing up" Paul Newman

Regrettably for Sal, the role ultimately went to Dustin Hoffman, who delivered one of the most brilliant performances of his long career.

Warren Beatty was the next to weigh in. At the height of his sexual allure, he wanted the juicy role of Joe Buck for himself. Beatty had appeared in Herlihy's All Fall Down, which had been based on his first novel.

Herlihy thought Beatty would be ideal as Joe Buck. Of course, the ultimate decision lay with Schlesinger, the director, who turned Beatty down. He told Herlihy that Beatty was too well known and too sophisticated to play the naive hustler, who arrives in New York to sell his sexual favors to women.

In New York, Paul contacted Herlihy through Arnold L. Weissberger, a famous theatrical attorney who represented such clients as Marlene Dietrich and Elizabeth Taylor. Herlihy was astonished to receive the call and agreed to meet Newman at his little bachelor pad in the East Village, a walk-up with the bathtub in the kitchen.

"I'd always had a certain resentment of Newman," Herlihy confessed. "I used to think that Hud was a bit of a rip-off of my novel, All Fall Down. My movie had starred Brandon De Wilde and Warren Beatty. Hud, of course, had also starred Brandon but with Paul Newman this time. Hud did very well at the box office, All Fall Down did not. I have to admit I was rather jealous of the success of Hud over my own work."

"Newman was all charm and graciousness when he walked up to my little hippie pad," Herlihy said. "`Mr. Newman' became `Paul' after a few beers. He had that winning smile that captivated me at once. I could really go for him, and I think he knew that. He talked a lot about my character of Joe Buck. We both understood that the character I wrote about was a lot younger than Paul."

"Paul came up with a slightly different interpretation of the movie character Joe Buck," Herlihy said. "He believed that if Joe Buck planned to hustle older, rich women, these ladies wouldn't want to be seen out in public with a young Buck but with an older, well-preserved Buck. `No fifty-five-year-old woman wants to show up at a party in New York with a man young enough to be her son ... or her grandson,' Paul told me. He had a point. I realized that a man like Paul would be more convincing as a New York stud than some young kid who just got off the Greyhound bus from Texas."

"I was rooting for Paul before the night was over, but I hadn't a clue as to what John Schlesinger would think," Herlihy said. "At the time Paul was also up for Butch Cassidy. He couldn't seem to make up his mind which role he really wanted. A real cowboy like Butch Cassidy or a faux cowboy like Joe Buck. In some ways, I think he wanted to do both pictures. He wondered if Midnight Cowboy could be delayed until he finished shooting Butch Cassidy. I didn't know about that."

"Throughout the evening, Paul and I had been sizing each other up," Herlihy said. "I'd heard that he was bisexual, and I made it clear I wanted some action. I didn't have to come out and proposition him. We were too subtle for that, even though both of us were drunk. When I invited him to spend the night, he readily agreed. And when we both decided we'd be more comfortable if we pulled off our clothes, the night was ours."

"We liked it so much that we went at it again the next morning," Herlihy claimed. "I thought we were so hot together, both drunk or sober, that he'd surely call again. He never did. Paul seemed to have lost interest in both Joe Buck and me by the following day. However, there's a footnote to the story. He gave the novel to his friend, Tony Perkins. That weekend the Psycho man himself called me. He'd read the novel, and now he wanted to play Joe Buck."

"As far as my love life was concerned, I thought I'd died and gone to gay heaven. First, Sal Mineo. Then Paul Newman. Then Tony Perkins. Too bad I never got to audition Warren Beatty. My friends, Tennessee Williams and Bill Inge, thought Beatty-and Newman, too belonged in the pantheon of Greek Gods."

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When Herlihy came together with Tony Perkins, he encountered an actor who desperately wanted to play Joe Buck. He feared that he'd be destined to play Psycho remakes unless he dramatically changed his image with the movie-going public. "Joe Buck is the kind of cowboy character who can do that for me," Tony said.

Herlihy had avidly followed Tony's career ever since he saw him on Broadway in Tea and Sympathy, where he played a student accused of being gay. But after Alfred Hitchcock cast him as the rail-thin, quivering wacko in Psycho (1960), he was forever identified as Norman Bates.

"I found my soulmate in Tony," Herlihy claimed. "Both of us were a little mad, but we brought out the best in each other. The first night I met him in Key West, I took him to Tony's Bar. We were both high on pot. I found out Tony wanted to be a singer. He stood up in front of a roaring crowd and sang `Midnight Swim.' The guys loved him, and so did I later in that evening."

"Tony talked about Paul Newman all the time," Herlihy claimed. "Year after year throughout our long drawn-out, on-again, off-again affair. He seemed obsessed with Newman, and measured his success on the screen-or lack of it-with that of Newman's. Newman had obtained the stardom that Tony wanted, and he resented it, even though he continued to maintain a long friendship with both Newman and his wife."

Tony relayed to Herlihy all of the details of his early affair with Paul in the '50s. "He's just as gay as I am, but he won't come out of the closet. He uses that so-called great marriage of his to conceal his true desires." In spite of that criticism of Paul, Tony also lived deep in the closet throughout most of his life as well.

John Schlesinger would not even consider the concept of Tony Perkins playing Joe Buck for more than a few seconds. "It's about the worst casting idea I've ever heard," Schlesinger told Herlihy. "Norman Bates as Joe Buck! You guys have been smoking too much pot."

Despite his disappointment over losing the role, Tony and Herlihy remained friends, getting together in secret and going to out-of-the-way gay bars in New York.

Tony continued to sleep around and kept Herlihy abreast of his many affairs. His relationship with Tab Hunter had long ago ended, and he pursued famous bed partners only rarely, having a torrid affair with Rudolph Nureyev, the ballet dancer. For the most part, he preferred hustlers, beautiful young Thai men, and lots of tall, thin Broadway male dancers.

"Tony was kinky," Herlihy admitted. "He'd pay guys to climb through his bedroom window, tie him up with a rope, and rape him."

Author Truman Capote, who knew Herlihy only casually, chastised him for hanging out with Tony.

"Personally I don't like blood even though I wrote In Cold Blood," Capote told Herlihy. "Tony's a sadist. He likes to see blood. I mean, he is Norman Bates."

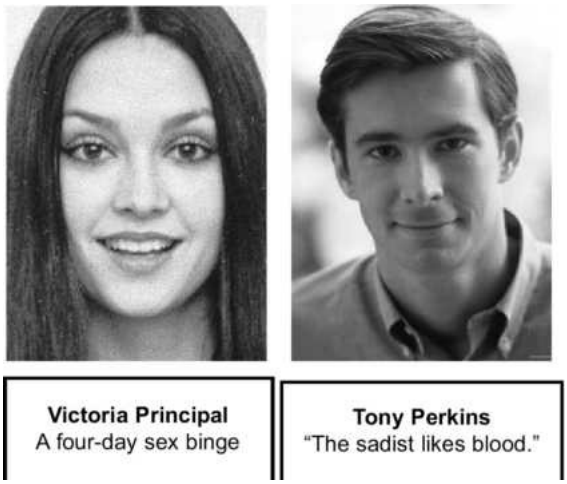
Herlihy himself had not seen such aberrant behavior in Tony, but he'd heard stories.

Later in life, Tony came to Herlihy and asked the writer if he'd help him pen an autobiography. "Random House will give me a hundred thousand bucks for every dick I say I sucked." He never went through with the plan and finally turned down all offers for a personal memoir. His former lover, Tab Hunter, however, did agree to write the story of their love affair, but only after Tony had died.

Tony told Herlihy an amazing story: When Paul got him a role in the 1972 The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean, Paul had grown tired of listening to Tony rant about how much he wanted to go straight. Responding to Tony's expressed intentions to "become heterosexual," Paul urged him to have an affair with Victoria Principal, who was also starring in the movie. "Don't knock it until you've tried it."

Paul pointed out to Tony that he'd had very satisfactory relationships with both men and women. "Each one is a different thrill in its own way. Instead of getting off on soft breasts, you learn to dig a hard chest, or vice versa. Instead of a hole to plug, you get plugged. The thrills are there in either case."

Tony took Paul's advice and seduced Victoria Principal, who would go on to become a household word when she starred in the long-running CBS nighttime drama, Dallas, from 1978 to 1987.



As Tony later admitted to People magazine, his meeting with Principal produced a "spontaneous combustion" and launched a four-day sex binge. "I was a virgin before I met her," admitted the fortyyear-old actor.

"In claiming virginity, he seemed to have forgotten all the dozens of men he'd slept with," said Herlihy, "including me. I can personally testify that Tony was no virgin when he met Principal."

Tony's biographer, Charles Winecoff, claimed that after Tony's cherrypopping sex binge with Principal, the actor "became a real man."

In his attempt to go straight, he married Berinthia ("Berry") Berenson, an American photographer, actress, and model, on August 9, 1973. She was the granddaughter of fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli. The union produced two sons, actor/musician Oz Perkins (1974) and folk/rock singer/songwriter Elvis Perkins (1976).

Even throughout the course of his marriage, Tony would continue his intimacies with male prostitutes on the side, according to Herlihy. It was from one such prostitute that he acquired AIDS.

In 1990, he sued the National Enquirer for writing that he'd tested positive for the AIDS virus. But, to his

horror, he found out that the tabloid was right. A lab technician had sold the results of Tony's blood test to the paper. Tony did have AIDS, from which he would die two years later.

His widow, Berry Berenson, was among the passengers aboard one of the airliners that was deliberately flown into the north tower of the World Trade Center by terrorists on September 11, 2001.

Paul never wanted to speak of Tony or the disaster that occurred to his widow. He referred to both deaths as tragedies and preferred to conceal his memories of his long friendship with the troubled actor whose fear of exposure helped seal his own doom.

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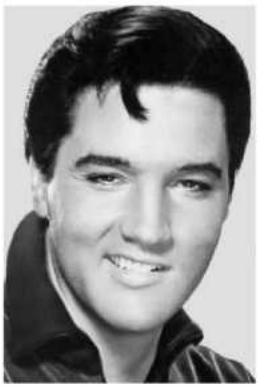
There was a footnote to the casting of Midnight Cowboy, the role that Paul briefly coveted, as did Tony Perkins.



Elvis Presley
Wanting to play
"a fag cowboy"

Jon Voight & Dustin Hoffman
X-rated Best Picture of the Year

Schlesinger told Herlihy that all his casting plans had been tossed out the window when Elvis Presley called. "This guy wants to play Joe Buck."

Herlihy thought Elvis in this truly serious role might be a sensation. "I can just see Elvis walking down Times Square dressed as a cowboy hustling his dick. The public would go wild."

But within two weeks Schlesinger called Herlihy again. Once again Col. Tom Parker had intervened. "There's no way I'm gonna let Elvis play a fag cowboy," Col. Parker told Schlesinger. "Sometimes I think my boy doesn't have enough sense to come in out of the rain. No wonder, he's doped up all the time." Then Col. Parker slammed down the phone.

Finally, Schlesinger "turned down all applicants" [his words] and cast Jon Voight into the role of Joe Buck. Herlihy was hardly delighted but had no vote or veto power in the actual casting.

In the film, Ratso and Joe Buck argue about cowboys, Ratso claiming that, "Cowboys are fags." Joe counters, "John Wayne is a cowboy. Are you calling John Wayne a fag?"

In a touch of irony, both Voight and Hoffman would eventually be nominated for a Best Actor Oscar for their roles in Midnight Cowboy, each losing out to none other than John Wayne himself for his performance in True Grit (1969). Midnight Cowboy as a film, however, would become the first X-rated movie ever to win a best Picture of the Year Oscar. Schlesinger carried away the Best Director Oscar.

As for Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, the film was nominated for both Best Picture and Best Director,

but would lose both. For their roles as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Paul and Redford would be ignored by the Academy but not by the movie-going public Paul had predicted the film might take in as much as $50 million. Soon after its release, it doubled that figure and continues to make money to this day.

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Even after Midnight Cowboy was cast, Richard Zanuck still hadn't decided on the actors he wanted for Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. He told director George Roy Hill that Steve McQueen should be offered the role of Sundance. "Newman and McQueen are two of the world's biggest stars. With those guys on the marquee, millions around the world will flock to see them. Of course, there will be a problem with top billing. They're both number one."

It was then that Hill proposed his own idea of who should star as Sundance. "I personally prefer Robert Redford," he told Zanuck. "I've known him since '62. 1 know what he can do. He'd make the best Sundance of any other actor in Hollywood."

Hill then pointed out to Zanuck that "Redford will cost Fox only half as much as McQueen."

Zanuck was not impressed with Redford's string of failures at the box office. "My mind is set. It's Steve McQueen and Paul Newman, or else the picture might not be made." He sounded threatening.

Zanuck told executives at Fox that McQueen is a "born screen cowboy," citing his role in The Magnificent Seven, which he'd made in 1960. He contacted McQueen and sent over the script.

Three days later, McQueen called. "I'm your Sundance. Draw up the contract. I don't work cheap. Remember that."

For years Paul and McQueen had discussed appearing in a film together, and the roles of Butch and Sundance now seemed to provide that chance. In talks night after night, they became so fired up over the movie's possibilities that Paul proposed that they acquire the rights to the script themselves, putting up $200,000 from each of their own pockets. McQueen rejected that idea.

The question of billing kept coming up, McQueen demanding top billing but Paul refusing to give up his star status. Fox intervened when they heard of this argument and proposed a staggered but equal billing.

After endless debates with himself, and after reaching an agreement with Paul to appear opposite him, McQueen, suddenly and impulsively, turned down the movie offer. "There's no way in hell that I'm gonna play Newman's bitch," McQueen told the stunned executives at Fox. He had finally figured out that Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid was the story of a love affair between two homosexual outlaws.

When Paul and McQueen finally did work together, in the disaster movie, The Towering Inferno, released in 1974, that concept of shared but equal billing was used in the posters. That 20th Century Fox film would also include Paul's son, Scott, in a small role, along with William Holden, Faye Dunaway, Fred Astaire, Susan Blakely, Richard Chamberlain, Jennifer Jones, Robert Vaughn, Robert Wagner, and future jailbird O.J. Simpson.

With McQueen out of the running as a candidate for the Sundance Kid, Hill again pressed Zanuck with the idea of casting Redford. The producer was dubious, but agreed to go along with the idea. Hill then called Paul, telling him that Redford would be ideal cast opposite him. Without missing a beat, Paul said, "The next time you have a role as a Wall Street lawyer, cast Redford. There's no way in hell I'm going to appear in this fucker with Redford. It's not his thing."

To consider Redford for Sundance is a waste of time," Paul told Hill. "He's a good-looking mother fucker, though. If I were a gay boy, which I'm definitely not, I'd fuck him. And he's got blue eyes, just like mine."

Up to then, Paul had seen only two films in which Redford had starred. Barefoot in the Park (1967) had been a

hit, but Paul credited the success of the movie to its playwright, Neil Simon, and to its female star, Jane Fonda.

He also sat through This Property Is Condemned (1966), starring Redford and Natalie Wood, who developed a crush on the handsome star. It was loosely based on a one-act play by Tennessee Williams. After watching Redford emote, Paul said, "I've appeared in two of the best plays Tennessee ever wrote. Redford has appeared in the worst."

It was Joanne who finally convinced Paul to cast his vote for Redford. In a complete about-face, Paul phoned Zanuck. "I'm convinced. We should go for Redford. Goldman practically created the part for him."

"You have yourself a co-star," Zanuck said.

"Who's going to play the girl?" Paul asked.

"We're thinking Katharine Ross," Zanuck said. "She was great in The Graduate. Hill has the hots for her."

"Actually I promised Susan Strasberg I'd put in a plug for her," Paul said. "Consider that promise of mine fulfilled. Just between us guys, I don't know if it matters who plays the girl. The part is incidental. I don't know if movie audiences will get it or not, but this is the story of a love affair between two guys. Just ask Brando."

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When Hill finally introduced Paul to Redford, the director said, "It was love at first sight on Paul's part. Redford seemed to hold back and reserve judgment. Perhaps he suspected there might be a casting couch involved. I had no idea if he'd heard stories about Newman. Surely he must have known that Newman slept with some of his leading ladies ... and leading men. Newman seemed mesmerized by Redford and his good looks in spite of those bumps on his face. Those two guys came together joking and bantering. Newman's chemistry was bubbling right away. It took Redford a while to work up combustion. The way I figured it, if Sundance and Butch were in love with each other, then Newman and Redford were the dudes to bring `Out' two outlaws on the screen."

Rumors swirled around Hollywood, romantically linking Paul with the handsome, blond-haired Redford, the screen's new matinee idol in the making. With Joanne safely tucked away in London, Paul spent as much time with Redford as he could.

Hill spread the rumor that Paul's "blue eyes danced" when Redford came into view. There was one problem with these rumors and speculations. No one can be absolutely sure, but Redford and Paul never became an item. Redford was straight, Paul was not.

"I think Paul was too much of a gentleman to put the make on Redford," Hill claimed. "If Redford had just winked at him, Paul would have jumped into bed with the guy. But I don't think that ever happened. Knowing Redford as I came to know him, I can bet my balls that it didn't happen. Maybe in Paul's mind, but that was the extent of it."

Early in production, a fundamental disagreement arose. Redford didn't like to rehearse but Paul did. "I ended up rehearsing," Redford said. "After all, Paul was calling the shots on this one."

After their initial explosion of chemistry, Paul began to see more characteristics in Redford he didn't like. No matter what or when the appointment was, Redford showed up late. Since Paul learned his screen pal was left-handed, he suggested to Hill that he re-title the script, Waiting for Lefty.

Hill disliked tardiness more than any other director. Fortunately, he never worked with Marilyn Monroe. Paul recalled that once, to pay Redford back for being late, "Hill took him up in his airplane. Scared the bejesus out of Redford."

What made production difficult during the short twelve-week shoot was Paul's fear of horses. "He was always afraid that one of those horses would kick him in his balls and ruin his married life ... or whatever," Hill said.

Paul and Redford made the screen versions of Butch and Sundance lovable figures, with very little in common with their historical antecedents. The real Butch Cassidy had been a ruthless, desperate, and destructive outlaw, Sundance a cold-blooded, trigger-happy killer. Paul and Redford imbued their screen characters with a rakish charm and a reckless bravado, thereby appealing to rebellious young audiences of the late '60s.

During the filming, Redford and Paul managed to bond together partly because of their shared enthusiasm for fast cars and racing. And their camaraderie managed to survive in spite of Paul's frat boy humor. "He tells the worst jokes," Redford said. "And that wouldn't be so bad if he didn't keep repeating them over and over."

During the shoot, Redford more or less stayed on the sidelines, as Hill and Paul battled over scenes. Even Goldman was called in to settle an argument about the script.

Their most heated argument came over a segment in the movie that came to be known as "the Bledsoe scene." The argument became so heated that production was shut down for the day.

The scene involved a meeting between Butch and Sundance with Sheriff Bledsoe, played by Jeff Grey, an old friend who warns both outlaws that "you're gonna die bloody and all you can do is choose where."

Paul wanted it to be the last scene in the movie before their escape to New York. Hill violently objected, feeling the scene and the information it contained had to appear sooner.

By the following morning, Hill and Paul had made up and shooting continued.

However, Paul was not above exacting a minor revenge. He hired a studio grip to saw Hill's desk into two pieces.

Their disagreement over the Bledsoe scene percolated until the final day of the shoot. After viewing the final cut, Paul finally agreed that Hill had been right.

One of the most memorable events during the shoot was when Paul got to meet Lulu Betanson, the sister of the historical Butch Cassidy. She stayed on to watch a scene in which Butch kicks actor Ted Cassidy, playing "Harvey Logan," in the balls.

"My brother really did have blue eyes and a winning grin just like you do," Lulu told Paul.

Hill was a temperamental director, and he became known for kicking writers, producers, and even actors, including Katharine Ross, off the set.

But even though he fought frequently with Paul, the film's megastar was too big to be ordered off. At the time, Paul even had the power to persuade Zanuck to replace Hill in favor of a less feisty director. Paul said, "I fought with Hill, but I respected him too much to get him fired. So, we just duked it out."

In one of the film's most memorable scenes, Ross, without shoes, is precariously perched on the handlebars of that newfangled contraption, the bicycle.

She later told the press that she enjoyed shooting the silent, bicycle-riding sequence with the film crew's second unit rather than with her director. "Any day away from George Roy Hill is a good one," she said.

The trick bicycle riding sequence was also performed by Paul. Even a stuntman had turned that scene down, for which he was subsequently fired.

Following the release of Butch and Sundance, Ross was swept up in a whirlwind of fame that blew through her life in the late `60s when she became the symbol of beauty for the Woodstock generation.

In a touch of irony, Joanne's close friend, Cloris Leachman, was cast as a friendly prostitute in a short scene featuring Paul as Butch.

Bob Dylan refused to sing "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," the job going to B.J. Thomas who made the song a hit.

Deep into the picture, Paul came to realize that "we're making a masterpiece that will live down through the ages. They'll be showing this fucker a hundred years from now as the last great western ever made in Hollywood."

He cornered Redford, when he wasn't playing practical jokes on him, and told him, "Pal, you and I are going to become the Tracy and Gable of the '70s. I've seen the rushes. Our male camaraderie lights up the screen. It's obvious to anyone but a homophobic fool that we're in love with each other. On the screen, I mean."

In spite of such assurance, Paul was nervous about the final scenes in the film. He began to drink heavily, pouring Scotch on ice into a coffeepot to disguise his choice of beverage. At lunch he supervised the making of a gigantic salad, which he distributed to the other tables, where the crew ate.

The faces of Paul and Redford were so stunning that Hill often turned the cameras on each of them for close-ups. When Zanuck saw these rushes, he said to Hill, "What in hell! Do you think Paul Newman is Greta Garbo or something? So he's got blue eyes. So what?"

Throughout the movie, Paul is subtly muted and nimbly self-effacing, consistently underplaying, giving scene after scene to Redford.

Before he signed for The Sting, their next picture together, Paul was asked to reflect on Butch and Sundance. "It was a delight both to make and watch. Too bad we had to be killed off in the end. Butch and Sundance could have gone on in the movies forever."

Toward the end of the film, the outlaws, with Etta Place (Katharine Ross), head for Bolivia, thinking it would provide a source of gold for them. They soon learn that isn't the case.

Etta, as played by Ross, knows what's in store for her men, and she makes her exit so "I won't watch you die."

Caught in a cul-de-sac trap, Butch and Sundance face their end, battling Bolivian soldiers. In a freeze frame, the movie comes to its brilliant conclusion. Audiences don't have to watch the slaughter of what evolved into two of the screen's most notorious but most endearing "heroes."

The most famous scene in the film, the cliff top jump, was filmed not in Bolivia but at the Animus River Gorge near Durango, Colorado.

Paul and Redford landed safely on a ledge cushioned with a mattress seven feet below.

The wide-angled, distant view of the cliff jump was shot at the studio's Century Ranch near Malibu. Stunt doubles jumped off a construction crane, which was obscured by a matte painting of the cliffs. The cliff jump was later cited as one of the ten best stunts ever filmed.

"Newman and I got through the movie without killing each other," Hill later said. "But he's a control freak. Even Redford thought he was an arrogant snob at first. I have a word for Newman. We use it a lot on Hollywood sets. The word is prick!"

After working with Redford as Sundance, Hill later said, "Redford is a dangerous man to let loose on the streets. He has holes in his head. He should be arrested."

In spite of the difficulties, Paul would work with Hill again on The Sting, the 1973 hit that would bring him back to the screen with Redford. Once again, Hill hired an impressive roster of character actors, including Robert Shaw, Charles Durning, Ray Walston, Eileen Brennan, and Sally Kirkland.

The story is that of two small-time Chicago con men who try to put "the sting" on a high roller from New York. The picture won seven Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director (Hill himself), and Best Screenplay

(David S. Ward).

Long after the release of The Sting, George Roy Hill would again star Paul in Slap Shot (1977), about a failing ice hockey team who finds success through the use of constant fighting and violence during games.

The film was attacked by critics for its foul language. "There is nothing in the history of movies to compare with this movie for consistent, low-level obscenity of expression," wrote Richard Schickel in Time. Paul's only comment? "Ever since Slap Shot, I've been swearing more. I knew I had a problem one day when I turned to my daughter and said, `Would you please pass the fucking salt?"'

When Fox executives screened the first cut of Butch and Sundance, no one wanted to point out the obvious. Robert Redford was far better in the film as the Sundance Kid than Paul Newman was as Butch Cassidy.

Opening slowly at the box office in the autumn of 1969, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid soon developed into a monster hit, as word of mouth extolled its virtues. After all his failures at comedy, Paul finally got it right. Never before and never again would his comedic persona light up the screen in such a way. Redford was the perfect foil for him.

Of course, Burt Bacharach's "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" and Paul's bicycle-riding sequence added greatly to making the film an entertainment wonder.

Over the ensuing decades many directors would try to steal the thunder of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid in various films and plot devices, but none of these would ever equal the original.

Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid
The West's most notorious
but endearing "heroes"

Released in 1979, a prequel to the Newman/Redford film, Butch and Sundance: The Early Days, starred William Katt and Tom Berenger.

The public liked Paul as Butch and Redford as Sundance more than the critics. Pauline Kael headlined her review "The Bottom of the Pit," borrowing one of Etta Place's lines from the movie.

One of the harshest appraisals of the film appeared in Time magazine, which charged that the two male stars "are afflicted with cinematic schizophrenia. One moment they are sinewy, battered remnants of a discarded tradition. The next they are low comedians whose chafing relationship-and dialogue-could have been lifted from a Batman and Robin episode. The score makes the film as absurd and anachronistic as the celebrated Smothers Brothers cowboy who played the kerosenepowered guitar."

TV Guide claimed that Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid "reinvented the Western for a new generation."

Throughout America, bedroom walls were draped with the famous poster of Butch and Sundance. The poster was in black and white except for two pairs of bright blue eyes. Redford joked that the film should have been called "Two Pairs of Blue Eyes."

Even as Paul was shooting his disastrous next picture, WUSA, Butch and Sundance would continue to rack up the largest gross of any Fox non-road show movie to date, making Paul America's number one box office attraction. The film would become the highest grossing Western in the history of motion pictures.

In the Oscar sweepstakes that year, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid was nominated for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay. In those categories, only screenwriter William Goldman took home the Oscar.

Launched by Redford at his Utah ski resort, Sundance, the Sundance Film Festival was named, of course, for his role in the film. Paul also named his Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for seriously ill children from the gang in the movie.

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Sitting in the theater watching Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid was an eight-year-old Tom Cruise. In 2009 Cruise announced to the press that he planned to remake the film for United Artists.

"Paul gave me his blessing," Cruise claimed. "He would have wanted me to do it." That statement, of course, cannot be confirmed. Few superstars want lesser actors remaking their classics.

Even though Paul had been Cruise's close friend, he announced that he didn't want to play Butch Cassidy, but preferred the role of Sundance. For Butch, Cruise said that he hoped to cast John Travolta. Wags immediately claimed that the post-millennium version of Butch and Sundance, if it's ever remade, would be the Scientology version.

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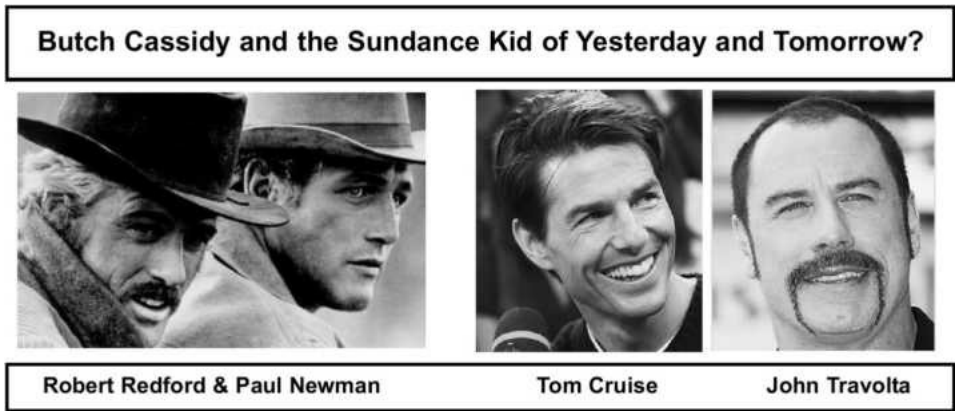

During the shooting of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, there was tension in the Newman/Woodward marriage over his heavy drinking. "She's nitroglycerine and I'm diesel fuel," Paul explained to George Roy Hill.

There was more trouble awaiting Joanne in her marriage, widely interpreted at the time the most enduring in Hollywood. That trouble arrived on the set of Butch and Sundance in a very shapely form. A cheesecake model and sometimes reporter, Nancy Bacon had posed for provocative pictures using the name "Buni." The curvaceous cutie had been hired to write a fluff piece on the production. Her first interview was with Paul Newman himself. That "interview," on and off, lasted for eighteen months. With Robert Redford reportedly serving as Paul's "beard," he launched a torrid affair with Buni.

Before she became a reporter, Buni had tried to become a movie star, cast first as Satan's Helper in the Private Lives of Adam and Eve and later, that same year, as a night club hostess in Sex Kittens Go to College.

Sometimes when not in front of the camera, she worked behind the scenes training big cats like Zamba or Clarence the Cross-eyed Lion. At one time she worked as a celebrity gossip writer for Confidential, the expose magazine. She also became a romance novelist, creating potboilers like The Love Game and Bayou Lady.

In Mexico and even in Colorado, Buni became Paul's constant companion. In Cuernavaca, she shared Paul's hotel suite. Their illicit liaison continued even when Paul returned to Los Angeles, except these assignations took place in her apartment.

Those who want to actually read the indiscreet tales need only to turn to her gossip-filled biography, Stars in My Eyes ... Stars in My Bed, originally published in 1980. Of course, it's hard to find a copy today since the autobiography is out of print.

Paul wasn't the only man upon whom Buni was bestowing her favors. It was in her tell-all memoir that she revealed her affairs with several famous actors, including Vince Edwards, Errol Flynn, Rod Taylor, Hugh O'Brien, and comedian Tommy Smothers. From 1963 to 1967 she was married to rock musician Don Wilson of "The Ventures." With her husband, she had a daughter, Staci Wilson.

According to Buni, after Paul reached a climax, he called it "heart attack time." Apparently, he did not always reach that desired climax. He wasn't getting any younger, and all that beer and Scotch drinking was sometimes or even often interfering with his lovemaking.

News of the affair spread rapidly across the Hollywood grapevine, no doubt reaching Joanne through some well-meaning "friend." Paul's heavy drinking during the time he played Butch Cassidy was problem enough for his marriage, but Buni may have proved too much for Joanne to handle.

By that time, Paul had already become famous for his pro-Joanne line, "Why go out for hamburger when I have steak at home?" Hollywood wags rewrote his line to say, "I've got steak at home, but I have to go out for my sizzling bacon."

It was Joyce Haber, the gossip columnist, who first broke the news to a worldwide public that the Newmans might be on the verge of breaking up. Writing for Syndicated Newspapers, she reported that "the Paul Newmans are living apart, according to friends, and will soon get a divorce," although she admitted that these were just "fascinating rumors, so far unchecked."

To counter her revelation, the Newmans took out a $3,000 half-page ad in The Los Angeles Times. It read:

"RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF THE PRESS, FEARING TO EMBARRASS AN AWESOME JOURNALIST, TERRIFIED TO DISAPPOINT MISS HABER AND HER READERS, WE WILL TRY TO ACCOMMODATE HER "FASCINATING RUMORS" BY BUSTING UP OUR MARRIAGE EVEN THOUGH WE STILL LIKE EACH OTHER."

It was signed: "Joanne and Paul Newman."

Although Buni may have dreamed the impossible dream, she realized that she could have only a Back Street affair with Paul. Nonetheless, she took pride when Paul one night deserted Joanne at a party and drove over to her

apartment. On another afternoon he missed his airplane headed for New York "because he was in my bed." Joanne flew East without him.

On another night she recalled being at The Factory, a dance club in which Paul had part ownership, and seeing him walk in with Joanne and all five of his daughters.

Eventually, Buni decided that she didn't want to carry on with an affair going nowhere. She lied to him, telling him that she'd met a man and had fallen in love with him. He hardly melted in front of her, but wished her all the best of luck. According to her memoirs, he did have one final request. "Could we get together a couple of times more before you do it?"

Buni took full responsibility for ending the affair, blaming it on his alcoholism. "I finally said to myself, I can do better than this. I told him, `You're always drunk, and you can't even make love.'"

Buni was also rumored to be "more than friends" with the likes of President John F. Kennedy, his brother, Robert F. Kennedy, and such actors as Sean Connery and John Wayne.

She was once a roommate of Marilyn Monroe and also had close friendships with Elizabeth Taylor, Sharon Tate, Jayne Mansfield, and Judy Garland.

Although the general public still regards Paul as the most faithful husband in Hollywood history, insiders knew better. As Buni herself confesses, "We were hot and heavy. He was at my house almost every night. It was the worstkept secret in Hollywood. People used to joke about it."

Upon Paul's death, and upon publication of a posthumous biography of him, headlines revealed what some called "Newman's Secret Mistress." Apparently, many of these newspaper editors didn't know the Newman/Bacon affair was about as much of a secret as the Monica Lewinsky/Bill Clinton blow-job in the Oval Office.

Buni, living today as a collage artist-and a very good one-in Washington State, told The Enquirer that she has no regrets about the story breaking once again after Paul's death. "As long as it's truthful, why not?" she asked. "That was the wild '60s."

Nanci ("Buni") Bacon
Tired of steak, Newman turns to bacon.

After the breakup of his affair with Buni, Paul with suitcase arrived back at his house in Connecticut. "I'm

home," he called out to Joanne emerging from the kitchen. "But, I must warn you, the fires of autumn burn on a very low flame."

He stole the line from a Gore Vidal play.

To restore their marriage, they journeyed once again to London where they'd spent their honeymoon, much of it with Gore Vidal.

"For two people with almost nothing in common, we have an uncommonly good marriage," Paul told the tabloid press in London.

As for Joanne, she seemed to be getting tired of all that talk about what a sex symbol and box office sensation Paul was. "Look, he's forty-four, got six children, and snores in bed. How can he be a sex symbol?"

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"Scott Newman spent the first five years of his life screaming in rage for having been born," Paul often said to friends. "He was unhappy throughout his short life. That libelous book on Joan Crawford by her adopted daughter, Mommie Dearest, took place in a child's playground compared to the struggles between Scott and me. I've always planned to use the story of our lives to inspire a film script one day, but I guess I never will-too personal." These words were spoken to John Foreman, Paul's producer, in the aftermath of Scott's tragic death.

Nervous and high-strung from birth, Scott grew into a hyperactive teenager who never forgave his father for

deserting his family.

"Father, dearest" **Paul Newman** with son **Scott**
"How can I compete against Mr. Superstar."

Lon Holden went to school with Scott and was his friend for a number of years. "Most kids would have been happy to have a big movie star for a dad, but not Scott," Holden said. "He was always bemoaning his fate. He took it real bad when his father left home to marry another woman. His two sisters seemed to adjust and accept, but not Scott. He developed a grudge against his dad that he never got over. I knew him for years on and off. Every time I saw him, he'd talk to me and ask about my life, but couldn't wait to launch into an attack on his dad."

"He was the most sensitive of the Newman children, including Joanne's brood," said Tony Perkins, who often visited the Newmans. He told novelist James Leo Herlihy that "Scott suffered from uncontrollable homosexual urges. I, of all people, know about that. One time out by the pool I had on this very revealing bikini. Scott was drunk and came on to me. There was no way in hell I was going to make it with Paul's son, and I flatly turned him down, even though I found him attractive. He stormed out of the house and never forgave me. He never wanted to be around me again. I guess he was too embarrassed."

If Scott resented his father and his success, he positively loathed Joanne, blaming her for destroying his parents' happy home. At times his rage against her became so extreme that he refused to speak to her for an entire year, although living temporarily under the same roof with his stepmother in their homes in Connecticut and California.

Once in Westport, an argument between Scott and Paul over money became so heated that Paul struck his son, a rare occurrence for him, since he did not believe in physical violence as a means of settling arguments. In fairness to Paul, he had been badgered all weekend and seemed to have boiled over in his fury and frustration with his son. Both father and son had been drinking heavily that weekend.

"I'm not going to raise another Hollywood brat!" Paul had shouted at Scott. "Instead of begging money off me, why don't you go out and earn some of your own?"

"You stingy, faggot asshole!" Scott had shouted at him.

That's when Paul bashed him in the face, bloodying his nose. Scott fled from the house and stayed away for four months, telling his friends what had happened between Paul and himself.

"How can I compete against Paul Newman?" Scott asked his girlfriend, Carol Studden. "He's handsome, he's rich, he's famous, he's adored. He has a certain talent although I'm a better actor. It's like he takes all the glory in the family and leaves nothing for the rest of us. What a greedy bastard."

Paul refused to give Scott a hefty allowance. "Peanuts is what I get from him," Scott said. "Not enough to buy a

couple of beers on a Saturday night. Paul did send him to private schools, but Scott kept getting expelled. He always made poor grades and never applied himself-that is, if he showed up in the classroom at all. Often he didn't.

There was an attempt to go to college, but Scott dropped out. "What in the fuck do I care what Napoleon did? That was so long ago."

By the age of nineteen, Scott had grown into a six-footer, weighing 180 pounds. He told both his boyfriends and his girlfriends, "I'm bigger than my dad. Not just taller, but bigger in every other department as well." He never explained how he'd acquired such a measurement.

"From his late teen years and throughout his twenties, Scott continued to drown his sorrows in alcohol and drugs," said Wayne Edmonston, an occasional friend and drinking buddy. "I hung out with him sometimes, but I got tired of hearing him blame Paul Newman for everything that had gone bad in his own life. Often he didn't have money for booze or drugs, and begged money from his friends. Here I was making eighty-five dollars a week and lending ten bucks to the son of a multi-millionaire. You figure."

Scott always resented going back home to Jackie Witte in her modest house in San Fernando Valley outside Los Angeles. "Joanne Woodward gets to live like a movie star," he told his mother. "You're the mother of three of his children. You get to live like the wife of a grocery store clerk."

"It's just not fair," Scott protested to Jackie. "His three daughters with the Woodward bitch live far better than we do. He even bought one of them a fur coat. He seems to forget that we're his children too. We have to live like peasants, while his branch of the family enjoys all sorts of luxuries. We deserve more, God damn it."

He also told his mother, "When I was staying with the Newmans"-that's how he referred to Joanne and Paul-"a photographer wanted to come by and take family pictures. Super Star said no. he wants to hog all the glory for himself. How can I become famous if he won't let me get my picture in the paper?"

"Scott was deep into drugs and booze by the time he turned eighteen," said Billy Kramer, a former friend. "When drunk he got violent. He was always getting into fights, and he wasn't that good at it either. He always ended getting beaten up or injured. The guy loved danger. He took up skydiving. He liked fast cars like his father. Steve McQueen, perhaps to defy Paul Newman who wouldn't give him one, gave Scott one of his better bikes, but it was secondhand. He raced that motherfucker day and night until he got into an accident. It would be the first of many accidents."

At one point Paul tried to get Scott interested in the dangerous sport of racing cars around the track. Scott raced for about three weeks, but dropped out. A far more skilled driver, Paul won every race against his son. "I couldn't compete against him as an actor, and I decided I wasn't going to go up against him as a race car driver either. I told him I was going to stick to skydiving. That's something I did better than he did."

Scott, accessorized for
The Towering Inferno.
A career not catching fire.

Scott became such a skilled jumper that the United States Naval Academy employed him as a parachute instructor. But after Scott didn't show up four days in a row, and didn't even call in sick, he was fired.

A breaking point between Paul and Scott came when Paul rejected Scott as a candidate to play opposite him in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Paul went so far as to let Scott read the script with him, but he was not impressed with Scott's grip on the role of Sundance. "This could be a really big picture. You need more experience."

"How in the fuck can I get experience if no one, especially my father, will give me a break?"

"My father didn't help me become an actor at all," Paul shot back. "He was completely opposed to it. He even set up roadblocks. You should do it on your own. That way success will taste all the sweeter."

"I can't do it on my own," he said. "All doors are closed to me."

"I'll try to find something for you," Paul promised.

"Yeah, right!" In fury, Scott stormed out of the house. Before leaving he called back, "While you're trying to find something for me, why don't you go fuck yourself?"

After that confrontation, Scott was determined to make it on his own. In desperation, he once accepted a job digging ditches at a salary of three dollars an hour. "I was virtually working for food at the time," he later said.

In 1970 while Paul was in Oregon scouting locations for Sometimes a Great Notion, he and Scott had a reconciliation. Paul had gotten Scott a job working on the second unit crew of the film.

"The closest I ever came to knowing my father was when I visited him in Oregon," Scott told Joan Chandler, who'd been his on-and-off girlfriend for nearly two-and-a half years when he was a teenager. "I think John Derek had just left when he invited me up there. It came as a surprise. I don't know where Joanne was, or what was going on in his marriage, and didn't seem to want to talk about that. But for the first time in his life, he talked openly about his marriage to my mother," Scott said. "Since Sal Mineo had told me that my dad also went for men, I quizzed him about that, and he admitted it. He said many men go through stages like that, and it didn't mean anything. I think he lied to me about that, at least as far as he was concerned."

"It was on that trip that I began to see him just as a man and not as this mythical figure the press created," Scott said. "In many ways, he seemed just as fragile as I was. Somehow I felt better about myself knowing how flawed he really was. He said he couldn't really reveal to me who he was because he had never figured that out. `Sometimes I

take on the characteristics of the role I'm playing,' he told me. `I want to be the good and perfect husband, and father everybody thinks I am. But, to tell you the truth, I think there's a lot of evil in me. My whole life has been an attempt to keep it bottled up inside me. Maybe that's why I drink so much.'"

At this point Paul rose to his feet, going to the kitchen. He soon returned with two cold beers. "Now tell me about yourself, son."

"You know, I've never heard you call me son before," Scott said. "Dad."

"I've never heard you call me Dad before either," Paul said. "Now tell me about yourself. I'm asking again."

"You know I can't tell you all the things that are in my black heart," Scott said.

"I know that, and in some ways I don't really want to know. That's why we'll never be a son and his dad."

"Guess not," Scott said. "But the sun is high in the sky. We can at least go fishing."

"That we can, kid."

Paul later admitted that "I was a good father to Scott only in flashes. Most of the time I was afraid to approach him, not knowing the level of hostility on any given day."

He made that statement while filming The MacKintosh Man in 1973 to director John Huston. The film was an espionage thriller, but the public had seen it all before. In the film, Paul co-starred with James Mason, who would play a strange interlude in Paul's life in 1978.

When Paul was cast in the disaster movie, The Towering Inferno, he did manage to secure a small role for Scott as a nervous fireman. But Scott ended up working for the most part with Steve McQueen, not Paul. One critic, on viewing Scott's appearance, wrote, "The part is so small it is hard to assess potential, but Scott has obviously inherited his father's good looks."

Paul himself tried to recapture the box office clout of The Towering Inferno when he signed to do When Time Ran Out, released in 1980. But, by then, Scott had already spent two years in his grave.

In this other disaster film, the story of an active volcano threatening a small South Pacific island resort, Paul was cast opposite William Holden and Jacqueline Bisset. When Holden, by then a fading star, expressed his sympathy to Paul over the loss of his son, Paul turned from him and walked away after saying, "Let's not speak about it, okay?"

Paul was hopeful that "the box office on When Time Ran Out will be miraculous." It was not. After The Towering Inferno, lightning didn't strike twice. "The only disaster in this film was at the box office," wrote one critic.

At the time he made The Towering Inferno, Scott was living by himself in a rented apartment in Los Angeles and going to acting school. He told a reporter, "Paul Newman has everything. I have not one cent. Not even money to pay rent." He constantly borrowed.

Kathy Cronkite, the daughter of the legendary television newscaster Walter Cronkite, attended acting classes with Scott at the time. Both were children of famous parents, and as such they had "that special bond" between them.

"Scott didn't give a damn about acting classes," she later said. "Sometimes he didn't show up at all. If there was a rehearsal, he most likely would miss it. I thought he was only pursuing acting because it was his father's business. He didn't seem to take the profession very seriously."

In 1974, after filming had been completed on The Towering Inferno, Scott got into a drunken brawl at

Mammoth Lake, a ski resort town in California. He was arrested and handcuffed, then placed in the back seat of a squad car to be hauled off to jail.

En route there, he kicked the officer who was driving the car, landing his boot on the back of the cop's neck. The policeman lost control of the car and ran into a snowdrift. No one was injured, but Scott was charged with felonious assault with a deadly weapon-in this case his boot-and resisting arrest.

At police headquarters he was locked up, Scott was given one phone call. He didn't want to utter a plea for help to his father, but he had no one else to turn to.

Later, in reference to his reaction to Scott's arrest, Paul said, "You go into the kitchen and you get about three ice cubes and you chill a beer mug and you sit there and think for a while. Listen, there's not much you can do except offer what support you feel is required."

Paul was perhaps remembering his own arrest for drunk driving on Long Island back in the 1950s. It was front page news.

Joanne was terse in her response, "Scott should stand on his own two feet and stop being such an emotional drain on Paul."

Scott's arrest appeared on several front pages across the country. Paul complained about the press coverage. "The incident with him was blown all out of proportion. The accusation is always on the first page, the retraction on page nineteen."

Using his movie star clout, Paul persuaded the judge to reduce the charges to a misdemeanor with a thousand dollar fine and two years' probation.

In desperation after the arrest, Paul finally admitted the obvious. "I can't help him. He's beyond me. I reach out to him but find nothing there. There is no response. Only a zombie staring back at me."

He called for professional help, hiring Dr. Robert Scott of the Advanced Health Center in Newport Beach, California. The doctor had several sessions with Scott, later claiming that he "was terrorized by the idea of trying to be a professional actor like his father. The risk of failure scared the hell out of him. That's one of the reasons he turned to drugs and alcohol. There were more buried reasons, but I'm not at liberty to discuss them."

The alcohol treatment program that Scott underwent was not a success. But Paul was not willing to give up on his son. He turned to both medical doctors and psychiatrists to help save Scott.

In the office of one psychiatrist, who wants to remain nameless, Paul accepted the doctor's invitation to sit in on sessions with his son. "These were the most violent sessions I think I ever held with one of my patients," the doctor said. "Scott blamed his father for everything. He screamed and shouted and at one point threatened his father with violence. I could not help Scott because he was too far gone. A patient has to work with me and reach out to some extent. Scott wouldn't budge an inch from his fixed position. He put it plain and simple when he told Paul Newman, `You ruined my life, you fucking bastard you. Someday, somewhere, I'm gonna kill you.' Those were his exact words to his father."

Finally, in desperation, Paul paid two psychologists to stay on call twenty-four hours a day to help Scott if he became suicidal or called out to them in any way.

After The Towering Inferno, Scott had used Paul's connection with George Roy Hill and Robert Redford, to get himself cast in a new movie called The Great Waldo Pepper (1975). Scott would be a bit actor and an aviator stuntman because of his experience with skydiving. Earlier Paul had turned down the lead, giving it to Redford.

Later Scott asked, "Did I get the job on my own merits-or just because I'm Paul Newman's son?"

In 1975 Paul praised Scott for his performance on The Merv Griffin Show. Merv himself said, "The kid's very

likable. And handsome, too."

But in the months that followed, Paul had little praise for Scott. Their relationship continued to be "mercurial," an expression often used to tactfully describe the tension between them. "We were like rubber bands, one minute close, the next separated by an enormous and unaccountable distance," Paul claimed.

Scott again tried to make it on his own, taking acting lessons from coach Peggy Feury four times a week. Changing his name to "William Scott," he attempted to get gigs singing in small nightclubs in the Los Angeles area, but he had an untrained, weak voice.

Scott Newman and **Robert Redford**
in *The Great Waldo Pepper*
Flying too close to the sun

He made some vague plan to cut a record with the singer Don McLean, who was known for recording "American Pie."

The only starring role Scott ever got was in Fraternity Row, released in 1977, but set in the hazing heyday of the 1950s at an upper-class college. The film opened and closed quickly.

"Every time I dream something will break for me, it turns into a nightmare," Scott told his friends as he sank deeper into despair. "But Super Star just goes on and on, even when he appears in a disaster. He bounces back and recovers quickly with a hit picture. Why can't some big break come my way? Super Star didn't go to Hollywood until he was around thirty. There's still hope for me I guess. By the time I'm thirty, maybe I will have made it too. Maybe."

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Shortly before he died, Scott was drunk and drugged, racing his motorcycle down Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles, when he lost control and crashed into a parked car. He broke three ribs and suffered a cracked shoulder that left him in constant pain.

It was the worst motorcycle accident in Scott's tortured personal history. In the past, he'd walked away from accidents and fallen down flights of stairs with relative ease, gotten up, brushed himself off, and collected his paychecks for his work as a stuntman. He'd survived countless tumbles from stallions. He'd survived hundreds of jumps from airplanes during his skydiving heyday. Often, as a means of making the experience more thrilling, he'd open his parachute only at the last possible minute before certain death.

After his release from the hospital, he checked into the Ramada Inn in West Hollywood. He'd lost his apartment when he was evicted for failure to pay the rent. Night after night he lay awake in his bed at the Ramada, watching the blinking neon lights outside his lone window.

The pain from the accident remained constant. He accelerated his drinking, drugs, and pill popping.

Sometimes his depression would be so extreme that he'd call Dr. Mark Weinstein, the clinical psychologist who was on Paul's payroll. Dr. Weinstein would dispatch his young associate, Scott Steinberg, to go spend the night with Scott. Suicide was an obvious fear on the part of this medical team.

"Scott's demons were moving in on him nightly," claimed Carol Studden. "There was one drunken night he spent with his father that he couldn't shake. He told me all about it. He was in tears." Although he was never faithful to her, Scott had been dating Carol for nearly two and a half years. "When Scott came around, which wasn't every night, I was there for him. In some ways, we were more best friends than lovers. I didn't have any other boyfriends but he did. I knew about them. He sometimes told me the details, knowing I wouldn't judge him."

"The most shocking story he told involved Paul arriving drunk one night at that seedy Ramada Inn where Scott was staying," Carol said. "Scott said that Paul pounded on his door, and he let him in. According to Scott, they talked for around three hours. At one point, Paul taunted Scott, claiming, `You'll never be the man I am.' This infuriated the hell out of Scott, and he attacked Paul on the bed. Both men, according to Scott, were undressed at the time because Paul planned to spend the night."

"Scott was very vague on the actual details," Carol said. "But the whole thing ended as a wrestling match between two drunks. Without really knowing what was happening, it turned sexual. Scott became aroused and attempted to rape his father. He claimed Paul did not put up any resistance. But looking into his father's accusatory eyes made him lose his erection. He couldn't go through with it. It was too vile."

"In the days ahead Scott had to face up to a truth he didn't want to face," Carol claimed. "Instead of hating his father, he might have been in love with him. In his attempted rape, he was trying to break through the cold barrier that had existed between them since the dawn of time. It was awful for Scott. He broke down and cried. He was all mixed up."

"He told me what Paul's final words were to him, as he stood at the door to that motel room, adjusting his clothes," Carol said. "`You're not even man enough to finish what you started back in that bed,' Paul told Scott. Trying to rape your own father is nightmarish enough, but to turn impotent in the middle of it didn't help Scott's ego. Maybe permanently damaged it. I tried to be supportive, but there was nothing I could do. Although hopelessly drunk and drugged, he went for a night ride on his motorcycle."

Carol said that on the day of his death, she'd invited Scott over but he chose instead to go to a friend's house to watch a football game. Once there, Scott downed eight Cuba libres while complaining of a severe pain in his shoulder and under his ribs as a result of that motorcycle accident.

His friend offered him eight Valium tablets. Scott refilled his glass with rum and swallowed five of them. Before leaving his friend's house that afternoon, he took the other three.

Scott's friend (not named in any accounts) drove him to the office of Dr. Mark Weinstein, who was on 24-hour call for Scott.

"Scott was too drunk to drive himself," the friend later said.

Once at Dr. Weinstein's office, Scott spent an hour attacking Paul, blaming him for "ruining my life." He also issued a violent attack on his stepmother, Joanne, blaming her "for trying to send me off to another world."

Unaware of the Valium and liquor that Scott had consumed, Dr. Weinstein gave him a sample bottle of the painkiller Darvon to relieve the pain of the motorcycle accident.

Dr. Weinstein then directed his assistant, Scott Steinberg, to drive Scott home and stay with him for the night. Perhaps this was tantamount to a suicide watch, although not specifically labeled as that.

Steinberg drove the patient to the Ramada Inn, where Scott had rented two adjoining rooms. Steinberg sat and

talked to him as long as he could, but Scott was becoming incoherent. He went to his own room, and Steinberg heard him making a number of calls. It is rumored, but never confirmed, that one of these calls was to his father. Exactly what Scott said that night will never be known. It is assumed that it was a farewell call, although Paul never alerted the police. From that lack of action on Paul's part, it can also be assumed that he was not unduly alarmed that Scott might take his life that night.

Scott called two other friends with whom he'd taken to hanging out. Both John Rutfield and Barry Devon claimed he told them he was going away on a long trip and wouldn't be back for quite a while.

"He told us what great fun he'd had with us," John said. "Our times together had been happy times. He thanked us and just hung up-and that was that."

Apparently, John and Barry, both homosexual lovers, had been indulging in a three-way with Scott.

John later said, "Scott told us that he'd learned from Sal Mineo that Paul Newman as a young man had indulged in some three ways, once with Marlon Brando and an old-time actress. Scott said, `If it's good enough for dear old dad, it's good enough for me.'"

Scott's final call was to Carol, whose invitation he'd turned down only hours before. "His speech was slurred, and I couldn't make out every word he said," she claimed. "For the first time in his life, he wasn't attacking his father, but Sal Mineo. He told me he'd been trying to get in touch with Mineo all night and that the `arrogant prick'-his words-wasn't taking his calls."

"But your pal died two years ago," Carol told him. "He was murdered. Don't you remember that?"

"And just who are you, bitch?" he shouted at her through the phone line. "You only dated me because I'm Paul Newman's son. Admit it, cow. You wanted to date me hoping you'd get a chance to fuck him."

"That drunken insult was too much for me to take," Carol claimed. "I slammed down the phone on him."

After checking on him periodically, Steinberg claimed that Scott entered into a deep sleep, snoring loudly. When the snoring stopped, Steinberg checked his pulse. Scott was still alive.

But perceiving that something was gravely wrong, Steinberg called paramedics, and Scott was rushed to the hospital immediately. The hospital was just across the street.

Scott was pronounced dead on arrival at 1:07am on Monday, November 20, 1978.

An autopsy revealed that Scott had ingested excessive amounts of Valium, Darvon, Quaaludes, and cocaine. Apparently, while with Steinberg in the motel room, he'd gone into the bathroom and ingested the cocaine and Quaaludes.

As if to protect himself from accusations of negligence, Steinberg reportedly said, "What was I supposed to do? Go into the bathroom with him and help him take a crap?"

Because of these farewell calls, the case of suicide as opposed to an accidental overdose is a compelling argument. Scott left no suicide note, but, in hindsight, it appeared that his choice of a pathway to self-destruction had begun long before.

In the previous two years, following Sal Mineo's murder, Scott had told friends, "In many ways, I identify with Sal. He ended up a failure, even though he had had his moment of glory. I'll end up a failure too, except I never had a fucking moment of glory. I don't see what's left for me. There will be no big career. I need money all the time. What in hell am I supposed to do? Wait around another forty years to inherit the old man's money? Hell, if I know Paul Newman, he'll live to be a hundred if his heavy drinking doesn't do him in.,,

The phone call that Paul had been "expecting all my life" came through in the early morning hours, reaching

him at Kenyon College, his old alma mater. To honor an old commitment, he was there directing a student play, CC Pyle and the Bunion Derby.

After receiving the news of Scott's death, he stayed up the rest of the night crying. "Those baby blues were all bloodshot the following morning," a drama student said. Paul told his actors that he'd stay on and open the play with them, although he'd have to interrupt rehearsals to fly to Los Angeles for his son's funeral. "I need all of you," Paul told the young cast. "I need this show. Be as rowdy as possible. Anything to distract me."

At midnight, some of the students showed up in clown costumes at Paul's hotel, where he greeted them at the door to his room. They offered him a case of Coors beer and a bottle of Jack Daniels, which he accepted. He opened the liquor bottle and gulped down a hefty drink. "I haven't touched the brown stuff in eight years. But tonight's my night. He held up the bottle and looked at it. "Welcome home, old friend," he told the bottle. Clair Bass, one of the drama students, claimed she saw a tear fall. He thanked them and shut the door.

The New York Times headlined its obituary, PAUL NEWMAN'S SON DIES OF OVERDOSE. One news report asserted, "Scott Newman spent his entire life trying to escape from the shadow of his famous father. He never did. That shadow was too wide, too dark, too threatening. Only in death did he free himself from it."

The newspapers kindly reported that Scott died from an overdose, but the suggestion of a possible suicide was clear in many reports from insiders associated with the situation. Carol Studden said, "I think Scott started committing suicide the day he was born."

Dr. Robert Scott told the press, "There was no competition between Scott and Paul Newman. They adored each other." The good doctor knew better.

In Los Angeles, Scott's funeral was a private affair open only to family members. Jackie Witte showed up with her new husband, who shared a brief handshake with Paul. Jackie and Joanne came face to face but had nothing to say to each other.

Scott's friends felt rejected and decided to hold their own services at Actors Studio West. Actor Alan Goorwitz and Burton Kittay showed up to honor Scott's passing. Goorwitz, along with Mimi Leder, even took out a memorial ad in Variety.

"He was only twenty-eight," Mimi said between sobs. "He had his life before him. If only he could have gotten over comparing himself to Paul Newman."

Dudley Monroe, an out-of-work actor, met Scott during the last three months of his life. "When he was sober, he had that wonderful Newman grin," Moore claimed. "When he was sober, he could also charm the pants off you, and I mean that literally. The rest of the Newmans are all hogs from what I hear. Only Scott, or so I'm told, had the sensitivity of a poet. A regular Byron or Shelley. He was the true artist of the family."

Reportedly, days after the funeral, Jackie Witte called Paul late one night and screamed at him, blaming him for Scott's death. That rumor, however, cannot be confirmed.

Right after Scott's death, Joanne told friends, "I realize how far I've faded from the public's view," she claimed. "The question used to be, `Aren't you Mrs. Paul Newman?' But after all the publicity surrounding Scott's death, I was asked, `Aren't you Scott Newman's mother?'"

In memory of Scott, the Newmans launched the Scott Newman Foundation at the University of Southern California in Pasadena. Scott's oldest daughter, Susan, was placed in charge of the foundation, whose aim is to alert grammar school age children about the dangers of drugs. "We didn't want Scott to have lived in vain," Joanne said.

To escape the memory of Scott's death, Paul threw himself into work. With director Robert Altman, he'd made the disastrous Quintet, released in 1979, and set during a future ice age. Apparently, he hadn't learned his lesson, as previously he and Altman had presented Buffalo Bill and the Indians or Sitting Bull's History Lesson to the public in 1976. In a one-line summary, that flop of a movie had dealt with Buffalo Bill's plans to put on his own Wild West

side show, starring Chief Sitting Bull.

Paul broke his silence over Scott during the making of Fort Apache: The Bronx (1981). Steve McQueen had turned down the starring role. "It's all yours, baby," McQueen told him. After John Travolta turned down the co-starring role, the part went to Ken Wahl.

Watching Wahl act one day, Paul told his director, Daniel Petrie, "The role of Corelli would have been ideal for Scott. Too bad my son's not here to play the part. I should have gotten better roles for him. I could have."

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In 1978, in the immediate aftermath of Scott's death, Paul sat on the beach, staring out at the ocean. Steve McQueen had called him earlier in the day and wanted to meet with him.

A grief-stricken Paul later told Tony Perkins and other friends, "Steve was one of the very first to be there for me. He knew what I was going through, and he wanted to spend the day at the beach with me. I found looking out at the vast ocean great therapy for me."

"We didn't say much to each other that day," Paul confided. "Steve sat on my blanket with his arm around me. He had some pot with him, and we smoked it. We both drank practically a case of beer. We'd been rivals in the past. Lovers, whatever. But somehow when we came together that day, all that was behind us. We'd emerged from it all-the fights over billing, whateveras true friends."

"When Steve left that day, he kissed me on the mouth, and told me that he loved me," Paul told Tony. "I couldn't believe that. Words of love coming from Steve McQueen. I had to admit I truly loved the guy too. We were friends. Friends until the end. I hardly knew how close the end would be in coming."

Steve McQueen died on November 7, 1980.

Another strange revelation about that day Paul spent on the beach came from James Mason, the actor who had co-starred with Paul in The MacKintosh Man.

In the 1980s, Mason told the author of this biography that shortly after Scott Newman died, he received a surprise call from Paul. "We knew each other but we could hardly be called friends," Mason said. "He told me that after Steve McQueen had left him on the beach mourning the death of his son, he'd sat there for an hour or two crying."

"He said that right before the sun set, he heard the recorded sounds of Judy Garland coming from a nearby beach house," Mason said. "Judy was singing the music she recorded for A Star Is Born, that picture we made together. Paul told me that the most dramatic scene in that movie, at least for him, was when I walked into the sea to drown myself to escape from the despair and failure of my life."

"Paul confessed that he too considered committing suicide that day the same way I did in the movie," Mason said. "He told me that he felt that the best part of his life, his youth, was over. He also told me that he felt that his best work was also behind him. `Every trick I know I've played out on the screen,' he said. `There is nothing left for me to give my fans. I have to find another reason for living.'"

"Paul also confessed to me that his love affairs were also behind him," Mason said. "He told me `they have all come and gone. Joanne, bless her, remains faithful.' He didn't see much future for himself that day. `I'll end up sitting somewhere in a rocking chair on a back porch in New England dreaming about Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. They had the good taste to get out of life before age moved in on them.'"

"After giving suicide serious concentration, Paul rejected the idea," Mason said. He told me, `I picked myself up, brushed off the sand, walked back to my car, and drove away.'"

"Before he did that, he actually spoke out loud to the ocean," Mason said. "He confided in me his last words to

the sea. `I told the ocean I was not ready for it to reclaim me, at least now,' he said. `I'm going to head out and see what surprises the future holds for me. Before the final curtain, something will turn up. I just know it.'"

Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward as Mr. and Mrs. Bridge (1990)

"I never ask my wife about my flaws. You don't want any woman to look under the carpet, guys, because there are lots of flaws underneath. Joanne believes my character in Mr. and Mrs. Bridge comes closest to who I really am. I don't think so. But I learned a long time ago not to disagree. The film, incidentally, centers on sexual tensions of an aging couple."

-Paul Newman

Epilogue

Even for movie legends, who seem timeless, human survival has its limits. In the Tennessee Williams play, Sweet Bird of Youth, in which Paul had starred, the playwright had warned against that relentless enemy, Time.

In one of Paul's last films, Road to Perdition (2002), in which he'd costarred with Tom Hanks, he made this comment when he was asked what it was like starring in a film in the 21st century. He was seventy-seven at the time.

"You can't be as old as I am without waking up with a surprised look on your face every morning. Holy shit! Waddya know? I'm still around. It's absolutely amazing that I survived all the booze and smoking, the cars, the career."

Best pal A.E. Hotchner paid a final call on Paul who had only days to live. Both men seemed to realize it would be their last visit with each other.

Their parting words:

HOTCHNER: "I'll be in touch."

PAUL: "It's been a hell of a ride."

Near the end of his life, a doorman in New York asked Paul how he wanted to be remembered.

His answer revealed how fleeting he felt fame was.

"I got this letter from a young man in California praising Newmans Own Spaghetti Sauce. He wrote, `My girlfriend mentioned that you were a movie star, and I would be interested to know what films you've made. If you act as well as you cook, your movies would be worth watching. P.S. Are any of your movies in VCR?"

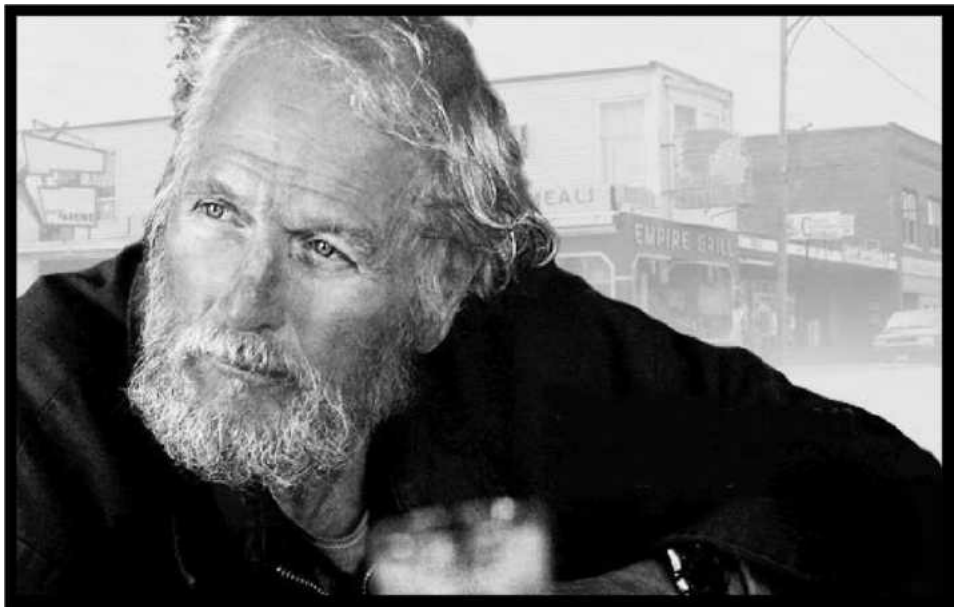
After acting in more than 65 films over a period that spanned a half century, Paul Leonard Newman died on September 26, 2008 at his home in Westport, Connecticut. The cause of death was lung cancer.

In his final interview he said, "We are such spendthrifts with our lives. The trick of living is to slip on and off the planet with the least fuss you can muster. I'm not running for sainthood. I just happen to think that in life we need to be a little like the farmer, who puts back into the soil what he takes out."

His last known words, while sitting in his garden for a final time, were, "I thought I heard a meadowlark sing."

Director Martin Scorsese, on hearing of Paul's death, showed his obvious pain at the passing.

"The history of movies without Paul Newman is unthinkable. His presence, his beauty, his physical eloquence, the emotional complexity he could conjure up and transmit through his acting in so many movies-where would we be without him?"



A LION IN WINTER

1925-2008

REST IN PEACE

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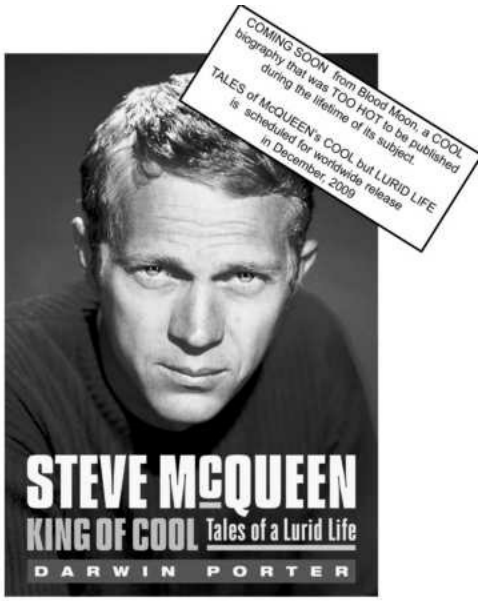

The drama of Steve McQueen's personal life far exceeded any role he ever played on screen. Born to a prostitute, he was brutally molested by some of his mother's "johns," and endured gang rape in reform school. His drift into prostitution began when he was hired as a towel boy in the most notorious bordello in the Dominican Republic, where he starred in a string of cheap porno films. Returning to New York before migrating to Hollywood, he hustled men on Times Square and, as a "gentleman escort" in a borrowed tux, rich older women on New York's Upper East Side.

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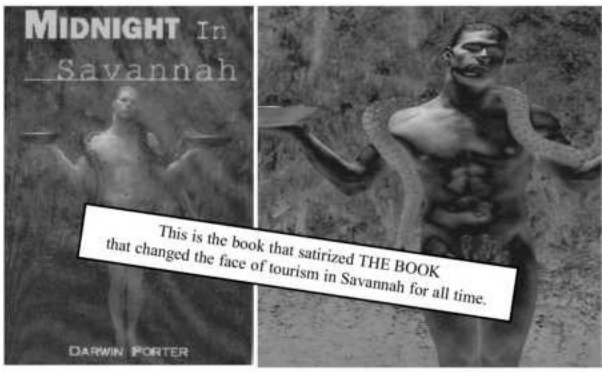

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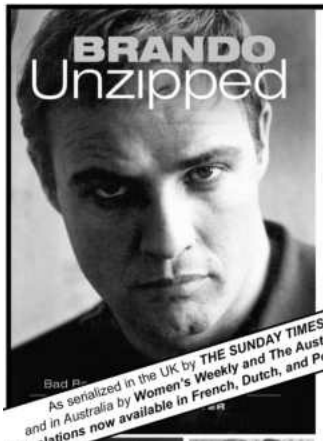

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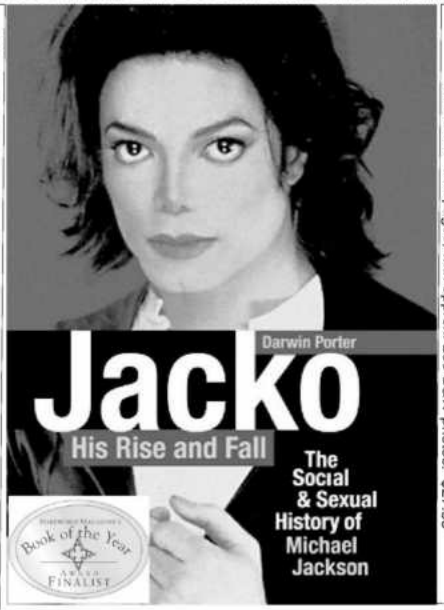

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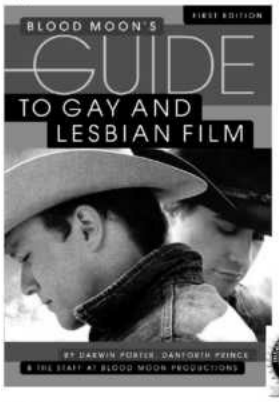
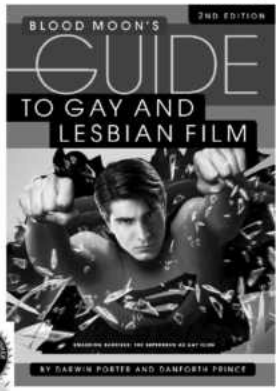
★ HOT, SWEATY, OUTRAGEOUS CELLULOID ★





"Authoritative, exhaustive, and essential, it's the queer girl's and queer boy's one-stop resource for what to add to their feature-film queues. The film synopses and the snippets of critic's reviews are reason enough to keep this annual compendium of cinematic information close to the DVD player. But the extras--including the special features and the Blood Moon Awards--are butter on the popcorn."
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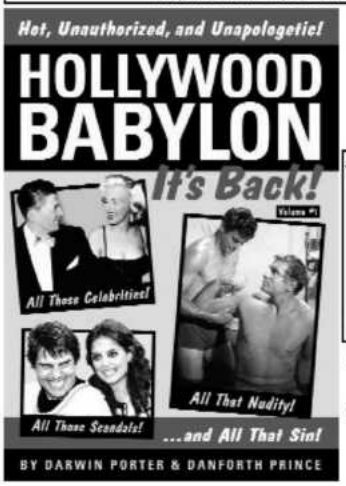

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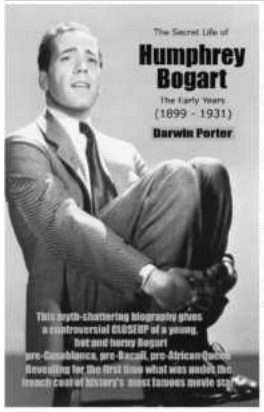

Loaded with information once suppressed by the Hollywood studios, this is the most revealing book ever written about the undercover lives of movie stars during the 1930s. Learn what America's most visible male star was doing during his mysterious early years on Broadway and in Hollywood at the dawn of the Talkies--details that Bogie worked hard to suppress during his later years with Bacall.

The subject of more than 80 radio interviews by its author, and widely covered by both the tabloids and the mainstream press, it's based on never-before-published memoirs, letters, diaries, and interviews from men and women who either loved Bogie or who wanted him to burn in hell. No wonder Bogie, in later life, usually avoided talking about his early years.

Serialized in three parts by Britain's ***Mail on Sunday***, it demonstrates that Hollywood's Golden Age stars were human, highly sexed, and at least when they were with other Hollywood insiders, remarkably indiscreet.

"This biography has had us pondering as to how to handle its revelations within a town so protective of its own...This biography of Bogart's early years is exceptionally well written."
JOHN AUSTIN, *HOLLYWOOD INSIDE*

"In this new biography, we learn about how Bogart struggled for stardom in the anything goes era of the Roaring 20s."
THE GLOBE

"Porter's book uncovers scandals within the entertainment industry of the 1920s and 1930s, when publicists from the movie studios deliberately twisted and suppressed inconvenient details about the lives of their emerging stars."
TURNER CLASSIC MOVIE NEWS

"This biography brilliantly portrays a slice of time: In this case, the scandal-soaked days of Prohibition, when a frequently hung-over Bogie operated somwhat like a blank sheet of paper on which other actors, many of them infamous, were able to design their lives. The book is beautifully written."
LAURENCE HAZELL, PhD. University of Durham (UK)

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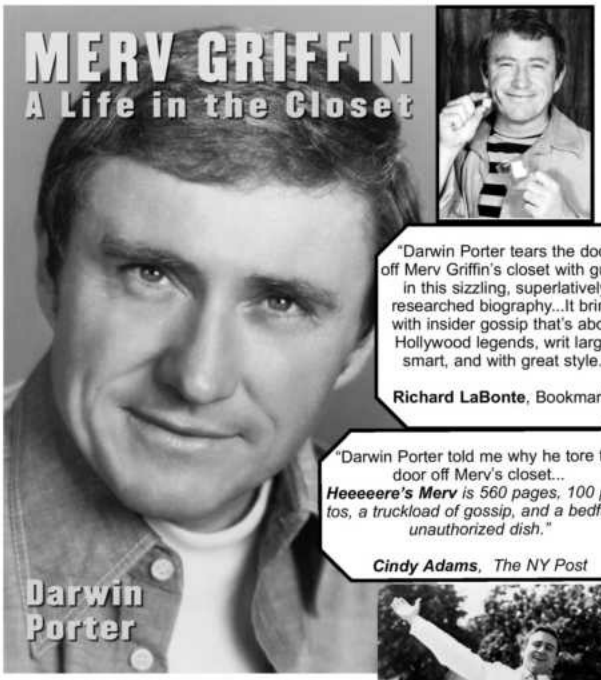

"Darwin Porter tears the door off Merv Griffin's closet with gusto in this sizzling, superlatively researched biography...It brims with insider gossip that's about Hollywood legends, writ large, smart, and with great style."

Richard LaBonte, Bookmarks

"Darwin Porter told me why he tore the door off Merv's closet... ***Heeeeere's Merv*** *is 560 pages, 100 photos, a truckload of gossip, and a bedful of unauthorized dish."*

Cindy Adams, *The NY Post*

Merv Griffin, A Life in the Closet

by Darwin Porter

Merv Griffin began his career as a Big Band singer, moved on to a failed career as a romantic hero in the movies, and eventually rewrote the rules of everything associated with the broadcasting industry. Along the way, he met and befriended virtually everyone who mattered, made billions operating casinos and developing jingles, contests, and word games. All of this while maintaining a male harem and a secret life as America's most famously closeted homosexual.

In this comprehensive biography--the first published since Merv's death in 2007--celebrity biographer Darwin Porter reveals the amazing details behind the richest, most successful, and in some way, the most notorious mogul in the history of America's entertainment industry.

HERE'S MERV like you've never seen him before. Hardcover. 560 pages, with photos. ISBN 978-0-9786465-0-9 **$26.95**

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About the Author, Darwin Porter

This tell-all expose of Paul Newman was authored by Darwin Porter, whose earlier portraits of Merv Griffin, Marlon Brando, Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, Howard Hughes, and Michael Jackson generated widespread reviews and animated radio and blogsite commentaries worldwide. Some of Porter's biographies have been serialized to millions of readers in THE SUNDAY TIMES of London and THE MAIL ON SUNDAY.

Porter is also the author of Hollywood Babylon It's Back!, a prize-winning anthology of celebrity indiscretion that was defined by some critics as "the hottest compilation of inter-generational scandal in the history of Hollywood," and "The Ultimate Guilty Pleasure."

Darwin was first introduced to Paul Newman by Tennessee Williams in 1959, when Darwin was functioning as the then-2l-year-old bureau chief for the Miami Herald in Key West, Florida. From there, Porter began the compilation of a vast dossier on the early decades of Newman's private life from sources as diverse as playwright William Inge, author of the play Picnic, which launched Newman as a Broadway legend; Richard Brooks, whose screenplay for the film version of Sweet Bird of Youth was ruthlessly "castrated" by a studio that was determined not to release a film that was "too controversial"; actress Geraldine Page, who co-starred with Paul for hundreds of performances of Sweet Bird of Youth; novelist/playwright James Leo Herlihy, author of Midnight Cowboy; and dozens of other witnesses to Paul Newman's life and adventures.

Darwin is also the well-known author of many past and present editions of The Frommer Guides, a respected travel guidebook series presently administered by John Wiley and Sons Publishers.

When not traveling, which is rare, Darwin lives with a menagerie of once-abandoned pets in a Victorian house in one of the outer boroughs of New York City, with frequent excursions to California and various Frommer-related parts of Europe and the Caribbean.